

Land to the Rear of
74 Leicester Road
Sharnford
Leicestershire



Archaeological Evaluation Report



Oxford Archaeology

August 2004

**Client: John Samuels
Archaeological Consultants**

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**Land to the Rear of 74 Leicester Road,
Sharnford, Leicestershire**

NGR: SP 4830 9194

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SUMMARY

On the 2nd August 2004, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation on land to the rear of 74 Leicester Road, Sharnford, Leicestershire (NGR: SP 48309194) on behalf of John Samuels Archaeological Consultants (JSAC). The evaluation revealed extensive deposits of post-medieval garden soils but no evidence of any earlier archaeological activity.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 On the 2nd August 2004 OA carried out a field evaluation on land to the rear of 74 Leicester Road, Sharnford, Leicestershire (NGR: SP 4830 9194) (Fig.1) on behalf of John Samuels Archaeological Consultants (JSAC). This was in respect of a planning application for the erection of a single detached dwelling unit (Planning Application No. 02/0175/1). A brief was set by the Senior Planning Archaeologist for Leicestershire County Council and an approved Written Scheme of Investigation was produced by JSAC.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 The development site is situated on level ground at the crest of a north-south running ridge within the central core of the village of Sharnford. The site is bounded to the east, west and south by residential properties and to the north by Chapel Lane. The site occupies an area of 0.021 hectares at a height of approximately 91 m OD. The underlying geology is boulder clay.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological background was compiled by JSAC in their specification (JSAC 2004), the results of which are presented below. The site itself has produced no significant archaeological evidence.

1.3.2 The Leicestershire Sites and Monuments Record indicate that the application area lies in a zone of high archaeological potential and importance.

1.3.3 The name Sharnford is from the Anglo-Saxon "*Scarn*", meaning "division by ford" (<http://www.sapcote.org.uk/village.htm>), although Ekwall indicates that the name suggests the site of a "Muddy Ford". Ekwall also records that the name Sharnford, was first mentioned in 1002 AD as *Scearnford* (Ekwall 1991).

1.3.4 The village of Sharnford is indicated, therefore as being present during the Anglo-Saxon period, although its exact date of establishment is not known. This is confirmed by the village's inclusion within at least two Anglo-Saxon charters of a similar date. Sawyer indicates that the village is recorded within the will of Wulfric, and within the granting of lands from King Aethelred to Burton Abbey dated 1002 AD and 1004 AD respectively (Sawyer 1968).

- 1.3.5 The Domesday return for Leicestershire (1086 AD) indicates that the village of Sharnford was present at the start of the medieval period. Sharnford is recorded twice within this return, with “Robert holding 1 c. of land within Sharnford from the Bishop”, this being the Bishop of Lincoln. The first entry also indicates that the land has the possibility of one plough, it had two holders and was worth 4s (Morgan 1979). The second entry within the Domesday return indicates that of the King’s Alms (Lands), “Aelfric the priest holds 2½ c. of land in Wigston (Parva) from the King, which belongs to Sharnford”. The entry also indicates that Aelfric has 1 plough, and that five small holders have another, there also existed 4 acres of meadow, the entire value was placed at 20s (Morgan 1979).
- 1.3.6 The site is within the medieval and post-medieval historic core of Sharnford (SMR 49SE BY), between the medieval street frontages of Chapel Lane to the north and Leicester Road to the south.
- 1.3.7 The proposed development area is also situated close to the 15th century St. Helen’s Church (to the south-east of the site), which has a peal of 6 bells. The church was restored in 1985 after fire severely damaged the chancel (SMR 49SE BC).
- 1.3.8 Cartographic evidence, dated 1880 AD, suggests that the proposed development area was unoccupied during the industrial period, although the presence of features within the proposed development site prior to this time cannot be corroborated.
- 1.3.9 It was previously anticipated that given the village’s inclusion within at least two Anglo-Saxon charters, the early place name evidence, the location of the site within the historic core of the village, and within close proximity to the 15th century church, that there would be a high potential for medieval and post-medieval remains to exist within the site. However, the results of the evaluation have proved that there are no medieval remains relating to this early period, and limited post-medieval evidence in the form of a possible garden feature.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

- 2.1.1 To establish the presence or absence, extent, nature and date of any archaeological remains within the proposed development area in order to inform any necessary and/or appropriate planning decisions, to be taken by the Senior Planning Archaeologist.
- 2.1.2 Where remains are of sufficient importance, to liaise with the planning archaeologist to formulate a strategy designed to determine the best method for mitigation.
- 2.1.3 To conform to the requirements of Planning Policy Guidance: Archaeology and Planning (DoE 1990) (PPG 16).
- 2.1.4 To make available the results of the investigation.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork

3.1.1 The evaluation consisted of one trench measuring 20 m long by 1.5 m wide (Fig.2). The trench was originally planned to run down the centre of the site, this however would have not have left enough space to stockpile the spoil safely on either side of the trench, therefore the trench was moved 2 m to the west in order to provide room for the spoil heap on the eastern side of the trench.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

3.2.1 The overburden was removed under close archaeological supervision using a mechanical excavator (JCB) fitted with a 1.5 m wide toothless ditching bucket. The trench was then cleaned by hand and the revealed feature was 100% excavated in order to determine its extent and nature, and to retrieve dating evidence. A half section of the feature and sample sections of the trench edges were drawn at a scale of 1:20. A plan of the trench after excavation was drawn at a scale of 1:50. All the features and sections were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OA Fieldwork Manual* (OAU 1992).

3.3 Finds

3.3.1 Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation. All the finds recovered were of modern date. These were evaluated on site but not retained.

3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

3.4.1 No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were identified during the evaluation.

3.5 Presentation of results

3.5.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below, starting with the stratigraphic account followed by an overall discussion and interpretation.

4 RESULTS: GENERAL

4.1 Soils and ground conditions

4.1.1 The site was located on level ground, with little intrusion by modern features such as services. The boundaries of the layers and the edges of the cut feature were well defined. Soil conditions were moist with no ground water encountered.

4.2 Distribution of archaeological deposits

4.2.1 The stratigraphy was constant throughout the length of the trench with no concentrations of archaeological deposits or features encountered.

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Description of deposits

- 5.1.1 At the base of the trench, at a depth of 0.65 m below ground level (Fig. 3, Sections 1 and 2) the underlying natural boulder clay, a tenacious reddish brown sandy clay (4) containing pockets of coarse yellow sand was encountered. Overlying this was a layer of tenacious orange brown sandy clay subsoil (3) 0.15 - 0.2 m deep, possibly representing an earlier medieval worked soil.
- 5.1.2 Cutting into the surface of this deposit was a circular feature (6) (Fig.3, Plan 1 and Section 3), 0.45 m in diameter and with a depth of 0.2 m. Filled by a tenacious clay loam (5), this has been interpreted as the truncated base of a post-medieval garden feature, probably a planting pit. No finds were retrieved from this fill.
- 5.1.3 Sealing this feature and layer 3 was a 0.25 m deep deposit of a friable light greyish brown silty loam (2). This layer contained a large quantity of charcoal flecking and abraded brick fragments associated with 18th or 19th century garden soil. Overlying this was a 0.28 m thick deposit of friable dark greyish brown silty loam (1). This layer contained numerous fragments of modern pottery and glass as well as many modern metal and plastic artefacts, which confirms it as a layer of modern worked garden soil.

6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 6.1.1 Approximately 14% of the area of the development site was evaluated, the percentage sample of the site, the location of the trench, and the consistency of the stratigraphy gives a high confidence that the interpretation of the results are likely to be representative of the development area.

6.2 Overall interpretation

- 6.2.1 The evaluation showed that there were substantial deposits of post-medieval garden soils throughout the area of the site. Whilst the nature of the origin of these deposits may have destroyed any shallow earlier archaeological remains, the absence of residual earlier finds, or of deeper, earlier, features cutting into the subsoil or natural suggests that the site has always been horticultural or agricultural in nature.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Ctxt No</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
1						
	1	Layer	0.0 m - 0.25 m	Modern garden soil	Pottery, Glass, Plastic, Brick	C20th
	2	Layer	0.25 m - 0.5 m	Earlier garden soil	Brick	C18th/C19th
	3	Layer	0.5 m - 0.65 m	Subsoil	-	-
	4	Layer	0.65 m - >0.75 m	Natural clay	-	-
	5	Fill	0.5 m - 0.7 m	Redeposited soils	-	-
	6	Cut	0.5 m - 0.7 m	Planting pit	-	poss. C19th

APPENDIX 2 REFERENCES

IFA, 1999 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations*

JSAC, 2004 *A specification for an Archaeological Evaluation of land to the rear of 74 Leicester Road, & adjacent to Chapel Lane, Sharnford, Leicester*

OA, 2000 *Oxford Archaeology Environmental Sampling Guidelines*

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

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Land to the Rear of 74 Leicester Road, Sharnford, Leicestershire

Site code: X.A216.2004

Grid reference: NGR: SP 4830 9194

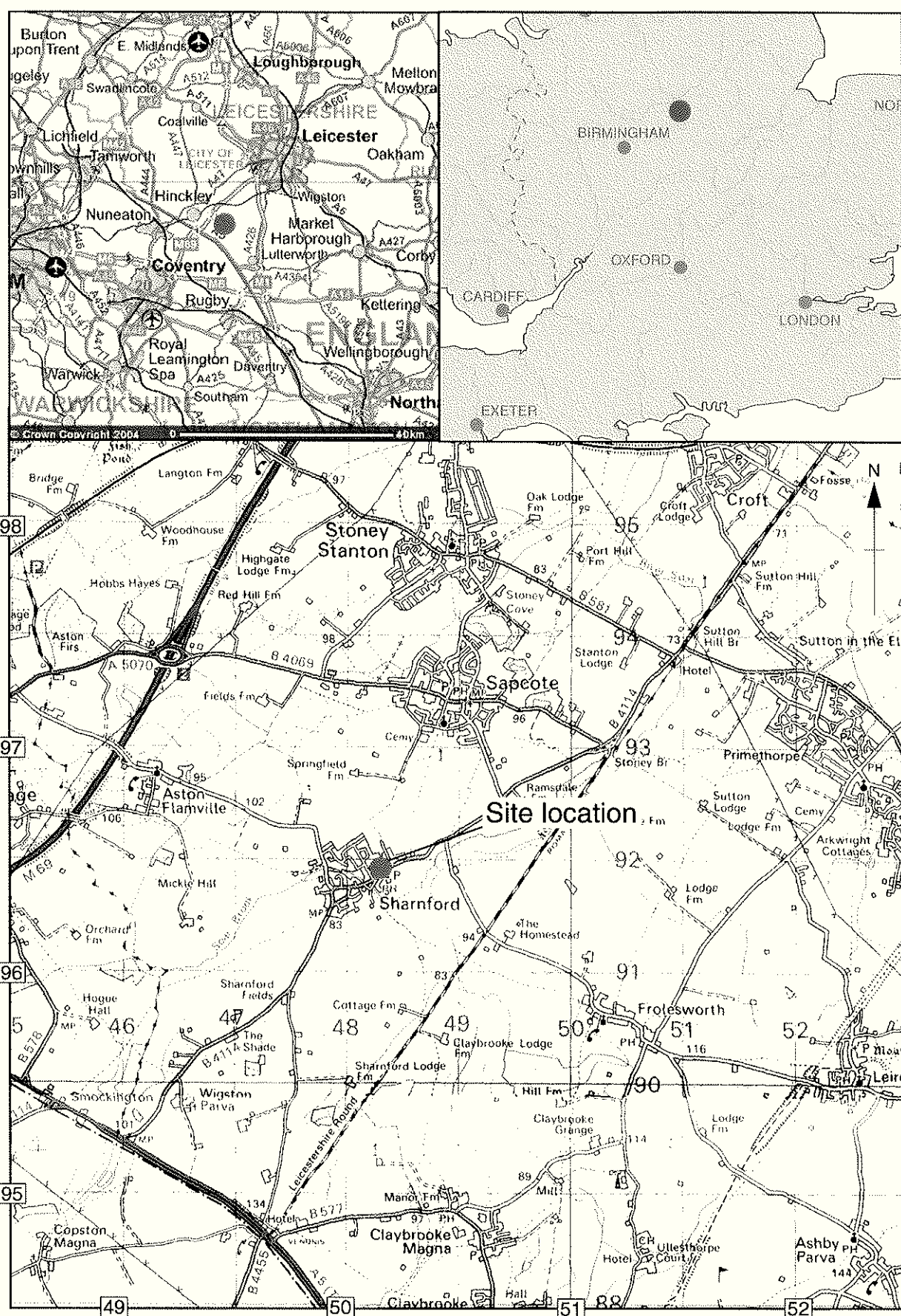
Type of evaluation: One machine dug trench

Date and duration of project: 1 day, 2nd August 2004

Area of site: 0.0212 hectares

Summary of results: Extensive deposits of post-medieval garden soils and a possible garden feature. No evidence of medieval or earlier archaeological remains.

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



Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location

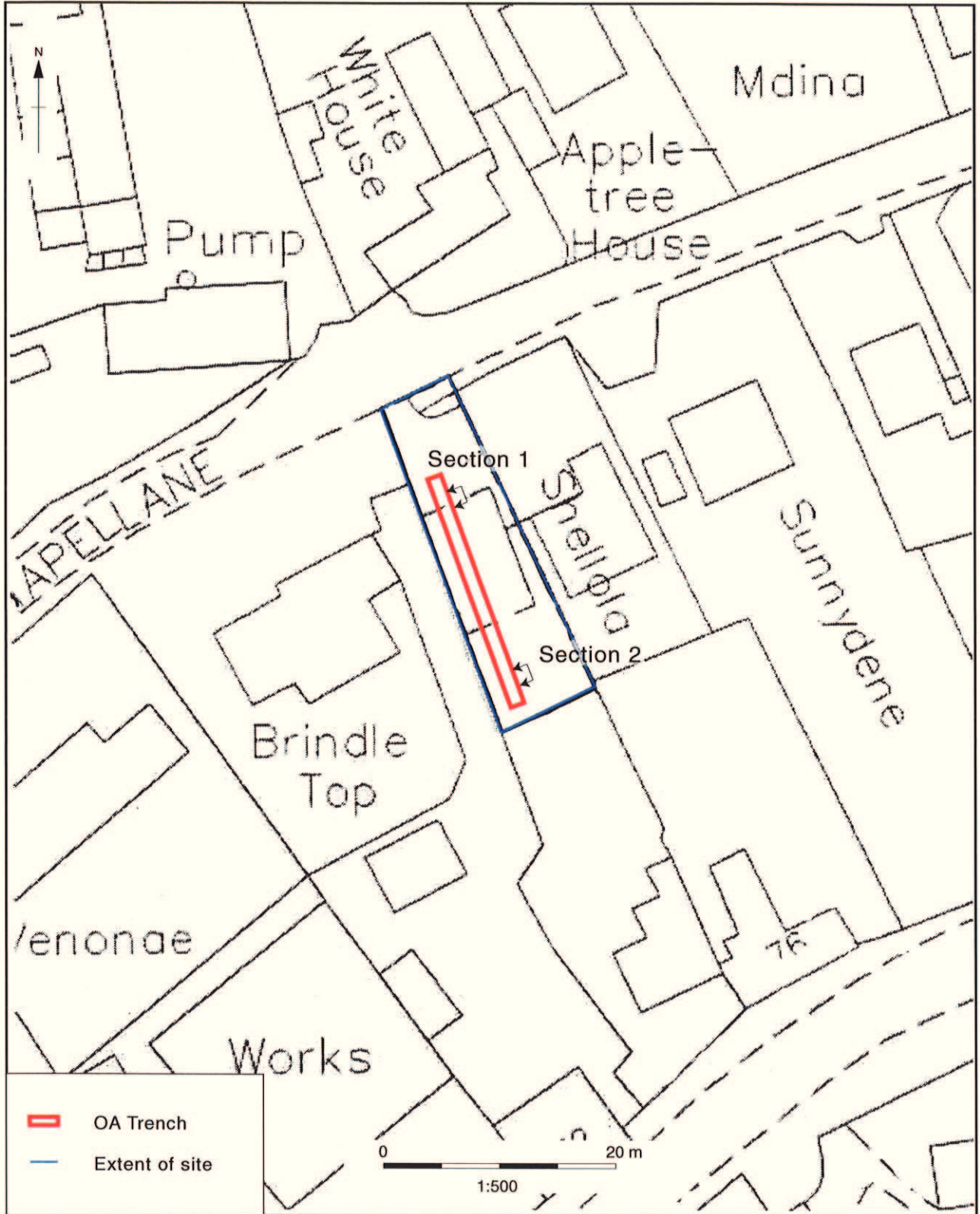


Figure 2: Trench location

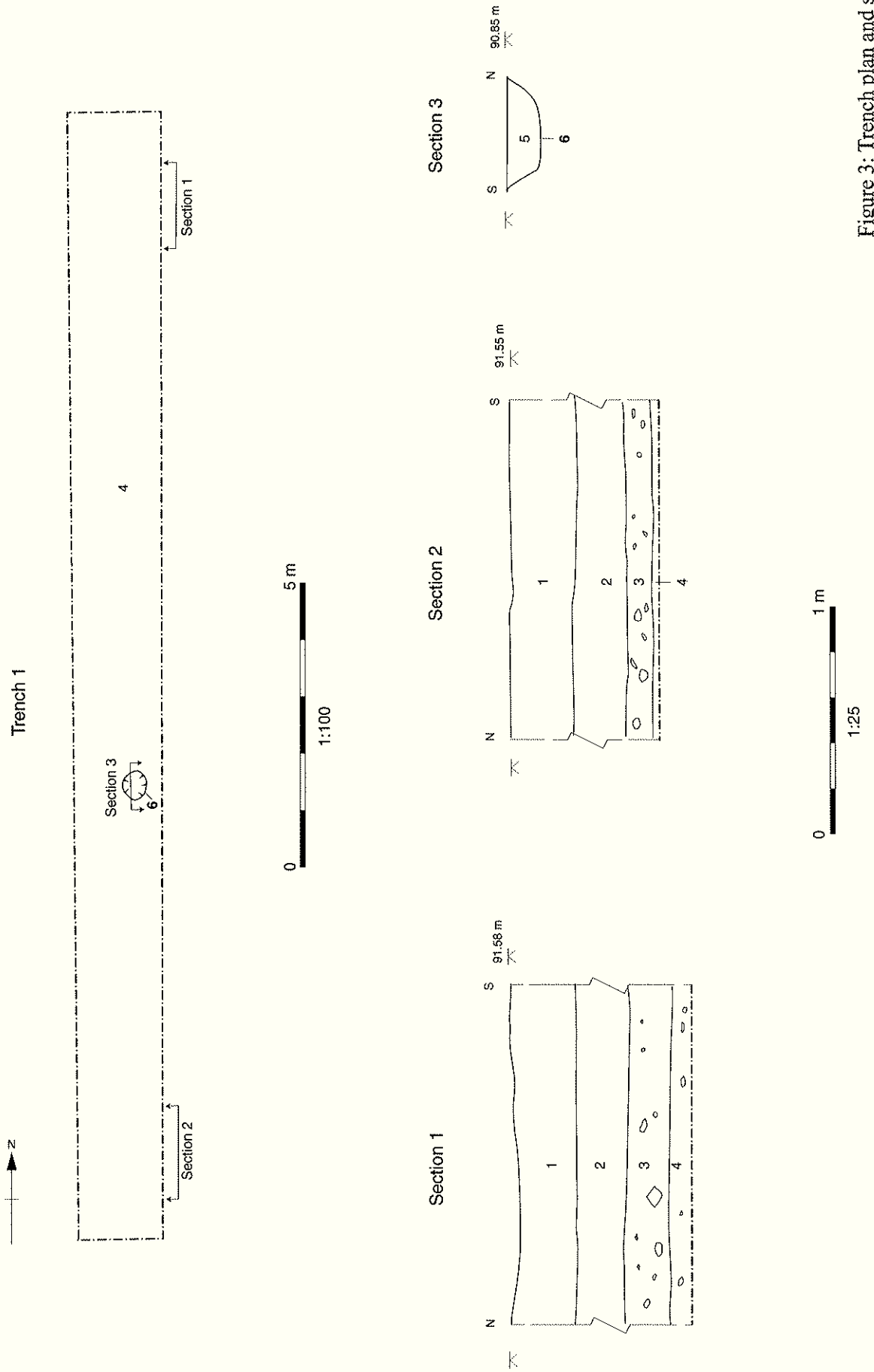


Figure 3: Trench plan and sections



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