

Land adjacent to Oxford Road, Calne, Wiltshire

NGR SU 0049 7280

Archaeological Evaluation Report



OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

July 1994

LAND ADJACENT TO OXFORD ROAD, CALNE, WILTSHIRE

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

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1.0 Summary

The Oxford Archaeological Unit undertook a field evaluation of land adjacent to Oxford Road, Calne, Wiltshire (Fig. 1), at the beginning of July 1994. The work was carried out on behalf of Dalton Warner Davis in connection with the proposed construction of a roundabout, a new section of road and the building of a straw to energy plant.

Five trial trenches were positioned and excavated according to specifications set by Wiltshire County Council.

The only archaeological features to be found were two shallow ditches, one of which contained a piece of Roman tile, along with several sherds of Roman pottery and the remains of some medieval ridge and furrow ploughing.

It was also established that deep modern disturbance has already taken place throughout the north-eastern quarter of the site, due to rubbish dumping.

2.0 Introduction

The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) was commissioned by Dalton Warner Davis to undertake an archaeological evaluation of the land adjacent to the Oxford Road, Calne, Wiltshire. It is proposed to construct a roundabout, along with a new section of road through the northern part of the site and to build a straw to energy plant immediately to the south. The construction work and associated landscaping, would have a major impact on any archaeological remains on the site. The aim of the evaluation was therefore to establish the presence, degree of preservation and extent of any archaeological remains, so possible mitigation strategies could be proposed.

A particular concern was to locate any activity contemporary with the deserted medieval village of Beversbrook, which survives as an area of extensive earthworks immediately to the north of the site.

Fieldwork took place over a period of 3 days, commencing on 4th July 1994.

3.0 Archaeological and historical background

Adjacent to the site lies the medieval village of Beversbrook (SMR 450), a well preserved Scheduled Ancient Monument (Wilts 906). The site is represented by substantial and extensive earthworks surviving in permanent pasture. It is first mentioned in the Domesday Book in 1086 as Bevresbroc, a name literally meaning "Bevers brook".

The reasons for, and the date of the decline of Beversbrook are uncertain, though documentary evidence shows that dwellings still existed on the site until at least the 1380's.

4.0 Topography and Geology

The site lies immediately to the west of the Oxford Road, some 2 miles to the north of Calne. The field is presently under pasture, but appears to have been substantially levelled by ploughing. The underlying geology is Kimmeridge clay and the land has a slight gradient from west to east.

5.0 Methodology and Strategy (see Fig. 1 for trench locations)

The trenches were positioned according to specifications set by Wiltshire County Council and were originally to consist of two 100 x 1.55m trenches and three 30 x 1.55m trenches. However, the location of an oil pipe line running through the northern part of the site meant that two of the trenches (4 and 5) were slightly shortened. The southern end of trench 1 was also reduced by 10m due to the field boundary being changed from the position indicated by the 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map.

Using a JCB with a 1.55m toothless ditching bucket the trenches were excavated down to the top of the first significant archaeological deposits, or in their absence to the top of the natural subsoil. The trenches were then planned and photographed, and a representative sample of features were hand excavated and sections were drawn where appropriate.

6.0 Description of Archaeology

6.1 Trench 1 (Fig. 2) (N-S aligned, 90 m long x 1.55 m wide)

The top of the natural clay was reached throughout the trench at a depth of 0.35 m to 0.40 m.

Cut into the top of the natural clay, some 10 m from the north end of the trench, was a shallow, E-W aligned ditch (104). The ditch, which produced a quantity of Roman pottery and a piece of decorated Roman tile, was only some 0.12m deep and had ill defined edges, having been heavily truncated by later ploughing.

Sealing the ditch, and overlying the natural clay throughout the rest of the trench was a deposit of orange brown sandy clay (102). Above layer 102, and also extending throughout the trench, was a deposit of grey brown clay loam (101), directly overlaid by the present topsoil (100).

6.2 Trench 2, aligned E-W, 100 m long x 1.55 m wide and trench 5, aligned NW-SE, 20 m long x 1.55 m wide.

The depth and the deposits in these two trenches were the same as trench 1, but no archaeological features were observed in either trench.

6.3 Trench 3 (Fig 3) (NNE-SSW aligned, 30 m long x 1.55 m wide)

Deep modern disturbance (303) was observed throughout this trench, and the natural clay (304) was only seen in the bottom of test pits, dug in the middle and at each end of the trench. The test pits, which were machine excavated, showed the disturbance to be 1.60 m deep in the north half of the trench, increasing to 1.80 m at the south end. The disturbance was filled with a grey brown sandy loam (302), containing frequent glass bottles (mid 20th century) and other rubbish. Filling in the top of the tip, and existing in patches throughout the trench, was a deposit of yellow brown clay (301), directly overlaid by the present topsoil (300).

6.4 Trench 4 (Fig. 4) (NW-SE aligned, 28 m long x 1.55 m wide)

The top of the natural clay was reached at an average depth of 0.45 m below the present ground surface.

Cut into the top of the clay, at the south end of the trench, was what appeared to be an E-W aligned ditch terminal (408), existing for only 1.90m within the trench. The ditch had well defined edges, but was only some 0.35m wide, 0.09m deep and 1.8m long and produced no finds. A shallow scoop (405) in the centre of the trench appeared to be the result of tree disturbance.

Sealing the ditch and the possible treethrow pit was a layer of orange brown sandy clay (406) a possible buried ploughsoil, which extended throughout the trench, becoming gradually thicker towards the south. Overlaying layer 406, but existing only in the northern two thirds of the trench, was an undulating deposit of grey clay loam (402), former ridge and furrow ploughing. A single sherd of medieval pottery was retrieved from this layer.

Above 402 was a layer of grey brown clay loam (401), overlaid by the present topsoil (400).

6.5 Reliability of results

The ground conditions and weather were generally very good at the time of the evaluation, and although heavily plough truncated, the few features that were located were clearly visible.

6.6 Comments on results

The undulating layer of clay loam in trench 4 (402) appeared to be the remains of ridge and furrow ploughing. The furrows were spaced 1.7m centre to centre and aligned E-W.

The layer of orange brown sandy clay seen in trenches 1,2,4 and 5 (102, 202, 406 and 502), and which was overlaid by the ridge and furrow ploughing, also appeared to be a buried ploughsoil.

The ditch/gully terminal located in trench 4 (408) was undated, but like the possible Roman ditch in trench 1 (104) was sealed beneath the early ploughsoil (102/406).

7 Finds

7.1 Roman pottery and tile by Paul Booth

A small number of Roman finds were recovered from the fill of feature 104, a heavily truncated ditch.

The finds were:

1 iron nail (fragment)

1 fragment of tile (imbrex with maker's 'signature')

10 sherds pottery (all abraded body sherds, total weight 62 gm)

The pottery can be further subdivided:

1 sherd samian ware (?Central Gaulish)

2 sherds reduced coarse ware

7 sherds oxidised coarse ware

One of the reduced coarse ware sherds is in a fine sandy fabric typical of the North Wiltshire industries. The other contains coarser quartz sand. The oxidised sherds all appeared to be in one fabric, similar to that of the coarser reduced sherd. The condition of the oxidised wares and the absence of diagnostic features means that they cannot be certainly identified as of Roman date, though this seems probable. A relatively local source is likely for all the coarse ware sherds

Close dating of most of the sherds is impossible, but the samian piece can be assigned to the 2nd century and it is quite possible that the group as a whole is of this date. This seems to have been the period of maximum output of the North Wiltshire industry (Anderson 1979, 9).

7.2 Medieval and Post-medieval pottery by Lucy Bown

Only eight sherds weighing 115gm were found in total.

The single sherd of medieval pottery retrieved from the ridge and furrow (402) appears to be part of a cooking pot rim, dated by rim form as 12th to 13th-century.

The post-medieval pottery consisted of five sherds of 18th to 20th-century date, including Transfer Printed Ware, Glazed Red Earthenwares and modern China and two sherds, less than 1 sq cm each, of indeterminate source.

8 Conclusions

The absence of medieval features, along with the very small quantity of pottery found, suggests that the village of Beversbrook did not extend into the area of investigation. This is confirmed by the existence of the medieval ridge and furrow ploughing located in trench 4, indicating that this area was used for cultivation, but apparently with a low level of manuring.

Although the plough truncated ditch containing Roman pottery in trench 2 (204) was the only feature of this date located, the amount of pottery retrieved from such a small cross section of the ditch, along with the fragment of decorated floor tile, would appear to indicate some Roman occupation in the locality, but probably not in this field (possibly on the site of the village ?). This ditch and the possible ditch 408 on a similar alignment indicate field systems away from a settlement area.

The extent of the deep modern disturbance located in trench 3 can be defined by the slight earthwork caused by this activity, and which is visible both on the ground and on aerial photographs. (see Fig.1).

References

Anderson, A S, 1979, The Roman pottery industry in North Wiltshire, Swindon Archaeol Soc Rep No 2

C Bell
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Table of Contexts and Finds

TRENCH NO.	CXT	TYPE	WIDTH	DEPTH	COMMENTS	FINDS
1	100	Layer		0.14	Topsoil	post-medieval pottery + tile
	101	Layer		0.15	Buried ploughsoil	1 piece of slag
	102	Layer		0.12	Buried ploughsoil?	2 flint flakes
	103	Fill		0.12	Fill of 104	10 sherds of Roman pottery + 1 piece of Roman tile
	104	Ditch			E-W aligned	
	105	Natural			Natural clay	
2	200	Layer		0.14	Topsoil	2 pieces of post-medieval pottery + tile
	201	Layer		0.16	Buried ploughsoil	
	202	Layer		0.12	Buried ploughsoil?	
	203	Pipe trench	0.18		Contains live plastic water pipe	
	204	Natural			Natural clay	
3	300	Layer		0.14	Topsoil	
	301	Layer		0.40	Clay dump	20th century artefacts
	302	Fill		1.00	Fill of 304	20th century bottles and other rubbish
	303	Tip		1.80	Mid 20th century rubbish tip	
	304	Natural			Natural clay	
	305	Pipe trench	0.14		Same as 203	
4	400	Layer		0.08	Topsoil	
	401	Layer		0.20	Clay dump	20th century finds
	402	Layer		0.16	Ridge and furrow	1 sherd of medieval pottery
	403	Natural			Natural clay	
	404	Fill		0.06	Fill of 405	
	405	Treehole	1.00	0.08		

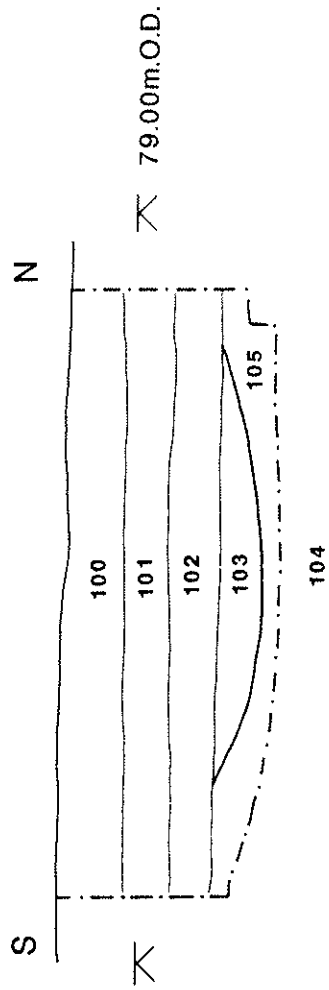
TRENCH NO.	CXT	TYPE	WIDTH	DEPTH	COMMENTS	FINDS
	406	Layer		0.28	Buried ploughsoil?	
	407	Fill		0.09	Fill of 408	
	408	Ditch/gully	0.35	0.09	Terminal	
5	500	Layer		0.12	Topsoil	
	501	Layer		0.14	Buried ploughsoil	
	502	Layer		0.12	Buried ploughsoil?	2 sherds of undated pottery
	503	Natural			Natural clay	

CAOR 94

Trench 1



section

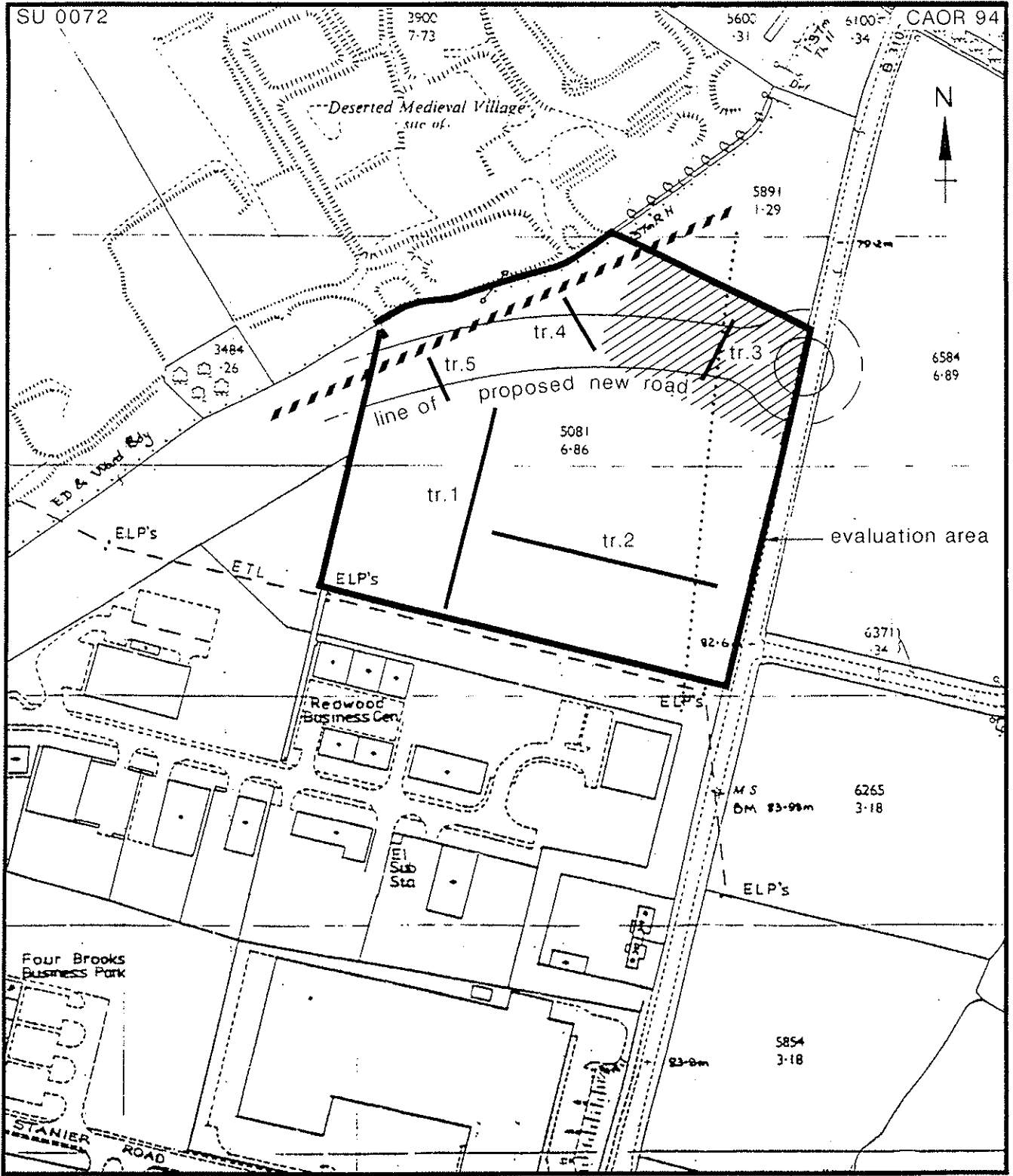


● levels in metres O.D.


- 1 78.91
- 2 78.55
- 3 78.64


scale 1:20

figure 2



scale 1:2500

 modern refuse tip
 visable as slight earthwork

 water pipeline

 oil pipeline

Based on the Ordnance Survey's 1:2500 map of 1991
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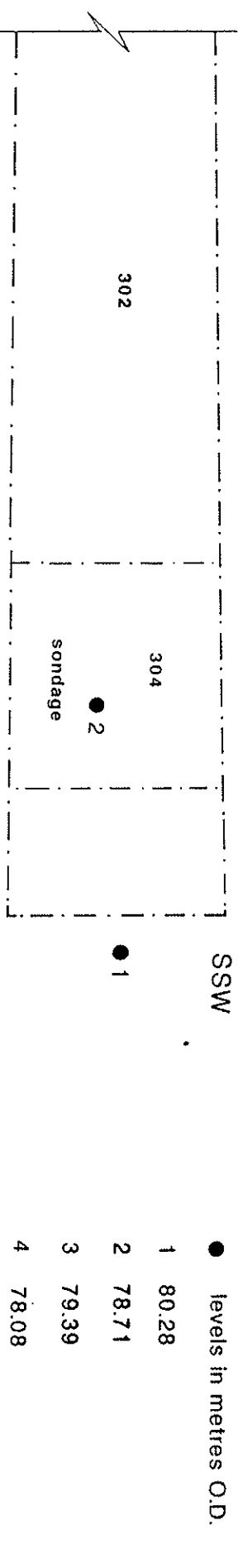
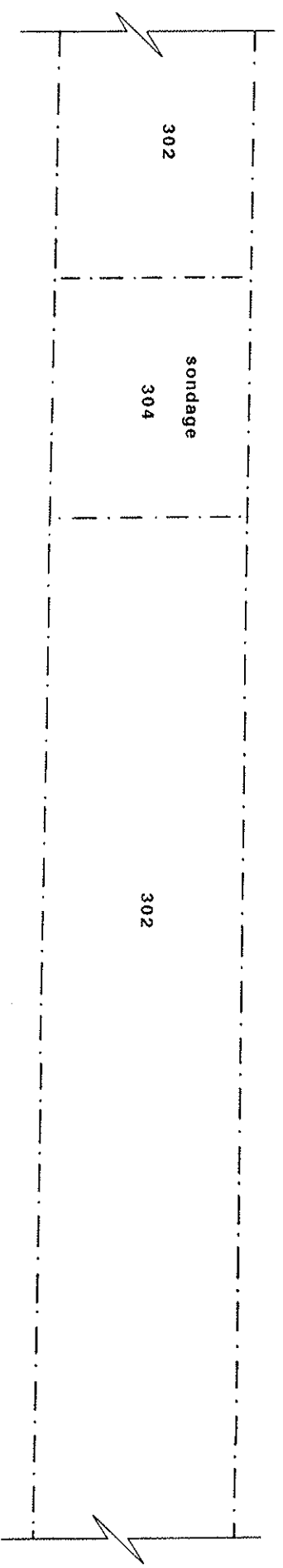
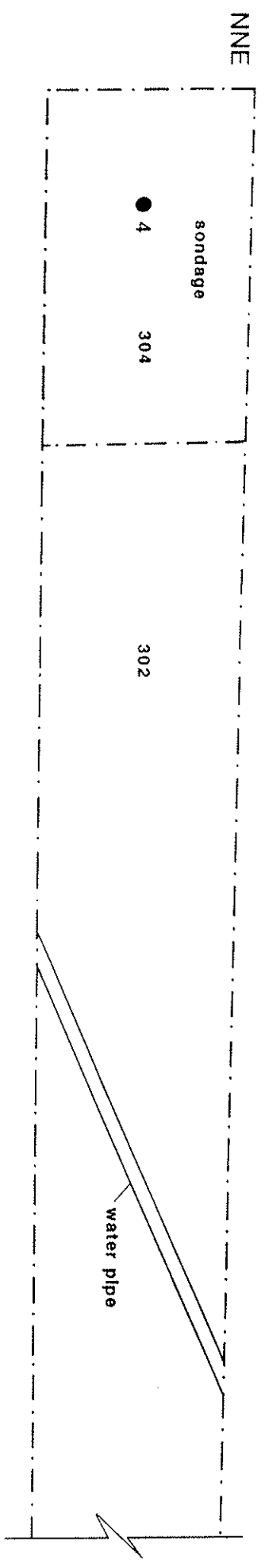
trench location plan

figure 1

Trench 3

CAOR 94

● 3



● levels in metres O.D.

- 1 80.28
- 2 78.71
- 3 79.39
- 4 78.08



figure 3

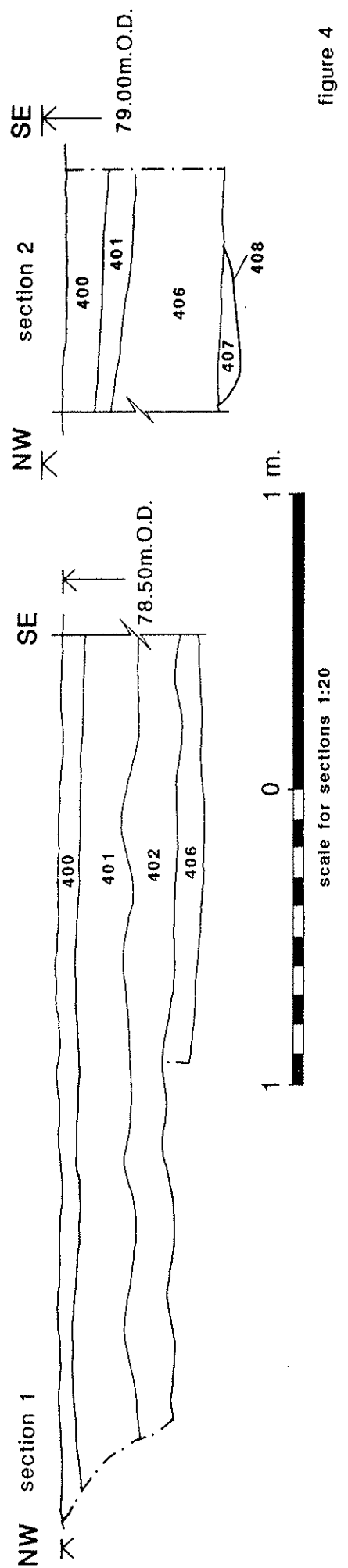
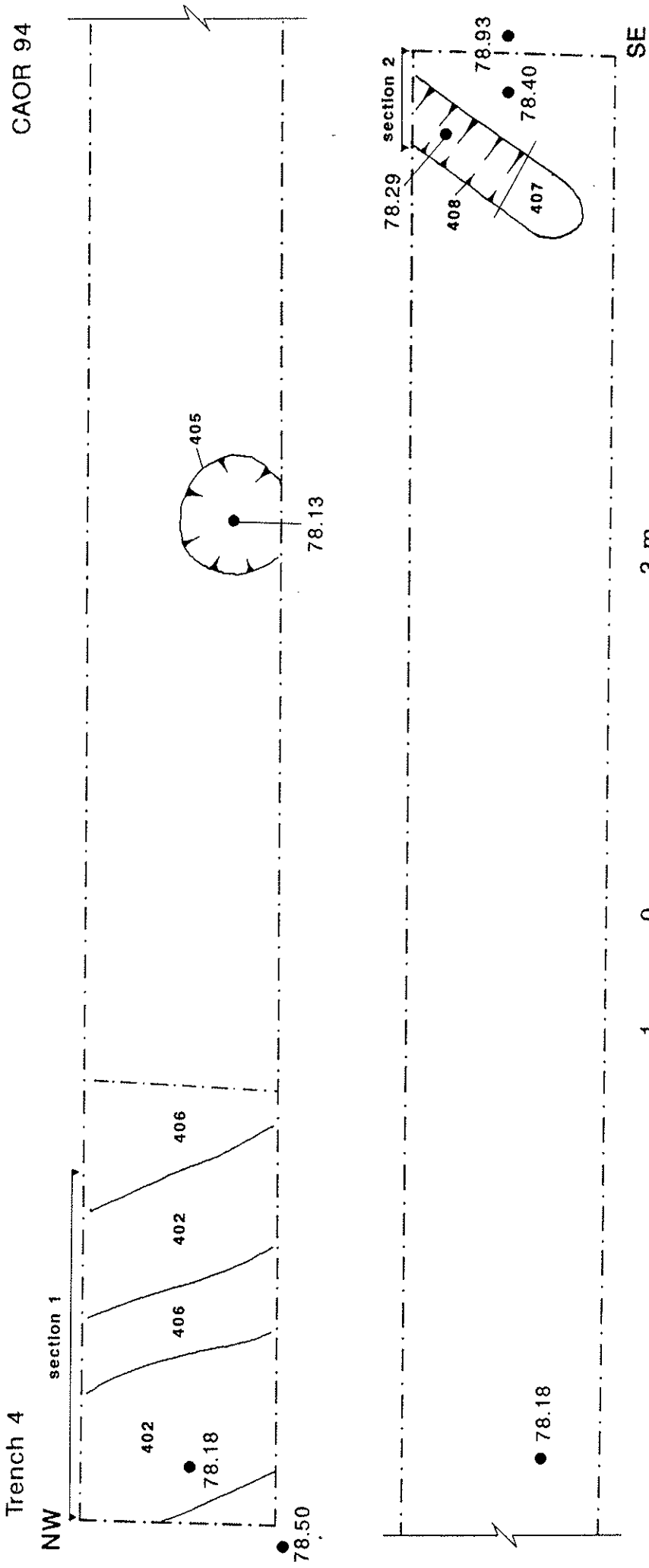


figure 4

Oxford Archaeological Unit

46 Hythe Bridge Street

Oxford OX1 2EP



Tel: 0865 243888 Fax: 0865 793496

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