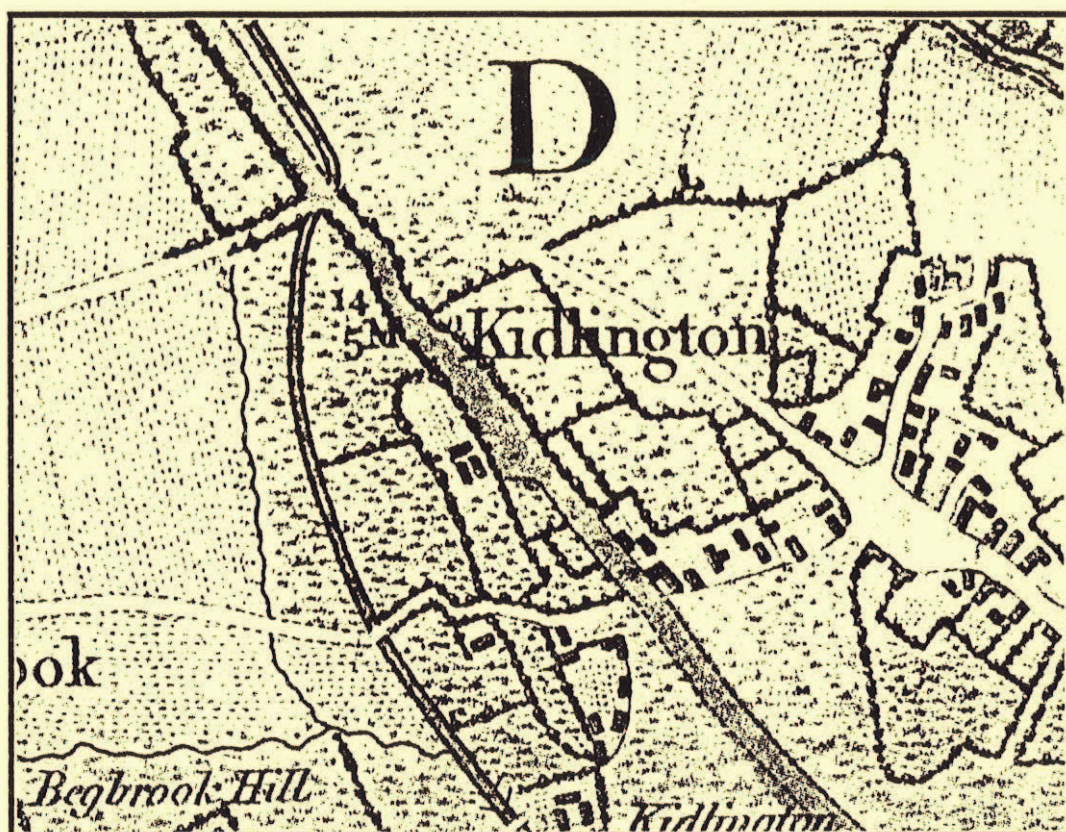


# Land to the rear of Church Street, Kidlington, Oxon.

95/00662/F

## Archaeological Evaluation Report



Oxford Archaeological Unit

October 1996

**WESTBURY HOMES**

**LAND TO THE REAR OF CHURCH STREET, KIDLINGTON**  
***ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT***

**NGR SP 49601475**

Planning Ref. 95/00662/F

Dan Poore

**OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT**

**October 1996**

## SUMMARY

*The Oxford Archaeological Unit carried out a field evaluation on the land to the rear of Church Street, Kidlington on behalf of Westbury Homes. The evaluation revealed a number of ditches, aligned either east-west or north-south, which were possibly late Iron Age-early Roman or medieval in date. Two undated pits and a large unidentified feature, possibly backfilled in the medieval period, were also seen.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Location and scope of work (Fig. 1)

In October 1996 the Oxford Archaeological Unit carried out a field evaluation at Church Street, Kidlington on behalf of Westbury Homes in respect of a planning application for the erection of twelve detached dwellings and the building of a new access road (Planning Application No. 95/00662/F). Paul Smith, the County Archaeological Officer, set the brief and agreed a WSI. The development site lay on land to the rear of numbers 57 and 58 Church Street, Kidlington and is 0.6 hectares in area.

### 1.2 Geology and topography

The site lies on river terrace drift geology at 62 m above OD. The site is situated about 500 m south of the river Cherwell in the Oxford Clay Vale. The land is currently in use as gardens for numbers 57 and 58 Church Street.

### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

The site lies in the historic core of Kidlington, in an area that was part of the original medieval settlement. The application area is situated immediately adjacent to the churchyard of the medieval parish church of St. Mary's, and about 150 m south-west of the Scheduled Ancient Monument Oxon 131, which is reputedly the site of a Roman villa. In 1977, during the extension of the parish churchyard to the north of this application area, traces of several probable building platforms were observed (PRN 11865). Medieval pottery and ridge tile fragments were recovered from unstratified deposits. A probable moated site lies to the north of the church. Recent limited investigations on the moat's island by Oxford University Archaeological Society have confirmed that Church Street once ran in a more direct alignment past the western end of the church. The early medieval manor house site has never been found; it could lie within the moated area, or possibly to the south of the church.

The 1st Edition OS map (1830) and Davis' map of 1799 show the site with a building in the north-east corner and open space, presumably gardens, to the rear of the property (1st edition OS on cover).

## 2 EVALUATION AIMS

As required by the brief set by the County Archaeologist, the aims of the evaluation were to establish the presence/absence, extent, character, condition and date of any archaeological remains within the proposal area. The evaluation also aimed to establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of any archaeological deposits and features present, and to make

available the results of the investigation.

### 3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Sample size and scope of fieldwork (Fig. 2)

The evaluation was based upon a 3% sample of the development area, and consisted of seven trenches measuring 120 m long in total and 1.50 m wide (Fig. 2). The topsoil and ploughsoil overburden was removed by a mechanical excavator [JCB] under close archaeological supervision.

#### 3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

The trenches were cleaned by hand and the revealed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds and environmental samples. All archaeological features were planned and, where excavated, their sections drawn at a scale of 1:20. All features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson 1992).

#### 3.3 Finds

Hand sorting was employed to recover any finds. Spoil heaps were monitored for finds during and after mechanical removal of the overburden.

#### 3.4 Environmental data

None of the deposits recorded appeared suitable for sampling due to the lack of charred inclusions, waterlogged deposits or mollusc shells.

### 4 RESULTS: GENERAL

#### 4.1 Soils and ground conditions

The general soil type was sandy silt. The underlying subsoil was sandy silt and sandy clay overlying sand and gravel. Ground conditions were dry.

#### 4.2 Distribution of Archaeological Deposits

The seven trenches excavated were mainly confined to the western half of the site, as there was no access to the eastern half at this stage. Topsoil and an older ploughsoil was distributed evenly across the site. Ditches aligned east-west were seen at the extreme west of the site. Ditches aligned roughly north-south were seen to the west of centre of the site. The pits appeared randomly distributed.



## 5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

### 5.1 Description of deposits

#### General

Natural sand and gravel was seen throughout at an average depth of 1.05 m. This was overlain by an orange-brown sandy clay natural subsoil with an average depth of 0.40 m. Overlying this subsoil was a light brown sandy silt also averaging 0.40 m in depth, and thought to be an old ploughsoil. A dark brown silty loam topsoil sealed this probable ploughsoil, with an average depth of 0.25 m.

#### 5.1.1 Trench 1: north-south ; 10 m long (Fig. 2)

At the north end of the trench a possible ditch (105), aligned east-west, was seen cutting the subsoil (103). Its northern edge lay outside the trench, but it was 0.85 m wide where seen, with a gently sloping southern edge. It was filled by a mid grey brown sandy silt (102), 0.22 m thick, which was overlain by the old ploughsoil (101). No finds were recovered from this feature.

#### 5.1.2 Trench 2: WNW-ESE; 20 m long. (Figs. 2,5)

Three ditches were seen in this trench, all aligned north-south and cutting the subsoil (204). Ditch 203 was 2.50 m wide and 0.48 m deep. It was filled by a light brown silty sand (202), which contained animal bone. Ditch 206 was 2.30 m deep and 0.46 m wide. It was filled by a light brown silty sand (205), which produced no finds. Ditch 208 was 1.90 m wide and 0.44 m deep. It was filled by a light brown sandy silt (207), which also contained animal bone. All three appeared to be sealed by the older ploughsoil (201) but this relationship was poorly defined.

#### 5.1.3 Trench 3: north-east to south-west; 10 m long (Fig. 3)

One ditch, 306, was seen aligned north-south, cutting the subsoil (302) and sealed by the older ploughsoil (301). It was not excavated and was assumed to be the same feature as ditch 208 seen immediately to the south in Trench 2. It was filled by a light brown sandy silt (305) which was in turn cut by pit 304. This was an ovoid pit the eastern limit of which lay outside the trench, with steep and undercutting edges. It was 1.15 m long, 0.80 m wide and 0.60 m deep, and was filled by a mid grey brown clay sand (303), which contained infrequent charcoal flecks and some large fragments of limestone, but no other finds. Pit 304 appeared to be sealed by ploughsoil 301.

#### 5.1.4 Trench 4: north-south; 20 m long (Figs 2,4)

Three ditches were seen aligned east-west, cutting the subsoil (402) and sealed by the older ploughsoil (401). Ditch 404 was 1.20 m wide and 0.17 m deep, and was filled by a mid brown sandy silt (403) which contained no finds. Ditch 407 was 2.90 m wide and 0.60 deep. It had two fills: a mid reddish brown sandy silt (406) which contained a single fragment of animal bone, which lay beneath a mid brown sandy silt (405) which contained a single sherd of late Iron Age-early Roman pottery. Ditch 409 was 1.10 m wide and 0.40 m deep. It was filled by a light brown sandy silt (408) which contained no finds.

#### 5.1.5 Trench 5: ENE-WSW; 40 m long (Figs 2,5)

Three ditches, two gullies and two possible pits were seen, of which a gully, a ditch and a pit were excavated. All three cut the subsoil (504) and were sealed by the ploughsoil (501). Gully 503, aligned north-west to south-east, was 0.64 m wide and 0.26 m deep, and was filled by a mid olive brown clay silt (502) from which a single worked flint was recovered. Ditch 512, aligned north-south, was 0.85 m wide and 0.50 m deep but appeared to have been re-cut by ditch 508. It had three fills: a mid brown clay silt (511) which lay beneath another mid brown clay silt (510) which in turn lay beneath a mid grey brown clay silt (509). No finds were recovered from any of these deposits. Ditch 508 was 3.00 m wide and 1.00 m deep. It had three fills: a mid grey brown silty sand (507), which lay beneath a mid grey brown sandy silt (506) with no finds, which in turn lay beneath a mid brown sandy silt (505), which contained animal bone fragments. A possible lava quern fragment was recovered from ditch fill 507. Pit 514 was partially concealed by the northern bank of the trench, appearing semi-circular in plan with a gently sloping southern edge. It was filled by a grey brown clay silt (513) which contained no finds.

#### 5.1.6 Trench 6: north-south; 10 m long (Fig. 4)

One ditch and one large pit or ditch were seen. Ditch 609, aligned north-west to south-east, cut the subsoil (601) and was sealed by the ploughsoil (602). It was not possible to establish width or depth due to truncation by the later pit or ditch (607, 612). 609 was filled by a mid olive brown sandy silt (608) which contained no finds. A large deep feature, (607, 612), was seen cutting both the subsoil (601) and the ploughsoil (602) and truncating ditch 609. Its southern edge 607 was aligned east-west and sloped steeply to a depth of at least 1.20 m. It had four fills: a mid grey brown sandy clay (606), which lay beneath a mid olive brown sandy silt (605), beneath a mid olive brown sandy silt with 15% fine gravel inclusions (604), beneath a mid orange brown sandy silt with 20% fine gravel inclusions (603). Only deposit 604 contained ecofactual evidence: a single cow tooth. Another edge (612) was seen at the northern end of trench 6, possibly forming the northern limit of the same large feature. The upper half of this edge was concealed beneath the northern edge of the trench, but it was also seen to slope steeply, to a depth of at least 0.80 m. Again it had four fills: a light grey sandy clay (613), beneath a mid orange brown clay silt with 10% fine gravel inclusions (611), beneath a mottled reddish grey silty sand (610), beneath a mid olive brown silty clay (614). Only deposit 611 contained artefactual evidence: four potsherds (three late Iron Age-early Roman, one medieval) and some animal bone. Edge 612 lay approximately 8.00 m to the north of edge 607, possibly forming either a large pit or ditch.

#### 5.1.7 Trench 7: north-south; 10 m long (Fig. 2)

One possible ditch, 704, was seen aligned north-south, cutting the subsoil (702) and sealed by the ploughsoil (701). Its eastern edge lay outside the trench but it was 0.50 m wide and 0.25 m deep where seen. It was filled by a mid brown sandy silt (703) which contained no finds.

## 5.2 Finds

### 5.2.1 Pottery

Five sherds of pottery were recovered (and identified by P Blinkhorn); one sherd of Late Iron Age-Early Roman from ditch fill 405, and three sherds of late Iron Age-early Roman, and one medieval sherd, from pit/ditch fill 611.

### 5.2.2 Bone

Bone from a number of contexts was examined by N Scott; ploughsoil 201 contained a pig mandible. Ditch fill 202 contained a fragment of cow tibia. Ditch fill 406 contained a probable cow jaw fragment. Ditch fill 505 contained a fragment of cow astragalus. Pit/ditch fill 604 contained a single cow tooth. Pit/ditch fill 611 contained fragments of cow tibia, jaw, metatarsal and a single cow tooth, plus a caprine (sheep or goat) metacarpal.

### 5.2.3 Other finds

Gully fill 502 contained a single worked flint, possibly a broken barbed and tanged arrow head (identified by Dr T Durden). Ditch fill 507 contained a piece of possible lava quern. Ploughsoil 501 contained a fragment of copper alloy sheet.

## 6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

### 6.1 Reliability of field investigation

The area sampled by trenching, although representing 3% of the proposal area, was mainly limited to the western half of the site due to problems of access at this stage. The area fronting onto Church Street was therefore not investigated. In addition to this, the quantity of dating evidence recovered was extremely limited (only five sherds of pottery). As a result, dating of the archaeological remains found is uncertain.

### 6.2 Overall interpretation

#### 6.2.1 Summary of Results

A minimum of six separate ditches on two main alignments were found. Of these, three were aligned east-west, one of which appeared fairly substantial. A further three were aligned north-south, and all appeared substantial, one being 3.00 m wide and at least 1.00 m deep. Three possible pits, two gullies and two more possible ditches, again aligned east-west and north-south, were also seen. In addition, a large, deep, unidentified feature was seen, possibly a large pit, or a large ditch again aligned east-west. Some evidence of deliberate backfilling of this feature was seen. None of these features were conclusively dated.

#### 6.2.2 Significance

A nodal point of enclosure ditches was located. However, as no secure date is proposed for these archaeological remains, conclusions have to be drawn from the known background of the immediate area surrounding the proposed development site (see section 1.3).

The presence of a reputed Roman villa about 150 m to the north-east of the site makes it possible that the ditches are part of a large complex of boundaries and driveways that would be expected in the vicinity of such an important building.

Alternatively, Church Street, assumed to be part of the original medieval settlement layout, is aligned north-south and lies only 90 m to the east. This suggests that these features may be associated with the rear of properties that would have fronted onto the street.

Both hypotheses suggest that further significant remains are likely to lie between the area sampled and Church Street.

#### 6.2.3 Impact of development (Fig. 2)

The archaeological features located by the evaluation are under threat from the installation of services, building of a new access road and erection of twelve detached dwellings. In addition the potentially sensitive area on the road frontage is under threat should the existing dwellings be demolished and the footings grubbed out.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Wilkinson, D (ed) 1992      *Oxford Archaeological Unit Field Manual*, (First edition, August 1992)



## Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory

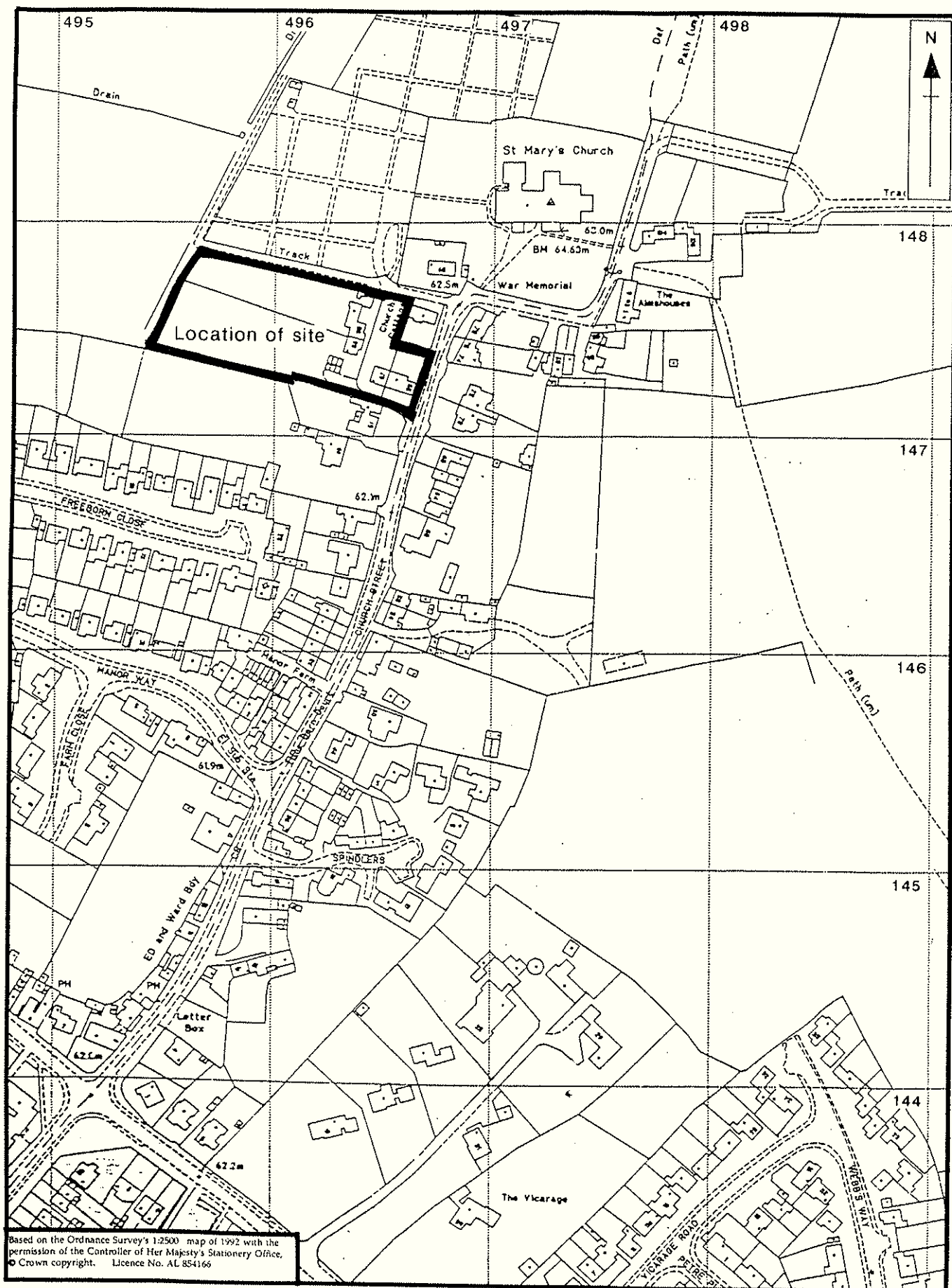
Trench	Ctx	Type	width (m)	thick. (m)	Comment	Finds
001						
	100	layer		0.30	modern topsoil	
	101	layer		0.25	old ploughsoil	animal bone
	102	fill		0.25	fill of 105	
	103	layer		0.40	natural silty sand	
	104	layer		-	natural sand and gravel	
	105	cut	-	0.25	ditch	
002						
	200	layer		0.25	modern topsoil	
	201	layer		0.40	old ploughsoil	animal bone
	202	fill		0.48	fill of 203	animal bone
	203	cut	2.50	0.48	ditch	
	204	layer		-	natural silty sand	
	205	fill		0.54	fill of 206	
	206	cut	2.30	0.54	ditch	
	207	fill		0.45	fill of 208	animal bone
	208	cut	1.70	0.45		
003						
	300	layer		0.25	modern topsoil	
	301	layer		0.40	old ploughsoil	animal bone
	302	layer		-	natural sandy silt	
	303	fill		0.50	fill of 304	
	304	cut	0.90	0.50	pit	
	305	fill		-	fill of 306	
	306	cut	-	-	ditch	
004						
	400	layer		0.30	modern topsoil	
	401	layer		0.45	old ploughsoil	
	402	layer		-	natural sandy clay	
	403	fill		0.20	fill of 404	

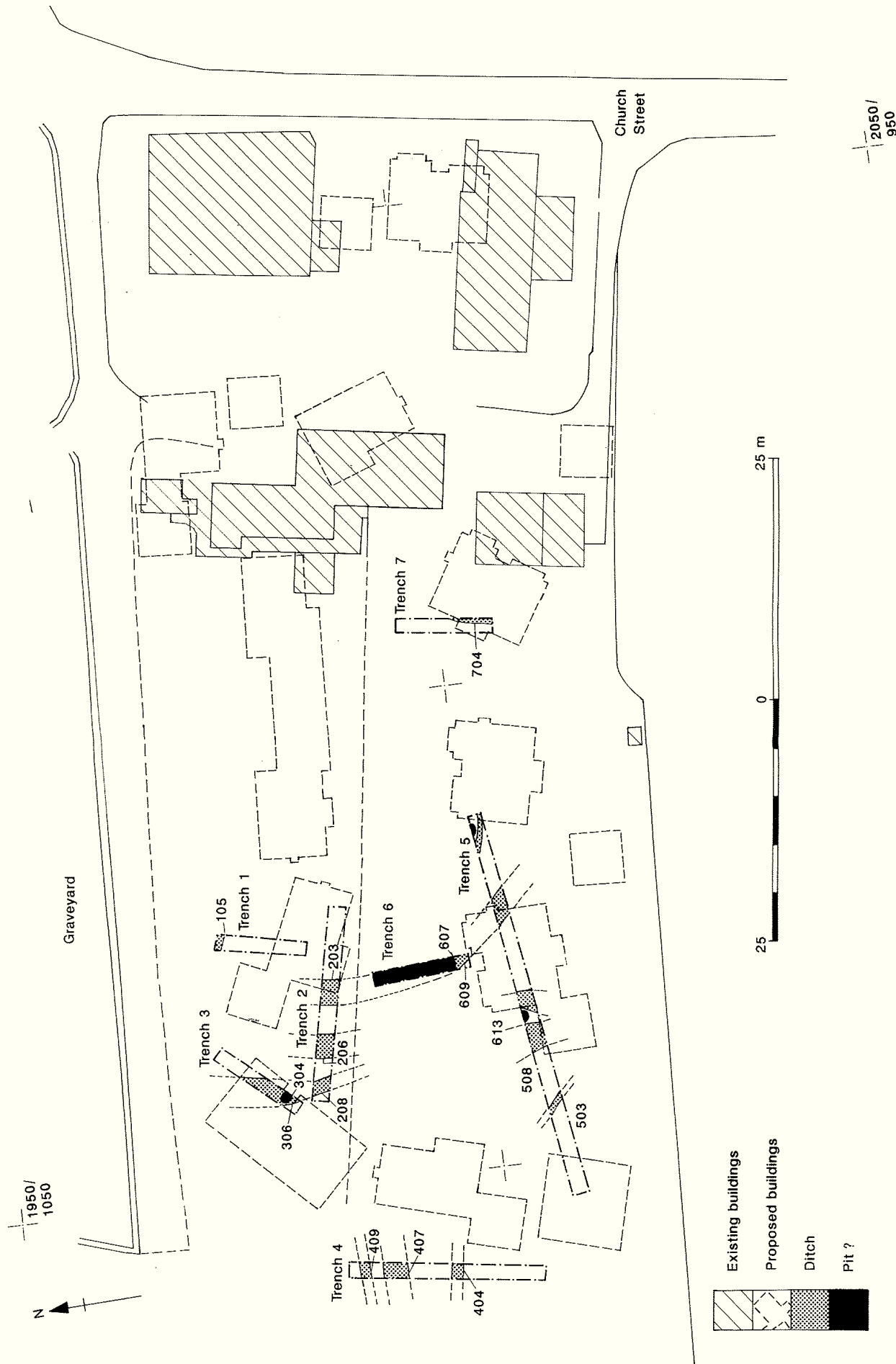
Trench	Ctx	Type	width (m)	thick. (m)	Comment	Finds
	404	cut	1.20	0.20	ditch	
	405	fill		0.30	fill of 407	LIA/ER pot
	406	fill		0.40	fill of 407	animal bone
	407	cut	2.30	0.50	ditch	
	408	fill		0.40	fill of 409	
	409	cut	0.90	0.40	ditch	
005						
	500	layer		0.20	modern topsoil	
	501	layer		0.44	old ploughsoil	animal bone
	502	fill		0.21	fill of 503	flint
	503	cut	0.60	0.17	gully	
	504	layer		-	natural sandy clay	
	505	fill		0.29	fill of 508	animal bone
	506	fill		0.30	fill of 508	
	507	fill		0.40	fill of 508	?lava quern
	508	cut	3.00	1.00	ditch (recut?)	
	509	fill		0.10	fill of 512	
	510	fill		0.32	fill of 512	
	511	fill		0.18	fill of 512	
	512	cut	0.80	0.50	ditch	
	513	fill		0.25	fill of 514	
	514	cut	1.30	0.22	pit	
	515	layer		0.35	?natural sandy clay	
006						
	600	layer		0.70	modern topsoil	
	601	layer		-	natural sandy clay	
	602	layer		0.15	old ploughsoil	
	603	fill		0.50	fill of 607	
	604	fill		0.35	fill of 607	animal bone
	605	fill		0.20	fill of 607	
	606	fill		0.28	fill of 607	
	607	cut	-	0.80	pit/ditch	

Trench	Ctx	Type	width (m)	thick. (m)	Comment	Finds
	608	fill		0.20	fill of 609	
	609	cut	-	0.20	ditch	
	610	fill		0.23	fill of 612	
	611	fill		0.40	fill of 612	3 sherds LIA/ER pot, 1 sherd medieval pot, animal bone
	612	cut	-	-	pit/ditch	
	613	fill		-	fill of 612	
	614	layer		0.28	dump layer .	
007						
	700	layer		0.25	modern topsoil	
	701	layer		0.40	old ploughsoil	animal bone
	702	layer		-	natural sandy clay	
	703	fill				
	704	cut	-	0.25	?ditch	

## Illustrations

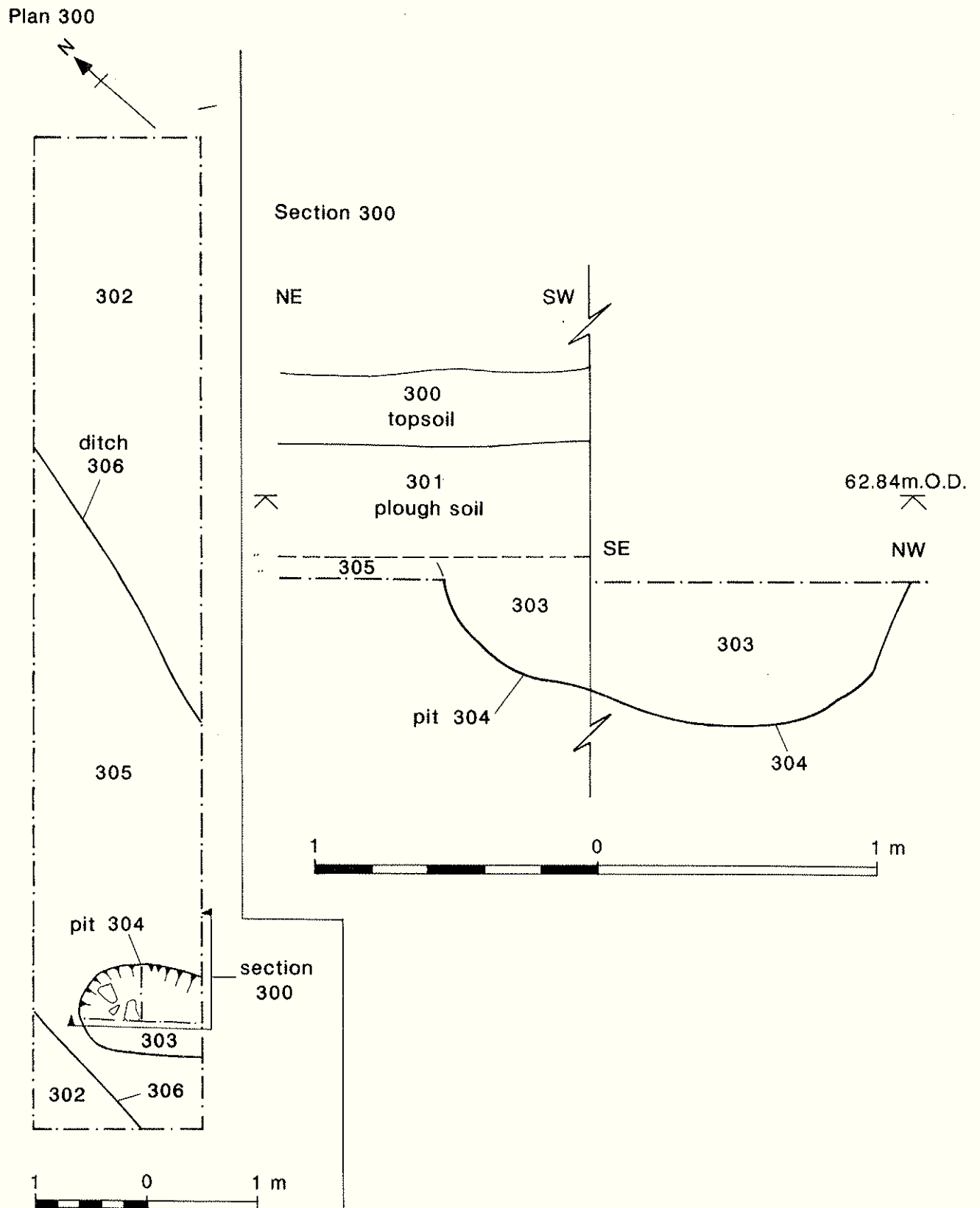
- Figure 1 Site Location  
Figure 2 Site Plan showing trench locations, features and proposed development.  
Figure 3 Plan and section of Trench 3  
Figure 4 Plans and section of Trench 6  
Figure 5 Sections of Trenches 2, 4 and 5





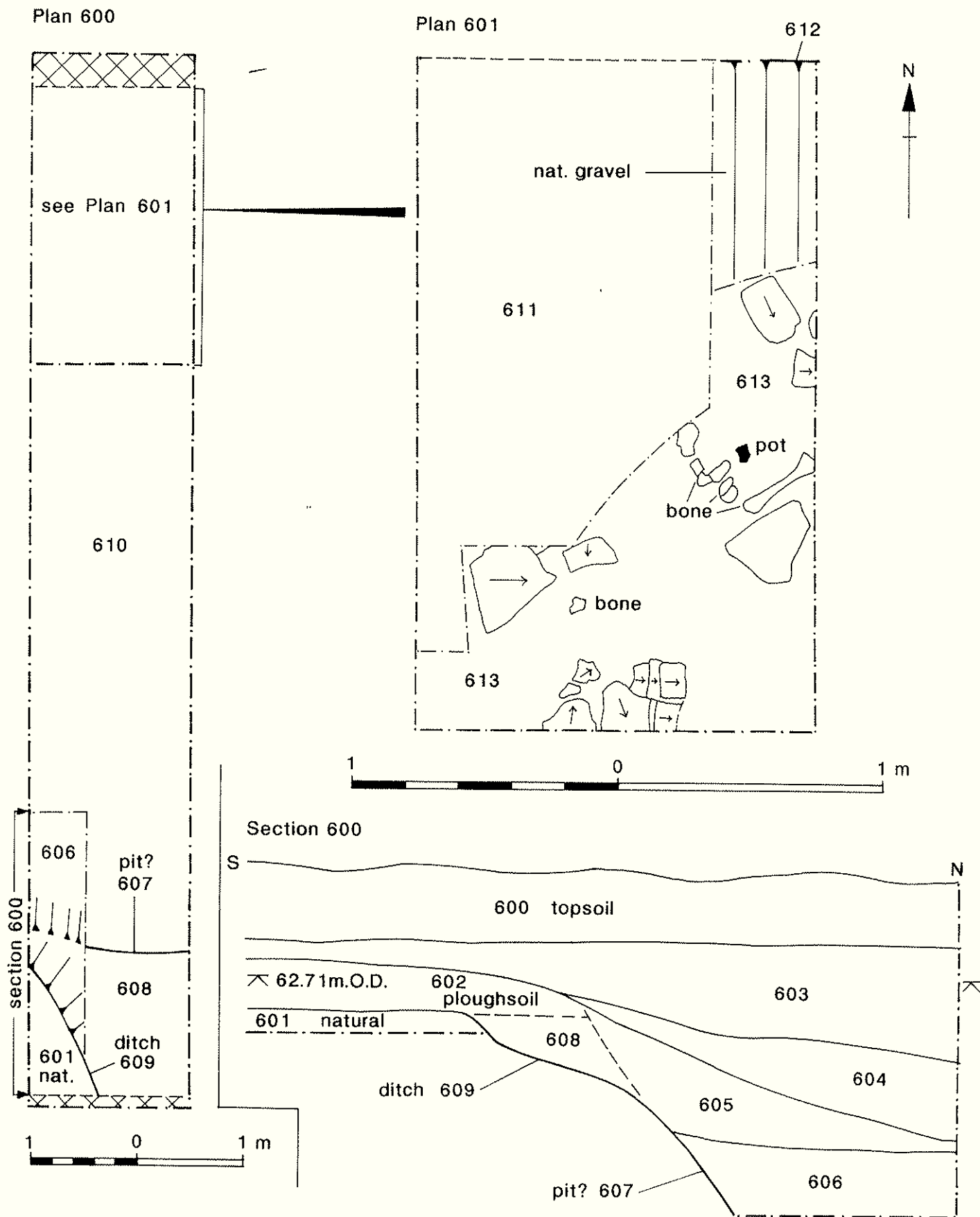
Location of trenches





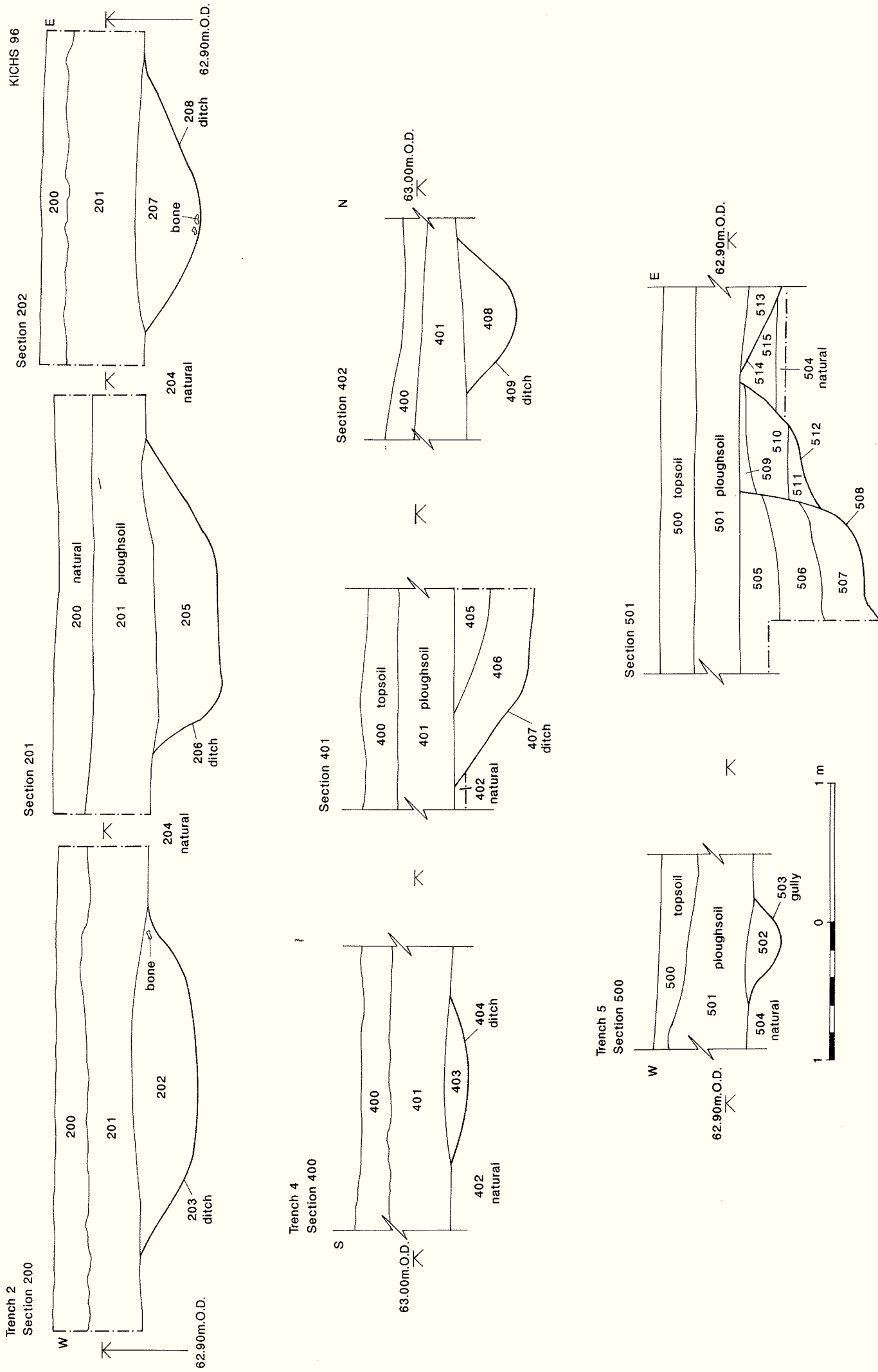
Plan and section of Trench 3

figure 3



Plans and section of Trench 6

figure 4



Sections of Trenches 2, 4 and 5

figure 5



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