

The Retreat
Church Lane
Finchampstead
Berkshire



Archaeological Evaluation Report



Oxford Archaeology

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The Retreat, Church Lane, Finchampstead, Berkshire

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

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SUMMARY

In February 2004, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at The Retreat, Church Lane, Finchampstead, Berkshire on behalf of Day Tanner Partnerships Ltd for Mr and Mrs D Collins. No deposits, features, or structures of any archaeological potential or significance were identified during the evaluation.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 On February 19th 2004, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at The Retreat, Church Lane, Finchampstead, Berkshire on behalf of Day Tanner Partnerships Ltd for Mr and Mrs D Collins. This was in respect of a planning application for the construction of a single family dwelling after the demolition of the current residence (Planning Ref: F/2002/9168). Wokingham District Council Planning Authority imposed this programme of investigation due to the potential for disturbing below ground archaeological features. This was in line with PPG 16, Wokingham District Council Planning Policy WHE 15 and 17 and Policy LBE22 of the London Area Local Plan.
- 1.1.2 A brief was set by Mr Kevin Beachus, Senior Archaeologist for Babtie on behalf of Wokingham District Council (Babtie, 2004) and a Written Scheme of Investigation was produced by OA (2004), which was then agreed with Mr Beachus.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The development site is situated off Church Lane, to the south (NGR: SU 7945 6391) and is bounded to the east, west and south by residential properties (Fig 1). The site lies at approximately 90m OD and is currently cleared open ground occupied by a single bungalow within 0.06 of a hectare.
- 1.2.2 The underlying geology is Plateau Gravel overlying the Upper Bagshot Beds.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The development site lies approximately 150m south of the Roman Road known as the Devil's Highway. To the West a series of three aisled buildings (SMR 1006) attributed to the Roman period appear on aerial photographs. To the north of the site the truncated remains of a Bronze Age Round Barrow can be seen (SMR 1005). The village itself is noted as a Saxon and Medieval settlement (SMR 767) with a 12th Century church (Church of St James) consisting of a Norman main body with 16th Century alterations and the addition of a 17th Century brick bell tower. The church itself stands on a rectangular platform enclosed by a bank in which the south and east walls of the churchyard stand. The origin of this platform is as yet unknown.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

- 2.1.1 The aims of the evaluation were to determine the location, extent, date, character, and state of preservation of any archaeological remains surviving within the site.
- 2.1.2 Attention was to be given to remains of all periods. This included evidence for past environments, with provision for environmental sampling included.
- 2.1.3 The evaluation sought to clarify the nature and extent of any modern disturbance and intrusion on the site, and to make available the results of the investigation.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork

- 3.1.1 The field evaluation comprised the excavation of three machine-dug trenches. The proposal was for two trenches measuring 15 m long by 1.6m wide (trenches 1 and 3) and one trench measuring 10m long by 1.6m wide (trench 2). This comprised the 10% sample which was requested in the brief. However, due to on site constraints the trench lengths were altered, while the widths stayed at 1.6m. Trench 1 was taken to 13.5m as at the south-west end a fence and hedge hampered machining to the full extent. Similarly Trench 2 measures 9.6m due to a pipe at the southern end and Trench 3 was only taken to 11m as again the machine was restricted at the north-west end because of a wall dividing this property with the next. (Fig 2).
- 3.1.2 Trenches 1 and 2 were located to the back of the existing building while trench 3 was positioned across the front driveway.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

- 3.2.1 The overburden was removed under close archaeological supervision by a JCB mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket.
- 3.2.2 The trenches were cleaned by hand and a sample section was drawn at 1:20 from current ground level to the base of each trench showing layers from topsoil to the natural geology. All trenches were planned at 1:100 and photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures detailed down in the *OA Fieldwork Manual* (OAU, 1992).

4 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

4.1 Description of deposits

- 4.1.1 In all trenches the clay natural (102, 203, 302) was overlain by a friable, mid yellowish-grey silty sand (101, 202, 301). This was then overlain by a dark brown garden soil (100, 200, 300) which was particularly deep in trenches 1 and 3. Trench 2 (fig 3) contained a dark greyish silty sand subsoil (201) below the garden soil which was thinner in this trench. Trenches 2 and 3 were sealed by modern paving and

tarmac respectively. No features were identified in any of the trenches during the course of machining down to the natural clays. Two service trenches were identified in trench 3 to the front of the property and left at that higher level so as not to disturb them.

5 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

- 5.1.1 No features or deposits of archaeological interest or significance were identified during the evaluation. The results of the field investigation are thought to be reliable and a true indicator of archaeological potential in the area of the development.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Ctxt No</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>No./wt</i>	<i>Date</i>
1								
	100	Layer	-	0 - 0.59	Top/garden soil	-	-	-
	101	Layer	-	0.41	Silty-sand lower subsoil	-	-	-
	102	Layer	-	>0.27	Clay natural	-	-	-
2								
	200	Layer	-	0 - 0.37	Top/garden soil	-	-	-
	201	Layer	-	0.36	Subsoil	-	-	-
	202	Layer	-	0.34	Silty-sand lower subsoil	-	-	-
	203	Layer	-	>0.28	Clay natural	-	-	-
3								
	300	Layer	-	0 - 0.68	Top/garden soil	-	-	-
	301	Layer	-	0.26	Silty-sand lower subsoil	-	-	-
	302	Layer	-	-	Clay natural	-	-	-

APPENDIX 2 REFERENCES

- Babtie, 2004 *The Retreat, Church Lane, Finchampstead, Berkshire - Design Brief for an Archaeological Field Evaluation.*
- OA, 2004 *The Retreat, Church Lane, Finchampstead, Berkshire, Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation.*
- OAU, 1992 *Field Manual*, (ed. D. Wilkinson).

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: The Retreat, Church Lane, Finchampstead, Berkshire

Site code: FIRC 04

Grid reference: SU 7945 6391

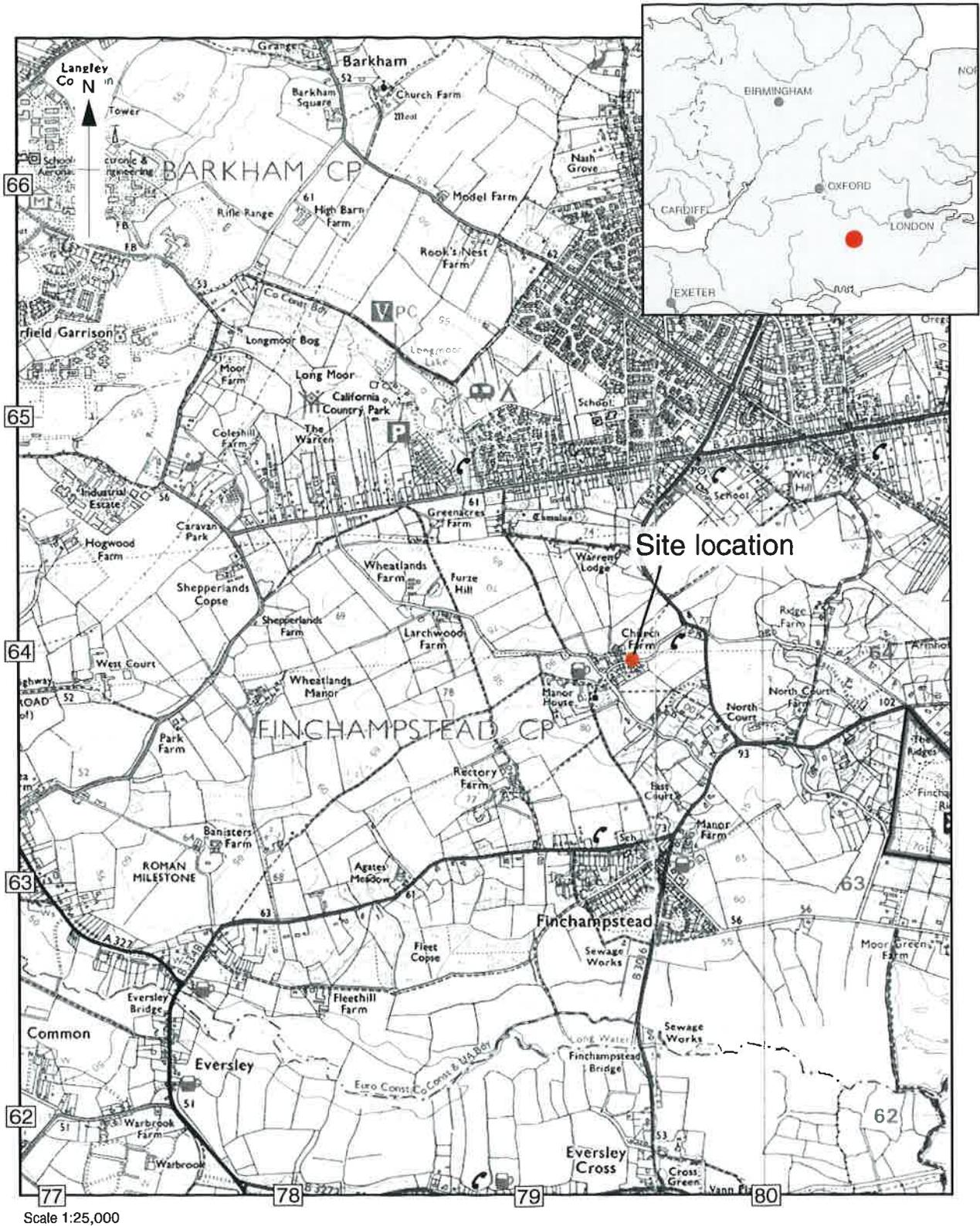
Type of evaluation: Three trial trenches (two 15 m x 1.6 m and one 10 m x 1.6 m)

Date and duration of project: 19th February 2004; 1 day

Area of site: 0.06 ha

Summary of results: No features or deposits of archaeological interest or significance were identified during the evaluation. Garden soil sealed the silty-sand subsoil overlying the natural clays.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Reading Museum in due course. The accession number is to be confirmed.



Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location

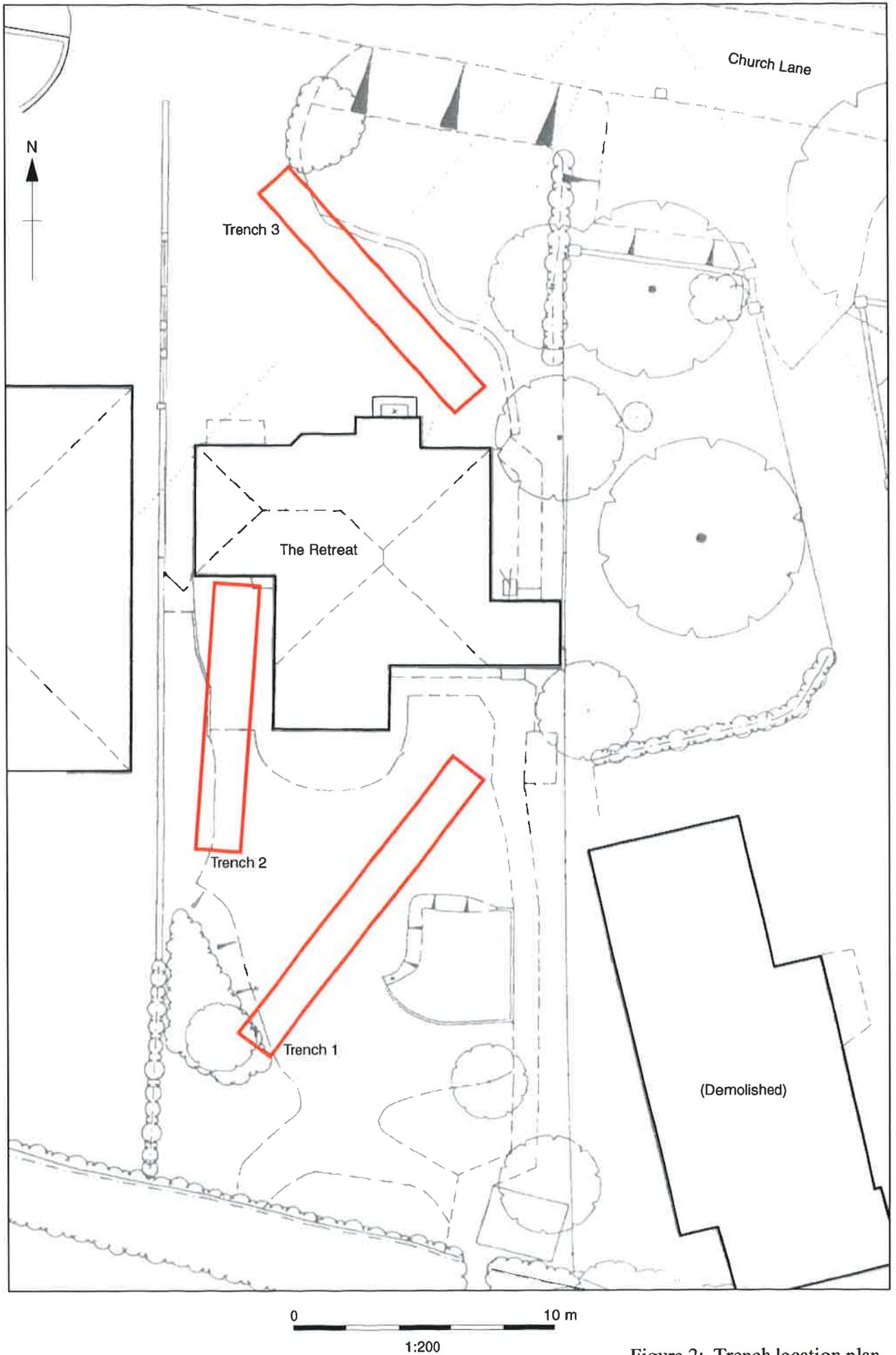


Figure 2: Trench location plan

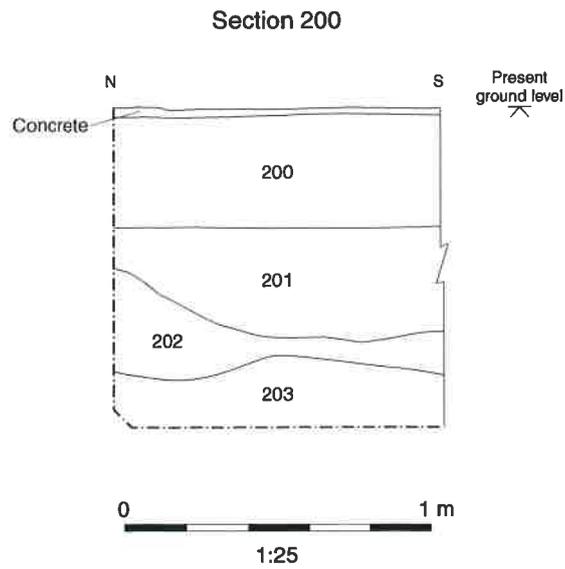
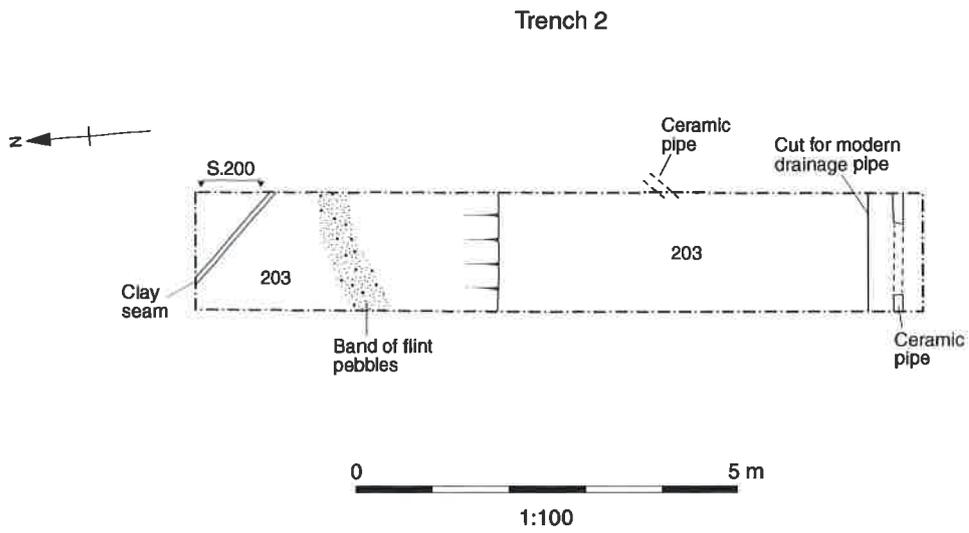


Figure 3: Trench 2 plan and section



Oxford Archaeology

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: (0044) 01865 263800
f: (0044) 01865 793496
e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk



Oxford Archaeology North

Storey Institute
Meeting House Lane
Lancaster LA1 1TF

t: (0044) 01524 541000
f: (0044) 01524 848606
e: lancinfo@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk



Director: David Jennings, BA MIFA FSA

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Oxford Archaeological Unit
Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES