

Land off
Swan Lane
Faringdon
Oxfordshire



Archaeological Evaluation Report



Oxford Archaeology

21st November 2002

Client Name: CgMs Consulting

Issue N^o: 1

OA Job N^o: 1554

Planning Ref N^o: Vale of the White Horse
Policy H1, Site Reference 18

NGR: SU 2903 9563

Client Name: CgMs Consulting
Client Ref No: CC/vmg/3467 Swan Lane
Document Title: Land off Swan Lane, Faringdon, Oxfordshire

Document Type: Evaluation

Issue Number: 1

National Grid Reference: SU 2903 9563
Planning Reference: Vale of the White Horse Policy H1, Site Reference 18

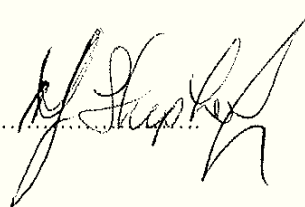
OA Job Number: 1554
Site Code: FASWAN02
Invoice Code: FASWANEV
Receiving Museum: Oxfordshire County Museums Service
Museum Accession No: OXCMS 2002.216

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Document File Location U:\OA\oa\WBEV\Oxon\SwanLaneFaringdon\REP\FinalIR
EP.doc
Graphics File Location Server10(W):oapubs1AtoH\FASWANEV*SwanLa*CL
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**Land off Swan Lane,
Faringdon, Oxfordshire**

NGR SU 2903 9563

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SUMMARY

In November 2002, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a 3-trench field evaluation at land off Swan Lane, Faringdon, Oxfordshire (NGR SU 2903 9563). The work was undertaken on behalf of CgMs Consulting Ltd for McCarthy and Stone who plan to redevelop the site. The evaluation revealed a general lack of archaeological remains, but located a single very large feature, possibly a pit or ditch, at the east side of the site. This feature was dated by pottery to the early post-medieval period (mid 16th century) and also contained a substantial quantity of animal bone. A small pit feature of early medieval (12th century) date was also located.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In November 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at land off Swan Lane, Faringdon, Oxfordshire (NGR SU 2903 9563) for CgMs Consulting Ltd, acting on behalf McCarthy and Stone (Developments) Ltd.
- 1.1.2 The site is currently being considered for sheltered housing accommodation. As the site lies within the historic core of Faringdon, Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service (CAS) advised that an archaeological field evaluation be undertaken prior to the planning application being made. This is in line with PPG16 and Policy HE18 of the Vale of the White Horse District Local Plan.
- 1.1.3 CgMs prepared a desk-based assessment of the site (CgMs 2002). OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (OA 2002) detailing how OA would implement the requirements of the County Archaeological Service, as detailed in a brief prepared by the Deputy County Archaeological Officer, Hugh Coddington.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The development site lies between Church Street and London Road, with Swan Lane on its west side and Coach Lane c 40 m to the east. The underlying geology is limestone strata of the Corallian Beds of the Jurassic system (CgMs, 2002).
- 1.2.2 The centre of the site is currently laid to grass and is a former orchard. The southern area contains buildings associated with a former joinery yard. In total, the site proposed for development covers c 0.6 ha.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the evaluation has been the subject of a separate desk study (CgMs 2002), the results of which are summarised below.
- 1.3.2 There is no evidence for extensive prehistoric activity in the area, although one possible find of Iron Age pottery was made during construction of Eastfield Court, at the junction of Swan Lane and Church Street.

- 1.3.3 Similarly, no Roman artefacts or structures are known within the site, although a number of unprovenanced coins have been found in the vicinity.
- 1.3.4 Although no Saxon or early medieval remains are recorded on the site, Faringdon was a royal manor in the later Anglo-Saxon period, probably with a royal residence, although it was not fortified. Edward the Elder died at Faringdon in AD924 and the town is mentioned in the Domesday survey of 1086.
- 1.3.5 Significant evidence for medieval activity in the vicinity of the site was recorded during the construction of Eastfield Court, immediately to the north. This comprised medieval deposits dating from the twelfth to fourteenth centuries. A circular, drystone lined well and two areas of limestone paving were also revealed, although it was unclear whether these related to the medieval deposits. Additionally, during construction work at 4 Market Place, to the west of the site, a beam slot containing twelfth and thirteenth century pottery was identified, several medieval cess-pits were also recorded (CgMs, 2002).
- 1.3.6 An archaeological watching brief at All Saints' Church, to the north-west of the site, recorded re-used medieval masonry during the excavation of a new drainage trench. The church itself was constructed between the 12th and 13th centuries (OAU 1996).

2 EVALUATION AIMS

- 2.1.1 The aims of the evaluation were to determine the location, extent, date, character, and state of preservation of any archaeological remains surviving on the site.
- 2.1.2 Attention was to be given to remains of all periods, including evidence for past environments, with provision for environmental sampling included. The desk-based study indicated high potential for post-medieval remains on the site.
- 2.1.3 The evaluation sought to clarify the nature and extent of any modern disturbance and intrusion on the site.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork

- 3.1.1 The evaluation consisted of two trenches each measuring 30 m long x 1.5 m wide (Trenches 1 and 2) and a single trench (Trench 3) measuring 30 m long by up to 3 m wide (Fig. 2). The overburden was removed under close archaeological supervision by a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

- 3.2.1 The trenches were cleaned by hand and the revealed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds and environmental samples. All archaeological features were planned and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20.

- 3.2.2 All features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

3.3 Finds

- 3.3.1 Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation and bagged by context. Finds of special interest were given a unique small find number. Modern finds were not retained but were noted on context records.

3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

- 3.4.1 No paleo-environmentally significant deposits were identified during the evaluation.

3.5 Presentation of results

- 3.5.1 A description of soils and ground conditions is given and the general distribution of archaeological deposits stated. This is followed by a description of the individual trenches according to the stratigraphic sequence, starting with the earliest or lowest deposits encountered. A description of the finds is given, followed by a discussion and interpretation of the results.

4 RESULTS: GENERAL

4.1 Soils and ground conditions

- 4.1.1 Overlying deposits consisted mostly of cultivated silty loams with underlying limestone strata of the Corallian Beds of the Jurassic system. Occasional heavy rain hampered work during excavation, but generally the ground conditions were good, with the trenches remaining dry.

4.2 Distribution of archaeological deposits

- 4.2.1 Only two features were found during the evaluation. These consisted of a small pit (307) in Trench 3 and a very large feature (103) in the south end of Trench 1.

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Description of deposits

5.2 Trench 1

- 5.2.1 Trench 1 was aligned north-south at the north-east edge of the site. A slight localised drop in the ground level was noted toward the southern end of the trench.
- 5.2.2 The underlying natural (102) consisted of an orange brown silty loam with approximately 50% fragmented limestone pieces. At the north end of the trench this was found at a relatively shallow depth of 0.4 m (c 110.76 m OD) beneath the present ground level. Towards the south end of the trench a single very large linear feature, (103) was cut from this level (Fig. 3).

- 5.2.3 The feature was c 5 m wide and appeared to be aligned east-west across the trench (Fig. 3). A slot was excavated at its north edge revealing a near vertical edge descending to a depth of at least 1.05 m. Excavation was stopped at this level due to safety considerations (the overall depth of section reaching 1.5 m at this point).
- 5.2.4 The lowest excavated fill of cut 103, was a brown clay-silt loam (106) containing frequent small limestone fragments. This fill was at least 0.5 m thick and appears to be a re-deposited cultivated soil.
- 5.2.5 Fill 106 was overlain by a 0.3 m thick deposit of mixed silty sand with patchy clay (105). This appears to be a dumped deposit and contained abundant animal bone as well as nine sherds of pottery of mid-16th century date and glass. Fill 105 was overlain by a light brown clay silt (104) containing frequent limestone pieces, which was similar to the lower fill 106 except that it also contained much animal bone, as well as medieval pottery and glass.
- 5.2.6 These fills were overlain by a brown silty loam cultivation horizon (101) beneath the present turf-line (100).

5.3 *Trench 2*

- 5.3.1 Trench 2 was aligned east/north/east - west/south/west to the centre of the site (Fig. 2) and was devoid of archaeological features.
- 5.3.2 The underlying natural consisted of bands of silt clay with stones (202) at a depth of 0.4 m (109.76 m OD). This was overlain by a 0.25 m thick red-brown loam, a cultivation horizon (201) in turn covered by the present orchard turf-line (200).

5.4 *Trench 3*

- 5.4.1 Trench 3 was aligned east-west within the former works yard at the south of the site. The trench was machined to a maximum depth of 1.56 m to fully investigate variations in the underlying natural. Deep cultivation soils were encountered here. The trench was machined with stepped sections to accommodate safe working practices.
- 5.4.2 The lowest deposits encountered consisted of a clean reddish clay silt (306) overlying bands of stony clay silt (305) to the centre and east end of the trench, but over a fragmented limestone layer mixed with sandy clay (304) to the west. These all appear to be natural deposits. The uppermost of these layers (305) was encountered at a depth of 1.3 m (109.24 m OD) beneath the present yard surface.
- 5.4.3 To the centre and west end of the trench these layers were overlain by a 0.56 m thick layer of fed-brown silty clay loam (303), which contained occasional broken limestone fragments, but no finds. This is probably a partially disturbed natural layer beneath overlying cultivation horizons.
- 5.4.4 A single small pit (307) cut from the level of layer 303/ 305 was revealed in the centre of the trench (Fig. 4). It was sub-rounded in plan, had uneven concave sides and measured approximately 0.39 m in diameter by 0.16 m in depth. Its fill (308)

was a red-brown stony clay containing occasional charcoal flecks and a single sherd of medieval pottery dated to the 12th century.

- 5.4.5 The fill of pit 308 and layers 305/ 303 were overlain by a 0.35 m thick layer of brown silty clay loam (302), which contained a sherd of green-glazed pottery of mid-16th century date. This layer probably represents a medieval/early post-medieval cultivation horizon. It was overlain by up to 0.4 m of a similar, but slightly darker, red-brown silty clay loam (301), which contained modern white glazed pottery. The trench was sealed by 0.3 m of sandy gravel and stone with patchy tarmac and brick and tile deposits.

5.5 Finds

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

- 5.5.1 The recovered pottery assemblage comprised 11 sherds with a total weight of 124 g. It was recorded utilising the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994), as follows:

OXAC: Cotswold-type ware, AD975-1350. 1 sherd, 12 g.

OXBK: Medieval Shelly Coarseware, AD1100-1350. 1 sherd, 4 g.

OXDR: Red Earthenwares, 1550+. 9 sherds, 108 g.

- 5.5.2 The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*.

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

Context	OXAC		OXBK		OXDR		Date
	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
105	1	12			8	71	M16thC
302					1	37	M16thC
308			1	4			12thC
Total	1	12	1	4	9	108	

Animal Bone by Bethan Charles

- 5.5.3 A total of 18 fragments of bone were recovered all of which were in good condition and these are listed in Table 2. Of note were two bones from contexts 104 and 105 that exhibited evidence of carnivore gnaw marks, probably by dogs.
- 5.5.4 A single horse metapodial was identified from context 105 and a single cattle mandible was recovered from context 302.
- 5.5.5 Butchery marks were noted on half the fragments identified, revealing chop marks across the long bone shafts of the cattle and sheep bones with knife marks indicative of de-fleshing and dismemberment.

Table 2: Animal bone by context and species

Context	Horse	Cattle	Sheep	Unidentified	Total
100				1	1
104		4			4
105	1	6	3	1	11
302		1	1		2
Total	1	11	4	2	18

Other finds

- 5.5.6 A glass bottle neck was found in fill 105, and in association with the pottery dates to the mid-16th century. A modern tile was recovered from layer 100 and an oyster shell from context 104.

6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION**6.1 Overall interpretation**

- 6.1.1 No evidence of Prehistoric, Roman or Saxon activity was revealed by the evaluation. Two features were found beneath a general soil horizon that is probably of medieval or early post-medieval date.
- 6.1.2 The small pit found within Trench 3 is of note as it contained a sherd of early medieval (12th century) pottery. Its significance is unclear, as no other contemporary features were located in the trench. Cut 103 in Trench 1 was a substantial feature measuring at least 5 m across, with the suggestion that it could represent a boundary ditch. It is also possible that it represents part of a very large rubbish pit, given the substantial quantities of dumped animal bone, together with early post-medieval (mid 16th century) glass and pottery found within the upper fills.
- 6.1.3 Evidence of butchery at the site was recovered from limited analysis of the animal bone from the fills of feature 103 and soil layer 302.
- 6.1.4 No obvious truncation by modern features was noted in the north part of the site, though a homogenous layer of cultivation or plough soil was observed, while modern make-up deposits formed the basis for the surface of the former joinery yard to the south.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1							
Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Latest Date
100	Layer	Turf line	0.2				
101	Layer	Cultivated soil	0.26				
102	Layer	Stony natural					
103	Cut	Pit/ditch	1.05	5 m+			
104	Fill	Upper fill of 103	0.2				
105	Fill	Fill of 103	0.3			Pot, glass, bone	Medieval
106	Fill	Fill of 103	0.40+				
Trench 2							
Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
200	Layer	Turf-line	0.2				Modern
201	Layer	Cultivated soil	0.25			Pottery	Modern
202	Layer	Stony natural	0.2				
203	Layer	Banded clay natural	0.12				
204	Layer	silty clay natural					
Trench 3							
Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
300	Layer	Surface/ make-up	0.3				Modern
301	Layer	buried topsoil	0.4			Pottery	Modern
302	Layer	Cultivated soil	0.35				Mid 16th Century?
303	Layer	Silty natural	0.56				
304	Layer	Stony natural					
305	Layer	Stony natural	0.3				
306	Layer	Clay-silt natural					
307	Cut	Small pit	0.16	0.39	0.39		Medieval feature
308	Fill	Fill of 307	0.16	0.39	0.39	Pottery	Medieval

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

- CgMs 2002 *Land off Swan Lane, Faringdon, Oxfordshire*, Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment
- CAS 2002 *Land off Swan Lane, Faringdon, Design Brief for Archaeological Field Evaluation*
- Mellor, M, 1984 A summary of the key assemblages. A study of pottery, clay pipes, glass and other finds from fourteen pits, dating from the 16th to the 19th century in TG Hassall et al, *Excavations at St Ebbe's Oxoniensia* **49**, 181-219.
- Mellor, M, 1994 Oxford Pottery: A Synthesis of middle and late Saxon, medieval and early post-medieval pottery in the Oxford Region, *Oxoniensia* **59**, 17-217
- OAU 1996 *All Saints' Church, Faringdon, Oxfordshire*, Archaeological Watching Brief Report
- OAU 1992 *Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D.Wilkinson, first edition, 1992)
- OA 2002 *Land off Swan Lane, Faringdon, Oxfordshire*, Written Scheme of Investigation

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Faringdon, Swan Lane

Site code: FAS WAN 02

Grid Reference: SU 2903 9563

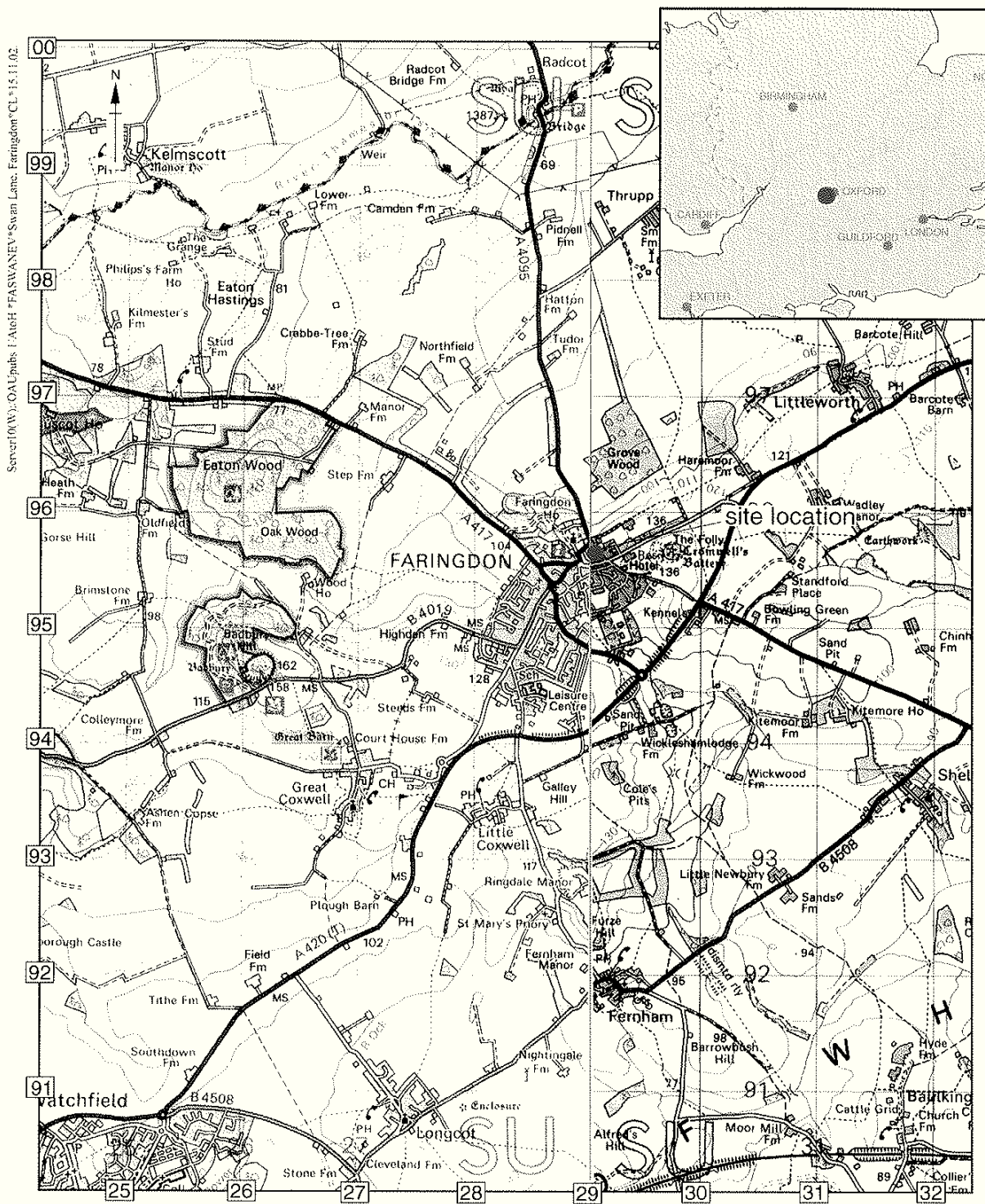
Type of evaluation: 3 trench evaluation

Date and duration of project: November 4th-6th 2002.

Area of site: 0.6 hectares

Summary of results: A pit of medieval date and a large early post-medieval pit or ditch were revealed beneath a general soil horizon.

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 2002.216



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Figure 1: Site location



Figure 2: Trench plan

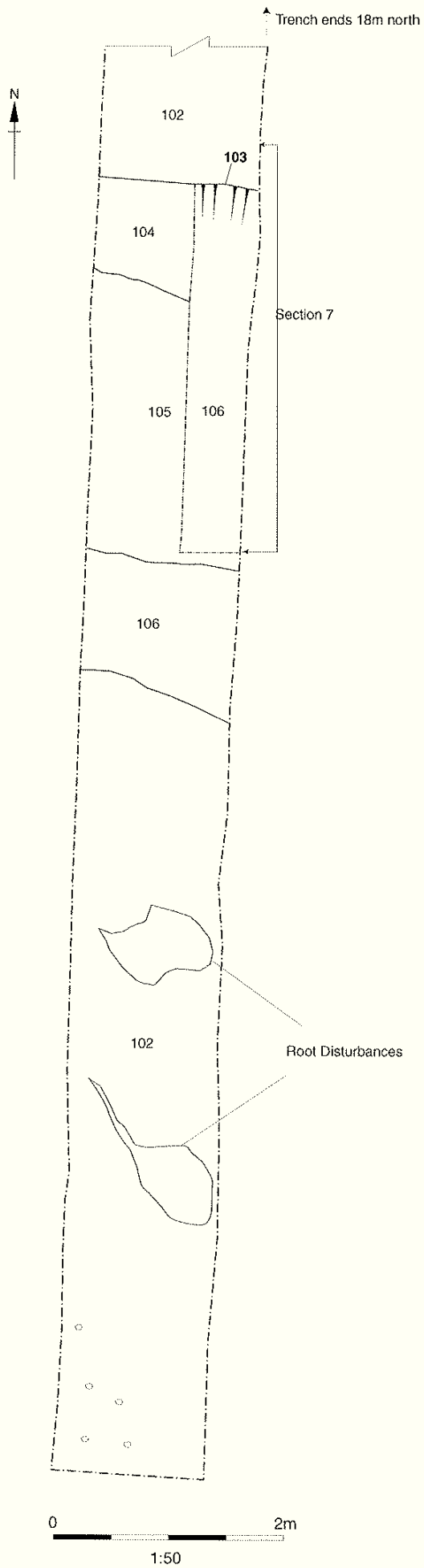


Figure 3: Trench 1, plan

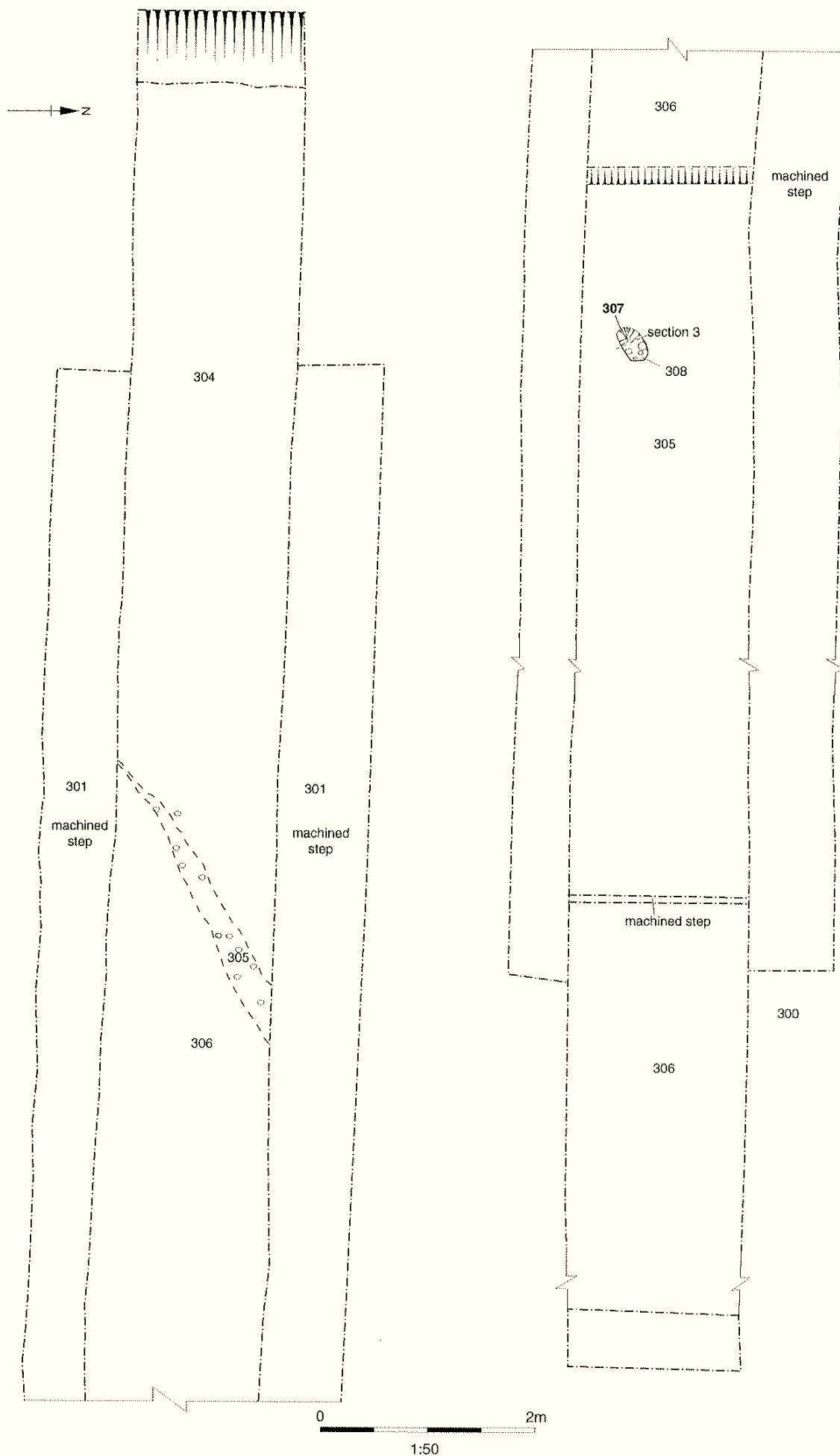


Figure 4: Trench 3, plan

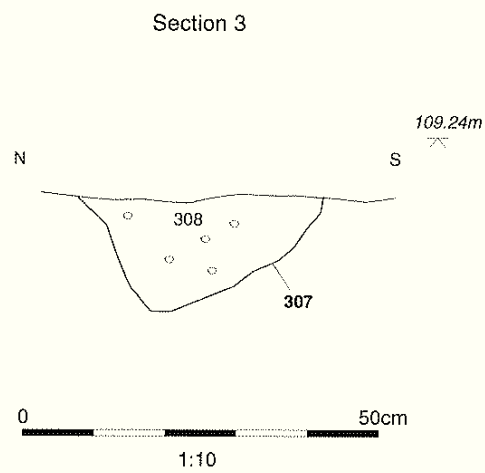
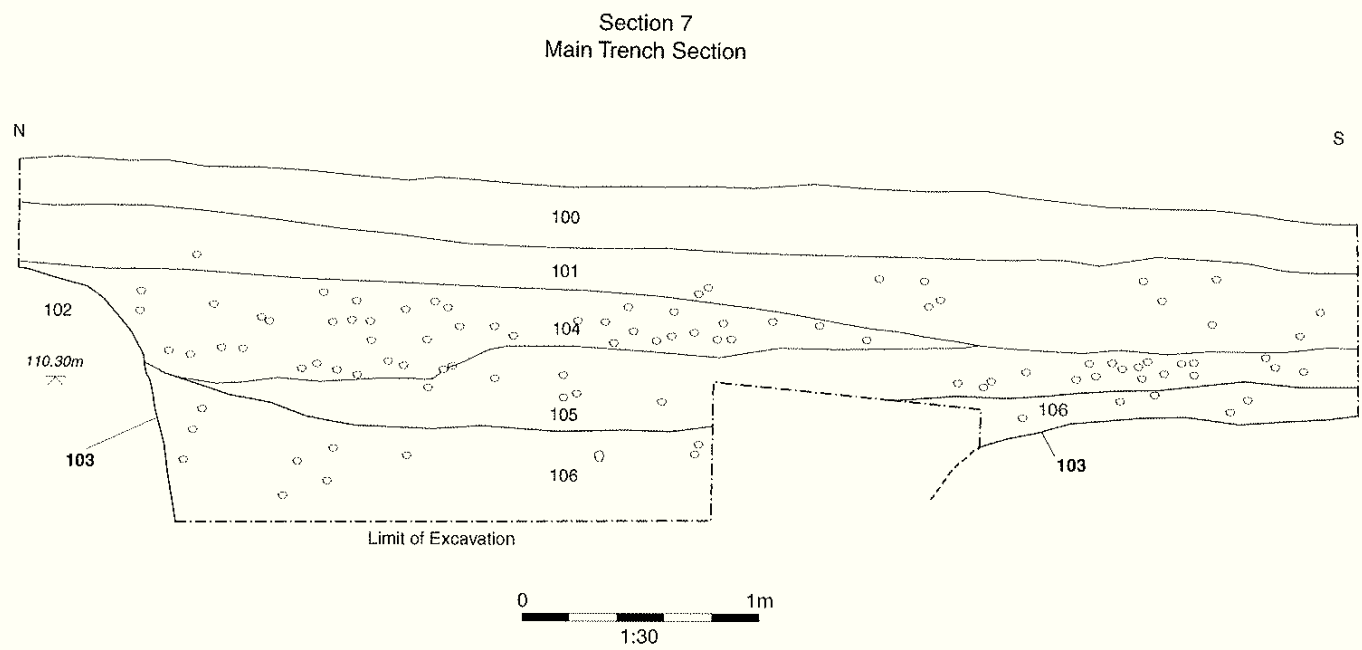


Figure 5: Sections 3 and 7



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