

Coopers Road Estate Southwark London SE 1



Archaeological Evaluation



Oxford Archaeology

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Coopers Road Estate, Southwark, London SE1

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

Client Name: Price & Myers Consulting Engineers

Issue No. 1

OA Job No. 1055

Planning Ref No. TP2353-B, Reg. 0100922

NGR: TQ 3395 7830

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SUMMARY

Oxford Archaeology (OA, -formerly trading as The Oxford Archaeological Unit) carried out a field evaluation within the grounds of the Coopers Road Estate in Southwark, on behalf of Price & Myers Consulting Engineers. Peat deposits were identified in the northern part of the site, possibly representing the edge of a prehistoric channel or mere. To the south a post-medieval cultivated soil was recorded. Both peats and soil were sealed by modern made ground.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 Between 08/10/01 and 16/10/01 OA carried out a field evaluation at Coopers Road Estate, Southwark on behalf of Price & Myers Consulting Engineers in respect of a planning application for the re-development of the site (London Borough of Southwark reference TP2353-B, Reg. 0100922) and a *Brief* set by Southwark Council's Planning and Regeneration Division.
- 1.1.2 This document reports on the results of the evaluation which comprised the excavation of 6 no. approximately 20 m x 2 m evaluation trenches.
- 1.1.3 Work was supervised on site for OA by Brian Matthews assisted by Tim Power. Overall project management was undertaken by Nick Shepherd. The project was monitored by Rob Bourne on behalf of the client and by Sarah Gibson on behalf of Southwark Council.

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 2.1.1 The underlying geology of the redevelopment area is Kempton Park Gravel that seals the Woolwich and Reading Beds.
- 2.1.2 A geotechnical survey of the site was carried out by LBH of Wembley in July 2001. This indicated the presence of up to two meters of made ground (which may represent archaeological deposits) overlying gravels. Alluvial clays and peats were also revealed.
- 2.1.3 The site is believed to be located within the extent of a large prehistoric freshwater lake (Mere) which was represented by marshy ground as late as the eighteenth century.
- 2.1.4 The site is located on broadly level ground, at approximately 2.2 m above OD, and is currently occupied by blocks of flats, grassed open space and a large, very early, twentieth century 'industrial' building on the corner of Coopers Road and Old Kent Road.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 *Prehistoric*

- 3.1.1 Widespread, but low intensity, prehistoric activity has been recorded in the general vicinity. Mesolithic flint-work and activity has been noted on three sites close by. A well-preserved timber platform made of interlaced branches, a possible wild-fowling base, was located in 1987 during archaeological investigations in the former Bricklayers Arms railway yard. The site also yielded Neolithic and Bronze Age flints (SMR 091174, 091174, 091173).
- 3.1.2 Archaeological work in advance of road widening to the west of the development site at the junction of Humphrey Street and the Old Kent Road revealed a possible late Neolithic or early Bronze Age farm homestead. This was suggested by the presence of cut features, scattered flint-work, pottery, a hearth and daub (SMR 091332).
- 3.1.3 Other sites in the vicinity have yielded numerous finds including struck Prehistoric flints and a Bronze Age socketed axe (SMR 091742, 090194).
- 3.1.4 Further south, at Albany Road, possible Iron Age drainage ditches have been recorded (SMR 091270) and at Ossary Road in 1995 a possible late prehistoric enclosure ditch has been identified (SMR 092416).

3.2 *Roman*

- 3.2.1 The Old Kent Road in this part of Southwark is believed to run along the approximate line of the Roman road from London to Dover and during that period Southwark formed part of a highly developed agricultural landscape (SMR 091068).
- 3.2.2 An extensive mid-Roman field system, aligned on Watling Street on reclaimed marshland, has been identified immediately west of the site at Dunton Road (SMR 091740). Associated boundary / drainage ditches and two groups of post-holes suggests a structural component to the field system, however, the absence of any hearths probably precludes their being domestic. This level of activity is reflected by the number of other finds and activity sites recorded in the immediate vicinity of the site. For example:
- 3.2.3 A Roman footpath, constructed of rubble and pottery over marshland, recorded in Albany Road (SMR 091377) was possibly contemporary with a number of drainage ditches (SMR 091491). The archaeological evidence suggests that the field system in this area had passed out of use due to flooding by the Late Roman period.
- 3.2.4 In 1917 a Roman burial was recovered at 279 Old Kent Road, a probable roadside interment alongside Watling Street, and in the 18th century 'Roman urns' (possibly indicative of cremation burials) were recovered at the junction of Old Kent Road and Marlborough Grove (SMR 091946).

3.3 *Medieval*

3.3.1 During this period the site lay in a relatively remote and undeveloped area at the edge of extensive marshlands. To the west a probable late medieval gallows was replaced in 1559 (SMR 090282).

3.3.2 The most notable of the very few Medieval finds in the area is that of a rubbish pit recorded at 96-120 Massinger Street (SMR 092254).

3.4 *Post-Medieval*

3.4.1 The evidence suggests that the site lay in open agricultural land until the early 19th century, Horwood's map of 1819 records the surrounding land as pasture or meadow. Between then and 1896 the site was fully developed with large buildings fronting Coopers Road with other buildings behind and fronting onto Old Kent Road. Some demolition and rebuilding took place around 1954 but by 1962 the OS map illustrates that all of the buildings within the site had been demolished and replaced with the existing blocks of flats.

4 **PROJECT AIMS**

4.1.1 To clarify the nature and extent of existing disturbance and intrusions (such as basements) and thereby assess the degree of archaeological survival.

4.1.2 To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present.

4.1.3 To establish the requirements for any further mitigation strategy.

4.1.4 To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features.

4.1.5 To define any relevant research priorities if additional archaeological investigation proves necessary.

4.1.6 To make available the results of the investigation.

5 **EVALUATION METHODOLOGY**

5.1 **Trench location**

5.1.1 Trench locations were originally advised by the Southwark Council Archaeologist. Three of the trenches were relocated to avoid existing features or plotted or found services (fig. 2).

5.1.2 Six trenches measuring approximately 20 m x 2 m were excavated by a mechanical excavator (JCB) under archaeological supervision. Some trenches were shortened to avoid encountered services while others were lengthened to maintain a 3.5% sample of the proposed area of redevelopment (the trench dimensions are given within individual trench descriptions). The trenches were located in the open grassed areas between the housing blocks, and placed to obtain a representative sample of the site.

5.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

- 5.2.1 The fieldwork was undertaken over a period of seven days by a team comprising a Project Supervisor and an archaeological technician, under a project manager. All OAU's fieldwork is carried out under the general direction of R J Williams MIFA (Head of Fieldwork).
- 5.2.2 All trenches were excavated to the top of the 'natural' geological deposits.
- 5.2.3 Site procedures for the evaluation were undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the *OAU Field Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson 1992). The methods and approaches set out in the *Southwark Guidance Paper for Archaeological Fieldwork* and the *Archaeological Guidance Papers* issued by the Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service, English Heritage, were fully adhered to.
- 5.2.4 The trenches were cleaned by hand as appropriate and inspected for finds. All of the trenches were planned at a scale of 1:50 or 1:100. Sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All trenches and 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).

5.3 Finds

- 5.3.1 Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation and bagged by context. Certain classes of building material or post medieval pottery were sampled as appropriate to date Victorian/ Post Victorian contexts sufficiently but otherwise noted and discarded.

5.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

- 5.4.1 Peat deposits within the north of the site were inspected but did not contain preserved organic material sufficient to provide either palaeoenvironmental information or yield material for C14 dating. Non of the peats were associated with cultural material.

6 RESULTS: GENERAL

6.1 Soils and ground conditions

- 6.1.1 The underlying natural consisted of banded sand and gravels. Substantial peaty deposits overlay the gravels within the northern part of the site. These deposits were overlain by silty loam and sandy silt layers which extended across the whole site. These were in turn overlain by extensive modern made-ground deposits.

6.2 Distribution of archaeological deposits

6.2.1 No significant archaeological deposits were identified within the evaluation.

7 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

7.1 Description of deposits

Trenches are located on fig. 2, with representative sections through trenches 1, 2,3 and 4 shown on fig. 3.

Trench 1

- 7.1.1 Trench 1 was aligned NNE-SSW within the north of the site (fig.2) and measured 22 m long by 4 m wide and was excavated to 3.3m below ground level (bgl).
- 7.1.2 For safety reasons the trench was machined by stepped sections. Two sondages were excavated within the lower portion of the trench to investigate the lowest deposits and reveal the underlying natural gravels.
- 7.1.3 The underlying natural (108) consisted of banded orange- yellow sand and yellow-brown sandy gravels, which occurred consistently across the whole site. Within trench 1 these deposits were encountered at a depth of -0.95 m AOD.(fig. 3).
- 7.1.4 A 0.8 m thick layer of dark grayish black peaty clay and silty peat (107, 106) overlay the natural sand and gravel with its upper surface at -0.30m AOD. These deposits were carefully inspected but no human activity was evident.
- 7.1.5 The peat was sealed by a 0.35 m thick layer of brownish yellow clay (105) and up to 0.6m of brown-gray silty loam (104) which probably represents a former cultivation horizon.
- 7.1.6 Layer 104 was overlain by modern made-ground deposits (103, 102, 101), which containing much brick, metal and Victorian/modern pottery, and up to 0.35 m of topsoil.

Trench 2

- 7.1.7 Trench 2 was aligned ESE-WNW and located to the south of trench 1.
- 7.1.8 Due to the presence of electrical cables and other services this trench was shortened to an overall length of 13 m. The trench was machined to a width of 4 m with a lower stepped section containing a machine dug sondage through the underlying peat to a depth of 4.10 m bgl.
- 7.1.9 Natural sandy gravel (207) was encountered at a depth of 4 m beneath the present ground surface (-2.35 m AOD).

- 7.1.10 The overlying stratigraphy of the trench was similar to that of trench 1 (fig. 3), although the peat deposit (206) overlying the natural gravel was much thicker at up to 1.8 m (upper surface -0.45 m AOD). No indication of human activity was evident within this deposit.
- 7.1.11 Layer 206 was overlain by 0.50 m of clean yellow brown clay (205) and up to 1.00 m of pinkish brown silty clay loam (204). These layers were clean and closely inspected but no finds were recovered.
- 7.1.12 Layer 204 was heavily truncated by the insertion of modern services and overlain by to 1.86 m of made-ground deposits containing 19th/ 20th C pottery and other debris.

Trench 3

- 7.1.13 Trench 3 was aligned WNW- ESE within the center of the site and measured 23 m long by 4 m wide. The trench was machined with a stepped section and revealed the underlying natural gravels within the bottom of the lower trench (fig.3).
- 7.1.14 The underlying sand and gravels were found at a depth of 1.4 m beneath the present ground level (+1.05 m AOD).
- 7.1.15 The natural was overlain by up to 0.6 m of reddish brown sandy silt (302). This is similar to other probable cultivation horizons found throughout the site. This layer was cleaned and carefully inspected but no finds were recovered.
- 7.1.16 Layer 302 was overlain by up to 0.5 m of modern made ground and the present topsoil.

Trench 4

- 7.1.17 Trench 4 was aligned WNW-ESE within the south of the site. It measured 31 m long by 4 m wide.
- 7.1.18 The underlying sand and gravels (411, 412, 413) were revealed at a depth of 1.36 m beneath the present ground level (+1.14 m AOD).
- 7.1.19 The natural was overlain by 0.65 m of orange brown sandy silt (404) and up to 0.43 m of made-ground beneath the present topsoil.

Trench 5

- 7.1.20 Trench 5 was aligned WNW-ESE within the southeast of the site.
- 7.1.21 The trench was located to avoid numerous detected services and these restricted its overall length to 10 m., the trench was stepped out to an overall width of 4 m.
- 7.1.22 The underlying sandy gravel (504) was revealed at a depth of 1.46 m beneath the present ground level (+1.07 m AOD) and was overlain by 0.45 m of reddish brown sandy loam (503) and 0.55 m of brown silty loam (502). The upper of these layers contained a single sherd of Roman pottery and two fragments of post-medieval CBM. This single sherd of

pottery therefore seems to be a residual find. These layers probably represent an upper and lower cultivation horizon which was seen elsewhere across the site as a single layer.

7.1.23 Layer 502 was overlain by 0.33 m of made-ground deposits and the present topsoil.

Trench 6

7.1.24 Trench 6 was aligned NNE-SSW within the southeast of the site. It was machined in stepped sections, as elsewhere, and measured 18 m long by 4 m wide.

7.1.25 The underlying sand and gravel was revealed at a depth of 2.2 m beneath the present ground level (+0.27 m AOD)

7.1.26 The stratigraphy of this trench was similar to that of trench 5 and consisted of thick deposits of sandy silt (603) and sandy loam (602). The lower of these layers (603) contained two fragments of post-medieval CBM.

7.1.27 These layers were in turn overlain by up to 0.6 m of modern made ground beneath the present topsoil.

7.2 Finds

7.2.1 With the exception of a single sherd of Roman black burnished ware, found within trench 5, all of the finds recovered were of post-medieval date. Most of the finds recovered consisted of late 19th / early 20th C pottery from the overlaying made-ground deposits (see appendix 2). Relatively few finds were recovered from probable cultivation levels across the site and these consisted of four fragments of post-medieval CBM from layers (502) and (603) together with the single sherd of Roman pottery (mentioned above) also within layer (502). This single sherd is therefore very likely to be a residual find, possibly from activity closer to the Old Kent Road.

7.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

7.3.1 Thick peat deposits were encountered within trenches 1 and 2 within the north of the site. However these were undated and appeared to contain no indications of archaeological activity.

8 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

8.1 Reliability of field investigation

8.1.1 The stratigraphic sequence across the site was consistent and unambiguous. Apart from a single residual sherd of Roman pottery, there were no indications of archaeological activity within the site.

8.1.2 Sample size at 3.5% by area is adequate to locate significant widespread deposits although isolated features may survive undetected.

8.2 Conclusions

- 8.2.1 No significant archaeological remains were recorded, although the possibility remains that isolated features may survive between the trenches.
- 8.2.2 Observations taken on the height of natural gravels indicate higher ground to the south close to Watling Street falling off to the north. This is consistent with current understanding of the palaeotopography.
- 8.2.3 Peat deposits within the northern two trenches indicate the edge of a mere or channel, probably of prehistoric date. No cultural remains were associated with the peat and it did not appear to have good potential for the preservation of palaeoenvironmental remains.
- 8.2.4 The site was open land, probably cultivated, during the post medieval period after which the ground the ground level has been raised by dumping.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY: CRJ '01

Trench 1					
Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Finds	Date
100	Layer	Topsoil	0.35		
101	Layer	Made ground	0.2		
102	Layer	Made ground	0.6	Pot, glass, Shell	Modern
103	Layer	Made ground	0.6	Pot, CBM	Modern
104	Layer	Cultivation level	0.6		
105	Layer	Cultivation level	0.35		
106	Layer	Peat deposit	0.35		
107	Layer	Peat deposit	0.4		
108	Layer	Gravel natural	0.4		
109	Layer	Sand natural			
110	Layer	Made ground	0.1		
111	Layer	Cultivation level	0.1		
Trench 2					
Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Finds	Date
200	Layer	Topsoil	0.1		
201	Layer	Made ground	0.5		
202	Layer	Made ground	1	Pottery	Modern
203	Cut	Modern disturbance	0.8		
204	Layer	Cultivation horizon	1		Modern
205	Layer	Cultivation horizon	0.5		
206	Layer	Peat deposit	1.8		
207	Layer	Gravel natural			
208	Structure	Brick surface			Modern
209	Structure	Manhole			Modern
Trench 3					
Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Finds	Date
300	Layer	Topsoil	0.74		
301	Layer	Made ground	0.5		Modern
302	Layer	Cultivation horizon	0.6		
303	Layer	Cultivation horizon	0.28		
304	Layer	Gravel natural			
305	Cut	Modern disturbance		CBM	Modern
306	Fill	Drain fill		Pot, CBM, pipe, slag, shell	Modern
Trench 4					
Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Finds	Date
400	Layer	Topsoil	0.15		Modern
401	Layer	Made ground	0.15		Modern
402	Layer	Made ground	0.43		Modern
403	Layer	Made ground	0.1		Modern
404	Layer	Cultivation horizon	0.6		
405	Layer	Made ground	0.3	Pipe stems and bowl, drainpipe	Modern
406	Cut	Modern disturbance			Modern
407	Layer	Made ground		Pot, pipe, CBM, glass	Modern

Trench 4					
Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Finds	Date
408	Cut	Modern disturbance			Modern
409	Layer	Made ground			Modern
410	Cut	Modern disturbance			Modern
411	Layer	Sand natural			
412	Layer	Gravel natural			
413	Layer	Made ground		Pot, CBM	Modern
414	Cut	Modern disturbance			Modern
415	Layer	Sand natural			
Trench 5					
Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Finds	Date
500	Layer	Topsoil	0.23		Modern
501	Layer	Made ground	0.33	Pot, CBM	Modern
502	Layer	Cultivation horizon	0.55		Post-med
503	Layer	Cultivation horizon	0.45		
504	Layer	Gravel natural			
Trench 6					
Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Finds	Date
600	Layer	Topsoil	0.4		Modern
601	Layer	Made ground	0.6	Pottery	Modern
602	Layer	Cultivation horizon	1		Post-med
603	Layer	Cultivation horizon	0.4	CBM	Post-med
604	Layer	Sand natural			
605	Layer	Gravel natural			
606	Layer	Sand natural			

APPENDIX 3 POTTERY ASSESSMENT/SPOT-DATING

CRJ '01: Summary table of Finds				
Context	Number	Type	Comments	Date
102	4	Pottery	White glazed	19th/20th C.
	2	Pottery	Stoneware	19th/20th C.
	1	Pottery	Tea-pot lid	19th/20th C.
	1	Glass	Clear window glass	
	1	Oyster shell		
103	4	Pottery	White glazed	19th/20th C.
	1	Pottery	Brown glazed	19th/20th C.
	3	CBM		
	2	Glass	Green, bottle	
	1	Glass	Clear, window	
202	1	Pottery	Stoneware, small container	
	2	Pottery	White glazed	19th/20th C.
305	2	CBM		
306	6	CBM		
	3	Pottery	White glazed	19th/20th C.
	1	Pottery	Stoneware	
	2	Pipe stems		
	2	Hammerscale		
	2	Pieces of slag		
405	1	Oyster shell		
	1	Pipe bowl		
	2	Pipe stems		
407	1	Clay drainage pipe		
	7	Pottery	White glazed, patterned	19th/20th C.
	1	Pottery	Stoneware	
	2	Pipe stems		
	2	CBM	Plant pot fragments	19th/20th C.
413	4	Glass	Clear glass	
	1	Pottery	Patterned white glazed	19th/20th C.
	2	CBM		
	1	Pipe stem		
502	1	Pottery	Black burnished-wear	Roman
	2	CBM		Post-Med
601	6	Pottery	White glazed	
603	2	CBM		Post-Med

APPENDIX 3 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service, English Heritage: *The Southwark Guidance Paper for Archaeological Fieldwork and the Archaeological Guidance Papers.*

Wilkinson, D. (ed.) 1992: *Oxford Archaeological Unit Field Manual*, (First edition, August 1992).

APPENDIX 4 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Coopers Road Estate, Southwark, London, SE 1.

Site code: CRJ '01

Grid reference: TQ 3395 7830

Type of evaluation: 6 x 20 m stepped trenches

Date and duration of project: Oct '01, 7 days

Area of site:

Summary of results: No archaeology found

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OAU, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Museum of London in due course, under the following accession number:

Illustrations

- Fig 1 Site Location
- Fig 2 Site Plan showing trench locations
- Fig 3 Sections



CRJEV * Coopers Road Estate, Southwark * L. Adams * 17.10.01

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Figure 1: Site location plan

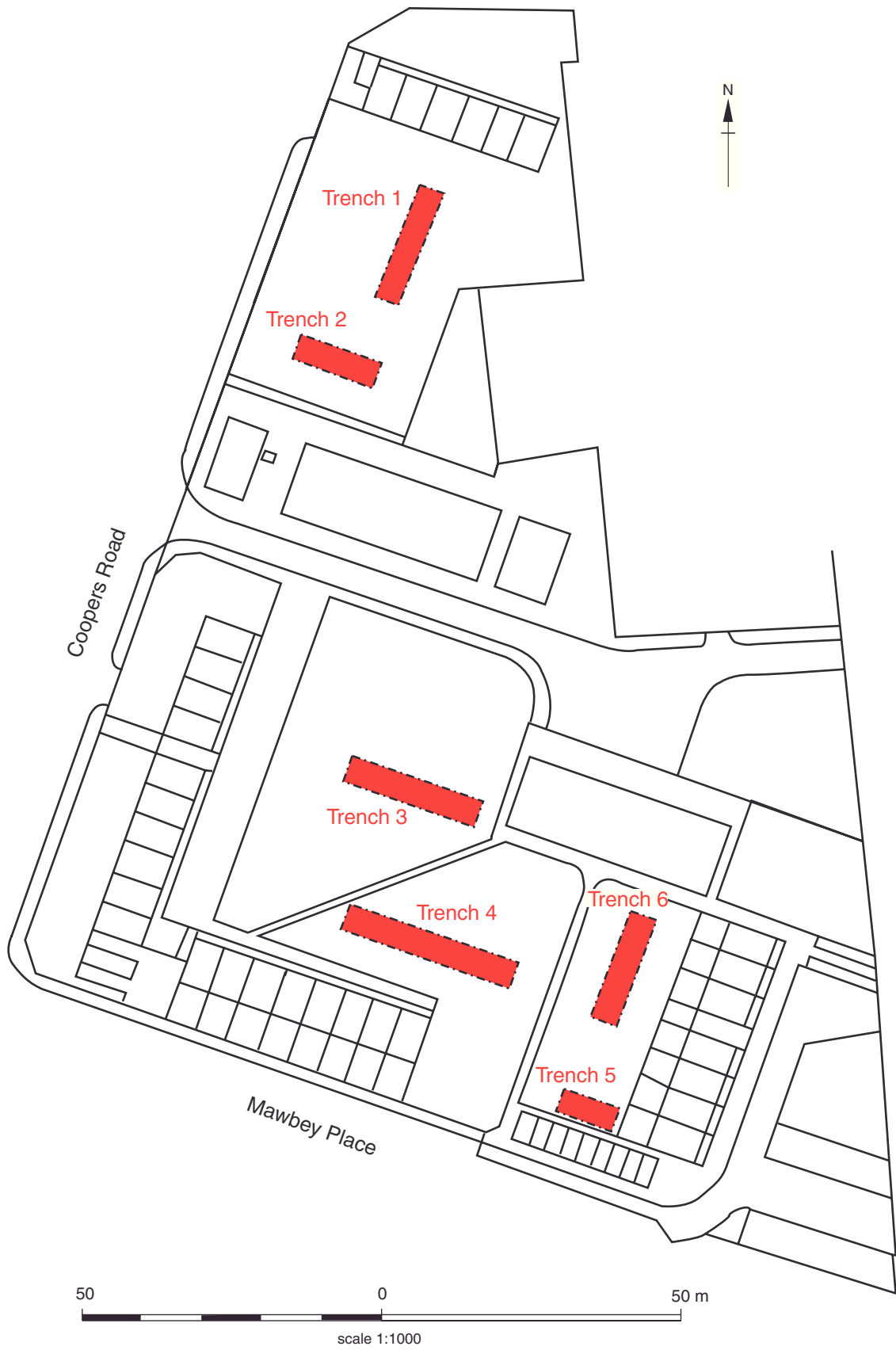
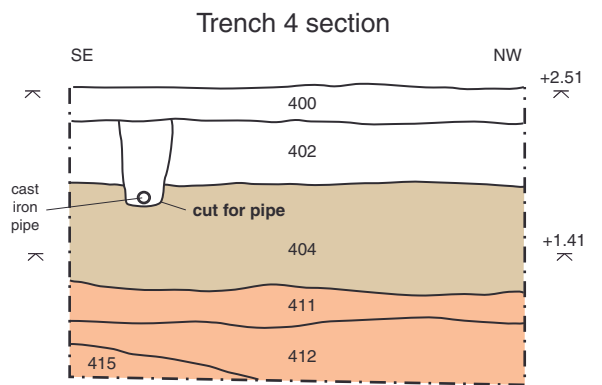
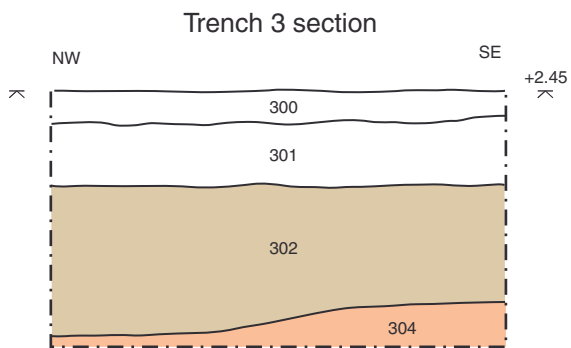
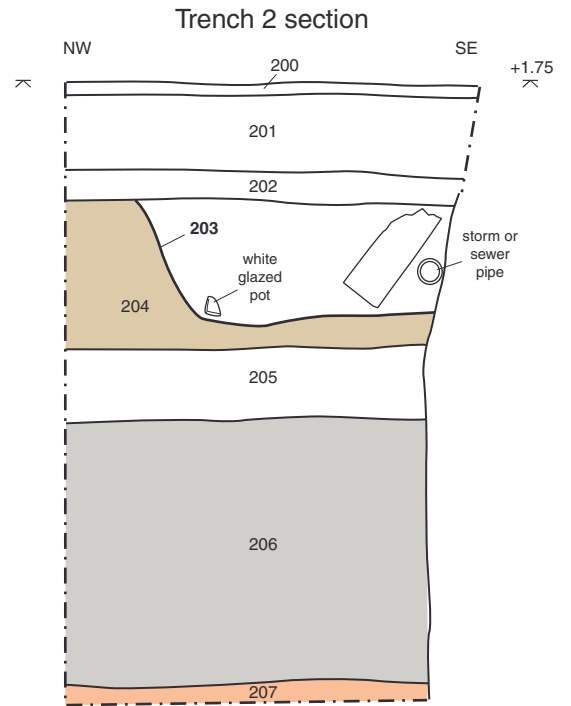
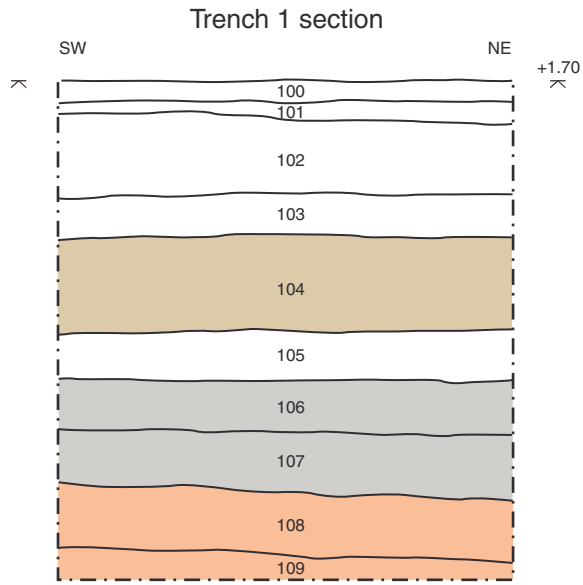


Figure 2: Trench location plan



- agricultural soil (post-medieval)
- peaty material
- sands/gravels



scale 1:50

Figure 3: Sections



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