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Salvation Army Centre
Booth Road
London Borough of Croydon

An Archaeological Evaluation

TQ 31836556

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

December 1994

**Salvation Army Centre, Booth Road
London Borough of Croydon
Archaeological Evaluation**

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1 Summary

The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook a small archaeological evaluation on ground adjacent to the Salvation Army Centre, Booth Road, London Borough of Croydon, at the end of November 1994. The work was carried out on behalf of The Salvation Army in connection with a proposal to build an extension to the centre.

The evaluation comprised a single trial trench, 10m long x 4 m wide. The only deposits located were a post-medieval soil horizon, and a narrow brick wall, overlaid by modern demolition material and topsoil. The only finds retrieved from these deposits were a small quantity of post-medieval brick and tile, and a single residual sherd of medieval pottery.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 It is proposed by the Salvation Army to build a large new extension on the west side of their existing centre, in Booth Road, in the London Borough of Croydon. As part of the considerations of planning permission for this development the Salvation Army commissioned The Oxford Archaeological Unit to undertake an archaeological evaluation of the site of the proposed new building. The aim of the evaluation was to establish the existence, and significance of any archaeological remains which might survive, so the need for mitigation strategies could be determined.
- 2.2 The fieldwork took place over a period of two days at the end of November 1994 and was carried out according to specifications agreed with English Heritage.

3 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 3.1 The site is located close to the historic centre of Croydon; the parish church of St John the Baptist, a probable saxon foundation, lies about 100 m to the south east. It is also likely that this area was crossed by the line of a Roman road leading to the south coast, known as the London Portslade Way.
- 3.2 A watching brief of contractors ground work for the first phase of extensions to the Salvation Army hall, was carried out some 30 m to the south, in April 1994, by the Museum of London. The Museum of London's report of the watching brief (site code BOO 94) has already covered the archaeological and historical background of the site in some detail, and also contains a complete list of the Sites and Monuments Records within a radius of 150 metres. The deposits observed during the watching brief consisted of modern topsoil and demolition deposits overlying a 19th century soil profile; this in turn sealed deposits which are believed to represent infill within an earlier watercourse (16th to 18th century). In addition there were a few pieces of medieval material, both pottery and worked stone, two sherds of Roman pottery and one piece of prehistoric struck flint.

4 Location and Topography

- 4.1** The site is situated on the west side of Croydon town centre, centred at National Grid reference TQ 31836556.

The present ground level exists at a height of 43.0 m O.D. The underlying geology is river terrace gravel and the site lies at the eastern end of the River Wandle flood plain.

- 4.2** The site of the proposed new extension consists of an area of flat waste ground, some 40 m long and 10 m wide, which lies immediately to the NW of the existing Salvation Army hall. Two buildings, dating from the 19th and 20th century, which existed in this location, were demolished some months before the evaluation was carried out.

5 Methodology (see Fig. 2 for trench location)

- 5.1** A single trial trench, 10 m long x 4 m wide, was centrally positioned within the area of the proposed new building, and was excavated using a 360 degree mechanical excavator, equipped with a toothless ditching bucket.

- 5.2** The trench was excavated to a depth of 1 m, at which depth disturbed natural gravel was located. The trench was then stepped into a width of 1.60 m where cleaner gravel was exposed by excavating down a further 0.20 m. Once it had been established that there were no archaeological features present, two machine excavated sondages were dug at either ends of the trench to confirm that the gravel was natural, and not redeposited.

The trench sections were then cleaned by hand, and the layers of overburden were described, drawn and photographed.

6 Archaeological description (see Fig. 3 for trench section)

- 6.1** The top of the natural gravel (4) was located at an even level of 1 m below the present ground surface. The top 0.20 m of the gravel was 'dirty' (3), as it contained some mixing from the layer above. The remains of a narrow brick wall, only one brick wide, ran through the south half of the trench in an E-W alignment (7). A thick layer of brownish silty loam (2), containing occasional fragments of post-medieval brick and ceramic roof tile, overlay the natural gravel to either side of the wall.

A layer of demolition material (8) overlay the loam (2) in the area to the north of the wall, and this in turn was overlaid by the present topsoil/demolition layer (1). In the area to the south of the wall the modern topsoil directly overlay layer 2, except on the line of a concrete foundation (6) which ran through this half of the trench in an E-W alignment.

The deposit which overlay the gravel consisted of a thick deposit of brownish silty loam (2), containing occasional fragments of post-medieval brick and ceramic roof tile.

The remains of a narrow brick wall, only one brick wide, ran through the south half of the trench in an E-W alignment (7), and partially truncated layer 2. A layer of demolition material (8) extended in the area to the north of the wall, and this was overlaid by the present topsoil/demolition layer (1). In the area to the south of the wall the modern topsoil directly overlay layer 2, except on the line of a concrete foundation (6) which ran through this half of the trench in an E-W alignment.

7 The Pottery (identification by C. Underwood-Keevill)

Only a single sherd of pottery was found during the evaluation and this was a residual sherd of medieval grey ware (Tyler Hill type), which came from the post-medieval buried soil horizon (2).

8 Building material (identification by C. Underwood-Keevill)

A small sample of the brick and ceramic tile was taken from the buried soil horizon (2), and the demolition layer (8). In both of these contexts the material consisted of fragments of hand made brick and tile which were post-medieval, but no later than mid 19th century in date.

9 Interpretation and conclusions

9.1 The buried soil horizon found appears to be post-medieval garden soil, and the narrow brick wall a boundary wall between gardens, or plots. The different level of the soil to either side of the wall simply being due to the separate activity in each of the plots/gardens. The demolition material in the north half of the trench was related to the destruction of the wall.

9.2 The evaluation appears to have shown that there are no significant stratified remains within the area of the proposed development. The occurrence of residual medieval material found during the watching brief, and the evaluation, does indicate that there is some medieval activity in the near vicinity and there is therefore a slight possibility that discrete features such as pits could occur. However, no such features have so far been located in any part of the site.

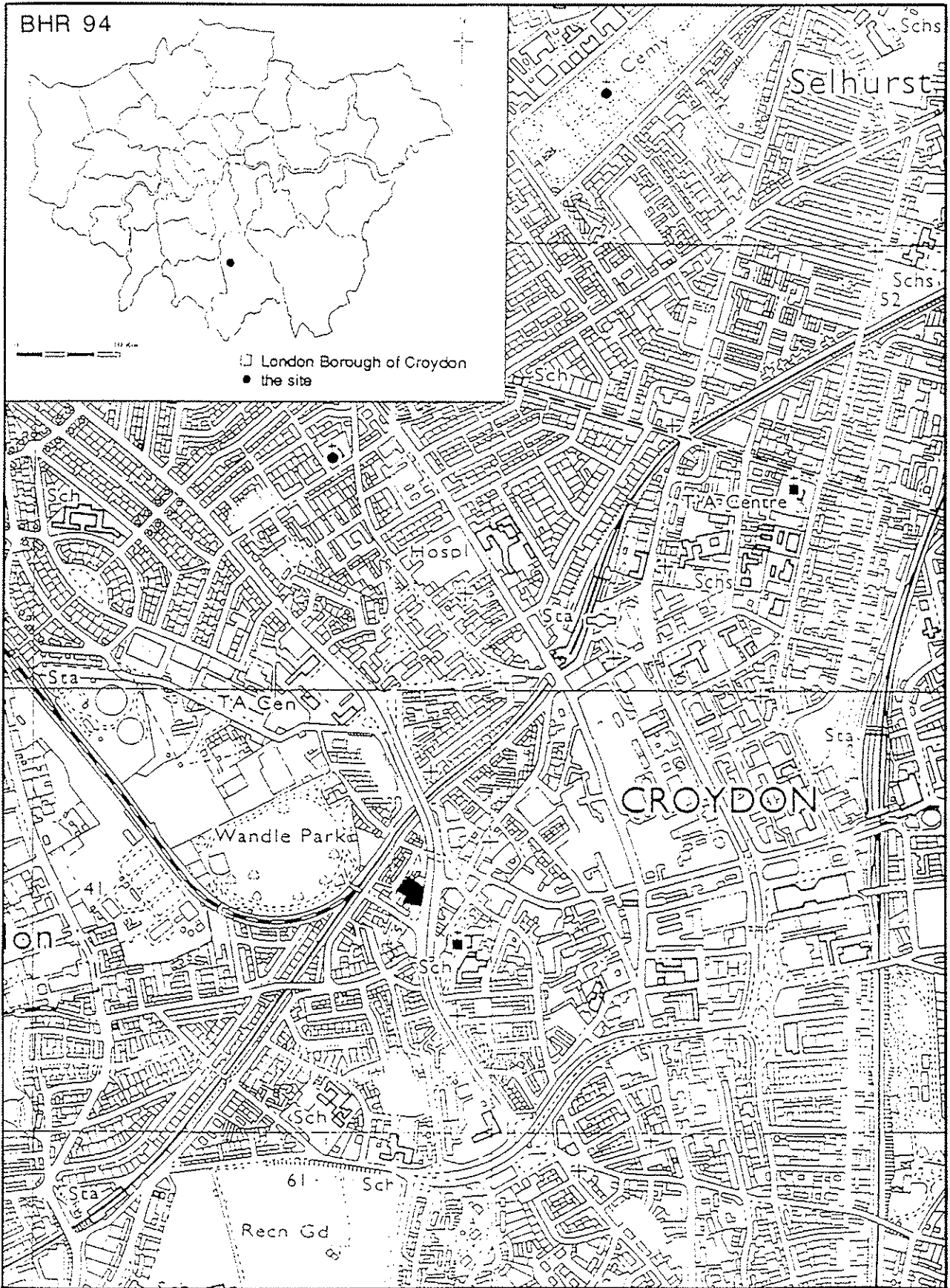
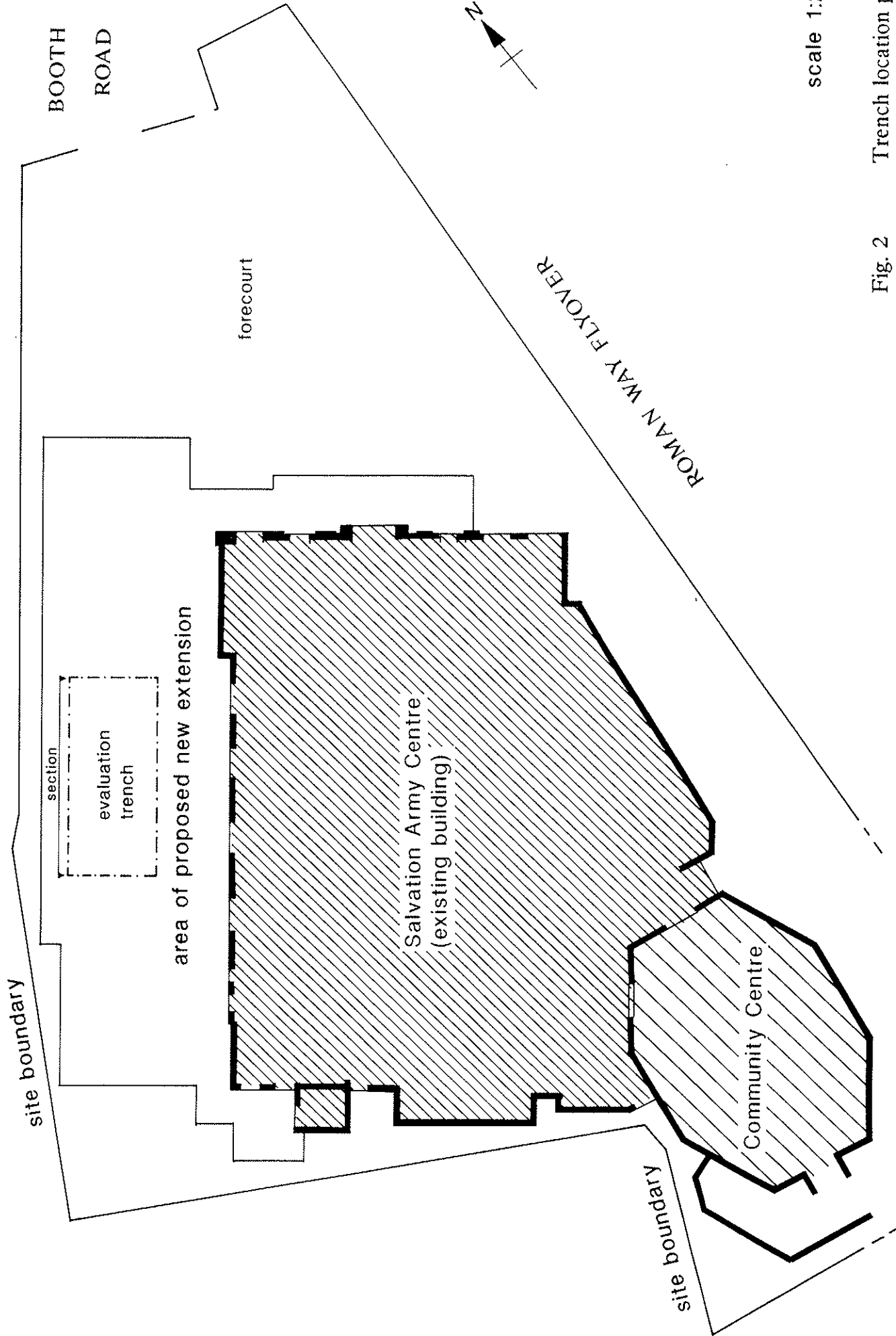


Fig. 1 Site location (from the OS 1:25 000 map) reproduced from the Museum of London report of this site (April 1994)

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scale 1:250

Fig. 2 Trench location plan

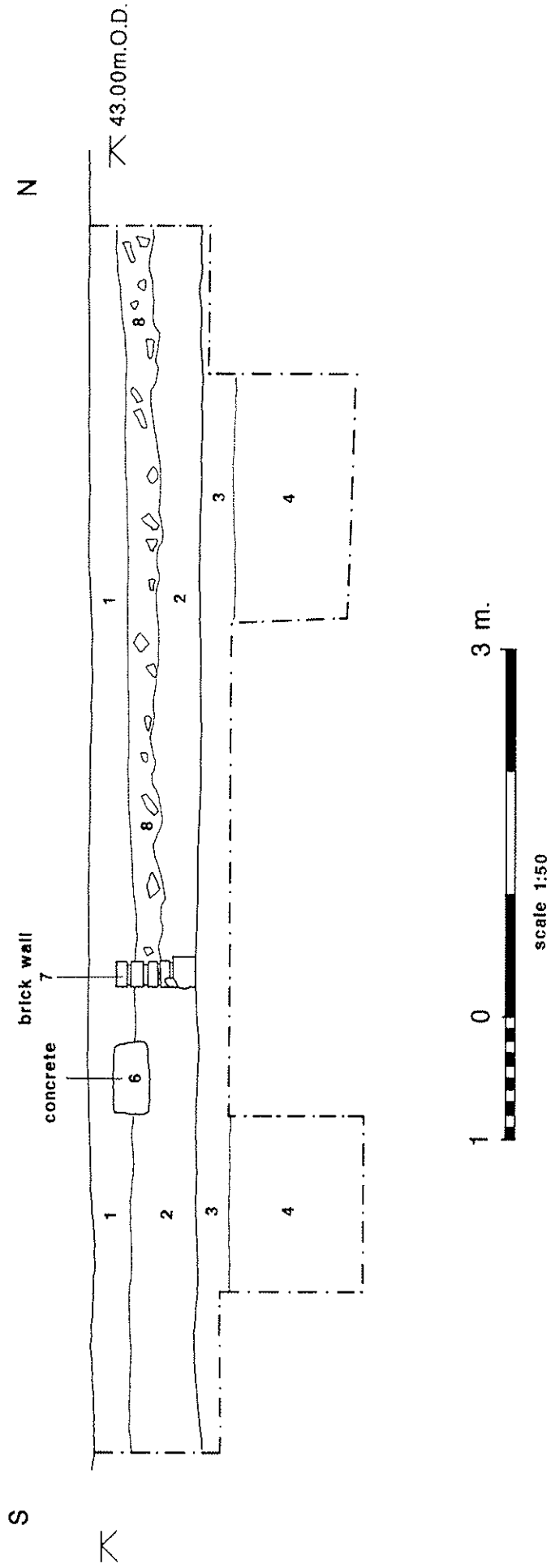


Fig. 3 Trench section

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