



Greenfield Associates  
Land at Harbour Road, Lydney,  
Gloucestershire

*ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT*

NGR SO 636018

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OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

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# Land at Harbour Road, Lydney, Gloucestershire

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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## *SUMMARY*

*The Oxford Archaeological Unit carried out a field evaluation at Lydney, Gloucestershire on behalf of Greenfield Associates. The evaluation revealed a sequence of alluvial deposits. The bottom of the alluvial sequence lay beyond the level of the proposed impact. The deepest section observed was 2.90m deep which revealed a fairly homogenous alluvial accumulation. No waterlogged organic deposits were encountered in the evaluation. An earlier cultivation soil which was associated with ridge and furrow and strip cultivation occurred in both fields. No archaeological features or finds were recovered from the evaluation.*

# **1 INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Location and scope of work**

- 1.1.1 In February 1998 the Oxford Archaeological Unit carried out a field evaluation at Lydney, Gloucestershire (Fig. 1) on behalf of Greenfield Associates in respect of a planning application for industrial development and associated lakes (Planning Application No. DF.1346. D) and a brief set by and a WSI agreed with Gloucestershire County Council. The development site lay in two parcels of land, a western field (Lower East Marsh), immediately north of Somerton Terrace which is approximately 2.8 hectares in area and the eastern field (Flat Marsh), north of Harbour Road and west of the existing industrial area which is approximately 3.5 hectares in area.

## **1.2 Geology and topography**

- 1.2.1 The site lies on estuarine alluvial deposits from the River Seven at 8.2m above Ordnance Datum (OD). The site is situated on level ground and has been used for grazing. The solid geology is Old Red Sandstone.

## **1.3 Archaeological and historical background**

- 1.3.1 A desktop study was carried out in 1996 by Avon Archaeological Unit (Prosser 1996) and its findings are summarised below.
- 1.3.2 There are no records of prehistoric and Roman activity within the area of the present town of Lydney, although an Iron Age promontory fort, later containing the well-known Roman temple complex, lies in Lydney Park to the west.
- 1.3.3 The site lies outside the settlement area of Lydney which dates from the 9<sup>th</sup> century. In the late Saxon period Lydney came into the possession of the monks of Glastonbury Abbey, who presumably utilised the rich deposits of iron ore in the area (Finberg 1975, 54). By the 13<sup>th</sup> century the area was under the jurisdiction of the Royal Forest of Dean which then passed on to the Earls of Warwick until the 15<sup>th</sup> century. A survey drawn up in 1282 refers to considerable mining activity at the Earl of Warwick's mines in his wood at Lydney (ibid, 83). In the medieval period ships were built at Lydney with oak from the Forest of Dean, and oak bark from the forest supplied tanneries in the town (Finberg 1975, 98).
- 1.3.4 Lydney became an industrial area due to its natural resources (iron, coal and timber). The development of a harbour at Lydney to ship out the town's natural wealth occurred in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Ironworks and tinplate works were constructed nearby. Industrial sites were concentrated to the north, around the railway and the harbour itself. A tramway was built from Lydney to Bishopswood in 1810, linking various collieries and ironworks in the region (Finberg 1975, 116). The line of the tramway, followed by the later railway, lay just to the east of the parish church (GLSMR 5701). The harbour was closed in 1977.

## **2 EVALUATION AIMS**

- 2.1 To determine, as far as is reasonably possible, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains in the area where the proposed development would cause disturbance.
- 2.2 To establish the ecofactual/ environmental potential of archaeological features.
- 2.3 To appraise the likely impact of the development proposals on any archaeology located.
- 2.4 To make available the results of the investigation.

## **3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Scope of fieldwork**

- 3.1.1 The field evaluation was undertaken by means of the excavation of twenty-three trenches. Trenches 1-8 were located in the area of the proposed Lake 2, (Lower East Marsh) (Fig. 2). Trenches 9-23 are located in the area of proposed industrial use and Lake 1, (Flat Marsh).
- 3.1.2 The trenches were excavated by mechanical excavator with the overburden removed under close supervision using a toothless ditching bucket. This was supplemented by hand investigation of archaeological deposits where appropriate.
- 3.1.3 The trenches were positioned so that they avoided: The underground cable and the sewer which runs parallel to Harbour Road along the southern boundary of the sites. The underground cable which bounds the east, and power lines which run along the north edge of the northern-most site (Lower East Marsh).
- 3.1.4 The impact of the development will be primarily from the excavation of two lakes which will penetrate the ground for *c.* 2 m. The depth of the trenches in the area of these lakes was limited to 2.2 m, in order that the immediate impact of the development could be determined with an allowance for a cushion between the groundworks and any archaeological deposits which may be present. In some areas the deeper trenches were inadvertently excavated to a slightly greater depth; up to 2.90m in the case of Trench 15.
- 3.1.5 The evaluation was based upon a 2% sample of the development area.

### **3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording**

- 3.2.1 The trenches were examined to determine the extent and nature of any archaeological features, and to retrieve finds and environmental samples. All trenches were planned and where excavated their sections drawn at scale of 1:20. All trenches were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

## **4 RESULTS: GENERAL**

### **4.1 Soils and ground conditions**

4.1.1 The general soil type was a silty clay topsoil and earlier cultivation soil which overlaid alluvial clays. The ground conditions were wet with poor preservation of waterlogged materials.

### **4.2 Distribution of Archaeological Deposits**

4.2.1 The deepest sequence of deposits were recorded in the deepest part of the proposed lake: Trenches 3, 10 and 15.

### **4.3 Presentation of Results**

4.3.1 The deposits described are confined to the deeper trenches were the most complete sequence of alluvial deposits was recorded. In the remaining trenches there was little variation and these are summarised in Appendix 1. Trench 15 identified where the higher ground slopes down into the floodplain and Trench 4 revealed a section across the ridge and furrow.

## **5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS**

### **5.1 General description of deposits**

5.1.1 The stratified variations in the alluvial deposits were recorded in section. However, deposits of this type exhibit a considerable degree of post-depositional alteration due to oxidation and changes in the water table, both over time and seasonally. This leads to discolouration as well as migration of fine clays which can lead to pseudo-layering. The processes of sediment deposition is not always apparent even when deposits are subjected to micromorphological analysis. The alluvial clays described below are broadly similar in character and consistent with estuarine deposition. The only trench which contained coarser alluvial deposits, which may have been deposited in an earlier phase of alluviation, was Trench 11.

### **5.2 Trenches 1-8 (Lower East Marsh)**

5.2.1 The trenches in the area of Lake 2 exposed a similar sequence of alluvium to those in Flat Marsh to the east. The deepest sequence of alluvium was exposed in Trench 3, which was excavated to a maximum of 2.2m deep.

5.2.2 Ridge and furrow was visible on the surface in the southern part of the field (Fig. 2) and was recorded in Trench 4 (Fig. 3), which lay perpendicular to the line of the ridge and furrow.

5.2.3 The deposits from Trench 3 (Fig. 3), which were excavated in the deepest part of the proposed lake, are summarised in Table 1. The earliest alluvium was a greyish blue clay (311). The bottom of this alluvium was not exposed but it exceeded 0.44m in depth. Desiccated organic root intrusions were present but no well preserved organic material.



Table 1: Stratigraphic summary of the deposits in Trench 3

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Thickness (m)</i>	<i>Manganese inclusions</i>
301	Topsoil	greyish brown silty clay topsoil	0.20	
302	Cultivation soil	mid-greyish orange silty clay	0.10	
303	Alluvium	light-orangish-grey clay	0.20	+
304	Alluvium	mid-greyish-blue clay	0.14	+
305	Alluvium	mid-bluish-grey clay	0.24	+
306	Alluvium	mid-greyish orange clay	0.14	+
307	Alluvium	light-greyish blue clay	0.14	
308	Alluvium	greyish orange clay	0.30	
309	Alluvium	greyish blue clay	0.36	
310	Alluvium	orangey-grey clay	0.20	
311	Alluvium	greyish blue clay	0.44+	
Total			2.46	

### 5.3 Trenches 9-23 (Flat Marsh)

5.3.1 The trenches in the area of the proposed industrial land and Lake 1 revealed a similar sequence of alluvium. Trench 11 was the only trench which located the natural below the alluvium, as it was situated on the margins of the alluvial floodplain where the alluvium is shallow and the ground rises at the north-eastern limits of the site.

5.3.2 The trenches in the proposed industrial land (Trenches 18-23) were relatively shallow (0.50m). This reflected the limited impact upon this area from the proposed development, which would raise the area following the initial topsoil stripping.

5.3.3 The trenches within the landtake of the lake exposed a greater depth of the alluvium which reflected the depth of impact and disturbance likely during the construction of the lake. The trenches were between 1.00m and 1.20m deep.

### 5.4 Trench 15 (Fig. 4)

5.4.1 Trenches 10 and 15 fall within the deeper area of the lake and were excavated to 2.20m deep. These gave the deepest section through the alluvium and the deposits from Trench 15 are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Stratigraphic summary of the deposits in Trench 15

Context	Type	Description	Thickness (m)	Manganese inclusions
1501	Topsoil	greyish brown silty clay topsoil	0.12	
1502	Cultivation soil	reddish brown silty clay	0.13	
1503	Alluvium	mottled mid-grey and orangey brown clay	0.35	+
1504	Alluvium	mottled light-grey and orangey-brown clay	0.70	+
1505	Alluvium	light-grey clay	0.20	
1506	Alluvium	orangey-brown mottle clay	0.40	
1507	Alluvium	mid-light grey clay with root inclusions	1.00+	
Total			2.90	

## 5.5 Trench 11 (Fig. 4)

5.5.1 The alluvial deposits in Trench 11 are summarised in Table 3. They differed from the other trenches reflecting the location of the trench on the north-east limit of the site at the junction of the floodplain with higher ground.

5.5.2 The natural (1106) was overlaid by a light brown sandy silt (1105) which contained inclusions of water worn sub-rounded sandstone pebbles. This alluvial layer was up to 0.10m thick and the pebbles varied in size from 0.03m to 0.10m. It had an undulating base and had been worked into the uneven natural below. The character of this deposit was very different from the fine grain clays seen in the other trenches. The pebble inclusions and apparently scoured basal junction suggests this deposit had resulted from faster flowing water.

5.5.3 The basal alluvium (1105) was overlain by two further deposits of mixed alluvium (1104 and 1103). The very mixed character of 1104 and 1103 suggests they had derived from fluvial disturbance and redeposition of material from the basal Layer 1105.

Table 3: Stratigraphic summary of the deposits in Trench 11

Context	Type	Description	Thickness (m)	Manganese inclusions
1101	Topsoil	greyish brown silty clay topsoil	0.12	
1102	Cultivation soil	orangish-brown silty clay	0.11	
1103	Alluvium	silty clay	0.33	
1104	Alluvium	mottled light brown and orangish-brown silty clay	0.22	
1105	Alluvium	light brown sandy silt with pebble inclusions	0.10	
1106	Natural	reddish brown clay		
Total			0.88	

## 5.6 Finds

5.6.1 No finds were recovered from the site.

## **5.7 Environmental data**

- 5.7.1 No waterlogged deposits were identified and the potential for organic waterlogged deposits existing within the zone of disturbance is likely to be very low. No molluscs were observed. Given the total absence of archaeological features and finds, no archaeological samples were collected.

## **6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION**

### **6.1 Reliability of field investigation**

- 6.1.1 If prehistoric remains exist previous work indicates that they are likely to be sealed below the alluvium and probably associated with peat deposits (Rippon 1996, 11). The topography of the site demonstrates that the greatest potential for identifying remains within the level of proposed disturbance, is likely to be at the margins of the floodplain and higher ground. The only area to have this potential is within the vicinity of Trench 11 on the northern margins of Lake 1, where the ground slopes up from the floodplain to higher ground at 10.5m above OD. This has the name of The Rookery on the 1839 tithe map (Prosser 1996, fig. 4). However, the results from Trench 11 did not identify any archaeological features or indications of any human activity, such as charcoal.
- 6.1.2 Roman remains previously identified in the Severn estuary, although buried by alluvium, tend to be towards the upper part of the alluvial sequence (Allen and Fulford 1986) and are consequently more likely to have been located in the deeper trenches had any such remains been present on the site.

### **6.2 Overall interpretation**

- 6.2.1 The evaluation identified a fairly homogenous accumulation of fine particle alluvial clays. No archaeological features were located within the depth of the proposed disturbance from the lakes or the proposed industrial use. No waterlogged organic deposits or significant environmental remains were encountered in the evaluation. The bottom of the alluvial sequence lay beyond the level of the proposed disturbance (maximum 2.00m within the deeper areas of the lakes). On the evidence of previous excavations the alluvial sequence is likely to extend for some depth, in the case of Gwent Levels up to c.10 metres (Rippon 1996, 11). Consequently, identifying the original landscape and character of earlier relict channels is difficult, as any topographic variations are masked by the alluviation (Needham and Macklin 1992, 10).
- 6.2.2 An earlier cultivation soil, which probably dates to the medieval period, was identified in both fields and was associated with ridge and furrow and strip cultivation. No archaeological features or finds were recovered from the evaluation.
- 6.2.3 Coarser alluvial deposits were identified in Trench 11. The earliest deposit overlaid the natural and was situated on the edge of the floodplain. This may represent early Holocene deposits, which are usually composed of coarser material (Needham and Macklin 1992, 17), although an alternative explanation is that it may have resulted from deposition caused by erosion and scouring along the floodplain margins.

## Bibliography and references

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- Wilkinson, D (ed) 1992 *Oxford Archaeological Unit Field Manual*, (First edition, August 1992)

## Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory

Ctxt	Type	width (m)	thick. (m)	Comment	Finds	No.	Date
Trench 1 (depth: 1.20m-1.30m)							
101	Layer		0.20	Topsoil			
102	Layer		0.20	Earlier cultivation soil			
103	Layer		0.21	Alluvium			
104	Layer		0.42	Alluvium			
105	Layer		0.18	Alluvium			
106	Layer		0.07+	Alluvium			
Trench 2 (depth: 1.16m-1.30m)							
201	Layer		0.14	Topsoil			
202	Layer		0.14	Earlier cultivation soil			
203	Layer		0.15	Alluvium			
204	Layer		0.28	Alluvium			
205	Layer		0.19-0.32	Alluvium			
206	Layer		0.10-0.20	Alluvium			
207	Layer		0.14+	Alluvium			
Trench 3 (depth 2.46m)							
301	Layer		0.20	Topsoil			
302	Layer		0.10	Earlier cultivation soil			
303	Layer		0.20	Alluvium			
304	Layer		0.14	Alluvium			
305	Layer		0.24	Alluvium			
306	Layer		0.14	Alluvium			
307	Layer		0.14	Alluvium			
308	Layer		0.30	Alluvium			
309	Layer		0.36	Alluvium			
310	Layer		0.20	Alluvium			
311	Layer		0.14+	Alluvium			
Trench 4 (depth: 1.10m-1.36m)							
401	Layer		0.20	Topsoil			
402	Layer		0.12	Earlier cultivation soil			
403	Layer		0.18	Alluvium			

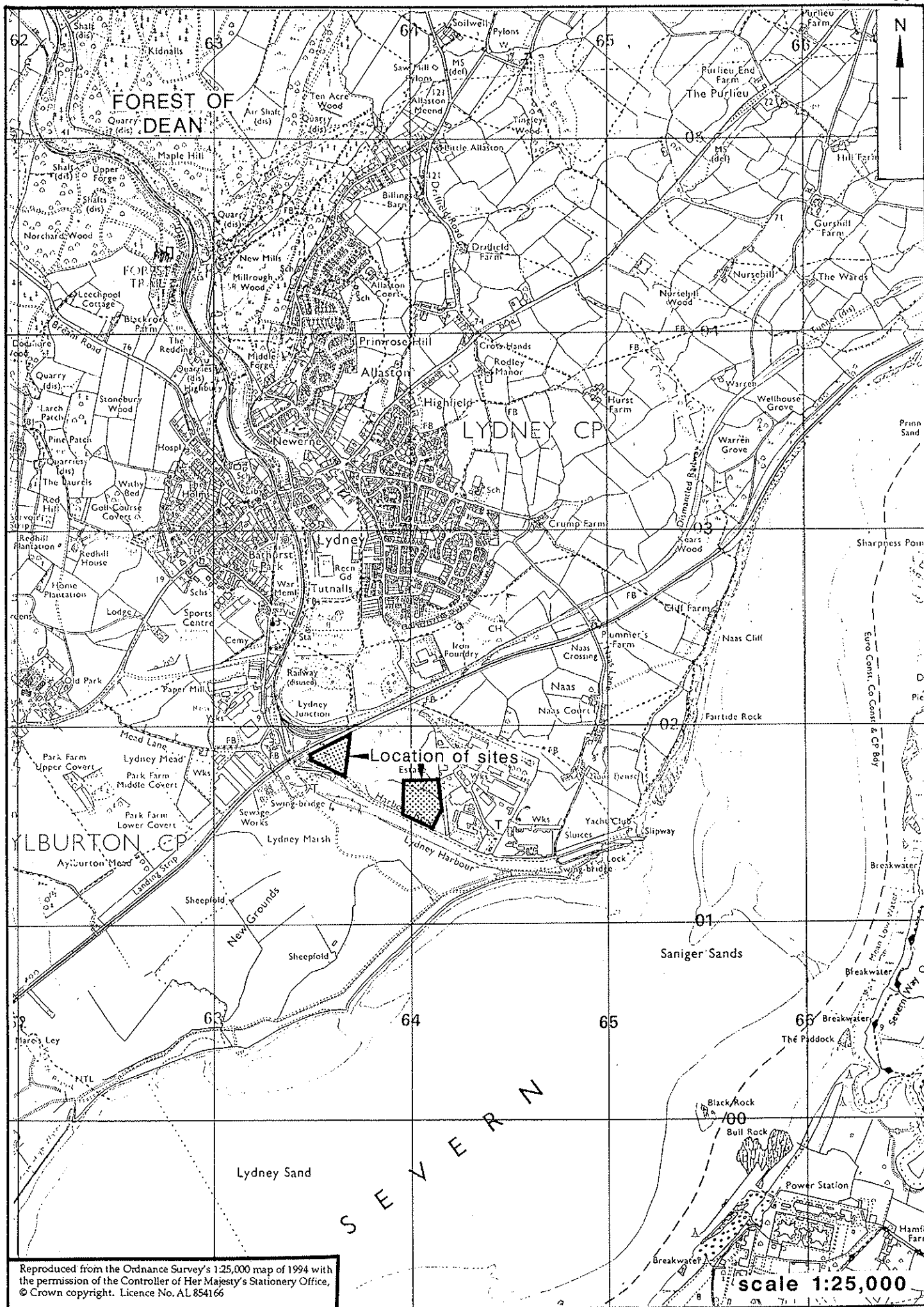
Ctxt	Type	width (m)	thick. (m)	Comment	Finds	No.	Date
404	Layer		0.14	Alluvium			
405	Layer		0.26-0.29	Alluvium			
406	Layer		0.18	Alluvium			
407	Layer		0.04+	Alluvium			
Trench 5 (depth: 1.18m-1.25m)							
501	Layer		0.20	Topsoil			
502	Layer		0.26	Earlier cultivation soil			
503	Layer		0.22	Alluvium			
504	Layer		0.18	Alluvium			
505	Layer		0.14	Alluvium			
506	Layer		0.17	Alluvium			
507	Layer		0.10+	Alluvium			
Trench 6 (depth: 1.10m-1.20m)							
601	Layer		0.20	Topsoil			
602	Layer		0.18	Earlier cultivation soil			
603	Layer		0.22	Alluvium			
604	Layer		0.30	Alluvium			
605	Layer		0.14	Alluvium			
606	Layer		0.14	Alluvium			
607	Layer		0.08+	Alluvium			
Trench 7 (depth: 1.10m-1.20m)							
701	Layer		0.18	Topsoil			
702	Layer		0.22	Earlier cultivation soil			
703	Layer		0.19	Alluvium			
704	Layer		0.30	Alluvium			
705	Layer		0.18+	Alluvium			
Trench 8 (depth: 1.12m-1.32m)							
801	Layer		0.20	Topsoil			
802	Layer		0.12	Earlier cultivation soil			
803	Layer		0.30	Alluvium			
804	Layer		0.30	Alluvium			
805	Layer		0.20	Alluvium			
806	Layer		0.20	Alluvium			

Ctxt	Type	width (m)	thick. (m)	Comment	Finds	No.	Date
Trench 9 (depth: 0.95m-1.00m)							
901	Layer		0.15	Topsoil			
902	Layer		0.13	Earlier cultivation soil			
903	Layer		0.40	Alluvium			
904	Layer		0.33+	Alluvium			
Trench 10 (depth: 1.30m-2.20m)							
1001	Layer		0.12	Topsoil			
1002	Layer		0.13	Earlier cultivation soil			
1003	Layer		0.35	Alluvium			
1004	Layer		0.70	Alluvium			
1005	Layer		0.20	Alluvium			
1006	Layer		0.40	Alluvium			
1007	Layer		0.30+	Alluvium			
Trench 11 (depth: 0.85m-0.90m)							
1101	Layer		0.14	Topsoil			
1102	Layer		0.11	Earlier cultivation soil			
1103	Layer		0.33	Alluvium			
1104	Layer		0.22	Alluvium			
1105	Layer		0.10	Silty Alluvium with pebbles			
1106	Layer		-	Natural			
Trench 12 (depth: 0.95m)							
1201	Layer		0.14	Topsoil			
1202	Layer		0.25	Earlier cultivation soil			
1203	Layer		0.40	Alluvium			
1204	Layer		0.20+	Alluvium			
Trench 13 (depth: 0.95m-1.15m)							
1301	Layer		0.13	Topsoil			
1302	Layer		0.22	Earlier cultivation soil			
1303	Layer		0.30	Alluvium			
1304	Layer		0.28+	Alluvium			

Ctxt	Type	width (m)	thick. (m)	Comment	Finds	No.	Date
Trench 14 (depth: 0.50m-0.90m)							
1401	Layer		0.18	Topsoil			
1402	Layer		0.16	Earlier cultivation soil			
1403	Layer		0.20	Alluvium			
1404	Layer		0.30	Alluvium			
1405	Layer		0.23+	Alluvium			
Trench 15 (depth: 2.20m - 2.90m)							
1501	Layer		0.12	Topsoil			
1502	Layer		0.13	Earlier cultivation soil			
1503	Layer		0.35	Alluvium			
1504	Layer		0.70	Alluvium			
1505	Layer		0.20	Alluvium			
1506	Layer		0.40	Alluvium			
1507	Layer		1.00+	Alluvium			
Trench 16 (depth: 0.50m)							
1601	Layer		0.18	Topsoil			
1602	Layer		0.22	Earlier cultivation soil			
1603	Layer		0.14+	Alluvium			
Trench 17 (depth: 0.95m-1.10m)							
1701	Layer		0.16	Topsoil			
1702	Layer		0.15	Earlier cultivation soil			
1703	Layer		0.35	Alluvium			
1704	Layer		0.40+	Alluvium			
Trench 18 (depth: 0.45m-0.50m)							
1801	Layer		0.18	Topsoil			
1802	Layer		0.18	Earlier cultivation soil			
1803	Layer		0.11+	Alluvium			
Trench 19 (depth: 0.44m-0.66m)							
1901	Layer		0.16	Topsoil			
1902	Layer		0.18	Earlier cultivation soil			
1903	Layer		0.28+	Alluvium			



Ctxt	Type	width (m)	thick. (m)	Comment	Finds	No.	Date
Trench 20 (depth: 0.45m-0.50m)							
2001	Layer		0.20	Topsoil			
2002	Layer		0.22	Earlier cultivation soil			
2003	Layer		0.18+	Alluvium			
Trench 21 (depth: 0.48m-0.55m)							
2101	Layer		0.20	Topsoil			
2102	Layer		0.22	Earlier cultivation soil			
2103	Layer		0.20+	Alluvium			
Trench 22 (depth: 0.45m-0.55m)							
2201	Layer		0.13	Topsoil			
2202	Layer		0.18	Earlier cultivation soil			
2203	Layer		0.32+	Alluvium			
Trench 23 (depth: 0.50m-0.70m)							
2301	Layer		0.13	Topsoil			
2302	Layer		0.12	Earlier cultivation soil			
2303	Layer		0.30+	Alluvium			



Site location map

Figure 1

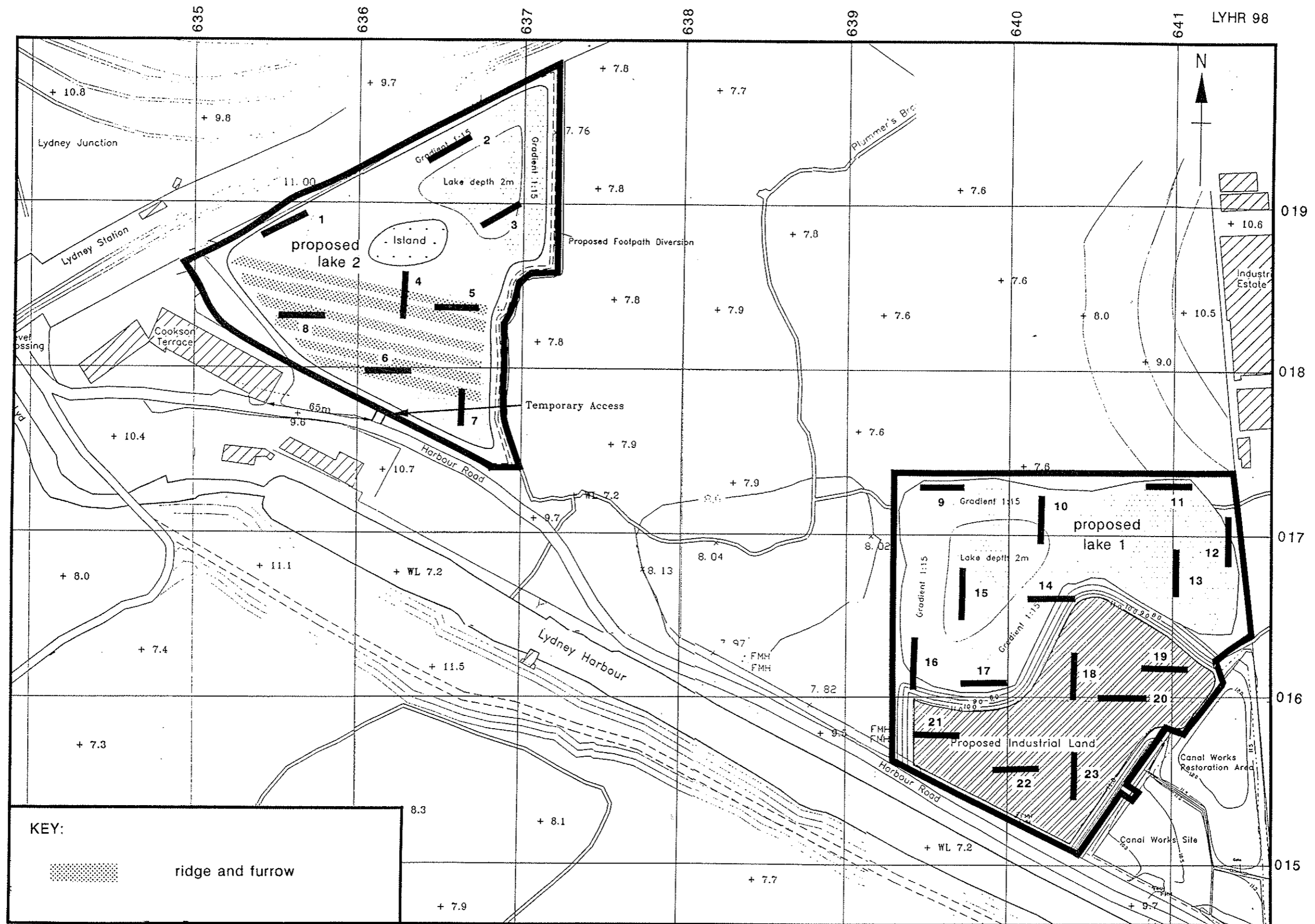
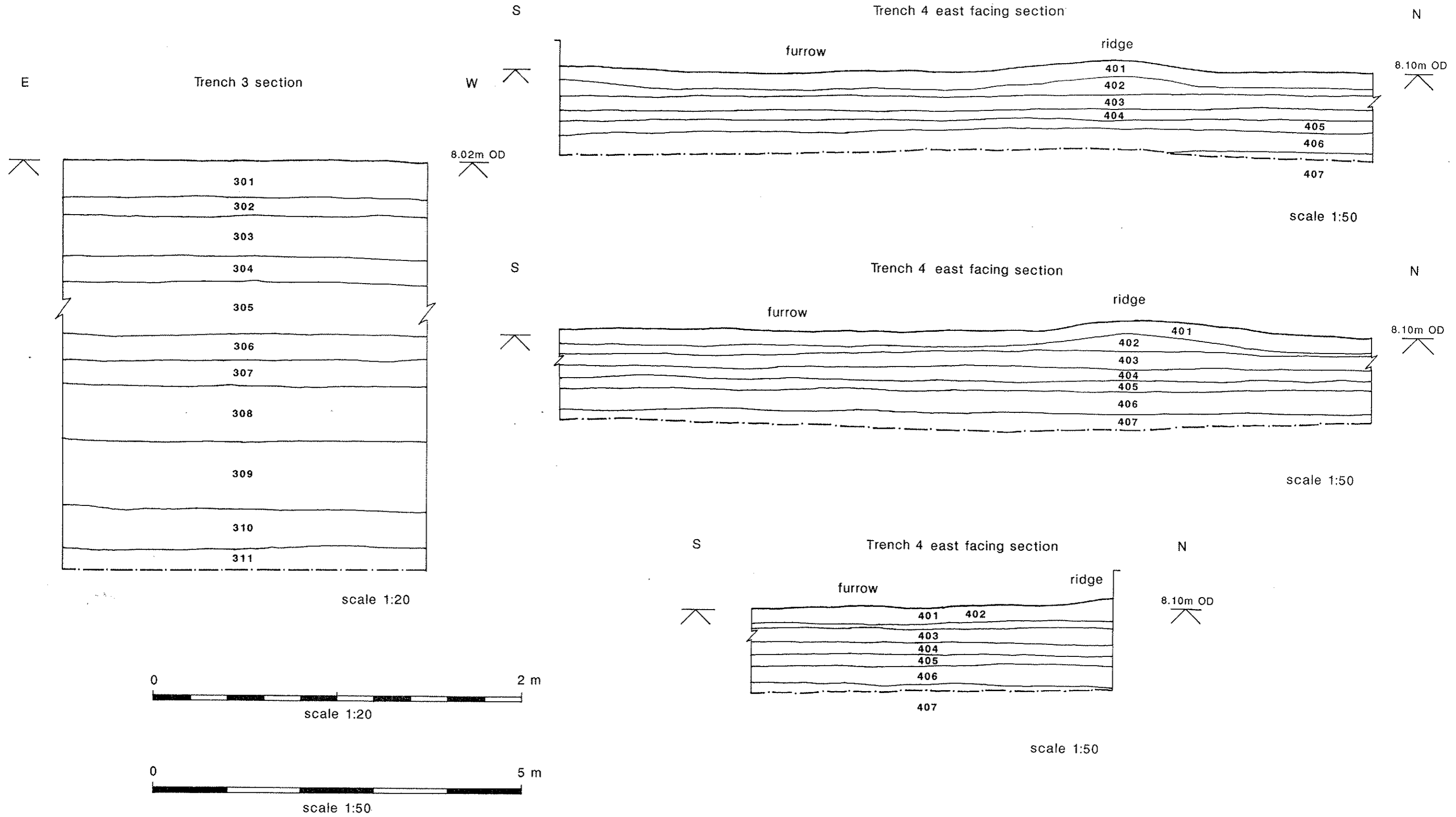


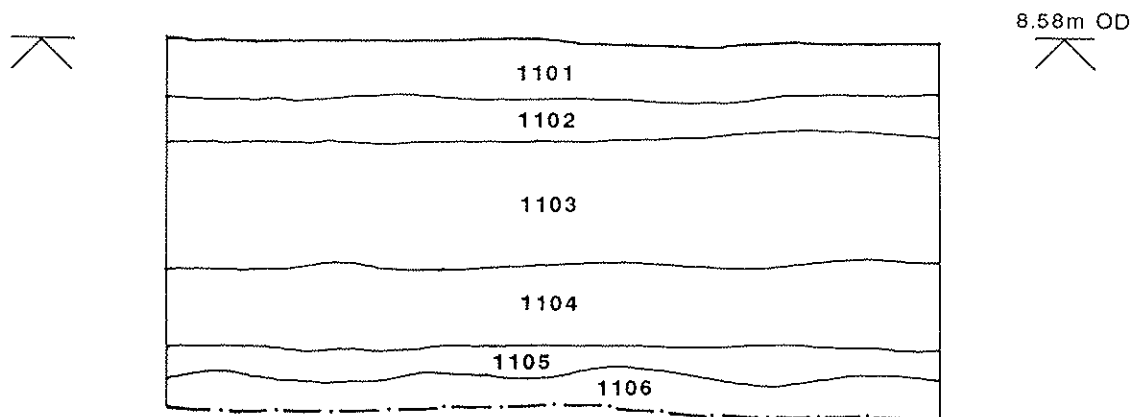
Figure 2



Trenches 3 and 4 sample sections

Figure 3

Trench 11 section

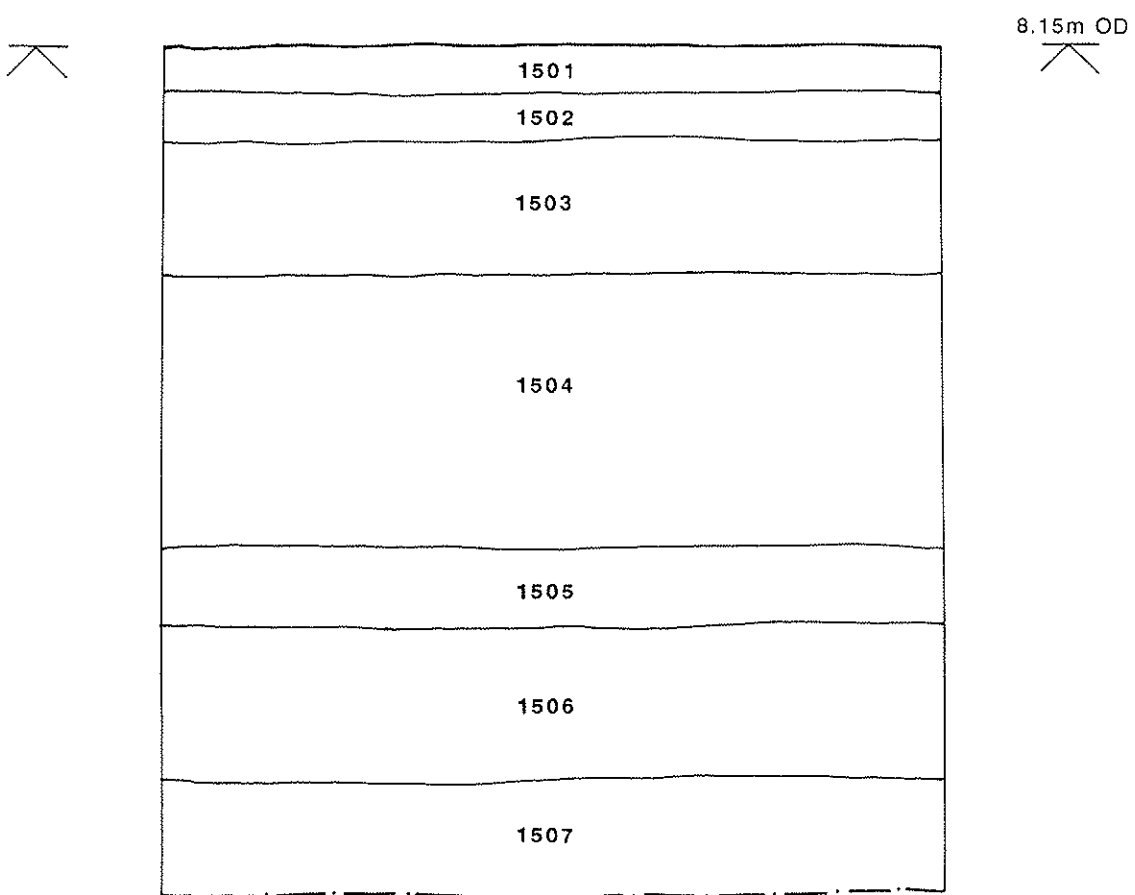


scale 1:20

N

Trench 15 section

S



scale 1:20



scale 1:20

Trenches 11 and 15 sample sections

Figure 4



**OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT**

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