

Land North-East of Bridgwater Somerset

Phase 3



Archaeological Evaluation Report



May 2012

**Client: CgMs on behalf of Hallam
Land Management Ltd**

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Land North-East of Bridgwater, Somerset

Phase 3

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Summary

On the 9th and 10th of May 2012 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation on land to the north-east of Bridgwater, Somerset. The Phase 3 evaluation followed the earlier Phase 1 trial trenching conducted by OA during December 2009 to January 2010 and Phase 2 trial trenching carried out in March and April 2010.

The current evaluation comprised machine excavation of three trenches measuring 50m by 1.9m and trench numbering followed on from the previous phases. All trenches were excavated to a maximum depth of 1m with a 2.2m deep sondage excavated at one end of each trench.

No archaeological features were identified in any of the trenches. A fragment of a post-medieval pottery, recovered from the subsoil layer Trench 80, was the sole artefact retrieved from the investigation.

A uniform alluvial sequence was observed throughout the trenches.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 Between the 9th and 10th of May 2012 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation on land at Little Sydenham Farm, near Bridgwater, Somerset, centred on NGR: ST 311 395 (Fig.1). The evaluation was undertaken on behalf of CgMs for Hallam Land Management Ltd. The area evaluated was approximately 4 hectares.
- 1.1.2 This phase of work followed on from two previous phases of evaluation conducted by OA across the wider development area in 2009 and 2010 (OA 2010a; OA 2010c).
- 1.1.3 The evaluation consisted of three trenches, each 50m long and 1.9m wide (Fig. 2). All three trenches were machine excavated to a maximum safe working depth of 1m with a sondage of 2.2m in depth excavated at one end of each trench. No personnel entered the sondages as no archaeological remains were encountered. Should archaeological remains have been present, the sondages would have been battered to a safe angle or stepped to enable investigation to take place.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies in the valley of the river Parrett, within the Somerset Levels, at a height of c 6m above Ordnance Datum. The site is bordered to the east by a new access road, to the west by the Penzance to Bristol railway, to the north by the new Morrisons distribution warehouse, and to the south by a new residential development. Current land use is pasture.
- 1.2.2 The underlying geology is identified as deposits of Upper Keuper Marl, overlain by bands of riverine alluvium, interspersed with isolated peat deposits. The Holocene alluvial sequence is up to 22 m thick (OA 2008).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 There are no records of archaeological features or finds from the earlier or later prehistoric periods within the site and there is only limited evidence from the vicinity of the site. However, previous archaeological investigations within the Somerset levels have revealed significant evidence for occupation and exploitation of the wetland resources from the Mesolithic to Iron Age periods. The paucity of known evidence from the area of the site may be a function of its proximity to the tidal floodplain of the river Parrett, as seasonal inundations are not conducive to settlement. Any such prehistoric evidence that is present would, however, have been sealed by later episodes of alluvial deposition (CgMs 2009).
- 1.3.2 There are no Roman remains recorded within the site, although remains of this date have been recorded within a 1 km radius of the site. These comprise a major settlement (and possible port) on the former course of the river Parrett on the Crandon Bridge to Puriton road, and a large linear settlement at Down End and Chilton Trinity, to the west of the application area. Roman roads and salterns have also been recorded in the vicinity of the site.
- 1.3.3 The site appears to have been in agricultural use from the Saxon to the post-medieval periods, although only a few medieval finds have been recovered. The deserted medieval village of Horsey, a Scheduled Monument (SAM No. 33729), lies to the east of the site, on the opposite side of the M5.



- 1.3.4 To further examine the potential of the site, a geoarchaeological assessment of the application area was undertaken (OA 2008). This involved a geophysical survey (combined with LIDAR data), and a programme of boreholes and test pits.
- 1.3.5 The geoarchaeological assessment revealed four zones of sedimentation. Two of these (Zones A and C) represented large channel systems, one a channel edge environment (Zone B) and one an area of alluvial floodplain undisturbed by former channel activity (Zone D). The channel systems contained localised peat deposits located between 2 m and -2.5 m OD. These deposits have the potential to contain waterlogged structures from the Neolithic and Bronze Ages. They are overlain by considerable depths of later alluvial deposits which have the potential to contain remains of Roman, Saxon, medieval or post-medieval date (OA 2008). The Phase 3 evaluation was situated within Zone C.
- 1.3.6 The wider site had been subject to two previous phases of evaluation. The Phase 1 evaluation took place in December 2009 and January 2010. In the 48 trenches excavated no archaeological features were identified and no finds recovered. In April 2010 the Phase 2 evaluation of 30 trenches revealed no significant archaeological features. Several linear features were identified. All the linear features cut through the subsoil and were identified as drainage ditches of recent origin. Associated depressions on the ground surface were still visible in some locations. A modern pit or ditch terminal was also identified.

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 The evaluation was commissioned by Rob Bourn of CgMs on behalf of Hallam Land Management Ltd and the trench location plan approved by Steve Membery of Somerset County Council.
- 1.4.2 The fieldwork was managed for OA by Katrina Anker and conducted by Dan Sykes with the assistance of Chris Richardson and Nathan Chinchen.



2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

General

2.1.1 The aims of the evaluation were to determine the location, extent, date, character and state of preservation of any archaeological remains surviving within the study area. Attention was to be given to remains of all periods including evidence for past environments, with provision for environmental sampling included.

Detailed aims and objectives

- 2.1.2
- (i) To determine or confirm the general nature of any remains present.
 - (ii) To determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of any remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence.
 - (iii) To determine or confirm the approximate extent of any remains.
 - (iv) To determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains.
 - (v) To determine the degree of complexity of the horizontal and/or vertical stratigraphy present.
 - (vi) To determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of any artefactual evidence present.
 - (vii) To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeo-environmental and/or economic evidence.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The trial trenching methodology adhered to the requirements set out in the Phase 2 written scheme of investigation (OA 2010b).
- 2.2.2 All three trenches were excavated to the depth of the main zone of construction impact, the top 1m of the sediment sequence and a sondage at one end of each trench was excavated to a depth of 2.20m. Roman and later sediments could potentially have been present at these depths, by comparison with other sites in the vicinity. Any surviving prehistoric remains were expected to be at greater depth.
- 2.2.3 All trenches were laid out by a surveyor using a GPS system tied into the Ordnance Survey grid. All levels were related to Ordnance Survey datum level.
- 2.2.4 All trenches were scanned with a Cable Avoidance Tool prior to excavation.
- 2.2.5 Trenches were excavated using a toothless ditching bucket under close archaeological supervision. Topsoil and subsoil were stored separately and reinstated in reverse order of excavation.
- 2.2.6 A representative section was cleaned, photographed and recorded within the trenches where excavated to 1m. In the sondages photographs and measurements were taken (Fig.3, Plates 1-9). All trenches were photographed with black and white 35 mm film. A digital photographic record was also maintained. All trenches had Ordnance Datum levels recorded at ground level at both ends and where safe, at three points along the base.



3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

- 3.1.1 No archaeological features or significant artefacts were identified in the course of the evaluation.
- 3.1.2 Descriptions of all deposits and details of trenches are tabulated in Appendix 1.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

- 3.2.1 The sediment sequence in all trenches was uniform. A topsoil layer 0.2 - 0.23m thick sealed subsoil (a buried ploughsoil, essentially re-worked alluvium), which was between 0.18m and 0.2m thick. This subsoil sealed the underlying alluvium.
- 3.2.2 The alluvial deposit was generally mid to light yellow or grey brown silty clays, becoming greyer with depth and with occasional manganese or iron staining. The base of the alluvial sequence was not reached in any of the trenches.

3.3 Finds summary

- 3.3.1 A single base sherd of pottery was recovered from the subsoil deposit 8001 in Trench 80. This was from a post-medieval red glazed earthenware vessel with a sagging base which was probably manufactured in Somerset and has been spot-dated c 1550-1625 (pers.comm. John Cotter).

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 4.1.1 Ground conditions were reasonable, although trench flooding was an issue. The bases of all trenches were visible in plan prior to any flooding and any archaeological features present would have been identified.

4.2 Interpretation

- 4.2.1 It seems likely that the evaluated area has, during the historic period, been exclusively used for agricultural purposes. The likelihood of flooding from the tidal river Parrett appears to have precluded any settlement within the flood plain in this area.



APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 80						
General description					Orientation	E-W
No archaeological remains. Base of trench rapidly flooded. Visibility during machining, however, remained good. Sondage excavated at western end.					Avg. depth (m)	1.1
					Width (m)	1.9
					Length (m)	50
Contexts						
context number	type	width (m)	depth (m)	comment	finds	date
8000	Layer	-	0.14	Topsoil. Friable mid brown silty clay with no inclusions visible.	-	-
8001	Layer	-	0.20	Subsoil/buried ploughsoil. Tenacious light brown clay.	pottery	c 1550-1625
8002	Layer	-	>1.9	Alluvium. Tenacious light grey brown silty clay.	-	-

Trench 81						
General description					Orientation	N-S
No archaeological remains. Base of trench rapidly flooded. Visibility during machining, however, remained good. Sondage excavated at northern end.					Avg. depth (m)	1.1
					Width (m)	1.9
					Length (m)	50
Contexts						
context number	type	width (m)	depth (m)	comment	finds	date
8100	Layer	-	0.2	Topsoil. Friable mid brown silty clay.	-	-
8101	Layer	-	0.22	Subsoil/buried ploughsoil. Tenacious light brown clay.	-	-
8102	Layer	-	>1.6m	Alluvium. Tenacious light grey brown sandy clay.	-	-

Trench 82						
General description					Orientation	E-W
No archaeological remains. Base of trench rapidly flooded. Visibility during machining, however, remained good. Sondage excavated at north-eastern end.					Avg. depth (m)	1.1
					Width (m)	1.9
					Length (m)	50
Contexts						
context number	type	width (m)	depth (m)	comment	finds	date
8200	Layer	-	0.22	Topsoil. Friable mid brown silty clay.	-	-
8201	Layer	-	0.18	Subsoil. Tenacious mid brown	-	-



Land North-East of Bridgwater, Somerset. Phase 3

				clay		
8202	Layer	-	>1.75	Alluvium. Tenacious light grey brown clay.	-	-



APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

CgMs, 2009 *Archaeological Evaluation/Strip Map and Sample. Land North-East of Bridgwater, Somerset.*

OA, 2008 *Little Sydenham Farm, near Bridgwater, Somerset. Geoarchaeological Assessment Report*, Oxford Archaeology client report for CgMs Consulting and Hallam Land Management.

OA, 2010a *Land North-East of Bridgwater, Somerset. Archaeological Evaluation Report.* Oxford Archaeology client report for CgMs Consulting and Hallam Land Management (Phase 1 trenching).

OA, 2010b *Archaeological Evaluation of Land North-East of Bridgwater, Somerset, Phase 2 trenching.* Written Scheme of Investigation. Oxford Archaeology client report for CgMs Consulting and Hallam Land Management.

OA, 2010c *Land North-East of Bridgwater, Somerset, Phase 2, Archaeological Evaluation Report.* Oxford archaeology client report for CgMs Consulting and Hallam Land Management.



APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Land north-east of Bridgwater, Somerset
Site code:	TTNCM:247/2009
Grid reference:	ST 311 395
Type:	3 trench evaluation
Date and duration:	9th to 10th May 2012
Area of site:	4 ha
Summary of results:	An alluvial sequence was observed. No archaeological features were encountered.
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at Oxford Archaeology, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Somerset County Museum in due course, under the following public record number: 32044

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Scale at 1:25,000
Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2011

Figure 1: Site location

X:\Bridgwater, Somerset\PHASE 3\GEO\PHASE 3 Evaluation\katrina.anker* 16 May 2012

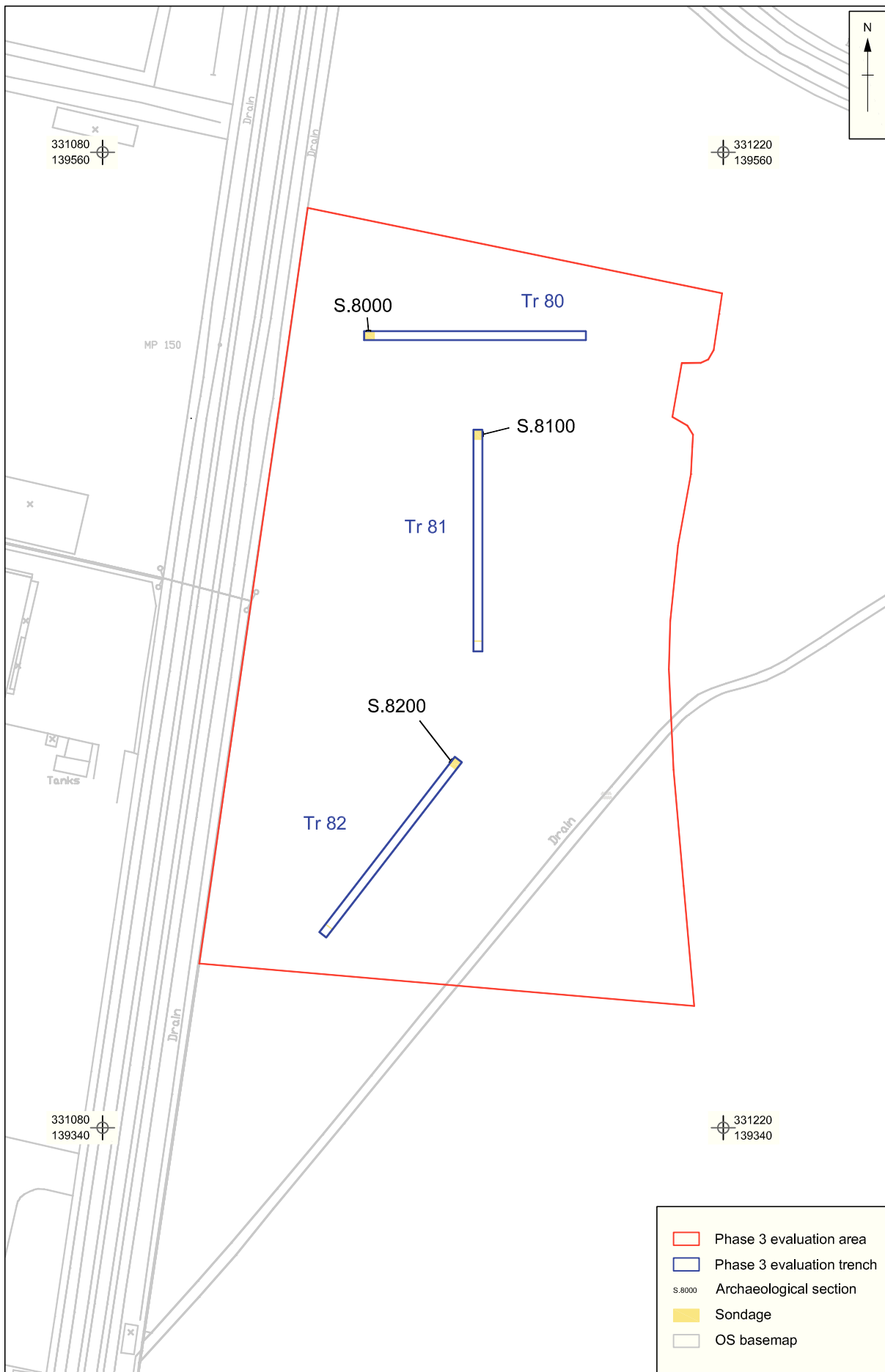


Figure 2: Phase 3 trench locations

0 50 m
1:1250

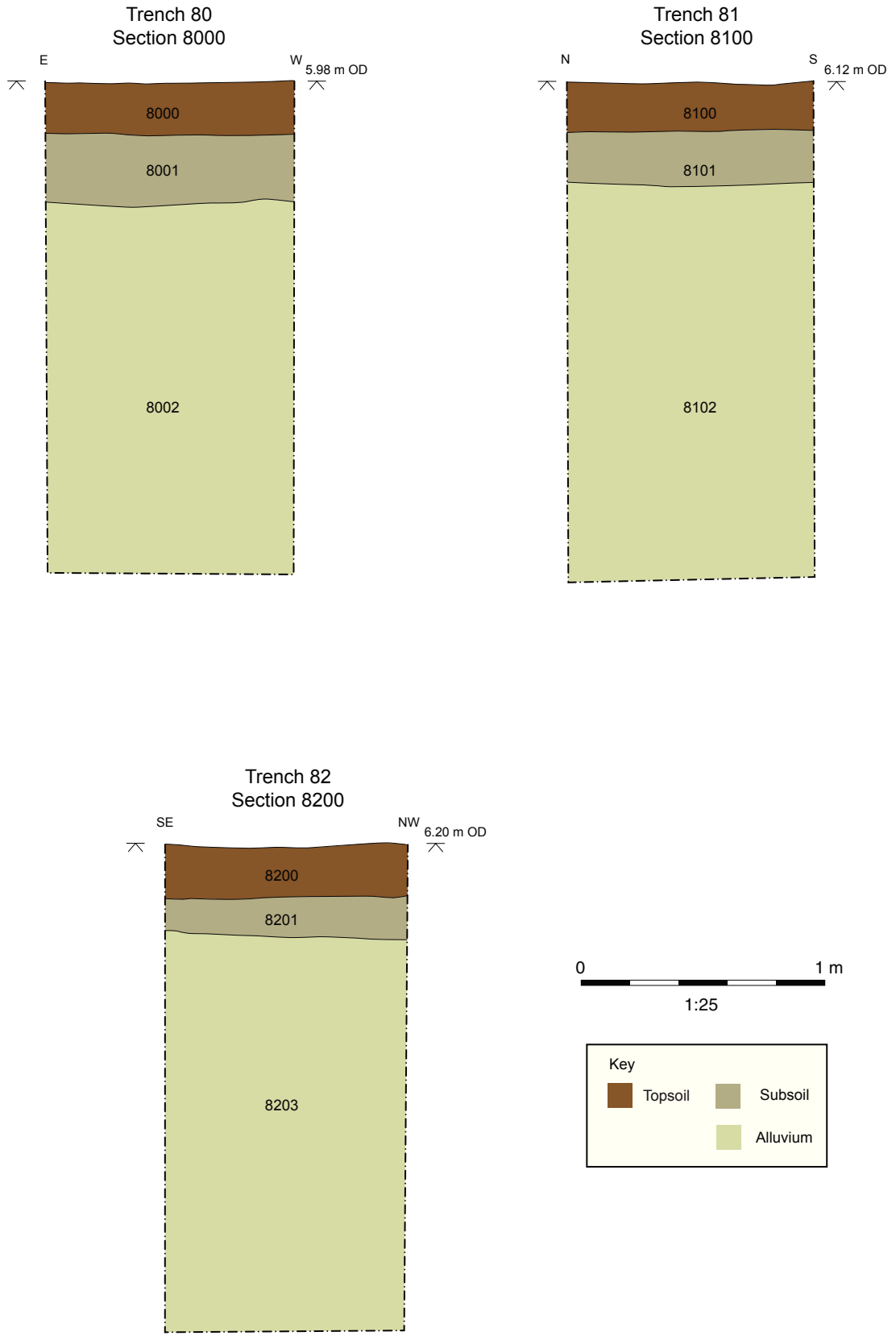


Figure 3: Representative sections 8000, 8100 and 8200



1: Trench 80 - view to east



Plate 2: North facing sondage section 8000



Plate 3: North facing sample section 8001



: Trench 81 - view to south



Plate 5: West facing sondage section 8100

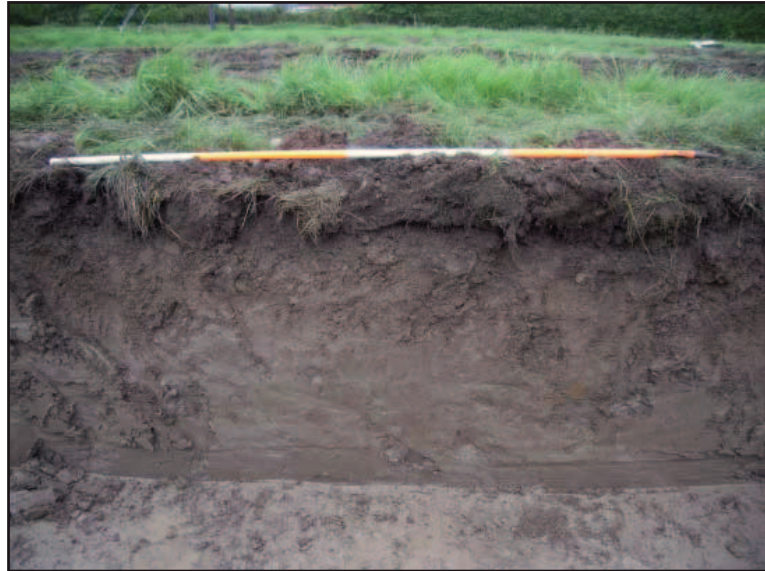


Plate 6: East facing sample section 8101



ch 82 - view to south-west



Plate 8: South-east facing sondage section 8200



Plate 9: South-east facing sample section 8201



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