



Monitoring Report No. 59

**16 Sandeel Lane
Orlock
Groomsport
Co. Down**

AE/06/86

Brian Sloan
& Thom Kerr

Site Specific Information

Site Address: 16 Sandeel Lane, Orlock, Groomsport, Do. Down (Fig. 1; Plate 1)

Townland: Orlock

SMR No: DOW 002:029

State Care *Scheduled* *Other* ✓

Grid Ref: J55368339

County: Down

Excavation License No: AE/06/86

Planning Ref / No.: W/2005/0130/F

Date of site visit: 28th April 2006

Archaeologists Present: Brian Sloan and Thom Kerr

Brief Summary:

Four test trenches were excavated to evaluate the potential impact of the proposed development of a replacement dwelling on any hidden archaeological remains. Nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered in any of the trenches.

Type of monitoring:

Excavation of four test trenches by mechanical excavator equipped with a grading bucket under archaeological supervision

Size of area opened: Four trenches measuring approximately 13m by 2m each.

Current Land Use: Residential/Garden

Intended Land Use: Residential

Assessment of site:

The current building at 16 Sandeel Lane is to be replaced, the area subsequently redeveloped, and a replacement dwelling to be constructed. An archaeological evaluation was required prior to this since the site is located in close proximity to a Mesolithic occupation site (DOW 002:029) listed in the *Archaeological Survey of County Down* (Fig. 2).

Conversation between Thom Kerr (CAF) and the landowner during the organisation of the evaluation revealed that site had previously been used as a large-scale sand pit, which had subsequently been infilled with imported clay from north Co. Down.

Monitoring of test trench excavation took place on 28th April 2006. Four test trenches were requested by the PHM Caseworker, Gina Baban, on the site plan (Fig. 3) – three measuring c. 20m x 2m and one c. 15m x 2m. Upon arrival at site it became clear that such an organisation of trenches was impractical since the site plan provided by the PHM Caseworker was out of date. A redevelopment of the neighbouring property (17 Sandeel Lane) had resulted in a large new house being constructed at the northern, seaward edge of this property. This construction work had a direct affect on the area of 16 Sandeel Lane. Part of the area to be trial trenched was covered by builders' rubble and shingle, and the southeastern area of the 16 Sandeel Lane property had been hard-cored to allow for access of heavy machinery, which had severely rutted the remaining grass area. These factors meant that the original trenching methodology was reviewed in the field and replaced with one consisting of four parallel trenches c. 13m x 2m (Fig. 4).

The topsoil (C101) was a uniform brown-black friable clay loam c. 0.10 m in depth. This overlay a layer composed mainly of modern builders' rubble ranging from concrete breeze blocks, concrete paving slabs and reinforced-concrete bollards through to crisp packets and sweet papers, along with slates, tiles, sewer pipes and sherds of modern ceramics (C102). This in turn overlay a compact sterile layer of orange boulder clay (C103).

In Trench 1 the builders' rubble (C102) ranged from between 0.40m and 1.50m in depth (Plates 2 and 3). The excessive depth of C102 in this trench was due to a pit (C104) having been cut through the orange clay (C103), which was then infilled with the builders' rubble which characterised C102. At the depth of 1.50m a layer of withered (yet still green) grass was found *in situ* above a layer of light brown sand (C105). A sondage, c. 0.3m³, was dug into C105 (Plate 4) but it proved to be an archaeologically sterile context. The excessive depth of the excavation, however, meant that no further work was attempted, both for health and safety considerations, and also because it is highly unlikely that the house foundations would impact on C105 (Fig. 5).

In Trench 2 the topsoil and builders' rubble (C101 & C102) was removed to a depth of between 0.40m and 0.80m (Plate 5); in Trench 3 the topsoil and builders' rubble (C101 & C102) was removed to a depth of between 0.45m and 0.85m (Plate 6); and in Trench 4 the topsoil and builders' rubble (C101 & C102) was removed to a depth of between 0.4m and 0.65m. In all three trenches this uncovered a layer of orange boulder clay (C103) to the west of the trench which was then cut into by the pit (C104) and infilled with C102. The northern and western edge of this cut feature could be seen in Trench 4 (Plate 7). It was decided, however, knowing the nature and potential depth of this deposit, that C102 not be fully excavated in these trenches.

Conclusion:

There was nothing of archaeological significance found during this evaluation. The builders' rubble (C102) contained, *inter alia*, green tree branches and, when fully excavated in Trench 1, was found to lie directly on a layer of withered grass which appeared to have been growing *in situ*. This strongly suggests that the dumped material which constituted C102 may have only arrived on site c. 6-12 months previous to evaluation. Context C104, which was infilled by C102, cuts through C103 and it is clear that this is an earlier deposit. Although C103 resembles subsoils in the north Co. Down area, it is more likely that this represents an earlier levelling dump which covered the sand layer (C105), and that subsoil, which was unexcavated during the evaluation, may lie under this layer.

Context C105 may either indicate the original ground surface prior to the levelling by contexts C103 and C102, or the unextracted sand left behind after the rest of the sand had been quarried away. If C105 represents the original ground level, this would suggest that there was a significant difference in the height of the garden and the height of the current property at 16 Sandeel Lane. This does not seem to be apparent in Plate 1. Equally, the fresh nature of the buried grass, would suggest that the area was recently levelled by the addition of C103 and then, shortly afterwards, a pit (C104) was dug into this clay layer, and filled with builders' rubble (C102) which was also spread over the surface up to c. 0.50m in depth. This timeframe seems highly unlikely. It is more probable that a layer of boulder clay was placed over the sand to level the area at the end of the sand extraction. Then, relatively recently, a pit had been dug through C103 which had exposed some of the underlying sand. This had lain open for a number of months, during which time the exposed sand was colonised with grass, before being recently buried under the builders' rubble C102.

The upper 1.50 m on the site, therefore, represents a mixture of earlier levelling of the sand-pit using the orange boulder clay (C103), and a very recent dump and consolidation connected both to the construction of the neighbouring property at 17 Sandeel Lane and also to preparation for construction works at 16 Sandeel Lane. The only *in situ* layer discovered during evaluation was the layer of sand (C105). It is highly likely that this context represents the lower levels of the original sand deposits, the upper 1.00m-1.50m of which was previously removed during quarrying. As such, had any archaeological deposits been present on this site, then it is highly probable that they would have been removed along with this sand. In this context it may be useful to revisit the stratigraphic sequence encountered during the evaluation undertaken by John O'Keeffe (EHS: PHM) on the development at 17 Sandeel Lane for comparative purposes.

Archive:

Finds: N/A

Photographs: 7 digital images, held by CAF

Plans / Drawings: N/A

Signed: _____ Date: _____

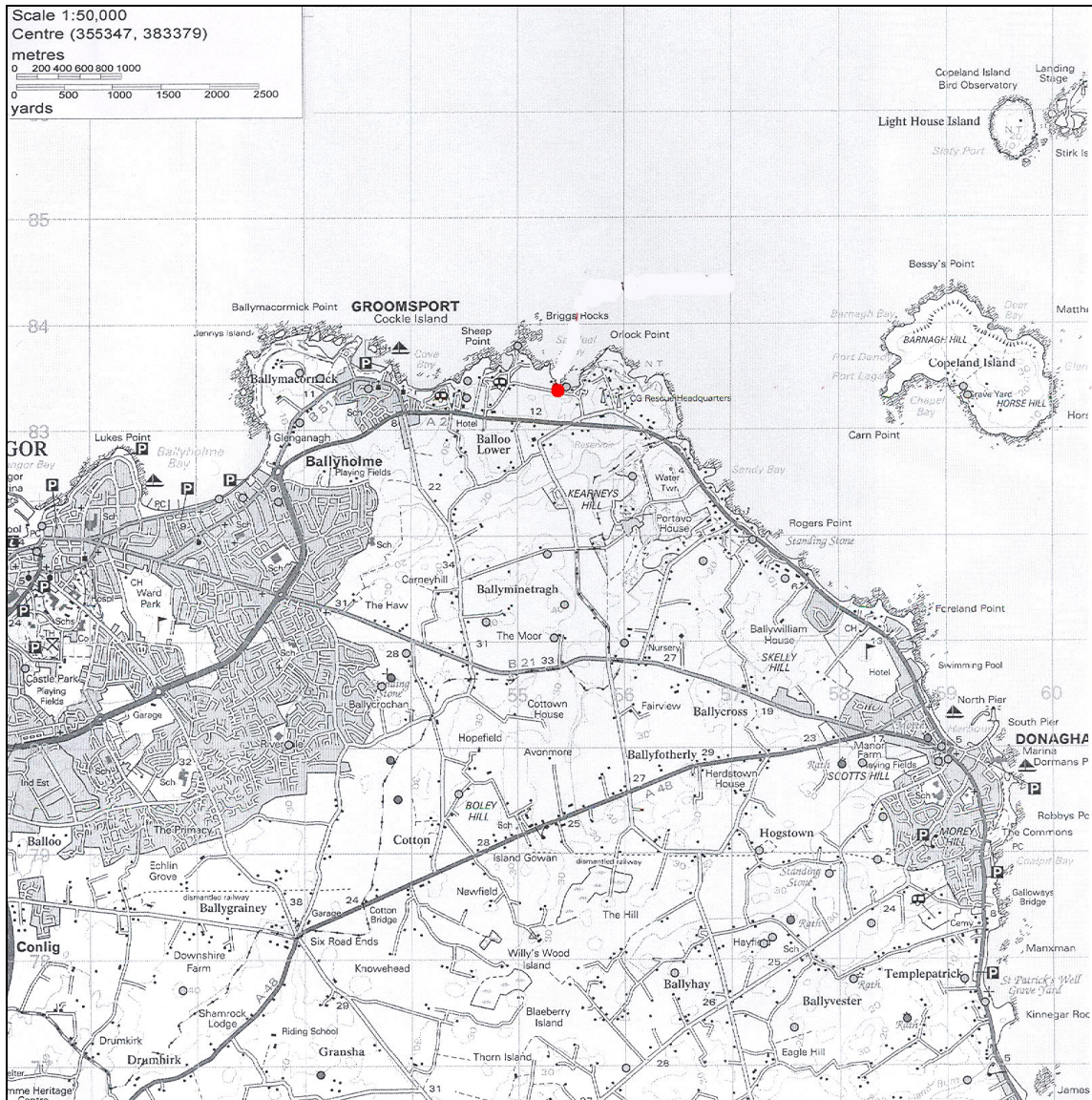


Fig. 1: 1:50,000 Map showing location of site (red dot).



Fig. 2: Location of site (red dot) and archaeological monuments in the immediate vicinity (green dots).



Fig. 3: Proposed location of test trenches (marked in red), as requested by Gina Baban, PHM Caseworker, 22 March 2006.

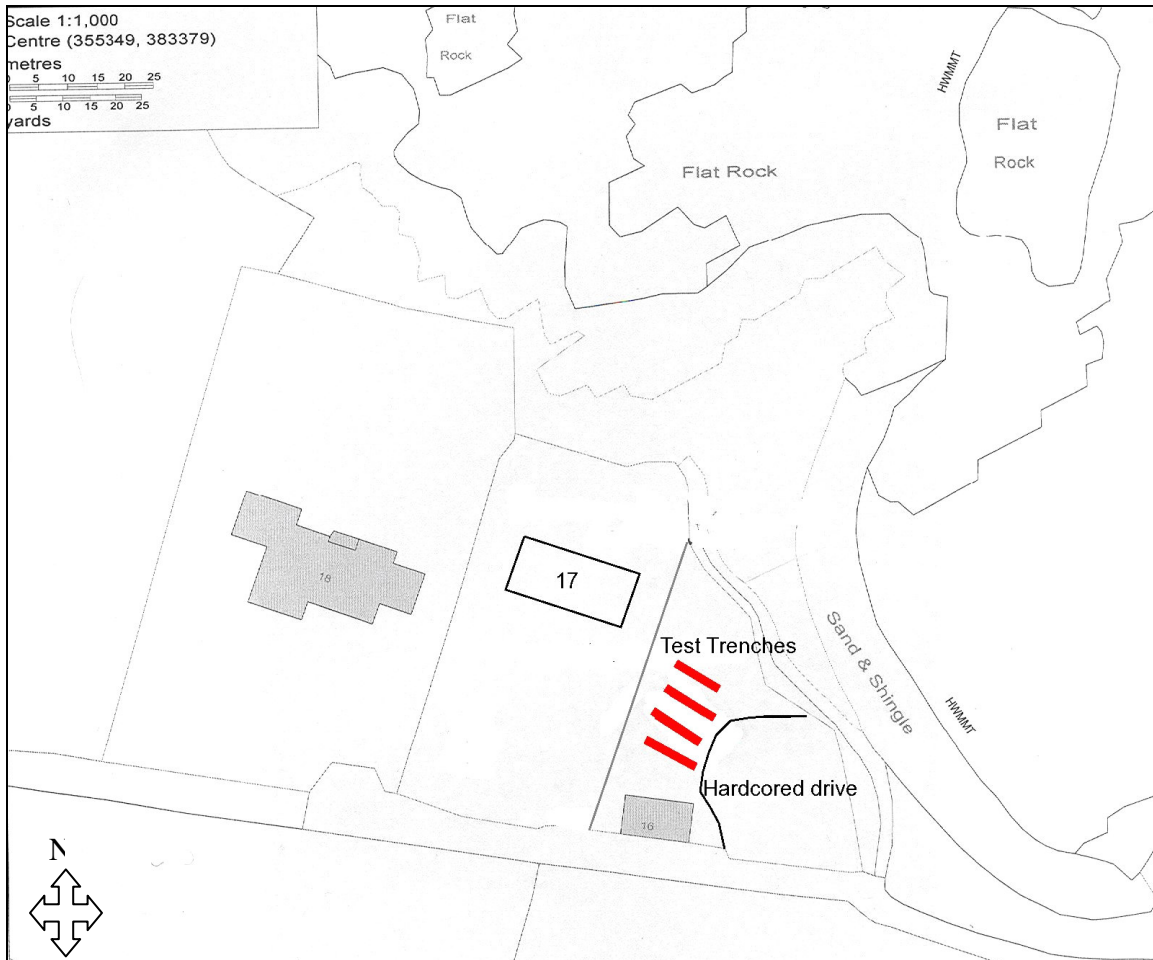


Fig. 4: Actual location of test trenches, excavated during the evaluation in light of the redevelopment work that had already been undertaken in the vicinity of the site, including the construction of a new house (No. 17 Sandeel Lane) and the hard-coring of the south-eastern section of the development area.

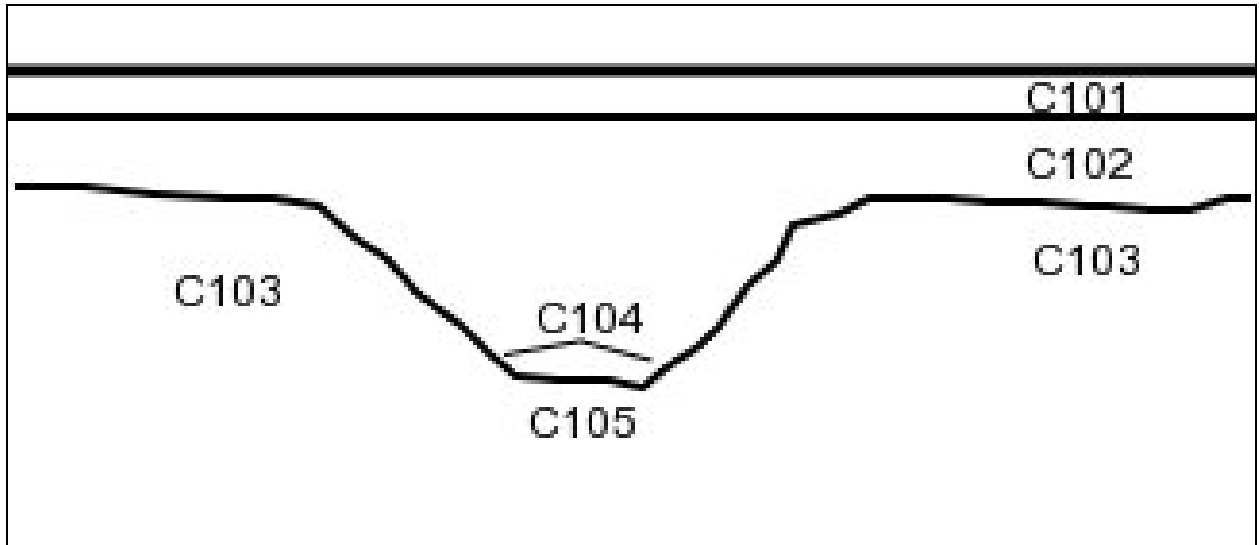


Fig. 5: Sketch showing stratigraphical relationships in Trench 1.



Plate 1: Satellite Image of area (outlined in red) – taken before construction of replacement building for 17 Sandeel Lane, and before hard-coring of area around 16 Sandeel Lane (www.earth.google.com)



Plate 2: Trench 1, looking south-east: Showing C103 in foreground and background, cut C104, the rubble infill C102 and C105 (sand layer).



Plate 3: Trench 1 looking south-west: profile of pit-cut (C104) infilled with C102.
Withered grass above bottom of pit-cut C104 is recognisable in front of ranging rod.



Plate 4: Trench 1 looking south: Sondage through C105. Withered grass above C104 is visible around the area of the sondage.

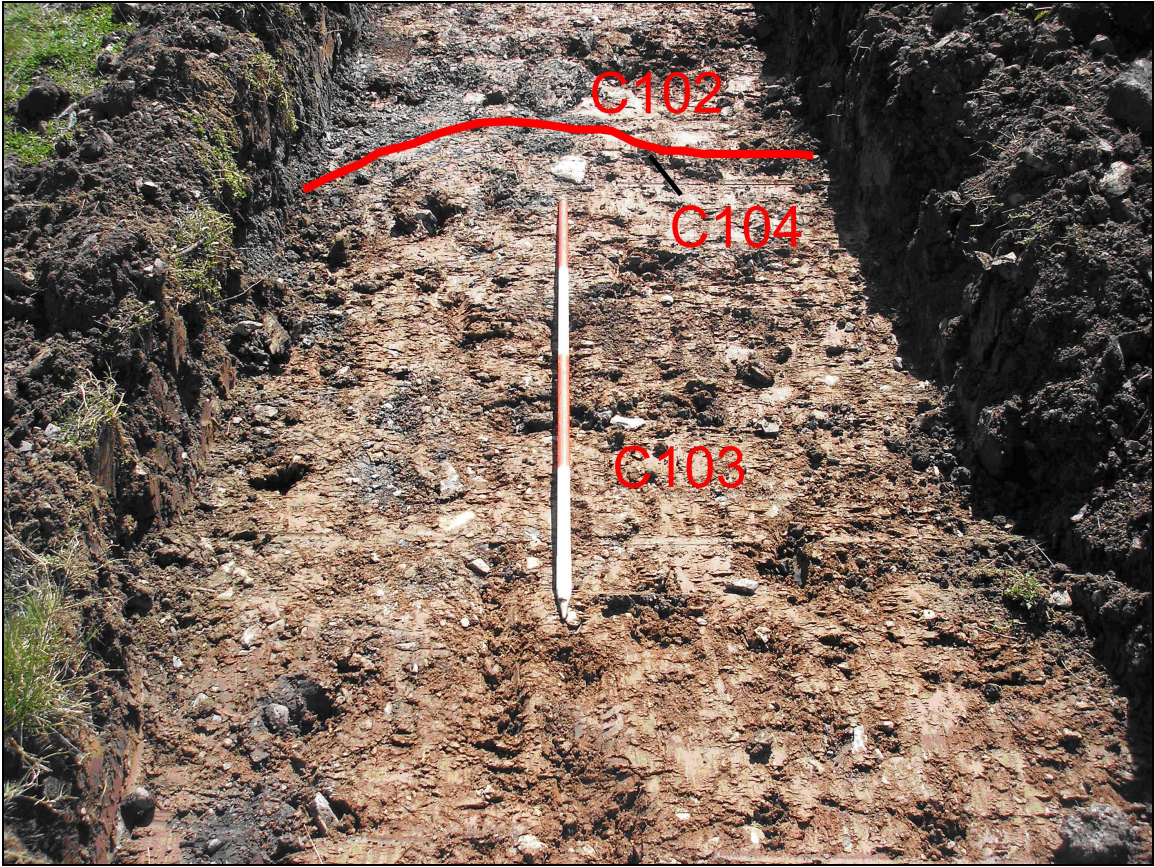


Plate 5: Trench 2, looking south-east: C103 with cut (C104) and rubble infill (C102) to rear.

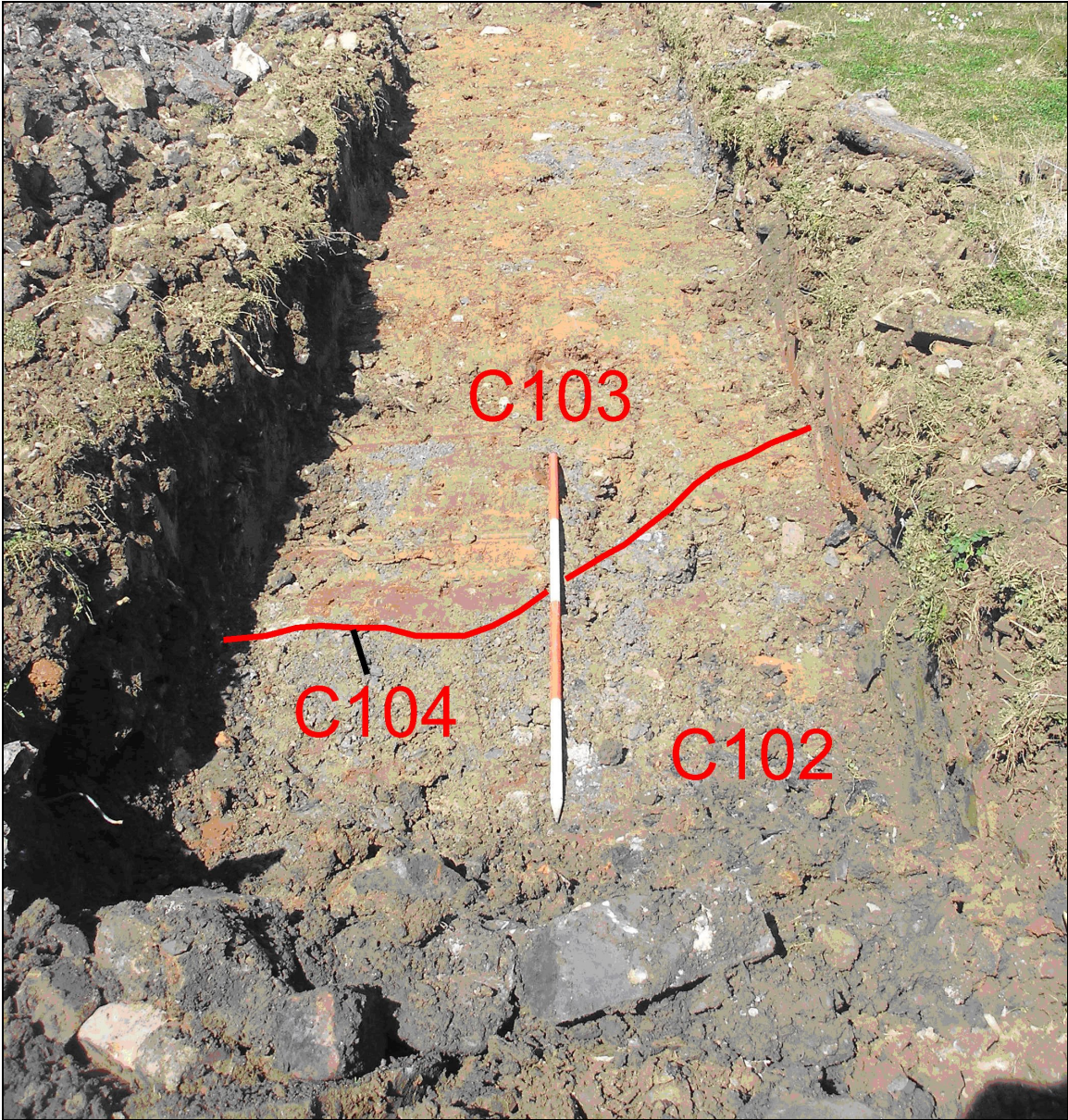


Plate 6: Trench 3 looking northwest: C103 with pit-cut (C104) and rubble infill (C102) in foreground.



Plate 7: Trench 4 looking southeast: C103 showing western and northern edge of pit-cut (C104) and rubble infill (C102) in background.