

Conversion of Mansion and
Grounds at Luton Hoo
The New Garden Wing
Hyde
Bedfordshire



**Archaeological
Watching Brief Report**



Oxford Archaeology

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**CONVERSION OF MANSION AND GROUNDS
AT LUTON HOO. THE NEW GARDEN WING,
HYDE, BEDFORDSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

NGR TL 1046 1847

CONTENTS

Summary	2
1 Introduction.....	3
1.1 Scope of Work	3
1.2 Location	3
1.3 Geology.....	3
1.4 Archaeological and historical background	3
2 Project Aims and Methodology	4
2.1 Aims.....	4
2.2 Methodology.....	4
3 Results.....	4
3.1 Description of deposits	4
3.7 Finds.....	5
3.8 Palaeo-environmental remains	5
4 Discussion And Conclusions	5
4.2 Acknowledgements.....	6
Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory.....	7
Appendix 2 Bibliography and references	8
Appendix 3 Summary of Site Details.....	8

LIST OF FIGURES

- Fig. 1 Site location
 Fig. 2 Site plan showing location of profiles, section, and geo-technical test pits.
 Fig. 3 Profiles 1 and 2 and Section 1
 Fig. 4 Test Pits: sections.

SUMMARY

In February 2004, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Luton Hoo, Bedfordshire during site investigations and groundworks for a new garden wing. The work was commissioned by Clague Architects Ltd (Kent).

The watching brief monitored the machining of an access through an earthen embankment, known as the 'dependency mound'. The mound is generally accepted to date from the late 18th century.

Profiles of the earthwork were recorded prior to the works. The cut for the access revealed a number of layers containing demolition debris, which probably derived from a 17th century manor house, Napier House, which once stood nearby. Four geological Test Pits excavated within the mound were also monitored. These revealed Upper Chalk and probable Palaeolithic alluvial sediments.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of Work

1.1.1 Clague Architects (Kent) Ltd, commissioned Oxford Archaeology (OA) to carry out a watching brief during site investigations and groundworks for a new garden wing, on the 17th and 19th February 2004.

1.2 Location

1.2.1 The development area comprises the former utility area, known as the 'dependency mound', of the mansion house of Luton Hoo (Fig. 1). This area, which contains the remains of boiler houses, coal storage areas, a toilet block and an oil tank, is enclosed by an earthen embankment upon which grow a number of mature trees and shrubs. The whole site covers approximately 1.2 hectares.

1.3 Geology

1.3.1 The solid geology of the site consists of Upper and Middle Chalk, whilst the drift geology consists of Clay with flint and Brickearth deposits.

1.4 Archaeological and historical background

1.4.1 A series of archaeological surveys and inspections have been undertaken within the Luton Hoo estate over the past five years with respect to the proposed conversion of the house and grounds.

1.4.2 An initial desk-based assessment (BCAS 1999) highlighted the archaeological potential of the estate. This indicated the likelihood of encountering deposits from Palaeolithic, Bronze Age, Roman and medieval periods, and also pinpointed sites of post-medieval interest.

1.4.3 A series of field investigations followed in 2002 and 2003, focussing upon plans for a new golf course (AA 2002; OA 2003a; OA 2003b; OA 2003c) which revealed the potential for prehistoric and Roman remains. These investigations culminated in the production of an Environmental Impact Assessment prior the submission of the planning application (OA 2003d).

1.4.4 Drawing upon the above corpus of knowledge, the potential for discovering archaeology in the area of the new garden wing may be summed up as follows:

- the study area lies on well preserved inter glacial deposits that contain Palaeolithic material in 'primary context'. An archaeological trial trench dug within the centre of the former 'dependency mound' in 1999 provided corroborative evidence with the find of an unabraded Palaeolithic artefact (BCAS Report 1999/34).
- an assemblage of flint artefacts (OA 2003c/11645) that date from the late Mesolithic to the Bronze Age have been found nearby on the estate.

- a coin hoard and a Roman brooch were discovered in the vicinity, whilst a large rectilinear enclosure, also believed to be Roman, was identified from a geophysical survey. The enclosure was located approximately 400 m north east of the site (Northamptonshire Archaeology 2003).
- field observations identified what is understood to be remains of the 17th century Napier House, immediately adjacent to the dependency mound (BCAS 1999).

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the proposal area.
- 2.1.2 To determine the extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits and features.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the investigation.
- 2.1.4 In the event of significant archaeological remains being present the County Archaeologist would be called upon to advise on an appropriate mitigation, such as a more intensive level of recording.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The investigation work comprised the recording of two profiles and one section through the mound (Fig. 3), plus four test pits placed within the mound (Fig. 2).
- 2.2.2 All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:50 and, where excavated, their sections drawn at a scale of 1:50. Features were photographed using a digital camera. A general photographic record of the work was also made.
- 2.2.3 The archaeologist was allowed enough time to make appropriate investigations and records, if it was safe to do so.
- 2.2.4 All work was carried out in accordance with the OAU, *Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992), and *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (1999) of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

3.2 Section through mound

- 3.2.1 A large section was cut through the mound during the excavation of an access route. This revealed a number of layers of mixed material that had been used to build the mound. These

consisted of brickearth, chalk and demolition material with abundant 17th century brick and tile fragments (Fig. 3: Section 1).

3.3 *Test Pit 1*

3.3.1 Test Pit 1 was excavated to a depth of 3 m (Fig. 4). The lowest deposit revealed was a layer of brickearth (4), which measured at least 2 m deep. It was overlain by 0.4 m of buried topsoil (3), containing modern finds. A deposit of demolition rubble (2) overlies the buried topsoil and was sealed by a layer of topsoil (1). The test pit did not reveal the base of the mound.

3.4 *Test Pit 2*

3.4.1 Test Pit 2 was excavated to a depth of 3 m (Fig. 4). The lowest deposit revealed was a layer of brown silt (4), which contained abundant rounded river pebbles and flint nodules. This deposit measured at least 1.8 m thick. Towards the south, the brown silt merged with a 1.3 m thick layer of brickearth (3). These deposits were overlain by 0.7 m of demolition rubble (2), and the present topsoil (1).

3.5 *Test Pit 3*

3.5.1 Test Pit 3 was excavated to a depth of 3 m (Fig. 4). The lowest deposit revealed was a brown silt with abundant river pebbles (3), which measured at least 1.3 m thick, and appeared to be the same as layer 4 in Test Pit 2. It was overlain by a 1 m thick deposit of mid brown clay silt with frequent rounded river pebbles and flint nodules (2), which was sealed by modern topsoil (1).

3.6 *Test Pit 4*

3.6.1 Test Pit 4 (Fig. 4) was excavated to a depth of 3 m. The lowest deposit revealed was Upper Chalk (3), which dropped down steeply towards the south. The chalk was at least 2 m deep and was overlain by a thick red brown clay (2), containing frequent river pebbles and flint nodules. The clay was sealed by modern topsoil (1).

3.7 **Finds**

3.7.1 A large number of post-medieval brick and tile fragments was noted during the excavation of the access through the utility mound and test pits. These were recorded but not retained.

3.8 **Palaeo-environmental remains**

3.8.1 No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were revealed.

4 **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

4.1.1 The section through the mound revealed it had been constructed with quarried material and rubble, very likely to have derived from the demolished Napier House, which once stood in the vicinity. There was an abundance of brick, tile and mortar fragments that dated to the post-medieval period. The works did not reveal the base of the mound.

4.1.2 Upper chalk was revealed in Test Pit 4, and probably represents an isolated geological outcrop. All of the test pits revealed probable Palaeolithic alluvial sediments which were scanned for artefacts, although none were found.

4.2 Acknowledgements

4.2.1 OA extends its thanks to Zena Dickenson (Administrator, Luton Hoo), Keith Hersey (Head Gardener, Luton Hoo) and Dominique Duffy (Assistant Gardener, Luton Hoo) for assistance and information (not to mention refreshments) during the course of this Watching Brief.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Section Through Mound

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i> Finds</i>
1	Layer	1.6 m		Demolition layer	CBM
2	Layer	0.6 m	5 m	Re-deposited brickearth	
3	Layer	0.3 m	8.5 m	Re-deposited chalk and brickearth	
4	Layer	0.55 m	8 m	Demolition layer	CBM
5	Layer	0.2 m		Topsoil	

Test Pit 1

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i> Finds</i>
1	Layer	0.1 m		Topsoil	
2	Layer	0.4 m		Demolition layer	CBM
3	Layer	0.4 m		Buried topsoil	CBM
4	Deposit	2 m		Alluvial sediment	

Test Pit 2

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i> Finds</i>
1	Layer	0.45 m		Topsoil	
2	Layer	0.3 m		Demolition layer	CBM
3	Deposit	1.3 m		Alluvial sediment	
4	Deposit	1.7 m		Alluvial sediment	

Test Pit 3

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i> Finds</i>
1	Layer	0.4		Topsoil	
2	Layer	1.2 m		Alluvial sediment	
3	Layer	1.5 m		Alluvial sediment	

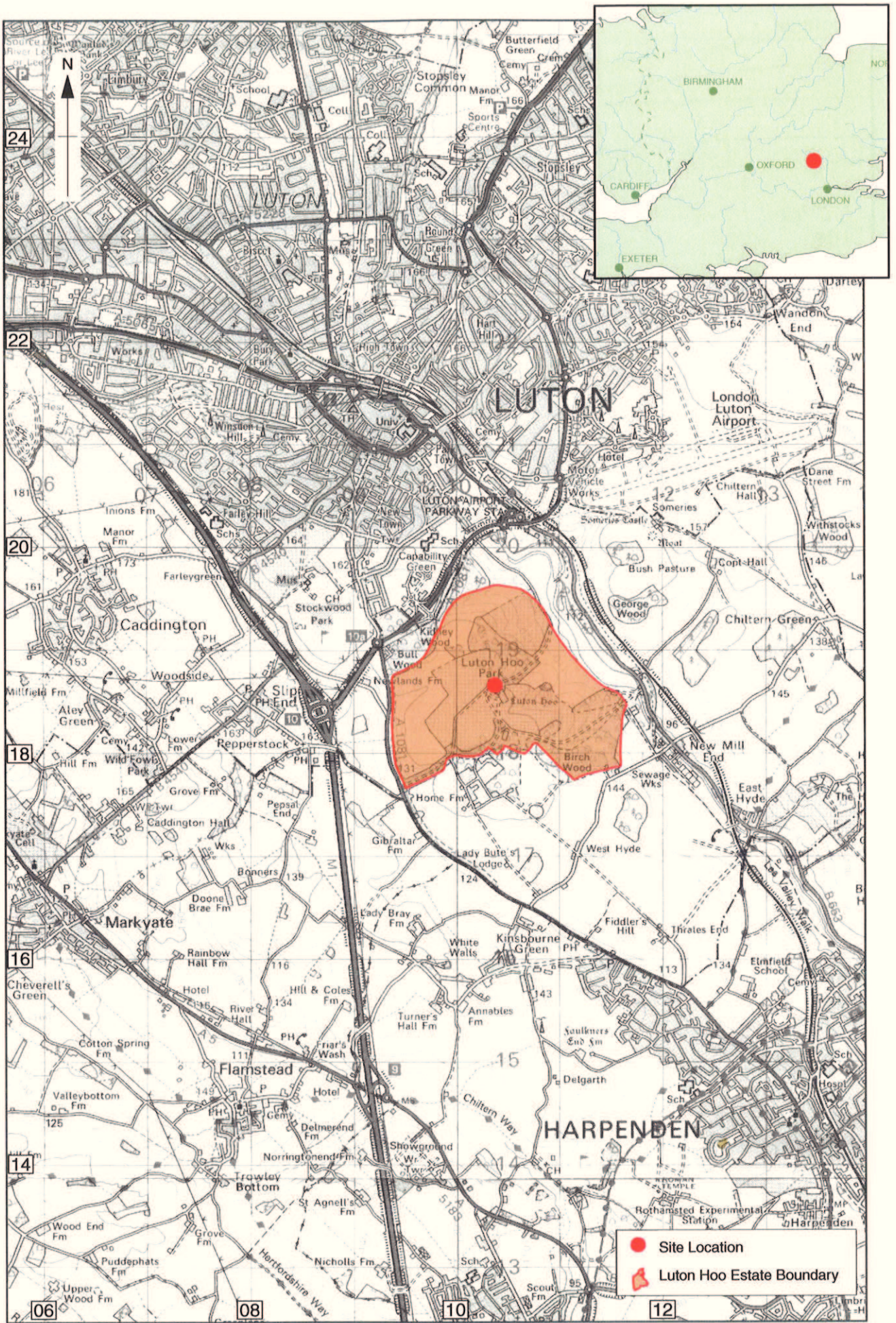
Test Pit 4

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i> Finds</i>
1	Layer	0.2 m		Topsoil	
2	Deposit	2.2 m		Alluvial sediment	
3	Deposit	2 m		Upper chalk	

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

- Albion Archaeology 1999 *Conversion of Mansion and Grounds at Luton Hoo, Bedfordshire: Archaeological Desk-based Assessment*, Document no.1999/38
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- OA 2003b *Luton Hoo, Hyde, Bedfordshire: Interim Archaeological Evaluation Report (Stage 3)*
- OA 2003c *Luton Hoo, Hyde, Bedfordshire: Archaeological Trenched Evaluation Report (Stage 3)*
- OA 2003d *Luton Hoo, Luton, Bedfordshire: Proposed Golf Course Development, Environmental Impact Assessment*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS**Site name:** Luton Hoo**Site code:** LUTH 04**Grid reference:** NGR TL 1046 1847**Type of watching brief:** Test pits and section through landscape feature.**Date and duration of project:** Two days. 17/02/04 and 19/02/04**Summary of results:** Probable Palaeolithic alluvial sediments identified in test pits. 17th century demolition material identified in section through earthwork, this is likely to be from demolition of nearby Napier House.**Location of archive:** The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Luton Museum in due course.



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Figure 1: Site location



Test Pit	
Profile	
Section	
OS Basemap	

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LUTHWO
 Luton Hoo

Scale of A3 1:500
 Drawing No. Figure 2
 Date printed 04.03.2004
 Drawing Title

Site Plan Showing
 Location of Profiles,
 Sections and
 Geo-Technical Test Pits

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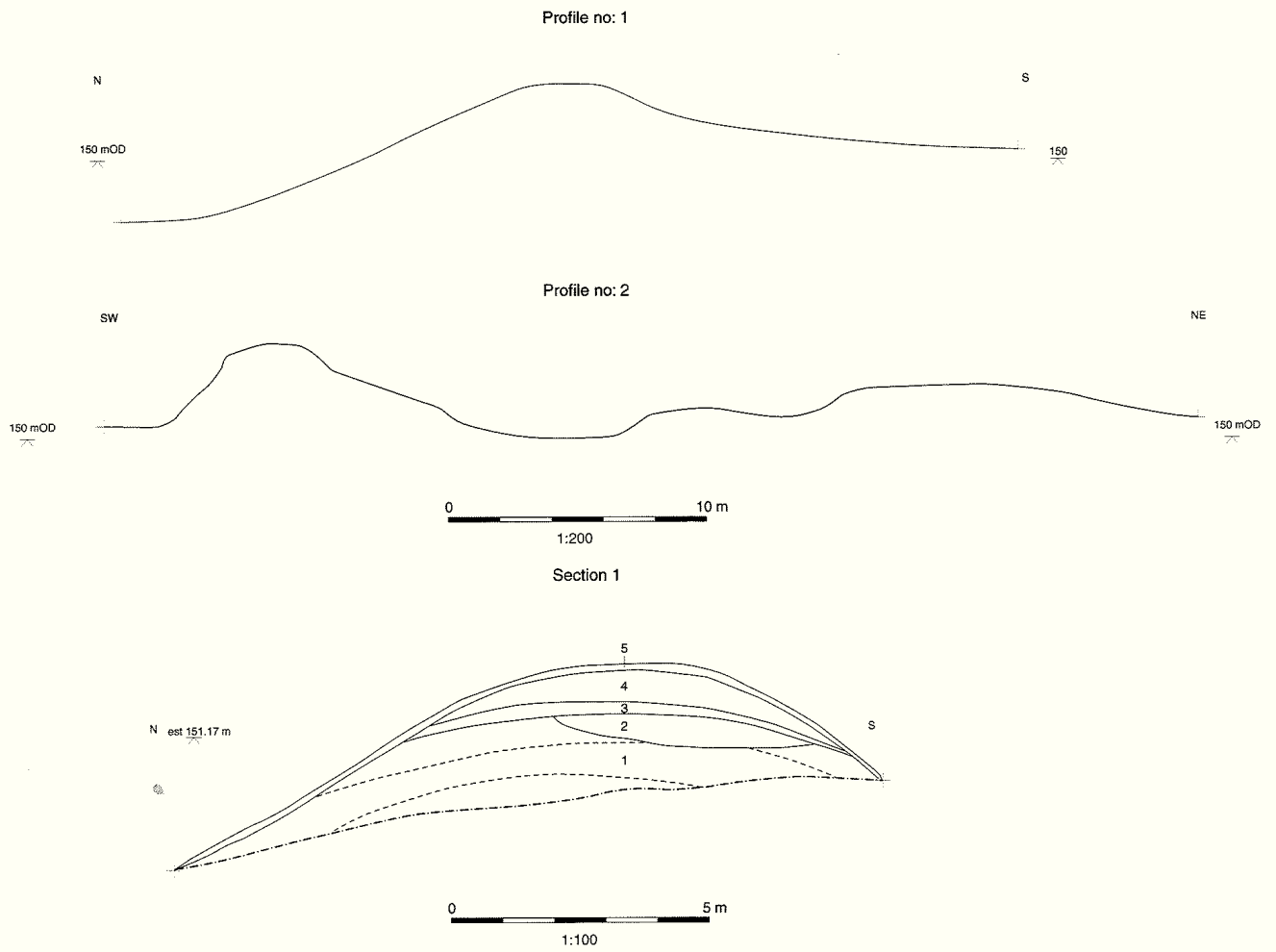


Figure 3: Profiles 1 and 2 and Section 1

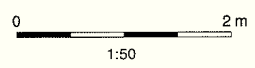
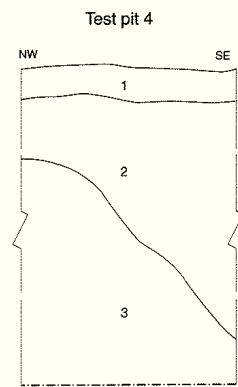
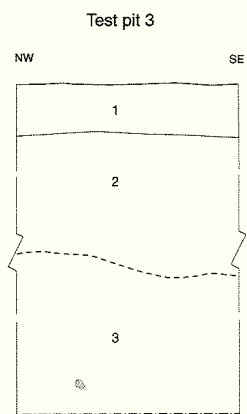
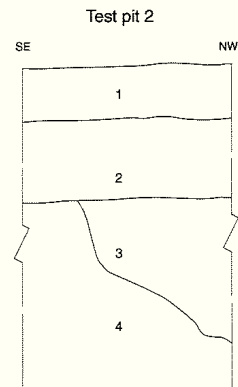
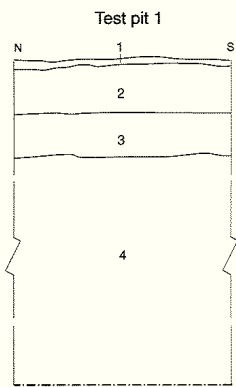


Figure 4: Test pits: Sections



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