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Wolverton Mill
Milton Keynes
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Archaeological Evaluation

Oxford Archaeology

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

SUMMARY

Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation between 5th and 18th June 2002 on land currently occupied by the Consignia Training Centre site at Wolverton Mill, Milton Keynes on behalf of Mason Austin Evans. The evaluation revealed a concentration of archaeological features in the north central area (Zone 4) of the site that dated to the early medieval period. Evidence for possible Roman quarrying was revealed in Trenches 11 and 12. Several pits and ditches dating to the early medieval period cut the deposits which had accumulated within the possible quarry pits.

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In June 2002, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation on land currently occupied by the Consignia Training Centre site at Wolverton Mill, Milton Keynes on behalf of Mason Austin Evans. A verbal brief was set by Mr Brian Giggins the Archaeological Officer for Milton Keynes County Council. The Site is located to the west of Great Monks Street and immediately south of Stratford Road, which links Stony Stratford with Wolverton.

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site is located *c* 1 km south of the River Great Ouse, and to the east of the A5, in the parish of Wolverton, which lies in the north west of Milton Keynes. The site lies between 70 and 85m OD.

1.2.2 The land within the proposed development rises from the north-west corner, reaching its maximum height in the south-east corner. The rise is not even, becoming less steep across the eastern half.

1.2.3 The underlying geology of the site is Jurrassic limestone (Blisworth Beds) overlain by glacial deposits of sands, gravels and clays. Evidence from excavations suggest that colluviation may have occurred on the site.

1.2.4 The Training Centre buildings, car park and roadways occupy the south-western two thirds of the area of proposed development. The remaining third is open grassland with a hedge dividing off a triangular area in the north-east.

1.3 Archaeological background

1.3.1 The proposal area has been the subject of a desk-based assessment, *Wolverton Mill Training Centre, Milton Keynes* produced by OA in March 2002. The following is an abridged version of the archaeological and historical background detailed in the Desk Based Assessment.

1.3.2 The principal evidence for prehistoric activity in the Study Area comes from cropmarks of ring ditches identified on aerial photographs. In 1972 Green excavated two ring ditches at Little Pond Ground, 0.2 km to the south-west, and at Warren

Farm immediately adjacent to the southern edge of the proposed development. The excavated barrows and the cropmark to the south all lie at *c* 80 m OD and were probably intervisible, so may have had a deliberate association. The northern cropmark is much lower, and lies close to the River Ouse.

1.3.3 Excavations at Warren Farm and Little Pond Ground barrows revealed that they dated to the Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age period. These excavations revealed environmental evidence for land clearance and the presence of settlement in the vicinity (Green 1974, 100). Further confirmation for occupation came from the 1990s excavations (TVAS 1994, 12-13), which found Bronze Age finds, post holes and pits. Warren Farm barrow also contained the only evidence for Iron Age activity from the Study Area in the form of a secondary inhumation found in the ditch on the east side of the barrow (Green 1974, 93).

1.3.4 Excavations in and around the southern part of the area of proposed development found Roman pottery in some of the lower ditch fills, perhaps indicating that these ditches, cut by early medieval features, originated in the Roman period (TVAS 1994, 13-14).

1.3.5 There are few finds of Roman material from the Study Area away from the possible Roman ditches discussed above. A possible house was suggested when a stone wall was uncovered together with pottery about 1.0 km to the north east of the area of proposed development.

1.3.6 The area of proposed development includes the northern part of the early medieval settlement excavated in 1972 by Schadla-Hall (BCMAS 1991, 1) and in 1991-94. The earlier work, which took place partly within the proposed development is unpublished. The finds suggest that the enclosure dated from the 8th to 9th century. More recent work suggests three phases of activity (TVAS 1994, 15-17). Some of the postholes might suggest a rectangular building within the area enclosed by the ditch.

1.3.7 Only the southern part of the rectangular enclosure and its internal features have been excavated. Both excavation and aerial photographs show that it extends northwards below the main buildings of the Training Centre.

1.3.8 In 1991, trial trenches were dug in the north-east corner of the area of proposed development and a possible sunken-featured building found. Its relationship to the ditches of the enclosure excavated south of the area of the proposed development is unknown and the geophysical survey results suggest this may be an isolated structure (Bartlett 1992, 2).

1.3.9 The manor and parish of Wolverton both originated before the Domesday survey. In 1902 a consecrational cross was said to have been found.

1.3.10 Very little evidence for later medieval activity from the area of proposed development has been revealed. Documentary research suggests that the site was part of the field system during the later medieval period (Croft & Mynard 1993, 190). A quarry pit was found on the eastern edge in the 1991 excavations and may represent medieval activity, possibly to obtain lime (BCMAS 1991, 12).

1.3.11 Little development took place within the Study Area during the post medieval period, apart from the Construction of the Grand Union Canal.

1.3.12 A geophysical survey of the site was commissioned by Oxford Archaeology and conducted by A.D.H Bartlett in May 2002. The results of this survey are discussed in Section 2.2.

1.4 Archaeological potential

1.4.1 The area of proposed development is known to have contained archaeological remains dating from the Bronze Age, Roman and early medieval periods. The excavations immediately south of the area of proposed development found a multi-period occupation site extending northwards into the site.

1.4.2 The features so far identified from excavation, aerial photographs and geophysics are mainly situated in the southern part of the site and in the north east corner. These locations are above the 75 m contour line where the upward slope to the south-east is less severe. It is possible that the steeper areas in the north west of the area were used less intensively.

1.4.3 Excavations in 1994 showed that soil erosion had taken place on the upper slopes in the south-east corner. This may suggest that this soil had ended up down slope, leaving archaeological features up slope vulnerable, but which may have protected features down slope.

1.4.4 The potential for Late Neolithic and Bronze Age remains is fairly high. Green's excavation of the beaker barrow, suggested there might be settlement nearby and some features from the 1990s excavations have been dated to this period.

1.4.5 There is some potential for archaeological remains from other prehistoric dates. Mesolithic flint artefacts have been found, although not in a density which suggested an occupation site in the vicinity.

1.4.6 Some of the ditches of the enclosure excavated to the south of the area of proposed development have been dated to the Roman period. There is a good potential for further remains from this period where these ditches extend within the proposed area.

1.4.7 There is a very high potential for archaeological remains from the early medieval period (10th - 12th century) to be present within the area of proposed development. The settlement already part excavated, extends northwards into the site and an apparently isolated building has also been found in the north-east triangle (Zone 2).

1.4.8 There is a low potential for archaeological remains from the later medieval period to be present within the area of proposed development. Only a single stray find has been found to date. The focus of activity during this period lay to the north where the DMV and castle lie. It is possible that the DMV once extended into the northern part of the development area, but the evidence suggests that the area of proposed development was more likely to be part of the village open field system.

1.4.9 Trial trenching found a possible medieval quarry pit in the north-east triangle and others may have been dug within the area.

1.4.10 There is a low potential for archaeological remains from the post medieval period within the area of proposed development. Documentary and historic map evidence show the site to have continued to be used for agriculture throughout the period. Only a few sherds of pottery have been recovered from it.

1.5 Evaluation Aims

1.5.1 To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the proposal area.

1.5.2 To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits and features.

1.5.3 To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features.

1.5.4 To make available the results of the investigation.

2 Evaluation Methodology

2.1 Scope of fieldwork

2.1.1 The evaluation comprised of an initial geophysical survey within Zone 4, the results of which are presented below and in section 4, followed by the excavation of twelve trenches by a mechanical excavator under archaeological supervision, supplemented by hand excavation of archaeological deposits (Fig. 2).

2.1.2 Twelve trenches were excavated all together. Trench lengths varied due to on-site restrictions, services and extensive made ground. Trenches 3 - 7, and 9 - 11 measured 30 m x 1.8 m. Trenches 1 and 4 measured 15 m x 1.8 m. Trench 2 measured 25 m x 1.8 m. Trench 8 was 27 m x 1.8 m and Trench 12 was shortened to 20 m long for safety purposes due to the depth of made ground. The trenches were located across the site both to provide a representative sample of the areas to be impacted by the development and to specifically target features highlighted in the geo-physical survey (Fig. 2).

2.2 Fieldwork Methods and Recording

Geophysical Survey by Bartlett-Clark Consultancy

2.2.1 The site was investigated by means of a magnetometer survey essentially similar to that undertaken in 1992. Conditions at the site, which is on a subsoil of glacial sands and gravels, are likely to be reasonably favourable for magnetic detection. The soil magnetic susceptibility values were higher than is usually the case on the clay soils which are widespread around Milton Keynes, and the 1992 survey appeared to detect relatively minor features. This suggests that at least some of the archaeological features present at the site could be small or shallow, and might be more readily identifiable in a more detailed survey. Magnetometer readings were therefore recorded along transects 0.5m apart (giving readings on a 0.5 x 0.3m grid), rather than at 1m separation as in 1992.

2.2.2 The results of the magnetometer survey are shown as graphical and grey scale plots at 1:625 scale (Figs 10 and 11). The x-y graphical plot shows the data after initial corrections including adjustment for irregularities in fine spacing caused by variations in the instrument zero setting, and slight linear smoothing (Fig. 10). Additional 2D low pass filtering has been applied to the grey scale plot to reduce background noise levels and emphasise features of dimensions which are suitable for features which may be archaeologically significant (Fig. 11).

2.2.3 Outlines and shading indicating the location of selected magnetic anomalies are shown superimposed on the graphical plot. The same interpretation is reproduced to provide a summary of the findings at 1:1500 scale on Figure 2.

2.2.4 The magnetometer survey was supplemented by a magnetic susceptibility survey with readings taken at 10 m intervals using a Bartington MS2 meter and a field sensor loop. Susceptibility measurements can provide a broad indication of areas in which archaeological debris, and particularly burnt material associated with past human activity, has become dispersed in the soil. They can provide useful supplementary evidence when interpreting a magnetometer survey, but are also affected by non-archaeological factors, including geology, past and present land use and modern disturbances.

2.2.5 The survey grid was set out and located at the required national grid co-ordinates by means of a sub-1m accuracy GPS system. The digital site plan used as a base for Figure 10 was supplied by the client.

Excavation

2.2.6 The trenches were cleaned by hand and the revealed features were sampled to determine their extent, nature and date. All archaeological features were planned and where excavated their sections drawn at a scale of 1:20.

2.2.7 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).

2.3 Finds

2.3.1 Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation and generally bagged by context.

2.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

2.4.1 Thirteen deposits were bulk sampled on-site, of which, seven have been selected for further detailed environmental analysis. The results of this analysis is described in section 4.4.

2.5 Presentation of results

2.5.1 In the following sections the deposits are described by trench. There is additional comment on the finds and the reliability of the results. A context inventory, including finds lists, is included in Appendix 1. The stratigraphy of each trench is described

individually and a discussion, interpretation and conclusions of the evaluation and results then follows.

3 RESULTS: GENERAL

3.1 Soils and ground conditions

3.1.1 The soils consisted of silty and organic loams overlying colluvial deposits and silt clays at the north western end of the site and Limestone Cornbrash elsewhere.

4 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

Geophysical Survey

4.1.1 The geophysical survey has produced some positive findings of potential archaeological interest, particularly towards the north-west of the area investigated. The magnetic anomalies as indicated on Figures 2, 10 and 11 lie in an area which also contains non-archaeological magnetic disturbances, but they could represent features such as silted pits, hollows or ditches. The background to the survey in much of the north-western half of the site is sufficiently undisturbed for archaeological findings to be identifiable, if any suitable features are present.

4.1.2 An area as shaded in the eastern half of the site contains strong magnetic disturbances that are likely to be of recent origin (Fig. 2). The disturbances as shaded on the plans are more concentrated than would be expected from an archaeological source and are more likely to indicate that there has been levelling or in-filling of the site as a result of modern landscaping.

4.1.3 The features as noted in the less disturbed western half of the site include linear alignments, which may have been detected in 1992, and which may be an effect of modern ploughing.

4.1.4 The susceptibility survey shows some clusters of high readings, but they do not relate very clearly to the magnetometer findings. There is no distinct susceptibility variation in the magnetically disturbed area at the east of the survey. This suggests that at least part of the site has been landscaped with imported topsoil, which would obscure any archaeological susceptibility effects.

4.2 Description of deposits

Trench 1

4.2.1 Trench 1 contained made ground with extinct services within it and natural deposits consisting of river gravels at c 66 m OD (see context inventory, Appendix 1). No archaeological features were seen in this trench.

Trench 2 (Fig. 3)

4.2.2 Trench 2 was orientated NW-SE. It was 25 m long and 1.8 m wide. The trench was excavated through the north-eastern end of an artificial mound.

4.2.3 Natural cornbrash limestone (2005) was revealed 0.50 m below ground (73.96 m

OD) at the south-eastern end of the trench. The natural ground surface sloped down towards the north-west. Approximately 6 m from the north west end of the trench the natural geology changed to a highly compact, laminated grey clay (2004). The change in natural geology occurred at c. 73 m OD.

4.2.4 A substantial linear feature and two, sub-circular, inter-cutting pits were revealed around the centre of the trench. The earliest of the features was a north-south orientated linear 2012. The feature was 9.5 m long (north-south) and was partially revealed running along the base of the eastern baulk of the trench. The feature curved to the west 11.5 m from the northern end of trench. The feature was 1.80 m wide at this point. The full depth of the feature was not established but it was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.38 m. The feature was filled with a mid-brown silty clay (2013) that contained pottery of 10th century date.

4.2.5 Pit 2016 truncated the fill (2013) of the linear feature [2012]. It was filled with an orangey grey clay (2017) which contained no finds. The dimensions of pit 2016 were not established due to later truncation but it was recorded at a maximum of 0.40 m in diameter and 0.30 m deep. Possibly contemporary with pit 2016 was an irregular linear feature [2010] which was orientated north-south and appeared to respect the edge of the linear feature 2012. This feature [2010] truncated the fill of the earlier linear (2013) and appeared to have been dug c. 0.3 m from the edge of 2012. The sides of 2010 were irregular and formed a slight ridge in the centre of the sondage. It is possible that feature [2010] represents two separate pits.. Feature 2010 was filled with a light grey silt clay (2011) and was 0.30 m wide, 0.20 m deep and was only clearly visible for 0.8 m within a sondadge. The fill (2011) contained pottery dating to the 10th century and a fragment of rotary quern. Any relationship between linear 2010 and pit 2016 had been removed by pit 2014.

4.2.6 Pit 2014 truncated pit fill 2017 and the fill of linear 2010 (2011). Pit 2014 was c.0.6 m in diameter and 0.30 m deep. It was filled with a greenish grey silt clay (2015) which was devoid of finds.

4.2.7 A possible east-west orientated gully or beam slot [2018] was located c.0.5 m to the south of the area of pits described above. The gully was 1.46 m long, 0.25 m wide and 0.15 m deep. It terminated with a sub-rounded end 0.12 m from the western baulk of the trench. The fill 2019 comprised of a light grey brown silty clay which was devoid of finds.

4.2.8 The archaeological features in Trench 2 were all sealed by a layer of mixed topsoil and subsoil (2003) 0.20 m thick contained within a shallow area of truncated ground along the base of the western baulk. This was overlain by up to 1.6 m of made ground (2001) which formed the SW/NE orientated artificial mound.

4.2.9 The made ground (2001) was overlain by topsoil and turf (2000), 0.15 m thick.

Trench 3

4.2.10 Trench 3 was orientated east-west and was 30 m long and 2 m wide. It was excavated to a general depth of 0.2 m. The trench contained no archaeological features.

4.2.11 A compact natural deposit comprising orange sand with limestone (3002) (Cornbrash) was encountered at a depth of 0.2 m below ground surface (73.46 m OD at the eastern end falling to 72. 40 m OD at the western end).

4.2.12 The subsoil (3001) was overlain by clay loam topsoil (3000).

Trench 4 (Fig. 4)

4.2.13 Trench 4 was orientated north-south and was 15 m long and 1.8 m wide. It was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.84 m.

4.2.14 A compact natural deposit comprising orange sand with limestone (4002) (Cornbrash) was encountered at a depth of 0.80 m below ground surface (c. 76. 14 m OD).

4.2.15 The natural (4002) was truncated by an irregular, feature [4013] which was filled with limestone rubble (4014). The dimensions of this feature could not be determined as it was heavily truncated by a later ditch [4015].

4.2.16 An east-west orientated ditch [4015] truncated the limestone rubble fill (4014) of possible pit 4013. The width of the ditch [4015] could not be determined as it extended beyond the sides of the trench but it was probably around 2 m based on the angle of the ditch sides. The base of the ditch was not revealed as it extended beyond a safe working limit. The ditch contained two fills of reddish brown sand (4016, 4017) and limestone rubble with a combined depth of c. 0.60 m. No pottery was recovered from these fills.

4.2.17 Three further ditches [4003, 4005, 4007] also orientated east-west and all filled with a mid-orangey brown silty clay (4006, 4004, 4008) were located towards the northern end of the trench. Ditch 4003 was 1 m wide and o.40 m deep. Ditch 4005 was 1.50 m wide and 0.40 m deep. Ditch 4007 was 0.35 m wide and 0.30 m. No pottery was recovered from their fills.

4.2.18 Two layers of yellowish silty clay (4010, 4011) overlaid the archaeology at the southern end of the trench. Both were 0.20 m deep. A layer of reddish brown subsoil (4001) overlaid 4011 at the southern end of the trench and ditch 4005 towards the north . The subsoil (4001) was a maximum of 0.32 m thick.

4.2.19 The subsoil (4001) was overlaid by topsoil and turf (4000).

Trenches 5, 6 and 7

4.2.20 These trenches contained made ground and natural deposits as seen in the other trenches (see context inventory, Appendix 1). Trench 7 contained several wide linear features which, upon investigation, were found to be of modern origin. No archaeological features were seen in these trenches.

Trench 8 (Fig. 5)

4.2.21 Trench 8 was orientated NW-SE and was 27 m long and 1.8 m wide. It was excavated to a general depth of 0.4 m.

4.2.22 A compact natural deposit orange sand with limestone (8002) (Cornbrash) was encountered at a depth of 0.5 m below ground surface (c. 75.70 m OD).

4.2.23 A substantial linear feature [8008] orientated NW-SE was partially revealed at the base of the eastern trench section. The ditch turned to the south west at the north-western end of the trench. It was never fully revealed but was excavated at this point. It contained 5 fills (8009-8013) to a total depth of 0.90 m. All the fills were similar and comprised dark brown silty clays. The primary and secondary fills (8013, 8012) contained organic material and were sampled for environmental analysis. The uppermost fill (8009) was slightly more loamy in content.

4.2.24 A shallow, sub-circular pit [8003] was revealed at the south-western end of the trench. It was 1. 2 m in diameter and 0.12 m deep. It contained a single fill of greenish silty clay (8004) containing pot of 12th century date, animal bone and a fragment of a rotary quern.

4.2.25 A narrow gully [8016], orientated north/south, truncated ditch 8008. It was 0.35 m wide and 0.15 m deep and filled with a brown silt clay (8017).

4.2.26 The natural (8002) was heavily disturbed by roots and animals. The larger root holes were sub-circular and filled with compact limestone fragments.

4.2.27 A subsoil of mid-brown sandy loam (8001) 0.20 thick overlaid the archaeology. The subsoil was overlaid by topsoil and turf (8000) 0.26 m deep.

Trench 9 (Fig. 6)

4.2.28 Trench 9 was orientated NE-SW and was 30 m long and 1.8 m wide. It was excavated to a general depth of 0.5 m.

4.2.29 Natural orange sand with limestone (9002) (Cornbrash) was encountered at c. 0.50 m below ground (77.15 m OD).

4.2.30 A large pit [9005] truncated the natural towards the south-western end of the trench. It was not fully revealed as it extended beyond the eastern limits of the trench and was truncated by a later feature [9003] to the west. It was 2.5 m wide and 0.5 m deep. It contained two fills (9007, 9006). The primary fill (9007) was of reddish brown silty clay with limestone and 0.4 m thick. The upper fill (9006) was similar but more loamy in content. No finds were retrieved from the fills of this feature.

4.2.31 Two postholes [9009, 9011] were located either side of pit 9005. Post hole 9009 was revealed 0.6 m to the north-east of the edge of 9005. It was 0.22 m in diameter and 0.16 m deep. It contained a single fill (9010) of reddish brown silty clay and limestone fragments. The second posthole, 9011, was located 0.50 m to the south west of pit 9005. It was 0.46 m in diameter and 0.20 m deep. It also contained a single fill of silty clay (9012). No finds were recovered from the fills of the post holes.

4.2.32 The edge of a curvilinear ditch [9008] was revealed extending along the trench for 5.5 m towards the north-eastern end of the trench. It was 0.44 m wide and 0.17 m deep. It was filled with an orangey brown sandy loam (9013).

4.2.33 A linear feature [9003] orientated NE-SW was partially revealed at the base of the western section. It extended for 16.5 m and appeared to have been truncated at its south-western limit (c. 2 m from the south-western end of the trench). Its full dimensions were not established as it extended beyond the trench limits. It was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.40 m and contained a single fill of mid-brown clay loam (9004) which contained pottery dating to the mid-11th century. The edge of the ditch displayed a steep profile similar to the ditch excavated in Trench 8 [8008]. The base of the ditch was not seen. Ditch 9003 truncated pit 9005.

4.2.34 All of the archaeological features were overlaid by a reddish brown subsoil (9001) 0.20 m thick which was, in turn, overlaid by topsoil and turf (9000).

Trench 10 (Fig. 7)

4.2.35 Trench 10 was orientated NW-SE and was 30 m long and 1.8 m wide. It was excavated to a general depth of 0.64 m.

4.2.36 A light orange brown sandy clay natural with limestone (10004) was seen throughout the trench at a depth of 0.3 m below present ground surface (77.75 m OD).

4.2.37 One feature [10003] was recorded cutting the natural (10004). This was a shallow sided, flat bottomed slightly curving linear orientated north-south and measuring 3 m in length, 0.7 m in width and 0.15 m in depth. It was filled by light brown silty clay (10002) which contained no pottery.

4.2.38 The ditch was overlaid by a subsoil of mid-reddish brown sandy loam (10001) and topsoil (10000).

Trench 11 (Fig. 8)

4.2.39 Trench 11 was orientated NE -SW and was 30 m long and 1.8 m wide. It was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.5 m.

4.2.40 Natural deposits were not reached in this trench as they were below safe working limits. The area in which the trench was positioned appeared to have been subjected to possible quarrying. An edge to the possible quarry [12007] was revealed in Trench 12.

4.2.41 The lowest context revealed in Trench 11 was a reddish brown silty sand (11013). This deposit extended throughout the base of the trench.

4.2.42 Deposit 11013 was truncated by a series of pits in the central area of the trench. The earliest pit [11014] extended beyond the trench limits. It was filled with a mid-orange brown sandy silt (11015). Two pits [11008, 11006] truncated fill 11015. Pit 11006 was 2.6 m long, 0.60 m deep and sub-oval in plan. It contained a single fill (11005) of reddish brown sandy silt with pottery of early medieval date.

4.2.43 Pit 11008 also truncated the fill (11015) of the earlier pit [11014]. It was sub-rounded in plan and measured 0.60 m in diameter and was 0.40 m deep. It was filled with a reddish brown silty sand (11007) also containing pottery of early medieval date.

4.2.44 Two east-west orientated ditches [11021, 11017] were revealed towards the northern

end of the trench. They were identical in size at 1.25 m wide and were located 2.5 m apart. Only ditch 11021 was excavated. It was 0.20 m deep and contained a single fill of reddish brown silty sand and limestone fragments (11022).

4.2.45 A possible posthole [11019] was located between the parallel ditches [11011, 11017]. The post hole was not excavated but contained a fill of mid brown silty clay (11020).

4.2.46 The archaeology in Trench 11 was overlaid by a layer of subsoil (11004) 0.20 m thick. This was overlaid by a buried topsoil (11003) also 0.20 m thick.

4.2.47 A layer of made ground comprising limestone rubble and re-deposited subsoil (11002) and up to 0.50 m thick overlaid the buried topsoil (11003). The made ground was overlaid by topsoil and turf (11001) 0.20 m thick.

Trench 12 (Fig. 9)

4.2.48 Trench 12 was orientated NE-SW and was 20 m long and 1.8 m wide. It was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.65 m. The trench was not fully excavated due to the depth of the deposits towards the south-western end of the trench.

4.2.49 Natural limestone cornbrash (12005) was encountered at 0.80 m (76.60 m OD) below ground at the north-eastern end of the trench.

4.2.50 The natural was truncated by a very large cut [12007] (possible quarry) 4.5 m from the south-western end of the trench. The side of the cut extended down at c.30 degrees towards the south-west. The single fill (12006) consisted of a reddish brown sandy silt (12006). The fill was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.2 m. The feature was not bottomed.

4.2.51 A possible ditch [12003] also truncated the natural at the north-western end of the trench. It was very shallow and somewhat irregular. It contained a single fill of reddish brown sandy silt (12004) and was 0.32 m wide and 0.10 m deep.

4.2.52 A layer of sub-rounded river pebbles (12007) were revealed c. 2.5 m to the south of ditch 12003. The pebbles were all c. 20 mm in diameter and varied in colour from dark red to orangey yellow.

4.2.53 The archaeological features were overlaid by a colluvial deposit of reddish brown sandy clay (12002) 0.32 m thick. A subsoil of browny red sandy silt 0.30 m thick overlaid the colluvium (12002). This was overlaid by a topsoil and turf (12000)

4.3 Finds

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

4.3.1 The pottery assemblage comprised 93 sherds with a total weight of 922 g. The estimated vessel equivalent (EVE), by summation of surviving rimsherd circumference was 1.07. All the pottery was of late Saxon to early medieval date, apart from a single fragment (2 g) of early/middle Saxon hand-built material, an heavily abraded Romano-British greyware sherd (68 g), and two sherds of late-post

good potential for observation of other surface alteration e.g. butchery. There was not a great deal of variation between features, or even between identified/unidentified fragments. Only one fragment was noted as burnt, while seven showed signs of dog gnawing, two of butchery, and one of pathology (out of 152 fragments): detailed examination would probably increase these numbers. Of the 50 identified fragments four were noted as measurable and 15 as contributing ageing data.

4.3.10 Overall, the bone recovered is in reasonable condition, and would repay further study. Depending on the amount of bone recovered in further excavation, there is high potential for information on species present, ageing data, and measurements, as well as taphonomic information, to contribute to a picture of the subsistence economy in relation to other archaeological findings.

Worked Stone by Ruth Shaffrey

4.3.11 **Methodology.** The stone was examined with the aid of a x10 magnification hand lens.

4.3.12 **Summary.** Of nine pieces of stone recovered during the excavations at Wolverton Mill, two are worked and seven are small unworked fragments. One of the worked pieces has a worked flat surface which suggests it may be from a quern although no edges remain. The other object is an edge fragment of a rotary quern whose original diameter would have been approximately 390 mm. Both pieces are made from Millstone Grit, the nearest source of which was in Derbyshire. This was a commonly used quern material in the region in all periods although the style of the querns indicates it is probably Roman in date and it is certainly no earlier than Roman. Smooth patches on the upper surface suggest it has been reused.

4.4 Palaeoenvironmental remains *by Elizabeth Huckerby*

4.4.1 Thirteen environmental bulk samples were taken from excavated contexts, of which seven were selected for further analysis. The samples selected are shown below in Table 3.

Table 3: Palaeoenvironmental samples evaluated for charred plant remains

Sample No	*Context No*	*Comments*
1	11005	Pit fill, Roman? cut into possible quarry backfill
2	9012	Post hole fill possibly associated with potential SFB
3	9004	Loamy upper fill of boundary ditch [**9003**]
10	4016	Fill of ditch [**4015**] 8th/9th C boundary ditch?
11	8004	Single fill of pit **8013** Early Med?
12	8013	Primary fill of ditch [**8008**] may be same as **9003**
13	8012	Secondary fill of ditch [**8008**] may be same as **9003**

4.4.2 Sample 1 is of possible Roman date but contained sherds of probable early medieval

date. Samples 3 and 10 may be of early medieval date and the remaining samples are thought to date to the medieval period.

4.4.3 The samples were processed by flotation using a modified Siraf-type machine, with the flot collected on a 250µm mesh. After air-drying the flots were scanned for material under a Leitz/Wild stereozoom binocular microscope.

4.4.4 The flots varied in size and all contained modern roots and some had modern seeds in them. All samples contained some charred cereal grains but significant numbers were only recorded in samples 1, 11, 12 and 13. *Triticum* sp (wheat mainly bread type), *Hordeum* (barley) and *Avena* (oats) were noted. Occasional fragments of chaff were recorded. Samples 1, 11, 12, and 13 also contained charred weed seeds from a number of different taxa.

4.4.5 Charcoal was abundant in all samples, except sample 10, although in general the fragments were less than 5mm. Charcoal from oak (*Quercus*) and other taxa was noted.

4.4.6 Fragments of mammal bone and small mammal bones were noted in all samples except sample 10. Some fish bone was recorded in sample 11 from the pit fill **[8004]** Abundant molluscs were recorded in all samples.

4.4.7 These results suggest that the fills contained some discarded domestic waste including burnt grain. The scarcity of chaff in the samples suggests that the initial processing of cereal crops was not being carried out near to the features that were sampled on the site. The preservation of the plant remains in the samples was mixed, although in some cases it was good, and would allow further analysis. The presence of charred plant remains in the fills of features with no dating evidence may enable these fills to be dated by radiocarbon dating. The results from this evaluation suggest that there is potential for good economic information from any further excavation of the site.

5 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

5.1.1 Significant archaeology was revealed in seven (Trenches 2, 4, 8 9, 10, 11, 12) out of the 12 trenches excavated. These were predominantly clustered in the north central area of the site (zone 4) and corresponded well with the area of potential activity highlighted by the geophysical survey.

5.1.2 During the geophysical survey, a large area towards the northern boundary of the site produced a significant magnetic anomaly. Trenches 11 and 12 were located specifically to investigate the nature of this anomaly. The edge of a large, relatively steeply cut feature (possibly a natural hollow) [12007] revealed within Trench 12 and the unusual depth of the earliest deposits excavated in Trench 11, may suggest the presence of large scale quarrying, of possible Roman date. The possible quarry pit(s) [12007] contained an archaeologically sterile colluvial deposit suggesting a process of gradual silting. This could equally suggest that the feature within which this deposit is contained is of natural origin.

5.1.3 Archaeological features revealed in Trench 11 suggest that sometime in the early

medieval period (10th -12th century), three pits [11006, 11008, 11014], two east-west orientated ditches [11011, 11017] running parallel to one another with a posthole [11019] in between them, were cut into the top of the colluvial in-fill of the possible quarry pit(s). The ditches probably represent an east-west boundary perhaps associated with the roughly N-S orientated linear features revealed in Trench 8 [8008] and Trench 9 [9003]. A further linear [12006] was revealed in Trench 12 close to the heavily truncated and undated remains of a possible trackway constructed of river pebbles (12007).

5.1.4 Further evidence for possible quarrying was revealed in Trench 4 which was located in the southern corner of the site. The edge of an irregular feature [4013] containing compacted limestone rubble (4014) was revealed. It extended beyond the trench boundaries and its size and form could not be interpreted. The backfill of the possible quarry pit [4014] was truncated by a large, east-west orientated ditch [4015]. This ditch probably represents the westward continuation of the enclosure excavated in 1994 by Schadla-hall (unpublished) which was dated from the 8th to 9th centuries. No finds were recovered from the fills of this ditch during the present evaluation.

5.1.5 Trench 2 contained a small number of pits [2012, 2014, 2016] and a gully [2010] which were all of 10th century date. The gully may be associated with a domestic structure and could represent a beam slot.

5.1.6 Trench 9 contained a large pit [9005] with two postholes [9009, 9011] located nearby on either side of it. No finds were retrieved from the fills of these features. The pit was not fully revealed but was c. 2.25 m wide and 0.50 m deep. These dimensions and the close proximity of the post holes (Rahtz 1976) suggests that the features may represent a sunken featured building (SFB) of possibly early medieval date. The feature was clearly truncated by a ditch [9003] of mid 11th century date. Trial trenches dug in the north-east corner of the site (zone 2), in 1991 (BCMAS 1991, 12), revealed features that were also interpreted as a possible SFB. Trench 9 also contained a small curvilinear gully [9008] but the fill of this feature did not produce any dating evidence.

5.1.7 A NE-SW orientated ditch [9003] containing pottery dating to the mid 11th century was excavated in Trench 9. This ditch appeared very similar to ditch [8008] revealed in Trench 8, although ditch 9003 was only partially revealed. Numerous potsherds of 10th century date were retrieved from the ditches in both trenches. If the ditches represent the same feature they probably form two sides of a rectangular enclosure perhaps associated with stock management. In Trench 2 a shallow gully [2010], possibly a beam slot, truncated four inter-cutting pits [2012, 2014, 2016, 2018]. These features were all of probable 10th century date. A small pit in Trench 8 [8003] contained pottery dating to the 12th century and a fragment of rotary quern.

5.1.8 No significant archaeological activity following that of early medieval date was revealed in the evaluation. The recent made ground, comprising limestone and imported soil horizons, seen in Trenches 11 and 12 suggests that a deep hollow defining the area of the possible quarry must have been present until very recently.

5.1.9 Three undated linear features [4003, 4005, 4007] were revealed towards the northern

end of Trench 4. These features are thought to be of later origins as the fills were of loose soils containing brick fragments.

5.2 Conclusions

5.2.1 The geophysical survey suggested that some parts of the site were obscured by modern interference. This includes the large area of magnetic anomaly towards the northern boundary of the site. Other magnetic anomalies are present but do not form a distinct and archaeologically identifiable plan. There was a good correlation between the results of the geophysical and archaeological results

5.2.2 The evaluation has produced evidence for the possible presence of large scale quarrying towards the northern part of the site in the area of the large magnetic anomaly defined in the geophysical survey. The quarrying probably occurred during the Roman period although due to the depth of deposits excavation was limited and the potential for dating the feature not fully realised. It is equally possible that the feature is natural in origin. Sometime in the 10th or 11th century a small number of pits and two possible boundary ditches were dug into the deposits in-filling the possible quarry and to the east, the natural ground. The pits and ditches contained pottery and animal bone indicating the possibility of domestic occupation on the site during this period. The presence of a possible SFB of perhaps 8th or 9th century date suggests the possibility of earlier occupation. Later medieval activity is represented by a single pit in Trench 8 [8003].

5.2.3 While no direct evidence for Roman activity on the site was revealed, quarrying, probably of this date, may have occurred towards the northern boundary. There is some evidence of possible mid-late Saxon (7th - 9th century) occupation on the site in the form of a possible SFB in Trench 9, the pits and a gully in Trench 2 and the possible boundary ditch in Trench for which was previously dated to this period. A hiatus of activity on the site occurs during the early medieval period (10th - 12th century) with a concentration of features of this date occurring towards the northern boundary of the site. The finds assemblage suggests that this activity probably relates to domestic occupation in the near vicinity.

5.3 Impact of the Development

5.3.1 The evaluation revealed that archaeological features were present in seven out of the 12 trenches. A concentration of archaeology was apparent in the northern part of the site (Zone 4). The majority of features where revealed between 0.20 and 0.50 m below ground. However, features in Trenches 11 and 12 were located at c. 1.20 m below ground as they were cut into the backfill of a quarry of probable early Roman date. This depression may have been present up until recent times and has been levelled off thus giving the depth of overburden.

5.3.2 All of the areas which are presently occupied by buildings and car parks (Zone 3) have been subjected to significant ground reduction and any archaeological horizons (except those associated with deep quarry pits) will have been removed. This includes the car parks to the north of Trench 4 and to the east of Trench 5, and the sloping ground where Trench 1 and 3 were located. Any further development that

may take place on the remaining areas of the site is likely to impact archaeological horizons of potential Roman and early medieval date.

5.4 Reliability of field investigation

5.4.1 The integrity of the stratigraphic evidence encountered during the evaluation is believed to be good although the varying nature of the natural deposits, including heavy clays made cleaning and identifying some of the features difficult. The excavated features had a generally good correlation with the results of the geophysical survey.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench	*Ctxt No*	*Type*	*Width. (m)*	*Thick . (m)*	*Comment*	*Finds*	*No./ wt*	*Date*
001	1000	Layer		0.25	Topsoil			
001	1001	Layer		0.22	Subsoil			
001	1002	Layer		0.48	Made ground			
001	1003	Layer		0.22	Topsoil (original)			
001	1004	Layer		0.26	Subsoil			
001	1005	Layer			Natural gravel			
001	1006	Cut			Construction			
001	1007	Fill			Made ground			
002	2000	Layer		0.18	Topsoil			
002	2001	Layer		1.30	Made ground			
002	2002	Layer		0.10	Made ground			
002	2003	Layer		0.22	Topsoil (original)			
002	2004	Layer		0.12	Subsoil			
002	2005	layer			Natural clay			
002	2006	Layer			Natural clay			
002	2007	Fill		0.05	F.O Tree dist 2009			
002	2008	Fill		0.06	F.O Tree dist 2009			
002	2009	Cut		0.11	Tree dist	pot Bone		10 th C ?
002	2010	Cut		0.20	Gully			
002	2011	Fill		0.20	F.O Gully 2010	pot Bone		10 th C ?
002	2012	Cut			Pit			
002	2013	Fill		0.40	F.O Pit 2012			
002	2014	Cut		0.30	Pit			
002	2015	Fill		0.40	F.O pit 2014			
002	2016	Cut		0.30	Pit			
002	2017	Fill		0.30	F.O Pit 2016			
003	3000	Layer		0.18	Topsoil			
003	3001	Layer			Natural combrash			

Trench	*Ctxt No*	*Type*	*Width. (m)*	*Thick. (m)*	*Comment*	*Finds*	*No./ wt*	*Date*
004	4000	Layer		0.15	Topsoil			
004	4001	Layer		0.25	Subsoil			
004	4002	Layer			Natural cornbrash			
004	4003	Cut		0.13	Ditch			
004	4004	Fill		0.13	F.O Ditch 4003			
004	4005	Cut			Ditch			
004	4006	Fill			F.O Ditch 4005			
004	4007	Cut		0.30	Ditch			
004	4008	Fill		0.30	F.O Ditch 4007			
004	4009	Layer		0.25	Silt clay			
004	4010	Layer		0.25	Silt clay			
004	4011	Layer		0.25	Sandy clay			
004	4012	Layer		0.20	Clay sand			
004	4013	Cut			Quarry Pit ?			
004	4014	Fill		0.15	F.O 4013			
004	4015	Cut			Ditch			
004	4016	Fill			F.O Ditch 4015			
004	4017	Fill		0.20	F.O Ditch 4015			
005	5000	Layer		0.22	Topsoil			
005	5001	Layer		0.14	Made ground			
005	5002	Layer		1.17	Subsoil			
005	5003	Layer		0.60	Colluvium			
005	5004	Layer			Natural cornbrash			
006	6000	Layer		0.20	Topsoil			
006	6001	Layer		0.15	Made ground			
006	6002	Layer		0.12	Subsoil			
006	6003	Layer		0.14	Colluvium			
006	6004	Layer			Natural cornbrash			
007	7000	Layer		0.10	Topsoil			
007	7001	Layer		0.10	Made ground			
007	7002	Layer		0.18	Topsoil (original)			
007	7003	Layer		0.20	Subsoil	pot		L 15th C?
007	7004	Layer			Natural Clay			
008	8000	Layer		0.30	Topsoil			

Trench	*Ctxt No*	*Type*	*Width. (m)*	*Thick . (m)*	*Comment*	*Finds*	*No./ wt*	*Date*
008	8001	Layer		0.26	Subsoil			
008	8002	Layer			Natural cornbrash			
008	8003	Cut		0.12	Pit			
008	8004	Fill		0.12	F.O Pit 8003	pot Bone		12 th C
008	8005	Cut		0.20	P.H			
008	8006	Fill		0.14	F.O P.H 8005	pot		10 th C ?
008	8007	Fill		0.20	F.O P.H 8005			
008	8008	Cut		0.92	Ditch			
008	8009	Fill		0.22	F.O Ditch 8008	pot Bone		10 th C ?
008	8010	Fill		0.16	F.O Ditch 8008	pot Bone		10 th C ?
008	8011	Fill		0.24	F.O Ditch 8008	pot Bone		10 th C ?
008	8012	Fill		0.18	F.O Ditch 8008			
008	8013	Fill		0.12	F.O Ditch 8008			
008	8014	Cut		0.29	Field Drain			
008	8015	Fill			Drain			
008	8016	Cut		0.20	Ditch			
008	8017	Fill		0.20	F.O Ditch 8016			
008	8018	Cut		0.13	Tree Dist			
008	8019	Fill		0.13	F.O 8018	pot		12 th C
009	9000	Layer		0.22	Topsoil			
009	9001	Layer		0.27	Subsoil			
009	9002	Layer			Natural cornbrash			
009	9003	Cut		0.42	Ditch			
009	9004	Fill		0.42	F.O Ditch 9003	pot Bone		11 th C ?
009	9005	Cut		0.48	Pit (SFB?)			
009	9006	Fill		0.17	F.O Pit 9005			
009	9007	Fill		0.38	F.O Pit 9005			
009	9008	Cut		0.17	Gully			
009	9009	Cut		0.16	PH			

Trench	*Ctxt No*	*Type*	*Width. (m)*	*Thick . (m)*	*Comment*	*Finds*	*No./ wt*	*Date*
009	9010	Fill		0.16	F.O P.H 9009			
009	9011	Cut		0.20	PH			
009	9012	Fill		0.20	F.O P.H 9011			
009	9013	Fill		0.16	F.O Gully 9008			
010	10000	Layer		0.30	Topsoil			
010	10001	Layer		0.22	Subsoil			
010	10002	Fill		0.32	F.O Ditch 10003			
010	10003	Cut		0.32	Ditch			
010	10004	Layer			Natural Cornbrash			
011	11001	Layer		0.20	Topsoil			
011	11002	Layer		0.45	Subsoil			
011	11003	Fill		0.20	Topsoil (original)			
011	11004	Cut		0.30	Subsoil			
011	11005	Fill		0.59	F.O 11006	pot Bone		12 th C
011	11006	Cut		0.59	Pit			
011	11007	Fill		0.30	F.O 11008	pot Bone		12 th C ?
011	11008	Cut		0.30	Pit			
011	11009	Fill		0.38	F.O Ditch 11010			
011	11010	Fill		0.38	Ditch			
011	11011	Cut		0.40	Ditch			
011	11012	Fill		0.25	Pit			
011	11013	Cut		0.30	Pit			
011	11014	Cut		>0.30	Pit			
011	11015	Fill		0.30	F.O Pit 11014			
011	11016	Fill		0.10	F.O Pit 11017			
011	11017	Cut			Ditch			
011	11018	Fill			F.O Ditch 11017			
011	11019	Cut			PH			
011	11020	Fill			F.O P.H 11019			
011	11021	Cut		0.22	Ditch			
011	11022	Fill		0.22	F.O Ditch 11021			
012	12000	Layer		0.12	Topsoil			

Trench	*Ctxt No*	*Type*	*Width. (m)*	*Thick . (m)*	*Comment*	*Finds*	*No./ wt*	*Date*
012	12001	Layer		0.30	Subsoil			
012	12002	Layer		0.60	Colluvium			
012	12003	Cut		0.20	Ditch			
012	12004	Fill		0.20	F.O 12003	pot		17 th C ?
012	12005	Layer			Natural Cornbrash			
012	12006	Cut		1.80	C.F Quarry (?)			
012	12007	Layer		0.02	River pebbles			

APPENDIX 2 POTTERY SPOT DATES

Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

Cntxt	RB		E/MS		SNC1		MS19		MC1		MS3		MSC1		Oxford		PM15		PM16		Date
	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
0	1	68			1	66															U/S
2008					1	3															10thC?
2011					1	16															10thC?
2013					1	5															10thC?
7003																	1	3			L15thC
8004									1	38			1	7							12thC
8006					1	2															10thC?
8009					8	102	1	1													10thC
8010					4	53															10thC?
8011					1	2															10thC?
8019			1	2					2	14											12thC
9004											2	41									M11thC
11005					3	28			29	182	12	120	2	11							12thC
11007									15	142	2	8			1	1					12thC?
12004																			1	7	17thC
Total	1	68	1	2	21	277	1	1	47	376	16	169	3	18	1	1	1	3	1	7	

APPENDIX 3 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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APPENDIX 4 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Woverton Mill, Milton Keynes, Bucks
Site code: MKWOM02

Type of evaluation: Twelve trenches
Date and duration of project: 5-16/06/02
Summary of results: E med Pits, ditches, postholes, enclosure/boundary ditches. Possible Roman quarrying

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Buckinghamshire County Museum in due course, under the following accession no: AYBCM 2002.59.

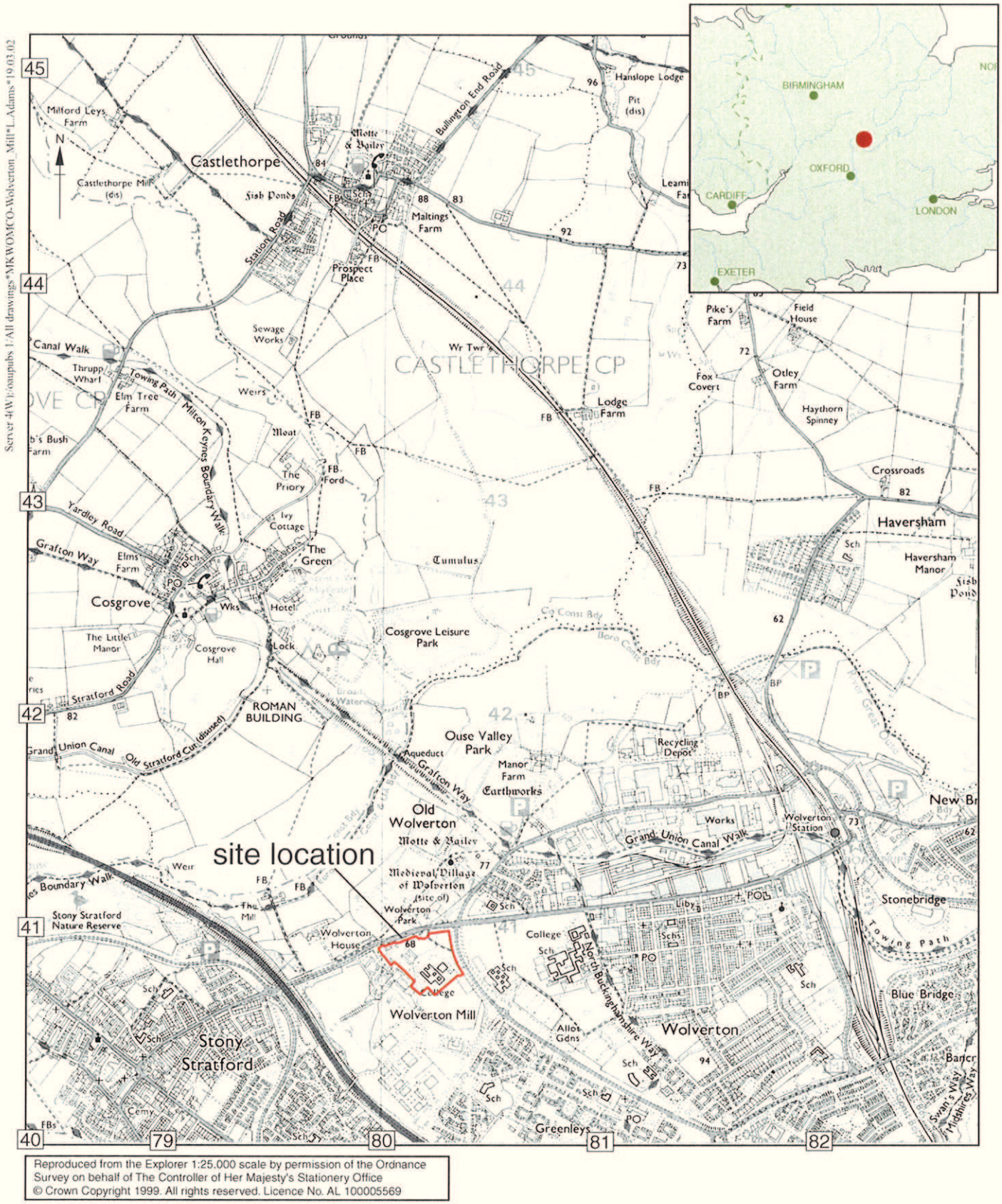


Figure 1: Site location

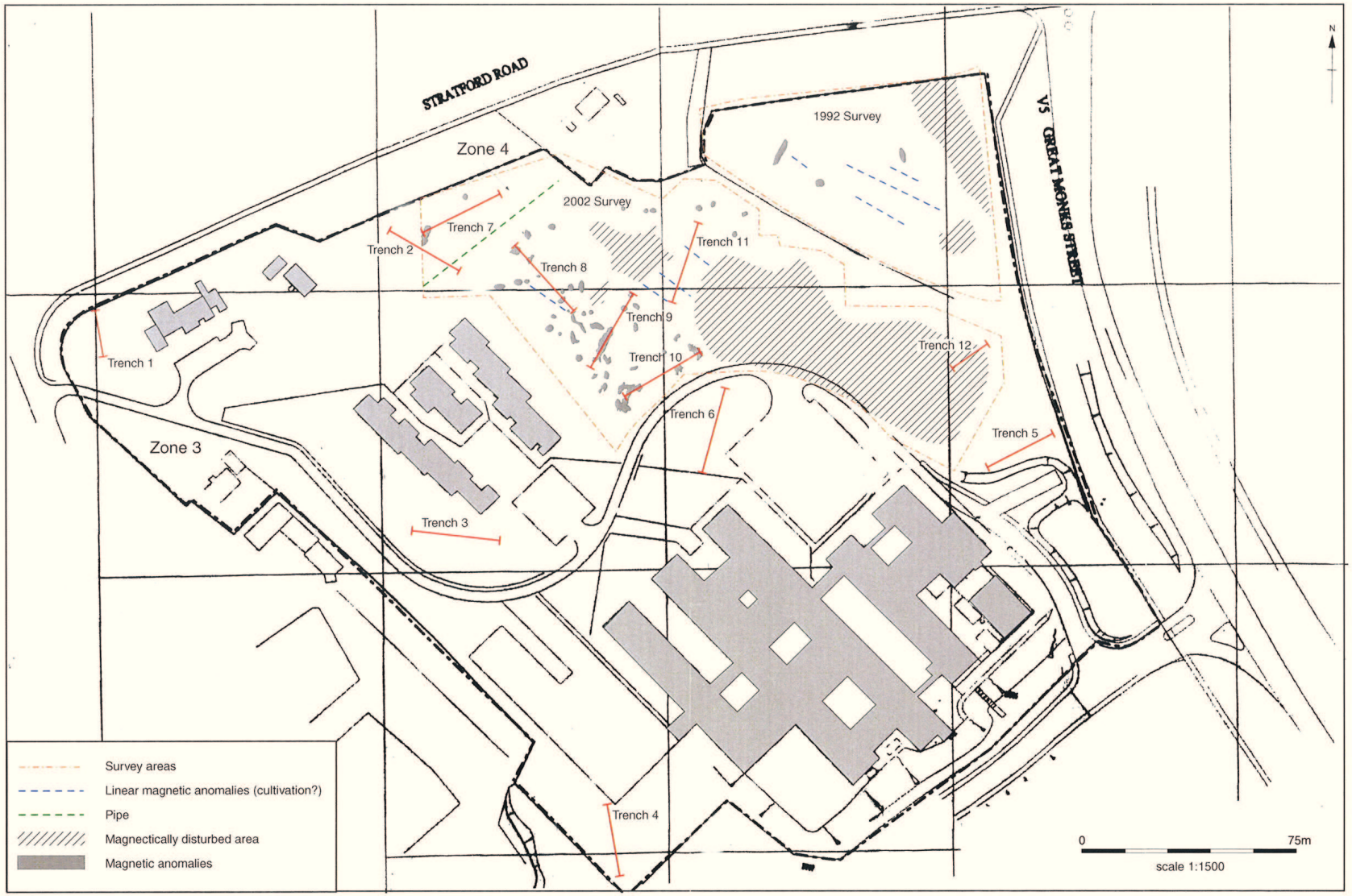
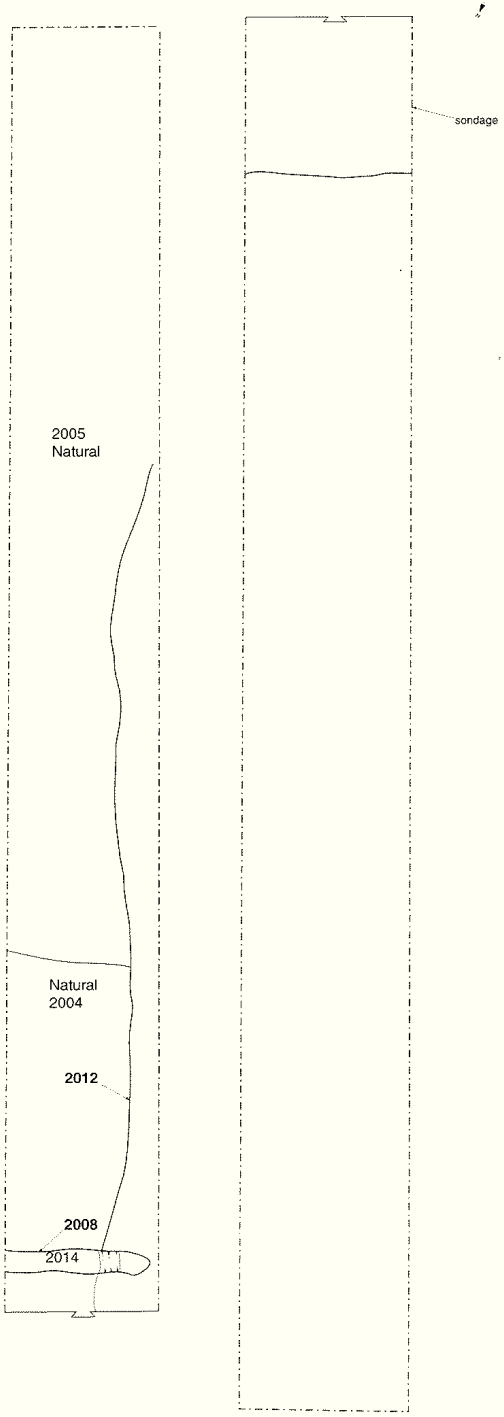
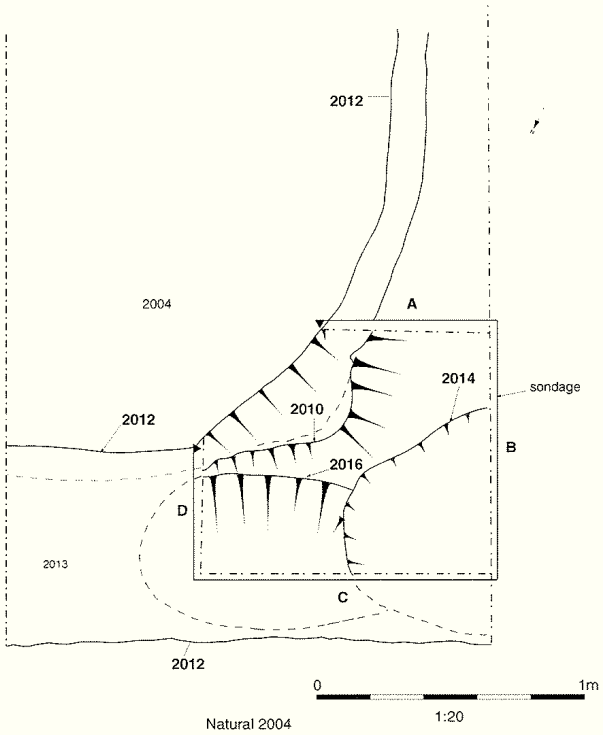


Figure 2: Trench Locations Zones 3 and 4.

Plan 2000



Detail of sondage



Composite
Section 2000 (ABCD)

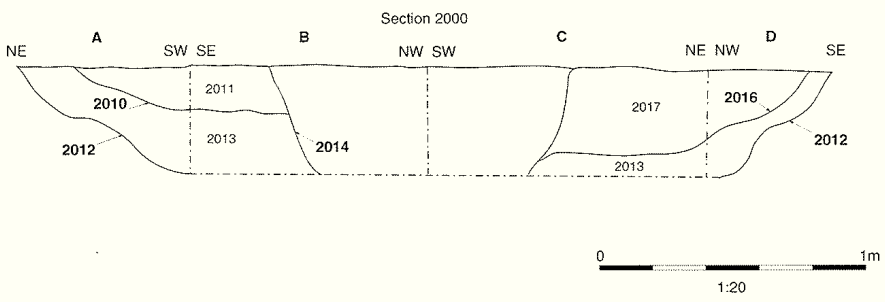


Figure 3 Trench 9

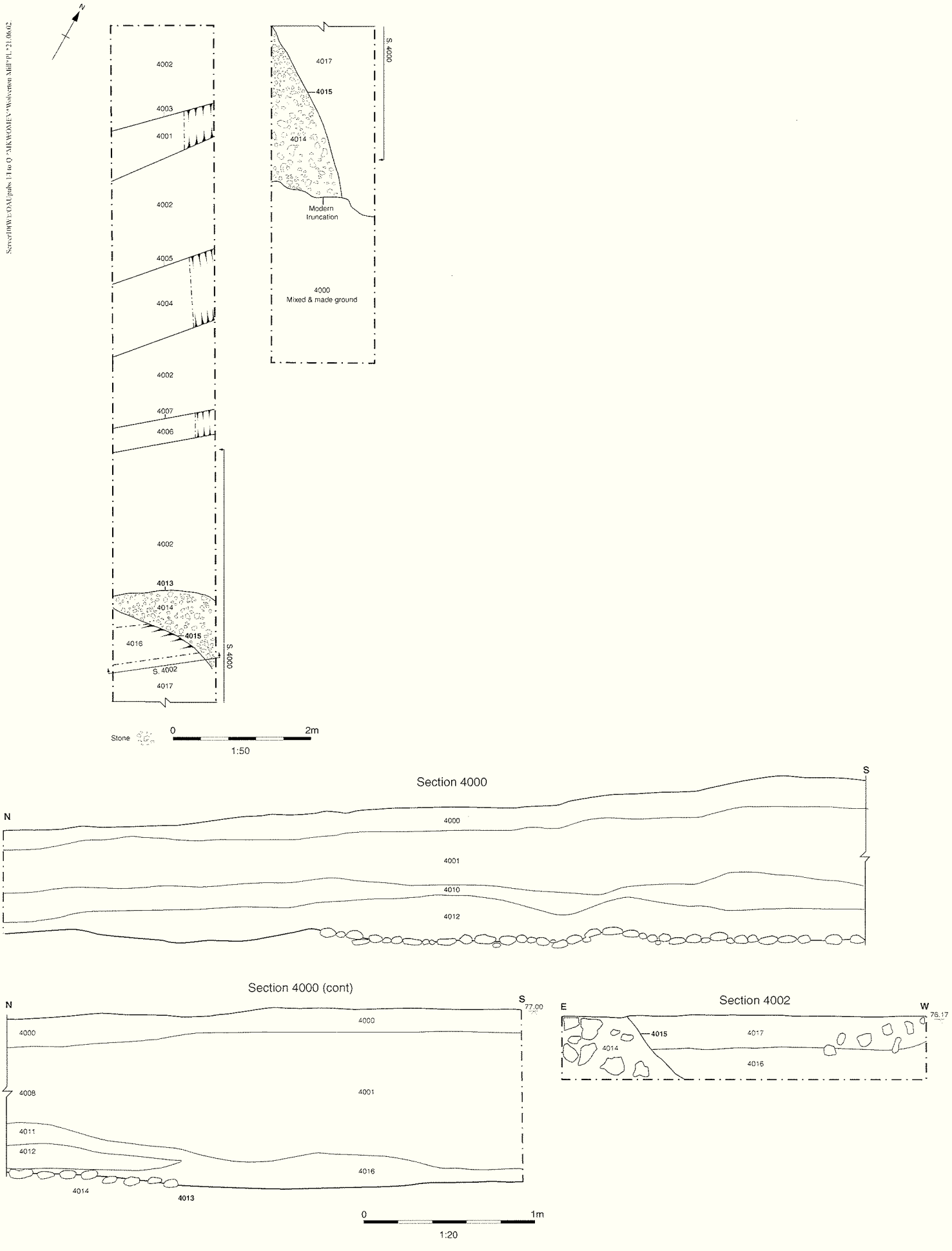


Figure 4: Trench 4 plan and sections.

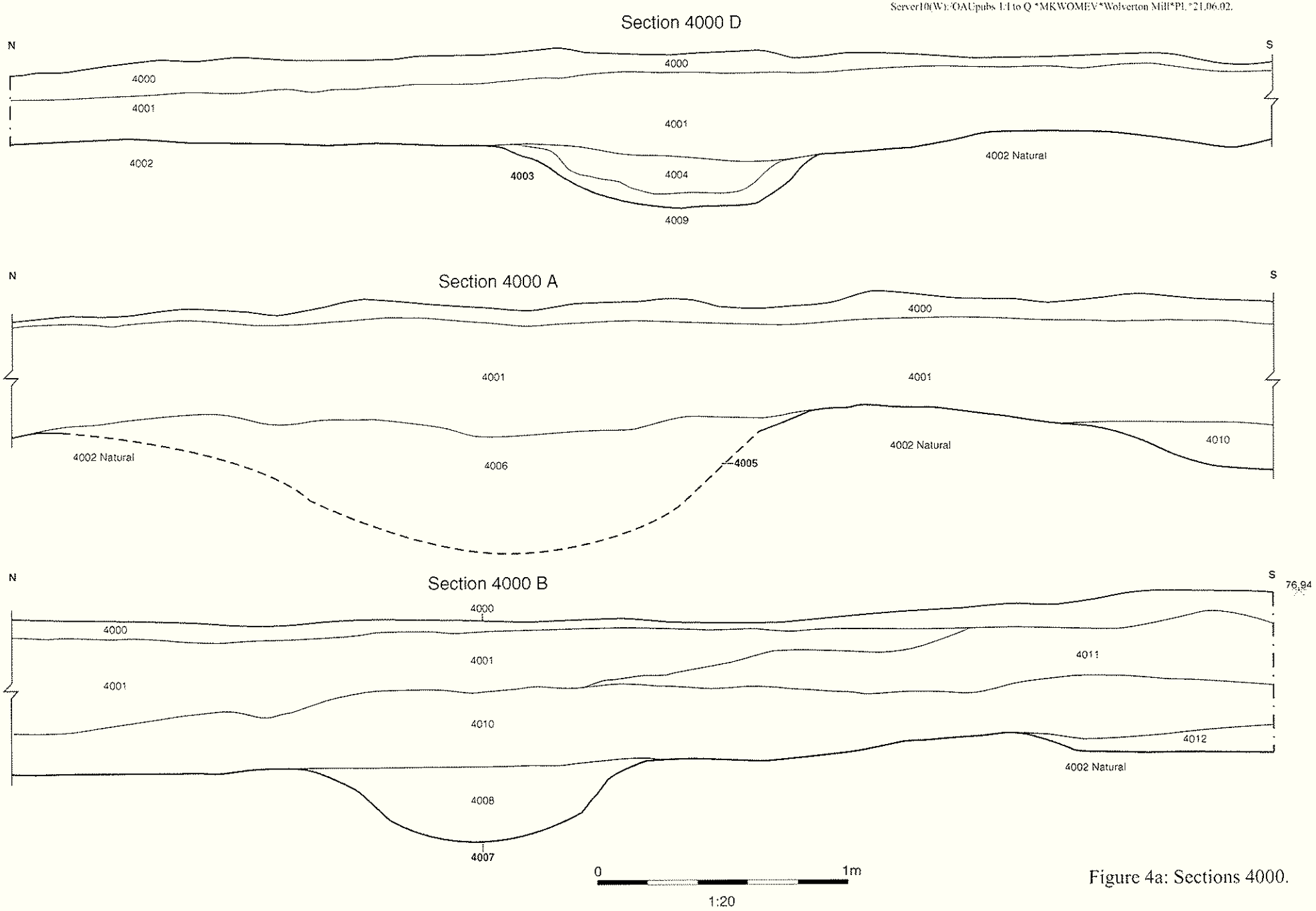
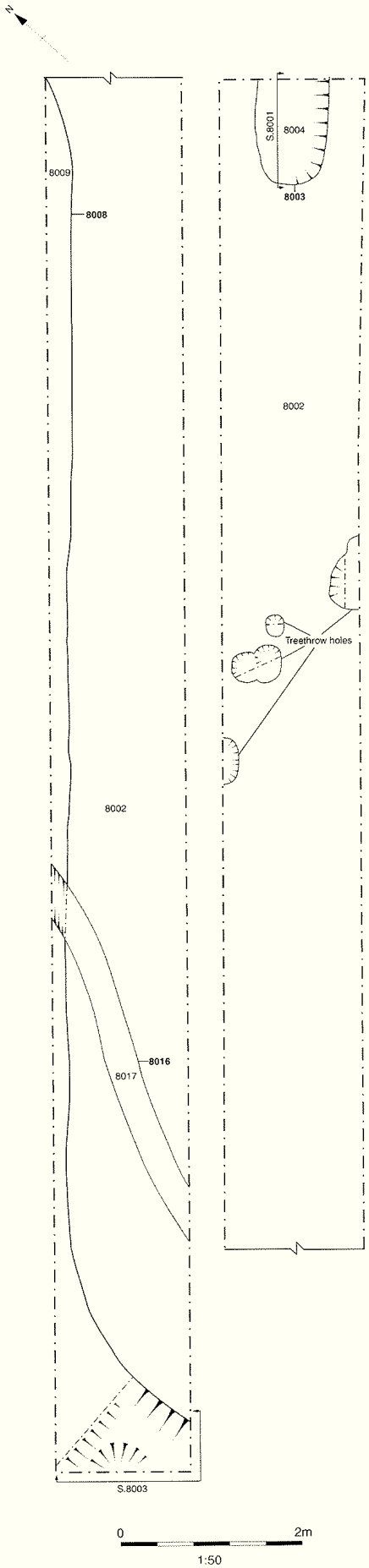
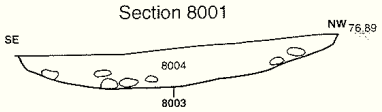


Figure 4a: Sections 4000.





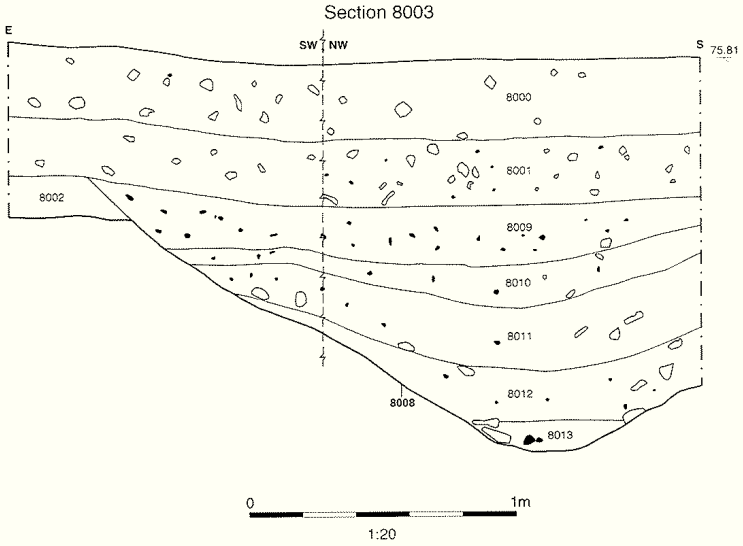


Figure 5: Trench 8, plan and sections.

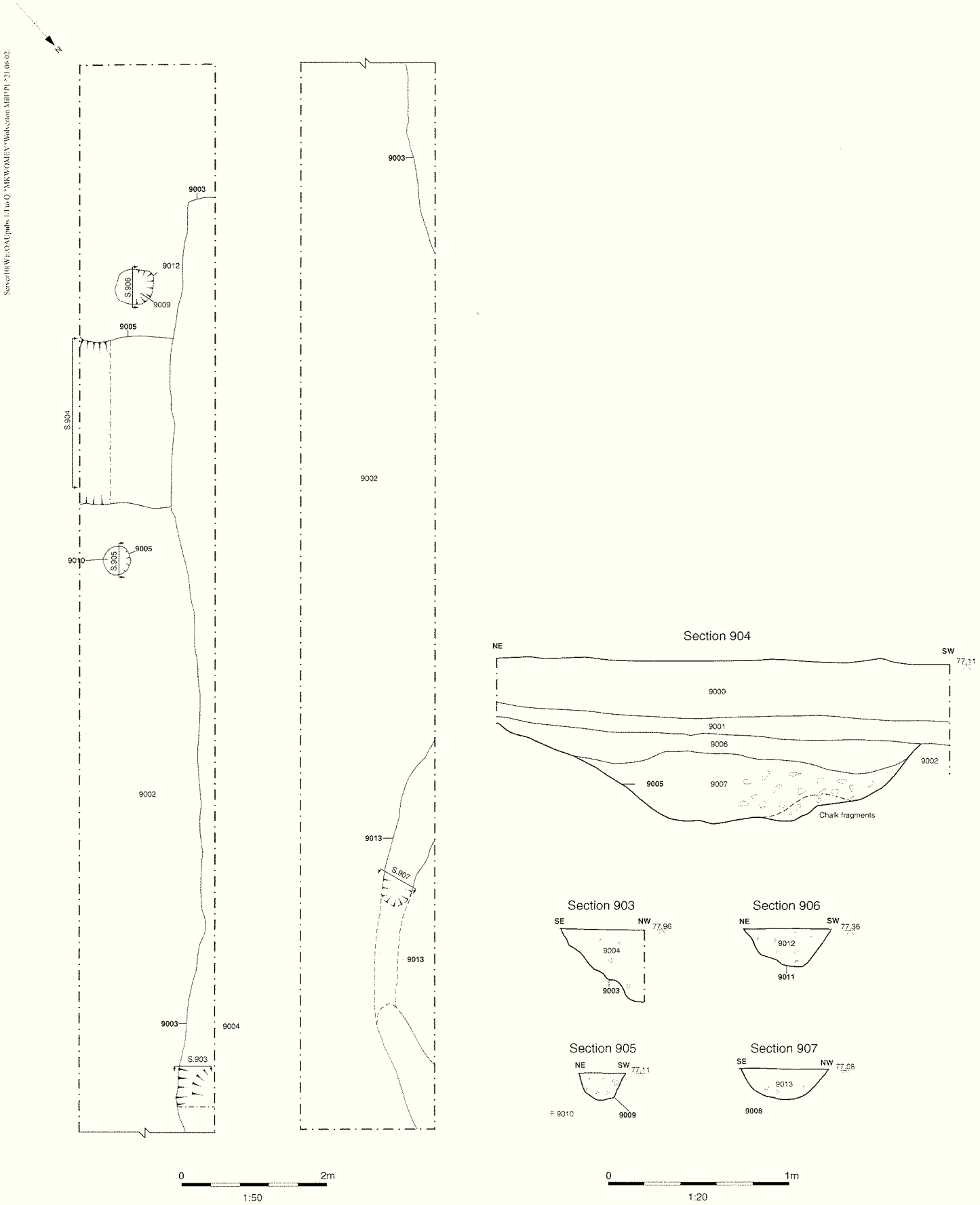


Figure 6: Trench 9, plan and sections.

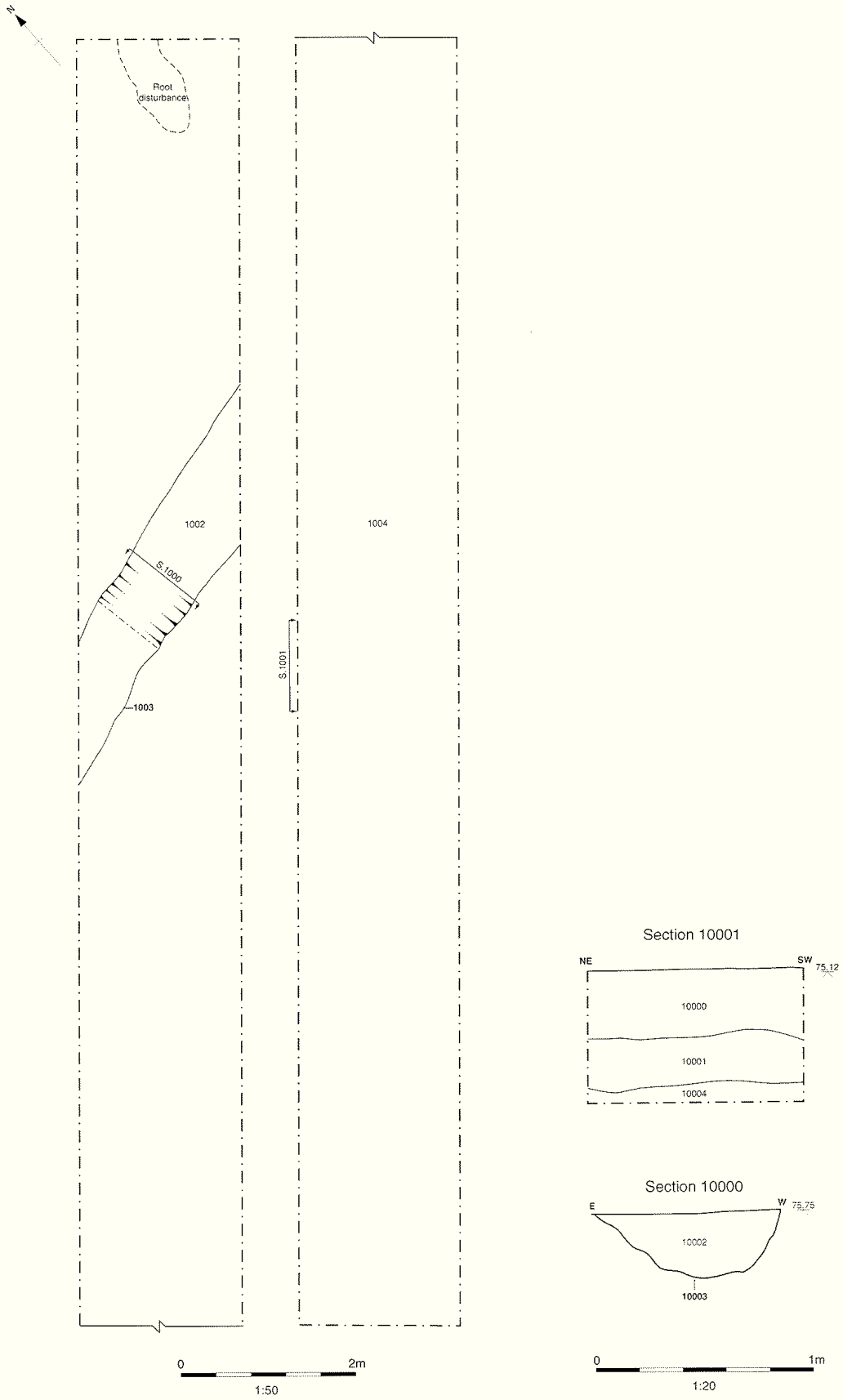
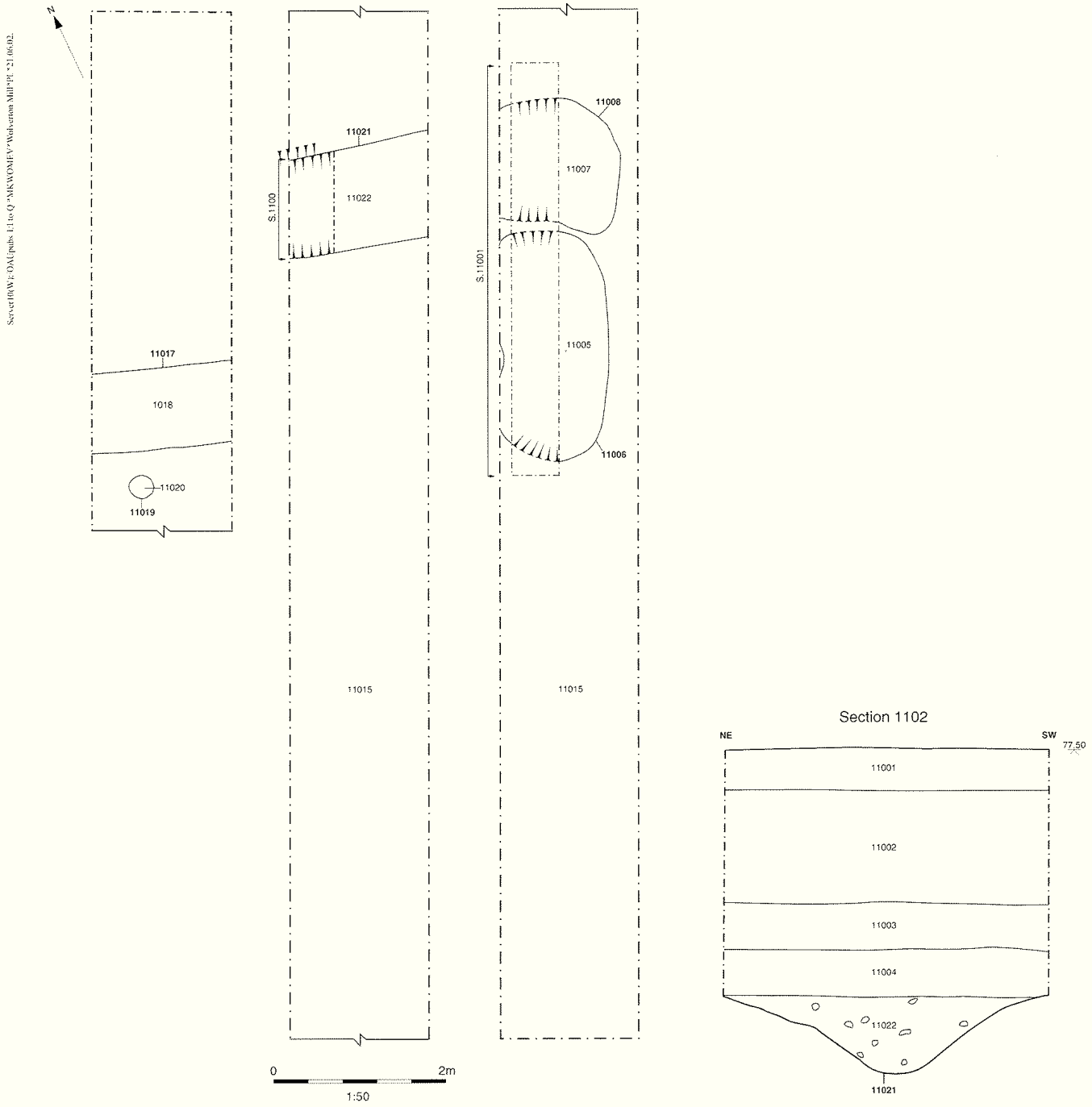


Figure 7: Trench 10, plan and sections.



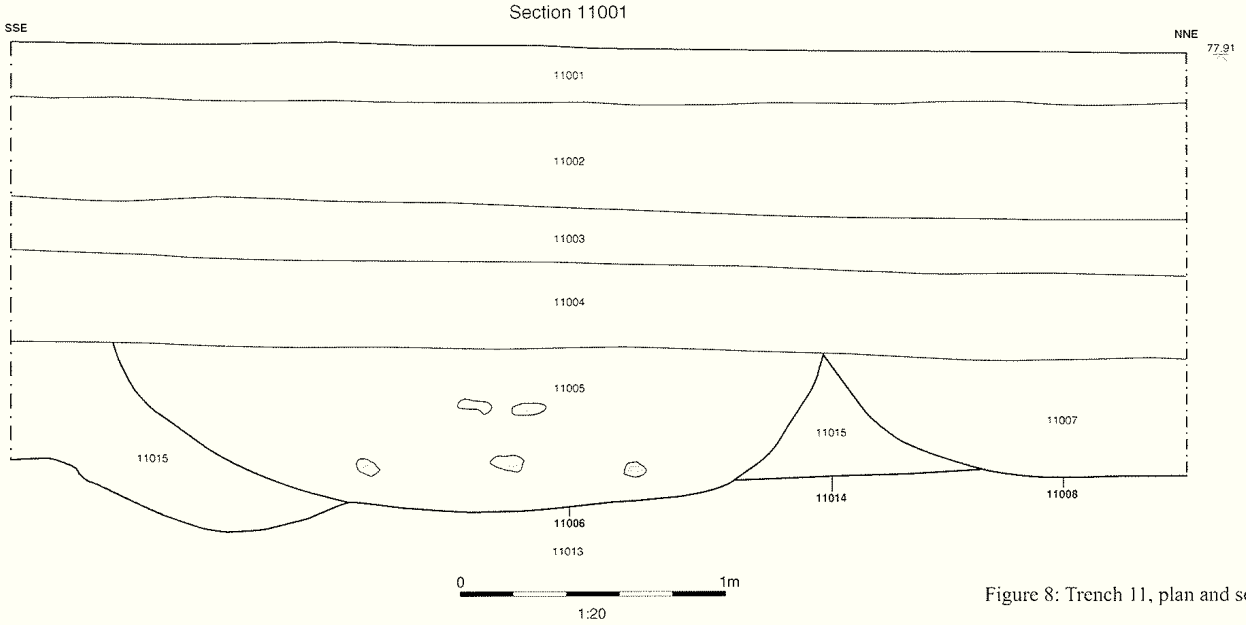


Figure 8: Trench 11, plan and sections.

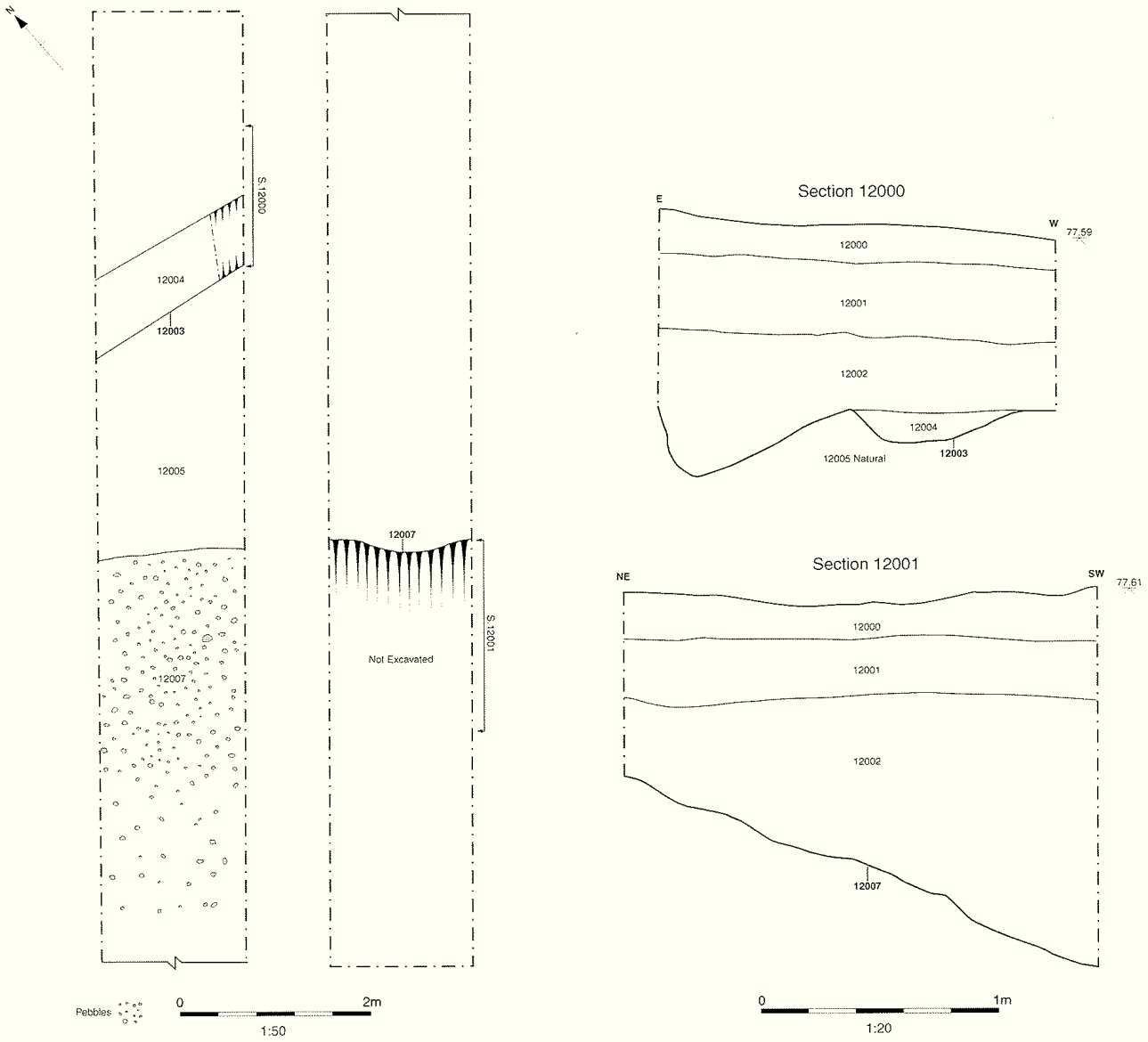


Figure 9: Trench 12, plan and section.

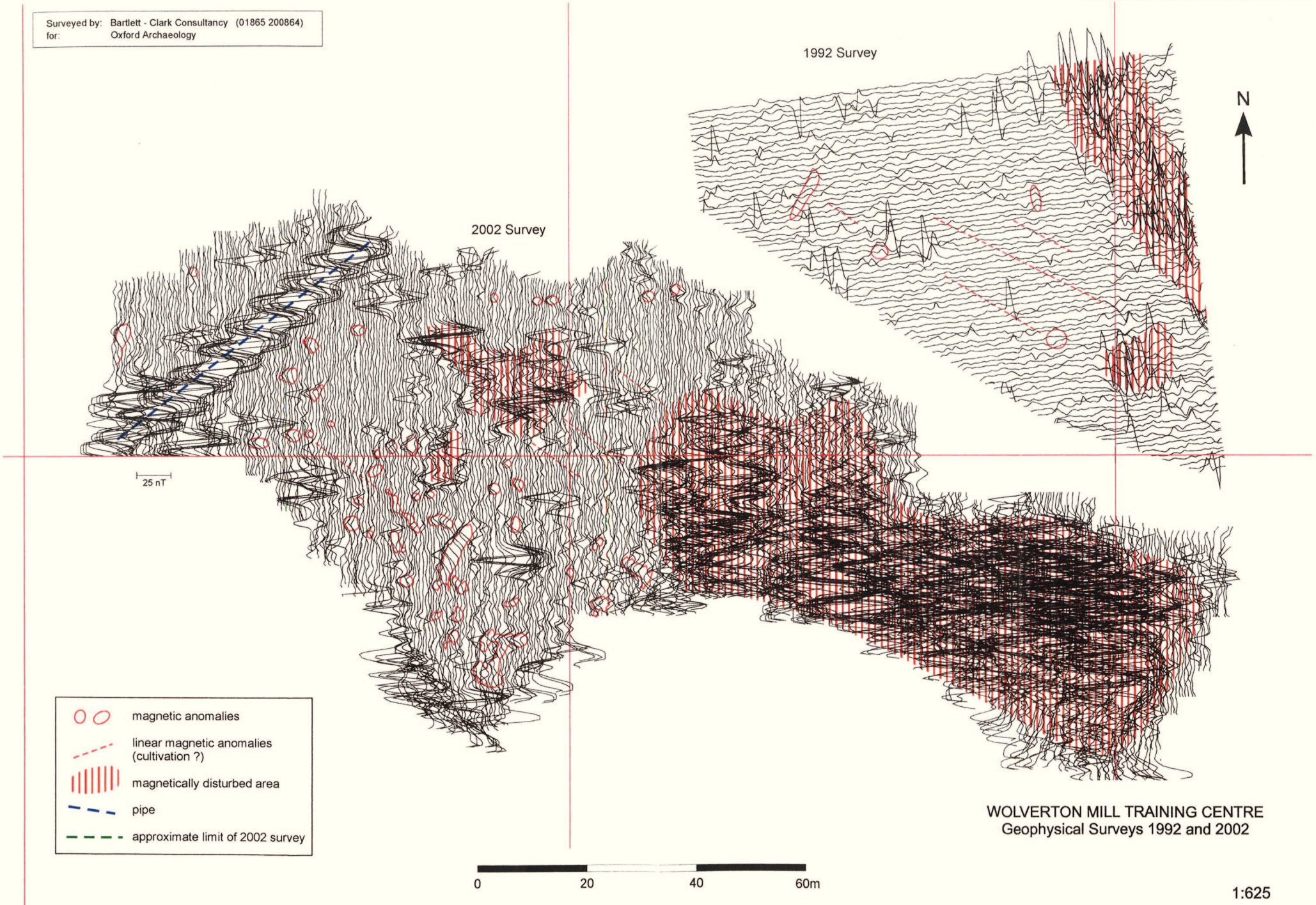


Figure 10: Magnetometer survey (with interpretation).

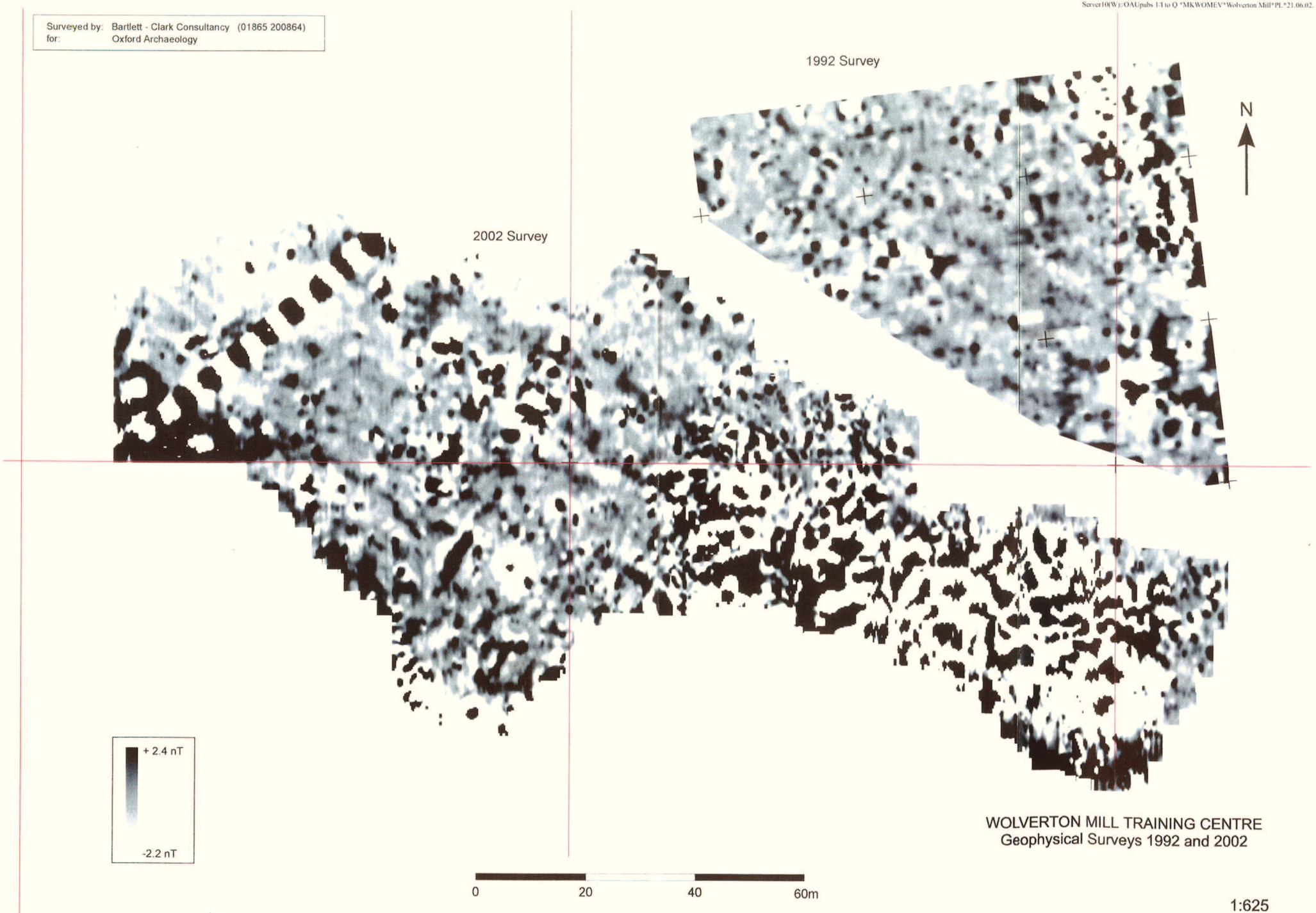


Figure 11: Magnetometer survey (grey scale plot).

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