

Centre for Sporting  
Excellence  
Oxford Road  
Horspath  
Oxon  
Phase III



**Archaeological Evaluation**



**Oxford Archaeology**

30th September 2002

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Centre for Sporting Excellence  
Land South of Oxford Road, Horspath,  
Oxfordshire: Phase III

*ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION*

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## SUMMARY

*In September 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at land south of Oxford Road, Horspath, Oxfordshire on behalf of Brookes Sports. The evaluation revealed no features or deposits of archaeological significance. Natural clay subsoil was sealed by well-worked topsoil in all of the trenches.*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In September 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out the third and final phase of a field evaluation at land south of Oxford Road, Horspath, Oxford (Fig.1), on behalf of Brookes Sport. The Phase III evaluation comprised a trenching exercise within part of the area proposed for redevelopment (Area B), and followed a fieldwalking evaluation of the whole site (OA 2001) and a previous trial trenching exercise in Area A (OA 2002a).

1.1.2 The evaluation was undertaken in respect of a planning application for a new Centre for Sporting Excellence (Planning Application No. 001/1001/NFY). A brief was set for the project by the City Archaeologist, Brian Durham. OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (OA 2002b) detailing how it would meet the requirements set out in the brief.

#### 1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site of the proposed development is located on the south side of Oxford Road, which runs between east Oxford and Horspath (NGR SP 5635 0435). The site comprises a triangular area of c. 16 ha. The evaluation trenching was situated in the main arable area (Area B), which lies adjacent to the east side of the disused allotments (Area A). On the south side of the development area lies a dismantled railway with the BMW car works bounding the west side. The site is used as arable agricultural land.

1.2.2 The ground slopes north to south, falling from c 70 m OD in the south-west corner. The geology is varied across the site with Wheatley Limestone of the Corralian Formation in the southern and western part of the site. This gives way to Amphill Clay to the north and east, with drift geology of the Younger Head deposits (British Geological Survey, Sheet 237).

#### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The site lies in an area of known archaeological potential. Previous studies carried out at the car works to the west show that archaeological activity dating from the Bronze Age has been recorded in close proximity to the site. Specifically this relates to a late Bronze Age/early Iron Age ditch identified during the evaluation of the Rover Vehicle Quality Building in 1996, to the immediate south west of the proposed site for the Centre for Sporting Excellence.

- 1.3.2 Evidence of medieval agricultural activity was also found during this investigation. A crop mark of a probable Bronze Age ring-ditch, located to the immediate south-west of the disused allotments, has been identified from aerial photographs. A linear cropmark located within the south corner of the proposal area has also been identified.
- 1.3.3 The route of the Dorchester to Alchester Roman road lies some 500 m to the west of the proposal site, under what is now Roman Way. A number of Roman finds and sites, including burials, coins and pottery, have been recorded along the route of the road as it runs past east Oxford. Roman finds and sites have also been recorded in Horspath including burials, coins, kilns and pottery. Coins dating to the 3rd and 4th centuries have also been recovered from fields to the north and south of the proposal area.
- 1.3.4 Historic maps show that the site has been under agricultural use and that no development or quarrying has taken place since the latter half of the 19th century.
- 1.3.5 The evaluation of Area A revealed a 1st century east-west aligned ditch, possibly a boundary feature and possible associated features in the south-east area of the investigation of this disused allotment and fallow site. The features included two further undated linear features (probably gullies) an isolated posthole and a shallow pit both of which were likewise undated. The remainder of the trenches contained a series of soil layers, overlain by the present allotment/garden soil. Traces of an undated ?ploughsoil were observed across the site. A few modern services were also encountered.

## 2 EVALUATION AIMS

### 2.1 General

- 2.1.1 To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the proposal area.
- 2.1.2 To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present.
- 2.1.3 To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features.
- 2.1.4 To make available the results of the investigation.

## 3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Scope of fieldwork

- 3.1.1 The evaluation consisted of four trenches, three of which measured 30 m in length with a width of 1.6 m (Trenches 13, 14 and 15). Trench 12 measured 20 m in length and was 1.6 m in width (Fig. 2).
- 3.1.2 The overburden was removed under close archaeological supervision by a JCB fitted with a toothless bucket.

### 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 *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

3.2.2 All trenches were planned at 1:100 and their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. All sections 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).

### 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 Presentation of results

3.4.1 The trenches, and the deposits identified within them, are described numerically below.

## 4 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

### 4.1 Description of deposits

#### *Trench 12*

4.1.1 Trench 12 (Fig. 3) was orientated NW/SE and measured 20 m in length. The earliest deposit seen in plan extending throughout the length of the trench was a natural light orangey brown sandy clay (1202). This deposit was overlain by the modern dark brown clayey loam topsoil with a depth of 0.3 m (1201). No finds were recovered from this trench.

#### *Trench 13*

4.1.2 Trench 13 (Fig. 4) was orientated NE/SW and measured 30 m in length. The earliest deposit identified in this trench was the natural pale orangey brown silty clay with occasional limestone (1303). This was overlain by up to 0.3 m of a mid-brownish orange silty clay (1302). The latest deposit was the modern topsoil (1301), which was 0.25 m thick. No finds were recovered from this trench.

#### *Trench 14*

4.1.3 Trench 14 (Fig. 5) was orientated NE/SW and located just south of the disused allotments. The trench was 30 m long and 1.6 m wide. The earliest deposit encountered in this trench was a natural yellow-white limestone brash (1403). This deposit was overlain by up to 0.24 m of a mid-brownish orange silty clay with occasional limestone (1402). The sequence was topped by 0.25 m of modern topsoil. No finds were recovered from this trench.

*Trench 15*

4.1.4 Trench 15 (Fig. 6) was orientated NE/SW and measured 30 m in length. The natural light orangey brown sandy clay (1502) was encountered immediately below 0.25 m of modern topsoil (1501). No finds were recovered from this trench.

**4.2 Finds**

4.2.1 No finds were recovered during the fieldwork.

**5 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION**

5.1.1 The evaluation trenches were located in order to test the presence or absence of archaeological features/deposits below findspots identified during the fieldwalking phase. The trenches clearly exhibited an absence of archaeology, though the below ground disturbance of subsoil was not great as might be expected from long term agricultural use of the land. This suggests that truncation or removal by previous ploughing of archaeological strata need not be considered in these areas.

5.1.2 The lack of any significant features or deposits within the evaluation trenches suggests that there will be little or no impact upon archaeological remains by the proposed development in Area B, in contrast to the archaeological evidence discovered in Area A.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench	Ctxt No	Type	Width (m)	Thick. (m)	Comment	Finds	No./wt	Date
12								
	1201	Layer		0.3	Modern Topsoil			
	1202	Layer			Natural			
13								
	1301	Layer		0.25	Modern Topsoil			
	1302	Layer		0.3	Relict Ploughsoil			
	1303	Layer			Natural			
14								
	1401	Layer		0.3	Modern Topsoil			
	1402	Layer		0.24	Relict Ploughsoil			
	1403	Layer			Natural			
15								
	1501	Layer		0.25	Modern Topsoil			
	1502	Layer			Natural			

## APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OA 2001 *Centre for Sporting Excellence, Oxford Road, Horspath, Oxford. Archaeological Evaluation: Surface Collection Survey. Client Report, December 2001.*

OA 2002b *Written Scheme of Investigation (Archaeological Evaluation): Centre for Sporting Excellence, Oxford Road, Horspath, Oxford. March 2002*

OA 2002a *Centre for Sporting Excellence, Oxford Road, Horspath, Oxfordshire. Archaeological Evaluation: Trenching April 2002*

Wilkinson D, 1992 *OAU Fieldwork Manual*

## APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

**Site name:** Centre for Sporting Excellence, Oxford Road, Horspath, Oxford

**Site code:** OXHPOR 02

**Grid reference:** SP 5635 0435

**Type of evaluation:** Three 30-m trenches and one 20 m trench

**Date and duration of project:** 09th and 10th September 2002

**Area of site:** 16 ha

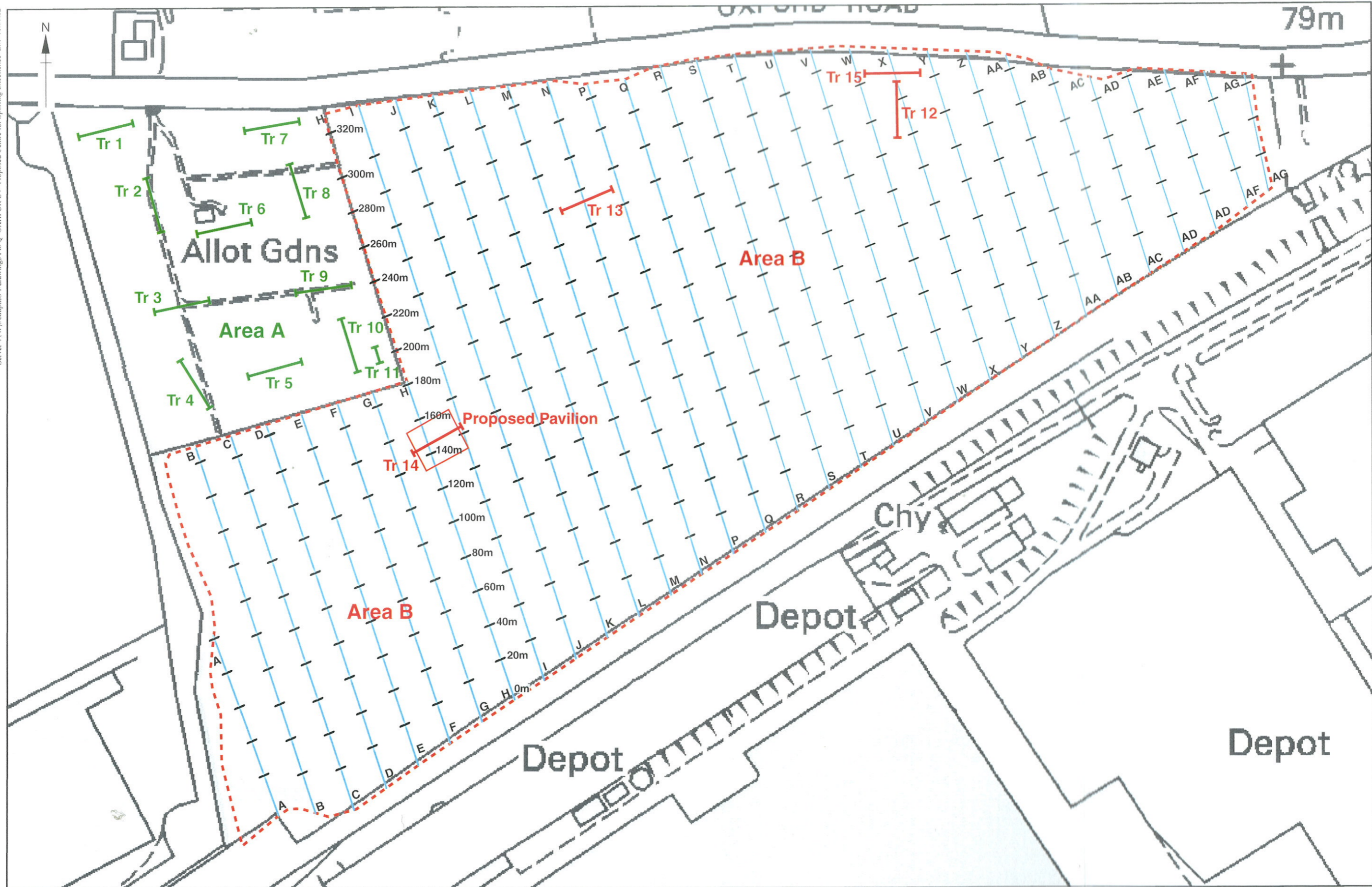
**Summary of results:** No features or deposits of archaeological significance identified

**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: 2001.7





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Scale 1:200

Figure 2: Trench locations and transect lines from the surface collection survey

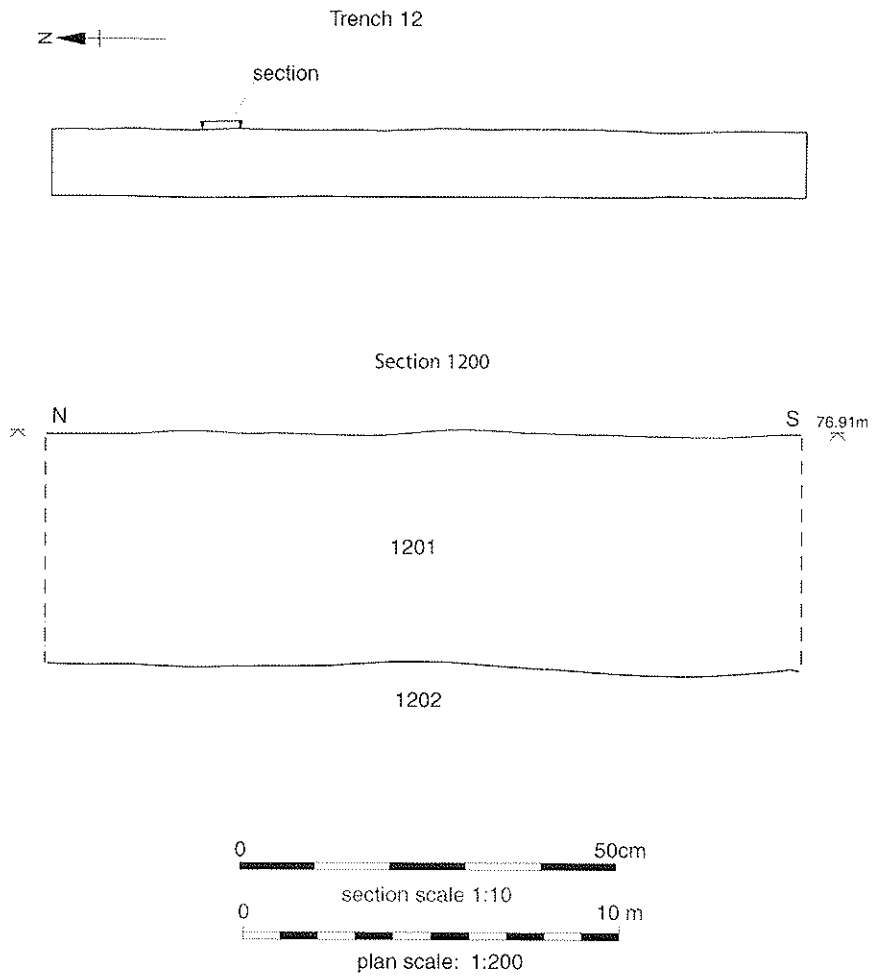


Figure 3: Plan and section of trench 12.

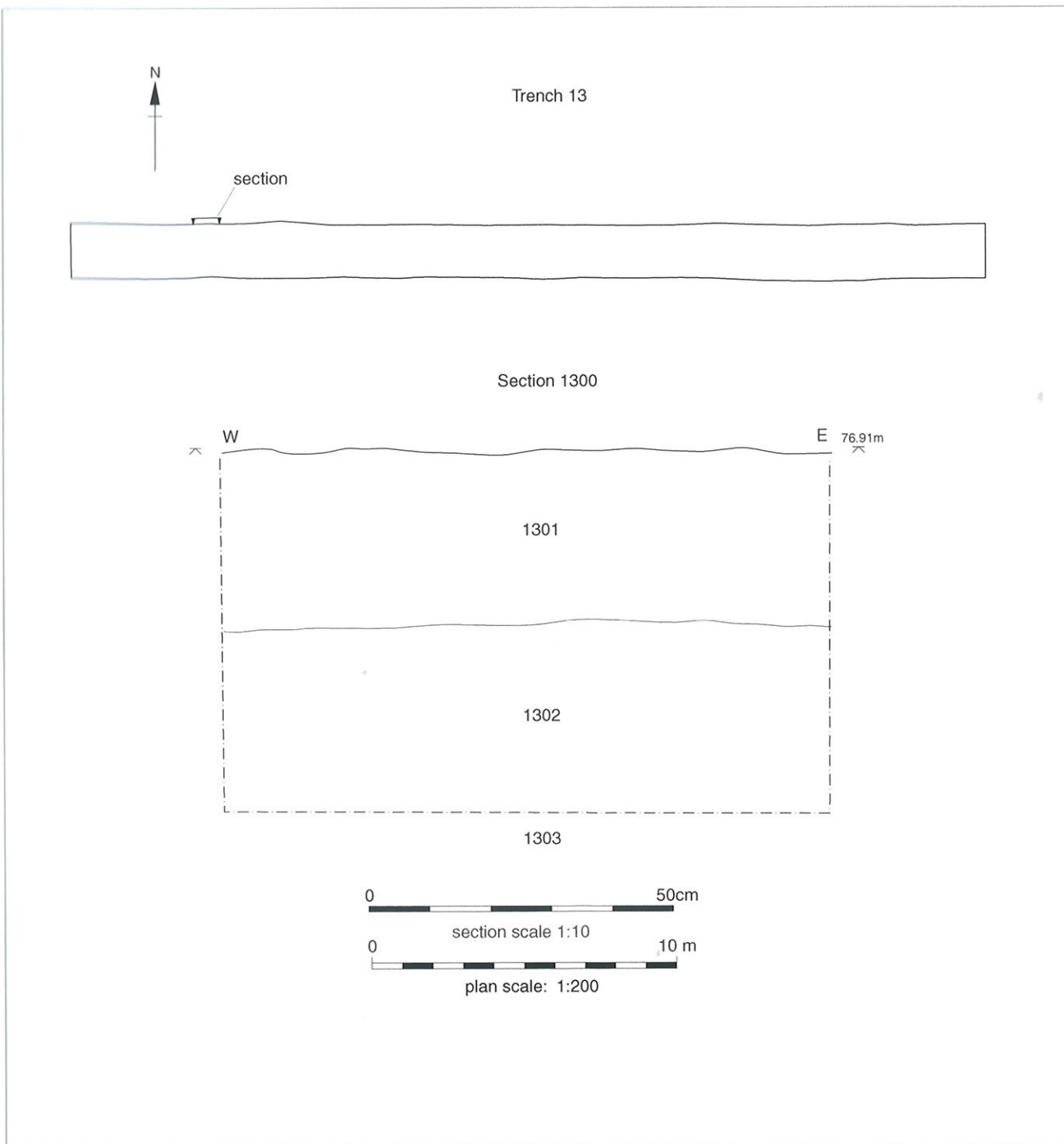


Figure 4: Plan and section of trench 13.

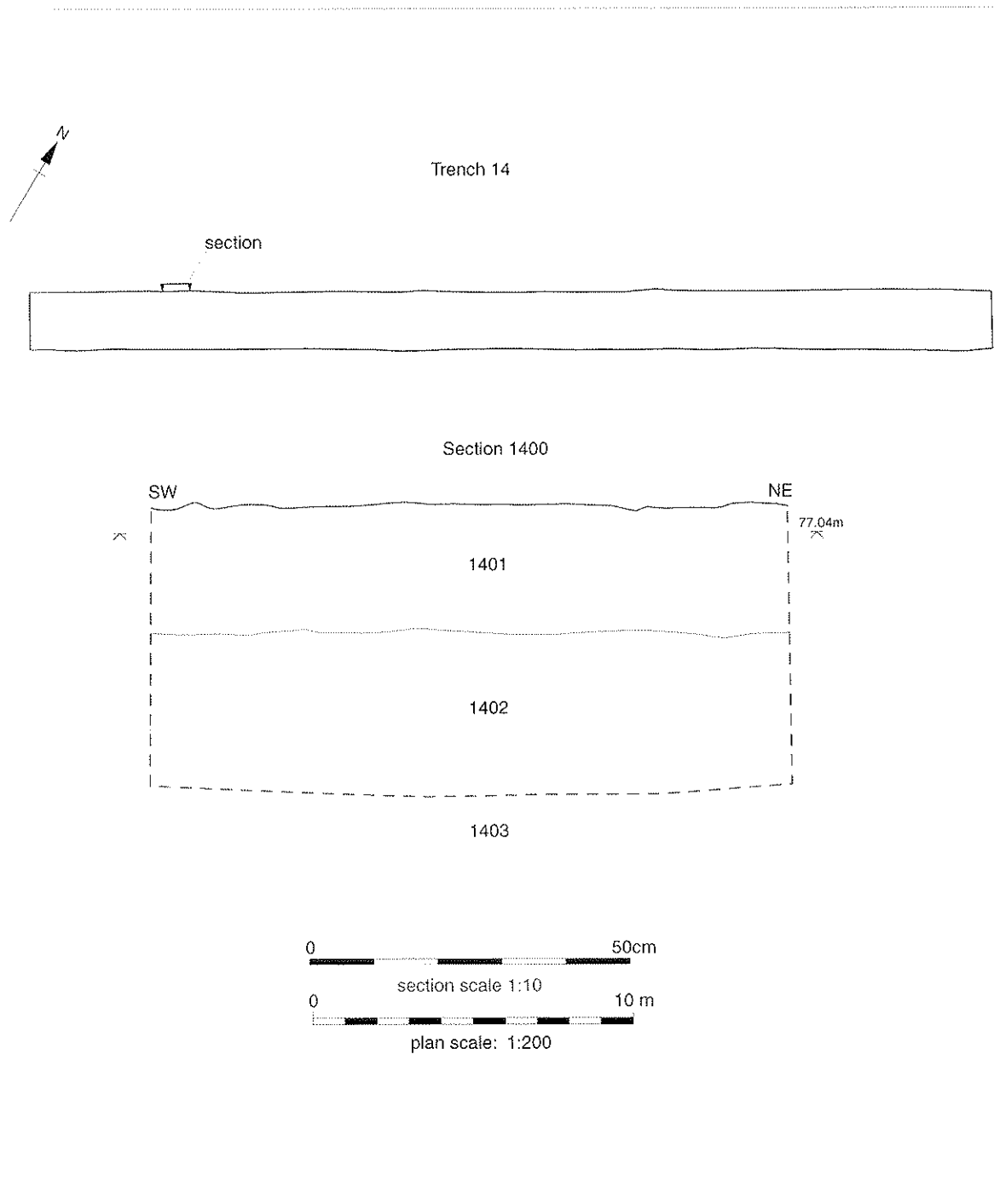


Figure 5: Plan and section of trench 14.

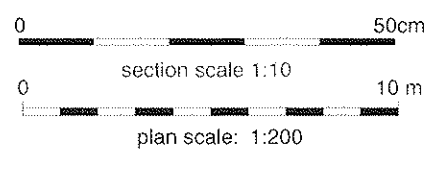
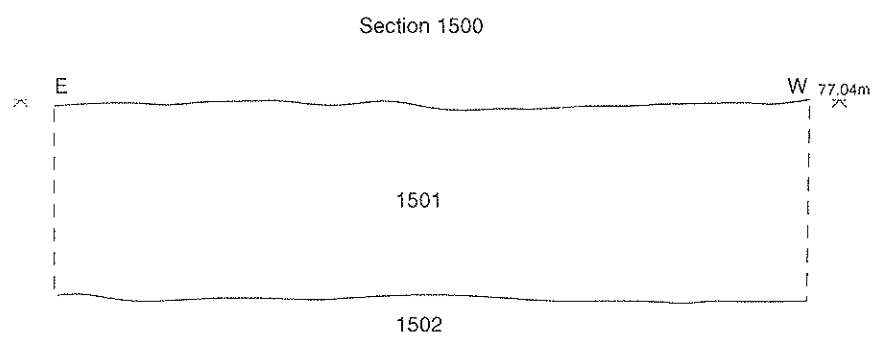
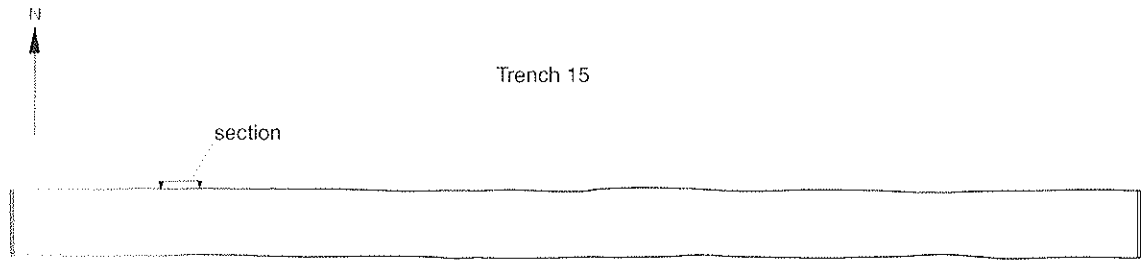


Figure 6: Plan and section of trench 15.



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