

6 Church Green Witney Oxfordshire



Archaeological Watching Brief



Oxford Archaeology

26th November 2001

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

In November 2001 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at 6 Church Green, Witney, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 3555 0950). The work was commissioned by Skyline Developments in advance of the construction of a new office building at the rear of the property.

The watching brief revealed a number of late post-medieval/Victorian rubbish pits and late post-medieval wall footings associated with outbuildings on the site at this time. The function of the buildings is uncertain, but they were evidently associated with properties on the street frontage.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In November 2001 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at 6 Church Green, Witney, Oxfordshire (Fig. 1).
- 1.1.2 The work was commissioned by Skyline Developments in respect of a planning application for a new office building (Fig. 2) at the rear of the property of 6 Church Green, Witney (Planning Application No. W98/1006).
- 1.1.3 A project brief was set by Hugh Coddington, Deputy County Archaeologist for Oxfordshire and OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies on geology of cornbrash/limestone at 84 m above OD. The site is situated on the west side of Church Green, Witney (NGR SP 3555 0950) and is 0.1 hectares 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 The development site lies within the early medieval settlement of Witney, whose historic core is centered on St Mary's Church and the Bishop of Winchester's Manor House (known as 'The Bishop's Palace') just to the south of this development area.
- 1.3.3 The crossroads to the north of the Church Green was a focal point for the village; the green itself was the site of the medieval fair and the Butter Cross was constructed at the crossroads in 1638. Large burghage plots are still discernible on both sides of Church Green and the Market Square.

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 make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The foundations were dug using a JCB excavator equipped with a 0.6 m wide bucket. Four square foundation pad pits were excavated first and infilled, and were linked to the building foundation trenches (Fig. 3).
- 2.2.2 All foundation trenches were planned at a scale of 1:100. Sections of trenches containing archaeological structure and features were drawn at scales of 1:20. All excavated features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was also made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 In all the trenches the natural cornbrash was removed to a depth of 0.1 to 0.3 m. The natural sloped from north-east to south-west across the site, and was overlain by a subsoil of dark red-brown clay loam (20) with limestone flecks. The subsoil was a maximum thickness of 0.65 m, and it had been cut by a number of features principally concentrated along the south side of the area of the new building (Figs 3 and 4).

Pit features

- 3.1.2 The fills of a large pit (2) were observed in the western-most foundation pad hole 1 (Fig. 4, section 1). The north edge of pit 2 was seen in the foundation trench to the north. The pit had near vertical sides rounding to a flattish base and it measured 2.4 m x 2 m x 1 m. Its fill was a grey-brown loam (3) with patches of ash and charcoal, limestone rubble, tile, pottery of 19th-century date and other domestic refuse.
- 3.1.3 A pit (10) was observed in the hole for pad 2 (Fig. 4, section 2). Its sides were not seen and it had a flat base. It measured 1.2 m x 0.66 m x 0.32 m. It was filled by light reddish brown silty clay loam (11) with charcoal flecks, small limestone fragments, pottery and bone.
- 3.1.4 In the hole for pad 4 and in the foundation trenches north of pad holes 3 and 4 a large pit/ hollow (13) was observed (Fig. 4, section 3). It had steep sloping sides rounding to an uneven base and measured 6 m x 4 m x 0.8 m. It was filled by a greyish brown

silty clay loam (14) with patches of ash, charcoal, fragments of ceramic building material, late post-medieval pottery and glass.

- 3.1.5 The foundations in the centre of the east side of the building footprint cut through a modern pit (28), which was recorded in plan (Fig. 3). It was sub-rectangular in shape and had near vertical sides and a flat base cut down onto limestone bedrock. It measured 1.6 m x 1.25 m x 1.2 m. It was filled by a dark grey-brown silty sand loam (29) with charcoal flecks, ash, limestone fragments, 19th-century pottery, bone and clay pipe.
- 3.1.6 In pad hole 3 along the north-south foundation trench was a rubbish pit (24) with steep sloping sides rounding to shallow concaved base (Fig. 4, section 6). The feature measured 0.6 m x 1.1 m x 0.44 m. It was filled by a light brown silty sand loam (25) with charcoal flecks, limestone fragments <0.03 m, patches of red sand and pottery sherds.

Wall 5, south-west part of site

- 3.1.7 In the south-west corner of the site, the corner of a wall (5) was exposed in the hole for pad 1, and it continued into the hole of pad 2 (Figs 3 and 4, section 1). The wall was constructed in a foundation trench (4) with vertical sides and flat base that was 0.7 m wide and 1 m deep. The trench cut down through the fill (3) of the large pit (2) and into the cornbrash.
- 3.1.8 Wall 5 was 0.6 m wide consisting of tabular fragments of limestone and bonded with a coarse yellow-brown mortar. The backfill of the construction trench comprised dark grey-brown silty loam (6) with gravel, charcoal flecks and small fragments of limestone.

Building 21, north-west part of site

- 3.1.9 In the north-west corner of the site were the remains of a building (21), comprising parts of the south and east walls (Figs 3 and 4, section 4); the stub end of a possible partition wall (22) was seen in the south facing section.
- 3.1.10 The walls forming structure 21 were constructed in a foundation cut (30) with a vertical side and flat base, which cut through layers 19 and 20 into the natural (Fig. 4, section 4). The walls comprised tabular fragments of limestone of drystone construction and stood nine courses high.
- 3.1.11 The probable partition wall (22) was 0.45 m wide and 0.75 m high and was of the same construction type as wall (21). There was a space of 0.4 m between the inner face of wall (21) and partition wall (22), presumably for access. The interior of the building had been backfilled with dark grey-brown silty clay loam (23) including sand, mortar, limestone fragments, late post-medieval/Victorian pottery and glass.

Wall 26, east part of site

- 3.1.12 In the centre of the site running east to west and seen in two of the foundation trenches was a wall footing (27) (Fig. 3, and Fig. 4 sections 6 and 7) in a construction trench (26) set into layer 20. The wall was at least 0.75 m wide and 0.45m deep, extending below the depth of the excavations, and comprised small angular limestones.

Garden wall 16

- 3.1.13 Along the east side of the site were the footings of a north-south aligned ?garden boundary wall (16) (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4, sections 3 and 7). The footing was in a vertical-sided flat based trench (15), which cut through deposit 14 and across the truncated earlier wall footings 27. The ?garden wall footing (16) consisted of packed limestone fragments, fragments of tile and brick. The construction trench was infilled with dark grey-brown silty sand loam (17).
- 3.1.14 Some of the features and structures were overlain by a former topsoil (19), consisting of dark red-brown silty sand loam (19) (Fig. 4, sections 5, 6, 7), which was sealed by modern dark topsoil (7) below demolition rubble and gravel (8) make up for the concrete surface.

3.2 Finds***Pottery***

- 3.2.1 A number of pottery sherds were recovered from some of the deposits and layers. A mixed assemblage of white china, red earthenware and decorated glazed cooking jars was recovered from context 3. Contexts 11 and 14 contained transfer ware willow pattern, white china and red earthenwares. Contexts 16 and 19 contained white china and large fragments of red earthenware cooking vessels, and red earthenware pottery with external purple glaze was recovered from context 23, 25 and 29. None of the pottery need date any earlier than the late 18th - 19th centuries.

Other finds

- 3.2.2 Glass fragments were recovered from contexts 16, 19, 23 and 25. None of the material is medieval, and by association with the pottery dates to the late 18th-19th century. A near complete bottle came from context 3. Clay pipe fragments were recovered from contexts 3, 11, 14, 19 and 29. The pieces are poorly fired and are dated in association with pottery. A single bowl was recovered with a small heel typical of late 18th-century types.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No environmental samples were taken during the time on site.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The absence of dated medieval deposits from the excavated trenches suggests that prior to the post-medieval period the site was open, and may possibly have been a garden or common land at the rear of the medieval street frontage.
- 4.1.2 The features identified in the south side of the site comprised late post-medieval/Victorian rubbish pits of various sizes, presumably associated with houses on the street frontage at this time.
- 4.1.3 The stone foundations revealed in some of the foundation trenches for the new building suggest that there were at least two outbuildings on the site in the late post-medieval period; the fills of 18th-19th century rubbish pits were certainly cut by the construction trenches for some of these walls. A later garden boundary wall at the east of the site was the latest structure observed.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth/ Height</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i> Finds</i>
1	Cut	1.5 m	2 m	2 m	Hole for pad 1	None
2	Cut	1 m	2 m	2.4 m	Post Med rubbish pit	
3	Fill				Fill of pit 2	Pot, Glass, Clay pipe
4	Cut	1 m	0.7 m	2 m	Foundation trench	
5	Structure	1 m	0.6 m	2 m	Foundation Wall	
6	Fill				Fill of trench	
7	Layer	0.22 m			Demolition layer	
8	Layer				Make up for concrete	
9	Natural					
10	Cut	0.32 m	0.64 m		Small Rubbish Pit	
11	Fill				Fill	Pot, clay pipe
12	Layer				Same as Layer 19	None
13	Cut				Large Pit/Hollow	
14	Fill				Fill	Pot, Glass
15	Cut	0.45 m	0.8 m		Foundation Trench	None
16	Structure	0.45 m	0.43 m		Wall Footing	Pot, CBM
17	Fill				Footing Trench Fill	
18	Layer	0.08 m			Demolition Layer	None
19	Layer	0.3 m			Old Topsoil	CBM, Pot
20	Layer	0.65 m			Subsoil	
21	Wall	0.7 m	0.35 m	2.3 m	Wall	
22	Wall	0.76 m	0.45 m		Wall	
23	Fill	0.96 m			Internal Building Fill	Pot
24	Cut	0.44 m	0.6 m	1.1 m	Small Pit	
25	Fill				Fill of Pit	Pot, Glass
26	Cut	0.5 m	0.75 m		Foundation Trench	
27	Structure				Foundation	Pot
28	Pit	1.2 m	1.25 m	1.6 m	Modern Pit	
29	Fill				Fill of pit	Pot, Glass

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth/ Height</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i> Finds</i>
30	Cut	0.9 m	0.7 m	2.45 m	Foundation Trench	
31	Cut	1.2 m	1.2 m	1.6m	Hole for pad 2	None
32	Cut	0.9 m	1.1 m	1.5 m	Hole for pad 3	None
33	Cut	1.1 m	1.1 m	1.7 m	Hole for pad 4	None

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OA 2001 *6 Church Green Witney, Oxfordshire. Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological watching brief.*

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

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: 6 Church Green, Whitney, Oxfordshire

Site code: WICG 01

Grid reference: NGR SP 3555 0950

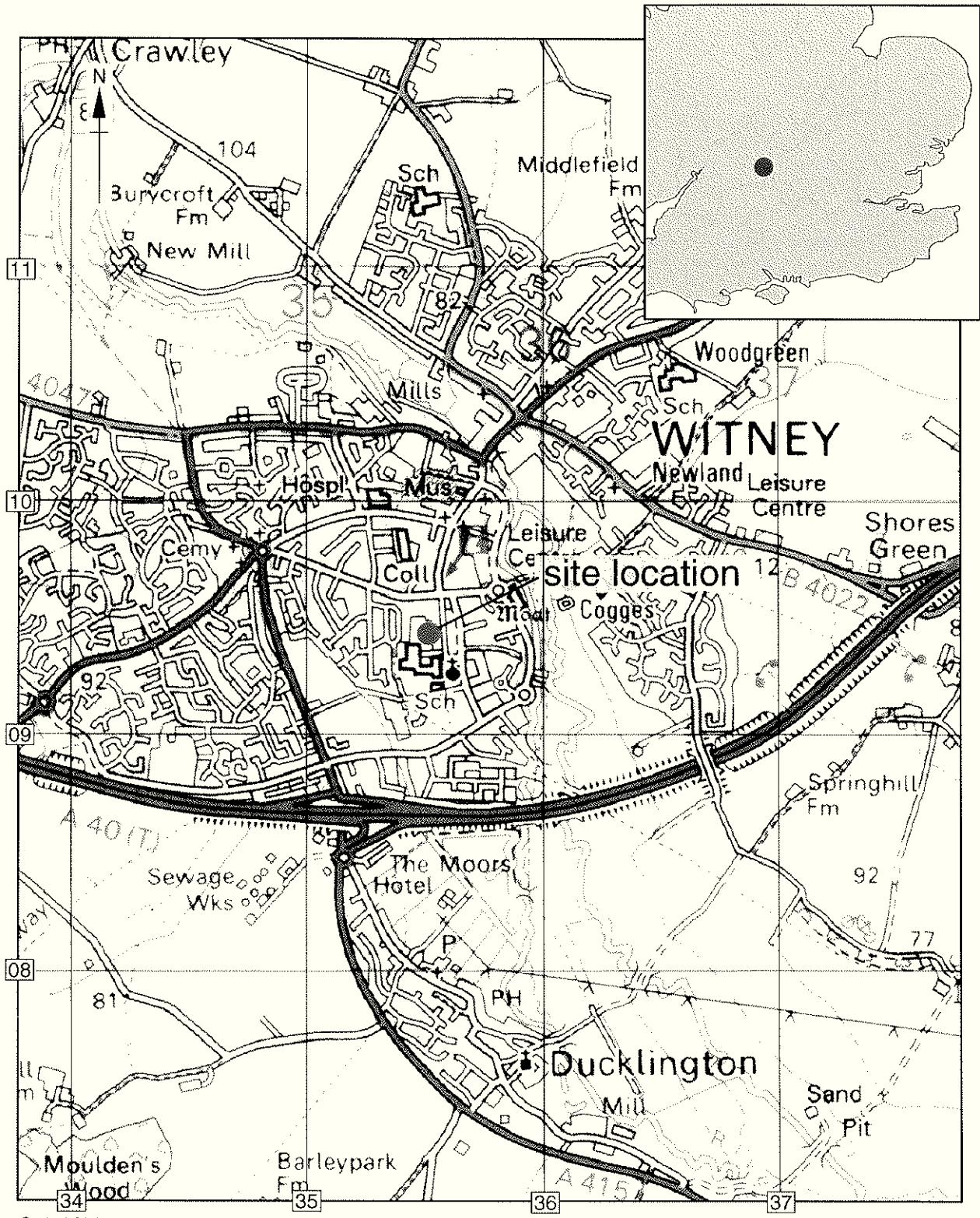
Type of watching brief: Excavation of foundation trench for new office building at rear of property.

Date and duration of project: Three site visits on 12th, 15th and 19th November 2001

Area of site: 0.1 Hectare

Summary of results: A number of post-medieval pits and the remains of at least two post-medieval outbuildings were located on the site.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: 2001.176



Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location

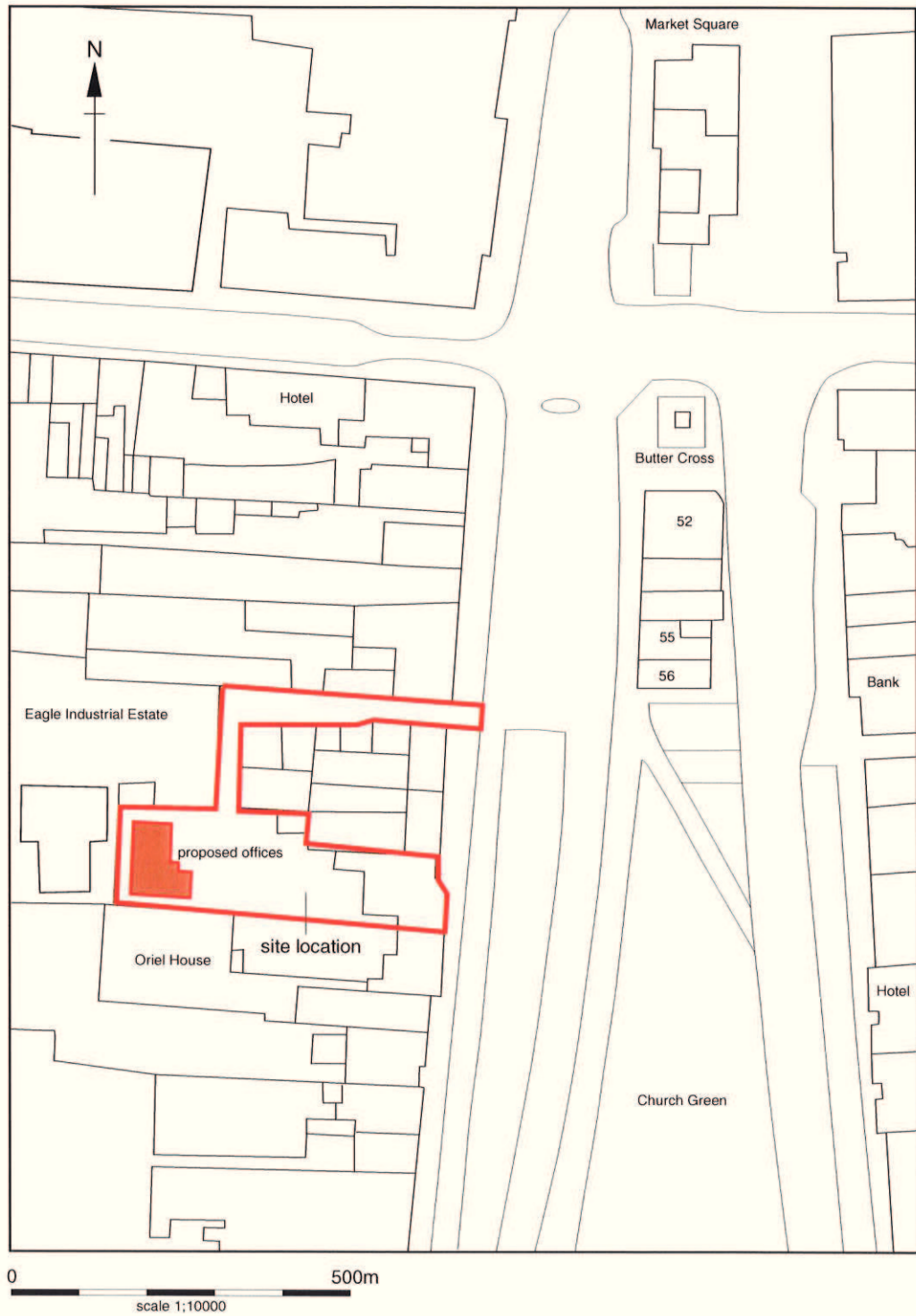


Figure 2: Site Location

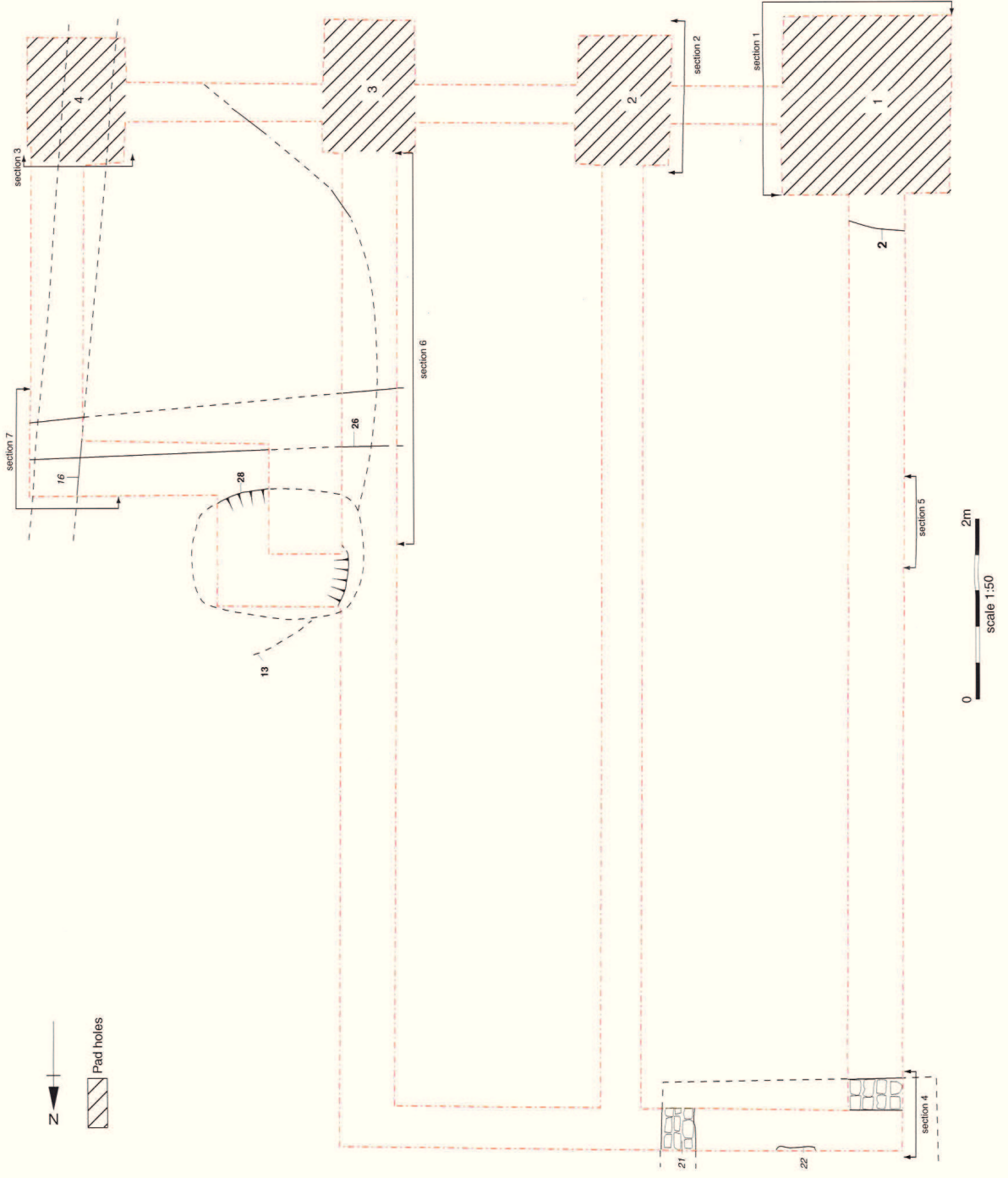


Figure 3: Site plan of Features, Foundation Trenches and Section Locations

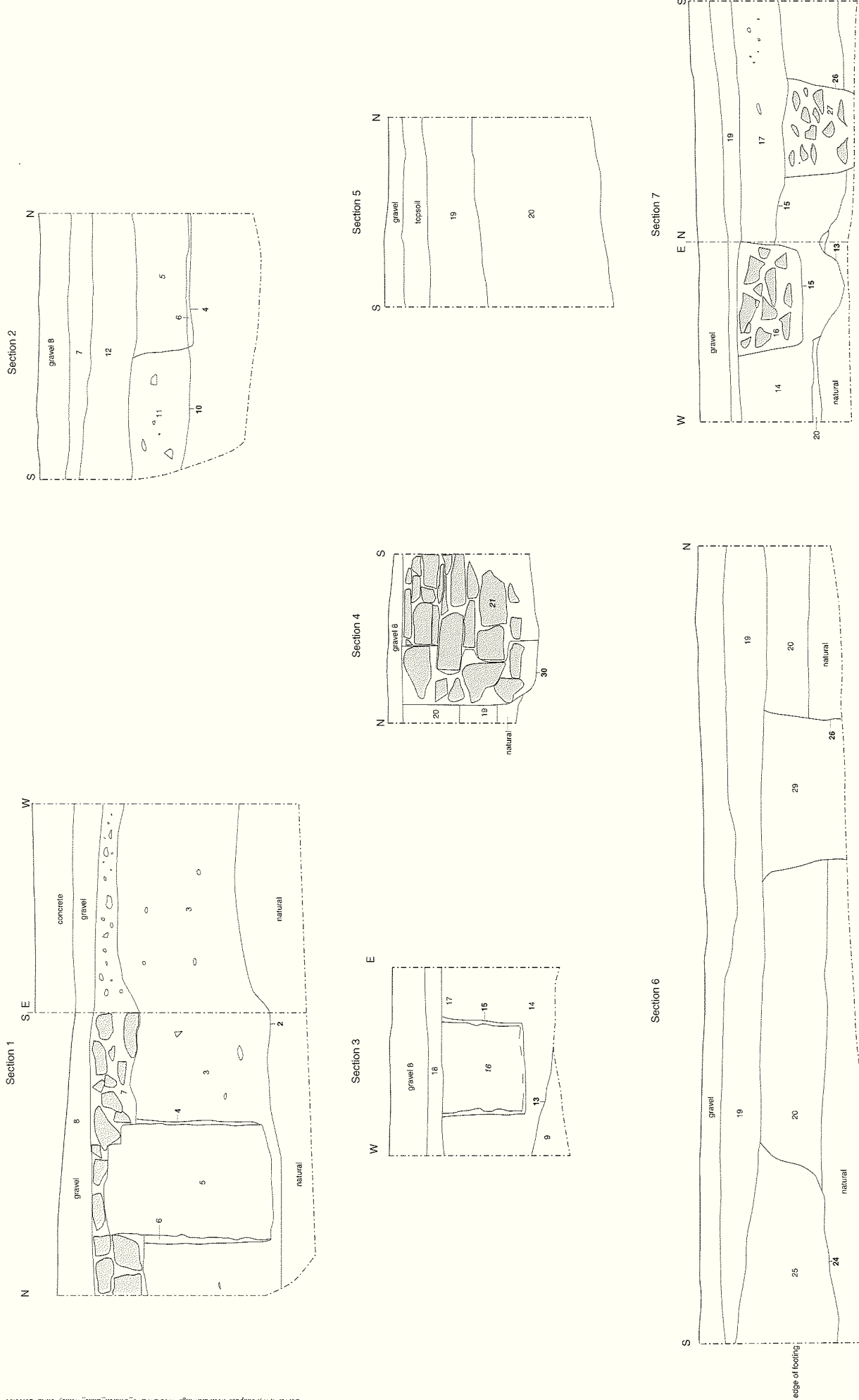


Figure 4 : Sections



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