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Burford & Co.

16 Turl Street, Oxford

NGR SP 5140 0640

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Oxford Archaeological Unit

January 1999

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Date: *11/2/1999*

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Summary

In June 1998 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook a watching brief at 16 Turl Street, Oxford (NGR SP 5140 0640). No cut features were seen; extensively disturbed backfill containing post-medieval pottery and pieces of limestone was identified and recorded.

1 Introduction

The development proposal comprised the alteration and improvement of the kitchens at 16 Turl Street, which houses the Taj Mahal restaurant. One component of the improvements involved the excavation of a trench across the kitchen floor prior to the insertion of new subfloor ducting and ventilation. An archaeological watching brief was required as a condition of the planning permission granted under the Town and Country Planning Act, and in accordance with PPG 16.

The watching brief was commissioned by Burford & Co. and was undertaken in consultation with the Oxford Archaeological Advisory service.

2 Background (Fig. 1)

The development site is immediately to the south of the 13th century city wall, which runs approximately east-west across the northern side of the site. It was therefore thought possible that groundworks within the kitchen could impact upon any surviving elements of the city wall, and any associated structures.

The OAU undertook archaeological field evaluations at 15 Ship Street and 18 Broad Street, encountering structural remains circa 0.20 m below present ground surface. It was suggested that the owners of plots on the north side of Ship Street broke through the city wall during both the 16th and 17th centuries, in order to extend their properties. It was therefore felt that any remnants of the city wall may have been minimal.

3 Aims

The aims of the watching brief were to record any archaeological remains exposed on site during the course of the works to established standards (Wilkinson 1992), in order to secure the preservation by record of any archaeology, the presence and nature of which could not be established in advance.

4 Methodology

Separate inspection visits were made to the site by prior arrangement with the contractor. The reinforced concrete floor of the kitchen was broken out by pneumatic drill; digging then proceeded by hand until the requisite excavation depth of 1 m was reached.

Within the constraints imposed by health and safety considerations the deposits exposed were cleaned, inspected and recorded in plan, section and by colour slide and monochrome print photography. Written records were also made on proforma sheets.

Soil descriptions use *estimated* percentages based on the use of standard charts for the approximation of percentage of inclusion types in soil deposits.

5 Results (Figs 2 and 3)

One trench was excavated to a depth of 1 m from east to west across the kitchen floor; this revealed three deposits which were consistent along the trench, and to the contractor's cut-off point of 1 m depth.

- (1) – reinforced concrete, c. 0.20 m thick
- (2) – modern housebrick, rubble, sand and gravel varying between 0.25 m and 0.28 m thick.
- (3) – mid grey silty clay loam with 5% medium-coarse subangular gravelly silt and 2% charcoal, consistent to the base of excavation. This deposit produced all retrieved finds and also contained small-medium pieces of unworked limestone rubble.

6 Finds

Post-medieval Pottery

Thirty-eight small to medium fairly abraded sherds, green glazed with an orange fabric, were retrieved from deposit (3). All of these were dated to the 17th and 18th centuries.

Other Finds

Deposit (3) also produced twelve fragments of 17th/18th-century clay pipe; there were four bowl fragments and eight stem fragments, all of which were undecorated.

Four pieces of 17th/18th-century glass and a quantity of animal bone, mostly cow, pig and sheep, some of the larger bones of which bore butcher marks, were also retrieved.

7 Discussion

Deposit (3) was fairly mixed and characteristic of backfill; the finds it contained seemed to indicate domestic activity. The rubble seen could be remnants of the city wall, demolished when the owners of plots on the north side of Ship Street broke through the wall in order to extend their properties. However, the individual limestone pieces were fairly small and in the main appeared to be intact. Coupled with the range of finds retrieved, the rubble may also represent the remains of lean-to structures, built up against the south face of the wall. A similar situation was encountered during an archaeological evaluation at 18 Broad Street, a short distance to the west (OAU 1994), where *in situ* foundations were encountered which were interpreted as possibly being the foundations of lean-to structures, on this occasion built up against the north face of the city wall.

All finds retrieved span a fairly limited date range covering the 17th and 18th centuries; this may simply reflect the limited depth of the contractor's excavation. Preservation of earlier deposits/features could still be good at a greater depth.

References.

OAU 1994 Flagg, 18 Broad Street, Oxford. Archaeological Evaluation Report.

Wilkinson, D (ed) 1992 Oxford Archaeological Unit Field Manual. (First edition, August 1992).

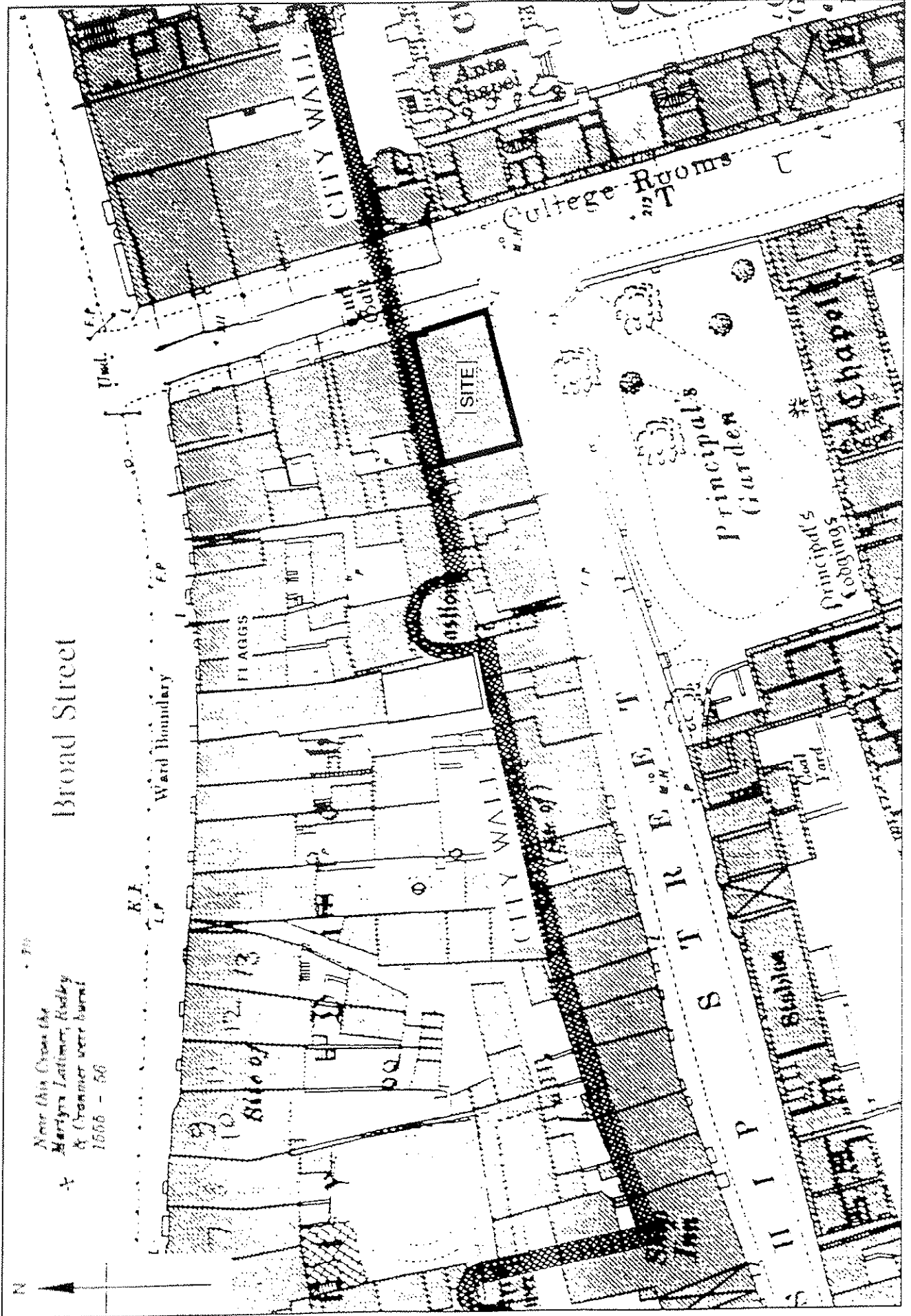


Figure 1: Location of site (taken from 1878 Ordnance Survey map)

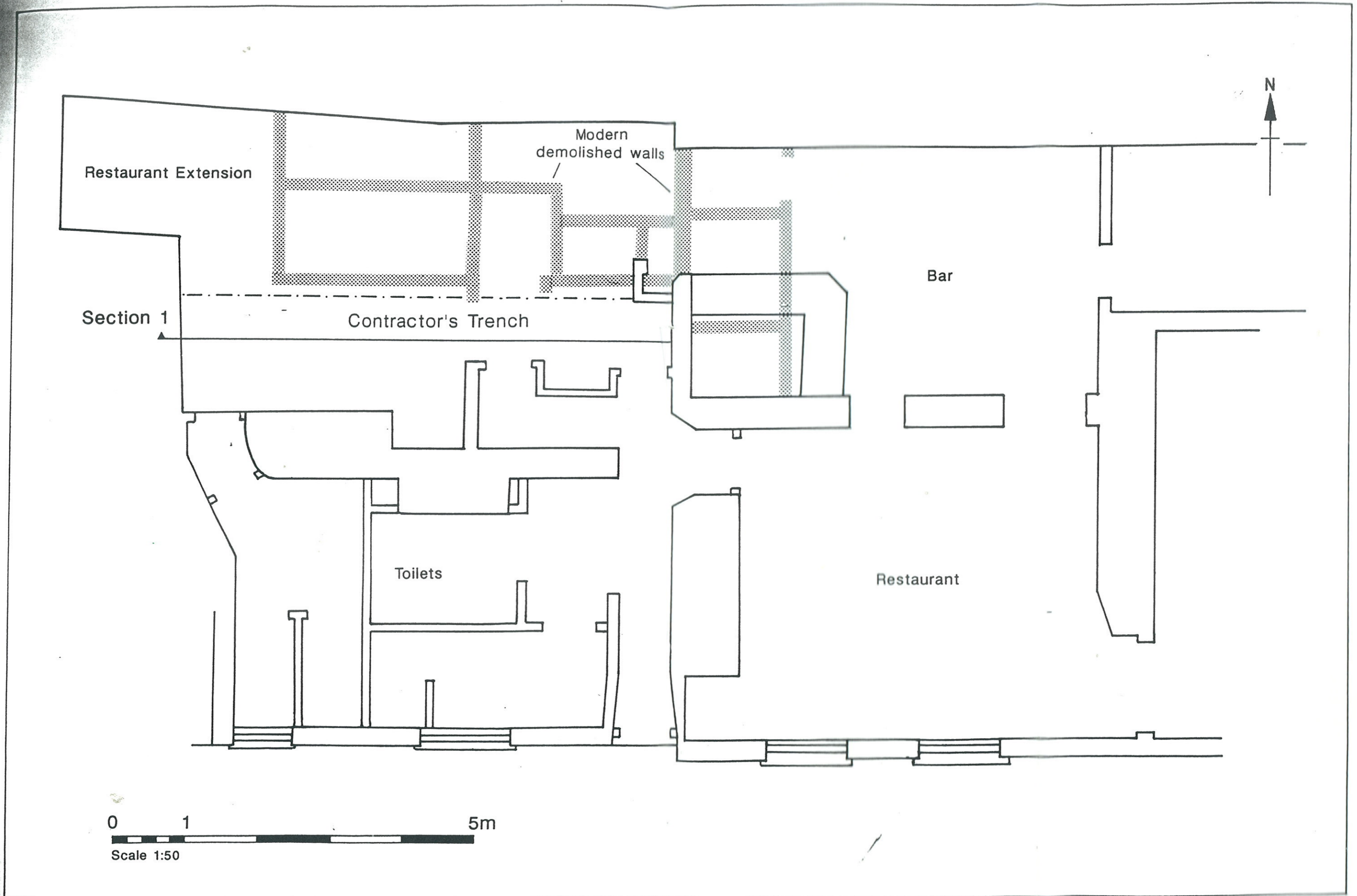


Figure 2: Trench and section location

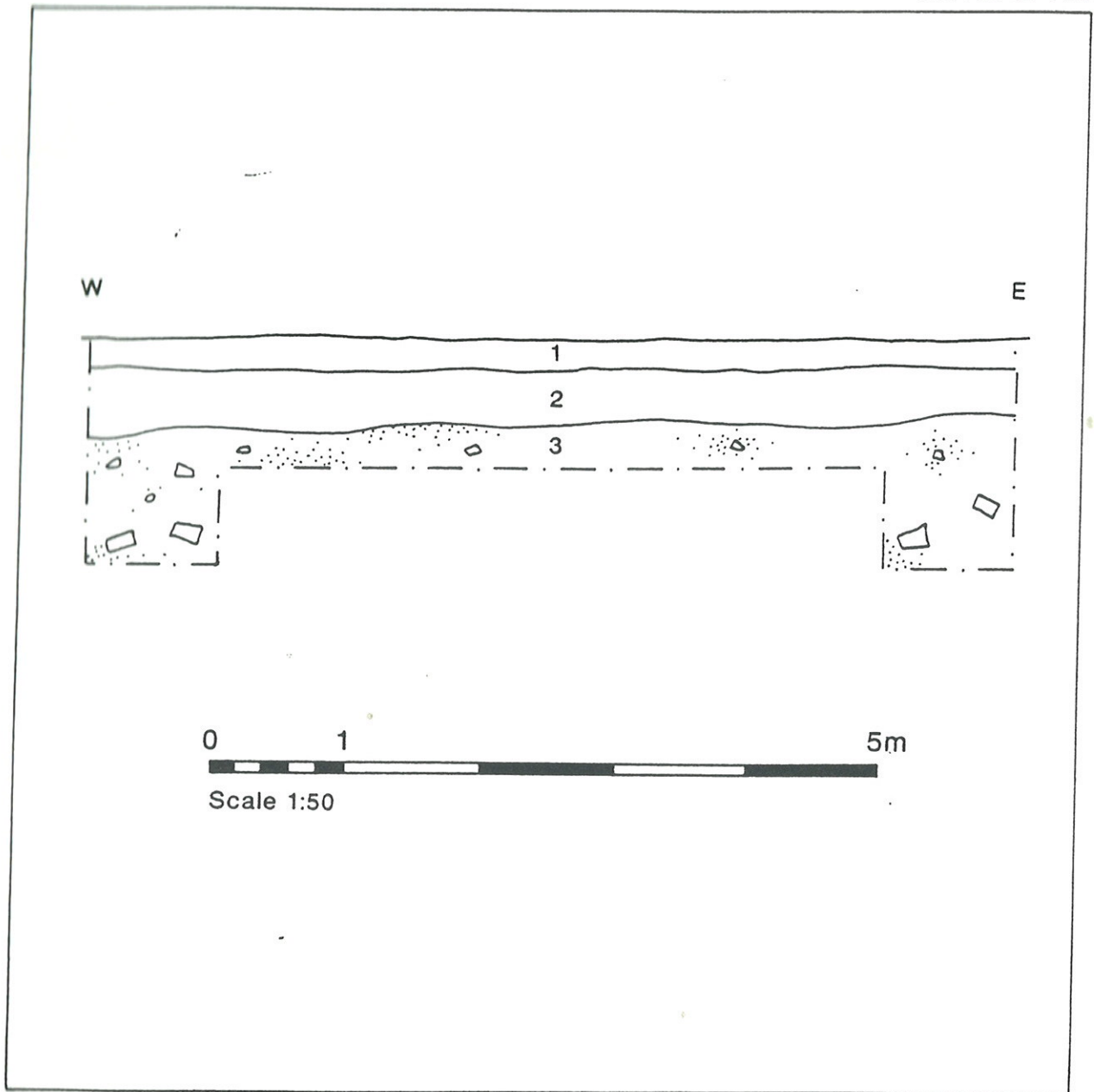


Figure 3: Section 1



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