

Osborne School Lankhills Winchester



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



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West Thames**

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Osborne School, Lankhills, Winchester

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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Summary

Between the 17th and the 20th of July 2012 Oxford Archaeology undertook an archaeological watching brief on behalf of Taylor Wimpey South West Thames as commissioned by BF Survey. The project was located at the site of road improvements on the junction of Andover Road and Athelstan Road, Winchester. The results showed that no archaeological deposits survived on the site and that previous work had severely impacted upon the natural chalk. The deposits observed related to in-filling and landscaping of the site following these earlier works. Evidence for the installation of services was also identified.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 The project consists of the improvement of the junction between the Osborne School access road (Athelstan Road) and Andover Road, Winchester (Fig. 1). This comprises the reduction of the ground level and areas of subsequent build-up with imported materials. An archaeological watching brief was put in place to monitor the intrusive phase of works and to ensure that any archaeological deposits could be identified and treated as per the Written Scheme of Investigation (OA 2012).
- 1.1.2 The investigation focused upon two areas (Figs 2 and 3). Area 1 consisted of approximately 45m² of land at the physical junction of Andover Road and Athelstan Road. Area 2 comprised an overall area of 19.5m² covered by two 1.5m wide trenches of 6m and 7m in length running parallel to Athelstan Road.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies to the north of Andover Road on the junction with Athelstan Road and is centred on National Grid Reference SU 478 303. The site is located at c 60m OD.
- 1.2.2 The site is located on the Seaford Chalk Formation, a sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 84 to 89 million years ago in the Cretaceous Period (BGS <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html>).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The site was located within an area which has been the subject of a series of excavations between 1967 and 1972, and then again between 2000 and 2005, which have been published in full (Booth et al 2010, and Clarke, 1979). The site was known to be situated within a Romano-British cemetery used throughout the 4th century (and possibly later), immediately to the east of the known Roman road leading toward Cirencester. The first excavation resulted in the identification and recovery of 444 inhumations and seven cremations (Clarke, 1979). A further 307 inhumations and 25 cremation burials were recorded in the later excavations (Booth et al 2010, Figs 2.1 and 2.2).

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The primary aims of the watching brief were to:



- (i) preserve by record any archaeological deposits, structures or features encountered during the course of any ground intrusions;
- (ii) seek to establish the extent, nature and date of any archaeological deposits, structures or features encountered within the scope of the ground intrusion;
- (iii) secure the analysis, conservation and long-term storage of any artefactual/ecofactual material recovered from the site;
- (iv) disseminate results through the production of a unpublished client (grey literature) report.
- (v) to accurately locate any graves within the project area;
- (vi) to fully record any graves which were encountered;
- (vii) to excavate any human remains, artefacts or archaeological evidence which would be impacted upon during the project;
- (viii) to enable the preservation of any graves and associated remains and artefacts which would not be impacted upon during the project.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 A summary of OA's general approach to excavation and recording can be found in Appendix A of the Written Scheme of Investigation (OA 2012). Standard methodologies for Geomatics and Survey, Environmental evidence, Artefactual evidence and Burials can also be found in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Appendices B, C, D and E respectively).

2.2.2 Site specific methodologies were as follows:

- (i) The area was scanned using a Cable Avoidance Tool (CAT) to identify any services;
- (ii) the impact area was to be subject to archaeological excavation;
- (iii) the area was stripped by a mechanical excavator using a toothless ditching bucket under close archaeological control to the level of the natural chalk or to the level of maximum impact;
- (iv) the area was hand cleaned to reveal any archaeological features;
- (v) the results of the excavation were recorded in written, drawn and photographic formats;
- (vi) one area was unexcavated due to the presence of services and a lamp post;
- (vii) one area was hand excavated to reveal the route of power cables.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

3.1.1 The project focused on two areas of excavation. The first, Area 1 (Fig. 3), comprised the area of road widening which would be the focus of maximum impact during the road improvement project. The second, Area 2 (Fig. 3), was where the verge and public footpath were to be located and as such would undergo lesser impact. The sequence of deposits was broadly uniform across the entire site and are discussed below. A summary of the deposits is also provided in tabular form in Appendix A. The sequence of deposits is illustrated in the form of hand drawn sections (Fig. 4).



- 3.1.2 The uppermost deposit (104) was a 0.5m thick, firm dark brown silty clay topsoil layer with rare chalk fragments contained within its matrix. This extended across the entire site but was disturbed in a single location measuring 2.5m x 1m where it appeared as a more mixed deposit containing larger amounts of chalk (100). A subsoil layer (105) was also consistent across the site comprising a friable light to mid yellowish brown sandy silt in excess of 0.3m deep. Again the only variation was in the area of disturbance described above where what was essentially the same deposit was observed but with higher amounts of chalk fragments included in the matrix (101). Below 101 was a shallow and localised lens of firm dark brown silty clay (102) which was 0.15m thick.
- 3.1.3 The natural chalk (103) was only evident in small pockets and only in a single spot was it seen to be undisturbed. It was more common to find what was either weathered or re-deposited natural chalk (106). This comprised a loose brown and white mottled silty chalk with occasional small stones and gravel inclusions. It was observed in two locations; in the northeast of Area 1 and the north of Area 2 (Fig 3).
- 3.1.4 Small areas towards the west of Area 1 had to remain unexcavated as a result of the presence of live services and a lamp post whilst power cables were also revealed through hand excavation to the east of the unexcavated area. However, the deposits observed were the same as those adjacent to the unexcavated area.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 No artefactual evidence was recovered from the excavations.

3.3 Environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits were observed that justified sampling for environmental purposes.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The results illustrate marked disturbance in that area designated for road widening. The area was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.8m below the level of the current kerb line which reflects the requirements of the road development. At no stage were any archaeological deposits encountered with only a pocket of undisturbed natural chalk being clearly observed. The remainder of the chalk deposits appear to be either re-deposited as part of an infilling phase or heavily weathered which would suggest that it had been previously stripped to that level. The areas earmarked for the new kerb line, verge and public footpath were excavated to a maximum depth of 0.4m. Again no archaeological deposits were encountered.
- 4.1.2 The deposits observed were imported for the landscaping of the site following earlier work. The horizon between topsoil and subsoil was very clear and both deposits appeared very homogeneous and sterile. It was clear that the area had been reduced previously.
- 4.1.3 Further modern disturbance was indicated adjacent to the existing footpath on the Athelstan Road side of the site where a power cable was identified and also a probable drain leading to an off site soak-away. The deposits here (100, 101 and 102) varied slightly in nature from the overall sequence but were interpreted as evidence for the backfilling of service trenches. cursory excavation revealed a gravel bedding also associated with service trenches. The probability is that these services were introduced following the landscaping of the site but there was no strong evidence to confirm this as the relationship between the deposits here with the adjacent topsoil and subsoil deposits was uncertain.



- 4.1.4 If any burials or other archaeological features were preserved on the site they were not located within the level of maximum impact of the development and must be assumed to be beyond any threat of disturbance. Where the natural chalk was encountered it was at a depth of c 0.45m which further suggests that marked truncation of the site has occurred previously and may have removed any archaeological deposits.



APPENDIX A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Thickness	Width	Length	Comments	Finds	Date
100	Layer	0.24m	1m	>2.5m	Topsoil	-	-
101	Layer	0.2m	1m	>2.5m	Deposit	-	-
102	Layer	0.15m	2m	-	Deposit	-	-
103	Layer	-	-	-	Natural chalk	-	-
104	Layer	0.5m	-	-	Topsoil	-	-
105	Layer	>0.3m	-	-	Subsoil	-	-
106	Layer	-	-	-	Redeposited/weathered chalk	-	-



APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Booth, P, Simmonds, A, Boyle, A, Clough, S, Cool, HEM and Poore, D 2010 *The Late Roman Cemetery at Lankhills, Winchester. Excavations 2000-2005*. Oxford Archaeology Monograph 10.

Clarke, G, 1979 *The Roman Cemetery at Lankhills, Winchester Studies 3: Pre-Roman and Roman Winchester. Part II*, Oxford University Press.

OA 2012 Osborne School, Lankhills, Winchester. Written Scheme of Investigation.



APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Osborne School, Lankhills, Winchester
Site code:	WINCM: AY491
Grid reference:	Centred at NGR SU 478 303
Type of watching brief:	Watching Brief on road improvement/road widening.
Date and duration of project:	17 th - 20 th July 2012
Area of site:	C 64.5m ²
Summary of results:	Between 17th and 20th July 2012 Oxford Archaeology undertook an archaeological watching brief on behalf of Taylor Wimpey South West Thames as commissioned by BF Survey. The project was located at the site of road improvements at the junction of Andover Road and Athelstan Road, Winchester. The results showed that no archaeological deposits survived on the site and that previous work had severely impacted upon the natural chalk. The deposits observed related to in-filling and landscaping of the site following these earlier works. Evidence for the installation of services was also identified.
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at Oxford Archaeology, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES and will be deposited with the Winchester City Museum in due course.



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Figure 1: Site location

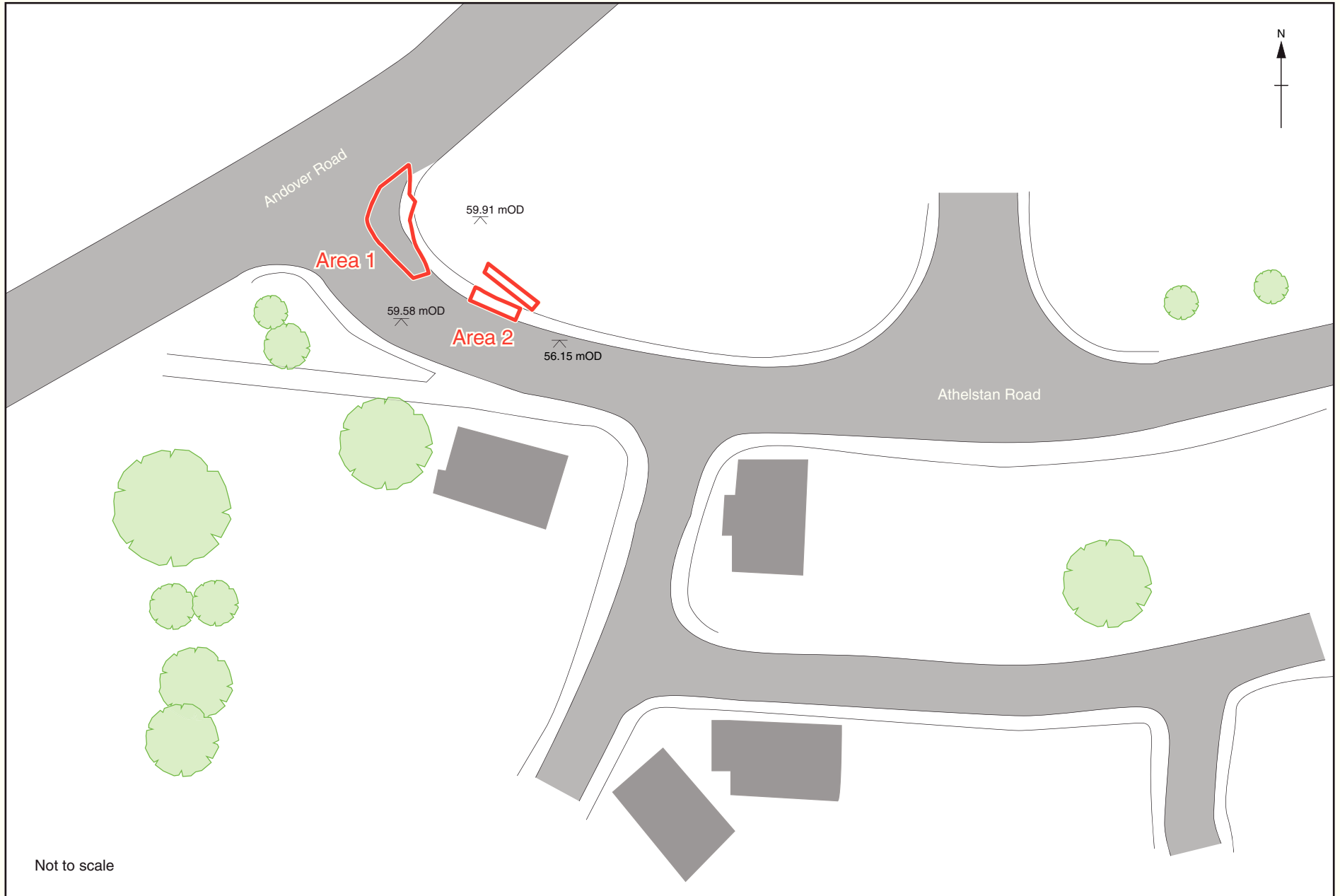


Figure 2: Development area

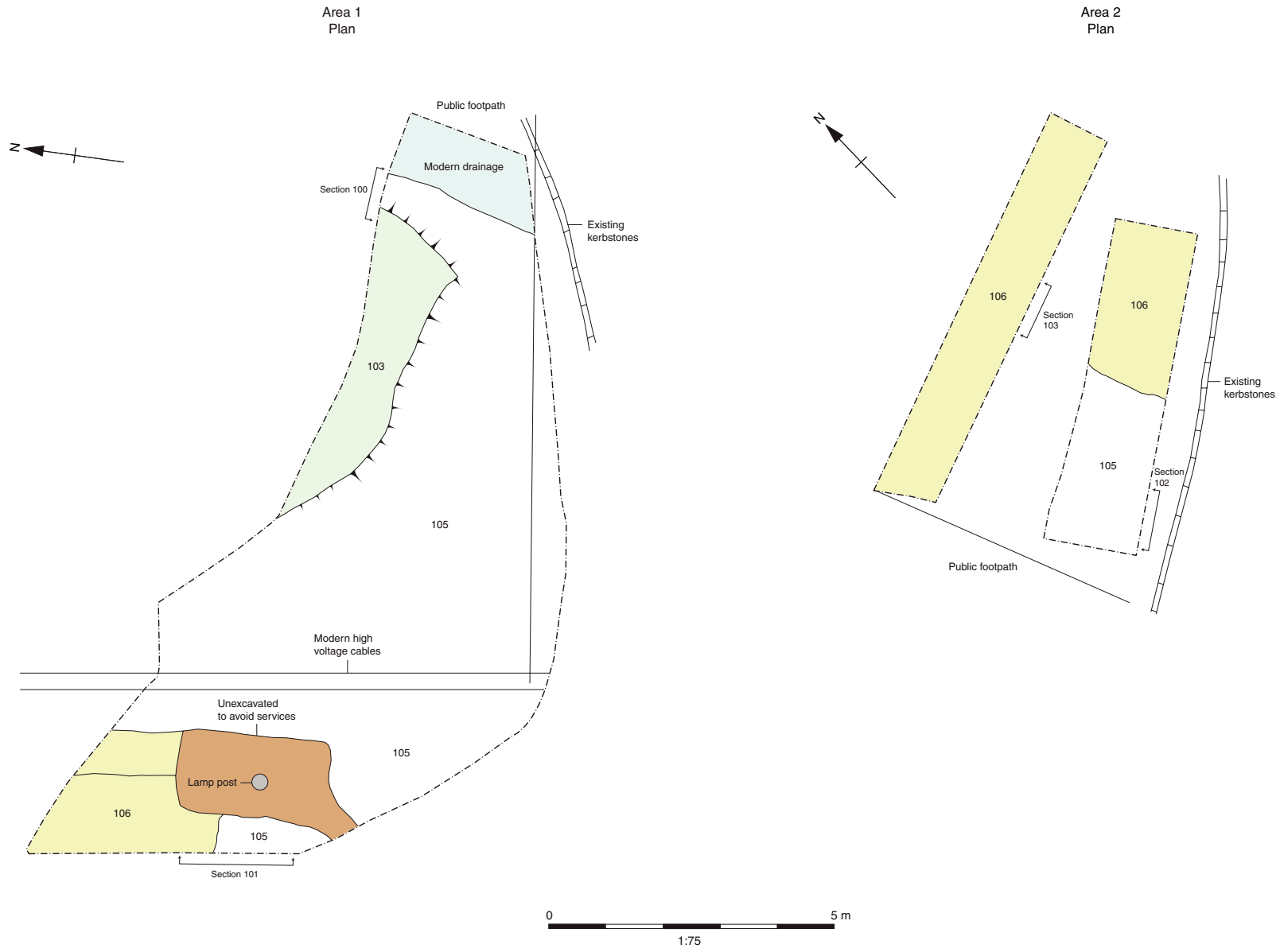


Figure 3: Trench plans

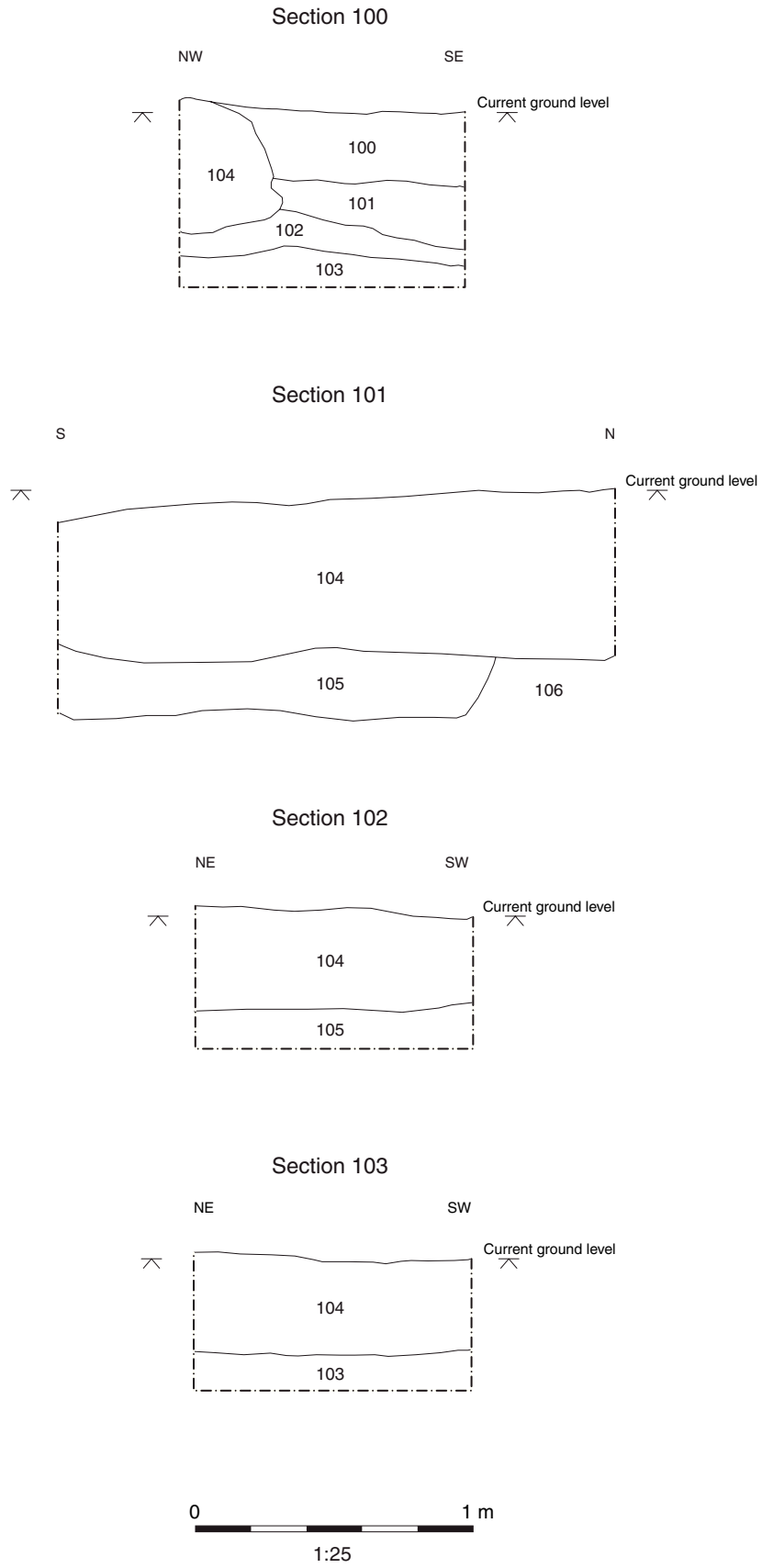


Figure 4: Representative sections



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