



Monitoring Report No. 118

**Sites to the south and north-west of the David Bates building
Queen's University Belfast
Co. Antrim**

AE/05/76

Brian Sloan

Site Specific Information

Site Name: Site of the New Library, Queen's University Belfast.

Townland: Malone Lower

SMR No (if applicable): N/A

State Care Scheduled Other **X** [delete as applicable]

Grid Ref: J 3380 7250

County: Antrim

Excavation License No: AE/05/76

Planning Ref / No. (if applicable): N/A

Dates of Monitoring: Monday 23rd October 2006

Archaeologist(s) Present: Brian Sloan

Brief Summary:

In June 2005 three Test Pits were mechanically excavated in the area around the David Bates building. These were called Test Pits A, B and C (Sloan 2005). The results of this exercise prompted a further investigation into the area around Test Pit A, where three 20m by 2m trenches were excavated in the Car Park in November 2005 (Sloan 2006), In November 2006, investigations were carried out in the areas around Test Pits B and C. The results of this work forms the contents of the current report. Nothing of archaeological significance was observed in either of the trenches and it is recommended that no further archaeological work is necessary at the New Library site.

Type of monitoring:

Archaeological supervision of two mechanically excavated trenches to subsoil.

Size of area opened:

Two trenches measuring 20m x 3m (north-west area) and 8m x 3m (south area).

Current Land Use: Landscaped lawn

Intended Land Use: New Library development

Brief account of the monitoring

Introduction

The monitoring undertaken in October 2006 was a component of a series of archaeological investigations into the area of the New Library development. This programme of works comprised:

- 1) In June 2005 three Test Pits (2m x 2m) were excavated in advance of the New Library Development. Test Pit A was in the Car Park to the rear of the David Bates building, while Test Pit B and C were opened on the grassy areas to the south and north-west of the David Bates building (Sloan 2005).
- 2) In November 2005 evaluative trenches (20m x 2m) were excavated in the Car Park to the rear of the David Bates building and in the area formerly occupied by Nos. 7 and 8 College Park East (Sloan 2006).
- 3) In November 2006 topsoil stripping in the areas of Test Pits B and C. The report of this work is detailed below.

Background

The monitoring work was the third component of an archaeological mitigation programme concentrated around the David Bates building, Queen's University Belfast. The programme of works preceded the construction of the New Library at this site.

Cartographic evidence suggests that the area of the New Library remained undeveloped until the late 1860s when College Park East and its surrounding environs were developed (Nelis 2004, Sloan 2006). The artefact assemblage recovered from the second investigation into the Car Park confirmed the cartographic evidence, also suggesting that the area of the Car Park had

undergone an episode of dumping before this development had taken place. A great diversity of finds including pottery, glass, leather fragments and clay tobacco pipes dating to the mid to late nineteenth-century were recovered from the trenches in the Car Park area.

Aims and Objectives

The monitoring of the excavation of the two trenches was prompted by the results of Test Pits B and C excavated in June 2005.

Test Pit B was located on the grassy area to the south of the David Bates building along the boundary with Botanic Gardens. The proximal end of a flint flake and a possible retouched fragment of flint were recovered from the fill of an animal burrow/tree-root hole (Context No. 207) in this test pit. The aim of further monitoring in this area was to see if any features or artefacts relating to the prehistoric period survived in the surrounding area to Test Pit B.

Test Pit C was located on the grassy area to the north-west of the David Bates building. A small posthole (Context No. 307) was observed cutting the subsoil in the south western corner of this test pit. No associated features or artefacts were observed in this test pit but it was decided that further investigation was necessary to see if there were any other remains in the wider area.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was situated to the south of the David Bates building and incorporated the footprint of Test Pit B from the June 2005 evaluation. The area excavated measured 8m east-west x 3m north-south and was excavated to the natural subsoil (Context No. 103) which consisted of reddish orange Malone sand, and was encountered at a maximum depth of 0.5m.

The sod and topsoil layer (Context No.101) consisted of mid to light brown friable loam and had a maximum thickness of 0.28m. Active tree roots were observed in this deposit, which probably originated from trees in Botanic

Gardens. The deposit contained frequent inclusions of small rounded and sub-angular stones (average size: 40mm x 30mm x 30mm). Sherds of black glazed earthenware, bottle glass, and fragments of plastic were recovered from the topsoil.

The sod and topsoil layer (Context No. 101) directly overlay a mid to dark brown gritty loam (Context No. 102). This deposit was, on average, 0.2m thick. Again active tree roots were observed in this deposit. A high frequency of brick fragments and building rubble were removed from this deposit, possibly derived from the construction of the David Bates building in the 1970s. Sherds of bottle glass were recovered from the gritty loam, which directly overlay the natural subsoil.

The natural subsoil (Context No. 103) consisted of reddish orange silty sand, consistent with the 'Malone sand'. Following trowelling of the surface of the subsoil, no negative features were observed, and due to no artefacts of a prehistoric nature being recovered, it can be assumed that the proximal fragment of a flint flake recovered in June 2005 was an isolated find.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was situated to the north-west of the David Bates building and incorporated the footprint of Test Pit C from the June 2005 evaluation. The area excavated measured 22m north-south by 3m east-west and was excavated to the natural subsoil (Context No. 204) which consisted of reddish orange Malone sand, consistent with the geological deposits of the Malone ridge on which the site is located.

The sod and topsoil (Context No. 201) consisted of a mid to light brown friable loam and had a maximum thickness of 0.2m. It contained frequent inclusions of small rounded and sub-angular stones (average size 40mm x 30mm by 30mm), as well as fragments of plastic and small pieces of bottle glass.

The sod and topsoil layer (Context No. 201) directly overlay the subsoil (Context No. 204) at the southern-most end of the trench, and a compact layer of gravel/tarmac (Context No. 202) at the northern end. The gravel/tarmac deposit (Context No. 202) was not observed in the original evaluation in June 2005. It is assumed that this deposit represents a relatively modern surface outside the David Bates building, which was then covered over with imported topsoil to make the landscaped lawn seen today to the building's west and north-west. The gravel/tarmac deposit (Context No. 202) was on average 0.15m thick, and consisted of small angular pieces of asphalt (average size: 20mm by 10mm by 10mm). Directly below the gravel/tarmac deposit (Context No. 202) in the southern end of the trench, was the natural subsoil (Context No. 204). Towards the northern end of the trench, the gravel/tarmac layer (Context No. 202) directly overlay a course of large stones and angular rubble hardcore (Context No. 203). It was noted that the natural subsoil sloped off towards the northern end of the trench and so it is assumed that the large stones and rubble were placed to level up the ground so that the gravel/tarmac deposit could be laid down. The large stones and rubble hardcore was, on average, 0.2m thick and overlay the natural subsoil (Context No. 204).

The natural subsoil (Context No. 204) in Trench 2 consisted of reddish orange silty sand, consistent with the 'Malone sand'. Upon trowelling of the surface of the subsoil, no negative features were observed. It is assumed that the possible posthole observed in the original evaluation (June 2005) is an isolated feature with no associated finds or stratigraphy.

Conclusions / Recommendations

The evaluation showed that there were no remains of archaeological significance within the investigated areas at the proposed site of the New Library. The finds and features identified in the June 2005 evaluation proved to be either isolated or residual. It is therefore recommended that no further archaeological work is carried out at the site of the New Library.

References

Nelis, E. (2004) '*Queen's University Belfast: P01 811 New Library Project*'. Archaeological Impact Assessment. Unpublished report prepared by the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University Belfast.

Sloan, B (2005) '*Investigations at Queen's University Belfast, Co. Antrim. New Library Project: P01 811*'. CAF DSR 039. Unpublished report prepared by the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University Belfast.

Sloan, B. (2006) '*Further investigations within the car park to the rear of the David Bates Building, Queen's University*'. CAF DSR 043. Unpublished report prepared by the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queens University Belfast.

Archive:

Finds: All finds are held by the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University Belfast.

Photographs: 18 photographs held by the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University Belfast.

Plans / Drawings: N/A

Signed: _____

Date: _____

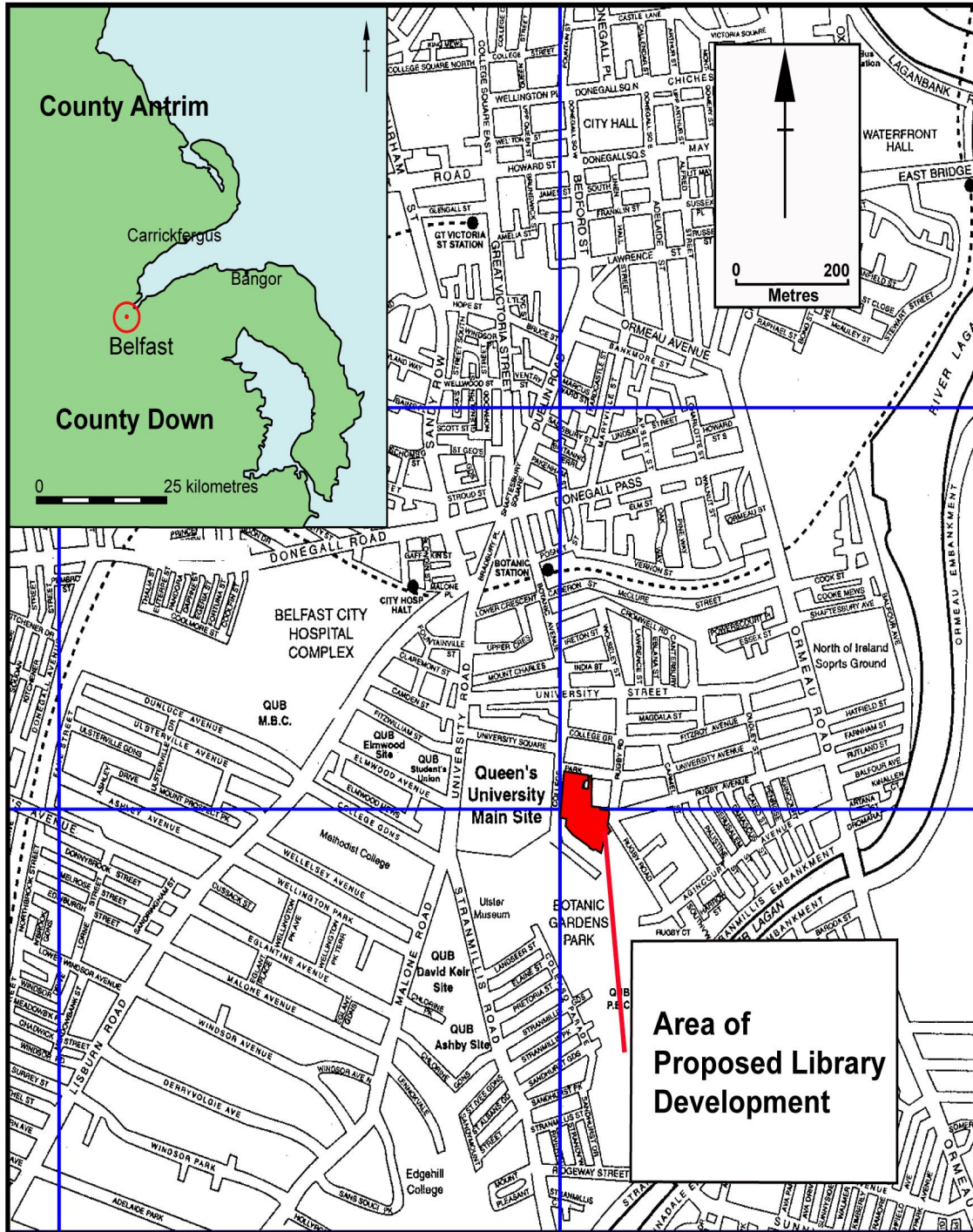


Figure 1. Location map (inset) and position of proposed library development

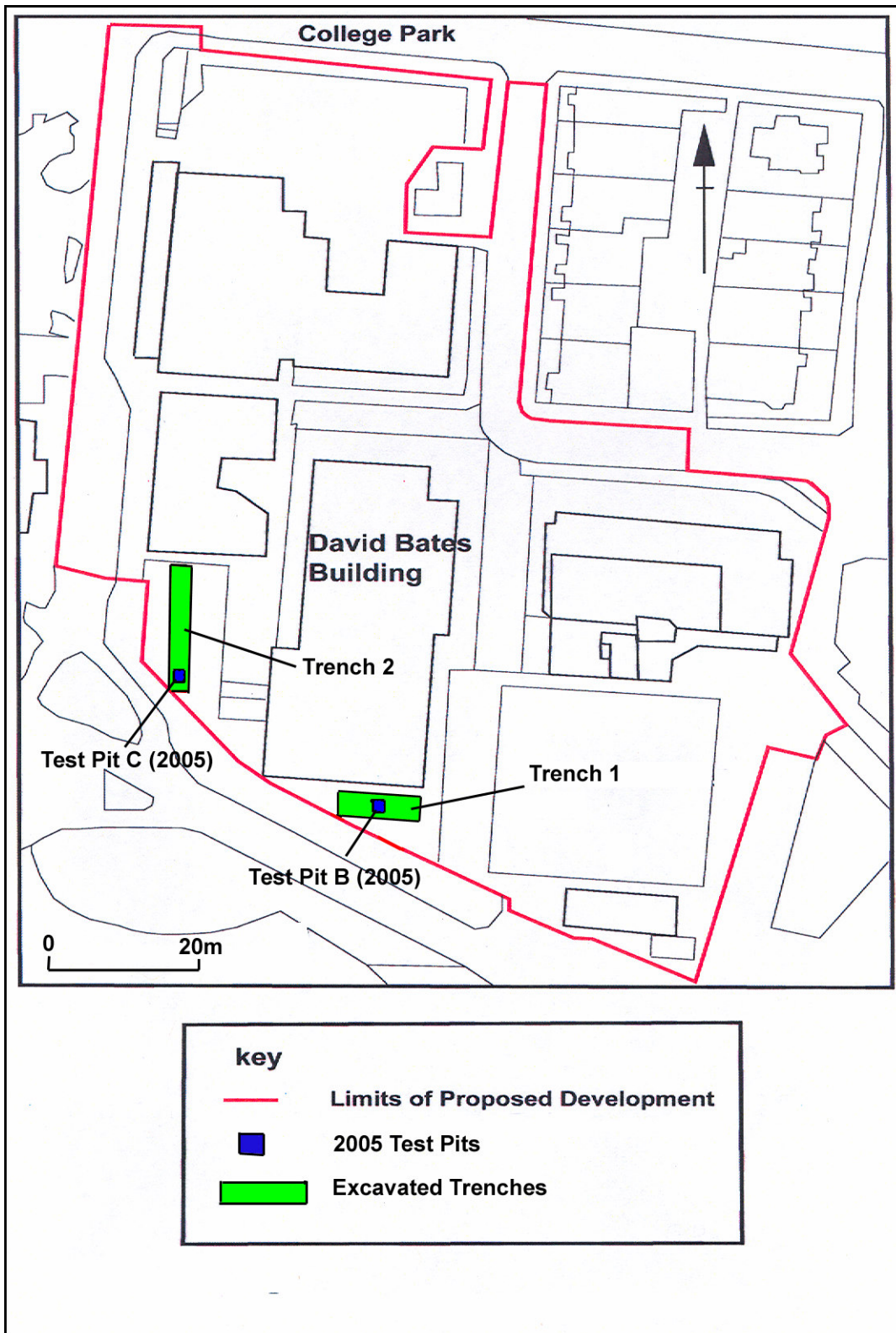


Figure 2: Position of excavated trenches.



Plate 1: Area to the south of the David Bates building prior to excavation, looking west.
(In the area of Test Pit B).



Plate 2: Trench 1, following excavation to the surface of the subsoil (Context No. 103), looking west.

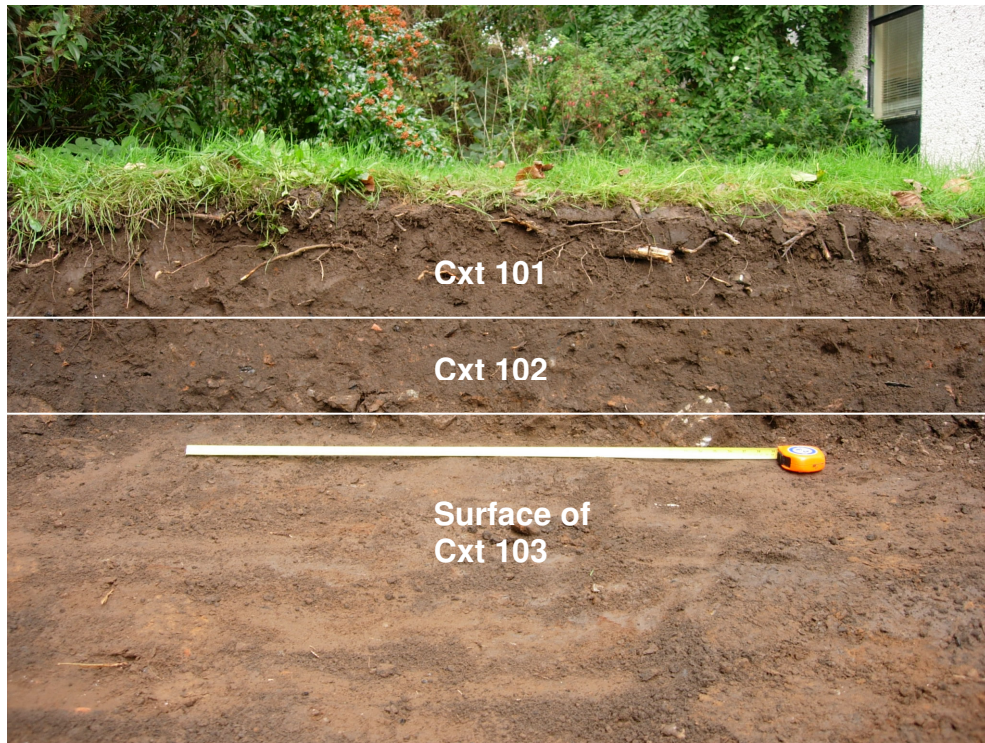


Plate 3: East facing section of Trench 1.



Plate 4: Area to the north-west of the David Bates building, prior to excavation looking south. (In the area of Test Pit C)



Plate 5: Trench 2 following excavation to the surface of the subsoil (Context No. 204), looking south.

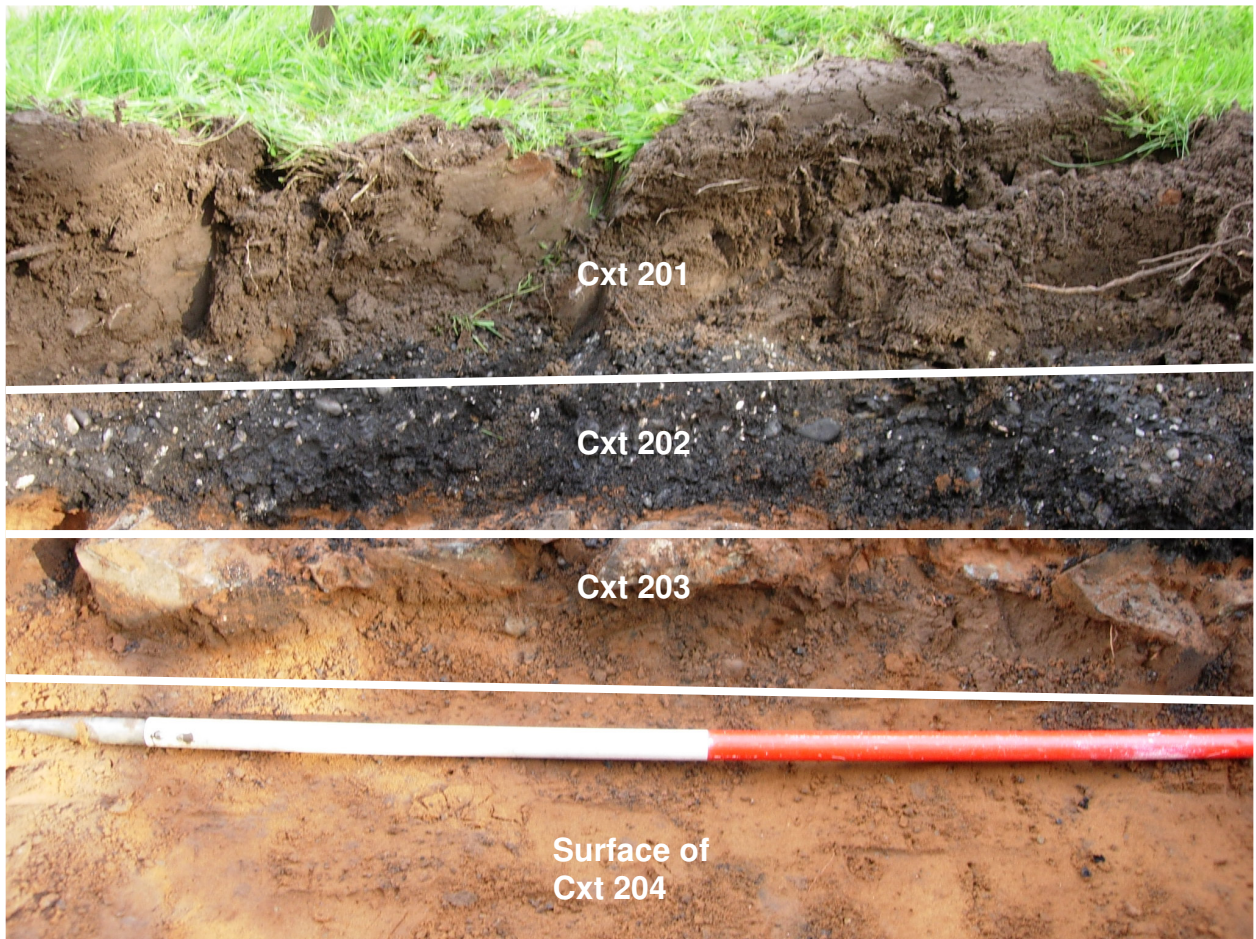


Plate 6: West facing section of Trench 2.