

Old Tennis Courts Site, Station Road, Hemyock

NGR ST 13740 13346

Results of an archaeological trench evaluation

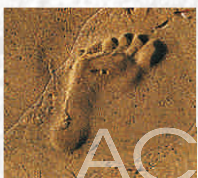
Planning ref. Mid Devon District Council 11/00020/FULL

Prepared by
Simon Hughes

On behalf of
Hemyock Parish Hall
Management Committee

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AC archaeology

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(NGR ST 13740 13346)

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Summary

An archaeological trench evaluation was carried out by AC archaeology during March 2011 on the site of eight proposed new flats at the Old Tennis Courts, Station Road, Hemyock, Devon (NGR ST 13740 13346). The site occupies an area of around 1000m² and is located to the northeast of the main historic core of the village. The main archaeological interest in the site is that recent investigations in the village have identified evidence for late medieval and post-medieval pottery production and probable medieval ironworking. These activities were generally undertaken on the fringes of historic settlement.

The evaluation comprised the machine-excavation of three trenches, with a combined length of 31m and each trench 1.9m wide. With the exception of modern drains, no archaeological features were present and no early finds recovered. It is likely that the construction of the tennis courts in the second half of the 20th century involved initial landscaping, whereby the original soil profiles were removed and replaced by imported clays to create a level surface.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 An archaeological trench evaluation carried out in support of a planning application for the construction of eight flats on land at the Old Tennis Courts site, Station Road, Hemyock, Devon (NGR ST 13740 13346), was undertaken by AC archaeology during March 2011. The work was commissioned by West of England Developments Ltd on behalf of Hemyock Parish Hall Management Committee.
- 1.2 The proposed development site is situated to the northeast of the main village centre and comprises a square plot of land of c. 1000m², currently level and mainly covered with tarmac (Fig. 1 & Plate 1). The site lies at around 135mOD, with the underlying solid geology comprising Triassic Mercia Mudstone.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The site is located to the northeast of the historic core of the village, with a settlement at Hemyock likely to have been present during the Saxon period. The castle was constructed during the late 14th century. Recent archaeological work within the village includes the excavation of a medieval ironworking and late-medieval/early post-medieval pottery production site at Churchills Farm, c. 280m to the south. Investigations at the Hemyock Motors site, c. 110m to the southwest, identified pits and layers containing waster sgraffito dishes dating to between 1580-1620 (Hughes 2009). The results from both sites indicate that pottery production was being undertaken in the vicinity of the village for a period of around 200-300 years in the late medieval and post-medieval periods, although no *in situ* kilns have yet been found.
- 2.2 The Hemyock parish tithe map of 1843 shows this part of the village as undeveloped, with the site part of a large open field. The accompanying apportionment of 1841 names the field as 'Town Mead', with the land-use at this time meadow. The field, as well as much of the surrounding land, was part of Hillhays tenement which was owned by Elizabeth Posuma Timcoe and occupied by Henry Manley.
- 2.3 By 1888, the Ordnance Survey 25-inch first-edition map depicts the site as still within the same large field, although immediately to the south the village school had been built. There are no changes on the 1903 second edition map.

3. AIMS

- 3.1 The aim of the evaluation was to establish the presence or absence, extent, depth, character and date of any archaeological features, deposits or finds within the site, with particular reference to any evidence for early pottery production or ironworking. The results of the work as set out in this report will be reviewed and used to inform any subsequent mitigation as a condition of planning permission, if granted.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The evaluation was undertaken following consultation with the Archaeology Officer, Devon County Council. It comprised the machine-excavation of three trenches totalling 31m in length, with each trench 1.9m wide (Fig. 2). This represents an approximate 6% sample of the total site area. Each trench was excavated using a mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket and working under constant archaeological supervision.
- 4.2 The site was recorded in accordance with the 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*. All plans were drawn at a scale of 1:50 and sections at 1:10. All levels have been related to Ordnance Datum. All spoil heaps were scanned for displaced finds.

5. RESULTS

- 5.1 The results from all trenches are described in detail below, with relevant sections included as Fig. 2 and photographs as Plates 1-4.
- 5.2 **Trench 1** (Representative section Fig. 2c; Plate 2)
This trench was located towards the northwest corner of the site, was north to south aligned and 8m long. It was excavated to a depth of 0.83m onto natural subsoil (context 103), which comprised a mottled light reddish-yellow clay with common gravel inclusions. The natural subsoil was overlain by a 0.6m thick deposit of made ground (102), composed of a mid brownish-grey re-deposited clay natural subsoil. Layer 102 was below stone hardcore (101) for the current tarmac surface (100). No archaeological features or deposits were present and no finds were recovered.
- 5.3 **Trench 2** (Plan Fig. 2a, section 2b; Plates 3 & 4)
This trench was east to west aligned, 17m long and excavated to a depth of 0.45m onto natural subsoil (203), which comprised a light reddish-yellow clay with moderately common gravel inclusions. The natural subsoil was cut by an approximately east to west aligned early 20th century ceramic land-drain system (F204, fill 205) that had branches extending to the north and northeast. The overlying layers comprised mid grey clay made ground (202), below the hardcore (201) and tarmac (200). One sherd of late 19th century blue and white transfer print pottery and a fragment of late 19th to 20th century transparent bottle glass were present in fill 205 (not retained).
- 5.4 **Trench 3** (Plan Fig. 2d, section 2e)
This trench was north to south aligned, 6m long and was excavated to a depth of 0.62m onto natural subsoil (303), which comprised a light brownish-grey clay with abundant gravel inclusions. The natural subsoil was overlain by a mixed made ground layer (302), composed of mid brownish-grey and mid reddish-brown clays. This was below stone hardcore (301) and tarmac (300). At the north end of the trench, layer 303 was cut by a 0.4m wide stone rubble land drain (F304, fill 305). No finds were recovered from Trench 3.

6. COMMENTS

- 6.1** With the exception of modern land-drains, no archaeological features were present and no early finds recovered. It is likely that the construction of the tennis courts in the second half of the 20th century involved initial landscaping, whereby the original soil profiles were removed and replaced by imported clays to create a level surface.
- 6.2** Based on the results of the work, it is considered very unlikely that the construction of the new flats will have an impact on any below ground archaeological remains. It is also doubtful that there will be even localised survival of any features, deposits or finds.

7. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

- 7.1** The paper and digital archive is currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, Bradninch, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ.
- 7.2** The OASIS (Online AccesS to the Index of Archaeological InvestigationS) number for this project is 96266.

8. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

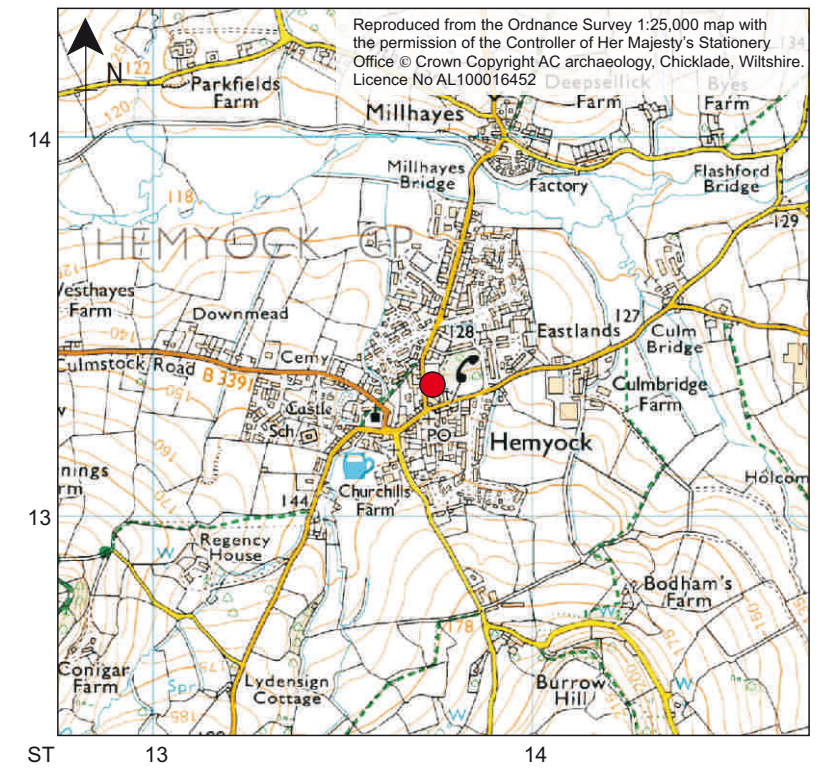
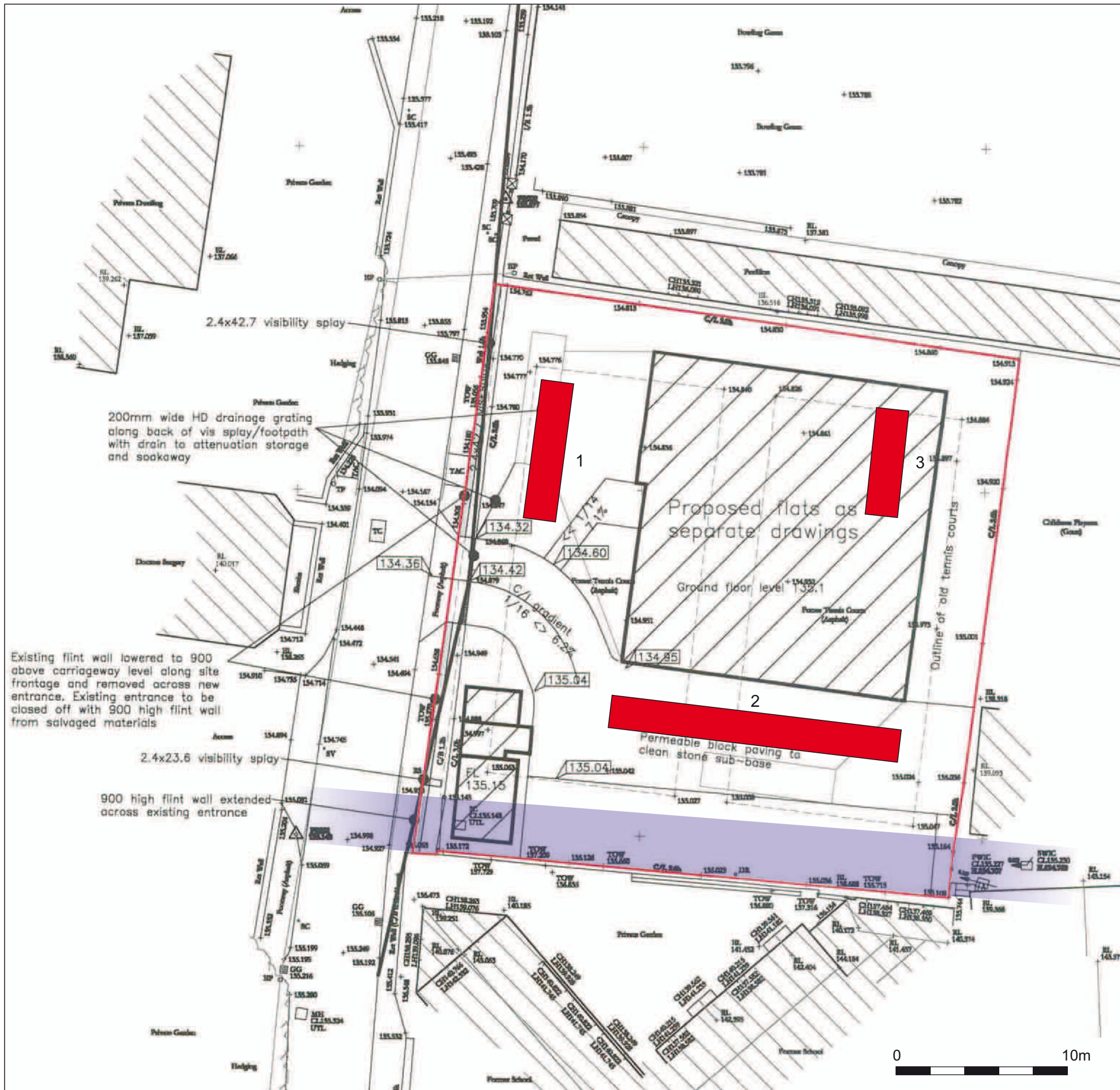
The evaluation was commissioned by Andy Lehner of West of England Developments Ltd on behalf of Hemyock Parish Hall Management Committee. The site trial trenching was carried out by Simon Hughes and Naomi Hughes, with the illustrations for this report prepared by Cain Hegarty. The advice and collaboration of Ann Dick and Stephen Reed, Devon Archaeology Officers, are duly acknowledged.

9. SOURCES CONSULTED

Devon Record Office, Hemyock parish tithe map, 1843 and apportionment, 1841

Hughes, S., 2009, *Results of a trench evaluation on land at Hemyock Motors, Culmstock Road, Hemyock, Devon: Interim Archaeological Statement*. AC archaeology unpublished report, ref. ACD44/2/0

Ordnance Survey 25-inch Devonshire sheet 47.3, surveyed 1888, published 1889, revised 1903, published 1905



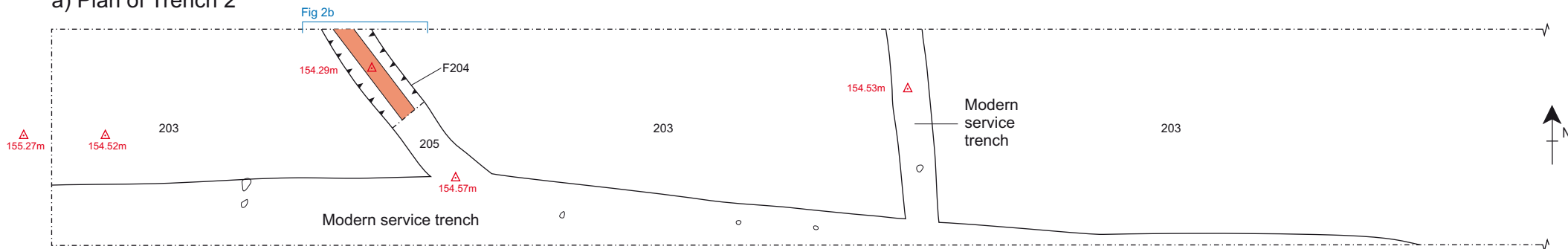
- Trench Location and number
- Sewer trench

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Hemyock Tennis Courts

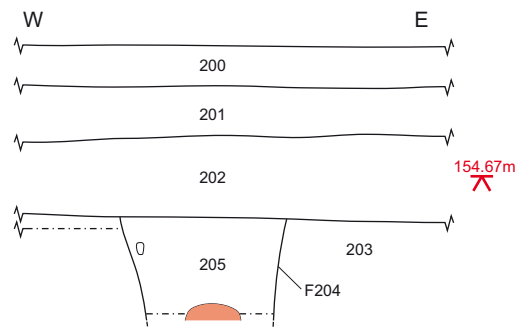
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Fig 1: Site and trench locations



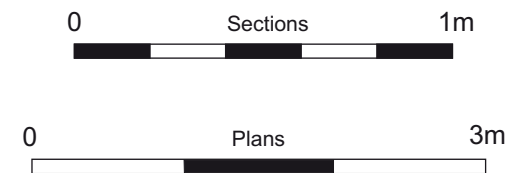
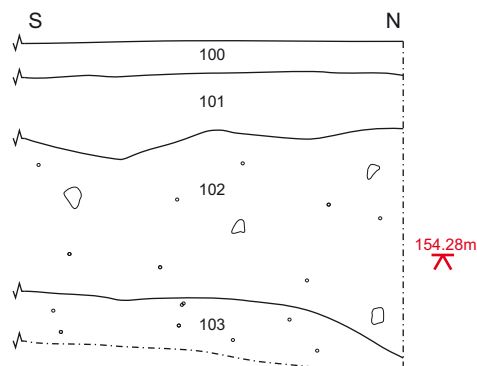
a) Plan of Trench 2



b) Section of Trench 2

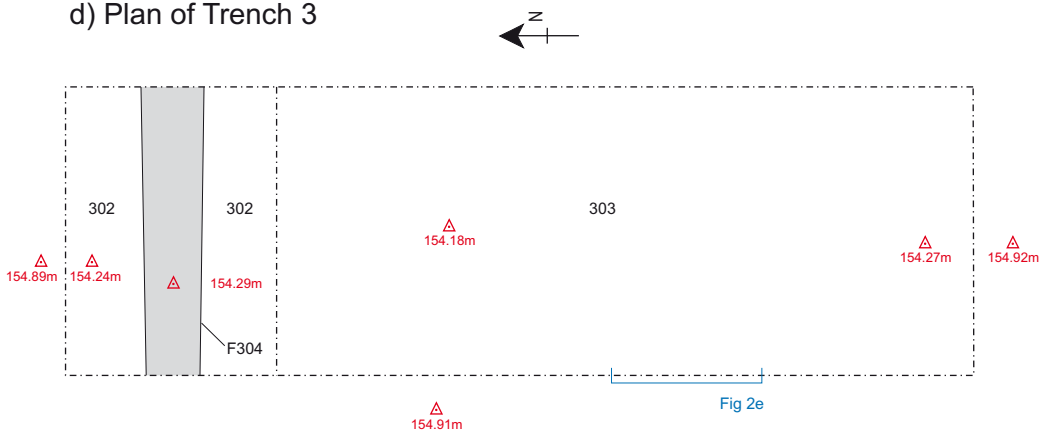


c) Representative section of Trench 1

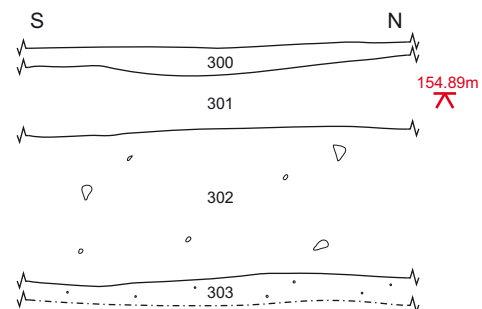


- Ceramic drainpipe
- Stone land drain

d) Plan of Trench 3



e) Representative section of Trench 3



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Fig 2: Plans and sections





Plate 1. General view of site from Trench 3, looking southwest



Plate 2. Trench 1, east-facing sample section. View to west (scale 1m)



Plate 3. Trench 2 general view, including drain F204, looking to east (scale 1m)



Plate 4, Trench 2, south-facing section of ceramic drain F204. View to north (scale 1m)

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