



Gateridge Farm, Croughton, Northamptonshire

Archaeological Observation, Investigation and Recording Report

May 2020

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Gateridge Farm, Croughton, Northamptonshire
***Archaeological Observation and Investigation and
Recording Report***

Written by Paul Murray.

With illustrations by Matt Bradley and Magda Wachnik.

Contents

Summary	vii
Acknowledgements	viii
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Scope of work	1
1.2 Location, topography and geology	1
1.3 Archaeological and historical background	1
2 WATCHING BRIEF AIMS AND METHODOLOGY	3
2.1 Aims	3
2.2 Methodology	3
3 RESULTS	4
3.1 Introduction and presentation of results	4
3.2 General soils and ground conditions	4
3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits	4
3.4 Feature 103	4
3.5 Finds and Environmental summary	4
4 DISCUSSION	5
4.1 Reliability of field investigation	5
4.2 Watching Brief objectives and results	5
4.3 Interpretation	5
APPENDIX A DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY	6
APPENDIX B BIBLIOGRAPHY	7
APPENDIX C SITE SUMMARY DETAILS	8

List of Figures

Fig.1	Site location
Fig.2	Area of Observation and Investigation
Fig.3	Plan of building foundations
Fig.4	Section 100

List of Plates

Plate 1	General shot of site
Plate 2	Feature 3

Summary

In April 2020 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Andrew Thompson to undertake a programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording at Gateridge Farm, Croughton, Northamptonshire. The works involved the archaeological monitoring of the excavation of foundation trenches for a new development.

The archaeological observations recorded a single feature suspected to be the result of root disturbance, although the feature maybe associated with land management, such as a boundary or drainage ditch.

Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Andrew Thompson for commissioning this project. Thanks, are also extended to Liz Mordue, Assistant Archaeological Advisor who monitored the work on behalf of Northamptonshire County Council.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Joakim Thomasson. The fieldwork was directed by Ashley Strutt. Digitizing was carried out by Matt Bradley and Magda Wachnik. Thanks, is extended to OA staff who prepared the archive under the management of Nicola Scott.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Andrew Thompson to undertake a programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording of the site of proposed residential development.
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken as a condition of Planning Permission (S/2019/0850/FUL). Although the Local Planning Authority did not set a brief for the work, discussions with Liz Mordue, Assistant Archaeological Advisor at Northamptonshire County Council (NCC), established the scope of work required. A written scheme of investigation was produced by OA detailing the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary to discharge the planning condition (OA 2020). This document outlines how OA implemented the specified requirements.
- 1.1.3 All work was undertaken in accordance with local and national planning policies and Chartered Institute for Archaeologists guidance (CIfA 2014).

1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The site lies in the southern part of Northamptonshire, c 3.5km south-west of Brackley in the northern outskirts of Croughton parish, at Gateridge Farm (Fig. 1). The area of the development is currently used as pasture.
- 1.2.2 The geology of the area is mapped as White Limestone Formation, which is a sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 166 to 168 million years ago in the Jurassic Period (BGS 2019).
- 1.2.3 The site is located on the crest of a north-west to south-east aligned ridge formation, at an elevation of c 145m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The primary information regarding the archaeological and historical background derives from the inventory of the historical monuments in Northamptonshire (RCHM 1982). The following summary provides a context for the proposed works.

Prehistoric period (500,000 BP – AD 43)

- 1.3.2 Several extensive clusters of cropmarks are situated on the north-west to south-east aligned ridge, the nearest immediately west of the site. These remains are interpreted as enclosures and settlements of probable Iron Age to Roman date.

Romano-British period (AD 43 – 410)

- 1.3.3 The remains of an extensive nucleated settlement and an associated villa are located c 800m north-west of the site (Allen *et al.* 2018; Historic England 2019a). The earliest dating evidence for Roman activity at the site indicates occupation from the late 2nd to the 4th century AD. The investigated evidence suggests that the settlement contained a combination of post-built and stone-founded structures and stock

enclosures. The villa comprised a masonry building measuring 30m by 8m, with at least five rooms. It included at least two mosaic pavements and a hypocaust. The villa may have continued in use until as late as the end of the 6th century AD. In the area surrounding the villa there is evidence for post-built structures, metallised surfaces and trackways amongst ditched enclosures.

1.3.4 Two late Roman pewter plates were discovered during “ploughing in Croughton” (without further information on the precise find spot). Additional settlements are located north-west of Croughton and just north of Evenley, suggesting intensive Roman activity in the vicinity of the site.

1.3.5 An east-west aligned potential Roman road is situated c 600m north of the site.

Early medieval period (AD 410 – 1065)

1.3.6 Although the Roman villa could have been in use until the 6th century, both the evidence from place names and the records in the Domesday Book suggest that the settlements focused in lower areas on the slope of the ridge. Croughton, Astwick, Evenley, Hinton in the Hedges and Brackley are the nearest to the site (Palmer and Powell-Smith 2019).

1.3.7 Croughton, c 2km south of the site, had a recorded population of 18 households in 1086 listed under 4 owners. Astwick, c 1.5km south-east of the site, had a recorded population of 9 households in 1086, putting it in the smallest 40% of settlements recorded in Domesday.

1.3.8 The place name Croughton is old English and means “farmstead or village on the fork of land” (Mills 2011). The prefix *Ast* derive from *As* and probably means “east” whereas the suffix *wick* means dwelling, dairy farm or village.

Later medieval period (1066 – 1550)

1.3.9 The village of Astwick was abandoned during the period 1450-1700 (Historic England 2019b). The remains comprise earthworks, fishponds and a moated site, surrounded by an area of ridge and furrow cultivation.

1.3.10 The parish church of All Saints in Croughton was constructed during the 12th century. In the village there are parts of a wayside cross, which stood on the road to Hinton in the Hedges.

Post-medieval period (1550-1900)

1.3.11 During the post-medieval period, Rowler Manor (c 950m west of the site) and Plomers Furze Farm (c 520m east of the site) were established. The site is depicted as farmland on the Ordnance Survey map from 1833.

Modern

1.3.12 RAF Croughton was established in 1938. Gateridge Farm was established after 1945.

2 WATCHING BRIEF AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The aims and objectives of the archaeological observation, investigation and recording were:
- i. To determine or confirm the general nature of any remains present;
 - ii. To determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of any remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence; and
 - iii. To make available the results of the investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 Observation, investigation, and recording was carried out during ground works with the potential to disturb archaeological remains. Specifically, the excavation of foundation trenches. Construction works associated with the access road only required the superficial removal of topsoil and as such were not undertaken to a depth sufficient to expose archaeological remains (Fig. 2).
- 2.2.2 The footprint of the proposed foundations was set out by the developer and excavated using a tracked 360° excavator fitted with a 0.8m wide bucket. The excavation works were carried out under constant archaeological supervision.
- 2.2.3 The bases and sections of the foundation trenches were sufficiently clean to establish the presence / absence of archaeological features. Exposed archaeological features were investigated by hand and recorded.
- 2.2.4 Unique context numbers were allocated to all archaeological features and deposits, and all context recording was carried out using OA proforma sheets. Finds were collected by context. Plans and section were hand drawn at an appropriate scale (1:10 or 1:20) and digital photographs were taken of all deposits, features and the works in general.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 The results of the watching brief are presented below and include a stratigraphic description of the trenches and archaeological remains. A full context inventory including dimensions and depths of all deposits can be found in Appendix A.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 The soil sequence was fairly uniform. The geology of limestone was overlain by a subsoil, which in turn was overlain by topsoil and turf.

3.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the watching brief were generally good, and the site remained dry throughout. Archaeological features, where present, were easy to identify against the underlying natural geology.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 A feature (103) was recorded at the base of a foundation trench towards the northern area of the site (Fig. 3).

3.4 Feature 103

3.4.1 The alignment of Feature 103 was difficult to define within the confines of the foundation trench (0.8m wide), although appeared to be broadly aligned north-west to south-east. The feature was 1m wide and 0.45m deep with a somewhat irregular profile (Fig. 4, Plate 2). Its north-eastern side was 45°-50° whilst its south-western side was 40°-45°, and it had a flattish base. It contained a single fill (104) comprising firm, reddish-brown silty clay with occasional small, sub-rounded limestone inclusions. The feature was recorded as representing either a ditch or tree-throw hole.

3.4.2 The feature was sealed by 0.21m of subsoil which was overlain by topsoil and turf.

3.5 Finds and Environmental summary

3.5.1 No artefacts were noted during the course of archaeological observations and investigations.

3.5.2 No archaeological deposits suitable for environmental sampling were observed during the course of the archaeological observations and investigations.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 The archaeological feature was only observed within a relatively narrow (0.8m) foundation trench, which limits the confidence of interpretation. The contrast between the archaeological feature and surrounding deposits was sharp and the feature easily defined. This suggests that if present other archaeological features would have also been well defined against the underlying geology.

4.2 Watching Brief objectives and results

4.2.1 All works with the potential to expose archaeological remains were monitored. Where present, the exposed features were fully investigated and recorded, however, the absence of artefactual evidence means it is not possible to establish a date for the single archaeological feature exposed.

4.3 Interpretation

4.3.1 The archaeological feature appeared linear within the narrow confines of the foundation trench, indicative of land management ditch. However, the feature was not noted at any other point within the foundation trenches, which would have been expected if the feature was linear (see Fig. 3). In addition, the sides of feature are somewhat irregular, and it contained a single homogenous fill, which perhaps is more suggestive of tree disturbance. Although not definitive, it should also be noted that there is a recorded boundary ditch on the historic mapping that would correspond with the feature.

4.3.2 The feature was sealed by a subsoil which was likely to represent a ploughed agricultural horizon.

4.3.3 Although a linear feature such as a drainage ditch cannot be ruled out, the feature is suspected to relate land clearance, such as hedge removal, possibly associated with the creation of Gateridge Farm after 1945.

APPENDIX A DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context Table						
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
100	Layer	-	0.3	Topsoil	-	-
101	Layer	-	0.21	Subsoil	-	-
102	Layer	-	-	Geology	-	-
103	Cut	1	0.45	Possible ditch or tree hole	-	-
104	Fill	1	0.45	Fill of 103		

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APPENDIX C

SITE SUMMARY DETAILS

Site name:	Gateridge Farm, Croughton, Northamptonshire
Site code:	CRGAFA19
Grid Reference	SP 55778 35141
Type:	Watching Brief
Date and duration:	15/04/2020. One day
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, and will be offered to Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre in due course, under the following HER No: ENN109707
Summary of Results:	Archaeological monitoring of foundation trenches exposed a single feature interpreted as tree disturbance, however, the possibility the feature is the remains of a land management ditch cannot be ruled out.



X:\c\Croughton_Gateridge-Farm_WB\10\Geomatics\03 GIS Projects\CRGFAFWB_figure_2019-11-27.mxd 'matt.bradley' 27/11/2019

Figure 1: Site location

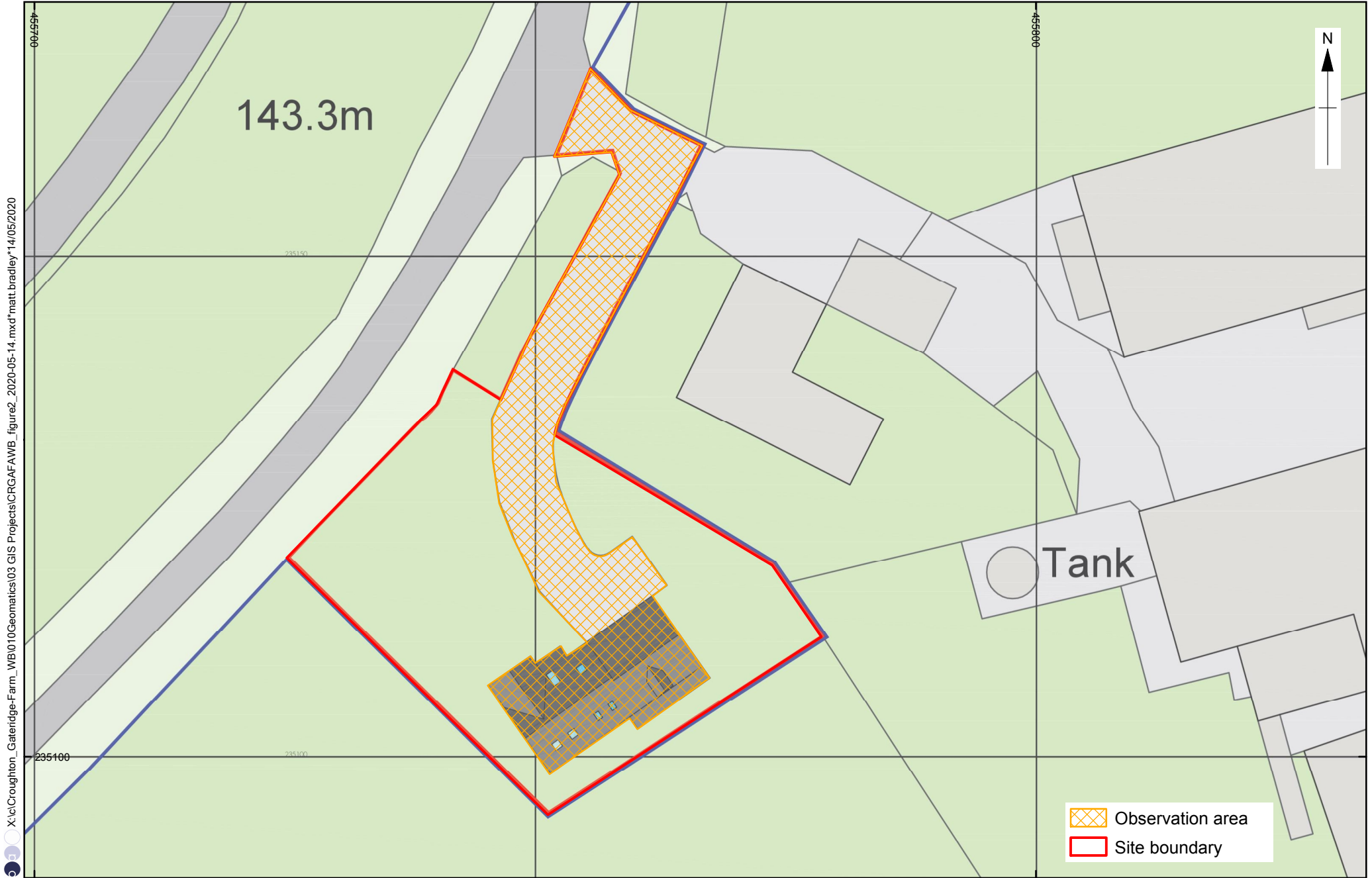
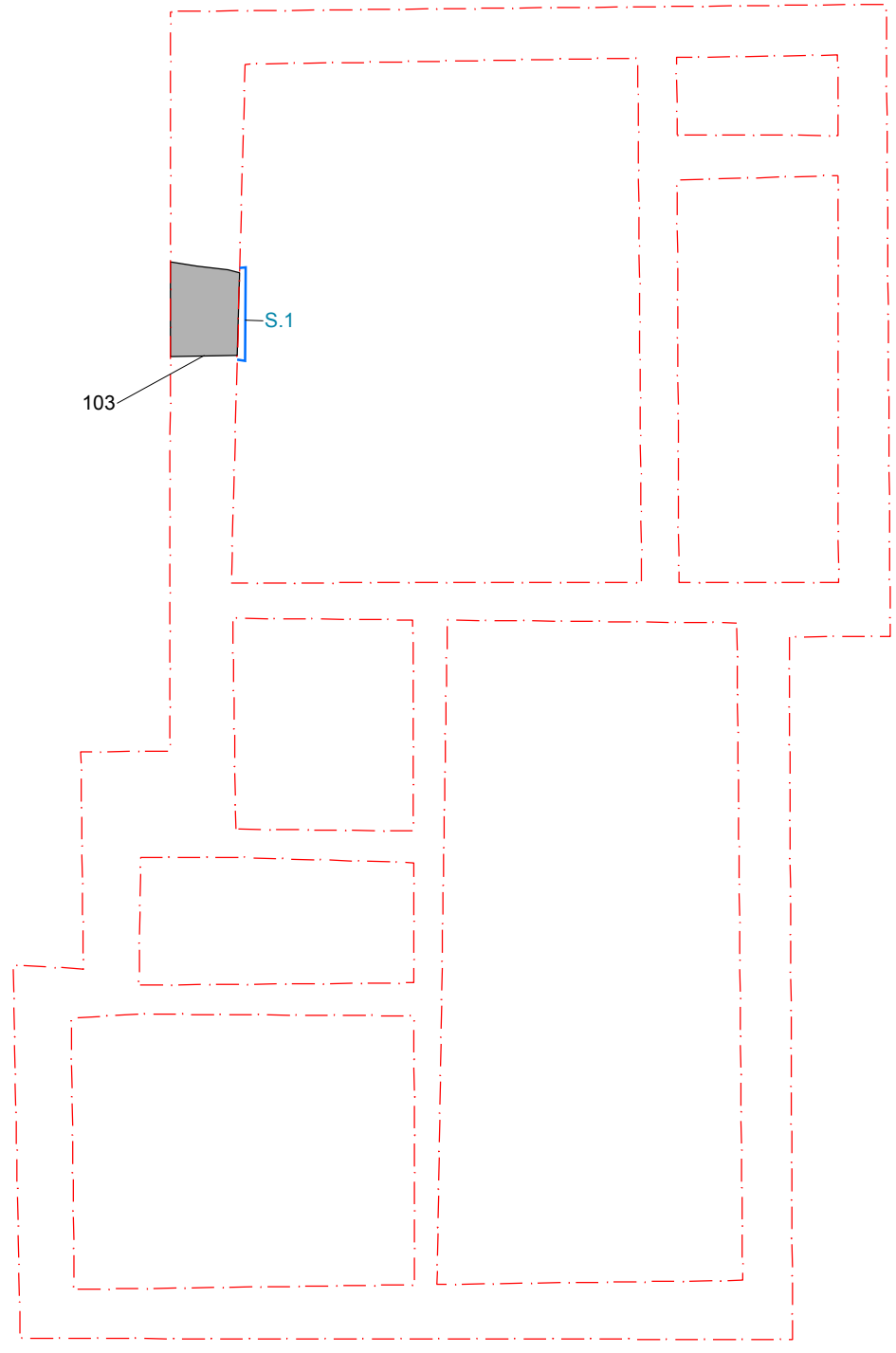
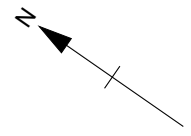


Figure 2: Area of observation and investigation



- Section
- feature
- - - foundations

0 1:100 @ A4 5 m

Figure 3: Plan of building foundations

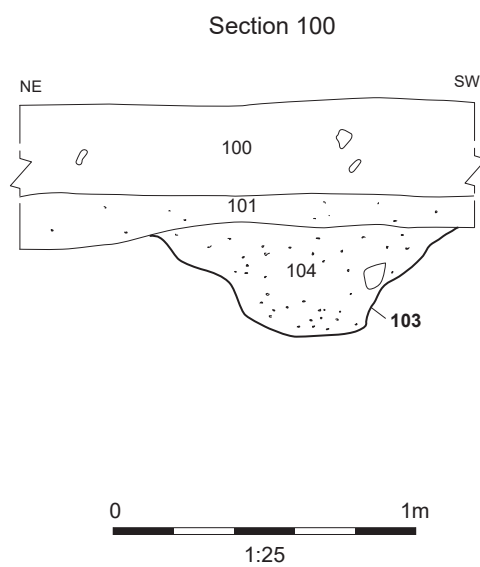


Figure 4: Section 100



Plate 1: General shot of groundworks



Plate 2: Ditch 3



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