

WARGRAVE (BR)

Barton Willmore Planning Partnership for Thirston Homes (Western) Limited

53 High Street, Wargrave, Berkshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

NGR SU 786 786

planning reference F/1999/0133

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November 2000

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October 2000

53 High Street, Wargrave

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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SUMMARY

The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) carried out a field evaluation at 53 High Street, Wargrave on behalf of The Barton Willmore Planning Partnership for Thirlstone Homes (Western) Limited. The evaluation revealed a single post medieval pit, and a number of modern features, including a large soakaway.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In October 2000 OAU was commissioned by The Barton Willmore Planning Partnership to carry out a field evaluation at 53 High Street, Wargrave (Figure 1) on behalf of Thirlstone Homes (Western) Limited. The evaluation was in respect of a planning application for the construction of three houses (Planning Application No. F/1999/0133). The work was undertaken to a brief set by and a WSI agreed with Babbie on behalf of Wokingham District Council. The development site is situated to the rear of the plot of number 53 High Street, and is approximately 0.07 hectares in area.

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site lies on Upper Chalk, at 40m above OD, and is situated on land which had been partly occupied by a garage, but which had been recently cleared.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The original settlement at Wargrave was south-west of the modern settlement centred on St. Mary's Church. However, following its granting to the Bishops of Winchester in 1199, the village was moved to its current position and given borough status in 1218. The application site lies in the core of the planned settlement, close to an area of land that appears to have been laid out for burgage plots but which was never occupied. As a consequence the site has the potential to contain archaeological remains associated with the origins, development, and decline of the planned urban settlement at Wargrave.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

2.1.1 To determine and understand the location, nature, date, function, character and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that be present in order to allow the effective targeting of further investigation of the site prior to or during the early stages of the development.

2.1.2 To preserve by record any archaeological remains that are excavated during the course of the evaluation.

2.1.3 To make available the results of the investigation

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork

3.1.1 The evaluation consisted of two parallel trenches, each measuring 10m by 1.6m, (Figure 2).

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

3.2.1 The overburden was removed by a JCB mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket under close archaeological supervision, to ensure that non-archaeological deposits were stripped in spits of no more than 100mm.

3.2.2 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 at a scale of 1:50, and where excavated their sections drawn at 1:20. All features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992), and complied with the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Codes of Conduct and Standards* documentation.

3.3 Finds

3.3.1 Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation and bagged by context.

3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

3.4.1 Environmental soil samples were taken from archaeological deposits of potential environmental interest.

4 RESULTS: GENERAL

4.1 Soils and ground conditions

4.1.1 The site is located on Upper Chalk, and is well drained.

4.2 Distribution of archaeological deposits

4.2.1 Trench 1 contained a single pit of post medieval date. Trench 2 contained a number of small features and a brick-built soak-away of post medieval or modern date.

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Description of deposits

- 5.1.1 The stratigraphic sequence was similar in Trenches 1 and 2. Immediately beneath the modern 0.3m thick topsoil (106) and (201), (which had a depth of 0.3m) was a silty deposit containing occasional chalk flecks (105) and (202), which was up to 0.46m thick. This layer is likely to be an old ploughsoil, and overlaid a similar deposit which contained charcoal flecks but not chalk (104) and (203), and which averaged 0.2m in thickness. This deposit overlaid the orange coloured natural clay silt (103) and (215), which contained some pockets of flint nodules.

Trench 1 (Figure 3)

- 5.1.2 In terms of archaeological features, Trench 1 contained a single pit (100) which was only partially revealed by the trench, but which appeared to be circular in plan (Figure 3). This feature contained a primary fill (101) which included bone, post-medieval CBM, and pottery of both medieval and post-medieval date; and a second fill which represented natural silting of the pit (102) (Figure 4). An environmental soil sample (1) was taken from the primary fill (101), in order to attempt to ascertain the function of the feature, and the degree of preservation of the environmental remains. This feature was sealed by layer (104).

Trench 2 (Figure 3)

- 5.1.3 The second trench contained a large soak-away (204), which was loosely capped with modern bricks and concrete (Figure 3). The capping was partially removed by the machining, and revealed that the structure was not filled, and in fact presented a void approximately 2m in diameter and 4m deep. The construction of the shaft itself could only be partially observed from the opening at the top, but it appeared to be built from bricks of a type that were earlier than those used to seal it.
- 5.1.4 The very edge of the soak-away was cut by a short and narrow linear feature (213), which was in turn cut by a small pit containing modern bottles (211). Two possible post holes (207) and (209) were also observed. All these features cut layer (203), and were sealed by (202). Towards the south end of the trench a small feature (205) was identified which was cut into the natural geology, and appeared from its irregular nature to be an animal burrow or tree root hole.

5.2 Finds

Animal bone (by Bethan Charles)

- 5.2.1 Context (101) produced cattle, sheep, and pig bone fragments, as well as a single bone from a small bird of unknown species.

Pottery

- 5.2.2 A total of 14 sherds of pottery were retrieved from primary pit fill (101). One of these was a medium sized sherd of post-medieval glazed ware, while the remainder were small abraded sherds of medieval earthenware.

Ceramic Building Material

- 5.2.3 Pit fill (101) also yielded 25 medium to large fragments of post-medieval roof tile.

Other finds

- 5.2.4 A single oyster shell fragment and a single iron nail were also collected from pit fill (101).

5.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

Carbonized plant remains and charcoal (By Dana Challinor)

- 5.3.1 A single soil sample of 40 litres (context 101) was taken during the evaluation from a probable post-medieval pit. The sample was processed by flotation and the resultant flot was scanned under a binocular microscope at x10 and x20 magnification. The flot was small in size and the preservation of charred material was poor.
- 5.3.2 Small fragments of wood charcoal dominated the flot; a range of species appeared to be present including *Quercus* sp. (oak) and *Fagus* sp. (beech). Only one whole cereal grain was preserved (free-threshing wheat), although unidentifiable fragments of charred grain were also observed. No chaff or weed seeds were preserved.
- 5.3.3 Given the paucity and poor quality of the charred remains, further analysis on this sample would not be productive.

6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 6.1.1 Both trenches were excavated under good conditions, and revealed a straightforward sequence of deposits. Where visible the natural geology was undisturbed, and it is considered unlikely that any deposits of archaeological significance were present but were unobserved.

6.2 Overall Interpretation

Summary of results

- 6.2.1 This field evaluation revealed that some features are preserved on this site. However, most of the features detected were modern, for example the soak-away (204), and the small cut features (207), (209), (211), and (213); although pit (100) was identified as

post-medieval. This feature also contained a number of abraded medieval pottery sherds.

Significance

- 6.2.2 None of the features discovered by this evaluation were of particular archaeological significance, and there was no evidence that archaeological remains may have been truncated by subsequent activity on the site. No archaeological features associated with the urban settlement planned in the thirteenth century were discovered. However, the presence of a number of abraded sherds of medieval pottery within the fill of a later pit, suggests that medieval features may exist within the site. Therefore the relative lack of archaeological evidence does not mean that the site as a whole contains no significant archaeological features, but it does suggest that significant archaeological remains are not preserved in substantial quantities.

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>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
001							
	100	Cut	1.84	0.44	Pit		P. Med
	101	Fill		0.15	Fill of 100	Pot, bone, CBM	P. Med
	102	Fill		0.42	Fill of 100		
	103	Layer			Natural geology		
	104	Layer		0.22	Old ploughsoil		?P. Med
	105	Layer		0.46	Old ploughsoil		?P. Med
	106	Layer		0.3	Topsoil		Modern
002							
	201	Layer		0.3	Topsoil		Modern
	202	Layer		0.45	Old ploughsoil		?P. Med
	203	Layer		0.15	Old ploughsoil		?P. Med
	204	Structure	2		Soakaway		?Mod.
	205	Cut	0.5 by 0.25	0.05	Animal burrow		
	206	Fill		0.05	Fill of 205		
	207	Cut	0.2		Post hole		?Mod.
	208	Fill	0.2		Fill of 207		?Mod.
	209	Cut	0.2		Post hole		?Mod.
	210	Fill	0.2		Fill of 209		?Mod.
	211	Cut	0.45 by 0.2		Pit		Modern
	212	Fill	0.45 by 0.2		Fill of 211		Modern
	213	Cut	0.6 by 0.15		Linear feature		?Mod.
	214	Fill			Fill of 213		?Mod.
	215	Layer			Natural geology		

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	53 High Street, Wargrave
Site code:	WARHIS 00
Grid reference:	SU 786 786
Type of evaluation:	Two trenches (10m by 1.6m)
Date and duration of project:	30 th and 31 st of October 2000 (two days)
Area of site:	0.07 ha
Summary of results:	The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) carried out a field evaluation at 53 High Street, Wargrave on behalf of The Barton Willmore Planning Partnership for Thirlstone Homes (Western) Limited. The evaluation revealed a single post medieval pit, and a number of modern features, including a large soak-away.
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OAU, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Reading Museum in due course, under the following accession number: REDMG: 2000.103

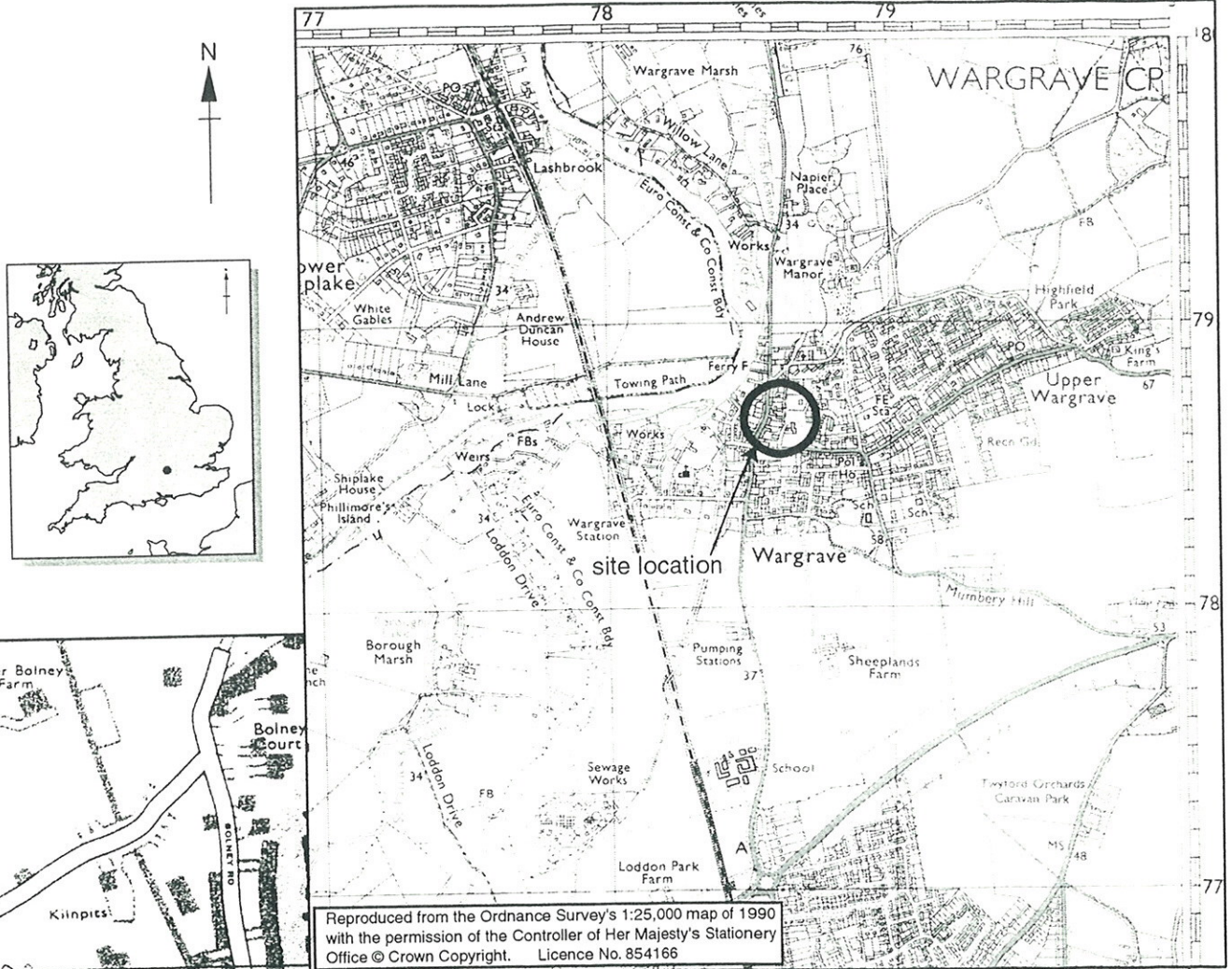


Figure 1: Site location.

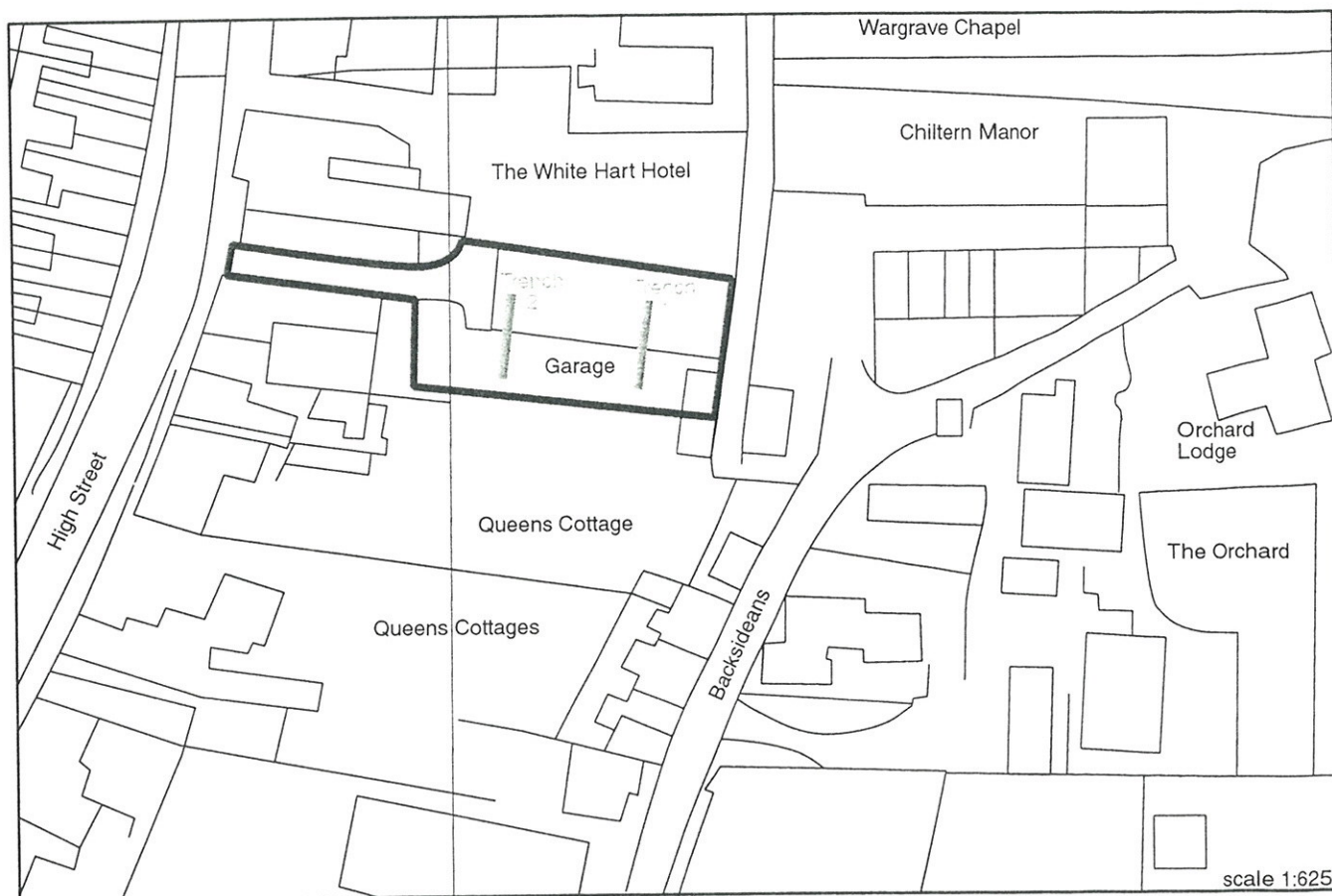


Figure 2: Trench location plan.

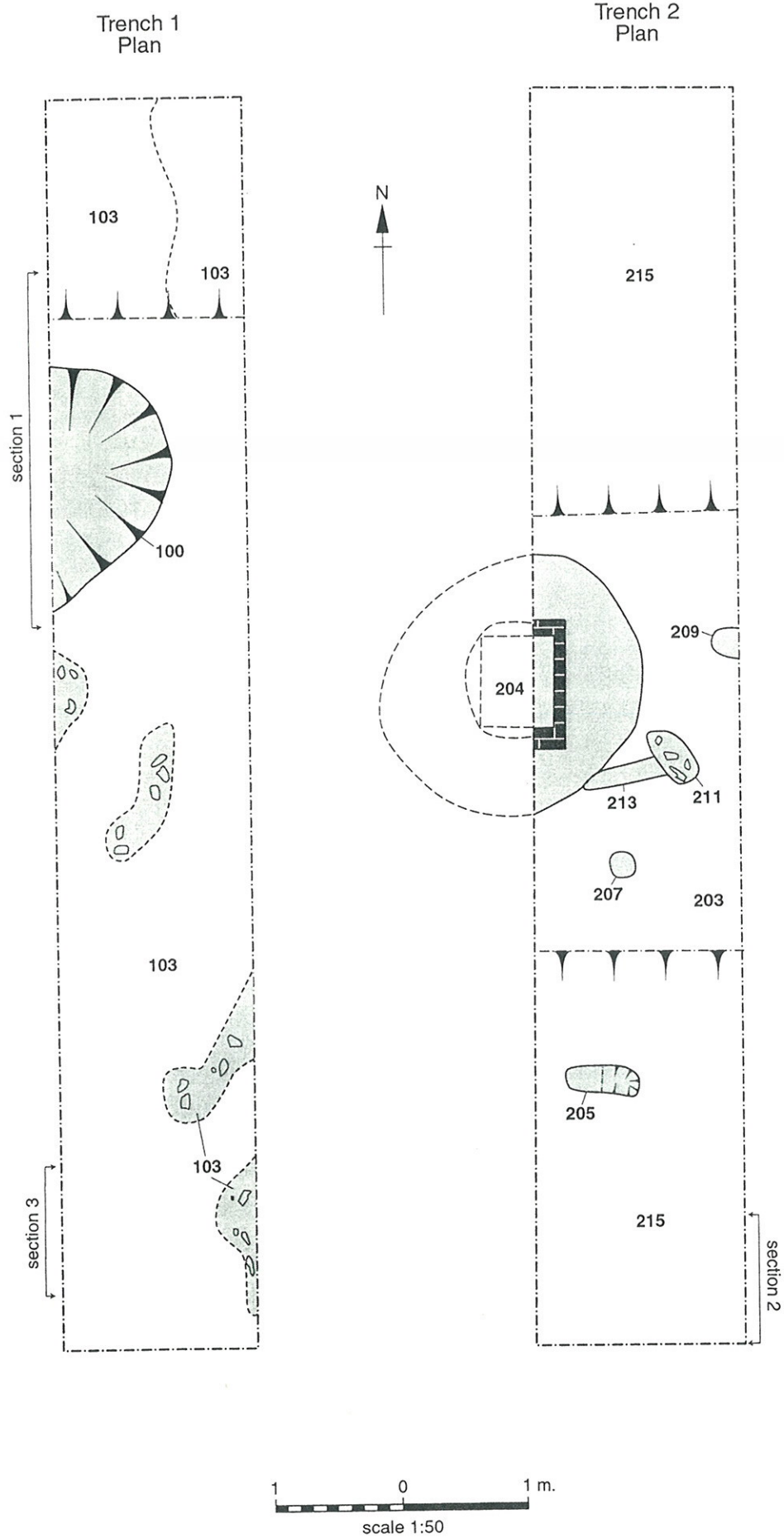


Figure 3: Trenches 1 and 2, plans.

Trench 1
Section

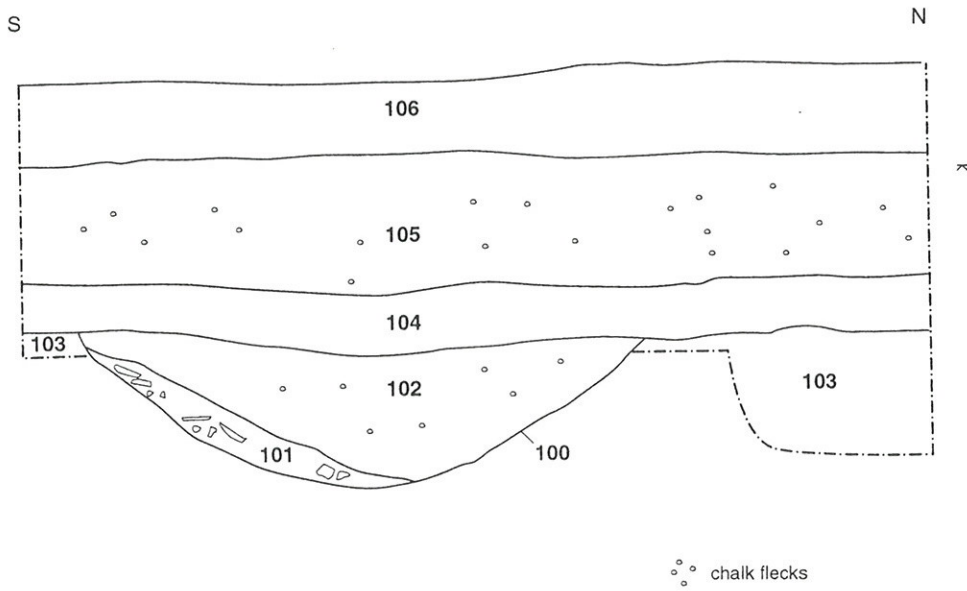


Figure 4: Trench 1, section.



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