

Oxon Planning Partnership

Eastwyke Farm, Abingdon Road, Oxford

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

Planning Application No. 98/072/NF

NGR SP 5171 0492

Prepared by: G. J. Pugh
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Checked by: S. P. Hensman
Date: 10/7/98
Approved by: R. Williams HEAD OF FIELDWORK
Date: 10/7/1998

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

July 1998

**Eastwyke Farm
Abingdon Road, Oxford**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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SUMMARY

The Oxford Archaeological Unit carried out a field evaluation at Eastwyke Farm, on the Abingdon Road Oxford, on behalf of Oxon Planning Partnership. The evaluation revealed that most of the site is devoid of archaeological remains. Three features revealed in Trench 1 related to possible late medieval and post-medieval activity. All other features encountered during the evaluation relate to modern farming activities (animal burial, rubbish pits and temporary structures).

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Location and scope of work (Fig. 1)

1.1.1. In June 1998 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) carried out a field evaluation at Eastwyke Farm (NGR SP 5171 0492), on the Abingdon Road Oxford, on behalf of Oxon Planning Partnerships. The evaluation was carried out in respect of a planning application to develop a hotel (Planning Application No. 98/072/NF). The work was conducted in accordance with a brief prepared by Oxford Archaeological Advisory Service (archaeological advisors to Oxford City Council), and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by the OAU. The development site lies to the east of Abingdon Road, and west of the River Thames. The site is *c.* 1 ha in extent.

1.2. Geology and topography

1.2.1. The site lies on a gravel island between abraded channels of the River Thames. Periglacial deposits overlie the gravel. Modern ground surface lies at *c.* 56 m above Ordnance Datum (OD). The site is situated on a sub-rectangular plot of land to the south-east of Eastwyke Farmhouse. Disused and derelict farm buildings currently occupy the overgrown site. The development proposals include demolition of all existing farm buildings south of the Farmhouse and the construction of a four star hotel, with swimming pool and car park.

1.3. Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1. The archaeological background to the evaluation has been the subject of a separate desk study (OAU 1998), the results of which are summarised below.

1.3.2. The site itself has previously produced no archaeological evidence. Historically the site lies in rural Berkshire, outside Oxford's outermost defended gate. The site lies to the west of Grandpont, the causeway of Norman date that brought the southern approach road to Oxford (now the Abingdon Road). The south bridge, or Grandpont, was built in succession to a series of fords, trackways or timber bridges across the floodplain to the south of Oxford in the 11th century. The causeway is thought to reach from around the south end of Christ Church to the other side of the floodplain at South Hinksey, about 1½ miles in length, although the causeway was not encountered during limited excavations along the southern stretch of Abingdon Road (Durham 1984).

1.3.3. During the medieval period the land belonged to Abingdon Abbey, although it is not clear whether the site was occupied by buildings. University College acquired the land in 1511. The land was leased to brewers during the 1540's. Subsequent tenants until 1820 were various gentlemen, clerks or clergy. The terms 'farm' and 'manor' are interchangeable and it is likely that Eastwyke farm was used as much as a country

residence or a holding station for cattle bound for Oxford market than as a working farm. Eastwyke Farmhouse is a grade II listed building and was constructed as a two storey T-shaped building in the 17th century. De Gomme's 1642 map of the Civil War defences of Oxford indicates a star shaped fort located on the site of the farm. The early edition Ordnance Survey maps, however, do not indicate any trace of these defences.

- 1.3.4. Excavations at Whitehouse Road, some 200 m to the north-west of the development site recovered important information about Middle Iron-Age occupation of the lower gravel terrace but indicated little evidence of flooding or alluviation (Mudd 1992).
- 1.3.5. The name Eastwyke may indicate that the site is of archaeological importance. The term 'wyke' can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly as a dairy farm and secondly as an early trading settlement or Emporium. Martin Biddle has previously suggested that the sites of Eastwyke and Westwyke were possibly Emporia, but there is no archaeological evidence to support this. Eastwyke Farm is on the border between two important Saxon Kingdoms and is therefore ideally located as a trading site.

2. EVALUATION AIMS

2.1. General 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.
- 2.1.3. To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features.
- 2.1.4. To make available the results of the investigation.

3. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1. General

- 3.1.1. Eight 15 m-long trenches were excavated in the locations shown in Figure 2. The trenches were located to investigate a c.2% sample of the development area. The trench locations were limited to open areas between the standing buildings. The presence of services and a public footpath (to the north of the site) were also constraints on the trench locations.

3.2. Survey

- 3.2.1. The client carried out a service search before fieldwork commenced. The location of the trenches was recorded in relation to the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

3.3. Excavation

- 3.3.1. Eight 15 m x 1.6 m trenches were excavated using a mechanical excavator with a toothless bucket (after the breaking out and removal of tarmac and the removal of undergrowth). The trenches were excavated under close archaeological supervision. They were cleaned by hand and the revealed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds and environmental samples.

3.4. Recording

- 3.4.1. All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:50 and where excavated their sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. Soil profiles were also drawn at a scale of 1:20 where appropriate. Trenches devoid of archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:100. All trenches 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).

4. RESULTS: GENERAL

4.1. Presentation of Results

- 4.1.1. Section 5 briefly summarises the deposits and features encountered during the evaluation including major modern disturbances. The trenches are described individually and by context in chronological order, starting with the earliest deposits. The relevant context numbers are given in brackets after the description of the deposit or feature. All levels are given above Ordnance Datum.

4.2. General Stratigraphy

- 4.2.1. Made ground deposits comprising rubbish, concrete blocks, brick and mortar were found to cover the entire site save Trench 3, indicating that the site has been the focus of much post-medieval and modern activity. The tarmac in the existing car park was 0.1 m thick. Farm activity was also visible in the form of large rubbish pits and animal burials (Trenches 4 and 8). Periglacial silts overlay the natural gravels throughout the site.

4.3. Site Archive

- 4.3.1. The written, drawn and photographic record will be ordered, quantified and security copied. The records and finds will be lodged with the Oxfordshire Museum service. Copies of the report will be sent to the client, the OAAS and the Oxfordshire Sites and Monuments Record.

5. RESULTS DESCRIPTIONS

5.1. Trench 1 (Fig. 3)

- 5.1.1. Natural, rounded, calcareous gravel and coarse sand (121) was encountered at 54.2 m OD at the north-west end of the trench. An alluvial clay deposit (118), part of an old water course/drainage ditch, overlay the gravel. A layer of red brown clay silt (117), similar to the periglacial deposit found elsewhere on the site, was encountered at the south-east end of the trench. A large irregular-sided oval pit (116) cut 117 and was filled by a clay silt deposit (115), which produced a single sherd of a Cistercian ware and probably dates to the late 15th century. An irregular sided linear ditch (124), aligned north-west to south-east, cut layer 115. Ditch 124 was filled by two clay silt deposits (111 and 114), which tipped to the north-west. The ground surface consisted of Tarmac. A large, 2.5 m-wide ditch (113), aligned north to south, cut through fill 111 and layer 118. A single deposit of clay silt and fragments of limestone (112) filled the ditch. A trench for a manhole (123) and a culvert (120) cut 112 at the north-west end of the trench. A series of modern dumping and backfill layers sealed all these features

and was in turn overlain by make-up and tarmac layers, which formed the car park surface.

5.2. Trenches 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8 (Figs 3 and 4)

5.2.1. Natural gravel and sand was encountered in all these trenches at levels between 53.66 m and 54.39 m OD. This glacial terrace was capped by a light yellowish brown, sandy silt of varying thickness (0.4 m – 0.7 m). A mid red brown clay silt (a periglacial deposit) overlay the terrace capping. This deposit varied from 0.35 m to 0.5 m in thickness. A sherd of a Brill/Boarstall jug and a 19th-century sherd were recovered from the top of this layer. A 0.15 m-thick layer of dark brown clay silt with a high percentage of charcoal inclusions overlay the periglacial deposit. No finds were retrieved from this deposit. A 0.5 m-thick layer of dumped modern rubbish and demolished building material overlay the charcoal rich deposit. A thin turf overlay the layer of rubbish and debris. A large pit or ditch at least 2.5 m wide and filled with modern materials and stained by diesel was located at the south-western end of Trench 8.

5.3. Trench 3 (Figs 3 and 4)

5.3.1. Natural sand and gravel (306) was encountered at c. 54.60 m OD sloping slightly to the south-east. A 0.2 m-thick terrace capping deposit (305) of light yellow brown sandy silt (similar to that encountered in all the other trenches save Trench 1) overlay the terrace gravel. A 0.12 m-thick layer of mid red brown, periglacial clay silt (304) overlay the terrace capping. (A thicker deposit (303), similar to 304, which has had its clay content washed down into the deposit below overlay 304). A layer of loam and periglacial material (302) probably mixed by ploughing, overlay 303. Turf formed the modern ground surface.

5.4. Trench 4 (Figs 3 and 4)

5.4.1. Natural gravel and sand (416) was encountered at c. 53.60 m OD. This was overlain as elsewhere by terrace capping (401) and periglacial material (402 and 403). Several features cut through these deposits. A large pit (414) containing the beheaded skeletons of a cow and a calf was encountered toward the centre of the trench. A second, smaller burial pit containing caprine skeletons, one of which was immature, was encountered at the north-east end of the trench. Two postholes (408 and 410) 0.4 m and 0.3 m in diameter respectively, containing undecayed wood, almost certainly of modern origin, were located to the north-east of the second burial. These are likely to relate to a lean-to structure or outhouse, the remains of which were encountered amongst the debris of layer 405. A posthole (406) was also encountered at the south-west end of the trench. A fragment of metal was retrieved from this posthole.

5.5. Finds

5.5.1. Only ten pottery sherds from five different contexts were recovered as described fully in Appendix 1. Thirty-nine animal bones including part of at least four articulated skeletons, were recovered and are briefly described in Appendix 2. Apart from the pottery and the bone the only other artefacts recovered were all of modern origin.

5.6. Environmental

- 5.6.1. Post-medieval activity was dominant on the site and is likely to have disturbed any earlier deposits had they ever existed. As no earlier features or archaeological horizons were identified no environmental samples were taken.

6. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

TRENCH	CTXT	TYPE	WIDTH (M)	THICK. (M)	COMMENT	FINDS	NO.	DATE
001								
	100	Layer			Tarmac			
	101	Layer			Make-up for tarmac			
	102	Fill		0.32	Fill of service trench			
	103	Fill		0.16	Fill of service trench			
	104	Fill		0.3	Fill of service trench			
	105	Cut		1	Service trench			
	106	Layer		0.5	Build-up deposit	Pot	4	Post-med
	107	Layer		0.12	Dump Material	Pot	2	Post-med
	108	Layer		0.12	Dump Material			
	109	Fill		0.1	Fill of pit 116			
	110	Fill		0.16	Fill of pit 116			
	111	Fill		0.48	Fill of pit 116			
	112	Fill		0.7+	Fill of pit 113			
	113	Cut			Pit			
	114	Fill		0.5	Fill of pit 116			
	115	Fill		0.48	Fill of pit 115	Pot	1	Late 15thC
	116	Cut	5		Pit	Pot	1	Mid 16thC+
	117	Layer			Periglacial material			
	118	Layer		1.2	Clay			
	119	Fill		0.35	Fill of 120			
	120	Cut			Service trench			
	121	Layer			Natural Gravel and sand			
	122	Cut	1.6+		Trench for manhole			
	123	Fill		0.9	Fill of 122			
002								
	201	Layer		0.1	Gravel path			
	202	Layer		0.35	Make-up for path			
	203	Layer		0.2	Clay silt with charcoal			

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TRENCH	CTXT	TYPE	WIDTH (M)	THICK. (M)	COMMENT	FINDS	NO.	DATE
	204	Layer		0.45	Periglacial deposit	Pot	1 1	Late 15 th C 19 th / 20 th C
	205	Layer		0.7	Terrace capping			
	206	Layer			Natural gravel with pockets of sand			
003								
	301	Layer		0.15	Turf			
	302	Layer		0.1	Mixed layer			
	303	Layer		0.45	Periglacial deposit			
	304	Layer		0.1	Periglacial deposit			
	305	Layer		0.4	Terrace capping			
	306	Layer			Natural gravel terrace			
	401	Layer			Natural sand			
	402	Layer		0.3~	Terrace capping			
	403	Layer		0.4	Periglacial deposit			
	404	Layer		0.3	Disturbed periglacial deposit			
	405	Layer		0.8	Rubbish and modern building material. dump layer			
	406	Cut	0.46		Posthole			
	407	Fill		0.55	Fill of posthole 406			
	408	Cut	0.22		Posthole			
	409	Fill		0.22	Fill of 408			
	410	Cut	0.4		Posthole			
	411	Fill		0.26	Fill of 410			
	412	Cut	0.6		Animal burial pit			
	413	Fill		0.2~	Fill of 412			
	414	Cut	2		Animal burial pit			
	415	Fill		0.8	Fill of 414			
005								
	501	Layer		0.2	Turf			
	502	Layer		0.5	Make-up layer			

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TRENCH	CTXT	TYPE	WIDTH (M)	THICK. (M)	COMMENT	FINDS	NO.	DATE
	503	Layer		0.15	Charcoal rich deposit			
	504	Layer		0.65	Periglacial			
	505	Layer		0.5	Terrace capping			
	506	Layer			Natural gravel terrace			
006								
	601	Layer		0.15	Turf			
	602	Layer		0.35	Make-up layer			
	603	Layer		0.1	Charcoal rich deposit			
	604	Layer		0.5	Periglacial			
	605	Layer		0.15	Terrace capping			
	606	Layer		-	Natural gravel terrace			
	607	Fill		0.2	Fill of 608			
	608	Cut	0.2		Service trench			
007								
	701	Layer		0.1	Turf			
	702	Layer		0.45	Make-up layer			
	703	Layer		0.15	Charcoal rich deposit			
	704	Layer		0.55	Periglacial deposit			
	705	Layer		0.45	Terrace capping			
	706	Layer			Natural gravel terrace			
008								
	801	Layer		0.05	Turf			
	802	Layer		0.8	Make-up layer			
	803	Fill		1.2	Fill of 804			
	804	Cut	3.5		Modern, large pit or ditch			
	805	Layer		0.6	Periglacial deposit			
	806	Layer			Natural gravel terrace			

7. CONCLUSIONS

7.1. Reliability

7.1.1. The trench sample, though somewhat constrained by the presence of standing buildings, has given a reliable indication of the presence or lack of archaeological deposits or features across the proposed development area. No finds predating the late 15th century period were recovered. Aside from the modern layers and features all deposits are glacial or periglacial. Natural gravel was revealed in all trenches.

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7.2. Summary of Results

7.2.1. All trenches apart from 1, 4 and 8 were devoid of archaeological features. The features revealed in Trenches 4 and 8 are certainly post-medieval and probably date from the 20th century. The deposits revealed in Trench 1 relate to mostly post-medieval activity. However the pit encountered at the south-east end of the trench may be late medieval, although this is by no means certain as the dating evidence was very limited. Glacial and periglacial deposits were encountered in all trenches and modern backfill or make-up deposits overlay these.

7.3. Significance

7.3.1. No evidence of prehistoric, Roman or Saxon activity was encountered. There was slight evidence for late medieval activity in the form of a pit, which produced a single sherd of possibly 15th century pottery. All other finds and features were of post-medieval or modern date, and must represent activity in and around Eastwyke Dairy Farm.

8. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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9. Appendix 1: The pottery

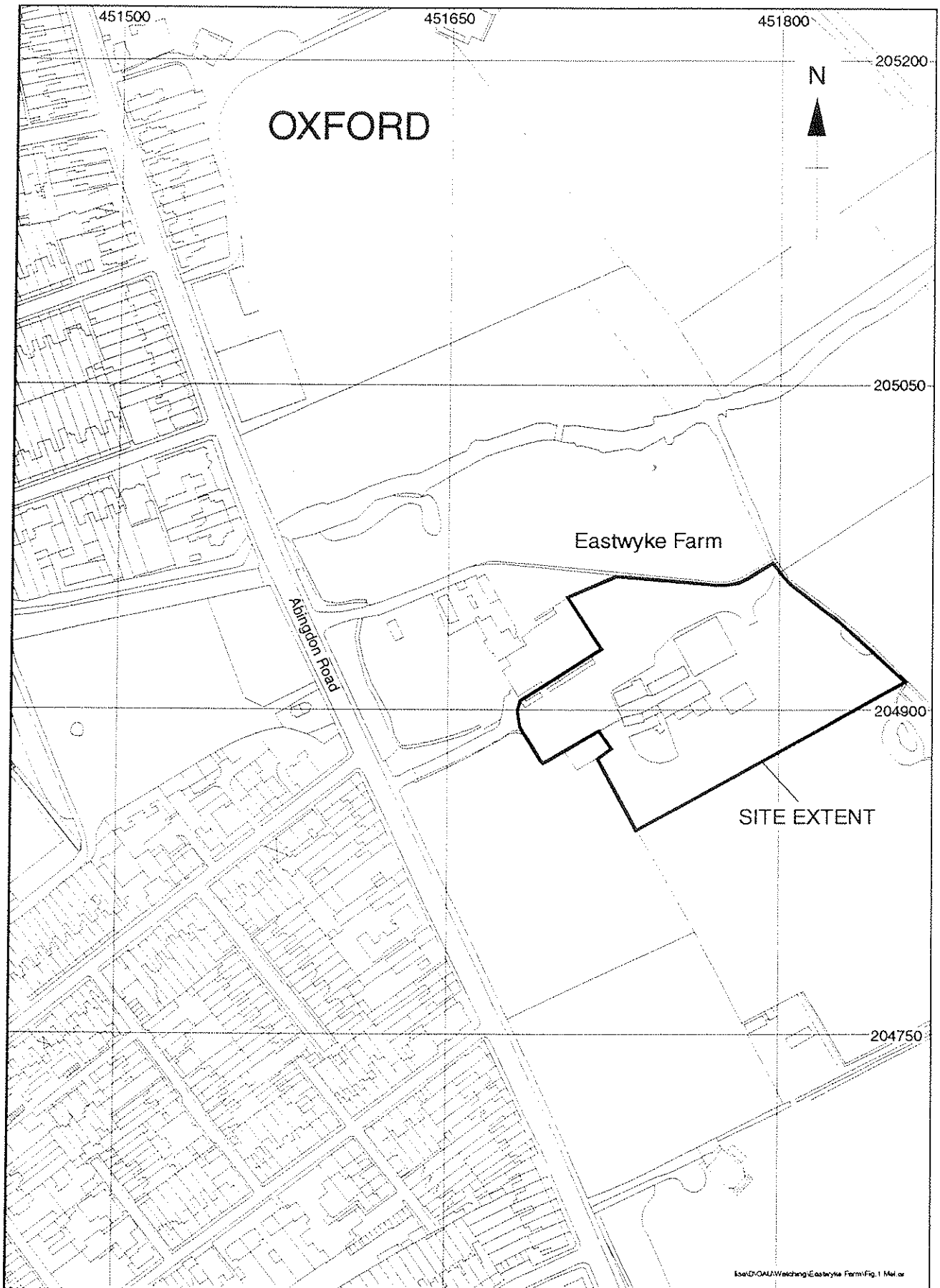
By Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage from Eastwick Farm comprised 10 sherds with a total weight of 666 g. The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per fabric type per context is shown in the table below.

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

Context	OXAM		CISTERCIAN WARE		RED EARTHENWARE		MISC 19/20THC		TPQ
	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
106					1	150	3	81	19thC
107							2	365	19thC
115			1	5					L15thC
119					1	48			M16thC
204	1	13					1	2	19thC
Total	1	13	1	5	2	198	6	448	

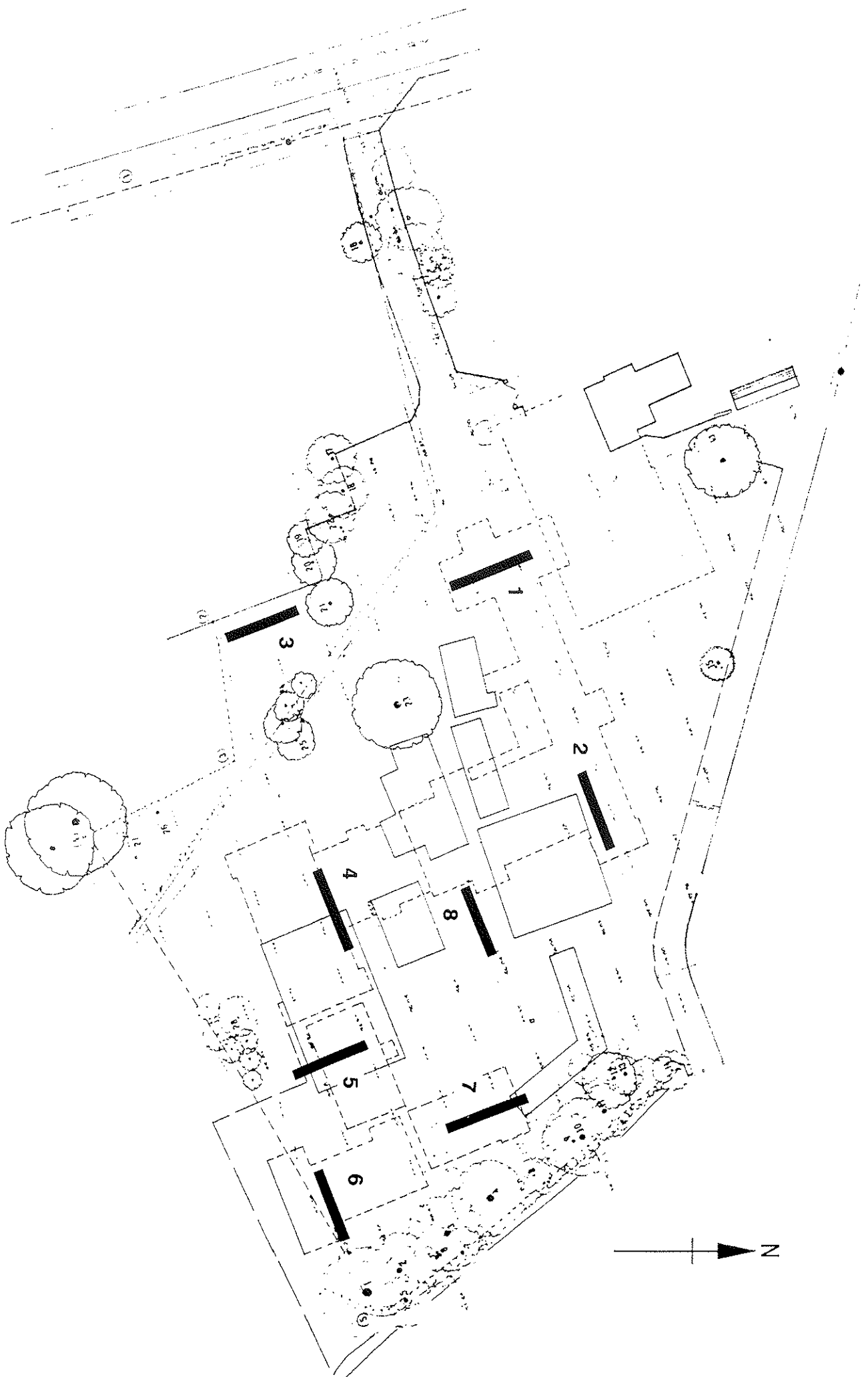
All but four sherds were of 19th-century date. The two sherds of red earthenware have a *terminus post quem* in the mid-16th century, but could be considerably later. The only medieval sherds were a fragment of a Brill/Boarstall jug (Oxford fabric OXAM, Mellor 1994) and a Cistercian ware (OXCL) tyg or cup, both of which are probably late 15th-century in date.



scale 1:2500

Site location on modern OS. map

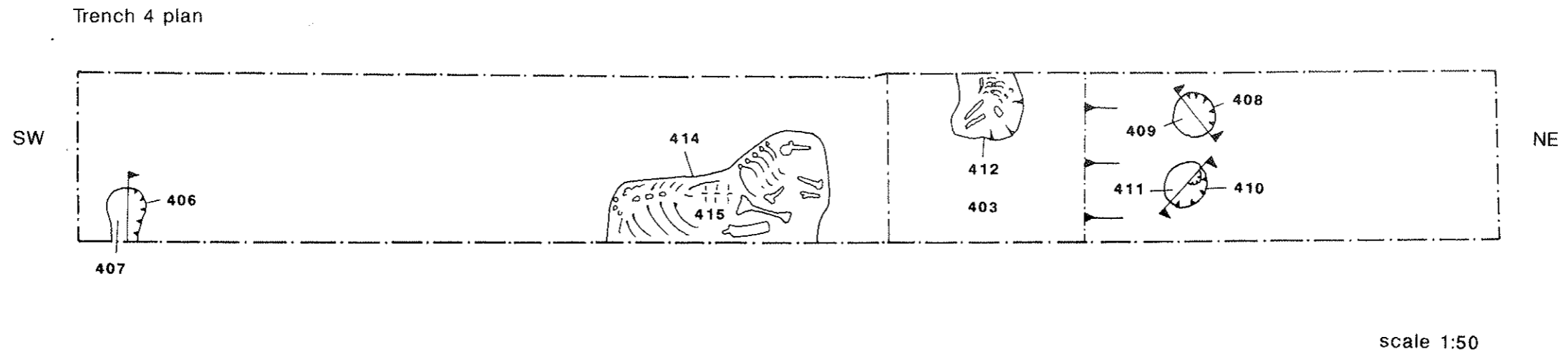
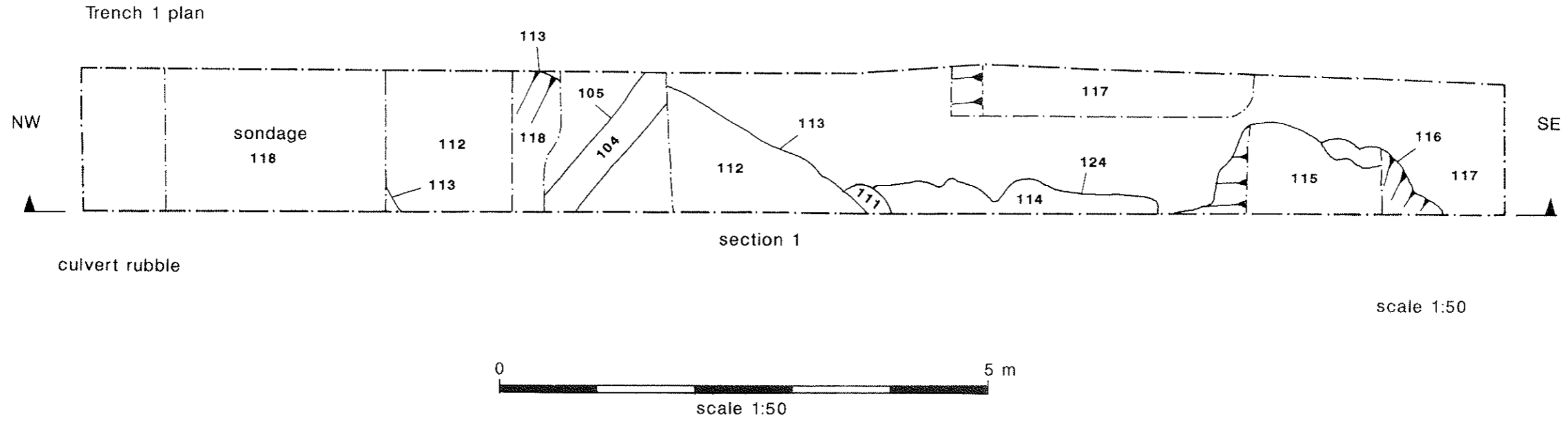
Figure 1



scale 1:100

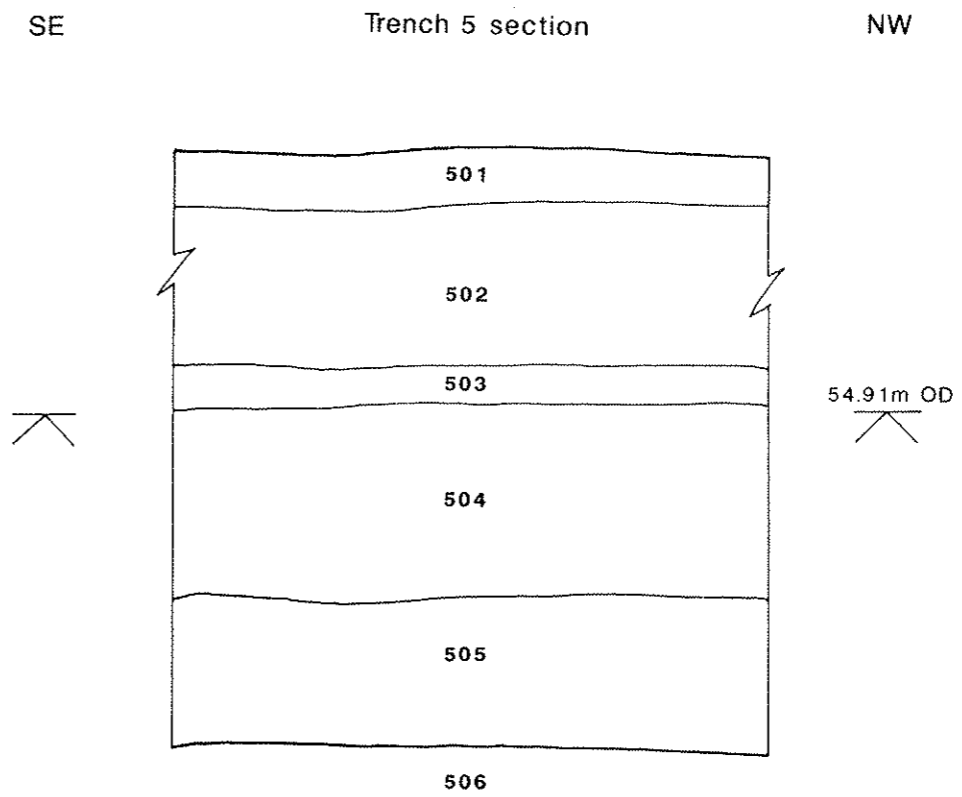
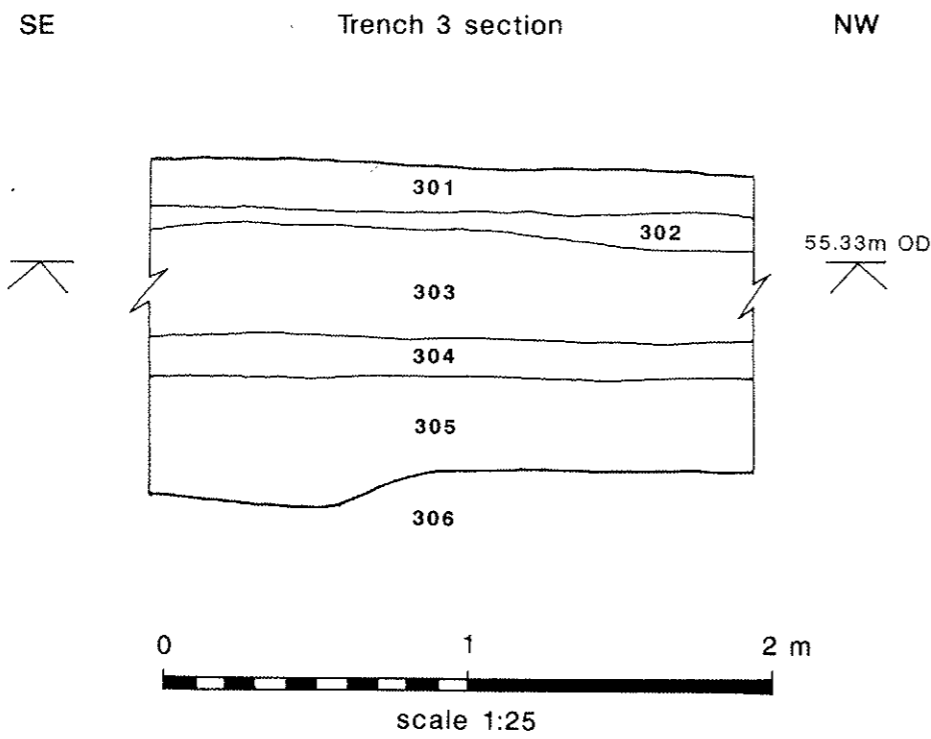
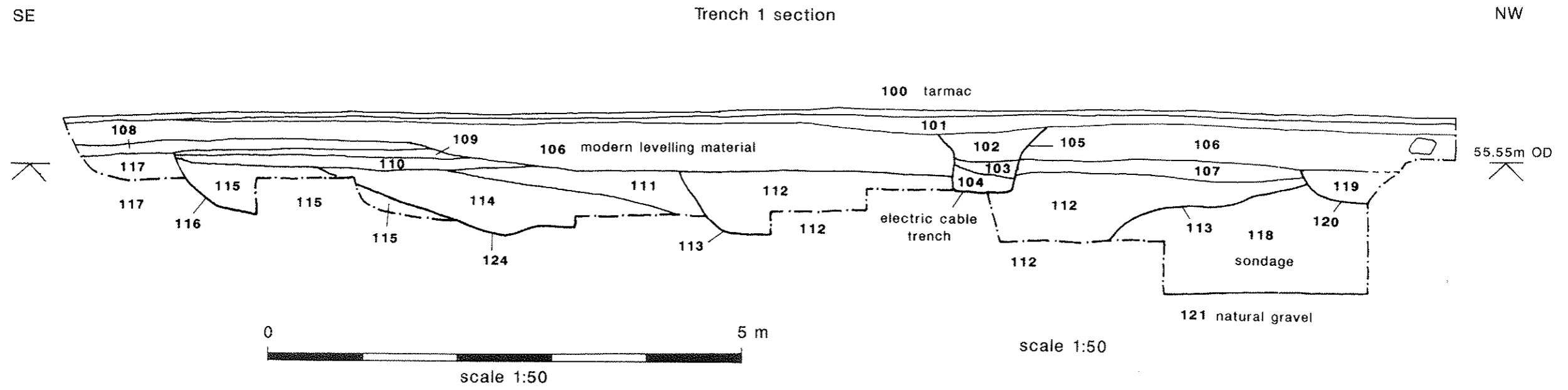
Location of trenches

Figure 2



Trenches 1 and 4 plans

Figure 3



Trenches 1, 3 and 5 sections

Figure 4