An Archaeological Evaluation on land at Senacre Technology College, Maidstone, Kent

January 2009

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NGR: 577993 152646

Site Code:STC-EV-09

Report for

Redrow Homes

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SUMMARY

In January 2009 Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) carried out an additional archaeological evaluation on land at the Senacre Technology College in Maidstone in Kent. A planning application (PAN: MA/07/0947) for the construction of a new residential development at the above site had been submitted to Maidstone Borough Council whereby Kent County Council Heritage and Conservation (KCCHC), on behalf of Maidstone Borough Council requested that an Archaeological Evaluation be undertaken in order to determine the possible impact of the development on any archaeological remains. The additional work was carried out in accordance with the requirements set out within an Archaeological Specification (KCCHC 2008) and in discussion with the Archaeological Officer, Kent County Council.

The Archaeological Evaluation encountered no archaeological features in any of the five trenches suggesting that there are no archaeological remains surviving within the site. As stated in Britchfield (2007-2) and independently noted here, It is likely that Groundworks and landscaping associated with the construction of the school and the playing fields, are likely to have removed any archaeology that was present.

The Archaeological Evaluation has therefore been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Specification. Despite the numerous trenches of the two phases of the evaluation no archaeological remains were seen and as a result the proposed development presents little or no threat to the local archaeological resource.

INTRODUCTION

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) was commissioned by Redrow Homes to carry out an archaeological evaluation at the above site. The work was carried out in two phases in accordance with the requirements set out within Archaeological Specifications (KCCHC 2007 and 2008) and in discussion with the Archaeological Officer, Kent County Council. The first phase of the evaluation was carried out between the 13th and 24th August 2007 (Britchfield, 2007 (2)) with this, the concluding phase carried out between the 23rd and the 27th January 2009.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND TOPOGRAPHY

Maidstone is located approximately 7km south of the Medway Towns and 16km east of Sevenoaks, adjacent to the southern extent of the North Downs. The proposed development site is situated approximately 3km to the south of the town's historic core (NGR: 577993

152646), adjacent to the southern side of Sutton Road. The site measures 7.82 hectares and is currently occupied by a secondary education technology college. The majority of the site has been landscaped to form level playing fields, tennis courts and sand pits. The college is situated within the northern most half of the site, covering approximately 30% of the total area. Mature trees grow around the perimeter of the site. The site lies at a height of approximately 94m and is situated on the Geological Hythe Beds Formation.

PLANNING BACKGROUND

A planning application (PAN: MA/07/0947) for the construction of a new residential development at the above site was submitted to Maidstone Borough Council. Kent County Council Heritage and Conservation (KCCHC), on behalf of Maidstone Borough Council, requested that an Archaeological Evaluation be undertaken in order to determine the possible impact of the development on any archaeological remains. The following condition was advised on the planning consent:

i *No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of archaeological field evaluation works in accordance with a specification and written timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority;*

and

ii *following on from the evaluation, any safeguarding measures to ensure preservation in situ of important archaeological remains and/or further archaeological investigation and recording in accordance with a specification and timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.*

Requirements for the archaeological evaluation comprised trial trenching designed to establish whether there are any archaeological deposits at the site that may be affected by the proposed development. The results from this phase of the evaluation will be used alongside those from the previous phase (Britchfield, 2007-2) to inform KCCHC and Maidstone Borough Council of any further archaeological mitigation measures that may be necessary in connection with the development proposals.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

This has been covered in great detail in both the Desk-based assessment, (Britchfield, 2007-1) and the Evaluation report of the first phase works, (Britchfield, 2007-2) and so here it is intended only to give a précis of the salient points.

Neolithic finds have been recovered from the surrounding landscape indicating activity in this

area from at least this time. The next records of activity in this area date from the Iron Age, where Iron Age structures have been located immediately to the west of the present site. Occupation appears to have continued into the Roman Period as foundations of buildings of this period were found in the nineteenth century in close proximity to the site. The contemporaneous Boughton Monchelsea Oppida, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, is located around a kilometre to the south and an undated earthwork to the west, may be associated with this. Later activity appears to be focussed south of the site with Migration and early Medieval period activity being recorded just to the south of the present site and later Medieval and Post-Medieval buildings being recorded further to the south along the banks of the Loose Stream.

The site of Senacre Technology College appears to have been undeveloped woodland immediately prior to the construction of the school, it is possible that this may have had an impact on any buried archaeological resource that may have existed before the extensive groundworks and landscaping that were undertaken during the construction of the school.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this phase of the evaluation, as set out with the Archaeological Specification (2008) was to:

"i) establish whether there are any archaeological deposits at the site that may be affected by the proposed development. The excavation is thus to ascertain the extent, depth below ground surface, depth of deposit, character, significance and condition of any archaeological remains on site.

ii) establish the extent to which previous development on the site has affected archaeological deposits."

"Particular issues that should be addressed by the evaluation include:

- Is there any further evidence of Romano-British and iron Age in the development area? How does this relate to previous findings within the surrounding area, such as the road and earthworks? Does the activity inform further on the location and character of settlement of this period in the area?
- Is there any evidence for early prehistoric and/or medieval activity within the development area?
- Is there any evidence for (the)*sic* post-medieval activity on the site?
- Has modern disturbance connected with the construction of the school reduced archaeological potential?
- What impact will the development proposals have on any buried archaeology?"

(KCCHC 2008)

METHODOLOGY

Trial trenching was carried out on 21st January 2009, with the excavation of five trenches measuring 1.8m in width (see below). Trench location was agreed prior to the excavation between KCCHC and SWAT. The trenches were initially scanned for surface finds prior to excavation. Excavation was carried out using a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, removing the overburden to the top of natural soil or the first recognisable archaeological horizon, under the constant supervision of an experienced archaeologist. Trenches were subsequently hand-cleaned to reveal features in plan and carefully selected cross-sections through the features identified were excavated to enable sufficient information about form, development date and stratigraphic relationships to be recorded without prejudice to more extensive investigations, should these prove to be necessary. All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the specification and to IfA Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (2008).

A single context recording system was used to record the deposits. A full list is presented in Appendix 1. Layers and fills are recorded (**100**). The cut of the feature is shown [**100**]. Context numbers were assigned to all deposits for recoding purposes; these are used in the report and shown in bold.

MONITORING

Curatorial monitoring was carried out during the course of the evaluation.

RESULTS

A common stratigraphic sequence had already been recognised across the site comprising topsoil/turf overburden over a disturbed/rotated natural which then gave way to the natural Hythe Beds. This sequence was, unsurprisingly, evident in trenches 5 and 6 which lay in the area covered by the previous phase of the evaluation. Trenches 1, 3 and 4 showed different sequences of stratigraphy, mainly comprising building materials overlying truncated natural, but this was solely due to their proximity to the more developed parts of the school grounds. Trench 1 was shortened by 3.5m due to machine operability in a confined space, Trench 2 was not excavated owing to the presence of large numbers of live electric cables which were picked up by a sweep with a CAT scanner and Trench 3 was shortened by 3.5m owing to water mains. In order to make up for this lost area, Trenches 5 and 6 were extended by a total of 18.5m. This was agreed as a suitable answer to these problems during the curatorial visit. Features were numbered whether archaeological or not to assist with the planning of the trenches.

Trench 1

(16.60m x 1.8m)

Trench 1 was located immediately adjacent to the main reception of the school which is in the North-east portion of the development area. This trench was aligned approximately northeast-

southwest, this trench was positioned to identify and confirm the impact caused during development of the school buildings. It measured 16.60m in length and contained two natural features, [105] and [107] and modern features including [103] and [109]. The natural features were numbered as initially they had the appearance of pits filled with stone, but upon excavation they were revealed to be areas where the solid elements of the Hythe Beds protruded through the natural soil matrix. Features [103] and [109] were recorded because of their prominence in the trench, [103] being a depression filled with a dense grey clay and the second being the remains of a kerb line related to the car park. The natural was present and in the northwest corner remained untruncated as this was in proximity to protected trees. Above the natural was seen almost half a metre of organic rich silt clay (100), this was interpreted as a remnant of the original woodland floor which would have covered the entire site.

Trench 2

This was not excavated owing to the presence of electrical services.

Trench 3

(12m x 1.8m)

Trench 3 was placed in the north east corner of the school grounds, It was originally intended to be on the west side of the perimeter road, however, again cables were found and the trench was moved into an area of parking bays on the east side of the road and adjacent to an electricity sub-station. Here the natural was found, but was seen to be heavily truncated and overlain by modern materials such as a redeposited and contaminated soil, (302) a layer of substrate, (301) and a top layer of tarmac, (300). The south eastern end was found to contain water pipes, so the trench did not reach natural here and was backfilled immediately.

Trench 4

(21.50m x 1.8m)

Trench 4 was placed across a parking area some 50m to the south of Trench 3 in a hope to find an area of relatively undisturbed soil. This trench contained, at the north end, below the tarmac, (400), a 2m length of services and the modern substrates protecting these, (402), (403) and (404) after this point the trench was deepened, but only by 0.10 – 0.20m to completely remove the hardcore substrate (401). At this point the excavation reached natural soils. These were once again heavily truncated with no sign of the original topsoil; these had traces of the solid elements of the Hythe Beds protruding through as was seen in Trench 1. No archaeological features were observed.

Trench 5

(27.40m x 1.8m)

Trench 5 was placed approximately 250m to the south of Trench 4 in an area of the playing fields that was out of bounds for the previous evaluation. No archaeological features were

seen in this trench and only three features were given numbers, all of which turned out to be associated with either tree root disturbance, [505] or natural silting [503] and [507]. The overlying sequence of the soils in this area was (500) which was a topsoil which lay above the natural. Between the two was an intermittent interface layer which was heavily disturbed and was presumed to be the rotavated layer mentioned in Britchfield, (2007-2), in this trench this was included in context (500).

Trench 6

(31.20m x 1.8m)

Trench 6 was placed at 90° to Trench 5 and was in the same area. No archaeological features were seen in this trench and the soil make up was exactly the same as Trench 5 with a good topsoil, (600), overlaying a more distinct rotavated interface, here given a separate context number, (601), which in turn was above the natural soils.

FINDS

No archaeological finds were recovered during the course of the evaluation.

DISCUSSION

This evaluation carried out on land around Senacre Technology College did not encounter archaeological remains. As mentioned in Britchfield, (2007-2) p5, the groundworks for the construction of the school and its playing fields would have had an, "...impact depth of at least 0.5m." This was proven by the western section in Trench 1 where around 0.50m of woodland soils had been lost plus an unknown amount of the natural below. No features of archaeological origin were seen during this evaluation, but it does not mean that they did not exist, but have been previously removed.

CONCLUSION

The archaeological evaluation has been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Specification. Despite the archaeological potential of the surrounding area no buried archaeological remains were present within the excavated trenches suggesting that, together with the results from the 2007 evaluation, the proposed development presents little or no impact upon the local archaeological resource.

This evaluation has therefore assessed the archaeological potential of land intended for development. The results from this work will be used to aid and inform the Archaeological Officer (KCCHC) of any further archaeological mitigations measures that may be necessary in connection with the development proposals.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SWAT would like to thank Redrow Homes for commissioning the project. Thanks are also extended to Heritage and Conservation (Kent County Council) for their advice and assistance. Geoff Morley and Paul Wilkinson carried out archaeological fieldwork, illustrations were produced by Jonny Madden. This report was edited and collated by Paul Wilkinson.

G. Morley MSc FSA Scot PIfA
February 2009

Sent Adam Feb 10th

REFERENCES

Britchfield, D. (2007) (1) S*enacre Technical College, Sutton Road, Maidstone, Kent: An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment*. Swale & Thames Archaeological Survey Company.

Britchfield, D. (2007) (2) *Archaeological Evaluation at Senacre Technical College, Sutton Road, Maidstone, Kent.* Swale & Thames Archaeological Survey Company.

IfA (2008) *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation*

Kent County Council (KCCHC) (2008) *Specification for an Archaeological Evaluation on Land at Senacre School, Sutton Road in Maidstone,* Kent County Council Heritage & Conservation

Wood C. J., Shephard-Thorn, E. R., Harris, C. S. (2000), *Geology of Kent and the Boulonnais: Historical geology of Kent and the Boulonnais*

CONTENTS OF SITE ARCHIVE

Correspondence

Photographs: Digital photographs 59. SWAT Film nos. 0/36 colour prints, SWAT film nos. 0/27

Photocopies of Ordnance Survey and other maps:

Drawings: Three A3 permatrace site drawings, comprising trench plans and associated sections.

Finds: --------

Context Register including: Context Register (1), Photographic Register (1), Trench Sheets (5) and Context Sheets (28)

APPENDIX 1 - Context Summary

Land at Senacre Technology College, Sutton Road, Maidstone, Kent

Site Code: STC/EV/09

	Context No.	Stratigraphic Extents	Description
Trench 1	(**100**)	0.00-0.50m max	**Turf/topsoil**. Friable mid grey brown silty clay with occasional to moderate inclusions of sub-rounded – angular flints. Probable original woodland soil.
	(**101**)	0.50-0.65m+	**Natural Subsoil**. Mid yellow brown silty clay.
	(**102**)	Fill of [103]	**Deposit.** Hard and very Dense Mid Blue Grey Clay filling shallow hollow [103].
	[103]	0.20m+ depth	**Shallow Depression**
	(104)	Bounded by [105]	**Natural.** Ragstone Outcrop
	[105]	0.20m+ depth	**Delineation of above outcrop.**
	(106)	Bounded by [107]	**Natural.** Ragstone Outcrop
	[107]	0.20m+ depth	**Delineation of above outcrop.**
	(108)	Fill of [109]	**Backfill.** Substrate for pavement, very mixed. Modern
	[109]	0.20m+ depth	**Cut** for Car Park/Pavement

	Context No.	Stratigraphic Extents	Description
Trench 3	(300)	0.00m-0.10m	**Tarmac**
	(301)	0.10m-0.25m	**Substrate for Tarmac.** Med-Large angular stones
	(302)	0.25m-0.50m	**Deposit.** Mid grey Silt clay, possible levelling layer.

	Context No.	Stratigraphic Extents	Description
Trench 4	(400)	0.00m-0.15m	**Tarmac**
	(401)	0.15m-0.35m	**Substrate for Tarmac.** Comprising roughly crushed brick.
	(402)	0.10m+ Depth	**Substrate to North of Service Trench (403)** Comprising Crushed Brick
	(403)	0.10m+ Depth	**Concrete lined Service trench**
	(404)	0.10m+ Depth	**Substrate to South of Service Trench (403)** Comprising crushed Concrete

	Context No.	Stratigraphic Extents	Description
Trench 5	(500)	0.00m-0.30m	**Topsoil** Includes Rotavated Interface.
	(501)	0.00m-0.50m+	**Tree bowl fills (Generic).**
	(502)	Bounded by [503]	**'Weathered' Silty Natural.** Area of Tree Disturbance
	(503)	0.10m Depth	**Boundary of Silty Matrix**
	(504)	Fill of [505]	**Fill.** Dark Organic Tree Bowl fill.
	[505]	0.15m Depth	**'Cut'** Tree Bowl
	(506)	Fill of [507]	**'Fill'.** Silty 'Weathered' Natural;
	[507]	0.25m+ Depth	**Delineation of 'Weathered' Area**

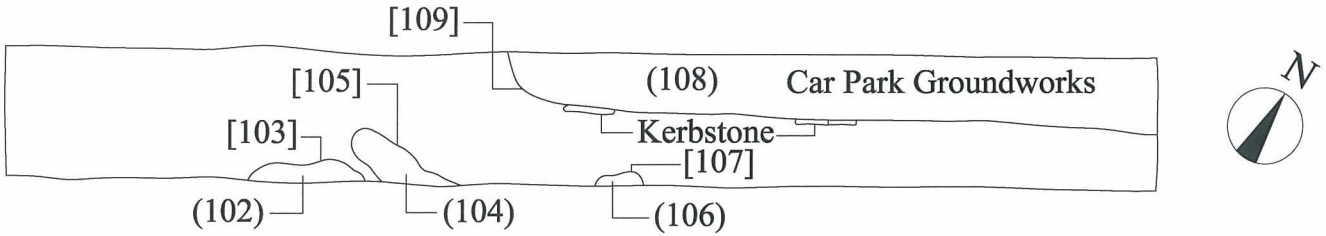
	Context No.	Stratigraphic Extents	Description
Trench 6	(600)	0.00m-0.10m	**Topsoil**
	(601)	0.10m-0.35m	**Rotavated Natural Soil**

APPENDIX 2 – Kent County Council SMR Summary Form

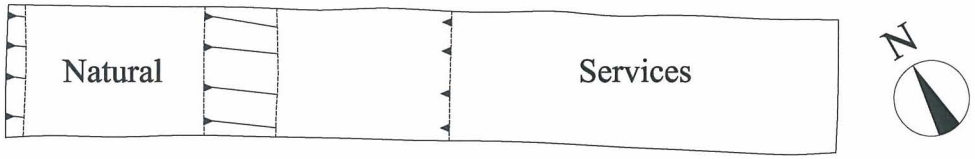
Site Name: *Land at Senacre Technology College, Maidstone* **SWAT Site Code:** *STC-EV-09*	
Site Address: *Sutton Road, Maidstone, Kent*	
Summary: *Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) carried out an archaeological evaluation on land at the Senacre Technology College in Maidstone in Kent. A planning application (PAN: MA/07/0947) for the construction of a new residential development at the above site was submitted to Maidstone Borough Council whereby Kent County Council Heritage and Conservation (KCCHC), on behalf of Maidstone Borough Council requested that an Archaeological Evaluation be undertaken in order to determine the possible impact of the development on any archaeological remains. The work was carried out in accordance with the requirements set out within an Archaeological Specification (KCCHC 2008) and in discussion with the Archaeological Officer, Kent County Council.* *The Archaeological Evaluation encountered no archaeological features in any of the five trenches suggesting that there are no archaeological remains surviving within the site. As stated in Britchfield (2007-2) and independently noted here, It is likely that Groundworks and landscaping associated with the construction of the school and the playing fields, are likely to have removed any archaeology that was present.*	
District/Unitary: *Maidstone Borough*	**Parish:** *Maidstone*
Period(s): **Tentative:** *NA*	
NGR (centre of site : 8 figures): **(NB if large or linear site give multiple NGRs):** *NGR* 577993 152646	
Type of archaeological work (delete) *Evaluation*	
Date of Recording: *January 2009*	
Unit undertaking recording: *Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT)*	
Geology: *Hythe Beds*	
Title and author of accompanying report: **Morley, G. (2009)** An Archaeological Evaluation on land at Senacre Technology College, Maidstone, Kent	
Summary of fieldwork results (begin with earliest period first, add NGRs where appropriate) *As above* **(cont. on attached sheet)**	
Location of archive/finds: *SWAT*	
Contact at Unit: *Paul Wilkinson*	**Date:** *03/03/2009*

Figure 1 - Location of trenches within site of proposed development

Trench 1



Trench 3



Trench 4

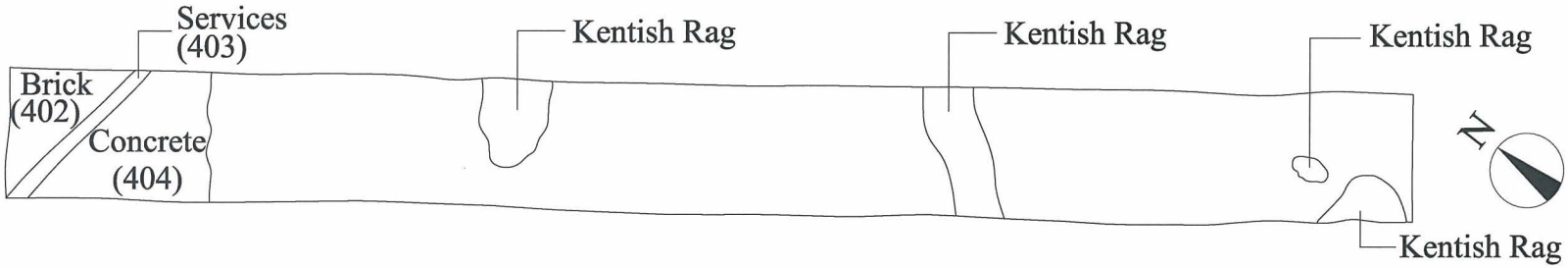
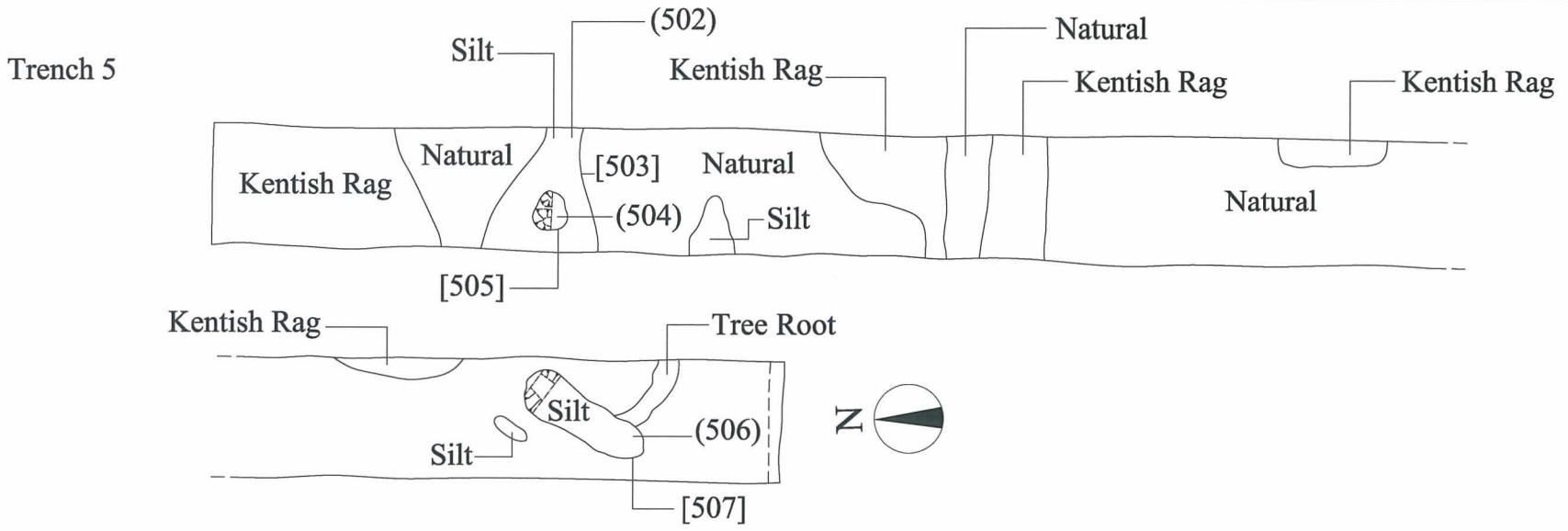


Figure 2: Trenches 1, 3 and 4 - 1:100



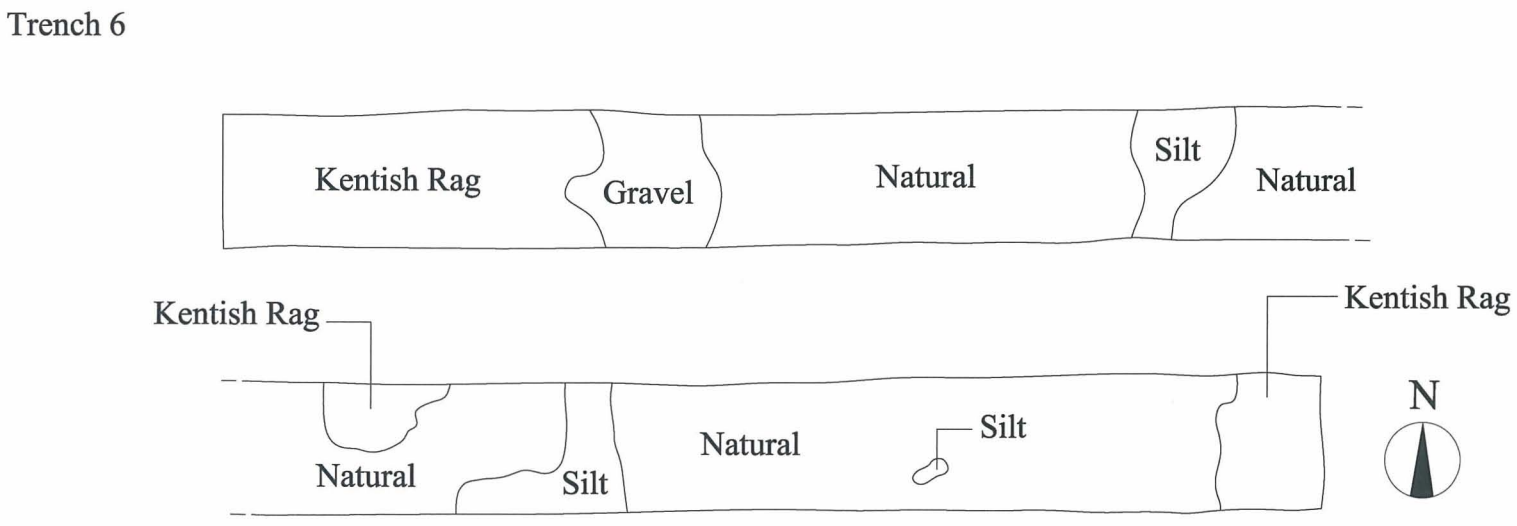
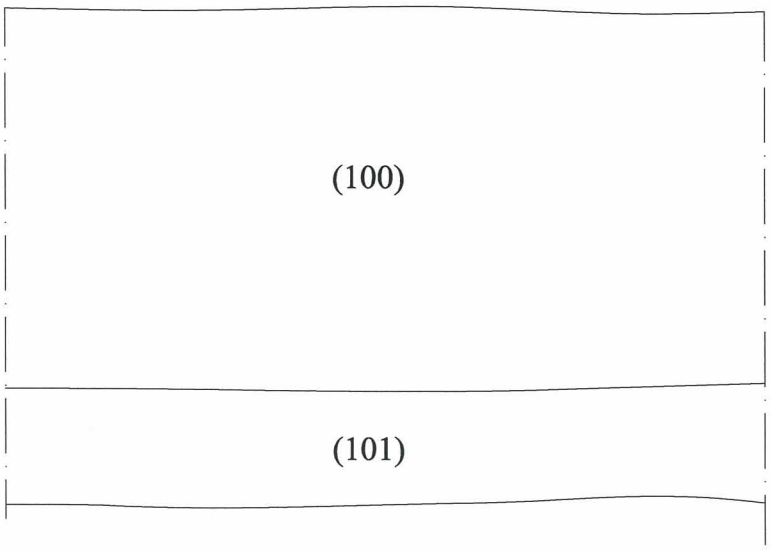


Figure 3: Trenches 5 and 6 - 1:100

Trench 1

West End SE Facing Section



East End NW Facing Section

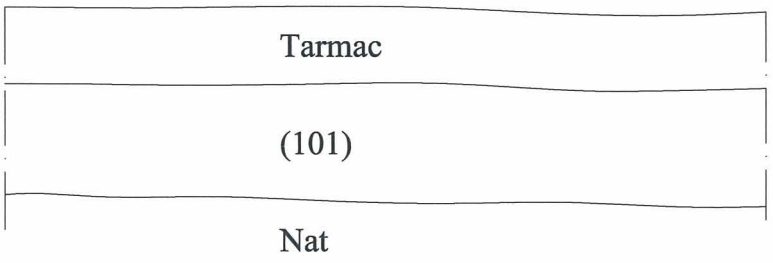


Figure 4: Trench Sections

0m 0.5m

Trench 3

North West End SW Facing Section

South East End SW Facing Section

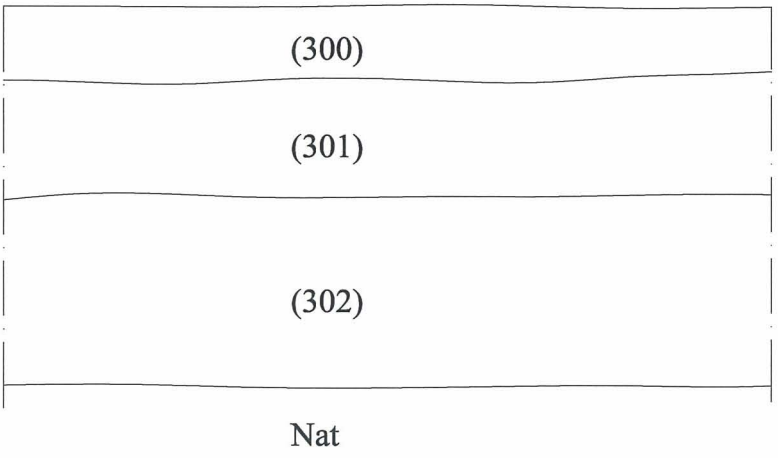


Figure 5: Trench Sections

Trench 4

North West End NE Facing Section

South East End NE Facing Section

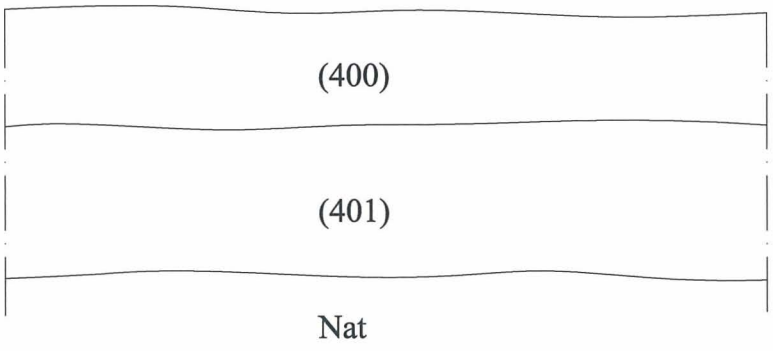
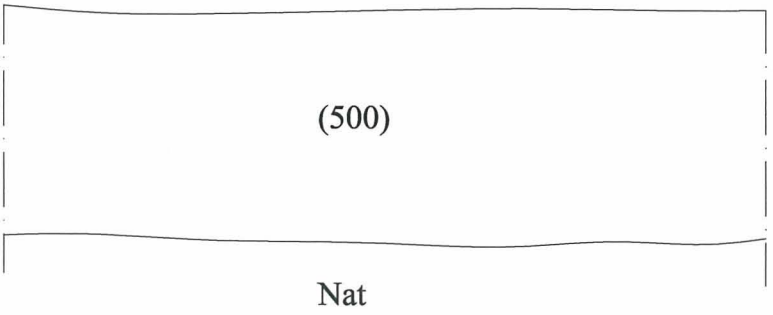


Figure 6: Trench Sections

Trench 5

North End West Facing Section



South End West Facing Section

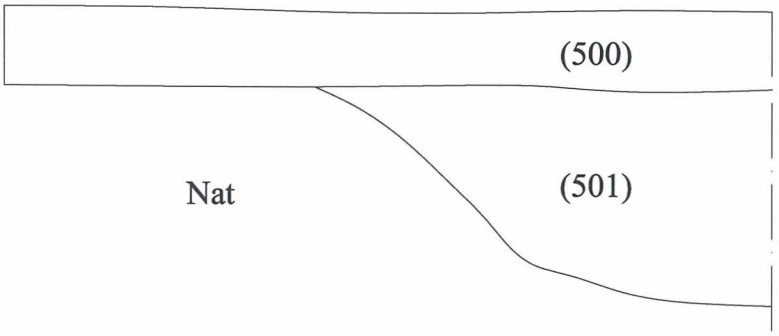
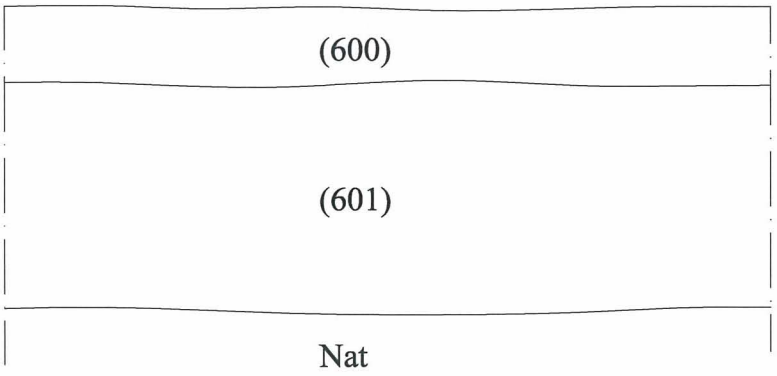


Figure 7: Trench Sections

Trench 6

West End North Facing Section



East End North Facing Section

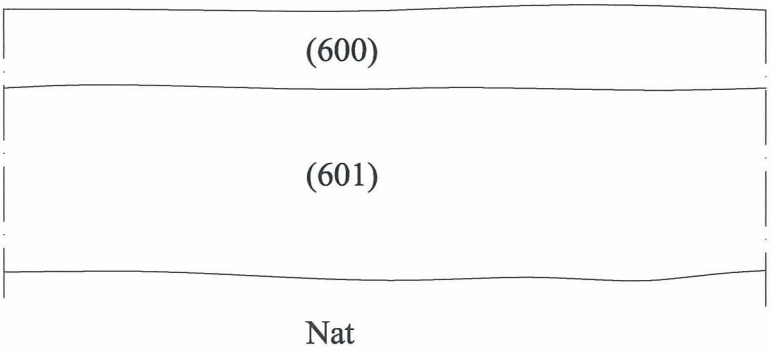


Figure 8: Trench Sections