

Wessex Archaeology

68 London Street Reading, Berkshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Ref: 55124

January 2004

**68 LONDON STREET
READING
BERKSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

Prepared for:

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by

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REF 55124.01

January 2004

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Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Horncastle West Ltd to undertake an archaeological trenching evaluation at 68 London Street, Reading, Berkshire centred on NGR 471770/173100. The archaeological works were conducted in advance of a proposed residential development in the 6m x 25m, yard area at the rear of the property.

Work was carried out on the 16th and 17th December 2003 and involved the excavation of two trenches totalling 25m² in area.

Both trenches revealed evidence of significant Post-medieval and modern disturbance comprising layers of demolition and levelling and a number of discrete features.

Evidence of medieval activity was located in one trench in the form of a pit containing a fragment of animal bone and pottery dated within a date range of the 12th to 14th centuries. The contents of the pit indicate it may have been a domestic refuse pit rather than a feature associated with an industrial or manufacturing activity.

The evaluation results indicate that activities extended to this part of London Street during the medieval period.

Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned by Horncastle West Ltd. Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Andrew Green of Horncastle West Ltd for his help and assistance during the course of the project. Thanks are also due to Kevin Beachus of Babtie Group who monitored the works on behalf of the Local Planning Authority.

The fieldwork was supervised by Susan Clelland who also prepared the report with contributions from Lorraine Mephram (finds) and Linda Coleman (illustrations). The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Robert Wardill.

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Horncastle West Ltd to conduct an Archaeological Evaluation comprising two trenches at 68 London Street, Reading (the Site) centred on NGR 471770/173100. This report details the results the fieldwork that was undertaken between 16th and 17th December 2003.

1.1.2 Archaeological works were carried out in accordance with an Evaluation Strategy outlined in a Project Design prepared by Wessex Archaeology (WA 2003) and approved by the Local Planning Authorities Archaeological Advisor, Kevin Beachus of Babtie Group. All works were carried out in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (1994 as amended).

1.2 The Site

1.2.1 London Street lies to the south of Reading town centre ring road (**Figure 1**). The Site comprised an area of open concrete hard standing 6m by 25m located at the rear of 68 London Street that had previously been occupied by an extension to the property.

1.2.2 Geological deposits within the trenches were found to comprise sand and gravel.

1.3 Historical Background

1.3.1 Towards the close of the C12th the centre of Reading moved eastwards from its previous location. A new road was constructed along with a new bridge over the River Kennet to funnel traffic towards the new Market Place which was located next to the outer, or Exchequer Gate of the Abbey. London Street, the High Bridge and the Market Place were meant to supplant Southampton Street, Bridge Street and St. Mary's Butts. This new Market Place was soon dominated by a new church, dedicated to St. Laurence.

- 1.3.2 The town expanded and by 1200 had a third church to the south, St. Giles's. This suggests that from the 1200's, London Street may have been an access route to and from the newly built market place.
- 1.3.3 A mill was located to the north-west of 68 London Street. St Giles Mill, also known as Town Mill by 1272, is indicative of occupational activity within the immediate vicinity of the Site (Wessex Archaeology 1990).
- 1.3.4 A map reconstructed from Amyce's map of 1552 shows 68 London Street to be within a terrace of almshouses, the top end of London Street being used for pasture (Wessex Archaeology 1990).

2 EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

- 2.1.1 The aim of the fieldwork was to determine, as far as reasonably possible, the presence/absence, location, extent, date, character, condition and depth of any surviving archaeological remains located within the areas of investigation.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Health and Safety

- 3.1.1 All work was carried out in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and the Management of Health and Safety regulations (1992) and all other relevant Health and Safety legislation and regulations and codes of practice in force at the time.
- 3.1.2 A risk assessment was prepared by Wessex Archaeology before the commencement of fieldwork.

3.2 Fieldwork

- 3.1.1 All fieldwork was carried out in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations (as amended 1999).
- 3.1.2 Two trial trenches were excavated within the Site totalling an area of approximately 25m² (**Figure 2**). This was equal to 16% of the proposed development area.
- 3.1.4 The trenches were opened using a 180° tracked excavator, equipped with a toothless grading bucket. Excavation proceeded under constant archaeological supervision through modern structural remains to the underlying Post-medieval destruction and levelling layers, and from there to the top of either archaeological deposits or the underlying natural deposits whichever was encountered first. Subsequent hand excavation was undertaken of any archaeological features and deposits revealed.

- 3.1.5 The limits of excavation were located in relation to the Ordnance Survey national grid and the height of all archaeological features were related to the Ordnance Survey Datum.
- 3.1.6 Archaeological features and deposits were recorded on Wessex Archaeology *pro forma* sheets in accordance with Wessex Archaeology guidelines for fieldwork recording. A sample of all archaeological features and deposits were excavated to determine the date, nature, extent and condition of the remains. A full photographic record was kept comprising black and white negatives, colour transparencies and digital images. All site drawings were drawn at an appropriate scale, typically 1:10 for sections and 1:20 or 1:50 for plans.

4 RESULTS (see Appendix 1 for trench summaries)

4.1 Trench 1

- 4.1.1 Trench 1 (**Figure 2**) measured 1.5m x 8m and was orientated north east-south west and followed the alignment of the southern edge of the building plot.
- 4.1.2 Modern deposits (**204-211**) were excavated down to a depth of between 0.7m and 0.8m at which point geological deposits cut by archaeological features were encountered at a height of around 42.7m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).
- 4.1.6 Underlying the concrete yard surface at the eastern extent of Trench 1 was the remains of an extant brick built wall (**108**) with associated construction cut and backfill. Aligned North West – South East, this wall is thought to be the remains of the rear of building 68 London Street prior to the construction of the enclosed concrete yard extension.
- 4.1.7 Towards the centre of the trench, truncated by the northern limit of excavation, a circular brick built soak away (**111**) was revealed beneath the re-deposited natural consolidation layer. With a diameter of 0.6m the feature was constructed from unfrogged bricks. All the bricks used in the construction had an average width of 0.11m and depth of 0.06m. All of them were incomplete with an average length of 0.14m, the broken end of the bricks always faced inwards. The soak-away was filled with mid to dark grey-brown sandy silt with multiple depositions of waste material (brick/tile/slate/stone/modern pottery).
- 4.1.8 To the east of the soak-away a large sub-rounded pit **101** was uncovered extending out from the northern trench edge.
- 4.1.9 The exposed diameter of this feature measured 2m across and comprised steep straight sides, tapering towards the base. Excavation of this feature was stopped at a depth of 0.85m (1.45m from ground surface, 41.95m aOD) as it was considered unsafe to excavate it any further due to the difficulty of working within the feature and its depth in conjunction with the adjacent trench edge.

4.1.10 Three fills were recorded within the excavated portion of the pit (**100, 102, & 103**) all of which appeared to be the result of secondary rather than deliberate deposition. Pottery dating from the late 12th to the 14th century was recovered from all three fills.

4.2 Trench 2

4.2.1 Trench 2 measuring 2.5m x 5m was orientated North West – South East and was located towards the western edge of the Site at the rear of the concrete yard area.

4.2.2 Natural geology (**205**) was encountered at a depth of 1.5m (41.90m aOD) towards the southern end of trench. Machine excavation revealed significant Post-medieval and modern disturbance and a number of similarly dated features.

4.2.3 Two parallel ovular features (**207** and **211**) were revealed in the centre of Trench 2. Both were cut from a level consistent with that of the substantial Post-medieval/modern levelling deposit which was comprised of loose, mid to dark grey-brown silt with multiple depositions of waste material (brick/tile/slate/stone/modern pottery etc) both features were filled with material similar to this deposit.

4.2.4 Large circular feature **213** truncated ovular feature **211** and appeared to be cut from below the current concrete surface. It was loosely filled with modern building rubble within a topsoil matrix.

4.2.5 Sub-circular feature **209** was truncated by the eastern limit of excavation. The associated fill was identical to that of the overlying Post-medieval/modern levelling layer was occurred across the Site.

4.2.6 Extending out from the western limit of the trench was a 1m diameter brick built soak-away (**215**) which was filled with modern building rubble and displaced plant/tree roots. The soak-away appeared to have been backfilled prior to the construction of the present concrete surface.

4.2.7 No features or deposits predating the Post-medieval remains were encountered in the trench.

5 FINDS

5.1.1 The evaluation produced a small quantity of finds, most of which derived from feature **101** in Trench 1. All finds have been quantified by material type within each context (see **Appendix 2**). With the exception of a prehistoric flint flake, found unstratified, all the finds recovered are demonstrably or probably of medieval date.

5.1.2 Datable material comprises pottery and ceramic building material. All of the pottery sherds are in sandy fabrics, some glazed. Diagnostic sherds comprise rim sherds from a dish and a jar (context **102**). Potential sources include the

Camley Gardens kilns at Maidenhead, although a source(s) closer to Reading is also likely (Underwood 1997, 145). A date range of late 12th to 14th century can be suggested.

- 5.1.3 The ceramic building material comprises fragments of handmade roof tile, two of which have traces of glaze on the upper surface.

6 CONCLUSION

- 6.1.1 The results of the evaluation indicate that the Site has been the subject of significant Post-medieval and modern disturbance and truncation as a result of phases of demolition, site levelling and construction.
- 6.1.2 Only one of the two trenches contained archaeological remains of significance. This consisted of a single, moderately large pit containing a fragment of animal bone and pottery dating from the 12th to the 14th century. The contents of the pit suggest it may have been a domestic refuse pit rather than a feature associated with an industrial or manufacturing activity.
- 6.1.3 The evaluation results indicate that activities extended to this part of London Street during the medieval period. As no evidence for structures was encountered, the pit possibly represents back-land activity to buildings fronting London Street.

7 THE ARCHIVE

- 7.1.1 The project archive will be held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology at Old Sarum, Salisbury, under the project code 55124. In due course the archive is to be deposited with Reading Museum Service under the accession number REDMG 2003.334.

8 REFERENCES

- | | | |
|--------------------|------|---|
| Underwood, C. | 1997 | 'Pottery' in Hawkes, J.W. and Fasham, P.J. <i>Excavations on Reading Waterfront Sites, 1979-1988</i> , Salisbury, Wessex Archaeol. Rep. 5, 143-61 |
| Wessex Archaeology | 1990 | <i>The Oracle, Reading, Berkshire</i> , uWessex Archaeology ref. W361. |
| Wessex Archaeology | 2003 | <i>68 London Street, Reading, Berkshire: Project Design for an Archaeological Evaluation</i> . Wessex Archaeology |

APPENDIX 1: EVALUATION TRENCH SUMMARIES

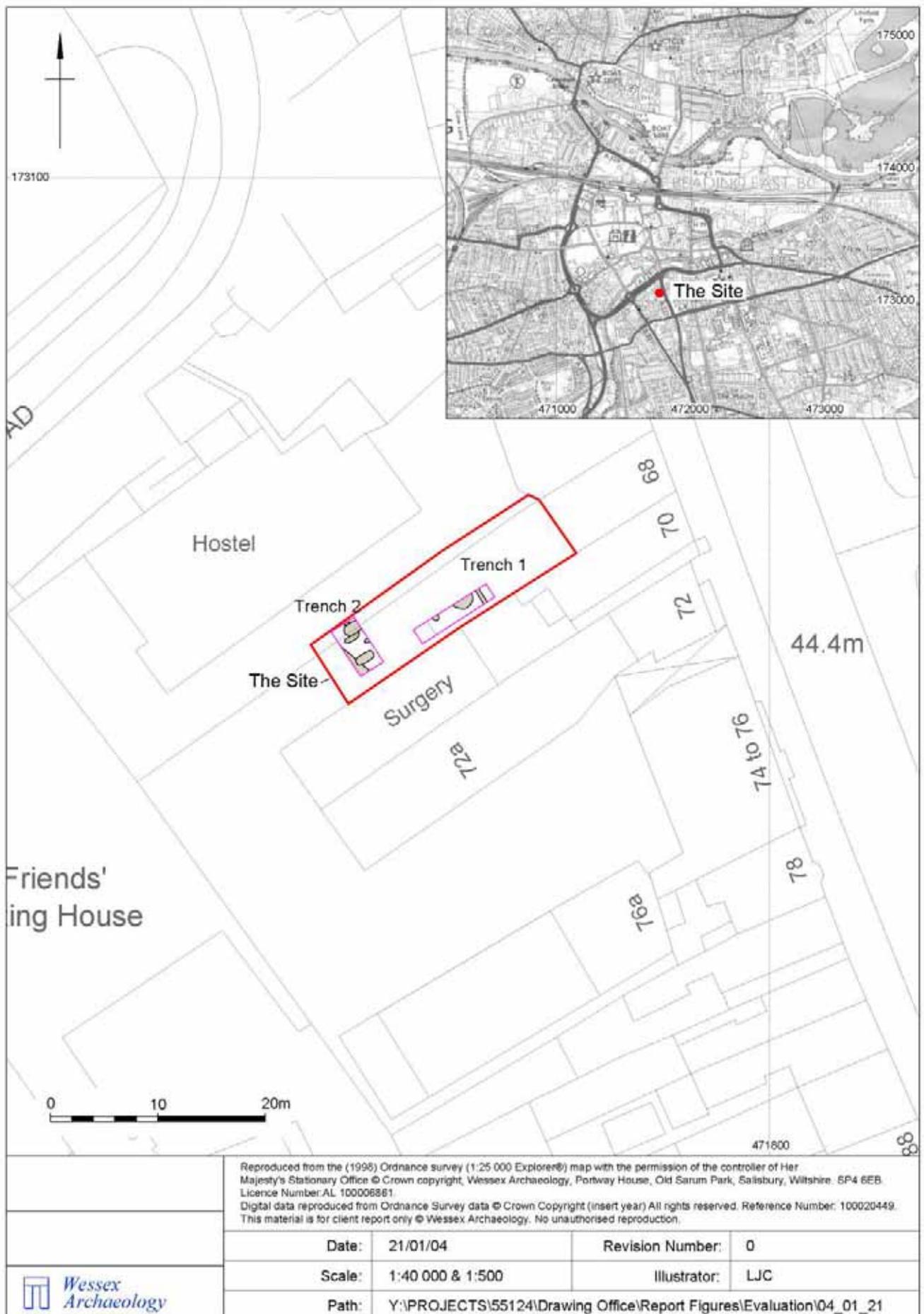
Trench 1		Max Depth: 1.7m	Length: 8m	Width: 1.5m
No.	Type	Description		Depth
100	<i>Fill</i>	Secondary fill of [101], a light brown sandy silt with frequent chalk flecking, CBM and pottery, derived from gradual silting.		0.6 – 1.45m
101	<i>Cut</i>	Medieval pit cut.		0.8 – 1.7m+
102	<i>Fill</i>	Secondary fill of [101], a mid orange-yellow silty sand with moderate gravel content and very occasional pottery fragment. Derived from the erosion of the feature sides and topsoil erosion.		1 – 1.65m
103	<i>Fill</i>	Secondary fill of [101], a light yellow-orange silty sand with frequent gravel inclusions. Very occasional animal bone and pottery recovered. Derived from erosion of surrounding natural and occasional topsoil erosion.		1.4 – 1.7m+
104	<i>Layer</i>	Current concrete surface level.		0 - 0.1m
105	<i>Layer</i>	Very substantial Post-medieval/modern levelling deposit comprised loose, mid to dark grey-brown silt with multiple depositions of waste material (brick/tile/slate/stone/modern pottery etc).		0.1 - 0.4m
106	<i>Layer</i>	Layer of re-deposited mid yellow silty sand and gravel forming a consolidation layer.		0.4 - 0.65m
107	<i>Layer</i>	Layer of loose fragmentary chalk.		0.65 – 0.8m
108	<i>Cut</i>	Construction cut for wall (110) foundation.		0.8m+
109	<i>Fill</i>	Backfill of [108], mid brown sandy silt.		0.8m +
110	<i>Wall</i>	Fill of [108], a well-built brick wall, aligned NW-SE .		0.4 – 0.8m+
111	<i>Well</i>	Well or soak away constructed of brick fragments.		0.7m – 1m +
112	<i>Natural</i>	Natural mid yellow brown silty sand.		
113	<i>Natural</i>	Natural sandy gravel.		

Trench 2		Max Depth: 1.65m	Length: 5m	Width: 2.5m
No.	Type	Description		Depth
200	<i>Layer</i>	Very substantial Post-medieval/modern levelling deposit comprised of loose, mid to dark grey-brown silt with multiple depositions of waste material (brick/tile/slate/stone/modern pottery etc).		
201	<i>Natural</i>	Natural mid yellow brown silty sand.		
202	<i>Layer</i>	Very substantial dump of Post-medieval/modern material comprised of loose, mid to dark grey-brown silt with multiple depositions of waste material (brick/tile/slate/stone/modern pottery etc).		
203	<i>Layer</i>	Layer of Re-deposited mid yellow silty sand and gravel forming a consolidation layer.		
204	<i>Layer</i>	Very substantial Post-medieval/modern levelling deposit comprised of loose, dark grey-brown silt with multiple depositions of waste material (brick/tile/slate/stone/modern pottery etc).		
205	<i>Natural</i>	Natural sandy gravel.		
206	<i>Layer</i>	Current concrete surface level.		
207	<i>Cut</i>	Modern Truncation.		
208	<i>Fill</i>	Fill of [207], mid grey brown sandy silt with multiple depositions of waste material (brick/tile/slate/stone/modern pottery).		
209	<i>Cut</i>	Modern Truncation.		
210	<i>Fill</i>	Fill of [209], mid grey brown sandy silt with multiple depositions of waste material (brick/tile/slate/stone/modern pottery).		
211	<i>Cut</i>	Modern Truncation.		
212	<i>Fill</i>	Fill of [211], mid grey brown sandy silt with multiple depositions of waste material (brick/tile/slate/stone/modern pottery).		
213	<i>Cut</i>	Modern Truncation.		
214	<i>Fill</i>	Fill of [213], mid grey brown sandy silt with multiple depositions of waste material (brick/tile/slate/stone/modern pottery).		
215	<i>Cut</i>	Brick built circular soak-away.		
216	<i>Fill</i>	Fill of [215], modern builders rubble.		

APPENDIX 2: TABLE OF FINDS BY CONTEXT
(number / weight in grammes)

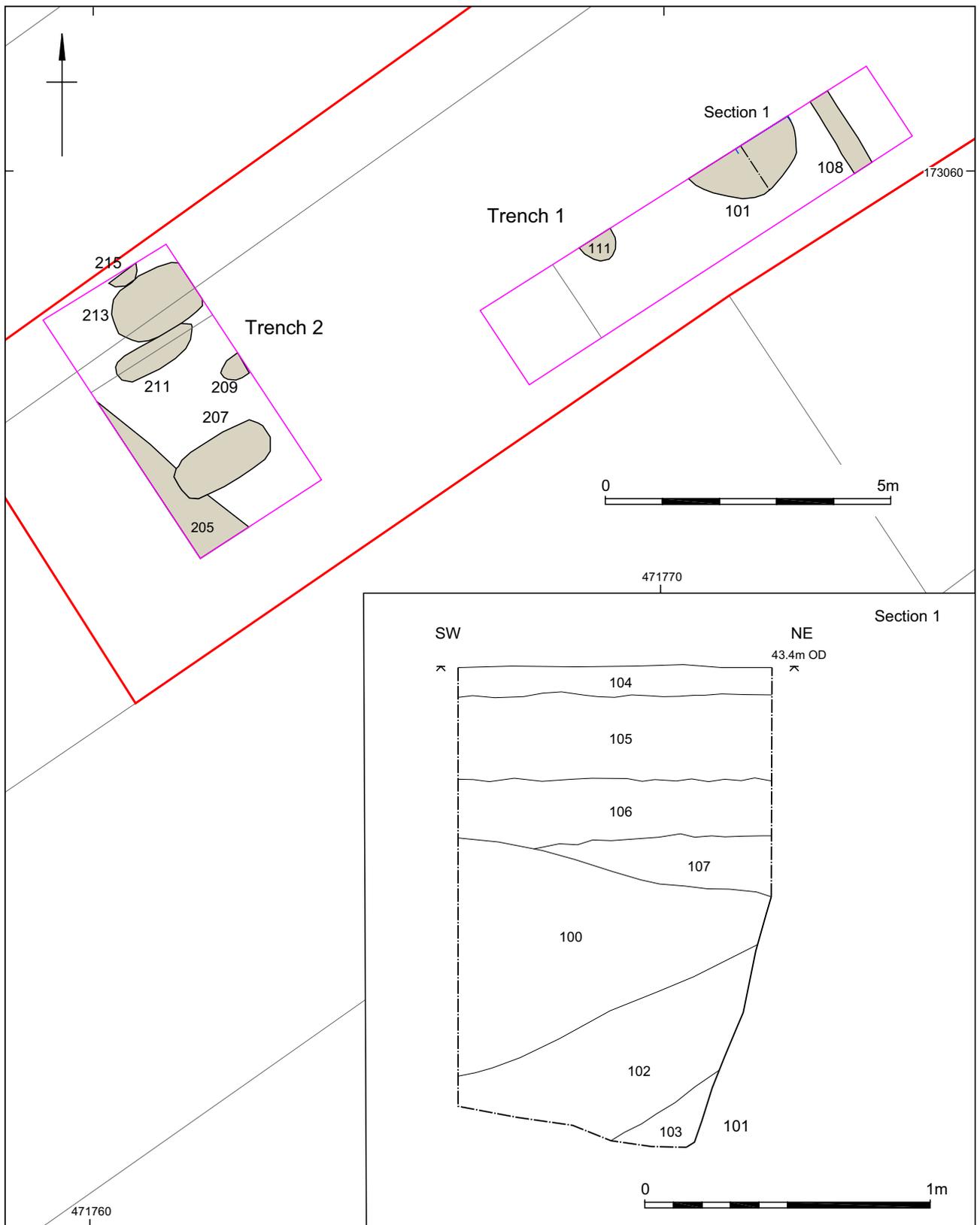
CBM = ceramic building material

Context	Animal Bone	CBM	Worked Flint	Pottery	Oyster Shell
100		4/997		1/8	
102				5/36	
103	1/2			1/3	2/45
unstrat			1/1		1/13
TOTALS	1/2	4/997	1/1	7/47	3/58



Site and trench location plan

Figure 1



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	Date: 21/01/04	Revision Number: 0	
	Scale: 1:100 and 1:20	Illustrator: LJC	
	Path: Y:\PROJECTS\55124\Drawing Office\Report Figures\Evaluation\04_01_21		

Plan of trenches 1 and 2 and section through feature 101

Figure 2



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