

Archaeological Evaluation of Land at West Knoll, Church Road, New Romney, Kent



NGR: 606465 124605

Site Code: KNO /EV/17

(Planning Application: YO9/0610/SH)

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1. Summary

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) carried out an archaeological evaluation of land at West Knoll, Church Road, New Romney, Kent on 31st March 2017. Planning Application (Y09/0610/SH) to develop this site for the demolition of the existing building and the erection of 4 dwellings with associated access road and car parking was sent to Shepway Council, whereby the Council requested that a Condition on the planning permission for an Archaeological Evaluation to 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 Specification A and KCC Manual Part B) and in discussion with the Senior Archaeological Officer, Kent County Council. The results of the excavation of 4 evaluation trench revealed some archaeological features (Figures 1, 2). Thus the Archaeological Evaluation has been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the KCC Archaeological Specification.

2. Introduction

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) was commissioned by the land owners 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 (KCC 2017) and in discussion with Ben Found Senior Archaeological Officer KCC. The evaluation was carried out on Wednesday 31st March 2017.

3. Site Description and Topography

3.1 The site is situated at West Knoll, Church Road, New Romney, Kent TN28 8EX. The proposed development is located on the southern side of Church Road and is accessed via a private drive that serves Chez Nous, La Villette and West Knoll. The proposed development will require the demolition of West Knoll with the four new dwellings to the rear.

3.2 On the basis of current information from BGS, the site is situated on Tidal Flat Deposits which overlie sandstone, siltstone and mudstone of the Hastings Beds. The site itself is relatively level, being generally situated at or a little above 5m aOD.

4. Planning Background

4.1 The land has planning permission for the erection of four detached two-storey dwellings with associated access following demolition of the existing building. The Local Planning Authority planning reference numbers for the scheme are Y09/0610/SH (outline planning permission, varied under Y/10/0571/SH and given an extension of time limit under Y/13/0324/SH, itself varied under Y16/0048/NMC) and Y16/0567/SH (reserved matters application).

The Local Planning Authority placed the following conditions (27 & 28) on the outline planning consent:

27 No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or 2 successors in title has secured the implementation of:

i) archaeological field evaluation works in accordance with a specification and written timetable which has been submitted to and approved by, in writing, 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, in writing, the Local Planning Authority.

The archaeological field evaluation works, safeguarding measures, and/or further investigation and recording shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved specification and timetable.

Reason: The site is in an area of high archaeological potential and it is necessary to ensure appropriate assessment of the archaeological implications of any development proposals and the subsequent mitigation of any adverse impacts through preservation in situ or by record in accordance with Government guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework.

And:

28 No development shall take place until details of the foundation design for the development hereby permitted and any other works associated with the development involving below ground excavation have been submitted to and approved by, in writing, the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: The site is in an area of high archaeological potential and it is necessary to ensure that due regard is addressed to the preservation in situ of important archaeological remains in accordance with Government guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework.

5. Archaeological and Historical Background

5.1 The Kent County Council Historic Environment Record (KCCHER) has provided details of any previous investigations and discoveries. The potential of this area has been assessed in relation to the proximity of known archaeological remains and archaeological evidence for buildings to the south of Church Road has been taken to suggest the presence of a 'lost lane' between the beachside trackway and the shoreline. This conjectured lost lane would pass through or close to the site in question. As with many similar towns early buildings were largely of timber, often seen archaeologically as a series of overlapping and interlapping clay floors.

5.2 To the north-west of the site in questions a series of metalled courtyard surfaces have been seen close to Church Road along with substantial quantities of redeposited burnt clay. It is suggested that this clay derives from kiln linings, perhaps suggesting industrial activity and some 'zoning' to the settlement. To the north clay floor sequences have been observed and whilst the nature of the associated building is not known, the lack of stone building debris suggests a timber structure. The pottery assemblage suggests that the building was abandoned in the mid to late thirteenth century.

5.3 To the north-east of the proposed development archaeological investigations have revealed evidence for occupation spanning the thirteenth century. The remains included a number of pits and postholes as well as other structural evidence. Abundant pottery, marine molluscs and fishbones were also recorded. These thirteenth century deposits were sealed beneath later marine deposits, including storm beach gravels and alluvial deposits.

5.4 To the east of the present site archaeological evidence along Tookey Road have revealed evidence for possible quayside structures. Evidence for a possible (?abortive) sea wall took the form of a cluster of substantial timber piles, set in a linear arrangement three or four abreast. A second area of timber revetment recorded on Tookey Road may form part of a late-medieval quay (Ben Found KCC Feb 2917).

6. Aims and Objectives

The primary objective of the archaeological evaluation as set out in the KCC specification 'is to establish or otherwise the presence of any potential archaeological features which may be impacted by the proposed development. The aims of this investigation are to determine whether any significant archaeological remains survive on site and to describe the importance of any such remains. Particular attention will be paid to the identification of any remains associated with the early development of New Romney. Assessment of the results should provide guidance on what mitigation measures would be appropriate. Such measures may, for example, include safeguarding measures, further detailed archaeological investigation either prior to development and/or during construction. Further mitigation or safeguarding measures will be subject to other documents or specifications which will need to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority' (KCC 2017).

7. Methodology

The general methodology for the archaeological evaluation is set out in Part B of the KCC specification. The evaluation comprised 4 machine excavated trench (20m x 1.8m) in a layout agreed with the Senior Archaeologist KCC. The trenches were machine excavated down to the top of any significant archaeological horizon/level or to the top of 'natural' subsoil where no archaeological deposits have been found at a higher level.

8. Monitoring

Curatorial monitoring was not available during the course of the evaluation.

9. Results

Four evaluation trenches (**Figure 1**) were mechanically excavated on the present development site. The original trench plan placed three of the proposed evaluation trenches in the garden land, but these had to be re-located for the following reasons.

The land in which the most north-westerly trench (Trench 1) was to be located is not yet in the possession of the prospective developer.

The original, central position of Trench 2 was changed because that position is presently occupied by a garden shed, currently in use, and a cluster of fruit trees. The original position of Trench 4 intersected a property boundary delineated by a fence, a well-established hedge row and line of poplars.

The trenches were therefore re-positioned as shown on Figure 1 in an arrangement designed to achieve the most indicative coverage within the available area.

The development area is 3410m² and each of the four evaluation trenches measured 20m by 1.50m (35m²), the total evaluated are therefore being 140 m² (3.5%). The trenches were cut in a rectilinear arrangement on a north-west/south-east orientation.

Trench 1 (Plan 1, Section 1, Plates 1, 2, 7, 8, 9)

This trench was the most productive in terms of the number of archaeological features and deposits exposed.

The basal deposit was exposed at a depth of 0.65m below the present ground surface and consisted of a substantial gravel deposit (Context Recording Number 5), the upper 0.4m part of which consisted of grey-brown rounded pebbles in a matrix of grey-brown humic sandy silt, grading downward into smoothly rounded slightly yellow-tinged clean white pebbles exposed at a depth of 1.45m and beyond (Plate 1). The gravel was interpreted with confidence (given its appearance and its close proximity to the ancient shore line, see Hasted reference below) as beach shingle deposited by medieval and pre-medieval marine action. It was of such a loose consistency that it could not excavated to a greater depth as it spilled out copiously into the trench from the cut section, threatening to de-stabilise the

surrounding land (Plate 2). This deposit was exposed in the base of all four trenches at the same approximate depth.

In Trench 1 the basal gravel was cut by two pits, one (CRN 11) sub-rectilinear in plan, one (CRN 13) oval, both only partly exposed in the trench and both interpreted as rubbish pits (Plates 7, 8). The surfaces of their top fills (CRNs 10 & 12 respectively) were excavated, producing 12 potsherds with date-range of c. 1225-1250 AD, also respectively, indicating that this was the beach surface used by the nearby inhabitants for rubbish disposal during that period.

The shingle layer and the two pit fills were sealed by a 0.46m-thick, mid brown slightly sandy humic clay-silt (CRN 4), almost certainly of colluvial origin, indicating that the area was no longer within a sea-margin environment during the period of its accumulation. This layer was also exposed in the three other trenches where, in areas where archaeological features were not present, it immediately underlay topsoil (CRN 1). The accumulation of this deposit undoubtedly followed the rapid change in the course of the River Rother and the dramatic 'retiring' of the sea caused by the 'violent tempest' (actually a *tsumami*-like event) that occurred in 1287, during the reign of Edward I (1272-1307) as reported by Hasted (*The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent*, Vol VIII, 1799, 446).

In Trench 1 this layer and a thin (66mm) discontinuous clay-silt layer (CRN 8) was cut by a large pit or ditch (CRN 7), which top part of which was 3.75m north-south and extended eastward across the 1.5m width of the evaluation trench. Its dark grey-brown fill (CRN 6) contained domestic detritus in the form of animal bone fragments, oyster shells and potsherds, 5 of which with a date-range of c.1200-1250 AD were recovered. In the north end of the trench another thin (40mm) discontinuous layer of clay-silt (CRN 3) containing occasional tile fragments was exposed. This was almost certainly a plough-smear westward extension of a 50mm-thick layer of fragmented roof-tiles occupying the same stratigraphic position exposed in the west end of Trench 2, some five metres to the east, where it was recorded as CRN 14.

A 0.17m-thick dark brown silty humic soil (CRN 2) overlay the two discontinuous layers (CRNs 3 and 8) and also overlay the fill of the large pit or ditch (CRN 7) in Trench 1, and in

the west end of Trench 2 it overlay the discontinuous layer exposed there (CRN 14), which, as previously postulated, was probably the same as CRN 3. However, the dark brown silty humic soil was not exposed in any other parts of the evaluation trenches, probably indicating that the north-western part of the development site had been subject to more intensive cultivation than the remainder, this preceding the use of the field for pasture or as meadow land. The present topsoil in this and all other trenches consisted of 0.2m-thick mid grey-brown humic clay-silt (CRN 1) into which the present grass cover is rooted.

Trench 2 (Plan 2, Section 2)

Excepting its western end, this evaluation trench exposed a simple stratigraphic sequence made up of horizontal deposits (CRNs 5, 4 and 1) as previously discussed in the regard to Trench 1 (Plate 3, 5). Two other deposits exposed in Trench 1 (CRNs 2 and 3=14) appeared to extend into the western end of Trench 2, where, as in Trench 1, they lay between the lowest non-marine derived layer (CRN 4) and top soil (CRN 1). Layer 14 consisted almost exclusively of fragmented roof tiles (Plate 6), but also present, some 0.25m east of the termination of both Layers 2 and 14, was what appeared to be a 0.25m-deep, 0.41m-wide foundation trench (CRN 16), the fill of which (CRN 15) consisted of large, partly mortar-covered fragments of very dense sandstone, almost certainly the remains of a demolished building associated with the foundation trench (Plate 10). On this assumption it is likely that a later post-medieval structure once occupied the area around the northern end of Trench 1 and the western end of Trench 2, and that, following its demolition, the area lying west of the probable foundation trench was subject to a degree of cultivation not evident elsewhere on the site. The demolished structure was almost certainly associated with the Romney Marsh Union Workhouse, which the 1907 Ordnance Survey shows to occupy the site at that time. The workhouse was built in 1835, enlarged in 1836 and demolished in the 1950s.

[http://www.workhouses.org.uk/Romney Marsh/Romney Marsh1981](http://www.workhouses.org.uk/Romney%20Marsh/Romney%20Marsh1981)).

Trench 3 (Plan 3, Section 3)

Trench 3 exposed a 0.6m-deep, steep-sided, flat-based pit (CRN 17) cutting down from immediately below topsoil (CRN 1). The pit contained at least four predominantly horizontally deposited layers, the basal example (CRN 21) of which consisted of a 0.2m-thick dark brown humic soil with very frequent small, medium-sized chalk fragments. This layer, which produced a small number of brick fragments (Plate 4) and blue-and white later post-medieval potsherds, underlay a 50mm-thick layer of compacted crushed chalk (CRN 20), which in turn underlay a 0.1m-thick composite layer (CRN 19). The latter was made up of a 30mm to 70mm-thick thick lens of dark brown humic soil with very frequent small, medium-sized chalk fragments (identical in appearance to basal layer 21) underpinning a layer of compact crushed chalk identical in thickness and consistency with CRN 20. The deposit sequence as a whole was sealed by a 0.5m-thick layer (CRN 18) identical in terms of inclusions and overall appearance with the basal deposit (CRN 21).

The original function of this pit and the deposit sequence it contained could not be established with any confidence (it may have been a back-filled cistern or cellar), but it was clearly of relatively modern construction and, as in the case of the structural remains exposed in Trench 2, were almost certainly related to New Romney Union Workhouse, which occupied the site from 1835 to the 1950s. A ceramic drainage or sewer exposed in the centre of the trench and occupying a 0.65m-deep pit (no CRNs attributed) that was also cut down from immediately beneath topsoil, was similarly interpreted.

Trench 4 (Plan 4, Section 4)

This trench exposed a simple horizontally deposited sequence as previously described. It consisted of basal beach shingle (CRN 5) underlying mid-brown slightly sandy humic clay-silt (CRN 4), which here was 0.57m-thick and was sealed by the present topsoil (CRN1).

11. Finds

32 pottery sherds were recovered from the evaluation and a summary is attached to this report (Appendix 1).

12. Conclusion

The evaluation exposed marine derived shingle and beach-side rubbish pits that clearly predated the withdrawal of the sea and the re-configuring of the coastline in 1287. Following the establishment of a dry-land colluvial regime a large pit of ditch was cut on the site, with associated potsherds with a date-range to c.1225-1250AD providing the approximate of this event. There was no evidence of further anthropic activity until the exposure of structural remains almost certainly associated with the New Romney Union Workhouse (1835 – c. 1950).

Therefore, this evaluation has been successful in fulfilling the aims and objectives as set out in the planning condition and the Archaeological Specification.

13. Acknowledgements

SWAT Archaeology would like to thank the client for commissioning the project. Thanks are also extended to Ben Found Senior Archaeological Officer KCC. Site survey and illustrations were produced by Bartek Cichy. The fieldwork was undertaken by Tim Allen MCIfA and the project was managed and report written by Tim Allen MCIfA and Paul Wilkinson MCIfA.

14. References

Institute for Field Archaeologists (IfA), Rev (2014). *Standard and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation*

KCC Specification Manual Parts A & B

KCC and Historic England HER data 2017

KCC HER Summary Form

Site Name: Land at West Knoll, Church Road, New Romney, Kent

SWAT Site Code: KNO/EV/17

Site Address: As above

Summary:

Swale and Thames Survey Company (SWAT) carried out Archaeological Evaluation on the development site above. The site has planning permission for residential development and parking whereby Shepway Council requested that Archaeological Evaluation be undertaken to determine the possible impact of the development on any archaeological remains.

The Archaeological Evaluation revealed some archaeology.

District/Unitary: Shepway Council

Period(s):

NGR (centre of site to eight figures) 606465 124605

Type of Archaeological work: Archaeological Evaluation

Date of recording: March 2017

Unit undertaking recording: Swale and Thames Survey Company (SWAT. Archaeology)

Geology: Underlying geology is Tidal Flat Deposits

Title and author of accompanying report: Wilkinson P. (2017) Archaeological Evaluation of Land at West Knoll, Church Road, New Romney, Kent

Summary of fieldwork results (begin with earliest period first, add NGRs where appropriate)

Archaeological features were revealed dating fro c.1225-1250AD

Location of archive/finds: SWAT. Archaeology. Graveney Rd, Faversham, Kent. ME13 8UP

Contact at Unit: Paul Wilkinson

Date: 14/07/2017

APPENDIX 1.

THE DATING AND ASSESSMENT OF THE CERAMIC ASSEMBLAGE FROM : THE SWAT ARCHAEOLOGY EXCAVATION AT : WEST KNOLL, NEW ROMNEY EVALUATION 2017 (WK-NR-EV-17)

I - ASSESSMENT

1 - Nothing pre-dating c. 1250/1150 AD

2 - Nothing post-dating c. 1500/1525 AD

3 - Three archaeological periods represented -

3a - First, Early Medieval, predominantly mid-late C12 AD and represented by material from all contexts.

3b - Second, Medieval, represented by material from all contexts except Context 12

3c — Third, Late Medieval, represented by a single jug bodysherd from Context 4.

4 - The overall assemblage is dominated by material of mid twelfth-earlier thirteenth century date (c. 150-1225 AD).

5 - There is a marked absence of material that could be confidently dated to the fourteenth century AD.

II - CONTEXT-BASED QUANTIFICATION AND DATING

Primary quantification : 31 sherds (weight: 810gms)

Period codes employed:

EM = early Medieval

M = Medieval

LM = Late Medieval

Context dating:

Context: 4 - 14 sherds (weight: 486gms)

6 EM S.Kent/Romney Marsh shell-tempered sandy ware (c.l 125/1150-1175 AD emphasis)

2 EM S.Kent/Romney Marsh shell-tempered sandy ware (c.l 175-1200/1225 AD emphasis)

1 EM-M ? Rye fine sandy ware (reduced, c.l 175-1200/1225 AD probably)

1 M prob East Sussex-type coarse quartzsand ware with sparse shell (c.l 175/1200-1250 AD (probably)

2 M S.Kent/Romney Marsh shell-tempered sandy ware (c.1200-1225/1250 AD emphasis)

1 M ? Wealden buff-brown sandy ware, ?Rye/Romney Marsh variant (C13 AD broadly, probably not later than c.1275/1300 AD)

1 LM Rye sandy ware with sparse chalk (c.1475-1500/1525 AD emphasis probably)

Comment: All fairly small to fairly large-sized sherds but including one large element. The earliest entry includes markedly more worn material than those dated around c.1200 AD or later. The only exception to this trend is a thick jug handle in ? Rye fine sandy ware decorated with bold spinal thumb presses - this is heavily worn and appears to have received a different post-loss history compared with the other broadly contemporary material from this context. The Late Medieval element is from a very hard-fired globular-bodied glazed jug with fine horizontal rilling on its shoulder. Latter is near fresh.

This element could be intrusive.

Likely commencement date : Nothing obviously predating c. 1150/1250 AD

Likely end-date: Uncertain - the LM element may be intrusive into a C13 AD context. If not between c.1475-1525 AD probably

Context: 6 - 5 sherds (weight: 10 gms)

1 EM S.Kent/Romney Marsh shell-tempered sandy ware (c.125/1150-1175 AD emphasis)

1 EM S.Kent/Romney Marsh shell-tempered sandy ware (c.1175-1200/1225 AD emphasis)

3 M S.Kent/Romney Marsh shell-tempered sandy ware (c.1175/1200-1225 AD emphasis)

Comment: Small-fairly large elements. Earliest element, a rim, is markedly more worn than later material. The second entry is a cooking-pot part-profile, rim form and condition suggesting only slightly earlier than last entry - which also includes a fairly large cooking-pot rim. Latter material only slightly worn or chipped - and should represent an undisturbed contemporary discard deposit.

Likely commencement date : Nothing obviously pre-dating c.125/1150 AD

Likely end-date : Between c.1200-1250 AD

Context: 10 - 6 sherds (weight: 139gms)

2 EM S.Kent/Romney Marsh shell-tempered sandy ware (c.125/1150-1175 AD emphasis)

3 M S.Kent/Romney Marsh shell-tempered sandy ware (c.1175/1200-1225 AD emphasis AD)

1 M S.Kent/Romney Marsh shell-tempered sandy ware (c.1200-1225/1250 AD emphasis)

Comment: Moderate-sized to one fairly large elements, most bodysherds but including 2 cooking-pot rim elements - one (the fairly large sherd) of early C I 3 AD date. Medieval elements marginally fresher than the EM-dated material. The EC 13 AD cooking-pot rim has internal ? wiping use-wear abrasion - and is only slightly worn. Latest dated element is oxidised, has marginally less shell content and is near-fresh.

Likely commencement date : Nothing obviously pre-dating c.l 150-1175 AD

Likely end-date : Between c.1225-1250 AD or slightly earlier

Context: 12 - 6 sherds (weight: 175gms)

3 EM S.Kent/Romney Marsh shell-tempered sandy ware (c.l 125/1150-1175 AD emphasis)

3 EM S.Kent/Romney Marsh shell-tempered sandy ware (c.l 175-1200/1225 AD emphasis)

Comment: Small-fairly large elements, earliest tend to be smaller and are more worn than latest dated material. Latter is slightly worn or chipped, includes a cooking-pot/torage-jar rim and one large element from the shoulder of a pitcher decorated with vertically spaced broad horizontal tooling – and should represent an undisturbed contemporary discard deposit.

Likely commencement date : Nothing obviously pre-dating c.l 125/1150 AD

Likely end-date : Between c.1200-1225 AD or slightly later

Analyst: N.Macpherson-Grant (5.2017)



Plate 1 Trench 1



Plate 2 Trench 1 section (north-east termination showing beach shingle)



Plate 3. Trench 2 (looking SSW)



Plate 4. Trench 3 showing modern demolition layers



Plate 5. Trench 2 (looking NNE)



Plate 6. Trench 2. Modern tile layer



Plate 7. Trench 1. Large pit or ditch (CRN 7)



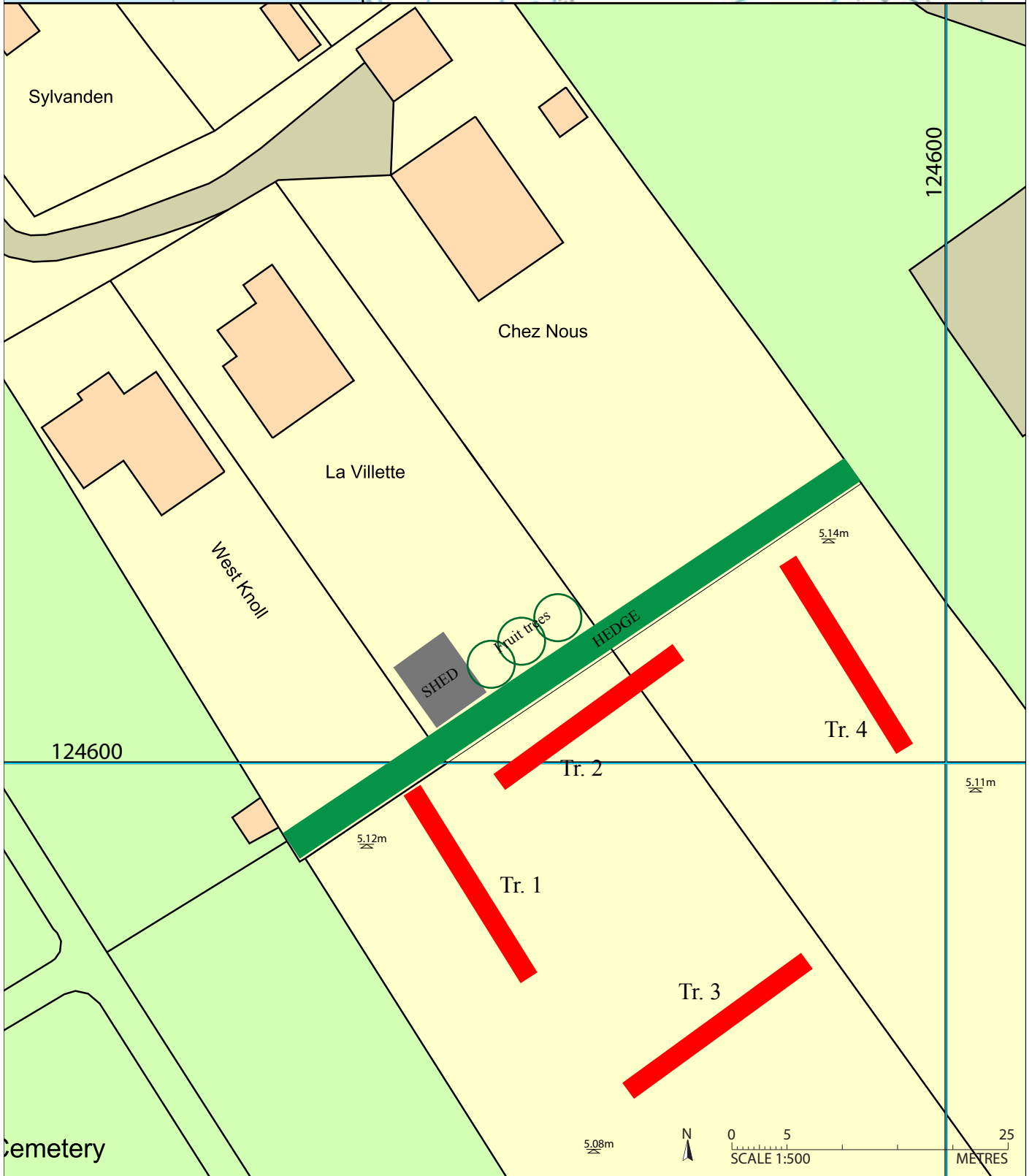
Plate 8. Trench 1. Pit (CRN 11)



Plate 9. Trench 1. Pit (CRN13)



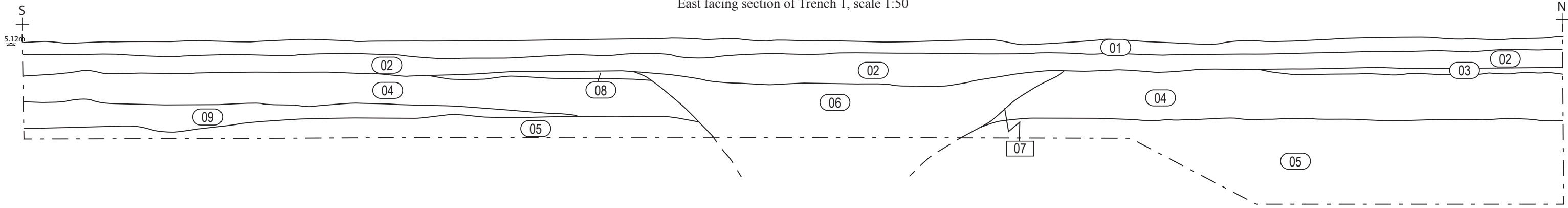
Plate 10. Architectural fragments from Feature 16 Trench 2



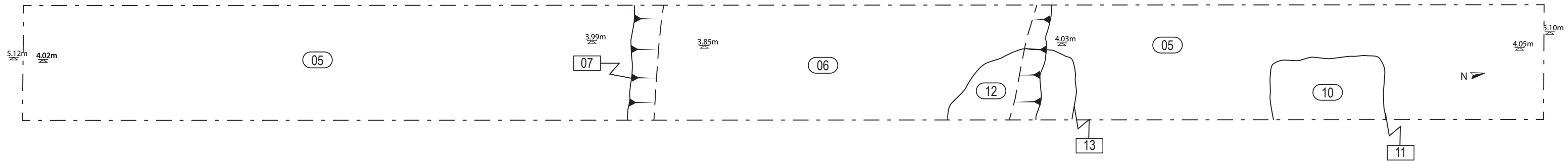
License number: 100031961

Figure 1: Trench location plan

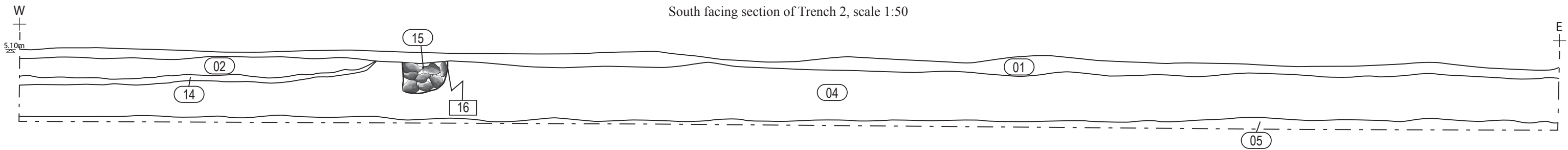
SECTION 1
East facing section of Trench 1, scale 1:50



PLAN 1
Plan of Trench 1, scale 1:50



SECTION 2
South facing section of Trench 2, scale 1:50

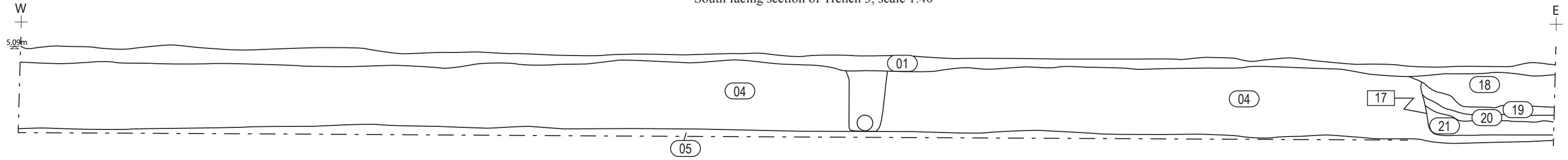


PLAN 2
Plan of Trench 2, scale 1:50



Figure 2: Drawings of Trench 1 and 2

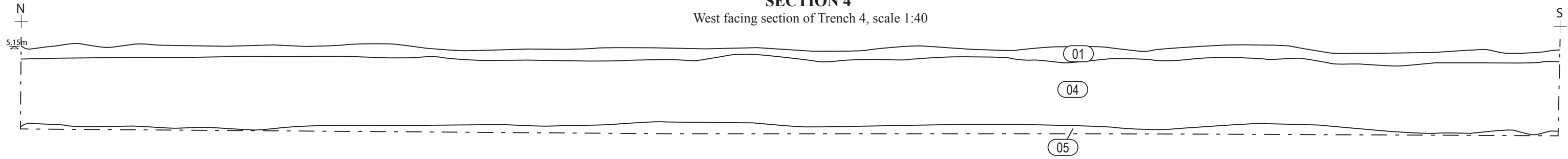
SECTION 3
South facing section of Trench 3, scale 1:40



PLAN 3
Plan of Trench 3, scale 1:50



SECTION 4
West facing section of Trench 4, scale 1:40



PLAN 4
Plan of Trench 4, scale 1:50

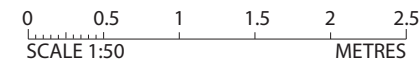


Figure 3: Drawings of Trench 3 and 4