



# **Archaeological Evaluation on land at Bonny Bush Hill, Kingston, Kent *November 2009***

**SWAT. Archaeology**  
Swale and Thames Archaeological Survey Company  
School Farm Oast, Graveney Road  
Faversham, Kent  
ME13 8UP  
Tel: 01795 532548 or 07885 700 112  
[www.swatarchaeology.com](http://www.swatarchaeology.com)

Archaeological Evaluation on land at  
Kingston, near Canterbury in Kent

NGR: 1977 5225

Site Code: KING-EV-09

Report for  
R W Goddard & Partners

SWAT Archaeology  
School Farm Oast, Graveney Road  
Faversham, Kent, ME13 8UP  
Tel; 01975 532548 or 07885 700 112  
[www.swatarchaeology.com](http://www.swatarchaeology.com)

## Contents

Figures.....	ii
Summary.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Site Description and Topography.....	1
Planning Background.....	2
Archaeological Background.....	2
Aims and Objectives.....	3
Methodology.....	4
Monitoring.....	5
Results.....	5
Finds.....	5
Discussion.....	6
Conclusion.....	6
Acknowledgements.....	7
Appendix 1.....	8

## **List of Figures and Plates**

Figure 1. Site location plan

Figure 2. Trench plan: Scale 1:50

Figure 3. Plans: Scale 1:20

Plate 1. General view showing grave cuts

Plate 2. Grave 003

Plate 3. Grave 001

Plate 4. Grave 002

Plate 5&6. Google aerial photograph

## **Archaeological Evaluation**

### **at Kingston, Kent**

**NGR: 1977 5225**

**Site Code: KING-EV-09**

#### **SUMMARY**

*Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) in November 2009 carried out an archaeological evaluation at Bonny Bush Hill, Kingston near Canterbury in Kent. The investigation was undertaken as part of academic research to test the veracity of an area of archaeological interest located on Google Earth mapping. The investigation was to test the possibility that with industry-standard GPS an individual Anglo-Saxon grave could be exactly located with the co-ordinates provided by Google Earth. An Archaeological Evaluation was undertaken in order to determine the possible impact of this methodology on any archaeological remains shown by aerial mapping. The work was carried out in accordance with the requirements set out within an Archaeological Specification and Project Design (SWAT 2009).*

*The Archaeological Evaluation consisted of one trench which exposed the exact position of Anglo-Saxon graves as shown on Google Earth mapping (Plate 5).*

*The Archaeological Evaluation has therefore been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Archaeological Specification (SWAT. 2009).*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) were given permission by R W Goddard & Partners to carry out an archaeological evaluation at the above site. The work was carried out in accordance with the requirements set out within an Archaeological Specification (SWAT 2009) and with the permission of the owners of the land. The evaluation was carried out on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2009 with a BBC film crew in attendance.

#### **SITE DESCRIPTION AND TOPOGRAPHY**

The site is located at Bonny Bush Hill and is adjacent on the west slope to the A260 Canterbury to Dover main road.

The village of Kingston, about 1km to the south-west sits in a valley to the west of an north-south aligned chalk ridge. The ridge is about 70m OD overlooking low lying meadows to the west that are fed by the Nailbourne stream. The course of a Roman Road, now the A260 in parts, would have provided a link from Canterbury (Durovernum Cantiacorum) to Dover (Dubris) along this high road. According the British Geological Survey (BGS), the site sits on Upper Chalk

## **RESEARCH BACKGROUND**

The Research Design aims were to:

1. Identify the exact location of individual graves using GPS and Google mapping.
2. Identify the extent of the inhumation cemetery from Google mapping.
3. If possible identify the chronological origins of the site.
4. Contribute to an understanding of Anglo-Saxon burials in the area.

At Kingston there is also a research opportunity to explore the spatial relationship between the known Anglo-Saxon cemeteries and the probable early Saxon village of Kingston.

In undertaking this work the principles set out by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) were adhered to. The IFA defines an excavation as being:

*“A programme of controlled, intrusive fieldwork with defined research objectives which examines, records and interprets archaeological deposits, features and structures and, as appropriate, retrieves artefacts, ecofacts and other remains within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater. The records made and objects gathered during fieldwork are studied and that results of that study published in detail appropriate to that design” (IFA 1999,2).*

Requirements for the archaeological evaluation (SWAT 2009) comprised a trial trench targeting a representative sample of the area with a trench designed to establish if there are any archaeological deposits at the site dating to the Early Medieval period or earlier and whether they may be affected by agricultural or metal detector activity. The results from this evaluation will be used to inform KCCHC, EH and CCC of any further archaeological mitigation measures that may be necessary in connection with the protection of the site.

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

A large number of prehistoric, Romano-British and Saxon sites and find spots are found within the 750m Historic Environment Record (HER) search area.

### **TR 15 SE 18.**

About 150m north of the site. Anglo-Saxon brooch. The foot and pin are missing. Found by Mrs. J. Roberts and Dr. M. Watson in 1962 on surface of a field at approximately TR 19665250: it remains in Mrs. Roberts possession.

### **TR 15 SE 21.**

About 300m from the site. A crouched burial was excavated April 1940 by G. Webster at TR 19895209 (sited from dimensioned sketch map); there were no small finds but the Royal

College of Surgeons dated the skeleton pagan-Saxon. There is nothing to indicate the find spot.

**TR 15 SE 26.**

About 350m from the site. A small Roman cemetery dating from the late 3rd or 4th century onwards was excavated in 1973 at TR 195527 alongside Watling Street. Four cremations and thirteen inhumations were examined, the latter all oriented roughly north west - south east. Grave goods consisted mainly of pottery vessels. Use of the cemetery was thought to have extended well into the 5th century.

**TR 15 SE 32.**

About 200m north of the site at TR 197525. Another? Anglo-Saxon cemetery, near Bishopsbourne, Barham Downs.

**TR 25 SW 14.**

About 650m south-east of the site, an extensive early medieval cemetery that was excavated in 1767-73 by Faussett and by Thomas Wright in the 19th century. Further excavations at the site took place in the 20th century. The excavations revealed an extensive cemetery containing over 300 burials. More than 180 were byroad in wooden coffins and most marked by small mounds, or barrows. Almost all were buried with their heads to the west. Numerous grave goods have been recovered including weapons, beads, Christian crosses and glass vessels. The most striking find was the famous 'Kingston Brooch' from a large mound containing the burial of a small woman. Fashioned of gold, with settings of garnet, blue glass and shell, its quality and condition are superb - even the back of the brooch is fabulous. It has been dated to the 7th century. The brooch's quality demonstrates the high level of skill of the craftsmen around Faversham where the brooch probably originated – a truly Kentish masterpiece.

**AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The purpose of the evaluation, as set out within the SWAT Archaeological Specification (2009) was to:

- a) ascertain the extent, depth below ground surface, depth of deposit, character, date, significance and condition of any archaeological remains on site;
- b) establish the extent to which previous agricultural activity and/or other processes have affected archaeological deposits at the site; and
- c) establish the likely impact on archaeological deposits by ploughing and metal detector activity

Specific aims of the archaeological work were set out in the Archaeological Specification (2009).

“The aim of this initial phase of evaluation work is to determine whether any significant archaeological remains survive on site. Assessment of the results should provide guidance on what mitigation measures would be appropriate. Such measures may include further detailed archaeological excavation ahead of any proposed development; and/or an archaeological watching briefs during farming work. This specification sets out the requirements for trial trenching on site. Further mitigation measures will be subject to other documents or specifications which will need to be agreed with EH/KCCH/CCC.”

Trial trenching was carried out on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2009, of one trench measuring 3m in width and 17m in length (see below). Trench location was agreed prior to the excavation between RW Goddard and Partners and SWAT Archaeology. The trench was initially scanned for surface finds prior to excavation. Excavation was carried out using a tracked 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, removing the overburden to the top of the first recognisable archaeological horizon, or natural, under the constant supervision of an experienced archaeologist. The trench was subsequently hand-cleaned to reveal features in plan and carefully selected cross-sections through the features, but not the burials, were excavated to enable sufficient information about form, development, date and stratigraphic relationships to be recorded without prejudice to more extensive investigations, should these

## **METHODOLOGY**

prove to be necessary. All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the SWAT Archaeology specification.

A single context recording system was used to record the deposits, and context recording numbers (CRN) were assigned to all deposits and cuts for recording purposes; these are used in the report and shown in bold.

## **RESULTS**

### **Trench 1**

(3m x 17m)

Trench 1 was located to the west of the A260 and north-east of the village of Kingston (Fig. 1) and was aligned north-west/south-east (Fig. 2). A thin deposit of humic dark brown-grey chalky topsoil (**001**) up to 0.60m deep covered the natural chalk (**011**). Once the topsoil had been stripped and after hand-cleaning of the exposed chalk surface seven grave cuts were apparent (Plate 1) enclosed on the north-west by a perimeter ditch (**009**). Both the perimeter ditch (DWG 3) and the seven grave cuts can be seen in some clarity on Google Earth (Plate 5&6). The perimeter ditch [**009**] was sectioned on the south-west (DWG 2) and north-east



(DWG 1) and its fill (010) comprised a mix of humic dark brown chalky infill with chalk and flint nodules. The cut [009] was irregular and shallow (Fig. 4).

All seven graves have been truncated by ploughing action with Graves 003 and 002 being left particularly shallow at about 90mm in depth. Grave 003 (Plate 2) was cleaned and found to be empty. Grave 002 (Plate 4) contained a residue of bone and displaced artefacts which was sieved and the small amount of bone replaced in the grave and the artefacts kept for identification and dating.

Grave 001 was partly excavated with the landowners permission at the west end to confirm the grave was occupied. The fill was a mix of humic dark brown chalky infill with numerous small to medium nodules of chalk. The top of a skull was exposed just 220mm under the level of the chalk (Plate 3) at 77.21m OD with the surrounding chalk surface at about 77.43m OD. Although a Licence for the Removal of Human Remains (Licence Number 09-0191) had been obtained no further work was carried out and the grave back-filled.

#### **FINDS-** Ian Riddler

The four objects recovered from the grave (002) consist of a copper alloy buckle, a copper alloy sheet metal pin, an iron knife and a nail. The buckle (01) is complete and rectangular in shape, the three broad surfaces including a central band decorated with a stamped pattern of triangles and dots enclosed within an incised frame. The buckle tongue has a schematic animal head terminal. Rectangular buckles are rarely found in early Anglo-Saxon England. They form Marzinzik's type I.6a, of which only ten examples are known, stemming from seven cemeteries, two of which (Dover Buckland and Mill Hill at Deal) are located in Kent, with others from Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, and one example from East Anglia (Evison 1987, 89; Marzinzik 2003, 24-5). This is the largest and most elaborate buckle of the entire group, which as a whole includes buckles extending in date from the mid-sixth century to the early seventh-century, although the majority belong to the sixth century (Marzinzik 2003, 25). Similar buckles occur on the Continent but the majority are small and plain, and lack the elaboration of this example (Siegmond 1998, 40; Nieveler and Siegmund 1999, fig 1.8). Thus this could be a Frankish buckle, but is more likely to be an Anglo-Saxon version of a Frankish form. A section of thin copper alloy sheet (02), rolled diagonally to form a tube, forms part of a pin of a type seen also at Dover Buckland (Evison 1987, 83 and fig 4.1.3). It is likely to be a pin, rather than a lace tag. Lace tags were also formed of sheet metal but they are noticeably shorter, as seen with the sample from Finglesham, all of which are 30mm or less in length (Hawkes and Grainger 2003, figs 2.94.2, 2.125.10.1 and 2.130.9).

The iron knife (03) is a typical product of the early Anglo-Saxon period. It can be assigned to type A1 (Drinkall and Foreman 1998, 279 and fig 136), the most common type found in England from the fifth century onwards, and it cannot be closely dated. The tang is incomplete but the blade is just over 80mm in length, which places it within the smallest of the knife groups established by Härke (1989, table 1; 1992, 89-91). Contemporary knives from

Dover Buckland have blade lengths of 58 – 312mm, those from the cemetery at Cuxton vary between 53 – 163mm and the Saltwood sample extends from 54 – 230mm (Riddler forthcoming). This particular knife lies therefore towards the shorter end of the scale, in terms of those found within Kent cemeteries. Traces of mineralised horn remain on one side of the tang (Figure 01); most knives of this period included horn handles. A tapering iron shaft (04) stems from a nail, given its square section; the head is now missing. Iron nails were found in at least nine of the Kingston graves excavated by Faussett, usually in groups of four to five. Smaller nails similar to this example have been discovered as single finds in graves at Bifrons, Dover Buckland, Holborough and Riseley (Evison 1956, 123; 1987, 99; Cumberland 1938).

Penn has noted that where knives and buckles occur as the only goods in a burial this is often a characteristic of male graves (Penn 2001, 55) but the presence of a pin as well in this particular grave effectively changes the gender, given that they mostly occur in the burials of females (Evison 1987, 82). Thus female gender is more likely here and the pin was probably located at or near to the neck originally, whilst the other grave goods would have lain in the area of the waist. The dating of the grave is based on the buckle alone, which can be placed in the period c AD 550 – 625, and it is likely that this was a grave deposited in the later sixth century.

The small finds will be returned to the landowner who will need to make arrangements for conservation, photography, illustration, and no doubt a loan agreement with Canterbury Museum. It is advised that any metal-detector permissions for the site be undertaken with the knowledge of the Small Finds Officer from KCC as part of the Portable Antiquities Scheme.

## **CONCLUSION**

The use of excellent aerial photography supplied free on the internet by Google Earth combined by industry standard GPS will enable any visible archaeological feature to be pinpointed in the field. The location of the perimeter ditch and individual graves at Kingston will allow focused academic research to expand on this data and enable researchers to explore the spatial distribution of archaeological sites on the chalk down-land from Canterbury to Dover. Of Kingston Anglo-Saxon cemetery itself, the retrieval of artefacts suggest an date of the late 6<sup>th</sup> century and the orientation of Grave 001 with the head to the west, does suggest a Christian burial. Indeed it seems from the aerial photograph that most of the cemetery is also orientated east-west. All five of the objectives of the Research Design have now been fulfilled.

## **DISCUSSION**

The evaluation carried out at Bonny Bush Hill, Kingston confirmed that with the recent availability of excellent aerial photographs on the internet, and with GPS input the

archaeological resource in some areas of Kent landscape is at risk and will enable illegal or legal removal of treasure and priceless artefacts with or without the landowners permission.

SWAT would like to thank R W Goddard & Partners and the BBC for commissioning the project. Thanks are also extended to Heritage and Conservation (Kent County Council) for their HER advice and assistance. Ian Riddler for the small finds data. Paul Wilkinson, Peter Cichy and James Madden carried out the archaeological fieldwork; illustrations were produced by Jonny Madden at *Digitise This*.

Dr Paul Wilkinson 12<sup>th</sup> February 2010

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## REFERENCES

- The Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries of Kent. Andrew Richardson: 2005
- Archaeological Evaluation specification and Research Design for Kingston, Kent, SWAT Archaeology. 2009
- Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) Rev (2008) *Standard and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation*.
- Inventorium Sepulchrale*. Bryan Faussett: 1773
- Kent Landscape Information System website: [www.extranet7.kent.gov.uk/klis/home.htm](http://www.extranet7.kent.gov.uk/klis/home.htm)

## APPENDIX 1 – Kent County Council SMR Summary Form

<b>Site Name:</b> <i>Bonny Bush Hill, Kingston, near Canterbury in Kent</i> <b>SWAT Site Code:</b> <i>KING-EV-09</i>	
<b>Site Address:</b> <i>As above</i>	
<b>Summary:</b>  <i>Swale &amp; Thames Survey Company (SWAT) carried out an archaeological research evaluation at the above site to confirm the survival of Anglo-Saxon graves and their condition.</i> <i>The Archaeological Evaluation consisted of one trench which revealed seven grave cuts. On investigation one grave contained an inhumation with the head to the west in a grave orientated east-west. Grave goods suggest a date of the late 6<sup>th</sup> century.</i>	
<b>District/Unitary:</b> <i>Canterbury</i>	<b>Parish:</b> <i>Kingston</i>
<b>Period(s):</b> <i>Early Medieval</i>	
<b>NGR (centre of site : 8 figures):</b> <b>(NB if large or linear site give multiple NGRs):</b> <i>NGR 1977 5225</i>	
Type of archaeological work (delete) <i>Evaluation</i>	

Date of Recording: <i>Nov 2009</i>	
Unit undertaking recording: <i>Swale &amp; Thames Survey Company (SWAT)</i>	
Geology: <i>Upper Chalk</i>	
Title and author of accompanying report: <i>Dr Paul Wilkinson</i>	
<b>Summary of fieldwork results (begin with earliest period first, add NGRs where appropriate)</b>  <i>As above</i>	
<b>(cont. on attached sheet)</b>	
Location of archive/finds: <i>SWAT</i>	
Contact at Unit: <i>Paul Wilkinson</i>	Date: <i>February 2010</i>

## **ARCHIVE STORAGE AND CURATION**

### **Museum**

The project archive will be deposited with Canterbury Museum under accession number KING09/2010

### **Archive Storage**

The project archive, consists of

One A4 file containing the paper records and drawings;  
A box of finds;  
Digital data (site photographs, survey data, word-processed files)

It is currently held at the offices of SWAT Archaeology at School Farm Oast, Graveney Road, Faversham under the project code 09/2010.

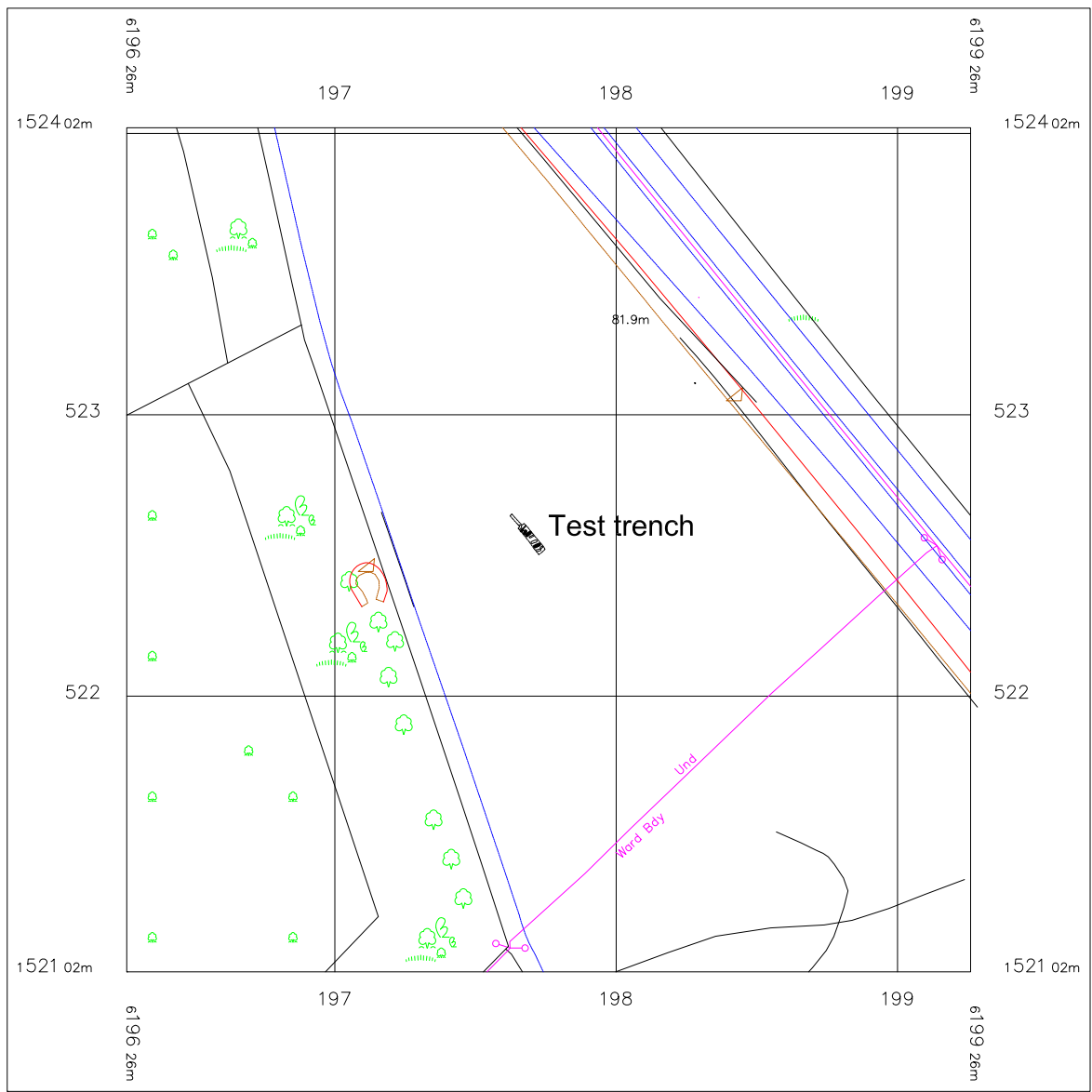
The project archive will be prepared following the 'Procedures for deposit of archaeological archives' and deposited with Canterbury Museum. In general our archive procedures follow nationally recommended guidelines (Walker 1990; SMA 1995; Richards and Robinson 1998; Brown 2007).

### **Copyright**

The full copyright of the written/illustrative archive relating to the site will be retained by SWAT Archaeology under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act* 1988 with all rights reserved. The Museum, however, will be granted an exclusive licence for the use of the archive for educational purposes, including academic research, providing that such use shall be non-profit making, and conforms to the Copyright and Related Rights regulations 2003.

### **Security Copy**

In line with current best practice, on completion of the project a security copy of the paper records will be prepared, in the form of a report printed on acid-free paper. The master CD and PDF and another copy of the report will be submitted to the National Monuments Record Centre (Swindon). A second CD and PDF copy will be deposited with the paper records at Canterbury Museum, and a third copy will be retained by SWAT Archaeology.



Scale 1:2500@A4



© Crown Copyright 2010  
 Reproduction in whole or in part is prohibited  
 without the prior permission of Ordnance Survey.

Figure 1: Site Location Plan showing trench location and linear features visible on ground; Scale 1:2500

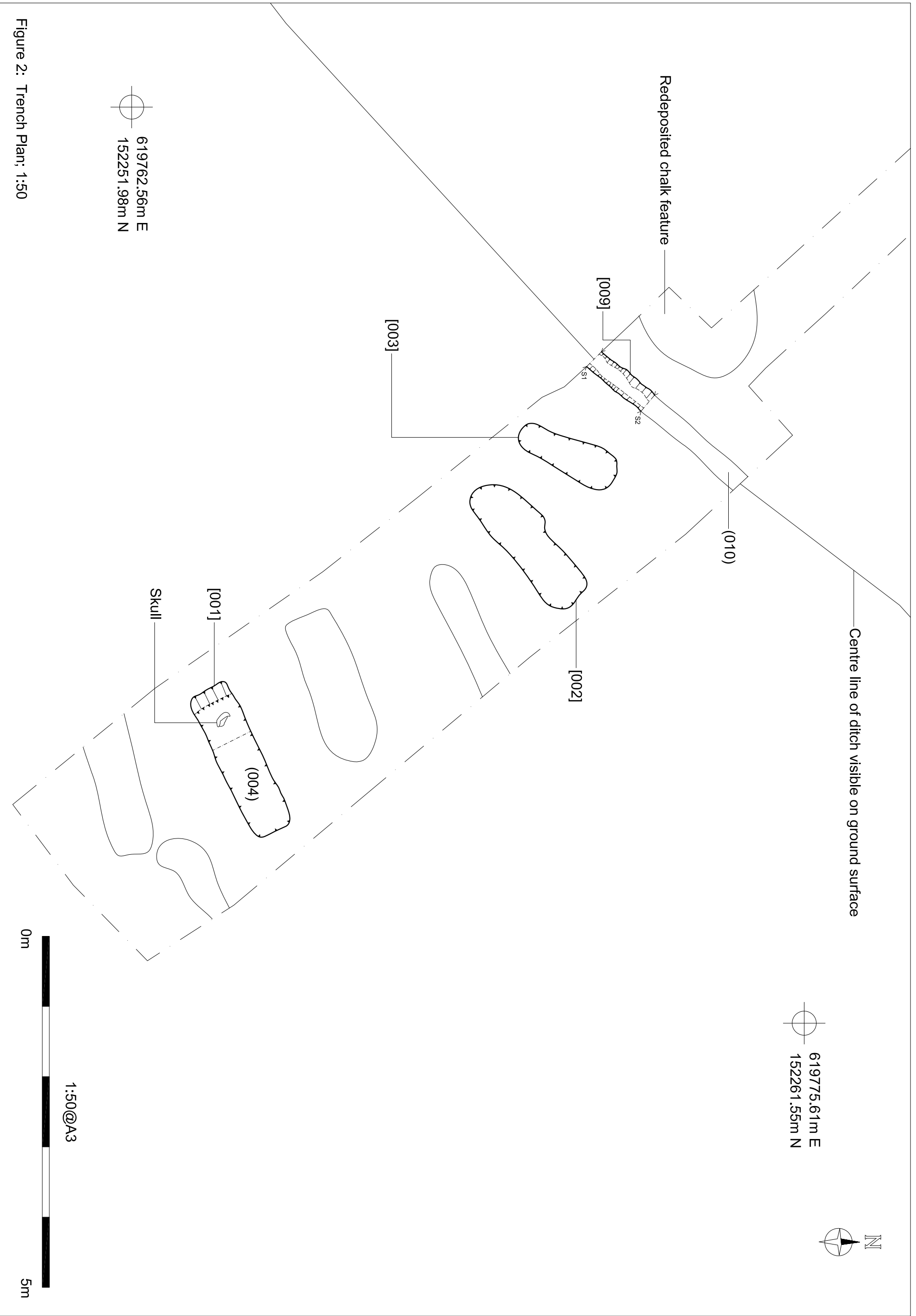
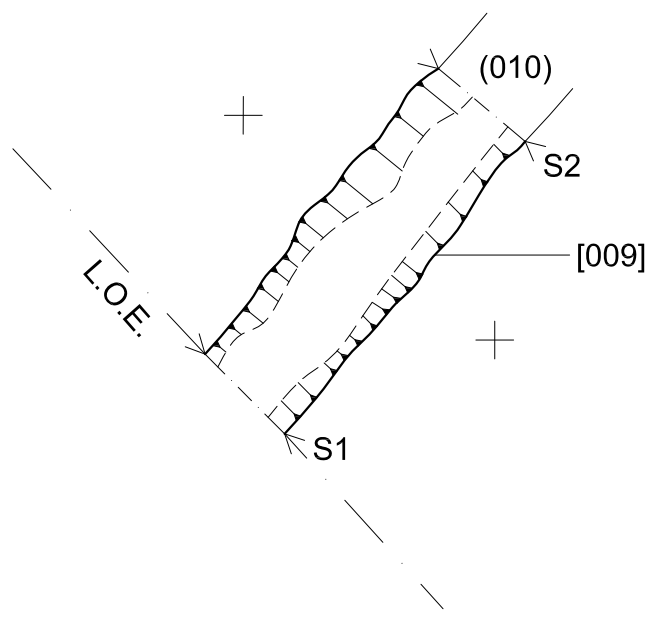


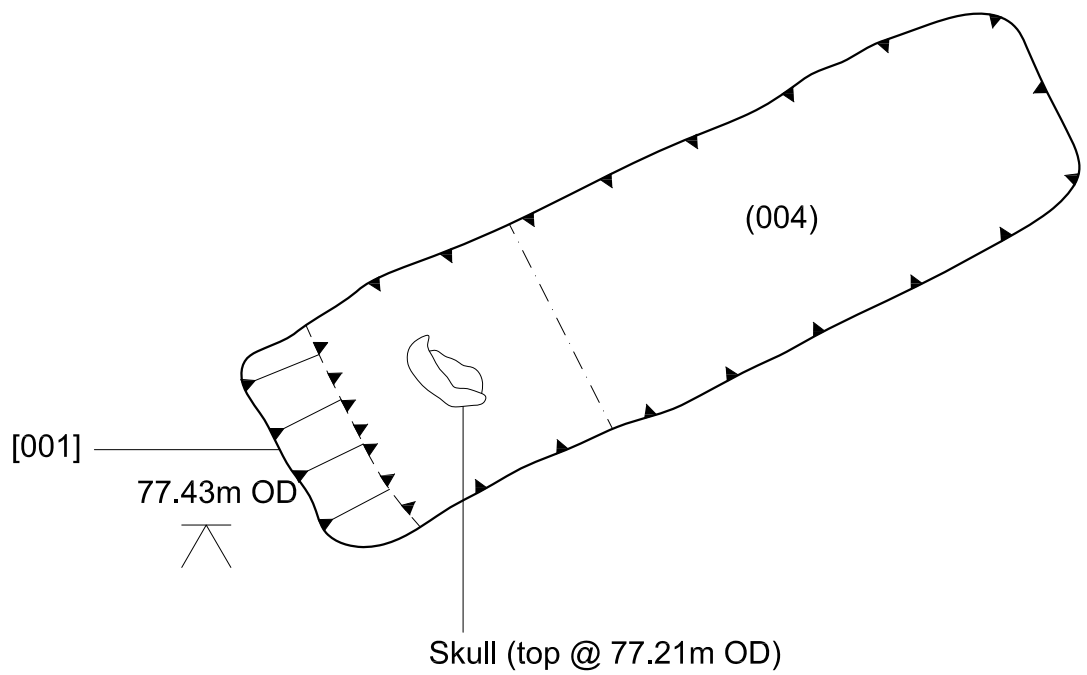
Figure 2: Trench Plan; 1:50



DWG 3; Plan of ditch [009]



DWG 4; Plan of [001]



1:20@A4



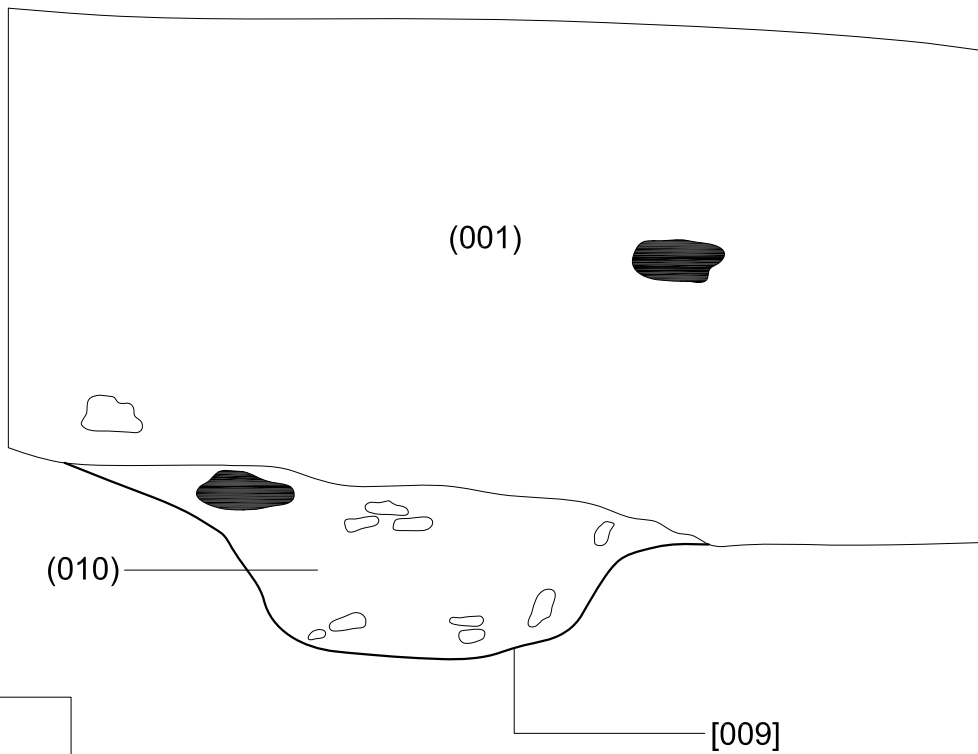
Figure 3: Plans; 1:20





DWG 1; North east facing section of ditch [009]

SE  
77.11m OD

NW



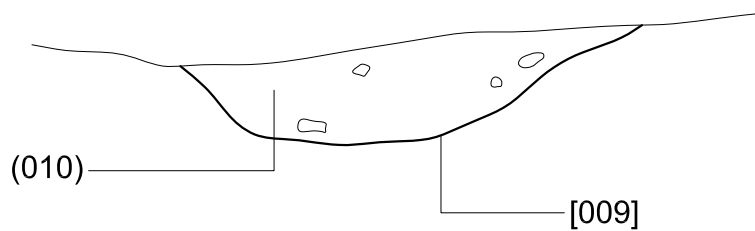
Key:

	Chalk
	Flint

DWG 2; South west facing section of ditch [009]

NW  
77.14m OD

SE



1:10@A4

Figure 4: Sections; 1:10

0m

1m





**Plate 1.** Trench One facing north-west.  
Bonny Bush Hill road is to the left (west)  
and the A 260 to the right (east).  
At least six grave cuts can be seen with  
Grave 002 in the centre of the photograph.



**Plate 2.** Grave 003 (left).  
Orientated towards the west, and  
much truncated by ploughing.



**Plate 3.** Grave 001 (below).  
Orientated with the skull at the west  
end of the grave..



**Plate 4.** Grave 002 facing south, orientated east-west with disturbed bone and grave goods.



**Plate 5.** Google aerial photograph of the Anglo Saxon cemetery at Kingston. Individual graves can be identified as can the perimeter ditch.