An archaeological evaluation of land off Park Lane, Great Alne, Warwickshire

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Contents

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Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken of land off Park Lane, Great Alne, Warwickshire (NGR SP 11906 59607). It was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd, acting on behalf of Mr and Mrs Jones, who intend to construct a residential dwelling, for which a planning application has been consented on appeal.

A single trench was excavated, within the footprint of the consented new building, revealing four ditches and two pits at a depth of c0.50m below the current ground surface. They are considered to represent low level agricultural activity in the medieval period. The presence of a single sherd of 13th to 14th century pottery dates the features, while the scarcity of material might suggest a relatively short period of use. There was no evidence for any settlement activity, indicating that the site was limited to peripheral activity on the edge of the village. Such a landscape has been similarly identified at Maudslay Park to the north-east of the site, where a number of truncated agricultural ditches dating from the 12th to 13th century were superseded by later medieval and post-medieval agricultural furrows. Whilst no furrows were identified on the present site, later truncation was evident in the presence of a series of dumped deposits extending into the 20th century.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken of land off Park Lane, Great Alne, Warwickshire (NGR SP 11906 59607). It was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd, acting on behalf of Mr and Mrs Jones, who intend to construct a residential dwelling, for which a planning application has been consented by Stratford-on-Avon District Council (reference 15/02889/FUL, appeal reference APP/J3720/W/16/3147170).

The proposed development site is considered to include potential heritage, the significance of which may be affected by the application. It is also located within the Great Alne Conservation Area.

The project conforms to a generic brief prepared by Warwickshire County Council and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (CgMs 2016) and approved by the local planning authority.

The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014).

2 Aims

The objectives of the archaeological evaluation were, where possible:

- To establish the presence/absence, extent and character of any archaeological evidence on the site and to consider the archaeological interest of these in the wider context
- To generate an archive which will allow future research of the remains to be undertaken
- To disseminate the results of the work in a format and manner proportionate to the significance of the findings
- To explore, and where possible and appropriate, implement measures to encourage public engagement with the findings

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The project was led by Peter Lovett (BSc (hons.)), who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2012 and has been practicing archaeology since 2004, assisted by James Spry (BA (hons.); MA). The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Vaughan (BA (hons.); MA; ACIfA). Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt (BSc (hons.); PG Cert; MCIfA). Jane Evans (BA, MA, MCIfA), contributed the finds report.

3.2 Documentary research

An archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) was undertaken by CgMs Consulting Ltd, centred on Maudslay Park to the east of the site (CgMs 2009). This site falls within the wider search area of that DBA.

3.3 List of sources consulted

Cartographic sources

- 1822 Map of Warwickshire, Greenwood
- 1st edition Ordnance Survey, 1889, scale 6":1 mile

Documentary sources

Published and grey literature sources are listed in the bibliography.

3.4 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification was prepared by CgMs Consulting Ltd (CgMs 2016).

Fieldwork was undertaken on 29 November 2016.

One trench, amounting to just over 47.5m² in area, was excavated, representing a sample of approximately 25% of the footprint of the new building. The location of the trench is indicated in Figure 1.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under archaeological supervision using a wheeled excavator, employing a toothless bucket. 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 Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

3.5 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.

3.6 Artefact methodology, by Jane Evans

3.6.1 Artefact recovery policy

Recovery of artefacts was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012).

3.7 Environmental archaeology methodology

3.7.1 Sampling policy

Sampling was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012) and conformed to relevant sections of the *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014), *Environmental Archaeology: a guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation* (English Heritage 2011), and *Environmental archaeology and archaeological evaluations* (AEA 1995). In the event no deposits were identified which were considered to be suitable for environmental analysis.

3.8 Statement of confidence in the methods and results

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved**.**

4 The application site

4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context

The site is relatively flat and sits at *c* 55m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). It is bounded on the east by Park Lane, to the north and south by residential properties, and to the west by fields.

The underlying geology consists of mudstone of the Mercian Mudstone Group (BGS 2016). No superficial deposits are recorded.

Spot finds of Roman coins have been reported in the area, and cropmarks attributed to this period have been identified to the north of the site. Great Alne developed as a settlement in the medieval period, though it has never had a proper village centre (CgMs 2016). The Conservation Area

defines the historic extent of the settlement (SADC 2016), and the site lies toward the northern end of this settlement. Low level agricultural activity from the medieval period has recently been identified during investigations by Worcestershire Archaeology at Maudslay Park to the north-east of the site (Walsh 2016).

4.2 Current land-use

The site has been a grassed field for some time, with a few apple trees present on the eastern side.

5 Results

5.1 Structural analysis

The evaluation trench and features recorded are shown in Figures 2-5. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

5.1.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits

The natural ground was a firm mid reddish pink clay, of Mercian Mudstone. It was between 0.49m and 0.72m below the current ground surface, with the overburden increasing in depth to the south. A firm mid yellow brown sandy clay subsoil was present in parts of the trench, though it appeared to have been scarped away in places.

5.1.2 Phase 2: Medieval deposits

Four ditches and two pits were excavated within the trench. Dating was recovered from only one of the ditches, but the similarity in form and fill between these features was such that it is considered that they were contemporary. The two pits had fills of a similar nature to the ditches, and exhibited nothing to contradict a contemporary date.

Ditch 110 (Fig 4; Plate 2), at the northern end of the trench, was aligned north-west to south-east, and measured 0.13m deep and 0.59m wide. It was filled with a dark grey silty clay, and had a slight v-shaped profile. Ditch 114 (Fig 5; Plate 7) lay on the same alignment, and contained a similar fill. It measured 0.09m deep and 0.38m wide, with a rounded profile.

Ditch 119 (Fig 4: Plate 3) was aligned north-east to south-west, and contained a rim sherd from a 13th to 14th century ceramic vessel. It measured 0.34m deep and 0.6m wide, with a slightly rounded profile. The south-east end of ditch 114 and the north-eastern end of ditch 119 would have intersected just beyond the eastern edge of the trench, so it is possible that they are effectively the same ditch. The slight disparity in size and profile could be due to the location of the excavated slots, being as far apart as possible with the confines of the trench.

The final ditch, 108 (Fig 3; Plate 5), at the southern end of the trench, returned to the alignment of the first two ditches. It measured 0.2m deep and 0.5m wide, with a v-shaped profile. It was unique amongst these ditches by having two fills, the upper one being a mid grey brown silty clay, and the lower a mid yellow brown silty clay.

The two pits were located either side of ditch 114. 112 (Plate 4) was very shallow scoop, with an amorphous shape and a sterile fill. It was 0.08m deep and 0.84m wide. Pit 117 (Fig 5; Plate 6), emerging from the western edge of the trench, was more substantial. It had a mid grey silty clay fill, with a thin charcoal-rich deposit observed in the section running across the top of it. It is possible that this was an upper fill of the pit, but dumping of modern rubble over these levels obfuscated the horizons. The pit measured 0.29m deep and 1.65m across, with moderately steep sides and a flat base.

5.1.3 Phase 3: Modern deposits

Sealing the medieval deposits were a number of dumped post-medieval and modern layers. In the southern end these were at their most extensive, with a dump of cobbles overlain by brick and

stone rubble. The modern brick rubble extended into the middle of the trench, before giving way to a more recently developed subsoil at the northern end. The upper layer consisted of a dark grey brown sandy loam topsoil, laid to turf.

5.2 Artefact analysis, by Jane Evans

The only diagnostic find was the rim from a sandy cooking pot from ditch fill (118), dating broadly to the 13th-14th century. The cooking pot has a simple, angular, thickened rim. The fabric has not been identified to source, but includes rounded and subangular quartz, and clay pellets. The surfaces are oxidised and the core reduced.

6 Synthesis

The features identified during the evaluation reveal a low level of activity in a medieval agricultural landscape. There was no evidence for any settlement features, indicating that the site was limited to peripheral activity on the edge of the village of Great Alne. The presence of a single sherd of 13th to 14th century pottery dates the features but also highlights the sparsity of material finds from the site, and might suggest a relatively short period of use. Such a landscape has been similarly identified at Maudslay Park to the north-east of the site, where a number of truncated ditches dating from the 12th to 13th century were superseded by later medieval and post-medieval furrows (Walsh 2016). Whilst no furrows were identified at the present site, some level of later truncation was evident in the presence of a series of dumped deposits extending into the 20th century.

7 Significance

The archaeological remains lie beneath at least 0.5m of overburden. They represent a potentially brief period of medieval agricultural activity, as indicated by the dearth of material finds recovered. As such, the archaeology is considered to be of low significance.

8 The impact of the development

8.1 Impacts during construction

During the construction phase there will be particular impacts, which will be dependent on the depth of footings and service trenches, as well as any landscaping that may be undertaken.

8.2 Impacts on sustainability

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) emphasises the importance of sustainability (DCLG 2012, section 131).

The historic environment is a non-renewable resource and therefore cannot be directly replaced. However mitigation through recording and investigation also produces an important research dividend that can be used for the better understanding of the area's history and contribute to local and regional research agendas (cf NPPF, DCLG 2012, section 141).

9 Publication summary

Worcestershire Archaeology has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, Worcestershire Archaeology 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 on behalf of CgMs Consulting, for Mr and Mrs Jones of land at Park Lane, Great Alne, Warwickshire (NGR SP 11906 59607*).*

A single trench was excavated, within the footprint of the proposed new building, revealing four ditches and two pits at a depth of c*0.50m below the current ground surface. They are considered to represent low level agricultural activity in the medieval period. The presence of a single sherd of 13th to 14th century pottery dates the features, while the scarcity of material might suggest a relatively short period of use. There was no evidence for any settlement activity, indicating that the*

site was limited to peripheral activity on the edge of the village. Such a landscape has been similarly identified at Maudslay Park to the north-east of the site, where a number of truncated agricultural ditches dating from the 12th to 13th century were superseded by later medieval and post-medieval agricultural furrows. Whilst no furrows were identified on the present site, later truncation was evident in the presence of a series of dumped deposits extending into the 20th century.

10 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Mr and Mrs Iwan Jones, and Cathy Patrick (CgMs Consulting Ltd).

11 Bibliography

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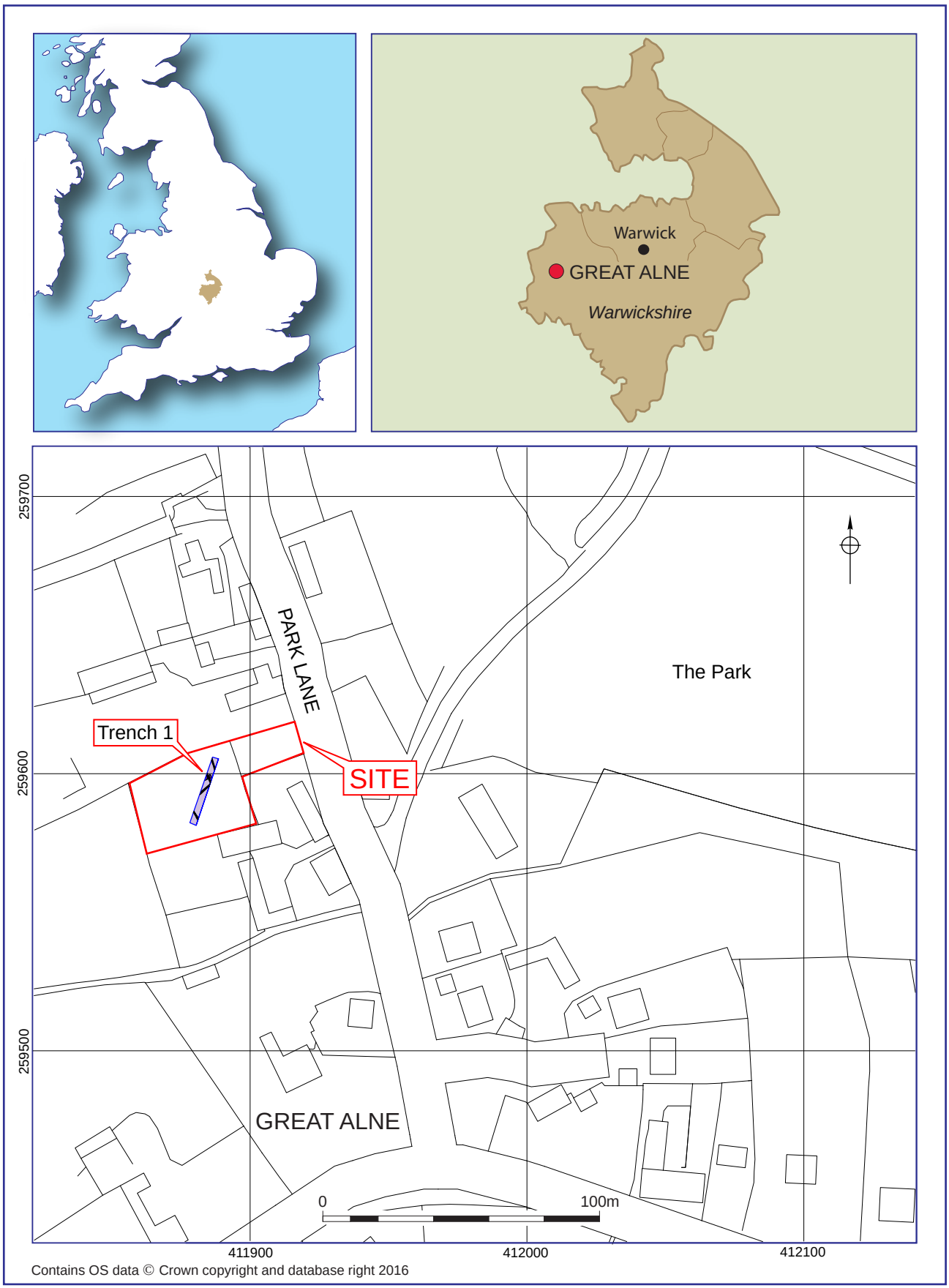
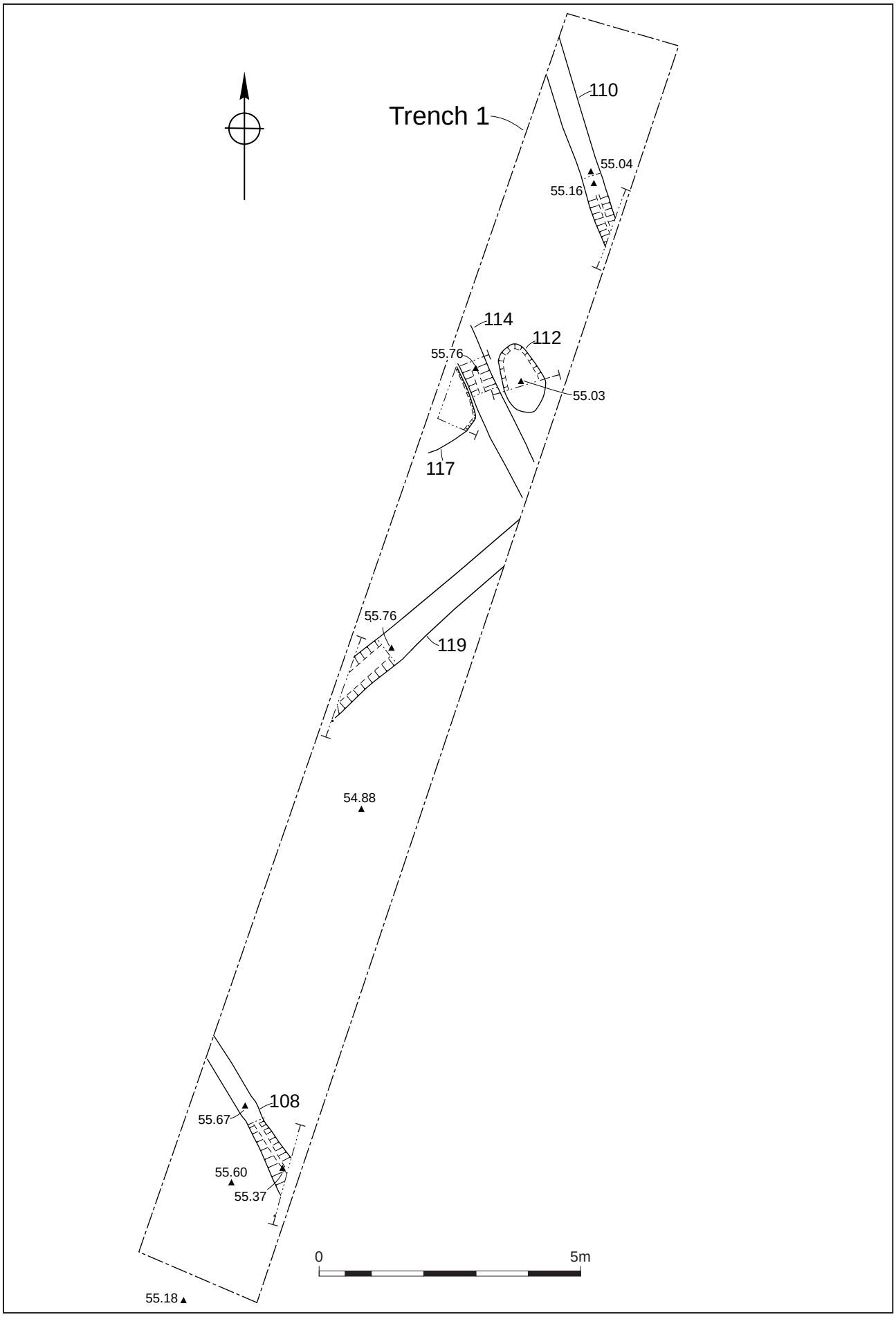
Walsh, A 2016 *Archaeological Investigations at Maudslay Park, Great Alne, Warwickshire*, Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished report **2303**, revision 1 dated 3 March 2016

Figures

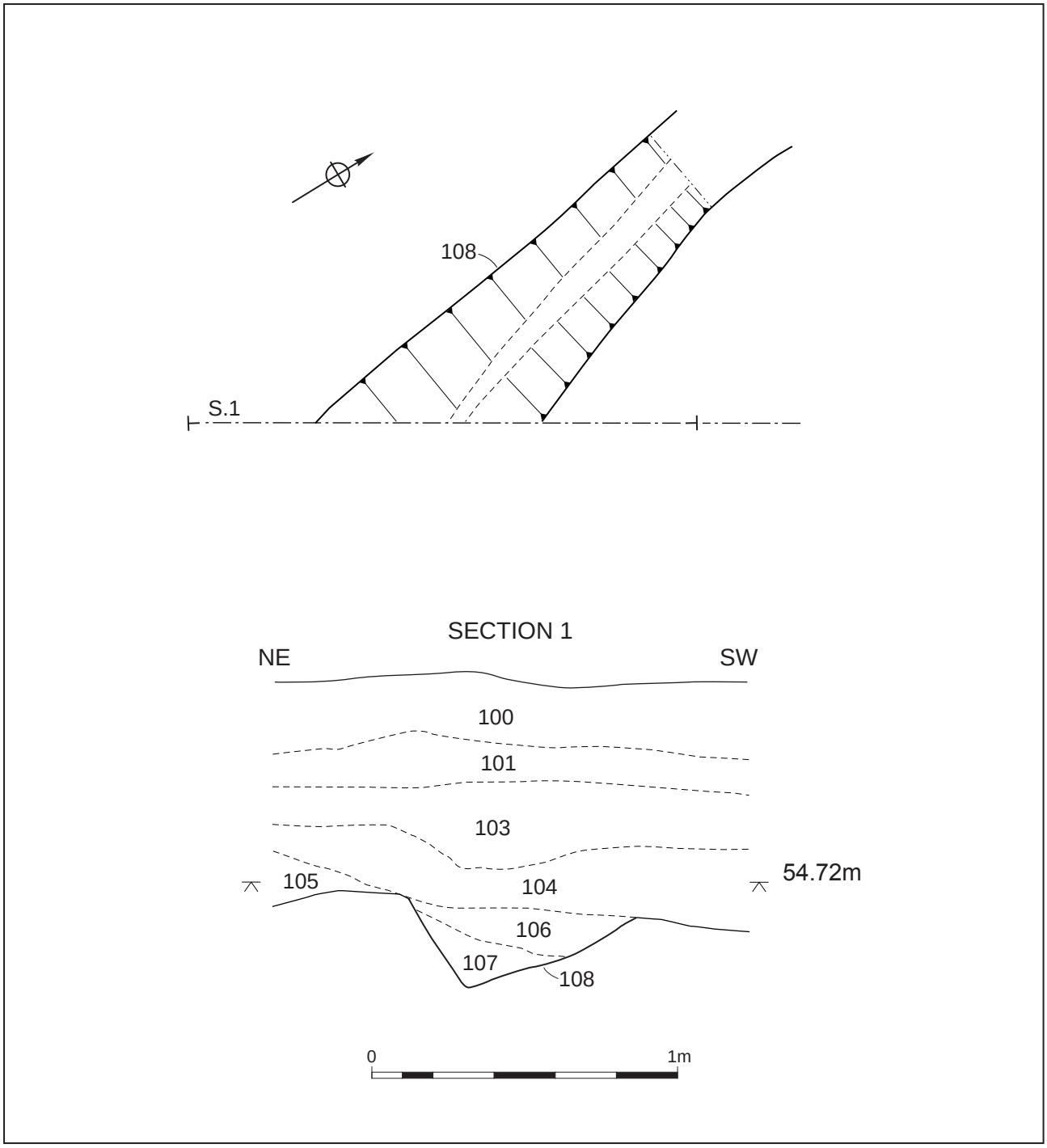


Location of the site *Figure 1*



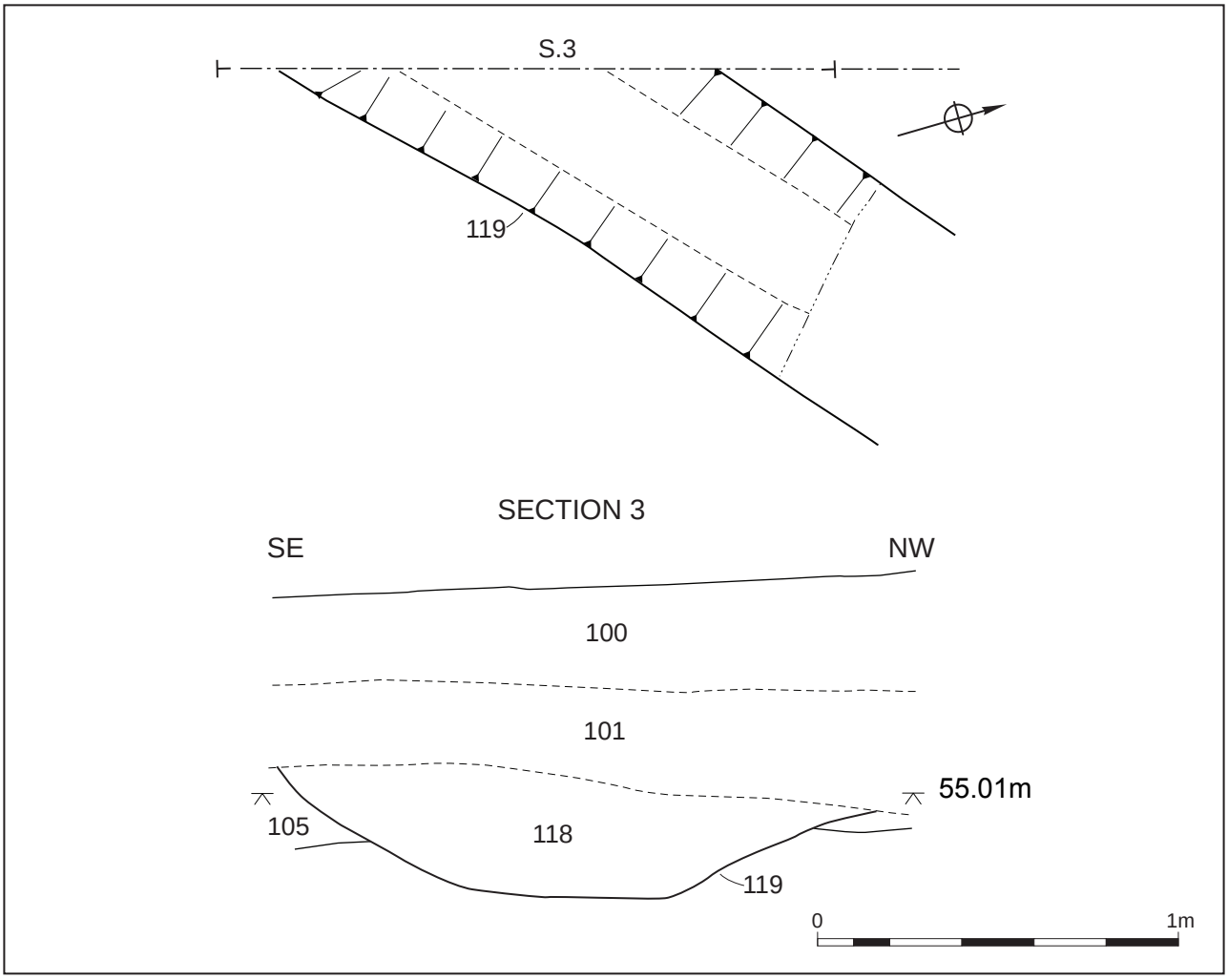
Features in Trench 1

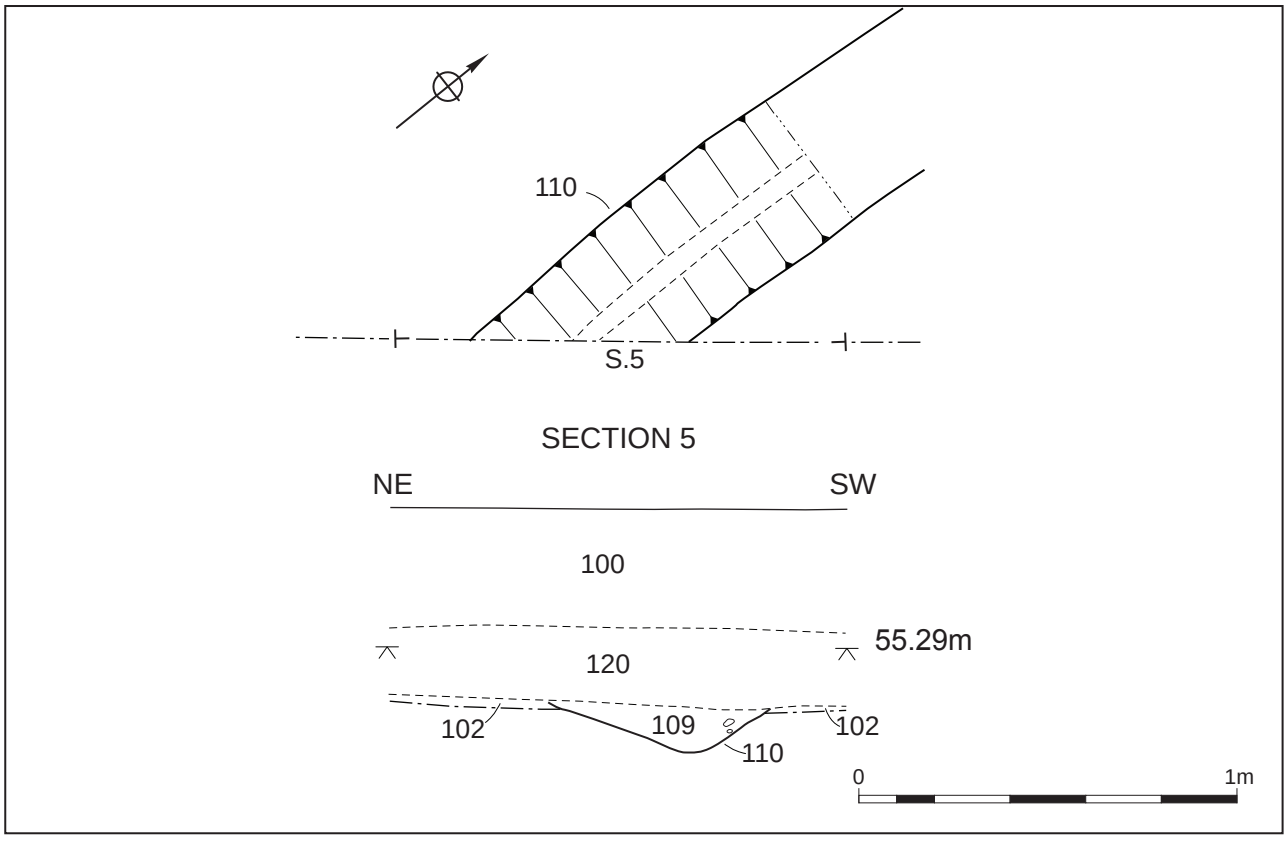
Figure 2



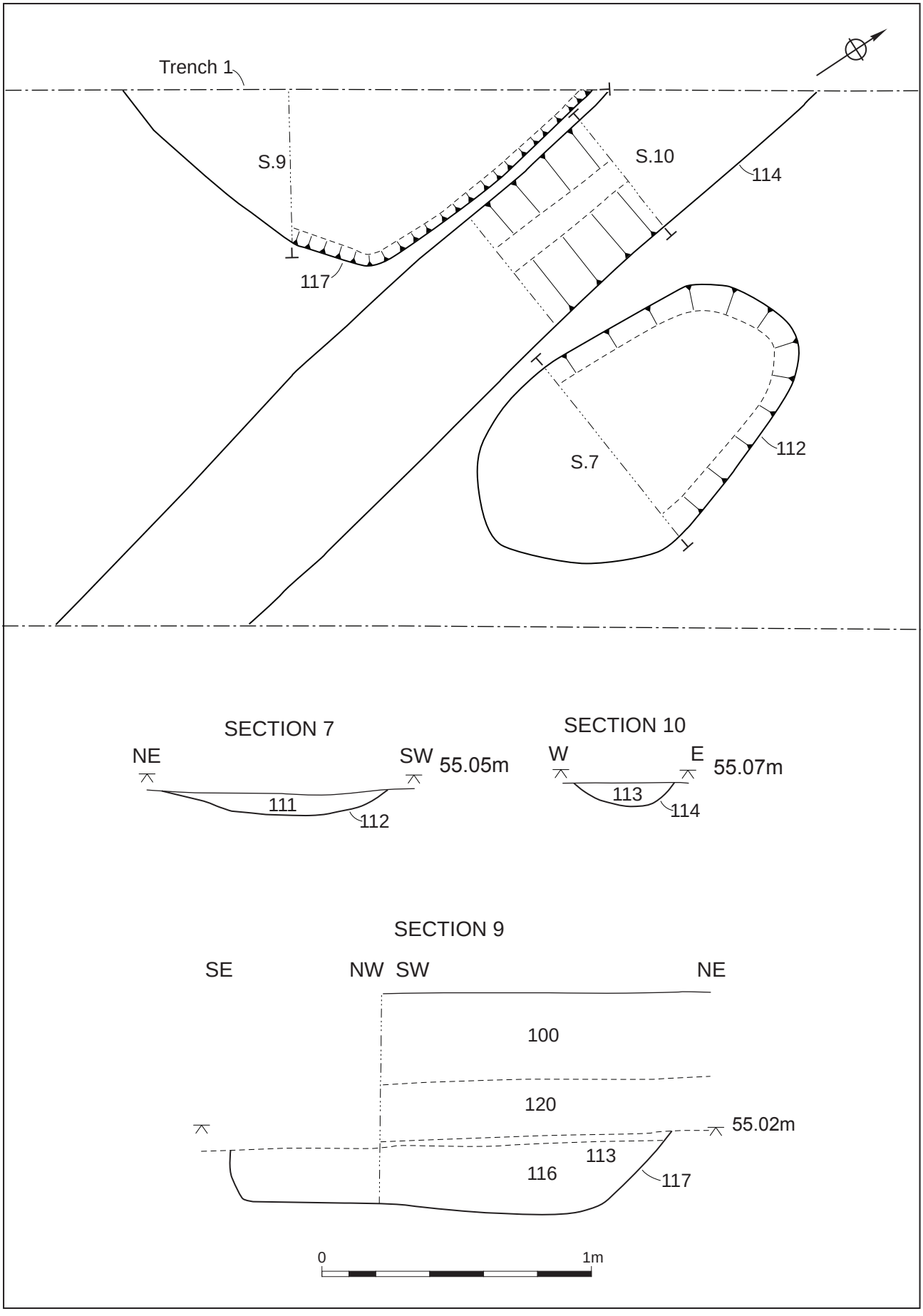
Ditch 108: plan and section

Figure 3





Ditches 110 and 119: plans and sections *Figure 4*



Features 112, 114 and 117: plans and sections *Figure 5*

Plates

Plate 1 The site, looking west

Plate 2 Ditch 110, looking south-east (1m scale)

Plate 3 Ditch 119, looking west (1m and 0.5m scales)

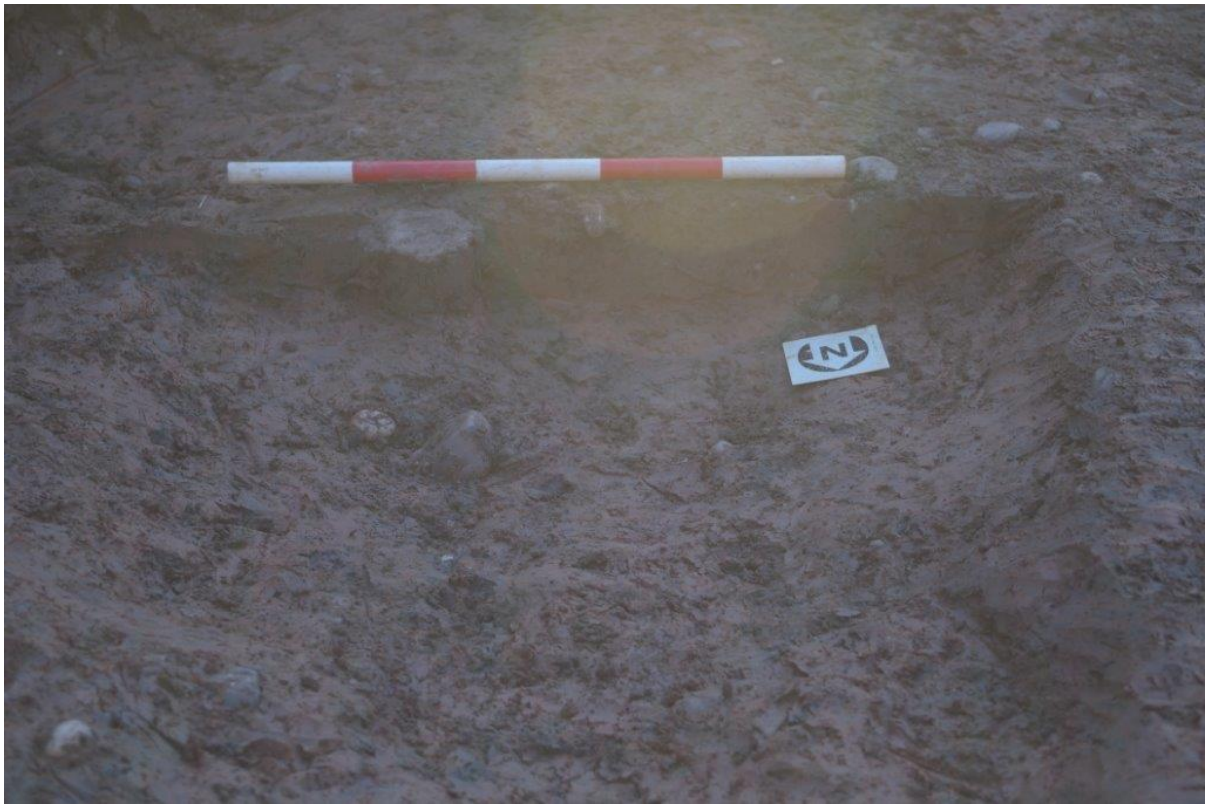


Plate 4 Shallow scoop pit 112, looking south (0.5m scale)

Plate 5 Ditch 108 with later dumping above, looking south-east (1m and 0.5m scales)

Plate 6 Pit 117, looking north-west (1m and 0.5m scales)

Plate 7 Ditch 114, looking north (0.2m scale)

Plate 8 Trench 1, looking north-east (2 x 1m scales)

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Length: 25m Width: 1.9m Orientation: North-east to south-west

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
100	Topsoil	Layer	Soft dark greyish brown sandy loam	0.32m	Topsoil
101	Modern Layer	Layer	Loose mid pinky brown clayey sand	0.2m	Dumped rubble layer
102	Natural	Layer	Firm mid pinky red clay		Natural; Mercian Mudstone
103	Modern Layer	Layer	Soft mid greyish brown silty clay	0.35m	Dump of cobbles
104	Layer	Layer	Soft mid greyish brown silty clay	0.25m	Levelling layer
105	Subsoil	Layer	Firm mid yellowish brown sandy clay	0.17m	Older subsoil
106	Ditch	Fill	Soft mid greyish brown silty clay	0.15m	Fill of Med ditch
107	Ditch	Fill	Soft mid yellowish brown silty clay	0.15m	Fill of Med ditch
108	Ditch	Cut		0.26m	Small Medieval ditch, nw-se alignment
109	Ditch	Fill	Firm dark brownish grey silty clay	0.13m	Fill of Med ditch
110	Ditch	Cut		0.13m	Medieval ditch, nw-se alignment
111	Pit	Fill	Firm mid orangey grey silty clay	0.08m	Fill of shallow pit
112	Pit	Cut		0.08m	Shallow scoop pit
113	Ditch	Fill	Firm mid brownish grey silty clay	0.09m	Fill of Med pit
114	Ditch	Cut		0.09m	Medieval ditch, nw-se alignment
115	Pit	Fill	Soft dark greyish black silty clay	0.03m	Fill of sub-circular pit
116	Pit	Fill	Firm mid brownish grey silty clay	0.29m	Fill of sub-circular pit
117	Pit	Cut		0.32m	Probably Medieval sub-circular pit
118	Ditch	Fill	Firm mid greyish brown silty clay	0.35m	Fill of Med ditch
119	Ditch	Cut		0.35m	Small Medieval ditch, nw-se alignment
120	Subsoil	Layer	Firm mid yellowish brown silty clay	0.2m	Newer subsoil, beneath the existing topsoil

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive

The archive consists of:

1	Field progress reports AS2
1	Photographic records AS3
24	Digital photographs
1	Drawing number catalogues AS4
2	Scale drawings
1	Trench record sheets AS41
1	Box of finds
1	CD-Rom/DVDs
1	Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Market Hall Museum
Market Place
Warwick
CV34 4SA
Tel: 01926 412 132