

**Mr P Strange**

**“Chelston”, Mill Lane, Hurley, Berkshire**

*NGR SU 8258 8410*

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**

**Oxford Archaeological Unit**

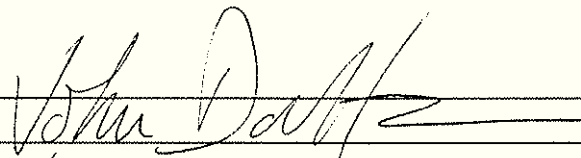
**July 1998**

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**

Prepared by: 

Date: 14/7/98

Checked by: Jon Hillier

Date: 15/7/98

Approved by: R. Williams HEAD OF FIELDWORK

Date: 24/7/1998

**Oxford Archaeological Unit**

**July 1998**

## **Summary**

*In May 1998 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook a watching brief at "Chelston", Mill Lane, Hurley, Berkshire (NGR SU 8258 8410). The watching brief identified modern deposits associated with the construction of "Chelston", a private house, sealing natural deposits. No cut features were seen and no finds were retrieved.*

### **1 Introduction**

The development proposal comprised the excavation of footings prior to the construction of an extension to the existing house.

Mr Philip Strange, the owner/occupier of "Chelston", commissioned the watching brief. It was undertaken to a brief set by, and a WSI agreed with, the County Archaeological Officer and English Heritage.

### **2 Background**

The development site lies within the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Hurley Priory (SAM 19020). Geoffrey de Mandeville founded Hurley Priory between 1085 and 1087 as a Benedictine House in memory of his first wife Athelais.

The priory was dissolved in 1536 and after passing through several hands was acquired by Sir John Lovelace. He demolished all but the nave of the church and incorporated the land, and probably some of the materials into his new mansion, the Ladye Place.

A part of the remains of the Priory now forms the nave of St Mary's Church. Previous excavations of the medieval church have revealed the foundations of the crossing of an important Saxon church (Pevsner 1966, 157), with two towers or turrets to its east; no church is mentioned on this site in the Domesday Survey.

At present all that remains of the priory above ground are a rectangular moat which partially survives on the north and east sides, two fishponds and various standing remains including the refectory, a part of the northern cloister range (c. AD 1300) and the priory wall. A brick-built crypt which survives in the garden of Hurley Lodge to the south-east of the church is associated with Ladye Place Mansion.

An archaeological field evaluation undertaken by the OAU within the grounds of the Monk's Garden bungalow (OAU 1997) identified medieval features including a ditch and mortar floors, as well as the post-medieval foundations of buildings associated with Ladye Place Manor. This was to the north and east of the watching brief site and suggests that archaeological features extend over a wide area.

The site lies on the Thames floodplain gravel terrace.

### 3 Aims

The aims of the watching brief were to record any archaeological remains exposed on site during the course of the works to established OAU standards (Wilkinson 1992), in order to secure the preservation by record of any archaeology, the presence and nature of which could not be established in advance.

### 4 Methodology

All excavation was by Kubota mini digger, supplemented by occasional hand digging. Separate inspection visits were made to the site as excavations progressed.

Within the constraints imposed by Health and Safety considerations the deposits exposed were cleaned, inspected and recorded in plan, section and by colour slide and monochrome print photography. Written records were also made on proforma sheets. Soil descriptions use *estimated* percentages based on the use of standard charts for the approximation of percentage of inclusion types in soil deposits.

### 5 Results (Figs 2 and 3)

Three main deposits were identified within all sections inspected:

(1) was topsoil; a mid-grey silty clay loam with 5% subangular fine gravel, fairly heavily rooted with occasional pieces of chalk, with an average thickness of 0.30 m.

(2) was a reworked natural subsoil; a mid brown silty clay loam with occasional modern housebrick and chalk inclusions, with an average thickness of 0.70 m.

(3) was natural subsoil; an orange silty clay, exposed in plan at the base of the foundation trenches.

The only variations to this sequence occurred in the southernmost of the foundation trenches. Immediately below the topsoil, 1.50 m east of the house, was a seam of chalk, numbered as (4), approximately 0.10 m thick (see Section 1). The seam was composed of lumps of chalk c. 0.07 m – 0.10 m in diameter. This layer petered out approximately 1 m north of the southernmost corner of the trench. It reappeared as a much thinner seam, approximately 0.06 m thick, approximately 2 m from the northernmost point of the foundation trench.

The north-western corner of this trench was deepened to 1.40 m due to a pocket of light buff/orange slightly silty sand with small quartzite pieces, numbered as (5), encountered in the base of the trench here. Layer (5) was seen to be approximately 0.25 m thick and sealed natural gravel (6). Layer (5) appeared to be confined to the north-west corner of this trench; whether or not this represents a peak in the natural geology remains unclear at this time.

## 6 Discussion

With the exception of the natural deposits, (3), (5) & (6), all of those deposits seen probably relate to the construction of "Chelston" itself; the chalk seam (4) occurs in an area of soft sand (5) and may have been deposited as a temporary working platform during construction and/or to consolidate the ground level in an unstable area.

### References.

OAU 1997 St Mary's Church, Hurley, Berkshire. Archaeological Evaluation Report.

Pevsner N 1966 *The Buildings of England, Berkshire.*

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

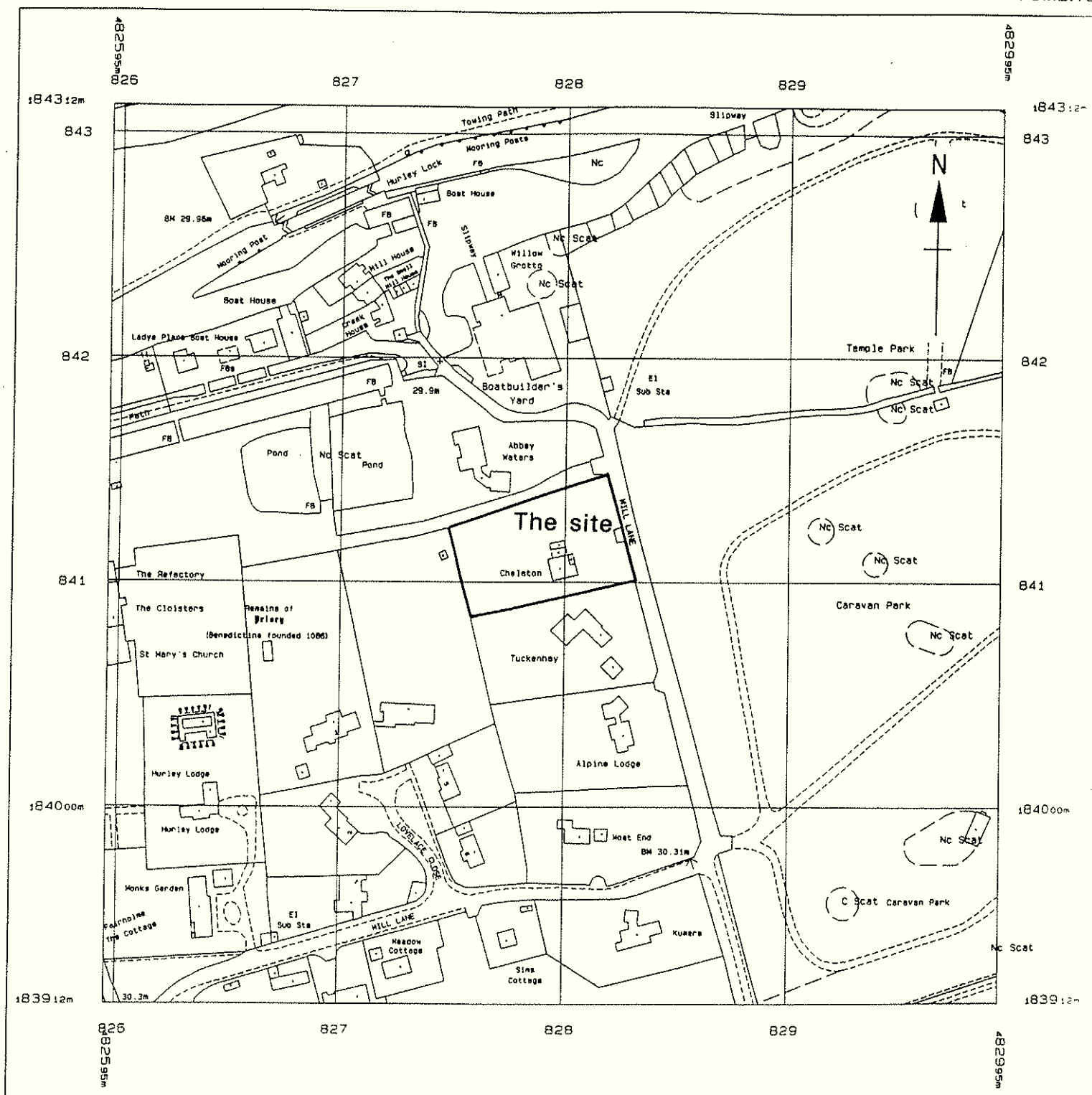
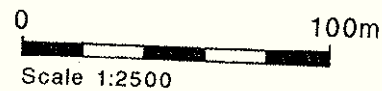


Figure 1: Site location plan

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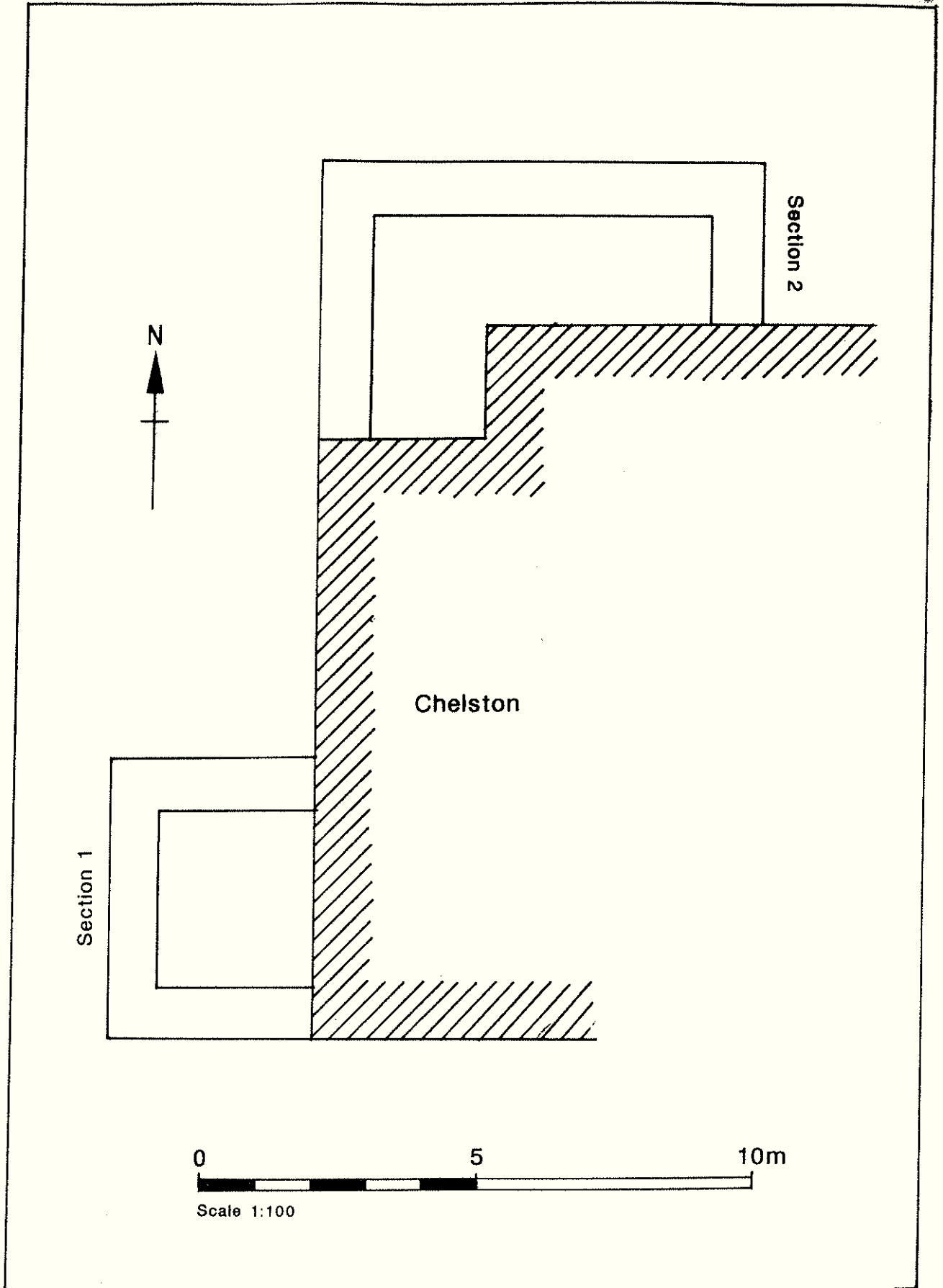


Figure 2: Site Plan

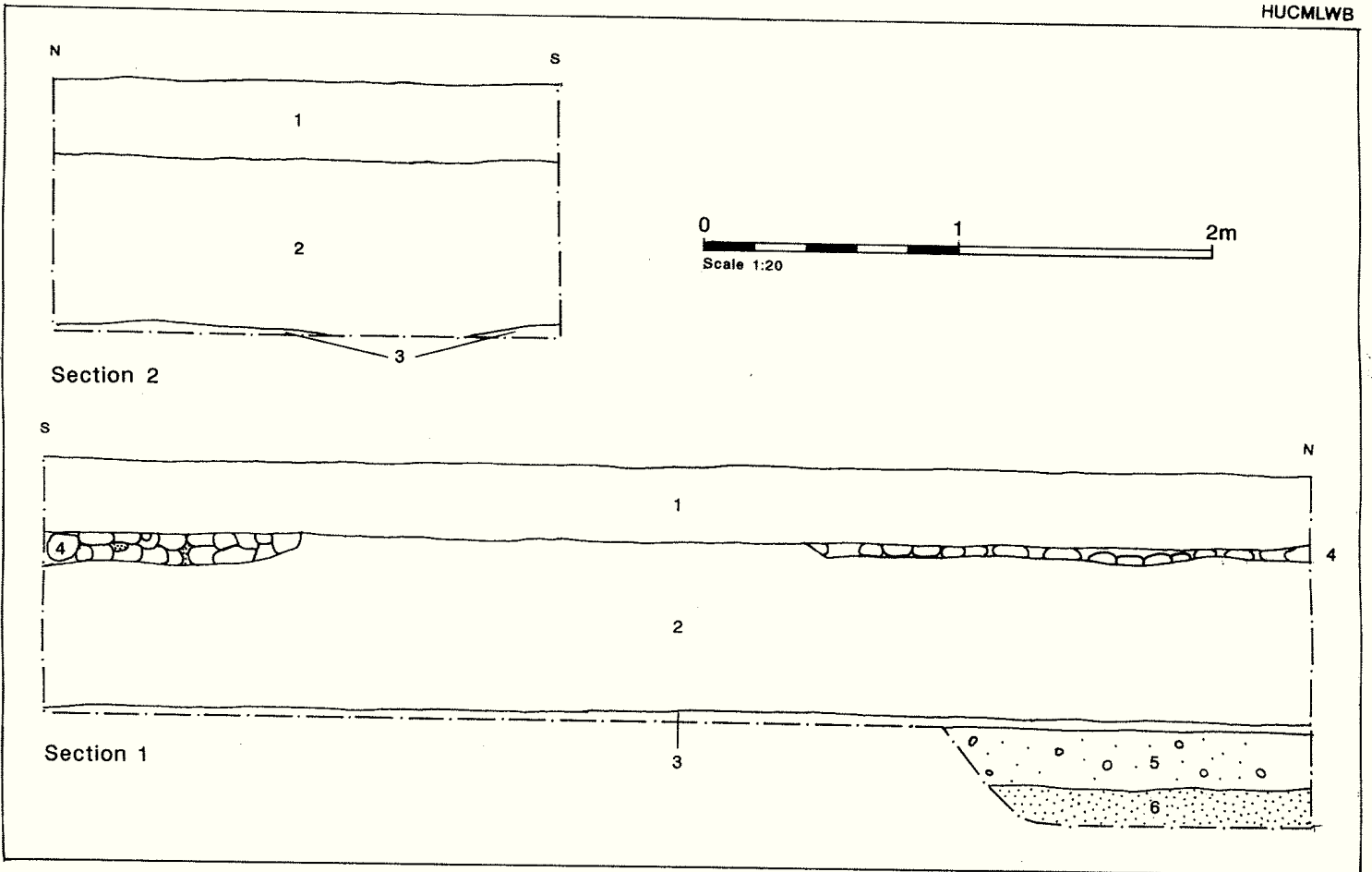


Figure 3: Sample Sections





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