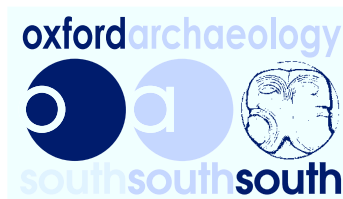


# Fobney Island Reading Berkshire



## Archaeological Evaluation Report



January 2011

**Client: Jacobs Engineering U.K. Ltd**

Issue No:1

NGR: SU 7016 7110





Fobney Island, Reading, Berkshire

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**Fobney Island, Reading, Berkshire**

Centred on SU 7016, 7110

**Archaeological Evaluation Report**

Jacobs Engineering UK Ltd

On behalf of the

Environment Agency

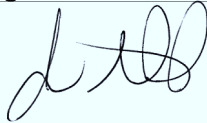
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## **Summary**

*In October 2010, Oxford Archaeology South undertook an archaeological evaluation at Fobney Island, Reading, Berkshire for Jacobs Engineering Ltd on behalf of the Environment Agency.*

*The evaluation aimed to assess the likely impacts of the creation of a new habitat restoration project within the island on the buried archaeological remains and important floodplain sequence known within the Kennet Valley. Six trenches and six boreholes were used to evaluate the site to assess its archaeological and palaeoenvironmental potential.*

*The boreholes successfully identified and mapped a 3m deep stratified sequence of fluvial sands, silty clay alluvium and organic silts. Mapping of the sedimentary sequence revealed a possible Late Glacial channel, infilled with organic silts, peats and silty clay alluviums. A series of undated channels and buried surfaces were also identified within the upper sequence. These deposits were found to have only moderate palaeoenvironmental potential with limited scope for further analysis.*

*No significant archaeological features or deposits were identified within any of the trenches. A small assemblage of animal bone, struck and burnt flint was collected from the basal alluvial deposits within trenches 1, 4 and 5 adjacent to the main buried palaeochannel. The slightly abraded condition of the flints may suggest that their position has been modified to some degree within the sequence.*

*The result of the fieldwork indicated that there is low potential for archaeological remains here, and if present are likely to be discrete features or deposits that are difficult to identify within evaluations.*



## Fobney Island, Reading, Berkshire

### *Archaeological Evaluation Report*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA), was commissioned by Jacobs Engineering U.K. Ltd, acting on behalf of the Environment Agency (EA) to undertake an archaeological evaluation and geoarchaeological assessment on Fobney Island, Reading, as part of an island habitat restoration project. These archaeological investigations were undertaken to inform the detailed design stage of the project.
- 1.1.2 Six trenches and six boreholes were undertaken on the site in order to evaluate the archaeological potential of the site. These were excavated into the top of the floodplain alluvial sequence to investigate and map the floodplain sequence. This report outlines the results of the evaluation, the extent and significance of any archaeological deposits identified and what this could potentially mean to the proposed scheme.

### 1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies on the south western urban fringe of Reading and is centred on NGR SU 7016 7110 (Figure 1). It is situated between the River Kennet to the south and the Kennet and Avon Canal to the north, 3.5km from the Kennet-Thames confluence. The area became an island through the construction of the Kennet and Avon Canal, although the canal is elevated above the island and the surrounding topography. The River Kennet has been heavily modified and the course of the river has been straightened significantly over time.
- 1.2.2 The site is relatively flat and covered in rough grassy vegetation with a few mature trees. Some dumping of building rubble was identified during the walkover survey (Jacobs 2009). The total site area is approximately 7 ha and lies between 37.5-39.0m AOD.
- 1.2.3 The geology of the area is mapped as Kennet floodplain gravels overlain by alluvial silts (BGS geological sheet 268: 1:50,000). The geotechnical boreholes examined indicate a considerable depth of alluvium - up to 3.70m within the site, closest to the river. This alluvium may represent the fill of an early watercourse or the fact that the deposits are deepest closest to the river. Extensive excavations to the south and east of the site (Moore and Jennings 1992; Brossler *et al* 2004, Brossler *et al* 2005) have revealed natural gravel overlain by reddish brown silts.

### 1.3 Proposed scheme

- 1.3.1 The aim of the proposed scheme is to improve the environmental habitat on the island as part of a biodiversity action plan (BAP). This aims to help wetland species such as lapwing and grass snake and restore the river structure to meet WFD hydro-morphological and ecological standards. The scheme is designed to help trap sediment and pollution within the proposed reed beds, and improve the overall water quality. The project partners are Thames Rivers Restoration Trust, Environment Agency, Reading



Borough Council and Thames Water, supported by the Reading and District Angling Association and the Berkshire Ornithological Club.

## **1.4 Archaeological and Historical Background**

1.4.1 No previous archaeological investigations have been undertaken on Fobney Island and no desk-based assessment has been commissioned as part of this project. The background and potential of the site has been highlighted by the number of finds and key sites identified within the area (Figure 2). The following information has been summarised from the brief for Geoarchaeological Investigation produced by Berkshire Archaeology (April 2010) and from previous excavations undertaken by OA in the area.

### ***Early Prehistoric Period (500,000 BP - 4,000 BC)***

1.4.2 During the early prehistoric period the site is likely to have been heavily forested. The earliest finds within the area date to the Palaeolithic, with the discovery of two hand axes during recent excavation to the south of the site. Mesolithic worked flints have been recovered on the site and within the surrounding floodplain, and during the OA Green Park Phase 1 excavations immediately to the south. The significance of these finds is uncertain, but indicate that the valley is likely to have been utilised for hunting and possibly settlement from the early prehistoric period and are part of a general spread of Mesolithic flintwork over the Pingewood, Moore's Farm, Green Park and Fobney Meadow area.

### ***Neolithic Period (4,000 BC - 2,200 BC)***

1.4.3 The Lower Kennet Valley survey, carried out in the 1980s, recovered a number of flint tools from the area dating to the Neolithic period (Lobb and Rose 1996). In 1987-9 OA Green Park excavations revealed evidence of prolonged and intensive Neolithic occupation to the south of the site, comprising c. 118 pits, over 30 postholes, large quantities of worked flint, pottery and bone (Moore and Jennings 1992, 117-118). A large 'U'-shaped enclosure was discovered during these excavations, possibly associated with the cropmark of a possible Neolithic cursus running north-east south-west through the area.

1.4.4 OA excavations during Green Park Phase 2 development revealed further evidence of Neolithic occupation in the form of a ring-ditch, 27 pits and 16 postholes. A substantial quantity of flintwork and a small quantity of pottery was recovered. Environmental evidence indicated clearance of forest for arable cultivation and pasture (Brossler *et al* 2004). A small amount of residual Neolithic flintwork was also discovered in the OA evaluation to the south carried out in 2001 (OAU 2001)

1.4.5 OA excavations at Moore's Farm in 1998-99, to the south west of the site, uncovered remains of Neolithic settlement in the form of ditches, pits and postholes (OAU 2000). In addition, a Neolithic gully was recorded in 1996 during the OA excavations at Pingewood, to the south west.

### ***Bronze Age Period (2,200 BC - 800 BC)***

1.4.6 The area contains evidence of extensive Bronze Age settlement located on the gravels along this part of the Kennet Valley (Moore and Jennings 1992, 118). Green Park Phase 1 and 2 excavations around Small Mead Farm, revealed an extensive Middle Bronze Age field system, pits and seven cremations in addition to the Early Bronze Age ring-ditch.



- 1.4.7 The Late Bronze Age was represented by two discrete areas of settlement, located to the south-east of the Phase 3 north area, comprising over 20 round houses, a number of four- and two-post structures, pits, a waterhole, a large burnt mound and an inhumation (Moore and Jennings 1992; and Brossler *et al* 2004). Excavations to the south-west at Pingewood and at Moore's Farm have revealed further traces of Bronze Age settlement (OAU 2000a) in the form of ditches, pits and postholes.

***Iron Age Period (800 BC -AD43)***

- 1.4.8 Evidence of Iron Age activity is relatively limited considering the extent of activity in the preceding and succeeding periods. During the Iron Age the climate deteriorated with colder weather and more rainfall. It is thought that increased flooding and alluviation occurred during this period, leading to the floodplain being less conducive to settlement. Within the area, finds dating to this period include six cremation pits excavated at Pingewood (Johnson 1985, 33).

***Roman Period (AD 43 - AD 410)***

- 1.4.9 A possible series of double ditched enclosures and associated linear features which may date to the prehistoric or Romano-British period have been identified from aerial photographs to the south of the site. However, these have largely been destroyed, unexcavated, by quarrying.
- 1.4.10 The study area contains much evidence of Roman activity and the valley in general would appear to have been a focus of Roman occupation (Moore and Jennings 1992, 124). The line of a possible Roman road between Silchester and Verulamium is believed to run on a south-west to north-east alignment, to the south west of the site, flanked by cropmarks of possible field systems and/or settlements visible on air photographs. Extensive quarrying activities have destroyed many of the cropmarks to the south west of the site and removed at least one possible occupation site.
- 1.4.11 OA Green Park Phase 1 excavations south and east of the site uncovered Roman activity dating from the 1st to the 4th centuries AD. In Area 2000 a series of ditches thought to represent part of an enclosure system, along with a number of gullies, pits and postholes were found. In Area 7000 four separate phases of Roman enclosure ditches were recorded.
- 1.4.12 An isolated Roman logboat burial was identified within alluvial deposits just to the south of the site.

***Early Medieval Period (AD 410 - AD 1066)***

- 1.4.13 The site lies within the ancient parish of Shinfield. This parish is likely to have evolved out of the manor (estate) mentioned in Domesday Book (1086). Prior to the Conquest, Shinfield was an important royal manor, with a mill and five fisheries, held by Edward the Confessor (VCH Berks iii, 261). It remained in royal hands after the conquest and was later granted to the Earl of Warwick (*ibid.*, 262). By the later medieval period there were nine manors in Shinfield Parish, but that held by the Cobham family, c. 5 km to the south-east of the site, is the most likely candidate for the original manor (VCH Berks iii, 262).
- 1.4.14 A Mid Saxon settlement was found just to the west of the site at Anslow Cottages, associated with wooden timber structure extending across the floodplain and former channels (Wessex Archaeology 1995). These appear to be fish or eel traps, while later





timbers from the site might indicate management of water meadows (Butterworth and Lobb 1992, 176).

**Later Medieval Period (AD 1066- AD 1550)**

- 1.4.15 The site is located on the very edge of the parish of Shinfield. Its peripheral location and susceptibility to flooding, particularly within the surrounding meadows, suggests that it is unlikely to have been a focus for settlement in this period and probably lay within common meadow land used for grazing.

**Post-medieval Period (AD 1550 – present)**

- 1.4.16 The area most likely continued as meadow into the post-medieval period. Fobney Lock was built between 1718 and 1723 under the supervision of the engineer John Hore of Newbury. This separated the area from the land to the north and created the present Fobney Island.

**1.5 Previous archaeological investigations**

- 1.5.1 OA has undertaken fieldwork in the area since the 1980s as part of mitigation for the Green Park Phase 1 and Phase 2 development. This work has demonstrated the presence of multi-period settlement immediately south and east of the site. This revealed evidence of Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age occupation (Area 7000); extensive Bronze Age settlement (Areas 5, 3000, 5000 and 6000); 1st to 4th century Romano-British settlement (Area 2000) and limited evidence of Late Bronze Age and Romano-British features (Area 4000). OA published the results of these investigations in a monograph in 1992 (Moore and Jennings 1992). In 1995 OA carried out further (Phase 2) excavations in the area around Small Mead Farm (Brossler *et al* 2004). This revealed further evidence of multi-period settlement dated to the Neolithic period and the Early, Middle and Late Bronze Age.
- 1.5.2 Other archaeological investigations within the wider area that were not undertaken as part of the Green Park development have also revealed a landscape rich in prehistoric and Roman archaeology. In 1989, 1998 and 1999 OA excavations at Moores Farm, located south-west of the site revealed Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman and medieval activity (OAU 2000e).
- 1.5.3 Excavations at Pingewood by the Berkshire Archaeological Unit (1978-9), Wessex Archaeology (1982) and OA (1983-5), c. 350 m south-west of the site (OA 51), revealed middle and late Bronze Age activity, along with later Iron Age and Romano-British field systems (Johnson 1983-5).
- 1.5.4 The only investigation undertaken previously on the site was a geotechnical ground investigation carried out by Norwest Holst (2008). This was not archaeological monitored, but does provide baseline data on the sediment sequence that has been incorporated within the current report.





## 2 AIMS

### 2.1 General aims

2.1.1 The general aim of the evaluation was to record the sedimentary sequence across the site and identify the presence or absence of archaeological remains, within the proposed scheme footprint. The results of the investigations will aim to develop a preliminary deposit model to help inform the design process and further mitigation strategies for the site.

2.1.2 Generic aims and objectives are as follows:

- *To identify the presence or absence of any buried archaeological remains;*
- *establish the preservation of any buried remains;*
- *establish a broad phased plan of the archaeology revealed following the evaluation of the site;*
- *provide a chronology of the archaeological phasing;*
- *investigate the function of structural remains and the activities taking place within; and*
- *inform the design process to minimise any potential impact*
- *to disseminate the results through reporting that will inform the requirement for further work.*

### 2.2 Specific site aims

2.2.1 The research questions for trial trenching are:

- *To identify the presence of any archaeological remains within areas that may be impacted upon by the proposed scheme*

2.2.2 Specific aims and research questions for the borehole samples are:

- *To characterise the sedimentary sequence at the site in terms of lithology, agents of deposition, preservational environment and age of deposition.*
- *To sample and characterise the preservational environment within bodies of sediment for the recovery of palaeoenvironmental remains.*
- *To develop, from the boreholes and previous geotechnical work, a sedimentary model for the site.*
- *On the basis of assessment of palaeoenvironmental remains if recovered, to produce a preliminary deposit model for palaeoenvironmental development at the site.*
- *To develop from these models recommendations for further mitigation work.*



### 3 METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Scope of works

- 3.1.1 The evaluation comprised an approximate 4% sample of the area of proposed impact within the scheme boundary. This translated as six 20m by 2m trenches. A trench layout was supplied by Jacobs indicating a boundary within the development that represents the major areas of development impact and is reproduced in this report (Figure. 3).
- 3.1.2 All the trenches were dug in their proposed locations without any alteration. A sixth trench was also dug in consultation with Jacobs in order to further assess the archaeological potential to the very western end of the site.

#### 3.2 Trench methodology

- 3.2.1 The trenches were mechanically excavated within the footprint of the proposed ponds to the maximum impact depth of 2.20m or to the surface of the underlying gravel deposits depending upon what was encountered first. These trenches reached depths of between 0.70-1.0m or more due to the presence of deep alluvial sediments.
- 3.2.2 It was recognised that archaeological deposits may have been stratified within the alluvial sequence above the gravel and particular care was taken to ensure such deposits could be identified during the machine excavation. This in fact occurred in Trenches 1, 4 and 5 where finds were found within the alluvial sequence. These archaeological horizons above the level of the underlying gravel, were exposed by machine excavation along the length of that trench. Hand cleaning of sections followed and once this archaeological horizon had been sufficiently evaluated, the trench was then machine excavated to the next horizon below or where possible to the surface of the gravel.
- 3.2.3 Where machine excavation could not expose the surface of the gravel, the sections were cleaned to establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the alluvial sequence. In all of these trenches, machine excavated sondage trenches were excavated to investigate the gravel surface and evaluate the potential presence of buried archaeology. These were entirely machine excavated and all recording of these deposits was undertaken from the surface of the trench.

#### 3.3 Borehole sampling

- 3.3.1 Six boreholes were drilled across the site in order to investigate the deeper floodplain alluvial sequences (Figure 3/Plate 1). The primary purpose of the borehole work was to record the sediment stratigraphy in detail and retrieve samples suitable for sediment description, palaeoenvironmental assessment and dating work.
- 3.3.2 The boreholes were drilled using a Terrier percussion rig operated by a specialist sub-contractor. Where possible, each borehole was drilled to the surface of the Pleistocene gravels. However a number of boreholes could not reach gravels due to the water pressure on the site.
- 3.3.3 A continuous sequence of undisturbed core samples was retrieved from each sampling location (Plate 2). The boreholes were monitored by an OA geoarchaeologist, who advised the drilling team on the depth of excavation. Each borehole sample was located in three dimensions; relative to the National Grid and Ordnance Datum.
- 3.3.4 The sediments were described according to Jones *et al* 1999, to include information about depth, texture, composition, colour, clast orientation, structure (bedding, ped



characteristics etc) and contacts between deposits. Note was also made of any visible ecofactual, or artefactual inclusions e.g. pottery, daub or charcoal fragments. The cores were photographed and logged according to borehole ground level (bgl).

- 3.3.5 The lithological data from each borehole location was added to the previous geotechnical data from the Norwest Holst ground investigation of 2008. This data was inputted into geological modelling software (Rockworks 14) in order to correlate the stratigraphy between sample locations and allow a sub-surface deposit model to be generated.



## 4 RESULTS

### 4.1 Presentation of results

- 4.1.1 The results presented in the main text of this report provide a detailed overview of the findings of the evaluation works. A comprehensive listing of individual trench descriptions and related context data can also be found in Appendix A. The borehole logs are reproduced in Appendix B. and site photographs in Appendix C.
- 4.1.2 Contexts identified have been uniquely numbered using a standard decimal system. All context numbers were trench specific with the trench number starting at one hundred and then being followed by the individual context (e.g. The first context used for Trench 1 would be 1000).
- 4.1.3 All recovered finds and samples are recorded in the specialist reports in Appendices D and E, with a summary also provided in the detailed trench descriptions (see Appendix A). The trench descriptions also contain the dimensions of both the trenches and the features within showing the depths of the deposits and, where appropriate, the relevant dating.

### 4.2 Soils and ground conditions

- 4.2.1 The trenches were dug through thin deposits of modern topsoil onto a well-preserved floodplain sequence. The site was under short mown grass and appears to have been left as an area of rough pasture. No services were present and there were no problems with access to the proposed trench locations. However, only the boreholes were generally able to reach the full depth to Pleistocene gravels.
- 4.2.2 The problem of high ground water-levels and pressure frequently hindered the fieldwork. Groundwater was met in nearly all trenches, usually as soon as the machining progressed near to a metre in depth. This significantly hindered the trench sondages that mostly failed to reach Pleistocene gravels. Ground water-levels prevented trenches 3 and 4 from reaching their full depth.

### 4.3 Sedimentary sequence

- 4.3.1 The results of the borehole survey combined with the previous geotechnical data helped to identify and map the site's underlying floodplain sequence. A sequence of commonly occurring lithological deposits were identified within the six borehole samples and geotechnical records. These were correlated into stratigraphic units in order to aid in the interpretation of the changing sedimentary environment and to help with the comparisons with other regionally recorded floodplain sequences.
- 4.3.2 A 3D model of floodplain development was produced to aid in the interpretation and discussion of the sedimentary sequence. This model has been reproduced in Figure 4. By mapping the palaeotopography of the site and establishing a sequence of floodplain development, it is possible to identify deposits and topographic features within the sequence that may have a higher archaeological potential.



4.3.3 The following stratigraphic sequence was identified in borehole samples in order of deposition:

**Stratigraphic units**

- I. Sandy gravels
- II. Fluvial sands
- III. Lower alluvium
- IV. Peat/organic deposits
- V. Middle alluvium
- VI. Buried soil
- VII. Channel deposits
- VIII. Upper alluvium
- IX. Topsoil

4.3.4 Assignment of individual lithologies to stratigraphic units is based on texture, nature of inclusions and sedimentary contacts. However, it should be noted that the correlations are based on only 22 data points and consequently may not be wholly representative of the entire site sequence. Localised sedimentary sequences can often occur in fluvially active environments due to variations in topography and localised sedimentation patterns.

4.3.5 Also the model includes data from the previous geotechnical investigation that record deposits to different levels of detail. The geotechnical data used in the model were from paper records only and no samples were available to confirm the observations made in these records. Therefore correlations between the two different dataset was problematic in some areas of the sequence and were made with varying degrees of confidence.

4.3.6 It is also evident from the current dataset that a much more complex sequence of floodplain and channel deposits are present on the site than is represented within our sampling points. The deposit model therefore attempts to simplify a very complex floodplain sequence, in order to make it more interpretable. Not all of the discrete lithologies and individual channel sequences could therefore be accommodated within the proposed deposit model.

***Pre-Holocene deposits***

***sandy gravels***

4.3.7 The basal sandy gravels were reached in three of the trenches and four of the targeted boreholes. These gravels were encountered at depths between 0.86m within Trench 5 (+37.08m OD) and 2.55m bgl in OABH6 (+34.61m OD). They comprised loose light whitish yellow fine to medium well-sorted sub-rounded sandy gravel, with inter-stratified beds (30-40mm) of moderately firm yellowish fine sand. These sediments are likely to have accumulated within high-energy braided stream channels at the end of the last glaciation between 20,000-10,000 years ago (Devensian glaciation). The bedded character of the deposits reflects seasonal fluctuations in river discharge and climate fluctuations during this cold stage.

4.3.8 Any archaeological finds recovered from the gravel deposits are likely to have been the subject of significant reworking. Palaeolithic material has been recovered previously from the gravels within the area but these have been largely chance discoveries from quarrying activity as potential findspots are very difficult to predict.



- 4.3.9 The surface of the gravel essentially defines the topography of the early Holocene landscape. This surface would have affected sedimentation patterns throughout the Holocene and created the site's unique sedimentary sequence. By understanding this basal template it is possible to develop a better understanding about the development of the sedimentary sequence on site.
- 4.3.10 The plot of the modelled gravel surface (Figure 5) appears to show a topographic low within the middle of the site consistent with an early incised channel. Basal elevations within the channels range between 35.06m OD and 35.25m OD, although the full depth of the sequence was never fully reached within OABH4. The channel appears to have been infilled with a stratified sequence of sands, organic alluvial from the start of the early Holocene.
- 4.3.11 Eitherside of the potential channel the gravel surface rises up to 37.40m OD in Trenches 2 and 5. These areas appear to represent the channel edge environments and may well have remained dry for much of the early Holocene. Such channel edge locations are often found to have been the focus for human activity in the past associated with the use and exploitation of the river and floodplain resources. These areas may have remained dryer for longer during the onset of flooding and alluviation on the Kennet floodplain during the early prehistoric periods.
- 4.3.12 Further topographic lows are identified to the very eastern and western portions of the site where the gravels drop away again into possible more channel cuts at 35.5m and 36.25m OD respectively. These channels are filled with similar sequences of peat and silty/sandy clay alluvium. The gravels then rise towards the west of site where it is recorded at 36.70m OD within Trench 1.

### ***Holocene sedimentary sequence***

#### ***Fluvial sands***

- 4.3.13 A sequence of well-banded greyish sands were identified within the base of the sequence overlying the sandy gravels. These were thickest within the topographic low identified in the centre of the site within boreholes OABH4, OABH5 and OABH6. They were identified at depths between 1.90m and 3.00m (36.41m OD and 34.60m OD), although localised higher deposits were identified in trenches 5 and 6, and ranged in thickness from 0.65m to 1.97m at the base of the channel.
- 4.3.14 These deposits represent high-energy fluvial sands that accumulated in the base of the main palaeochannel sequence. These deposits may represent the transition of late glacial incised channels into the broader and shallower meander transitional channels at the start of the early Holocene. Areas of more localised deposits at higher elevations may represent levies or channel edge deposits. These channels would have created an undulating floodplain topography with high elevated areas of sand bars and channel edges.
- 4.3.15 Any archaeological material found within these deposits is likely to have undergone a moderate degree of reworking. However it is possible that the higher channel edge and sand bar areas may have offered temporary staging posts to exploit the floodplain resources. Evidence of significant Mesolithic activity has been identified on the surface of the sands along the middle Kennet Valley, but activity identified in Lower Kennet is less well known.



### ***Lower alluvial deposits***

- 4.3.16 A very thin alluvial deposit was identified within OABH 4, OABH5 and OABH6 at a depth between 1.77m and 1.97m bgl (35.63m OD and 35.83m OD) in the base of the channel. These deposits were recorded as a soft pale greenish grey clayey silt/sand with occasional organic and wood inclusions.
- 4.3.17 The deposition of these finer grained sediments marks a significant reduction in the energy of the channels, potential reflecting climatic amelioration and establishment of early woodland at the onset of the Holocene. The deposits represent the first low energy infilling of the later glacial/early Holocene channel sequence with silty clay and organic deposits.
- 4.3.18 Any artefacts within these deposits are likely to be well preserved and may have undergone only moderate to slight modification.

### ***Peat/Organic deposits***

- 4.3.19 A sequence of fibrous organic silt or peats was encountered inter-stratified within the alluvial sequence between depths of 1.73m bgl and 1.0m bgl (36.62m and 35.88m OD). These deposits average about 0.55m in thickness and were confined to the main buried channel sequence within OABH4-6 (Figure 6). They were found to contain occasional plant inclusions and snail shells, which were found to contained frequent flowing water, aquatic and marsh species.
- 4.3.20 The botanical and molluscan evidence reflects shallow water and marsh species within a mosaic of reed swamp/carr environments, with episodes of increased flooding. These deposits appear to represent a rise in the water-table during the prehistoric period that created a drowned landscape over much of the lower elevations of the floodplain. This would have resulted in creating islands on the high elevations on the floodplain that may not have been submerged until later in the Holocene. These islands may have been attractive locations for human activity in the past.
- 4.3.21 Artefacts associated with these peat deposits are likely to have undergone only limited lateral transportation and would have been rapidly sealed by later flooding. The rate of channel flow appears to have been significantly reduce during the accumulation of the peat, possibly as a result of the channel being either cut-off or dense vegetation encroaching on to the floodplain.

### ***Middle alluvium***

- 4.3.22 The overlying bluish grey silty clay accumulated across the entire site between 1.77m and 1.97m bgl (35.63m OD and 35.83m OD). They were recorded as silty clay deposits within the trenches and borehole samples. These deposits represent periods of overbank alluviation associated with increased flooding and floodplain sedimentation and were on average about 0.80m in thickness.
- 4.3.23 Previous environmental studies in the Kennet valley record a similar sequence of minerogenic silts overlying peats sitting on gravels, reflecting rising water-levels and increased alluviation on the floodplain.
- 4.3.24 Any artefacts identified within these silty clay deposits are likely to have undergone a moderate degree of lateral transportation and possible size sorting. Human activity is likely to be found towards the edges of the floodplain or islands which would have provided dry staging points in which to exploit the floodplain resources.





### ***Buried soil***

- 4.3.25 A thin upper organic rich dark greyish brown silty clay was identified across the site between 0.30m and 0.50m in depth (37.98m OD and 36.80m OD). These deposits also contained reddish mottling and small angular pebbles. Small fragments of struck and burnt flint, with rare charcoal inclusions were also noted in the trenches.
- 4.3.26 The deposits indicate a drying out of the floodplain possibly as a result of either a period of stable ground water-levels or deliberate drainage of the area using drainage ditches. The date of this surface is uncertain, but may related to the initial stages of floodplain reclamation. Based on what is currently known about the reclamation of the Kennet floodplain a medieval/post medieval date seems likely.
- 4.3.27 Any archaeological material found in association with this surface is likely to be well preserved sealed underneath later overbank alluvial deposits. This surface may still have been prone to flood during this period and therefore it seems the area would have been more likely to be used for pasture rather than settlement activity.

### ***Channel deposits***

- 4.3.28 Evidence of higher-energy fluvial deposits and channel cuts were identified within OABH1-3 and to the south of trench 6. These sequences were dominated by a complex sequence of laminated sands, sandy gravels and organic silts and appears to have truncated parts of the early floodplain sequences (Figure 7). These deposits were located within the upper floodplain sequence at an elevation of 37.26m OD and may be contemporary with the buried floodplain surface. They extended to depths of up to 2.60m from the surface but were sealed by silty clay alluvium and topsoil.
- 4.3.29 These deposits appear to represent former channels of the River Kennet prior to the construction of Fobney Lock and the creation of the island. Comparison with the historical mapping of the island shows that the distribution of these deposits correspond well with known former channels.

### ***Upper alluvium***

- 4.3.30 A further phase of light bluish grey silty clays were found to overlies the buried surface across the site. This was similar in nature to the previous episodes of overbank alluviation underlying the buried surface. These deposit were identified at depths between 0.14m and 1.13m (38.14m OD and 36.47m OD) across the site.
- 4.3.31 Any artefacts recovered from these deposits are likely to post-date the construction of the lock and date from the 18th century onwards.

### ***Topsoil***

- 4.3.32 The floodplain sequence was sealed by an average 0.37m of friable dark brown silty clay topsoil with frequent rooting and occasional coarse inclusions. The topsoil appears to have developed relatively rapidly following increased management of the floodplain after the construction of the Kennet and Avon Canal and Fobney Lock.

## **4.4 Distribution of archaeological deposits**

### ***General***

- 4.4.1 The project brief (Jacobs 2010) specified the excavation of five 20m by 2m trenches to impact depth, and deeper sondages at the end of each trench. There was also a





contingency provided for additional trenching should deposits or features of archaeological interest be uncovered.

- 4.4.2 No significant focus of archaeological activity was located in the evaluation; a small number of finds of uncertain date were identified, within the upper part of the alluvial sequence identified here. These were located in Trenches 1, 4 and 5 in the eastern area of the site associated with buried channel edge environments.

***Trenches 1 and 2 (Figures 7 & 8)***

- 4.4.3 Trenches 1 and 2 were located to the west of the site and contained no archaeological features or artefacts (Plate 3). Pleistocene gravels were reached at depths of 1m in trench 1, but undulated across the trench. The gravels were observed to be higher in the north of Trench 1 and gradually dipped to the south. Section 101 records the sequence at the northern end of the trench, while Section 100 represents the edge of a palaeochannel cut through the southern end of the trench.
- 4.4.4 The gravels were recorded at a depth of 1.22m (37.00m OD) within the sondage in Trench 2. The rest of the trench was taken down to a depth of 1m onto the silty clay alluvial sequence 208.
- 4.4.5 The channel cut within Trench 1 was filled with a soft mid grey structureless silty clay (105), which appears to represent low-energy channel deposits. These deposits were minerogenic in nature and produced no finds. They were confined to the southern half of the trench to a depth of 1.20m.
- 4.4.6 Towards the north of the trench on the higher gravel elevations a thin reddish brown organic deposit (107) was identified overlying the gravels (106). A piece of animal bone was recovered from the surface of the gravel at the interface zone between deposits of the lower organic surface and the gravels. This may represent a wetland surface that developed at the edge of the channel.
- 4.4.7 This sequence was overlain by a thin mid grey alluvial deposit (104) that extended across the length of the trench. This was overlain by a 0.20m thick reddish brown friable organic clay deposits (102 and 103), a soft greyish silty clay deposit (101) and sealed by a modern silty clay topsoil (100). A similar sequence was recorded within Trench 2 of a sequence of silty clay alluvial deposits (204-28), underlying an organic silty clay horizon (203) and a second accumulation of grey silty clays (201 and 202) (Plate 4). This sequence was sealed by 0.14m of modern topsoil.

***Trench 3 and 4 (Figures 7 & 8)***

- 4.4.8 Trench 3 and 4 came down on to the top of a sequence of alluvial silty clays. These trenches never achieved full depth to gravels as ground water flooding prevented further progress (Plate 5). The water pressure was found to be particularly high in this area of the site and based on the borehole survey a sequence of waterlogged organic silts and peat were identified to underlie this sequence to a depth of 3m. The trenches were taken down to 0.70m to just above the level of ground water, and this level was maintained across the length of the trench. No sondages were dug in the end of these trenches due to the flooding risk, but was targeted during the borehole sampling as a response.
- 4.4.9 The overlying alluvial sequence was very similar to the upper sequence identified within Trenches 1 and 2. Two deposits of alluvial silty clay deposits (301, 401, 303 and 403) separated by a thin stabilised alluvial organic surfaces (302 and 402). Again signs of rooting and oxidation within this surface would suggested that these deposits were



exposed to the air when they were accumulating. This sequence was sealed by thin modern topsoil deposits (300 and 400).

- 4.4.10 No archaeological features or deposits were identified within either of the two trenches. However one piece of worked flint was recovered from the alluvial deposit (404) and a burnt flint recovered from the stabilized alluvial surface (402).

#### ***Trench 5 (Figures 7 & 8)***

- 4.4.11 The gravel surface was seen to rise up in Trench 5 and was recorded within the trench sondage to 37.42m OD. This surface was cleaned and examined for signs of flintwork or features. The gravel deposits (506) were recorded as sub-rounded cobble clasts supported by greyish yellow silty sand matrix. The surface of the gravel appeared to rise up in the trench from west to the east.
- 4.4.12 This trench was considerably drier than the other trenches and therefore ground water flooding of the trench was less of a problem. The trench was taken down to a depth of 1m across the strip to the surface of loose light yellowish sand (505). The sand deposits were carefully cleaned and examined for artefacts. A small concentration of struck flint was recorded within the base of the overlying alluvial deposits (504), that may have originally been located on the surface of the sands. These flints may have been displaced from the surface of the sands by later flooding.
- 4.4.13 Two phases of silty clay alluvial deposits (503 and 504) were recorded over the sands. Both deposits produced evidence of worked and burnt flint and were concentrated within the eastern end of the trench.
- 4.4.14 No features were identified on or within the alluvial sequence and each end of the trench was reduced down to the floodplain gravel deposits (506). These were exposed for around a 2m strip within each end of the trench. These gravels were cleaned and were closely examined for further struck flint, though none were observed.

#### ***Trench 6 (Figures 7 & 8)***

- 4.4.15 Trench 6 was an additional trench dug to investigate the higher gravel elevations identified in Trench 5 and whether the deposits continued towards the east. This was located within an area of proposed deeper excavations associated with the creation of reed beds.
- 4.4.16 The trench had a similar sequence of alluvial deposits to those identified within the other trenches. This was a fluvial sand deposit (605) overlain by silty clay alluvium (604), two stabilisation deposits (603 and 602) and an upper silty clay deposit (601). This sequence was sealed by 0.20m of modern topsoil (Plate 6). The only difference in the trench was that the southern end had been truncated by a 19th century palaeochannel or drainage channel cut (606). This channel was filled with a whitish well sorted sub-rounded pebble gravel deposit (607) and a mid greyish brown silty clay (608).
- 4.4.17 The alluvial deposits did not contain or seal any features here, nor were there any features cut into the floodplain gravels. Additionally, no artefacts were recovered from the gravel, but a clay pipe and brick fragment dating to the 19th century was recovered from channel deposit 608.

### **4.5 Distribution of finds**

- 4.5.1 Overall there was a very low rate of finds recovery across the site. Single examples of (probable) prehistoric worked and burnt flint were recovered from alluvial layers (402,



404, 503 and 504) in Trenches 4 and 5. Animal bone was recovered from trenches 1 and 4. A 19<sup>th</sup> century clay pipe and brick fragment was recovered from the small channel cut identified in Trench 6.

#### **Worked flint by Geraldine Crann**

- 4.5.2 A total of five flints were recovered from three contexts from trenches 4 and 5. Most were in a moderately fresh conditions but some had signs of abrasion possible indicating some reworking.

Context	Description
404	Flake with hinge termination on brown flint, 5g.
503	Flake with 2 ventral surfaces on brown mottled flint, 3g.
503	Natural fragment, 51g.
504	Secondary flake on brown mottled flint, cortex 15%, short length of retouch on distal lateral edge, 8g
504	Natural fragment, 23g.
402	Burnt, unworked, 22g.
504	Burnt, unworked, 10g.

Table 1: worked and burnt flint

- 4.5.3 All the flint can be classified as undatable prehistoric debitage flakes. The small quantity of worked flint recovered limits the interpretation of the material beyond illustrating a human presence in the local area during the prehistoric period.

#### **Animal Bone by Lena Strid**

- 4.5.4 The remains of three animal bones were recovered from Trenches 1 and 4 (Table 2), all in good condition. The cattle femur had been gnawed by a carnivore. The cattle femur and red deer radius were fused, indicating adult animals.

Context	Species	Element
103	Red deer	Radius
106	Cattle	Femur
402	Horse	Femur

Table 2. Bones present in the assemblage

#### **Other finds by John Cotter**

- 4.5.5 A single fragment of 19<sup>th</sup> century clay pipe stem, with a narrow stem bore (c1.5mm) and a small fragment of red brick was recovered from an in-filled channel deposit (608) within Trench 6.

#### **Environmental assessment**

- 4.5.6 Two bulk soil samples (1 and 2) were taken for the recovery of waterlogged plant remains (WPR) and snails as part of the evaluation trench sampling strategy. These were taken through the buried surface and overlying alluvial deposits identified within Trench 5 in the same area where the worked and burnt flint were recovered (see Figure 7). Additionally, eight samples were selected from borehole OABH4 to assess the



palaeoenvironmental potential of the buried alluvial sequence. The more detailed specialist report can be found within Appendix D, but are summarised briefly below:

- 4.5.7 The assessment of upper silty clay deposits (sample 1) identified a snail assemblage dominated by marsh and freshwater slum species (*Oxyloma/Succinaea* sp., *Lymnaea truncatula* and *Anisus leucostoma*). Terrestrial species that can tolerate damp conditions, frequently on floodplains, were also present in lesser abundance (*Vallonia pulchella*, *Carychium miniumum* and *Trichia hispida*). This is consistent with an open, seasonally flooded, grassland environment. The abundance of *Oxyloma/Succinaea* sp., may suggest the presence of tall erect vegetation such as reeds or sedges in the vicinity. *A. leucostoma* may also suggest there may have been areas of more permanent shallow standing water.
- 4.5.8 The buried surface (sample 2) produced a similar less well preserved assemblage. But conditions appear to have been less favourable for the preservation of snails. These were recovered in insufficient numbers to say anything further about the conditions present on the site at this time.
- 4.5.9 In general, the potential for waterlogged plant remains and insects from the borehole samples was not good. Most of the samples were dominated by degraded, fibrous plant stem material, much of which has little potential for identification. A few waterlogged seeds were identified but the assemblages were extremely limited. The peat horizon sampled at a depth of 1.67-1.72m showed the best preservation. Here, seeds of *Carex* sp. (sedge) occur in moderate numbers; as inhabitants of damp ground, these would have been well suited to the moist conditions under which peat formation would have been initiated. The presence of insects in this and several other of the horizons, although in small quantity, demonstrates that there is potential for insect preservation at this site. Mollusc were less well preserved and the calcareous nature of the sediments would suggest that conditions may not be conducive to preserving pollen.
- 4.5.10 Organic material suitable for radiocarbon dating was identified within the assemblage that could help establish a chronological framework to the floodplain sequence. This would help to correlate this sequences with the other investigated sequence within the middle and lower Kennet Valley.

## 5 DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 5.1.1 The trenches represented a fair sample of the available site and were located in such a manner as to maximise the probability of exposing archaeological deposits. The evaluation demonstrated a general absence of archaeological remains associated with the alluvial sequence preserved on the island. Only a few possible redeposited struck and burnt flints were identified within later alluvial contexts. While significant archaeological remains were absent, there is always a possibility that isolated features or artefact scatters may survive between the trenches (Hey and Lacey 2001). This is particularly true of the ephemeral nature of activity on floodplains such as flint scatters or fish traps which are not always laterally extensive.
- 5.1.2 The fieldwork also identified only limited evidence for modern truncation, only the pre-canals channels of the Kennet have removed parts of the earlier floodplain sequence. The truncation of these earlier deposits was more severe along the centre of the evaluated area within the areas of OABH1-3 but was far more limited in the



eastern portion of site between Trenches 3-4 where a deeper and more complete floodplain sequence is preserved.

## 5.2 Interpretation and significance

- 5.2.1 The evaluation revealed a sequence of floodplain deposits that are broadly consistent with the those identified further upstream to the west of site at Anslow's Cottages. Here timber structures dating from the late Bronze Age to the Saxon period were found in association with a complex sequence of peat, tufa and sand filled channel sequences (Butterworth and Lobb 1992). This activity may be a continuation of the extensive archaeological settlement activity located on the gravel terrace towards the south of the site at Green Park.
- 5.2.2 Where Fobney Island differs from the site of Anslow's Cottages is that it occupies a more central floodplain location within a more fluvial active area. The field evaluation identified a complex sequence of deeply incised palaeochannel within the underlying gravels at the site. Similar large incised channels infilled with fine sediments have been identified with the middle Kennet Valley dating from the Late Glacial period (Worsley *et al* 1996). It is possible that the intercutting channel sequences have helped to limit the archaeological potential at the site.
- 5.2.3 Within these channels, the Pleistocene to Holocene transition appears to be represented by the infilling of the channel and lower floodplain with finer grained sediment bodies. Immediately above the gravels a sand unit was recorded within the main buried channel and may represent an early Holocene outwash channel and first stabilisation of soil profiles on the channel edges. It is possible that the site contains multiple sand filled outwash channels (sand deposits immediately above the gravel) combined with areas of higher stable landsurfaces and vegetation growth (peat deposits immediately above the gravel).
- 5.2.4 Above the gravels/sands there is a complex sequence of silty clay, peat and organic silt units. The fluctuation between minerogenic (clay) and organic (organic) deposits within the sequence represents a changing floodplain environment, from stable wetland surfaces through to periodic inundation. This creates a high potential for archaeological deposits on stable land-surfaces at channel edges. The small reworked flint assemblage identified at the channel edges may hint at the presence of archaeological activity within the site buried at depths greater than reached by the trenching. However as it stands phases of peat accumulations are not completely understood for the site, nor has the date of peat accumulation been established.
- 5.2.5 Previous work in the Middle Kennet has identified significant early Mesolithic archaeology associated with the interface of basal sands and the accumulation of thick peat deposits at numerous sites at Thatcham (Healy *et al* 1992) and Newbury (Wymer 1977; Wessex Archaeology 2005). In contrast, no great thickness of peat deposits has been identified at site or is known within the Lower Kennet Valley and it is generally regarded as less intensively utilised in the early prehistoric period. However this has been challenge by the discovery of flint knapping areas at the base of a peat sequence at Ufton Nervet (Allen and Allen 1997), 3km to the west of the site.
- 5.2.6 The upper alluvial sequence present across the site is broadly uniform and represents increased overbank alluviation on the floodplain associated with increased catchment runoff into the river systems. Similar evidence for increased flooding and rising water-levels during the later prehistoric period is recorded elsewhere within the Lower Kennet. It is possible that large-scale deforestation played a significant role in increased flooding and rising water-levels of floodplain environments during this period.





- 5.2.7 The buried surface identified within the upper alluvial sequence potentially represents a period of more stable conditions on the floodplain possible dating from Roman to post-medieval times. This may have been a response to climate conditions or to deliberate drainage of the floodplain. This surface appears to have been associated with a number of meander channel sequences that were identified within the upper sequence during the evaluation. This surface was then sealed by further overbank alluviation representing a return to less stable conditions on the floodplain. The thin modern topsoil possible developed on the site following the creation of the island during the construction of the Kennet and Avon canal.
- 5.2.8 The absence of archaeological features within the site area may suggest that this area was either permanently underwater or too prone to flooding for more permanent occupation when compared to similar floodplain environments like those found at Anslow's Cottages. The type of archaeology that may still be identified within the site is likely to be of a more ephemeral nature related to specific activities associated with the river and floodplain environments. These features may include jetties, bridges and fish and eel traps that are often found associated with channel deposits.

### 5.3 Potential

- 5.3.1 No archaeological features or deposits were identified within any of the evaluation trenches or detected within the boreholes. The absence of archaeological remains from the site in part may be due to shifting channel activity that has removed parts of the earlier floodplain sequence toward the edges of the island. The possibility that discrete prehistoric activity could still be identified on the site within the alluvial sequence can not be totally discounted, but the trenches have provided a fair sample of the site that would have identified any significant archaeological presence if it were there. The potential for archaeological preservation is excellent due to the overlying alluvial deposits and limited modern disturbance identified on the site. This is further enhanced by the site's potential for organic preservation and material suitable for dating.
- 5.3.2 The lack of struck flints on the sands and gravels does not preclude the potential of discovering *in situ* flint scatters within the area. Such scatters could occupy a very restricted area of no more than 5-10m<sup>2</sup> and are extremely difficult to detect through evaluation trenching, particularly so in instances when they have not been disturbed through later activity such as ploughing. Such finds are likely to be located at depths between 0.66m and 2m below the modern ground on the surface of the sands and potentially at the edges of the main channel sequence.
- 5.3.3 Saxon through to post-Medieval development in the study area is better understood. The buried soils and channel sequences in the upper sequence may be of this date and would help in enhancing our knowledge of these periods were they to be examined in more detail. Although no significant archaeology has been identified within these deposits there still remains the possibility that discrete features associated with floodplain management and use, like jetties, revetments, mills and boat remains may still be uncovered.

### 5.4 Acknowledgements

- 5.4.1 OA would like to thank Adam Brossler of Jacobs Engineering Ltd for his guidance and advice. The evaluation was supervised by Steven Leech, with the assistance of Lee Sparks. The borehole survey was undertaken under the guidance of Carl Champness, who also produced this report and managed the project.



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## APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1							
General description					Orientation		
Trench 1 revealed a complex sequence of undulating sandy gravels, likely to be associated with a channel edge environment. A small amount of animal bone was recovered from the surface of the gravels. This was sealed by an alluvial sequence with a buried soils inter-stratified within the sequence. No archaeology features or deposits were identified.					N-S		
					Avg. depth (m)		1.16
					Width (m)		2
		Length (m)		20			
Contexts							
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date	
100	Layer	2	0-0.24	Topsoil	no	modern	
101	Layer	2	0.24-0.4	Mid grey brown clay	no	Medieval/Post medieval	
102	Layer	2	0.24-0.48	Buried clayey soil	no	Medieval/Post medieval	
103	Layer	20	0.48-0.6	Buried clayey soil	Bone	Medieval/Post medieval	
104	Layer	2	0.60-0.74	Mid grey silty clay	no	Holocene	
105	Layer	2	0.74-0.86	Mid grey silty clay	no	Holocene	
106	Layer	2	0.74-1.16	Loose light whitish sandy gravels	Bone	Late Pleistocene	
107	Layer	2	0.66-0.74	Light orange brown clay	no	Early Holocene	
108	Layer	2	0.74-1.18	Mid grey silty sand	no	Holocene	
109	Layer	2	1.18-1.70	Mid dark grey silty sand	no	Holocene	
110	Layer	2	1.7	Light grey silty clay	no	Holocene	

Trench 2							
General description					Orientation		
Trench 2 contained a similar alluvial sequence to that identified within trench 1. No archaeology was identified.					E-W		
					Avg. depth (m)		1
					Width (m)		2
		Length (m)		20			
Contexts							
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date	
200	Layer	2	0-0.16	Topsoil	no	Modern	



201	Layer	2	0.16-0.24	Dark grey silty clay	no	Medieval/Post medieval
202	Layer	2	0.24-0.40	Light-mid grey slightly silty clay	no	Medieval/Post medieval
203	Layer	2	0.40-0.49	Dark orangey brown silty clay soil	no	Medieval/Post medieval
204	Layer	2	0.49-0.54	Dark blue grey	no	Holocene
205	Layer	2	0.54-0.80	Mid dark grey silty clay with reddish mottles	no	Holocene
206	Layer	2	0.80-0.86	Dark blue grey silty clay	no	Holocene
207	Layer	2	0.86-0.92	Mid grey silty clay	no	Holocene
208	Layer	2	0.92-1.00	Mid reddish grey clay	no	Holocene
209	Layer	2	1.00-1.35	Loose light mid yellow sand	no	Late Pleistocene/early Holocene
210	Layer	2	1.35	Light yellow sandy gravel	no	Late Pleistocene

Trench 3						
<b>General description</b>					<b>Orientation</b>	N-S
Trench 3 contained a similar profile of a buried soil deposit buried within a alluvial sequence. Neither the Pleistocene gravels nor the sands were reached in the base of the trench. No archaeological deposits were identified.					<b>Avg. depth (m)</b>	0.7
					<b>Width (m)</b>	2
					<b>Length (m)</b>	20
<b>Contexts</b>						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
300	Layer	2	0-0.20	Topsoil	no	Modern
301	Layer	2	0.20-0.36	Firm greyish brown silty clay	no	Medieval/Post medieval
302	Layer	2	0.36-0.50	Dark brown organic silty clay	no	Medieval/Post medieval
303	Layer	2	0.50-0.60	Soft grey silty clay	no	Holocene
304	Layer	2	-0.6	Mid dark bluish grey silty clay	no	Holocene

Trench 4						
<b>General description</b>					<b>Orientation</b>	E-W
Trench 4 contained a similar alluvial sequence to trench 3. A small amount of burnt flint and animal bone were recovered from (402) and a pieces of worked					<b>Avg. depth (m)</b>	0.79



flint from (404).		<b>Width (m)</b>	2			
		<b>Length (m)</b>	20			
<b>Contexts</b>						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
400	Layer	2	0.22	Topsoil	no	modern
401	Layer	2	0.22-0.30	Soft dark grey silty clay	no	Medieval/Post medieval
402	Layer	2	0.30-0.44	Very dark brown silty clay	Bone/ burnt flint	Medieval/Post medieval
403	Layer	2	0.44-0.66	Dark bluish brown silty clay	no	Holocene
404	Layer	2	-0.66-0.70	Mid orangey grey silty clay	Flint	Holocene
405	Layer	2	-0.7	Soft mid grey clay	no	Holocene
406	Layer	2	-0.7	Calcareous silt	no	Holocene

<b>Trench 5</b>						
<b>General description</b>			<b>Orientation</b>	E-W		
Trench 5 also contained the same upper alluvial sequence but came down onto sand/sandy gravels in the base of the trench. A small assemblage of burnt and worked flint were recovered from alluvial contexts 503 and 504.			<b>Avg. depth (m)</b>	1		
			<b>Width (m)</b>	2		
			<b>Length (m)</b>	20		
<b>Contexts</b>						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
500	Layer	2	0-0.20	Topsoil	no	modern
501	Layer	2	0.20-0.34	Light mid grey silty clay	no	Medieval/Post medieval
502	Layer	2	0.34-0.40	Very dark brown silty clay	no	Medieval/Post medieval
503	Layer	2	0.40-0.57	Light brownish grey silty clay	Burnt and worked Flint	Prehistoric
504	Layer	2	0.57-0.79	Light yellowish brown silty clay	Burnt and worked Flint	Prehistoric
505	Layer	2	0.79-1.00	Light brown sandy silt	no	Late Pleistocene
506	Layer	2	1.00-1.22	Sandy gravels	no	Late Pleistocene



<b>Trench 6</b>						
<b>General description</b>					<b>Orientation</b>	N-S
Trench 6 contained a sequence of multiple alluvial layers surviving at the northern end of the trench, overlying Floodplain gravels. The southern end of the trench had been truncated by a palaeochannel cut (606) filled with calcareous gravels (607) and brown silty clays (608).					<b>Avg. depth (m)</b>	1
					<b>Width (m)</b>	2
					<b>Length (m)</b>	20
<b>Contexts</b>						
<b>context no</b>	<b>type</b>	<b>Width (m)</b>	<b>Depth (m)</b>	<b>comment</b>	<b>finds</b>	<b>date</b>
600	Layer	5	0-0.20	Topsoil	no	modern
601	Layer	5	0.20-0.26	Soft mid grey silty clay	no	Holocene
602	Layer	5	0.26-0.38	Mid dark grey silty clay	no	Holocene
603	Layer	2	0.38-0.50	Mid-dark orangey brown silty clay	no	Holocene
604	Layer	5	0.50-0.70	Mid dar grey silty clay	no	Holocene
605	Layer	2	-0.7	Firm mid yellow silty clay	no	Late Pleistocene
606	Cut	3.5	0.70-1.22	Cut of a palaeochannel	no	C19th
607	Layer	3.5	-	White gravel fill of the palaeochannel	no	C19th
608	Layer	3.5	-	Mid brown silty clay fill of palaeochannel	brick/clay pipe	C19th



## APPENDIX B. BOREHOLE LOGS

**FIELD SEDIMENT LOGGING SHEET**

SITE CODE: OFW10

NG EASTING: 470104

BH NO: OABH01

ELEVATION: 38.84

NG NORTHING: 171158

LOGGER: CH

Depth      Lithology      Cores      Description

0.00	[Symbol]		0.00, 0.55 Friable dark brown clayey silt. TOPSOIL
0.50	[Symbol]		0.55, 0.85 Firm light greyish brown silt. ALLUVIUM
1.00	[Symbol]		0.85, 1.00 Loose pale greyish brown fine to coarse gritty sand with small pebbles (15%). FLUVIAL DEPOSIT
1.50	[Symbol]		1.00, 1.78 Loose greyish brown fine to coarse gritty sand with flint pebbles (40%). FLUVIAL DEPOSIT
2.00	[Symbol]		1.78, 1.79 Soft dark greyish brown organic silt. ORGANIC SILT
2.50	[Symbol]		1.79, 2.32 Loose greenish grey fine to medium stratified sand. FLUVIAL SAND
3.00	[Symbol]		2.32, 2.45 Loose greenish grey sand with small to medium subangular pebbles (60%). GRAVEL
	[Symbol]		2.45, 2.58 Soft dark brown pseudofibrous organic silt. PEAT
	[Symbol]		2.58, 2.65 Firm greenish grey fine sand with small to medium pebbles (20%). SAND
	[Symbol]		2.65, 3.00 Loose fine to coarse gritty sand with small to large angular pebbles (70%). PLEISTOCENE GRAVEL

NOTES:

# GEOARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES



## FIELD SEDIMENT LOGGING SHEET

SITE CODE: OFW10

NG EASTING: 470113

BH NO: OABH02

ELEVATION: 38.59

NG NORTHING: 171131

LOGGER: CH

Depth      Lithology      Cores      Description

0.00			0.00, 0.30 Void
			0.30, 0.62 Friable greyish brown humic sandy silt. TOPSOIL
0.50			0.62, 0.84 Firm light brown clayey silt. ALLUVIUM
			0.84, 1.00 Loose pale brown laminated sand. FLUVIAL SAND
1.00			1.00, 1.20 Loose yellowish brown sand with small to medium flint pebbles (25%). FLUVIAL SAND
			1.20, 1.30 Firm pale greyish brown sand with lenses of organic rich sandy silt. FLUVIAL SAND
1.50			1.30, 1.59 Loose light brown sand with small to medium subangular flint pebbles (80%). GRAVEL
			1.59, 1.63 Soft dark brown organic silt. ORGANIC SILT
2.00			1.63, 2.00 Loose reddish brown sand (10%) with small to large subangular pebbles of flint. PLEISTOCENE GRAVEL

NOTES:

**FIELD SEDIMENT LOGGING SHEET**

SITE CODE: OFW10

NG EASTING: 470122

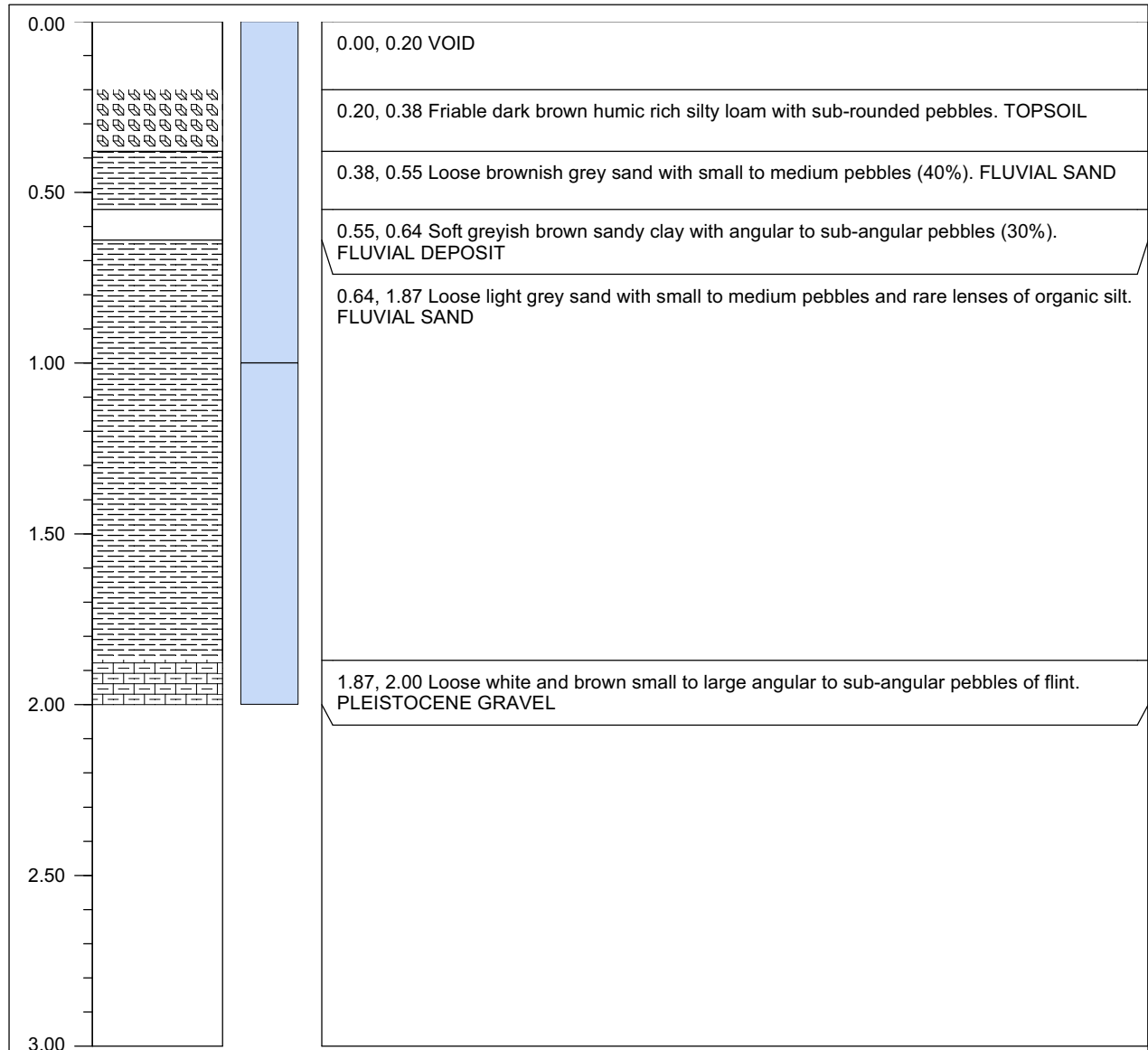
BH NO:

ELEVATION: 38.83

NG NORTHING: 171106

LOGGER: CH

Depth      Lithology      Cores      Description



NOTES:



**FIELD SEDIMENT LOGGING SHEET**

SITE CODE: OFW10

NG EASTING: 470326

BH NO: OABH04

ELEVATION: 37.6

NG NORTHING: 171100

LOGGER: CH

Depth      Lithology      Cores      Description

0.00			0.00, 0.53 VOID
0.50	▽▽▽▽▽▽▽▽▽▽		0.53, 0.80 Friable dark brown humic silt. TOPSOIL
	▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬		0.80, 0.95 Firm greyish brown clayey silt. ALLUVIUM
1.00	▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬		0.95, 1.13 Loose white fine to medium laminated sand. FLUVIAL SAND
	△△△△△△△△△△		1.13, 1.22 Soft drak greyish brown organic silt. ORGANIC SILT
	▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬		1.22, 1.36 Firm dark brown pseudo fibrous organic silt. PEAT
1.50	▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬		1.36, 1.66 Soft greenish grey clayey silt. ALLUVIUM
	▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬		1.66, 1.77 Soft dark greyish brown pseudofibrous organic silt. PEAT
	▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬		1.77, 1.97 Soft pale greenish grey fine sandy silt. ALLUVIUM
2.00	▽▽▽▽▽▽▽▽▽▽		1.97, 2.48 Firm light grey laminated silty fine sand. FLUVIAL SAND
2.50	▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬		2.48, 3.00 Firm brownish grey fine sand. FLUVIAL SAND
3.00	▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬		

NOTES:

**FIELD SEDIMENT LOGGING SHEET**

SITE CODE: OFW10

NG EASTING: 470373

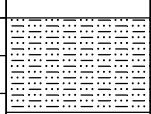


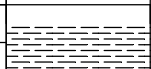
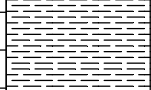
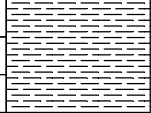


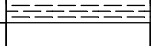
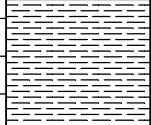
BH NO: OABH05

ELEVATION: 37.89

NG NORTHING: 171083

LOGGER: CH

Depth      Lithology      Cores      Description

0.00			0.00, 0.50 VOID
0.50			0.50, 0.75 Friable brownish yellow silty clay. ALLUVIUM
			0.75, 0.79 Soft brown organic rich silt. ORGANIC SILT
			0.79, 0.85 Soft brownish grey organic rich silty clay. PALAEO SOL
1.00			0.85, 1.00 Pale greenish grey clayey silt. ALLUVIUM
			1.00, 1.05 VOID
			1.05, 1.35 Pale greenish grey clayey silt. ALLUVIUM
1.50			1.35, 1.70 Greenish grey clayey silt with small organic inclusions (10%) . ALLUVIUM
			1.70, 1.82 Soft brown organic rich silt. ORGANIC SILT
			1.82, 1.95 Firm brown organic rich pseudofibrous silt. PEAT
2.00			1.95, 2.00 Firm greenish grey clayey silt. ALLUVIUM
			2.00, 2.65 VOID
2.50			
3.00			2.65, 3.00 Loose brownish grey sand with small to large subangular pebbles of flint (70%). PLEISTOCENE GRAVEL

NOTES:

**FIELD SEDIMENT LOGGING SHEET**

SITE CODE: OFW10

NG EASTING: 470227


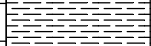



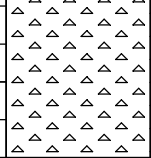
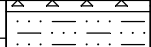
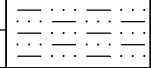

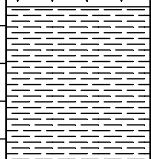
BH NO: OABH06

ELEVATION: 37.61

NG NORTHING: 171100

LOGGER: CH

Depth      Lithology      Cores      Description

0.00			0.00, 0.48 VOID
0.50			0.48, 0.69 Friable brown clayey silt. TOPSOIL
			0.69, 0.82 Firm brown silty clay. ALLUVIUM
			0.82, 0.87 Firm brown humic rich silty clay. PALAEOSOL
1.00			0.87, 0.99 Soft olive grey clayey silt. ALLUVIUM
			0.99, 1.13 Firm pale brown fine sand. FLUVIAL SAND
1.50			1.13, 1.70 Soft brown organic rich silt. ORGANIC SILT
			1.70, 1.73 Soft greyish brown silty clay. ORGANIC SILT
2.00			1.73, 2.00 Firm white laminated clayey sand with small pebbles (30%). FLUVIAL SAND
			2.00, 2.40 VOID
2.50			2.40, 2.55 Loose greyish brown sand. FLUVIAL SAND
			2.55, 3.00 Loose grey sand with small to large pebbles of flint (60%). PLEISTOCENE GRAVEL
3.00			

NOTES:



## APPENDIX C. PLATES

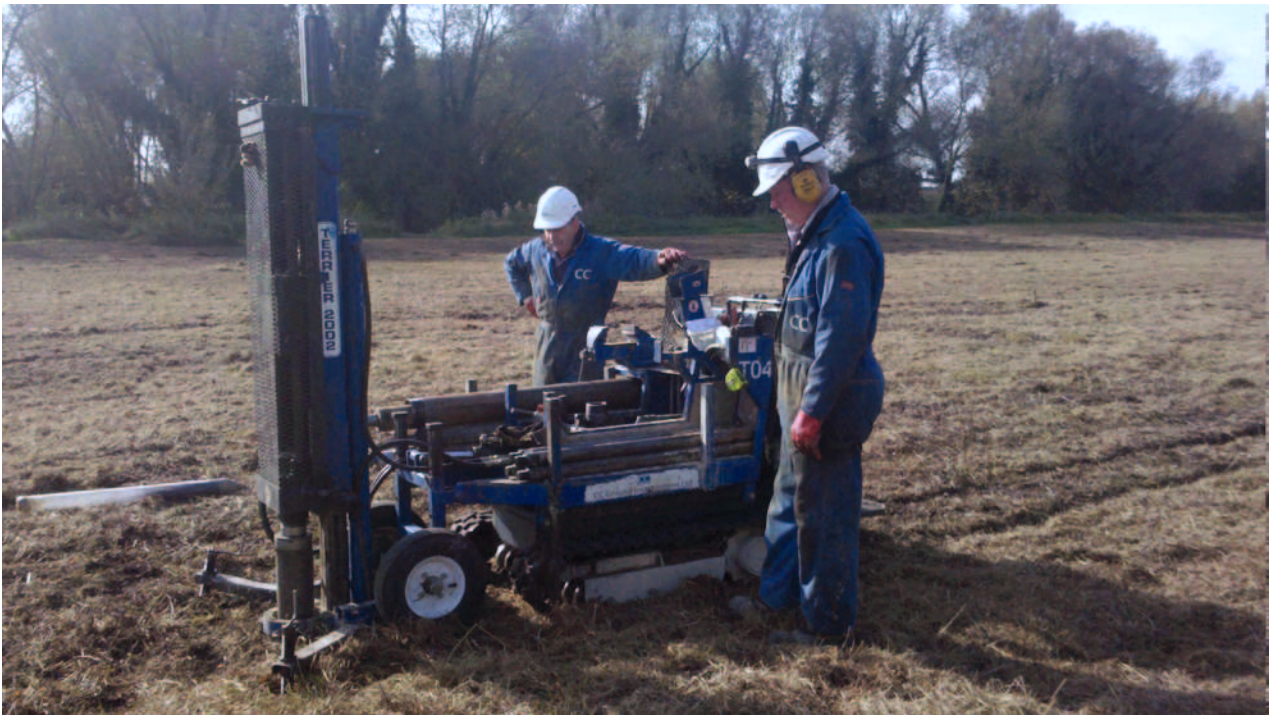


Plate 1: Photo of borehole sampling rig



Plate 2: Photo of borehole sample OABH2





Plate 3: Photo of Trench 1 looking north



Plate 4: Photo of south facing section within Trench 2





Plate 5: Photo of Trench 4 looking south



Plate 6: Photo of east facing section within Trench 6



## APPENDIX D. FIND ASSESSMENT REPORTS

### D.1 Flint report

By Geraldine Crann

#### **Introduction**

D.1.1 A total of 5 flints were recovered from 3 contexts during the evaluation.

<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Date</b>
404	Flake with hinge termination on brown flint, 5g.	
503	Flake with 2 ventral surfaces on brown mottled flint, 3g.	
503	Natural fragment, 51g.	
504	Secondary flake on brown mottled flint, cortex 15%, short length of retouch on distal lateral edge, 8g	
504	Natural fragment, 23g.	
402	Burnt, unworked, 22g.	
504	Burnt, unworked, 10g.	

#### **Discussion**

D.1.2 All the flint can be classified as undatable prehistoric debitage flakes. The small quantity of worked flint recovered limits the interpretation of the material beyond illustrating a human presence in the local area during prehistoric period.

#### **Recommendations**

D.1.3 The assemblage is generally of low potential and requires no further work.

#### **Bibliography**

Butler, C. 2005. *Prehistoric Flintwork*, Stroud: Tempus.

### D.2 Other finds

by John Cotter

D.2.1 A single fragment of 19<sup>th</sup> century clay pipe stem, with a narrow stem bore (c1.5mm) and a small fragment of red brick was recovered from an in-filled channel deposit (608) within trench 6.

### D.3 Animal bone assessment

By Lena Strid

D.3.1 The animal bone assemblage from REF0110 comprised three bones (Table 1), all in good condition. The cattle femur had been gnawed by a carnivore. The cattle femur and





red deer radius were fused, indicating adult animals. Measurements of the deer radius are included in Table 2.

<b>Context</b>	<b>Species</b>	<b>Element</b>	<b>Weight (g)</b>
103	Red deer	Radius	238
106	Cattle	Femur	392
402	Horse	Femur	120

Table 1. Bones present in the assemblage

<b>Species</b>	<b>Element</b>	<b>GL</b>	<b>Bp</b>	<b>Bd</b>	<b>SD</b>
Red deer	Radius	295. 5	53.0	48.9	31.1

Table 2. Measurements of red deer radius



## APPENDIX E. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT REPORTS

### E.1 Waterlogged and charred plant remains

*by Julia Meen*

#### **Introduction**

- E.1.1 This report describes two environmental samples, and a series of waterlogged subsamples from a borehole sequence, taken from the field evaluation at Fobney Island, Reading, in October 2010.
- E.1.2 Sample 1 (501) was taken from an alluvial layer, to assess its potential for snail preservation. Sample 2 (502) was taken from a buried land surface for the recovery of charred plant material and artefacts. Borehole 4 was taken through the alluvial sequence of a backwater channel. Subsamples were taken from eight distinct horizons within the waterlogged sequence it represents to assess potential for waterlogged plant material and insects.

#### **Aims**

- E.1.3 Sampling was undertaken to:
- Record the range of soils and sediments on site.
  - Determine whether ecofacts and environmental evidence (such as plant remains, animal bone, human bone and molluscs) are present.
  - Determine the quality, range, state and method of preservation of any ecofactual evidence.
  - Recover and identify any small artefacts.
  - Make further recommendations about sampling for future excavations at the site.

#### **Methodology**

- E.1.4 The two bulk samples were hand floated for the recovery of charred plant remains (CPR), with the intention of assessing the snail potential of sample 1 from the CPR flot. The flots were collected on a 250µm mesh and the heavy residue sieved to 500µm, and both were dried in a heated room, after which the residue was sorted by eye for artefacts and ecofactual remains. The flots were scanned for charred plant remains using a binocular microscope at approximately x15 magnification. After the sedimentary sequence represented by Borehole 4 had been logged, eight subsamples were taken and their positions recorded. Each sample represents 5cm of depth in the monolith, and the volume in each case was between 0.25 and 0.45L, depending on how much material was available to sample. Each of these eight subsamples were hand-floated for the recovery of WPR, and the flot and the residue were collected separately on 250µm meshes and stored in water-filled containers in cold storage. The waterlogged flots were scanned for WPR and insects using a binocular microscope at approximately x15 magnification. Identifications were made without reference to Oxford Archaeology's reference collection and therefore, should all be seen as provisional. Nomenclature for the plant remains follows Stace (1997).



## **RESULTS**

### **Sediment**

- E.1.5 Sample 1 (501) was a light olive brown sandy clay loam. 2L was processed for the recovery of CPR and snails. Sample 2 (502) was a dark yellowish brown silty clay loam. 1.5L was processed for the recovery of CPR.
- E.1.6 For a full sedimentary description of Borehole 4 and the locations from which each subsample was taken, see the attached Core Logging Sheet (C. Heistermann). In summary, the eight distinct horizons subsampled were: 0.81-0.86m a firm greyish brown clay silt with reddish brown mottles (alluvium); 1.23-1.28m a very dark brown/black organic peat; 1.46-1.50m a greenish grey clayey silt with lenses of dark brown organic rich silt (alluvium); 1.50-1.55m as previous; 1.67-1.72m a dark greyish brown organic peat; 1.78-1.83m a pale greenish grey sandy silt with reddish brown mottles (alluvium); 2.22-2.27m a light grey silty fine fluvial sand; 2.83-8.88m a fine brownish grey fluvial sand with a banded structure.

### **Bones and artefacts**

- E.1.1 No finds were recovered from the heavy residues of either of the two bulk samples.

### **Plant Remains**

- E.1.1 Table 1 summarises the assessment results for waterlogged plant remains (WPR) from the eight subsamples from Borehole 4.
- E.1.2 The flot of the sample located at 0.81-0.86m, an alluvial clay silt, contained common mineral material. Charcoal was present in fairly low quantities, and mostly as small flecks. One waterlogged seed was observed, and fragments of wood or plant stem material, as well as roots, were common. One possible, very small fragment of insect casing was noted.
- E.1.3 The sample from 1.23-1.28m, an organic peat, had a flot mostly consisting of fine clods of extremely degraded organic material. Abundant fine, fibrous fragments of waterlogged root/stem material were present, but no charred material, insects, molluscs or waterlogged seeds were observed.
- E.1.4 The sample located at 1.46-1.50m, an alluvial clayey silt, contained abundant waterlogged wood and root fragments. Rare waterlogged seeds were observed, although these were in a poor state of preservation, but could however be seen to include at least one example of *Urtica* sp. (nettle) as well as at least one other species. One beetle thorax was observed, but no molluscs or charred material were present.
- E.1.5 1.50-1.55m, a continuation of the alluvial horizon, yielded a similar flot to the overlying sample, with abundant waterlogged fibrous plant stems fragments present, but with the appearance at this depth of charcoal, which tended here to be present as a low number of slightly larger (>2mm) items. A piece of waterlogged twig approximately 10mm in length was noted, as was a single fragment of beetle elytra. No molluscs or waterlogged seeds were observed.
- E.1.6 The sample taken from the peat at a depth of 1.67-1.72m had a flot of which the majority consisted of degraded, highly fragmented wood and leaf fragments. No charred material was observed. Occasional waterlogged seeds were noted, almost all of which were of *Carex* sp. (sedge). A low quantity of insect parts were observed, including a single example each of a beetle thorax, elytra, a leg, plus occasional indeterminate fragments. No molluscs were present.



- E.1.7 The alluvial sandy silt at 1.78-1.83m produced a flot composed of fragments of waterlogged plant and wood stem material and containing no charred material, insects, waterlogged seeds or molluscs.
- E.1.8 The sample taken from a depth of 2.22-2.27m, a fine fluvial sand, produced a very small flot, mostly consisting of fragmented plant stem material, as well as occasional very fine charcoal flecks. No waterlogged seeds, insects or molluscs were observed.
- E.1.9 2.83-2.88m, again a fluvial sand, yielded a low quantity of very fine, fibrous waterlogged plant stem material. Rare fine charcoal flecks were observed, all of which were less than 2mm in size. No insects, molluscs or waterlogged seeds were present.
- E.1.10 Table 2 summaries the assessment results for charred plant remains (CPR) from samples 1 and 2.
- E.1.11 Sample 1, which was taken largely with the aim of assessing snail preservation, produced a flot dominated by snails and demonstrating a good state of preservation. A moderate number of additional snails were also present in the heavy residues. Charred material was low, limited to occasional charcoal flecks all of which were less than 2mm in size, as well as one indeterminate fragment of a charred plant seed, whose large size was suggestive of a cereal grain. Modern root was common and modern seeds could occasionally be seen.
- E.1.12 Sample 2 produced a very small flot, with a low number of snails present. Very little charcoal was present, and no items were greater than 2mm in size. Modern root was also noted.

## E.2 Assessment of land and freshwater snails

**By Elizabeth Stafford**

- E.2.1 Two samples from Trench 5; 1 (501) and 2 (502), were submitted for the assessment of Mollusca. Shell was very abundant and well-preserved in the flot from 1 which derived from an alluvial clay layer. The assemblage was dominated by marsh and freshwater slum species (*Oxyloma/Succinaea* sp., *Lymnaea truncatula* and *Anisus leucostoma*) Terrestrial species that can tolerate damp conditions, frequently on floodplains, were present in lesser abundance (*Vallonia pulchella*, *Carychium miniumum* and *Trichia hispida*). Overall the assemblage is consistent with an open, seasonally flooded, grassland environment. The abundance of *Oxyloma/Succinaea* sp., may suggest the presence of tall erect vegetation such as reeds or sedges in the vicinity. *A. leucostoma* may also suggest there may have been areas of more permanent shallow standing water. 2 from an underlying dark brown clay layer produced only a few shells of the species described above.

### **Discussions and conclusions**

- E.2.2 Both sample 2 and in particular sample 1 contained snails, in the latter case in sufficient quantities to allow valid interpretations to be made about the taphonomy of the deposit and local environmental conditions, and showing that conditions are suitable for the preservation of this type of ecofact at the site. If further excavations are carried out, specialist 2L series samples for snails should be taken from suitable sequences.
- E.2.3 Although neither of the bulk samples produced charred material in great quantity, its occurrence in both does demonstrate that CPR can survive in deposits at this site. Whilst neither sample assessed here provides material of interpretable value, the presence of a possible cereal grain fragment from sample <1> suggests that there may



have been arable activity close by and that further sampling for charred material may provide information on the character of the local agricultural economy.

- E.2.4 In general, the potential for waterlogged plant remains and insects from the borehole subsamples was not good. Most of the samples were dominated by degraded, fibrous plant stem material, much of which has little potential for identification. The peat horizon sampled at a depth of 1.67-1.72m showed the best preservation. Here, seeds of *Carex* sp. (sedge) occur in moderate numbers; as inhabitants of damp ground, these would have been well suited to the moist conditions under which peat formation would have been initiated. The presence of insects in this and several other of the horizons, although in small quantity, demonstrates that there is potential for insect preservation at this site.
- E.2.5 If further excavations are carried out, standard 30-40L bulk samples and specialist samples for waterlogged plant remains and snails should be taken from a range of potentially datable features across the site and should be in accordance with the most recent sampling guidelines (eg. Oxford Archaeology, 2005 and English Heritage, 2002).

### **REFERENCES**

English Heritage, 2002. *Environmental Archaeology. A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation*. Centre for Archaeology guidelines 2002.01.

Oxford Archaeology, 2005. *Sampling guidelines*. Unpublished document.

Stace, C. 1997. (second edition). *New Flora of the British Isles*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



## APPENDIX F. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Fobney Island, Reading, Berkshire

Site code: REFOI10

Grid reference: TQ 36237 95160

Type: Evaluation

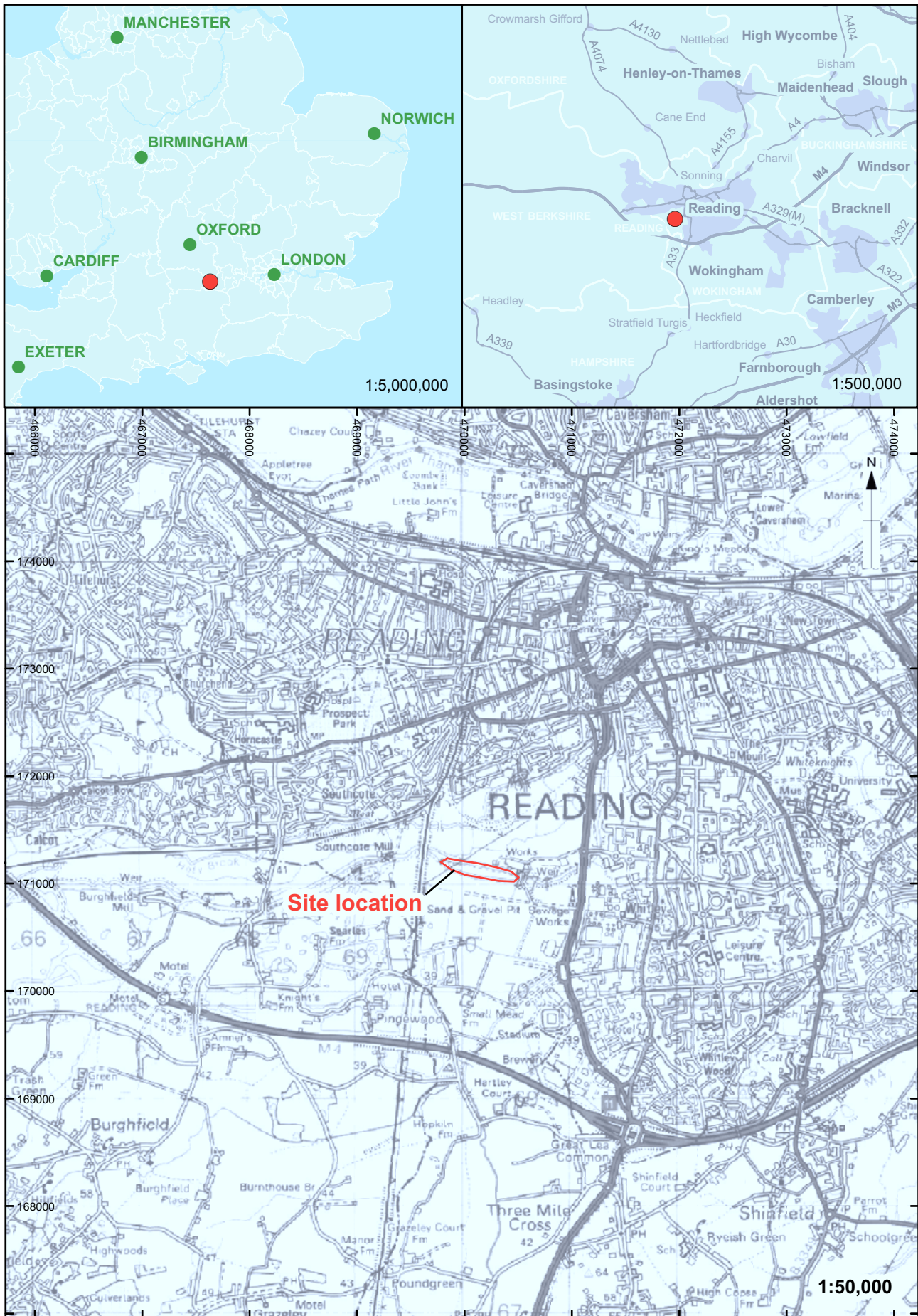
Date and duration: Fieldwork occurred from late October 2010

Area of site: 7 ha

Summary of results: A total of 6 trenches and 6 boreholes were undertaken at Fobney island, Reading, Berkshire to assess the archaeological and palaeoenvironment potential of a proposed new habitat creation project. No significant archaeology was identified but a complex sequence of buried floodplain and channel deposits were found to underlie the site. These were found to have only limited potential for palaeoenvironmental reconstruction.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Reading Museum in due course, under the following accession number: REDMG, 2010.126





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Figure 1: Site location





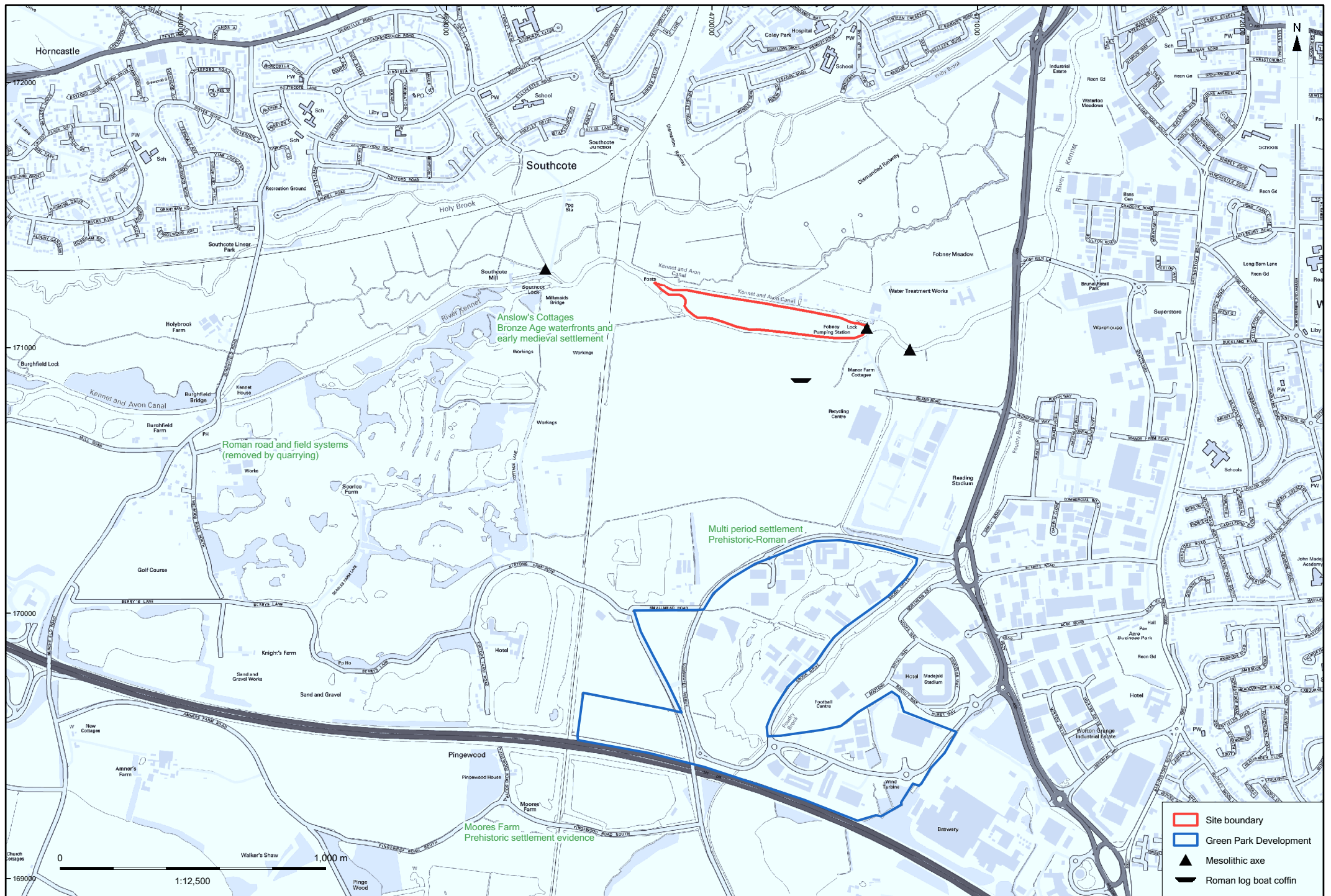


Figure 2: Archaeological feature map





Figure 3: Trench and borehole locations



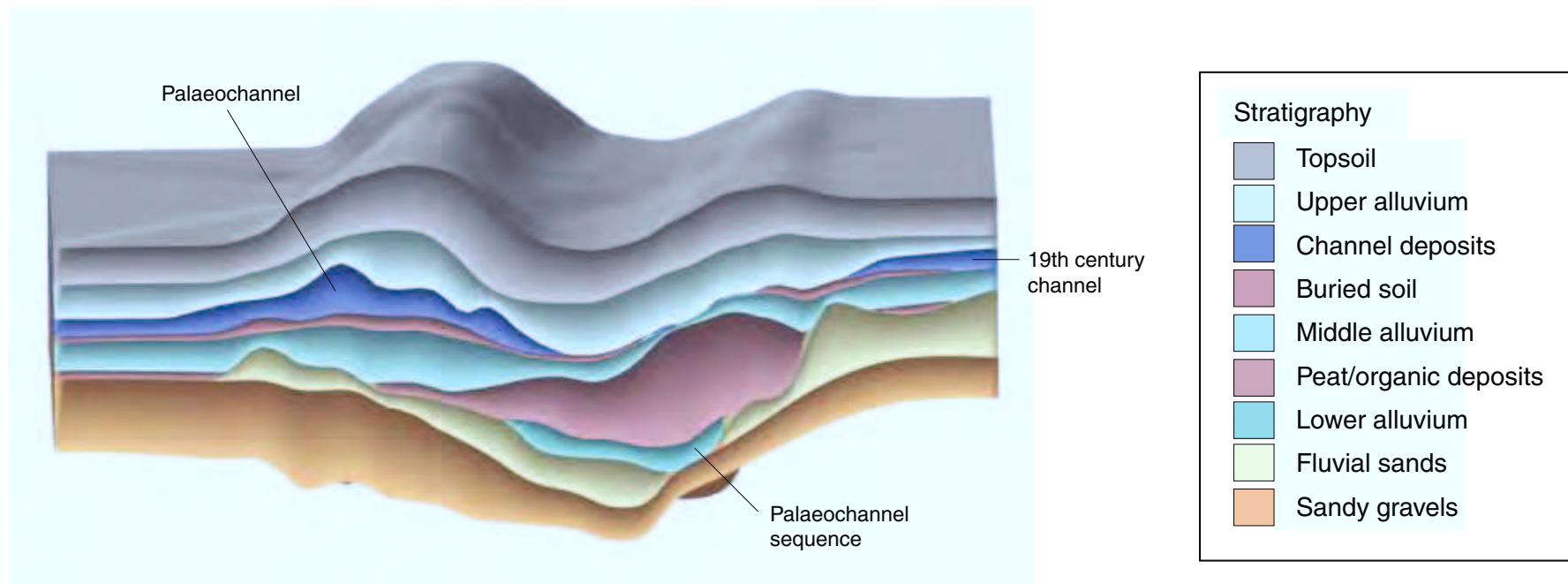


Figure 4: Modelled 3D cross-section





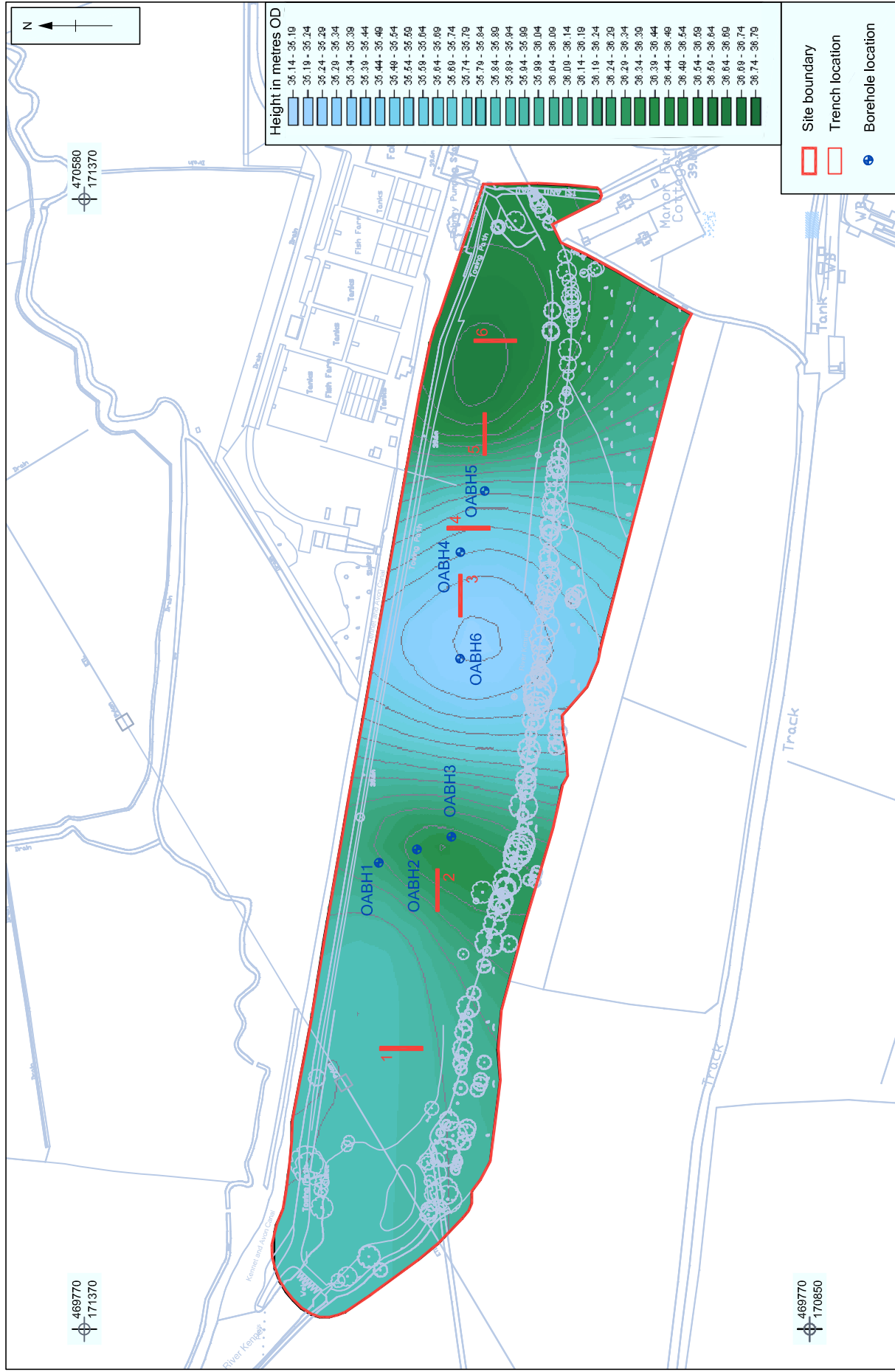


Figure 5: Modelled Palaeotopograph

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Figure 6: Modelled Peat thickness

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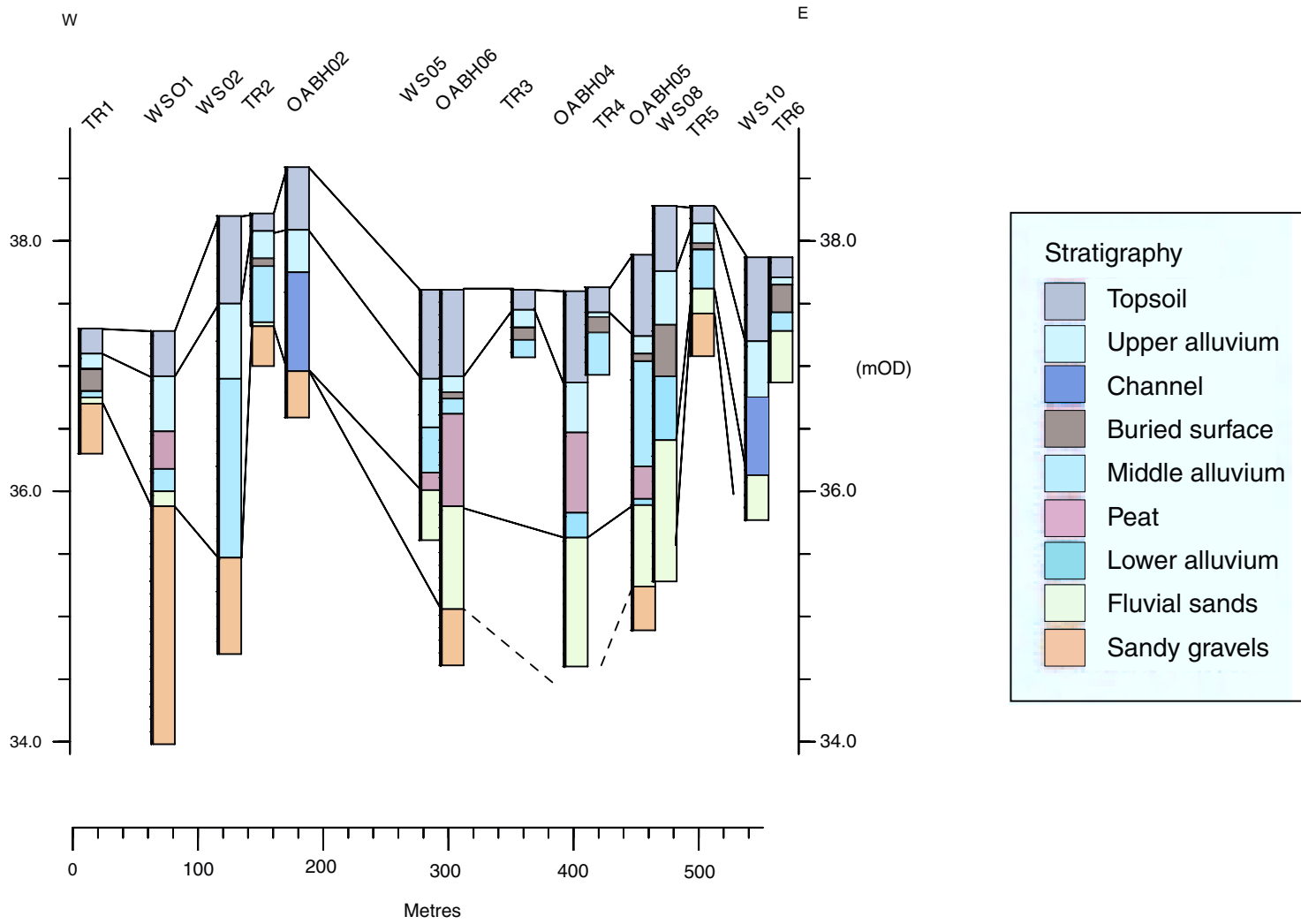


Figure 7: Borehole cross section



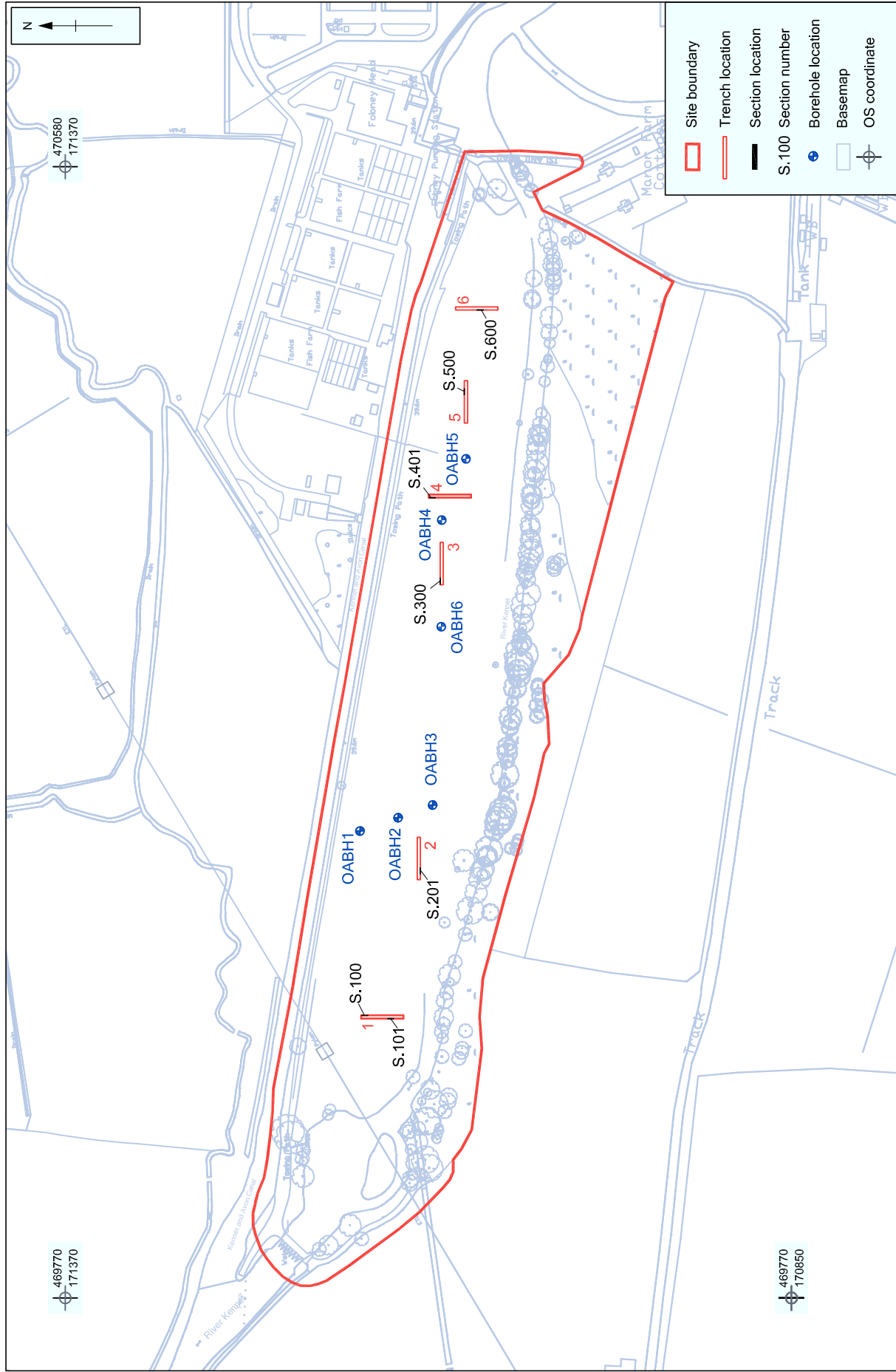


Figure 8: Location of trench sections

0 200 m

Scale at A4 1:4000



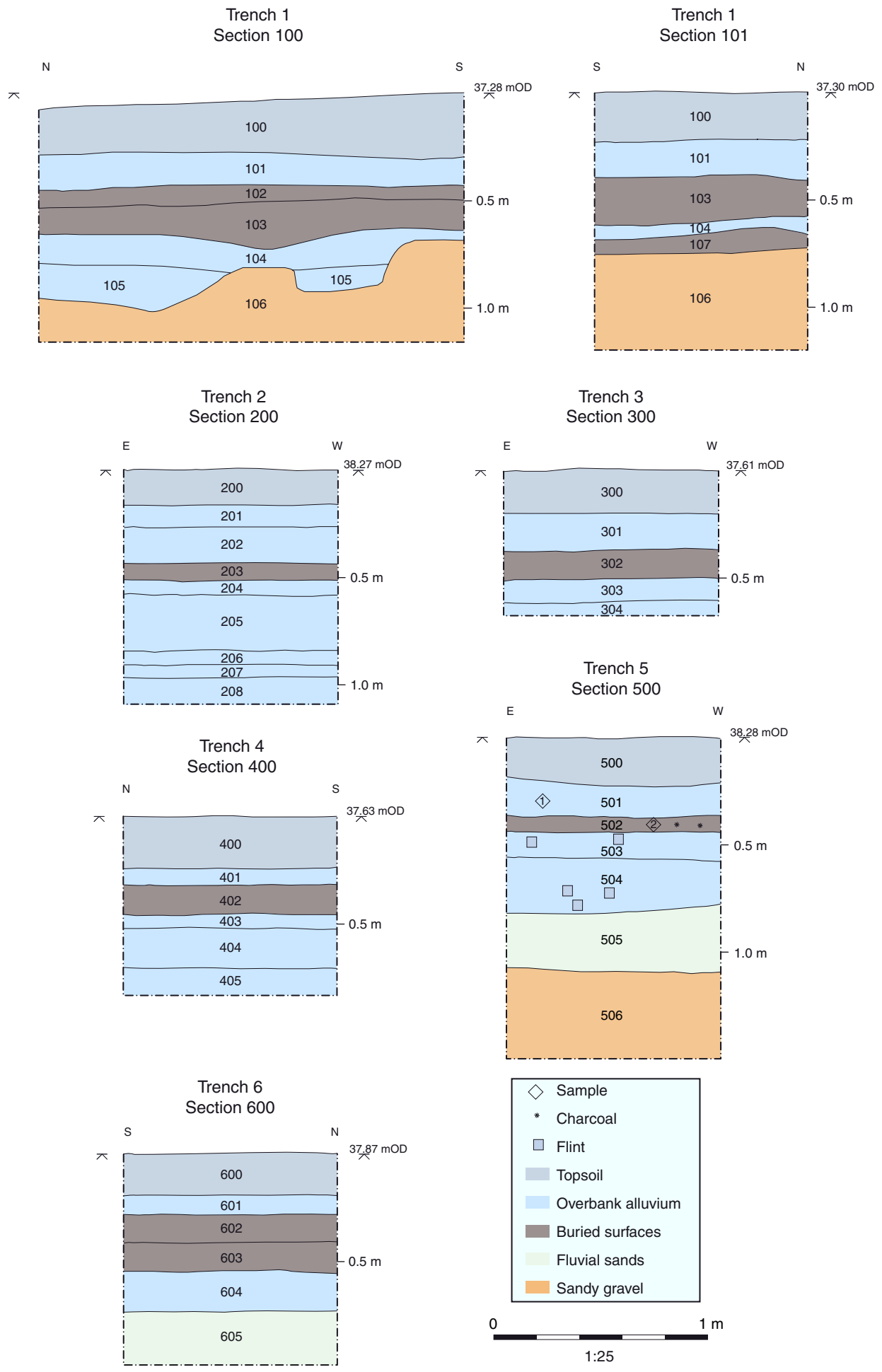


Figure 9: Trench sections



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