

Abbey Farmhouse Lavendon Grange Buckinghamshire



Archaeological Evaluation



Oxford Archaeology

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Abbey Farmhouse, Lavendon Grange, Buckinghamshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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SUMMARY

Oxford Archaeology carried out a field evaluation of a proposed development site on land at Abbey Farmhouse, Lavendon Grange, Buckinghamshire on behalf of Mr and Mrs S Jensen in February 2002. The evaluation revealed an archaeological feature in Trench 2 that contained medieval pottery, located in the middle of the development site. This feature is interpreted as a possible pond.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 On the 27th and 28th February 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at Abbey Farmhouse, Lavendon Grange, Buckinghamshire (Fig. 1) on behalf of Mr and Mrs S Jensen.
- 1.1.2 The evaluation was required to inform the determination process for a planning application for a proposed residential extension to the above property. The work was carried out to a brief set by and a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with, Brian Giggins the archaeologist for Milton Keynes Council. The site is situated at NGR SP 9002 5348.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site of the proposed extension at present forms part of the garden of Abbey Farmhouse and lies to the north and east of the property. The ground is roughly level but a bench mark above OD was not available, so all levels taken were tied into the porch floor of the property.
- 1.2.2 The site is situated on a mixed geology of boulder clay and cornbrash.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 An investigation of the Milton Keynes Sites and Monuments Record has shown that the development site has not been subject to a systematic survey and that the baseline data necessary for a satisfactory archaeological assessment is therefore currently not available.
- 1.3.2 The development site is located in an area of potential archaeological significance as it is on or near the site of Lavendon Abbey, which was founded in 1154-58 by John de Bidun, then sheriff of Buckinghamshire. The minor nobility predominantly supported the foundation of Premonstratensian Abbeys in England, and Lavendon Abbey was the only Premonstratensian Abbey in Buckinghamshire.
- 1.3.3 The Abbey was dissolved in 1536 and today very little survives to indicate either its exact location or size and layout. The Victoria County History of Buckinghamshire states that 'some fragments of the moat surrounding the site exist to the west of the village, and foundations have been discovered to the west of them' (VCH, Bucks, IV, p.379).

- 1.3.4 An English Heritage Inspectors report of 1992 (ref. AA 62990/1) states that the 'exact position of the abbey buildings, including the church, is uncertain', and that only fishponds and traces of a field system remain. The present site of Lavendon Grange is thought likely to be situated on the Abbey buildings.
- 1.3.5 The Grange itself was originally built c1625, probably with re-used stone from the Abbey (RCHM(E) 1913 - Historical Monuments of Buckinghamshire), and consisted of what are now the West Wing and the Brewhouse.
- 1.3.6 The Grange was subsequently extensively modified and added to, with the South Wing being built late in the 18th/early 19th century, and the East Wing itself being built in 1911. However, recent works at the Grange (OAU 2001) failed to positively locate evidence of the Abbey buildings.

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Mr and Mrs S Jensen for their hospitality during the fieldwork.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

- 2.1.1 To determine the condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present in the site area.
- 2.1.2 To make available the results of the investigation.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork

- 3.1.1 The evaluation consisted of three machine-excavated trenches in the site area. The trenches measured 10, 12 and 8 m long by 1.6 m wide and were located to provide a good general sample of the site area (Fig. 2).
- 3.1.2 Trench 1 was L shaped to avoid damaging an existing tree.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

- 3.2.1 The overburden was removed under close archaeological supervision by a JCB mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless bucket. The evaluation trenches were excavated to the top of the geological horizon and were then cleaned by hand.
- 3.2.2 The revealed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds.
- 3.2.3 All archaeological features were planned and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20.
- 3.2.4 All features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (OAU, 1992).

3.3 Finds

- 3.3.1 Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation and generally bagged by context. Finds of special interest were given a unique small find number.

3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

- 3.4.1 No palaeo-environmental samples were taken.

3.5 Presentation of results

- 3.5.1 This report describes the sequence of deposits in each trench. The plan of Trench 2 with sections and a single section from each of Trenches 1 and 3 are illustrated (Fig. 3). Context details are given in a Context Inventory (Appendix 1).

4 RESULTS: GENERAL

4.1 Soils and ground conditions

- 4.1.1 Although made ground and garden soils were apparent across the site, the general soil type was a dark brown silt loam topsoil. A yellowish brown silty clay redeposited natural was located in Trench 1.
- 4.1.2 The underlying geology was a mixed light yellowish silty clay and cornbrash. Generally the site and weather conditions were fair to good.

4.2 Distribution of archaeological deposits

- 4.2.1 The evaluation revealed a single archaeological feature to the middle of the development site within Trench 2.

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Trench descriptions

Trench 1 (Fig. 3, section 4)

- 5.1.1 This trench was located in the western part of the development area and was L shaped. It measured 5.5 m and 6.5 m in length and was aligned north - south and east - west.
- 5.1.2 No archaeological features or deposits were located. The mixed boulder clay and cornbrash natural geology (102) was sealed by a dark brown silt loam (101). In the east part of the trench this was overlain by a redeposited layer of yellow brown silt clay (103). Post-medieval potsherds and a single fragment of tile were recovered from (101).

Trench 2 (Fig. 3)

- 5.1.3 Trench 2 was aligned east - west in the centre of the development area and measured 12 m in length. To the middle and on the south edge of the trench a 3 m machine slot was excavated to investigate the extent of feature (203). The boulder clay - cornbrash

natural (202) was truncated by a large pond feature (203) measuring an estimated 15 m in diameter.

- 5.1.4 The full depth of this feature was not excavated; however, a depth of 0.70 m was recorded (1.10 m below present ground surface). A tenacious mid brownish blue deposit with inclusions of cornbrash (205) had probably been used as a lining to the pond feature. Two similar deposits, both yellowish brown clay silt with inclusions of cornbrash and flecks of charcoal (207 and 206) filled 203 and contained medieval pottery sherds. Sealing the pond deposits was a layer of compact mid brown silty clay with cornbrash inclusions and occasional flecks of charcoal (204). This layer contained pottery, tile and bone and was overlain by a layer of dark brown silt loam topsoil (201). Pottery sherds were recovered from the topsoil and dated to the post-medieval period.

Trench 3 (Figs. 3, Section 5)

- 5.1.5 This trench was located on the eastern edge of the development site and measured 8 m in length and was aligned north - south. No archaeological features or deposits were located. The natural geology a boulder clay - cornbrash (302) was sealed by a dark brown silt loam topsoil (301). Sherds of pottery of post-medieval date were retrieved from this deposit.

Additional observation

- 5.1.6 A realignment / break in the northern boundary wall of the Abbey Farmhouse property was noted (Fig. 2). The significance of this is not fully clear at present but it may indicate the existence of a previous wall or boundary at this point.

5.2 Finds

- 5.2.1 Finds collected from the three trenches included pottery from the medieval to the post-medieval periods, several fragments of bone and CBM, a single nail and a piece of shell.

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

- 5.2.2 The pottery assemblage comprised 54 sherds with a total weight of 651 g. The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. All the pottery is either medieval shelly ware or modern.
- 5.2.3 It was recorded using the coding system of the Milton Keynes Archaeological Unit type-series (e.g. Mynard and Zeepvat 1992; Zeepvat et al. 1994), as follows: *MCI: Shelly Coarseware*, AD1100-1400. 16 sherds, 241 g.
- 5.2.4 The rest of the assemblage comprised miscellaneous 19th – 20th century wares such as late English Stoneware, refined white earthenwares, etc. 38 sherds, 410 g.
- 5.2.5 A number of the shelly ware sherds from this site have rouletted decoration, which appears to have been predominantly a 12th – century trait of the industry. This dating is further supported by the fact that products of the main 13th century industries of the

region, Potterspury (MK fabric MC6) and Brill/Boarstall wares (MK fabric MC9), are entirely absent.

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

| Context | <i>MCI</i> | | <i>19th/20th</i> | | Date |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------------|------------|-------|
| | No | Wt | No | Wt | |
| 101 | | | 20 | 83 | 20thC |
| 201 | | | 9 | 26 | 19thC |
| 204 | 4 | 55 | | | 12thC |
| 206 | 7 | 89 | | | 12thC |
| 207 | 5 | 97 | | | 12thC |
| 301 | | | 9 | 301 | 19thC |
| Total | 16 | 241 | 38 | 410 | |

5.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

5.3.1 No environmental samples were taken.

6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 Reliability of field investigation

6.1.1 The evaluation trenches were positioned to give a good overall coverage of the development area. Within the area examined the results from the three trenches clearly demonstrated the absence of archaeological features and deposits in two trenches and identified the presence of a large feature in Trench 2.

6.2 Overall interpretation

Made ground and landscaping relating to the garden of the present property were revealed in the trenches. In addition a large feature was recorded in Trench 2. This continued beyond the southern and western baulks and is interpreted as a roughly circular pond. The pottery recovered from its fills indicates a possible medieval date for its backfilling. No evidence of the Abbey buildings was revealed in the evaluation trenches, however, a large feature possibly dating to the medieval period was identified. The interpretation of this feature as a medieval pond is difficult due to the limited area investigated but it seems possible that it could have been associated with the Abbey.

APPENDICES

7 APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

| Trench | Ctxt No | Type | Width (m) | Thick. (m) | Comment | Finds | No. | Date |
|--------|---------|-------|-------------|------------|-------------------------|--------------------|---------|-------|
| 001 | | | | | | | | |
| | 101 | Layer | | 0.56 | topsoil | Pot CBM | 20 1 | PM |
| | 102 | Layer | | | Natural clay-cornbrash | - | | |
| | 103 | Layer | | 0.20 | Redeposited natural | - | | |
| 002 | | | | | | | | |
| | 201 | Layer | | 0.38 | Topsoil | Pot Nail | 9 / 1 | PM PM |
| | 202 | Layer | | | Natural clay- cornbrash | - | | |
| | 203 | Cut | 15 m Dia | | Pond | - | | |
| | 204 | Layer | | 0.10 | Capping to pond | Pot CBM Bone | 4/ 1/2 | Med |
| | 205 | Fill | | | Fill of 203 | - | | |
| | 206 | Fill | | 0.28 | Fill of 203 | Pot | 7 | Med |
| | 207 | Fill | | 0.20 | Fill of 203 | Pot Shell | 5 / 1 | Med |
| 003 | | | | | | | | |
| | 301 | Layer | | 0.36 | Topsoil | Pot | 9 | PM |
| | 302 | Layer | | | Natural clay-cornbrash | - | | |

8 APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

IFA 1999 Standard and Guidance for archaeological field evaluations.

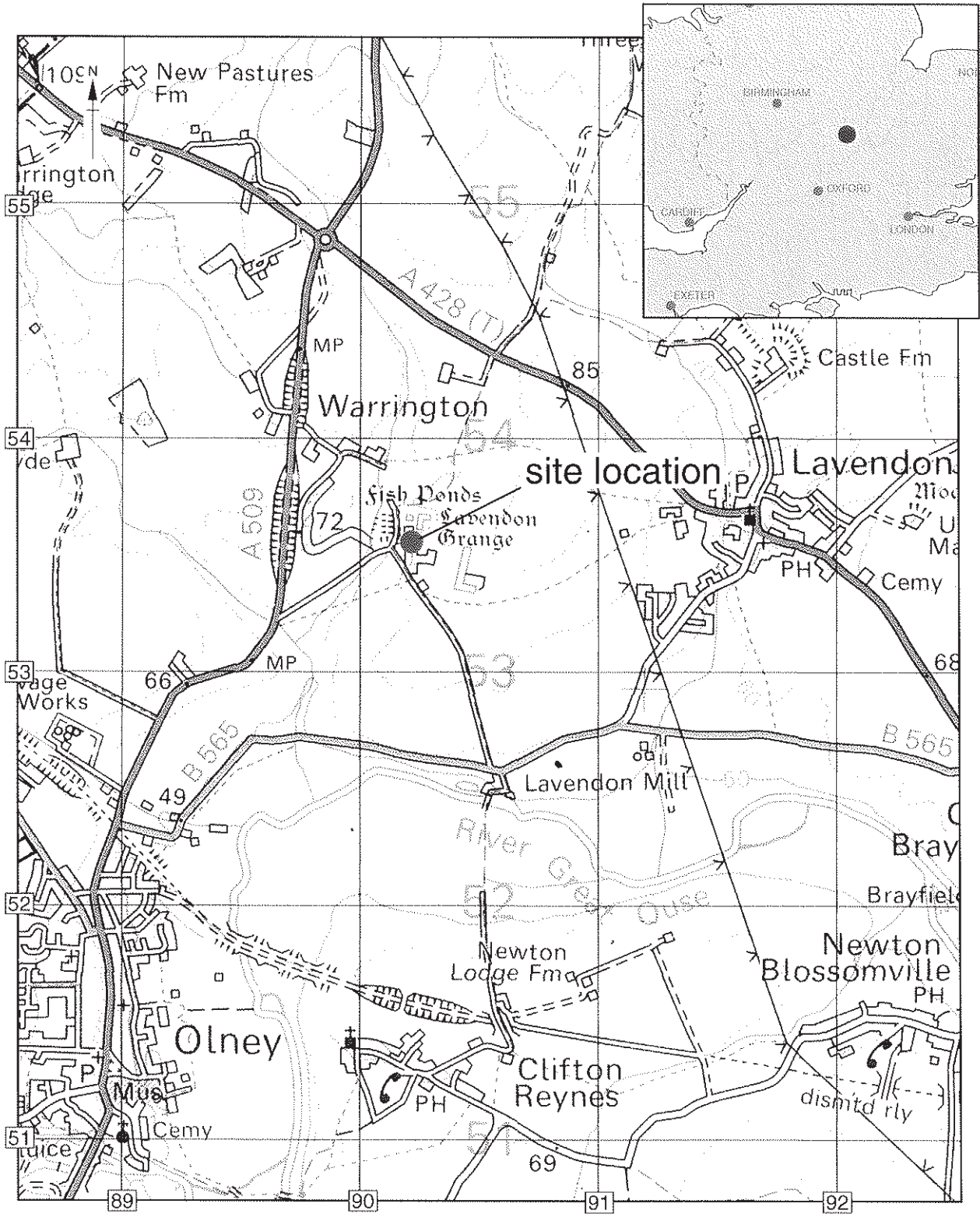
Mynard, DC and Zeepvat RJ, 1992 *Great Linford Bucks Archaeol Soc Monog Ser 3*

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Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location

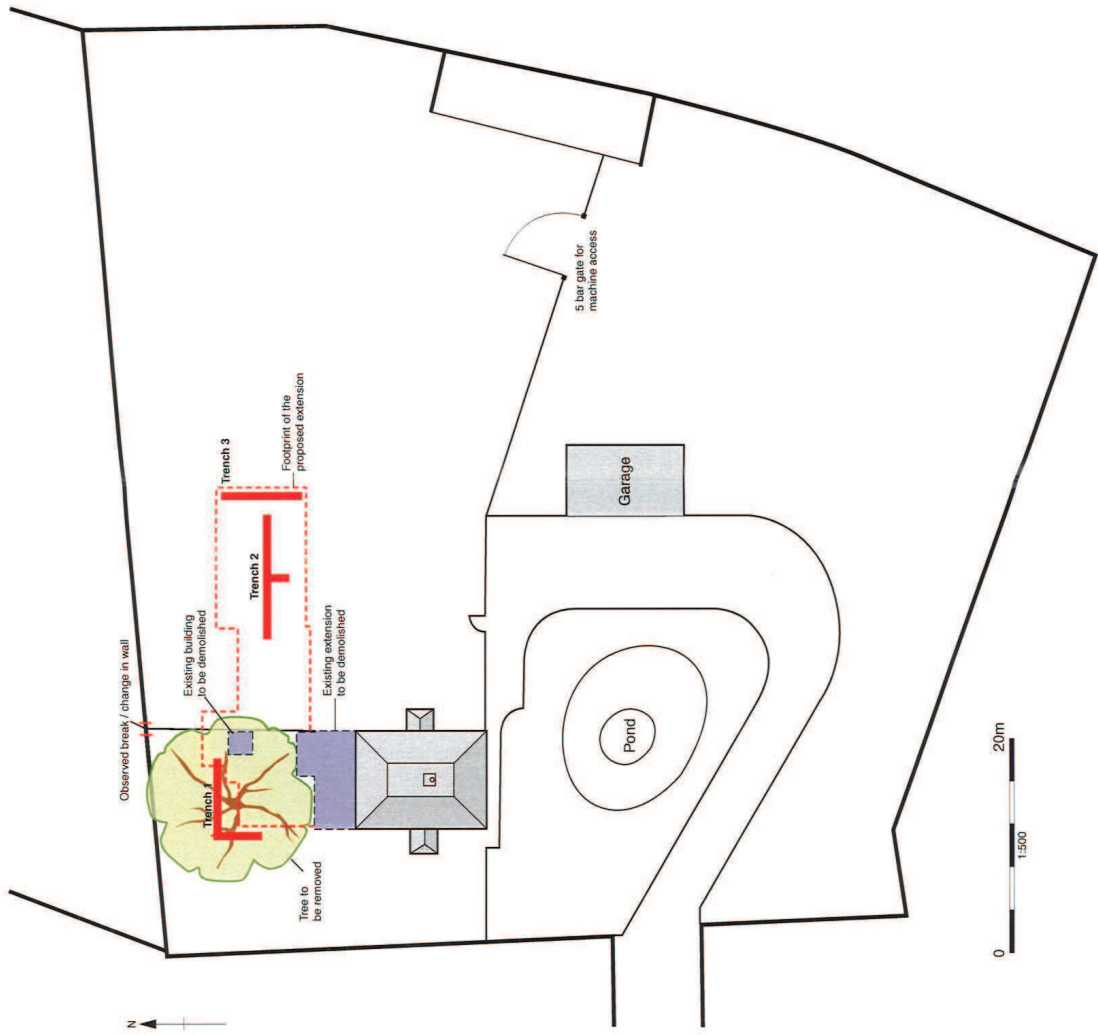


Figure 2: Trench location

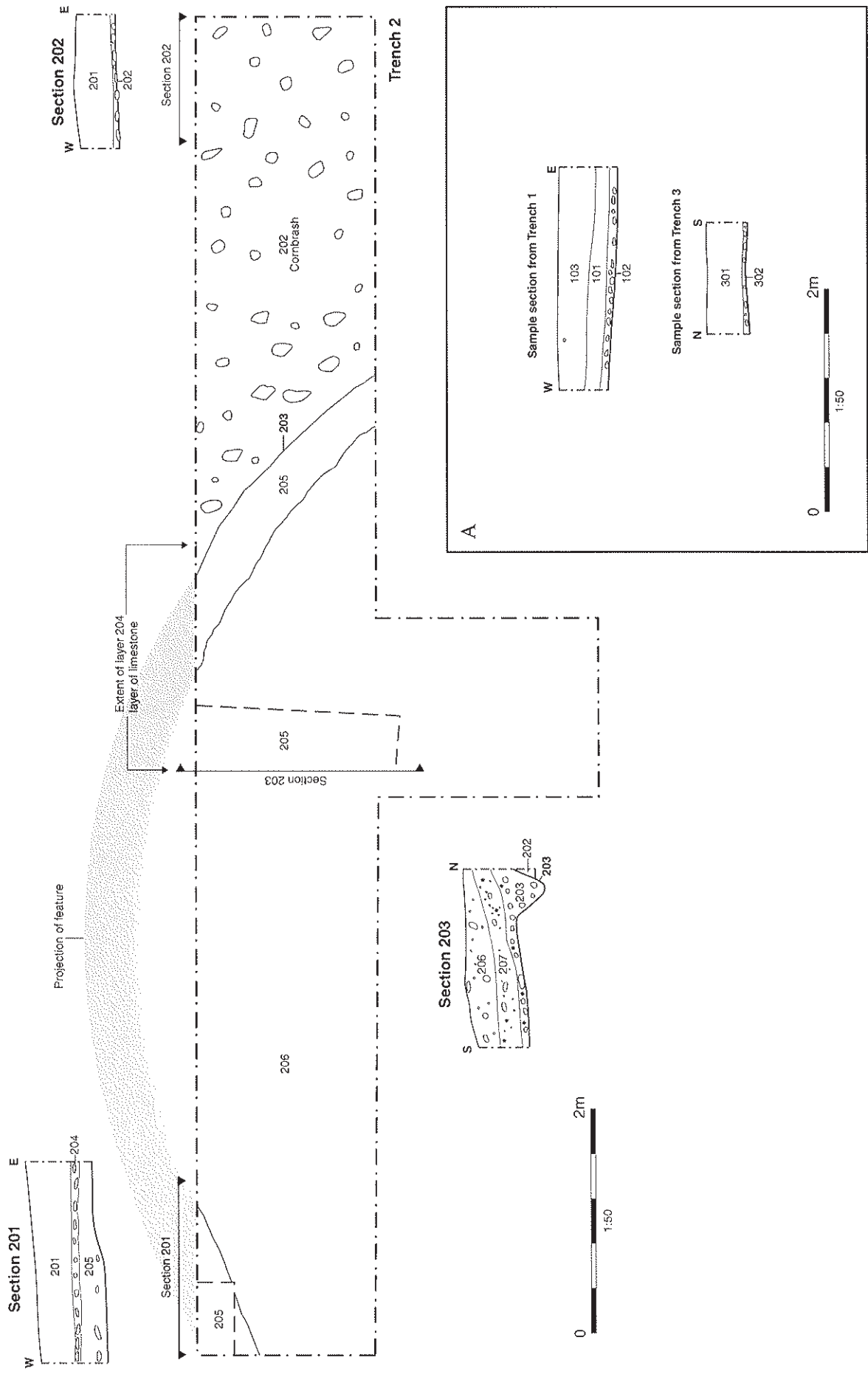


Figure 3: Trench 2, plan and sections, Inset (A) sections 4 and 5



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