

Dartford, Kent
Dartford Fastrack Scheme
Sections E and F



**Archaeological Evaluation
and Watching Brief Report**



Oxford Archaeology

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Dartford, Kent. Dartford Fastrack Sections E and F

NGR TQ 5500 7330 and 5700 7330

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AND WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological evaluation from the 6th to 10th September 2004 at 'Section E' of the proposed Fastrack route in Dartford, Kent (NGR TQ 5500 7330). This work was undertaken at the grounds of Darenth Valley Hospital, on behalf of Kent County Council (KCC). The evaluation comprised the excavation of four trenches located along this stretch of the Fastrack land take. No archaeological remains were revealed other than several struck flint flakes and a possible flint scraper retrieved from the subsoil.

Further work was undertaken in 'Section F', the stretch of the route that runs from Darenth Valley Hospital, to Bluewater (NGR 5700 7330). This comprised a watching brief on a 'de-stumping exercise' carried out by a team of ecologists from BAPTIE and a walkover survey carried out in order to determine the presence and nature of a reported hollow-way to the north of Roman Watling Street. The watching brief results have confirmed that there was no archaeological potential in the area of 'de-stumping'. The walkover survey has revealed the existence of linear earthworks extending parallel to Watling Street, but their date could not be determined.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In September 2004, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological evaluation within a stretch of 'Section E' of the new Fastrack Public Transport route in Dartford, Kent (NGR 5500 7330). Other parts of this section had been evaluated previously for a different project. In addition, a watching brief was undertaken during tree-stump clearance in 'Section F' of the route, led by the BAPTIE ecologists. A rapid walkover survey of the area was also made to determine the presence or absence of a possible ancient hollow-way (Fig. 1).
- 1.1.2 The desk-based assessment produced by Kent County Council (KCC) established that the line of the Fastrack route has archaeological potential, as it is in close proximity to Roman Watling Street. 'Section E' of the Fastrack route runs parallel to and *c* 60 m south of the line of Watling Street, within the grounds of Darenth Valley Hospital. The area of Section E evaluated was *c* 170 m long by *c* 7 m wide forming a corridor running between the Hospital car parks to the west and the junction of Watling Street, with Gore Road to the east (Fig. 2). Four 20 m long x 1.8 m wide trenches were excavated and the proposed trench positions were modified slightly to take account of the topology of the area and the presence of underground services.
- 1.1.3 'Section F' of the Fastrack route (Darenth Valley Hospital [Watling Street] to Bluewater) also runs parallel to Watling Street, but on its north side, along the edge of old Stone Castle Quarry (Bluewater - NGR 5700 7330).
- 1.1.4 Other reports have been prepared by OA for Sections B (A & D) and a Geo-archaeological Report has been prepared for Section C of the Fastrack Scheme (Oa 2006a and OA 2006b).

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The topography of the evaluated area in 'Section E' has been heavily influenced by the landscaping that has taken place in relation to the construction of the hospital car parks and by a drainage lagoon situated immediately to the south of the site. The general topography of the area is a slight slope from south to north, towards Watling Street. A more pronounced break of slope exists along the southern edge of the Fastrack route in the form of a raised and modified earthwork. This appears to be housing a deep drainage system, probably related to the artificial lagoon.
- 1.2.2 The underlying geology of the site is a thin sporadic sheet of brickearth overlying a chalk solifluction deposit. The depth of the trenches did not reveal the underlying chalk bedrock, as shown by the previous evaluation by Canterbury Archaeological Trust (CAT) prior to the construction of the hospital car parks.
- 1.2.3 Chalk bedrock was present below the chalk solifluction in the 'de-stumping' area in 'Section F'. The topography of this part of the Fastrack route is characterised by a steep slope descending from the existing pedestrian route along A296 (Watling Street) into the Stone Castle Quarry (Bluewater).
- 1.2.4 The remaining part of 'Section F' to the east has been subjected to heavy modification during the quarry works. Ground levels vary in relation to the surface of the modern road so that from the 'de-stumping' area to the west, where it steeply slopes northwards into the quarry, it suddenly rises to create a sheer southern face towards the road along the middle part of section F. Further east the ground slopes down in relation to the road again and apart from the east-west orientated earthworks, the general topography continues to slope eastwards.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background to the area has been the subject of a separate desk-based assessment study by Kent County Council (KCC 2004). The following is a summarised version of the background information provided within this document, which should be read in conjunction with this report.
- 1.3.2 The archaeological potential of both 'Section E' and 'Section F' of the Fastrack route is primarily related to the proximity of Roman Watling Street, which runs parallel to the north and to the south of each Section respectively.
- 1.3.3 The central and eastern parts of 'Section E' were subject to archaeological evaluation prior to the construction of the hospital and its surrounds. No archaeological remains were reported other than the features associated with the 19th century asylum that used to occupy the site (Canterbury Archaeological Trust, 1997).
- 1.3.4 'Section F' is effectively a margin left between the quarry (Bluewater) and Watling Street to the south. The area has been impacted by the quarry works and consequent construction and landscaping. There were several early and later prehistoric sites found within Stone Castle Quarry area and Roman features were also reported. The

early maps show Watling Street in a slight cutting, which could correspond to a reported hollow-way along this section of the Fastrack route.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Evaluation Aims

- 2.1.1 The aims of the evaluation were: to establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the proposal area and to determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present.
- 2.1.2 To establish the eco-factual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features and to establish the need for a mitigation strategy.
- 2.1.3 To define any relevant research priorities if additional archaeological investigation proves necessary and to make available the results of the investigation.

2.2 Scope of trenching, 'Section E'

- 2.2.1 Four evaluation trenches were excavated along the line of the Fastrack route in 'Section E' (Fig. 3). Trench 1, an east-northeast to west-southwest orientated trench, measured 20 m long by 1.8 m wide and was the western-most trench. Trench 2, an east-northeast to west-southwest orientated trench, measured 20 m long by 1.8 m wide.
- 2.2.2 The trench was 'dog-legged' in the middle due to a high voltage electricity cable being detected along its course at the eastern half. The service was possible to detect only after the removal of some 0.6 m of overburden. The west half of the trench was subsequently set about 1 m to the south, to avoid the line of the electrical service and machined to the top of natural. The eastern half of the trench was left at a depth of 0.6 m due to health and safety concerns.
- 2.2.3 Trench 3, an east-northeast to west-southwest orientated trench, measured 20 m long by 1.8 m wide. The trench was excavated to the top of natural only at the east end to a depth of 1.3 m. The rest of the trench was only excavated to a depth of 0.5 m due to a high voltage cable. It proved not possible to move the trench to the south or north due to the site topography and the presence of substantial drainage structure.
- 2.2.4 Trench 4, an east-northeast to west-southwest orientated trench, measured 20 m long by 1.8 m wide and it is the easternmost trench of four. The trench was machine excavated to the top of natural at 1.1 m.

2.3 Watching brief, 'Section F'

- 2.3.1 The watching brief in 'Section F' was carried out in relation to the 'de-stumping' ecological exercise. The operation took place on a very steep slope from which several tree stumps were removed with a mechanical excavator using a toothed

bucket. The trees had been previously pollarded and the stumps left in accordance with the seasonal behaviour of dormice, which are protected species.

2.4 Fieldwork methods and recording

2.4.1 The whole of the evaluation area was checked for any services running across the site before the commencement of the excavation work. This, however, proved to be insufficient due to the thickness of the overburden found above the services on the site. Therefore, a constant service check was maintained using a Cable Avoidance Tool (CAT scanner) during the excavation of the trenches: two previously unknown high voltage electricity cables were found.

2.4.2 The trenches were excavated by a mechanical excavator under constant archaeological supervision, supplemented by hand cleaning of sample sections, which were recorded.

2.4.3 All the excavated trenches were cleaned by hand, planned and relevant sample sections recorded. The plans of trenches were drawn at 1:100, sections at 1:20 scale. All trenches and sample sections were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

2.4.4 The Watching Brief in 'Section F' was carried out in accordance with standard OA practise.

2.5 Finds and palaeoenvironmental

2.5.1 Finds, where present, were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation and bagged by context.

2.5.2 There were no deposits suitable for environmental sampling identified during the evaluation works.

3 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

3.1 Evaluation trenches

Trench 1

3.1.1 Trench 1 (Fig. 4) was situated *c* 50 m east of Gore Road and measured 20 m long by 1.8 m wide. The trench was machined to the top of natural at a depth of 1.15 m. The stratigraphic sequence consisted of recent landscaping topsoil (100) overlying three different layers of modern built up ground (101, 102 and 103). These deposits comprised re-deposited chalk rubble, flint inclusions and modern brick, concrete and other structural waste. The layers were compacted and were probably mechanically rolled as part of landscaping works.

3.1.2 The upper layer of natural was sporadically occurring red/brown brickearth (104), a thin layer with a maximum thickness of 0.15 m. This contained flint nodules and

some 'reworked' chalk rubble, both presumably deriving from the underlying chalk. Underlying the brickearth was the chalk solifluction natural (105) in a light brown sandy matrix with flint inclusions. The depth of the deposit was not investigated.

Trench 2

- 3.1.3 Trench 2 (Fig. 5) was situated 16 m east of Trench 1 on the same east-north-east/west-south-west orientation. The trench measured 20 m long by 1.8 m wide and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.2 m. The western half of the trench was excavated to the top of natural and did not contain any archaeological remains. Only a modern machine-cut feature was revealed in plan along the south baulk of the trench. At the top of the stratigraphic sequence, landscaping topsoil (200) overlay two modern built up layers (201 and 202), the upper of which (201) comprised re-deposited chalk rubble, while the lower (202) is a thin dark brown sandy silt with flint and brick inclusions.
- 3.1.4 The upper natural layer was a dark red/brown brickearth (203), which covered the entire eastern (and fully excavated) half of the trench. The underlying chalk solifluction deposit (204) was seen only in one localised instance, where the sample section was drawn.

Trench 3

- 3.1.5 Trench 3 (Fig. 6) was situated 11 m east of Trench 2 on same east-north-east/west-south-west orientation. It measured 20 m long by 1.8 m wide and was 1.3 m deep. It was only possible to excavate the eastern part of the trench to the natural geology, due to a high voltage electricity cable. There were no archaeological remains present.
- 3.1.6 At the top of the stratigraphic sequence was a landscaped topsoil (300) overlying four layers of modern built up ground (301, 302, 303 and 304). Layer 301 was 0.3 m thick and comprised chalk rubble, modern bricks, concrete and metal. Layer 302 was a mixed rubble deposit in a brown silt matrix. Layer 303 was a very compact chalk rubble layer, probably mechanically compacted during landscaping works and 304 resembled a possible former topsoil but was undated.
- 3.1.7 Underlying the built up ground deposits was a light orange/brown sandy silt (305), which appeared cleaner but contained occasional fragments of brick/tile. It is most likely that this layer represents a remnant of the subsoil, which has survived the landscaping works and it has not been truncated. There were no finds recovered from this deposit in Trench 3. The natural in Trench 3 was chalk solifluction material (306). Brickearth, which occurs sporadically in other trenches, was not observed here.

Trench 4

- 3.1.8 Trench 4 (Fig. 7) was situated some 7 m east of Trench 3 on the same orientation and was the most easterly trench. It measured 20 m long by 1.8 m wide and it was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.1 m. The excavation stopped at the top of natural and there were no archaeological remains present apart from five residual struck flint flakes and a possible scraper found in subsoil layer 404 (see finds section below). The

top of the stratigraphic sequence was represented by recent landscaping topsoil (400) overlying several modern layers of built up ground (401, 402, 403 and 407). These layers were similar to those seen in Trenches 1-3. Underlying the made ground deposits were subsoil layers 404 and 405, which probably represent the same deposit, (404) being a slightly darker interface.

- 3.1.9 This subsoil deposit contained the flint artefacts but they must be residual as the layer also contained modern brick fragments. There is no evidence that the modern inclusions could have been pressed in from the overlying contexts as they have been observed at the very base of the lower part of the subsoil (405). The natural geology in Trench 4 is in accordance with the rest of the trenches. The dark red/brown brickearth (406) overlies soliflucted chalk (408).

3.2 **Watching Brief on de-stumping: `Section F`**

- 3.2.1 A small sample section (*c* 1 m) was cleaned and photographed (Fig. 8; Plate 1) at the very top of the slope and it revealed natural geology directly under a thin layer of topsoil. A layer of soliflucted chalk 0.2 m thick separated the topsoil from the chalk bedrock. No archaeological deposits were observed.

3.3 **Walkover Survey results: `Section F`**

- 3.3.1 Further eastwards within the area of `Section F`, a rapid walkover survey was carried out with an aim of confirming the presence/absence of a reported hollow-way or sunken lane (Fig. 8; Plates 2, 3, 4). This part of `Section F` survives as a marginal plateau to the south bordered by the A296 (Watling Street) and to the north it drops suddenly into the Stone Castle Quarry in form of the cliffs facing Bluewater.
- 3.3.2 The area starting immediately to the east from the area of tree-stump clearance is occupied by a lane, which is indeed cut into the ground, but it appears to be distinctively modern with fairly neat tree arrangement on both banks, a tarmac surface and evidently respecting the access points at either end. It is beyond its eastern terminal that the vegetation changes into a thick shrub, but the presence of two parallel earthworks can just be seen.
- 3.3.3 The southern `bank` is at the same time a slope off from the modern line of Watling Street and as such it may be direct product of the road construction and landscaping. At its base it appears to have a run off ditch. Several metres to the north, along the very edge of the quarry there is a parallel bank, which is a proper earthwork in its own right. It is heavily overgrown with shrub and small trees and it becomes higher as the ground between the `banks` slopes eastwards.

3.4 **Finds**

Flint by Rebecca Daveaney, OA

- 3.4.1 A total of six pieces of flint were recovered from context 404 of the evaluation. The five flakes, one of which is broken, are consistent with a broad later Neolithic to

Bronze Age flint industry. The end scraper is quite crude, with direct retouch on the distal end and is also consistent with the suggested date.

- 3.4.2 All pieces exhibit light to medium cortication, slight iron staining and post-depositional damage, which suggests a degree of movement or exposure. Where dorsal cortex remains, it is characteristic of gravel derived flint, and is likely to be from a local source. No further work is required.

Table: Summary of worked flint by context

Context	404
Flake	5
End scraper	1
Total	6

4 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 4.1.1 The integrity of the stratigraphic evidence encountered during the evaluation in 'Section E' is believed to be good, even though it was not possible to examine the full extent of Trenches 2 and 3 due to on site restrictions and health and safety considerations. All trenches were excavated to the top of natural, Trenches 1 and 4 in full, while Trenches 2 and 3 to c 50% of their full size. The restrictions posed by the underground services have meant that the eastern half of Trench 2 and the western half of Trench 3 could not be safely excavated to the required depth.
- 4.1.2 The walkover survey in 'Section F' has confirmed the presence of earthworks, though there is a doubt as to whether these are of significant antiquity.

4.2 Overall interpretation

'Section E'

- 4.2.1 No archaeological features were identified in the evaluation trenches. The stratigraphic sequence in all trenches was fairly uniform, with a recent landscaping topsoil overlying several layers of made ground, most of which can be traced through the trenches and are dominated by re-deposited chalk rubble and modern structural and construction waste.
- 4.2.2 The thickness of these deposits varies by trench due to their locations along the artificial ridge running along the southern sides of trenches 2, 3 and 4. It is apparent that these deposits have been used for the landscaping of the area, including the ridge.
- 4.2.3 The only significant spatial variation in regard to the extent of the deposits present on the site is related to the subsoil horizon, which was identified in Trench 4 and the eastern half of Trench 3, yet completely absent in Trenches 1 and 2. It is not clear

whether this represents its natural extent or whether there has been a higher degree of truncation at the western part of the site.

- 4.2.4 At the same time it is not certain whether there has been any truncation on the site at all prior to the landscaping. Considering that the subsoil in Trench 4 is the only deposit on the site to have produced archaeological material, albeit residual flint-work, this could have implications in regard to the archaeological potential of the site. The presence of worked flint in the area might indicate that there is a potential for prehistoric occupation in the vicinity, even though its character and density remain unknown.
- 4.2.5 The top geology across the site is uniform. A relatively thin sheet of brickearth occurs sporadically on top of soliflucted chalk. These two natural deposits formed the base of the trenches and any lower geological formations have not been investigated.
- 4.2.6 It is known from previous investigations (CAT,1997) in the immediate vicinity that these deposits are underlain by chalk bedrock, which is the sequence also noted during the watching brief in Section F.

'Section F': de-stumping and the walkover

- 4.2.7 The impact of this exercise on the underlying deposits was minimal and the machine work has revealed that the top make up of the slope being de-stumped is largely recently made ground, probably planted on in the past for stability.
- 4.2.8 The general topography of this area of 'Section F' does resemble a hollow-way, running parallel to Watling Street on its north side. However, the formation of this topography is not completely clear.
- 4.2.9 Its southern side could simply reflect the landscaping related to the construction of the modern road, while the northern bank seems somewhat suspicious, considering that it creates a perfect barrier right on the quarry's precarious edge.
- 4.2.10 The fact that early maps show Watling Street in a cutting certainly raises the possibility that its original features might have survived, but the antiquity and more precise dating of the earthworks visible on the site could only be tested by more detailed investigation, perhaps involving trenched evaluation.
- 4.2.11 The problem with this approach is the site location, with its sudden drop towards Bluewater, as well as the density of the vegetation, which would both make the fieldwork difficult and potentially dangerous.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench	Ctx No	Type	Width (m)	Thick. (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
1	100	layer	1.80	0.35	topsoil		
	101	layer	1.80	0.12	made ground		
	102	layer	1.80	0.45	made ground		
	103	layer	1.80	0.15	made ground		
	104	layer	1.80	0.15	brickearth natural		
2	105	layer	1.80	?	chalk solifluction natural		
	200	layer	1.80	0.12	topsoil		
	201	layer	1.80	0.40	made ground		
	202	layer	1.80	0.05	made ground		
	203	layer	1.80	0.38	brickearth natural		
3	204	layer	1.80	?	chalk solifluction natural		
	300	layer	1.80	0.20	topsoil		
	301	layer	1.80	0.30	made ground		
	302	layer	1.80	0.20	made ground		
	303	layer	1.80	0.20	made ground		
	304	layer	1.80	0.15	made ground		
	305	layer	1.80	0.20	subsoil		
4	306	layer	1.80	?	chalk solifluction natural		
	400	layer	1.80	0.16	topsoil		
	401	layer	1.80	0.13	made ground		
	402	layer	1.80	0.10	made ground		
	403	layer	1.80	0.15	made ground		
	404	layer	1.80	0.15	subsoil	+	
	405	layer	1.80	0.22	subsoil		
	406	layer	1.80	0.16	brickearth natural		
	407	layer	1.80	0.16	made ground		
	408	layer	1.80	?	chalk solifluction natural		

APPENDIX 2 REFERENCES

Canterbury Archaeological Trust 1997 *Darenth Park Hospital - Archaeological Evaluation* (KCC/1997/64).

Kent County Council 2004 *Specification for an Archaeological/Geo-archaeological Evaluation & Walkover Survey associated with the Fastrack Scheme, Phase 1, Dartford to Bluewater, Dartford Kent.*

OA 1992 *Fieldwork Manual (Ed. D Wilkinson, first edition, August 1992)*

OA 2006a *Dartford Kent. Dartford Fastrack Scheme. Section C. Geo-archaeological Report on test pits and bulk gravel extraction.*

OA 2006b *Dartford Kent. Dartford Fastrack Scheme. Sections B (and Sections A and D) Archaeological Watching Brief Report.*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Dartford, Kent. Dartford Fastrack: Sections E and F

Site code: DAFT EV

NGR: TQ 5500 7330 and 5700 7330

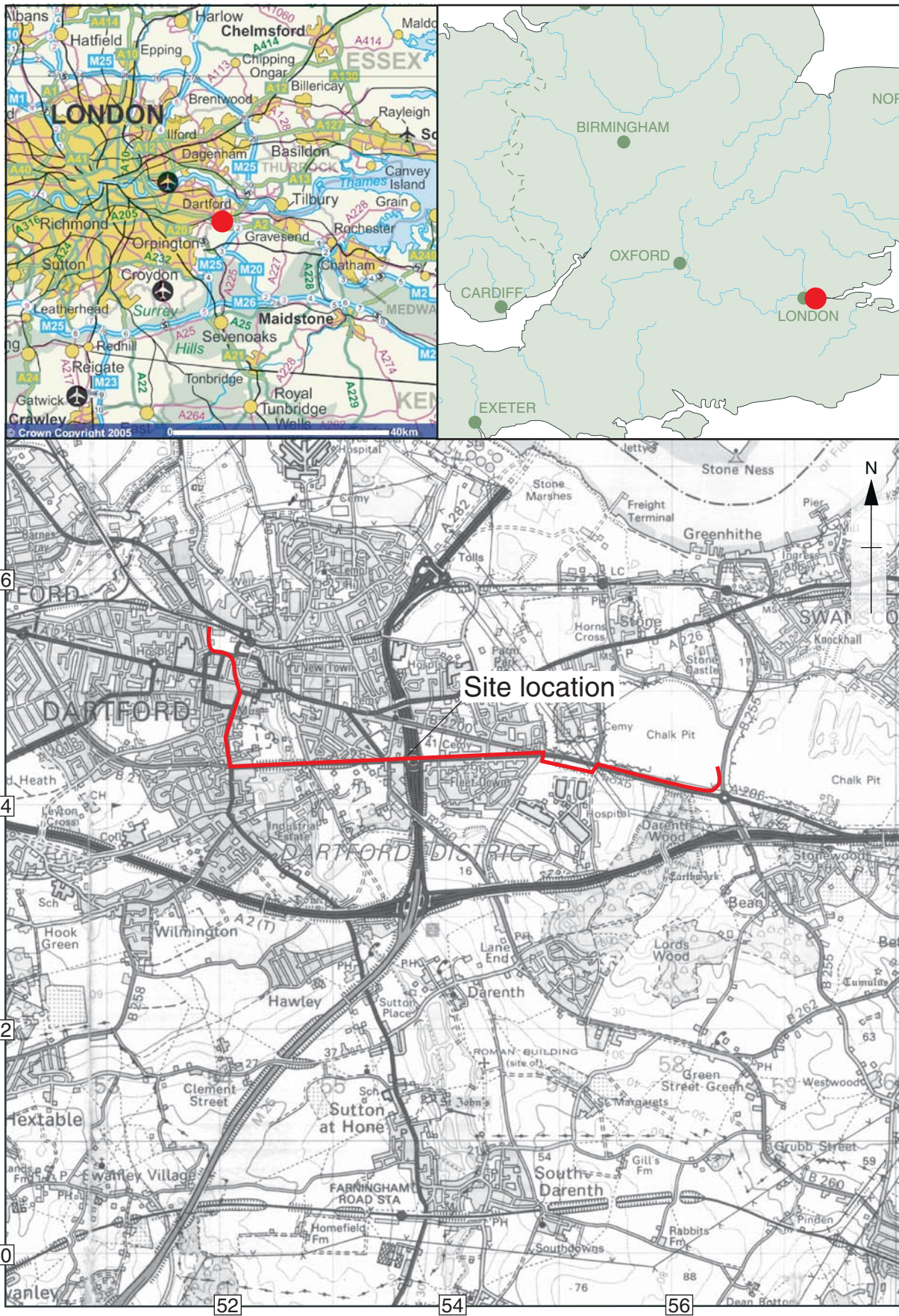
Type of evaluation: 4 trenches, watching brief and walkover exercise in Sections E and F

Date and duration of project: September 2004, 1 week

Area of site: 1 ha.

Summary of results: The evaluation comprised the excavation of four trenches located along this stretch of the Fastrack land take. No archaeological remains were revealed other than several struck flint flakes and a possible scraper retrieved from the subsoil and therefore residual. Further work was undertaken in 'Section F', the stretch of the route that runs from Darenth Valley Hospital, to Bluewater (NGR 5700 7330). This comprised a watching brief on a 'de-stumping exercise' carried out by a team of ecologists from BABTIE and a walkover survey carried out in order to determine the presence and nature of a reported hollow-way north of Roman Watling Street. The watching brief results have confirmed that there was no archaeological potential in the area of 'de-stumping'. The walkover survey has revealed the existence of linear earthworks extending parallel to Watling Street, but their date could not be determined.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with an appropriate Museum Service in due course, under the following accession code: DAFT EV



Scale 1:50,000

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Figure 1: Site location

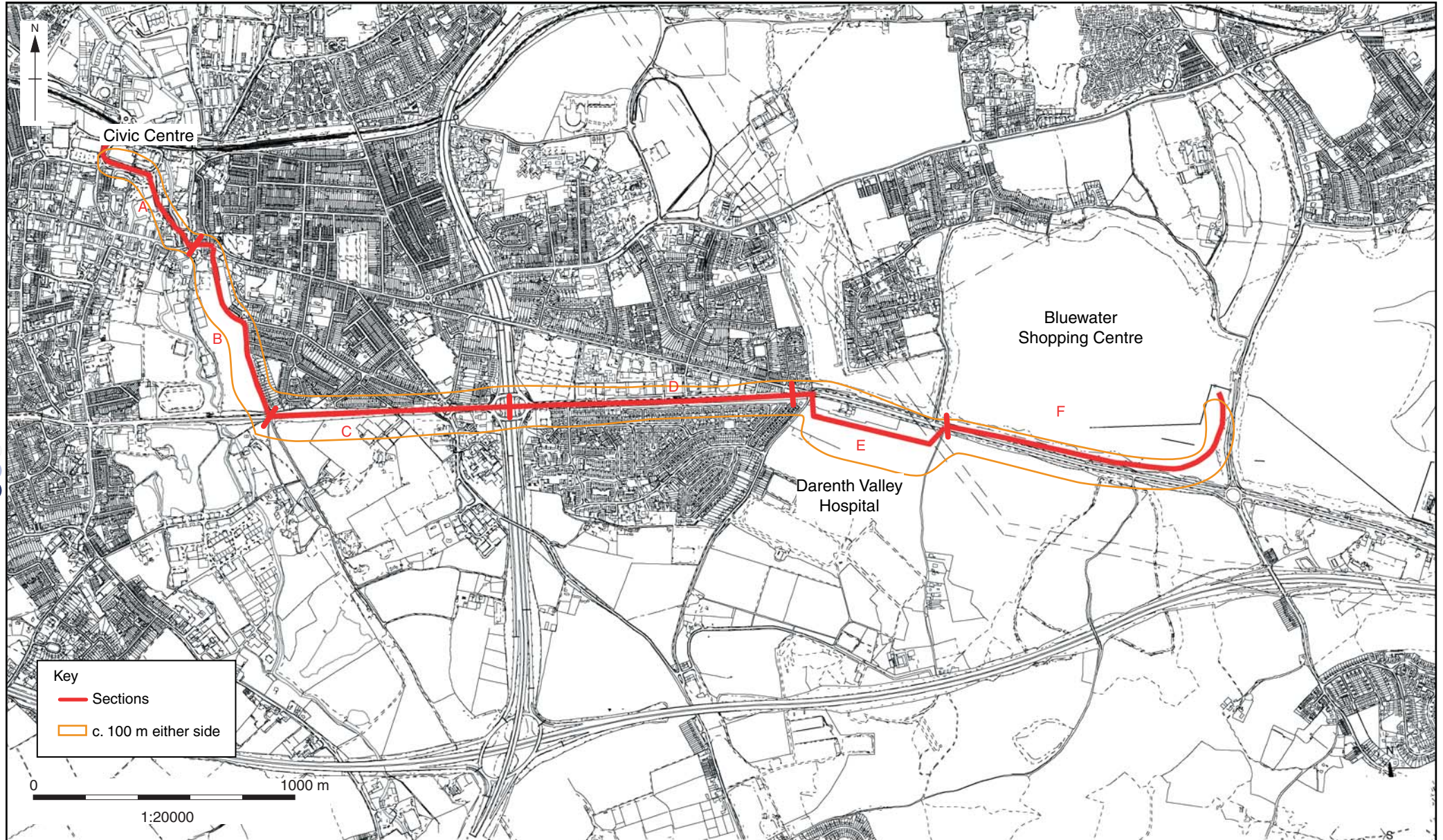


Figure 2: Route of Fastrack scheme, A to F

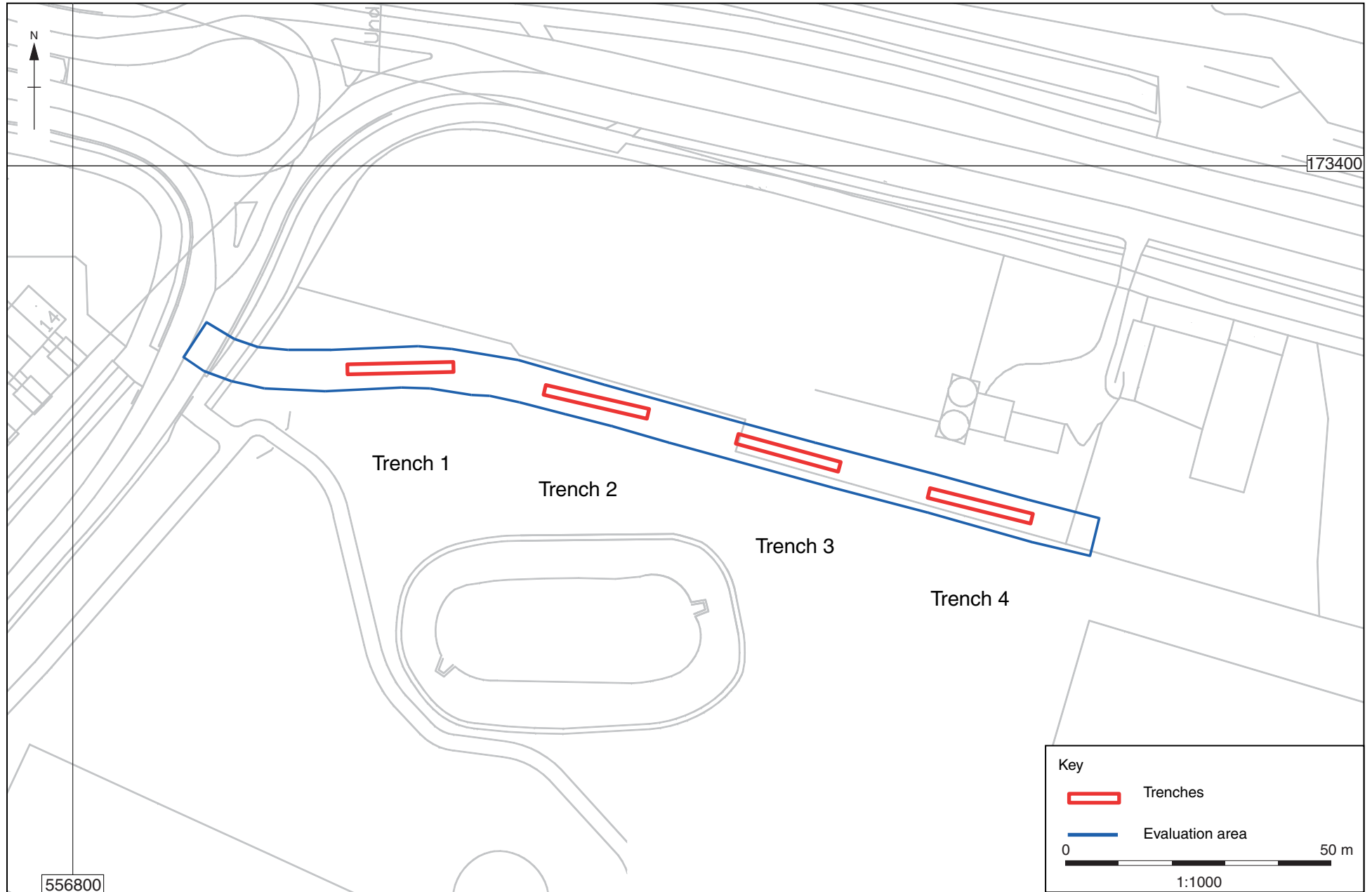


Figure 3: Trench locations

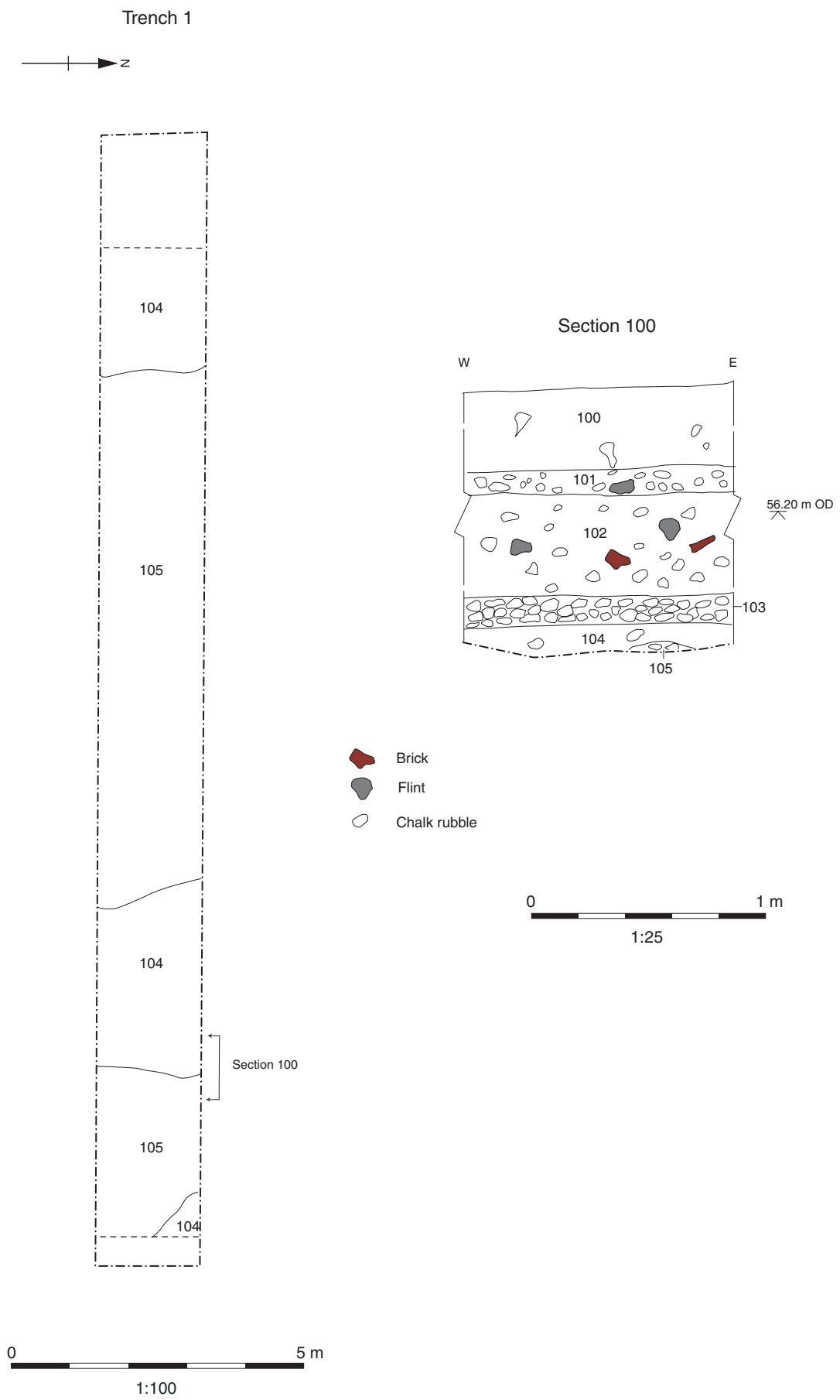


Figure 4: Trench 1, plan and section

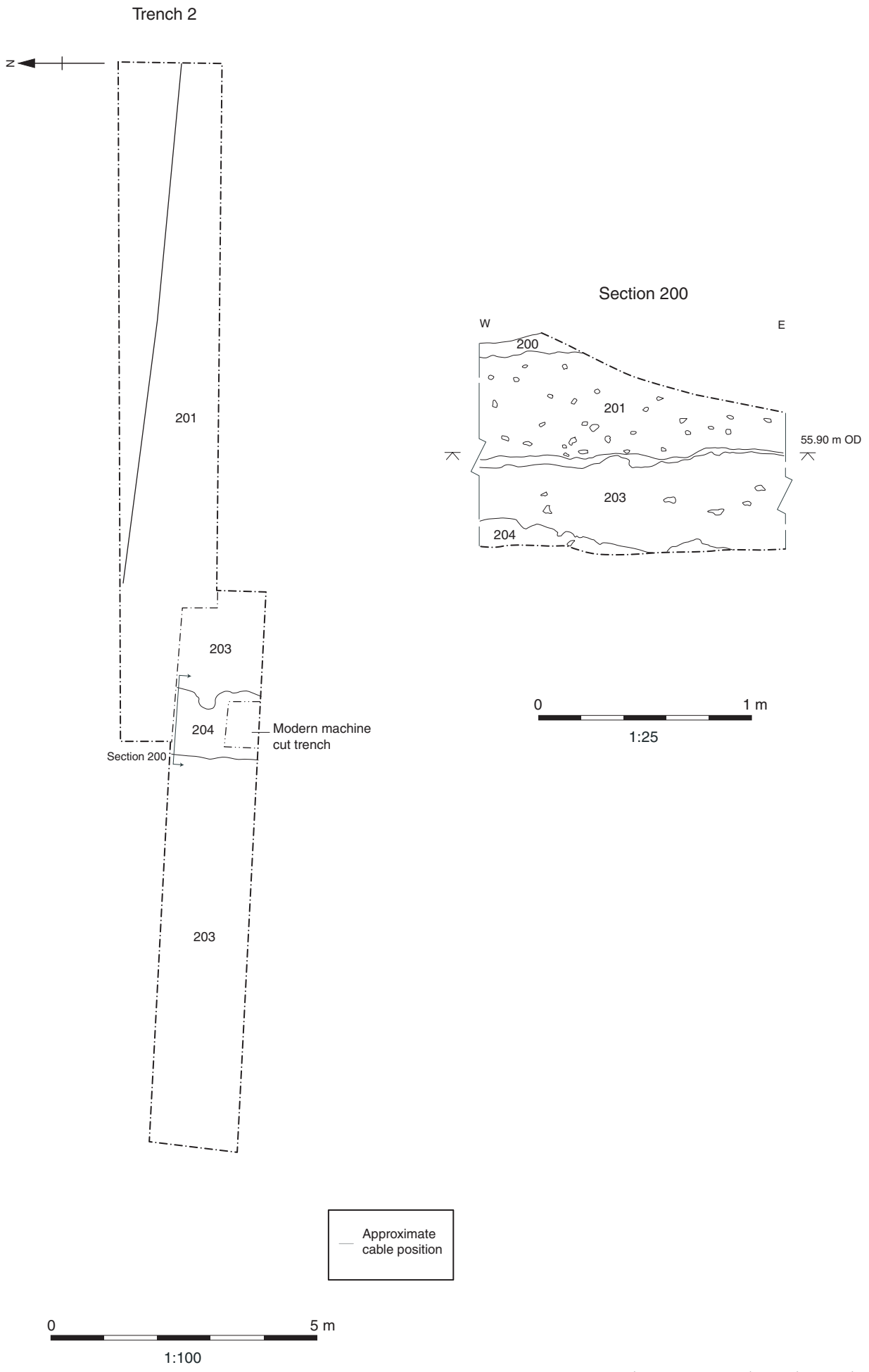


Figure 5: Trench 2, plan and section

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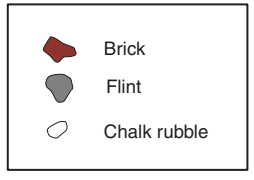
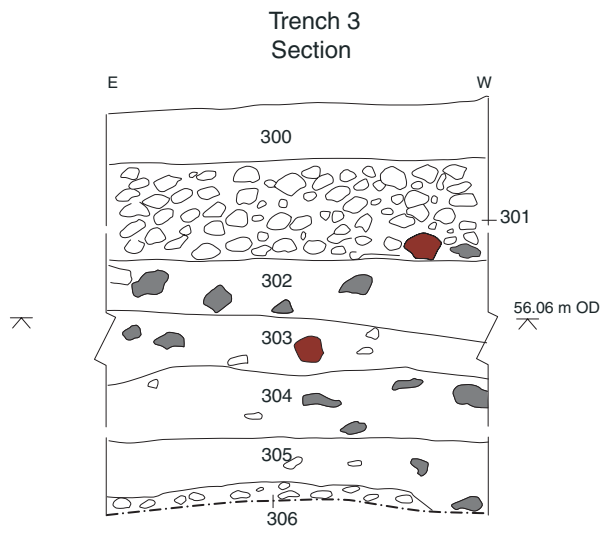
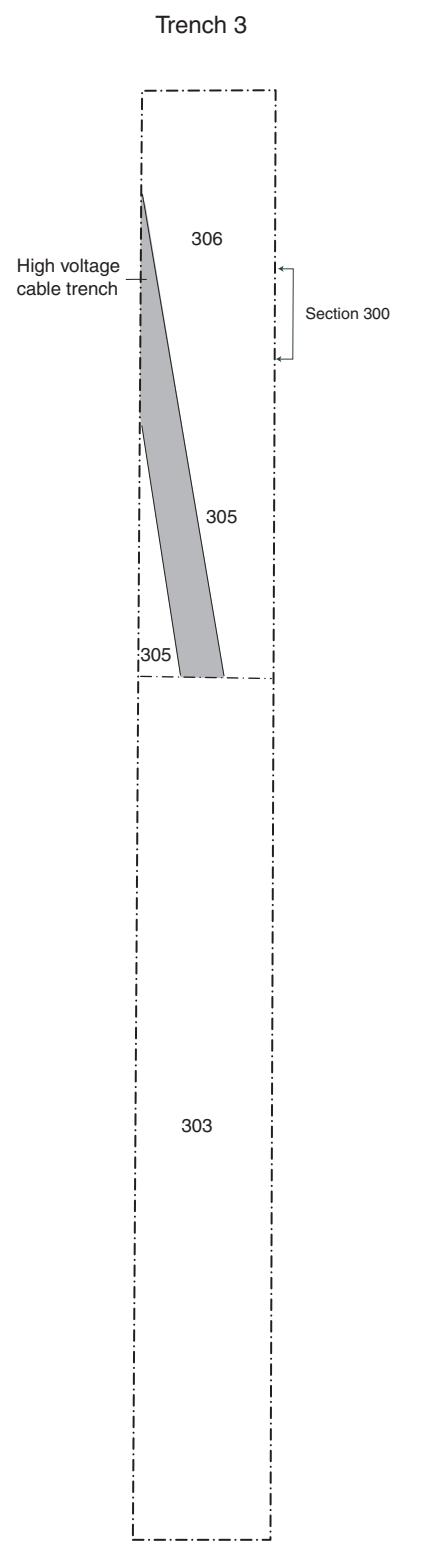
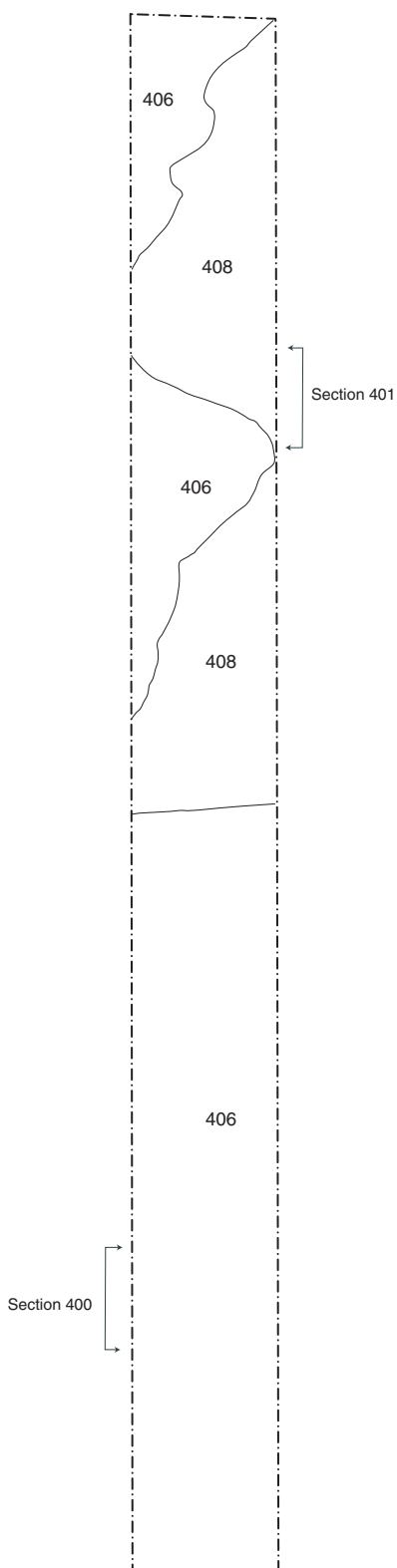


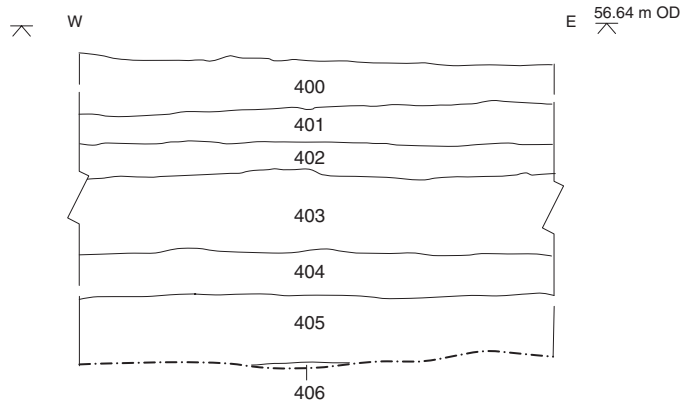
Figure 6: Trench 3, plan and section



Trench 4



Section 400



Section 401

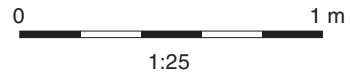
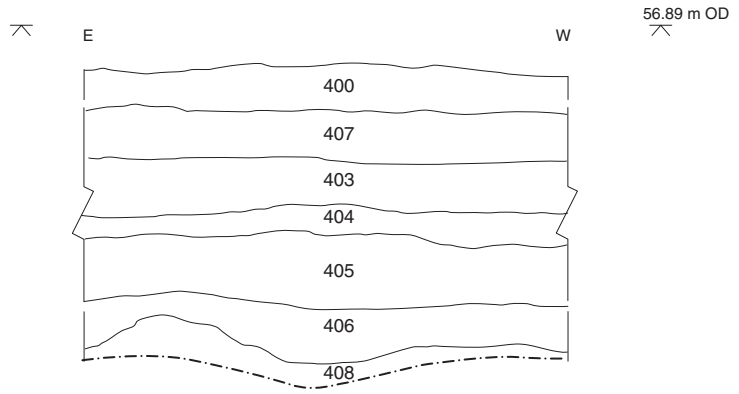


Figure 7: Trench 4, plan and sections

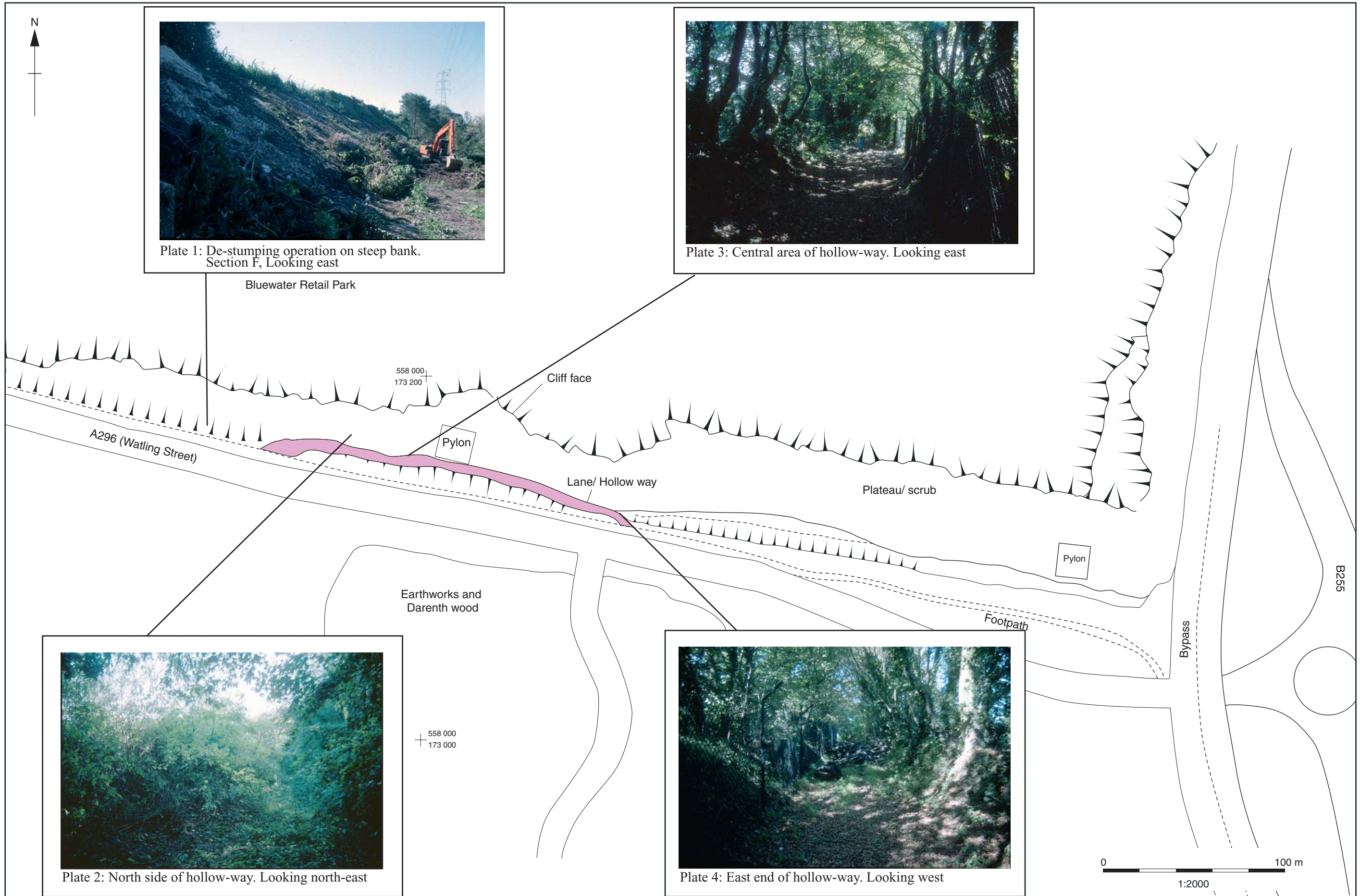


Figure 8: Section F: Area of de-stumping and location of hollow-way