

DUNKELLIN FLOOD RELIEF SCHEME
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION OF A LATE MEDIEVAL CEMETERY AT DUNKELLIN, CO. GALWAY
FINAL REPORT

Excavation Licence Number 20E0407

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1. Introduction

This report describes the results of the archaeological excavation of a small cemetery on the south bank of the Dunkellin River, just upstream (east) of Dunkellin Bridge, in the townland of Dunkellin, Co. Galway. The excavation was undertaken as part of the archaeological mitigation for the Dunkellin River and Aggard Stream Flood Relief Scheme. The Dunkellin River section of the scheme extends from approximately 200m upstream of Craughwell Village to approximately 400m downstream of Killeely Bridge (figure 4). The programme of flood relief works includes channel widening along the south bank of the river from upstream of Dunkellin Bridge to downstream of Killeely Bridge. All ground disturbance works associated with the scheme were subject to archaeological monitoring, in compliance with condition 7 of the grant of planning (Planning Ref. No. 07.JA0035). Human remains were uncovered on the south bank of the river just upstream of Dunkellin Bridge during the course of archaeological monitoring on 13th July 2020, and archaeological excavation was carried out between 20th July and 8th August 2020. The excavation revealed a small cemetery containing the skeletal remains of a minimum of sixteen individuals. The results of radiocarbon dating indicate a date range spanning the late 15th century to the mid-17th century, with four of the five samples submitted returning remarkably similar median probability dates in the mid-16th century (Appendix 2).

2. Archaeological and Historical Background

Dunkellin is a small townland in the Parish of Killeely, in the Barony of Dunkellin in East County Galway. The townland takes its name from the Irish *Dún Coillín* meaning 'fort of the little wood'. Dunkellin has a strong association with Clanricarde, also known as Mac William Uachtar or the Galway Burkes, a gaelicised branch of the Irish House of Burke. The Irish Burkes are descendants of William de Burgh, an Anglo-Norman adventurer and knight who settled in Ireland after arriving with King Henry II of England in 1185. William was granted vast estates in Leinster, Munster and Connacht but was thwarted in his efforts to take control of his lands in Connacht. It was his son Richard who eventually took possession of the province and proclaimed himself Lord of Connacht in 1235. Thus began the dynasty of the Clanricarde Burkes (Clanricarde was a Gaelic title meaning 'Richard's Family' or '(head of) Richard's Family'), who were based largely in what is now east and central County Galway. Ulick *na gCeann* Burke was created Baron of Dunkellin and Earl of Clanricarde in 1543, having submitted to King Henry VIII as part of the English government's policy of 'Surrender and Regrant'. At the time of the Down Survey in 1656-58 the townland of Dunkellin formed part of the estate of the Earls of Clanricarde and it was still in the possession of the Burkes at the time of the Ordnance Survey in the 1830's when the Clanricarde Estate is recorded as one of the largest estates in County Galway.

2.1 Recorded Monuments

There is a cluster of recorded monuments in the immediate vicinity of Dunkellin Bridge. These include a settlement (GA103-120001), castle (GA103-120002), church (GA103-120003) and dovecote (GA103-12004) on the south bank of the Dunkellin River, and an enclosure (GA103-102) and inauguration site (GA103-102001) on the north bank (table 1). This concentration of monuments indicates that this fording point on the river was a site of considerable importance throughout the medieval period.

RMP No.	ITM Ref.	Townland	Classification	Distance
GA103:102	544048, 718491	Castlegar	Enclosure	130m WNW
GA103:102001	544011, 718507	Castlegar	Inauguration site	230m WNW
GA103:120001	543992, 718311	Dunkellin	Settlement cluster	150m SW
GA103:120002	544109, 718339	Dunkellin	Castle – tower house	150m WSW
GA103:120003	544126, 718274	Dunkellin	Church	215m SW
GA103:120004	544066, 718331	Dunkellin	Dovecote	200m WSW

Table 1 Recorded monuments in the vicinity of Dunkellin Bridge

The monuments are recorded in considerable detail in the files of the Archaeological Survey of Ireland, which are retained by the National Monuments Service Archive Unit. It is not necessary to revisit the monument descriptions here but it is important to look at the historical contexts for these monuments.

2.1.1 Enclosure (GA103-102) and Inauguration Site (GA103-102001)

The inauguration site (GA103-102001) on the north bank of the river is named ‘Marquis of Clanricarde’s Chair’ on early ordnance survey maps (figures 1 & 2). The name refers to Ulick Mac Richard Burke, 5th Earl of Clanricarde, as he was the first and only Marquess of Clanricarde, the title becoming extinct upon his death in 1657. The inauguration site is recorded in O’Donovan’s Ordnance Survey Letters as “a hill with a rude stone chair called the Marquis of Clanrickard’s Chair from which the peasantry assert, the Earl of Clanrickard takes his title” (O’Donovan vol 3, 366-7). O’Donovan postulates that it may have been the inauguration site of the chiefs of *Uí Fiachrach Aidhne* prior to the arrival of the Anglo-Normans. The inauguration site was located within the north extent of a large enclosure (GA103-102) which was known locally as ‘Caher na Erle (The Earls Caher)’ (Redington, 69). Redington alludes to the foundations of a huge caher (*cathair*, a stone fort or cashel) on the north bank of the river describing it as a ‘rough enclosure, rather more than a semicircle in shape, cut away on the southern side by the cliff of a riverbank’ (ibid.). Redington also mentions a mound ‘said to be

the site of Clanrickardes Chair’ in the northwest extent of the enclosure, and a possible souterrain to the south of it. The enclosing element of the fort appears to be preserved in the curving field boundaries marked on the ordnance survey twenty-five-inch map c. 1900 (figure 2). The curving field boundary on the west survives to the present day. It was completely overgrown at the time of inspection (by the author) and there was no visible surface trace of an enclosing element such as a bank or ditch. The evidence strongly suggests this is the site of an early medieval cashel, possibly the *Dún Coillín* (‘fort of the little wood’) from which Dunkellin takes its name. It is recorded that there was a mound with a ‘stone chair’ in the northwest extent of the enclosure, which local tradition asserts to be an inauguration site of the Clanricarde Burkes.

2.1.2 *Settlement (GA103-120001), Castle (GA103-120002), Church (GA103-120003), and Dovecote (GA103-120004)*

O’Donovan records Dunkellin Castle (GA103-120002) as the castle after which the Baron and Barony are named (O’Donovan, 366). It seems likely that the castle was erected by the Burkes to control an important fording point at the site of the existing bridge. According to Fahey it was built by Richard ‘The Great’ Burke, in the early sixteenth century (Fahey, 232). Richard died in 1530 and was succeeded by his son Ulick na gCeann Burke, who was created 1st Earl of Clanricard in 1543. In 1574 ‘Therle of Clanricard’ is recorded as the owner of Dunkellin Castle (Nolan,113). The extant remains of Dunkellin Castle comprise a substantial mound, which is considered to be the remains of a collapsed late medieval tower house. The Archaeology Survey file records earthworks in the immediate vicinity of the mound but these were removed during land clearance works about 20 years ago. There is no reference to a castle here in the medieval period but this cannot be discounted given the sites possible strategic importance as a fording point on the Dunkellin River, and the long-established de Burgo/Burke presence in the area.

The early ordnance survey maps show a ‘Pigeon Ho (in ruins)’ (GA103-120004) a short distance to the west of the castle. Redington (1911, 68) records ‘part of the circular wall of the pigeon house is still standing’ while Westropp (1919, 179) describes it as ‘a portion of a pigeon house with rows of nests’. The Archaeology Survey file records ‘a stone and earth covered stump’ in 1982, but the last remaining vestiges of the monument were removed during land clearance works in the early years of this century. Pigeon houses or dovecotes were structures designed to house pigeons or doves, which were valued as a source of food, feathers and manure throughout the medieval period. They were usually large circular structures built of stone and topped with a pointed roof.

The old church of Dunkellin ((GA103-120003) is situated approximately 80m south of the castle. Its date is unknown but Redington (1911, 68-69) suggested a 13th century date based on the architectural features visible at the time of inspection in the early 20th century. The features recorded by Redington

comprise three possible lancet windows in the east gable, and a possible lancet window in the north wall.

The Archaeology Survey Files record an “extensive deserted settlement of uncertain date” comprising of “rectangular house sites, cultivation plots, two lime kilns, a well and a boreen or street extending into three fields in the immediate area between Dunkellin castle and church”. Redington (1911, 69) states ‘all the land between it (the church) and the castle is crossed by foundations of buildings’ while Westropp (1919, 179) noted ‘Many old house sites lie between it (the castle) and the church; only the corners of the latter remain. Ms. Redington remembers more of the walls and window sills now removed’. Elizabeth Fitzpatrick compiled a detailed account of the extant remains during a course of a site visit in May 1986. There has been some encroachment onto the site in the intervening years.

The castle, dovecote, church and settlement at Dunkellin are broadly contemporary structures dating from possibly as early as the 13th century to the 17th century. In the absence of archaeological excavation, it is not possible to assign specific dates to any of these monuments.

There was another castle at Castlegar (GA103-103), less than 500m to the north of Dunkellin. Nothing is known of this castle but the Irish name *An Caisleán Gearr* or ‘the short castle’ suggests it was a ‘squat’ structure, possibly an early hall-type castle of Anglo-Norman origin.

2.2 Dunkellin Bridge

Dunkellin Bridge is not a recorded monument but it is included in the Record of Protected Structures (RPS No. 3561), which is published as Appendix 6 to the Draft Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028, and the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH Reg. No. 30410332). An archaeological and historical assessment of Dunkellin Bridge was undertaken by the author during the course of the Dunkellin Flood Relief Scheme 2016-2020 - *Dunkellin Flood Relief Scheme: Killeely Beg, Castlegar, Dunkellin & Rinn – Appendix 2* (DDA, March 2021). The assessment identified three phases of construction, most likely dating from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries.

2.3 Cartographic Sources

2.3.1 Ordnance Survey six-inch map 1838 (Figure 1)

The first edition Ordnance Survey six-inch map 1838-9 shows the ‘Dunkellin River’ flowing into ‘Dunkellin Turlough’ approximately 1km east of Dunkellin Bridge, and re-emerging in a broad channel immediately east of the bridge. Dunkellin Bridge is marked and a cluster of antiquities are shown on the west side of the bridge, namely ‘Dunkellin Castle (In ruins)’, ‘Pigeon Ho (In ruins)’, and ‘Church (In ruins)’ on the south bank of the river, and the ‘Marquis of Clanricardes Chair (Site of)’ on the north bank. The site of the recently-excavated burial ground is within a field on the southeast side of the bridge.

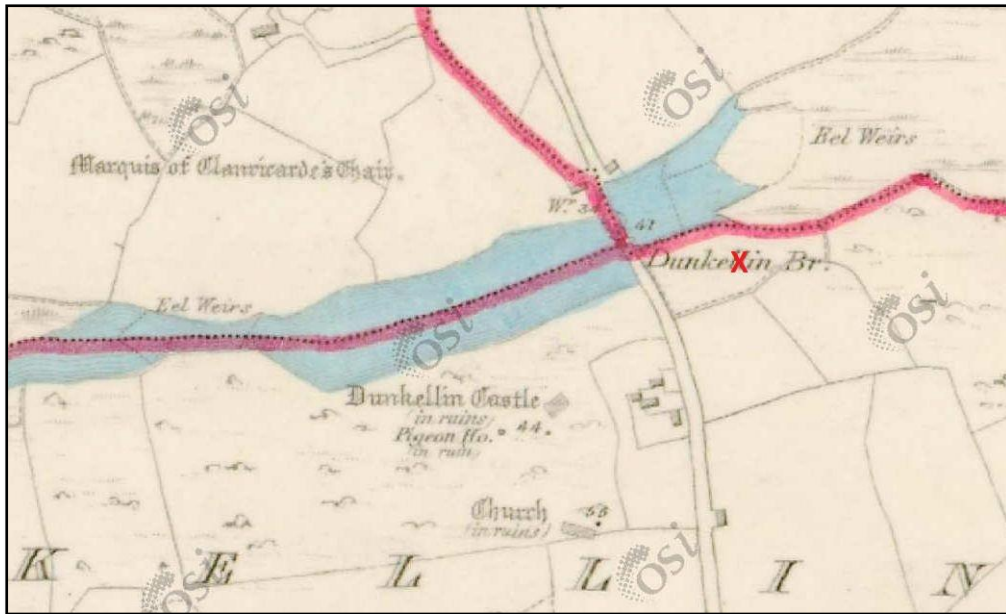


Figure 1 Ordnance survey map 1838-39 showing location of cemetery at Dunkellin

Ordnance Survey Ireland Licence No. EN 0076823

2.3.2 Ordnance survey twenty-five-inch map c. 1900 (Figure 2)

The Ordnance Survey twenty-five-inch map 1890-1900 shows the now canalised river, a result of the Dunkellin Drainage Works 1843-1857 (See section 2.4 below). The monuments are named as before but the castle and inauguration site are now labelled 'site of' suggesting there is little or no surface trace of these monuments.

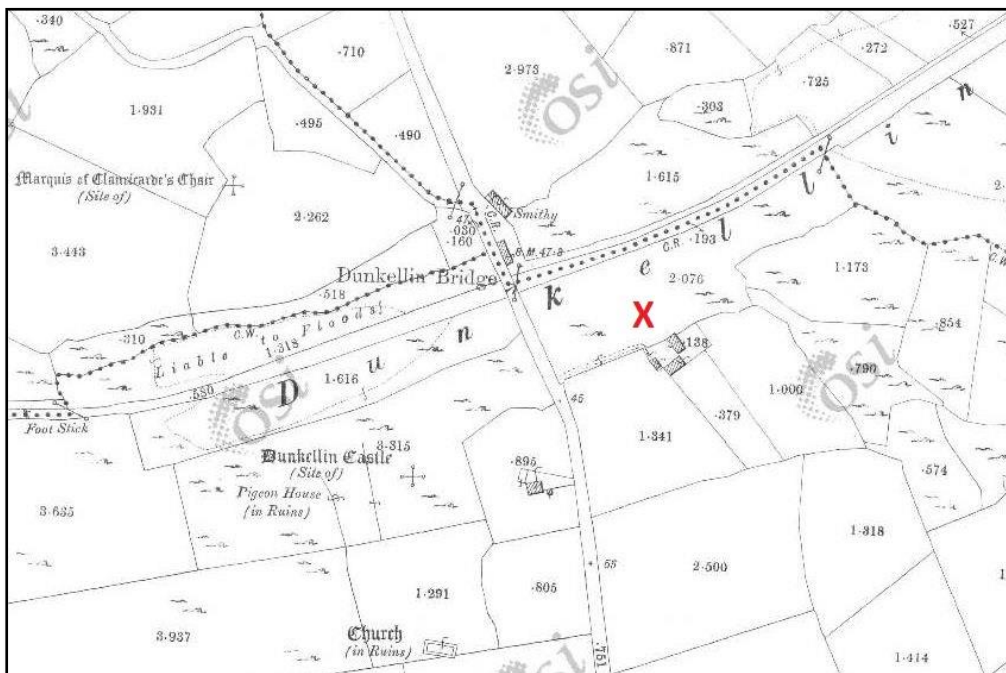


Figure 2 Ordnance survey map c. 1900 showing cemetery location

Ordnance Survey Ireland Licence No. EN 0076823

2.4 Aerial Images

A series of the aerial images dating from the period 1995-2018 were examined on the Ordnance Survey Ireland website www.osi.ie. The earlier images (1995 and 1999-2003) pre-date land reclamation works in the immediate vicinity of Dunkellin Castle (GA103-020002), and the construction of a dwelling adjacent to the settlement (GA103-020001) to the south of the castle. The excavation site on the southeast side of the bridge is unchanged throughout this period. The most recent image shows traces of the sub-surface rocky ground on the site of the excavated cemetery (figure 3).



Figure 3 Aerial image 2013-2018 showing rough ground on site of excavated cemetery
Ordnance Survey Ireland Licence No. EN 0076823

2.5 Dunkellin Drainage Works 1843-1857

The extent of the drainage works carried out in the District of Dunkellin in the mid-19th century are recorded in a report published by the Commissioners of Public Works in Ireland, dated 7th September 1857. It is stated that the works were carried out in accordance with a series of Acts of Parliament (1843, 1846, 1848, 1854 and 1857), the purpose of which was to *'promote the Drainage of Lands and Improvement of Navigation and Water-power'*, to which the 1846 Act adds *'to afford facilities for increased employment for the Labouring Classes in works of Drainage during the present year'*. The completed works are recorded as including *'The widening and deepening of a portion of the old channel of the Dunkillin River, between its outfall at the sea, immediately below Kilcolgan Bridge, on the mail-coach road from Galway to Limerick, and Nogganstown Bridge, on the mail-coach road from Loughrea to Ballinasloe, including the formation of several new cuts'*. The report also records the building of a new accommodation bridge at Killeely Beg, the rebuilding of Dunkellin Bridge and the underpinning of Craughwell Bridge.

2.5 Previous Archaeological Investigations on the Dunkellin Flood Relief Scheme

Previous archaeological works on the Dunkellin Flood Relief Scheme included pre-development testing on the south bank of the river immediately west of Dunkellin Bridge and the excavation of a single burial which was uncovered during monitoring in the townland of Castlegar, approximately 500m downstream from Dunkellin Bridge.

2.5.1 Dunkellin, Co. Galway (Excavation Licence No. 16E0426)

Archaeological testing was carried out in advance of channel widening along the south bank of the Dunkellin River immediately downstream of Dunkellin Bridge in August 2016. The site is located in the vicinity of recorded monuments GA103-120001 (settlement), GA103-120002 (castle), GA103-120003 (church) and GA103-120004 (dovecote). It is evident from early ordnance survey maps that the test excavation site was part of the original river channel prior to its canalisation in the mid-19th century. A single test trench, 160m long and 2m wide, was opened parallel to the south bank of the river. Testing revealed a thin topsoil layer over re-deposited material which overlay natural sand and gravel in the east and silt subsoil in the west. The re-deposited material varied from 0.3-0.9m in thickness and is probably associated with land reclamation works following the canalisation of the river. No archaeology was found but a compact grey coarse sand and cobble layer uncovered at the base of the trench in the west of the tested area was identified as being of archaeological potential. It underlay over 1m of redeposited material and presented as a rough surface, most likely an access point to the river. *Archaeological Test Excavation at Dunkellin, Co. Galway* (DDA, October 2016).

2.5.2 Castlegar, Co. Galway (Excavation Licence No. 16E0481)

The archaeological excavation of a single inhumation was undertaken at Castlegar, Co. Galway on 2nd August 2017. The excavation followed the discovery of human remains during monitoring of topsoil removal in advance of channel-widening works on the south bank of the river between Killeely Beg Bridge and Dunkellin Bridge on 28th July 2017. The skeleton was truncated below the hips, probably in antiquity, but was otherwise relatively well-preserved. Although most of the remaining skeletal elements were present, many had suffered fragmentation. The position of some disarticulated foot bones suggests the legs of this individual were flexed to the right but this was not conclusive. The most conspicuous aspect of the skeleton was the contortion of the spine, which was clearly visible as an 'S' profile during excavation, suggesting the individual had suffered severe scoliosis. The individual was buried supine and orientated west/east, with the head to the west. There was no evidence of a coffin and no artefacts were found. Osteoarchaeological analysis revealed the skeletal remains are those of a young adult male, aged between 17 and 25 years at the time of death. A bone sample sent to Queen's University Belfast for radiocarbon dating returned a date range of AD 1449-1630, with a

median probability date of AD 1505. A full report on the excavation is contained in *Dunkellin Flood Relief Scheme: Killeely Beg, Dunkellin & Rinn - Appendix 1* (DDA, March 2021)

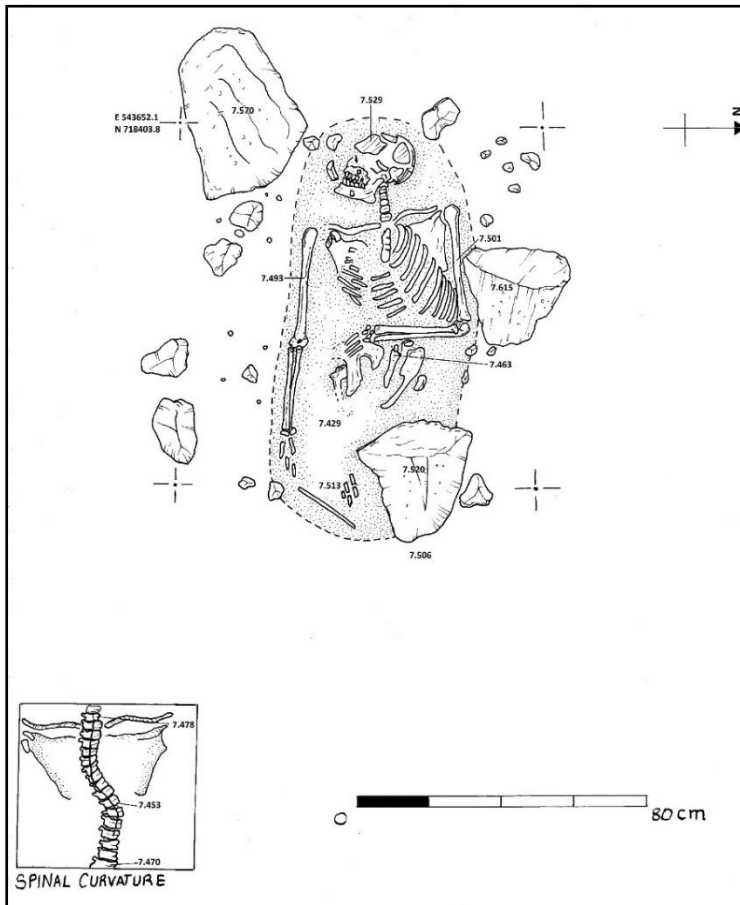


Illustration 1 Plan of Castlegar burial

3. Monitoring (July 2020)

The field on the southeast side of Dunkellin Bridge was stripped of topsoil between 6th and 17th July 2020. Topsoil strip commenced 25m east of the bridge as no works were permitted within 25m of the bridge pending the removal of overhead cables in this area. In the north of the field, adjacent to the riverbank, a thin topsoil layer overlay deposits of broken angular limestones and medium-sized sub-rounded cobbles (plate 1). This stone deposit extended all along the riverbank, widening and deepening as works proceeded to the east. It is assumed that this deposit is landfill, most likely up-cast from excavations associated with the canalisation of this section of the river in the mid-19th century. Much of the 19th channel was rock-cut hence the prevalence of large angular limestone blocks within the fill. An excavator was deployed to remove the stone fill along the riverbank while a second excavator continued stripping the ground south of the stone infill. Here there was 0.15m of fine dark brown silt topsoil over 0.1m of grey coarse sand, gravel and stone. The sand/gravel/stone deposit overlay tan silty/clayey sand subsoil in the west and compact orange/brown coarse sandy clay with frequent stones and boulders in the east (plate 2).



Plate 1 Facing northeast showing topsoil strip along riverbank southeast of Dunkellin Bridge



Plate 2 Facing west towards Dunkellin Bridge showing exposed rocky ground in foreground and soft silty clay in background

On 13th July 2020 human remains were discovered within the soft silty/clayey sand subsoil c. 50m east of Dunkellin Bridge and c. 30m south of the riverbank. Excavations were halted and the National Museum of Ireland, National Monuments Service, Garda Síochána and the County Coroner were informed of the discovery. It was immediately clear that the exposed bones were disarticulated and that this was almost certainly a result of disturbance at the time of discovery. A systematic examination of the excavated spoil was undertaken and several human bones, associated with the exposed remains, were recovered. Following consultations with the National Monuments Service and National Museum it was agreed that topsoil strip should proceed with due caution. As work proceeded to the east there was a marked change in the stratigraphy with the soft silty/clayey sand subsoil giving way to compact orange/brown coarse sandy clay with frequent stones, boulders and rock outcrop. Further human remains were uncovered within this rocky ground and it became clear that this was a burial ground. The human remains were located just 0.25m below the old field surface and there was evidence of disturbance in antiquity as most of the exposed bones were crushed and fragmented. The disturbance is likely a result of works associated with the ‘Dunkellin Drainage Works’ carried out in the mid-19th century (see Section 2.5 above).



Plate 3 Facing northwest towards Dunkellin Bridge showing locations of human remains (under covers) uncovered during monitoring

Some of the human remains were located within the extent of the proposed channel-widening works, which would require deep excavations, while others were located just south of the proposed works. The client considered options to preserve the human remains *in situ* but this was not possible due to the extensive groundworks and associated construction traffic required to complete the proposed flood relief works in this area. Following further consultations with the National Museum and National Monuments Service it was agreed that the human remains should be preserved by record. The National Monuments Service requested that a new excavation licence be put in place in respect of the proposed archaeological excavation. The licence application and method statement submitted by the author was approved by the National Monuments Service and the archaeological excavation commenced on 20th July 2020.

4. Excavation (July-August 2020)

The archaeological excavation was directed by the author, and Osteoarchaeologist Linda Lynch was retained to oversee the recording and excavation of the burials. A total of sixteen burials, fifteen *in situ* burials and one *ex situ* individual, and a small quantity of disarticulated human remains were excavated under licence 20E0407 between 20th July and 8th August 2020. The burials were numbered from 'SK01' through to 'SK16', with the *ex-situ* remains also allocated a burial number (SK01) as it clearly represented the redeposited remains of a single individual.

The majority of the burials were located in rocky ground, which comprised of compact orange/brown coarse sandy clay with frequent stones and boulders, and occasional rock outcrop. The burials were placed in shallow graves, the presence of rock/boulders frequently determining the depth at which the burials were inserted. The fills within the grave-cuts consisted of light grey/brown silty sands with frequent inclusions of small stones, moderate inclusions of medium stones and occasional large stones. Many of the fills contained occasional fragments of mollusc shells, mainly oyster shells but also including a couple of winkle and cockle shell fragments. Two small animal bone fragments were recovered from the fill of SK07, one small fragment was found within the fill of SK16 and an animal tooth was found within the fill of SK06.

The only artefacts recovered during the excavation were a sub-circular iron object (buckle?) from the pelvic area of SK15 (a prone burial) (plate 29), three copper alloy wire rings with twisted terminals from the right side of the torso of SK08 (a female buried with the head to the east) (plate 30), and a ferrous object (nail?) from the grave fill of SK03 (a juvenile burial) (plate 31). The latter find is probably incidental but the iron object and copper rings would appear to be associated with the individuals with whom they were found.

It was apparent from the early stages of the excavation that the level of preservation of the skeletal remains was poor. Some of the grave fills contained compacted angular stones, which would have impacted the preservation and certainly contributed towards at least the fragmentation of the remains. The skeletal remains which lay directly on bedrock/boulders had a very poor survival rate. For example, in the case of SK08, no bone survived where the body directly overlay the bedrock. Actual truncation of remains was minimal and the quantity of disarticulated human remains was very low. The exception was SK01, which was inadvertently disturbed during site works and recovered in a disarticulated *ex situ* state. The level of preservation of the skeletons was classed as 'very poor' in the case of 8 no. skeletons and 'poor' in the case of 7 no. skeletons, with just a single skeleton (SK03) classed as 'good'.

The general distribution of juvenile to adult individuals (approximately 50/50) suggests that this is a communal burial ground, not particularly reserved for any one cohort of society. At the time of excavation, the cemetery was considered likely to be of early medieval date, as this period saw frequent small familial and communal cemeteries, which were typically non-ecclesiastical. The Dunkellin cemetery also displays the variety of burial practises which is common to cemeteries of the early medieval period in Ireland. The majority are extended inhumations, orientated with the head to the west, but there were also three crouched inhumations (two being juveniles), a prone burial, and an extended inhumation with the head placed to the east.

The age-at-death profiles are interesting in that there were no indications of older adults (45+ years) although it should be pointed out that it was only possible to determine age-at-death of five of the seven adults present. However, the evidence suggests that this community did not experience longevity. The sex of the adults suggests that females (66.7%) were more frequently buried here than male individuals. In the juveniles, there were two infants (<1 year), three young juveniles (1-6 years), two older juveniles (7-12 years), and two adolescents (13-17 years). Traditionally, it is the youngest cohorts of juveniles who would have had the highest mortality, and the general profile from this site largely mirrors that expectation, with five of the nine *in situ* juvenile burials being 6 years or less at the time of death.

The health profile of the population is difficult to assess due to the small sample size and the fragmentary nature of the remains. One of the most basic indicators of health status may be the assessment of the final attained stature. In this case it was only possible to estimate the living stature of two female adults and their average stature was taller than most of their contemporaries, which may suggest that the females at least experienced a relatively healthy childhood. The dentition can offer one of the most immediate and clear indicators of general health status and this is discussed in detail in the osteoarchaeological report (Appendix 1).

5. Discussion

It has been shown that the cemetery is located in the vicinity of a number of recorded monuments, clustered around what must have been an important fording point on the Dunkellin River. The enclosure (GA103-102) and inauguration site (GA103-102001) on the north bank of the river suggest this was a place of considerable importance in the early medieval period. The inauguration site is traditionally associated with the Clanricarde Burkes but O'Donovan (367) suggests it may have been the inauguration site of the *Hy-Fiachrach Aidhne (Ó' hEidhin)* who were chiefs of this country prior to the arrival of the Anglo-Normans. Such sites were of great significance in early medieval Ireland, places of assembly that would have attracted large numbers of people on important ceremonial occasions. The Burkes, recognising the importance attached to this place, appear to have used it for their own ceremonial purposes. The inauguration site is named 'Marquis of Clanricarde's Chair' on early ordnance survey maps and the enclosure is said to have been known locally as 'Caher na Erle (The Earls Caher)' (Redington, 69).

The castle, church and settlement on the south bank of the river testify to the site's continued importance into the later medieval period. Dunkellin Castle (GA103-120002) is said to have been built by Richard Óge Burke, 7th Earl of Clanricarde, in the early 16th century. However, the De Burgho's were established in Connacht since the mid-13th century and it is possible that the late medieval castle occupies the site of an earlier structure. The extensive earthworks recorded in the immediate vicinity of the castle, but no longer visible on the ground, may be related to an earlier structure here, perhaps an earthen fortification if not a masonry castle. The church (GA103-120003) to the south of the castle has been suggested as being of 13th century date based on the evidence of the remains of possible lancet windows recorded by Redington in the early 20th century.

The remains of a small settlement (GA103-120001), located between the church and castle, was recorded in considerable detail by Elizabeth Fitzpatrick during the course of fieldwork for the Archaeology Survey in 1986. Fitzpatrick records a possible trackway, three rectangular house sites, two lime kilns, a well and a series of cultivation plots, all located in an area of rocky terrain. Fitzpatrick suggested the settlement may post-date the church and castle, noting the north and east walls of the church are abutted by field walls associated with the settlement, and cultivation ridges extend right up to the north wall of the church.

Bone samples from five of the individuals buried at this small cemetery were submitted to Queen's University Belfast for radiocarbon dating. Four of the samples (SK03, SK04, SK08 & SK15) returned a date range spanning the late 15th century to the mid-17th century, with remarkably similar median probability dates of 1562 (x2), 1565 and 1566 (Appendix 2). The date range indicates the burials are

broadly contemporary while the median probability dates suggests many of the internments may have taken place about the same time in the mid-16th century. In this context it is considered likely that the burials represent a single generation of individuals from a small community, perhaps an extended family? All the more surprising then are the range of burial practices on display at this cemetery. Of the four burials with median probability dates in the 1560's, two (SK03 and SK15) were extended burials with the head placed to the west, one (SK04) was a crouched burial, and the other (SK08) was an extended burial with the head placed to the east. The fact that at least four of the burials may have been buried about the same time, and the presence of two double burials, suggests many of the burials in this cemetery may represent victims of a single tragic event, such as a disease epidemic. Although no evidence of such a disease was found it is noted in the osteoarchaeology report that 'acute infections, those that kill quickly and often indiscriminately, typically leave no trace on the bones' (Lynch, 54). The sample from SK16, a young juvenile (2-4 years), returned a median probability date of 1655 indicating the cemetery was still in use in the 17th century.

On the basis of available evidence, it is considered possible that the cemetery is associated with the small settlement (GA103-120001) located between the castle and the church, thereby suggesting a core 16th century date for this settlement. It would appear that the church had gone out of use by this time but it is very likely that the castle was occupied for it is said to have been built in the early 16th century (Fahey, 232), and is recorded as being in the ownership of the Earl of Clanricarde in 1574 (Nolan, 113). This being the case it is possible that the settlement developed in the shadow of the castle and the occupants may well have been tenants or servants of the Burkes. Such a settlement would have been wholly dependent on the castle and its lifespan may have mirrored that of the castle. We do not know how long the settlement was in use. It is not marked on the first edition ordnance survey map 1838-9 indicating there were no buildings or structures of any substance here at that time, and thereby suggesting the settlement was long since abandoned. The lifespan of the settlement may have been brief, perhaps spanning no more than a couple of generations. Four of the five radiocarbon dated burials are firmly fixed in the mid-16th century while the other likely dates from the mid-17th century. Perhaps the settlement was abandoned by the time of the later burial but the cemetery was still in use as a place of occasional internment.

The cemetery would certainly have been convenient to the settlement as it is located just 150m to the northeast. The siting of the cemetery on rocky ground may seem unusual in the context of the flat green field site we see today but it must be remembered that the lands along the riverbank were transformed during the course of a major programme of works on the Dunkellin River in the mid-19th century. Low-lying lands along the riverbank would have been liable to regular flooding prior to the widening and deepening of the river channel. The 19th century works saw the effective canalisation of

the river with a new rock-cut channel designed to contain the flow of water, and the excavated spoil and quarried stone used to build up the low-lying lands along the riverbank. The outcrop of rocky ground on which the cemetery is sited would have presented a secure site for burial prior to the later canalisation of the river. The cemetery may have been more extensive than the excavation suggests for it may have been truncated during the course of the Dunkellin Drainage Works in the mid-19th century but the general absence of disarticulated human remains suggests that is not the case.

The cemetery excavated at Dunkellin is considered to be the burial place for a small community or extended family, who most likely lived locally. In that context the burials may well be associated with the small settlement (GA103-120001) located between the castle (GA103-120002) and the church (GA103-120003), a short distance to the southwest of the cemetery. Radiocarbon dates from five of the excavated skeletons suggest the cemetery's core period of usage was in the mid-16th century suggesting the cemetery, and by extension the settlement, may have had a relatively short lifespan.

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Figure 4 Site location map showing Dunkellin River and Aggard Stream Flood Relief Scheme

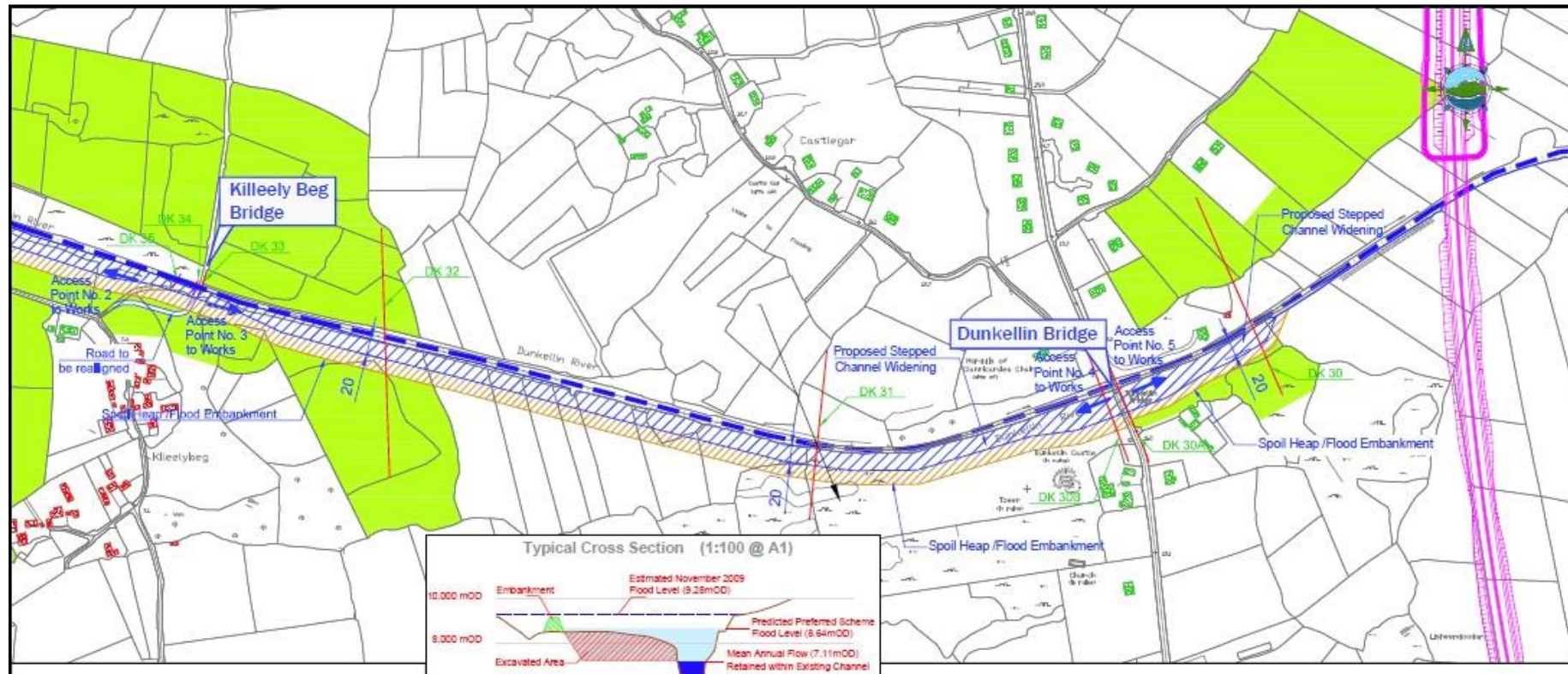


Figure 5 Map showing proposed flood relief works along south bank of the Dunkellin River from downstream of Dunkellin Bridge to upstream of Killeely Beg Bridge with channel-widening works highlighted in blue and flood embankment in light brown

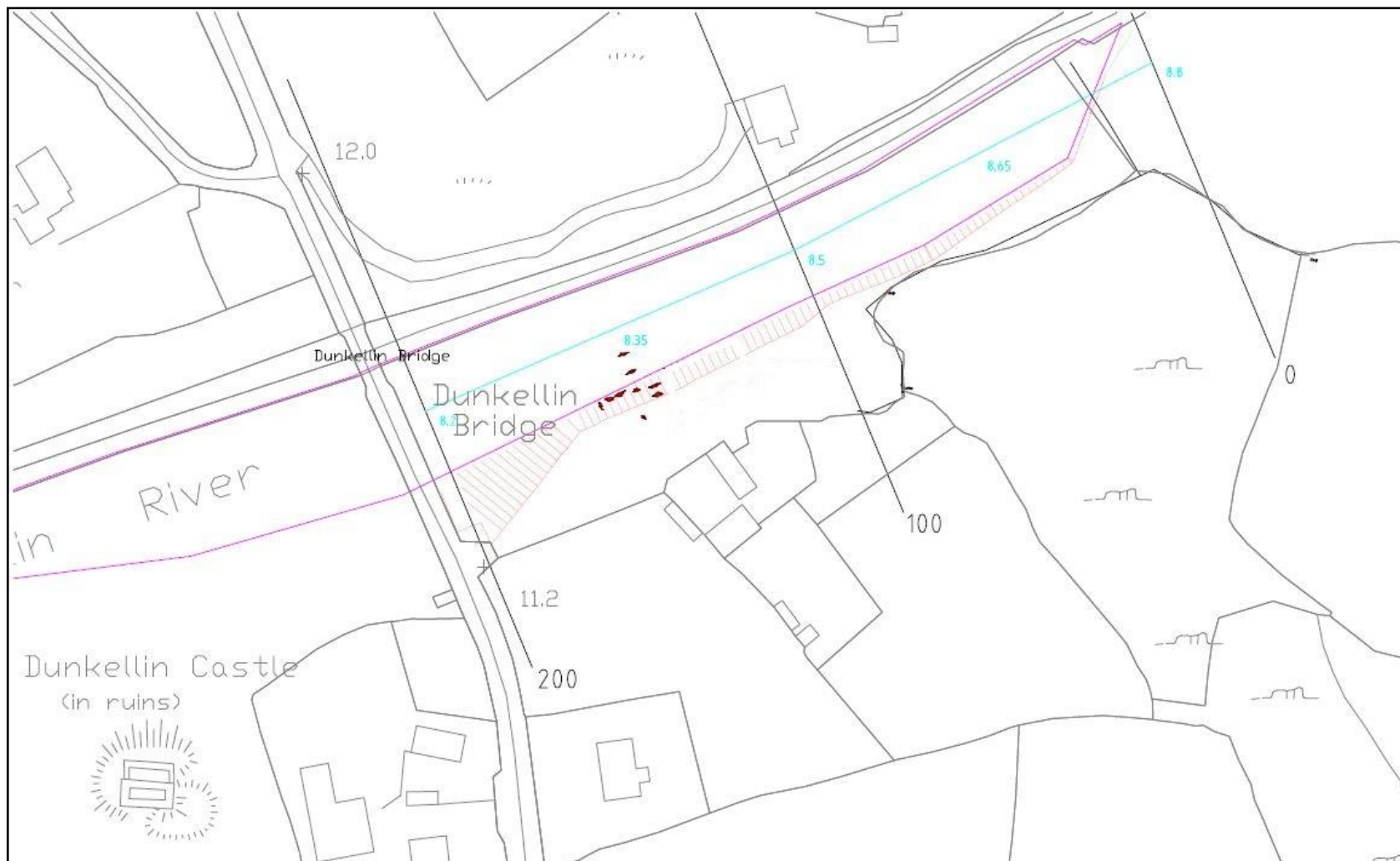


Figure 6 Site map showing location of burials east of Dunkellin Bridge

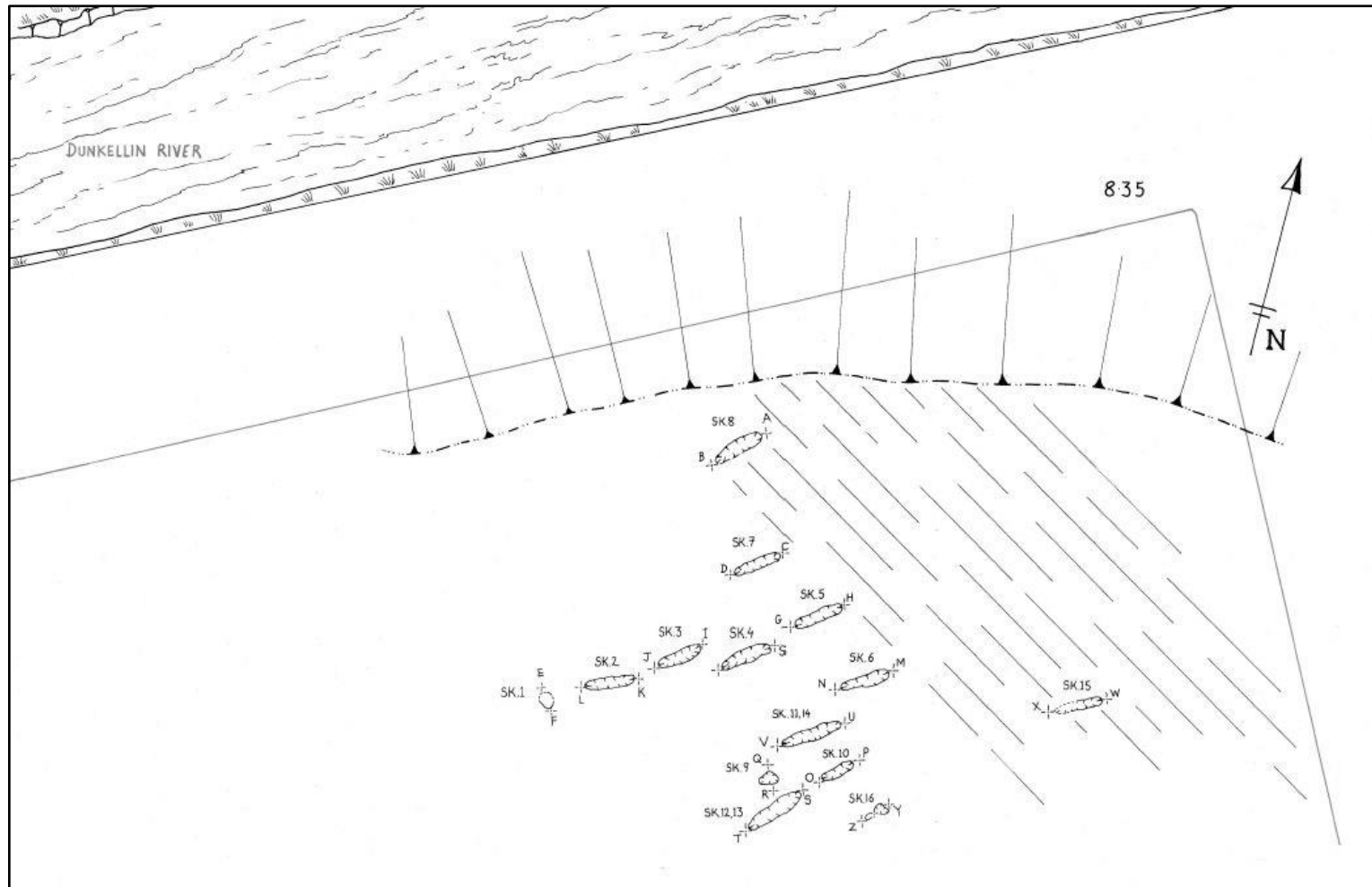


Illustration 2 Plan of Dunkellin Cemetery

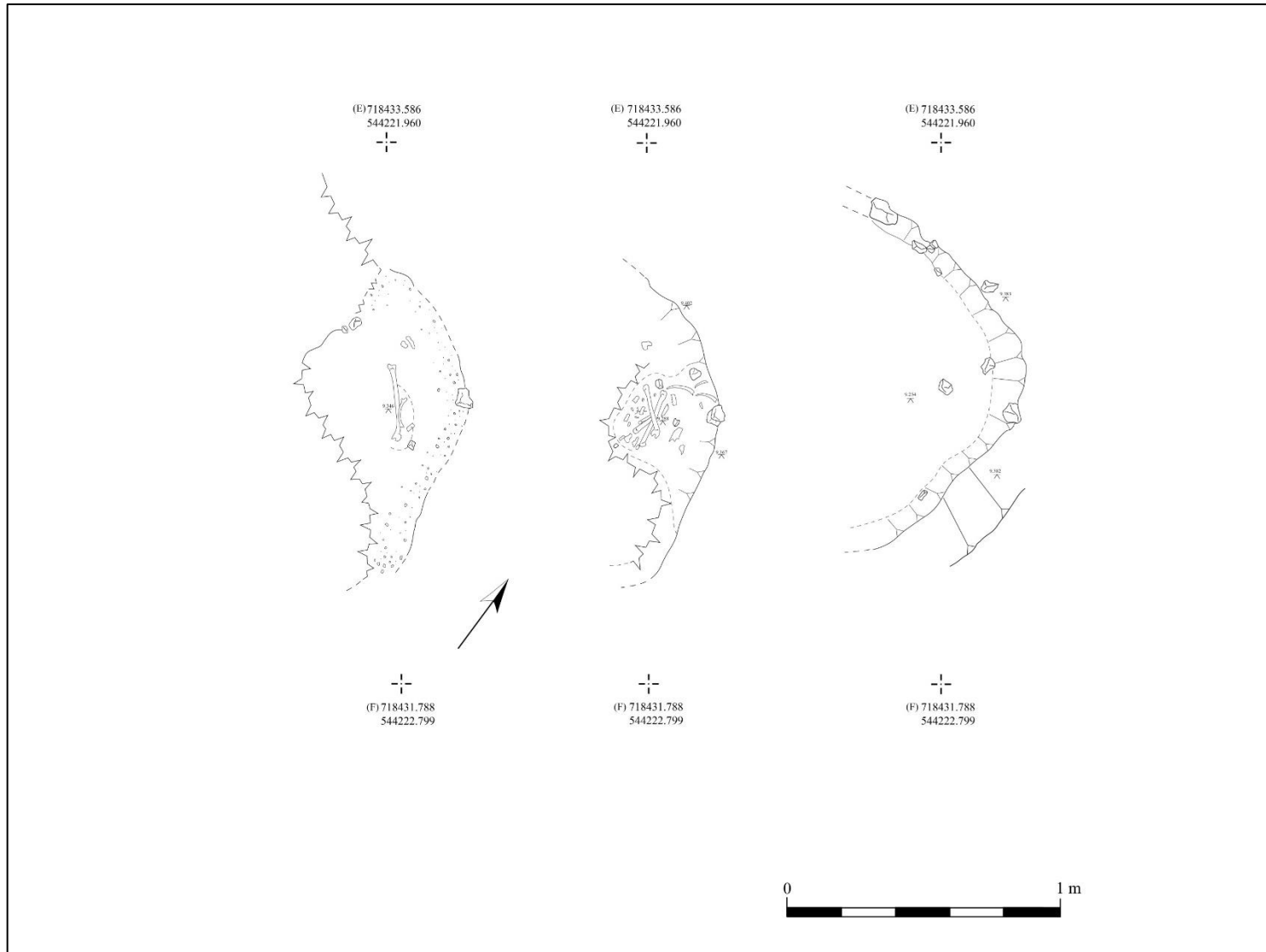


Illustration 3 SK1 – ex situ remains, pre-ex, mid-ex and post-ex

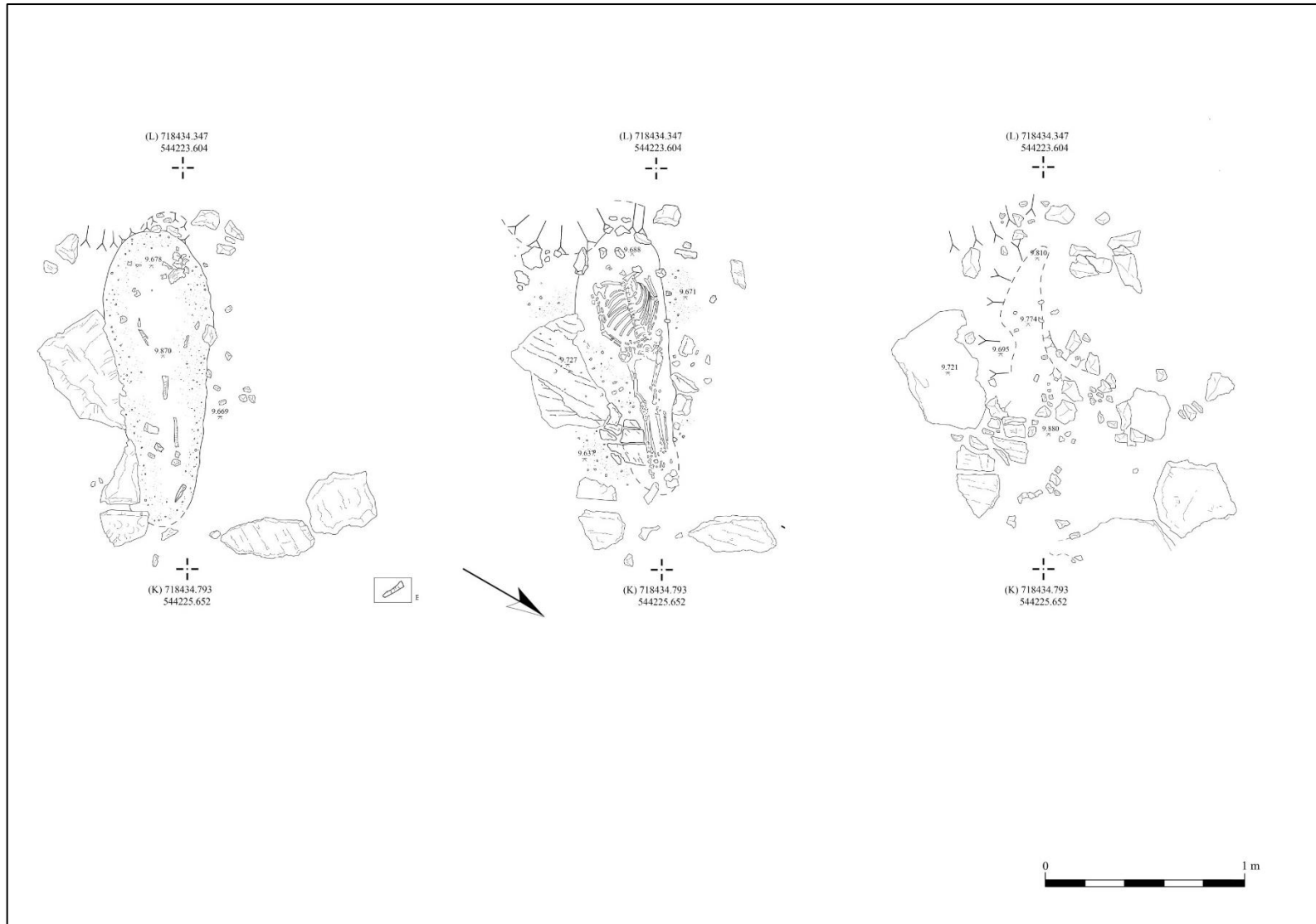


Illustration 4 SK2 – pre-ex, mid-ex and post-ex

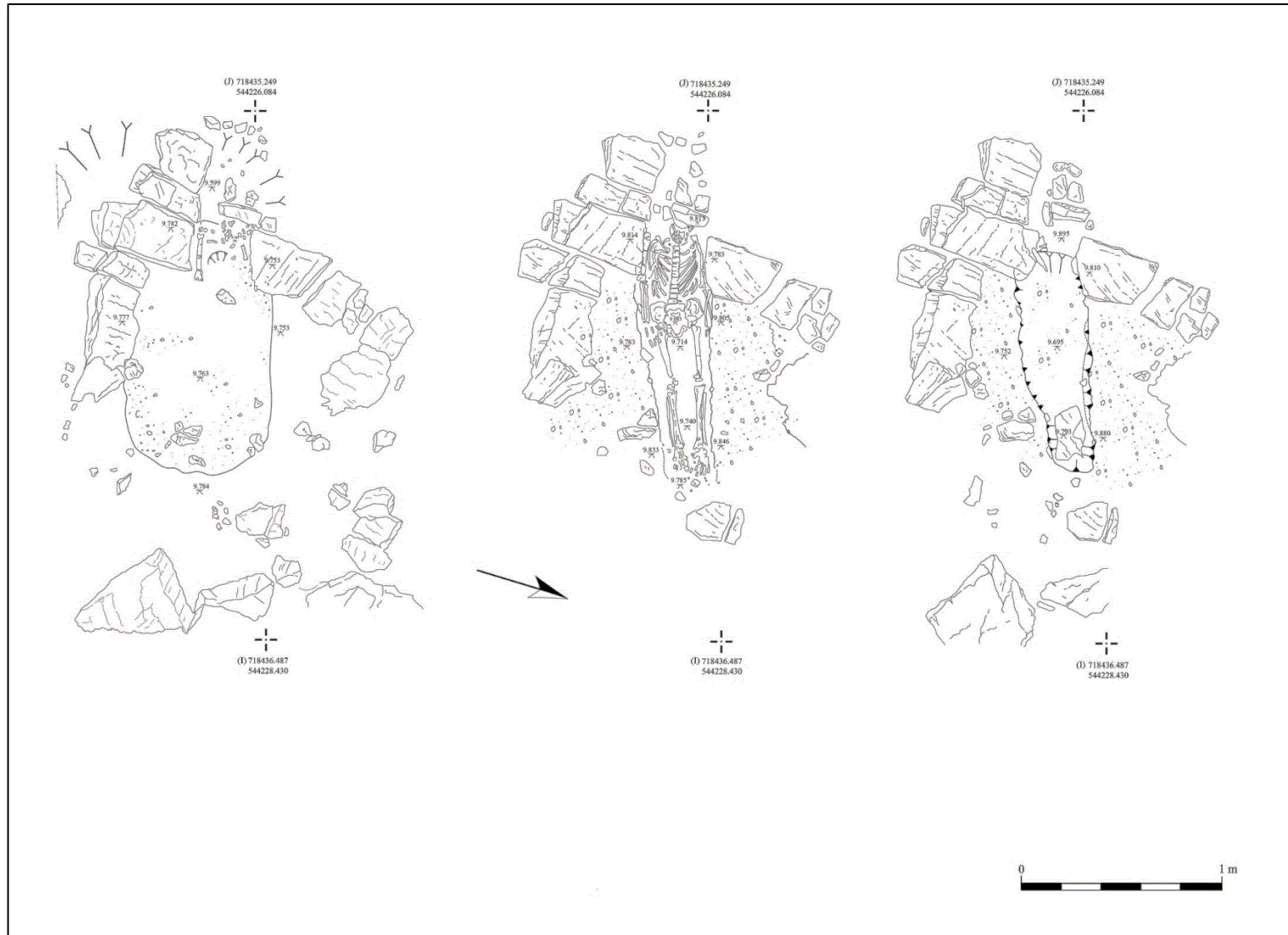


Illustration 5 SK3 - pre-ex, mid-ex and post-ex

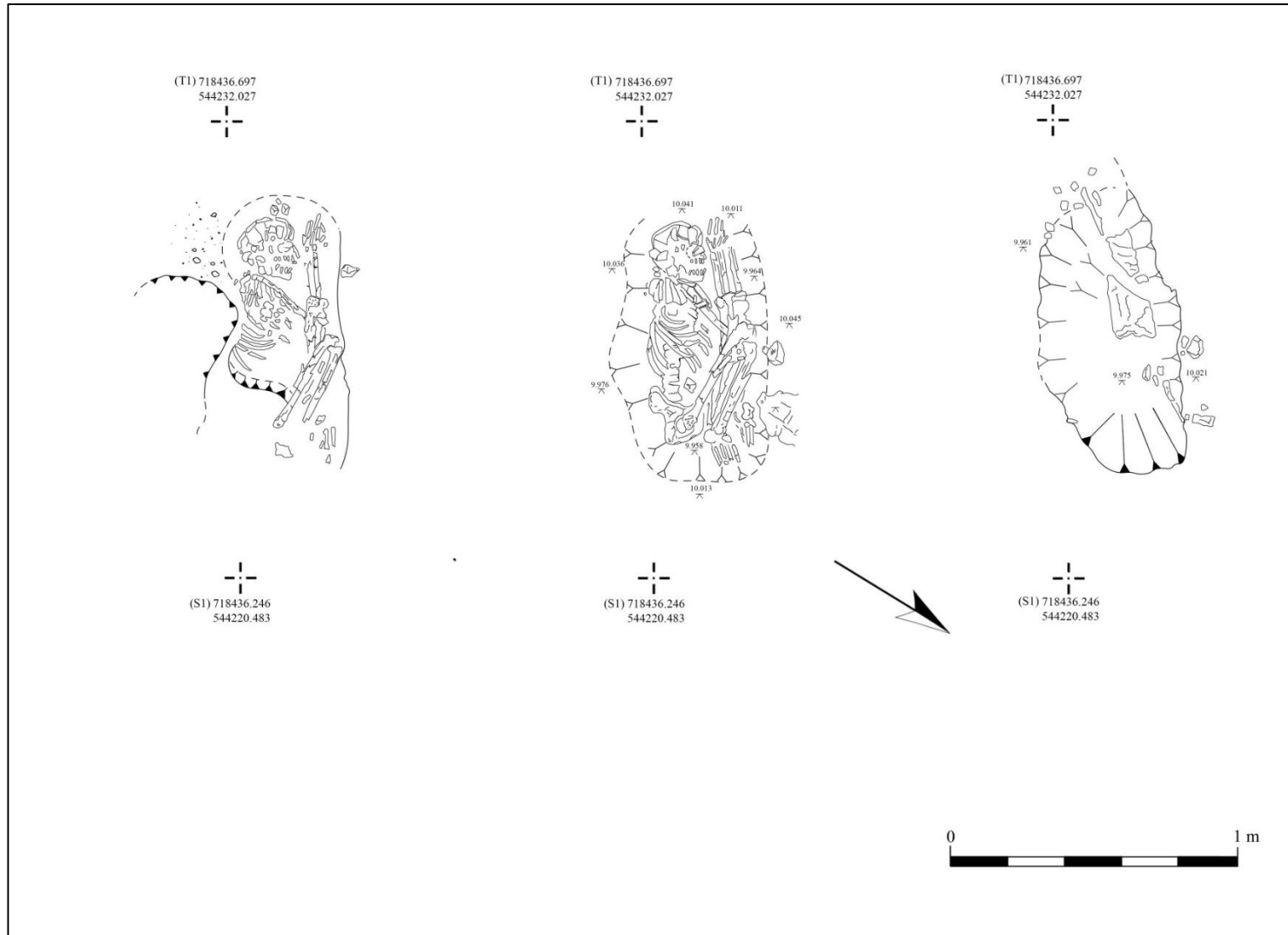


Illustration 6 SK4 - mid-ex 1, mid-ex 2 and post-ex

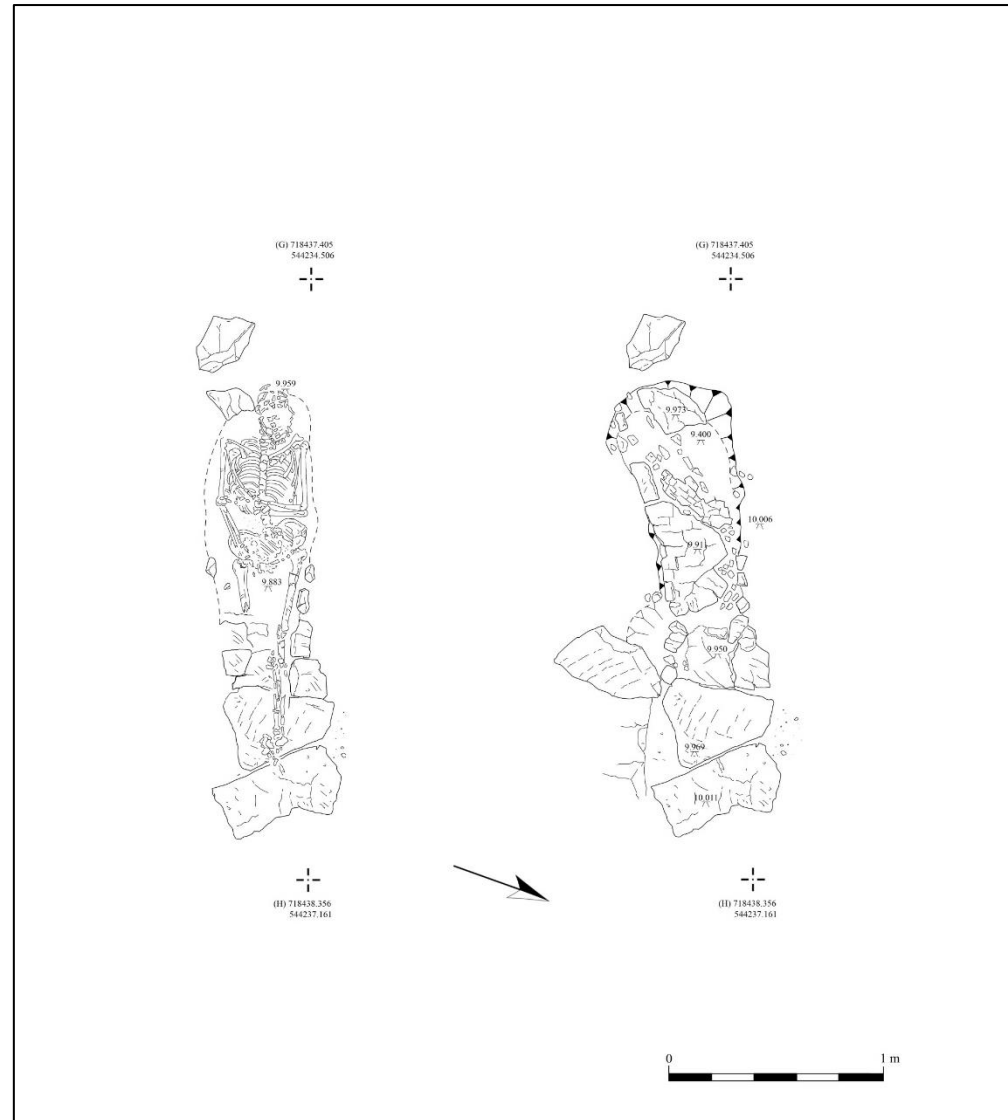


Illustration 7 SK5 - mid-ex and post-ex

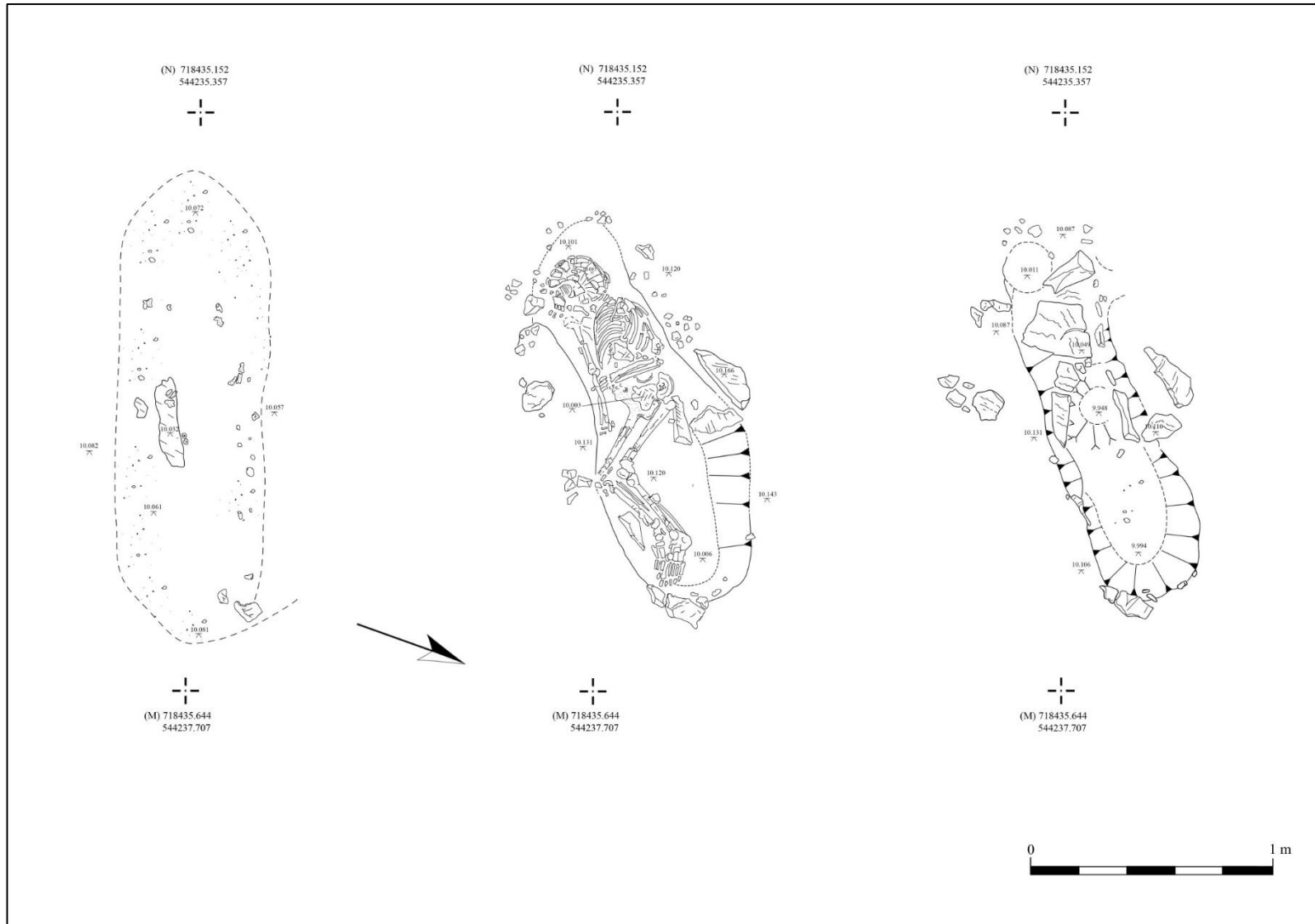


Illustration 8 SK6 - pre-ex, mid-ex and post-ex

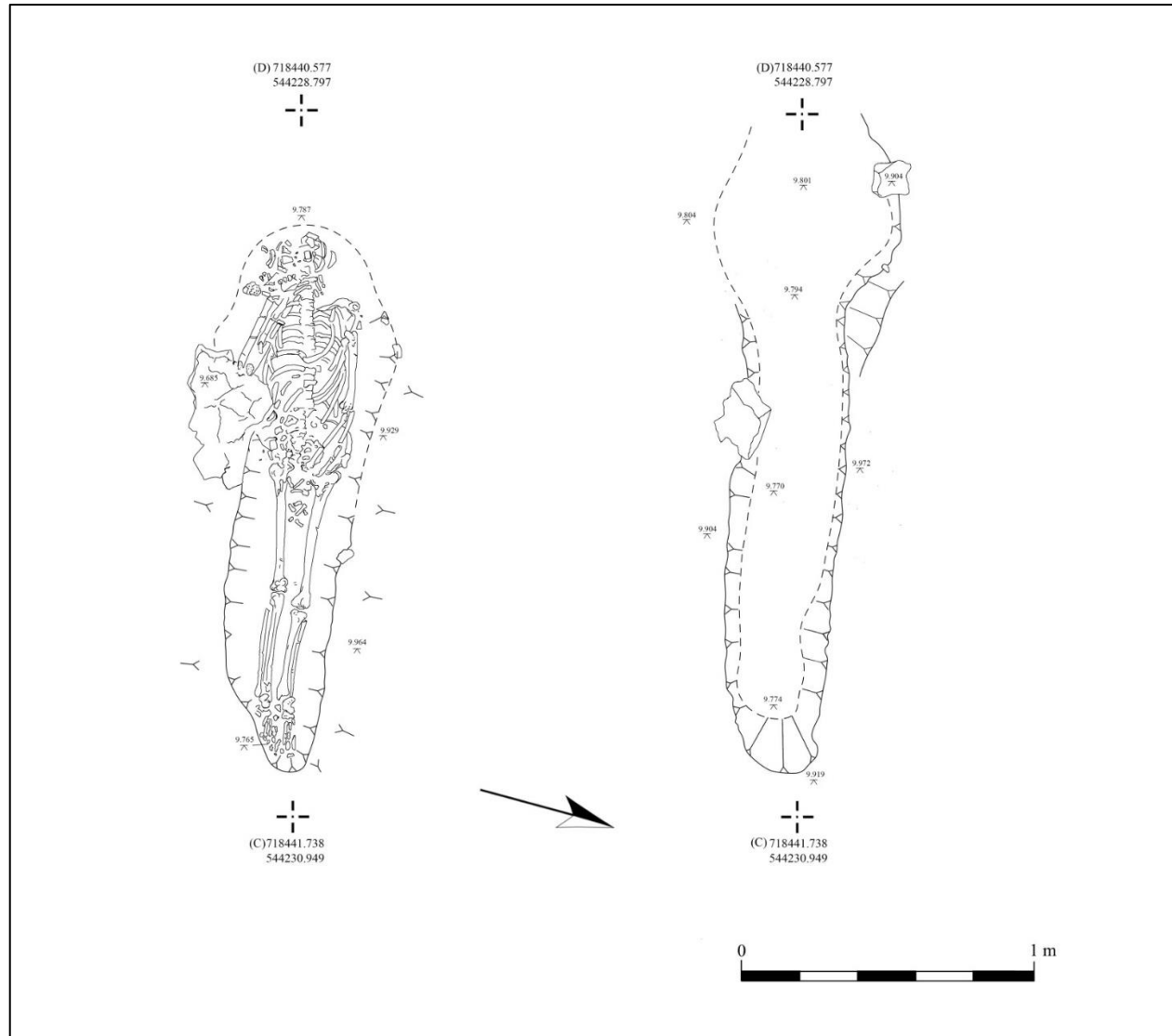


Illustration 9 SK7 - mid-ex and post-ex

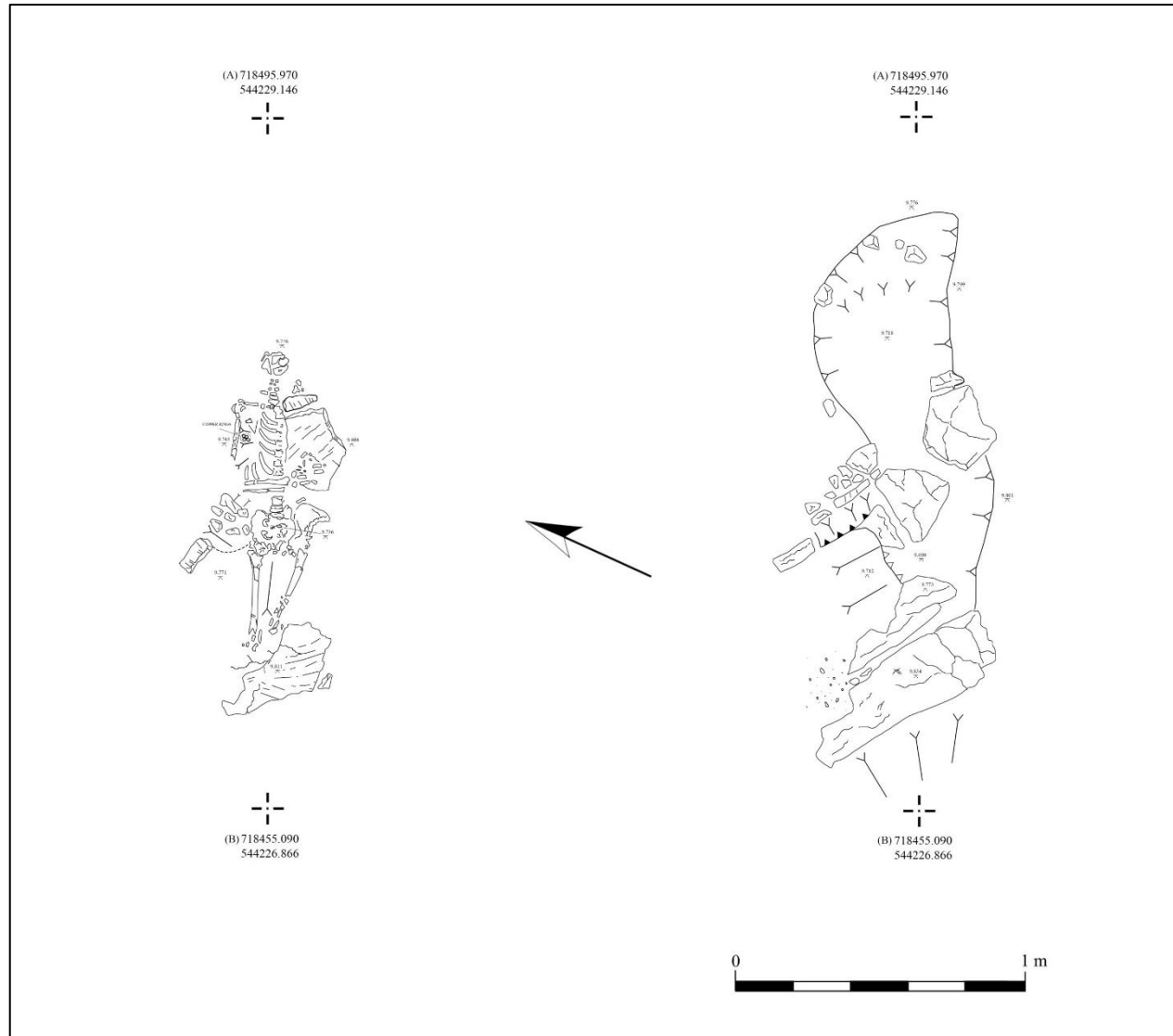


Illustration 10 SK8 - mid-ex and post-ex

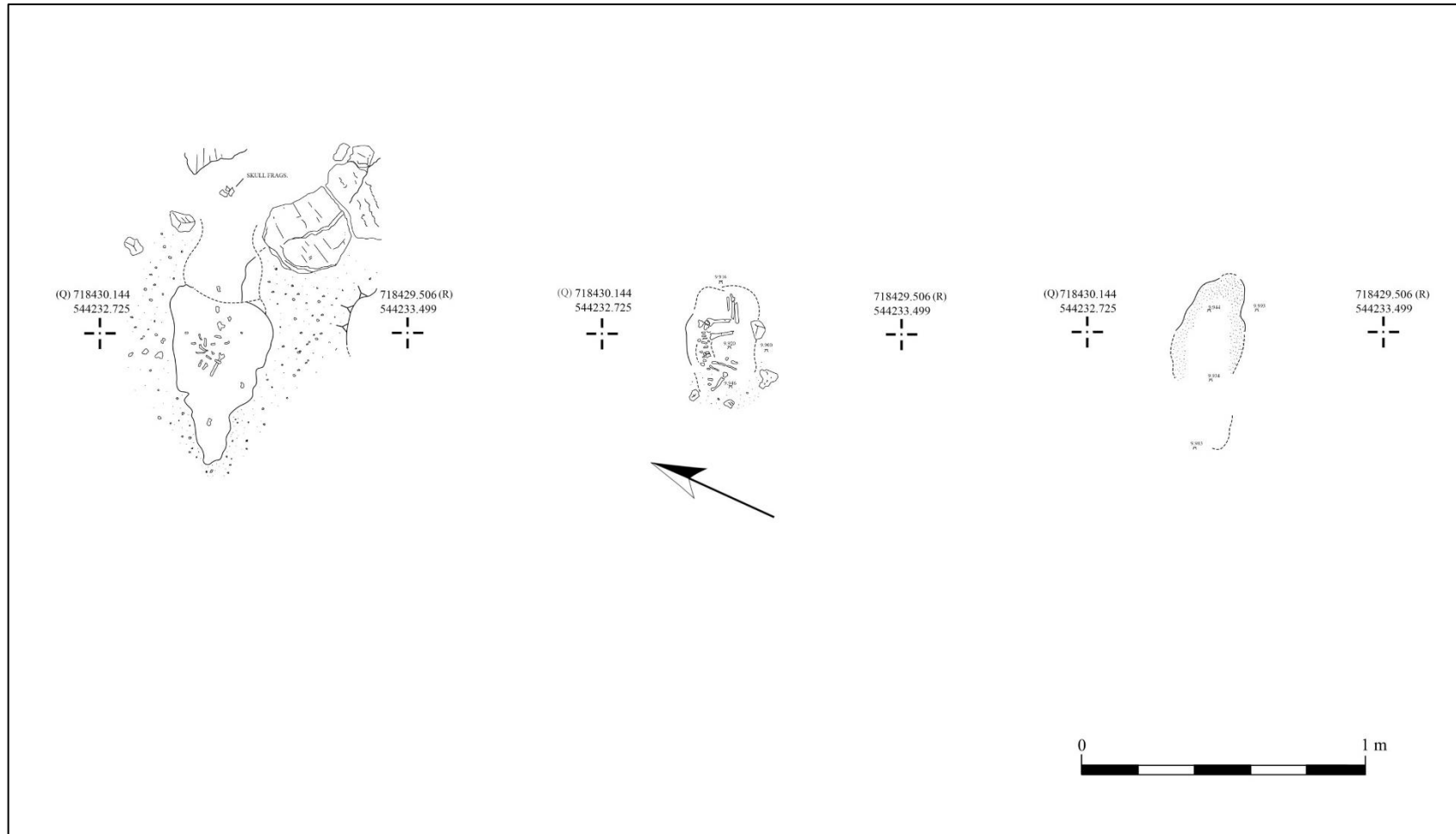


Illustration 11 SK9 - pre-ex, mid-ex and post-ex

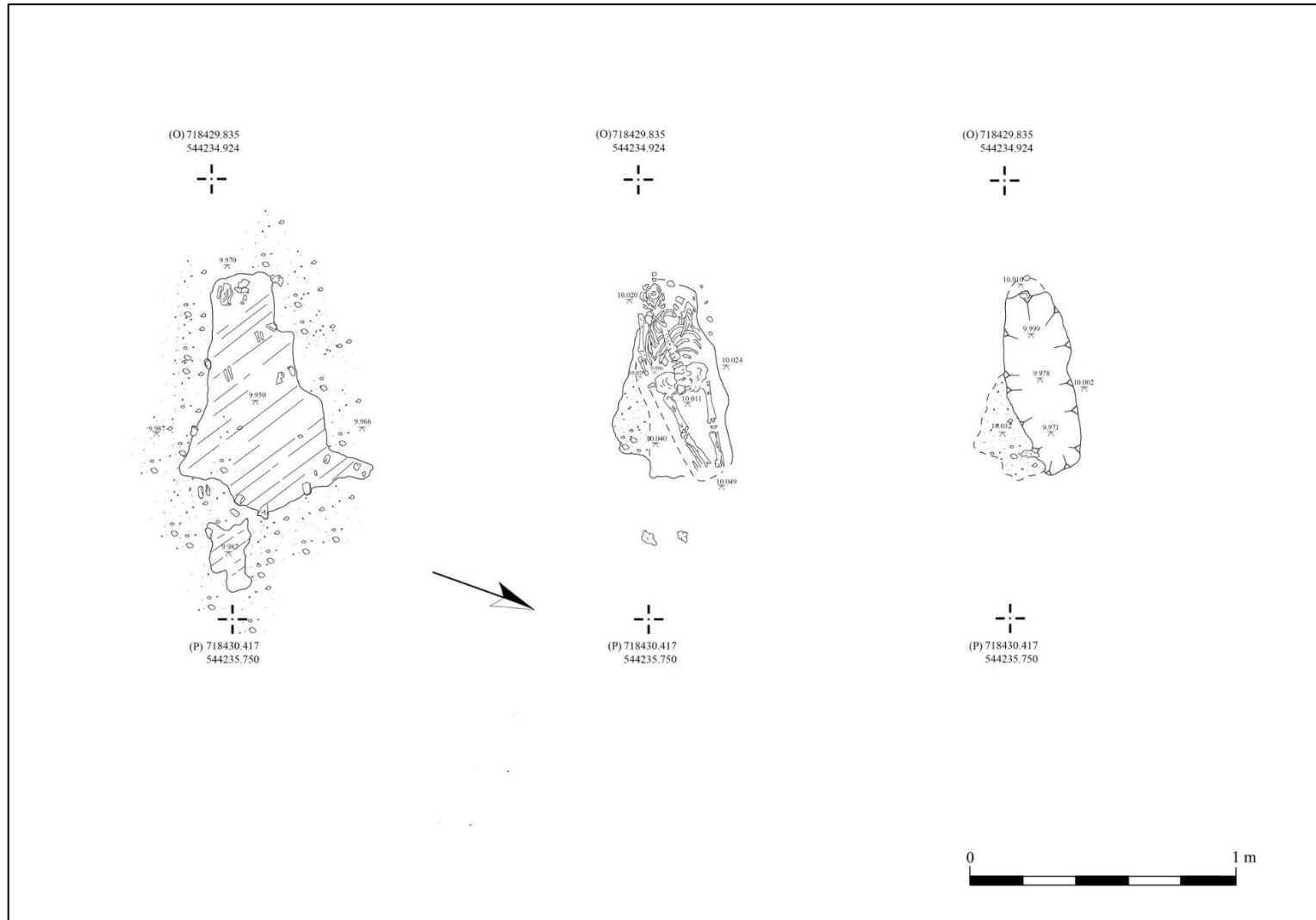


Illustration 12 SK10 - pre-ex, mid-ex and post-ex

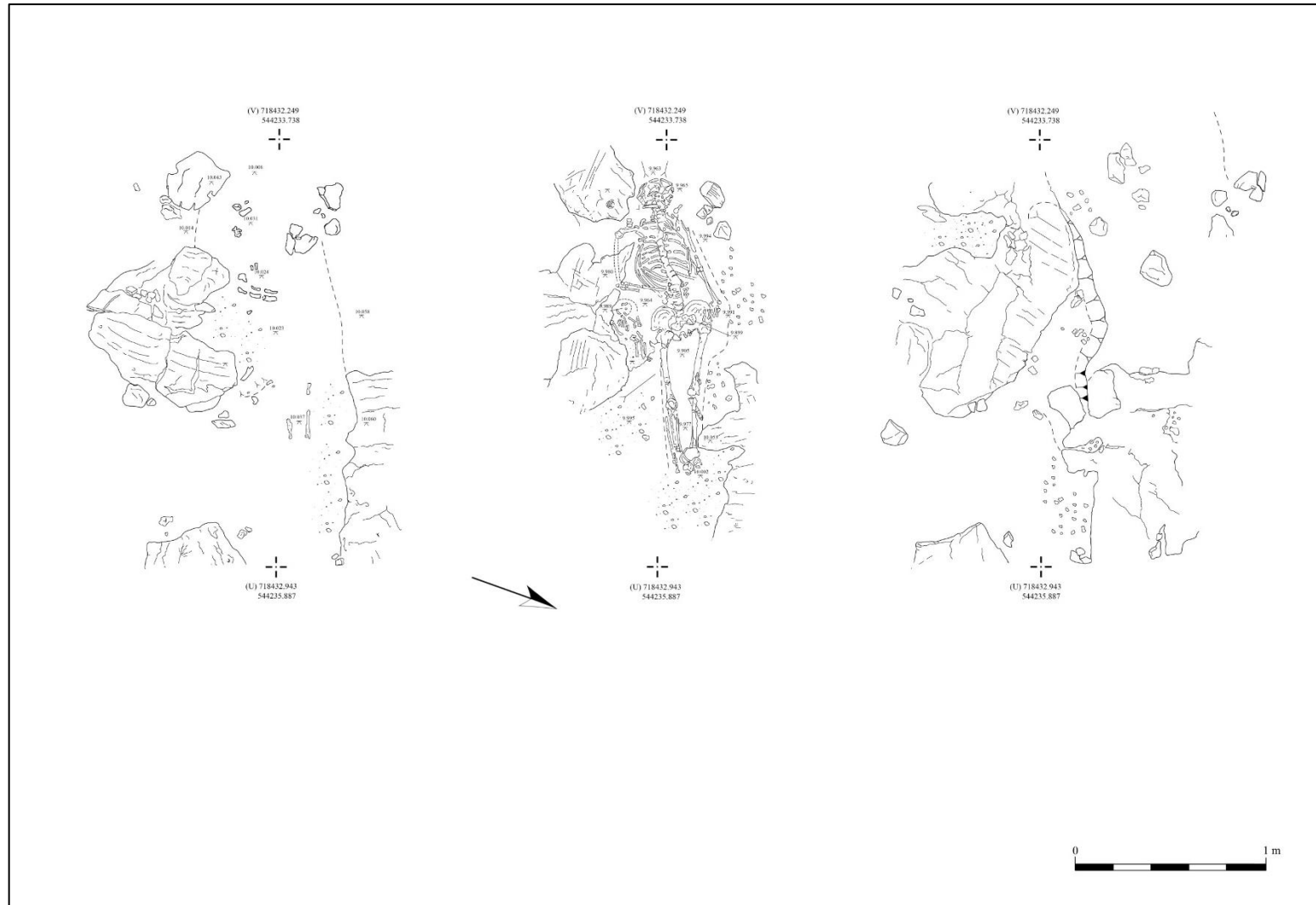


Illustration 13 SK11 & SK14 - pre-ex, mid-ex and post-ex

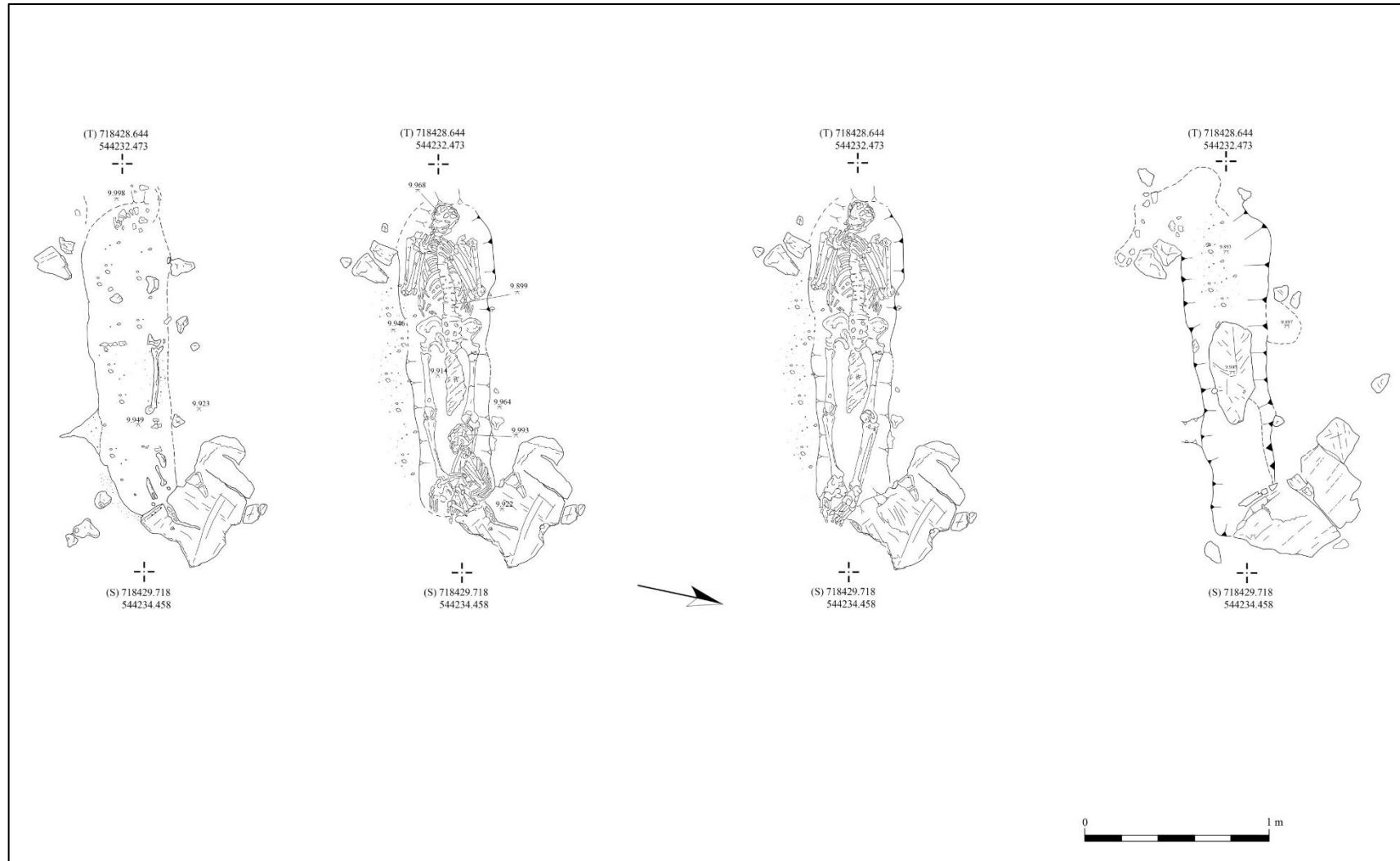


Illustration 14 SK12 & SK13 - pre-ex, mid-ex 1, mid-ex 2 and post-ex

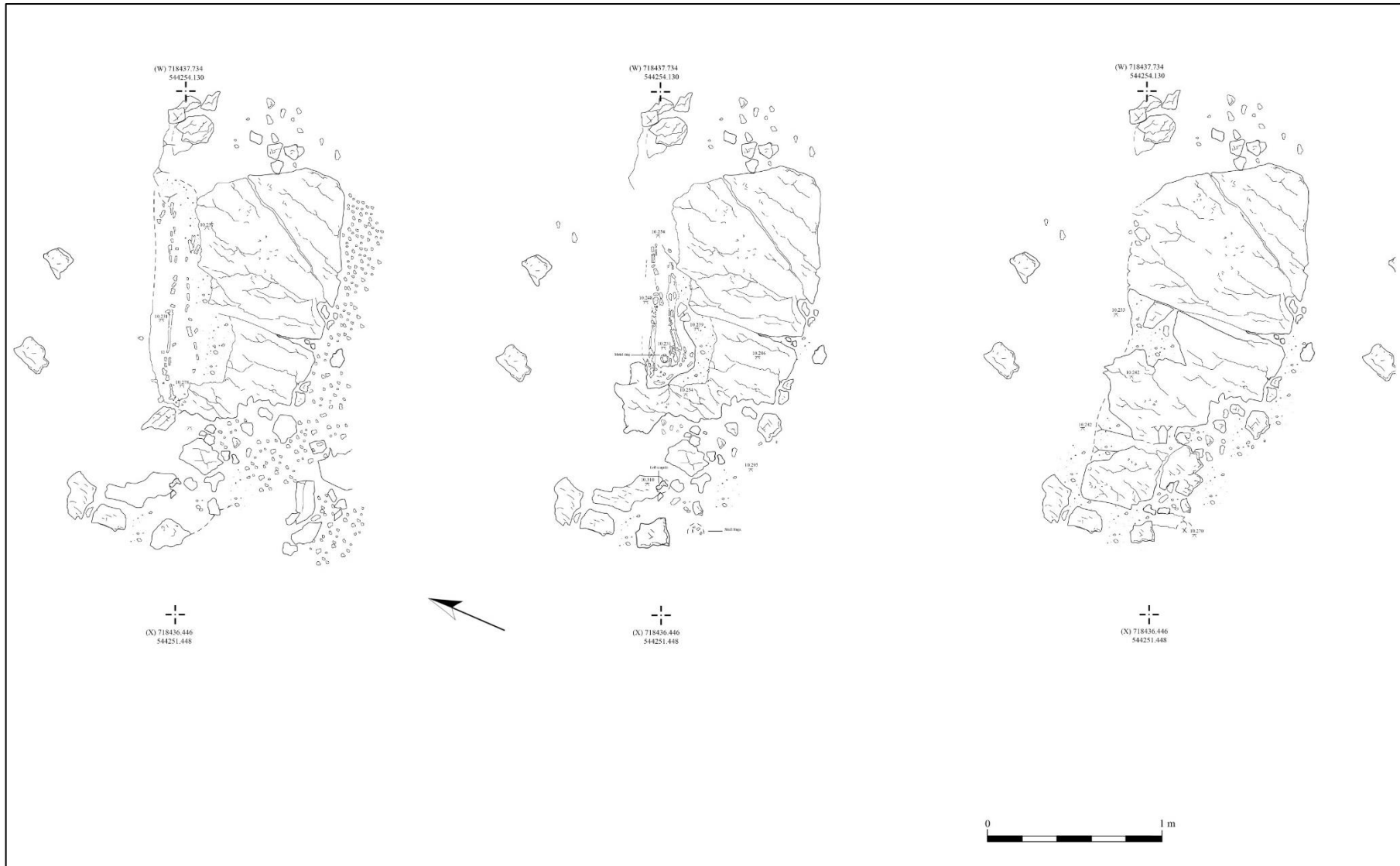


Illustration 15 SK15 - pre-ex, mid-ex and post-ex

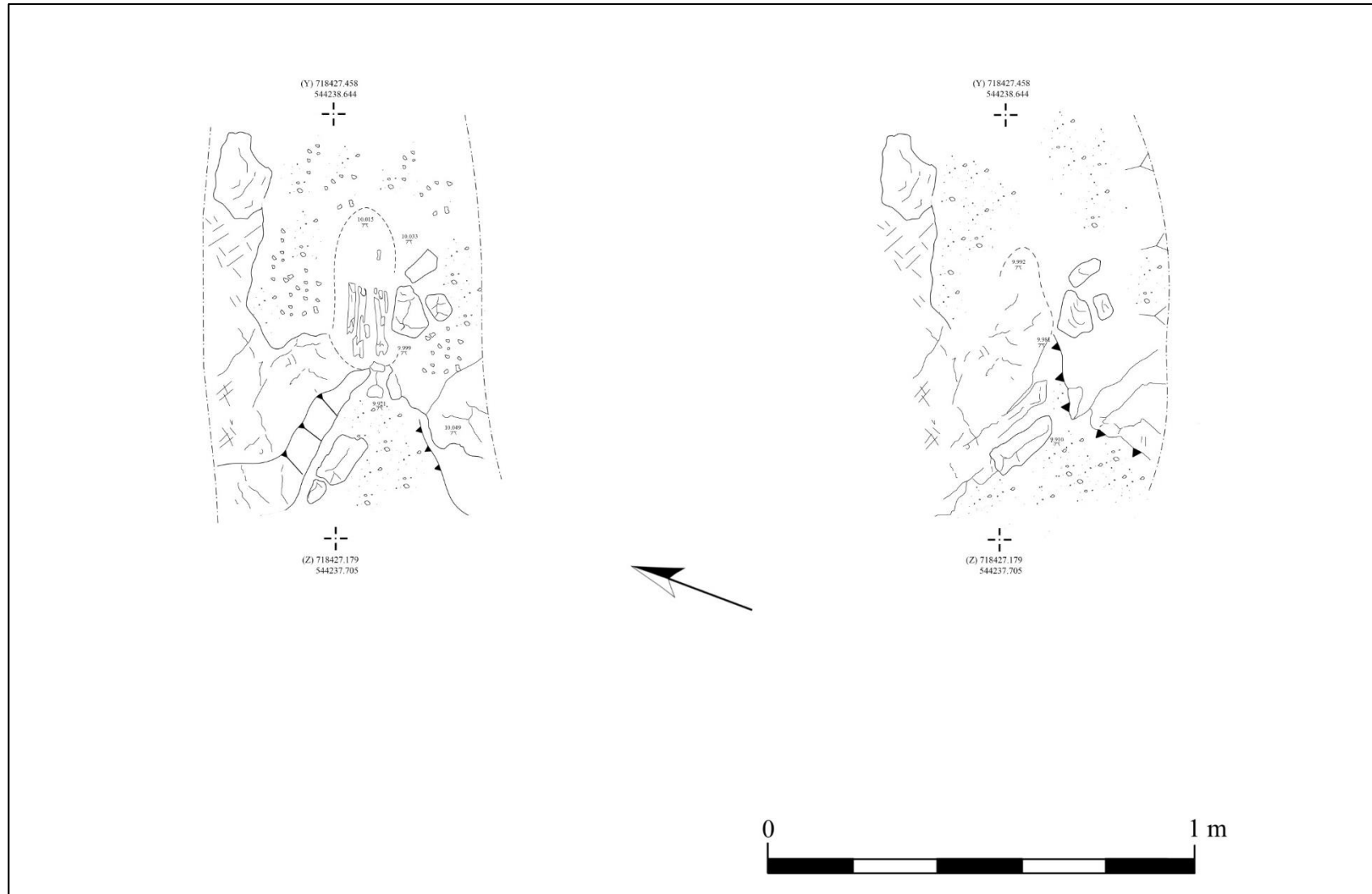


Illustration 16 SK16 - mid-ex and post-ex

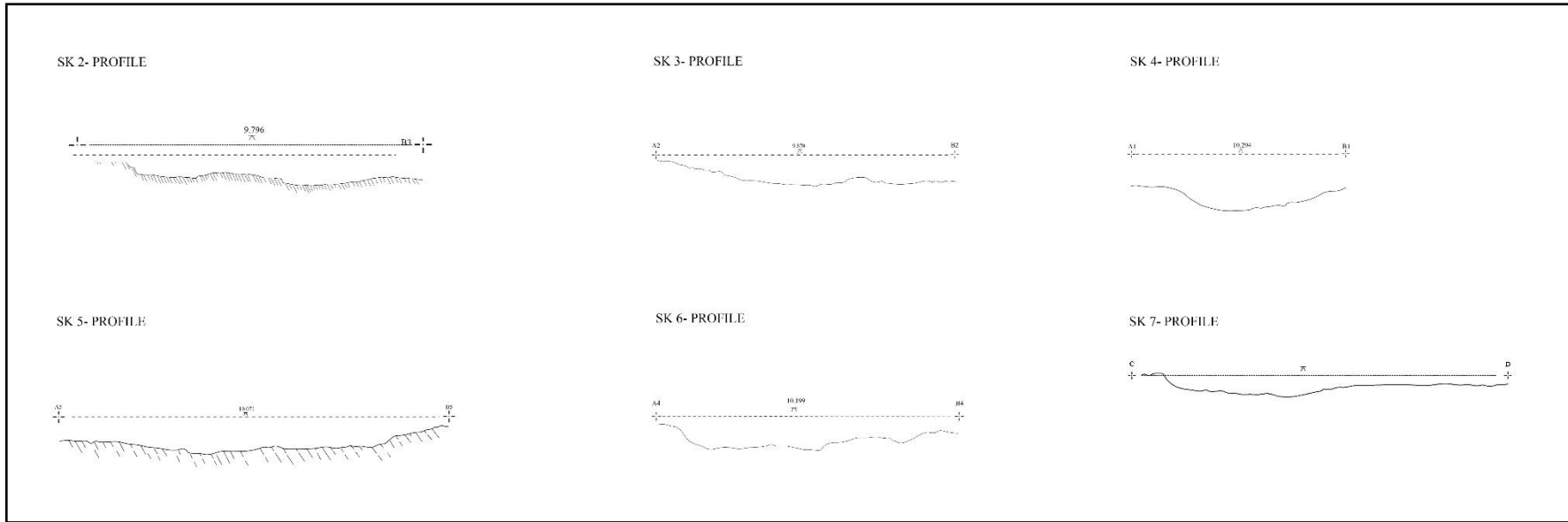


Illustration 17 SK02-SK07 - grave-cut profiles

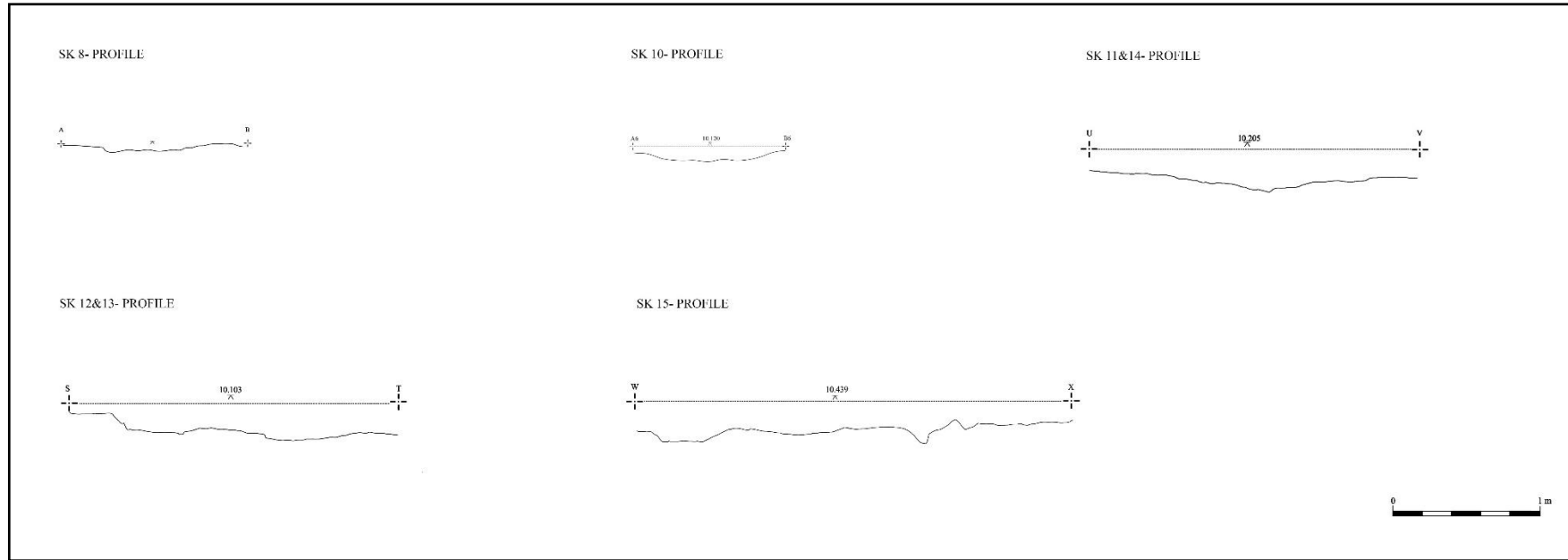


Illustration 18 SK08-SK15 - grave-cut profiles

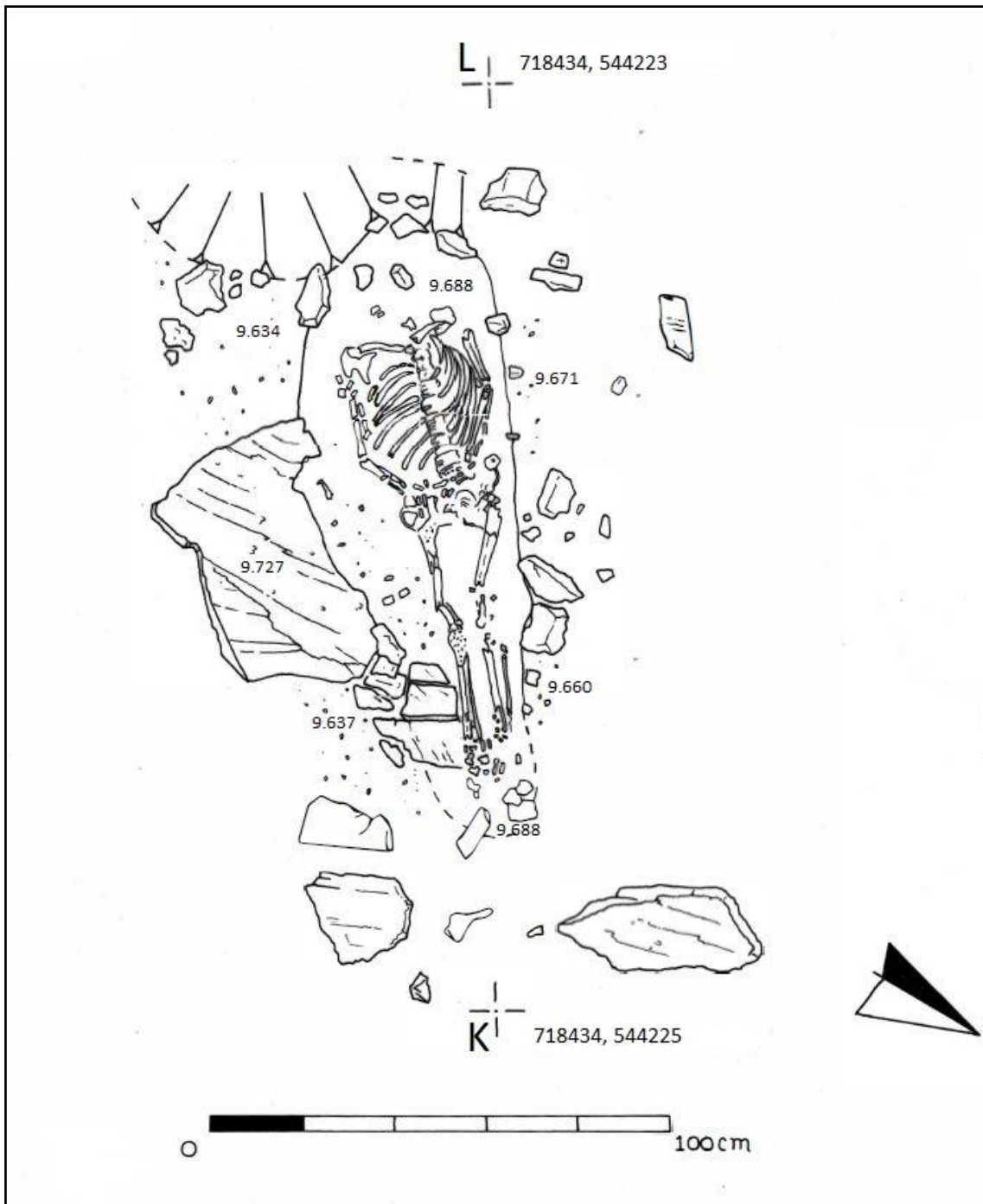


Illustration 19 SK2, mid-excavation

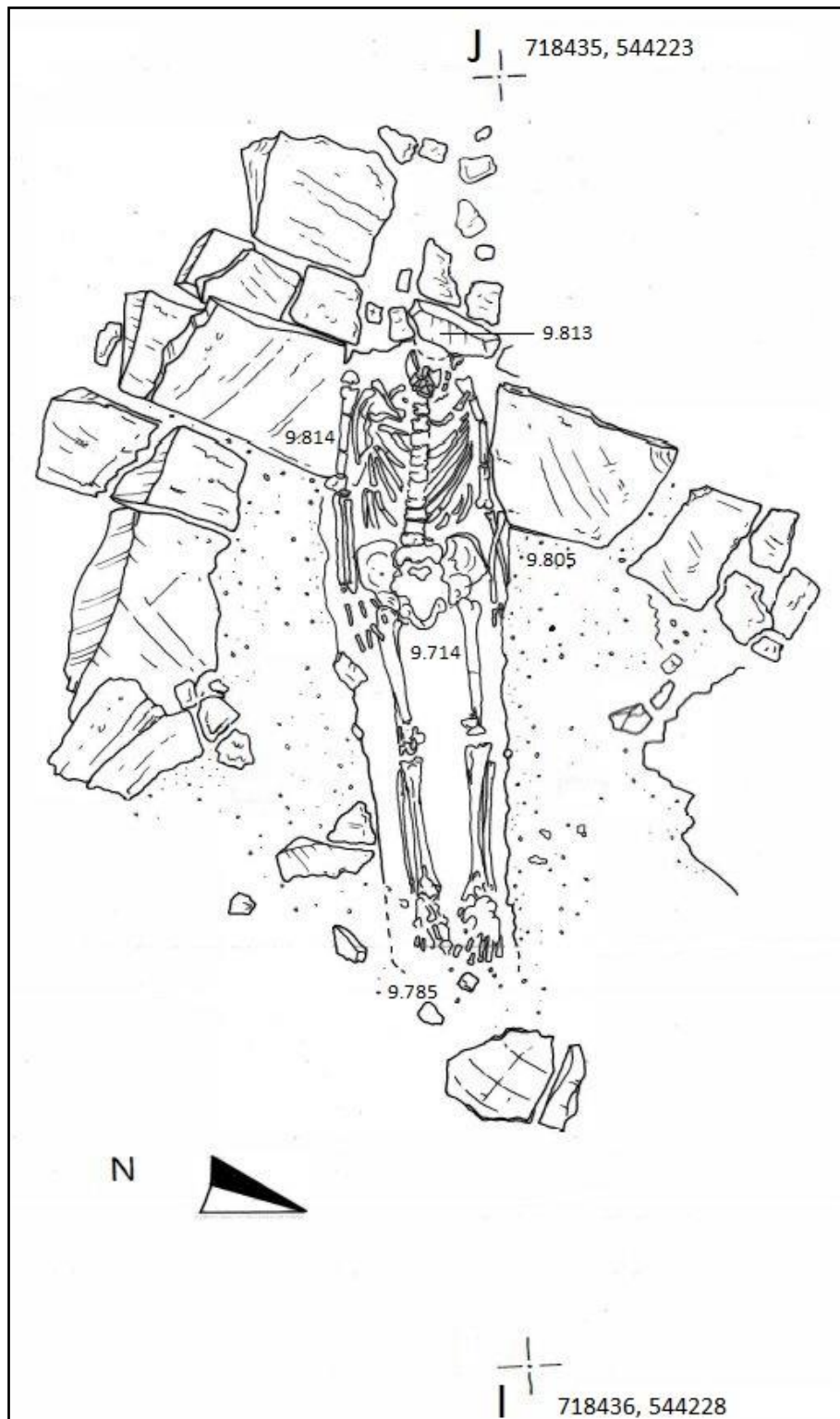


Illustration 20 SK3, mid-excavation

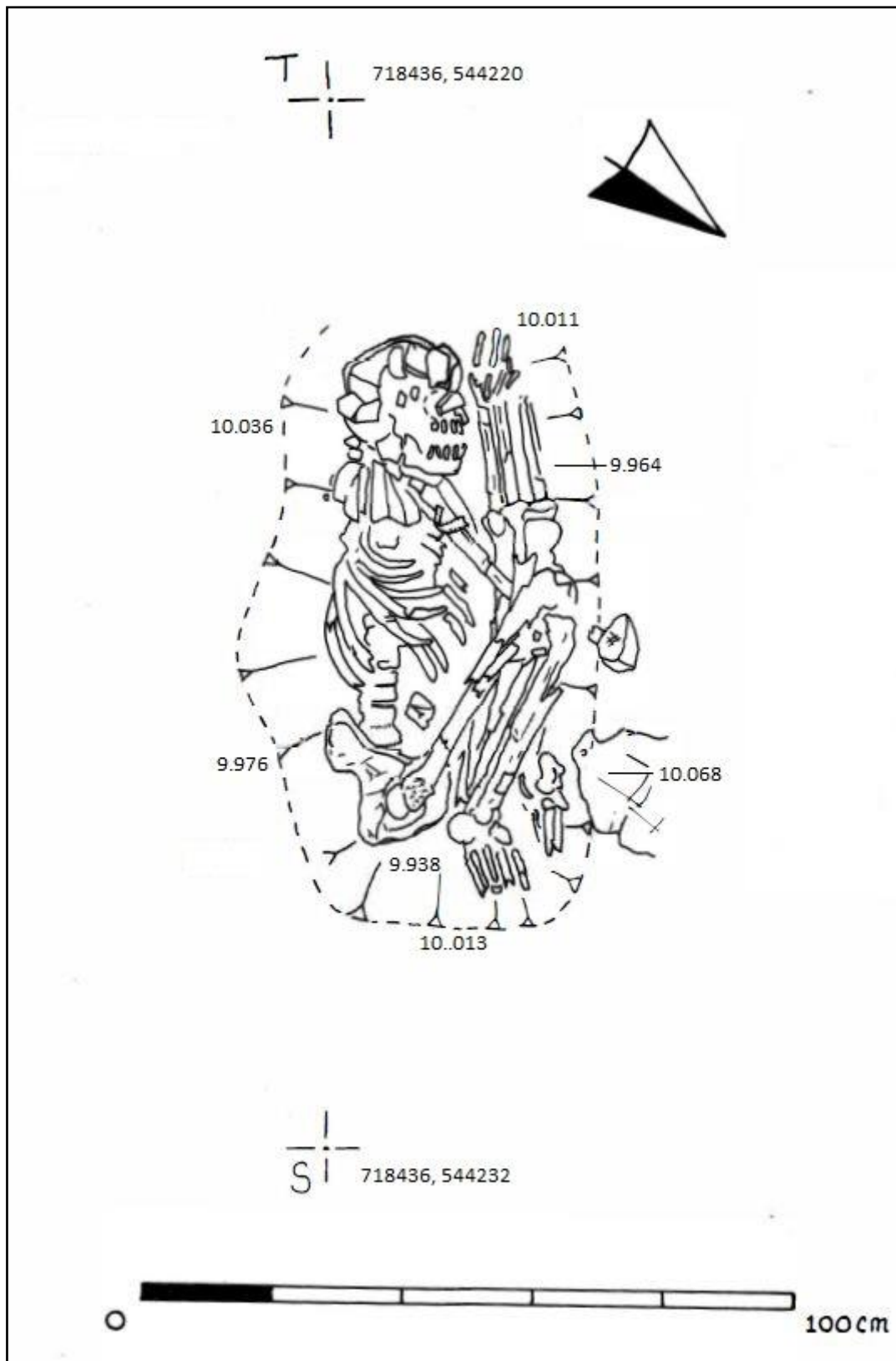


Illustration 21 SK4, mid-excavation

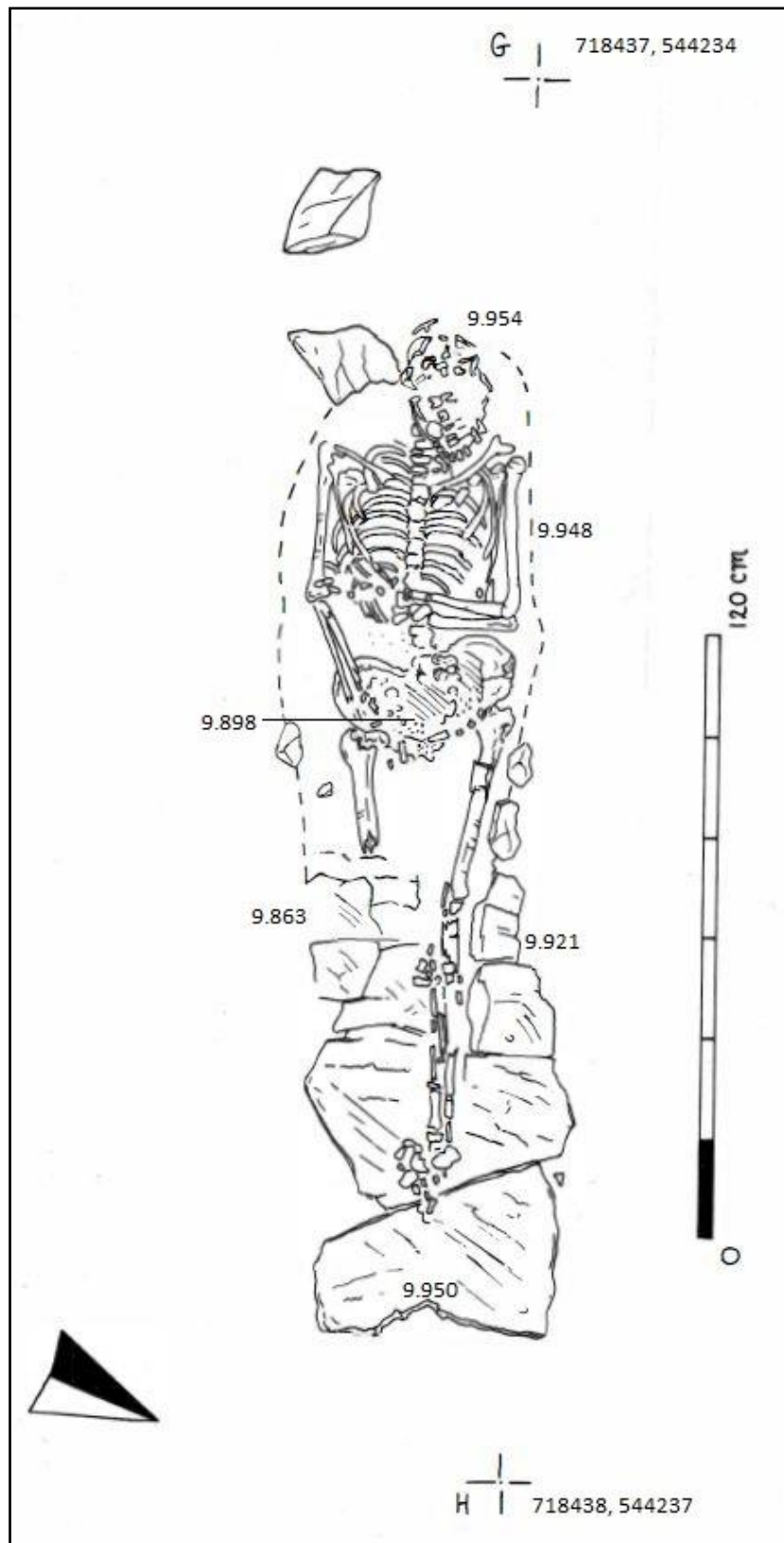


Illustration 22 SK5, mid-excavation

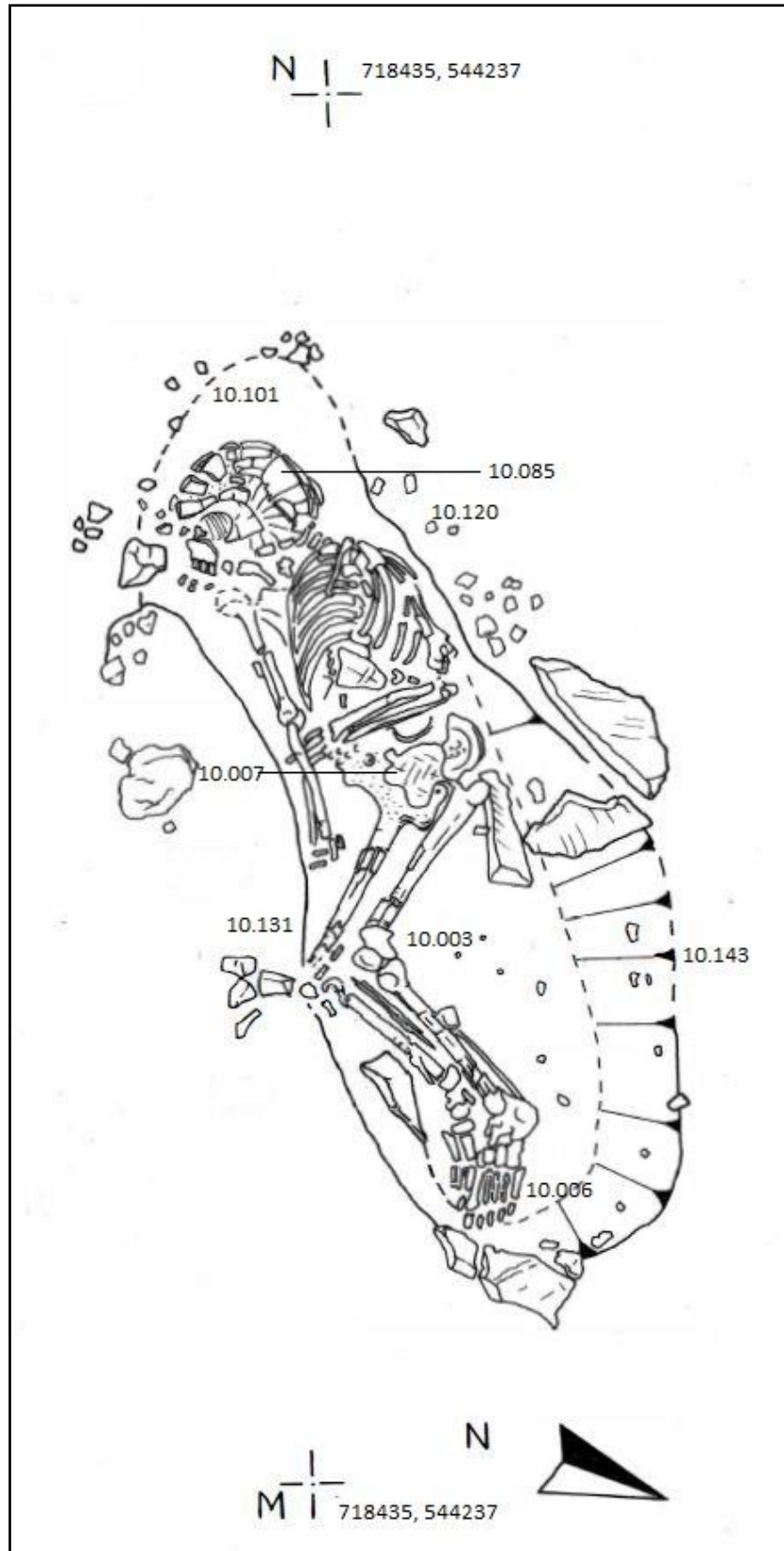


Illustration 23 SK6, mid-excitation

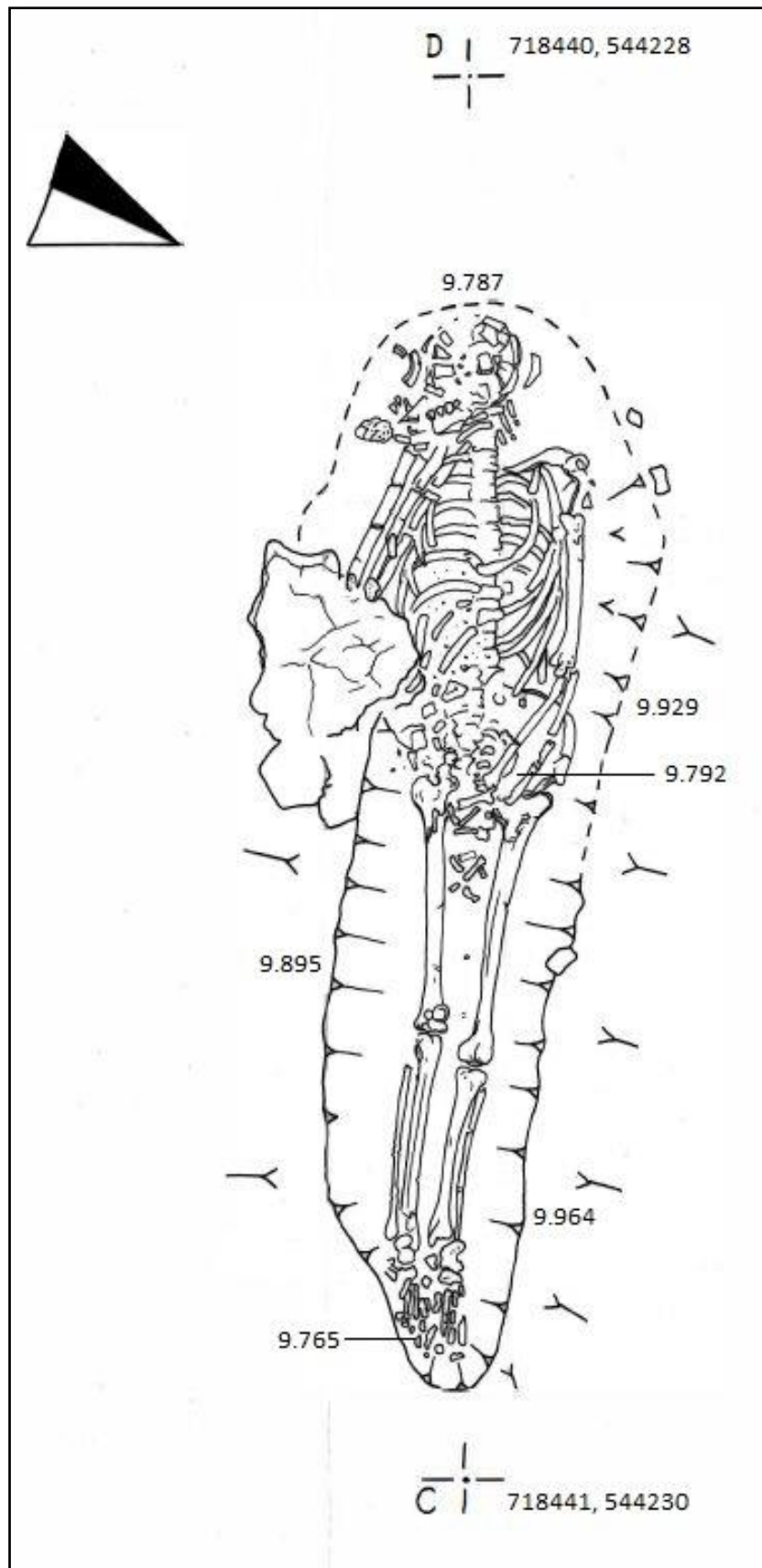


Illustration 24 SK7, mid-excavation

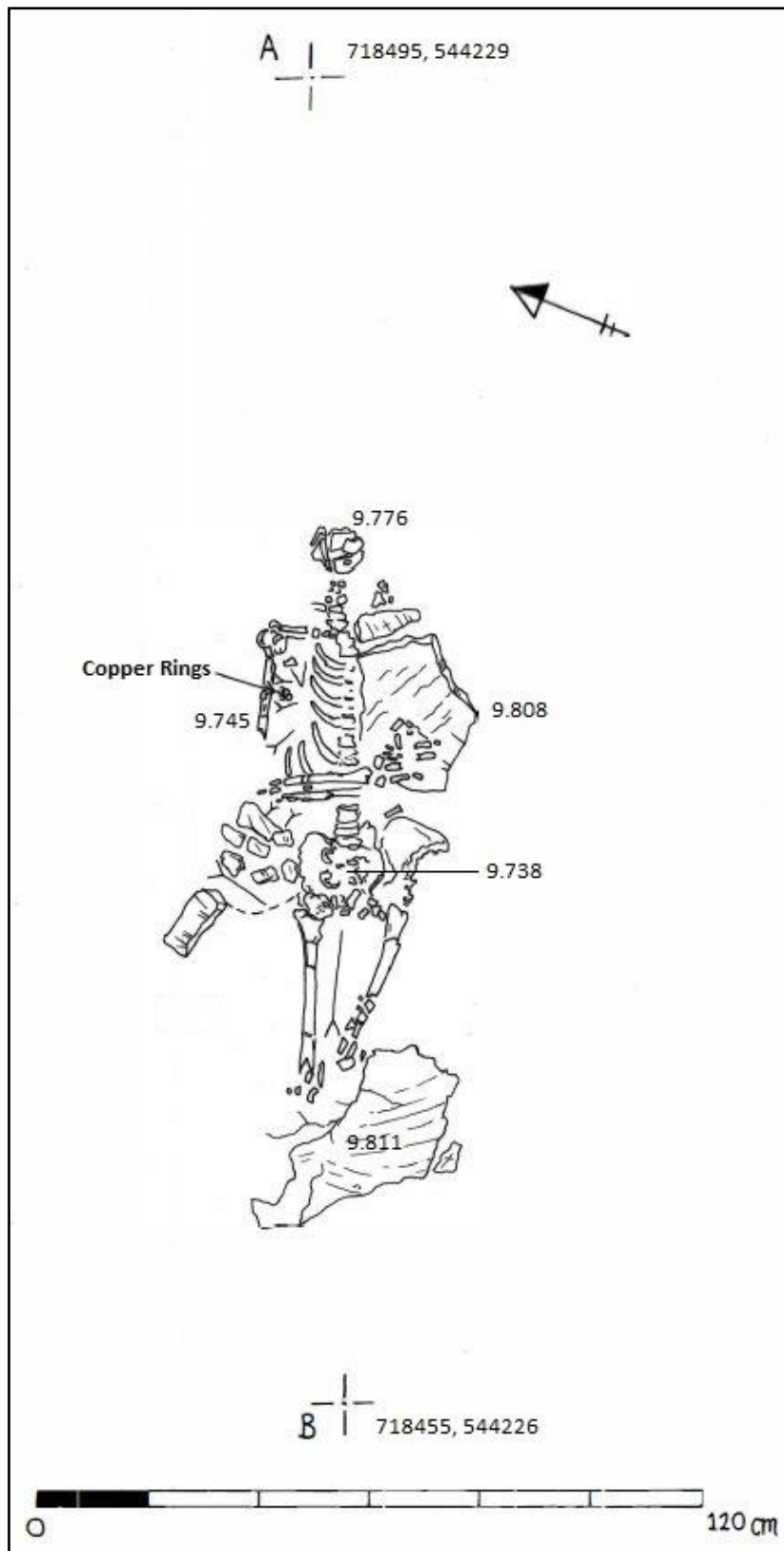


Illustration 25 SK8, mid-excavation

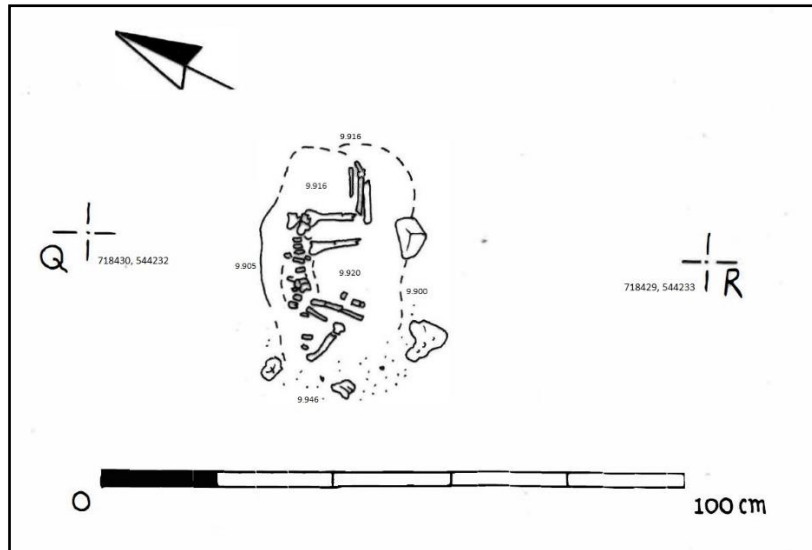


Illustration 26 SK9, mid-excavation

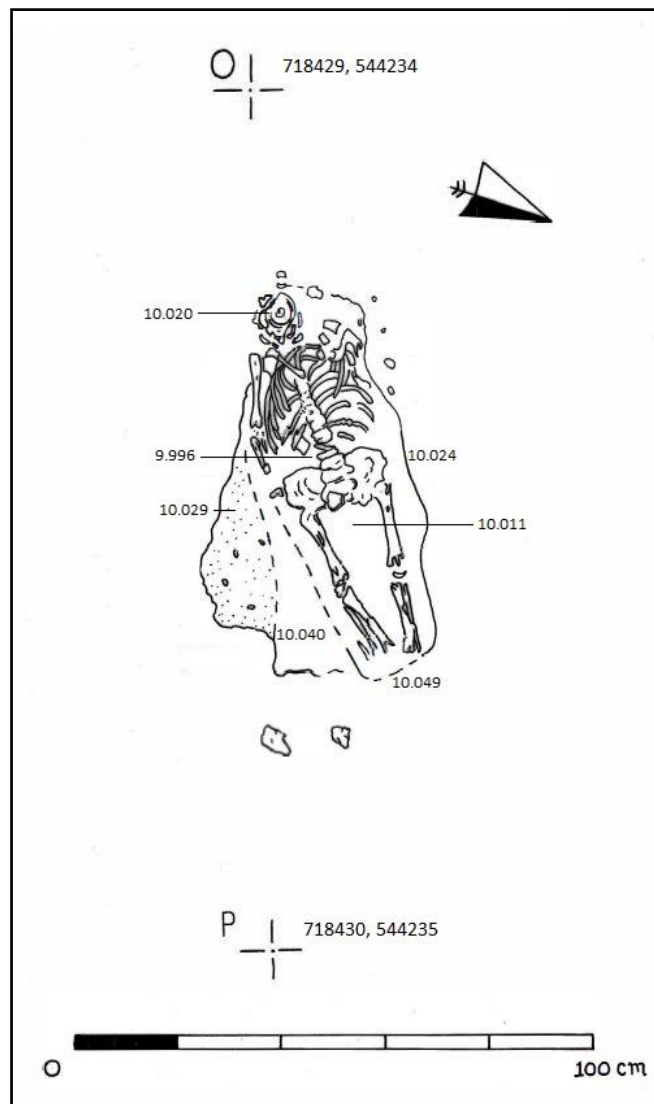


Illustration 27 SK10, mid-excavation

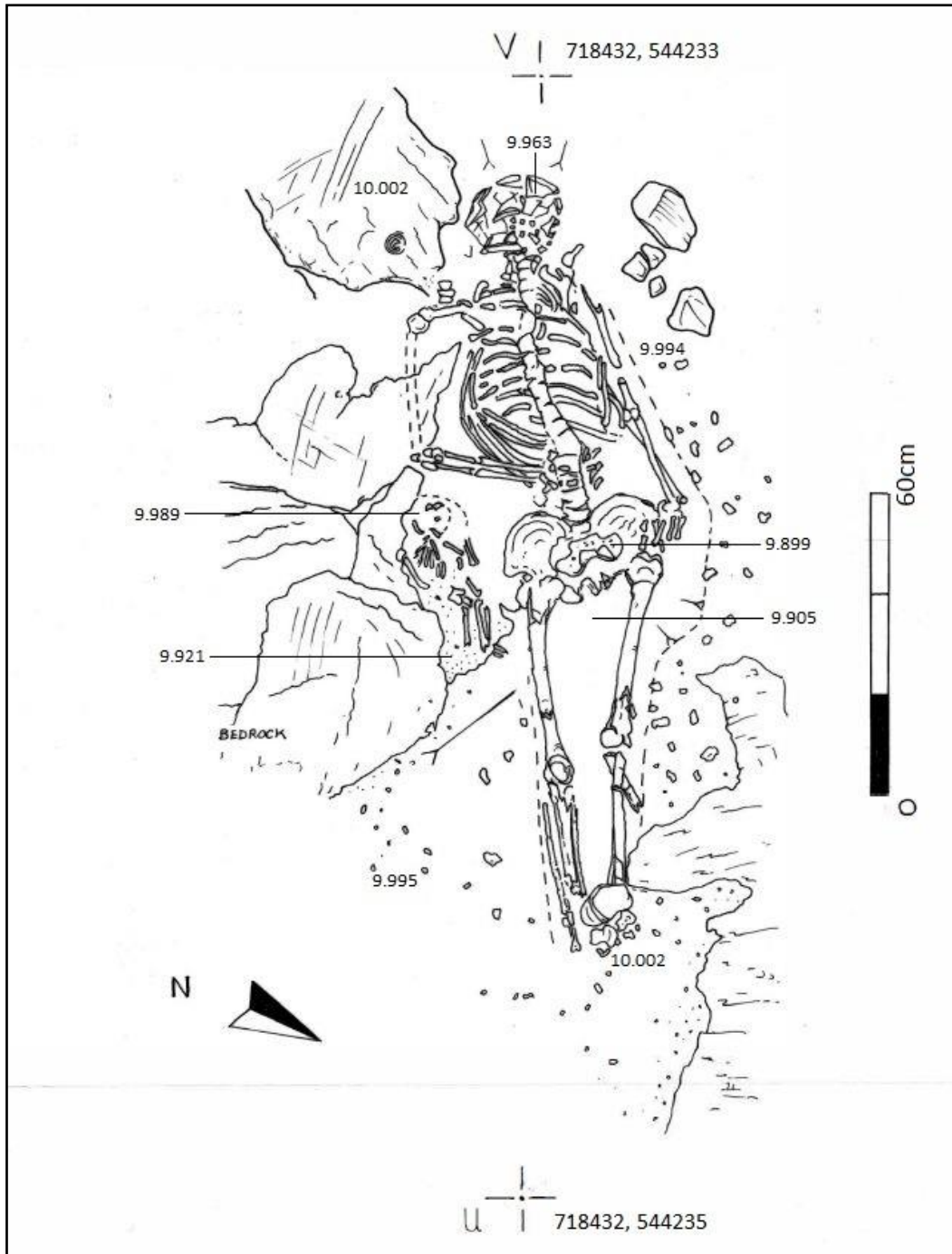


Illustration 28 SK11 & SK14, mid-excavation

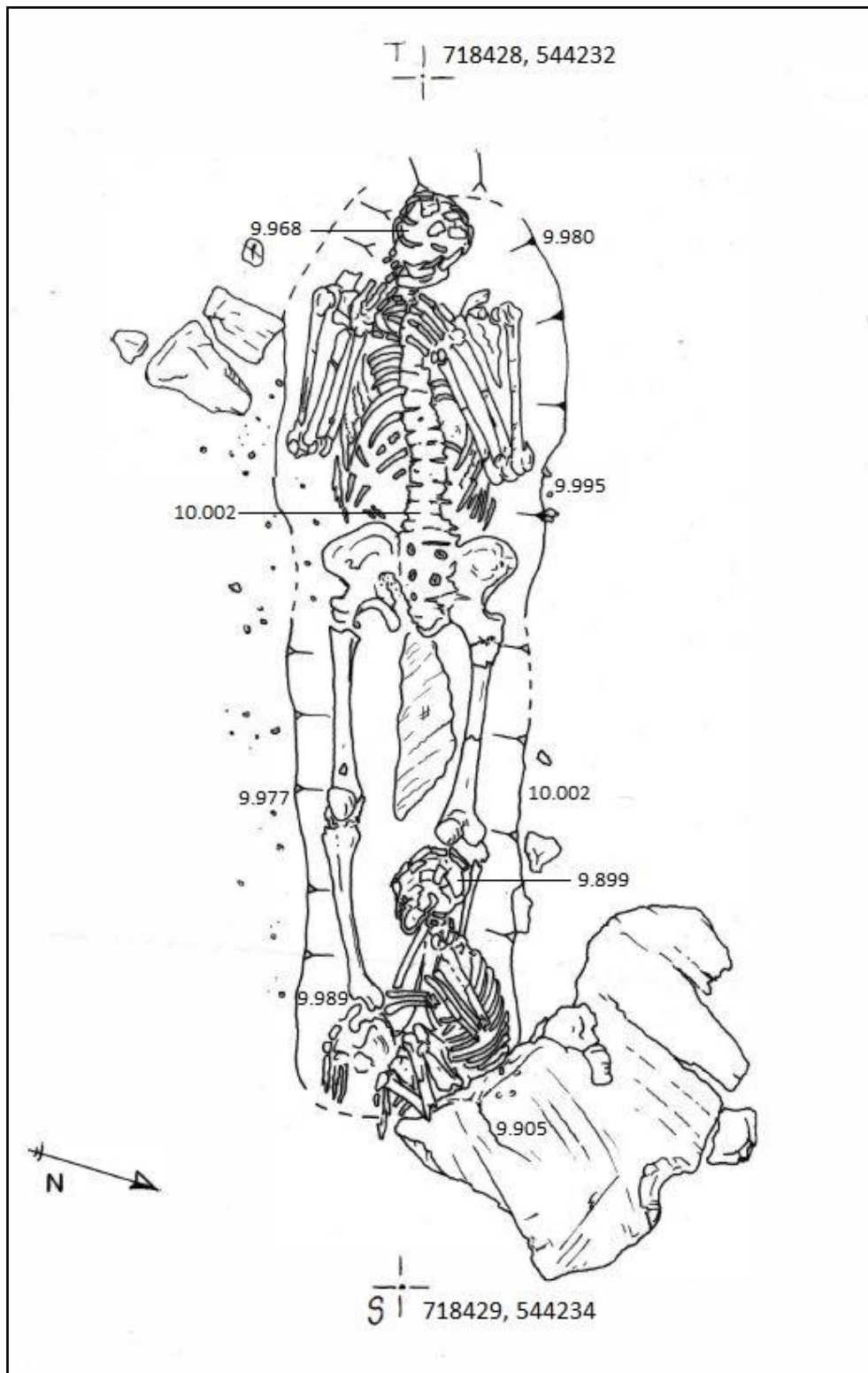


Illustration 29 SK12 & SK13, mid-excavation

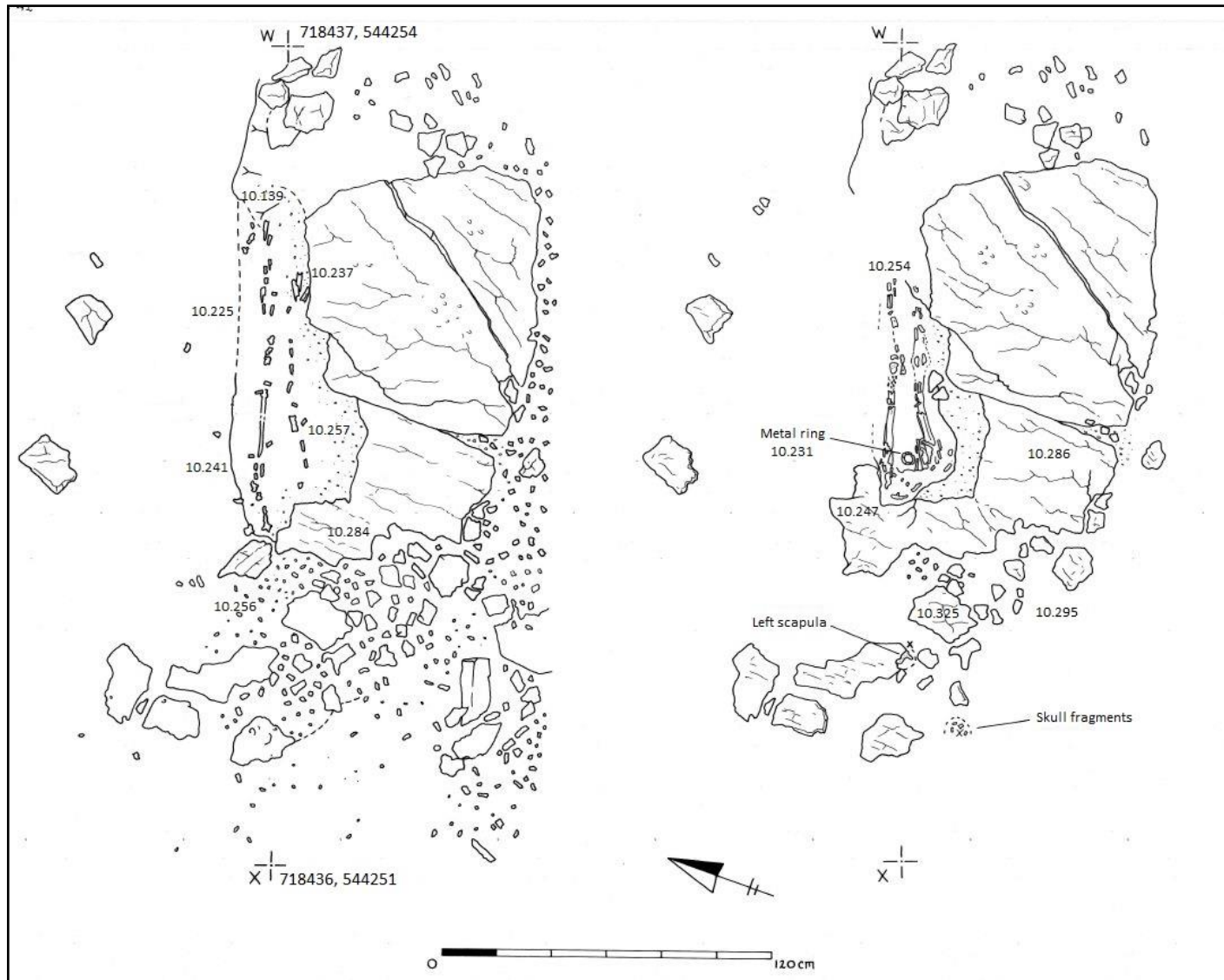


Illustration 30 SK15, pre-excitation and mid-excitation



Plate 4 SK01 (ex-situ), facing northwest



Plate 5 SK02, facing WSW



Plate 6 SK03, facing WSW



Plate 7 SK04, facing WSW



Plate 8 SK05, facing WSW



Plate 9 SK06, facing WSW



Plate 10 SK07, facing WSW



Plate 11 SK08, facing ENE



Plate 12 SK09, facing WSW



Plate 13 SK10, facing WSW



Plate 14 SK11 & SK14, facing WSW



Plate 15 SK12 & SK13, facing WSW



Plate 16 SK15, facing WSW



Plate 17 SK16, facing WSW



Plate 18 Facing ENE showing SK2 (foreground) and SK3 (middle ground)



Plate 19 Facing west showing SK05 in foreground and Dunkellin Bridge in background



Plate 20 Facing west showing SK07 in foreground and SK08 under cover at far right



Plate 21 SK03 grave-cut, facing ENE



Plate 22 SK05 grave-cut, facing S



Plate 23 SK07 grave-cut, facing ENE



Plate 24 SK11 & SK14 burial site post-excavation, facing SW



Plate 25 SK12 & SK13 grave-cut, facing WSW



Plate 26 SK15 grave-cut, facing ENE



Plate 27 Facing WSW showing final site clearance with SK15 (under cover) left of centre



Plate 28 Facing east showing broken stone fill in north-facing section of excavation for stage 2 channel



Plate 29 Iron artefact from pelvic area of SK15



Plate 30 copper alloy wire rings with twisted terminals from the right side of torso of SK08



Plate 31 Iron artefact (nail?) from grave fill of SK03