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**Aids to Communication in Education (ACE)**

**Relocation of ACE Centre, Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre,  
Headington, Oxford**

*NGR SP 5478 0658*

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**

**Planning Ref. No. 97/619/NO**

**Oxford Archaeological Unit**

**June 1998**

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Planning Ref. No. 97/619/NO

Prepared by: 

Date: 23/6/98

Checked by: 

Date: 23/6/98

Approved by: R. Williams HEAD OF FIELDWORK

Date: 25/6/98

Oxford Archaeological Unit

June 1998

## **Summary**

*In May and June 1998 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook a watching brief at the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre, Windmill Road, Headington, Oxford (NGR SP 5478 0658). No cut features were seen; a sequence of ploughsoils was identified below topsoil which contained both Romano-British and post-medieval sherds.*

### **1 Introduction (Fig. 1)**

The development proposal (planning application no. 97/619/NO) comprised the excavation of a trench for a new gas pipeline, ground reduction within the building footprint and the excavation of trenches within the reduced area for footings, prior to the relocation of the ACE centre from its present site to the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre. A programme of archaeological work was required as a condition of the planning consent granted under PPG 16.

The watching brief was commissioned by Aids to Communication in Education. It was undertaken to a brief set by and a WSI agreed with the Oxford Archaeological Advisory Service.

### **2 Background**

The development site lies on sand at approximately 98 m OD (centred). Prior to development it comprised a mown grass lawn with trees and shrubs fronting Windmill Road.

The site is located in an area of Oxford which has a large concentration of Romano-British pottery kilns. By the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century this had become a substantial industry, and by the early to mid 4<sup>th</sup> century the Oxford kilns had become one of the major producers of pottery in Roman Britain (Young 1977).

This watching brief is further to an archaeological field evaluation undertaken by the OAU on the site on 19<sup>th</sup> September 1997 (OAU 1998), which itself was further to a magnetometer survey of the site (Bartlett 1997). The magnetometer survey identified an anomaly which was strongly suggestive of a kiln. Consequently a test pit was opened directly above the signal, revealing a sequence of ploughsoils, an iron rod and a quantity of concrete rubble; it was these which probably accounted for the strong magnetometer signal.

### **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

Two inspection visits were made to the site by prior arrangement with the main subcontractor. On the first visit it was apparent that the trench for the new gas pipeline had already been dug and backfilled and thus took place without archaeological supervision. Both ground reduction and the excavation of trenches for footings were monitored. These were both adjacent to and substantially deeper than the gas pipeline trench; it was thought likely that any archaeology seen in that trench would also be seen in the deeper excavation.

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)

The ground was reduced by a mean depth of 0.90 m within the footprint of the new building, with the trenches for footings being excavated to a depth of 1 m below this level. All sections revealed the following sequence:

(1) – topsoil; 0.30 m of grassed and heavily rooted mid gray very silty clay loam, sealing:

(2) – light-mid buff/yellow silty sand, shading to light-mid buff/brown towards the base of excavation for ground reduction. This deposit produced all finds retrieved.

In the footings trenches, 0.60 m wide by 1 m deep, (2) was seen to continue for a further 0.60 m, where it sealed (3), a clean light yellow/orange slightly brashy sand.

A soakaway was dug in the north-western corner of the site; 2.20 m by 1.60 m on the surface and 1.70 m in depth, revealing exactly the same sequence.

## 6 Finds

### *Romano-British pottery*

The sherds generally were small and showed some abrasion; several rim sherds were found, these were a white mortarium of type M22, dated AD 240-400 (Young 1997).

### *Post-medieval finds*

The remainder of the material retrieved comprised two pieces of clay pipe of probable 17<sup>th</sup>-/18<sup>th</sup>-century date and some 20<sup>th</sup>-century china.

## 7 Discussion

No cut features were seen. The depth of deposit (2), thought to be a ploughsoil, is not unusual for light, sandy soils, and it is likely that the cultivation it represents postdates the Roman period.

The pottery recovered indicates some Roman activity in the area; a greater quantity of pottery and some fired clay kiln lining would be expected if there were a pottery kiln in the immediate vicinity. The post-medieval pottery recovered from the same deposit implies a degree of residuality, suggesting limited disturbance from recent development associated with the hospital.

## References.

Bartlett, A D H, 1997 Nuffield Hospital, Headington, Oxford. Report on Archaeogeophysical Survey, September 1997.

OAU 1998 Relocation of ACE Centre, Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre, Oxford. Archaeological Evaluation Report.

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

Young, C J, 1997 Oxfordshire Roman Pottery, Brit. Archaeol. Rep. (Brit. Ser.) **43**, Oxford.

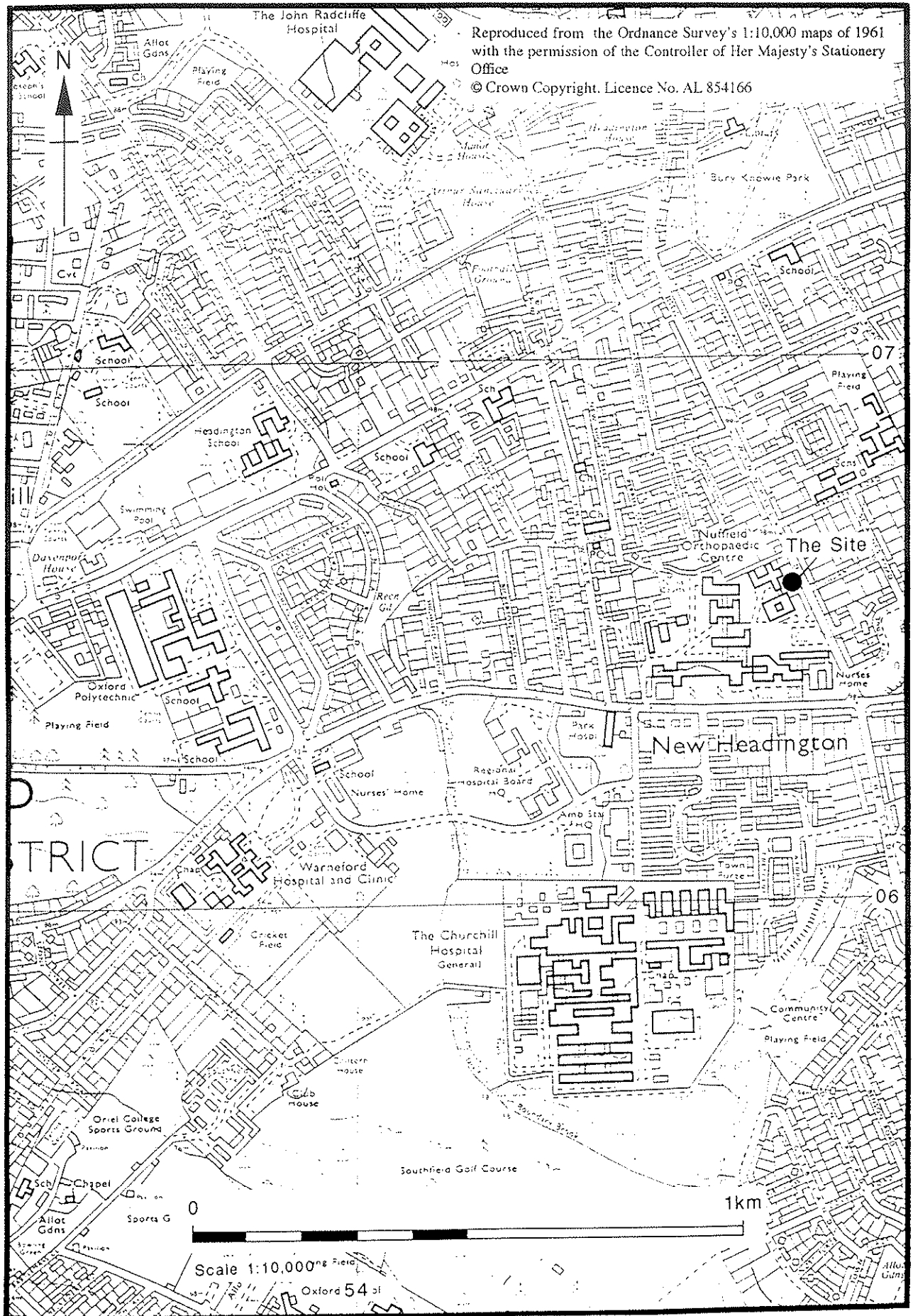


Figure 1: Site Location Plan

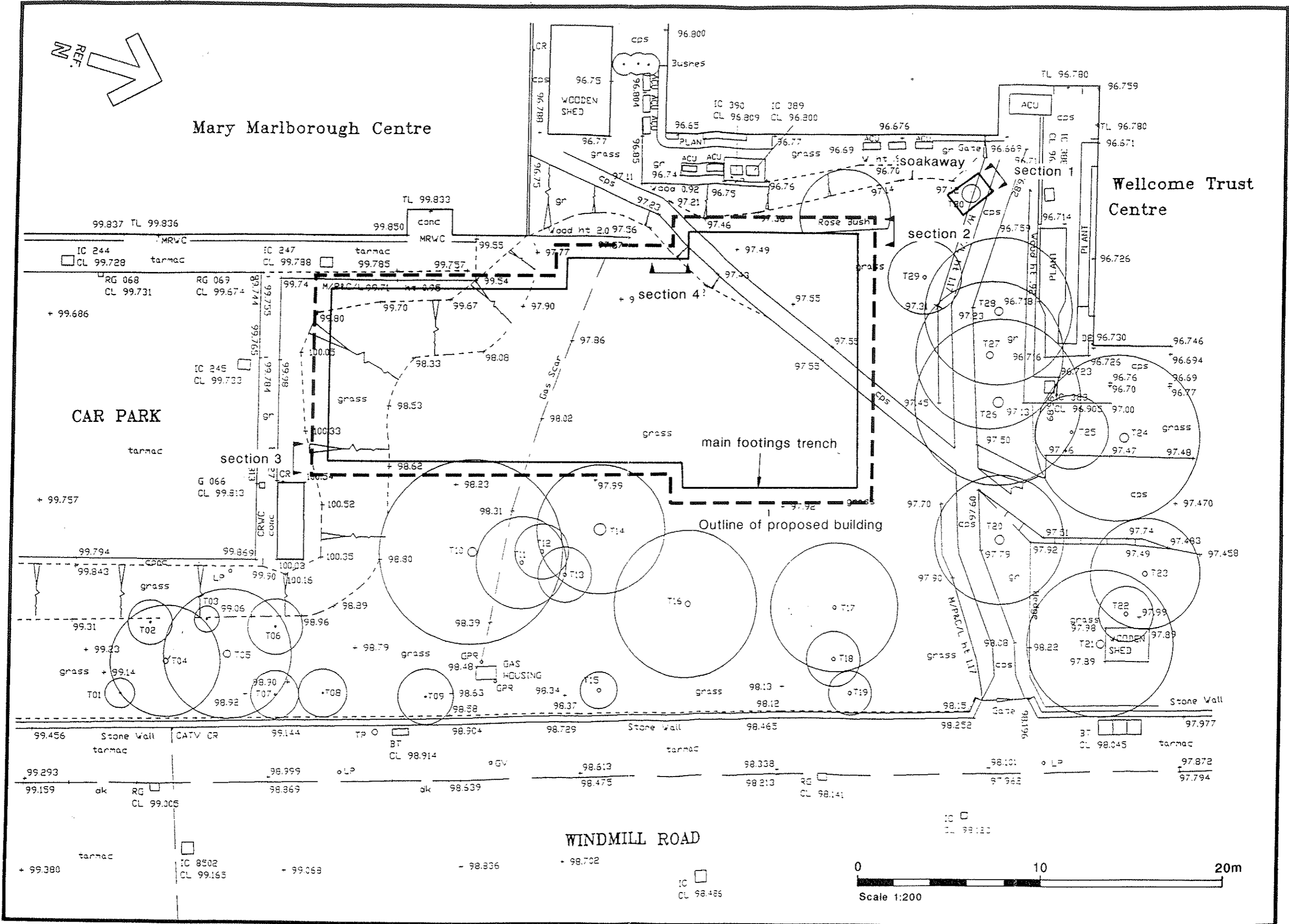


Figure 2:Trench Location Plan

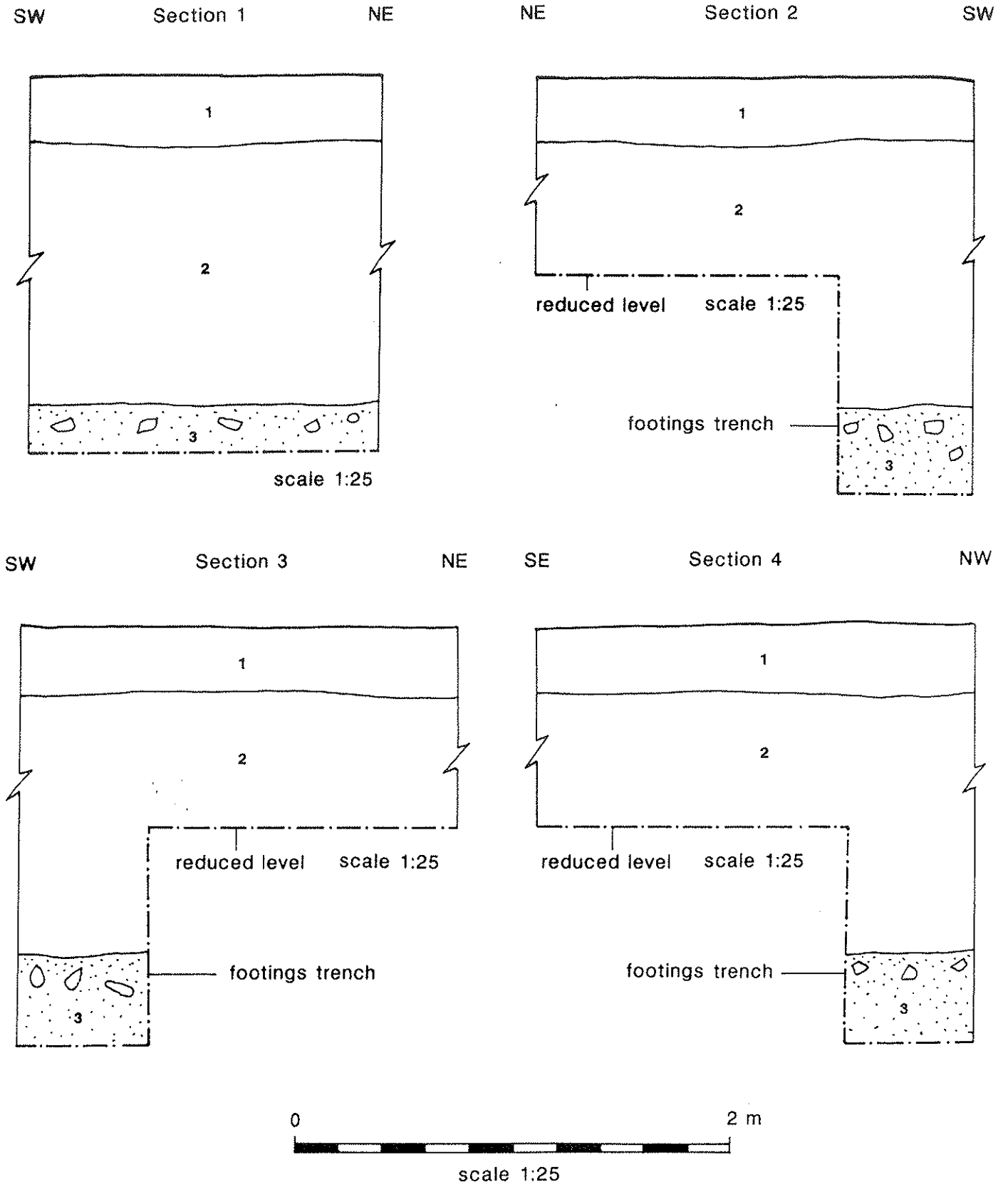


Figure 3: Sections





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