Archaeological Evaluation on Land at Hever Court Road, Gravesend, Kent

May 2010

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

Archaeological Evaluation and Assessment of Land at Hever Court Road, Singlewell, Gravesend

Archaeological Evaluation

NGR: TQ 6520 7081

Site Code: HCR-EV-10

(Planning Application GR/2006/1087)

Report for

Chartway Group Limited

July 2010 (REVISED)

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SUMMARY

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) carried out an archaeological evaluation and assessment of land at Hever Court Road, Singlewell, Gravesend, Kent, between the 14th April 2010 and 23rd April 2010. Kent County Council Heritage and Conservation (KCCHC), on behalf of Gravesham Borough Council requested that an Archaeological Evaluation be undertaken in order to determine the possible impact of potential development on any archaeological remains. The work was carried out in accordance with pro-forma County requirements as specified by the Archaeological Officer, Kent County Council (KCCHC 2010).

The Archaeological Evaluation consisted of nine trenches which encountered a number of significant archaeological features, including ditches pits and post holes provisionally assigned medieval and post-medieval dates. An impact assessment has concluded that the relatively shallow surviving depth of archaeological features would therefore be under threat from any development within this area, and further archaeological mitigation has been recommended.

INTRODUCTION

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) was commissioned by Chartway Group to carry out an archaeological evaluation and assessment at the above site. The work was carried out in accordance with the requirements set out within an Archaeological Specification (KCC 2010) and in discussion with the Archaeological Heritage Officer, Kent County Council. The evaluation was carried out between the 14th April 2010 and 23rd April 2010.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND TOPOGRAPHY

Hever Court Road is located approximately 2km south of Gravesend and 11km northwest of Rochester, directly adjacent (north) to the former route of the A2 carriageway (NGR: 573899 155286). The development site measures approximately 0.5 hectares (c.5000sq m) in area and was formally open fields bounded on all extents by mature shrubbery at a height of

approximately 60m to 65m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD), sloping gently to the north.

According the British Geological Survey (BGS), the underlying geology of the development site is Upper Chalk covered by various drift deposits, though deposits of Thanet Beds (sands) were also encountered under the drift material. A number of geological soils were encountered during the evaluation including a Calcareous Brown Earth (CBE), a brownish weathered subsurface horizon, resulting from weathering and leaching of the original material and often supported by Head Brickearth. Further thought is given to the nature of the natural geology below.

PLANNING BACKGROUND

Planning Policy Guidance 16: Archaeology and Planning (2001) states:

'Positive planning and management can help to bring about sensible solutions to the treatment of sites with archaeological remains and reduce the areas of potential conflict between development and preservation. Both central government and English Heritage have important roles to play (see Annex 1). But the key to the future of the great majority of archaeological sites and historic landscapes lies with local authorities, acting within the framework set by central government, in their various capacities as planning, education and recreational authorities, as well as with the owners of sites themselves. Appropriate planning policies in development plans and their implementation through development control will be especially important'

(2001:14)

'The needs of archaeology and development can be reconciled, and potential conflict very much reduced, if developers discuss their preliminary plans for development with the planning authority at an early stage. Once detailed designs have been prepared and finance lined up, flexibility becomes much more difficult and expensive to achieve. In their own interests therefore, prospective developers should, in all cases, include as part of their research into the development potential of a site, which they undertake before making a planning application, an initial assessment of whether the site is known or likely to contain archaeological remains. The first step will be to contact the County Archaeological Officer or equivalent who holds the SMR, or English Heritage in London. The SMR provides information about the locations where archaeological remains are known or thought likely to exist. Where important remains are known to exist or where the indications are that the remains are likely to prove important, English Heritage are also ready to join in early discussions and

provide expert advice.
(2001:19)

In accordance with the above planning policy guidelines, Kent County Council Heritage and Conservation (KCCHC) recommended that an archaeological evaluation comprising trial trenching be carried out, targeting a minimum of 4% of the impact area, designed to establish whether there are any archaeological deposits at the site that may be affected by the proposed development. The results from this evaluation will be used to inform KCCHC and Gravesham Borough Council (GBC) of any further archaeological mitigation measures that may be necessary in connection with the development proposals and future planning applications.

Development proposals, at the time of producing this report, comprised the construction of 16 domestic properties with associated services and access. Seven archaeological trenches measuring a minimum of 20m by 2m in width were considered appropriate to adequately evaluate the proposed development site, with a contingency for two further trenches, if considered necessary.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Archaeological Background

The Archaeological record, both in and around Gravesend is extensive, comprising occupation evidence dating from the prehistoric periods through to the industrial post-medieval period. The site has been the subject of an extensive Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (Russell 2008) which concluded that the potential for Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Anglo-Saxon and Post-Medieval remains were low, with the potential for Neolithic and Medieval remains as being moderate. Bronze Age and Romano-British remains were considered medium-high (2008:8.10). The report summary is provided herewith;

'A Desk-Based Assessment has been prepared for a plot of land at Singlewell, in the southeast fringes of Gravesend, Kent. A review of existing archaeological and historical sources suggests that the site has a generally moderate potential overall for containing archaeological deposits, but with a moderate-high potential for the Bronze Age and Romano-British period. This level of potential for the Bronze Age is based on the possibility that the site maybe into a Bronze Age field system, as one has been excavated only 200m to

the south of the site. For the Romano-British period, it is because the study area comprises a considerable number of sites of this date, including a Roman road that runs directly past the site and an enclosed settlement 100m to the southwest of the site, both of which may increase the likelihood of Romano-British material being discovered on the site. The site has a low potential for containing archaeological remains for every other period but the Neolithic and Iron Age, when the potential is moderate, and the medieval period, when it is low-moderate. There is the possibility of encountering boundary features and a temporary shed within the site, which date to the 19th and 20th centuries. Any archaeological deposits to the west side of the site will have been disturbed to some extent by ploughing, whilst those to the east may be similarly impacted upon by the uprooting of an orchard'.
(2008:i)

Historical Background

The Domesday Book, completed in 1086, offers first reference to the area of Gravesend and Northfleet. The book states that Herbert FitzIvo held Gravesend, which consisted of three manors and had land for four ploughs, for the Bishop of Bayeux. Approximately two kilometres south of the study area was Northfleet Manor in the Tollingtrough Hundred, which was held in *demesne* by the Archbishop of Canterbury. A *demesne* was land kept exclusively for the use of the Lord of the Manor, in this case, the Archbishop Lanfranc. The Manor was occupied by thirty-six villains and seven slaves, and consisted of twenty acres of meadow, land for fourteen ploughs, woodland for twenty pigs, a mill and a fishery.

Singlewell was one of two parishes, the other being Ifield, on either side of the A2/Watling Street The name 'Singlewell' appears as 'dela Chinglede Welle' in 1240 and Schingelwell in 1278. On the 20th of January 1331 a Royal Charter was granted to Thomas de Heure for a market every week on Monday at his manor of Shyngeldewell and a fair to be held every year for two days on the vigil and day of St. Lawrence (10 August). According to the author Rev. Ffinch, an annual fair was held in a field opposite the George Inn until about 1870. Edward Hasted references Ifield in 'the 21st year of King Edward I (i.e., 1298) when some of the tenants of the village tried to escape attendance at the Sheriff's Court by claiming they were in the lowy of Tonbridge, but were unsuccessful as Richard Earl of Gloucester disclaimed them. In the same reign there was reference to a 'Fine' which was a form of fictitious proceedings relating to land at 'Shyngledwell de domino Bertrando de Crycle', this being the earliest reference to SInglewell.

In Wallenberg's *The Place Names of Kent,* the author offers two suggestions for the origin of Shinglewell, either a spring, on which the bed was covered in small pebbles, i.e., shingles, or that the well was protected by a covering of shingles or wooden tiles. The idea that the village only contained one well is untrue, and relates to the misspelling of the original 'Shinglewell'. When the author Kenneth Ffinch first visited Singlewell in 1912, he counted at least eleven wells. 'Shancuntewelle' and 'Shanconteswell' are two further spellings found in conjunction with the references given above. There was one well in particular from which the idea of a 'single well' is derived, and it was south of Watling Street/Hever Court Road. It became derelict when mains water was laid through the village, and its wooden framework was removed and the well domed over in April 1914. It was eventually backfilled during WWI when Watling Street was used for transporting munitions between Chatham and Woolwich. In February 1935, an eighteen inch square slab of grey granite inscribed, 'Site of Ancient Well' was inserted into the roadway, but was later removed by Kent County Council in 1952.
Watling Street was later renamed Hever Court Road after the original home of the Medieval family who lived there until their removal to Hever, near Tonbridge in 1331. The earliest reference to Hever Court was during the reign of King John in the early 13th century when it was held by Hugo de Tokington. The chief house of the village, Hever Court was also the manor house for Ifield or Hever (sometimes spelt 'Heure'). After the Hevers moved to Tonbridge, the house passed to a number of influential families including those headed by Reginald de Cobham, Nicholas Child, who was buried in Ifield Church in 1638, and in the 19th century, to Thomas Colyer of Wombwell Hall, Northfleet. During WWII the house was requisitioned for military use, but a fire, possibly due to ordinance being stored there, badly damaged the roof and the property was abandoned, eventually being demolished in 1952 to make way for a housing estate.

Historical Environment Record & National Monument Record

Prehistoric

TQ 67 SW 369 / NGR TQ 64700 70900 There is one Palaeolithic site, a findspot, within the 1km study area listed in the HER. A Lower Palaeolithic bifacial hand axe was found during evaluation trenching in advance of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL) approximately 400m west of the Development Site. The artefact had been moved slightly from its original location through soil movement. The National Monument Record (NMR) also records a Late Iron Age pit and a linear feature of uncertain date.

TQ 67 SE 283 / NGR TQ 65052 71378 One Mesolithic or possibly Neolithic findspot was recorded 600m north of the Study Area during an evaluation at Ifield School and was comprised of a re-deposited 'pyramid' of flint core from the subsoil.

TQ 67 SW 418 / NGR TQ 6439 7097 An evaluation at Tollgate found cropmarks comprising a Neolithic ditch, enclosures and track way.

TQ 67 SW 3 / NGR TQ 6439 7097 Excavations in 1995 revealed a sub-rectangular ditched enclosure which may be the remains of a Neolithic long barrow. The substantial flint debitage dated to between the Early Neolithic to Late Bronze Age.

TQ 67 SW 135 / NGR TQ 6428 7068 A possibe Bronze Age circular/sub-circular enclosed settlement with internal features and entrance.

TQ 67 SE 244 / NGR TQ 6511 7066 An evaluation in 1997 in advance of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link on land west of Church Road, Singlewell found the remains of a possible Bronze Age field system comprising two pits, a possible post hole and several gullies. Two post-Medieval quarries and Anglo-Saxon finds were also discovered.

TQ 67 SE 64 / NGR TQ 6552 7086 A polygonal enclosed settlement with entrance, interpreted as Iron Age from good quality aerial photographs, approximately 300m to the northeast of the Site.

TQ 67 SE 117 / NGR TQ 6561 7093 Cropmarks identified through good quality aerial photographs. Undated and unexcavated, but within enclosure of Iron Age settlement TQ67 SE 64.

EHNMR 1320547 / 66 71 A watching brief at Hillside, near Singlewell found a Late Iron Age and Romano-British farmstead roughly 800m to the northeast of the Site.

TQ67 SW 1050 / NGR TQ 64730 70800 An evaluation in 1997 near Tollgate in advance of CTRL found a Late Iron Age/Early Romano-British pit and an undated linear feature 400m to the west of the Site.

Romano-British

There are nine or ten Romano-British sites recorded with the 1km study area. Those within a 500m radius are listed below.

TQ 67 SE 100 / NGR TQ 6562 7063 Roman Road – Watling Street.

TQ 67 SE 104 / NGR TQ 6532 7050 Probable Roman rectangular enclosed settlement, 100m southeast from the Development Site, with no entrance or internal features.

TQ 67 SW 1050 / NGR TQ 64730 70800 A large pit measuring 6m across contained burnt and struck flints and pottery dating to the Late Iron Age/Early Romano-British period. A linear

feature of unknown date contained carbon and struck flints. No other archaeological features were encountered during the 1997 evaluation prior to the CTRL works.

Anglo-Saxon

Only one 'site' with Anglo-Saxon finds was recorded in the study area, and these were residual artefacts found during an evaluation in 1997. (See **TQ 67 SE 244**)

Medieval

Two Medieval sites are located within the 500m survey area.

CTRL03-17 / NGR TQ 6505 7060 An excavation in 1996 west of Church Rd uncovered several ditches and post holes or small pits. Only one ditch was positively given a Medieval date.

TQ 67 SE 1072 / NGR TQ 6538 7074 Grade II Listed Chapel Farmhouse is located 100m to the east of the site and is at least 18th century.

TQ 67 NW 13 / NGR TQ 6537 7074 Grade II Listed Chapel Farm has the remains of a 12th-13th century chapel incorporated into the building. The surviving elevations are 0.8m thick and are comprised of flint rubble with ragstone dressing. Originally the building would have been of an 'open hall' type with steeply pitched roof. In Tudor times, floors, partition walls and a central chimney were inserted.

Post Medieval

There are seven post-Medieval sites within the 500m survey area.

TQ 67 SE 1087/ NGR TQ 6532 7076 Corner Cottage on Hever Court Road is a Grade II listed 17th – 18th century building.

TQ 67 SE 1070 / NGR TQ 6530 7078 Orchard House on Hever Court Road is a Grade II Listed 18th century dwelling.

TQ 67 SE 1110 / NGR TQ 6542 7071 The George Inn on Hever Court Road is a Grade II Listed 18th century inn. It was a WWII battle headquarters for HG VII in the Singlewell area forming part of the anti-invasion defences.

NGR TQ 65212 70814 This northeast-southwest field boundary bisects the site and dates to at least 1821. It was removed between 1908 and 1936, though it is possible linear **[025]** found in trench 9 during the evaluation may be this field boundary.

NGR TQ 65212 70814 A small rectangular temporary structure is visible on the OS map of 1864, but it was demolished by 1896.

TQ 67 SE 245 / NGR TQ 65252 70503 Three possible quarries were found during evaluation

trenching. Two were circular in shape, one measuring 12m in diameter, the other measuring 8.5m. The third was a large multi-chambered quarry.

TQ 67 SW 1297 / NGR TQ 6494 7091 This was a WWII air raid wardens post with air raid siren built in 1939 and located on the south side of Watling Street. It consisted of a rectangular concrete building with flat roof on which the siren was mounted. It was decommissioned in 1945 and demolished c. 1965.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the evaluation, as set out within the Archaeological Specification (2010) 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 development and/or other processes have affected archaeological deposits at the site; and
c) establish the likely impact on archaeological deposits of the proposed development.

METHODOLOGY

Trial trenching commenced on the 14th April 2010, with the excavation of seven trenches each measuring 2m in width and 20m in length. An additional two trenches were added on 19th April 2010 as a contingency to cover areas closest to Hever Court Road. The trench locations were agreed with KCCHC forming part of the specification. The trench was 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 the first recognisable archaeological horizon, under the constant supervision of an experienced archaeologist. The trenches were subsequently hand-cleaned and allowed to weather for duration of approximately 24 hours in order to reveal features in plan. Regular metal detecting sweeps were carried out throughout mechanical excavation. Carefully selected cross-sections through potential features 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 KCCHC and IFA standards and guidance.

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

MONITORING

Curatorial monitoring was carried out via emails and site visits during the course of the evaluation by KCCHC, at which time methodologies and preliminary results were discussed.

RESULTS

A common stratigraphic sequence was recognised across the site comprising topsoil (**01**) and subsoil (**02**) directly overlying natural drift geology (**03**). The topsoil consisted of friable dark brown silty clay overlying course moderately compact mid grey brown silty clay subsoil with contained occasional rounded stone and charcoal flecks. Natural geology was reached at a depth of approximately 0.43m below the existing ground level (c. 65m AOD) where mechanical excavation ceased and careful examination and investigation for truncating features was carried out.

Of particular interest was the variation in the different types of natural geology. On the whole this comprised a combination of Head Brickearth, Thanet Sands and alluvial silts, which is characteristic of the area (Wendy Rogers *pers comm*). That said, and more specific to this particular site was a 'brown soil' horizon (**11**) that appeared to underlie the subsoil (**02**) directly atop the identified natural drift deposits (**03**). Initially this was thought to represent an earlier subsoil or possible buried soil as it was present over large areas of the site and appeared relatively well intact. Further investigations, however, showed that this was not the case and that the variation in form and colour was down to natural processes such as leeching and bioturbation. Deposit (**11**) was not a deposit at all, but an area of 'worked' natural, the extents of which were mapped and planned as shown on the figures within Appendix 3.

Trench 1

(18 x 2m) Figure 3

Trench 1 measured 18m in length and contained an east-west aligned ditch [**34**] that

possessed steep sloping sides with an undulated, albeit concave base (see Section 17). The single fill (**033**) consisted of a mid grey brown fairly compact silty clay with rare large flint nodules, one mammal long bone and one very small fragment of shell or flint tempered pottery. The feature was initially masked by the leeching and bioturbation and only visible after a few days of weathering. In order to fully define the extents of the ditch the sondage was overcut, exposing natural mid blue-grey oxidised fine sandy clay silt (**04**).

*Plate 1: Ditch [**34**] within Trench 1*

Trench 2

(20 x 2m) Figure 3

Trench 2 was located within the western extent of the site. Aligned northeast-southwest, the trench measured 20m x 2m and contained no archaeological features. Head Brickearth (**03**) was visible at the south-western end of the trench, the majority of which had been 'worked' (**11**). A sondage (see Section 2) excavated to a depth of approximately 1.85m was cut at the northeast end of the trench in order to confirm the stratigraphic deposit model. Large flints were encountered at the base of the sondage, covered by a very thick (up to 1.20m) deposit of natural mid blue grey oxidised fine sandy clay silt (**04**) directly underlying 'worked' natural (**11**).

Trench 3

(18 x 2m) Figure 3

Trench 3 was aligned north-south and measured 18m x 2m. It contained no archaeological features.

A hand-dug sondage (Section 16) at the southern end of the trench exposed laminated layers of natural geology consisting of the weathered brown clay (**11**) over a thin lens of highly ferrous 'bright' orange brown coarse sand (**32**). This undulating sand lens covered further undulating layers of mid blue grey oxidised fine sandy clay silt (**04**) and Head Brickearth (**03**). This sequence of natural layers is further illustrated on Plate 4 above and in Section 16 (see Appendix 2).

Plate 2: Sondage within Trench 3 showing upper natural horizons (see Section 16)

Trench 4

(19.5 x 2m) Figure 4

Trench 4, aligned roughly east-west, was 19.5m x 2m and contained no archaeological

features. A sondage (see Section 4) measuring up to 0.96m deep was cut at the western end of the trench to investigate the geology. Brown weathered clay (**11**) masked cleaner Head Brickearth (**03**) covered a natural deposit of pale beige brown fine sandy clay silt with rare small flints (**04**).

Trench 5

(12 x 2m) Figure 4

Trench 5 was aligned north-south and measured 12m x 2m. The trench was shortened due to a possible badger sett in the area. Two natural features was investigated, but was found to represent tree boles. The natural geology exposed within Trench 5 consisted of Head Brickearth (**03**).

Trench 6

(25 x 2m) Figure 4

Trench 6 was located within the eastern extent of the site. Aligned east-west and measuring 25m x 2m, this trench was the largest of all the evaluation trenches. Archaeological features included a large pit [**10**], a ditch [**31**] and three potential post holes [**013**], [**015**], [**017**].

*Plate 3: Post hole [**17**]*

Located within the northern extent of the trench, ditch [**10**] measured 4.3m in width, with a depth of approximately 0.46m (Section 6). The single fill (**09**) comprised mid grey silty sand with frequent fragments of Kent Peg tile (16^{th}-17^{th} centuries). To the south, ditch [**31**] measured 0.75m in width with a depth of 0.30m. The single fill (**30**) comprised fairly compact mid orange brown silty clay and contained a large ball of iron slag, burnt flint and one struck flint. The three 'post holes' [**013**], [**015**] and [**017**] contained no cultural material and may represent bioturbation (i.e., root activity) associated with the orchard that existed on the development site in the 19^{th} century. That said, the shape and profile would suggest that they are genuine, possibly representing a structure associated with the adjacent boundary ditch. A Neolithic polished flint axe was found embedded in the Brickearth (**03**) during machining but was clearly residual.

Trench 7

(15 x 2m) Figure 5

Trench 7 was the most easterly trench excavated during the evaluation, being aligned north-south and measuring 15m x 2m. Modern truncation [**08**] was visible within the central-southern area of the trench filled with flint and edged with redeposited chalk cutting the subsoil from just below the topsoil. This feature was not excavated. A single pot sherd collected from the surface of this feature dated to the Early Roman period although it was clearly residual.

*Plate 4: Ditch [**06**] / [**19**]*

In proximity to this pit, a northwest-southeast aligned linear represented at least two phases of occupation [**06**]/ [**19**]. Recut [**06**] measured 0.60m wide and appeared to terminate at the northwest limit of the trench (Section 9). The fill (**05**) comprised fairly loose mid brown grey silty clay with frequent pottery sherds including fragments of North or West Kent shell-filled sandy ware (1175-1225/1250 AD), residual Early Roman flagon sherds (c.75-150 AD) and mussell shells, small chalk fragments and occasional small to medium flints. The original linear [**19**] was much wider at 1.40m and filled by (**08**), a compact light to mid orange brown silty clay with rare burnt and struck flint and one small sherd of flint or shell tempered pottery. Just south of this linear, a single post hole [**21**] measured 0.34m in diameter with a depth of 0.20m. The single fill comprised fairly compact mid grey brown silty clay, with a slightly worn c.15th-16th century Kent peg tile fragment (Section 10). Natural Head Brickearth **(003)** survived at 0.25m below the present ground surface at a level of approximately 64.76m AOD (Section 7).

Trench 8

(12.2 x 1.5m) Figure 5

Trench 8 was the first of two contingency trenches agreed by SWAT and KCC Heritage to

target areas of additional interest associated with archaeological deposits encountered during the initial evaluation. Trench 8 was specifically cut to further define and characterise the recut ditch [**06**]/ [**19**] present within Trench 7. Trench 8 measured 12.20m x 1.50m and was machined to a depth of up to 2m at the east end due to the presence of deep overburden material, possibly associated with localised quarrying. The depth of the natural varied greatly, and was reached at 0.65m below the present ground surface at the west end of the trench, sloping down to at least 2m at the eastern end where Thanet Beds were encountered. Even at that depth, redeposited pale grey white firm clay silt (**39**) containing fresh 16th-17th century Kent peg tile was encountered. The overburden comprised thick brown grey silty clay (**23**) with horizontal spreads of redeposited brickearth (**22**) containing modern fragments of white china and roof tile.

Plate 5: Trench 8 long profile (see Section 19)

Directly underlying this dark brown grey clay, with occasional fragments of ash and bitumen sealed natural geology. A modern pit [**38**] was revealed after further examination of the exposed section (Section 19). No archaeological deposits were encountered within this trench.

Trench 9

(11 x 1.5m) Figure 5

Trench 9 measured 11m x 1.5m and exposed a north-south aligned linear [**25**] filled with fairly loose mid yellow grey silty clay (**24**). The alignment of this feature suggests that is may represent the post-Medieval field boundary between the orchard to the east and the arable land to the west as seen on the 19th century Ordnance Survey maps (see Section 15). Directly to the east of this linear, two Post-Medieval features contained roof tile and fragments of faced wall daub (c. 16th-17th c). The first of these, a circular small pit [**027**], measured 0.70m in diameter with a depth of 0.17m and possessed a single fill comprising mid orange grey silty clay (**26**) with small flints and occasional fragments of pulverised brick (see Section 14). The earlier pit [**29**] measured 0.65m in width with a depth of 0.29m. The steep sides and flat base gave way to a loose red, grey and black crushed brick fill (**28**).

*Plate 6: Trench 9, ditch [**25**]*

FINDS

Pottery Assessment

Lithic Assessment

The flint axe-head (Hugo Lamdin-Whymark)

A reworked Neolithic polished flint axe-head was recovered from Trench 6, context 3. The artefact is in reasonable condition, but the surface exhibits a light bluish-white cortication and bright orange iron-stained spots and streaks. The latter result from contact with iron ploughshares and indicate the artefact was recovered from an agricultural soil. Despite the surface condition, it is apparent that the implement was manufactured from a good quality mid-grey flint with occasional light and mid grey cherty inclusions. Comparable raw materials were quarried on the South Downs during the Neolithic and this area can be considered as a possible source for the implement. The artefact measures 108 mm long, by 49 mm wide and 35 mm thick, but originally the axe-head would have been longer and slightly broader. In its original form, the axe-head had slightly convex, broadly parallel sides, a lens-shaped cross-section and a curving blade edge. The entire surface of the axe-head was polished, although deeper flake scars were not fully removed. The blade edge is blunt from use and exhibits a use-polish.

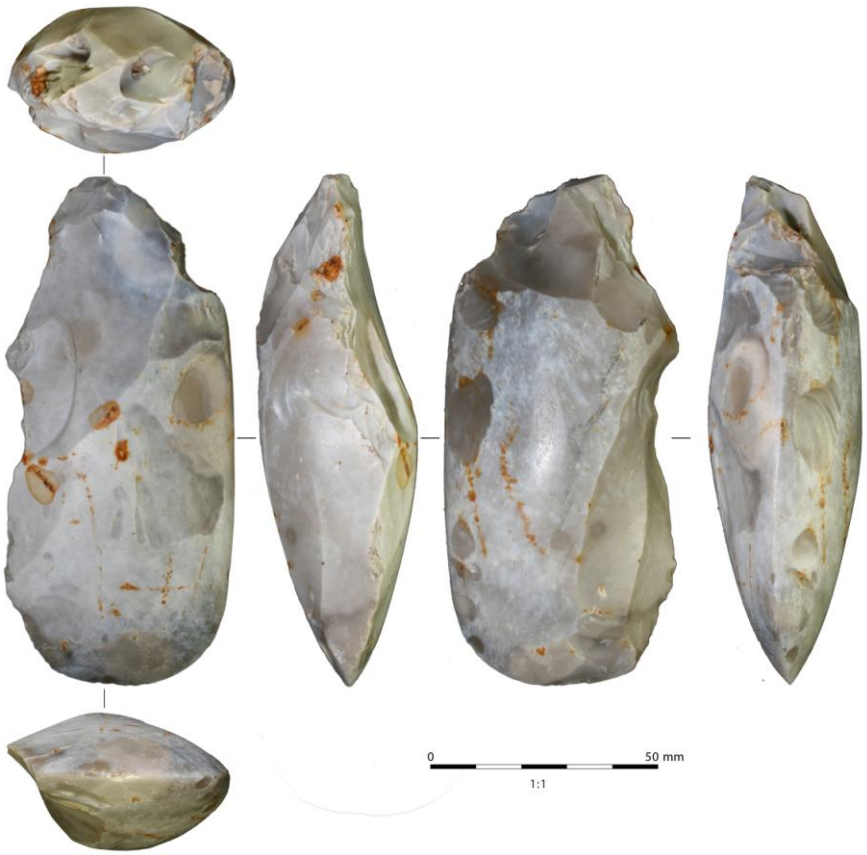

*Plate 7: A reworked Neolithic flint axe-head from Trench 6, context [**03**]*

The butt of the axe-head and one side of the artefact was re-flaked in antiquity. The flaking is comparatively crude and removed a section of the axe-head's blade-edge, but these removals do not appear to represent an attempt to systematically work the implement as a flake core. The positions of the removals in fact indicate they were intended to rejuvenate the axe-head and facilitate hafting, possibly due to a broken butt. This interpretation is confirmed by the presence of heavy use-damage on the edge of a flake scar which truncates the original blade-edge, so demonstrating the artefact continued to be used as an axe-head after it was reworked.

This artefact is of intrinsic interest and provides an indication of Neolithic activity in the local landscape, but as an isolated artefact it can add little to our understanding of the period.

Recommendations

The artefact has been fully described and illustrated and requires no further work.

PROJECT CONSTRAINTS

No constraints were associated with the identification of archaeological features throughout the course of the fieldwork.

DISCUSSION

The archaeological evaluation has been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Specification. A common stratigraphic sequence was recognised across the site comprising topsoil overlying subsoil and natural geology. A total of 12 archaeological features have been encountered, including four ditches, four post holes and three pits. In addition, residual prehistoric flints were retrieved, including a rare Neolithic Axe head, suggesting localised settlement near to the proposed development site. The absence of significant dating material is of slight concern, although it should be stressed that the evaluation targets a small area of the site (approximately 4%). Of all the 12 features encountered only one of the ditches could be dated (Trench 7, ditch [**06**]), being positively assigned a 12th century date. That said, the spatial relationship between this feature and the perpendicular ditch within Trench 6 [**31**] is of interest. It is possible that the two are contemporary and that post holes in proximity also have a relationship – a series of small structures within a larger enclosure for example.

Similarly, at the other extent of the site, Trench 1 revealed another ditch albeit of a different alignment. This trench provided a few concerns, the first being the nature of the disturbed or 'worked natural' clay. In this particular trench, ditch [**34**] was not visible until the upper 0.1m of clay had been removed. Was this material (**11**) therefore sealing earlier features? Is the material actually a fill of a large cut or slump into the upper horizon of the natural geology? It was only after a few days of weathering and subsequent geological research that it became clear. This layer was in fact natural geology that had been exposed to pedogenic processes such as weathering and leeching. These natural occurrences have an effect on the upper natural horizons subsequently changing characteristics such as colour and form. As a result, discrete archaeological features are often masked and barely visible. Ditch [**34**] was therefore not visible until the upper 10cm had been removed.

The Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment carried out by Archaeology South East (Russell 2008) suggested the Moderate-High potential for Bronze Age remains. These were not encountered during the archaeological evaluation. Similarly, a Moderate-High potential was

emphasised for the Romano-British period. Once again, no archaeological features could be dated to this period and no residual finds were present. This is intriguing, especially due to the high frequency of significant Roman settlement within the surrounding landscape. The Roman Watling Street is meant to be directly adjacent to the site and yet no remains were present. One would expect to find some 'background noise' for such a large feature – ditches, artefacts or even residual construction material. The difference in elevations between Hever Court Road was clear – up to 1.7m in some areas, so it may be possible that the Roman Road followed an earlier sunken trackway and therefore had no impact on the proposed development site. It is also possible of course that the Roman road is beneath the now defunct A2 carriageway, although no records seem to support this.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT & SUGGESTED MITIGATION

Existing Impacts

With the exception of rooting and localised animal burrows very little impact appears to have affected surviving archaeological horizons. The presence of modern material directly overlying natural geology within Trench 8 would seem to suggest that this particular area has been reduced, thus destroying any archaeological features that may have been present.

Proposed Impacts

Construction proposals are primarily focussed on the construction of 16 new domestic properties within the extents of the site. The relatively shallow surviving depth of archaeological features would therefore be under threat from any development within this area, in particular the construction of foundations, drainage, services and possibly even car parking, access and landscaping.

Mitigation (Suggested)

The purpose of the archaeological evaluation was to provide an assessment of the contextual archaeological record, in order to determine the potential survival of archaeological deposits that may be impacted upon during any proposed construction works. In the event that finished ground levels remain constant, the depth of foundations trenches, services, access and car parking are likely to require the excavation of material exceeding approximately 0.40m in depth. In the absence of ground raising, proposed impacts to archaeological deposits throughout the entire site is therefore deemed as moderate/high. As a result, further archaeological mitigation is recommended. Allowances

should therefore be made for the excavation, analysis and publication of archaeological deposits, which would then ensure appropriate assessment of the archaeological implications of any development proposals and the subsequent mitigation of adverse impacts through preservation by record.

CONCLUSION

The archaeological evaluation has been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Specification. Despite a moderate amount of truncation, intact medieval deposits remain preserved *in situ*. Development proposals, which comprise the construction of new domestic premises fronting Hever Court Road are therefore likely to impact on archaeological remains. Further archaeological mitigation has been recommended, although it should be stated that the final decision will be that of Gravesham Borough Council and their archaeological advisors at Kent County Council.

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 mitigation measures that may be necessary in connection with any future development proposals.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SWAT would like to thank Chartway Group Ltd. for commissioning the project. Thanks are also extended to Wendy Rogers, Senior Archaeological Officer, Kent County Council, Heritage & Conservation for her advice and assistance.

Julie Martin supervised the archaeological fieldwork, assisted in the field by Marcus Headifen and James Madden; illustrations were produced by James and Jonny Madden at Digitise This. This report was edited and collated by Dr. Paul Wilkinson.

David Britchfield

Julie Martin

July 2010

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Ordnance Survey 2nd Edition (1897-1900)

Ordnance Survey 3rd Edition (1907-1923)

Ordnance Survey 4th Edition (1929-1952)

Websites

Exploring Kent's Past http://extranet7.kent.gov.uk/ExploringKentsPast/

Here's History Kent http://www.hereshistorykent.org.uk/

Archaeological Data Service http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/

Kent Landscape Information System http://extranet7.kent.gov.uk/klis/home.htm

Heritage Gateway http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/

Archaeological Investigations Project http://csweb.bournemouth.ac.uk/aip/aipintro.htm

CONTENTS OF SITE ARCHIVE

Correspondence:

Photographs: 87 digital images (10.1 mega pixel), SWAT film nos. 10/008, including those used in this report.

Photocopies of Ordnance Survey and other maps:

Drawings: One A3 permatrace site drawing, comprising site plans and notes.

Finds: ?1 box (as per KCC guidance).

Context Register including: Context Register (1), Drawings Register (1), Photographic Register (1), Levels Sheets (x), Environmental Samples Register (x) and Context Sheets (38)

APPENDIX 1 - KCC Summary Form

Site Name: *Hever Court Rd., Singlewell, Gravesend, Kent* SWAT Site Code: *HCR-EV-10*	
Site Address: *Hever Court Rd., Singlewell, Gravesend, Kent*	
Summary: Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) carried out an archaeological evaluation at *Hever Court Road, Singlewell, Gravesend in Kent. A planning application (GR/2006/1087) for the construction of 16 houses and access road along with associated parking, was submitted to Gravesham Borough Council (GBC) whereby Kent County Council Heritage and Conservation (KCCHC) 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 (KCC 2010) and in discussion with the Archaeological Officer, Kent County Council.* *The Archaeological Evaluation consisted of nine trenches which encountered a number of significant archaeological features, including ditches pits and post holes provisionally assigned medieval and post-medieval dates. An impact assessment has concluded that the relatively shallow surviving depth of archaeological features would therefore be under threat from any development within this area, and further archaeological mitigation has been recommended.*	
District/Unitary: *Gravesham*	**Parish:** Singlewell and Ifield
Period(s): Tentative: Prehistoric/Medieval/Post Medieval	
NGR (centre of site : 8 figures): (NB if large or linear site give multiple NGRs): *NGR 6520 7081*	
Type of archaeological work (delete) Evaluation	
Date of Recording: *April 2010*	
Unit undertaking recording: *Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT)*	
Geology: *Upper Chalk covered by various drift deposits including Head Brickearth*	
Title and author of accompanying report: *Britchfield, d & Martin, J. (2010) Evaluation and Assessment of Land at Hever Court Road, Singlewell, Gravesend, 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:**29th July 2010

APPENDIX 2 – Figures

N

Ordnance Survey®

OS Landplan® Data

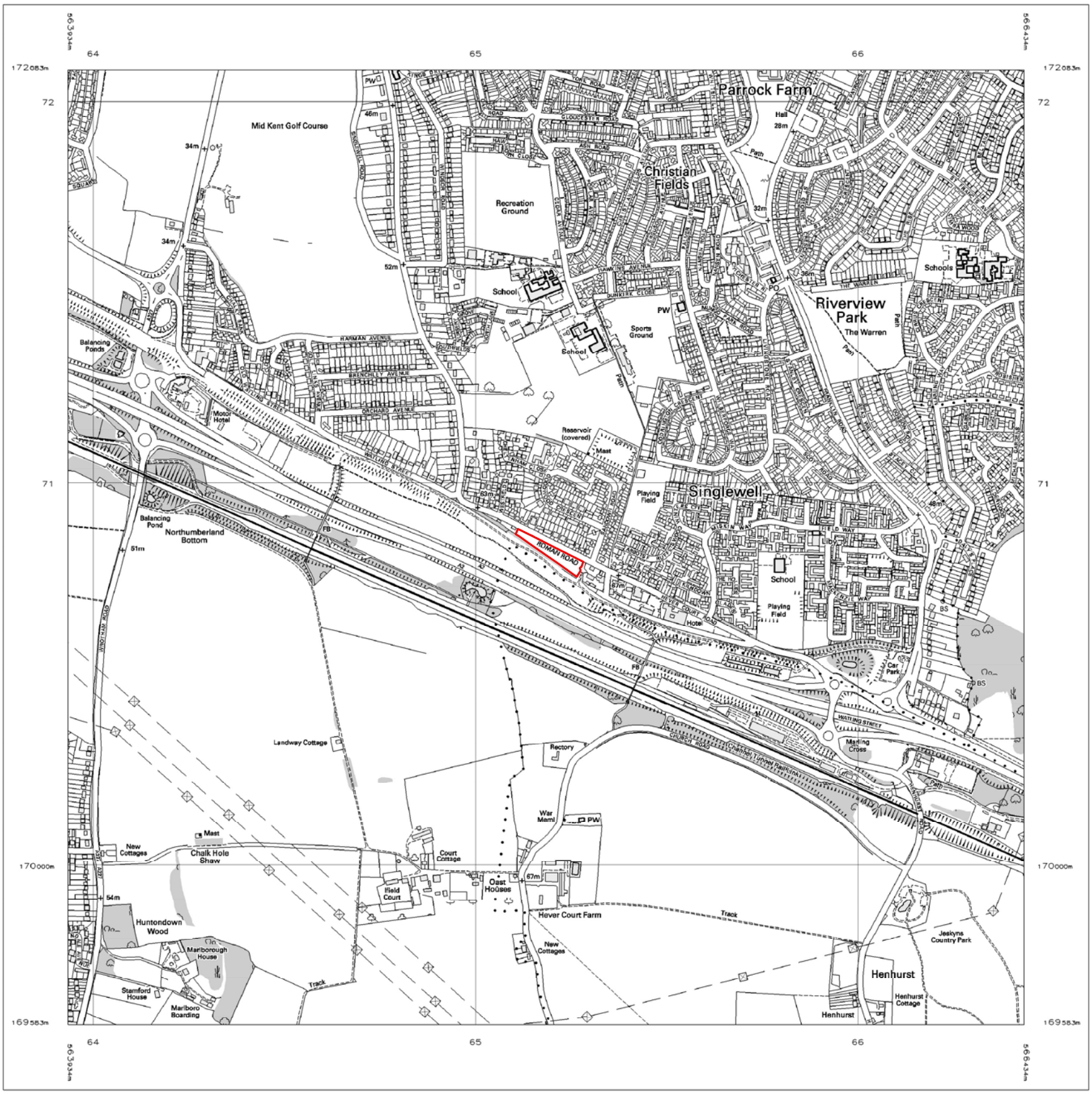

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Figure 1: Site Location Plan

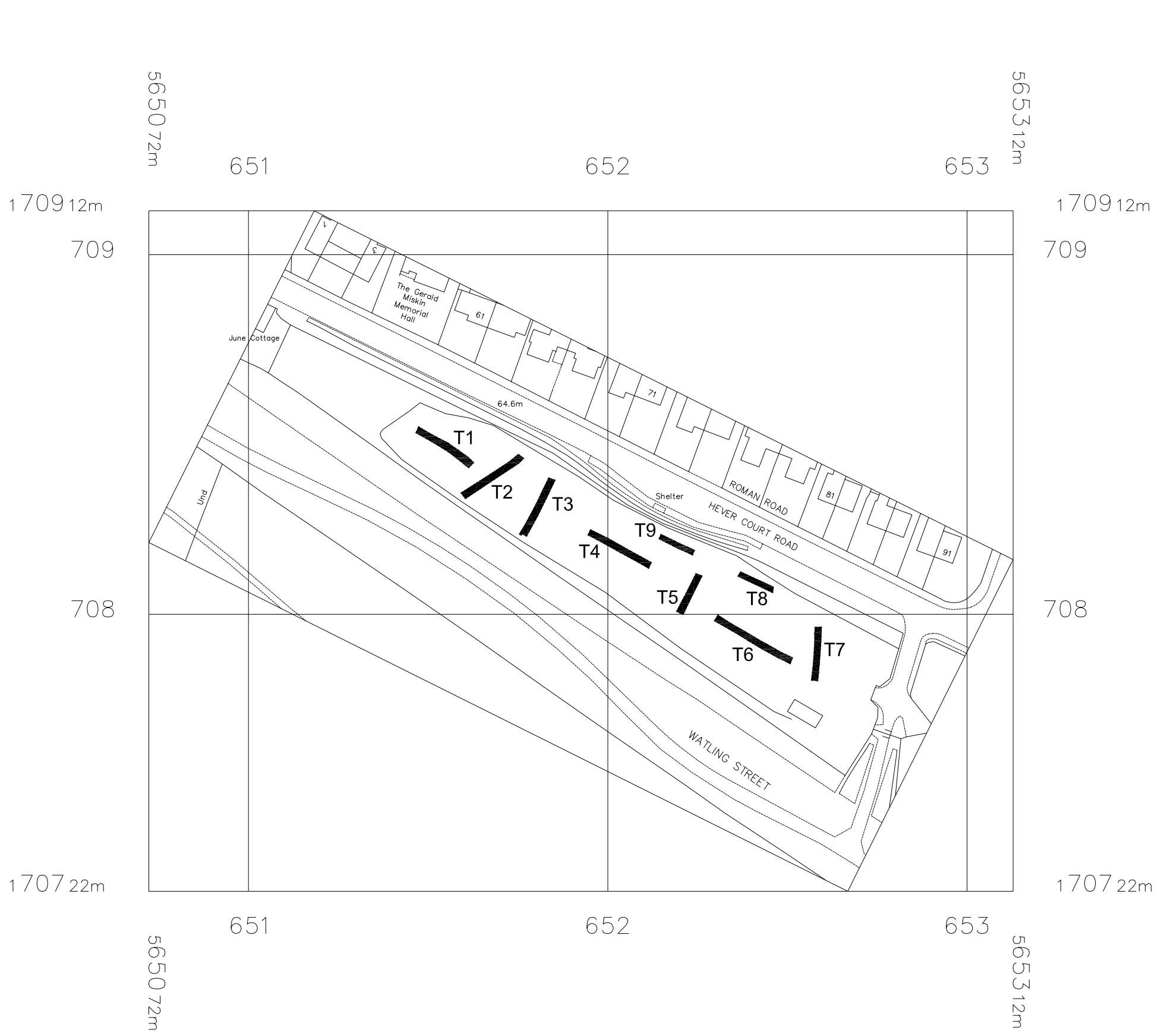


Figure 2: Trench Location Plan

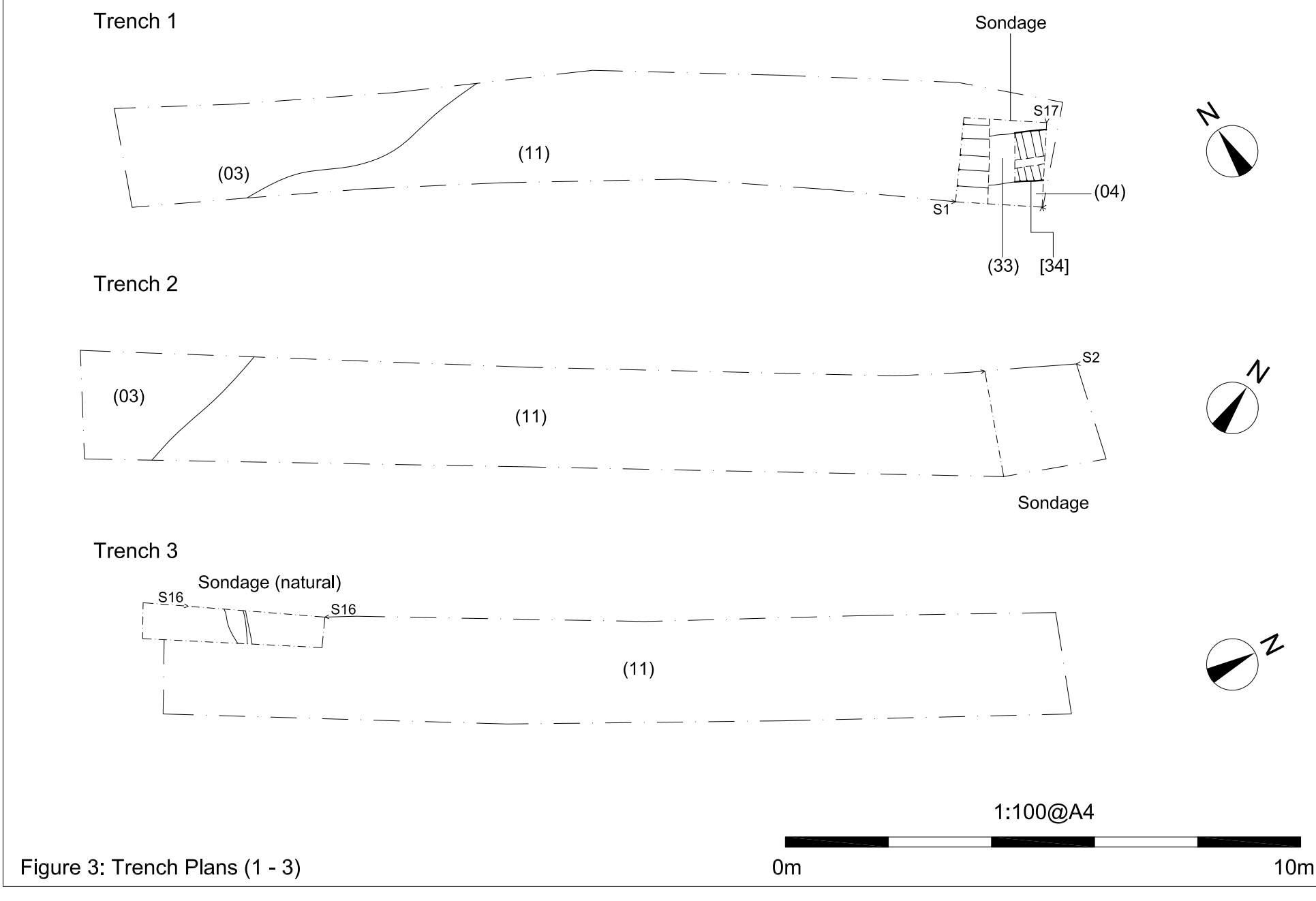


Figure 3: Trench Plans (1 - 3)

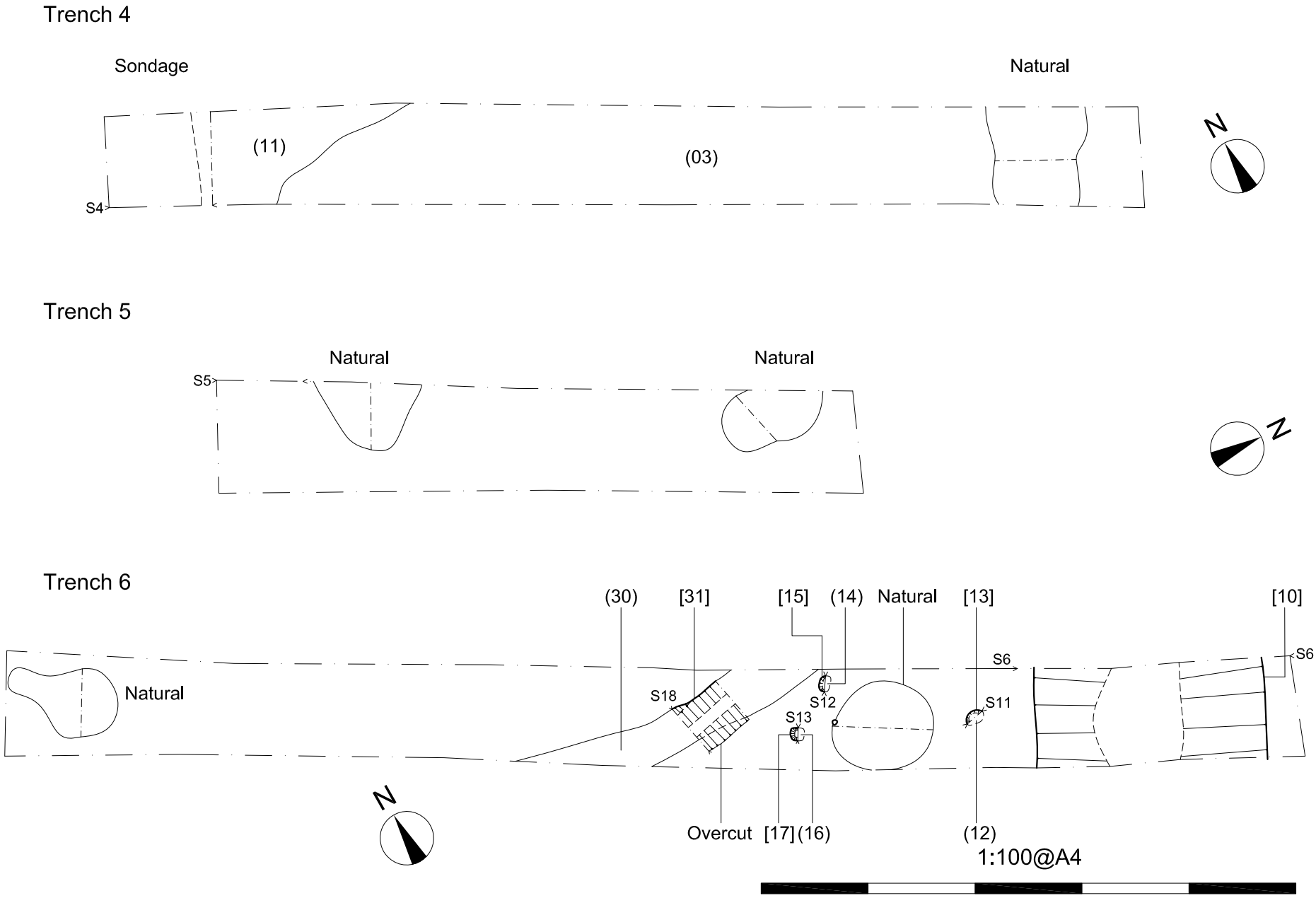
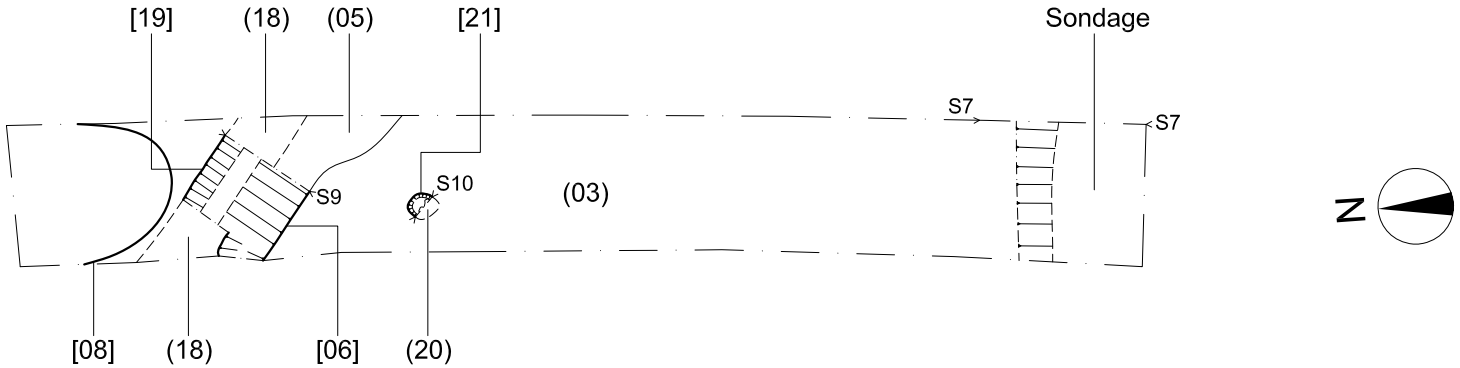


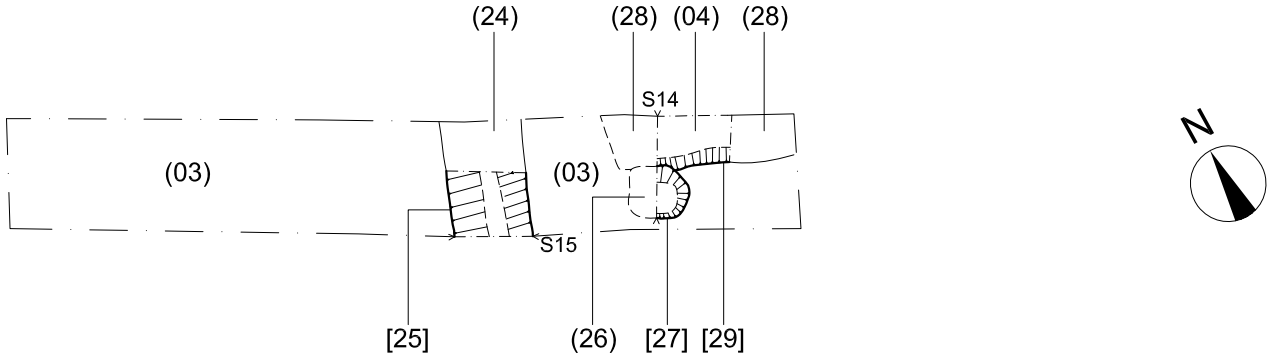
Figure 4: Trench Plans (4 - 6)

Trench 7



Trench 8

Trench 9



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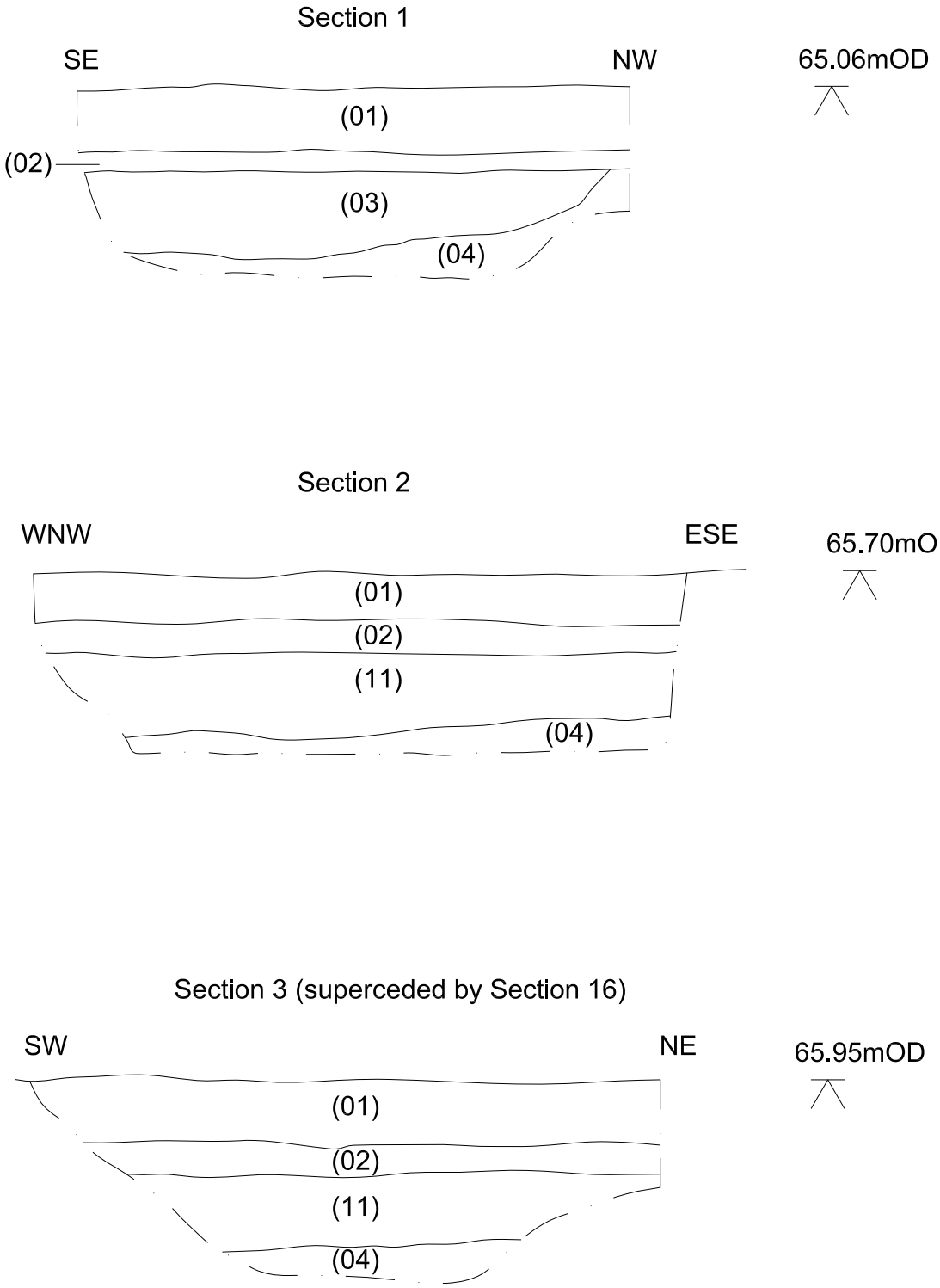
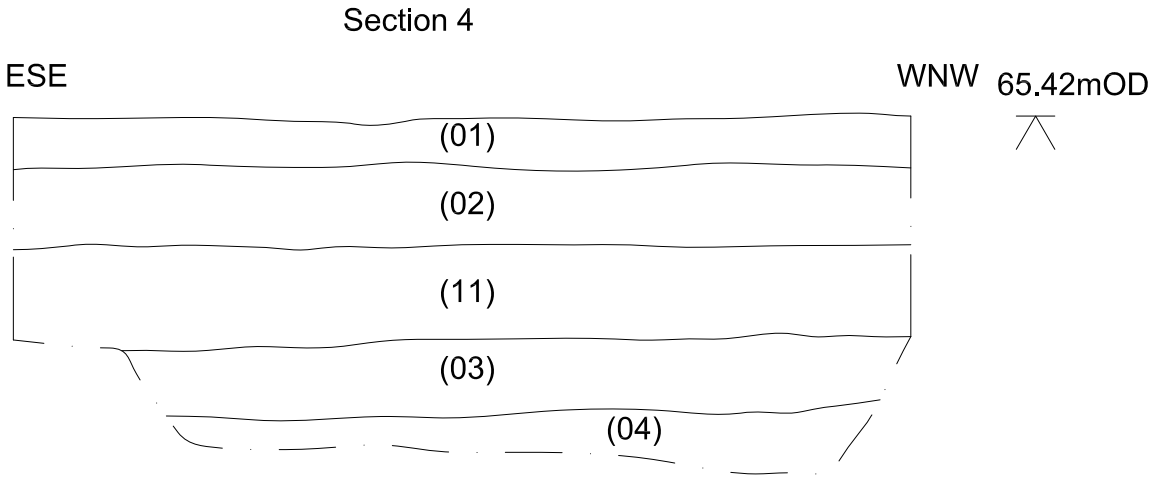
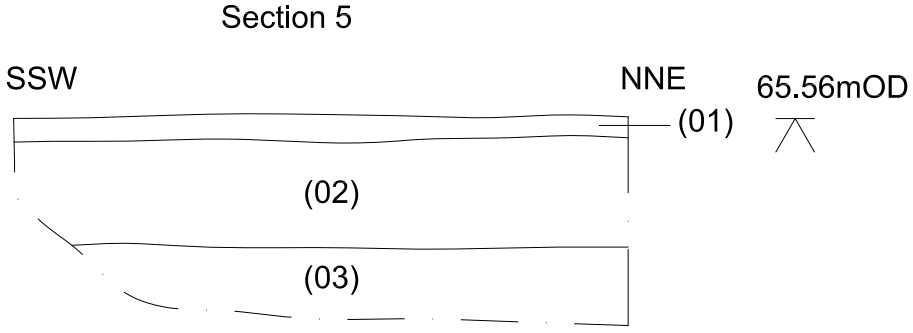


Figure 6: Sections (1 - 3)





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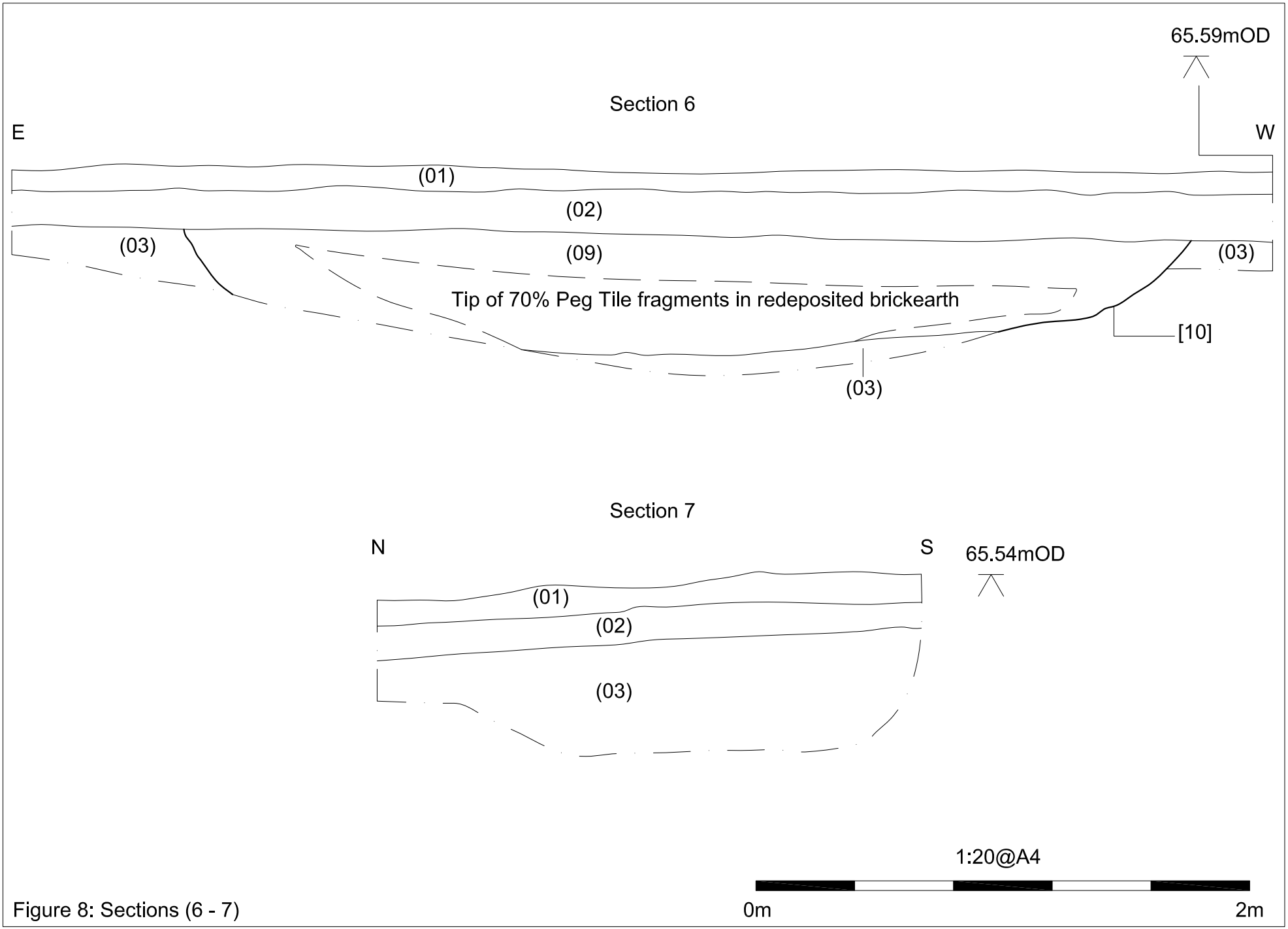

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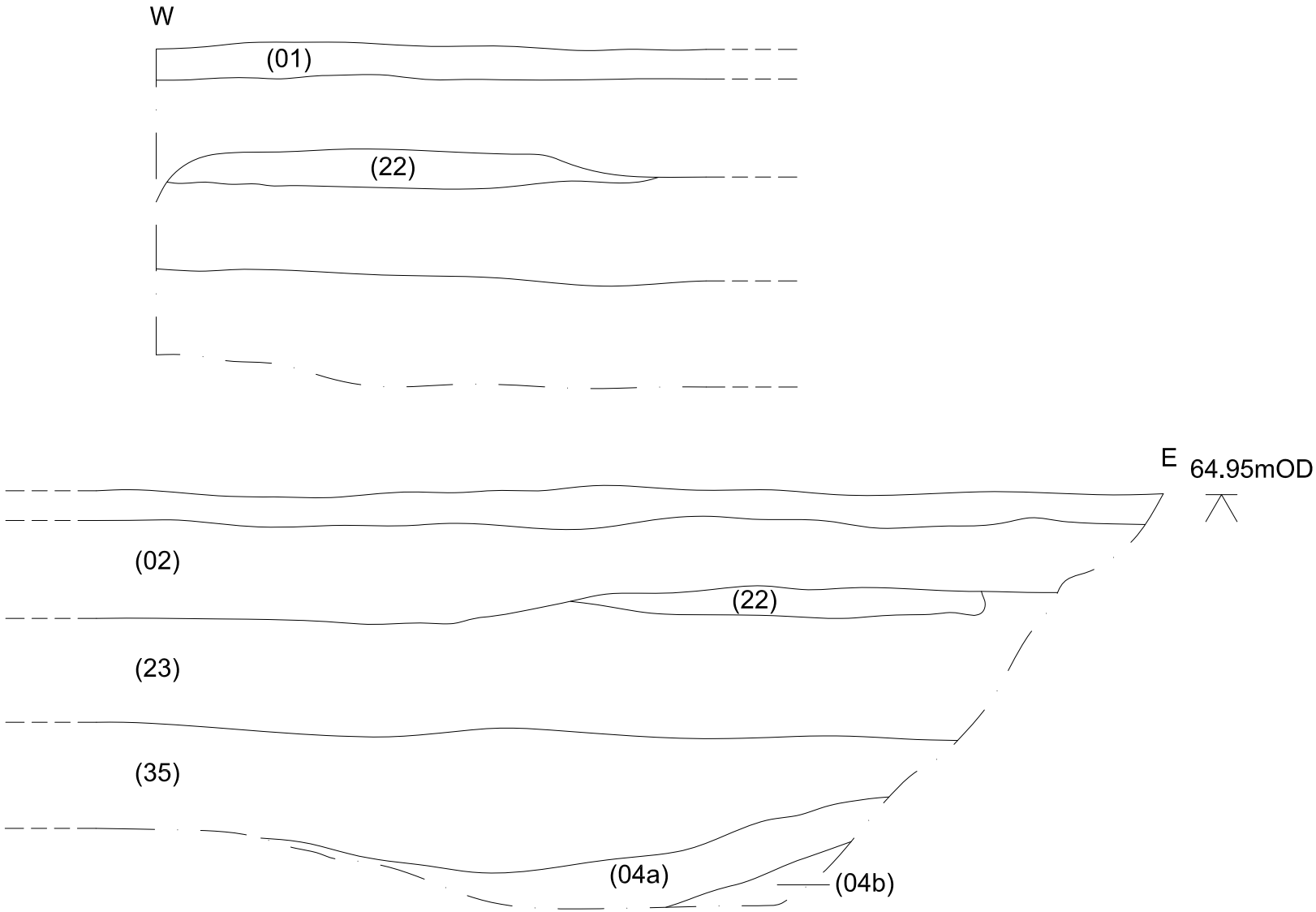

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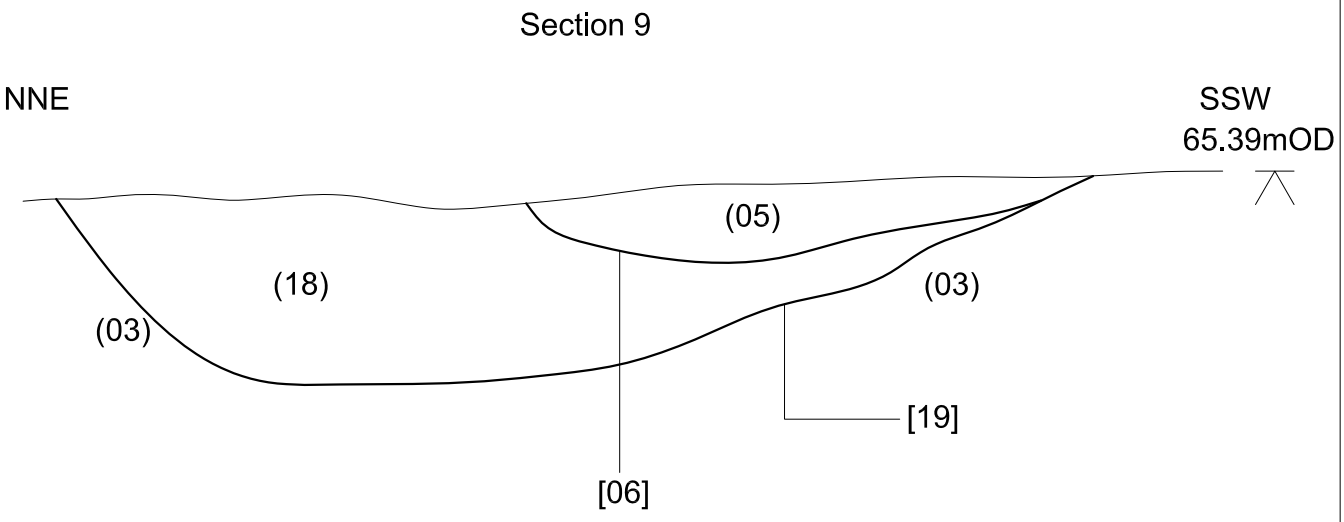

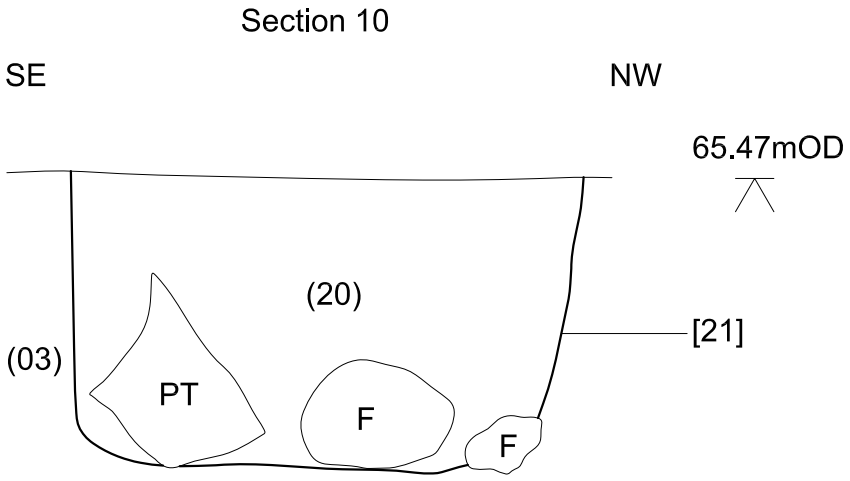

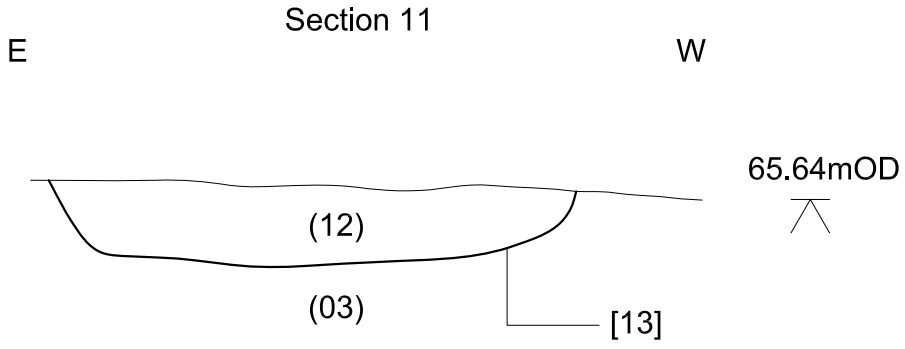

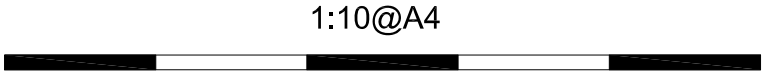

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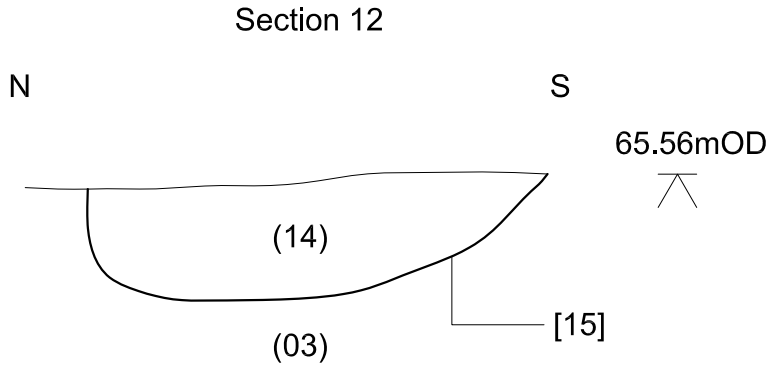

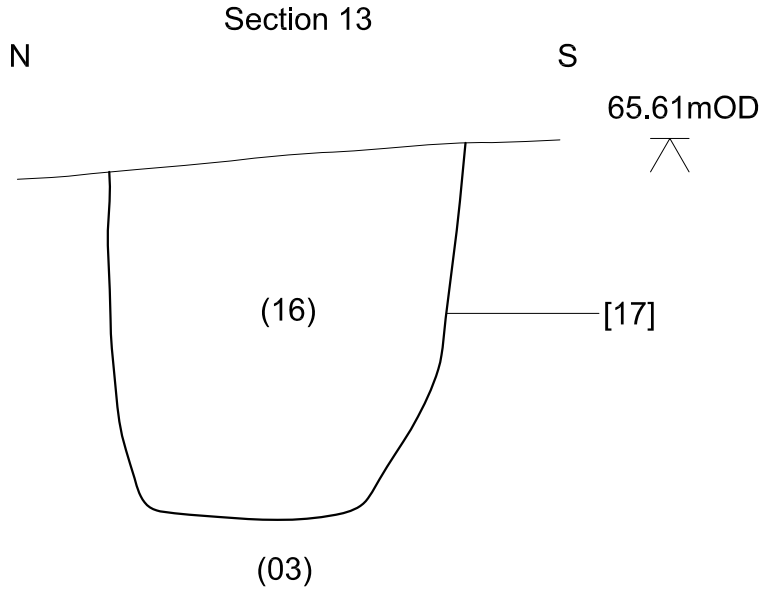

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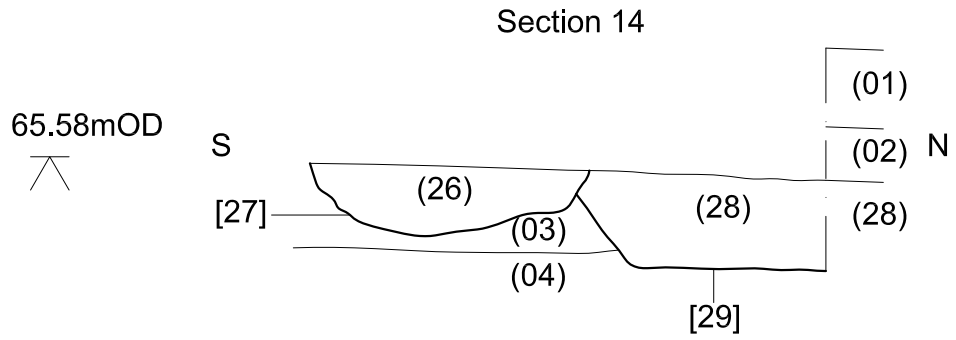

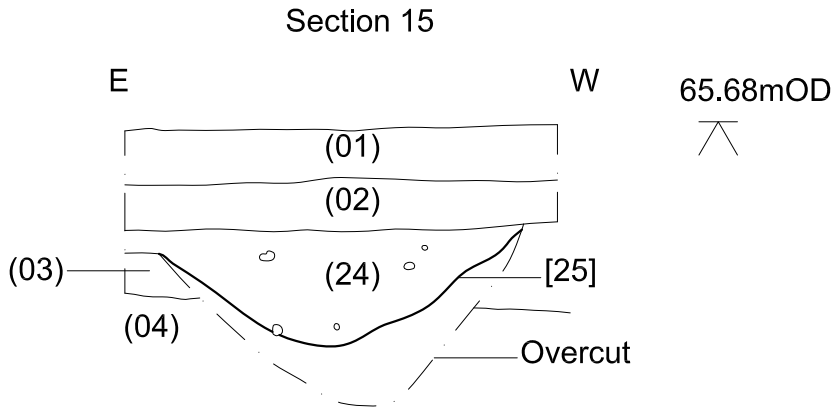

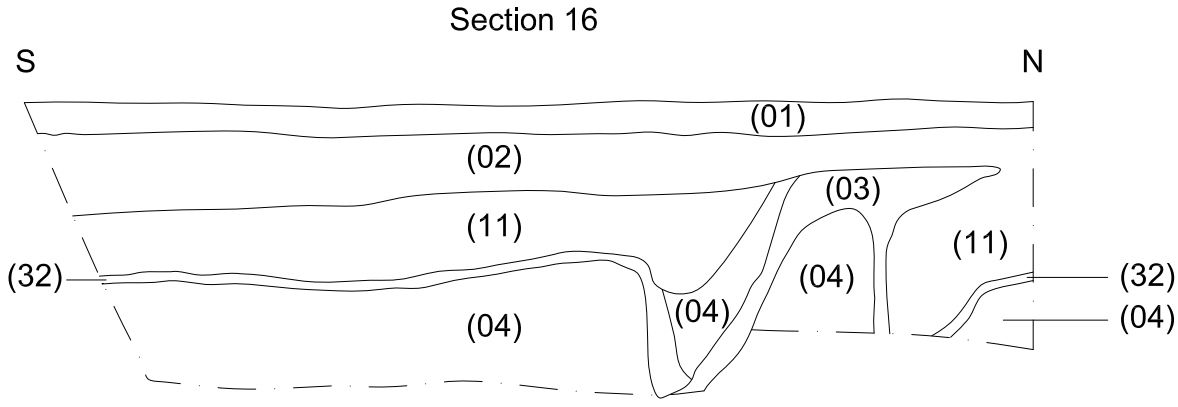

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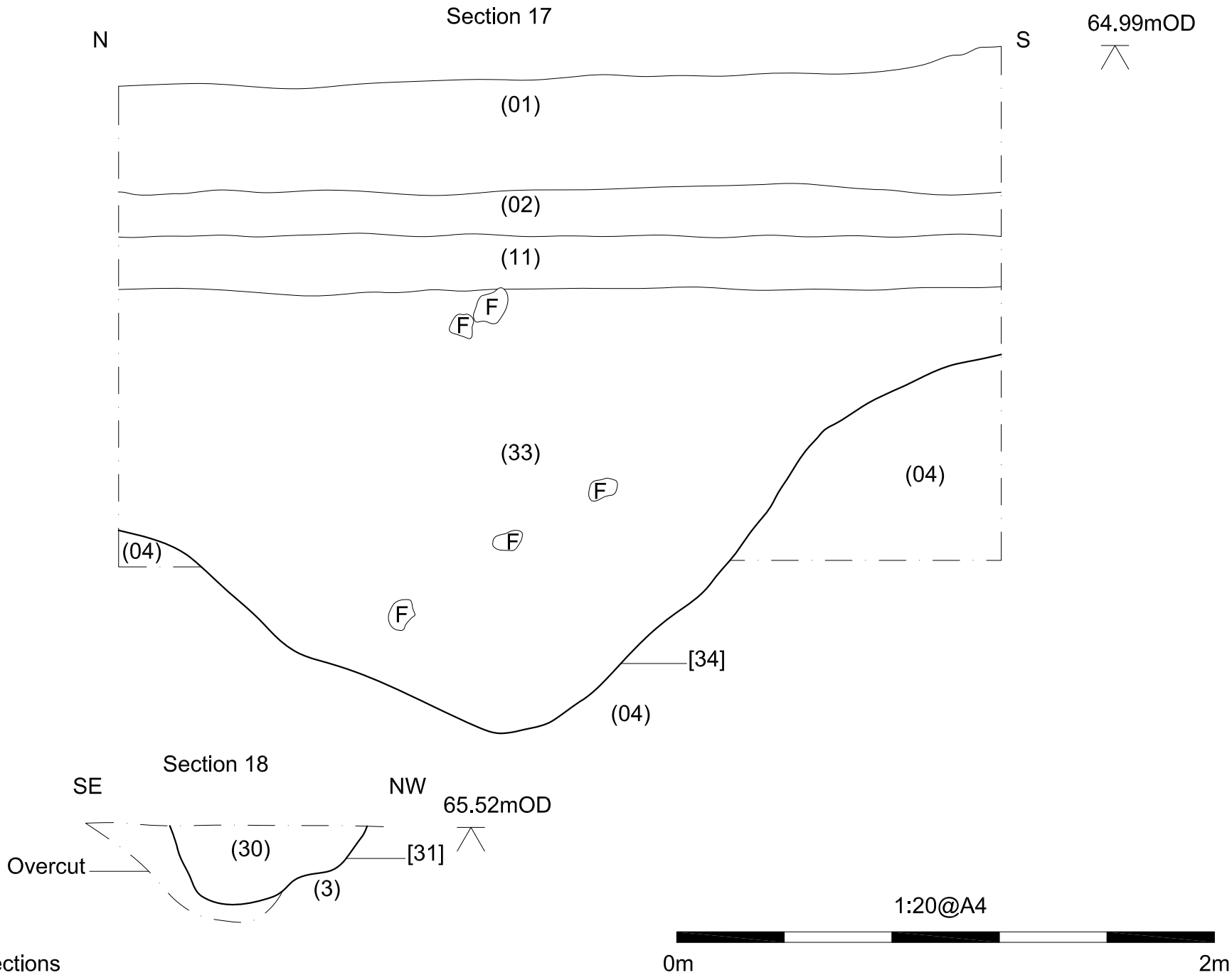
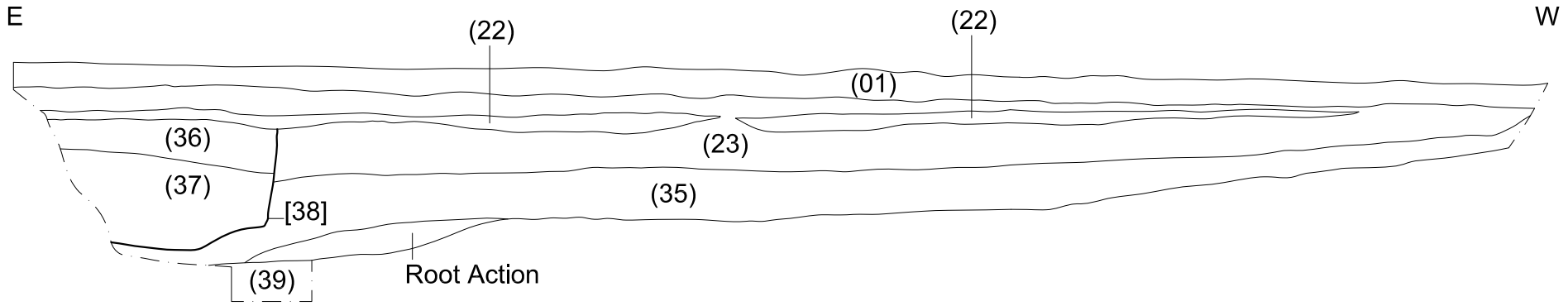


Figure 13: Sections

Section 19



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