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Dropmore House Burnham Buckinghamshire

Archaeological Evaluation and Watching Brief Report



April 2007

**Client: Gifford on behalf of
Corporate Estates Ltd.**

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OA Job N^o: JN 3507
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Corporate Estates Ltd

**The Italian Garden at Dropmore House
Burnham, Buckinghamshire**

NGR SU 9248 8611

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT**CONTENTS**

Summary	1
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Location and scope of work.....	1
1.2 Geology and topography.....	2
1.3 Archaeological and historical background	2
2 Evaluation Aims.....	3
3 Evaluation Methodology	4
3.1 Scope of fieldwork.....	4
3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording	4
3.3 Finds	5
3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence	5
4 Results: General.....	5
4.1 Soils and ground conditions	5
4.2 Distribution of archaeological deposits	5
5 Results: Descriptions	5
5.1 Trench descriptions	5
5.2 Finds	10
6 Discussion and Interpretation	12
6.1 Overall interpretation.....	12
Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory	14
Appendix 2 Pottery spot dates.....	17
Appendix 3 CBM spot dates	18
Appendix 4 Bibliography and references.....	19
Appendix 5 Summary of Site Details.....	20

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 1	Site Location
Fig. 2	Trench Location Plan and Watching Brief Area
Fig. 3	Trench 1 plan and sections
Fig. 4	Trench 2 plan and section
Fig. 5	Trench 3 plan and sections
Fig. 6	Trench 4 plan and section
Fig. 7	Trench 5 plan and section
Fig. 8	Trench 6 plan
Fig. 9	Trench 7 plan and section
Fig. 10	Trench 8 plan and section

SUMMARY

In January 2007, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation in the Italian Garden of Dropmore House in Burnham, Buckinghamshire (NGR SU 9248 8611). The work was commissioned by property owners Corporate Estates Ltd., through their archaeological consultant Gifford, who advise on the future management of the site. The eight-trench evaluation revealed a selection of features associated with the Italian Garden, including tree and plant holes, flower beds, drains, paths, and investigated the construction of an existing fountain feature. This was followed by a watching brief recording exercise along the eastern edge of the garden which revealed the foundations and planting trenches of a greenhouse and associated cold frames. All of the features and structures date to the 19th/20th century; no archaeology of earlier date was identified.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In January 2007, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an eight-trench field evaluation in the Italian Garden of Dropmore House in Burnham, Buckinghamshire (NGR SU 9248 8611). This was followed by a watching brief recording exercise of an area partly incorporating and bordering the eastern edge of the Italian Garden in February 2007.

1.1.2 The historic Dropmore Estate has been purchased by Corporate Estates Ltd. and Gifford has been contracted to provide recommendations for the future management of the site that will be incorporated into an overarching *Landscape Conservation Plan* currently in preparation (by the Terra Firma Consultancy). This is in response to Condition No. 7 of the Application (No. 03/00899/FUL), which states that:

Notwithstanding any indications in documents and drawings already submitted, no development should take place until there has been submitted to and approved by the District Planning Authority in writing a comprehensive Landscape Conservation Plan incorporating a full survey and assessment of the historic development of the landscape and detailing the methodology for the restoration and long term management of this Historic Park and Gardens an associated listed features. Thereafter the management of the landscape shall be undertaken in strict accordance with this approved scheme.

Reason: To safeguard the appearance, integrity and interest of the listed buildings occupying the site and of the historic park and garden itself.

1.1.3 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was contracted by the client through Gifford to undertake the archaeological fieldwork and recording. Gifford prepared a *Brief* for the evaluation (Gifford 2006, No. 13582.R01) and OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing how it would undertake the requirements of the *Brief*

(OA 2006). The Italian Garden is situated off the western end of Dropmore House and is approximately 1 ha. in area.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 Dropmore House is located in 88 ha. of designed parkland set in the Chiltern Hills, 4 km south of Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire. The parkland is listed on the statutory Register of Parks and Gardens. The Italian Garden is centred at SU 9248 8611 and lies at approximately 93 m OD. The underlying geology comprises plateau and river terrace drift of the Essendon Association over well-drained glacial sands and gravels with occasional outcrops of clay (BGS Sheet 255).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The following reproduces a summary of the early history of the Dropmore Estate taken from the *Draft Landscape Conservation Plan*.
- 1.3.2 In 1791 William Wyndham (Lord Grenville) began negotiations for Dropmore Lodge and 30 acres of land, prior to his marriage to his cousin Anne Pitt. Through a gradual process of land acquisition (the focus being the former labourer's cottage, Dropmore Lodge, which was later to become Dropmore House) Lord Grenville created the Dropmore Estate. This was greatly assisted (it is assumed financially) by the inheritance of the Boconnoc Estate in Cornwall by his wife, upon the death of her brother Lord Camelford, in 1804. The architect Samuel Wyatt was appointed in 1792 to add to the original cottage, moving in entirety a hill to afford a view of Windsor Castle from the windows and in 1806-9, further extensive alterations were designed by the architect Charles Tatham. Lord Grenville also negotiated various road amendments and closures by Acts of Parliament that removed public access from the Estate.
- 1.3.3 By the 1820s the Grenvilles had created an Estate of national repute, notable for its Flower Gardens, Pinetum and the application of modern horticultural thinking and state-of-the-art techniques. Lady Grenville oversaw the development of the formal landscape, which as well as the formal flower gardens, the ornamental pergolas, aviary and Italian Garden, included extensive kitchen gardens. At the height of the Estate there were some 50 gardeners and estate workers employed. The development of the garden in the 1800s is well documented in gardening publications of the day and especially by the renowned critic J.C. Loudon, who detailed the site in 1828.
- 1.3.4 Upon the death of Lady Grenville in 1864, the Estate passed to the George Mathew Fortescue. The extent of the land holding of the Estate was at its peak in the 1870s, with the Estate and holdings of the Fortescue family extending to 1029 hectares in the Taplow area, with the majority centred in the Dropmore Estate. In this period of ownership there was little in the way of change to the Estate, but the policies established under Lord Grenville and his head gardener Philip Frost were continued. George Fortescue was succeeded by his son John Bevill Fortescue in 1877 and by the end of the 19th century Dropmore was demoted to summer residence in favour of the

Boconnoc Estate in Cornwall, also left by Lady Grenville to the Fortescue family. The estate holdings were gradually reduced the current size, with a large proportion of the outlying Estate sold off in 1919 and little work, other than maintenance, was carried out to the house and grounds.

- 1.3.5 During the war the Estate was requisitioned by the Army and used for army billeting and training. Much of the grounds and gardens fell into disrepair, although the vegetable garden was still used. The Army constructed various buildings and a sewage farm on the Estate.
- 1.3.6 Lord Kelmsley purchased the Estate in 1945, although did not take up residence until 1948 when a programme of restoration and enhancement both inside and outside was completed. During the Kelmsley's occupation, the gardens and Pinetum were opened to the public on Whit Monday each year in aid of the National Gardener's scheme. In 1963 a comprehensive cataloguing of the Pinetum was carried out to establish the condition of the specimens, which led to tree planting to replace trees lost and extend the Pinetum further.
- 1.3.7 On Viscount Kelmsley's death in 1969, the Estate was sold again and further broken up. One third of the Estate was sold for gravel extraction and the main body of the Estate including the House was sold to the United States International University. During the University's ownership several portions of the Estate were sold off including various dwellings and woodland. The University sold the remaining Estate (88 hectares) to Mohammed Mahdi Al-Tajir (the former United Emirates Ambassador to London) in 1972. Extensive work was carried out to the House, a swimming pool built to the north east of the House and exterior lighting to driveways installed.
- 1.3.8 In 1990 and 1998 fires devastated the main house. The first gutted the west wing, the second heavily damaged the service wing. The house was then uninhabited, became derelict and was vandalised.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

- 2.1.1 To assess the condition of former features of the Italian Garden, in particular the original pathway surfaces and borders, in order to enable recommendations to be made for the long term conservation and management of the Garden.
- 2.1.2 Insofar as possible within the methodological constraints, to explain any temporal, spatial or functional relationships between the structures/remains identified.
- 2.1.3 Six locations were identified for evaluation by trial trenching as defined in the *Brief* provided by Gifford (Gifford 2006, Figure 2). These were:
 - **Trench 1 and Trench 2:** located to investigate the archaeological potential of an area known to have been used formerly as an orchard

- **Trench 3:** located to investigate the nature of the former pathway surface of the western arm of the Italian Garden
- **Trench 4:** located to investigate a possible stone garden feature and the nature of the former pathway surface of the southern arm of the Italian Garden
- **Trench 5:** located to investigate the construction of border features within the eastern arm of the Italian Garden
- **Trench 6:** located to investigate the former pathway surface and an area of terracing at the eastern end of the Italian Garden (subsequently divided into two staggered trenches numbered 6 and 8)
- **Trench 7:** located to investigate the former pathway surface of the area adjacent to the fountain

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork

3.1.1 As noted above, Trench 6 was split and staggered into two individually numbered trenches (6 and 8) so that a total of eight trenches were excavated during the course of the work. Trench 3 was also extended to provide a single transect across the main path and terrace along the northern rear edge of the garden. The trenches measured:

- Trenches 1 & 2 – 20 m x 2 m
- Trench 3 – 13.5 m x 2 m
- Trench 4 – 7.5 m x 2 m
- Trench 5 – 5 m x 2 m
- Trench 6 – 9.25 m x 2 m
- Trench 7 – 1.75 m x 1.25 m
- Trench 8 – 7 m x 2 m

3.1.2 In addition to the trench excavation, and following on-site agreement with the consultant and curator, the area of a below ground level car park to be created as part of the development along the eastern edge of the garden was recorded as a watching brief exercise. This covered an area of approximately 0.15 ha.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

3.2.1 Each trench was excavated by JCB mechanical digger fitted with a toothless bucket to remove the upper soil levels of overburden with the exception of Trench 7 which was hand excavated. The trenches were cleaned by hand where deemed necessary and the revealed features were sample excavated 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.

3.2.2 Topsoil removal across the watching brief area was partly observed before the ground level was reduced by up to 3 m within the car park footprint. Any features

within this area were recorded at a scale of 1:500 and related to the existing garden layout and construction plan.

- 3.2.3 All features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures outlined 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 bagged by context. Finds of special interest were given a unique small find number.

3.4 **Palaeo-environmental evidence**

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

4 **RESULTS: GENERAL**

4.1 **Soils and ground conditions**

- 4.1.1 A geology consisting of clay with occasional patches of sand and gravel was encountered within each trench. This was overlain within most trenches by a lower cultivated soil that was subsequently sealed by a humic cultivated soil horizon and turf. The soils were moderately well drained and no significant problems were encountered with groundwater during the evaluation. During the watching brief phase, following prolonged rainfall, the area of the basement car park filled with water, halting the work until dry conditions allowed for this to be drained and work to continue.

4.2 **Distribution of archaeological deposits**

- 4.2.1 All trenches revealed traces of deposits and features relating to the garden construction, design, and final intended appearance. The watching brief area provided further evidence of the garden use although the garden structures and deposits encountered here were not part of the original Italian Garden and reflect later functional additions.

5 **RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS**

5.1 **Trench descriptions**

Trench 1

- 5.1.1 Trench 1 was orientated north/south within the western half of the garden and was machine excavated to a maximum depth of 0.45 m below the current ground level revealing a sequence of features cut into the natural clay (10) (Fig. 3).
- 5.1.2 Few stratigraphic relationships were present between the features and the common alignment and spacing that was clearly evident suggests that most, if not all, were

part of a contemporary layout. A large shallow 'feature' (4) occupied the southern end of the trench. This had a clear linear edge aligned east/west although excavation demonstrated that the feature was shallow (0.20 m max) and irregular across its base. This was infilled by a yellow brown deposit (5) that did not appear to have been regularly cultivated due to the small lumps of redeposited natural clay incorporated into it. Despite this the shallow nature of the feature, the irregular base and its setting do point to this representing cultivation disturbance of the natural clay surface level rather than any other significant feature. A single sherd from the base of a flowerpot broadly dating to the 19th/20th century was recovered the fill.

- 5.1.3 The northern portion of the trench was occupied by a series of linear features each orientated NNW/SSE (12, 13, 16, 17, 18). None were fully exposed within the trench although the shortest (17) appears to have had a maximum length of 4.00 m. Each was between 0.70 and 0.80 m wide with clearly defined linear edges and rounded ends where present and were infilled by a homogenous brown 'soil' with occasional sand and gravel inclusions (14, 15, 19, 31 and 32). These probably represent planting trenches or deep digging aimed at improving the drainage and soil conditions of the garden. The alignment also reflects the axial NNW/SSE alignment of the garden as defined by the central path which may be significant in terms of the interpretation as planting trenches. The southern extent of these was clearly defined by the rounded ends of planting trenches 12 and 13. These stopped short of, and respected, the location of a further planting trench or bed (6/8 - see below). Eight fragments (90g) of flowerpot were recovered from the infills of the planting trenches with the addition of a single sherd of Staffordshire blue transfer printed whiteware from a dish rim (3g). All are consistent with a 19th or early 20th century date.
- 5.1.4 At the southern end of planting trench 18 was located a separate though probably related feature (33). This appeared to be circular with a diameter of 0.80 m and 0.15 m deep and was infilled by a deposit of broken tile (34). This may have been a firm base for a standing feature or object at the end of the planting trench or intended as extra drainage.
- 5.1.5 Planting trench or bed 6/8 appeared U-shaped in plan resulting from the way in which it curved around the end of later drain (see 1 below) although it continued east and west of the trench limit. This arrangement suggests that these features were broadly contemporary even though the drain cuts into part of 6/8 and across each of the planting trenches to the north. The southern edge of the planting bed 6/8 was sharply defined by a NE/SW linear edge. Excavation of this (see fig. 3 section 1) revealed a vertical edge and a flat base at a maximum depth of 0.25 m below the surface level of the surrounding natural clay. A sand and gravel deposit (9) was present across part of the base, probably as an aid to drainage, before a similar brown 'soil' (7) with occasional sand and gravel inclusions infilled the remainder. A single sherd from a creamware jar and six sherds from various flowerpots were recovered from this fill. One of the flowerpot sherds had an external white slip that extended over the rim with a band of slip inside and is possibly a Brill product. These sherds

are suggestive of a 19th century date rather than significantly later within the 20th century. The sharp southern edge was aligned broadly parallel to the garden boundary and wall to the south.

- 5.1.6 A drain (1) constructed by infilling a narrow trench with flint nodules and gravel (11) was aligned NNE/SSW across the linear planting trenches/beds. A lower cultivated soil horizon (3) sealed all of the features present within the trench with a more recent humic topsoil and turf (2) completing the sequence.

Trench 2

- 5.1.7 Trench 2 was orientated east/west also within the western half of the garden and was machine excavated to a maximum depth of 0.60 m below the current ground level revealing a sequence of features cut into the natural clay (68) (Fig. 4). These largely reflect the appearance of Trench 1 with earlier planting trenches and beds truncated by drains.
- 5.1.8 The western portion of the trench was occupied by a single large feature (62) with a slightly irregular northern and eastern outline. Its eastern side is suggestive of rough north/south linear edge although this was not clearly defined as with other features. A total of nine sherds (124g) of pottery consistent with a 19th century date were recovered from its fill (68). To the east parallel to this were two planting trenches (60, 61) both 0.50 m and on a north/south alignment. A small circular 'pit' (59) 0.55 m in diameter and a larger, more irregular, pit (57) 2.00 m diameter were east again of this. None of these features were investigated in detail and each was infilled by a very similar brown 'soil' as recorded within the planting trenches of Trench 1 to the south.
- 5.1.9 Two narrow drains (70, 72) infilled with coarse sand/gravel and large flint nodules (71, 73) were aligned across the trench on converging alignments. Drain 72 truncated the fills of the narrow linear planting trenches 60 and 61.
- 5.1.10 A 0.35 m thick cultivated soil horizon (47) sealed each of the features cut into the clay natural. This was overlain by the current humic topsoil (35) and turf that included a relatively recent gravel path (55/56) constructed whilst the soil was accumulating at the eastern end of the evaluation trench.

Trench 3

- 5.1.11 Trench 3 was orientated NNW/SSE across the western raised path along the rear (north) of the garden and down slope to the lower level parallel path (Fig. 2). Both paths were encountered at shallow depths of less than 0.10 m below the current ground level (Fig. 5). The natural clay was generally encountered at a depth of 0.45 m below the current ground level although this had clearly been cut into as a terrace to create the height differences for the raised and lowered path walkways. The highest point on the upper level was approximately 94.65 m OD with the level over the lower path at 93.82 m OD.

- 5.1.12 Unlike the trenches to the south the earliest deposit encountered within this area was a horizon of made ground derived from garden soil (41, 46). This reflects the hard landscaping required here to create the different level walkways prior to actually creating any planting borders and associated features. To the south a drain (44) with loose flint nodules infill (45) was cut into the made ground (41).
- 5.1.13 The paths were well constructed within deep trenches cut into the consolidated made ground horizon. The lower path (43) was the shallower of the two set within a 0.25 m deep flat-based trench (42) 2.15 m wide. The upper path (40) was set within a 0.40 m trench (39) of similar construction but much broader at 3.75 m wide. Both paths had a raised aggar along their spines to allow for drainage of surface water and were constructed of compacted silt sand and gravel. The associated garden soil horizon (37) was also laid across the area at the same time with the path apparently being butted by the lower part of the deposit. Also the upper level of the contemporary soil horizon had silted over the edge of the paths through erosion. The current topsoil (36) and turf sealed the paths and lower soil horizon throughout the trench although, as noted above, this was very thin over the line of the paths.

Trench 4

- 5.1.14 Trench 4 was orientated ENE/WSW across the central axial path of the garden (Fig. 2). The natural clay (30) was encountered 0.25 m below the current ground level with several drains clearly evident parallel to the path (27) across the centre of the trench.
- 5.1.15 Four drains (23, 24, 28, 94) were revealed adjacent to the path and cut directly into the natural clay. They were arranged so that one bordered each edge of the path with another positioned 1.65 m to either side. These were of identical construction with loose flint nodules and sand and gravel infilling the narrow trenches. The single excavated example proved to be near vertical sided, 0.25 m deep and flat-based.
- 5.1.16 The path was of a substantial construction 2.50 m wide and set in a trench (26) in excess of 0.45 m deep. This was constructed of a heavily compacted silty sand and gravel (27). The probable contemporary garden soil (21) was present to either side of the path with a maximum thickness of 0.12 m and actually sealed the surface as a thin layer no more than 0.05 m thick. This would have been a result of less frequent use and maintenance of the path allowing the surrounding soils to wash and encroach over the surface before the current topsoil and turf (20) accumulated.

Trench 5

- 5.1.17 Trench 5 was orientated roughly east/west across the edge of a path and adjacent border on the raised walkway across the eastern half of the garden (Fig. 2). This was machine excavated to the level of natural clay (76) 0.30 m below the current ground surface across all but the eastern end of the trench, demonstrating that it was largely clear of any features.
- 5.1.18 The earliest deposit (75) encountered reflects the garden construction and ground levelling similar to that seen in Trench 3 to the west. This 0.15 m thick soil provided

the surface level that the path and border edging were created on. Following the same construction method as seen elsewhere within the garden the path (78) was set within a trench up to 0.20 m deep and cut into deposit 75. This was flanked to either side by loosely set large flint nodules (79) that created a shallow bank or slope up away from the path. The current topsoil (74) continued to raise away from these to the west.

Trench 6

5.1.19 Trench 6 was orientated NNW/SSE and located in an almost identical fashion to Trench 3 but across the eastern raised and lowered paths approximately 12 m in front of the existing loggia building (Fig. 2). This revealed the same sequence of deposits and construction as seen to the west although no cut features other than the path construction trenches were encountered (Fig. 8).

5.1.20 Made ground (58) was used in the same way to level off the areas once the terrace and walkway had been created. Both paths were cut (50, 54) into this deposit and made of the same compacted silty sand and gravel (49, 53). The upper level path surface is situated at 94.38 m OD with the lower level path surface at 93.59 m OD. The current topsoil and turf (48) was generally 0.22 m thick across the trench shallowing to less than 0.10 m over the path surfaces.

Trench 7

5.1.21 Due to the proximity of the fountain and slightly limited access and movement for the machine Trench 7 was excavated as a hand dug test pit up against the wall of the fountain (Fig. 2). The natural clay (84) was revealed within the trench with the construction trench of the fountain the only feature present at this level (Fig. 9).

5.1.22 The foundation trench (85) was cut directly into the natural clay with the foundation courses of brick (87) rising above this level by four courses. The surrounding surface and path (81) sealed the backfill (86) of the foundation trench and butted against the brick foundation rising 0.10 m above the upper foundation course level.

5.1.23 A recent cable trench (82) was cut into the path surface. A thin (0.05m) topsoil accumulation sealed the surface and cable trench backfill.

Trench 8

5.1.24 Trench 8 was orientated NNW/SSE immediately to the south of the loggia and across an existing earthwork which had recently been cleared of vegetation and standing trees (Fig. 2). The natural clay was revealed throughout the trench and no features were cut into this level (Fig. 10).

5.1.25 The earliest deposit present was a lower cultivated soil horizon (92) comparable to the earliest soil horizons within the other trenches. This was up to 0.30 m thick across the trench and had a level surface suggesting that there were no features within this part of the original garden. Upon this a soil bank had been created (90). This was approximately 2.50 m wide and 0.30 m deep and lay directly over the surface of the earlier soil horizon. The lack of any deposits separating the two could

suggest that little in date separates them although the origin of the bank and its purpose is not clear. After the bank had been created and vertical sided and flat based trench (91) was cut into the southern side of it. The reason for this is again a little unclear although the backfill with a good friable silty soil could suggest it was a planting trench.

- 5.1.26 A 0.20 m thick modern topsoil and turf (88) sealed the bank and level ground to either side. A series of tree stumps lined the northern side of the bank and had clearly been growing there for some time. A hedge had also been growing along the crest of the bank. It is possible that these may have been intended to screen the loggia in part from the functionary western end of the main building to the south of this area.

Watching Brief Area

- 5.1.27 The watching brief covered an area of approximately 0.15 ha. The majority of the overburden stripping was unsupervised by an archaeologist due to contracting work starting at the southern end of the area before the watching brief had been notified. However, upon the initial site visit a brick arched culvert was recorded at a depth of 2.60 m below the current surface level. This was aligned off the corner of the ancillary building range to the east and directly towards the pond on a NW/SE orientation. The culvert was relatively small being only 0.60 m wide and 0.40 m high. The line of the culvert corresponds with a break in the vegetation on the eastern side of the pond.
- 5.1.28 The northern part of the area was stripped of the overlying soil levels under archaeological supervision. This revealed the brick foundations of a large greenhouse (105) and associated cold frames (108) to west. The greenhouse had internal mortar and cinder floors and clearly identified planting trenches within. The brick from the greenhouse would appear to be early 20th century in origin suggesting that the garden was turned over to more functional uses at this time. A crushed brick and mortar path (106) flanked the eastern side of the greenhouse.

5.2 Finds

Pottery

by John Cotter

Introduction and Methodology

- 5.2.1 A total of 40 sherds of pottery weighing 697g was recovered. All of this is of post-medieval date. All the pottery was examined and spot-dated during the present assessment stage. For each context the total pottery sherd count and weight were recorded on an Excel spreadsheet, followed by the context spot-date which is the date-bracket during which the latest pottery types in the context are estimated to have been produced or were in general circulation. Comments on the presence of datable types were also recorded, usually with mention of vessel form (jugs, bowls etc.) and any other attributes worthy of note (eg. decoration etc.).

Date and Nature of the Assemblage

- 5.2.2 Overall the pottery assemblage is in a fragmentary condition, although the sherds themselves are quite fresh and some are fairly large. Ordinary domestic and horticultural pottery types are represented.
- 5.2.3 The assemblage largely comprises sherds of red terracotta flowerpots which most probably date as the few sherds of Staffordshire-type whitewares from the site (see below). At any rate the flowerpots exhibit irregularities resulting from wheel throwing and so are unlikely to be much later than the 19th century. One flowerpot sherd is decorated with cream slip banding around the rim - this is characteristic of late 18th- and early 19th-century flowerpots produced at Brill (Bucks.) and elsewhere in central southern England. Besides flowerpots, there are a few sherds of well-known late 18th- to early 19th-century, and 19th-century products of the Staffordshire and Midlands potteries including mass-produced tablewares in Staffordshire-type white earthenware (transfer-printed etc.), Creamware and Pearlware. The Pearlware vessel may be a chamberpot. There is also a single sherd of plain English porcelain. A teacup rim in Staffordshire whiteware bears a blue transfer-printed floral design datable to c. 1830-1860. This may well be the date of most of the assemblage. The flowerpots, obviously, suggest the excavated area was a garden or, at least, that the pottery finds largely derive from horticultural activities.

Recommendations

- 5.2.4 In view of the lateness of the pottery assemblage, its small size and poor condition, no further work is recommended. The pottery could be discarded if the holding museum so desires.

Ceramic Building Materials

by John Cotter

Introduction and Methodology

- 5.2.5 A total of 24 pieces of ceramic building materials weighing 6977g were recovered. All of this appears to be of late post-medieval date. Details, including complete dimensions, were recorded on an Excel spreadsheet in a similar way to the pottery assemblage.

Date and Nature of the Assemblage

- 5.2.6 The CBM assemblage consists very largely of large, fresh, flat roof tile (peg tile) fragments, plus parts of a single chimney pot, a complete red brick and a few small scraps of soft red brick. All of this material is likely to be of late 18th- or 19th-century date.
- 5.2.7 The roof tile fragments are unusually large and fresh. Those in context (34) are particularly fresh and seem to have experienced very little weathering before breakage. The tiles are of standard medieval/post-medieval type - rectangular with a

pair of circular nail holes near the top. One almost complete tile preserves its full dimensions: length 267mm, width 152mm, thickness 13-14mm, with a pair of circular nail holes both around 10mm in diameter. They are in a uniform orange-red sandy fabric and are of fairly regular appearance suggesting a late date (see spreadsheet for other details). The chimney pot fragment is of unusually plain cylindrical form (possibly a local product?) and is heavily sooted internally. The presence of the chimney pot suggests a late 18th- or 19th-century date for much of the assemblage. The complete red brick is clearly quite recent - probably 19th- or perhaps even early 20th century in date. It bears a maker's stamp 'GAB' or 'CAB' which might, with further research, be identifiable. The small brick fragments lack diagnostic features but are probably quite late as well.

Recommendations

- 5.2.8 In view of the lateness of the assemblage and its fairly small size, no further work is recommended. Discard of the assemblage is suggested unless the holding museum wishes to retain all, or some, of it - perhaps including the complete roof tile and brick.

Glass

by Ian Scott

- 5.2.9 The glass finds comprise two complete and similar bottles (context 108), the bases of two bottles (context 56) and a small fragment of cast decorative glass (context 75).
- 5.2.10 The two complete bottles are embossed 'SOURCE PERRIER' on the base. Both bottles are mould blown and would have been closed by crown corks. The crown cork was patented in 1892. The name 'Source Perrier' dates from 1898. At the same time the water was bottled in bottles 'shaped like Indian clubs'. These bottles therefore date to very end of the 19th century or more likely the early 20th century. The bottle bases comprise a dark olive green wine bottle with indented base, probably machine blown, and a light blue green glass bottle embossed on the shoulders with the words 'SANITAS DISINFECTANT'. The latter was certainly machine moulded. Both bottles probably date to late 19th or early 20th century, when the 'Sanitas' product was current. The moulded decorative glass fragment is made light blue and white opaque glass mixed to give a marbled effect, and is part of a border or rim. Again it is fairly recent in date.

Iron

by Ian Scott

- 5.2.11 The only metal find is a cast iron peg with ribs along its length (context 56).

6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 Overall interpretation

- 6.1.1 The principal aim of the evaluation was to assess the condition of the former features of the Italian Garden, in particular the pathway surfaces and garden borders. The evidence from the evaluation can then inform the future management and conservation of the Garden. To this end the evaluation and, to a lesser degree, subsequent watching brief were very successful.
- 6.1.2 The key aim of identifying the character and condition of the original paths was substantially achieved. It is clear that the original radial paths were constructed of heavily compacted silty sand and gravel providing a soft reddish appearance and that these remain *in situ* and intact just below the current surface level. Where investigated they have not been significantly altered nor truncated by later activities and based upon the current topography it is reasonable to believe that this survival is characteristic of all the pathways within the garden. The pathways were also of solid construction, often set and rammed into in deep trenches and with an aggar along the spine of the path to aid drainage. The trenches (3 and 6) across the terrace and the raised and lower paths also show that the terrace and paths here have not suffered from significant erosion or later disturbance. Removal of the most recent humic topsoil accumulation should provide the historic levels more accurately although the recent soil actually only mimics the underlying topography to a lesser or greater extent.
- 6.1.3 The presence of significant drainage features of a single style construction serves further to show the level of preservation of original features within the garden albeit functional and not for visual impact. Trench 4 adeptly illustrates that the drains were a contemporary construction with the excavated path surfaces providing additional drainage to the path edges at this location. The presence of these elsewhere indicates that much of the original garden construction and, hence, design remains preserved.
- 6.1.4 The evidence provided by Trenches 1 and 2 was slightly more ambiguous although these did partly achieve the aim of the investigation here. It is clear from the number of linear planting trenches present and areas of cultivated soil with distinct sharply defined edges that these do represent planting schemes or areas within the garden. Also the association with a flint and gravel filled drain tentatively suggests that these are largely original features. However, a more precise interpretation of the character or plan of this areas is difficult to achieve within the confines of a trench. It is known that an orchard was planted within this area and the planting trenches could reflect this. In such cases it is more reasonable to expect a sequence of spaced planting pits rather than closely spaced trenches. Indeed this style of trench has more in common with actual bedding trenches or even deep digging cultivation normally used within vegetable gardens than they do for orchards. In this example and area it would appear that the basic aims have been achieved but have served to provide more detailed questions as to the appearance of the garden.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

N.B. listed in trench order followed by context order

Ctxt No	Type	Width (m)	Depth/Thick (m)	Comment	Finds	No./ wt	Date
Trench 1							
1	Cut	0.44	0.18	Drainage trench			
2	Layer		0.22	Topsoil			
3	Layer		0.22	Lower cultivated soil horizon	Pottery CBM	1, 11g 2, 99g	19-20C
4	Cut	1.50	0.21	Tree hole			
5	Fill		0.21	Fill of 4	Pottrey	1, 88g	19-20C
6	Cut	1.50	0.25	Tree hole			
7	Fill		0.25	Fill of 6	Pottery CBM	8, 74g 2, 106g	late 18-19C
8	Cut	0.61	0.14	Planting trench			
9	Fill		0.14	Fill of 8			
10	Layer			Natural clay			
11	Fill		0.18	Flint nodule drainage fill of 1	Pottery CBM	3, 17g 3, 459g	19-20C
12	Cut	1.50		Tree hole			
13	Cut	1.50		Tree hole			
14	Fill			Fill of 12	Pottery	1, 16g	19-20C
15	Fill			Fill of 13	Pottery	1, 18g	19-20C
16	Cut	0.75		Planting trench			
17	Cut	0.90		Planting trench			
18	Cut	0.65	0.05	Planting trench			
19	Fill			Fill of 16	Pottery CBM	5, 50g 1, 10g	19-20C
31	Fill			Fill of 17	Pottery	1, 6g	19-20C
32	Fill			Fill of 18	Pottery CBM	1, 3g 2, 281g	c1820- 1900
33	Cut	0.86	0.08	Drainage pit			
34	Fill		0.08	Tile fragment fill of 33	CBM	11, 3668g	late 18-19C
Trench 2							
35	Layer		0.18	Topsoil			
47	Layer		0.40	Lower cultivated soil horizon			
55	Cut		0.20	Path trench			
56	Fill		0.20	Path surface. Fill of 55	Pottery Glass Iron	2, 39g 2, - 1, -	c1820- 1900
57	Cut	1.80	un-ex	Tree hole/planting pit			
58	Cut	0.70	un-ex	Plant/tree disturbance?			
59	Cut	0.90	un-ex	Tree hole/planting pit			
60	Cut	0.70	un-ex	Planting trench			
61	Cut	0.70	un-ex	Planting trench			
62	Cut	1.50x 7.50	un-ex	Tree hole/tree disturbance			
63	Fill		un-ex	Fill of 57			
64	Fill		un-ex	Fill of 58			
65	Fill		un-ex	Fill of 59			
66	Fill		un-ex	Fill of 60			
67	Fill		un-ex	Fill of 61			
68	Fill		un-ex	Fill of 62	Pottery	9, 124g	c1780- 1830
69	Layer			Natural clay			
70	Cut	0.40		Drainage trench			

Ctxt No	Type	Width (m)	Depth/Thick (m)	Comment	Finds	No./ wt	Date
71	Fill			Flint nodule drainage fill of 70	CBM	2, 42g	18-19C
72	Cut	0.70		Drainage trench			
73	Fill			Flint nodule drainage fill of 72	Pottery	4, 120g	19-20C
Trench 3							
36	Layer		0.15	Topsoil			
37	Layer		0.20	Lower cultivated soil horizon			
38	Layer			Natural clay			
39	Cut	1.60	0.60	Path construction trench			
40	Fill		1.00	Path 'foundation' and surface. Fill of 39			
41	Layer		0.40	Lower cultivated soil horizon			
42	Cut	1.60	0.30	Path construction trench			
43	Fill		1.00	Path 'foundation' and surface. Fill of 42			
44	Cut	0.36	0.20	Drainage trench			
45	Fill		0.11	Flint nodule drainage fill of 44			
46	Layer		0.30	Made ground			
Trench 4							
20	Layer		0.20	Topsoil			
21	Fill		0.25	Lower cultivated soil horizon			
22	Fill		0.20	Flint nodule drainage fill of 23			
23	Cut	0.30		Drainage trench			
24	Cut	0.30		Drainage trench			
25	Fill	0.30		Flint nodule and tile drainage fill of 24			
26	Cut	1.60	0.40	Path construction trench			
27	Fill		0.60	Path 'foundation' and surface. Fill of 26			
28	Cut	0.3		Drainage trench			
29	Fill			Flint nodule drainage fill of 28			
30	Layer			Natural clay			
94	Cut	0.30		Drainage trench			
95	Fill	0.30		Flint nodule and tile drainage fill of 94			
Trench 5							
74	Layer		0.16	Topsoil			
75	Layer		0.22	Lower cultivated soil horizon	Pottery Glass	1, 4g 1, -	c1830- 1860
76	Layer			Natural clay			
77	Cut	1.50	0.20	Path construction trench			
78	Fill		0.20	Path 'foundation' and surface. Fill of 77			
79	Layer		0.26	Cobbled facing			
Trench 6							
48	Layer		0.22	Topsoil			
49	Fill		0.25	Path 'foundation' and surface. Fill of 50			
50	Cut	1.20	0.20	Path construction trench			
51	Layer		0.25	Lower cultivated soil horizon			
52	Layer			Natural clay			
53	Fill			Path 'foundation' and surface. Fill of 54			
54	Cut	1.30		Path construction trench			
Trench 7							
80	Layer		0.05	Topsoil			
81	Layer		0.38	Path			
82	Cut	0.20	0.30	Cable trench			
83	Fill		0.30	Backfill of 82			
84	Layer			Natural clay			
85	Cut	0.14	0.10	Construction trench			

Ctxt No	Type	Width (m)	Depth/Thick (m)	Comment	Finds	No./ wt	Date
86	Fill		0.10	Backfill of 85			
87	Structure			Fountain brick structure			
Trench 8							
88	Layer		0.20	Topsoil			
89	Fill		0.20	Fill of 91			
90	Layer	1.00	0.30	Upcast soil bank			
91	Cut	0.75	0.40	Trench/flower bed			
92	Layer		0.30	Lower cultivated soil horizon			
93	Layer			Natural clay			
Watching Brief area							
100	Layer		0.20	Topsoil			
101	Layer		0.40	Lower cultivated soil horizon			
102	Cut	1.80	2.60	Culvert trench			
103	Structure	0.60		Brick arched culvert			
104	Fill	1.80	2.60	Backfill of 102 over 103			
105	Structure	6.00		Brick greenhouse foundation			
106	Fill	3.00	0.15	Path surface and fill of 107			
107	Cut	3.00	0.15	Shallow terrace for path			
108	Structure			Brick cold frame structures	Pottery CBM Glass	2, 109g 1, 2312g 2, -	19-20C

APPENDIX 2 POTTERY SPOT DATES

Ctxt No	Spot Date	No. of Sherds	Weight	Comment
3	19-20C	1	11	Red terracotta flowerpot rim
5	19-20C	1	88	Flowerpot base
7	c1770-1830?	8	74	1x bs plain Creamware jar form. 6x bss flowerpot incl sub-rim/shoulder area of large flowerpot with white slip allover ext and band of slip inside below rim - poss a Brill product?
11	19-20C	3	17	Flowerpot bss
14	19-20C	1	16	Flowerpot bs
15	19-20C	1	18	Flowerpot base
19	19-20C	5	50	Flowerpots incl 2 rims & base w central perforation. Handmade - 19/E20C?
31	19-20C	1	6	Flowerpot bs
32	c1820-1900	1	3	Staffs whiteware blue transfer printed dish rim (WHEW)
56	c1820-1900	2	39	Staffs blue transfer printed dish base (WHEW) Willow pattern dec. Eng porcelain/bone china plate rim - undec
68	c1780-1830?	9	124	6x plain Pearlware (1 vess) prob a chamberpot w footring base and handle stub. 3x flowerpot bss
73	19-20C	4	120	Flowerpot incl base (2 joining) & trace of collared rim
75	c1830-1860?	1	4	Staffs blue transfer printed cup rim - quite delicate with int/ext floral (?peony) dec
108	c1830-1860+?	2	109	Staffs whiteware or late Creamware large conical jug/pitcher rim with pouring lip and shallow relief banding on body. Large fresh joining sherds
Total		40	679	

APPENDIX 3 CBM SPOT DATES

Ctxt No	Spot Date	No. of Sherds	Weight	Comment
3	18-19C?	2	99	Pegtile corner w incompletely pierced nailhole. Orange-red sandy fabric, quite uniform texture. 1x small scrap red brick
7	18-19C?	2	106	Pegtile edge. 1x small scrap red brick
11	18-19C?	3	459	Pegtile corner w 1 complete & 1 trace circular nailholes (2 joining frags). 13mm thick, nailhole 10mm diam (ext side). 1x corner frag unfrogged red brick, prob quite late
19	18-19C?	1	10	Shapeless scrap red brick with large flint inclusion
32	L18-19C	2	281	Plain chimney pot rim (JOINS 34) heavily sooted int. Red terracotta fabric. 1x small edge frag pegtile
34	L18-19C	11	3668	1x plain cylindrical chimney pot frag with plain squared-off rim (diam c240mm; JOINS 32), heavily sooted int; fairly crude - poss locally produced? Other 10 frags = pegtiles, mostly large fresh frags incl 1 near complete and 2-3 half or third complete. All v similar fabric as in (3). Most complete lacks only 1 upper corner: Length 267mm, Width 152mm, Thickness 13-14mm, 1 surviving circ nailhole tapering from ext-int (ext diam 10mm, int 8mm); ext surf smooth, slightly concave, int rougher but unweathered but w speck of clear ?ash glaze at mid lower edge int. 1x half pegtile frag broken horizontally, complete width 160mm. 15mm thick with pair circ nailholes 14 & 13mm diam. 2 other complete tile widths = 165mm & 156mm. Average thickness of all tiles = 13mm. max 14mm. only 1 corner frag, in slightly smoother fabric. shows any significant weathering (nailhole diam 16mm)
71	18-19C?	2	42	1x pegtile frag. 1x scrap red brick with partial surface. prob quite late
108	19-E20C	1	2312	Complete orange-red brick, frogged with stamped maker's mark 'GAB' or 'CAB' within frog. Modern-looking with sharp arrises. Dimensions Length 227, width 110, thickness 66mm. At least 4 layers of whitewash on one of the long sides
TOTAL		24	6977	

APPENDIX 4 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Gifford 2006 *Dropmore House, Burnham, Buckinghamshire. Brief for archaeological evaluation in the Italian Garden* (Rep. No. 13582.R01)

IFA 1992 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations*

OA 1992 *Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, first edition, August 1992)

The Terra Firma Consultancy *The Dropmore Estate, Burnham, Buckinghamshire: Landscape Conservation Plan (in Draft)*

APPENDIX 5 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Dropmore House, Burnham, Buckinghamshire

Site code: BURDH 07

Grid reference: SU 925 861

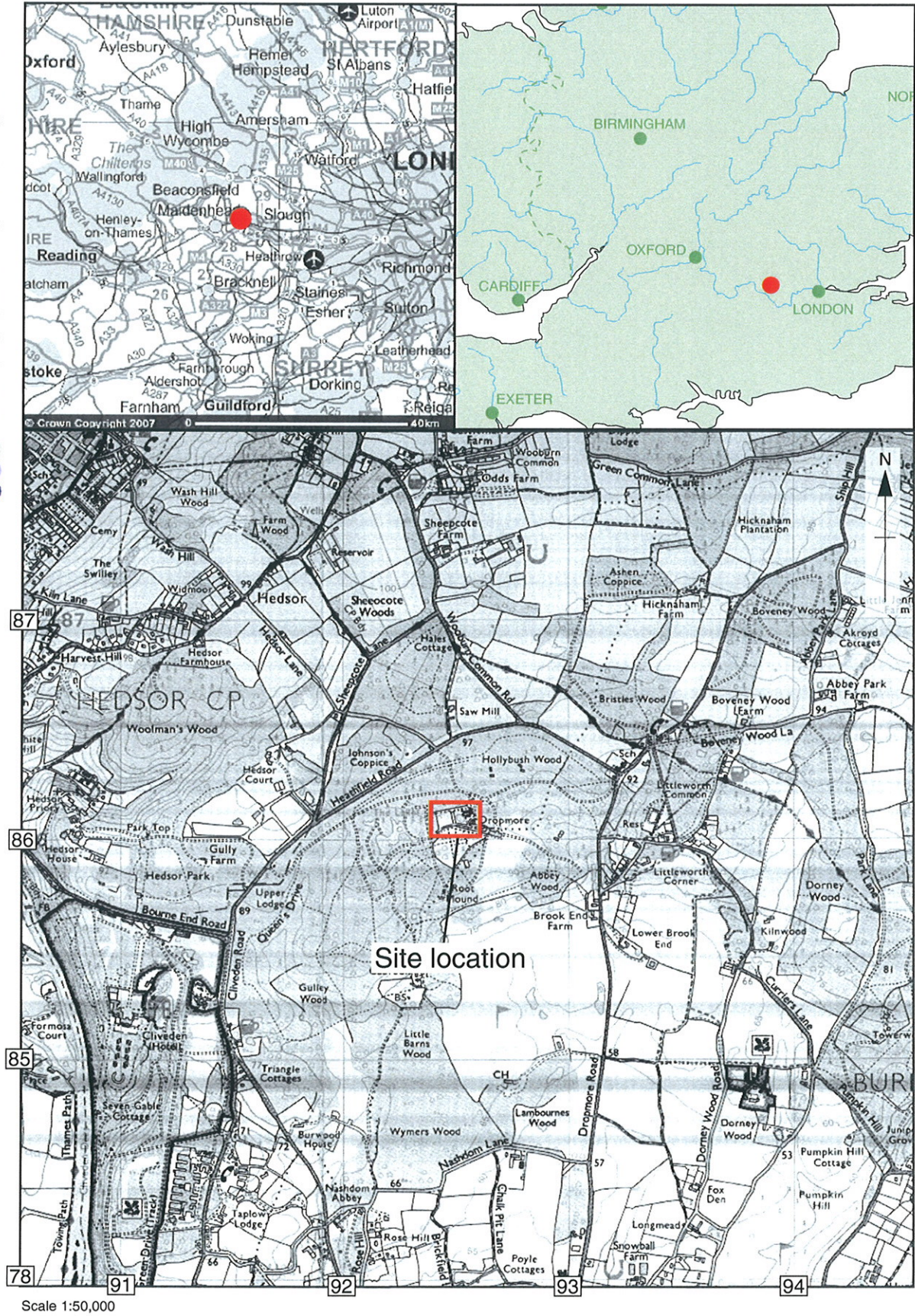
Type of evaluation: Eight machine stripped trench evaluation trenches of varying lengths within existing garden grounds

Date and duration of project: January 8th-12th 2007

Area of site: 0.5 ha.

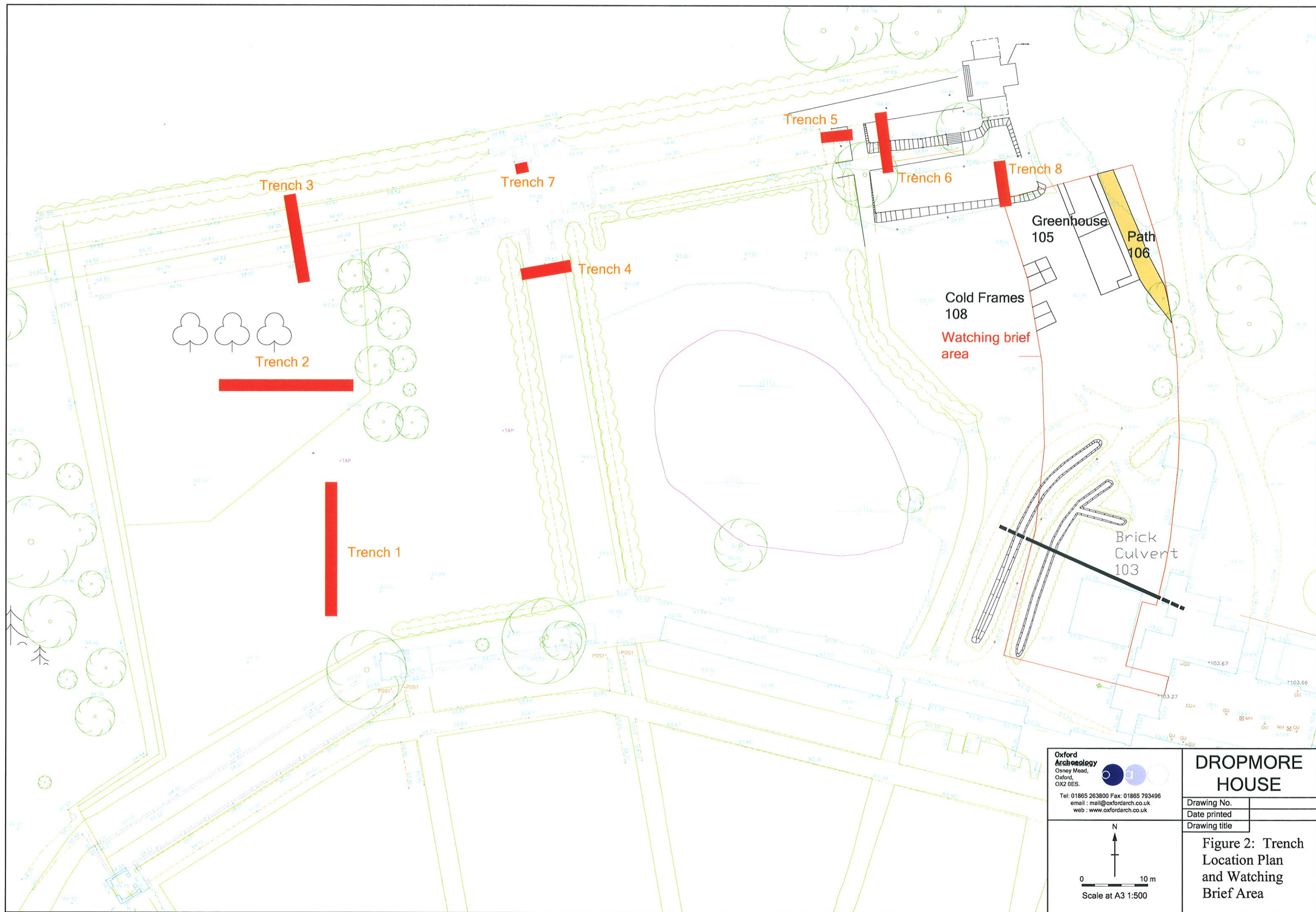
Summary of results: In January 2007, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation in the Italian Garden of Dropmore House in Burnham, Buckinghamshire (NGR SU 9248 8611). The work was commissioned by property owners Corporate Estates Ltd., through their archaeological consultant Gifford, who advise on the future management of the site. The eight-trench evaluation revealed a selection of features associated with the Italian Garden, including tree and plant holes, flower beds, drains, paths investigated the construction of an existing fountain feature. This was followed by a watching brief recording exercise along the eastern edge of the garden which revealed the foundations and planting trenches of a greenhouse and associated cold frames. All of the features and structures date to the 19th/20th century; no archaeology of earlier date was identified within the trenches.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: AYBCM 2007.

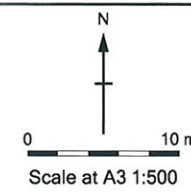


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Figure 1: Site location



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Archaeology
Osney Mead,
Oxford,
OX2 0ES.
Tel: 01865 263800 Fax: 01865 793496
email: mail@oxfordarch.co.uk
web: www.oxfordarch.co.uk



DROPMORE HOUSE

Drawing No.	
Date printed	
Drawing title	

Figure 2: Trench Location Plan and Watching Brief Area

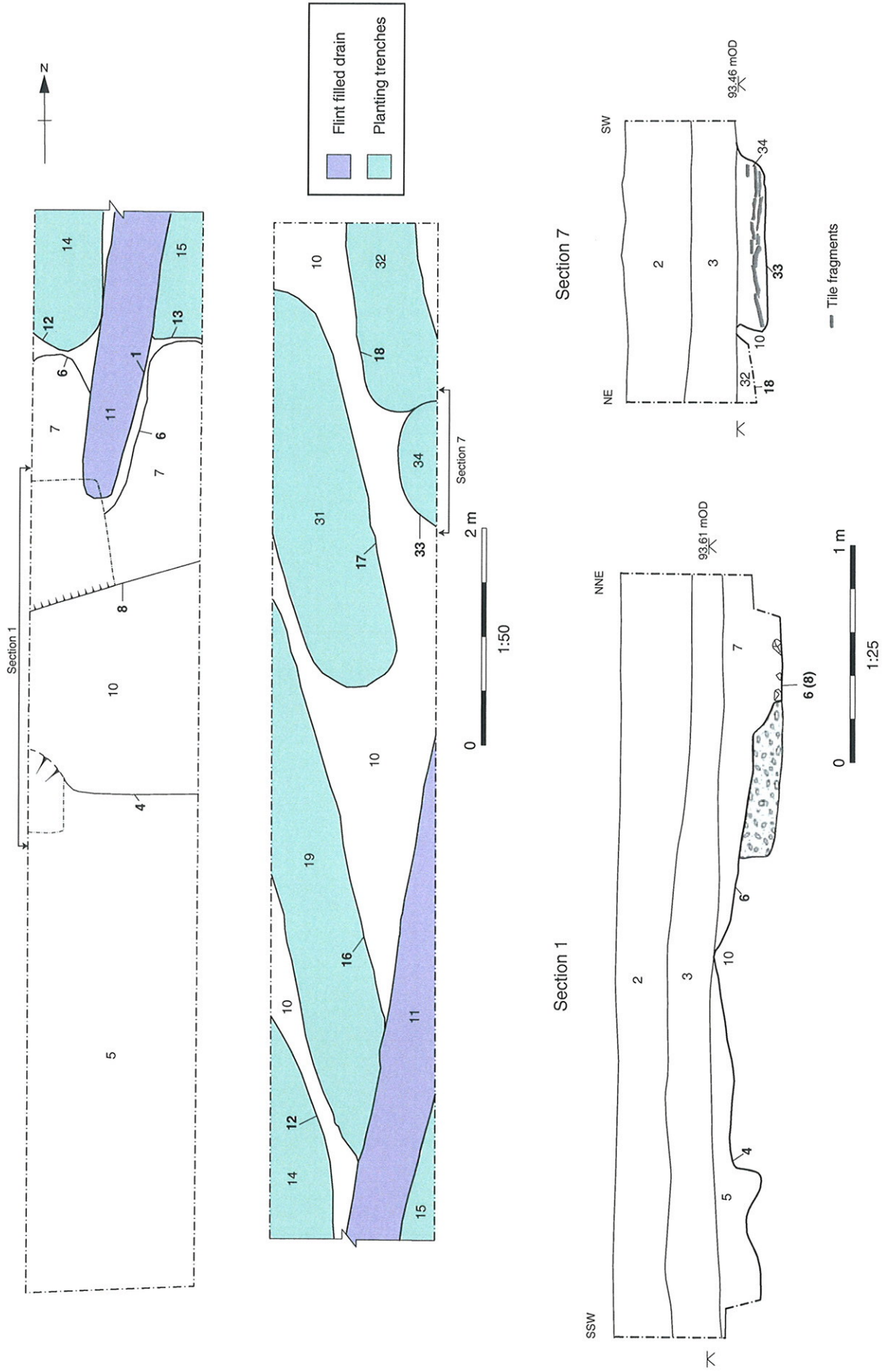
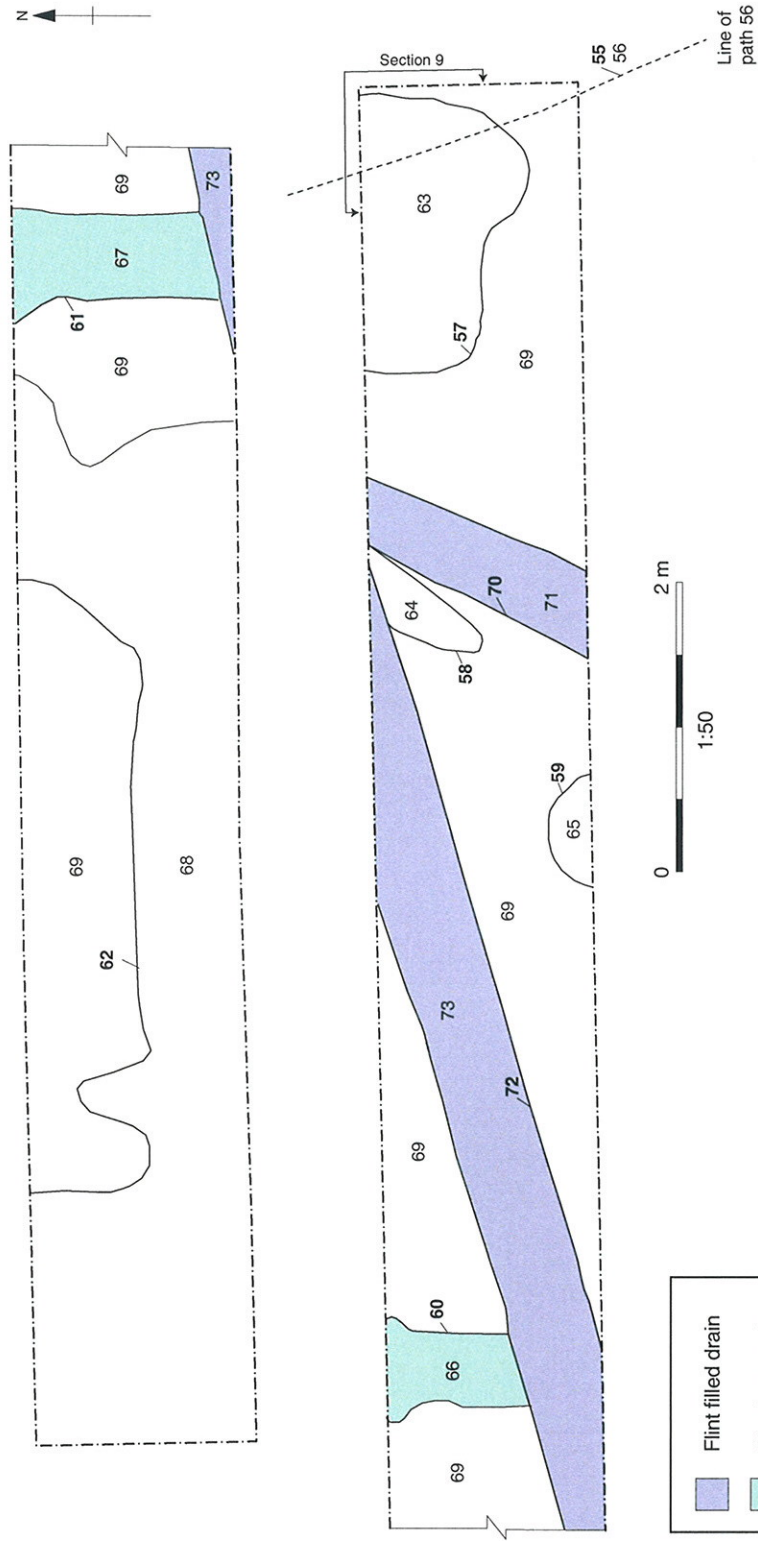


Figure 3: Trench plan and sections

Plan 5



Section 9

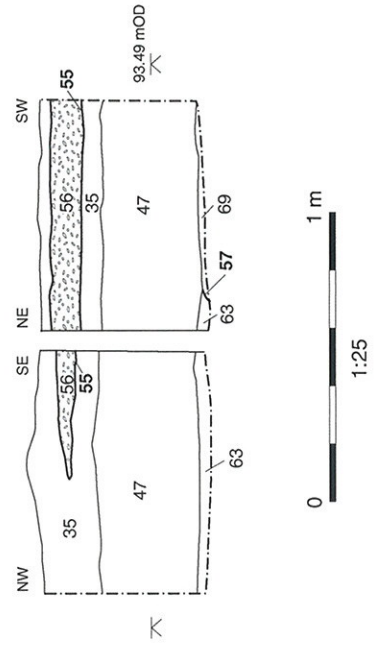


Figure 4: Trench 2 plan and section

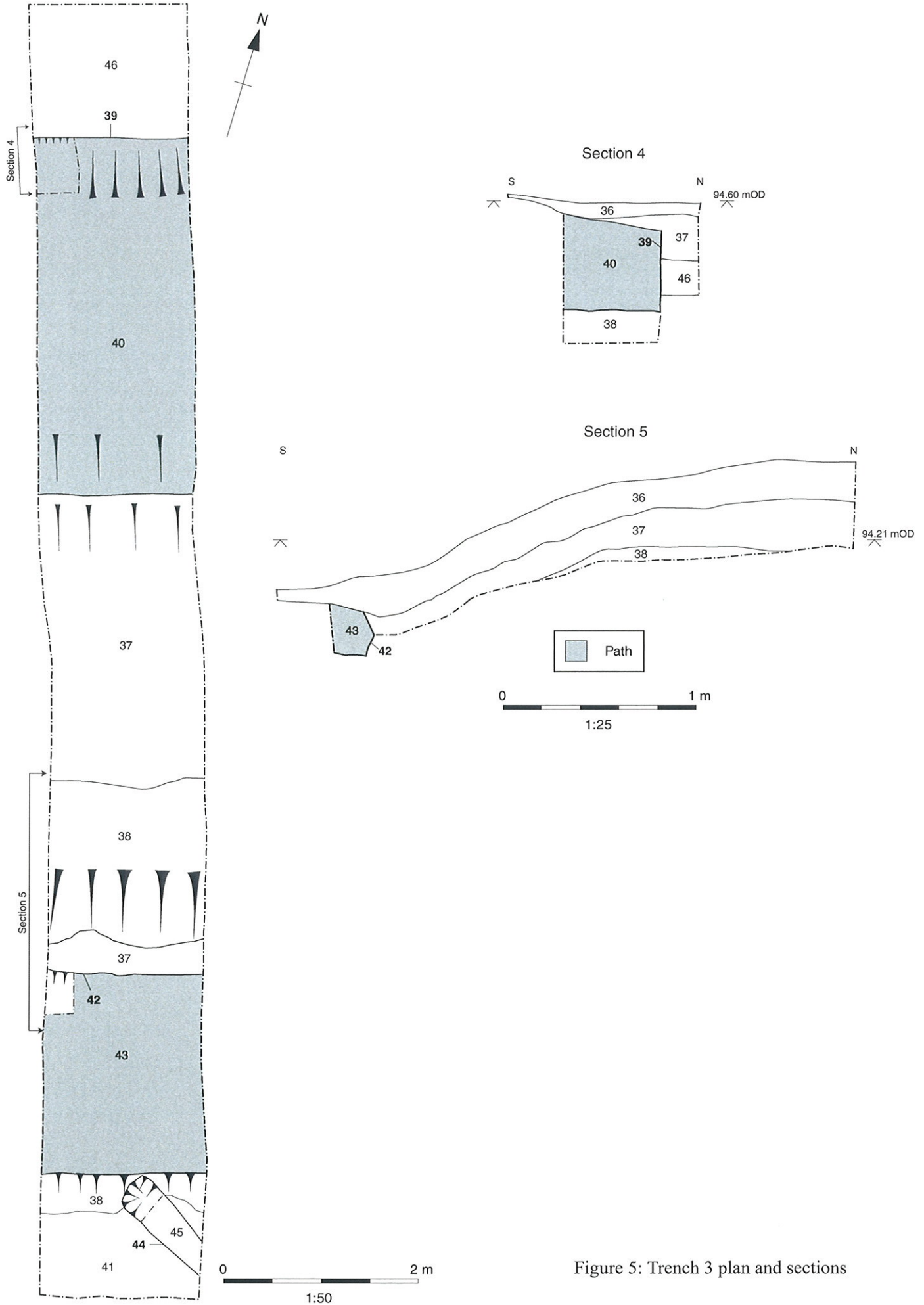


Figure 5: Trench 3 plan and sections

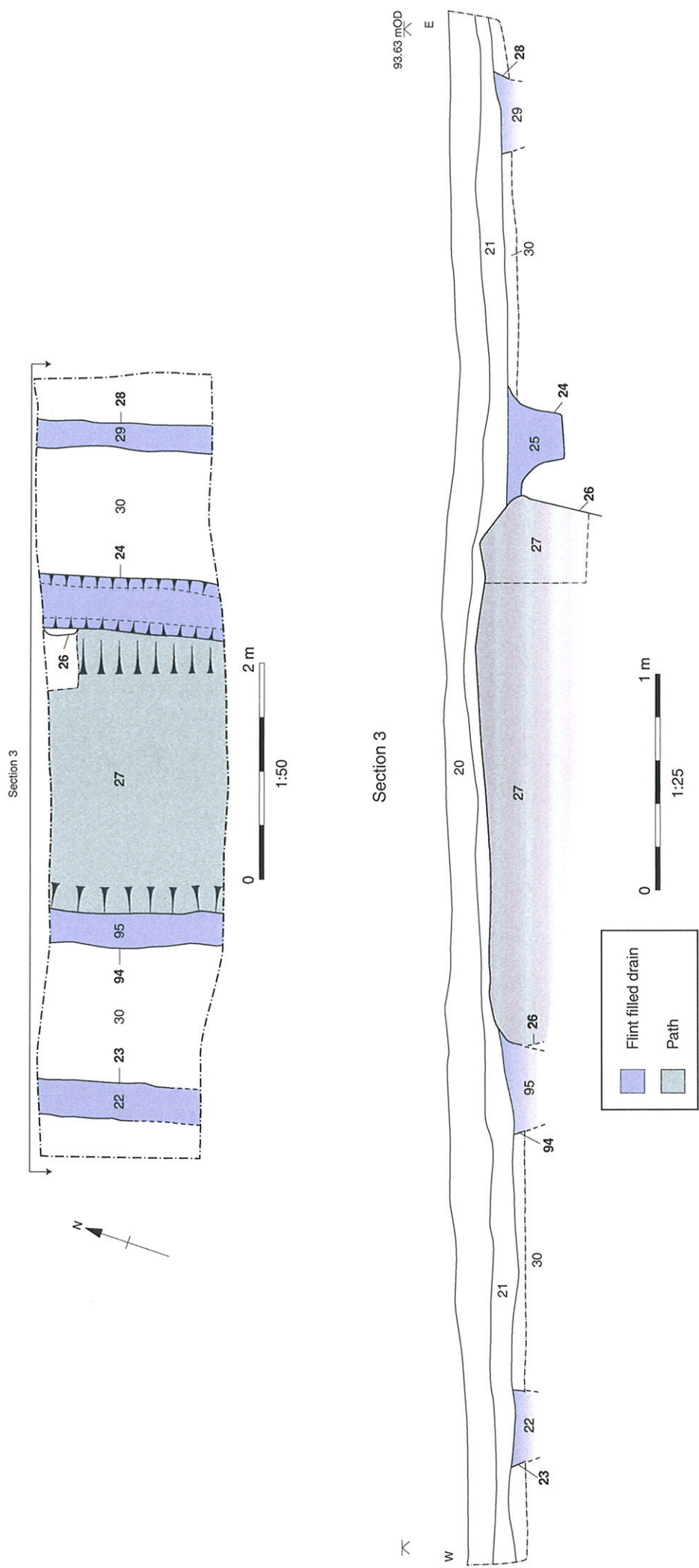


Figure 6: Trench 4 plan and section

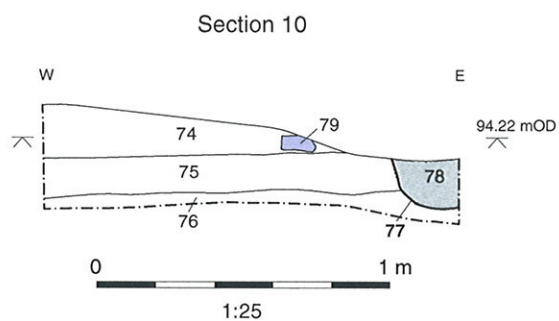
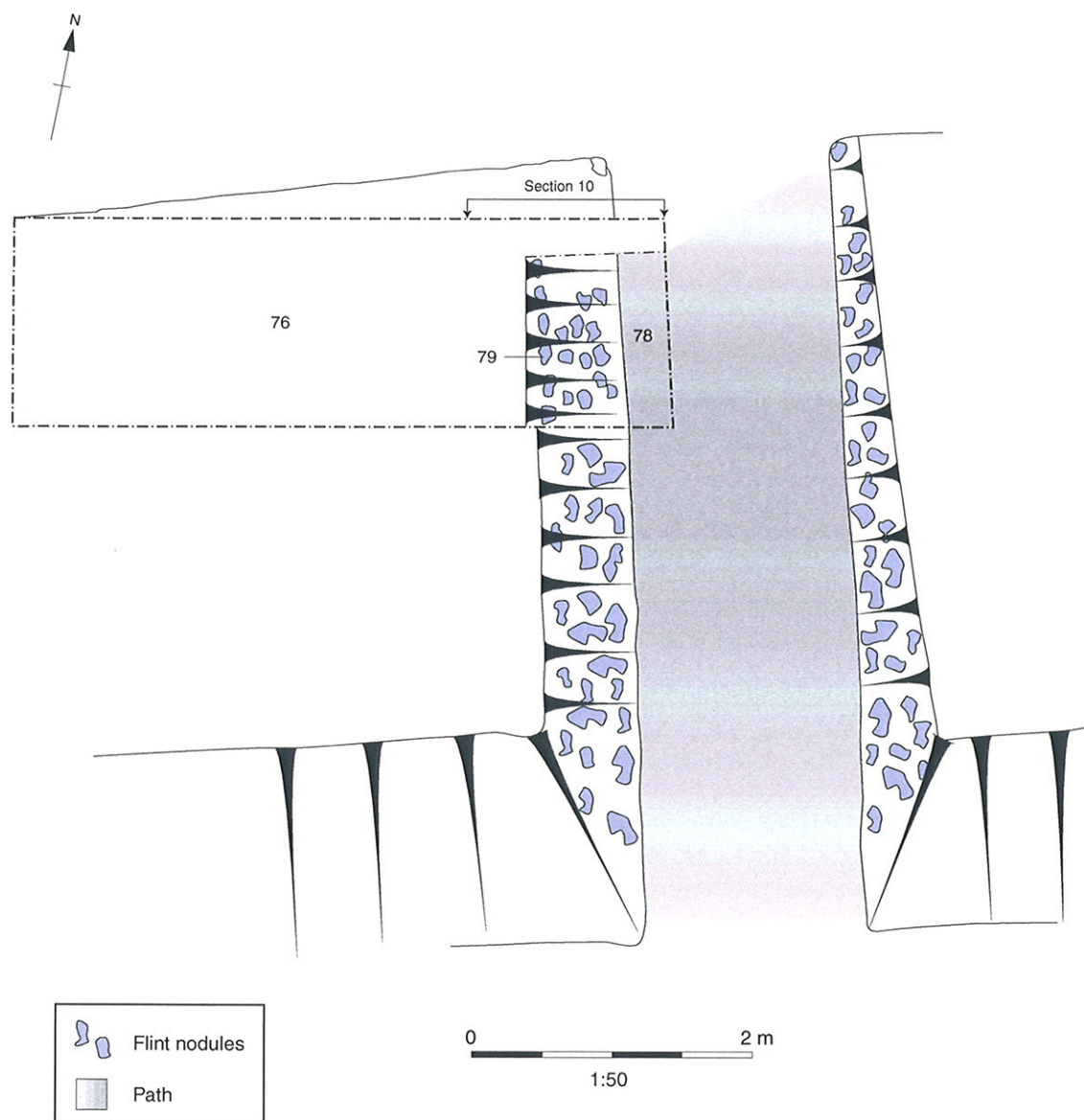


Figure 7: Trench 5 plan and section

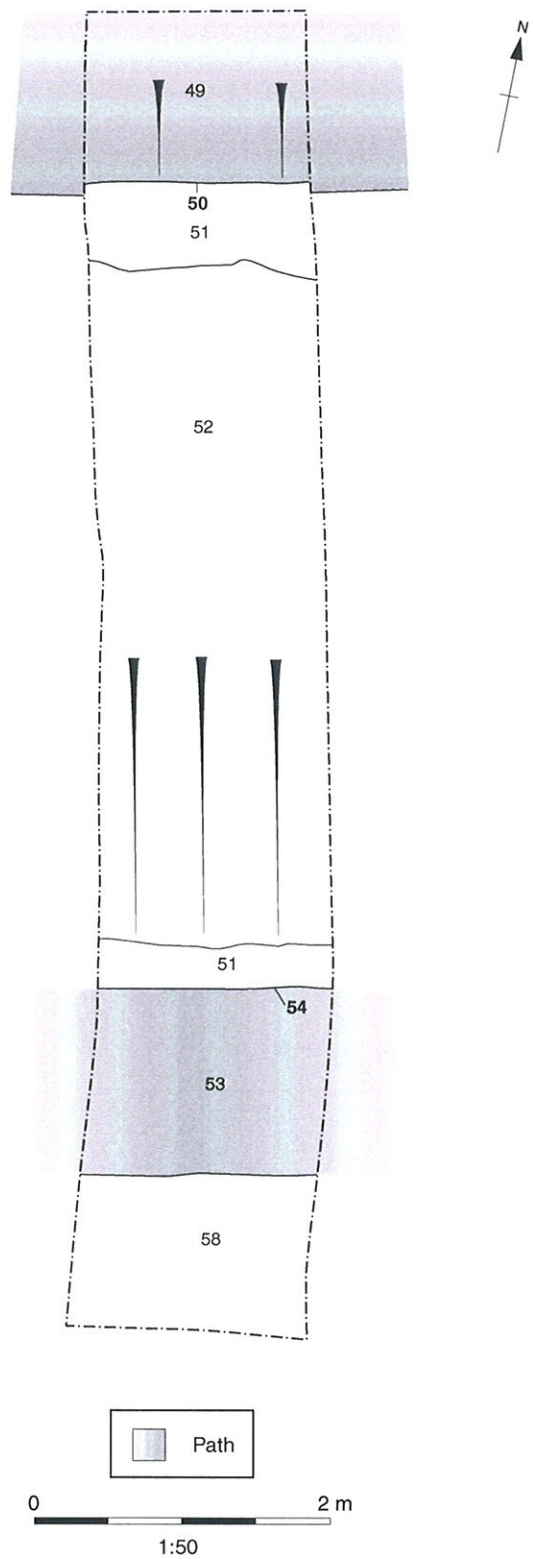


Figure 8: Trench 6 plan

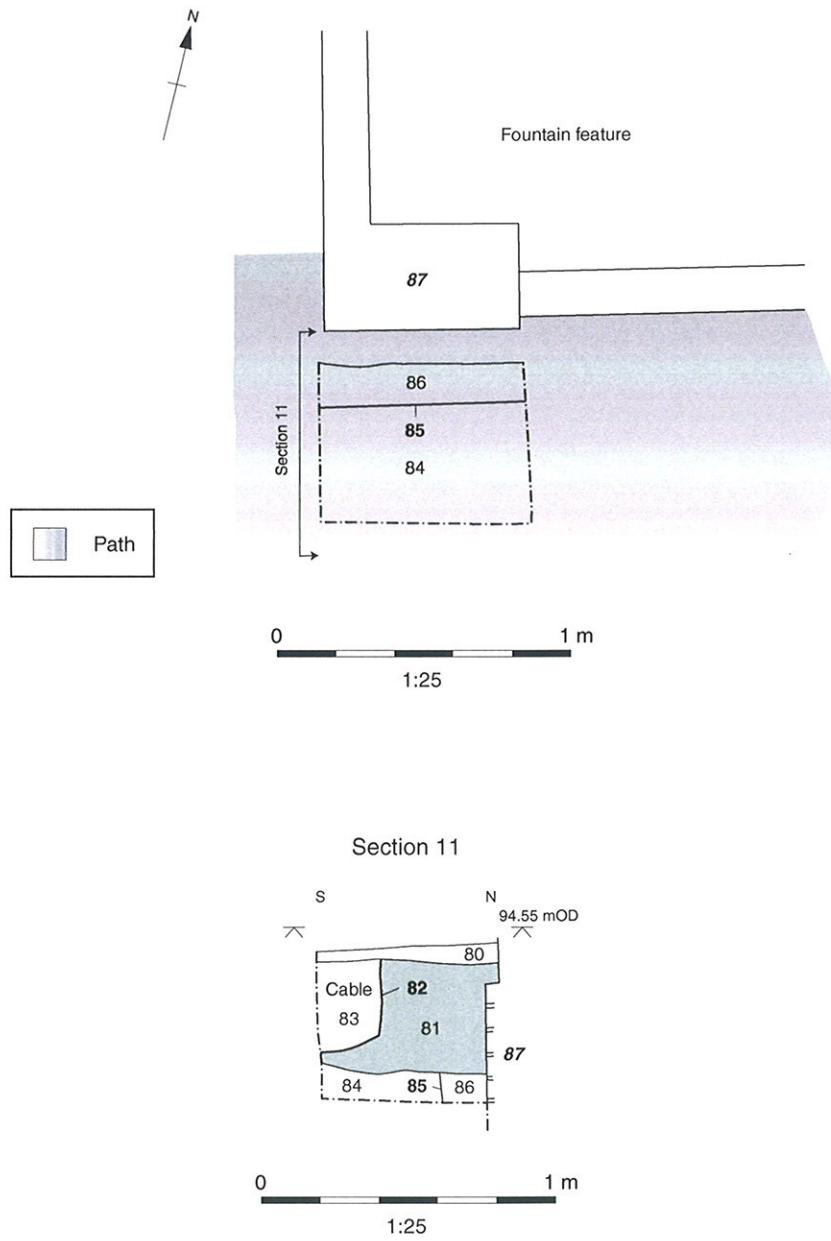


Figure 9: Trench 7 plan and section

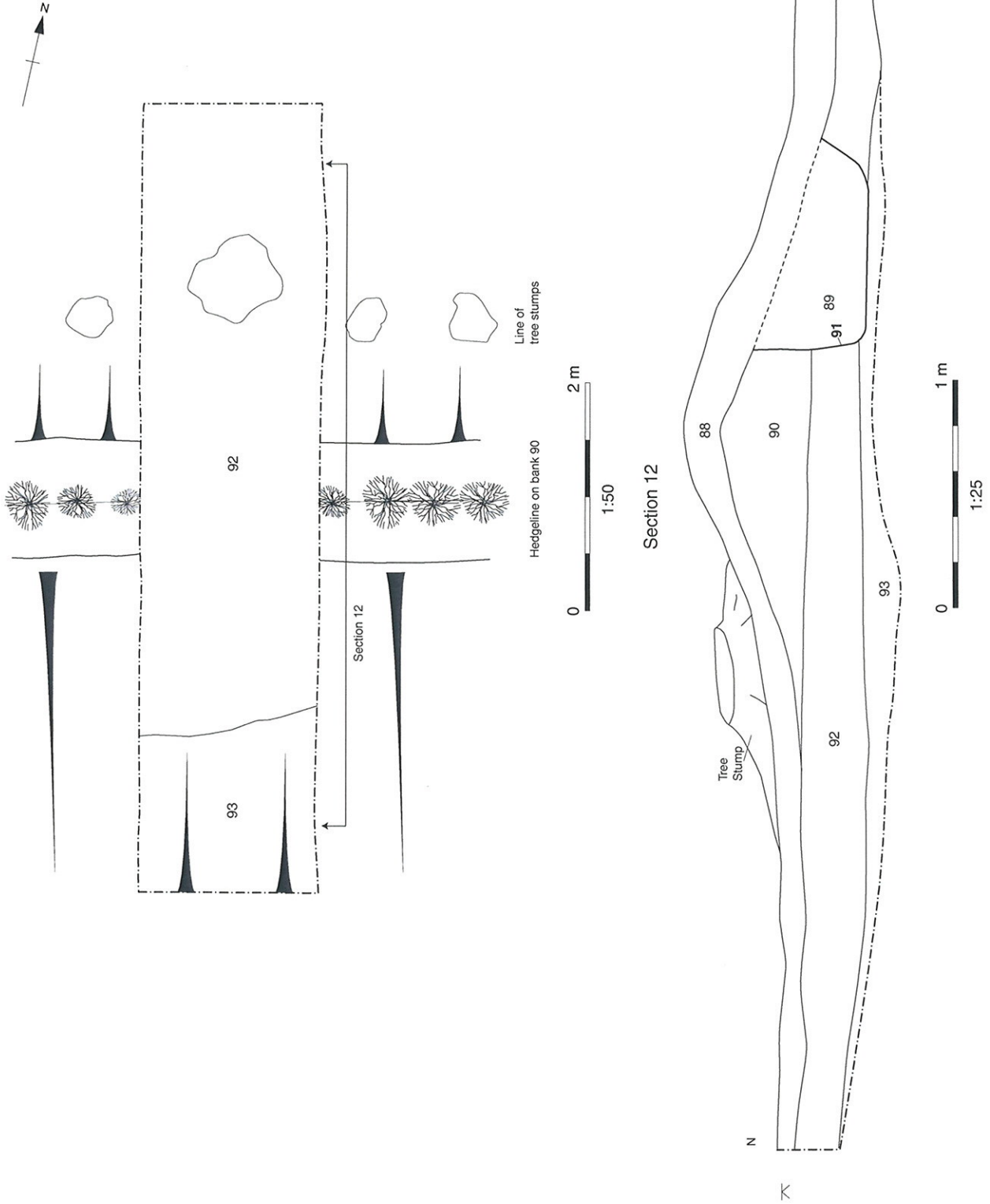






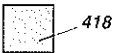








Figure 10: Trench 8 plan and section

	Section line and number
	Section through feature not illustrated with section drawing
	Limit of excavation
	Sondage / Interior limit of excavation
	Fill line and number
	Cut line and number
	Structure number
	Unclear boundary
	Stones
	Hachures indicate inclination of slope inside excavated feature
	Levels
	Grid point
	Continuation line (trench edge continues)



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