

Land at Milton Heights Oxfordshire



Archaeological Evaluation Report



June 2013

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Land at Milton Heights, Oxfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Written by Gerry Thacker

*with contributions from John Cotter, Edward Biddulph, Lena Strid and Ian Scott and
illustrated by Leo Heatley and Georgina Slater*

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Summary

From the 3rd to the 6th of June 2013 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a trial trench evaluation on land at Milton Heights, Oxfordshire, on behalf of Stewart Lilly Associates. The evaluation identified two north-south aligned ditches of possible Roman date and a series of west-east orientated plough furrows of post medieval date. A single north-west to south-east aligned ditch, two postholes and a tree throw hole remained undated.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 From the 3rd to the 6th of June 2013 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a trial trench evaluation on land at Milton Heights, Oxfordshire, on behalf of Stewart Lilly Associates. The site lies on the eastern side of Milton Hill, to the south of Home Farm Trust and to the west of Milton Church of England primary school and is centred on NGR SU 4818 9104 (Fig. 1). It is proposed to build 48 dwellings and five Home Farm Trust Residential units within the site.
- 1.1.2 A design brief for a predetermination evaluation was issued by Hugh Coddington of Oxfordshire County Council (OCC 2013), and OA produced a written scheme of investigation (WSI) in response to this document (OA 2013).
- 1.1.3 The evaluation consisted of sixteen trenches, each measuring 30m by 1.5m laid out to provide an even coverage of the site (Fig. 2).

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The area of proposed development currently consists of around 2.4 hectares of pasture.
- 1.2.2 The geology of the area is Upper Greensand, and the site lies at around 90m OD.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The application site lies within an area of archaeological potential. The monitoring of a recent water pipeline that ran to the southern and western sides of the application area revealed two distinct and important archaeological sites (Hart et al 2012). To the south is a late Iron Age hilltop enclosure bounded by a triple ditch. To the west is a settlement site, with evidence of occupation during the late Bronze Age, middle Iron Age and later Roman periods. Archaeological remains identified included buildings, wells, enclosures and human burials.

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 OA would like to thank Stewart Lilly who commissioned the work, and Hugh Coddington, Principal Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council who monitored the evaluation. The field work was undertaken by Robin Bashford with the assistance of Ben McAndrew, Felicia Fricke and Benn Penny-Mason, and was managed for OA by Gerry Thacker.



2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The aims of the evaluation were:

- (i) To determine the presence or absence of any archaeological remains which may survive.
- (ii) To determine or confirm the approximate extent of any surviving remains.
- (iii) To determine the date range of any surviving remains by artefactual or other means.
- (iv) To determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains.
- (v) To determine the degree of complexity of any surviving horizontal or vertical stratigraphy.
- (vi) To assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape.
- (vii) To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence, and the forms in which such evidence may survive.
- (viii) To determine the implications of any remains with reference to economy, status, utility and social activity.
- (ix) To determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of the artefactual evidence present.

2.2 Specific aims and objectives

2.2.1 The specific aims and objectives of the evaluation were:

- (x) To investigate whether the archaeological remains uncovered during the earlier pipeline works extended into the application area.

2.3 Methodology

2.3.1 The sixteen trenches were laid out using a GPS system, and were excavated under close archaeological supervision to the top of the natural sediments.

2.3.2 The methodology outlined within the WSI was followed at all times.

2.3.3 Trenches 12, 14, 15 and 16 were moved slightly from their original positions due to above ground obstructions.



3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 Trenches containing archaeological features are discussed in general in section 3.3 below, and in more detail in section 3.4. The dimensions and depths of all deposits are shown within the tables that form Appendix A. A summary of the finds is presented in section 3.7 below, and the quantification and description of the finds form Appendix B. The location of the archaeological features are shown in Figure 2, and the excavated sections are shown in Figure 3.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 All trenches contained topsoil, which varied in depth between 0.25m (Trench 6) and 0.5m (Trench 16). The topsoil was directly above the natural Greensand, except at the eastern end of Trench 16, where a 0.15m thick dark grey layer of disturbed soil of modern date (1601) was present between the topsoil and natural.

3.2.2 Ground conditions were good throughout, and trenches remained dry. The visual difference between the fills of features and the Greensand natural was noted to be fairly subtle, and edge definition of features was often fairly poor.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 A series of west-east orientated shallow ditches, several of which contained material of post medieval date, are interpreted as plough furrows and were present in Trenches 3, 4, 5, 8, 13 and 13 (Fig. 2). A ditch on a similar alignment in Trench 5 is likely to be an associated field boundary. Two north-south aligned ditches (in Trenches 6 and 11) contained a small number of pottery sherds of Roman date. A NW-SE aligned ditch within Trench 2, and postholes in Trenches 3 and 4 remained undated.

3.3.2 Trenches 1, 9, 7, 10, 15 and 16 were devoid of any archaeological features.

3.4 Trenches 3, 4, 5, 8, 12 and 13

3.4.1 This group of trenches contained one or more wide and shallow linear features which shared a broadly west-east alignment, and are interpreted as the remains of plough furrows. Of the nine furrows identified (302, 304, 404, 406, 502, 801, 1201, 1302 and 1304), six contained material of post medieval date including pottery sherds, clay pipe, ceramic building material, animal bone, bottle glass and an iron nail (see Appendix B). In addition Trenches 3 and 4 each contained a shallow undated posthole.

3.5 Trenches 6 and 11

3.5.1 Both Trenches 6 and 11 contained a single ditch orientated in a broadly north-south direction. Ditch 602, in Trench 6 had a wide and shallow concave profile not dissimilar to the plough furrows described above. The single fill (603) was similar to the underlying natural Greensand (601), and contained a single small worn sherd possibly from an Oxfordshire white ware flagon of 2nd to 3rd century date.

3.5.2 Ditch 1101 in Trench 11 had a comparatively deeper profile with steeper sides and a flat base. The single fill was a mid greenish grey sandy clay from which two small and abraded pottery sherds of early Roman date were recovered (see Appendix B).



3.6 Trench 2

- 3.6.1 Trench 2 contained a single narrow ditch (204) which was orientated NW-SE. The ditch had fairly steep sides and a flat base and contained a single mid – pale brownish grey clay silt fill which contained no finds (205). The trench also contained a tree throw hole (202), the single mid yellow brown clay fill of which (203) contained frequent roots of recent date.

3.7 Finds summary

- 3.7.1 Finds were recovered from fills 303, 403, 405, 407, 603, 802, 1102, 1202, and 1303. The finds comprised three small sherds of pottery of Roman date (fills 603 and 1102), and four sherds of 18th century date (fills 405 and 407). Nine fragments of peg tile and floor tile of 17th-19th century date were recovered from fills 303, 405, 1202 and 1303. Stem fragments of clay pipe of 18th and 18th-19th century date were recovered from fills 303 and 1202 respectively. Animal bone fragments including a pelvis fragment from a medium sized mammal and a horse tooth were recovered from fills 407, 802 and 1303. An iron nail of post medieval date was found in fill 802, and bottle glass of mid 19th century to modern date was recovered from fill 403.
- 3.7.2 No features with the potential to provide palaeoenvironmental information were identified during the evaluation.



4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 4.1.1 The evaluation was undertaken during fair weather and ground conditions were good throughout. The visibility of the revealed features was good on initial machining, although they dried out quickly and became less visible over time. Edge definition between the feature edges and the underlying Greensand geology was often poor, but deliberate over excavation by hand allowed the true feature profiles to be recorded.

4.2 Evaluation objectives and results

- 4.2.1 The evaluation determined the presence of archaeological remains, and confirmed their date, extent, condition and degree of complexity. The historic associations and the potential for the site to provide palaeoenvironmental data were assessed and the range, quantity and quality of the artefactual evidence determined. The presence or absence of the remains uncovered by previous work in the vicinity was determined.

4.3 Interpretation

- 4.3.1 The majority of the features uncovered can be shown with a high degree of confidence to be of post medieval date, and are interpreted as the remains of plough furrows, with the corresponding ridges having been ploughed flat. The furrows run in a broadly west-east direction, parallel to a field boundary to the north shown on the OS map of 1883. The two ditches identified in Trenches 6 and 11 that run on a north-south orientation could be of Roman date, but the pottery sherds recovered from the fills are generally small and abraded and the ditch profiles are not dissimilar from those of the plough furrows. It is clear that the quantity of archaeology and finds identified from the previous excavations to the south and west of the site were not present within the evaluation trenches.



APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description				Orientation		N-S
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil overlying a natural of pale yellow-grey Greensand.				Avg. depth (m)		0.4
				Width (m)		1.5
				Length (m)		30
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
100	Layer	-	0.4	Topsoil	-	-
101	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 2						
General description				Orientation		E-W
Trench contained a narrow NW-SE orientated ditch and a tree throw hole. These were sealed by topsoil overlying a natural of pale yellow-grey Greensand.				Avg. depth (m)		0.4
				Width (m)		1.5
				Length (m)		30
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
200	Layer	-	0.4	Topsoil	-	-
201	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
202	Cut	1.7	0.15	Tree throw hole	-	-
203	Fill	1.7	0.15	Fill of 202, brownish yellow silty clay	-	-
204	Cut	0.43	0.11	Ditch	-	-
205	Fill	0.43	0.11	Fill of 105, brownish grey silty clay	-	-

Trench 3						
General description				Orientation		N-S
Trench contained two W-E orientated plough furrows and a posthole. Features were sealed by topsoil overlying a natural of pale yellow-grey Greensand.				Avg. depth (m)		0.35
				Width (m)		1.5
				Length (m)		30
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
300	Layer	-	0.35	Topsoil	-	-
301	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
302	Cut	2.4	0.2	Plough furrow	-	-



303	Fill	2.4	0.2	Fill of 302. dark greyish brown silty clay	Tile, clay pipe	17 th -19 th century
304	Cut	1.35	0.24	Plough furrow	-	-
305	Fill	1.35	0.24	Fill of 304, brownish grey silty clay	-	-
306	Cut	0.43	0.09	Post Hole	-	-
307	Fill	0.43	0.09	Fill of 306, brownish grey	-	-

Trench 4						
General description					Orientation	N-S
Trench contained two W-E orientated plough furrows and a posthole. Features were sealed by topsoil overlying a natural of pale yellow-grey Greensand.					Avg. depth (m)	0.3
					Width (m)	1.5
					Length (m)	30
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
400	Layer	-	0.3	Topsoil	-	-
401	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
402	Cut	0.26	0.8	Post hole	-	-
403	Fill	0.26	0.8	Fill of 402, greyish brown silty clay	Glass	Mid 19th century-modern
404	Cut	1.15	0.2	Plough furrow	-	-
405	Fill	1.15	0.2	Fill of 404, light brownish yellow	Tile, pottery	17th-19th century
406	Cut	2.2	0.15	Plough furrow	-	-
407	Fill	2.2	0.15	Fill of 406, dark brownish grey silty clay	Pottery, animal bone	AD 1710-1750

Trench 5						
General description					Orientation	N-S
Trench contained a W-E orientated ditch and plough furrow. Features overlain by topsoil overlying a natural of pale yellow-grey Greensand.					Avg. depth (m)	0.3
					Width (m)	1.5
					Length (m)	30
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
500	Layer	-	0.3	Topsoil	-	-
501	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
502	Cut	1.65	0.2	Plough furrow	-	-
503	Fill	1.65	0.3	Fill of 502, dark grey silty clay	-	-



504	Cut	0.55	0.2	Ditch	-	-
505	Fill	0.55	0.2	Fill of 504, brownish yellow silty clay	-	-

Trench 6						
General description				Orientation		E-W
Trench contained a single N-S orientated linear ditch. The ditch was overlain by topsoil overlying a natural of pale yellow-grey Greensand.				Avg. depth (m)		0.25
				Width (m)		1.5
				Length (m)		30
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
600	Layer	-	0.25	Topsoil	-	-
601	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
602	Cut	1.5	0.25	Ditch	-	-
603	Fill	1.5	0.25	Fill of 602, greyish brown silty clay	Pottery	2nd-3rd century

Trench 7						
General description				Orientation		E/W
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil overlying a natural of pale yellow-grey Greensand.				Avg. depth (m)		0.3
				Width (m)		1.5
				Length (m)		30
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
700	Layer	-	0.3	Topsoil	-	-
701	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 8						
General description				Orientation		N-S
Trench contained a single W-E orientated plough furrow. Feature overlain by topsoil overlying a natural of pale yellow-grey Greensand.				Avg. depth (m)		0.4
				Width (m)		1.5
				Length (m)		30
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
800	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
801	Cut	1.3	0.24	Plough furrow	-	-
802	Fill	1.3	0.24	Fill of 801, brownish grey silty clay	Slag, Fe nail	Post medieval



803	Layer	-	0.4	Topsoil	-	-
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Trench 9

General description Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil overlying a natural of pale yellow-grey Greensand.	Orientation	E-W
	Avg. depth (m)	0.35
	Width (m)	1.5
	Length (m)	30

Contexts

context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
900	Layer	-	0.35	Topsoil, dark grey silty clay	-	-
902	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 10

General description Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil overlying a natural of pale yellow-grey Greensand.	Orientation	N-S
	Avg. depth (m)	0.35
	Width (m)	1.5
	Length (m)	30

Contexts

context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
1000	Layer	-	0.35	Topsoil, dark grey silty clay	-	-
1001	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 11

General description Trench contained a single N-S orientated linear ditch. Feature overlain by topsoil overlying a natural of pale yellow-grey Greensand.	Orientation	N-S
	Avg. depth (m)	0.35
	Width (m)	1.5
	Length (m)	30

Contexts

context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
1100	Layer	-	0.35	Topsoil, dark grey silty clay	-	-
1101	Cut	-1.1	0.3	Ditch	-	-
1102	Fill	-1.1	0.3	Fill of 1101, greenish grey sandy clay	Pottery	Early Roman
1103	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 12



General description				Orientation		
Trench contained a single W-E orientated plough furrow. Feature overlain by topsoil overlying a natural of pale yellow-grey Greensand.				N-S		
				Avg. depth (m)		0.3
				Width (m)		1.5
				Length (m)		30
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
1200	Layer	-	0.3	Topsoil	-	-
1201	Cut	-1.85	0.2	Plough furrow	-	-
1202	Fill	-1.85	0.2	Fill of 1201, dark brownish grey silty clay	Tile, clay pipe	Late 18th-19th century
1203	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 13						
General description				Orientation		
Trench contained two W-E orientated plough furrow. Features overlain by topsoil overlying a natural of pale yellow-grey Greensand.				N-S		
				Avg. depth (m)		0.3
				Width (m)		1.5
				Length (m)		30
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comments		
1300	Layer	-		Topsoil	-	-
1301	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
1302	Cut	2.9	0.35	Plough furrow		
1303	Fill	2.9	0.35	Fill of 1302, yellowish brown silty clay	Tile, animal bone	17th -19th century
1304	Cut	1.5	0.16	Plough furrow	-	-
1305	Fill	1.5	0.16	Fill of 1304, dark grey silty	-	-

Trench 14						
General description				Orientation		
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil overlying a natural of pale yellow-grey Greensand.				NE-SW		
				Avg. depth (m)		0.3
				Width (m)		1.5
				Length (m)		30
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
1400	Layer	-	0.3	Topsoil, grey silty clay	-	-
1401	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-



Trench 15						
General description				Orientation		E-W
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil overlying a natural of pale yellow-grey Greensand.				Avg. depth (m)		0.4
				Width (m)		1.5
				Length (m)		30
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
1500	Layer	-	0.4	Topsoil	-	-
1501	Layer	-	0.02	Re-deposited natural	-	-
1502	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 16						
General description				Orientation		E-W
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil overlying a natural of pale yellow-grey Greensand.				Avg. depth (m)		0.5
				Width (m)		1.5
				Length (m)		30
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
100	Layer	-	0.5	Topsoil, grey silty sand	-	-
101	Layer	-	0.15	Modern disturbance, dark grey silty clay	-	-
102	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-



APPENDIX B. FINDS REPORTS

B.1 Pottery

By John Cotter and Edward Biddulph

Context	Description	Date
405	2 sherds of Pearlware plate or dish, 26g.	1730-1780.
407	1 sherd post medieval redware (PMR), 1 sherd Staffordshire white salt glazed stoneware, 9g.	1710-1750
603	1 sherd Oxfordshire white ware ?flagon, 8g.	2nd- 3rd c AD
1102	1 sherd Roman grey ware and 1 grog-tempered sherd, 3g.	Early Roman

Description/recommendations.

B.1.1 The assemblage is of low potential and requires no further work.

B.2 Ceramic Building Material

By John Cotter

Context	Description	Date
303	Floor-tile fragment, 44g.	17-19th c
405	2 fragments post medieval peg tile, 71g.	17-19th c
1202	2 fragments post medieval peg tile 1 fragment land drain, 68g.	17-18th c late 18-19th c
1303	3 fragments post medieval peg tile, 42g.	17-19th c

Description/recommendations.

B.2.1 The assemblage is of low potential and requires no further work.

B.3 Clay pipe

By John Cotter

Context	Description	Date
303	1 stem fragment, 5g.	18th c
1202	1 thin stem fragment, 2g.	Late 18-19th c

**Description/recommendations.**

B.3.1 The assemblage is of low potential and requires no further work.

B.4 Animal bone

By Lena Strid

Context	Description
407	1 medium mammal pelvis fragment, 6g.
802	3 unidentifiable fragments, 1g.
1303	1 horse tooth, 26g.

Description/recommendations.

B.4.1 The assemblage is of low potential and requires no further work.

B.5 Glass

By Ian Scott

Context	Description	Date
403	1 sherd moulded wine bottle glass, green metal, no diagnostic features, 9g.	Mid 19th c - modern

Description/recommendations.

B.5.1 The assemblage is of low potential and requires no further work.

B.6 Metalwork

By Ian Scott

Context	Description	Date
802	1 iron nail, 7g.	post-medieval

Description/recommendations.

B.6.1 The assemblage is of low potential and requires no further work.



B.7 Slag

By Geraldine Crann

Context	Description
802	A single scrap of vitreous slag, 4g.

Description/recommendations.

B.7.1 The assemblage is of low potential and requires no further work.



APPENDIX C. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OCC. 2013. Land at Milton heights, Oxon. Design Brief for Archaeological Field Evaluation. Oxfordshire County Council. Unpublished document

Hart H et al. 2012. The Archaeology of the Cleeve to Fyfield Water main, South Oxfordshire. Excavations in 2006-7. Oxoniensia Vol 77.

OA 2013. and at Milton Heights, Oxfordshire. Written scheme of investigation for an archaeological evaluation. Unpublished document





APPENDIX D. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Land at Milton Heights, Oxfordshire

Site code: MILH13

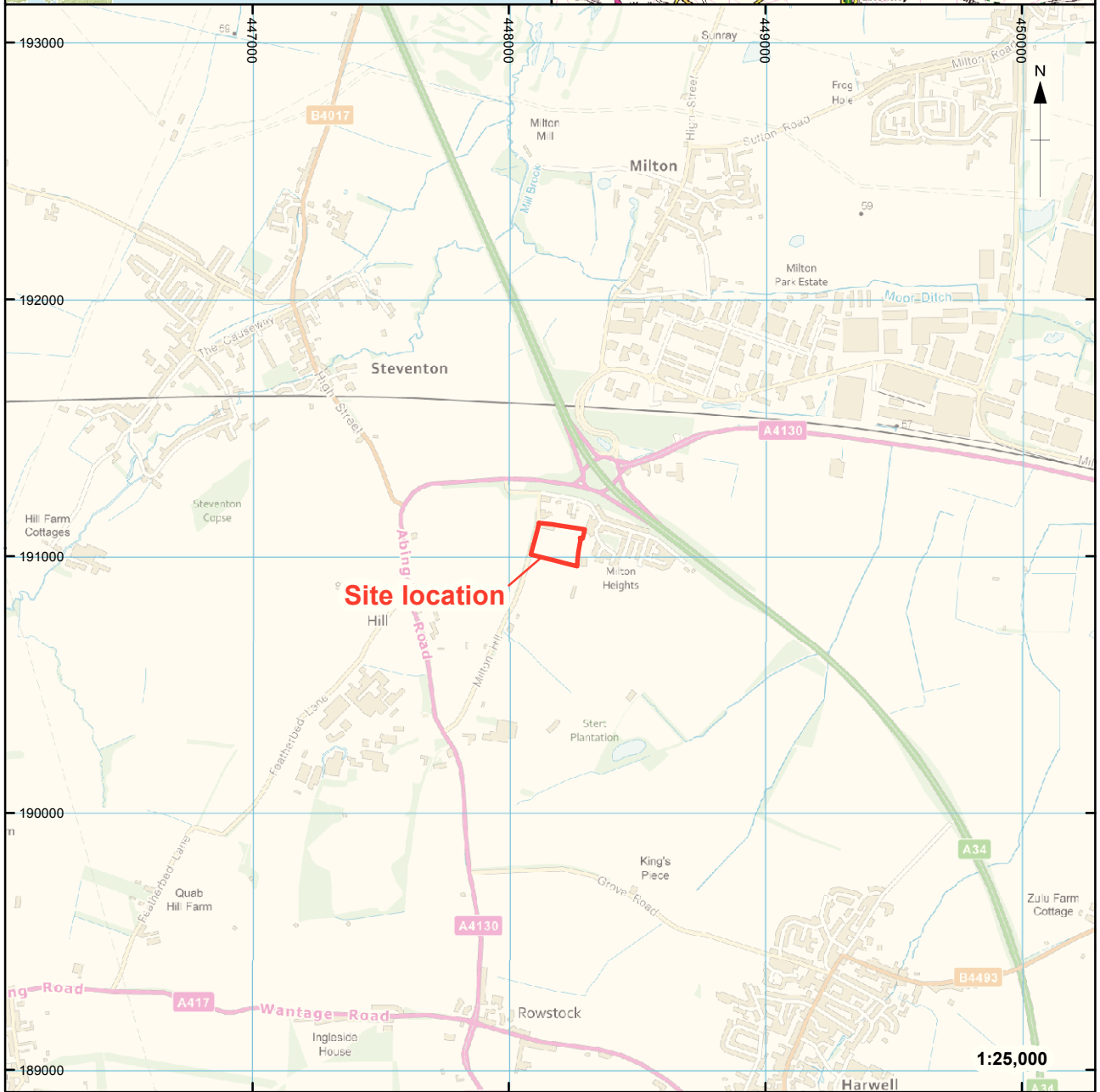
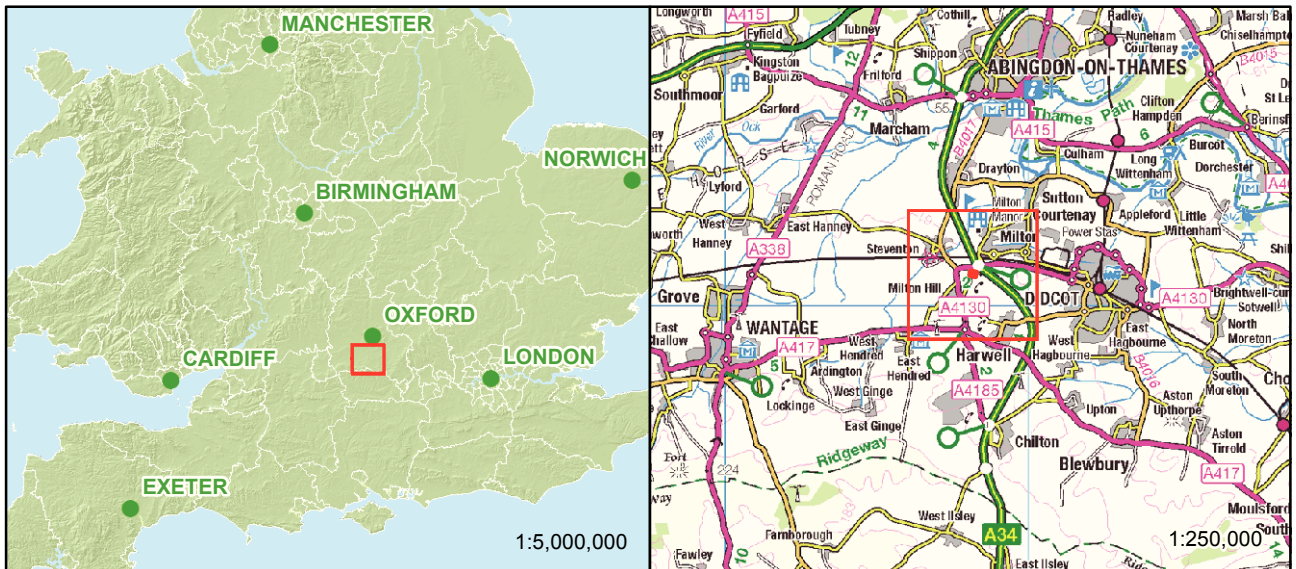
Grid reference: SU 4818 9104

Type: Evaluation

Date and duration: 3rd -6th June 2013

Summary of results: The evaluation identified two north-south aligned ditches of possible Roman date and a series of west-east orientated plough furrows of post medieval date. A single north-west to south-east aligned ditch, two postholes and a tree throw hole remained undated.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Oxfordshire County Museum Service in due course, under the accession number OXCMS:213.85.



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Figure 1: Site location

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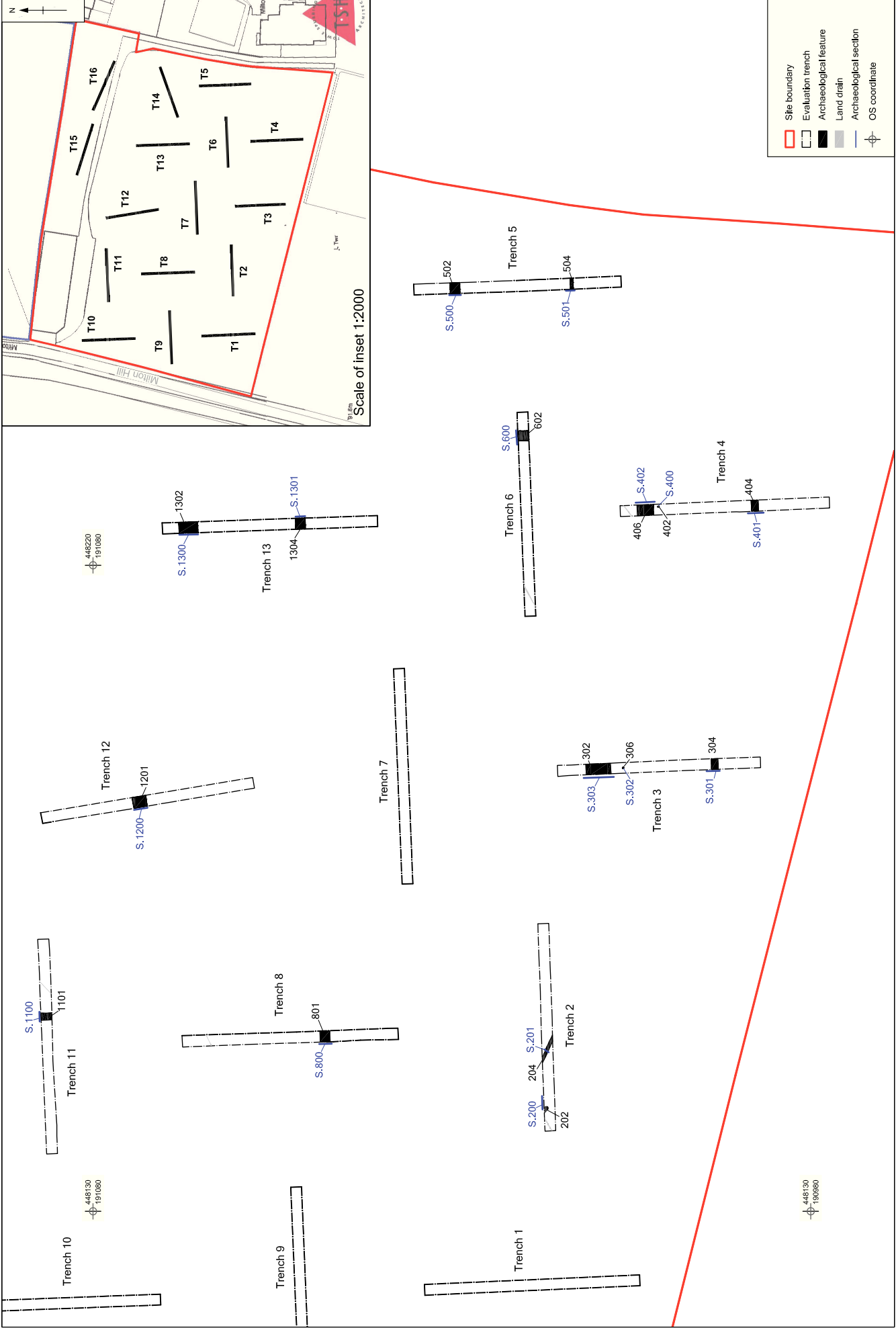


Fig. 2: Trench locations with features and section locations

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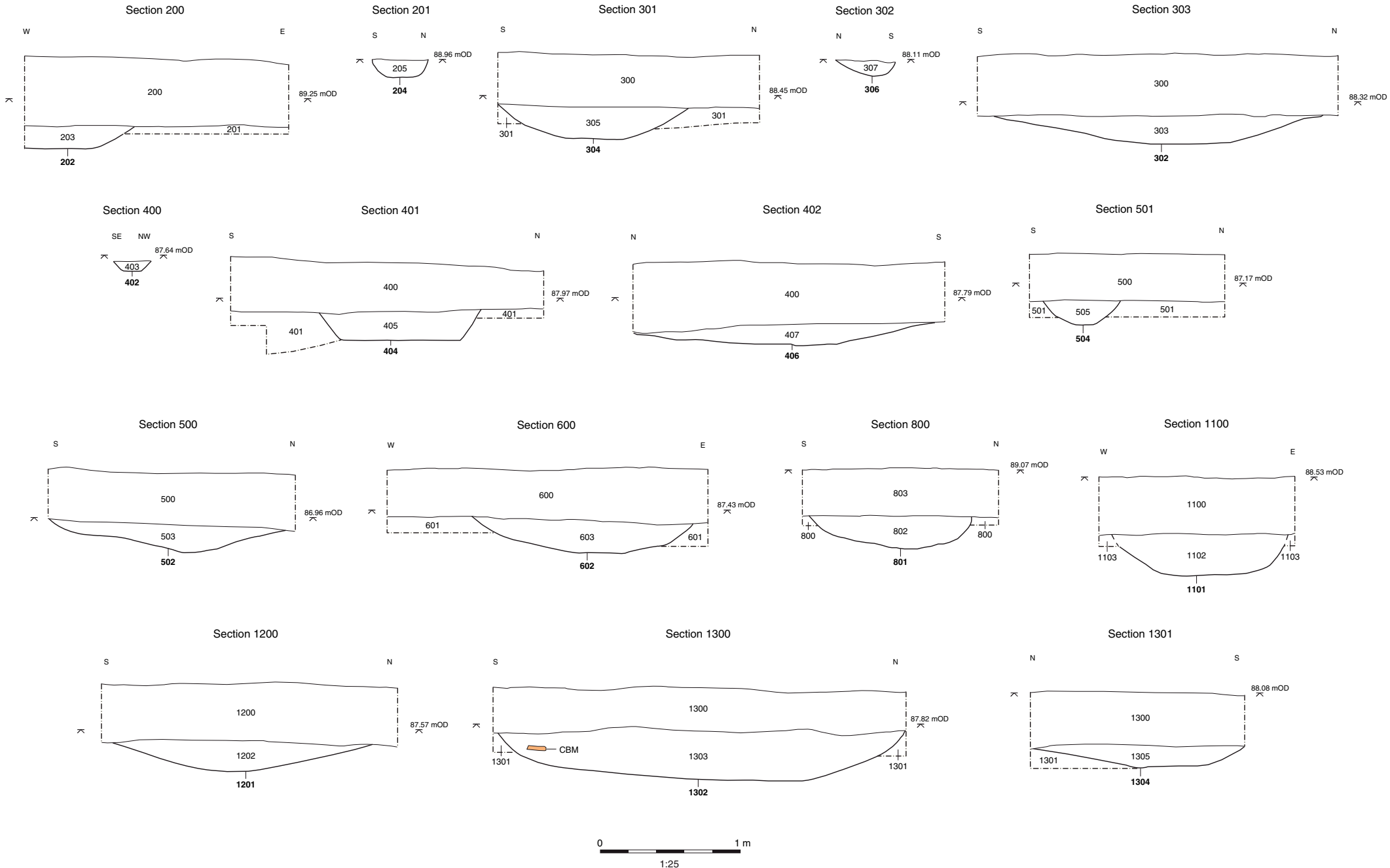


Figure 3: Sections



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