

179-183 Sydenham Road  
Borough of Lewisham  
London  
SE 26



**Archaeological Watching Brief**



**Oxford Archaeology**

02 January 2002

**Client Name:**  
**Greenacre Homes Ltd**

Issue N<sup>o</sup>: 1

OA Job N<sup>o</sup>: 1127

Planning Ref N<sup>o</sup>: LE/180/175/TP

NGR: TQ 3617 7164

**Client Name:** Greenacre Homes

**Client Ref No:**

**Document Title:** 179-183 Sydenham Rd, London, SE26

**Document Type:** Watching Brief

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**OA Job Number:** 1127  
**Site Code:** SYA 01  
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**Museum Accession No:** SYA2001

**Prepared by:** James Mumford

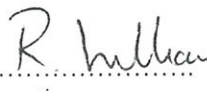
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**Date:** 20th December 2001

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Signed..... 

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**179-183 Sydenham Road,  
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***ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT***

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## SUMMARY

*In December 2001, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at 179-183 Sydenham Road, London, SE 26 (NGR TQ 3617 7164). The work was commissioned by Greenacre Homes Ltd in advance of the construction of a three storey building comprising of 4 two bedroom properties and 7 single bedroom flats. An undated soil horizon above the natural clay was observed in one location. The site appears to have been truncated during construction of the 19th century building that was demolished in the course of the work here.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In December 2001 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at 179-183 Sydenham Road, London, SE 26 (Figs 1 and 2). The work was commissioned by Greenacre Homes Ltd, in respect of Condition 3 of their planning application for a three storey building comprising 4 two bedroom properties and 7 single bedroom flats with attendant parking (Planning Application No. LE/180/175/TP).
- 1.1.2 Mark Stevenson, the Archaeology Advisor for the Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service prepared an advice note for a similar development, and following discussions with OA, that advice note formed the basis for this project.
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (OA 2001) detailing how it would meet the requirements of the advice.

### 1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies at 34.1 m above OD. The site overlies Eocene London Clay and is c 550 m<sup>2</sup> in area.

### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA 2001) and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 There is little evidence for prehistoric activity in Sydenham, and in the Roman period it lay outside the limit of the Roman town of *Londinium*. It is known that a sizeable hamlet existed here by the 16th century along the Sydenham Road. To the west, and uphill were the 500 acres of Sydenham Common, of which only Wells Park now survives. Springs were discovered there in the middle of the 17th century, and the place became a minor spa, but did not develop until the common was enclosed in 1819.



- 1.3.3 By the time of John Rocque's Map of c. 1741, the road through the hamlet of Sydenham was flanked by tenement plots and larger buildings, with open meadows to the north and south of the central road. The site of this development seems to have been occupied by a small tenement with a yard to the east. By 1816 the line of the Croydon Canal passes c. 0.5 km to the west of this development site.
- 1.3.4 By 1863, the development site was partly an open space (orchard?), and partly occupied by a formal, possibly ornamental garden crossed by pathways. This formal garden is depicted again on the 1875 map, with plots to the west covered by properties with yards to the north and on the street frontage.
- 1.3.5 By 1946, Nos. 179 and 181 Sydenham Road contained properties with yards to the north, while a garage occupied part of the site of No. 183. By 1971, properties with yards are again depicted on the site of Nos. 179 and 181, while the land immediately east was an open yard.
- 1.3.6 Little remains of the former hamlet of Sydenham. The buildings at No. 32-34 retain some of their early post-medieval character, but by the 19th century many new large sub-urban properties had been constructed here (Cheery and Pevsner, 1983).

## 1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 OA extends its thanks to John Lucas and his workmen for their assistance. Dan Bashford (OA) and Jim Mumford (OA) undertook the site work.

## 2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features.
- 2.1.3 In the event that archaeological remains were discovered on the site, to determine what further mitigation measures would be required, and to agree them with Greenacre Homes, the Local Planning Authority and English Heritage.
- 2.1.4 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

### 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 Following demolition of the existing structures on the site, the site was cleared and levelled by machine under archaeological supervision. The area to the rear of 179-183 Sydenham Road was cleared first down to the level of the natural clay, prior to the laying of a temporary surface to provide access for lorries removing demolition rubble.

- 2.2.2 The foundation trenches for the new buildings were excavated by a 360° machine fitted with a 0.75 m wide ditching bucket (Fig. 3). The trenches were excavated to a set level and were then filled with concrete.
- 2.2.3 A site plan of the work was made at a scale of 1:100. Sample sections of the foundations were drawn at a scale of 1:20. A general photographic record of the work was made and will be deposited with the archive. On site recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

### 3 RESULTS

#### 3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The earliest deposits observed across the site consisted of natural bands of clay and silty clay with coarse gravel inclusions (layers 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 12), observed to a depth up to 1.2 m in the foundation trench sections (Fig. 4, sections 1, 2, 4).
- 3.1.2 The top of the natural clay lay 1.1 m below the level of the adjacent Sydenham Road. The upper level of natural clay (3) was observed consistently to the north of the site, prior to the laying of the temporary hardcore access surface. No features or soil horizons were observed here.
- 3.1.3 An earlier undated topsoil layer (9) was observed in section towards the Sydenham Road Frontage (Fig. 4, section 3) in the south-west corner of the site. The layer was a dark brown silty clay and directly overlay the clay natural (12) at this point. The extent of the layer was unclear, as machining had removed its eastern extent (deposits 10, 11) and it was not observed in the trench sections to the north of the site.
- 3.1.4 The brick footings of the Victorian building on the site (Fig. 3) had been trench built and they were 0.6 m deep by 0.45 m wide, cut down into the natural. The foundations were constructed of yellow-brown bricks bonded with lime mortar, but were only clearly recorded in section along the frontage of Sydenham Road, the remainder of the foundations having been removed during the clearing and levelling of the site.
- 3.1.5 A layer of general demolition debris (2 and 8) was left *in situ* to act as a base for the new building (Fig. 4, sections 3 & 4) near the street frontage.

#### 3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 No finds were recovered from the site. Material dating to the 19th and 20th centuries including willow pattern china was not retained

#### 3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No environmental samples were taken from the site.

#### 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 No archaeological features of any period were identified during the site clearance operations.
- 4.1.2 In a few places the remains of an earlier undated soil horizon suggest that the site was open or possibly cultivated or used as gardens until around the 17th century, when maps begin to depict buildings and yards on the site. These appear to have left no archaeological trace.
- 4.1.3 The construction of the 19th building with back yard appears to have removed further evidence for earlier soil horizons or structures across the site.



## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Height</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>
1	Structure	0.6 m	0.45 m	-	Foundations of 19th century building	-
2	Layer	0.05 m	-	-	Demolition layer	None
3	Layer	0.2 m	-	-	Natural Clay	-
4	Layer	0.22 m	-	-	Natural Clay & Gravel	-
5	Layer	0.18 m	-	-	Natural Clay & Gravel	-
6	Layer	0.55 m+	-	-	Natural Clay	-
7	Layer	0.76 m	-	-	Natural Clay	-
8	Layer	0.48 m	-	-	Demolition Layer	None
9	Layer	0.22 m	-	-	Old Topsoil	None
10	Layer	0.18 m	-	-	Machining deposit	-
11	Layer	0.44 m+	-	-	Machining deposit	-
12	Layer	0.22 m	-	-	Natural Clay	-

## APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Cheery, B and Pevsner, N 1983 *London 2: South*

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

OA 2001 *179-183 Sydenham Road. Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological watching brief.*



**APPENDIX 3 GLSMR/RCHME NMR ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT FORM**

## 1) TYPE OF RECORDING

Watching Brief

## LOCATION

Borough: Lewisham

Site address: 179-183 Sydenham Road, London, SE26

Site Name: 179-183 Sydenham Road, London, SE26 Site Code: SYA 01

Nat. grid Refs: TQ Centre of site: NGR TQ 3617 7164

Limits of site: N TQ 3617 7184 S TQ 3617 7139

E TQ 3717 7164 W 3611 7164

## 2) ORGANISATION

Name of archaeological unit/company/society: Oxford Archaeology

Address: Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 OES

Site director/supervisor: James Mumford

Project manager: Jon Hiller

Funded by: Greenacre Homes Ltd

## 3) DURATION

Date fieldwork started 3/12/2001 Date finished: 7/12/2001

Fieldwork previously notified? NO

Fieldwork will continue? NO

## 4) PERIODS REPRESENTED

Victorian/undated

## 5) PERIOD SUMMARIES

Remains of 19th building foundations; undated soil horizon.

## 6) NATURAL

Type: Eocene London Clays

Height above Ordnance datum: c 34 m OD

## 7) LOCATION OF ARCHIVES

- a) Please provide an estimate of the quantity of material in your possession for the following categories:
- |            |    |                 |   |                               |     |          |    |
|------------|----|-----------------|---|-------------------------------|-----|----------|----|
| NOtes      | 15 | PLans           | 4 | PHotos                        | - 0 | Ngatives | 30 |
| SLides     | 30 | COrrrespondence |   | MScRipts (unpub reports, etc) | -   |          |    |
| BULk finds | 0  | SMall finds     | 0 | SOil samples                  | 0   |          |    |
| OTHer      |    |                 |   |                               |     |          |    |
- b) The archive has been prepared and stored in accordance with MGC standards and will be deposited in the following location: Museum of London
- c) Has a security copy of the archive been made?: YES

#### 10) BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cheery, B and Pevsner, N 1983 *London 2: South*

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

OA 2001 179-183 Sydenham Road, London SE 26. *Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological watching brief*

SIGNED: *J.R. Hillier*  
NAME: J. R. HILLIER

DATE: 2/1/2002



Server:4(W)/oupubs/1/All drawings/SYA/179-183\_Sydenham\_Road\_London/RMS\*14.12.01



Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location.



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Figure 2 : Development Area

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Sydenham Road

pavement

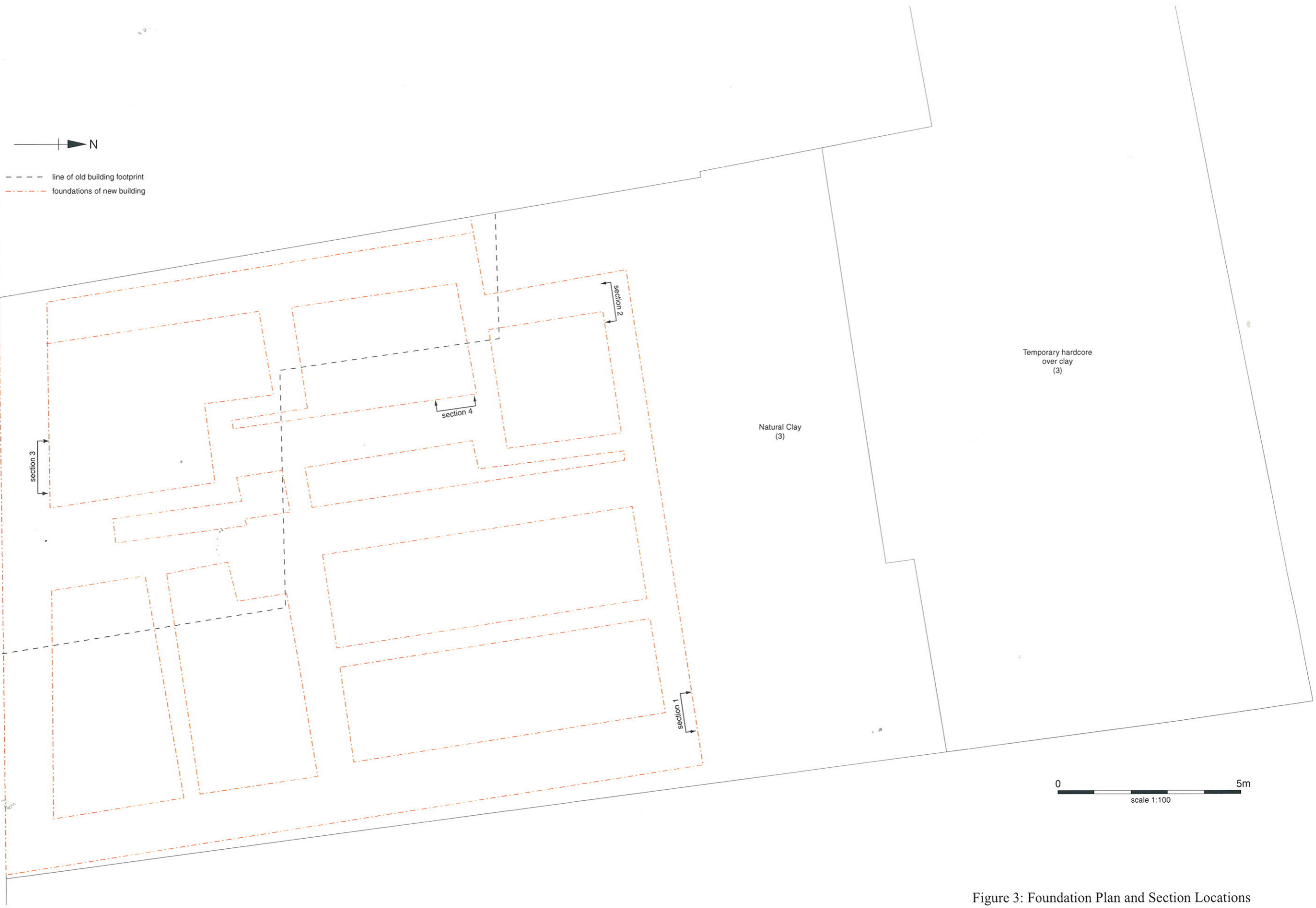


Figure 3: Foundation Plan and Section Locations

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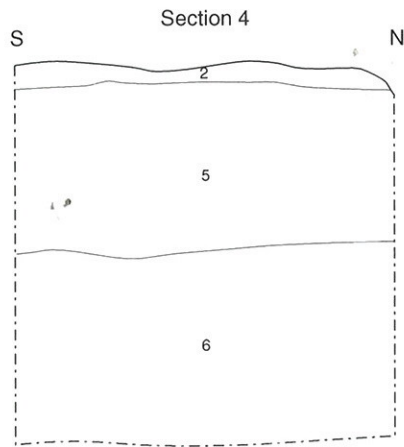
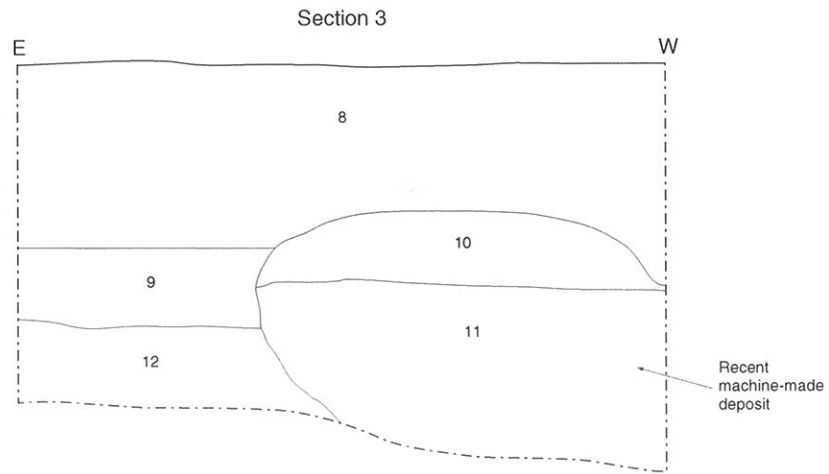
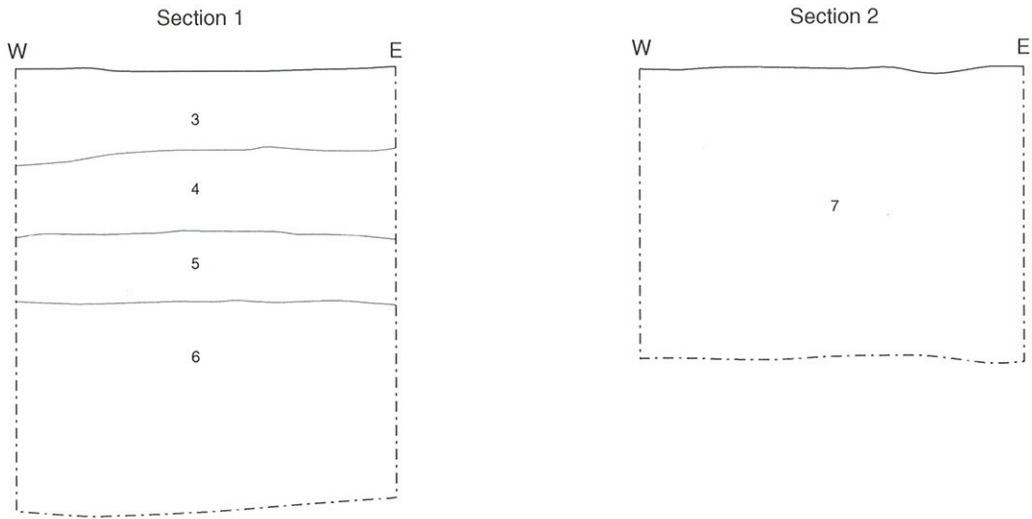


Figure 4 : Sections





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**Director:** David Jennings, BA MIFA FSA



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