

# Roman Ditch at Smith's Chase March



## Archaeological Evaluation Report



May 2008

**Client: FE Peacock Ltd**

OA East Report No: 1108

OASIS No: 59779

NGR: TL 4090 9754

**Roman Ditch at Smith's Chase, March**

*Archaeological Evaluation*

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*Report Date: May 2009*

**Report Number:** 1108  
**Site Name:** Smith's Chase, March  
**HER Event No:** 3170  
**Date of Works:** April 2009  
**Client Name:** FE Peacock Ltd  
**Client Ref:**  
**Planning Ref:** F/YR07/0897/F  
**Grid Ref:** TL 4090 9754  
**Site Code:** MAR SMC 09  
**Finance Code:** MAR SMC 09  
**Receiving Body:** CCC Stores  
**Accession No:**

**Prepared by:** Chris Thatcher  
**Position:** Project Officer  
**Date:** 30 April 2009

**Checked by:** James Drummond Murray  
**Position:** Project Manager  
**Date:** May 2009  
**Signed:** 

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## **Summary**

*Between the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> April 2009 OA East conducted an archaeological evaluation at Land at Smith's Chase, March, centred on TL 4090 9754. The proposal was for the construction of residential properties with associated access and parking.*

*A total of four trenches were excavated. Three were 20m x 2m and the fourth 15m x 2m. Two possible Roman ditches were recorded in Trench 2, that may have formed part of an enclosure towards the centre of the development area.*

*No further archaeological features were recorded and a significant level of modern disturbance and made ground was evident in the southern part of the development area. The underlying geology comprised silty clay deposits with frequent patches of silt and root disturbance.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 An archaeological evaluation was conducted at Land at Smith's Chase, March, centred on TL 4090 9754. The proposal was for the construction of 11 houses with access and parking.
- 1.1.2 This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Andy Thomas of Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC; Planning Application F/YR07/0897/F, supplemented by a Specification prepared by OA East (formerly Cambridgeshire County Council's CAM ARC).
- 1.1.3 The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, in accordance with the guidelines set out in *Planning and Policy Guidance 16 - Archaeology and Planning* (Department of the Environment 1990). The results will enable decisions to be made by CCC, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority, with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.
- 1.1.4 The site archive is currently held by OA East and will be deposited with the appropriate county stores in due course.

### 1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is located on the western side of March island overlying Boulder Clay close to the Fen edge.

### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The background for this report is drawn from the Specification produced for the project (Drummond Murray, 2009).
- 1.3.2 March lies on a gravel island in the fens and, as such, has been a focus for settlement from prehistoric times onwards. The site itself lies outside the historic core of the town and the earliest O/S map from 1885 shows the site as undeveloped. A series of archaeological interventions have taken place close to the current site.
- 1.3.3 Most recently, an evaluation and subsequent excavation 300m to the north-east on Norwood Road revealed prehistoric and Roman activity (ECB 2346 & 3114). Whilst 300m to the south-west, ditches and a pit of probable prehistoric date were recorded during an evaluation at Yarrow Close (ECB 2501).
- 1.3.4 Further afield, Bronze Age and Roman activity was uncovered at Whitmoor Sidings to the north (ECB2014 – Hall 2004) and a Roman field system and Bronze Age settlement were found on the site of a new Highways depot off Hundred Road (ECB 2965). Evidence for Late Bronze Age to Middle Iron Age ritual activity and elements of an agricultural landscape were excavated at the Northern County Offices (ECB928). Further Roman finds are also recorded to the north and south-east of the site (HER 05909 and 05921).
- 1.3.5 Undated features were recorded at Melbourn Avenue (ECB2032) and a neolithic flint and a series of 19<sup>th</sup> century features were recorded along the route of an Anglian Water pipeline (ECB1992). To the south of the site Mesolithic and Neolithic finds were recovered from the other side of the river Nene (HER 08455/A and 10913/A).

- 1.3.6 Late medieval and post-medieval features were excavated at Grays Lane (ECB284), though nothing was revealed at the New March Library site (ECB286). Further post-medieval activity was uncovered at White Horse Public House (ECB409).
- 1.3.7 In summary there is potential for prehistoric and Roman activity on the site but the site was not occupied in the historic period until the late 19th/20th centuries.

#### **1.4 Acknowledgements**

- 1.4.1 The author would like to thank FE Peacock who commissioned and funded the project and Andy Thomas who monitored the archaeological works. The project was managed by James Drummond Murray. Chris Thatcher supervised the fieldwork with the assistance of Taleyna Fletcher. Taleyna Fletcher conducted the site survey.



## 2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The objective of this evaluation was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

### 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The Brief required that a total of four trenches be excavated (3 x 20m by 2m and 1 x 15m by 2m).
- 2.2.2 Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a wheeled JCB-type excavator using a toothless ditching bucket.
- 2.2.3 The site survey was carried out by Taleyna Fletcher using a Leica TPS 700 series TST.
- 2.2.4 Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds were retained for inspection, other than those which were obviously modern.
- 2.2.5 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA East's *pro-forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.
- 2.2.6 Two 20L environmental samples were taken from the features recorded in Trench 2.
- 2.2.7 Conditions on site were bright and dry. A significant level of modern make-up was recorded throughout Trench 4.

### 3 RESULTS

#### 3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below by trench.

#### 3.2 Trench 1

3.2.1 Trench 1 was located towards the northern limit of the excavation area aligned north-west to south-east. Several silty patches were noted within the trench but upon investigation these were found to be a mixture of root disturbance and natural variation in the underlying geology. No archaeological features were recorded within the trench.

#### 3.3 Trench 2

3.3.1 Trench 2 was aligned north-east to south-west, perpendicular to Trench 1 and adjoining it at its northern end.

3.3.2 Approximately 9m from the trenches southern end, a ditch, aligned east to west, was recorded traversing the trench (**103**). This feature was 1.12m in width and 0.38m deep with a V shaped profile and concave base. A single light grey silty clay deposit (**102**) was recorded filling the ditch , from which no finds were recovered.

3.3.3 At the southern limit of Trench 2 a second ditch, aligned north to south was recorded (**105**). In profile it was very similar to **103** albeit slightly smaller, at only 0.46m wide and 0.26m deep. A single sherd of pottery was recovered from the light grey silty clay deposit (**104**) recorded filling the ditch

#### 3.4 Trench 3

3.4.1 Trench 3 was located towards centre of the development area aligned north to south. As with Trench 1, a number of silty patches within the trench were noted but these were found to be a mixture of root disturbance and natural variation in the underlying geology. No archaeological features were recorded within the trench.

#### 3.5 Trench 4

3.5.1 Trench 1 was located towards the southern limit of the excavation area aligned north-west to south-east. This trench was located upon made ground and as a result the depth to natural deposits was significantly greater. Furthermore a high frequency of modern disturbance was recorded within this trench, which included a concrete foundation and associated trenching. No archaeological features were recorded within the trench.

#### 3.6 Finds Summary

3.6.1 A single fragment of pottery weighing 0.2 grams was recovered. This was dated to the Roman period.

#### 3.7 Environmental Summary

3.7.1 Two 20L bulk samples were taken from ditches **103** and **105**. Both samples proved to be atefactually and ecofactually sterile.

## 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

### 4.1 Conclusions

- 4.1.1 Two putative Roman ditches, that may have formed part of an enclosure, were recorded towards the centre of the development area during the evaluation.
- 4.1.2 No further archaeological features were recorded and significant levels of modern disturbance were recorded in the southern part of the development area.

### 4.2 Recommendations

- 4.2.1 Recommendations for any future work based upon this report will be made by the County Archaeology Office.

## APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
<b>General description</b>					<b>Orientation</b>	NW-SE
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying a natural of silty clay.					<b>Avg. depth (m)</b>	0.42
					<b>Width (m)</b>	1.6
					<b>Length (m)</b>	20
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
100	Layer	-	0.14	Topsoil	-	-
101	Layer	-	0.25	Subsoil	-	-
Trench 2						
<b>General description</b>					<b>Orientation</b>	NE-SW
Two shallow ditches recorded in trench, aligned perpendicular to one another					<b>Avg. depth (m)</b>	0.44
					<b>Width (m)</b>	1.6
					<b>Length (m)</b>	20
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
100	Layer		0.15	Topsoil		
101	Layer		0.26	Subsoil		
102	Fill	1.12	0.38			
103	Cut	1.12	0.38			
104	Fill	0.46	0.26		Pot sherd	Roman
105	Cut	0.46	0.26			
Trench 3						
<b>General description</b>					<b>Orientation</b>	NE-SW
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying a natural of silty clay.					<b>Avg. depth (m)</b>	0.42
					<b>Width (m)</b>	1.6
					<b>Length (m)</b>	20
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
100	Layer	-	0.26	Topsoil	-	-
101	Layer	-	0.16	Subsoil	-	-

<b>Trench 4</b>						
<b>General description</b>				<b>Orientation</b>	NW-SE	
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and significant modern disturbance and made ground overlying a natural of silty clay.				<b>Avg. depth (m)</b>	1	
				<b>Width (m)</b>	1.6	
				<b>Length (m)</b>	15	
<b>Contexts</b>						
<b>context no</b>	<b>type</b>	<b>Width (m)</b>	<b>Depth (m)</b>	<b>comment</b>	<b>finds</b>	<b>date</b>
106	Layer	-	0.21	Topsoil	-	-
107	Layer	-	0.12	Levelling Layer	-	-
108	Layer	-	0.1	Re-deposited topsoil		
109	Layer	-	0.07	Make up		
110	Layer	-	0.18	Re-deposited topsoil		
111	Layer	-	0.52	Make up		

## APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Drummond Murray, 2009 Specification for an Archaeological Evaluation at Land at Smith's  
James Chase, March
- Thomas, Andy 2009 Archaeological Brief for an Evaluation at Land at Smith's Chase,  
March

## APPENDIX C. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

### Project Details

OASIS Number	<input type="text" value="59779"/>		
Project Name	<input type="text" value="Roman Ditch at Smith's Chase, March"/>		
Project Dates (fieldwork) Start	<input type="text" value="28-04-2009"/>	Finish	<input type="text" value="29-04-2009"/>
Previous Work (by OA East)	<input type="text" value="No"/>	Future Work	<input type="text" value="No"/>

### Project Reference Codes

Site Code	<input type="text" value="MAR SMC 09"/>	Planning App. No.	<input type="text" value="F/YR07/0897/F"/>
HER No.	<input type="text" value="3170"/>	Related HER/OASIS No.	<input type="text"/>

### Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt	<input type="text" value="Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16"/>
Development Type	<input type="text" value="Rural Residential"/>

### Please select all techniques used:

<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - interpretation	<input type="checkbox"/> Grab-Sampling	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - new	<input type="checkbox"/> Gravity-Core	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sample Trenches
<input type="checkbox"/> Annotated Sketch	<input type="checkbox"/> Laser Scanning	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey/Recording Of Fabric/Structure
<input type="checkbox"/> Augering	<input type="checkbox"/> Measured Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Targeted Trenches
<input type="checkbox"/> Dendrochronological Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Metal Detectors	<input type="checkbox"/> Test Pits
<input type="checkbox"/> Documentary Search	<input type="checkbox"/> Phosphate Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Topographic Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Sampling	<input type="checkbox"/> Photogrammetric Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Vibro-core
<input type="checkbox"/> Fieldwalking	<input type="checkbox"/> Photographic Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Visual Inspection (Initial Site Visit)
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysical Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Rectified Photography	

### Monument Types/Significant Finds & Their Periods

List feature types using the [NMR Monument Type Thesaurus](#) and significant finds using the [MDA Object type Thesaurus](#) together with their respective periods. If no features/finds were found, please state "none".

Monument	Period	Object	Period
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="Select period..."/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="Select period..."/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="Select period..."/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="Select period..."/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="Select period..."/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="Select period..."/>

### Project Location

County	<input type="text" value="Cambridgeshire"/>	Site Address (including postcode if possible)
District	<input type="text" value="March"/>	<input type="text" value="Smith's Chase,&lt;br/&gt;March,&lt;br/&gt;Cambridgeshire"/>
Parish	<input type="text" value="March"/>	
HER	<input type="text" value="3170"/>	
Study Area	<input type="text" value="0.1ha"/>	National Grid Reference
		<input type="text" value="TL 4090 9754"/>

### Project Originators

Organisation	OA EAST
Project Brief Originator	Andy Thomas
Project Design Originator	James Drummond Murray
Project Manager	James Drummond Murray
Supervisor	Chris Thatcher

### Project Archives

Physical Archive	Digital Archive	Paper Archive
OA East	OA East	OA East

### Archive Contents/Media

	Physical Contents	Digital Contents	Paper Contents
Animal Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ceramics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Glass	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leather	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Metal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stratigraphic		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Survey		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Textiles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wood	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Bone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Stone/Lithic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>




Digital Media	Paper Media
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Database	<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photos
<input type="checkbox"/> GIS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Context Sheet
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Correspondence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Images	<input type="checkbox"/> Diary
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Illustrations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Drawing
<input type="checkbox"/> Moving Image	<input type="checkbox"/> Manuscript
<input type="checkbox"/> Spreadsheets	<input type="checkbox"/> Map
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Matrices
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Text	<input type="checkbox"/> Microfilm
<input type="checkbox"/> Virtual Reality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Misc.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Research/Notes
	<input type="checkbox"/> Photos
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Plans
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Report
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sections
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Survey

**Notes:**



## Drawing Conventions

### Plans

Limit of Excavation	_____
Deposit - Conjectured	-----
Natural Features	_____
Sondages/Machine Strip	- - - - -
Intrusion/Truncation	.....
Illustrated Section	<u>S.14</u>
Archaeological Deposit	
Excavated Slot	
Modern Deposit	
Cut Number	<b>118</b>

### Sections

Limit of Excavation	-----
Cut	_____
Cut-Conjectured	-----
Deposit Horizon	_____
Deposit Horizon - Conjectured	-----
Intrusion/Truncation	.....
Top Surface/Top of Natural	_____
Break in Section/ Limit of Section Drawing	- - - - -
Cut Number	<b>118</b>
Deposit Number	117
Ordnance Datum	18.45m OD ^
Inclusions	Q
Charcoal	#

### Convention Key



Figure 1: Location of site showing the development area (red)

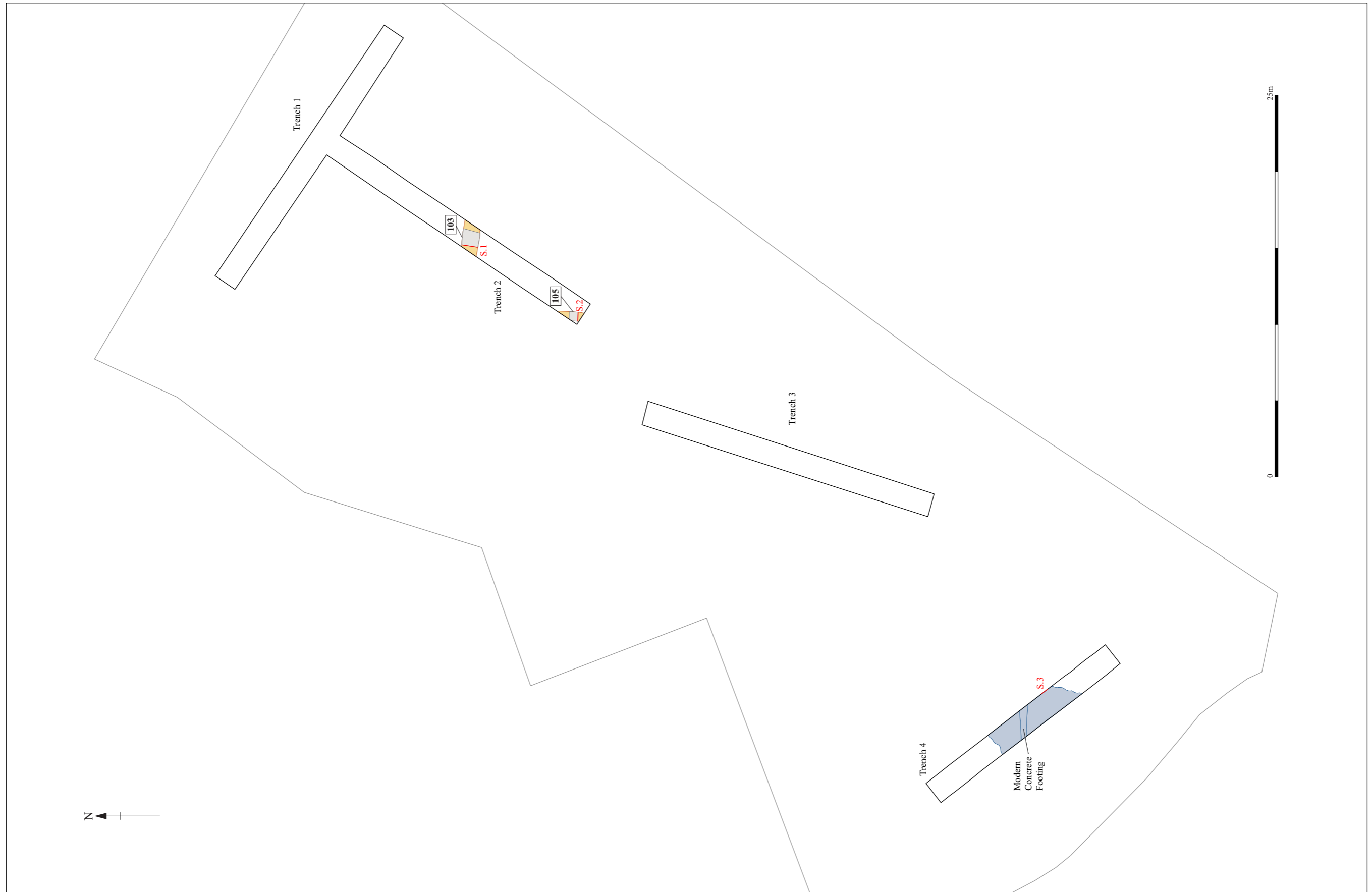


Figure 2: Trench plan (at 1:250)

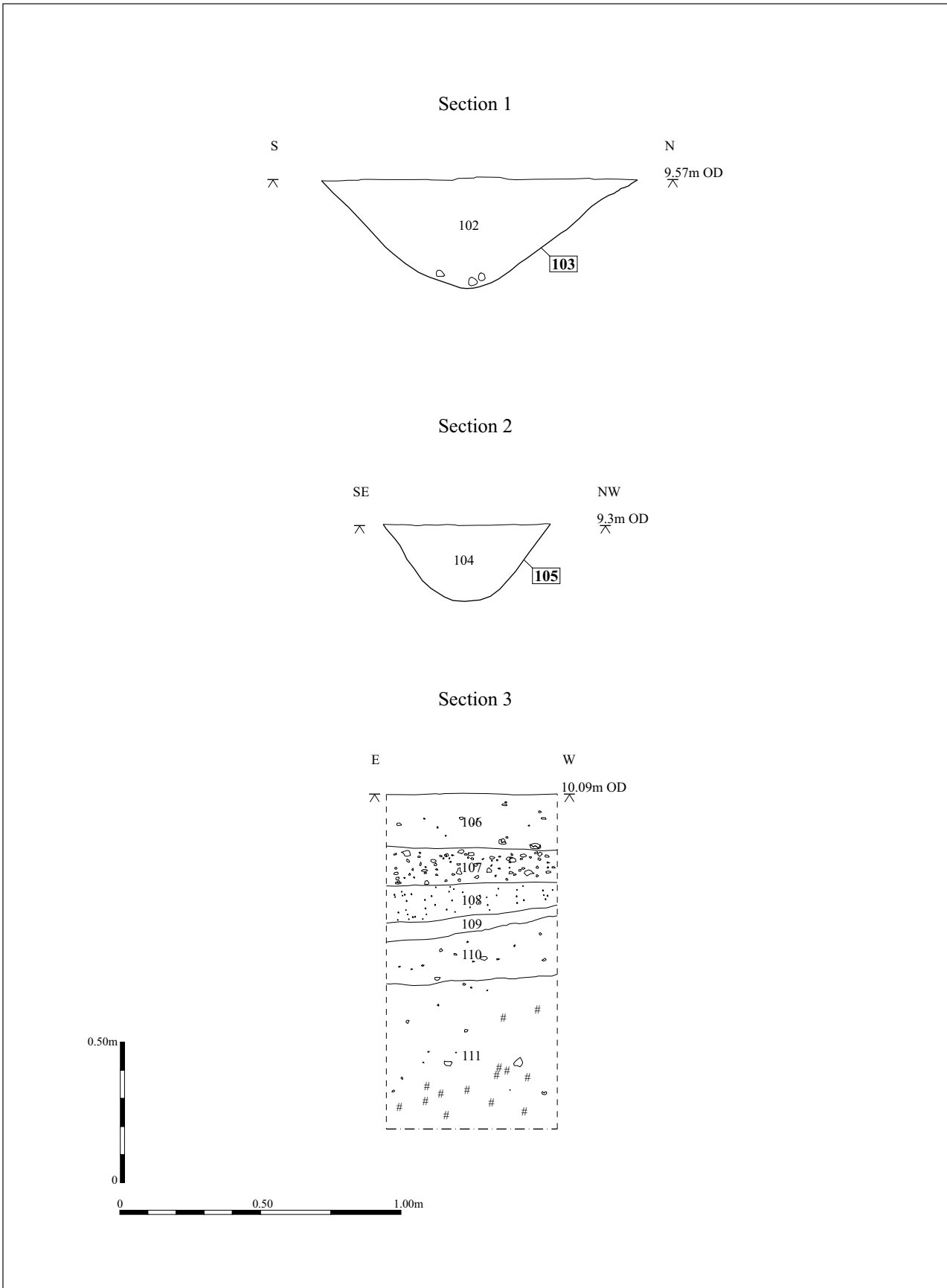


Figure 3: Ditch sections and soil profile (at 1:20)



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