

Development at Swindon Data Centre Wroughton Wiltshire



Archaeological Evaluation Report



Oxford Archaeology

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SUMMARY

The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OA) carried out a field evaluation at the Swindon Data Centre on behalf of Watkins Gray International LLP in July 2003. A line of probably recent postholes and a pit were found beneath the remains of modern leveling and made-ground. These probably relate to construction of the WWII hospital.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In July 2003 OA carried out a field evaluation at the Swindon Data Centre, Wroughton, on behalf of Watkins Gray International LLP to extend the present Beta Building of the Swindon Data Centre to the west to form the Gamma Building. A Written Scheme of Investigation (OA 2003) was produced by OA in response to a Brief prepared by Roy Canham on behalf of the local planning authority, Wiltshire County Council.

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The development site is located to the south of Burderop Hill and adjacent to the north/south section of the B4005 Brimble Hill Road (NGR SP 5100 7935). The development site measures approximately 0.4 hectares in area. The geology is London Clay over Lower Chalk (BGS *Soil Survey of England and Wales* sheet 266).

1.2.2 The site is currently open ground to the west of the Beta Building of the Swindon Data Centre and lies at approximately 180 m OD.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The site of the proposed development lies within an area of the former Swindon Military Hospital. This was demolished in the 1990s to make way for the present Data Centre.

1.3.2 While previous discoveries in the area have indicated remains of Romano-British and Iron Age settlement activity, the site was subject to ground contamination clearance during its development in the 1990s and subsequent made ground levels following the clearance cover most of the site.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

2.1 General aims

2.1.1 To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the development area.

2.1.2 To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality, date and depth of any archaeological remains present.

- 2.1.3 To establish the palaeo-environmental potential of any features or deposits within the site.
- 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 the excavation of a 2% sample of the proposed development area; this equated to two trenches, Trench 1 measuring 19m long by 1.6 m wide and Trench 2 measuring 25 m long by 1.6 m wide (Figs. 3 and 4).
- 3.1.2 The trenches were excavated under archaeological supervision by a JCB mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket.
- 3.1.3 Site procedures were as defined in the Written Scheme of Investigation (OA 2003) and practices were carried out in accordance with the OA Fieldwork Manual (Wilkinson 2nd ed. 1993).
- 3.1.4 Fieldwork took place over two days (July 10th – 11th) and was carried out by a project supervisor and a technician, under the direction of Andrew Holmes, Assistant Manager for Smallworks. The project was under the overall direction of Nick Shepherd MIFA (Head of Fieldwork).

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

- 3.2.1 The trenches were cleaned by hand and finds retrieved from contexts as appropriate.
- 3.2.2 The trenches were planned and two sample sections drawn from each trench.
- 3.2.3 Trenches and sections were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film.

3.3 Finds

- 3.3.1 There were no finds recovered during the course of the excavation.

3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

- 3.4.1 There were no deposits encountered on site deemed suitable for environmental sampling.

3.5 Presentation of results

- 3.5.1 A general description of the soils and ground conditions is given. This is followed by descriptions of the individual trenches, with a brief discussion of the results. Details of individual contexts are given in Appendix 1.

4 RESULTS: GENERAL

4.1 Soils and ground conditions

- 4.1.1 Deposits sealing London Clay consisted of made-ground and demolition layers from the leveling of the former military hospital. During investigation, weather conditions were good and the ground was dry.

4.2 Distribution of archaeological deposits

- 4.2.1 A modern drainage ditch filled with ballast was found in Trench 1. An undated pit and three postholes were found in Trench 2.

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Description of deposits

Trench 1 (Fig. 3)

- 5.1.1 Trench 1 was aligned north-east by south-west within the south-west of the site, and measured 19 m long by 1.6 m wide. It was excavated to a depth of 2 m deep at the north-east end and 1 m deep at the south-west end.
- 5.1.2 London clay natural (103) was encountered at a depth of between 0.05m and 0.74m beneath present ground levels at c.170.25 OD. The natural was cut by a modern drainage trench 106, 0.42 m from the north-eastern end of the trench. At the centre of the trench the natural was cut by modern excavations (105) to clear contaminated deposits from the site. Here a mixed deposit (104) consistent with the remains of the demolished hospital were encountered up to 0.7 m deep and covered a 12 m length of the trench. Both (104) and (103) were overlain by a friable mid-greyish brown clayey-silt subsoil (102) up to 1.0 m deep with frequent brick, brick dust and medium to large pebbles. This was then sealed by the topsoil (101) measuring up to 0.21 m deep.

Trench 2 (Fig. 4)

- 5.1.3 Trench 2 was aligned east to west in the north-east of the site (Fig. 2) and measured 25 m long by 1.5 m wide by 0.5 m deep. A 2.7 m sondage was excavated at the west end of the trench to a further depth of 0.5m.
- 5.1.4 The natural (203) was found at a depth of between 0.05 m and 0.74 m beneath the present ground level at 170.41 OD. Four possible archaeological features were identified cut into the surface of the clay. Three circular postholes with straight sides and rounded bases (204, 206 and 208) were aligned north-east by south-west and had an average dimension of c. 0.15-0.2 m in diameter by 0.07 – 0.09 m deep. These were filled by a compact orange-reddish brown silty sand loam (205) (207) and (209) respectively. Pit 210, found just west of the three postholes, measured approximately 0.5 m in diameter and 0.21 m deep and was filled by a compact orangey-reddish brown silty sand with patches of grey (211). Overlying these features and the natural was a demolition layer (202) measuring 0.15 m – 2.0 m deep containing patches of chalk, brick, tile and concrete. This was overlain by a compact light grey-brown orange silty clay deposit (202) with chalk, brick, tile and concrete inclusions which was sealed by the topsoil (201).

6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 Overall interpretation

Summary of results

- 6.1.1 The underlying London clay horizon was readily identified and any possible features beneath disturbed ground were investigated. The postholes and pit identified in Trench 2 were probably modern as was the drainage ditch in Trench 1 and were likely to be associated with the construction of the military hospital, indicated by the material within the fills of these features.
- 6.1.2 No other archaeological features were found. The demolition layer from the military hospital was identified but there was no evidence of finds from the hospital or of features or deposits that date to earlier than this period.

Significance

- 6.1.3 No archaeological features were found other than a possible modern pit and postholes and a modern drainage ditch. The site is believed to have little archaeological potential having been affected by the demolition and made-ground undertaking in the 1990's.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1							
Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
101	Layer	Topsoil	0.15-0.21				
102	Layer	Subsoil	0.16-1.0				
103	Natural	London clay	0.05-0.74				
104	Layer	Demolition deposits	0.21-0.70				Modern
105	Cut	Contamination clearance phase					Modern
106	Cut	Drainage trench					Modern
Trench 2							
Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
201	Layer	Topsoil	0.15				
202	Layer	Demolition/levelling layer	0.15-2.0			CBM	Modern
203	Natural	London Clay	0.05-0.74				
204	Cut	Posthole	0.07	0.15	0.15		Modern
205	Fill	Fill of posthole 204					Modern
206	Cut	Posthole	0.09	0.19	0.19		Modern
207	Fill	Fill of posthole 206					Modern
208	Cut	Posthole	0.09	0.2	0.2		Modern
209	Fill	Fill of posthole 208					Modern
210	Cut	Pit	0.21	0.4	0.56		Modern
211	Fill	Fill of pit 210					Modern

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

- OA, 1992 *Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D. Wilkinson, 2nd edition, 1992)
- OA, 2003 *(Development at Swindon Data Centre, Wroughton, Wiltshire - Written Scheme of Investigation)* Oxford Archaeology Client Report

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Swindon Data Centre, Wroughton, Wiltshire

Site code: WRSDC 03

Grid reference: SP 5100 7935

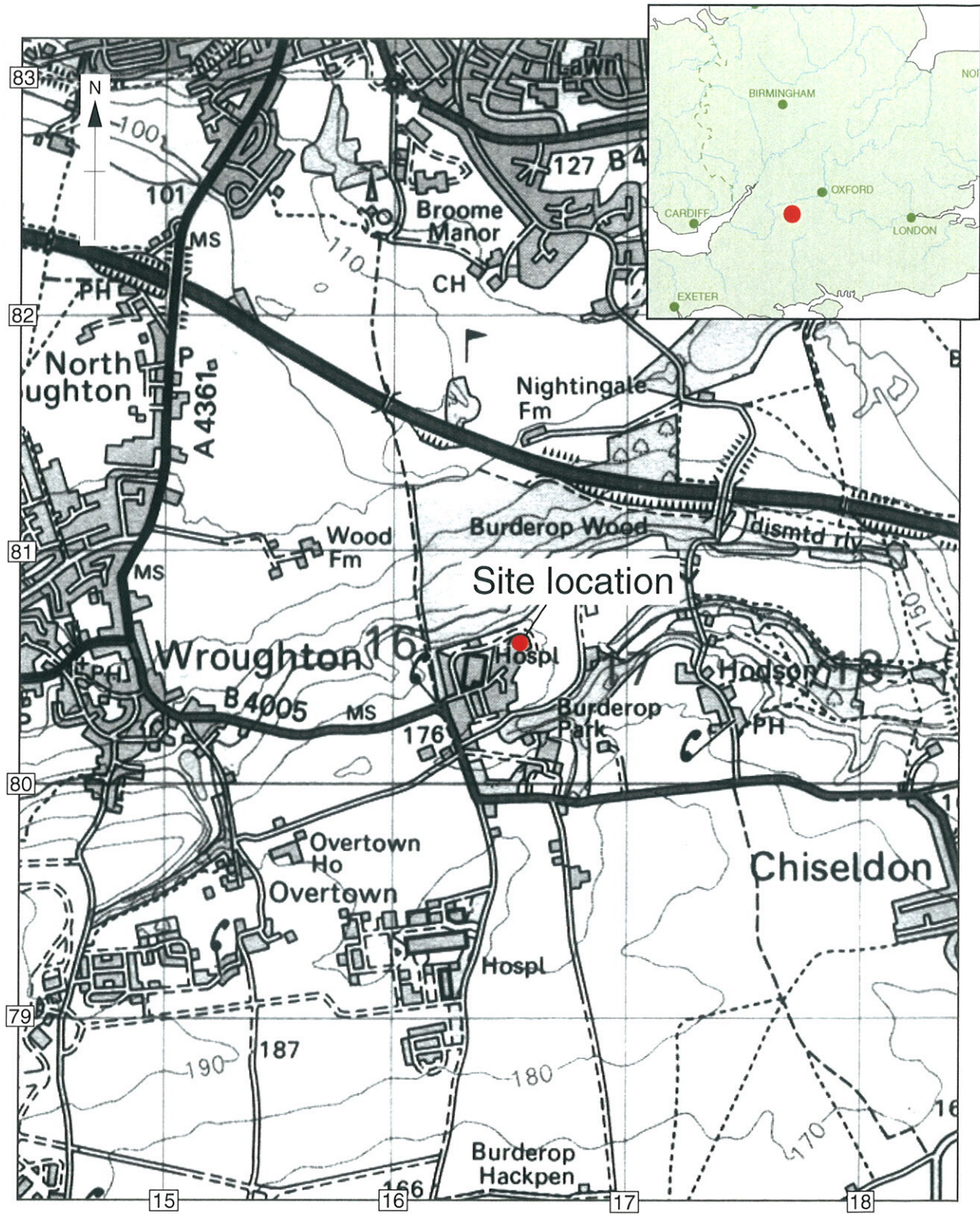
Type of evaluation: Two trenches.

Date and duration of project: Two days, July 10th – 11th 2003

Area of site: 0.4 hectares

Summary of results: Three aligned postholes and a pit of possibly modern date were identified.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OAU, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Wiltshire County Museums Service in due course.



Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location

WRSDCEV HP Data Centre Swindon

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Key



Archaeological
Evaluation Trench

Drawing
No.

CAIWRDCEV001
1B

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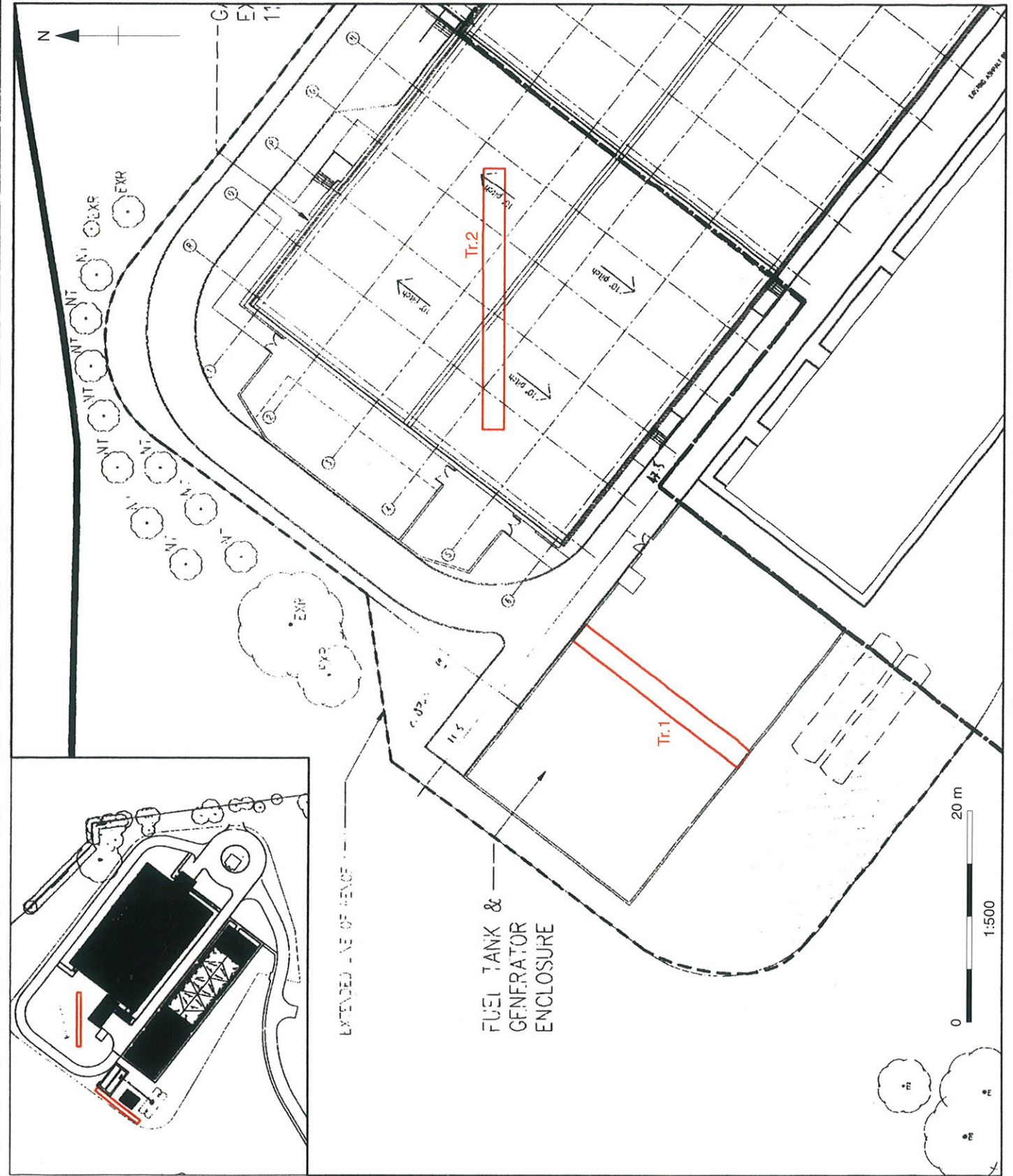
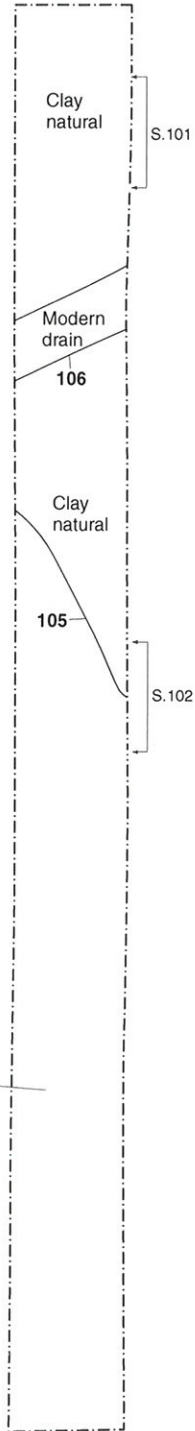


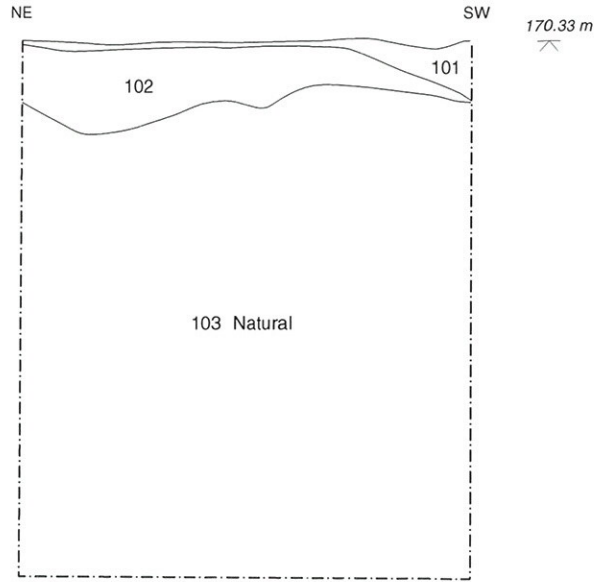
Figure 2: Trench location plan showing proposed development (inset current buildings)



Trench 1
Plan 101



Trench 1
Section 101



Trench 1
Section 102

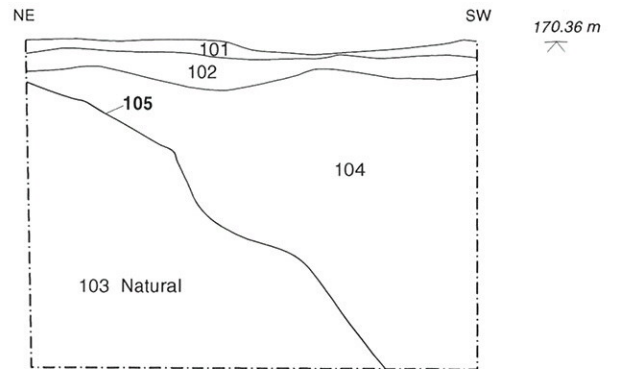


Figure 3: Trench 1 plan and sections

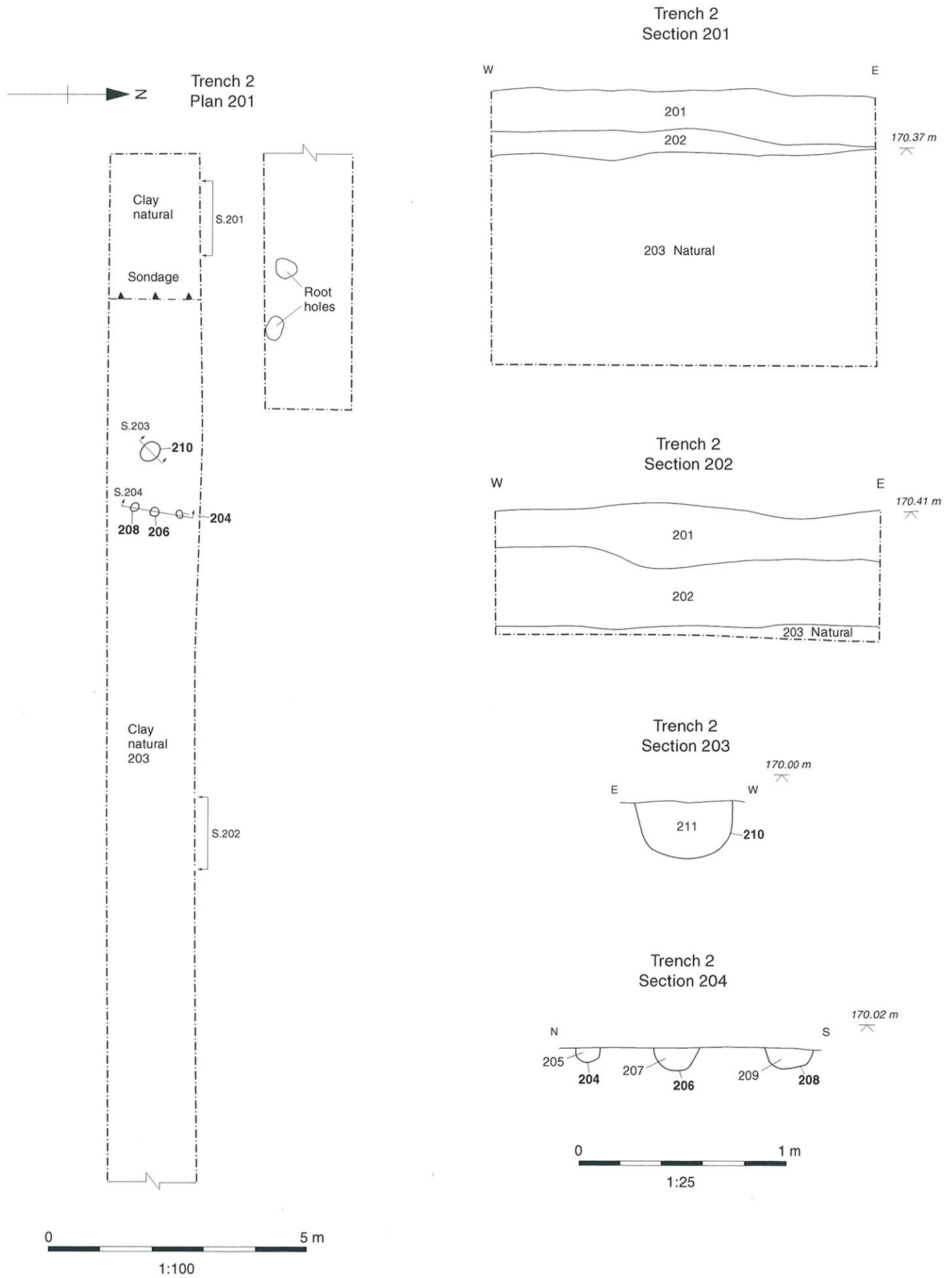














Figure 4: Trench 2 plan and sections

	Section line and number
	Interior section line and number
	Limit of excavation
	Sondage / Interior limit of excavation
	Fill line and number
	Cut line and number
	Structure number
	Unclear boundary
	Stones
	Hachures indicate inclination of slope inside excavated feature
	Levels
	Grid point



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