



Estcourt Road, Gloucester

Archaeological Evaluation Report

January 2020

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Issue No: 1

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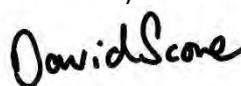
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Prepared by: Victoria Green (Assistant Supervisor)
Checked by: John Boothroyd (Senior Project Manager)
Edited by: Gerry Thacker (Senior Project Manager)
Approved for Issue by: David Score (Head of Fieldwork)
Signature:



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OA South

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford
OX2 0ES

t. +44 (0)1865 263 800

OA East

15 Trafalgar Way
Bar Hill
Cambridge
CB23 8SQ

t. +44 (0)1223 850 500

OA North

Mill 3
Moor Lane Mills
Moor Lane
Lancaster
LA1 1QD

t. +44 (0)1524 880 250

e. info@oxfordarch.co.uk
w. oxfordarchaeology.com

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Director and Chief Executive
Gill Hey BA PhD FSA MCITA
Private Limited Company, No: 1618597
Registered Charity, No: 285627
Registered Office: Oxford Archaeology Ltd
Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES

Estcourt Road, Gloucester

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Written by Victoria Green

*With contributions from Edward Biddulph and Rebecca
Nicholson and illustrations by Conan Parsons and Charles
Rousseaux*

Contents

Summary.....	vii
Acknowledgements.....	viii
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Scope of work.....	1
1.2 Location, topography and geology.....	1
1.3 Archaeological and historical background.....	1
2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY.....	3
2.1 Aims.....	3
2.2 Methodology.....	3
3 RESULTS.....	5
3.1 Introduction and presentation of results.....	5
3.2 General soils and ground conditions.....	5
3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits.....	5
3.4 Trench 1 (Fig. 3).....	5
3.5 Trench 2 (Fig. 4).....	5
3.6 Finds summary.....	6
4 DISCUSSION.....	7
4.1 Reliability of field investigation.....	7
4.2 Evaluation objectives and results.....	7
APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY.....	8
APPENDIX B FINDS REPORTS.....	9
B.1 Pottery.....	9
APPENDIX C ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS.....	10
C.1 Animal Bone.....	10
APPENDIX D BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	11

APPENDIX E	SITE SUMMARY DETAILS	12
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List of Figures

Fig. 1	Site location
Fig. 2	Trench location plan
Fig. 3	Trench 1
Fig. 4	Trench 2

List of Plates

Plate 1	Trench 1, view to west
Plate 2	Trench 2, view to west

Summary

On 20th January 2020, Oxford Archaeology undertook a trial trench evaluation on the site of a proposed residential development at Estcourt Road, Gloucester. The works comprised the excavation of two trenches. Archaeological remains were present in both trenches and comprised two broadly parallel NNE-SSW aligned ditches, a north-south aligned ditch and a cremation burial. The ditches are undated, with artefactual evidence limited to animal bone. Pottery recovered from the surface of the cremation burial has been dated to 1st-2nd century AD. The cremation burial was left in-situ.

Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Nick Cooke of RPS Consulting for commissioning this project on behalf of Miller Homes (Midlands) Ltd. Thanks are also extended to Andrew Armstrong who monitored the work for Gloucester City.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by John Boothroyd. The fieldwork was directed by Benjamin McAndrew. Survey and digitising was carried out by Conan Parsons. Thanks are also extended to the teams of OA staff that cleaned and packaged the finds under the supervision of Leigh Allen, and prepared the archive under the supervision of Nicky Scott.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by RPS Consulting on behalf of Miller Homes (Midlands) Ltd to undertake a trial trench evaluation at the site of proposed residential development.

1.1.2 The work was undertaken to inform a planning decision (Application ref. 19/01012/FUL). The scope of work required was agreed between Nick Cooke of RPS Consulting and Andrew Armstrong, Gloucester City Archaeologist, and was set out in a written scheme of investigation (WSI) produced by OA (OA 2020). This document outlines how OA implemented the specified requirements.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

1.2.1 The site lies to the north of Gloucester city centre, Gloucestershire, NGR: SO 83981 19743.

1.2.2 The area of proposed development consists of a single domestic dwelling and its associated garden. The site is enclosed to the east, south and west by residential properties that front onto Estcourt Road, which runs on a broadly east-west alignment 80m to the south of the site. The proposed development forms part of the much larger redevelopment of the former Bishops College which lies to the north of the site (Fig. 1).

1.2.3 The geology of the area is mapped as Blue Lias Formation and Charmouth Mudstone Formation, Sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 183 to 210 million years ago in the Jurassic and Triassic Periods. Superficial deposits of Cheltenham Sand and Gravel, formed 3 million years in the Quaternary Period, are recorded across the site (BGS Online).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background of the wider development has been described in detail in a heritage desk-based assessment (CA 2015a), and will not be reproduced here. A summary is provided to place these works in context.

1.3.2 Prehistoric activity within the area is very sparse. Apart from occasional finds of Neolithic worked flint to the east of the site, no Bronze Age or Iron Age activity has been recorded.

1.3.3 Between 1983 and 1985 a large Roman cemetery was partially excavated at Gambier Parry Lodge approximately 400m to the west of the site. Over 300 burials, mostly inhumations of 2nd–4th century AD date, were excavated. An earlier 1st century AD polygonal building, interpreted as a shrine, was also recorded, along with gravel extraction pits. Roman burials have also been recorded along the route of Estcourt Road to the south of the site.

1.3.4 The site is located beyond the limits of the medieval city, some 900m north-east of the city walls, in an area believed to be occupied by agricultural land and small hamlets.

1.3.5 The 1780 Estate Map depicts the site as being within an enclosed field known as Pedmoor or Pedmarsh Field. The later 1885 Ordnance Survey Map shows the development of a farmhouse, Pedmarsh Cottage, and several associated outbuildings. The present structure within the site, known as the Knoll, is believed to date to the late 19th century and it is likely to be the same structure as the one shown on the 1885 map. Part of a medieval trackway, likely an access route to Pedmarsh Field, was identified during the laying of a driveway to the Knoll, which lies outside the site boundary.

Previous archaeological works

1.3.6 Previous archaeological work within the school has identified Roman remains. A dupondius of Antonia, mother of Claudius I, was recovered during the construction of school buildings in 1967. An archaeological evaluation and watching brief were undertaken in advance of and during the construction of new school buildings in 1995. The works revealed a Roman ditch and gravel pits, along with undated gravel pits, post-medieval and later plough-soils and modern building foundations.

1.3.7 In 2015 a trial trench evaluation was undertaken to support a planning application for the redevelopment of the school located to the north of the site (CA 2015b). The works comprised the excavation of seven trenches and revealed two pits and three postholes of Roman date in the south-east corner of the site. Evidence of ridge and furrow cultivation was observed across the site as well as modern landscaping.

1.3.8 Trial trenching was also undertaken immediately to the north of the development area on playing fields associated with the school (OA 2015; 2016). No archaeological features, other than plough furrows, were recorded in the eight trenches excavated.

1.3.9 In 2018 further evaluation and strip, map, and sample excavation was undertaken around and within the school structures during their demolition (OA 2018a). The works identified a quarry pit of possible Roman date, and linear boundary ditches and plough furrows dating to the post-medieval period. An area to the east of the site contained ditches that may have been field boundaries, dating either to the Roman or medieval period. There was a large amount of modern disturbance and truncation in the trenches located in the footings of the Bishop's College School buildings and their environs. These areas were found to have been heavily truncated and disturbed by the construction of the buildings and associated concrete pads, and as such no archaeology remained in these areas.

1.3.10 A final phase of excavation was undertaken targeting the impacts of the proposed development (OA 2018b). The work uncovered Roman features comprising a ditch terminus, a number of pits and a quarry pit. Two undated ditches were also recorded towards the east of the site, and a number of post-medieval furrows were identified. A rectangular pit of unknown function in the south-eastern part of the site contained pottery dating to c 1700-1800.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The project aims and objectives were as follows:

- i. To determine the presence or absence of any archaeological remains which may survive.
- ii. To determine or confirm the approximate extent of any surviving remains.
- iii. To determine the date range of any surviving remains by artefactual or other means.
- iv. To determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains.
- v. To determine the degree of complexity of any surviving horizontal or vertical stratigraphy.
- vi. To assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape.
- vii. To determine the potential of the site to provide paleoenvironmental and/or economic evidence, and the forms in which such evidence may survive.
- viii. To determine the implications of any remains with reference to the economy, status, utility and social activity of or at the site.
- ix. To determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of the artefactual evidence present.
- x. To disseminate the results of the evaluation through the production of a fieldwork report.
- xi. To contribute towards the regional research framework agenda for south-west England (Grove and Croft 2012).

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 A summary of OA's general approach to excavation and recording can be found in Appendix A. Standard methodologies for Geomatics and Survey, Environmental evidence, Artefactual evidence and Burials can also be found below (Appendices B, C, D and E respectively).

2.2.2 The trenches were laid out as shown in Figure 2 using a GPS with sub-15mm accuracy. Due to the presence of a tree, Trench 2 was moved approximately 0.5m to the north of the positioned proposed in the WSI (OA 2020).

2.2.3 The trenches were excavated using a 5t tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket under the direct supervision of an archaeologist. Spoil was stored adjacent to, but at a safe distance from the trench edges.

2.2.4 Machining continued in even spits down to the top of the undisturbed natural geology. Once archaeological deposits were exposed, further excavation proceeded by hand.

2.2.5 The exposed surface was sufficiently cleaned to establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains. A sample of each feature type, ditches and tree bowls, was excavated and recorded. Excavation was sufficient to resolve the principal aims of the evaluation.

- 2.2.6 All features and deposits were issued with unique context numbers, and context recording was in accordance with established best practice and the OA Field Manual. Bulk finds were collected by context.
- 2.2.7 Digital photos were taken of archaeological features, deposits, trenches and evaluation work in general.
- 2.2.8 Plans were produced at 1:50. Sections of features were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All section drawings are located on the plans.
- 2.2.9 Upon completion of the works and in agreement with the Gloucester City Archaeologist, the trenches were backfilled with the arisings in reverse order of excavation.

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 trenches. The full details of all trenches with dimensions and depths of all deposits is tabulated in Appendix A. Finds data and spot dates are presented in Appendix B.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 The soil sequence in the trenches was fairly uniform. The natural geology of sandy gravel was overlain by a silty clay subsoil, which in turn was overlain by topsoil (Plates 1 and 2).

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

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 Archaeological features were present in both Trenches 1 and 2 (Fig. 2). A ditch, a ditch terminus and three tree throws were uncovered in Trench 1; a cremation burial, which was left *in situ*, and a ditch terminus were exposed in Trench 2.

3.4 Trench 1 (Fig. 3)

3.4.1 Orientated roughly east to west, Trench 1 measured 10m long and was excavated to a depth of 1.1m below ground level (bgl), with natural geology encountered at a height of 13.29m above Ordnance datum (aOD). The trench contained three irregular features of which two were investigated and were interpreted as tree throws. Tree throw 1005 was truncated on its eastern side by a ditch. Orientated NNE-SSW, the ditch (1003) had a concave profile and measured 1m wide and 0.28m deep. No datable material was recovered from the features sole fill (1004), a dark orangey brown silty clay, although a single cattle phalange was present. A second ditch was recorded in the centre of the trench. Entering from the northern baulk on a broadly NNE-SSW alignment, ditch 1007 measured 0.7m wide and 0.2m deep with a concave profile and terminated in the centre of the trench. No artefactual evidence was recovered from the fill of the ditch (1008), also a dark orangey brown silty clay.

3.5 Trench 2 (Fig. 4)

3.5.1 Also orientated roughly east-west, Trench 2 measured 6m long and was excavated to 1.2m bgl (12.3m aOD). A north-south aligned ditch terminated within the trench at the eastern end (2005). Continuing beyond the northern baulk of the trench, the ditch measured 1.1m wide and 0.3m deep with a concave profile. The ditch contained a single fill (2006), a dark orangey brown silty clay, from which an indeterminate fragment of bone from a large mammal was recovered. An unurned cremation burial (2003) was present at the western end of the trench. Measuring approximately 0.5m in diameter the cremation consisted of a charcoal rich silty sand deposit in which fragments of cremated bone were present. The cremation was unexcavated, protected

and left *in-situ*. A single fragment of Roman pottery dating from the 1st – 2nd century AD was recovered from the surface.

3.6 Finds summary

- 3.6.1 Artefactual evidence from the site was limited. A single sherd of Roman pottery was recovered from the surface of a cremation burial in Trench 2. The sherd is likely to form part of a jar or flagon dating the 1st – 2nd century AD. Given the sherds location on the surface of the cremation, it is unclear if its representative of a grave good or is a later intrusion (Appendix B.1).
- 3.6.2 Two fragments of animal bone were also recovered, a cattle phalange from ditch 1003 in Trench 1, and a fragment from a large mammal bone from ditch 2005 in Trench 2 (Appendix C.1).

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 Where present, archaeological features were well defined against the underlying natural geology. Around two thirds of the features suspected to be of non-anthropogenic origin were investigated and the interpretation confirmed. As such, the results of the trial trench evaluation can be considered to provide a reliable assessment of the archaeological potential and preservation within the site.

4.2 Evaluation objectives and results

4.2.1 The evaluation has successfully confirmed the presence of archaeological remains within the site. This activity is present across both excavated trenches. The shallow nature of the archaeological features suggests there has been a significant amount of truncation across the site. In contrast, the depth of overburden sealing the archaeological remains is fairly substantial and is likely to have accumulated from medieval and post-medieval agricultural activity.

4.2.2 Given the limited scope of the investigations and the lack of artefactual evidence, it is difficult to provide a compressive interpretation of the remains. The presence of Roman activity to the north and south of the site, along with the recovered pottery sherd, suggest the remains date to 1st – 2nd century AD. Undated linear features on a comparable alignment were recorded during investigations at Bishops College to the north (OA 2018a and b), although it is not possible to directly link any of the features recorded during this current investigation with those from the previous works.

APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Trench consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of yellow/grey sandy gravel. There was a ditch at the east end and a ditch terminus halfway along the trench, as well as three tree bowls.					Length (m)	10
					Width (m)	1.65
					Avg. depth (m)	1.1
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1000	Layer	-	0.2	Topsoil	-	-
1001	Layer	-	0.9	Subsoil	-	-
1002	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
1003	Cut	1	0.28	Ditch	-	-
1004	Fill	1	0.28	Fill of ditch [1003]	Bone	-
1005	Cut	1.1	0.3	Tree Bowl	-	-
1006	Fill	1.1	0.3	Fill of tree bowl [1005]	-	-
1007	Cut	0.7	0.2	Ditch terminus	-	-
1008	Fill	0.7	0.2	Fill of ditch [1007]	-	-

Trench 2						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Trench consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of yellow/grey sandy gravel. A cremation was uncovered at the west end of trench 2, and there was a ditch terminus at the east end.					Length (m)	6
					Width (m)	1.6
					Avg. depth (m)	1.2
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
2000	Layer	-	0.2	Topsoil	-	-
2001	Layer	-	1	Subsoil	-	-
2002	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
2003	Fill	0.5	-	Cremation	Pottery	-
2004	Cut	0.5	-	Cremation	-	-
2005	Cut	1.1	0.3	Ditch terminus	-	-
2006	Fill	1.1	0.3	Fill of ditch [2005]	Bone	-

APPENDIX B FINDS REPORTS

B.1 Pottery

By Edward Biddulph

- B.1.1 A single sherd of Roman pottery, weighing 15g, was recovered from the site. The sherd was collected from the surface of context 2003, a fill of cremation 2004 recorded in Trench 2.
- B.1.2 The body sherd, from a closed form, possibly a jar or flagon, has an orange exterior surface, an orange-brown interior surface and a grey core. It is in a fine, sandy fabric with occasional white clay pellets and elongated voids. The fabric is similar to Severn Valley ware fabrics identified in the Gloucester fabric series as TF11D or TF23 (Glospot nd), as well as Oxford Archaeology fabric O49 (Booth nd), which is suggested to have a Severn Valley ware source (Green 2004, 310, 312). Given these affinities, the sherd is likely to be of Severn Valley ware origin and of mid-1st to 2nd century AD date.
- B.1.3 As the sherd was found on the surface of the grave, it is uncertain whether it forms part of a grave-good. It is possible that it had become incorporated accidentally into the backfill, but further elements of the vessel may exist within the grave, which remains unexcavated.

APPENDIX C ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS

C.1 Animal Bone

Identified by Rebecca Nicholson

Context	Description
1004	Single cattle second phalange, fused. 14g
2006	Indeterminate fragment of large mammal bone, 8g

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APPENDIX E SITE SUMMARY DETAILS

Site name:	Estcourt Road, Gloucester
Site code:	OAGLER20
Grid Reference	SO 83981 19743
Type:	Evaluation
Date and duration:	1 day, 20th January 2020
Area of Site	685m ²
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES with Gloucester City Museum and Art Gallery in due course.
Summary of Results:	On 20th January 2020, Oxford Archaeology undertook a trial trench evaluation on the site of a proposed residential development at Estcourt Road, Gloucester. The works comprised of the excavation of two trenches. Archaeological remains were present in both trenches and comprised two broadly parallel NNE-SSW aligned ditches, a north-south aligned ditch and a cremation burial. The ditches are undated, with artefactual evidence limited to animal bone. Pottery recovered from the surface of the cremation burial has been dated to 1st-2nd century AD. The cremation burial was left in-situ.

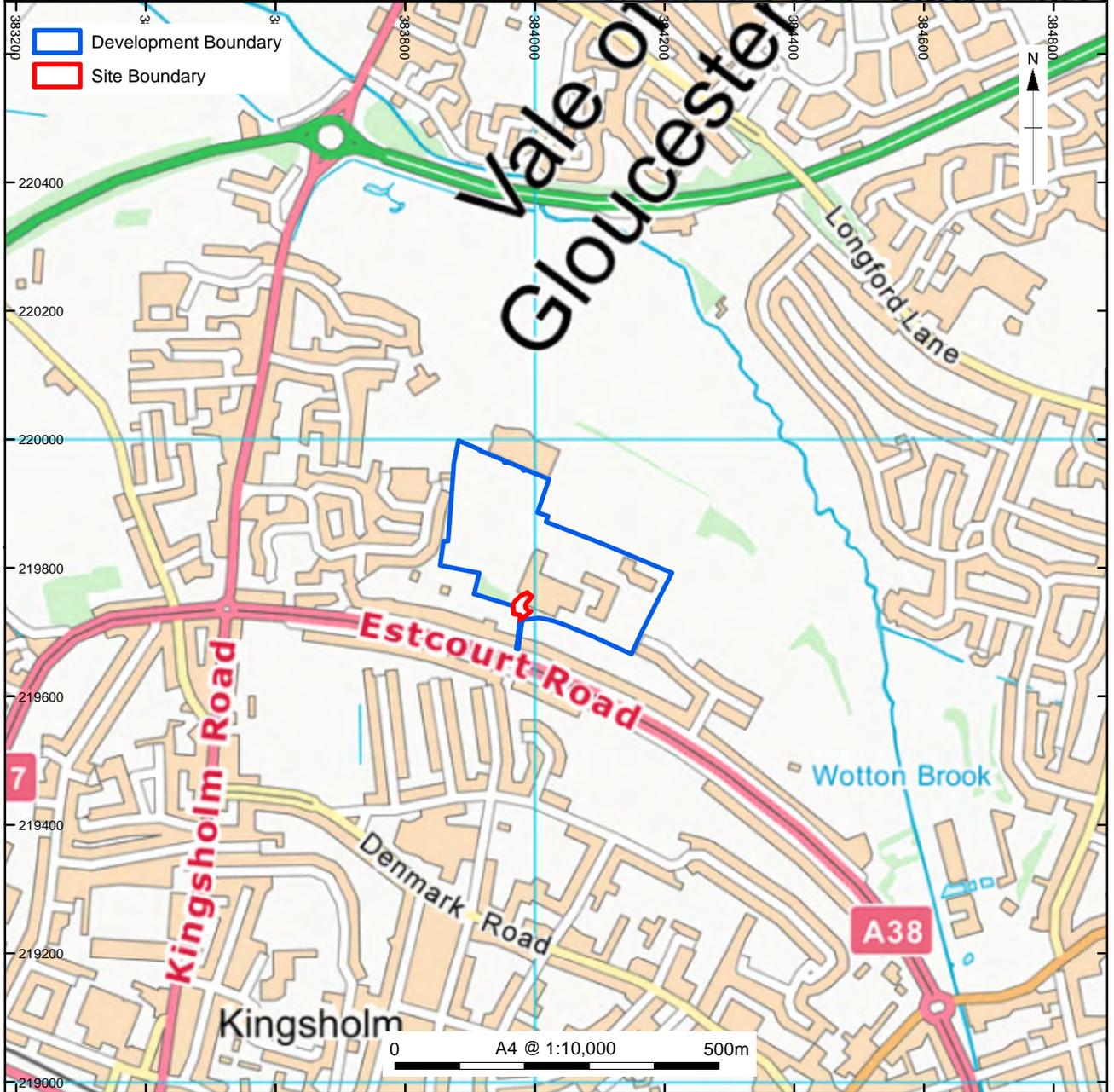
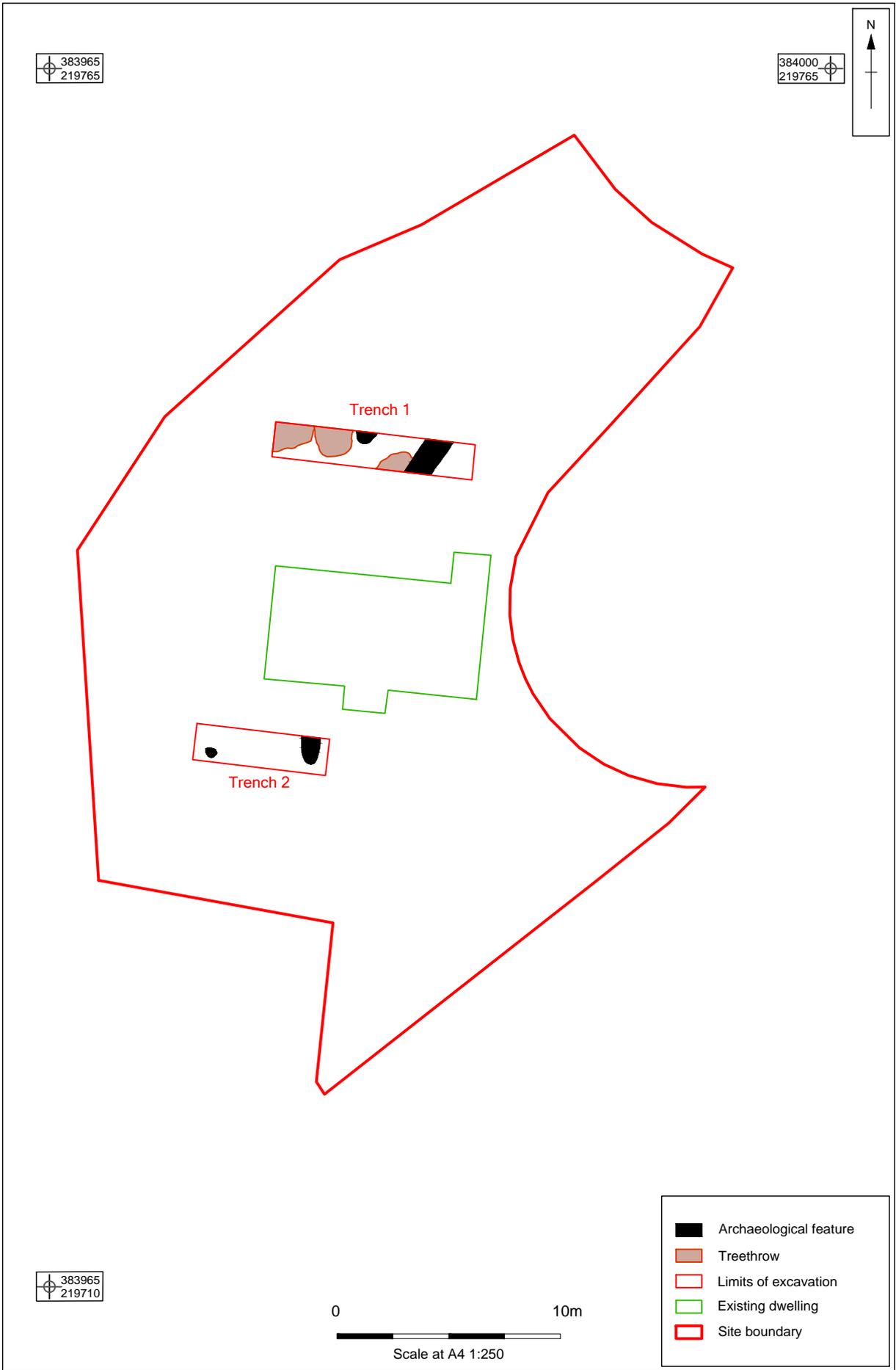


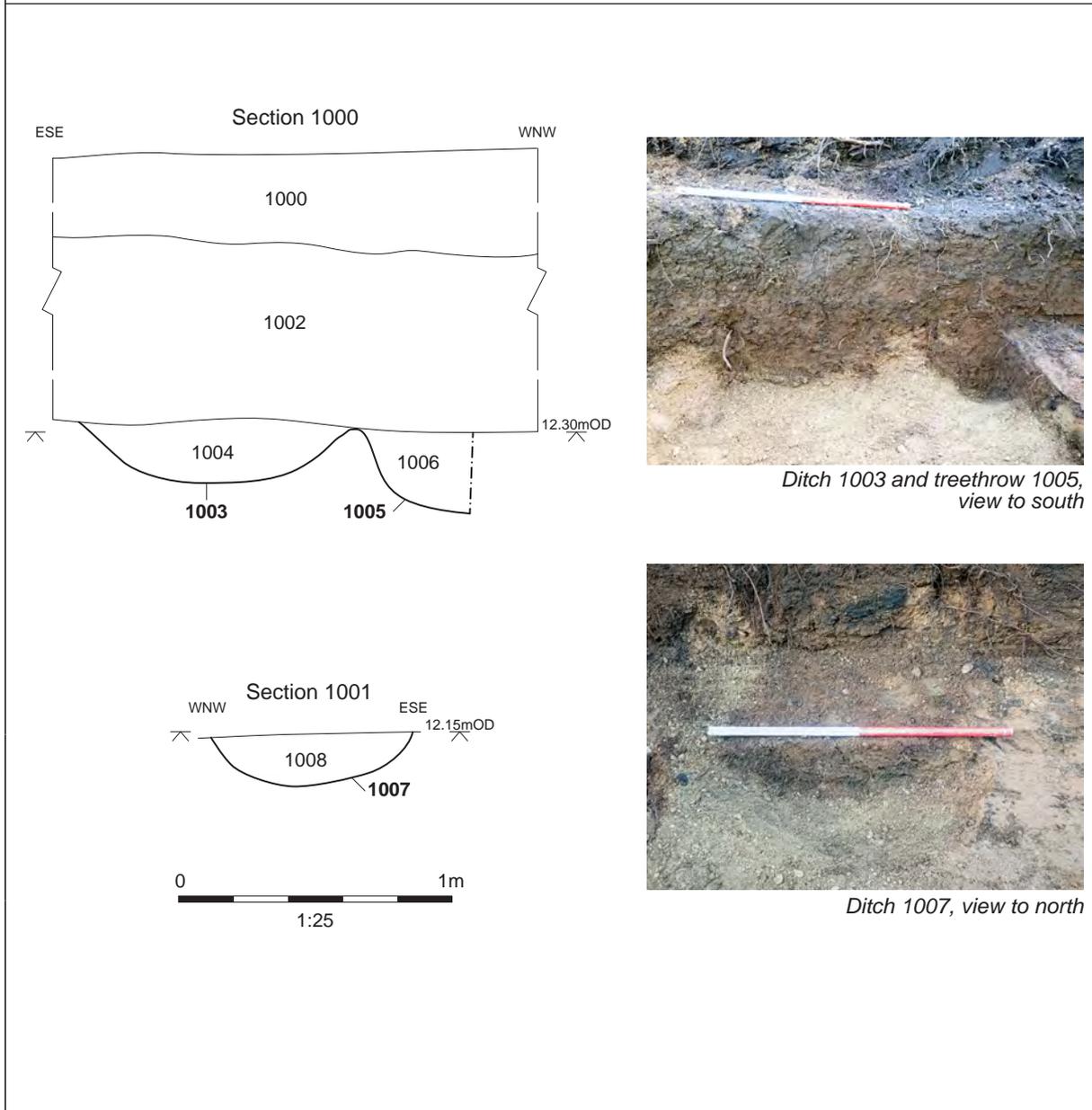
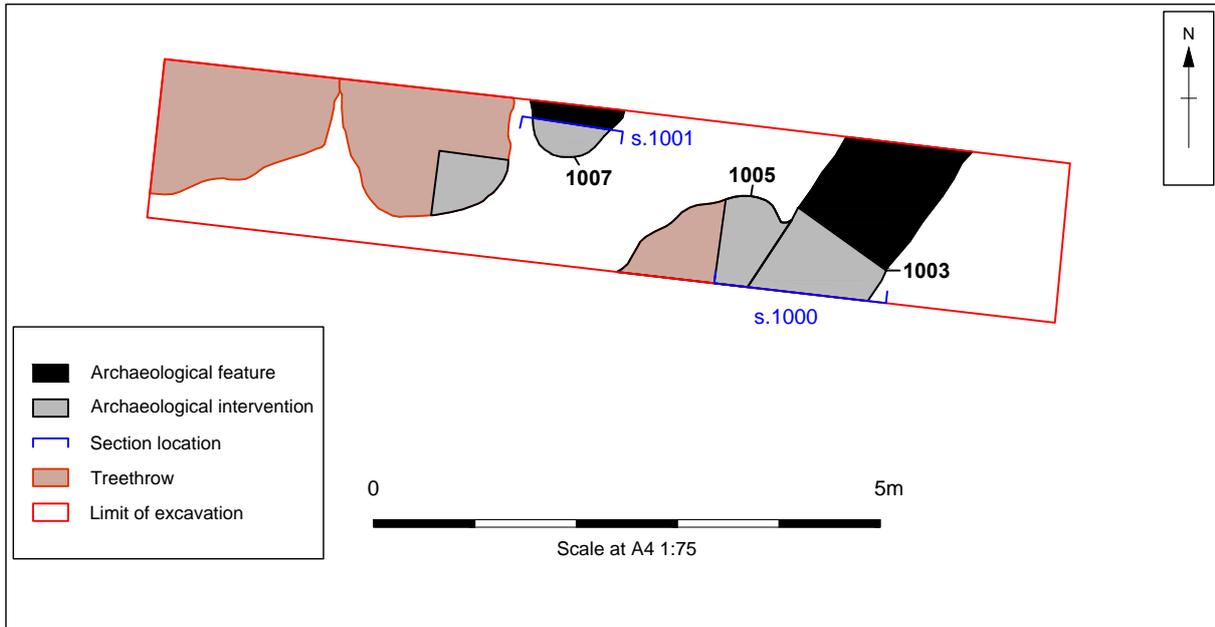
Figure 1: Site location

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Figure 2: Trench location plan



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Figure 3: Trench 1

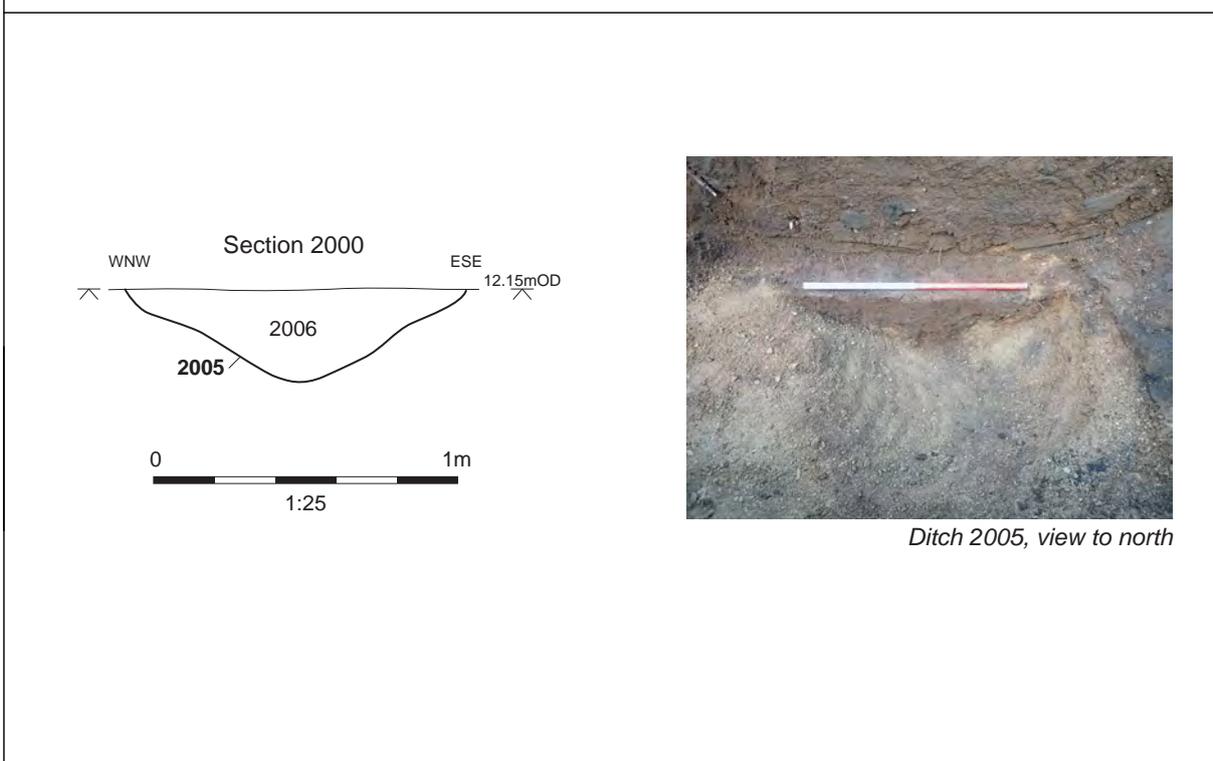
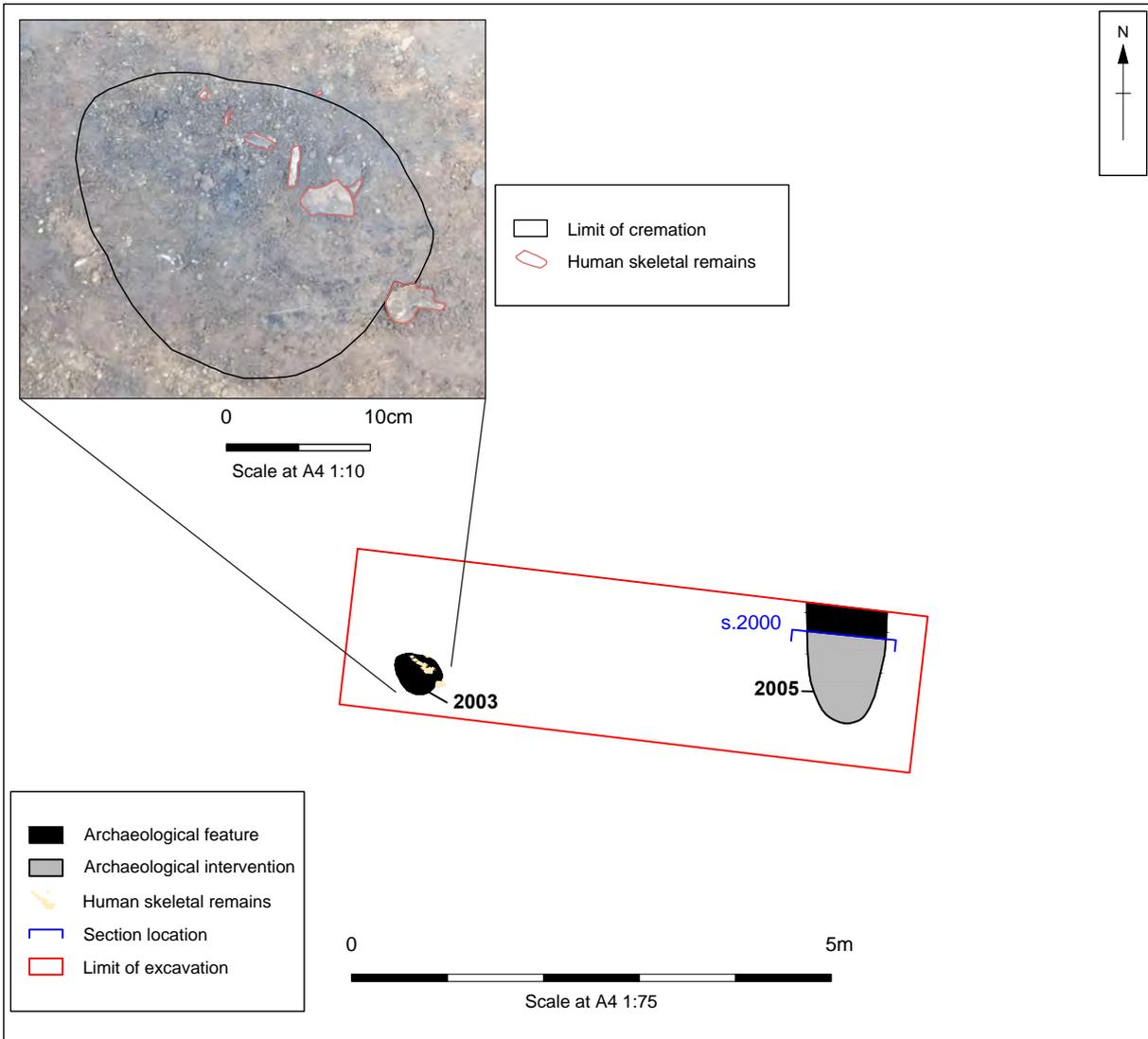


Figure 4: Trench 2



Plate 1: Trench 1, view to west



Plate 2: Trench 2, view to west



**Head Office/Registered Office/
OA South**

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX20ES

t: +44 (0) 1865 263 800
f: +44 (0) 1865 793 496
e: info@oxfordarchaeology.com
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>

OA North

Mill 3
Moor Lane
Lancaster LA1 1QD

t: +44 (0) 1524 541 000
f: +44 (0) 1524 848 606
e: [oanorth@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto: oanorth@oxfordarchaeology.com)
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>

OA East

15 Trafalgar Way
Bar Hill
Cambridgeshire
CB23 8SQ

t: +44 (0) 1223 850500
e: [oaeast@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto: oaeast@oxfordarchaeology.com)
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>



Director: Gill Hey, BA PhD FSA MCIfA
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