



Archaeological Evaluation of Land at Siskin Close, Hawkinge, Folkestone, Kent *February 2011*

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Archaeological Evaluation of Land at Siskin Close, Hawkinge, Folkestone, Kent

NGR 620502 139748
Site Code: SCH 11
(Planning Application Y10/0531/SH)

Report for
Jenners (Construction) Ltd

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Contents

List of Figures.....	3
List of Plates.....	3
Summary.....	4
Introduction.....	4
Site Description and Topography.....	4
Planning Background.....	5
Archaeological and Historical Background.....	5
Aims and Objectives.....	7
Methodology.....	7
Monitoring.....	7
Results.....	7
Finds.....	10
Discussion.....	10
Conclusion.....	10
Acknowledgements.....	11
References.....	11
Appendix.....	13

List of Figures

Fig. 1 Location of evaluation trenches within development site

Fig. 2 Approximate location of WWII Aerodrome structures

Fig. 3 Trench Plans

Fig. 4 Sections

Fig. 5 Sections

Fig. 6 Sections

Fig. 7 Sections

List of Plates

Pl. 1 Trench 7- Oblique view, 1m scale, looking northwest

Pl. 2 Trench 10 – Overburden (002), 1m scale, looking southeast

Pl. 3 Trench 9 – Concrete base/surface (006), 1m scale, looking
northeast

Pl. 4 Plan of RAF Hawkinge from *Battle of Britain-Then and Now*

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SUMMARY

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) carried out an archaeological evaluation of land at Siskin Close, Hawkinge, Folkestone, Kent. A planning application (Y10/0531/SH) for the construction of 50 dwellings with associated access roads, car parking, woodland open space and landscaped buffer strips was submitted to Shepway District Council whereby the Council requested that an Archaeological Evaluation be undertaken in order to determine the possible impact of the development on any archaeological remains. The work was carried out in accordance with the requirements set out within an Archaeological Specification (KCC 2010) and in discussion with the Archaeological Heritage Officer for Kent County Council.

The Archaeological Evaluation consisted of eleven trenches which encountered only modern features possibly relating to the area's use as an aerodrome during WWII. These features consisted of concrete bases or surfaces edged in brick in trenches 7, 9 and 10. The Archaeological Evaluation has therefore been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Specification.

INTRODUCTION

Swale and Thanet Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) was commissioned by Jenners (Construction) Ltd to carry out an archaeological evaluation at the above site. The work was carried out in accordance with the requirements set out within an Archaeological Specification (KCC 2010) and in discussion with the Archaeological Heritage Officer, Kent County Council. The evaluation was carried out between the 22nd and the 25th of February 2011.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND TOPOGRAPHY

The development area is situated on the western edge of Hawkinge on a corner plot bordering Siskin Close and Paddlesworth lane. New housing on the site of RAF Hawkinge lies west of the site and a disused sewage works lies to the north. The area is also surrounded by paddocks and derelict land once housing the Officers' Mess and other military facilities, also earmarked for housing, to the south. The site is approximately 160m above Ordnance Datum, and the British Geological Survey records the area as lying on a deposit of Clay with Flint which overlies Middle Chalk of the New Pit Chalk Formation. Clay with Flint was found in

many of the trenches, but overlying this was a deposit of mid orange brown clay silt drift or colluvium. The site has been used for the tipping of soils, both legally and illegally, and the central area contained over 1.55m of modern overburden which covered concrete bases for structures possibly associated with RAF Hawkinge. The periphery of the site was mainly untouched, with the trenches reaching the natural Clay with Flint at approximately 0.55m below the modern ground surface in Trench 1 to the north and 0.25m to the overlying drift deposit in Trench 5 to the south.

PLANNING BACKGROUND

Planning consent for the scheme of works (Y10/0531/SH) consisting of 50 houses and associated access roads, parking and amenities was granted by Shepway District Council. The Council requested that an archaeological evaluation be undertaken in order to determine the possible impact the development may have on any archaeological remains. The Local Planning Authority placed the following condition on the planning consent:

'No development shall take place until the applicant, or the developer, or successor(s) in title has secured; firstly, the implementation of an archaeological evaluation of the site, to be undertaken for the purpose of determining the presence or absence of any buried archaeological features and deposits, and to assess the importance of the same; secondly, implementation of any mitigation measures, including further archaeological work that may be required as a result of the evaluation to safeguard the preservation of the archaeological remains; and, thirdly a programme of post-excavation analysis and recording of any matters of archaeological interest. All archaeological works shall be carried out in accordance with written programmes and schemes of work that have been first submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.'

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The western area of Hawkinge, where the development site was located, was relatively devoid of buildings until after 1915 when the British War Office began looking for suitable locations near the Channel for aerodromes. One site was an area of land called Megone's Field, owned by Lord Radnor. Renamed Folkestone Field, the aerodrome, fitted with temporary buildings, was used to ferry planes to France. By 1917 the temporary structures were replaced with Belfast hangars, and a number of administration buildings were built. In 1923 Hawkinge became part of a larger expansion programme that saw the construction of new hangars, operational buildings and a water and telephone supply. Further growth beyond Megone's Field occurred around the early 1920s. With the outbreak of WWII, RAF Hawkinge

became No. 3 Training Station Pool, training hundreds of pilots. 1939 saw the arrival of the first Hurricanes with No. 3 Squadron. By 1940, with increasing hostility on the Continent, RAF Hawkinge was deemed too dangerous to carry on as a training base and was handed over to Fighter Command in February 1940. On December 8, 1958, after serving a crucial part in the Battle of Britain, RAF Hawkinge was officially decommissioned. The Ministry of Defence put much of the land up for auction in 1964, and eventually housing estates filled the areas once housing hangars, runways and administration buildings. Recent archaeological mitigation work in advance of development 400m southeast of Siskin Close has revealed both Iron Age and Roman activity.

HER summary within a 500m radius of the Development Area

All the entries for the HER are from the area's use during WWII as an airbase.

TR 23 NW 217 – MKE 17979

Officers' Mess – Brick neo-Georgian style Officers' Mess built during the expansion of the aerodrome in the 1930's. Now demolished to make way for development.

TR 23 NW 245 – MKE 17980

Perimeter track at Hawkinge Airfield – Remains of a concrete perimeter track surrounding the airfield.

TR 23 NW 246 – MKE 18289

Former Armoury at Hawkinge Airfield – Brick built armoury most likely constructed during the 1930s and now part of the Battle of Britain Museum.

TR 23 NW 247 – MKE 18290

Operations Block at Hawkinge Airfield – Now part of the Battle of Britain Museum.

TR 23 NW 248 – MKE 18291

Type 22 Pillbox at Hawkinge Airfield – One of a number of brick pill boxes built throughout the airfield and next to the former Operations Block.

TR 23 NW 249 – MKE 18292

'B' Flight Dispersal Hut at Hawkinge Airfield – A corrugated iron Nissan hut moved from its original location near Killing Wood and now standing at the Battle of Britain Museum.

TR 23 NW 254 – MKE 18297

Pickett Hamilton Fort – One of four Pickett Hamilton forts built on the airfield and moved from its (unknown) original location and now sited at the Battle of Britain Museum. The design consisted of two pre-cast concrete pipes, one sliding within the other, with one end of each being closed.

TR 23 NW 541 – MKE 39089

Pillbox

TR23 NW 542 – MKE 39090

Pillbox

TR 23 NW 521 – MKE

Pillbox (Air Ministry Pattern) – Type 22 pillbox now incorporated into the Battle of Britain Museum

TR 23 NW 517 – MKE 39584

Sector 3 Pillbox southeast of Paddlesworth village.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the evaluation, as set out within the Archaeological Specification (2010) was:

- 'to determine whether any significant archaeological remains survive on the site
- to ascertain the extent, depth below ground surface, depth of deposit, character, significance and condition of any archaeological remains on site.'

METHODOLOGY

Trial trenching was carried out on 22 February 2011 with the excavation of eleven trenches. Due to a large area set aside for hibernating wildlife by the conservation officer to the west of the site, north and south of the site entrance, one trench had to be abandoned. Surrounding trenches were altered to incorporate as much area near to the hibernation zone as possible. The hibernation zone is shown on the trench plan, (Figure 2). Excavation was carried out using a tracked 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, removing the overburden to the top of the first recognisable archaeological horizon or natural geology, under the constant supervision of an experienced archaeologist. All trenches measured 1.80m wide and most ran 25m long except for Trench 4 which had to be shortened due to Health and Safety concerns as the amount of loose overburden and debris dumped in the area made the ground conditions very unstable. Trenches were positioned to evaluate areas relatively untouched by tipping around the perimeter of the site and also areas in the centre of the site mounded high with a number of tipped deposits.

All work was carried out in accordance with the specification, and a single context recording system was implemented. Contexts numbers are shown in bold in this report.

MONITORING

No curatorial monitoring was carried out during the course of the evaluation.

RESULTS

All trenches were covered with either topsoil (001) or modern overburden (002). Trenches on the periphery (Trenches 1,2,3,4,5,6,and 11) of the site were significantly more shallow than the central trenches that cut through deep deposits of modern overburden. Trenches 7, 9, and 10 exposed the concrete bases (006) of buildings possibly associated with RAF Hawkinge. The Ordnance Survey 4th Edition map shows a number of buildings on the site in the southern half of the development area. (Fig.2) The overburden and topsoil covered in many trenches a mid orange brown clay silt drift deposit/colluvium (004) which sealed the natural geology of Clay with Flint (005).

Trench 1

(24.27m x 1.80m x <0.60m)

Trench 1 was sited at the extreme north end of the development site and was aligned north-south. No dipping of overburden occurred in this area, and the stratigraphic sequence was comprised of topsoil (001) over a layer of mid grey brown clay silt subsoil (003) up to 0.45m thick. This subsoil covered the natural Clay with Flint (005). No archaeological features of great antiquity were observed, but the concrete lids of two brick drains and two narrow concrete strips were exposed under the subsoil. These features could be associated with buildings from RAF Hawkinge.

Trench 2

(23m x 1.80m x < 1.90m)

Trench 2 was sited in the northwest corner of the site and was aligned northwest-southeast. The southeast end of the site contained a thick deposit of dumped material up to 1.90m thick. It appeared in the southeast section that the existing soils had been truncated at some time, perhaps to accommodate this later tip of soils. (Fig. 4/Trench 2) Topsoil covered a 0.20m thick layer of subsoil (003) which sealed the natural Clay with Flint (005). No archaeological features were observed in this trench.

Trench 3

(23m x 1.80m x < 0.75m)

Trench 3 was cut along the western edge of the development site and was aligned north-northeast – south-southwest. It was at the base of the very large mound that dominated the centre of the site. In fact, the trench had to be squeezed into a narrow gap between the Heras fencing panels and the mound of soil. The only features found in the trench were two very modern machine cut pits filled with burnt material and rubbish. There was no topsoil covering this trench, modern overburden (002) covered a deposit of mid orange brown clay silt colluvium (004) up to 0.35m thick which sealed the natural Clay with Flint (005).

Trench 4

(13.8m x 1.80m x < 0.50m)

Due to the thick deposit of tipped and unstable material, Trench 4 was shortened to fit into the area illustrated in the indicative trench layout provided by KCC Heritage. The trench was aligned roughly east-west and was filled by up to 0.27m of overburden (002) covering colluvium (004). No features were observed, but the southern edge of the trench exposed one of the many brick drains scattered throughout the site.

Trench 5

(25.2m x 1.80m x < 0.35m)

Trench 5 was placed in the extreme southwest corner of the site and was aligned north-northeast – south-southwest. Situated at the periphery of the development, it was outside the main area of tipped material and was covered with a layer of crushed tarmac (002) up to 0.25m thick which sealed the natural colluvium (004). No archaeological features were observed.

Trench 6

(24.1m x 1.80m x < 0.55m)

Trench 6 was located at the south-west corner of the site and was aligned roughly east-west. This trench was also outside the area of soil tipping, but was covered with an upper layer of crushed tarmac and a mixture of crushed chalk and clinker at the western end of the trench. Below this modern deposit was a layer of subsoil (003) up to 0.20m thick over colluvium (004). No archaeological features were exposed, but the edge of a brick drain was found in the south-facing section.

Trench 7

(25.5m x 1.80m x < 1.55m)

Trench 7 was one of three trenches that exposed concrete bases or surfaces (006) possibly associated with RAF Hawkinge. Trench 7 was cut at the southern end of the site and was aligned north-south. The entire context of the trench consisted of varying tips of overburden (002) including crushed tarmac, chalk, and a thick layer of pale blue-grey clay. These deposits were quite shallow at the southern end of the trench where the colluvium was reached at 0.25m below the present ground surface. The concrete surfaces were found from 1.25m to 1.55m below the present ground surface, and the northern end of the trench had to be 'stepped' due to the unstable nature of the tipped deposits. Due to the extent of the concrete surfaces it is probable any earlier features were truncated during construction of the military buildings.

Trench 8

(24.3m x 1.80m x < 0.85m)

Trench 8 was aligned roughly east-west and was placed at the eastern edge of the site near the Hibernation Zone for wildlife. Two brick drains were visible in the south-facing section, but no other features were observed. Overburden (002) covered the entirety of the trench to a depth of 0.70m sealing the natural colluvium (004).

Trench 9

(23.18m x 1.80m x < 0.85m)

Trench 9 was sited in a central position of the development site and was aligned northeast-southwest. Concrete surfaces (006) covered the entire base of the trench which was filled with very loose modern overburden (002) up to 0.85m thick. Due to the unconsolidated nature of the tipped soils, both long sections collapsed into the trench.

Trench 10

(24.6m x 1.80m x < 1.60m)

Trench 10 was placed next the Hibernation Zone to the east of the site and was aligned northwest-southeast. The entire depth of the trench was filled with varying thick deposits of tipped soil/overburden (002), and it is worth noting that a lower deposit up to 0.75m thick comprised of mid brown grey sandy silty clay, at the eastern end of the trench, gave off a noticeable smell of hydrocarbons. (Fig. 7/Trench 10) Natural colluvium (004) was exposed at both ends of the trench, and a brick drain and concrete surface (006) were exposed in the centre. No other archaeological features were seen.

Trench 11

(21.5m x 1.80m x < 0.75m)

Trench 11 was sited near the entrance of the site, west of a large pile of tyres, and was aligned roughly east-west. Topsoil (001) up to 0.25m thick covered colluvium (004) up to 0.50m thick over Clay with Flint (005). One linear feature was observed, but excavation revealed a modern metal water pipe.

FINDS

Due to the amount of disturbance throughout the site, no archaeological features of great antiquity were observed or cultural material retained.

DISCUSSION

The archaeological evaluation at the development site at Siskin Close revealed areas of concrete surfaces **(006)** within the centre of the site under a thick deposit of tipped soils. The site had a history of legal and illegal tipping over the decades after RAF Hawkinge was decommissioned as a military facility. Recently, the site was used as a BMX course for local young people. It is likely that during the construction of the concrete surfaces, the natural geology of colluvium **(004)** over Clay with Flint **(005)** was truncated, and earlier archaeological features destroyed. Even the shallow areas on the periphery of the site may have been subject to truncation as the site was cleared in the 1930s for the construction of the military facilities. The 4th Edition Ordnance Survey map (1929-1952) shows a number of small buildings and what may have been concrete bays for standing aircraft. (Fig. 2) An aerial photograph in the book 'Battle of Britain-Then and Now' shows a collection of structures that differ from the 4th Edition map.

Site stratigraphy consisted of topsoil **(001)** or overburden **(002)** as the upper layer. Subsoil **(003)** was observed in Trenches 1, 2 and 6, all peripheral trenches which remained relatively undisturbed by the site's use as a soil tip. Colluvium **(004)**, most likely truncated in some areas, was seen in most trenches covering the natural Clay with Flint **(006)**. Trench 3 was excavated to test the depth of the colluvium in a relatively undisturbed part of the site and was found to be 0.40m thick. The central area of the site, used as a spoil heap, contained dumped deposits up to 1.55m thick including possible contaminated clay soils smelling of hydrocarbons in Trench 10.

The development site has been subject to modern activity since at least the 1930s. Earlier maps show the area as relatively undisturbed paddocks until the acquisition of the western area of Hawkinge for an RAF aerodrome which saw active service from October 1913 to December 1958.

CONCLUSION

The archaeological evaluation has been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Specification. A common stratigraphic sequence was recognised

across the site comprising topsoil **(001)** or modern overburden **(002)** overlying subsoil **(003)** in Trenches 1, 2, and 6 and natural deposits of Colluvium **(004)** sealing Clay with Flint **(005)**. Concrete surfaces **(006)** possibly associated with RAF Hawkinge were observed in Trenches 7, 9 and 10. Due to building activity relating to the aerodrome, there is a strong possibility that any archaeological features present on the site were destroyed during this construction phase. In addition, due to the amount of disturbance to the site after the decommissioning of RAF Hawkinge and its subsequent use as a soil dump, further damage may have been done to the development area. The entirety of the modern overburden **(002)** will have to be removed before building work can commence on the site, and this will offer an opportunity to expose the full extent of the buried concrete surfaces **(006)**.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Julie Martin and Paul Wilkinson supervised the fieldwork, assisted in the field by James Madden. Illustrations were produced by Jonny Madden for Digitise This. The project was managed by Dr. Paul Wilkinson.

Julie Martin

March 2011

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Maps

Ordnance Survey 1st Edition (1871-1890)

Ordnance Survey 2nd Edition (1897-1900)

Ordnance Survey 3rd Edition (1907-1923)

Ordnance Survey 4th Edition (1929-1952)

Websites

Airfield Information Exchange <http://airfieldinformationexchange.org/>

Battle of Britain Museum <http://www.kbobm.org/>

Hawkinge Parish Council <http://www.hawkingepc.kentparishes.gov.uk>

Kent Landscape Information System <http://www.extranet7.kent.gov.uk/klis/home.htm>

APPENDIX

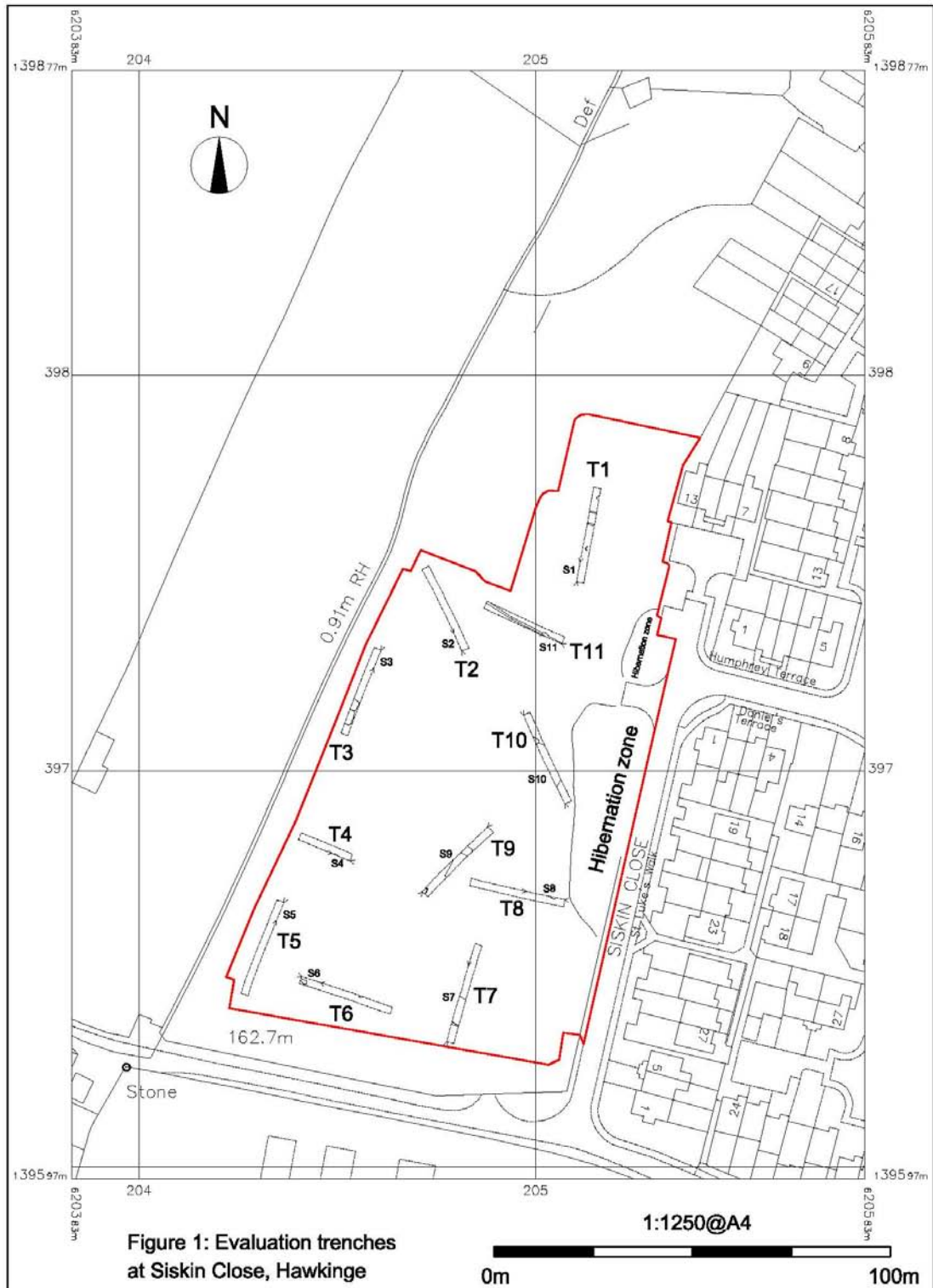
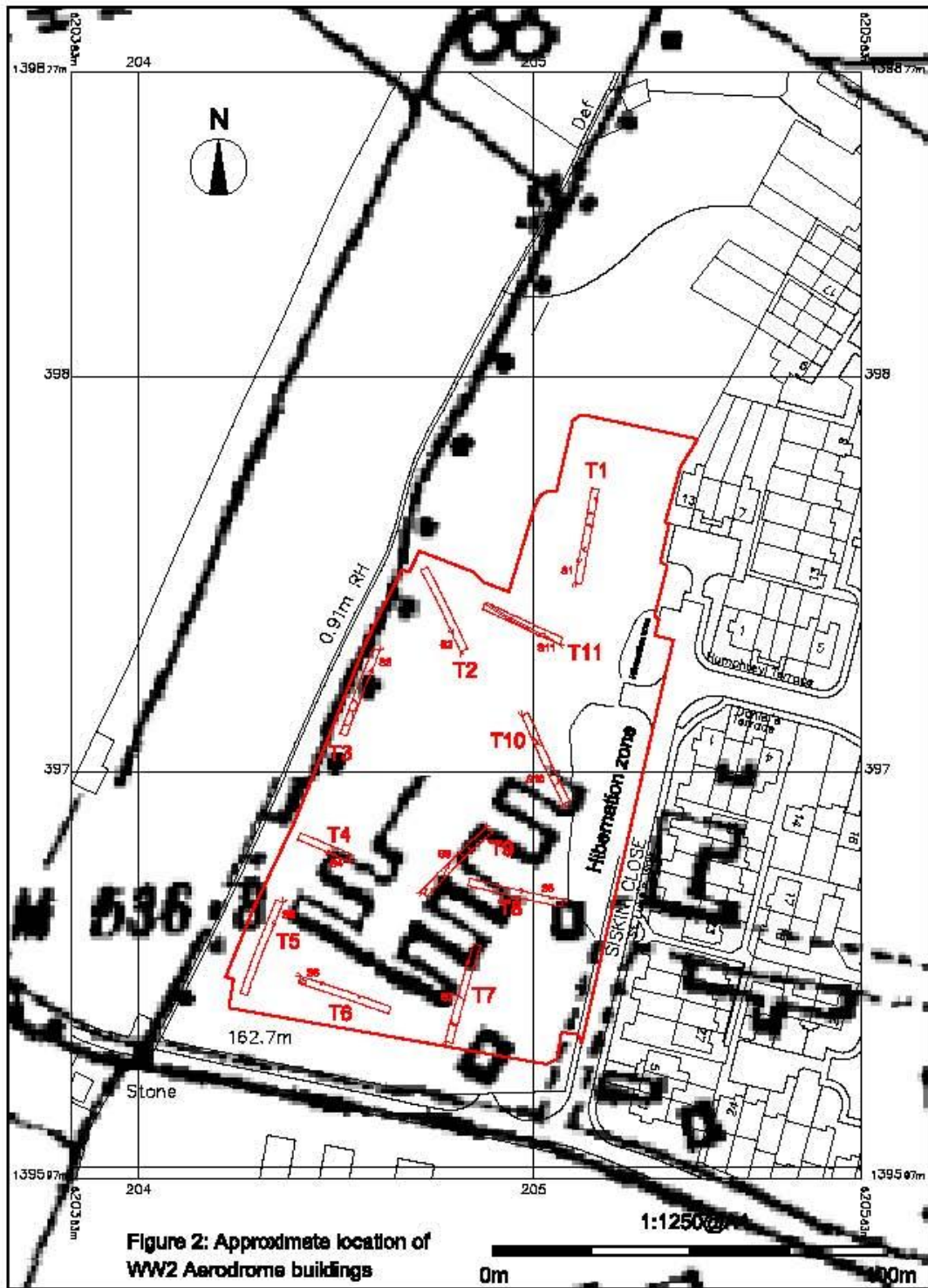
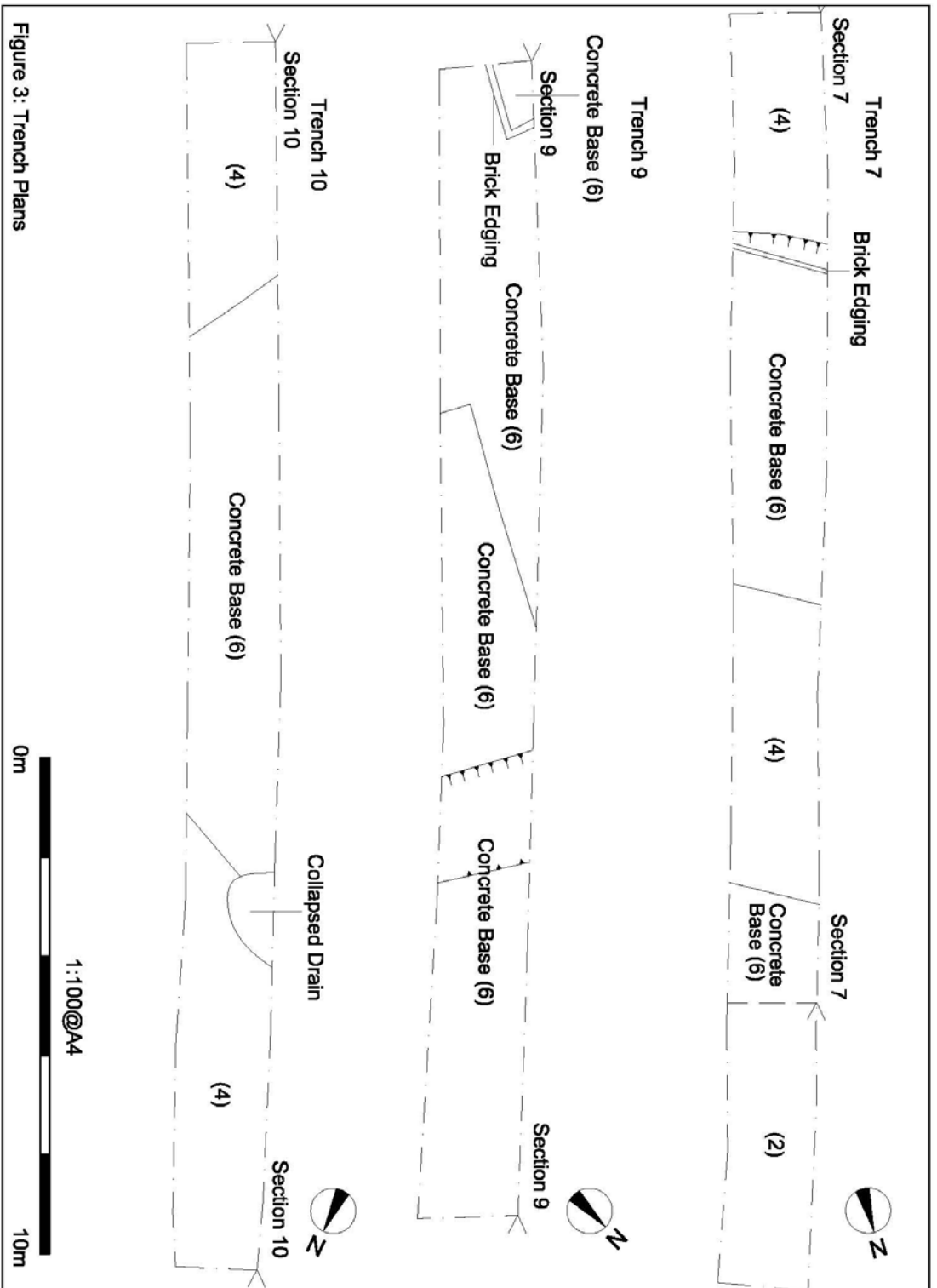


Figure 1: Evaluation trenches at Siskin Close, Hawkinge





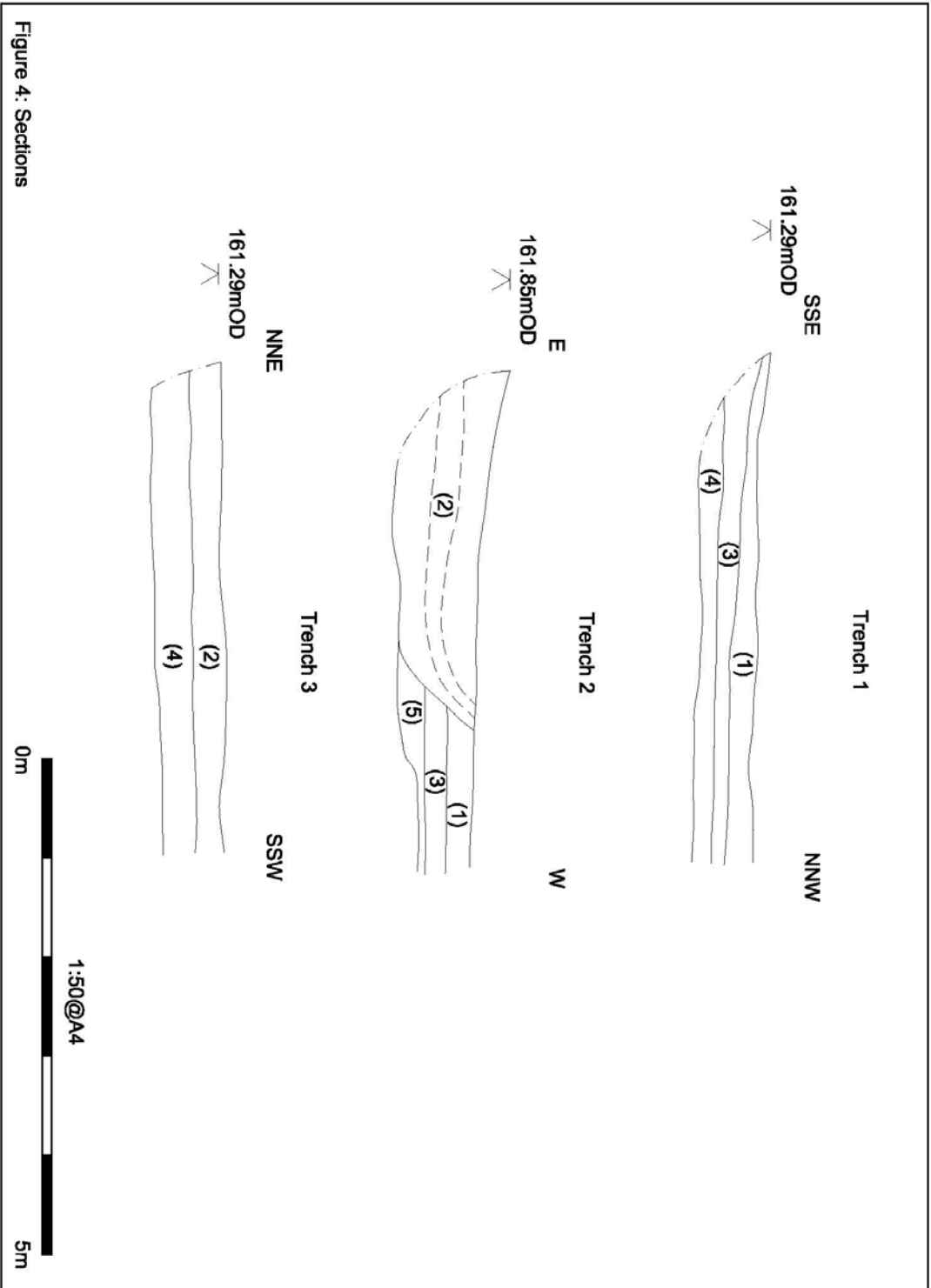
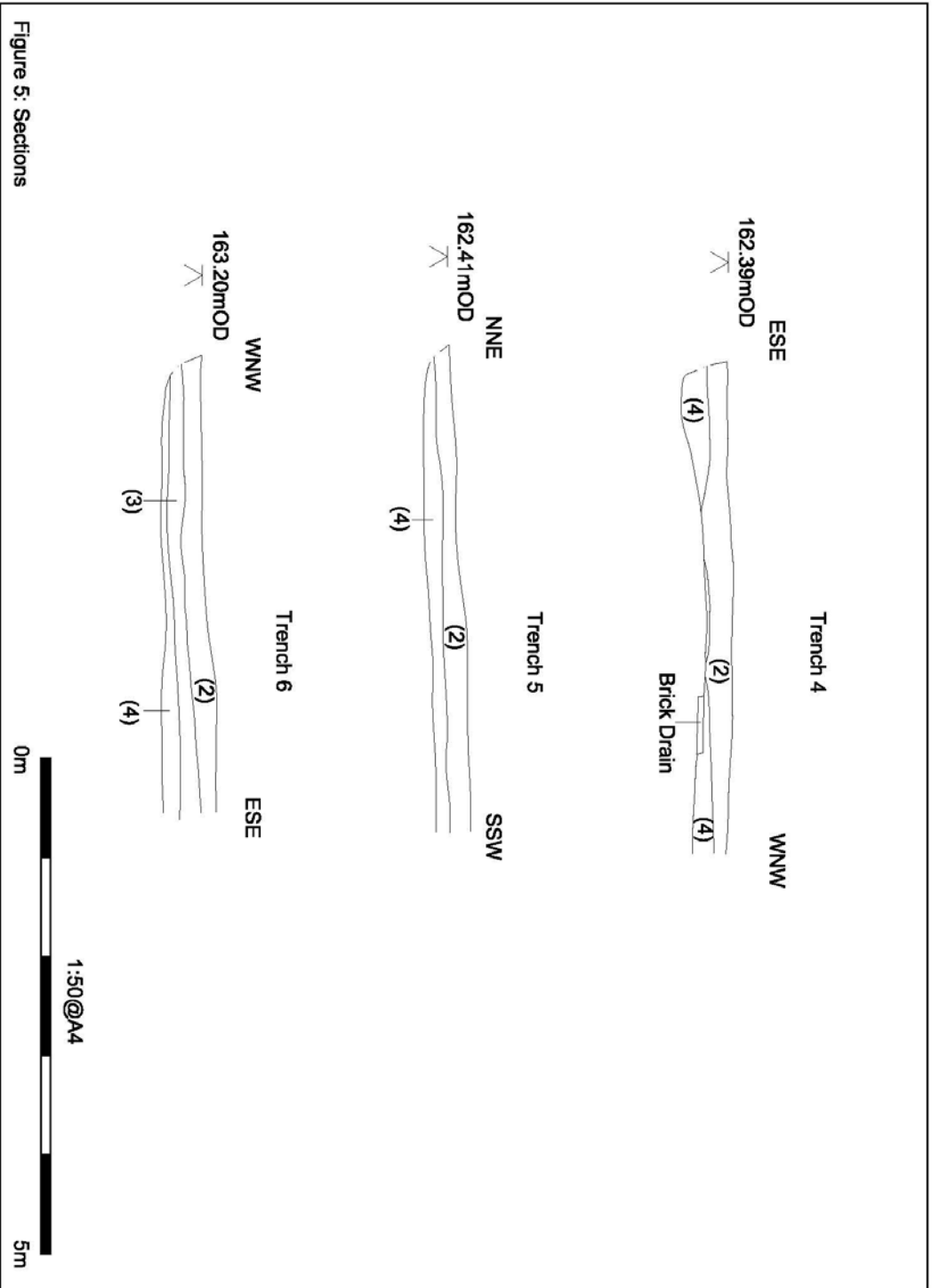
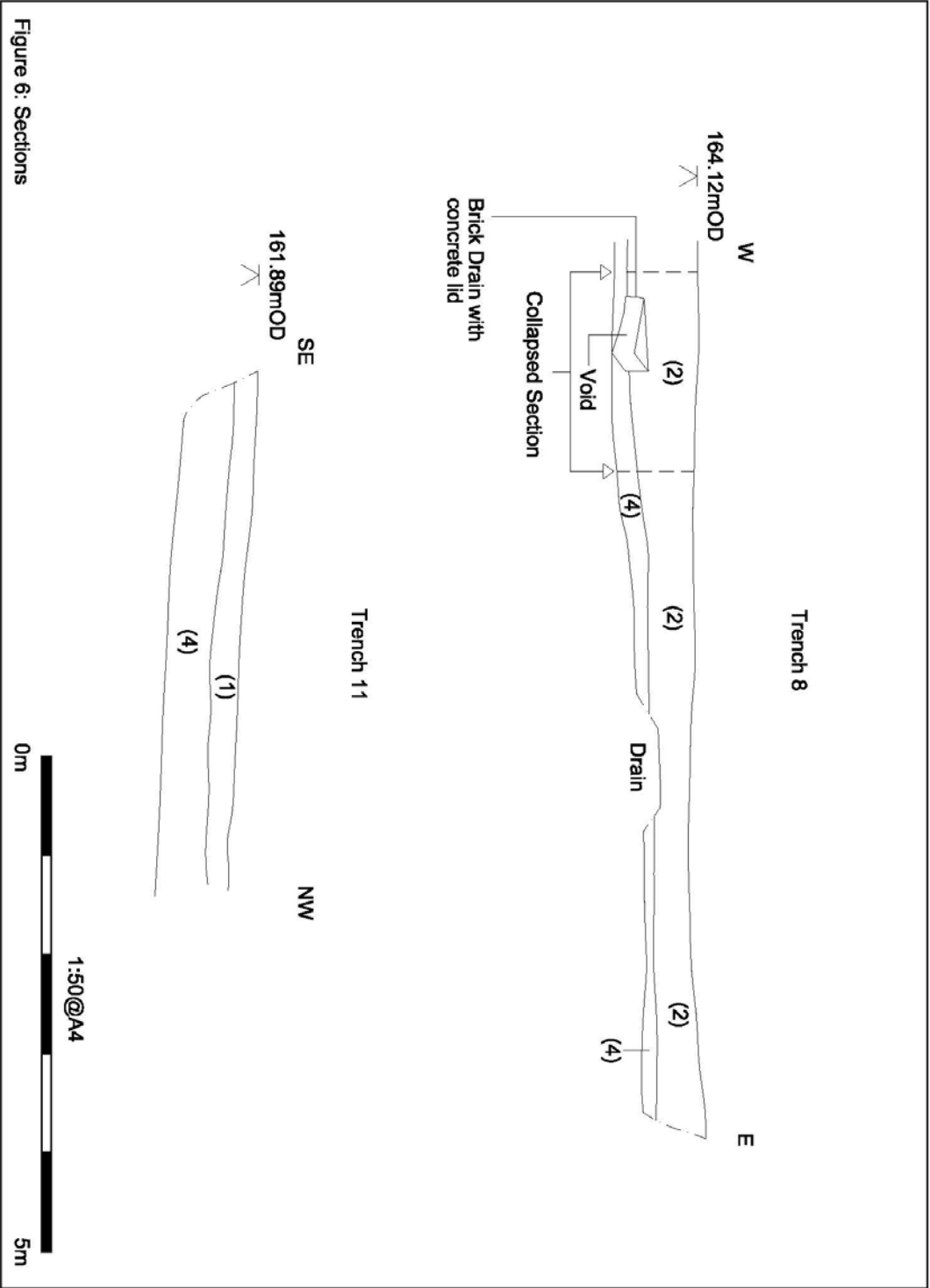


Figure 4: Sections





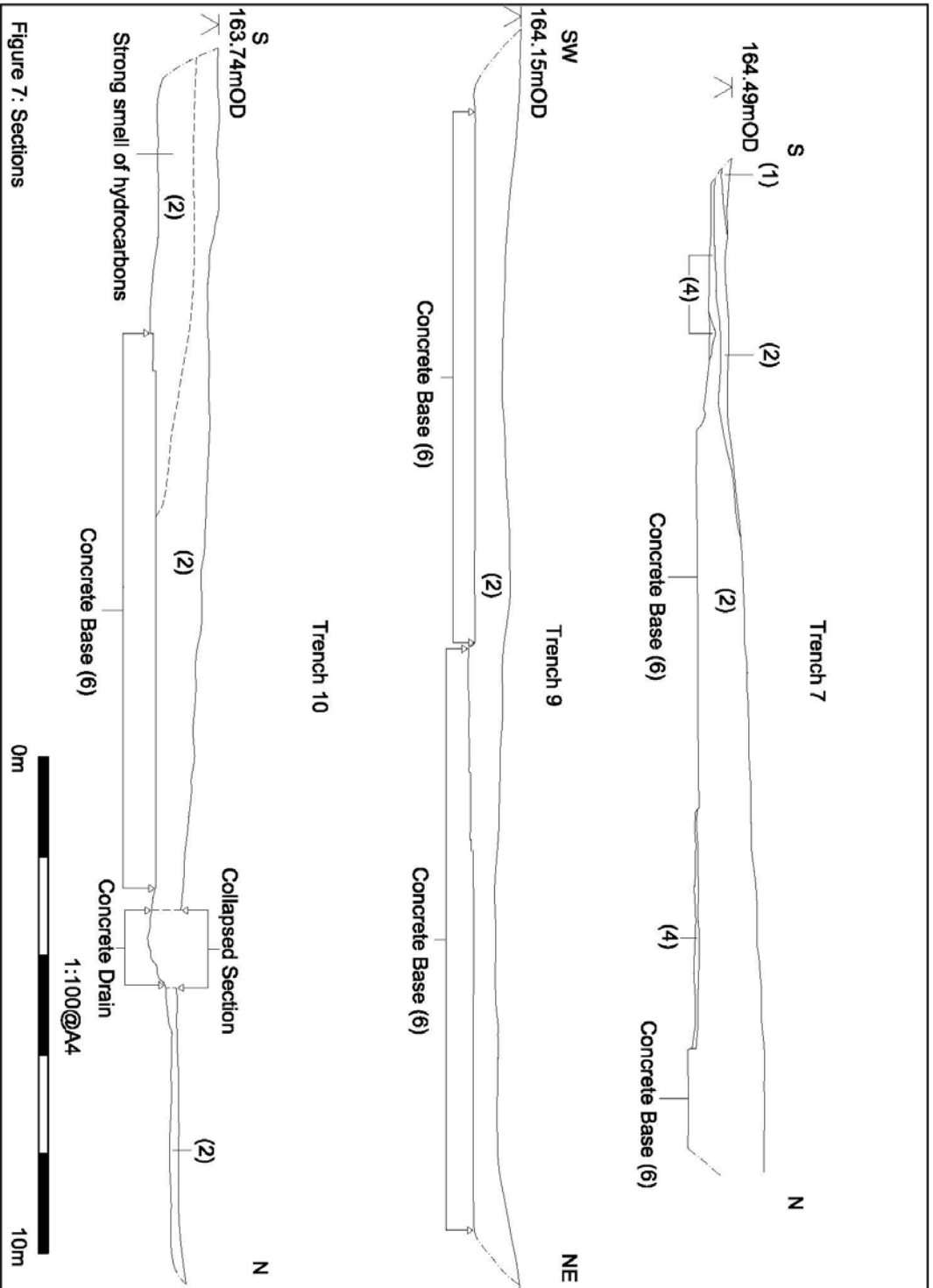


Figure 7: Sections



Plate 1 - Trench 7 Oblique view, 1m scale, looking northwest



Plate 2 - Trench 10 Overburden (002), 1m scale, looking southeast



Plate 3 - Trench 9 Concrete Base/Surface (006), 1m scales, looking northeast

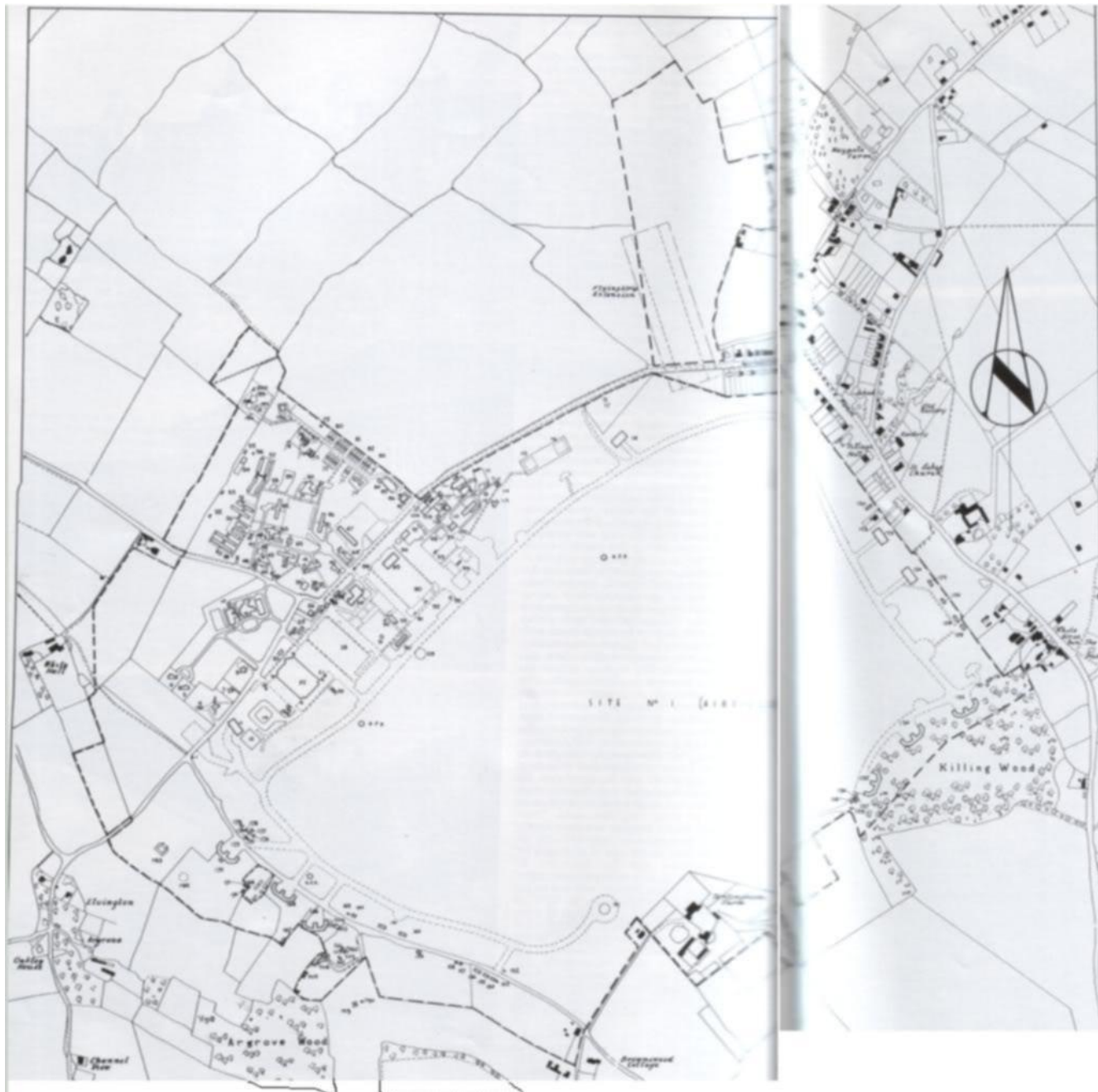


Plate 4 - Plan of RAF Hawkinge from *Battle of Britain-Then and Now*