

SMK ✓
EOX2090
SOX 1936
5847



New Power Cables Oddington Oxfordshire

**Archaeological
Watching Brief Report**



oxford

July 2007

**Client: Scottish and Southern
Energy Ltd**

Issue N^o: 1

OA Job N^o: 3675

NGR: SP 553 148

Client Name: Scottish and Southern Energy Ltd
Client Ref No:
Document Title: New Power Cables, Oddington, Oxfordshire

Document Type: Watching Brief
Issue Number: 1

National Grid Reference: SP 553 148
Planning Reference:

OA Job Number: 3675
Site Code: CHODDP 07
Invoice Code: CHODDPWB
Receiving Museum: Oxfordshire County Museums Service
Museum Accession No: tbc

Prepared by: Mike Sims
Position: SWD Supervisor
Date: 07th June 2007

Checked by: Dan Dodds
Position: Head of Small Works
Date: 11th July 2007

Approved by: Nick Shepherd
Position: Head of Field work
Date: 15th June 2007

Signed. 

Document File Location H:\PROJECTS\Oxfordshire OX\Cherwell CH\7790
Oddington Electric Cable\wbREP.doc
Graphics File Location Servergo/AtoH/CHODD07/CHODDWB/Oddington
Power Cable/jm/07.03.07
Illustrated by Julia Moxham

Disclaimer:

This document has been prepared for the titled project or named part thereof and should not be relied upon or used for any other project without an independent check being carried out as to its suitability and prior written authority of Oxford Archaeology being obtained. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for the consequences of this document being used for a purpose other than the purposes for which it was commissioned. Any person/party using or relying on the document for such other purposes agrees, and will by such use or reliance be taken to confirm their agreement to indemnify Oxford Archaeology for all loss or damage resulting therefrom. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for this document to any party other than the person/party by whom it was commissioned.

Oxford Archaeology
© Oxford Archaeological Unit Ltd 2007

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES
t: (0044) 01865 263800
f: (0044) 01865 793496

e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk

Oxford Archaeological Unit Limited is a Registered Charity No: 285627

New Power Cables, Oddington, Oxfordshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

CONTENTS

Summary.....	1
1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Scope of work.....	1
1.2 Location, geology and topography.....	1
1.3 Archaeological and historical background.....	1
2 Project Aims and Methodology.....	2
2.1 Aims.....	2
2.2 Methodology.....	3
3 Results.....	3
3.1 Description of deposits.....	3
3.2 Finds.....	4
3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains.....	4
4 Discussion and Conclusions.....	4
Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory.....	6
Appendix 2 Bibliography and References.....	6
Appendix 3 Summary of Site Details.....	6

LIST OF FIGURES

- Fig. 1 Site location
- Fig. 2 Site plan
- Fig. 3 Sections

Front cover: Trench digging at eastern end of site

SUMMARY

Between May 31st and June 2nd 2007, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief on land to the south of the Village of Oddington, Oxfordshire (NGR: SP 553-148). The work was commissioned by Scottish and Southern Energy Ltd in advance of excavation of a service trench for new underground power cables. The watching brief revealed 2 ditches running across the course of the trench. One of these was a probable Burgage plot boundary ditch located within the level area at the top of the field. The second was a probable enclosure ditch running along the base of the upper terrace of the field. A second lower terrace was of probable geological origin, marking the boundary between cornbrash and alluvial deposits.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 Between 31st May and 2nd June 2007, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief on land to the south of the village of Oddington, Oxfordshire (NGR SP: 553 148). The work was commissioned by Scottish and Southern Energy Ltd in advance of the excavation of a service trench for new underground power cables across a field to the north-east of the village church.

1.1.2 Because of the known presence of a possible Saxon enclosure ditch running across the site, and the presence of a suspected (but not scheduled) Deserted Medieval Village (DMV), an archaeological watching brief was requested during the course of the groundworks.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 The village of Oddington lies approximately 7 km north-east of Oxford (Fig. 1). The site itself was within a field located to the immediate south of the village. The field through which the trench travels measures approximately 4 hectares in area and has a marked slope to the east with a level terrace at the top of the slope (c66 m above OD) and two marked steps in the slope before reaching level ground at the base (c57 m above OD). The underlying geology consists of Cornbrash formations at the top of the field before changing to alluvium at the base (British Geological Survey sheet no. 237).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background to the watching brief was prepared for the project using published sources and is summarised below.

1.3.2 The parish of Oddington lies some 8 miles north-east of Oxford and on the western edge of Otmoor. The River Ray forms a natural boundary to the south, with its tributaries marking the greater part of the eastern and western boundaries with a

branch of the river flows through the centre of the parish. Within the parish there are a number of springs noted for their mineral properties and their supposed capacity to cure cattle of a disease known as "the Otmoor evil".

- 1.3.3 There are several disused quarries south of Oddington village which once provided a good quality limestone for house-building and road making.
- 1.3.4 The name Oddington suggests an early settlement, the name meaning in Old English "Ot(t)a's hill" and the site was probably settled by the same man who gave his name to Otmoor and Otley. The discovery in 1815 of a pre-Christian Saxon cemetery in the Rectory garden suggests that there was a settlement there in the 6th-century.
- 1.3.5 By the time of Edward the Confessor the Manor of Oddington was assessed at 3 hides and half a virgate (c140 hectares) and was held by a man named Alwi. By 1065 Edward had granted this estate, together with Islip to the Abbey of Westminster, however the King died before the Abbey had taken possession.
- 1.3.6 William the Conqueror appears to granted possession to Hugh de Grantmesnil, Sheriff of Leicestershire, where it passed to his daughter Adeline, wife of Roger d'Ivry. In 1086 Adeline was recorded as holding it herself.
- 1.3.7 A papal bull of 1146, confirming the exemption of Thame Abbey from paying tithes on its lands and including those of its Oddington Grange implies that there was a church in Oddington by the 12th-century.
- 1.3.8 The current church, the Church of St. Andrew, is a plain stone building dating mainly from the end of the 13th and the beginning of the 14th centuries, but has been much restored. The nave has 13th-century buttresses, and the tower also probably dates to this period. The chancel retains part of a late 14th-century window and an elegant 14th-century piscina.
- 1.3.9 The village itself is a mixture of late post-medieval farm houses and modern terraced housing.
- 1.3.10 Other than the Saxon cemetery previously mentioned, no other significant archaeology has been recorded.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To preserve by record any archaeological features or deposits that may be disturbed or destroyed during the course of the groundworks.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The trench was dug by a tracked excavator fitted with a 0.3 m wide toothless bucket. Excavation proceeded in spits until the required depth of excavation (1 m) was achieved. The sides and base of the trench were closely examined for archaeological evidence and the spoil was examined for dating evidence. Because of the width of the trench and the unstable nature of the ground, all recording was done from the top of the trench.
- 2.2.2 A plan showing the extent of the excavations and the location of any archaeological features was maintained at a scale of 1:250 (Fig. 2) and any recorded sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All excavated features were photographed using colour digital photography. A general photographic record of the work was also made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The stratigraphy varied throughout the length of the trench and a detailed account will be given for each recorded section.

Section 1

- 3.1.2 The underlying solid geology, consisting of tabular oolitic limestone (4) was encountered at a depth of 0.85 m below ground level. This was overlaid by a 0.18 m deep layer of sub-angular fragments of limestone in an orange clay matrix (3), a layer of cornbrash composed of weathered and shattered bedrock. Overlying this was a 0.25 m deep layer of grey-brown clay silt loam (2). This was a very friable deposit and may be a layer of earlier worked soil. Sealing this was a 0.4 m deep layer of very dark grey silt loam (1), the current topsoil and turf.

Section 2

- 3.1.3 The cornbrash (3) was encountered at a depth of 0.4 m below ground level. This layer continued to the base of the trench. Cut into the surface of this deposit was a 2.4 m wide by 0.55 m deep ditch (6). This feature had steeply sides with a shallow "V" shaped profile. The ditch run approximately N-S across the trench and appeared to follow the alignment of the upper field boundary. This feature was sited in the centre of the level area at the top of the field and may represent a medieval burgage plot boundary. Filling this ditch was a dark brown clay loam (5), which was a probable silting deposit. Sealing the ditch fill was a 0.18 m deep layer of the earlier worked soil (2) overlain by a 0.2 m deep layer of topsoil and turf (1).

Section 3

3.1.4 The tabular bedrock (4) was encountered in the base of the trench at a depth of 0.9 m below ground level. Overlying this was a 0.45 m deep layer of cornbrash (3). Cut into the surface of this deposit and down into Layer 4 was a 2.3 m wide shallow "V" shaped ditch (8) which was in excess of 0.55 m in depth. This feature appears to run along the base of the upper terrace within the field and may represent a possible enclosure ditch. Filling the ditch was a dark brown clay silt loam (7), this was a probable silting deposit.

Section 4

3.1.5 The cornbrash (3) was encountered 0.85 m below the ground level. This was overlaid by a 0.4 m deep layer of orange brown clay (9). This deposit had inclusions of grey clay and represents an alluvium. Sealing this was a 0.15 m deep layer of the earlier worked soil (2) overlaid by a 0.25 m deep layer of the topsoil and turf (1).

3.2 Finds

3.2.1 No artefacts or dating evidence were recovered during the course of the watching brief.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

3.3.1 Due to the method of machining it was considered that any samples recovered from either the machine bucket or from the spoil would be too contaminated for meaningful analysis. The nature of the trench precluded collecting samples from the trench sides by hand.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 Although no evidence for direct occupation such as foundation trenches or rubbish pits were encountered during the course of the watching brief the presence of the two ditches suggest that a degree of activity has taken place within the site in the past.

4.1.2 The westernmost Ditch 6 represents a probable medieval burgage plot boundary probably from a plot fronting the east-west road immediately north of the field.

4.1.3 Ditch 8 is located at the base of the upper terrace and is a probable enclosure ditch (possibly Saxon in date ?) running N-S across the field before turning westwards and running south of the church. Its fill (7) is a silting deposit suggesting that it fell into disuse possibly in the medieval period. There was no evidence for any associated bank surviving in the surface of the current field and it is probable that later ploughing has truncated this feature. The absence of cornbrash within the fill of the ditch would confirm that the bank has been truncated rather than used to backfill the ditch.

- 4.1.4 The presence of these two features might indicate that the area bounded by the enclosure may form part of a platform containing an earlier section of the village. This may have fallen into disuse as the centre of the village moved towards the top of the ridge and spread to the north.
- 4.1.5 A second, lower terrace is visible in the field running approximately north-south, however close examination of the trench sides when it crossed this feature failed to show any signs of deliberate construction such as a ditch or a bank. This feature did however occur on the junction of the alluvium and the cornbrash suggesting that it is probably geological in origin.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i> Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	Layer	0.2 m - 0.4 m	-	Topsoil and turf, modern ploughsoil	-	-
2	Layer	0.18 m	-	Subsoil, earlier ploughsoil	-	-
3	Layer	0.3 m - 0.6 m	-	Combrash, stone fragments in a clay matrix	-	-
4	Layer	> 0.1 m	-	Natural, tabular limestone	-	-
5	Fill	0.58 m	2.3 m	Fill of Ditch 6, silting deposit	-	-
6	Cut	0.58 m	2.3 m	North-south running ditch, possible burgage plot boundary ditch	-	-
7	Fill	0.55 m	2.4 m	Fill of Ditch 8, silting deposit	-	-
8	Cut	0.55 m	2.4 m	Ditch running around the base of the upper terrace	-	-
9	Layer	0.4 m	-	Natural clay, probable alluvium	-	-

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

IFA, 2001 *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

OA, 1992 *Field Manual* (ed. D. Wilkinson)

Victoria History of the Counties of England: Oxfordshire Volume VI, p277-286

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: New Power Cables, Oddington, Oxfordshire

Site code: CHODDP 07

Grid reference: SP 553 148

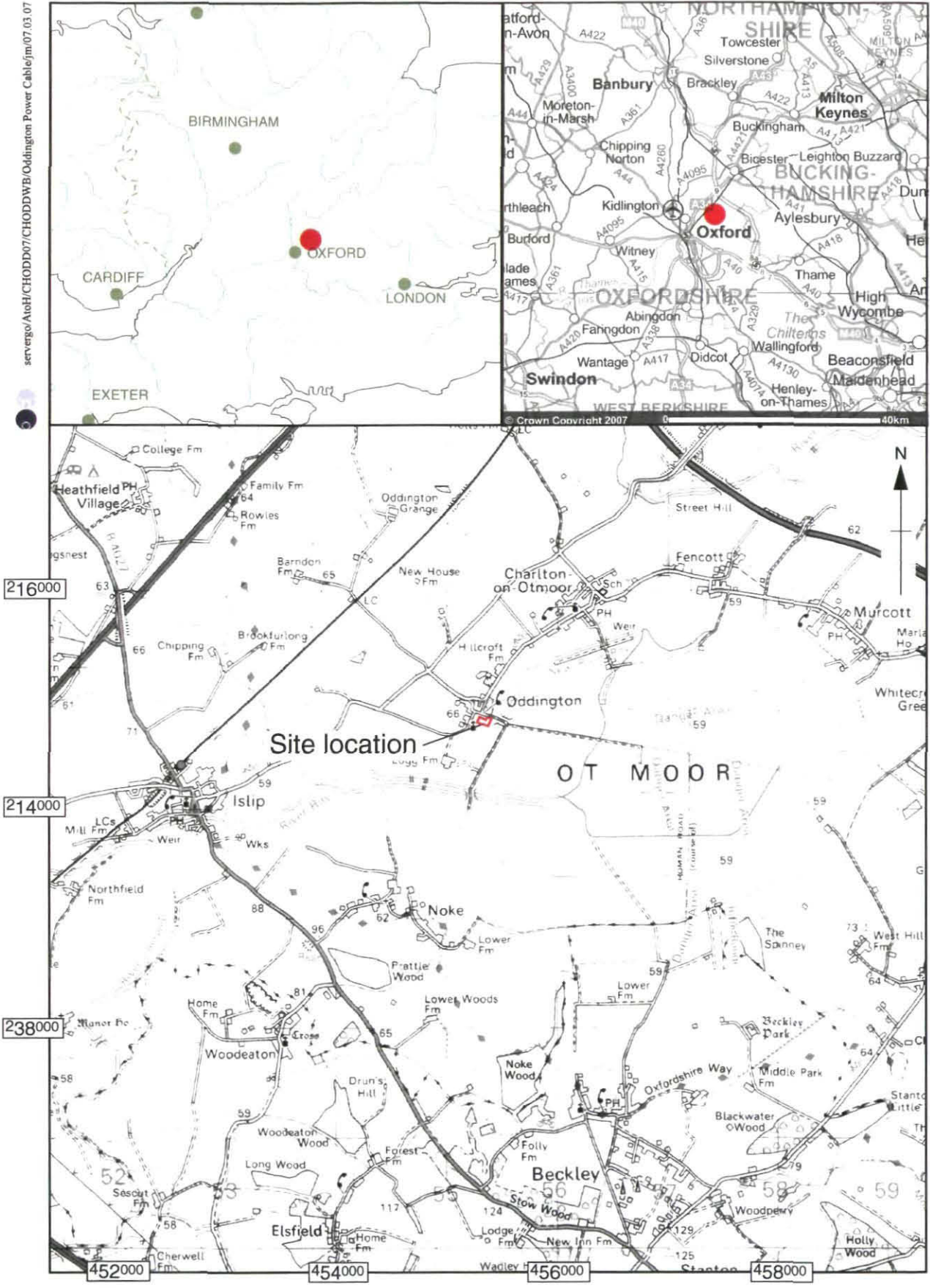
Type of watching brief: Machine excavation of an electric cable trench

Date and duration of project: 31st May to 2nd June 2007, 3 days

Area of site: 4 hectares

Summary of results: The watching brief revealed 2 ditches running across the course of the trench. One of these was a probable medieval burgage plot boundary, while the second lower ditch running along the alignment of the upper terrace was a probable Saxon enclosure ditch. A second lower terrace was of probable geological origin, marking the boundary between the combrash and alluvial deposits.

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



Reproduced from the Landranger 1:50,000 scale by permission of the Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright 1997. All rights reserved. Licence No. AL 10005569

Figure 1: Site location

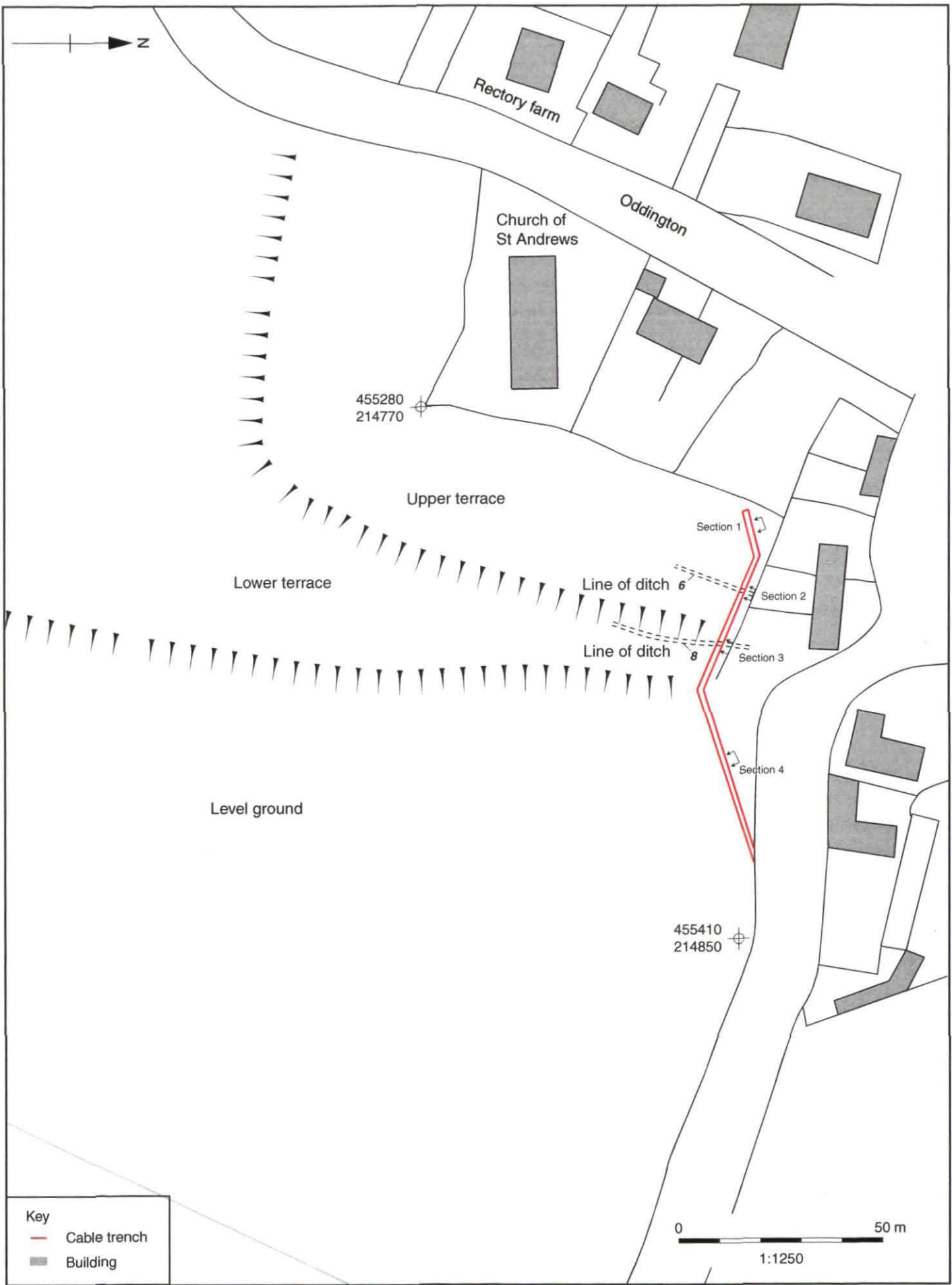
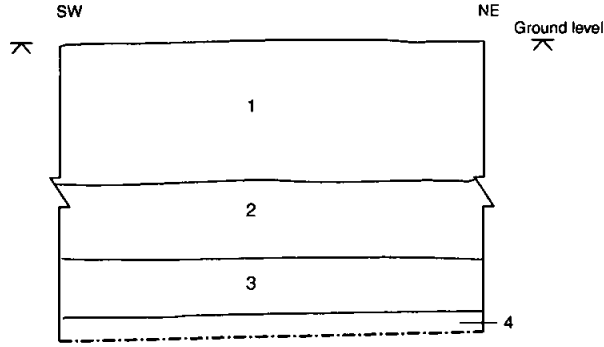


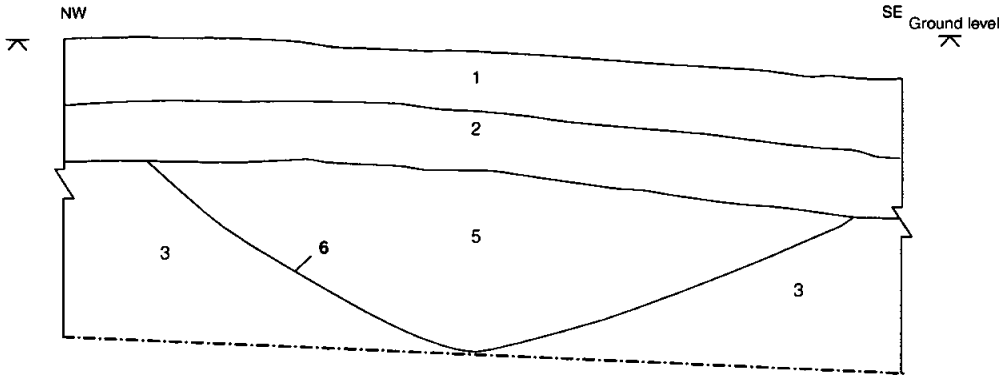
Figure 2: Site plan



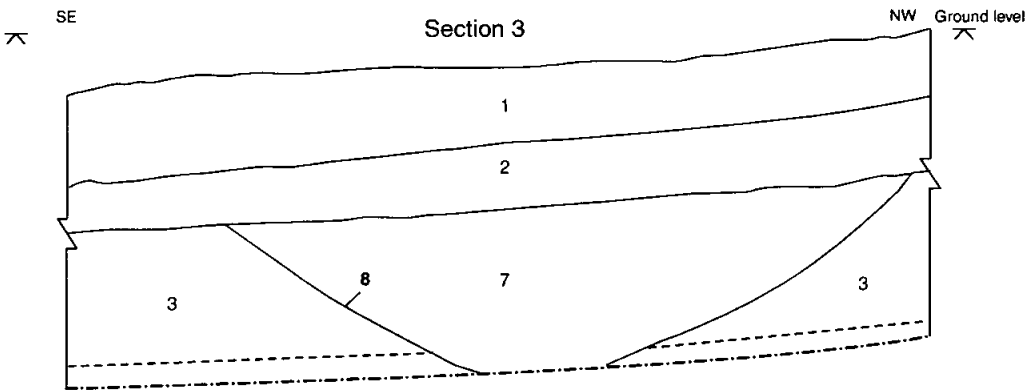
Section 1



Section 2



Section 3



Section 4

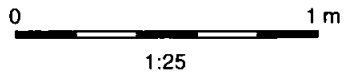
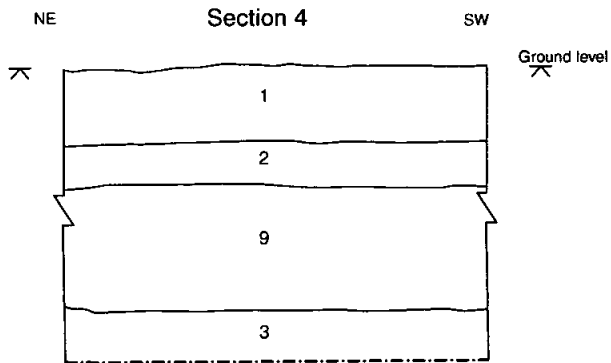


Figure 3 : Sections



Oxford Archaeology

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: (0044) 01865 263800
f: (0044) 01865 793496
e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk



Oxford Archaeology North

Storey Institute
Meeting House Lane
Lancaster LA1 1TF

t: (0044) 01524 541000
f: (0044) 01524 848606
e: lancinfo@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk



Director: David Jennings, BA MIFA FSA

Oxford Archaeological Unit is a
Private Limited Company, N^o: 1618597
and a Registered Charity, N^o: 285627

Registered Office:

Oxford Archaeological Unit
Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES