

New Civic Offices Woolwich London



Archaeological Evaluation Report



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Summary

During February and May 2008, Oxford Archaeology undertook an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching on land between Wellington street and Love lane, Woolwich (NGR TQ 435 787) on behalf of the London Borough of Greenwich who have planning permission to develop the site to provide new civic offices.

The trenching demonstrated that the development area was heavily truncated by modern basements and obstructions and no archaeological remains were found.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 Planning permission has been granted for the construction of New Civic Office buildings on a site bounded by Wellington Street and Love Lane, Woolwich (NGR TQ 435787) (Figure 1). This site is being developed by the London Borough of Greenwich and forms part of a much larger area which will also be redeveloped in due course.

1.1.2 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by the London Borough of Greenwich to undertake an archaeological trench evaluation of the site in order that the impacts on the archaeological resource resulting from the development works could be assessed. The evaluation was conducted in two stages in February and May 2008 following demolition and clearance of buildings from the site. It was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (OA February 2008) produced by OA and agreed with English Heritage who advise the London Borough of Greenwich on planning matters relating to the historic environment.

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The proposed development site slopes downwards from south to north. The underlying geology across the middle and west of the site comprises the clays and sands of the Woolwich Beds. The remainder of the site lies on Thanet Sands. The Thanet Sands also lie immediately to the east and north of the site and the sand and pebbles of the Blackheath Beds lie immediately to the west and south. The Woolwich and Blackheath Beds support relatively poorly drained soils which would not have been attractive to early farmers and tend to produce boggy heath as is still evident to the immediate west of the site on Woolwich Common (Brown 2002). The Thanet Sands, however, are relatively free draining and appear to have settlement concentrated upon them from an early date.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background to the development area as a whole (including the specific part of the site to be developed for the New Civic Centre to which this evaluation relates) has been the subject of a Desk Based Assessment (OA 2006). In addition, further specific detail on the buildings formally occupying the New Civic Centre site has been documented in an historic building report on the properties (now demolished) on the Wellington Street frontage (OA June 2008).

2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The objectives of the evaluation were as follows:

- (i) To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the proposal area and to determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present.
- (ii) To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features.
- (iii) To establish the need for any onward mitigation strategy.
- (iv) To make available the results of the investigation.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The area of the Site being developed by the London Borough of Greenwich is approximately 3650m². However, approximately 1230m² had been truncated by pre-existing basements. It was planned to excavate five 20 x 2m trenches located to give good overall coverage of the remaining area. However, due to truncation by modern obstructions Trench 4 was divided into three smaller trenches, 4A, 4B and 4C (Figure 2).

2.2.2 Excavation was undertaken by a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket operating under direct archaeological supervision and proceeded to the natural geology or the top of the first archaeological horizon, whichever was encountered first. Deposits were then hand cleaned and investigated.

2.2.3 The excavation and recording was carried out in accordance with the methodology outlined in the WSI for the project.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Presentation of results

3.1.1 The results presented in the main text below provide an overview of the evaluation works. Individual trench descriptions and related context data can be found in Appendix A. Trench plans are illustrated on Figure 3 and sample sections on Figure 4.

3.2 Soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 The site had been occupied by residential and commercial buildings which had been demolished prior to the evaluation. A related demolition layer measuring an average of 0.56m was present on the site. Overburden consisting of made ground and subsoil deposits that reached a depth of up to 1.45m towards the NE end of the site were excavated from the trenches. Where it was not severely truncated by modern deposits the underlying natural across the site consisted of sands and gravels.

3.3 Distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 No archaeological deposits were identified.

3.4 Discussion and interpretation

Reliability of field investigation

3.4.1 Approximately 8% of the area not known to be truncated by existing basements was evaluated by trenching which provided good overall coverage of the site area. Ground conditions were good and particularly considering the degree of additional truncation encountered the results are considered reliable.

Evaluation objectives and results

3.4.2 The evaluation objectives have been fulfilled. It has been established that the site has little or no potential to contain archaeological deposits.

Interpretation

3.4.3 There is no positive indication that any archaeological deposits were ever present on the site although the background to the site in general showed that it could not be ruled out. No archaeological deposits were identified. However, the level of truncation from modern basements, walls, services and other modern obstructions across the site was extensive and will have removed any remains which may have been present.

APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description					Orientation	NW-SE
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of demolition, modern overburden material and obstructions including walls and footings and subsoil overlying an orangey brown gravelly sand natural.					Avg. depth (m)	0.9
					Width (m)	2.0
					Length (m)	16
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
100	Layer	-	0.18	Demolition material	-	Modern
101	Layer	-	0.42	Modern overburden	-	Modern
102	Layer	-	0.3	Subsoil	-	-
103	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
Trench 2						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of modern, concrete obstructions and demolition debris infill. The majority of the trench could only be dug down to a maximum depth of 0.3m due to concrete obstructions and live services but a sondage at the SW end confirmed that these extended to a depth of greater than 1.0m and would therefore have truncated any archaeology present.					Avg. depth (m)	0.3
					Width (m)	2.0
					Length (m)	20
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
200	Layer	2m-	0.3m-	Modern infill material.	-	Modern
Trench 3						
General description					Orientation	NW-SE
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of modern demolition material, an extensive area of modern concrete in the north western half probably relating to a modern basement, services and walls relating to the demolished buildings on the site. Subsoil overlying an orangey brown gravelly sand natural was observed at the south eastern end of the trench.					Avg. depth (m)	1.16
					Width (m)	2.0
					Length (m)	22
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
300	Layer	-	0.92	Demolition material	-	Modern
301	Layer	-	0.24	Subsoil	-	-
302	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
Trench 4A						
General description					Orientation	NW-SE
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of modern demolition					Avg. depth (m)	1.7

material and subsoil overlying an orangey brown gravelly sand natural. This trench was only excavated to a length of 4m due to a modern cellar encountered at its northern end.	Width (m)	2.0
	Length (m)	4

Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
400	Layer	-	0.4	Demolition material	-	Modern
401	Layer	-	1.1	Subsoil	-	
402	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 4B

General description	Orientation	NE-SW
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of modern demolition material and subsoil overlying an orangey brown gravelly sand natural. This trench had the edge of a modern cellar running along its north western side.	Avg. depth (m)	1.7
	Width (m)	2.0
	Length (m)	10

Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
403	Layer	-	0.4	Demolition material	-	Modern
404	Layer	-	1.3	Subsoil	-	
405	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 4C

General description	Orientation	NE-SW
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of modern demolition material and subsoil overlying an orangey brown gravelly sand natural. Trench has the wall of a modern cellar at its south western end.	Avg. depth (m)	1.7
	Width (m)	2.0
	Length (m)	7

Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
406	Layer	-	0.4	Demolition material	-	Modern
407	Layer	-	1.3	Subsoil	-	
408	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 5

General description	Orientation	NW-SE
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of modern demolition material and subsoil overlying an orangey brown gravelly sand natural. Trench truncated at north western end by a modern cellar.	Avg. depth (m)	1.45
	Width (m)	2.0
	Length (m)	18

Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
500	Layer	-	0.92	Demolition material	-	Modern
501	Layer	-	0.3	Subsoil	-	-



502	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
503	Layer	-	0.75	Overburden	-	Modern

REFERENCES

Oxford Archaeology June 2008. Civic Centre Development, Wellington Street, Woolwich. Historic Building Recording.

Oxford Archaeology February 2008. New Civic Offices, Woolwich, Written Scheme of Investigation. Archaeological Evaluation.

Oxford Archaeology 2006. Woolwich, Peggy Middleton House Site - Love Lane. Environmental Impact Assessment Baseline and Impact Assessment.

Brown, G 2002. Roman Greenwich. *Archaeologia Cantiana* CXXII.

APPENDIX B. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: New Civic Offices, Woolwich

Site code: WCV08

Grid reference: NGR TQ 435 787

Type: Trench Evaluation

Date and duration: February and May 2008

Area of site: 3650m².

Summary of results: A total of seven trenches (one of the original trenches was split into 3 smaller trenches) were excavated and recorded across the area. The trenches confirmed that the area was heavily truncated by modern obstructions and devoid of archaeology.

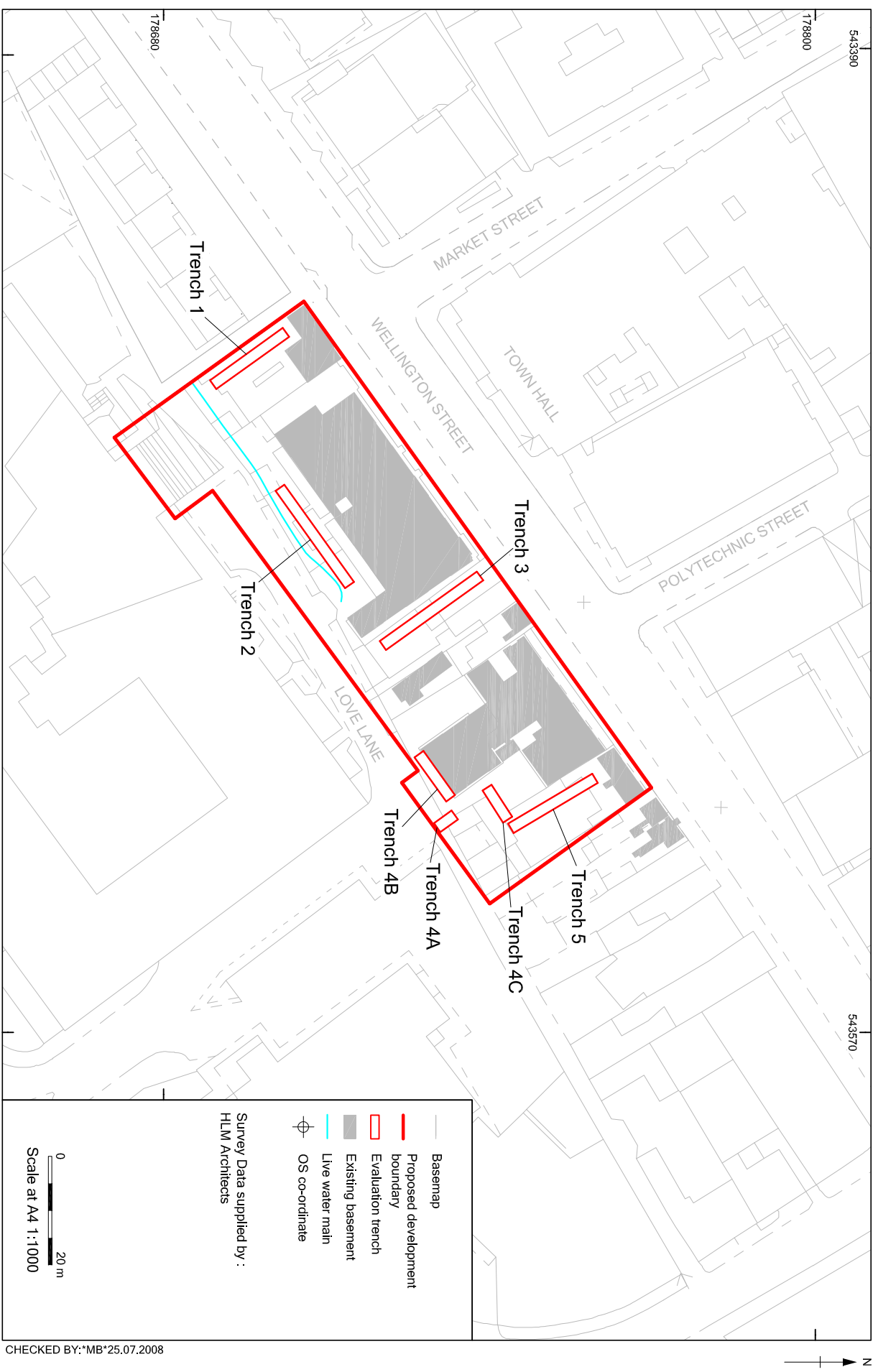
Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Museum of London in due course.



Scale 1:50,000

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Figure 1: Site location



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Figure 2: Trench location plan

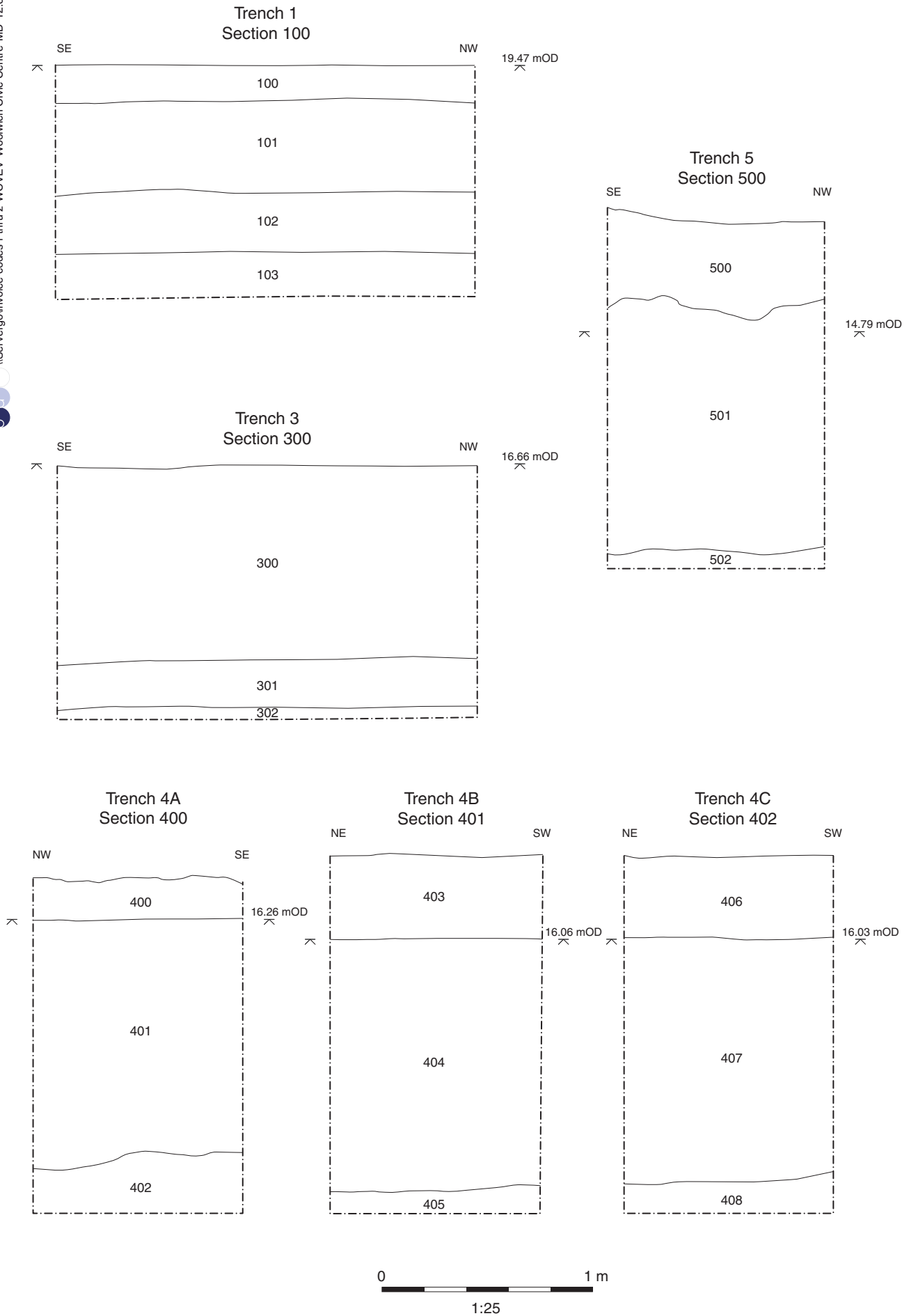


Figure 4: Trenches 1 and 3-5, sample sections