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WINDMILL BUSINESS PARK
NAPTON ON THE HILL, WARWICKSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

August 1994

**WINDMILL BUSINESS PARK, NAPTON ON THE HILL,
WARWICKSHIRE, NGR. SP 4540 6140.**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT.

Summary

The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) carried out an evaluation in an area of proposed development at Napton on the Hill, east of the present scrapyards and the Oxford canal. Most of the hillside had been quarried for clay for a brickworks formerly located close to the site. A small area of undisturbed archaeological features principally of early Roman date was located in the southeastern corner of the site.

Introduction

An application for development of an area of c 6.75 ha at the above named site has been submitted to Stratford upon Avon District Council (Ref S94/0194). The site lies on Lower Lias clay. Part of a possible Anglo-Saxon cemetery was encountered some 200 m south of the site (Warwicks SMR No 739) and a stray find of a sherd of Roman pottery was made only c 100 m south (Warwicks SMR No WA 742). In view of the possibility of archaeological features (particularly of Anglo-Saxon date) occurring within the development area the local planning authority required further information so that the application could be determined on cultural heritage issues. Accordingly an archaeological evaluation was requested to establish the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present.

Methodology

It was proposed to excavate 23 trenches 30 m long, distributed regularly across the development area. In the event, evidence for extensive disturbance from recent quarrying was widespread and the number of trenches excavated was reduced to only 11. This change of strategy was agreed with Mr Douglas Moir, the Planning Archaeologist for Warwickshire County Council. In addition some trenches were relocated in order to define the extent of the archaeological features identified in the southeast corner of the site. The trenches were dug using a 360° excavator equipped with a 1.60 m ditching bucket. They were excavated to an initial depth of 1.20 m, except where archaeological deposits were present.

All archaeological features were manually cleaned, recorded in section and plan and photographed. Sufficient features were excavated to understand their character and date. Owing to modern disturbance the topsoil was not sieved for artifacts. No

environmental samples were taken as a consequence of the dryness of the deposits.

Context recording was by the OAU standard method (OAU Field Manual ed D Wilkinson 1992)

Results

Trenches 2, 7, 13, 14, 16, 17, 20, 21 and 23 were excavated and produced no archaeological features, due to disturbance caused by quarrying. Trenches 18 and 22 in the southeastern part of the site contained various archaeological features.

Trench 18

The subsoil in the trench was a patchy yellow to brown clay. Limestone was revealed at the SW end of the trench. Three ditches and a gully were partly excavated by hand. Three other features (18/7, 18/11 and 18/12) were recorded but not excavated.

Ditch 18/5 was 1.20 m wide and 0.50 m deep with a U-shaped profile, aligned almost NW-SE. This feature was truncated to the W by a modern disturbance (18/3), but enough of it was seen in section to establish its orientation. Pottery from the fill of this feature is dated to the 2nd century AD.

Ditch 18/13 was 1.20 m wide and 0.58 m deep with a V-shaped profile and aligned c SW-NE, ie at right angles to 18/5. Pottery recovered from the fill of this feature is dated approximately to the middle of the 1st century AD. Immediately E of 18/13 and on a diverging alignment was a further ditch (18/15). This lay obliquely across the trench and only its western edge was visible in plan. The ditch was at least 1.60 m wide and 0.80 m deep, with a 25 degree sloping side and a concave bottom where seen. A few Iron Age sherds were recovered from the fill, along with pottery from the late 1st-2nd century AD.

Within the angle between ditches 18/5 and 18/13 was a group of miscellaneous features. The most clearly defined of these was a small gully 18/9, aligned parallel to ditch 18/3 and seen to terminate within the trench. It was 0.35 m wide and 0.18 m deep with a U-shaped profile. No pottery was recovered from this feature. 18/9 may have cut a large ?pit (18/12) which projected from the SE side of the trench, but the relationship was not entirely clear. The relationship between 18/12 and 18/11, a possible N-S aligned linear feature to the N, was equally uncertain. Between 18/9 and ditch 18/5 was a small possible posthole 18/7.

The feature fills were generally of grey-brown silty clay, usually with small limestone fragments. Some also contained charcoal flecks.

At the SW end of the trench feature 18/5 was cut away by 18/3, probably a modern clay pit. The fill of this and all the other features was overlaid by a mixed dumping layer of varying thickness up to 1.05 m.

Trench 22

The subsoil was a blue Lias clay with limestone fragments. Six gullies/ditches cutting this deposit were seen and excavated.

The earliest feature in the trench seems to have been 22/13, a N-S aligned gully cut by later features in the central part of the trench. It was 0.33 m wide and 0.14 m deep. No finds were recovered from the fill of this feature.

A further N-S aligned ditch (22/6) was seen in the west end of the trench, it was 0.90 m wide and 0.21 m deep, with a flat U shaped profile. The fill of this feature contained pottery from the 2nd century.

In the central part of the trench and partly cutting the N-S gully 22/13 was a group of features aligned c SE-NW. Three of these gulleys seemed to be related (and their fills were subsumed under a single cut number 22/4). From W to E these were 22/10 (0.50 m wide), 22/11 (0.55 m wide) and 22/12 (0.30 m wide). The profiles of the gullies were all U shaped and they ranged from c 0.10-0.06 m in depth.

Pottery from all these features dates from the first half of the 2nd century AD. These gullies were sealed by a 0.50 m thick deposit of dark grey silty clay (22/5), which contained a large quantity of early to mid 2nd century pottery.

Just E of the group of gulleys was a further small SE-NW aligned ditch/gully (22/8), 0.45 m wide and 0.20 m deep. This also produced pottery of 1st-2nd century date.

Topsoil depth over these features and layer 22/5 was variable but on average was little more than 0.10 m.

Finds

The principal finds from the site were pottery. Small quantities of animal bone, fired clay and iron slag were also recovered, along with two undiagnostic flint flakes.

The pottery was mostly dateable to the mid 1st-mid 2nd centuries, though a very few sherds in sand tempered fabrics appear to be in a middle Iron Age tradition. These included a rim sherd with oblique incised lines on the top of the rim.

The principal Roman coarse wares were in three traditions. These were grog-tempered wares, perhaps loosely of 'Belgic' type and of 1st century date (these were scarce); a characteristic vesicular (originally shell- or organic-tempered) fabric very common in this area and in Northamptonshire to the east, and locally produced sandy reduced coarse wares. These are likely to have derived from the

Wappenbury industry, sited some 12 km to the northwest, or from other production sites within the same area working within the same tradition. Vessels in these fabrics made up the bulk of the material, but other fabrics represented were possible Mancetter-Hartshill and Verulamium region white wares, black-burnished ware from Dorset and two sherds of samian ware. The most striking individual vessel was a large hook rimmed mortarium of a characteristic late 1st-early 2nd century form. The fabric of this piece is unusual and it cannot have derived from either Mancetter-Hartshill or Verulamium, the most likely sources of supply for mortaria at this period. A more local, but unlocated source seems likely.

Discussion

Most of the evaluation area appeared to have been very heavily disturbed by clay digging and backfilling associated with the Brickworks (Warwicks SMR No WA 379) which formerly occupied the site. In the areas of disturbance no archaeological deposits have survived, but features were encountered in a limited area in the southeastern part of the site. The extent of surviving archaeological deposits is defined by their absence in Trenches 23, 20 and 17 to the north and west and by the existence of a modern feature at the southwest end of Trench 18. In the extreme southeast corner of the site modern disturbance was also encountered across Trench 16. The situation was less clear in Trench 21 to the south, however, though no archaeological features were detected. On present evidence the maximum extent of the site is no more than c 100 m east-west by c 50-60 m north-south. The occurrence of Roman pottery c 100 m further south may indicate that the site was originally more extensive, but this was only a single sherd which could easily have been redeposited from elsewhere within the quarry area, including from the present site.

The character of the site as indicated by the excavated features is difficult to assess. Two flints may indicate low-level prehistoric activity in the area. The principal features were ditches and gullies, though one possible posthole and a possible pit were also noted. Truncation of deposits at any time from the later 2nd century onwards could have resulted in the removal of layers and slight cut features.

There were two principal orientations of linear features. Three ditches were aligned roughly north-south (18/11, 22/6 and 22/13). Most of the other features were either on an approximately northwest-southeast or a complementary northeast-southwest alignment. One ditch (18/15) diverged more to the east from this latter alignment but could still have been a part of the same broad pattern. It may be possible to see these alignments as part of a system of settlement and field boundaries with a number of phases of development within a relatively short overall period - basically of early Roman date. The relationship of the north-south alignments to this pattern is not entirely clear. Feature 22/13 was clearly earlier than the northwest-southeast alignment but was otherwise undated, and feature 18/11 may possibly have been earlier than a feature (18/12) in turn perhaps cut

by a gully on the northwest-southeast alignment. The north-south ditch 22/6, however, contained pottery of comparable date to that from the northwest-southeast aligned gullies and ditches.

Of all the finds categories only the pottery occurred in sufficient quantity to allow an assessment of the date of the site, but also to indicate, both from the quantity and size of the sherds, that there must have been immediately adjacent domestic settlement. A very few sherds were probably of middle Iron Age date, but they all occurred in association with later material. The bulk of the pottery was assignable to the mid 1st-mid 2nd centuries AD, with an emphasis probably in the early 2nd century. The range of material reflects the major local sources of supply, but there are also extra-regional imports such as black-burnished ware and samian ware. These and a large mortarium suggest that the site, while presumably a fairly ordinary rural settlement (the absence of building material such as roof tile should be noted) was perhaps not quite of the lowest status. Inferences of this kind drawn from such small assemblages must, however, be treated with great caution.

Very few Roman settlements are known on the clay geology in this part of Warwickshire. There are thus no local comparanda for the form and date range of the settlement. The nearest major settlements are Chesterton and Princethorpe, approximately 12 km to the west and northwest respectively, but the rural hinterlands of these sites are still very poorly understood. The Napton site may be typical of rural settlement in this area, but this remains to be demonstrated.

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August 1994

APPENDIX 1: Table of depths of recent disturbance in excavated trenches

Trench	Observed Depth of Disturbance	Comments
2	1.40 m	Possible buried soil at bottom
7	1.20 m	Subsoil
13	1.00 m +	
14	1.20 m	Subsoil
16	1.20 m	Subsoil
17	0.35 m	Undisturbed subsoil?
18	1.05 m	Archaeological features present
20	1.00 m	Subsoil
21	0.80 m	Subsoil
22	0.10-0.20 m	Archaeological features present
23	1.00-1.15 m	Subsoil

Note: Trenches 1, 3-6, 8-12, 15 and 19 were not excavated.

APPENDIX 2: Summary table of archaeological features in Trenches 18 and 22

Context	Type	Width	Depth	Finds	Comment
18/1	Layer	-	1.05 m	not retained	Modern dumping/topsoil
18/2	Layer	-	-	-	Natural subsoil
18/3	Cut	6 m +	0.85 m +	-	?Quarry pit
18/4	Fill	6 m +	0.85 m +	-	Fill of 18/3
18/5	Cut	c 1.20 m	0.30 m	-	Ditch
18/6	Fill	c 1.20 m	0.30 m	pottery and bone	Fill of 18/5 cut by 18/3
18/7	Cut	c 0.50 m	-	-	?Posthole, not excavated
18/8	Fill	c 0.50 m	-	-	Fill of 18/7
18/9	Cut	0.35 m	0.18 m	-	Gully
18/10	Fill	0.35 m	0.18 m	-	Fill of 18/9
18/11	Cut	c 1.50 m	-	-	?Ditch
18/12	Cut	0.70 m +	-	-	?Pit, may cut 18/11
18/13	Cut	1.20 m	0.58 m	-	Ditch
18/14	Fill	1.20 m	0.58 m	pottery and bone	Fill of 18/13
18/15	Cut	1.60 m	0.80 m	-	Ditch
18/16	Fill	1.60 m	0.26 m	-	Upper fill of 18/15
18/17	Fill	c 1.30 m	0.52 m	pottery and bone	Lower fill of 18/15
22/1	Layer	-	0.10-0.20 m	-	Turf and topsoil
22/2	Layer	?c 4 m	max 0.35 m	pottery	?Localised colluvium
22/3	Layer	-	-	-	Natural subsoil
22/4	Cut	c 4 m	max 0.65 m	-	Overall cut for gulleys 22/10, 22/11 and 22/12
22/5	Fill	c 4 m	0.50 m	pottery and bone	Upper fill of 22/4 over gulleys
22/6	Cut	0.90 m	0.21 m	-	N-S ditch
22/7	Fill	0.90 m	0.21 m	pottery and bone	Fill of 22/6
22/8	Cut	0.45 m	0.20 m	-	Gully
22/9	Fill	0.45 m	0.20 m	pottery	Fill of 22/8
22/10	Fill	0.50 m	0.10 m	pottery and bone	Fill of W gully in 22/4
22/11	Fill	0.55 m	0.09 m	pottery and bone	Fill of central gully in 22/4
22/12	Fill	0.30 m	0.16 m	pottery and bone	Fill of E gully in 22/4
22/13	Cut	0.33 m	0.10 m	-	N-S gully
22/14	Fill	0.33 m	0.10 m	-	Fill of 22/13

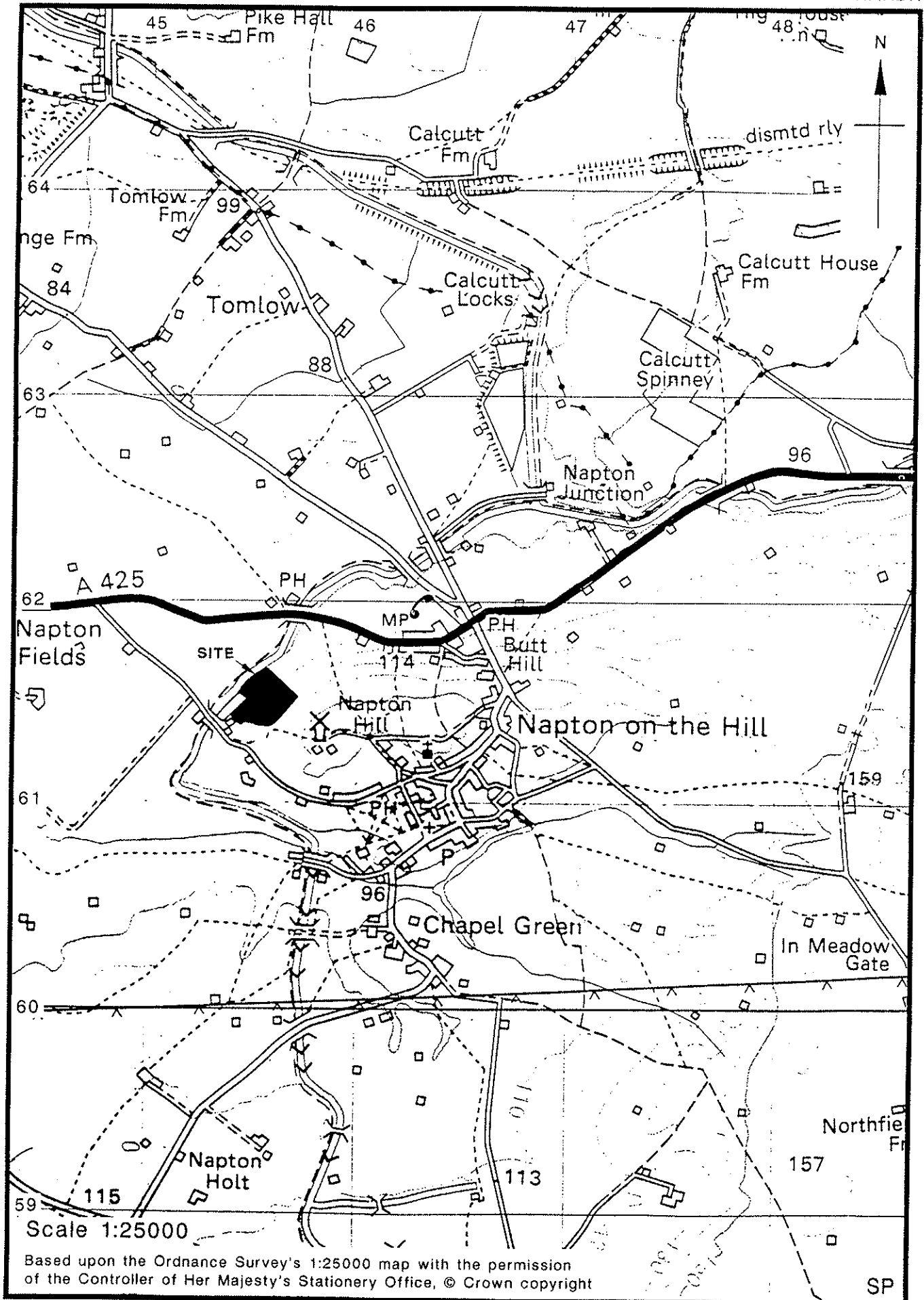
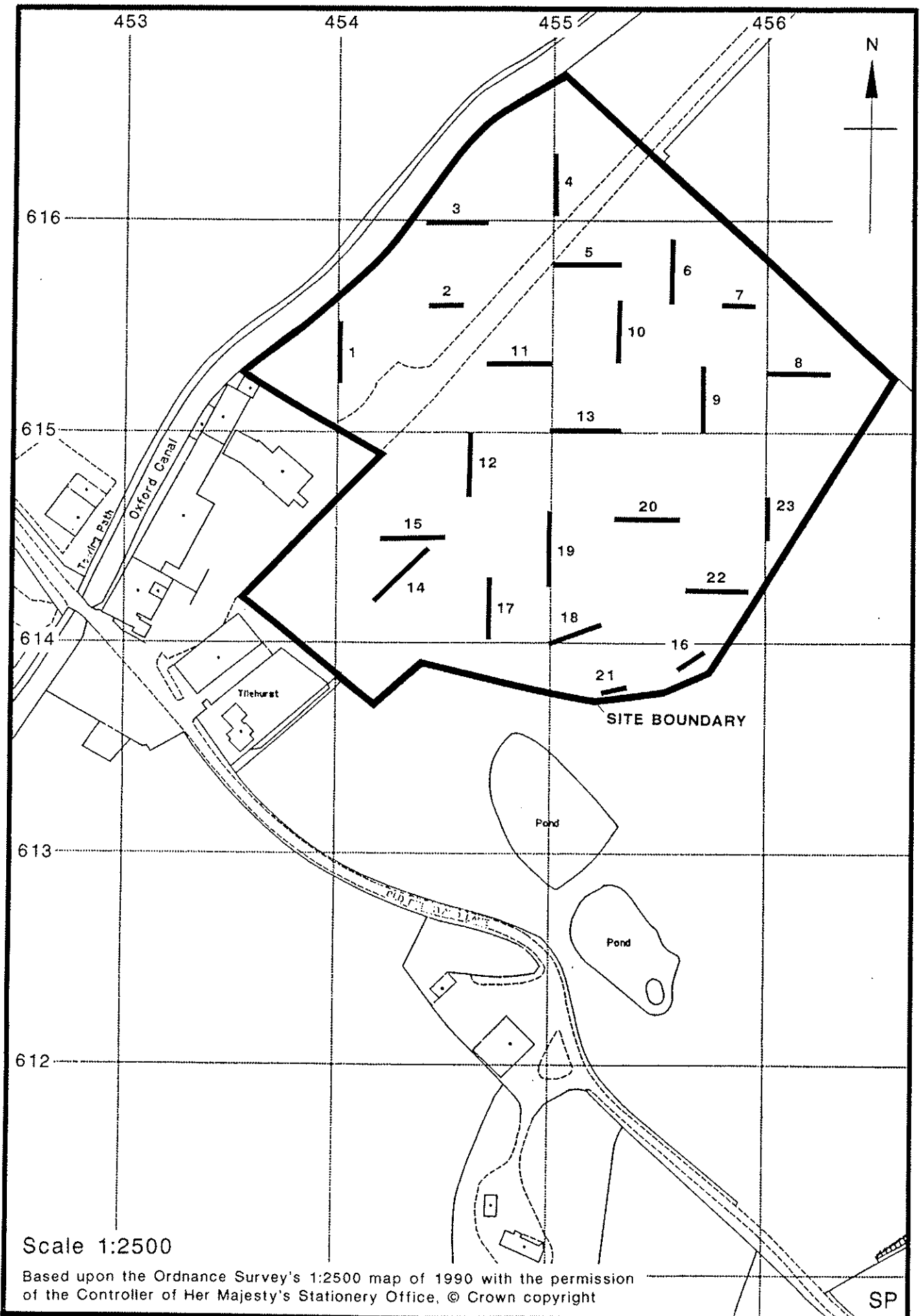


figure 1: Site location

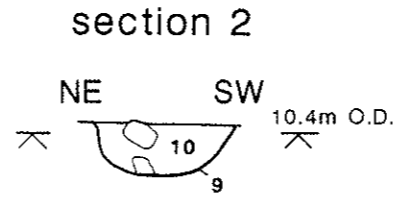
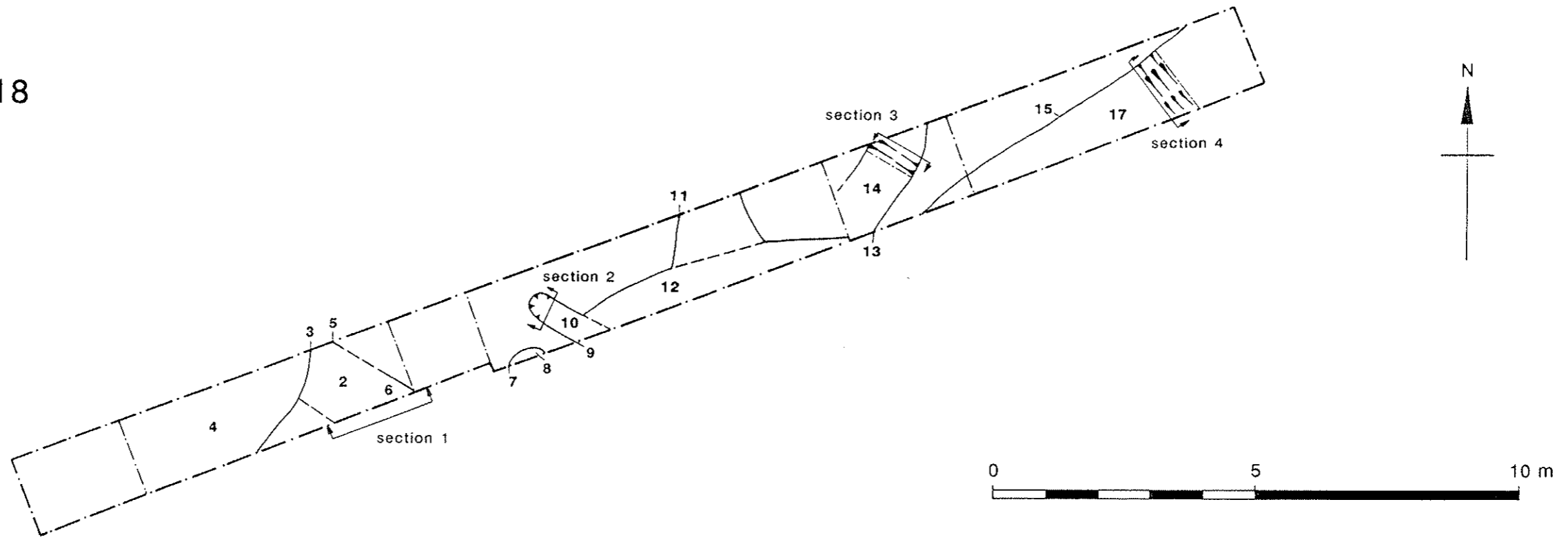


Scale 1:2500

Based upon the Ordnance Survey's 1:2500 map of 1990 with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown copyright

figure 2: Trench location

Trench 18



section 4

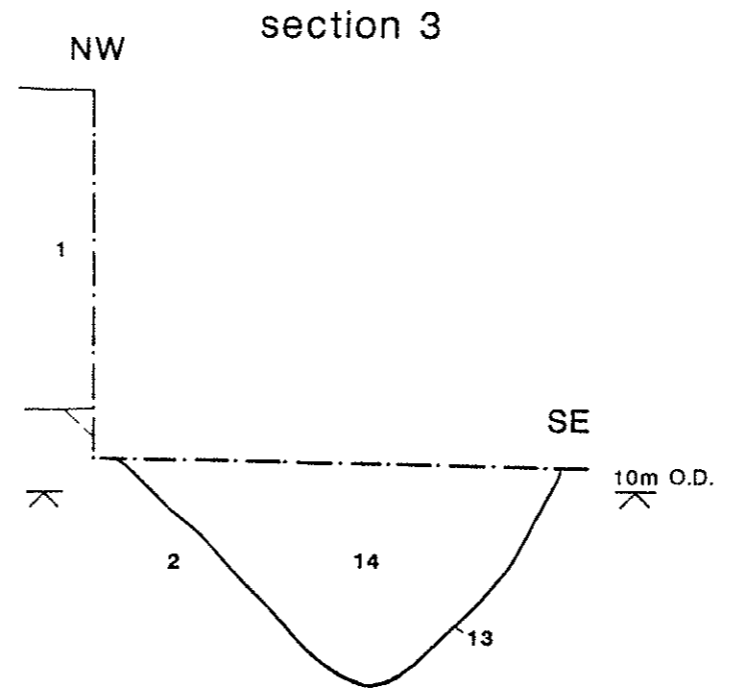
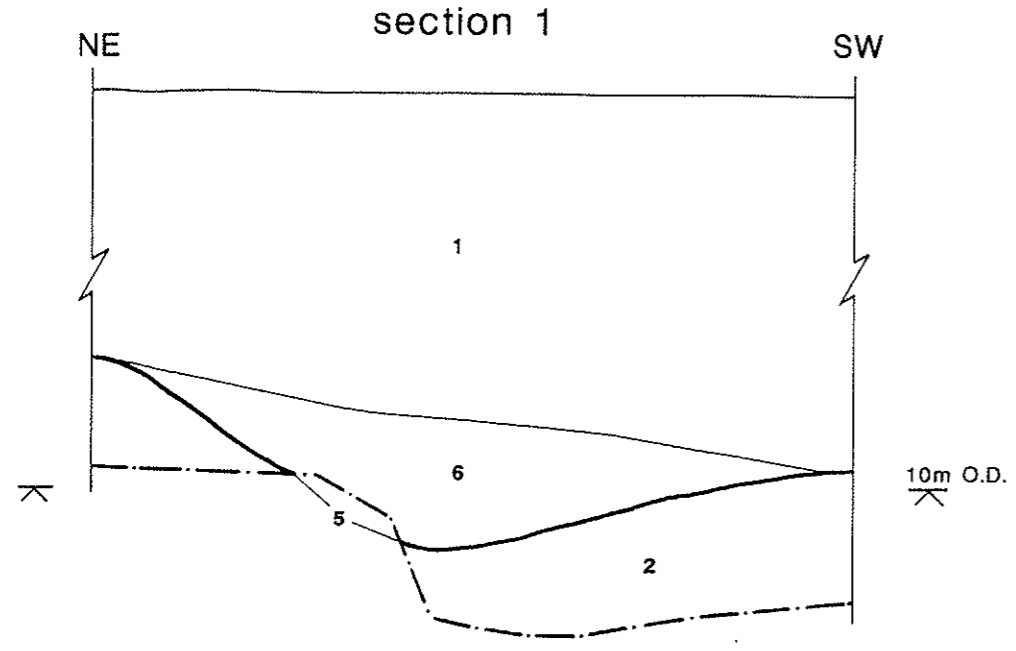
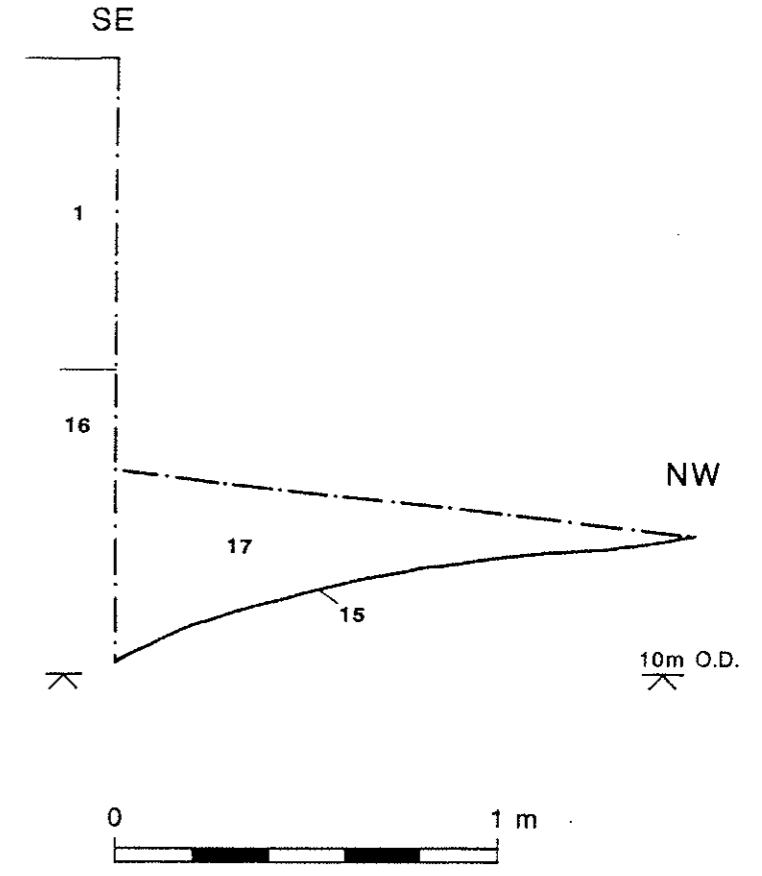


figure 3: Trench 18 plan & sections

Trench 22

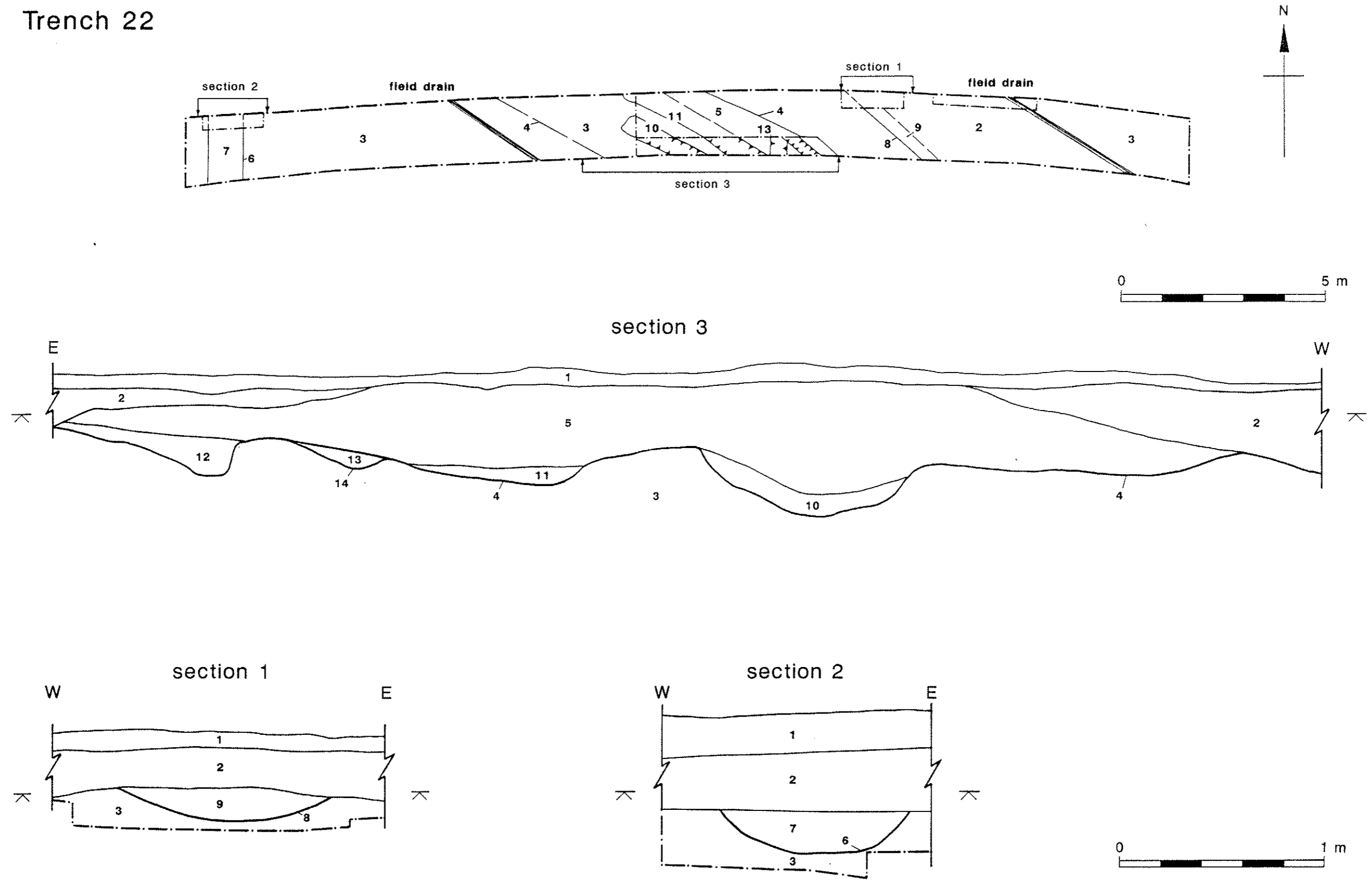


figure 4: Trench 22 plan & sections

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