New Sewerage Works
Hurley Lock
Berkshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

oxford archaeology

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New Sewerage Works, Hurley Lock Island, Hurley, Berkshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

Between January and March 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Hurley Lock and Hurley Village, Berkshire (centred at NGR: SU 827 844). The work was commissioned by the Environment Agency in advance of the excavation of a sewer trench linking Hurley Island to the existing sewerage system. The watching brief revealed deposits of 19th century made ground on Hurley Lock Island, deposits of 20th century made ground on Camping Island and layers of demolition debris, probably 16th or 17th century in date, alongside the Old Priory site. A later, inserted, brick culvert dated to the late 17th or early 18th century was observed running from the old fish ponds, under the footpath and into the priory site. No evidence for structures relating to the priory extending outside the current SAM boundary was observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 Between January and March 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Hurley Lock and Hurley Village, Berkshire (Centred at NGR: SU 827 844). The work was commissioned by the Environment Agency in respect of proposal to excavate a pipe trench running through Hurley Lock Island and Camping Island, along an existing footpath towards Hurley High Street and connecting with an existing foul water sewer system.

1.1.2 Due to the proximity of the works to a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM), a condition has been placed on the planning consent requiring a scheme of archaeological work to be undertaken at the site.

1.1.3 A project brief was set by Stephen Kemp, Archaeologist for the National Environment Assessment Service, with the Environment Agency (EA), detailing the requirements for the watching brief (EA, 2005).

1.1.4 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA, 2006).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 The site is situated on two islands within the River Thames at Hurley Lock and on the northern edge of the village of Hurley, on the northern edge of Berkshire (Fig. 1). The works comprised a trench dug from the lockkeepers cottage on Hurley Island (NGR: SU 8266 8428), (with a spur running off to Camping Island), along the towpath, crossing the river and running along an existing footpath to the west of the old Hurley priory site, before connecting to the existing foul water sewer system in Hurley High Street (NGR: SU 8253 8405). The path of the trench is approximately level at a height of between 30 and 31 m above OD. The underlying geology is

alluvium over Flood Plain Terrace gravels and Upper Chalk (Geological Survey of Great Britain sheet no. 255).

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, 2006) and is reproduced below.

1.3.2 The proposed development lies within an area of archaeological potential identified as the following:

1.3.3 Lock Islands: Archaeological evaluations by Oxford Archaeology (OA, 2003) on Hurley Lock Island identified the presence of a robbed out wall. Finds from the fill date to the 19th century. The wall and the made ground through which the "robber-trench" cuts would have predated this episode. The report concludes that the level of the island was substantially built out (and up) at the time of the construction of Hurley Lock in 1773 and archaeology predating this episode may lie at a depth of over 1.2 m below the existing ground levels.

1.3.4 Camping Island: No information was available at the time of preparation of the WSI.

1.3.5 Hurley Village: The course of the pipeline takes a route close to the site of the Priory (SAM 19020). The priory was founded by Geoffrey de Mandeville between 1085 and 1087 as a Benedictine House subject to Westminster Abbey. The Priory was dissolved on the 3rd of June 1536 and granted to Westminster Abbey which was itself dissolved on the 16th January 1540, with all its land being forfeit to the Crown. The site passed through a number of hands until it was acquired by Sir John Lovelace in 1550. He demolished all bar the nave of St Marys church and incorporated the land into his new mansion, the Ladye Place. The Lovelaces remained Lords of the Manor throughout the 16th and 17th centuries. Eventually the lands passed to Sir George East who demolished the old manor in 1836.

1.3.6 Since then the lands have been used as pasture, market gardens and more recently as a residential area and a marina.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 To establish the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development. Particular attention was paid to the lock islands in order to record any archaeology (including the date and depth of made ground and make-up levels) disturbed by the scheme and to inform any future works on the islands. Attention was also focussed on works occurring adjacent to the Priory site.

2.1.2 To preserve by record any archaeological remains, that the development may remove or damage within the impacted area.

2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The watching brief was conducted as a series of site visits during groundwork likely to disturb or damage archaeological deposits.

2.2.2 A plan showing the extent of the works and the location of any sections was maintained at a scale of 1:100 (Fig. 2) and sections of features and sample sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20 (Figs. 3 and 4). All sections and 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 *OA Field Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

3.1.1 The work observed was divided into 4 different categories:

- Excavation of a trench from the garden of the lockkeepers cottage to the towpath.
- Excavation of a trench and "Klargester" pit from the toilet block on Camping Island to the weir, and from the other side of the weir to the towpath.
- Excavation of a trench along the towpath on the north side of the lock up to the footbridge.
- Excavation of a trench from the southern side of the footbridge along the footpath to the west of the priory leading to Hurley High Street..

3.1.2 Each category of work will be described separately followed by an overall discussion and conclusion.

Lockkeepers cottage to the towpath (Sections 1 and 2)

3.1.3 As the trench approached the access chamber in the towpath a layer of grey-brown clay silt (4) was encountered at a depth of 0.65 m below ground level. This layer contained much gravel and chalk flecking and is a probable alluvial deposit, possibly the original ground level. This was overlaid by a 0.15 m thick layer of pale yellow-brown silt (3) containing gravels and brick fragments. This is a probable layer of made ground, possibly cast up during work on the lock. Overlying this was a layer of light grey-brown clay silt (2), up to 0.5 m in depth. This contained large quantities of ballast and also represents a layer of made ground. This was sealed by a layer of dark brown silty loam (1), the present day topsoil and turf. This measured 0.3 m deep within the cottage garden reducing down to 0.15 m as it approached the towpath.

Camping Island (Sections 10, 11 and 12)

3.1.4 A pit measuring 2 m square and 2.5 m deep, and approximately 40 m length of trench was dug on camping island (Section 10) running up to the northern end of the Camping Island weir. A layer of friable dark yellow-brown clay loam (29) was encountered 0.12 m below the current ground level. This could be seen to be in excess of 2.4 m thick within the pit and its full depth was not established. This context contained fragments of brick and tile as well as modern pottery and a boat registration plate dated 1914, suggesting a modern layer of made ground. This was sealed by a 0.12 m deep layer of dark brown silt loam (28), the present day topsoil and turf.

3.1.5 A 20 m length of trench was dug from the southern side of the Camping Island Weir to the pumping chamber located on the towpath (Sections 11 and 12). A compact layer of natural blocky chalk (31) was encountered 0.6 m below the current ground level. This was overlaid by a 0.4 m thick layer of pale grey-brown clay silt (30). This contained chalk flecking and brick fragments and may be a continuation of the layer of made ground (2). A 0.15 m thick layer of topsoil and turf (1) completed the section.

Towpath trench (Sections 3, 5, and 13)

3.1.6 Approximately 100 m length of 1.2 m deep trenching was dug along the line of the towpath running along the north bank of Hurley Lock. At the eastern end of this trench a layer of olive-grey clay (9) was encountered at a depth of 0.8 m below ground level (Section 3). This was a clean deposit with occasional gravel inclusions and probably represents the underlying alluvial clay. This was overlain by a 0.2 m deep layer of grey-brown silt clay (8) which contained occasional gravels and probably represents a layer of made ground or backfill behind the current lock wall. Overlying this was a 0.15 m thick layer of light grey-brown silts (7) which contained large quantities of coarse gravel and also represents a layer of made ground. This was sealed by a 0.15 m thick layer of light grey-brown silty gravel (6), a probable layer of made ground. This was overlaid by another layer of made ground (5), a 0.12 m deep layer of pale yellow clay containing fine gravels. A 0.15 m thick layer of the modern topsoil and turf (1) completed the section.

3.1.7 Section 5 was recorded approximately 30 m south west of section 1. A yellow-brown sandy clay (15) was encountered at a depth of 0.4 m below ground level. Although this was a very clean deposit it was probably a layer of made ground. Overlying this was a 0.18 m thick continuation of layer (9). This was overlain by a 0.15 m deep layer of orange-brown clay (14) which contained a high percentage of fine gravels and is a probable continuation of layer (5). This was sealed by a 0.12 m thick layer of grey-brown silt clay (13), a layer of made ground. As before a 0.25 m thick layer of the modern topsoil and turf (1) completed the section.

3.1.8 At the western end of the excavation the trench was dug through the embankment leading up to the footbridge (Section 13).

3.1.9 A continuation of the layer of blocky chalk (31) was encountered at a depth of 1 m below the current ground level. This was overlaid by a 0.7 m thick layer of pale grey-brown clay silt (32) which contained many pebbles and fragments of angular yellow flint and which may represent a layer of material dredged from the river used to raise the level of the river bank and later to form the embankment for the footbridge path. This was sealed by a 0.3 m thick layer of dark brown silt loam (1), a layer of modern topsoil and turf.

Footpath west of priory (Sections 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9)

3.1.10 This section comprised approximately 90 m length of 0.6 m wide trench, dug to an average depth of 0.85 m

3.1.11 At the southern extent of the trench (Section 4) a layer of clean dark yellow silt clay (12) was encountered at a depth of 0.75 m below the current ground level. This may represent a layer of alluvial clay. This was overlaid by a 0.2 m thick layer of dark yellow-brown clay silt (11). This contained some lime mortar flecking and small brick fragments and is a probable demolition layer relating to the later demolition of the priory. Overlying this was a 0.3 m thick layer of dark grey-brown silt loam (10). This contained some gravels and probably represents an occupation layer post-dating the demolition. The modern tarmac footpath (19) had been laid directly onto this layer.

3.1.12 At approximately the midpoint of the trench (Section 6) a layer of dark grey-brown silt loam (18), was encountered at a depth of 0.4 m below the current ground level. This contained charcoal flecking and small brick fragments and represents an occupation layer, probably a continuation of layer (10). This was overlaid by a 0.2 m thick layer of dark brown silt loam (17), this contained charcoal flecking and brick fragments and which also represents an occupation layer. This was sealed by a 0.1 m thick layer of gravel (16), the base for the tarmac footpath (19).

3.1.13 Approximately 10 m further north (Sections 7 and 8), a layer of light grey clay silt (24) was encountered 0.75 m below the current ground level. This contained chalk flecking and may represent an alluvial deposit. Overlying this was a 0.2 m thick layer of light brown clay silt (23). This contained charcoal flecking and fragments of pottery dating to the 17th and 18th centuries and represents an occupation layer. This was overlaid by a 0.15 m thick layer of mixed blocky chalk and grey silts (22), a layer of made ground. Overlying this within Section 7 and the southern half of Section 8 was a 0.15 m thick layer of construction debris (21) composed of lime mortar and small brick fragments and which probably relates to the rebuilding of the top of the boundary wall immediately to the east. Overlying layer (21) within Section 7 and layer (23) within Section 8 was a 0.12 m thick layer of dark grey-brown clay silt (20). This contained small brick fragments and is also an occupation layer. This

was cut by a 3 m wide east-west aligned linear feature (25), with steeply sloping sides and whose full depth was not exposed. This contained the brick built culvert (26), a semi-circular feature with an internal diameter of 0.91 m. It was constructed using lime mortar and hand moulded bricks measuring 0.195 m by 0.102 m by 0.055 m in size, suggesting a date range of between the late 17th century and early 18th century. The western portal of this culvert could be seen below the roots of an ash tree towards the top of the bank of the fish pond to the west of the footpath (Section 9). Closer examination of the interior of this culvert showed that it had been blocked by a north-south running wall approximately 4 m in, which runs on the same alignment and position as the brick infill of an arch observed within the current boundary wall to the east of the footpath. Overlying the culvert and backfilling feature (25) was a dark grey clay silt (27), containing brick fragments and mortar, probably construction debris relating to the culvert. The current tarmac footpath (19) had been laid directly onto layer (20) and backfill (27).

3.2 Finds

3.2.1 Fragments of brick were observed in layers 1, 3, 11, 17,18, 20, 21, 23, 24, 27, 29 and 30. Those recovered from layers 1, 3 and 11 were recognisable as dating to the 19th or early 20th century and were recorded, but not retained, while the remainder were considered to be too fragmentary to be diagnostic and their presence was noted, but they were not retained. A sample of brick from culvert 26 was retained, while a fragment of a peg tile was recovered from layer 23.

3.2.2 Samples of glass from a deep punted wine bottle were recovered from layer 11 and a leg bone from an adult horse was recovered from layer 23.

3.2.3 Fragments of pottery were recovered from layers 11, 18, 23 and 29 and were provisionally dated as post-medieval, covering a date range from the 16th to 19th centuries.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

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

4 Discussion and Conclusions

Hurley Lock Island

4.1.1 The watching brief exposed deep deposits of made ground both within the main part of the island and during the trenching along the towpath. The dating evidence recovered suggests that this material was deposited during both the construction of the lock chamber and during later revetment to the river. The original ground surface (Layer 4) was encountered at a depth of 0.75 m below the current ground level, suggesting that the area alongside the lock had been deliberately built up in order to

raise the water level within the lock. Evidence for earlier structures such as the robbed out wall exposed during the 2003 evaluation on the site were not encountered, although archaeology may survive beneath made ground deposits. The made ground observed during the excavations along the towpath is possibly backfill of the area between the piling edging the river, and the original river bank, several iron tie bars running from the piling into ground anchors set within the island were observed.

Camping Island

4.1.2 The stratigraphy observed during the works on the island suggest that this area had been substantially increased in height during the early 20th century. Examination of the topology of the island shows that there is a notable step down in ground level running around the northern edge of the island, possibly indicating the original ground level. The raising of the ground level may have served a twofold purpose, primarily to support the existing river bank leading to the weir and secondly to provide a self contained recreational area. Deposits predating this activity were not encountered during the watching brief and therefore no conclusions regarding the archaeological potential of this area can be drawn.

Area adjoining the priory site

4.1.3 This Watching Brief encountered evidence for activity post dating the dissolution of the priory throughout the length of the trench. These deposits consisted of several layers of demolition debris, probably deposited during the demolition of the priory and the construction of the "Ladye Place" by the Lovelace family during the 16th and early 17th centuries. These had been sealed in places by later occupation layers probably dating to the 18th century. Culvert (26) dates to the late 17th or early 18th centuries and appears to have been constructed within the existing overflow channel from the fish pond to the west of the priory, and which may have originally ran through the old priory site. The existing boundary wall appears to predate the construction of this culvert with a brick arch contemporary with the wall seeming to span the original channel at this point. Presumably the culvert was constructed in order to provide a pathway alongside the wall at this time, and allowing the brick arch to be infilled. At a later date the current channel running from the fishpond was excavated leaving the culvert isolated. Probably at this time the brick wall observed severing the culvert was constructed, either to prevent flood water entering the old priory site, or possibly to prevent it being used as a means of access.

4.1.4 A single deposit possibly relating to the priory was the occupation layer (24), which was sealed below a succession of demolition layers, although this produced no usable dating evidence.

4.1.5 No evidence for any structures relating to the original priory extending outside the boundary of the SAM were observed during the course of the watching brief.

5 ADDITIONAL WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

5.1.1 As part of the refurbishment of the lock a new sanitary station on Hurley Lock Island was to be constructed. This involved the excavation of approximately 45 m length of a 1.2 m wide by 1 m deep trench to contain the heat exchanger pipe. The stratigraphy exposed was similar throughout its length, with a layer of pale grey-brown clay silts encountered at a depth of 0.65 m below ground level. These could be seen to be in excess of 0.3 m thick within the section and may be a continuation of Layer (2) within Section 1. This layer produced a stoneware bottle labelled "The Brewery, Henley-on-Thames" suggesting a 19th century date. This was overlaid by a 0.15 m thick layer of fine yellow-brown sandy gravel, a probable layer of made ground. Overlying this was a 0.25 m thick layer of mixed chalk and grey-brown silts, a layer of made ground, probably material dredged from the river. A 0.25 m thick layer of the landscaping layer of topsoil and turf (1) completed the section. No evidence for any earlier archaeology was observed.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	*Type*	*Depth/ Height*	*Width*	*Comments*	*Finds*	*Date*
1	Layer	0.25 m	-	Modern topsoil	Brick	C20th
2	Layer	0.45 m	-	Made ground	-	C19th
3	Layer	0.15 m	-	Made ground	Brick	C19th
4	Layer	> 0.45 m	-	Probable original ground level	-	-
5	Layer	0.12 m	-	Made ground	-	C19th/ C20th
6	Layer	0.15 m	-	Made ground	-	C19th/ C20th
7	Layer	0.18 m	-	Made ground	-	C19th/ C20th
8	Layer	0.2 m	-	Made ground	-	C19th/ C20th
9	Layer	> 0.4 m	-	Alluvium	-	-
10	Layer	0.25 m	-	Modern topsoil	-	C20th
11	Layer	0.2 m	-	Made ground/ demolition debris	Brick	C19th
12	Layer	> 0.18 m	-	Possible alluvium	-	-
13	Layer	0.15 m	-	Made ground	-	C19th/ C20th
14	Layer	0.15 m	-	Made ground	-	C19th/ C20th
15	Layer	> 0.4 m	-	Probable alluvium	-	-
16	Layer	0.15 m	-	Made ground	-	C19th/ C20th
17	Layer	0.2 m	-	Occupation layer	Brick	C18th
18	Layer	> 0.5 m	-	Made ground	Brick	C17th/ C18th
19	Surface	0.08 m	1.2 m	Modern tarmac footpath	-	C20th
20	Layer	0.15 m	-	Possible demolition layer	Brick	C17th
21	Layer	0.15 m	-	Possible demolition layer	Brick	C17th
22	Layer	0.15 m	-	Made ground	-	-
23	Layer	0.23 m	-	Possible demolition layer	Brick	C17th
24	Layer	> 0.2 m	-	Occupation layer, possibly associated with the priory	Brick	C16th
25	Cut	> 0.8 m	3.0 m	Overflow channel from fishpond, reused for culvert	-	C17th/ C18th

Context	*Type*	*Depth/ Height*	*Width*	*Comments*	*Finds*	*Date*
26	Structure	0.9 m	1.4 m	Brick built semi-circular culvert	Brick	C17th/ C18th
27	Fill	> 0.8 m	3.0 m	Backfill of culvert trench	Brick	C17th/ C18th
28	Layer	0.12 m	-	Landscaping layer of topsoil and turf	-	C20th
29	Layer	> 0.7 m	-	Modern made ground	Pottery, brick, metal	C20th
30	Layer	0.5 m	-	Made ground	Brick	C19th
31	Layer	> 0.4 m	-	Natural chalk	-	-

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

EA, 2005 *Outline of Works for Watching Brief at Hurley Locks*

IFA, 2001 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

OA, 2003 *Hurley Lock Island, Hurley, Berkshire : Archaeological Evaluation Report*

OA, 2006 *Hurley Lock Island, Hurley, Berkshire : Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

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

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Mains Sewerage, Hurley Lock, Berkshire
Site code: HUSEW 06
Grid reference: SU 8266 8428 to SU 8253 8405
Type of watching brief: Machine and hand excavation of approximately 250 m length of trenching
Date and duration of project: Between January and March 2006, Approximately 3 months
Area of site: Approximately 1 hectare
Summary of results: The watching brief revealed deposits of 19th century made ground on Hurley Lock Island, deposits of 20th century made ground on Camping Island and layers of demolition debris, probably 16th or 17th century in date, alongside the old priory site. A later inserted brick culvert dated to the late 17th or early 18th century was observed running from the old fish ponds, under the footpath and into the priory site. No evidence for structures relating to the priory extending outside the current SAM boundary were observed.
Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Reading Museum in due course, under the following accession number: REDMG:2006.39

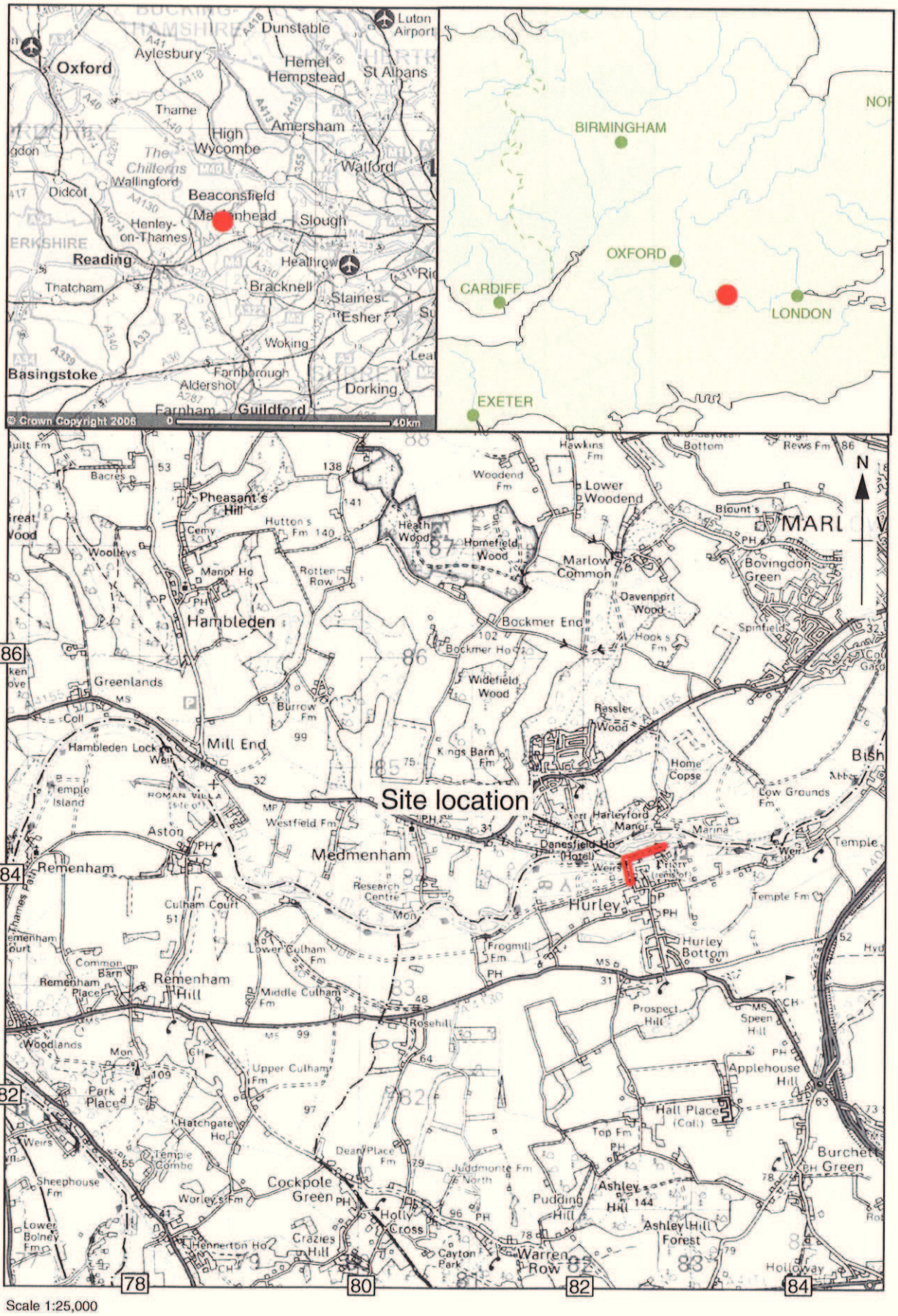

Figure 1: Site location

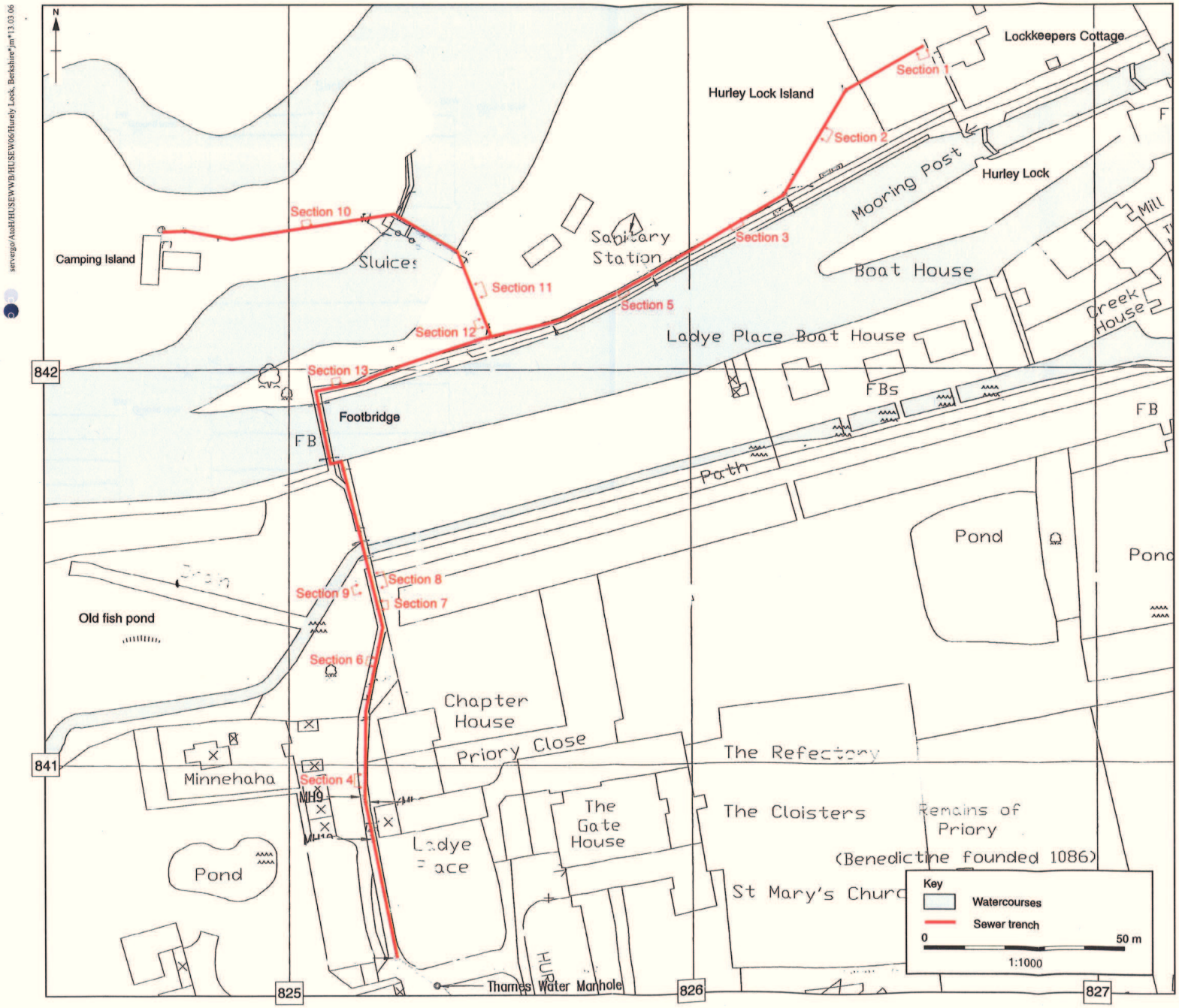

Figure 2: Site plan

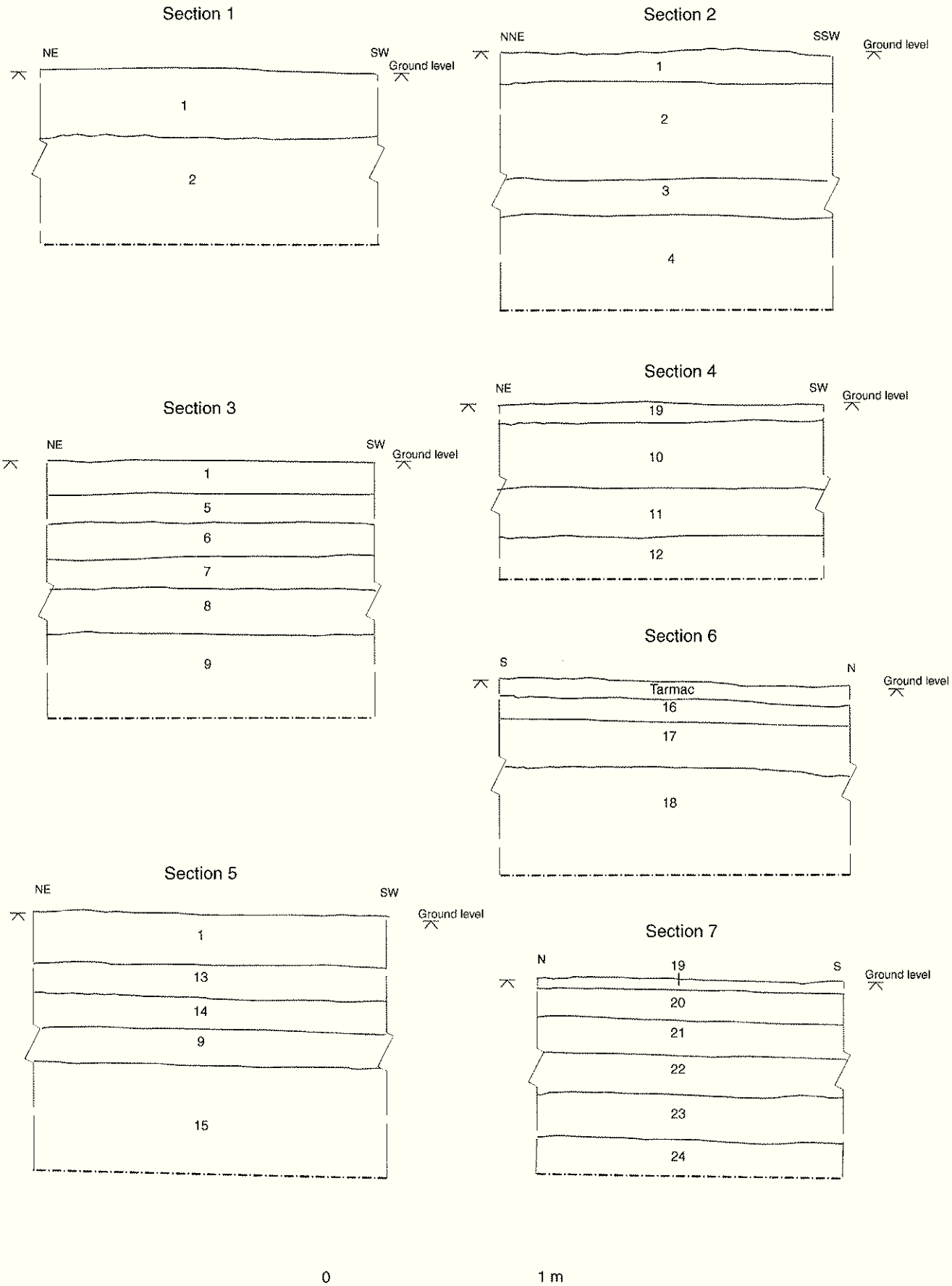

Figure 3: Sections 1-7

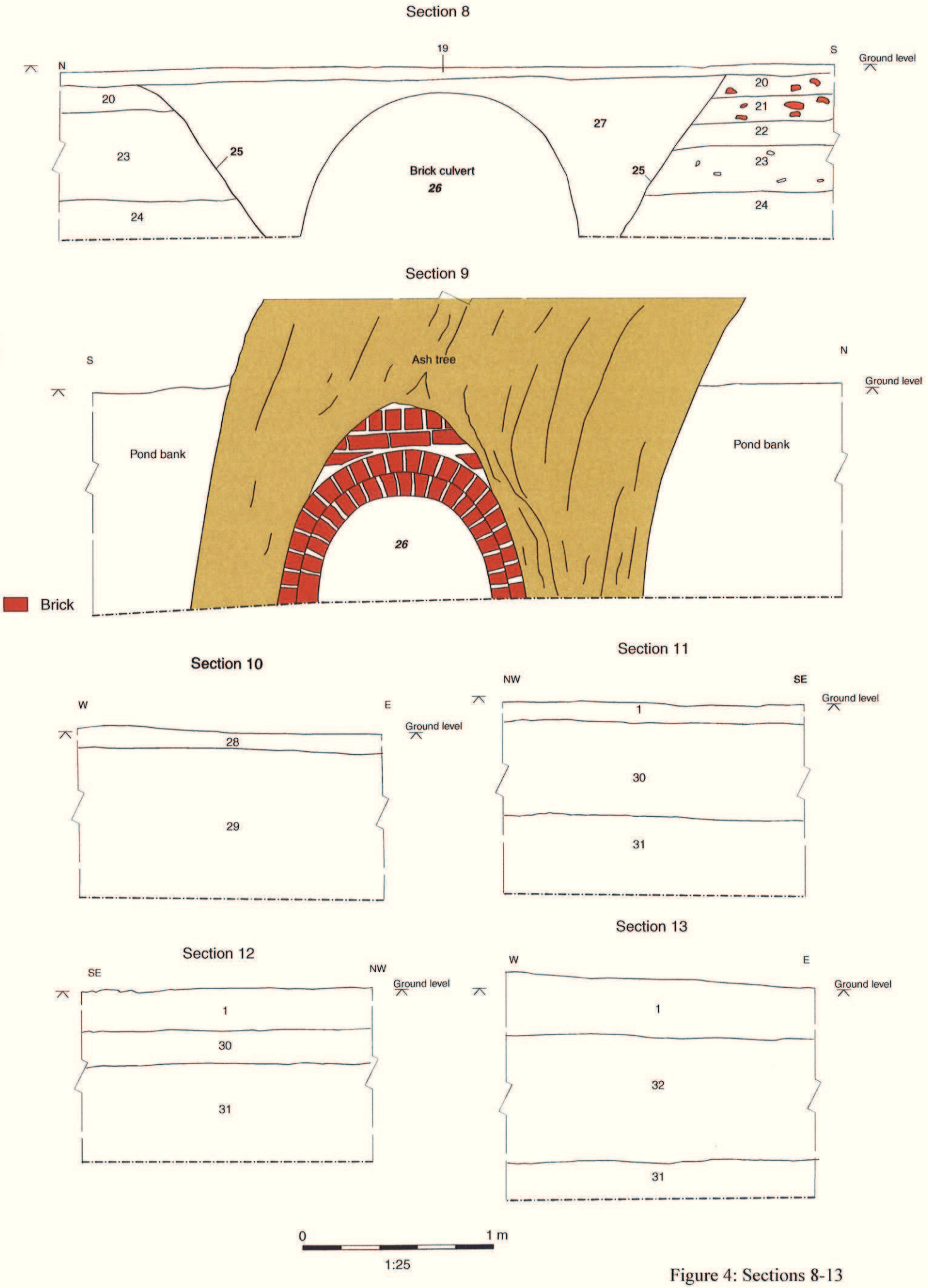

Figure 4: Sections 8-13

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