

# Archaeological Evaluation of Land at Castledene Transport Site, Millhall, Aylesford, Kent



NGR: 571990 158760

Site Code: AYL/EV/17

Planning Application: TM/07/00241/FL

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Site Code: AYL-EV-17

## **1. Summary**

*Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) carried out an archaeological evaluation on land at Castledene, Millhall, Aylesford in Kent. A Planning Application (TM/07/00241/FL) to develop this site with residential development and associated works went to Tonbridge and Malling Borough 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 Specification and KCC Manual Part B) and in discussion with the Senior Archaeological Heritage Officer, Kent County Council. The results of the excavation of 7 evaluation trenches revealed that no archaeological features were present within the trenches (Figures 1, 2 and Plates 1-12).*

*The Archaeological Investigations have therefore been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Archaeological Specification.*

## **2. Introduction**

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) was commissioned by Clague on behalf of the client to carry out an archaeological evaluation, geoarchaeological fieldwork and building recording at the above site. The work was carried out in accordance with the requirements set out within Archaeological Specifications (KCC 2017) and in discussion with the Senior Archaeological Heritage Officer, Kent County Council. The evaluation was carried out on the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> April 2017. The three reports are stand alone but cross referenced where required.

## **3. Site Description and Topography**

The proposed development site is located in the parish of Aylesford and lies just to the south of the River Medway. The site is bounded to the south by the Maidstone to Strood

Railway Line and Millhall to the north. The River Medway lies about 50m to the north. The OS location is 571990 158760.

On the basis of current information from BGS, the site lies on Bedrock Geology of Lower Greensand overlain by river deposits including undifferentiated River Terrace Gravels.

#### **4. Planning Background**

The land has planning permission (TM/07/00241/FL) for the development of residential housing and associated works. On the basis of the present archaeological information, the Archaeological Officer for Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council recommended that the site should be subject to a programme of archaeological work in order to clarify the historical and archaeological elements within the site. Conditions 15, 16 of the planning permission states:

*15. No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written specification and timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.*

*Reason: To ensure that features of archaeological interest are properly examined and recorded in accordance with Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.*

*16. No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of building recording in relation to the Goods shed, as referred to in paragraph 4.11.12 of the Archaeological Assessment submitted with the application, in accordance with a written specification and timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.*

*Reason: To ensure that historic building features are properly examined*

#### **5. Archaeological and Historical Background**

A search of the Historic Environment Records as well as a list of reports of archaeological investigations not yet included in the HER was commissioned for the project and a search made of aerial photography on Google Earth with informative results. The landscape to the north was once occupied by a Farmstead now completely demolished (MKE 84624). To the south there is the railway complex of Aylesford Station (TQ 75 NW 258), a Grade II listed building dating from 1856 and a Signal Box constructed by the South Eastern & Chatham Railway in 1921 (TQ 75 NW 401).

## **6. Aims and Objectives**

According to the KCC Archaeology Specification, the aims and objectives for the archaeological work were to ensure that:

“The programme of archaeological work should be carried out in a phased approach and will commence with evaluation through trial trenching. This initial phase should determine whether any significant archaeological remains would be affected by the development and if so what mitigation measures are appropriate. Such measures may include further detailed archaeological excavation, or an archaeological watching brief during construction work or an engineering solution to any preservation in situ requirements” (KCC 2017).

## **7. Methodology**

According to the KCC specification the initial evaluation will comprise 5 machine excavated trenches (c.25m x 1.2m) in a layout agreed with the County Archaeologist. Each trench will be machine excavated down to the archaeological horizon or the natural.

In addition a RAMS (Risk Assessment and Method Statement) will be produced before the work starts on site and issued to all interested parties.

There will also be an allowance of c.10m of contingency trenching which could be used if it would help address the aims set out above. Contingency trenching can be activated following agreement with the County Archaeologist. Further requirements are set out in KCC Spec Manual for Trial Trenching part B.

Care will be taken to ensure that unnecessary additional excavation does not take place where archaeological deposits or structures are exposed; in particular, there is to be no reduction of the underlying soils to further enhance archaeological features.

A soil sampling programme will be put in place to facilitate palaeo-environmental analysis, bulk screening, and soil micromorphology in the case that suitable deposits are identified (within the limits of the objectives of this evaluation), from which data can be recovered.

If required, cultural material will be recovered and subjected to screening (wet or dry) through mesh with a width of 10mm mesh in control samples of between 100 and 200

litres. Any on site screening that may take place will not impede the removal of further bulk soil samples for screening at a separate wash facility off-site (see also KCC Evaluation Specification Part B: 6. Machine and Hand Excavation).

## **8. Monitoring**

Curatorial monitoring was available during the course of the evaluation.

## **9. Results**

The evaluation took place on a large near-riverside site currently used as a commercial transport depot supplying parking, storage, logistical and loading and unloading services associated with the haulage industry. The evaluation was required as part of a proposal to develop the site for housing, the construction of which, along with the installation of associated services, would necessitate significant impact on any significant archaeological and/or geo-archaeological remains present on the site. The objective was to identify whether such remains are present and, if so, to identify their type, age and status.

## **10. Discussion**

The site, most of which is used for parking bays for lorries, offices and warehouses, is centred on NGR 571990 158760 and is bounded to the south by the Maidstone-Strood Railway line and, to the north, by Millhall (the road that originally led to the hall of the same name), which in turn lies some twenty metres south of the River Medway.

The geo-archaeological potential of the site lies in its location over deposits associated with the most recent Medway river terrace, identified in this area in the British Geological Survey (erroneously as it transpired – see below) as ‘river deposits including undifferentiated River Terrace Gravels’, which deposits were thought to overlie bedrock Lower Greensand.

However, more pertinent to the present site were finds made at Cuxton, some ten kilometres to the south, where cross-bedded yellow-orange alluvial sands over chalk bedrock produced Palaeolithic *ficrons* (sharp-tipped curved-sided handaxes) and cleavers, along with two extremely large handaxes (Wenban-Smith undated 25). As discussed below, similar, if not identical, yellow-orange alluvial sands were exposed in Trenches 1A, 1B, 2, 3, 6 & 7 on the present site. The age of these sands is problematic, not least because the

Medway was intersected and its original length shortened during the middle Pleistocene Anglian glaciation, this interrupting the continuity of the depositional regime (Bridgland 2003, 23). However, an OSL (optically stimulated luminescence) date of 250,000 – 27500 BP was derived from very similar sands investigated in the nearby Aylesford Sand Quarry and, like those at Cuxton, these also produced Palaeolithic artefacts, in this case ‘a wide range of handaxe types’ (Wenban-Smith *et al*, 2007, Fig. 4). Of note here was the fact that the sandy deposits in the quarry underlay undifferentiated riverine gravels of the sort mentioned in the British Geological Survey.

The more recent archaeological and historical evidence of the site shows it to have been marshland, probably changing into a water meadow forming part of the estate of which Millhall was the centre, while to the south, a well-preserved early nineteenth-century industrial building in which goods were unloaded lies within the prospective development site and adjoins the railway line just to the south.

Of the nine evaluation trenches proposed in the Written Scheme of Investigation, four (Trenches 1b, 6, 7 & 9) could not be excavated or could only be partly excavated due either to inaccessibility (Trench 9, the most south-easterly, was placed in a car park which remains in use) or because modern drains, services or concrete foundations made full excavation impossible (Trenches 1b, 6 & 7). However, with the exception of Trenches 1a and 1b, the evaluation within the depot itself exposed stratification indicating that the site had been subject to truncation down to the depth of natural geological and, where necessary, subsequently levelled off using modern rubble before the laying of the large expanse of concrete hard-standing that now covers most of the development area. It can therefore be assumed that no later prehistoric, Roman-period, Anglo-Saxon or medieval and post-medieval remains survive on the site. The archaeological potential of the site therefore lies in the deeper-lying Pleistocene sand deposits, as discussed above, and it proved possible to excavate seven geo-archaeological to investigate the these deposits.



**Trench 1** (Figures 1, 2, 3. Plates 1 & 2)

Trench depth: 2.24m

Top soil thickness: 0.2m

Levelling deposits thickness: 1.1m

(101): Top soil - Black loam with grass vegetation

(102): Levelling deposit - Medium compaction, medium brown clayey silt with abundant gravel (sandstone, flint) and occasional hardcore

(103): Levelling deposit - Firm compaction, black clay with abundant gravel (sandstone, flint), occasional hardcore, glass, plastic and metal

(104): Levelling deposit - Firm compaction, medium brown clayey silt with abundant hardcore

(105): Levelling deposit - Firm compaction, dark brown silty clay with abundant gravel (sandstone, flint) and occasional hardcore

(106): Drain - Ceramic pipe - buried

(107): Drain bedding - shingle

(108): Natural - Medium orangish brown laminated with greyish brown sandy silt

**Trench 2** (Figures 1, 2, 3. Plates 4 & 5))

Trench depth: 1.0m

(201): Floor - concrete - thickness: 0.2m

(202): Levelling deposit - Hardcore with reddish brown sandy silt - thickness: 0.22m

(203): Floor - Reinforced concrete - thickness: 0.18m

(204): Buried modern top soil - mid compaction, black loam with occasional stone and modern rubbish - thickness: 0.18m

(205): Natural - Medium reddish brown sand with abundant gravel

### **Trench 3** (Figures 1, 2, 3. Plates 6 & 7)

Trench depth: 1.34m

Levelling deposits thickness: 0.2m - 0.54m

(301): Car park floor - concrete - thickness: 0.1m

(302): Levelling deposit - Hardcore

(303): Levelling deposit - Firm compaction, dark brown clay with occasional flints

(304): Fill of [305] - Medium compaction, black sand with frequent coal, brick fragments, flints and ash

[305]: Cut of modern pit - Oval (not fully exposed), moderate sloping sides, narrow concave base - width: 1.54m, depth: 0.56m

(306): Foundation boundary wall - Cast concrete - width: 0.68m, depth: 0.8m

(307): Natural - Medium brown sandy silt with moderate sandstone gravel

(308): Natural - light grey sandstone cobbles in light brown sand matrix

(309): Natural - Medium brown sandy silt with occasional sandstone

(310): Natural - pale sandstone cobbles in orangish brown sand matrix

(311): Natural - Medium greenish brown sandy silt with abundant sandstone

(312): Natural - Medium orangish brown sandy silt with abundant sandstone

### **Trench 4** (Figures 1, 2, 4. Plates 8 & 9)

Trench depth: 1.24m

(401): Top soil - Black loam with yellow sand pockets, moderate bricks, occasional metal , glass and plastic - thickness: 0.28m

(402): Levelling deposit - firm compaction, dark brown sandy silt with moderate roof tiles and sandstone - thickness: 0.26m

(403): Natural - Loosely packed sandstone cobbles

#### **Trench 5** (Figures 1, 2, 4. Plate 10)

Trench depth: 1.5m

(501): Car park floor - Tarmac - thickness: 0.1m

(502): Levelling deposit - Hardcore

(503): Levelling deposit - gravel

(504): Levelling deposit - Firm compaction, mid orange brown clay, freq flints and sandstone

Levelling deposits thickness: 0.52m - 0.6m

(505): Natural - Medium brown clayey silt

(506): Natural - Mid orangish brown, fine sand with occ. sub rounded sandstones and flints

(507): Natural - Mid orangish brown, sand and gravel (flint, sandstone)occ. pockets of clay, fine sand, coarse sand and pebble

#### **Trench 6** (Figures 1, 2, 4)

Trench depth: 2.4m

(601): Car park floor - tarmac - thickness: 0.1m

(602): Levelling deposit - Flint gravel in black sand matrix - thickness: 0.4m

(603): Natural - pale brown mottled with orange sand - thickness: 0.64m

(604): Natural - orange sand mottled with pale brown sand - thickness: 0.95m

(605): Natural - pale brown sand with orange sand lenses

### **Trench 7 (Figures 1, 2, 4. Plate 11)**

Trench depth: 1.1m

(701): Car park floor - Tarmac- thickness: 0.14m

(702): Levelling deposit, dark brown clay mixed with hardcore and gravel - thickness: 0.35m

(703): Natural - Mid orangish brown laminated sand

(704): Fill of [705] - compacted, Very close set large blocks and block-like fragments in pale brown sand matrix with occasional yellow brick fragments and metal pipe

[705]: Cut of modern pit - one vertical side was exposed

### **11. Finds**

No finds were found or archaeological soil samples taken.

### **12. Conclusions**

Many of the sand-dominated orange-yellow alluvial deposits exposed in Trenches 1A, 1B, 2, 3, 6 & 7 were either very similar or identical in appearance to those exposed at Cuxton (Wenban-Smith undated 25) and at the nearby Aylesford Sand Quarry (Wenban-Smith *et al*, 2007, Fig. 4). The latter produced Palaeolithic artefacts, with an associated date-range (derived from OSL dating of the containing sand matrix) of 250,000 – 27500 BP. If the Aylesford alluvial sands form part of the same depositional sequence as those at Cuxton, then the present evaluation may have identified potentially important later Pleistocene deposits containing evidence for *in-situ* or near *in-situ* occupation activity by early pre-modern human beings.

Indeed, something could be deduced about the ancient topography of the area, as the loosely-packed, close-set natural fragmented rock exposed in Trenches 3 and 4 almost certainly represented collapsed material from the ancient Medway bank or cliff side, as suggested by its presence overlying light yellow-orange, cross-bedded alluvial sands in Trench 3. It may therefore be postulated that transient Palaeolithic activity took place within the sand-dominated flood plain of the ancient Medway.

The higher-lying natural deposits exposed on the site had been severely truncated, probably during the construction of the present depot, as evident in Trench 3, where, excepting an intervening modern pit, the modern concrete surface and its associated bedding layer immediately overlay natural rock-rich deposits (CRNs 3/3, 3/4 & 3/5). A similar phenomenon was present in Trench 2, 4, 5, 6 & 7, with only Trench 4 exposing a possible demolition layer (CRN4/2) in the form of a 0.2m-thick band of mixed fragmented natural rock and humic soil containing, in its upper part, occasional brick and tile fragments. To the east, in Trenches 1A and 1B, again natural deposits immediately underlay either modern demolition layers (CRNs 1A/4, 1A/7 or were sealed by a modern tarmac surface and its bedding (CRNs 1B/3). It can therefore be proposed with some confidence that no later Prehistoric or later remains have survived on the site.

Therefore, this evaluation has been successful in fulfilling the aims and objectives as set out in the Planning Condition and the Archaeological Specification.

### **13. Acknowledgements**

SWAT Archaeology would like to thank the client and Clague for commissioning the project. Site survey and illustrations were produced by Bartek Cichy. The fieldwork was undertaken by Tim Allen MCIfA and the project was managed by Dr Paul Wilkinson MCIfA.

Paul Wilkinson

20/06/2017

## 14. References

Institute for Field Archaeologists (IfA), Rev (2014). *Standard and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation*

KCC *Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation*

KCC Specification Manual Part B

Bridgland, D., 2003, 'The evolution of the River Medway, SE England, in the context of the Quaternary paleoclimate and Palaeolithic occupation of NW Europe', *Proceedings of the Geologists' Association*, 23-48

Wenban-Smith, F., undated, 'Handaxe Typology and Lower Palaeolithic Cultural Development: Ficrons, Cleavers and two giant handaxes from Cuxton', in *Lithics*, Vol 25

Wenban-Smith, F., Bates, M. R. & Marshall, G., 2007, *Medway Valley Palaeolithic Project Final Report: The Palaeolithic Resource in the Medway Gravels (Kent)*

### Summary:

Swale and Thames Survey Company (SWAT) carried out Archaeological Evaluation on the development site of land at Castledene, Millhall, Aylesford in Kent.

The site has planning permission for residential housing whereby Kent County Council Heritage and Conservation (KCCHC) requested that Archaeological Evaluation be undertaken to determine the possible impact of the development on any archaeological remains.

The Archaeological Evaluation revealed no archaeology.

**District/Unitary:** Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

**Period(s):**

**NGR (centre of site to eight figures)** 571990 158760

**Type of Archaeological work:** Archaeological Evaluation

**Date of recording:** April 2017

**Unit undertaking recording:** Swale and Thames Survey Company (SWAT. Archaeology)

**Geology:** Underlying geology is Sand-dominated orange-yellow alluvial deposits

**Title and author of accompanying report:** Wilkinson P. (2017) Archaeological Evaluation of Land at Castledene, Millhall, Aylesford, Kent

**Summary of fieldwork results (begin with earliest period first, add NGRs where appropriate)**

No archaeology found

**Location of archive/finds:** SWAT. Archaeology. Graveney Rd, Faversham, Kent. ME13 8UP

**Contact at Unit:** Paul Wilkinson

**Date:** 20/06/2017

| Trench no. | Alignment A-B | Trench axis coordinates and level at A end | Trench axis coordinates and level at B end | Depth: |
|------------|---------------|--|--|--------|
| 1          | NNW-SSE       | 572066.09E<br>158781.22N<br>Alt: 5.25 m OD | 572072.42E<br>158764.09N<br>Alt: 5.48 m OD | 1.4m   |
| 2          | NNE-SSW       | 572024.34E<br>158767.56N<br>Alt: 6.78 m OD | 572022.75E<br>158759.51N<br>Alt: 6.77 m OD | 1m     |
| 3          | WNW-ESE       | 571986.39E<br>158776.54N<br>Alt: 7.02 m OD | 572005.84E<br>158772.38N<br>Alt: 6.83 m OD | 1.34m  |
| 4          | N-S           | 571910.80E<br>158803.58N<br>Alt: 7.23 m OD | 571908.04E<br>158783.72N<br>Alt: 7.05 m OD | 1.24m  |
| 5          | NW-SE         | 571902.20E<br>158752.46N<br>Alt: 6.73 m OD | 571920.32E<br>158752.46N<br>Alt: 6.82 m OD | 1.5m   |
| G1 or 1B   | NNW-SSE       | 572066.37E<br>158779.57N<br>Alt: 5.28 m OD | 572067.48E<br>158776.57N<br>Alt: 5.39 m OD | 2.24m  |
| G2 or 6    | NNW-SSE       | 572001.70E<br>158716.61N<br>Alt: 6.65 m OD | 572003.31E<br>158719.44N<br>Alt: 6.68 m OD | 2.4m   |
| G3 or 7    | NNW-SSE       | 571978.68E<br>158730.60N<br>Alt: 6.64 m OD | 571977.06E<br>158727.77N<br>Alt: 6.66 m OD | 1.1m   |





Plate 1. Trench 1 and 1a (looking NNW)



Plate 2. Trench 1, 1a (looking SSE)



Plate 3. Section of Trench 1 (looking W)



Plate 4. Trench 2 (looking NNE)



Plate 5. Section Trench 2 (looking E)



Plate 6. Trench 3 (looking E)



Plate 7. Trench 3 section (looking S)



Plate 8. Trench 4 (looking N)



Plate 9. Trench 4 (Section looking N)



Plate 10. Trench 5 (looking NW)



Plate 11. Trench 6 (looking NE)



Plate 12. Trench 7 (looking NE)

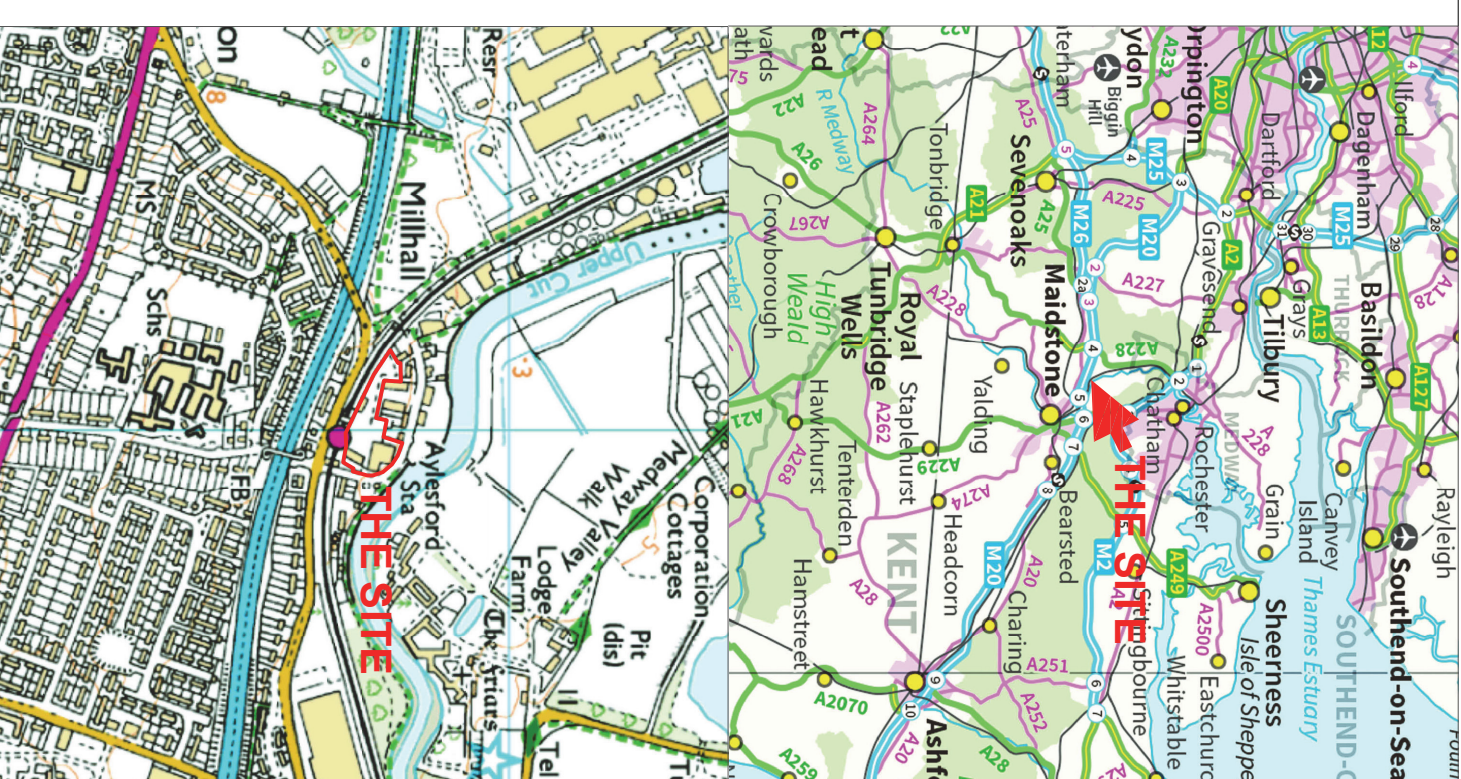


Figure 1: Site location map

|   |  |   |  |
|---|--|---|--|
| PROJECT: Castledene Transport – Mill Hill, Aylesford ME20 7JN |  | SWAT ARCHAEOLOGY  |  |
| DRAWING TITLE: Site location map                              |  | The Office: School Farm<br>Oast, Groveway Road,<br>Faversham, Kent ME13 8UP |  |
| SIZE AND SCALE: 1:1000@A3                                     |  | DATE: 24/07/2017  |  |
| DRAWING NUMBER: 1   |  | SITE CODE:  |  |
|   |  | REF. FILE: castledenetransport.dwg  |  |





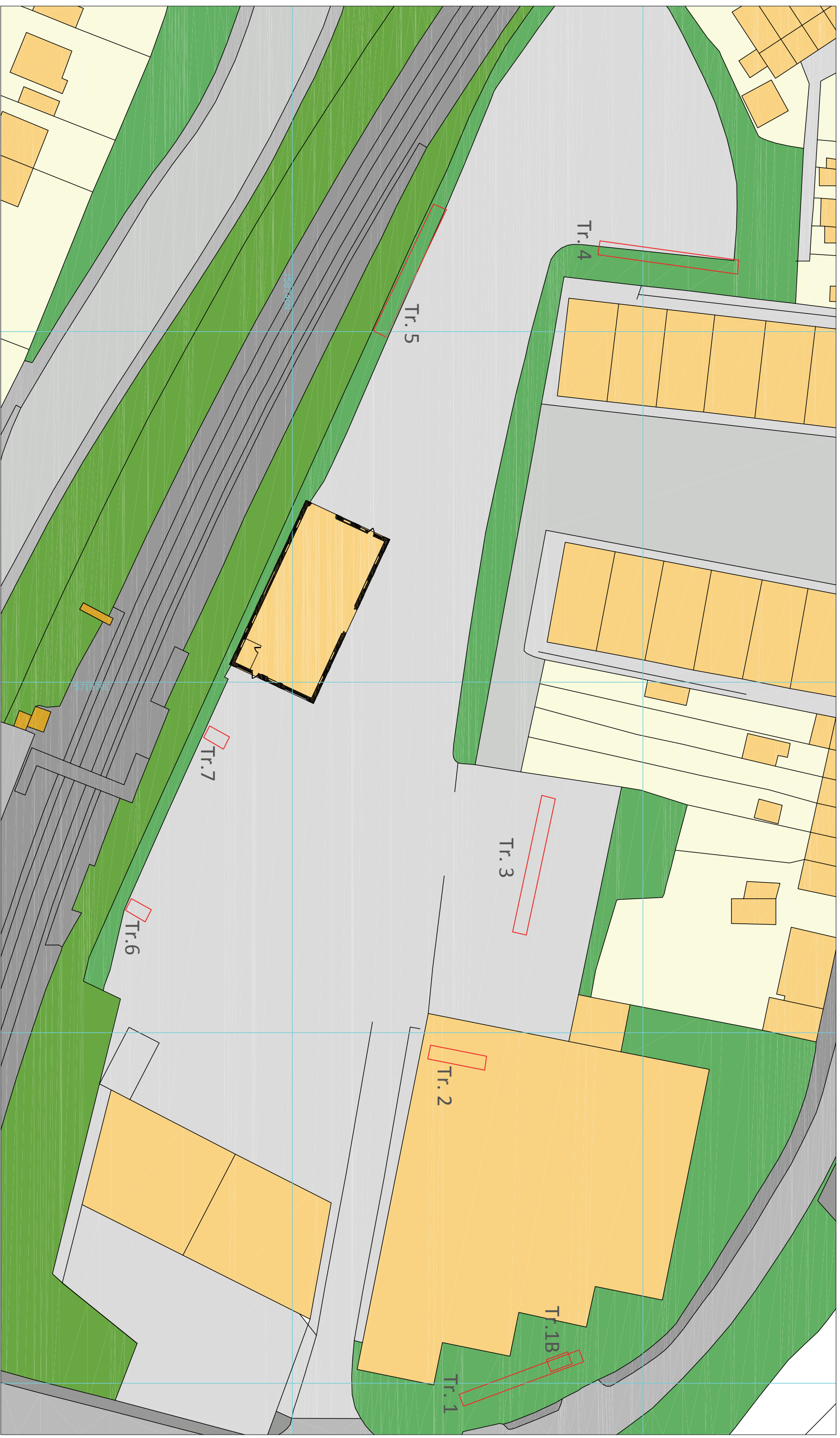


Figure 2: Trench location plan

|   |  |                                   |  |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|--|
| PROJECT: Castledene Transport – Mill Hall, Aylesford ME20 7JN |  | SWAT ARCHAEOLOGY                  |  |
| DRAWING TITLE: Trench location plan                           |  | The Office: School Farm           |  |
| SIZE AND SCALE: 1:500@A3                                      |  | Oast, Groveway Road,              |  |
| DRAWING NUMBER: 2   |  | Faversham, Kent ME13 8UP          |  |
| DATE: 24/07/2017  |  | DRAWN BY: Bartosz Cichy           |  |
| SITE CODE:  |  | REF. FILE: castledentransport.dwg |  |



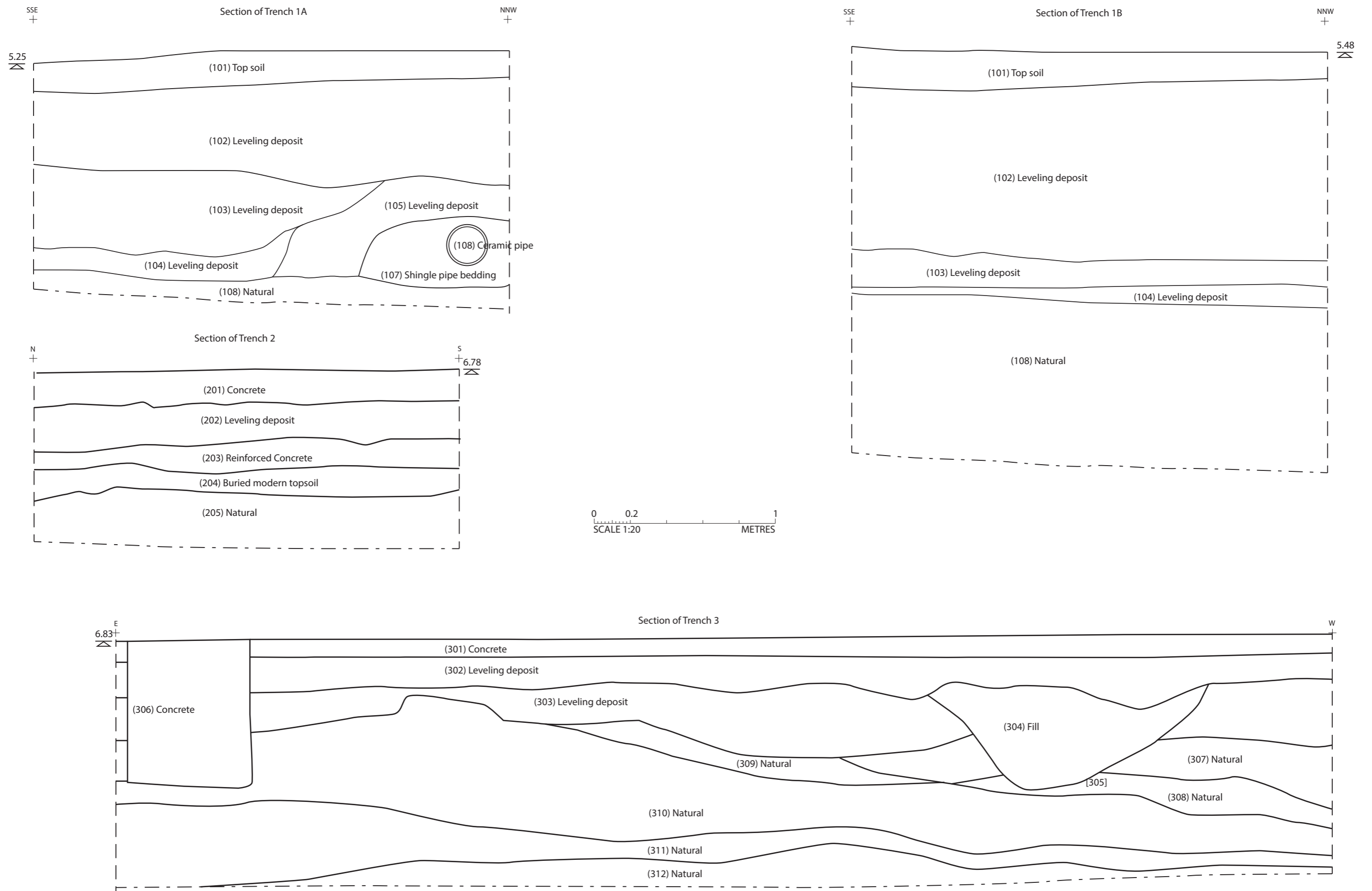


Figure 3: Representative sections of Trench 1-3

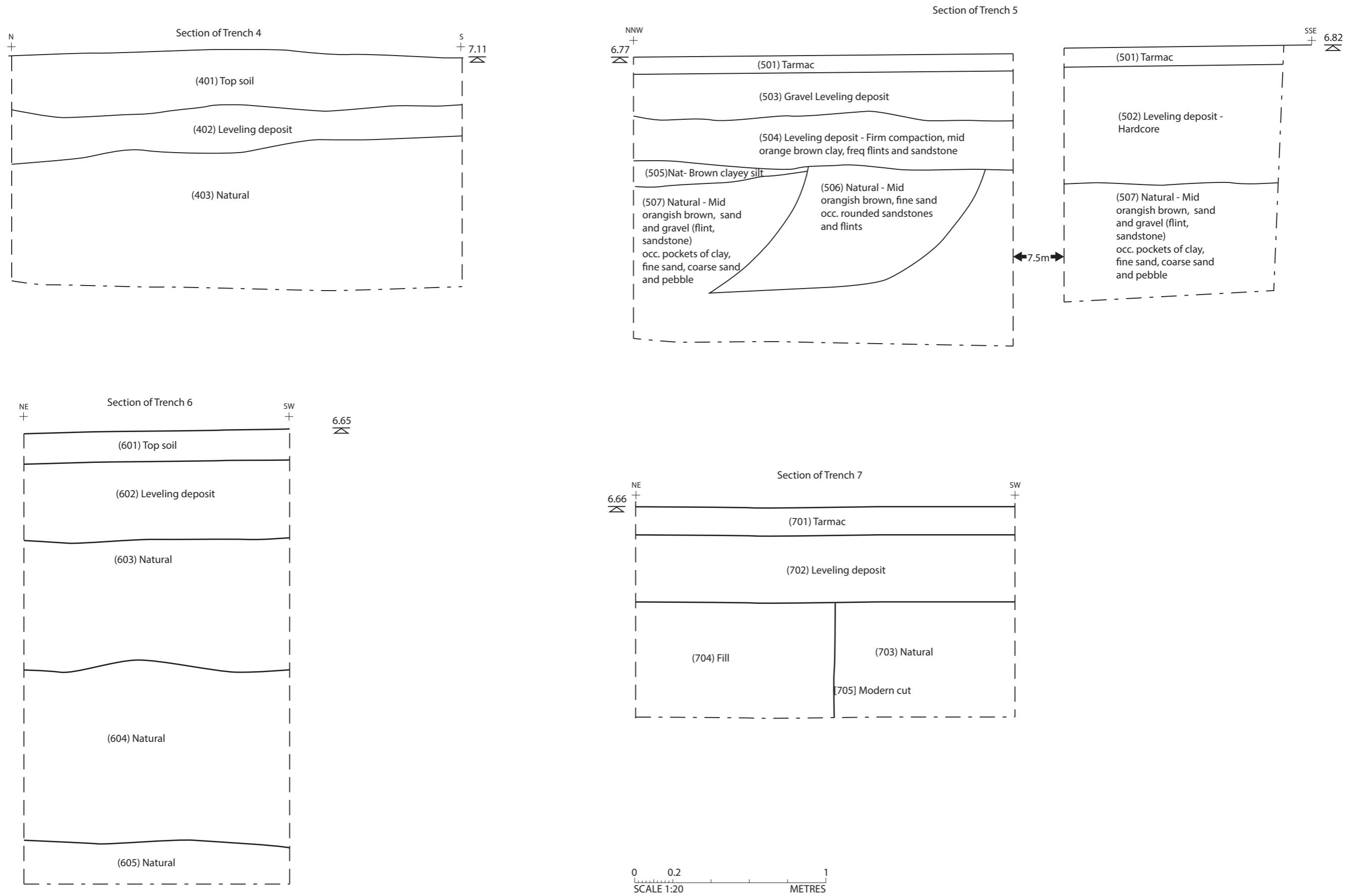


Figure 4: Representative sections of Trench 4-7