

# Elm Tree Farm Station Road Blackthorn Oxfordshire



## Archaeological Watching Brief Report



**Oxford Archaeology**

September 2003

**Client: M.J. Brain Homes**

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## SUMMARY

*From October 2002 to June 2003 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Elm Tree Farm, Station Road, Blackthorn, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 6242 1952). The work was commissioned by M.J. Brain Homes in advance of the construction of seven new dwellings and associated garages. The watching brief revealed two ponds relating to the farm buildings, and a number of undated boundary ditches.*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 From October 2002 to June 2003 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Elm Tree Farm, Station Road, Blackthorn, Oxfordshire (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by M.J. Brain Homes in respect of a planning application for construction of seven new dwellings and associated garages (Planning Application No. 01/00484/OUT).
- 1.1.2 A project brief was set by Hugh Coddington, Deputy County Archaeologist (OCAS 2002).
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief.

#### 1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies on loamy soils over Lower Oxford Clay at 62 m above OD. The site is situated on the east side of the village of Blackthorn and is 0.72 hectares in area

#### 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 2002) and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 The development area is in the historic core of Blackthorn where early settlement is suggested by its place name 'blaec-porn' or 'pyrne', thought to be of late Saxon origin. The site is adjacent to a historic village green, which was converted to arable fields in 1776. Part of a documented shrunken medieval and post-medieval settlement is known here. Davis' historic map of 1797 depicts 4 houses north-east of the site of Elm Tree Farm.
- 1.3.3 Previous archaeological evaluation on the development site comprised 8 trenches, one of which contained medieval midden deposits over in-filled ditches, possibly of late Saxon date (TVAS 2001, Report No.01/66).

## 2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

### 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The site was built up with a 0.5 m thick layer of ground make up of crushed stone and rubble. The foundation trenches were then marked out and excavated with a mini excavator and poured with concrete. Archaeological observations were made on the exposed foundation trenches.
- 2.2.2 All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:100 and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. All excavated features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (OAU 1992).

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Description of deposits

#### *Plot 3*

- 3.1.1 The ground works for the foundations consisted of 0.7 m wide trenches excavated to a depth of 1.2 m below the ground level. They cut into the undisturbed natural of a yellowish brown clay with patches of grey clay (9), which was sealed below a cultivated ploughsoil of dark brown silty clay (8). This layer of ploughsoil had been cut by a number of features, which consisted of two ditches and two ponds. The ditch (12) was exposed in the south-west foundation trench with steep sloping sides rounding to a base below impact level. It measured 7.8 m x 0.9 m x 0.7 m and contained two fills. The lower fill was a very dark grey brown silty clay (13) silting up base of ditch, which was sealed below a light yellowish brown silty clay (14) (Figs 3 and 4, section 4).
- 3.1.2 The second ditch (10) had steep sloping sides and concave base. It measured 0.7 m x 2.5 x 0.8 m and was filled by a dark grey brown silty clay (11). This had been cut by a large sub circular pond (4) with a shallow concave profile. The pond measured 8 m x 12 m x 0.8 m and contained two fills. The lower fill was a dark brown silty clay (3), which was overlain by a light grey silty clay (2). Both these fills show that the pond had slowly silted up and was covered by a 0.2 m thick layer of very dark greyish brown silty clay loam topsoil (1). This had been cut by a later large pond (5) with steep sloping sides descending below impact level. It measured 14 m x 9.5 m x 0.9 m and was filled by a very dark grey silty clay loam (6). These were all sealed below a 0.5 m thick layer of ground make up (7) (Figs 3 and 4, sections 1, 2 and 3).

**Plot 2**

3.1.3 In the north corner of plot 2, a ditch (15) was aligned north-east to south-west. It measured 2 m x 0.9 m x 0.8 m, but the shape was hard to define as it was partly under water and had unstable sides. It cut into the plough soil (8) and was filled by a dark grey silty clay and sealed below the topsoil (1) (Fig. 2).

**3.2 Finds**

3.2.1 No finds were recovered during the watching brief.

**3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains**

3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the watching brief.

**4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

4.1.1 The watching brief revealed two ponds at the rear of the farmyard. The later pond being in filled prior to the development. A number of field boundary ditches were observed, but no dating evidence was recovered. These possibly relate to the ditches possibly of late Saxon date recorded in the earlier evaluation by TVAS. These were cut into an earlier plough soil.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Height</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>
1	Layer	0.2 m			Topsoil	
2	Fill				Fill of pond	
3	Fill				Fill of pond	
4	Cut	0.8 m	12 m	8 m	Pond	
5	Cut	0.9 m	9.5 m	14 m	Pond	
6	Fill				Fill of pond	
7	Layer	0.5 m				
8	Layer	0.4 m			Old plough soil	
9	Natural				Natural clay	
10	Cut	0.8 m	2.5 m	0.7 m	Ditch	
11	Fill				Fill of ditch	
12	Cut	0.7 m	0.9 m	7.8 m	Ditch	
13	Fill				Fill of ditch	
14	Fill				Fill of ditch	

## APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OAU 1992 *Fieldwork Manual*, (Ed. D Wilkinson, first edition, August 1992)

TVAS 2001 *Elm Tree Farm, Blackthorn, near Bicester, Oxfordshire. Archaeological Evaluation*

OCAAS 2001 Design Brief for Archaeological Watching Brief

OA 2002 *Elm Tree Farm, Station Road, Blackthorn, Oxfordshire* Written Scheme of Investigation

## APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

**Site name:** Elm Tree Farm, Station road, Blackthorn, Oxfordshire

**Site code:** BIELM 02

**Grid reference:** NGR SP 6242 1952

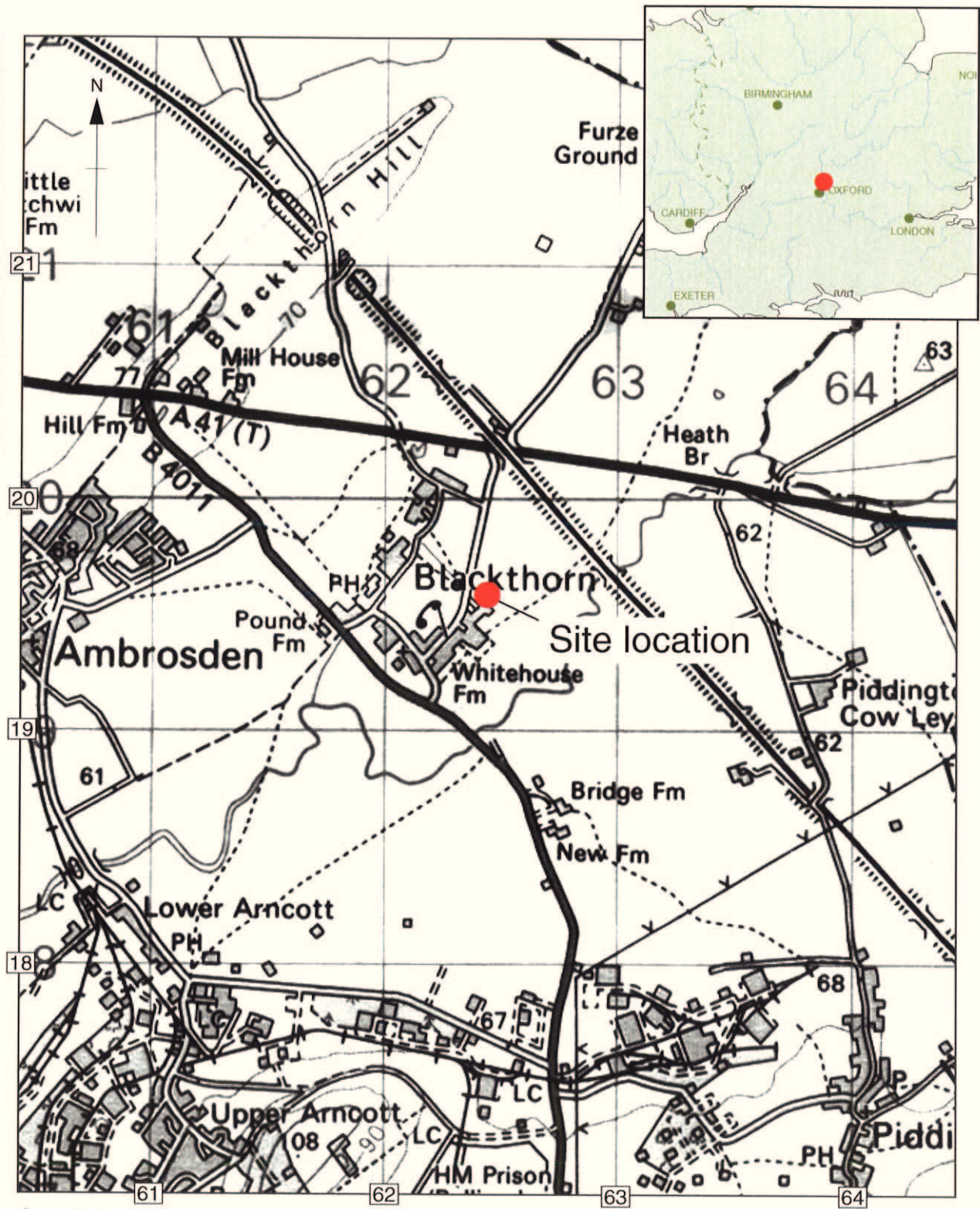
**Type of watching brief:** Excavation of foundations for new dwellings.

**Date and duration of project:** A total of 5 visits from 3/10/2002 to 26/6/2003.

**Area of site:** 60 m x 110 m

**Summary of results:** Two ponds relating to the farm buildings were uncovered. Also a number of undated boundary ditches.

**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, under the following accession number: OXCMS 2002.172



Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location



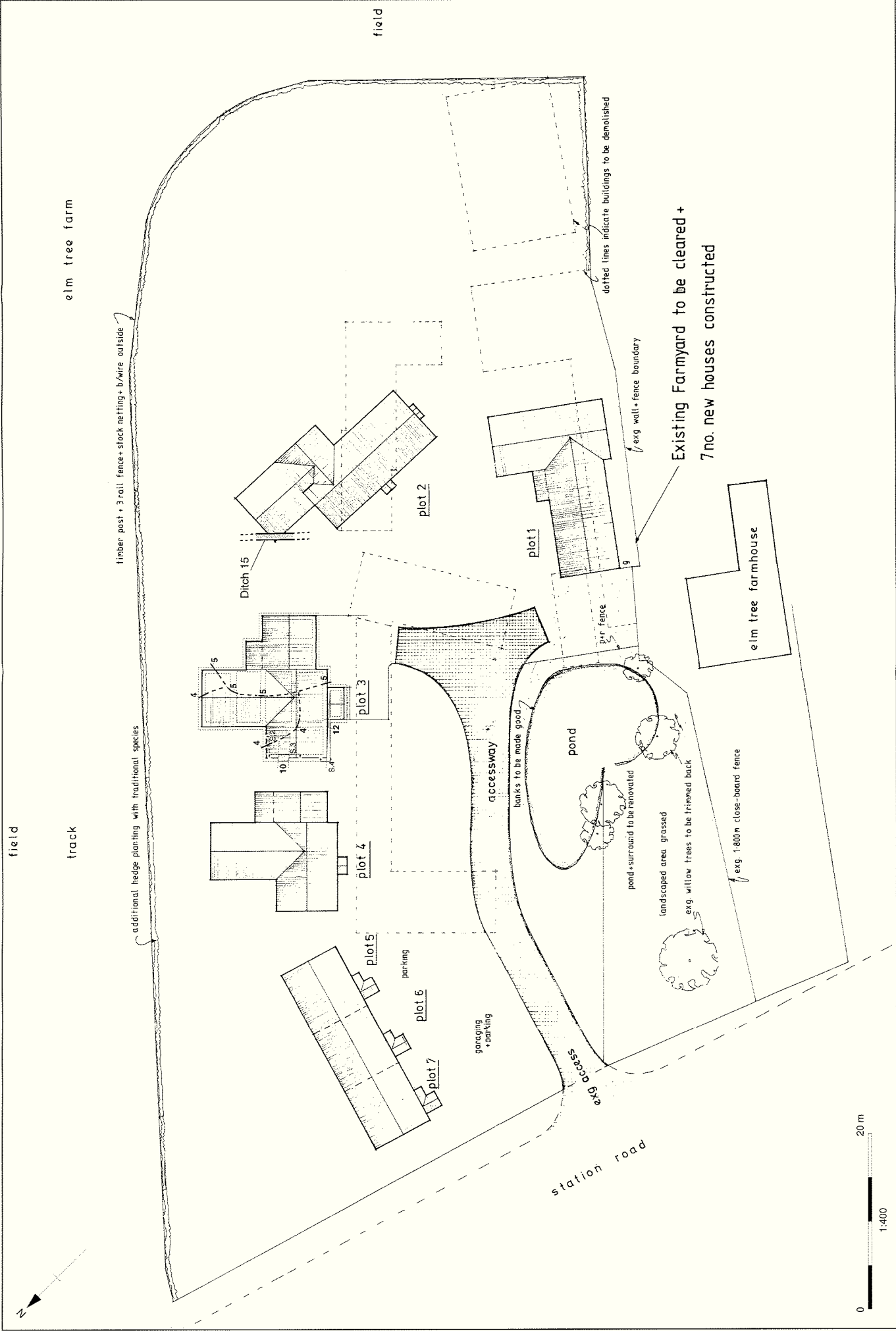


Figure 2: Site plan showing development plots and Ditch 15

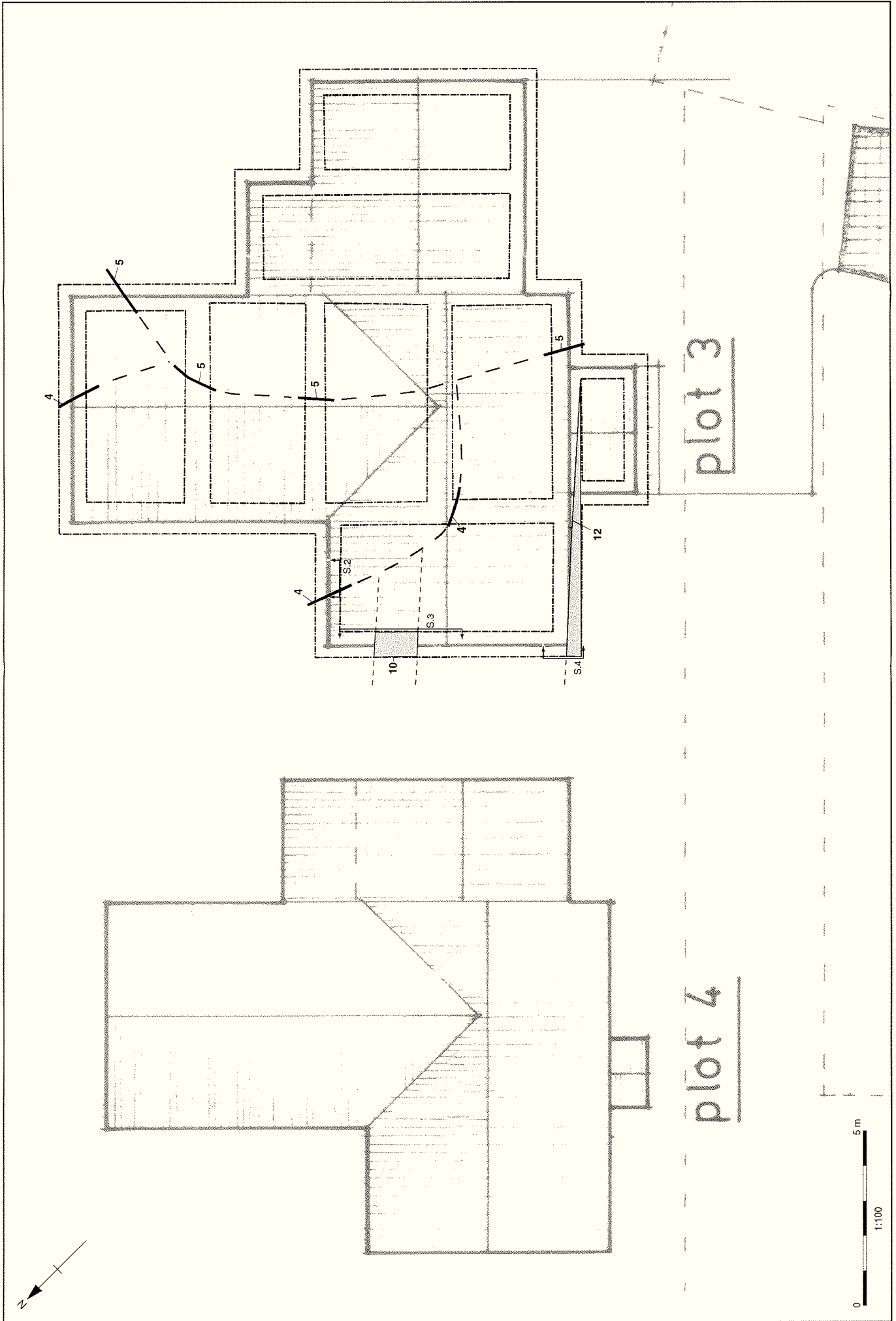
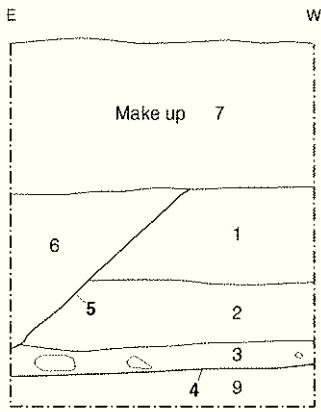
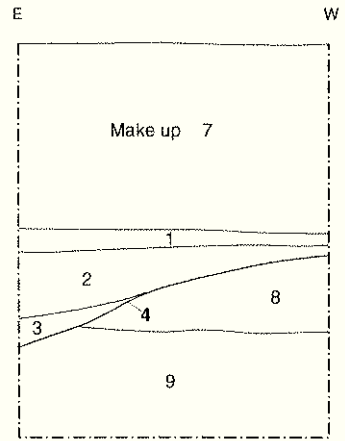


Figure 3: Plan of foundation trenches for Plot 3 showing location of sections and features

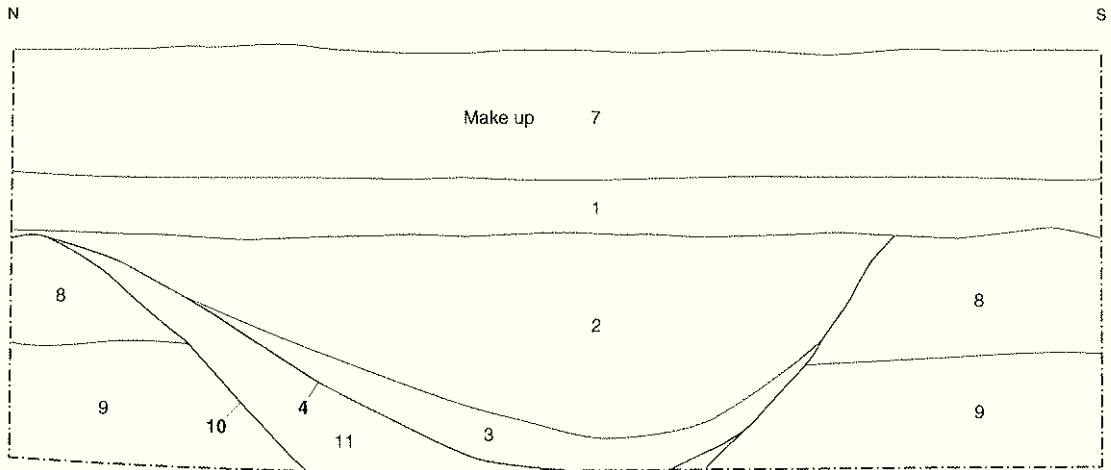
### Section 1



### Section 2



### Section 3



### Section 4

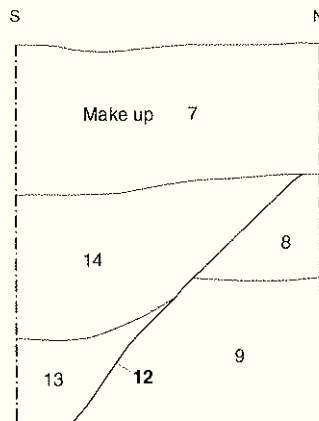

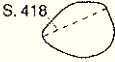




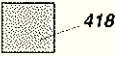





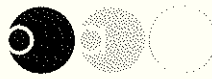


Figure 4: Sections 1-4

	Section line and number
	Interior section line and number
	Limit of excavation
	Sondage / Interior limit of excavation
	Fill line and number
	Cut line and number
	Structure number
	Unclear boundary
	Stones
	Hachures indicate inclination of slope inside excavated feature
	Levels
	Grid point



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