

EVALUATION AT  
COLEFORD MOAT, BUCKLAND  
END, BIRMINGHAM

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## **Evaluation at Coleford Moat, Buckland End, Birmingham**

**Simon Griffin and Simon Woodiwiss**

### **Part 1 Project summary**

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at the site of Coleford Moat, Buckland End, Birmingham (NGR SP 142 886). It was undertaken on behalf of Dearle and Henderson and Waterloo Housing Association, who intend to carry out partial demolition and or repair of exiting housing and the construction of new housing, and have submitted a planning application to Birmingham City Council. The project aimed to determine if any significant archaeological site was present and if so to indicate what its location, date and nature were. The presence of a moat has been suggested by previous desk-based study of the area including map regression analysis.

The evaluation revealed deposits interpreted as the fill of a moat, at a depth of approximately 1.5m beneath the present ground surface. These took the form of dark grey silty deposits containing occasional fragments of brick and ceramic debris. Artefacts recovered dated to the 17th century. Therefore the deposits appear to represent the initially filling phase of the moat.

There was no evidence for any structures or features dating to the period when the moat would have been in use, however the extent of the sample trenches were restricted by the presence of existing buildings and the considerable depth of more recent deposits.

## Part 2 Detailed report

### 1. Background

#### 1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Coleford Moat, Buckland End, Birmingham (NGR SP 142 886), on behalf of Dearle and Henderson and Waterloo Housing Association. The client intends to carry out partial demolition and or repair of existing housing and the construction of new housing. and has submitted a planning application to Birmingham City Council, who consider that a site of archaeological interest may be affected (WSM 2965).

#### 1.2 Project parameters

The project conforms to the *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IFA 1999).

The project also conforms to a brief prepared by Birmingham City Council (2000) and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (AS 2003).

#### 1.3 Aims

The aims of the evaluation were to locate archaeological deposits and determine, if present, their extent, state of preservation, date, type, vulnerability and documentation. The purpose of this was to establish their significance, since this would make it possible to recommend an appropriate treatment, which may then be integrated with the proposed development programme.

More specifically the following aims have been identified.

- The location and extent of the moat, and the presence of organic deposits in its fill;
- The presence of archaeological remains on the moat platform;
- The presence of a raised platform and any archaeological remains sealed by it;
- The potential of the site to contribute to an understanding of the historic development of this part of Birmingham.

### 2. Methods

#### 2.1 Documentary search

All relevant documentary and cartographic sources are contained within a desk-based assessment prepared at an earlier date (DINGWALL 1999).

#### 2.2 Fieldwork

##### 2.2.1 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by the Service (HEAS 2003). Borehole data provided by the client just prior to the start of the evaluation revealed potentially deep deposits, in close proximity to housing and public rights of way. As a result trenching was

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adapted to enable adequate shoring to be installed. Long trenches were impossible to excavate due to the amount of spoil generated and the lack of space to step the trenches or to shore safely. The proximity to standing housing also prohibited deep excavations.

Fieldwork was undertaken between 8th July 2003 and 9th July 2003.

Three trenches were excavated where services and practical considerations allowed. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2. Trenching was confined to the front of the housing and was primarily concerned with locating deposits relating to the infill of the moat.

Augering was carried out to the rear of the housing in an attempt to locate moat deposits and ascertain their depth and form (Figure 4).

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed using a 180° wheeled excavator, employing a toothless bucket and under archaeological supervision. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were excavated to retrieve artefactual material and environmental samples, as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Service practice (CAS 1995). Deposits which were encountered were deep and unstable, despite shoring it was difficult to carry out normal archaeological recording, where possible photographs were taken to compliment measured sketches.

On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

#### 2.2.2 **Structural analysis**

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was effected through a combination of structural, artefactual and ecofactual evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

### 2.3 **Artefacts**

#### 2.3.1 **Artefact recovery policy**

The artefact recovery policy conformed to standard Service practice (CAS 1995; appendix 2).

#### 2.3.2 **Method of analysis**

All hand retrieved finds were examined. They were identified, quantified and dated to period. A *terminus post quem* date was produced for each stratified context. The date was used for determining the broad date of phases defined for the site. All information was recorded on *pro forma* sheets.

Pottery fabrics are referenced to the fabric reference series maintained by the Service (Hurst 1994).

### 2.4 **Environmental samples**

No bulk samples, which were likely to be uncontaminated, could be taken from the trenches. Two samples were taken from the augered moat fills for potential pollen assessment, however, the lack of a context in which to place any results indicated that assessment would be unlikely to add significantly to the evaluation. By comparison with similar sites and deposits it remains likely that pollen will be preserved in these deposits, though it is likely to relate to a period of disuse of the moat and therefore have a reduced interest.

## 2.5 **The methods in retrospect**

Having undertaken the project the following comments may be made with regard to the methods adopted.

The depth of made ground was not known at the time the brief was prepared, and the trenches had to vary from the specification in the brief due to the proximity of standing buildings and for safety reasons. No trenches were able to test the moat platform. The Service were given to understand that the scope of the proposed works would be unlikely to affect deposits associated with the moat due to their depth. The augered holes aimed to augment the sample trenches.

## 3. **Topographical and archaeological context**

All relevant archaeological background is included in the desk-based assessment (Dingwall 1999).

## 4. **Description**

The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1. The trenches and features recorded are shown in Figure 2.

### 4.1 **Phase 1 Natural deposits**

Natural deposits were recorded in Trench 3 and in the auger profile (Fig 4). This consisted of mixed gravelly sands (306) and occurred at a depth of at least 2.0m below ground surface in Trench 3 to the front of the housing. This may represent the base of the moat, although in such small trenches this is difficult to prove. To the rear of the properties, similar deposits were recorded at a depth of 2m at the base of the moat. However, seemingly natural clays were recorded at a depth of 0.5m (bgs) in Auger hole5, this was located at the northern edge of the site and is likely to represent the edge of the moat (Fig 4).

### 4.2 **Moat deposits**

Deposits consisting of dark greyish brown silty clays (304, 305) were observed in Trenches 2 and 3 and by augering deposits in the base of Trench 1 and to the rear of the housing have been interpreted as representing the fill of a moat. Post-medieval and modern ceramic and brick artefacts, including a fragment of c17th pottery (L Griffin pers comm) were recovered from within the upper layers (304) of these deposits in Trench 3. This activity would suggest that the later filling at least occurred during this period.

There was no direct evidence for medieval deposits or any structures relating to buildings or features dating to the period when the moat as in use. No potentially pre-modern building stone was noticed during excavation.

### 4.3 **Made ground and modern deposits**

Considerable landscaping of the area clearly occurred between the disuse of the moat and the construction of the modern housing in the late 1950s. Local residents suggested that a huge amount of material was laid across the site prior to housing construction and that the houses in this particular area were founded on deep concrete rafts. Trenching and augering revealed deep deposits of redeposited natural overlying the moat deposits. To the rear of the houses there was less evidence for such deposits, suggesting that the site had been levelled. There was no evidence for concrete rafting, as no trenching was possible close to the houses.



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## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Medieval moated site

The evaluation revealed that deposits relating to the filling the moat survive across the frontages of numbers 53, 55 and 57 Embleton Grove at a depth of *c* 1.5m or more. Similar deposits, to the rear of number 53 suggest the moat survives to the rear of the properties. With such small trenches it is difficult to glean any additional information., although its north-western outer edge lies approximately in the position indicated by Dingwall (1999, fig 7). The map regression from the desk-based assessment had inferred a very small site indeed. Similar sites in the region were often larger for example Hawkesley Moated Farmhouse in Longbridge (Griffin *et al* 1999). Such sites commonly would have contained a number of structures, such as a manor house and ancillary buildings.

The depth of made ground above the moat fills suggests that the moat did remain as an earthwork feature until the made ground levelled the local topography. The moat is not shown on maps from 1845, though it may have existed as an earthwork but was not represented catographically. Much of the made ground is likely to be relatively recent, however, it is possible that filling may have been occurring from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The superimposition of the location of the moat (Fig 2) is taken from the desk-based assessment (Dingwall 1999) and being drawn from large-scale maps may not be entirely accurate. Auger 5 contains moat deposits but due to their reduced depth it is likely the moat edge lies just to the north-west. Moat deposits were also observed in Trench 3, which does not conform to the suggested location of the moat.

The trenches were all located within the moat and areas of the moat platform were not tested. Any structures on the site would be underneath the present day housing and the made ground. Whereas pre-modern moat fills lie at a depth of *c* 1.5m, were medieval and post-medieval deposits to survive within the moat platform, these may be located at a depth of 500mm or less. However, with the amount of earthmoving having been undertaken on the site more recently, it appears likely that may have been vulnerable to disturbance.

## 6. Publication summary

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at the site of Coleford Moat, Buckland End, Birmingham (NGR SP 142 886; BSMR 2965). It was undertaken on behalf of Dearle and Henderson and Waterloo Housing Association, who intend to carry out partial demolition and or repair of exiting housing and the construction of new housing, and have submitted a planning application to Birmingham City Council. The project aimed to determine if any significant archaeological site was present and if so to indicate what its location, date and nature were. The presence of a moat has been suggested by previous desk-based study of the area including map regression analysis.

The evaluation revealed deposits interpreted as the fill of a moat, at a depth of approximately 1.5m beneath the present ground surface. These took the form of dark grey silty deposits containing occasional fragments of brick and ceramic debris. Artefacts recovered dated to the 17th century. Therefore the deposits appear to represent the initially filling phase of the moat.

There was no evidence for any structures or features dating to the period when the moat would have been in use, however the extent of the sample trenches were restricted by the presence of existing buildings and the considerable depth of more recent deposits.

## 7. **The archive**

The archive consists of:

- 1 Fieldwork progress records AS2
- 5 Augerhole records AS26
- 3 Scale drawings
- 1 Box of finds

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Birmingham City Museum

## 8. **Acknowledgements**

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Paula Koller and Paul Ingleston of Dearle and Henderson and Chris Miller of Waterloo Housing.

## 9. **Personnel**

The fieldwork and report preparation was led by Simon Griffin. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Simon Woodiwiss. Fieldwork was undertaken by Andy Mann and Adam Mindykowski, finds analysis by Laura Griffin and illustration by Carolyn Hunt.

## 10. **Bibliography**

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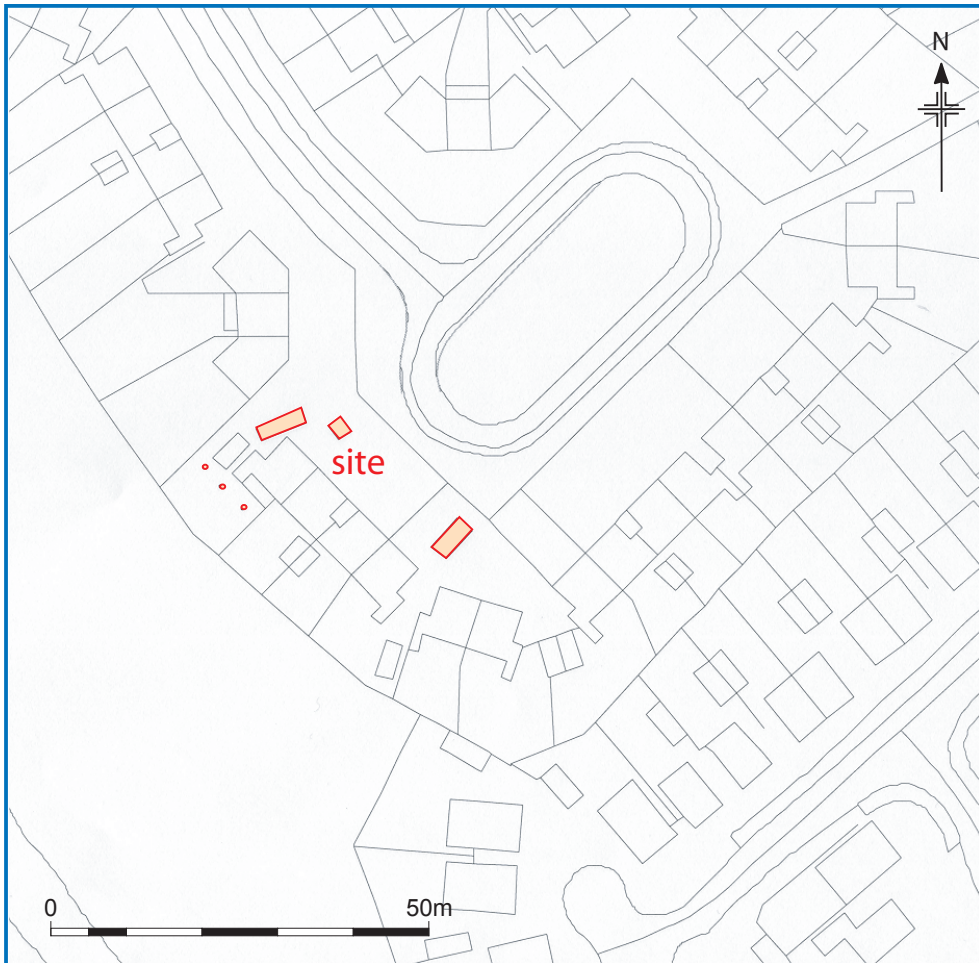
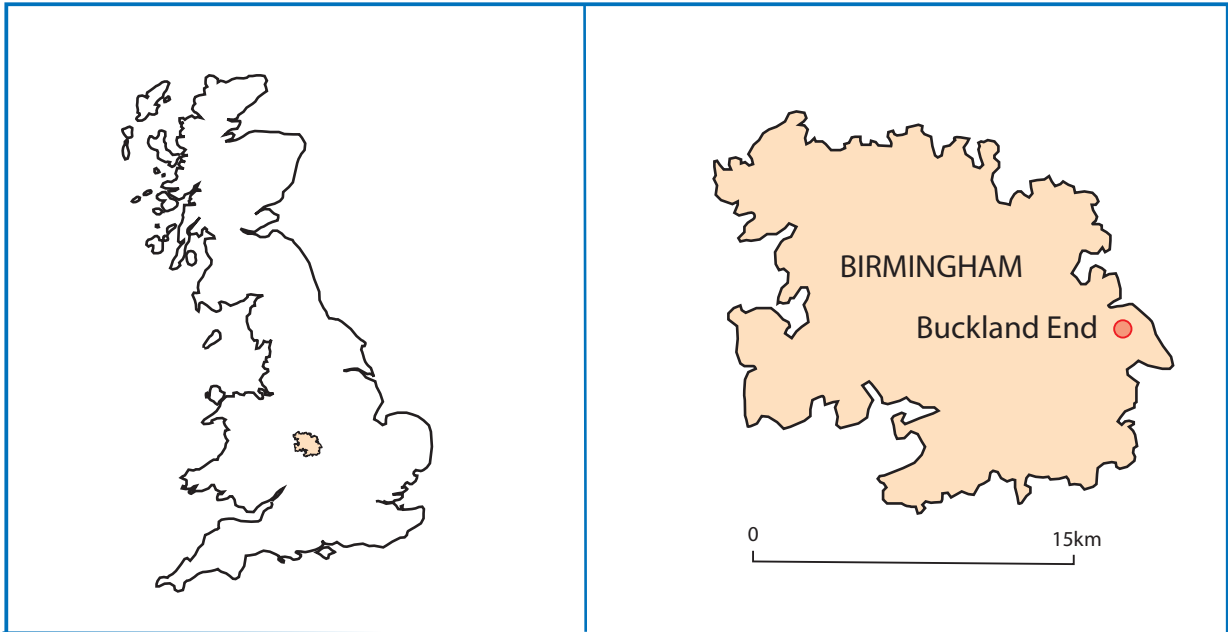
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11. **Abbreviations**

BSMR            Numbers prefixed with 'BSMR' are the primary reference numbers used by the Birmingham Sites and Monuments Record.



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Location of the site.

Figure 1

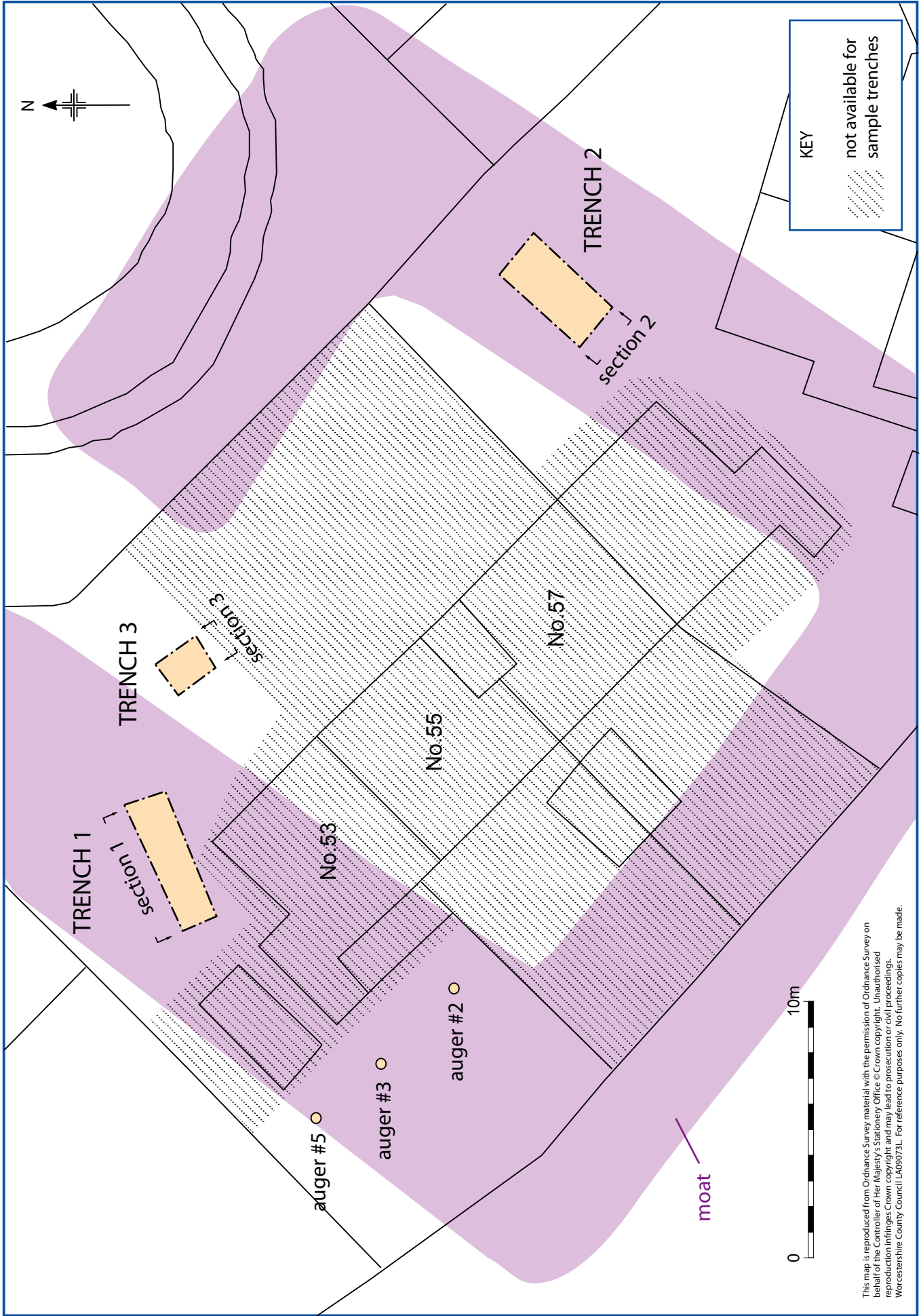
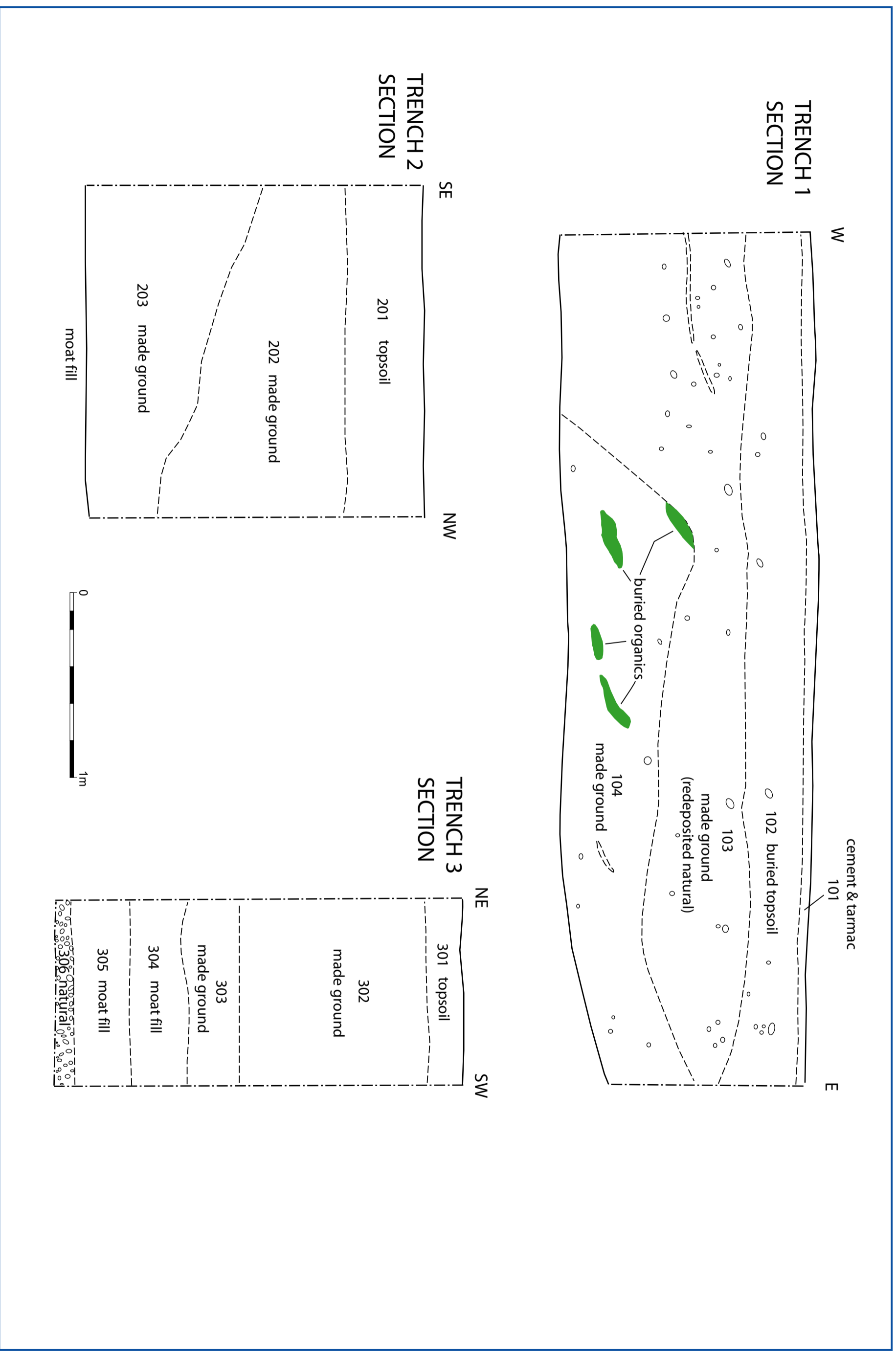


Figure 2

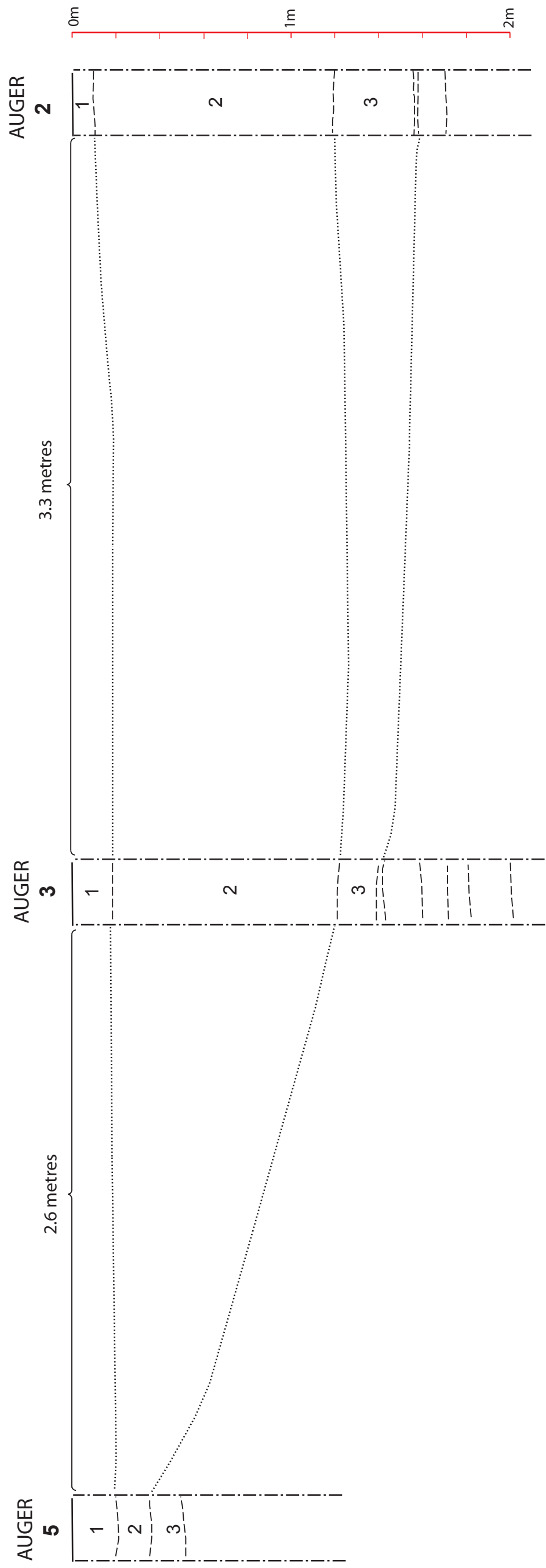
Trench location plan.

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Sections.

Figure 3



Auger profile.

Figure 4

# Appendix 1 Trench descriptions



**Trench 1**

Maximum dimensions: Length: 5m Width: 1.8m Depth: 1.0-1.8m

Orientation: NE-SW

## Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
101	Cement and tarmac drive		0-0.05m
102	Buried topsoil	Mid brown sandy silt, very loose and friable. Contains numerous rounded stones and roots (10%)	0.20-0.30m
103	Redeposited natural – made ground	Mid orange red silty clay, very compact. Contains numerous small rounded stones (<10%).	0.30-1.0m
104	Redeposited soils and organics – made ground	Mid-light brown silty clay, moderately compact. Contains occasional rounded stones (<5%), moderate amounts of buried organic material –probably turf (<10%).	0.40-0.60m

**Trench 2 (contexts 201-203)**

Maximum dimensions: Length: 2m Width: 1.8m Depth: 2.0m

Orientation: n/a

**Trench 3 (contexts 301-306)**

Maximum dimensions: Length: 4m Width: 1.8m Depth: 2.5m

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
201-301	Topsoil	Dark brown friable silty clay	0.0-0.20m
202-302	Topsoil/ made ground	Compact mid reddish brown silty clay, moderate- medium sub rounded stones	0.20-1.0m
203-303	Made ground	Black, moderately compact silty loam, frequent small sub rounded stones with post med-modern fragments of pottery.	1.20-1.50m
304	Upper moat fill	Soft dark greyish brown sandy silt, occasional small sub rounded stones	1.50-1.80m
305	Primary moat fill/ deposit	Black moderate compact sandy silty clay, frequent small to medium sub rounded stones	1.80-2.0m+
306	Weathered Natural	Compact light yellowish grey clay abundant medium sub rounded stones	<2.0m -