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MONA OFFSHORE WIND PROJECT

Environmental Statement

Volume 7, Annex 5.5: Trial trenching report - Part 1

Document Number: MOCNS-J3303-RPS-10118

Document Reference: F7.5.5

APFP Regulations: 5(2)(a)

February 2024

F01

Image of an offshore wind farm

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Document status

Version	Purpose of document	Authored by	Reviewed by	Approved by	Review date
F01	Application	Oxford Archaeology	Mona Offshore Wind Ltd	Mona Offshore Wind Ltd	February 2024

Prepared by:

Oxford Archaeology

Prepared for:

Mona Offshore Wind Ltd.

Mona Offshore Wind Project Onshore Cable Route and Substation

Abergele, Conwy, to St Asaph, Denbighshire, North Wales

Interim Archaeological Evaluation Report

November 2023

Client: RPS Heritage Ltd on behalf of Mona Offshore Wind Limited

Issue No: Interim
OA Reference No: L11519
NGR: SH 9226 7804, SH 9355 7391, SJ 0148 7334

oxford archaeology

Client Name:	RPS Heritage Ltd on behalf of Mona Offshore Wind Limited
Document Title:	Mona Offshore Wind Project Onshore Cable Route and Substation, Abergele, Conwy, to St Asaph, Denbighshire, North Wales
Document Type:	Interim Archaeological Evaluation Report
Report No.:	2023-24/2301
Grid Reference:	SH 9226 7804, SH 9355 7391, SJ 0148 7334
Site Code:	MOSWF23
Invoice Code:	L11519
OA Document File Location:	https://files.oxfordarchaeology.com/nextcloud/index.php/f/25725701
OA Graphics File Location:	https://files.oxfordarchaeology.com/nextcloud/index.php/f/25869405
Issue No:	Interim
Date:	07 February 2024
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Mona Offshore Wind Project Onshore Cable Route and Substation, Abergele, Conwy, to St Asaph, Denbighshire, North Wales

Interim Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Glossary

Term	Meaning
Applicant	Mona Offshore Wind Limited.
Mona Offshore Wind Project	The Mona Offshore Wind Project is comprised of both the generation assets and offshore and onshore transmission assets and associated activities.
Mona Proposed Onshore Development Area	The area presented at PEIR in which the landfall, onshore cable corridor, onshore substation, mitigation areas, temporary construction facilities (such as access roads and construction compounds), and the connection to National Grid infrastructure will be located. This area was the boundary consulted on during statutory consultation and subsequently refined for the application for Development Consent.
Mona Onshore Development Area	The area in which the landfall, onshore cable corridor, onshore substation, mitigation areas, temporary construction facilities (such as access roads and construction compounds), and the connection to National Grid infrastructure will be located.
Landfall	The area in which the offshore export cables make contact with land and the transitional area where the offshore cabling connects to the onshore cabling.
Local Authority	A body empowered by law to exercise various statutory functions for a particular area of the United Kingdom. This includes County Councils, District Councils and County Borough Councils.
Relevant Local Planning Authority	The Relevant Local Planning Authority is the Local Authority in respect of an area within which a project is situated, as set out in Section 173 of the Planning Act 2008. Relevant Local Planning Authorities may have responsibility for discharging requirements and some functions pursuant to the Development Consent Order, once made.

Acronym

Acronym	Description
BGL	Below ground level
BGS	British Geological Survey
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
CPAT	Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust
DCO	Development Consent Order
NGR	National Grid Reference
OA	Oxford Archaeology
OS	Ordnance Survey
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation

Units

Unit	Description
km	Kilometre
m	Metre

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SUMMARY

Oxford Archaeology carried out archaeological trial-trench evaluation at the site of a proposed onshore cable route and onshore substation between Abergele, Conwy, and St Asaph, Denbighshire, North Wales, as part of the Mona Offshore Wind Project. The fieldwork was commissioned by RPS Heritage Ltd, on behalf of Mona Offshore Wind Limited, and was undertaken between September and October 2023.

A preceding geophysical survey of the wider Mona Proposed Onshore Development Area, presented in the Preliminary Environmental Information Report, undertaken between November 2022 and June 2023 detected a series of linear and curvilinear anomalies of probable/possible archaeological and undetermined origin. The geophysical survey results also reflect medieval/post-medieval ridge-and-furrow cultivation, former historic field boundaries, and other post-medieval/modern agricultural activities and modern impacts.

A total of 75 of the 284 trenches proposed for the scheme was excavated during this phase of works, many of which were targeted on geophysical anomalies. Of these, 36 trenches were found to contain archaeological remains, comprising linear ditches and gullies, curvilinear ditches, pits and postholes, a probable cremation burial, remains of a bank deposit, and tree-throw holes. A moderately good correlation between the results of the geophysical survey and the excavated evaluation trenches was demonstrated.

The limited finds assemblage does not provide further interpretation or dating evidence to the features beyond their stratigraphy, although the charcoal, recovered from bulk environmental samples, may provide further information on local woodland and wood fuel use, as well as potentially dating the features. Nevertheless, the archaeological remains provide evidence of past activity within the landscape. The currently undated linear ditches recorded across the scheme provide evidence of land division possibly for agriculture, while the curvilinear ditches and postholes are suggestive of structures, perhaps of later prehistoric date. Scattered pits may also indicate associated occupation activity, and a single probable cremation burial provides limited evidence of potentially contemporary funerary activity.

The remains of post-medieval/modern agricultural activity were encountered across the scheme, comprising former field boundary ditches and field drains. They are demonstrative of the continued agricultural use of the landscape during the more recent historical period.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by RPS Heritage Ltd, on behalf of Mona Offshore Wind Limited (the Applicant), to undertake a trial-trench evaluation at the site of a proposed onshore cable route and onshore substation between Abergele, Conwy, and St Asaph, Denbighshire, North Wales, as part of the Mona Offshore Wind Project (Fig 1). In total, 284 trenches have been proposed across the scheme, targeted upon geophysical anomalies and areas suspected to be devoid of archaeological remains, as identified by a preceding geophysical survey (*Volume 7, Annex 5.3*: Onshore geophysical survey report)). To date, 75 trenches have been investigated; the remaining trenches will be excavated at a later date.

1.1.2 The work was undertaken to contribute to Volume 3, Chapter 5: Historic environment of the Environmental Statement that will accompany an application for a Development Consent Order (DCO). Although the Local Planning Authority did not set a brief for the work, discussions between RPS and the Senior Planning Archaeologist at Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) established the scope of work required, which was set out within a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by RPS (2023). As only 75 of the 284 trenches were undertaken at this stage, CPAT accepted that only a low number of trenches was achievable at this stage and that this was sufficient for the application to progress, provided that there was a commitment to complete the programme at a later date. This document outlines how OA would implement the specified requirements.

1.2 Location, topography, and geology

1.2.1 The site lies across the principal areas of Conwy County Borough and Denbighshire, both within the preserved county of Clwyd, in North Wales. The scheme follows a roughly linear route from the coast north-west of Abergele, Conwy (National Grid Reference (NGR) SH 9226 7804), heading south-south-eastwards towards Moelfre, Conwy (NGR SH 9355 7391), and then eastwards towards St Asaph, Denbighshire (NGR SJ 0148 7334) (Fig 1).

1.2.2 The site consists of a *c* 74 m-wide Onshore Cable Corridor (approximately 12 km long), compound locations set at intervals along the Onshore Cable Corridor, and the substation location south of St Asaph Business Park.

1.2.3 The solid geology across the majority of the site comprises Carboniferous limestone of the Clwyd Limestone Group and Silurian mudstone, siltstone, sandstone of the Elwy Formation, with outcrops of mudstone, siltstone, sandstone of the Ffernant Formation and Elwy Sandstone Formation also recorded (BGS, 2023). The geology in the easternmost end of the site is mapped as Warwickshire Group mudstone, siltstone, and sandstone (*ibid*). In terms of overlying superficial deposits, Devensian till (diamicton) is mapped across much of the Onshore Cable Corridor, associated with more level topography (*ibid*). Areas of Quaternary alluvium (clay, silt, sand, gravel) and Devensian glaciofluvial deposits of sand and gravel is also recorded (*ibid*).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background of the site has been described in detail in a desk-based assessment (*Volume 7, Annex 5.1: Historic environment desk based assessment, of the Environmental Statement*) and an outline of the salient background information is given in the WSI (RPS 2023) and is summarised below.

1.3.2 *Prehistoric*: the general area of the Vale of Clwyd has a long history of human occupation. Excavation in several caves and rock shelters in the higher parts of the limestone uplands has produced evidence of early prehistoric habitation, in some cases dating as far back as the Lower Palaeolithic (*cf.* Aldhouse-Green *et al.,* 1996). Subsequent advances and retreats of ice sheets changed the lower-lying parts of the landscape on numerous occasions through to the ending of the most recent glacial episode at about 12,000 BP. As the ice sheet diminished, sea levels in the area started to rise quickly and much of what is currently dry land would have been inundated (Tooley 178; 1985). Evidence of sequences of marine transgression and regression is in the form of Holocene peat deposits that have been found at depths of 10 m and 13 m below ground level (BGL) close to the mouth of the River Clwyd.

1.3.3 Material, such as shell middens and worked flints, found on the foreshore is broadly attributable to the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods, though there is increasing evidence of considerable activity in the area during the Mesolithic period (Murphy, 2002). The higher ground at Abergele is set on a ridge of Clwyd limestone and would have remained above the sea level high stands, probably representing the most seaward habitable land at such times.

1.3.4 Within the study area, the earliest evidence of human activity comprises the possible site of a Bronze Age round barrow or burial monument, indicated by both place name evidence and a record of a concentration of stones, located on the boundary of the Mona Onshore Development Area in its mid-section. A possible Bronze Age barrow cemetery formed of six mounds is recorded approximately 175 m to the south of the scheme.

1.3.5 Iron Age activity in the general area is demonstrated by the presence of settlements, including hillforts on higher ground. Various field systems and enclosures of possible Iron Age date have been recorded within the vicinity of the site, though later dates cannot be precluded without further investigation.

1.3.6 *Roman*: activity during the Roman period was clearly linked to the military conquest and occupation of the area. The major Roman road leading west from the legionary fortress of *Deva* or *Deva Vetrix* (Chester) to the forts at *Canovium* (Conway) and *Segontium* (Caernarvon) passes through the wider landscape primarily along the line of Glascoed Road, St Asaph. The postulated route of the Roman road has the potential to cross the scheme in up to four different locations. A possible Roman fort, perhaps the documented fort of *Varae*, may have been located at St Asaph, approximately 200 m to the north-east of the site (Silvester, 2003).

1.3.7 *Medieval*: St Asaph appears to have continued to develop as the pre-eminent centre of activity during the medieval period. Documentary evidence

suggests that a monastery and episcopal see may have been founded here as early as AD 560. Documentary sources also refer to King Offa's victory over the Welsh at Rhuddlan (*Bellum Rudglann*) in AD 796, although the actual location of any battle remains conjecture.

1.3.8 In Domesday (AD 1086), the settlement here is referred to as *Llanuile* (Llanelwy) and this was changed to St Asaph around the middle of the twelfth century. Construction of the cathedral had started by 1239, but the building was burned by troops of Edward I in 1282. Outside of the main centre at St Asaph, settlement in the surrounding area would mainly have been in the form of small hamlets and isolated farms, as shown in the Domesday survey.

1.3.9 Field name evidence may suggest the former presence of a medieval stone cross located within the mid-section of the scheme. Analysis of aerial survey data has also identified several areas of medieval ridge-and-furrow earthworks across the scheme and within the surrounding landscape.

1.3.10 *Post-medieval and modern*: during the post-medieval period the settlement pattern within the Vale of Clwyd continued to evolve, with hamlets growing or coalescing into villages. Some isolated farms disappeared, whilst some hamlets declined to become single farmsteads or occasionally were totally deserted. A review of the mid-nineteenth-century mapping for the region confirms the agricultural character of the land along the scheme at this time. The major twentieth-century changes in the area have been the expansion of established settlements, the establishment of residential development and holiday camps in the land between the North Wales Main Line railway and the sea, and also the construction of new roads cutting across the landscape, which includes the A55 trunk road. Several post-medieval and modern sites, including farmsteads, buildings, field systems, quarries, mines/ mineshafts, milestones, lime kilns, wells, and an aircraft crash site, fall within the development area.

1.3.11 *Geophysical survey*: between November 2022 and June 2023 the land within the Mona Proposed Onshore Development Area, covering *c* 840ha, was subject to an extensive geophysical survey (*Volume 7, Annex 5.3*: Onshore geophysical survey report, of the Environmental Statement). In general, the geophysical survey identified series of probable/possible archaeological and undetermined anomalies of interest. The most significant are two well-defined anomalies suggestive of ditched enclosures, one of which is located near Betws Lodge Wood in the northern part of the Onshore Cable Corridor and a second one near Nant Meiford Farm in the central part of the route. With the exception of occasional ring ditch-type anomalies identified with the eastern half of the cable route, the remaining anomalies detected consist of a regular series of linear and curvilinear features.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The main aims of the trial trenching, with 75 out of 284 trenches being completed to date due to access available at the time, is to establish whether any archaeological evidence survives within the proposed area of impact and also to de-risk the project by aiming to mitigate the archaeological remains prior to the start of the construction programme. As stated in the WSI (RPS, 2023), the trial trenching aims to determine, as far as is reasonably possible, the location, form, extent, date, character, condition, significance, and quality of any surviving archaeological remains, irrespective of period, liable to be threatened by the proposed redevelopment. The trial trenching also seeks to clarify the nature and extent of existing disturbance and intrusions and hence assess the degree of archaeological survival of buried deposits and any surviving structures of archaeological significance (*ibid*).

2.1.2 Within these parameters, the trial trenching of this site presents an opportunity to address the following objectives, as presented in the WSI (*ibid*):

i. To establish the presence or otherwise of activity on the site dating to the prehistoric periods. Can the prehistoric features identified be associated with concentrations of settlement or industrial activity? Is there any evidence of contemporary funerary activity taking place?

ii. To establish the presence or otherwise of any Roman activity. Can any of the features identified be associated with the anticipated Roman road, linking the forts at Chester and Caernarfon, which crosses the study area?

iii. To establish the presence or otherwise of any medieval activity on site.

iv. To establish the presence or otherwise of any post-medieval or modern activity on site. Can any of ten features identified provide insight on the development and utilisation of the North Wales rural landscape during these periods?

v. To establish the environmental context of prehistoric, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, medieval activity.

vi. Evaluate the likely impact of past land use and development.

2.1.3 Where appropriate, reference will be made to the *Research Framework for the Archaeology of Wales* (CIfA, 2011), so that the archaeological remains can, if possible, be placed within their local and regional context.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 To date the evaluation has comprised the excavation of 75 of the 284 trenches proposed for the scheme (Table 1; Fig 2). Of these, 74 trenches measured *c* 30 m x 1.6-2.0 m and a single trench (Trench 51) measured *c* 24 m x 2 m. The trenches were positioned in order to establish the reliability of the geophysical survey results. The vast majority of excavated trenches were located in accordance with the WSI (RPS, 2023), where trenches were required to deviate from their intended positions, this was done in agreement of the Senior Planning Archaeologist at CPAT. Trench 51 was shortened in length

and repositioned slightly to the south-west in order to avoid on-site constraints. Trench 52 was also repositioned on a slightly different angle to avoid a field boundary hedge line. All work was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) *Code of Conduct* (2022) and relevant *Standard and Guidance* (CIfA, 2020a; CIfA, 2020b; and CIfA, 2020c) and local and national planning policies.

Field no	Excavated trench no	Centred on NGR
2	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17	SH 92487 77965
6	25, 26	SH 92531 77437
279	27, 28, 29	SH 92273 77250
11	30, 31, 32	SH 92188 77015
17	33, 34	SH 92058 76711
18	35	SH 92063 76486
21	36, 37, 38, 39, 40	SH 92251 76240
23	41	SH 92400 76126
26	42, 43, 44	SH 92484 75936
27	45	SH 92522 75758
28	46, 47, 48, 49, 50	SH 92522 75758
32	51	SH 92592 75623
45	52, 53, 54	SH 93086 74657
46	55, 56, 57, 58	SH 93086 74657
47	59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66	SH 93230 74546
76	67	SH 93341 74497
77	68, 69, 70	SH 93373 74373
298	111, 112	SH 95475 73919
175	162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171	SH 98545 73536

Table 1: Distribution of trenches excavated across the scheme to date

2.2.2 The trenches were laid out using by a real-time kinematic global navigation satellite system with sub-15 mm accuracy. The trenches were excavated using a tracked or wheeled mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket under direct archaeological supervision. Spoil was stored adjacent to, but at a safe distance from, the trench edges. Machining continued in even spits, no more than 0.20 m thick, down to the top of the undisturbed natural geological deposits or the first archaeological horizon, whichever was encountered first. Sondages were machine-excavated in several trenches to test the character of the natural deposits exposed at the base of the trenches.

2.2.3 The exposed surfaces were sufficiently cleaned to establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains. As outlined in the WSI (*ibid*), a sample of each feature or deposit type, for example pits, postholes, and ditches, was excavated and recorded to resolve the principal aims of the evaluation.

2.2.4 All features and deposits were issued with unique context numbers, and context recording was completed in accordance with established best practice and the OA (1992) *Field Manual*. Environmental soil samples were allocated unique numbers. Finds, where present, were retrieved and collated by context.

2.2.5 Spoil produced from machine excavation, the surface or archaeological features, and spoil from hand excavation was scanned by a metal detector to enhance finds retrieval. Bulk soil samples were collected from deposits judged in the field to have potential for the recovery of environmental remains (*e.g.* carbonised or waterlogged plant macrofossils) and/or small artefacts and faunal remains.

2.2.6 Sections of features were drawn at a scale of 1:20 and 1 m-wide sample sections of stratigraphy were drawn at a scale of 1:10. All section drawings were located on the plan. A full photographic record comprising digital photos was taken and all archaeological features, deposits and trenches were photographed. In addition, a number of photographs representative of the general work on site were taken.

2.2.7 Upon completion of the works and in agreement with the Senior Planning Archaeologist at CPAT, the trenches were backfilled with the arisings in reverse order of excavation. Regular updates, including images and plans of trenches and archaeological remains, were provided to the Senior Planning Archaeologist at CPAT, as well as site visits being undertaken, to allow the prompt agreement of backfilling of the trenches.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below and include a stratigraphic description of the trenches that contained archaeological remains. The full details of all trenches with dimensions and depths of all deposits can be found in *Appendix A*.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 The soil sequence in the trenches was fairly uniform. The natural geology of light to mid-yellowish/orangish brown silty clay was typically overlain by a mid-greyish brown subsoil, *c* 0.07-0.33 m thick, which in turn was overlain by a topsoil of mid- to dark greyish brown clay silt or sandy silt, *c* 0.07-0.40 m thick. Colluvial/alluvial deposits of silty clays of varying hues, *c* 0.15-0.61 m thick, were identified underlying the topsoil or subsoil, where present, and overlying the natural geology in a small number of trenches located along the scheme, with a slight concentration to the south of Abergele Road. Sondages were excavated in several trenches to confirm the soil sequences and character of the colluvial/alluvial and natural deposits.

3.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the evaluation were generally good. Spells of wet and dry weather did not inhibit the identification of archaeological remains. Features, where present, were generally easy to identify against the underlying natural geology.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 Archaeological features were present in 36 of the 75 excavated evaluation trenches. The features present comprised linear ditches and gullies, curvilinear ditches, various pits and postholes, a probable cremation burial, remains of a bank deposit, and natural features, such as tree-throw holes. Field drains were also observed crossing several trenches. A generally low density and low inter-cut complexity of features was encountered, though there were slight concentrations of features, most notably in Fields 27, 28, and 175.

3.4 Field 2

3.4.1 Trenches 1-17 were evenly distributed across Field 2 at the coastal end of the scheme (centred on NGR SH 92487 77965). They were positioned to investigate a series of geophysical anomalies of natural and undetermined origin and magnetic/ferrous disturbance (Fig 3). Eleven of the trenches contained a small number of archaeological features, none of which were detected by the geophysical survey. All features were found cutting into the natural geology and were generally sealed by topsoil or subsoil, where present. The only exception was in Trench 12, where one feature (*1203*) was instead sealed by a colluvial layer (*1202*) present in the southern end of the trench only.

3.4.2 *Trench 1*: located in the north-western corner of Field 2, Trench 1 revealed two features (Fig 4). Ditch *102* crossed the eastern end of the trench on a north-north-west/south-south-east alignment, extending beyond the trench limits.

Its continuations were not seen in nearby trenches. The ditch had moderately sloping sides, a concave base, and a single fill (***103***) of light greyish brown silty clay from which bulk soil sample 24 was collected. No finds were hand-collected from this feature, though numerous fragments of shell were recovered from the bulk soil sample (*Section 3.16*.1 and *Appendix B.2.7*-11). The molluscan evidence suggested a moist, shady, and wet habitat, which most plausibly related to the at least seasonally or periodically, water-filled ditch.

3.4.3 Pit ***104*** was located *c* 11.6m to the west of ditch ***102***. The pit extended beyond the northern trench limit but exhibited moderately sloping sides and a concave base. Its single fill (***105***) of light grey silty sand was devoid of finds or environmental remains.

3.4.4 *Trench 2*: adjacent to Trench 1, Trench 2 revealed two shallow pits towards its centre (Fig 4). Spaced *c* 0.5m apart, pits ***202*** and ***204*** had gently sloping sides and slightly concave bases. Both pits contained single fills (***203*** and ***205*** respectively) of greyish brown/orangish grey silty clay. No finds were recovered, but soil samples 22 and 23 were collected from pits ***202*** and ***204*** respectively, with sample 22 containing a 17 mollusc shells. Although no apices or other countable parts are present, at least one fragment is plausibly from *Cepea* sp. there are no definite identifications from this sample (*Section 3.16.1* and *Appendix B.2.6*).

3.4.5 *Trench 6*: located to the south-east was slightly curved ditch ***603***, which crossed the eastern half of Trench 6 on a broadly north-west/south-east alignment (Fig 4). Continuation of the ditch were not seen in adjacent trenches. Ditch ***603*** had moderately sloping sides, a concave base, and a single fill (***604***) comprising mid-brown silty clay from which no finds were retrieved.

3.4.6 *Trench 9*: a sub-circular posthole (***903***) was found in the centre of Trench 9, situated to the west of Trench 6 (Fig 4). It had a U-shaped profile and contained a dark brown silty clay fill (***904***) from which bulk soil sample 29 was collected. The feature was devoid of finds. A field drain was also observed crossing the northern half of the trench (Plate 1).

Plate 1: Overview of Trench 9, looking south (1m and 2m scales)

3.4.7 ***Trench 10***: this trench was located in the south-western corner of Field 2 and revealed a single shallow pit or tree-throw hole (***1003***; Fig 5). Irregular in plan shape, it had moderately sloping sides and a concave, albeit slightly uneven, base (Plate 2). It contained a single fill (***1004***) of mid-greyish brown silty/sandy clay from which six fragments of animal bone were hand-collected. Bulk soil sample 28 was also collected from this fill and contained further animal bone fragments, again identified as pig teeth (*Section 3.16.1* and *Appendix B.2.1-2*). A north-west/south-east aligned field drain was noted crossing much of the trench.

*Plate 2: Pit **1003**, looking south-west (1m scale)*

3.4.8 *Trench 11*: directly to the east, Trench 11 revealed the rounded terminal of a probable north-north-west/south-south-east aligned ditch (*1103*; Fig 5). It is probable that it was related to a linear anomaly of undetermined origin detected directly to the south-east by the geophysical survey (Fig 3). Ditch *1103* had steep straight sides, a flat base, and a single fill (*1104*) composed of dark greyish brown clay silt. Five parallel field drains, aligned north/south, were also observed crossing the base of the trench (Plate 3).

Plate 3: Overview of Trench 11, looking east (1m and 2m scales)

3.4.9 *Trench 12*: this trench was positioned in the central-south of Field 2 and contained a small number of archaeological features (Fig 5). Ring gully *1205* crossed the centre of the trench and had a roughly V-shaped profile. No finds were recovered from its mid-brownish grey silty clay fill (*1206*), though bulk soil sample 26 was collected.

3.4.10 Shallow posthole *1203* was located in the southern end of Trench 12 and had moderately sloping sides and a flat base. Its single fill (*1204*) comprised a light grey silty clay that was devoid of finds.

3.4.11 Two shallow tree-throw holes (*1207* and *1209*) were also investigated, located towards the centre of the trench. They were irregular in plan and profile shape, and both contained single sterile fills (*1208* and *1210* respectively) of mid-brown to dark greyish brown clay silt.

3.4.12 *Trench 13*: Trench 13 was situated to the east of Trench 12 and revealed two parallel ditches, a pit, and a posthole (Fig 5). Ditches *1305* and *1309*, spaced c 3.6m apart, crossed the centre of the trench on a roughly north/south alignment. Continuations of the ditches were not identified in nearby trenches. The ditches generally had moderately sloping sides, though the western side of ditch *1309* was stepped (Plate 4). Both had slightly concave, albeit uneven, bases. Ditch *1305* contained a fill (*1306*) of light brown silty clay,

while ditch *1309* was filled with a mid-greyish brown sandy clay (*1310*). Bulk soil sample 27 was collected from ditch *1305* and produced a tiny fragment of glass and two small pieces of unidentified animal bone (*Section 3.16.1* and *Appendix B.2.3*). A single iron nail head was recovered from ditch *1309*, however, this cannot be firmly dated (*Section 3.16.1* and *Appendix C.1.3*).

*Plate 4: Ditch **1309**, looking north (1m scale)*

3.4.13 Situated just to the east of ditch *1305* was pit *1307*. Slightly irregular in plan shape, it continued beyond the northern trench limit and exhibited gently sloping sides and a concave base (Plate 5). An iron object, possibly a nail, was recovered from its mid-greyish brown silty clay fill (*1308*). Bulk soil sample 20 was also collected.

*Plate 5: Pit **1307**, looking north-east (0.5m scale)*

3.4.14 Posthole ***1303*** was adjacent to pit ***1307***. Sub-circular in plan, the posthole had near vertical sides and a concave base. It contained a single fill (***1304***) of mid-greyish brown silty clay from which no finds were retrieved.

3.4.15 ***Trench 14***: the trench was in the east of Field 2 (Figs 3 and 6). Two sub-circular pits were excavated in the northern end of the trench. Only the uneven base of pit ***1407*** survived, though it contained a charcoal-rich clay silt fill (***1408***) from which bulk soil sample 21 was collected (Plate 6). Small quantities of burnt clay and magnetic material are present within the sample (*Section 3.16.1* and *Appendix C.1.5*), suggestive of burnt soil, rather than metalworking debris.. Approximately 3.5 m to the north, pit ***1405*** survived to a great depth and had a V-shaped profile. Its single fill (***1406***) of mid-grey sandy clay was devoid of finds and burnt material.

*Plate 6: Pit **1407**, looking west (0.5m scale)*

3.4.16 Located just to the south of the pits was gully ***1403***. It crossed the trench on a slightly curved east-north-east/west-south-west alignment, extending beyond the trench limits, though it was not seen to have continued into nearby trenches. The gully had gently sloping sides, a concave base, and a fill (***1404***) of mid-brown silty from which no finds were retrieved.

3.4.17 Narrow ditch ***1409*** entered the southern end of the trench from the south-west and was recorded for *c* 3.2 m, ending in a rounded terminal. It exhibited steep sides and a concave base and contained a fill (***1410***) comprising light grey sandy clay. No finds or soil samples were collected from this fill.

3.4.18 *Trench 16*: located in the south of the area, Trench 16 contained a single shallow pit (***1603***; Fig 6). Continuing beyond the southern trench limit, it appears to have been sub-circular in plan and exhibited moderately sloping sides and a slightly flat base. No finds were retrieved from its dark greyish brown silty clay fill (***1604***), though bulk soil sample 25 was collected. A natural variation in the underlying geology and four north/south aligned field drains were also observed in the base of the trench.

3.4.19 *Trench 17*: this trench was located in the south-eastern corner of Field 2 and revealed a ditch and posthole (Fig 6). Crossing the eastern end of the trench on a north/south orientation, ditch ***1705*** had gently to moderately sloping sides and a flat, albeit uneven, base. The eastern side of the ditch was truncated by a field drain; a further field drain was identified to the west of the ditch. The ditch contained a fill (***1706***) of dark brown clay silt, which was devoid of finds.

3.4.20 Posthole ***1703*** was located *c* 11m to the west. Sub-circular in plan, it had a U-shaped profile and a single fill (***1704***) comprising brown sandy clay from which no finds were retrieved.

3.5 Field 11

3.5.1 Field 11 (centred on NGR SH 92188 77015) contained Trenches 30-32, which were targeted upon an extensive agricultural spread and weak agricultural anomalies detected by the previous geophysical survey (Fig 7). All three trenches revealed belowground archaeological remains correlating with the survey results.

3.5.2 Underlying the topsoil and extending across Trenches 30-32 was a deposit (*3002*, *3104*, *3202*) suggestive of a north-east/south-west aligned bank overlying the natural geology (Fig 8). Excavated in Trench 30 only, it comprised a mid-greyish brown sandy silt with frequent stone inclusions (*3002*), up to 0.21 m thick (Plate 7). No finds were recovered from deposit *3002* or the surface of deposits *3104* and *3202*.

*Plate 7: Bank **3202**, looking south-east (1m scale)*

3.5.3 A pit (recorded in plan only) was investigated in the south-eastern end of Trench 32 and was found to be modern in date, having contained plastic waste material. The only other archaeological feature uncovered within the trenches was a narrow, curved ditch (*3102*) in Trench 31 (Fig 8). The feature, which also cut into the natural geology and was sealed by topsoil, was not detected by the geophysical survey. Ditch *3102* was exposed for *c* 11.5m across the south-eastern half of the trench on a broadly north-west/south-east alignment; its stratigraphic relationship with bank deposit *3104* was not investigated. The ditch had gently to moderately sloping, stepped sides leading to a narrow V-shaped base. No finds were retrieved from its mid-brownish grey sandy clay fill (*3103*).

3.6 Field 21

3.6.1 Trenches 36-40 were positioned across the southern half of Field 21 (centred on NGR SH 92251 76240) in order to investigate a series of discrete and linear anomalies of undetermined and possible archaeological origin (Fig 9). Trenches 38 and 39 each revealed a single feature, with only that in Trench 38 broadly correlating with the geophysical survey results. The remaining

trenches were negative. Where present, the archaeological remains cut into the natural geology and were sealed by subsoil.

3.6.2 *Trench 38*: ditch *3803* crossed the south-eastern end of Trench 38 on a roughly north/south alignment, extending beyond the trench limits (Fig 10). Its northward continuation was not seen in Trench 36. The ditch had a profile of gently sloping to steep sides and a flat, albeit slightly uneven, base. No finds or soil samples were collected from its mid-yellowish brown sandy clay fill (*3804*).

3.6.3 *Trench 39*: the only feature identified in Trench 39 was a small sub-circular posthole (*3903*) located towards the centre (Fig 10). It had steep sides, a concave base, and a fill (*3904*) of greenish brown clay that was devoid of finds.

3.7 Field 23

3.7.1 Field 23 (centred on NGR SH 92400 76126) contained Trench 41, which was positioned to target two linear geophysical anomalies (Fig 9). No corresponding belowground remains were identified, though three discrete archaeological features were uncovered within the trench (Fig 10).

3.7.2 Located in the centre of the trench was partially exposed pit *4107*, the remainder of the feature continuing beyond the western trench limit. The pit exhibited gently sloping sides and a concave base. It contained a single fill (*4108*) of mid-brown silty clay from which no finds were recovered.

3.7.3 Two sub-circular to sub-oval postholes (*4103*, *4105*) were situated approximately 6m to the north, spaced c 1.5 m apart. Posthole *4105* had moderately steep sides and an uneven base. Very little of posthole *4103* survived, though it exhibited near vertical sides and a flat base. Both features contained single fills (*4104*, *4106*) of mid-greyish brown sandy clay. No finds were recovered from either posthole, though bulk soil sample 1 was collected from fill *4106* of posthole *4105*.

3.8 Field 26

3.8.1 Located within Field 26 (centred on NGR SH 92484 75936) were Trenches 42-44, which were targeted upon weak curvilinear anomalies of undetermined origin detected by the preceding geophysical survey (Fig 11). Archaeological remains were found in Trench 44 only, correlating with the survey results.

3.8.2 *Trench 44*: underlying the subsoil and cutting into the natural deposit was ditch *4403*, which crossed the centre of the trench on an east/west alignment, extending beyond the trench limits. The geophysical survey results suggest that it curves round to the south in both directions. The ditch had a V-shaped profile and a single fill (*4404*) of greyish brown sandy silt from which no finds were retrieved or bulk soil samples collected.

3.9 Fields 27 and 28

3.9.1 Trenches 45-50 were positioned across Fields 27 and 28 (centred on NGR SH 92522 75758), positioned to investigate a series of linear and penannular anomalies (Fig 12). All trenches, except Trench 47, contained archaeological remains, the majority concentrated in Trench 45. All features were cut into the natural geology and sealed by subsoil.

3.9.2 *Trench 45*: the trench was targeted upon a penannular geophysical anomaly, though corresponding belowground remains were not identified. Nevertheless, Trench 45 revealed the densest concentration of archaeological features across the excavated trenches so far (Fig 12). In total, ten postholes and two pits were excavated, with a further six discrete features unexcavated and recorded in plan only. Although indicative of structural remains, no discernible spatial patterning was evident within the trench.

3.9.3 Pits *4503* and *4525* were located in the south-eastern end and centre of the trench respectively. Pit *4503* had moderately sloping to steep sides and a slightly flat base, while pit *4525* had steep to near vertical sides and a concave base. They each contained a single fill (*4504* and *4526* respectively) of dark brown/greyish brown sandy silty. No finds were retrieved from the pits, though bulk soil samples 3 and 16 were collected from pits *4503* and *4525* respectively.

*Plate 8: Pit **4525**, looking north-east (0.5m scale)*

3.9.4 The ten excavated postholes (*4505*, *4507*, *4509*, *4511*, *4513*, *4515*, *4517*, *4519*, *4521*, *4523*) were distributed across the trench. They ranged in size (0.19-0.68 m wide and 0.08-0.37 m deep) and varied in profile, though they typically had moderately sloping to steep sides and slightly concave bases. The profile of posthole *4513* differed slightly, comprising gently sloping sides and an uneven base. The postholes generally contained single fills of light grey to dark greyish brown silty sand or clay silt. Only posthole *4505* contained two fills (*4506*, *4527*). Bulk soil samples 3-5 and 7-14 were collected from across the postholes.

3.9.5 *Trenches 46, 48, and 49*: the trenches were positioned to investigate a linear geophysical anomaly identified as a former field boundary as depicted on nineteenth-century Ordnance Survey (OS) mapping (Fig 13). A north-north-west/south-south-east aligned ditch was recorded in Trench 46 (*4603*), correlating with the geophysical survey results and historic mapping. Its south-eastward continuation was recorded as ditch *4907* in Trench 49. Ditch

4603/*4907* had moderately sloping sides and a slightly concave base. The ditch (*4803*) recorded in Trench 48 was on a slightly different alignment and had an uneven profile, though it is likely that it formed part of the same field boundary ditch, or perhaps represented the remains of an adjacent hedgerow. The ditches contained single fills (*4604*, *4804*, *4908*) of mid- to dark brown silty sand, none of which produced any finds. Nevertheless, the field boundary ditch is considered to have been of later post-medieval date as demonstrated by historic mapping.

3.9.6 No other features were recorded in Trenches 46 and 48, though a further ditch (*4905*) and a posthole (*4903*) were revealed in Trench 49. Shallow ditch *4905* crossed the trench on a more north-west/south-east alignment, located *just* to the east of field boundary ditch *4907*. Continuations of ditch *4905* were not identified in nearby trenches. The ditch had moderately sloping sides, a slightly concave, albeit uneven, base, and was filled with a mid-brown silty clay (*4906*). No finds or soil samples were collected from this fill.

3.9.7 Sub-circular posthole *4903* was revealed in the north-eastern end of Trench 49 and had moderately sloping sides and a slightly concave, albeit uneven, base. No finds were recovered from its light greyish brown sandy silt fill (*4904*).

3.9.8 *Trench 50*: the trench was targeted upon a penannular geophysical anomaly, though no corresponding belowground remains were encountered (Fig 13). However, excavation revealed a probable cremation burial (*5003*) in the south-eastern half of the trench. Although unexcavated at this stage of investigation, the sub-oval burial pit (*5003*) contained a fill (*5004*) of dark bluish black sandy silt with charcoal and burnt bone visible on its surface (Plate 9). A possible ditch terminal (*5005*) located *c* 2m to the north-west was also recorded in plan only.

*Plate 9: Probable cremation burial **5003**, looking south-east (0.5m scale)*

3.10 Field 32

3.10.1 Trench 51 was investigated in Field 32 (centred on NGR SH 92592 75623), targeted upon a linear geophysical anomaly of undetermined origin (Fig 14). A single archaeological feature was encountered below the topsoil and cut into the natural geology. Ditch *5102* crossed the trench on a north-north-west/south-south-east alignment, broadly corresponding with the plotted position of the geophysical anomaly. It had moderately sloping to steep sides and a slightly concave base. Its single fill (*5103*) comprised a dark greyish brown clay silt with moderate charcoal inclusions from which bulk soil sample 17 was collected. No finds were hand-collected from the fill.

3.11 Fields 45 and 46

3.11.1 Trenches 52-58 were positioned across Fields 45 and 46 (centred on NGR SH 93086 74657) to investigate a series of linear geophysical anomalies of possible archaeological and an anomaly correlating with a former field boundary (Fig 15). Only Trenches 53 and 55 revealed archaeological features, all of which cut into the natural geology and were sealed by subsoil.

3.11.2 *Trench 53*: corresponding with the geophysical survey results and nineteenth-century OS mapping, ditch *5304* crossed the centre of Trench 53 on a north-east/south-west alignment (Fig 16). Contrary to the survey results and cartographic evidence, continuations of the field boundary ditch were not seen in Trenches 52 and 54. Ditch *5304* had a gently sloping north-west side and a steep south-east side, leading to an uneven base. Its single fill (*5303*) of mid-greyish brown silty sand was devoid of finds, though historic mapping demonstrates its later post-medieval date.

3.11.3 *Trench 55*: excavation revealed two shallow pits located in its south-eastern end; no features correlating with the targeted anomalies were identified (Fig 16). Sub-oval pit *5504* had shallow sloping sides and an uneven base. It contained a fill (*5503*) of dark greyish brown sandy silt with a concentration of charcoal in its base, suggestive of the deposition of burnt material. Bulk soil sample 2 was collected from this fill, which was devoid of finds.

3.11.4 Located *c* 1.6m to the south-east was sub-circular pit *5505*, which had steep sides (stepped on its north-west side) and a relatively flat base (Plate 10). It contained a fill (*5506*) of mid-brownish grey sandy silt but no finds or burnt material.

*Plate 10: Pit **5505**, looking south-east (0.5m scale)*

3.12 Field 47

3.12.1 Located within a single field towards the south-west of the scheme (centred on NGR SH 93230 74546) were Trenches 59-66, positioned to investigate several linear geophysical anomalies of possible archaeological and undetermined origin, as well as agricultural trends and magnetic disturbance (Fig 15). Only Trenches 63 and 65 revealed archaeological remains, a single ditch within each trench, both corresponding with the plotted positions of the geophysical anomalies. The features were sealed by subsoil and cut into the natural geology.

3.12.2 *Trench 63*: ditch *6303* crossed the northern half of the trench on a north-west/south-east orientation (Fig 16). Continuations of the ditch were not observed in nearby trenches. It had a profile of moderately sloping sides imperceptibly breaking into a concave base. No finds or soil samples were collected from its single fill (*6304*) of dark brown clay silt.

3.12.3 *Trench 65*: crossing the south-eastern half of the trench was roughly north/south aligned ditch *6506* (Fig 16). Although the geophysical survey results suggest that the ditch continued into Trench 66, no corresponding belowground remains were identified. The ditch had moderately sloping to steep sides, a slightly concave to flat base, and a single fill (*6507*) of mid-greyish brown silty clay (Plate 11). No finds or soil samples were collected from this fill.

*Plate 11: Ditch **6506**, looking south (1m scale)*

3.13 Field 77

3.13.1 Trenches 68-70 were located in Field 77, in the south-west of the scheme (centred on NGR SH 93373 74373), targeted upon a series of linear geophysical anomalies of possible archaeological origin (Fig 17). Archaeological remains were encountered in Trenches 69 and 70, cutting into the natural geology and sealed by subsoil deposits.

3.13.2 *Trenches 69 and 70*: a linear ditch was revealed extending across both Trenches 69 (***6903***) and 70 (***7003***) on an east-north-east/west-south-west alignment, correlating with one of the targeted geophysical anomalies (Fig 18). Its continuation further to the west-south-west was not identified in adjacent Trench 68. Ditch ***6903***/***7003*** had moderately sloping sides and a concave base and contained a single fill of mid-brown silty clay (***6904***/***7004***) that was devoid of finds.

3.13.3 Two further features were recorded in Trench 69; no other features were present in Trench 70 (Fig 18). Adjacent to ditch ***6903*** was sub-circular pit ***6905***, which had moderately steep sides and a slightly concave base (Plate 12). No finds were retrieved from its single light grey clay fill (***6906***), though bulk soil sample 18 was collected.

*Plate 12: Pit **6905**, looking east (0.5m scale)*

3.13.4 Possible ditch terminal ***6907*** was located in the south-east end of Trench 69. Its pointed end was to the south-west and it extended to the north-east beyond the trench limits, though its continuation was not seen in Trench 70. Terminal ***6907*** had moderately sloping to steep sides, a flat base, and a single fill (***6908***) of mid-purplish grey clay silt. Bulk soil sample 19 was collected from this fill and yielded a moderate charcoal assemblage (*Section 3.16.2* and *Appendix B.1.10*) two amphibian bones, likely frog, and one small fragment of animal bone (*Section 3.16.1* and *Appendix B.2.4*); no finds were hand-collected from this feature.

3.14 Field 298

3.14.1 Trenches 111 and 112 were situated within Field 298, located in the mid-section of the scheme (centred on NGR SH 95475 73919; Fig 19). The trenches were positioned to target a linear geophysical anomaly interpreted as a former field boundary and a curvilinear anomaly of undetermined origin, respectively. A single corresponding belowground archaeological feature was revealed in Trench 111 only, cut into the natural geology and sealed by topsoil. A series of alluvial deposits identified in Trench 112 may have accounted for the geophysical anomaly.

3.14.2 ***Trench 111***: ditch ***11102*** crossed the western end of Trench 111 on a north-east/south-west alignment, extending beyond the trench limits (Fig 19). The ditch had gently sloping sides and a slightly rounded base and contained a single fill (***11103***) of mid-brownish grey silty clay from which no finds were recovered. Correlating with the geophysical survey results, the plotted position of the ditch also broadly corresponds with a field boundary depicted on nineteenth-century OS mapping, demonstrating its more recent date. Two

field drains also crossed the trench on a similar north-east/south-west alignment (Plate 13).

Plate 13: Overview of Trench 111, looking north-east (1m and 2m scales)

3.15 Field 175

3.15.1 Field 175 was located towards the eastern end of the scheme (centred on NGR SH 98545 73536) and contained Trenches 162-171, which were targeted upon a series of curvilinear and rectilinear geophysical anomalies of probable archaeological origin (Fig 20). A small number of belowground archaeological features were revealed in Trenches 162, 163, 164, 166, and 167, of which only a few correspond with the plotted survey results. All features cut into the natural geology and were sealed by subsoil.

3.15.2 *Trench 162*: a curvilinear ditch (*16203*) crossed the centre of Trench 162, roughly correlating with the targeted geophysical anomaly (Fig 21). The curved ditch was exposed for *c* 8.2m and had a rounded terminal to the south-east, suggestive of an entranceway to a roundhouse or small enclosure. It had a narrow U-shaped profile and was filled with a dark brown clay silt (*16204*), which was devoid of finds.

3.15.3 *Trench 163*: a small sub-circular pit (*16304*) was revealed approximately 19.2m to the north-east in the southern end of Trench 163 but was not detected by the geophysical survey (Fig 21). The targeted curvilinear anomaly was not identified as belowground remains. Pit *16304* had shallow sides, a concave base, and a single fill (*16303*) of dark greyish brown silty sand. No finds or soil samples were collected from the feature.

3.15.4 *Trench 164*: excavation revealed a single archaeological feature that was not detected by the preceding geophysical survey (Fig 21). Ditch *16403* crossed the south-eastern end of the trench on a north-north-east/south-south-west

orientation. Continuations of the ditch were not seen in nearby trenches. The shallow ditch had a U-shaped profile and a fill (*16404*) of light brown silty clay that was devoid of finds.

3.15.5 *Trench 166*: the trench contained a single sub-circular pit (*16603*) that again was not detected as a geophysical anomaly (Fig 22). The large but shallow pit had steep sides and a flat base. No finds or soil samples were retrieved from its fill (*16604*) of mid-brown clay sand.

3.15.6 *Trench 167*: a possible ditch (*16703*) crossed the centre of Trench 167 on a west-north-west/east-south-east alignment, broadly correlating with the geophysical survey results (Fig 22). It was not seen to have continued into adjacent trenches. The feature had moderately sloping sides, an uneven base, and a sterile fill (*16704*) of mid-yellowish brown sandy silt, suggesting it may have been natural in nature, perhaps constituting the remains of a former hedgerow.

*Plate 14: Possible ditch **16703**, looking north-west (2m scale)*

3.16 Environmental and finds summary

3.16.1 A small assemblage of finds was recovered during the evaluation to date. It largely comprises small fragments of animal bone and shell (*Appendix B.2)*, as well as small quantities of iron, glass, magnetic material, burnt clay, and a single pottery sherd of possible post-medieval date (Table 2; *Appendix C.1*). The majority of this material was recovered from the environmental soil samples rather by hand collection. In addition, the pottery sherd retrieved from Trench 4, was residual in the topsoil deposit. Only two finds are dateable and are post-medieval to modern in date. All the finds have no potential for further study due to their small size, average weight of 0.87g, and the limited number. Given the paucity of dating evidence and its recent date range, the animal bone and mollusc shell also have no further potential.

Context	Material	Type	Sample no	Quantity	Weight (g)
103	Shell	Marine	24	122	11

Context	Material	Type	Sample no	Quantity	Weight (g)
203	Shell	Marine	22	17	1
400	Ceramic	Vessel		1	203
1004	Bone	Animal		6	1
1004	Bone	Animal	28	21	2
1306	Glass		27	1	1
1306	Bone	Animal	27	2	1
1308	Iron	Object		1	6
1408	Magnetic material	Residue	21	80	9
1408	Burnt clay		21	25	10
6908	Bone	Micromammal	19	2	1

Table 2: Quantification of finds

3.16.2 In total, 29 soil samples were collected during this phase of evaluation for the primarily for the retrieval and assessment of ecofacts and the recovery of artefacts. They were collected from a range of contexts, such as ditch and pit fills, with the potential for the recovery of charred plant remains. Samples with common and abundant charcoal consist mostly of oak fragments, which may represent possible 'in-situ' deposits of fuel waste. Although oak is not considered suitable for radiocarbon dating due to the old wood effect, charred short-lived wood, such as alder/hazel, or small charred round wood, provide potential for radiocarbon dating. Larger fragments of charred hazel nutshell also provide suitable material for radiocarbon dating. Charcoal from ditches *5102* and *6907*, and pit *6905* may provide further information on local woodland and wood fuel use, if these features were to be dated.

3.16.3 Remains other than charcoal were sparse, and although four of the samples contained charred cereals and weed seeds, little can be advanced about their presence at the site, given only very few were recovered. Charred plant remains such as cereals and weed seeds may provide evidence for possible earlier agricultural activity. Unfortunately, the low level of significant archaeobotanical remains recovered from the site does not allow for any further analysis.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 The work was undertaken to contribute to Volume 3, Chapter 5: Historic environment of the Environmental Statement that will accompany an application for a DCO. Although the Local Planning Authority did not set a brief for the work, discussions between RPS and the Senior Planning Archaeologist at Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) established the scope of work required, which was set out within a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by RPS (2023). As only 75 of the 284 trenches were undertaken at this stage, CPAT accepted that only a low number of trenches was achievable at this stage and that this was sufficient for the application to progress, provided that there was a commitment to complete the programme at a later date.

4.1.2 The trenches provided a good coverage of the investigated site areas and were located to maximise the potential for exposing archaeological remains. The ground and site conditions were largely good throughout this phase of evaluation. The machining was generally carried out cleanly, providing good visibility of features and deposits in the excavated evaluation trenches. Spells of wet and dry weather did not inhibit the evaluation or the identification of archaeological remains.

4.1.3 The evaluation results to date demonstrate the presence of a generally low density of archaeological remains across the scheme, though slight concentrations of features are present, most notably in Fields 27-28 and 175. The interim results of the evaluation completed so far are considered to reflect the archaeological potential of the site as highlighted by the historic background and geophysical survey (*Volume 7, Annex 5.3: Onshore geophysical survey report*).

4.1.4 The evaluation of the 75 excavated trenches, with archaeological remains being encountered in 36 of these, generally confirmed the reliability of the geophysical survey results (*Volume 7, Annex 5.3: Onshore geophysical survey report, of the Environmental Statement*), of those 36 trenches 19 contained archaeological remains which corresponded well with those results. Most of the trenches were targeted upon geophysical anomalies, many of which were of undetermined origin. The investigations established the archaeological or natural origin of several of the anomalies, with a proportion of the features revealed in the trenches not previously detected by the geophysical survey.

4.2 Evaluation objectives and results

4.2.1 The trial trenching is considered to have achieved the general aims of the project for the investigated areas (*Section 2.1*). The evaluation so far has established and recorded the presence and extent of archaeological features and deposits in 36 of the 75 excavated trenches. A generally low density and low inter-cut complexity of features was recorded, largely comprising linear and curvilinear ditches, gullies, pits, and postholes, as well as a probable cremation burial, remains of a bank deposit, and several tree-throw holes. The curvilinear ditches and postholes revealed on site may provide evidence of structures of possible later prehistoric date, while a probable cremation burial

is suggestive of potentially contemporary funerary activity. A number of trenches were positioned in proximity to the putative Roman road, postulated as running through Fields 46 and 47, however, no clear evidence of associated roadside activity was identified. Several of the linear ditches represent the remains of former late post-medieval field boundaries, providing some evidence of rural land division during this period. Field drains were also observed in the bases of several trenches, demonstrating a degree of truncation from more recent agricultural activities.

4.2.2 Limited artefactual evidence was recovered from the investigated trenches, comprising a little pottery, burnt clay, animal bone, glass, and metalwork. This material has yet to be assessed and so the recorded features and deposits currently remain undated, although the results of that assessment will be incorporated into this interim report as soon as they are available. However, some ditches correspond with field boundaries depicted on nineteenth-century OS mapping, demonstrating their more recent historic date. A proportion of features were also sampled, as they showed potential for containing environmental remains. The processed samples have not yet undergone specialist assessment, so the interim results currently cannot inform on the character of past environments and land use activity, although as soon as the assessment results are available, they will be incorporated into this assessment report.

4.2.3 The excavated trenches have also established the reliability of the geophysical survey results. The trenches were positioned to investigate and verify the results of the survey, which had identified a range of anomalies of probable/possible archaeological and undetermined origin. In addition, several anomalies were identified and interpreted as former field boundaries of later post-medieval date, as well as areas of ferrous/magnetic disturbance. The geophysical survey results had a moderately good correlation with the archaeological remains recorded within the excavated evaluation trenches.

4.2.4 The extensive agricultural spread and weak agricultural anomalies detected across Field 11 were identified as belowground archaeological remains in the form of the bank deposit identified across Trenches 30-32. The linear geophysical anomalies interpreted as former field boundaries were also demonstrated to be archaeological in nature in Trenches 46, 48, and 49 (Field 28), Trench 53 (Field 45), and Trench 111 (Field 298), correlating with historic OS mapping. In contrast to the geophysical survey results and cartographic evidence, continuations of the field boundary ditch revealed in Trench 53 were not found in Trenches 52 and 54.

4.2.5 The undated ditches recorded in Trench 38 (Field 21), Trench 51 (Field 32), Trenches 63 and 65 (Field 47), Trenches 69 and 70 (Field 77), and Trench 167 (Field 175) all correlate with the plotted positions of the targeted geophysical anomalies. The penannular anomalies investigated by Trench 44 (Field 26) and Trench 162 (Field 175) were also found to be archaeological in origin, though no finds were recovered to indicate a date for the features. The linear anomalies targeted by Trench 41 (Field 23) were not identified as belowground remains, though three discrete features were revealed within the trench.

4.2.6 A proportion of the archaeological features revealed within the excavated trenches were not detected as geophysical anomalies. This was the case for the ditches, pits, and postholes found across Trenches 1, 2, 6, 9, 10-4, 16, and 17 (Field 2), the ditch in Trench 31 (Field 11), the multiple postholes and pits encountered in Trench 45 (Field 27), the probable cremation burial in Trench 50 (Field 28), the pits in Trench 55 (Field 46), and the ditches and pits in Trenches 163, 164, and 166 (Field 175). This was possibly due to the narrow and shallow profiles of the features and their single sterile fills.

4.3 Interpretation

4.3.1 Archaeological remains encountered within the excavated trenches comprised a relatively low density of ditches, gullies, pits, and postholes, as well as a probable cremation burial, the remains of a bank deposit, and several tree-throw holes. The finds and environmental remains have yet to be assessed, although once those results are available, they will be incorporated into this interim report, and so the majority of the excavated features and deposits currently remain undated. Nevertheless, several of the recorded features can be dated on the basis of cartographic evidence and are discussed below. Preliminary interpretations of the remaining features are also considered.

4.3.2 *Possible prehistoric*: the curvilinear ditches recorded in Trench 44 (Field 26) and Trench 162 (Field 175) may provide evidence of structural remains. In conjunction with the geophysical survey results, these features are characteristic of later prehistoric roundhouses or small enclosures, though no dating evidence was recovered from the excavated interventions.

4.3.3 A single probable cremation burial was also revealed in Trench 50 (Field 28) during this phase of the evaluation. Although not excavated, it provides some evidence of funerary activity within the area that may have prehistoric origins, though a later date cannot be ruled out at this stage.

4.3.4 *Post-medieval and modern*: the ditches recorded in Trenches 46, 48, and 49 (Field 28), the ditch in Trench 53 (Field 45), and the ditch in Trench 111 (Field 298) represent the remains of former field boundaries depicted on nineteenth-century OS mapping. The field drains observed in several of the trenches provide further evidence of the continued agricultural use of the landscape during the later post-medieval period and into the modern era.

4.3.5 The linear deposit extending across Trenches 30-32 (Field 11) appears to have formed the remains of a bank. This area corresponds with a former woodland shown on historic OS mapping and it is likely that the bank deposit related to the transformation of the area to agricultural use following the removal of the woodland.

4.3.6 *Currently undated*: Trench 45 (Field 27) revealed the densest concentration of archaeological features, predominantly comprising postholes and a few pits. The postholes did not reveal any clear spatial patterning, though they provide evidence of structural remains on site. Although no finds were recovered from the excavated postholes, bulk soil samples may provide dating material or evidence of the nature of activity in this area.

4.3.7 The various linear ditches recorded across the excavated trenches represent the remains of land division across the landscape that may have been agricultural in nature. The presence of nearby pits and postholes are also suggestive of associated occupation activity, while tree-throw holes may indicate episodes of tree clearance.

4.4 Significance

4.4.1 The evaluation to date has identified archaeological remains suggestive of land management alongside occupation, funerary, and agricultural activity. The undated ditches recorded across the scheme provide evidence of land division, while the curvilinear ditches and postholes are suggestive of structures. Scattered pits may also indicate associated occupation activity, while the single probable cremation burial provides limited evidence of funerary activity. The limited finds assemblage does not provide much further interpretation or dating evidence to the features beyond their stratigraphy, although the charcoal, recovered from bulk environmental samples, may provide further information on local woodland and wood fuel use, as well as potentially dating the features. Nevertheless, the archaeological features may provide evidence of activity within the landscape during the prehistoric period in particular. The evaluation results are likely to be of local significance and may relate to a wider focus of activity within the landscape. The finds and environmental assessments from this phase of work, together with the results of the remaining fieldwork to be completed in due course, will aim to refine these interim results and place them within their broader social and cultural contexts.

4.4.2 The remains of former field boundaries encountered across the site are of limited local significance. They demonstrate the agricultural use of the landscape during the late post-medieval period, supporting the historic mapping of the area. Field drains observed it in several of trenches provide further evidence of continued agricultural land use.

5 FIGURES

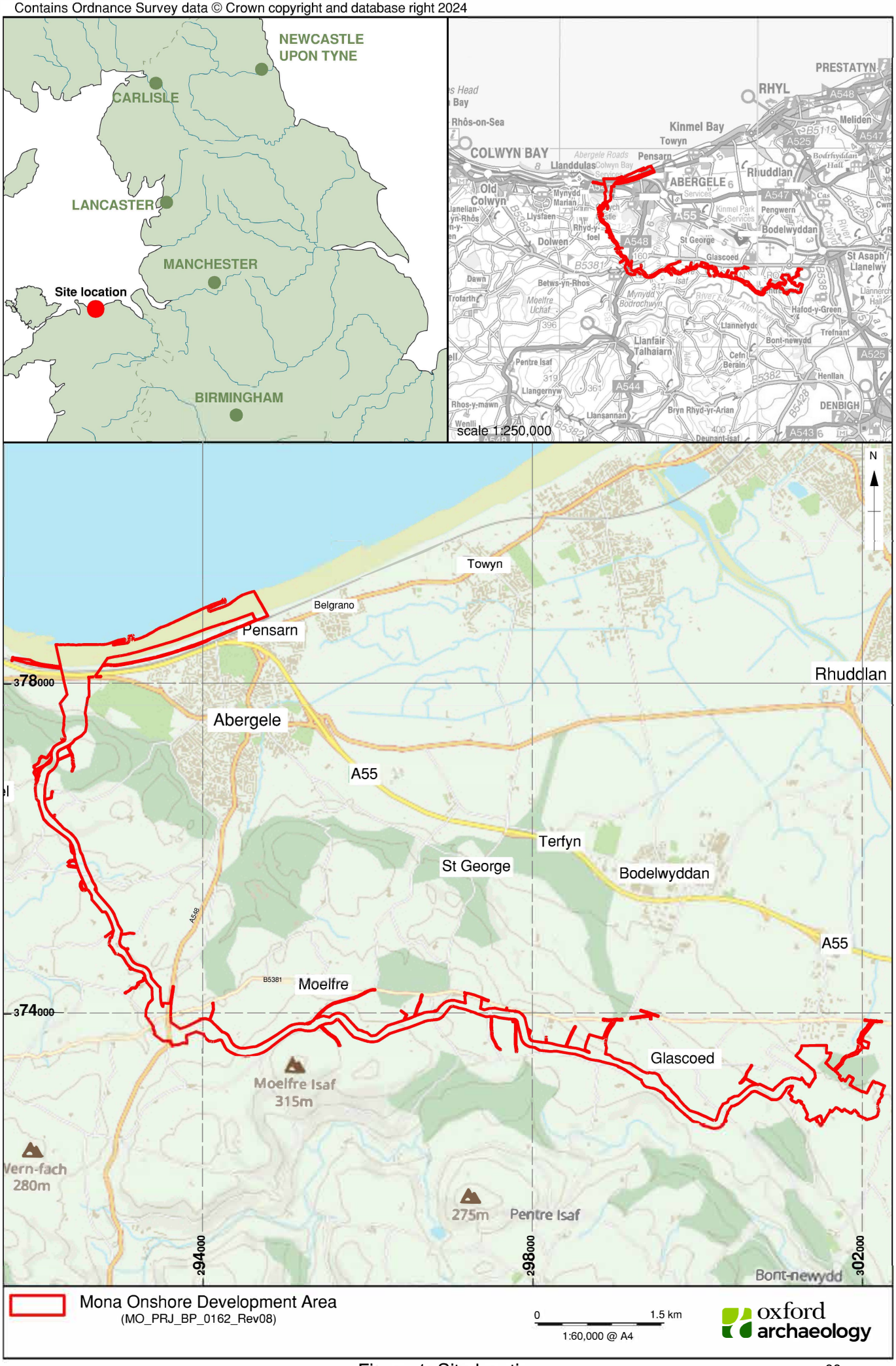

Figure 1: Site location

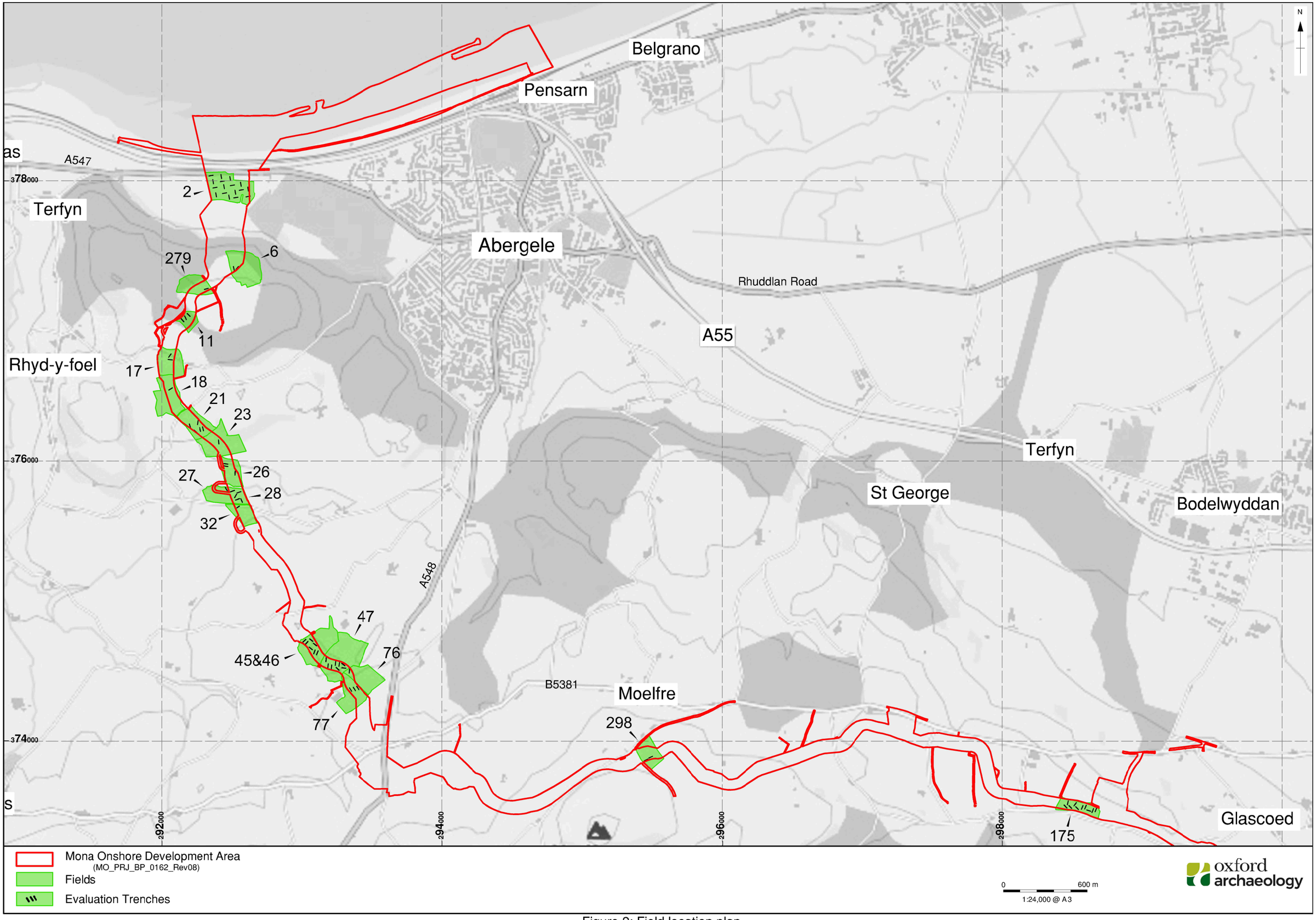

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Figure 2: Field location plan

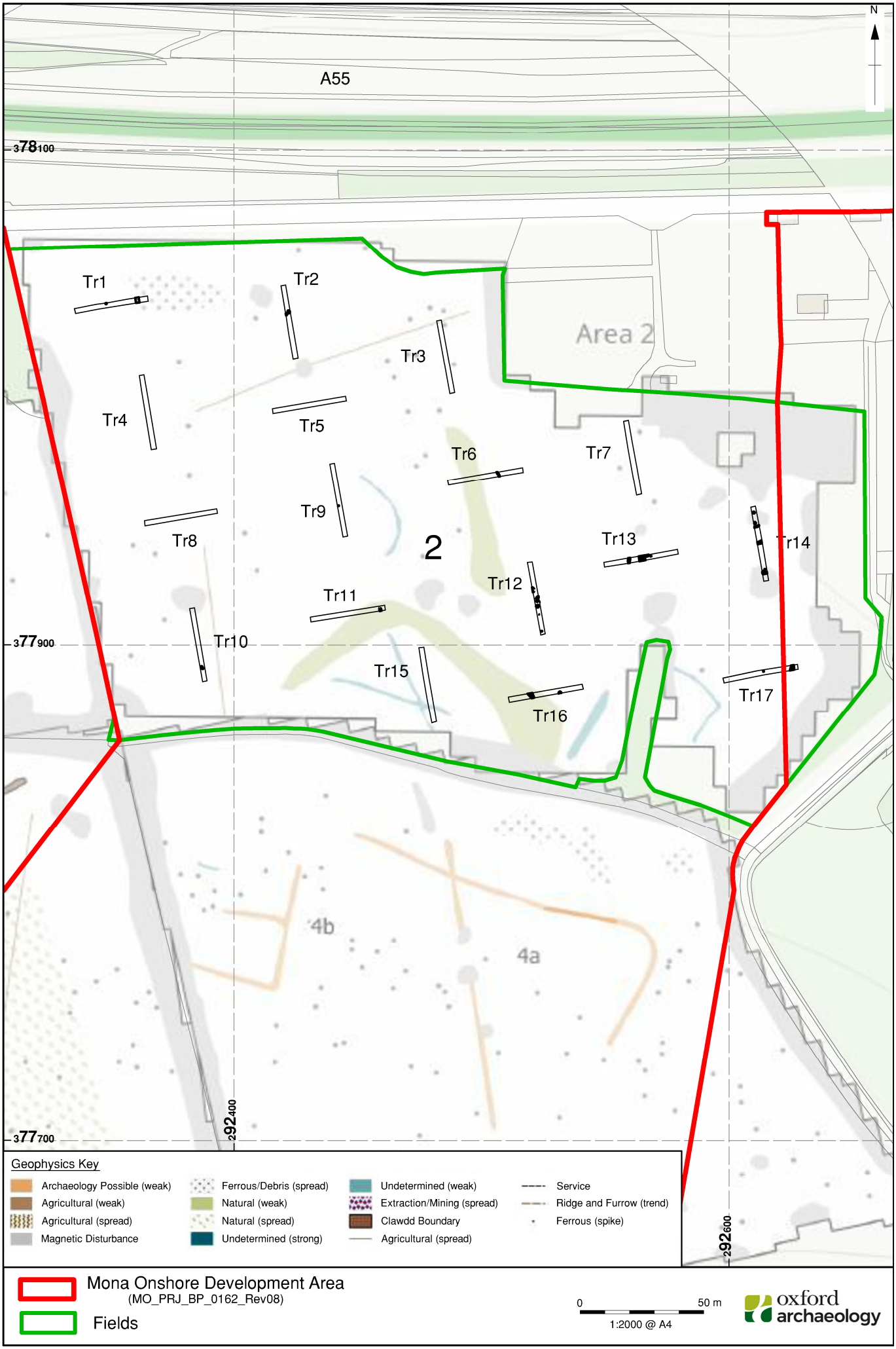

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Figure 3: Field 2 trench plan

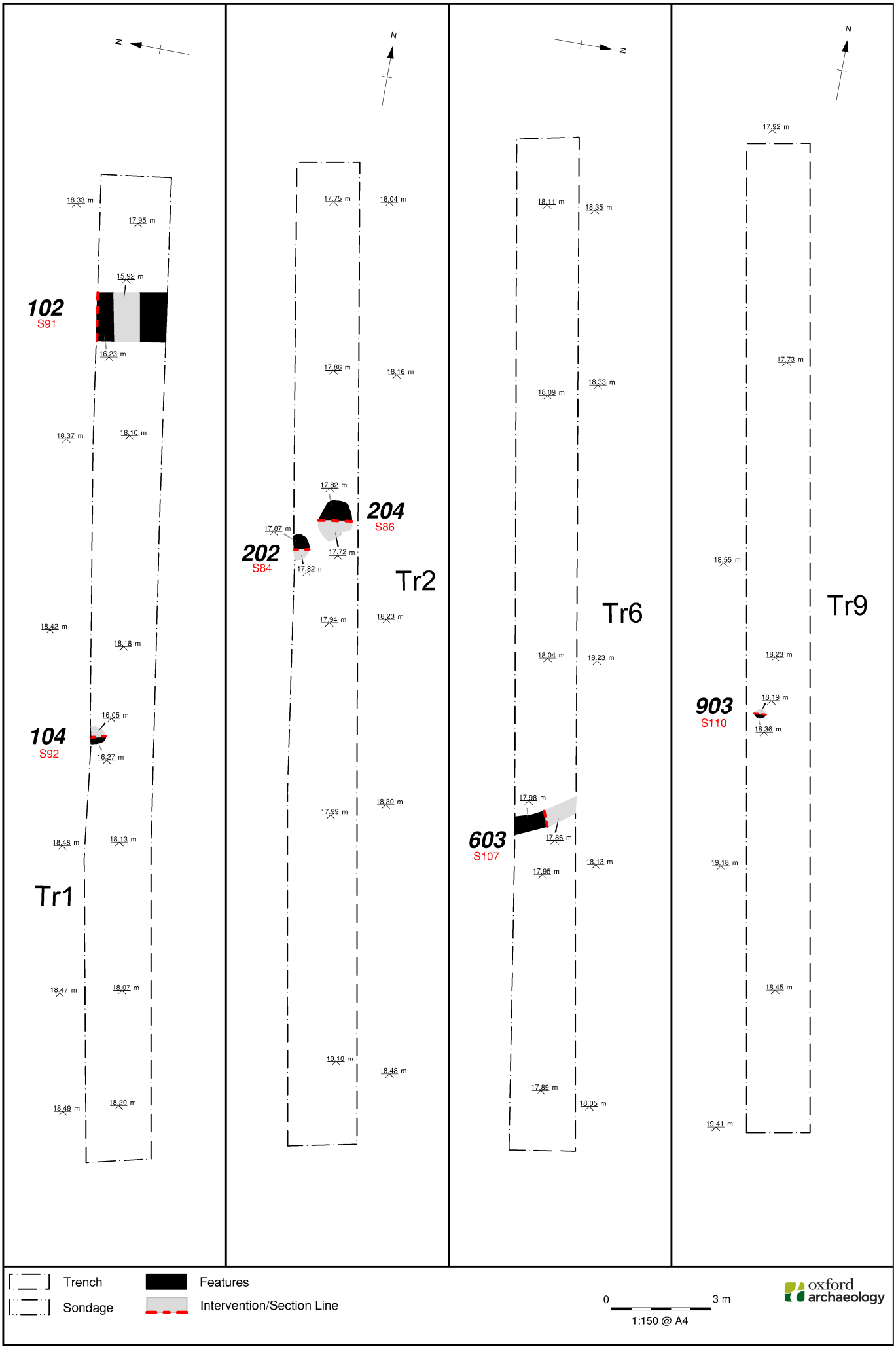

Figure 4: Detailed plans of Trenches 1, 2, 6 and 9

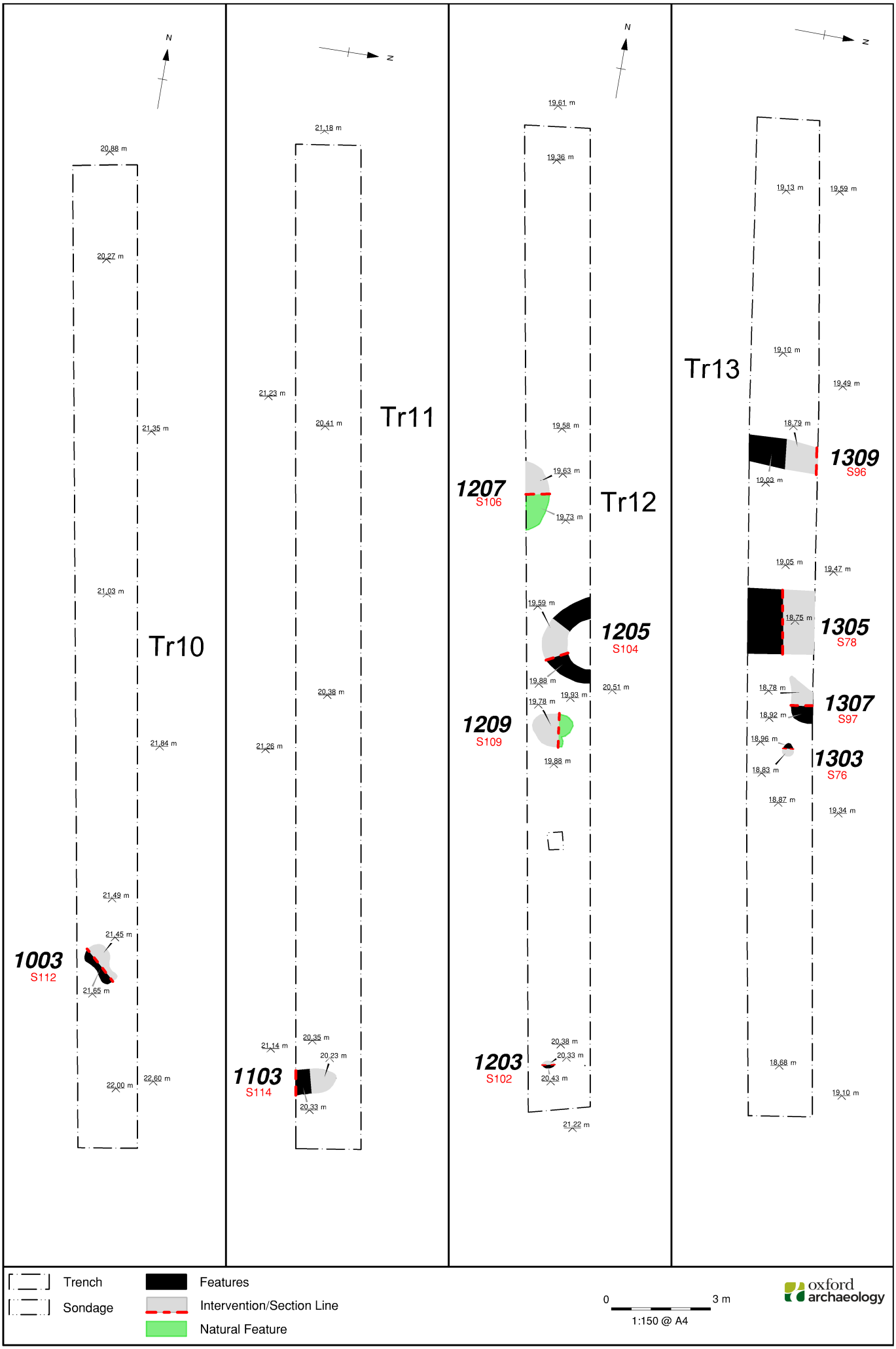

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Figure 5: Detailed plans of Trenches 10-13

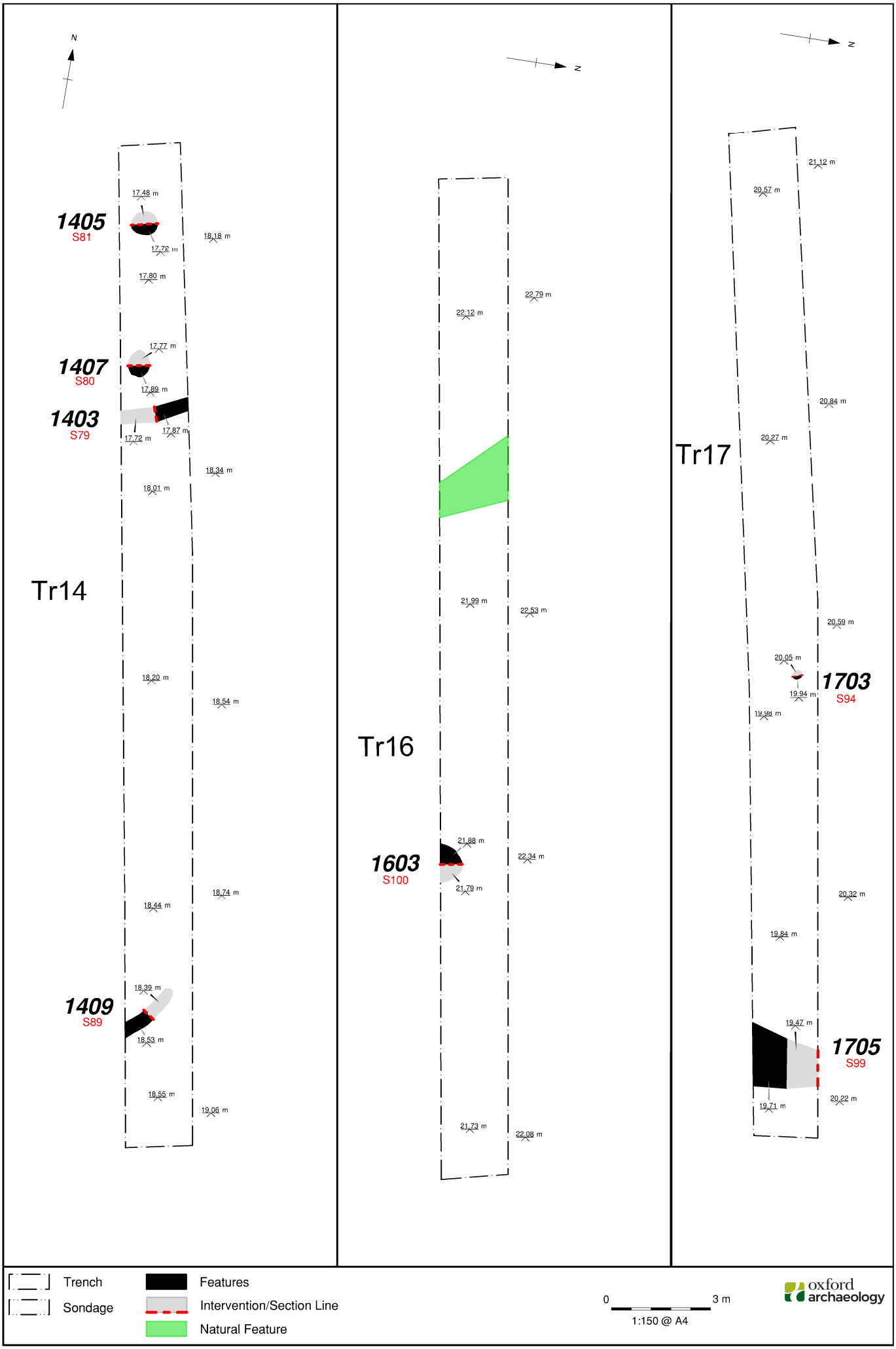

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Figure 6: Detailed plans of Trenches 14, 16 and 17

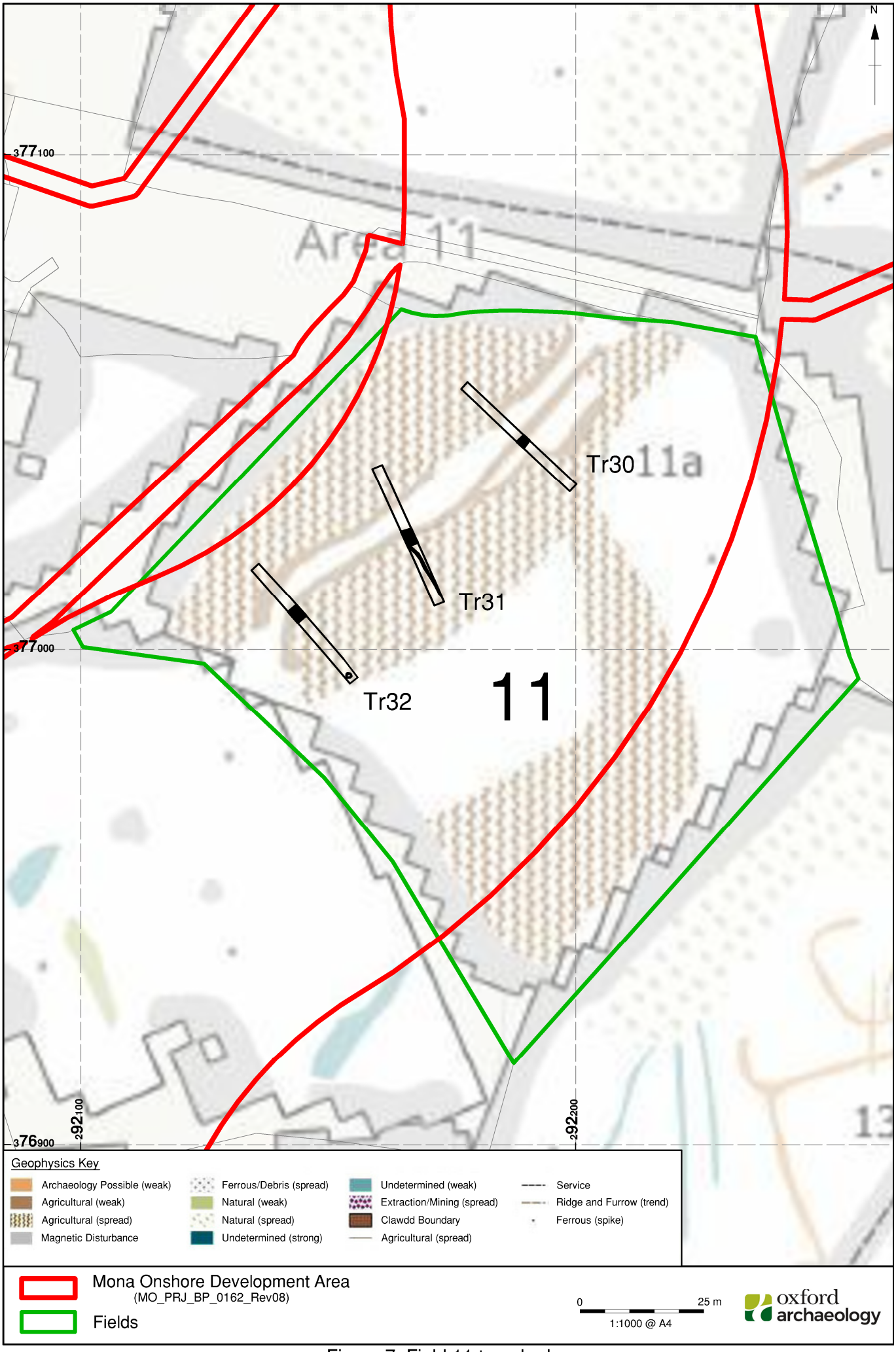

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Figure 7: Field 11 trench plan

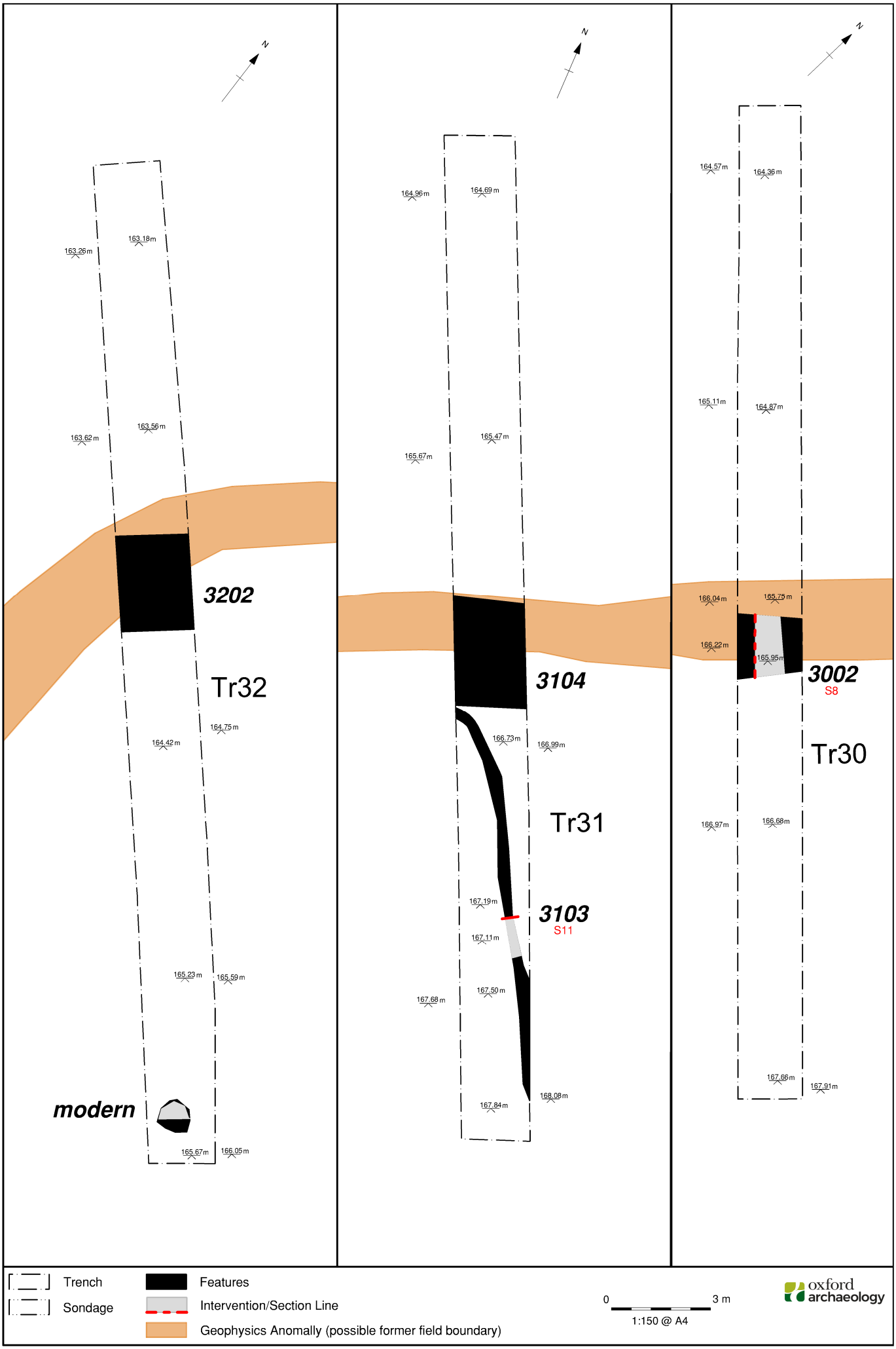

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Figure 8: Detailed plans of Trenches 30-32

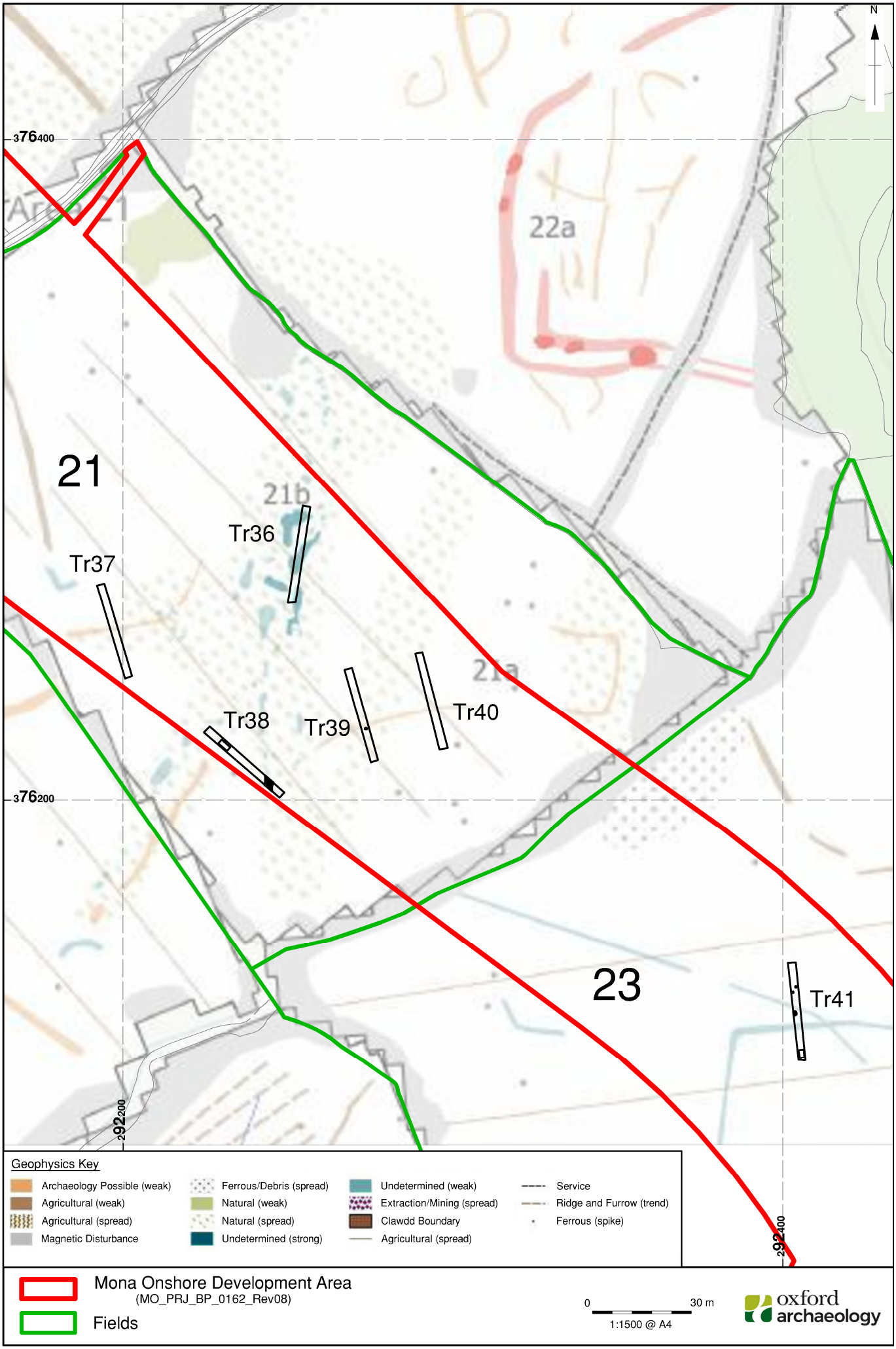

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Figure 9: Fields 21 and 23 trench plan

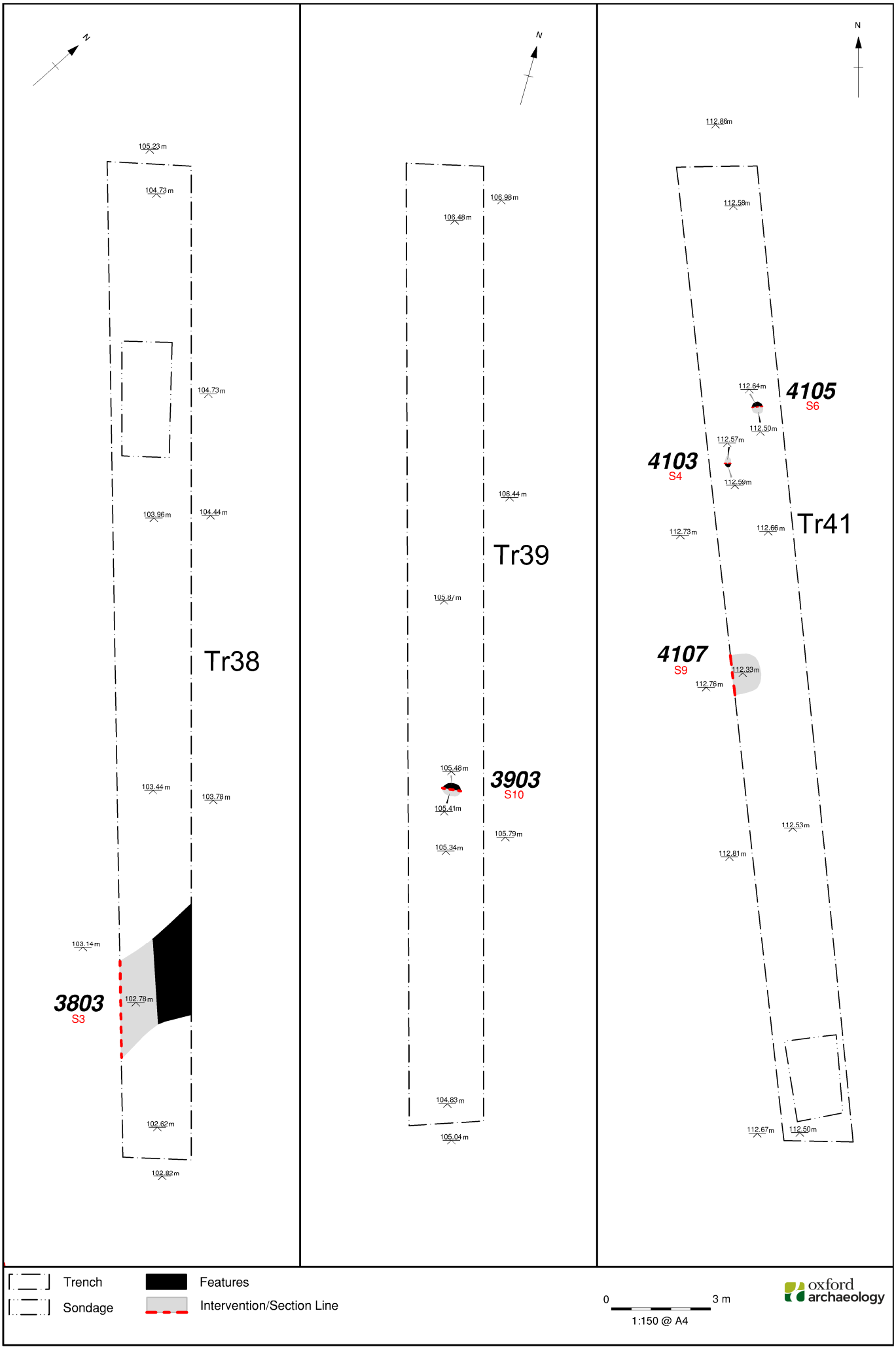

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Figure 10: Detailed plans of Trenches 38, 39 and 41

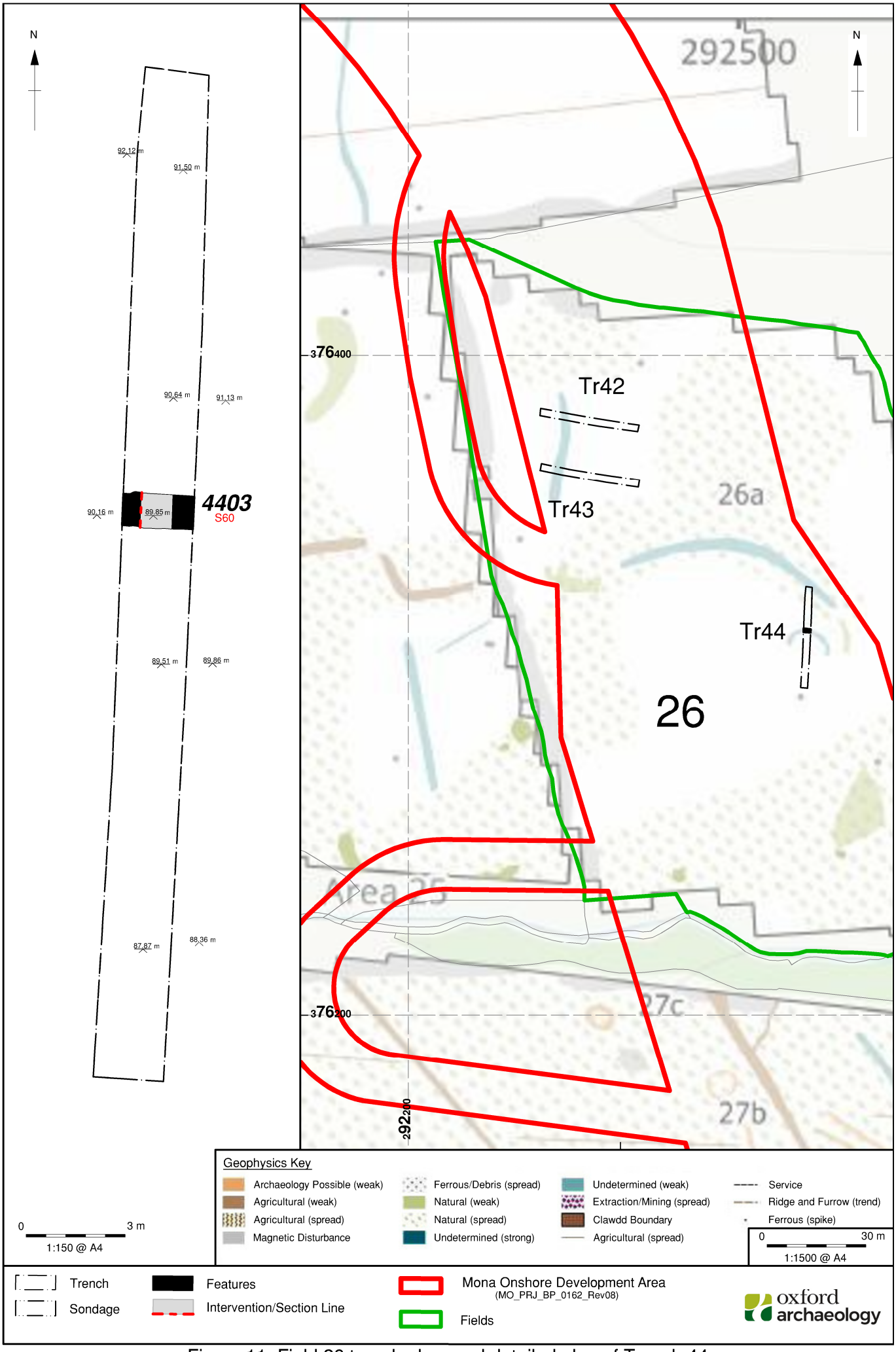

Figure 11: Field 26 trench plan, and detailed plan of Trench 44

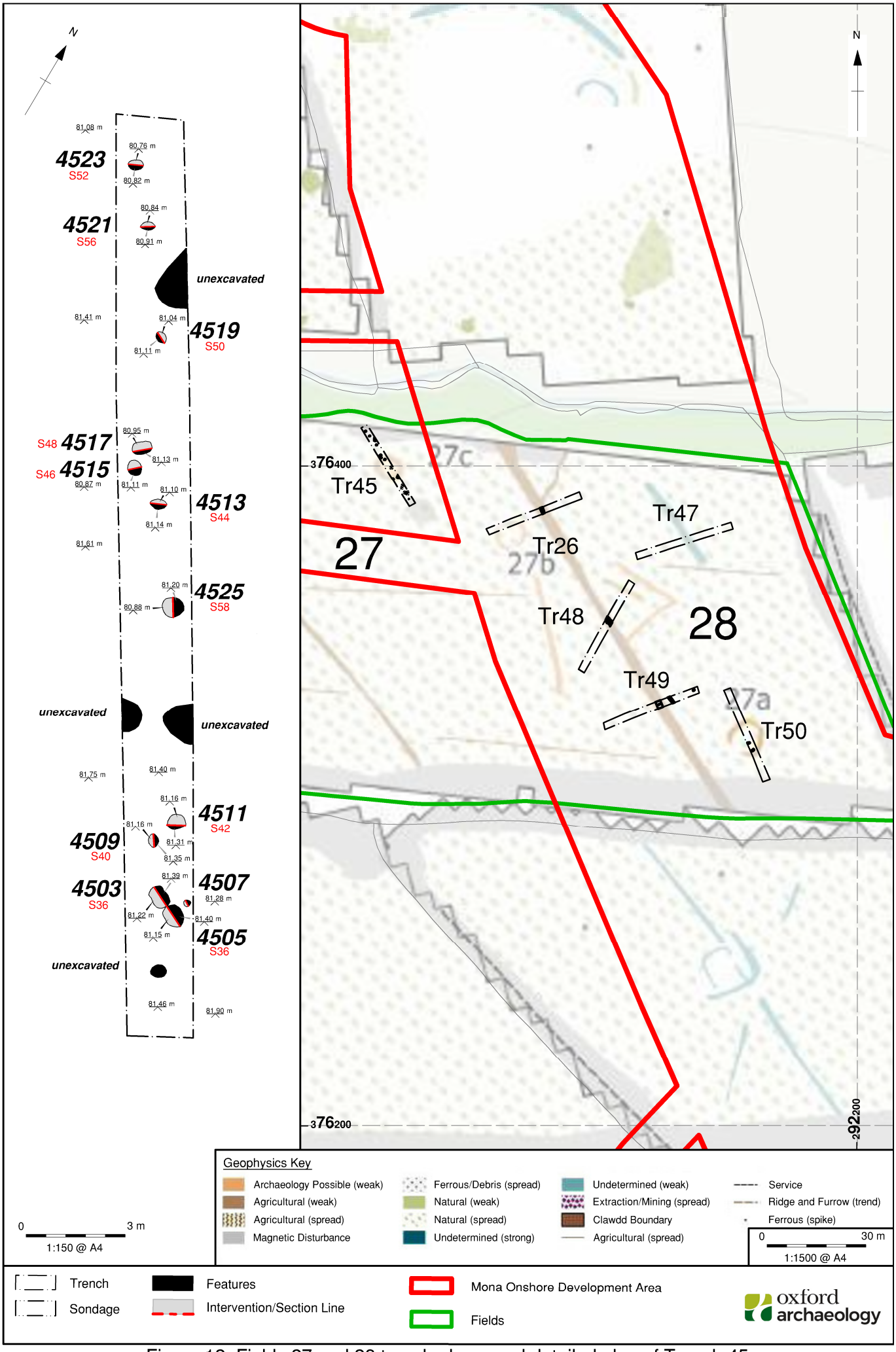

Figure 12: Fields 27 and 28 trench plans, and detailed plan of Trench 45