

99b High Street
Witney
Oxfordshire



**Archaeological
Watching Brief Report**



Oxford Archaeology

July 2005

**Client: Glenbreck Developments
Ltd.**

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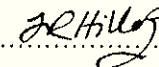
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Glenbreck Developments Ltd

**99b High Street,
Witney, Oxfordshire*****ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT*****CONTENTS**

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SUMMARY

In June 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at 99b High Street, Witney, Oxfordshire (NGR: SP 3570 1014). The work was commissioned in advance of the construction of 90 m² of office space with undercroft car parking and nine residential dwellings. The watching brief revealed evidence of post-medieval structures, pits and an undated ditch.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 Between 6th and 28th of June 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at 99b High Street, Witney, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 3570 1014). The work was commissioned in respect of a planning application for the construction of 90 m² of office space with undercroft car parking and nine residential dwellings (Planning Application No. 04/1421/P/FP).

1.1.2 Hugh Coddington, Oxfordshire's Deputy County Archaeologist prepared a Design Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief (OCAS 2005). The brief sets out the requirements and standards for the archaeological work, in line with PPG16 and Policy BE16 of the District Local Plan.

1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief, which was approved by Hugh Coddington (OA 2005).

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The development site is located on the west side of the High Street in Witney (Fig. 1) and lies at approximately 81 m OD. The underlying geology is alluvium and gravel.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The site lies within an area of considerable archaeological potential. Earlier archaeological work along the south side of the High Street revealed evidence of late medieval activity. This was in the form of ditches and pits, which appear to respect the medieval burgrave plots that radiate out at right angles to the High Street. The cartographic evidence suggests that burgrave plots existed in the area of the development and existing property boundaries appear to respect them (OCAS 2005).

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To establish the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality, and date of any archaeological remains within the development area.
- 2.1.2 To preserve by record any archaeological remains that the works may remove or damage within the impacted area.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The watching brief consisted of the monitoring of approximately 162 m of 1 m wide excavations for building foundations.
- 2.2.2 Visits were made on seven occasions to observe the excavations for building foundations. Observations were during those excavations and on exposed sections through undisturbed deposits.
- 2.2.3 All deposits and excavations were planned at a scale of 1:100 (Fig. 2) and where appropriate, sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All deposits were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was also made.
- 2.2.4 The stratigraphy was recorded even where no archaeological deposits could be identified. Spoil heaps were monitored to allow analysis of the spatial distribution of artefacts.
- 2.2.5 All features and deposits were issued with unique context numbers, and context recording was in accordance with established OA practice. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (ed. D. Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The general stratigraphy across the site consisted of a gravel natural (12), overlain by a layer of subsoil (11), a dark brown silty clay with frequent fragments of limestone of between 0.15 m and 0.25 m in depth. To the north and west of the site deposit 11 was overlain by a mix of demolition material and garden soil (10) (Fig. 3, section 11) of approximately 0.3 m depth. Within the south and east area of the site deposit 10 was sealed by a levelling layer of made ground, (18) - the area of the existing car park.

- 3.1.2 A possible linear ditch (14) was observed running north-south towards the east of the footings for the main building (Fig. 3, section 10). This feature was observed running for 1.5 m and was 0.45 m wide by 0.26 m deep. It was filled by a dark orangey brown silty clay (15), which produced no finds. This fill was sealed by 11.
- 3.1.3 Three metres to the north-east of ditch 14 was observed a large pit, (16), which was 1.1 m in diameter and 0.8 m deep (Fig. 3, sections 12 and 13). Pit (16) had very steep sides and a concave base, and was filled by an orangey brown silty clay with a very high proportion of limestone rubble (17). This redeposited material may indicate that it was the backfill of a gravel extraction pit.
- 3.1.4 A very similar pit (20) was seen 9 m to the south-west of (16). Pit (20) was 1.6 m in diameter and 1.1 m deep with a similar profile to 16 (Fig. 3, section 14). It appeared to cut subsoil (11) and was filled with a grey brown silty clay (19), which also contained a high proportion of limestone fragments. Green bottle glass was recovered from the top of the fill. This pit may also be interpreted as a gravel extraction pit, possibly of post medieval date.
- 3.1.5 Two wall foundations (21) and (22) were also observed running parallel to each other at the eastern end of the site running out of the northern boundary wall during the excavation of the garage footings (Fig. 2). Both wall foundations were of a similar construction, being of randomly coursed roughly hewn limestone blocks ranging in size from 0.34m by 0.22 m by 0.12 m, up to 0.6 m by 0.37 m by 0.29 m. Both walls appeared to be keyed in to a 6 m long section of east-west running wall that forms part of the northern boundary of the site. It is therefore probable that the wall foundations are both contemporary with this section of the northern boundary wall. The structures themselves were 1 m deep by 0.9 m thick and were observed running for the entire 6 m of the respective excavated footings. Wall foundation (21) appeared to have some of the backfill (23) of a construction cut (24) still attached to the west face of the wall. This material, a grey blue clay, contained oyster shell and sherds of 18th and 19th century glazed pottery.
- 3.1.6 A probable continuation of Wall 22 was observed during the excavation of a pit for a septic tank to the east of the main buildings suggesting that they subdivided the plot.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 All the finds recovered during the course of the watching brief were post-medieval in nature and were evaluated on site, but were not retained.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were observed during the course of the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 Archaeological evidence observed at the site consisted of 2 large probable post-medieval gravel extraction pits, one undated ditch, and two probable post-medieval wall foundations. This kind of evidence is typical for the location as earlier archaeological work along the south side of the High Street revealed evidence of late medieval activity in the form of ditches and pits. It is possible that archaeological remains within the development area have been truncated by medieval and post-medieval activity, although this seems unlikely as lack of any pre-medieval residual finds suggests that there was limited archaeological activity in the area

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Date</i>
10	Layer	0.15 m	-	Topsoil and demolition debris	C20th
11	Layer	0.42 m	-	Subsoil	-
12	Layer	1.28 m	-	Natural gravel	-
14	Cut	0.26 m	0.45 m	Ditch	-
15	Fill	0.26 m	-	Fill of 15	-
16	Cut	0.8 m	1.1 m	Pit	C18th - C19th
17	Fill	0.8 m	-	Fill of 16	C18th - C19th
18	Layer	0.15 m	-	Madeground	C20th
19	Fill	1.1 m	-	Fill of 20	C19th - C20th
20	Cut	1.1 m	1.6 m	Pit	C19th - C20th
21	Structure	1.0 m	-	Wall	C18th - C19th
22	Structure	1.0 m	0.9 m	Wall	C18th - C19th
23	Fill	1.0 m	-	Backfill of construction cut	C18th - C19th
24	Cut	1.0 m	-	Construction cut	C18th - C19th
25	Cut	1.0 m	0.9 m	Construction cut	C18th - C19th

APPENDIX 2

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OA, 2005, 99b High Street, Witney, Oxon. *Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

OCAS 2005, Design Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief at 99b High Street, Witney, Oxfordshire

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

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: 99b High Street, Witney, Oxfordshire

Site code: WITHS 05

Grid reference: SP 3570 1014

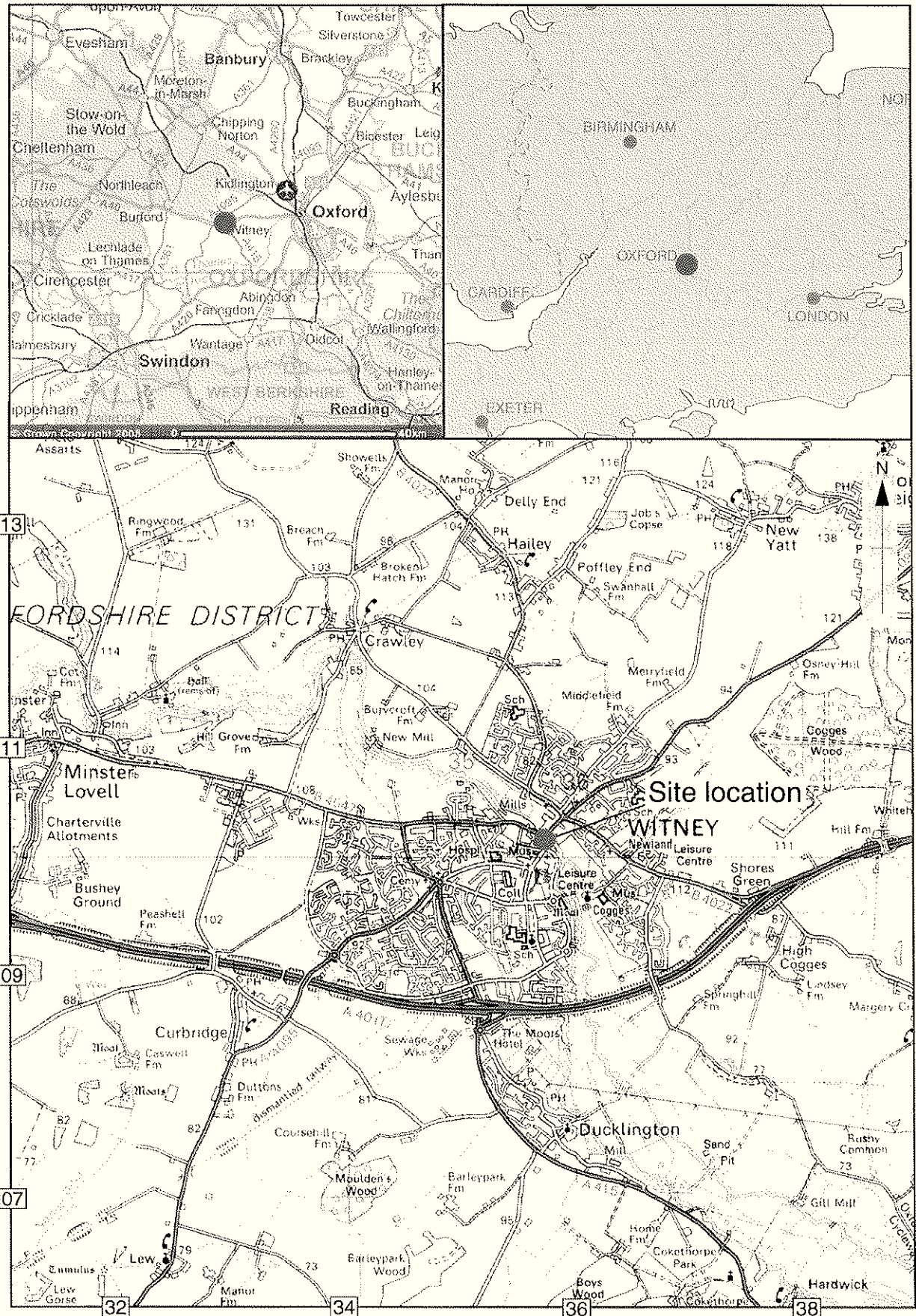
Type of watching brief: Monitoring foundation trenches for the construction of a new house.

Date and duration of project: 06.06.05-29.06.05

Area of site: 0.1 ha

Summary of results: A sequence of undisturbed natural deposits was observed.

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.



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Figure 1: Site location

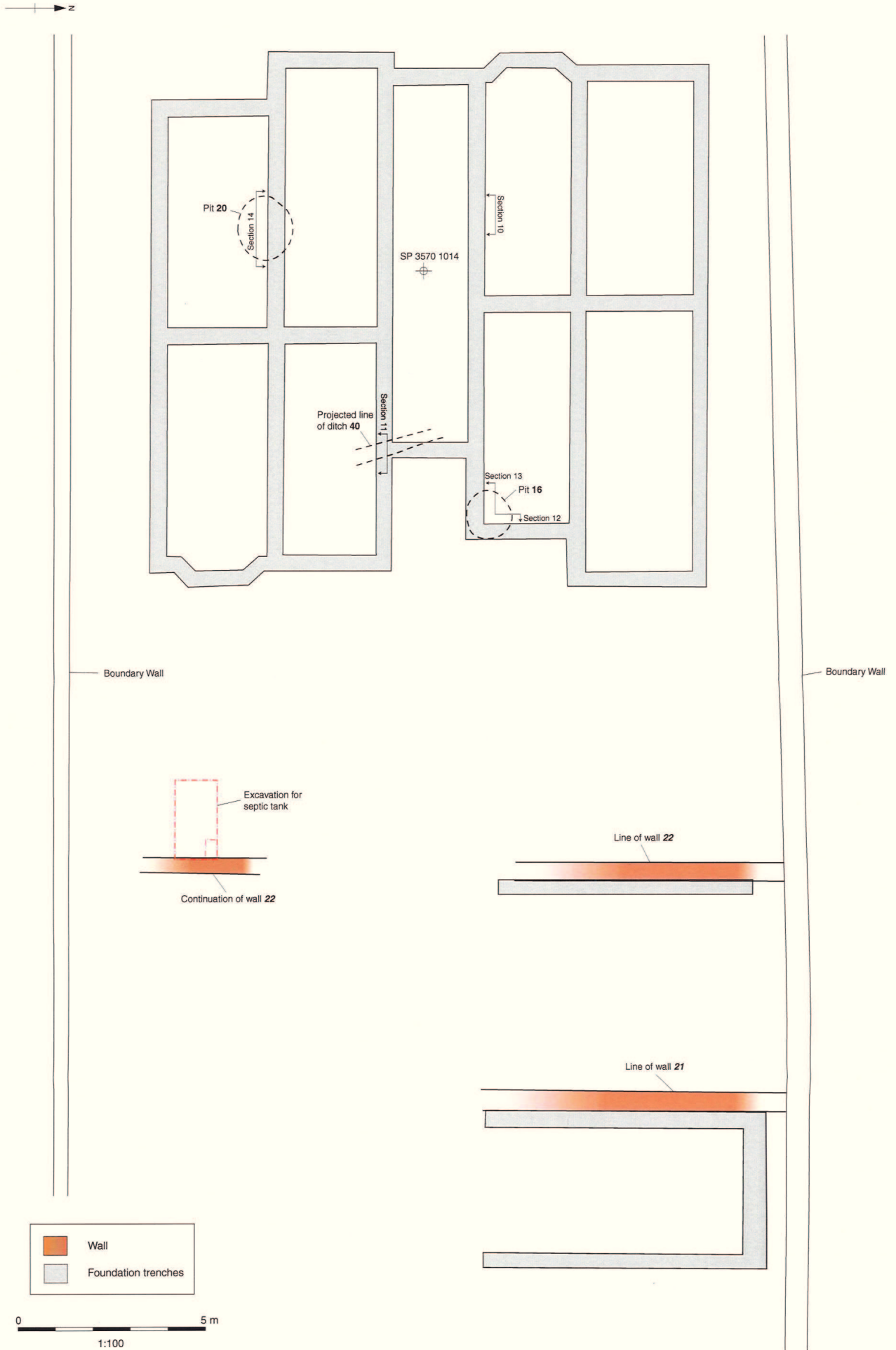
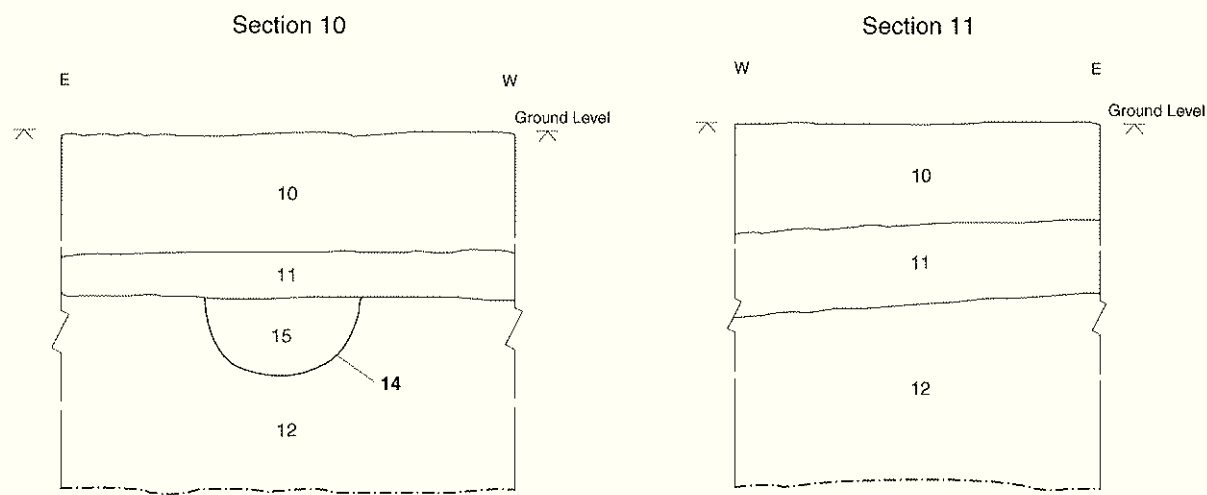
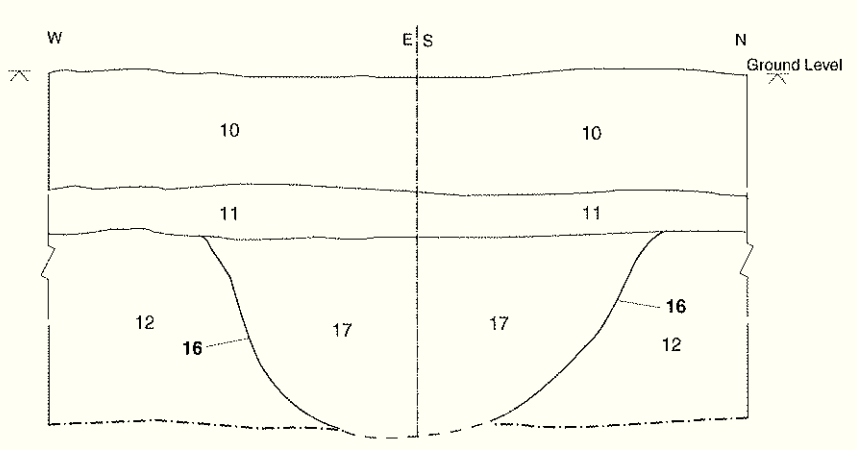


Figure 2: Extent of excavations showing features and location of sections

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Section 12 and 13



Section 14

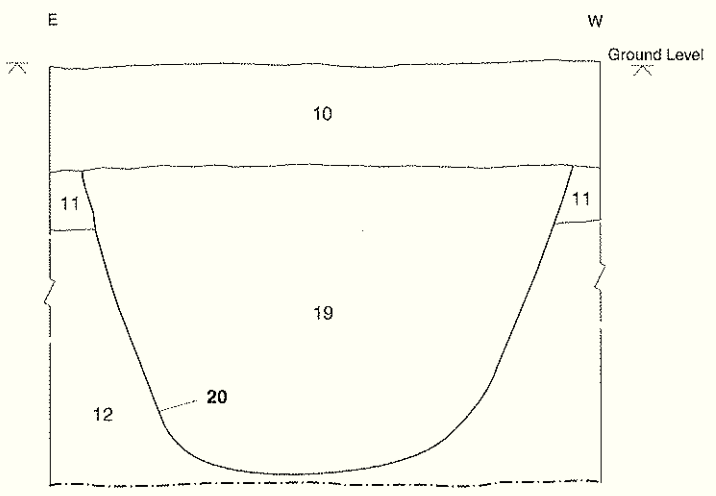


Figure 3: Sections



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