A Proposed Development at Harepath Hill, Seaton, Devon

NGR SY24289185

Results of an archaeological trench evaluation

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Summary

An archaeological trench evaluation on land at the junction of Harepath Hill and Harepath Road, Seaton, Devon, was undertaken by AC archaeology during August 2008. The site is located adjacent to the probable course of the Fosse Way Roman road, in an area where extensive evidence for prehistoric and Romano-British settlement has been previously identified. A geophysical survey undertaken on the site prior to trenching identified a series of sub-surface anomalies, including a large number of probable linear features and what appeared to be a ring ditch towards the centre of the site. Many of the trenches excavated as part of this work targeted these anomalies.

A total of 24 trenches was excavated amounting to 585m in length, with each trench 1.8m wide. These established that archaeological features are present across large parts of the site, mainly comprising a network of ditches and gullies of varying size, profile and orientation. Other features recorded include a 7m diameter, probably prehistoric, ring ditch and associated features towards the centre of the site, a large possibly modern pit at the southern end and a spread/deposit in the SW corner, which contained a large quantity of worked flint and chert, including diagnostically prehistoric material alongside post-medieval gunflint.

The general character of the archaeology recorded here is not dissimilar to parts of the Honeyditches site located c. 800m to the southwest. At Honeyditches a network of ditches was also recorded, as well as small ring ditches. On that site, however, the proximity to known settlement meant that far more artefacts were recovered and the features could be more precisely dated to the late Iron Age and Romano-British periods.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report has been commissioned by Magna Housing Association Ltd and sets out the results of an archaeological trench evaluation undertaken by AC archaeology during August 2008 on land at the junction of Harepath Hill and Harepath Road, Seaton, East Devon. The work was carried out in order to provide supporting information for a forthcoming planning application for residential development on the site, and followed consultation with the Deputy County Archaeologist, Devon County Historic Environment Service (hereafter DCHES).

1.2 The site comprises approximately 3.7 hectares of pasture land (Plate 1) on the north side of Seaton and to the south of Colyford (Fig. 1). It lies between c. 27m and 46mOD on ground that slopes gently to moderately down from west to east and the underlying geology comprises Upper Keuper Marl.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 A desk-based archaeological assessment and geophysical survey have been previously carried out for the site (Valentin 2008a). This established that the site occupies an elevated position on the north side of Seaton, in an area where there is extensive evidence for late prehistoric and Romano-British occupation. The northern boundary is alongside a section of the probable course of Fosse Way Roman road and an Iron Age settlement and possible Roman villa or mansio complex is located *c*. 800m to the southwest. The geophysical survey identified a series of sub-surface anomalies,

including a possible ring ditch in the central part of the field, a ditch enclosure in the northwest and probable linear ditches and drains across the whole of the site (Fig. 2).

2.2 Historic maps show the site as unchanged since at least 1806, with the only modern disturbance recorded comprising two substantial service trenches extending along the inner side of the northern boundary.

3. AIMS

3.1 The aims of the evaluation were to establish the presence or absence, extent, depth, character and date of any *in situ* archaeological deposits within the site. The results as presented in this report will be reviewed by DCHES and used to enable them to provide informed advice to East Devon District Council when the planning application is submitted, on the extent and need for any further archaeological work on the site as a condition of planning permission if granted.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a project design and trench plan prepared by AC archaeology (Valentin 2008b), submitted to and approved by the Deputy County Archaeologist, DCHES, prior to commencement on site.

4.2 A total of 24 trenches each measuring 1.8m wide and with a total length of 585m was excavated across the site. This included a contingency of 100m amounting to five extra trenches (1a, 4a, 12a, 20 and 21). The location of trenches as excavated is shown on Fig. 2 and in relation to the anomalies recorded during the earlier geophysical survey. On-site constraints (overhead cables) led to two trenches (16 and 19) being slightly re-positioned from their agreed locations. All trenches were excavated under constant archaeological supervision, using a tracked 360^{o} mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless grading bucket.

4.3 All deposits and features revealed were recorded using the standard AC archaeology pro-forma recording system, comprising written, graphic and photographic records, and in accordance with AC archaeology's *General Site Recording Manual, Version 1* (Revised April 2005). Detailed sections were produced at 1:10 or 1:20 and plans at 1:20 or 1:50. All levels have been related to Ordnance Datum.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

Trenches 1, 6-8 and 15-18 proved largely negative (i.e. contained no archaeological features), and are therefore summarised in Table 1 only. The remaining trenches contained archaeological features and are described below. Where the same linear feature crossed through more than one trench, one segment was excavated and recorded in detail, and any others only recorded and cleaned for the recovery of any dating evidence. Natural subsoil was largely consistent throughout the site and generally comprised light brown or reddish-brown clay with common unworked flint and chert gravels.

5.2 **Trench 1a** (Fig. 3a plan; 3b section)
This trench was an extension to Trench 1 to locate the continuation or extent of a linear feature (F205) investigated in Trench 2 (see below). It measured 20m x 1.8m in plan and was aligned approximately N-S. Topsoil and a subsoil (contexts 100 and 101), comprising a greyish-brown silty clay loam and a light reddish-brown silty clay, were removed to a maximum depth of 500mm onto natural subsoil (102), where two linear features (F104 and 105) and a modern service trench were present.

Excavated feature
Feature **F104** comprised a NW-SE aligned curvilinear feature, with an exposed length of 2.5m and width of 600mm. Hand-excavation revealed an almost 'V' profile to a maximum depth of 200mm. It contained a single fill (103) composed of a compact greyish-brown silty clay containing moderate unworked flint and chert gravels. Modern ceramic building material and glass were recovered from this feature.

Unexcavated
Feature **105** comprised a NW-SE aligned linear feature with an exposed length of 2m and width of 900mm. It was unexcavated and its exposed fill was composed of a compact mid-dark brown silty clay containing occasional unworked flint and chert gravels.

5.3 **Trench 2** (Fig. 3c plan; 3d – e sections, Plate 2)
This trench measured 20m x 1.8m in plan and was aligned approximately NW-SE. Topsoil and a subsoil (contexts 200 and 201), comprising a greyish-brown silty clay loam and a light reddish-brown silty clay were removed onto natural subsoil (207), where two archaeological features (F203 and F205) and a probable tree throw (206) were revealed.

*Excavated feature*s
Feature **F203** comprised a NW-SE aligned linear feature, with an exposed length of 3.5m and width of 900mm. Hand-excavation revealed a shallow, gentle-sloping profile and slightly uneven base at a maximum depth of 100mm. It contained a single fill (202), composed of a compact mid-brown silty clay containing moderate unworked flint and chert gravels and sparse charcoal flecks. Prehistoric worked flint and chert were recovered.

Feature **F205** comprised a NW-SE aligned linear feature, with an exposed length of 3.5m and width of 900mm. Hand-excavation revealed a steep-sloping profile and concave base at a maximum depth of 400mm. It contained a single fill (204), composed of a compact mid-dark brown silty clay containing moderate unworked flint and chert gravels and sparse charcoal flecks. Prehistoric worked flint and chert and a small quantity of probable late Iron Age pottery were recovered from this feature.

Context **206** comprised a sub-linear band of light brown stiff silty clay, which was box-sectioned only. This feature was irregular in plan and profile and is likely to be a tree throw.

5.4 **Trench 3** (Fig. 3f plan; 3g section)
This trench measured 20m x 1.8m in plan and was aligned approximately NW-SE. Topsoil and a subsoil (contexts 300 and 301), comprising a greyish-brown silty clay loam and a light brown silty clay, were removed to a maximum depth of 450mm onto natural subsoil (304), where a single linear feature (F303) was present.

Excavated feature
Feature **F303** comprised an approximately E-W aligned probable ditch, with an exposed length of 2m and width of 850mm. Hand-excavation revealed a gentle, slightly irregular sloping profile and flattish base at a maximum depth of 150mm. It contained a single fill (302), composed of greyish-brown silty clay containing common unworked flint and chert and sparse charcoal flecks. No finds were recovered. The ditch continued into Trench 5 where it was recorded as 503 (see below).

5.5 **Trench 4** (Fig. 4a plan; 4b section, Plate 3)
This trench measured 30m x 1.8m in plan and was aligned E-W. Topsoil (context 400) comprising a mid-dark brown silty clay loam, and two layers of subsoil (contexts 401 and

407), comprising a light reddish-brown silty clay and a dark brown silty clay, were removed to a maximum depth of 600mm onto natural subsoil (406), where a large ditch (F404) was revealed.

Excavated feature
Feature **F404** comprised a NW-SE aligned linear feature, with a length exposed of approximately 7m and width of 1.8m. Hand-excavation revealed a broad, moderately-sloping profile and flattish base at a maximum depth of 350mm. It contained three fills composed of the following:

Upper fill (402) - a greyish-brown silty clay containing occasional unworked flint and chert gravels and sparse charcoal flecks. Prehistoric worked chert was recovered.

Secondary fill (403) - a dense deposit of unworked flint and chert gravels within a light brown clay silt.

Primary fill (405) - a dark grey clay silt containing sparse small gravels.

5.6 **Trench 4a** (Fig. 4a plan; 4c section)
This trench was an extension to Trench 4 to locate the continuation or extent of linear feature F404 and other anomalies identified by the geophysical survey. The trench measured 20m x 1.8m in plan and was aligned N-S. Topsoil (context 400) and two layers of subsoil (401 and 407), were removed to a maximum depth of 650mm onto natural subsoil (406), where two linear features (411 and F409) were present.

Excavated feature
Feature **F409** comprised an E-W aligned linear feature, with a length exposed of 2m and width of 1m. Hand-excavation revealed a steep sloping profile and concave base at a maximum depth of 450mm. It contained two fills composed of the following:

Upper fill (408) - a greyish-brown silty clay containing moderate unworked flint and chert gravels and charcoal flecks. A single prehistoric worked flint chip was recovered.

Primary fill (410) - a light brown silty clay containing common unworked flint and chert gravels.

Unexcavated
Feature **411** comprised a NW-SE aligned linear feature, with a length exposed of 2m and width of 2.3m. Its exposed fill was composed of a greyish-brown silty clay containing occasional unworked flint and chert gravels and sparse charcoal flecks. This large ditch was excavated in Trench 4 as F404 (see above).

5.7 **Trench 5** (Fig. 5a plan)
This trench measured 30m x 1.8m in plan and was aligned N-S. Topsoil and a subsoil (contexts 500 and 501), comprising a greyish-brown silty clay loam and a mid-light brown silty clay, were removed to a maximum depth of 600mm onto natural subsoil (504), where two linear features were revealed (502 and 503). Linear feature 503 was a continuation of ditch F303 in Trench 3 (see above) and was therefore not investigated in detail. Linear feature 502 was also recorded in plan only, with its exposed fill composed of a mid yellowish-brown silty clay containing frequent gravels. No finds were recovered from either feature.

5.8 **Trench 9** (Fig. 5c plan, d-f sections)
This trench measured 30m x 1.8m in plan and was aligned approximately NW-SE. Topsoil and a subsoil (contexts 900 and 901), comprising a greyish-brown silty clay loam and a light reddish-brown silty clay, were removed to a maximum depth of 550mm onto natural subsoil (906), where two archaeological features were revealed (F903 and F905). These features were intercutting, although no stratigraphic relationship could be established due to the similarity in their fills.

*Excavated feature*s

Feature **F903** comprised an approximately E-W aligned linear feature, with an exposed length of 2m and width of 1.05m. Hand-excavation revealed a steep-sloping profile and narrow concave base at a maximum depth of 400mm. It contained a single fill (902), composed of a compact mid-brown silty clay containing common unworked flint and chert gravels. A single prehistoric worked flint flake was recovered.

Feature **F905** comprised an approximately N-S aligned linear feature, with an exposed length of 6.5m and width of 600mm. Hand-excavation revealed a moderately-sloping profile and slightly undulating base at a maximum depth of 150mm. It contained a single fill (904), composed of a compact mid-brown silty clay containing moderate unworked flint and chert gravels and sparse charcoal flecks. A single prehistoric flint fabricator tool was recovered.

5.9 Trench 10 (Fig. 6a plan; 6b section)

This trench was L-shaped in plan, with the NE-SW aligned extent measuring 25m x 1.8m and the NW-SE aligned extent 30m x 1.8m. Topsoil and a subsoil (contexts 1000 and 1001), comprising a greyish-brown silty clay loam and a light reddish-brown silty clay, were removed to a maximum depth of 600mm onto natural subsoil (1002), where two archaeological features were revealed (F1004 and F1008).

*Excavated feature*s

Feature **F1004** was present in the NW-SE section of the trench and comprised an approximately NE-SW aligned probable linear feature terminating within the confines of the trench. It had plan dimensions of 1.45m x 900mm, with hand-excavation revealing a steep-sloping profile and flat base at a maximum depth of 350mm. It contained a single fill (1003), composed of mid-brown silty clay containing common unworked flint and chert gravels. A large number of iron nails was recovered from this feature.

Feature **F1008** was also revealed in the NW-SE extent of the trench and is likely to be a tree throw. It comprised a sub-oval feature, not fully exposed in plan, with dimensions present of 1.15m x 2.1m. Hand-excavation revealed a moderately sloping/irregular profile and uneven base at a maximum depth of 500mm. It contained three fills (1005-1007), comprising light to dark brown silty clays containing common or occasional unworked flint and chert gravels. A small quantity of prehistoric worked flint was recovered from the upper fill (1005).

5.10 Trench 11 (Fig. 6c plan; 6d section)

This trench measured 15m x 1.8m in plan and was aligned approximately NW-SE. Topsoil and a subsoil (contexts 1100 and 1101), comprising a greyish-brown silty clay loam and a light reddish-brown silty clay, were removed to a maximum depth of 500mm onto natural subsoil (1104), where a single linear feature was present (F1103).

Excavated feature

Feature **F1103** comprised an approximately N-S aligned linear feature, with an exposed length of 2m and width of 950mm. Hand-excavation revealed a moderately-sloping profile and flat base at a maximum depth of 200mm. It contained a single fill (1102), composed of mid-brown silty clay containing occasional unworked flint and chert gravels and sparse charcoal flecks. No finds were recovered.

5.11 Trench 12 (Fig. 7a plan; 7b section, Plate 4)

This trench measured 30m x 1.8m in plan and was aligned approximately E-W. Topsoil and a subsoil (contexts 1200 and 1201), comprising a greyish-brown silty clay loam and a light brown silty clay, were removed to a maximum depth of 650mm onto natural subsoil (1204), where a single linear feature was present (F1203).

Excavated feature

Feature **F1203** comprised an approximately NW-SE aligned linear feature, with an exposed length of 5m and width of 900mm. Hand-excavation revealed a 'V' profile to a maximum depth of 400mm. It contained a single fill (1202), composed of greyish-brown silty clay containing occasional unworked flint and chert gravels and sparse charcoal flecks. A small quantity of prehistoric worked flint was recovered.

5.12 Trench 12a (Fig. 7a plan; 7c-e sections)

This trench was an extension to Trench 12 to confirm the continuation or extent of ditch F1203 and to establish the presence of other anomalies identified by the geophysical survey. The trench measured 20m x 1.8m in plan and was aligned N-S. Topsoil and subsoil (contexts 1200 and 1201) were removed to a maximum depth of 650mm, where the continuation of F1203 (1210) was located as well as two further linear features (F1206 and F1209).

Excavated features

Feature **F1206** comprised a NE-SW aligned probable ditch, with a length exposed of 2.2m and width of 650mm. Hand-excavation revealed a steep-sloping profile and flat base at a depth of 320mm. It contained a single fill (1205), composed of mid-brown silty clay containing frequent unworked flint and chert gravels. No finds were recovered.

Feature **F1209** comprised a NE-SW aligned probable ditch, with a length exposed of 2.2m and width of 900mm. Hand-excavation revealed a steep-sloping profile and flat base at a depth of 400mm. It contained two fills comprising the following:

Upper fill (1207) - a mid-brown silty clay containing occasional unworked flint and chert gravels and sparse charcoal flecks. No finds were recovered.

Primary fill (1208) - a yellowish-brown silty clay containing common unworked flint and chert gravels. No finds were recovered.

Unexcavated

Feature **1210** comprised a NW-SE aligned linear feature, with a length exposed of 2m and width of 1.1m. Its exposed fill was composed of a greyish-brown silty clay containing moderate unworked flint and chert gravels. No finds were recovered from its exposed surface.

5.13 Trench 13 (Fig. 7f plan; 7g-k sections, Plate 5)

This trench was L-shaped in plan, with the NE-SW aligned extent measuring 30m x 1.8m and the NW-SE length 20m x 1.8m. Topsoil and a subsoil (contexts 1300 and 1301), comprising a greyish-brown silty clay loam and a light reddish-brown silty clay, were removed to a maximum depth of 600mm onto natural subsoil (1302), where five archaeological features were revealed. Two of these (F1307 and F1309) represent part of a circular ditched feature identified during the earlier geophysical survey.

Excavated features

Feature **F1307** comprised the western side of a circular ditch of approximately 7m diameter. The width of the ditch was 850mm and hand-excavation revealed a steep-sloping profile and flat base at a maximum depth of 250mm. It contained two fills, with the upper fill (1303) composed of a reddish-brown clay silt containing moderate unworked flint and chert gravels and sparse charcoal flecks, with a primary fill (1306), consisting of a dark greyish-brown clay silt with common charcoal flecks and occasional unworked flint and chert gravels. A single piece of worked chert was recovered from the upper fill.

Feature **F1309** represented the western side of the circular ditch and had a width of 700mm. Hand-excavation revealed a steep-sloping profile and flat base at a maximum depth of 200mm. It contained a single fill (1304) composed of reddish-brown clay silt containing occasional unworked flint and chert gravels and sparse charcoal flecks (1304). A single worked flint chip was recovered.

Feature **F1308** was located within the interior of the circular ditch and is likely to be a small posthole of 250mm diameter. Hand-excavation revealed a steep-sloping, but slightly irregular, profile and concave base depth of 180mm. It contained a single fill (1305), composed of a dark reddish-brown clay silt containing common unworked flint and chert. No finds were recovered.

Feature **F1311** was also located within the circular ditch and is likely to be a small posthole of 250mm diameter. Hand-excavation revealed a steep-sloping profile and concave base at a depth of 200mm. It

contained a single fill (1310), composed of a dark reddish-brown clay silt containing common unworked flint and chert gravels. No finds were recovered.

Feature **F1313** comprised a NW-SE aligned linear feature, with a length exposed of 1.8m and width of 850mm. Hand-excavation revealed a steep sloping profile and concave base at a maximum depth of 500mm. It contained two fills comprising the following:

Upper fill (1312) – a dark reddish-brown silty clay containing common unworked flint and chert gravels and charcoal flecks. Prehistoric worked and burnt flint was recovered.

Primary fill (1314) – a light brown silty clay containing common unworked flint and chert gravels.

5.14 Trench 14 (Fig. 8a plan; 8b-c sections)

This trench measured 20m x 1.8m in plan and was aligned approximately N-S. Topsoil (context 1400), comprising a mid-dark brown silty clay loam and two layers of subsoil, composed of a light reddish-brown silty clay (1407) and a dark brown silty clay (1401), were removed to a maximum depth of 750mm onto natural subsoil (1406), where two parallel and adjacent linear features were identified.

*Excavated feature*s

Feature **F1403** comprised a NE-SW aligned linear feature, with a length exposed of 2m and width of 300mm. Hand-excavation revealed a shallow gentle-sloping profile and rounded base at a maximum depth of 100mm. It contained a single fill (1402), composed of a compact mid-dark brown silty clay containing occasional unworked flint and chert gravels and sparse charcoal flecks. A small quantity of prehistoric worked flint was recovered.

Feature **F1405** comprised a NE-SW aligned linear feature, with an exposed length of 2m and width of 500mm. Hand-excavation revealed a steep-sloping profile and rounded base at a maximum depth of 300mm. It contained a single fill (1404), composed of a compact mid-dark brown silty clay containing occasional unworked flint and chert gravels and charcoal flecks. A moderate quantity of prehistoric worked flint and chert and a single unworked piece were recovered.

5.15 Trench 19 (Fig. 8d plan; 8e section)

This trench measured 15m x 1.8m in plan and was aligned approximately E-W. Topsoil and a subsoil (contexts 1900 and 1901), comprising a dark brown silty clay loam and a mid-dark brown silty clay, were removed to a maximum depth of 750mm onto natural subsoil (1904), where a single large possible pit and two modern land drains were revealed.

Excavated feature

Feature **F1903** comprised a large probable sub-circular pit, not fully exposed within the trench, but with dimensions present of 5.25 x 1.2m. Hand-excavation revealed a steep to moderately-sloping profile to a depth of at least 550mm (not bottomed). It contained a single exposed fill (1902), composed of a compact mid-dark brown silty clay containing occasional unworked flint and chert gravels and sparse charcoal flecks. A small quantity of prehistoric worked flint and a small fragment of modern bottle glass were recovered.

5.16 Trench 20 (Fig. 9a-b plans; 9c section, Plate 6)

This trench measured 20m x 1.8m in plan and was aligned approximately NE-SW. Topsoil (context 2000) composed of a mid-dark brown silty clay loam, and two layers of subsoil, comprising a light reddish-brown silty clay (2001) and a dark brown silty clay (2003), were removed to a maximum depth of 600mm onto natural subsoil (2007), where a single linear feature (F2005) and a mixed ill-defined deposit (2002) were revealed. An area that was initially thought to be linear feature was also investigated (2006), but this was a natural tree throw.

Excavated feature
Feature **F2005** comprised a NW-SE aligned linear feature, with a length exposed of 1.8m and width of 1.1m. Hand-excavation revealed a steep-sloping profile and flat base at a depth of 350mm. It contained a single fill (2004), composed of a compact mid-dark brown silty clay containing moderate unworked flint and chert gravels and sparse charcoal flecks. A small quantity of worked flint was recovered.

Deposit **2002** comprised a mixed ill-defined area of dark brown/light brown and reddish-brown silty clay, appearing scorched in places and containing frequent natural flint and chert gravels. Common charcoal flecks were also present. A comparatively large quantity of worked flint and chert was collected from the surface of this deposit.

5.17 Trench 21 (Fig. 9d plan; 9e-g sections)

This trench measured 20m x 1.8m in plan and was aligned approximately NW-SE. Topsoil (context 2100) composed of a mid-dark brown silty clay loam and three layers of subsoil, comprising a light reddish brown silty clay (2101), a dark brown silty clay (2102) and a light brown silty clay (2103), were removed to a maximum depth of 950mm onto natural subsoil (2106), where two parallel linear features (F2105 and F2108) were revealed. Subsoil layer 2103 was only present in the SE half of the trench.

*Excavated feature*s
Feature **F2105** comprised a NE-SW aligned linear feature, with a length exposed of 2m and width of 450mm. Hand-excavation revealed a steep-sloping profile and rounded base at a maximum depth of 250mm. It contained a single fill (2104), composed of a compact light brown silty clay containing occasional unworked flint and chert gravels and sparse charcoal flecks. A single worked flint bladelet was recovered.

Feature **F2108** comprised a NE-SW aligned linear feature, with a length exposed of 2m and width of 650mm. Hand-excavation revealed a steep-sloping profile and concave base at a maximum depth of 350mm. It contained a single fill (2107), composed of a mid-light brown silty clay containing moderate unworked flint and chert gravels. A single piece of prehistoric worked flint was recovered.

Table 1. Negative trenches

Trench	Depth below ground	Contexts	Comments
1	0 - 250mm 250 - 550mm 500mm+	100-Topsoil 101-Subsoil 102-Natural subsoil	Approximately E-W aligned and measuring 30m x 1.8m in plan. Topsoil composed of greyish-brown silty clay loam. Subsoil composed of light reddish-brown silty clay. A single piece of worked flint was recovered from the topsoil.
6	0 - 250mm 250 - 450mm 450 - 900mm 900mm+	600-Topsoil 601-Subsoil 602-Subsoil 603-Natural subsoil	E-W aligned and measuring 20m x 1.8m in plan. Topsoil composed of greyish-brown silty clay loam. Subsoils composed of light reddish-brown silty clay and dark brown silty clay. A small quantity of worked flint was recovered from layer 602.
7	0 - 300mm 300 - 600mm 600mm+	700-Topsoil 701-Subsoil 702-Natural subsoil	N E-SW aligned and measuring 20m x 1.8m in plan. Topsoil composed of greyish-brown silty clay loam. Subsoil composed of light reddish-brown silty clay. A small quantity of worked flint was recovered from layer 701.
8	0 - 250mm 250 - 450mm 450mm+	800-Topsoil 801-Subsoil 802-Natural subsoil	E-W aligned and measuring 15m x 1.8m in plan. Topsoil composed of greyish-brown silty clay loam. Subsoil composed of light reddish-brown silty clay. A piece of worked flint was recovered from 801.
15	0 - 250mm 250 - 450mm 450 - 800mm 800mm+	1500-Topsoil 1501-Subsoil 1502-Subsoil 1503-Natural subsoil	E-W aligned and measuring 20m x 1.8m in plan. Topsoil composed of greyish-brown silty clay loam. Subsoils composed of light reddish-brown silty clay and dark brown silty clay. A small quantity of worked flint was recovered from layers 1500 and 1501.
16	0 - 250mm 250 - 400mm 400 - 750mm 750mm+	1600-Topsoil 1601-Subsoil 1602-Subsoil 1603-Natural subsoil	Approximately NW-SE aligned and measuring 20m x 1.8m in plan. Topsoil composed of greyish-brown silty clay loam. Subsoils composed of light reddish-brown silty clay and dark brown silty clay.
17	0 - 200mm 200 - 450mm 450mm+	1700-Topsoil 1701-Subsoil 1702-Natural subsoil	NE-SW aligned and measuring 15m x 1.8m in plan. Topsoil composed of greyish-brown silty clay loam. Subsoil composed of light reddish-brown silty clay. A small quantity of worked flint was recovered from the topsoil.
18	0 - 200mm 200 - 500mm 500mm+	1800-Topsoil 1801-Subsoil 1802-Natural subsoil	E-W aligned and measuring 30 x 1.8m in plan. Topsoil composed of greyish-brown silty clay loam. Subsoil composed of light reddish-brown silty clay.

6. THE FINDS

6.1 All finds recovered on site have been retained, cleaned and marked where appropriate. Finds were then quantified according to material type within each context. The assemblage was then scanned by context to extract information regarding the range, nature and date of artefacts represented. This information is briefly discussed below. Finds totals by material type are given in Table 2.

6.2 **The pottery** by Emma Firth

A small quantity of pottery, eight sherds (21g) was recovered during trenching. The pottery is mainly small featureless sherds in poor condition. All of the pottery was recovered from features containing worked flint of prehistoric date, although a later date range is suggested for the pottery.

A single sherd, recovered from a layer of colluvium in Trench 4 (407) is quartz-tempered with rare chalk and flint. This sherd has a possible medieval date. Four sherds (9g) recovered from subsoil layer 1501, Trench 15, are very friable fine quartz fabric with small voids. The date of this fabric is uncertain, although it is possibly Romano-British. Ditch fill 408, Trench 4 also contained a very small sherd (1g) of this fine quartz fabric.

Ditch fill 204, Trench 2 contained two conjoining sherds (3g) of a similar fabric to that found in 1501, but with rare flint inclusions. Residue was present on the internal surface of one of these sherds. These are possibly late Iron Age in date.

6.3 **Lithic assessment** by Julian Richards

The assemblage consists of 119 pieces of worked stone (two pieces of burnt but unworked flint are also present). Raw material is flint and a variety of cherts, mainly an orange grainy type probably local to the site.

Flint (98 pieces) consists of 4 cores, 3 core fragments, 37 flakes, 2 blades, 17 broken flakes, 16 retouched flakes, a long end scraper, a fabricator, 1 retouched lump, 14 chips, 1 worked fragment and 1 burnt worked piece.

Chert (21 pieces) consists of 14 flakes, 2 broken flakes, 2 retouched flakes and 3 chips.

This assemblage is clearly a mixture of raw material, with the majority of the flint most probably obtained from the nearby much exploited source at Beer. In terms of date there are few individually diagnostic pieces although the two tools, a long end scraper from topsoil layer 1700, Trench 17 and a crude but convincing fabricator from ditch fill 904, Trench 9 suggest dates in the earlier and later Neolithic respectively. Layer 2002, Trench 20 contains a notched blade that appears to be of Mesolithic date but also includes a number of pieces that suggest recent gunflint manufacture. These include a number of flakes with the characteristically crushed platforms that suggest having been struck using a metal hammer. A typical gunflint core made on the side of a large flake came from ditch fill 411, Trench 4 and there may a small number of other pieces from this recent industry within other contexts. There is no indication from refitting material to suggest that areas of *in situ* knapping have been located, although a sample from deposit 2002, Trench 20, which was processed for artefact retrieval, contained a further 45 chips and small flakes (<30 grams) recovered from 500micron, 4mm and 5.6mm sieve meshes. These are not itemised in the catalogue below, or in Table 2.

Catalogue

Trench no.	Context	
1	100	1 flake
2	202	1 broken flake, 1 worked flint fragment, 1 orange chert flake
	204	3 flakes, 2 chips - flint
		3 flakes - chert
		1 burnt
3	300	3 flakes
4	402	2 chert flakes, one grey, one orange
	407	2 retouched flakes
	408	1 chip
	411	1 retouched flake (almost scraper)
		1 gunflint core (Wiltshire/Dorset type)
5	500	1 flake
6	602	flint – 2 flakes, 1 retouched (rolled),
		1 broken fragment from retouched flake/tool
		Grainy orange chert – 1 flake, 2 retouched flakes
		(V mixed bag – all very chunky) 7
7	701	1 flake, 1 retouched flake
8	801	1 flake
9	901	2 flakes
	902	1 flake
	904	1 fabricator
10	1005	1 chert chip
		1 flint chip
		1 flint blade
11	1100	1 core, 1 flake, 1 broken flake
12	1200	1 broken flake
		1 flake (cortical suggest modern)
	1202	1 flake (cherty flint), 1 broken flake
13	1300	2 flakes
	1303	1 chert flake
	1304	1 chip
	1310	1 core fragment, 1 broken flake, 2 retouched flakes
	1312	1 flake, 1 burnt worked, 2 chips (flint)
		1 flake orange chert
14	1401	1 ? core rejuvenation flake
	1402	1 flake, 1 chip
	1404	5 flakes, 1 broken flake, 1 chip – flint
		2 flakes, 1 broken flake –chert
		1 burnt unworked
15	1500	1 retouched flake
	1501	1 core fragment, 1 broken flake
17	1700	1 broken flake, 2 retouched flakes, 1 long end scraper
		1 flake grey grainy chert
19	1902	1 flint chip, 2 chert chips
20	2001	1 retouched flake
		1 retouched thermal piece
	2002	This is a mixture of prehistoric and modern. Identifiable modern material is fresh and metal hammer struck (gunflint manufacture?)
		'Modern' 4 flakes, 7 broken flakes, 4 chips
		Prehistoric – 4 flakes, 1 broken flake, 1 notched blade
		1 chert flake.
	2004	1 broken flake, 1 large broken flake orange chert
	2006	1 flint flake, 1 grey chert flake
21	2100	1 flake core, 1 ? core fragment, 1 retouched 'lump',
		1 retouched flake (?borer), 1 ? gunflint core
	2104	1 bladelet
	2107	1 flake

6.4 Other finds

Only a small quantity of other finds was recovered and these comprise two small modern bottle glass fragments from ditch fill 103, Trench 1 and pit fill 1902, Trench 19, 27 iron nails from ditch fill 1003, Trench 10 and a small quantity of modern tile, also from contexts 103 and 1500. Three pieces of burnt unworked stone were recovered from the ring ditch in Trench 13.

Table 2. Finds quantification (weight is in grams)

Trench	Context Number	Feature Description	Burnt stone		Tile		Fe nails		Burnt flint		Lithics		Glass		Pottery	
			No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt
1	100	Topsoil									1	16				
1	103	Fill of ditch F104			1	59							1	3		
2	202	Fill of ditch F203									3	47				
2	204	Fill of ditch F205							1	16	8	74			2	3
3	300	Topsoil									3	42				
4	402	Fill of ditch F404									2	82				
4	407	Colluvium									2	104			1	8
4	408	Fill of ditch F409									1	2			1	1
4	411	Fill of ditch F404									2	93				
5	500	Topsoil									1	7				
6	602	Subsoil									7	290				
7	701	Subsoil									2	13				
8	801	Subsoil									1	3				
9	901	Subsoil									2	9				
9	902	Fill of ditch F903									1	4				
9	904	Fill of ditch F905									1	27				
10	1003	Fill of ditch F1004					27	287								
10	1005	Tree-throw									3	4				
11	1100	Topsoil									3	84				
12	1200	Topsoil									2	27				
12	1202	Fill of ditch F1203									2	23				
13	1300	Topsoil									2	38				
13	1301	Subsoil														
13	1303	Fill of F1307									1	3				
13	1304	Fill of F1309	3	190							1	1				
13	1305	Fill of posthole														
13	1310	Fill of posthole									4	45				
13	1312	Fill of ditch F1313									5	30				
14	1401	Subsoil									1	24				
14	1402	Fill of ditch F1403									2	5				
14	1404	Fill of ditch F1405							1	13	10	85				
15	1500	Topsoil			1	18					1	3				
15	1501	Subsoil									2	15			4	9
17	1700	Topsoil									5	112				
19	1902	Fill of pit F1903									3	5	1	1		
20	2001	Subsoil									2	49				
20	2002	Spread									22	150				
20	2004	Fill of ditch F2005									2	37				
20	2006	Fill of tree throw									2	36				
21	2100	Topsoil									5	308				
21	2104	Fill of ditch F2105									1	1				
21	2107	Fill of ditch F2108									1	5				
Totals:			**3**	**190**	**2**	**77**	**27**	**287**	**2**	**29**	**119**	**1903**	**2**	**4**	**8**	**21**

7. DISCUSSION

7.1 The evaluation has established that archaeological features are present across large parts of the site and, with exceptions, these mainly comprise a network of ditches and gullies of varying size, profile and orientation. Other features recorded include a ring ditch and associated features towards the centre of the site in Trench 13, a large pit towards the southern end in Trench 19 which contained modern glass as well as worked flint and a spread/deposit towards the southwest corner in Trench 20, which contained a large quantity of worked flint and charcoal. The distribution of all archaeological features recorded is shown on Fig. 10.

7.2 The linear features recorded formed no obvious pattern and are likely to relate to various phases of land drainage and field division from the prehistoric through to the post-medieval period. Other than worked stone, there was a general paucity of artefacts recovered from these feature types, so it is difficult to be certain of dates; in some cases diagnostically prehistoric lithics were found in association with later finds such as pottery and post-medieval gun flints. It is probable, at least in some instances, that the prehistoric lithics became incorporated into features through general silting and cultivation, as there was also a reasonable quantity of material present within overlying layers.

7.3 The ring ditch identified in Trench 13 was approximately 7m in diameter and also had associated features comprising two postholes. Ring ditches are generally thought to represent either drip gullies surrounding later prehistoric roundhouses or quarry ditches from now ploughed-out Bronze Age barrows, although its relatively small diameter and the presence of postholes indicates that the former function is more likely. Only a small quantity of worked flint was recovered from features within this trench.

7.4 The deposit of soil and burnt material identified in Trench 20 (2002) was not excavated, but contained a large quantity of worked flint and chert which, as well as including diagnostically prehistoric material, also comprises a significant number of pieces from gunflint manufacture. This later material cannot date to earlier than the 17th century, with flintlocks in use well into the 19th century.

7.5 The character of the archaeological features present at this site is not dissimilar to those encountered at Honeyditches during investigations in 1978 (Silvester 1981). The Honeyditches site is located *c*. 800m to the southwest, and there too a complex network of linear features as well as circular gullies were present. The dates of the linear features at Honeyditches were generally thought to span the late Iron Age and Romano-British periods, but there they were located adjacent to known settlements of these dates, so artefacts were far more prevalent than at Harepath Hill. However, two ditches at this site (F205 and F409) contained pottery of late Iron Age or Romano British date.

8. CONCLUSIONS

8.1 The geophysical survey of the site contains mixed results if compared with what was identified in the trenches. The presence of the ring ditch and many of the linear features has been confirmed by the trenching, although it is unlikely that a prehistoric enclosure is located in the northwest portion of the site. There was also a number of other linear features in the trenches, none of which were recognised by the geophysics, although in some cases the initial interpretation has obviously been influenced by variations in the natural subsoil**.**

8.2 There is a variable amount of soil cover on the site, with the deeper and more layered sequence located on the lower-lying ground towards the west side of the site, where colluvial deposits have formed. With the exception of two large modern services alongside the northern boundary, the archaeology across the remainder of the site appears to be generally well-preserved.

8.3 What is clear from these investigations is that the character of the archaeology on the site has been established, with the principal features comprising the ring ditch, the linear ditches and gullies, and the spread of burnt material in Trench 20 which contained both

prehistoric and post-medieval flints and chert. There was generally a paucity of certain dating evidence for most features and in many cases where finds were present, material from different periods was represented. The earliest finds recorded on the site comprised worked flint diagnostic to the Mesolithic period, with the latest post-medieval and modern tile, glass and gunflint.

9. ARCHIVE

9.1 The paper and digital archive and finds are currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, in Unit 4 Halthaies Workshops, Bradninch, Nr Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ. They will be deposited at Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter under the accession number 316/2008, along with any archive generated as part of any further archaeological work undertaken on the site.

10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

10.1 The evaluation was commissioned by Mark Mabey on behalf of Magna Housing Association Ltd. The fieldwork was carried out by Chris Caine, Simon Hughes, Steve Robinson and Richard Sims and the drawings for this report were prepared by Sarah Cottam.

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Valentin, J., 2008a, *A proposed development at Harepath Hill, Seaton: Archaeology and cultural heritage assessment and geophysical survey*. Unpublished AC archaeology report, ref. ACD06/1/0.

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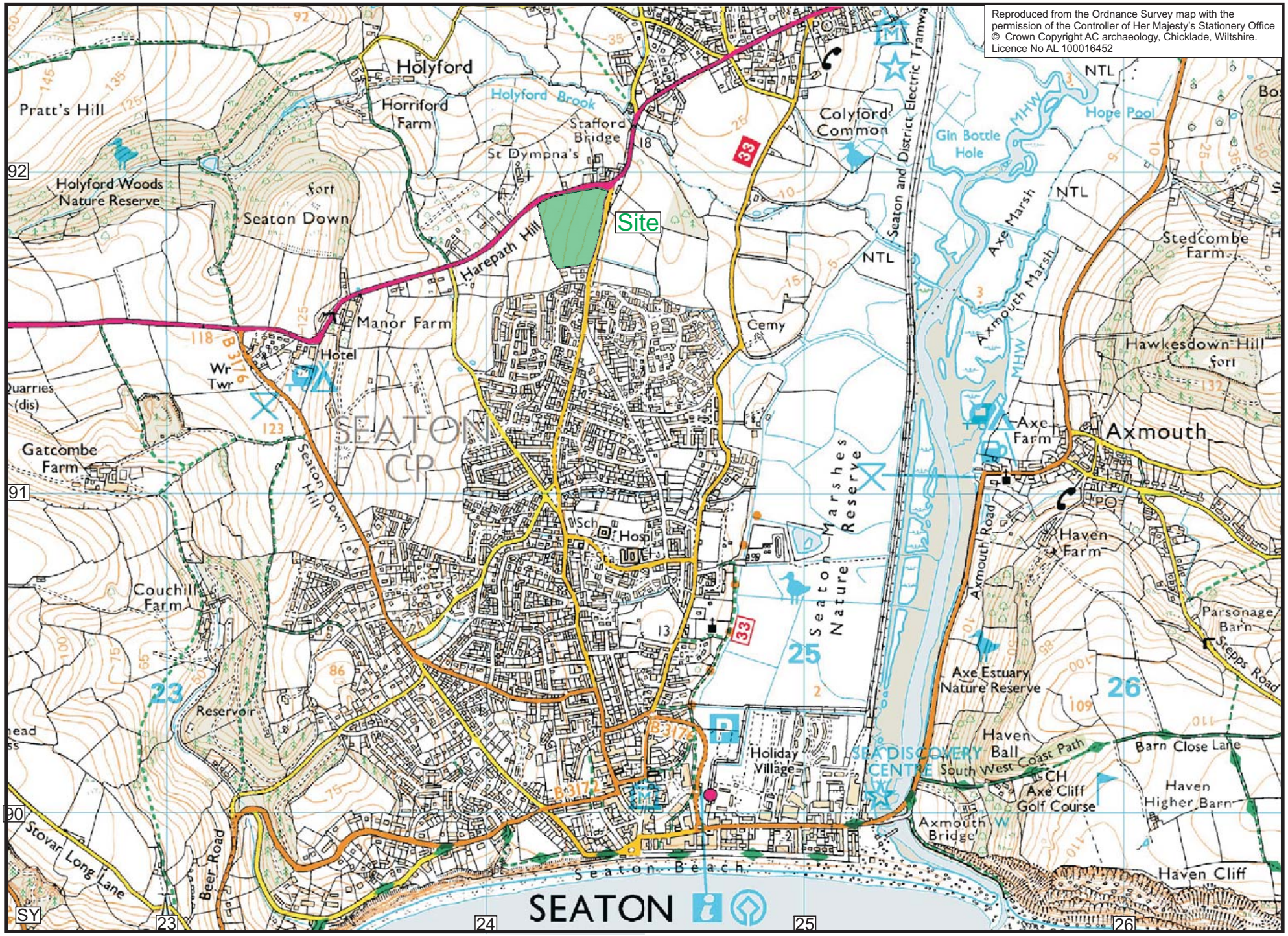


Fig. 1: Site location

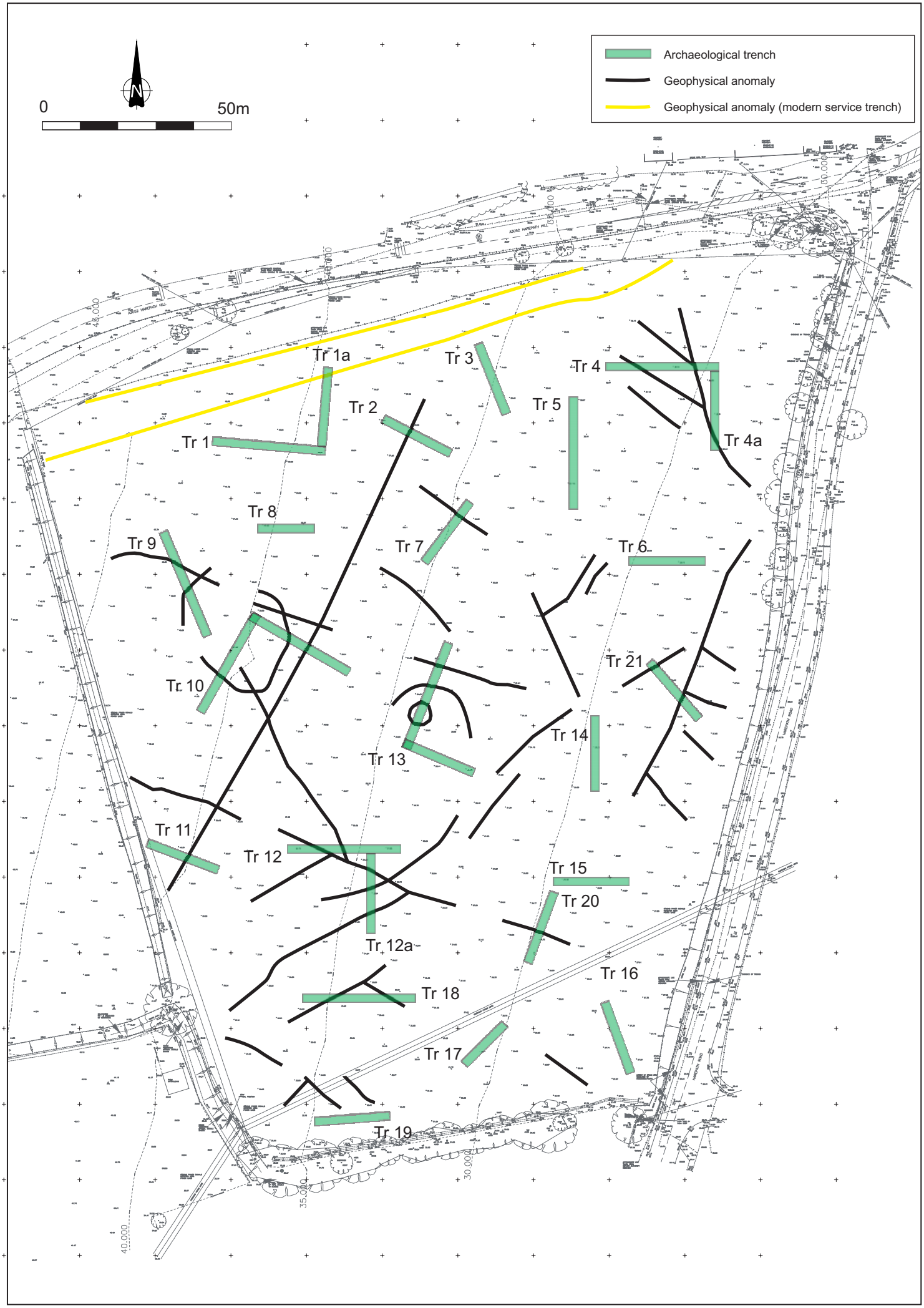


Fig. 2: Trench locations in relation to recorded geophysical anomalies

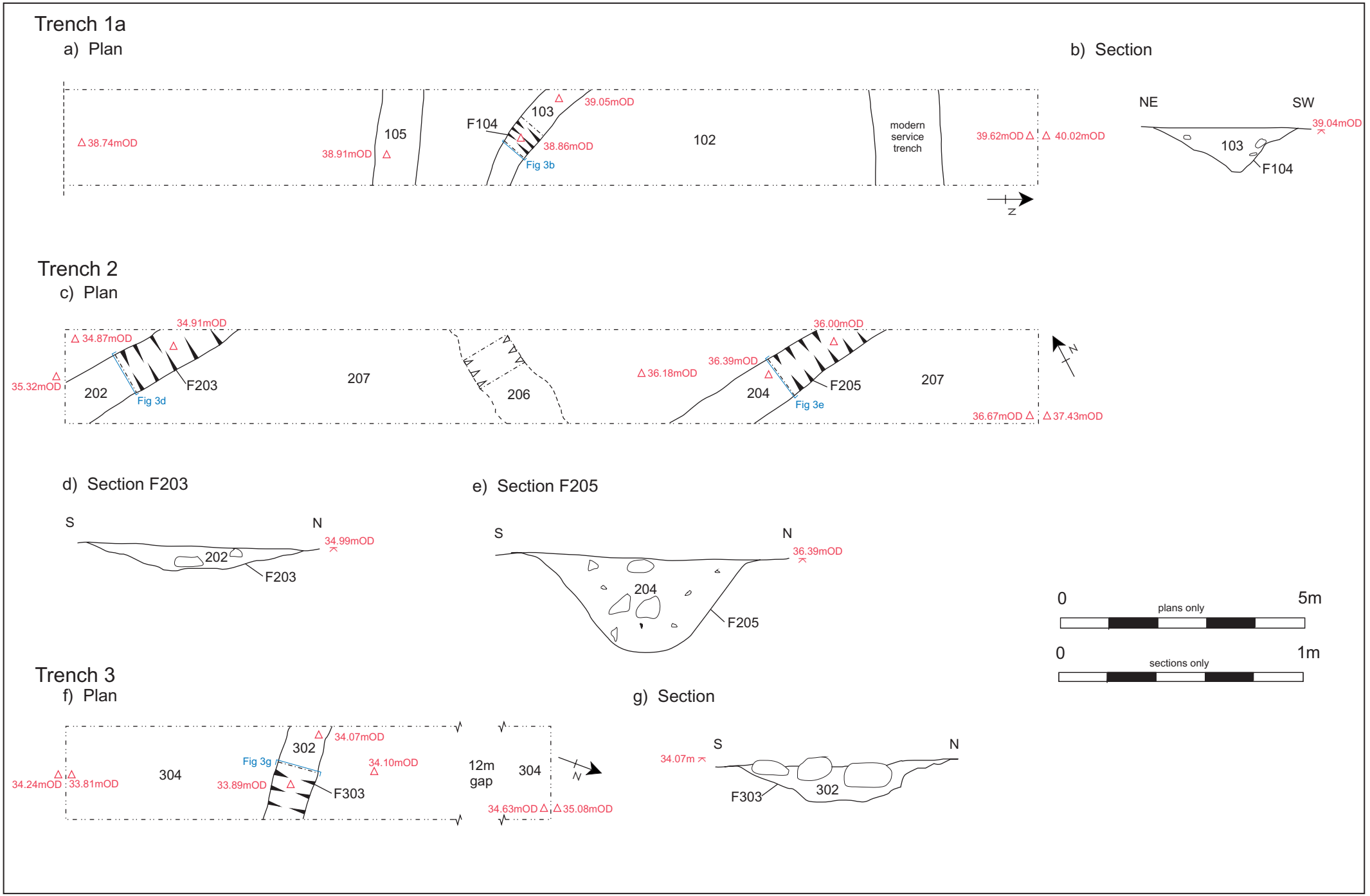


Fig. 3: Plans and sections, Trenches 1-3

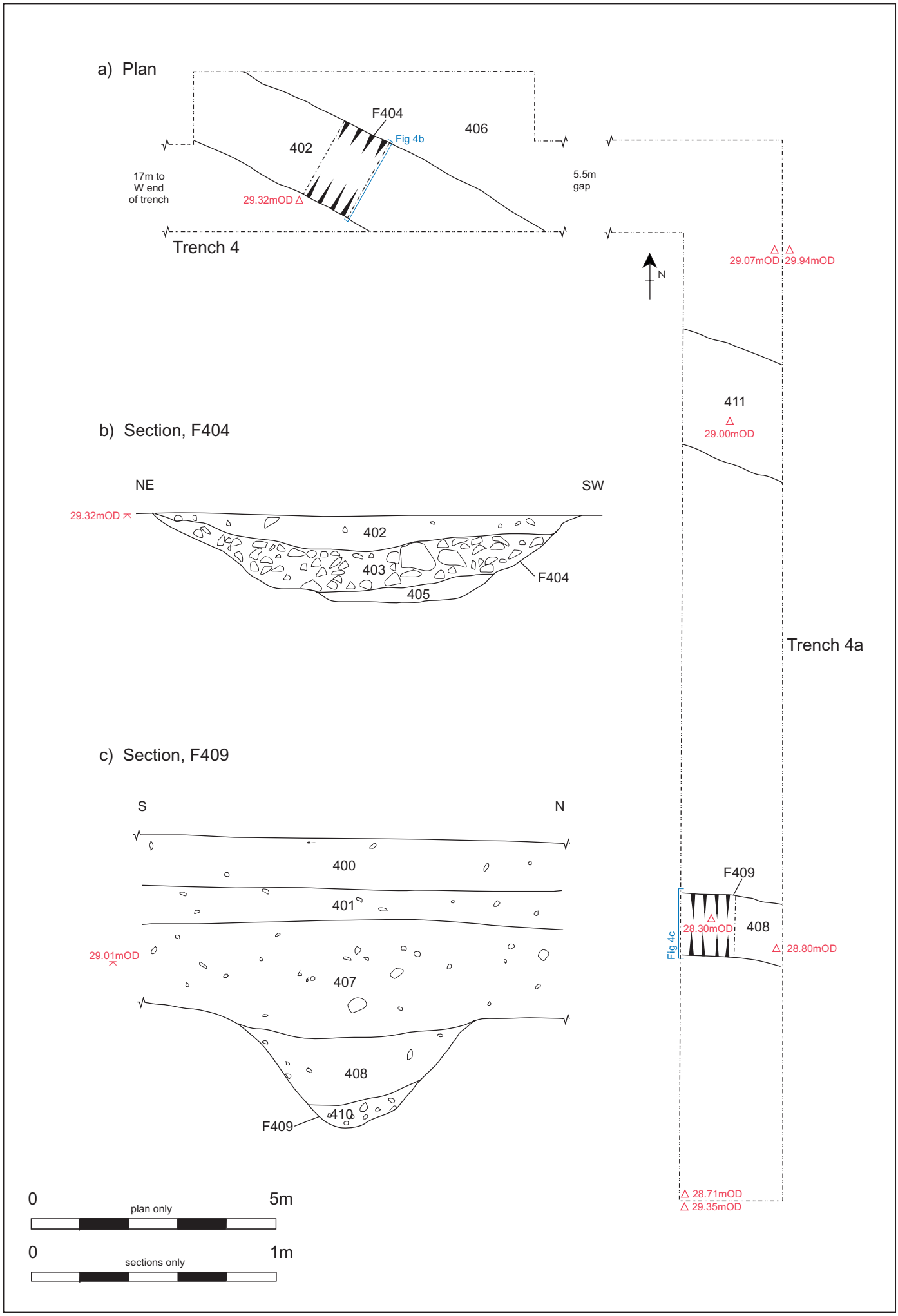


Fig. 4: Plan and sections, Trench 4 and 4a

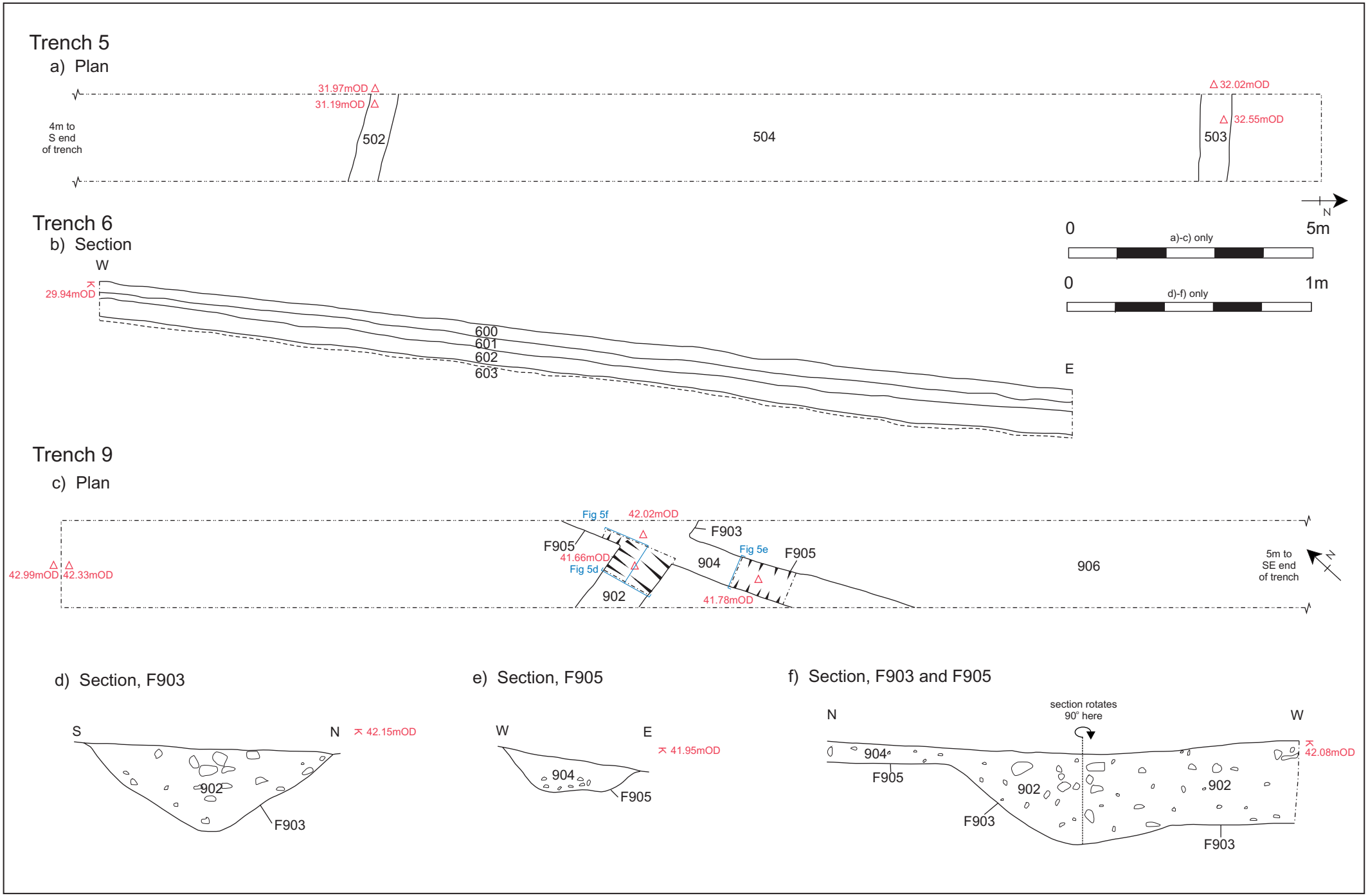


Fig. 5: Plans and sections, Trenches 5, 6 and 9

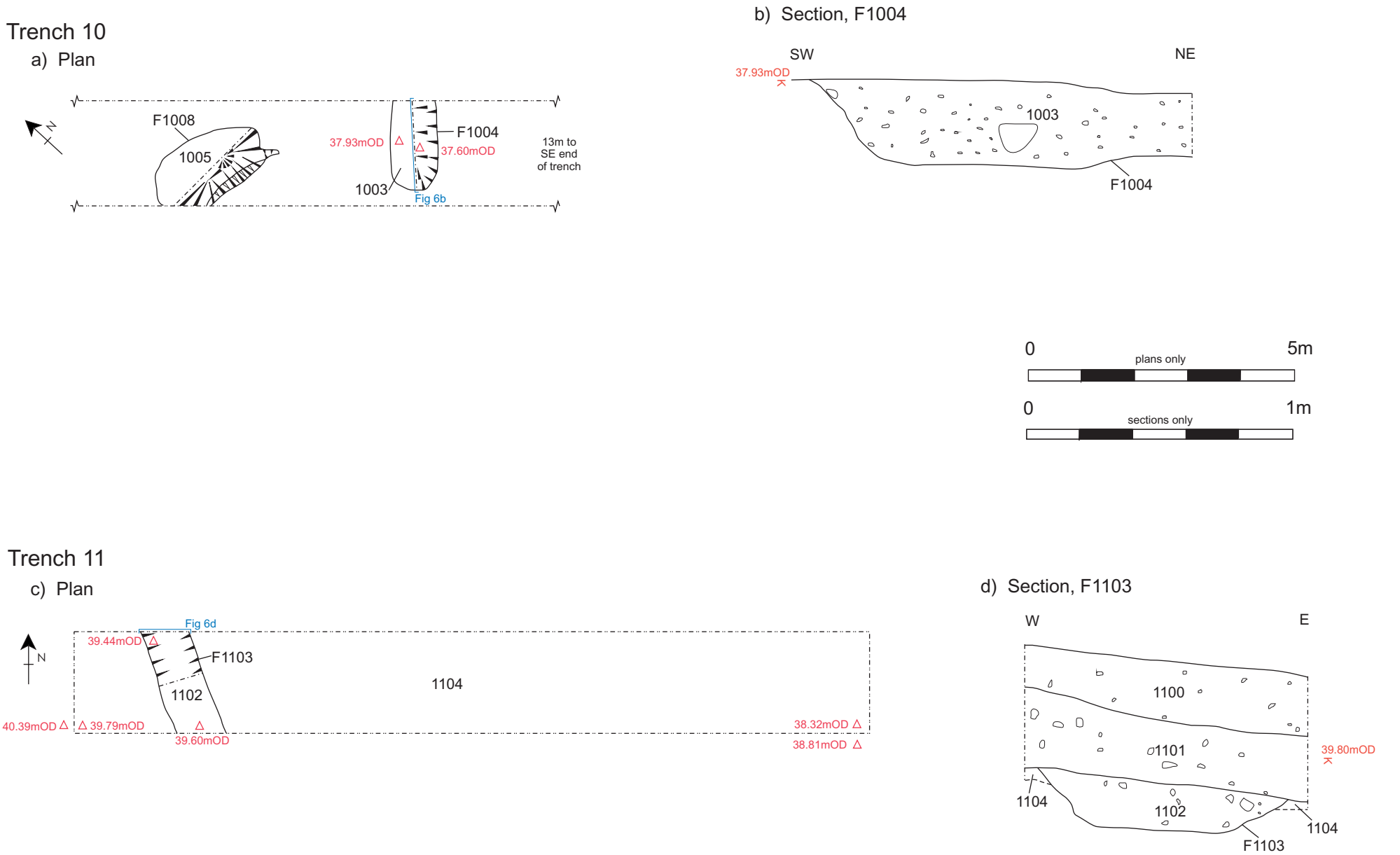
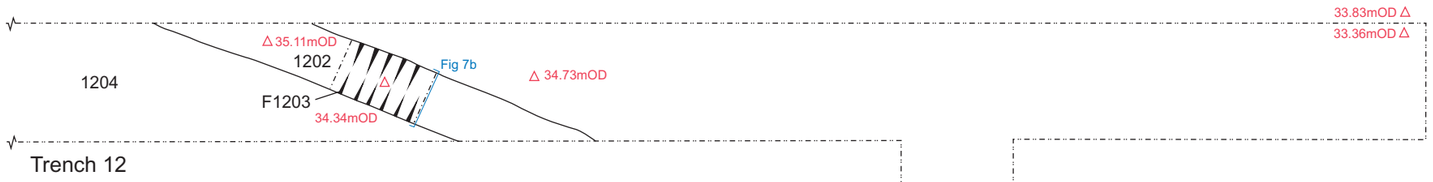


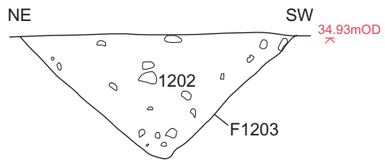
Fig. 6: Plans and sections, Trenches 10 and 11

Trench 12 and 12a

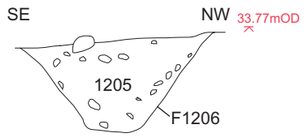
a) Plan



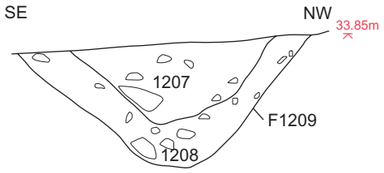
b) Section, F1203



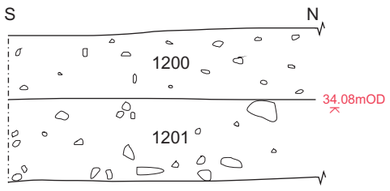
c) Section, F1206

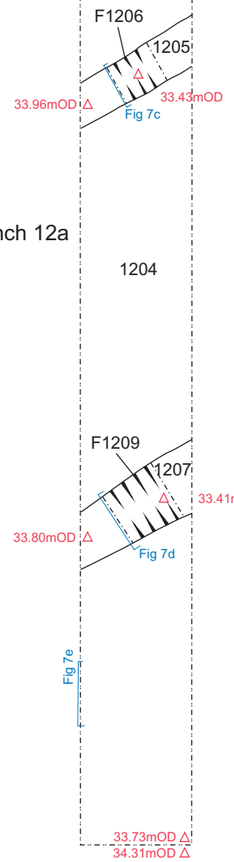


d) Section, F1209



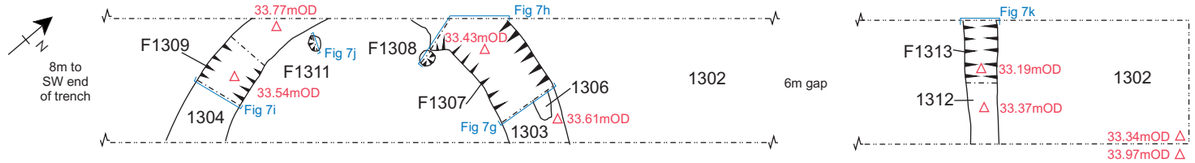
e) Representative section





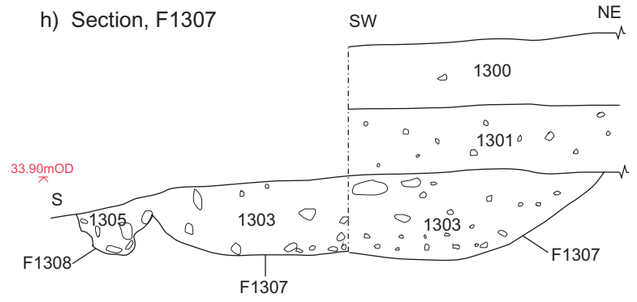
Trench 13

f) Plan

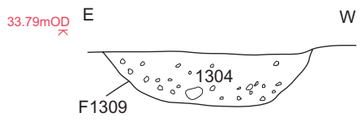


g) Section, F1307

h) Section, F1307



i) Section, F1309



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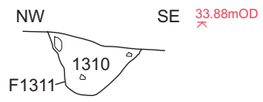

k) Section, F1313

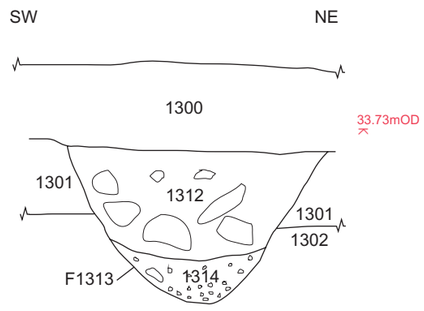

Fig. 7:
Plans and sections, Trenches 12, 12a and 13

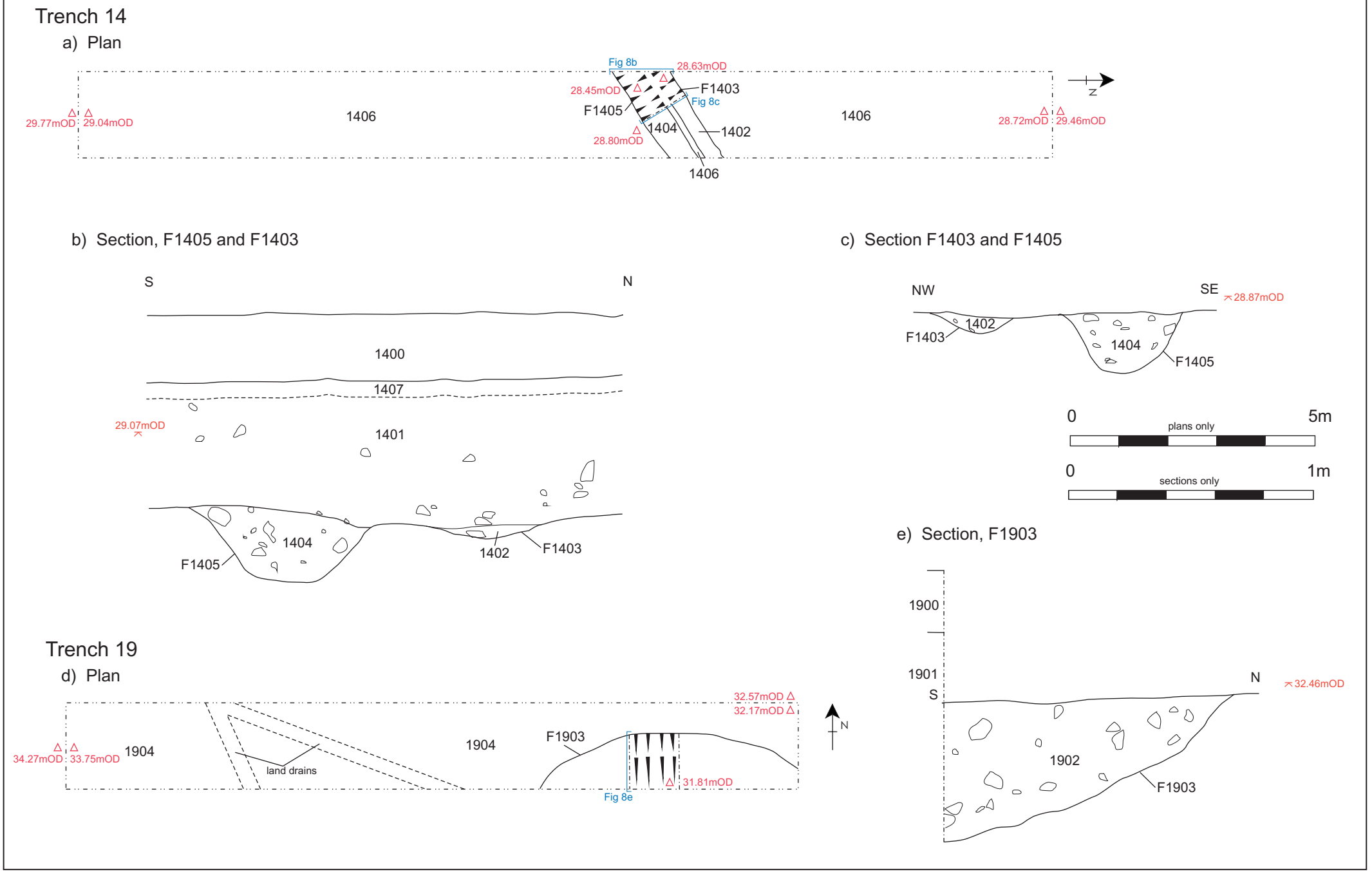

Fig. 8: Plans and sections, Trenches 14 and 19

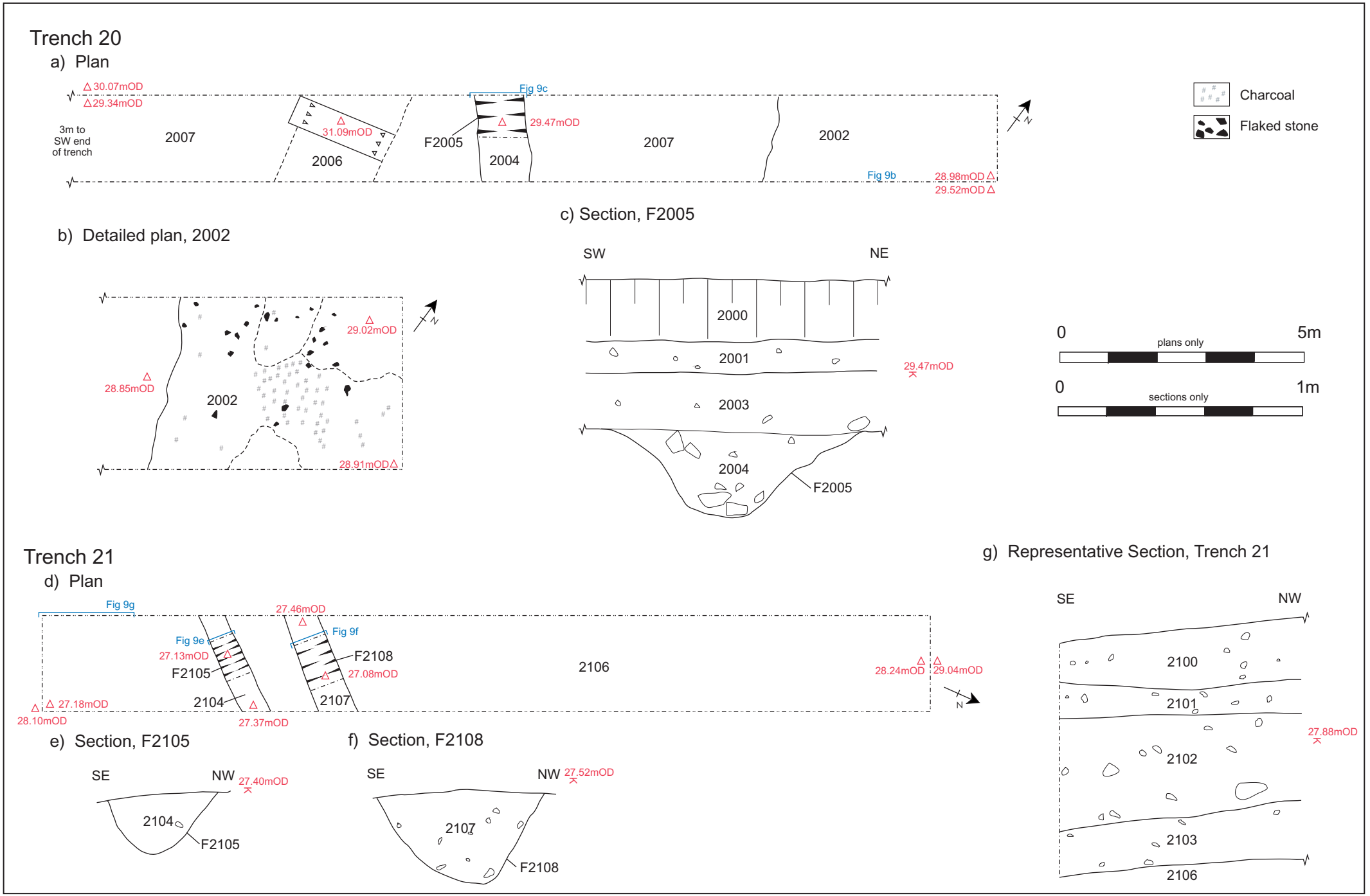

Fig. 9: Plans and sections, Trenches 20 and 21

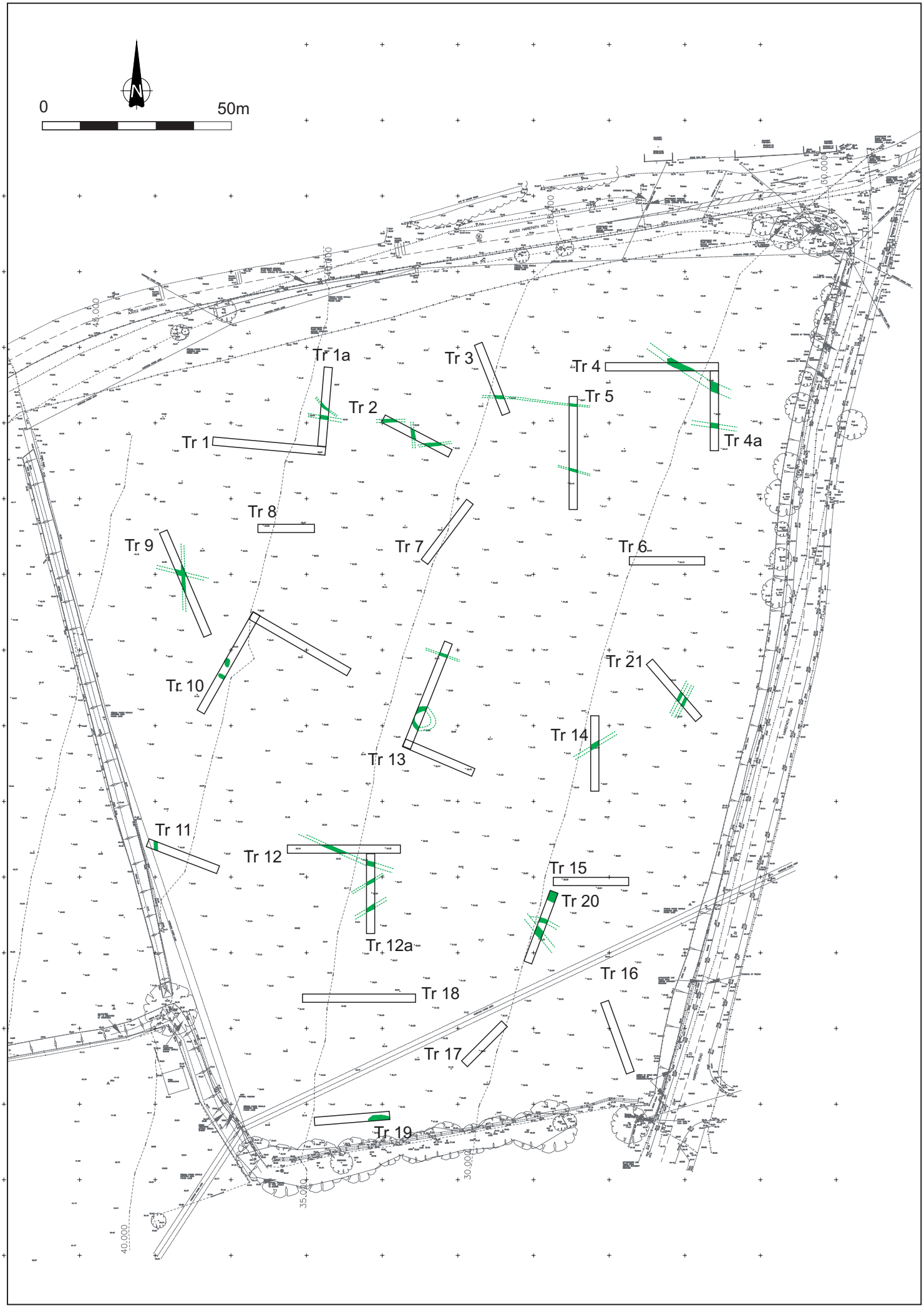

Fig. 10: Interpretive plan showing all features

Plate 1: General view of site from SW. Trench 11 is in the foreground

Plate 2: East facing section of F205, Trench 2 (Scales 0.5m and 2m)

Plate 3: General view of Trench 4 from the east (Scale 2m)

Plate 4: NW facing section, F1203, Trench 12 (Scale 0.5m)

Plate 5: Circular feature F1307/F1309, Trench 13.
View from SW (Scales 2m)

Plate 6: Deposit 2002, Trench 20, showing worked flint on surface.
View fromSE (Scale 1m)

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