

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT:
TRIAL TRENCHING ON LAND OFF FOLLY LANE, NORTON DISNEY, LINCOLNSHIRE**

NGR: SK 8578 6009
AAL Site Code: NDFL 21
OASIS Reference Number: allenarc1-421059



Report prepared for the Norton Disney History and Archaeology Group

By
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Allenarchaeology



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Cover image: General shot across the northeast part of the site, looking west

Executive Summary

- Norton Disney History and Archaeology Group commissioned Allen Archaeology Limited to undertake an archaeological evaluation with trial trenching on land off Folly Lane, Norton Disney, Lincolnshire, as part of an ongoing community project.
- The site lies within an area of significant archaeological activity, with a scheduled Roman villa lying in the field immediately to the north. Iron Age activity has also been identified by geophysical survey and trial trenching to the east of the site.
- A prior geophysical survey on the site revealed a circular/sub-rectangular feature along with positive linear features.
- The evaluation trenching comprised seven 10 - 15m long by 1.8m wide trenches, sited on the results of the preceding geophysics work and an aerial photograph showing cropmarks within the site.
- The trial trenching revealed archaeological features within each trench, corresponding well with features seen on the geophysical survey and on the aerial photograph. The evaluation revealed more archaeological features than shown on the geophysical survey, which suggests that the cropmarks shown on the aerial photograph are likely a good representation of surviving archaeology within the field. This also suggests that features relating to those excavated and revealed continue into the field immediately to the north.
- Finds and environmental evidence was very sparse, and comprised a small number of sherds of probable prehistoric date, but they were not closely dateable. The low volume of finds indicates a probable agricultural function for the site as opposed to settlement. Possible crucible fragments may indicate metal working in the vicinity.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Norton Disney History and Archaeology Group commissioned Allen Archaeology Limited to undertake an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching on land off Folly Lane, Norton Disney, Lincolnshire, as part of an ongoing community project.
- 1.2 All fieldwork and reporting has been undertaken in line with the recommendations of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists '*Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation*' (CIfA 2014) and the Historic England document '*Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment*' (Historic England 2015).

2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1 Norton Disney is located approximately 15.2km to the southwest of Lincoln and 10.3km to the north-northeast of Newark. The area of investigation lies approximately 2.5km to the west-northwest of the centre of Norton Disney and comprises the northern corner of a larger agricultural field, bounded by Folly Lane to the west, and centred on NGR SK 8578 6009 (**Error! Reference source not found.**).
- 2.2 The local geology comprises a bedrock geology of Scunthorpe Mudstone Formation, with Eagle Moor Sand and Gravel Member superficial deposits recorded over the entire site (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 3.1 Immediately to the north of the site is a Roman villa, which survives solely as below-ground remains and is designated as a Scheduled Monument (No. 1005018, LHER No. 60745). Excavations undertaken between 1934 and 1937 identified a multiphase development of the villa site from the 1st century AD through to the middle of the 4th century AD. A geophysical survey (Bunn 2018) of the entire field containing the villa, using both magnetometry and resistivity techniques, revealed anomalies associated with the primary villa complex, as well as features potentially associated with prehistoric occupation of the site.
- 3.2 A geophysical survey (Bunn 2017) immediately to the west of Folly Lane (and to the east of the site) revealed potential pits and ditches. A follow up evaluation (Brocklehurst 2018) established these features as being Iron Age in origin, therefore pre-dating the villa.
- 3.3 Within the site, cropmarks recorded in the Lincolnshire Historic Environment Record (Monument No. 1067645) suggest the location of a probable prehistoric or Roman settlement consisting of enclosures and a possible hut circle. A geophysical survey (AAL 2020) on the site identified a circular/sub-rectangular feature along with potentially associated positive linear features.

4.0 Methodology

- 4.1 The trial trenching methodology entailed the excavation of an initial five trenches measuring approximately 10m in length and 1.8m in width. A further two trenches measuring 10m and 15m in length were subsequently opened, targeted on geophysical survey anomalies and cropmarks shown on an aerial photo of the site.
- 4.2 The fieldwork was conducted by volunteers from Norton Disney History and Archaeology Group on Thursday 8th and Friday 9th April 2021, and was supervised by Robert Evershed of AAL.
- 4.3 The trenches were located on site using a Leica GS08 RTK NetRover GPS. In each trench, topsoil, subsoil and underlying non-archaeological deposits were removed, in spits no greater than 0.1m in thickness, by a 360° tracked excavator with a toothless ditching bucket. The process was repeated until either the first archaeological horizon or natural horizon were exposed.
- 4.4 A full written record of the deposits were made on standard AAL context record sheets. Each deposit, was allocated a unique identifier (context number) and accorded a written description. A summary of all contexts has been included in Appendix 1.
- 4.5 Deposits were drawn in section (at scales 1:20 or 1:50). Digital photography formed an integral part of the recording strategy, and all photographs had scales, an identification board and directional arrow.

5.0 Results

- 5.1 Throughout the site, the stratigraphic sequence was consistent, comprising a ploughsoil of dark brown very sandy silt (ranging in depth between 0.35m and 0.50m), over the natural geology of mid-orange/light-brown silty sand and gravel.
- 5.2 Trenches 1 to 5 were plotted out prior to the start of the trial trenching, targeting features revealed by the former geophysical survey (AAL 2020) and seen as cropmarks on an aerial photograph from 1959. Following the opening of these trenches on Day 1 of the evaluation, two further trenches were opened to further identify archaeological features within the area on Day 2.

Trench 1

- 5.3 Trench 1 was located across a circular feature in the centre of the site, and an adjacent anomaly. Corresponding well with the geophysical survey, three linear features were revealed. Approximately half way along the trench a linear ditch [102] was revealed, 0.58m wide and 0.35m deep, which contained a very dark greyish brown slightly silty sand 103. This ditch was recut on its northern side by ditch [104], 1.08m wide and 0.32m deep, which contained a mid-orange brown slightly sandy silt 105. No finds were recovered from either of these features.



Plate 1: East-facing section of [102] and [104], scale is 1m

- 5.4 Approximately 2.5m to the north a third linear ditch [106], 0.70m wide and 0.20m deep was revealed which contained a mid-brown slightly silty sand fill 107. No finds were recovered from this ditch.



Plate 2: East-facing section of [106], scale is 1m

Trench 2

- 5.5 Trench 2 was located to attempt to identify two linear features on the geophysical survey, a potential boundary feature aligned east-northeast to west-southwest, and a potential linear feature which ran from the potential boundary feature north-northwest towards the circular feature. This second potential feature was not identified within the trench, however at the southern end of the trench a linear ditch aligned east-northeast to west-southwest, [202] was revealed. This ditch was 0.90m wide and 0.20m deep contained a very dark brown slightly sandy silt 203. No finds were recovered from this feature, and a soil sample from the fill produced only one charred seed which could not be identified to species.



Plate 3: East-facing section of [202], scale is 1m

Trench 3

- 5.6 The geophysical survey suggested that the boundary feature identified in Trench 2 continued for a further 20m to the east-northeast before turning to run north. Trench 3 was located across the north/south part of the feature, and a linear ditch [302] was revealed, 1.20m in width and 0.35m deep. This contained a mid/dark brown sandy silt 303, from which a small assemblage of seven pottery sherds were recovered. Six were all likely to be from the same vessel, but the small abraded nature of the sherds made them hard to date. However, their appearance and the presence of a possible metallic residue suggests they may be crucible fragments. The final sherd was from a grog tempered vessel and is likely to be of a Bronze Age date. A soil sample from the fill produced only very small specks of charcoal.



Plate 4: South southeast-facing section of [302], scale is 0.5m

Trench 4

- 5.7 Trench 4 was located at the northern end of the site, targeting a potential linear feature aligned east-northeast to west-southwest. Within the trench a linear ditch on the same alignment was revealed, [402], 1.80m wide and 0.32m deep. This contained a mid-greyish brown silty sand 403. No finds were recovered from this feature.



Plate 5: South and east-facing sections of [402], scales are 1m and 0.5m

- 5.8 A further linear feature, aligned northwest to southeast [404], 0.50m wide, was also revealed, containing a mid-greyish brown silty sand 405. Unfortunately due to time constraints it was not possible to excavate this feature, and its relationship with [404] remains unclear.



Plate 6: Unexcavated feature within Trench 4, looking north northwest, scales are 1m and 0.5m

Trench 5

5.9 Trench 5 was located to target potential cropmarks identified on a 1959 aerial photograph (Figure 9), and a large linear ditch [502], 2.50m wide, was revealed. This contained a mid-brownish grey silty sand 503, but the feature was not fully excavated due to time constraints and reaching the water table. A large decorated rim sherd of a probable Iron Age date was recovered from this fill. A soil sample from the deposit was devoid of any environmental evidence. This ditch was potentially recut on its western edge by a much smaller ditch [505], 1.06m wide and 0.20m deep. This contained a mid-grey silty sand 505, devoid of finds. Potentially ditch [502] may continue into Trench 6 as [602] with [504] continuing as [604].



Plate 7: North-facing section of [502] and [504], scale is 1 x 1m

Trench 6

- 5.10 Trench 6 was opened to see whether the features in Trench 5 continued to the south. Due to time constraints it was not possible to excavate any of the features revealed, however the trench was cleaned and the features exposed were recorded in plan.
- 5.11 Within the trench at least two linear features were revealed, [602] a linear ditch aligned roughly north to south, approximately 2.90m wide likely represents a continuation of [502] revealed in Trench 5. This ditch contained a mid/dark brown silty sand 603, from which an iron nail of uncertain date was recovered during cleaning. To the east a second linear feature [604], also aligned north to south, was also revealed, measuring approximately 1.00m in width. This contained a mid/dark brown silty sand 605. This feature most likely represents a continuation of [504] from Trench 5.
- 5.12 The slightly irregular nature of the eastern edges of both of these features may suggest that there were more features within the trench than initially identified.



Plate 8: Unexcavated features in Trench 6, looking southeast, scales are 1m

Trench 7

- 5.13 Trench 7 was located to target an east to west linear feature identified by the geophysical survey. A large linear feature [702], 2.10m wide, likely representing a former boundary feature was revealed containing a mid/dark brown silty sand 703. Due to time constraints it was not possible to excavate this feature.



Plate 9: Unexcavated feature in Trench 7, looking east, scales are 1m

6.0 Discussion and Conclusions

- 6.1 The trial trenches exposed a natural stratigraphic sequence of topsoil over natural throughout the site.
- 6.2 The trenches were targeted on features revealed by the geophysical survey (AAL 2020) and additional cropmarks on an aerial photograph from 1959, which were not present in the geophysical survey results (Figure 9). The aerial photograph was taken at a very oblique angle, so it was necessary to warp the photograph during the georeferencing process to accurately locate the features visible on the photograph. Potentially this increases the error margin with regards to the location of the features, however the combination of the geophysical survey and the location of features revealed in the evaluation suggest the aerial photograph has been accurately manipulated.
- 6.3 All seven evaluation trenches revealed archaeological features, with Trenches 1 – 4 and 7 revealing features seen on the geophysical survey, and Trenches 5 and 6 revealing features seen on the aerial photograph.
- 6.4 The linear features revealed in all the trenches except Trench 1, likely relate to former boundary or enclosure features. The pottery recovered from the site was of uncertain date with a probable Iron Age sherd from Trench 5, and a sherd that may be Bronze Age from Trench 3, all predating the Roman villa located in the field immediately to the north. Likely this corresponds with a continuation of use of the landscape throughout the prehistoric period into the Roman period.
- 6.5 Trench 1 was targeted on the circular/sub-rectangular feature in the centre of the site. A shallow linear feature at the northern end corresponded well with the geophysical survey, as did the revealed ditch and recut in the centre of the trench. The recut of this feature suggests at least a couple of phases of activity. No finds were recovered from these features, but they clearly form related components of the later prehistoric landscape.

- 6.6 Finds and environmental evidence were very limited, with a small number of pottery sherds and an iron nail being recovered, with the samples producing only very limited charcoal and one charred grain. This lack of finds suggests the site does not represent settlement, but may be field boundaries or stock enclosures. The pottery from Trench 3 may potentially represent crucible fragments, and this, combined with probable Iron Age slag recovered during fieldwalking, provides convincing evidence for metal working in the immediate vicinity.
- 6.7 The aerial photograph suggests that the features uncovered in the evaluation continue into the field immediately to the north, and despite the geophysical survey (Bunn 2018) showing little corresponding to these features, the trial trenching gives hope that they may survive within that field too. It may be that the magnetic signature of the ditch fills is too similar to the surrounding natural, potentially due to the iron rich nature of the soils.

7.0 Effectiveness of Methodology

- 7.1 The trial trenching methodology employed was suited to the scale and nature of the project in determining the nature of the archaeology present. It has confirmed that the features present in the aerial photo survive, and has offered several interesting targets for any further stages of archaeological investigation.

8.0 Acknowledgements

8.1 Allen Archaeology Limited would like to thank Norton Disney History and Archaeology Group for this commission, and thanks to all the members of the group who took part in the evaluation.

9.0 References

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Bunn, D, 2018, *Archaeological Geophysical Survey: Ancient Scheduled Monument, Villa Farm, Folly Lane, Norton Disney, Lincolnshire*. Pre-Construct Geophysics, Grey literature report (unpublished)

CIfA, 2014, *Standard and guidance for archaeological evaluation*, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, Reading

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Appendix 1: The Finds

By Dr Alice Forward

An assemblage of eight sherds of pottery and an iron nail was retrieved from excavations at Norton Disney. The sherds represent three vessels, one of which is datable to either the Iron Age or early Anglo-Saxon period, one, comprising six sherds, is not immediately datable and a third which is likely to be prehistoric in date and possibly Bronze Age rather than Iron Age.

Methodology

The pottery has been visually identified and recorded by count, weight (g) and fabric as set out in the '*Standards for pottery studies in archaeology*' (Barclay et al 2016).

Results

Vessel 1

Vessel 1 was retrieved from ditch fill 502. The sherd is a rim sherd with finger impressed decoration on the very top of the rim. The rim is everted leading to a rounded body. The fabric of the sherd is heavily tempered with quartz and the sherd is fired a very dark brown to black in colour.

The sherd is likely to be Iron Age in date and could represent the rim from a carinated jar. However, further work would be required to provide a definite identification as Anglo-Saxon vessels have also been found with very similar fabrics, decoration and form.

Vessel 2

Vessel 2 was retrieved from ditch fill 303 and is represented by six sherds. Whilst they do not re-fit they are clearly from the same vessel. The fabric is grog tempered and the body sherds are relatively fine in width. The finish on the sherds, both internal and external are noticeably smooth and on one sherd the internal/external surface appears to possibly have a layer of metallic residue adhering. Due to the fabric and the smoothed but also roughly hand-built nature of the sherds, it is possible that this vessel is a crucible. Further work is required to better understand these sherds but there are no particular features that determine a specific date for these sherds.

Vessel 3

Vessel 3 was also retrieved from ditch fill 303, found within the sample residue, is represented by a single sherd. It appears to be shell tempered with all the shell having burnt or leached out of the pottery leaving voids. It is likely that this is an early sherd, possibly Bronze Age in date but it could be earlier. Further should be done to better identify and date this sherd.

Context no.	Trench	Fabric	No. Sherds	Weight (g)	Rim diameter (cm)	EVE (%)	Notes
303	3	Grog tempered	6	13			Possible slag adhering to surface
303	3	Shell Tempered	1	5			All inclusions burnt out
502	5	Quartz tempered	1	38	18	14	Finger decoration on top of the rim

Table 1 details of pottery from excavation

Conclusions

The three vessels represented in the assemblage from Norton Disney are interesting finds. The rim sherd is of a highly decorated vessel which could be either Iron Age or Anglo-Saxon in date. The body sherds from the hand-built vessel, possibly a crucible, are intriguing and would be worthy of further work. The body sherd from a third vessel is certainly prehistoric and could be Bronze Age in date.

Small Finds

One iron nail was retrieved from ditch fill 603 and numbered as small find 1. It measures 61mm in length and is 17mm thick at the widest end tapering to a point which is now broken and its thickness no longer measurable. It weighs 13g. The nail is not particularly diagnostic and therefore not datable on its own.

References

Barclay et al, 2016, *A standard for pottery studies in archaeology*.

Appendix 2: Environmental Assessment

Bryn Leadbetter

Three whole-earth sample were collected during archaeological work on land off Folly Lane, Norton Disney, Lincolnshire (Site code NDFL21). The samples were taken for the recovery of any artefacts and for charred plant remains and wood charcoal in order to aid the interpretation of the features from which the samples derive and to help provide an understanding of the arable economy and local environmental conditions at the time the site was active.

Methodology

The samples were processed by flotation with the lighter, floating, material (flot) retained in a 300-micron mesh and the heavier fraction (residue) captured in a 1000-micron mesh. The flot was then air dried before being scanned under a microscope. The residue was air dried and sieved at 5mm and 2mm. Any artefacts were then removed and any additional plant material recovered and added to the flot.

Results

Sample	Context	Volume (ltrs)	Flot Volume (ml)	Environmental Remains	Residue finds
1	203	10	<2	1x poss' cg, seed, rootlets, charc'	
2	303	10	5	seed, rootlets, charc'	1x pot fragment
3	503	10	7	seed, rootlets	

Table 2 Quantification of 3 whole-earth samples from NDFL21

Table 2 quantifies the samples taken. Sample 1 (203) produced 1 possible charred grain, but this was heavily distorted and could not be identified further. Small numbers of modern, intrusive, seeds and rootlets were noted in all three samples. A few small specks (<2mm) of charcoal were present in samples 1 (203) and 2 (303) only. The geological aspect of all three samples consisted of small amounts of angular and pebble flints <50mm on average.

Discussion

Given the paucity of material no worthwhile interpretations can be made and no further analysis is therefore required.

Appendix 3: Context Summary List

Trench 1

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness (m)	Interpretation
100	Layer	Dark brown very sandy silt			0.40	Topsoil
101	Layer	Mid orange/light brown silty sandy gravel				Natural
102	Cut	Linear, east/west aligned, steep sloping sides		0.58	0.35	Cut of linear ditch
103	Fill	Moderately compact, very dark greyish brown slightly silty sand with frequent small stones		0.58	0.35	Natural deposition within [102]
104	Cut	Linear, east/west aligned, steep sides and concave base		1.08	0.32	Recut of [102]
105	Fill	Moderately compact, mid orange/brown slightly sandy silt with frequent small stones		1.08	0.32	Natural deposition within [104]
106	Cut	Linear, east/west aligned, concave sides and base		0.70	0.20	Cut of boundary ditch
107	Fill	Moderately compact, mid brown slightly silty sand with frequent small stones		0.7	0.2	Natural deposition within [106]

Trench 2

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness (m)	Interpretation
200	Layer	Dark brown very sandy silt			0.45	Topsoil
201	Layer	Mid orange/light brown silty sandy gravel				Natural
202	Cut	Linear, east northeast/west southwest aligned, concave sides and base		0.90	0.20	Cut of possible boundary ditch
203	Fill	Moderately compact, very dark brown slightly sandy silt with frequent small stones and pebbles		0.90	0.20	Natural deposition within [202]

Trench 3

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness (m)	Interpretation
300	Layer	Dark brown very sandy silt			0.35	Topsoil
301	Layer	Mid orange/light brown silty sandy gravel				Natural
302	Cut	Linear, north/south aligned, concave sides and base		1.20	0.35	Cut of boundary ditch
303	Fill	Moderately compact, mid/dark brown sandy silt with frequent small stones and pebbles		1.20	0.35	Natural deposition within [302]

Trench 4

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness (m)	Interpretation
400	Layer	Dark brown very sandy silt			0.50	Topsoil
401	Layer	Mid orange/light brown silty sandy gravel				Natural
402	Cut	Linear, east northeast/west southwest aligned, variable sides and base		1.80	0.32	Cut of ditch
403	Fill	Moderately compact, mid greyish brown silty sand with frequent small stones		1.80	0.32	Natural deposition within [402]
404	Cut	Linear, northwest/southeast aligned. Not excavated		0.50		Linear ditch
405	Fill	Mid greyish brown silty sand		0.5		Fill of [404]

Trench 5

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness (m)	Interpretation
500	Layer	Dark brown very sandy silt			0.42	Topsoil
501	Layer	Mid orange/light brown silty sandy gravel				Natural
502	Cut	Linear, north/south aligned, concave sides, not fully excavated		2.54	>0.50	Cut of boundary ditch
503	Fill	Moderately compact, mid brownish grey silty sand with frequent stones		2.54	>0.50	Natural deposition within [502]
504	Cut	Linear, north/south aligned, concave sides and base		1.07	0.20	Recut of [502]
505	Fill	Moderately compact, mid grey silty sand with frequent small stones		1.07	0.20	Natural deposition within [504]

Trench 6

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness (m)	Interpretation
600	Layer	Dark brown very sandy silt			0.40	Topsoil
601	Layer	Mid orange/light brown silty sandy gravel				Natural
602	Cut	Linear, north/south aligned, not excavated		2.90		Cut of linear ditch, possibly same as [502]
603	Fill	Mid/dark brown silty sand		2.90		Fill of [602]
604	Cut	Linear, north/south aligned, not excavated		1.00		Cut of linear ditch, possibly same as [504]
605	Fill	Mid/dark brown silty sand		1.00		Fill of [604]

Trench 7

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness (m)	Interpretation
700	Layer	Dark brown very sandy silt			0.35	Topsoil
701	Layer	Mid orange/light brown silty sandy gravel				Natural
702	Cut	Linear, east/west aligned, not excavated		2.10		Cut of boundary ditch
703	Fill	Mid/dark brown silty sand		2.10		Fill of [702]

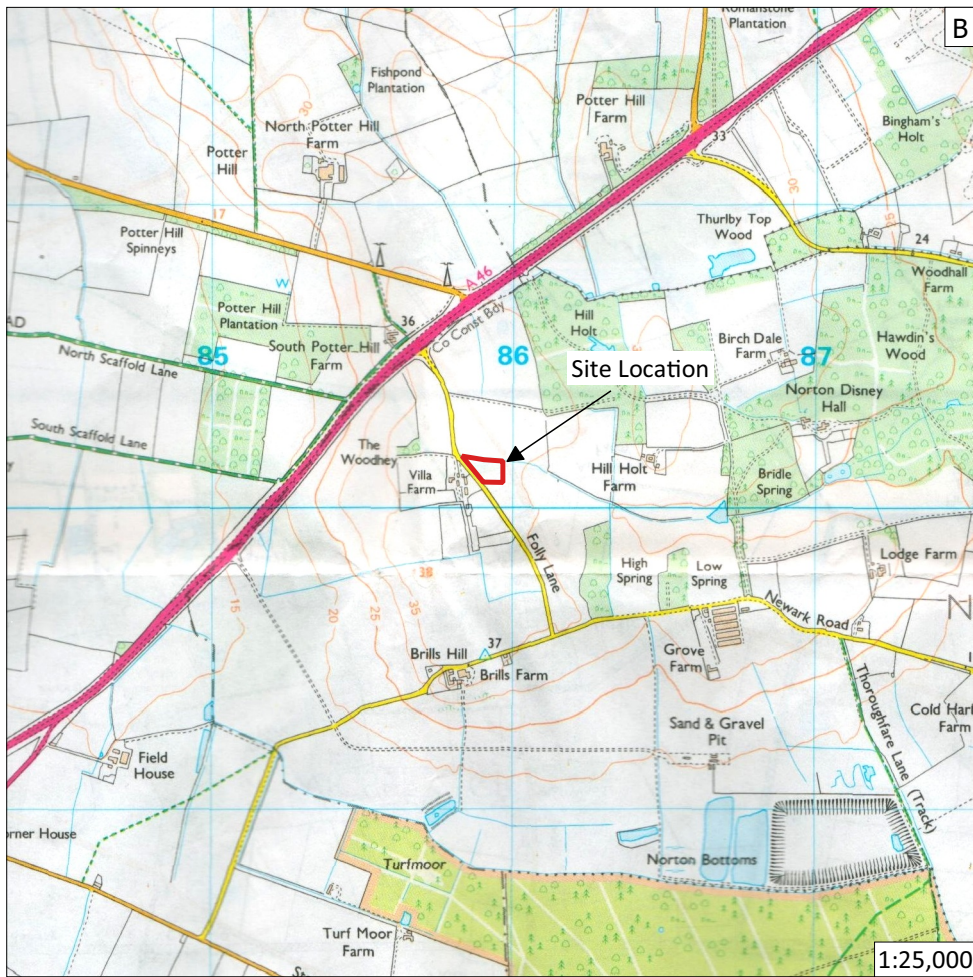
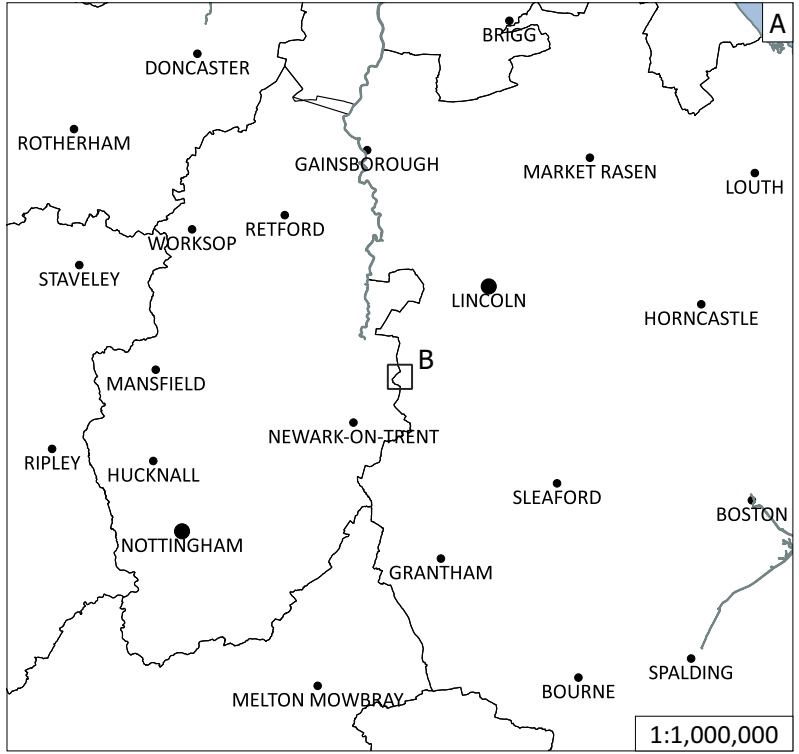


Figure 1: Site location outlined in red

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Drawn by	R Evershed
Date	15/04/2021

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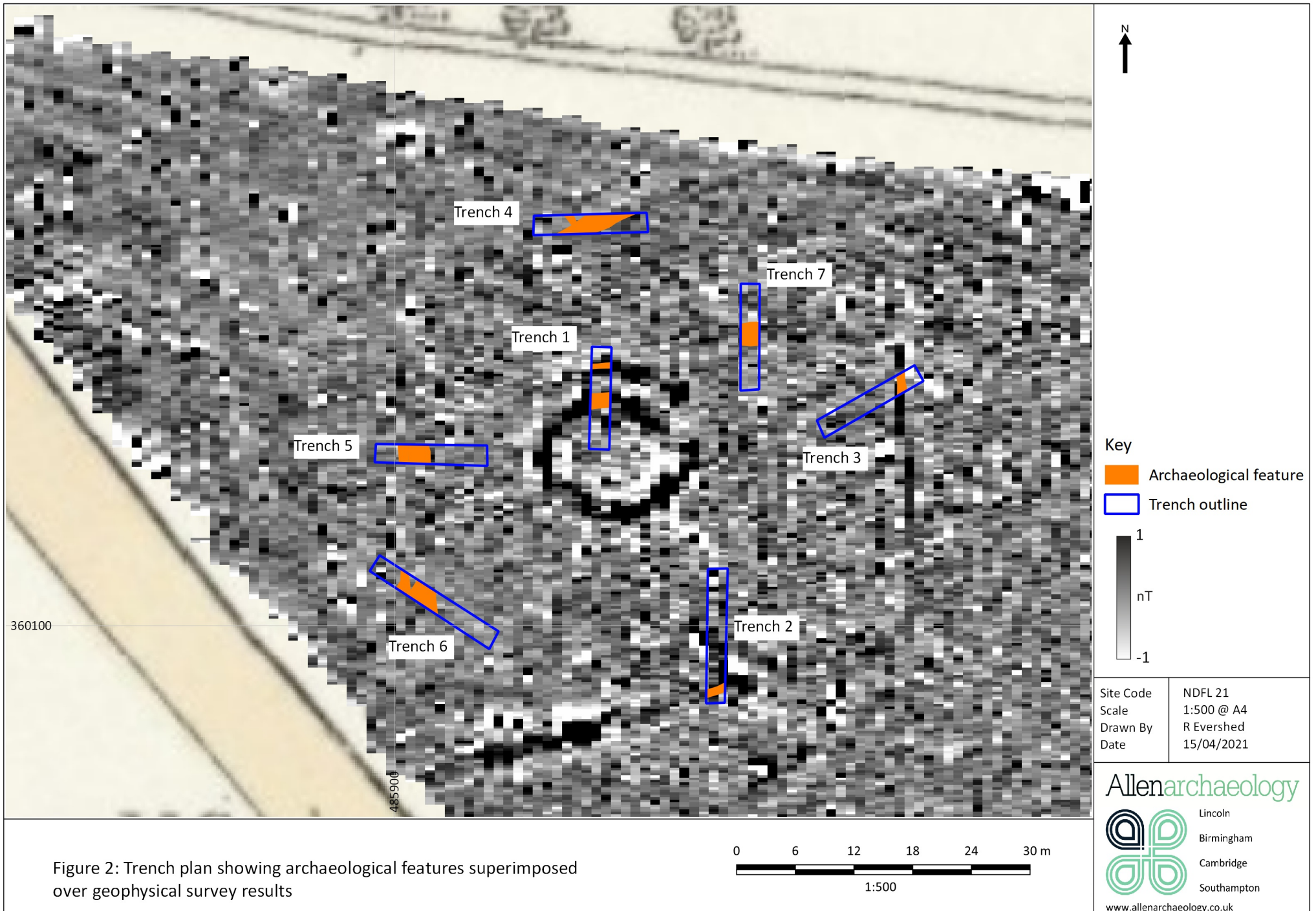
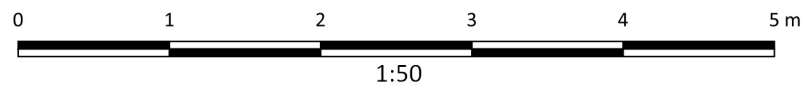
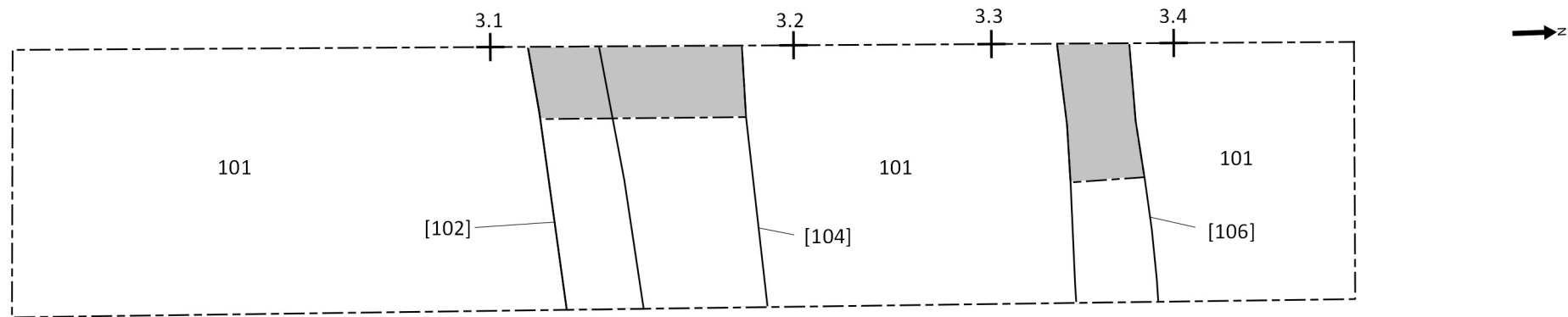
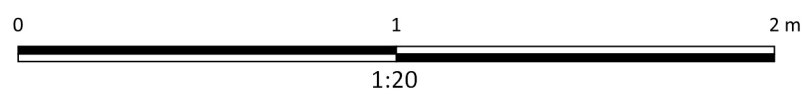
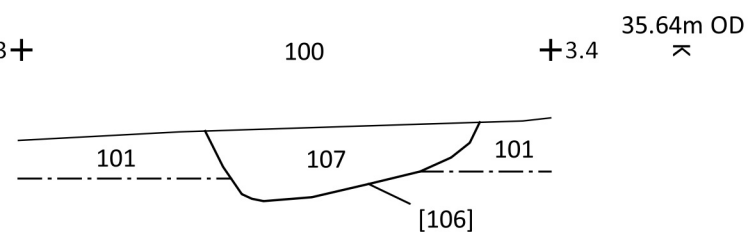
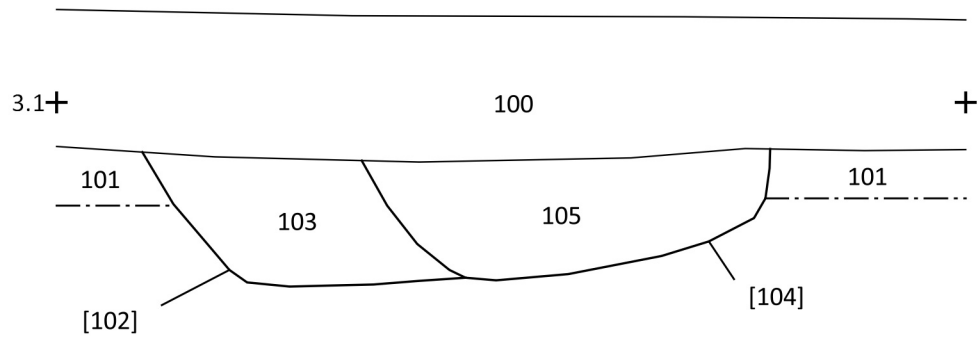


Figure 2: Trench plan showing archaeological features superimposed over geophysical survey results



East-facing section

East-facing section



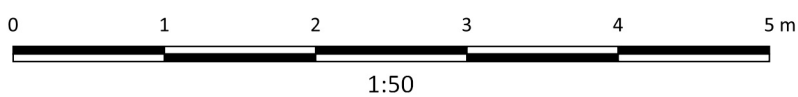
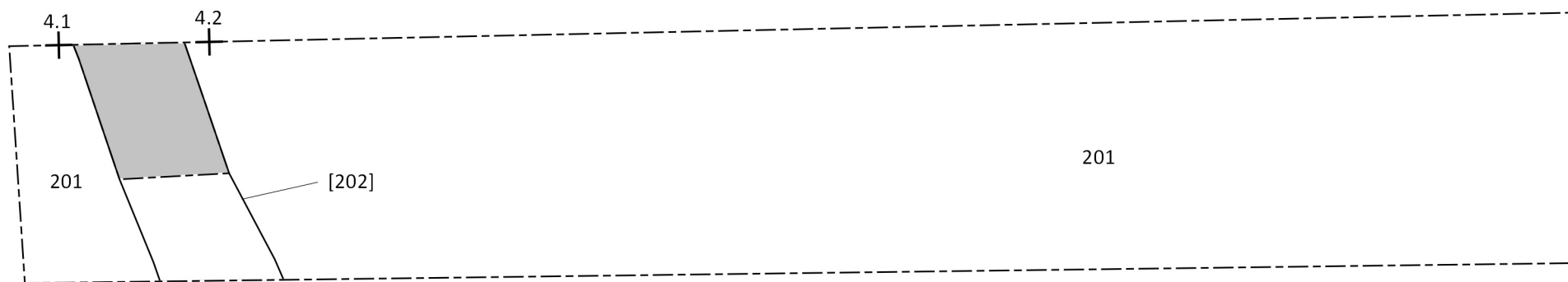
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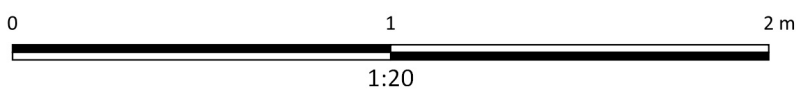
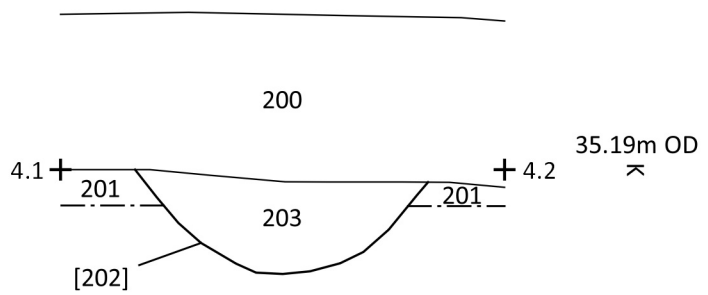
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Figure 3: Trench 1 plan and sections



East-facing section



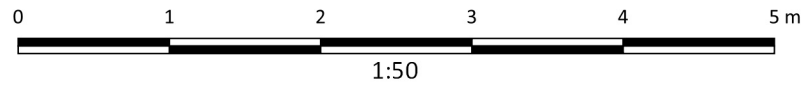
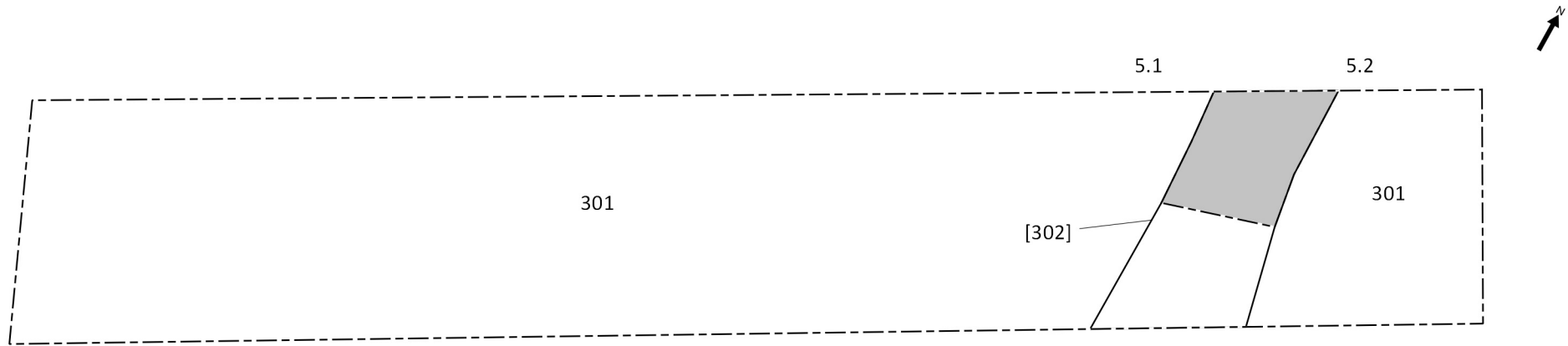
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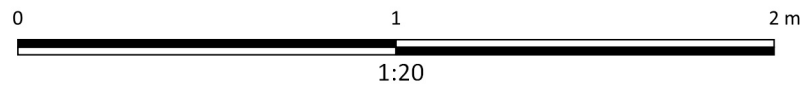
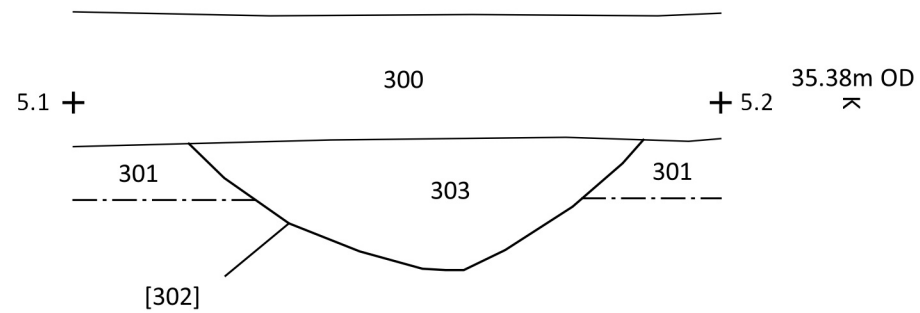
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Figure 4: Trench 2 plan and section



Southeast-facing section



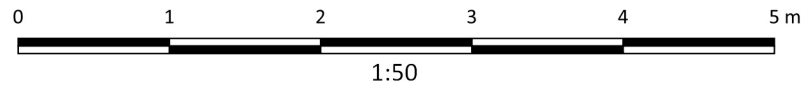
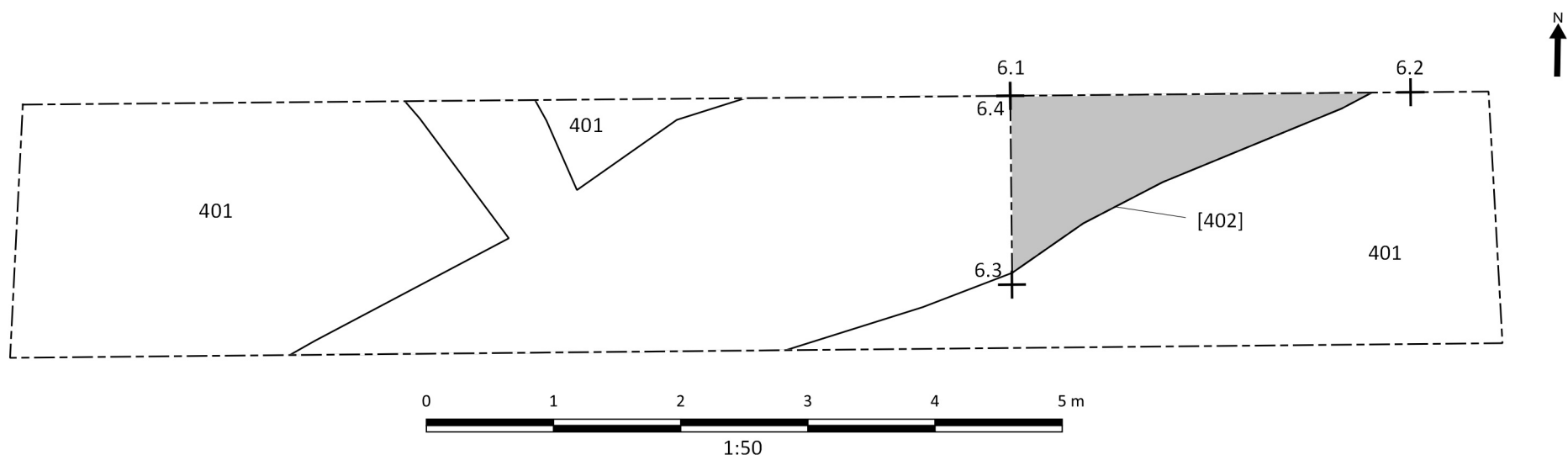
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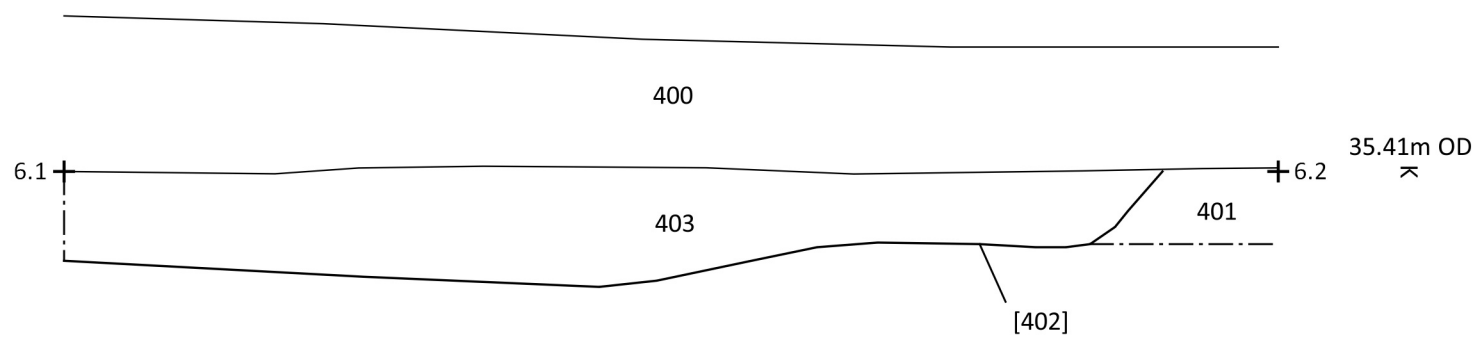
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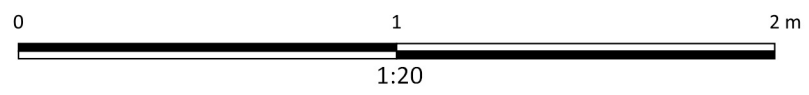
Figure 5: Trench 3 plan and section



South-facing section



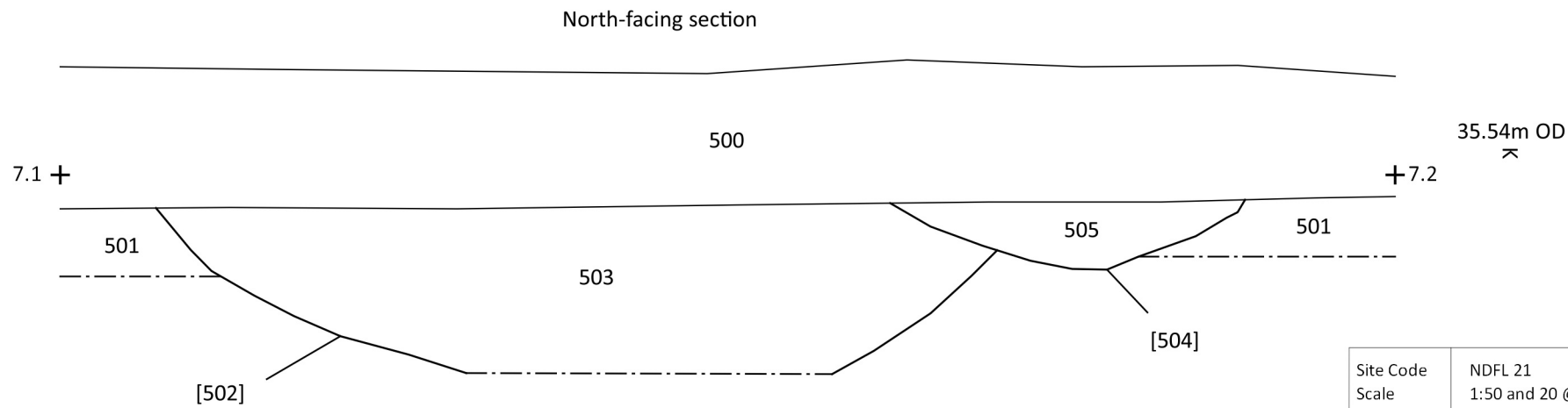
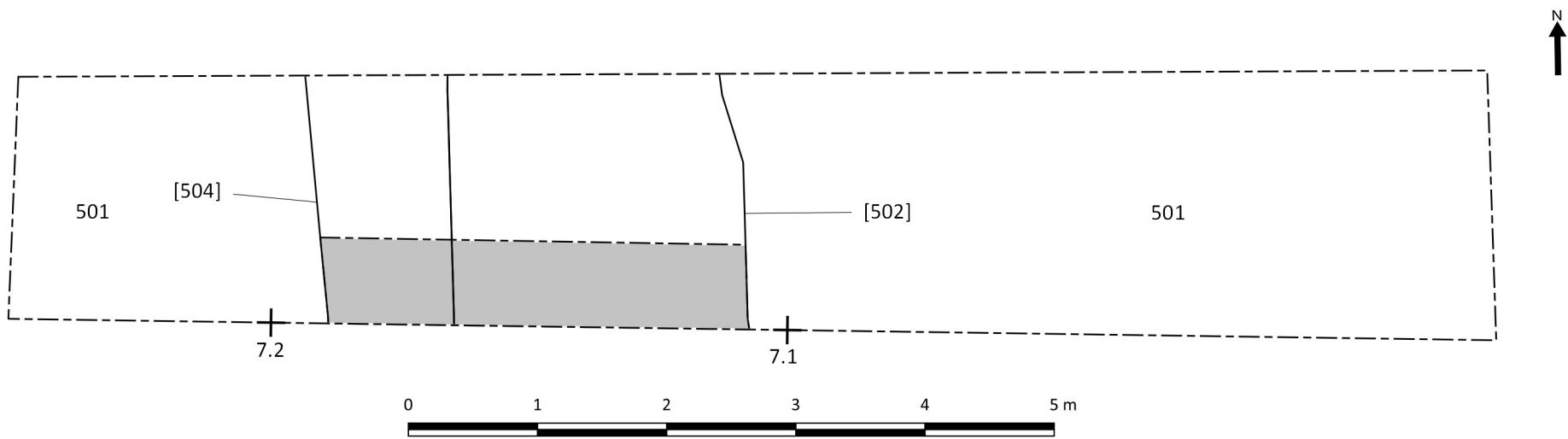
East-facing section



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Figure 6: Trench 4 plan and sections



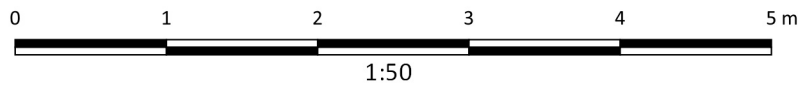
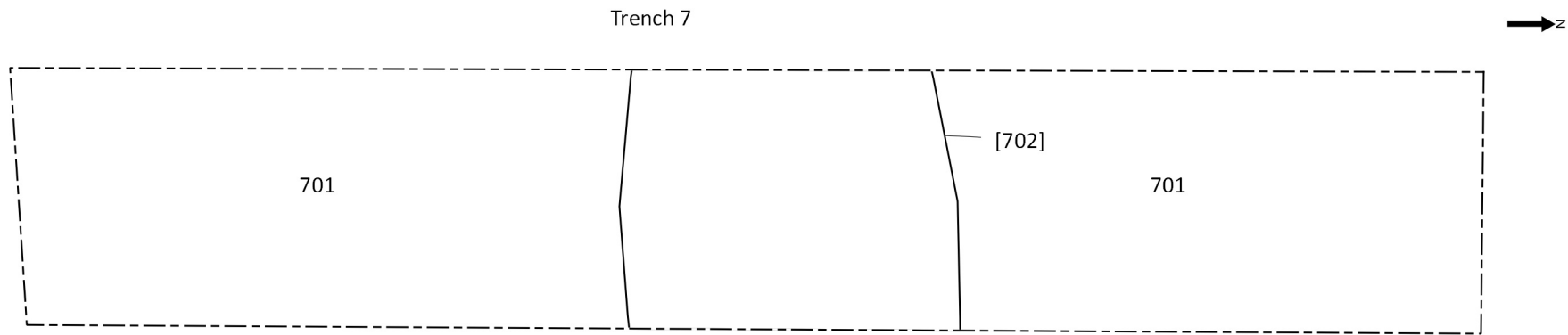
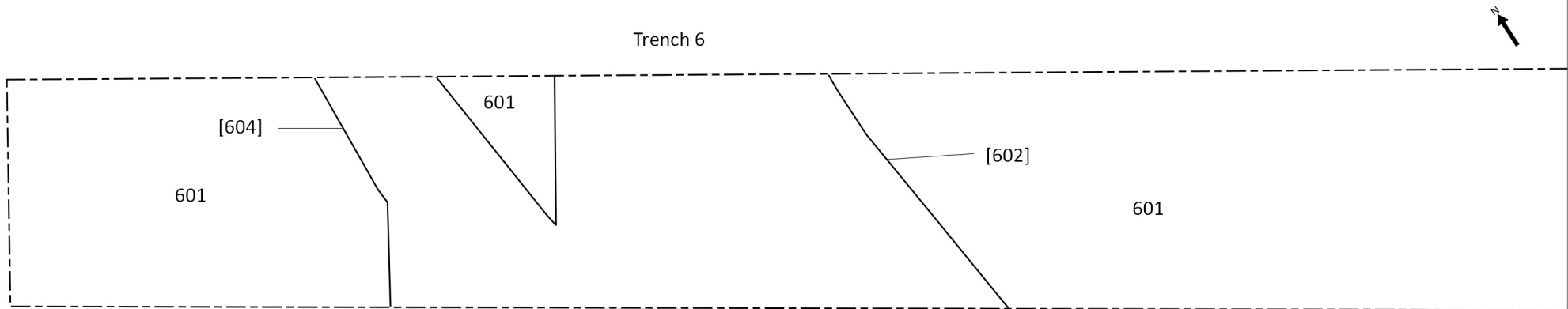
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Figure 7: Trench 5 plan and section



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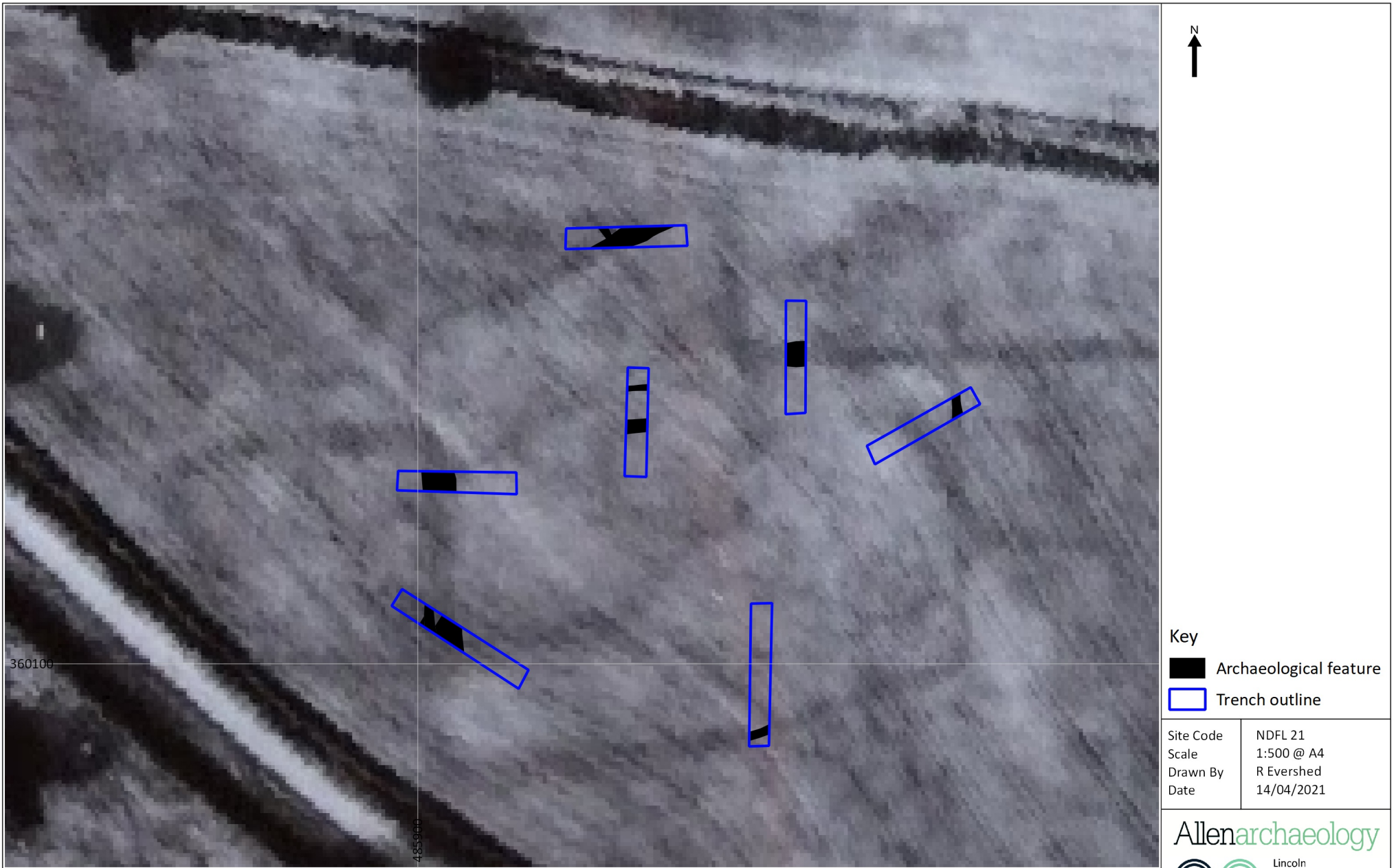
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Figure 8: Plans of Trenches 6 and 7



Key

- Archaeological feature
- Trench outline

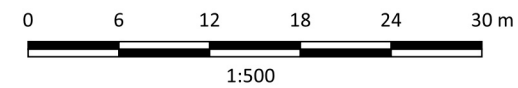
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Figure 9: Trench plan showing archaeological features superimposed over the 1959 aerial photograph





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