Radstone Technology Site
Towcester
Northamptonshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Oxford Archaeology

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

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SUMMARY

In July and October 2004 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a two phased field evaluation at the Radstone Technology Site, Water Lane, Towcester, Northamptonshire (NGR: SP 691 485) on behalf of John Samuels Archaeological Consultants. The site was divided into 2 areas by Water Lane; Block A to the west and Block B to the east.

Block B was situated over the projected course of the Roman road from Towcester to Alchester and revealed extensive evidence of 1st-2nd century boundary ditches, pits and a limestone wall footing, although there was no conclusive evidence of the Alchester road. Evidence of 3rd-4th century ditches and gullies was also recovered.

Evaluation to the north of Block A revealed evidence of 1st-2nd century plot boundaries and gullies and a possible limestone wall footing. Three 3rd-4th century inhumations were also excavated and the western extent of the burials appeared to be defined by a re-cut of a section of one of the earlier plot boundaries. As a result of the preliminary results of the evaluation in this area, a subsequent excavation was undertaken which revealed a further 25 burials, a possible southern boundary to the cemetery and evidence of 1st-2nd century activity to the extreme north of Block A. Although the results of the excavation will be the subject of a forthcoming report, they are relevant here in that they informed the post-excavation interpretation of a number of features revealed within Block A during the evaluation

The trenches excavated to the south of Block A were subject to flooding and features observed were therefore not fully characterised. However, a sequence of alluvial deposits overlying the natural geology was recorded, together with a number of features of Roman date.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 Between the 16th-27th July and the 2nd-3rd November 2004, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a two phased field evaluation on land at the Radstone Technology Site, Towcester, Northamptonshire (NGR: SP 691 485) in respect of a planning application for residential and B1 development (Planning Application No. S/2003/0800/PO) submitted by David Wilson Homes. A series of geotechnical test pits, undertaken by Ground Risk Management were also monitored during this two periods.

1.1.2 A brief was set by Northamptonshire County Council, Historic Environment Team and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was produced by John Samuels Archaeological Consultants (JSAC 2004), providing the framework for OA to undertake the evaluation. The WSI was subsequently amended due to the presence of human remains in Block A (ref. Section 3 below).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 The site consists of two areas of land, Blocks A and B, located to the west and east of Water Lane respectively (Fig.1). The development area covers approximately 2 hectares and is bounded to the south-west, north-west and north-east by residential and commercial properties and to the south-east by a tributary of the River Tove, lying at approximately 95 m OD. The underlying geology is upper Lias clays within Block B and the northern half of Block A, and 1st river terrace gravels within the southern half of Block A.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological background of the development area was produced by JSAC in their specification (JSAC 2004). The following is largely reproduced from the specification.

1.3.2 Probable Pleistocene deposits were exposed in 1997, during the evaluation in advance of the construction of Safeways, to the south of Block B. Stray prehistoric finds have been recovered in Park Street, Bury Mount and Buckingham Way. The earliest evidence for prehistoric occupation in Towcester is the Iron Age cemetery, found close to the Bury Mount, c. 300m north-east of the study site.

1.3.3 In 1732 Horsley recognised Towcester as the Roman town of *Lactodoro,* first mentioned in the 5th century AD Antonine Itinerary and Ravenna List (cited in RCHME 1982:150). The discovery of early finds from the town suggests that it may have had a fort. The town is situated on the River Tove at an important junction of Watling Street and the road from Winchester to Lincoln. The accepted alignment of the Roman Alchester road crosses the south-eastern corner of Block A and extends slightly off the centre of Block B, see Figure 2. The route of the Alchester Road has been established to the south of its junction with Watling Street (Lambrick, 1980), evidence of roadside settlement was also revealed. This settlement appears to have continued along the road, outside the Roman defences, as evidence for settlement running along both sides of the Alchester Road to the south-west of the town has also been revealed (RCHM, 1982, p154). As there is evidence of roadside settlement to the north and south of the site, it was considered possible that settlement evidence may be encountered in one or more of the trenches, particularly those in Block B.

1.3.4 A substantial linear feature exposed in an evaluation at 17 Richmond Road, to the north-east of Block B may be the Roman defensive town ditch. Late 1st and early 2nd century AD buildings have been found c. 200 m north of the study site and a possible temple is recorded c. 75 m south of Block A. Evaluation and excavation of the Safeway site revealed a range of suburban Roman features and deposits. A cemetery was also exposed and is known to extend westwards towards Water Lane. The presence of burials and Roman ribbon development along the Alchester road was therefore thought to have a high potential for survival within the site.

1.3.5 The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (c. 925 AD) mentions the *'burh'* at Towcester. The available evidence suggests that the re-establishment of occupation and an estate centre

at Towcester may have taken place under Edward the Elder in response to Danish incursions in 917. Boundary ditches in the Allen's yard area of the town provide some evidence for late Saxon activity in the town.

1.3.6 A motte-and-bailey castle was constructed in the south-eastern part of the defended area of Towcester in the late 11th or earlier 12th century AD. The core of the medieval town appears to have developed around Bury Mount and St Lawrence church on the eastern side of Watling Street, c. 400 m north-east of the development area. The town lay at the important road junction, where the Oxford to Northampton road crossed Watling Street. The town's market is thought to have been established shortly after 1086 (it is first recorded in 1220) and the town grew and survived the 14th century recession to become a successful small town in the post-medieval period.

1.3.7 During the Civil War, Towcester was refortified. The evaluation at 17 Richmond Road discovered a substantial post-medieval ditch, which was interpreted as a later re-cutting of the original Roman defences.

1.3.8 Towcester benefited from the expansion of travel in the post-medieval period and flourished in the 18th and 19th centuries as a staging post on the coaching route from London to Holyhead.

1.3.9 Two undated burials were found within the northern part of Block A during the construction of a car park in 1968 and can now be attributed to the remains of a 3rd to 4th century cemetery.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

2.1.1 To monitor and record any archaeological features and deposits exposed during the excavation of geotechnical test pits and to include the results within the evaluation report.

2.1.2 To establish the presence or absence, the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains within the proposed development area.

2.1.3 To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features.

2.1.4 To make available the results of the investigation.

2.1.5 In addition Northamptonshire County Council Historic Environment Team provided a list of specific detailed research aims, These were:-

i. To establish whether the Roman defensive circuit remains previously recorded on sites immediately to the west continue into the proposal site. If so, to determine their date, course and extent, character, state of preservation and depth of burial.

ii. To establish whether there is any physical evidence for later reuse of the defensive circuit-either in the 10th century or in the mid-17th century.

iii. To determine whether evidence for the Alchester road survives on the site and

to establish whether there is any *extra-mural* activity and if so, what form it takes.

iv. To establish whether the cemetery found to the south of Block B extends into the site. If so, to establish the depth of burial, nature, state of preservation and extent.

v. To interpret any important remains, of any period, within the context of the archaeology of Towcester.

vi. To establish the degree to which previous development of the site has damaged or removed earlier archaeological remains, and the degree to which buried remains survive within the footprints of the buildings in Block A.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork

3.1.1 A series of geotechnical test pits were monitored and recorded throughout the site; 21in Block A and 2 in Block B, with a further 7 immediately outside of the southern boundary of Block A. Although these last 7 (TPs 1-7) were not monitored by OA at the time, the geotechnical results have been included here in order to give a better understanding of the underlying geology. Each test pit was excavated to an average depth of 3 m below the existing ground level.

3.1.2 An additional 3 test pits were excavated to the south of Block A following the demolition of the standing buildings in this area (TPs A, B and C - Fig. 2).

3.1.3 The evaluation comprised the excavation of 8 out of the 9 trial trenches originally specified in the brief. The proposed location of trench 3 was to the south of the site, adjacent to the Silverstone Brook. This trench was to be located within an area to be used as public open space, which the geotechnical survey has demonstrated to be contaminated. It has therefore been agreed with the County Archaeological Officer that this trench will not be required.

3.1.4 Block A contained Trenches 1, 2 and 7, 8 and 9. Trench 1 was originally excavated as a 30 m long by 1.8 m wide trench aligned south-east/north-west. As burials were encountered, it was agreed between JSAC, David Wilson Homes and the County Archaeological Officer (Myk Flitcroft) that the trench be extended in an attempt to establish the extent of the burials. The extension measured 45 m long by 1.8 m wide and crossed the first trench at right angles. A further 25 m long by 1.8 m wide spur was then excavated at the south-west end of this second trench. As the skeletons observed lay within barely discernible cuts, the original trench was re-machined to a depth of 89.85 m OD (1.2 m below current ground level) in order to confirm that no further burials were present.

3.1.5 Trench 2 was 25 m long by 1.8 m wide, aligned south-east/north-west. Trench 7 was originally located within the footprint of one of the standing buildings awaiting demolition. As there was no access and the floor of the building was reinforced concrete, the trench was moved 12 m eastwards from its original location and

positioned between the present building and Water Lane. This measured 15 m long by 1.8 m wide and was aligned south-east by north-west.

3.1.6 Trenches 8 and 9 were excavated within the footprint of the standing buildings in the southern half of Block A following the demolition of these premises. Trench 8 was aligned east-west and measured 20 m long x 1.8 m wide. A northward extension *c* 2 m square was excavated 4 m east of the western end of the trench. Trench 9 was aligned north-south and also measured 20 m x 1.8 m, although a step was excavated *c* 0.5 m to the east and west (to the base of the modern overburden) due to concentrations of brick rubble making the ground unsafe.

3.1.7 Trenches 4, 5 and 6 were excavated within Block B. Trench 4 measured 15 m long by 1.8 m wide, aligned south-west by north-east. Trench 5 measured 30 m long by 1.8 m wide, aligned east-west, and Trench 6 measured 15 m long by 1.8 m wide, aligned south-east by north-west.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

3.2.1 The overburden was removed under close archaeological supervision using a mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.8 m wide toothless grading bucket. Excavation proceeded to the top of the natural geology or to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon, whichever was encountered first.

3.2.2 The trenches were cleaned by hand and revealed features were sampled to determine their extent, nature, and date, and where appropriate, palaeo-environmental evidence. All features and deposits were issued with unique context numbers.

3.2.3 The trenches were planned at a scale of 1:50, with detailed plans drawn at a scale of 1:20 where applicable. Section drawings of features and sample sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. Skeletons were recorded by rectifiable photography using a digital camera and then plotted using Auto Desk Map 2004 (CAD). All features, sections and trenches were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures detailed in the OA *Field Manual* (OAU 1992).

3.3 Finds

3.3.1 Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation and bagged by context. Finds of special interest were given a unique small find number. Human remains were recovered by hand and carefully bagged before being placed in specialist skeleton boxes for transport to OA company premises.

3.4 Palaeo-environmental remains

3.4.1 A large boundary ditch, two pits and a gully were found suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling during the evaluation and subsequent excavation. Bulk samples were taken for analysis of charred plant remains and small finds.

3.5 Presentation of results

3.5.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below by grouped test pits and by individual trench and are followed by an overall discussion and interpretation. A full context inventory and an assessment of the pottery are listed in the Appendices.

4 RESULTS: GENERAL

4.1 Soils and ground conditions

4.1.1 Block A was located within the complex of buildings and associated car park of Radstone Technology, to the west of Water Lane. Block B was located within a car park on the eastern side of Water Lane.

4.1.2 Monitoring of the geotechnical test pits has facilitated the production of a deposit model for the site, which incorporates the information from the trenches, para 5.2. Although no archaeological features were identified and the dating of deposits exposed can only be tentative from such an exercise it has provided valuable information as to the depth below the current ground surface of the natural geology.

4.1.3 All trenches exposed layers of 'made ground' and hardcore levelling deposits. Potentially contaminated soils and groundwater were encountered in Trenches 2 and 7, making excavation of features within these trenches unfeasible for Health and Safety reasons. Groundwater was also encountered in Trenches 8 and 9 preventing sample excavation of features in the base of these trenches.

4.1.4 As a result of the location of the site on the interface between boulder clay to the north and the terrace gravels to the south, the natural geology was very mixed comprising bands of sand, clays and gravels. Most features were clearly identifiable with the exception of grave cuts, which were extremely hard to define.

4.2 Distribution of archaeological deposits

4.2.1 All the trenches exposed archaeological deposits, predominantly of Roman date. The majority of 1st-2nd century activity appears to be focused to the east of Water Lane, with the exception of potential plot boundaries to the west. In the 3rd-4th century, at least the northern part of Block A was utilised as a cemetery, while to the east further ditches and gullies were revealed. Several modern and medieval/post-medieval land drains were recorded in both Blocks A and B.

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Description of deposits

Test Pits 8 - 10

5.1.1 The clay natural was encountered at an average depth of 0.3 m below ground level within these pits. A modern hardcore levelling deposit and tarmac surface then sealed

this natural. Any soils that may have existed previously had clearly been removed prior to laying the tarmac surface. This deposit sequence was replicated in the trenches excavated in the northern extent of the site.

Test Pits 11A, 12, 16, 17, 18, 24 - 29

5.1.2 Ten test pits encountered the clay natural at a depth of between 0.7 - 1.1 m below the present ground level with the exception of TP 11A, where the natural was seen at a depth of 0.4 m. A buried soil was observed overlying the natural in TPs 11A, 24-26 and 29. This appears to have been a modern topsoil, except in TP 24 where the buried soil was encountered at 0.7 m below the surface, suggesting a relict ploughsoil possibly dating from the medieval or the Roman period. Again, these test pits were sealed by made ground and a tarmac surface. TP 17, however, was situated over a small border garden where the natural was sealed by a modern topsoil. Trench 2 contained a similar deposit sequence to the bulk of the test pits in this part of the site.

Test Pits 20, 23

5.1.3 Both of these test pits were located in an area of the site to the south of Trench 2, where the current ground surface was at least 1 m below the level around Trench 2. The natural clays were exposed between 0. 7m and 0.9m below the exiting ground surface. In both testpits the natural geology was sealed by a modern buried topsoil, which was in turn sealed by 0.2 m of tarmac/concrete surfacing.

Test Pits 1 - 7, 19, 21, 22, 30, 31

5.1.4 Located towards the southern extent of Block A, TPs 19, 21, 22, 30 and 31 showed natural clays averaging a depth of 0.75 m below ground level. In TP31 a buried soil was also recorded at approximately 0.5 m below the surface, subsequently overlain by made ground. It is not known whether this buried soil was modern or earlier in date.

5.1.5 Immediately outside of the southern boundary were a further seven test pits (TPs 1-7) which revealed a significant drop in the clay natural to a depth of between 1.7 m and 2.9 m below exiting ground level. All the test pits, except TP 1, contained several deep alluvial deposits approximately 0.45-0.6 m below the surface. All deposits were then sealed by made ground up to 1 m deep.

Test Pits A, B and C

5.1.6 Test pits A, B and C were located beneath the demolished buildings to the south of Block A (Fig. 2). These revealed further evidence for a sequence of alluvial deposits overlying the natural geology which was also observed within Trenches 8 and 9 (see below).

Test Pits 13 and 14

5.1.7 Both test pits were excavated within Block B. The natural clay was encountered at a depth of 0.8-1 m below ground. This was overlain by a buried soil seen in both test pits, measuring up to 0.65 m deep. These deposits may represent a possible former

ploughsoil similar to deposits 401 and 540 in Trenches 4 and 5. These deposits were then sealed by made ground and a tarmac surface.

Trench 1 (Fig. 3, Plan 100 and Section 100, and Fig. 3a, Skeletons)

5.1.8 Natural orange brown clay (106) was reached at a depth of 0.55 m below current ground level (Fig. 4, Section 100). To the west of the Trench 1 extension, the natural was overlain by lenses of grey-brown silty sands (111, 112 and113), all probable variations/bands within the natural geology. Cutting through the natural were the truncated and disturbed bases of three grave cuts 102 (SK 100), 104 (SK 101) and 122 (SK 121) and a probable cemetery boundary ditch 116.

5.1.9 The inhumations had been heavily disturbed during the construction of the existing car park making the definition of the edges very difficult. Cut 102 contained an almost complete but crushed adult skeleton (100, see Fig. 3 photograph), aligned north-south with its arms crossed over its chest. This was covered by an orange brown clay (102), 0.2 m thick, most probably redeposited natural used as backfill within the grave cut. Cut 104 contained a complete young adult skeleton aligned north-west to south-east (101), again heavily crushed. This was sealed by an orange brown clay (105) 0.1 m thick, the backfill of the grave cut. Cut 122 contained a heavily disturbed and crushed skeleton of a child (121) and a small sand tempered beaker with rouletted decoration dating to the late 3rd to 4th century (124), both were overlain by a grey-brown clay backfill (123), 0.15 m deep.

5.1.10 A roughly north-south aligned ditch (116) was excavated in the western arm of the east-west extension to Trench 1. The ditch measured at least 1.9 m wide, and was excavated to a depth in excess of 1 m. The base of the ditch was filled by a grey-brown silty clay (117), 1 m deep, with the top of the ditch filled by a 0.2 m thick lens of a grey silty clay (118). Given the similarity of the lower fill (118) to the natural geology, establishing the exact dimensions of the feature was problematic within the confines of the evaluation trench. Deposit 118 contained 3rd-4th century pottery, though deposit 117 produced 1st century pottery. This would suggest that 118 may actually represent the fill of a re-cut of an earlier ditch. It is probable that the earlier cut is the same as the probable ditch in Trench 2 (211) and part of the same plot boundary, possibly associated with the 1st-2nd century expansion of the town. This section of the ditch appears to have been re-cut in the 3rd-4th century and utilised as the western boundary of the cemetery. (The subsequent excavation [OA, in prep] revealed the full extent of this feature and also established that deposit 117 was in fact the upper fill of a re-cut. The interpretation and characterisation of this feature will be discussed at greater length in the excavation report).

5.1.11 Cut into the top of deposit 118 was a post-medieval field drain 114, filled by a dark grey silty clay (115). These fills contained fragments of Romano-British pottery dating to the 3rd and 4th centuries.

5.1.12 The sandy natural to the west was cut by an irregular shallow feature (119) approximately 4 m wide by 0.2 m deep and filled by a dark grey-brown silty clay (120), which produced post-medieval pottery and brick. Aligned roughly north-south, this has been tentatively interpreted as the base of a possible plough furrow, even though it appears to stand in isolation. Vertical air photographs taken in 1947 show the area south of Richmond Road was covered by ridge and furrow (RCHM, 1982, p153).

5.1.13 These features were all overlain by a thin (0.05 m) band of disturbed and mixed orange-grey clays and sand (107), possibly a construction layer relating to the stripping of this area prior to spreading of the hardcore rubble layer (108). This in turn was overlaid by a layer of coarse sand (109) and finally the tarmac surface (110).

Trench 2 (Fig. 4, Plan 200 and Section 200)

5.1.14 A strong odour of solvent was apparent upon excavation of this trench and having sought the advice of a geotechnical engineer, on site recording was undertaken from the surface and features were not excavated.

5.1.15 A natural yellow-brown clay (200) was reached at a depth of 0.6 m below ground level (Fig. 4, Section 200). Showing in the surface of this layer were lenses of alluvial sandy clays 201 and 202. The natural was cut by two features, 210 and 212.

5.1.16 Feature 210 was a possible ditch, 2 m wide, running roughly north-south and filled by a light grey clay silt (211). This was probably the southern extension of the 1st-2nd century plot boundary observed in trench 1.

5.1.17 Feature 212 was a circular feature 2.5 m in diameter filled with a orange-yellow silty sand (213) and has been interpreted as a possible pit. No dating evidence was recovered from these features.

5.1.18 Both the natural and features were sealed by a 0.5 m deep layer of friable light brown clay silt (203), possibly representing a former ploughsoil. This in turn was overlain by a layer of made ground comprising a 0.25 m thick layer of friable dark brown clay silt (204). Overlying this was a 0.08 m thick deposit of mixed soil and rubble fragments (205), forming the base layer for the construction of the carpark. This was sealed by a sequence of 0.1 m thick sand and gravel layers 206, 207 and 208 underneath the tarmac surface 209.

Trench 4 (Fig. 5, Plan 400 and Section 400)

5.1.19 A layer of tenacious mixed yellow-brown and blue-grey natural clay (421) was reached at a depth of 0.85 m below ground level (Fig. 5, Section 400). Cutting into this layer was a small north-south aligned gully (416), approximately 0.6 m wide. A friable yellow-brown silt clay (415) surviving up to 0.3 m deep in the base of this linear contained pottery dated to the 1st and 2nd centuries. The remainder of the gully was filled by a 0.15 m thick layer of friable dark blue-grey silty loam (414) also containing 1st to 2nd century pottery.

5.1.20 Cut into the top of 414 was a circular feature 420 measuring 1.5 m across by 0.7 m deep. This had a bowl shaped profile and was filled by a 0.12 m thick lens of a friable yellow-brown silt clay (419) containing late 1st to 2nd century pottery. This was overlain by a 0.2 m deep layer of friable grey-brown sandy clay (418), which produced mid to late 1st century pottery. The top fill of this feature comprised a 0.35 m thick deposit of a friable grey-brown silt loam (417)

5.1.21 Cutting along the eastern edge of 416 and through the top of 420 was a later "V" shaped ditch 408/413 measuring 1.8 m wide by 0.9 m deep. The bottom of this feature was filled by a 0.25 m thick layer of tenacious yellow-brown silt clay (407/412) containing late 1st to 2nd century pottery. Overlying this was a 0.15 m deep lens of yellow-brown clay silt (406/411), which produced late 1st century pottery. A tip-line of friable dark grey silt loam (405/410), up to 0.15 m deep and containing late 1st to early 2nd century pottery sloped from the northern edge of the cut and overlay deposit 406/411. This was in turn overlain by a 0.25 m thick deposit of friable grey-brown silty loam (404/409) from which mid 1st to early 2nd century pottery was retrieved. A 0.4 m thick layer of friable grey-brown silty loam (403) containing limestone rubble and pottery of possible 2nd century date, overlay 404 and 405, while a lens of friable dark grey clay silt (402), up to 0.25 m thick, filled the remainder of ditch 408/413.

5.1.22 The upper fills of these features were sealed by a layer of friable grey clay loam (401) 0.25 m deep, possibly representing a later ploughsoil and potentially the equivalent of deposit 541 in trench 5. This was sealed below a 0.35 m thick levelling layer of mixed brick rubble and sand (400), forming the base for the tarmac carpark.

Trench 5 (Fig. 6, Plan 500 and Section 500, and Fig. 6a, Sections 502-508)

5.1.23 The natural clay 514 was reached at a depth of 0.6 m below ground level (Fig. 4, Section 500). Bands of mixed clay and gravel, *c* 0.1 m thick (528) were observed in the top of the clay and represented variations in the natural geology. Approximately 4 m from the western end of trench 5 was a geological feature (526) cut into the natural clay. This measured 1.8 m wide by 0.55 m deep, and was filled by a mixture of sands and gravel (527).

5.1.24 Although no direct relationship was apparent between many of the features, there appear to have been two distinct phases of activity in the Roman period:

1st-2nd Century Features

5.1.25 Cutting through deposit 527 was a shallow gully (524) measuring 0.9 m wide by 0.3 m deep. This ran north-east by south-west and was filled by a grey-brown clay silt (525), which produced late 1st century pottery. Below this fill was a dark staining of the deposit 527 (545), which appeared to be a primary fill of the gully, but on closer inspection was believed to be the result of minerals leaching from the gully fill above. Gully 524 was also seen to be cut by a modern land drain.

5.1.26 Roughly 7 m either side of gully 524 were another two small round based gullies containing 1st to 2nd century pottery. Gully 506 to the east measured 0.5 m wide by 0.18 m deep and contained a tenacious grey-brown clay silt fill (507), while 520 to the west, measured 0.4 m wide by 0.3 m deep and was filled by a friable green-grey sandy silt (521).

5.1.27 At the eastern most end of Trench 5 a 0.75 m wide by 0.42 m deep ditch (510) was recorded. This ran north-south across the trench and was filled by a tenacious grey-brown clay silt (511) containing 1st century pottery. This feature appeared to be an extension of a similarly aligned ditch (603) recorded in Trench 6 (see below).

5.1.28 A shallow, flat based gully (522) measuring 0.5 m wide by 0.14 m deep bisected the trench at its centre. It contained a single friable grey clay silt fill (523), which produced late 1st to 2nd century pottery.

5.1.29 At the western most end of the trench was a roughly north-south aligned wall footing (500) constructed from coarse unworked limestone (see Fig. 6 photograph). This measured 0.6 m wide by up to three courses (0.38 m) high and lay within a construction cut (515), which was subsequently backfilled with a friable grey-brown clay silt (503). Late 1st to 2nd century pottery was retrieved from this fill. Approximately 1 m east of this wall was a semi-circular possible ditch terminus (542), 1.2 m wide by over 0.2 m deep, running in from the northern bulk of the trench. This contained a jumbled mass of unworked limestone (502), which may represent the robbed out remnants of a wall, or possibly the fill of a "Rumbler" drain. This feature contained a primary grey-brown clay silt fill (544) overlain by the limestone (502) and a grey clay silt (543). No finds were recovered from these deposits although it is probably associated with footing 500.

5.1.30 Roughly 3 m from the eastern end of Trench 5 was a north-south aligned gully (508) filled by a tenacious dark grey clay silt (509), which contained fragments of early to mid 2nd century pottery and tegulae. This measured 0.75 m wide by only 0.04 m deep and probably truncated gully 506, although the relationship was obscured by a later circular pit (512) measuring 0.75 m in diameter by 0.16 m deep. This was filled by a similar dark grey clay silt (513) to 509 and also contained early to mid 2nd century pottery. All three feature (506, 508 and 512) cut through a natural geological feature that initially appeared to be a large pit (see Fig. 6, section 505).

3rd-4th Century Features

5.1.31 Gully 506 (see 5.1.20) was truncated to the south-west by a large feature (529) measuring approximately 4.5 m wide by 0.28 m deep representing either a heavily truncated boundary ditch or possibly, due to its gradual profile and flat base, a holloway. This feature contained a single fill of grey-brown clay silt (530), which produced pottery dating to the 3rd and 4th centuries.

5.1.32 A north-west by south-east ditch (516) was recorded 0.5 m to the east of gully 522 (see 5.1.21). This feature measured 1 m wide by 0.14 m deep and contained a single clay silt fill (517) from which one sherd of undiagnostic Roman pottery was retrieved. Cutting this feature immediately to the south-east was gully terminus 504. Measuring 0.7 m wide by up to 0.18 m deep, this feature was filled by a dark grey clay silt (505), which produced late 3rd to 4th century pottery.

Post-Roman Features

5.1.33 Three undated features were also recorded. Whilst no dating evidence was recovered, a potential date for these is suggested below.

5.1.34 Two probable field drains were recorded in Trench 5 (531 and 534). These were similarly constructed using a stone rubble fill (533, 519) sealed with a redeposited clay (532, 535) and believed to be medieval or post-medieval in date although no dating evidence was recovered. Stratigraphically, feature 534 cut across gully 520 (which was 1st-2nd century), while 531 cut feature 529 (which was 3rd-4th century), so both must post-date the Roman activity on the site (assuming the similarity in construction implies that they are contemporary).

5.1.35 Between gully 520 and ditch 522 was the truncated base of a possible plough furrow (537), which was filled by sterile grey clay silt (536). Although no dating evidence was retrieved from this fill, this may represent evidence of the ridge and furrow previously identified from air photographs in 1947 (RCHM, 1982, p154).

Overlying Deposits

5.1.36 Overlying these features was a layer of deep grey brown clay silt (541), an average of 0.25 m thick. To the east of wall footing 500, this contained fragments of limestone rubble, presumably originating from the structure. It is likely that 541 is a buried ploughsoil. Although no dating evidence was recovered from this deposit, the fact that it seals the potentially post-medieval features 531, 534 and 537 may suggest a relatively late origin for this deposit. However, it should be stressed that no dating evidence was recovered from any of these 3 features. Therefore, whilst it is possible that 541 represents a post-medieval ploughsoil, an earlier origin for this deposit cannot be discounted, although it certainly overlies the fills of 3rd-4th century features. This is possibly the same deposit as 401 in trench 4.

5.1.37 Overlying deposit 541 was a 0.1 m thick layer of mid brownish grey clayey silt with inclusions of 15% gravel and 5% chalk fragments (501/518). This represented the interface between 'ploughsoil' 541 and the overlying deposit 540.

5.1.38 Deposit 540 was also a possible ploughsoil. It consisted of a mid-dark grey clay silt with 2% gravel inclusions. No dating evidence was recovered from this deposit.

5.1.39 Overlying this was a 0.45 m thick levelling deposit of mixed brick rubble and gravels (539) which was considerably thicker to the east of the trench. This formed the base for the present car park tarmac surface (538).

Trench 6 (Fig. 7, Plan 600 and Section 600)

5.1.40 The natural yellow-brown clay (614) was exposed at a depth of 0.6 m below current ground level (Fig. 7, Section 600). The natural was sealed below a thick layer up to 0.45 m deep of grey-brown sandy clay (602) representing a possible early Roman ploughsoil (although no securely stratified dating evidence was recovered). It should be noted that deposit 602 is not part of the same ploughsoil as 541 and 401 as Roman features cut it whereas the latter appear to seal features of a similar date.

5.1.41 This deposit was cut by a number of features. At the south-eastern end of the trench was the truncated base of a Roman ditch (603) measuring 1.3 m wide by 0.3 m deep, which formed steeply sloping sides and a flat base. This was filled by a yellow-brown clay sand (604) containing fragments of Roman pottery, overlain by a mid greyish brown sandy clay with *c* 10% flint and gravel pebbles (613). The similarity of the upper fill to 'ploughsoil' 602 (see above) made it difficult to establish with any degree of certainty whether 603 was sealed by, or cut 602.

5.1.42 A probable boundary ditch (609) was observed to the north-east of ditch 603. This feature measured 2.5 m wide by 0.4 m deep, and ran east-west across the trench. The primary fill of this feature was a tenacious yellow-brown clay (611) 0.1 m deep, which was overlain by a dark yellow clay sand (610) 0.3 m thick. This produced a large quantity of late 1st to early 2nd century pottery and other domestic refuse (animal bone etc.). Although this feature was on a similar alignment to feature 529 in trench 5, the pottery produced from 529 was 3rd-4th century in date and it therefore seems unlikely that they are one and the same, unless 529 represents a re-cut of an earlier feature.

5.1.43 These deposits were cut by a possible medieval or post-medieval "Rumbler" drain (613), measuring 0.26 m wide by 0.35 m deep containing a rubble limestone fill (615), which produced most likely residual Roman pottery and animal bone. This may have equated to one of the stone filled 'drains' in trench 5 (531 and 534).

5.1.44 Also cutting the surface of layer 602 were two possible medieval or post-medieval land drains 605 and 607, both filled with a redeposited yellow clay backfill (606 and 608 respectively).

5.1.45 These features were overlain by a 0.2 m layer of a disturbed grey-brown sandy clay (601), probably formed by trampling prior to deposition of the 0.4 m thick layer of modern made ground (600).

Trench 7 (Fig. 8, Plan 700 and Section 700)

5.1.46 An orange-brown natural clay (702) was reached at a depth of 1.25 m below the present ground level (Fig. 4, Section 700). At this depth potentially contaminated

groundwater was encountered and recording was undertaken from the surface leaving observed features unexcavated.

5.1.47 Three features were observed cutting the natural (702). A 0.4 m wide linear (704), running east-west across the trench filled by a dark grey-brown sandy clay (705), and a second feature (706), 0.5 m wide, aligned north-south and filled with a grey-brown sandy clay (707). Both features were likely to have been gullies.

5.1.48 The third feature was a poorly defined, possible construction cut (709) for a limestone wall footing. It ran in from the eastern bulk of the trench and contained the robbed out remains of a roughly constructed limestone footing (703). Its shape in plan possibly indicating a return or corner running under the western bulk. This was sealed by a layer of mixed rubble and soil (708), possibly representing the robbing out of the limestone wall. No dating evidence was recovered from these contexts, although the wall appears to be similar to that found in Trench 5.

5.1.49 These features were overlain by a 0.65 m thick deposit of grey-brown sandy clay (701), representing a possible buried ploughsoil. This was then sealed below a 0.6 m deep layer of modern made ground (700).

Trench 8 (Fig. 9, Plan 800 and Sections 801-802)

5.1.50 A mid orange-brown natural clay with sand and gravel bands (800) was located at 85.67 m OD (1.54 m below current ground level). This was overlain by a mid blue-grey silty clay alluvial deposit (801), averaging 0.26 m thick.

5.1.51 This deposit appeared to be cut by a number of features. However, as groundwater was encountered at *c* 85.80 m OD, sample excavation of these potential features was not undertaken for Health and Safety reasons.

5.1.52 A number of localised deposits of limestone rubble were observed within the surface of deposit 801, and may have represented feature fills (809-813 and 815). Pottery from the mid 1st to 2nd century plus, associated with these deposits, may also suggest that they are the fills of features. However, no obvious cuts were apparent, and it is feasible that these limestone spreads mark an interface between deposit 801 and the overlying layer (802).

5.1.53 Cutting the alluvium (801) was a north-south aligned linear feature (807) filled by a dark grey clay silt (808). This was not excavated due to groundwater preventing access.

5.1.54 A possible sub-circular feature (805) was observed. This was filled by a mid grey clay silt (806) and a dark grey clay silt with 25% limestone, stone, gravels and fired clay (814). This was more convincing as a negative feature than 809-813 and 815, and was revealed in section by a sondage dug within the trench extension to the north (Fig. 9, Section 801). Although of no great depth (*c* 0.14 m) it produced a significant amount of late 3rd century Roman pottery and may represent the base of a pit.

5.1.55 Overlying the alluvium (801) and the observed fills of the potential features was a layer of dark grey clay silt with 2-3% gravel fragments (802), which averaged 0.55 m thick. This appeared to be re-worked alluvial soils, possibly associated with the post-medieval agricultural activity thought to be present elsewhere on site.

5.1.56 This was overlain by 0.3 m of modern made ground (803) and hardcore (804). The made ground probably equates to deposit 701 in Trench 7. Although deposit 701 was present to the top of the natural geology, it is reasonable to assume that the overlying alluvium (801) and possible ploughsoil (802) has been truncated in the area of Trench 7 as this was located within 1 m of the foundation of the demolished building and has therefore been subject to a higher level of disturbance.

Trench 9 (Fig. 10, Plan 900 and Sections 900-901)

5.1.57 The natural geology, which was encountered within this trench at 85.62 m OD, was overlain by a similar sequence of deposits to those observed in Trench 8. Deposit 901 was similar in composition to 801 and was consistently encountered at a depth of approximately 86.00 m OD. This was also cut through by a possible Roman feature (906) in the form of a north-south aligned gully. This gully was filled by a dark grey clay silt (907) which produced 2nd century Roman pottery. With the exception of a modern ceramic drain, no other features were observed within Trench 9.

5.1.58 Alluvial deposit 901 was overlain by a dark grey clay silt (902) equivalent to 802 in Trench 8. This was 0.4 m thick to the north of Trench 9 but had undergone a greater degree of modern truncation to the south where it was only 0.2 m thick.

5.1.59 Deposit 902 was overlain by two deposits of made ground (903 and 904, with 903 equating to 803 and 904) containing large quantities of brick rubble, which were in turn overlain by a 0.2 m thick concrete slab (905).

5.2 Deposit modelling

5.2.1 The site is located on the northern bank of the River Tove and the underlying geology consists of the river terrace gravels for the southern half of the site and upper Lias clays for the northern half. The existing ground surface largely reflects terracing as a response to development of the naturally sloping ground.

5.2.2 The evidence from the test pits, the archaeological trenching and the subsequent excavation within the carpark area within c. 60 m of the site's northern boundary shows that this area has been truncated. The degree of truncation is unclear; the gardens to the east of the site are significantly higher than the previous carpark surface (c. 90 m AOD), but the survival of the burials within the clay suggests that this layer was not heavily truncated. It is likely that the Roman ground surface was c. 0.5 – 0.7 m above the natural clays and that the top of the clay is unchanged from the Roman period.

5.2.3 Between 60 m and 125 m south of the site's northern boundary the existing ground surface falls from c. 89.5 m to 87.4 m. Block B is relatively flat at about 87.5 m AOD. The natural geology was exposed at between 0.7 m and 1.1 m below the current ground surface, with few exceptions (the archaeology within Trench 7 was exposed at 1.25 m below the current ground surface). This picture is consistent for the remainder of the site, with the exception of the previously council owned land, beyond the Radstone Technology southern boundary. It is unclear how some of the soils overlying the Roman archaeology are derived although, Trenches 8 and 9 and Test Pits A, B and C suggest an alluvial origin for these soils to the south of the site.

5.2.4 It is likely, based upon aerial photographic evidence and the spreads of material found in trenches in Block B that the site was ploughed in the medieval/post-medieval periods. This may have truncated some of the Roman deposits and features but the fact that this soil horizon remains across the bulk of the site suggests that there has been only limited and localised modern intrusion into potential Roman levels. There is however a significant amount of material protecting the natural geology, into which the archaeology is cut.

5.2.4 In the area beyond the Radstone Technology site's southern boundary the natural geology falls away steeply towards the Tove. The gravels are sealed by alluvial deposits up to 2.9 m below the existing ground surface.

5.2.5 In summary the site can clearly be divided into three broad zones. Zone 1, within c. 60 m of the site's northern boundary has been reduced to the top of the clay natural, but probably not significantly truncated. The archaeology within this area was impacted upon during the construction of the carpark and hard-surfacing.

5.2.6 Zone 2 covers the remainder of the site, including Block B, with the exception of the area beyond the Radstone Technology site's southern boundary. Across the bulk of the site the natural geology is sealed by in excess of 0.7 m of modern overburden and buried soils. The only evidence for truncation of Roman features and/or deposits is the suggestion that the site was used for ridge and furrow agriculture in the medieval/post-medieval period.

5.2.5 Within Zone 3, the area beyond the Radstone Technology site's southern boundary the archaeology is sealed by deep alluvial sequences. The impact of the modern buildings upon the site's archaeological resource appears to be minimal within the area of Trenches 8 and 9 as little impact appears to have been made beneath the re-worked alluvial deposit (801/901).

5.3 Pottery

By Paul Booth

Introduction

5.3.1 Some 753 sherds (13304 g) of Roman pottery were recovered in the evaluation. A small amount of later pottery (all but two sherds of post-medieval date) is listed but not commented upon further here. It should be noted that the figures for count given here are of the total number of fragments - the true sherd count excluding modern breaks will be less. The pottery was scanned very rapidly, with a note being made of the quantities of major ware categories present, using standard codes from the OA Roman pottery recording system. Vessel types were also noted (by major class), and an assessment of the date of each group made on ceramic criteria. For the larger groups the date range could be defined in part on the basis of negative (ie absence of certain diagnostic fabrics and forms) as well as positive evidence, though clearly this was not possible for the small groups. The majority of the pottery appeared to be of early Roman date. The material is summarised by context in Table P1 below.

Table P1: Quantities of pottery by context

Context	Roman		Post-Roman		Context ceramic date	Comment
	No.sh.	Wt (g)	No.sh.	Wt (g)		
115			2	93	post-medieval	
117	4	9			mid-late 1C+	
118	12	81			?late 3C-4C	
120			2	12	post-medieval	
124	38	110			late 3-4C	beaker from burial
402	42	1328			late 1C (+)	
403	84	1592			?2C	
404	24	519			mid 1C-early 2C	
405	37	636			late 1C-e 2C+	
406	23	912			late 1C (+)	
407	3	38			late 1C-2C	
414	35	727			early-mid 2C (+)	most is probably 1C
415	40	810			late 1C-mid 2C	
418	3	94			mid-late 1C+	
419	6	68			late 1C-2C	
501	33	458			early 2C+	
503	5	47			late 1C-2C	
505	18	75			late 3C-4C	
509	6	37			?early-mid 2C+	
511	2	170			1C+	
513	21	212			?early-mid 2C	
517	1	7			Roman	
519	1	8			Roman	
522	10	178			late 3C-4C	
523	5	23			late 1C-2C (+)	
525	14	141			late 1C+	
530	2	146			?3C-4C	
602	5	178			?late 1C+	
604	4	104	1	30	post-medieval	
606	3	15	1	2	post-medieval	
608	6	50	12	114	post-medieval	

610	212	3435			late 1C-early 2C	
Context	Roman		Post-Roman		Context ceramic date	Comment
	No.sh.	Wt (g)	No.sh.	Wt (g)		
611	8	310			mid 1C-2C	
615	7	125			late 1C-2C	
703	14	205			late 2C+	poss late 3C-4C
809	1	75			2C+	
813	1	6			mid 1C-2C	
814	15	246			late 3C (+)	
815	1	18			late 1C	
907	7	113			2C+	
TOTAL	753	13304	18	251		

Dating conventions:
+ date range given or later
(+) date range given or possibly later

5.3.2 The pottery was in variable condition. The average sherd weight was quite high (17.7 g), though the material was rather more fragmented in some context groups than in others. In contrast, surface condition was frequently quite poor, with survival of slips quite variable and evidence for surface treatments such as burnishing often completely lost.

Wares

5.3.3 The approximate breakdown of the Roman assemblage in terms of ware groups was as follows:

Table P2: Quantification of Roman pottery by major fabric groups

OA ware code	National fabric ref collection code*	Summary description	No. sherds	%
S		samian ware (all sources)	34	4.5
F30		mica-coated fine wares	5	0.7
F50		colour-coated ware, uncertain source	1	0.1
F52	LNV CC	Nene Valley colour-coated ware	41	5.4
A		amphorae (all sources)	19	2.5
M21	VER WH	Verulamium region mortaria	5	0.7
M22	OXF WH	Oxfordshire white mortaria	5	0.7
W		white wares (all sources)	40	5.3
E	SOB GT etc	'Belgic type' coarse fabrics	10	1.3
O		miscellaneous oxidised wares	56	7.4
O80		coarse (usually grog) tempered oxidised wares	84	11.2
O81	PNK GT	pink grogged ware	69	9.2
R		miscellaneous reduced wares	296	39.3
R90		coarse (usually grog) tempered reduced wares	48	6.4
B11	DOR BB 1	black-burnished ware (Dorset BB1)	2	0.3
C		shell-tempered wares (all sources)	38	5.0
TOTAL			753	

*Tomber and Dore 1998

5.3.4 The assemblage was quite varied. The 'fine and specialist ware' component included a range of local/regional and imported fabrics. Samian ware was not assigned to source systematically, but a subjective assessment suggests that South Gaulish material was quite well-represented. The amphora sherds consisted principally of Dressel 20 (one vessel was represented by rim sherds) but a probable South Gaulish fabric was also present. Five probably mica-coated sherds, in two distinct fabrics, came from a single context (404), but other fine wares were confined to Nene Valley colour-coated wares and a single very small fragment of uncertain source. The great majority of the Nene Valley sherds (38) were from a single late Roman beaker associated with a burial (context 124). Mortaria were drawn from two sources, the Verulamium and Oxford industries, while the former also contributed some, perhaps a majority, of the other white ware sherds from the site.

5.3.5 The coarse ware component of the assemblage was equally mixed, but presumably drew largely on locally produced pottery, though specific sources were not defined. Reduced coarse wares, in a wide variety of fabrics, dominated the assemblage, but oxidised wares were also well-represented, again in a variety of fabrics. Both oxidised and reduced versions of a distinct coarse-tempered Nene Valley ceramic tradition (cf Perrin 1999, 124) were present. Most (but not all) of the sherds assigned to the O80 and R90 categories were in this tradition. More readily identifiable was pink grogged ware (O81), a common component of pottery assemblages in Towcester (eg Woodfield 1983, 78-9) and now known to have been produced at Stowe Park (Booth 1999). A relatively few sherds were defined as being in a late Iron Age 'Belgic type' ceramic tradition (E ware), but in fact there was no clear cut-off point between this tradition and early Roman oxidised and reduced ware groupings and the E ware component may be underrepresented in the present figures. Shell-tempered fabrics were a little more common, but diagnostic sherds were very rare in these fabrics. Only two black-burnished ware sherds were identified.

Vessel types

5.3.6 Some 87 vessels were identified on the basis of rim sherds. As usual, the group was dominated by jars, which accounted for 70.1% of the vessels, with bowls (10.3%) the next most important vessel class, again conforming to a standard pattern. Lid seated and angled everted rim jars, both characteristic early types, were well-represented. There were only single rims of amphorae, flagons, beakers and lids; all three cups represented were of samian form Drag 27 and samian bowls (Drag 37) and dishes (15/17 and 18) were also represented by rims; two hook rimmed mortaria were recorded, both from the Verulamium region. The group is too small for meaningful detailed analysis and the observations on the minor vessel classes are offered without further comment.

Chronology

5.3.7 A small proportion of the context groups (6 out of 35 of Roman date) were assigned, in some cases rather tentatively, to the later Roman period, but they contained only 12.6% of the sherds from the 35 contexts) and included one certain late vessel, a colour-coated beaker from a burial, in 38 fragments. With the exception of this vessel the general absence of Nene Valley colour-coated wares is notable, as is the almost complete lack of late Roman Oxford products (a white ware mortarium bead from context 814 was of late 3rd century or later date) and the presence of only two sherds of black-burnished ware, both of late type (a bead and flanged bowl and a simple straight-sided dish). Collectively these absences support the view that the great majority of the assemblage is of early Roman date. It is difficult to assign close date ranges to many of the local fabrics and vessel forms, but overall the range of material suggests that the earliest elements of the site assemblage could date to about the middle of the 1st century AD, and that the majority of the material represents activity in the later 1st century and the first half of the 2nd century. Thereafter use of the site was apparently more localised and sporadic.

5.4 Environmental indicators

By Laila Sikking

Methodology

5.4.1 Six samples, ranging in size from 28 to 34 litres, were taken during the excavation for recovery of charred plant remains from pits, ditches and a gully. These six samples were processed by flotation using a modified Siraf-type machine, with the flots collected on a 250µm mesh. After air-drying the flots were scanned for material under a binocular microscope at x10 and x20 magnification.

Results

5.4.2 The results of the assessment of charred plant remains are presented in Table E1. The flots varied in size. The quantity of identifiable material was often low and the preservation was moderate to poor. All flots contained large quantities of clinker, occasional pieces of slag and modern root material. Recent contamination of paper fibre and plastic occurred in two samples (sample 14, context 1146 and sample 15, context 1142).

5.4.3 The small quantity of wood charcoal in the flots produced a range of taxa, including *Quercus* (oak), *Fraxinus* (ash), *Prunus* (cherry, sloe etc.). Five flots contained cereal grains, including *Triticum* (wheat), *Hordeum* (barley) and *Avena* (oat). Modern weed seeds were present in 4 of the samples, including *Rubus* (blackberry), *Sambucus* (elder) and *Urtica* (nettle). All but one sample contained molluscs, four of which in high quantities (see Table E1).

5.4.4 Sample 2 (context 118) was previously assessed during the evaluation stage and did not contain any identifiable plant remains. It did contain clinker, modern roots and molluscs.

Implications

5.4.5 The results of the assessment indicate that the sampled pits, ditches and gully contained discarded refuse of domestic origin (fuelwood and foodstuff) and possibly industrial origin (clinker and slag). The only indications of domestic refuse were the occasional cereal grains in some of the samples. Fuelwood was present in all samples but only represented by a few fragments.

5.4.6 The quantity and preservation of charcoal was generally quite poor which makes the potential for further identification low. The range of food remains, related to diet, was also limited. It is recommended that no further work is merited.

5.4.7 Since molluscs were well preserved in most samples and often present in large quantities, there is a potential for further analysis, if required.

Table E1: Charred plant remains

Sample no.	Context no.	Type of context	Charcoal quantity	Charcoal identification	Grain identification	Molluscs
7	1071	pit	+	*Quercus*, *Fraxinus*, *Prunus* Mixed taxa	*Triticum*	+++
10	1098	ditch	+	*Quercus*		++++
11	1093	ditch	+	*Quercus*		+++
14	1146	ditch	+	*Prunus*	Cereal indet	+
15	1142	pit	+	*Fraxinus*, Mixed taxa	*Hordeum/Avena*	-
16	1158	gully	+	*Alnus/Corylus*	*Triticum*	++++

+ = present (up to 5 items), ++ = frequent (5-25), +++ = common (25-100), ++++ = abundant (>100)

6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 Reliability of field investigation

6.1.1 The only area to have been demonstrably truncated is that within the carpark at the northern extent of the site. The survival of the burials suggests that the natural geology has not been significantly reduced and that the surviving archaeology is likely to be a fair reflection of the features cut into that part of the site through history. Elsewhere, especially in Block B there was a suggestion of truncation by ridge and furrow, but this was difficult to assess within the trenches. There was also some intrusion by modern drainage.

6.1.2 The percentage sample, distribution and positioning of the trenches are believed to have given a good reflection of the overall archaeological potential of the site.

6.2 Overall interpretation

6.2.1 It is notable that with the possible exception of layer 602 in Trench 6 there is little or no indication of vertical stratigraphy except where this is related to negative features. This may reflect a generally low level of activity in this area in the Roman period, but in view of the intensive occupation seen a little further south in the Alchester road suburbs, for example (Brown and Woodfield 1983) this seems unlikely, and it may be that Roman (and perhaps other) features and deposits have been affected by successive phases of truncation, including medieval ploughing and more recent ground clearance. Evidence from Trenches 8 and 9 suggests that 'undisturbed' alluvial deposits survive to the south of the site and are cut by possible Roman features. These are sealed by a potentially re-worked alluvial soil which may also be indicative of later ploughing, but which seals any surviving archaeology below.

6.2.2 Two major linear features of Roman date, the Alchester road and the defences might have been expected to have had a direct influence on the alignment and character of features in the site. The Alchester road was arguably the more important of these simply because of its chronological primacy. In addition it is possible that the imposition of defences had a negative effect on continued development of the area immediately outside them. This is suggested by the results of the evaluation, which produced a heavy preponderance of early Roman material; the clear exception is the vessel associated with a burial in Trench 1 and the late Roman material concentrated in Trench 5, which intercepted the suspected line of the Alchester road.

6.2.3 No direct evidence for the road itself was recovered in Trench 5, though the general north-south alignment of a number of features in the trench was consistent with its alignment. A shallow feature (529) some 4.5 m wide on this alignment was possibly a holloway although it did produce 3rd-4th century pottery. Heavy wear on the road at this point might help to explain the lack of evidence for surfaces, though the total absence of signs of any attempt to provide metalling is puzzling. Metalled surfaces, albeit rather irregularly defined, were a feature of the road a little further south, where it was probably established in the later 1st century AD and was up to *c* 10 m wide (Brown and Woodfield 1983, 46-47).

6.2.4 Features on alignments consistent with that of the projected road were certainly located only in Trenches 5 and 4 - successive linear features in the latter trench being possible candidates for a roadside ditch, given that this need not have lain immediately adjacent to the road edge. If this is correct, however, these features are likely to have lain on the west side of the road, which should then probably have been located in the western part of Trench 5, although it is just possible that the ditches were set back sufficiently from the road edge to relate to an alignment such as that suggested by the 'holloway' in Trench 5.

6.2.5 Linear features in all the trenches except Trench 4, even including some of those in Trench 5, bore no relation to the alignment of the Alchester road. There are several possible explanations for this, but the most likely one for those located close to the road line is that they relate to a layout of boundaries that, in origin at least, predates

the road alignment itself. Amongst these features is the large shallow ditch 609 in Trench 6, which produced a substantial group of pottery dated to the late 1st to early 2nd century, by which time the road line should have been established. This feature cut the only significant Roman layer (as opposed to feature fill) located on the site, and the interpretation of both is uncertain.

6.2.6 Structural evidence was confined to Trenches 5 and 7, in both cases consisting of traces of stone buildings - no beamslots or postholes were identified in any of the trenches. The building in Trench 5, indicated principally by wall foundation 500 (the absence of facing stones suggests that no superstructure elements survive), lay parallel to the line of the Alchester road, presumably on the west side, some 13.5 m from the edge of the possible holloway. If the two features had been contemporary there would be sufficient space between them to suggest that feature 500 could have been the back wall of a building fronting onto the road, but there is no other evidence to support this assertion. A possible foundation was seen in Trench 7, but could not be examined in detail. If correctly understood, however, its alignment bears no relation to that of the road.

6.2.7 Few linear features could be traced for any distance across the site. The only major ditch in this category was feature 116/210, in Trenches 1 and 2. This was the only significant linear feature outside Trench 5 to produce any indications of late Roman date, albeit only from the upper fill. It appears to have defined the western limit of the area of burials initially identified in Trench 1 and subsequently examined more extensively. Based on burial practices, as well as the limited associated finds (of which a Nene Valley colour-coated pentice beaker is the most significant) the inhumations appear to date to the late 3rd to 4th centuries. The burials form a characteristic late Roman extra-mural cemetery group, even if their layout is such that they are characterised as 'backland' burials rather than forming a formally managed cemetery (Esmonde Cleary 2000, 129).

6.2.8 None of the evidence discussed so far indicates that the presence of the Roman town defences had any significance for the site except in a negative sense (see below). The defensive history of Towcester, including its post-Roman phases, has been studied by Woodfield (1992), with a more recent discussion specifically of the later 2nd century aspect of the defences in a wider context (Woodfield 1995). From this work it is clear that the south-western corner is one of the more problematic areas of the defences (Woodfield 1992, 62), although its approximate location can be identified by projection from the known elements of the west and south sides. On the basis of this evidence Trench 5 was located not only on the likely line of the Alchester road (see above) but also at the point where this might have intersected with the line of the western defences just north of the projected south-west corner. If the evidence for the line of the Alchester road was unsatisfactory, that for the defences was non-existent. There were no features that could have been interpreted as relating to any of the components of the defensive system as currently understood.

6.2.9 The most likely explanation of this is that the south-west corner of the defences was cut off at an angle rather than running to a 'point' - one advantage of which would be that the Alchester road did not meet the line of the defences at an acute angle. It should be noted, however, that there is no indication of defence-related features at Woodfield's Sites J and K (Woodfield 1992, 29) only a relatively short distance to the north, so considerable uncertainty about their configuration remains.

6.2.10 Myk Flitcroft (*pers comm.*) in response to the above has commented that the work undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology in 2001 suggests that Block B is located 25 m south of the projected line of the defences. Northamptonshire Archaeology established that c.80% of the 180AD town ditch lies under Richmond Road, at least to the north of Block B. A heavily robbed out stone wall in a shallow foundation trench was exposed immediately to the north of the Richmond Road. A later, more ephemeral 3rd/4th century ditch was identified to the south.

6.2.11 The proximity of the defences would certainly have inhibited, but not necessarily completely precluded, later activity in their immediate vicinity. Whatever line the defences took they are likely to have had an immediate affect on features in Trenches 5 and 6, and the limited evidence for late Roman activity in the former is presumably related to maintenance of the Alchester road as it approached a likely gate location (and it is just possible that the absence of evidence for defensive features in this area relates to the presence of a causeway carrying the road between ditch terminals). An alternative, but much less likely, possibility is that the Alchester road was not provided with a gate and that subsequent to the construction of the defences it was re-routed to join another road access to the town - perhaps running eastwards south of the Silverstone Brook to join the line of Watling Street.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench	Ctxt No	Type	Depth. (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
1						
	100	Skeleton	-	Human inhumation in 102	-	C3rd/4th
	101	Skeleton	-	Human inhumation in 104	-	C3rd/4th
	102	Cut	0.2 m	Grave cut	-	C3rd/4th
	103	Fill	0.2 m	Grave fill	Pottery	C3rd/4th
	104	Cut	0.1 m	Grave cut	-	C3rd/4th
	105	Fill	0.1 m	Grave fill	Pottery	C3rd/4th
	106	Layer	>0.15 m	Natural clay	-	-
	107	Layer	0.05 m	Modern trample deposit	-	C20th

	108	Layer	0.25 m	Rubble hardcore base for tarmac	-	C20th
	109	Layer	0.1 m	Scalping base for tarmac	-	C20th
	110	Surface	0.1 m	Tarmac surface	-	C20th
	111	Layer	Up to 0.35 m	Alluvial deposit above natural clay	-	-
	112	Layer	-	Alluvial sand	-	-
	113	Layer	0.2 m	Alluvial sand	-	-
	114	Cut	0.5 m	Land drain	-	Post-med
	115	Fill	0.5 m	Backfill of land drain	Glass, CBM	Post-med
	116	Cut	>0.8 m	Possible boundary ditch	-	C3rd/4th
	117	Fill	>0.8 m	Primary fill of boundary ditch 116	Pottery, Bone	Mid to late C1st
	118	Fill	0.2 m	Upper fill of boundary ditch 116	Pottery, CBM,Tile, Bone	Late C3rd/4th
	119	Cut	0.2 m	Possible plough furrow	-	Post-med
	120	Fill	0.2 m	Fill of plough furrow 119	Pottery, Tile, Brick	Post-med
	121	Skeleton	-	Human inhumation in 122	-	C3rd/4th
	122	Cut	0.15 m	Grave cut	-	C3rd/4th
	123	Fill	0.15 m	Backfill of grave 122	Pottery	C3rd/4th
	124	Pot	-	Grave goods from grave 122	Sand tempered flagon	C3rd/4th
Trench	**Ctxt No**	**Type**	**Depth. (m)**	**Comment**	**Finds**	**Date**
2						
	200	Layer	-	Natural clay	-	-
	201	Layer	-	Natural sandy clay	-	-
	202	Layer	-	Alluvium	-	-
	203	Layer	0.5 m	Buried ploughsoil	-	C19th ?
	204	Layer	0.25 m	Made ground	-	C20th
	205	Layer	0.08 m	Made ground	-	C20th
	206	Layer	0.1 m	Made ground	-	C20th
	207	Layer	0.1 m	Made ground	-	C20th
	208	Layer	0.1 m	Made ground	-	C20th

	209	Surface	0.05 m	Tarmac surfac	-	C20th
	210	Cut	-	Possible boundary ditch	-	Roman?
	211	Fill	-	Fill of ditch 211	-	Roman?
	212	Cut	-	Possible pit	-	Roman?
	213	Fill	-	Fill of pit 212	-	Roman?
4						
	400	Layer	-	Hardcore carpark surface	Brick	C20th
	401	Layer	0.2 m	Buried topsoil	-	C19th ?
	402	Fill	0.2 m	Ditch fill of 408	Pottery, Clay pipe, Bone	Late C1st
	403	Fill	0.3 m	Ditch fill of 408	Pottery, CBM, Bone	C2nd
	404	Fill	0.12 m	Ditch fill of 408	Pottery, Bone, Slag	Mid C1st - early C2nd
	405	Fill	0.1 m	Ditch fill of 408	Pottery, CBM, Bone	Late C1st – early C2nd
	406	Fill	0.1 m	Ditch fill of 408	Pottery	Late C1st
	407	Fill	0.15 m	Ditch fill of 408	Pottery	Late C1st– C2nd
	408	Cut	0.9 m	Boundary ditch same as 413	-	Late C1st – C2nd
	409	Fill	0.12 m	Ditch fill, Same as 404	Pottery	Mid C1st - early C2nd
	410	Fill	0.1 m	Ditch fill, Same as 405	Pottery	Late C1st – early C2nd
	411	Fill	0.1 m	Ditch fill, Same as 406	Pottery	Late C1st
	412	Fill	0.15 m	Ditch fill, Same as 407	Pottery	Late C1st – C2nd
	413	Cut	0.9 m	Boundary ditch, Same as 408	-	Late C1st – C2nd

Trench	Ctxt No	Type	Depth. (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
4						
	414	Fill	0.14 m	Fill of gully 416	Pottery, CBM, Bone	C1st/C2nd
	415	Fill	0.1 m	Fill of gully 416	Pottery	C1st/C2nd
	416	Cut	0.3 m	Small gully	-	C1st/C2nd
	417	Fill	0.35 m	Upper fill of pit 420	Pottery	C1st/C2nd
	418	Fill	0.2 m	Fill of pit 420	Pottery	Mid to late C1st
	419	Fill	0.12 m	Primary fill of pit 420	Pottery	Late C1st - C2nd
	420	Cut	0.7 m	Rubbish pit	-	C1st/C2nd
	421	Natural	-	Natural clay	-	-
5						
	500	Structure	0.38 m	Wall footing	-	C1st/C2nd
	501	Deposit	0.1 m	Lens of demolition material	Fe nails, CBM, Bone	Early C2nd
	502	Structure	0.2 m	Stone lined drain	-	-
	503	Fill	0.3 m	Backfill of construction cut 515	Bone	Late C1st – C2nd
	504	Cut	0.18 m	Gully terminus	-	C3rd/4th
	505	Fill	0.18 m	Fill of terminus 504	Pottery, Oyster, Bone	Late C3rd/4th
	506	Cut	0.18 m	Small gully	-	C1st?
	507	Fill	0.18 m	Fill of gully 506	Fe brooch, Bone, CBM	C1st?
	508	Cut	0.04 m	Ditch	-	Early to mid C2nd
	509	Fill	0.04 m	Fill of ditch 508	Pottery, CBM, Bone	Early to mid C2nd
	510	Cut	0.4 m	Boundary ditch	-	C1st
	511	Fill	0.4 m	Fill of ditch 510	Pottery, Bone	C1st
	512	Cut	0.16 m	Pit	-	Early to mid C2nd
	513	Fill	0.16 m	Fill of pit 512	Pottery, Bone, Tile	Early to mid C2nd
	514	Layer	-	Natural clay	-	-
	515	Cut	0.4 m	Construction cut for wall 500	-	C1st/C2nd
	516	Cut	0.14 m	Ditch	-	Roman

Trench	Ctxt No	Type	Depth. (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
5						
	517	Fill	0.14 m	Fill of ditch 516	Pottery	Roman
	518	Deposit	0.1 m	Disturbed interface between ploughsoils 540 and 541	-	-
	519	Deposit	0.2 m	Fill of gully 534	-	Poss. med/ post-med.
	520	Cut	0.3 m	Gully	-	C1st - C2nd
	521	Fill	0.3 m	Fill of gully 520	Pottery, Bone, CBM	C1st - C2nd
	522	Cut	0.14 m	Ditch	Oyster, Bone	Late C1st – C2nd
	523	Fill	0.14 m	Fill of ditch 522	-	Late C1st – C2nd
	524	Cut	0.3 m	Gully	-	Late C1st
	525	Fill	0.3 m	Fill of gully 524	Pottery, Bone	Late C1st
	526	Cut	0.55 m	Geological feature	-	-
	527	Fill	0.55 m	Fill of 526	-	-
	528	Lens	0.1 m	Lens of natural gravel	-	-
	529	Cut	0.3 m	Ditch or possible track/ holloway	-	C3rd/4th
	530	Fill	0.3 m	Fill of ditch or track/holloway 529	Pottery, Bone	C3rd/4th
	531	Cut	>0.35 m	"Rumbler" drain	-	Poss. med/ post-med.
	532	Fill	0.35 m	Backfill of drain 531	-	Poss. med/ post-med.
	533	Fill	0.15 m	Rubble fill of drain 531	-	Poss. med/ post-med.
	534	Cut	>0.3 m	"Rumble drain"	-	Poss. med/ post-med.
	535	Fill	0.3 m	Backfill of drain 534	-	Poss. med/ post-med.
	536	Fill	0.05 m	Fill of linear 537	-	-
	537	Cut	0.05 m	Possible plough furrow	-	-
	538	Surface	-	Tarmac surface	-	C20th
	539	Layer	0.45 m	Made ground	-	C20th
	540	Layer	0.2 m	Buried ploughsoil	-	C19th ?
	541	Layer	0.25 m	Buried soil	-	C19th

	542	Cut	>0.2 m	Stone lined drain	-	Poss. med/ post-med.

Trench	Ctxt No	Type	Depth. (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
5						
	543	Fill	0.2 m	Rubble fill of drain 542	-	Poss. med/ post-med.
	544	Fill	0.5 m	Backfill of drain 542	-	Poss. med/ post-med.
	545	Layer	>0.5 m	Leached natural	-	-
6						
	600	Layer	0.35 m	Made ground	-	C20th
	601	Layer	0.15 m	Buried soil	-	C19th - C20th
	602	Layer	0.4 m	Possible Roman ploughsoil	Pottery, Bone	Late C1st
	603	Cut	0.36 m	Ditch	-	C1st - C2nd
	604	Fill	0.36 m	Fill of ditch 603	Pottery, Bone	C1st - C2nd
	605	Cut	0.6 m	Modern drainage trench	-	C20th
	606	Fill	0.6 m	Backfill of trench 605	Glass, Fe nails, CBM	C20th
	607	Cut	0.56 m	Modern drainage trench	-	C20th
	608	Fill	0.56 m	Backfill of trench 607	Pottery, CBM, Glass	C20th
	609	Cut	0.5 m	Boundary ditch	-	C1st - C2nd
	610	Fill	0.4 m	Upper fill of ditch 609	Pottery, Oyster, Bone, Fired clay	C1st - C2nd
	611	Fill	0.1 m	Primary fill of ditch 609	Pottery, Bone, Fired clay	C1st - C2nd
	612	Layer	0.15 m	Alluvial clay	-	-
	613	Cut	0.32 m	"Rumbler" drain	-	Poss. med/ post-med.
	614	Layer	-	Natural clay	-	-
	615	Fill	0.32 m	Fill of drain 613	Residual Pottery, Bone	C1st/C2nd
	616	Fill	c 0.2 m	Ditch fill	-	-
7						
	700	Layer	0.55 m	Made ground	Pottery, Brick	C20th
	701	Layer	0.5 m	Buried soil	Pottery	Poss. med

	702	Layer	>0.1 m	Natural clay	-	-
	703	Structure	-	Roman wall	Oyster, Bone	Late C2nd
	704	Cut	-	Possible Roman gully	-	Roman?
Trench	**Ctxt No**	**Type**	**Depth. (m)**	**Comment**	**Finds**	**Date**
7						
	705	Fill	-	Fill of gully 704	-	Roman?
	706	Cut	-	Possible Roman gully	-	Roman?
	707	Fill	-	Fill of gully 706	-	Roman?
	708	Lens	-	Concentration of burnt demolition material	-	Roman?
	709	Cut	-	Construction cut for wall 703	-	Late C2nd
8						
	800	Layer	>1.15 m	Natural clay and gravel	-	-
	801	Deposit	0.26 m	Alluvium	-	-
	802	Deposit	0.56 m	Reworked alluviun/ ploughsoil	CBM	Roman
	803	Deposit	0.3 m	Made Ground	-	-
	804	Deposit	0.48 m	Hardcore	-	-
	805	Cut	>0.15 m	Possible linear feature	-	-
	806	Fill	0.1 m	Primary fill of feature 805	-	-
	807	Cut (?)	>0.36 m	Possible feature	-	-
	808	Fill (?)	>0.37 m	Fill of feature 807	-	-
	809	Fill (?)	-	Possible fill of feature	Pottery	C2nd+
	810	Fill (?)	-	Possible fill of feature	-	-
	811	Fill (?)	-	Possible fill of feature	-	-
	812	Fill (?)	-	Possible fill of feature	-	-
	813	Fill (?)	-	Possible fill of feature	Pottery	Mid C1st - C2nd
	814	Fill	0.1 m	Upper fill of feature 805	Pottery	Late C3rd
	815	Fill (?)	-	Possible fill of feature	Pottery	Late 1st - C2nd
9						
	900	Layer	>1.8 m	Natural clay and gravel	-	-
	901	Deposit	0.4 m	Alluvium	-	-
	902	Deposit	0.4 m	Reworked alluvium	-	-
	903	Deposit	0.8 m	Made ground	-	-
	904	Deposit	0.5 m	Made ground	-	-

	905	Deposit	0.2 m	Concrete surface	-	-
	906	Cut	>0.14 m	Gully	-	-
	907	Fill	>0.15 m	Fill of gully 906	Pottery	C2nd+

APPENDIX 2 POTTERY ASSESSMENT BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDIX 3 REFERENCES

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APPENDIX 4 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Radstone Technology Park, Towcester, Northamptonshire
Site code: TORAD 04
Grid reference: SP 691 485
Type of evaluation: 6 machine dug trenches
Date and duration of project: 16th-27th July and 2nd-3rd November 2004 (12 days)
Area of site: 2 Hectares
Summary of results: Evidence of 1st–2nd century enclosures and possible buildings later used to contain a 3rd–4th century cemetery. No evidence of the defensive circuit or further extension of Alchester road was found.
Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Northamptonshire County Museums Service in due course.

Client Name:	John Samuels Archaeological Consultants
Client Ref No:	JSAC 935/04/02
Document Title:	Radstone Technology Site, Towcester, Northamptonshire
Document Type:	Evaluation
Issue Number:	1
National Grid Reference:	SP 691 485
Planning Reference:	S/2003/0800/PO
OA Job Number:	2351
Site Code:	TORAD 04
Invoice Code:	TORADEV
Receiving Museum:	Northamptonshire County Museum Services
Museum Accession No:	
Prepared by:	Mike Sims/Robin Bashford
Position:	Project Supervisors
Date:	10th November 2004
Checked by:	Andrew Holmes
Position:	Head of Small Works
Date:	17th November 2004
Approved by:	Nick Shepherd Signed.....
Position:	Head of Fieldwork
Date:	22nd November 2004
Document File Location	H:\PROJECTS\Northamptonshire NH\5301 Radstone Technology Site, Towcester EV\EV\evREP.doc
Graphics File Location	
Illustrated by	Margarita De Guzman/Geogina Slater

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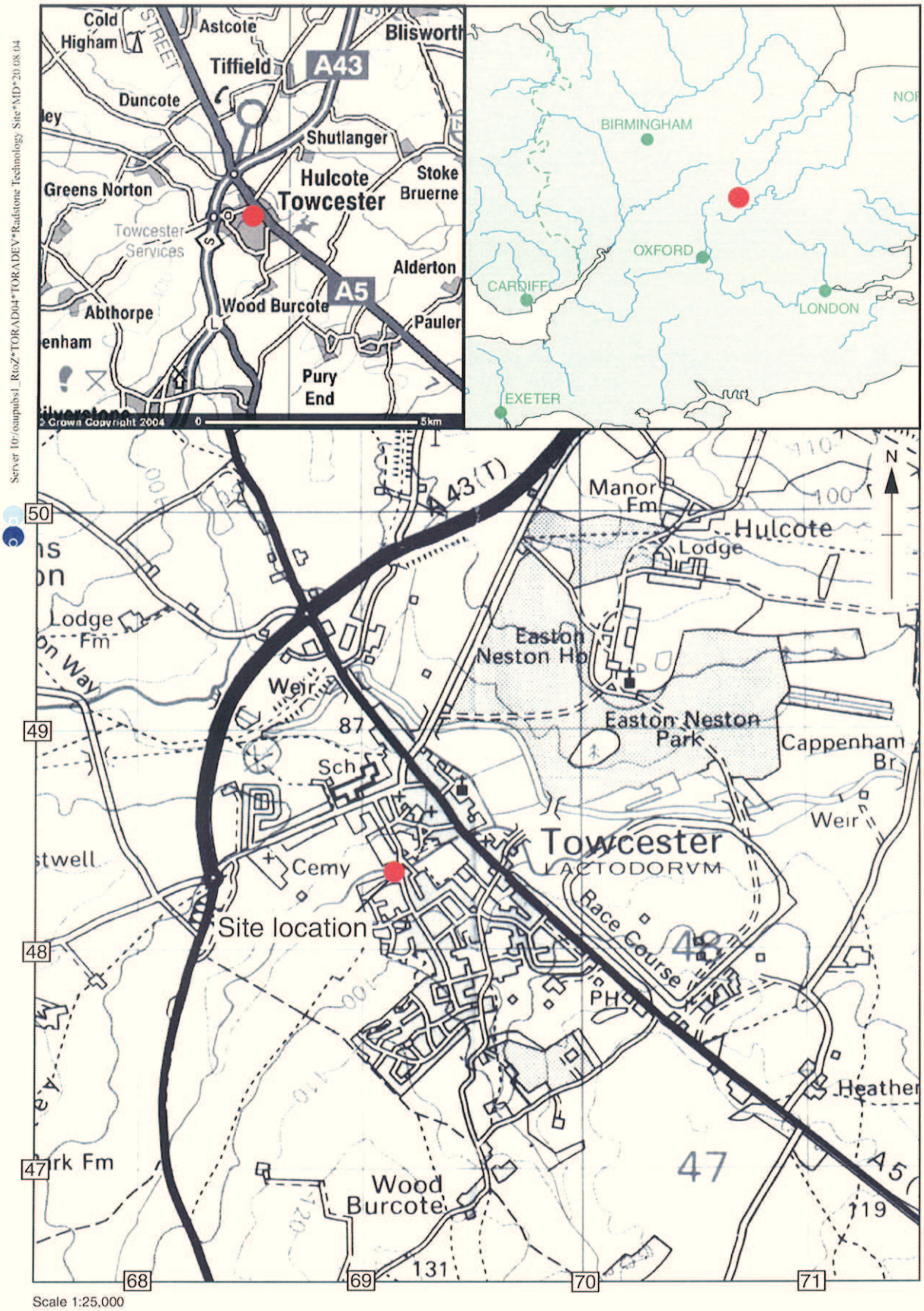

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Figure 1: Site location

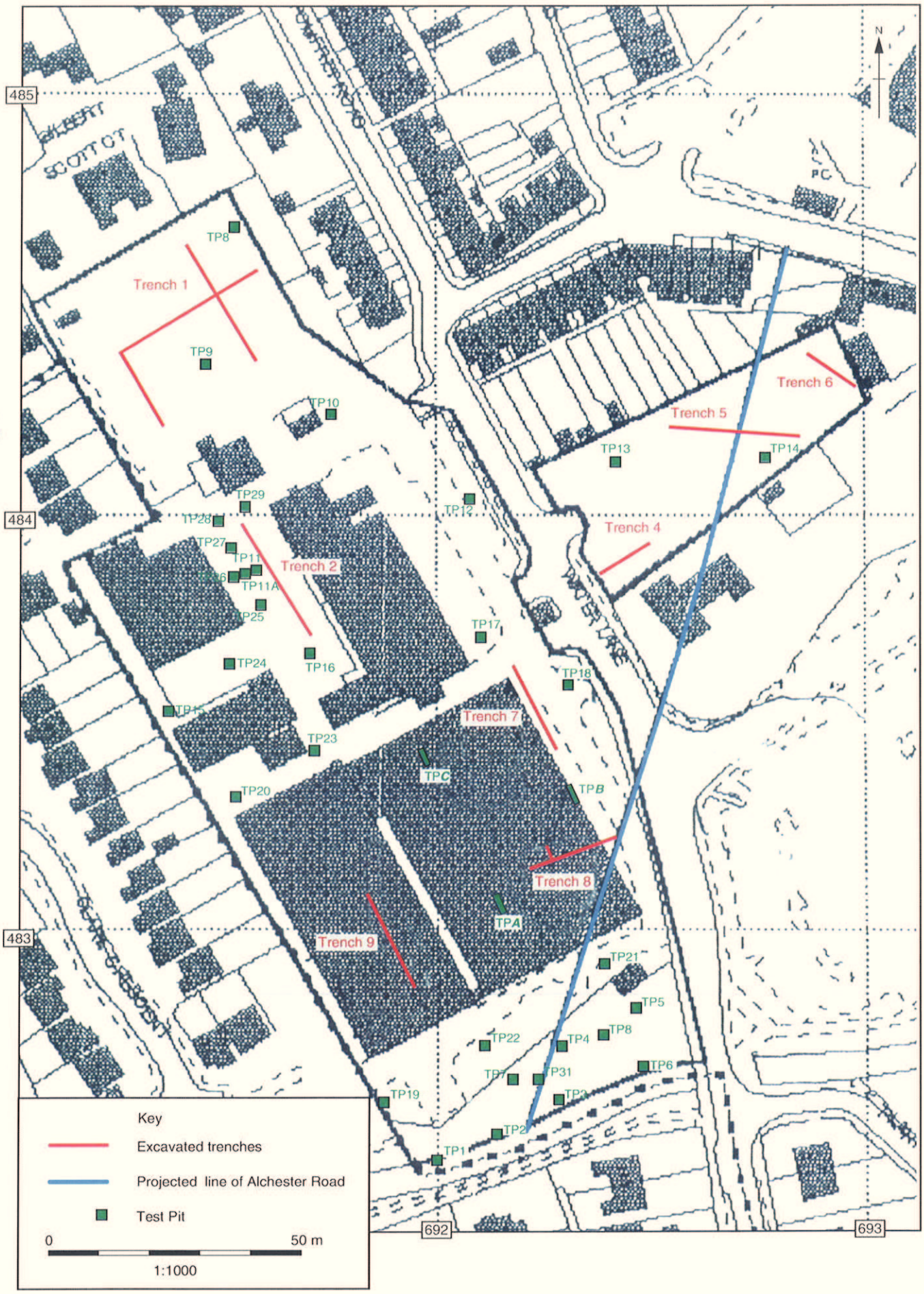


Figure 2: Trench and Test Pit location plan

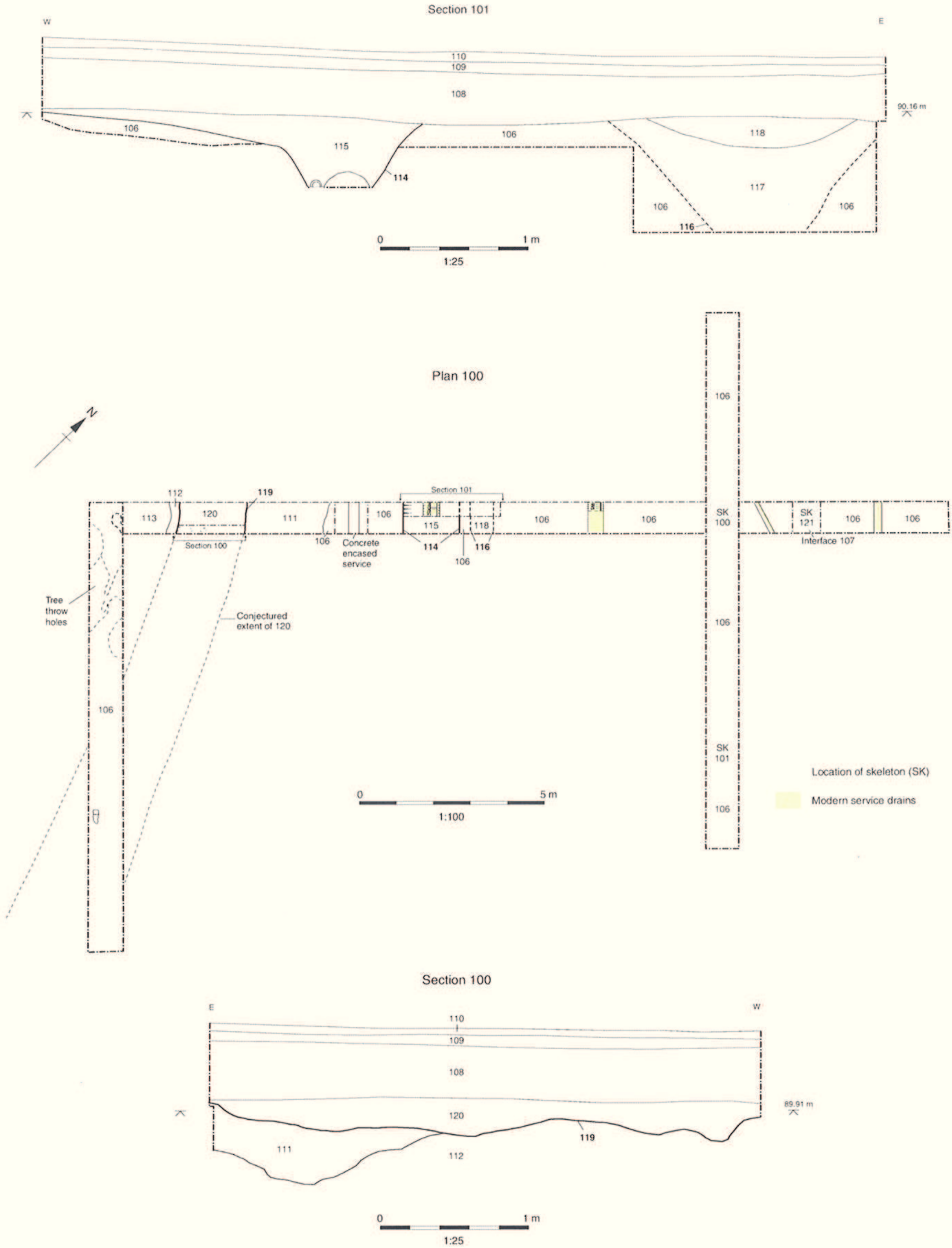
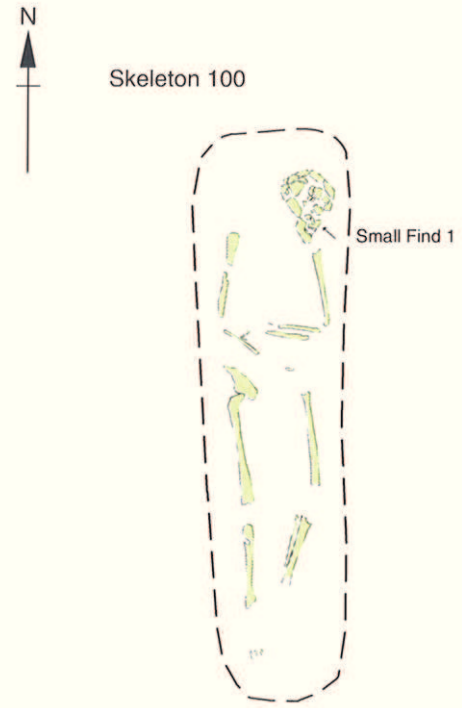


Figure 3: Trench 1, Plan 100 and Sections 100 - 101



Skull 100 showing metal small find 1

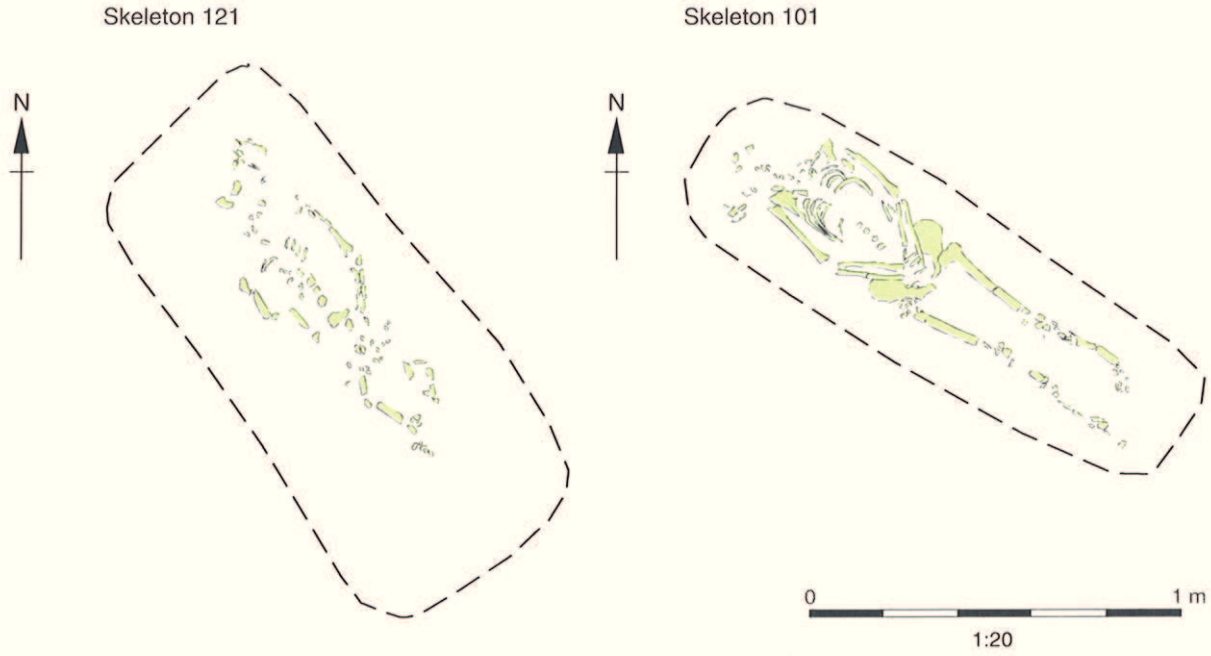
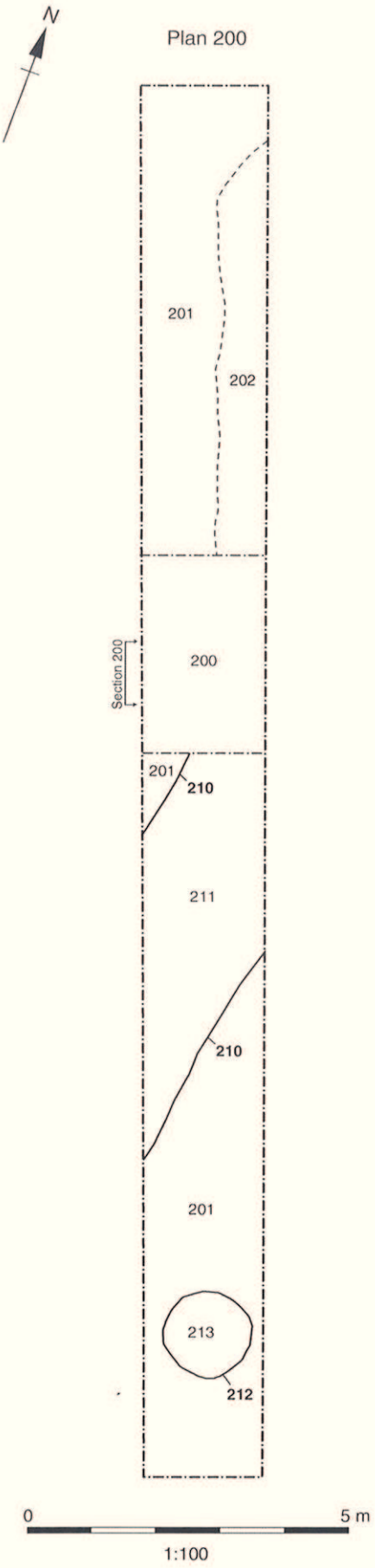


Figure 3a: Trench 1, Skeletons



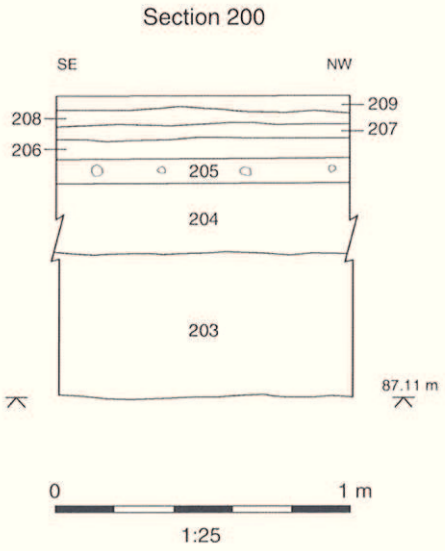


Figure 4: Trench 2, Plan 200 and Section 200

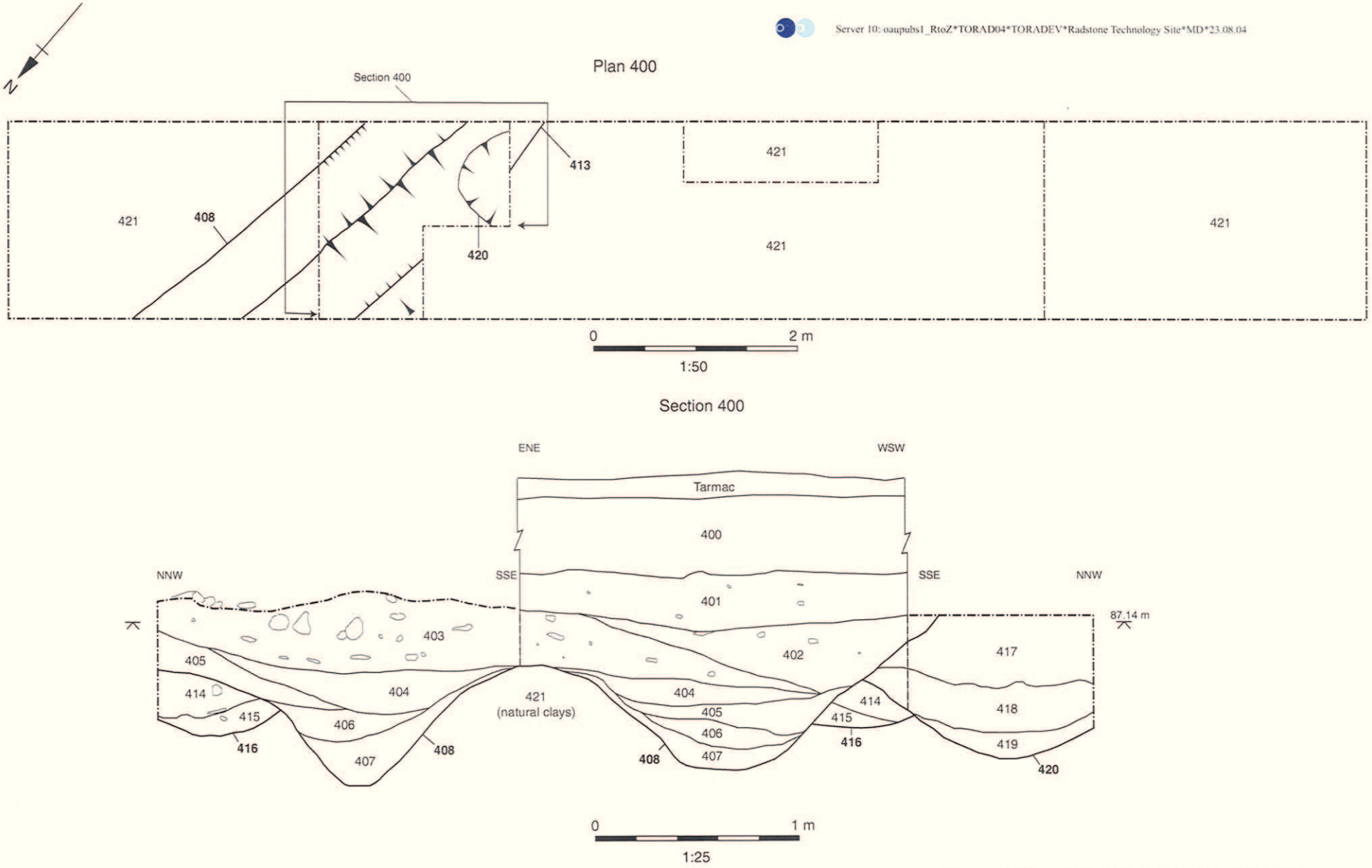
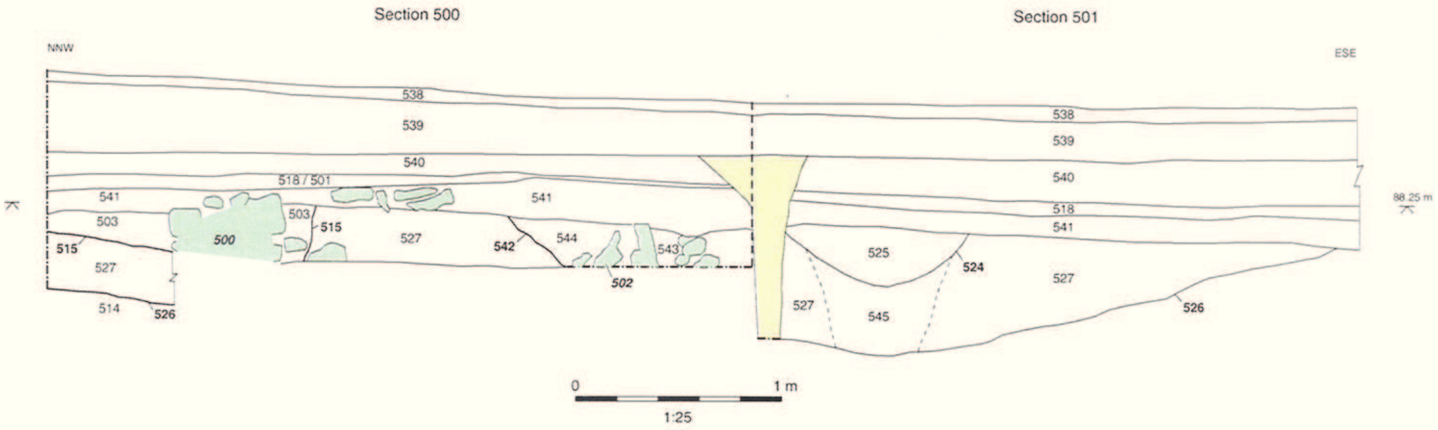


Figure 5: Trench 4, Plan 400 and Section 400

Wall 500



Plan 500

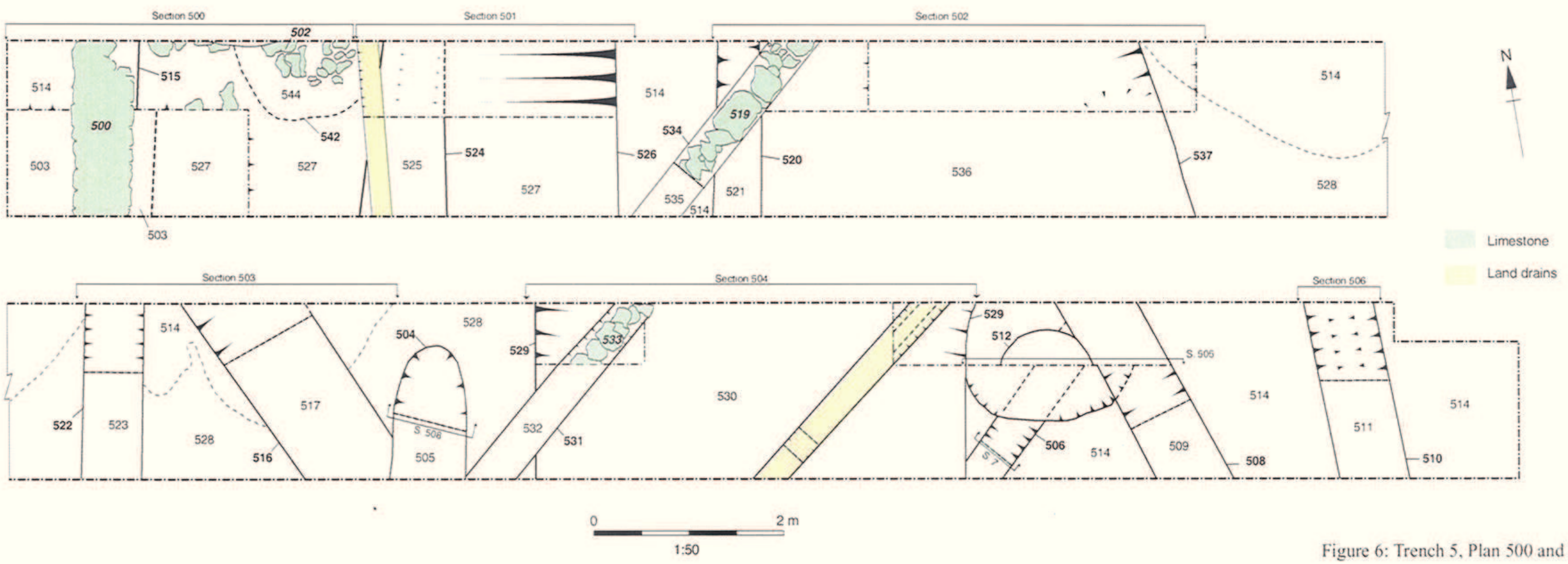


Figure 6: Trench 5, Plan 500 and Section 500

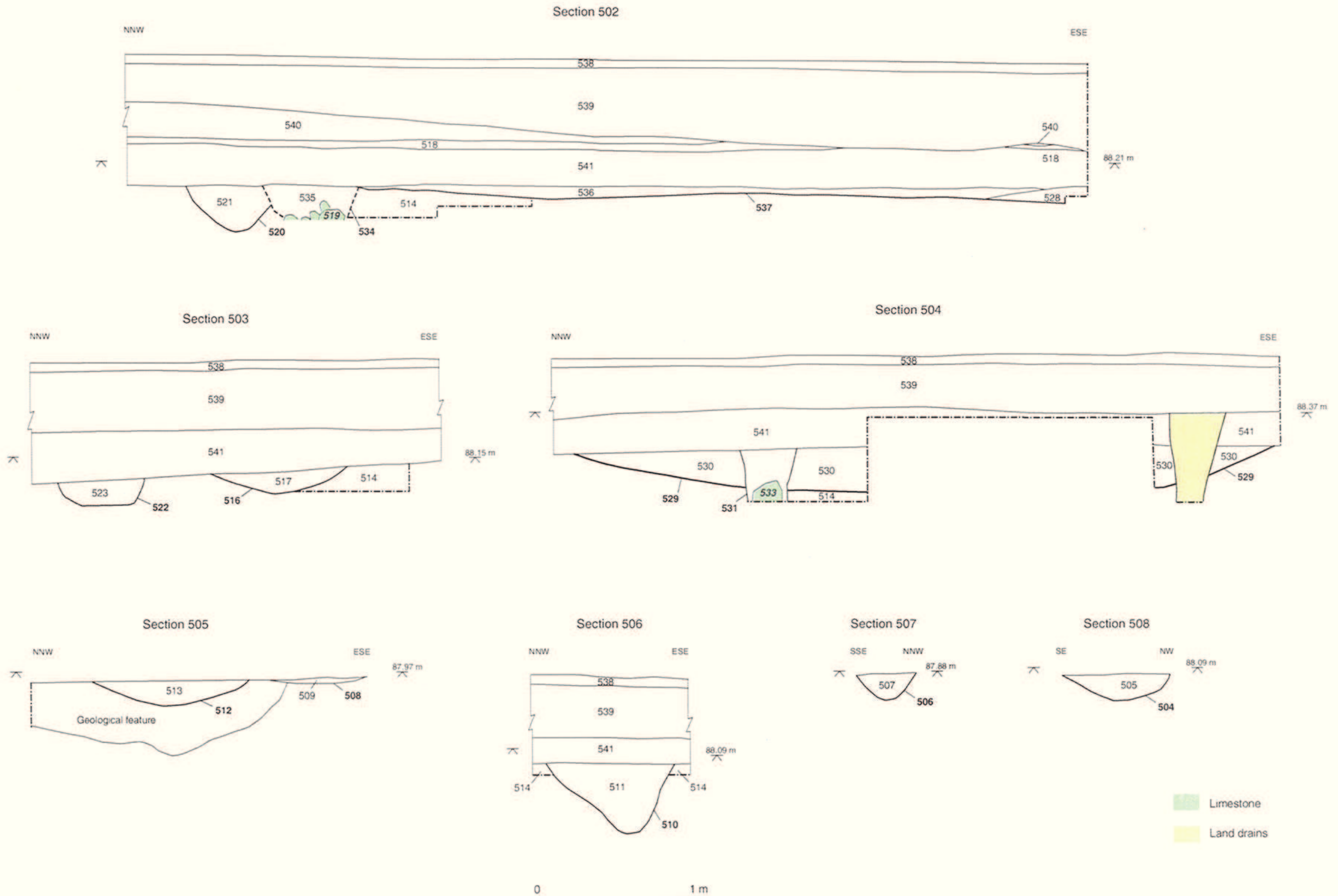


Figure 6a: Trench 5, Sections 502 - 508

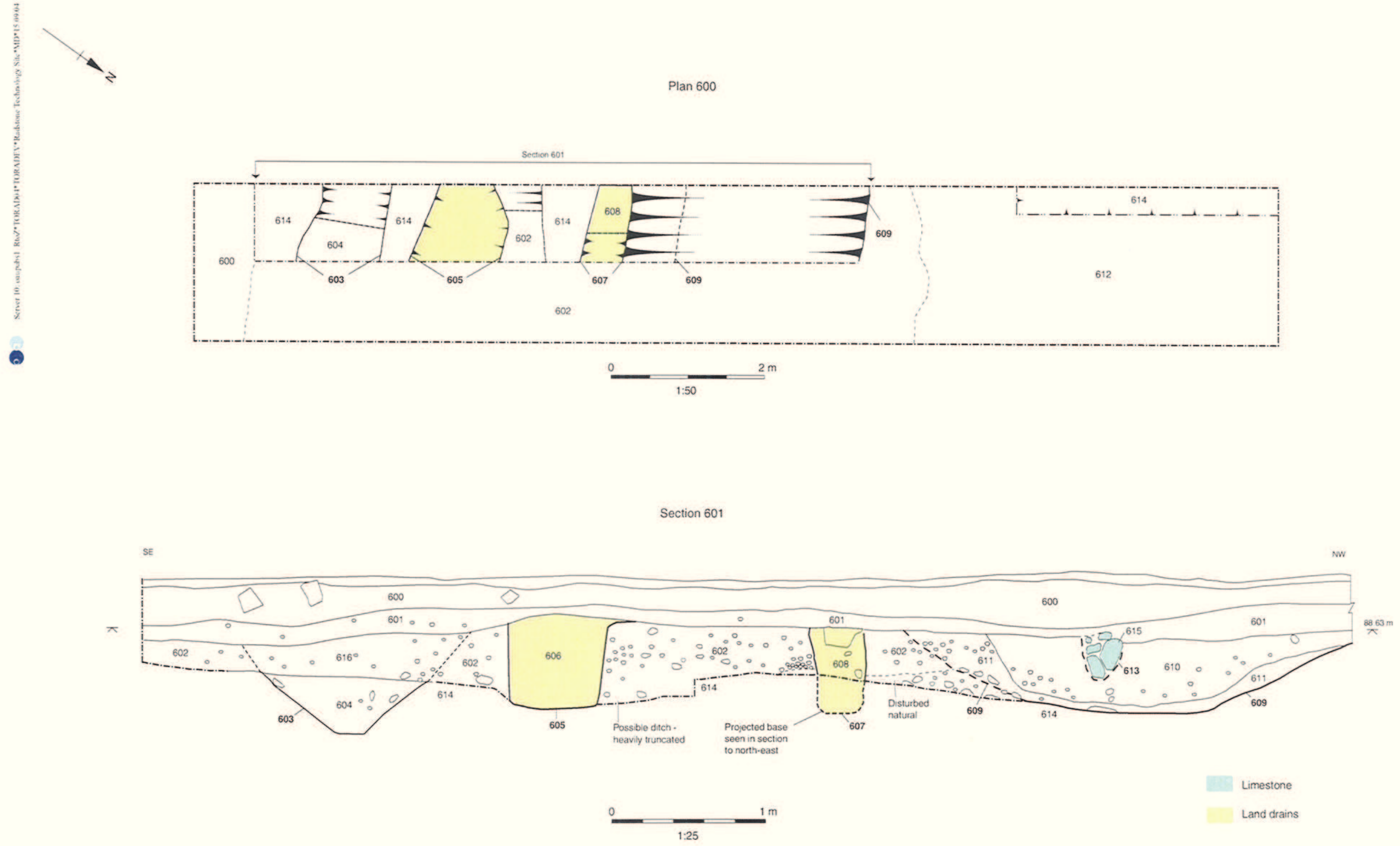
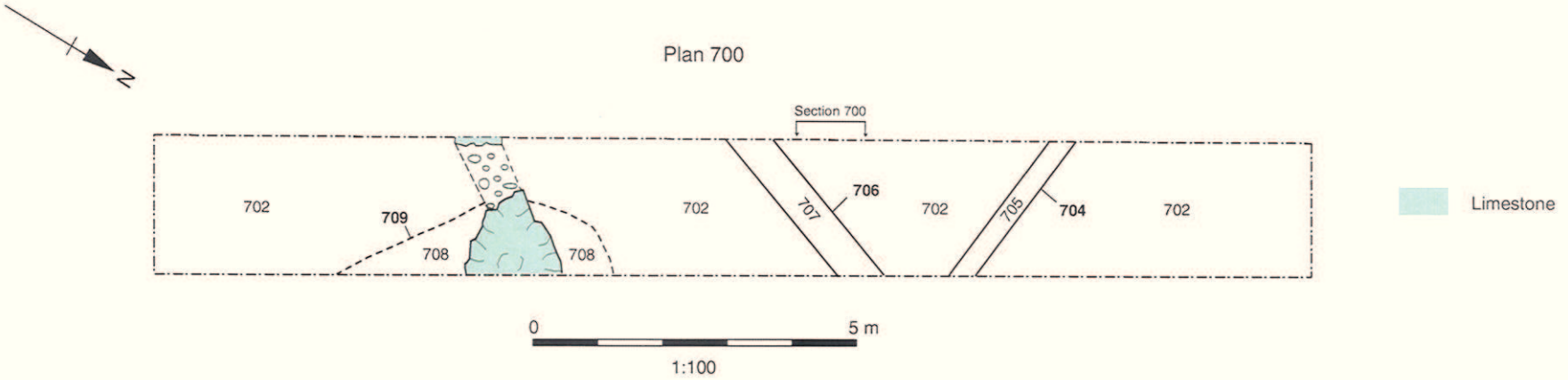


Figure 7: Trench 6, Plan 600 and Section 600



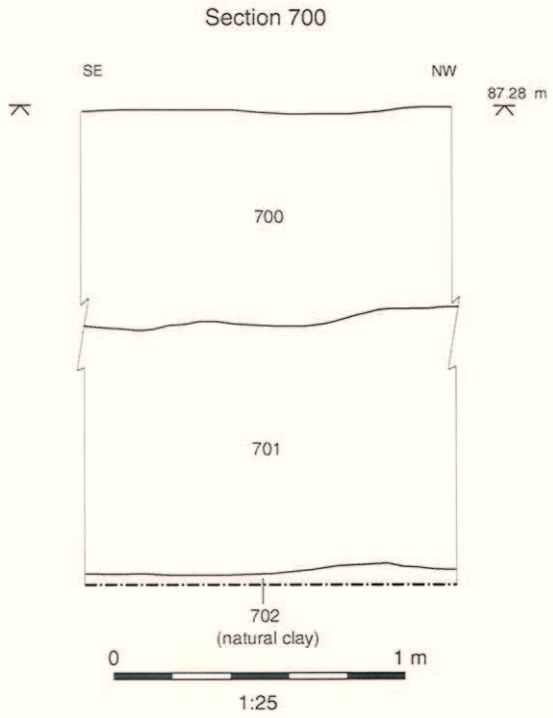


Figure 8: Trench 7, Plan 700 and Section 700

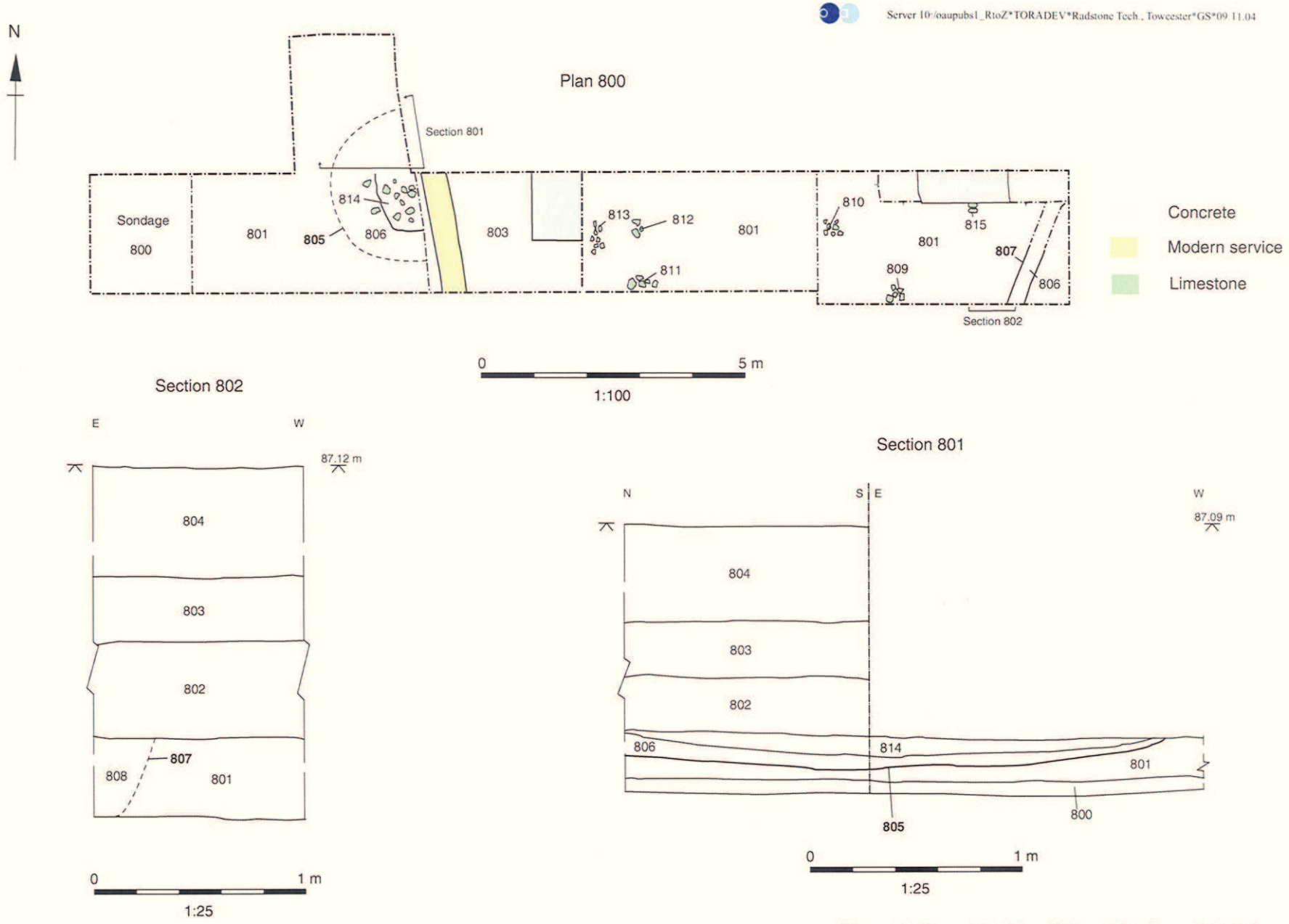
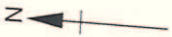
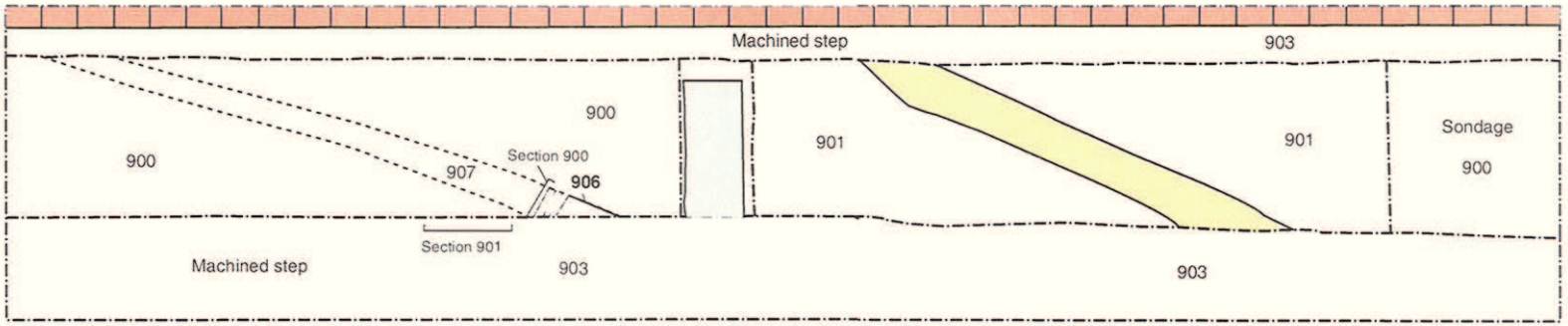


Figure 9: Trench 8, Plan 800 and Sections 801-802



Plan 900



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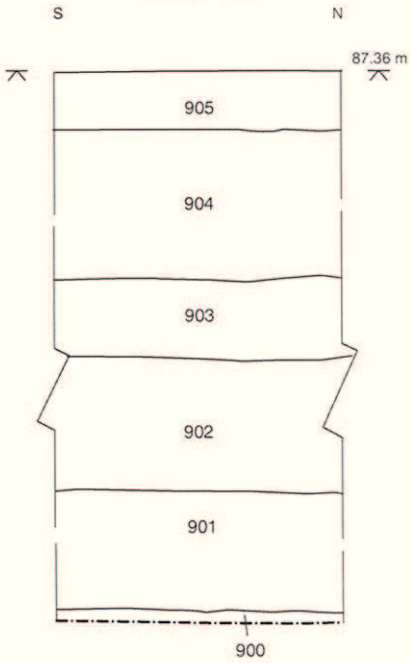
Section 901



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Section 900

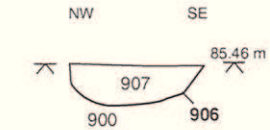

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Figure 10: Trench 9, Plan 900 and Sections 900-901