# Sir William Dunn School of Pathology, Oxford

SP 5169 0707

Archaeological Evaluation

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

May 1995

# SIR WILLIAM DUNN SCHOOL OF PATHOLOGY

# OXFORD

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**OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT**

**MAY 1995**

# SIR WILLIAM DUNN SCHOOL OF PATHOLOGY

# OXFORD

Planning Application No: NF/1777/94

SP 5169 0706

## INTRODUCTION

The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook an evaluation in an area where Oxford University is proposing to build an extension to the Sir William Dunn School of Pathology Laboratory (centred at NGR SP 5169 0706). The work was carried out on the 26th of April 1995 according to a specification set by Oxford Archaeological Advisory Service (OAAS).

## LOCATION (see fig. 1)

The site is situated on South Parks Road and the development occupies the rear backing onto the University Parks. The proposed 'Building 304' will occupy an area approximately 30 m x 30 m. The current use is a yard with car parking, garages and outbuildings. The present tarmac surface is approximately level at 61.80 m above Ordnance Datum (OD).

## GEOLOGY

The geology of the area consists of Summertown Radley Gravel Terrace.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site lies within a Zone of Archaeological Interest identified in a draft report prepared for Oxford City Council in 1993. The Zone contains a dense area of prehistoric and later cropmark features, most notably in the University Parks to the north. Recent development and OAU excavations in the Science Area for the Rex Richards (1982 & 1993) and Rodney Porter (Plant Sciences 1989) buildings, revealed two concentric ditches of a Bronze Age Barrow with a central pyre-pit. The main alignment of the barrowfield in the University Parks appears to be east-west and it was thought that a further barrow could lie in the area of the proposed building.

Later ditches and isolated pits indicate Iron Age farming of the gravelly soils, impinging on the Bronze Age Barrow.

At the west end of South Parks road Roman occupation of the first half of the second century was located during the extension of the Radcliffe Science Library and a Romano-British vase came from digging the Observatory foundations in 1896 (Hassall 1972).

Bibliography

Hassall T. G. et al 'Roman Finds from the Radcliffe Library Extension, Oxford, 1970-71' *Oxoniensia* 1972, 38-50.

## STRATEGY

Three trenches were machine excavated with a JCB equipped with a five foot toothless ditching bucket, measuring *c.*4.00 m long and *c.*1.66 m wide and represented a sample of approximately 2.3% of the development area. The positioning of the trenches was designed to establish the presence and extent or absence of archaeological remains within the development area. The position of Trench 2 aimed to locate a ditch known from previous work in the Rodney Porter building.

The trenches were excavated by machine down to the first archaeologically significant horizon. Features revealed in the trench were then hand excavated to establish their condition, character, quality and to recover material to date the archaeological remains present.

## SUMMARY

No archaeological features were located in any of the three trenches. Earlier ploughsoils were identified in all the trenches and in Trench 1 and 2 they produced medieval pottery. A sherd of Iron Age pottery was recovered from the earliest layer in Trench 3.

**RESULTS** (see fig. 2 & Fig. 3)

For dimensions of features and trenches see Appendix 1.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was orientated approximately NE-SW. The natural geological deposit of silty sand, 1/7, was exposed at a depth of 0.68 m (61.12 m OD) below the present ground surface. Two silty loam cultivation soils were identified 1/5 & 1/6 with a combined thickness of 0.27 m. The earliest, ploughsoil 1/6, overlaid the natural subsoil and produced one sherd of green glazed medieval pottery. The later soil, possibly the former University Parks soil, 1/5 overlaid 1/6 and produced post-medieval pottery and clay pipe.

Layer 1/5 was overlain by modern rubble make-up layers 1/4, 1/3, 1/2 and the present tarmac 1/1, these layers had a combined thickness of 0.42 m.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was orientated approximately NW-SE. The natural geological gravel was exposed at a depth of 0.60 m (61.34 m OD) below the present ground surface. Three very irregular periglacial features 2/8, 2/10, 2/12, were cut into the gravel.

Two cultivation soils were identified, 2/5 and 2/6, which were almost certainly the continuation of the soils identified in Trench 1. They had a combined thickness of 0.34 m. No finds were recovered from this trench and soil 2/5 was truncated by make-up layer 2/5. The modern gravel, stone and rubble make-up layers 2/4, 2/3, 2/2 and tarmac 2/1 had a combined thickness of 0.39 m.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was orientated approximately NE-SW on a grassed area. The natural geological deposit occurred at a depth of 0.69 m (61.20 m OD) below the present ground surface. The earliest layer, a light brown sandy silt 3/5 formed an interface layer between the natural silt 3/6 and a ploughsoil 3/4. Layer 3/5 was hand excavated and produced one small sherd of pottery which is probably middle Iron Age in date.

The interface layer 3/5 was overlaid by a sandy loam ploughsoil 3/4. Ploughsoil 3/4 produced four sherds of medieval pottery and a fragment of bone.

Ploughsoil 3/4 was overlaid by a dark brown sandy loam cultivation soil 3/3 which contained a clay pipe fragment and probably represents the former University Parks soil. The combined thickness of the cultivation soils was 0.34 m.

Cultivation soil 3/3 was overlain by a redeposited silty loam 3/2 and the turf and topsoil 3/1. Both these deposits represent landscaping and reinstatement of the site following building work.

## CONCLUSIONS AND CONSIDERATION OF THE RESULTS

An early ploughsoil, probably medieval in date, was located in all three trenches and the modern make-up layers (made ground) had not significantly disturbed the earlier ploughsoil. The potential for the preservation of archaeological features was favourable.

The occurrence of a small sherd of Iron Age pottery in Trench 3 would be consistent with the Iron Age ditches recorded immediately to the west of the site during the construction of the Rodney Porter (Plant Sciences) building in 1989. Trench 2 did not locate the conjectured continuation of one of these ditches.

The trench plan would have located a dense pattern of archaeological features although isolated pits, such as that seen during the 1993 excavation at the Rex Richards Building Magnet Room, are less likely to have been located. Although no archaeological features were located, due to the proximity of ditches and pits immediately west of the proposed building the existence of a low density of archaeological features on the present site cannot be totally discounted.

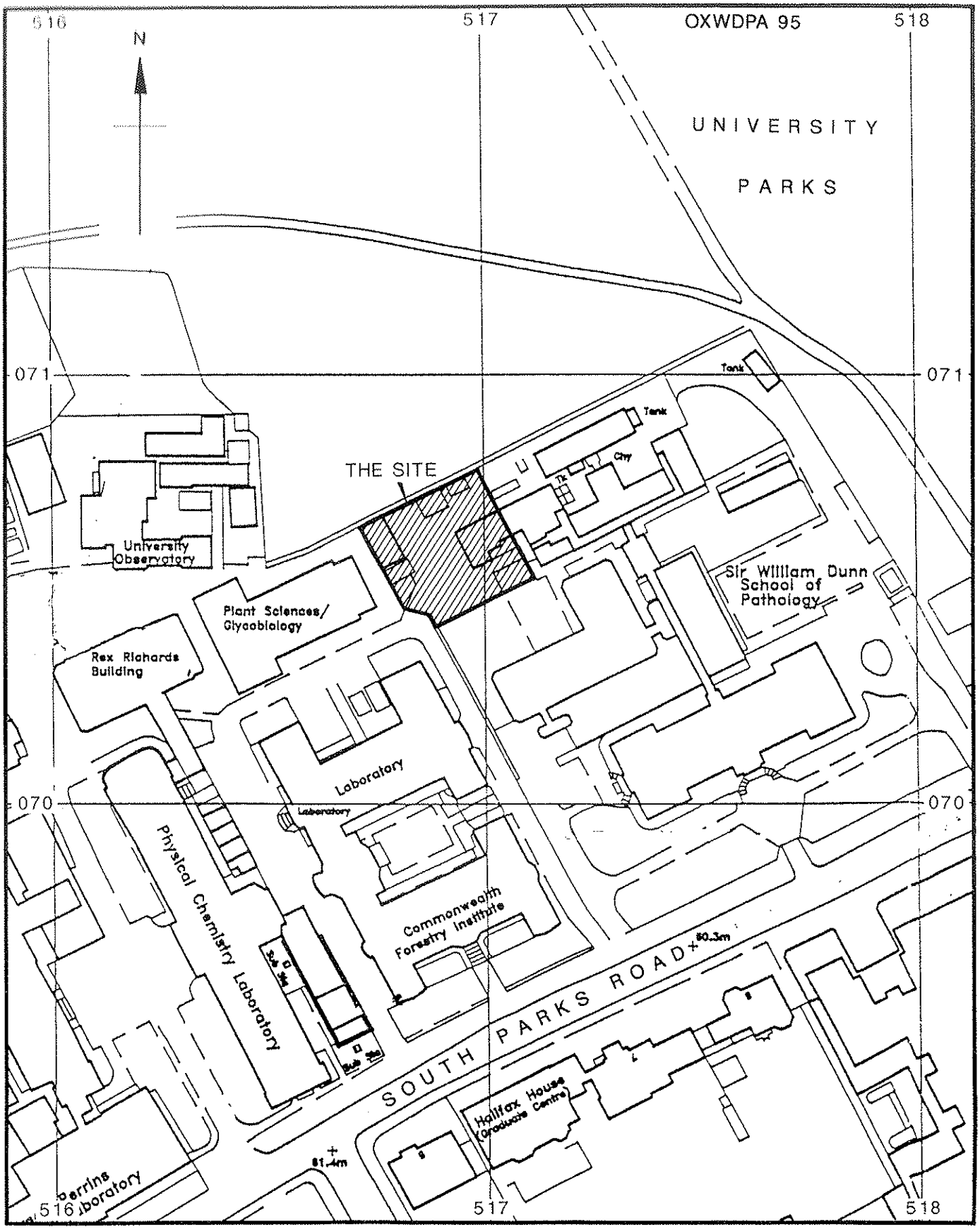
OAU
A Parkinson
May 1995

# APPENDIX 1: Table of Contexts and Finds

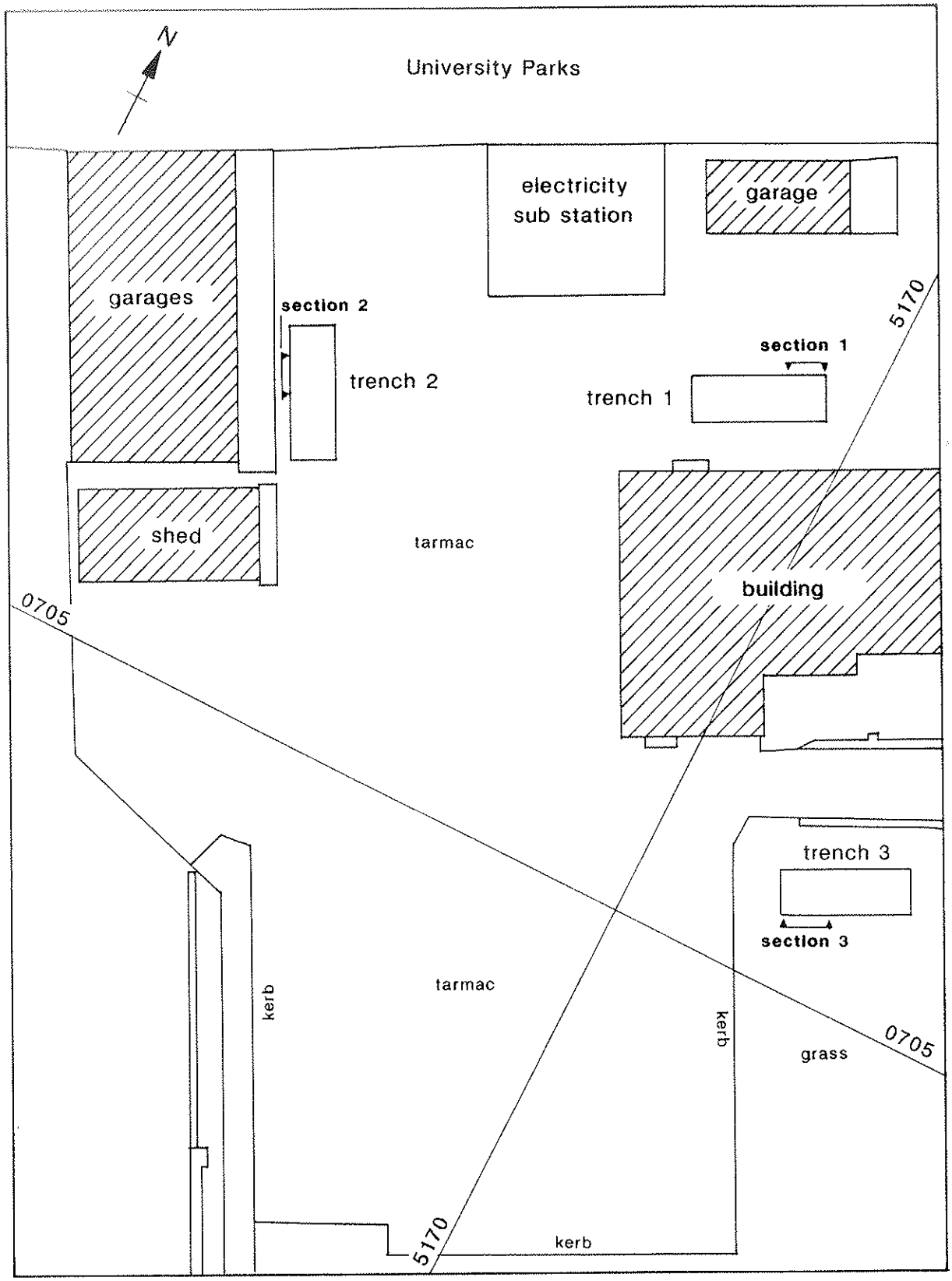
**SIR WILLIAM DUNN SCHOOL OF PATHOLOGY**
**OXFORD** (OXWDPA 95)

| Context | Type | Depth (m) | Length (m) | Width (m) | Comments | Finds |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **TRENCH 1** | | **0.68** | **4.20** | **1.66** | | |
| 1/1 | Layer | 0.05 | | | Tarmac | |
| 1/2 | Layer | 0.12-0.19 | | | Make up for present surface | |
| 1/3 | Layer | 0.08-0.12 | | | Make up for present surface | |
| 1/4 | Layer | 0.12 | | | Make up for present surface | |
| 1/5 | Layer | 0.12-0.14 | | | Earlier Ploughsoil | 1 med. pot sherd,<br>2 post-med. pot sherds,<br>2 clay pipe frags.,<br>1 bone frag. |
| 1/6 | Layer | 0.13 | | | Earlier Ploughsoil | 1 med. green glazed pot sherd |
| 1/7 | Layer | | | | Natural silty sand | |
| **TRENCH 2** | | **0.60** | **4.60** | **1.60** | | |
| 2/1 | Layer | 0.03 | | | Tarmac | |
| 2/2 | Layer | 0.10 | | | Make up for present surface | |
| 2/3 | Layer | 0.25 | | | Make up for present surface | |
| 2/4 | Layer | 0.10 | | | Cinder | |
| 2/5 | Layer | 0.19 | | | Earlier Ploughsoil | |
| 2/6 | Layer | 0.15 | | | Earlier Ploughsoil | |
| 2/7 | Layer | | | | Natural | |
| 2/8 | Cut | 0.15-0.46 | | 0.70+ | Natural feature | |
| 2/9 | Fill | 0.15-0.46 | | | Fill of 2/8 | |
| 2/10 | Cut | 0.11 | 0.80 | 0.55 | Natural feature | |
| 2/11 | Fill | 0.11 | | | Fill of 2/10 | |
| 2/12 | Cut | 0.07 | 0.50 | 0.29 | Natural feature | |
| 2/13 | Fill | 0.07 | | | Fill of 2/12 | |
| **TRENCH 3** | | **0.60** | **4.20** | **1.55** | | |
| 3/1 | Layer | 0.10 | | | Turf and Topsoil | |
| 3/2 | Layer | 0.15-0.18 | | | Redeposited soil | |
| 3/3 | Layer | 0.19 | | | Soil Horizon | 1 clay pipe frag. |
| 3/4 | Layer | 0.12-0.14 | | | Ploughsoil | 4 med. pot sherds,<br>1 bone frag. |
| 3/5 | Layer | 0.04-0.05 | | | Interface Layer | 1 IA pot sherd probably MIA |
| 3/6 | Layer | | | | Natural | |

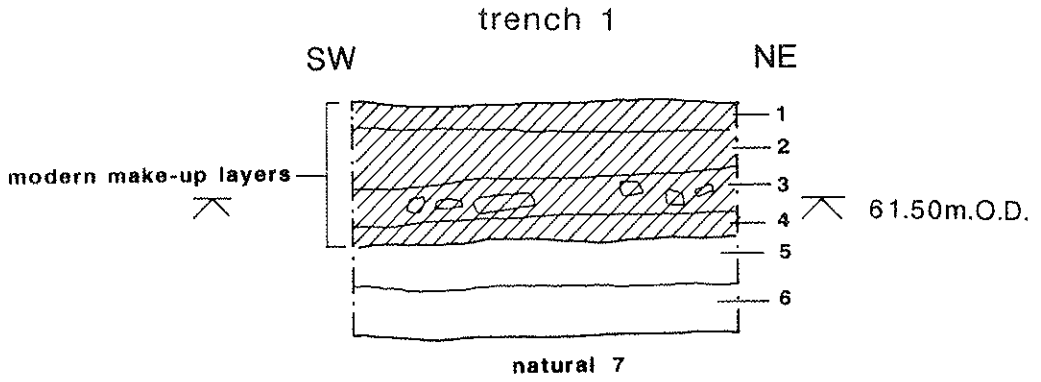
IA = Iron Age
MIA = Middle Iron Age
Med = medieval
Post-med = Post medieval
Frag. = Fragment

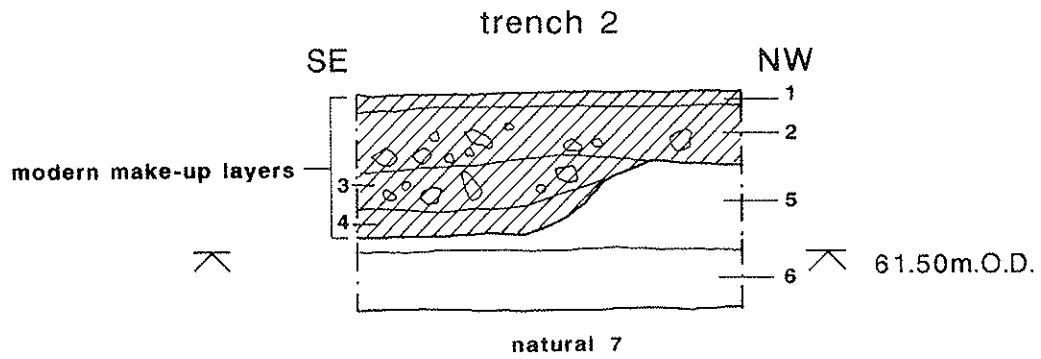


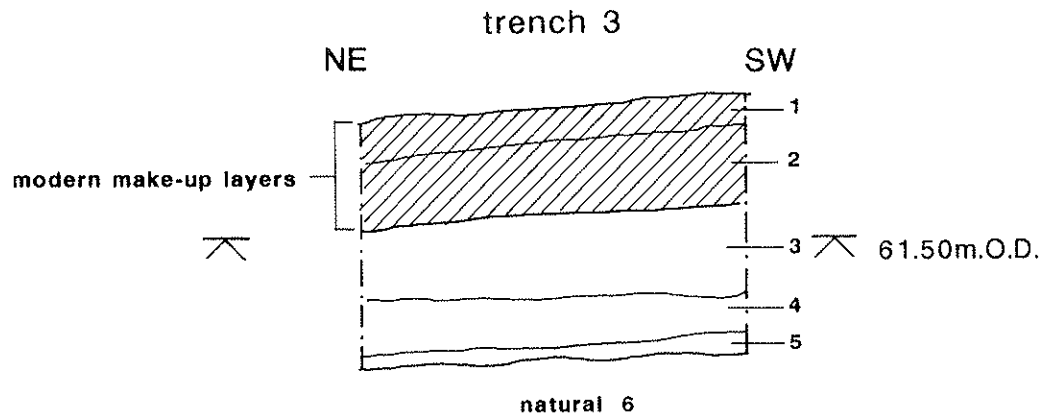

scale 1:1250 site location figure 1

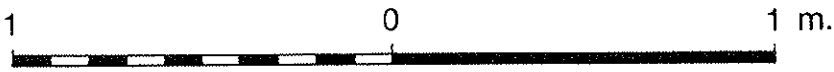



scale 1:200 trench location plan figure 2




scale 1:20 section samples figure 3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