



Land West of Dale Farm, Willington Derbyshire

Evaluation Report



Oxford Archaeology North

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Prepared by: Becky Wegiel
Position: Project Officer
Date: September 2013

Checked by: Fraser Brown
Position: Project Manager
Date: 06-09-13

Signed...  ..

Approved by: Alan Lupton
Position: Operations Manager
Date: 06-09-13

Signed..  ..

Oxford Archaeology North

Mill 3, Moor Lane Mills
Moor Lane
Lancaster
LA1 1QD
t: (0044) 01524 541000
f: (0044) 01524 848606
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk
e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk

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Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford
OX2 0ES
t: (0044) 01865 263800
f: (0044) 01865 793496

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SUMMARY

A planning application has been submitted to South Derbyshire District Council for residential development on a c 3.5ha site, located off Etwall Road and west of Dale Farm, Willington, Derbyshire (Fig 1). Existing aerial photographic crop-mark evidence from the site suggests the presence of two prehistoric monuments, towards its southern boundary: a putative hengiform monument, formed by two concentric circles, and a pennannular (C-shaped) enclosure (Air Photo Services 2004).

The Development Control Archaeologist for Derby and Derbyshire has determined that, due to the archaeological potential of the site, pre-determination geophysical survey and trial trench evaluation is required. A geophysical survey of the site has been undertaken (Stratascan 2012) and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), for an initial phase of trial trench evaluation, was submitted by CgMs Consulting (Mortimer 2012). Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) were contracted to undertake the evaluation in 2013, and this report presents the results of this work.

Four trenches (A-D) were originally proposed by the WSI, targeting the cropmark monuments, and other linear cropmarks, variously interpreted as being potentially of archaeological or geological origin (Fig 2). The trenches established the presence of the both of the monuments. These survived in approximately the same locations as the cropmarks had indicated, but only as ditches, in a badly plough-truncated state. Two pits were found in association with the penannular monument, which were not excavated pre-determination, as they had the potential to contain human remains.

The evaluation demonstrated that ditches and pits were also present in the north of the site, but no coherent pattern was apparent in their arrangement, and, as there was no good evidence for the date or function of these features, they could potentially relate to low-intensity agricultural activity, from almost any period. The exception to this is the large agricultural pit in Trench A, which is of modern date. Many of the linear cropmarks were also proven to be of geological origin.

In addition to those trenches proposed by the WSI, three smaller, trenches (F-H) were excavated along a major east/west aligned linear cropmark to establish its presence or absence; it was not detected within any of the trenches. Another trench (E) confirmed that a linear cropmark, corresponding to a ditch in Trench A, also continued for approximately 12m beyond Trench A.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The evaluation trenching was undertaken by Becky Wegiel and Vickie Jamieson. The report was written by Becky Wegiel. Anne Stewardson and Gemma Jones produced the drawings. Simon Mortimer, of CgMs Consulting Ltd managed the project, and Fraser Brown managed the project on behalf of OA North, and also edited the report.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1 A planning application has been submitted to South Derbyshire District Council for residential development on a c 3.5ha site, located off Etwall Road, west of Dale Farm, Willington, Derbyshire (Fig 1). A programme of archaeological works has been conducted in advance of the determination of the current planning application. The archaeological programme aims to assess the archaeological potential of the development site.
- 1.1.2 The Development Control Archaeologist for Derby and Derbyshire has determined that due to the archaeological potential of the site, a pre-determination geophysical survey and trial trenching is required. There is already aerial photographic evidence available for the site (Air Photo Services 2004), which suggests that it contains a hengiform monument, a pennannular enclosure and at least one long linear feature (Fig 2). The geophysical survey of the site, carried out in support of the current application by Stratascan (2012), for CgMs, added little to the aerial photographic assessment. A Written Statement of Investigation (WSI) was submitted by CgMs Consulting (Mortimer 2012) for a preliminary phase of trial trench evaluation.
- 1.1.3 Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) were contracted to undertake the trial trenching, which targeted the principal cropmark features, including the putative monuments. This evaluation was undertaken in August 2013. This report presents the results of the evaluative programme, detailing the findings, and provides a very general assessment of the potential archaeological impact of the proposed development.

1.2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 1.2.1 **Location:** the site is located on the northern edge of the village of Willington, Derbyshire, centred on SK 2955 2885. The land is to the north of Findern Lane, and the Trent and Mersey Canal, and is bounded by the railway, to the north, and Etwall Road, to the west.
- 1.2.2 **Topography and Geology:** the land is currently arable, and lies at a height of approximately 47m OD. The site is situated on underlying mudstone, and is overlain by sands and gravels (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

1.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND AND STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

- 1.3.1 The development site lies to the west, and just north of, the former Willington

Power Station. Desk-based assessment, air photo analysis and field evaluation has been undertaken within the Power Station site. This identified a significant archaeological resource, including the remains of the Potlock cursus (Wheeler 1970; Scheduled Monument (SM 1212767) to the east of the former power station), together with Bronze Age, Iron Age and Romano-British material.

- 1.3.2 The current proposal site, on land west of Dale Farm, Willington, was included on the air photo survey (Air Photo Services 2004). This survey identified cropmark features within the site, including a single ring ditch, a double-ditched circular feature, tentatively interpreted as a Neolithic hengiform monument, a major east/west linear feature, and probable periglacial features.
- 1.3.3 A Magnetic Gradiometer Survey of the site was undertaken by Stratascan (2012). Linear anomalies characteristic of ridge and furrow, curvilinear anomalies related to the probable hengiform monument identified within the air photo survey and an area of possible pitting were identified. Overall, the data from the geophysical survey does not add much clarity to the aerial photographic transcription.
- 1.3.4 The Development Control Archaeologist for South Derbyshire District Council, Steve Baker, has advised that due to the 'equivocal evidence from cropmark plots and geophysics, it is necessary in the first instance to investigate the range of features arising from the cropmark plots and magnetometer survey, in order to determine their origin and advise on their archaeological significance.'
- 1.3.5 The Development Control Archaeologist requires an initial, pre-determination phase of evaluation trenching. It has been established that the scheme of work for this, set out within the Written Scheme of Investigation (Mortimer 2012), is sufficient to meet the requirements of NPPF, to understand the significance of the site, so that an informed planning recommendation can be made. This report presents the results of this preliminary phase of trenching.

2 RESEARCH DESIGN

2.1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

2.1.1 The objectives of the programme of archaeological investigation are:

- to provide sufficient information regarding the character, origin, date, preservation and significance of the possible archaeological features, anomalies and areas identified from cropmark plots and geophysical survey;
- to ensure the appropriate investigation and recording of any archaeological remains encountered;
- to disseminate the results of the archaeological investigation, and advance understanding of the site's archaeology as appropriate;
- to produce a site archive for deposition with an appropriate museum.

2.2 RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

2.2.1 The programme of archaeological investigation was conducted within the general research parameters and objectives defined by *East Midlands Heritage: An updated research strategy for the Historic Environment of the East Midlands* (Knight *et al* 2012) and the earlier Archaeological Resource Assessment and Research Agenda for the East Midlands: *The Archaeology of the East Midlands* (Cooper 2006).

2.2.2 The investigation takes account of the national research programmes outlined in English Heritage's *Strategic Framework for historic Environment Activities and Programmes in English Heritage (SHAPE)*, first published in 2008.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

- 3.1.1 The evaluation trial trenching was undertaken in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI; Mortimer 2012), which was approved by the Development Control Archaeologist (DCA) for Derby and Derbyshire. It was also compliant with the relevant Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) guidelines (2008a; 2008b; 2010). Evaluation techniques were selected to cause the minimum amount of destruction, and complied with all relevant health and safety regulations. All of those working on site were made aware of the significance and history of the site.

3.2 EVALUATION TRENCHING

- 3.2.1 The strategy and methodology for the trenching is detailed in the WSI, and the results are presented in *Section 4* of this report. Four trenches were originally proposed (A-D; Fig 2), targeting cropmarks and geophysical anomalies (*Section 1*). All of these trenches were excavated and, following discussions with the DCA, four extra trenches (E-H) were also excavated and, in several places, the original trenches were extended to further characterise the identified features (Fig 2).
- 3.2.2 Trenches were located by use of a differential Global Positioning System (dGPS), and altitude information has been established with respect to Ordnance Survey Datum. The topsoil was removed by machine (fitted with a toothless ditching bucket), under archaeological supervision, to the surface of the first significant archaeological deposit. Each trench was cleaned appropriately by hand, in order to assist the identification and interpretation of exposed archaeological features, and the nature of identified features was assessed by limited sample excavation, sufficient to establish their character and date. All features of archaeological interest were recorded, but it was agreed with the DCA that the discrete features associated with the cropmark monuments should not be excavated, as it was deemed more appropriate to do so during a conditioned phase of works.
- 3.2.3 All information identified in the course of the site works was recorded stratigraphically, using a system adapted from that used by the former Centre for Archaeology of English Heritage, with an accompanying pictorial record (plans, sections, and monochrome contacts/digital photographs). Primary records were available for inspection at all times.
- 3.2.4 Results of all field investigations were recorded on *pro forma* context sheets. The site archive includes both a photographic record and accurate large-scale plans and sections at an appropriate scale (1:50, 1:20 and 1:10).

3.3 FINDS AND PALAEOENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLES

- 3.3.1 The finds recovery and sampling programmes were carried out in accordance with best practice, as set out in the WSI (Mortimer 2012). However, the only artefacts found were a few burnt, unworked stones from a pit (**10**; *Section 4.2.2*), and, following discussions with the DCA, no samples were recovered, as the excavated deposits had no potential for the recovery of environmental or dating evidence.

3.4 HUMAN REMAINS

- 3.4.1 The methodology for human remains was set out in the WSI (Mortimer 2012), but none were encountered in the evaluation.

3.5 ARCHIVE

- 3.5.1 Following completion of the archaeological fieldwork, an estimate of the size of the archive and programme for deposition has been provided to the DCA and relevant museum curator. The archive will be prepared in accordance with the museum guidelines and the DCA will be informed in writing of final deposition of the archive.
- 3.5.2 Following acceptance of the report by the Local Planning Authority, an ordered archive of both object and paper elements will be prepared according to the recommendations in Procedures for the Transfer of Archaeological Archives (Derby Museum and Art Gallery 2003) and Archaeological Archives A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation (Brown 2011).
- 3.5.3 All documentation and correspondence created as part of this project will clearly quote the Derby Museum and Art Gallery accession number **DBYMU 2013-61**. The Arts and Humanities Data Service (AHDS) online database Online Access to index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) will be completed, as part of the archiving phase of the project.

4 FIELDWORK RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1 In total, eight trenches were excavated during the course of the investigations (Fig 2). They were on various alignments, and of various dimensions, and targeted cropmarks and geophysical anomalies identified in the aerial photographic (Air Photo Services 2004) and geophysical surveys (Stratascan 2012).

4.1.2 **Summary:** the crop-mark penannular and hengiform monuments, which were of greatest potential archaeological significance (*Section 1.3*), were confirmed by ditches, in Trenches B (**020** and **022**) and D (**016**, **013** and **039**); although the cropmarks seem to be displaced (by *c* 5m, to the south-east) from their actual locations. A discrete pit (**038**), which, was left unexcavated, and may be a grave or other feature associated with the penannular monument, lay at its centre, in Trench B. Another pit (**037**), also left unexcavated, lay outside the monument, 10m further to the north, and a third pit (**009**) was identified towards the southern end of Trench A and was excavated. All these features were sealed below a relict-plough-soil subsoil.

4.1.3 The long, east/west linear crop mark feature (*Section 1.3.2*) was not detected in Trench A or in the additional Trenches F-H, which were positioned to test for it. Two ditches (**027** and **029/041**), were examined in Trench C; of which, **027** might, be a candidate for the linear crop mark, if this, like the crop-mark monuments, has been displaced towards the south-east, although, given the negative results elsewhere, this seems improbable. Trenches A and E detected a ditch (respectively **004/042** and **040**), corresponding to a potential linear feature suggested by a crop mark. Although ditch **027** was sealed below the same subsoil as the monumental ditches, the other ditches (**029/041** and **004/042=040**) cut this deposit, suggesting that they were much later. The potential periglacial features detected by the aerial photographic survey (*Section 1.3*), were demonstrated to be of geological origin in all the trenches they were sampled within. Apart from three pieces of burnt, unworked stone, from pit (**009**), there were no artefacts within any of the features or trenches.

4.1.4 The results have been presented in detail below, ordered by Trench. A context list is provided in *Appendix 2*.

4.2 DETAILED TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS

4.2.1 **Trench A:** this trench targeted two geophysical anomalies (Figs 2 and 3), and the east/west-aligned cropmark. The trench was on a north-north-west/south-south-east-alignment, measuring 75m by 2m, and had a maximum depth of 0.4m. The

features had been heavily plough truncated, and there was a mixed interface (**002**, 0.15m thick) between the natural geology **003** and topsoil **001** (0.25m thick).

- 4.2.2 The natural geology was observed to be cut by a ditch (**004**) and a pit (**009**). Pit **009** (Fig 7; Plate 1), at the southern end of the trench, measured 1.9m by 1.2m and was 0.4m deep. Pit fill (**10**) contained three pieces of burnt, unworked stone and occasional charcoal inclusions. It was sealed by subsoil **002**, and the trench was extended to reveal its full extent. Ditch **004**, at the northern end of trench, was on a north-west/south-east-alignment, and was 1.6m wide and 0.65m deep. The lower fill (**005**; Fig 7) was indicative of standing water within the ditch, which may suggest a primary drainage function. This was sealed by episodes of secondary silting (**006** and **007**). After the ditch had nearly completely silted up, it was recut (**042**), on its north-western side. Both phases of this ditch appeared to cut through the relict-plough-soil subsoil (**002**), so it is much more recent than the pit. A large, discrete geophysical anomaly, towards the central part of the trench, was a modern agricultural pit, backfilled with rubbish.



Plate 1: West-facing section through pit 009

- 4.2.3 **Trench B:** was on a north-north-west/south-south-east-alignment, measuring 50m by 2m, and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.75m. The trench targeted the probable penannular crop-mark monument, and an area that the geophysical survey suggested may have contained archaeological pits (Figs 2 and 4). There was no evidence for the latter within the trench, but the ditch of the penannular monument was crossed in two places by the trench, indicating that it had a diameter of *c* 25m. The ditch cut the natural geology **019**, and was sealed by a 0.15m-thick subsoil interface (**018**) with the topsoil (**017**), which was 0.35m thick.
- 4.2.4 Ditch **020** formed the southern arc of the penannular ditch, and measured 0.65m

wide and was 0.5m deep. Ditch **022** (Plate 2) formed the northern arc, and was 0.95m wide and 0.55m deep. Both were filled by a secondary silts (respectively **021** and **023**; Fig 7).



Plate 2: North-west-facing view of ditch 022

- 4.2.5 Two pits were observed in the trench, both sealed below subsoil **018**. Sub-rectangular pit **038**, measuring 2.2m by 0.6m, lay at the centre of the monument, and may possibly contain a burial. A second pit (**037**) lay c 10m to the north of the monument, and measured 3.2m by 0.8m. Neither pit was excavated at this time, due to the possibility that they might contain human remains, but the trench was extended to reveal their full extent.
- 4.2.6 **Trench C**: this trench targeted several potential periglacial features and the east/west-aligned linear cropmark (Figs 2 and 5). The trench was on a north-east/south-west-alignment, measuring 50m by 2m, and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.8m. The features it sampled were heavily plough-truncated and cut the natural geology **026**. A 0.2m-thick subsoil interface (**025**) existed between the natural geology and the 0.35m-thick topsoil (**024**).
- 4.2.7 The potential periglacial features were shown to be of geological origin. Two ditches were observed within the trench. Sealed by subsoil **025**, ditch **027** was on an east/west-alignment and measured 1.3m wide and 0.3m deep. It had silted naturally and may be a candidate for the long, east/west-aligned linear cropmark, although it does not correspond perfectly to it. Ditch **029** (Plate 3), measured 1.25m wide and 0.6m deep, and was on a north-west/south-east-alignment. A water-borne

silt (**030**) and an episode of secondary silting (**031**) had been allowed to accumulate within the ditch, before it was subsequently recut (**041**), on its south-western side. The ditch cut through the relict-plough-soil subsoil (**025**), so must be much more recent than **027**.



*Plate 3: South-east-facing section through ditch **029** and recut **041***

- 4.2.8 **Trench D:** was on a north-west/south-east-alignment, and measured 44m by 2m, with a maximum depth of 1m (Figs 2 and 6). A rectangular extension, 12.5m by c 5m, extended, at a perpendicular, from the south-eastern end of the trench. The trench targeted the hengiform cropmark, which suggested an interior ditch with a 15m diameter, circumscribed by an outer ditch with a 30m diameter, with the trench extension positioned to test for an apparent south-eastern causeway into the monument. The ditches of the monument cut the natural geology (**034**), and plough truncation was demonstrated by a 0.15m-thick subsoil interface below the 0.3m-thick topsoil (**033**).
- 4.2.9 The outer ditch (**039**) of the monument terminated, at the extreme edge of the site, under the south-eastern baulk of the trench extension, strongly suggesting the veracity of the apparent causeway. What was probably the northern arc (**016**) of the same outer ditch was observed 5m to the north-west of where the cropmark had indicated, demonstrating that the monument was c 30m in diameter, as the cropmark had indicated. It measured 2.2m wide and was 1m deep (Fig 7), and a sterile silt (**015**) in its base, sealed by a stony episode of secondary silting (**036**), may suggest that it had remained open for a prolonged duration. Some 5m to the south-west of **016**, was a second ditch (**013**; Plate 4), which measured 2.2m wide

and was 0.7m deep. Although similarly displaced to the north-west, this probably corresponds to the northern arc of the inner cropmark ditch. Like **016**, it seemed to have been open for a long period of time, with a sterile stony primary fill (**043**) accumulating in its base, followed by a sterile silt (**012**) sealed below stony, plough-truncated secondary silts (**011**). Within the 5m of trench between the two ditches, the natural geology, although plough-scarred, was less truncated than elsewhere, rising c 0.3m higher up into the machined section (**014**; Plate 4). It seems plausible that this was because it had been protected by a monumental bank that has since been ploughed out. There was no evidence for the southern arc of the inner ditch, which may mean that it has a south-eastern causeway like the outer ditch, and it was this that was sampled by the trench.



*Plate 4: Oblique view of north-east-facing section through inner ditch **013** and the rise in the natural geology (**014**), visible in the north-western part of the section*

- 4.2.10 **Trench E**: was an additional trench to those originally proposed in the WSI (Mortimer 2012). It was excavated to assess the nature of the potential linear cropmark feature detected, as **004/041**, in the northern part of Trench A (Section 4.2.1; Figs 2 and 3). The confirmed continuation (**040**) of ditch **004/041** in Trench E, measured 1.6m wide and 0.7m deep, and its profile and the manner in which it had silted up was very similar to that observed in Trench A. The feature cut through the natural geology and was sealed by subsoil and then topsoil.
- 4.2.11 **Trenches F-H**: these trenches were also additional to the WSI and were excavated along the line of the east/west-aligned cropmark (Fig 2). The trenches varied from 4m to 6.5m long, were 2m wide and, generally, 0.3m deep. The subsoil and the

topsoil lay above the natural geology in all of the trenches, and no archaeology of any kind was observed.

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 DISCUSSION

- 5.1.1 By far the most significant results of the evaluation were in the southern trenches, B and D. These confirmed the existence of sub-surface archaeological features (ditches and pits) in the approximate locations where the penannular and hengiform monuments (*Section 1.3*) had been indicated by the cropmarks (Fig 2). Furthermore, the relative position of the detected ditches seemed to be broadly consistent with the suggested monument morphology. However, both monuments were heavily plough-truncated and, although a rise in the natural geology suggests where a former bank may have stood between the concentric ditches of the hengiform monument in Trench D, the bank itself had been utterly removed by ploughing (Fig 7; Plate 4). No finds were retrieved by the evaluation that might confirm the presumed prehistoric date of the monuments, and their sterile fills contained no organic material that might have been suitable for radiocarbon dating. The two pits identified in association with the penannular monument, in Trench B, are also likely to be prehistoric in date, and demonstrate the potential for the presence of other features in the immediate vicinity of the monuments. It is possible that one of the pits, in the centre of the penannular monument, may be a grave.
- 5.1.2 In the north of the site, there was no convincing evidence for the long, east/west-aligned linear cropmark (*Section 1.3.2*; Fig 2), despite attempting to trace it with additional trenches. This may either mean that the ditch does not actually exist or that it lies outside of the trenches, due to a discrepancy between their surveyed location and the projection of the aerial photographic interpretation (although this does not seem to be so pronounced in the northern part of the site). Other ditches and pits were shown to be present, but no coherent pattern was apparent in their arrangement, and, as there was no good evidence for the date or function of these features, they could potentially relate to low-intensity agricultural activity, from almost any period. However, the fact that some of these features cut through a relict-plough-soil subsoil and others were sealed by it, suggests that they date to, relatively, different periods. The exception to this is the large agricultural pit in Trench A, which is certainly of modern date. The evidence from this evaluation suggests that the northern part of the site is of far less significance than the areas around the monuments.

5.2 POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IMPACT

- 5.2.1 The archaeological evaluation has shown that significant prehistoric monuments, survive within two areas towards the southern extreme of the site. These are buried beneath topsoil and subsoil, at a depth of approximately 0.30m below the present

ground level. Considerable plough damage has already occurred to the monuments and development may, potentially, further damage the remains, but this will depend upon the specifics of the design, which are not known presently.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

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Plate 4: Oblique view of north-east-facing section through inner ditch **013** and the rise in the natural geology (**014**), visible in the north-western part of the section

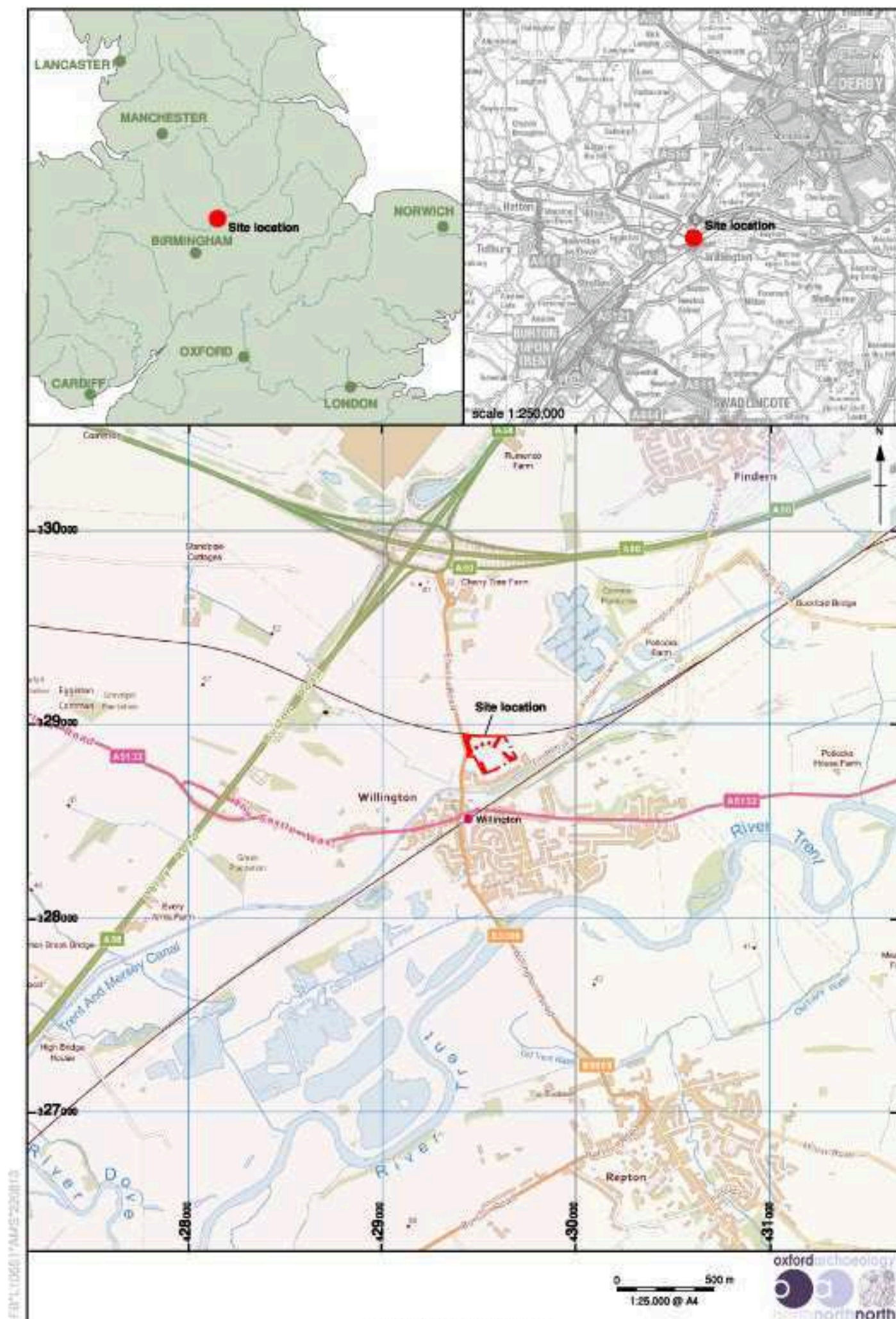


Figure 1: Site location

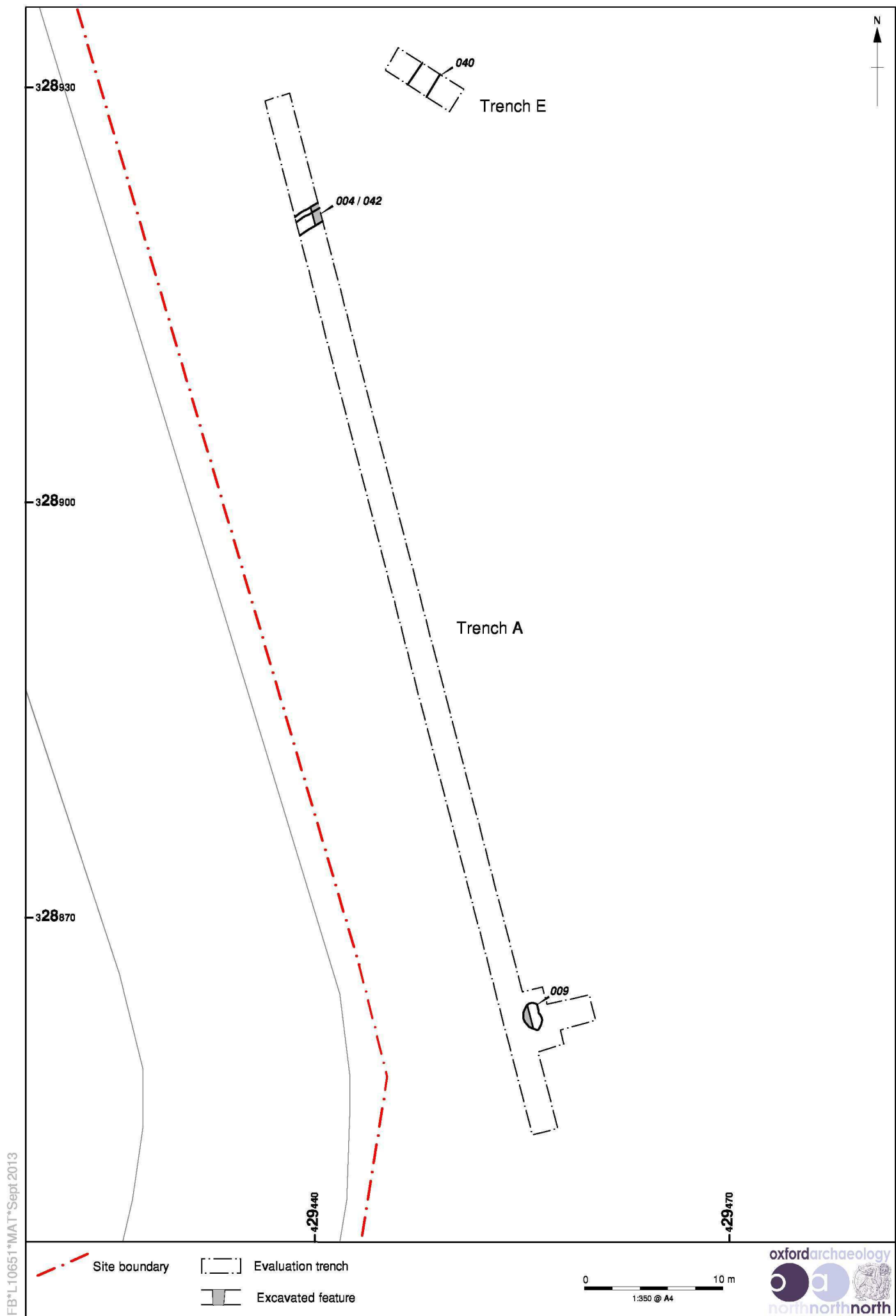


Figure 3: Plan of trenches A and E

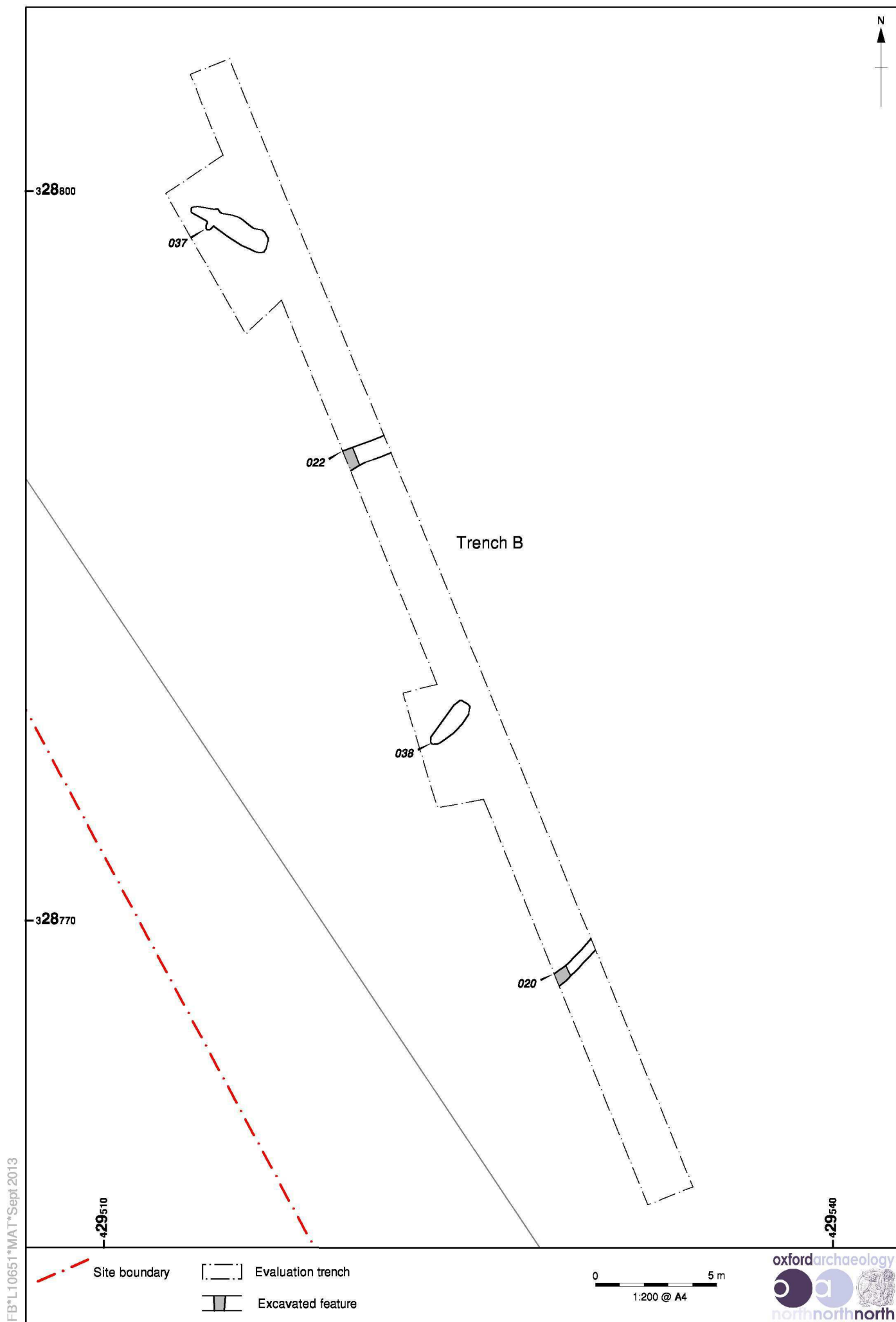


Figure 4: Plan of trench B

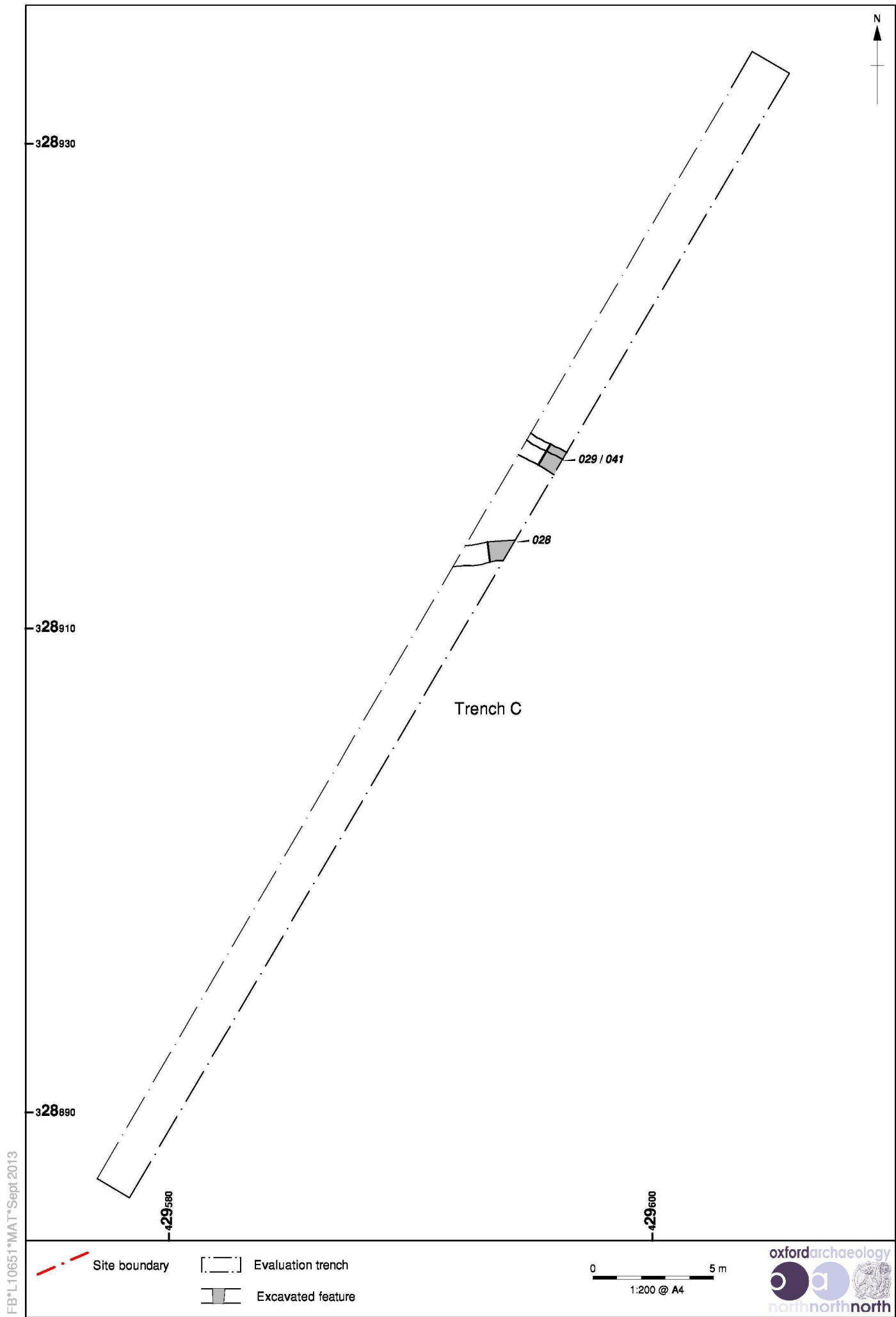


Figure 5: Plan of trench C

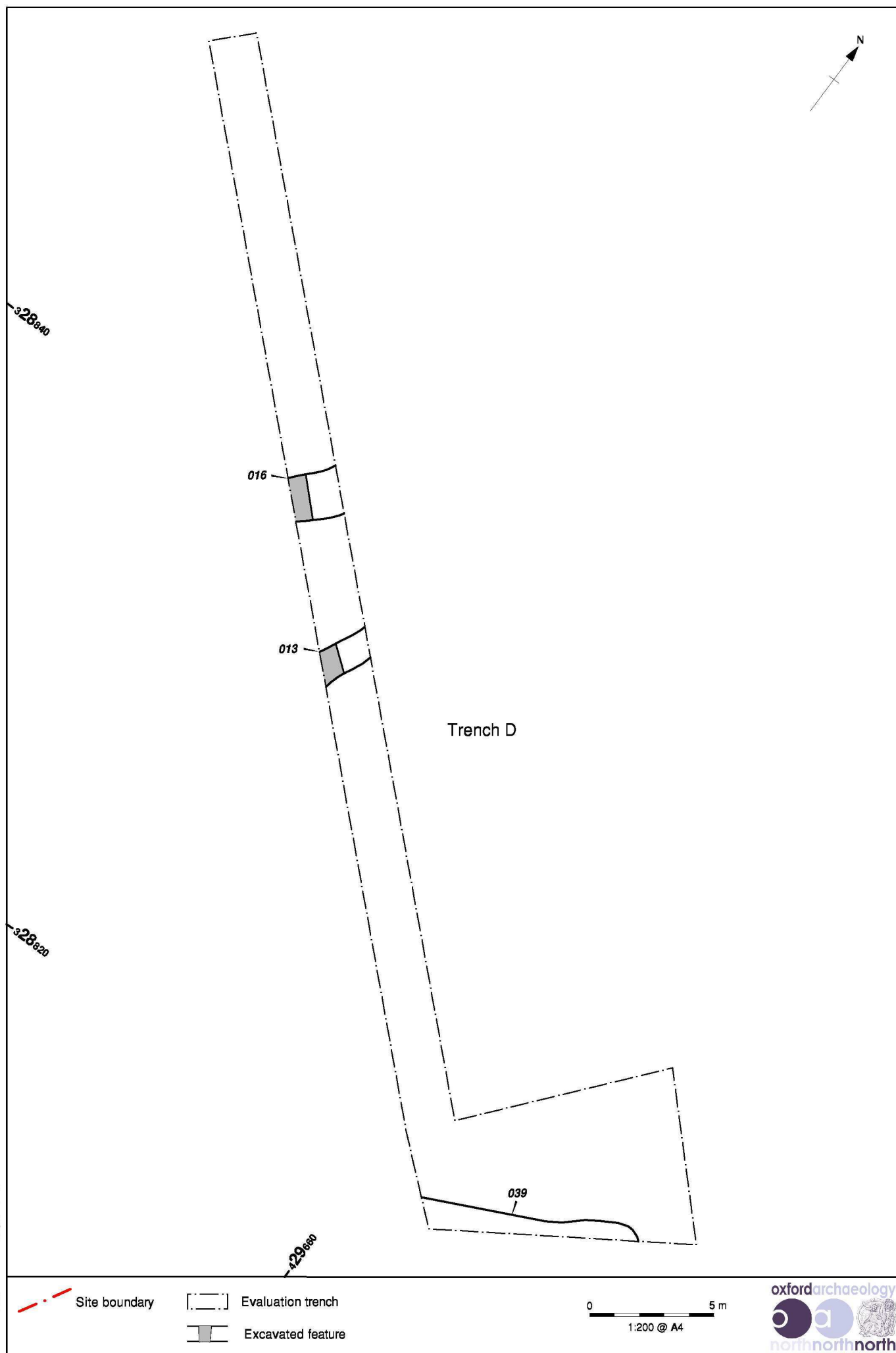
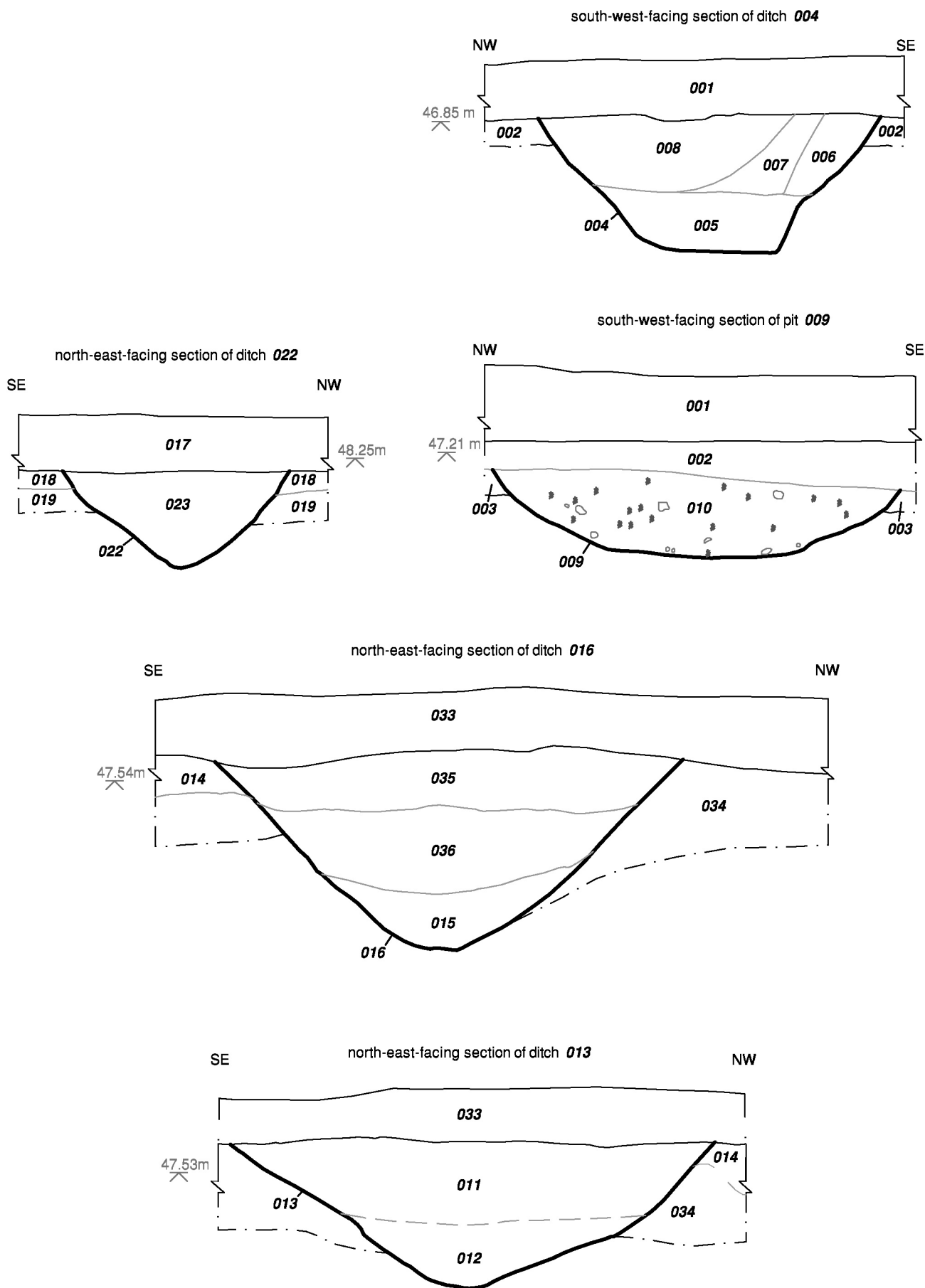


Figure 6: Plan of trench D



0 0.5 m
1:25 @ A4

Figure 7: Sections

APPENDIX 1 – INVENTORY OF CONTEXTS

Context No	Site Subdivision	Description
001	Trench A	Topsoil
002	Trench A	Interface between topsoil 001 and natural geology 003
003	Trench A	Natural geology
004	Trench A	Boundary/drainage ditch
005	Trench A	Basal fill of ditch 004, water-borne silt
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009	Trench A	Pit
010	Trench A	Charcoal bearing fill of pit 009
011	Trench D	Secondary silting in ditch 013
012	Trench D	Basal fill of ditch 013; built up slowly over a long period of time
013	Trench D	Inner ditch of putative hengiform monument
014	Trench D	Rising natural geology between ditches 013 and 016 , indicative of former bank
015	Trench D	Basal fill of ditch 016; built up slowly over a long period of time
016	Trench D	Outer ditch of putative hengiform monument
017	Trench B	Topsoil
018	Trench B	Interface between topsoil 017 and natural geology 019
019	Trench B	Natural geology
020	Trench B	Penannular enclosure ditch
021	Trench B	Secondary silting of ditch 020
022	Trench B	Penannular enclosure ditch
023	Trench B	Secondary silting of ditch 022
024	Trench C	Topsoil
025	Trench C	Interface between topsoil 024 and natural geology 026
026	Trench C	Natural geology
027	Trench C	Boundary ditch
028	Trench C	Secondary fill of ditch 027
029	Trench C	Boundary ditch
030	Trench C	Basal fill of ditch 029, water-borne silt
031	Trench C	Secondary fill of ditch 029
032	Trench C	Secondary fill of ditch 042
033	Trench D	Topsoil
034	Trench D	Natural geology
035	Trench D	Uppermost secondary fill of ditch 016
036	Trench D	Secondary silting within ditch 016
037	Trench B	Pit, unexcavated
038	Trench B	Pit, unexcavated
039	Trench D	Ditch terminus, unexcavated
040	Trench E	Boundary ditch, machine excavated
041	Trench C	Recut to ditch 029
042	Trench A	Recut to ditch 004
043	Trench D	Primary fill in ditch 013