

**Land at Rugeley Quarry, Cannock Chase
Staffordshire**

NGR: SK 008 185

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Planning Ref: CH.00/0577

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Prepared by: Granville Laws AIFA
Date: August 2001
Reviewed by: Paul Booth
Date: 10th August
Approved by: <i>R. Hillman</i>
Position: <i>ASSISTANT DIRECTOR</i>
Date: <i>13/8/2001</i>

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SUMMARY

The Oxford Archaeological Unit carried out an archaeological field evaluation of a proposed development site on land at Rugeley Quarry, Cannock Chase, Staffordshire in July 2001. The work was undertaken for SLR Consulting, acting on behalf of RMC Aggregates Western (Limited). The evaluation trenches revealed only one archaeological feature, an undated ditch located in the south-eastern part of the site. Made ground deposits were recorded at one point in the south-west part of the northern development area. No finds were retrieved from any of the trenches.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) carried out a field evaluation on land at Rugeley Quarry, Cannock Chase, Staffordshire on 25th and 26th July 2001. The work was undertaken for SLR Consulting acting on behalf of RMC Aggregate Western (Limited) in respect of a planning application (Planning Ref. CH.00/0577) for extension of Rugeley Quarry (Fig. 1).

1.1.2 The development site, Rugeley Quarry at Cannock Chase, lies *c.*8 km to the east of Stafford (NGR SK 008 185) and is some 43 hectares in area. The field evaluation was carried out in accordance with a Brief prepared by the County Archaeological Officer for Staffordshire (Welch 2001), and a Written Scheme of Investigation (July 2001) which detailed how OAU would satisfy the term of the Brief.

1.2 Geology and topography

The geology of the site comprises Lower Triassic Sherwood Sandstone/Bunter Pebble Beds. The site is divided into three development areas. In the northern development area the ground slopes steeply down to the south, east and west from a central high point, and to the west it rises again from a dry valley to the site boundary. The northern section of the eastern development area slopes very steeply down from the north in a crescent running from north to south-east, while the southern section of this area slopes comparatively gently to the south. The western development area is relatively flat, sloping down very gently to the south. The development area is largely covered with pine and birch woodland. This with its associated vegetation gave rise to organic 'topsoil' deposits.

1.3 Archaeological and Historical Background

1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background to the evaluation has been the subject of a separate desk study, supplemented by site inspection (OAU 2001a). The results of the latter are presented here and summarised in Appendix 2 below. The principal known aspect of archaeological interest in the area is post-medieval glass production. A glassworks site has been examined immediately south of the northern development area (Welch 1997).

- (i) The best-preserved archaeological earthworks on the site are four ditches with associated banks (OAU gazetteer numbers 1, 3, 13 and 14). Features 13 and 14 seem to form part of a related feature, perhaps the edge of an enclosure or woodland division. OAU 3 might perhaps, based upon current examination, also be part of a larger enclosure or woodland division. OAU 13 and 14 are different in character and are probably not part of a wider enclosure but could be the remains of drainage ditches. From initial survey and given the size of the extant banks for all the sites (which survive up to a height of *c.*1 m), it is probable that these features date to the post-medieval period and some may be as late as the 19th century or 20th century.

- (ii) A series of amorphous and currently ambiguous features were identified during the survey. These include two mounds of disturbed soil (OAU 2 and 5), an area of uneven ground (OAU 6), a further area of disturbed ground (OAU 11) and another area of uneven ground (OAU 10), adjacent to an extant boundary marker stone (OAU 9). These features may relate to recent quarry activity, or could represent archaeological features, possibly industrial activity.
 - (iii) A probable ditch (OAU 4) was located in the north-west of the Northern Development Area. The course of the ditch is unclear owing to tree and root action, although it may be part of a wider complex of features.
 - (iv) In the centre of the Eastern Development Area are two more probable ditch features (OAU 7). As identified the ditches are discrete but their lengths are uncertain due to ground cover and disturbance, although again they may be part of a wider complex of features.
 - (v) The southern extent of the Eastern Development Area is marked by the parish boundary ditch (OAU 12). The date of this feature is not certain, but it is likely to be of medieval or post-medieval date.
 - (vi) The remaining features located comprise a modern raised hide and pond of recent date (OAU 15), a modern square fenced area with adjunct mound of similar date (OAU 16) and what appear to be recent quarry 'scoops' (OAU 17).
 - (vii) Overall the field survey has identified a series of relatively ambiguous features which are difficult to accurately categorise and date. Therefore, further assessment work is required at this stage to assess their significance.
 - (viii) Previous work has revealed that there is a strong likelihood of encountering deposits connected with the glassworking industry of the medieval and post-medieval periods in the development area. Some of the sites identified during the study, namely OAU 2, 6, 10 and 11, may be connected with this form of activity but it is likely that any remains directly connected with these industries would be located in sub-surface deposits and hence not visible during the field survey.
 - (ix) The possibility for features connected with the parkland landscape such as woodland boundaries, deer leaps and park boundaries was also identified during prior archaeological assessments. The field survey undertaken for this report has identified a series of sites, OAU 1, 3, 12, 13 and 14, that may be connected with these forms of activity.
- 1.3.2 Further historical background references will be found in the desk study (OAU 2001a). Subsequent to the site inspection selected areas of the site were subject to geophysical survey, carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology (Northamptonshire Archaeology 2001). A number of magnetic anomalies of uncertain significance were indicated by this work and the location of the evaluation trenches was largely determined by these results. This information was set out in the evaluation trenching proposals (OAU 2001b).

2 EVALUATION AIMS

The stated evaluation aims were:

- ◆ To determine the location, extent, date character, significance and quality of archaeological remains identified by the geophysical survey, and which will be threatened by development of the quarry site.

- ◆ To give attention to sites and remains of all periods including evidence of past environments, with provision for environmental sampling included.
- ◆ To determine if applicable the relationships of above-ground structures to surviving deposits below ground - should these relationships be identified then the evaluation would encompass the character, condition, significance and quality of the above ground remains.
- ◆ To record all remains to established OAU standards (OAU Fieldwork Manual, 1992), in order to secure their preservation by record.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork

As proposed, the field evaluation was to consist of four trenches. When these proved unproductive two further trenches were excavated with the approval of the County Archaeologist. In total the evaluation comprised six trenches within the development area (Figs 2a and 2b), one each measuring 6 m, 9 m, 12 m and 22 m and two measuring 14 m in length. All trenches were 2.30 m wide. They were located on relatively even ground within the forest.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

The overburden was removed from the trenches by a 360°, twenty ton tracked machine equipped with a toothless ditching bucket, working under archaeological supervision. The excavated spoil was closely monitored for archaeological artefacts. The trenches were hand-cleaned and recorded in plan. Features were sampled by hand excavation and sections were drawn where appropriate. A colour and black-and-white photographic record was made. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (OAU 1992).

3.3 Finds

No artefacts were recovered by hand during the course of the field evaluation.

3.4 Environmental data

No deposits of potential palaeo-environmental significance were located and therefore no environmental samples were taken.

4 RESULTS: GENERAL

4.1 Soils and ground conditions

4.1.1 Although made ground from quarry activity were apparent in one trench, the general soil type was a dark-brown organic-rich deposit that overlaid the geology of yellow-orange sandstone and pebbles.

4.1.2 Ground conditions were difficult owing to the presence of bracken and trees. Weather conditions for the evaluation were good.

4.2 Distribution of Archaeological Deposits

A single feature of archaeological significance was located in Trench 4. No archaeological deposits or features were located in Trenches 1, 2, 3 and 6. Made ground deposits measuring 0.90 m deep were identified in Trench 5, however.

4.3 Presentation of Results

The sequence of deposits in each trench is described. The plans of Trenches 1 to 6 are illustrated together with a single section from each trench. Context details are given in the Context Inventory, Appendix 1 below.

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Trench descriptions

5.1.1 Trench 1 (Fig. 3, Plan 1 and Section 1)

This trench was located in the northern development area directly north of the glassworks (Fig. 2a) and was aligned east-west parallel to a modern trackway. Geophysical survey picked up a strong signal indicating possible features, a linear east-west then turning north-east representing a wall foundation and a sub-circular anomaly. Trench 1 was sited to investigate the latter anomaly.

No archaeological features or deposits were located. The sandstone and pebble natural geology (102) was sealed by a dark-brown organic material (101).

5.1.2 Trench 2 (Fig. 4, Plan 2 and Section 2)

Trench 2 was located in the northern development area and aligned north-south across a circular anomaly identified by geophysical survey (Fig. 2a).

No archaeological features or deposits were located. The geology, a sandstone and pebble natural (202), was capped by a dark-brown organic material (201).

5.1.3 Trench 3 (Fig. 5, Plan 3 and Section 3)

Trench 3 was situated in the north-east of the northern development area and was aligned south-west to north-east, targeted on a sub-circular anomaly revealed by geophysical survey (Fig. 2a).

There were no archaeological features or deposits located in this trench. The natural, a sandstone and pebble deposit (302), was overlain by a dark-brown organic material (301).

5.1.4 Trench 4 (Fig. 6, Plan 4 and Section 4)

This trench was located towards the southern end of the eastern development area. It was targeted on a north-west to south-east aligned linear anomaly noted in the geophysical survey (Fig. 2b). This feature also survives as a slight earthwork and the line of the boundary which it indicates is perpetuated by a number of boundary stones. One of these survives set in the line of the ditch some 5 m from the location of the trench.

The sandstone and pebble natural (403) was truncated by a ditch (405), aligned north-west to south-east and measuring 1 m wide by 0.30 m deep. This ditch contained a single fill (404), a brown sandy organic mix with pebble inclusions. Layer (402), a mid-brown sandy silt perhaps representing bank material, overlaid the natural and also locally slumped into ditch 405 from the north-east. Capping layer 402, ditch fill 404 and natural 403 was a layer of dark brown organic material (401)

5.1.5 Trench 5 (Fig. 7, Plan 5 and Section 5)

Trench 5, aligned north-south, was excavated to the south-west of Trench 1 in the northern development area in order to investigate a small east-west linear anomaly identified by geophysical survey (Fig. 2a).

This trench revealed a sandstone and pebble natural (504) which was overlain by a dark brown organic layer (503). A layer of red-brown sandy loam with pebbles (502) overlay the organic deposit and in turn was sealed by a brown silty loam with pebbles (501). The last two layers were interpreted as made ground.

5.1.6 Trench 6 (Fig. 8, Plan 6 and Section 6)

This extra trench was excavated to the west of Trench 1 and just north of Trench 5, north of the glassworks and at a right angle to a modern trackway. Trench 6 was orientated north-south and targeted an east-west linear anomaly located by geophysical survey (Fig. 2a).

The underlying geology (602) comprised a sandstone with pebbles and was overlain by a dark brown organic material (601).

5.2 Finds and environmental data

No finds were retrieved and no significant archaeological deposits were located so as a consequence no environmental samples were taken.

6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 Reliability of field investigation

The evaluation trenches were specifically positioned to investigate anomalies identified in the geophysical survey. Within the areas examined the results from the six trenches were generally quite consistent, for the most part showing an absence of archaeological features or deposits. One linear feature identified by the geophysical survey was located in Trench 4. Conditions were not ideal for identifying archaeological features, principally because of disturbance from tree and other plant roots and former tree holes. However, while these factors might have obscured small, discrete archaeological features the conditions would not have hampered the location of larger feature or of linear features where these were present.

6.2 Overall Interpretation

6.2.1 Summary of Results

Only one archaeologically significant feature was located in the six evaluation trenches, while made ground was revealed in another trench. The ditch located in Trench 4 in the south-east part of the site was the only identified feature among the geophysical anomalies specifically targeted by the evaluation. This feature, which survives as a slight hollow in the ground, may have been associated with a bank, but no dating evidence was recovered. The continuity of use of this feature as a boundary into relatively recent times, however, is suggested not only by its survival as an earthwork but also by the presence of associated boundary stones. The date of the ditched form of the boundary remains unclear, but it may be no earlier than post-medieval in origin. Directly north of the glassworks, Trench 5 showed made ground deposits up to 1.1 m deep. No dating or other cultural material was recovered from any of the trenches.

6.2.2 Significance and impact

In general the anomalies indicated by the geophysical survey and targeted by trenching seemed not to be of archaeological significance. The only well-defined linear feature indicated by geophysics and examined in trenching was one which was in any case evident as a slight earthwork. On present evidence, therefore, the geophysical survey has not located significant unknown features, and the evaluation has not revealed any additional significant archaeological features or deposits within the area investigated. The principal impact of development of the site may thus fall on already known earthwork features.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND LIST OF SOURCES CONSULTED

Northamptonshire Archaeology 2001 *Detailed gradiometer survey, Rugeley Quarry, Cannock Chase, Staffordshire*, Northamptonshire County Council, June 2001.

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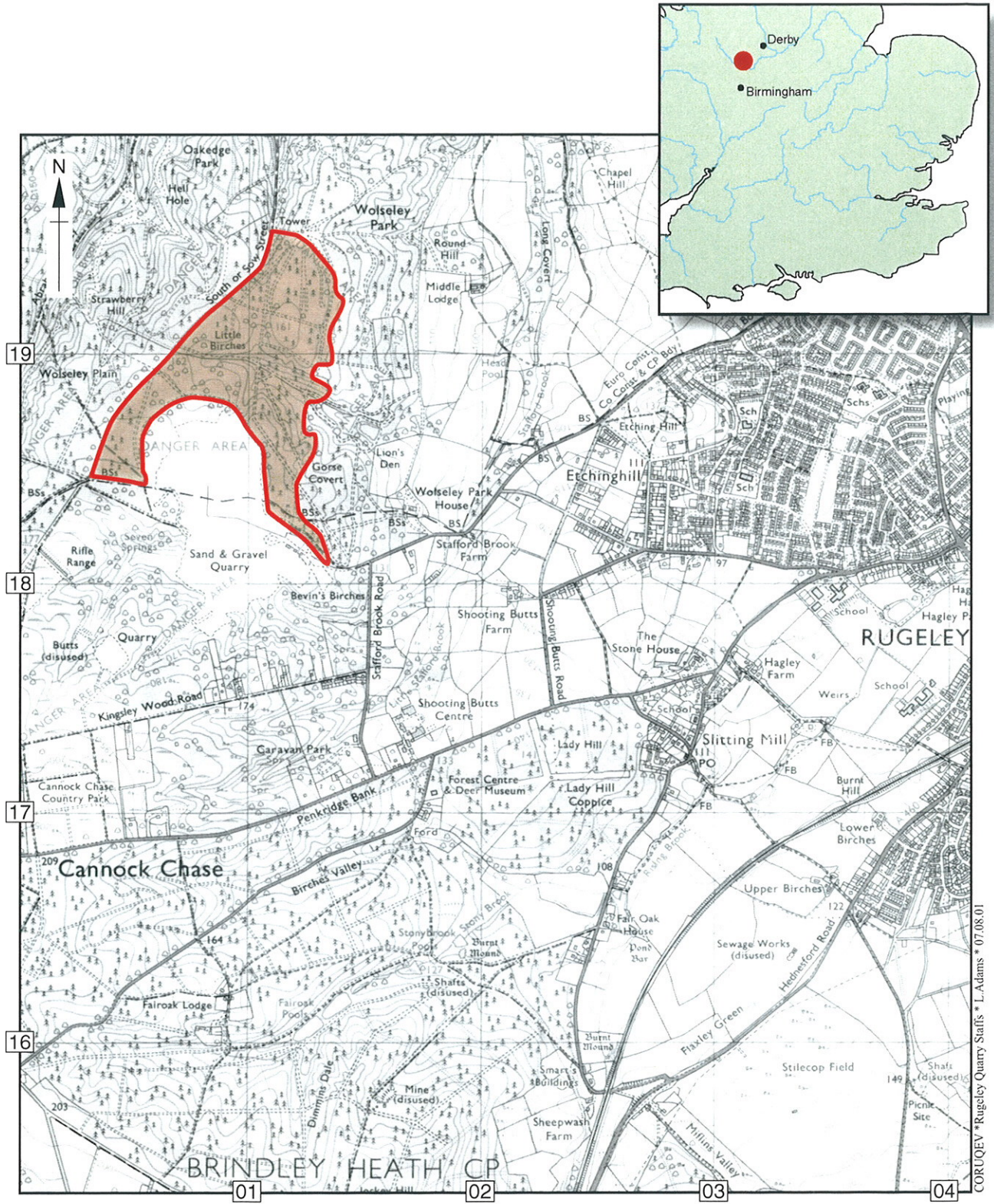
Welch, C, 2001 *Brief for an archaeological evaluation at Rugeley Quarry Staffordshire*, Staffordshire County Council Development Services, March 2001.

Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory

Trench	Ctxt	Type	width (m)	thick. (m)	Comment	Finds	No.	Date
001								
	101	Layer		0.15	Organic material	-		
	102	Layer		-	Natural	-		
	103	Layer		-	Natural	-		
002								
	201	Layer		0.21	Organic material	-		
	202	Layer		-	Natural	-		
003								
	301	Layer		0.13	Organic material	-		
	302	Layer		-	Natural	-		
004								
	401	Layer		0.12	Organic material	-		
	402	Deposit		0.17	Bank material	-		
	403	Layer		-	Natural	-		
	404	Fill		0.30	Fill of ditch	-		
	405	Cut	1 m	0.30	Ditch	-		
005								
	501	Layer		0.58	Made ground	-		
	502	Layer		0.40	Made ground	-		
	503	Layer		0.15	Organic material	-		
	504	Layer		-	Natural	-		
006								
	601	Layer		0.17	Organic material	-		
	602	Layer		-	Natural	-		

Appendix 2 Gazetteer of archaeology

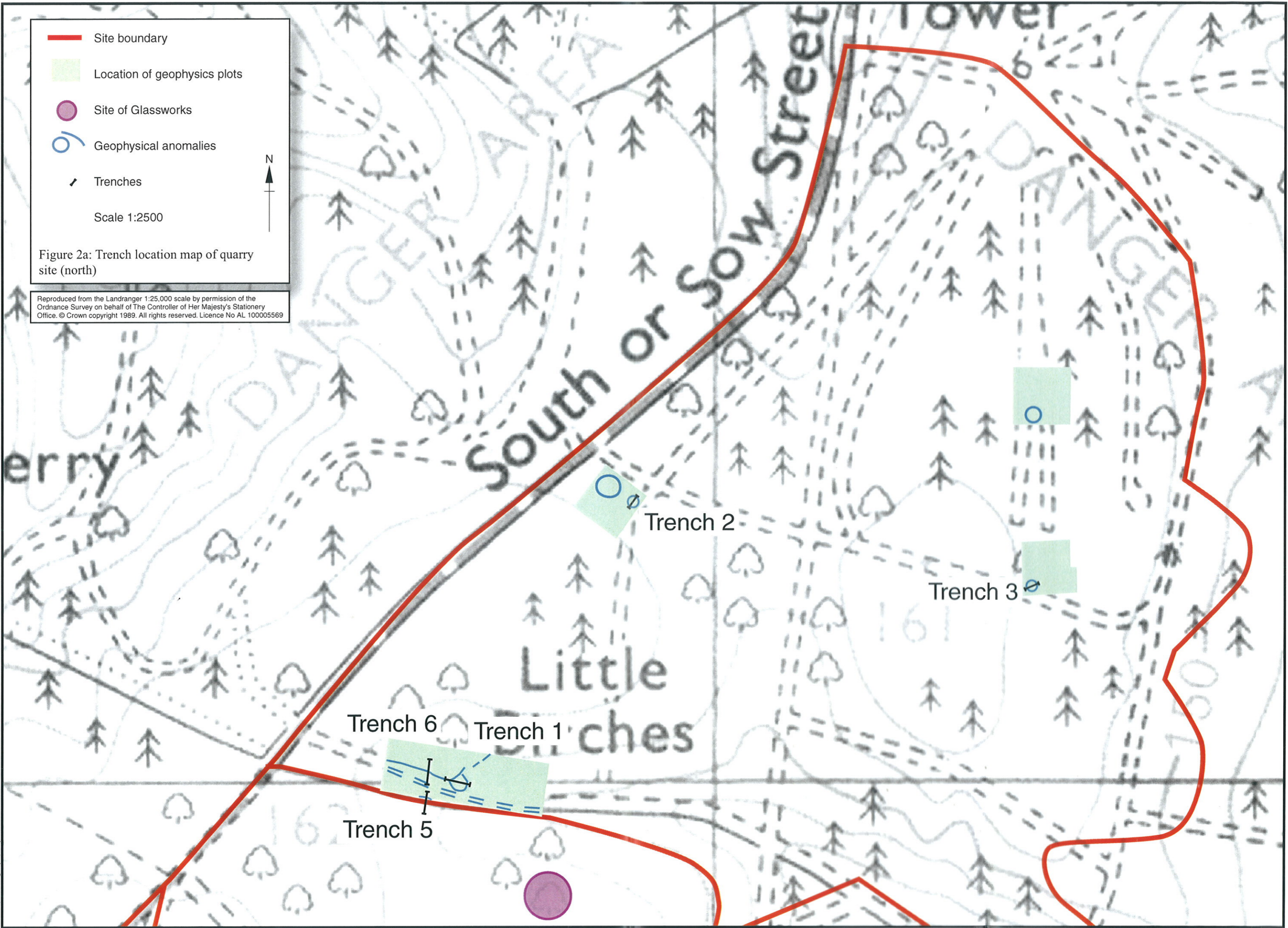
OAU No.	DESCRIPTION	NMR UID/ SMR No.
1	<i>Banks and ditches.</i> A small interrelated group of banks and ditches that probably represent the remains of drainage activity of post-medieval date.	
2	<i>Mound of disturbed ground.</i> A sub-ovoid mound of disturbed ground of unknown date and function.	
3	<i>Bank and ditch.</i> A substantial bank and ditch that may be related to the medieval park or woodland enclosure.	
4	<i>Probable ditch.</i> A relatively vague feature whose course has been obscured by root action.	
5	<i>Mound of disturbed ground.</i> A substantial mound, c. 1.7m in height, that may be archaeologically significant.	
6	<i>Area of uneven ground.</i> A small area of disturbed ground that may be related to archaeological activity but could equally be the result of tree throws from earlier woodland.	
7	<i>Probable ditches.</i> A series of relatively vague ditches, in part obscured by vegetation and root action, that may represent the remains of earlier woodland enclosure.	
8	<i>Parish boundary ditch.</i> A short section of ditch marking the parish boundary, probably post-medieval or medieval in date.	
9	<i>Boundary stone.</i> A post-medieval boundary stone marking the location of the parish boundary.	
10	<i>Area of uneven ground,</i> An area of uneven ground in part obscured by wood plantation, the site may be archaeologically significant.	
11	<i>Area of uneven ground.</i> An area of uneven ground in part obscured by wood plantation, the site may be archaeologically significant.	
12	<i>Parish boundary ditch.</i> A substantial length of ditch marking the parish boundary, probably post-medieval or medieval in date.	
13	<i>Bank and ditch.</i> A significant length of substantial ditch with associated bank that is probably the remains of a woodland boundary perhaps associated with the medieval park or maybe later activity. The site is connected to OAU 14 and may be part of a larger enclosure.	
14	<i>Bank and ditch.</i> A well-defined length of substantial ditch and well defined bank that probable represents the remains of a woodland enclosure. The site is connected to OAU 13 and is possibly part of a larger enclosure.	
15	<i>Raised hide and pond.</i> Modern.	
16	<i>Modern Feature.</i> Square fenced area with probable modern mound adjacent.	
17	<i>Gravel quarry scoops.</i> Small area of shallow scoops.	



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Figure 1: Site location

CORUQEV * Rugeley Quarry Status * L.Adams * 07.08.01



- Site boundary
- Location of geophysics plots
- Site of Glassworks
- Geophysical anomalies
- / Trenches

N
↑

Scale 1:2500

Figure 2a: Trench location map of quarry site (north)

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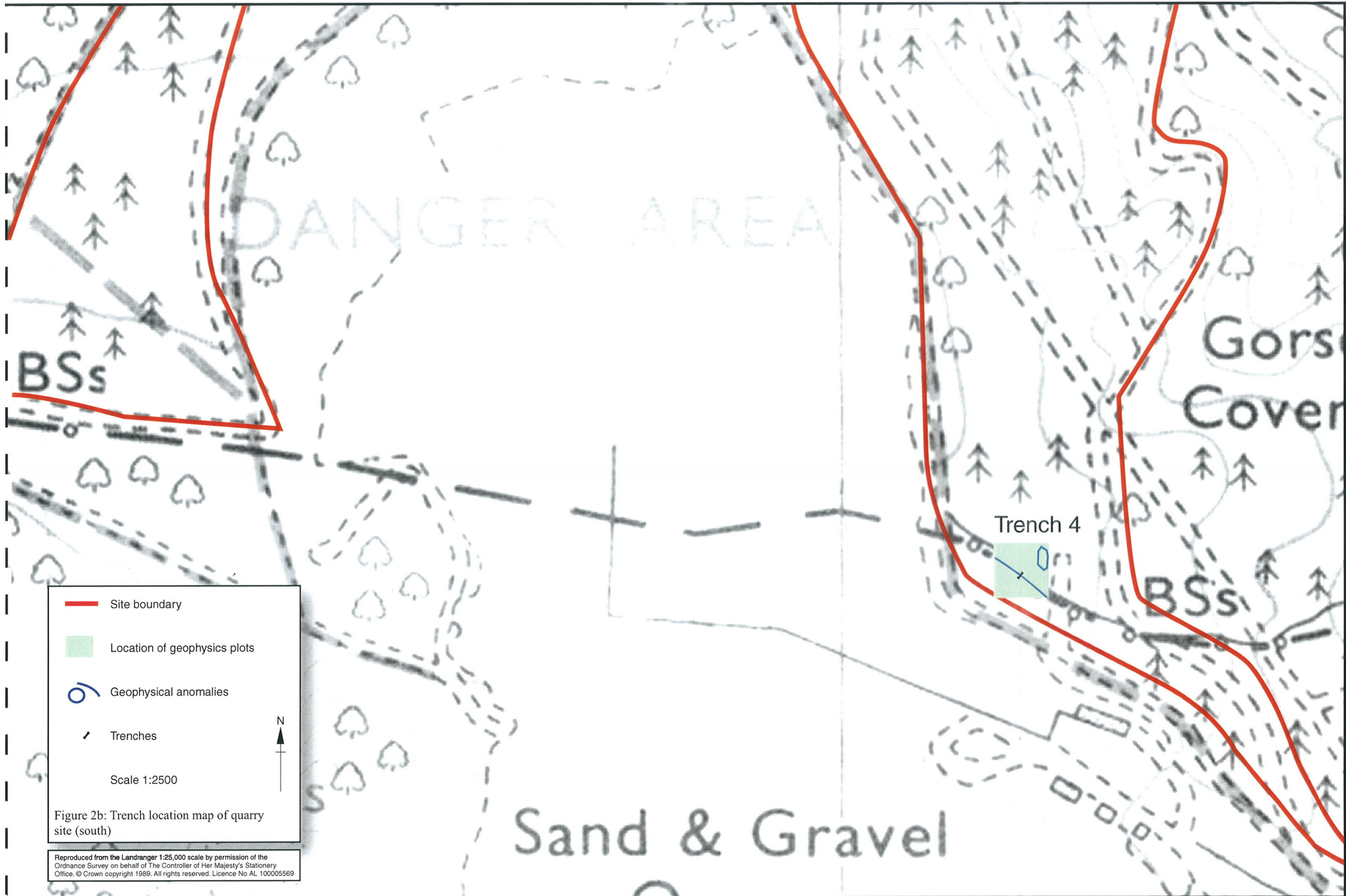


Figure 2b: Trench location map of quarry site (south)

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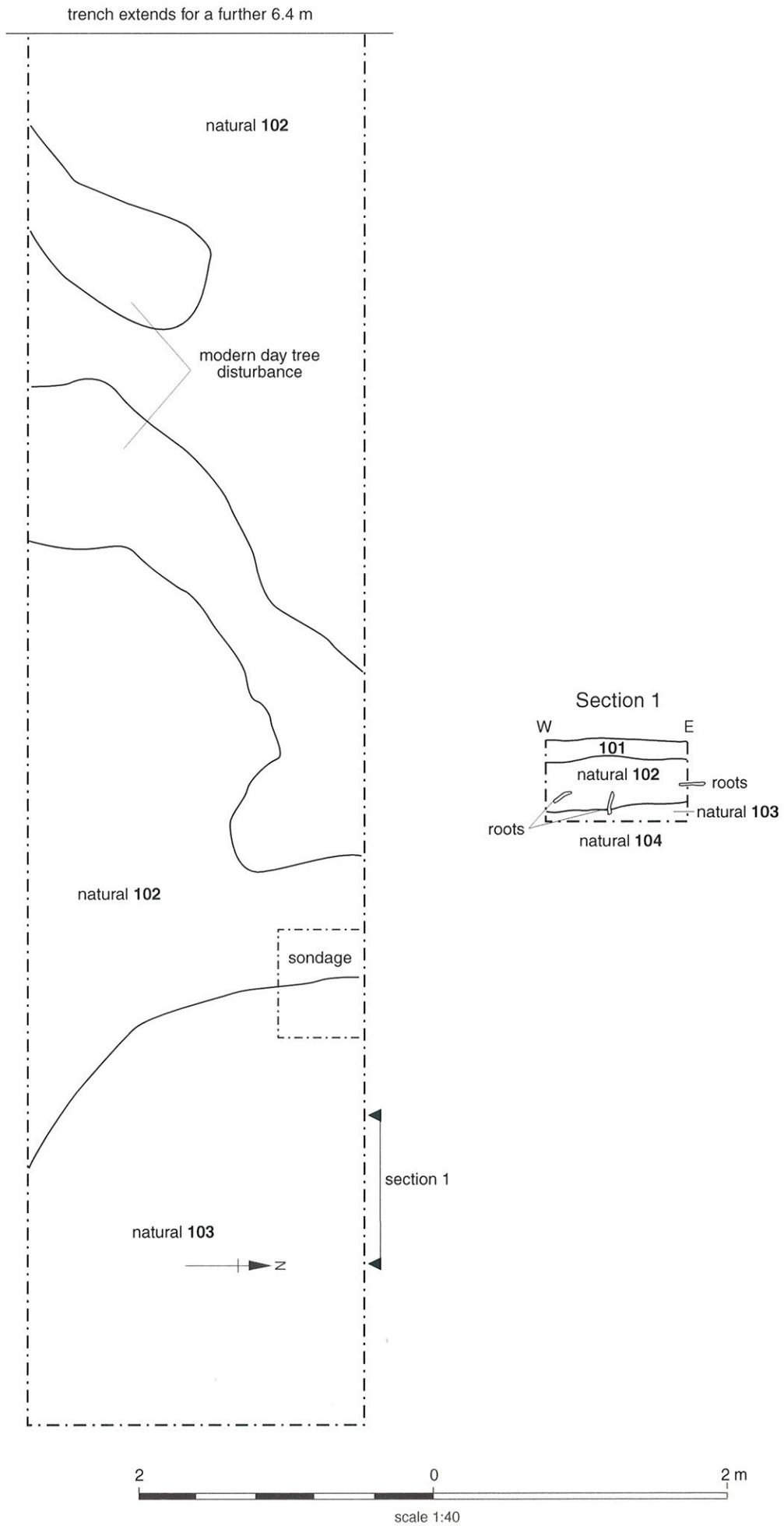


Figure 3: Trench 1 plan and section



Trench 3 Plan

section 3

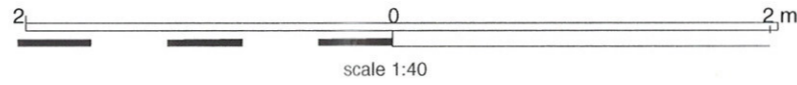
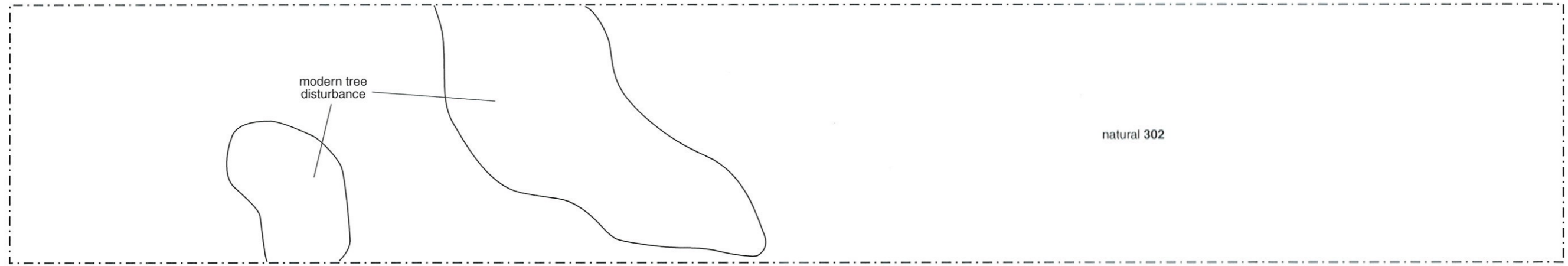


Figure 5: Trench 3 plan and section

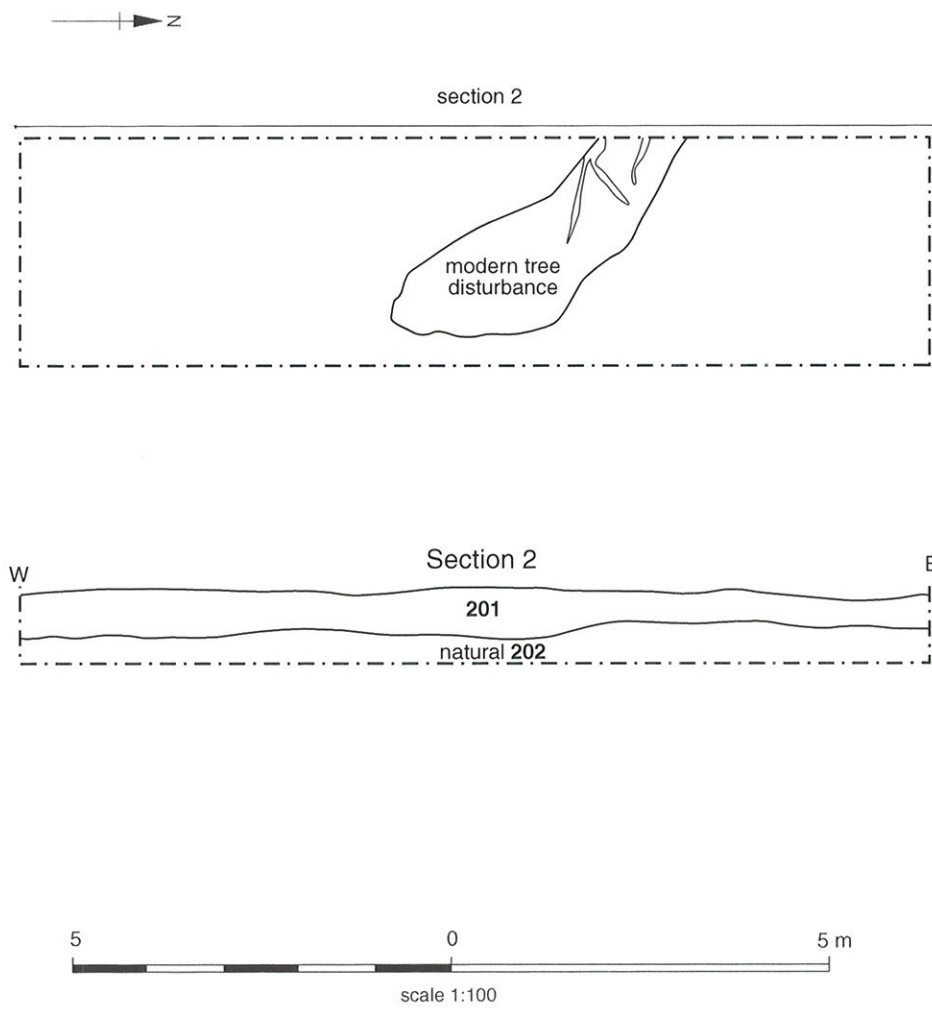
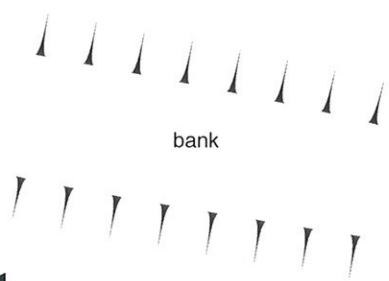
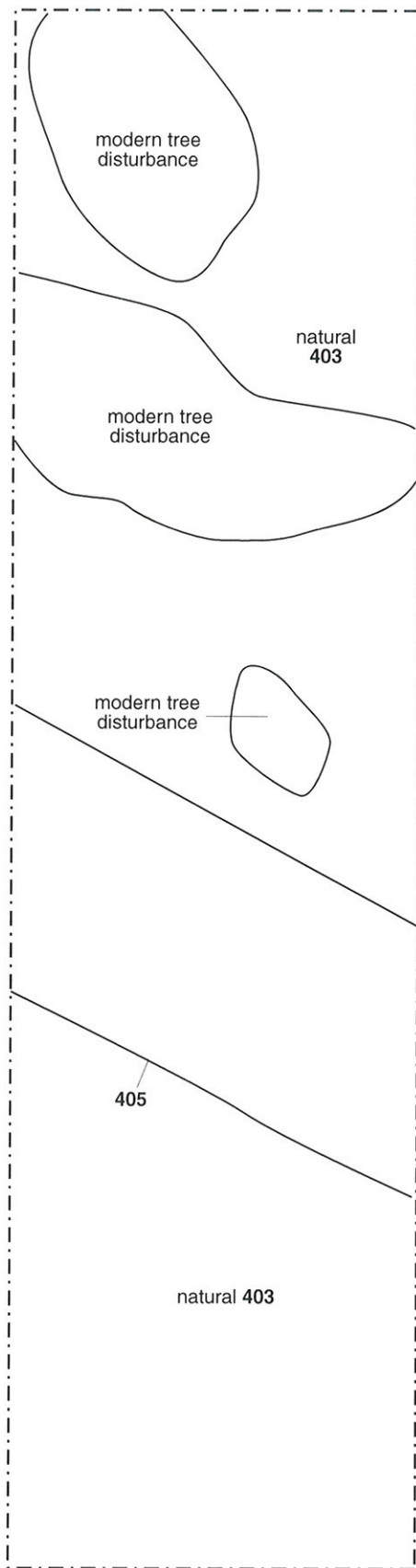


Figure 4: Trench 2 plan and section

Trench 4 Plan



section 4

Section 4

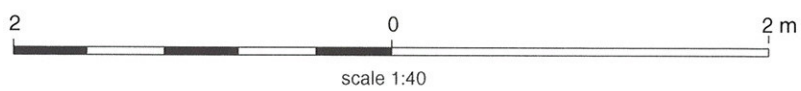
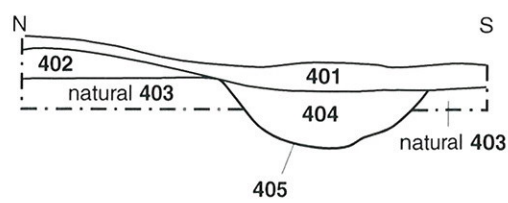


Figure 6: Trench 4 plan and section

Trench 5 Plan

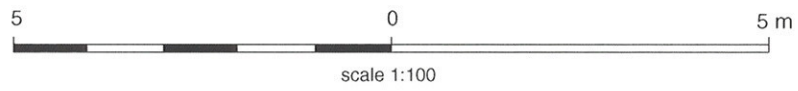
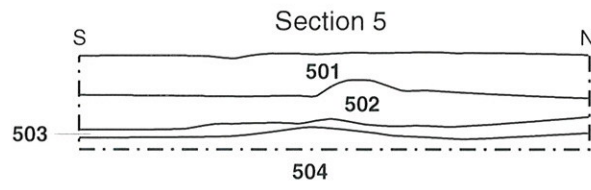
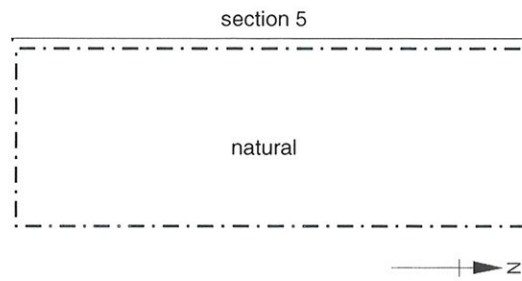


Figure 7: Trench 5 plan and section

Trench 6 Plan

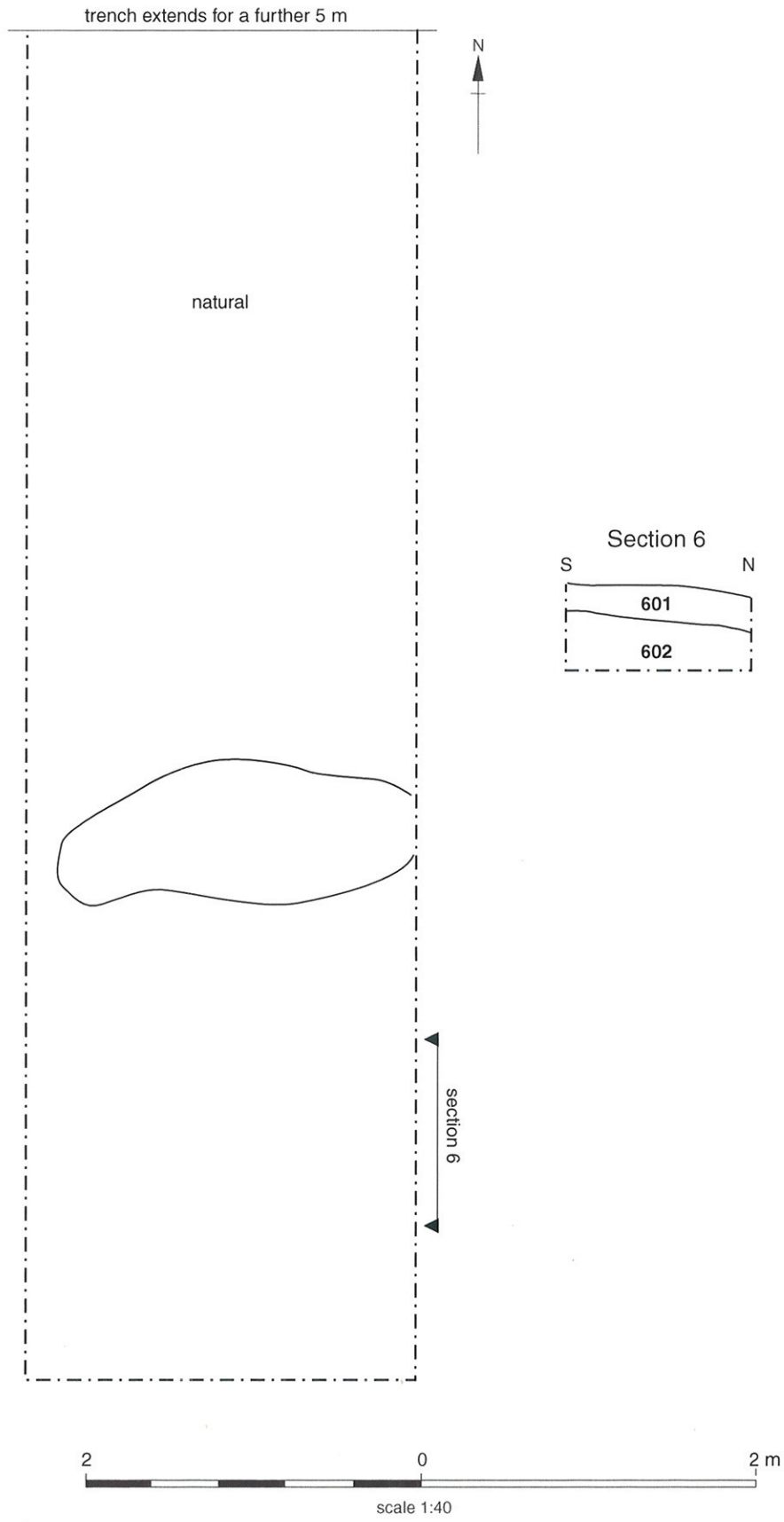


Figure 8: Trench 6 plan and section



OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES

Tel: 01865 263800 Fax: 01865 793496

email: postmaster@oau-oxford.com www.oau-oxford.com



Director and Chief Executive: David Jennings B.A., M.I.F.A. Oxford Archaeological Unit Limited.
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Registered Office: Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES