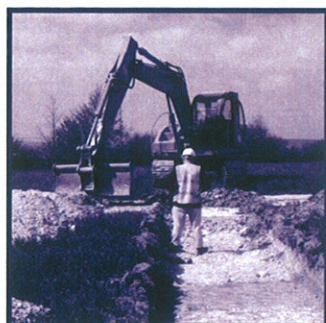


Land at Dunnock Way
Blackbird Leys
Oxford
New Primary Care Centre



Archaeological Evaluation Report



Oxford Archaeology

14th April 2003

**Client name: Gray Baynes & Shew/
Oxford City Primary Care Trust**

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

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SUMMARY

In April 2003, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation in Blackbird Leys, Oxford, on Land at Dunnock Way (NGR SP 5561 0240). The work was undertaken on behalf of Gray, Baynes and Shew Architects for the Oxford City Primary Care Trust.

The evaluation revealed a sequence of alluvial clay layers above the natural, associated with the nearby Northfield Brook. An undated turf line/ground horizon was identified in two trenches, sealed beneath further alluvial clay layers. Areas of modern disturbance and intrusion relating to the construction of the surrounding Housing Estate were noted across the site.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In April 2003, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation in Blackbird Leys, Oxford on Land at Dunnock Way (NGR SP 5561 0240) on behalf of Gray, Baynes and Shew, Architects of Oxford.
- 1.1.2 The evaluation was undertaken in respect of a planning application for the construction of a new medical centre for Oxford City Primary Care Trust (Planning Ref: 02/2027/FUL).
- 1.1.3 A brief for the evaluation was set by Oxford City's Archaeological Advisor, Brian Durham, who requested a 2% sample of the development site to be evaluated by trial trenching to inform on the survival of archaeological remains, prior to development.
- 1.1.4 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how Oxford Archaeology (OA) would implement the requirements of the City Archaeologist (OA 2003).

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The development site (Fig. 1) is located on Dunnock Way beside Northfield Brook, which runs through the middle of the historic parish of Sandford on Thames (NGR: SP 5561 0240). The site is bordered to the north by a public footpath, to the west by a car park and retail outlet and to the south by Dunnock Way. The site lies at c 62 m OD.
- 1.2.2 The underlying geology of the site is Flood Plain Drift, comprising Terrace and River Gravels overlying Oxford Clay.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 Though there are no known archaeological find spots from Dunnock Way itself, archaeological investigations by OA at Windale School to the west in 1994 revealed a ditch of prehistoric date and a Roman trackway over fifty metres in length (OAU 1994b).

- 1.3.2 Evidence of a buried soil horizon of probable Roman date was found sealed within alluvial deposits that overlay earlier alluvial deposits associated with the Northfield Brook; these contained preserved waterlogged deposits.
- 1.3.3 The buried soil was believed to be associated with land clearance, arguably for the expansion of the known Roman pottery production site to the west. Finds from the site comprised predominantly Roman pottery sherds of mixed dates. These are likely to have been re-deposited through the effects of land clearance, testimony of which was provided by numerous burnt tree holes. (OAU 1994a).

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. Attention was to be given to remains of all periods, including evidence for past environments, with provision for environmental sampling included.
- 2.1.2 A specific aim was to determine whether there was evidence of human activity on the early flood plain in this area.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the investigation.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork, methods and recording

- 3.1.1 The field evaluation originally proposed the excavation of two machine-dug trenches, each measuring 30 m long by 1.6 m wide. However, to avoid a large mound of modern dumped material, the southern-most trench was split into two and the western part moved to the south by approximately 13.6 m to become Trench 3. (Fig. 2).
- 3.1.2 The trenches were excavated under archaeological supervision by a mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket. 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 detailed down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

3.2 Finds

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

3.3 Palaeo-environmental evidence

- 3.3.1 No samples suitable for environmental analysis were identified.

4 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

4.1 Description of deposits

Trench 1

4.1.1 Trench 1 (Figs 3 and 4) was 30 m in length and 1.6 m wide and was orientated N-S. It was excavated to a depth of between 1.2 m and 1.4 m, down to the top of the natural geology. The deposits formed a series of clay layers, probably laid down in the flooding of the Northfield Brook. The lowest deposit was 113, this was an outcropping of the natural underlying limestone, which formed the end point of machining and was only seen in the northern half of Trench 1. Above this were a series of clay layers 112 to 106.

4.1.2 Layers 112 and 107, which immediately overlay the limestone, had large amounts of degraded natural within them. These layers also contained decayed organic material including rotted roots; these could be relatively recent.

4.1.3 Over these layers were a series of light reddish-brown and grey clay alluvial layers (111, 110, 109, 108, and 106). Overlying these and running for the entire length of the trench was layer 105, a distinct deposit of dark organic material with frequent fragments of wood and frequent snail shells within it. Overlying this were layers 104 and 103, two more layers of clay and then layers 102 (a former topsoil) and 101 the present topsoil and turf. All the layers were sterile and no archaeological features were seen in the trench. There was no sign of any plough disturbance.

4.1.4 *Trench 2*

4.1.5 Trench 2 (Figs 3 and 4) was 12.5 m in length and 1.6 m wide and was orientated E-W. The trench was excavated to a depth of 1.6 m at which point machining stopped due to health and safety reasons. The lowest layer reached was 207, a mix of degraded natural limestone and clay; it was taken as the top of natural or very close to it. The layers above this were roughly equivalent to those in Trench 1. Layers 206 and 205 were broad clay layers. Above 205 was 204, an organic layer, almost certainly the same as layer 105, although not as distinct as that in Trench 1. Above this were 203 and 204, two clay layers with a diffuse horizon between them. Above this was the topsoil and turf, 201. As with Trench 1 the layers were very sterile with no archaeological features or finds. There was no sign of plough disturbance.

Trench 3

4.1.6 Trench 3 (Figs 3 and 4) was 10 m in length and 1.6 m wide. It comprised the western part of the original Trench 2 moved south by around 13.6 m to avoid mounds of modern spoil. Again a layer of orange clay, 301, similar to those found in Trenches 1 and 2 was seen along the southern side of the trench, although the majority of this deposit was cut away by a large modern cut 303, filled with modern building debris 302. Over this feature was made ground 300, which contained modern bricks and other debris under turf. The large modern cut was machine excavated to a depth of 1.7 m before filling with ground water and being backfilled for health and safety reasons. Given the depth of the natural geology in both trenches 1 and 2, it is

reasonable to assume that the modern cut truncated the clay alluvial layers to this level at least. Again, no archaeology was detected in the trench.

4.2 Finds

- 4.2.1 No finds were recovered from any of the excavated deposits. Modern building material in Trench 3 was not retained.

5 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 5.1.1 The stratigraphy of the site was very well preserved in Trenches 1 and 2 although modern intrusion (303) had removed virtually all layers in Trench 3, and possibly over much of the western part of the site. There was no indication of plough disturbance in any of the trenches.

5.2 Overall interpretation

Summary of results

- 5.2.1 The sequence of deposits was fairly uniform over the whole site, the only disturbance being the late feature 303 in Trench 3. The underlying geology was an irregular limestone (113), which had degraded and mixed with the overlying alluvial clays to form the lowest deposits (107, 112, 207). The natural slopes very gradually upwards from the north to the south away from Northfield Brook, which runs along the north edge of the site.
- 5.2.2 A sequence of clay alluvial layers lies immediately above the natural and degraded natural. There were no archaeological features or finds in any of these layers. A layer of humic, organic material (105, 204) was found to extend over both Trench 1 and Trench 2. It was most concentrated at the north of site in Trench 1 and became more dissipated within Trench 2, again moving away from the line of the Northfield Brook. Above this were further clay layers and the topsoil and turf.
- 5.2.3 Trench 3 was very disturbed by a large modern cut, 303, which was apparently dug as a pit to dispose of modern building waste from the construction of the housing estate. The full extent of this feature was not found but it may extend over much of the western side of the site. There were no archaeological features or finds in any of the upper layers

Significance

- 5.2.4 The site should be viewed in the light of previous excavation, evaluation and watching brief results to the west. Firstly, on the site of Windale First School, Roman pottery was recovered from a similar sequence of alluvial clays and gravels, and a single organic rich layer, to the south of the Northfield Brook, was located as was the case with the site here.
- 5.2.5 Secondly, excavations around 200 m to the west of Windale School revealed Roman occupation and pottery kilns. The evidence from Dunnock Way, however, suggests

that the broad sequence of alluvial and organic soils formed over the whole of the area under archaeological investigation, though the absence of finds from this site indicates that it lies well away from previous occupation.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Ctxt</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Thick. (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Finds</i>
1						
	100					-
	101	Layer	1.6	0.3	Turf and topsoil	-
	102	Layer	1.6	0.2-0.25	Subsoil	-
	103	Layer	1.6	0.06-0.08	Orange clay, alluvial.	-
	104	Layer	1.6	0.03-0.07	Grey clay, alluvial	-
	105	Layer	1.6	0.04-0.1	Purplish brown organic layer.	-
	106	Layer	1.6	0.12-0.30	Orange and grey clay, alluvial	-
	107	Layer	1.6	0.2-0.29	Degraded limestone and clay.	-
	108	Layer	1.6	0.2	Pale grey sandy clay	-
	109	Layer	1.6	0.05-0.07	Grey clay	-
	110	Layer	1.6	0.21-0.22	Mid orange alluvial clay	-
	111	Layer	1.6	0.22-0.23	Grey and orange clay	-
	112	Layer	1.6	0.07+	Mixed degraded natural and clay.	-
	113	Nat.	1.6		Natural underlying limestone.	-
2						
	200					-
	201	Layer	1.6	0.34	Turf and topsoil	-
	202	Layer	1.6	0.1	Orange clay	-
	203	Layer	1.6	0.04-0.06	Brownish grey clay, alluvial.	-
	204	Layer	1.6	0.04-0.07	Purplish brown organic layer	-
	205	Layer	1.6	0.38-0.42	Mixed orange and grey clay.	-
	206	Layer	1.6	0.32-0.40	Sandy clay layer	-
	207	Nat	1.6		Degraded limestone, top of the natural geology	-
3						
	300	Layer	1.6	0.22	Topsoil and modern landscaping	-

	301	Layer	1.6	up to 0.5	Clay layer seen in Tr 1 and 2-	-
	302	Fill	1.6+	1.7+	C20 construction debris	-
	303	Cut	1.6+	1.7+	Not bottomed. C20 rubbish pit.	-

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OAU 1994a *Windale First School, Blackbird Leys, Oxford Archaeological Evaluation Report*

OAU 1994b *Windale First School, Blackbird Leys, Oxford Archaeological Watching Brief Report*

OA 1992 *Fieldwork Manual* (1st Edition, ed D Wilkinson)

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Land at Dunmoek Way, Blackbird Leys, Oxford

Site code: OXDUN 03

Grid reference: SP 5561 0240

Type of evaluation: 2-trench field evaluation, revised to 3 trenches owing to on site access problems

Date and duration of project: April 8th and 9th and 10th 2003

Area of site: 0.1 ha

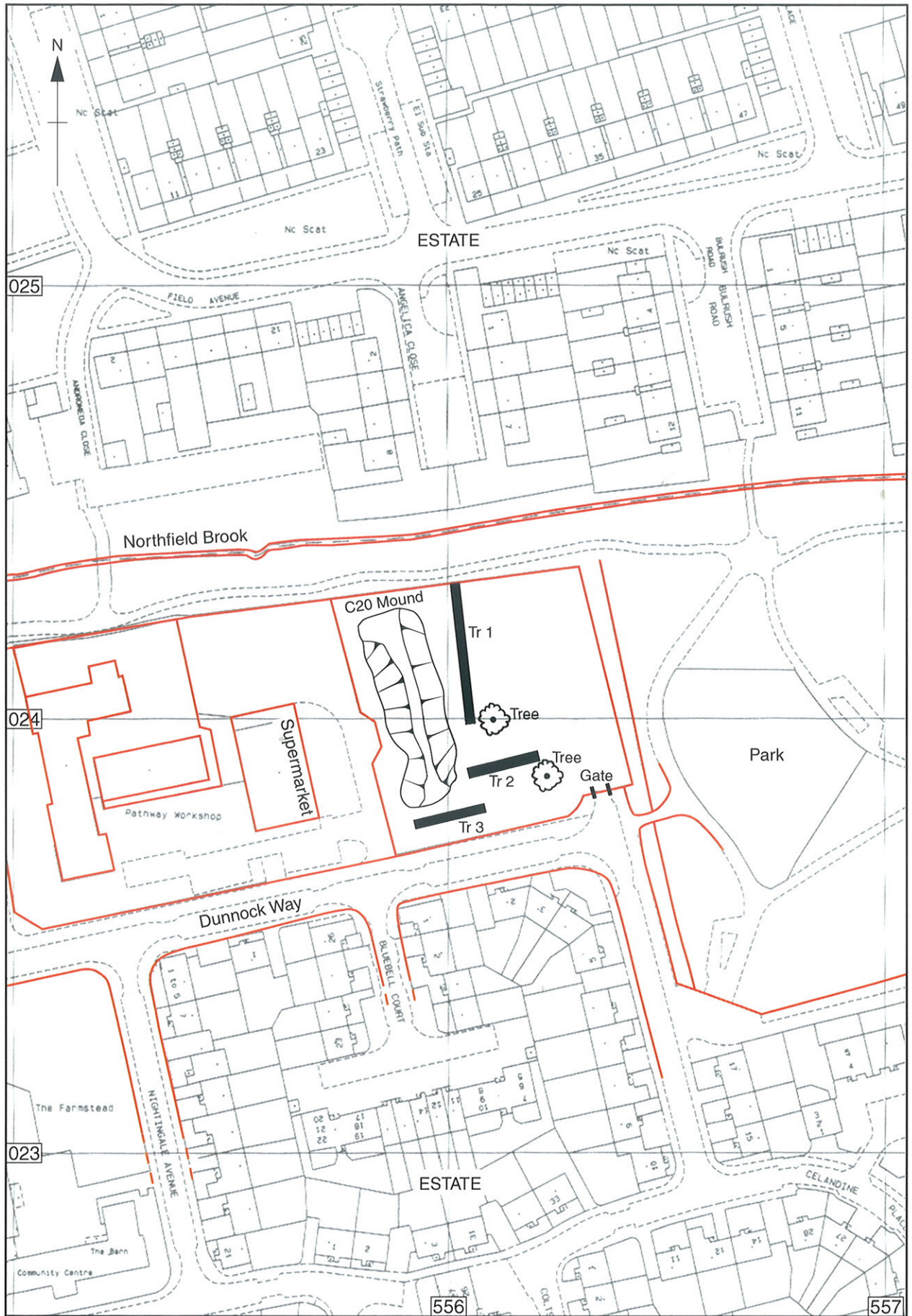
Summary of results: A sequence of alluvial clay layers above the natural, associated with the nearby Northfield Brook. An undated turf line/ground horizon was identified in two trenches, sealed beneath further alluvial clay layers. Areas of modern disturbance and intrusion relating to the construction of the surrounding Housing Estate were noted across the site.

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.



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Figure 1: Site location



Scale 1:1250

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Figure 2: Trench locations

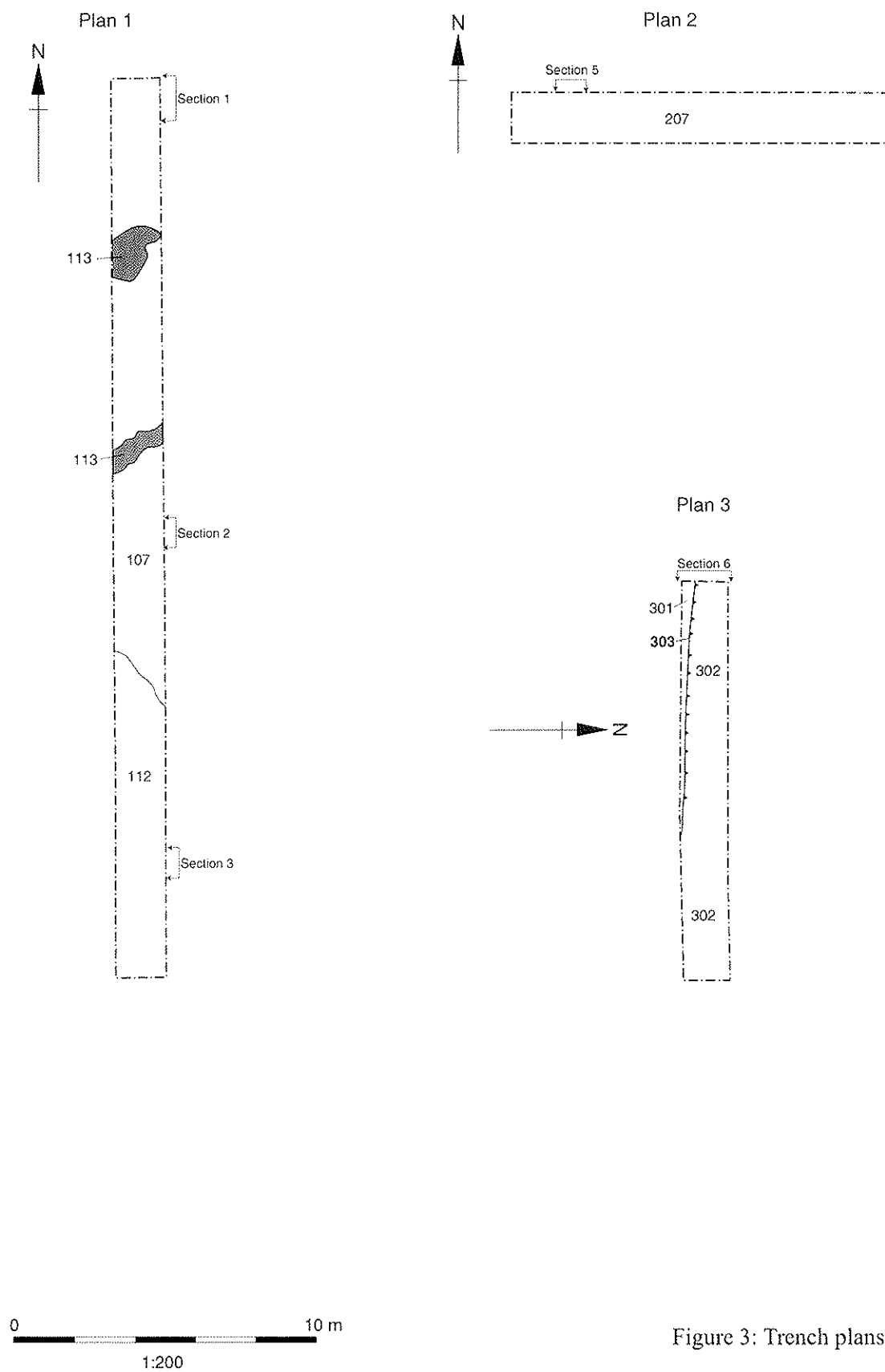
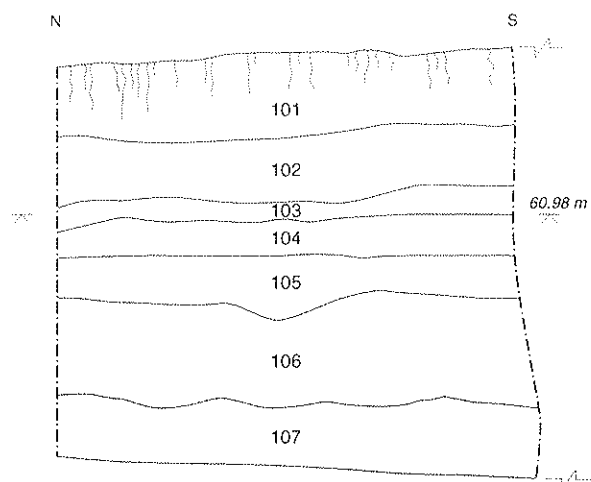
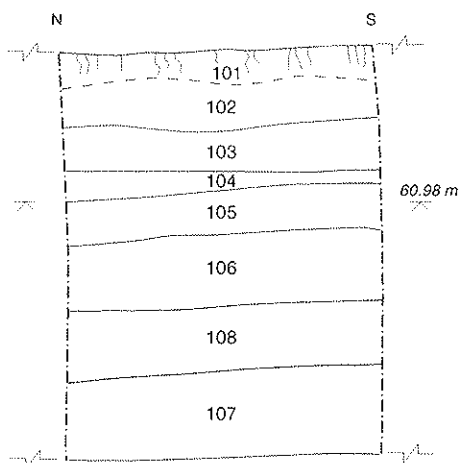


Figure 3: Trench plans

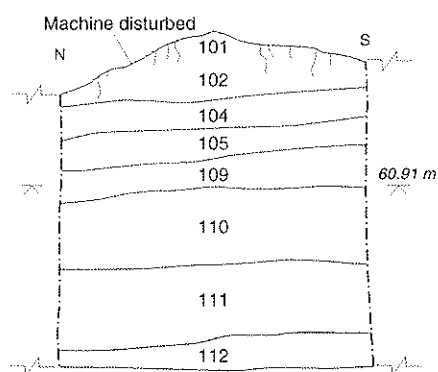
Trench 1
Section 1



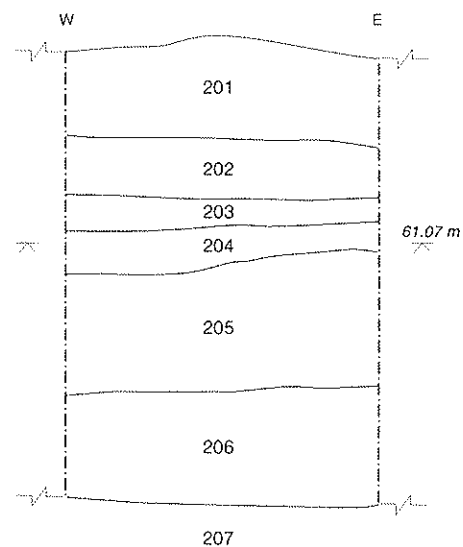
Trench 1
Section 2



Trench 1
Section 3



Trench 2
Section 5



Trench 3
Section 6

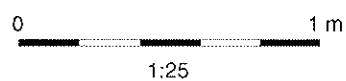
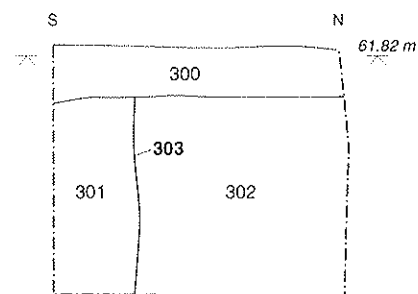
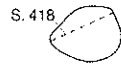


Figure 4: Sections



Section line and number



Interior section line and number



Limit of excavation



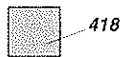
Sondage / Interior limit of excavation



Fill line and number



Cut line and number



Structure number



Unclear boundary



Stones



Limestone



Hachures indicate inclination of slope
inside excavated feature



Levels



Grid point



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