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Archaeological Evaluation Report



Oxford Archaeology

April 2005

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Signed.....



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SUMMARY

Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at Telford Road, Bicester, Oxfordshire on behalf of Coleman Hicks Partnerships. A total of 10 trenches were excavated. The evaluation revealed no evidence of archaeological remains.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In April 2005 OA carried out a field evaluation at Telford Road Bicester on behalf of Coleman Hicks Partnerships in respect of a planning application for the erection of 4 buildings for B2 use, associated new and modified parking, hardstanding and cycle storage (Planning Ref: 05/00123/F).

1.1.2 Due to the potential for disturbance of below ground archaeological deposits an archaeological evaluation has been required to assess the presence, location and preservation of any archaeological deposits. This is in line with PPG 16 and Cherwell District Local Plan. A Written Scheme of Investigation was prepared by OA and approved by Oxfordshire's County Archaeological Services (OCAS) Planning Archaeologist, Hannah Fluck (OA 2005).

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site is located on the east side of Bicester to the south of the Telford Road industrial area, between Telford Road and the railway line (NGR: SP 598 229). The site lies at approximately 68 m above OD. The underlying geology is Oxford Clay although it is close to a boundary with cornbrash (BGS). The site is currently occupied by warehouses directly adjacent to the north of the development area.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The development lies within an area of archaeological potential, although little is known archaeologically about the site itself. To the north of the proposed site, between Manston Close and Telford Road is an area of prehistoric ring ditches, now mostly destroyed. To the south of the site are several areas of considerable archaeological interest.

1.3.2 To the south west, in the area of the Bicester Fields farm development, an archaeological evaluation and subsequent excavation revealed a middle to late Iron Age enclosed settlement and some indication of limited agricultural use of the landscape during the Roman period.

1.3.3 South from the proposed site, between Charbridge Lane, Gavray Drive and the railway line, archaeological evaluation revealed a possible Romano-British farmstead with enclosures and associated field systems. More recently archaeological excavation immediately north of the railway line and south of Charbridge Way has revealed further evidence of Roman activity in the area, including extensive field systems, a series of enclosures and a quantity of Roman pottery. The roman deposits

appear to extend in all directions and although no buildings have yet been observed in the area, there is definitely potential for such structures and associated deposits (OCAS 2005).

- 1.3.4 The proximity of the brook to the east of the site, the clay geology and the findings of the nearby excavation suggest that it is possible that waterlogged deposits may be present within the site.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

- 2.1.1 To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the proposal area.
- 2.1.2 To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present.
- 2.1.3 To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features. Particular attention shall be given to the possibility of waterlogged deposits.
- 2.1.4 To make available the results of the investigation.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork

- 3.1.1 The brief stated that a c 4% sample of the proposal area be archaeologically sampled. This is equivalent to 270 linear metres of trenching at 1.5 m wide. The trenches were aimed at the main areas of impact and were located to minimise the disruption to services.
- 3.1.2 Initial trench locations had to be altered due to immovable obstacles and concrete hardstanding. All changes to the trench locations were agreed with the monitor and the final layout is shown in Figure 2.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

- 3.2.1 The trenches were excavated to the top of the 'natural' in the absence of any significant archaeological level. Where present, exposed features and deposits were sampled in order to sufficiently characterise them and establish their archaeological potential.
- 3.2.2 All features and deposits were issued with unique context numbers, and context recording was in accordance with the established OA Field Manual, (OAU 1992) and IFA Guidance (IFA 1999). Colour transparency and black-and-white negative photographs were taken of all features.
- 3.2.3 The stratigraphy of the trenches was recorded even where no archaeological deposits were identified.
- 3.2.4 Spoil heaps were monitored to allow analysis of the spatial distribution of artefacts.

3.2.5 A project supervisor and an archaeologist, under the supervision of a project manager undertook the fieldwork.

3.2.6 Monitoring of the evaluation was undertaken by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services.

3.3 Finds

3.3.1 Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation and generally bagged by context.

4 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

4.1 Description of deposits

Trenches 1, 2, and 3

4.1.1 A similar stratigraphic sequence was exposed in trenches 1, 2 and 3 (see sample sections Trench 2, Fig. 3). All three trenches were excavated onto clean mixed clays and gravel natural (201) at c 1.05 m below ground level, over which lay a 0.2 m minimum thick layer, of firm orangey grey alluvial silt (203). Above this was a layer of mid greyish brown subsoil (202) overlain by a buried topsoil (201) of varying thickness. Each trench was capped by a layer ranging between 0.3 to 0.8 m thick of redeposited topsoil and modern debris used as a levelling layer (200). No archaeological features were recorded in the bases of these trenches.

Trenches 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10

4.1.2 Trenches 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 also had very similar stratigraphic sequences and are described together (see Figs 3, 4, 5, and 6).

4.1.3 All were excavated down to mixed clay and gravel natural at approximately 1.2 m depth. The top of this material appeared to be more disturbed than that of the trenches described above in 4.1.1. A number of these disturbances were investigated, for example 704 (Fig. 4), 804 (Fig. 5), 903 and 905 (Fig. 6), but due to their irregular shape and shallow nature were assigned to natural factors such as water channels and root disturbance. Fills from these features, 803 and 906 produced sherds of nineteenth to twentieth century pottery. These features and the natural were sealed by a patchy subsoil that was heavily disturbed in place; for example 907 in Trench 9 and 801 in Trench 8 were contaminated with large fragments of reinforced concrete, possibly dumped to consolidate the marshy ground in this area. This was generally overlain by a humic buried topsoil, its organic nature possibly indicating that it corresponds to the marshy ground to the south and west of the site. In trenches 4 to 9 this soil horizon was overlain by modern made ground for the present car park.

4.1.4 In Trench 10 a levelling layer (1001) of mixed clay and rubble was visible beneath the modern made ground. The buried topsoil and subsoil were very thin in this trench and disappeared completely towards the north-east possibly due to truncation.

4.2 Finds

- 4.2.1 Archaeological finds recovered from the site consisted of sherds of nineteenth and twentieth century pottery.
- 4.2.2 No deposits were identified that warranted environmental sampling.

5 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 Overall interpretation

- 5.1.1 Conditions in the field were dry. There was no intrusion by modern features such as services and land drains. In the area of Trenches 8 and 9 however there was an indication that some disturbance may have occurred, evidenced by a layer contaminated with reinforced concrete immediately above the natural.
- 5.1.2 The evaluation results show the absence of any archaeological evidence in the area of the proposed development. It may be assumed that the development area is not within the area of Prehistoric and Roman activity discussed above (1.3). It may be that the land was low lying and waterlogged and therefore has always been at some distance from any settlement.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench	Cxct No	Type	Width (m)	Thick (m)	Comment	Finds	No/ wt	Date
001								
	100	Layer		0.25-0.3	Modern levelling layer	-		
	101	Layer		0.35	Buried topsoil	-		
	102	Layer		0.3	Subsoil	-		
	103	Layer		0.2-0.3	Alluvium	-		
	104	Layer		-	Natural clays and gravel	-		
002								
	200	Layer		0.4-0.5	Modern levelling layer	-		
	201	Layer		0.1	Buried topsoil	-		
	202	Layer		0.2	Subsoil	-		
	203	Layer		0.3	Alluvium	-		
	204	Layer		-	Natural clays and gravel	-		
003								
	300	Layer		0.4-0.8	Modern levelling layer	-		
	301	Layer		0.3	Buried topsoil	-		
	302	Layer		0.3	Subsoil	Glass		Modern
	303	Layer		0.2	Alluvium	Pot		Modern
	304	Layer		-	Natural clays and gravel	-		
004								
	400	Layer		-	Natural clays and gravel	-		
	401	Layer		0.3-0.4	Subsoil	-		
	402	Layer		0.3-0.4	Buried topsoil	-		
	403	Layer		0.4	Modern made ground	-		
005								
	500	Layer		0.4	Modern made ground	-		
	501	Layer		0.35	Buried topsoil	-		
	502	Layer		0.25	Subsoil	-		
	504	Layer		-	Natural clays and gravel	-		

Trench	Ctxt No	Type	Width (m)	Thick. (m)	Comment	Finds	No./wt	Date
006								
	600	Layer		0.6-0.7	Modern made ground	-		
	601	Layer		0.2	Buried topsoil	-		
	602	Layer		0.1-0.2	Subsoil	-		
	603	Layer			Natural clays and gravel	-		
007								
	700	Layer		0.5-0.7	Modern made ground	-		
	701	Layer		0.2-0.3	Buried topsoil	-		
	702	Layer		0.2	Subsoil			
	703	Layer		-	Natural clays and gravel	-		
	704	Cut	1.5		Natural channel	-		
	705	Fill		0.2	Fill of (704)	-		
008								
	800	Layer		0.4	Modern made ground	-		
	801	Layer		0.5	Alluvial subsoil	Pot		Modern
	802	Layer		0.1	Natural clays and gravel	-		
	803	Fill			Fill of (804)	Pot		Modern
	804	Cut		0.2-0.3	Root disturbance	-		
	805	Layer		-	Buried topsoil	-		
009								
	900	Layer		0.4-0.5	Modern made ground	-		
	901	Layer		0.5	Disturbed buried topsoil	-		
	902	Layer			Natural clays and gravel	-		
	903	Cut	0.5		Natural depression	-		
	904	Fill		0.1	Fill of (903)			
	905	Cut	1.0		Possible channel			
	906	Fill		0.2	Fill of (905)	Pot		Modern
	907	Layer		0.3	Disturbed subsoil	-		
010								
	1000	Layer		0.4-0.5	Modern made ground	-		

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Ctct No</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Thick. (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>No./wt</i>	<i>Date</i>
	1001	Layer		0.5-0.9	Levelling layer	-		
	1002	Layer		0.1	Buried topsoil	-		
	1003	Layer		0.2	Subsoil	-		
	1004	Layer		-	Natural clays and gravel	-		

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

BGS, Geological Survey of England and Wales sheet 201

IFA, 1999 *Standard and Guidance for archaeological evaluations*

OAU, 1992 Fieldwork Manual (1st edition, August 1992 ed. D Wilkinson)

OA, 2005 Telford Road, Bicester, Oxfordshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation. Prepared by OA for Coleman Hicks Partnership

OCAS, 2005 Land east of CCH Editions and W of railway line, Telford Road, Bicester (05/00123/F): Design Brief for Archaeological Evaluation

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Telford Road, Bicester, Oxfordshire

Site code: BITER 05

Grid reference: SP 598 229

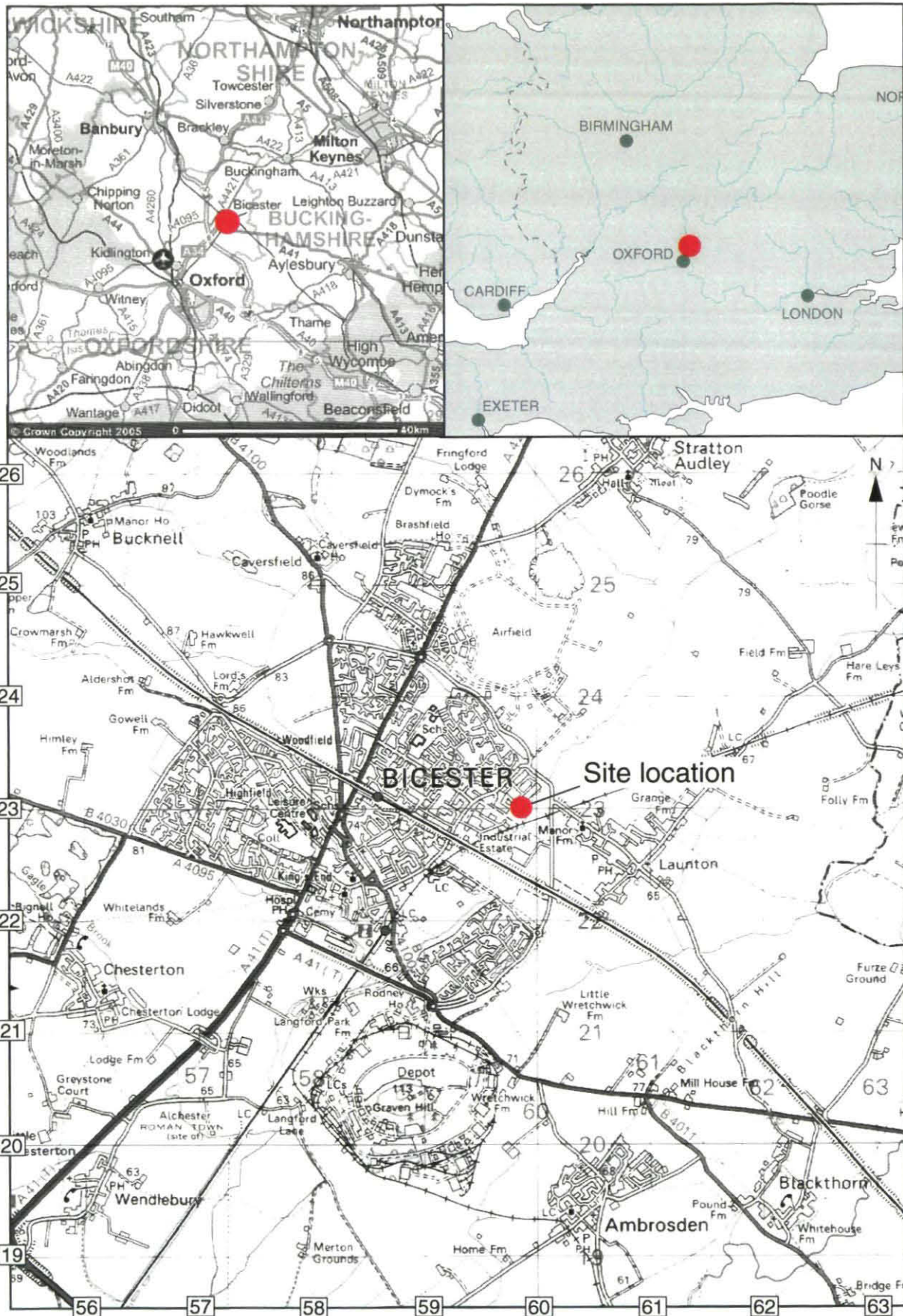
Type of evaluation: Ten trenches of varying length 10m-30m

Date and duration of project: 11-14 April, 4 days

Area of site: 1.2 ha

Summary of results: No archaeological features uncovered.

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, under the following accession number: OXCMS: 2005.42



Scale 1:50,000

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Figure 1: Site location



Figure 2: Trench location plan for Telford Road, Bicester

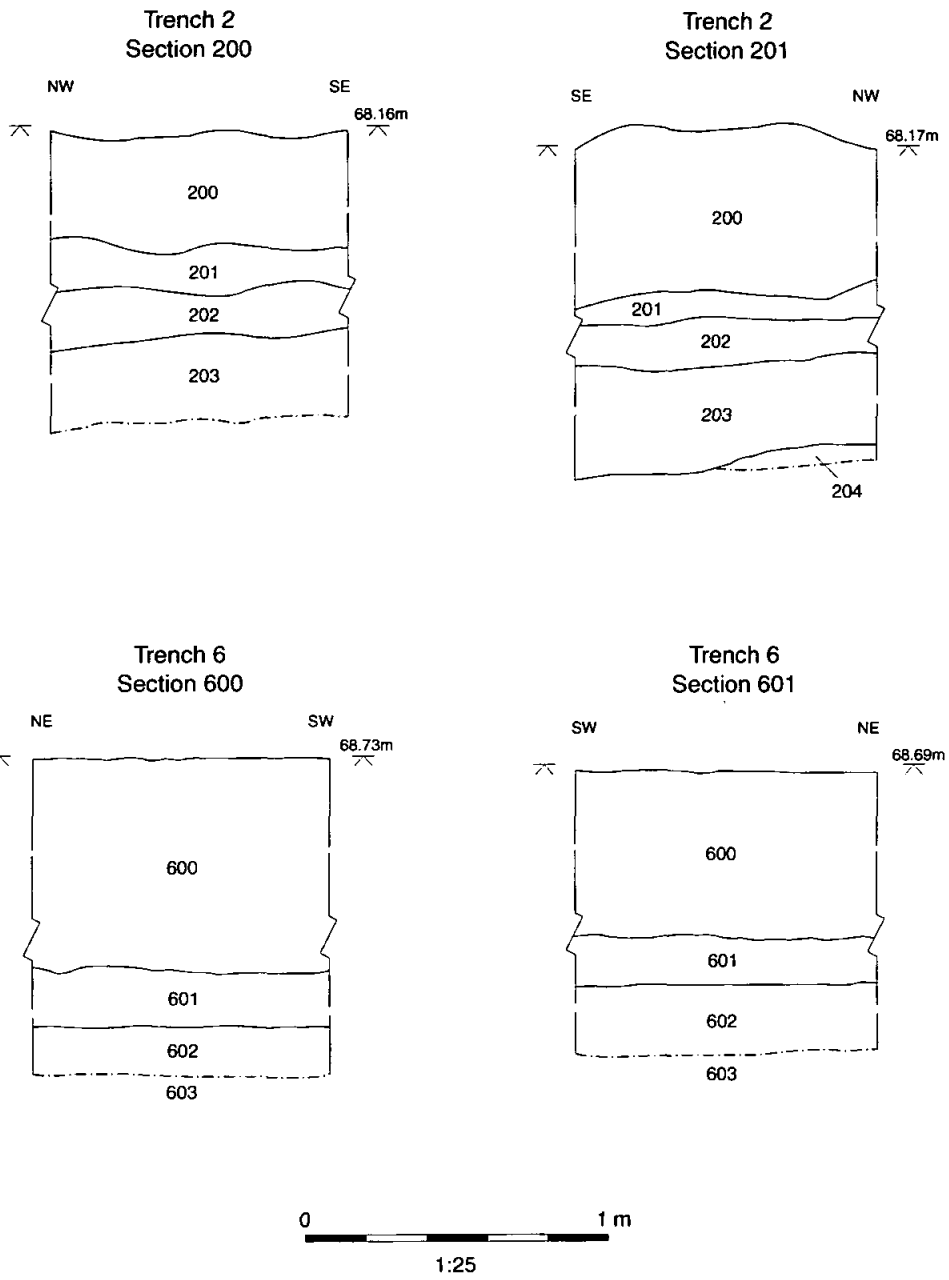


Figure 3: Trenches 2 and 6, sections

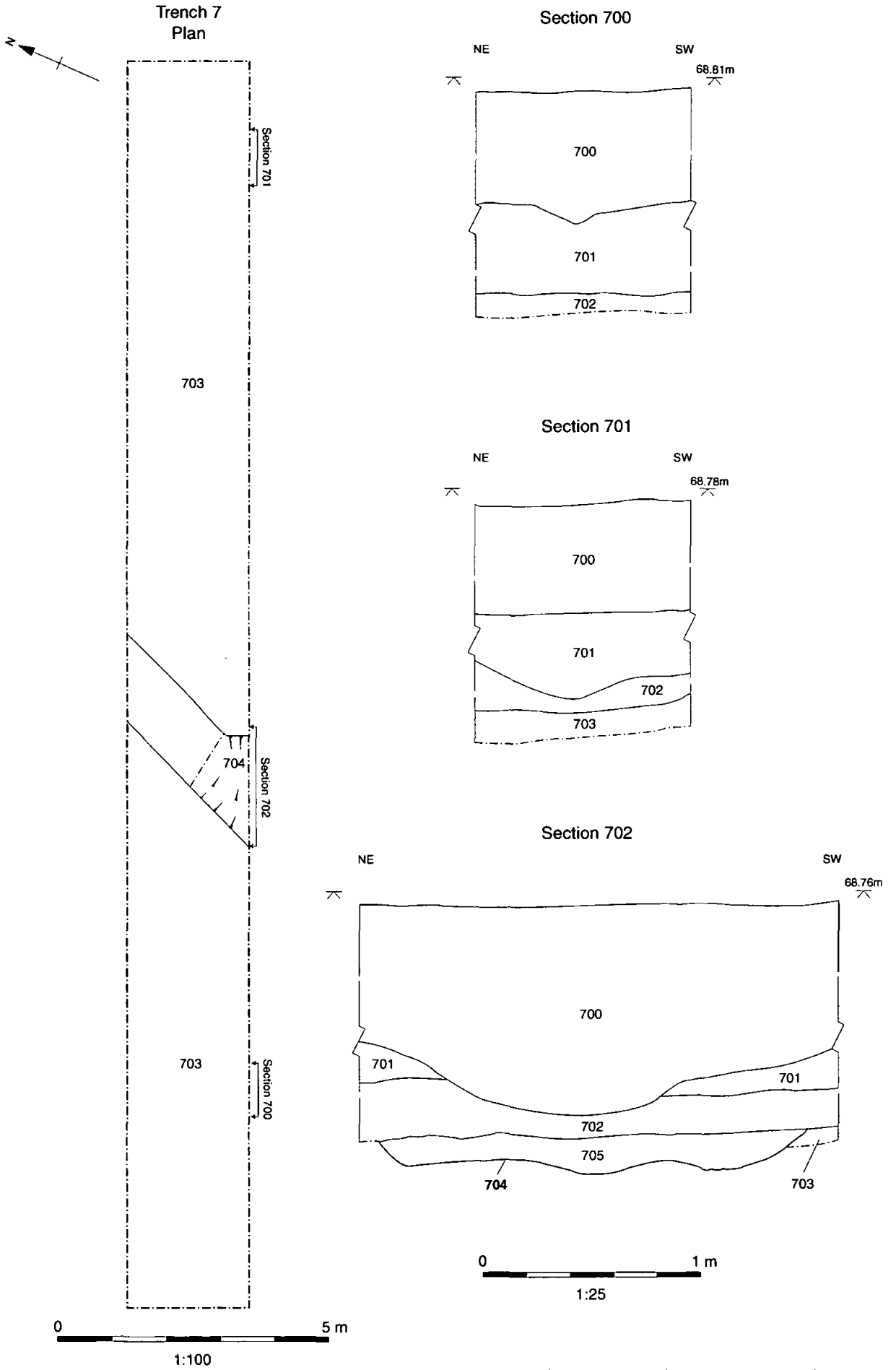


Figure 4: Trench 7, plan and sections

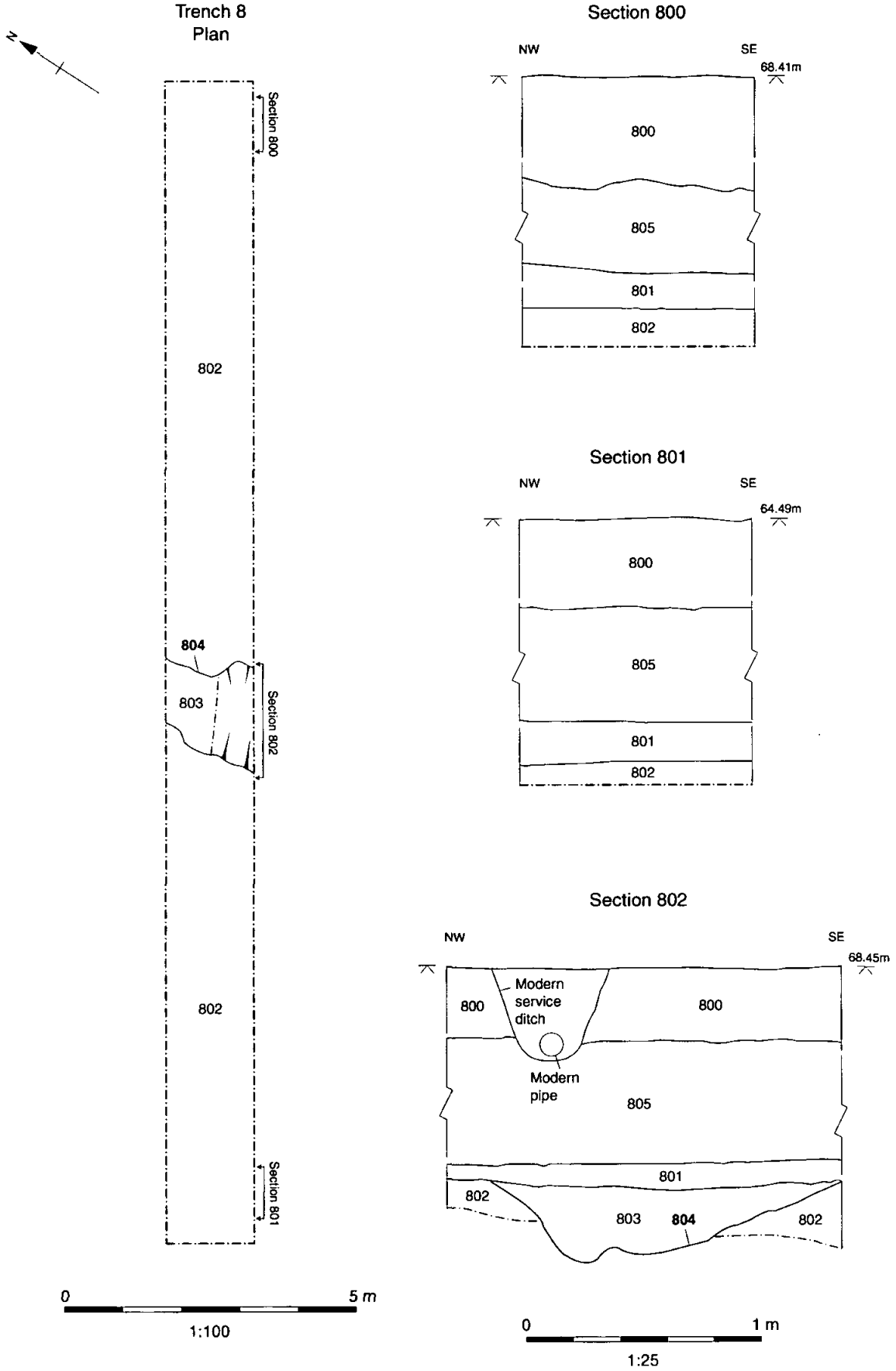


Figure 5: Trench 8, plan and sections

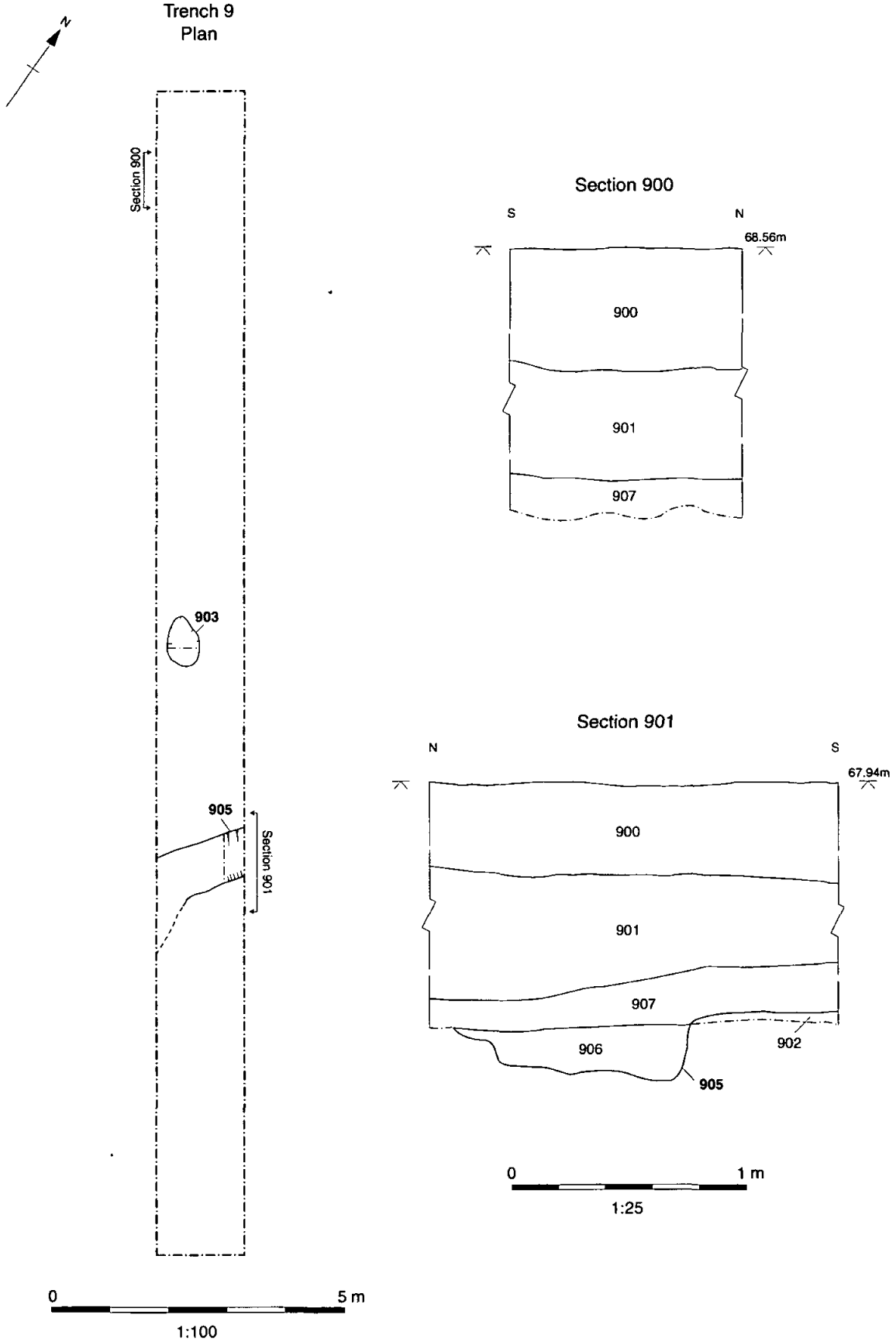


Figure 6: Trench 9, plan and sections



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