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# Nos 15/17 Llewelyn Street Aberffraw

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## Archaeological Evaluation 2006

**GAT Project No. 1875**

**Report No. 649**

**August 2006**

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## **Archaeological Evaluation**

**Report No. 649**

**Prepared for Cymdeithas Tai Eryri**

**August 2006**

**By**

**John Roberts**

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# Nos 15/17 Llewelyn Street Aberffraw

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## AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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## **Nos 15/17, Llewelyn Street, Aberffraw (G1875): Archaeological Evaluation**

*An archaeological evaluation has been conducted at the former location of Nos. 15 to 17 Llewelyn Street, Aberffraw, in advance of a proposed development. Aberffraw was one of the most important medieval royal settlements in Gwynedd and previous archaeological work in the village has revealed evidence for medieval field boundaries and a possible Roman fort. The evaluation did not reveal any evidence of the Romano-British or Medieval periods and was limited to post-medieval activity associated with the former buildings. A watching brief is recommended during initial groundworks to address the potential for any evidence of boundary ditches, medieval or earlier and any other buried archaeology that may be present beyond the sample areas excavated.*

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Cymdeithas Tai Eryri has commissioned Gwynedd Archaeological Trust to undertake an archaeological evaluation in advance of the development of the former location of Nos 15 to 17 Llewelyn Street, Aberffraw (Figure 1). The proposed development includes plans to construct five terraced houses fronting Llewelyn Street with gardens and parking to the rear. The development footprint covers an area of c.850m<sup>2</sup> and is shown on drawing no. D065/01 and accompanying planning application 10C93/CA.

Numbers 15 to 17 Llewelyn Street comprised a small terrace of nineteenth century stone-built buildings and a single-storey cottage (of probable eighteenth century date), which were demolished in April 2006. An archaeological assessment was undertaken by the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust prior to this in August 2005 (GAT Report No. 598), which provided a written and photographic record of the development site. It was felt that there was potential for undisturbed Medieval remains due to the close proximity of a substantial defensive bank and ditch enclosure c. 35m south of the proposed development. The alignment and extent of the enclosure has been postulated to be the remains of a Roman auxiliary fort or Early Medieval *llys* (*ibid.*). Moreover, a trial excavation was undertaken in 1974 in the area to the east of the proposed development, which identified Medieval boundary ditches aligned north-south.

An archaeological evaluation was conducted at the Cross Keys Garage Site across the road from the proposed development (GAT Report No. 620). Two evaluation trenches were opened and a shallow ditch was identified in the easternmost trench. No dating evidence was found and the origin of the feature was uncertain (*ibid.*).

### **2.0 SPECIFICATION AND PROJECT DESIGN**

Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Services prepared a Brief for this project (Reference: D991; Appendix I). A project design was prepared conforming to the requirements specified within the Brief, and in the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation* (Institute of Field Archaeologists, 1995, rev. 1999).

### **3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AIMS**

The aim of the evaluation was to build upon knowledge obtained from previous assessments and findings by using trial trenching to determine the presence or absence of archaeological remains and to assess their extent and significance. The known archaeological remains were used both to help determine the likely location of, and the character of, new archaeological findings. Particular attention was paid to the likelihood of Medieval settlement activity.

The archaeological evaluation was undertaken on the 8<sup>th</sup> August 2006 when four trenches were opened within the enclosed plot of land (Figure 1).

### **4.0 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

The village of Aberffraw is located in southwest Anglesey on the west bank of Afon Ffraw. The site is located to the north of the main square on the western side of Llewelyn Street.

The history of Aberffraw is focused mainly on its importance as the centre of the royal estate (a *llys* and *maerdref*) of the Princes of Gwynedd in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Following the Edwardian Conquest, the former *maerdref* was leased to major landholders before being sold off in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century (GAT Report No. 614, 3). The village began to take shape during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, centred on Bodorgan Square, with further development, in the form of new housing, taking place over the next two centuries. The former structures within the development site (Nos. 15 to 17 Llewelyn Street), were probably built around the middle of the nineteenth century, perhaps in the decade after 1850 (GAT Report 598: 10)

A series of excavations were undertaken in Aberffraw by the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust between 1974 and 1979, from which the location of a Roman defensive enclosure was postulated in the centre of the village (*ibid.*). Other excavations during this period revealed evidence of Medieval property boundaries located at various points east of Chapel Street and Church Street, as well as the area to the immediate south of the development area. The ditches measured between 0.50m and 0.80m in width and were up to 0.80m in depth (White and Longley, 1995, 19). It was suggested, from 13<sup>th</sup> Century pottery recovered from one of the examples, that the boundary ditches had been laid out during this period, placing them in the context of the Edwardian Conquest (*ibid.*, 20). The ditches excavated to the south of the development area were orientated north to south and east to west and a single sherd of Roman Samian ware was recovered from the east-west ditch. The sherd was thought to be redeposited (*ibid.*).

Further work was undertaken on different sites in the village in 1987 and 1988, with the latter, at 40 Church Street, suggesting further evidence of boundary ditches. The Medieval *llys* has not been excavated but its location has been identified as north of St. Beuno's Church and therefore at some distance to the southwest of the evaluation area.

## **5.0 EVALUATION RESULTS**

### **5.1 Methodology**

The project took place on the 8<sup>th</sup> August 2006.

Four trenches were opened using a 180° wheeled excavator. The trench locations were designed to provide a 5% sample of the development area, concentrating on the footprint of the proposed new buildings. Topsoil and unwanted material overlying the archaeological remains were removed by machine. All subsequent features were excavated by hand.

Trench size is expressed in square metres. The dimensions of deposits and features are expressed in metres. The dimensions of structural stonework are expressed in millimetres.

For the location and orientation of individual trenches, see Figure 1.

### **5.2 Recording**

Identified features were recorded photographically and by notes, sketches and plans, and were located by measuring from the local boundaries.

The archive is held by GAT under the project number **G1875** and will eventually be deposited at Oriel Ynys Môn, Llangefni

### **5.3 Summary site narrative by trench**

#### **Trench 1**

Size: 16.96m<sup>2</sup>

#### *Description:*

Trench 1 was located at the eastern end of the site across what would have been Numbers 16 and 17 Llewelyn Street and a small alley which separated the two houses. It was unclear, prior to the evaluation, how much of the properties had survived at foundation level (Plate 1). There was limited archaeological activity within the trench: the surface comprised a 0.14 to 0.30m thick deposit of

building rubble created during the demolition of Number 16 (Context 101; Figure 3; Plate 2). Directly below this deposit, at the central and northern end of the trench, was glacial boulder clay. At the southern end of the trench, below the demolition layer, was a 0.90m wide cut, which was filled with irregular sized sub-angular stones bonded by clay (The use of clay bonding for the now demolished structures was noted during the assessment phase (GAT Report No.: 598: 10)). The cut was extant to a depth of 0.20m and was truncated.

*Interpretation:*

The feature at the southern end of the trench was identified as a foundation cut associated with Number 17 Llewelyn Street. It appeared from the available map evidence that the cut was on a similar alignment to the north elevation of Number 17 (see Figure 2). There was no other archaeological activity within the trench.

## **Trench 2**

Size: 16.64m<sup>2</sup>

*Description:*

Trench 2 was located towards the southern end of the site, across what would have been the location of Number 17 Llewelyn Street, incorporating the south end of the house and the rear of the property (Figure 1). There was a distinctive east to west slope running across the site and the trench was positioned along this slope. The majority of the trench was filled by demolition/levelling material (Context 201) similar to that identified in Trench 1 (*q.v.*). This deposit was deeper at the western and central portion of the trench. It was extant to a depth of 0.75m and was mixed with what appeared to be garden soil disturbed during the demolition process. This deposit became thinner towards the eastern end of the trench and was above a thin mortar-rich deposit, 0.18m thick, which was also part of the demolition process. Directly below the mortar layer was the glacial boulder clay. At the western end of the trench the demolition deposit covered a buried soil. The buried soil was extant to a depth of 0.20m and was identified as the remnants of gardening area at the rear of the property. Below this buried soil was a cut, 0.20m wide (Figure 4; Plates 5 and 6). The cut was filled by a large amount of sub-rounded stones and was orientated north to south. The feature was identified as a field drain. Another drain was identified towards the centre of the trench on a similar alignment (Figure 4). This drain differed in containing a ceramic drain pipe. Both drains cut the glacial boulder clay. There were no other features.

*Interpretation:*

The trench contained evidence of post-medieval drainage activity associated with the occupancy of Number 17 Llewelyn Street. The full extent of the drains was not identified within the confines of the trench but were assumed to feed in to a larger drainage system outside of the development area. The buried soil at the western end of the trench may have been truncated due to the large amount of garden soil present in the demolition deposit, becoming mixed into this deposit as the property was being levelled.

## **Trench 3**

Size: 12.80m<sup>2</sup>

*Description:*

This trench was located towards the centre of the development area, across the east-west slope and incorporating part of Number 15 Llewelyn Street and an open area (Figure 2). The trench was very shallow: there were no deposits and the glacial boulder clay was exposed immediately, showing that the demolition/levelling of this area had removed all traces of the houses and the associated open areas. There were no archaeological features.

*Interpretation:*

The trench was archaeologically sterile.

## **Trench 4**

Size: 16.00m<sup>2</sup>

*Description:*

This trench was located at the southwest corner of the site, across what would have been a former outbuilding and an open area to the rear of the Llewelyn Street properties. A large pit or “scoop” was identified in the centre of the trench, c.4.0m long and 1.12m wide (Figure 5). The pit was below a 0.40m thick deposit of demolition/levelling material. The function of the pit was rather unclear but it had very regular sides. It may have been created during the demolition process by a machine bucket, but the fill was an undisturbed sandy loam akin to garden soil, rather than a demolition fill. Equally, it did not appear to be a refuse pit or a cesspit. South of this feature was a 0.40m wide pit full of charcoal and ash. The pit was shallow: c.0.70m deep, although it was truncated slightly when the trench was

opened. Both pits cut the glacial boulder clay. There were no other archaeological features within the confines of the trench.

*Interpretation:*

Although the function of the two features within the trench were unclear, they were both interpreted as post-medieval in origin and associated with the occupancy of the buildings within the study area.

## **6.0 CONCLUSION**

The archaeological evidence within the proposed development area was limited to post-medieval activity associated with the former properties along Llewelyn Street. There was no apparent evidence for Medieval activity within the site. There was limited evidence for foundation level activity associated with the buildings, with the only example being the north-facing elevation from Number 17, which was extant as a very truncated cut filled with clay bonded stone. It appeared that the properties were built directly onto the glacial boulder clay without any deep foundations.

Although the results from the trenches appear to rule out any extensive medieval settlement or other activity, the limited area investigated means that there is still the potential for the presence of small linear boundary features such as those discovered within the local area during earlier archaeological investigations. Such features would be expected to be of limited size, based on previous evidence. A watching brief is, therefore, recommended during initial foundation work/groundworks in order to identify and record such features, if they are present.

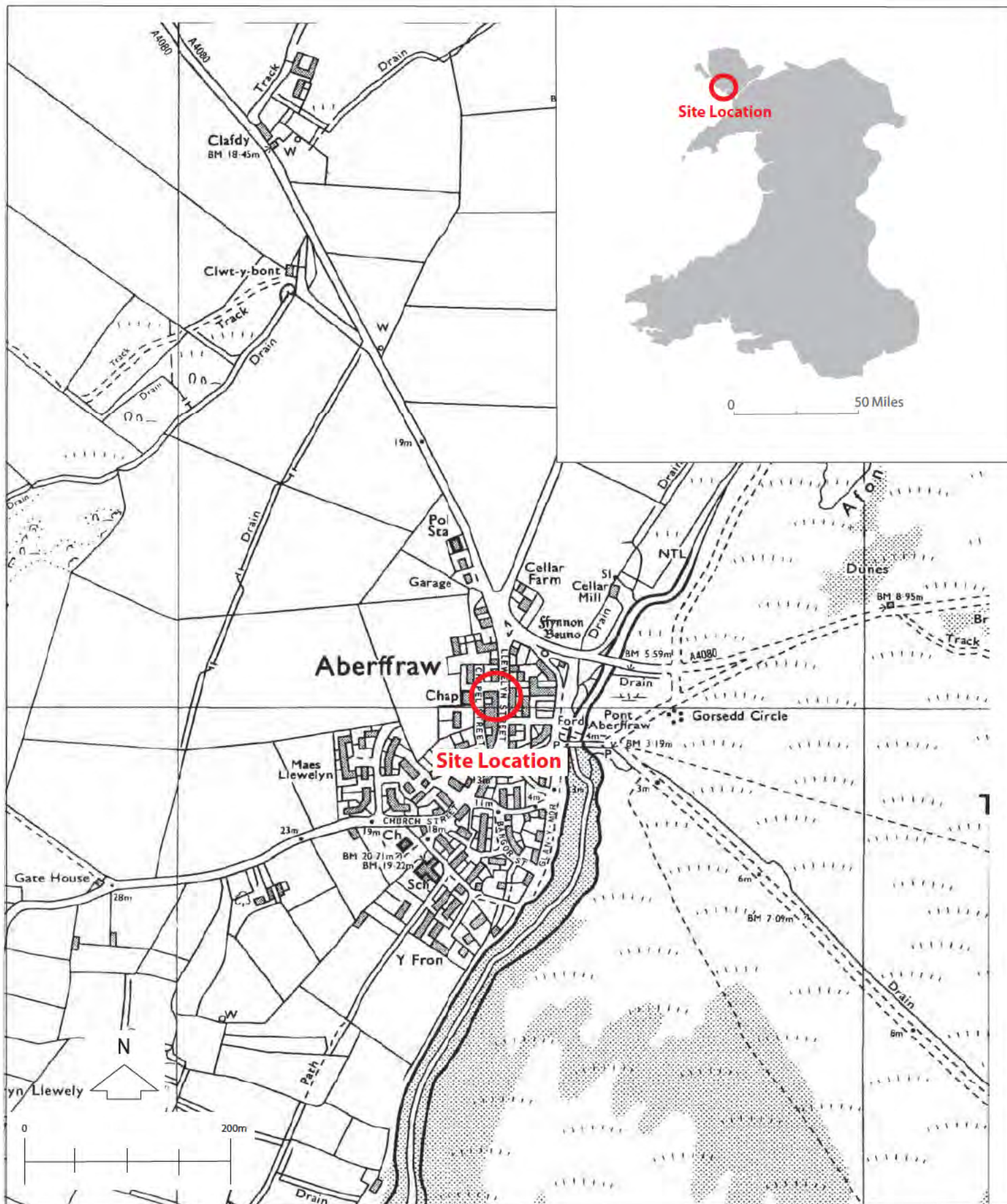


#### **4 REFERENCES**

Longley, D., 2005, 'Nos. 15/17 Llewelyn Street Aberffraw'. GAT Report: 598 Project No. G1875.

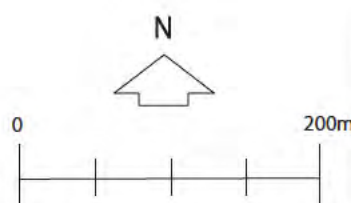
Roberts, J. A., 2005, 'Cross Keys Development Aberffraw'. GAT Report: 614 Project No. G1894.

White, R.B. and Longley, D. 1995. Excavations at Aberffraw. *Transactions of the Anglesey Antiquarian Society and Field Club*: 13-21.



0 50 Miles

**Site Location**



TWYFODOLAUH  
MICHAEL J. J. J.  
GWYNEDD

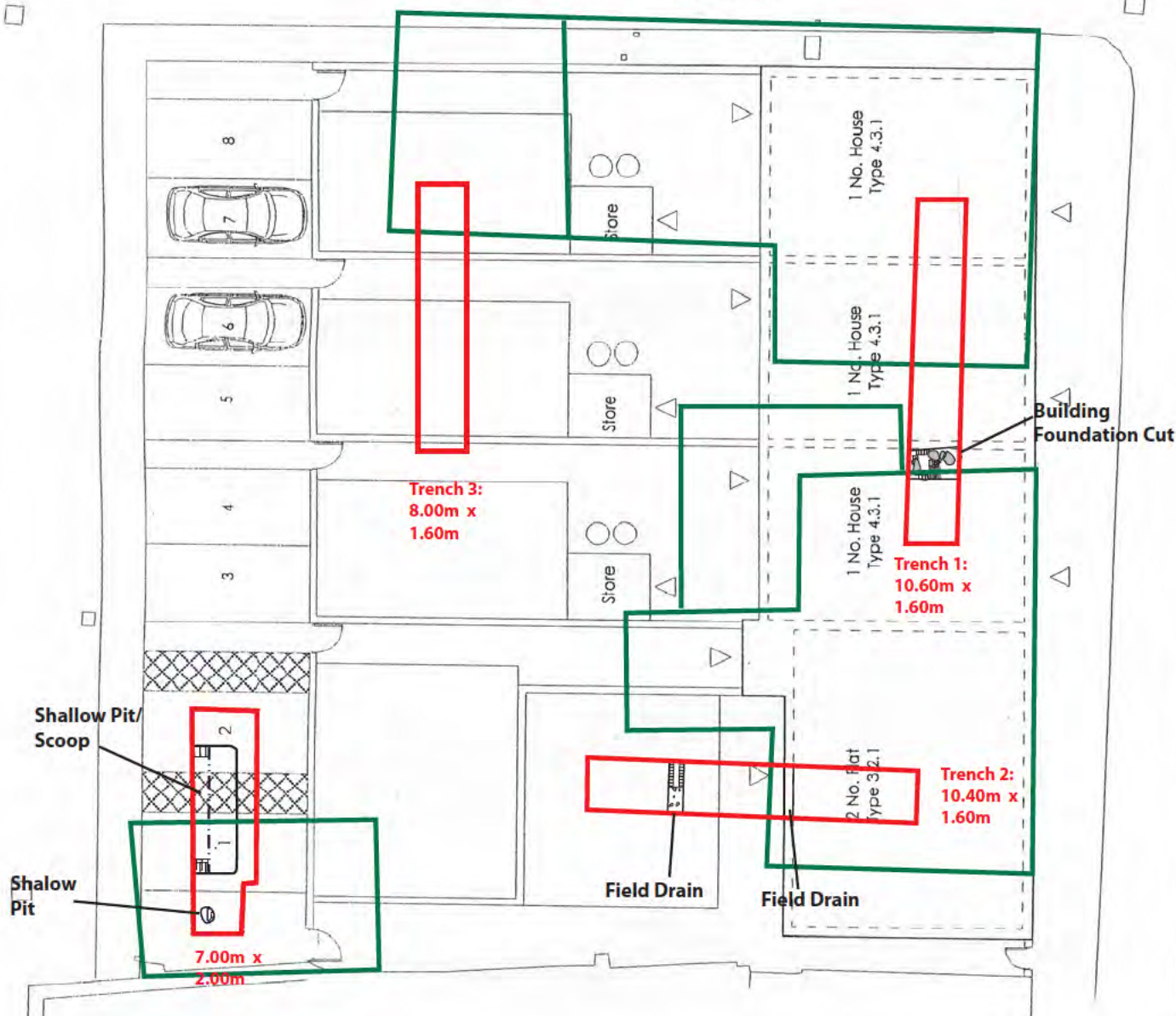


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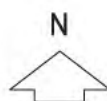
**Figure 1: Location Map**  
**Scale: 1:5000@A4**

# CHAPEL STREET



## Key

- Trench
- Former Building Outline



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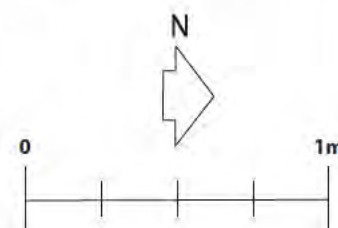
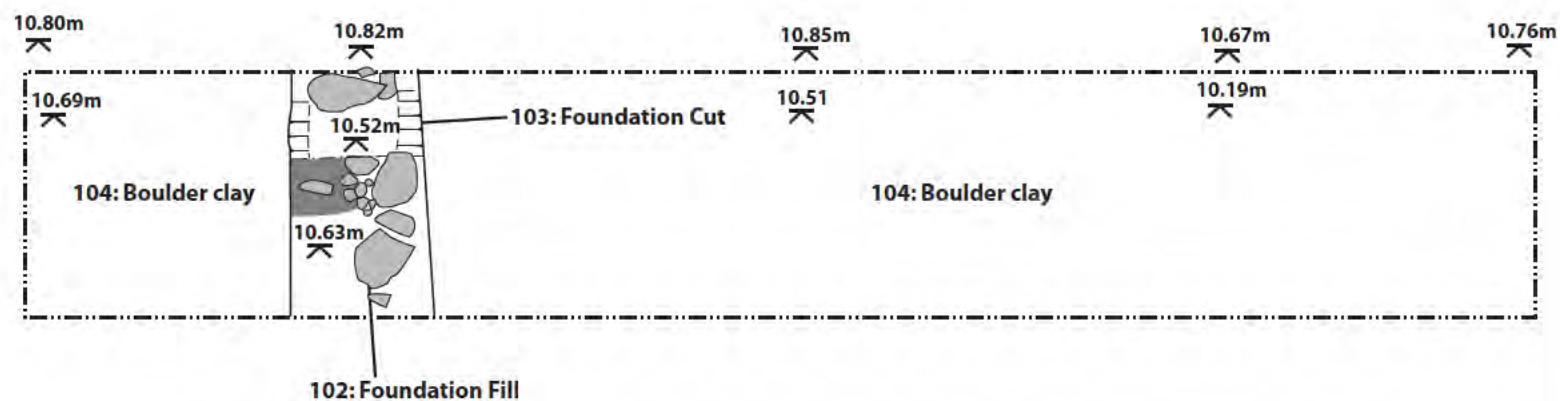
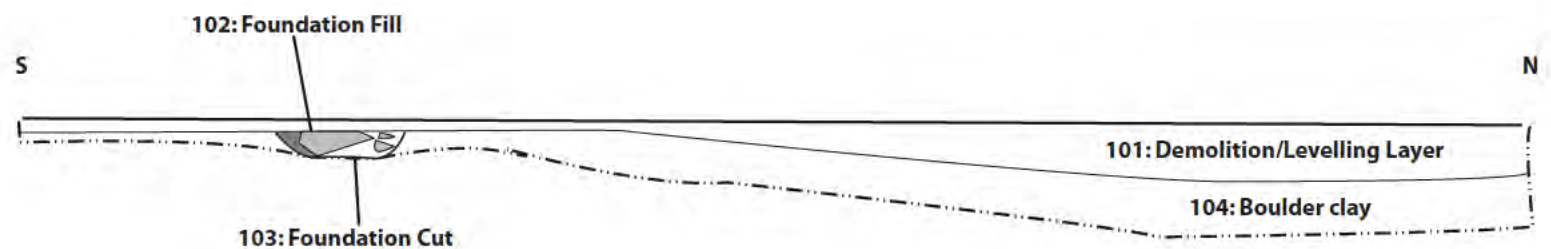
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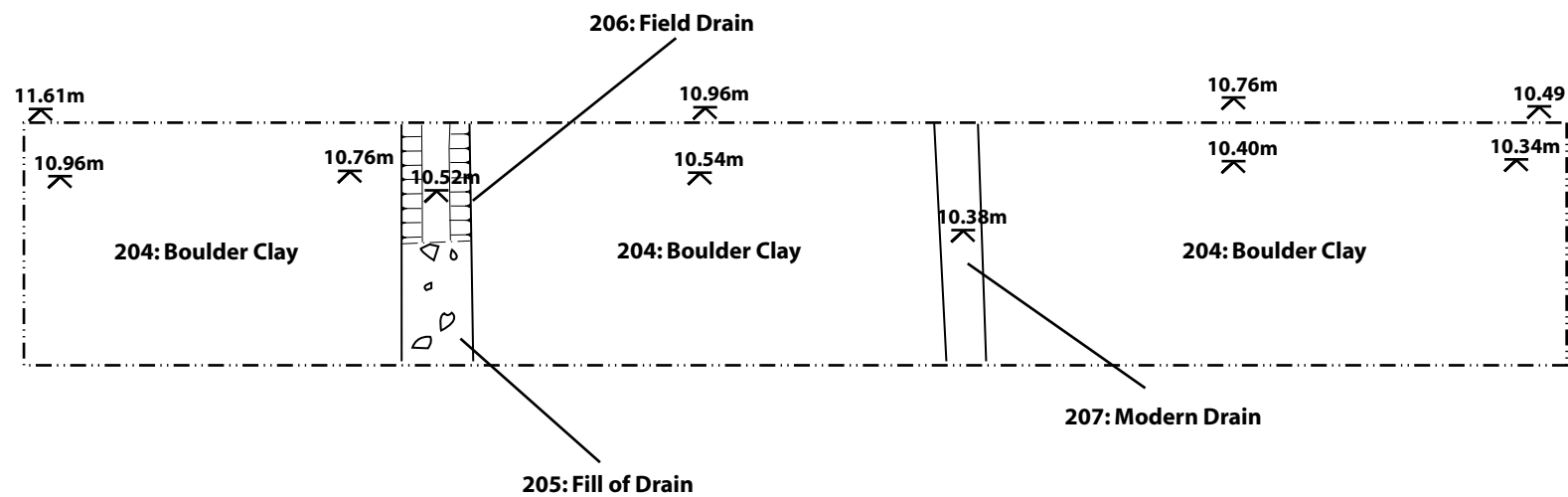
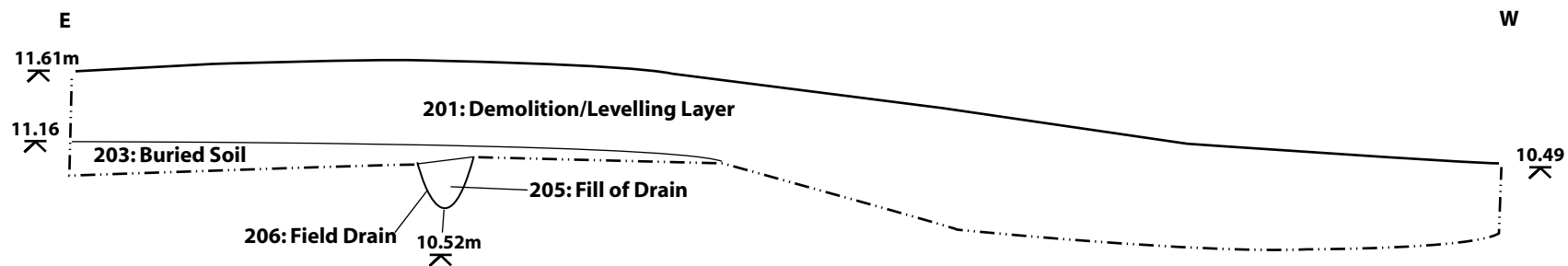
**Figure 2: Trench Layout**  
**Scale 1:200@A4**

(Drawing Based on Proposed Site layout Drawing: 4500/(90)/01/A)

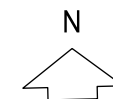




**Figure 3: Trench 1**  
**Scale 1:50@A4**



Stones



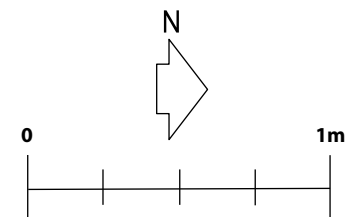
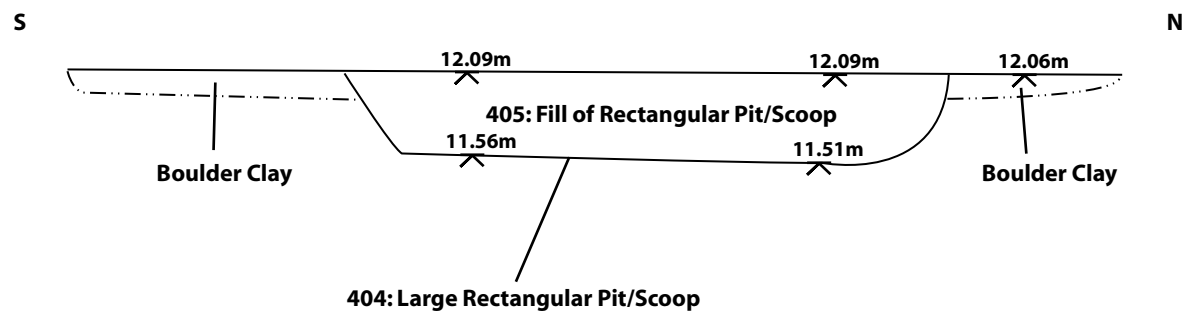
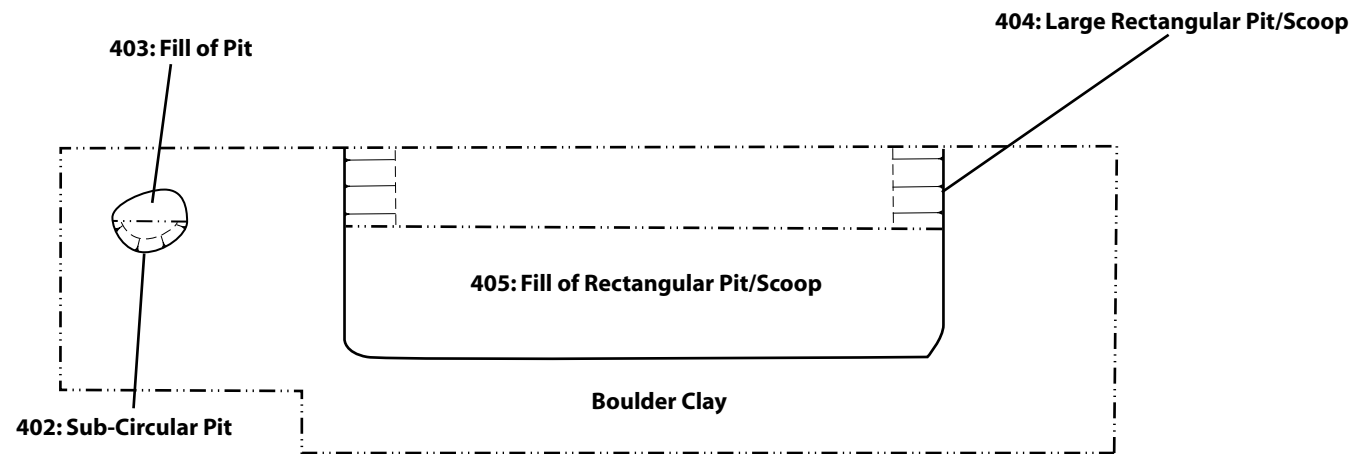
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**Figure 4: Trench 2**  
**Scale: 1:50@A4**



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**Figure 5: Trench 4**  
**Scale 1:50@A4**



**Plate 1: Evaluation area prior to the opening of Trenches 1 to 4**



**Plate 2: Trench 1: View South**





**Plate 3: Trench 1: View Southeast**



**Plate 4: Trench 1: Close-up of Foundation Cut**





Plate 5: Trench 2: View East



Plate 6: Trench 2: Field Drain: South-Facing Section Detailing Fill





Plate 7: Trench 3: View South



Plate 8: Trench 3: View North





Plate 9: Trench 4: View Northwest: Detail of Large Pit/Scoop

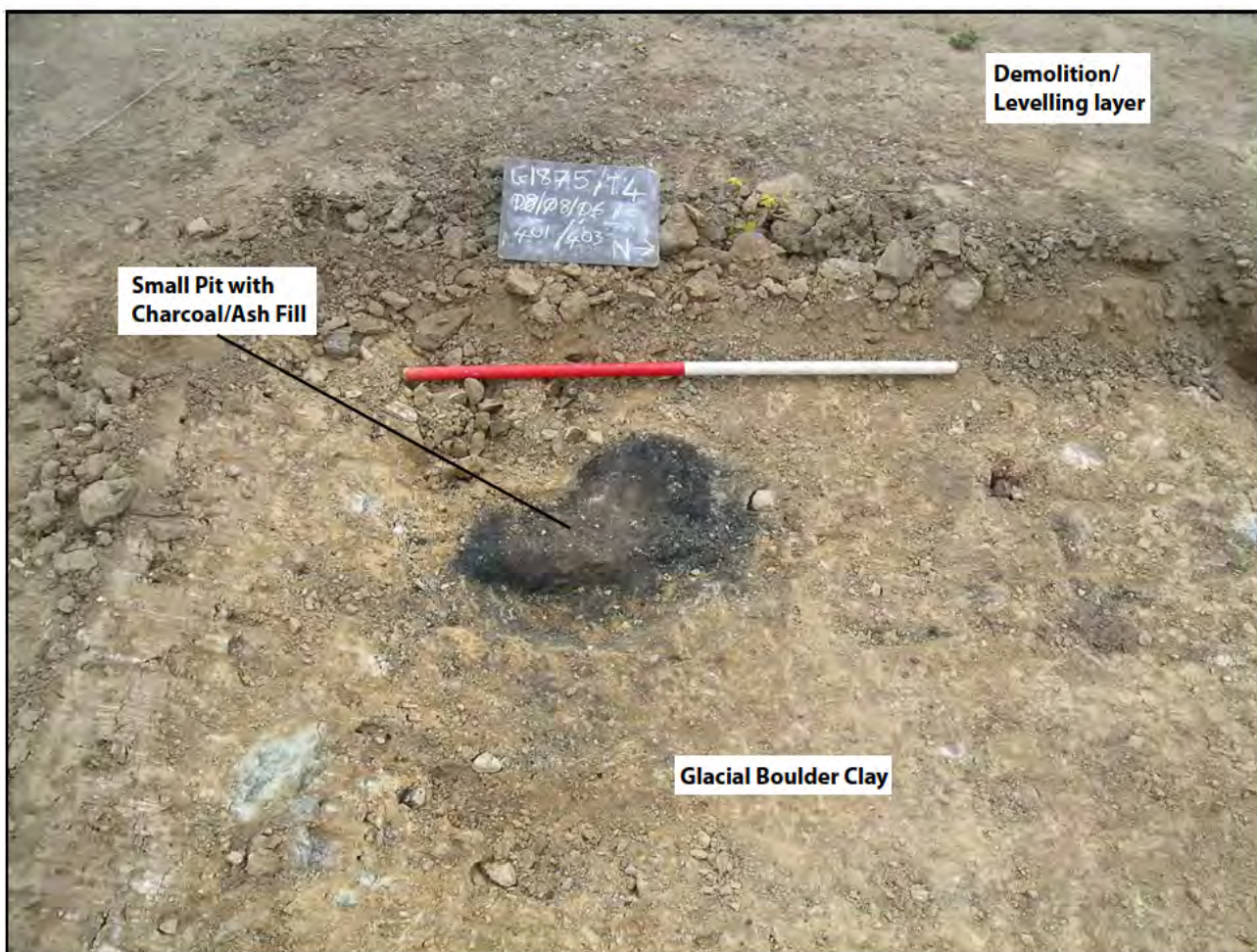


Plate 10: Trench 4: View West: Detail of Small Pit





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