

Hinton Cook Architects

**The Aviary, Mentmore
Buckinghamshire**

NGR SP 9065 1970

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Planning Ref. No. A/98/1704/APP

Oxford Archaeological Unit

November 1999

Hinton Cook Architects

**The Aviary, Mentmore
Buckinghamshire**

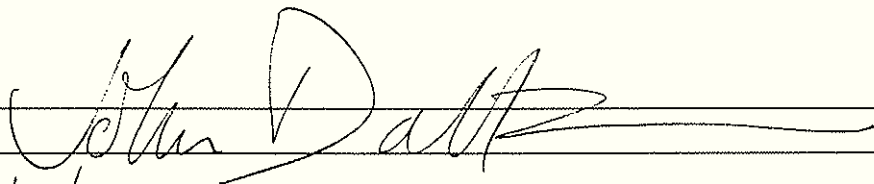
NGR SP 9065 1970

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Planning Ref. No. A/98/1704/APP

Prepared by: Kayt Brown

Date: 4/11/99

Checked by: 

Date: 10/11/99

Approved by:  HEAD OF FIELDWORK

Date: 12/11/1999

Oxford Archaeological Unit

November 1999

Summary

During 1999 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook a watching brief at The Aviary, Mentmore, Buckinghamshire (NGR SP 9065 1970). No archaeological features were seen; modern finds were examined on site but not retained.

1 Introduction

Planning permission was granted for the construction of a new extension, a garage conversion and relocation of the driveway at *The Aviary*, Mentmore, (Planning ref: A/98/1704/APP). Work on the driveway remains to be done, and as such this report forms an interim document pending completion of works. The site lies within an area of archaeological potential, and an archaeological watching brief was required during the period of groundworks, in line with the planning consent granted under PPG 16.

The watching brief was commissioned by Hinton Cook Architects on behalf of their clients. It was undertaken to a brief set by and a WSI agreed with Buckinghamshire County Council.

2 Background (Fig 1)

The site lies in an area of archaeological potential. A probable Anglo-Saxon Cemetery was discovered in the area during the mid 19th century (Ouvry 1853 and 1855). The exact location of the cemetery has yet to be confirmed, but it appears to be quite extensive. Burials were recovered just to the south of the church (west of the site). Both inhumations and cremations were recorded. Finds include a bronze saucer brooch dating to the 5th century, spear-heads, knives, partial remains of a shield, a 12th century spur and several Roman coins, including one of Constans or Constantius.

Mentmore is mentioned in the Domesday book, when it belonged to Eddeva Pulchra (Fair Edith), the wife of King Edward the Confessor. St. Mary's church lies c. 250 m to the west of *The Aviary* and is thought to date to the 12th or 13th century. Mentmore House was built in 1852 by Sir Joseph Paxton for Baron Meyer Amshel de Rothschild.

The site is located at the southern end of Mentmore village, to the north of Mentmore Park and to the east of Mentmore House and St. Mary's Church at NGR SP 9065 1970. The geology is glacial sands and gravels overlying Gault (stiff, calcareous clay).

3 Aims

The aims of the watching brief were to record the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains exposed on site during the course of the groundworks. Any archaeological remains uncovered were to be recorded to established OAU standards (Wilkinson 1992), in order to secure their preservation by record.

4 Methodology

Monitoring of the groundworks, which included surface stripping and excavation for foundations and surfaces, was conducted by an archaeological supervisor during a number of separate site visits. Within the constraints imposed by health and safety considerations the deposits and features exposed were cleaned, inspected and recorded in plan, section and by colour slide and monochrome print photography. Written records were also made on proforma sheets. Soil description utilises standard charts for the approximation of percentage of inclusion types in soil deposits.

5 Results

Trench 1

Located to the north of the house and adjacent to the existing garage, an area measuring 8.0 m x 5.0 m was stripped to a depth of 1.50 m. Within this area two foundation trenches were excavated to a depth of a further 1.50 m. All archaeological deposits within this area were recorded in section. Natural clay (4) was observed to a depth of 0.80m overlain by a layer (0.60 m in depth) of natural sandy gravel (3) (see section 2). The natural gravel was also observed in trench 2, layer (23). To the south of the area, the gravel (3) was overlain by a layer of extensively disturbed topsoil (5), to a depth of 0.55 m. To the north of the area, the sandy gravel (3), was overlain by c. 0.85 m of made ground (2), probably representing the demolition of a brick building prior to the existing wooden garage, which in turn was sealed by a concrete slab floor (1) (see section 1). No archaeological features were identified within this trench.

Trench 2

Located towards the south-east of the existing house, an area measuring 12 m x 12 m was stripped to a depth of 1 m below the existing ground surface, with footings to the extension excavated a further 0.65 m in depth. This area was very heavily disturbed due to the in-situ foundations and demolished remains of an earlier boiler house and a great deal of associated buried pipework. The resulting disturbance was seen to a depth varying between 0.75 – 1.10 m below present ground level.

6 Finds

No finds were retrieved during the course of the watching brief.

7 Environmental results

Full consideration was given to environmental sampling, however due to the absence of any significant archaeology no environmental soil samples were taken.

8 Discussion

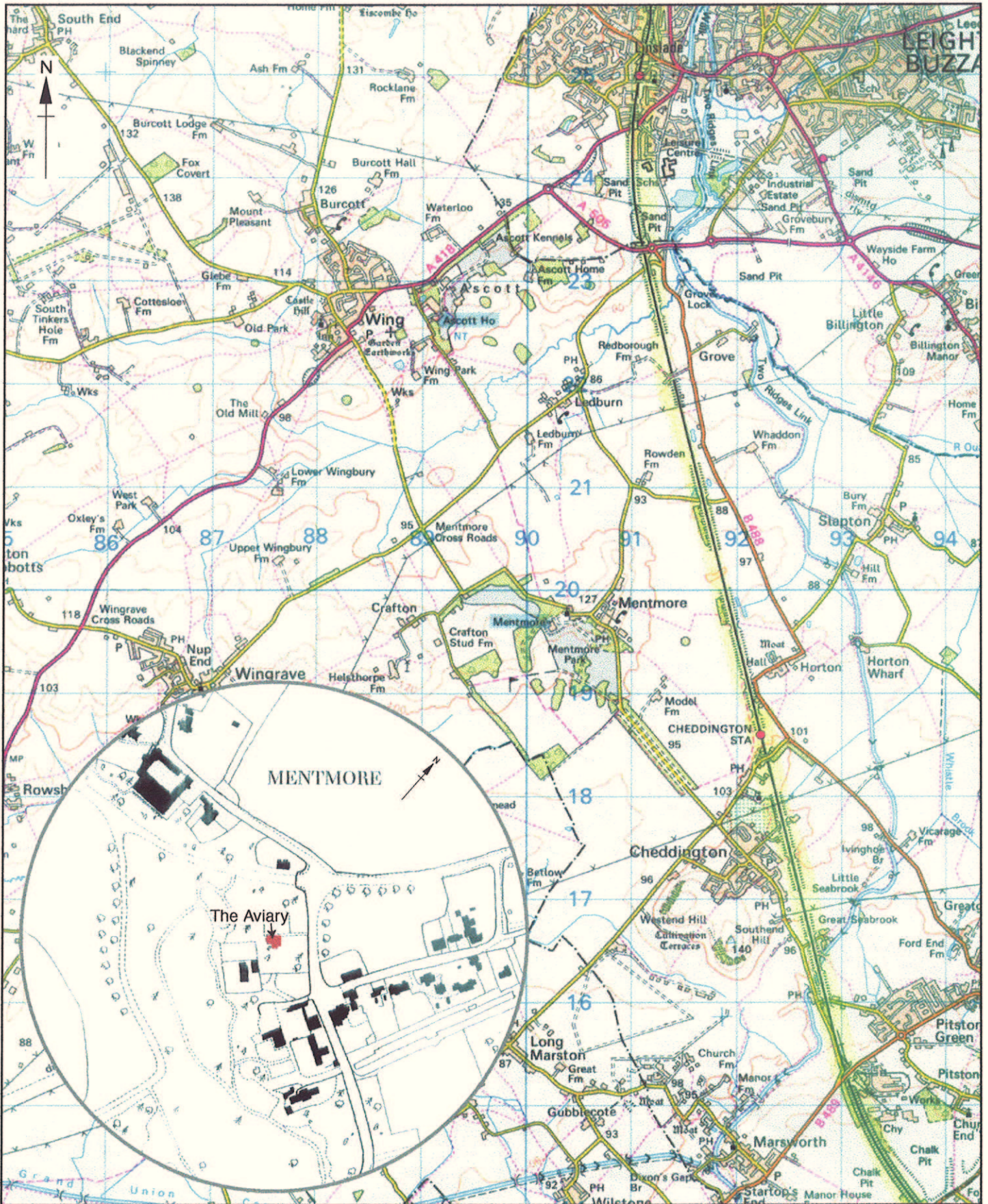
The watching brief produced only negative evidence; this is at least in part a reflection of the heavy modern disturbance in some areas of the site. Further work remains to be done on the site, and thus any conclusions based on the evidence gathered to date must be treated with due caution.

References.

Ouvry F, 1853 Saxon and other Remains discovered at and near Mentmore, *Archaeologia XXXV* 379-382

Ouvry F, 1855 Saxon and other Remains discovered at and near Mentmore, *Records of Buckinghamshire I* 108-112

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



Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey's 1:50,000 map of 1993 with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright. Licence No. 854166

figure 1: site location

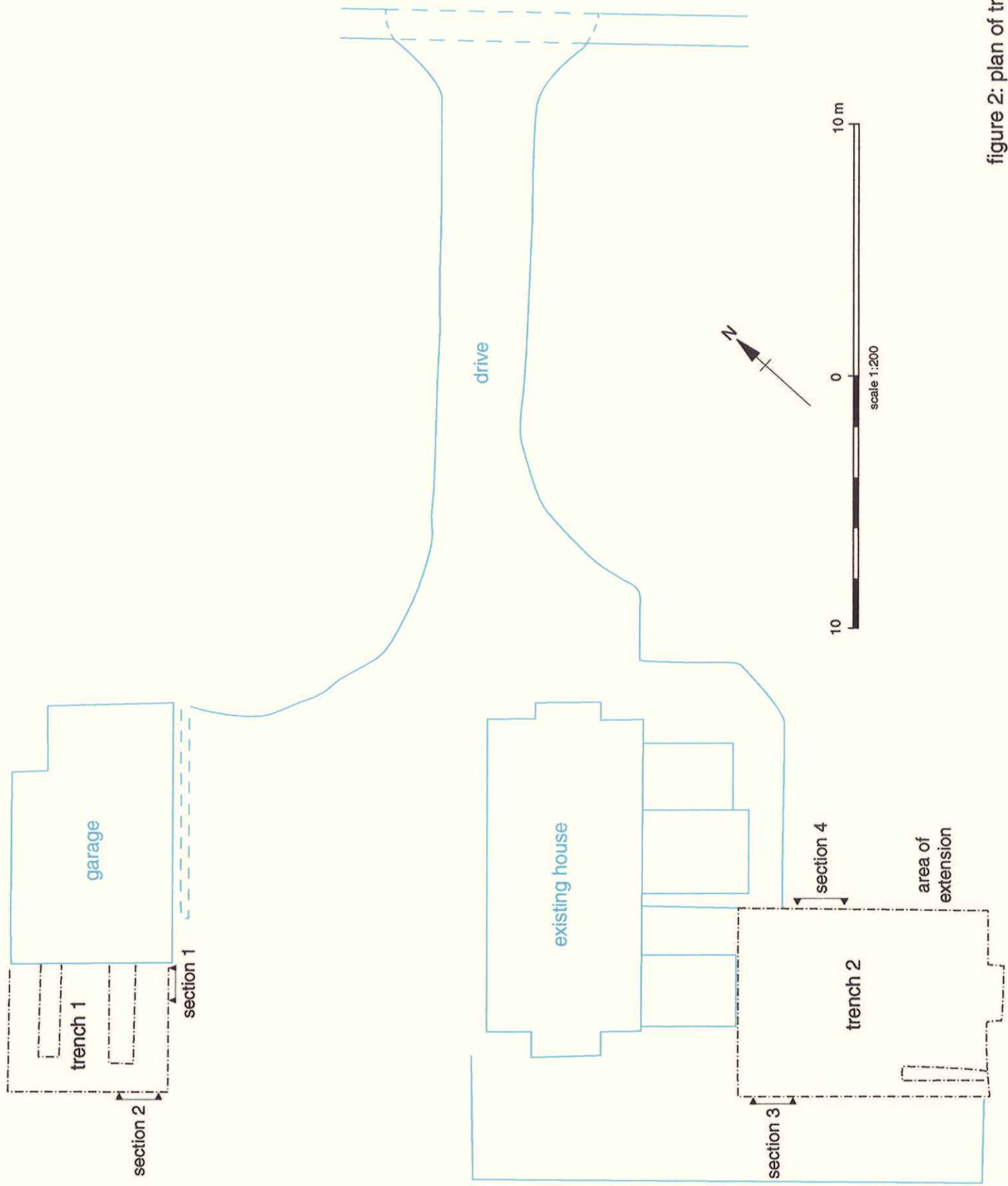


figure 2: plan of trenches

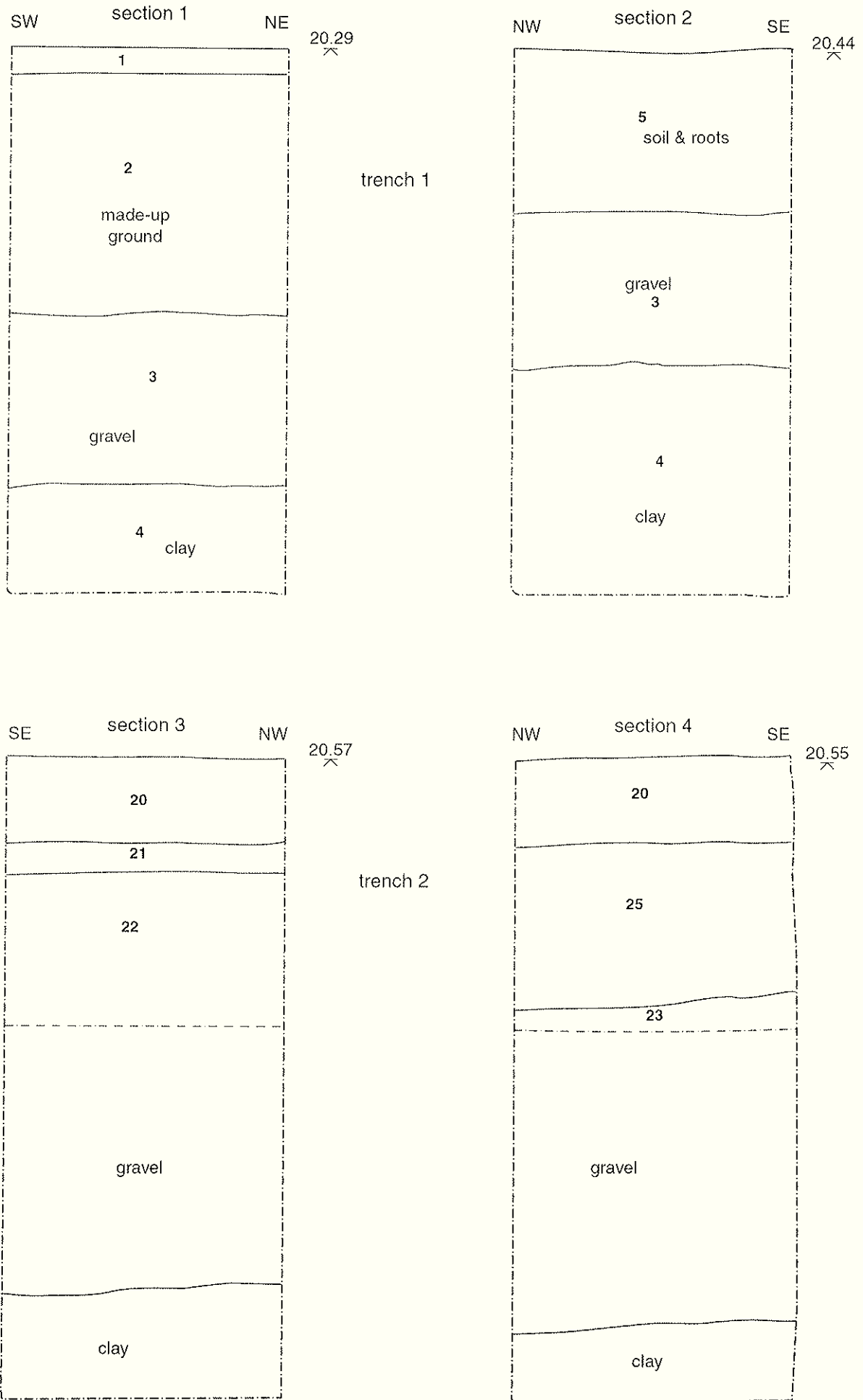


figure 3: sections



OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES

Tel: 01865 263800 Fax: 01865 793496

email: postmaster@oau-oxford.demon.co.uk



Director and Chief Executive: David Jennings B.A., M.I.F.A. Oxford Archaeological Unit Limited.
Private Limited Company Number: 1618597 Registered Charity Number: 285627.
Registered Office: Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES