

# LADYGROVE ESTATE

## DIDCOT, OXON.

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

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LADYGROVE ESTATE, DIDCOT  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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## LADYGROVE ESTATE, DIDCOT ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

### SUMMARY

*A field evaluation was undertaken by the Oxford Archaeological Unit on three parcels of land to the west of Ladygrove Estate, Didcot on behalf of Bryant Homes Southern Limited between 3rd and 16th May 1994. The evaluation was carried out in accordance with South Oxfordshire District Council requirements, and in agreement with a brief set by the Oxfordshire County Archaeological Officer, in advance of an application for planning approval to construct 248 residential properties. The evaluation consisted of a limited desktop study followed by the excavation of 33 machine-dug trenches over approximately 9 hectares. It was found that the entire area under study had been subjected to considerable inundation from the later prehistoric period onwards. This had resulted in places in the accumulation of almost 0.80 m of alluvial deposits. Underlying the alluvium was a buried prehistoric ground surface which contained numerous tree-throw pits, some of which showed evidence of burning and which had almost certainly resulted from Neolithic or Bronze Age land clearance, although no dating evidence was obtained. The only archaeological features were several linear ditches at approximate right angles to one another. While none contained any artefacts they are believed, on the basis of environmental observations, to be of Roman date and are likely to have been either field ditches or channels dug in an attempt to drain the area.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Topography and Geology

The proposed development site, consisting of parts of three parcels of land covering approximately 9 hectares (centred NGR SU 5285 9135), is located 1 km to the north-east of Didcot, to the immediate south of the A4130 northern bypass, and just over 2 km to the south of Appleford (Fig.1). It lies on level ground at c.52 metres above OD. and 2.5 km south of the River Thames.

The solid geology of the development area is shown as Gault clay on the one inch OS Geological Survey of Great Britain, with Upper Greensand to the south and extensive gravel terrace deposits to the north along the course of the River Thames. The only alluvial deposit in the vicinity is sited to the west and is associated with a minor tributary (Moor Ditch) of the Thames. The Soil Survey of England and Wales indicates that the site lies on the Thames Series of gley soils consisting of clayey and calcareous clayey alluvium. Furthermore the Soil Survey Land Use Capability Classification indicates that the land is subject to very slow permeability, which causes surface wetness restricting cultivation. This data is supported by field examination and by comments made by local inhabitants which suggest that much of the area is subject to high groundwater levels. The pattern of modern and 19th-century land drains also indicates that groundwater drainage has been a perpetual problem.

## 1.2 The Archaeological Background

A desktop appraisal has shown that no archaeological sites or finds have been recorded from the development area, although the general area is rich in archaeological remains (Fig. 2 and *Appendix 1*). Extensive cropmarks (PRN 8491, 8492, 8516 and 11608) lie to the north around Pearith Farm and probably relate to concentrated settlement activity in the late pre-Roman Iron Age and Romano-British periods. Other recorded activity around Pearith Farm includes Bronze Age burials and pottery (PRN 2382), an early Iron Age settlement (Oxfordshire C.C. Sites and Monuments Record PRN 2384), Romano-British inhumations (PRN 2385) and possible Saxon buildings (PRN 12544). Neolithic ditches, a Saxon sunken-featured building and a Saxon inhumation cemetery have also been revealed by the Oxford Archaeological Unit during excavations at Didcot Power Station 2.5 km to the west. A possible Roman settlement (PRN 8035) has been recorded 1 km to the south-west in Didcot, more extensive Romano-British remains including substantial foundations and occupation debris have also been recorded 1 km to the north-east at Willington's Down Farm (PRN 7944) and Saxon pottery has been found around Ladygrove Farm c. 400 m to the east (PRN 7674). Except for the last two sites which are located on Gault clay the others are sited on the gravel terraces of the River Thames.

## 1.3 Purpose of the Evaluation

The evaluation at Ladygrove Estate was commissioned by Bryant Homes Southern Limited in advance of a proposed development (ref. P94/WO133) for a residential scheme comprising 248 houses and associated works including public open spaces.

The aims of the evaluation were as follows:

- i.* To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the development area.
- ii.* To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present.
- iii.* To establish the ecofactual/environmental potential of archaeological features.
- iv.* To appraise the likely impact of the development proposals on any archaeology located.

## 1.4 Evaluation Methodology

A limited desktop assessment comprising the collection of relevant County Sites and Monument Record information and the examination of historical maps of the area was undertaken. While this indicated that no archaeological remains were known within the development area it indicated the likely potential (see 1.2 above). The results of this assessment are presented in Fig. 2 and *Appendix 1*.

Field evaluation was undertaken by machine excavation of thirty-three 30 m long trenches (Fig. 3), which formed a *c.* 2 % sample of the development area. The trenches were excavated by a Chieftain 360° tracked excavator using a 1.60 m wide toothless ditching bucket. Once the depth of the solid geology had been established the topsoil, the alluvium and, in most trenches, the buried soil were mechanically removed one layer at a time. Where features were noted to have been dug through the buried soil this was not removed. Where modern field drains were encountered (Fig. 3) these were, where possible, left *in situ*. All trenches were excavated to the pre-arranged layout with the exception of Trench 22 which was resited 1.5 m to the north to avoid a land drain which was on the same alignment. Subsequent excavation of archaeological features was undertaken by hand. All trenches were planned at a scale of 1:100 and sample sections of the stratigraphy of each trench and sections of features were drawn at a scale of 1:20. Written recording was in accordance with the standard OAU method (Wilkinson 1992). Inclement weather conditions, localised flooding of Trench 21 and the depth of Trench 17 (making safe working impossible without recourse to shoring) prevented the total excavation of the large ditch located in Trenches 12, 17 and 21. Only a very limited sampling programme for later mollusca analysis was implemented at the suggestion of the consultant environmentalist (Dr Mark Robinson).

## 2 RESULTS

### 2.1 Soils

The topsoil consisted of a very clayey silt, rarely thicker than 0.20 m. This overlay a grey alluvial deposit formed of two horizons, although there was no distinct interface between with each merging into the other. The upper alluvium was generally darker in colour and finer in consistency having the appearance of a gley. The lower alluvium was generally a lighter grey with a slightly larger grain size. No dating evidence was obtained from the alluvium and its date must remain speculative. Comparison with other similar deposits along the Upper Thames and its tributaries (*Appendix 3*) suggests that it is probably of late pre-Roman Iron Age and Romano-British date. The variation in the consistency of the alluvium may have resulted from the upper layer having been deposited in slower flowing water. It is, however, equally possible that the upper alluvial deposit was of later, perhaps medieval, date. The depth of the alluvium varied across the site (Fig. 4) but was thickest at almost 0.60 m deep in Trenches 17, 21 and 23, presumably having been deposited in a slight basin in the underlying solid geology. In both easterly and southern directions the alluvium was shallower and on the east side of the site the lower alluvial deposit was barely visible. Towards the north, while the alluvium was not as deep as near the centre of the site, it was still substantial up to 0.40 m deep in Trenches 1 and 2.

The alluvium had sealed an earlier very dark grey/black silty clay soil which varied considerably in thickness from as little as 0.10 up to almost 0.30 m in places. This had undoubtedly resulted from greater accumulations in localised depressions in the Gault clay. Although no dating evidence was obtained from the buried soil it is

certainly of post-glacial date having gradually accumulated until it was covered by alluviation in the later prehistoric period. The dark colour of the buried soil had resulted from a high manganese rather than humic content. Sealed beneath or partly within the buried soil were numerous tree-throw holes of possible Neolithic date.

## 2.2 Tree-throw Holes

All but one of the machine-dug trenches contained what have been interpreted as tree-throw holes. These were generally circular in plan and between 2.0 and 3.5 m across, often showing the distinctive crescent-shaped area of darker soil contiguous with an area of redeposited clay subsoil. Such holes, originally identified by Kooi (1974) in Belgium, result from large trees having either been naturally uprooted by strong winds or having been deliberately pulled over following ring-barking. More locally at Drayton in Oxfordshire it has been confirmed that the holes were associated with Neolithic woodland clearance (Robinson 1992, 50-51). Several of the examples at the Ladygrove Estate also showed considerable evidence of burning, including areas of fire-reddened clay and patches of charcoal, possibly having resulted from the deliberate burning of fallen trees to clear the ground. However, the chance combustion of trees through natural causes cannot be discounted. At least three tree-throw holes were partly excavated but contained no artefacts. It was impossible, given the limited ground surface exposed in any of the trenches, to distinguish any pattern amongst the tree-throw holes, although a subjective judgement suggests that up to 20% of the land surface had been disturbed by such hollows.

## 2.3 Trench Descriptions

Twenty five (1-6, 11, 13-16, 18-20 and 22-32) of the thirty-three excavated trenches (Fig. 3) contained no visible archaeological deposits, with the exception of the tree-throw holes (2.2 above) and 19th and 20th-century land drains (Fig. 3). Consequently it is not proposed to describe these but further details are to be found in the site archive.

### *Trench 7 (Fig. 5)*

30 m long, aligned N-S.

The trench was machined down to the top of the Gault clay removing the topsoil (7/1), the upper (7/2) and lower (7/3) alluvial deposits and the buried soil (7/4) to an average depth of 0.80 m. Three definite parallel linear ditches (7/9, 7/11 and 7/13) aligned approximately E-W and a possible feature (7/7) were revealed in plan, as were several tree-throw holes, two of which contained burnt patches (2.2 above). When the trench section was cleaned by hand it became apparent that the three ditches, 0.90, 1.60 and 1.00 m wide respectively and at c. 0.45 m deep, had been cut through the buried soil from the lower alluvium. However, due to the similarity of the alluvium and the tertiary fill of the ditches, it was impossible to ascertain from exactly which level within Layer 7/3 that the cuts had been made. A possible linear

feature (7/7) in the north end of the trench was also excavated. It was found to have contained a fill of near identical consistency to that of the buried soil and is consequently thought to have been part of a tree-throw hole.

*Trench 8 (Fig. 6)*

30 m long, aligned E-W.

This trench, sited approximately 50 m east of Trench 7, exposed two ditches (8/7 and 8/9) also aligned roughly E-W, lying at a very acute angle to the line of the trench. However, with the earlier experience of having excavated the linear features in Trench 7, both ditches were observed in plan cutting through the darker buried soil (8/4). Ditch 7 was no more than 0.40 m wide and 0.12 m deep and had barely cut into the solid Gault clay. Ditch 9 was more substantial, 0.90 m wide and 0.53 m deep, and contained a medium grey silty clay primary silt (8/10) beneath a lighter grey secondary silt (8/8). Both ditches were on the same alignment as those located in Trench 7 and there can be little doubt that they were the same.

*Trench 9 (Fig. 6)*

30 m long, aligned N-S.

This trench was machined down to the top of the Gault clay removing the topsoil (9/1), the alluvium (9/2) and the buried soil (9/3). In this trench, and in most of those towards the eastern side of the development area, the lower of the two alluvial deposits was either not visible or very poorly defined. Apart from a number of tree-throw holes the only feature was a linear ditch (9/5) aligned approximately E-W located towards the centre of the trench. This was almost certainly the eastern continuation of the larger of the two ditches noted in Trench 8, having a similar V-shaped profile 1.40 m wide and 0.60 m deep. It had also been cut through the buried soil (9/3).

*Trench 10 (Fig. 8)*

30 m long, aligned E-W

This trench was machined down to the top of the Gault clay removing the topsoil (10/1), the alluvium (10/2) and the buried soil (10/3). Like Trench 9, to the west, only one alluvial horizon was visible in section. Apart from four probable tree-throw holes only a single linear ditch, aligned NNE-SSW, was located and excavated towards the east end of the trench. This ditch differed from those noted in Trenches 7, 8 and 9 in that whilst it may have been partially cut through the buried soil, a new soil had either formed on the ditch margins or the soil had slumped into the freshly dug ditch. A mottled orange brown silty clay primary silt (10/8) was sealed by a

grey-brown secondary silt (10/7) and this in turn was sealed beneath a lighter grey silty clay tertiary silt (10/6) of similar consistency to the alluvium. The ditch had a U-shaped profile up to 1.50 m wide and 0.65 m deep.

*Trench 12 (Fig. 7)*

30 m long, aligned N-S

Sited approximately 50 m to the south of Trenches 7 and 8 this trench was also machined down to the Gault clay, through the topsoil (12/1), the upper (12/2) and lower (12/3) alluvium and the buried soil (12/4). A single ditch (12/7), aligned NNE-SSW and at an approximate right angle to those recorded in Trenches 7, 8 and 9, was located towards the northern end of, and running at an acute angle across the line of, the trench. The ditch was at least 1.50 m wide and up to 0.70 m deep with a slight shelf on the western side, although there was no obvious evidence for a recut. Like the ditch on a similar alignment in Trench 10, the darker buried soil (12/3) appeared to have partially slumped into the sides of the ditch. The remains of at least four tree-throw holes were also noted on the surface of the Gault clay.

*Trench 17 (Fig. 7)*

30 m long, aligned E-W

This trench, along with Trenches 21, 22 and 23, was much deeper than most of the others on the site with the Gault clay at a depth 1.10 m below the modern ground surface. Almost as soon as the topsoil (17/1), the upper (17/2) and lower (17/3) alluvium and the buried soil (17/4) had been mechanically removed, the trench flooded and the sides became unstable. A large ditch (17/7), at least 2 m wide, was located in the centre of the trench on a NNE-SSW alignment. In both plan and section it was apparent that the buried soil (17/4) had slumped into the sides of the ditch, although hand excavation of the base of the ditch was impossible. Several tree-throw pits were also noted.

*Trench 21*

30 m long, aligned N-S

The depth of this trench at over 1 m deep and its close proximity to a large waterlogged field ditch also created problems with flooding and only superficial recording was possible. The eastern side of the ditch (21/6) previously recorded in Trenches 12 and 17 was located. Unfortunately the western side lay just beyond the northern limit of the trench which could not be extended due to the existence of a modern land drain.



### *Trench 33* (Fig. 8)

30 m long, aligned E-W

This, the most southerly of the trenches, revealed two further ditches as well as extensive evidence of tree-throw holes. Towards the east end of the trench a small ditch (33/9), 0.35 m wide, 0.20 m and aligned broadly E-W, was recorded running for almost 5 m at an acute angle across the line of the trench. It had cut through a tree-throw hole which contained fire-reddened clay. Just west of the trench centre a larger ditch (33/7), 1.50 m wide, 0.50 m deep and aligned NNE-SSW, was also recorded. Although on a similar course to the ditch noted in Trench 10 to the north, it would be highly speculative to suggest that they were the same ditch since they are at least 300 m apart. However, their similarity of alignment together with that of the ditch noted in Trenches 12, 17 and 21 indicates that they may belong to a contemporary arrangement of boundary/drainage ditches.

## 2.4 Finds

With the exception of several broken post-medieval horseshoes and fragments of pottery found in the topsoil, no other artefacts were recovered either from the alluvial deposits or any of the ditch fills. With regard to the latter, despite 50% of their contents having been excavated, no artefactual or ecofactual remains could be found. This dearth of pottery and animal bone clearly reflects the probable distance of the features from contemporary domestic occupation or other forms of activity.

## 2.5 Environmental

Six 2 kg soil samples were taken from the two alluvial deposits (7/2 and 7/3), the buried soil (7/4), and the fills of Ditches 7/9, 7/11 and 7/13 in Trench 7 for possible future molluscan analysis. Since Dr Mark Robinson made a number of field identifications (*Appendix 3*) of the mollusca present on the site it is considered unnecessary to examine these samples at present. They will, however, be retained should future work in the area require additional or supporting environmental data.

## 3 DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Reliability of methodology

No significant problems were encountered with any of the trenches apart from very localized flooding of Trenches 17 and 21 which, combined with their greater than average depth, made hand excavation impossible. Weather conditions were on the whole favourable. The sample size, comprising *c.* 2% of the proposed development area, is considered sufficient to have defined and interpreted the archaeological features exposed in the trenches.

### 3.2 Overall Interpretation

The results of the evaluation, summarized above, indicate that in the post-glacial prehistoric period the area was almost certainly covered by broad-leaved woodland. Many of these trees had either blown over or had been pulled over by humans resulting in tree-throw pits where the geology had been substantially disturbed by the displacement of the tree roots. Since a number of the pits showed evidence of fire reddening and other contained charcoal it is probable that some, if not all, may represent Neolithic or Bronze Age clearance activities, although no actual dating evidence was recovered. During the later prehistoric period a topsoil formed over the Gault clay. In the very late Iron Age or more probably in the Roman period, a simple linear arrangement of small drainage or boundary ditches approximately at right angles to one another were dug through the soil into the underlying clay.

It is suggested that two larger parallel ditches, aligned approximately NNE-SSW and located in Trenches 12, 17 and 21 and Trench 10, are the earliest since the buried soil appears to have slumped into their fills. It is also possible that the larger of the two ditches noted in Trench 33, also aligned NNE-SSW, may have been the southern continuation of the ditch recorded in Trench 10. It might, however, be expected to have been located in Trench 25, which was found to be devoid of archaeological features.

The three ditches recorded in Trench 7, two of which were subsequently recorded in Trench 8 and one in Trench 9 to the east, may belong to a slightly later phase. Apart from the buried soil not having slumped into their fills, there was slight evidence that they had been cut from a slightly higher level within the lower alluvium, some time after periodic flooding had commenced. The discovery of three ditches all on the same alignment and very close together suggests that two of them may have been later replacements of a primary ditch cut. The smaller ditch located in Trench 33 was also on a similar alignment to those noted in Trenches 7, 8 and 9 but is sited over 300 m further south.

Although there is no corroborative dating evidence it is thought likely that the ditches aligned NNE-SSW are of early Roman date and those aligned more E-W are of later Roman date.

All of the ditches had been sealed beneath a thick alluvial deposit which had resulted from the main episodes of alluviation in the late Iron Age/Roman and late Saxon/medieval periods in the upper Thames floodplain. Although the Didcot site is 2.5 km from the Thames the alluvium had resulted from the flooding of the minor local tributaries. The differentiation between the two alluvial deposits had resulted from the lower 'grittier' deposit having been laid down by faster flowing water.

### 3 Archaeological potential

- 3.3 The discovery that the development area had suffered severe flooding from the late prehistoric period onwards substantially lessens the likelihood that any significant occupation had occurred after the Iron Age, and the area would have remained a low lying meadow. There remains the possibility that prehistoric activity occurred in the area although no evidence for this was found in any of the evaluation trenches. It is felt likely that the Gault clay was generally avoided, particularly so given the extensive lighter better drained soils available for settlement to the north and south of the site.

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May 1994

## APPENDIX 1

### CULTURAL HERITAGE FEATURES OF THE GENERAL AREA

<i>PRN</i>	<i>NGR (SU)</i>	<i>Description</i>
7674	53589147	Saxon pottery
7942	546917	Roman pottery
7944	540918	Extensive Romano-British remains including substantial foundations and occupation debris
2846	524904	Roman silver coin
8035	52159051	Romano-British pottery/settlement
7660	52009050	Roman, medieval and post-medieval pottery found on surface
2838	52159200 (C)	Cropmarks of doubtful archaeological significance
2861	535922	Possible cropmark circle
2382	53799245	Bronze Age burials found during gravel quarrying
2385	53799244	Roman inhumation cemetery
8492	536925	Part of an oval cropmark
8491	530928 (C)	Extensive cropmarks of enclosures, trackways and pits of uncertain date
11608	53419289	Prehistoric trapezoidal enclosure cropmark
12544	53979237	Two possible Saxon sunken-featured buildings
2384	54089234	Early Iron Age settlement
8516	542927	Rectilinear enclosure cropmarks of unknown date

(C) = approximate centre

*The list above and the accompanying map (Fig. 2) does not include later medieval and post-medieval PRN entries.*

## APPENDIX 2

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

*Trenches 1-6, 11, 13-16, 18-20 and 22-32 contained no archaeological deposits and have consequently not been listed in the following table.*

<i>Trench No.</i>	<i>Context No.</i>	<i>Context Type</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comments</i>
<b>7</b>	7/1	layer		0.20	topsoil
	7/2	layer		0.12	upper alluvium
	7/3	layer		0.21	lower alluvium
	7/4	layer		0.14	buried soil
	7/5	natural			Solid geology
	7/6	fill		0.20	fill of Feature 7/7
	7/7	feature ?	1.20	0.20	tree-throw pit ?
	7/8	fill		0.42	fill of Ditch 7/9
	7/9	ditch	0.90	0.42	linear ditch
	7/10	fill		0.44	fill of Ditch 7/11
	7/11	ditch	1.60	0.44	linear ditch
	7/12	fill		0.38	fill of Ditch 7/13
	7/13	ditch	1.10	0.38	linear ditch
<b>8</b>	8/1	layer		0.26	topsoil
	8/2	layer		0.12	upper alluvium
	8/3	layer		0.12	lower alluvium
	8/4	layer		0.16	buried soil
	8/5	natural			solid geology
	8/6	fill		0.13	fill of Ditch 8/7
	8/7	ditch	0.35	0.13	linear ditch
	8/8	fill		0.36	secondary fill of Ditch 8/9
	8/9	ditch	0.90	0.54	linear ditch
	8/10	fill		0.18	primary fill of Ditch 8/9

<i>Trench No.</i>	<i>Context No.</i>	<i>Context Type</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comments</i>
<b>9</b>	9/1	layer		0.24	topsoil
	9/2	layer		0.25	alluvium
	9/3	layer		0.14	buried soil
	9/4	natural			solid geology
	9/5	ditch	1.40	0.58	linear ditch
	9/6	fill		0.58	fill of Ditch 9/5
<b>10</b>	10/1	layer		0.20	topsoil
	10/2	layer		0.22	alluvium
	10/3	layer		0.12	buried soil
	10/4	natural			solid geology
	10/5	ditch	1.50	0.60	linear ditch
	10/6	fill		0.20	tertiary fill of Ditch 10/5
	10/7	fill		0.26	secondary fill of Ditch 10/5
	10/8	fill		0.14	primary fill of Ditch 10/5
<b>12</b>	12/1	layer		0.22	topsoil
	12/2	layer		0.22	upper alluvium
	12/3	layer		0.14	lower alluvium
	12/4	layer		0.24	buried soil
	12/5	natural			solid geology
	12/6	fill		0.76	fill of Ditch 12/7
	12/7	ditch	1.50	0.76	linear ditch
<b>17</b>	17/1	layer		0.22	topsoil
	17/2	layer		0.28	upper alluvium
	17/3	layer		0.14	lower alluvium
	17/4	layer		0.20	buried soil
	17/5	natural			solid geology
	17/6	fill		0.40+	fill of Ditch 17/7
	17/7	ditch	2.0	?	linear ditch

<i>Trench No.</i>	<i>Context No.</i>	<i>Context Type</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comments</i>
21	21/1	layer		0.20	topsoil
	21/2	layer		0.32	upper alluvium
	21/3	layer		0.18	lower alluvium
	21/4	layer		0.20	buried soil
	21/5	natural			solid geology
	21/6	ditch	2.0+	?	linear ditch
	21/7	fill		?	fill of Ditch 21/6
33	33/1	layer		0.20	topsoil
	33/2	layer		0.22	upper alluvium
	33/3	layer		0.08	lower alluvium
	33/4	layer		0.18	buried soil
	33/5	natural			solid geology
	33/6	fill		0.44	fill of Ditch 33/7
	33/7	ditch	1.50	0.62	linear ditch
	33/8	fill		0.20	fill of Ditch 33/9
	33/9	ditch	0.36	0.20	linear ditch

## APPENDIX 3

### ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

Dr Mark Robinson

A site visit was paid to the OAU evaluation at Ladygrove Estate, Didcot on 9th May 1994. According to the drift geology map, the site lies on Gault clay but the Soil Survey records the soil of the site as belonging to the Thames Series, which usually develops from alluvial clay.

The trenching showed that the Gault clay of the site is covered by between 0.40 and 0.60 m of pale grey alluvial clay. This seals a non-calcareous clay palaeosol which in places is black, probably the result of manganese staining. Beneath the palaeosol are typical tree-throw features, some of which show reddening from burning. Oak charcoal was identified from one.

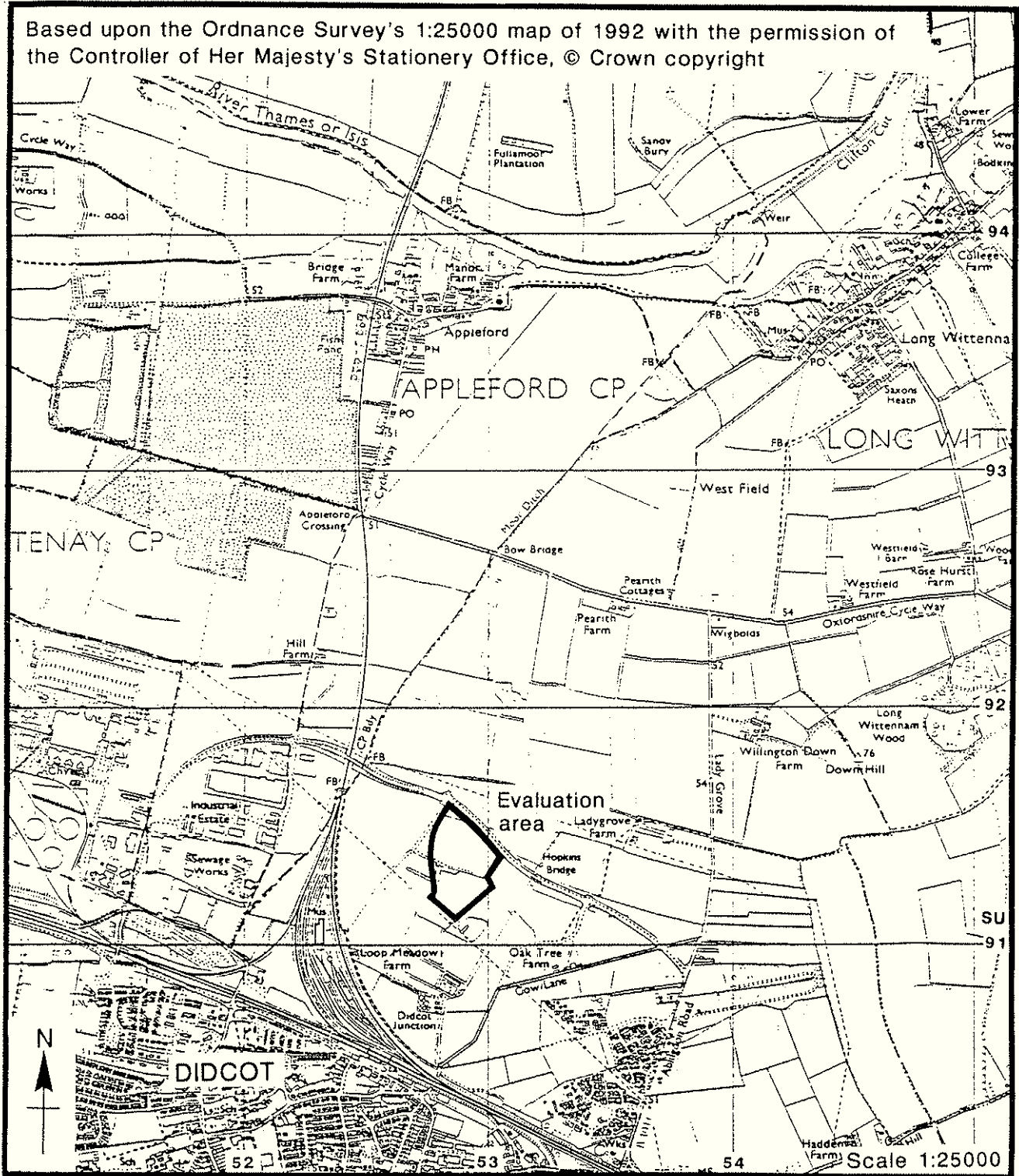
Cutting the palaeosol were several ditches. The ancient soil spills into some, but the majority are filled entirely with alluvial sediments, usually pale grey with calcareous fragments. Some of the ditches may have partially cut the earliest alluvium. Molluscs noted from the ditches include *Bithynia tentaculata*, *Planorbis corneus* and *Lymnaea stagnalis*, which suggest flowing water conditions. All the ditches are sealed by the alluvial clay. The clay is more calcareous and paler towards the bottom of the profile, possibly reflecting more rapid sedimentation. The molluscs from the alluvium again include the flowing water snail *Bithynia tentaculata* and also *Succinea* or *Oxyloma* sp. and *Trichia hispida* gp., which are typical of meadowland.

The tree-throw features are probably prehistoric and may represent Neolithic or Bronze Age clearance activities. The main episodes of alluviation in the upper Thames floodplain were later Iron Age to late Roman and late Saxon to early medieval, so the ditches could be Iron Age to medieval in date. However, they are reminiscent of early Roman activity elsewhere on the floodplain, where ultimately unsuccessful attempts were made to counter increasing wetness.

The evidence for an area of floodplain over Gault clay rather than gravel is archaeologically useful in understanding the development of the landscape of the region. No further work would be required unless archaeological features of more importance than tree-throw holes and minor undated drainage ditches are found.



Based upon the Ordnance Survey's 1:25000 map of 1992 with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown copyright



Site location plan

Figure 1

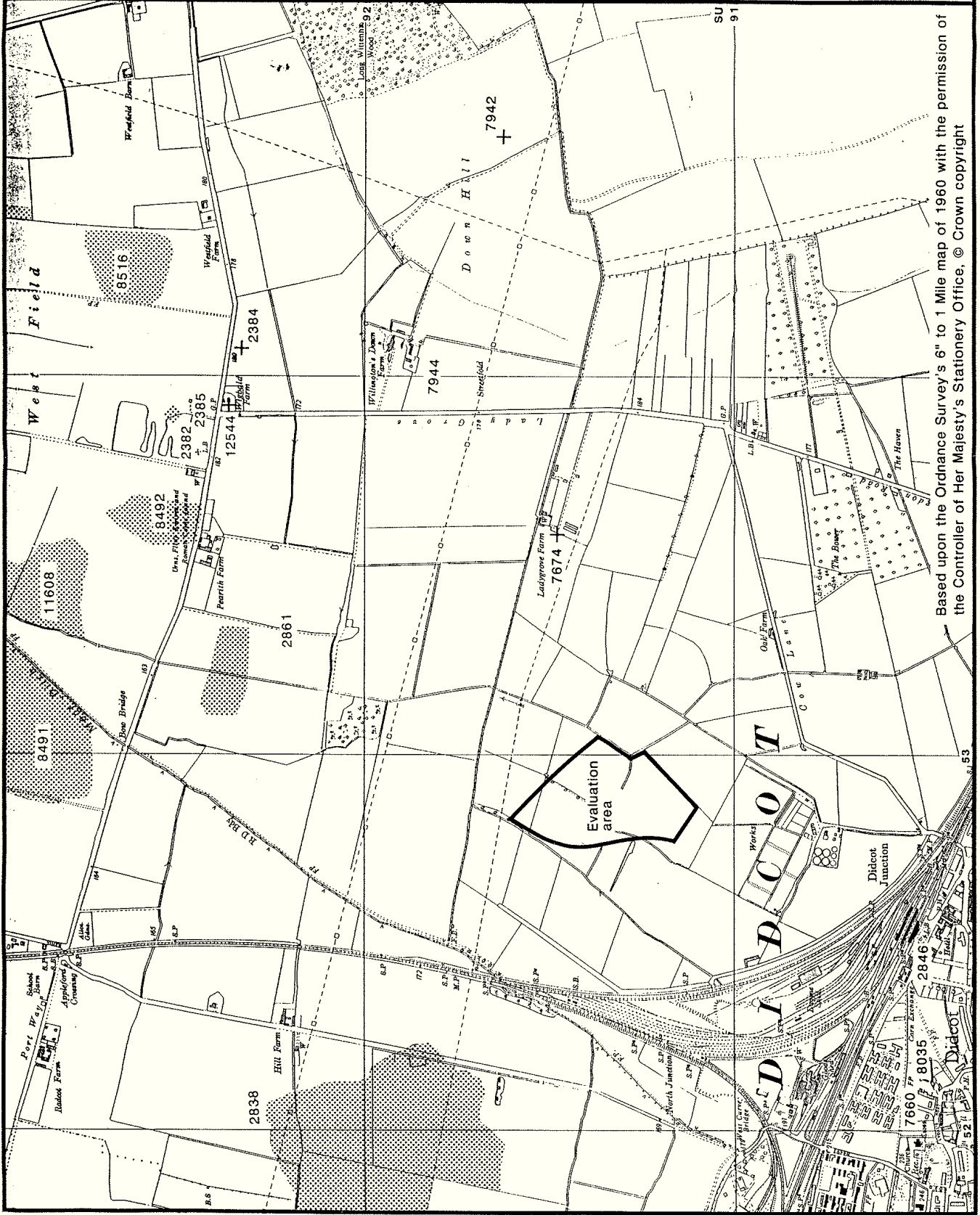
# Archaeological Background

7944 PRN number

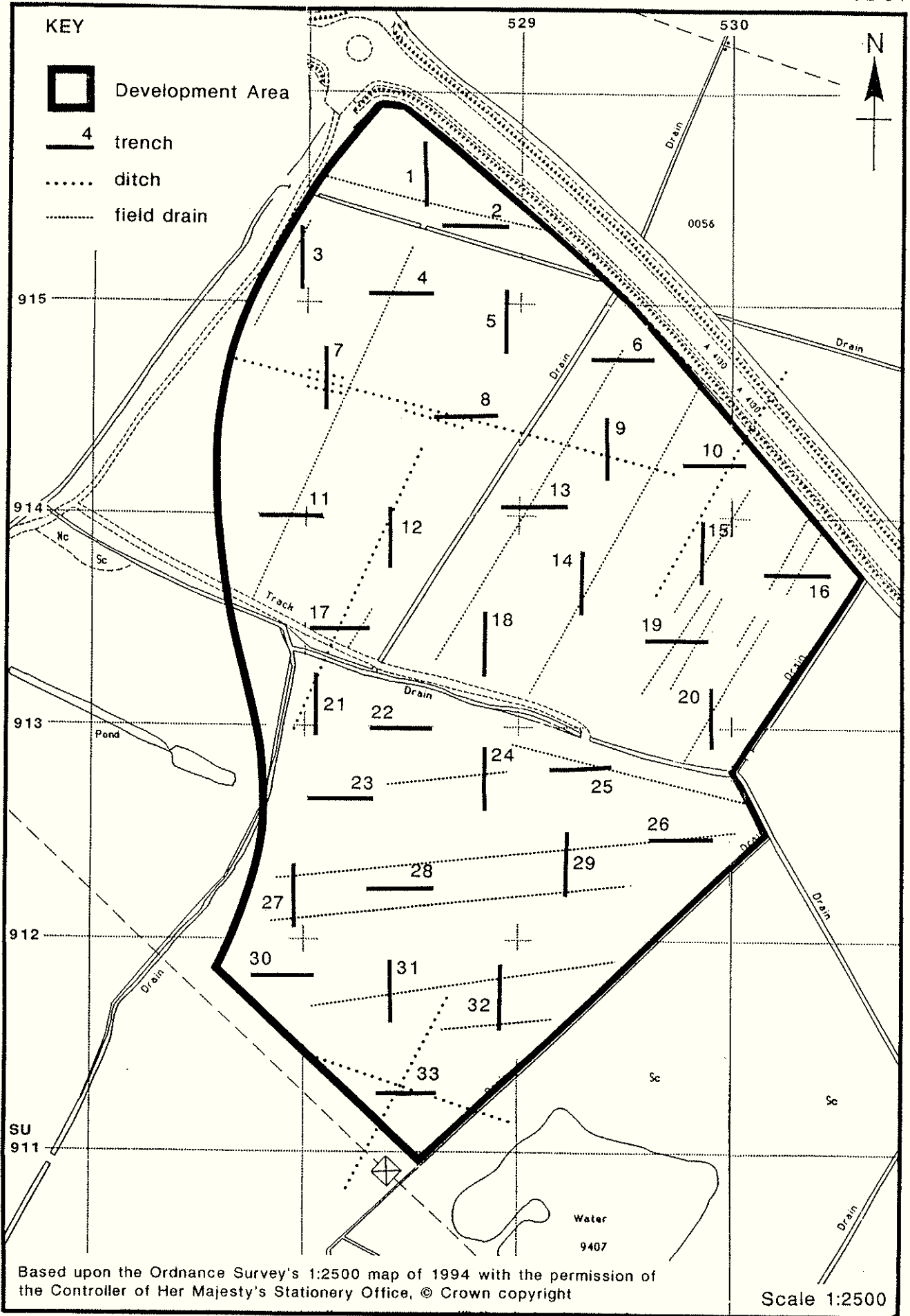
+ Find

Area of cropmark

Scale 6" to 1 mile

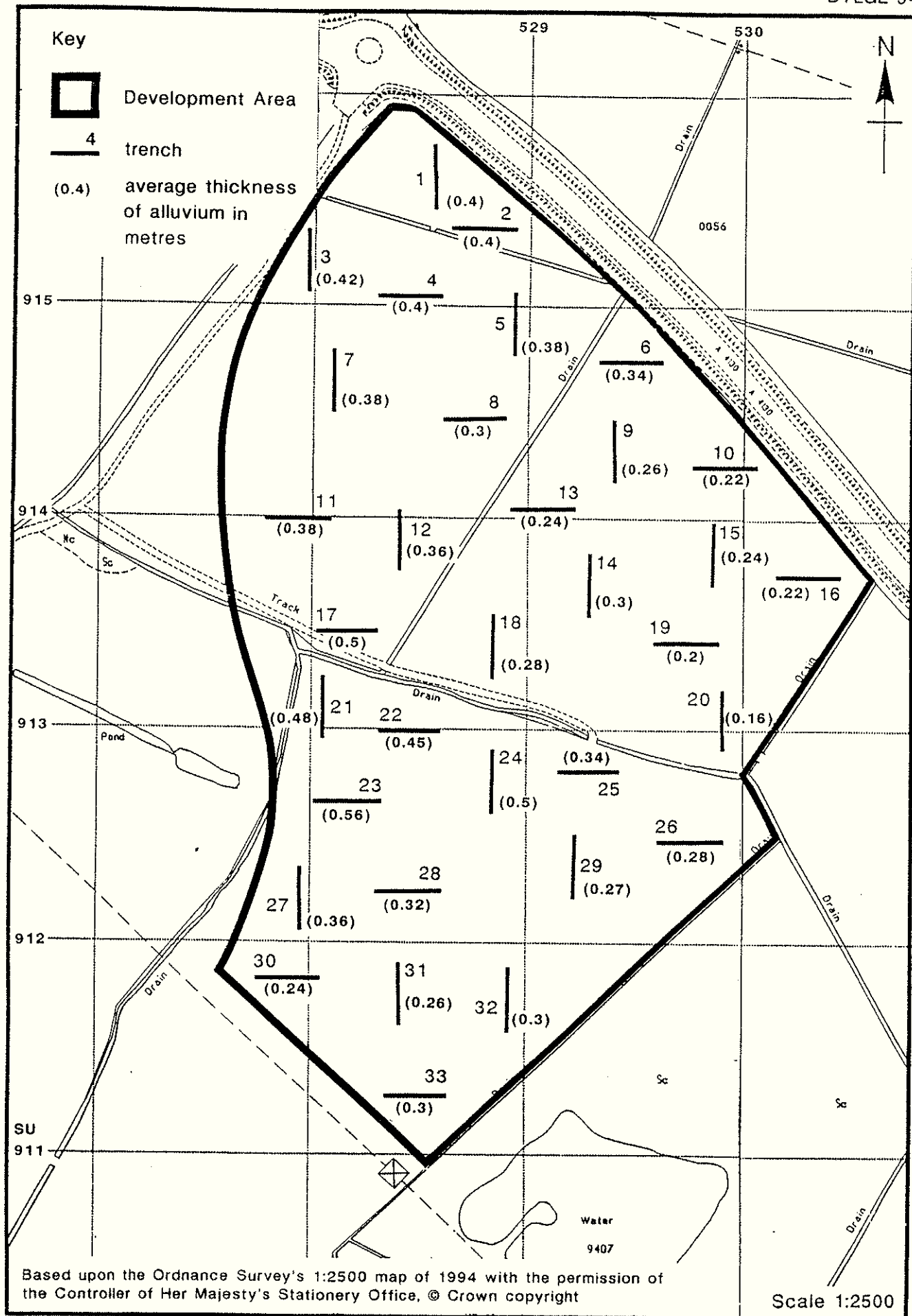


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Trench location plan

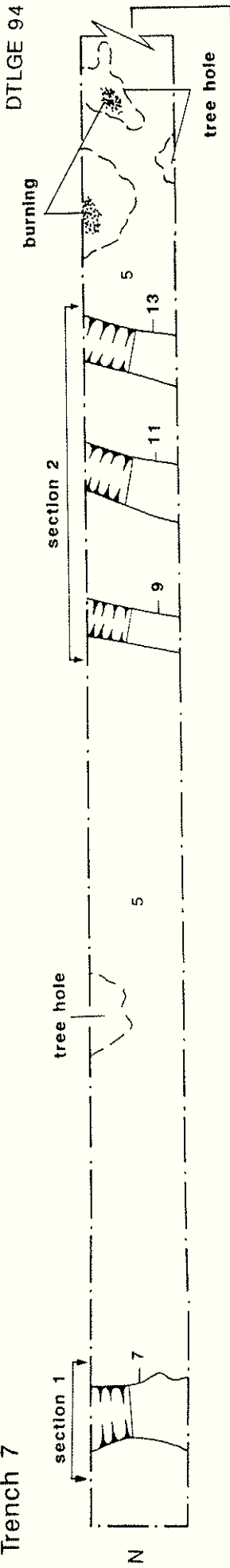
Figure 3



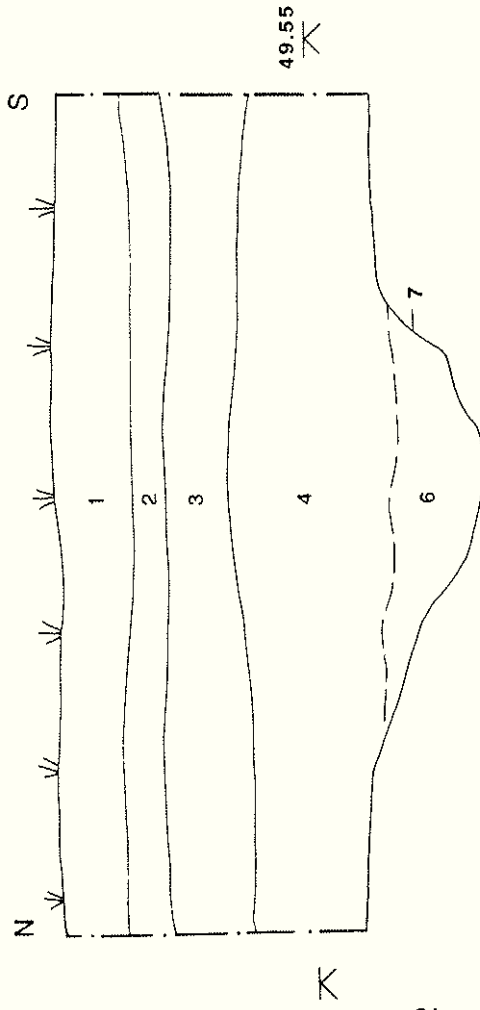
Depth of alluvium in trenches

Figure 4

Trench 7



Section 1



Section 2

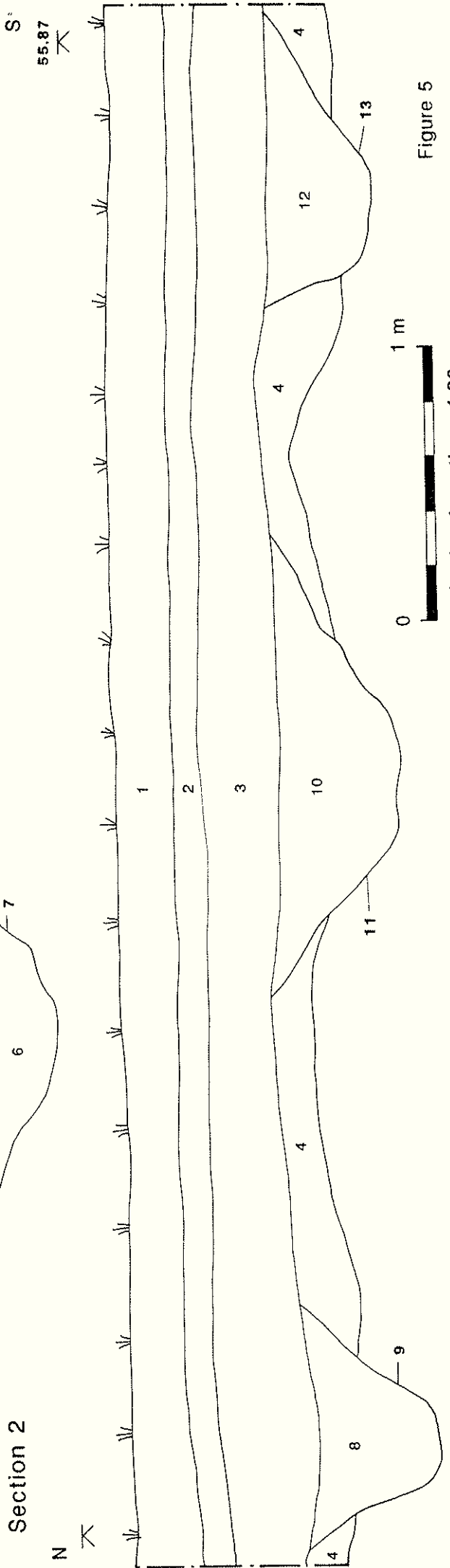
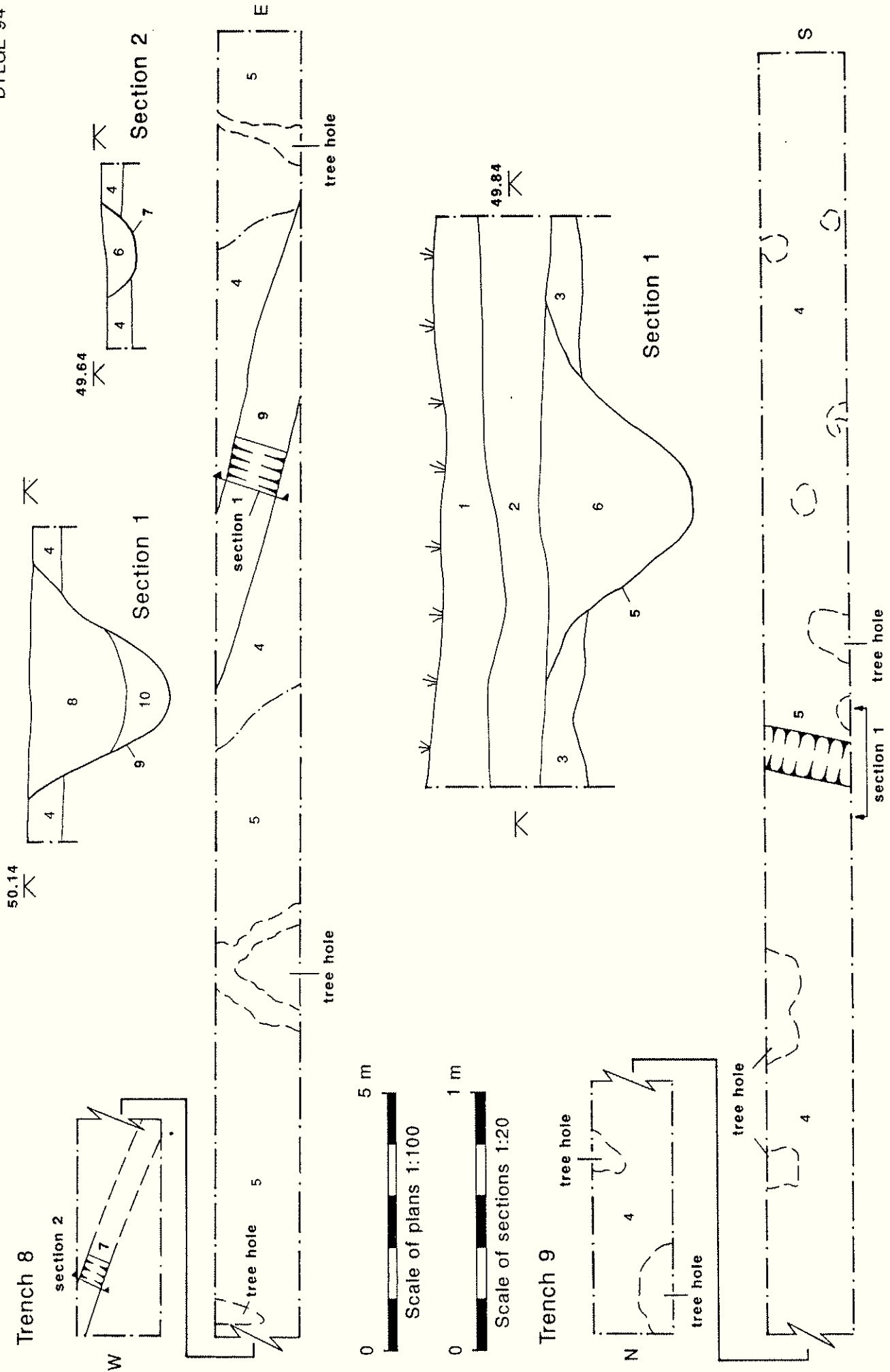


Figure 5

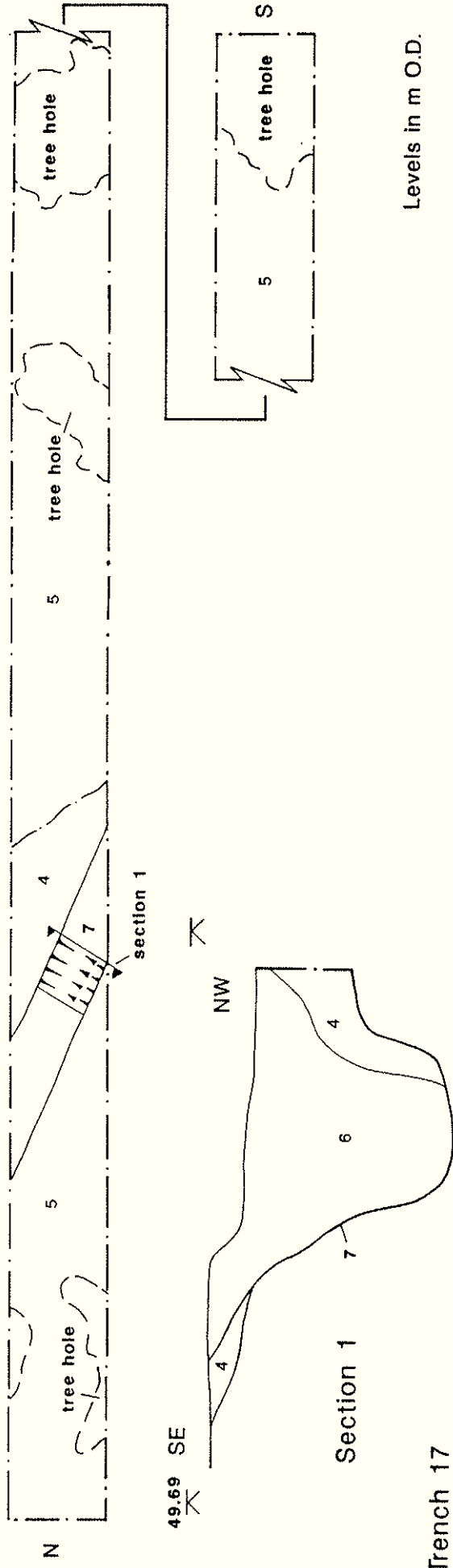


Levels in m O.D.

Figure 6

Trench 12

DTLGE 94



Trench 17

Levels in m O.D.

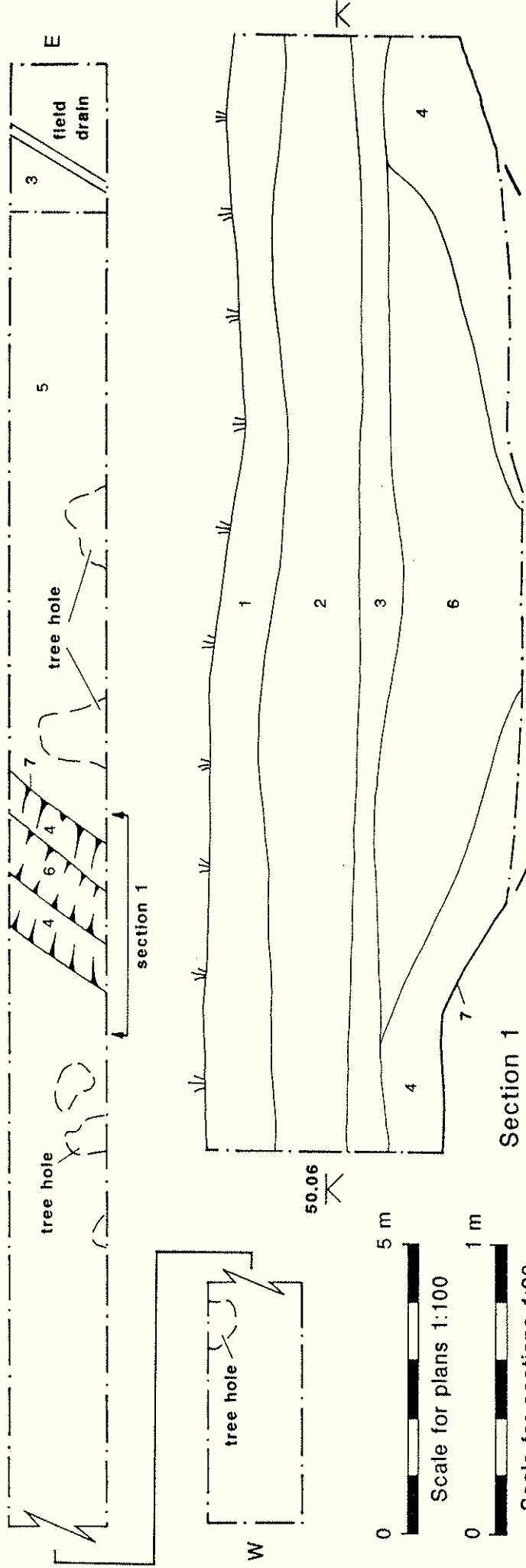
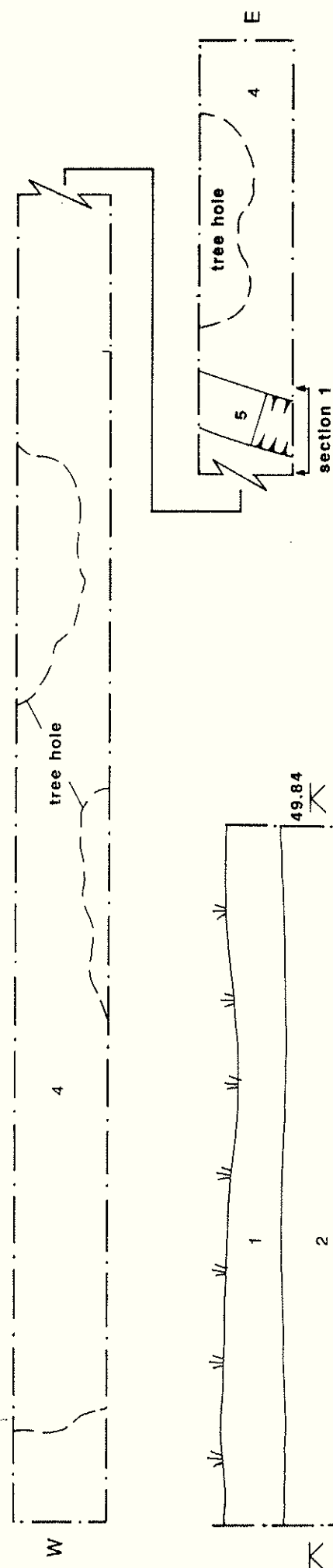
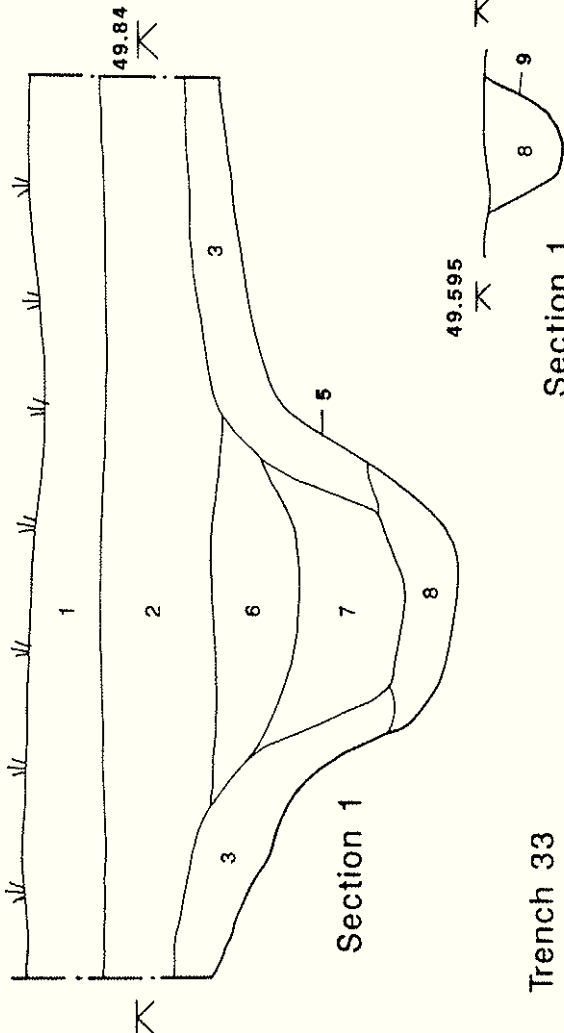


Figure 7

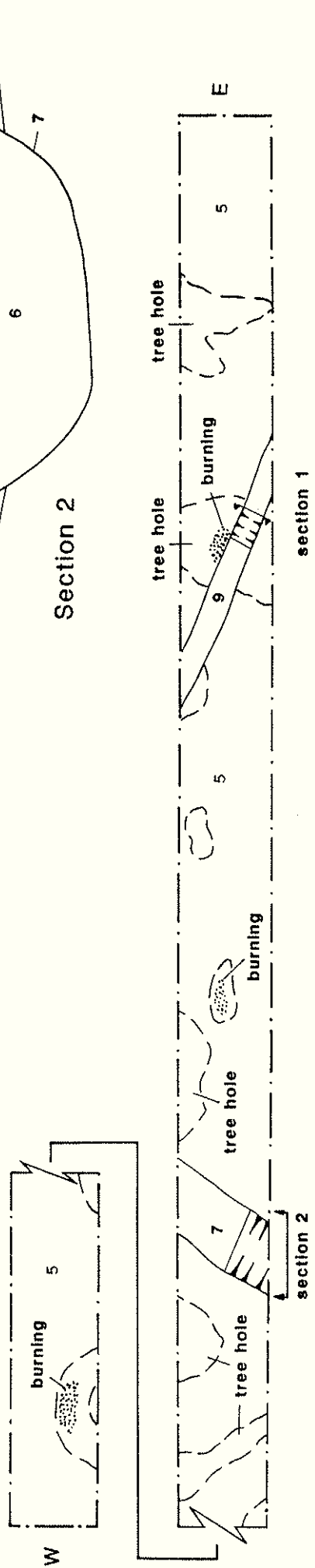
Trench 10



Section 1



Trench 33



Section 2



Scale for plans 1:100



Scale for sections 1:20

Levels in m O.D.

Figure 8





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