

Gas Main Replacement Wanborough Road Covingham Swindon

Archaeological Watching Brief



for
SWECO

on behalf of
Wales and West Utilities Limited

CA Project: 6281
CA Report: 17471
Accession Number: SWIMG: 2017.80
September 2017



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SUMMARY

Project Name:	Gas Main Replacement, Wanborough Road
Location:	Between Wanborough and Covingham, Wiltshire
NGR:	419612 185126 at the north-west and 421035 183572 to the south-east
Type:	Watching Brief
Date:	10 - 15 July and 27 July - 1 August 2017
SMC:	S00165832
Location of Archive:	To be deposited with Swindon Museum and Art Gallery
Accession Number:	SWIMG:2017.80
Site Code:	WANR 17

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology during groundworks associated with the replacement of existing gas mains at Wanborough Road, Covingham, Wiltshire.

A northeast-southwest aligned wall containing a sherd of Roman pottery and a series of Roman to early modern road surfaces were recorded.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Between July and August 2017 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological watching brief for SWECO, on behalf of Wales and West Utilities Limited (WWU), along Wanborough Road, between Wanborough and Covingham, Wiltshire (NGR: 419612 185126 at the north-west and 421035 183572 to the south-east; Fig. 1). A programme of gas main replacement is to be carried out by WWU, as a requirement of the Health and Safety Executive and Ofgem, to update and rationalise the gas main network. In the instance of this programme of works, impact upon buried archaeological remains (including areas of a Scheduled Monument) was noted as a possibility. As a result, consultations were conducted with Hugh Beamish (Assistant Inspector of Ancient Monuments, Historic England) and Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger (County Archaeologist, Wiltshire Council). It was determined that a watching brief was required during the replacement works where they impact potentially sensitive remains. Within the Scheduled Monument, works progressed under a Scheduled Monument Consent (reference S00165832).

1.2 The watching brief was carried out in accordance with a detailed *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) produced by CA (2017) and approved by Hugh Beamish (HE). The fieldwork also followed *Standard and guidance: Archaeological watching brief* (CIfA 2014).

The site

1.3 The gas main replacement route (hereafter 'the route') follows the alignment of Wanborough Road, both within the carriageway and adjacent grass verge. Wanborough Road itself runs through an area of agricultural fields between the outskirts of Covingham in the northwest and Wanborough in the southeast. The southern end of the route lies at 105m AOD and gently slopes down to its northern end at 95m AOD.

1.4 The underlying bedrock geology of the area is mapped as Amphill Clay Formation and Kimmeridge Clay Formation (undifferentiated) – Mudstone of the Jurassic Period, overlain by superficial deposits of clay, silt, sand and gravel of the Quaternary Period (BGS 2017). During the watching brief natural substrate consisting of clay, was observed in all observed trenches.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The northern extent of the route lies directly adjacent to the *Site of Roman Town, West of Wanborough House* (Scheduled Monument ref 1004684), which has been subject to a number of previous archaeological investigations. Historic excavation of the Scheduled Monument revealed a substantial roadside settlement interpreted to be the Roman settlement of *Durocornovium*. It was occupied from the mid-1st century, reaching its peak in the period AD 244-367 (Anderson *et al* 2001). Wanborough Road, and therefore parts of the route, aligns with the projected route of Ermin Street, a major Roman road running between Wanborough (*Durocornovium*) and Speen (*Spinis*) (Margary Road No. 41; Margary 1967).
- 2.2 In the wider vicinity, approximately 1km to the south of the route's southern extent, pits containing Late Bronze or Early Iron Age pottery and a probable kiln site of similar date have been previously excavated (CAT 1999, Foundations Archaeology, 2002).
- 2.3 Medieval settlement activity has previously been identified at The Mallards, approximately 100m to the south-west of the southern extent of the route. This comprised two structures with stone walls, chalk floors and a thick black occupation layer (Wiltshire HER ref MWI20240). Earthworks of medieval date have also been identified c. 20m to the south-west of the route (Wiltshire SMR MWI20233). An evaluation adjacent to the southern extent of the route identified a north-eastward continuation of this activity (CA 2014).

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The objectives of the archaeological works were:
- to monitor groundworks, and to identify, investigate and record all significant buried archaeological deposits revealed on the site during the course of the development groundworks;
 - at the conclusion of the project, to produce an integrated archive for the project work and a report setting out the results of the project and the archaeological conclusions that can be drawn from the recorded data.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The fieldwork followed the methodology set out within the WSI (CA 2017). An archaeologist was present during intrusive groundworks comprising excavation of inspection trenches over the existing gas main and sections of new service trenching (see Fig. 2 for locations and extent). Due to the limitations of time, the full extent of groundworks was not completed.
- 4.2 Where archaeological deposits were encountered written, graphic and photographic records were compiled in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: *Fieldwork Recording Manual*.
- 4.3 The archive from the watching brief is currently held by CA at their offices in Kemble and will be deposited with Swindon Museum and Art Gallery (accession number: SWIMG:2017.80). A summary of information from this project, set out within Appendix B will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

5. RESULTS (FIGS 2-4)

- 5.1 The natural geological substrate, consisting of clay (111, 209 and 301), was revealed in all observed groundworks locations (Trenches 1-3) at a typical depth of 1.3m below present ground level (bpgl). No archaeological features or deposits were identified in Trench 3, within which only modern deposits were observed. This trench is not discussed further.

Trench 1

- 5.2 Trench 1 lay within the carriageway of Wanborough Road. In this trench, natural clay 111 was cut by wall foundation 108 (Fig. 3). It was 0.9m in width, 0.1m in height and consisted of a single course of northeast-southwest aligned limestone blocks bonded by clay mortar. During cleaning of the wall foundation, a sherd of Roman pottery was collected. This foundation course was overlaid by wall 104, which measured 0.5m in width, 0.2m in height and similarly consisted of limestone blocks in a clay mortar. This was sealed by silty clay deposits 109 and 110, totalling 0.25m in thickness, that were overlain by cobbled surface 103, which was 0.1m in thickness. This was in turn sealed by deposit 102, approximately 0.1m in thickness from which Roman pottery was recovered. Given the existing gas service trench was

partially overlain by this deposit, it may have been formed of redeposited elements of made ground 109 and 110. Made ground 102 was overlain by deposits associated with the modern Wanborough Road.

Trench 2

- 5.3 Trench 2 lay within the western grass verge of Wanborough Road. In this trench, natural clay 209 was overlain by buried subsoil 208, which was typically 0.15m in thickness (Fig. 2). This was overlain by road surfaces 207 and 206; both were 0.1m in thickness. Both road surfaces were only observed in section, having been historically truncated by the existing gas service (see below). The limited view of the road surfaces meant that their precise form was unclear, though they appeared to be formed by pea gravel and grit in a silty-clay matrix. This was sealed by silting layer 205, which was less than 0.05m in thickness, which was in turn sealed by a series of further road surface deposits (201, 202, 203 and 204), which in turn was overlain by topsoil (200). The existing gas service cut through all the observed deposits.

6. THE FINDS

- 6.1 Artefactual material was hand-recovered from three deposits (a wall foundation, made ground and topsoil). The recovered material dates to the Roman and post-medieval/modern periods. Quantities of the artefact types are given in Appendix B. The pottery has been recorded according to sherd count/weight per fabric. Where possible, pottery fabric codes are equated to the Wanborough type series (Seager Smith 2001).

Pottery: Roman

- 6.2 A total of nine sherds (58g) of Roman pottery were retrieved, mostly in a relatively unabraded condition. Most presented as unfeatured bodysherds in reduced (F53, F21) or oxidised (F13) coarseware fabrics. Three joining rimsherds from an everted rim jar in Southeast Dorset Black-burnished ware (F54) were recorded from made ground layer 102. When found outside Dorset this ware type typically dates to the 2nd to 4th centuries (Davies *et al.* 1994, 107).

Post-medieval/modern

- 6.3 Topsoil 200 produced two sherds of transfer-printed refined whiteware of late 18th to 19th century date.

7. DISCUSSION

- 7.1 In Trench 1, the earliest archaeological asset identified was wall 104/108. It is probable that this wall relates to a Roman structure at the fringe of the Scheduled Monument (1004684). The recovery of pottery dating to the Roman period during surface cleaning supports this conclusion. However, the disturbance caused by the excavation of the existing gas service precluded clear conclusions regarding the date of deposits immediately above the wall.
- 7.2 Cobbled surface 103 is on the balance of interpretation also likely to be of Roman date. Given it was observed to consist of a single layer of cobbles, it is most likely to have been associated with a structure rather than Ermin Street.
- 7.3 The series of road surfaces identified within Trench 2 remain undated. However, given their location off the modern Wanborough Road alignment, they are most probably Roman and/or medieval in date. This interpretation is supported by records of investigations of Ermine Street, including that excavated between Birdlip Quarry and Cricklade (CA 2008): at this location, sequences of road surfaces of Roman date were noted comprising tightly packed stone of beds of silty clay without evidence of a retaining cut. The impact of the existing gas service in this trench was significant, and the absence of dating evidence precludes further interpretation.

8. CA PROJECT TEAM

Fieldwork was undertaken by Peter Busby and Daniel Sausins. The report was written by Luke Brannlund and Daniel Sausins. The finds report was written by Jacky Sommerville. The illustrations were prepared by Charlotte Patman. The archive has been compiled by, and prepared for deposition by Hazel O'Neill. The project was managed for CA by Ian Barnes.



9. REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Trench No.	Context No.	Type	Context interpretation	Description	W (m)	Depth /thickness (m)	Spot-date
1	100	Layer	Road surface	Tarmac		0.1	
1	101	Layer	Road base	Gravel		0.1	
1	102	Layer	Silting/ Made-ground	Mid grey-brown clay silt		0.1	C2-C4
1	103	Layer	Road surface	Cobbles		0.1	
1	104	Structure	Wall	Northeast-Southwest aligned wall consisting rough limestone blocks in clay mortar	0.5	0.2	
1				VOID			
1				VOID			
1				VOID			
1	108	Structure	Wall foundation	Northeast-Southwest aligned wall consisting rough limestone blocks in clay mortar	0.9	0.1	RB
1	109	Layer	Made-ground	Dark yellow-brown silt-clay		0.25	
1	110	Layer	Made-ground	Light green-grey clay-silt		0.3	
1	111	Layer	Natural	Light grey-green clay		n/a	
2	200	Layer	Topsoil	Mid yellow-grey clay-silt with chalk inclusions		0.5	LC18-19
2	201	Layer	Road surface	Rough tarmac and gravel		0.05	
2	202	Layer	Road surface	Rough tarmac and gravel		0.05	
2	203	Layer	Road surface	Rough tarmac and gravel		0.1	
2	204	Layer	Road base	Limestone rubble in crushed limestone matrix		0.1	
2	205	Layer	Silting	Mid brown-grey clay-silt with pea-grit and limestone fragments		<0.05	
2	206	Layer	Road surface	Mid grey silt-clay with abundant pea-grit and gravel		0.1	
2	207	Layer	Road surface	Mid grey silt-clay with abundant pea-grit and gravel		0.1	
2	208	Layer	Buried subsoil	Dark orange-grey clay-silt with limestone fragments		0.15	
2	209	Layer	Natural	Grey silt clay		n/a	
2	210	Layer	Modern disturbance	Mid grey-brown silt clay			
3	300	Layer	Topsoil	Mid brown silt-clay		1.1	
3	301	Layer	Natural	Mid yellow-blue clay		n/a	

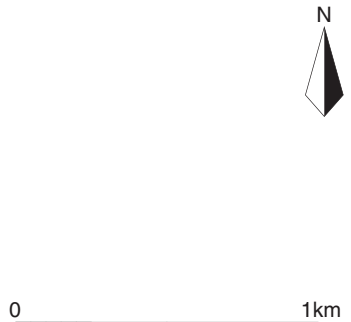
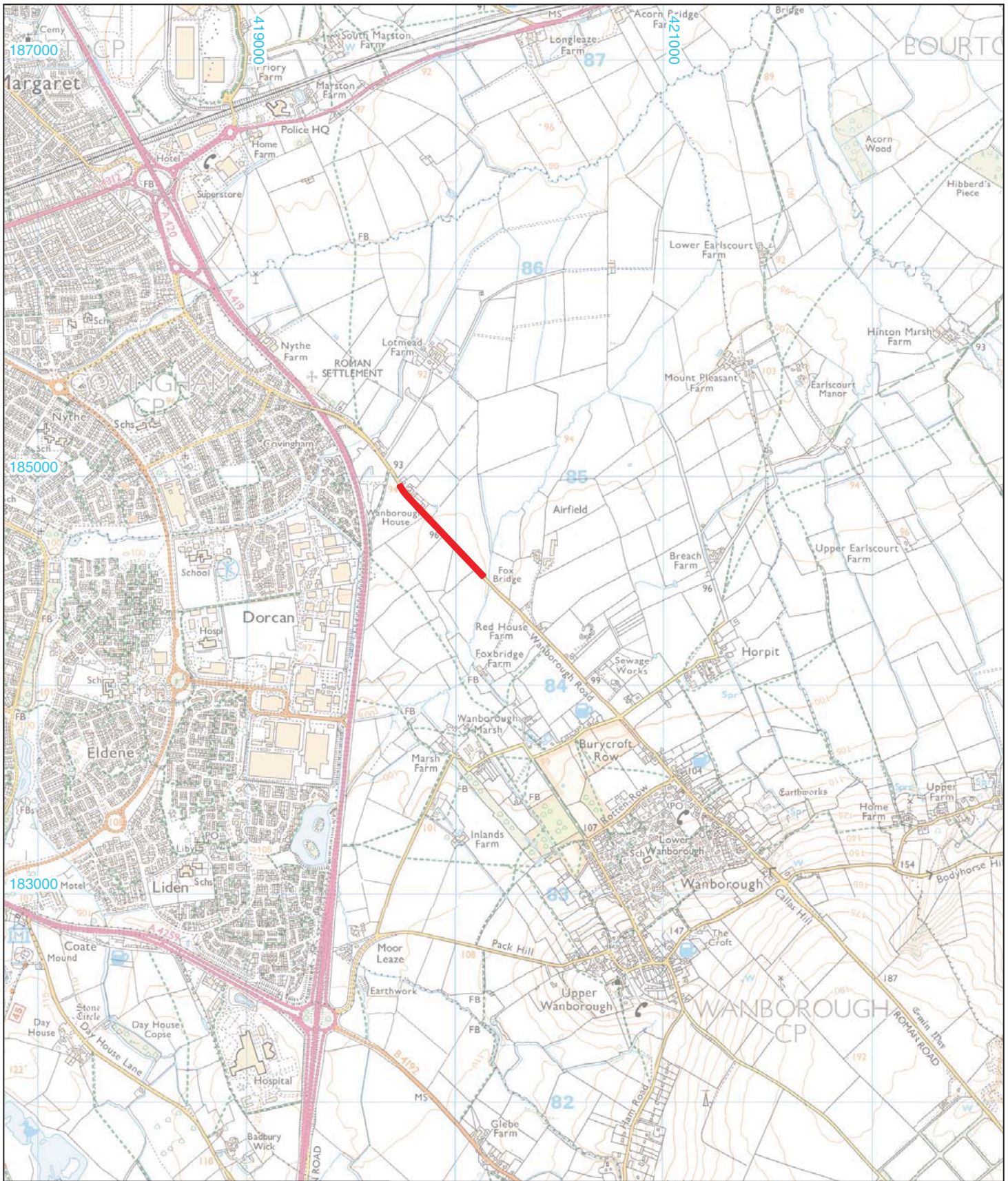
APPENDIX B: THE FINDS

Finds concordance

Context	Category	Description	Fabric Code	Count	Weight (g)	Spot-date
102	Roman pottery	Southeast Dorset Black-burnished ware	F54	3	32	C2-C4
	Roman pottery	Fine greyware	F53	3	13	
	Roman pottery	Black-surfaced greyware	F21	2	9	
108	Roman pottery	Sandy orange ware	F13	1	4	RB
200	Post-medieval/modern pottery	Transfer-printed refined whiteware	TRP	2	2	LC18-C19

APPENDIX C: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project Name	Gas Main Replacement on Wanborough Road, Covingham, Wiltshire	
Short description	<p>An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology during groundworks associated with the replacement of existing gas mains at Wanborough Road, Covingham, Wiltshire.</p> <p>A northeast-southwest aligned wall containing a sherd of Roman pottery and a series of Roman to early modern road surfaces were recorded.</p>	
Project dates	10 - 15 and 27 July - 1 August 2017	
Project type	Watching Brief	
Previous work	<p>CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2017 Gas Main Replacement Wanborough Road, Covingham, Wiltshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief</p> <p>CAT (Cotswold Archaeological Trust), 1999 Commonhead Roundabout Site, Swindon, Wiltshire: Archaeological Evaluation, CAT typescript report no. 991104</p> <p>Foundations Archaeology, 2002 Commonhead Roundabout, Park and Ride, Liddington, Borough of Swindon: Archaeological Evaluation, report no. 249</p>	
Future work	Unknown	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site Location	Wanborough Road, Covingham, Wiltshire	
Study area (M ² /ha)	c.620m linear	
Site co-ordinates	419612 185126 at the west and 421035 183572 to the south	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Brief originator		
Project Design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Ian Barnes	
Project Supervisor	Peter Busby, Daniel Sausins	
MONUMENT TYPE	Wall	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS	None	
PROJECT ARCHIVES		
	Intended final location of archive	Content
Physical	n/a	n/a
Paper	Swindon Museum and Art Gallery	Trench Sheets
Digital	Swindon Museum and Art Gallery	Digital photos
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
<p>CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2017 <i>Gas Main Replacement Wanborough Road, Covingham, Wiltshire: Archaeological Watching Brief</i>. CA typescript report 17471</p>		



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PROJECT TITLE
 Gas Main Replacement, Wanborough Road, Covingham, Swindon

FIGURE TITLE
 Site location plan

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- site boundary
- observed groundworks
- scheduled area



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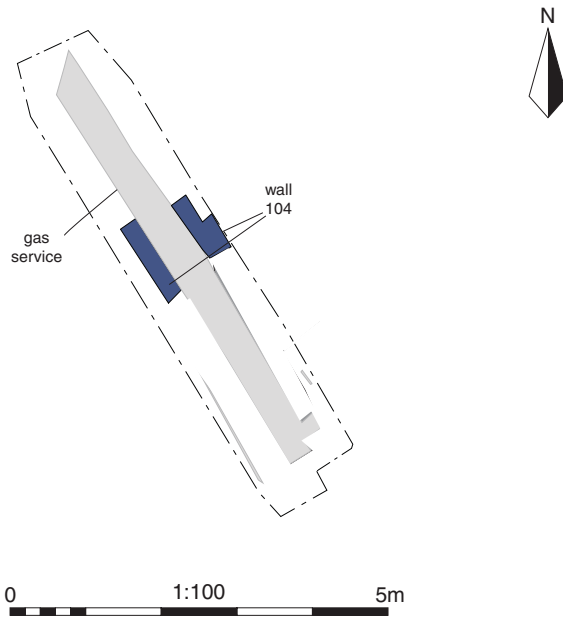
PROJECT TITLE
 Gas Main Replacement, Wanborough Road, Covingham, Swindon

FIGURE TITLE
 The site, showing location of groundworks





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Trench 1, plan



Wall 104 (scale 0.5m)

-  observed groundworks
-  archaeological feature
-  structural feature
-  modern



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PROJECT TITLE

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FIGURE TITLE

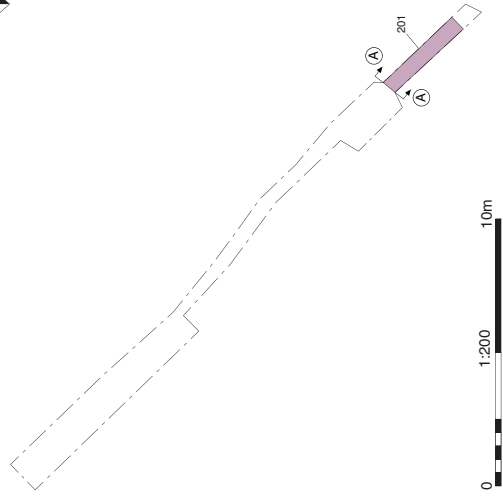
Trench 1: plan and photograph

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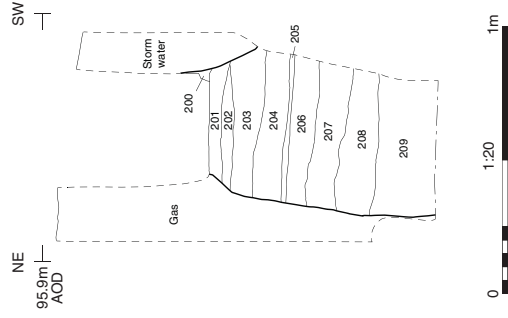
FIGURE NO.

3

Trench 2, plan



Section AA



 observed groundworks
 surface



Stone surface 201, looking south-east (scale 0.3m)



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FIGURE TITLE

Trench 2: plan, section and photograph

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