

Archaeological Evaluation  
of land adjacent to  
**THE VILLAGE COMMUNITY CENTRE,  
TINTERN, MONMOUTHSHIRE.**  
for  
Tintern Community Council



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Archaeological Evaluation  
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Centred on  
N.G.R. SO 5306 0017

Client: Tintern Community Council

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### Abbreviations

aOD	above Ordnance Datum
O.S.	Ordnance Survey
c.	Circa
NLW	National Library of Wales

### NOTE

Notwithstanding that Bristol and Region Archaeological Services have taken reasonable care to produce a comprehensive summary of the known and recorded archaeological evidence, no responsibility can be accepted for any omissions of fact or opinion, however caused.

June, 2008.

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## **SUMMARY**

In May 2008 Bristol and Region Archaeological Services carried out an archaeological evaluation of land adjacent to the Village Community Centre, Quayside, Tintern, Monmouthshire. The fieldwork revealed that ground reduction for construction of the Community Centre has resulted in a 1m depth of made ground within the evaluation area. Underlying the imported soils and sand were colluvial deposits above undisturbed natural sandy clay. Fragments of worked flint were recovered from the colluvium.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Bristol and Region Archaeological Services (BaRAS) were commissioned by Roger Hopson of Tintern Community Council, to carry out an archaeological evaluation of land adjacent to the Village Community Centre, Tintern, Monmouthshire, centred on NGR SO 5306 0017. A planning application has been submitted to extend the existing Community Centre with the construction of an educational, sports, and recreation facility (Planning Application No. DC/2007/01358).
- 1.2 The development site lies within the south-west corner of the outer walled-precinct of Tintern Abbey, a medieval Cistercian monastery founded in 1131.
- 1.3 The Curatorial Division of the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT) advised Monmouthshire County Council planning section that an archaeological evaluation should be undertaken before determination of the planning application.
- 1.4 Planning Policy Wales, issued by the Welsh Assembly and revised in March 2002, sets out under section 6.5 the means by which archaeological remains should be considered within the planning process (**Appendix 1**). The Monmouthshire Local Plan contains policies to protect the County's heritage, whether these are existing buildings and streetscapes or buried archaeological remains.
- 1.5 'Where nationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not and their settings, are likely to be affected by proposed development, there should be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation in-situ. In cases involving lesser archaeological remains, local planning authorities will need to weigh the relative importance of archaeology against other factors, including the need for the proposed development' (PPW 2002, sec, 6.5.3).
- 1.6 Welsh Office Circular 60/96 'Planning and the Historic Environment: Archaeology' is still considered to be relevant. This also sets out the need for the consideration of the archaeological resource, including the commissioning of archaeological field evaluations (**Appendix 1**).
- 1.7 There is a requirement for a developer to provide sufficient information on the archaeological implications of development as part of the planning process in order that an informed and reasonable planning decision can be taken. To fulfil the imposed condition on the proposed development the excavation of two trenches, was requested in a standard 'Brief for archaeological evaluation' (prepared by GGAT Curatorial). The results of the evaluation are produced in this report.
- 1.8 The fieldwork took place between the 23rd and the 27th May 2008 and was directed by Andrew King who subsequently compiled this report. Ann Linge produced the illustrations.
- 1.9 The site archive will be prepared in accordance with nationally accepted guidelines (Brown 2007) and will be retained by Tintern Community Council at their request. A copy of the report will be sent to the Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Monuments in Wales at Aberystwyth.
- 1.10 No previous archaeological investigation has taken place on this site.

## 2. THE SITE

- 2.1 The village of Tintern is focussed on a narrow plain on the south side of one of several bends in the course of the River Wye. The steeply wooded northern face of Chapel Hill overlooks the proposed development site, which comprises an area of approximately 85m<sup>2</sup> to the south-east of the existing Village Community Centre (**Cover**). The site is currently in use as a children's playground and is bounded to the south by the route of the A466 and to the west by a playing field (**Fig.1**).
- 2.2 The routes of mains services run north-west from the Community Centre, the ground surface on the site is fairly level at around 10.10m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).
- 2.3 There are no Listed Buildings or Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the boundaries of the development site. The extant ruins of Tintern Abbey, to the east, have Scheduled Ancient Monument status (Mm 102Mon & Mm 265), however, the development site is beyond the curtilage area of the monuments.
- 2.4 The underlying geology of the site consists of Devonian Old Red Sandstone (Welch & Trotter 1961).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The archaeological works were undertaken in accordance with criteria set by the Institute of Field Archaeologist's *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations* (revised 2001). The fieldwork complied with the methodology stated within the brief for archaeological evaluation issued by the Curatorial Division of Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust on behalf of the Local Planning Authority and the Written Scheme of Investigation for this evaluation produced by BaRAS in May 2008.
- 3.2 Two trenches were excavated to determine the degree to which archaeological deposits and features had been disturbed by more recent activity and also to attempt to establish, by detailed examination in selected areas, the full stratigraphic sequence.
- 3.3 Modern topsoil and non-archaeologically significant deposits were removed using a 180° mechanical excavator equipped with a 1.5m wide, toothless, grading bucket. The trenches were then hand-cleaned and recorded using the Bristol & Region Archaeological Services' continuous numbered single context recording system. Trench plans were drawn at a scale of 1:20 and representative sections at a scale of 1:10.
- 3.4 A photographic record of the site was compiled using 35mm monochrome print film and digital photography. Twenty-one digital images and twenty-six monochrome-print images were taken during the progress of the works. These were all entered onto BaRAS' pro-forma photographic recording sheets and the direction of the images placed upon a scale plan (**Fig.2**). Where possible, scales were placed within the range of the photographic frames.
- 3.5 Separate survey grids were maintained for each trench. The trench locations were related relative to the National Grid and Ordnance Datum levels. The temporary site benchmark was transferred from an O.S. benchmark at a height of 13.50m above Ordnance Datum on the south-eastern corner of the village doctor's surgery adjoining the A466.
- 3.6 Following completion of the fieldwork the trenches were backfilled with the excavated spoil but not reinstated.



#### 4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The area around Tintern Abbey has several entries in the National Monuments Record of Wales for sites of prehistoric, medieval and later provenance, however, only a section of the Abbey's precinct wall is in the immediate vicinity of the site (NPRN:275975). An entry for Tintern Parva Methodist chapel (NPRN:307513) is erroneously located south of the site adjoining the A466 (**Appendix 2**).
- 4.2 Excavations in the outer precinct of the Abbey in the 1970s produced finds of Romano-British pottery sherds, although these were later interpreted as having been imported onto the site with levelling material (Courtney 1989, 138).
- 4.3 There is little evidence for post-Roman and early medieval occupation in this vicinity and it was not until the founding of a Cistercian community at Tintern in 1131 that historic records become more thorough. The Abbey church and its associated buildings were expanded through the centuries until the community was dissolved in 1536. The Abbey buildings and extensive lands were granted to Henry Somerset, Earl of Worcester.
- 4.4 In the later 16th-century a substantial wire-working industry, utilising the plentiful natural resources, was established in an area to the north-west of the Abbey precincts. The earliest furnace was known as the Laytons and this name was depicted on an estate map of 1764 (**Fig.3**). The site area at that time was an unoccupied field within the former Abbey precinct. The boundary wall to the north of the present-day playground may date from this period.
- 4.5 In the 1820s the route of the new road between Chepstow and Monmouth (the present A466) bisected the Abbey precinct. The first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1830 shows the site as part of an orchard (**Fig.4**), it remained as such until at least 1886 (**Fig.5**). The eastern and part of the south-eastern boundary walls of the site are probably the original orchard walls.
- 4.6 The Abbey and its grounds were purchased by The Crown from the ninth Duke of Beaufort in 1901. The 1902 edition OS plan showed the orchard to have been cleared and no further changes occurred on the site by the time of the 1921 edition plan (**Fig.6**).
- 4.7 By the early 1970s a narrow building labelled as a 'Club' occupied the area of the Community Centre car park. This was later replaced by the present building and the adjoining playground was laid out.

## 5. THE EVALUATION

### Trench 1 (Figs.7 & 8)

- 5.1 Trench 1 measured 6m x 2m and was located at NGR SO 53056 00142 to the south-east of the Village Community Centre (**Plate 1**). A hand-dug sondage (**Plate 2**) was excavated to a height of 8.15m aOD into the undisturbed, compact, reddish-brown, natural sandy clay and gravel containing medium-sized stones up to 200mm in width (Context 110).
- 5.2 Immediately overlying 110 was a softer, reddish-brown, sandy clay (107) possibly representing eroded natural. Associated with 107 was a thin layer of flattish, angular stones less than 150mm in size (106). Above 106 was a colluvial deposit of yellowish-brown, sandy clay (105), up to 350mm in depth.
- 5.3 Overlying 105 at a height of 9m aOD was a 250mm thick deposit of light reddish-brown, sandy clay (104) containing occasional inclusions of charcoal and pieces of worked flint. The flints were not associated with any features but were most probably washed down from the adjacent hill.
- 5.4 At the eastern end of the trench, above 104, was a localised spread of frequent, small angular stones less than 160mm in width (103), similar to those of 106. The absence of pottery sherds and animal bone suggest a natural process of hillwash accumulation behind the formation of deposits 103-104.
- 5.5 A layer of clean, imported sand (102) up to 50mm in depth, extended across the area of the trench and was covered by a thin spread of greyish-black silty clay with frequent inclusions of small stones (101). Deposits 101 and 102 had been truncated by a 400mm deep pit [108], with a width of 900mm, near-vertical sides and a flat base. Pit 108 was filled with a mixed deposit of sandy clay and topsoil (109).
- 5.6 Overlying 101 and sealing pit 108 was an extensive deposit of imported topsoil up to 750mm in depth (100). Deposits 102-100 represent landscaping activities contemporary with the construction of the present Village Community Centre.

### Trench 2 (Figs. 9 & 10)

- 5.7 Trench 2 measured 6m x 2m and was located at NGR SO 53048 00141 to the south of the Community Centre (**Plate 3**). The top of the undisturbed, natural reddish-brown, sandy clay (208) was reached at a height of 8.57m aOD.
- 5.8 Overlying 208 was a mid-brown, sandy clay (205) up to 400mm in depth, extending to a height of 9.16m aOD and containing frequent inclusions of small stones and occasional charcoal flecks. Apart from an absence of worked flints deposit 205 was similar in consistency to deposit 104 in trench 1.
- 5.9 The modern landscaping which evidently took place during construction of the Village Community Centre meant that the uppermost 900mm of trench 2 consisted of imported deposits. A layer of clean sand (204), similar to 102, was in turn covered by a mixed, redeposited, sandy clay and small stones (203). One notable difference between trenches 1 and 2 was the presence of a distinctive layer of cinders, slag and clinker (202), overlying 204 and varying in depth up to a maximum of 150mm at the southern end of trench 2. At the southern end of the trench was a lens of burnt material (207) comprising charcoal and pieces of coal that formed a separate layer from 202.

5.10 Above 202 and 207 was a second, mixed layer of redeposited clay and stone (201) sealed by up to 250mm of imported topsoil (200). As with trench 1 no dating evidence or animal bone was present in trench 2.

## 6. DISCUSSION

- 6.1 The proposed development site lies in an area that would have been at the western extent of the Abbey's walled precinct, some distance from the domestic outbuildings that supported the monastic community. Cartographic and historic evidence indicates that in 1764 the site was part of a large field and later used as an orchard for most of the 19th century. The site remained open land until the later 20th century when construction of a clubhouse preceded the existing Village Community Centre.
- 6.2 The evaluation trenches revealed that undisturbed sandy clays and layers of colluvium, washed down from the adjacent hill known today as Chapel Hill, characterised the lower deposits in both trenches. Two pieces of worked flints and a few indeterminate fragments were the only finds recovered, which, together with the presence of charcoal flecks between 9m and 9.16m aOD approximately 1m below present ground level, were the only evidence for human activity. No pottery sherds or animal bones were encountered in either trench.
- 6.3 Modern landscaping associated with construction of the existing Village Community Centre and the surrounding playground has replaced the uppermost 520mm of stratigraphy in the area of trench 1 and 900mm of trench 2 with imported sand, clay and topsoil. It is possible that towards the north and east edges of the playground, beyond the proposed development footprint, there may be better preservation of archaeological deposits.
- 6.4 Given the extent of modern disturbance in the immediate vicinity of the evaluation trenches and the nature of the deposits revealed, it is unlikely that much more will be gained from further fieldwork in the area of the proposed development.

## 7. BIBLIOGRAPHY & SOURCES CONSULTED

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- RCAHMW <http://www.coflein.gov.uk> Map enabled query system.
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- Welch, F.B.A. & Trotter, F.M. 1961 *Geology of the country around Monmouth and Chepstow*. London:HMSO

### Maps

- 1764 Map of Tintern Abbey Precinct (NLW Badminton maps Vol.2, map 6)
- 1830 1st Edition Ordnance Survey 1" : 1 mile (GRO Misc Mss 2093.1, 2)
- 1886 Ordnance Survey 6":1 mile, surveyed 1880-81
- 1902 Ordnance Survey 1:2500
- 1921 Ordnance Survey 1:2500
- 1994 Geological Map of Wales, British Geological Survey, 1:250,000

## 8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Bristol & Region Archaeological Services are grateful to the staff of the National Monument Record of Wales, Gwent Record Office, and the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust (Curatorial Section) for their advice and assistance and to Mr Roger Hopson for his assistance on site.

## **APPENDIX 1: Extracts from Planning Policies Relating to Archaeology**

### **Planning Policy Wales, revised March 2002**

#### ***Section 6.5: Development control and the historic environment***

##### ***Archaeological remains***

- 6.5.1 The desirability of preserving an ancient monument and its setting is a material consideration in determining a planning application, whether that monument is scheduled or unscheduled. Where nationally important **archaeological remains**, whether scheduled or not and their settings, are likely to be affected by proposed development, there should be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation in-situ. In cases involving lesser archaeological remains, local planning authorities will need to weigh the relative importance of archaeology against other factors, including the need for the proposed development.
- 6.5.2 The needs of archaeology and development can be reconciled and potential conflict very much reduced, if developers discuss their proposals for development with the local planning authority at an early stage. Archaeological assessments commissioned by developers (sometimes as part of a wider Environmental Impact Assessment) can help to provide information on the archaeological sensitivity of a site before submitting a planning application. If important remains are thought to exist at a development site, the planning authority should request the prospective developer to arrange for an archaeological field evaluation to be carried out before any decision on the planning application is taken. The results of any assessment and/or field evaluation should be provided as part of a planning application. If this information is not provided, authorities should consider whether it is appropriate to direct the applicant to supply further information, or whether to refuse permission for inadequately documented proposals.
- 6.5.3 Where local planning authorities decide that physical preservation in-situ of archaeological remains is not justified in the circumstances of the case and that development resulting in the destruction of archaeological remains should proceed, before granting planning permission the authority needs to be satisfied that the developer has made appropriate and satisfactory provision for the archaeological investigation and subsequent recording of the remains and the publication of the results. Archaeological investigations should be carried out before development commences, working to a project brief prepared by the planning authority.
- 6.5.4 Local planning authorities may impose conditions to protect a monument and require that an archaeological watching brief is carried out. In order to secure the provision of an appropriate archaeological investigation and subsequent recording of remains, a negative condition may be imposed prohibiting the carrying out of development until such time as works or other action (for example, an excavation) have been carried out by a third party.
- 6.5.5 Archaeological remains may only become apparent when development has commenced. Where such remains are deemed by the Assembly to be of national importance, the remains may be scheduled. In these circumstances, developers would need to seek separate Scheduled Monument Consent before continuing work. The local planning authority or the Assembly may revoke planning consent if deemed necessary.

#### **Welsh Office Circular 60/96 ‘Planning and the Historic Environment: Archaeology’**

##### ***Planning Applications***

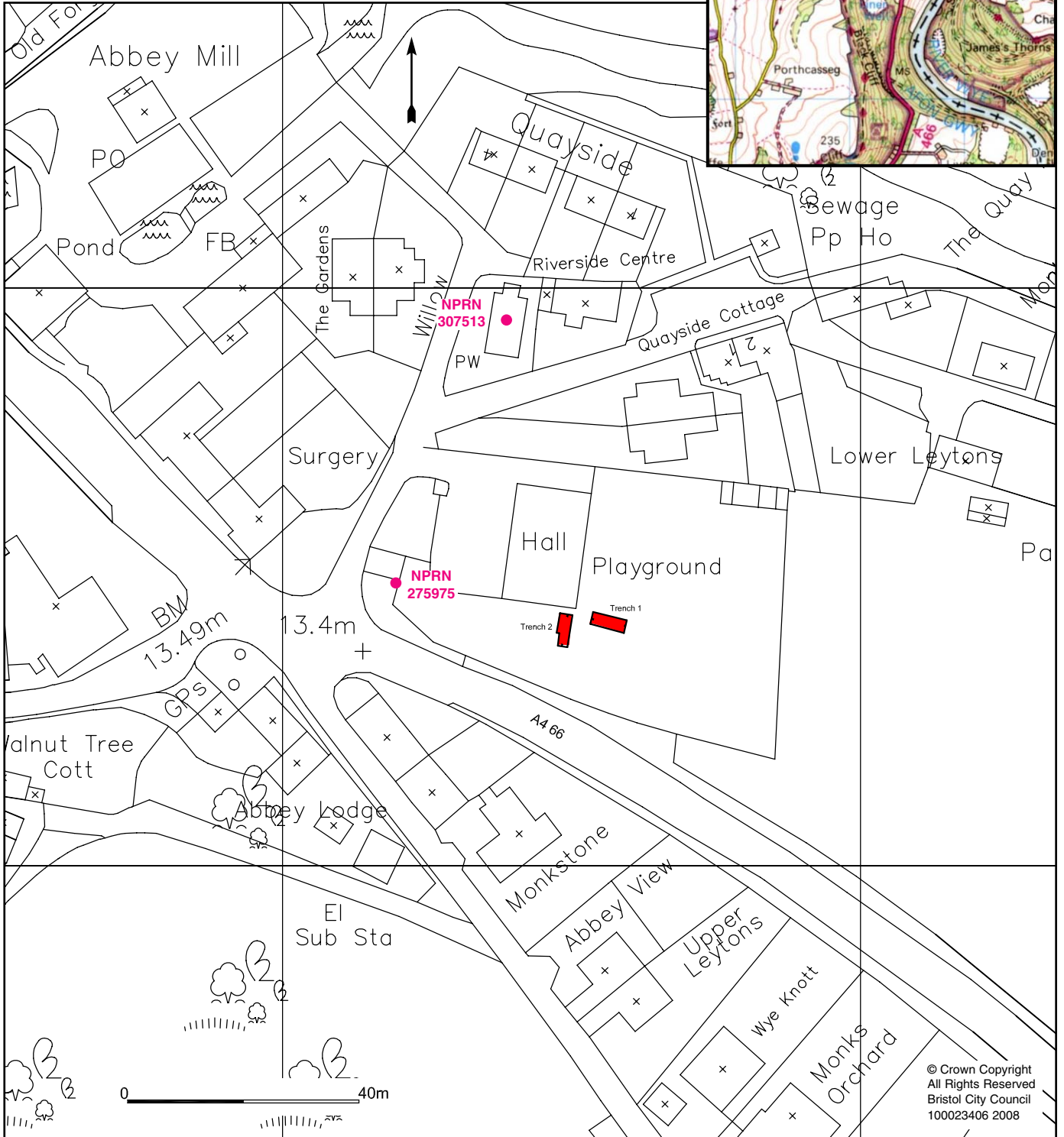
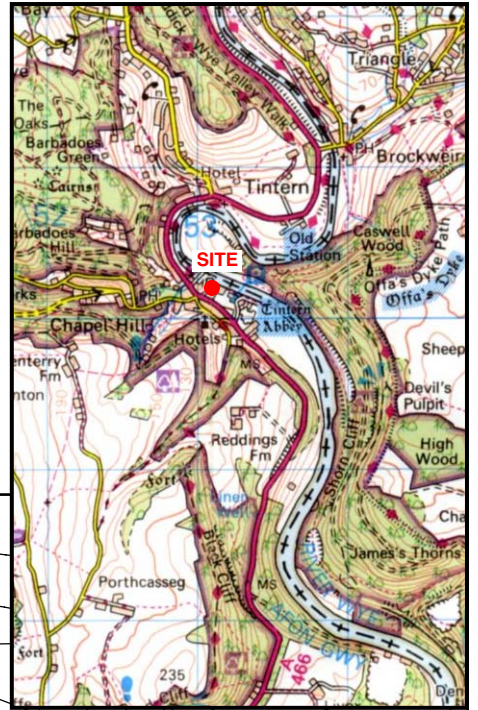
###### ***(c) Field Evaluations***

13. Where early discussions with local planning authorities or the developer’s own research indicate that important archaeological remains may exist, the planning authority should request the prospective developer to arrange for an archaeological field evaluation to be

carried out before any decision on the planning application is taken. Such an evaluation, normally a rapid and inexpensive operation involving ground survey and/or small-scale excavation and trial trenching, is quite distinct from full archaeological excavation but it should be carried out by a professionally qualified archaeological organisation or archaeologist. Evaluations of this kind help to define the character and extent of the archaeological remains that exist in the area of a proposed development and indicate the weight which ought to be attached to their preservation. They also provide information useful for identifying potential options for minimising or avoiding damage.

14. Local planning authorities should expect developers to provide results of such appraisals, assessments and/or evaluations as part of their application for sites where there is good reason to believe there are remains of archaeological importance. If developers are not prepared to do so voluntarily, the planning authority may wish to consider whether it would be appropriate to direct the applicant to supply further information. Authorities will need to consider refusing permission for proposals which are inadequately documented.

[The Circular then goes on to discuss the next stages of dealing with the archaeological resource during consultations by planning authorities and the preservation of archaeological remains in-situ or the preservation of archaeological remains by record.]



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Fig.1 Site location based on Ordnance Survey plan, scale 1:1000



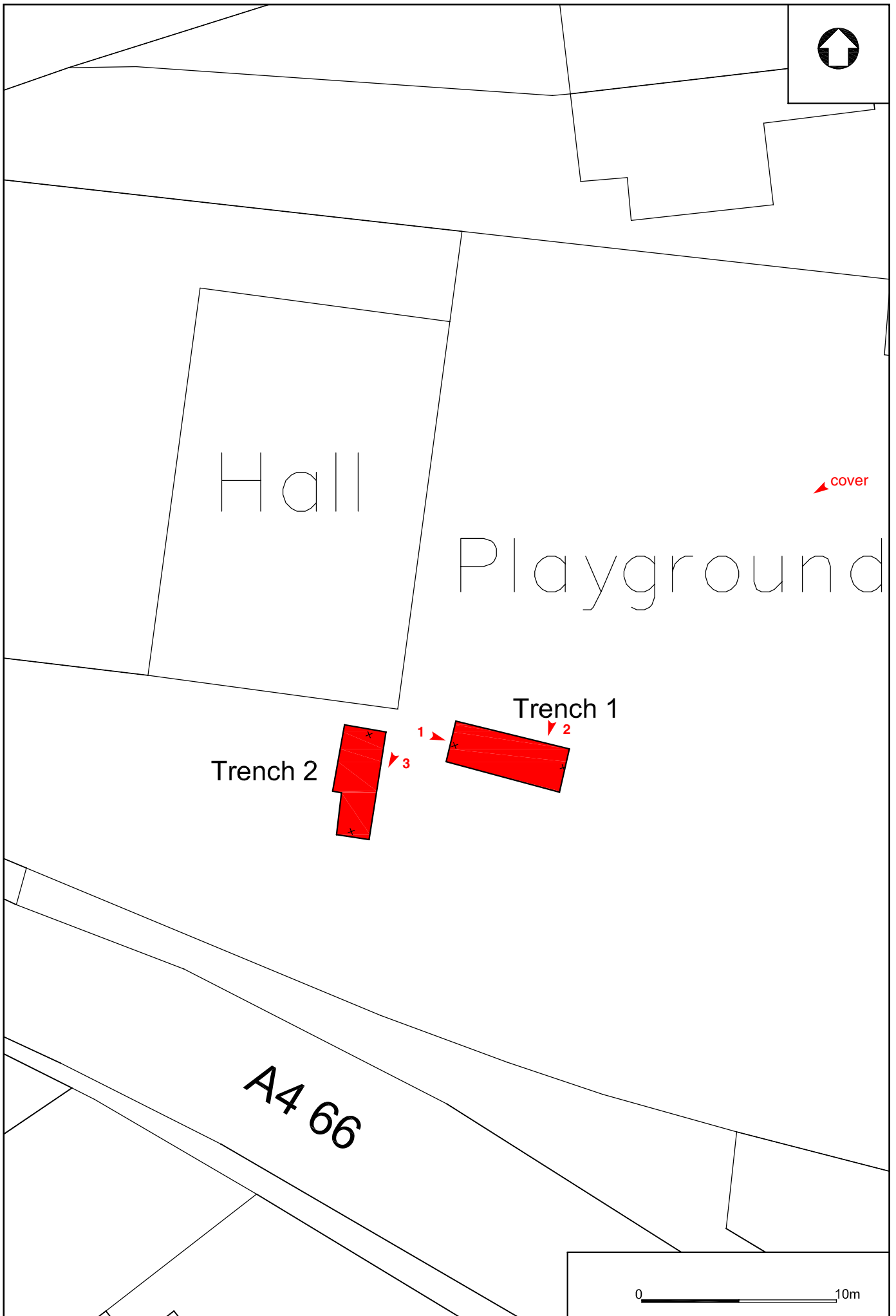


Fig.2 Trench location showing direction of plates, scale 1:250

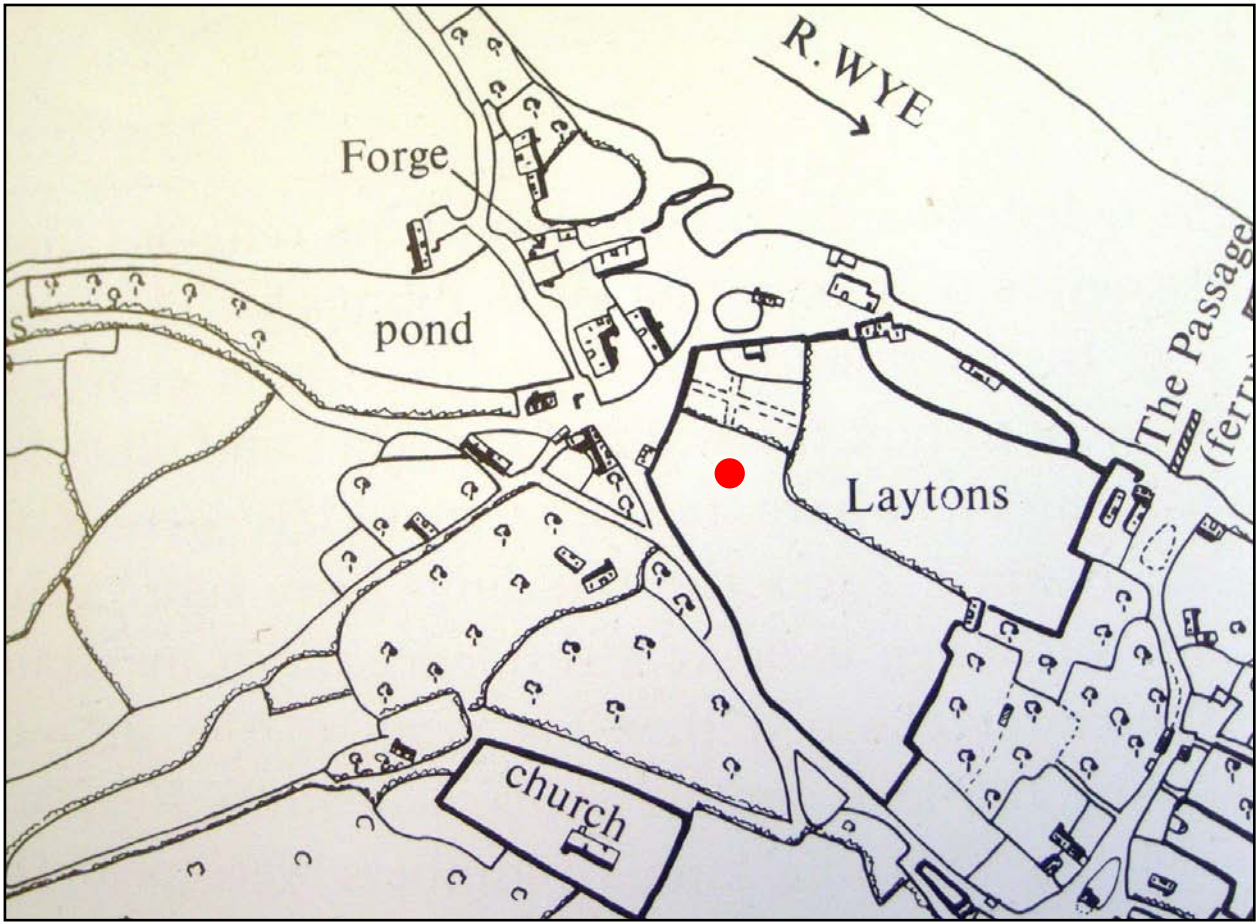


Fig.3 Estate map of 1764 showing site location (after NLW Badminton maps Vol.2, map 6)



Fig.4 Ordnance Survey 1830 First Edition plan showing site location, original scale 1 inch to 1 mile

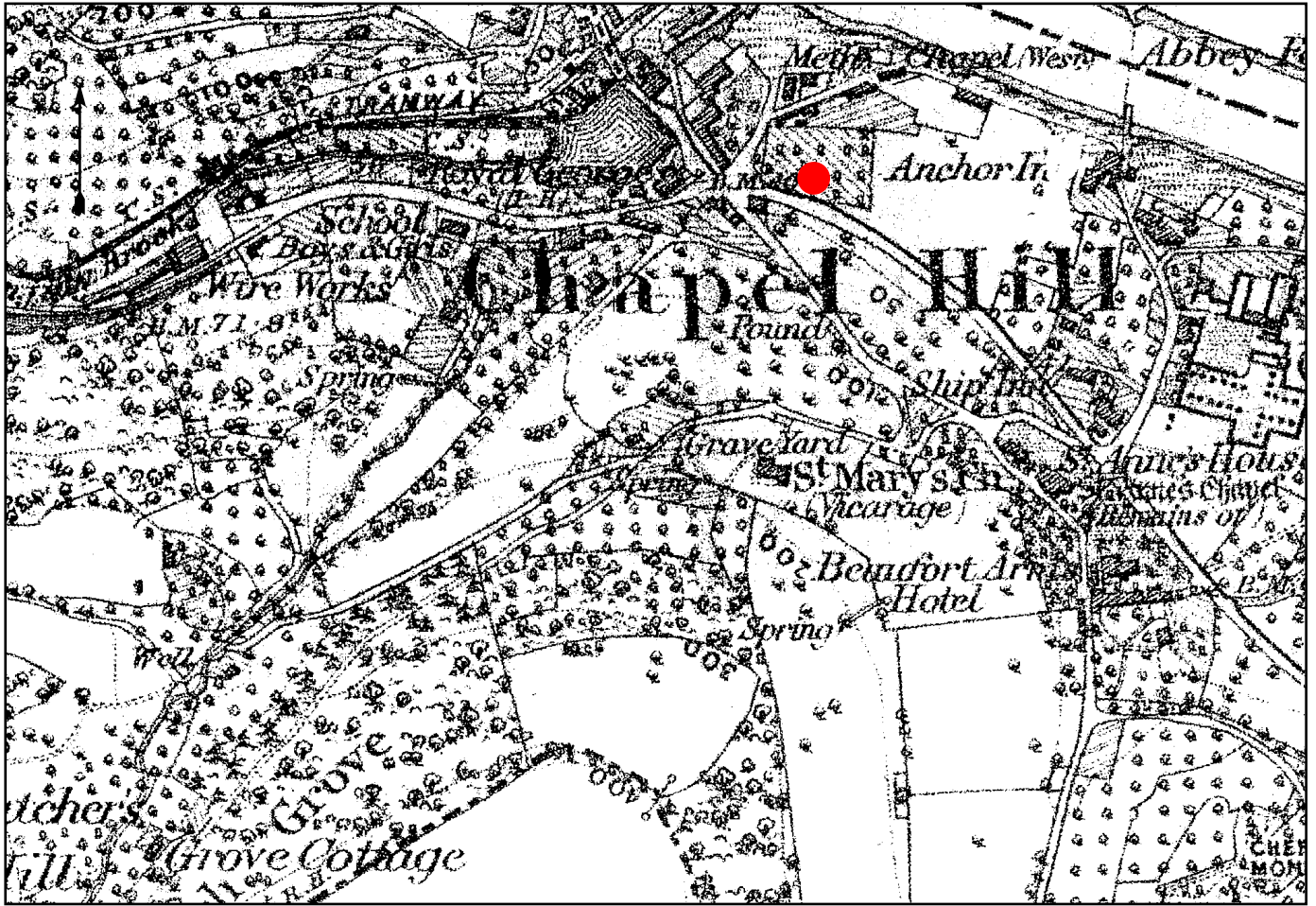


Fig.5 1886 OS plan, original scale 6 inches to 1 mile

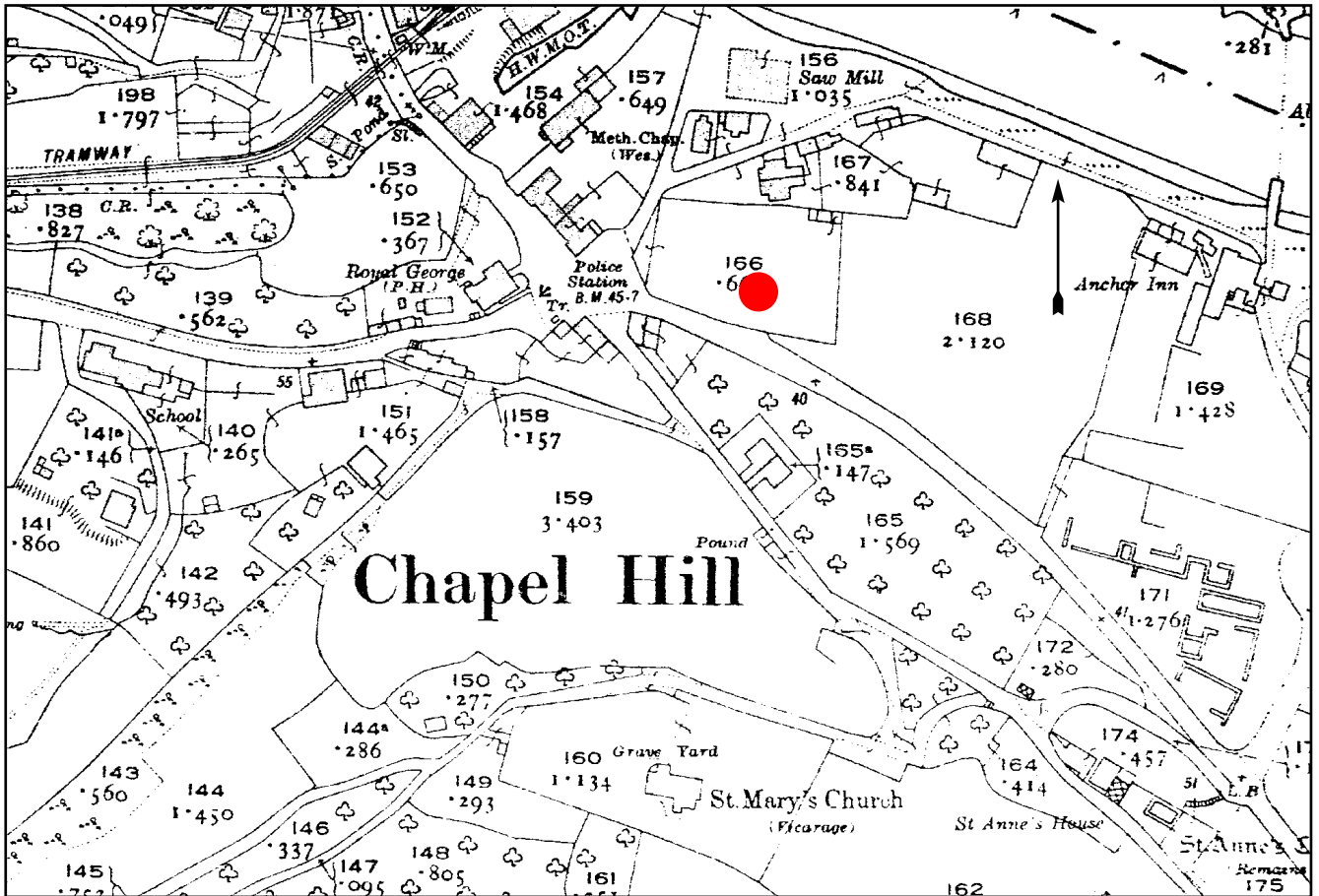


Fig.6 1921 OS plan, original scale 1:2500

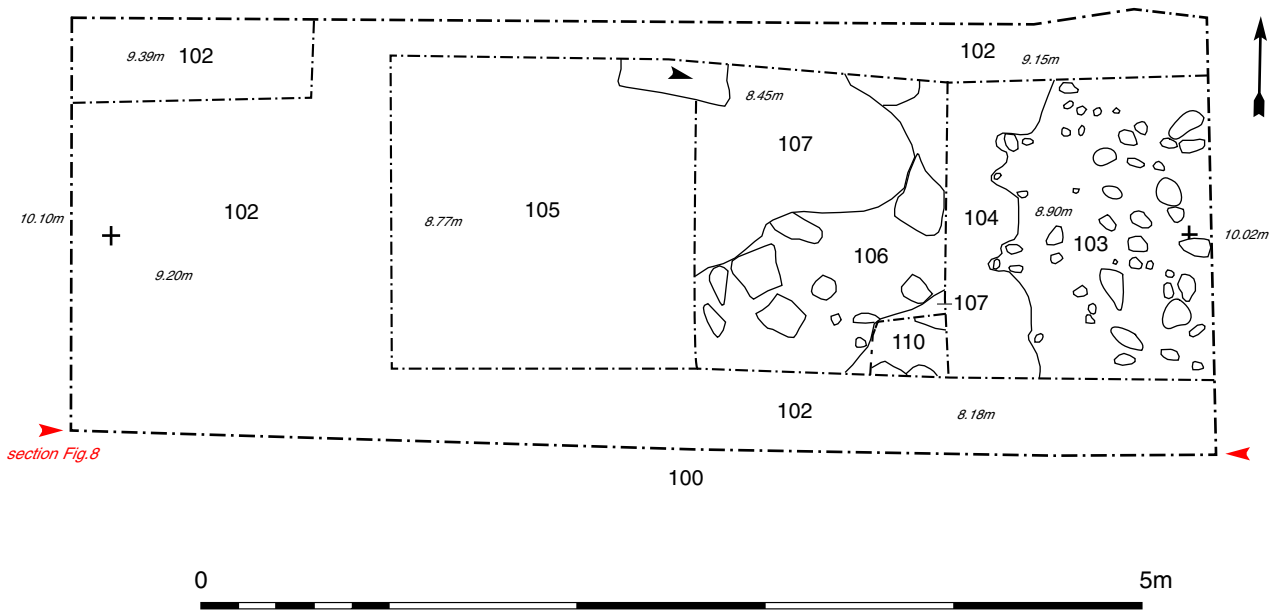


Fig.7 Trench 1, scale 1:40

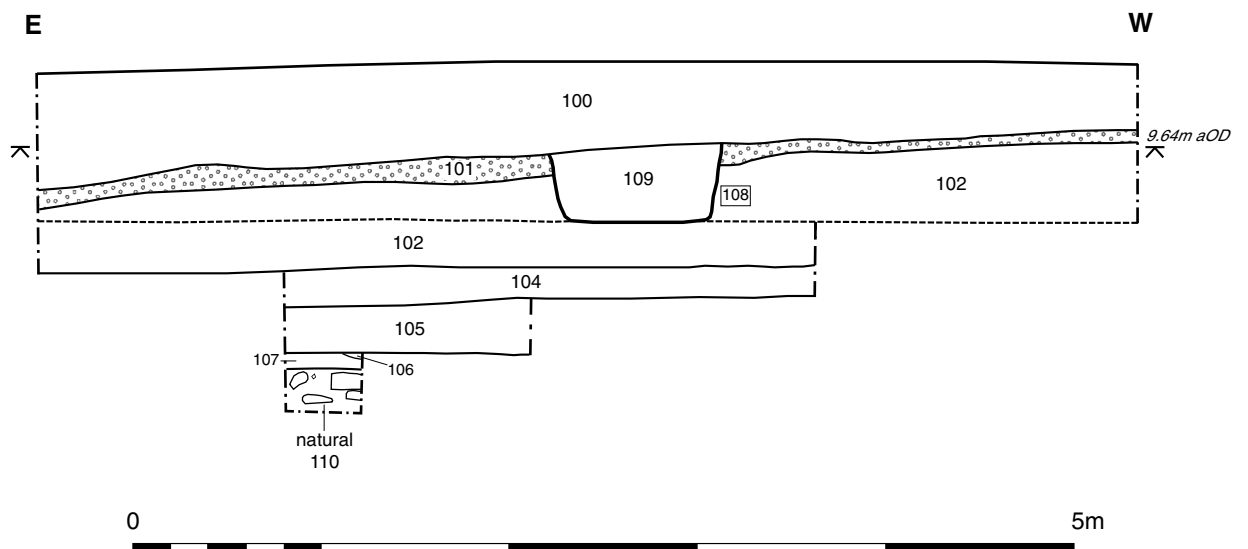


Fig.8 Trench 1 section, scale 1:40

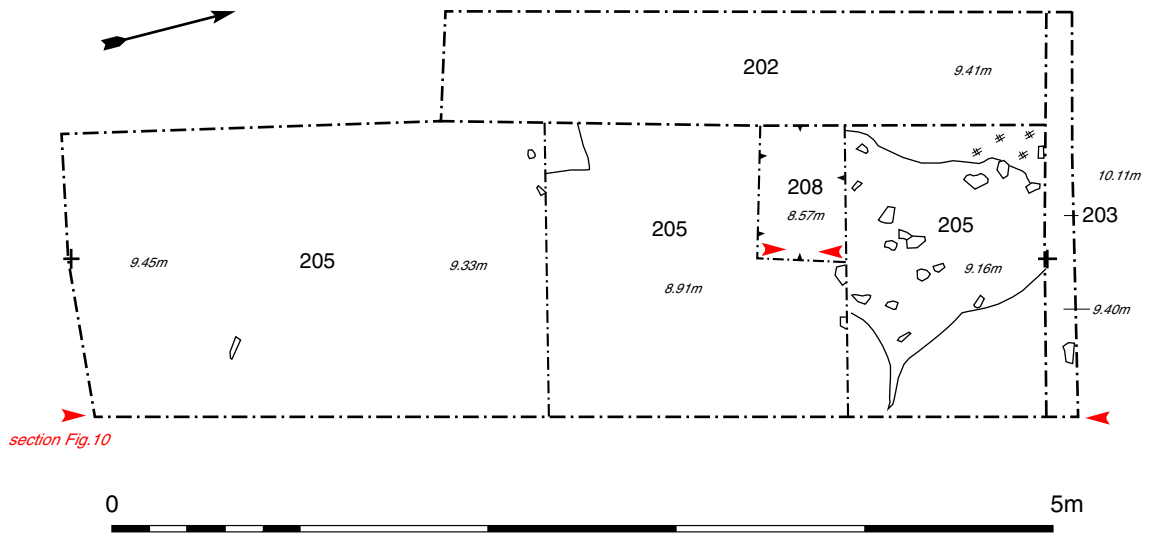


Fig.9 Trench 2 plan, scale 1:40

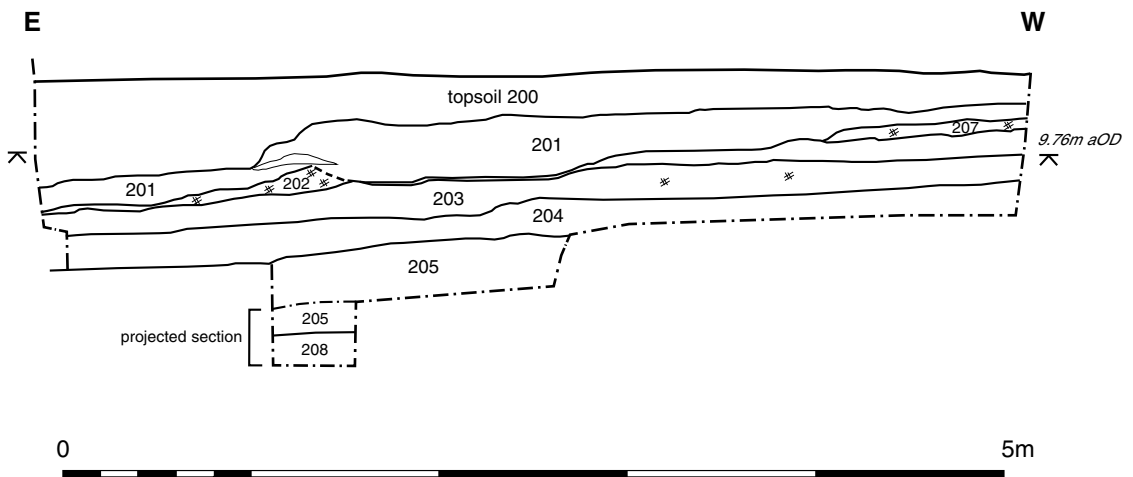


Fig.10 Trench 2 section, scale 1:40



Plate 1 Trench 1, looking west



Plate 1 Sondage through deposits 105-107 showing natural 110, looking south



Plate 3 Trench 2, looking south-west