

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

**AT**

**SYLINGER SOLAR FARM, CHALGROVE  
&  
EASINGTON, OXFORDSHIRE**

**(NEAR MONUMENT BUSINESS PARK)**

**NGR SU 6546 9724**

*On behalf of  
Chalgrove Solar Ltd*

**OCTOBER 2014**

**REPORT FOR** Chalgrove Solar Ltd  
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**FIELDWORK** 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> October 2014

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**Site Code:** CGEA14  
**JMHS Project No:** 2990

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## **Summary**

*John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological evaluation on the 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> October 2014. 15 evaluation trenches were excavated by machine revealing five discrete linear features and one distinct post medieval ditch.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)**

The development area is located to the north east of Chalgrove and to the west of Easington, southeast and east of Warpsgrove Lane (NGR SU6546 9724). The site is relatively flat and lies at approximately 78.2m OD. The geology of the site is shown as Gault Clay to the west and chalk to the eastern side of site, with areas of gravel to the far west and alluvial deposits to the south. The site is currently in agricultural use.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) has granted planning permission for the development of a solar farm, including solar panel modules, power inverter/transformers systems and housings, power connections, and associated works (P14/S1734/FUL). Due to the potential disturbance of below ground archaeological features a condition of permission required a programme of staged archaeological investigation to be carried out. This evaluation formed the first stage of investigation.

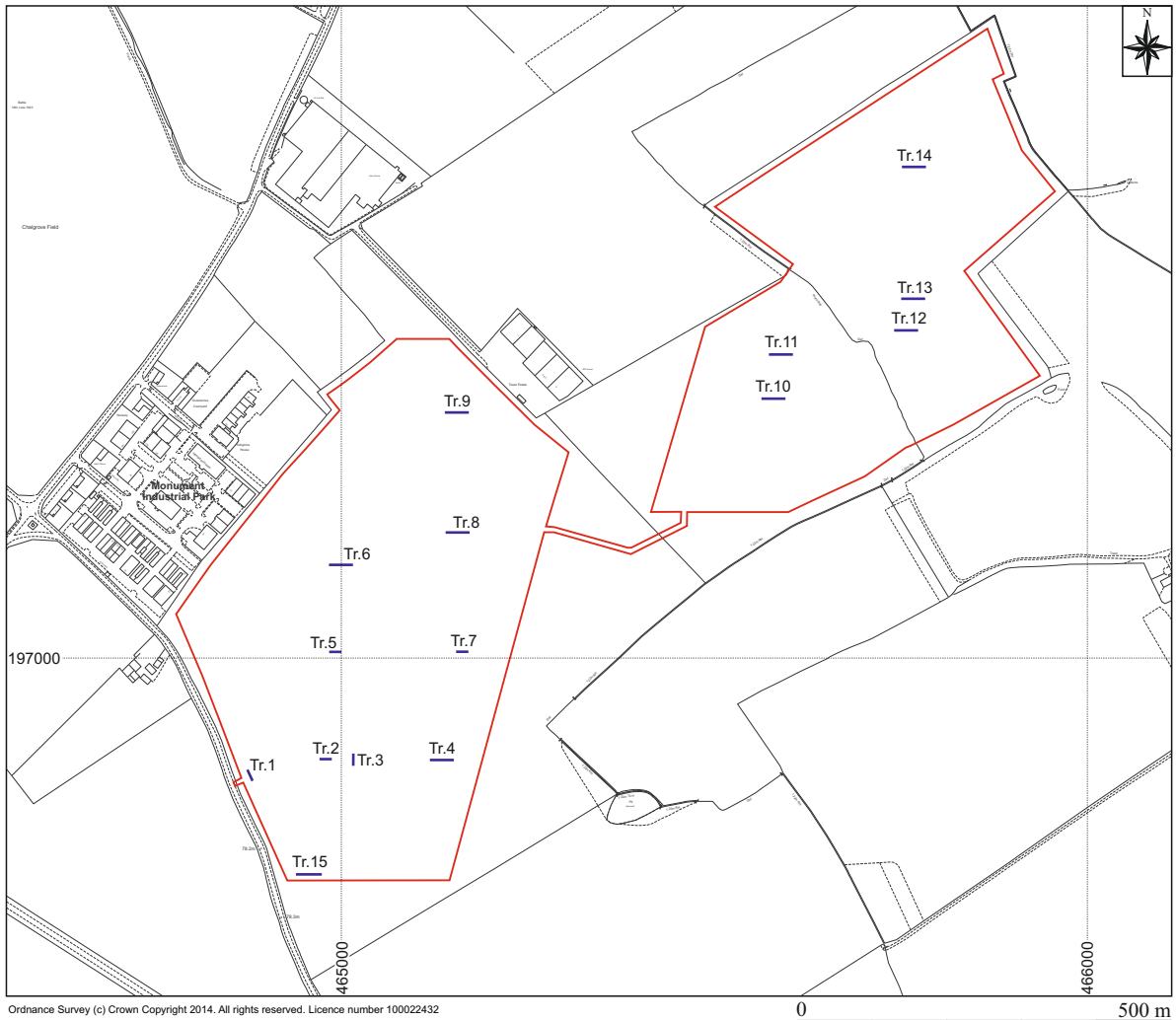
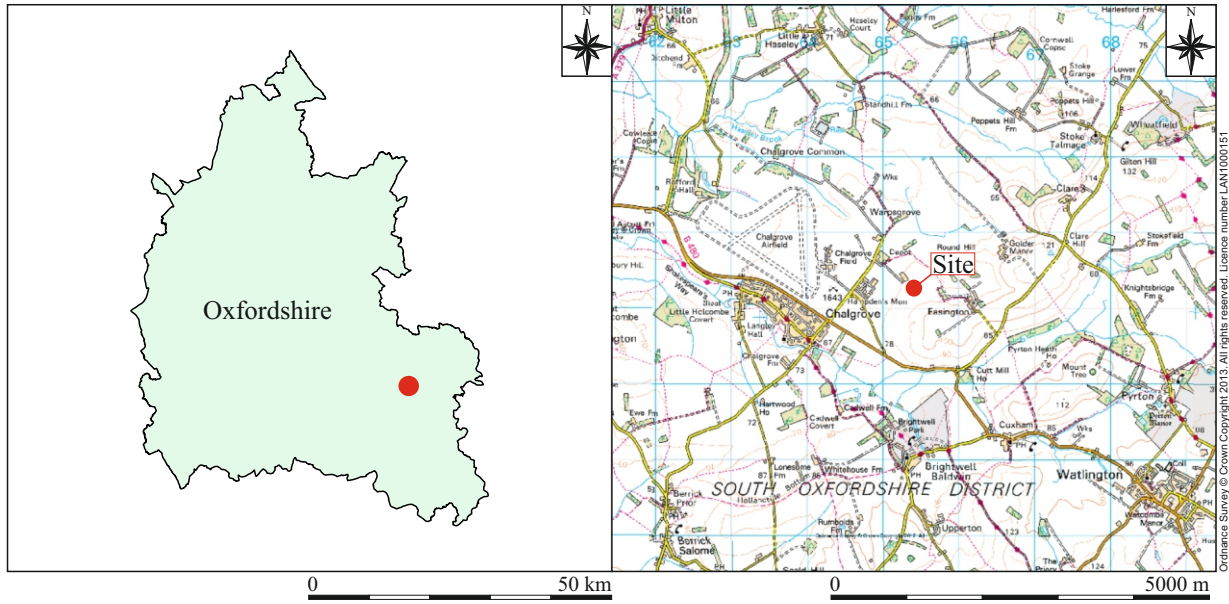
### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

The site is located in an area of known archaeological potential. A Romano British settlement and medieval activity (PRN 15023) were investigated during the excavations of two pipelines crossing the development area. Although only small plans of the site have been published, they indicate a large number of ditches and other features, many containing large quantities of charcoal. Another site, partly within the development area, identified Mesolithic material, a Bronze Age ditch, middle Iron Age settlement activity and a Late Romano British settlement. A field on the northwest side of Warpsgrove Lane, c.400m from the development area, is the site of the Battle of Chalgrove in 1643 during the English Civil War. It is thought that as the Parliamentarian forces advanced towards the Royalist troops and they must have crossed the development area, although any evidence of this is likely to be sparse.

## **2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation were as follows:

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the site.
- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.



Key  Site boundary  Evaluation trenches

Figure 1: Site location

- To assess the ecofactual and environmental potential of the archaeological features and deposits.
- To establish if features related to the prehistoric and Romano British landscapes are present in the application site.
- To determine the impact of the proposed development on any remains present.
- To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation.
- To inform the need for, and scope of, further phases of work to mitigate the impact of the development.

### **3 STRATEGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS). Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate and possible.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (2008).

#### **3.2 Methodology**

The field evaluation comprised of the mechanical excavation of fifteen trenches, eleven of which were 30m in length and the remaining four that were 15m in length. Excavation was by a 13 tonne excavator equipped with a 1.80m wide ditching bucket. Mechanical excavation was used to remove topsoil and secondary ploughsoil to the uppermost archaeological horizon or geological horizon under direct archaeological supervision. The machine excavation was used only for the removal of non-archaeologically significant material. The resulting surfaces were cleaned and excavated by hand where appropriate to achieve the objectives of the investigation.

Richard Oram of Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) monitored the work.

### **4 RESULTS (Figure 2)**

All features were assigned individual context numbers. These numbers covered both the feature cuts and the fills for five discrete linear features and one distinct post medieval ditch. Context numbers in ( ) show feature fills or deposits of material.

Trenches 1, 3, 4, 5, 6-7, 9-10, & 13-15 contained no archaeological evidence whatsoever.

## **4.1 Excavation Results**

### **Trench 2**

This trench was an east/west aligned trench, 15m in length (Plates 1-2). The natural geological deposit in the area was a compact, yellow-brown Gault clay with frequent angular and sub-rounded small stone inclusions (202). Above the natural was a moderately compacted ploughsoil consisting of a dark grey silty clay with a moderate amount of angular, sub-angular and sub-rounded small stone inclusions (201). Cut into the natural deposit at the eastern end of the trench was a 0.90m wide discrete linear feature, 203. This contained a compact, grey-brown slightly silted clay fill, with occasional small angular stone inclusions (204). Investigations of similar features within the other trenches on the site led to an interpretation of this feature being consistent with that of an old field boundary and as there was no indication of any human activity within the fill, the feature was mapped and was not investigated further.

### **Trench 8**

This trench was an east/west aligned trench, 30m in length (Plates 3-4). The natural geological deposit in the area was a compact, yellow-brown slightly sandy Gault clay with moderate angular, sub-angular and rounded small stone inclusions (802). Above the natural was a moderately compacted ploughsoil consisting of a dark grey silty clay with a moderate amount of angular, sub-angular and sub-rounded small stone inclusions (801). Two discrete features were observed within this trench.

At the very eastern end of the trench was a northwest/southeast aligned linear feature 0.90m wide running across the entire width of the trench, 803. This contained a compact, grey-brown slightly silted clay fill, 0.10m thick with occasional small angular stone inclusions (804). A 0.75m wide intervention was hand excavated through this feature revealing a shallow sloping flat-bottomed ditch (section 800, Plate 5). It is likely that this was the base of an earlier field boundary.

Approximately half way along the trench was a small patch of discoloured natural with occasional charcoal flecks (805). A rapid investigation of this material showed that this was nothing more than a very slight depression within the natural clay in which topsoil material had gathered.

### **Trench 11**

This trench was an east/west aligned trench, 30m in length (Plate 6). The natural geological deposit in the area was a compact, yellow-brown slightly sandy Gault clay with moderate angular, sub-angular and rounded small stone inclusions (1102). Above the natural was a compact thin layer of secondary ploughsoil, grey-brown in colour consisting of a slightly sandy silt-clay with occasional sub-angular and rounded small stone inclusions (1101). Above this subsoil layer was a moderately compacted ploughsoil consisting of a dark grey silty clay with a moderate amount of angular, sub-angular and sub-rounded small stone inclusions (1100). Three discrete features were visible within this trench.

The first two features were side by side linear gullies 1105 & 1007, 0.80m & 0.65m wide, respectively, located approximately central to the trench, aligned in a northwest/southeast direction. Both were in-filled with a compact brown-grey coloured slightly silted clay with a rare amount of sub-angular and sub-rounded small stone inclusions, 0.10m-0.12m thick (Plate 7). A 0.75m wide intervention was hand excavated through these features, revealing two shallow sloping flat-bottomed gullies (section 1102, Plate 8). No direct relationship between the two could be ascertained, but it is probable that they represent original field boundaries one of which is the re-cutting of the other.

The other feature within this trench was a north/south aligned liner gully 1104, positioned 10m from the eastern end of the trench. This was filled by a grey-brown silt-clay with rare charcoal flecking and rare sub-angular and sub-rounded small stone inclusions, 0.12m thick (1103). A 0.50m intervention was hand excavated through this gully, which showed it to have a steep sloping side on its eastern side and a shallow, moderate slope on its western side and a fairly flat base. This was again interpreted as an original field boundary.

## **Trench 12**

This trench was another east/west aligned trench, 30m in length (Plate 9-10). The natural geological deposit in the area was a compact, yellow-brown sandy Gault clay with occasional angular, sub-angular and rounded small stone inclusions (1202). Above the natural was a compact thin layer of secondary ploughsoil, grey-brown in colour consisting of a sandy silt-clay with moderate sub-angular and rounded small stone inclusions (1201). Above this subsoil layer was a moderately compacted ploughsoil consisting of a dark grey silty clay with a moderate amount of angular, sub-angular and sub-rounded small stone inclusions (1200). A single linear feature was seen, four meters from the eastern end of the trench.

The feature, 1203, was aligned in a northeast/southwest direction and filled by a grey-brown silt-clay with rare rounded small stone inclusions and a small amount of wood pieces from a round wooden post protruding from the fill next to the southern side of the trench (1204). A 0.50m intervention was excavated through this feature showing a ditch with moderate sloping sides and a concave base, 0.22m deep. It was clear from excavation that this was a modern ditch probably relating to an earlier field boundary.

## **4.2 Reliability of Results and Techniques**

Although conditions were wet on the first day, the obvious natural Gault clay was easily identifiable and although the majority the features that were visible were discrete they were obvious, meaning the reliability of the results is considered good.

## **5 FINDS**

No finds were recovered from any of the trenches or features during this investigation.



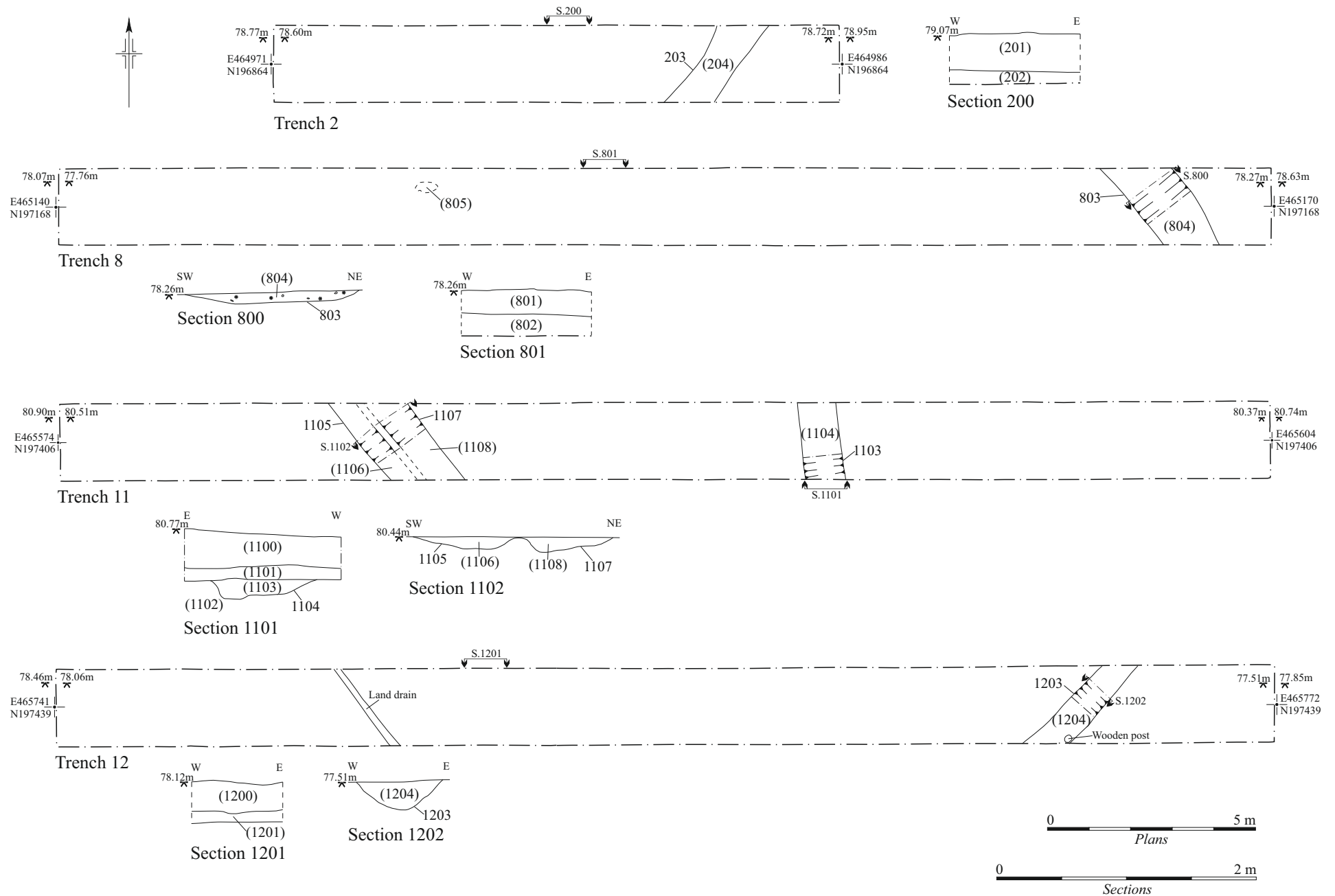


Figure 2: Trenches 2, 8, 11 and 12 - plans and sections

## 6 DISCUSSION

Despite the presumed potential for multi-period remains within the proposed development area it is surprising that no evidence was discovered during this investigation. There could be a few reasons for this. Firstly, trial trenching evaluations do have a limited scope and there is the possibility that the locations of the trenches in this evaluation were simply placed in 'blank' areas, missing any of the significant remains which could exist. However this is unlikely as no surface finds of artefacts were seen within the fields. There is also the possibility that the remains discovered during the excavation of the gas pipeline are nucleated close to the pipe line itself and did not extend as far to the east and west as the location of the trenching. Another reason for the absence of features may be that the original records are simply wrong and that the remains found during the observation of the gas works have been located within the wrong field systems and exist either further north or further south of this development site.

What is clear, however, is that the impact of the solar farm at this site should not have any adverse effect on any potential archaeological remains that may exist across the rest of the area and that the sites of the inductors pose no threat to anything that could be considered significant.

## 7 ARCHIVE

The records will be maintained by John Moore Heritage Services.

## 8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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**Appendix - Photographs**



**Plate 1 – Trench 2**



**Plate 2 – Trench 2 layers**



**Plate 3 – Trench 8**



**Plate 4 – Trench 8 layers**



**Plate 5** – *Section 800*



**Plate 6** – *Trench 11*



**Plate 7** – *Section 1101*



**Plate 8** – *Section 1102*





**Plate 9** – *Trench 12*



**Plate 10** – *Trench 12 Layers*



**Plate 11** – *Section 1202*