

Village Homes (South East) Ltd

**Land adjacent to Pooh Corner and Wildacre, Sandy Lane,
Northwood, Herts.**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

TQ 0991 9290

Planning Application No. 99/1873/FUL

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

December 1999


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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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SUMMARY

The Oxford Archaeological Unit carried out a field evaluation at land adjacent to Pooh Corner and Wildacre, Sandy Lane, Northwood Hertfordshire on behalf of Village Homes Ltd. The evaluation did not identify the presence of any archaeological features or layers.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

In November 1999 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) carried out a field evaluation at land adjacent to Pooh Corner and Wildacre, Sandy Lane, Northwood, Hertfordshire on behalf of Village Homes (South East) Ltd in respect of a planning application for the construction of six five-bedroomed dwellings (Planning Application No. 99/1873/FUL). A brief was set by Alex Hunt of Hertfordshire County Council and a WSI prepared by OAU was agreed as an appropriate response to the brief.

The development site is bounded to the east by Sandy Lane, to the south by the residences of Clearcroft, Hillside, Pooh Corner and Wildacre, to the west by Upland Court and to the north by properties fronting Bishop's Avenue; it is 0.58 hectares in area (Fig. 1).

1.2 Geology and topography

The site is situated *c* 1 km to the south of the River Colne, and lies on London Clay, covering solid chalk drift (Geological Survey of Great Britain, sheet 255) at 102 m OD. The site is currently part of a landscaped garden. In the Pooh Corner garden, to the south of the development, landscaping has taken place, along with the removal of trees.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

The archaeological background to the evaluation has been presented in the WSI (OAU 1999), the results of which are summarised below.

The site itself has produced no archaeological evidence, however, the area around the development is of known archaeological significance:

- (i) The site of Sandy Lodge Golf Course, located 500 m to the north of the development area, has been subject to a number of archaeological investigations during the 1960s, 70s and 90s, the results of which have indicated multi-period activity. An Upper Palaeolithic knapping site represented the earliest deposits identified. Activity then continues in the Mesolithic, represented by worked flints, which included an axe. The Neolithic was represented by a number of sherds of pottery. Further prehistoric activity was attributed to the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age and comprised flint and pottery. Later activity was identified and included a Roman structure, with flint foundations and associated finds and features, Saxon pottery and a number of medieval artefacts, which included pottery and a knife.

- (ii) Earthworks were identified at Oxhey Woods, c 500 m to the east of the development site. These features represent former field boundaries and part of an ancient trackway. Neolithic activity has been located to the north of the development area, at the site of Hamper Mill. A number of other medieval features were recognised at this site, which included a barn and a watermill.

1.4 The evaluation was undertaken for Village Homes (South East) Ltd. Thanks are extended to Alex Hunt (H.C.C.) and to the contractors.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

The aims of the evaluation, as stated in the WSI were as follows:

- 2.1 To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the proposal area.
- 2.2 To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present.
- 2.3 To establish the artefactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features.
- 2.4 To make available the results of the investigation.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Sample size and scope of fieldwork

The evaluation was based upon a 4% sample of the development area, and consisted of 2 trenches measuring 20 m long and 1.80 m wide, and 12 test pits measuring 1 m x 1 m (Fig. 2).

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

The overburden in the trenches and test pits was removed by a JCB mechanical excavator under close archaeological supervision. The test pits were hand excavated in 0.10 m spits, with the deposits being sieved for artefacts. The first and last 1 m length of topsoil in each trial trench was sieved for artefacts.

The trenches were cleaned by hand and any revealed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds and environmental samples. All archaeological features were planned and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. All features 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).

3.3 Finds recovery

Finds were recovered from a number of contexts and comprised pottery, building material, glass, a small number of metal objects and one struck flint. All spoil heaps were monitored in order to recover artefacts.

3.4 Environmental data

No samples were taken as no significant archaeological deposits or features were excavated.

4 RESULTS: GENERAL

4.1 Soils and ground conditions

The general soil type was an orange brown acidic silty-clay, with poor preservation of bone. Ground conditions were dry, and no waterlogged materials were identified. The deposits were sealed by a layer of turfed topsoil.

4.2 Distribution of Archaeological Deposits

No negative features or significant archaeological deposits were identified during the excavation.

4.3 Presentation of Results

A description of the trenches and test pits are presented below. A summary of the contexts can be found in the archaeological context inventory.

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Description of deposits

Where not described all deposits overlay the natural London clay and were overlain by topsoil and turf.

5.1.1 Trench 1 (Fig. 3)

The trench, orientated north-east/south-west, was located in the north-eastern area of the site and measured 20 m long, 1.80 m wide; it was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.85 m. A total of seven layers were identified in the trench. The natural (103) was a brownish-yellow-clay, that contained a low frequency of flint and pebbles. This was sealed by a series of deposits (106,

105, 104, 102) that contained small quantities of late 19th century plant pots and glazed wares. These deposits appeared to represent some form of garden build up, possibly as a result of landscaping during the Victorian period. The layers were sealed by topsoil (101) and turf (100).

5.1.2 Trench 2, Test pits 11 and 12 (Figs 2 and 4)

The trench, orientated north-west/south-east, measured 20 m in length, 1.80 m in width and was excavated to a depth of 1.20 m. A total of four layers were identified, these comprised two layers (202, 203) of mid-brown grey clay measuring 0.90 m in depth; neither contained any finds. These deposits appeared to represent garden build up layers. The other two layers comprised topsoil (201), which contained a small quantity of broken plant pot, and turf (200).

Test Pits 11 and 12 were excavated at the northern and southern ends respectively of Trench 2. The deposits encountered were the same as those identified in the trench and as a result, both were excavated only to a depth of 0.30 m to identify the garden build up layers.

5.1.3 Test pits 1 and 2 (Figs 2 and 5)

The test pits were located in the eastern corner of the site, to the south of Trench 1, and were excavated to a depth of 0.96 m and 0.60 m respectively. Both of the test pits identified layers of redeposited natural, which were sealed by layers of subsoil and topsoil. The redeposited natural (255, 256, 302-306) was a friable orange-brown silty clay that contained low frequencies of gravel. Layers 255 and 256 both contained low frequencies of late 19th century plant pots and glazed pottery. Layers 251-254 appear to represent a series of deliberate dumps, and are probably a result of Victorian or later landscaping of the area.

5.1.4 Test pits 3, 4, 9 and 10 (Figs 2 and 5)

This group of test pits was aligned north-east/south-west along the northern edge of the development area. The redeposited gravel layers in Test Pits 3, (352) and 10, (704, 705) (Fig. 3), and dump layers in Test Pit 9, (651, 652) appeared to have been very disturbed, possibly by the landscaping of the garden area. The dump layers (651, 652) both contained *c* 5% brick fragments and the layer (705) contained 19th-20th century pottery. Part of a frogged brick was recovered from the subsoil (402). The test pits were dug to a depth of between 0.38 m–0.60 m.

5.1.5 Test pits 5, 6 and 7 (Fig. 5)

Test Pits 4 (see 5.1.4), 5, 6 and 7 form a co-axial line, orientated north-west/south-east, with Test Pits 3, 9 and 10 (see Fig. 2). Redeposited natural, apparently used as a levelling deposit, was identified in Test Pits 6 (503, 504) and 7 (552, 553). A dump of construction/demolition material mixed with subsoil (451) was identified in Test Pit 5. This was thought to be a result of the landscaping of the garden area similar to the deposits described above. The test pits were dug to a depth of between 0.35-0.82 m.

5.1.6 Test pit 8 (Fig. 2)

Test Pit 8 was located to the east of Trench 2, in a rough north-east/south-west alignment with Test Pit 3, and was excavated to a depth of 0.42 m. A primary layer of redeposited natural (603) was overlain by a garden landscaping deposit (602); neither contained any finds. Like the other trenches and test pits, it is thought that the area was heavily truncated as a result of the landscaping of the garden.

5.2 Finds

5.2.1 *Worked Flint*

A single flint flake was recovered from the topsoil layer 700, in Test Pit 10. The flake is of an indeterminate prehistoric date.

5.2.2 *Post-medieval pottery*

A total of 75 sherds of pottery was recovered from 22 separate contexts. The bulk of the assemblage contains Victorian or later plant pots, with a lesser amount of glazed pottery, which included willow pattern and fragments of marmalade jars.

5.2.3 *Metalwork*

A total of five iron nails were recovered from four contexts (255, 256, 300 and 600). The preservation was poor and the objects were heavily corroded. A further iron object was recovered but its preservation was so poor that its original function could not be ascertained.

A further two metal objects were recovered and consisted of a lead disc and two fragments of copper alloy. The disc, recovered from 253, was circular and measured 45 mm in diameter, c 3 mm in thickness and weighed 45g; it is probably a weight. The preservation of the copper alloy material was so poor that its original function could not be identified.

5.2.4 *Other finds*

Other finds included Victorian, or later, bottle and window glass, a fragment of a clay pipe and a small quantity of burnt stone.

6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 Reliability of field investigation

The level of truncation across the site appears to be extremely high and the results were very consistent; consequently limited results from the field evaluation are considered a reliable indication of the lack of significant archaeology.

6.2 Overall interpretation

6.2.1 *Summary of Results*

No archaeological features or significant deposits were identified during the excavation, but the presence of a struck flint suggests possible prehistoric activity in the area.

The layers of silty clay below the topsoil would appear to be from landscaping of the garden - they contained late pottery which is likely to be redeposited from a domestic midden.

6.2.2 *Significance*

The results of the evaluation produced only data of very limited archaeological significance.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OAU 1999 *Land adjacent to Pooh Corner and Wildacre, Sandy Lane, Northwood, Herts. Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Field Evaluation Planning Application No. 99/1873/FUL*

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

Appendices

Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory

| Trench | Ctxt | Type | width (m) | thick. (m) | Comment | Finds | No. | Date |
|----------|------|-------|-----------|------------|------------------|----------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| 001 | | | | | | | | |
| | 100 | layer | | 0.05 | Turf | | | |
| | 101 | layer | | 0.26 | Topsoil | Pot | 1 | Victorian |
| | 102 | layer | | 0.10 | Make-up layer | CBM | 2 | |
| | 103 | layer | | | Natural gravel | | | |
| | 104 | layer | | 0.20 | Make-up layer | CBM | 2 | |
| | 105 | layer | | 0.12 | Make-up layer | Pot, CBM | 3, 2 | Victorian |
| | 106 | layer | | 0.26 | Make-up layer | Pot | 2 | Victorian |
| 002 | | | | | | | | |
| | 200 | layer | | 0.07 | Turf | | | |
| | 201 | layer | | 0.26 | Topsoil | Pot, CBM | 3, 1 | Victorian |
| | 202 | layer | | 0.45 | Make-up layer | | | |
| | 203 | layer | | - | Made-ground | | | |
| Test pit | | | | | | | | |
| 001 | | | | | | | | |
| | 250 | layer | | 0.10 | Turf and topsoil | | | |
| | 251 | layer | | 0.48 | Sub-soil | Pot, CBM, clay pipe, glass | 13, 1, 1, 2 | Victorian |
| | 252 | layer | | 0.48 | Sub-soil | Pot, CBM, glass | 11, 2, 3 | Victorian |
| | 253 | layer | | 0.48 | Sub-soil | Pot, slag, glass, Pb disc | 3, 2, 1, 1 | Victorian |
| | 254 | layer | | 0.48 | Sub-soil | Pot, CBM, glass | 7, 2, 7 | Victorian |

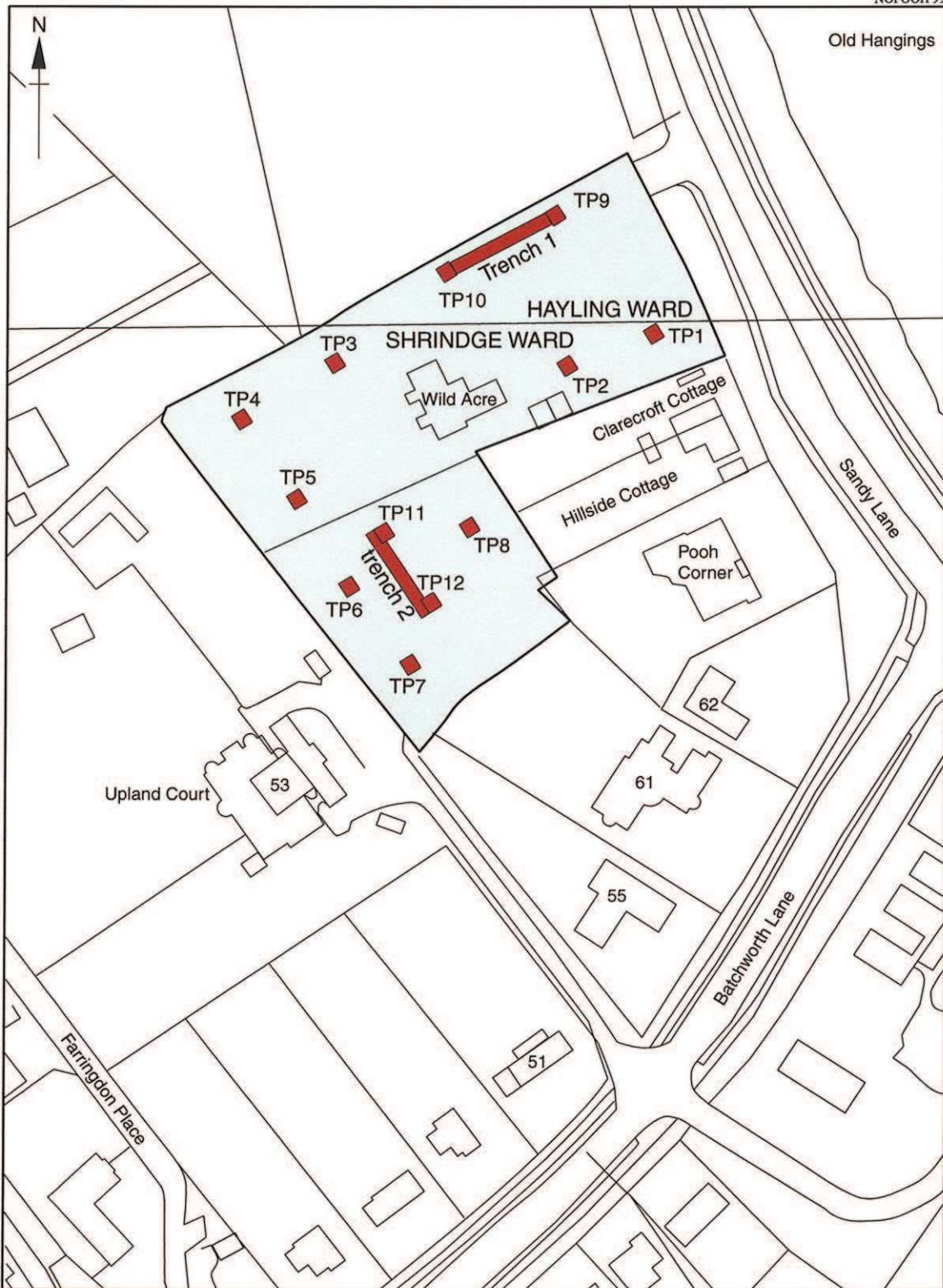
| | | | | | | | | |
|-----|-----|-------|--|------|----------------------------|---------------------------|------------|-----------|
| | 255 | layer | | 0.38 | Redeposited natural | Pot, CBM, slag, nails | 1, 3, 1, 2 | Victorian |
| | 256 | layer | | 0.38 | Redeposited natural | Pot, CBM, glass, nail | 6, 1, 2, 1 | Victorian |
| | 257 | layer | | - | Natural gravel | | | |
| 002 | | | | | | | | |
| | 300 | layer | | 0.06 | Turf and topsoil | Pot, nail, cu alloy strip | 1, 1, 1 | Victorian |
| | 301 | layer | | 0.10 | (spit) Topsoil/subsoil | Pot, CBM | 2, 1 | Victorian |
| | 302 | layer | | 0.10 | (spit) redeposited natural | | | |
| | 303 | layer | | | (spit) levelling layer | | | |
| | 304 | layer | | | (spit) redeposited natural | | | |
| | 305 | layer | | | (spit) levelling layer | | | |
| | 306 | layer | | | (spit) redeposited natural | | | |
| 003 | | | | | | | | |
| | 350 | layer | | 0.10 | (spit) Turf and topsoil | | | |
| | 351 | layer | | 0.10 | (spit) Topsoil/subsoil | CBM | 6 | |
| | 352 | layer | | 0.10 | (spit) Made-ground | | | |
| | 353 | layer | | - | (spit) Natural | | | |
| 004 | | | | | | | | |
| | 400 | layer | | 0.11 | Topsoil | CBM | 2 | |
| | 401 | layer | | 0.10 | (spit) subsoil | CBM | 2 | |
| | 402 | layer | | 0.08 | Subsoil | Pot | 1 | Victorian |
| | 403 | layer | | - | Natural clay | | | |
| 005 | | | | | | | | |
| | 450 | layer | | 0.10 | Topsoil | Slag | 2 | |
| | 451 | layer | | 0.18 | Subsoil | Pot, CBM | 1, 1 | Victorian |
| | 452 | layer | | - | Natural clay | | | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|-----|-----|-------|------|------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|-----------|
| 006 | | | | | | | | |
| | 500 | layer | | 0.10 | Topsoil | | | |
| | 501 | layer | | 0.10 | (spit) subsoil | Pot, CBM | 1, 3 | Victorian |
| | 502 | layer | | 0.10 | (spit) subsoil | CBM | 1 | |
| | 503 | layer | | 0.10 | (spit) redeposited natural | | | |
| | 504 | layer | | 0.10 | (spit) redeposited natural | | | |
| | 505 | layer | 0.75 | 0.10 | (spit) levelling deposit | | | |
| | 506 | layer | 0.75 | 0.10 | (spit) levelling deposit | | | |
| | 507 | layer | 0.75 | 0.10 | (spit) levelling deposit | | | |
| | 508 | layer | | - | Natural clay | | | |
| 007 | | | | | | | | |
| | 550 | layer | | 0.10 | (spit) topsoil/subsoil | CBM | 3 | |
| | 551 | layer | | 0.10 | (spit) topsoil | | | |
| | 552 | layer | | 0.10 | (spit) redeposited natural | | | |
| | 553 | layer | | 0.10 | (spit) redeposited natural | | | |
| 008 | | | | | | | | |
| | 600 | layer | | 0.10 | (spit) topsoil/turf | Pot, CBM, glass, nail | 3, 1, 1, 1 | Victorian |
| | 601 | layer | | 0.10 | (spit) topsoil | | | |
| | 602 | layer | | 0.10 | (spit) levelling deposit | | | |
| | 603 | layer | | 0.10 | (spit) re-deposited natural | | | |
| 009 | | | | | | | | |
| | 650 | layer | | 0.10 | (spit) topsoil/turf | Pot, CBM | 3, 1 | Victorian |
| | 651 | layer | | 0.10 | (spit) made-ground | | | |
| | 652 | layer | | 0.10 | (spit) made-ground | | | |
| | 653 | layer | | - | Natural clay | | | |
| 010 | | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|-----|-----|-------|--|------|-----------------------------|------------------------|---------|-----------|
| | 700 | layer | | 0.10 | (spit) topsoil/turf | Pot, CBM, worked flint | 4, 1, 1 | Victorian |
| | 701 | layer | | 0.08 | (spit) topsoil | Pot, slag, glass | 1, 1, 2 | Victorian |
| | 702 | layer | | 0.10 | (spit) subsoil | Pot, CBM, glass | 3, 1, 2 | Victorian |
| | 703 | layer | | 0.07 | (spit) subsoil | Pot, CBM | 1, 1 | Victorian |
| | 704 | layer | | 0.10 | (spit) re-deposited natural | CBM | 1 | |
| | 705 | layer | | 0.08 | (spit) re-deposited natural | Pot | 1 | Victorian |
| | 706 | layer | | - | Natural clay | | | |
| 011 | | | | | | | | |
| | 750 | layer | | 0.10 | (spit) topsoil/turf | | | |
| | 751 | layer | | 0.10 | (spit) made-ground | | | |
| | 752 | layer | | 0.10 | (spit) made-ground | | | |
| 012 | | | | | | | | |
| | 800 | | | 0.10 | (spit) topsoil/turf | | | |
| | 801 | | | 0.10 | (spit) made-ground | | | |



Figure 1 : site location



scale 1:1250

Figure 2: trench and test pit location plan

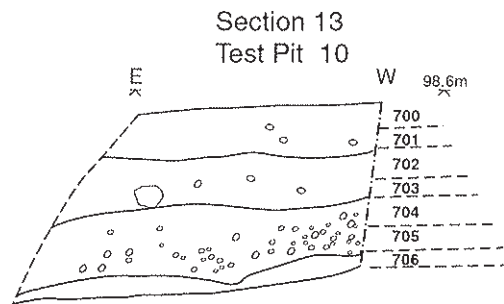
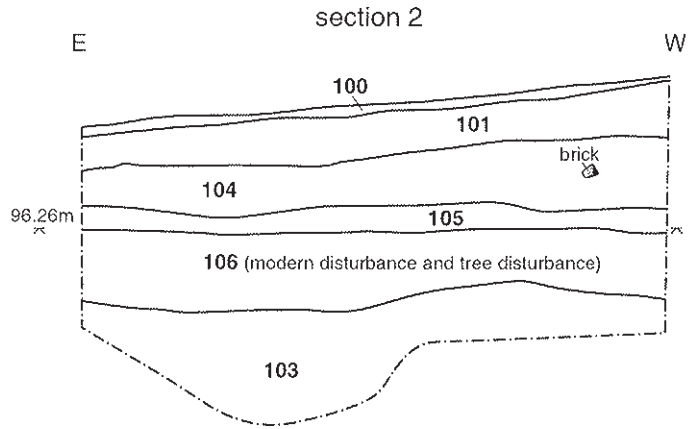
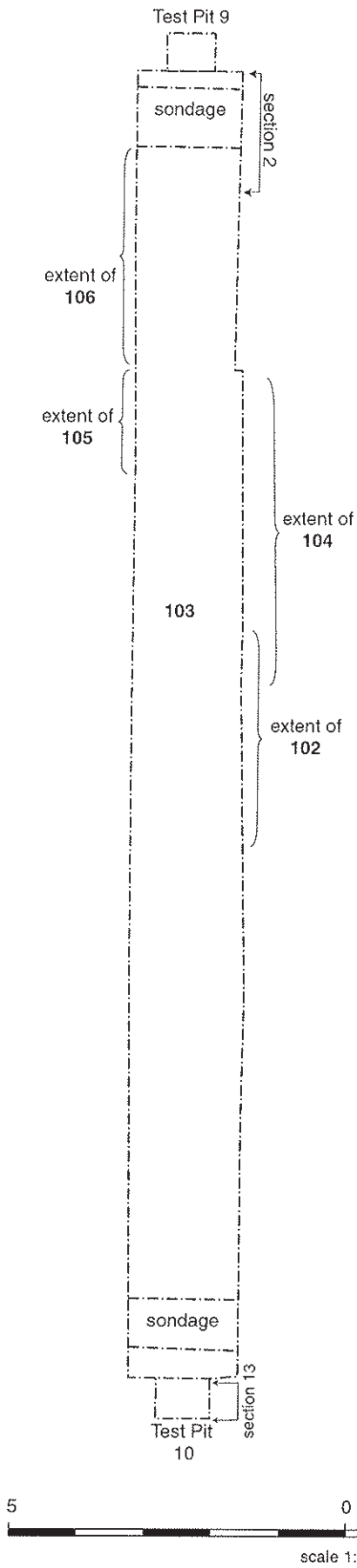


Figure 3: Trench 1, test pit 10.

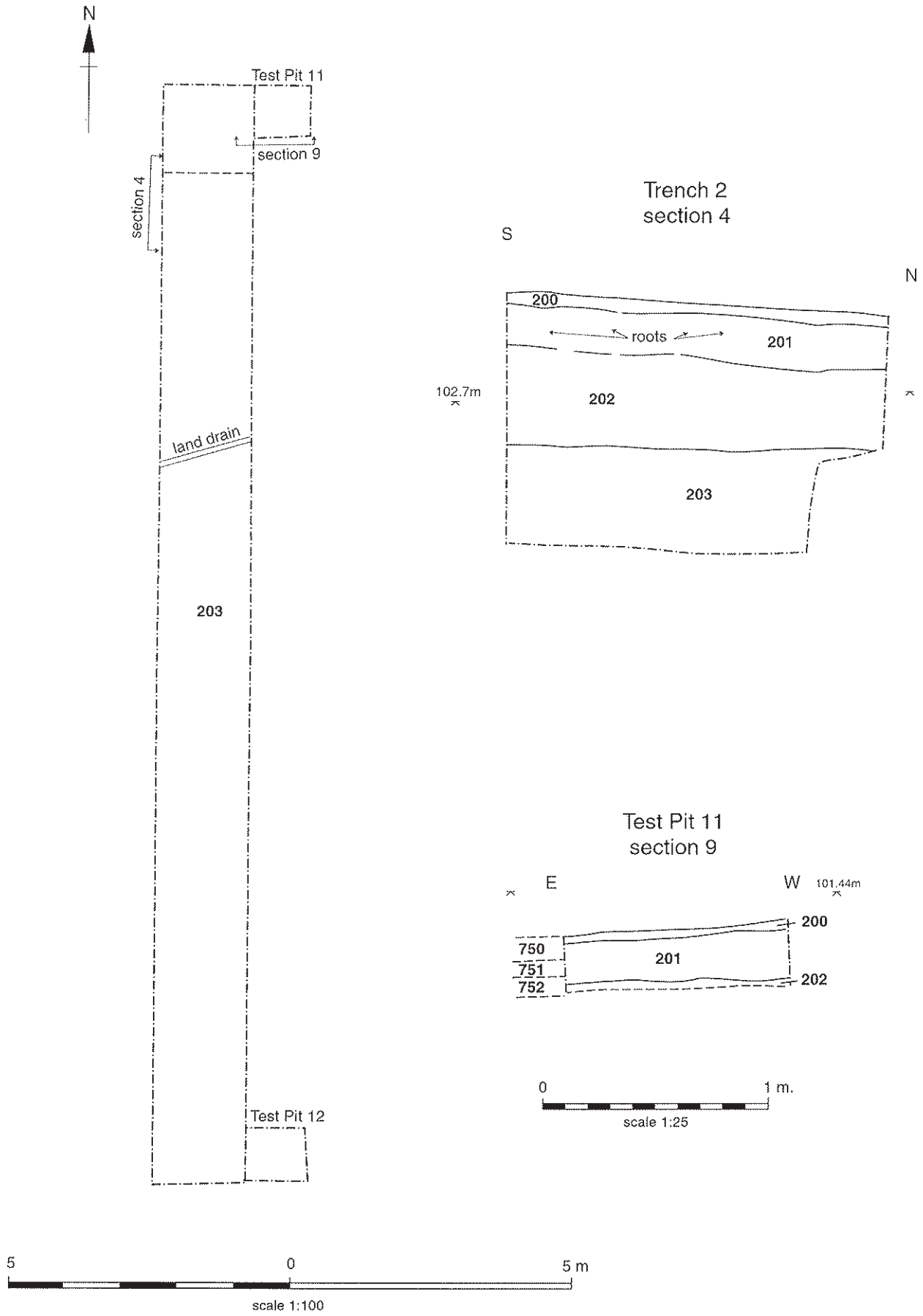


Figure 4: Trench 2 and test pit 11, plan and section

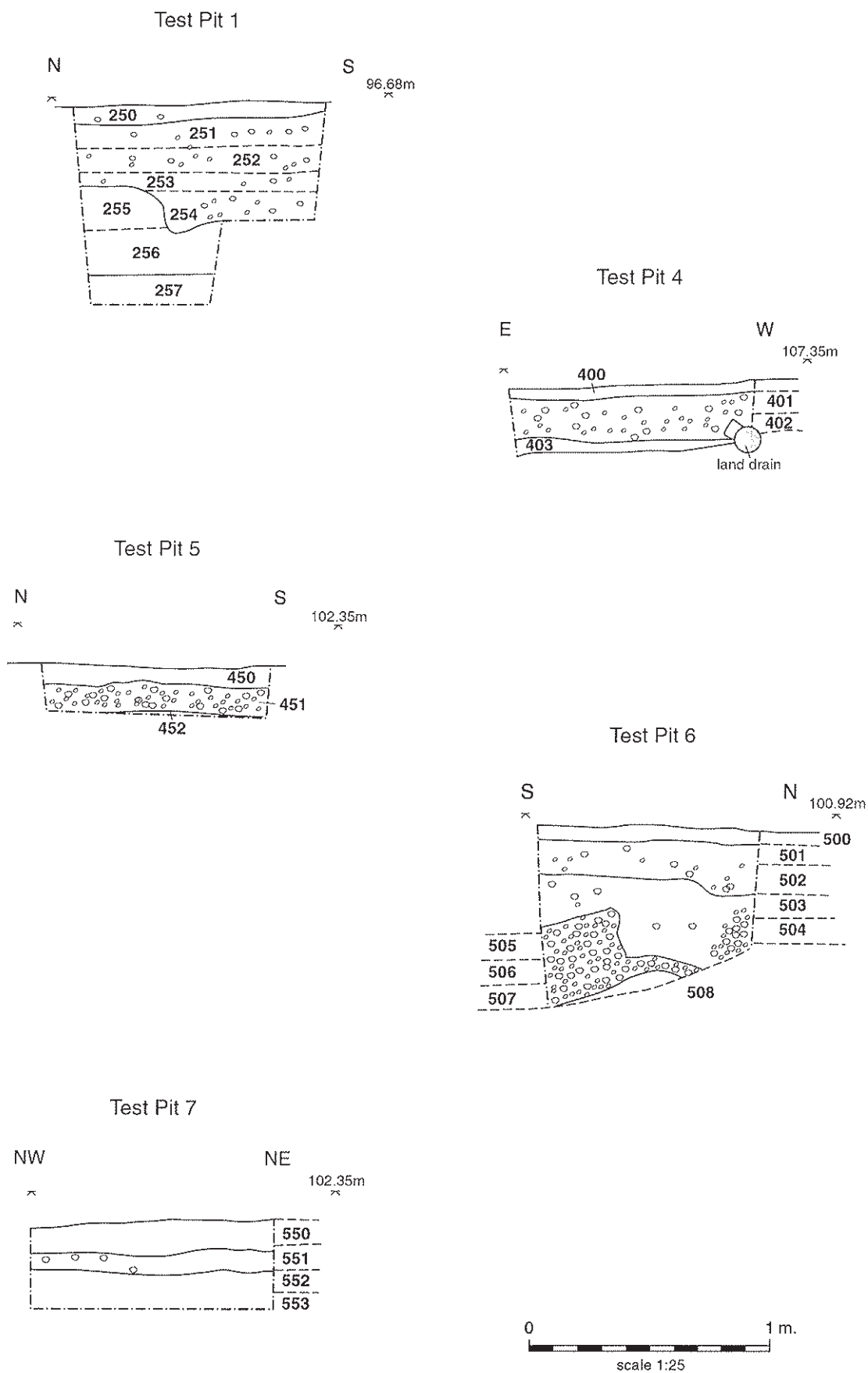


Figure 5: Test Pit sections



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