Altogether Archaeology
Project:
Excavation Recording Manual

Perspective view of Gueswick Hills excavation trench 4, looking east August 2024, from photogrammetry model

Contents

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Forms from Altogether Archaeology by courtesy of Martin Green & Tony Metcalf.

Altogether Archaeology

Dr Jane Harison & WallCAP kindly gave Bob Abram permission to use the format and text of this document for community excavations with changes to suit Lunesdale Archaeology Society (LAS) and further adapted for Altogether Archaeology including recording forms for consistence within their excavations.

Revisions:
Original for WallCAP by Jane Harrison; Revised for LAS, March 2022, and for AA July 2025 by Bob Abram

Approved for use on Altogether Archaeology excavations by the AA Field Working Group 1st August 2025.

A. Introduction

This guide will help with your work on site: with digging, recording and sampling. Each site has a slightly different approach so is important to refer to this manual, even if you have considerable experience. If you are unsure about anything, **ask**. It is always better to check.

Excavation Training may cover many of the following, depending on your length of time on site:

- Trowelling and other digging techniques; sieving
- Undertaking the excavation sequence for each area of soil or context you work on, which could include the following: initial careful trowelling or 'cleaning', further excavation, photography, drawing to scale, written and drawn recording on the context sheet (an ongoing task), and spatial measurements
- Filling out context and other recording sheets
- Setting out a site grid *(not covered in this manual - site training only)*
- Taking measurements and levels
- Drawing plans and sections to scale
- Taking and recording environmental samples
- Dealing with finds: recording and lifting 'small/special finds'; recording and bagging 'bulk finds'
- Preparing an area for photographs
- Taking photos for photogrammetry *(not covered in this manual - site training only)*
- Undertaking GPS measurements *(not covered in this manual - site training only)*
- Undertaking Drone photography *(not covered in this manual - site training only)*

B. Excavation Process: starting digging

You will usually, except when trench-opening and back-filling, be excavating with a trowel, hand-shovel and bucket; some use of the mattock and larger shovel may be necessary.

To get to the area that will be trowelled the turf will need to be removed by hand and stacked in an orderly manner with turves placed grass face-to-face and soil face-to-face to preserve the plant life as well as possible. Ideally each turf should be of a similar thickness as this makes replacement easier as well as helping to make a smoother surface

Usual equipment needed for excavation: trowel, hand shovel, bucket, brush, finds tray with context number tag, context sheet, notebook and black biro/HB Pencil

Bulk finds: all bone and shell goes into the bulk finds tray, and usually all pottery and other ceramics. **Fuel Ash Slag** (vitrified/burnt sand and burnt material) and metal-working **slag** are also

collected, but please ask as these may be dealt with slightly differently. ***Anything* you are not sure about should go in the tray for discussion**. If you think any find is particularly significant and may need recording in more detail as a small find then check, ideally before you lift it out, or after marking its location.

Small finds: these may include: pottery (if especially interesting); worked stone objects; worked bone artefacts; worked flint or chert; some metalwork (iron **Fe** or copper **Cu**). These finds are treated differently: see below for recording. ***Again always ask if in doubt*.**

Dry Sieving: *when the dig director requests sieving*, unless instructed otherwise, begin by sieving one bucket of excavated deposit in three. If you find more than a very few, small fragments of bone, shell, flint/chirt debitage etc. then go to sieving two in three. If you are finding almost nothing then sieve one in five as a running check on your technique. For certain contexts (you may be advised sieving is unnecessary. If you are uncertain show the results of your sieving to someone.

The excavation cycle for each context/area under excavation:

Clean, photo, begin recording (an on-going task), **measure, draw** (on context sheet), **excavate** (while reviewing all records), **sample, draw to scale, photo, complete written record. Repeat.**
Note that normally the dig leader/director on the day will take photographs and note the details in the photograph record sheet.

1. **Recording is a continuous process** (see below) as you excavate an area or context. It is useful to keep a notebook to hand to record differences in the distribution of bulk finds, your developing thoughts about the composition of the soil and the nature of the finds or inclusions such as stone (proportions of shells, bone etc.; fragmentation and abrasion).

2. When you are given a context to excavate, check first whether it needs **cleaning for a photograph**. This means removing any vestiges of overlying (recorded) deposits and loose material which obscures a view of the surface of the new context and any surrounding features and deposits. The aim is to create a clear photographic record <u>not</u> to remove undisturbed material.

3. **A to-scale drawing** or **measured plan** may need doing at this stage. At least one measured plan will be done on the reverse of the context sheet: *see 4 below*.
   *Please **Ask** for clarification on the detail needed it is not intended to be as detailed as a scale drawn plan but will help the report author to interpret the context sheet at a later date after the excavation has been backfilled.*

4. **Begin a context sheet** *(see below).*

- Make sure you have the necessary basic information (**project code, area, context number, approximate co-ordinates of the centre of your context, height above sea-level for the top of the context** using a dumpy level related to the Temporary Benchmark, ***TBM*).**
- Where applicable take other measurements: especially dimensions.
- In most cases draw an **annotated measured sketch plan** at this stage on the reverse of the context sheet to pinpoint **location and horizontal shape**. This is a 'single-context plan', but you may want to include surrounding contexts/structures to clarify your context's location. You may need to annotate this, or add a further plan or a section later (**the drawing should be in back biro/HB pencil; ink over a pencil sketch if you want to start in pencil)**.

5. **Begin excavating.** Unless instructed otherwise: work from a clear **edge** of the context down into the context and **towards yourself**. Unless told otherwise, start by removing around two centimetres, evenly across the whole context. This may mean following the contours of the context, not trying to even it out to create a level surface. There should be no trowel marks but the micro-contours of the context should be preserved. **Empty your bucket often, don't accumulate piles of loose material**: this obscures your work and quickly begins to blow back across your own or someone else's work. All 'bulk finds' go in your tray, 'small finds' need 3D recording. You will may need to take at least one environmental sample (see below). **Check some working shots are taken as excavation is in progress.**

6. **From your notes complete the context sheet (see below).** Check you have added all small finds, soil and environmental samples, a bulk finds summary and that you add plan and section numbers. Check your sketch drawing on the back of the context sheet locates the context adequately; **annotate freely**. **Show the context sheet to a team member.** As this stage discuss your interpretation of how the deposit was formed and events that can be deduced. Talk to your colleagues, especially those working close by.

7. **Draw the plan or section to scale** *(see below later in this guide).*

Fig. 1: Trowelling and straightening edges

C. Completing Context sheets

The process of completing the context record sheet for the layer, deposit, cut, fill, feature or structure you are working on is a *crucial* part of the record of the site. The descriptions, measurements and interpretation enable the post-excavation team to recreate the context and to build-up ideas about the history of the site. Each project records slightly differently in response to the local geology, archaeology and practical constraints.

USE BLACK PEN AND WRITE CLEARLY – these sheets are photocopied/scanned.

Consult the following together with the sample context sheet on p. 13-14.

1. **No excavation should be done before the boxes at the head of the sheet are filled in**: site context and area number, context type, levels i.e. heights above sea-level of the upper unexcavated surface, where applicable, and co-ordinates rough centre the context or a clear location description or sketch.

2. The new context number needs to be taken from the context register. Check with a team member. **Never take a number without recording the fact in the context.**

3. You will return to the context sheet several times. Keep **taking notes as you dig**. The forms are working documents not polished productions; note thoughts, including changes of mind, as impressions can be as helpful as certainties when writing up.
4. Remember to add any **soil sample numbers, small finds numbers, environmental sample numbers, and scale drawing numbers.** These are very easy to forget. Double-check as it can

take quite a while in post-excavation to track down all the relevant drawings for a context if you have forgotten to record their completion on the context sheet.

5. The **drawing on the reverse of the context sheet** is also very important. It shows the relative location of the context for which reason you should **include a north arrow and preferably a trench-edge;** at least indicate with an arrow approximately how far and in which direction the nearest trench-edge lies. Use the same drawing conventions as on the scale drawings. The drawing is not to scale but should be a proptionate representation. It can be annotated freely. It also records the **dimensions** graphically and **accurate measurements** should be included.

6. **Keep notes on the bulk finds**. At the end of the day, or when you complete excavation if that happens first, a summary of the bulk finds should be added. Include type, approximate proportions e.g. shell: bone, condition (including noting burning) and fragmentation. Date the summary. If the context is large and excavation continues over more than one day complete the bulk finds summary at the end of each day and date it. If you have a part articulated skeleton (bird, fish or cattle/caprid) or anything unusual **check before you lift it**.

7. **Note on the context sheet.** There are sections of the context sheet in a background buff colour which are only relevant if you are recording deposits/fills/layers. Other sections in a background blue colour are only relevant when recording cuts.

Describing fills, layers and deposits:
see sample context sheet: would you change/add anything

See also appendix 3 on "How to assess soil composition".

Descriptions should be numbered as in the prompt box on the context sheet

1. **Colour** described using 3 elements in the following order: **1. light, mid** or **dark**; **2. Hue**, if necessary and **3. the predominant colour** *e.g. dark, yellowish brown*. You may need to expand this if the context is mixed, as are some midden deposits! The shades of brown are important:
   broadly the darker the deposit the higher the organic or burnt content.
   Again **comparison** with associated contexts is useful.

   ### Use the following colours only:

Modifier	Hue	Colour
light	greyish	grey
mid	pinkish	pink
dark	reddish	red
	yellowish	yellow
	brownish	brown
	orangey	orange
	blueish	blue
	purpley	purple
	greenish	green
	blackish	black
		white

2. **Compaction**: use one of the following
   Loose: easily excavated with a trowel does not cohere
   Friable: some resistance to trowel, some coherence but crumbles in fingers
   Soft: can be moulded with fingers (the grains must cohere)
   Firm: needs some effort to excavate, is either very dry or very fine grained and coherent **Compact**: needs a mattock!

Note any **variation** in compaction. **Comparison** to overlying/nearby contexts is useful: include here or in descriptive data. **Also record whether the context is dry, damp or wet.**

3. **Composition and texture: texture** can be described as smooth, silky, sticky, sandy or gritty. **Composition**: the proportions of each range of different grain-sizes of sediment. The components are sand, clay and silt e.g. silty sand, sandy clay, silty clay *(see fig 2*). Stones or pebbles/cobbles *could* be part of the composition rather than recorded as inclusions if they are above c15% of the context.

Decide the grain-sizes involved and then the proportion of those different grain-sizes within the context

The table below gives the approx. size ranges. Thus, silty sand in the proportion (40:60): the greatest proportion comes last. Describe any **lenses** small patches of distinctly different material e.g. clay, and **changes** within the context e.g. larger pebbles concentrated in the NW corner, siltier in E.

See fig 2 to guide you through the decision process regarding the composition of the context or use the descriptions in Appendix 3.

Grain sizes:

Material	**Size in mm**
Clay	Smallest grain size – smooth feel
Silt	Slightly soapy feel
Fine sand	0.02-0.06mm
Medium sand	0.06-0.20mm
Coarse sand	0.20-2.0mm
Pebbles	2.0-60.0mm
Cobbles	60.0-200mm (6-20cm/0.06-0.20m)

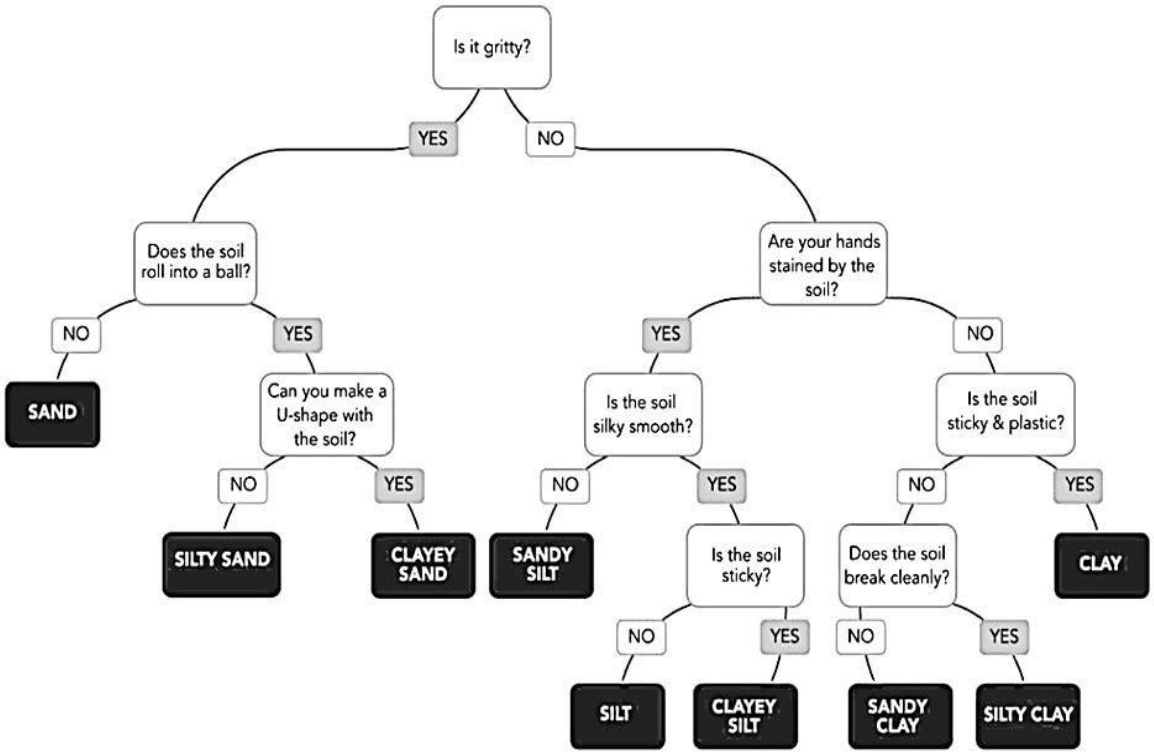
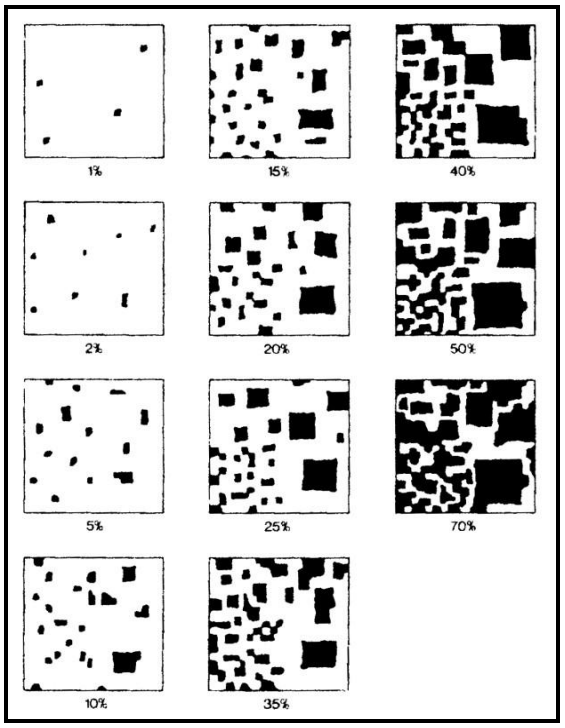


Fig. 2: deciding the composition of soil

4. **<u>Inclusions</u>**: This requires description of everything not covered in composition that is not a bulk find: usually **stones, some shell and/or charcoal,** and their proportion **of the whole context** (see chart below: *fig. 3*); or are they infrequent, occasional, moderate or frequent in occurrence e.g. rare flecks of charcoal or 5% rounded small pebbles c10mm. In the bulk finds box compare proportions of stone, shell etc **within** the bulk finds.
   Careful description is vital. Elaborate in the descriptive space or on the back as necessary. **Note if the inclusions are spread unevenly,** if they cluster or shell is associated with the stone rather than charcoal etc. This can alert to 'special' deposits
   Note the condition of inclusions (elaborate in the bulk finds box): burnt, fragmentary, shattered, abraded, polished, complete, well-preserved.
   Note range of sizes of stones: and also is the stone well sorted – mostly all the same size; moderately sorted – a small range of sizes; or poorly sorted – a wide range of sizes.
   What shape are the stones? See below, *fig. 4*.

Proportions Chart

Fig. 3: chart to help estimate proportions of stones etc in a context



Shape chart

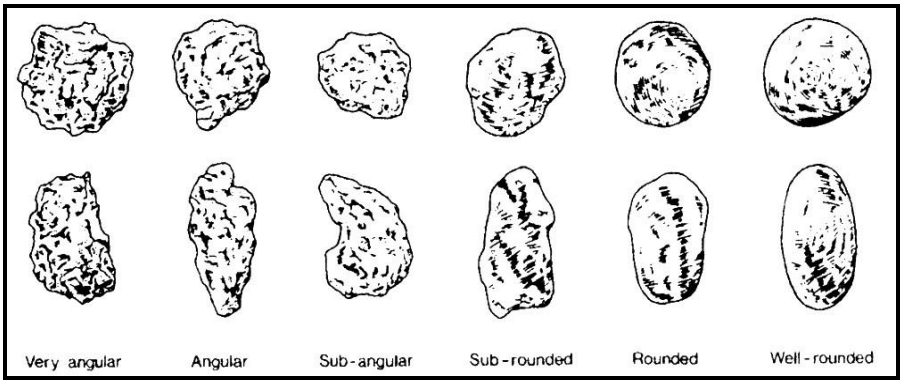


Fig. 4: shapes of stones

5. **Thickness/Dimensions:** ensure the N-S and E-W dimensions of the context are included, and shown on the drawing on the back of the sheet. **Go back when excavation complete to note the depth/thickness of the deposit**. Elaborate on the measured drawing on reverse if necessary.

6. **Extent/Boundaries:** between deposits. Are they clear, irregular or diffuse (blurred and difficult to pinpoint) with the contexts below and above.

7. **Method of recovery:** what tools were you using, what was the **weather** like? E.g. Mattock, spade, hoe, trowel. Was the context sieved or not.

8. **Comments/Contamination:** modern, disturbance rabbit holes, other burrows, worm action and roots. Any other comment to help define the context.

Context Sheet

Site code: GH24 Trench: 4

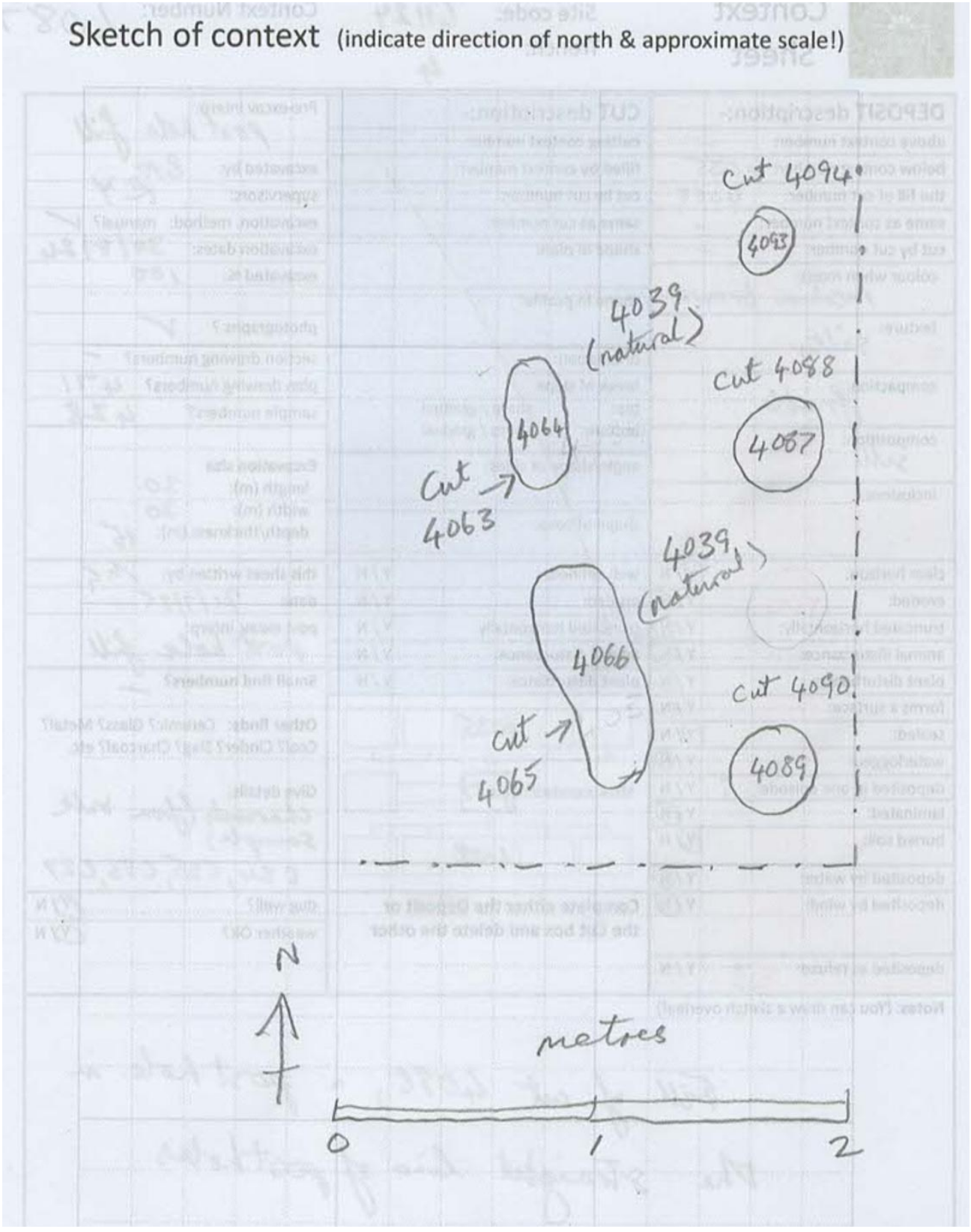
Context Number: 4087

DEPOSIT description:-		**CUT** description:-		
above context number: –		**cutting** context number:		Pre-excav interp: post hole fill
below context number: 4035		**filled by** context number:		excavated by: BT RY
the fill of cut number: 4088		**cut by** cut number:		supervisors:
same as context number: –		**same as** cut number:		excavation. method: manual? ✓
cut by cut number: –		**shape in plan:**		excavation dates: 30/8/24
colour when moist: medium brown				excavated %: 100
		shape in profile:		
texture: silty				photographs ? ✓
		orientation:		section drawing numbers? –
compaction: friable		break of slope		plan drawing numbers? 471
		top: sharp / gradual		sample numbers? 428
composition: silt		bottom: sharp / gradual		
		angle/shape of sides:		**Excavation size**
inclusions: no stones flecks charcoal				length (m): 30
		shape of base:		width (m): 30
				depth/thickness (m): 15
clear horizon: (Y) / N		well defined: Y / N		this sheet written by: MG.
eroded: Y / (N)		eroded: Y / N		date: 21/7/25
truncated horizontally: Y / (N)		truncated horizontally: Y / N		post excav. interp: post hole fill
animal disturbance: Y / (N)		animal disturbance: Y / N		
plant disturbance: Y / (N)		plant disturbance: Y / N		**Small find numbers?** –
forms a surface: Y / (N)		4035		
sealed: (Y) / N		this context 4087		**Other finds**: Ceramic? Glass? Metal? Coal? Cinder? Slag? Charcoal? etc.
waterlogged: Y / (N)		4088		
deposited in one episode: ? Y / N				Give details: Charcoals (from bulk sample) C24, C25, C26, C27
laminated: Y / (N)				
buried soil: (Y) / N				
deposited by water: Y / (N)				
deposited by wind: Y / (N)		**Complete either the Deposit or the Cut box and delete the other**		dug well? (Y) / N
deposited as refuse: ? Y / N				weather OK? (Y) / N

Notes: (You can draw a sketch overleaf)

Fill of cut 4088, a post hole in the straight line of post holes

Reverse *(note the sheet reverse is blank and below is an example of what to include)*



Don't forget to **Sign and date the form!**

Describing cuts:
see sample context sheet:

Postholes and small pits can be very hard to pick up. Post-depositional processes often blur the cut-lines. **Keep your eyes open and your trowel hand alert.** Changes in compaction and inclusions may signal a 'cut feature' even if changes in colour or texture are not obvious.

Dimensions: diameter, length, width, depth as applicable

Describe:
1. **Shape in plan**: circular, sub-circular, rectangular etc.
2. **Profile**: what happens where feature sides meet the surface the feature is cut into: is the feature truncated?
4. **Sides**: steeply/gently sloping, with a break of slope, undercut, vertical, uneven
6. **Base**: U-shaped, V-shaped, flat, uneven
7**. Orientation**: if relevant (e.g. for a ditch or a more linear feature)
9. Fill Numbers

Other information

Descriptive data: an overall description in words of the physical character of the context. The presence of iron-pan and other staining such as manganese is very important; so is any variation across the context. Note all the physical relationships with other contexts that you have revealed: above/below, butting/abutting, filled by/fill of. Suggest the process by which the context might have accumulated; has it accumulated slowly or rapidly in one go. Compare with contexts close by. **Note what proportion of the context was sieved** (if undertaken**).**

Stratigraphic matrix: complete in discussion with a team member. You may need to leave this until other excavation has been completed.

Interpretation: what is it? This is your chance to suggest what the context might represent, what activities in the past produced it. Is it a surface, a midden deposit or a dump of ash? Give reasons for your interpretation. Relate it to other contexts. Hypotheses are fine.

On the reverse: on the blank side draw a measured sketch plan and/or section of your context with important dimensions indicated and annotated with any helpful additional information. Reference dimensions back to a datum point ⊗ and add North direction ↗.

Don't forget to **Sign and date the form!**

Context Sheet

Site code: GH24 Trench: 4 Context Number: 4048

DEPOSIT description:-		**CUT** description:-		
above context number:		**cutting** context number: 4012, 4039		Pre-excav interp: gulley ? drainage.
below context number:		**filled by** context number: 4047		excavated by: MG
the fill of cut number:		**cut by** cut number: –		supervisors: RY
same as context number:		**same as** cut number: –		excavation. method: manual? Y
cut by cut number:		**shape in plan:** straight gulley 0.5m wide		excavation dates: 15/8/24
colour when moist:				excavated %: 100.
		shape in profile: V		photographs ? ✓
texture:		orientation: NE – SW.		section drawing numbers? 449, 469
compaction:		break of slope top: sharp / ~~gradual~~ bottom: ~~sharp~~ / gradual		plan drawing numbers? –
				sample numbers? fill: 419
composition:		angle/shape of sides: 45° slopes.		**Excavation size** length (m): width (m): depth/thickness (m):
inclusions:		shape of base: rounded.		
clear horizon: Y / N		well defined: (Y) / N		this sheet written by:
eroded: Y / N		eroded: Y / (N)		date: MG 21/7/85.
truncated horizontally: Y / N		truncated horizontally: Y / (N)		post excav. interp: ? boundary ditch
animal disturbance: Y / N		animal disturbance: Y / (N)		
plant disturbance: Y / N		plant disturbance: Y / (N)		**Small find numbers?** –
forms a surface: Y / N		4047		
sealed: Y / N		this context 4048		**Other finds:** Ceramic? Glass? Metal? Coal? Cinder? Slag? Charcoal? etc.
waterlogged: Y / N		4012 4039		Give details:
deposited in one episode: Y / N				
laminated: Y / N				
buried soil: Y / N				
deposited by water: Y / N				
deposited by wind: Y / N		**Complete either the Deposit or the Cut box and delete the other**		dug well? (Y) / N
deposited as refuse: Y / N				weather OK? (Y) / N

Notes: (You can draw a sketch overleaf)

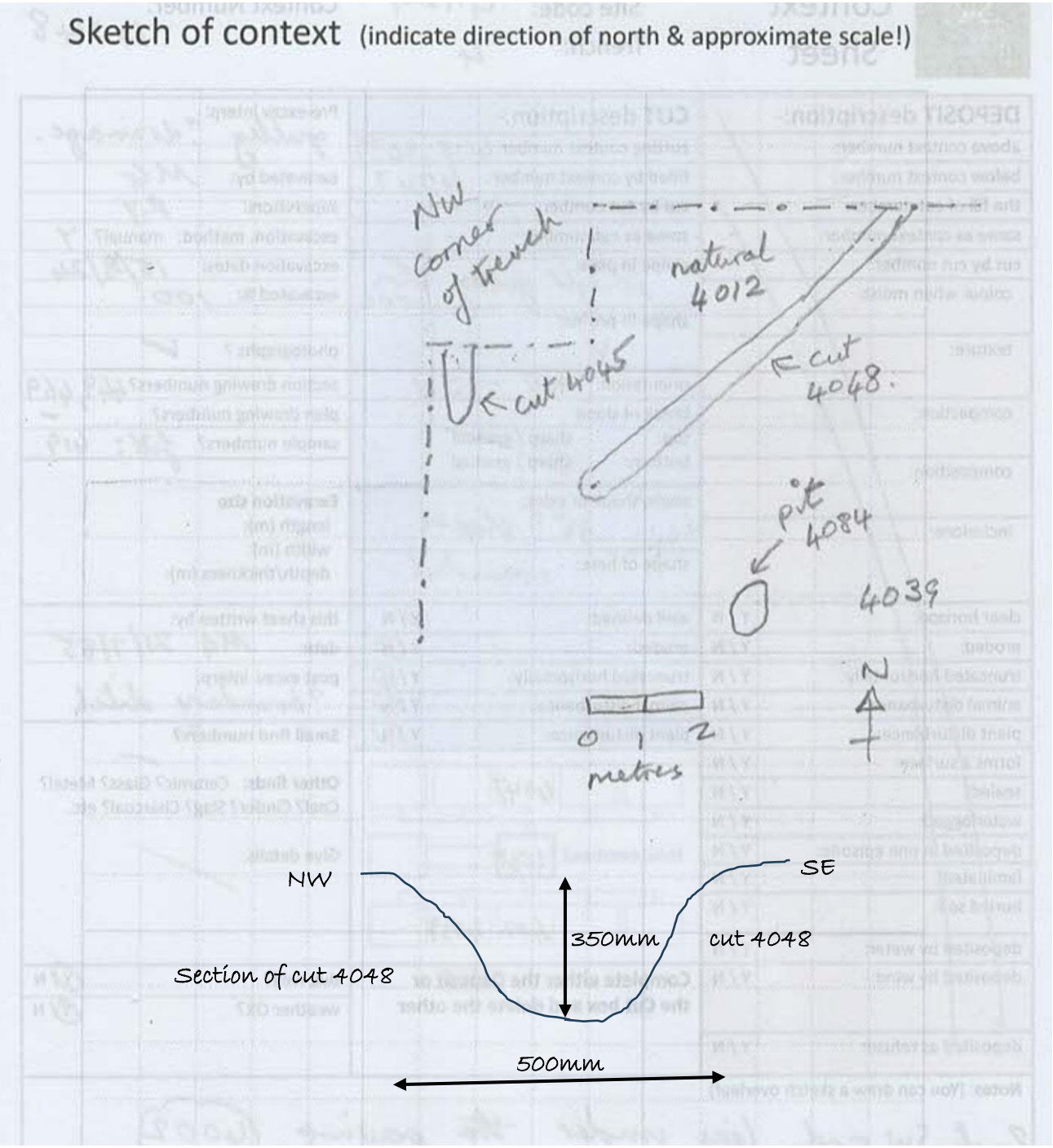
2m of SW end lies under the paving (4002), separated by loamy deposit (4050)

Rest of gulley is under cobbled surface 4010.

Is cut into natural (4012)/(4039).

Total length 7m. Rounded SW end.

Reverse *(note the sheet reverse is blank and below is an example of what to include)*



D. Bulk Finds: at the end of each working day or when moving to a new context ensure you have completed the inclusions box on the context sheet and that finds are sorted and bagged for collection *(you may need to seek help to sort the bulk finds).*

E. 'Small' Finds: Small finds are not always small!

Fig. 5: Retrieving an Iron Age Quern Stone

Metal (this may not include all iron/Fe, so check), worked stone, worked bone, worked flint, glass, and sometimes some pottery and tile, may be small finds. These are particularly significant objects that help date and explain activity on the site. Articulated animal and fish skeletons may be recorded in 3-D but not treated as small finds. The spatial measurements for small finds should be recorded on your context sheet with the unique small finds number.

If you uncover something you suspect classifies as a small find **leave it where it** is or mark the spot it came from if you have already dislodged it. Some finds will be needed to be lifted out of the ground especially carefully, perhaps in a block of soil. Consult someone. You will need a small finds number **which you should note on the context sheet immediately**. The number will also be entered in the **finds register** in the trench file (with the context number; x, y, z measurements, and a brief description).

A member of the team will help you **record**:

1. the location using the GPS and dumpy level; or site measurement from a grid.
2. its height above sea level using the GPS, or dumpy level. **Where possible mark the location of the find(s) △ on your sketch plan on the reverse of the context sheet with its given number.**

The find will be wrapped if necessary and put in a plastic bag with holes punched in or Silica gel. The **site code, date, finds number, context number, level and co-ordinates, description** (comb fragment, bead) **and type of material** (copper Cu, Iron, Fe, glass, bone) will all be written on the white panels on the bag.

F. Environmental and geoarchaeological samples.

Environmental samples:

- You may need to take at least a white bucket or a general environmental sample bag for your context. Ask if you should be doing so. Consult about the best location from which to take the sample(s). The sample should generally be taken after a first trowel 'clean' and from the least disturbed area of the context.
- **Take the next number in sequence from the Environmental Sample Register.** And fill in the details on the register. Note the same details on the environmental sample bag or container.
- Each of the sample locations should be marked ◊ on the sketch map with its location on the reverse of the context sheet and where applicable on a scale section or plan drawing. If there was a special reason for taking the sample note that on the context sheet Notes section.
- Check all the environmental sample numbers have been recorded on the relevant context sheet in the notes section.

G. Drawing Plans and Sections

Whilst Altogether Archaeology use photogrammetry and drone scalable images site drawn plans and sections allow direct interpretation to be recorded and highlighted.

We will guide you through the drawing conventions and the methods if they are new to you. Remember the drawings are accurate scale representations but are **also the result of your interpretation of the deposits and structures**. **They should be annotated freely.** Think as you draw: do structures and deposits behave in the way being depicted? Is the drawing explaining what has been excavated and you now see in front of you? The following sets out the process to follow:

You will need**:**

- **A drawing kit:** pencil 4H - 6H, rubber, scale-ruler, pencil-sharpener, hand tape, plumb-bob
- **To decide a scale:** consult as necessary (generally 1:10 or 1:20 for sections and localised plans with 1:100 for whole trench plans).
- **A drawing board/clipboard:** with graph paper on and the right size of drawing film
- **A Plan or Section Number:** from the register in the trench file
- **For a Plan:** two 30m tapes, possibly also a drawing frame, a hand tape and long nails. The drawing frame is a metre square frame (on the inside edge of the frame) divided into 0.2m squares by strings. This can be laid directly on the area being drawn using whatever is handy to ensure it is level.
- **For a Section:** one 30m tape, a hand tape or ruler, long nails, string, bulldog clips and someone to help you level the string against your section. If you are doing a wall elevation you may need canes to erect a section string in front of the wall.
- To make sure you are clear about the sequence or layout of the deposits before you draw. That understanding is necessary to produce a useful drawing! More than one plan or section may be drawn on a sheet so it is important to record on the drawing register which plan/section is shown on which sheet for compiling in the report catalogue.

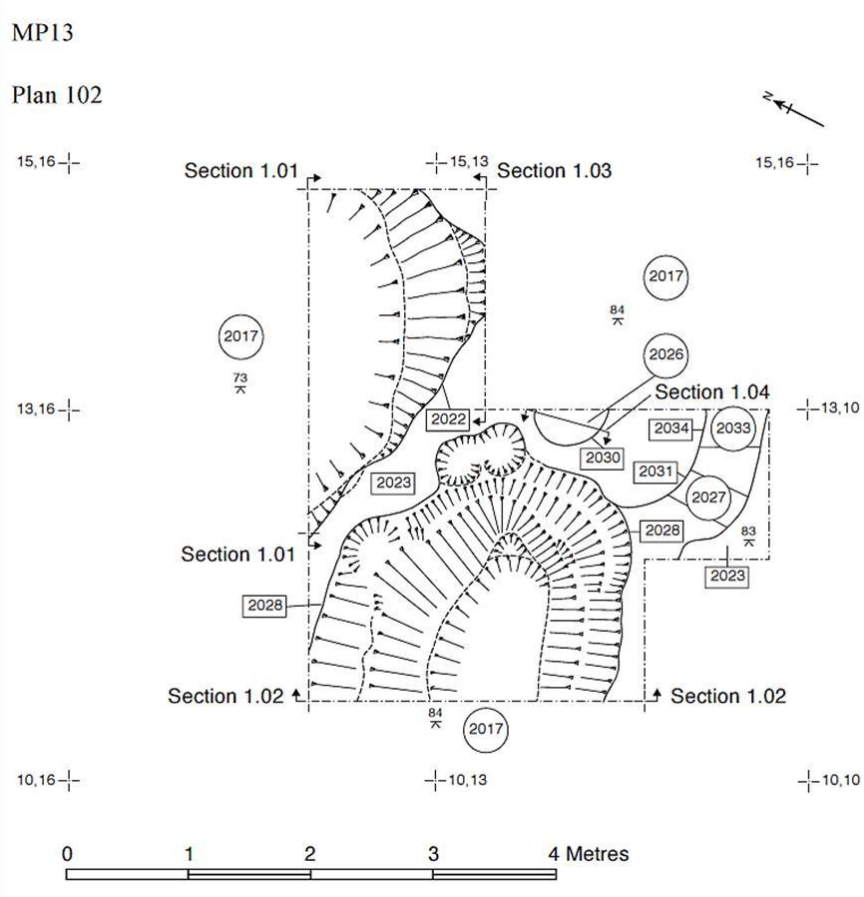


Fig. 6: a digitised plan. The field drawing would also have date, planners' initials and a scale, e.g. 1:20

Drawing a plan:

1. **Decide how to set up the area to be planned:** the area being planned (that is recorded to scale from a vertical bird's-eye view) needs to be divided into metre squares on the ground. Tapes or a sequence of nails can be secured across the area on the trench's E-W and N-S grid lines so that the planning frame can be laid on a square metre easily located on the site grid. The number of grid lines you will need set up in the trench will depend on the size and complexity of the area.

2. **Prepare the drawing board: w**ork out the area of drawing film needed for the plan at the chosen scale. For example an area 7m x 5m (max dimensions), being drawn at 1:20 (a common planning scale), will require a piece of film 35cm x 25cm (**100cm** on the ground is **5cm** on the film): allowing for a margin, the piece of film should be around 40cm x 30cm. Fix the film on the drawing board <u>securely</u> with masking tape: it is usually better to wrap the film slightly over the edge and secure on the back. In damp and windy conditions bulldog clips can be very useful as an extra way of holding the film - in fact bulldog clips are very useful in many ways on site and an indispensable part of a digger's kit!

4. **Mark-up the drawing film:** draw on a scale bar and mark the position of several relevant grid co-ordinates making sure they sit on one of the solid corners of the graph squares. Mark on the trench edge or, if it does not feature in the plan, use an arrow to indicate exactly how far away to

the N, S, E or W is the nearest trench edge. Check your plan sits comfortably within the grid you have plotted. In the corner with the most room write in pencil: **site code, trench number, plan number, scale drawn at, date, your name, and mark on a North arrow.**

4. **Locate the first metre square:** put the planning frame in the trench on the most sensible metre square to start drawing (using nails on the grid strings where possible). The inside corners of the planning frame should be marked with long nails if there are no nails already in place. With a light x note the location of the four corners of the frame's square metre on the drawing film. Use the frame's strings to draw everything within that square metre to scale on the marked square on your film. Keep your eye as near to vertical over the spot you are drawing to avoid distortion. If your frame has to be above the surface because of structures or large stones drop a plumb bob down to the point you are drawing to find its true location on the frame grid. **Use crisp single lines and keep your pencil very sharp.**

5. **Move the frame**: lift the frame and using two of the corner nails as a guide and, checking against the internal grid, put the frame on the adjacent square metre. Draw everything in that square checking all the lines from the previous square join up.

6. **When the drawing is done**: levels need to be taken across the plan. All context numbers need to be added and the **plan number noted on all the context sheets for those contexts**. Add a key if necessary. Before any of the location nails are removed have the drawing checked. Do not take the plan off the board. The drawing will be, double-checked and taken off the board later. **Post-excavation.** All the drawings are scanned and digitised. Many will appear in the final Project publications!
If the dumpy level is used ensure that the backsight reading is recorded (from the TBM) and make clear if the level recorded is a Foresight reading or a Reduced level this is to ensure the corrected level is recorded on the final drawing.

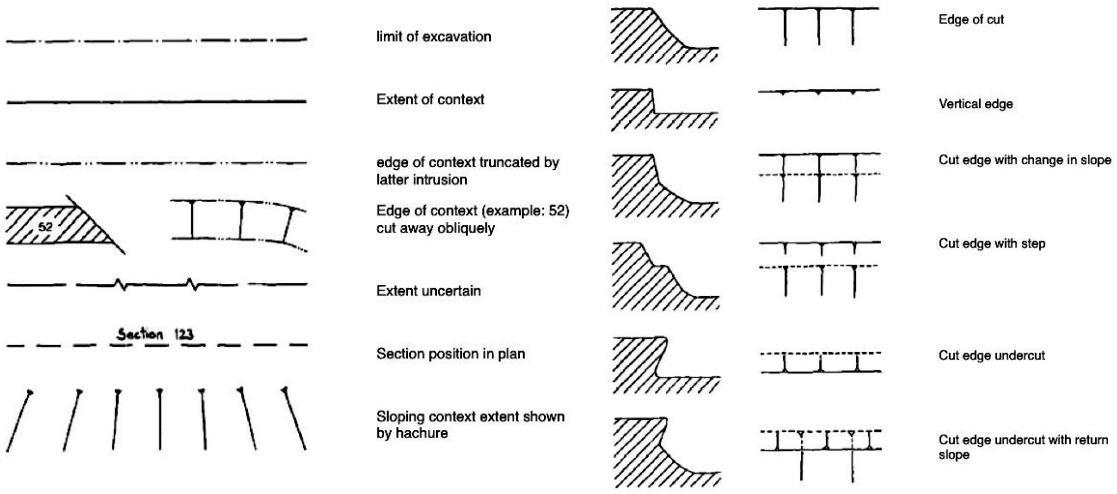


Fig. 7: some common planning conventions, and see last page

Drawing a Section

The procedure is very similar to planning but a level horizontal line needs to be set up across the vertical surface (baulk of layered deposits or structural face) of the section as a reference point for the drawing.

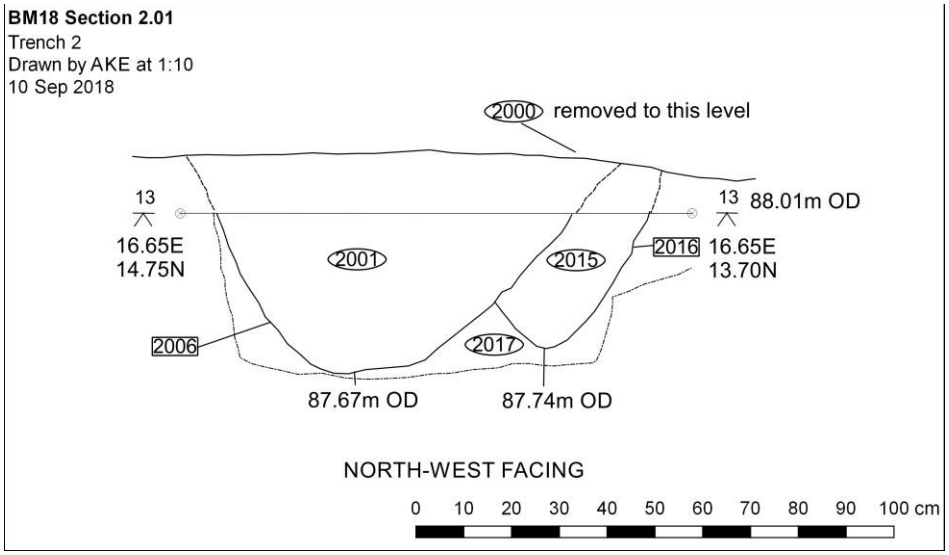


Fig. 8: sample digitised section drawing

1. **Decide a scale**: measure the maximum length and height of your section/wall. Work out the size of drawing film needed. The usual scale is 1:10 or **100cm** on the ground is **10cm** on the film. Allow a margin as above and fix the film securely to the board. Annotate the drawing with the basic information as above including the section number. **Make sure you draw a scale bar.**

2. **Set up a level line across the section**: unless the section is less than one metre long this should be done using the dumpy level. This procedure will be taught on site but involves choosing a suitable point for the nail for one end of the string (preferably about one-third of the way from the top of the section across its face), measuring the level of that point and then putting a series of nails in across the section at c. 0.5-0.7m intervals at that same level. Get and record the level of the string line in the levels register! The string can then be set up along the levelled-in nails.

3. Set up a tape with the zero end on the southern or western nail and secure it to the nails using bull-dog clips so that you have an horizontal scale. Mark the line on your film at the scaled-down length. Mark the two vertical ends of your section measuring up and down from the nails to establish their correct height.

4. Using a plumb-bob as necessary and a hand tape to plot the upper and lower limits of the section. Starting with the top edge measure vertically up with the hand-tape every 0.1m or so, or where there are definite height changes, and mark the heights on your drawing with a light cross or dot. Join your marks in a single line but try and replicate the contours of the surface rather than join the dots with unnatural straight lines.

5. Do the same for the lower limit and then gradually plot in all the context boundaries, stones, burrows etc.

6. For an wall/masonry elevation every stone is drawn. It can help to lightly plot in an outline of the upper and lower limits to guide your work.

7. Work out the co-ordinates of the two end nails. Add to the drawing. Give each nail a cardinal direction and note which direction the section is facing. Put in the context numbers, add a key if necessary. Add the section number to the context sheets for all those contexts. The checking procedure is as above.

Common drawing conventions:

Limit of Excavation :

Internal edge of Excavation :

Edge of Context :

Edge of Context indeterminate :

Level marked on plan or section :

Context Number :
(trench number followed by 3 digit context number)

3005 for cuts **3006** for deposits & fills

Small FInd :

001

Sample :

001

Cut Hatch :

Slope Hatch :

Closer together for steeper slope
Length shows breaks of slope.

Limestone :

LS

Sandstone :

SS

Brick :

or

Br

Tile :

T T T

Cobble :

draw as seen

Gravel / Pebble

Sand :

Clay (as inclusion) :

Clay (pure) :

Mortar :

Shell :

Bone :

draw as seen and write bone next to it

Ash :

Charcoal :

Peat :

Coal :

Plaster :

Wood :

Appenicies

Forms used for site recording

1. Context Register – extract in **appendix 1**
2. Context Sheet – **appendix 2**
3. Finds Register – extract in **appendix 1**
4. Level Register – extract in **appendix 1**
5. Photo Register – extract in **appendix 1**
6. Plan & Section Register – extract in **appendix 1**
7. Sample Register – extract in **appendix 1**
8. Site Diary – extract in **appendix 1**
9. Soil Composition and Stone Sizes – **appendix 3**

Appendix 1 – Extracts of Registers & Site Diary

Context Register

Site Code: **Trench:** **Sheet number:**

When entering a context on this sheet, allocate the next number in sequence.
As well as putting an entry on this sheet, fill in a Context Description Sheet for each context.
Put an "F" in front of number if context is a feature.

Date *day/mon*	Context number	Feature number *if in one*	Recorded by *initials*	Brief description, including whether this context is a deposit, cut, natural geology or feature

Finds Register

Site Code: **Sheet number:**

When entering a find on this sheet, allocate the next find number in sequence. Give plan/section number if marked on one. Mark find bag with site code, find number (in triangle) & context number (in circle).

Date day/mon	Find number	Trench number	Context number	On plan / section?	Material e.g. iron	Found By	Brief description

Level Register

Site Code: **Sheet number:**

When entering a level on this sheet, allocate the next number in sequence.
Instrument (Dumpy) Height = Temporary Bench Mark (TBM) ***plus*** *Backsight*
Reduced Level = Instrument (Dumpy) Height ***minus*** *Foresight*

Date day/mon	Level number	Plan/sect number	Done by	TBM height	Back-sight	Dumpy height = (TBM+Backsight)	Fore-sight	Reduced level = (Dumpy–Foresight)

Photograph Register

Site Code: **Sheet number:**

Enter "Image number" if known. "Time" helps to identify images.

Date day/mon	Time	Camera	Trench number	Context and/or Section number	Image number	Taken By	Description

Plan & Section Register

Site Code: **Sheet number:**

When entering a plan or section on this sheet, allocate the next number in sequence.

Date day/mon	Plan/section Number	Trench number	Scale	Levels done?	Drawn By	Brief description, including location in trench and (for sections) which way facing

Appendix 2 Context Sheet

Sample Register

Site Code: **Sheet number:**

When entering a sample on this sheet, use the next sample number in sequence. Label sample bag with site code, context number (in circle) and "sample xx", where xx is the sample number.

Date day/mon	Sample Number	Number of bags	Trench number	Context number	% of context	Taken By	Brief description	Reason for taking

Site Diary

Site Code

Day / Date *Weather*

Number of diggers

Visitors

Diary entries (continue overleaf if necessary)
Include significant events, accidents, progress with trenches and surveying, speculations, plans, etc

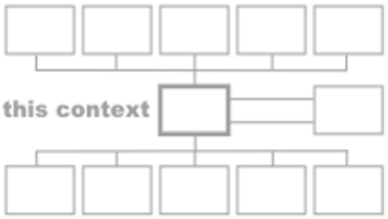
Appendix 2 Context Sheet

Context Sheet

Site code:

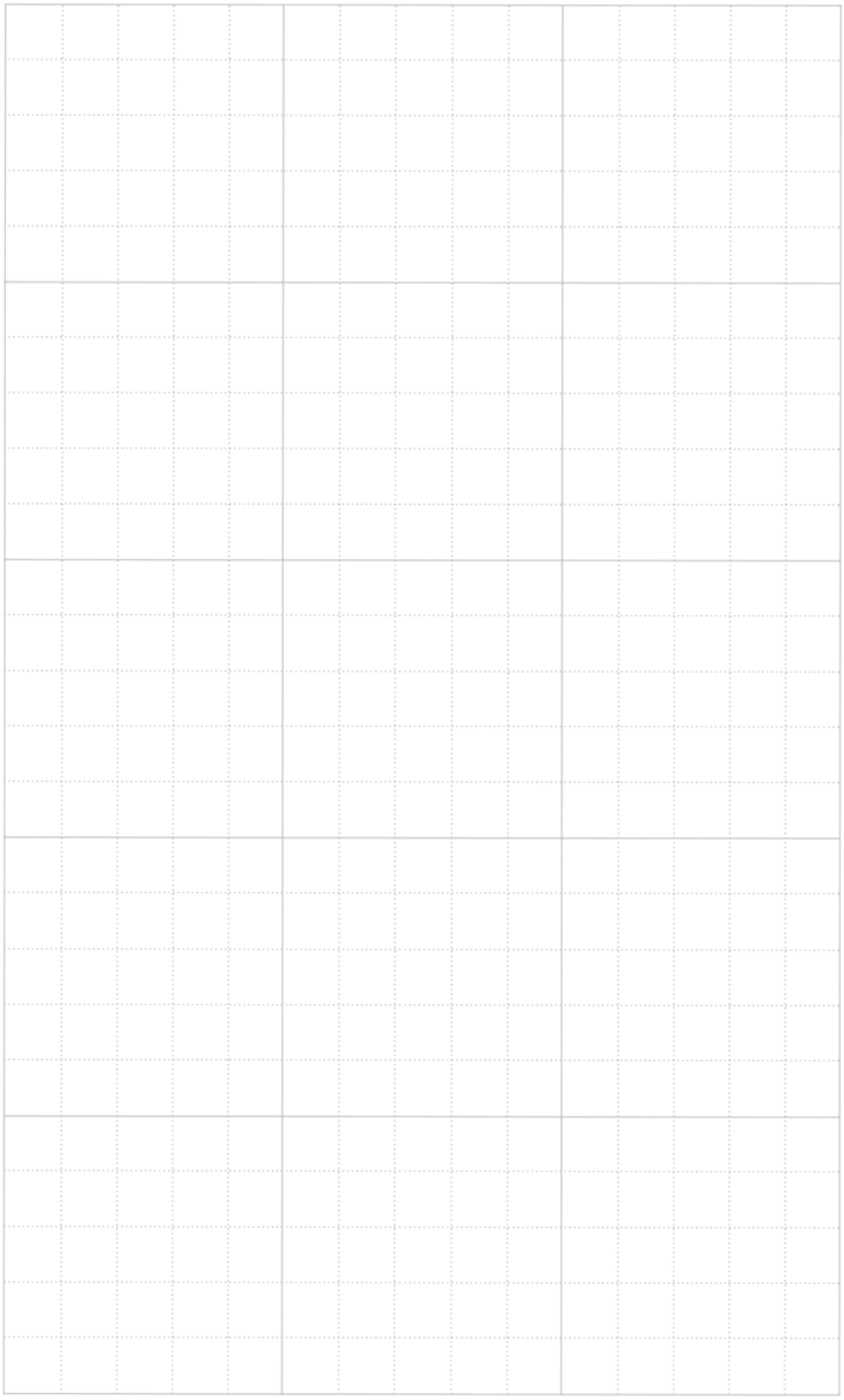
Trench:

Context Number:

DEPOSIT description:-		**CUT** description:-		Pre-excav interp:
above context number:		**cutting** context number:		
below context number:		**filled by** context number:		excavated by:
the fill of cut number:		**cut by** cut number:		supervisors:
same as context number:		**same as** cut number:		excavation. method: manual?
cut by cut number:		**shape in plan:**		excavation dates:
colour when moist:				excavated %:
		shape in profile:		
texture:				photographs ?
		orientation:		section drawing numbers?
compaction:		break of slope top: sharp / gradual bottom: sharp / gradual		plan drawing numbers?
				sample numbers?
composition:				
		angle/shape of sides:		**Excavation size** length (m): width (m): depth/thickness (m):
inclusions:				
		shape of base:		
clear horizon:	Y / N	well defined:	Y / N	this sheet written by:
eroded:	Y / N	eroded:	Y / N	date:
truncated horizontally:	Y / N	truncated horizontally:	Y / N	post excav. interp:
animal disturbance:	Y / N	animal disturbance:	Y / N	
plant disturbance:	Y / N	plant disturbance:	Y / N	**Small find numbers?**
forms a surface:	Y / N			**Other finds**: Ceramic? Glass? Metal? Coal? Cinder? Slag? Charcoal? etc. Give details:
sealed:	Y / N			
waterlogged:	Y / N			
deposited in one episode:	Y / N			
laminated:	Y / N			
buried soil:	Y / N			
deposited by water:	Y / N			
deposited by wind:	Y / N	**Complete either the Deposit or the Cut box and delete the other**		dug well? Y / N
				weather OK? Y / N
deposited as refuse:	Y / N			

Notes: (You can draw a sketch overleaf)

Sketch of context (remember to indicate direction of north & approximate scale!)



Appendix 3 - Soil Composition and Stone Sizes

How to assess soil composition (From DU Arch Services Manual)

Estimate by the following procedure using a 2cm cube of soil:

A. Moisten and knead to maximise plasticity and stickiness – add water if necessary

B. Roll soil into a ball with the palms of the hand
- Ball does not form = SAND
- Ball does form – go to C

C. Roll into a thick cylinder about 1cm diameter.
- Cylinder does not form = LOAMY SAND
- Cylinder forms – go to D

D. Roll into thick thread about 0.5cm diameter
- Thick thread does not form = SANDY LOAM
- Thread forms – go to E

E. Bend thick thread into U shape.
- Thread breaks (feels gritty) = SANDY SILT LOAM
- Thread breaks (feels silky) = SILTY LOAM
- U-shape forms – go to F

F. Roll into thinner thread and form into a ring about 2.5cm diameter
- Thread breaks = SANDY CLAY LOAM
- Ring forms (just, feels doughy) = SILTY CLAY LOAM
- Rings forms (just, feels fairly gritty) = CLAY LOAM
- Ring forms easily (surface smooth, sand grains clear) = SANDY CLAY
- Ring forms easily (surface has a high polish, sticky) = CLAY
- Ring forms easily (surface has a high polish, less sticky) = SILTY CLAY

Particle sizes (ascending size):

clay		
silt		
sand	0.02-2.00mm	(fine 0.02 – 0.06mm, medium 0.06-0.20mm, coarse 0.2 – 2.0mm)
pebbles	2-60mm	(fine (gravel) 2-6mm, medium 6-20mm, coarse 20-60mm)
cobbles	60-200mm	
boulder	200mm +	

Compaction (increasing hardness)

Loose:	can be trowelled easily
Compact:	requires mattock or aggressive trowelling
Cemented:	mattock breaks into lumps (which can then be broken by hand if weakly cemented)
Indurated:	breakable only with a pick

Fine-grain sediments can be:

Stiff:	can't be moulded by finger pressure
Firm:	needs strong finger pressure to mould
Soft:	easily moulded by finger pressure
Friable:	crumbly, can't be moulded as disintegrates