

Land North of Shipton Road Woodstock Oxon



Archaeological Evaluation Report



September 2007

Client: J.A. Pye (Oxford) Ltd.

Issue N^o: 1
OA Job N^o: 3786
NGR: SP 4568 1692

Client Name: J. A. Pye (Oxford) Ltd

Client Ref No:

Document Title: Land North of Shipton Road, Woodstock, Oxon

Document Type: Evaluation report

Issue Number: 1

National Grid Reference: SP 4568 1692

Planning Reference:

OA Job Number: 3786

Site Code: WOLSR07

Invoice Code: WOLSREV

Receiving Museum: Oxfordshire County Museum Services

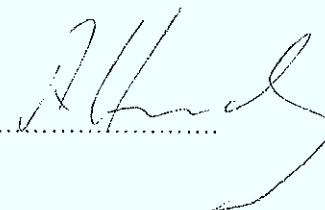
Museum Accession No: tba

Prepared by: Andrew Norton
Position: Senior Project Manager
Date: 20th September 2007

Checked by: Andrew Norton
Position: Senior Project Manager
Date: 26th September 2007

Approved by: Alan Hardy
Position: Senior Project Manager
Date: 27th September 2007

Signed.....



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Oxford Archaeology

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Janus House

Osney Mead

Oxford OX2 0ES

t: (0044) 01865 263800

f: (0044) 01865 793496

e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk

w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk

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Land North of Shipton Road Woodstock, Oxfordshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

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SUMMARY

In September 2007 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation on land north of Shipton Road, Woodstock, Oxon (NGR SP 4568 1692). The work was carried out on behalf of J. A Pye (Oxford) Ltd in advance of a proposed residential development. The evaluation revealed evidence for ridge and furrow in the north of the site, and a 19th-century boundary ditch in the SE corner of site. Several land drains and natural features were also recorded.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In September 2007 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation on land north of Shipton Road, Woodstock, Oxon (NGR SP 4568 1692), in advance of a proposed residential development. The site is an open field at the eastern edge of Woodstock bounded by Woodstock Swimming baths and Marlborough School to the west, Sansom Lane to the east and Shipton Road to the south (Fig. 1).

1.1.2 As part of the planning process, discussions were held between OA, Savills, J. A. Pye (Oxford) Ltd and Oxfordshire County Council (OCC). As a result of these discussions an archaeological evaluation was proposed. OA produced a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI - OA 2007), outlining how it would deal with the archaeological requirements of the work, which was approved by Hugh Coddington (OCC).

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The underlying solid geology is Jurassic Limestone of the Greater Oolite formation. Locally this is overlain by drift deposits comprising Pleistocene 3rd (Thames) Terrace Gravels of the Wolvercote formation. The proposed site is located on slightly rising ground (c 90 m OD), on the eastern edge of the Glyme valley and is c 2 ha in area.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The site was subject to a desk-based assessment (DBA - OA 2006). These results are summarised below. No previous archaeological work has taken place on the proposed development site, although there are several known areas of interest within 1 km of the site.

Prehistoric

1.3.2 Flint finds have been found c 600 m to the south, c 500 m north and c 600 m to the west of the site and indicate a certain degree of prehistoric activity.

1.3.3 A possible disc barrow lies c 450 m to the south of the site, and the remains of a section of Grim's Ditch and Bank (a probable late Iron Age boundary) lie in Blenheim Park c 3k m to the west. There are also a number of undated sites,

identified from aerial photographs, which could represent prehistoric settlement and agricultural activity.

Roman

- 1.3.4 The site lies *c* 2 km to the south of the Roman road Akeman Street, and there are numerous known Roman settlement sites in the immediate area of Woodstock. Roman find spots have also been identified to the west of the site.
- 1.3.5 The nearest of the sites is the Begbroke or Blenheim villa site *c* 800 m to the south the site boundary. Field systems identified as being associated with the villa were noted on aerial photographs.
- 1.3.6 Campsfield Roman settlement is located *c* 1.3 km to the southeast of the site, and *c* 1.5 km to the north of the site is Sansom's Farm Roman roadside settlement.
- 1.3.7 Begbroke Villa lies close to a probable Anglo-Saxon route called *Heh Straet*, which follows the line of Sansom's Lane along the eastern edge of the proposed development area. It is likely that this route follows the line of a pre-existing Roman track or minor road.

Anglo-Saxon

- 1.3.8 The proposed development site lies *c* 0.5 km to the southeast of the township of Hensington, the name of which probably derives from a *Tun* (enclosure) within a wood, or adjacent to a stream named *Hensing* (Ekwall 1985). The settlement of Hensington (*Hanistone*) is first mentioned at the time of the Domesday survey in 1086, and the manor is described as supporting 5 villagers and two smallholders, and as containing land for 4 ½ ploughs, a mill, 6 acres and 1 furlong of meadow, and 17 acres of woodland.
- 1.3.9 The adjacent township of Woodstock (*Wudustoc c* 1000 AD) derives its name from a 'place in the woods' (Ekwall 1985) and by Domesday had become the seat of a Royal hunting lodge within the Forest of Wychwood. Evidence of pre-conquest settlement at Woodstock is further provided by the record of a council held by Aethelred II 'at Woodstock in the land of the Mercians' (VCH 1907).
- 1.3.10 Two roads lie close to the proposed site; Sansom's Lane forms the parish boundary with Shipton-on-Cherwell. The road is referred to as *Heh Straet* in the charter of Shipton-on-Cherwell in 1005 (Cooper 1985). The *Grene Way* links Barton to Woodstock, and lies to the west of the site.
- 1.3.11 A farmstead or fortified house called *Bica's burh* has been provisionally located, through the use of field name evidence, as lying *c* 0.5 km to the north of the proposed development site. A charter also refers to an enclosure to the south of *Bica's burh*, the site of which has not been identified, which may lie within or near the proposed development site.

Medieval

- 1.3.12 The medieval fortunes of Woodstock are strongly linked to the Royal hunting lodge and park. New Woodstock was founded in 'waste' ground adjacent to the park to provide accommodation for the Royal retinue of Henry II. By 1230 Woodstock is referred to as a borough and was being taxed as such by the end of the 13th century. The town expanded into the area of water meadows north of the town towards the end of the medieval period but otherwise little expansion, apart from 16th-century colonisation of the Market Square, occurred in the town until the 19th century.
- 1.3.13 The proposed development site lies within open fields to the southeast of the hamlet of Hensington, outside the medieval borough and park at Woodstock. A study of aerial photographs shows that ridge and furrow is present across the proposed development site and the surrounding fields, supporting the view that the proposed development area lies in the area of open fields.
- 1.3.14 A scheme of Geophysical Survey and fieldwalking on the proposed line of the Woodstock Bypass (OAU 1993), identified scatters of medieval pottery.

Post-medieval

- 1.3.15 During the post-medieval period the proposed development site appeared to lie within fields enclosed from the open fields of Hensington. The first evidence of enclosure in Hensington is in 1596, and the whole of Hensington was enclosed by 1750 (VCH 1990). A study of the available Ordnance Survey maps of the area indicates that the development site appears to have remained open agricultural land on the periphery of Woodstock/Hensington up until the present day.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

2.1 General

- 2.1.1 General aims were to establish the presence/absence of any archaeological remains within the proposal area, and to determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains that may affect further need for mitigation during the construction process.
- 2.1.2 To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of any archaeological deposits and features, and to make available the results of the investigation.

2.2 Specific

- 2.2.1 To identify any evidence for *Bica's burh* and to establish the nature of the medieval land use of the site.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork

3.1.1 The evaluation consisted of 12 trenches each measuring *c* 30 m by *c* 2 m (Fig. 2). The overburden was removed, under close archaeological supervision, by a 360° 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 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* (OAU 1992).

3.3 Finds

3.3.1 Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation and bagged by context.

3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

3.4.1 No deposits of palaeo-environmental interest were encountered.

3.5 Presentation of results

3.5.1 Section 5 comprises a detailed description of the deposits within each trench, including individual context descriptions, with archaeological features described from earliest to latest. General context information is summarised in the inventory (Appendix 1).

4 RESULTS: GENERAL

4.1 Soils and ground conditions

4.1.1 The site is located on limestone and silty clay overlain by topsoil. The fills of the features were generally sterile silty clays.

4.2 Distribution of archaeological deposits

4.2.1 No deposits of archaeological significance were revealed. However, furrows were evident in the north of the site and a drainage ditch was revealed in the south of the site.

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Description of deposits

Trenches 1 - 3 (Figs 3 and 4)

- 5.1.1 Natural limestone and silty clay (2, 11 and 21) was revealed at c 93.2 m OD - 0.2 m below ground level (BGL). In Trench 1 the natural was cut by three circular root holes or natural depressions (4), measuring 0.8 m wide and 0.1 m deep. The features had uneven bases and were filled with a reddy brown silty clay (5).
- 5.1.2 In Trenches 2 and 3, seven NW-SE aligned furrows (12 and 22) were revealed (representing six features), measuring between 2 m and 3 m wide and 0.1 m deep. The furrows were also filled with a reddy brown silty clay (13 and 23).
- 5.1.3 The deposits were overlain by an old ploughsoil (2), which contained 19th-century pottery and a clay pipe stem, and the present topsoil (1 and 20).

Trenches 4-8 (Fig. 5)

- 5.1.4 Natural geology (33, 41, 51, 63 and 72) was revealed at c 92.9 m OD (0.3 m BGL). In Trenches 5, 7 and 8 it was cut by irregular root holes or natural depressions (42, 61 and 73). The features measured between 0.3 m and 1 m wide, 0.1 m deep and were filled with reddy brown silts (43 and 74).
- 5.1.5 NW-SE aligned furrows (44 and 52) were revealed in Trenches 5 and 6, which measured c 2.5 m wide and 0.1 m deep. They were filled with a reddy brown silty clay (45 and 53).
- 5.1.6 A N-S aligned natural channel or depression (32) was revealed in Trench 4, measuring 4 m wide and 0.25 m deep. It was filled with a yellow brown silt clay.
- 5.1.7 The deposits were overlain by an old ploughsoil (31 - not illustrated) that contained a sherd of 17th- or 18th-century pottery, and the existing topsoil, which was cut by modern land drain trenches (34 and 62) in Trenches 4 and 7.

Trenches 9-12 (Figs 6 and 7)

- 5.1.8 Natural geology (91, 101 and 111) was revealed c 92.8 m OD (0.25 m BGL) and in Trench 10 was cut by five irregular natural features or root holes (92). The features measured 0.5 m wide and 0.1 m deep and were filled with a reddy brown silt clay (93). The features were overlain by an old ploughsoil.
- 5.1.9 In Trench 11 the ploughsoil was cut by a land drain trench (102) and by three modern drainage trenches running into a soakaway (104). In Trench 12 the ploughsoil (112) was cut by a NNE-SSW aligned ditch (115), measuring 0.56 m wide and 0.2 m deep. It was filled by a dark brown silty clay (116) that contained two sherds of late 18th-century pottery, a clay pipe stem and two sherds of glass. To the west of the ditch was

a rubble filled drainage trench (113 and 114). The deposits were overlain by the existing topsoil (110).

5.2 Finds

General

- 5.2.1 Two sherds of 17th- to 18th-century red earthenware pottery were recovered from a buried ploughsoil (31) and a ditch fill (116), the ditch fill also contained a sherd of late 18th-century cream ware. Two sherds of 19th-century transfer print pottery were recovered from a buried ploughsoil (2).
- 5.2.2 Two clay pipe stems were also recovered from deposits 2 and 116, no attempt was made to measure the stem bores. Ditch fill 116 also contained an oyster shell and two sherds of 19th- or 20th-century glass.

6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 6.1.1 The evaluation revealed no evidence of archaeological settlement, although features similar in size to postholes or small pits, were revealed in Trenches 1, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 10. The features were irregular in shape and were filled with a sterile silt, they probably formed hollows in the natural or root holes.

6.2 Overall interpretation

- 6.2.1 It is thought that the site lay within open fields to the southeast of the hamlet of Hensington, during the medieval period (OA 2006), and the lack of archaeological evidence within the site indicates that it would have been unpopulated prior to that time. Furrows were evident in the northern part of the site, which were previously identified in aerial photographs, and may have been medieval in date.
- 6.2.2 The buried ploughsoil below the current topsoil and grass indicates that the field continued to be worked into the post-medieval period, the small finds assemblage is probably a result of manuring.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench	Context	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comments	Finds	Date
1	1	Layer		0.15	Topsoil		
	2	Layer		0.2	Buried ploughsoil	pot/clay pipe	19th century
	3	Layer			Natural		
	4	Cut	0.8	0.1	3 x Natural features		
	5	Fill		0.1	Fill of natural features		
2	10	Layer		0.3	Topsoil		
	11	Layer			Natural		
	12	Cut	3	0.08	2 x Furrows		
	13	Fill		0.08	Fill of furrows		
3	20	Layer		0.28	Topsoil		
	21	Layer			Natural		
	22	Cut	2 - 3 m	0.12	5 x Furrows		
	23	Fill		0.12	Fill of furrows		
4	30	Layer		0.12	Topsoil		
	31	Layer		0.15	Buried ploughsoil	pot	17th-18th century
	32	Layer		0.15	Natural feature		
	33	Layer			Natural		
	34	Cut	0.3	0.4	Drain		Modern
5	40	Layer		0.27	Topsoil		
	41	Layer			Natural		
	42	Cut	0.4	0.1 - 0.15	3 x Natural features		
	43	Fill		0.1 - 0.15	Fill of natural features		
	44	Cut	2.7	0.08	Furrow		
	45	Fill		0.08	Fill of furrow		
6	50	Layer		0.3	Topsoil		
	51	Layer			Natural		
	52	Cut	2.6	0.1	Furrow		
7	53	Fill		0.1	Fill of furrow		
	60	Layer		0.28	Topsoil		
	61	Cut	1	0.12	2 x Natural features		
	62	Cut	0.2	0.1	Drain		
	63	Layer			Natural		
8	70	Layer			Topsoil		
	71	Layer			Buried ploughsoil		
	72	Layer			Natural		
	73	Cut	0.3	0.1	3 x Natural features		
9	74	Fill		0.1	Fill of natural features		
	80	Layer		0.2	Topsoil		

Trench	Context	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comments	Finds	Date
	81	Layer		0.08	Buried ploughsoil		
	82	Layer			Natural		
10	90	Layer		0.26	Topsoil		
	91	Layer			Natural		
	92	Cut	0.5	0.1	5 x Natural features		
	93	Fill		0.1	Fill of natural features		
11	100	Layer		0.28	Topsoil		
	101	Layer			Natural		
	102	Cut	0.2	0.3	Drain		
	103	Fill		0.3	Fill of drain		
	104	Cut	0.5	0.6	3 x drains		
	105	Fill		0.6	Fill of drains		
12	110	Layer		0.1	Topsoil		
	111	Layer			Natural		
	112	Layer		0.2	Buried ploughsoil		
	113	Cut	0.54	0.4	Drain		
	114	Fill		0.4	Fill of drain		
	115	Cut	0.56	0.2	Ditch		
	116	Fill		0.2	Fill of ditch	glass/shell/pot/clay pipe	Late 18th century

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Cooper, J. 1985 *Four Oxfordshire Anglo Saxon Charter Boundaries*

Ekwall, E., 1985 *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place Names*

OA, 2006 Land North of Shipton Road, Woodstock, Oxfordshire, Desktop Assessment

OA, 2007 Land North of Shipton Road, Woodstock, Oxfordshire, Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation

OAU, 1992 Fieldwork Manual (ed. D Wilkinson)

OAU, 1993 Woodstock Bypass, Stage 1 Report, Archaeological Assessment, Unpublished Client Report for Oxfordshire County Council Engineers Department

VCH, 1907 *The Victoria County History (Oxfordshire Vol II)*

VCH, 1990 *The Victoria County History (Oxfordshire Vol XII)*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Land north of Shipton Road, Woodstock, Oxon

Site code: WOLSR07

Grid reference: SP 4568 1692

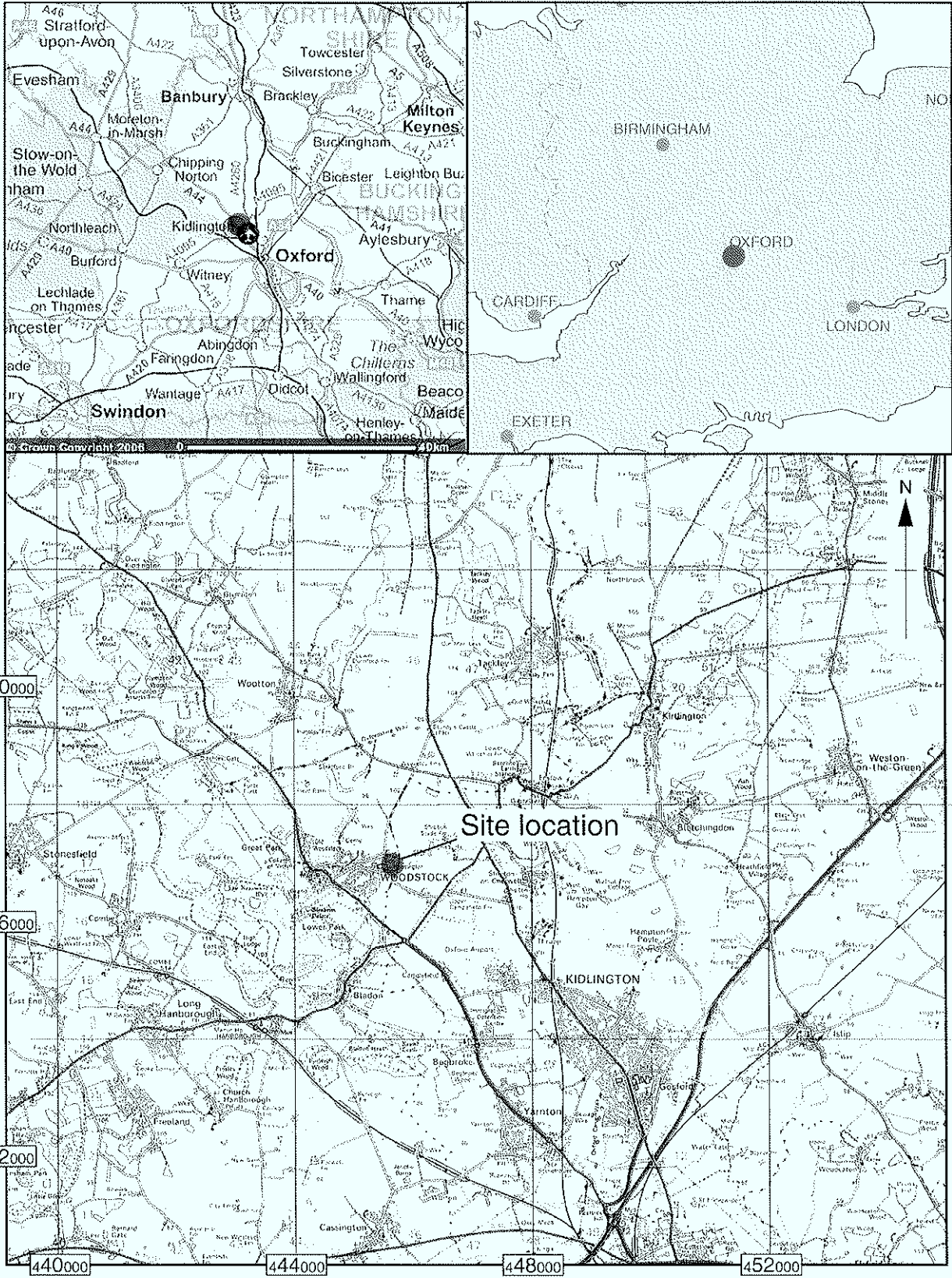
Type of evaluation: 12 30 m trenches

Date and duration of project: 10th - 14th September 2007

Area of site: 2 ha

Summary of results: Furrows, land drains and natural features were revealed. A post-medieval boundary ditch was also seen.

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: tba



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Figure 1: Site location

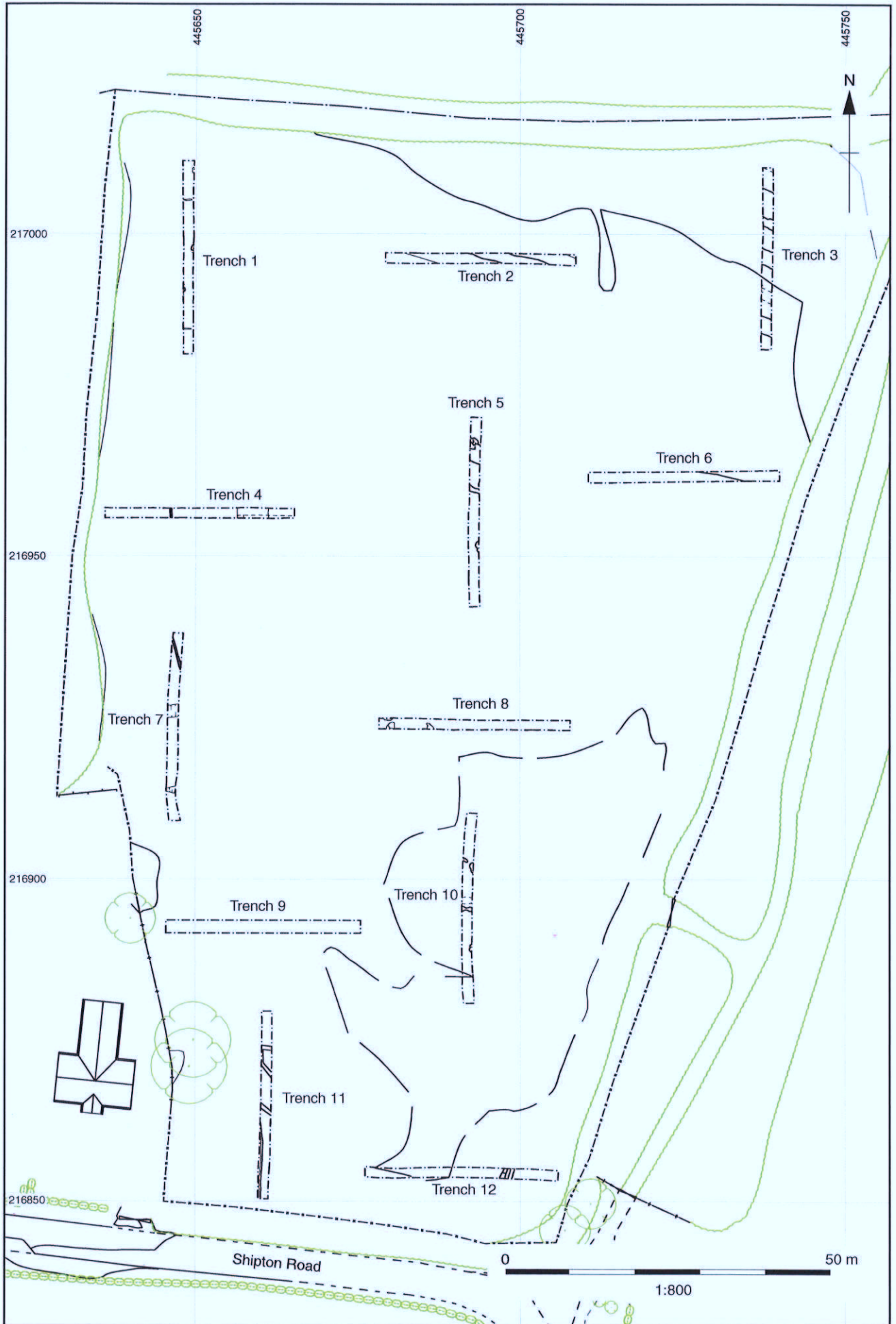


Figure 2: Trench location

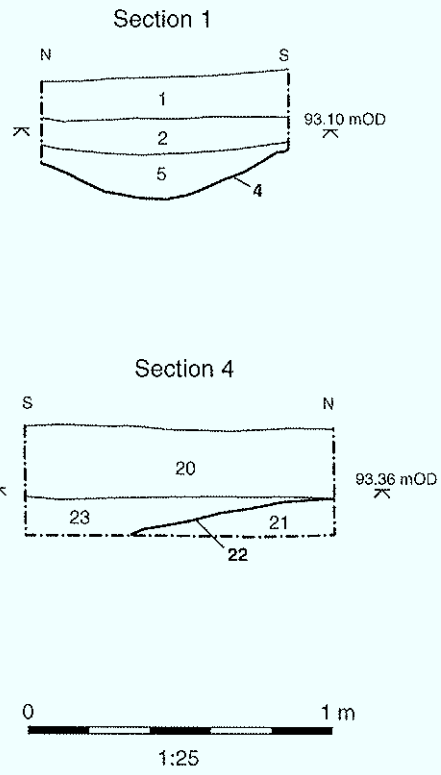


Figure 4: Trenches 1 and 3 sections

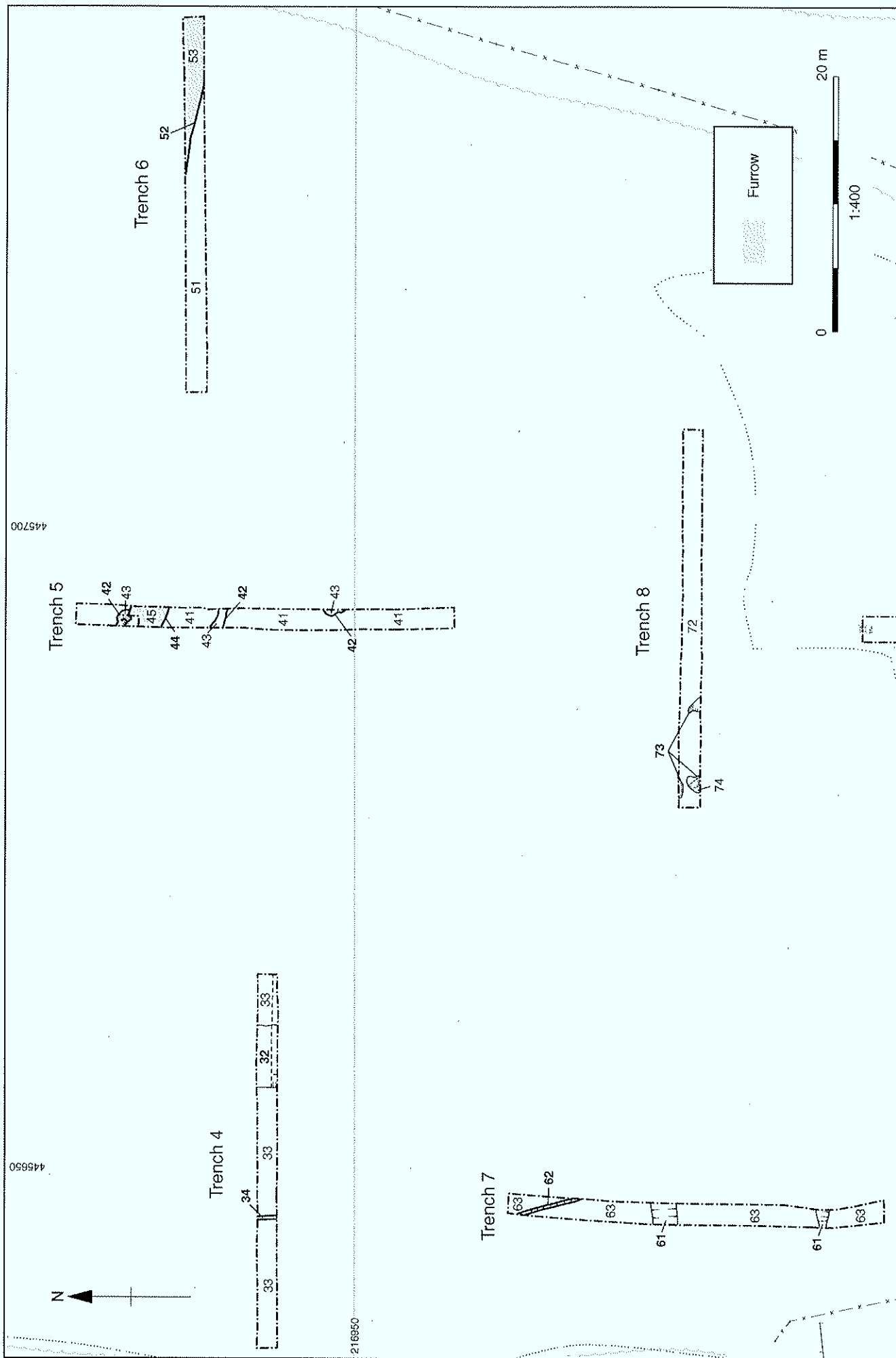


Figure 5: Trenches 4-8

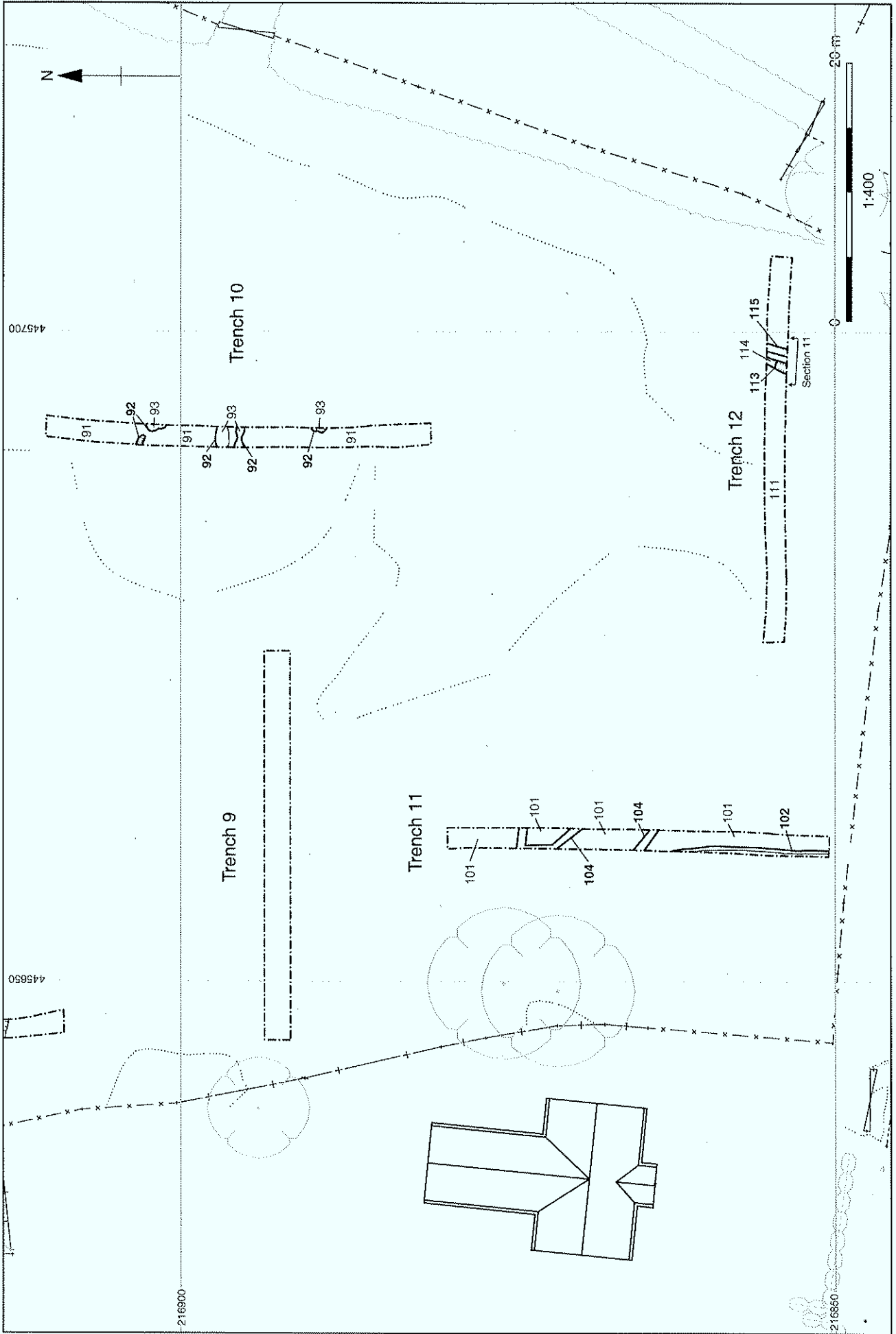


Figure 6: Trenches 9-12

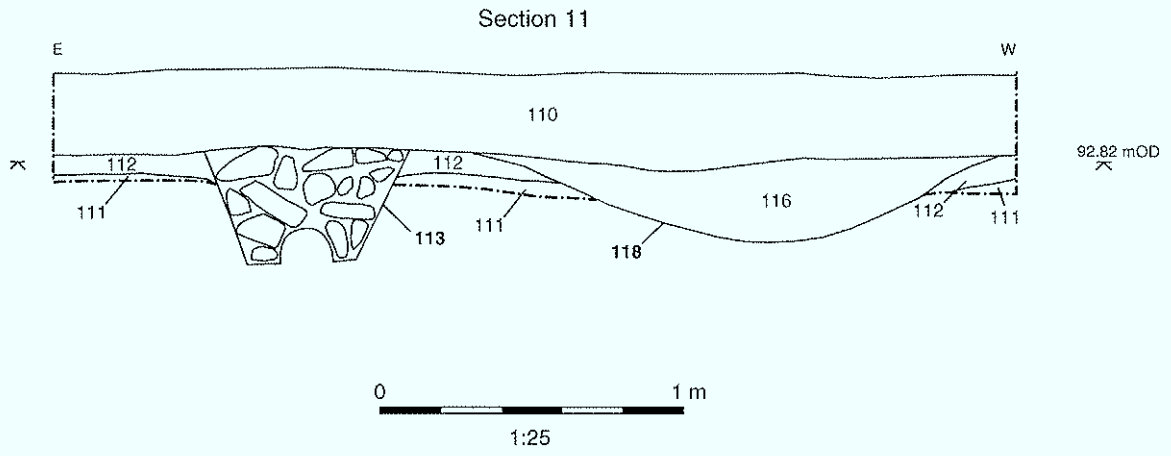


Figure 7: Trench 12 section



Oxford Archaeology

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: (0044) 01865 263800
f: (0044) 01865 793496
e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk



Oxford Archaeology North

Storey Institute
Meeting House Lane
Lancaster LA1 1TF

t: (0044) 01524 541000
f: (0044) 01524 848606
e: lancinfo@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk



Director: David Jennings, BA MIFA FSA

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