

Archaeological Watching Brief  
at  
**KINGS WESTON ROMAN VILLA,  
LONG CROSS, BRISTOL.**  
for  
Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery



Report No. 2628/2013  
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By Tracey Smith



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**KINGS WESTON ROMAN VILLA,  
LONG CROSS, BRISTOL.**

Centred on  
N.G.R. ST 53372 77554

Client: Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery

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### Abbreviations

AD	Anno Domini	C	Century
aOD	Above Ordnance Datum	DCLG	Dept. for Communities & Local Government
BaRAS	Bristol & Region Archaeological Services	DCMS	Dept. for Culture Media & Sport
BC	Before Christ	EH	English Heritage
BCC	Bristol City Council	EHA	English Heritage Archive
BCL	Bristol Central Library	IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
BCMAG	Bristol City Museum & Art Gallery	Km	Kilometre
BHER	Bristol Historic Environment Record	m	Metre
BL	British Library	NGR	National Grid Reference
BRO	Bristol Record Office	OS	Ordnance Survey
c	Circa		

### NOTE

Notwithstanding that Bristol and Region Archaeological Services have taken reasonable care to produce a comprehensive summary of the known and recorded archaeological evidence, no responsibility can be accepted for any omissions of fact or opinion, however caused.

January, 2013.

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## **SUMMARY**

An archaeological watching brief was carried out during groundworks associated with the excavation of a metre square soak-away located outside the north-west corner of the visitor centre, Kings Weston Roman Villa, Bristol.

The groundworks revealed a substantial layer of 1940s excavation backfill, which in the main area of the trench lay directly over natural but which at the north-east section covered the remains of the previously excavated Roman drain and a cut feature, later then the drain, backfilled with light industrial waste.

## **LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS**

### **Figures**

- Figure 1      Site location plan
- Figure 2      Plan showing study area in detail
- Figure 3      Villa ground plan (after Boon 1950) and trench position
- Figure 4      1 :10 scale drawing of the eastern section of the trench, looking east

### **Plates**

- Cover      Location of soak-away outside south-western wall of villa building
- Plate 1      South-west facing section of soak-away after excavation

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Bristol and Region Archaeological Services (BaRAS) were commissioned by Bristol City Museum to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the construction of a soak-away in the north-west corner of the Kings Weston Villa complex.
- 1.2 The watching brief was commissioned to comply with scheduled monument consent.
- 1.3 The fieldwork was undertaken on the 2nd February 2012 under the supervision of Tracey Smith who also compiled this report.
- 1.4 The project archive will be deposited with Bristol City Museum & Art Gallery under the Accession Number 2012/64 and a copy of the report will be made available to the National Monuments Record maintained by English Heritage. The project has been entered in the Bristol Historic Environment Record as: BHER 25086 and in the OASIS Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations as: bristola1-118116.

## **2. THE SITE**

- 2.1 The site (centred on NGR 53372 77554) lies on the southern side of Long Cross, Lawrence Weston, Bristol, at 10.15m aOD.
- 2.2 The geology of the study area comprises Keuper Marl, coming off of a band of limestone which forms the hill to the south of the villa (British Geological Survey 1984).

### **3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Kings Weston Roman Villa was originally discovered during the construction of the Long Cross road that served the new housing estate at Lawrence Weston. Construction of the road removed the northern half of the villa before it could be recorded, however, the southern half was excavated and recorded by G. Boon and J. Brown in 1948.
- 3.2 Their excavations identified at least two phases of construction, with the primary phase dating to *c* AD268 and consisting of the portico, courtyard and east and west wings. A bath suite was added later to the west side of the villa and a number of changes were made to incorporate a hypocaust system. The main occupation of the villa continued until *c* AD370, although evidence suggests that secondary occupation extended after this date.

#### **4. AIMS AND METHODOLOGY**

4.1 The fieldwork followed the *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* issued by the Institute for Archaeologists (1999). The aim of the watching brief was to record any archaeological features or deposits revealed during the course of intrusive groundworks.

4.2 The watching brief involved monitoring the mechanical excavation of a one metre square soak-away pit, excavated to a maximum of 0.90 metres deep and located 1.50m south of the north-west corner of the visitor centre, and 0.70m to the west of the centre's wall.



## 5. RESULTS

- 5.1 All groundworks were carried out using a 360° mechanical excavator using a toothless grading bucket.
- 5.2 In the south-western facing section, disturbed by a possible pipe trench, was a stone-built structure (106). Excavation of the trench had exposed the very eastern edge of this feature without disturbing it, revealing a single course of rough limestone blocks, unworked, with brownish-red clay bonding. These rough blocks, the largest visible of which was 0.19m in length, appeared to sit above what at first was thought to be mortar, but then discovered to be heavily degraded sandstone. Cleaning suggested this may originally have been formed of two sandstone slabs, placed side by side, with the clay-bonded wall above. Given that the current plan of the villa shows a Roman drain to be running parallel to the edge of the visitor centre and feeding into room II of the villa itself, it seems likely that the soak-away trench had just exposed the eastern edge of that drain. The drain was built onto natural clay (107) at 0.54m from the current ground surface and was the earliest feature noted in the excavation.
- 5.3 In the north-western corner of the trench a cut feature [105] with steeply sloping sides leading to a rounded base with a depth of 0.40m was exposed. Only a small area of this was visible in the section so it is difficult to make a positive interpretation but given its visible shape it may have been a posthole or small pit. This was filled with a very loose mix of small iron slag fragments, coal fragments and carbon, with only approximately 5% grey silt in the matrix. (104). With no evidence of in-situ burning, this looks most likely to have originated elsewhere on the site and been used to backfill the cut [105] at a later date. This feature also appeared to cut through the stone lined drain (106), suggesting a later date.
- 5.4 In the very north-eastern corner of the trench a mid grey-brown, slightly sandy, silty clay (103) was noted, with common irregular small and medium sized sandstone fragments jumbled throughout. This deposit was possibly the backfill of the water pipe trench, which is marked on the 1950 villa plan, but too small an area was exposed to be certain.
- 5.5 Overlying this deposit and sealing the earlier features was a disturbed, reddish-brown sandy clay (102), containing rare small sandstone fragments, common carbon flecks and rare modern glass fragments. This was a fairly compact layer, 0.24m deep, which extended across the whole of the excavated trench area and appeared disturbed. It was thought to be backfill from the 1940s excavations.
- 5.6 A layer of modern topsoil (101) to a depth of 0.18m overlay this potential backfill.

## 6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Built onto the natural clay, the stone and clay-bonded structure, presumed to be the drain shown on earlier plans, was the earliest feature exposed within the excavated trench. This was cut by the small pit feature [105] to the north and disturbed to the south by what may have been the water pipe noted on the early map. The 1940s excavation backfill sealed these features and extended across the whole of the trench, with no further archaeology visible within the trench.
- 6.2 Excavation of the trench revealed the drain as shown on the 1950s villa plans to be still in-situ, while the presence of a possible posthole / pit cutting through this drain is of interest, although unfortunately no dating evidence was recovered from this deposit. No Romano-British artefacts were recovered, either from in-situ archaeology or from the 1940s excavation backfill.

## 7. PROJECT TEAM

- 7.1 The fieldwork was undertaken by Tracey Smith who also produced this report. The illustrations were prepared and the report compiled by Ann Linge. The project was managed by John Bryant.

## 8. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES CONSULTED

### Maps

- Ordnance Survey 1:1250 plan, 1972.
- British Geological Survey Geological Survey of England & Wales, Solid & Drift (Bristol District), scale 1:63360, published 1962; reprinted 1967 & 1984 (BML).

### Published Material

- Boon, G C 1950 *The Roman Villa in Kings Weston Park (Lawrence Weston Estate, Gloucestershire)* in Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society LXIX, pp 5-58.

### Unpublished Material

- R. Burchill, BA/D197 *Survey and Archaeological excavation of Kings Weston Roman Villa, Lawrence Weston, Bristol.* 1995.

## 9. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

BaRAS would like to thank John Connell of Classic Landscapes Ltd for his assistance and co-operation and BCC Archaeological Officer Bob Jones for his advice.

## **APPENDIX 1: Policy Statement**

This report is the result of work carried out in the light of national and local authority policies.

### **NATIONAL POLICIES**

Statutory protection for archaeology is enshrined in the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979), amended by the National Heritage Act, 1983. Nationally important sites are listed in the Schedule of Ancient Monuments (SAM). Scheduled Monument consent is required for any work that would affect a SAM.

### **GOVERNMENT POLICY GUIDANCE**

Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment (1994) and Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning (1990) have been replaced (23 March 2010) by Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (2010) which sets out the Government's national policies on conservation of the historic environment. Those parts of the historic environment that have significance because of their historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest are called heritage assets.

Of particular relevance within the Planning Policy Statement are:

#### **Policy HE6: Information Requirements for Applications for Consent Affecting Heritage Assets**

HE6.1 Local planning authorities should require an applicant to provide a description of the significance of the heritage assets affected and the contribution of their setting to that significance. The level of detail should be proportionate to the importance of the heritage asset and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on the significance of the heritage asset. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets themselves should have been assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary given the application's impact. Where an application site includes, or is considered to have the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where desk-based research is insufficient to properly assess the interest, a field evaluation.

#### **Policy HE9: Additional Policy Principles Guiding the Consideration of Applications for Consent Relating to Designated Heritage Assets**

HE9.1 There should be a presumption in favour of the conservation of designated heritage assets and the more significant the designated heritage asset, the greater the presumption in favour of its conservation should be. Once lost, heritage assets cannot be replaced and their loss has a cultural, environmental, economic and social impact. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. Loss affecting any designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, including scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, battlefields, grade I or II\* listed buildings and grade I and II\* registered parks and gardens, World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.

#### **Policy HE12: Policy Principles Guiding the Recording of Information Related to Heritage Assets**

HE12.3 Where the loss of the whole or a material part of a heritage asset's significance is justified, local planning authorities should require the developer to record and advance understanding of the significance of the heritage asset before it is lost, using planning conditions or obligations as appropriate. The extent of the requirement should be proportionate to the nature and level of the asset's significance. Developers should publish this evidence and deposit copies of the reports with the relevant historic environment record. Local planning authorities should require any archive generated to be deposited with a local museum or other public depository willing to receive it. Local planning authorities should impose planning conditions or obligations to ensure such work is carried out in a timely manner and that the completion of the exercise is properly secured.

### **DISTRICT POLICY**

Bristol City Council Supplementary Planning Document (2006) states (policy SPD No.7, p4):

- (i) There will be a presumption in favour of preserving any archaeological features or sites of national importance, whether scheduled or not.
- (ii) Development which could adversely affect sites, structures, landscapes or buildings of archaeological interest and their settings will require an assessment of the archaeological resource through a desktop study, and where appropriate a field evaluation. Where there is evidence of archaeological remains, development will not be permitted except where it can be demonstrated that the archaeological features of the site will be satisfactorily preserved in situ, or a suitable strategy has been put forward to mitigate the impact of development proposals upon important archaeological remains and their settings; or, if this is not possible and the sites are not scheduled or of national importance, provision for adequately recording the site prior to destruction is made, preferably by negotiating a planning agreement to ensure that access, time and financial resources are available to allow essential recording and publication to take place.

## APPENDIX 2: Context Descriptions

Context No.	Description
101	Modern topsoil.
102	Mid reddish-brown sandy-clay, small patches of 'dirty' yellow sand, rare sandstone fragments, occasional carbon flecks, rare modern glass fragments. Moderately compact.
103	Mid grey-brown sandy, silt-clay, occasional small and medium sized stone fragments, unsorted, occasional carbon flecks. Disturbed appearance.
104	Very loose deposit, consisting of small fragments of coal, carbon and ash with occasional small pieces of iron slag concretions. <10% grey silt matrix.
105	Cut, seen only in the NE corner of the trench. Steep-sided (aprox 75 degree angle) to a rounded base. 0.41m deep, full shape in plan unknown.
106	Stone-built feature, consisting of rough limestone blocks, up to 0.19m in length, unworked, in a single course. Three stones were visible only at the very eastern edge of the trench, with brownish-red clay bonding. These sat above a layer of degraded sandstone, which after cleaning appeared to be the possible remains of two sandstone slabs.
107	Very compact, brownish-red natural clay. Rare flecks of carbon from bioturbation but otherwise appeared clean. Excavated to a depth of 0.22m to base of trench.

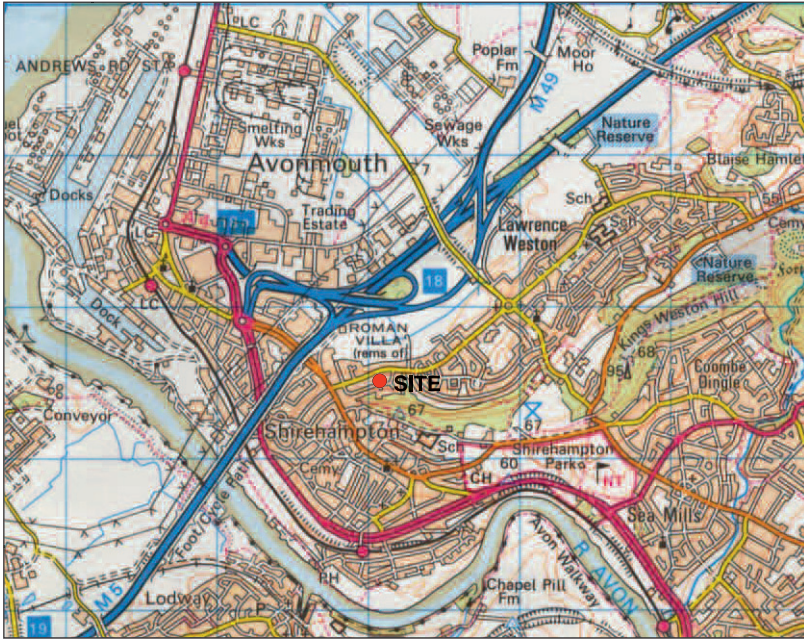


Fig.1 Site location plan

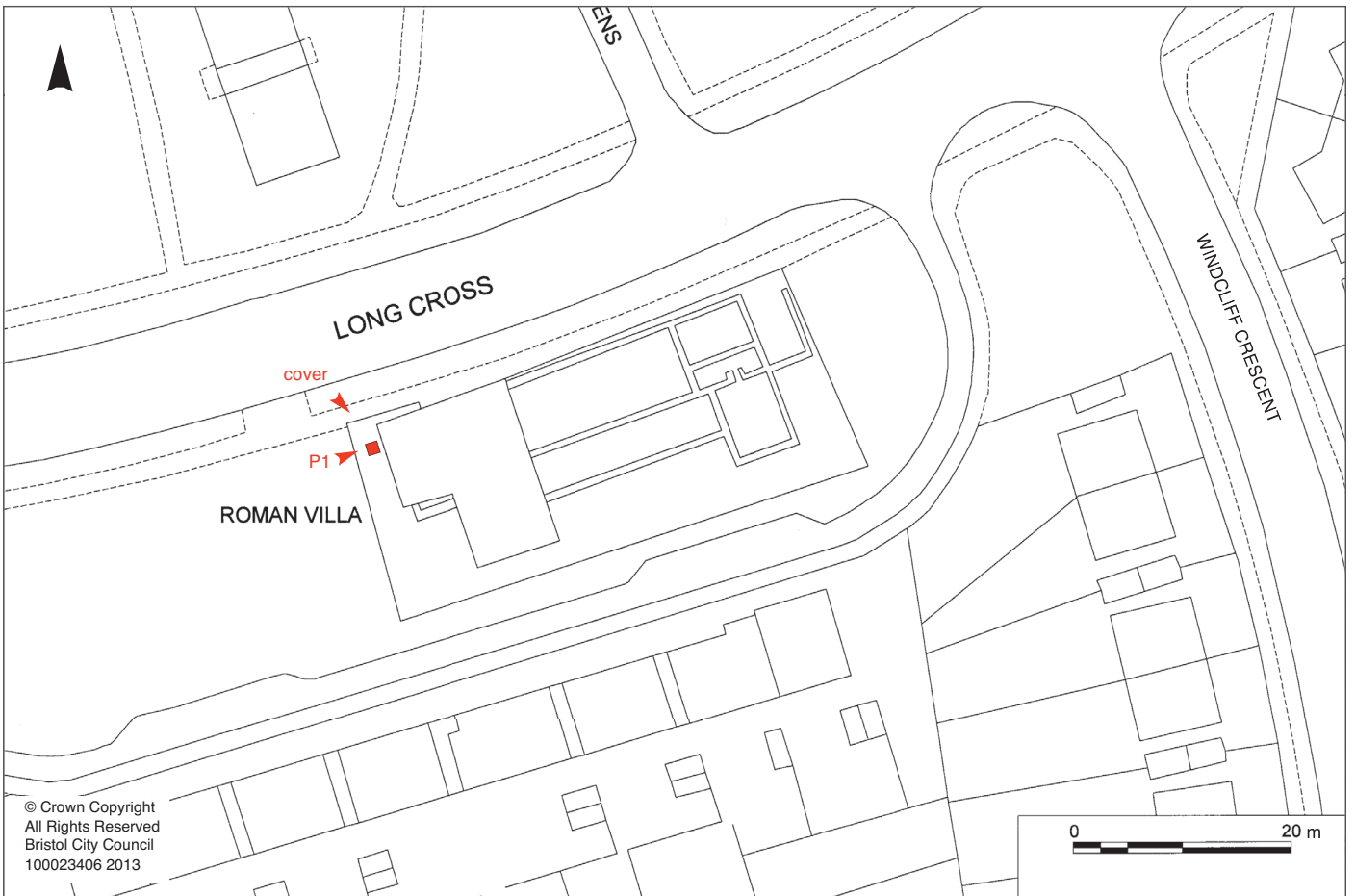


Fig.2 Plan showing study area in detail

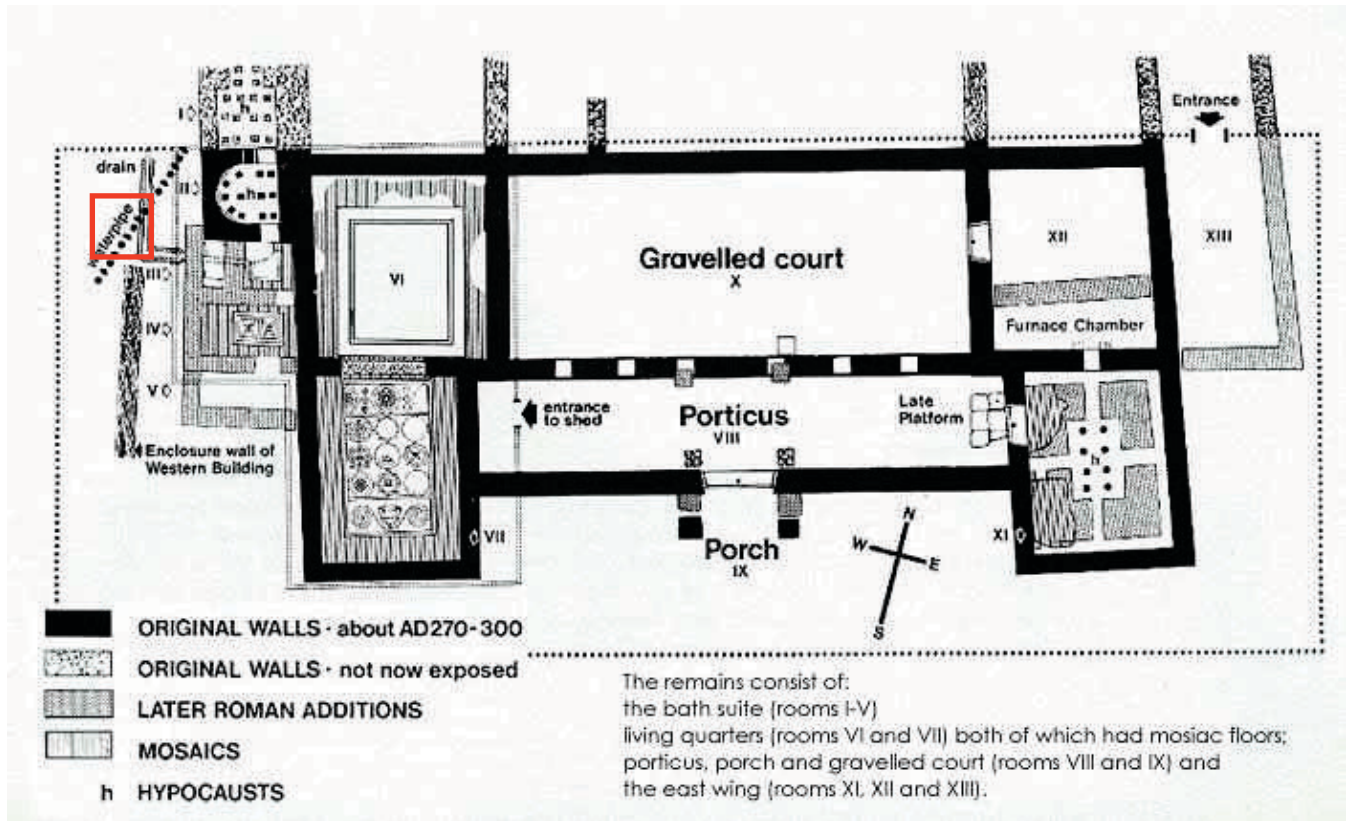


Fig.3 Villa ground plan (after Boon 1950) and trench position in red

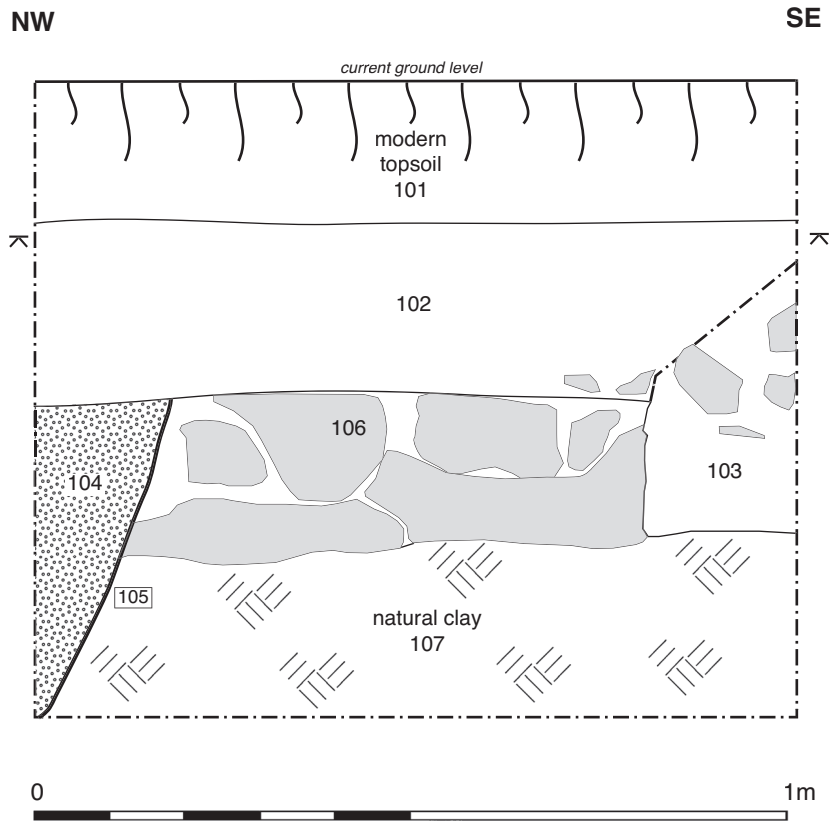


Fig.4 1:10 scale drawing of the south-west facing section of the trench

