

Hurley Lock Island Hurley Berkshire



Archaeological Evaluation Report



Oxford Archaeology

18th November 2003

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Partners**

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HURLEY LOCK ISLAND, HURLEY, BERKSHIRE

NGR: SU 8257 8423

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Summary

Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at Hurley Lock Island for Herbert J. Stribling & Partners on behalf of the Environment Agency (EA). The evaluation revealed extensive made ground in all three trenches with the addition of the partial remains of a possible late 19th century single coarse wall in Trench 3. These consecutive episodes of dumping have raised this area of the island to the present ground level and may represent a period of land reclamation contemporary with the construction of the lock.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 On the 29th and 30th October 2003, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at the western end of Hurley Lock Island, Hurley on behalf of Herbert J. Stribling & Partners. This work was undertaken in advance of the submission of a planning application for the construction of new facilities, in accordance with a brief set out by a Written Scheme of Investigation (OA, 2003a) agreed with Elizabeth Rowe, Archaeologist for Babtie, representing the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site lies within the grounds of Hurley Lock Island, Hurley, part of a group of gravel islands located within the Thames to the north of Maidenhead at NGR SU 8257 8423 (Fig. 1). This most southerly of the islands incorporates a towpath on its south bank and forms the north bank to a narrow strip of navigable water. The site is located on the western end of the island, flanked to the north west by two extant sheds and with a waste disposal depot located centrally to the proposed building footprint. The site is currently surrounded by mature trees and lies at approximately 30 m OD and is roughly 90 m² in area.

1.2.2 The underlying geology is Oldhaven, Blackheath, Woolwich, Reading and Thanet Beds (middle Thames gravel terrace) with overlying drift geology of alluvial clay with gravel. Some calcareous material may also be present as chalk geology is also found in this area (Sheet 255, Institute of Geological Sciences, 3rd Ed., 1979).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological background to the evaluation has been the subject of a separate WSI, the results of which are presented below.

1.3.2 Although no specific archaeological remains in the way of features or earthworks are recorded at Hurley Lock, that is not to say that they do not exist. Hurley is located within the Thames Valley on the middle terrace gravel that has produced extensive Bronze Age and Neolithic activity at both Eton (Dorney Lake, OA, unpublished) and at Heathrow (T5 excavations, Framework Archaeology, unpublished) across the Colne valley. A Round Barrow is also known c 5km to the north-west of Maidenhead, not far from Hurley.

- 1.3.3 Evidence of prehistoric activity at Hurley is quite sparse and undefined, being limited to sporadic finds. A transept axe, approximately dated to the Mesolithic, was dredged from the Thames between Hurley and Medmenham in 1970. The Neolithic was represented by two finds of a flint knife, found below Hurley Lock in 1968, and a partly ground axe head was recovered in 1970 on a local caravan site. At the Bisham Estate, approximately 2 km to the north-east of Hurley, evidence of Late Iron Age settlement in the form of substantial domestic waste pits and ditches has recently been discovered during an evaluation of two separate sites close to the River Thames (OA, 2003b).
- 1.3.4 The area lies within close proximity of the boundary of Hurley Priory (SAM 19020), which was located on the southern bank of the Thames, opposite Hurley Lock Island. The Benedictine Priory at Hurley was established in 1086 by Geoffrey de Mandeville and was subject to the Abbey of Westminster. It is likely that the 200 acre precinct of the priory, which was defined by a moat, was established on an already extant Saxon religious site. The Priory had a conventional arrangement with a cloister garth with the priory church on the south and the refectory to the north. Excavations carried out during the 1930's revealed considerable details of the arrangement and development sequence of the priory buildings.
- 1.3.5 The priory was dissolved in 1536 and in 1550 became the property of Sir John Lovelace. Sir John demolished much of the church, retaining only the nave, and incorporated the land and remnant priory stone into his new mansion, the Ladye Place. This building was demolished in 1837.
- 1.3.6 The land is now incorporated into the modern day village centre with various buildings associated with housing and repairing boats located along the Thames south bank.

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 Thanks are given to the Environment Agency and the Lock Keepers at Hurley for their help and co-operation during the evaluation.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

- 2.1.1 To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains, particularly those relating to the 11th century priory at Hurley, whose boundary was located on the southern bank of the River Thames adjacent to the modern lock.
- 2.1.2 To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present.
- 2.1.3 To establish any ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features.
- 2.1.4 To make available the results of the evaluation.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork

- 3.1.1 The evaluation was carried out through trenching within the proposed building footprint and covered approximately a 10 % sample of the proposed development area.
- 3.1.2 The proposed site was evaluated by three trial trenches measuring 2 m x 1 m (Trench 1), 1 m x 1 m (Trench 2) and 3 m x 1 m (Trench 3). The location of these trenches is shown in Figure 2.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

- 3.2.1 A Kubota mini-digger fitted with a toothless bucket was used to removed the overburden under close archaeological supervision. Trenches were then 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 scales of 1:20. All features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OA Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

3.3 Finds

- 3.3.1 Any finds recovered during the course of the excavation were generally bagged by context. Modern finds were recorded but not retained.

3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

- 3.4.1 No deposits deemed suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were encountered during the evaluation.

3.5 Presentation of results

- 3.5.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below with separate sections devoted to stratigraphic and artefactual aspects. In the stratigraphic section each trench is described individually. Following these descriptions is an overall discussion and interpretation of the results. Details regarding the stratigraphy in each trench are presented in the Context Inventory Table, Appendix 1.

4 RESULTS: GENERAL

4.1 Soils and ground conditions

- 4.1.1 The site is covered by a thin turf and topsoil deposit which overlay hard make-up deposits. The weather conditions were dry with good visibility and no flooding of trenches occurred.

4.2 Distribution of archaeological deposits

- 4.2.1 No significant archaeological remains were identified.

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Description of deposits

- 5.1.1 Made-ground exposed up to 1 m in depth represented the predominant deposits exposed in all three trenches. No natural deposits, save that of a possible drift silt of calcareous origin (303) in Trench 3, were encountered. The made-ground deposits were consistent within each trench, alternating gravel and chalk dumps with soil dump material (101-3, 203-5, 301-2) overlain by a thin sandy loam topsoil (100, 200, 300).
- 5.1.2 In Trench 3 deposit 303 was cut by a linear feature (305) representing a grubbed-out wall aligned, which ran north-south across the trench, measuring 0.8 m wide by over 0.3 m deep. This feature was filled by chalk and flint lumps, as well as brick, roof tile and degraded lime mortar fragments (304), encountered at 29.30 m OD (Fig. 3).
- 5.1.3 Trench 2 contained a circular pit (201) that was cut through the upper gravel and chalk dump of material (203). A loam soil deposit (202) that contained modern brick, glass and other mixed debris filled the pit.

5.2 Finds

- 5.2.1 A single sherd of 19th century pot and two roof tiles were retained from the fill of linear wall cut 305 from Trench 3.

6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 6.1.1 Given the small area of the proposed site and consistency of the underlying deposits encountered, it is believed that the evaluation has provided an accurate assessment of the potential for the existence and survival of any archaeological remains.

6.2 Overall interpretation

Summary of results

- 6.2.1 The evaluation found no significant archaeological remains in this area of Hurley Lock Island, although archaeology may survive beneath made-ground deposits. These made-ground deposits were seen to extend beyond 1.2 m from the present ground surface and appear to indicate that the level of the Island was substantially built out and extended at the time of the construction of Hurley Lock. If any archaeological remains have survived below made-ground, it is likely these would have suffered some impact as indicated by the grubbed-out 19th century wall seen in Trench 3.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench	Context	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comments	Findings
1	103	Layer	-	< 0.24	Chalk/flint make-up level	-
	102	Layer	-		Soil dump	-
	101	Layer	-	0.64	Chalk/flint make-up level	-
	100	Layer	-	0.08	Topsoil	-
2	205	Layer	-		Chalk/flint make-up level	-
	204	Layer	-	< 0.14	Soil dump	-
	203	Layer	-	1.1	Chalk/flint make-up level	-
	201	Cut	1.8	1	Modern Pit	-
	202	Fill	1.8	1	Loam rubble fill of 201	-
	200	Layer	-	0.08	Topsoil	-
3	303	Layer	-	< 0.15	Calcareous silt	-
	305	Cut	0.8	0.3	Linear wall construction cut	-
	304	Fill	0.8	0.3	Rubble debris fill of 305	C19th pot and tile
	302	Layer	-	0.4	Soil dump	-
	301	Layer	-	0.8	Chalk/flint make-up level	-
	300	Layer	-	0.08	Topsoil	-

The table above presents a contextual list of deposits located within the evaluated trenches. They are listed in stratigraphic order, starting with the earliest and ending with the latest encountered deposit and divided by trench.

APPENDIX 2 REFERENCES

OAU, 1992 *Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D. Wilkinson)

OA, 2003a *Hurley Lock Island, Hurley, Berkshire* : Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation

OA, 2003b *Manor Cottage and Temple Cottage, Temple Lane, Bisham, Berkshire*: Archaeological Evaluation Report

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Hurley Lock Island, Hurley, Berkshire

Grid reference: NGR: SU 8257 8423

Type of evaluation: Three trenches measuring 1 m², 2 m x 1 m and 3 m x 1 m

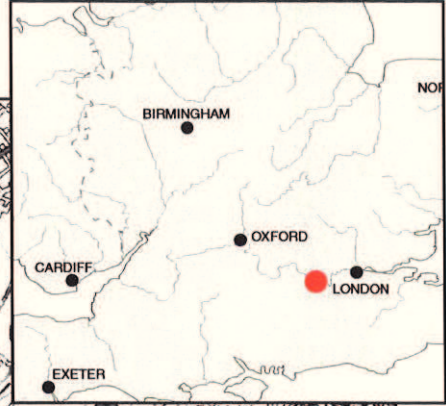
Date and duration of project: 29th - 30th October 2003

Area of site: Approximately 90m²

Summary of results: A single grubbed-out wall of possible 19th century date and a modern waste pit. All overlain by made-ground of the last century associated with possible land reclamation.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Berkshire County Museums Service in due course.

Server 10:/outpus 1/AtcH*HULIEV*Hurley Lock Island*JN*4.1.1.03



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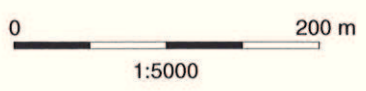
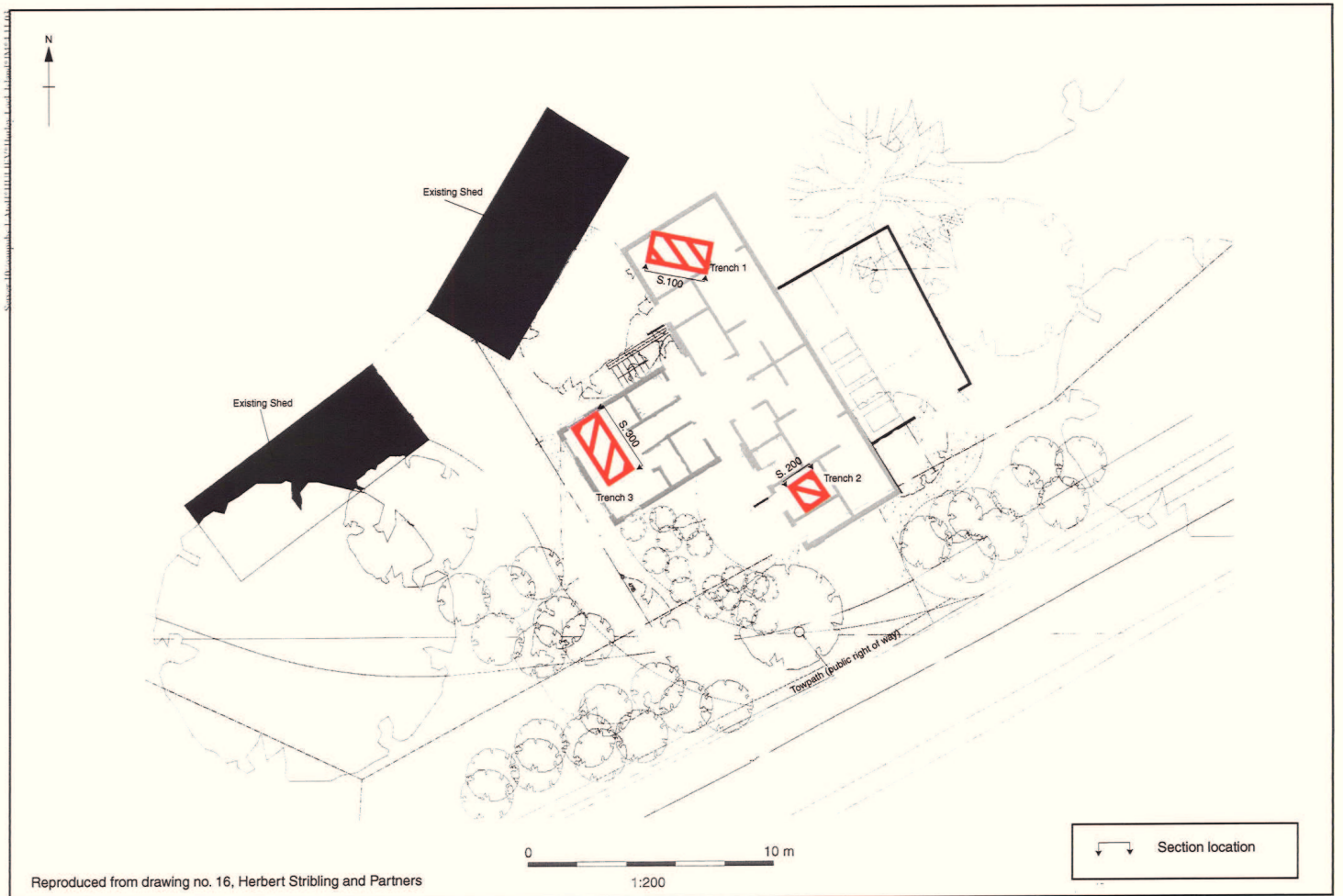


Figure 1 : Site location



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Figure 2: Trench location plan

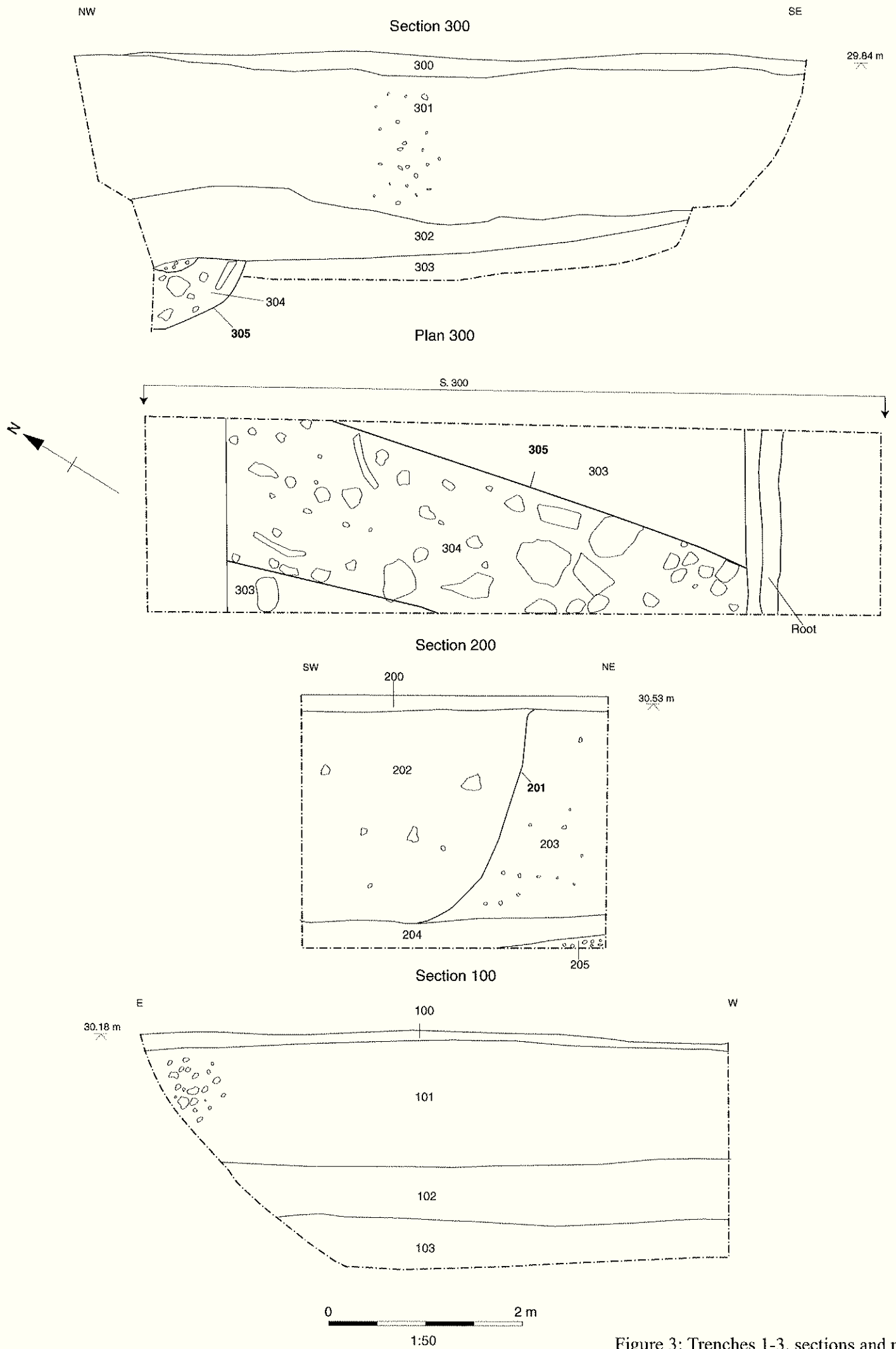


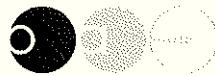
Figure 3: Trenches 1-3, sections and plan



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