

# 30-36 Reading Road Wokingham Berkshire



## Archaeological Evaluation Report



January 2007

**Client: Millgate Homes**

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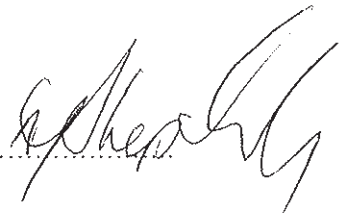
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Millgate Homes

**30-36 Reading Road,  
Wokingham, Berkshire**

NGR SU 8073 6881

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## SUMMARY

*In December 2006, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at 30-36 Reading Road, Wokingham, Berkshire (NGR SU 8073 6881) on behalf of Millgate Homes. The five-trench evaluation revealed layers of modern landscaping relating to two phases of 20th century construction on the site. Below this natural clay soil was identified showing signs of tree root disturbance; no archaeological features or finds were noted during the work.*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In December 2006, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at 30 to 36 Reading Road, Wokingham (centred on NGR SU 8073 6881) on behalf of Millgate Homes (Fig. 1).

1.1.2 The work was carried out in respect of a planning application for 42 one and two bedroom apartments as part of a sheltered accommodation block with associated access, parking and landscaping (Planning Application No. F/2005/44526).

1.1.3 A project brief was set by David Thomason of Berkshire Archaeology on behalf of Wokingham District Council (BA 2006). OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing how the requirements of the brief would be met (OA 2006).

1.1.4 The evaluation was the initial stage of a proposed phased program of investigations, designed to inform on any further archaeological mitigation on site prior to development.

#### 1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site lies on Lower Bagshot Beds (British Geological Survey, 1979, Sheet 268) at an average level of 62 m above OD. The site encompasses an area of *c* 0.439 ha and slopes towards the west. It is located on land to the rear of 30 to 36 Reading Road previously occupied by four detached dwellings and associated garages prior to demolition.

#### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The site has produced no archaeological evidence but is identified as being of archaeological potential, due to a number of sites noted on the Berkshire Sites and Monuments Record for this area.

1.3.2 The background is based on information contained in the project brief and other sources.

***Prehistoric***

- 1.3.3 There is little evidence for prehistoric activity in the vicinity of Wokingham, as demonstrated by the East Berkshire archaeological survey (Ford, 1987). A Mesolithic flint blade and a Neolithic flint axe are known north of the town, though in general the poorly drained clay soils of the area prohibited prehistoric human occupation and cultivation of the land. A hoard of Roman coins was discovered in 1970 north of the town beside Matthews Green Farm.

***Saxon/medieval***

- 1.3.4 Wokingham is a Saxon place name interpreted as '*Homestead of the people of Wocce*', and may refer to a group of settlers from *Woccingas* near Woking in Surrey (Gelling, 1973, 139). There is no mention of the town in Domesday, possibly because at the time it was part of the Bishop of Salisbury's manor of Sonning. Domesday records East Berkshire as having vast tracts of woodland in this period associated with the great forest of Windsor.
- 1.3.5 The ancient borough of Wokingham was an early medieval settlement that may owe its origin to a market granted to the Bishop of Salisbury in 1219, which was confirmed in 1227 and later in 1339. The town became a secondary settlement and part of the communication system giving access to the larger urban centres of Reading and Windsor (Astill, 1978, 101).
- 1.3.6 It is likely that the early settlement of Wokingham, like the development of many similar small towns, was originally based around the church, although at present this is presumptive. The proposed development site is located approximately 690 m to the west of the identified medieval core of the town.

***Post-medieval***

- 1.3.7 The majority of sites identified in the SMR are Listed Buildings. The Terrace at Shute End comprises nine Listed Buildings dating from the 1400s to the 1800s. An evaluation carried out by The Trust for Wessex Archaeology (TWA 1987) at Station Road found no evidence for occupation dating earlier than the 18th century.
- 1.3.8 The trench in an orchard behind the 19th century Rectory found no medieval features, but did contain three residual late medieval sherds. It is possible that there was medieval occupation closer to the Shute End Street frontage where less garden landscaping had occurred.
- 1.3.9 TWA also carried out a Watching Brief on a site between Rose Street and Rectory Road during the construction of the Waitrose supermarket. Here investigations recorded a concentration of post-medieval pits, a brick-lined well, a late medieval pit and an undated ditch. This site was located approximately 330 m to the east of the present development.

## 2 EVALUATION AIMS

- 2.1.1 To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the proposal area.
- 2.1.2 To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present and determine/confirm the range, quality and quantity of the artefactual evidence.
- 2.1.3 To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features and to make available the results of the investigation.

## 3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Scope of fieldwork

- 3.1.1 The evaluation consisted of five trenches each measuring 10 m x 1.8 m wide. These were positioned within the proposed building footprints and away from tree conservation zones (Fig. 2). The overburden was removed under close archaeological supervision by a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket.

### 3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

- 3.2.1 The trenches were cleaned by hand and where potential features were exposed, these were sampled to determine their extent and nature and to retrieve finds and environmental samples. Any archaeological features and the extent of the trenches were planned at 1:50 and sample trench sections drawn at a scale of 1:20.
- 3.2.2 All features and trenches were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures outlined in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

## 4 RESULTS: GENERAL

### 4.1 Soils and ground conditions

- 4.1.1 The site was located on a working demolition site and as such was overlain by heaps (and often a layer) of modern building debris, making access to trenches difficult. For this reason - and to avoid access routes and tree conservation zones around the site perimeter - trenches were moved to the nearest practical position.
- 4.1.2 The soils encountered were well tilled and often unstable but well drained with the water table reached at approximately 60.5m OD.

### 4.2 Distribution of archaeological deposits

- 4.2.1 Soil layers were similar across the five trenches, comprising of modern demolition rubble over imported garden soils.



4.2.2 Below these was sparse evidence of previous modern construction directly overlying the clay natural. Some evidence of tree roots may suggest previous woodland on the site.

## 5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

### 5.1 Description of deposits

#### *Trench 1*

5.1.1 This trench (Figs 3 and 4) was opened in an area of relatively flat ground at approximately 64 m OD. Clean natural (104) was reached around 1 m below the ground surface and comprised yellow clay with some gravel lenses. In places were irregular patches of slightly darker sandy soil (103).

5.1.2 These soil patches appear to have been tree root systems, now filled with the only surviving subsoil on the site. This horizon appears to represent the level of excavation prior to the first of the recent housing developments on the site. Above this level were layers of sandy loam and gravel containing modern building materials (102) and (101), sealed by a 0.3 m deep modern topsoil layer (100) of the current gardens.

#### *Trench 2*

5.1.3 Trench 2 (Figs 3 and 4) was opened to the rear of one of the buildings undergoing demolition and was moved south-west slightly to avoid the *in situ* foundations. The trench was on sloping ground at the top of a modern terrace, at approximately 63 m OD. Natural yellow clay (205) with similar root disturbance to that in Trench 1 was reached at a depth of 0.6 m.

5.1.4 Cut into the clay was a modern feature (204) running east-west, a shallow path edging of red frogged bricks (202) retaining a thin deposit of crushed cinder some 0.14 m deep (203). This probably relates to the phase of development before the current houses were built on site. Layer (201) was a similar modern sandy loam to that in Trench 1 and also contained building material. Topsoil (200) overlay 201.

#### *Trench 3*

5.1.5 This trench (Fig. 4) was also moved slightly to avoid demolition rubble and was located on a lower sloping terrace than Trenches 1 and 2. It was located at approximately 62 m OD and yellow clay natural (302) was reached at a depth of 0.25 m.

5.1.6 This clay was mottled with blue/grey clay and a sondage was machined at the south-east end to ensure that true natural had been reached. This layer was overlain by brown grey sandy loam (301) and dark topsoil (300), both of which contained modern brick and tile fragments.

#### ***Trench 4***

- 5.1.7 The trench (Fig. 4) was moved to avoid the demolition haul road. It also had to avoid the adjacent tree protection zone and consequently was excavated 5 m further west and 2 m to the north of the proposed location. The trench lay on disturbed ground sloping steeply to the west at approximately 63.6m OD and natural orange sandy clay (403) was reached at a depth of 1.3 m. Tree roots disturbed this layer and a sondage was excavated to ensure true natural had been reached.
- 5.1.8 Over this lay a mid brown sandy loam subsoil (402). The horizon between this and natural was much more diffuse than elsewhere and despite there being no modern building materials within the soil, it seemed identical to modern made ground elsewhere. Above this lay dark topsoil similar to the rest of the site (401) which was buried below tarmac and brick rubble from the current demolition haul road (400).

#### ***Trench 5***

- 5.1.9 Trench 5 (Fig. 4) was also relocated 4 m south-east of its proposed position to avoid a live water main and lay at 61.5 m OD. Natural yellow clay with sandy lenses (503) was located at a depth of 0.8m. This clay was cut by a modern gas main and a 19th century land drain.
- 5.1.10 Over this lay a grey brown subsoil (502) identical to that found in the other trenches and also contained modern brick fragments. This deposit seemed to be contemporary with the plastic gas main trench fill and most likely represents made ground from the houses predating those currently on site. The two modern phases were most clearly demonstrated by a thin layer of garden topsoil (501), which was directly overlain by a tarmac and stone (500) to create a driveway to the house currently being demolished.

### **5.2 Finds and palaeo-environmental**

- 5.2.1 No finds were recovered from the evaluation trenches. No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were found during the evaluation.

## **6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION**

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

- 6.1.1 All the deposits located appear to be modern imported materials containing roofing tile and brick. The underlying natural soil was a yellow clay with rare pockets of sand whereas the overlying soils were primarily sandy in consistency.
- 6.1.2 In many places there is considerable root disturbance to the natural but not the soils above suggesting the entire site was stripped of trees to this level prior to modern construction. All the trenches were located outside the footprint of the buildings being demolished.



## 6.2 Overall interpretation

- 6.2.1 It appears that the entire site was stripped of any potential archaeological deposits above natural during the first phase of modern building evident on the site (probably dating to the 1960s). Very little of this construction period was found except for feature 204 in Trench 2, which seems to be the edge of to a cinder garden path.
- 6.2.2 Trench 5 also showed two separate building episodes with make up layers for a later tarmac driveway overlying garden topsoil. After this phase, presumably when the current buildings were erected, the site appears to have been re-landscaped to a higher level and the previous modern construction materials either removed or covered over.
- 6.2.3 No archaeological features or residual artefactual material were evident on the site.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Ctxt No</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Thick. (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1					
	100	Layer	1.8	0.36	Topsoil
	101	Layer	1.8	0.14	Made ground
	102	Layer	1.8	0.38	Made ground
	103	Layer	1.8	0.2	Subsoil fill of tree throw
	104	Layer	1.8	N/A	Natural clay
2					
	200	Layer	1.8	0.2	Topsoil
	201	Layer	1.8	0.4	Made ground
	202	Fill	0.05	0.1	Red brick path edging
	203	Fill	0.6	0.6	Crushed cinder block
	204	Cut	1.3	1.2	Construction cut
	205	Layer	1.8	N/A	Natural clay
3					
	300	Layer	1.8	0.16	Topsoil
	301	Layer	1.8	0.16	Made ground
	302	Layer	1.8	N/A	Natural clay
4					
	400	Layer	1.8	0.36	Topsoil and debris
	401	Layer	1.8	0.26	Buried modern topsoil
	402	Layer	1.8	0.56	Made ground/subsoil
	403	Layer	1.8	N/A	Natural clay
5					
	500	Layer	1.8	0.56	Topsoil and debris
	501	Layer	1.8	0.06	Buried modern topsoil
	502	Layer	1.8	0.14	Made ground/subsoil
	503	Layer	1.8	N/A	Natural clay

**APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES**

Astill, G G 1978 *Historic Towns in Berkshire: an archaeological appraisal*. Berkshire Archaeological Committee Publication, 2. Reading

British Geological Survey 1979, Sheet 268

Berkshire Archaeology, 2006 *30-36 Reading Road, Wokingham: Brief for an Archaeological Evaluation*

Ford, S 1987 *East Berkshire Archaeological Survey*. Department of Highways and Planning, Berkshire CC Occasional Paper, 1.

Gelling, M 1974 *The place-names of Berkshire*. English place-name Society. Cambridge University Press.

OA 1992 *Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, first edition, August 1992)

OA 2006 *30-36 Reading Road, Wokingham, Berkshire. Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation*

**APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS**

**Site name:** 30-36 Reading Road, Wokingham, Berkshire.

**Site code:** WOKRR 06

**Grid reference:** SU 8073 6881

**Type of evaluation:** Five 10 m x 1.8 m wide trenches.

**Date and duration of project:** 20th- 21st December 2006.

**Area of site:** 0.439 ha.

**Summary of results:** Modern landscaping and post-WW II housing structures (two periods of construction). No archaeological features or residual artefactual material.

**Location of archive:** The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Reading Museum in due course, under the following accession number: REDMG: 2006.825





Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location



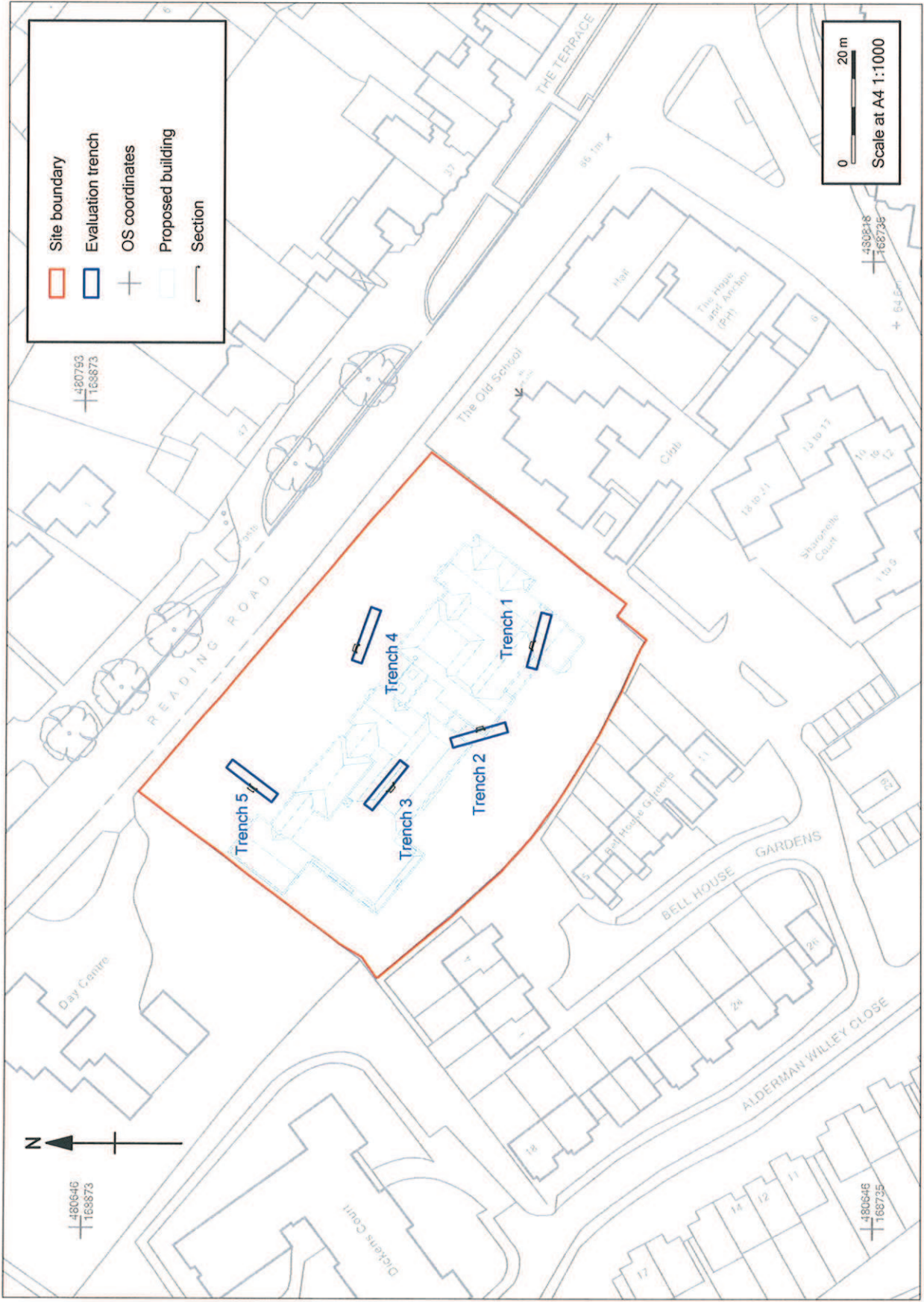
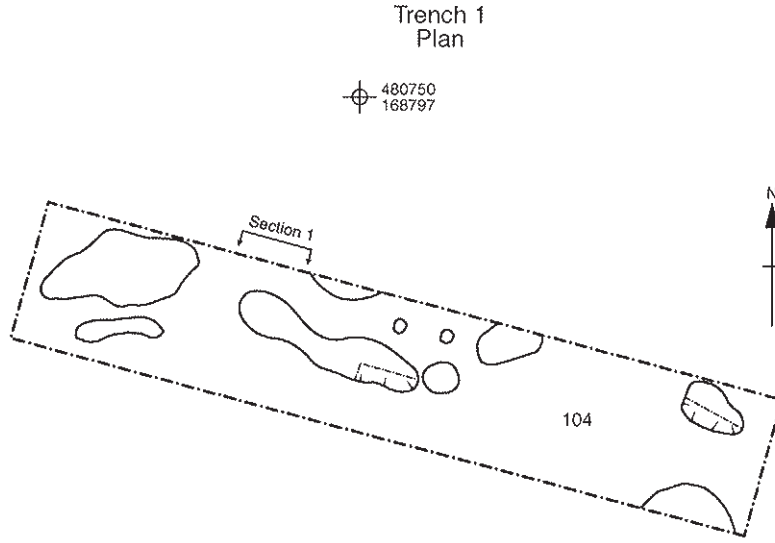
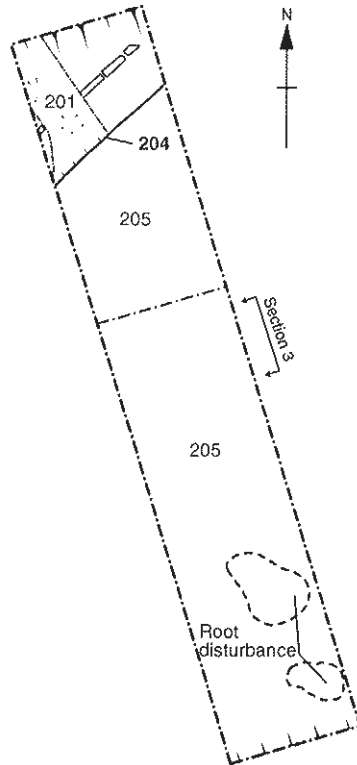


Figure 2: Trench layout



480750  
168790

### Trench 2 Plan



480724  
168805

480737  
168805



Figure 3: Trench plans: Trench 1 and Trench 2



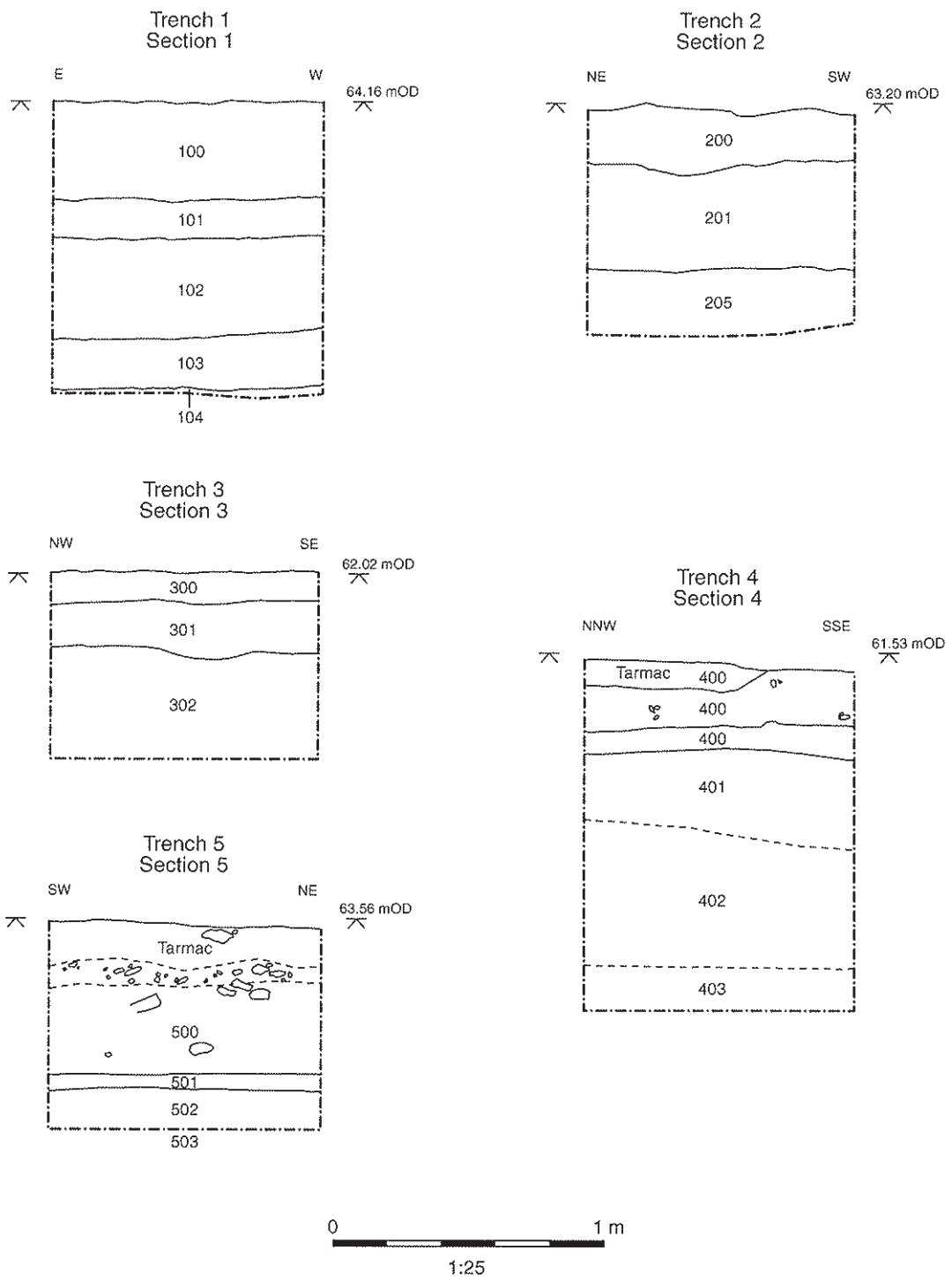


Figure 4: Sections: Trenches 1 - 5



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