



WYAS  
**Archaeological  
Services**

**Land off Firthland Road**

**Pickering**

**North Yorkshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

Report no. 2752

May 2015

**Client:** Persimmon Homes Yorkshire



# **Land off Firthland Road, Pickering, North Yorkshire**

## **Archaeological Evaluation**

### *Summary*

*A scheme of archaeological evaluation by trial trenching was carried out ahead of a proposed housing development on land south of Firthland Road, Pickering. Eleven trenches were excavated as part of this initial phase, targeting anomalies detected as part of an earlier geophysical survey. On excavation, some of the anomalies produced negative results but the evaluation confirmed the presence of medieval ridge and furrow across much of the site and an Iron-Age/Romano-British system of ditches, enclosures and settlement to the west.*

## Report Information

Client: Persimmon Homes Yorkshire  
Address: Persimmon House, Fulford, YO19 4FE  
Report Type: Archaeological Evaluation  
Location: Firthland Road, Pickering  
County: North Yorkshire  
Grid Reference: SE 78896 84011  
Period(s) of activity: Iron Age/Romano-British, Medieval  
Report Number: 2752  
Project Number: 4393  
Site Code: FRP15  
OASIS ID: archaeol11-210283  
Planning Application No.: n/a  
Museum Accession No.: Awaiting number  
Date of fieldwork: April 2015  
Date of report: April 2015  
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Ian Rowlandson (pottery)

Authorisation for  
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## **1 Introduction**

Archaeological Services WYAS (ASWYAS) was commissioned Persimmon Homes Ltd to undertake a programme of archaeological trial trenching in advance of a proposed residential housing development of land off Firthland Road, Pickering. This initial phase of evaluation was limited to eleven trenches at the northern end of the proposed development area (PDA). The evaluation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012), employing standards laid down by English Heritage (2006; 2008) and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2014). The trial trenching was undertaken between the 7th and 16th April 2015.

### **Site location, topography and land-use**

The PDA is centred on NGR 478896 484011, south of Firthland Road, Pickering (Fig. 1). The site, for this initial phase of investigation, comprises four separate agricultural fields on land bounded immediately to the north and east by existing housing, an industrial estate to the west and further open fields and agricultural buildings to the south. The site is around 1km to the west of the historic core of Pickering, on generally flat land situated at around 30m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

### **Soils and geology**

The underlying bedrock comprises West Walton Formation, Ampthill Clay Formation and Kimmeridge Clay Formation in undifferentiated beds of mudstone, siltstone and sandstone (British Geological Survey 2015). The soils are classified in the Badsey 2 association, described as well drained calcareous fine loamy soils over limestone gravel (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983)

## **2 Archaeological Background**

An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment by MAP Archaeological Practice Ltd (n.d.) provides an overview of known archaeological features within 1km of the site. The DBA concluded that the development area may have earthworks of medieval date but that it was unlikely that any remains of national importance would exist on the site to prevent development.

The Manor of Pickering has a pre-Conquest foundation and is noted in the Domesday Book. Pickering Castle, an 11th-century motte and bailey castle and 13th-century shell-keep castle, is located over a kilometre north-east of the PDA (SAM 13301). Another motte is located on Beacon Hill (SAM 32662; DNY551; MNY21250; HNY24156) 1km north-east of the PDA.

A geophysical (magnetometer) survey by Phase Site Investigation (2011) of the PDA identified anomalies of archaeological interest. These geophysical anomalies indicate the

presence of former settlement activity and field systems. It was suggested that two anomalies within one field indicate the presence of smaller ditched features with one possibly a ring-ditch feature. There were also a number of isolated areas of enhanced response which could be suggestive of infilled pits and areas of burning. The system of enclosures was seen to have a different alignment to and was overlain by the ridge and furrow suggesting that it predates these features. The enclosures have parallels with similar examples of Iron-Age/Romano-British date.

### **3 Aims and Objectives**

The overall aim of the evaluation was to provide information on the presence or absence and the extent, character, date, depth of burial and degree of survival of any archaeological features or deposits which may be present within the PDA. The results of the trial trenching, in conjunction with the geophysical survey results, will be used to inform the level and type of mitigation work that might be required in order to ensure that the archaeological resource is adequately recorded before development.

To achieve this aim, eleven trenches were excavated within this initial phase of investigation, each measuring 25m x 2m. They were located to target possible archaeological features identified as geophysical anomalies and to test apparently blank areas of the site.

### **4 Methodology**

The scope of works is for a total of 45 trenches to be excavated across the whole PDA, with this initial phase limited to Trenches 1-11, at the northern end of the site. Excavation of the trenches was carried out using a mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket until either the top of the first archaeological horizon or undisturbed natural was reached. The resulting surface was inspected for archaeological remains. Linear features encountered were at least 50% sample excavated in order to investigate their depth and profile and to recover finds, whilst the two discreet features were 100% sampled.

A full written, drawn and photographic (35mm monochrome and digital) record of all material revealed during the course of the work was made. The trench locations were set out using GPS survey equipment with hand drawn trench plans and sections produced at a suitable scale and tied to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. All sections, plans and elevations included spot-heights related to Ordnance Datum in metres as correct to two decimal places.

All artefacts recovered were retained and removed from the site for assessment with soil samples taken of deposits, where appropriate, in order to identify and recover carbonised and waterlogged remains, vertebrate remains, molluscs and small artefactual material.

An inventory of the primary archive is presented in Appendix 1, and a concordance of finds and samples by context, is presented in Appendix 2. ASWYAS currently hold the site archive in a stable and secure location, but it will be deposited with Malton Museum for long-term storage in due course.

All excavation was undertaken in line with the CIfA guidelines Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (2014), the English Heritage MoRPHE PPN3: Archaeological Excavation (2008) and in compliance with ASWYAS's own methodologies (ASWYAS 2011).

## **5 Results**

The results from the interventions are summarised in Table 1 and trench locations are shown in Fig. 2.

A dark greyish-brown, sandy-silt topsoil was encountered across the entire site, measuring between 0.24 and 0.50m in depth. This sealed a mid or light orangey or yellowish-brown sandy-silt subsoil, varying between 0.08m and 0.30m deep. The subsoil in places contained frequent stone cobble inclusions. Beneath this, natural geology was encountered, which across much of the site was mid-yellow-brown silty clay with frequent medium-large rounded cobbles. In some lower lying areas, in Trenches 1, 2 and 11, this was covered in a layer of light yellow-brown sandy-clay. The natural did create difficulties, especially where larger cobbles were encountered, as it was difficult to create a clean, level surface to aid identification and excavation of archaeological features.

Six of the eleven trenches excavated contained archaeological features which were cut into the natural and were sealed by the subsoil. Small, shallow linear features encountered in Trenches 6 and 7 were interpreted as the base of plough furrows, which corroborates the geophysical results. Trenches 1, 2, 4 and 9 contained archaeological features, which are likely to predate the medieval ridge and furrow, and are described in more detail below.

The remaining trenches contained no archaeological features. Trenches 3 and 10 were targeted on apparently blank areas and confirm the lack of archaeology in these areas. The geophysical evidence provided convincing evidence of a ditch running east-west across Trenches 4, 8 and 11, but this was not observed in any of these trenches. In Trench 11 the anomaly may be explained by a change in the geology at the southern end of the trench, or



perhaps by the large amount of ferrous material in the topsoil. Finally Trench 5 targeted a large negative magnetic anomaly which was not identified as archaeological.

Table 1. Summary of results from the individual interventions

Trench No.	Dimensions	Total Depth	Observations
1	25m x 2m	0.65m	Archaeological remains present, see below
2	25m x 2m	0.50m	Archaeological remains present, see below
3	25m x 2m	0.70m	No archaeological remains present
4	25m x 2m	0.60m	Archaeological remains present, see below, but geophysical anomaly also investigated in Trenches 8 and 11 was not identified
5	25m x 2m	0.60m	No archaeological remains present
6	25m x 2m	0.50m	Plough furrow identified
7	25m x 2m	0.32m	Plough furrow identified
8	25m x 2m	0.50m	No archaeological features present, and geophysical anomaly also investigated in Trenches 4 and 11 was not identified
9	25m x 2m	0.58m	Archaeological remains present, see below
10	25m x 2m	0.60m	No archaeological features present
11	25m x 2m	0.70m	No archaeological features present, and geophysical anomaly also investigated in Trenches 4 and 8 was not identified

### Trench 1

A large linear ditch [103] aligned roughly east-west ran across the centre of the trench, and corresponds with a geophysical anomaly. The feature measured 2.50m wide and the fill was excavated to a depth of 0.47m before further excavation was curtailed by an unsafe section (Plate 1; Fig. 3). A single mid-grey-brown silty-clay fill (102) was encountered which contained heat-affected stone and two abraded sherds of pottery. The feature was interpreted as a large field boundary ditch, probably of Iron Age or Roman date. A second, much smaller, linear feature [105] was aligned north-west to south-east at the northern end of the trench, measuring 0.83m wide and 0.09m deep (Plate 2). It contained a single mid-yellow-brown silty-clay fill (104) but no finds. This feature was not identified as a geophysical anomaly and does not align with either the ridge and furrow or enclosure ditches. The base of a plough furrow, aligned north-south, was noted to the south of feature 105 but was not recorded

further. Despite recent ploughing, ridge and furrow earthworks, aligned north-south were still clearly visible in this area, especially to the west of the trench.

## **Trench 2**

A large linear ditch [203] ran roughly north-south across the middle of the trench, measuring 0.92m wide and 0.24m deep with a steep V-shaped profile (Plate 3; Fig. 4, S.201). It contained a single mid-brown sandy-clay fill (202) which contained frequent gravel and cobbles (up to 80mm) and occasional charcoal flecks but no finds. This corresponds with one of the enclosure ditches identified on the geophysics. Two discreet features were identified at the western end of the trench, internal to the enclosure (Plates 4 and 5). Feature 207 measured 0.49m in diameter and 0.30m deep and contained a single dark brown sandy-clay fill (206) with well-sorted large rounded cobbles (up to 150mm). Feature 205 lay 0.70m to the south-west, had a similar diameter of 0.44m but was much shallower at 0.12m. It also contained one fill (204) but had no large stone inclusions and contained large amounts of charcoal and animal burnt bone. Feature 207 is likely to be a post-hole with the cobbles used as packing to support a wooden post. Feature 205 may be a second post-hole, or a small pit used to deposit domestic hearth and food waste.

## **Trench 4**

Based on the geophysical survey, Trench 4 was positioned in order to target a major east-west aligned linear anomaly. As discussed above, this did not appear in any of the three trenches in which it was anticipated. The geophysical survey, however, also shows a rectangular enclosure ditch running north-south along the eastern edge of this trench (Fig. 5). This corroborates well with what appears to be the terminus of a linear feature [403] entering the trench along its eastern edge around 12m from the southern end. The total width of the feature was not exposed but it extended into the trench for around 3m before terminating. It had a minimum width of 0.90m and a depth of 0.27m. Its single mid-brown-grey fill (404) contained no finds.

## **Trench 9**

An east-west aligned linear ditch [903] crossed the trench around 4m from its southern end, and measured 1m in width and 0.10m in depth (Plate 6; Fig. 6, S.901). It contained a single dark orange-brown sandy-silt fill with no finds (904). The geophysical survey suggests that this may be the same boundary ditch as investigated in Trench 1, although here it was much smaller in both width and depth.

## 6 Artefact Record

### The handmade pottery by I.M. Rowlandson

Two sherds, weighing 16g, from a single handmade vessel with quartz sand and grog inclusions were retrieved from fill 102 of ditch 103. The vessel has irregularly partially oxidised surfaces and a reduced or black core. The fabric can be paralleled with the H4 fabric from Newbridge (Rowlandson 2012). These sherds most probably date to the first millennium BC or perhaps the early Roman period.

## 7 Environmental Record

### Soil samples by Jane Richardson

Two soil samples of ten litres were subjected to a system of flotation in an Ankara-style flotation tank. The floating remains (the flot) were collected in a 300 $\mu$ m sieve and the heavy fraction (the retent) was collected in a 1mm mesh. The flots, once dry, were scanned using a binocular microscope. The flot from post-hole 205 contained frequent charcoal flecks and the flot from post-hole 207 contained occasional charcoal flecks. While their presence indicates the potential for charred plant material to survive, none were of sufficient size to be identified to genus. The retent were scanned by eye for both ecofacts and artefacts, but none were found.

### Animal bone by Jane Richardson

Approximately 100 fragments of cremated animal bone, all of which probably represent sheep bones, were recovered from the fill (204) of feature 205. Diagnostic fragments include limb bones, vertebrae and ribs, with all surviving epiphyses fused. The deposition of bones from a single individual is possible.

## 8 Conclusions

The evaluation methodology used here has been successful in understanding the character, depth and survival of archaeology during this initial phase of works. Alongside the geophysical survey, the results of the trial trenching indicate where development is likely to have an impact on surviving archaeological remains and where further mitigation work may be required.

As the geophysical survey predicted, ridge and furrow was seen to extend across much of the site though only the deepest furrows appeared to cut into the natural geology, as seen in Trenches 1, 6 and 7. The ridges still exist as earthworks in the field around Trench 1.

Given no trace of the linear geophysical anomaly survived in Trenches 4, 8 and 11, it is possible that this feature survives only intermittently or has been completely ploughed out. Elsewhere in these fields, the trenches confirmed the lack of archaeological activity.

As expected, the trenches to the west provided evidence for significant archaeological remains, with a concentration of geophysical anomalies and positive results in Trenches 1 and 2. A likely pre-medieval feature was also identified in Trench 9. Trenches 1 and 2 confirmed the presence of likely Iron Age or Romano-British settlement comprising a system of ditches, with discreet features also surviving.

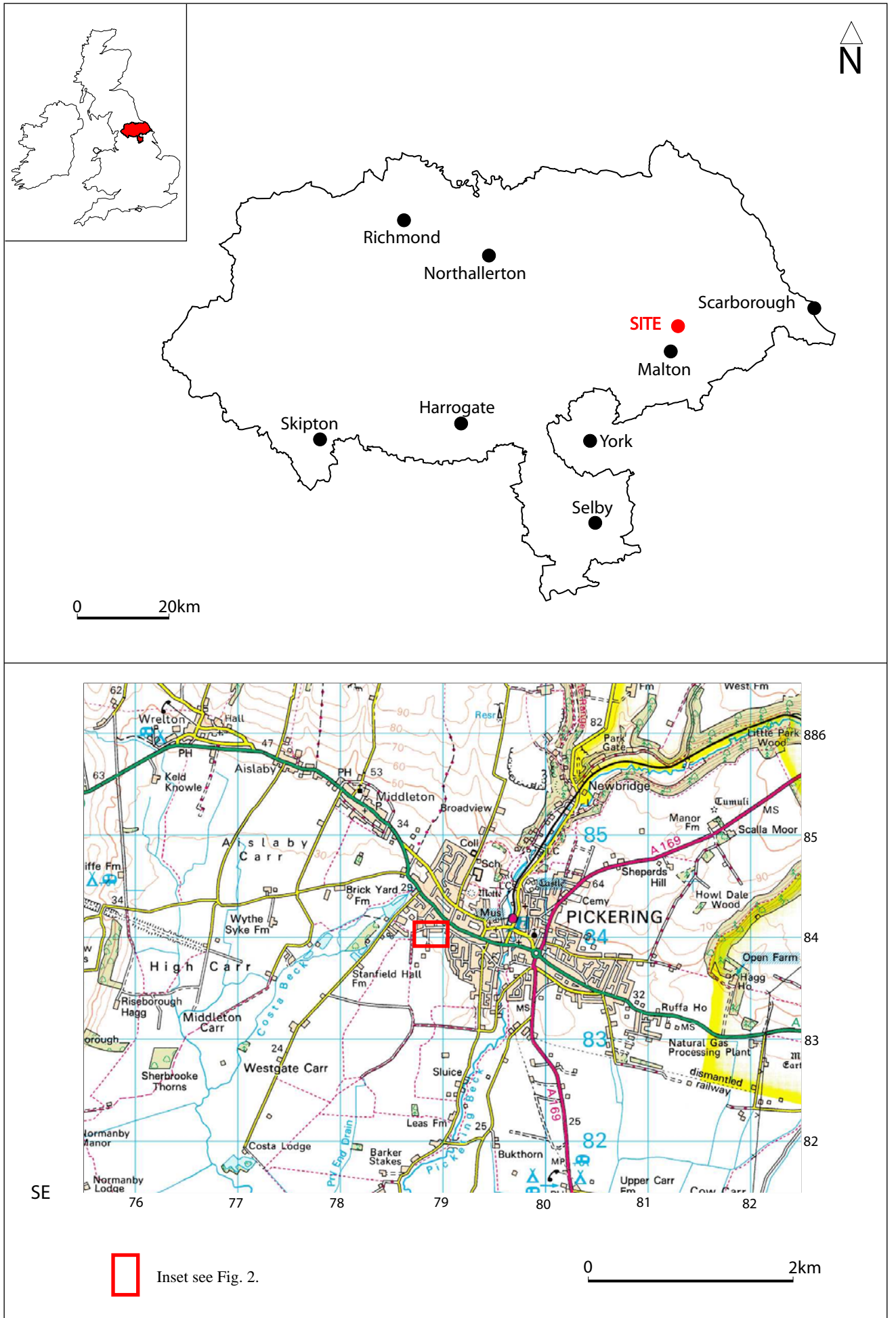


Fig. 1. Site location



Fig. 2. Location of trial trenches with interpretation of geophysical anomalies (1:1000 @ A3)

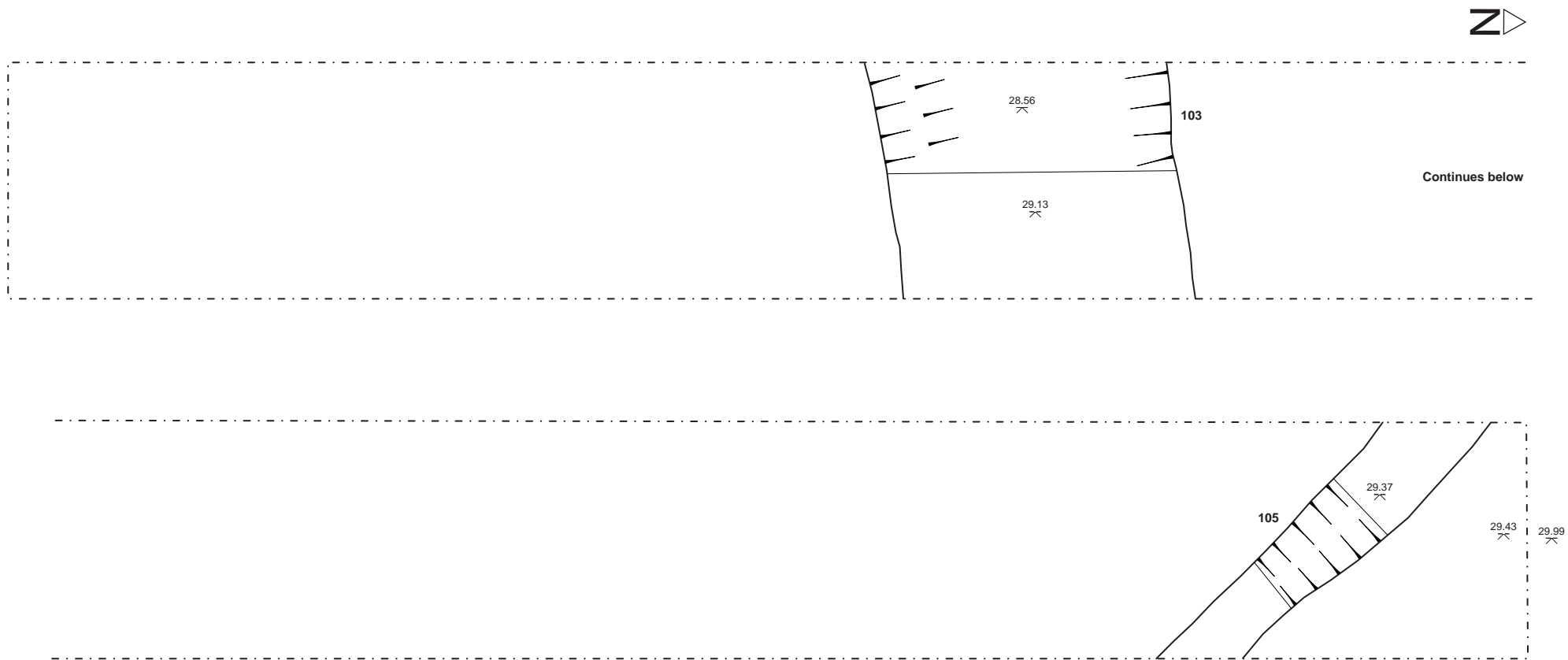
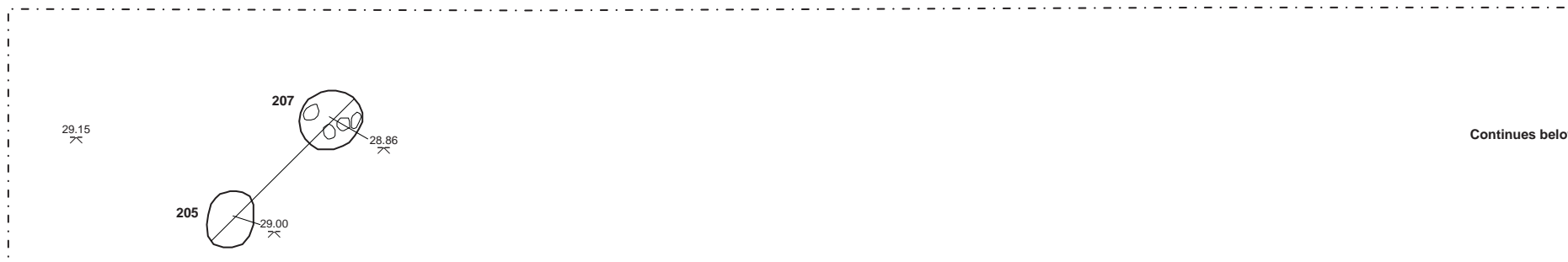


Fig. 3. Trench 1 plan and section





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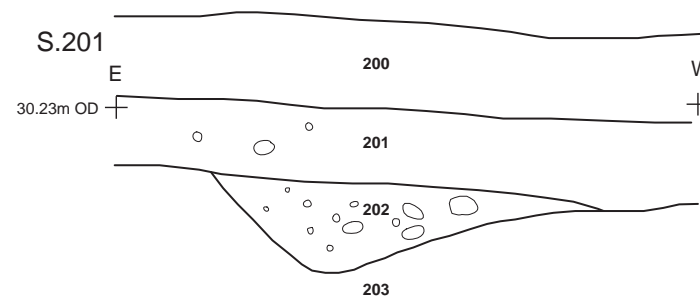
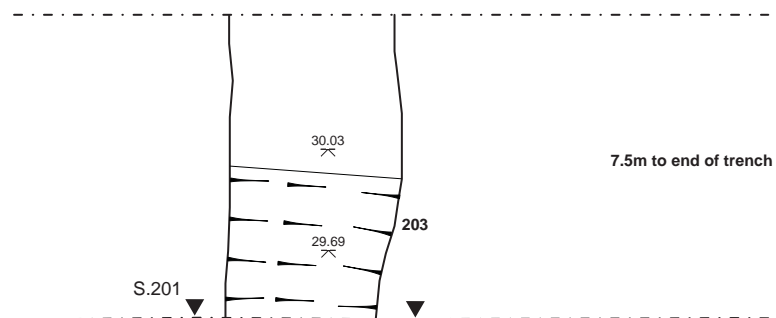


Fig. 4. Trench 2 plan and section



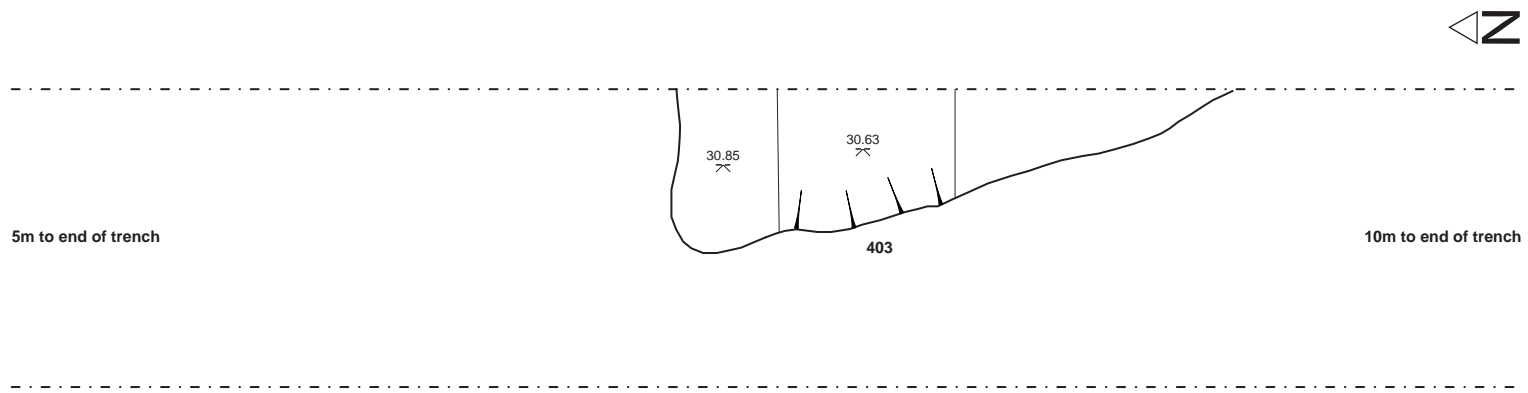
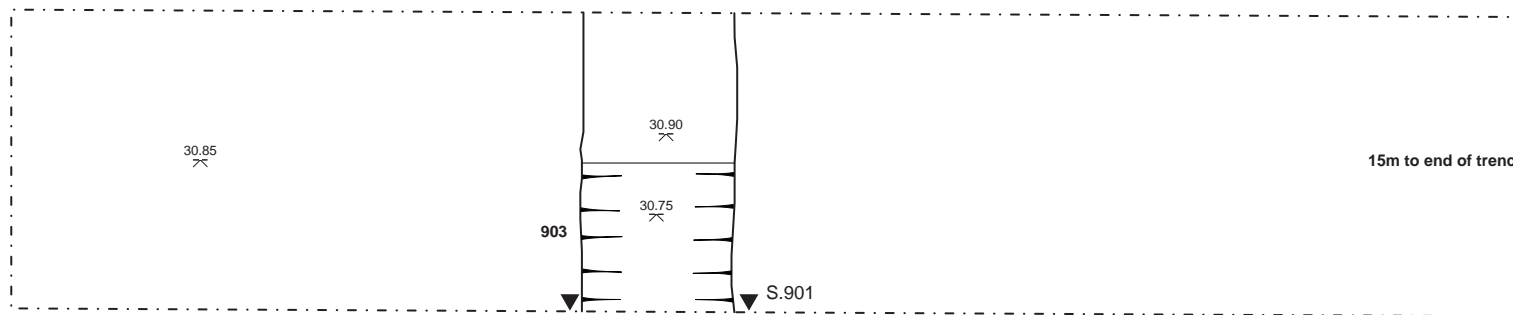


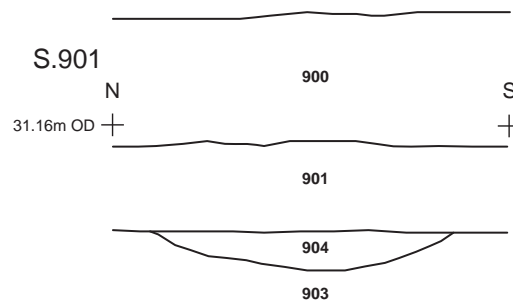
Fig. 5. Trench 4 plan





Plan

0 2m (1:50)



Section

0 1m (1:20)

Fig. 6. Trench 9 plan and section



*Plate 1. East-facing section of ditch 103*



*Plate 2. Trench 1 looking south*



*Plate 3. North-facing section of ditch 203*



*Plate 4. South-east-facing sections of post-holes 205 and 207*



*Plate 5. Trench 2 looking north*



*Plate 6. West-facing section of ditch 903*

## Appendix 1: Inventory of primary archive

File	Description	Quantity
File 1	Trench record sheet	11
	Context register	2
	Context cards	18
	Sample register	1
	Drawing register	3
	Digital photo record sheet	1
	Photo record sheet (film no. 9255)	1
	Permatrace sheets	6

## Appendix 2: Concordance of contexts yielding artefacts or environmental remains

Context	Trench	Description	Artefacts and environmental samples
100	1	Topsoil. Dark greyish-brown sandy-silt	
101	1	Subsoil. Light yellowish-brown clayey sand	-
102	1	Fill of [103]. Mid greyish-brown silty-clay	Pottery (2)
103	1	Cut of east-west aligned ditch	
104	1	Fill of [105]. Mid yellowish-brown silty-clay with frequent gravel	-
105	1	Cut of north-west to south-east aligned ditch	-
106	1	Natural. Mid yellowish-brown sandy-clay overlying cobbles and gravel	
200	2	Topsoil. Dark greyish-brown sandy-silt	
201	2	Subsoil. Light yellowish-brown clayey sand	
202	2	Fill of [203]. Mid brown sandy-clay	
203	2	Cut of north-south aligned ditch	
204	2	Fill of [205]. Dark brown sandy-clay	Burnt bone, GBA 200
205	2	Cut of post-hole or small pit	
206	2	Fill of [207]. Dark brown sandy-clay with frequent medium-large rounded cobbles	GBA 201
207	2	Cut of post-hole	
208	2	Natural. Mid yellowish-brown sandy-clay overlying cobbles and gravel	
400	4	Topsoil. Dark greyish-brown sandy-silt	
401	4	Subsoil. Dark yellowish-brown sandy-silt with frequent rounded cobbles and gravel	
402	4	Natural. Mid yellowish-brown silty-clay with frequent mid-large rounded cobbles	
403	4	Cut of north-south aligned ditch	
404	4	Fill of [402]. Mid brownish-grey sandy-silt	
600	6	Topsoil. Dark greyish-brown sandy-silt	

Context	Trench	Description	Artefacts and environmental samples
601	6	Subsoil. Mid-orangey brown sandy silt	
602	6	Natural. Mid yellowish-brown silty clay with frequent medium-large rounded cobbles	
603	6	Cut of north-south aligned plough furrow	
604	6	Fill of [603]. Dark greyish-brown sandy-silt	
700	7	Topsoil. Dark greyish-brown sandy-silt	
701	7	Subsoil. Mid-orangey brown sandy silt	
702	7	Natural. Mid yellowish-brown silty-clay with frequent medium-large rounded cobbles	
703	7	Cut of north-south aligned plough furrow	
704	7	Fill of [703]. Dark greyish-brown sandy-silt	
900	9	Topsoil. Dark greyish-brown sandy-silt	
901	9	Subsoil. Mid-orangey brown silty-sand	
902	9	Natural. Mid yellowish-brown silty-clay with frequent medium-large rounded cobbles	
903	9	Cut of east-west aligned ditch	
904	9	Fill of [903]. Dark orangey-brown sandy silt	

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