

# St Neots Footpath & Foot and Cycle Bridge Cambridgeshire



## Archaeological Watching Brief Report



June 2011

**Client:** Cambridgeshire County Council

OA East Report No: 1244

OASIS No: oxfordar3-103160

NGR: TL 176 592

## **St Neots Footpath and Foot and Cycle Bridge**

*Watching Brief*

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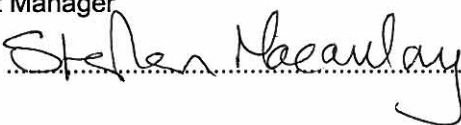
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**Site Name:** St Neots Footpath and Foot and Cycle Bridge  
**HER Event No:** ECB3468  
**Date of Works:** January – May 2011  
**Client Name:** Cambridgeshire County Council  
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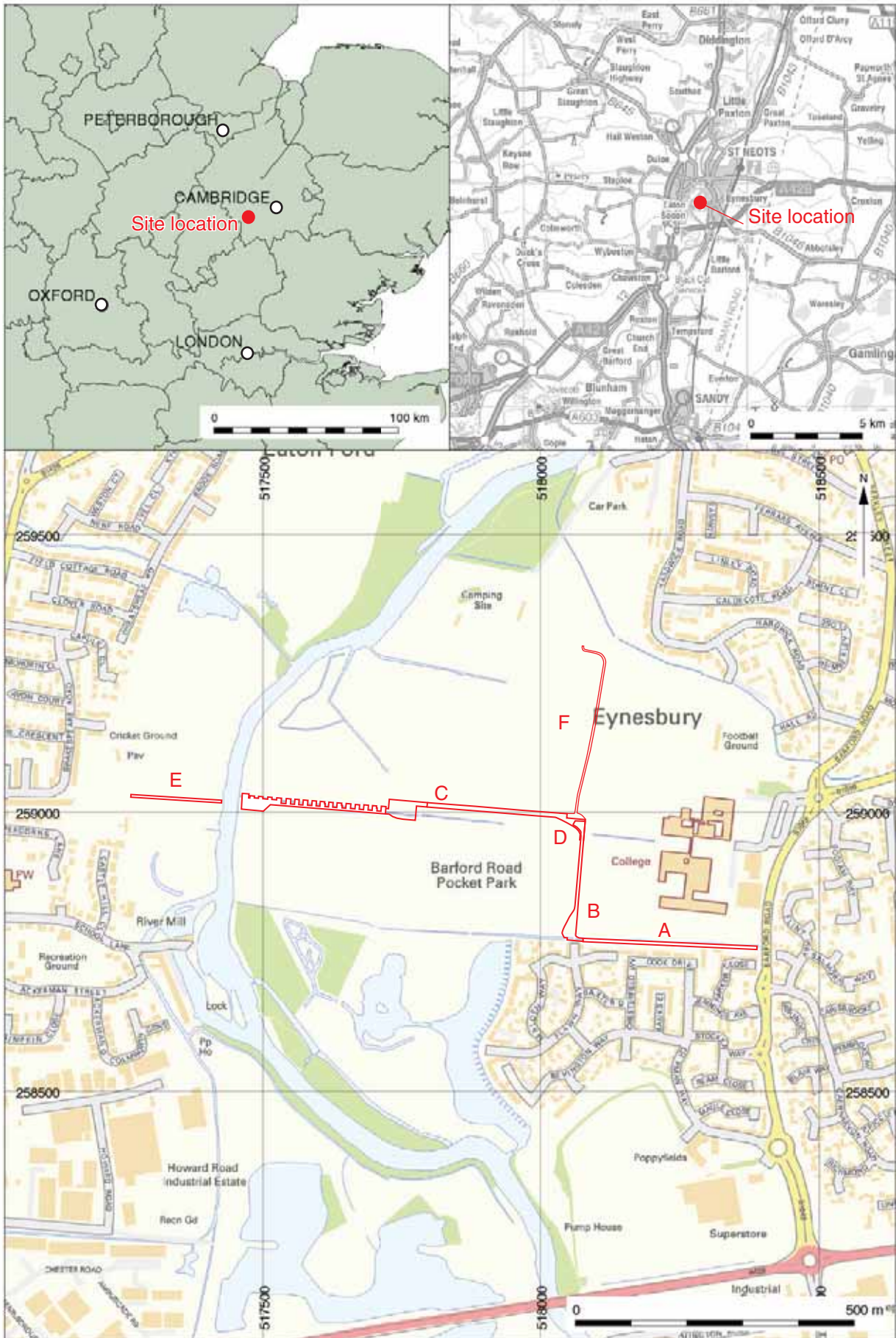
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## **Summary**

*Between January and May 2011, Oxford Archaeology East (OA East) carried out an archaeological watching brief at the St Neots Footpath and Cycle Bridge (TL 176 592). The monitoring was carried out during the laying of a haul road for the construction of a footbridge and subsequent footpath/cycle way linking Eynesbury and Eaton Socon.*

*The Watching Brief revealed Post medieval ridge and furrow and a number of possibly Neolithic/Bronze age pits and ditches on the eastern side of the river Great Ouse. To the west of the river were a series of Early Medieval and later quarry pits and a sequence of later Medieval banks and ditches possibly associated with the castle to the south.*



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Figure 1: Site location with development area outlined red

## 1 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 1.1.1 The site lies within the valley/flood plain of the River Great Ouse lying on 1st and 2nd terrace river gravels at a height of c17m OD. The land to the west of the river Great Ouse was higher than the floodplain to the east and fell away sharply towards the river bank (Fig 1). Alluvium overlies the river gravels on either side of the River Great ouse.

## 2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1.1 Extensive prehistoric and later monumental, funerary, ritual and settlement sites are known to the north, south and west of the development area, through archaeological excavation, aerial photograph and the recovery of isolated finds. Excavations carried out prior to the construction of housing to the south of the site revealed significant prehistoric remains, including a Neolithic long barrow and cursus monument (HER 00381, MCB17676). Further Neolithic activity was revealed in the form of thirty pits containing flint and antler tools and pottery (Ellis, C.J. 2004)
- 2.1.2 Bronze age remains were revealed under the present St Neots Community College All Weather Sports pitch to the north of the route and series of Early Bronze Age cremations (one urned and 6 un-urned) were excavated to the south (MCB 17703). Later Bronze Age activity, also to the south, comprised of 440 pits forming part of a broadly rectangular enclosure containing Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age pottery (Ellis C.J. 2004). Further Iron Age evidence was revealed to the with two post holes recorded prior to the extension of the Tesco store to the south of the route (Gent, T. 2001).
- 2.1.3 Roman settlement activity was recorded immediately to the east of the St Neots Community College (formerly The Ernulf Community College) buildings (Alexander 1993; Macaulay 1994, Kenney 2002, Cooper 2005). A Romano British field system and associated droveway was located to the south (Ellis, C.J. 2004). Further evidence of Roman activity was revealed to the southwest of the proposed route through excavations at Priors Gate Eaton Socon where a Romano British field system, watering holes and structures interpreted as wind breaks were revealed (Gibson, C 2005). Cropmarks and isolated scatters of pottery and building material in the vicinity are also indicative of extensive Roman Activity in the vicinity of the proposed route (HER00396B, HER00389, HER00684).
- 2.1.4 Anglo-Saxon settlement was recorded to the south with 7 Sunken Floor Buildings (or *Grubenhaus*) and associated pits and post holes (MCB19113). Further Early Medieval activity was also recorded at River Mill, Eaton Socon where a number of ditches contained 11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> century pottery (Roberts, J. 1997).
- 2.1.5 To the west of the river the lies the extant earthworks the of the 12th century ringwork castle The Hillings. Excavation has revealed underlying Saxon structures and 40 late Saxon burials indicating a pre castle settlement spreading to the south and west. The site is a Scheduled Monument (SM 20434) and is considered of National Importance.
- 2.1.6 Previous evaluations carried out on the footprint of the bridge supports and during the monitoring of geological test pitting revealed no archaeological deposits, yet the scope of these works was fairly limited (Bailey, G.D 2004, 2005). Given the extensive archaeological remains encountered in previous groundworks surrounding the proposed route, there remains a high probability of encountering archaeology.



### 3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1.1 The objective of this watching brief was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.
- 3.1.2 The Brief required that any archaeological features exposed during ground works would be recorded and interpreted to acceptable standards in accordance with IFA guidelines.
- 3.1.3 The area of investigation was located on the flood plain of the River Great Ouse following the line of an existing rough footpath running from Barford Road, Eynesbury to the east bank of the river. From the west bank of the river the proposed route ran adjacent to The Hillings Castle Hills, joining Shakespeare Road Eaton Socon.
- 3.1.4 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA East's *pro-forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales digital photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.
- 3.1.5 Site conditions were generally good yet significant ground water was encountered in the deepest areas monitored. The use of large dumper trucks resulted in areas of rutting prior to machine excavation that impacted on several of the archaeological features encountered.

### 4 RESULTS

#### 4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 Six trenches (or varying size) in total were opened along the course of the proposed development (Fig 2) The archaeological features and deposits encountered are described below. The Trenches refer to overburden strips by mechanical excavators in advance of haul road and bridge pad construction.

#### 4.2 Trench A

- 4.2.1 Trench A ran from west to east for approximately 450m, from Barford Road along the course of an existing rough footpath (Fig 2) An area 4.5m wide was stripped by mechanical excavator to a depth of between 0.2m and 0.5m. At a depth of 0.2m a pre existing crushed brick haul road was encountered measuring up to 3m wide. An area approximately 1m wide, to the north of this crushed brick, was disturbed by the roots of a recently removed hedge line. Where stripping impacted below the level of the crushed brick, terrace gravels were revealed yet no archaeological deposits were encountered.

#### 4.3 Trench B

- 4.3.1 Trench B ran from south to north for approximately 180m from the corner of the present all weather sports pitch to the end of an extant east west running tarmac path (Figs 2 and 3). Wider areas were opened at the southern and northern ends of the trench for ease of vehicle movement.
- 4.3.2 Towards the southern end of Trench B, within the wider vehicle turning area was a single shallow post hole **150** measuring 0.2m wide and 0.06m deep (Fig 6). This posthole was filled with dark grey brown sandy clay silt (151) that contained no datable artefactual material.

- 4.3.3 To the north of posthole **150**, up against the western limit of excavation was pit **102** measuring 0.56m long, 0.3m wide and 0.12m deep (Fig 6). This pit was filled with a single mid grey brown sandy clay silt (103) that also yielded no dating evidence.
- 4.3.4 A series of narrow ditches running east to west were revealed along the length of Trench B with a notable concentration at the northern end. Of the ditches excavated **104, 106, 108, and 110** were broadly similar in character ranging in width from 0.78m to 1.2m and in depth from 0.05m to 0.08m (Fig 6). Each ditch contained a single clay silt fill, very similar to the overlying subsoil. Within fill (105) of ditch **104** 2 sherds pottery dating 12th to 14th century were recovered. Fill (111) of ditch **110** yielded a single sherd of 16th to 18th century pottery (see Appendix A).
- 4.3.5 Overlying the archaeological features was mid grey brown sandy clay silt subsoil layer (101) that was uniformly 0.1m deep. This was sealed by modern mid brown sandy clay silt topsoil/plough soil (100) that was consistent across all of the trenches monitored.
- 4.3.6 At the far northern end of the trench was a large truncation containing potentially contaminated modern material.

#### 4.4 Trench C

- 4.4.1 Trench C ran from east to west for approximately 480m from the end of the tarmac path that links the floodplain to the college to the west, to the eastern bank of the River Great Ouse (Fig 2 and 4) At the northern edge of Trench C the piled foundations for the bridge required the monitoring of a further 17 trenches measuring approximately 10m by 10m. At the western end of Trench C, adjacent to the river bank an area measuring approximately 50m east to west and 25m north to south was also stripped for the setting down of materials for bridge construction. The impact of dumper truck rutting resulted in the southern haul road area being machine excavated deeper than both the piling mat and setting down areas. The archaeology revealed towards the western end of the trench was concentrated in this deeper haul road strip.
- 4.4.2 All archaeological features at the eastern end of the trench were cut through either sandy clay gravel natural (149) or sandy silt brickearth (148). Towards the western end of the trench silty yellow brown silty clay alluvium (147) sealed gravel (149). Machine excavation at the western end of the trench, and in the majority of piling mat bays did not penetrate alluvium (147) therefore no archaeology was revealed.
- 4.4.3 Towards the eastern end of the trench was shallow ditch **112** that was 4m long, 1.2m wide and 0.08m deep. This irregular feature contained a single dark grey brown sandy clay silt fill (113) from which two sherds 12th to 14th century pottery and a single fragment of Early Post Medieval ceramic roof tile were recovered (see Appendix A). At the eastern side of ditch 112 a shallow projection indicated a potential east west linear feature. However this was so shallow that interpretation was difficult.
- 4.4.4 A heavily truncated posthole **114** was recorded 6m to the west of ditch **112** measuring 0.65m long, 0.4m wide and 0.05m deep. The sandy clay silt fill (115) yielded two sherds of 12th to 14th century pottery and three sherds of 17th to 18th pottery and two pieces of residual Neolithic flint (see Appendix A). As with ditch **112**, the heavy truncation of posthole **112** made any detailed interpretation of the feature difficult.
- 4.4.5 Ditch **116** lay 48m to the west of posthole **114** running north east south west with a stepped south eastern edge cutting brick earth natural (148) (Fig 6). This ditch measured 0.6m wide and 0.25m deep and contained a single mid grey brown sandy clay silt fill (117) suggestive of gradual silting. A slight concentration of gravel on the south western side of fill (117) suggested the presence of a bank on that side of the

ditch. A single flake of worked flint was recovered from close to the surface of fill (117), although this was not closely datable (see Appendix A).

- 4.4.6 Steep sided pit **121** was located 3m beyond the vehicle turning area and cut brickearth natural (148) (Fig 6). This pit measured 1.36m long, 0.7m wide and 0.26m deep and contained a dark grey brown sandy silt fill (122) from which several worked flint flakes of Neolithic date were recovered. (see Appendix A).
- 4.4.7 A concentration of similar steep sided elongated pits and a series of ditches lay 20m to the west to the west of pit **121**, prior to the alluvial deposits that sealed any potential archaeology closer to the river bank. No finds were recovered from these features yet a Prehistoric date could be inferred by proximity the similar shape, profile and fills of the features to the west.
- 4.4.8 Pit **123** was aligned north south and measured 1.36m long, 0.7m wide and 0.26m deep. The dark grey brown sandy clay fill (124) suffered truncation on the northern side by dumper rutting.
- 4.4.9 Directly to the north of pit **123** lay posthole **125** that measured 0.55m wide and 0.17m deep and contained mid grey brown sandy clay (126) (Fig 6). No other postholes were noted in the vicinity
- 4.4.10 Pit **127** ran north east to south west and measured 3m long, 0.7m wide and 0.35m deep (Fig 6). Lower fill (128) was a gravel rich light grey brown sandy silt and was sealed by mid grey brown sandy clay silt (129). Both fills of this feature were subject to substantial damage from dumper truck ruts.
- 4.4.11 Pit **130** lay 4m to the west of pit **127** and measured 2.25m long, 0.72m wide and 0.24m deep and was aligned north east to south west (Fig 6). The single fill was mid grey brown sandy clay silt (131).
- 4.4.12 Pits **140** and **142** were ephemeral and indistinct and may represent bioturbation. Pit **140** measured 1.45m long, 0.64m wide and 0.18m deep and contained diffuse silty sand fill (141). Pit **142** was 1m wide and 0.2m deep and the sand fill (142) collapsed immediately upon excavation.
- 4.4.13 Excavation conditions deteriorated towards the western limit of the archaeological features. Ditches **137** and **139** and pits **135** and **146** were difficult to see in plan and filled with water immediately upon excavation.
- 4.4.14 Ditch **137** was aligned north south and measured 1.3m wide and 0.3m deep and contained a brownish grey silty clay fill (138) suggestive of natural infilling processes.
- 4.4.15 No relationship could be ascertained between ditch **137** and large irregular pit **135** that lay directly to the north. The extent of this feature was also difficult to determine and it was hoped it would be seen in the piling area to the north. However, as the pile mat areas were not machined to the depth of the haul road this was not the case.
- 4.4.16 Ditch **139** lay 44m to the west of ditch **137** and measured 1.34m wide and 0.44m deep (Figs 6). The single bluish grey silty clay fill (144) appeared to have formed in standing water.
- 4.4.17 Directly to the west of ditch **139** was pit **145** that was the westernmost archaeological feature encountered. Pit **145** measured 1.58m wide and 0.22m deep and contained a single mid grey brown silty clay fill derived in part from topsoil erosion.
- 4.4.18 The above archaeological features were sealed by mid grey brown sandy clay silt subsoil (101). The latest feature encountered in Trench C was ditch **132** that cut subsoil

(101) and was sealed by topsoil (100). Ditch **132** ran north east south west and measured 1.7m wide and 0.66m deep and had fills (133, 134) (Fig 6) Lower fill (133) was a mid bluish grey silty clay suggestive of formation in standing water. Upper fill (134) was mid orange brown sandy clay derived in part from erosion of the surrounding sub soil.

## 4.5 Trench D

- 4.5.1 Trench D was located to the west of Trench B and the south of trench C measuring 48m east to west by 22m north to south, narrowing to the north (Figs 2 and 3).
- 4.5.2 A number of regularly spaced east west linear features were revealed forming the continuation of the furrows seen within Trench B to the east. Of these ditches **118** was 3.8m wide and 0.24m deep and contained sandy clay silt fills (119) and (120). Post medieval material was abundant in both fills of this ditch and similar material was noted in the fills of the ditches to the south.

## 4.6 Trench E

- 4.6.1 Trench E was located to the west of the River Great Ouse, on the Eaton Socon side and ran from east to west for 280m from the bank of the river to an extant north south footpath/cycleway. (Figs 2 and 5) Between this footpath and Shakespeare Road to the west a small trench was opened. No archaeology was present and only brick rubble likely to be associated with the construction of houses to the north was revealed. In contrast to the level floodplain on the eastern riverside, the topography of Trench E was markedly different with the land falling away steeply towards the river.
- 4.6.2 Towards the eastern end of the trench, before the drop in level a series of inter cutting pits with amorphous edges were revealed. The fills of these features were present across large areas of the trench, with edges indicated by spits of the natural sandy gravel (302). The true dimensions of these features were impossible to ascertain due to inter cutting therefore the dimensions described below are those of the slots excavated.
- 4.6.3 The earliest of these amorphous features was pit **319** was located 2m from the eastern end of the trench measuring 1.85 wide (as seen), and 0.65m deep (Fig 7). This pit contained mid grey brown sandy clay silt backfill (320) from which a single sherd of 9th to 11th century St Neots ware and two sherds of 12th to 14th were recovered. A single fragment of medieval ceramic roof tile and a residual Neolithic flint flake was also recovered (See Appendix A).
- 4.6.4 Located 8m to the east of pit **319** was pit **321** that measured 1m wide (as seen) and 1.55m deep (Fig 7). This pit contained mid grey brown sandy clay silt backfill (322) from which no dating material was recovered. A further 8m to the west was vertically sided pit **323** that measured 0.9m wide and 0.6m deep (Fig 7). The single undated backfill (324) was very similar in character to the fills of other pits in the vicinity. A cattle metacarpal was recovered from this fill indicates the disposal of domestic waste in the backfilling process (see Appendix A).
- 4.6.5 Located 20m to the west of pit **319** was irregular sided feature **316** that measured 3.2m long, 1m wide and 0.3m deep (Fig 47). Lower mid grey brown sandy clay silt fill (317) contained adult cattle rib, indicative of waste disposal (see Appendix A). Upper light brown silty sand fill (318) derived from the collapse of the unstable western edge.
- 4.6.6 Located towards the western end of the trench a number of undulations in the ground level were noticed prior to opening of Trench E. Most notable was an apparent

upstanding linear earthwork running north south 62m from the western end of the trench.

- 4.6.7 The earliest deposit associated with this bank was mid yellow brown sandy clay and gravel mixed (313) (Fig 7). This layer extended across the trench and was 4.2m wide. Through observations in truncating features to the east and west the depth of the bank deposit was noted as 0.48m, resting directly over the natural gravel (302). Machine excavation truncated the layer to a depth of 0.3m (Fig 7).
- 4.6.8 Truncating deposit (313) to the west was north south aligned ditch **325** that measured 2m wide and 0.75m deep (Fig 7). This ditch contained mid grey brown sandy silt fill (326) that contained no dating material.
- 4.6.9 Sealing both bank deposit (313) and fill (326) of ditch **325** was mid grey brown sandy clay deposit (303), a possible remnant subsoil, or a buried topsoil associated with the stabilisation of the bank after flanking ditch **325** filled (Fig 7). 2 sherds of 12th to 14th century pottery were recovered from this layer possibly indicating a post mid 14th century date for the underlying bank deposit (see Appendix A).
- 4.6.10 Both deposits (313) and (303) were truncated to the east by pit **314** that measured 1.46m wide by 0.3m deep (Fig 7). This pit contained mid grey brown sandy clay silt 315 and appeared similar in character to the inter cutting pits noted further to the east.
- 4.6.11 Located 17m to the west of ditch **325** was north south aligned ditch **330**. An area of grey brown soil between the features may represent a series of intercutting linear features or possibly the continuation of soil layer (303). Ditch **330** measured 1.8m wide (as seen) and 0.6m deep and contained homogeneous mid grey brown sandy clay silt fill (331). A single sherd of pottery was recovered from near the top of this deposit yet this was not closely datable.
- 4.6.12 To the west ditches **325** and **330** was another probable bank deposit (312) with a similar yellow brown clay gravel mix to bank (313). Layer (312) measured 7m wide and up to 0.36m deep, lying directly below topsoil layer (300) (Fig 7). Truncating layer (312) directly to the east and west was ditch **327** that measured 1.6m wide and 0.6m deep with a diffuse eastern edge sandy clay silt fill (328).
- 4.6.13 To the west of bank (312), close to the end of the trench were large irregular pits **304** and **306** (Fig 7) that contained very similar dark grey clay silt backfills (305) and (306). These pits were sealed by a substantial soil layer (311) present for 31m from the western end of the trench. The boundary between the base of this soil and the fills of pits **304**, **306** was diffuse and it is possible that both pits form the base of a large cut feature that soil (311) fills.
- 4.6.14 Ditch **308** formed the eastern boundary of soil (311) and the western limit of bank (312) as it cut both features. This ditch was 2.55m wide and 0.4m deep and filled by dark grey brown sandy clay silt (309) and pale grey brown sandy clay silt (310) (Fig 7). Due to the increase of machine excavation depth towards the western end of the trench, this feature was only recorded in section. No finds were recovered from the fills of this feature.
- 4.6.15 The latest features revealed within Trench E were located towards the eastern end of the trench, where the land sloped towards the river. Large irregular post medieval truncations containing brick, peg tile and modern pottery were present to the end of the trench and not recorded. Where machine excavation impacted below the level of these truncations, no earlier archaeological features were revealed.

- 4.6.16 No subsoil was present in Trench E with archaeology sealed directly by dark grey sandy clay silt topsoil (300). A area of gravel (329) laying directly below topsoil over fill (331) of pit **330** is likely to be a previous road or track that ran towards the cricket club to the north as described in conversations with local residents (Fig 7).

## 4.7 Trench F

- 4.7.1 Trench F was located to the north of the junction of Trenches B and C and ran for 165m from south to north, turning at the northern end to the west to meet an existing tarmac footpath (Figs 2 and 3).
- 4.7.2 The earliest feature encountered in Trench F was pit **152** that was located 83m from the southern end of the trench and measured 0.7m wide and 0.4m deep (Fig 8). Pit **152** contained mid grey brown silty sand (153) that was sealed by dark grey brown charcoal rich sandy clay silt (154). Deposit (154) contained 21 sherds of moderately abraded grog tempered prehistoric pottery (Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age).
- 4.7.3 Both deposits (153) and (154) were subject to disturbance by animal burrowing that truncated the western edge of the feature.
- 4.7.4 To the west of pit **152**, up against the eastern baulk was pit **158** that measured 0.85m wide and 0.27m deep (Fig 8). This pit contained dark grey brown sandy silt (159) from which no finds were recovered.
- 4.7.5 Truncating fill (159) of pit **158** was ditch **155** that ran north south, up against and running beyond the eastern edge of the trench (Fig 8). Ditch **155** emerged from the eastern edge of the trench 61m from the southern end and ran for 15m before running below topsoil (101). This ditch was 1.13m wide and 0.56m deep and contained mid grey brown sandy clay (156) from which modern brick fragments were recovered. Overlying deposit (156) was mid grey brown sandy silt (157) that contained 19th century pottery and clay pipe fragments. These were not retained.

## 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

### 5.1 Trench A

- 5.1.1 No archaeological deposits were revealed in the monitoring of Trench A due to the presence of a modern crushed brick road directly below the topsoil. Where machine excavation was deeper than this road, although the natural gravel was occasional exposed,

### 5.2 Trench B and D

- 5.2.1 Few archaeological features were revealed in Trench B despite natural gravel being encountered throughout and the proximity to known archaeological activity. Posthole **150** and pit **102** were the only features at the southern end of the trench and were both undated. Posthole 150 was isolated with no other similar features in the vicinity. Pit **102** was difficult to interpret as it lay directly up against the northern limit of excavation, possibly being part of a more extensive feature. The east west aligned ditches encountered towards the northern end of the trench were shallow and irregular and the fills similar to the subsoil. This combined with regular spacing between features suggests they form the furrows of a ridge and furrow field system Pottery recovered from fills (105) and (111) of ditches **104** and **110** indicate a probable post-medieval date for this field system, although the presence of earlier medieval pottery might

suggest that these fields may have been long lived. The extension of this system was seen in Trench D to the west with a number shallow discontinuous ditches running on the same alignment. Of these only **118** was excavated, forming the continuation of furrow **110** in Trench C to the east. No other archaeological features were encountered in Trench D

### 5.3 Trench C

5.3.1 The archaeological features encountered at the eastern end of Trench C were shallow and diffuse, possibly the remnants of the overlying subsoil. Ditch **112** was very difficult to trace in plan and in profile was similar to the post medieval features encountered to the east. Pottery of 12th to 14th century date was recovered from fill (113), yet this may have derived from ploughed out features in the vicinity. Posthole **114** was similarly shallow and truncated possibly indicating a subsoil remnant. A mixture of Bronze Age flint and 16th to 18th century pottery was recovered from fill (115) of this feature indicating a likely modern date. A single flake of residual Neolithic flint was also recovered from this fill.

5.3.2 Dating evidence for the pits and ditches located towards the western end of Trench C was restricted to the **Neolithic** flint recovered from fill (122) of pit **121**. Whether this flint provides a secure date for this feature is uncertain as Neolithic flint was noted as residual material later features such as posthole **114** to the east and quarry pit **319** to the west (see below). Due to the similar size, shape and profile of a number of the features to the west of pit **121**, a tentative Prehistoric date could be ascribed to the archaeological activity in this area. If this were the case, pits such as **123**, **127** and **130** and post hole **125** may indicate significant prehistoric activity, adding to the known prehistoric landscape revealed to the west and extending this landscape to the east, closer to the river Great Ouse. The exact nature of this activity is difficult to establish due to the paucity of material recovered from the fills of the features and the uncertainty surrounding the origin of the material recovered. Ditch **132**, although undated was cut from below the topsoil indicating a date later than the pits east. Ditches **132** and **139** were sealed by subsoil (101) suggesting an earlier and possibly contemporary date to the pits. Ditch **137** possibly formed a limit to activity associated with the pits, as only pit **145** is located further west than this ditch. How far archaeological activity is present beyond ditch **139** could not be ascertained due to the increase in depth of alluvium (147) that sealed potential earlier features.

### 5.4 Trench E

5.4.1 As stated above, no significant archaeological features were present at the eastern end of Trench E, due to a number of large post medieval or modern features. It is likely these features represent quarry pits for the extraction of sandy gravel (302). Earlier quarrying activity was apparent further to the west, where pits such as **323**, **321** and **316**, formed a series of largely irregular inter cutting features. The earliest of these, pit **320** contained earlier medieval pottery. However, post-medieval peg tile was noted in the tops of several of the pits suggesting multi period quarrying activity.

5.4.2 To the west of this sequence of quarry pits, the earthworks represented by bank deposits (312) and (313) may indicate activity associated with the 12th century castle to the south. Pottery dated 14th to 16th century was recovered from deposit (303) that sealed bank (313), and this bank was clearly visible running north south prior to the excavation of Trench E. This bank became difficult to trace towards the southern edge of the field in which Trench E lay, yet following the line of the feature it is possibly it

meets with the north west corner of the extant earthwork remains of the castle outer defences. Ditches **308**, **325**, **327** and **330** are likely to be associated with this medieval activity although pottery from ditch **330** was not closely datable. Ditch **325** flanked the western side of bank (313) and was possibly contemporary with the upstanding feature. Ditch **330** was located at the eastern edge of large expanse of soil, seen as a depression between banks (312) and (313) prior to machining. This depression may have formed through use as an access or track way though such an interpretation is speculative. Bank deposit (313) was flanked to the east and west by ditches **327** and **308**. Ditch **308** truncated substantial soil deposit (311) that continued to the western end of the trench. As mentioned above, soil (311) was very dark and organic in appearance suggesting it may have filled a large cut feature of which pits **304** and **306** formed the base. Alternatively, this soil may have accumulated over bank (312) over time if this bank formed a western limit to medieval occupation in this area. The apparent organic content may have derived from dumping of material beyond this limit.

- 5.4.3 The discovery of medieval earthworks this close to the castle has significance for the other raised areas clearly visible in the vicinity of Trench E. A number of raised platforms, terraces and possible banks survive to the north and south of the trench, possibly representing building platforms and associated earthworks and not simply quarrying remains. These upstanding features may be associated with the castle and subsequently abandoned when the Hillings went out of use. However, these remains may be of greater significance if they represent a contraction of the medieval settlement of Eaton Socon now located to the south west and/or indeed are the remains of earlier medieval settlement that was abandoned as a result of the construction of the castle. Also in Cambridgeshire, the construction of the Anarchy castle at Giants Hill Rampton, resulted in the abandonment of part of the village, which survives today as a Shrunken Medieval Village whose earthworks (house platforms, hollow ways etc.) lie *beneath* the 12th century castle moat and associated earthworks.

## 5.5 Trench F

- 5.5.1 Trench F yielded the only closely dated prehistoric feature from all monitoring with pit **158** producing 21 sherds of undecorated grog tempered prehistoric pottery (Late Neolithic/early Bronze Age). This pit was in isolation as no other features of this date or earlier than post medieval were encountered nearby. As with the potentially prehistoric pits encountered in Trench C to the south west, the presence of a Late Neolithic/Bronze Age feature in Trench F extends the known prehistoric landscape on to the floodplain of the River Great Ouse and is suggestive of more widespread late Neolithic or Bronze Age activity in the vicinity.
- 5.5.2 Pit **158**, was likely to be associated with overlying post medieval ditch **155** potentially acting as a soak away. As ditch **155** lay directly to the west of the present field boundary now represented as a fence line, it can be assumed that the ditch is an earlier incarnation of this boundary. Towards the northern end of the trench the machine excavation did not penetrate below the level of topsoil (101), and therefore no archaeological features were encountered.



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## 6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 6.1.1 The author would like to thank Cambridgeshire County Council (Alistair Frost) who commissioned and funded the archaeological work and Matthew Lees who assisted in the monitoring. The project was managed by Stephen Macaulay.
- 6.1.2 The report on the archaeological works was written by Nick Pankhurst, who visited the site and monitored the watching brief.

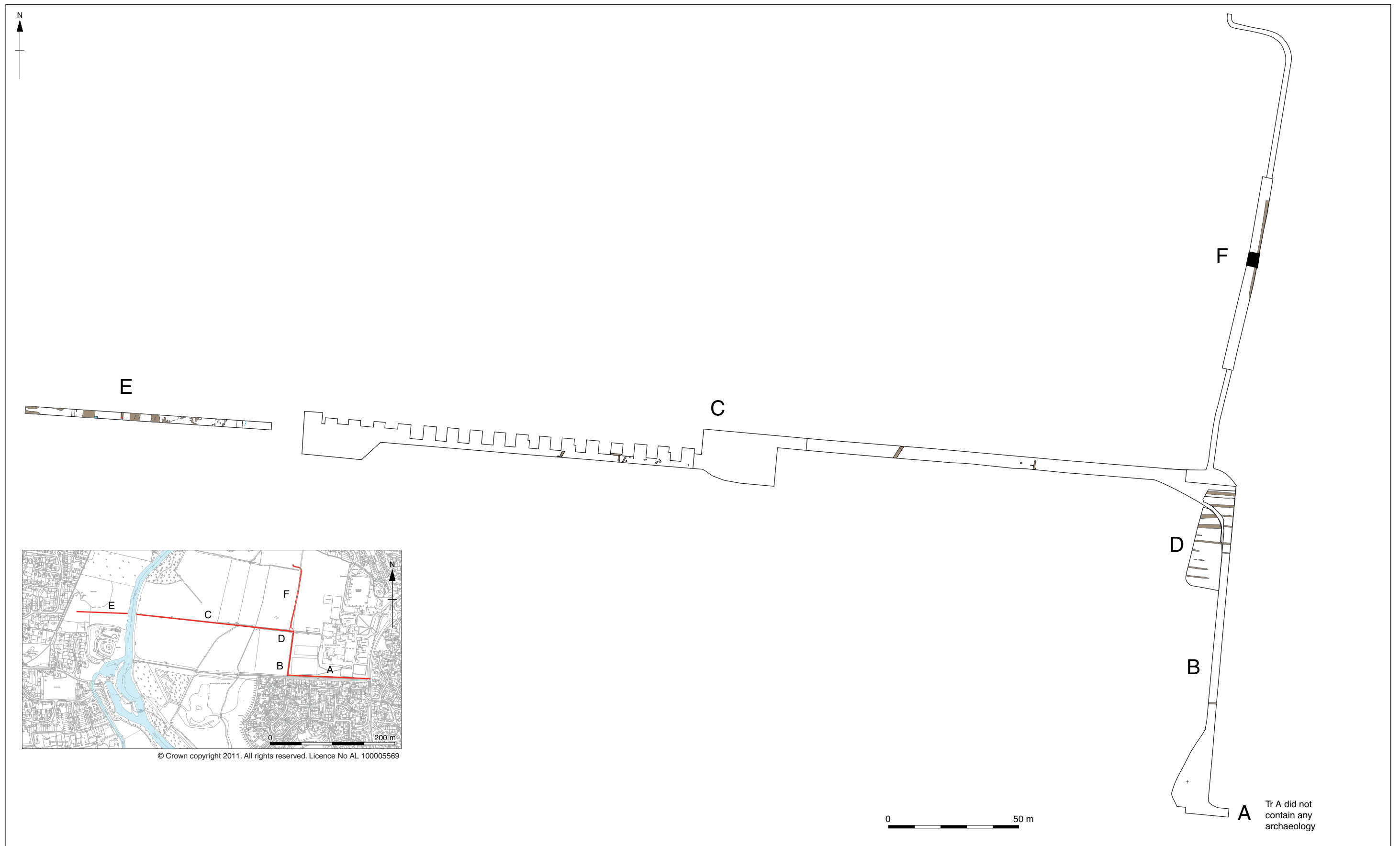


Figure 2: Plan of trenches. Scale 1:1388 (1:1250 reduced by 90%)

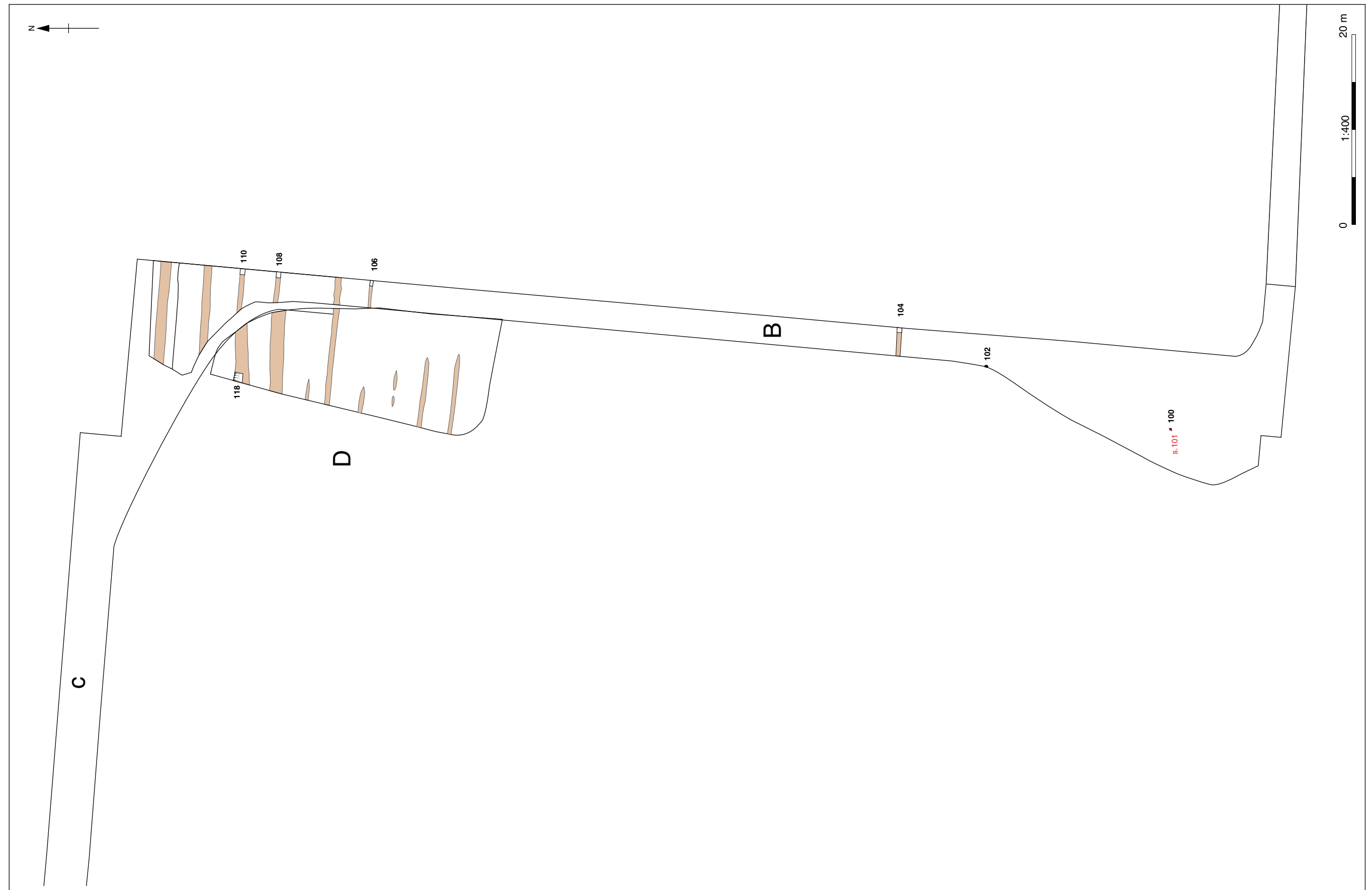


Figure 3: Plan of Trench B and D, Scale 1:400

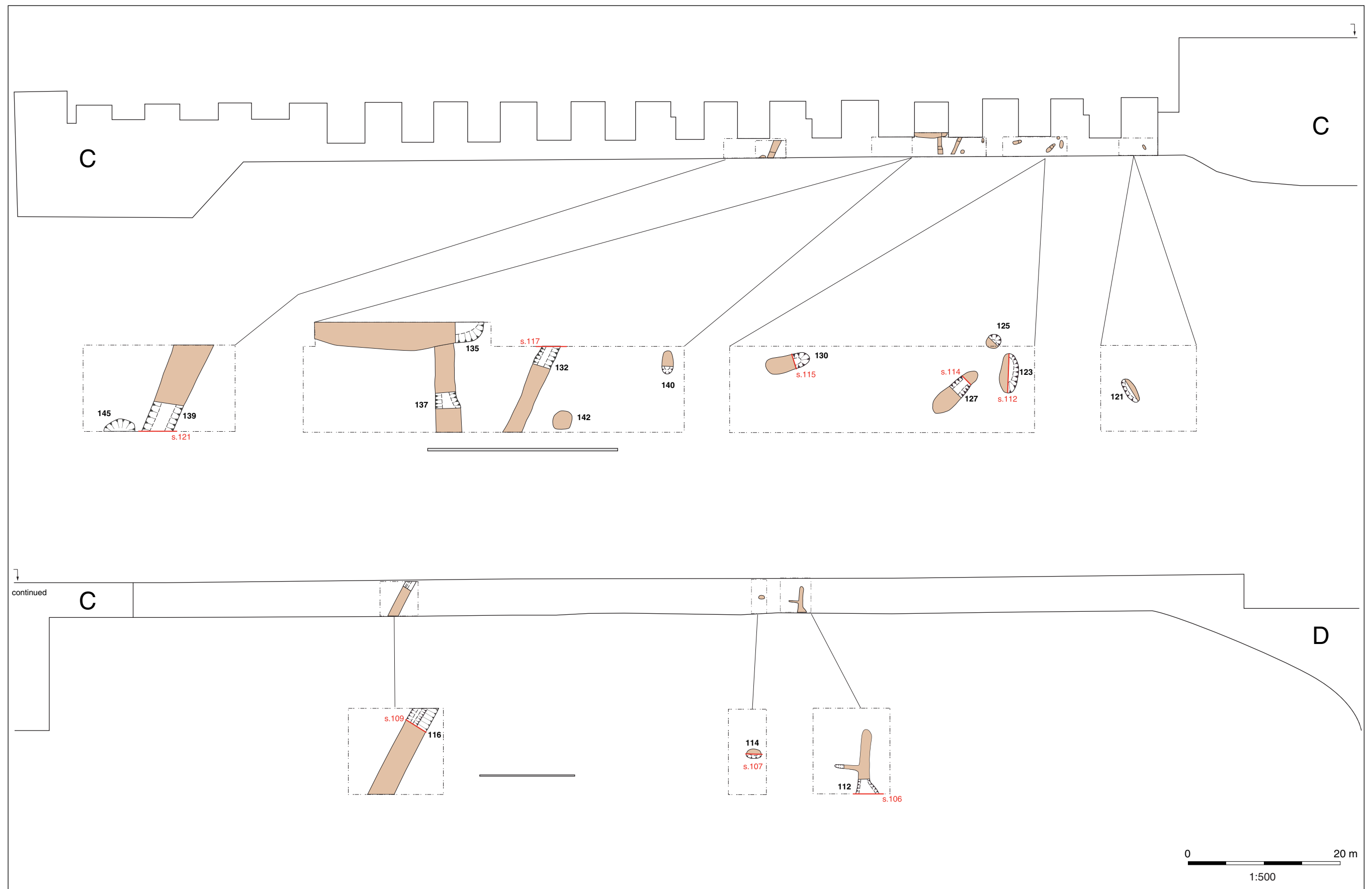


Figure 4: Plan of Trench C

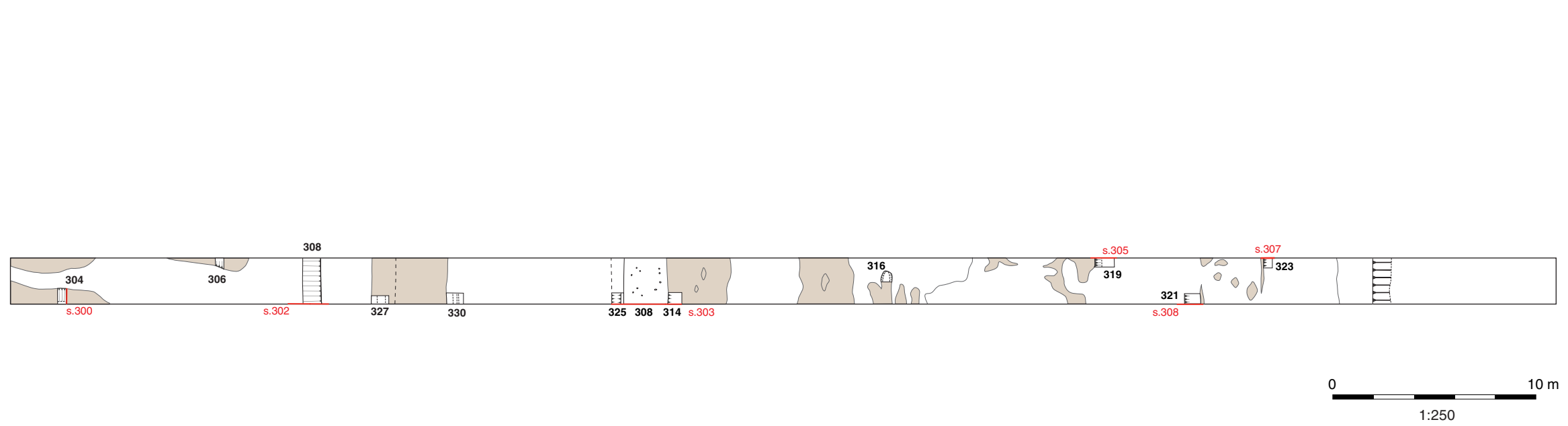


Figure 5: Plan of Trench E

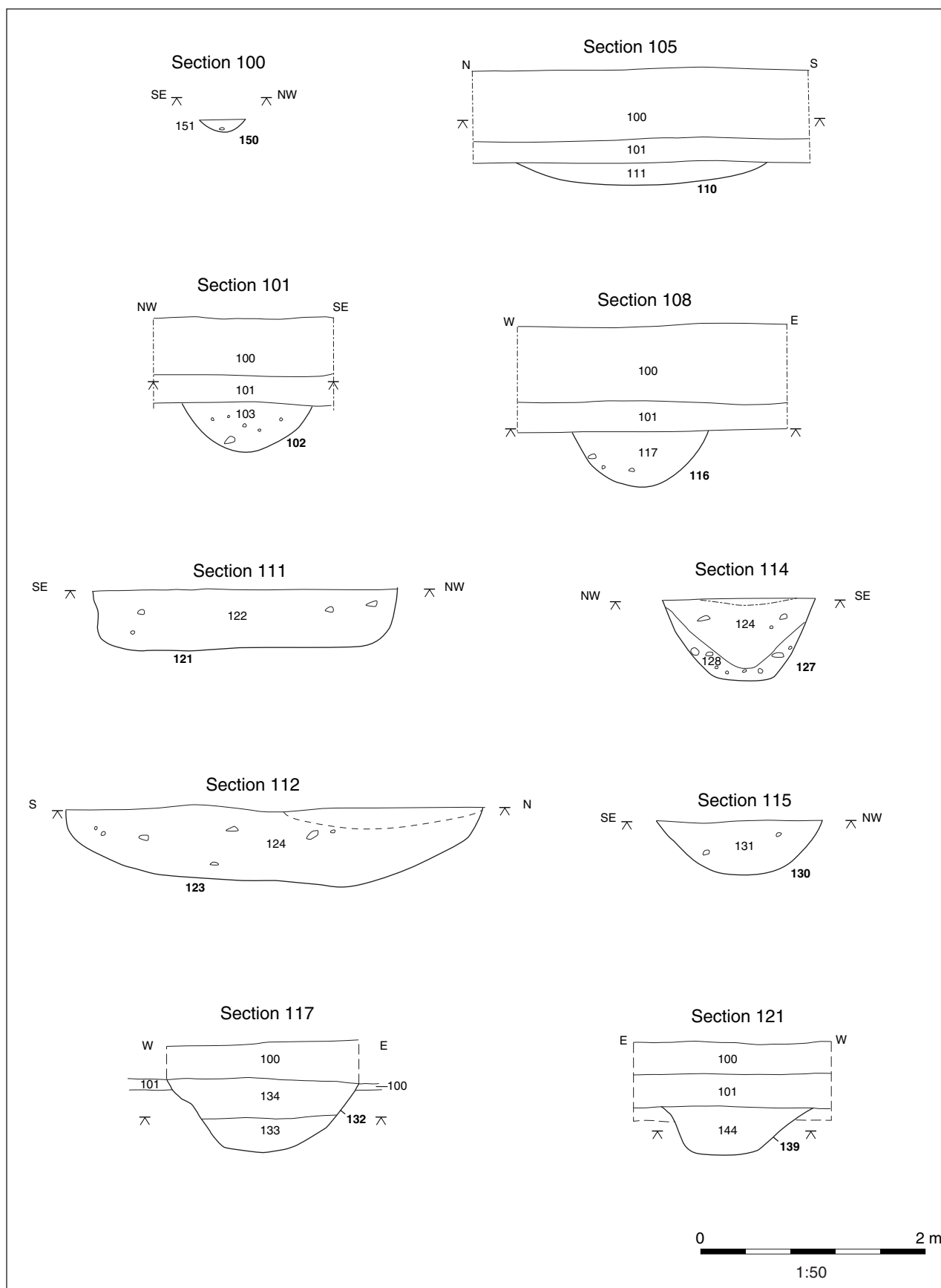


Figure 6: Trench C sections, Scale 1:50

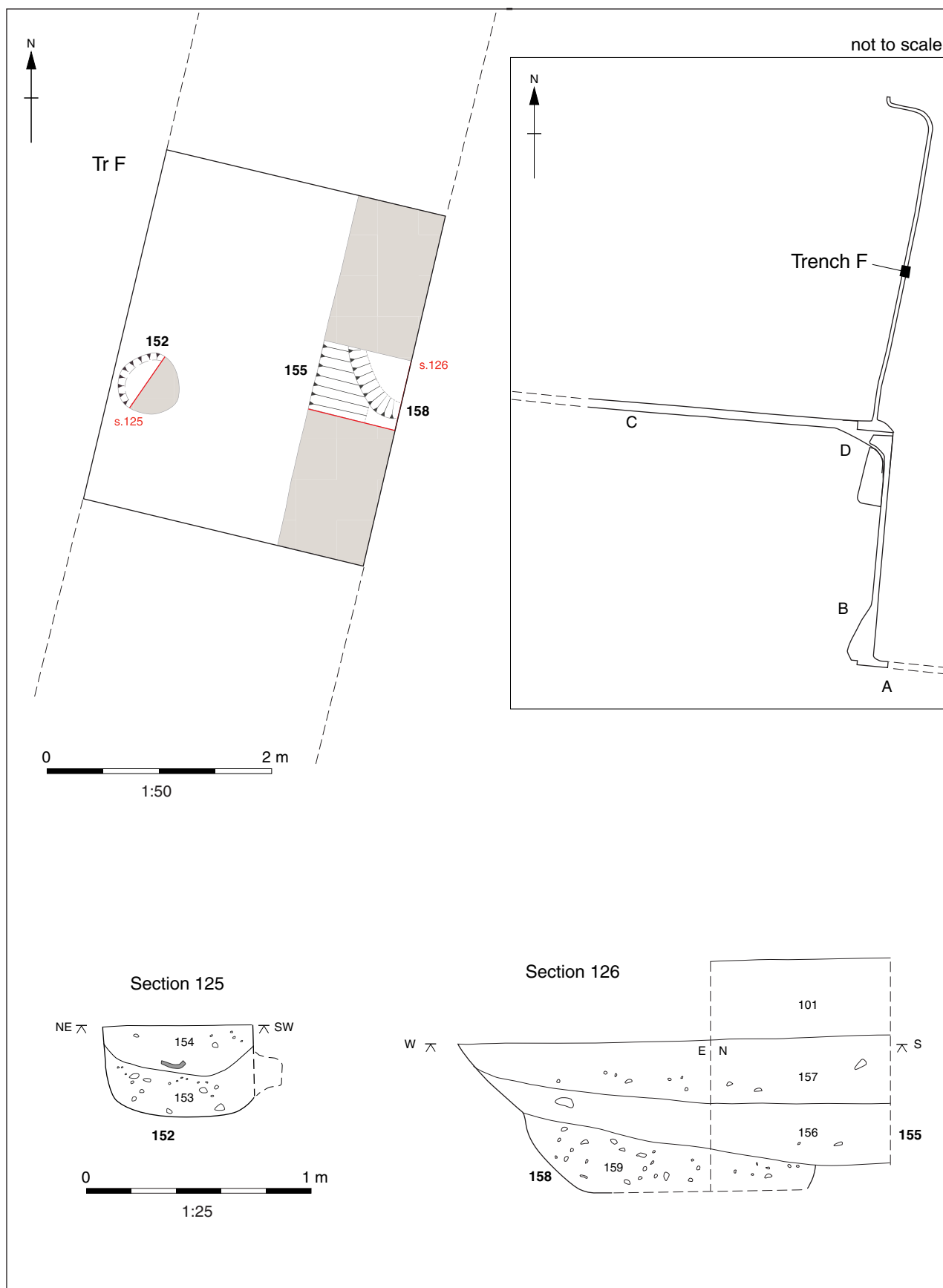


Figure 8: Trench F plan and associated sections. Scale 1:50 and 1:25.

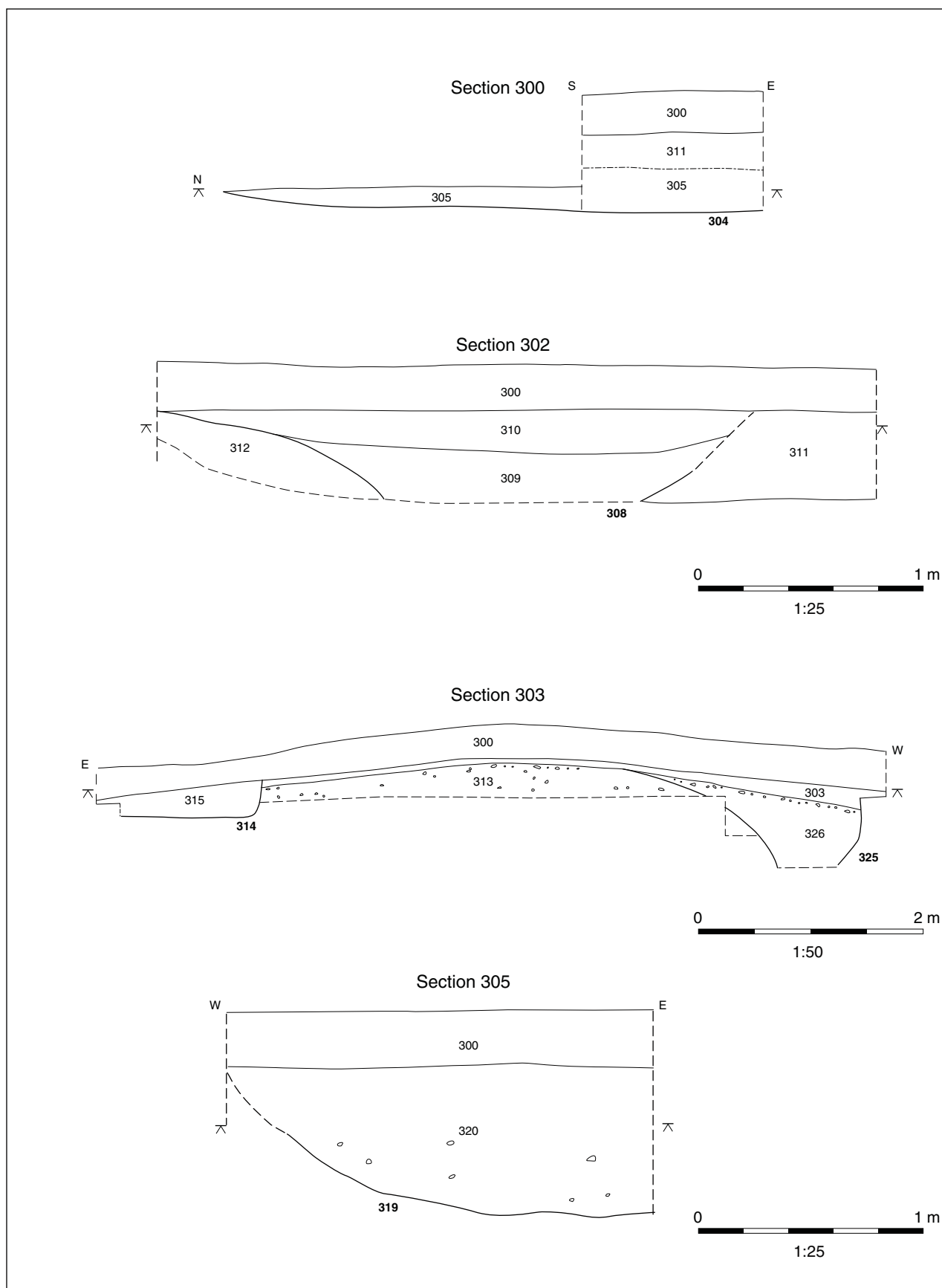


Figure 7: Trench E Sections, Scale 1:25 and 1:50



## APPENDIX A. FINDS REPORTS

### A.1 Flint

*By Richard Mortimer*

#### **Introduction**

- A.1.1 The watching brief produced a small assemblage of 7 pieces of worked flint from 4 features. All of the flint encountered derived from river pebbles.

#### *Assemblage*

- A.1.2 Context (115) from ditch **114** produced one flake and one chunk. The flake was likely to be Neolithic in date. The chunk was not datable
- A.1.3 Context (117) from posthole **116** produced 1 small chunk of undiagnostic flint that was not datable
- A.1.4 Context (122) from pit **121** contained a single core flake, and 2 flakes all of Neolithic date.
- A.1.5 Context (320) from quarry pit 319 produced one snapped retouched Neolithic blade.

### A.2 Pottery

*By Carole Fletcher*

#### **Introduction**

- A.2.1 The trenches produced a small pottery assemblage of 11 sherds, weighing 0.107kg, from six contexts. The condition of the overall assemblage is moderately abraded and the average sherd weight from individual contexts is approximately 13g.
- A.2.2 Ceramic fabric abbreviations used in the text are:

LMSW	Late Medieval Sandy Ware
NEOT	St Neots Type Ware
PMR	Post Medieval Red Ware
RSW	Reduced Sandy Ware
SW	Sandy Ware
SHW	Shelly Ware
GTW	Grog Tempered Ware

#### **Methodology**

- A.2.3 The Medieval Pottery Research Group (MPRG) documents *A guide to the classification of medieval ceramic forms* (MPRG, 1998) and *Minimum Standards for the Processing, Recording, Analysis and Publication of Post-Roman Ceramics* (MPRG, 2001) act as a standard.
- A.2.4 Dating was carried out using OA East's in-house system based on that previously used at the Museum of London. Fabric classification has been carried out for all previously described medieval and post-medieval types. All sherds have been counted, classified

and weighed. All the pottery has been recorded and dated on a context-by-context basis.

- A.2.5 The pottery and archive are curated by Oxford Archaeology East until formal deposition.

### **Assemblage**

- A.2.6 Two sherds of SW were recovered from the furrow **104** and a single sherd from a PMR bowl was recovered from furrow **110**. The section through ditch **112** produced two abraded leached sherds from a SHW jar of mid 12th-mid 14th century date.
- A.2.7 Post hole **114** produced three sherds, an abraded SHW rim sherd and a small abraded SW sherd. The final sherd is a complete profile of a small bowl that has lost its surface which may have been a black glaze or slip and has tentatively been dated to the 16th-18th century.
- A.2.8 Context 303 produced three sherds from a flat based late medieval vessel suggesting a post mid 14th century date for the bank. The quarry pit **319** produced a single abraded medieval RSW sherd and a rim sherd from a small pre-conquest NEOT jar.
- A.2.9 Ditch 330 produced only a single abraded sherd of coarse SW which is not closely datable.
- A.2.10 Pit **152** produced 21 sherds of GTW from the same vessel.

### **Statement of Research Potential and Further Work**

- A.2.11 An assemblage of this size provides only basic dating information for a site. The prehistoric pottery was well stratified and indicates a reasonably reliable date for the pit from which it was recovered. It is a firm indicator of prehistoric activity in the vicinity. The NEOT rim sherd is only moderately abraded and although recovered from a quarry pit indicates Late Saxon activity in the vicinity of the site. The medieval material has been disturbed by later activity, probably in the post-medieval period and none of the pottery is likely to be located in its place of primary deposition, unless further excavation takes place no further work is required on this assemblage.

<b>Context</b>	<b>Fabric</b>	<b>Basic Form</b>	<b>Sherd Count</b>	<b>Weight (kg)</b>	<b>Pottery Date Range</b>	<b>Context Date Range</b>
<b>105</b>	SW		2	0.002	Mid 14th-mid 16th century	Mid 12th-mid 14th century
<b>111</b>	PMR	Bowl	1	0.034	16th-18th century	16th-18th century
<b>113</b>	SHW	Jar	2	0.009	Mid 12th-mid 14th century	Mid 12th-mid 14th century
<b>115</b>	SW		1	0.002	Mid 12th-mid 14th century	17th-18th century
	SHW		1	0.002	Mid 12th-mid 14th century	
	UNK	Bowl	1	0.015	17th-18th century	
<b>303</b>	LMSW		3	0.020	Mid 14th-mid 16th century	Mid 14th-mid 16th century
<b>320</b>	NEOT	Jar	1	0.018	Mid 9th-mid 11th century	Mid 12th-mid 14th century
	RSW		1	0.003	Mid 12th-mid 14th century	
<b>331</b>	SW		1	0.003		Not closely datable
<b>154</b>	GTW		21	0.035	Late Neo/EBA	

Table 1: Pottery dating

### A.3 Ceramic Building Material

*By Carole Fletcher*

#### **Assemblage**

- A.3.1 A small assemblage of four fragments of ceramic building material (CBM), weighing 0.046kg, was recovered. The condition of the overall assemblage is abraded and the average fragment weight from individual contexts is small at approximately 11g.
- A.3.2 The CBM and archive are curated by Oxford Archaeology East until formal deposition.

#### **Statement of Research Potential and Further Work**

- A.3.3 An assemblage of this size provides only basic dating information for a site. No further work is required on this assemblage.

<b>Context</b>	<b>Form</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Weight (kg)</b>	<b>Fabric</b>	<b>Range</b>
<b>113</b>	Roof Tile	1	0.014	Hard fired smooth cream-yellow fabric numerous irregular voids.	
	Roof Tile	1	0.001	Dull pink fabric with cream-yellow surfaces.	
	Roof Tile	1	0.009	Hard fired smooth dull orange fabric numerous small voids similar to Bourne D pottery fabric.	Early Post-medieval
<b>320</b>	Roof Tile	1	0.022	Hard fired sandy dull orange surfaces and margins with mid grey core.	Medieval

Table 1: Ceramic building material

### A.4 Faunal Remains

*By Chris Faine*

#### **Assemblage**

- A.4.1 Eleven fragments of animal bone were recovered with 3 identifiable to species (27% of the sample). Context **303** contained a butchered pig tibia, with a cattle rib fragment and metacarpal being recovered from contexts **317** and **324** respectively. All fragments were from adult animals.

#### **Further Work**

- A.4.2 No further work is required on this assemblage.

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## APPENDIX B OASIS REPORT FORM

### Project Details

OASIS Number	oxfordar3-103160		
Project Name	Saint Neots Footpath and foot and Cycle Bridge		
Project Dates (fieldwork) Start	17-01-2011	Finish	05-05-2011
Previous Work (by OA East)	Yes	Future Work	No

### Project Reference Codes

Site Code	STNFOC10	Planning App. No.	N/A
HER No.	ECB 3468	Related HER/OASIS No.	

### Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt	Planning condition
--------	--------------------

### Please select all techniques used:

<input type="checkbox"/> Field Observation (periodic visits)	<input type="checkbox"/> Part Excavation	<input type="checkbox"/> Salvage Record
<input type="checkbox"/> Full Excavation (100%)	<input type="checkbox"/> Part Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Systematic Field Walking
<input type="checkbox"/> Full Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Recorded Observation	<input type="checkbox"/> Systematic Metal Detector Survey
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<input type="checkbox"/> Open-Area Excavation	<input type="checkbox"/> Salvage Excavation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Watching Brief

### Monument Types/Significant Finds & Their Periods

List feature types using the [NMR Monument Type Thesaurus](#) and significant finds using the [MDA Object type Thesaurus](#) together with their respective periods. If no features/finds were found, please state "none".

Monument	Period	Object	Period
Pit	Bronze Age -2.5k to -700		Select period...
Bank	Medieval 1066 to 1540		Select period...
Ditch	Medieval 1066 to 1540		Select period...

### Project Location

County	Cambridgeshire	Site Address (including postcode if possible)
District	St Neots	St Neots, Cambridgeshire PE19
Parish	Eynesbury	
HER		
Study Area	8000sq m	National Grid Reference TL 176 592

## Project Originators

Organisation	OA EAST
Project Brief Originator	Stephen Macaulay
Project Design Originator	Stephen Macaulay
Project Manager	Stephen Macaulay
Supervisor	Nick Pankhurst

## Project Archives

Physical Archive	Digital Archive	Paper Archive
Cambridgeshire County Store	Location ...	Oxford Archaeology East
STNFOC10	Accession ID ...	STNFOC10

## Archive Contents/Media

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