

David Mitchell

Amwell Place, Cholsey, Oxfordshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

NGR SU 589 865

Planning Ref. P99/WO 638



OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

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SUMMARY

The Oxford Archaeological Unit carried out a field evaluation at, Amwell Place, Cholsey, Oxfordshire on behalf of Mr. David Mitchell. The evaluation was commissioned in advance of the proposed construction of two new homes with garages and parking. Two trenches were investigated: Trench 1 contained a large pit, probably of post-medieval date, and Trench 2 contained a medieval or post-medieval ditch. The natural subsoil was encountered at a depth of 0.40 m below ground level.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

In November 1999 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) carried out a field evaluation in Cholsey, Oxfordshire on behalf of Mr. David Mitchell in respect of a planning application for the proposed construction of two new homes with garages and parking (Planning Application No. P99/WO 638). The work was conducted in accordance with a brief prepared by the Oxfordshire County Council Archaeologist (Paul Smith) and a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by the OAU. The site lies on the west side of Amwell Place, Cholsey, at NGR SU 589 865.

1.2 Geology and topography

The site comprises the garden of 10, Amwell Place. It lies at *c.* 50 m OD and is *c.* 0.13 ha in extent. An existing building ('The Cottage') extends into part of the application area. The solid geology in this part of Cholsey is the Lower Chalk.

1.3 Historical and archaeological background

The Dorchester-Silchester Roman Road lies less than 50 m to the west of the application area and Roman occupation remains have been found nearby. A coin of Constantine 1 (PRN 7638) was found less than 100 m to the north-west and a number of Roman coins of 3rd - 4th- century date have been found to the west of Honey Lane (PRN 2686, 7953). A Saxon glass bead was found in 1965 on the western side of Cholsey (PRN 7637). Medieval occupation evidence has been identified less than 50 m from the application area (PRN 879) and further medieval remains were recorded at Cholsey Vicarage in 1992 (PRN 5941).

1.4 Acknowledgements

The evaluation was undertaken on behalf of Mr David Mitchell and monitored by Paul Smith of Oxfordshire County Council.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

The aims of the evaluation, as stated in the WSI, were as follows:

- ◆ To establish the presence/ absence, extent, condition, character and date of archaeological remains within the area affected by invasive development.
- ◆ To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features.
- ◆ To make available the results of the investigation.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Sample size and scope of fieldwork

The evaluation was based upon a *c.* 4% sample of the development area, and consisted of two trenches: Trench 1 was 14 m long and 1.6 m wide and Trench 2 was 17 m by 1.6 m (Fig 2), *c.* 50 m² in total.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

The trenches were cleaned by hand and the overburden was removed by a mechanical excavator under close archaeological supervision. The exposed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds. No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified. All archaeological features were planned and 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 described in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

4 RESULTS: GENERAL

4.1 Soils and ground conditions

The features cut a natural subsoil consisting of a silty clay head deposit overlying the Lower Chalk. Ground conditions were generally dry, with good preservation of bone and metalwork.

4.2 Distribution of Archaeological Deposits

The two trenches each contained one potentially significant feature of medieval or post-medieval date. There were also features interpreted as tree-root hollows.

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Trench Descriptions

5.1.1 Trench 1 (Fig 3)

Trench 1 was aligned north-south, measured 14 m by 1.6 m and was excavated to a maximum of 1.10 m below the ground level. Natural chalk was reached at a depth of 0.70 m below ground level in most of the trench.

A large pit (100) was observed at the south end of the trench. It was partly obscured by the limits of excavation but had a flat base and vertical sides and was at least 2.0 m long, 1.5 m wide and 0.60 m deep. The pit was filled with a dark brown silty clay with lenses of redeposited natural chalky clay (101). Finds from this deposit included a post-medieval buckle and two residual 13th- century pottery sherds, the latter in a heavily abraded shell-tempered coarseware and a brown-glazed splash ware respectively.

Also present in this trench was a modern posthole and some root disturbance. Sealing the archaeology was 0.60 m of sub-soil, overlain by 0.20 m of garden topsoil.

5.1.2 Trench 2 (Fig 4)

Trench 2 measured c.17 m by 1.6 m and was excavated to a maximum depth of c.1.10 m below the ground level. The trench was aligned east-west and natural subsoil was recorded at a depth of c.0.40 m below ground level.

The only feature present in Trench 2 was a ditch (204) measuring 2.60 m wide and 0.20 m deep. At the southern side of the trench the ditch opened out into a pit or sump which was 1.60 m wide and over 0.60 m deep, the ditch was fairly gentle in profile whilst the pit was fairly steep. The ditch fill and the upper fill of the pit area comprised a light grey clay containing a single sherd of medieval pottery and cattle bones. The lower pit fill was a brownish grey silty clay (205), the result of weathered material washed into the ditch. Further evidence for tree root activity and another modern post hole were also recorded. The ditch was truncated by a modern drainage pipe (201). The archaeology was sealed by 0.45 m of sub-soil, a B-horizon and 0.30 m of top soil.

5.2 Finds

5.2.1 Worked Flint

A single undiagnostic, residual flake was recovered from context 101.

5.2.2 Medieval Pottery

A single green-glazed sherd, thought to date from the early to mid 13th- century was found in fill 206. Two 13th- century sherds recovered from fill 101 are probably residual. They included one heavily abraded shell-tempered coarseware sherd and a brown-glazed splash ware sherd.

5.2.3 Post-medieval pottery

A single sherd of 19th- century yellow and brown-glazed pottery was found in fill 101.

5.2.4 Fired clay

A large piece of poorly fired, white clay, medieval daub with a large wattle impression was found in fill 206.

5.2.5 Metalwork

A nail of indeterminate date and a 17th- century or later buckle from fill 101 comprise the metalwork assemblage.

5.2.6 Bone

The distal end of a right bovine humerus, the proximal end of a right bovine tibia and a bovine phalange were retrieved from fill 206. An unidentifiable bovine long bone fragment was retrieved from fill 101.

5.2.7 Building material

Medieval or post-medieval tile fragments were found in fills 101 and 206. with the tile from 101 having a peg hole, a possibly intrusive slate fragment was found in fill 101.

6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 Reliability of field investigation

The site has been subject to disturbance and truncation as a result of landscaping in the garden of 10, Amwell Place and service trenches. It is nevertheless clear that archaeological features of medieval or post-medieval date survive on the site.

6.2 Overall interpretation

The trenches contained few archaeological features, but given the small scale of the trenching the evidence is sufficient to indicate significant medieval activity on the site. The presence of residual medieval material in an apparently post-medieval feature (100) casts some doubt on the dating of the individual features, particularly given the limited exposure. The pottery finds nevertheless add to the evidence of medieval activity recorded at Cholsey Vicarage and elsewhere in the vicinity during previous investigations (See 1.3).

6.2.1 Summary of Results

Trench 1 revealed a pit (100), containing two sherds of pottery dated to the 13th- century but also post medieval finds. No function can be suggested on present evidence, and the

date remains in question, although a 17th- century or later date seems most likely.

Trench 2 contained a ditch (204), which produced a single 13th- century pot sherd and daub and a incorporated a possible drainage sump.

It is possible that both features are post-medieval in date with the medieval finds being residual.

6.2.2 Significance

As little is known about the medieval activity recorded in this area, the early finds are of some interest. However the small scale of the development, the mixed date of the finds and truncation of the deposits limits the potential of the site for further work.

6.2.3 Impact of development

The possible medieval ditch recorded in Trench 2 lies within the proposed gardens. Although the ditch and any other features in this area could potentially be damaged by landscaping work, the impact could be limited to the proposed building footprint and service trenches by restricting the depth of landscaping work.

The post-medieval pit in Trench 1 (201) would fall partly within the footprint of House 2 and is therefore likely to be damaged by the foundation trenches. The feature probably extends into the garden to the south.

Andrew Norton
Oxford Archaeological Unit
November 1999

Bibliography and references

Wilkinson, D (ed) 1992 *Oxford Archaeological Unit Field Manual*, (First edition, August 1992)

Appendices: Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory

Trench	Ctxt	Type	width (m)	thick. (m)	Comment	Find	No.	Date
001	100	Cut	2.00	0.60	Pit			
	101	Fill		0.60	Pit fill	Pot BM Bone Fe buckle Flint	3 2 1 2 1	post-med
	102	Layer		0.20	Topsoil			
	103	Layer		0.60	Sub-soil			
	104	Layer			Natural chalk			
002	200	Layer		0.30	Topsoil			
	201	Drain			Modern drain			
	202	Layer		0.25	Sub-soil			
	203	Layer		0.20	B-Horizon			
	204	Cut	2.60	0.80	Ditch and sump			
	205	Fill		0.40	Sump fill			
	206	Fill		0.20	Ditch fill	Pot BM Daub Bone	1 1 1 3	medieval ?
	207	Fill		0.30	Ditch fill			
	208	Layer			Natural chalk			

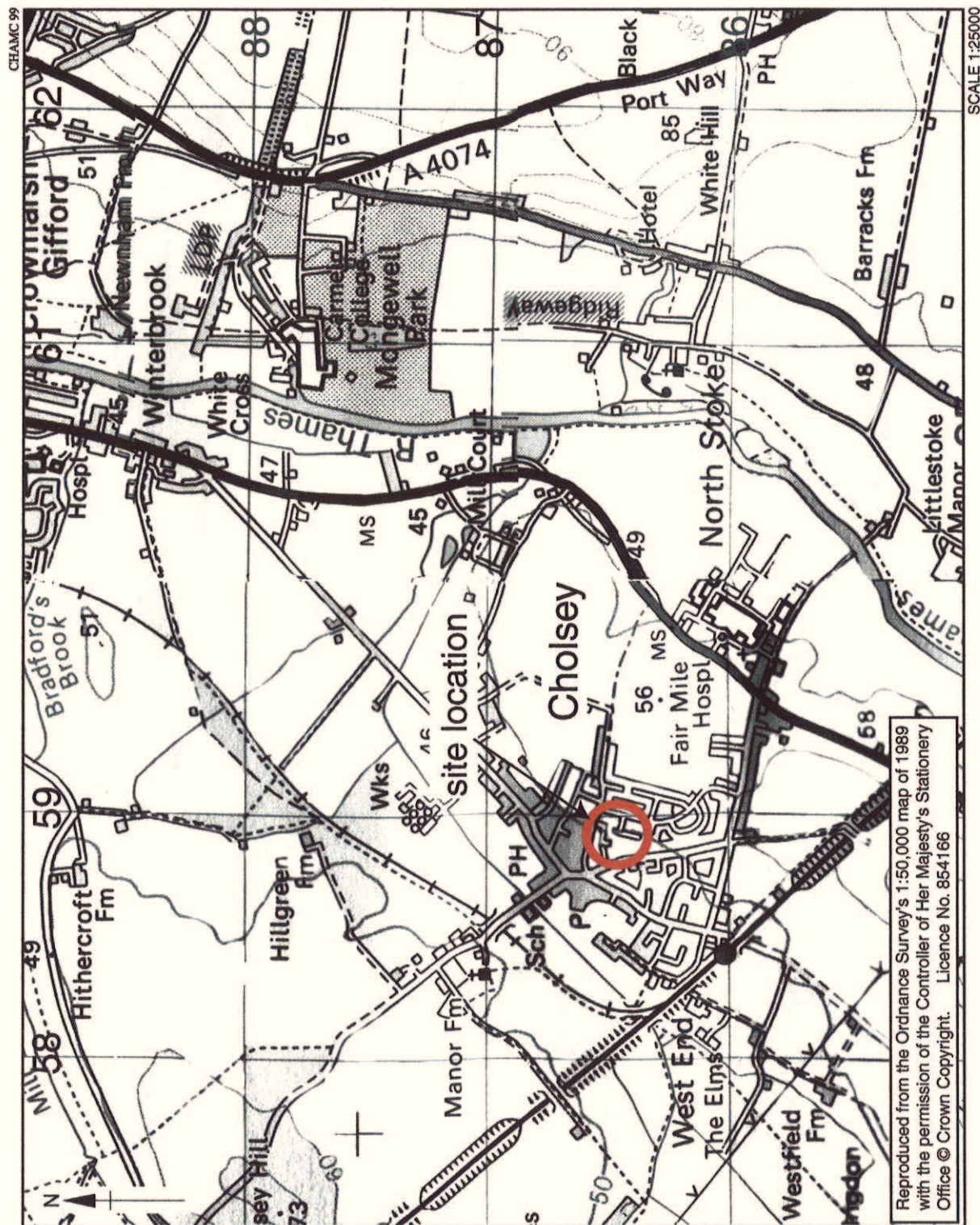


Figure 1: location of site

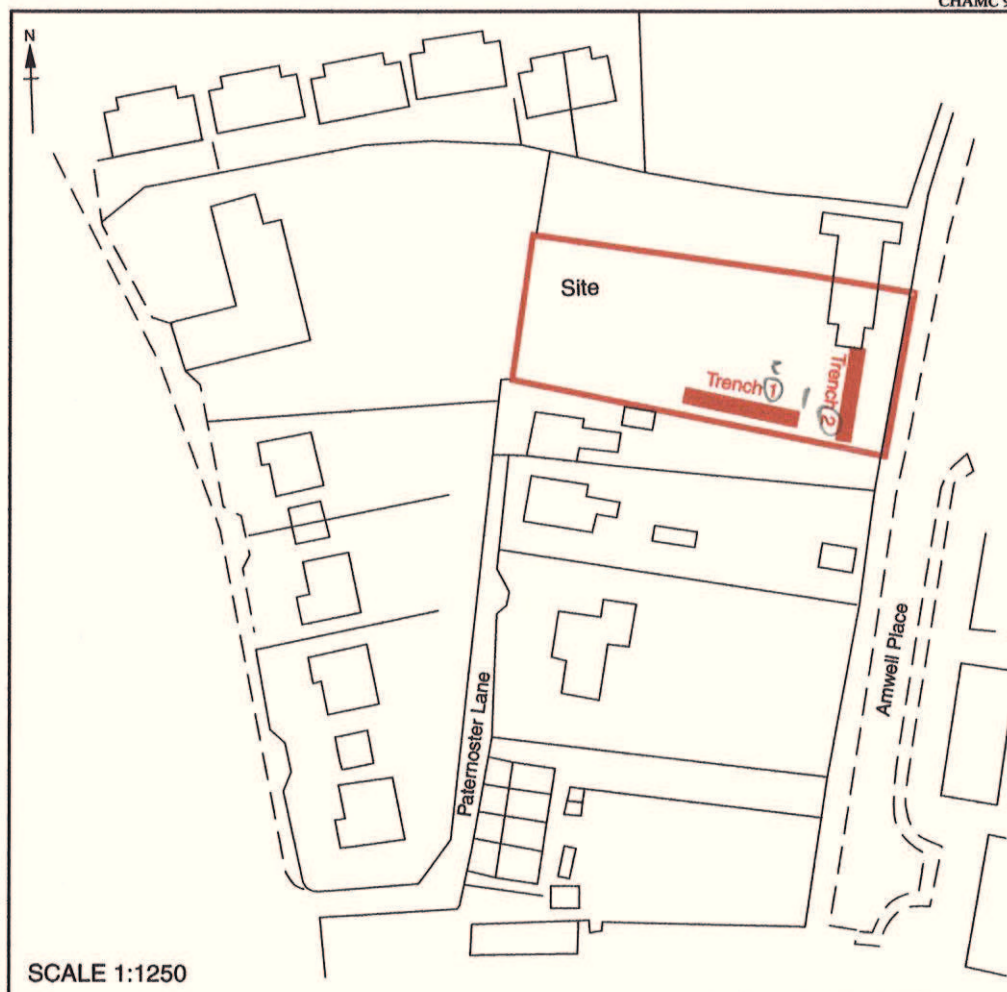


Figure 2: trench location plan

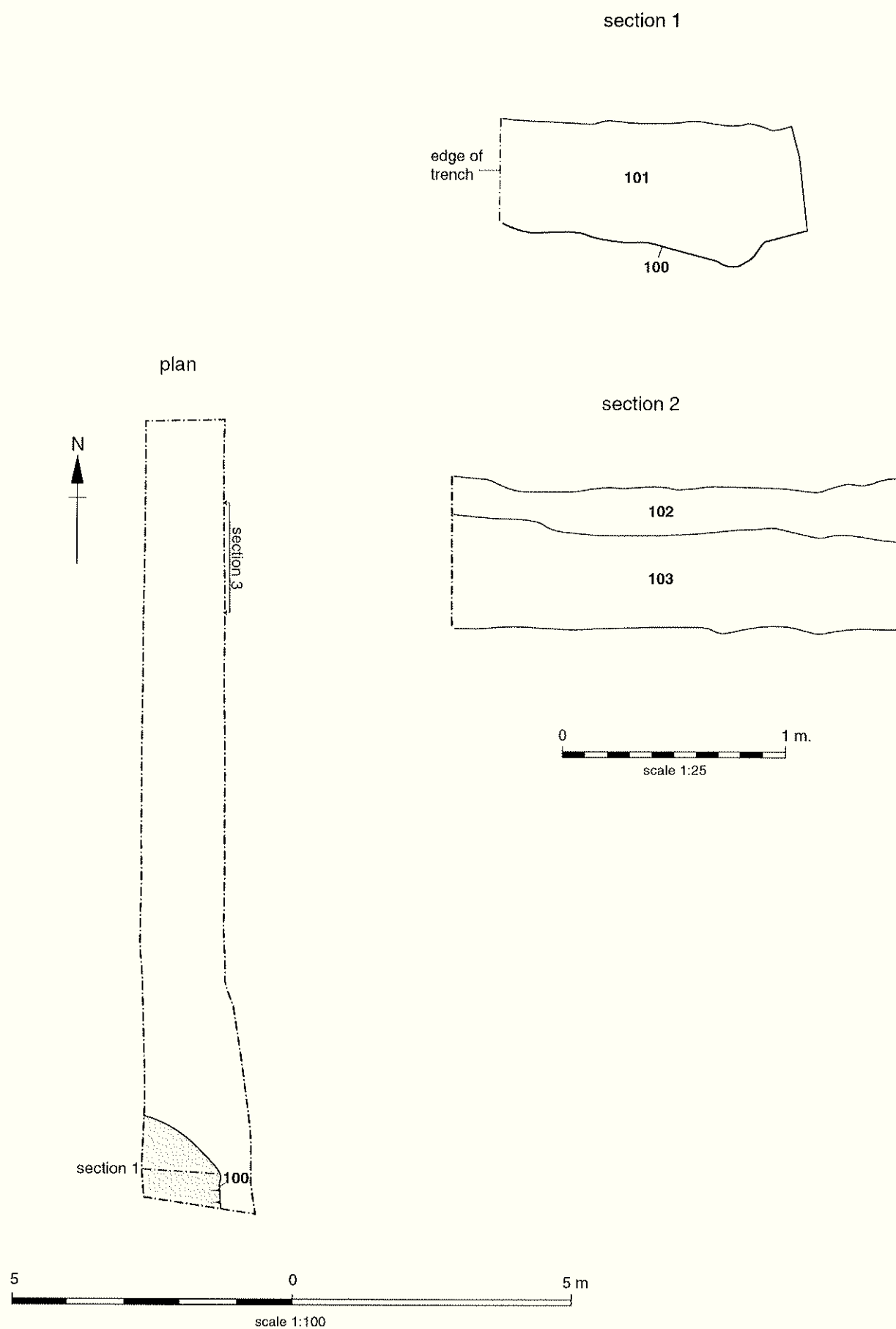


Figure 3: trench 1, plan and sections.

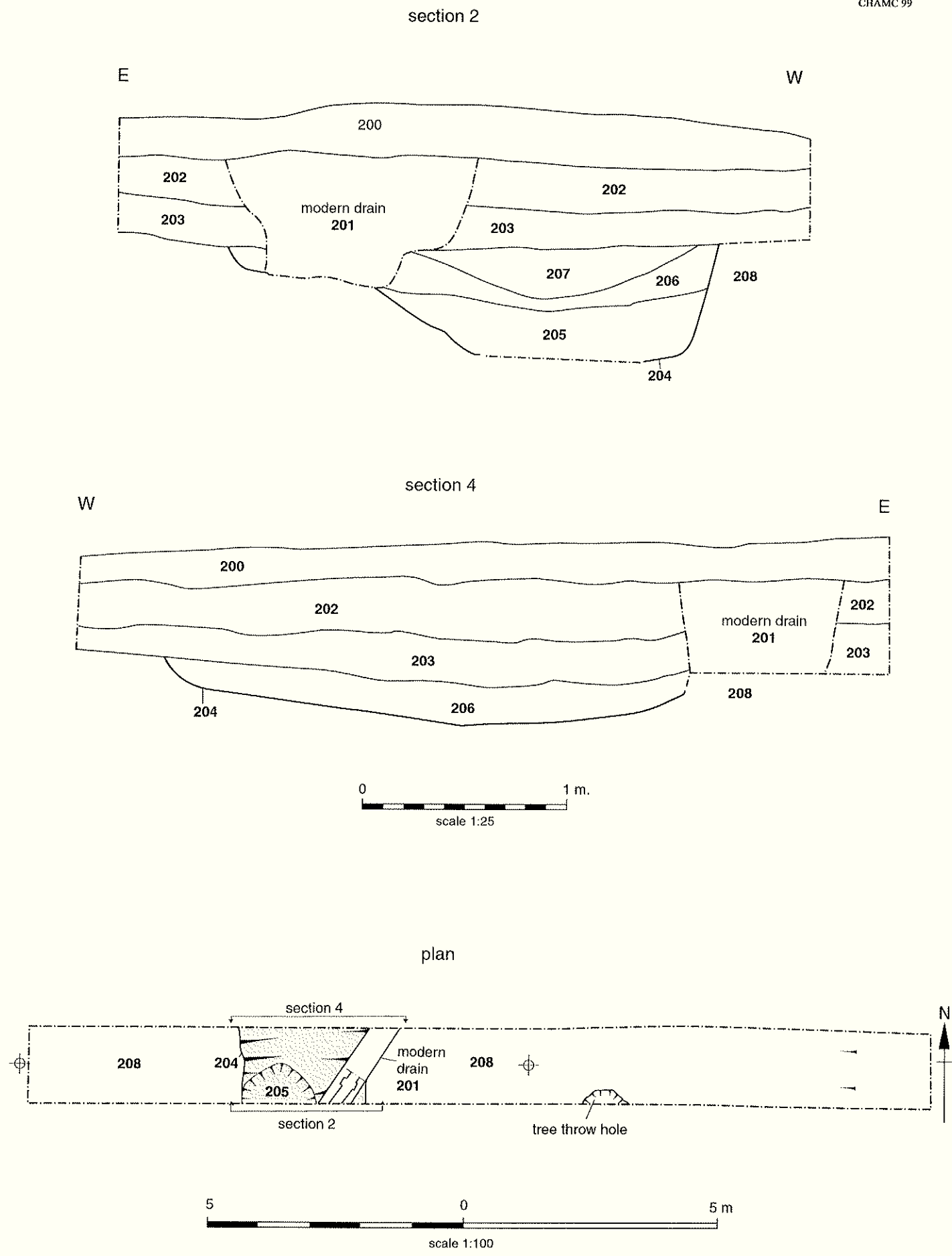


Figure 4: Trench 2, plan and sections.



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