

67 Honey Lane and the
site of the former Thames
Water Pumping Station
Cholsey
Oxfordshire



Archaeological Evaluation Report



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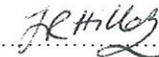
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**67 Honey Lane and site of former
Thames Water Pumping station, Cholsey, Oxfordshire**

NGR: SU 588 861

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

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SUMMARY

In November 2006, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at 67 Honey Lane and the site of the former Thames Water Pumping Station, Cholsey, Oxfordshire (NGR SU 588 861) on behalf of Soha Housing Ltd. The evaluation revealed a number of modern soil layers representing landscaping of the site, most likely during construction of the current structures. Below these was a thin layer of former subsoil that filled irregularities in the surface of the natural chalk. Two features were excavated, one of which has been interpreted as resulting from tree root disturbance, the other appearing as the base of a modern rubbish pit predating the landscaping work.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 On 13-14th November 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at 67 Honey Lane and the site of former Thames Water Pumping station in Cholsey, Oxon. (Fig. 1) on behalf of Soha Housing Ltd. This was in respect of a planning application for demolition of existing properties on the site and the subsequent construction of eleven houses and flats with access from Honey Lane (Planning Application No. P06/W0975).

1.1.2 A project brief (OCC 2006) was set by and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) agreed with Paul Smith, County Archaeological Officer for Oxfordshire County Council. The site lies at National Grid Reference SU 588 861 and measures 0.27 hectares in area.

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site is situated on Lower Chalk geology. The site lies at *c* 61 m above Ordnance Datum and is situated on a gradual slope from east to west with a break in slope forming a shallow ridge approximately 20 m from Honey Lane. No. 67 Honey Lane is currently occupied by a detached house set to the rear of the property behind a pear orchard.

1.2.2 The adjacent site to the south, which is a former Thames Water pumping station, is occupied by a few small buildings housing plant. From map evidence (OCC 2006) these have been the first structures to occupy these plots of land.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 Whilst the site itself has produced no archaeological evidence it is adjacent to the existing course of Honey Lane, a road that follows the alignment of the Silchester to Dorchester-on-Thames Roman road.

-
- 1.3.2 Roman coins, pottery, and other occupation evidence have been recorded from Cholsey, including coins from Station Road to the west of the site. Medieval and post-medieval settlement evidence has also been observed in the area (OCC 2006).

2 EVALUATION AIMS

- 2.1.1 To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the proposal area, particularly Roman remains associated with the Silchester-Dorchester Roman road.
- 2.1.2 To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present. To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features.
- 2.1.3 To make available by means of a report the results of the investigation. The results to be presented in such a way as to form the basis of any proposals for further mitigation measures that will seek to limit the damage to significant archaeological deposits.
- 2.1.4 The report to include proposals for any post-excavation work and publication requirements resulting from the evaluation works.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork

- 3.1.1 The evaluation consisted of four trenches (Fig. 2) located to examine the central area of the site where the proposed houses will be built and the frontage area where the new access road will enter the development. Trenches 1 and 2 measured 10 m (north-south) x 1.5 m (east-west). Trench 3 measured 12 m (north-south) x 1.5 m (east-west) and Trench 4 measured 10 m (north-east/south-west) x 1.5 m (north-west/south-east).
- 3.1.2 These trenches represent a 2.25% sample of the development area. The overburden was removed under close archaeological supervision by a mechanical excavator 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 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 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. Modern building debris and non-diagnostic finds were logged but not retained.

3.4 **Presentation of results**

- 3.4.1 This report describes the overall stratigraphy encountered during the excavation before addressing the findings in trench order and interpretation of the archaeology. Contexts and finds are tabulated in the appendices alongside site and trench plans and sections at the end of the report.

4 **RESULTS: GENERAL**

4.1 **Soils and ground conditions**

- 4.1.1 The site is situated on chalk geology, the surface of which was seen to be quite degraded within the trenches. This was overlain by a succession of modern deposits, probably associated with the construction of the water pumping station buildings. The soil is stable but rich in organic material. This allows free drainage with the only water-logging appearing in Trench 3 where gravel hard-standing is laid directly over chalk natural. Excavation was hampered in some places (Trenches 2 and 3) by the presence of numerous redundant services feeding the water pumping station. Other services are evident from inspection pit covers around the site.

4.2 **Distribution of archaeological deposits.**

- 4.2.1 Topsoil and subsoil deposits across the site are probably the result of landscaping associated with the construction of the current water pumping station. It is most likely they are imported soils and are of modern deposition. Prior to these deposits the site has been truncated, with all former deposits removed to the chalk natural with the exception of isolated patches of the original subsoil. These survive in shallow irregularities and breaks of slope such as the ridge running parallel to Honey Lane. The only surviving archaeological deposits occurred where negative features were cut into the chalk and these were heavily truncated.

4.3 **Description of deposits**

Trench 1

- 4.3.1 Trench 1 (Fig. 3) was orientated north-south and located at the northern end of the site. It was excavated to a depth of between 0.9 m at the northern end and 0.7 m at the southern end. Natural chalk geology (101) was encountered at a height of 59.16 m OD at the southern end and sloped gently down to 58.65 m OD at the northern end. This was overlain by patchy remnants of clayey loam subsoil (101) up to 0.1 m thick.

-
- 4.3.2 The subsoil was only present in the north-west corner of the trench, where the chalk sloped gently down, presumably removed by landscaping elsewhere. One of these patches (103) was partially excavated and interpreted as tree root disturbance topsoil between 0.5 m - 0.7 thick contained modern debris (see Fig 3; Section 10). No finds were recovered.

Trench 2

- 4.3.3 In Trench 2 (Fig. 3) all soil deposits appeared to have been removed from this area of the site during the construction of the water pumping station. The trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 61.35 m OD at the south and 60.88 m OD at the north. A layer of crushed concrete and gravel hard standing (201) overlay natural chalk (200). No archaeology was present; modern pipe trenches cut into the chalk were visible.

Trench 3

- 4.3.4 Trench 3 (Fig. 4) was excavated to a depth of 61.25 m OD (where a modern cable was located), requiring a further step down to 61.02 m OD at the south end and 60.97 m at the north. The natural chalk (303) contained geological fissures running roughly east west filled with clay rich soil (304) derived from the original subsoil (302). Above 302 lay a 0.6-m thick clay soil layer containing modern CBM (301) that was more notable at the west edge of the trench where the shallow chalk ridge falls away. Layer 301 was sealed by the topsoil (300) that also contained modern CBM. No archaeology was present in the trench. The south end of this trench contained numerous service runs associated with water pumping station buildings within modern make-up layer 301.

Trench 4

- 4.3.5 In Trench 4 (Fig. 4) the natural chalk was located at 59.7 m OD at the southwest end of the trench and 59.92 m OD at the north-east end. At the base of the trench (404) cut natural (403), the base of a refuse pit containing a stony, chalky loam fills (see Fig. 4; Section 4). Voids in the fill (405) suggest that although predating the landscaping of the site, this feature was not very old. Animal bone and oyster shell was recovered from the fill. The fill of the feature and the natural were overlain by a clay soil layers (402 then 401) containing modern ceramic building materials. Topsoil (400) containing a single worked flint sealed the trench. Owing to its position at the base of a general incline to the east the modern topsoil and make-up clay layers formed a deeper sequence than elsewhere.

4.4 Finds

The Pottery

- 4.4.1 One base sherd of post-medieval pottery was recovered from context 100. From the Staffordshire Potteries this is a fragment from an engine-turned, fine-red glazed

earthenware vessel, probably the base of a tankard or coffee pot and dates to c 1770 - 1800.

Lithics

- 4.4.2 A single flake with a distal break in poor condition was recovered from context 400. Broadly dating to the Neolithic/Bronze Age, this is a residual find.

Ceramic building materials

- 4.4.3 Fragments of modern brick and roof tile were found in most make up layers across the site. Due to the large number of fragments and their age these were not retained.

Animal Bone

- 4.4.4 One cattle ulna was recovered from pit fill 405. This was logged but not retained.

5 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 5.1.1 The stratigraphy here is almost entirely modern, owing to truncation and reinstatement, thus replacing any archaeological deposits that may have existed above the level of the natural. Any finds from these modern layers are likely to have derived from elsewhere. It seems from the small patches of clay subsoil still occurring in places that no depth of chalk natural was removed during this truncation process.
- 5.1.2 The only surviving archaeological feature (404) cut into the chalk natural was very shallow, the upper levels of the feature presumably removed during the same site truncation. It is not thought that this feature is representative of the depth at which it is buried.

5.2 Overall interpretation

- 5.2.1 Modern landscaping here associated with preparation for its current use has removed any potential archaeological deposits relating to the Roman road or any subsequent medieval settlement. No positive features remain but the scarcity of negative features suggests no substantial settlement.
- 5.2.2 Feature 404 indicates that it was feasible to reach natural chalk whilst pit digging from the earlier ground surface, so settlement could be expected to have left some archaeological evidence.
- 5.2.3 The low chalk ridge running parallel to Honey Lane may represent terracing associated with the roadway and appears to form an approximately 0.5 m high bank, with the lower terrace sloping to the road more gently. Unfortunately all deposits that may have built up above the terrace have also been removed.

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>No./wt</i>	<i>Date</i>
1								
	100	Layer	>10	0.7	Topsoil	Pottery	1	p. med
	101	Layer	2	0.2	Subsoil			
	102	Layer	>10	n/k	Natural chalk			
	103	Cut	2	0.08	Tree disturbance			
	104	Fill	2	0.08	Fill of tree disturbance			
2								
	200	Layer	>10	0.2	Modern hard-standing			
	201	Layer	>10	n/k	Natural chalk			
3								
	300	Layer	>10	0.3	Topsoil			
	301	Layer	>10	0.6	Subsoil	CBM		
	302	Layer	>10	0.13	Clay subsoil	CBM		
	303	Layer	>10	n/k	Natural chalk			
	304	Layer	1	0.3	Clay subsoil			
4								
	400	Layer	>10	0.35	Topsoil	CBM Flint	1	Neo-BA
	401	Layer	>10	0.35	Subsoil	CBM		
	402	Layer	>10	0.45	Subsoil	CBM		
	403	Layer	>10	n/k	Natural chalk			
	404	Cut	2.2	0.3	Shallow pit			
	405	Fill	2.2	0.3	Pit fill	Bone Oyster shell	1 1	

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY

OAU 1992 *Fieldwork Manual* (1st edition, August 1992)

OCC 2006 *Honey Lane/site of former Thames Water pumping station, Cholsey, Oxfordshire. Design Brief for Archaeological Field Evaluation*

OA 2006 *67 Honey Lane/site of former Thames Water pumping station. Cholsey, Oxfordshire. Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological evaluation*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: 67 Honey Lane/site of former Thames Water pumping station, Cholsey

Site code: CHOHON 06

Grid reference: SU 588 861

Type of evaluation: Three 10 m x 1.5 m trenches and one 12 m x 1.5 m trench.

Date and duration of project: 13-14th November 2006

Area of site: 0.27 ha.

Summary of results: 1 x refuse pit of uncertain, probably modern date. Landscaping deposits; truncation of site to natural chalk bedrock.

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: TBC



Scale 1:50,000

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Figure 1: Site location

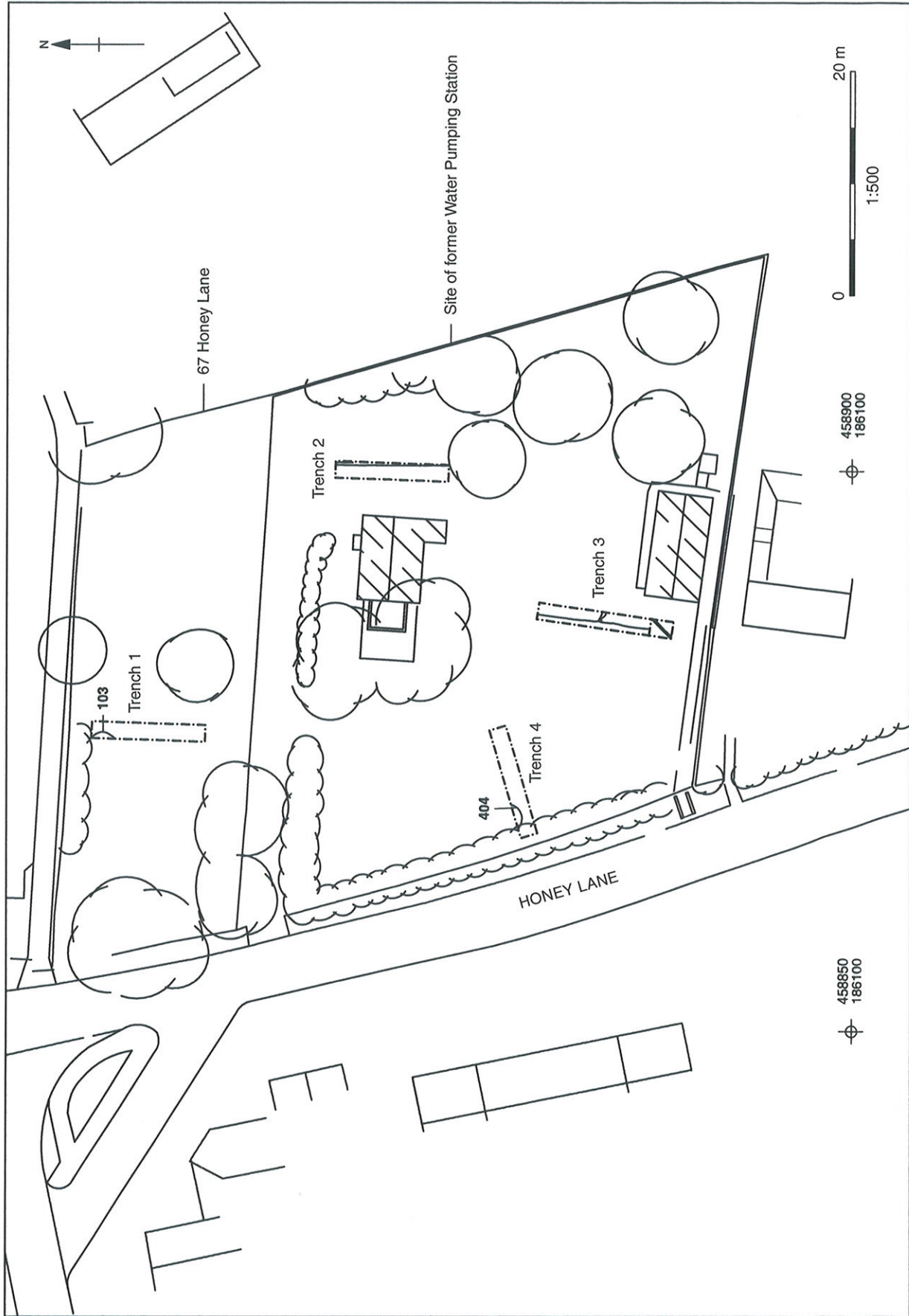


Figure 2: Trench locations and overall feature plan

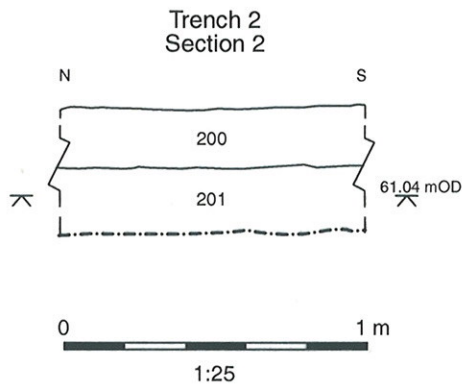
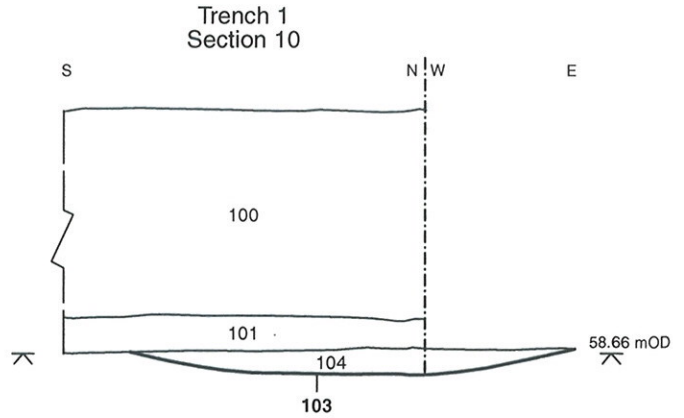
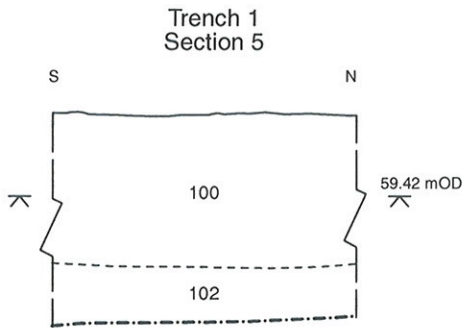
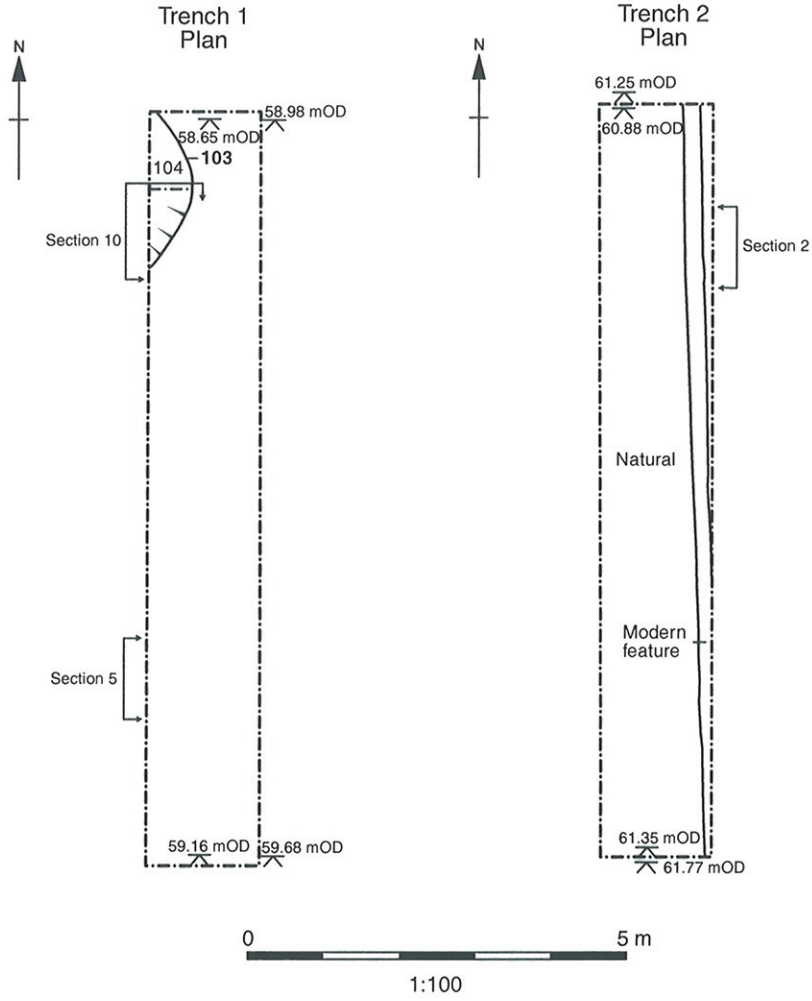


Figure 3: Trenches 1 and 2, plans and sections

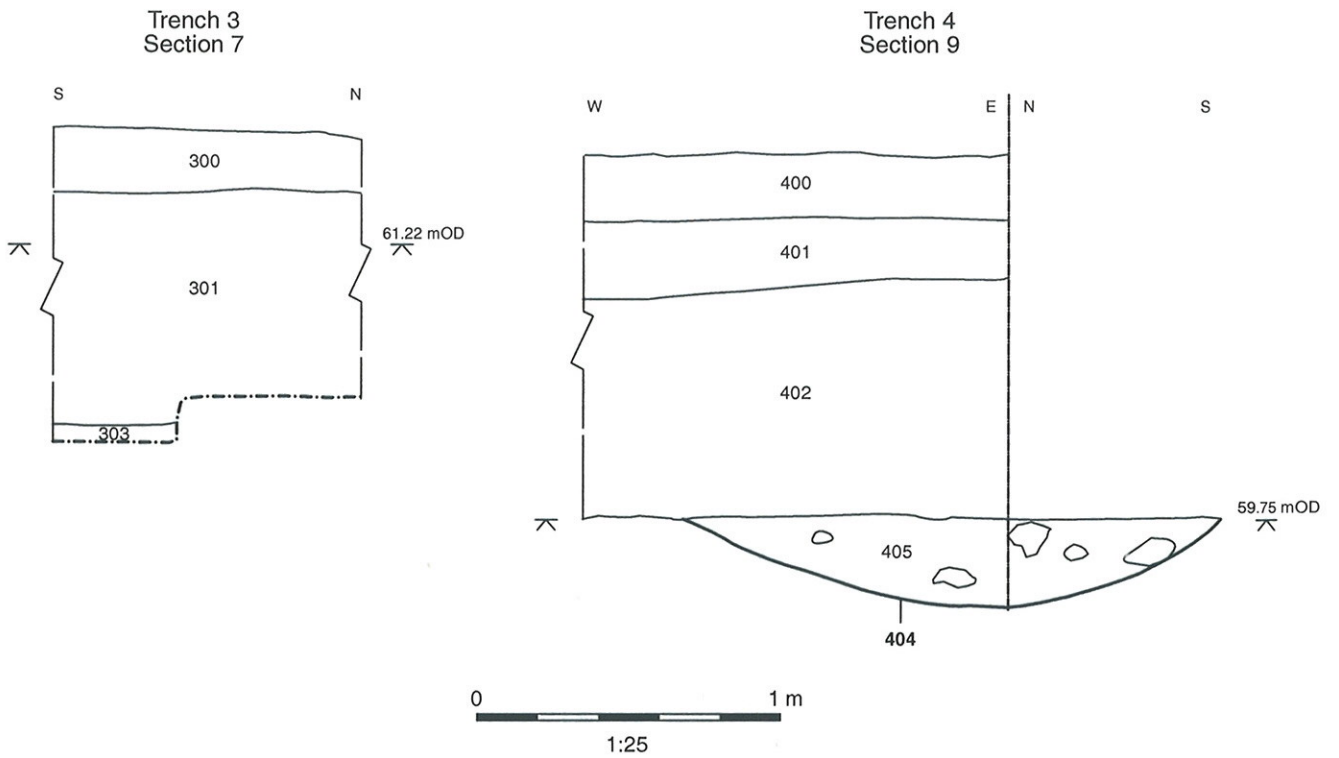
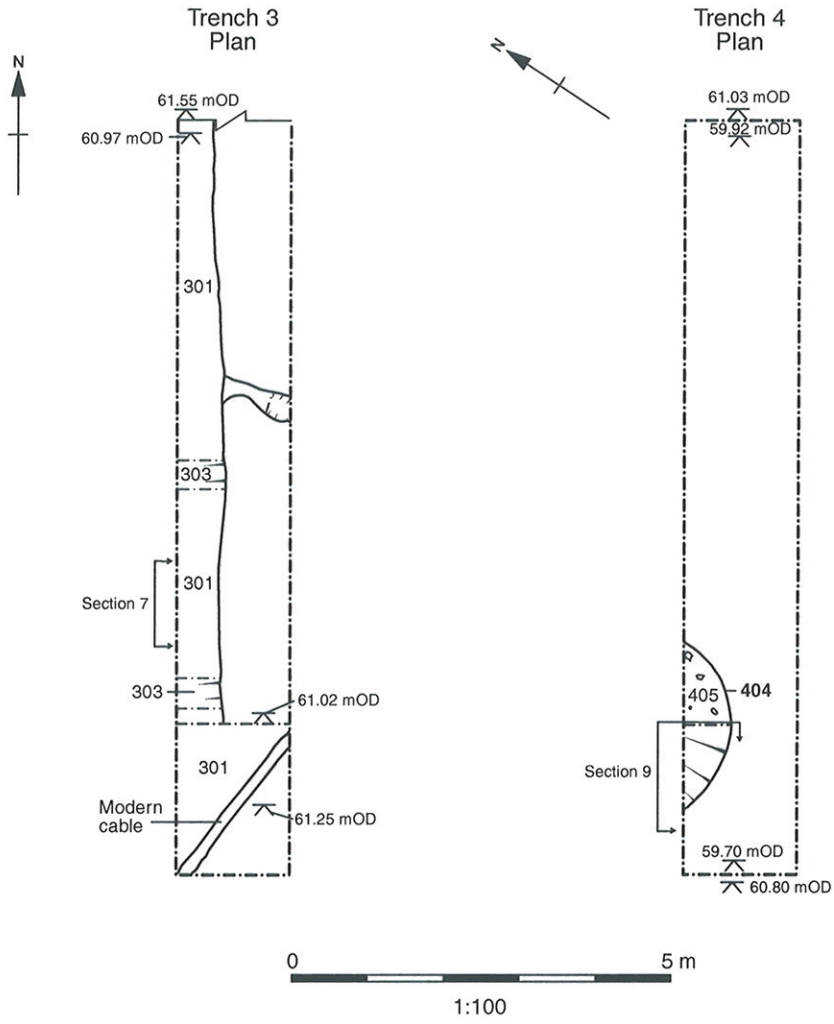


Figure 4: Trenches 3 and 4, plans and sections



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