

Network Rail

Trent Valley

West Coast Mainline Upgrade

Staffordshire: Tamworth to Lichfield

Site A13, Tewnalls Lane



## Archaeological Evaluation Report



November 2006



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**Network Rail, Trent Valley  
West Coast Mainline Upgrade  
Staffordshire: Lichfield to Armitage  
Site A13 Tewnalls Lane**

NGR: SK 109 136

***ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT***

**CONTENTS**

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Summary .....                                     | 1  |
| 1 Introduction.....                               | 1  |
| 1.1 Location and scope of work.....               | 1  |
| 1.2 Geology and topography.....                   | 1  |
| 1.3 Previous work and project background .....    | 1  |
| 1.4 Archaeological and Historical Background..... | 2  |
| 2 Evaluation Aims .....                           | 5  |
| 3 Evaluation Methodology .....                    | 6  |
| 3.1 Scope of fieldwork.....                       | 6  |
| 3.2 Finds .....                                   | 6  |
| 3.3 Palaeo-environmental evidence .....           | 6  |
| 4 Results: General.....                           | 6  |
| 4.1 Soils and ground conditions .....             | 6  |
| 4.2 Distribution of archaeological deposits ..... | 7  |
| 5 Results: Descriptions .....                     | 7  |
| 5.1 Description of deposits .....                 | 7  |
| 6 Discussion And Interpretation .....             | 8  |
| Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory.....  | 9  |
| Appendix 2 Bibliography and references .....      | 9  |
| Appendix 3 Summary of Site Details.....           | 10 |

**LIST OF FIGURES**

- Fig. 1 Site location map  
 Fig. 2 Trench location  
 Fig. 3 Trench 1 plan and section  
 Fig. 4 Trench 3 plan and section

## SUMMARY

*In April 2006, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation as part of the West Coast Main Line upgrade in Staffordshire between Tamworth and Lichfield, on behalf of Network Rail. A number of areas of this rail improvement have been designated to be of archaeological interest and this report concerns the Tewnalls Lane site Area A13 (centred at NGR: SK 109 136).*

*The evaluation revealed a single post-medieval quarry pit dug for gravel extraction. No other archaeology was detected. The trenches had been subject to bio-turbation and localised plough scarring.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In April 2006, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation on land adjacent to the West Coast Railway Mainline, in one field located to the SE of the A515, in the parish of King's Bromley near Lichfield, Staffordshire (Fig.1). The evaluation site was 0.19 ha in area and located at NGR SK 109 136 (centred).
- 1.1.2 The evaluation was carried out on behalf of Network Rail ahead of works for upgrading of the rail line between Tamworth and Lichfield (known as Network Rail 'Order 2').
- 1.1.3 Discussions between Steve Dean, Archaeological Officer for Staffordshire County Council and OA, led to an agreement that in areas where there was the potential for damage to possible archaeological remains, due to temporary or permanent land-take disturbance, archaeological fieldwork would be carried out.
- 1.1.4 An outline project proposal detailing how OA would implement the evaluation and watching briefs was agreed between all parties (OA 2004 - and see 1.3 below).

### 1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies on Recent and Pleistocene Older River Gravel (BGS Sheet 154) at c 77 m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The site is on flat ground previously used for agricultural purposes. At the time of the evaluation topsoil storage bunds suggest partial removal of the topsoil the area of the evaluation. Plant growth on these bunds suggest they are not recent.

### 1.3 Previous work and project background

- 1.3.1 In 2002, an initial phase of field-walking was carried out by OA for *Railtrack* along the northern side of the railway line between (approximately) Whittington and the Sewage works to the north-west of Tamworth.

- 1.3.2 The report for this work has not been issued, as the project did not continue once *Railtrack* as a company had ceased to exist. The results of the work, however, revealed post-medieval material throughout the study area in the vicinity of a former track-way. It was thought, nonetheless, that there would have been greater potential for archaeological finds along the walked route, owing to the number of crop marks within the vicinity of the track-way and in adjacent fields.
- 1.3.3 In 2002, when Network Rail Order 2 went to Public Inquiry, Staffordshire County Council requested that further and more detailed archaeological work should be undertaken on known crop-marks along the route and within fields with ancient field names depicted on Parish Tithe maps.
- 1.3.4 The Council also requested that an all-encompassing archaeological project design be produced to cover the construction works proposed under Order 2. This work (*West Coast Mainline Upgrade - Trent Valley. Outline Proposal for Phase 1 Works, OA 2004*) was undertaken by OA and included provision for both evaluation trenches and watching briefs.
- 1.3.5 As part of the mitigation works OA monitored the construction of the haul road adjacent to the west coast mainline (OA 2005b) and the results of this watching brief and previous field-walking were used to determine a programme of work to mitigate the effects of the upgrading of the railway upon any potential archaeology.

#### 1.4 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 1.4.1 The following background information is reproduced from the Heritage Impact Assessment produced by OA for Railtrack but never issued due to the collapse of the latter. The “study corridor” refers to a corridor 500m either side of the railway line which was the subject of the Impact Assessment

##### General

- 1.4.2 Between 1960 and 1976 JK St Joseph and later J Pickering carried out regular aerial reconnaissance of the central section of the study corridor, following the discovery of a large number of cropmarks on the Gravel Terrace within the Tame Valley. As a result of this research a number of archaeological ‘rescue’ excavations were carried out in the early 1970s in the Fisherwick area in response to gravel extraction, which threatened to destroy a number of cropmark sites within this area of seemingly high archaeological potential. The majority of these excavations were located c. 2 km to the north-east of the study corridor. One excavation was undertaken within the study corridor c. 300 m north-east of the line of the railway. The results of these excavations were published in a British Archaeological Reports volume in 1979 entitled *Fisherwick: The Reconstruction of an Iron Age Landscape* (Smith *et al.*, 1979).
- 1.4.3 In 1980, Christopher Smith published a summary of his doctoral thesis for the University of Nottingham on the historical development of the parishes of Alrewas,

Fisherwick and Whittington, in *Transactions of the Southern Staffordshire Archaeological Society* Vol **XIX**. Smith's study area forms a broad north-south strip which encompasses the central section of the WCML study corridor between eastings SK 16 (Whittington) and SK 19 (River Tame). The study involved detailed examination of documentary and cartographic sources, air photographs, and also involved several fieldwalking surveys. The survey revealed concentrations of material from the prehistoric to post-medieval period at various locations within his study area. Smith attempted to reconstruct the landscape of his study area at four periods in time: the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium, AD200, c. AD1300 and the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century.

### *Prehistoric*

- 1.4.4 Excavations on the Gravel Terrace at Fisherwick, c. 2 km to the north-east of the study corridor, prior to gravel extraction in 1968 and 1973-4, have revealed further evidence of prehistoric activity in the form of a possible Neolithic settlement and extensive Iron Age activity. The latter includes Iron Age settlements believed to have been agricultural in nature - small farmsteads surrounded by extensive field systems. It has been suggested (Smith 1977 quoted in Hodder 1982, 19) that the Tame Gravel Terrace was divided by a series of permanent ditched boundaries during the first millennium BC, as the result of population increase. Excavations at Fisherwick revealed that pre-medieval population levels within the Valley are likely to have been considerably greater than was previously supposed (Smith 1979, 103).

### *Roman*

- 1.4.5 Excavations in 1968 prior to gravel extraction at Fisherwick, c. 2 km to the north-east of the study corridor, revealed a Romano-British farmstead consisting of four circular huts, pens and palisaded enclosures, adjacent to a drove-way. The farm, dated to the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, was believed to have specialised in stock-rearing. In addition, traces of Roman activity have been found within the historic core of Tamworth and it is possible that there may have been an earlier settlement here prior to the early medieval *burh* (Staffs SMR).

### *Medieval*

- 1.4.6 There were a number of known medieval settlements within the study area, some of which later became deserted and which have left no trace. The settlements include Lichfield, Streethay, Whittington (all extant) and *Fisherwick* (deserted), located just outside the study corridor, and *Tamhorn*, *Horton*, *Fulfen* and *Morughale* (all deserted), located within the study corridor. These settlements would have provided a focus for the community within the parish. In addition, there were probably a number of smaller secondary settlements in the form of isolated farmsteads located away from the villages. The identification of these is less straightforward and is primarily based on buildings shown on the earliest maps consulted and place-name evidence.



- 1.4.7 Fisherwick, although not mentioned in Domesday Book, is recorded as a manor in 1167 (VCH xiv, 239). The settlement no longer exists but is believed to lie outside the study corridor, c. 1.5 km to the north-east of the railway (Hurst 1967, 45 and VCH Staffs xiv, 239).
- 1.4.8 Tamhorn and Horton are both mentioned in Domesday and formed a township by the late 13<sup>th</sup> century, with Horton apparently more important (VCH Staffs xiv, 239). The township of Tamhorn and Horton is listed in a Subsidy Roll of 1327 when 12 people were assessed for subsidy. Smith (1980, 7) identified the possible location of the DMVs of Tamhorn and Horton through concentrations of medieval pottery and building material found during fieldwalking in the early 1970s. The spread of artefacts was too dense to be simply residual material within a manure scatter used to assist cultivation. It should however be noted that the VCH (XIV 1990, 240) suggests that the site of Horton village may also lie close to, or on, the present site of the small cluster of houses at Hademore, immediately to the south of the railway.

#### *Fisherwick Park*

- 1.4.9 The Railway line between Fisherwick Brook and Hademore cuts the southern edge of a formal post-medieval park called Fisherwick Park. The park is not listed in English Heritage's Register of Parks and Gardens. The park was created to provide a setting around a '*very proper brick house*' (possibly located on or near the site of the medieval manor) built by John Skeffington in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century (VCH Staffs xiv, 243-4).
- 1.4.10 The park was enclosed by a park pale (boundary) intended to keep deer and rabbits out of the park grounds. The park was planted with a large number of trees and by the 1680s the trees had '*grown to a magnitude (in number) almost beyond belief*' (*ibid.*, 244). Two avenues led through the park to Fisherwick Hall (c. 1.5 km to the north-east of the railway) aligned on the Whittington and Tamhorn churches. The park increased in size in the later 18<sup>th</sup> century, evidently to the north-east (VCH Staffs xiv, 244), absorbing enclosed farmland adjacent (Smith 1980, 5). In 1747 the park covered an area of 450 acres; in 1760 this had grown to 571 acres. A map of the park dated 1760 shows a fence around the perimeter of the park and the broad avenue leading to Fisherwick Park from an entrance by Hademore Lodge. The map shows little detail, other than a depiction of land within the park boundary and the enclosed fields to the east.
- 1.4.11 Between c. 1766-79 Fisherwick Hall was demolished and rebuilt for Lord Donegall. This involved landscaping of the park by Lancelot (Capability) Brown, following an Act of 1766 stopping up all public roads through the park. The two avenues were removed and replaced with two new drives, which led to south to the lodge at Hademore, and east to Stubby Leas (outside the study area). Brown planted 10,000 trees and created a boundary plantation enclosing a ride along the south and east sides of the park (VCH Staffs xiv, 244). A plan of the Estate of Lord Spencer Chichester dated to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century shows boundary plantations along the



southern edge of the park at Hademore as well as a building marked 'Hedimore Lodge' at the southern entrance to the park. Also shown is the developing estate hamlet of 'Hedimore' immediately to the south, consisting of Hademore Farm, Holly Cottage and another cottage (now demolished). It had been intended to build a brick wall around the whole park, but only about a mile of it was completed, on the south-east side. This wall was evidently still standing in 1990 (*ibid.*, 244). Shortly after 1808 Fisherwick Hall was demolished. A large number of trees were felled and the park divided into fields. The OS 1<sup>st</sup> map (1834) shows the former park, with a clear boundary in the form of a line of screening trees along the southern edge. This is the earliest map which enables the southern line of the park to be placed in relation to the modern OS mapping with any accuracy. A Plan of the Township of Fisherwick (1842) and the OS 1<sup>st</sup> edition 6<sup>th</sup> map (1883-8) both show Hademore Lodge as still extant, the latter showing the lodge to have lain some 50m north-east of the railway.

- 1.4.12 When the Trent Valley Railway was built in 1846-7, it cut across the extreme southern corner of the former Fisherwick Park, just to the south of the gate lodge. It is unclear whether the southern edge of the park as shown in 1834 represented the extent of the original 16<sup>th</sup> century park however. It is therefore possible that remains of the original park pale, in the form of a bank, ditch or fence (the latter is suggested by a map of 1760) may survive in the form of an earthwork, or that remains of a ditch may be preserved as a buried feature beneath and close to the railway. Whilst the site of the Fisherwick Hall is now occupied by a container company, and its grounds now lie under a former explosives depot and a field of crops, a pair of Grade II Listed gate piers dating to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century still survive at a point some 50 m north of the railway, flanking the former formal drive, which remains in use from this point northward. The course of the driveway southward from the gates has been abandoned following the construction of a later connecting road, although its alignment is still traceable as a double hedge line. This crosses the railway at a disused level-crossing to the west of Fogg Cottages, before passing behind Holly Cottage to emerge onto the public road behind a cast-iron telephone kiosk.

## 2 EVALUATION AIMS

- 2.1.1 The aims of the evaluation were to determine the location, extent, date, character and state of preservation of any archaeological remains surviving on the site.
- 2.1.2 To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the investigation on completion of the fieldwork.
- 2.1.4 To define relevant research priorities if additional archaeological investigation was deemed necessary.

### 3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Scope of fieldwork

- 3.1.1 A total of 3 evaluation trenches (1, 3 and 4) were excavated in Area 13 (Fig. 2). The location of these trenches was altered from the surveyed layout due to on site obstructions. Trench 2 was not excavated as it lay within the Balfour Beatty site compound.
- 3.1.2 Trench 1 measured 30 m by c 1.6 m. Trench 3 and Trench 4 were 25 m and 20 m long respectively due to on site obstructions (see below). The overburden was removed under close archaeological supervision by a JCB mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The trenches were mechanically excavated to the top of natural deposits or the top of any significant archaeology, whichever was highest. The topsoil was stored and checked for any finds of archaeological importance.
- 3.1.3 Where appropriate the trenches were cleaned by hand and the revealed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds and environmental samples. All archaeological features were planned and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. All features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures outlined in the *OA Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992). The stratigraphy of the trench was recorded even where no archaeological features were encountered.

#### 3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the evaluation and bagged by context.

#### 3.3 Palaeo-environmental evidence

- 3.3.1 No deposits of environmental significance were revealed.

### 4 RESULTS: GENERAL

#### 4.1 Soils and ground conditions

- 4.1.1 The site is located on Recent and Pleistocene Older River gravel; the mottled sandy gravel contained patches of grey sandy silt possibly filling natural hollows. The overburden consisted of a uniform sandy loam topsoil in all of the trenches opened.
- 4.1.2 Obstructions on the ground led to the relocation of the trenches from the surveyed positions. Trenches 1 and 4 were moved to avoid temporary topsoil and gravel storage bunds. Trench 2 could not be excavated as it was located within the Balfour Beatty compound. Trench 3 was obstructed by an area of standing water and an open deep

excavation carried out prior to our arrival. A high pressure water pipe running NE SW across site also affected the relocation of the trenches.

## 4.2 Distribution of archaeological deposits

- 4.2.1 The only archaeological feature revealed by the evaluation was a possible quarry pit containing post-medieval peg tile. This feature relates to relatively recent gravel extraction. Plough scars revealed in trenches 1 and 4 are likely to be the product of fairly recent agricultural practises. Areas of bio-turbation were also encountered in all trenches.

## 5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

### 5.1 Description of deposits

#### *Trench 1*

- 5.1.1 Trench 1 (Fig. 3) contained a single cut feature (107). The natural geology (108) was a light yellow sandy gravel and was observed at c 78.02 m aOD, 0.36 m below the ground surface. Plough scars on a NE SW alignment and areas of bio-turbation were present within this trench.
- 5.1.2 Cut 107 was a probable quarry pit for gravel extraction. This feature ran through the northern end of the trench on a E-W alignment and was excavated by hand to a depth of 0.8 m. The remaining fills were machine excavated for finds retrieval purposes. Pit 107 contained five clay silt fills (102, 103, 104, 105, and 106) indicative of deliberate back filling. Of these deposits, 105 contained Finds indicating a post-medieval date for the feature

#### *Trench 2*

- 5.1.3 Trench 2 (Fig. 2) could not be excavated as it was located within the Balfour Beatty compound.

#### *Trench 3*

- 5.1.4 Trench 3 (Fig 4) contained a single feature (303). The natural geology (301) was mottled sandy gravel varying between grey yellow and orange. It was observed at c 80.27 m above aOD, 0.32 m below the current ground surface.
- 5.1.5 Cut (303) ran on a NE SW alignment and contained a single very dark brown silty fill (304). The base and sides of the cut were very irregular suggesting it was a result of bio-turbation. No finds were recovered from this feature.

#### *Trench 4*

- 5.1.6 Trench 4 (Fig 2) contained no archaeological features. The natural geology was a mottled sandy gravel varying between grey, yellow and orange. This trench was

subject to plough scarring on a NW SE alignment. It was observed at c 80.41 m above aOD, 0.34 m below topsoil (401).

## 6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

- 6.1.1 Of the three trenches excavated, archaeology was only present in Trench 1. Pit 107 extended beyond the edges of the trench and probably represents a quarry pit for the extraction of gravel. The fills of this feature suggest deliberate and rapid backfilling, indicating a levelling up of the area after the gravel had been extracted. A number of post-medieval pan tile fragments were recovered from fill 105 of this feature suggesting a 18th or 19th century date for this extraction. The process was probably small-scale and related to a construction project within the locality.
- 6.1.2 As mentioned above, the presence of plough scarring is likely to be a product of fairly recent agricultural activity.
- 6.1.3 The location of the temporary topsoil and gravel bunds along with the standing water issues and under ground services impaired the reliability of the evaluation. These issues were addressed by the relocation of trenches where possible. The placement of the Balfour Beatty compound precluded the excavation of Trench 2.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

| <i>Trench</i> | <i>Cxt No</i> | <i>Type</i> | <i>Width (m)</i> | <i>Thickness/depth (m)</i> | <i>Comment</i>                        | <i>Finds</i> | <i>No./wt</i> | <i>Date</i> |
|---------------|---------------|-------------|------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------|---------------|-------------|
| 001           |               |             |                  |                            |                                       |              |               |             |
|               | 101           | topsoil     | na               | 0.36                       | Dark brown clay silt                  | na           | na            | na          |
|               | 102           | fill        | 1.6              | 0.2                        | Mid brown clay silt                   | na           | na            | na          |
|               | 103           | fill        | 1.6              | 0.35                       | Reddish brown clay silt               | na           | na            | na          |
|               | 104           | fill        | 1.6              | 0.1                        | Mid grey clay silt                    | na           | na            | na          |
|               | 105           | fill        | 1.6              | 0.35                       | Reddish brown/Grey mottling clay silt | cbm          | 4 pieces 330g | post-med    |
|               | 106           | fill        | 1.6              | 0.3                        | Light whitish grey clay silt          | na           | na            | na          |
|               | 107           | cut         | 1.6              | 1.0                        | Quarry pit                            |              |               |             |
|               | 108           | natural     | na               | na                         | white yellow sandy gravel             | na           | na            | na          |
| 003           |               |             |                  |                            |                                       |              |               |             |
|               | 301           | topsoil     | na               | 0.32                       | Dark brown sandy loam                 | na           | na            | na          |
|               | 302           | natural     | na               | na                         | Yellow grey orange sandy gravel       | na           | na            | na          |
|               | 303           | cut         | 1.32             | 0.4                        | Bio-turbation                         | na           | na            | na          |
|               | 304           | fill        | 1.32             | 0.4                        | Dark brown silt                       | na           | na            | na          |
| 004           |               |             |                  |                            |                                       |              |               |             |
|               | 401           | topsoil     | na               | 0.3                        | Dark brown sandy loam                 | na           | na            | na          |
|               | 402           | natural     | na               | na                         | Yellow grey orange sandy gravel       | na           | na            | na          |

## APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

- OA 1992      OA Fieldwork Manual (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992)
- OA 2000      West Coast Mainline-Historical Impact Assessment -not issued. OA Internal report only.
- OA 2003      West Coast Mainline-Field-walking Report-not issued. OA Internal report only.

**APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS**

**Site name:** Network Rail, Trent Valley, West Coast Mainline Upgrade, Staffordshire: Lichfield to Armitage Site A13 Tewnalls Lane

**Site code:** WCMA13 06

**Grid reference:** SK 109 136

**Type of evaluation:** Trial Trenching

**Date and duration of project:** April 2006 and was completed within three days

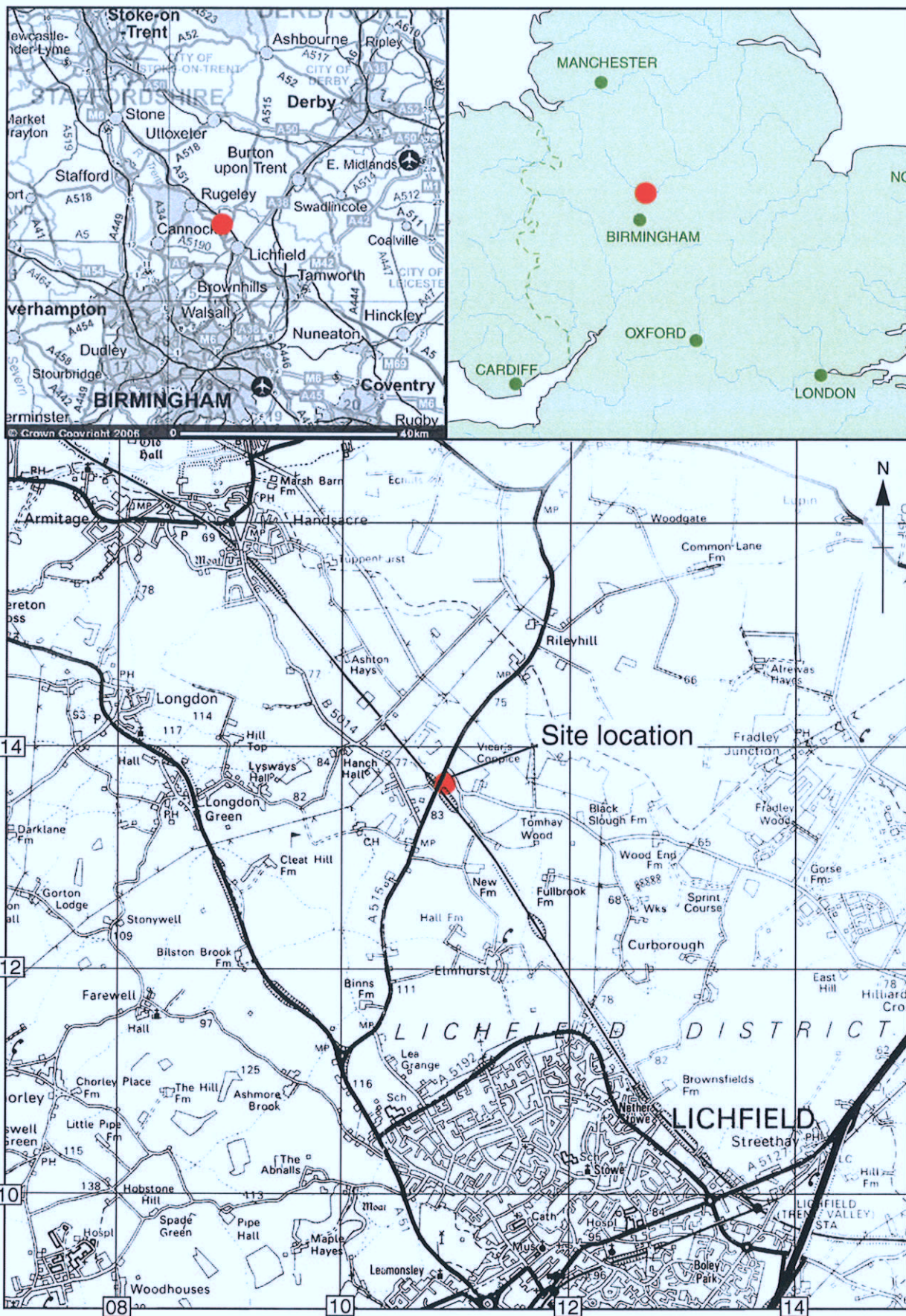
**Area of site:** 0.19 hectares

**Summary of results:** The evaluation produced limited archaeological features that indicated past mineral extraction and ploughing

**Location of archive:** The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Potteries Museum & Art in due course, under the following accession number: 2006.LH.65







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Figure 1: Site location





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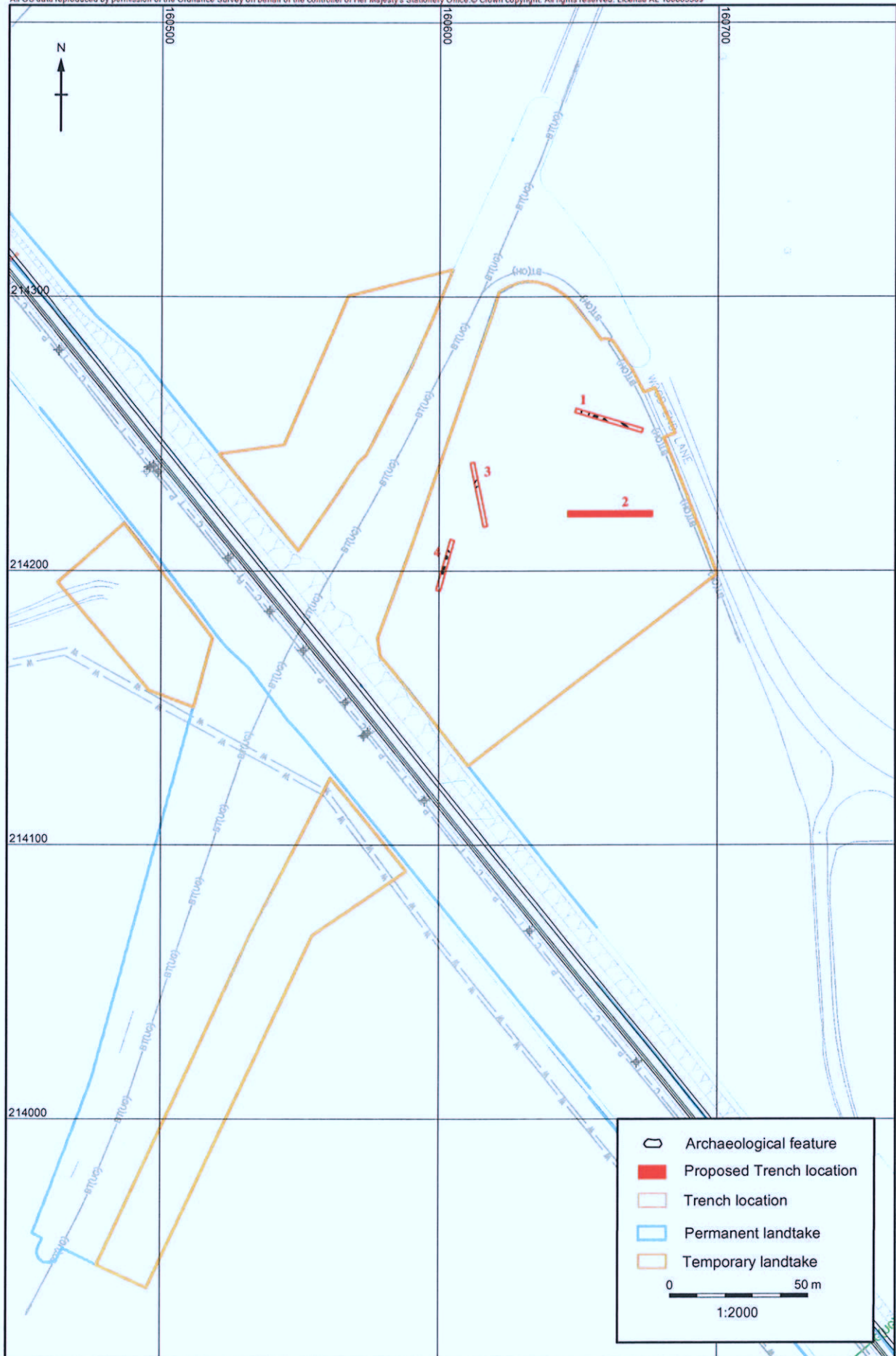


Figure 2: Trench location



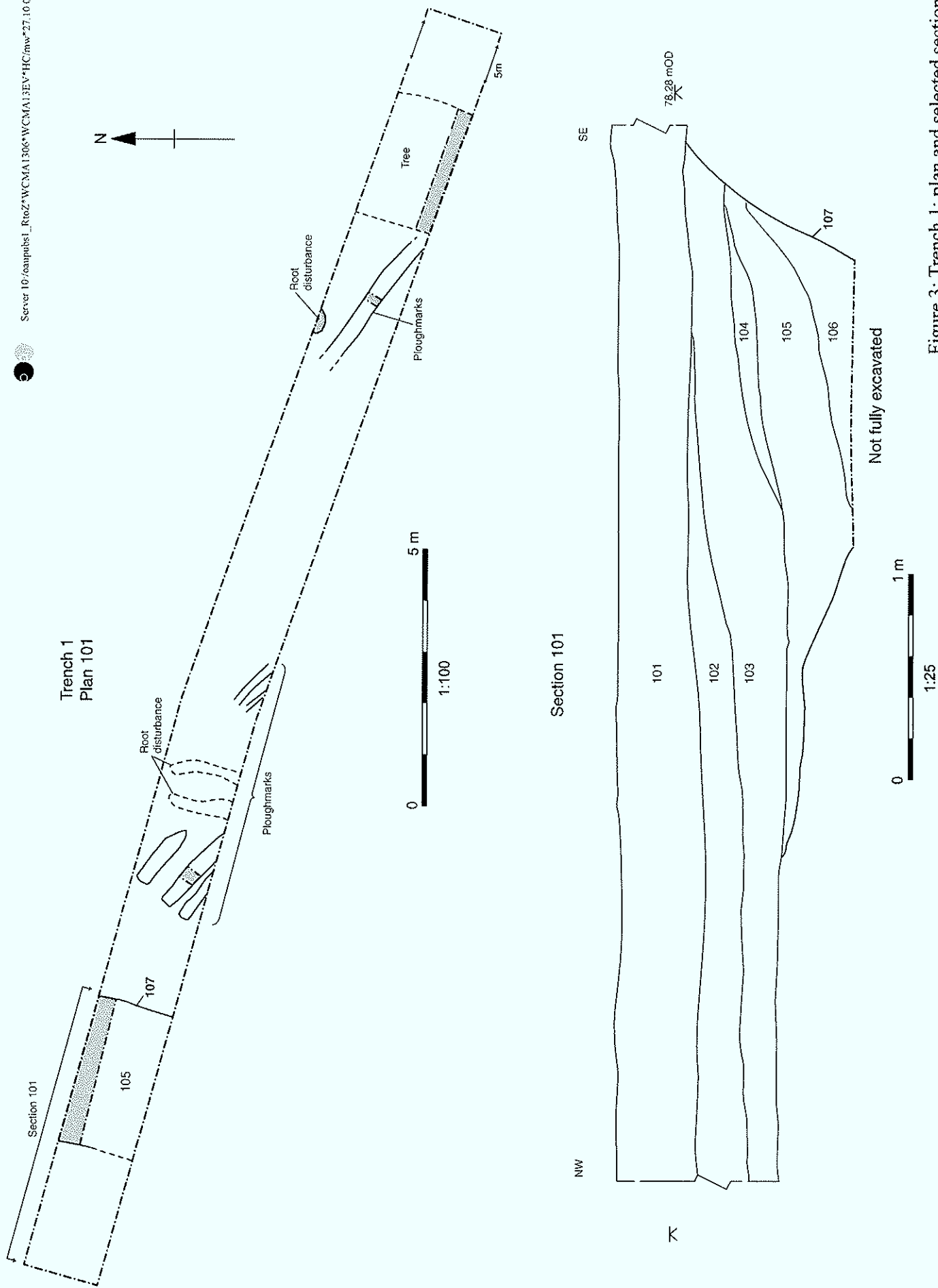
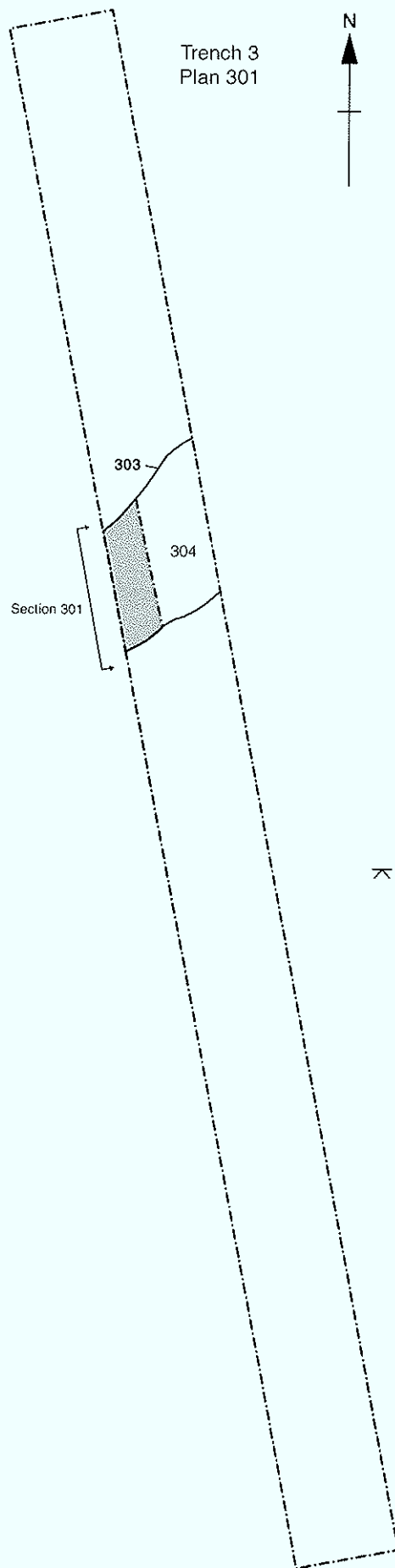


Figure 3: Trench 1; plan and selected section





0 5 m  
1:100

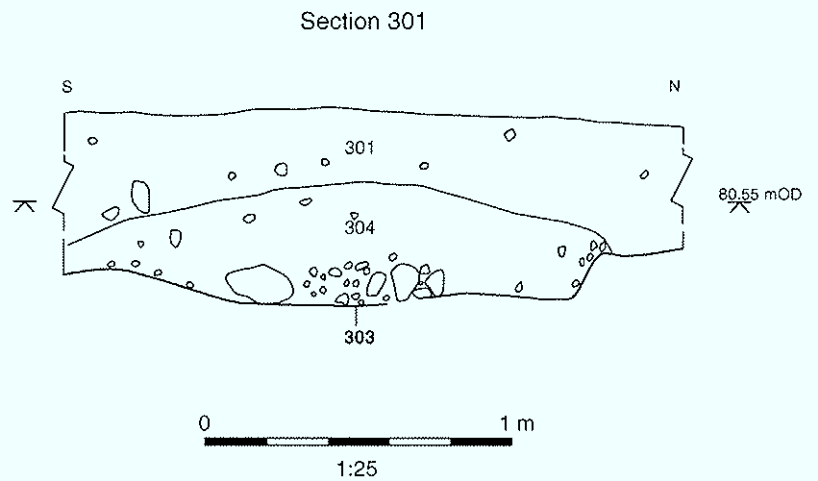


Figure 4: Trench 3; plan and selected section







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