



Milton Garden Machinery, Milton Road, Drayton, Oxfordshire Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Archaeological Evaluation Report

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With illustrations by Conan Parsons and Charles Rousseux.

Contents

Summary	vii
Acknowledgements	viii
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Scope of work.....	1
1.2 Location, topography and geology.....	1
1.3 Archaeological and historical background.....	2
1.4 Potential.....	2
2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY.....	3
2.1 Aims	3
2.2 Methodology.....	3
3 RESULTS	4
3.1 Introduction and presentation of results	4
3.2 General soils and ground conditions.....	4
3.3 General distribution of deposits	4
3.4 Finds summary	4
4 DISCUSSION	5
4.1 Reliability of field investigation.....	5
4.2 Evaluation objectives and results.....	5
4.3 Interpretation.....	5
APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY	6
APPENDIX B BIBLIOGRAPHY	7
APPENDIX C SITE SUMMARY DETAILS	8

List of Figures

- | | |
|--------|------------------|
| Fig. 1 | Site location |
| Fig. 2 | Trench locations |
| Fig. 3 | Sections 1-3 |

List of Plates

- | | |
|---------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Plate 1 | Trench 1, view to north-west |
| Plate 2 | Trench 1, Section 1, detail of west end. View to north |
| Plate 3 | Trench 2, view to north-east |
| Plate 4 | Trench 3 showing natural features 13 and 15. View to north |
| Plate 5 | Trench 3, Section 3. View to east |

Summary

Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological evaluation at Milton Garden Machinery, Milton Road, Drayton, to determine the presence or absence of archaeological remains relating to the Scheduled Monument known as 'Settlement Site' (NHLE: 1004852). Three test pits were excavated and hand cleaned. No archaeological remains were encountered, and no finds were recovered. Trench 1, an open trench excavated prior to the evaluation, contained a modern cut feature. Trench 2 was devoid of archaeology and Trench 3 contained two geological features. No evidence of a circular cropmark feature or quarrying indicated by aerial photographs was identified.

Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Paul Manthorpe for commissioning this project. Thanks are also extended to David Wilkinson who monitored the work on behalf of Historic England.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Daniel Bray, Project Officer, HMS. The fieldwork was directed by Becky Peacock, Project Officer, who was supported by Jody Bloom. Survey and digitising were carried out by Conan Parsons. Thanks are also extended to the OA staff that prepared the archive under the supervision of Nicky Scott.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Paul Manthorpe to undertake a trial trench evaluation at Milton Garden Machinery, Milton Road, Drayton, Oxfordshire, centred on Grid Reference SU 48861 93782. It is situated at the northern end of a scheduled monument known as 'Settlement Site' (NHLE: 1004852) (Fig. 1).
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken to inform a planning application (P18/V2563/FUL), submitted to the Vale of the White Horse District Council, for the proposed retention and change of use of an existing building, currently used as a dwelling, to a lawnmower retail showroom.
- 1.1.3 The planning application was originally submitted to the VWHDC in October 2018. In November 2018, an Assistant Inspector of Monuments at Historic England (HE) noticed that some groundworks had already been undertaken prior to the decision of the planning application. The groundworks undertaken included the excavation of a number of postholes for wooden telegraph poles to support a wooden roof, and a pit for a cess tank.
- 1.1.4 Works were ordered to stop until scheduled monument consent had been granted. Historic England were subsequently consulted in November 2018 and, in their response (HE ref: P00990950) dated 6th December 2018, they recommended that the application be refused due to a lack of information on the potential impact of the development on the monument. An historic environment desk-based assessment (DBA) was prepared for the site addressing these comments (Oxford Archaeology 2019a).
- 1.1.5 Following the submission of the DBA, Historic England advised in their letter (5th June 2019) that, before determination of the application, a field evaluation should be carried out, comprising examination of an existing trench and some additional test pits.
- 1.1.6 This document outlines how OA implemented the specified requirements. The fieldwork was undertaken on the 13th and 14th August 2019 and was carried out in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI - Oxford Archaeology, 2019b) approved by David Wilkinson.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The site is located at Windyridge Farm, on the eastern side of Milton Road approximately 1km east of Drayton and 3.3km south of Abingdon (Fig. 1). The site is rectangular in shape and is approximately 0.17ha in size. The site is within the Thames Valley and is approximately 1.2km south-west of the River Thames. It comprises a yard and buildings currently used for lawnmower repairs.
- 1.2.2 The topography of the site is level at a height of 58m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The geology of the area is mapped as Ampthill Clay Formation which is overlain by

Summertown-Radley Formation Sand and Gravel deposits (Second Gravel Terrace) (BGS 2019).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background of the site has been described in detail in the DBA (OA 2019a) and will not be reproduced here. In summary, the site is situated within an area that was a focus for the development of a complex of monuments creating a ceremonial and funerary landscape, dating to the prehistoric period. The landscape was reorganised in the Romano-British period and new field systems were laid out. The surrounding area was later the focus of a large high-status Anglo-Saxon settlement.

1.4 Potential

1.4.1 The site is situated within the northern part of a scheduled monument known as 'Settlement site'. The scheduled monument comprises a number of different archaeological features of different periods and its significance derives partly from the sum of these component parts. The monument is divided into two sections, on either side of Milton Road. It comprises the southern part of the Drayton Cursus, Bronze Age barrows and enclosures, six Anglo-Saxon halls and sunken featured buildings and includes other undated cropmarks. There is also the potential that the monument boundary contains further as yet unknown archaeological remains of prehistoric, Roman and Anglo-Saxon date.

1.4.2 The majority of the archaeological features including the cursus, barrow and five of the Anglo-Saxon halls are situated in the western part of the scheduled monument. The site is located along the northern boundary of the eastern half of the monument. Large parts of the site have been previously quarried and as such have no archaeological potential or significance despite, being within the scheduled monument. Some areas of the site appear to have remained unquarried and have the potential for archaeological features to be present. Aerial photographs indicate that a small section of a ring ditch might survive within the site (although there is the possibility that this might be the edge of former quarrying). Due to its location within the scheduled monument this feature would be considered to be of high heritage significance.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The general aim of the project was to determine the presence (or absence), character, extent, quality and preservation of archaeological remains, and enable an assessment of their significance.
- 2.1.2 The specific aims and objectives of the evaluation were to determine whether or not archaeological remains survive within the site and were impacted upon by the unconsented building works.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 A summary of OA's general approach to excavation and recording can be found in Appendix A. Standard methodologies for Geomatics and Survey, Environmental evidence, Artefactual evidence and Burials can also be found below (Appendices B, C, D and E respectively).
- 2.2.2 Site specific methodologies were as follows:
- i. The site and trench/test pits were photographed prior to any works taking place, in accordance with a condition (b) of the Scheduled Monument consent (Historic England ref: S00223156).
 - ii. Trenches/test pits were located as agreed in Figure 2 of the Written Scheme of Investigation (Oxford Archaeology, 2019b). Trench 1 was an open trench excavated prior to the evaluation commencing on the site and measured 5m by a maximum width of 0.8m and up to a maximum depth of 1m.
 - iii. Two trenches/test pits were excavated by hand, except for the removal of the compact tarmac and gravel made-ground deposit on the surface which was too compact to excavate with hand-tools. The machine excavation was carried out by a 3T mini-excavator with a toothless bucket under continuous archaeological supervision.
 - iv. The topsoil and subsoil were hand excavated to better retrieve artefacts and excavation ceased at the top of the natural gravel.
 - v. In the case of the trench previously opened, the debris (vegetation clippings and rubble) was removed from the base by mechanical excavator and the sections were cleaned by hand to assess the stratigraphic sequence.
 - vi. All trenches/test pits were recorded in line with the Standard recording methodologies outlined above.
 - vii. The open trenches/test pits were monitored by David Wilkinson, Historic England.
 - viii. The site and trench/test pits were backfilled and the areas photographed prior to leaving the site.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below (Figs 2-3). The full details of all trenches with dimensions and depths of all deposits can be found in Appendix A.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 The soil sequence in the trenches was fairly uniform. The natural geology of coarse sands and gravels was overlain by a mid reddish brown sandy silt subsoil, which in turn was overlain by buried topsoil, sealed by hardstanding consisting of gravel and tarmac (Fig. 3, section 1).

3.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the evaluation were generally good, and the site was excavated in dry conditions; however, most of the recording and monitoring took place in very wet conditions.

3.3 General distribution of deposits

3.3.1 Trench 1, which was situated close to the circular cropmark visible on aerial photographs (Fig. 2), revealed a modern cut (5) at the east end, which contained a modern loose backfill of bricks, clay and sand (Plates 1-2). The cut was narrower than the upper part of the trench so was visible in plan but not in the section of the trench. Trench 3 contained two natural hollows (contexts 13 and 15) with fills that were very similar to the subsoil (Plates 4-5). Archaeological features were not present in any of the trenches.

3.4 Finds summary

3.4.1 There were no finds recovered from the site.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 The conditions and visibility were good while the excavation was taking place. The trenches were located close to the structures on the site (Fig. 2). The trenches were small and excavated to the natural geology although Trench 1 could not be excavated any deeper due to Health and Safety considerations.

4.2 Evaluation objectives and results

4.2.1 The evaluation determined the absence of archaeological features or deposits in the investigation areas, although the limited size and number of trenches meant that it could not determine if there were archaeological remains within the wider site and the footprint of the buildings.

4.3 Interpretation

4.3.1 There were no archaeological features encountered in the trenches. Cut 5, in Trench 1, was clearly modern in date and did not correspond with a circular cropmark visible on aerial photographs. This feature was not identified within the trench.

4.3.2 Trenches 2 and 3 were located in an area that from aerial photography appeared to have been truncated by quarrying. No evidence of quarrying was identified in either trench, and the area appears to have remained undisturbed. The natural hollows, (contexts 13 and 15) recorded in Trench 3 were typical of natural features observed within the gravels in the area.

4.3.3 The subsoil, (layers 3, 8 and 12) throughout the evaluation, were notably sterile as was the buried topsoil (layers 2, 7 and 11), considering the proximity to the Scheduled Monument.

APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of a gravel surface, buried topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of sandy gravel.					Length (m)	4.8
					Width (m)	0.8
					Avg. depth (m)	0.66
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1	Layer	-	0.15	Modern surface, gravel.	-	-
2	Layer	-	0.14	Remnant topsoil	-	-
3	Layer	-	0.34	Subsoil – ploughsoil.	-	-
4	Fill	0.7	0.3	Modern 20 th century backfill	-	-
5	Cut	0.7	0.3	Modern cut	-	-
6	Layer	-	-	Natural – sands and gravels.	-	-

Trench 2						
General description					Orientation	N-S
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of a tarmac and made ground surface, buried topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of sandy gravel.					Length (m)	1.66
					Width (m)	0.96
					Avg. depth (m)	0.42
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
10	Layer	-	0.16	Tarmac and made ground	-	-
7	Layer	-	0.14	Remnant topsoil	-	-
8	Layer	-	0.10	Subsoil – ploughsoil	-	-
9	Layer	-	-	Natural – sands and gravel	-	-

Trench 3						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of a surface of tarmac and made ground, buried topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of sandy gravel.					Length (m)	1.58
					Width (m)	0.98
					Avg. depth (m)	0.50
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
10	Layer	-	0.16	Tarmac and made ground	-	-
11	Layer	-	0.27	Remnant topsoil	-	-
12	Layer	-	0.1	Subsoil - ploughsoil	-	-
13	Cut	0.46	0.22	Natural feature	-	-
14	Fill	0.46	0.22	Fill of natural feature 13.	-	-
15	Cut	0.28	0.08	Natural feature	-	-
16	Fill	0.28	0.08	Fill of natural feature 15	-	-
17	Layer	-	-	Natural – sands and gravels	-	-

APPENDIX B BIBLIOGRAPHY

British Geological Survey, 2019 Geology of Britain viewer. Visited 2019.

Oxford Archaeology, 2019a Milton Garden Machinery, Milton Road, Drayton, Oxfordshire. Historic Environment Desk-based assessment.

Oxford Archaeology, 2019b Milton Garden Machinery, Milton Road, Drayton, Oxfordshire. Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation

APPENDIX C**SITE SUMMARY DETAILS**

Site name:	Milton Garden Machinery, Milton Road, Drayton, Oxfordshire
Site code:	DRMGM19
Grid Reference	SU 48861 93782
Type:	Evaluation
Date and duration:	13 August to 14 August 2019; 2-day duration
Area of Site	0.17 ha
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Services in due course, under the following accession number: TBC.
Summary of Results:	Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological evaluation at Milton Garden Machinery, Milton Road, Drayton, to determine the presence or absence of archaeological remains relating to the Scheduled Monument known as 'Settlement Site' (NHLE: 1004852). Three test pits were excavated and hand cleaned. No archaeological remains were encountered, and no finds were recovered. Trench 1, an open trench excavated prior to the evaluation, contained a modern cut feature. Trench 2 was devoid of archaeology and trench 3 contained two geological features. No evidence of the circular cropmark feature or quarrying indicated by aerial photographs was identified.

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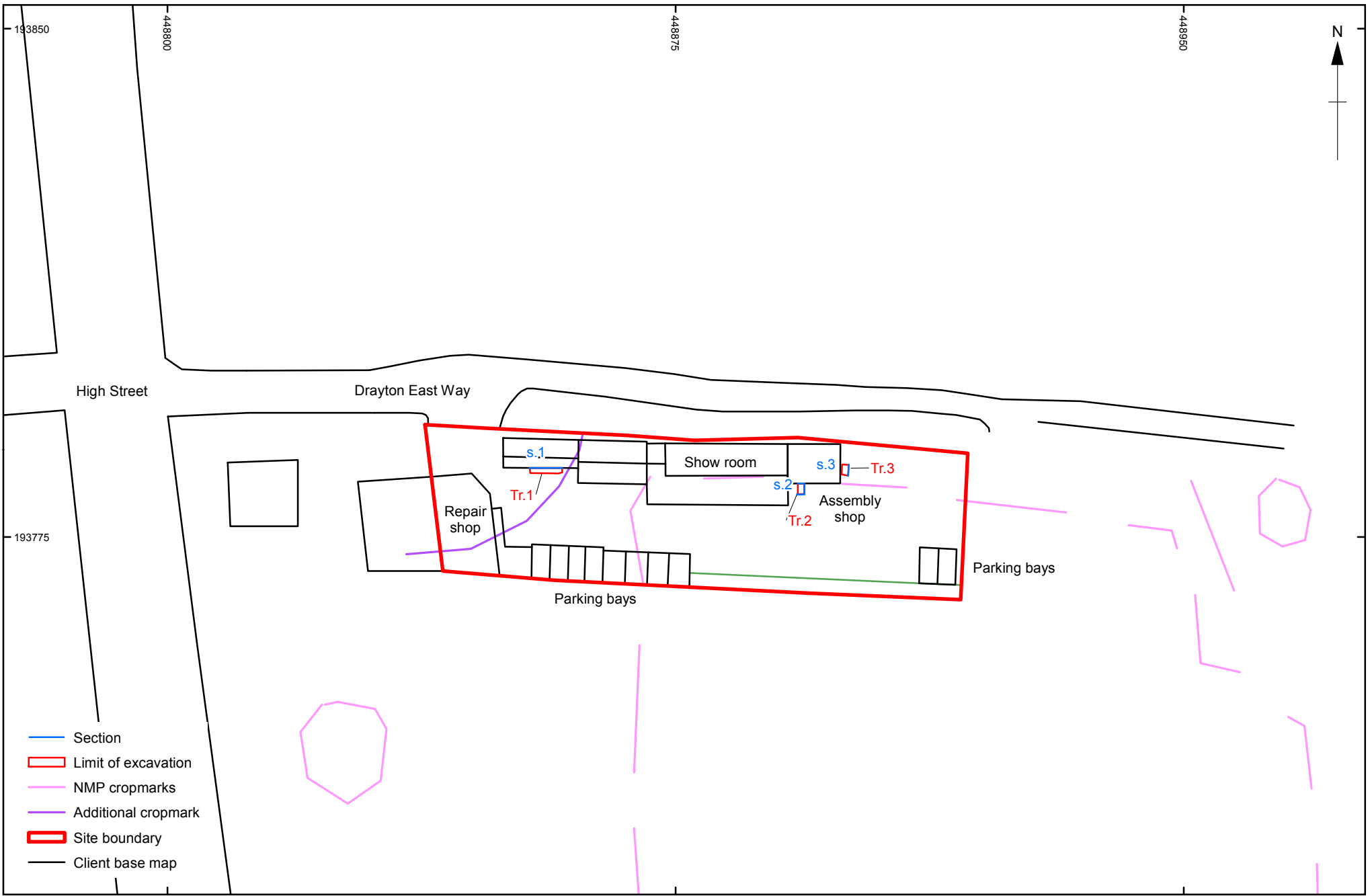


Figure 2: Trench locations

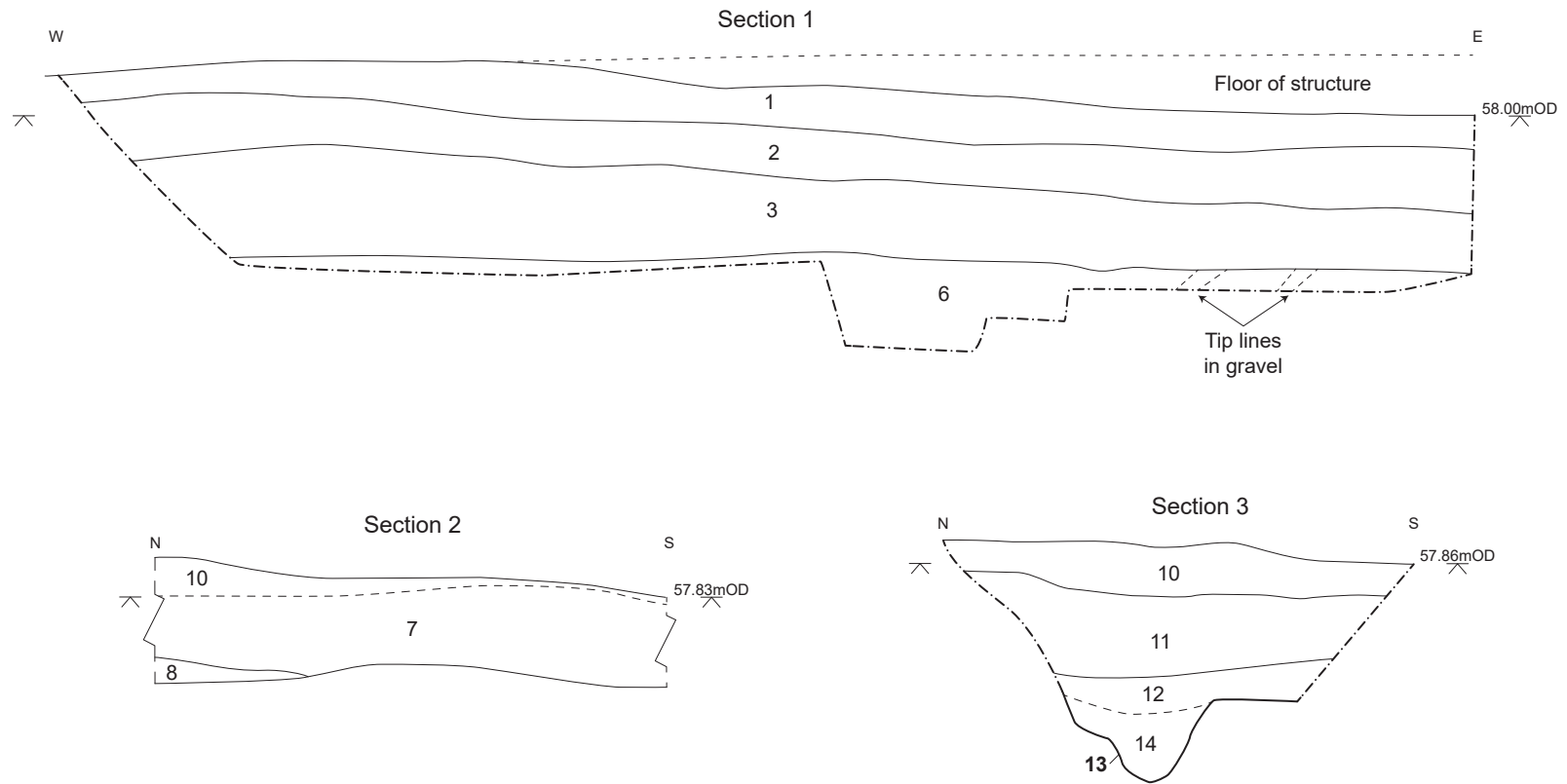


Figure 3: Sections 1-3



Plate 1: Trench 1, view to north-west



Plate 2: Trench 1, Section 1, detail of west end. View to north



Plate 3: Trench 2, view to north-east



Plate 4: Trench 3 showing natural features 13 and 15.
View to north



Plate 5: Trench 3, Section 3. View to east



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