

The White Hart Old Marston Oxford



Archaeological Evaluation



Oxford Archaeology

30th August 2002

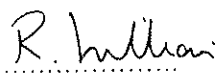
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The White Hart, Old Marston Village, Oxford

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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SUMMARY

In August 2002, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at the site of the White Hart Public House, Old Marston, Oxford (NGR SP 5270 0872), on behalf of Banner Homes.

The evaluation revealed part of a stone building of probable post-medieval date and an associated stone surface. The structures may represent an outbuilding associated with the White Hart building. Also revealed were ditches and potential posthole alignments delineating boundaries of former properties on the site. The arrangement appears to date to the 19th century on the basis of the finds evidence. Residual sherds of medieval pottery from a 19th century feature could suggest that medieval remains exist nearby.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In August 2002, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at the site of the former White Hart Public House, Old Marston, Oxford (NGR SP 5270 0872) on behalf of Banner Homes Limited. The evaluation was undertaken in respect of a planning application to redevelop the site (Planning References: 01/1758/FUL and 1757 LBC).
- 1.1.2 The planning application comprises the construction of 11 new homes, the demolition of late 19th-early 20th century outbuildings and the conversion of the public house into two homes.
- 1.1.3 Oxford City's Archaeological Advisor, Brian Durham, prepared an advice note requesting that a condition should be attached to the planning application requiring an archaeological evaluation, to inform on the survival of archaeological remains on the site.
- 1.1.4 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would implement the requirements set by the City Archaeologist (OA 2002).

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is located at NGR SP5270 0872 on the east side of Oxford Road, Old Marston (Fig. 1). The village lies to the north-east of the historic city of Oxford on the southern edge of a small gravel island, surrounded by a band of Oxford Clay, which is in turn surrounded by alluvium associated with the floodplain of the River Cherwell.
- 1.2.2 The area around the village is prone to flooding and for much of its history this has made it seem more remote than is now apparent. The village lies at c 65m OD. Historically much of the land around the village was marsh, which was later drained for use as pasture and arable land. The landscape is typical of the Cherwell Valley with low-lying fields and sparse woodland.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 In 2001 Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU, now Oxford Archaeology, OA) was commissioned to produce a desk-based assessment of the proposed development site (OAU 2001). The background that follows is summarised from that report.
- 1.3.2 Although no evidence for pre-historic activity has been discovered in the immediate vicinity of the site, it has a certain potential to contain remains of this period due to its location on a gravel island, which was a preferred situation for occupation throughout later prehistory.
- 1.3.3 Approximately 0.45 km to the south of the development area lies an area of Roman pottery kilns discovered during road construction (OAU 1993). This is a part of the major pottery industry extending from Dorchester in the south to Noke in the north.
- 1.3.4 The development site lies within the historic core of Old Marston, a settlement first recorded in AD1122 (VCH 5, 215). In essence Old Marston is a planned medieval village built along a main street (Oxford Road), with plots and houses positioned along it. The White Hart itself has stood on the site since the 17th century, although it also incorporates later refurbishment, and extensions to the rear.

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 Oxford Archaeology extends its thanks to Banner Homes for arranging access.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

- 2.1.1 The aims of the evaluation were to determine the location, extent, date, character, and state of preservation of any archaeological remains surviving on the site. Specific aims were to identify evidence for backyard activities of the medieval and post-medieval periods.
- 2.1.2 Attention was to be given to remains of all periods, including evidence for past environments, with provision for environmental sampling included.
- 2.1.3 The evaluation was to seek to clarify the nature and extent of any modern disturbance and intrusion on 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 field evaluation originally comprised the excavation of five machine-dug trenches, two measuring 20 m long by 1.6 m in width, one measuring 23 m in length and 1.6 m wide, one 10 m in length and 1.6 m wide and one measuring 7 m by 1.6 m wide. This represented a 3% sample of the development area, which comprises c 3,900 sq. m (Fig. 2).

- 3.1.2 In the event, Trench 5 was not excavated owing to its close proximity to a Party Wall, following agreement with the City archaeological advisor. Trench 1 became two trenches (Trenches 1 and 6), as it was bisected by a dry stone wall
- 3.1.3 The trenches were excavated under archaeological supervision by mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket. Excavation proceeded to the natural geology or the top of the first archaeological horizon, whichever was encountered first.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

- 3.2.1 The trenches were cleaned by hand and the revealed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds and environmental samples. All archaeological features were planned and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. All features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OA Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

3.3 Finds

- 3.3.1 Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation and generally bagged by context. Finds of special interest were given a unique small find number.

3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

- 3.4.1 No deposits suitable for sampling were identified.

3.5 Presentation of results

- 3.5.1 Trench descriptions are followed by finds reports.

4 RESULTS: GENERAL

4.1 Soils and ground conditions

- 4.1.1 The site is located on clay and gravel. Weather conditions were good.

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Description of deposits

Trench 1

- 5.1.1 The earliest deposit in the trench (Fig. 3) was a layer of red-brown sandy clay and gravel (103, the natural). This was cut at the west end of the trench by two roughly circular features interpreted as postholes. Posthole 108 was 0.43 m in diameter and 0.08 m deep and was filled by an undated brown silty clay (109). Post hole 110 was 0.57 m across and 0.22 m deep and was filled with a mid-brown clay silt (111) that contained no finds.

5.1.2 The natural was cut by a north-east/south-west aligned ditch (112) that was 0.58 m wide and 0.2 m deep and filled by a reddish-brown clay silt (113) from which animal bone was recovered. A second ditch (104) to the west of 112 was 1.2 m wide and 0.67 m deep and aligned north-south. It was filled by a brown clay (105) containing chalk fragments, flint pebbles, animal bone and clay pipe pieces of post-medieval date. Adjacent to the ditch and following the same alignment was a shallow gully (106) filled by a grey-brown silty clay (107) containing animal bone. Gully fill 106 was cut by ditch 104.

5.1.3 The fills of all the features were sealed by a 0.2 m thick layer of reddish-brown clay soil (102), in turn sealed beneath the present topsoil and grass (101).

Trench 2

5.1.4 Natural sandy gravel (203) at the base of the trench (Fig. 4) was cut by a gently curving east-west ditch (204). The ditch was 0.73 m deep and 0.97 m wide with steep sides descending to a flat base. It was filled by an undated compact brown clay silt (205) with gravel inclusions. To the north of the ditch was an irregular shaped feature, possibly a gravel quarry pit (208). It was 1.1 m wide and 0.6 m deep with its edges undercut when originally excavated. The base fill was an undated brown clay with gravel (210), below a dark-brown silt (209) with ash and charcoal and some burnt sandstone.

5.1.5 The upper fill of the ?quarry and the fill of ditch 204 were cut by a later ditch feature (206) that followed the line of 204 and may represent a re-cut. Ditch 206 was 1 m wide and 0.38 m deep. It was filled by light grey clay (207) with some gravel that contained animal bone and tile of 19th century date. This ditch truncated the extent of quarry pit 208. The fills of the all features were sealed by soil layer 202, in turn overlain by the topsoil (201)

Trench 3

5.1.6 No features were seen in the trench (Not illustrated). Natural gravel (303) lay below a soil layer (302) beneath the topsoil (301) from which 19th century pottery and glass were recovered.

Trench 4

5.1.7 Natural gravel and clay (402) was identified at the base of the trench (Fig. 5). At the south end of the trench was the corner of a stone built structure comprising wall footings 405 (north-south) and 410 (east-west). Wall 405 was 0.6 m wide and 410 was 0.45 m wide. An adjacent limestone pavement (403) with brick and concrete components is probably associated with the structure. Wall 405 had a sherd of mid-18th century and later stoneware within its mortar. The wall and the limestone pavement were set into soil and stone rubble deposit 404 = 406, and within the limit of the structure formed by walls 405 and 408 was a spread of mortar (409) over a gravel surface (408). A layer of 19th century broken tile (407) overlay 408 and is likely to represent demolition debris. Clay pipe was recovered from 407. Wall 405 had been robbed after demolition, represented by cut 418 filled by stoney fills 419

(containing clay pipe) and 401. Wall 410 appeared to have been demolished to foundation level and was overlain by a stoney soil layer (411).

- 5.1.8 To the north end of the trench, a possible wall footing (412 = 421) was set into the natural (402). The structure was aligned north-west/south-east and was overlain by a spread of mortar and rubble (413 = 414 = 415), probably demolition debris. Modern glass was recovered from 415. At the north end of the trench was a probable pit fill 417 in cut 417. This was clearly modern and was not excavated, and lay below a general demolition/soil horizon (420). A former topsoil (401) containing 18th-19th century pottery, bottle glass and clay pipe overlay the structural remains.

Trench 5

- 5.1.9 Not excavated, not illustrated.

Trench 6

- 5.1.10 Trench 6 was an extension of Trench 1, with a dry stone wall separating the two. Natural gravel and clay (603) was cut at the west end of the trench by circular posthole (604) that was 0.55 m in diameter and 0.1 m deep and filled with an undated sandy silt (605). The posthole may be associated with those in Trench 1.
- 5.1.11 To the east end of the trench was a shallow amorphous feature (616) that was 0.65 m wide and 0.16 m deep and was filled by a yellow-brown silty clay with stones (617). It is unclear if the feature was real or a slight variation in the natural gravel/clay.
- 5.1.12 To the centre of the trench was a rectangular pit (614) that was 0.8 m wide and at least 0.48 m deep. The clay loam fill (615) contained articulated animal bone suggesting a full burial. The burial was not further investigated due to health and safety concerns.
- 5.1.13 The fills of the pit and ditch were cut by a modern pit feature (608) that was cut from just below the level of the topsoil (602 below 601). The pit was 3 m across, 0.28 m wide and 0.8 m deep. Gravel fill 609 at the base of the pit was sealed by an undated brown clay (610), in turn overlain by gravel lens 611. This was covered with a 0.6 m thick fill of clay (612) below a grey brown silty clay (613) that contained 19th century tile and pottery. Pit 608 cut away the fills of a north-south ditch (606). The ditch was 1.5 m wide and at least 0.6 m deep and its fill (607) contained 19th century pottery and bottle glass, together with sherds of residual medieval pottery.

5.2 Finds

The pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

- 5.2.1 The pottery assemblage comprised 22 sherds with a total weight of 277 g. All the contexts, and the majority of the pottery, were of 19th century or later date, although three sherds (30 g) of redeposited medieval material were also present. The pottery was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1989; 1994), as follows:

OXY: Medieval Oxford ware, AD1075 – 1350. 1 sherd, 16 g.

OXAM: Brill/Boarstall ware, AD1200 – 1600. 2 sherds, 14 g.

OXEST: Later English Stoneware, c 1750+. 4 sherds, 79 g.

WHEW: Mass-produced white earthenwares, mid 19th - 20th C. 15 sherds, 168 g.

- 5.2.2 The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*.

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

Context	OXY		OXAM		OXEST		WHEW		Date
	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
301					1	14	4	33	19thC
400							1	5	19thC
401					2	35	2	49	19thC
405					1	30			19thC
407							3	32	19thC
607	1	16	2	14			3	5	19thC
613							1	40	19thC
615							1	4	19thC
Total	1	16	2	14	4	79	15	168	

Ceramic building material by Leigh Allen, OA

- 5.2.3 A total of nine fragments of ceramic building material weighing 799g were recovered from the evaluation. The fragments are all plain, fairly thin (12mm) fragments most probably from roofing tiles and are post-medieval/modern in date.

Context	No. frags	Description	Weight	Thickness	Date (pot)
207	1	Plain	91g	20mm	-
404	1	Plain	73g	12mm	-
407	3	Plain	338g	12mm	19thC
410	1	Plain	72g	12mm	-
613	3	Plain	225g	12mm	19thC

Clay pipes

- 5.2.4 A total of 7 seven clay pipe fragments were recovered from the evaluation, they are all small undiagnostic fragments of pipe stem.

Context	No. frags	Description	Date (pottery)
105	2	Stem frags.	-
401	1	Stem	19thC
407	1	Stem	19thC
419	1	Stem	19thC
609	2	Stem	19thC

Glass

- 5.2.5 A total of six fragments of vessel glass were recovered from the evaluation, five appear to be from green glass bottles, including a large base fragment from a straight sided bottle. The sixth fragment is from the base of a clear glass bottle. All are modern in date.

Context	No.frag	Description	Date (pottery)
301	1	Bottle frag.	19thC
401	1	Bottle base frag.	19thC
415	1	Bottle frag.	-
607	2	Bottle frags.	19thC
613	1	Base frag.	19thC

Iron

- 5.2.6 Two iron nails and a heavily corroded fragment of iron were recovered from the evaluation.

Context	No.frag	Description	Date (pottery)
105	1	Nail	-
607	1	Nail	19thC
613	1	Corroded frag.	19thC

Shell

- 5.2.7 A single fragment of oyster shell was recovered from context 404.

6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

- 6.1.1 The evaluation revealed part of a stone building of probable post-medieval date. A sherd of mid-18th century or later pottery associated with the building could give an approximate date for the construction of the building. The building appears small and may represent an outbuilding associated with the White Hart building. The building appears to have been demolished in the 19th century or later.
- 6.1.2 The trenches to the north-east of the building revealed ditches and potential posthole alignments delineating boundaries of the properties on the site. The arrangement appears to date to the 19th century on the basis of the finds evidence.
- 6.1.3 Residual sherds of medieval pottery from a feature in Trench 6 could suggest that medieval remains exist nearby.

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					
	101	Layer		0.3	Topsoil
	102	Layer		0.22	Clay subsoil
	103	Layer			Gravel natural
	104	Cut		0.67	Ditch
	105	Fill		0.67	Ditch fill
	106	Cut		0.07	Gully cut by 104
	107	Fill		0.07	Gully fill
	108	Cut		0.08	Posthole
	109	Fill		0.08	Fill of 108
	110	Cut		0.22	Posthole
	111	Fill		0.22	Fill of 110
	112	Cut		0.2	Ditch
	113	Fill		0.2 m	Fill of 112
2					
	201	Layer		0.3	Topsoil
	202	layer		0.22	Soil layer
	203	Layer			Natural gravel
	204	Cut		0.73	Ditch
	205	Fill		0.73	Fill of 204
	206	Cut		0.38	Ditch re-cut of 204
	207	Fill		0.38	Fill of 206
	208	Cut		0.6	Pit
	209	Fill		0.34	Fill of 208
	210	Fill		0.4	Fill of 208
3					
	301	Layer		0.3	Topsoil
	302	Layer		0.22	Former topsoil
	303	Layer		-	Natural gravel
4					
	400	layer		0.3	Topsoil

	401	Layer		0.32	Old topsoil and ground make-up
	402	Layer			Natural gravel and clay
	403	Structure	2.8	0.3	Limestone surface
	404	Layer		0.3	Soil layer
	405	Structure	0.45		Wall footing
	406	layer		0.38	Soil layer = 404
	407	layer		0.05	Layer of broken tiles
	408	layer		0.03	Gravel ?floor
	409	layer		0.03	Mortar spread
	410	structure	0.3		Wall footing
	411	layer			Soil layer
	412	structure	0.6		Wall footing
	413	Fill			Probable fill of modern pit
	414	layer			mortar layer
	415	layer			mortar
	416	Cut			Un-excavated modern pit cut
	417	Fill			Fill of 416
	418	Cut			Robbing of wall 405
	419	Fill			Fill of 418
	420	Layer		0.22	Ground build up
	421	Layer		0.2	layer of stone
	422				
6					
	601	layer			same as 101
	602	layer			same as 102
	603	layer			same as 103
	604	Cut		0.1	Posthole
	605	Fill		0.1	Fill of 604
	606	Cut		0.62	Ditch
	607	Fill		0.62	Fill of 606
	608	Cut		0.8	Pit
	609	Fill		0.08	Fill of 608
	610	Fill		0.37	Fill of 608
	611	Fill		0.42	Fill of 608
	612	Fill		0.18	Fill of 608

	613	Fill		0.57	Fill of 608
	614	Cut		0.48	Animal burial cut
	615	Fill		0.48	Fill of 614
	616	Cut			Gully?
	617	Fill			Fill of 616

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Mellor, M, 1989 A summary of the key assemblages. A study of pottery, clay pipes, glass and other finds from fourteen pits, dating from the 16th to the 19th century in TG Hassall et al, *Excavations at St Ebbe's Oxoniensia* 49, 181-219.

Mellor, M, 1994 Oxford Pottery: A Synthesis of middle and late Saxon, medieval and early post-medieval pottery in the Oxford Region *Oxoniensia* 59, 17-217

OA 2001 *The White Hart, Marston, Oxford. Archaeological Desk Based Study and Historic Building Assessment*. Oxford Archaeological Unit

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

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: The White Hart, Old Marston, Oxford

Site code: OXOMWH02

Grid reference: SP 5270 0872

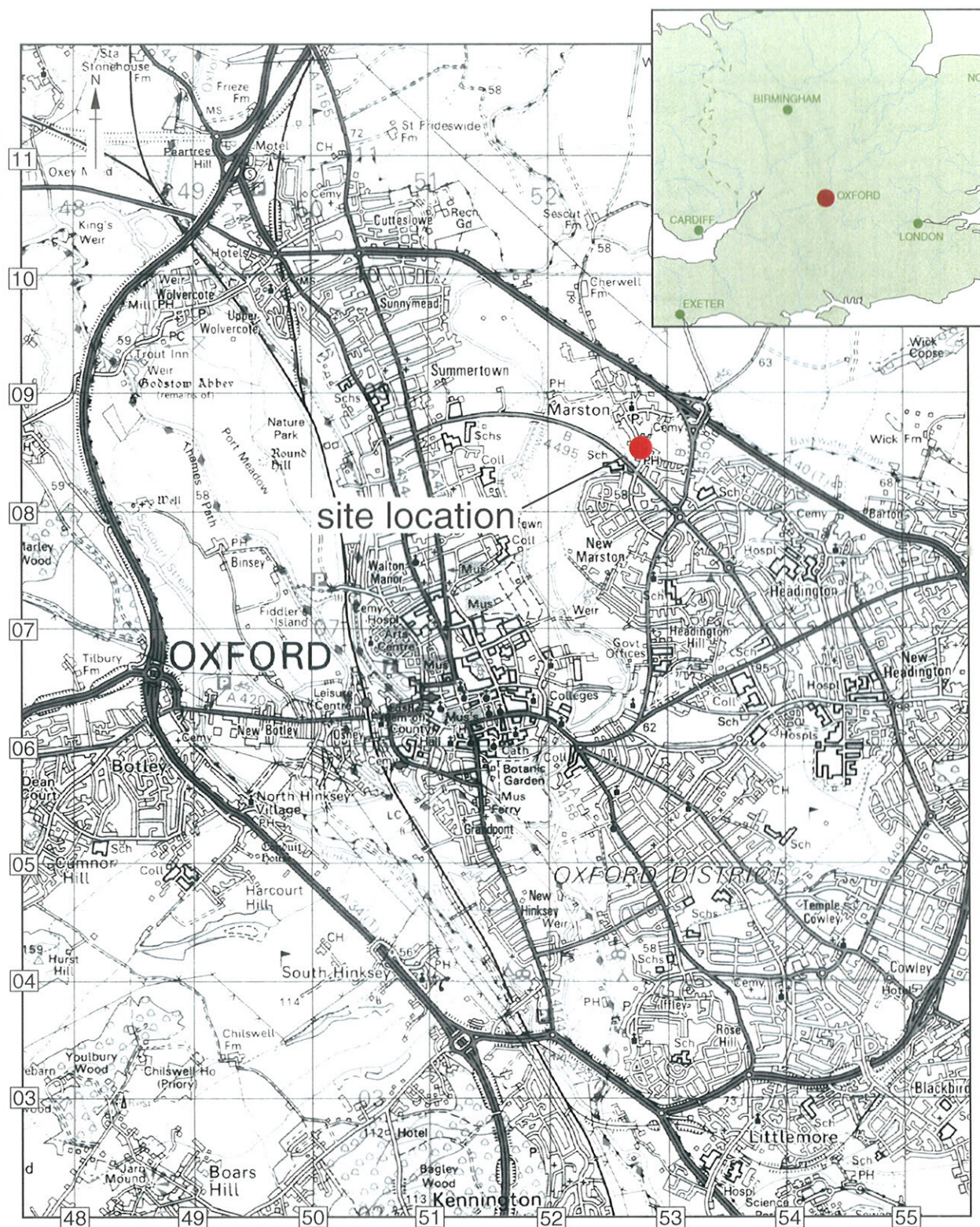
Type of evaluation: 5-trench evaluation

Date and duration of project:

Area of site: 3,900 sq. m

Summary of results: Post medieval building and ditched property boundaries of 19th century date.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS 2002.116



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Figure 1: Site location.

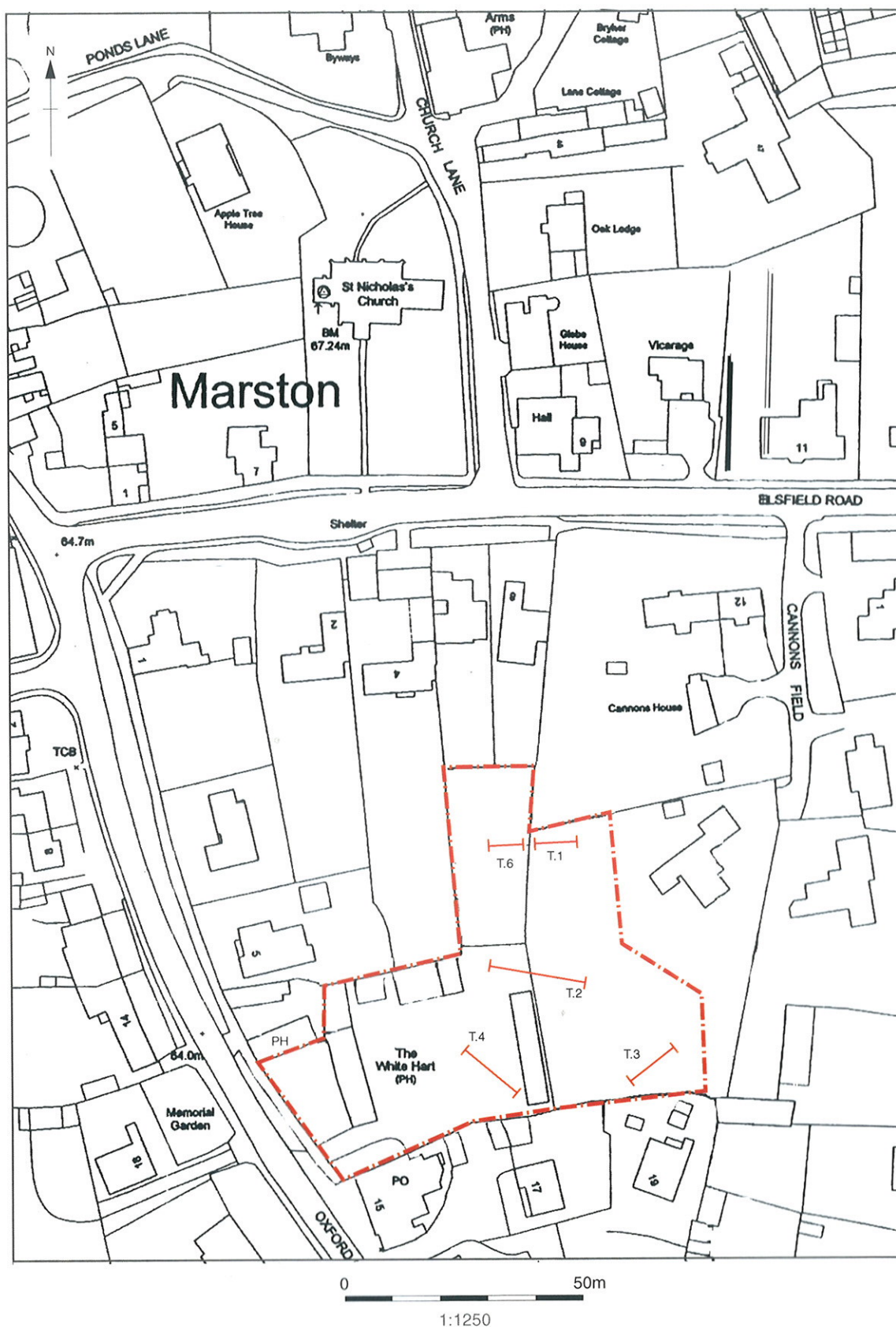


Figure 2: Trench Locations

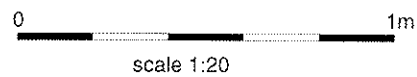
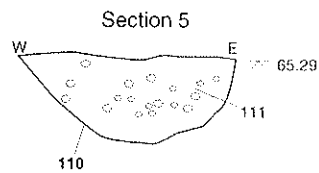
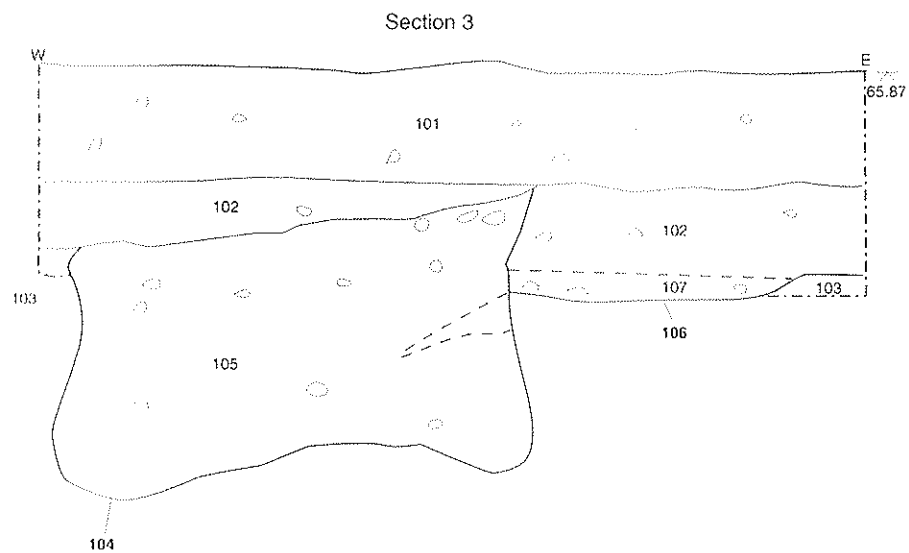
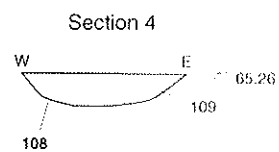
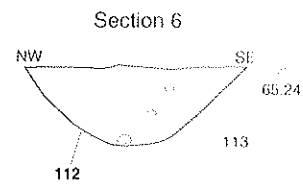
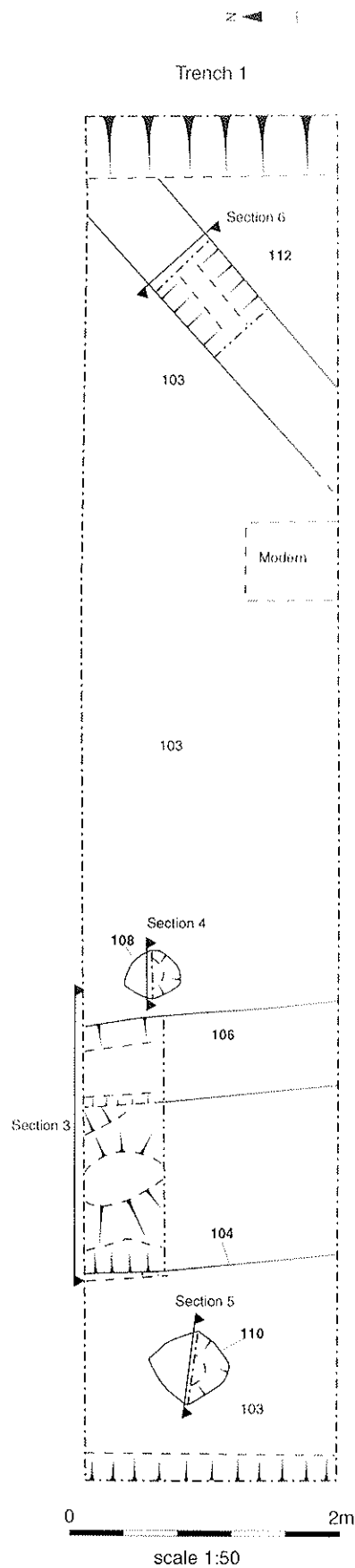


Figure 3: Trench 1, Plan and Sections

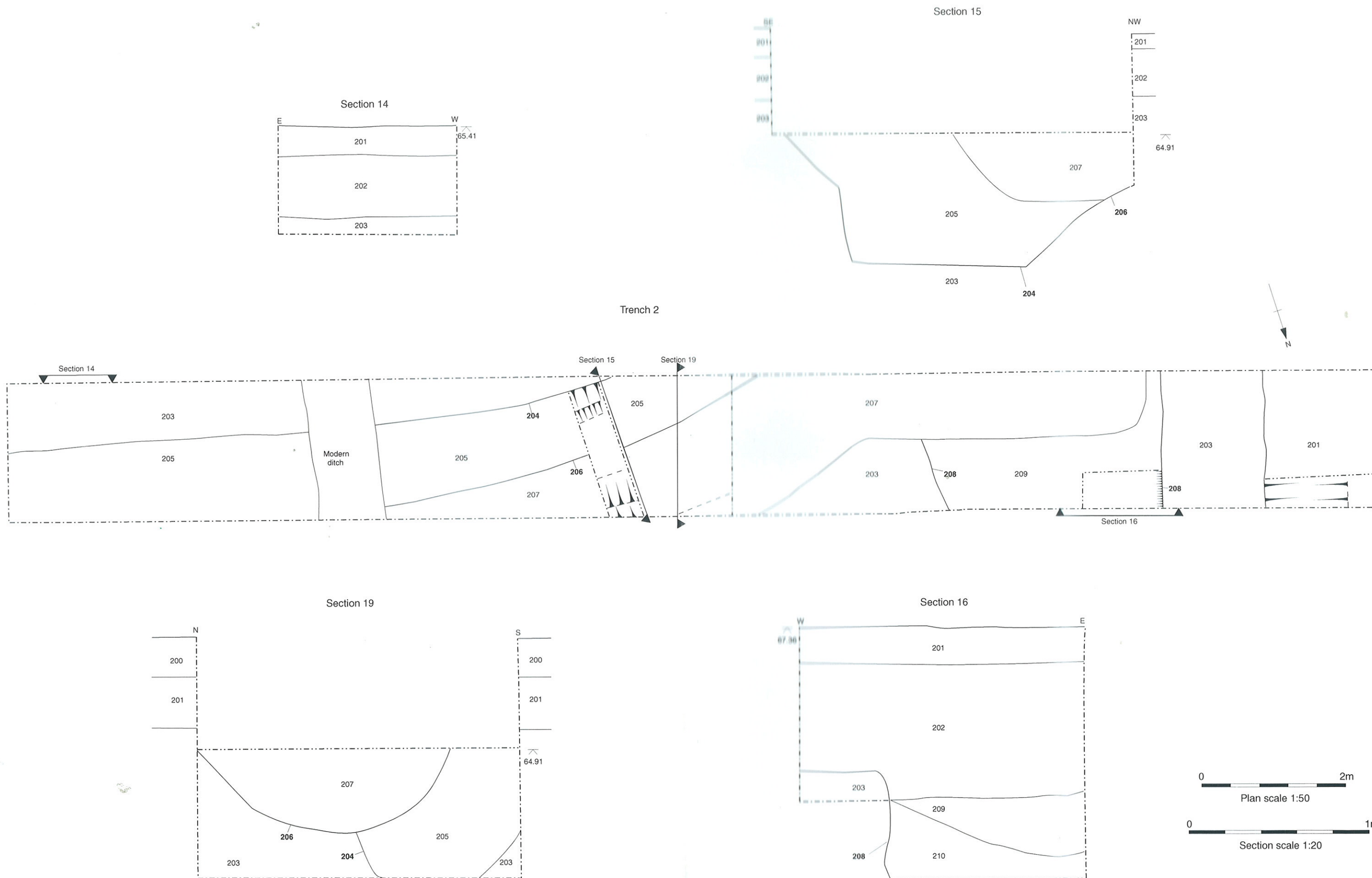


Figure 4: Trench 2, Plan and Sections

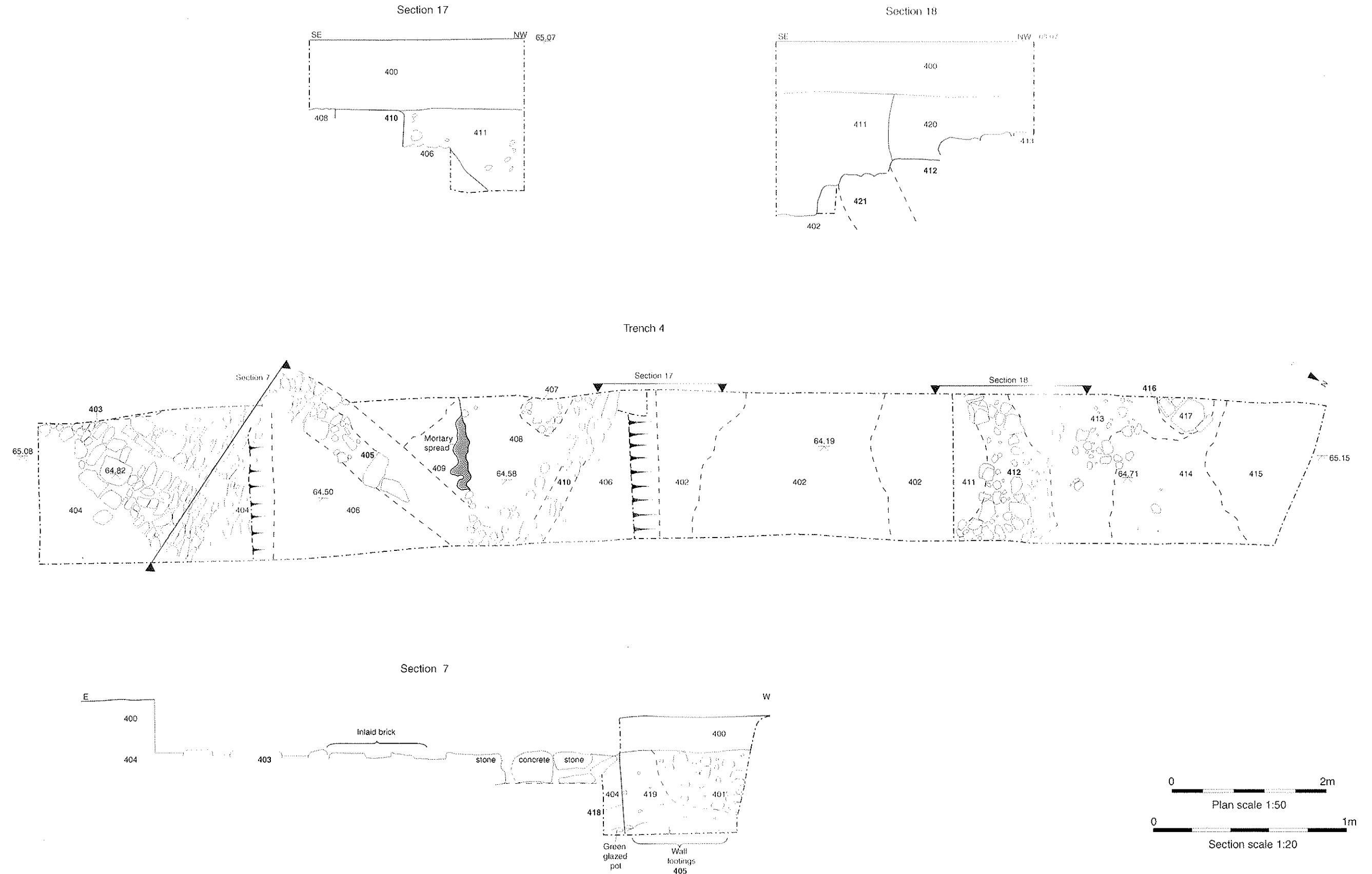


Figure 5: Trench 4, Plan and Sections

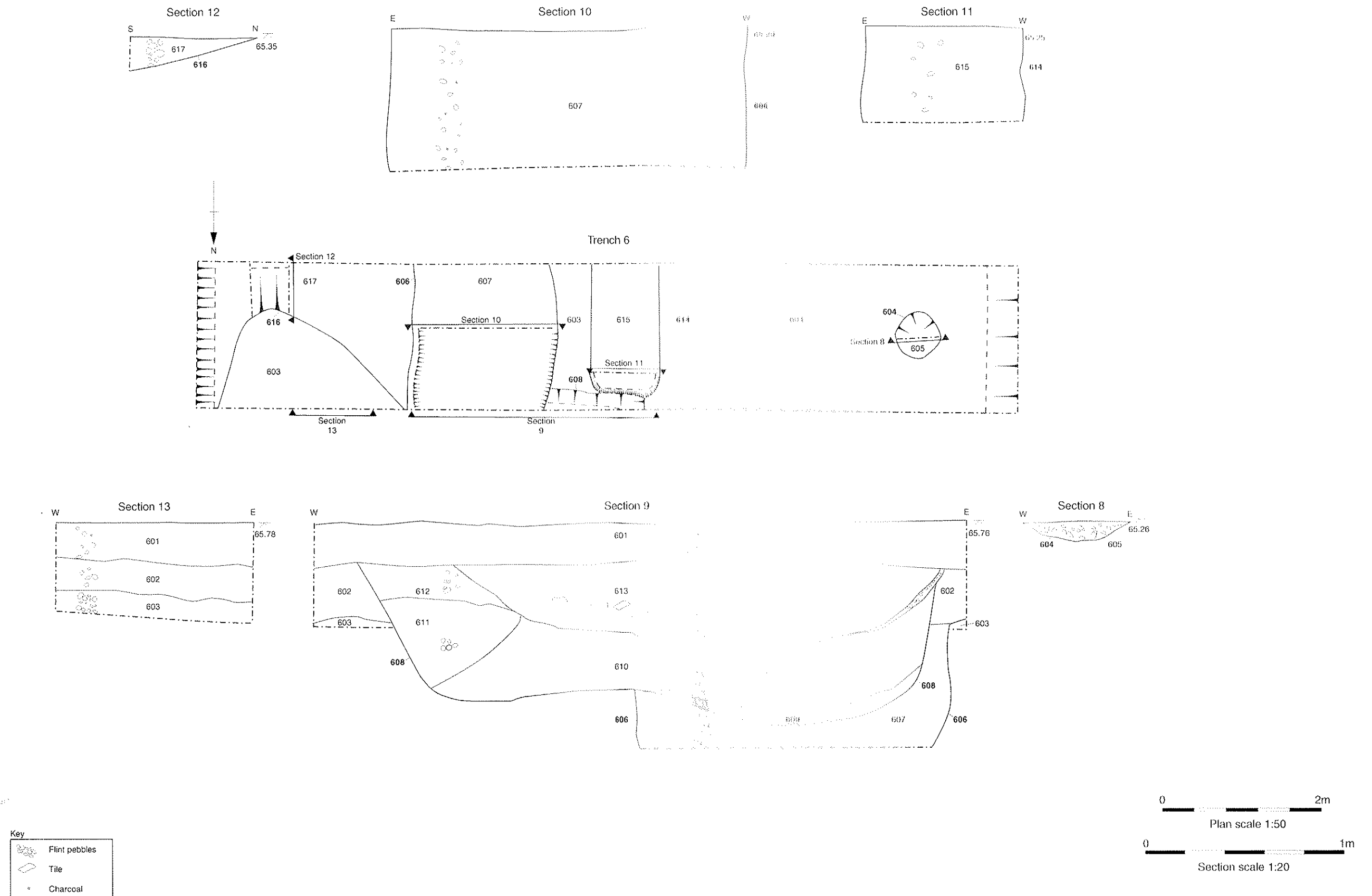


Figure 6: Trench 6, Plan and Sections



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