

# Archaeological Excavation at Common Lane, Kenilworth, Warwickshire



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## **Archaeological Excavation at Common Lane, Kenilworth, Warwickshire**

Jesse Wheeler

With contributions by Jane Evans and Elizabeth Pearson

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

### **Summary**

An archaeological excavation was undertaken at Common Lane, Kenilworth, Warwickshire (NGR SP 29879 73181). It was undertaken on behalf of Bloor Homes who have been granted planning permission for the erection of up to 93 dwellings together with open space, drainage infrastructure and access from Common Lane (Resubmission of W/14/0618) by Warwick District Council. Permission was granted subject to conditions including a programme of archaeological works.

An archaeological evaluation at a 4% sample of the site had previously been carried out by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2017). Fourteen trenches were excavated across the site; these revealed three features of probable Bronze Age date, alongside a number of post-medieval pits of agricultural function, and a poorly built red brick wall. An area to the north, the location of a proposed attenuation tank, could not be included in the archaeological evaluation.

Three areas were further identified for excavation; a 25mx25m area around Trench 9, a 25mx25m area around Trench 2 and a 1.8m x 15m area in the location of the proposed attenuation tank. Following consultation with Anna Stocks during excavation, a 10 x 10m area around Trench 7 was also opened around an undated pit.

The excavation revealed two modern ditches and four undated pits establishing that the prehistoric activity observed in the evaluation was low-level activity, probably related to agricultural rather than settlement activities.

## Report

### 1 Background

#### 1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological excavation was undertaken at Common Lane, Kenilworth, Warwickshire (NGR SP 29879 73181). It was undertaken on behalf of Bloor Homes who have been granted planning permission for the erection of up to 93 dwellings together with open space, drainage infrastructure and access from Common Lane (Resubmission of W/14/0618) by Warwick District Council. Permission was granted subject to conditions including a programme of archaeological works.

The c.3.5ha site lies at the northern edge of Kenilworth, to the north of Common Lane. It encompasses two parcels of farmland (Areas 1 and 2) situated between the cutting of the former Kenilworth and Berkswell Railway and the embankment of the Warwick and Leamington Union Railway line.

A geophysical survey of the site has been undertaken (PreConstruct Geophysics Ltd 2014). No recorded magnetic anomalies that clearly resolve as traces of buried archaeological features were recorded and it was concluded a low potential for the survival of archaeological remains within the site.

An archaeological evaluation at a 4% sample of the site was carried out by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2017). Fourteen trenches were excavated across the site; these revealed three features of probable Bronze Age date, alongside a number of post-medieval pits of agricultural function, and a poorly built red brick wall.

The Bronze Age features consisted of two ditches and a probable pit. The artefact assemblage included small pottery fragments and flint tools.

An area to the north, the location of a proposed attenuation tank, could not be included in the archaeological evaluation.

Correspondence with Anna Stocks, Planning Archaeologist for Warwickshire County Council confirmed that further mitigation in the form of targeted excavation was appropriate, to sample and record the identified archaeological deposits in advance of construction works. A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was produced by Worcestershire Archaeology and approved by Anna Stocks. The project conforms to the WSI and to *Standard and guidance: Archaeological excavation* (ClfA 2014a)

### 2 Aims

The aims and scope of the project were to locate and sample archaeological deposits and record their nature, extent and date with the aim of preserving these assets by record to mitigate the effects of the proposed development.

### 3 Methods

#### 3.1 Personnel

The project was led by Andrew Walsh (BSc (hons); MSc; ACIfA; FSA Scot); who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2013 and has been practicing archaeology since 2004, assisted by Jamie Wilkins (BA (hons.)), and Emma Chubb (BA (hons.); MA). The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Rogers (BA (hons.)). Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn

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Hunt (BSc (hons.); PG Cert; MCIfA). Elizabeth Pearson (MSc; ACIfA) contributed the environmental report; Jane Evans (BA, MA, MCIfA) contributed the finds report.

### **3.2 Documentary research**

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the Historic Environment Record (HER).

### **3.3 List of sources consulted**

#### *Cartographic sources*

- Ordnance Survey 1st edition
- Ordnance Survey 1946

#### *Documentary sources*

Published and grey literature sources are listed in the bibliography.

### **3.4 Fieldwork strategy**

A WSI was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2017) and approved by Anna Stocks, planning archaeologist for Warwickshire County Council.

Four areas, amounting to just over 1550m<sup>2</sup>, were excavated over the site. Three areas were originally identified for excavation; a 25mx25m area around evaluation Trench 9, a 25mx25m area around evaluation Trench 2 and a 1.8m x 15m trench in the location of the proposed attenuation tank which was not included in the 2017 evaluation. Following consultation with Anna Stocks during excavation, a 10 x 10m area around Trench 7 was also opened around undated pit 704.

The locations of the areas and Trench 15 are indicated in Figure 2.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under archaeological supervision using a 360° tracked 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, Trench 15 was reinstated by replacing the excavated material. Areas A, B and C remained open in advance of the development.

Fieldwork was undertaken between 15th and 24th January 2018. The site code used in the archive is P5246.

### **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**

The finds work reported here conforms with the following guidance: for finds work by ClfA (2014), for pottery analysis by PCRG/SGRP/MPRG (2016), for archive creation by AAF (2011), and for museum deposition by SMA (1993).

#### **3.6.1 Artefact recovery policy**

The artefact recovery policy conformed to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012; appendix 2).

### **3.6.2 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 where possible. The date was used for determining the broad date of phases defined for the site.

No artefacts from environmental samples were examined.

The pottery and ceramic building material was examined by eye with reference to the Warwickshire Medieval and Post Medieval Pottery Type Series (Soden and Ratkai 1998).

## **3.7 Environmental archaeology methodology, by Elizabeth Pearson**

### **3.7.1 Project parameters**

The environmental project conforms to relevant sections of the *Standard and guidance: Archaeological excavation* (ClfA 2014) and *Environmental Archaeology: a guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation* (English Heritage 2011).

### **3.7.2 Aims**

The aims of the analysis were to determine the state of preservation, type, and quantity of environmental remains recovered, from the samples and information provided. This information will be used to assess the importance of the environmental remains.

### **3.7.3 Methods**

#### *Sampling policy*

Samples were taken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (2012). A total of two samples (each of up to 30 litres) were taken from the site (Env Table 1).

#### *Processing and analysis*

The samples were processed by flotation using a Siraf tank. The flots were collected on a 300µm sieve and the residue retained on a 1mm mesh. This allows for the recovery of items such as small animal bones, molluscs and seeds.

The residues were scanned by eye and the abundance of each category of environmental remains estimated. A magnet was also used to test for the presence of hammerscale. The flots were scanned using a low power MEIJI stereo light microscope and plant remains identified using modern reference collections maintained by Worcestershire Archaeology, and a seed identification manual (Cappers *et al* 2012). Nomenclature for the plant remains follows the New Flora of the British Isles, 3rd edition (Stace 2010).

The cell structure of all the non-oak identification samples was examined in three planes under a MEIJI dark illumination microscope and identifications were carried out using reference texts (Schweingruber 1978 and Hather 2000) and reference slides housed at Worcestershire Archaeology.

### **3.7.4 Discard policy**

Remaining sample material and scanned residues will be discarded after a period of 3 months following submission of this report unless there is a specific request to retain them.

## **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.



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## 4 The application site

### 4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context

The site lies between two deep railway cuttings, the one to the west a decommissioned Kenilworth and Berkswell Railway line that is now a footpath, and to the east the current Warwick and Leamington Union Railway line. The southern limit is bordered by Common Lane, and the northern boundary is farmland. The land slopes from c. 90m aOD in the south to c. 78m aOD in the north.

The geology is recorded as Kenilworth Sandstone Formation – Sandstone, and as Kenilworth Sandstone Formation – Mudstone (BGS 2017).

The archaeological background to the site is set out in detail in the Heritage Appraisal by Cotswold Archaeology (CA 2014)

### 4.2 Current land-use

The site is currently fallow and has returned to grassland.

## 5 Results

### 5.1 Structural analysis

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

#### 5.1.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits

The natural geology consists of heavy red marl, greyish yellow sand, and weathered sandstone bedrock.

#### 5.1.2 Phase 2: Modern deposits

A shallow gully was excavated in Trench 15, 1504, running west to east. Its full extent was not revealed in plan. It contained a sherd of modern (19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century) china.

In Area A, a shallow gully, 2011=2013, was observed cutting through the subsoil, and may have cut the topsoil also but this was not determined. This was orientated north to south with a curve to southwest where it became shallower and disappeared. Moderate charcoal was found within the fill.

A light grey sandy silt subsoil between (depths) thick was present across areas A, B and C, sealed by a greyish-brown sandy silt topsoil between (depths) thick. Trench 15 had a light pinkish-brown silty clay subsoil between 0.12-0.2m thick, and was sealed by a mid brownish-grey silty clay topsoil between 0.2-0.28m thick.

#### 5.1.3 Phase 3: Undated

A single pit was identified in Area B, 2003, measuring 0.92m wide and 0.14m deep. Its single fill contained moderate charcoal and two possible heat affected stones

Three pits were identified in Area C. Pit 2007 measured 3.6m by 2.1m and was 0.22m deep and contained two sterile fills. Pit 2009, which was partially excavated during the evaluation, measured 3.44m by 2.35m and was 0.36m deep contained moderate charcoal and large cobbles suggesting it may be a backfilled quarry pit. Pit 2014 was a shallower feature, measuring 1.84m by 1.10m and 0.18m deep, which contained a moderate amount of charcoal.

## 5.2 Artefact analysis, by Jane Evans

A very small assemblage of finds was recovered (Table 1) from Area A (2012) and Trench 15 (1503). This comprised two sherds of modern china (Warwickshire Fabric MGW) dating broadly to the 19th or 20th century, and two fragments of undiagnostic ceramic building material. A small fragment of charcoal was recovered from fill 2012.

period	material class	material class sub-type	object specific class	count	weight (g)
post-medieval/modern	ceramic	earthenware	brick/tile	2	30
Modern	ceramic	earthenware	pot	2	3
undated	organic	charcoal		1	0.5

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage by period

## 5.3 Significance

No finds of significance were recovered.

## 5.4 Recommendations

No further analysis is required.

## 5.5 Discard and retention

The finds can be discarded, with the agreement of the local museum.

## 6 Environmental analysis, by Elizabeth Pearson

The environmental evidence recovered is summarised in Tables 2 and 3.

Uncharred remains, consisting of mainly root fragments are assumed to be modern and intrusive as they are unlikely to have survived in the soils on site for long without charring or waterlogging.

Initial assessment showed that charcoal was abundant but was dominated by oak (*Quercus robur/petraea*) heartwood, with occasional charred seed remains and fungal spores. The dominance of oak suggests that wood use for activities that resulted in this waste was selective. As these remains have low potential to provide more detailed information on the function of the pits, no further work was carried out on these samples.

Context	Sample	Feature type	Fill of	Phase	Sample volume (L)	Volume processed (L)	Residue assessed	Flot assessed
2004	1	Pit	2003	?prehistoric	30	10	Yes	Yes
2016	2	Pit	2014	?prehistoric	10	10	Yes	Yes

Env Table 1: List of bulk samples

context	sample	charcoal	charred plant	artefacts
2004	1	abt	occ	
2016	2	abt		chert

Env Table 2: Summary of remains from bulk samples, occ = occasional, abt = abundant

context	sample	preservation type	species detail	category remains	quantity/diversity	comment
2004	1	ch	unidentified wood fragments, unidentified fungal sclerotia	misc	+++/low	mostly unidentifiable, moderate fungal spores
2004	1	ch	<i>Silene</i> sp	seed	+/low	
2004	1	?wa*	unidentified herbaceous root fragments	misc	+++/low	
2016	2	ch	<i>Quercus robur/petraea</i> wood, cf <i>Quercus</i> sp, unidentified wood fragments	misc	++/+++/low	Dominated by oak
2016	2	?wa*	unidentified herbaceous root fragments	misc	+++/low	

Env Table 3: Plant remains from bulk samples

#### Key:

preservation	quantity
ch = charred	+ = 1 - 10
*probably modern and intrusive	++ = 11 - 50
	+++ = 51 - 100
	++++ = 101+

## 7 Synthesis

The archaeological features uncovered during the excavation consisted of two likely modern ditches, and four undated, possibly prehistoric pits. The artefactual assemblage is minimal and comprised of two sherds of modern china dating broadly to the 19th or 20th century, and two fragments of undiagnostic ceramic building material. The environmental remains were deemed have low potential to provide more detailed information on the function of the pits.

Trench 15 yielded a modern ditch 1504, dated by a single ceramic sherd.

Area A of this excavation was opened around Trench 9 from the previous evaluation in which ditch 904 was assigned a probable prehistoric date due to the inclusion of a flint blade. On re-excavation, this feature was proven to be an amorphous spread that was likely natural in origin. However ditch 2011=2013 was observed to the west of the Trench 9 location, although this was assigned a modern date due to the inclusion of modern ceramic and modern/post medieval brick/tile.

Area B of this excavation correlated with Trench 7 of the evaluation in which pit 704 was excavated. On its re-excavation this was deemed to be a natural feature. Possible prehistoric pit 2004 was excavated to its northeast, although it remained undated.

Area C correlated with Trench 2, in which possible prehistoric activity was observed in feature 205, interpreted as a ditch. On re-excavation the northern edge of the feature was revealed and was

reinterpreted as a pit. This was previously dated through the recovery of Bronze Age pottery. The three other pit features excavated in the area, one previously partially excavated as 210, now 2009, did not yield any dating evidence so can only be dated by association to the previously excavated pit.

The characterisation of the possible prehistoric activity observed in the evaluation has been shown to be low-level activity, probably related to agricultural rather than settlement activities.

## 8 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.

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The excavation revealed two modern ditches and four undated pits establishing that the prehistoric activity observed in the evaluation was low-level activity, probably related to agricultural rather than settlement activities.

## 9 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Chris Shaw of Bloor Homes, and Anna Stocks of Warwickshire County Council.

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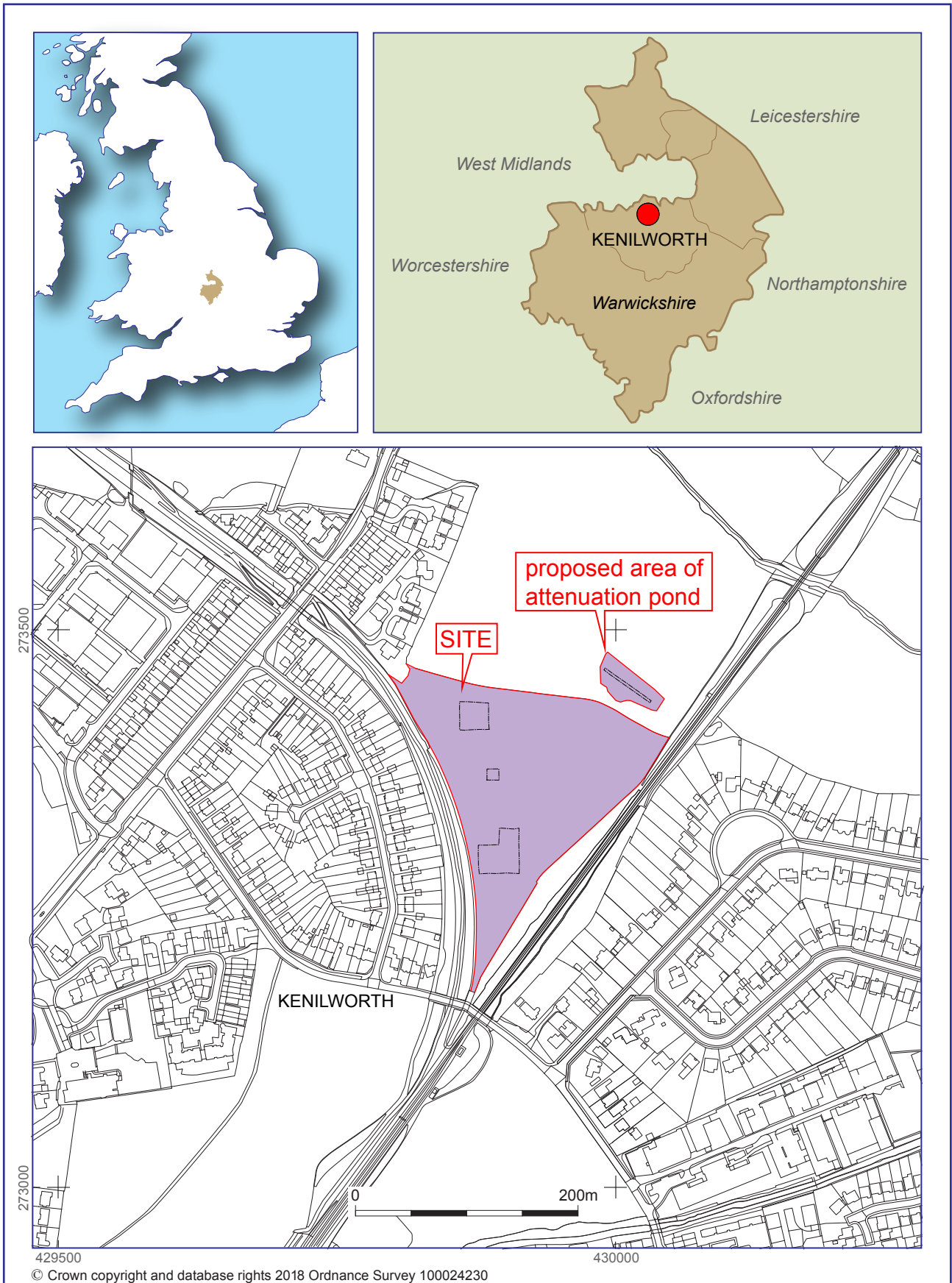
WA 2018 *Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological excavation at Common Lane, Kenilworth, Warwickshire* Worcestershire Archaeology, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished document dated 11<sup>th</sup> January 2018, **P5246**





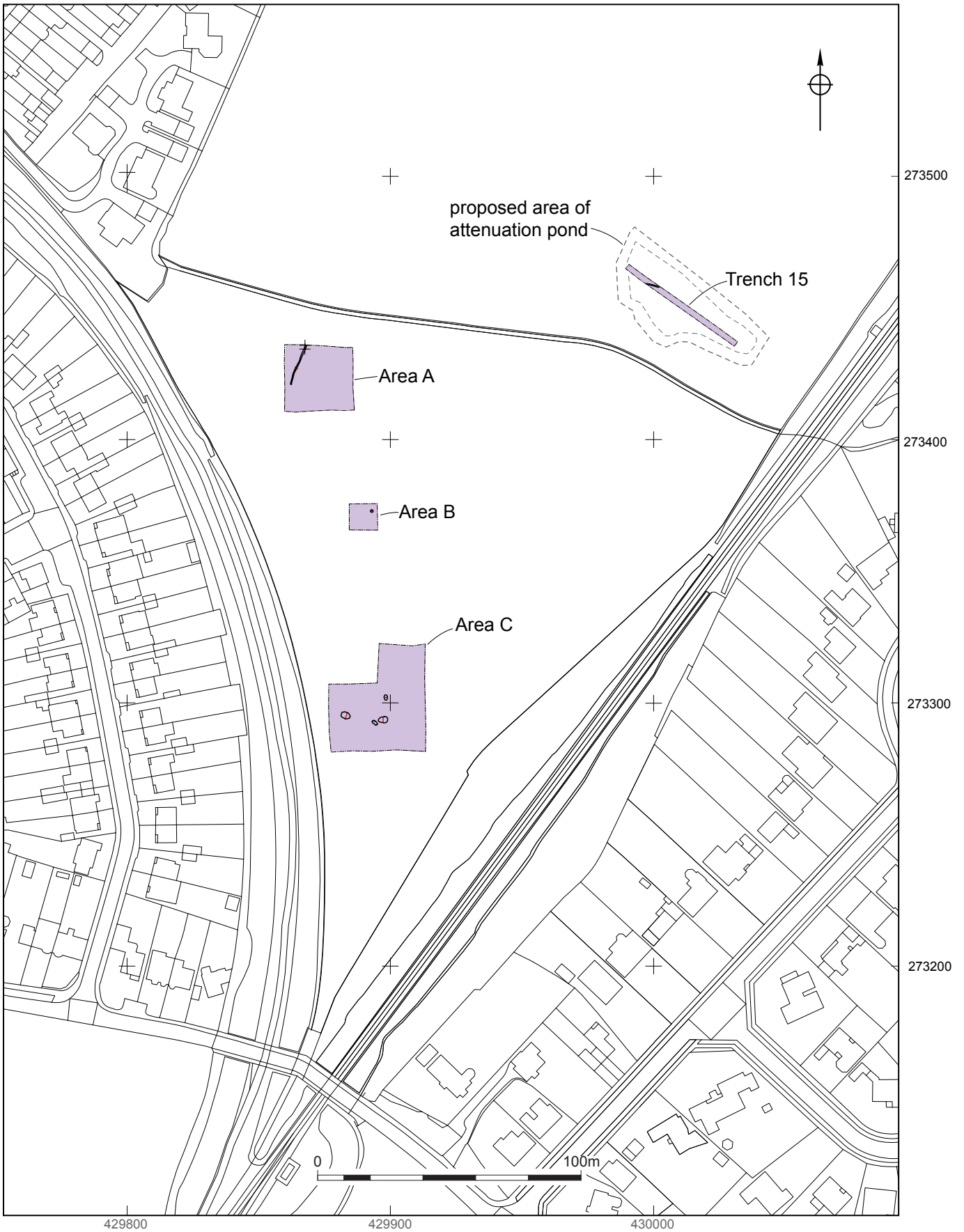
## Figures





Location of the site

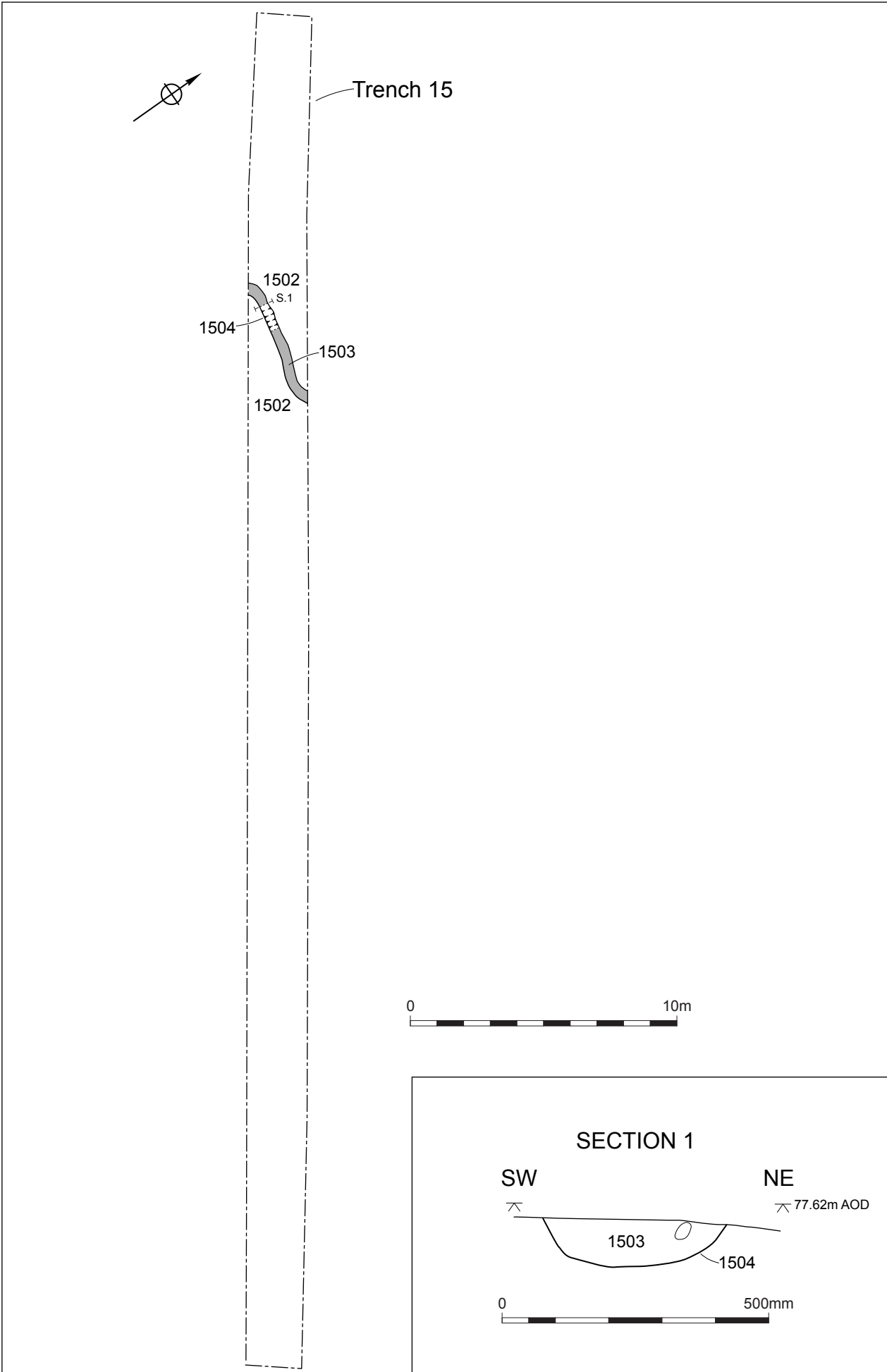
Figure 1



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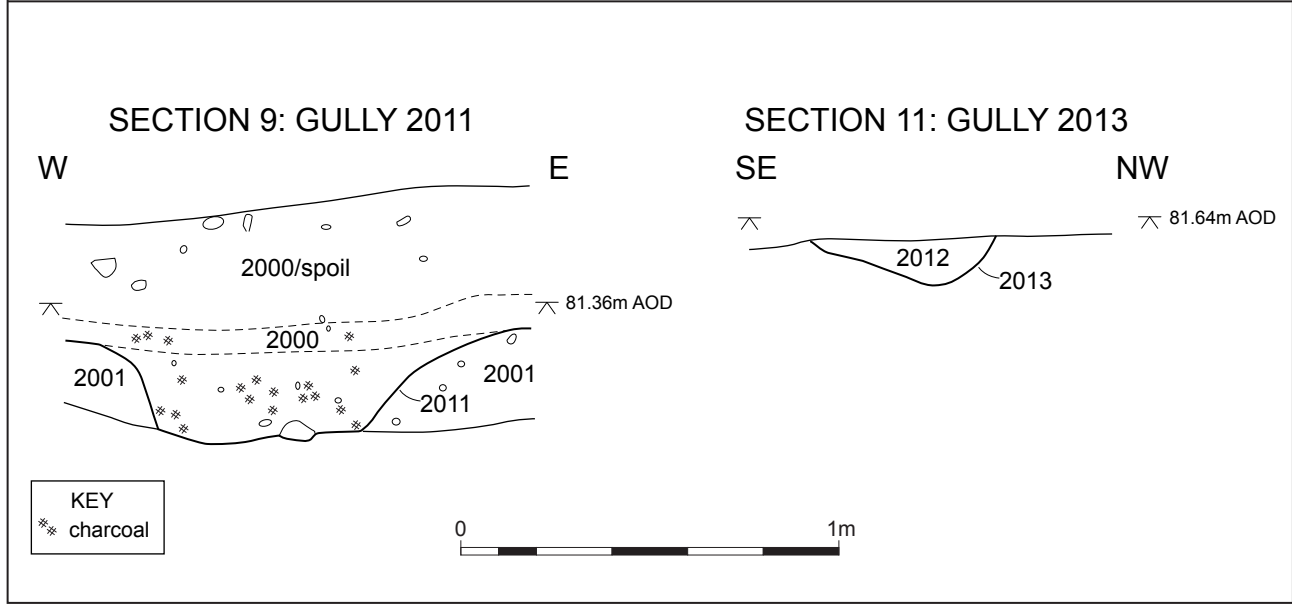
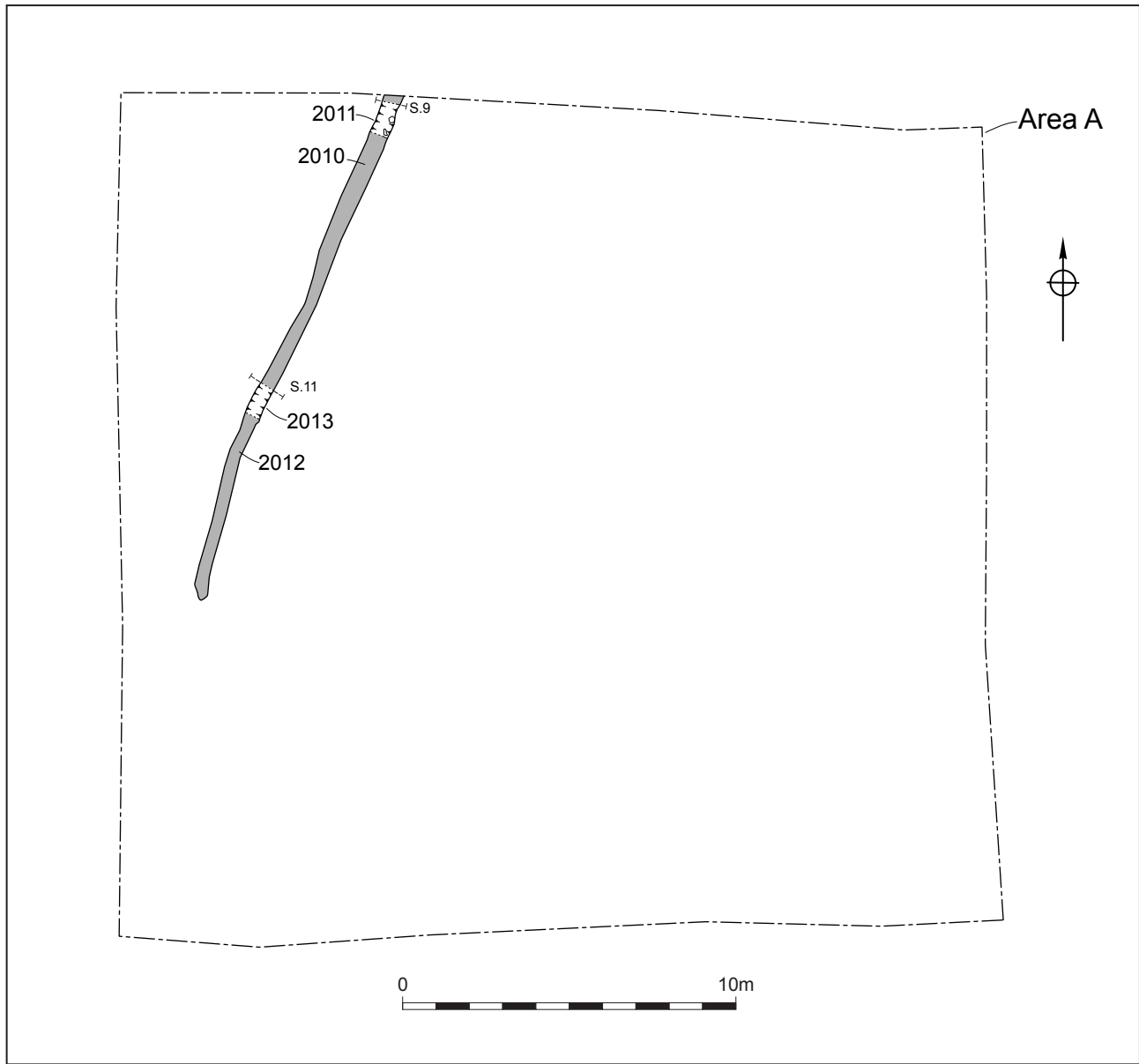
Trench location plan

Figure 2



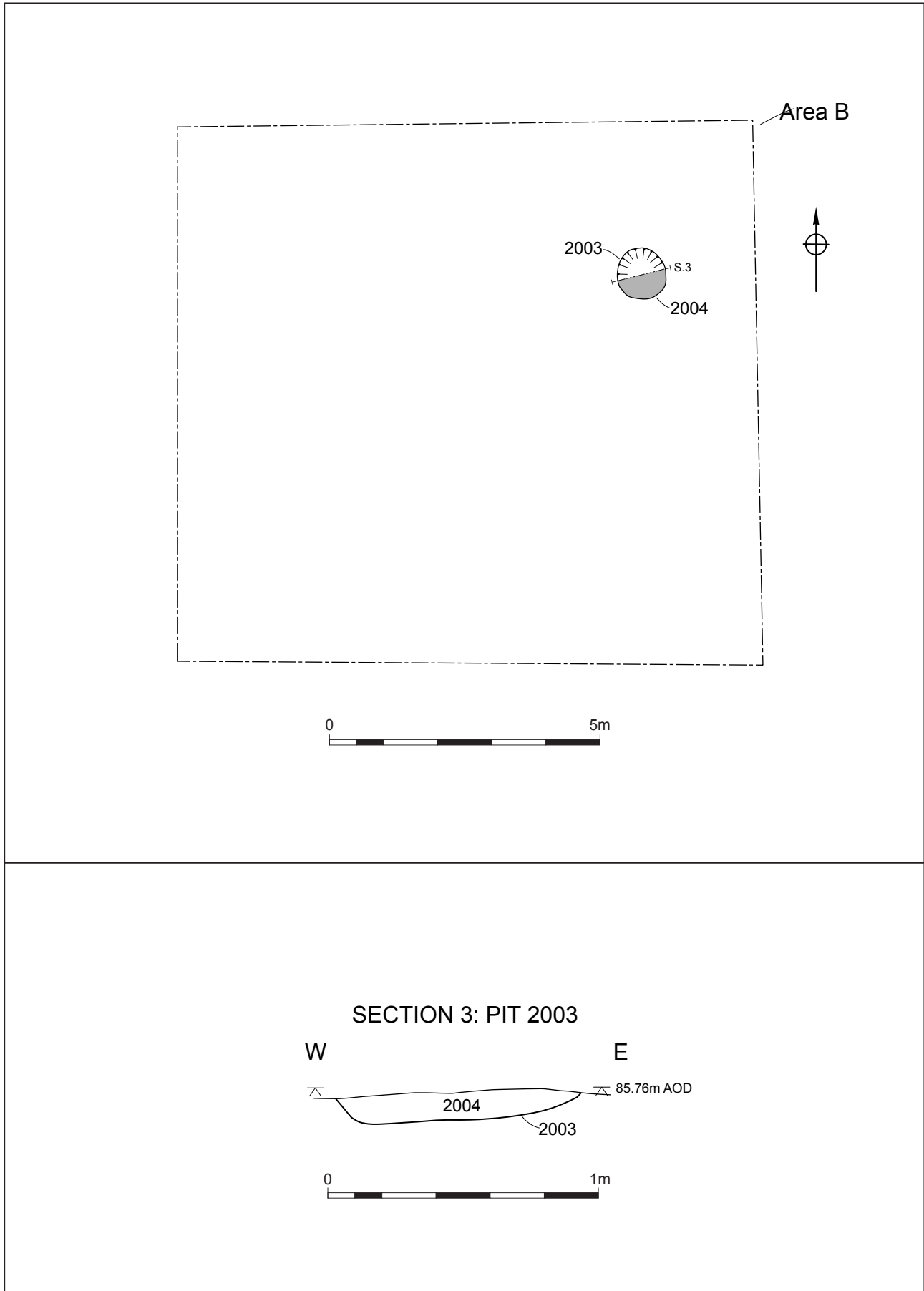
Trench 15: plan and section

Figure 3



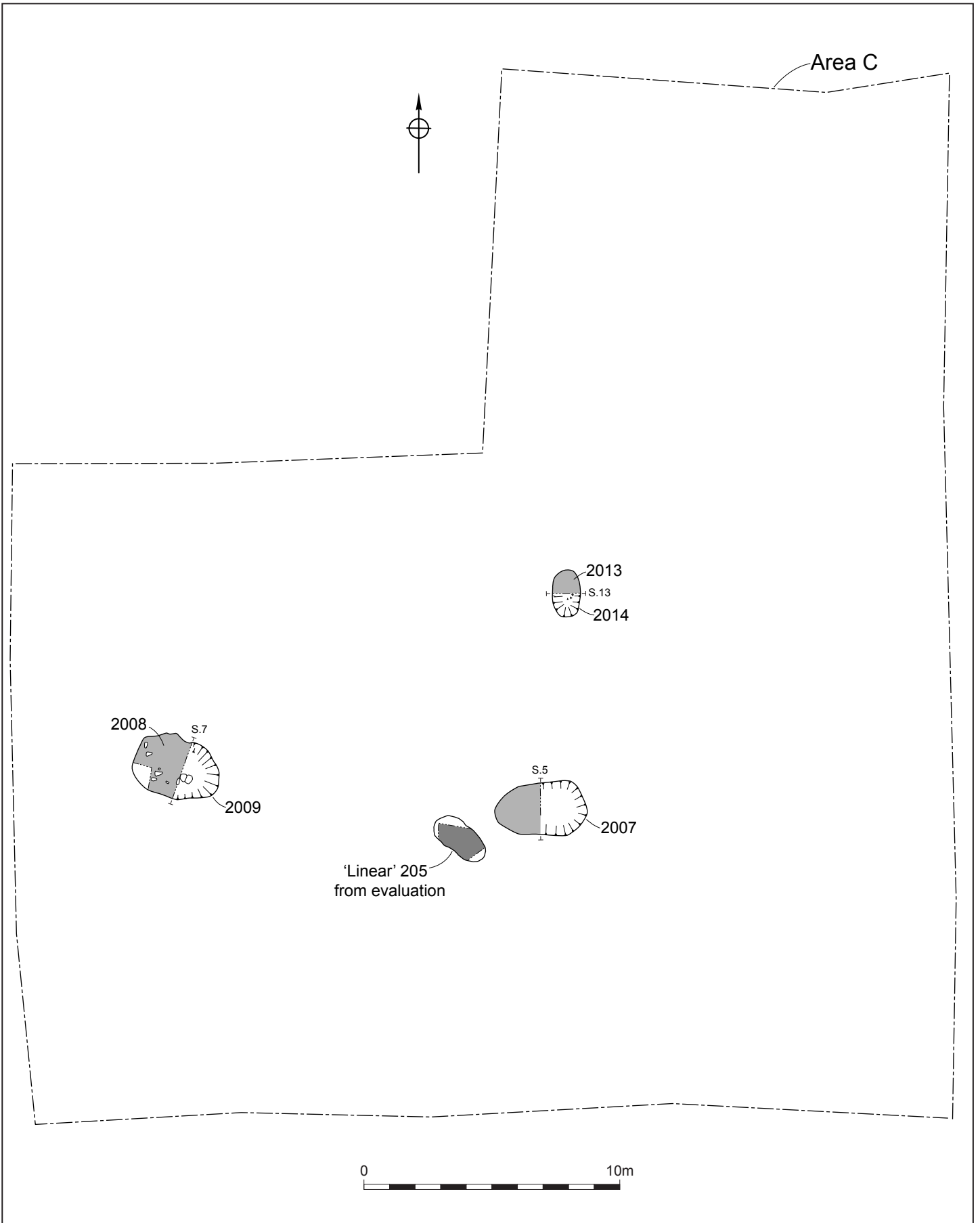
Area A: plan and sections

Figure 4



Area B: plan and section

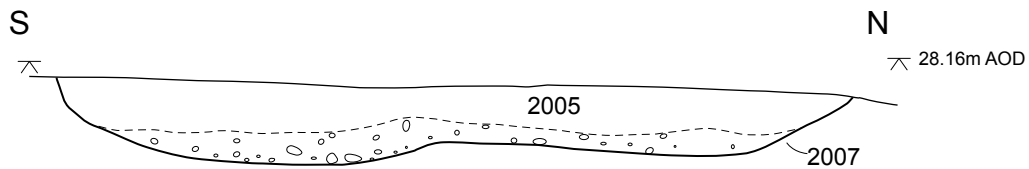
Figure 5



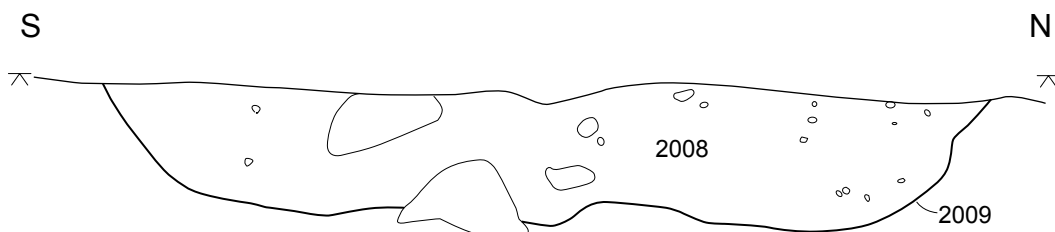
Area C: plan

Figure 6

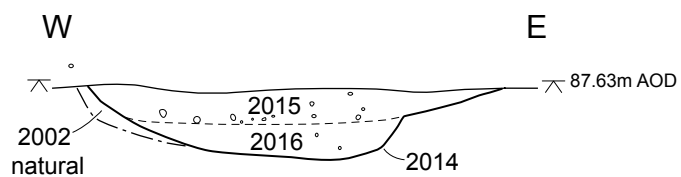
SECTION 5: PIT 2007



SECTION 7: PIT 2009



SECTION 13: PIT 2014



Area C: sections

Figure 7



## Plates



*Plate 1: North facing section of Pit 2003 (0.4m scale)*



*Plate 2: East facing section of Pit 2007 (1m scale)*

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*Plate 3: South-west facing photograph of Pit 2009 (1m scale)*



*Plate 4: South facing section of Pit 2014 (1m scale)*

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## Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

### Trench 15

Length: 30m

Width: 30m

Orientation: North to south

#### Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
1500	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.24m	Brownish grey silty clay
1501	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil-	0.16m	Pinky brown silty clay
1502	Natural	Layer	Natural,	0.4m	Pinky brown silty clay
1503	Gully	Fill	Fill of gully [1504]	0.09m	Friable brownish grey silty clay
1504	Gully	Cut	Cut of shallow gully	0.09m	.

### Area A

Length: 25m

Width: 25m

#### Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
2000	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.3m	Greyish brown sandy silt
2001	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil		Grey sandy silt
2002	natural	Layer	Brownish red clay mud stone with occasional sandstone patches		
2010	Gully	Fill	Fill of shallow gully [2011]	0.22m	Moderately compact Brownish grey sandy clay
2011	Gully	Cut	Cut of shallow gully	0.22m	
2012	Gully	Fill	Fill of gully [2013]	0.12m	Moderately compact Greyish brown sandy clay
2013	Gully	Cut	Cut of gully	0.12m	

## Area B

Length: 50m      Width: 50m

### Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
300	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil		Greyish brown sandy silt
301	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil		Grey sandy silt
302	Natural	Layer	Brownish red clay mudstone with occasional sandstone patches		
2003	Pit	Cut	Cut of shallow pit	0.1m	
2004	Pit	Fill	Fill of pit [2003]	0.1m	Friable greyish brown clay silt

## Area C

Length: 25m      Width: 25m      Orientation:

### Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
400	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil		Greyish brown sandy silt
401	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil		Grey sandy silt
402	Natural	Layer	Irregular yellowish brown sands		
2005	Pit	Fill	Slightly humic fill of shallow Pit [2007],	0.14m	Firm reddish brown silt
2006	Pit	Fill	Stoney Basal fill of shallow Pit [2007]	0.09m	Firm pinky red silty clay
2007	Pit	Cut	Large shallow pit	0.22m	
2008	Pit	Fill	Fill of large slightly irregular Pit [2009]	0.36m	Moderately compact greyish pink sandy clay
2009	Pit	Cut	Cut of irregular but oval shaped pit	0.36	
2014	Pit	Cut	Cut of slightly irregular shallow pit	0.18m	
2015	Pit	Fill	Upper fill of pit [2014]	0.09m	Firm brownish pink sandy clay
2016	Pit	Fill	Lower basal fill of pit [2014] no finds	0.1m	Firm greyish pink sandy

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## **Appendix 2 Technical information**

### **The archive**

The archive consists of:

- 12 Context records AS1
- 2 Field progress reports AS2
- 2 Photographic records AS3
- 1 Black and white photographic film
- 38 Digital photographs
- 1 Drawing number catalogues AS4
- 6 Scale drawings
- 1 Context number catalogues AS5
- 1 Sample number catalogues AS18
- 2 Trench record sheets AS41
- 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 or 01926 412 500

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