

Yarnton Nurseries
Sandy Lane
Yarnton
Oxfordshire



**Archaeological
Evaluation Report**




March 2013

**Client: Yarnton Nurseries
Garden Centre**

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Yarnton Nurseries, Sandy Lane, Yarnton

Oxfordshire

Evaluation report

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Summary

In February 2013 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation on land at Yarnton Nurseries, Yarnton, Oxfordshire on behalf of Yarnton Nurseries Garden Centre. The evaluation comprised the machine excavation of eight trenches.

Occasional archaeological features, including ditches and a single posthole, were encountered in four trenches but, with the exception of a single pit of modern date, no artefacts were recovered. The features are likely to be of agricultural origin although some, at least, may be associated with the recent use of the site as a garden centre.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project details

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Yarnton Nurseries Garden Centre to undertake an evaluation of the site of a proposed housing development. The evaluation was carried out during February 2013.
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken in advance of the submission of a planning application. A brief was set by Richard Oram of Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services detailing the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary to inform the planning process (Oxfordshire County Council 2012).
- 1.1.3 A Written Scheme of Investigation (Oxford Archaeology 2013), outlining how OA would implement those requirements, was submitted to, and approved by, Richard Oram prior to work commencing.
- 1.1.4 Some areas of the site were not available to be evaluated and it is understood that these areas may be the subject of a condition requiring further evaluation works should planning permission be granted (pers comm Richard Oram).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies off Sandy Lane, immediately to the north of the village of Yarnton in Oxfordshire (NGR SP 4758 1319).
- 1.2.2 The area of proposed development currently consists of a car park, a display of garden sheds, a private garden and two areas of pasture (Fig. 1).
- 1.2.3 The site is located on the Summertown-Radley sand and gravel deposits

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background to the site has been described in detail in a desk-based assessment (Oxford Archaeology 2012), and is not reproduced in full here. A brief summary is given below to set the context for the current works.
- 1.3.2 The area has produced some evidence for Palaeolithic and Mesolithic activity.
- 1.3.3 Extensive cropmark evidence from the area indicates the presence of Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman activity and settlement.
- 1.3.4 A number of cropmarks have been identified immediately to the north of the proposed development, including a possible Bronze Age barrow and two linear features which may date to the late Iron Age/early Roman period (Fig. 2).

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 The fieldwork was managed for OA by Ken Welsh and conducted by Mike Donnelly, Christof Heistermann and Rose Grant. OA would like to thank Yarnton Nurseries Garden Centre staff, in particular Chris Weller and James Spencer, for their assistance. Richard Oram monitored the fieldwork for Oxfordshire County Council.



2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1.1 The aims of the evaluation, as set out in the brief, were to gather sufficient information to establish the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within those areas affected. The evaluation also aimed to define any research priorities that may be relevant should further field investigation be required.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The trial trenching methodology adhered to the requirements set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (OA 2013), except where detailed below.

2.2.2 Trench 3 was abandoned on health and safety grounds after 15m had been excavated, due to contamination of the underlying deposits.

2.2.3 All trenches were laid out by a surveyor using a Leica RX1250XC Global Positioning System tied into the Ordnance Survey grid. All levels were related to Ordnance Survey datum level.

2.2.4 All trenches were scanned with a Cable Avoidance Tool prior to excavation.

2.2.5 Mechanical excavation was undertaken using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under the close supervision of an archaeologist.

2.2.6 Any archaeological features exposed were sampled sufficiently to characterise and, where possible, date them. Finds of an archaeological age were recovered by context. Modern finds of glass, china and plastic were recorded but not retained.



3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below, beginning with a summary of the trench results, followed by a stratigraphic description of the trenches which contained archaeological remains. An index of all trenches is presented in Appendix A.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 Trenches 1-5 were capped by a compact layer of gravel and tarmac fragments forming the surface of the car park. Under this was a layer of hardcore used to level of the natural slope. A former topsoil and subsoil were present below this, overlying a yellowish to reddish brown pebbly sand of the Summertown-Radley sand and gravel deposits.

3.2.2 In Trenches 6-8, the overlying car park surface was absent, with topsoil and subsoil overlying natural sands.

3.2.3 The natural sands contained frequent patches of reddish brown silty sand which, on investigation, proved to be of natural, geological, origin.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 Four of the trenches contained no archaeological remains (Trenches 3, 4, 5 & 7). Trench 1 contained one possible ditch terminus (103), Trench 2 contained an undated posthole (205) and a modern pit (207), Trench 6 contained a pit or treethrow (605) and a curving gully (603) and Trench 8 contained one ditch (805). Only modern pit 207 contained any finds.

3.4 Trench 1

3.4.1 Trench 1 contained a possible ditch terminus (103) (Figs 2 and 3). This was orientated NE-SW and was steep-sided with a flat base. It contained a light reddish brown fill but no artefacts were recovered.

3.5 Trench 2

3.5.1 Trench 2 contained two features, a posthole and a modern pit (Figs 2 and 3). The posthole was sub-square in plan and measured 0.38 by 0.4m in depth with vertical sides. It contained a dark reddish brown silty sand but no artefacts were recovered.

3.5.2 Pit 207 was 2.05m wide and more than 0.5m deep and had vertical sides. It contained 20th century bottle glass, fragments of iron and a sherd of post-medieval pottery.

3.6 Trench 6

3.6.1 Trench 6 contained a pit or tree throw-hole (605) and a ditch terminal (603) (Figs 2 and 3).

3.6.2 The ditch terminal was orientated NW-SE and had a 'V' shaped profile. It was filled with a light reddish brown silty sand but did not produce any artefactual material.

3.6.3 Pit or tree throw-hole (605) was 2.6m by at least 0.8m and was 0.3m deep. It was irregular in plan and was filled with a dark reddish brown sandy silt but did not produce any artefactual material.



3.7 Trench 8

3.7.1 Trench 8 contained a ditch orientated roughly north-south (Figs 2 and 3). It measured 1.2m in width and had fairly regular sides but due to rising groundwater mixing with the natural sands, excavation had to be abandoned before the feature could be fully excavated. No finds were recovered from it. This feature did not appear in Trench 6, 20m north of it.

3.8 Finds Reports

Miscellaneous material by Geraldine Crann

3.8.1 A number of finds of recent date were recovered from pit 207:

Context	Material	Comments	Date
208	Glass	1 fragment olive green bottle glass	20th century
208	Iron	4 fragments iron sheet	Undatable
208	Pottery	1 sherd late creamware	1760-1830

3.8.2 No deposits containing remains suitable for palaeo-environmental reconstruction were encountered and no soil samples were taken.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 Although rising ground water was encountered in a number of the trenches, sufficient time was available before the water levels rose to allow any archaeological features to be identified. It is therefore felt that results of the evaluation represent an accurate indication the density and distribution of archaeological deposits.

4.2 Interpretation

4.2.1 The presence of a buried subsoil and topsoil in all the trenches within the car park area suggests that relatively little truncation of the natural geological sequence has occurred at the site.

4.2.2 Relatively few features were found within the evaluation trenches and this, along with the lack of artefactual remains, suggests that the past activity represented by these features is not related to settlement. Rather, they are likely to be agricultural in origin or, perhaps, related to the recent use of the site as a nursery.

4.2.3 No remains were encountered to suggest a continuation of the possible barrow cemetery represented by cropmarks to the north.



APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description					Orientation	N-S
Trench contained probable ditch terminus and several natural features. No finds.					Avg depth (m)	0.52
					Width (m)	30
					Length (m)	1.6
Contexts						
Context number	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
100	layer	-	0.2	Buried modern topsoil, dark brown clayey sand	-	modern
101	layer	-	0.08	Buried modern subsoil, reddish brown clayey, pebbly sand	-	-
102	natural	-	?	Light yellow brown to reddish brown pebble/sand 'gravels'.	-	-
103	cut	0.75	0.35	Cut of possible ditch terminus. Steep sided, 'U' shaped profile slightly inclined base.	-	-
104	fill	-	0.35	Fill of ditch 103. Reddish brown silty sand.	-	-
105	void				-	-
106	void				-	-
107	layer	-	0.09	Compacted pebbles, tarmac fragments. Car park surface.	-	modern
108	layer	-	0.16	Hardcore. Light yellow brown stones, bricks, coarse sand levelling deposit.	-	modern

Trench 2						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Contained one genuine posthole of indeterminate date and a very modern pit. Gravels surface sloped down to east from 0.35m to 0.7m					Avg depth (m)	0.63
					Width (m)	30
					Length (m)	1.6
Contexts						
Context number	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
200	layer	-	0.05	Buried modern topsoil, dark brown clayey sand	-	modern
201	layer	-	0.2	Buried modern subsoil, reddish brown clayey, pebbly sand	-	-
202	natural	-	?	Light yellow brown to reddish brown	-	-



				pebble/sand 'gravels'.		
203	layer	-	0.12	Compacted pebbles, tarmac fragments. Car park surface.	-	modern
204	layer	-	0.26	Hardcore. Light yellow brown stones, bricks, coarse sand levelling deposit.	-	modern
205	cut	0.38	0.4	Cut of posthole. Sub-square in plan with steep sides and a rounded base. Probable car park feature although fills not hardcore.	-	modern?
206	fill	-	0.4	Fill of posthole 205. dark reddish brown clayey, pebbly sand.	-	modern?
207	cut	2.08m	0.52	Cut of pit. Semi-square feature in southern baulk, vertical sided and resembles machine cut. Very modern fills. Not bottomed.	-	modern
208	fill	-	0.4	Lower fill of pit 207. Pale brown sandy clay.	Metal, china, glass	modern
209	fill	-	0.13	Upper fill of pit 207. Trample layer, find brown silty sand.	-	modern

Trench 3						
General description					Orientation	N-S
Trench initial location immediately hit edge of modern contamination in east baulk. The trench was moved to west but after 15m, several modern and potentially contaminated deposits/features were encountered. Very string 'rotten eggs' small. Trench abandoned after record shots.					Avg depth (m)	0.2
					Width (m)	0.3
					Length (m)	15
Contexts						
Context number	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
301	layer	-	?	Subsoil, reddish brown clayey, pebbly sand	-	-
303	layer	-	0.1	Compacted pebbles, tarmac fragments. Car park surface.	-	modern
304	layer	-	0.15	Hardcore. Light yellow brown stones, bricks, coarse sand levelling deposit.	Bricks, plastic, metal (NR)	modern
305	layer	-	0.01	Thin layer of blue plastic sheeting	-	modern
306	deposit	-	-	Greyish black bricks, stones, foul water.	-	modern

Trench 4			
General description		Orientation	N-S
No archaeological features present in trench.		Avg depth (m)	0.6
		Width (m)	1.6
		Length (m)	30
Contexts			



Context number	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
400	layer	-	0.14	Buried modern topsoil, dark brown clayey sand	-	modern
401	layer	-	0.18	Buried modern subsoil, reddish brown clayey, pebbly sand	-	-
402	natural	-	?	Light yellow brown to reddish brown pebble/sand 'gravels'.	-	-
403	layer	-	0.15	Tarmac car park surface.	-	modern
404	layer	-	0.33	Hardcore. Light yellow brown stones, bricks, coarse sand levelling deposit.	Bricks, glass, plastic, metal, china (NR)	modern

Trench 5						
General description					Orientation	E-W
No archaeological features present in trench. Depth dipped from west to east.					Avg depth (m)	0.8
					Width (m)	1.6
					Length (m)	30
Contexts						
Context number	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
500	layer	-	0.13	Buried modern topsoil, dark brown clayey sand	-	modern
501	layer	-	0.35	Buried modern subsoil, reddish brown clayey, pebbly sand	-	-
502	natural	-	?	Light yellow brown to reddish brown pebble/sand 'gravels'.	-	-
503	layer	-	0.08	Compacted pebbles, tarmac fragments. Car park surface.	-	modern
504	layer	-	0.24	Hardcore. Light yellow brown stones, bricks, coarse sand levelling deposit.	-	modern

Trench 6						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Trench contained one ditch and one pit or treethrow. Other natural features were tested. No finds.					Avg depth (m)	0.65
					Width (m)	1.6
					Length (m)	30
Contexts						
Context number	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
600	layer	-	0.16	Topsoil, dark brown clayey sand	-	modern
601	layer	-	0.49	Subsoil, reddish brown clayey, pebbly sand	-	-



602	natural	-	?	Light yellow brown to reddish brown pebble/sand 'gravels'.	-	-
603	cut	0.6	0.25	Cut or curvilinear gully. V-shaped profile. Runs from NE-S where it exits trench.	-	-
604	fill	-	0.25	Fill of gully 603. reddish brown pebbly. Silty sand.	-	-
605	cut	2.6	0.3	Cut of pit or treethrow. Large slightly irregular semi-oval in plan. Only a portion present in trench. Shallow dished cut	-	-
606	fill	-	0.3	Fill of pit/treethrow 605. loose, reddish brown sandy silt.	-	-

Trench 7						
General description					Orientation	N-S
No archaeological remains identified.					Avg depth (m)	0.78
					Width (m)	1.6
					Length (m)	30
Contexts						
Context number	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
700	layer	-	0.05	Topsoil, dark brown clayey sand	-	modern
701	layer	-	0.43	Subsoil, reddish brown clayey, pebbly sand	-	-
702	natural	-	?	Light yellow brown to reddish brown pebble/sand 'gravels'.	-	-
703	layer	-	0.12	Compacted pebbles, tarmac fragments. Car park surface.	-	modern
704	layer	-	0.18	Hardcore. Light yellow brown stones, bricks, coarse sand levelling deposit.	-	modern

Trench 8						
General description					Orientation	N-S
Single north-south orientated ditch present. No finds recovered.					Avg depth (m)	0.75
					Width (m)	1.6
					Length (m)	30
Contexts						
Context number	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
800	layer	-	0.25	Topsoil, dark brown sandy silt	-	modern
801	layer	-	0.5	Subsoil, reddish brown clayey, pebbly sand	-	-
802	natural	-	?	Lght yellow brown to reddish brown	-	-



				pebble/sand 'gravels'.		
803	void				-	-
804	void				-	-
805	cut	1.4	?	Cut of ditch. Shallow sides, remainder of profile and depth unknown.	-	-
806	fill		?	Fill of ditch 805. Reddish brown clayey sand, not bottomed due to water table	-	-



APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Oxford Archaeology, 2012 Yarnton Nurseries, Sandy Lane, Yarnton: Cultural Heritage Assessment

Oxford Archaeology, 2013 Yarnton Nurseries, Sandy Lane, Yarnton: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Evaluation

Oxfordshire County Council, 2012 Yarnton Nurseries, Sandy Lane, Yarnton: Design Brief for Archaeological Field Evaluations



APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Yarnton Nurseries, Sandy Lane, Yarnton

Site code: YANU 13

Grid reference: NGR SP 4758 1319

Type: 8 trench evaluation

Date and duration: 11th to 14th February 2013

Area of site: 1.2ha

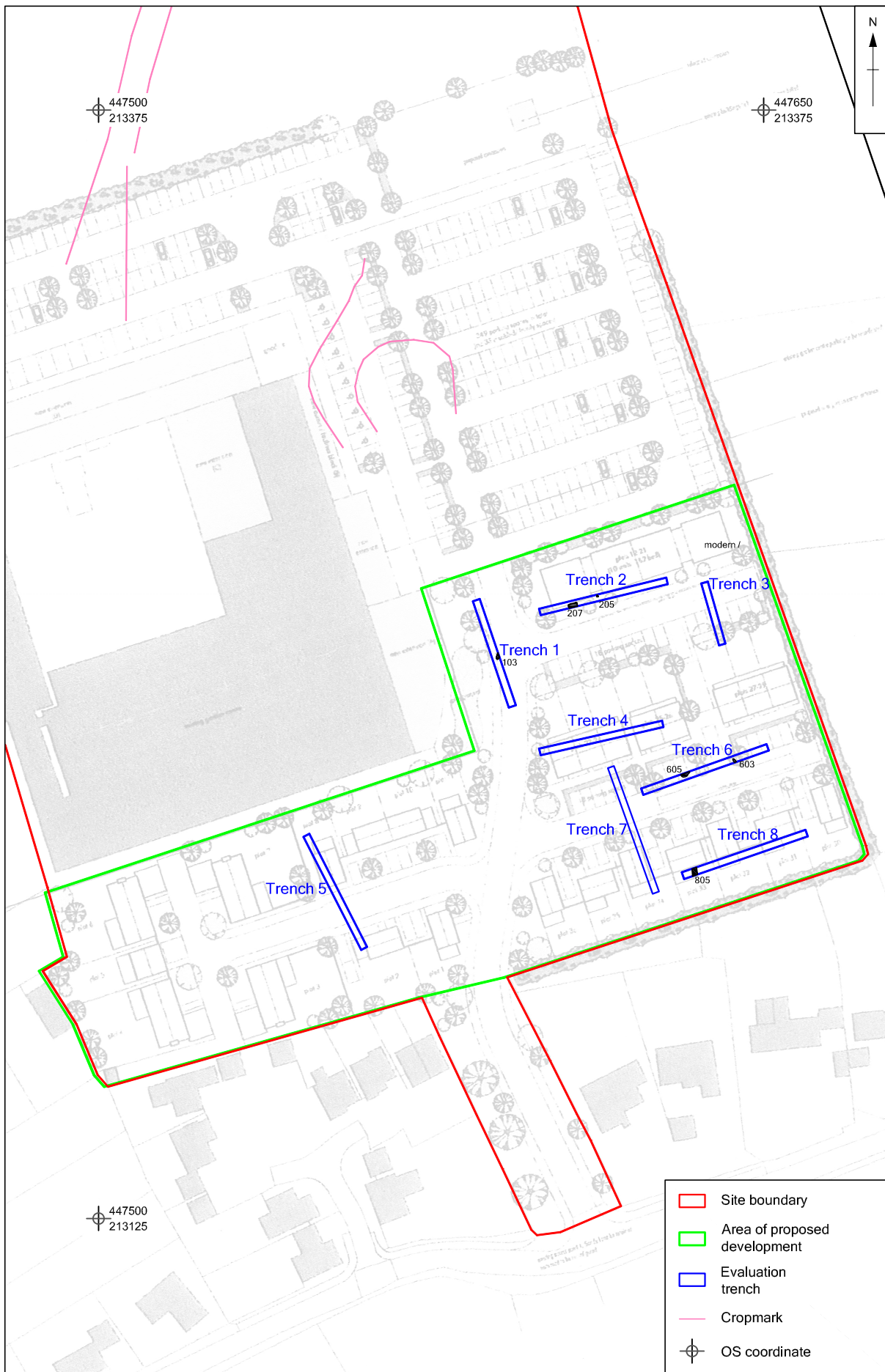
Summary of results: Occasional archaeological features, including ditches and a single posthole, were encountered in four trenches but, with the exception of a single pit of modern date, no artefacts were recovered. The features are likely to be of agricultural origin although some, at least, may be associated with the recent use of the site as a garden centre.

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Figure 1: Site location

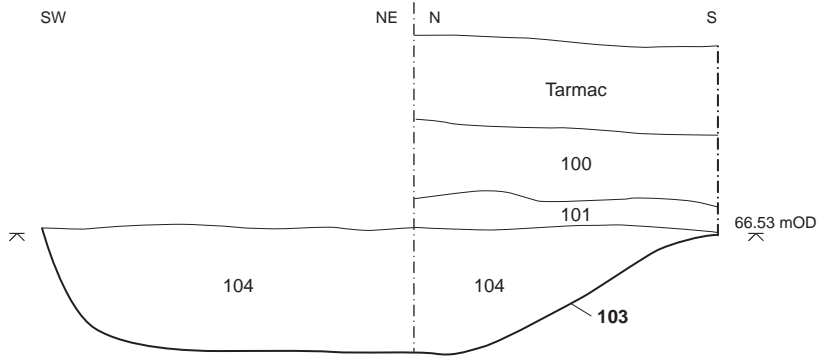


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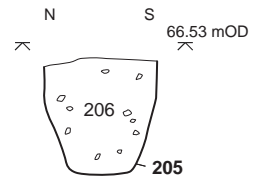
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Figure 2: Trench plan

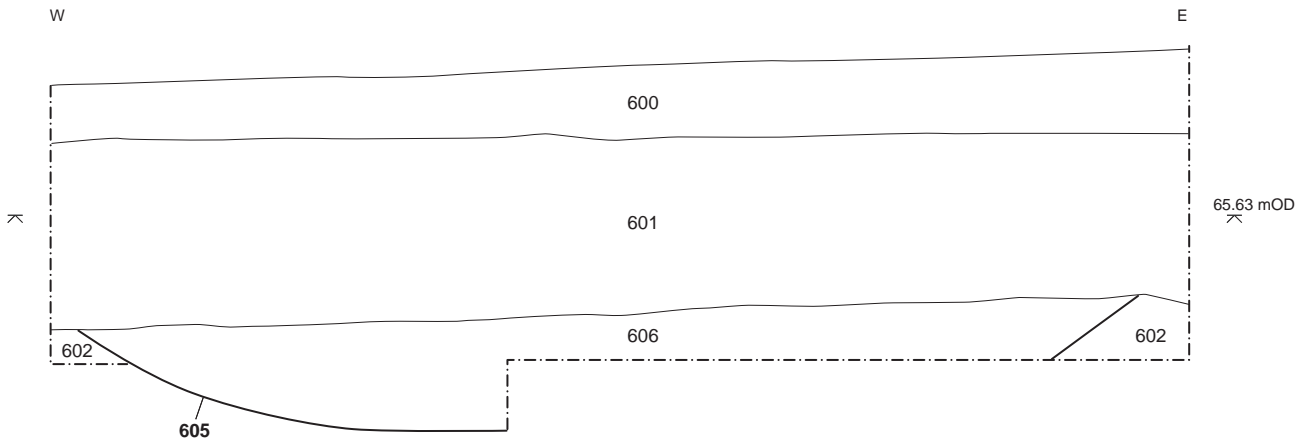
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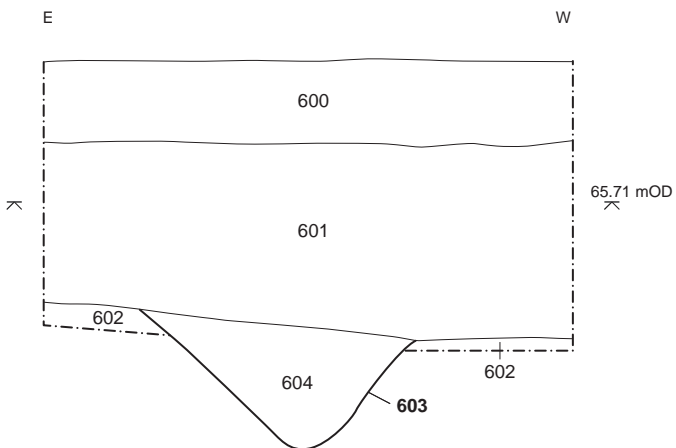
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Section 600



Section 601



Section 801

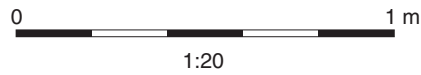
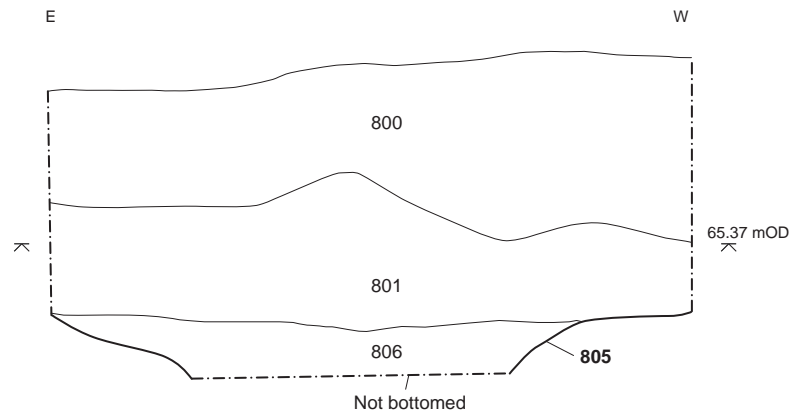


Figure 3: Sections 100, 200, 600, 601 and 801



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