

Kings Ride House
High Street
Brill
Buckinghamshire



**Archaeological
Watching Brief Report**



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**Kings Ride House
High Street, Brill,
Buckinghamshire**

NGR SP 6538 1385

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

In September 2009 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Kings Ride House, High Street, Brill, Buckinghamshire. The work was commissioned by Country House Developments in advance of the construction of a detached double garage with associated driveway. The watching brief revealed deep deposits of worked/garden soil overlying weathered ironstone. No significant archaeology was observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 In September 2009 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Kings Ride House, High Street, Brill, Buckinghamshire (NGR SP 6538 1385). The work was commissioned by Country House Developments in respect of a planning application for a detached double garage with living accommodation above, together with an associated driveway (Planning Application No. 08/02789/APP). Planning consent included a requirement for an archaeological watching brief during the period of groundworks.

1.1.2 A project brief was set by Ruth Beckley of the Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service (BCAS) specifying the details of the archaeological watching brief (BCAS, 2009). OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing how the requirements of the brief would be met (OA, 2009), which was approved by BCAS.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 The village of Brill is located approximately 14 km north-east of Oxford and 13 km west of Aylesbury (Fig. 1). The development site is situated within the rear garden of Kings Ride House which is sited on the west side of the High Street. The High Street itself runs north-south along the eastern half of the village.

1.2.2 The development site was previously a lawned area and is bounded to the south, west and north by domestic gardens and to the east by Kings Ride House. The site rises to the north-east with an average height of approximately 185 m OD. The underlying geology is Whitchurch Sand Formations with Shotover Ironsands (British Geological Survey, sheet no 237).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was originally presented in the WSI (OA, 2009) and is reproduced below. Brill is of considerable archaeological interest with evidence from pre-history through to the post-medieval periods.

- 1.3.3 Iron Age occupation adjacent to the church associated with an earthwork (Historic Environment Record (HER) Number 0106), may represent the remains of a hillfort rampart (Farley, 1989), but are likely to be later (JMHS, 2005).
- 1.3.4 Roman finds are known from Brill and include a coin 200m southwest (HER 216) of the proposal site and a 1st-century coin from the parish (HER 0582).
- 1.3.5 In the late-Saxon period, Brill was a royal manor and the centre of an estate, which may have had its origins in a pre-Saxon 'multiple estate' (Baines, 1995). Brill was the most important settlement within the medieval forest of Bernwood, which was legally established following the Norman Conquest based upon the pre-existing woodland and a hunting lodge built by Edward the Confessor. Brill was the administrative centre for the forest and hundred with a royal house, fishponds, mills, church, prison-house, market and fair, clay pits and kilns.
- 1.3.6 A timber royal hunting lodge (HER 2310) was constructed in the 11th century somewhere within Brill. The building prospered and grew with royal favour and the later parish church (HER 2192) may have functioned as a royal chapel to the palace.
- 1.3.7 Royal presence had economic implications as under its patronage, the pottery industry may have been established by the end of the 12th century (Mellor, 1994, 111). Evidence for the industry is found throughout Brill and medieval pottery is often found in conjunction with later brick, tile and pottery kilns (e.g. HER 5712), indicating longevity and continuity of use.
- 1.3.8 A mound considered a medieval castle motte (HER 0528) lies close to the site. This mound is recorded on the Bateson map of 1590.
- 1.3.9 In the 13th and early 14th centuries Brill was described as a borough but thereafter it went into decline and lost its status as a town.
- 1.3.10 Extensive remains of the medieval and post-medieval pottery, tile and brick industry are known in close proximity to the proposed development site (Farley, 1979). Medieval pottery kilns have been found in the vicinity of the site (HER 5058, HER 4394, HER 0576, possible HER 5681, HER 5293 and HER 2195).
- 1.3.11 Post-medieval brick and tile works are known c.1km north of the proposed development site (HER 4653 and HER 4192). Pottery kilns of the post-medieval period occur within 200m of the site (HER 5293, HER 2129 and HER 2499). Another closer one (HER 2153) was excavated directly to the rear of the site at Prosser's Yard (Cocroft, 1985).
- 1.3.12 An evaluation at the east end of Windmill Street, to the rear of the Sun Inn, produced traces of post-medieval pottery production, including dumps of clay, pottery wasters and kiln furniture (Murray, 2001).

1.3.13 The Solent Thames Historic Environment Resource Assessment for post-medieval Buckinghamshire has noted the heavy concentration of excavated pottery kilns at Brill. There is considerable research potential of this isolated industrial community to serve as a model for other early industrial settlements and settlement patterns in the region (Taylor-Moore and Dyer, 2007; Green, Giggins and Welch, 2007). Detailed investigation of the village might fill in the picture of the distribution of kilns through time and space. It would be interesting to know, for example, whether Brill had an 'industrial quarter' as might be superficially suggested by the concentration of known sites in the northern half of the settlement. This pattern might usefully be related to known settlement patterns and evidence of the standards of living across the village through the study of pottery or other material (Green, Giggins and Welch, 2007).

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The aims of the Archaeological Watching Brief are to determine the location, extent, date, character, and state of preservation of any archaeological remains surviving on the site, to investigate and record any remains and to produce a client report, with subsequent publication within a suitable local journal if necessary.

2.1.2 Specific objectives will be to obtain:

- Evidence relating to the origins of occupation fronting on to The Square
- Remains of pottery, tile and brick manufacture
- Evidence relating to Iron Age activity

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The excavations were conducted using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless 1.8m wide grading bucket during the excavation of the access road, and a 0.6m wide toothless bucket during the excavation of the foundations (Fig.2). The watching brief was conducted as a series of site visits to monitor any activity likely to impact upon archaeological deposits.

2.2.2 All excavated material and the sides of any excavations were closely examined both to collect dating material and for evidence of any features or structures.

2.2.3 A plan showing the extent and location of any excavations was maintained at a scale of 1:50 (Figs. 2 and 3) and any recorded sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All the excavations and recorded sections were photographed using digital photography and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was also made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

Foundations for the garage

- 3.1.1 The footprint of the garage measured approximately 7 m by 6 m. A foundation trench measuring 0.6 m wide was machine-excavated at the perimeter of this area (except for two small gaps on the north-east side). The trench reached a depth of 1.2m below the current ground level (bgl), except around the south-western corner where it reached a depth of 1.8 m bgl (due to the proximity of a sewer pipe close to this corner).
- 3.1.2 The stratigraphy observed was similar within all the excavations and a general description can be applied throughout.
- 3.1.3 Within the deepest part of the excavations (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4, Section 1) a layer of pale orange-yellow natural sand (7) was encountered at a depth of 1.5 m below the original ground level (185.47 m OD). This deposit sloped down to the south-west reflecting the topography of the area. Overlying this was a 0.18 m deep band of very dark red-brown sand containing small to medium sized angular fragments of ironstone (6). This was overlaid by a layer of light orange-yellow sand (5) measuring up to 0.3 m in depth (Fig. 4, Sections 1, 2 and 3).
- 3.1.4 Sealing this deposit was a 0.25 m deep layer of small to medium sized angular ironstone fragments within a dark red-brown clay silt matrix (4). This was overlaid by a 0.18 m deep layer of light grey-brown clay silt containing occasional ironstone fragments (3).
- 3.1.5 Layer 3 was overlain by a layer of dark grey-brown silt loam, 0.20 m deep (2). This was sealed by a layer of very dark grey-brown silt loam (1), measuring between 0.25 m and 0.3 m in depth.

Access road and turning area

- 3.1.6 This ran from the existing gateway fronting the High Street, up to the new garage entrance for a total length of approximately 38 m. The excavations were dug to a maximum depth of 0.18 m and were wholly within layer 1.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 Despite the potential of the site very little dating evidence was recovered from the excavations. A total of three fragments of a plain red ceramic peg roofing tile was recovered from layer 1. These dated from the post medieval period.
- 3.2.2 No other artefacts were recovered from any of the other contexts.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 Layers (4) - (7) probably represent colluvial (“hill-wash”) deposits. Layer (3) was subsoil, and possibly the result of bioturbation and weathering between layers (4) and (2).
- 4.1.2 Layer (2) was a thick deposit of worked soil probably the result of horticulture associated with the houses fronting the High Street or possibly agriculture prior to their construction.
- 4.1.3 Layer (1) was also a thick deposit of worked soil. This is a probable layer of garden soil associated with Kings Ride House.
- 4.1.4 Although the site had high potential for archaeological remains, no evidence for any activity either in the form of structures, deposits or residual finds was observed during the course of the watching brief. The lack of evidence is probably as much a result of the limited nature of the excavations as well as the location of the works themselves.
- 4.1.5 The works are located within one of a number of properties on the west side of the High Street, which probably originated as medieval tenements. The deeper excavations, which impacted below the topsoil, were located some 40 m from the street frontage. Much of the medieval (and probably post-medieval) activity such as rubbish pits and wells would have been located nearer to the buildings on the street frontage.
- 4.1.6 Neither was there evidence for the medieval and post-medieval pottery industries that Brill is famous for. However much of the evidence for these has been located to the north and east of the site, and probably at the limits, if not beyond the medieval settlement itself. Kilns have been found at 28 and 58 Temple Street and also at Temple Farm, all located between 160 m and 400 m north-east of the site, on the northern edge of the village. A 16th-century kiln was found at 75 Temple Street. Post-medieval kilns were recorded at 40 Windmill Street, 160m north of the site and at Tram Hill, 440 m north-east of the site (see section 1.3).
- 4.1.7 The location of the kilns suggest a zoning of this industry away, and downwind from the tenements of the village, within one of which this watching brief was carried out.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

| <i>Context</i> | <i>Type</i> | <i>Depth</i> | <i>Comments</i> | <i>Finds</i> | <i>Date</i> |
|----------------|-------------|----------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| 1 | Layer | 0.25m – 0.3 m | Cultivated soil | Clay roofing tile | Post-medieval |
| 2 | Layer | 0.2 m – 0.25 m | Earlier worked soil | - | - |
| 3 | Layer | 0.18 m | Subsoil, bioturbation layer | - | - |
| 4 | Layer | 0.25 m | Weathered Ironstone | - | - |
| 5 | Layer | 0.3 m | Natural sand | - | - |
| 6 | Layer | 0.18 m | Weathered Ironstone | - | - |
| 7 | Layer | > 0.3 m | Natural sand | - | - |

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Kings Ride House, High Street, Brill, Buckinghamshire

Site code: BRKIRH 09

Grid reference: SP 6538 1383

Type of watching brief: Excavation of foundations for a detached garage and associated driveway

Date and duration of project: 3rd to the 14th of September 2009. Four site visits.

Area of site: 45 m x 15 m

Summary of results: Post-medieval cultivated soil overlying an earlier worked soil. No significant archaeology was encountered.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Buckingham County Museum under the following accession number: AYBCM:2009.192

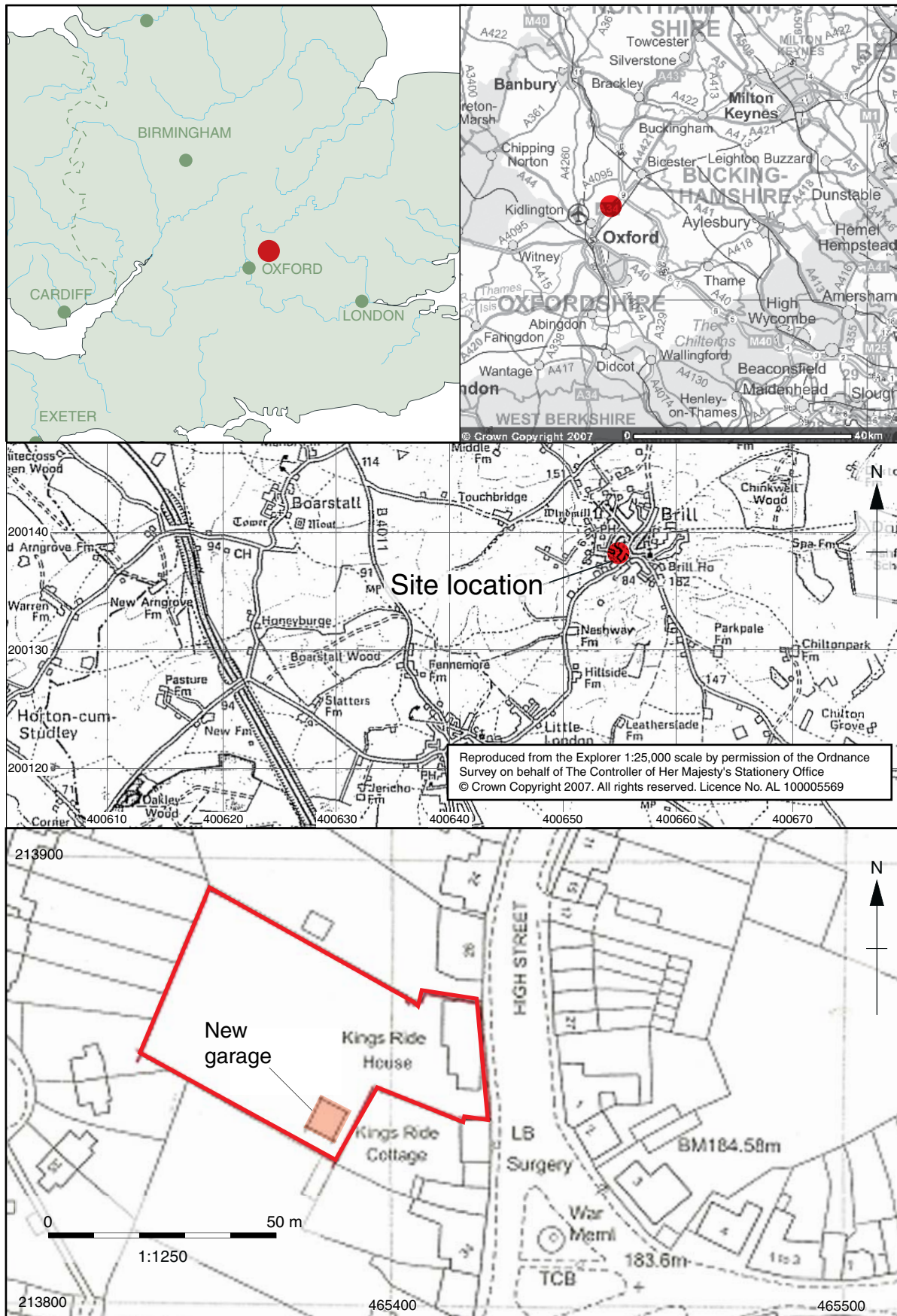


Figure 1: Site location

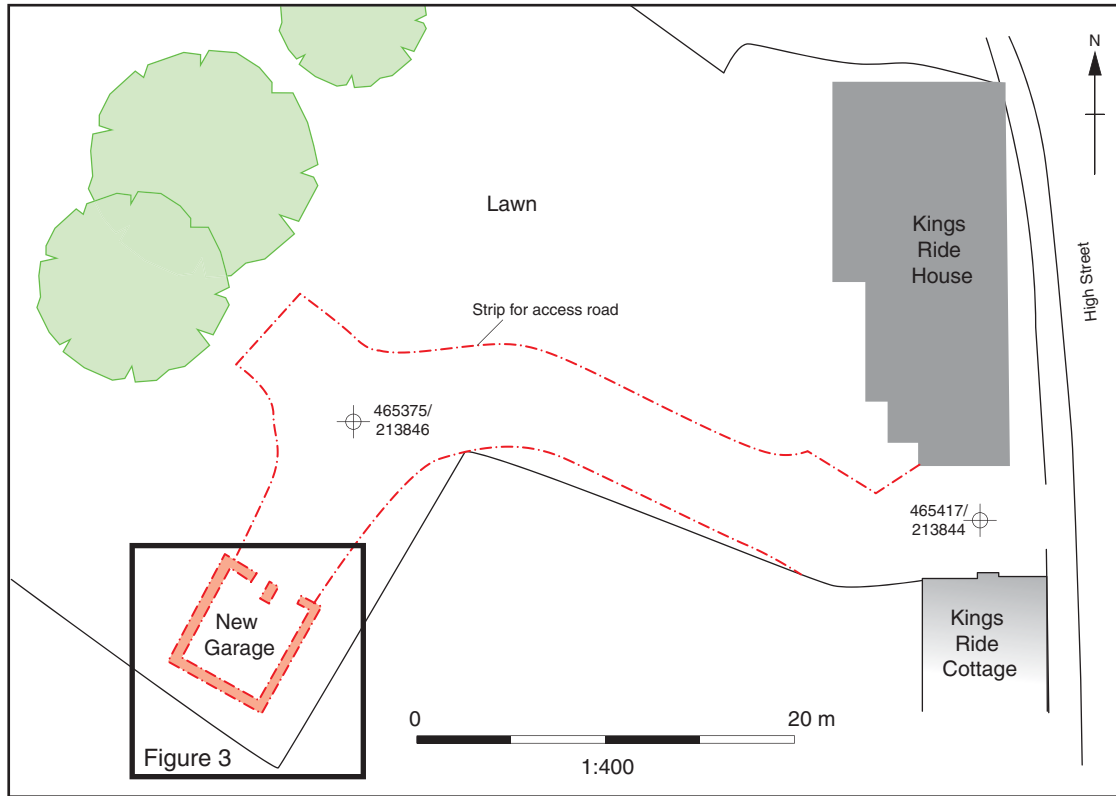


Figure 2: Site plan

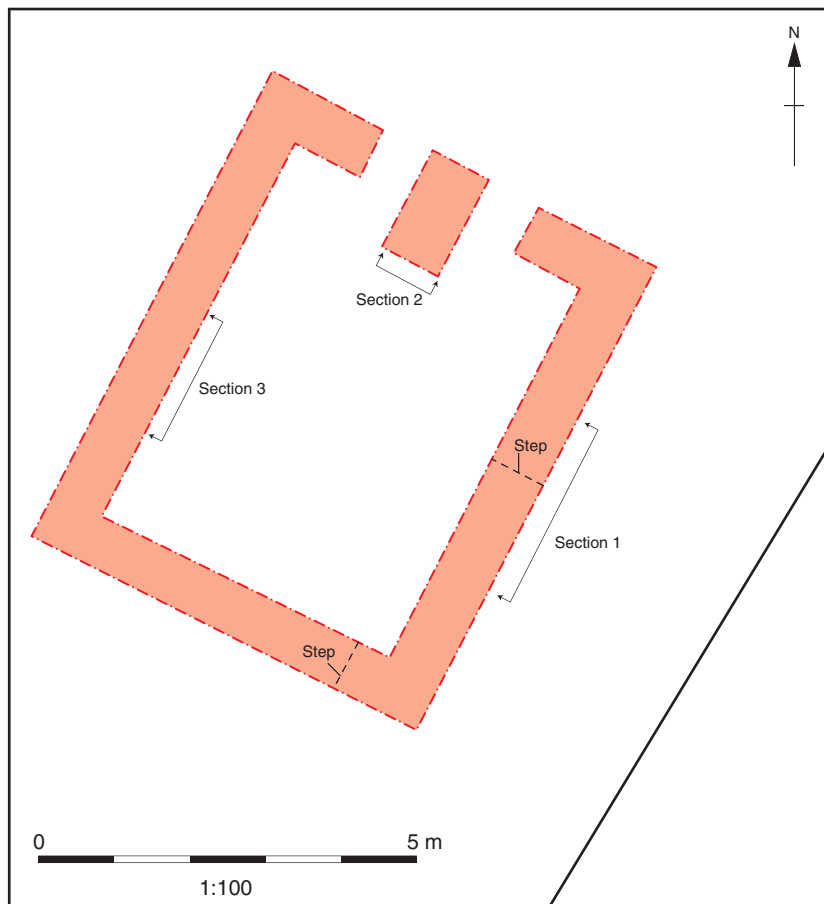


Figure 3: Plan of excavation of Garage

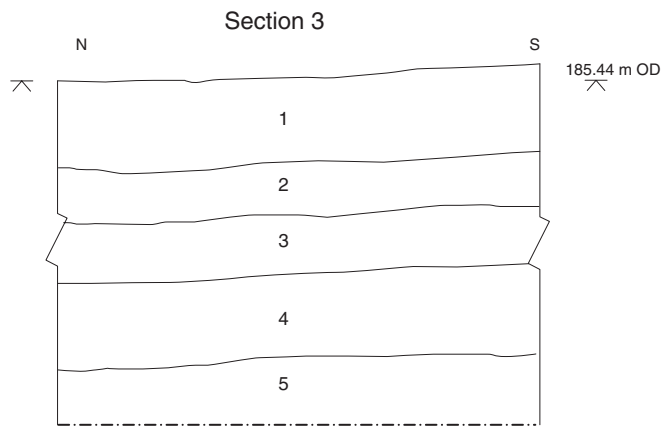
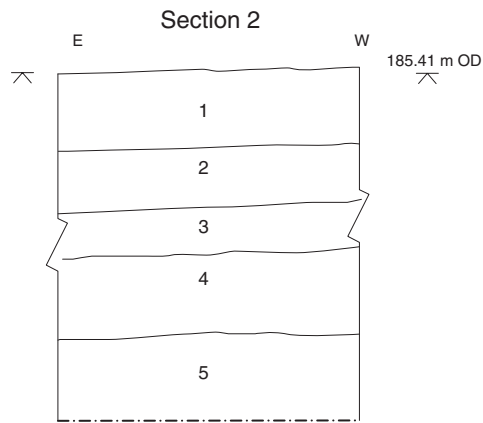
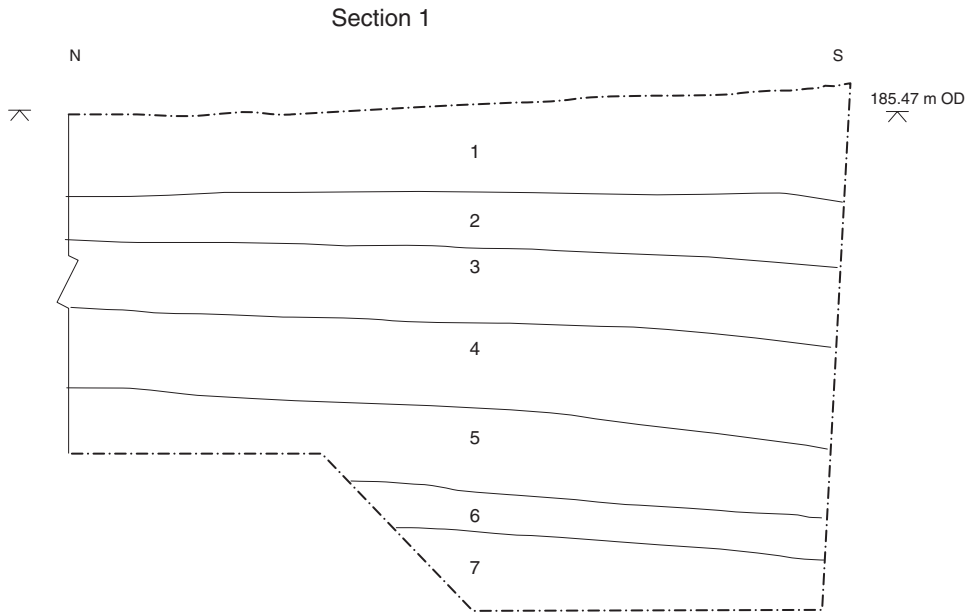


Figure 4: Sections



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