

HWRC

Sandleford Farm
Newbury
West Berkshire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



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HWRC Sandford Farm, Newbury, Berkshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

On the 7th and 8th April 2008, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Sandford Farm, Newbury, Berkshire (NGR: SU 474 647). The work was commissioned by Rivar Ltd in advance of the construction of a civic amenity development. The watching brief revealed overall deposits of post-medieval ploughsoil sealing an undated earlier worked soil. No significant archaeology was observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 On the 7th and 8th of April 2008 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Sandford Farm, Newbury, Berkshire (NGR: SU 474 647). The work was commissioned by Rivar Ltd in respect of a planning application for the construction of a new Civic Amenity development (Planning Application No. 06/00960/FULMAJ).

1.1.2 A project brief was set by Duncan Coe, the Archaeological Officer for West Berkshire District Council.

1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA, 2007).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 The site is situated approximately 2 km south of the centre of Newbury (Fig. 1). The development area lies on the west side of the A339 (Newtown Road) and comprises an area c1.9 hectares. The site is bounded by to the east by the A339, to the south by farmland, to the west by a reservoir and to north by the Newbury College site. The eastern part of the site, including the old balancing pond is roughly level, while the western area including the new pond slopes to the east, running from approximately 118 m down to 112 m above OD. The underlying geology is alluvium over Bagshot Bed sands and gravel and London clay (Geological Survey of Great Britain, sheet no. 267).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

A full and detailed account of the Archaeological and Historical background to the site is laid down in the Desk Based Assessment (DBA) for the site (OA, 2006).

Below is a reproduction of the summary.

Prehistoric Period

1.3.1 The proposed development area has the potential to contain archaeological deposits dating to this period, although this potential is probably low. A low level of finds, particularly, worked flint, have been recorded in the vicinity, indicating activity from

at least the Neolithic period onwards, but no settlement or significant remains have been identified to date.

Roman Period

- 1.3.2 Probable Romano-British field systems have been identified in a number of excavations within the vicinity of the development site. No associated settlements have yet been identified.

Later Historical Periods

- 1.3.3 No further remains have been identified as having archaeological of potential until the development of the site in the 19th century.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To preserve by record any archaeological features or deposits that may be disturbed or destroyed during the course of any intrusive groundworks.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The watching brief was conducted as a series of site visits during any groundworks that had the potential to disturb any archaeological deposits. These works included top and subsoil stripping, service trenching and excavation of a new pond.
- 2.2.2 A plan showing the extent and location of any excavations was maintained at a scale of 1:100 (Fig. 2) and any recorded sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20 (Fig. 3). All excavations and recorded sections were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was also made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

Western Area

- 3.1.1 This area contained the excavations for a new pond measuring approximately 70 m by 50 m.
- 3.1.2 The underlying pale yellow-brown natural clay (4) was encountered at a depth of between 0.4 m and 0.6 m below the current ground level (Fig. 3, sections 1 and 2).

This deposit could be seen to be in excess of 2 m deep in the centre of the excavation for the pond.

- 3.1.3 Overlying this was a layer of pale yellow-brown sub-angular gravels (3). This layer was up to 0.65 m deep at the eastern (highest) edge of the area (Fig. 3, Section 1), decreasing in depth to 0.25 m deep at the western (lowest) edge (Fig. 3, section 2). This deposit contained numerous patches of iron-panning and some areas of probable manganese staining, all of natural origin. Sealing this deposit was a 0.25 m deep layer of grey-brown clay loam (2). This contained a high percentage of small sub-angular gravel suggesting that it may be a mechanical mixture of soils and the top of the terrace gravel caused by ploughing, although no dating evidence was recovered. Cutting this layer was a 1.2 m deep by 0.6 m wide trench containing a machine extruded clay land drain. This feature was noted but not recorded.
- 3.1.4 Overlying this earlier worked soil was a 0.35 m deep layer of dark grey-brown silt clay loam (1). This deposit contained many abraded fragments of 19th-century brick and tile suggesting that is a probable modern ploughsoil.

Eastern Area

- 3.1.5 This area included the old balancing pond and an area of roughly level ground to the south that was formerly occupied by buildings and car parking prior to the current development.
- 3.1.6 The base and banks of the old balancing pond and the level terraced area were composed of a dark grey-brown silt clay (6) (Fig. 3, Section 3). This deposit contained fragments of 19th- and 20th-century brick and tile and quantities of organic debris suggesting it was of recent origin, possibly a layer of made ground. This was overlaid by a 0.25 m deep layer of dark grey-brown silt loam (5). This is a landscaping layer deposited when the pond was excavated and the ground levelled. No undisturbed ground was encountered within this area.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 Fragments of brick and tile dating to the 19th-century were observed within the topsoil (Layer 1) and 19th/20th-century clay land drains were encountered, but no other dating evidence was recovered. The presence of these finds was recorded but they were not retained.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The watching brief showed that the eastern half of the site, immediately adjacent to the A339 had been heavily truncated and disturbed, probably when the old balancing pond was excavated and the material used to terrace the south-eastern corner of the site on which buildings had previously stood prior to the start of the present development. No significant archaeology was observed within this area.
- 4.1.2 Within the western half of the site, within the area of the new pond, a layer of post-medieval topsoil and turf representing modern ploughsoil was observed overlying an earlier, undated worked soil. No significant archaeology was observed within this area.
- 4.1.3 The earlier worked soil directly overlaid the natural terrace gravels. If any earlier activity had taken place in this area evidence, in the form of truncated features cutting into the natural or in the form of residual finds would have been observed. The absence of this evidence suggests that this area has been subject to little intrusive activity and has probably been pastoral/rough grazing in nature prior to deep cultivation in the post-medieval period.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i> Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	Layer	0.35 m	-	Modern ploughsoil	Brick and tile	C19th/ C20th
2	Layer	0.2-5 m	-	Earlier worked soil	-	-
3	Layer	0.3 m - 0.65 m	-	Terrace Gravel	-	-
4	Layer	> 2.0 m	-	Natural Clay	-	-
5	Layer	0.25 m	-	Topsoil and turf, landscaping layer	Brick and tile	C20th
6	Layer	> 0.5 m	-	Modern made ground	-	C20th

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

IFA, 2001 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

OA, 2006 *Proposed Civic Amenity Site. Land and Buildings at Sandleford Farm, Newbury: Archaeological Desk Based Assessment*

OA, 2007 HWRC, *Sandleford Farm, Newbury, Berkshire : Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

OAU, 1992 *Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson)

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Sandleford Farm, Newbury, West Berkshire

Site code: NESAF A 08

Grid reference: SU 474 647

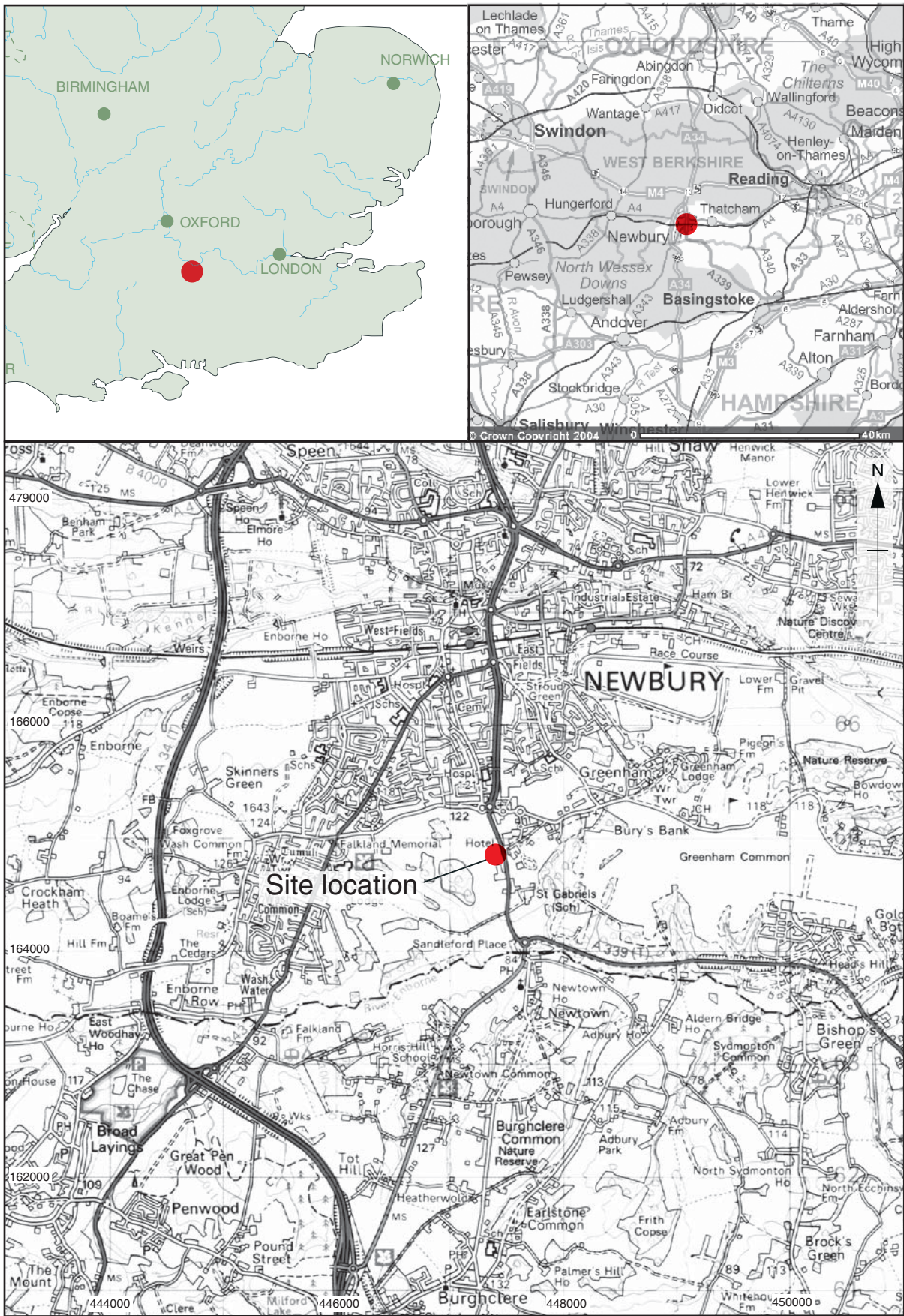
Type of watching brief: Machine excavation of new pond and other groundworks as part of a new civic amenity site.

Date and duration of project: 6th and 7th April, 2008

Area of site: c1.9 hectares

Summary of results: The watching brief exposed large areas of modern made ground in the eastern half of the site, while a modern ploughsoil and an earlier undated worked soil were exposed in the western half. no significant archaeology was observed.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with West Berkshire Heritage Service in due course, under the following accession number: NEBYM:2008.72



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Figure 1: Site location

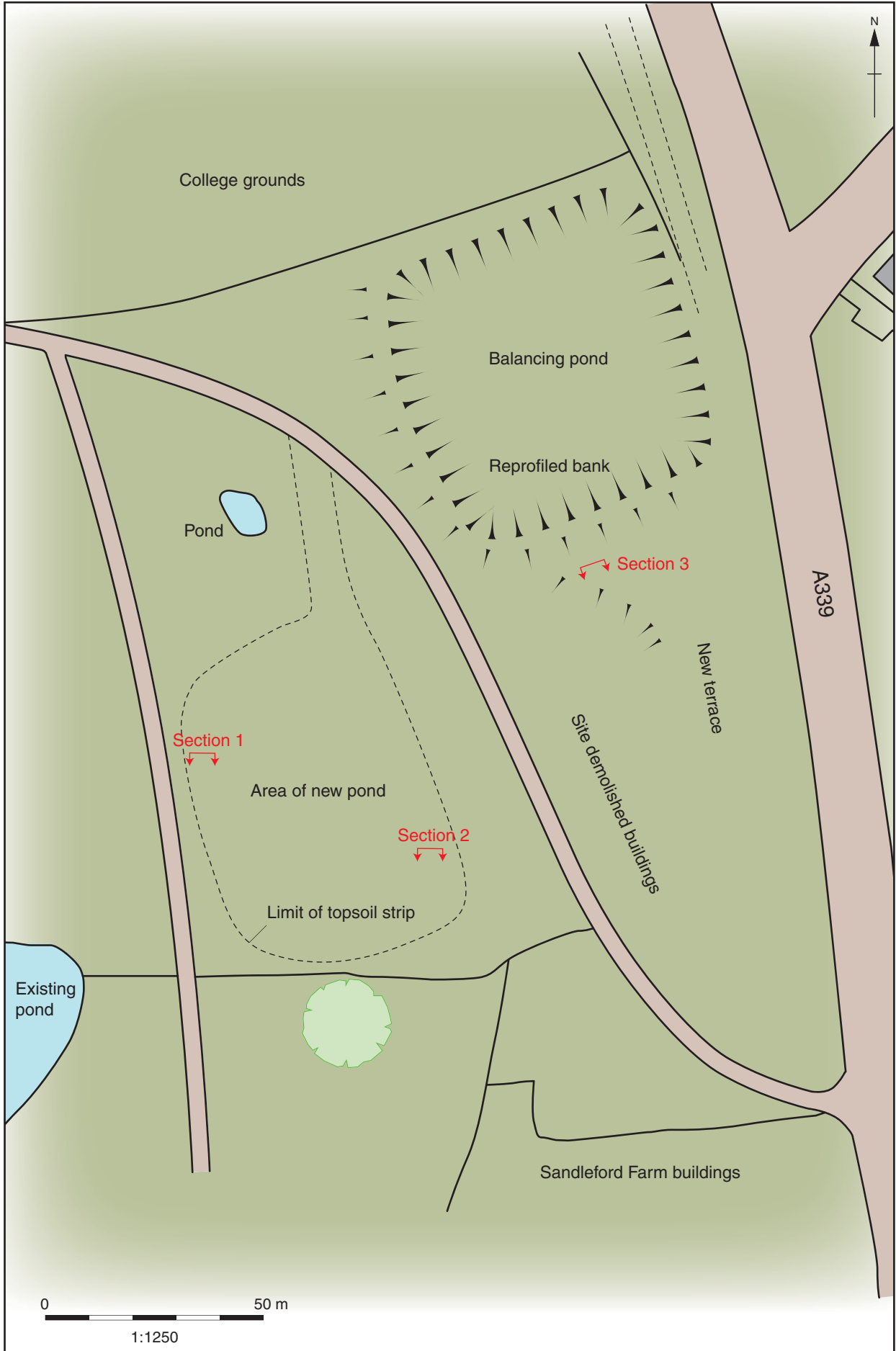


Figure 2: Site plan

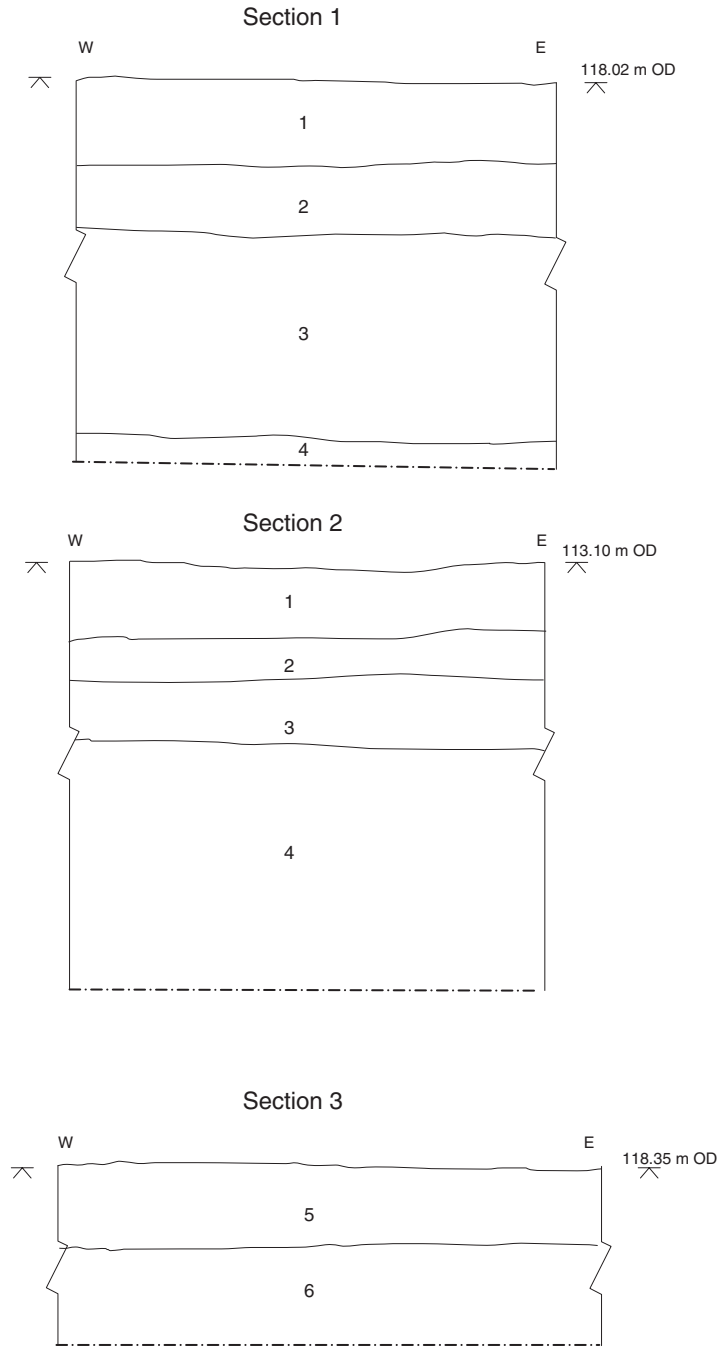


Figure 3: Sections



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