

The Corner Garage  
Main Road  
Ardley  
Oxon



**Archaeological Evaluation Report**



**Oxford Archaeology**

August 2003

**Client: Thomas & Co.**

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## SUMMARY

*On 6<sup>th</sup> August 2003, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at the Corner Garage, Main Road, Ardley on behalf of Thomas & Co. A ditch and several pit-like features, probably tree throws, were identified within Trench 1 relating to the medieval shrunken village seen to the west of the site.*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In August 2003 OA carried out a field evaluation at the Corner Garage, Main Road, Ardley on behalf of Thomas & Co in advance of the demolition of the existing garage buildings and the erection of thirteen new dwellings. A Written Scheme of Investigation (OA 2003) was produced by OA in response to a brief prepared by Hannah Fluck, County Archaeological Planning Officer, on behalf of the local planning authority, Cherwell District Council.

#### 1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The development site is located off Station Road on the west side, south of the junction with Ardley Road (NGR SP 5427 2751). The site lies at approximately 120 m OD and is roughly 0.2 of a hectare in area. The geology is Great Oolite, which is overlain by Oxford Clays (BGS Map 219).

#### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The development site lies within the historic core of Ardley. Immediately to the west of the proposed development site are the remains of a shrunken medieval village, visible as earthworks (SMR 9015). Associated with this settlement are medieval holloways (SMR 1159), one of which was investigated by Oxford Archaeology in 1988 (OAU 1988).
- 1.3.2 Evidence of Roman activity has been recovered east of the development site in the form of several coins and pottery sherds (SMR 2525). Several hundred metres to the north-east is an Iron Age banjo enclosure (SMR 15964), while further evidence of prehistoric settlement and activity is apparent to the north-west where a Bronze Age ring ditch was identified by aerial photography.

### 2 EVALUATION AIMS

#### 2.1 General aims

- 2.1.1 To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the development area.
- 2.1.2 To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality, date and depth of any archaeological remains present.

2.1.3 To determine the nature and extent of any modern disturbance and intrusion on the site.

2.1.4 To make available the results of the investigation.

### **3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Scope of fieldwork**

3.1.1 The evaluation consisted of the excavation of two trenches. Trench 1 measured 20 m long by 2 m wide (Fig. 3).

3.1.2 Due to limited space in the northern part of the site, Trench 2 was excavated in the form of an "L" shaped trench. The east-west arm measured 9 m long by 2 m wide and the north-south arm 11 m by 2 m.

#### **3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording**

3.2.1 The trenches were excavated by a mechanical excavator (JCB) using a toothless ditching bucket, directed by an archaeological supervisor. Excavation proceeded to the first significant archaeological horizon, which in this case coincided with the surface of the natural geology.

3.2.2 A representative sample of the features thus revealed were excavated by hand to determine their depth, extent and nature, and to retrieve finds and environmental samples. Where finds were visible in the surface of unexcavated features these were retained. All features and deposits encountered were issued a unique context number. A plan was drawn of each trench at a scale of 1:50, and each excavated feature was recorded in section at 1:20. Colour transparency and black-and-white photographs were taken of each feature, as well as more general shots of each trench. All recording was conducted in accordance with the practices detailed in the OA Fieldwork Manual (OAU 1992).

3.2.3 The trenches were surveyed in by hand using 30 m tapes and levels taken relative to Ordnance Datum utilising survey stations left in place from a borehole survey of the site.

#### **3.3 Finds**

3.3.1 Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation and generally bagged by context. Finds of special interest were given a unique small find number.

#### **3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence**

3.4.1 There were no deposits encountered on site deemed suitable for environmental sampling.

### 3.5 Presentation of results

- 3.5.1 A general description of the soils and ground conditions is given. This is followed by descriptions of the individual trenches, with a brief discussion of the results. Details of individual contexts are given in Appendix 1.

## 4 RESULTS: GENERAL

### 4.1 Soils and ground conditions

- 4.1.1 The site is situated on limestone bedwork overlain by Oxford clay. Part of the site to the south was made-ground which buried an earlier ploughsoil. Weather conditions were hot and the ground was dry allowing for clear visibility of the archaeology.

### 4.2 Distribution of archaeological deposits

- 4.2.1 A small number of features were identified in Trench 1. Trench 2 produced no archaeological features or finds.

## 5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

### 5.1 Description of deposits

#### *Trench 1 (Fig. 3 and 4)*

- 5.1.1 Trench 1 was aligned east by west in the south of the site, and measured 19.5 m long by 2 m wide.
- 5.1.2 Oxford clay natural (105) was encountered at a depth of between 0.58 m and 0.94 m beneath present ground levels at 119.3 m OD. Four features were cut into the natural (105). A ditch (108), aligned north-south was found at the centre of the trench, measuring 1.6 m wide by 0.52 m deep and contained two fills. The primary fill was a tenacious dark yellow brown silty clay (107) with limestone inclusions and charcoal flecking which produced animal bone and a sherd of pottery. This was partially overlain by a grey brown clay silt (106) with limestone inclusions to a depth of 0.26 m.
- 5.1.3 A pit-like feature (110) was found 0.5 m to the east of the ditch (108). This feature was rectangular, with a flat bottom and steep sides, measuring over 3.25 m long by over 1 m wide and 0.25 m deep. It contained a single tenacious brown clay silt (109) and produced two pieces of animal bone. Approximately 0.5 m to the east of 110 was an irregular rounded feature (112), possibly a shallow tree throw measuring 0.85 m in diameter and 0.08 m deep, which produced no finds. A similar but smaller feature (114) was identified 2 m to the west of 108. Circular in plan with gently sloping sides, this feature measured 0.44 m in diameter and 0.12 m deep and again produced no finds. Both features 112 and 114 were filled with a tenacious orange brown silty clay analogous to the clay natural (111 and 113).

- 5.1.4 All features in Trench 1 except ditch 108 were probably sealed by a disturbed natural deposit (104) composed of tenacious orange brown clay with limestone inclusions measuring up to 0.3 m deep. This was then overlain by buried ploughsoil (103) measuring between 0.2 m and 0.4 m deep. The buried ploughsoil was overlain at the western end of the trench by made-ground consisting of light yellow brown loose sandy silt and gravel (102) and modern topsoil (101) measuring 0.1 m to 0.2 m deep. This was sealed by the present yard surface (100) consisting of light grey gravel up to 5 cm deep.

#### ***Trench 2 (Fig. 4)***

- 5.1.5 Trench 2 formed an "L" shape with one arm aligned east-west measuring 9 m long by 2 m wide and the other north-south arm measuring 11 m by 2 m.
- 5.1.6 The natural clay (203) was encountered at a depth of between 0.14 m and 0.58 m beneath the present ground surface at 119.3 m OD. This was mixed in places with large pockets of the natural orange brown clay mixed with limestone fragments and was overlain by a dark brown clay silt plough soil (202) up to 0.45 m deep. This was then overlain by made-ground (201) measuring up to 0.1 m deep. Deposit 201 was then sealed by a modern topsoil (200) measuring c. 0.6 m deep.
- 5.1.7 No archaeological features were found in this trench.

## **5.2 Finds**

- 5.2.1 The only finds recovered came from Trench 1. Two pieces of pig long bone were retrieved from feature 110. Two cow ribs and a single pottery sherd were recovered from ditch 108. The pottery sherd is an example of Brill/Boarstal ware dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century.

## **6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION**

### **6.1 Overall interpretation**

#### ***Summary of results***

- 6.1.1 Ditch 108 identified in Trench 1 is likely to represent a medieval boundary or field ditch associated with the earthworks of the shrunken medieval village; visible to the west of the site, the full extent of which is not yet known. Features 114, 112, and 110 appear to be sealed by the disturbed natural and produced no dating evidence. It is therefore likely that these features are tree throws, though they could be earlier features of prehistoric date.

#### ***Significance***

- 6.1.2 The concentration of limestone fragments evident in the disturbed natural (104) is believed to be the result of ploughing action in the medieval period, creating a distinct layer above the undisturbed natural. Ploughing may also have truncated ditch 108 and any earthworks that may have previously existed with the site, similar to those seen immediately west of Trench 1.

6.1.3 In light of the proximity of the medieval earthworks to the west of the site and the good state of preservation seen in Trench 1, there is good potential to find further features and deposits associated with the shrunken medieval village, though these may be limited to the southern half of the site as indicated by the lack of features from Trench 2. There is likewise a good opportunity to trace the extent of ditch 108 in Trench 1 within the boundary of the site and to record the extent and nature of any further features associated with the shrunken medieval village that may be exposed during the development. This will allow us to build a more detailed picture of the village at its most prosperous and expansive period.



## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Findings	Date
<b>Trench 1</b>							
100	Layer	Workyard surface	0.015				Modern
101	Layer	Topsoil	0.1 - 0.2				Modern
102	Layer	Made ground	0.25				Modern
103	Layer	Buried ploughsoil	0.2 - 0.4				
104	Layer	Disturbed natural	0.08 - 0.3				Natural
105	Natural	Natural clay					Natural
106	Fill	Upper fill of ditch [108]	0.26				
107	Fill	Primary fill of ditch [108]	0.45			Bone, pottery	
108	Cut	Boundary ditch	0.52	1.6			
109	Fill	Fill of [110]	0.25			Bone	Medieval
110	Cut	Unknown feature	0.25	1.0	3.25		
111	Fill	Fill of [112]	0.08				
112	Cut	Tree throw hole	0.08	0.85			
113	Fill	Fill of [114]	0.12				
114	Cut	Truncated base of posthole	0.3	0.44			
<b>Trench 2</b>							
200	Layer	Turf	0.6				Modern
201	Layer	Made ground	0.04 - 0.1				Modern
202	Layer	Ploughsoil	0.35 - 0.45				
203	Layer	Natural clay					Natural

**APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES**

- OAU 1988 *Archaeological Assessment, Ardley, Orchard Road 1988*
- OAU 1992 *Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D.Wilkinson)
- OA 2003 *The Corner Garage, Main Road, Ardley, Oxfordshire - Written Scheme of Investigation*

**APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS**

**Site name:** The Corner Garage, Main Road, Ardley, Oxfordshire

**Site code:** ARGAR 03

**Grid reference:** SP 5427 2751

**Type of evaluation:** Two 20 m x 2 m trenches.

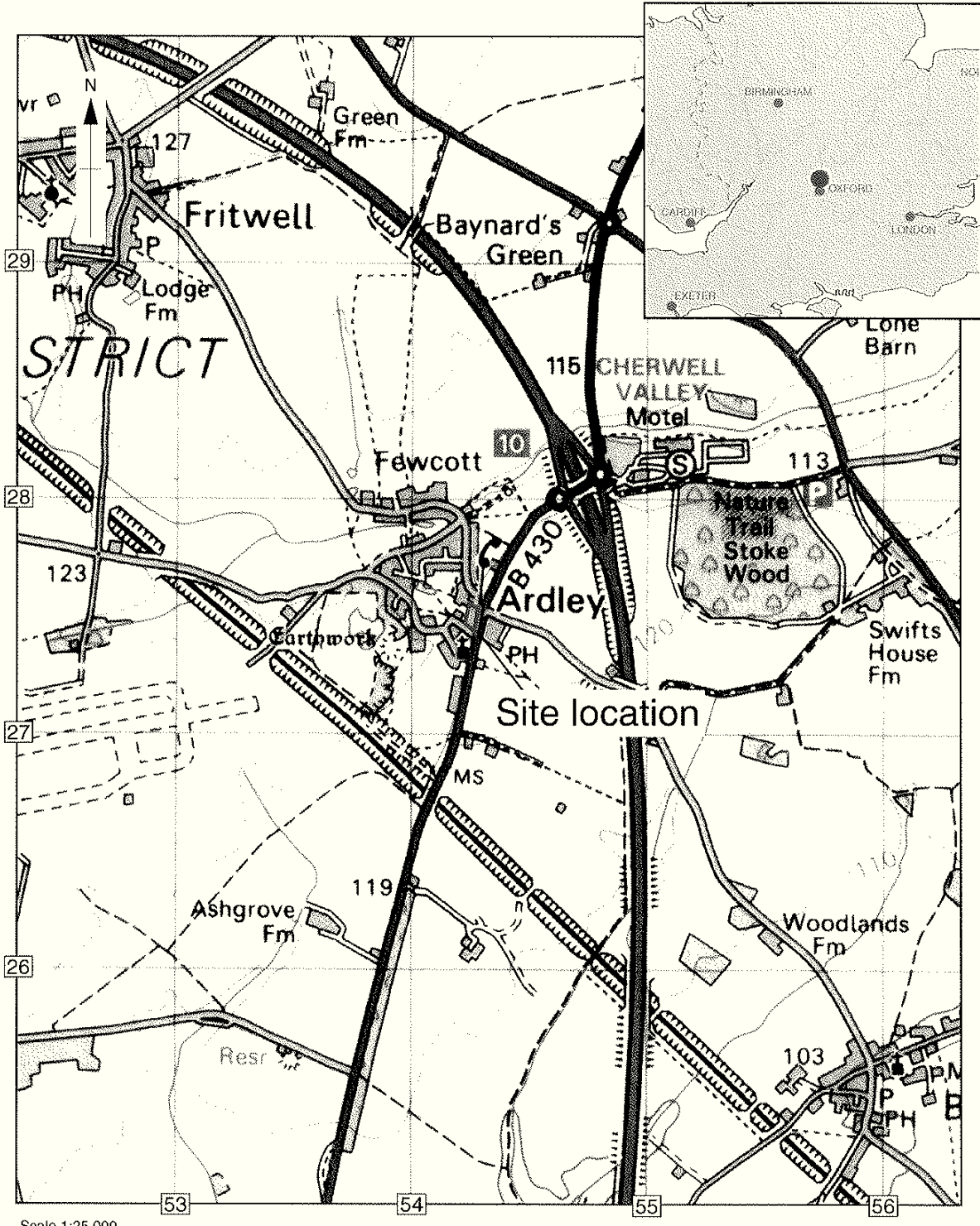
**Date and duration of project:** Two days, August 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, 2003

**Area of site:** 0.2 hectares

**Summary of results:** A possible medieval ditch associated with the shrunken medieval village earthworks together with features interpreted as probable tree throws.

**Location of archive:** The archive is currently held at OAU, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course.

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Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location



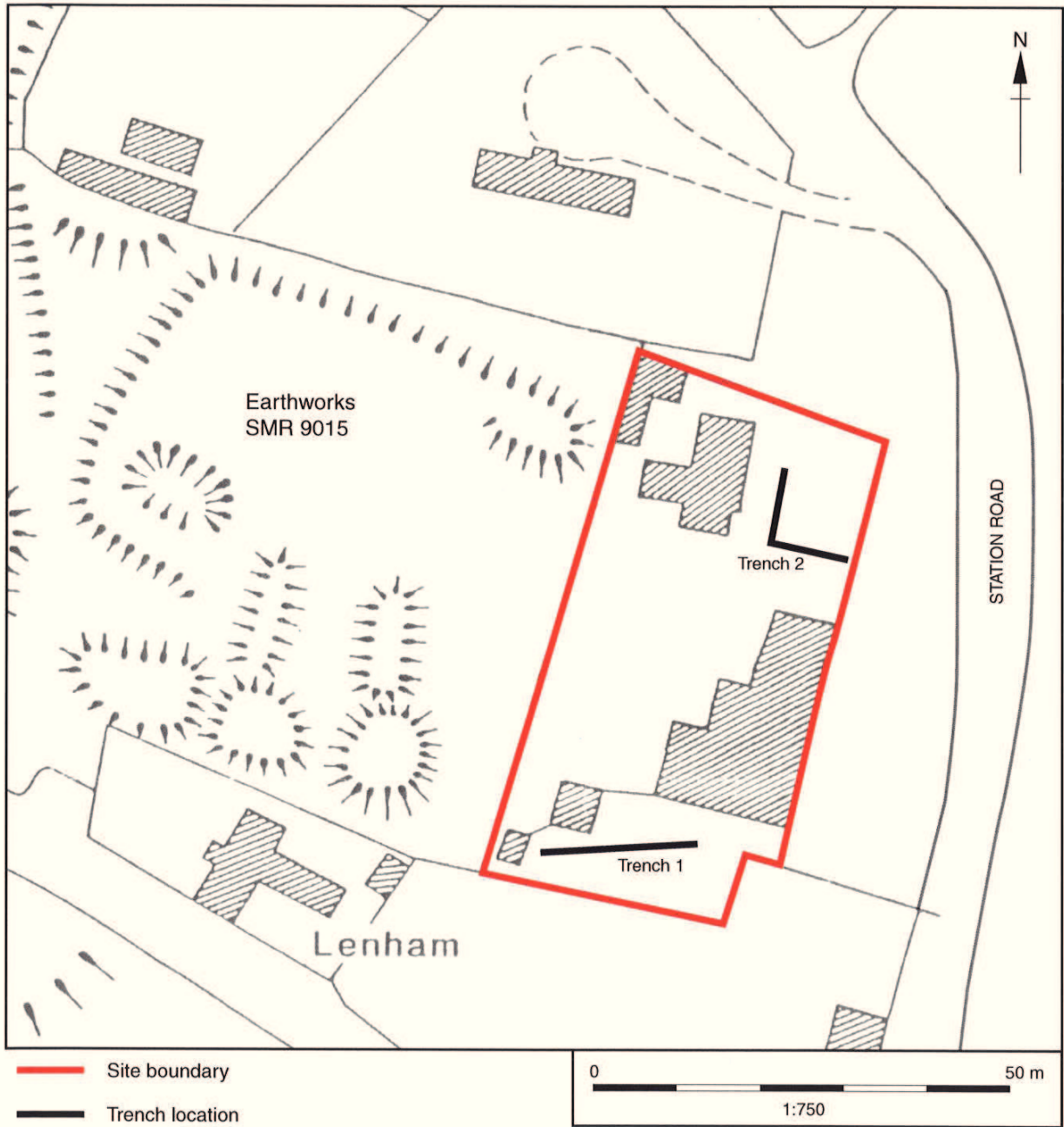
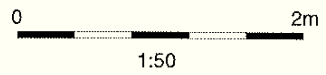
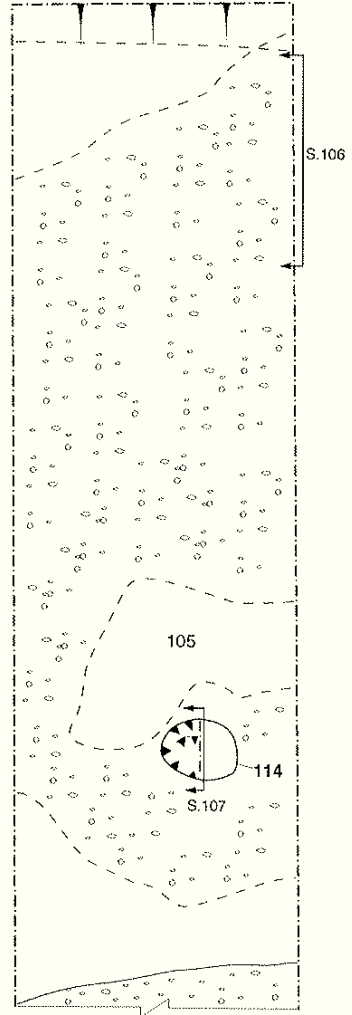
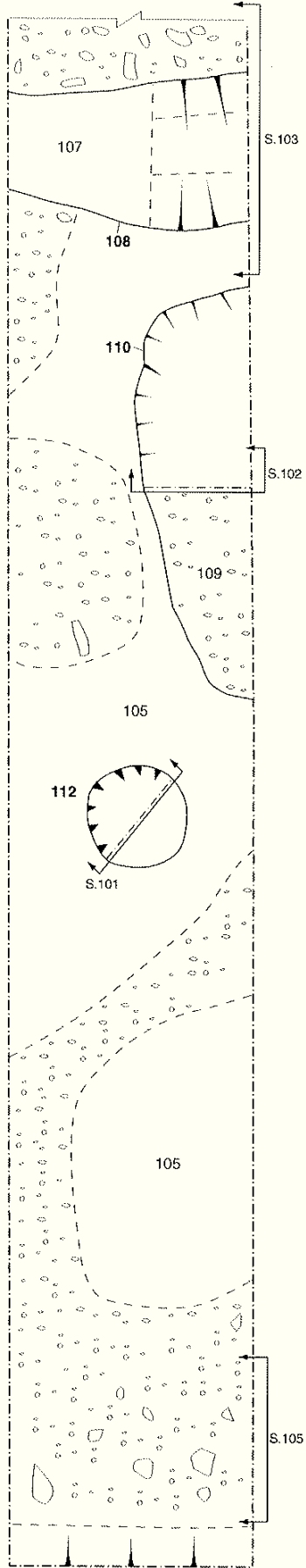
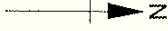


Figure 2: Trench location plan

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
 Clay and limestone

Figure 3: Trench 1 Plan

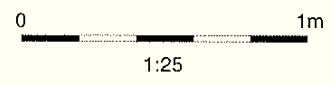
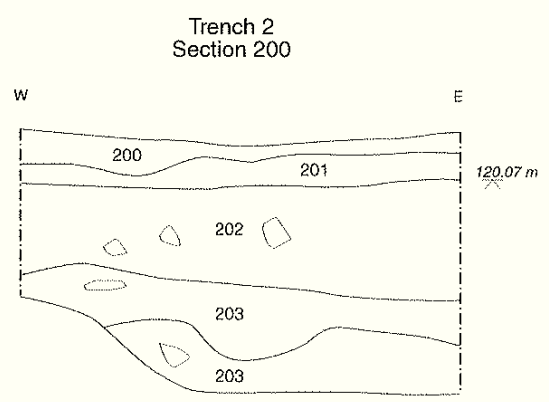
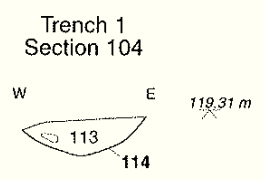
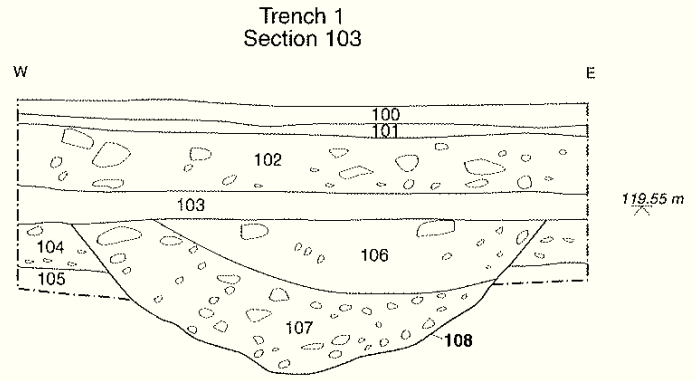
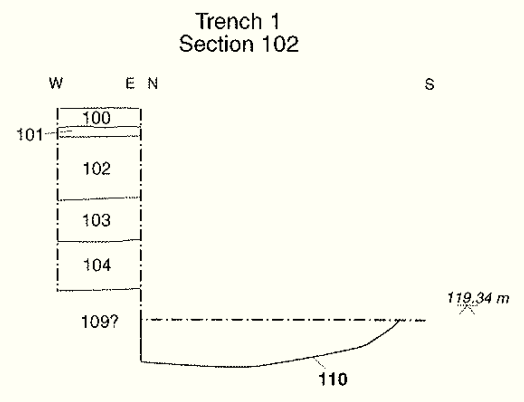
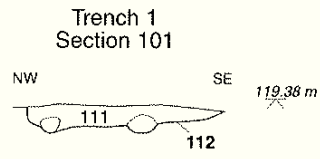

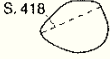










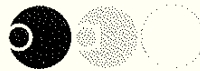


Figure 4: Trenches 1 and 2 sections

	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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