

# Larkhill House Cemetery Road Abingdon Oxfordshire



## Archaeological Watching Brief Report



**Oxford Archaeology**

November 2004

**Client: ROK**

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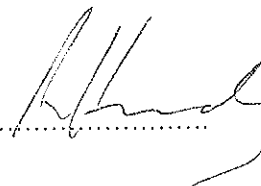
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Signed.....



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**Larkhill House, Cemetery Road,  
Abingdon, Oxfordshire**

NGR: SU 4866 9718

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## SUMMARY

*Between the 13th September and 13th October 2004 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Larkhill House, Cemetery Road, Abingdon, Oxfordshire (NGR: SU 4866 9718). The work was commissioned by the Barwick Property (Partnership) in advance of refurbishment of the existing building and construction of three new dwellings in the old car park. The watching brief revealed evidence of extensive truncation and ground reduction throughout the area with no significant archaeology observed.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 Between the 13th September and 19th October 2004 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Larkhill House, Cemetery Road, Abingdon, Oxfordshire (NGR: SU 4866 9718). The work was commissioned by Barwick Property (Partnership) in respect of a planning application for refurbishment of the existing building and construction of three new dwellings in the old car park. (Planning Application No. 03/0023/FUL).

1.1.2 A project brief (OCAAS 2004) was set by, and a Written Scheme of Investigation (OA 2004) was agreed with, Hugh Coddington the Deputy County Archaeologist for Oxfordshire.

### 1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site lies on level ground on the south-eastern edge of the centre of Abingdon (Fig. 1). The site is bounded to the east and south-east by residential properties, to the south, west and north-west by a "brown field" site and to the north and north-east by a cemetery. The underlying geology is Kimmeridge clay with an interface of overlying second terrace gravels. The area of the intrusive groundworks was an open carpark and driveway surfaced with concrete and tarmac covering an area of 670 m<sup>2</sup> at a level of approximately 56 m OD.

### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA 2004) and an amended and updated version is reproduced below.

1.3.2 The area 200 m to the north of the development site has produced archaeological deposits dating from the Neolithic to the Anglo-Saxon period, particularly towards the western end of the second terrace gravel. Excavations were undertaken in this area by OA in 1990 (OAU 1990), Abingdon and Area Archaeological and Historical Society (AAAHS) in 1994 (Ainslie R, 1999, *Abingdon Spring Road Cemetery*, South Midlands Archaeology 29-30) and OA in 2000 (Publication forthcoming, extracts published; Allen T, 2001, *Abingdon Spring Road Cemetery*, South Midlands Archaeology, 31, 55).

- 1.3.3 These excavations have established the presence of a scatter of prehistoric flintwork across this area. Pits dating to the Neolithic period have been found along with postholes that might form part of a timber circle. Within other pits a Bronze Age crouched burial and a bucket urn have been found. Iron Age burials, a child and two young adults, have also been revealed. It is possible that these are attached to an Iron Age settlement but given the mass of small pits and post holes across the area, it has been difficult to identify individual structures. There appears to have been activity across this area during the Romano-British period with linear ditches, pits and a rectangular post structure. An Anglo-Saxon SFB was also revealed. All these features had been truncated to some extent by medieval ploughing.
- 1.3.4 On a 1:10,000 OS map of the area dated 1979, the site of the three new dwellings is located on the edge of large industrial premises, now demolished and forming the "brown field" site noted in paragraph 1.2.1. Larkhill House was formerly part of the office buildings for the MG motor works.

## 2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the development area.
- 2.1.2 To identify and record the extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains, if any, in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

### 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The ground work consisted of three phases of operation, the excavation of the southern half of the footings for the new dwellings, the excavation of the northern half of the footings for the new dwellings and the excavation of the service trenches.
- 2.2.2 Site visits were made during each phase of work in order to monitor and record the stratigraphy exposed.
- 2.2.3 A plan of the extent of the excavations showing the location of the sections was drawn at a scale of 1:100 (Fig.2), while the sample sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. The excavations and the sections were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (OAU 1992).

### 3 RESULTS

#### 3.1 Description of deposits

##### *Sections 1 and 2 (Fig. 3)*

- 3.1.1 Within the deepest excavation (Section 1) a natural tenacious blue-grey clay (5) was reached at a depth of 1.4 m below current ground level. This was overlaid by a 0.5 m thick layer of a tenacious yellow brown clay and gravel (4), a natural alluvial deposit. Sealing this was a 0.4 m thick layer of fine gravels (3), a deposit of terrace gravels. Within Section 1 this was directly overlaid by a 0.25 m thick layer of redeposited soil (2), a layer of modern made ground, which in turn was overlaid by a 0.15 m thick spread of mixed redeposited gravels (1), another layer of modern made ground.
- 3.1.2 Within the area of Section 2, layer 3 was directly overlaid by a 0.35 m deep layer of mixed soil and gravel (6), representing a layer of modern made ground.

##### *Sections 3 and 4 (Fig. 3)*

- 3.1.3 In both these sections a layer of tenacious olive-grey clay (7), in excess of 0.5 m in depth, was reached at 0.35 m below the current ground level. This is an alluvial deposit tipping down towards the east. This was sealed by a 0.15 m thick layer of the modern made ground (2), which was overlaid by a 0.2 m thick layer of modern made ground, a continuation of deposit (6).

##### *Section 5 (Fig. 3)*

- 3.1.4 The layer of tenacious yellow-brown clay and gravel (4) was reached at a depth of 0.7 m below ground level. This was directly overlaid by a 0.35 m deep layer of modern made ground (2), composed of redeposited soils and gravels. This was sealed by a 0.25 m thick layer of hardcore (8), the base for the modern tarmac surface (9).

#### 3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 Find were recovered by context during the course of the evaluation. All the finds recovered were of 19th and 20th century building materials, principally brick, and were evaluated on site but were not retained.

#### 3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

### 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The results of the watching brief show that the site had been subject to large scale ground reduction. Within the development site this had truncated the original stratigraphy down onto the natural clays and gravel, completely removing the medieval plough soil noted during excavations in the area. Any post-medieval deposits, other than deep lying foundations and culverts had also been truncated. This probably occurred during the demolition and removal of the industrial premises.

The depth of this reduction is unknown and may have been such that any archaeological features surviving cut into the top of the natural may also have been removed.

- 4.1.2 No significant archaeological deposits or features were observed during the course of the watching brief but whether this is due to the absence of such features or their subsequent removal is unknown.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i> Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	Layer	0.0 m - 0.18 m	Layer of redeposited gravel and soil, made ground	-	C20th
2	Layer	0.2 m - 0.4 m	Redeposited and buried soils, made ground	Brick	C20th
3	Layer	0.4 m - 0.75 m	Natural gravel	-	-
4	Layer	0.75 m - 1.4 m	Natural clay/gravel mix	-	-
5	Layer	1.4 m - >1.7 m	Natural clay	-	-
6	Layer	0.0 m - 0.3 m	Made ground	-	C20th
7	Layer	0.4 m - >0.7 m	Clay alluvium	-	-
8	Layer	0.1 m - 0.35 m	Hardcore	-	C20th
9	Surface	0.0 m - 0.1 m	Modern Tarmac	-	C20th

## APPENDIX 2 REFERENCES

- Ainslie R, 1999 *Abingdon Spring Road Cemetery*, South Midlands Archaeology
- Allen T, 2001 *Abingdon Spring Road Cemetery*, South Midlands Archaeology
- IFA, 1992 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*
- OA, 2002 *Larkhill House, Cemetery Road, Abingdon, Oxfordshire; Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*
- OA, 2004 *Larkhill House, Cemetery Road, Abingdon, Oxfordshire; Written Scheme of Investigation*
- OAU, 1990 *Spring Road Cemetery, Abingdon, Oxfordshire; Archaeological Evaluation Report*
- OAU, 1992 *Field Manual (ed. Wilkinson D)*
- OCAAS, 2004 *Larkhill House, Cemetery Road, Abingdon: Design Brief for Archaeological Watching Brief*

## APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

**Site name:** Larkhill House, Cemetery Road, Abingdon, Oxfordshire



**Site code:** ABLHC 04

**Grid reference:** SU 4866 9718

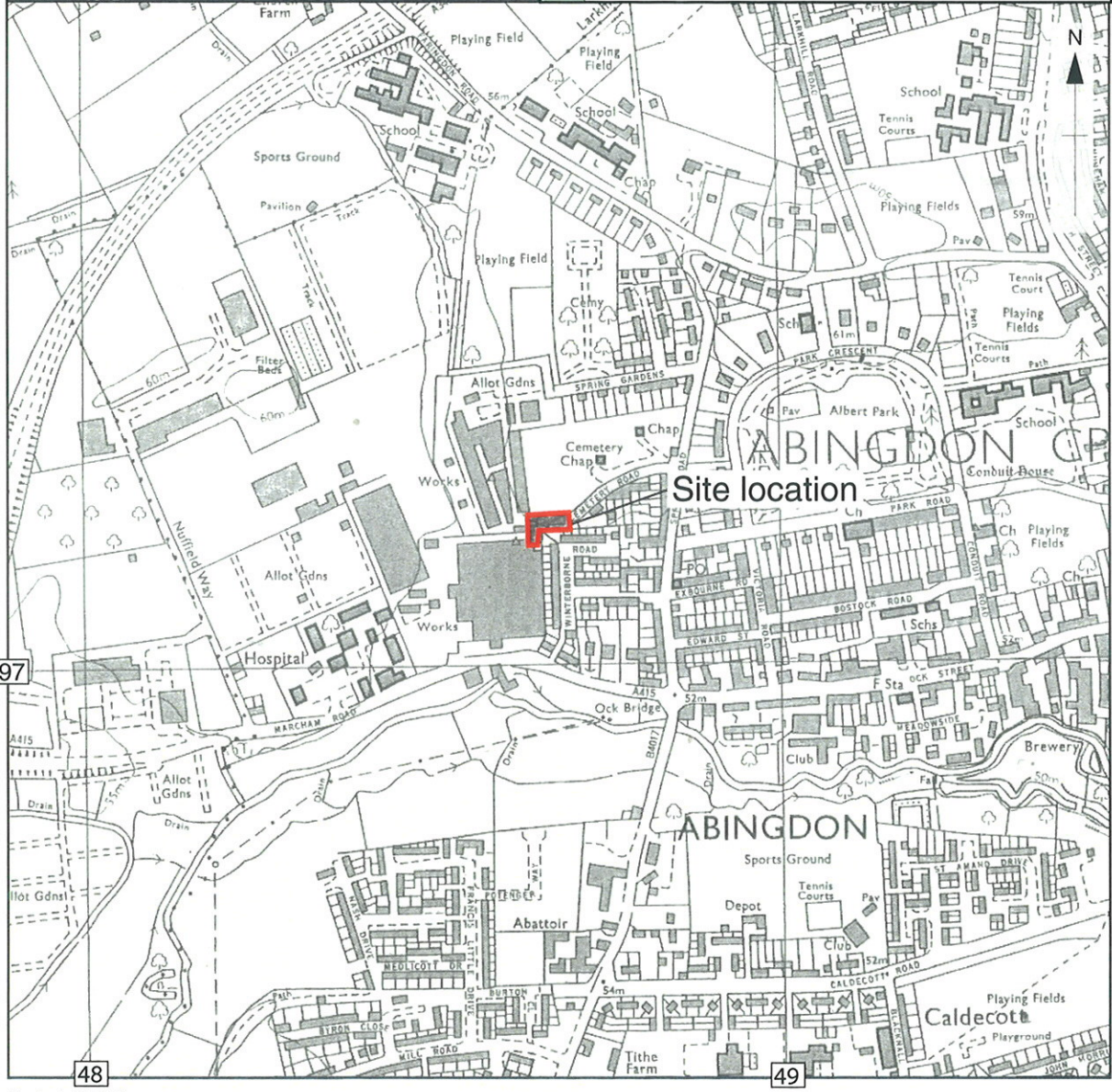
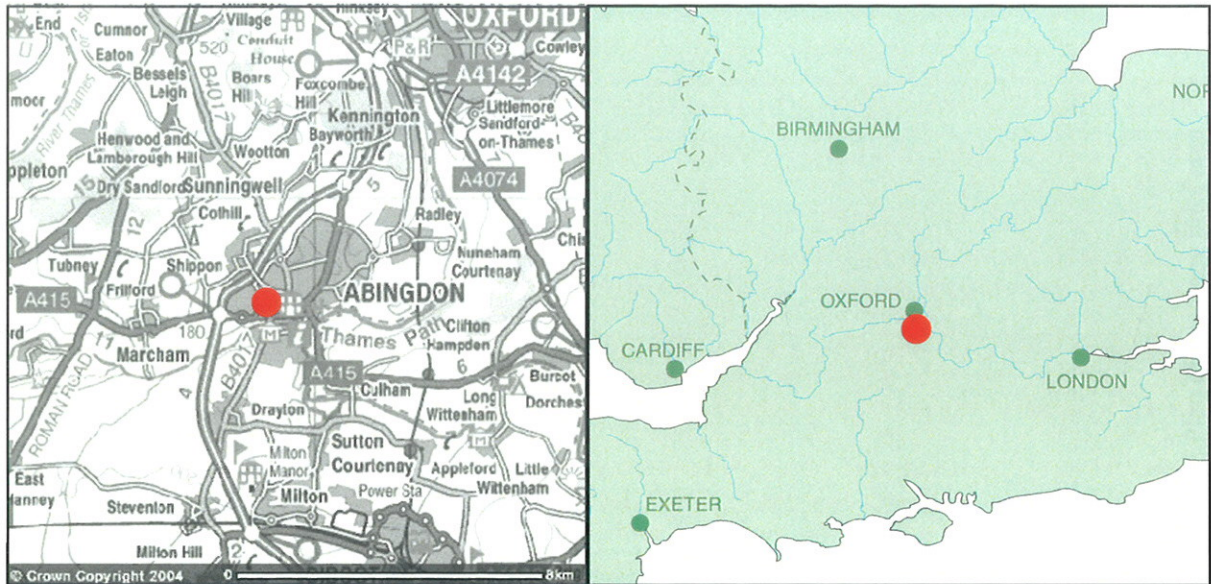
**Type of watching brief:** Monitoring of foundation and service trenches excavations.

**Date and duration of project:** 13.09.04 to 22.10.04, 25 days (6 site visits)

**Area of site:** 670 m<sup>2</sup>

**Summary of results:** Extensive truncation and ground reduction throughout the site, no significant archaeology observed

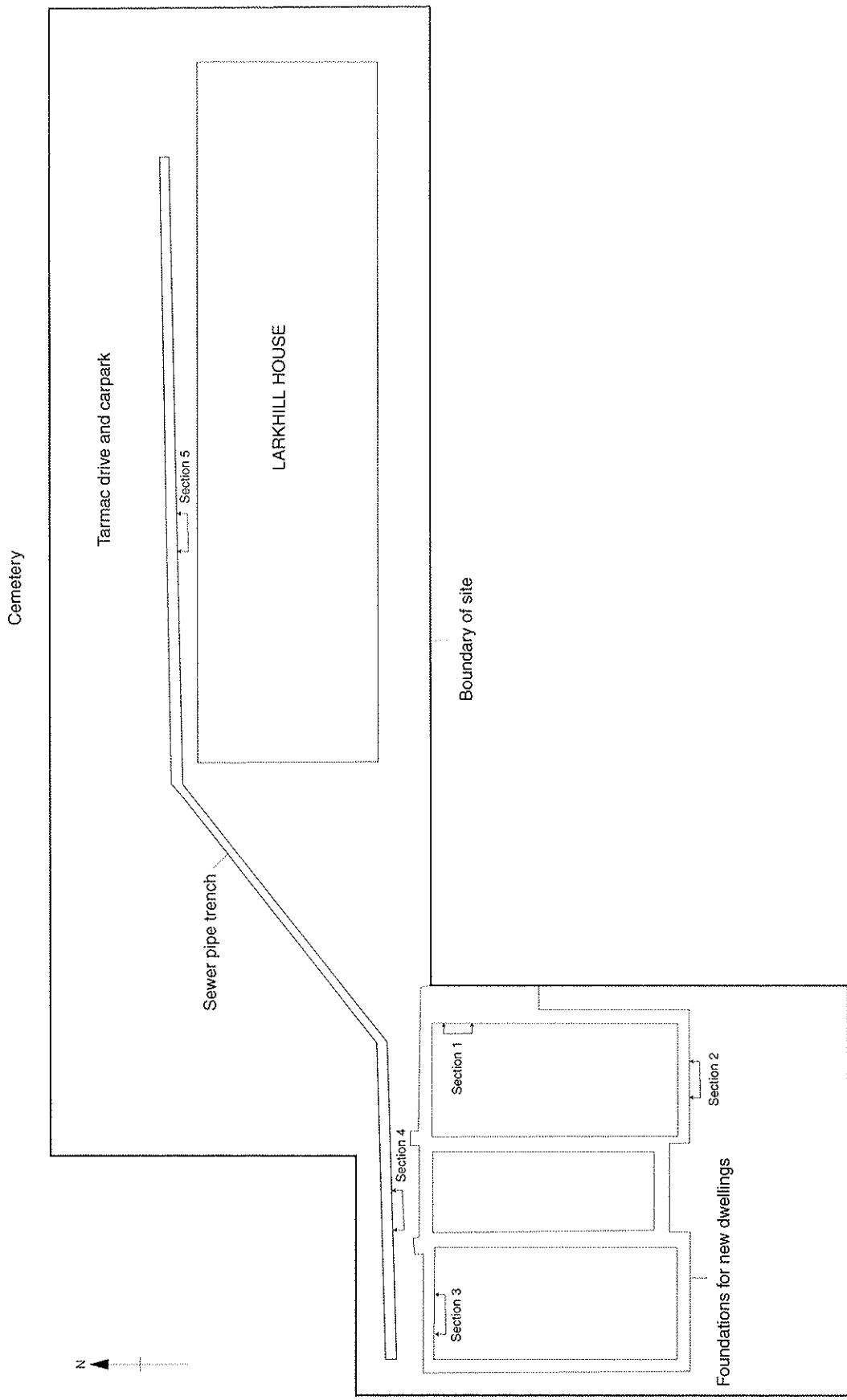
**Location of archive:** The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course.



Scale 1:10,000

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Figure 1: Site location



1:250

Figure 2: Plan of watching brief area

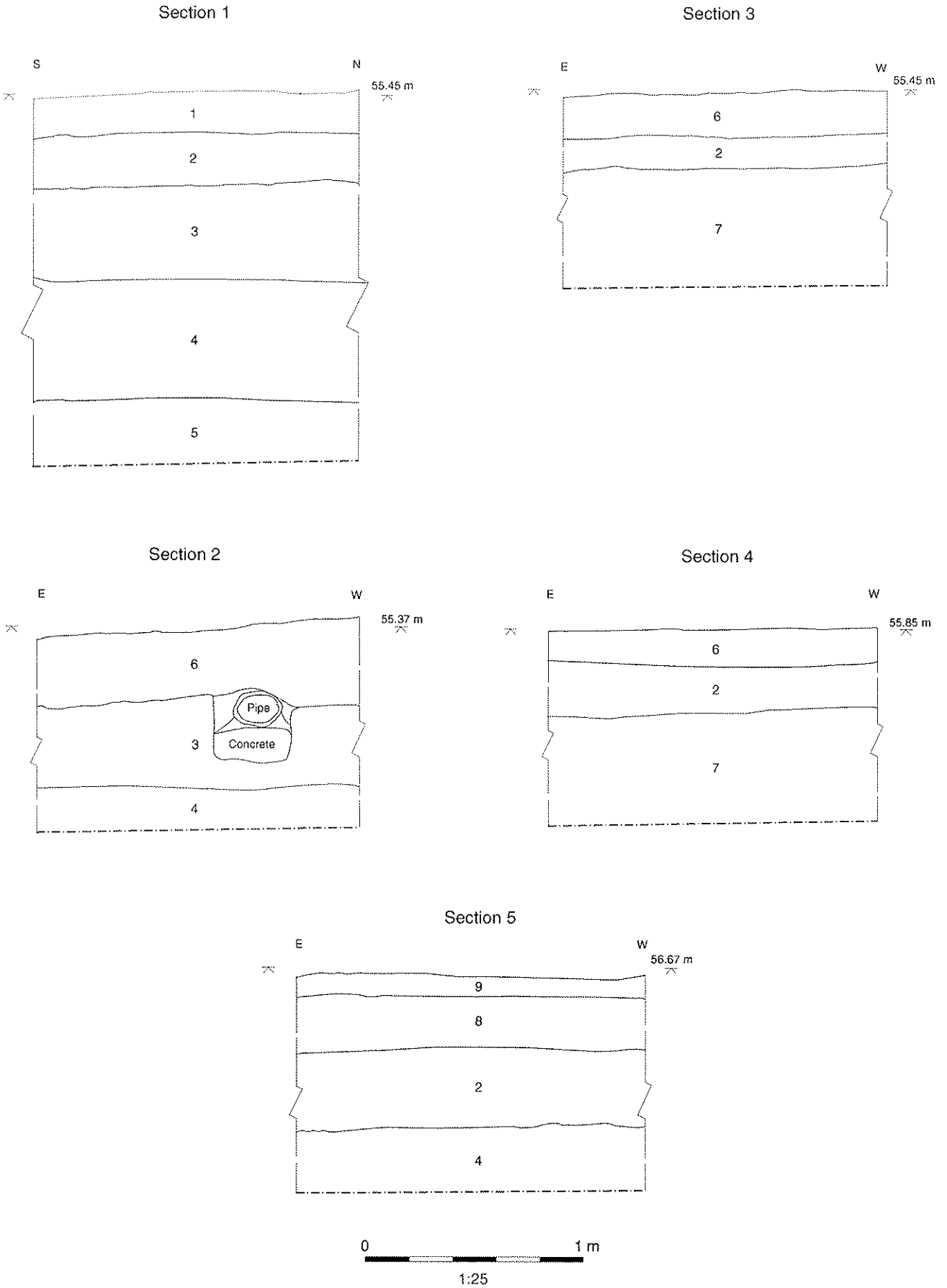
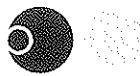


Figure 3: Sections



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