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Architects Design Partnership

**St. Antony's College
Woodstock Road
Oxford**

NGR SP 5102 0739

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
REPORT**

Planning Ref. No. NFH/858/93

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July 2000

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Prepared by: John Dalton/Kayt Brown

Date: July 2000

Checked by: J Hiller

Date: July 2000

Approved by: Paul Booth

Date: August 2000

Summary

During 1999 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook a watching brief at St. Antony's College, Woodstock Road, Oxford (NGR SP 5102 0739). The only archaeological remains encountered were three cut features interpreted as 19th century gravel quarry pits. The fills of these features produced a small quantity of finds, including pottery of 19th century date.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The development proposal (Planning Application Ref. NFH//858/93) concerned the construction of 50 new study bedrooms at St. Antony's College, Woodstock Road, Oxford (Fig. 1). The watching brief was commissioned by Architects Design Partnerships of Oxford on behalf of the college.
- 1.2 The watching brief was undertaken in accordance with a brief set by and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) agreed with the Oxford Archaeological Advisory Service (OAAS).

2 Archaeological Background

- 2.1 The site lies on river gravel deposits at c 62 m OD and is located at the corner of Winchester Road and Bevington Road. This area of North Oxford is well known for a spread of archaeological finds, mainly recorded during late 19th century building work in this part of the city.
- 2.2 There is also a find of decapitated burials, which are likely to be of Roman date, discovered at the front of No.16 Winchester Road and Bevington Road. Here a pronounced drop in the ground level may be the result of quarrying during Victorian building developments.
- 2.3 An archaeological evaluation on the site of the redevelopment was undertaken by OAU in July 1994. This work suggested that the area had previously been quarried, resulting in the removal of any potential of archaeological deposits. The quarry here had been infilled with material that included a quantity of late Roman finds, suggesting that there had been some form of settlement in the immediate vicinity. The recovery of four 1st century coins may represent part of a dispersed hoard.
- 2.4 Later activity at the site was represented by a group of clay pipes and kiln furniture, suggesting that a professional pipe maker had at one time worked in the general area. Plough-marks within the topsoil overlying the quarry suggested that the quarry had been disused, reinstated and returned briefly to agricultural use prior to the expansion of the Victorian suburb

3 Aims

- 3.1 The aims of the watching brief were to identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any

archaeological deposits exposed on site during the course of the works. Any archaeological deposits were to be recorded to established OAU procedures in order to secure their preservation by record (OAU 1992).

4 Methodology

- 4.1 An archaeological supervisor was present on site during the mechanical excavation of the foundation trenches for the development. Within the constraints imposed by health and safety considerations the deposits and features exposed were cleaned, inspected and recorded in plan and section.
- 4.2 Written records were made on pro-forma recording sheets. Soil descriptions were compiled using standard charts for the approximation of percentage of inclusion types in soil deposits. The location of the soil profiles that were inspected is presented as Fig. 2.

5 Results

- 5.1 During the monitoring of the ground-works a series of deposits were identified and recorded in three places (Fig. 3). The only archaeological features were three negative features (5, 7 and 9) that were interpreted as gravel quarry pits. These were observed in three locations within the foundation trenches and were all vertical sided with flat bases.
- 5.2 The earliest deposit seen within the foundation trenches was a layer of yellow-white sandy alluvium (18), that had been sealed by a yellow sand with 50% gravel inclusions (4). This deposit was also derived from alluvial processes and was 0.4 m deep. Above lay a friable light orange-brown silty clay with 10% mixed small stones and gravel (3) that was 0.4 m deep and represented a former soil horizon (3).
- 5.3 Quarry cut 5 was 2.6 m wide and 1 m deep and had been cut from the level of layer 3. The fill (6) was an orange-brown clay silt with 15% mixed stones and gravel. Quarry cut (7) was 1.4 m wide and 1.6 m deep and was cut from the level of layer 3. The primary fill of the quarry was a backfilled loamy soil (8) which was overlain by a thin layer of orange-yellow gravel-sand (11) with a maximum thickness of 0.1 m. Above lay a friable dark orange-brown clay silt with 10% mixed gravel (10), that was 0.4 m deep.
- 5.4 The third quarry pit (9) measured 1.4 m by 1 m and was 1.3 m deep. The primary fill (12) comprised a 0.45 m thick friable grey-brown silty clay with 10% gravel. This was overlain by a light orange-brown silty clay (13) with 5% sand and 10% gravel to a depth of 0.3 m, in turn overlain by a layer (14) 0.50 m thick of the same composition as (12). This was sealed by a 0.3 m thick light orange-brown silty clay (15), that lay beneath a natural gravel/sand slippage (16) that had a maximum thickness of 0.6 m. The upper fill of the quarry pit (17) was a 0.45 m thick deposit of grey-brown silty clay.
- 5.5 The upper fills of the three quarry pits were sealed by a mixed layer of subsoil and tarmac fragments (2) that lay below the topsoil (1).

6 Finds

- 6.1 A total of 18 pottery sherds weighing 1072 g was recovered from two primary fills of the quarry features (fills 6 and 8). This material included 9 sherds of English glazed refined earthenware and a single sherd of glazed red earthenware, datable to the 19th century. The other finds recovered comprised four pieces of ceramic building materials (tile), three fragments of heavily corroded iron, and a single fragment of animal bone. The finds are tabulated below:

<i>Material</i>		<i>Fill 6</i>	<i>Fill 8</i>	<i>Totals</i>
Bone	No. fragments		1	1
	Weight (g)		10	10
CBM	No. fragments	1	3	4
	Weight (g)	28	322	350
Iron	No. fragments	3		3
	Weight (g)	42		42
Pottery	No. fragments	8	2	10
	Weight (g)	622	48	670
Total	No. fragments	12	6	18
	Weight (g)	692	380	1072

7 Environmental results

- 7.1 No suitable archaeological deposits were encountered which would have warranted sampling for environmental material.

8 Discussion

- 8.1 Although Roman and 18th century finds had been recovered during the previous archaeological investigation at this site, no material earlier than the 19th century was recovered during this watching brief. The only archaeological features observed comprised the cut features visible in the sides of the foundation trenches. These are interpreted as evidence of quarrying, an activity already known to have occurred at the site. The date of the backfill material suggests the quarrying was probably connected to the period of building in this part of the city in the late 19th century.
- 8.2 The watching brief confirms the evidence from the evaluation, in that any earlier archaeological deposits are likely to have been destroyed through this quarrying activity.

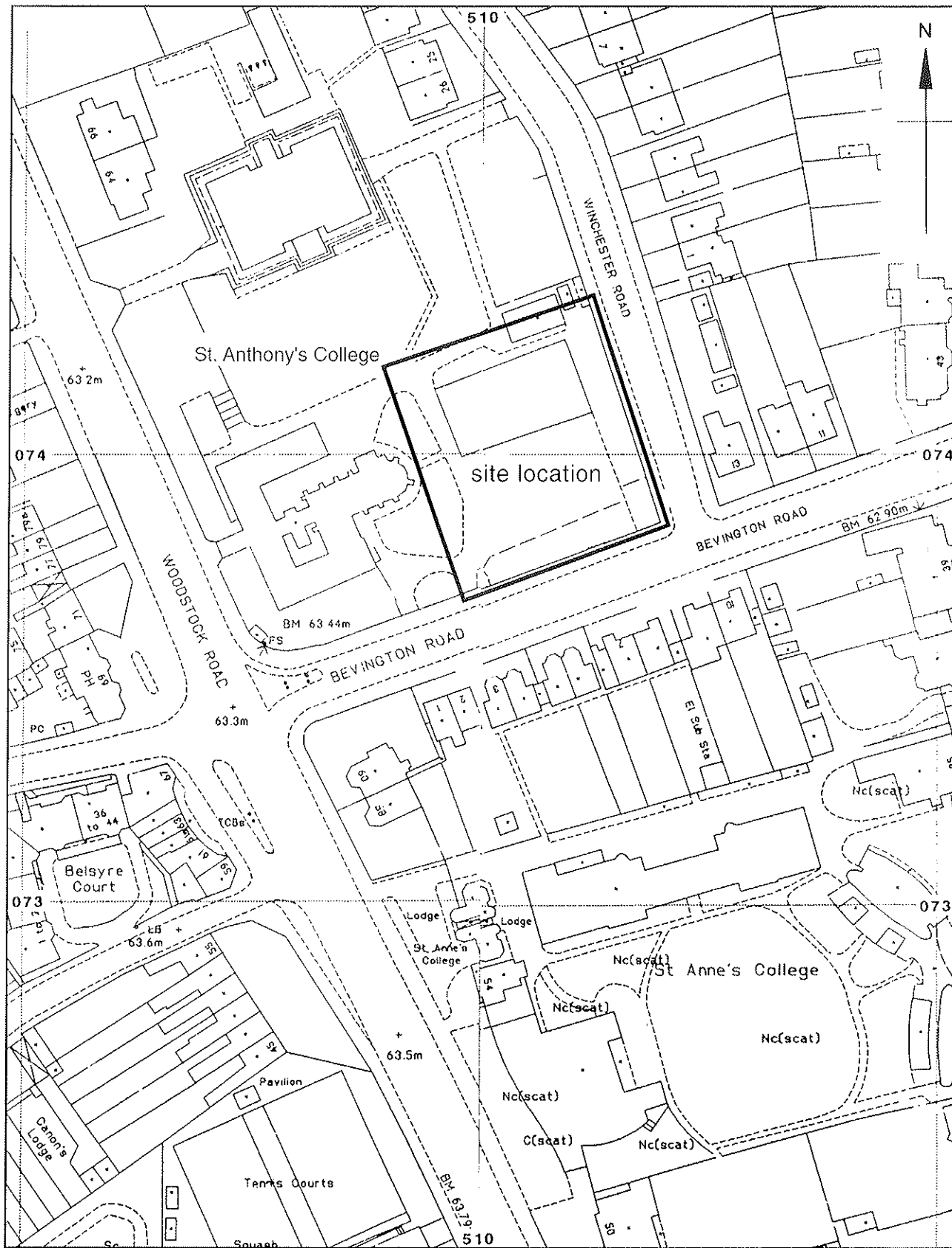
Kayt Brown/John Dalton/Jon Hiller
June 2000

Table of Context Information

Context	Type	Depth	Width	Comments
1	Layer	0.1-0.3 m	-	Topsoil
2	Layer	0.1 m	-	Old tarmac and topsoil
3	Layer	0.4 m	-	Former soil horizon
4	Layer	0.4 m	-	Alluvium
5	Cut	1 m	2.6 m	19th century quarry pit
6	Fill	1 m	-	Fill of 5
7	Cut	1.6 m	1.4 m	19th century quarry pit
8	Fill	1.2 m	-	Primary fill of 7
9	Cut	1.34 m	1 m	19th century quarry pit
10	Fill	0.4 m	-	Upper fill of 7
11	Fill	0.04 m	-	Gravel slip fill of 7
12	Fill	0.2 m	-	Fill of 9
13	Fill	0.12 m	-	Fill of 9
14	Fill	0.5 m	-	Fill of 9
15	Fill	0.3 m	-	Fill of 9
16	Fill	0.6 m	-	Gravel slips within pit 9
17	Fill	0.45 m	-	Upper fill of 9
18	Layer	0.12 m	-	Natural sandy alluvium

Reference

OAU, 1992 Oxford Archaeological Unit Field Manual (Wilkinson, D ed)



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Figure 1: Site location

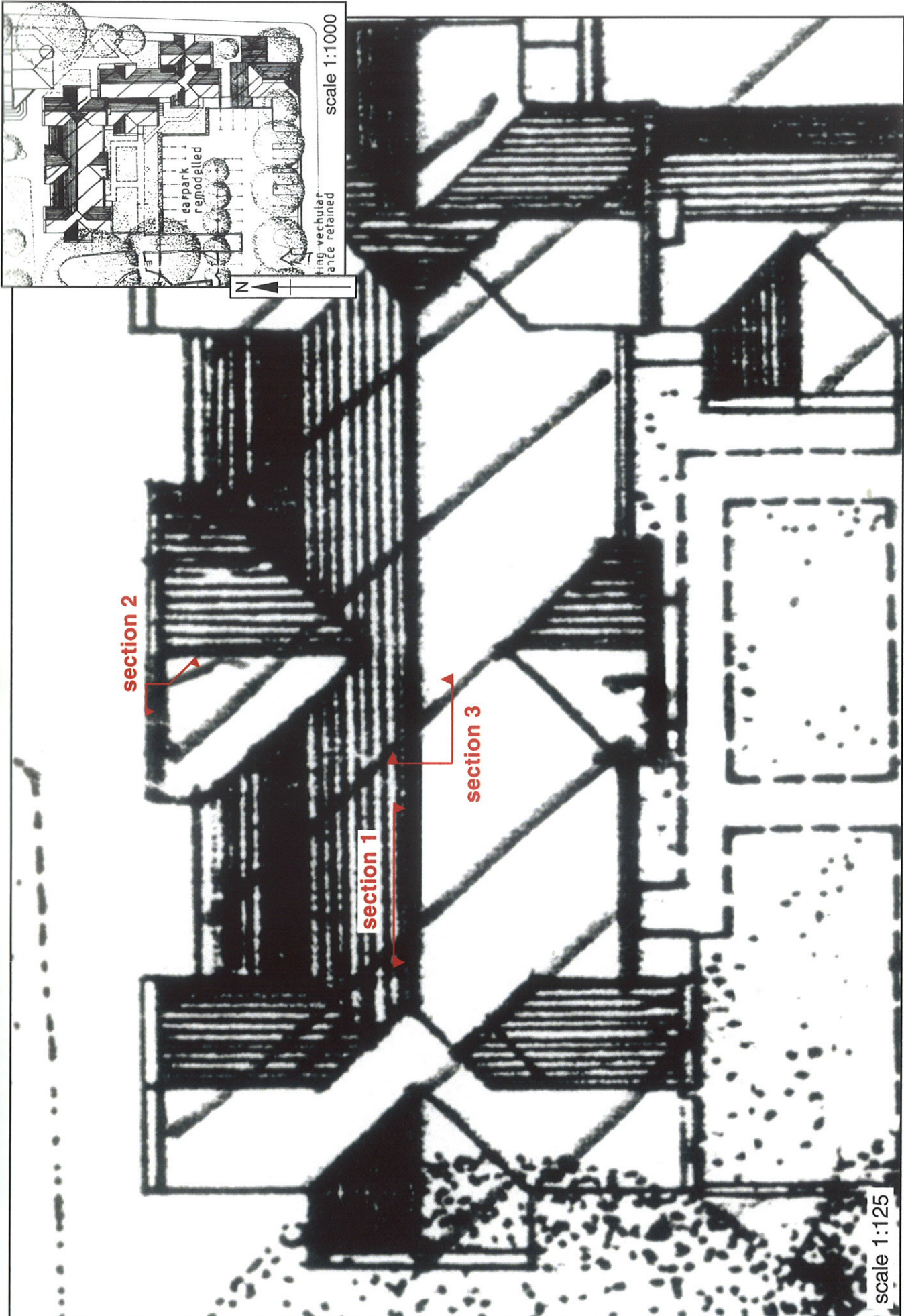


Figure 2: Trench plan and section locations

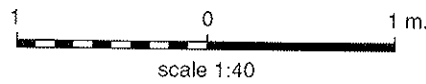
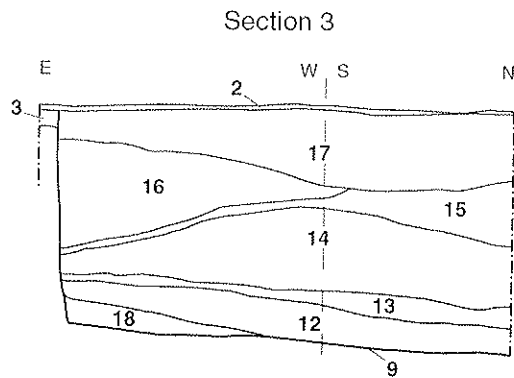
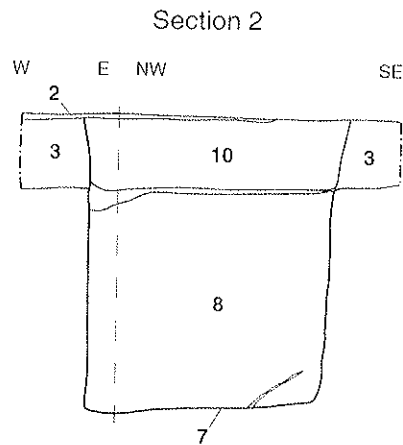
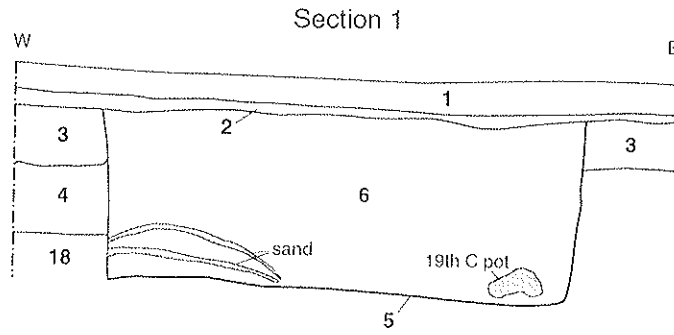


Figure 3: Quarry pit sections



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