



No. 36 Fen Lane, Sawtry

Archaeological Evaluation Report

July 2017

Client: Luminus Homes Limited

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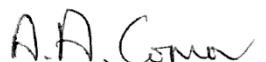


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No. 36 Fen Lane, Sawtry

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Summary

On the 14th of June 2017 Oxford Archaeology East carried out an archaeological evaluation at No. 36 Fen Lane, Sawtry, Cambridgeshire.

A single 11m-long trench was excavated on the site of a proposed new semi-detached house. The trench revealed a shallow, east-to-west aligned ditch that is undated, along with a modern rubbish pit.

Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Luminus Homes for commissioning this project. Thanks are also extended to Gemma Stewart, who monitored the work on behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council, for her advice and guidance.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by James Drummond-Murray. The fieldwork was directed by Nicholas Cox. Survey and digitising was carried out by David Brown.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Luminus Homes to undertake a trial trench evaluation in advance of a small residential development at No. 36 Fen Lane, Sawtry, Cambridgeshire (TL 1711 8352; Fig. 1).
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken as a condition of Planning Permission (planning ref. 16/01154/FUL. A brief was set by Gemma Stewart and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) was produced by OA (Wiseman and Phillips 2017) detailing the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary to discharge the planning condition. This document outlines how OA implemented the specified requirements.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The site lies to south of Fen Lane within the centre of the modern town, on the southern edge of the medieval village. The elevation is c.13m OD.
- 1.2.2 The area of proposed development consists of the garden of an existing property. Fen Lane is located to the north and Blind Lane to the east.
- 1.2.3 The geology of the area is mapped as Oxford Clay formation, no superficial deposits are recorded (British Geological Survey 2014, British Geological Survey online map viewer: <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html>, accessed 15/06/17).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background of the site is based on that included in the WSI, which is drawn from data supplied by the Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Record (CHER; nearby records shown on Fig. 1).

Prehistoric

- 1.3.2 Approximately 600m south-east of the site an excavation at Black Horse Farm revealed remains of a well preserved Early – Middle Iron Age settlement dating between the 5th and 2nd centuries BC (MCB 16484, ECB 2785). The remains included at least two roundhouses (one of which was surrounded by a substantial ditched enclosure), pit ovens, and an infant burial.
- 1.3.3 Roughly 600m to the west of the site, sparse Iron Age remains have been found at Gidding Road (MCB 18238, ECB 3476), comprising a Late Iron Age ditch and a pit.
- 1.3.4 On the western side of Tort Hill, a kilometre to the north, open area excavation revealed Late Iron Age round houses, an Iron Age timber framed building and enclosures (CHER 11666).

Roman

- 1.3.5 Evidence for Roman settlement has been found 650m north of the site (CHER 01329b, d; not illustrated), both to the east and west of the Old North Road, the A1 (M), which follows the course of Roman Ermine Street. Roman ditches were found adjacent to St Andrew's graveyard to the north (HER 15824) and Roman remains were also found on Gidding Road to the south-west (MCB 18238, ECB 3476). Further Roman settlement evidence was found during excavations on both the eastern (HER 11665) and western side (HER 11666) of Tort Hill, a kilometre to the north.

Saxon and Medieval

- 1.3.6 The development area is located south of the medieval village. It lies 400m south of the medieval parish church of All Saints (DCB2501 – completely rebuilt in 1880, but incorporating substantial older material) and 600m south-west of the site of the medieval parish Church of St Andrew (demolished 1879) located on the east side of the Old North Road. The development area lies to the south of Sawtry moat and shrunken medieval village, statutorily protected earthwork remains (National Heritage List England ref 1006817), which include earthworks of house platforms, banks and ridge and furrow. Further medieval remains and moated sites are known in the vicinity (HER 01311, 01329a). The Manor Farm (CHER 01338a) immediately north of the scheduled area dates from 1540.
- 1.3.7 Most excavated finds of medieval pottery around Sawtry have come from an area stretching from the Chapel Lane west along Fen Lane to The Maltings and the Green (400m to the west), and north to the shrunken medieval village on Toft Hill (MCB 20104, 20167, 20169, 20171, 20173, 201740).
- 1.3.8 During the Middle Ages, water levels in the nearby Fens rose, and Ermine Street (the current A1 motorway) fell out of use from the 14th century – replaced by what is now Bullock's Way, 2.5km southwest of the village. It originally ran from Huntingdon in the south to Wansford and Stamford in the north, following a ridge of high ground.

2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The project aims and objectives were as follows:

- i. To determine or confirm the general nature of any remains present.
- ii. To determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of any remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence.
- iii. To set results in the local, regional, and national archaeological context – and, in particular, its wider cultural landscape and past environmental conditions.
- iv. To provide sufficient information to construct an archaeological mitigation strategy, dealing with preservation, the recording of archaeological deposits, working practices, timetables, and orders of cost.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 A single trench was excavated, which was designed to measure 12m long x 1.6m wide, providing a 5.75% sample of the area to be disturbed by construction. Due to limited space, the presence of an existing outbuilding and the need to maintain access, the length of the trench was reduced slightly to 11m.

2.2.2 Service plans were checked before work commenced on site. Before trenching, the footprint of the trench was scanned by a qualified and experienced operator using a CAT and Genny with a valid calibration certificate.

2.2.3 Bucket samples of 90 litres of excavated soil were taken from the ends of the trench, in order to characterise artefactual remains in the topsoil and other soil horizons above the archaeological level. These were sieved on site for the purposes of finds retrieval. Only modern garden rubbish was recovered.

2.2.4 Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector.

2.2.5 All machine excavation was undertaken under the supervision of a suitably qualified and experienced archaeologist.

2.2.6 The trial trench was excavated by a mechanical excavator to the upper interface of archaeological features or deposits. A toothless ditching bucket was used to excavate the trench. Overburden was excavated in spits not greater than 0.1m thick.

2.2.7 Spoil was stored alongside trenches. Topsoil, subsoil, and archaeological deposits were kept separate during excavation, to allow for sequential backfilling of excavations.

2.2.8 All archaeological features and deposits were excavated by hand, in slots of at least 1.0m in width.

2.2.9 Site survey was carried out using a survey-grade differential GPS (Leica CS10/GS08 or Leica 1200) fitted with "Smartnet" technology with an accuracy of 5mm horizontal and 10mm vertical.

2.2.10 The site grid is accurately tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid and located on the 1:2500 or 1:1250 map of the area. Elevations are levelled to the Ordnance Datum.

2.2.11 A register has been kept of all trenches, contexts, and photographs.

-
- 2.2.12 All features, layers and deposits have been issued with unique context numbers. Each feature is individually documented on context sheets, and hand-drawn in section. Written descriptions are recorded on pro-forma sheets comprising factual data and interpretative elements.
- 2.2.13 Sections of features have been drawn at 1:20. All sections are tied in to Ordnance Datum.
- 2.2.14 All site drawings include the following information: site name, site code, scale, section number, orientation, date and the name or initials of the archaeologist who prepared the drawing.
- 2.2.15 The photographic record comprises high resolution digital photographs.
- 2.2.16 Photographs include both general trench shots and photographs of specific features. Every feature has been photographed at least once. Photographs include a scale, north arrow, site code, and feature number (where relevant), unless they are to be used in publications. The photograph register records these details, and photograph numbers are listed on corresponding context sheets.
- 2.2.17 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were encountered.
- 2.2.18 The site archive is currently held by OA East and will be deposited with the appropriate county stores in due course.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below, and include a stratigraphic description of the trench. The full details of the trench with dimensions and depths of all deposits can be found in Appendix A.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 The natural yellowish grey clay geology was overlain by a mid grey clay subsoil, which in turn was overlain by garden/topsoil.

3.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the evaluation were generally good, and the trench remained dry throughout. Archaeological features, where present, were easy to identify against the underlying natural geology.

3.3 Trench 1

3.3.1 The 11m-long trench was aligned north-east to south-west and had an average depth of 0.45m.

3.3.2 Four metres from the south-west end was a small, shallow ditch (**4**) on an east to west alignment. This varied in width between 0.5m and 0.7m and had a maximum depth of 0.17m. The ditch was filled by a dark grey clay (**5**) which contained no finds.

3.3.3 At the north-eastern end there was a rectangular pit (**6**), 0.9m wide and at least 2.5m long, cutting from just below the ground surface. This was backfilled with modern rubbish (**7**), containing plastic, concrete paving slabs and discarded batteries.

3.4 Finds summary

3.4.1 No finds earlier than those of modern date were present and these were not retained.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 4.1.1 The features were well-defined against the natural clay.
- 4.1.2 Although it was not possible to position the trench fully within the footprint of the proposed house, the presence of a recent rubbish-filled pit at the north-eastern end of the trench indicates that modern disturbance continues beyond the trench limit within this area.

4.2 Evaluation objectives and results

- 4.2.1 The evaluation has indicated that the site has low potential for the preservation of archaeological remains.
- 4.2.2 No finds were recovered from the single ditch, while the second feature contained only very modern material.

4.3 Interpretation

- 4.3.1 Ditch **4** was very shallow and varied considerably in width. It is undated and may represent a former boundary, possibly a hedge line, or garden feature.
- 4.3.2 The modern pit (**6**) seems to have been dug in order to dump a large amount of rubbish: it extended beyond the trench to the north-east and was cut from just below the topsoil.

4.4 Significance

- 4.4.1 The evaluation revealed a minimal amount of archaeology within the development area, suggesting that the site lay well beyond the edge of the medieval village and other settlement remains known to lie to the north of Fen Lane.

APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Trench contained a small ditch and a modern pit. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of clay.					Length (m)	11
					Width (m)	1.6
					Avg. depth (m)	0.45
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1	Layer	-	0.23	Topsoil	-	-
2	Layer	-	0.30	Subsoil	-	-
3	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
4	Cut	0.70	0.17	Ditch	-	-
5	Fill	-	0.17	Fill of Ditch	-	-
6	Cut	0.90	-	Modern Pit	-	Modern
7	Fill	-	-	Fill of Pit	-	Modern

APPENDIX B BIBLIOGRAPHY

Stewart, G., 2017, *Brief for Archaeological Evaluation, 36 Fen lane, Sawtry*, Cambridgeshire County Council (unpublished)

Wiseman, R. & Phillips, T., 2017, *36 Fen Lane, Sawtry, Written Scheme of Investigation*, OA East (unpublished)

APPENDIX C OASIS REPORT FORM

Project Details

OASIS Number	oxfordar3-287664		
Project Name	36 Fen lane, Sawtry		
Start of Fieldwork	14-06-2017	End of Fieldwork	14-06-2017
Previous Work	No	Future Work	No

Project Reference Codes

Site Code	SWTFEN17	Planning App. No.	16/01154/FUL
HER Number	ECB 5132	Related Numbers	

Prompt	Direction from local planning authority
Development Type	Urban Residential
Place in Planning Process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Techniques used (tick all that apply)

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography – interpretation | <input type="checkbox"/> Grab-sampling | <input type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - new | <input type="checkbox"/> Gravity-core | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sample Trenches |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Annotated Sketch | <input type="checkbox"/> Laser Scanning | <input type="checkbox"/> Survey/Recording of Fabric/Structure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Augering | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Measured Survey | <input type="checkbox"/> Targeted Trenches |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dendrochronological Survey | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Metal Detectors | <input type="checkbox"/> Test Pits |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Documentary Search | <input type="checkbox"/> Phosphate Survey | <input type="checkbox"/> Topographic Survey |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Sampling | <input type="checkbox"/> Photogrammetric Survey | <input type="checkbox"/> Vibro-core |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fieldwalking | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Photographic Survey | <input type="checkbox"/> Visual Inspection (Initial Site Visit) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Geophysical Survey | <input type="checkbox"/> Rectified Photography | |

Monument	Period	Object	Period
Ditch	Uncertain	None	Choose an item.
Pit	Modern (1901 to present)		Choose an item.
	Choose an item.		Choose an item.

Project Location

County	Cambridgeshire	Address (including Postcode) 36 Fen Lane, Sawtry, Huntingdon, PE28 5HT
District	Huntingdonshire	
Parish	Sawtry	
HER office	Cambridgeshire	
Size of Study Area	1028 sq. m	
National Grid Ref	TL 1711 8352	

Project Originators

Organisation	OA East
Project Brief Originator	Gemma Stewart
Project Design Originator	Rob Wiseman & Tom Phillips
Project Manager	James Drummond-Murray
Project Supervisor	Nicholas Cox

Project Archives

	Location	ID
Physical Archive (Finds)	N/A	N/A
Digital Archive	OA East	ECB 5132
Paper Archive	CCC Stores	ECB 5132

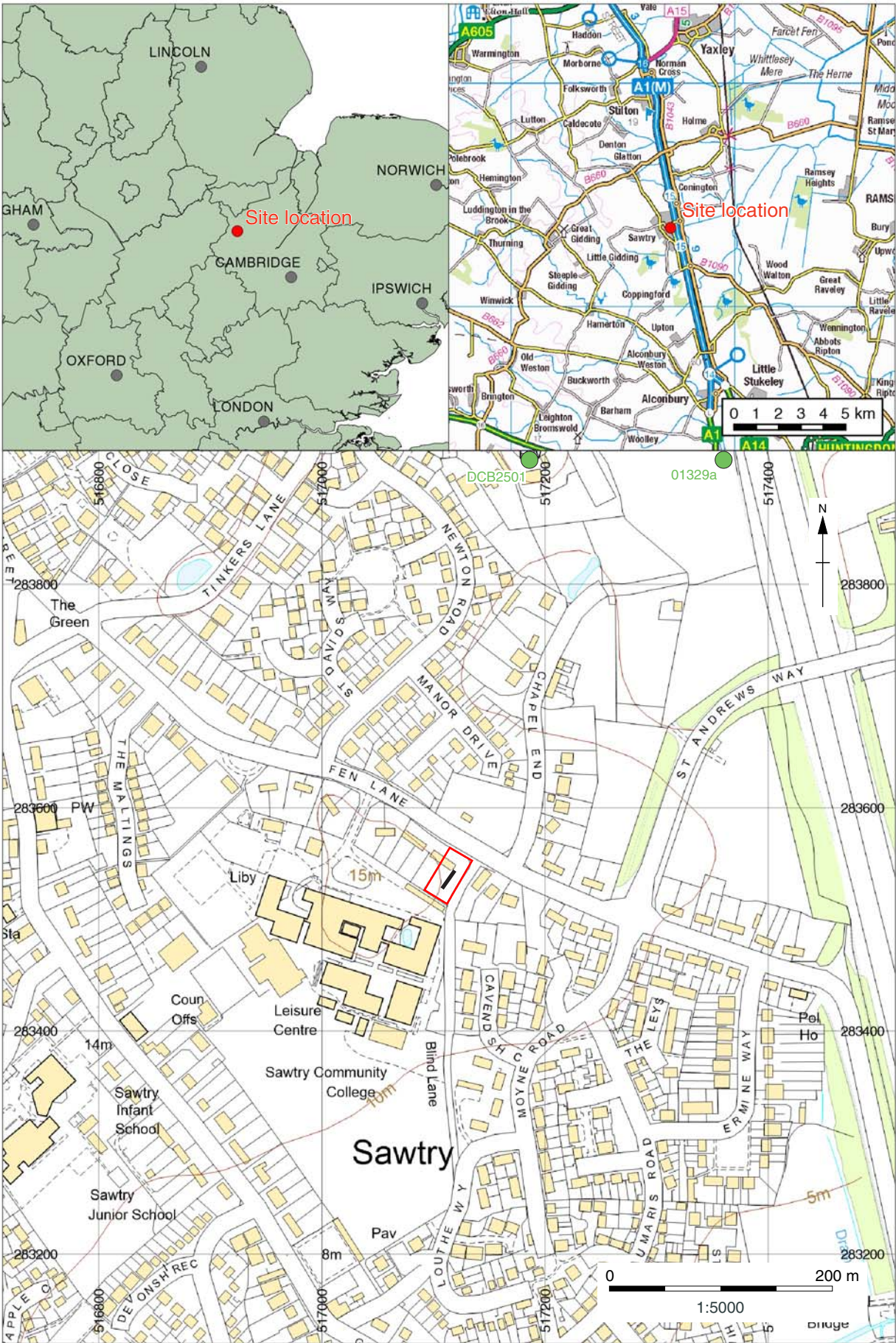
Physical Contents	Present?	Digital files associated with Finds	Paperwork associated with Finds
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Ceramics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Glass	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Remains	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leather	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Metal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stratigraphic		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Survey		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Textiles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wood	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Bone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Stone/Lithic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
None	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Digital Media

Database	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
GIS	<input type="checkbox"/>
Geophysics	<input type="checkbox"/>
Images (Digital photos)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Illustrations (Figures/Plates)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Moving Image	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spreadsheets	<input type="checkbox"/>
Survey	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Text	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Virtual Reality	<input type="checkbox"/>

Paper Media

Aerial Photos	<input type="checkbox"/>
Context Sheets	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Correspondence	<input type="checkbox"/>
Diary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drawing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manuscript	<input type="checkbox"/>
Map	<input type="checkbox"/>
Matrices	<input type="checkbox"/>
Microfiche	<input type="checkbox"/>
Miscellaneous	<input type="checkbox"/>
Research/Notes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Photos (negatives/prints/slides)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Plans	<input type="checkbox"/>
Report	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sections	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Survey	<input type="checkbox"/>



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Figure 1: Site location showing development area (red) and archaeological trench (black)

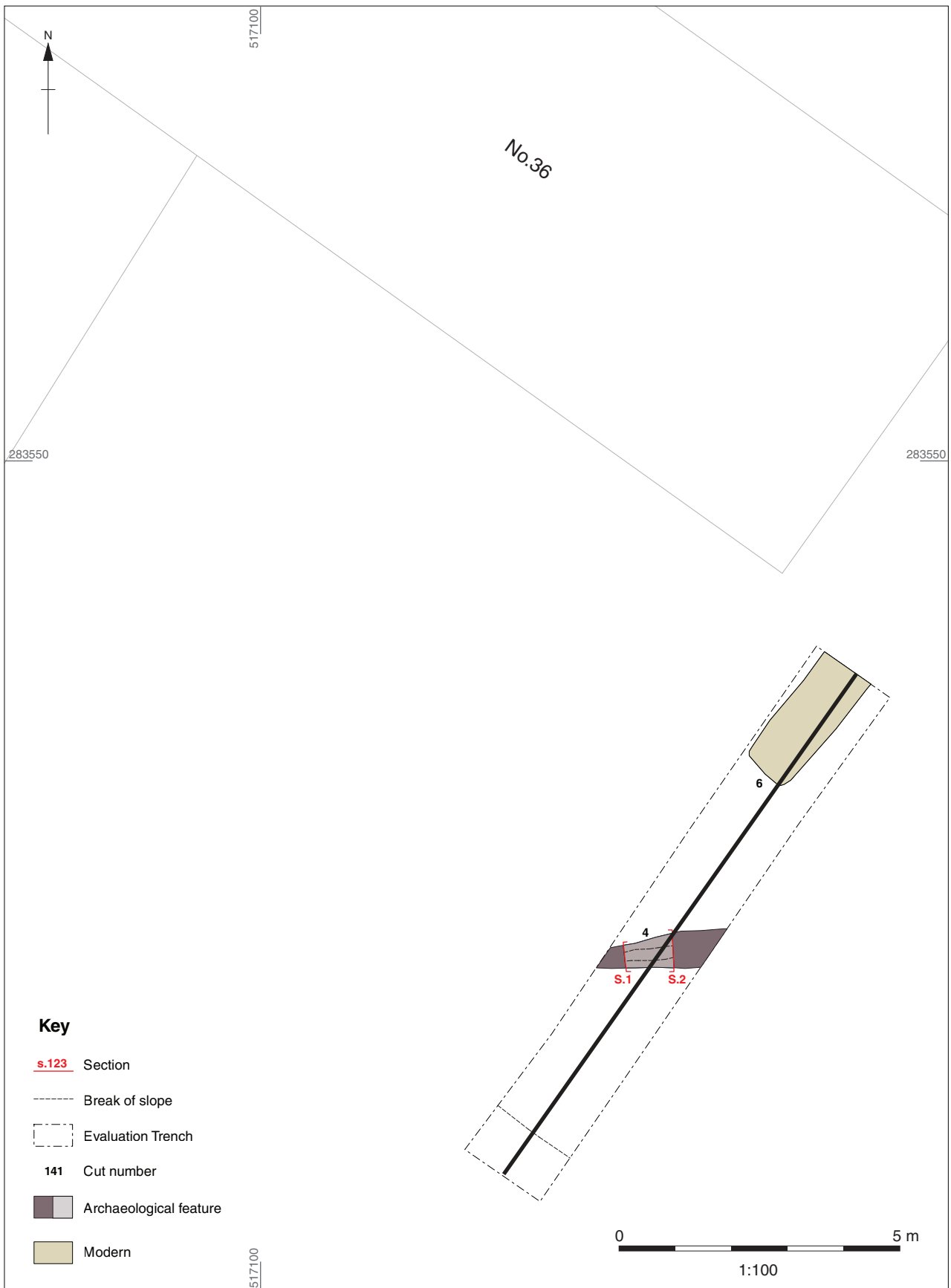


Figure 2: Trench plan

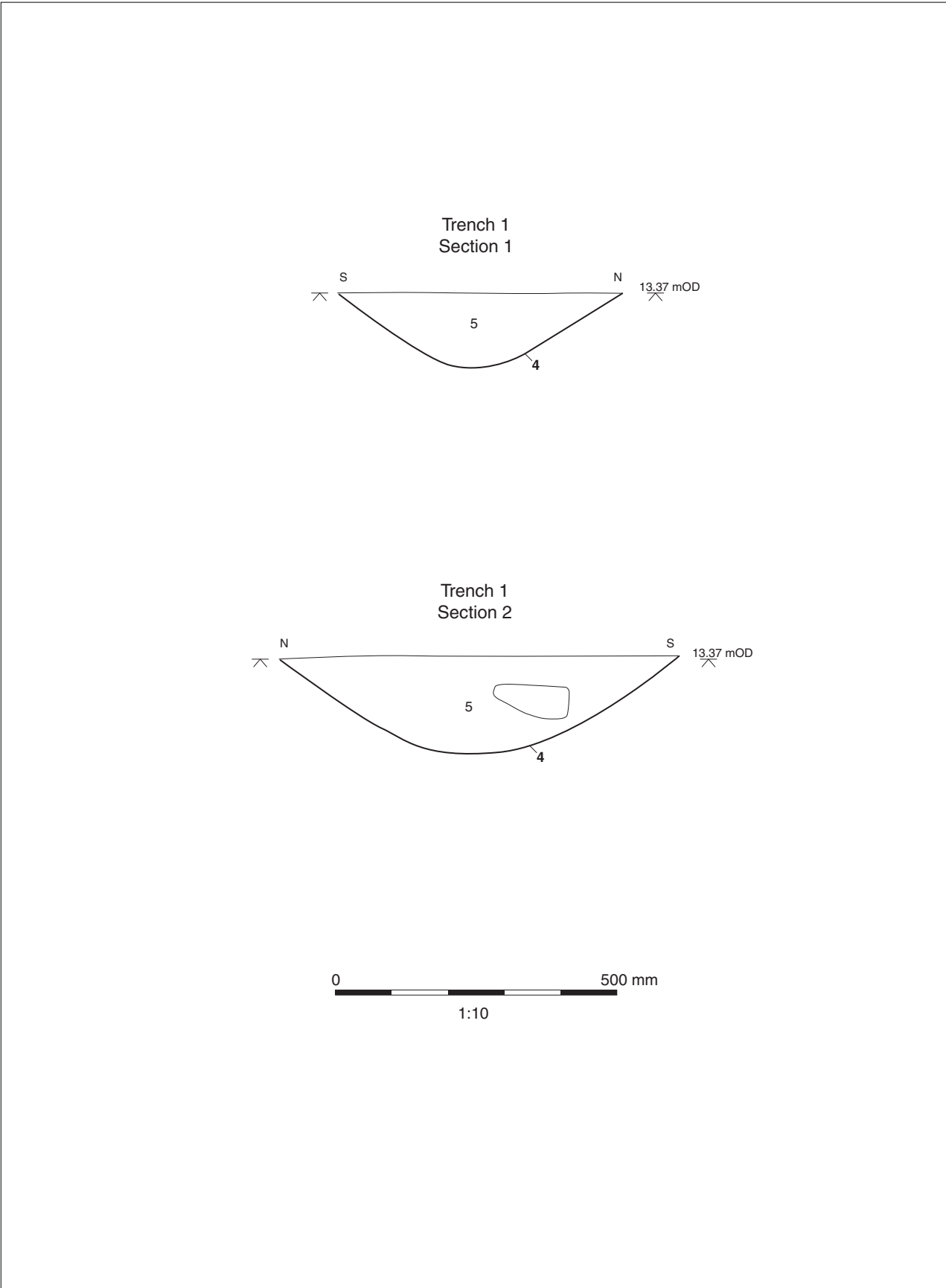


Figure 3: Sections

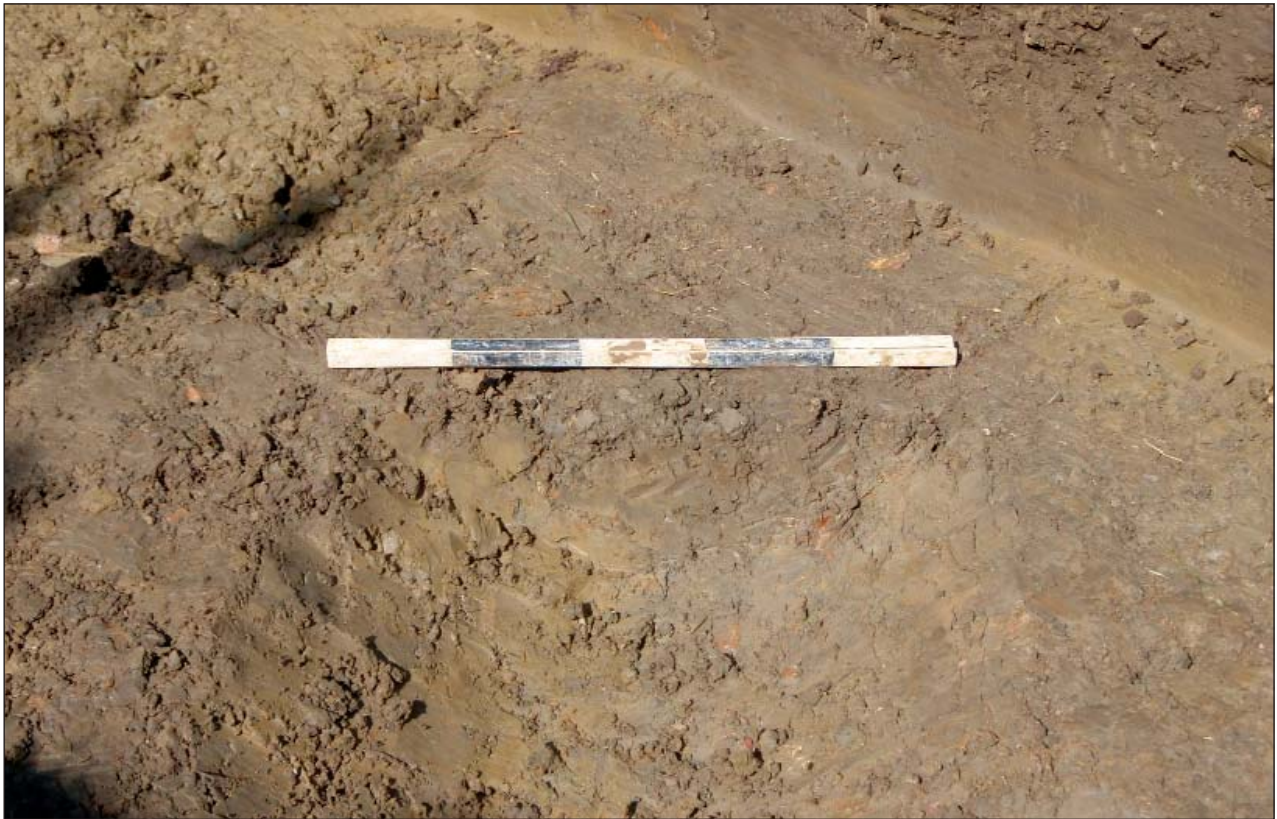


Plate 1: Ditch 4, looking west



Plate 2: Trench 1, looking south-west, with modern pit 8 in the foreground



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