

Exeter City Council Historic Environment Record

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| Civil Parish & District: Exeter | National Grid Reference: SX 9196 9259 | Number: |
| Subject: Archaeological monitoring on the SW Highways drains and highway enhancement scheme, High Street, Exeter. | | Photo attached: Y |
| Planning Application no: n/a | Recipient museum: Royal Albert Memorial Museum | |
| OASIS ID: | Museum Accession no: 13/6 | |
| Contractor's reference number/code: EXH 13 | Dates fieldwork undertaken: 21/1/-27/2/13 | |
| <p>Description of works: A watching brief was maintained by Cotswold Archaeology during repair works to the surface drainage and highways enhancements in the High Street (Fig. 1). The proposed works are located within the Exeter Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI) and it was considered possible that significant remains or deposits of Roman or later date might survive within the proposed works area and may be exposed during trenching.</p> <p>Results: 10 trenches were excavated to replace existing drains and widen the road (Fig. 2-4). All of the works exposed ground heavily disturbed by modern services to an average depth of between 600 to 700mm below current ground level. Trenches 1 and 5-9 exposed stratified archaeological deposits. The sequence in the trenches were:</p> <p>Trench 1 (Fig. 5): 100 0-0.1m concrete paving slabs 101 0.1-0.7m concrete sub-base 102 0.7-2.4m mid reddish brown silty clay (service trench fill) 103 0.7-2.4m service trench 104 0.7-1.4m volcanic trap rubble (Roman civil building foundation?) 105 0.7-2.4m mid to dark reddish brown silty clay (service trench fill?) 106 0.8-1m aggregate (service trench fill) 107 1-2.4m brick manhole 108 0.8-2.4m manhole foundation trench 109 1-2.4m brick culvert 110 1-2.4m culvert foundation trench</p> <p>Trench 5 (Fig. 6): 500 0-0.1m concrete paving slabs 501 0.1-0.2m concrete sub-base 502 0.2m+ service trench 503 0.2m+ mid reddish brown silty clay (service trench fill) 504 0.4m+ roughly squared volcanic trap bonded with light yellow lime mortar (medieval/post-medieval building foundation). 505 0.5m+ roughly squared heavitree stone (medieval/ post-medieval steps)</p> <p>Trench 6 (Fig. 7): 600 0-0.13m concrete paving slabs 601 0.13-0.5m concrete sub-base 602 0.5m+ service trench 603 0.5m+ mid reddish brown silty clay (service trench fill)</p> | | |

604 0.6m+ service trench
605 0.6m+ dark reddish brown silty clay (service trench fill)
606 1.25m+ mid grey silty clay (undated deposit)
607 1.20m+ light yellow brown silty clay (undated deposit)
608 1.18-1.32m mid grey silty clay (undated deposit)
609 1.05-1.22m light yellow brown silty clay (undated deposit)
610 0.98-1.15m mid grey brown silty clay (undated deposit)
611 0.93-1.04m light yellowish brown silty clay (undated deposit)
612 1.07-1.40m robber trench
613 1.07-1.40m mid to dark grey silty clay (robber trench fill)
614 0.6-1.1m mid grey silty clay (modern disturbance)
615 0.5-0.97m mid reddish brown silty clay (modern disturbance)
616 0.88m+ mid to dark blackish brown silty clay (undated deposit)
617 0.4m+ mid to dark brown silty clay (modern disturbance)
618 0.4m+ brick wall (19th- 20th century)
619 0.4m+ service trench
620 0.4m+ mid reddish brown silty clay (service trench fill)
621 0.4m+ service trench

Trench 7 (Fig. 8):

700 0-0.07m concrete paving slabs
701 0.07-0.6m concrete sub-base
702 0.6-0.8m service trench
703 0.6-0.8m mid reddish brown silty clay (service trench fill)
704 0.8-1.05m dark blackish brown silty clay (post-Roman dark soil horizon)
705 1.05m+ mid brownish red silty clay (top of Roman civil deposits?)

Trench 8 (Fig. 9):

800 0-0.1m concrete paving slabs
801 0.1-0.25m aggregate sub-base
802 0.25-0.45m concrete sub-base
803 0.45m+ service trench
804 0.45m+ mid reddish brown silty clay (service trench fill)
805 0.65-0.95m mid to dark brown silty clay (early medieval deposit?)
806 0.85-0.95m volcanic trap rubble (early medieval deposit?)
807 0.95m+ dark blackish brown silty clay (post-Roman dark soil horizon)

Trench 9 (Fig. 10):

900 0-0.1m tarmac
901 0.1-0.35m concrete sub-base
902 0.35-0.45m dark reddish brown silty clay
903 0.45-0.8m mid brown silty clay
904 0.8m+ dark blackish brown clayey silt (Roman civil deposit?)
905 0.8m+ mid reddish brown silty clay (Roman civil deposit?)
906 0.8m+ dark reddish brown silty clay (Roman civil deposit)
907 0.68m+ volcanic trap rubble bonded with mid brownish red clay (Roman civil building foundation)

Finds:

A single rim sherd from a Black Burnished ware (BBW) flanged bowl, dating to the early 2nd century AD (Holbrook & Bidwell 1991, type 71.3, pp. 130-132), and four sherds from a plain BBW rimmed dish (late 2nd-3rd century) were uncovered during the lowering of the highway. Four further fragments of BBW consisting of small body sherds and displaying few diagnostic features were recovered from deposit 904. A single *tegula* fragment of CBM was recovered from deposit 705. The majority of the material is unstratified and adds little to what has already been found and published from Exeter.

Conclusions:

Structure 104, located in the north section of Trench 1, can possibly be interpreted as the surviving remains of Roman civil building foundations, although the level of later disturbance and the depth of the trench make interpretation difficult.

Wall 504, composed of roughly squared volcanic trap, and steps 505, composed of heavitree stone, were identified in Trench 5. The wall is interpreted as the remains of the western property boundary wall of a medieval building, with steps leading into an undercroft/cellar from street level. The remains were truncated on all sides by modern activity.

A number of small deposits (606-611) were identified in the north and east sections of Trench 6. They were truncated on the west side by possible robber trench 612 containing heavitree stone rubble and water-worn pebbles. No dating evidence was recovered from these deposits and they remain uninterpreted.

Deposit 705 identified at the base of Trench 7 consisted of mid brownish red silty clay. A single unidentified cbm fragment was recovered from this deposit and it has been interpreted as the top of Roman civil deposits. This was overlain by dark blackish brown silty clay (704), interpreted as a post-Roman dark soil horizon.

The earliest deposit identified in Trench 8, composed of dark blackish brown silty clay (807), is interpreted as a post-Roman dark soil horizon, identified elsewhere in the city. This is overlain by volcanic trap rubble (806), which is in turn sealed by a mid to dark brown silty clay deposit (805). Deposit 806 is interpreted as a post-abandonment demolition deposit, while represents further post-abandonment accumulated soil.

Wall 907, built of volcanic trap rubble and bonded with red clay, is located at the eastern end of Trench 9 and can be interpreted as the surviving lowest masonry course of a Roman civil building foundation. The foundations were overlying the top of an earlier Roman civil deposit (904) from which four sherds of plain BBW were recovered. Deposit 906 was partly overlain by wall 907 and is likely to be an earlier Roman civil deposit. These were overlain by construction/demolition deposit 905, although the relationship with wall 907 was truncated by later disturbance.

Project archive and OASIS entry

The site records have been compiled into a fully integrated site archive which is currently held at Cotswold Archaeology offices under project number 4157, pending deposition with the RAMM. A summary of the investigations has been submitted to the on-line archaeological database OASIS (Online AccesS to the Index of archaeological InterventionS).

References:

Holbrook, N. & Bidwell, P.T. 1991: *Roman Finds from Exeter*, Exeter Archaeological Reports Vol. 4 (Exeter).

Recorder:

MFR Steinmetzer on behalf of Cotswold Archaeology

Date sent to HER:

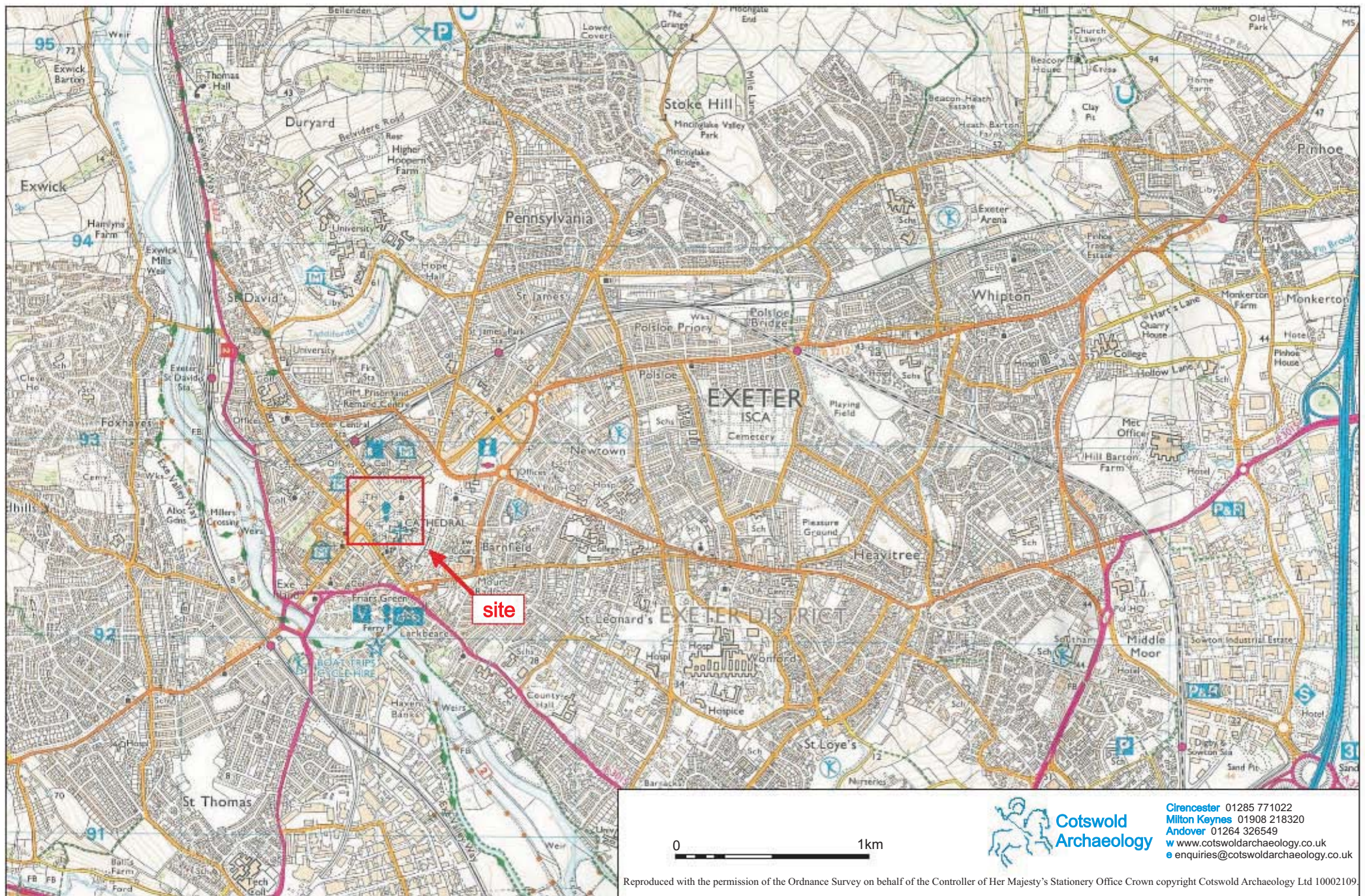


Fig. 1 Location of drainage works.

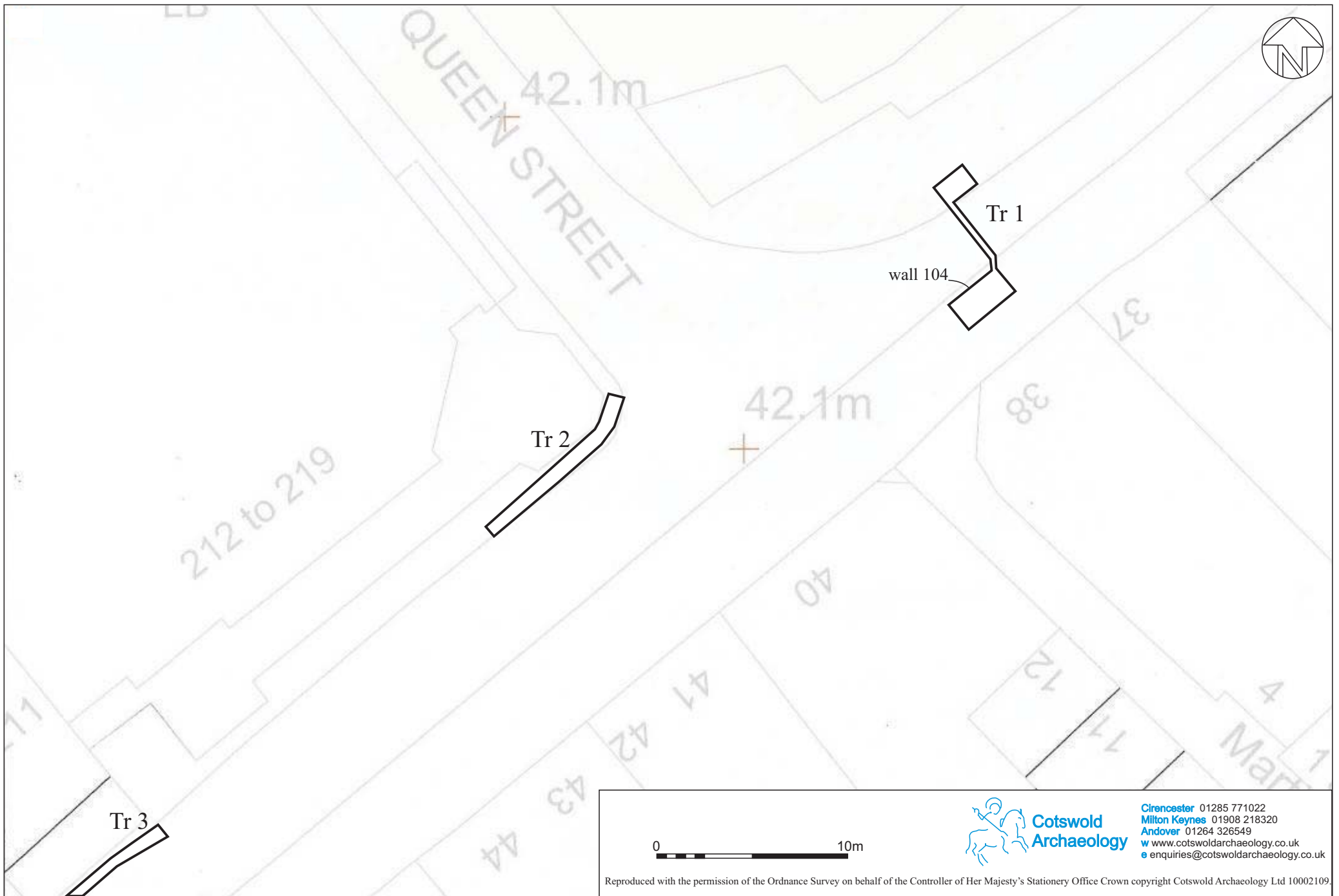


Fig. 2 Location of observations, trenches 1-3. Scale 1:250.

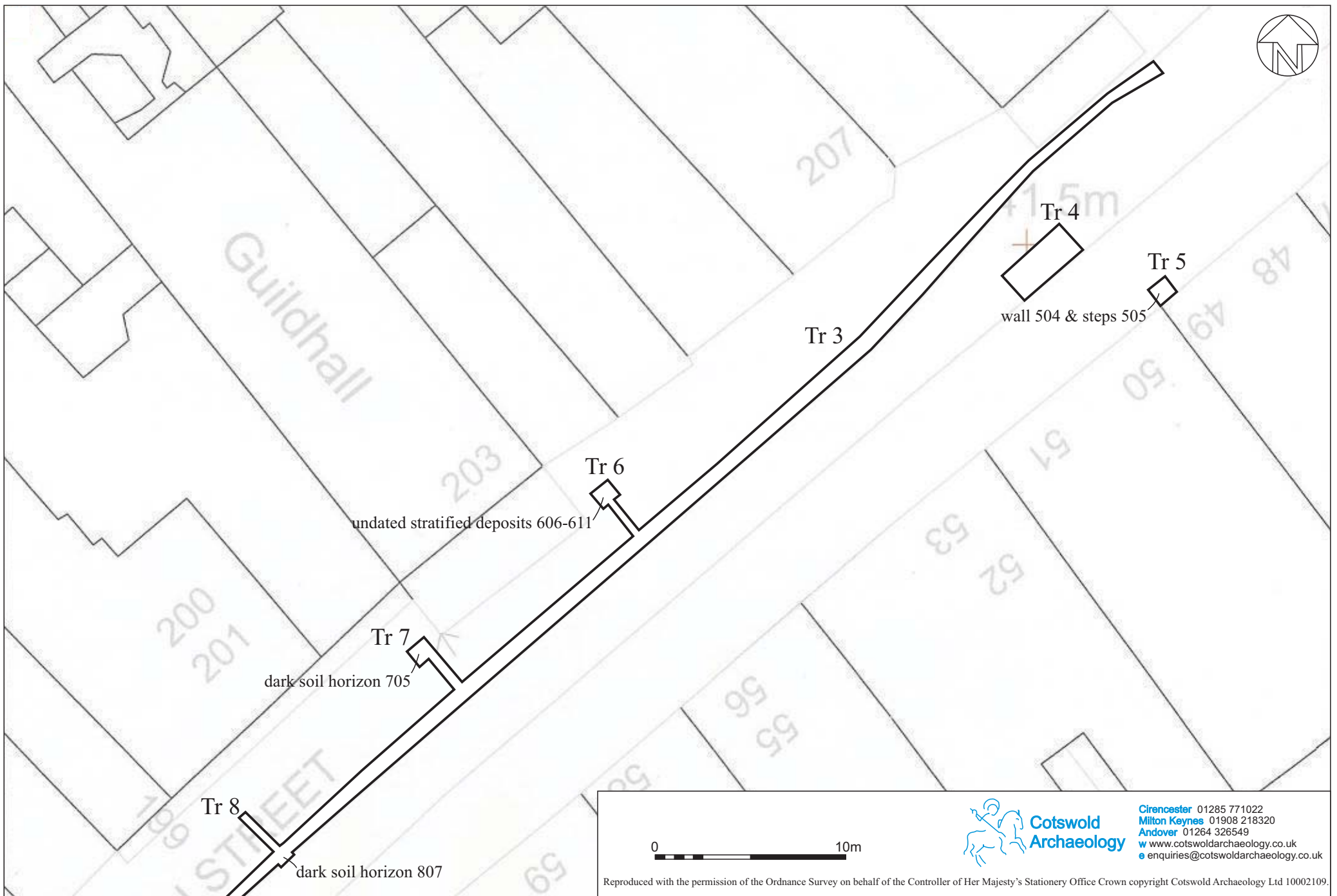


Fig. 3 Location of observations, trenches 3-8. Scale 1: 250.

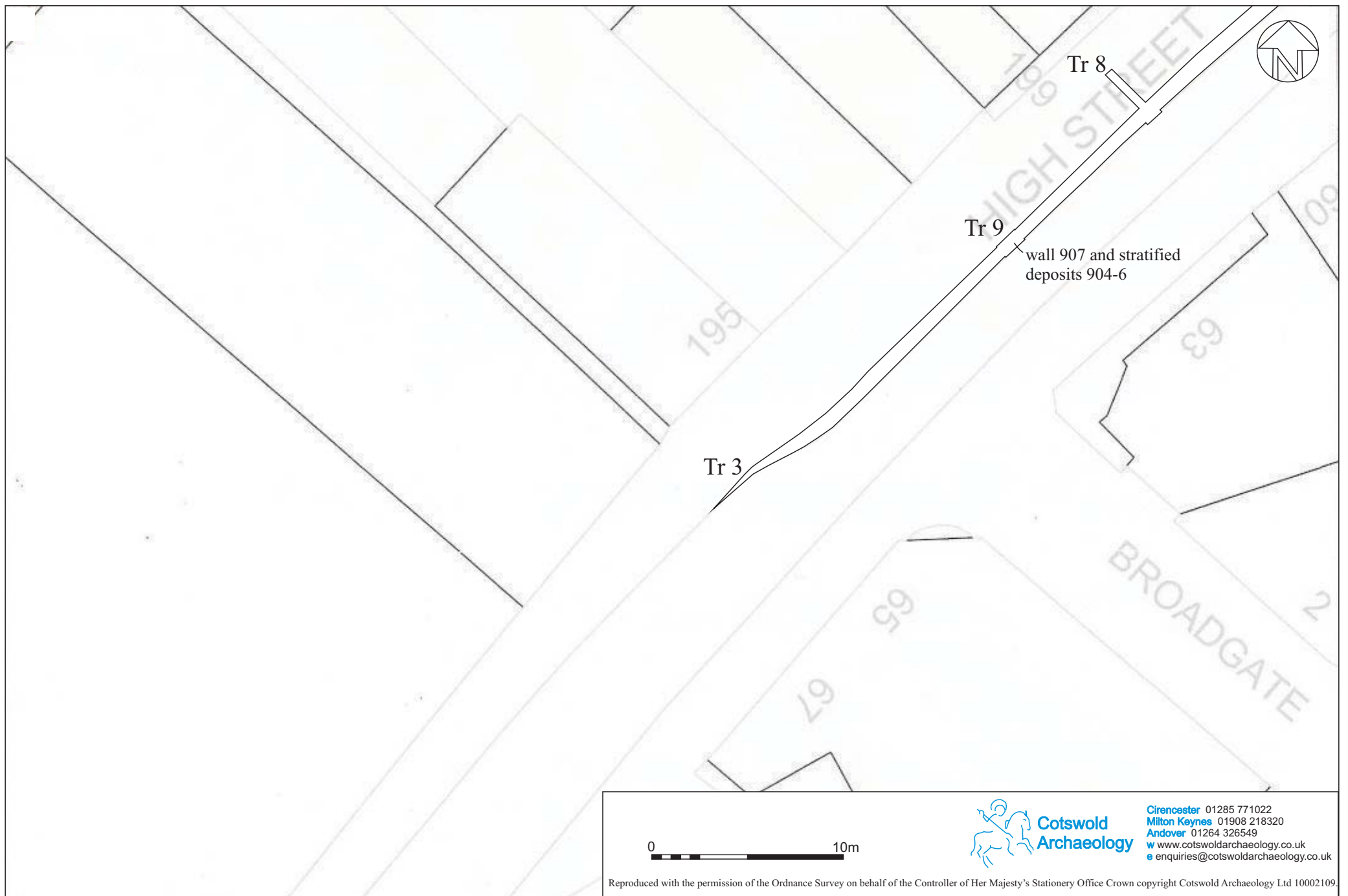


Fig. 4 Location of observations, trenches 8-9. Scale 1: 250.



Fig. 5 General view of trench 1 showing possible wall 104 (left) and general view of trench 3 showing depth of kerb excavations (right).

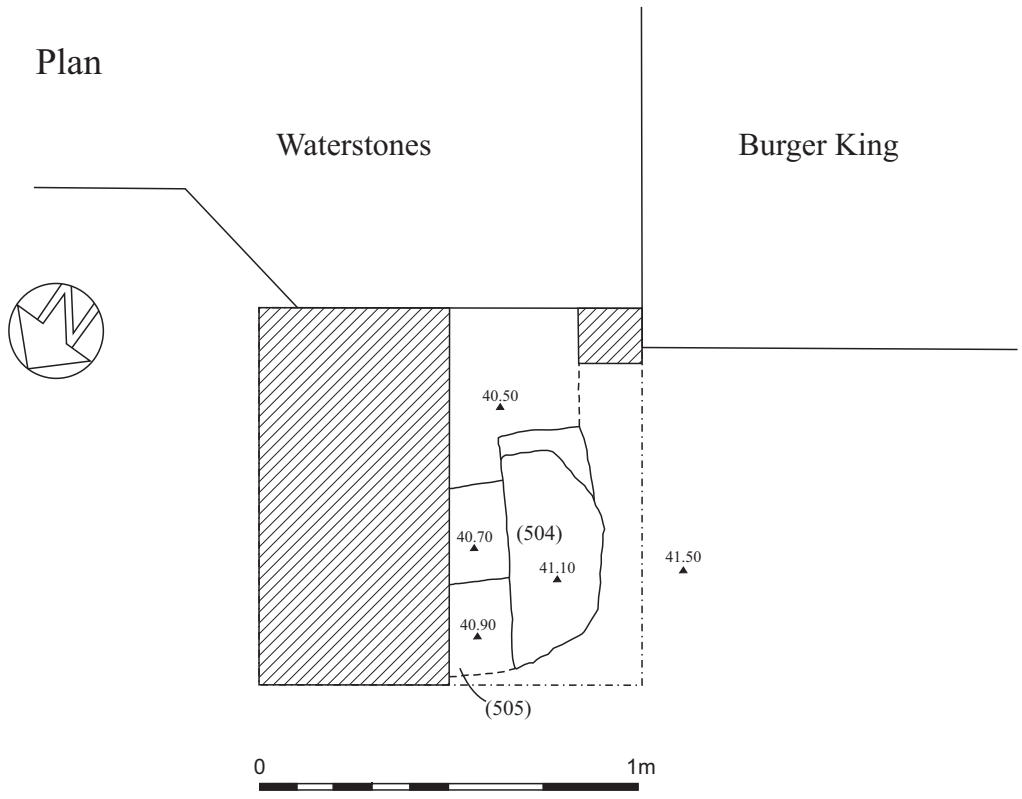


Fig. 6 Plan and photograph of wall 504 and steps 505.

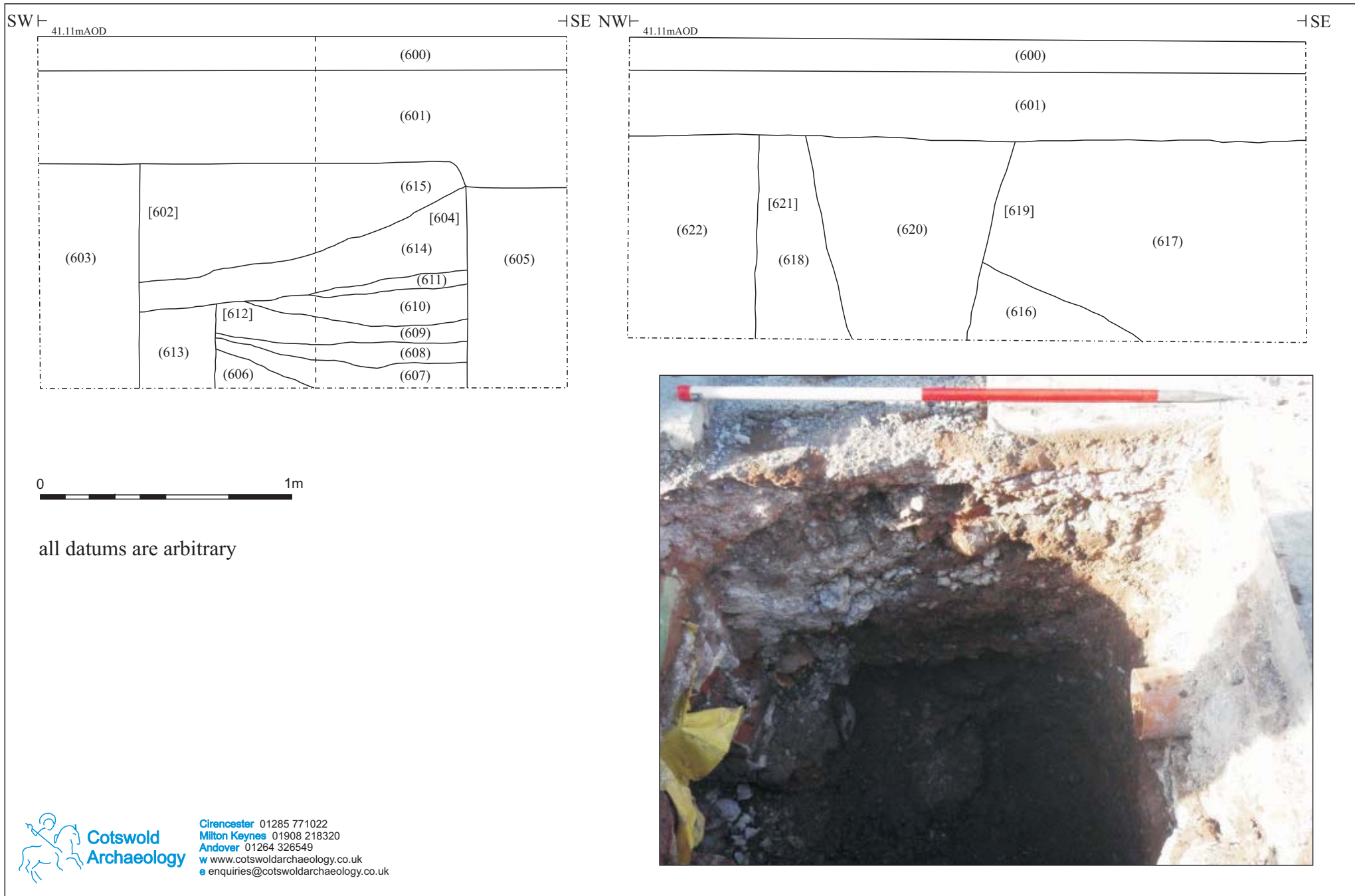
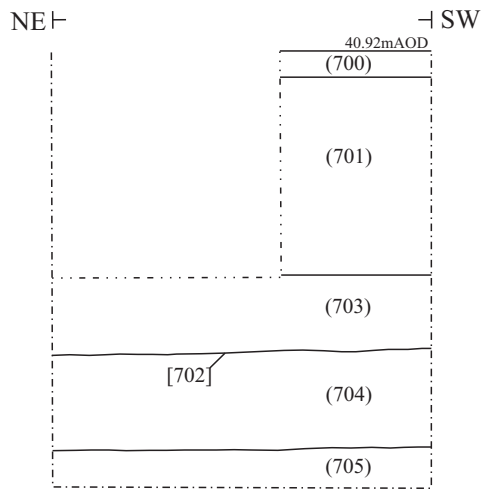


Fig. 7 Section and photograph of *in situ* archaeological deposits trench 6.



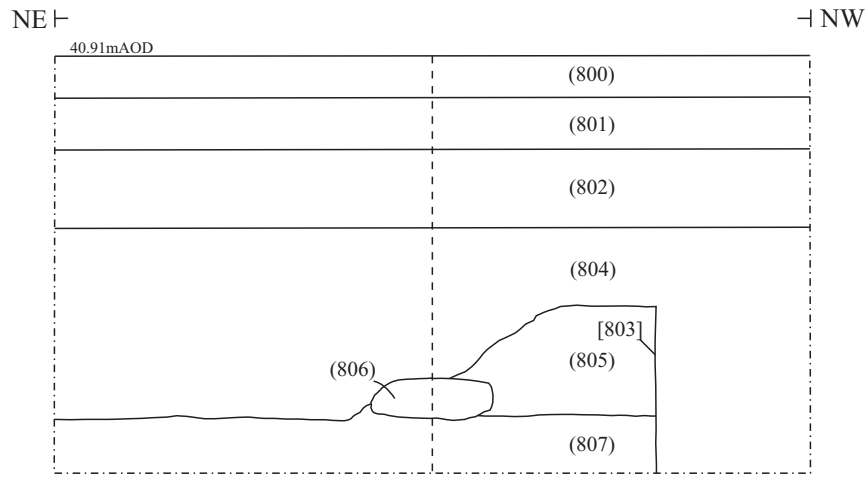
all datums are arbitrary



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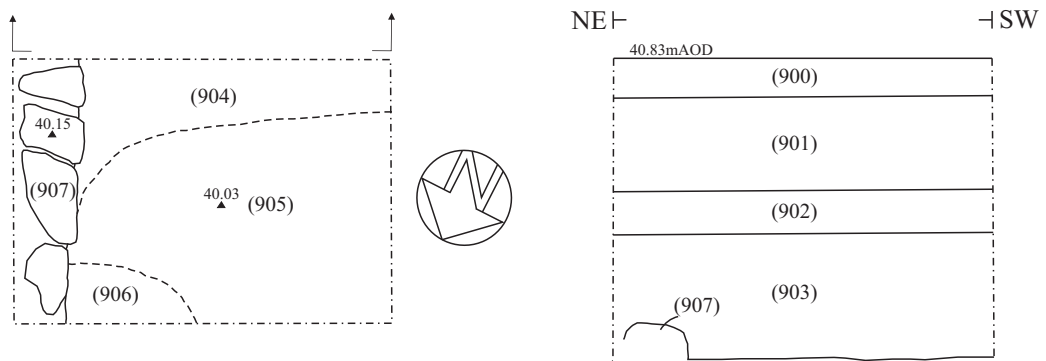
Fig. 8 Section and photograph of dark soil horizon 704.



all datums are arbitrary



Fig. 9 Section and photograph of dark soil horizon 807.



all datums are arbitrary



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Fig. 10 Plan, section and photograph of wall 907 and *in situ* deposits 904-6.