



Castle Mews
Caerphilly
Mid Glamorgan
Wales

Archaeological Evaluation Report



Oxford Archaeology

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(Developments) Ltd.**

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CASTLE MEWS, CAERPHILLY, MID GLAMORGAN***ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT***

NGR: 315830 187020

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SUMMARY

Between the 21st and 24th of June 2004, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at Castle Mews, Caerphilly on behalf of McCarthy and Stone (Developments) Ltd. Of the four trenches planned for the site, three were partially opened. Two of these were abandoned due to ground conditions and were not fully investigated. One trench contained a possible east-west aligned ditch of indeterminate date. The fills of this feature were overlain by a possible post-medieval cultivation horizon, which was cut by a recent field drain. 19th/20th century made ground was present across the whole of the site to a depth of 0.8m - 1m below present ground level.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In June 2004 OA carried out a field evaluation on behalf of McCarthy and Stone (Developments) Ltd., in advance of a planning application for Castle Mews, Caerphilly. The site lies in the centre of Caerphilly, c 100m east of the edge of the medieval castle precinct (Fig. 1).
- 1.1.2 The work was carried out in line with a specification laid out in a brief set by and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) agreed with Jim Hunter of CgMs Consulting. Of the four planned trenches, only three were partially opened (Fig. 2). Two of these (Trenches 2 and 3) were abandoned due to severe ground contamination.
- 1.1.3 Although no significant contamination was apparent in Trench 1, this was also abandoned at the request of the client following consultation with Jim Hunter of CgMs Consulting and Neil Mayland of Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT).
- 1.1.4 As a result, a full characterisation of the deposits and potential features revealed during the evaluation was not possible. However, a tentative interpretation is presented below based on observations made during the initial excavation of the trenches.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site covers an area of about 0.2 hectares, and lies on a low-lying area between the castle and a stream, the Porset Brook (approximate grid reference: NGR 315830 187020).
- 1.2.2 To the north, the land rises to the Castle Court shopping centre development and to the south it rises toward Twyn County Junior and Infant Schools. The land is currently undeveloped and derelict with a mound of demolition rubble in the south-west corner.
- 1.2.3 The site lies on sedimentary Carboniferous Upper Westphalian (including pennant measures) with superficial deposits of Sand and Gravel with Boulder Clay and Moranic Drift.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

The following is based on information produced in the brief (CgMs Consulting, 2004) and is reproduced from the WSI (OA, 2004)

- 1.3.1 No Scheduled Ancient Monuments lie within the development site. The SMR holds no records dating from the Palaeolithic or Mesolithic periods on the site or within its immediate vicinity. A low to nil potential is identified for archaeology of these periods. Similarly, there is no direct evidence of later prehistoric activity within neither the site nor the immediate vicinity.
- 1.3.2 There is a Roman fort to the west of the site at the rear of the Castle. However, at the time of the evaluation, there was no evidence that activity spread as far as the site itself.
- 1.3.3 In the medieval period, Caerphilly Castle was constructed (it was begun in 1268). It is assumed that there was some settlement at this time outside the castle precinct, but as yet no sign of it has been located. It is conceivable that this development site was the location of some medieval settlement, placed as it is between the Castle and the Porset Brook. However, if this was indeed the case, it is curious that subsequent development is concentrated elsewhere.
- 1.3.4 During the post-medieval period there was considerable development of the area although the site itself was not properly developed until the 1960s.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

- 2.1.1 To clarify the presence/absence and extent of medieval or other significant archaeological deposits.
- 2.1.2 Identify, within the constraints of the evaluation, the date, character, condition and depth of any surviving remains within the site.
- 2.1.3 Assess the degree of existing impacts to sub-surface horizons and to document the extent of archaeological survival of buried deposits.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork

- 3.1.1 The evaluation was intended to consist of four 20 m x 1.8 m trenches, located as indicated on Fig. 2. However, due to heavy soil contamination (see below), Trenches 2 and 3 were abandoned.
- 3.1.2 A 15 m long section of Trench 1 was opened to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon, but was also abandoned following agreement from CgMs Consulting, and after an instruction from McCarthy and Stone (Developments) Ltd.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

- 3.2.1 Although the instruction from McCarthy and Stone (Developments) Ltd negated the possibility of further investigation of the deposits and potential features revealed in trench 1, the trench was planned at a scale of 1:100 and 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

- 3.3.1 No finds were retained from the evaluation, although post-medieval and 19th/20th century material was observed during machine excavation of Trench 1.

3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

- 3.4.1 Although no palaeo-environmental sample evidence was taken during the evaluation, a number of deposits with potential for environmental sampling were observed, an issue that is discussed below.

4 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

4.1 Description of deposits

Trench 1

- 4.1.1 Trench 1 was excavated in the north-west corner of the site (Fig. 2) and measured 15 m in length by 1.8 m in width. It was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.74 m below existing ground level (bgl). Due to health and safety considerations, a 1.8 m wide step was also excavated to a depth of c 1 m bgl along the eastern edge of the trench (Fig. 3).
- 4.1.2 The trench was excavated to the top (c 1.74 m bgl) of a friable bluish grey sand (103), which was probably alluvial in origin and was cut by a probable ditch (104) running from east to west across the trench (Fig. 3). The ditch was at least 2 m wide, although the full width could not be established as a north-east/south-west aligned ceramic drain ran across the trench at a depth of approximately 1 m and was left *in-situ*, thus obscuring the southern edge of the ditch. The upper fill of this ditch comprised a mid-dark brown clayey silt deposit (105), which appeared to contain concentrations of organic material.
- 4.1.3 The alluvial sand (103) was overlain by a 0.1 m thick deposit of tenacious mid bluish grey clay (102) of uncertain origin. Overlying the clay was a layer of friable, dark brown, clay silt (101) which was an average of 0.4 m thick and may represent a garden soil or cultivation layer. Post-medieval pottery was recovered from this deposit during machine excavation of the trench, but is unreliable as dating evidence as it cannot be securely attributed to this deposit. A 0.2 m wide linear feature (106) truncated this deposit and also the underlying alluvial sand (103). This was

tentatively interpreted as a field drain as the fill comprised a very mixed 'backfill' (107) which contained 19th century pottery and ceramic building material.

- 4.1.4 The remaining 1.3 m of material through which the trench was excavated comprised 19th/20th century made ground (100).

Trench 2

- 4.1.5 Trench 2 was excavated in the south-east corner of the site (Fig. 2) and excavation began at the eastern end of the trench. However at a depth of approximately 0.8 m bgl, a heavily contaminated deposit was encountered which necessitated the immediate backfilling of the trench due to health and safety considerations.

- 4.1.6 The overlying 0.8 m of material was 20th century made ground. In order to establish the extent of the contaminated material, the western end of the trench was also opened and the same contaminated deposit encountered at approximately the same depth, if not a little higher (c 0.7 m bgl).

Trench 3

- 4.1.7 Trench 3 was excavated towards the centre of the site and excavation began at the southern end. At a depth of approximately 1 m bgl, the trench became flooded with heavily contaminated water and was therefore backfilled for health and safety reasons.

- 4.1.8 The origin of the water was uncertain, but it potentially represented the water table as it was at approximately the same level as the Porset Brook. The deposits through which the trench was excavated comprised 20th century demolition rubble of stone and brick, probably associated with the demolition of the building(s), which formerly occupied the site (see below). The contaminated deposit observed within Trench 2 was not observed but may exist below the demolition rubble, which was not bottomed.

Trench 4

- 4.1.9 It was proposed that Trench 4 be opened in the north-east corner of the site. However, the instruction from McCarthy and Stone (Developments) Ltd negated the necessity of opening this trench.

4.2 Finds

- 4.2.1 No finds were retained from the evaluation.

4.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 4.3.1 Although no environmental samples were taken, features such as ditch 104 in Trench 1 may yet prove suitable for sampling should further archaeological investigation be required on the site.

5 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 5.1.1 As all three of the opened trenches were abandoned before a full characterisation of the deposits and potential features could be undertaken, the reliability of these results is limited.

5.2 Overall interpretation

- 5.2.1 The made ground observed across the whole site presumably derives from the construction and subsequent demolition of the recent building(s) which previously occupied the site. However, the degree of modern truncation across the site is uncertain as the made ground does appear to overlie *in-situ* archaeological deposits, in particular the possible post-medieval cultivation horizon (101) observed in Trench 1.
- 5.2.2 Although the earliest artefactual evidence was from the post-medieval period, the ditch (104) seen in Trench 1 would suggest that there is potential for earlier archaeological features surviving beneath deposit 101. Additionally, if the ditch continued on the same alignment, it is likely that it would also have been present in (the unfinished) Trench 3, depending on the degree of modern truncation in that area.
- 5.2.3 Anecdotal evidence from local residents during the evaluation revealed that the site was previously occupied by F.C Brookes and Son, Haulage, Removals and Furniture. It became apparent that vehicle maintenance, fuelling and parking of heavy goods vehicles was occurring on site and is probably the origin of the majority of the contamination observed during the fieldwork.
- 5.2.4 The residents also suggested that some of the contamination might have originated from a tar production plant further upstream.
- 5.2.5 It should also be noted that contaminants were observed leaking into the Porset Brook during the evaluation.
- 5.2.6 The degree of contamination, particularly to the south and east of the site, would necessitate remediation of the contaminated material before reliable archaeological investigations could be undertaken.

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>
001								
	100	Dep		1.3m	made ground			C19th/20th
	101	Dep		0.4m	garden soil/cultivation layer			?p-med
	102	Dep		0.1m	?alluvial clay			?natural
	103	Dep			alluvial sand			natural
	104	Cut	2m+		?paleochannel			unknown
	105	Fill			?paleochannel fill			unknown
	106	Cut	0.2m		?field drain			?C19th
	107	Fill			backfill of field drain			?C19th

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

CgMs Consulting, 2003 *Specification for Archaeological Evaluation*. Castle Mews, Caerphilly

OA 2003 Written Scheme of Investigation. Castle Mews, Caerphilly

Wilkinson, D (ed.) 1992 Oxford Archaeological Unit Field Manual, (First edition, August 1992).

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Castle Mews, Caerphilly

Site code: CAMEW04

Grid reference: NGR 315830187020

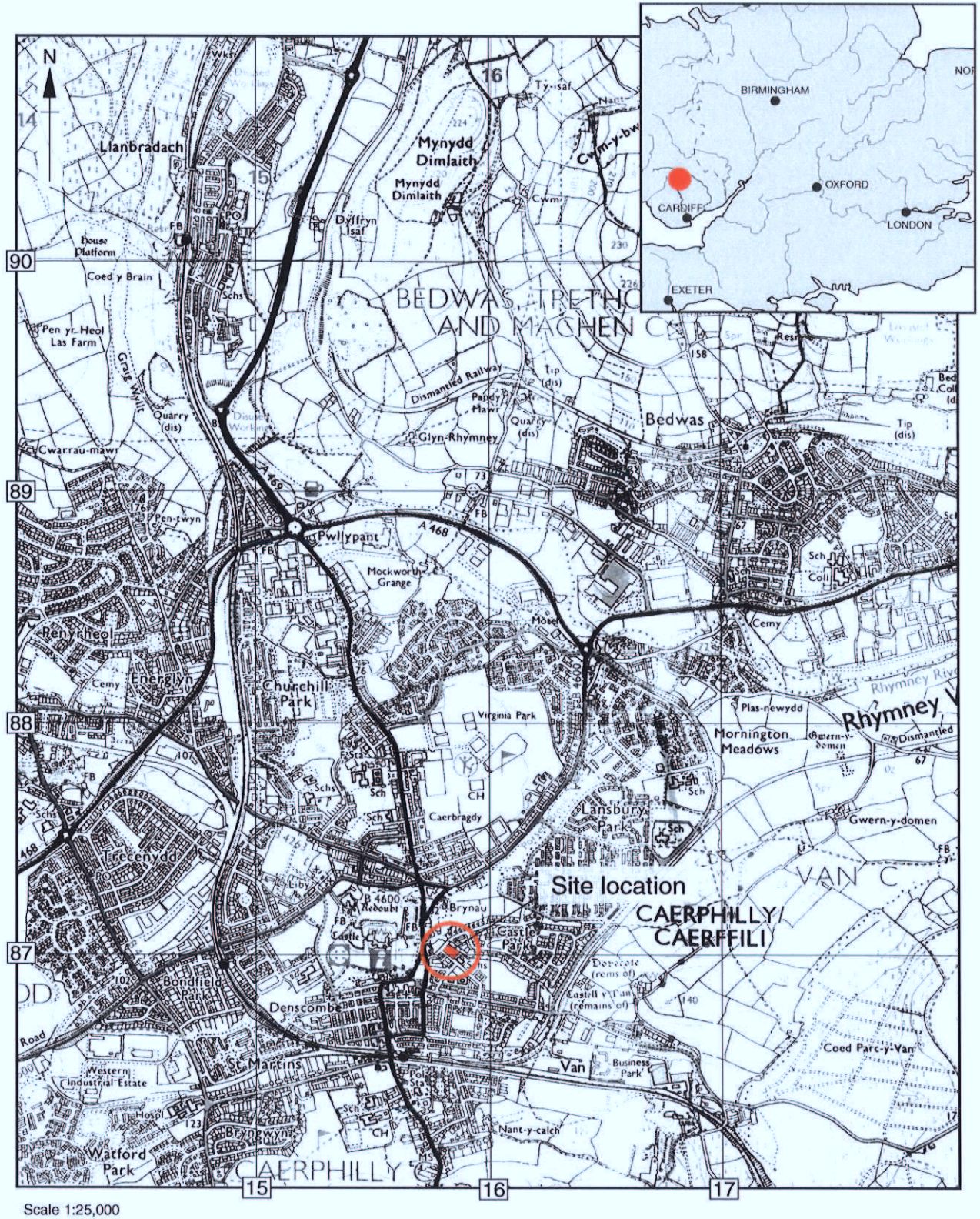
Type of evaluation: Trial trenching

Date and duration of project: June 2004, 3 Days

Area of site: 0.2ha

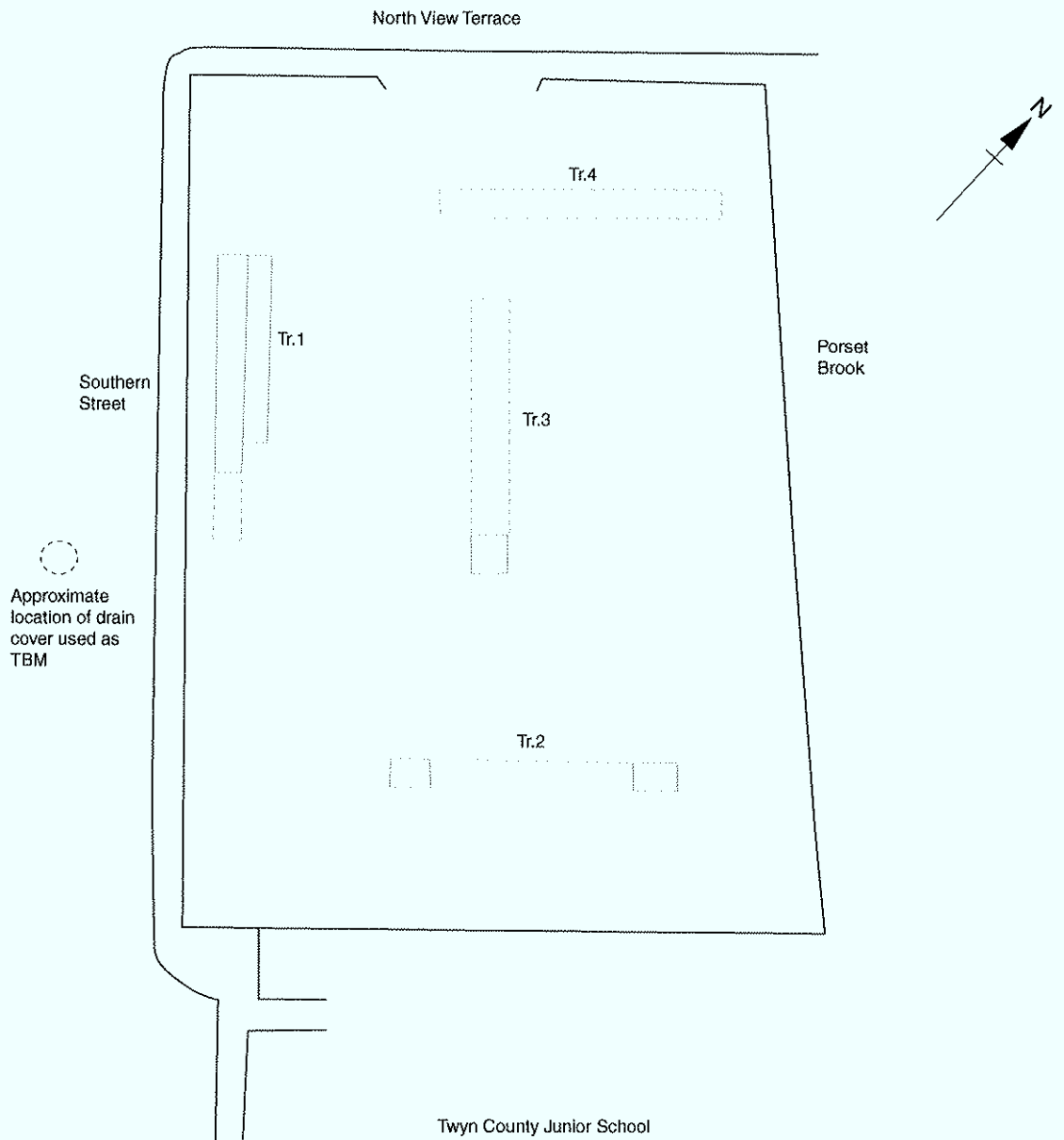
Summary of results: Results were inconclusive as evaluation aborted following instruction from McCarthy and Stone (Developments) Ltd. Average of 1 m of made ground across whole site, to the south and east heavily contaminated. Some suggestion of features surviving beneath a garden soil/cultivation horizon, including an undated ditch, which survives beneath the made ground.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the appropriate museum in due course.



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Figure 1: Site Location



Proposed trenching
not opened

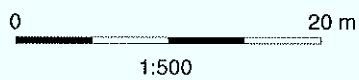


Figure 2: Trench location

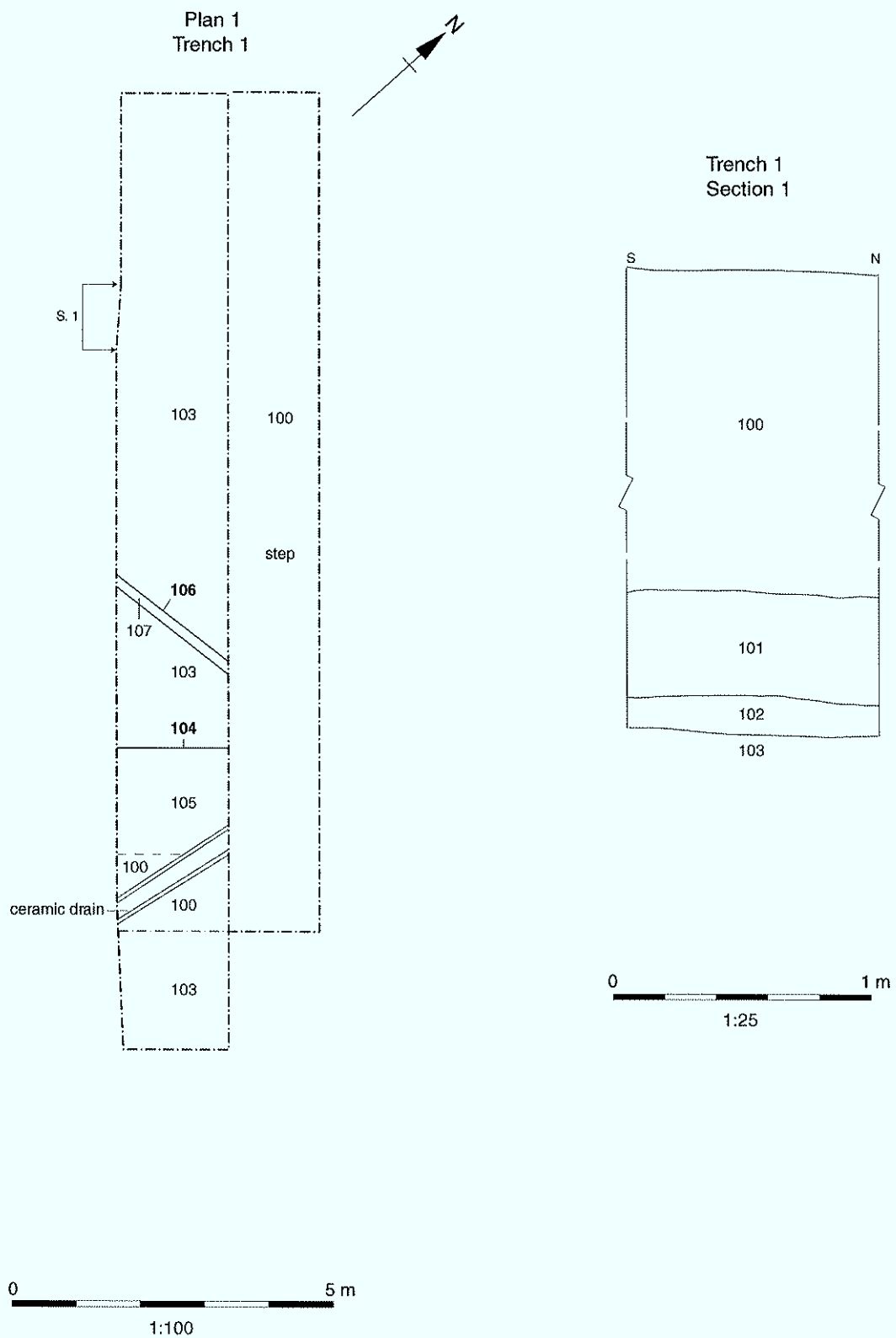


Figure 3: Trench 1 plan and section



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