



Proposed New Conservation
Pond
Notley Abbey
Long Crendon
Buckinghamshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report



Oxford Archaeology

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Client: Mr P Ruddock

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Mr P. Ruddock

**Proposed New Conservation Pond, Notley Abbey
Long Crendon, Buckinghamshire**

NGR: SP 714 091

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SUMMARY

In March 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at Notley Abbey, Long Crendon, Buckinghamshire (NGR SP 714091) on behalf of Mr P. Ruddock. The work was undertaken in respect of a planning application for the formation of a conservation and wildlife pond within an area of water meadow adjacent to the River Thames and Notley Abbey. The evaluation revealed a sequence of alluvial deposits relating to the flood plain of the River Thames. The termination of medieval ridge and furrow at the edge of this plain suggests that this area was used as pasture/water meadows during this period. No other archaeological features or deposits were observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 In March 20045 OA carried out a field evaluation at Notley Abbey, Long Crendon, Buckinghamshire (Fig. 1) on behalf of Mr P Ruddock. OA carried out the work in respect of a planning application for the formation of a conservation and wildlife pond within an area of water meadow adjacent to the river Thames and Notley Abbey (Planning Application No. 04/2238).

1.1.2 A project brief (BCAS, 2005) was set by, and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (OA, 2005) agreed with David Radford, Buckinghamshire's Archaeological Officer.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 The development site is located 200 m to the south east of Notley Abbey, on the southern side of the river Thames (NGR: SP 714 091). The site lies at approximately 70 m OD. The underlying geology is Purbeck Formation marl and clay, overlying Portland sand. (British Geological Survey, Sheet 237).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological background for this evaluation was prepared for the WSI (OA 2005), based on information contained in the project brief and further research, the results of which are presented below.

1.3.2 The development site lies 200 metres south east of Notley Abbey, immediately across the River Thames and will be located within the flood plain of the river. It is known from alluvial models of the Thames Valley that these flood plains along the Thames Valley have been a focus of settlement and habitation from the Palaeolithic period through to Roman times.

- 1.3.3 Both Upper and Lower Thames alluvial models have shown that deposits are normally composed of Pleistocene river gravels overlain by alluvial clays dating to the medieval period. However, buried soils can be found interfacing these two deposits and it is these buried soils which contain evidence from the Palaeolithic to Roman periods and are therefore of great importance in understanding the socio-economic patterns of such areas (*per.* Liz Stafford, OA Geoarchaeologist).
- 1.3.4 Notley Abbey, to the north of the proposed development, is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 29409). The Abbey was founded by the Earl of Buckingham and his wife between AD 1154 and 1164 (Pantin, 1941). This Augustinian monastery became one of the wealthiest in Buckinghamshire.
- 1.3.5 Excavations in 1937 recorded those remains of the abbey complex visible above ground as well as below the topsoil. The abbey comprised in its earliest phase the central crossing, the transepts and the eastern limb of the church. Approximately a century later c.1200 - 1250, the cloister, the chapter house and the dormitories were added to the eastern part of the church. The next three centuries saw various rebuilds and extensions to the main body of the church culminating in the early 16th century with the completion of the Abbot's house. The whole complex was enclosed in a precinct boundary defined by a ditch.
- 1.3.6 Aerial photographs show earthworks immediately to the east of the Abbey that probably represent water meadows and other systems of water management. These would most likely have related to the mill known to have existed further down stream of Notley Abbey. Any ground intrusive work within the proposed development has the potential therefore to disturb or destroy archaeological remains that may survive below ground.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

- 2.1.1 To establish the presence or absence, extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any of archaeological remains within the proposed development area.
- 2.1.2 To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features, if any.
- 2.1.3 Specific aims of the evaluation are, to establish whether traces of earlier structures survive on this site and to establish any relationships with the current structure, to establish whether similar water management features to those east of the Abbey survive on the south side of the river and to relate any relevant structures or features to the Abbey.
- 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 seven trenches each measuring 10 m long and 2 m wide, with the exception of Trench 5, which had a 8 m long east-west return excavated at its southern end and Trench 6 which was 40 m long and 2 m wide (Fig. 2). The trenches were excavated under close archaeological supervision by a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a 2 m toothless ditching bucket. Excavation proceeded in spits down to the first significant archaeological horizon or to the top of the water table whichever was encountered first. Depth of the trenches varied between 1 m and 1.6 m, with all the trenches reaching depth of impact.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

3.2.1 After the trenches were excavated they were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Sample sections were cleaned by hand and any revealed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds and environmental samples. All archaeological features were planned and where excavated their sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (OAU 1992).

3.3 Finds

3.3.1 A horseshoe was recovered from the topsoil of Trench 3.

3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

3.4.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the course of the evaluation.

4 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

4.1 Description of Trenches

Trench 1 (Fig. 3, Plan 1 and Section 1)

4.1.1 This trench was excavated to a depth of 1.30 m below ground level (63.38m AOD) cutting 0.3 m deep into a mid blue-grey natural clay (3), which was overlaid by a 0.65 m thick orange-brown alluvium clay (2). This was sealed below a 0.20 m thick layer of very dark brown silty clay topsoil (1).

Trench 2 (Fig. 3, Plan 2 and Section 2)

- 4.1.2 This trench was excavated to a depth of 1.30 m below ground level (63.44 m AOD), cutting up to 0.3 m deep into the top of a layer of dark blue-grey alluvium clay (13), which in turn was overlaid by a 0.30 m thick layer of orange-brown silty clay alluvium (12). Overlying this was a 0.40 m thick light brown silty clay alluvium (11). This was sealed below a 0.20 m thick layer of very dark brown silty clay topsoil (10).

Trenches 3 and 4 (Fig. 3, Sections 3 and 4)

- 4.1.3 These two trenches were excavated to a depth of 1.50 m below ground level (63.44 m and 63.65 m AOD respectively) cutting 0.15 m deep into the top of a layer of blue-grey clay alluvium (24 and 34), that was sealed below a 0.28 m thick layer of reddish orange silty clay alluvium (23 and 33). Overlying this was a 0.40 m thick orange brown silty clay alluvium (22 and 32), that was also sealed below a 0.50 m thick layer of a beige brown silty clay loam (21 and 31). Overlying all these was a 0.20 m thick layer of very dark brown silty clay topsoil (20 and 30).

Trenches 5, 6 and 7 (Fig. 3, Sections 5, 6 and 7)

- 4.1.4 These three trenches were all excavated to a depth of 1.60 m below ground level (63.56 m, 63.54 m and 63.61 m AOD respectively) cutting up to 0.2 m deep into the top of a layer of dark grey-blue alluvium clay with reddish brown specks (44, 64 and 74). This had been sealed by a 0.60 m thick layer alluvium deposit of a mid brown silty clay loam (43, 63 and 73) with light grey and reddish brown patches. Overlying this was a 0.20 - 0.30 m thin layer of light grey silty clay alluvium (42, 62 and 72), sealed below a 0.4 m layer of beige brown silty clay alluvium (41, 61 and 71). Overlying all these was a 0.20 m thick layer of very dark brown silty clay topsoil (40, 60 and 70).

5 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

- 5.1.1 The evaluation trenches revealed a series of alluvium deposits building up along the flood plain. No evidence of natural river channels or man made channels diverting the river or other archaeological features were present within the area of the proposed new conservation pond. This would suggest that the fields in the flood plain were waterlogged during wet periods and possibly used as marginal pasture land during dry periods.
- 5.1.2 It was also noted that the medieval ridge and furrow to the south of the site ended in a broad headland along the edge of the flood plain. This suggests the area was left as a water meadow and not cultivated during the medieval period.
- 5.1.3 It is within these two fields, either side of the main driveway, that a proposal for the permanent storing of spoil from the pond is located. The present proposal would aim to strip the topsoil off three-quarters of the two fields, spreading the spoil evenly across these areas (300 - 400 mm deep) and then overlaying them with the topsoil initially

stripped. The remaining spoil would be placed along the top of the fields adjacent to the A418 forming a bund of approximately 2 - 2.5 m high.

- 5.1.4 Following a walk over of the two fields, it is clear that ridge and furrow cultivation is prominent along the lower, more level halves of the two fields, with it gradually receding as the gradient and height of the fields increase to the south-east. Any removal of topsoil and raising of ground surfaces within these lower areas would effectively remove these extant features and therefore have a detrimental effect on the historic landscape of Notley Abbey. However, considering the marked lack of clearly defined ridge and furrow on the ridge of both fields to the south-east, this area would not be effected to the same degree should such a scheme be implemented in this 'upper' part of the fields. The raising of ground levels and the proposed bund would change the topography, though not necessarily impair its setting. It is, therefore, suggested that further options be considered in order to prevent any detrimental effects to Notley Abbey's remaining historic landscape, particularly the surviving ridge and furrow.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Ctx No</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i> Finds</i>
1							
	1	Layer	-	0.20 m	-	Topsoil	-
	2	Layer	-	0.55 m	-	Alluvium Layer	-
	3	Layer	-	0.30 m	-	Alluvium Layer	-
2							
	10	Layer	-	0.20 m	-	Topsoil	-
	11	Layer	-	0.40 m	-	Alluvium Layer	-
	12	Layer	-	0.28 m	-	Alluvium Layer	-
	13	Layer	-	0.45 m	-	Alluvium Layer	-
3							
	20	Layer	-	0.20 m	-	Topsoil	Iron horseshoe
	21	Layer	-	0.52 m	-	Alluvium Layer	-
	22	Layer	-	0.40 m	-	Alluvium Layer	-
	23	Layer	-	0.22 m	-	Alluvium Layer	-
	24	Layer	-	0.06 m	-	Alluvium Layer	-
4							
	30	Layer	-	0.20 m	-	Topsoil	-
	31	Layer	-	0.30 m	-	Alluvium Layer	-
	32	Layer	-	0.35 m	-	Alluvium Layer	-
	33	Layer	-	0.30 m	-	Alluvium Layer	-
	34	Layer	-	0.22 m	-	Alluvium Layer	-
5							
	40	Layer	-	0.20 m	-	Topsoil	-
	41	Layer	-	0.38 m	-	Alluvium Layer	-
	42	Layer	-	0.22 m	-	Alluvium Layer	-
	43	Layer	-	0.50 m	-	Alluvium Layer	-
	44	Layer	-	0.18 m	-	Alluvium Layer	-

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Ctx No</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Finds</i>
6							
	60	Layer	-	0.20 m	-	Topsoil	-
	61	Layer	-	0.38 m	-	Alluvium Layer	-
	62	Layer	-	0.18 m	-	Alluvium Layer	-
	63	Layer	-	0.60 m	-	Alluvium Layer	-
	64	Layer	-	0.22 m	-	Alluvium Layer	-
7							
	70	Layer	-	0.20 m	-	Topsoil	-
	71	Layer	-	0.40 m	-	Alluvium Layer	-
	72	Layer	-	0.18 m	-	Alluvium Layer	-
	73	Layer	-	0.62 m	-	Alluvium Layer	-
	74	Layer	-	0.12 m	-	Alluvium Layer	-

APPENDIX 2 REFERENCES

BCAS, 2004 *Formation of conservation and wildlife pond, near Notley Abbey, Long Crendon. Brief for an Archaeological Field Evaluation (Trial Trenching)*

IFA, 1999 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations*

OA 2005 *Conservation Pond, Notley Abbey, Long Crendon, Buckinghamshire Written Scheme of Investigation*

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

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Proposed New Conservation Pond, Notley Abbey, Long Crendon, Buckinghamshire

Site code: LOABLA 05

Grid reference: NGR SP 701 604

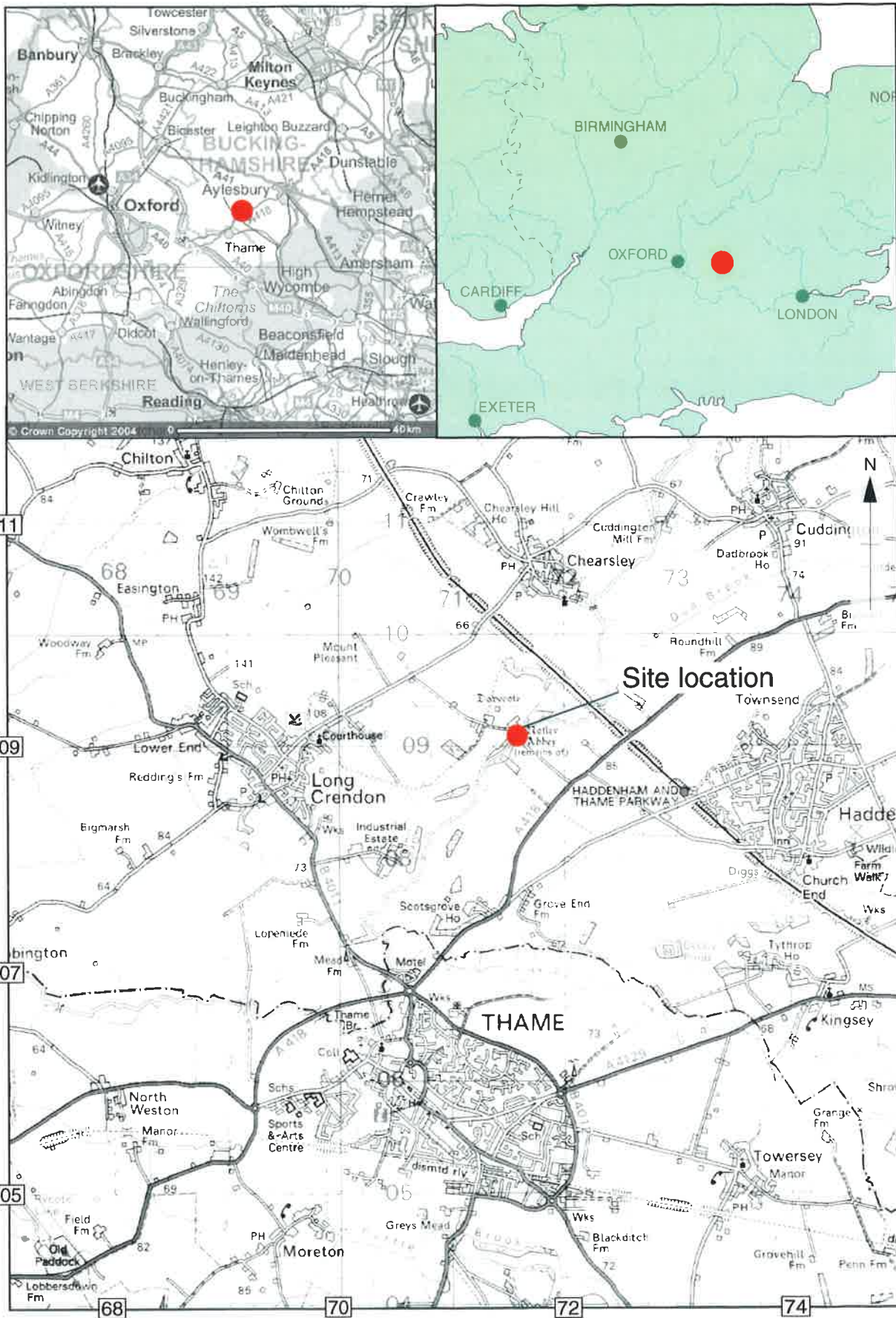
Type of evaluation: Seven evaluation trenches across the site of proposed area of the new conservation pond.

Date and duration of project: Two days from the 14th to 15th of March 2005.

Area of site: Six 10 m x 2 m trenches and one 40 m x 2 m trench.

Summary of results: Topsoil overlying River Thames flood plain alluvium.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museum, Technical Centre, Tring Rd, Halton, Aylesbury, Bucks HP22 5PJ in due course, under the following accession number: 2005.34



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Figure 1: Site location



Figure 2: Trench location plan, showing location of sections

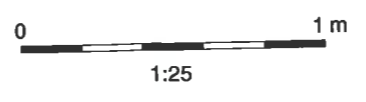
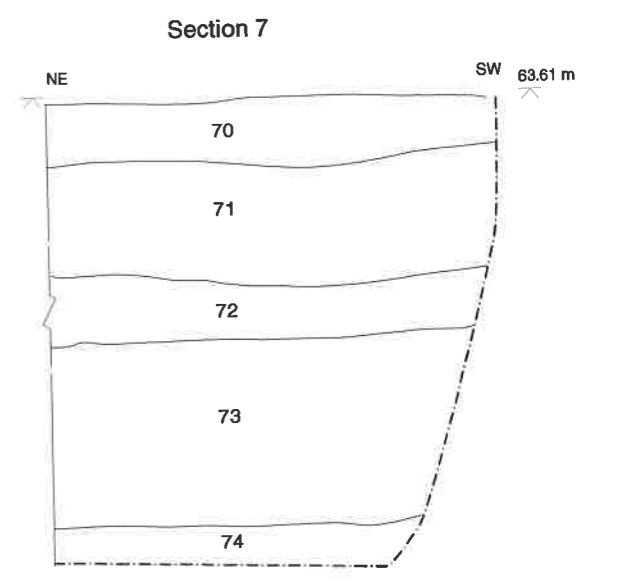
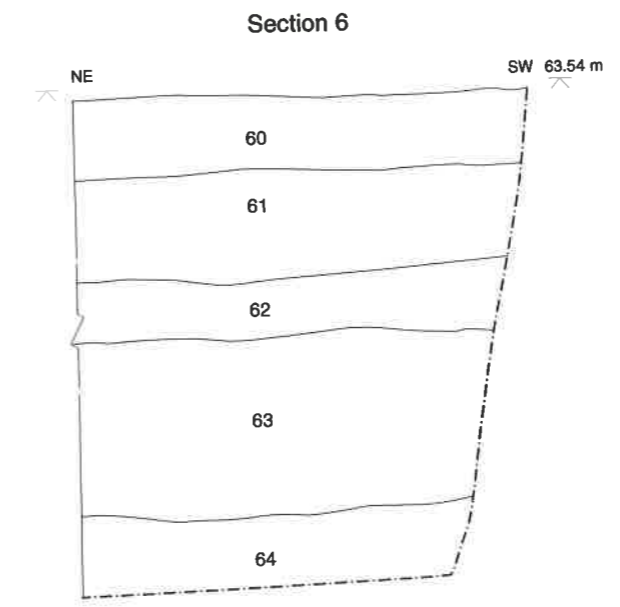
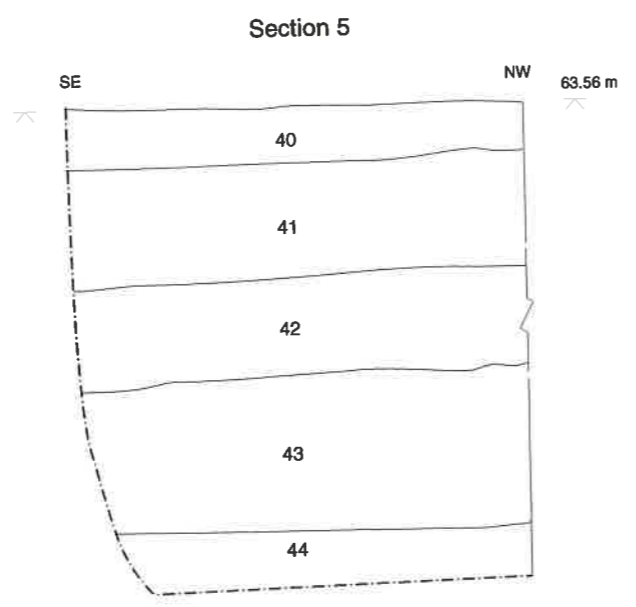
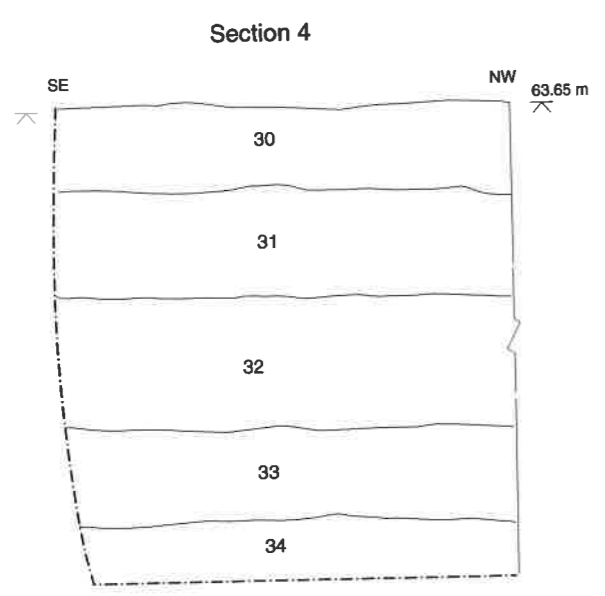
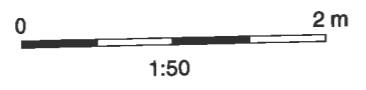
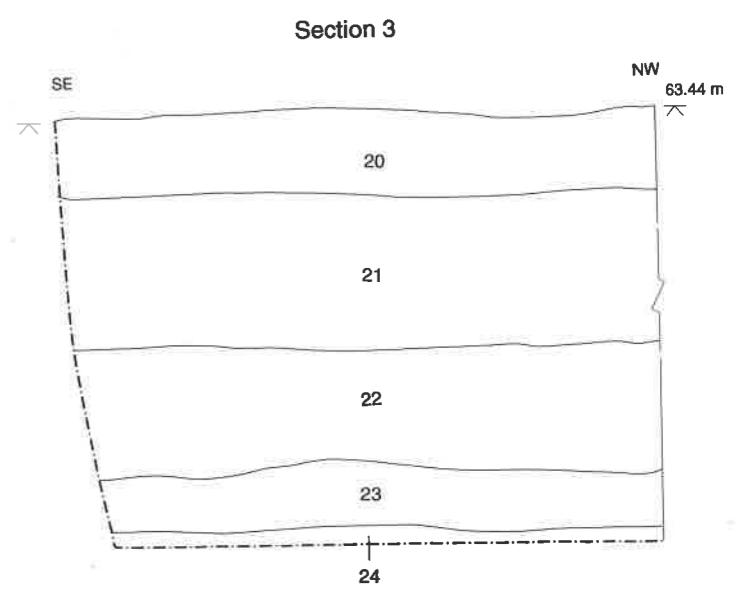
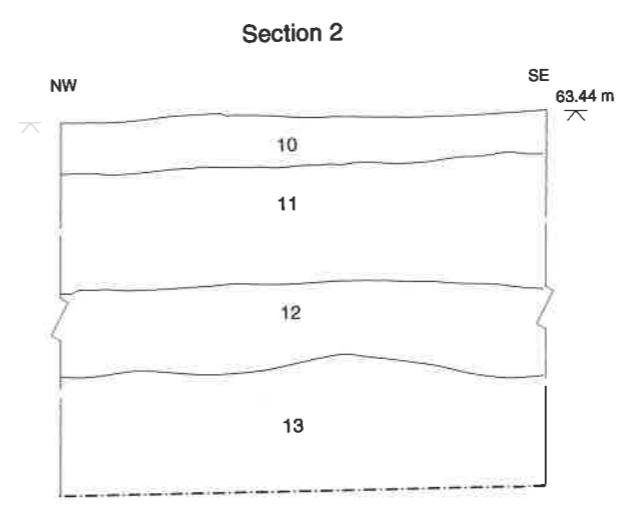
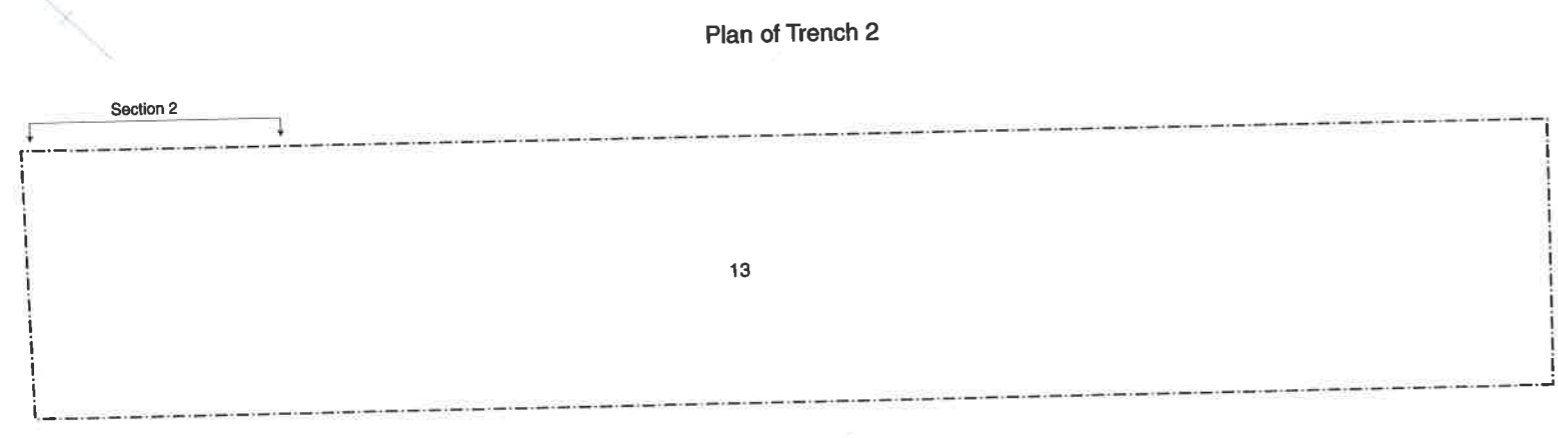
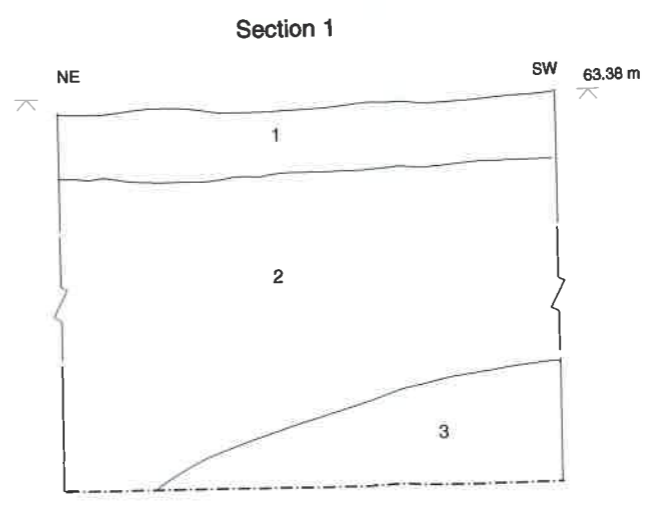
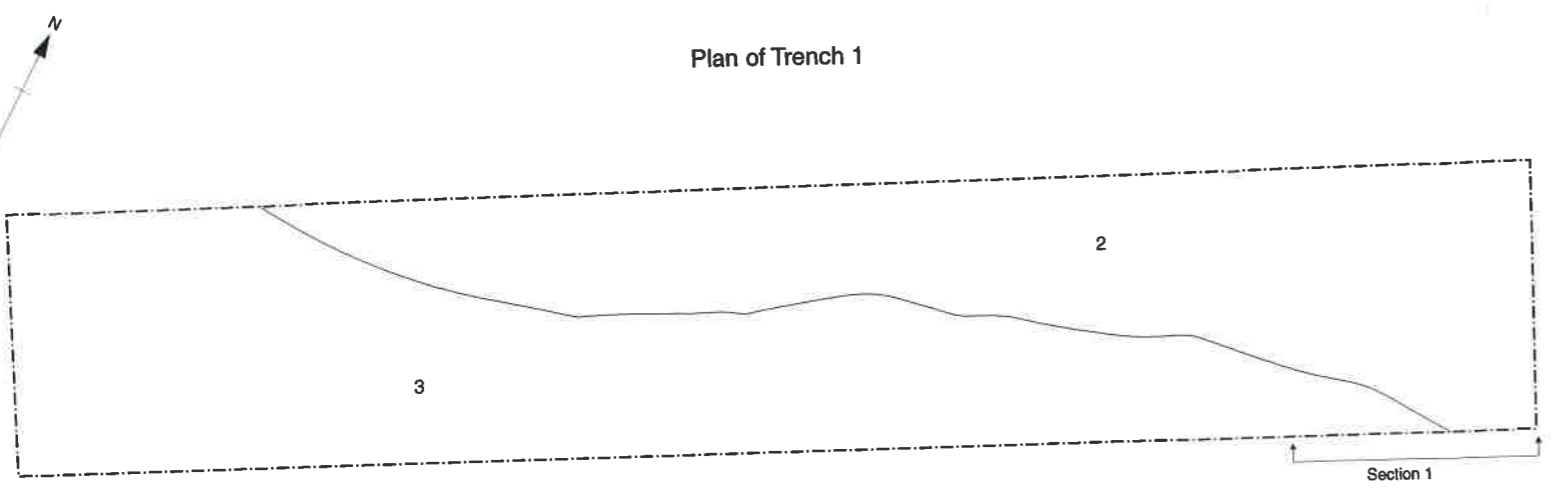


Figure 3: Plans and sections



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