

# North Lodge Blenheim Park Oxfordshire



## Archaeological Evaluation Report



March 2006

**Client: JG Land and Estates**

Issue N<sup>o</sup>: 1  
OA Job N<sup>o</sup>: 3099  
NGR: SP 426 183

**Client Name:** JG Land and Estates  
**Client Ref No:**  
**Document Title:** North Lodge, Blenheim Park  
**Document Type:** Evaluation  
**Issue Number:** 1  
National Grid Reference: SP 426 183  
Planning Reference: n/a  
OA Job Number: 3099  
Site Code: WOBPAL 06  
Invoice Code: WOBPALEV  
Receiving Museum: Oxfordshire County Museum Services  
Museum Accession No: tba

Prepared by: Bryan Matthews  
Position: P.O.  
Date: 9th March 2006

Checked by: Andrew Norton  
Position: Senior Project Manager  
Date: 17th March 2006

Approved by: Jon Hiller  
Position: Senior Project Manager  
Date: 23rd March 2006

Signed. 

Document File Location: Projects/ Blenheim Palace WOBPAL 06/ Report/Eval  
report final  
Graphics File Location: Server 10:/oapubs1\_rthruz\*WOBPALEV\*North Lodge,  
Blenheim Palace\*AH13.03.06  
Illustrated by: Amy Tiffany Hemingway

**Disclaimer:**

*This document has been prepared for the titled project or named part thereof and should not be relied upon or used for any other project without an independent check being carried out as to its suitability and prior written authority of Oxford Archaeology being obtained. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for the consequences of this document being used for a purpose other than the purposes for which it was commissioned. Any person/party using or relying on the document for such other purposes agrees, and will by such use or reliance be taken to confirm their agreement to indemnify Oxford Archaeology for all loss or damage resulting therefrom. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for this document to any party other than the person/party by whom it was commissioned.*

**Oxford Archaeology**

© Oxford Archaeological Unit Ltd 2006

Janus House

Osney Mead

Oxford OX2 0ES

t: (0044) 01865 263800

f: (0044) 01865 793496

e: [info@oxfordarch.co.uk](mailto:info@oxfordarch.co.uk)

w: [www.oxfordarch.co.uk](http://www.oxfordarch.co.uk)

Oxford Archaeological Unit Limited is a Registered Charity No: 285627

# North Lodge, Blenheim Park Woodstock

NGR SP 426 186

## *ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION*

### CONTENTS

Summary .....	2
1 Introduction.....	2
1.1 Location and scope of work.....	2
1.2 Geology and topography.....	2
1.3 Archaeological and historical background .....	2
2 Evaluation Aims .....	3
2.1 General aims .....	3
2.2 Specific aims.....	3
3 Evaluation Methodology.....	3
3.1 Scope of fieldwork.....	3
3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording .....	3
3.3 Finds.....	3
3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence .....	4
3.5 Presentation of results.....	4
4 Results: General.....	4
4.1 Soils and ground conditions.....	4
4.2 Distribution of archaeological deposits .....	4
5 Results: Descriptions .....	4
5.1 Description of deposits .....	4
5.2 Finds.....	6
6 Discussion and Interpretation .....	6
6.1 Reliability of field investigation .....	6
6.2 Overall interpretation.....	7
Appendix 1: Archaeological Context Inventory.....	8
Appendix 2 Bibliography and References.....	10
Appendix 3 Summary of Site Details .....	10

### LIST OF FIGURES

- Fig. 1 Site location
- Fig. 2 Trench location plan
- Fig. 3 Trench 2; plan and sections
- Fig. 4 Trench 4; plan and section

## SUMMARY

*In March 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at North Lodge, Blenheim Park, Woodstock, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 426 186) on behalf of JG Land and Estates. The evaluation revealed the presence of two limestone wall footings, which were associated with the North Lodge buildings. No other archaeological deposits were identified. Grim's Ditch and Bank survive to the south of the Lodge but do not extend into the evaluation area.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In March 2006 OA carried out a field evaluation at North Lodge, within the grounds of Blenheim Park, Oxfordshire. The work was on behalf of JG Land and Estates in respect of a pre-planning investigation for the refurbishment of North Lodge, and the construction of a number of new buildings and a swimming pool. A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), outlining how OA would deal with any archaeological remains, was prepared (OA, 2006b) and agreed with the Deputy County Archaeologist, Hugh Coddington. The site is centred at NGR SP 426 186.

### 1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 North Lodge lies within the northern part of Blenheim Great Park (Figs 1 and 2) to the west of the Great Avenue. The site generally slopes down very gently from the west. The centre of the site lies at approximately 110 m OD.

1.2.2 The underlying geology of the site is of Jurassic limestone, with marl and mudstone horizons.

### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological background to the evaluation has been the subject of a separate desk study (OA 2006a), which should be referred to for a detailed discussion of the archaeological potential of the area.

1.3.2 North Lodge lies within the Grade I Registered Park and Garden of Blenheim Park, which is a World Heritage Site.

1.3.3 It is of particular note that North Lodge lies just to the north of an extant section of Grim's Ditch, a Scheduled Iron Age earthwork. Where well-preserved, the monument comprises an upstanding bank c 4 m high and 10 m wide, with a ditch c 1 m deep and 8 m wide. Approximately 30 m to the south of the house the ditch and bank are clearly visible, but the monument decreases in height within the North Lodge property and is not visible as an earthwork close to the house (Fig. 2).

1.3.4 North Lodge also lies approximately 150 m to the north of Akeman Street, a major Roman road.

## 2 EVALUATION AIMS

### 2.1 General aims

2.1.1 To establish the presence or absence, extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains within the proposal area that may affect the need for further mitigation during the construction process.

2.1.2 To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of any archaeological deposits uncovered.

2.1.3 To make available the results of the investigation.

### 2.2 Specific aims

2.2.1 To establish the presence or absence of Grim's Ditch, to the east of North Lodge.

## 3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Scope of fieldwork

3.1.1 The evaluation consisted of ten small trenches, measuring between 2 m by 2 m, and 6 m by 2 m. They were located to assess the nature of underlying deposits and the archaeological potential of the site (Fig 2).

### 3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

3.2.1 The overburden was removed under close archaeological supervision by a JCB mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket. Excavation stopped at the upper archaeological horizon or the top of the underlying geology, whichever was encountered first. The trenches were then archaeologically recorded, before further machining was undertaken, to investigate the underlying geological horizons, as part of the geo-technical investigations.

3.2.2 The trenches were cleaned by hand as appropriate and the revealed features were examined to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds. All features were planned and, where excavated, their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. All features and trenches were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

### 3.3 Finds

3.3.1 Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation and bagged by context.

### 3.4 **Palaeo-environmental evidence**

3.4.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified.

### 3.5 **Presentation of results**

3.5.1 Sections 4 and 5 give a description of the ground conditions and soils encountered, together with a distribution of archaeological deposits.

3.5.2 The empty trenches are briefly described, together with a description of the deposits found. Trenches 2 and 4 revealed standing walls and are described separately.

3.5.3 The stratigraphic description is followed by a description of the finds and a discussion and interpretation of the results.

3.5.4 A table of contexts is given in Appendix 1, which gives details of individual contexts.

## 4 **RESULTS: GENERAL**

### 4.1 **Soils and ground conditions**

4.1.1 Typically the underlying geology consisted of fragmentary limestone in sandy clays and silts (cornbrash). It became progressively stonier and harder with depth, and intermittent and irregular patches, or bandings, of clean sandy clays were observed. These deposits were typically overlain by a layer of orange brown silty clay and a thin covering of modern topsoil.

4.1.2 The ground was well-drained, and ground water was not encountered during the investigations.

### 4.2 **Distribution of archaeological deposits**

4.2.1 Apart from the footings of two limestone walls, found within Trenches 2 and 4, no archaeological deposits were identified.

## 5 **RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS**

### 5.1 **Description of deposits**

#### ***Empty trenches***

5.1.1 Trenches 1, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 revealed no archaeological features or deposits. Typically, within these trenches the underlying limestone bedrock (where reached) was found at approximately 3 m beneath the present ground level. The bedrock was overlain by fragmentary limestone in sandy clays and silts (cornbrash), and intermittent and irregular patches and bandings of clean sandy clays. Typically the upper horizon of the limestone was found between 0.3 m and 0.7 m beneath the present ground level. It was overlain by a layer of clean orange brown silty clay, beneath a thin covering of modern topsoil.

- 5.1.2 Trench 3 varied from the sequence described above in that the underlying natural comprised mixed limestone and silty clays. These were overlain by a 0.22 m thick layer of buried topsoil. This deposit contained scattered animal bone and was presumed to be a levelling up spread of soil and domestic rubbish, in a broad area of lower ground to the north-east of the house (Fig 2). The buried soil was overlain by up to 0.24 m of a re-deposited dirty orange brown silty clay and the present topsoil.
- 5.1.3 None of the deposits encountered within these trenches contained any indication of archaeological activity within the area.
- 5.1.4 Details of all deposits are given within the table of contexts (Appendix 1).

### **Trench 2**

- 5.1.5 Trench 2 was located within gardens to the north of the house (Figs 2 and 3) and measured 2.9 m wide x 2.8 m long. The trench was initially excavated down to a depth of 1.2 m, recorded archaeologically, and then subsequently deepened to an overall depth of 3 m, to test the underlying geology.
- 5.1.6 Bedrock was revealed within the bottom of the deepened trench at a depth of 108 m O.D. and was overlain by cornbrash (207). A large feature (208) cut to this level and appeared to slope down sharply towards the house from the north. The cut was 2.4 m deep by at least 1.6 m wide, it was relatively poorly defined, being mostly recognisable by its lower fill (204). Fill 204 contained relatively loose, large flat limestone pieces in a matrix of pinkish brown silty clay. The fill also contained occasional charcoal flecking and small fragments of brick. A small pocket of pale yellow-white sandy silt (206), seen within the western side of the trench, formed the upper fill of this feature. The presence of charcoal and brick fragments within fill (204) indicates that this cut was relatively modern and is probably associated with the construction of the house.
- 5.1.7 A 0.25 m thick layer of compact sandy clay (203), containing frequent small and medium sized limestone, lay above the fills of cut 208. The remains of a limestone wall (201) overlay this layer. The wall was aligned NNW - SSE and consisted of roughly laid courses of un-worked limestone pieces. The wall was 0.44 m wide and survived to a height of 0.28 m. It was noted during excavations that this wall corresponded with an extant corner wall stub, incorporated into a low garden wall. This wall was aligned WSW-ENE across the garden, some 4 m to the north of Trench 2 (Fig. 2).
- 5.1.8 To the west of wall 201 a spread of dark grey-brown sandy clay (205) containing limestone rubble, fragmentary CBM and coal, was revealed. It appeared to be a demolition deposit associated with the wall.
- 5.1.9 These deposits and wall 201 were overlain by up to 0.35 m of topsoil.



#### **Trench 4**

- 5.1.10 Trench 4 lay approximately 6 m to the east of Trench 2, outside of the present garden fence and to the north of the visible remains of Grim's Ditch (Fig. 2).
- 5.1.11 The trench was aligned WSW-ENE, measured 6 m long by 1.5 m wide and was excavated to a depth of 0.95 m. Undisturbed natural deposits of fragmentary limestone in pale orange sandy silts and clays were revealed (402, 404, 406), intermittent layers and pockets of pinkish brown, slightly silty clay were also observed (403, 405; Fig. 4).
- 5.1.12 Within the west of the trench the footings of a NNW-SSE aligned limestone wall (408) were revealed, approximately 1 m to the east of the existing wooden garden fence-line.
- 5.1.13 The wall was built of roughly coursed unworked limestone, bonded with a pinkish brown silty clay. It survived to a height of 0.19 m and was up to 0.4 m wide. A blackish brown clay loam (407) containing broken limestone fragments, frequent coal and charcoal flecking and 17th-18th century pottery, lay to the west of the wall. It seems likely that this deposit was either levelling up for a former pathway, or simply a spread of domestic waste.
- 5.1.14 Wall 408 and spread 407 were overlain by up to 0.14 m of pinkish brown silty clay (401) and a thin spread of modern topsoil.

#### **5.2 Finds**

##### ***Pottery***

- 5.2.1 A sherd of pottery dated from the 17th-18th centuries was recovered from a dumped layer (407).

##### ***Animal bone***

- 5.2.2 Four fragmented sheep bones were recovered from a topsoil deposit (302). The assemblage comprised a left and right humerus, a left sided metacarpal and an unidentified longbone fragment.

##### ***Ceramic building material***

- 5.2.3 Two fragments of brick were recovered from topsoil layer 302 and subsoil layer 203.

## **6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION**

### **6.1 Reliability of field investigation**

- 6.1.1 The underlying natural was fully tested within all trenches and consisted of fragmented limestone with occasional banded clay (overlying limestone bed-rock at depth).



6.1.2 Trenches targeted on a possible continuation of Grim's Ditch revealed the natural at a relatively shallow depth with no indication the ditch or bank materials. The only features identified were two limestone walls which were associated with the house. The recovered finds all appear to be post-medieval in date. No evidence of earlier activity was found and the results of the evaluation appear consistent.

## 6.2 Overall interpretation

6.2.1 The only features identified were the remains of two limestone walls within Trenches 2 and 4. Both of these features are post-medieval in date and are associated with the North Lodge buildings.

6.2.2 During the excavations it was noted that the wall within Trench 2 was aligned with a short corner-stub incorporated into a upstanding ESE-WNW aligned garden wall. The wall was thicker and more substantial to the west of the corner-stub. It therefore seems likely that the revealed wall was the eastern side of a former out-building.

6.2.3 The wall within Trench 4 lay on a parallel alignment, 1 m to the east of the present wooden garden fence-line. This suggests that it is either the remains of an earlier garden wall or possibly a wall bordering a former pathway.

6.2.4 No other features were identified. If Grim's Ditch had continued beyond its present visible extent it should have been clearly visible within Trench 4. Trench 4 extended 6 m across the line of the ditch and was machined down into the underlying limestone to positively identify any possible cut there. It therefore seems likely that the ditch never extended to this area. It may have stopped to the south to allow access or perhaps to respect a natural feature such as woodland.

### *Summary of results*

6.2.5 The remains of two NNW-SSE limestone walls were identified within Trenches 2 and 4. These were probably associated with the North Lodge buildings. No other features were identified.

### *Significance*

6.2.6 The walls were of relatively little interest. It is not thought that Grim's Ditch extends as far as the Lodge, and the absence of any other features or finds suggests that there is no archaeologically significant settlement or activity within the immediate area of the North Lodge House.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1: ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<b>Trench 1</b>							
Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
100	Layer	Topsoil	0.4				
101	Layer	Subsoil?	0.3				
102	Layer	Limestone brash	0.25+				
<b>Trench 2</b>							
Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
200	Layer	Topsoil	0.35				
201	Structure	NNE-SSW aligned wall	0.28	0.44	2.3+		
202	Layer	Pebbly clay	0.06				
203	Layer	Subsoil?	0.25+			CBM	Post-med
204	Fill	Fill of cut 208	2.4+	1.6+			
205	Layer	Demolition deposit?	Unknown				
206	Fill	Fill of cut 208	0.2				
207	Layer	Limestone brash	2.4				
208	Cut	Construction cut?	2.4	1.6+			Post-med?
<b>Trench 3</b>							
Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
300	Layer	Topsoil	0.26				
301	Layer	Re-deposited clay	0.3				
302	Layer	Buried topsoil	0.23			CBM /Animal bone	Post-med
303	Layer	Silty Clay	0.23				
304	Layer	Limestone brash	0.4+				
305	Layer	Limestone brash	0.4+				
<b>Trench 4</b>							
Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
400	Layer	Topsoil	0.1				
401	Layer	Subsoil?	0.25				
402	Layer	Limestone brash	0.48				
403	Layer	Silty clay	0.35				
404	Layer	Limestone brash	Unknown				
405	Layer	Silty Clay	0.6				
406	Layer	Limestone brash	0.45				
407	Layer	Demolition deposit?	Unknown			pot	17th-18th
408	Structure	NNE-SSW aligned wall	0.19	0.4	1.5+		
<b>Trench 5</b> : Not excavated							
<b>Trench 6</b>							
Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
600	Layer	Topsoil	0.3				
601	Layer	Subsoil?	0.2-0.6				
602	Layer	Limestone brash	1+				
<b>Trench 7</b> : Not excavated							
<b>Trench 8</b>							
Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
800	Layer	Topsoil	0.21				

801	Layer	Subsoil?	0.48				
802	Layer	Limestone brash	0.5				
Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
803	Layer	Silty sand	0.6				
804	Layer	Limestone bedrock	Unknown				
<b>Trench 9</b>							
Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
900	Layer	Topsoil	0.32				
901	Layer	Subsoil?	0.37				
902	Layer	Hard Limestone brash	0.45+				
<b>Trench 10</b>							
Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
1000	Layer	Topsoil	0.22				
1001	Layer	Subsoil?	0.6				
1002	Layer	Limestone brash	0.51				
1003	Layer	Hard Limestone brash	Unknown				
<b>Trench 11</b>							
Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
1100	Layer	Topsoil	0.12				
1101	Layer	Subsoil?	0.35				
1102	Layer	Limestone brash	0.3				
1103	Layer	Powdery Limestone brash	0.7+				
1104	Cut	Hard Limestone brash	Unknown				
<b>Trench 12</b>							
Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
1200	Layer	Topsoil	0.22				
1201	Layer	Subsoil?	0.32				
1202	Layer	Powdery Limestone brash	0.8				
1203	Cut	Limestone brash	0.4+				

**APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES**

- OA 1992      *OA fieldwork Manual (1st Edition, Ed. D Wilkinson)*
- OA, 2006a.    North Lodge, Blenheim Park, Woodstock, Oxfordshire. Desk Based Assessment, Oxford Archaeology
- OA, 2006b.    North Lodge, Blenheim Park, Woodstock, Oxfordshire. Archaeological Written Scheme Of Investigation

**APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS**

**Site name:** North Lodge, Blenheim Park, Woodstock, Oxfordshire.

**Site code:** WOBPAL 06

**Grid reference:** SP 426 183

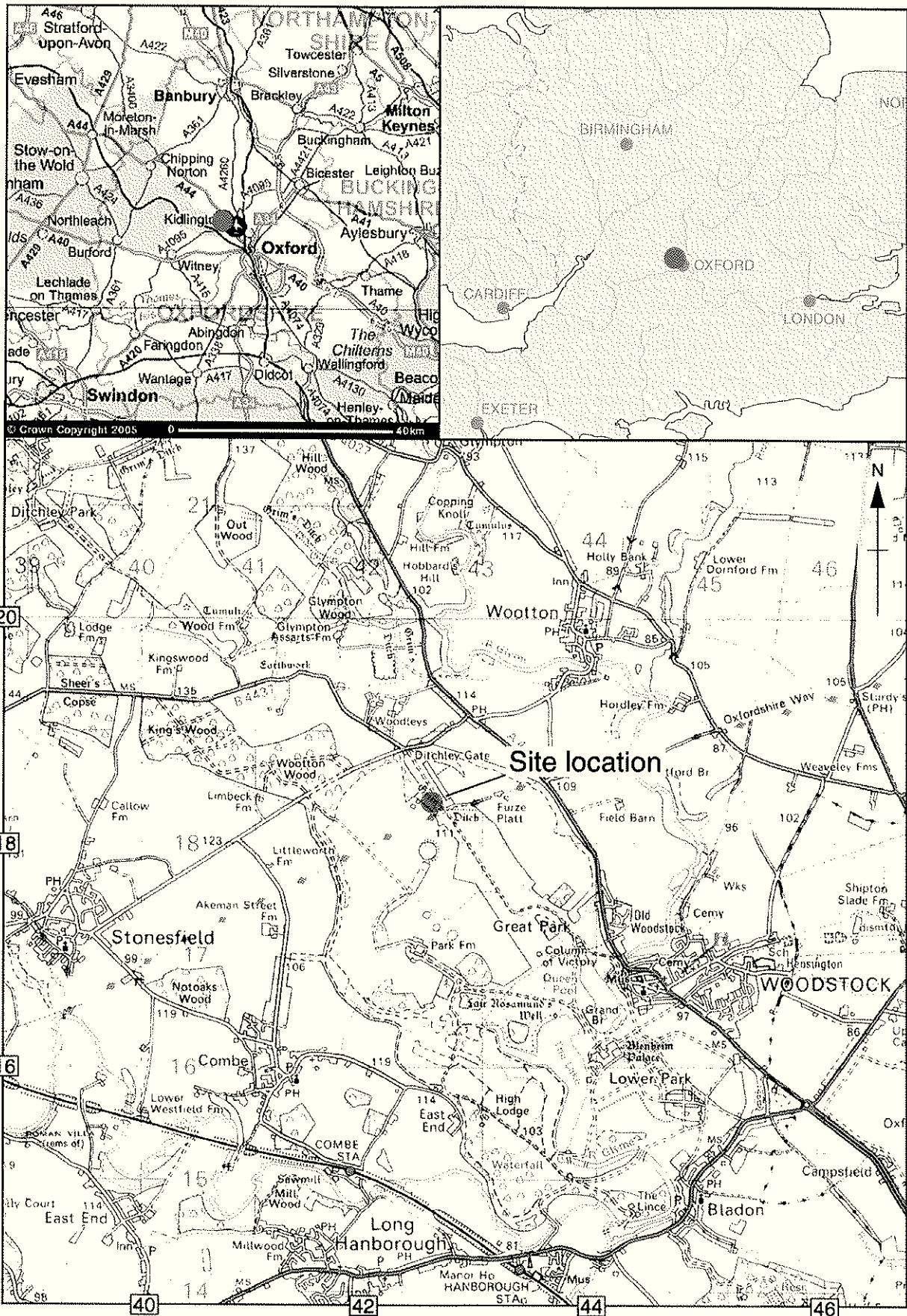
**Type of evaluation:** Ten small trial trenches/ test pits, to assess archaeological potential and retrieve geo-technical information.

**Date and duration of project:** Three days: 6th-8th March 2006

**Area of site:** 0.7ha

**Summary of results:** Remains of two walls associated with the post-med house. No other features, or indication of earlier occupation

**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.



Scale 1:50,000

Reproduced from the Landranger 1:50,000 scale by permission of the Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office  
© Crown Copyright 1999. All rights reserved. Licence No. AL 100005569

Figure 1: Site location



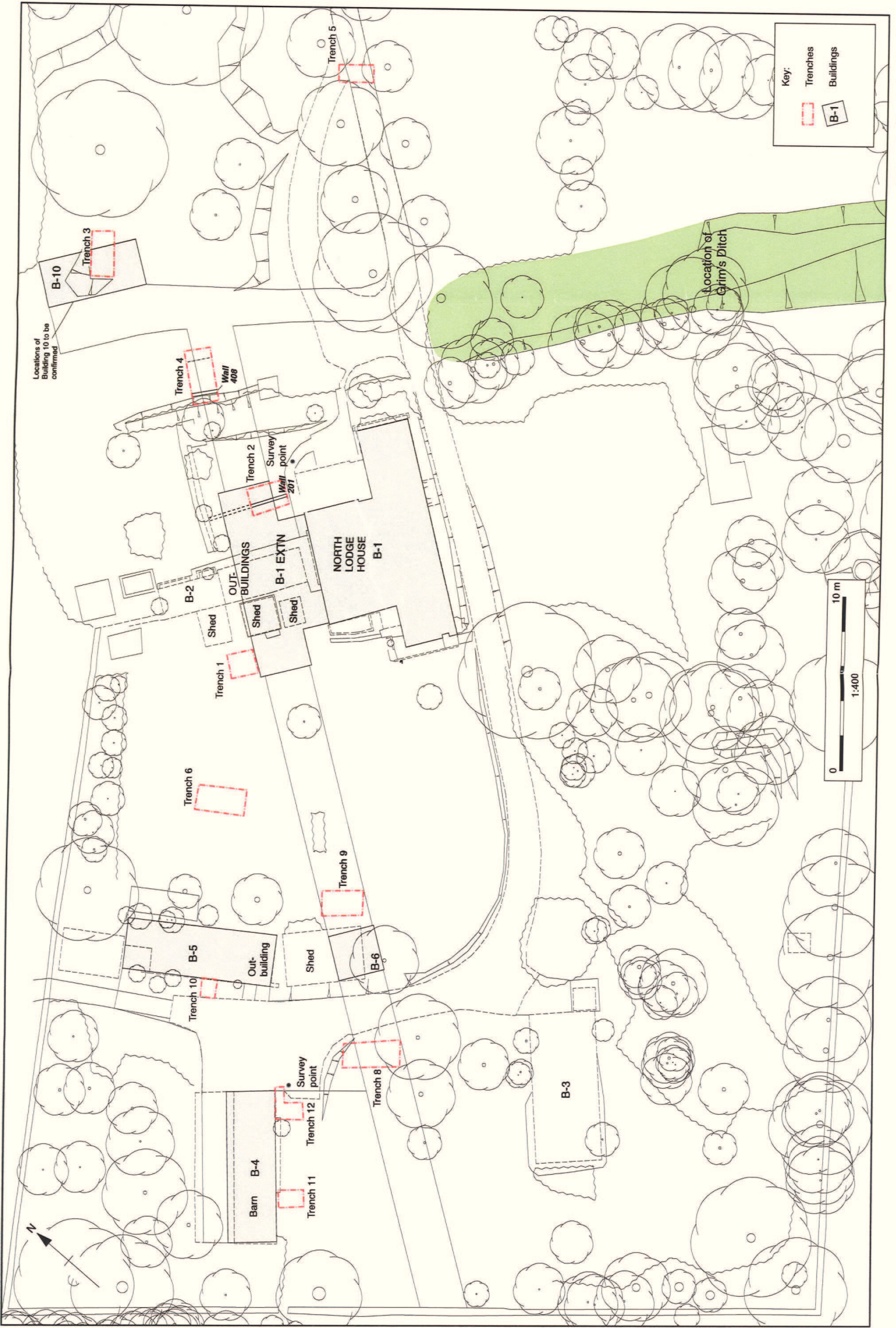


Figure 2: Trench location plan

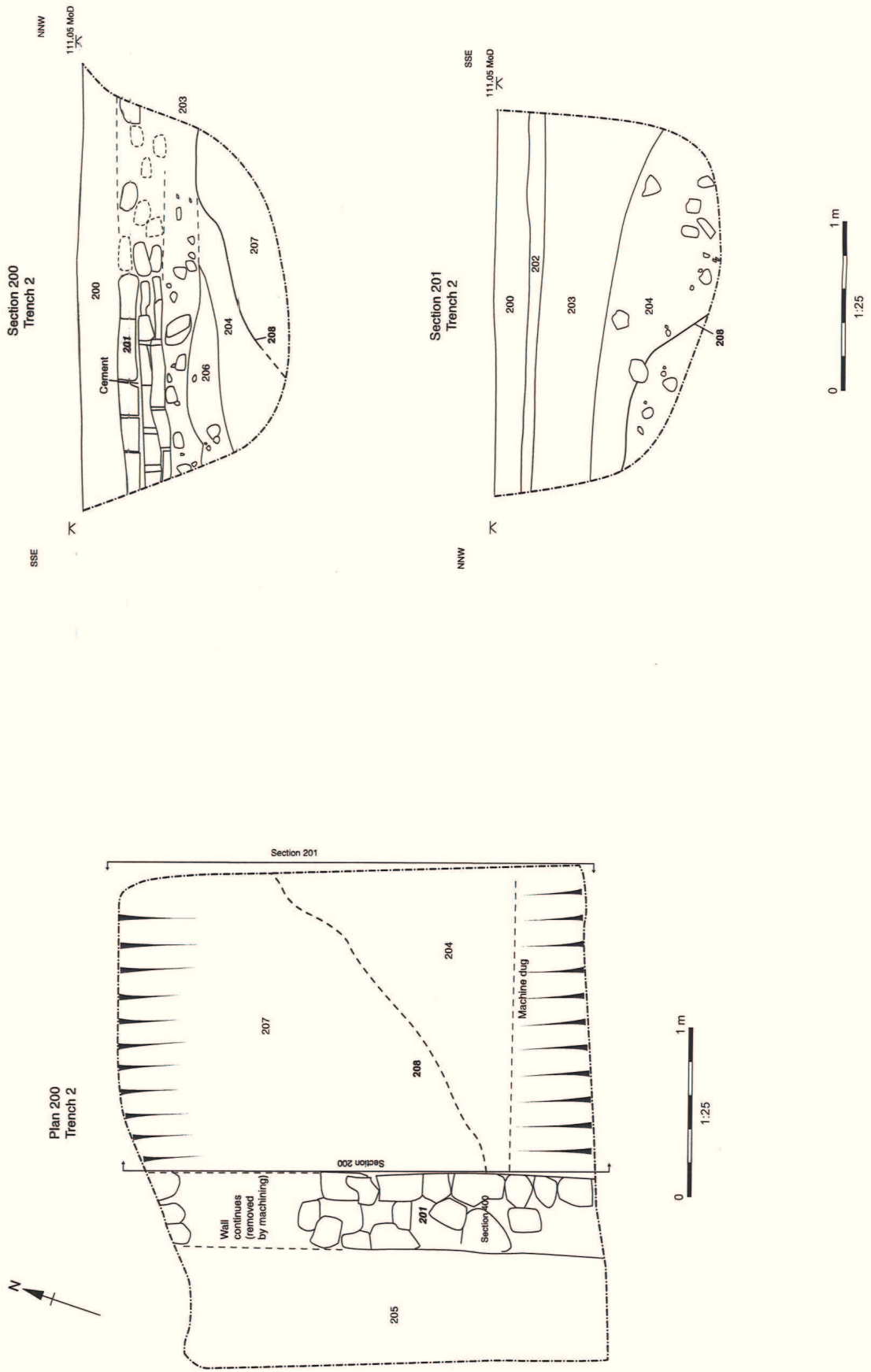
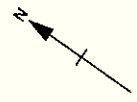
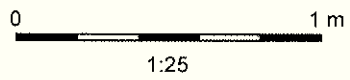
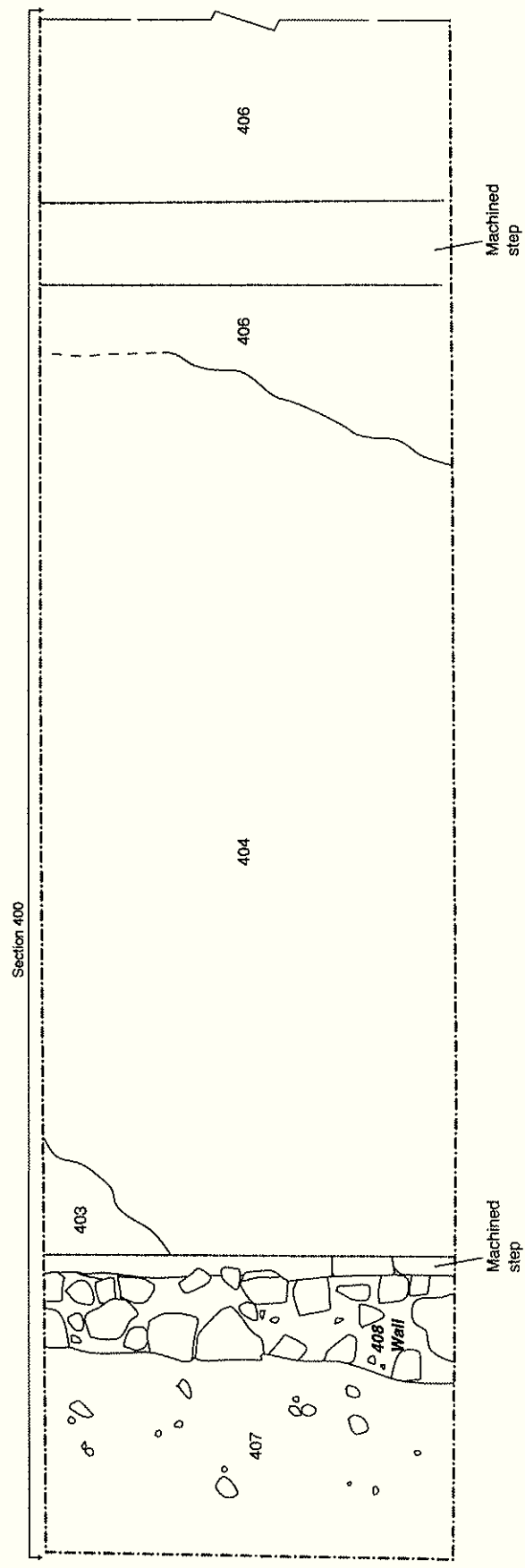


Figure 3 : Trench 2; plan and sections





### Plan 400 Trench 4



### Section 400 Trench 4

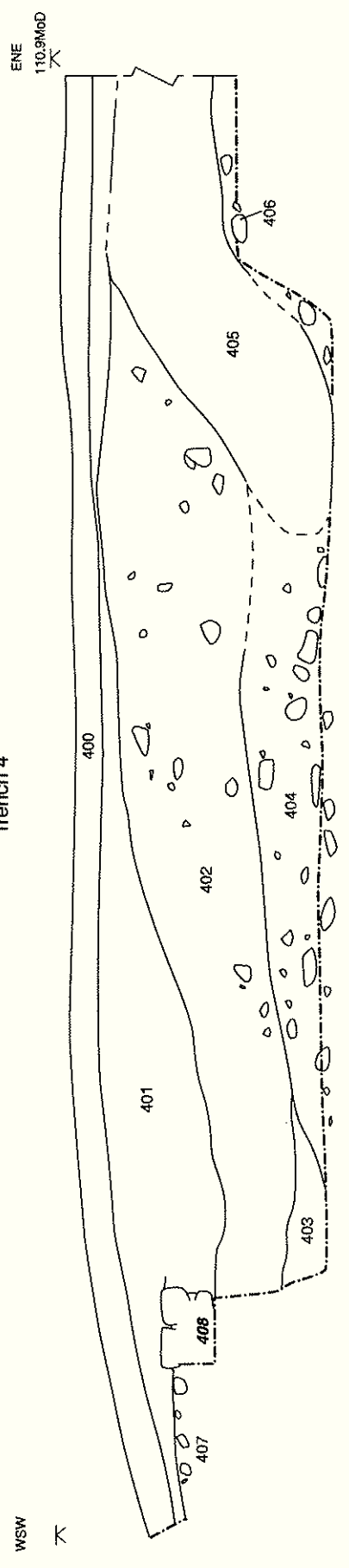


Figure 4 : Trench 4; plan and section



### **Oxford Archaeology**

Janus House  
Osney Mead  
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: (0044) 01865 263800  
f: (0044) 01865 793496  
e: [info@oxfordarch.co.uk](mailto:info@oxfordarch.co.uk)  
w: [www.oxfordarch.co.uk](http://www.oxfordarch.co.uk)



### **Oxford Archaeology North**

Storey Institute  
Meeting House Lane  
Lancaster LA1 1TF

t: (0044) 01524 541000  
f: (0044) 01524 848606  
e: [lancinfo@oxfordarch.co.uk](mailto:lancinfo@oxfordarch.co.uk)  
w: [www.oxfordarch.co.uk](http://www.oxfordarch.co.uk)



**Director:** David Jennings, BA MIFA FSA

Oxford Archaeological Unit is a  
Private Limited Company, N<sup>o</sup>: 1618597  
and a Registered Charity, N<sup>o</sup>: 285627

**Registered Office:**

Oxford Archaeological Unit  
Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES