

WARMINSTER WILTSHIRE  
WASH 04.

Were House  
George Street  
Warminster  
Wiltshire



**Archaeological Evaluation Report**



**Oxford Archaeology**

August 2004

**Client: Hadfield Associates**

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**Were House, George Street  
Warminster, Wiltshire**

NGR: ST 872 451

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## SUMMARY

*In August 2004 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at land at Were House, George Street, Warminster, Wiltshire (NGR ST 872 451) on behalf of Hadfield Associates. The evaluation revealed no evidence relating to the medieval development of Warminster. However, late post-medieval well and building foundations, possible associated with Were House were revealed. An organic rich clay/peat layer was also discovered at the base of both trenches representing an earlier period when this area had been exposed to occasional flooding.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 On the 10th August 2004 OA carried out a field evaluation at land at Were House (Fig. 1) on behalf of Hadfield Associates, in respect of a planning application for the construction of nineteen dwellings and fourteen car parking spaces, together with vehicular and pedestrian access (Planning Application No. 04/01190/FUL).
- 1.1.2 Due to the potential for development to disturb archaeological remains, in particular those associated to the early medieval development of the town centre, a pre-determination condition for an archaeological evaluation was placed on planning permission. A design brief was set and a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Sue Far, representing Wiltshire County Archaeological Services (WCAS 2004).

### 1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The development site measures approximately 0.2 hectares in area and is situated south of George Street, Warminster, Wiltshire (NGR ST 872 451) along a narrow lane, which is surrounded by dwellings facing George Street and the County Hall to the north-east.
- 1.2.2 The site lies at approximately 120 m OD on level ground. The underlying geology of the area is Upper Greensand and Gault (BGS *Soil Survey of England and Wales* sheet 281).

### 1.3 Archaeological background

- 1.3.1 An extensive urban survey of Warminster, recently completed, shows the development area as lying within the bounds of the 12th century settlement. In the 13th century, the planned development of the town to the west is believed to have extended as far as the junction of Portway and High Street with George Street. It is therefore believed that George Street may contain evidence of early medieval settlement relating to the 11th to 13th centuries.

## 2 EVALUATION AIMS

- 2.1.1 To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the proposed development area.

- 2.1.2 To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present. In particular, attention would be paid to remains relating to the earlier development of the town between the 11th and 13th centuries.
- 2.1.3 To establish the palaeo-environmental potential of any features or deposits within the site.
- 2.1.4 To make available the results of the investigation.

### **3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Scope of fieldwork**

- 3.1.1 The evaluation comprised the excavation of two trenches measuring 17 m and 9 m in length by 1.75 m wide (Fig. 2). The trenches were located within the perimeter of the proposed development site. Due to high levels of contamination recorded in the southern half of the site, this area of the site was not evaluated.

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

- 3.2.1 The overburden was removed under close archaeological supervision by a JCB mechanical excavator fitted with a flat bladed grading bucket. Excavation proceeded to the top of the natural geology or to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon, whichever was encountered first.
- 3.2.2 The trenches were cleaned by hand and the revealed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and where possible to retrieve dating evidence and environmental samples. All features and deposits were issued with unique context numbers. The trenches were planned at a scale of 1:100 where sterile, and at a scale of 1:50 if containing archaeological features. Section drawings of features and sample sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All features, sections and trenches were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the OA *Fieldwork Manual* (OAU 1992).

#### **3.3 Finds**

- 3.3.1 Finds were retrieved by hand and generally bagged by individual context. No small finds were found. Late medieval and post-medieval pottery was retrieved during the evaluation. The late medieval pottery consisted of two sherds, one of which was identified as Redware, though both are believed to be residual having come from a post-medieval make-up layer (1005). The post-medieval pottery consisted of fourteen sherds of earthen ware, stone ware and slipware dating from late fifteenth to eighteenth centuries, within layers 1004, 1005 and 2005. All three deposits represented make-up layers.

## 4 RESULTS: GENERAL

### 4.1 Soils and ground conditions

- 4.1.1 The site is located on an area of land containing eight small outbuildings and two dwellings, including the former Were House, all of which were unoccupied. The ground around the buildings was covered by loose tarmac and brick rubble. Excavation encountered predominantly alluvial deposits, although a significant layer of peat was discovered at the deepest level of both trenches, but this was not bottomed. A sample was taken and an assessment of this peat can be found in Appendix 2.

## 5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

### 5.1 Description of deposits

- 5.1.1 A description of deposits is given by trench below. This is followed by an interpretation of the archaeological features. A full list of features and deposits encountered can be found in Appendix 1.

### 5.2 Trench 1 (Fig. 3)

- 5.2.1 Aligned north-east south-west, Trench 1 was situated within the western half of the site and measured 17 m by 1.75 m. Excavation reached a depth of 1.8 m with the earliest deposit (1006) being reached at 1.5 m. This was located at the western end of the trench and consisted of organic clay/peat containing bone and organic debris. This deposit was overlain by a possible levelling deposit (1005) consisting of a dark sandy clay, 0.35 m thick, containing post-medieval ceramics. This was overlain by a similar levelling deposit consisting of a light grey sandy clay, 0.24 m thick (1004). This was then sealed by a 0.43 m deep sandy-clay (1003), likely representing an earlier formation level subsequently overlain by (1002), the present modern levelling deposit. This measured up to 0.40 m deep and was in turn overlaid by a 0.2 m thick tarmac and brick rubble surface (1001), which forms the existing ground surface within the evaluation area.
- 5.2.2 Two north-west/south-east aligned walls and associated surfaces were located at either end of the trench and represent the remains of an earlier building. The westernmost of these walls (1011) contained at least fifteen roughly hewn stone courses measuring over 1.24 m high by 0.34 m wide, and included a double red brick facing course. This structure was seen to go beyond the base of excavation, where its construction cut through layers 1004 and 1005. Overlying these two post-medieval deposits was a thin (0.06 m) lens of clay sand (1013) representing a trample deposit associate with the construction of the wall. Overlying this deposit were two thin layers of clay sand (1014 and 1015) possibly associated with external landscaping of grounds abutting the wall.
- 5.2.3 Brick wall 1009, situated 4.85 m to the east, measured 0.5 m wide and contained the remnant of a doorway abutted by a brick surface (1008). An ashlar block was revealed at the base of the doorway indicating (1008) overlaid an earlier stone surface (1007) seen further to the east. (1007) was the remains of a roughly hewn,



random patterned stone surface surviving to the east of the wall; this may have originally extended further westwards to form an earlier, and possibly original, surface of the building.

- 5.2.4 Between walls 1009 and 1011 an internal concrete floor (1010) was recorded. Overlying this floor (1010) was a demolition deposit (1016) representing the remains of this building.

### 5.3 Trench 2 (Fig. 4)

- 5.3.1 Aligned north-west south-east, Trench 2 was located immediately to the east of Trench 1 and measured 9 m long by 1.75 m wide. Excavation reached a depth of 2.1 m with the earliest deposit (2006) encountered at 2 m. This consisted of an organic clay/peat deposit similar to 1006 in Trench 1. This deposit was sealed by a 1.05 m thick layer of sandy clay made ground (2005), containing post-medieval peg tile, pottery and animal bone. Above this were two thin layers of clay sand (2007 and 2004) containing frequent brick and mortar fragments, representing a construction horizon. These two deposits were cut at the centre of the trench by a brick well (2010) measuring approximately 1.8 m in diameter. This extended down for over 0.44 m before passing below the base of excavation. The cut for the well (2008) was lined by a 0.3 m thick layer of clay (2009), although a dark clay sand construction deposit, up to 0.3 m thick was also seen between cut deposits 2004 and 2007 and the clay lining.
- 5.3.2 The well and construction deposits 2004 and 2007 were then sealed by a clay sand levelling deposit (2003), measuring 0.3 m thick. This is believed to have been the external surface level associated with the structures identified in Trench 1. Sealing 2003 was a 0.4 m thick demolition deposit (2002), again consistent with the demolition layer 1016 seen in Trench 1. This was then sealed by the existing tarmac and brick rubble surface (2001) on site measuring up to 0.3 m thick.

## 6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

- 6.1.1 The evaluation found no evidence relating to the medieval development of the town. All deposits overlying the natural clay/peat layer were found to be of post-medieval origin. The well is likely to be of Victorian date and would have served those households in the immediate vicinity. The building located in Trench 1 is also likely to be Victorian with later 20th century alterations, such as the concrete floor and walls, and would probably have been an outbuilding similar to those existing on site today.
- 6.1.2 The organic rich clay/peat deposit located at the base of the two trenches suggests the site was formerly open waste ground and therefore not built on during the construction of the medieval town. However, post-medieval made ground deposits may have truncated any surviving medieval deposits and features relating to that period.
- 6.1.3 The presence of some wetland plants may also suggest the area had been exposed to occasional flooding, although not so extensive as to form a marshland habitat. If so,

the sinking of the well in Trench 2 would not have had to go excessively deep to find an adequate supply of water, however in order to build confidently on this type of land a significant depth of made ground would have been prudent as indicated by the sections.



## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Ctxt No</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
1							
	1001	Layer		0.2	Tarmac/brick rubble		C20th
	1002	Layer		0.4	Modern levelling		C19th
	1003	Layer		0.43	Post-medieval levelling		C19th
	1004	Layer		0.24	Post-medieval levelling	Pottery, clay pipe stems	C15th - C18th
	1005	Layer		0.35	Post-medieval levelling	Pottery, clay pipe stems, animal bone	C15th - C18th
	1006	Layer		>0.2	Organic clay/peat	Cattle bone, oyster shell	
	1007	Structure	2.5		Stone surface		Post-med.
	1008	Structure	0.4		Brick surface		C19th
	1009	Structure	0.5		Brick wall		
	1010	Structure	4.85		Concrete floor		C20th
	1011	Structure	0.36	>1.26	Brick-faced stone wall		
	1012	Cut	0.38	0.8	Foundation cut		
	1013	Layer	0.52	0.06	Trample associated with (1011) construction		
	1014	Layer	0.38	0.1	Levelling, associated with (1011)		
	1015	Layer	0.3	0.24	Levelling, assoc. with (1011)		
	1016	Layer	4.85	0.5	Demolition debris		C19th
2							
	2001	Layer		0.3	Tarmac/brick rubble		C20th
	2002	Layer		0.4	Modern levelling		C20th
	2003	Layer		0.3	Post-medieval levelling		Post-med.
	2004	Layer		0.05	Post-medieval levelling		Post-med.
	2005	Layer		1.05	Post-medieval levelling	Pottery	Post-med.

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Ctxt No</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
	2006	Layer		0.04	Organic clay/peat		
	2007	Layer		0.08	Post-medieval levelling		Post-med.
	2008	Cut	1.5	>0.44	Construction cut		
	2009	Deposit	0.3	>0.42	Clay lining		Post-med.
	2010	Structure	1.15	>0.26	Brick well		Post-med.
	2011	Deposit	0.16	0.3	Backfill		Post-med.

## APPENDIX 2 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

### *Assessment of waterlogged plant remains by Elizabeth Huckerby*

A single a waterlogged sample from a peat layer, sealed by a mixed deposit which contained some medieval pottery, was assessed for waterlogged plant remains, charcoal fragments and insects remains. The sample, 10 litres in volume, was hand floated onto 250 µm mesh. A representative sample of the wet flot was scanned with a low power Wild/ Leitz stereozoom microscope to evaluate the environmental potential of the sample. Easily identifiable plant remains were recorded and the nature of other material in the flot was noted. The presence or absence of insects and molluscs was noted.

The palaeo-environmental evaluation of the waterlogged sample demonstrated the presence of well preserved waterlogged plant remains, charcoal fragments and insects remains. Plants recorded included three native taxa, which could have been used as a food source. These are hazel nut shell fragments (*Corylus avellana*), sloes (*Prunus spinosa*) and wild/bullace plum (*Prunus domestica*). Other plant taxa identified include a seed of the arable weed corn cockle (*Agrostemma githago*), buttercups (*Ranunculus repens*-type), grasses (Poaceae), common chickweed (*Stellaria media*) and common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*). All these plants, excluding corn cockle, are found today in grassland or waste ground habitats. A few seeds of a rush were also recorded. Amorphous plant debris and wood fragments made up the bulk of the very large flot. Some charcoal fragments and insect remains were also recorded.

The deposit on closer examination appeared to be an organic rich clay/mud rather than a true peat. The assemblage of plants recorded suggest that grassland or waste ground were the dominant habitat types in the environs of the site. The occasional seeds of plants of wet ground suggest that the surrounding environment was not waterlogged.

The identification of stones from Wild/bullace plum is interesting but although it is usually considered to be a relict of cultivation there are reports of records from the Iron Age onwards (Godwin, 1956, 110, Rackham, 2003, 352). Therefore it was not possible to infer a great deal about the chronology of the deposit from its presence.

If further archaeological mitigation is recommended a programme of environmental sampling is recommended as the preservation of waterlogged material has the potential to inform about the local environment.

### ***Bibliography***

Godwin, H, 1956, *The History of the British Flora*, Cambridge

Rackham, O, 2003, *Ancient Woodland*, Colvend Dalbeattie, Kirkcudbrightshire

**APPENDIX 3 REFERENCES**

- WCAS, 2004 *Were House, George Street, Warminster. Design Brief for an Archaeological Evaluation.*
- OA, 2004 *Land at Were House, George Street, Wiltshire. Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation.*
- OAU, 1992 *Field Manual*, (ed. D. Wilkinson)

**APPENDIX 4 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS**

**Site name:** Were House, George Street, Warminster, Wiltshire.

**Site code:** WAWH 04

**Grid reference:** ST 872 451

**Type of evaluation:** Two trenches measuring 9 m and 17 m in length by 1.75 m wide.

**Date and duration of project:** 2 days, 10th-11th August 2004

**Area of site:** 0.2 ha

**Summary of results:** Organic clay/peat layer located in base of trenches suggesting former land was open waste ground. Overlying this were post-medieval made ground deposits, a late post-medieval well and the remains of a Victorian outbuilding.

**Location of archive:** The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Wiltshire County Museums Service in due course.





Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location



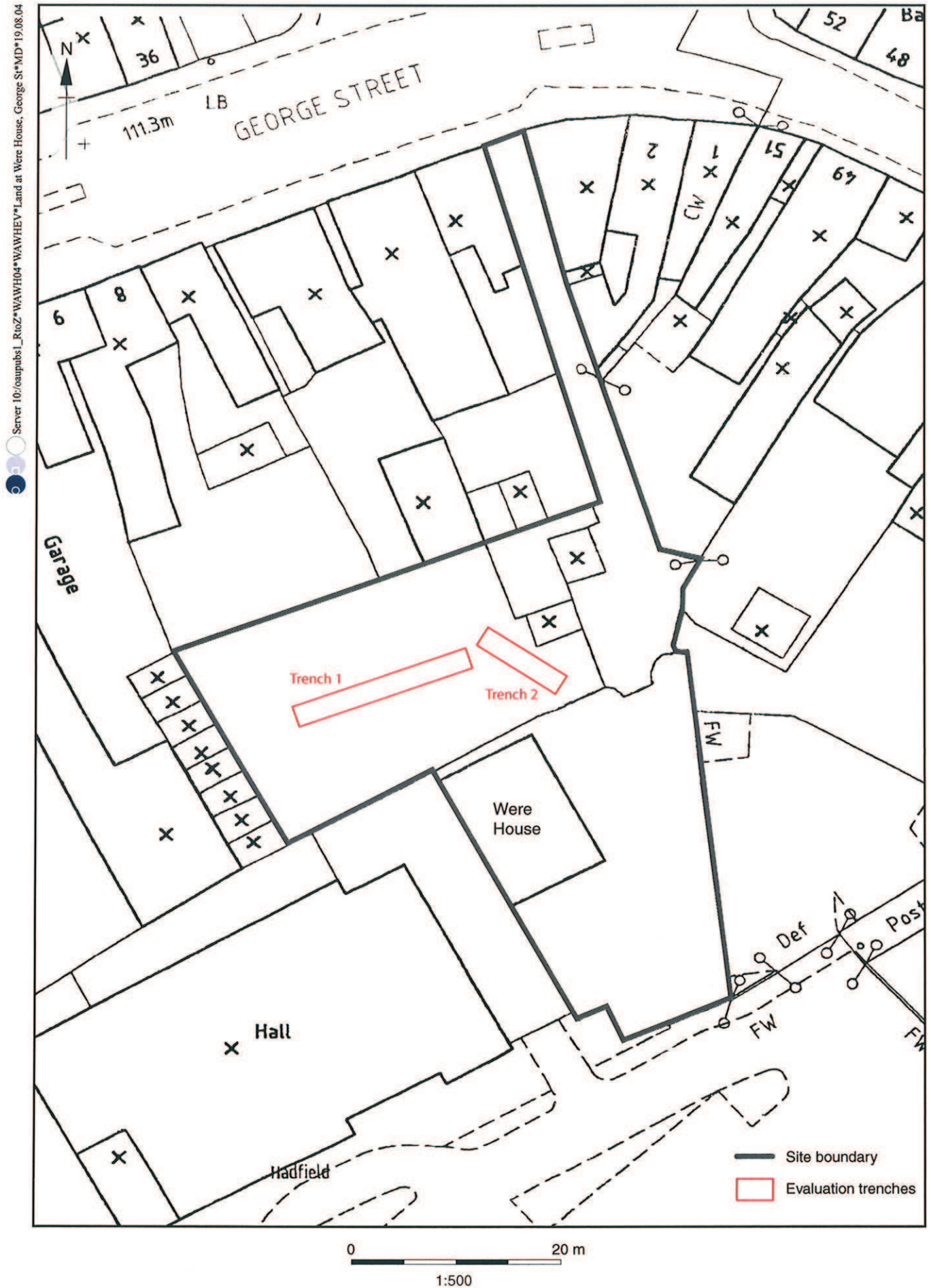


Figure 2: Trench location plan

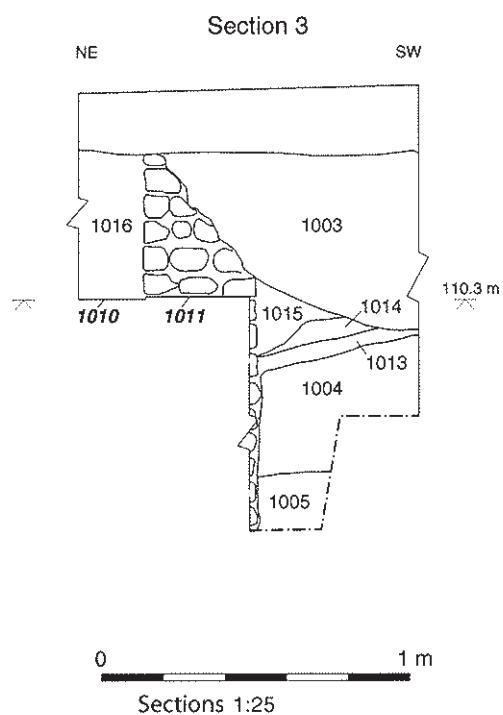
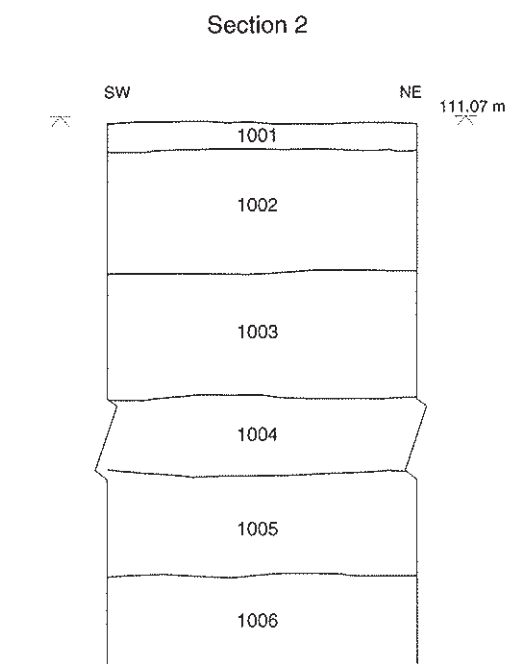
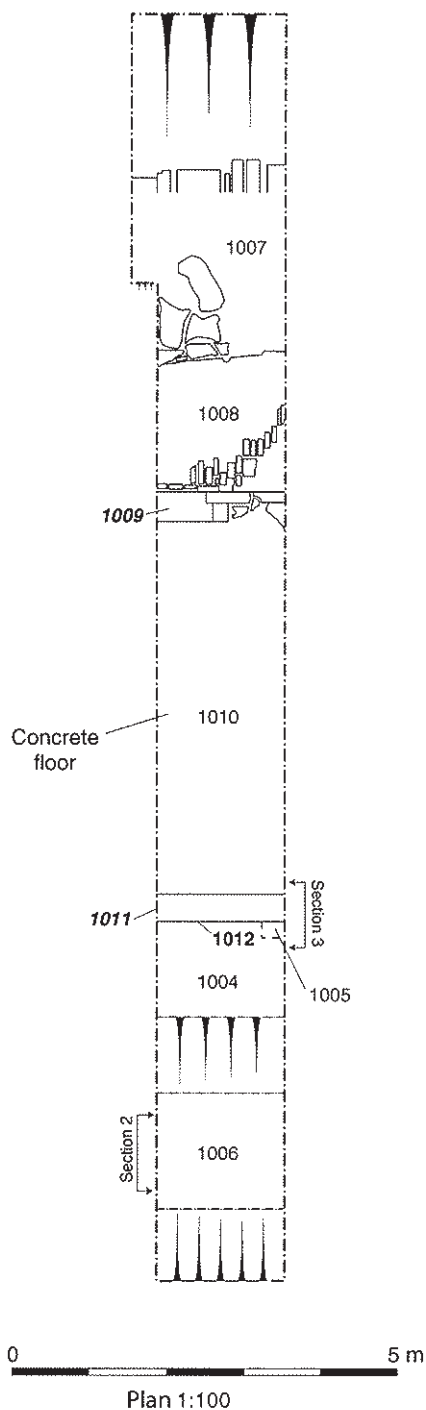
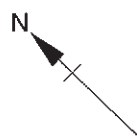


Figure 3: Trench 1, plan and sections



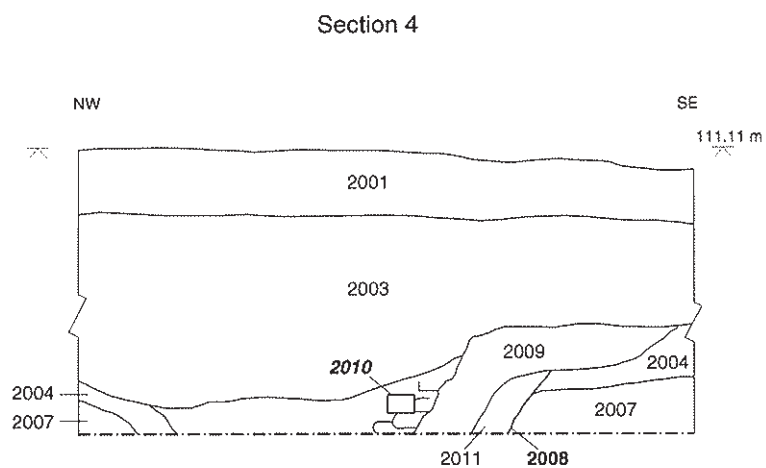
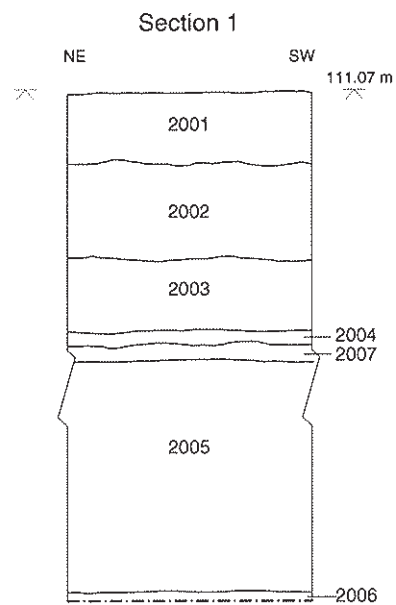
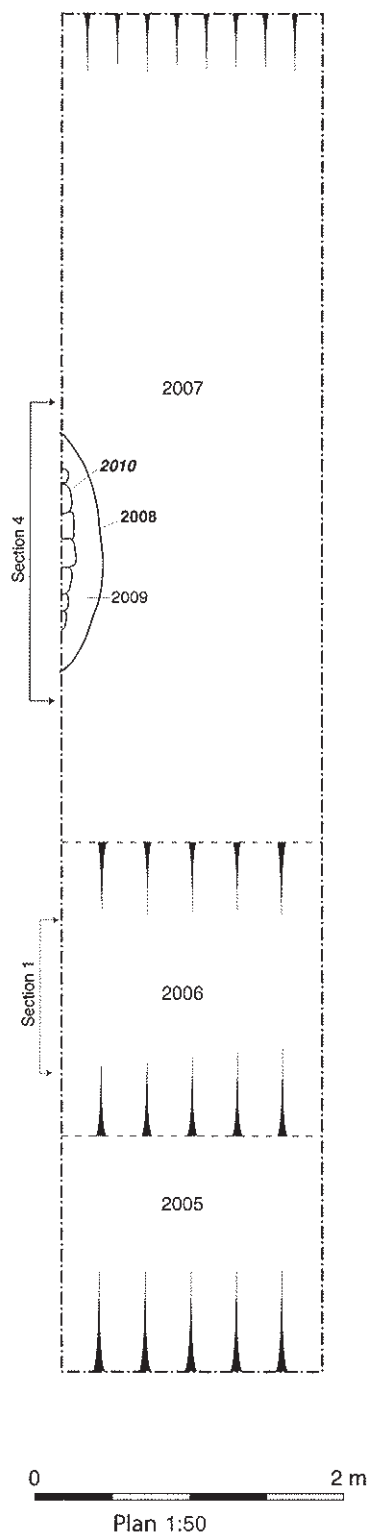
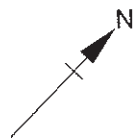


Figure 4: Trench 2, plan and sections



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