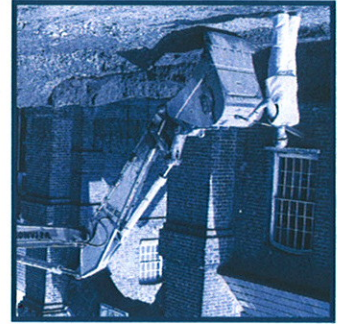


Heath Farm 55 North Street Fritwell Oxfordshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report



February 2007

Client: Luke Annaly

Issue No: 1
OA Job No: 3245
Planning Ref No: 04/00667/F
NGR: SP 523 293

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

Between June 2006 and February 2007, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Heath Farm, 55 North Street, Fritwell, Oxfordshire (NGR: SP 523 293). The work was commissioned by Luke Annaly in respect of a planning application for the conversion of existing barns to form dwellings and the conversion of an existing outbuilding to form guest accommodation to the existing farmhouse. The watching brief revealed a possible foundation plinth which may relate to the medieval settlement of Fritwell and the presence of ridge and furrow. No other archaeology was observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 Between June 2006 and February 2007, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Heath Farm, 55 North Street, Fritwell, Oxfordshire (NGR: SP 523 293). The work was commissioned by Luke Annaly in respect of a planning application for the conversion of existing barns to form dwellings and the conversion of an existing outbuilding to form guest accommodation to the existing farmhouse (Planning Application No. 04/00667/F).

1.1.2 A project brief was set by Richard Gram, the Planning Archaeologist with Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services, requiring that an archaeological watching brief be maintained during any intrusive groundworks within the development area (OCCAS 2006).

1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA 2006).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 The village of Fritwell is situated approximately 7 km north-west of Bicester with the site located of the south-west outskirts of the village, 60 m south-west of the church (Fig. 1). The development area is on level ground lying at approximately 125 m OD and comprises open pasture and redundant farm buildings. The underlying geology is clay over white limestone formations of the Great Oolite Group (British Geological Survey sheet no. 218).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the project (OA, 2006) and is reproduced below.

1.3.2 The proposal site lies within an area of archaeological interest. Fritwell village was composed of two distinct settlements between 1086 and the Middle Ages, each dependant on one of the two manorial estates (Ormond Manor and FitzObern

Manor). This has resulted in the village being composed of two distinct parts, the western part on the Somerton road and the southern part on the Middleton road. The latter, in the former Ormond Manor, was perhaps the original settlement. The church, which dates from the 12th century, was built between the two settlements. Its dedication to St Olave, the early 11th century king of Norway suggest that there may have been Danish influence before the conquest. To the north and west of the development area concentrations of medieval pottery and have been recovered during fieldwalking, and earthworks relating to the medieval settlement at Fritwell are visible in the surrounding fields.

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 deposits or features 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 watching brief was conducted as a series of site visits during groundworks likely to intrude upon potential archaeological deposits. These works included the stripping for an access road, underpinning of the buildings and the excavation of service trenches.
- 2.2.2 All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:100 (Fig. 2) and where recorded sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All features and excavated areas were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. 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

Access Road

- 3.1.1 On the northern extent of the development area, the underlying natural, a dark yellow-brown clay silt containing many small fragments of weathered limestone (3) was encountered at a depth of between 0.25 m and 0.35 m below ground level (Fig. 3, Section 1). At the north-western edge of the easement this was cut by a shallow, 0.8 m wide, south-west to north-east aligned feature (5), which ran in from the southern bank for a length of 5 m (Fig. 2). This was filled by a closely packed single layer of medium sized limestone cobbles, some displaying signs of burning (4). No dating

evidence was recovered from this feature and it has been tentatively interpreted as a possible foundation plinth.

3.1.2 This was sealed by a 0.15 m deep layer of red-brown clay silt (2), a layer probably representing an earlier ploughsoil. This was overlaid by a 0.15 m deep layer of very dark grey-brown clay loam (1), the present day topsoil and turf.

3.1.3 At the eastern extent of the road easement the excavations passed between two standing buildings and the excavations extended to 0.8 m below the original ground level (Fig. 3, Sections 2 and 3).

3.1.4 The natural dark yellow-brown clay silt (3) was encountered at a depth of 0.5 m below ground level. The truncated remains of a clay pipe field drain could be seen within this deposit. This was overlaid by a 0.3 m deep layer of grey-brown silt clay, a probable continuation of the subsoil (2). Overlying this was a 0.2 m deep layer of dark grey-brown clay loam, a continuation of layer (1). Within the area of the buildings this layer contained many fragments of limestone, possibly construction debris from the buildings.

Building Underpinning

3.1.5 As part of the conversion of the redundant farm buildings a programme of underpinning was undertaken.

3.1.6 These works consisted of the excavation of a series of linked 1m square excavations dug directly under the walls of the buildings. The stratigraphy exposed within these excavations was broadly similar and a sample section and description can be applied throughout.

3.1.7 The underlying natural, a dark yellow-brown clay silt (8) becoming much lighter with depth, was encountered at a depth of 0.5 m below the current ground level (Fig. 3, Section 4). This contained many small pieces of weathered limestone and is a continuation of layer 3. Overlying this was a 0.2 m deep layer of dark orange brown silt clay (7). This may represent a subsoil or possibly an earlier ploughsoil and is similar to, and a possible continuation of layer 2. This was sealed by a 0.3 m deep layer of dark grey-brown clay silt (6), which contained many brick and stone fragments and represents the old farm yard surface.

Service Trenching

3.1.8 This comprised the insertion of new sewer pipes within the area of the access road and to the north of the farm buildings. The stratigraphy observed was similar to that exposed within the easement for the access road with the trenching continuing into the underlying natural.

3.2 Finds

3.2.1 Fragments of brick and tile, glazed earthenware and glass were recovered from layer (1) all suggesting a 18th/19th century date.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

3.3.1 No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 The presence of the possible foundation plinth (4) suggests that the earthworks relating to the medieval settlement of Fritwell may extend within the north-western extent of the development. The absence of any other similar archaeology suggests that it may mark the south-western extent of the settlement. The presence of two distinct layers of worked soil (layers 1 and 2) indicate that the area has been under cultivation and there are flattened remnants of ridge and furrow working visible to the east of the development area which suggest that the development area would also have been under ridge and furrow working.

4.1.2 There was no evidence observed for features associated with St Olave's church into the development and no other archaeology than that previously mentioned was observed during the course of the watching brief.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Depth	Width	Comments	Finds	Date
1	Layer	0.18 m	-	Topsoil and turf; old plough soil	Pottery, Brick, Glass	C19th
2	Layer	0.12 m	-	Subsoil, probable earlier plough soil	-	-
3	Layer	> 0.1 m	-	Top of weathered natural	-	-
4	Structure	0.1 m	0.8 m	Possible foundation plinth ?	-	-
5	Cut	0.1 m	0.8 m	Shallow feature containing structure 4	-	-
6	Layer	0.2 m	-	Old farmyard surface, topsoil mixed with construction debris	Brick, tile	C19th
7	Layer	0.3 m	-	Weathered natural	-	-
8	Layer	> 0.5 m	-	Natural clay	-	-

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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

OA, 2006 *Heath Farm, Fritwell, Bicester, Oxfordshire:- Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

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

OCAS, 2006 *Heath Farm, Fritwell, Bicester, Design Brief for Archaeological Watching Brief*

VCH, 1959 *A History of the County of Oxford, Volume 6*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Heath Farm, 55 North Street, Fritwell, Bicester, Oxfordshire

Site code: FRITHF 06

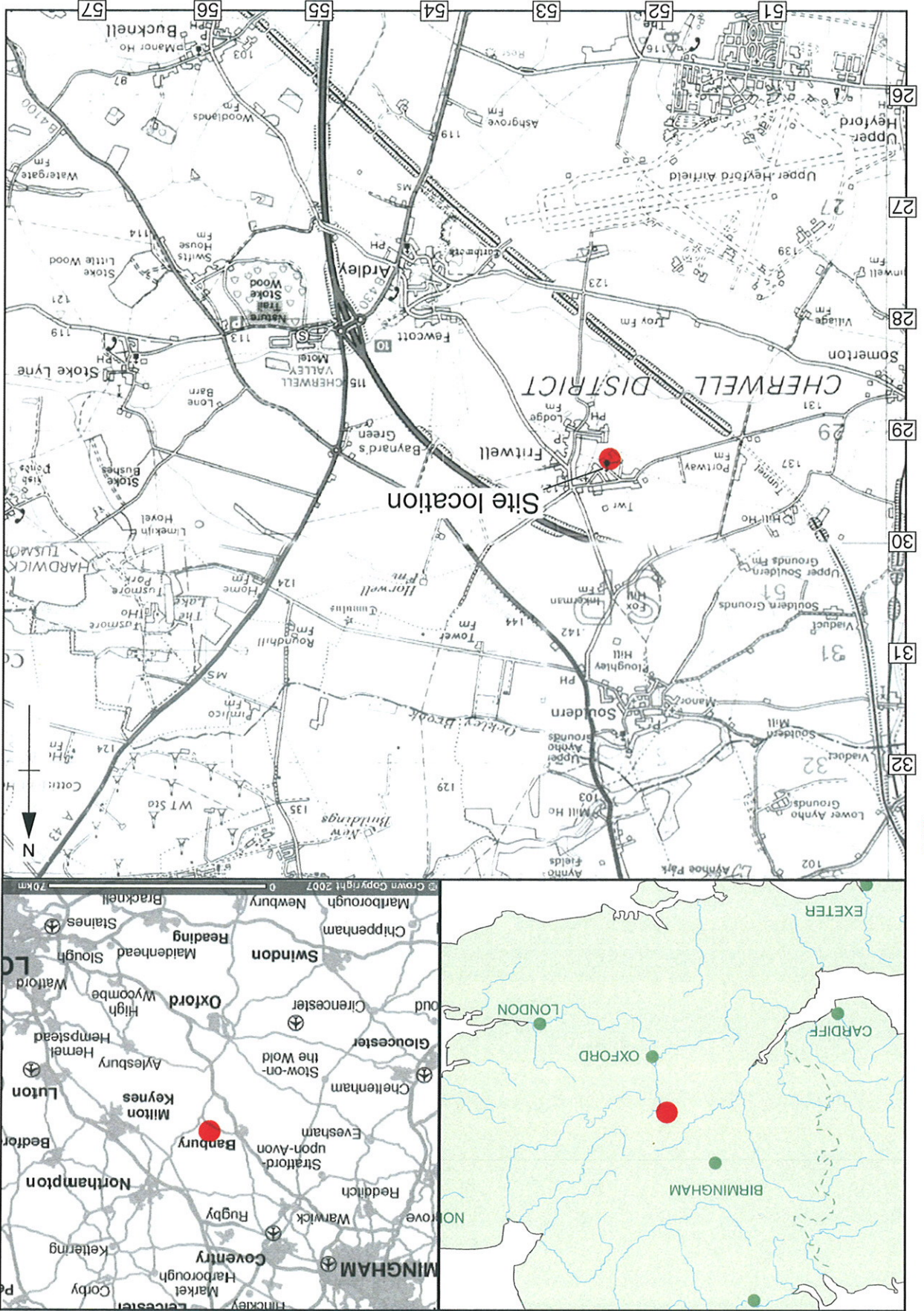
Grid reference: SP 523 293

Type of watching brief: Machine excavation of easement for an access road, machine excavation of service trenches and hand excavation of underpinning pits.

Date and duration of project: 6th June 2006 to 13th February 2007, 5 site visits.
Area of site: 1650 m²

Summary of results: The watching brief observed a possible foundation plinth that may relate to the medieval settlement of Fritwell and evidence for ridge and furrow working. No other archaeology was observed.

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:2006.75



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Figure 1: Site location

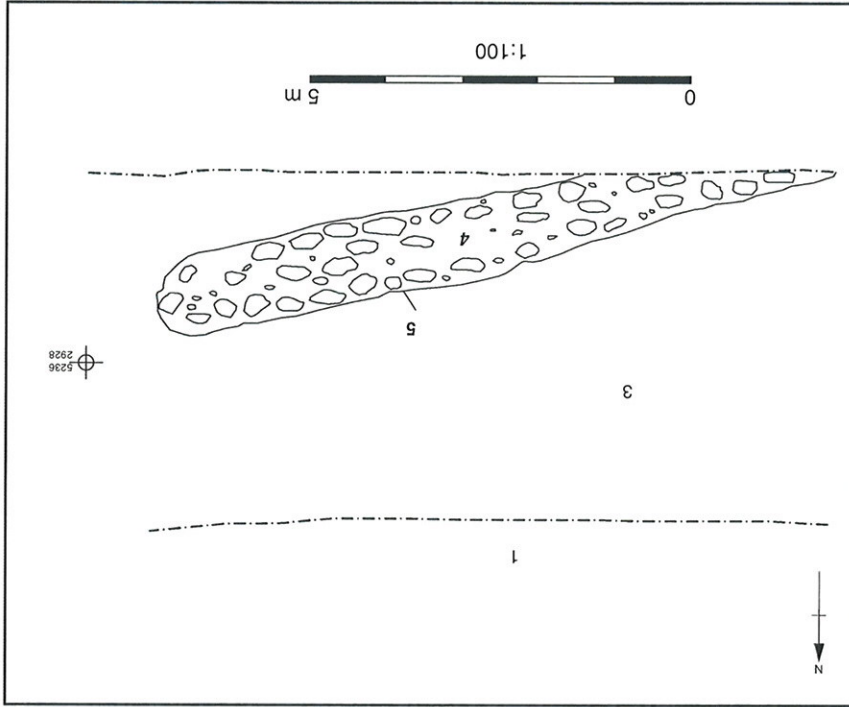
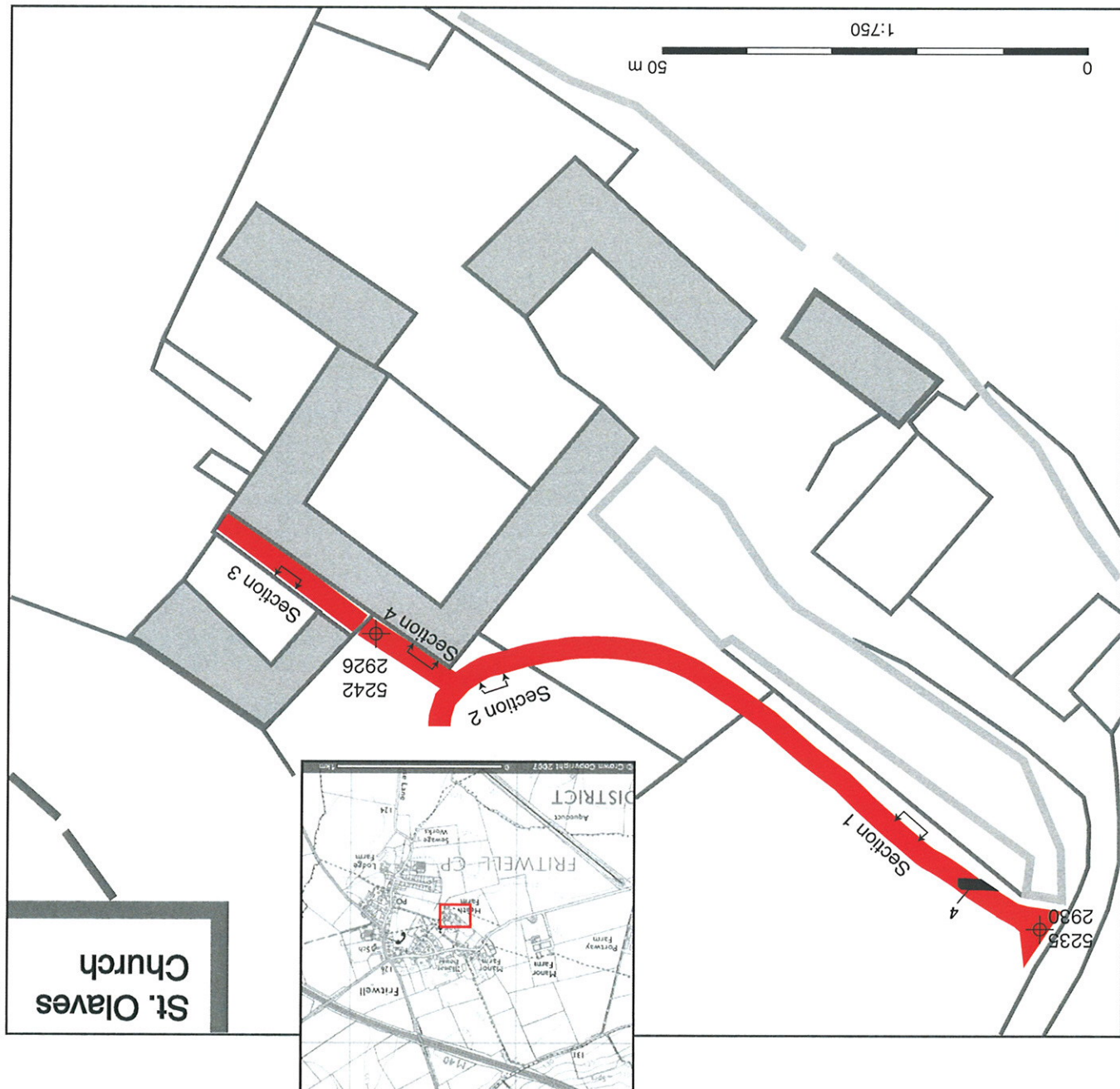


Figure 2: Site plan and detail of Feature 4

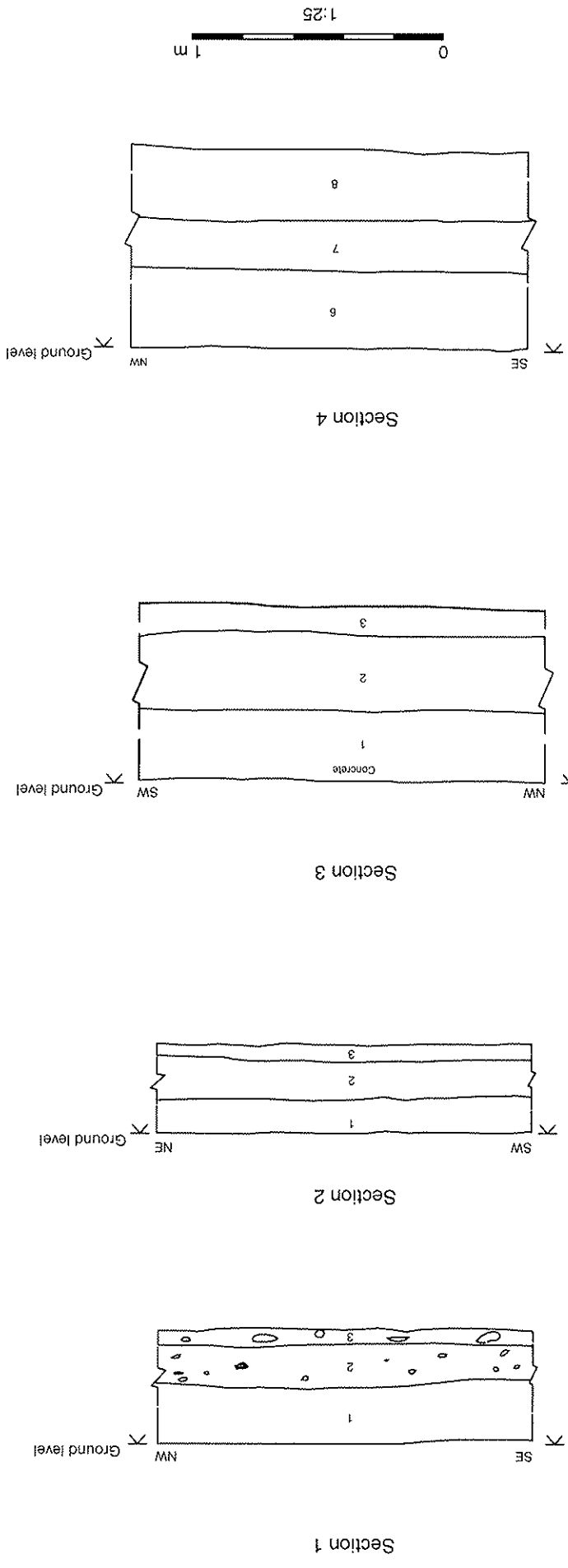


Figure 3: Sections 1-4

Key to Oxford Archaeology plans and sections

Section line and number	
Section through feature not illustrated with section drawing	
Limit of excavation	
Sondage / Interior limit of excavation	
Fill line and number	
Cut line and number	
Structure number	
Unclear boundary	
Hachures indicate inclination of slope inside excavated feature	
Levels	
Grid point	
Continuation line (trench edge continues)	
Charcoal	
Clay	
Clay nodule	
Stones	
Ceramic building material	
Bone	
Pot	



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