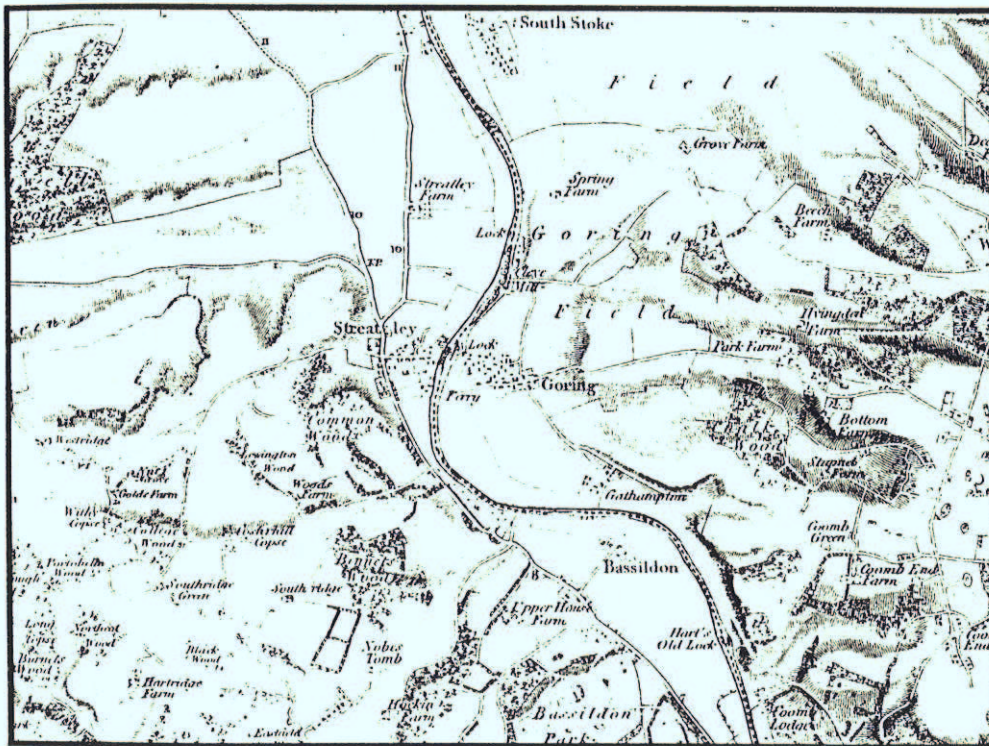


Beechcroft Developments Limited

Thames Bank, Goring, Oxon

*ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT*

SU 597 819



OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

March 1998

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**SU 597 819**

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**OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT**

**March 1998**

# Thames Bank, Goring, Oxon

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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## Thames Bank, Goring, Oxon

### *Archaeological Evaluation Report*

SU 597819

#### **SUMMARY**

*The Oxford Archaeological Unit undertook a field evaluation at Thames Bank, Goring on behalf of Beechcroft Developments Ltd on the 26th and 27th of February 1998. The evaluation revealed that the site was extensively landscaped prior to, and possibly in association with, the construction of the present building, now partially demolished. The footings of the building were found to be constructed directly on top of the natural chalk, and the ground level had subsequently been made up to a height of some 1.4m above the natural chalk. To the south of the site a thin layer of sand was encountered, surviving beneath the made ground deposits. A ditch, aligned approximately east-west cut from the top of this sand, was dated by a single sherd of pottery to the Early or Middle Saxon period.*

#### **1 INTRODUCTION**

##### **1.1 Location and scope of work**

In February 1998 the Oxford Archaeological Unit carried out a field evaluation at Thames Bank, Goring on behalf of Beechcroft Developments Limited in respect of a planning application for residential development (Fig.1) and Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) agreed with Paul Smith, County Archaeological Officer for Oxfordshire. The development site lay on the East bank of the River Thames and is c.0.87 hectares in area.

##### **1.2 Geology and topography**

The site lies on Middle Chalk geology (Geological Survey Sheet BGS 254) at 45m above Ordnance Datum. Since the site is situated on the East bank of the River Thames, it was anticipated that alluvial clay deposits might exist, but none were encountered during this investigation. The evaluation area is at present undergoing demolition and construction, but was formerly a residential home for the elderly.

##### **1.3 Archaeological and historical background**

The site itself has produced limited archaeological evidence and there are no known sites with archaeological finds adjacent to the development site. However, archaeological deposits and finds are common within the Thames Floodplain area.

- (i) The nearest find was a single flint flake (possibly Neolithic) discovered in the garden of 3 Nun's Acre (Oxon SMR PRN 7656).
- (ii) To the south-east of the site, at Gatehampton Farm (Allen 1995), excavation by the OAU in advance of pipe-laying has revealed evidence of occupation from the early postglacial period to the Bronze Age and again in the Roman and Saxon periods. This includes evidence of a pagan Saxon *Grubenhau*s and a midden which suggests that the Saxon settlement was extensive.

## 2 EVALUATION AIMS

The general aims of the evaluation, as stated in the WSI, were as follows:

To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the development area.

To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present.

To establish the ecofactual/environmental potential of archaeological features.

To make available the results of the investigation.

### **3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Sample size and scope of fieldwork**

The evaluation consisted of two trenches (Fig.2). Trench 1 was located in the area of the proposed car park, outside the original cellared area. It measured 2m wide and was extended from 10m to 12m long to facilitate understanding of the deposits (Fig. 3). Trench 2 was positioned in the area of the proposed car park access ramp and measured 5m long and 2m wide (Fig. 4).

The overburden was removed using a mechanical excavator (JCB) with a toothless ditching bucket under close archaeological supervision. Where possible, the trenches were excavated down to the natural chalk subsoil to allow for the full impact of the development to be examined. Trenches 1 and 2 were machined to maximum depths of 1.55m and 1.48m respectively.

#### **3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording**

The trenches were cleaned by hand and the revealed feature was sampled to determine the extent and nature, and to retrieve finds and an environmental sample. Both trenches were planned at scales of 1:50 and where necessary their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. The trenches were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

#### **3.3 Finds**

All deposits were examined for the presence of finds.

#### **3.4 Environmental data**

An environmental sample was recovered from the Ditch 203 in Trench 2, for the analysis of any surviving environmental indicators and for the retrieval of small artefacts.

### **4 RESULTS: GENERAL**

#### **4.1 Soils and ground conditions**

The deposits encountered mainly consisted of mixed and well-drained largely calcareous made ground. Ground conditions were dry with no preservation of waterlogged materials.

#### **4.2 Distribution of Archaeological Deposits**

The only significant archaeological deposits were observed in Trench 2: A thin layer of sand survived under the made ground, through which a ditch, aligned approximately east-west, had been cut. These deposits were sealed under a layer of garden soil. The ditch contained a single sherd of pottery dated to the Early or Middle Saxon period, which was recovered during environmental processing.



### 4.3 Presentation of Results

Section 5 includes individual context descriptions by trench. Archaeological deposits and features are described from earliest to latest in each trench. Context information is summarised in the context inventory (Appendix 1).

## 5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

### 5.1 Description of deposits

#### 5.1.1 Trench 1 (Fig. 3)

Natural weathered chalk (107) was reached at the south end of Trench 1 at 43.93m OD. This was overlain directly in the northern 10m of the trench by the recently demolished building: This comprised a foundation (102), which was visible in section, and footings (101) which were visible in both section and plan. Part of the original cellared area was revealed in the northernmost 1.5m of the trench. A layer of silt (106) and a later wall (108), were visible in plan in the interior of 101. Mixed rubble and chalk dumping/levelling deposits (103 -105) 1.38m thick, overlay the natural chalk and abutted the outside of 101 and 102, making the ground up to the present level. The footings of the building (101) had been filled with rubble (100) during the recent demolition of part of the building.

#### 5.1.2 Trench 2 (Fig. 4)

Natural weathered chalk (200) was reached in the southern part of Trench 2 at 44.38m OD. In the northern end of the trench the level of the chalk was some 0.44m lower and here it was overlain by a layer of sterile sand (201). Both the natural chalk (200) and sand layer (201) were cut by a ditch (203) which ran almost at right angles to the trench.

Ditch 203 was 2.3m wide and survived to a maximum depth of 0.9m. It had an 'ankle-breaker' profile; with shallow sides and an almost square slot at the bottom. It contained three sand and silt fills (202, 204 and 205) of which 204, the secondary fill, yielded a single sherd of pottery (through sampling) dated to the Early or Middle Saxon period. Ditch 203 was sealed by a layer of garden soil (206).

Mixed rubble and soil dumping/levelling deposits (207 - 211), similar to those in Trench 1 (103 -105) but less thick (0.54m - 0.64m), overlay 206 and were sealed beneath gravel (212, 213) and modern tarmacadam (214).

### 5.2 Finds

No finds were recovered during the evaluation, although modern brick and tile were observed. A single abraded sherd of pottery only 20mm across was recovered from the environmental sample taken from the secondary fill (204) of Ditch 203 in Trench 2. This has been dated to the Early or Middle Saxon period.

### 5.3 Environmental data

A summary of the environmental data recovered during the evaluation is contained in Appendix 2. A small quantity comminuted charcoal and several charred cereal grains together with a limited snail assemblage was noted in the sample taken from Ditch 203.

## 6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

### 6.1 Reliability of field investigation

The sample size was sufficient to determine the extent and type of deposits on the site liable to be affected by the proposed development.

### 6.2 Overall interpretation

#### 6.2.1 *Summary of Results*

The evaluation revealed a ditch, aligned approximately on an east -west axis, which contained a single sherd of pottery dated to the Early or Middle Saxon period.

The remaining deposits recorded on the site are of the same date or later than the present building.

#### 6.2.2 *Significance*

The majority of the deposits encountered on the site are of limited archaeological interest. It would appear that the area has been landscaped to the level of natural chalk before, and possibly in connection with, the construction of the present building.

The ditch recorded in Trench 2 would be of local and regional significance if it proved to be of a Saxon date. However, the single sherd of Early or Middle Saxon pottery recovered from the ditch is of insufficient size to positively date the feature and could be considered to be residual.

### Bibliography and references

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Wilkinson, D (ed) 1992 | <i>Oxford Archaeological Unit Field Manual</i> , (First edition, August 1992) |
| Allen, T G 1995        | <i>Oxford Archaeological Unit Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph No.7</i>     |



## Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory

Trench	Ctxt	Type	width (m)	thickness (m)	Comment
1	100	layer			modern demolition deposit/fill
	101	structure		>1.55	modern brick building
	102	layer		0.12	foundation for 101
	103	layer	>2.3	0.37	levelling/dumping deposit
	104	layer	>2.3	0.58	levelling/dumping deposit
	105	layer	>2.3	0.57	levelling/dumping deposit
	106	layer			fill of building 101
	107	layer			natural Middle Chalk
	108	structure			internal addition to building 101
2	200	layer			natural Middle Chalk
	201	layer	>0.84	0.18	sterile sand
	202	fill	0.56	0.16	primary fill of ditch 203
	203	ditch	2.3	0.9	ditch, aligned approx. east -west
	204	fill	0.88	0.22	secondary fill of ditch 203
	205	fill	0.9	0.48	tertiary (uppermost) fill of ditch 203
	206	layer	>5	0.38	buried garden soil
	207	layer	>1.02	0.23	levelling/dumping deposit
	208	layer	3.44	0.35	levelling/dumping deposit
	209	layer	>1.32	0.21	levelling/dumping deposit
	210	layer	>1.66	0.21	levelling/dumping deposit
	211	layer	>5	0.35	levelling/dumping deposit
	212	layer	>3.1	0.17	levelling/dumping deposit
	213	layer	>2.48	0.2	levelling/dumping deposit
	214	layer	>5	0.11	modern tarmacadam

## Appendix 2 Assessment of environmental indicators by Dana Challinor and Elizabeth Stafford

### Introduction

A single sample from the secondary of three fills (context 204) in a linear ditch was taken for the assessment of environmental indicators. The total volume processed was 30 litres.

### Methods

The sample was processed by mechanical flotation in a modified Siraf machine with the sample held on a 500um mesh and the flot collected on a 25um mesh. The coarse residue was then sieved for small bones and artefacts.

Flots were first put through a stack of sieves, ranging from 500um to 4mm to separate the flot into manageable fractions. Each fraction was then scanned under a binocular microscope at x10 to x 20 magnification.

### Results

The flot was small in size and consisted principally of modern roots and molluscs.

#### *Charred Remains*

Charred remains were very poor, in both quality and quantity. A small amount of very comminuted charcoal and several of cereal grain fragments were present. No charred weed seeds were noted.

#### *Bone*

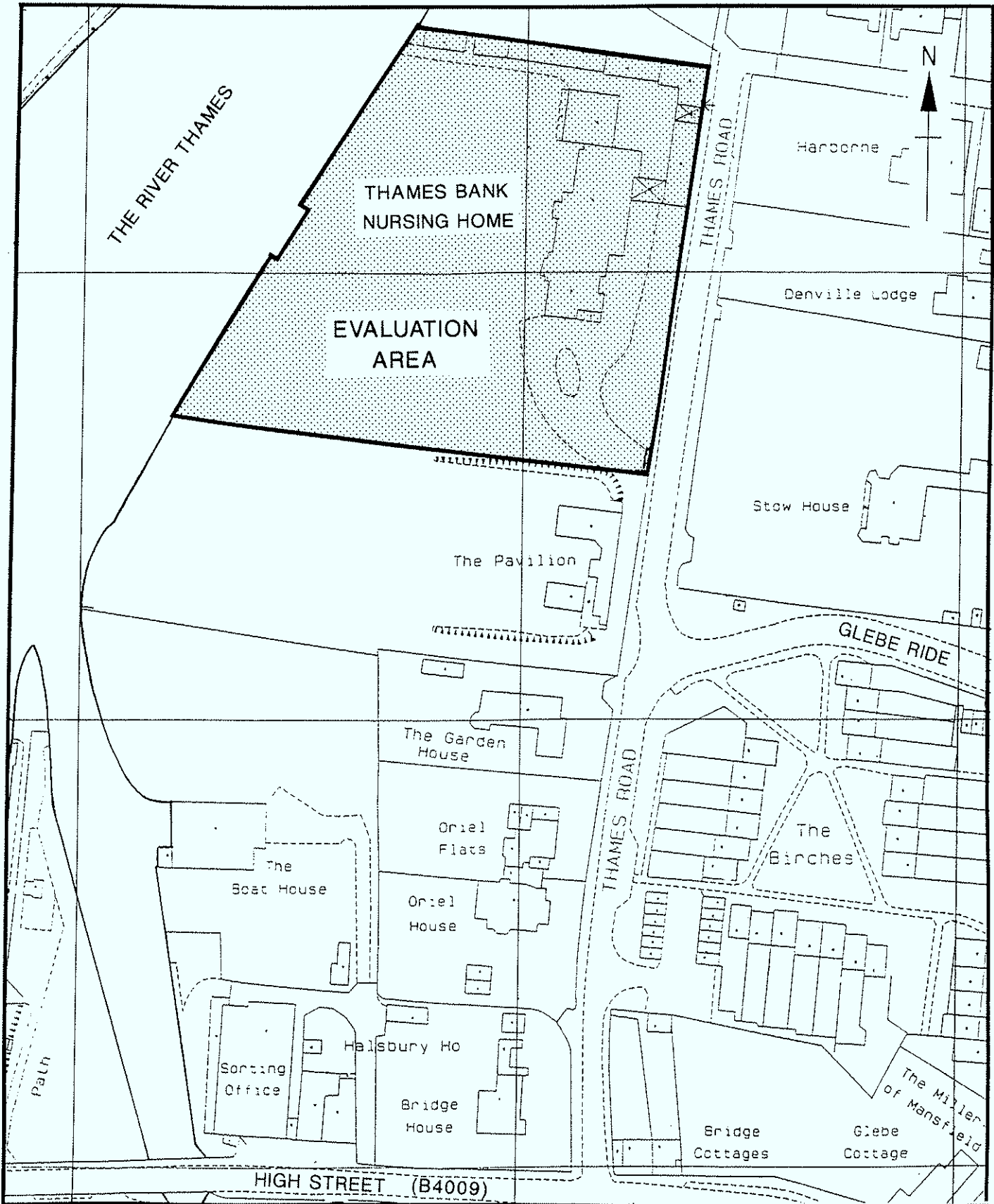
No bone was recovered from the sample.

#### *Molluscs*

The molluscan assemblage was not rich, but those snails present were well-preserved. Assessment of the flot revealed a predominance of open country species such as *Vallonia Costata*, *Vallonia excentrica* and *Pupilla muscorum*. *Trichia hispida* and *Cochlicopa* species were abundant but neither are particularly diagnostic of shaded or unshaded habitats.

### Discussion

Given the poor preservation of charred plant remains in this sample further work would not be recommended.



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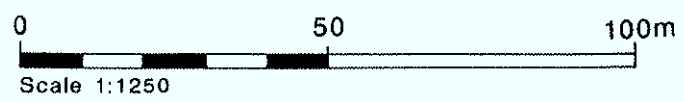


Fig 1: Site Location

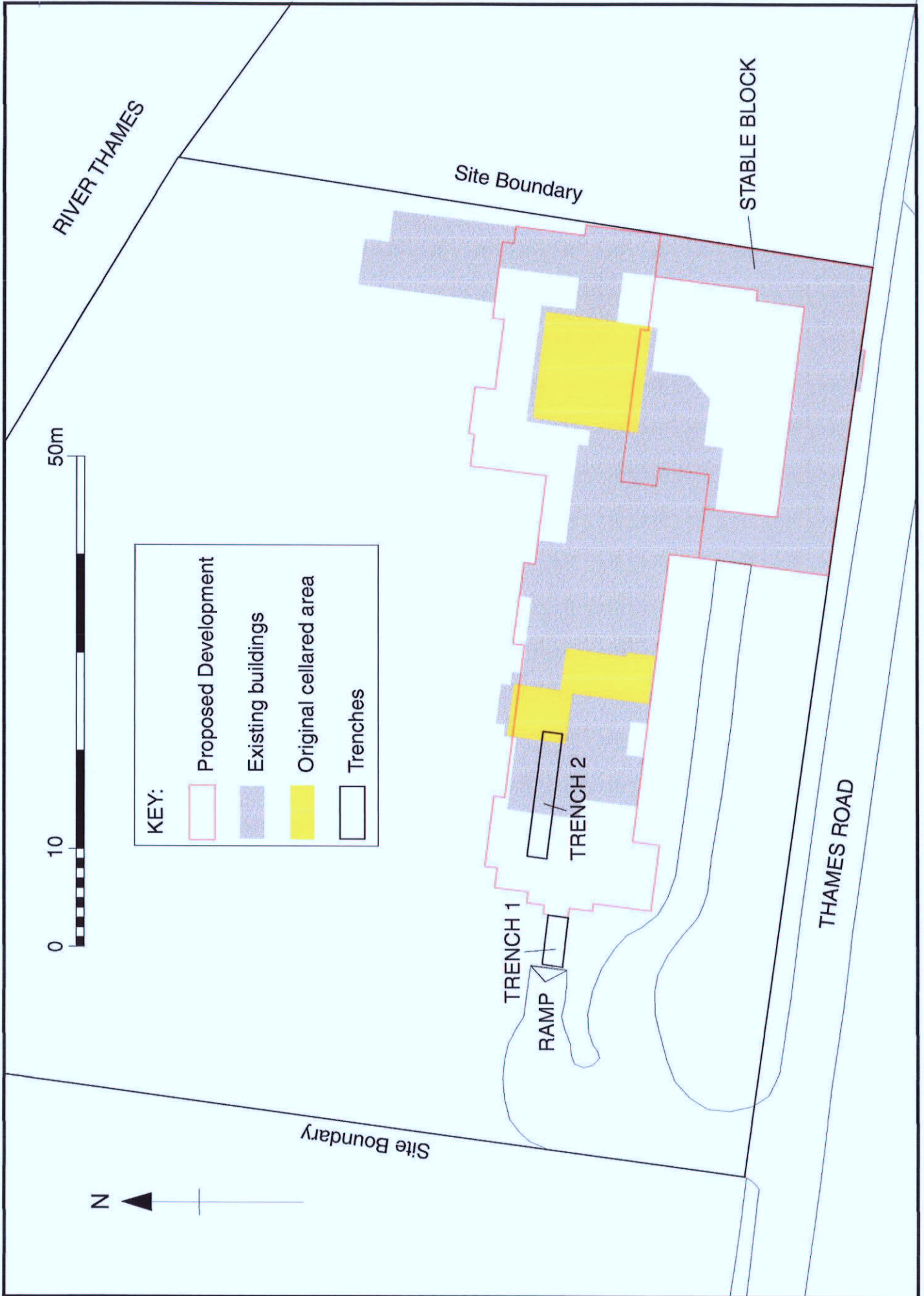


Figure 2: Trench location in relation to existing building and proposed development

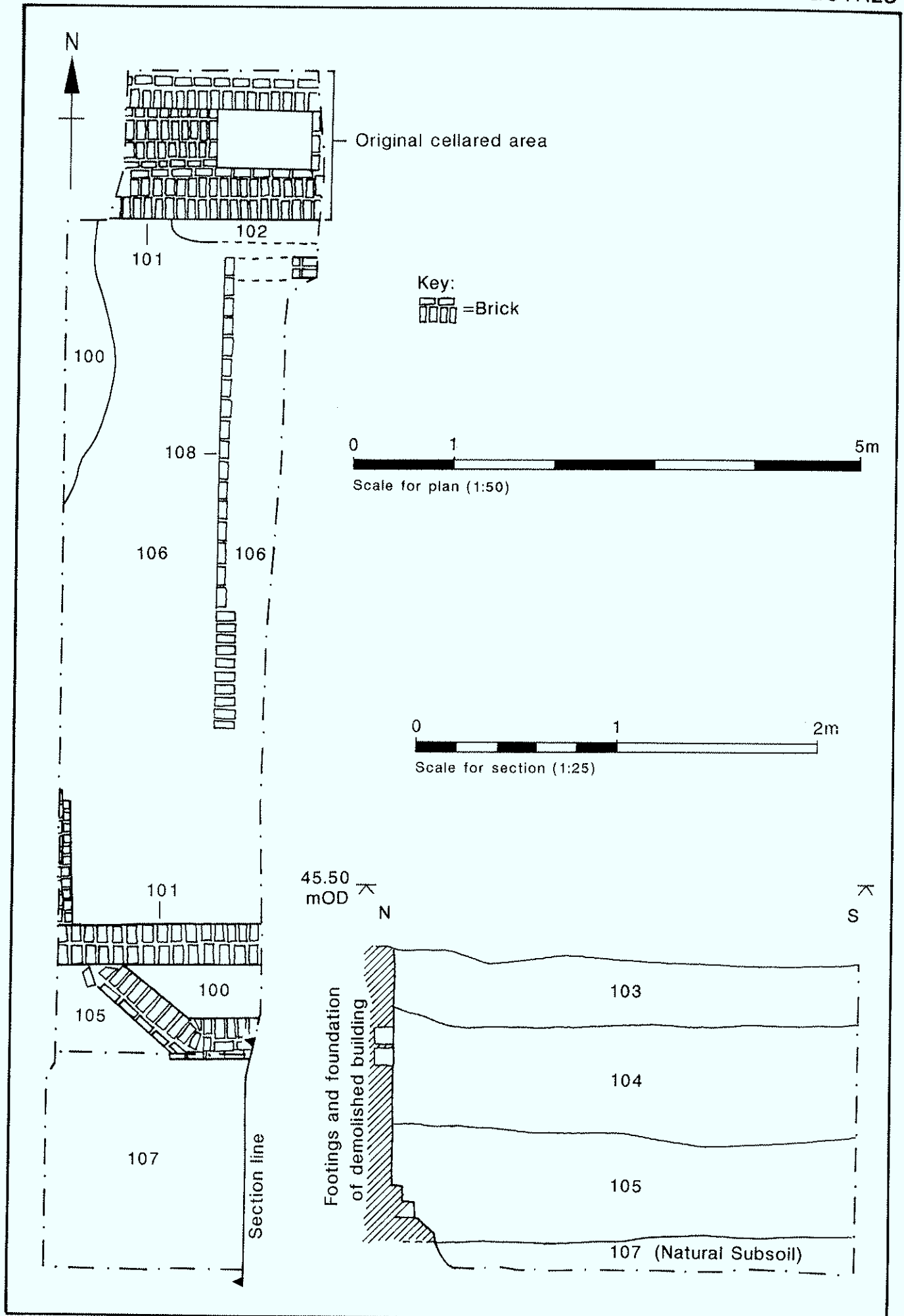


Figure 3: Trench 1; Plan and section

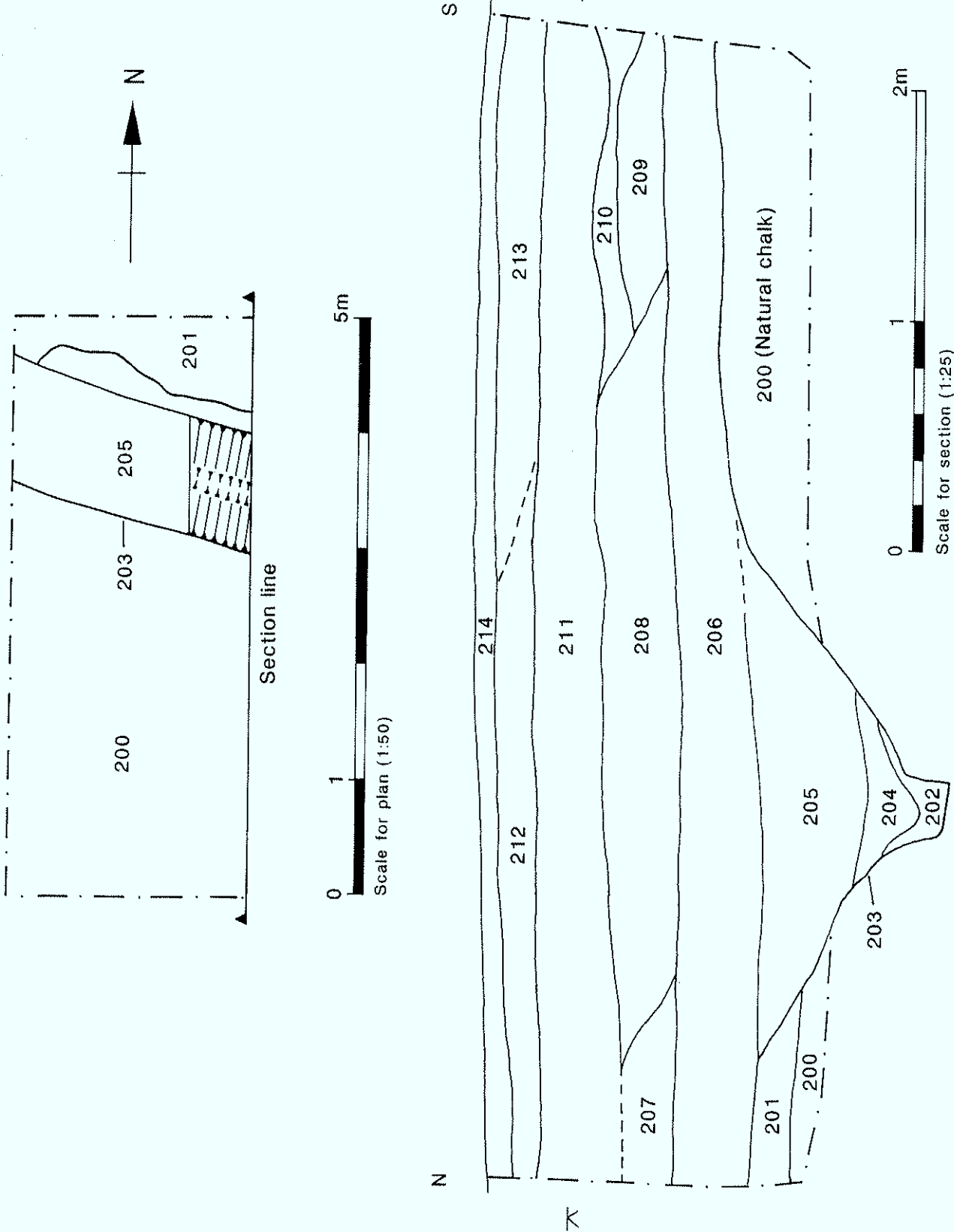


Figure 4: Trench 2; Plan and section





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