

H J Stribling and Partners/Eton College

Eton Guest House, Eton, Berkshire  
*ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT*

NGR SU 966776

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February 2001

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February 2001

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## SUMMARY

*In February 2001, the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) carried out a field evaluation within a former guest house at 122/123 Eton High Street, Eton, Berkshire on behalf of Eton College. Two trenches were excavated; both were found to contain modern deposits of backfill and make-up.*

### 1.1 Introduction

### 1.2 Location and scope of work

- 1.2.1 In February 2001, the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) carried out a field evaluation within a former guest house at 122/123 Eton High Street, Eton, Berkshire (Fig. 1), on behalf of H J Stribling and Partners acting for Eton College. The evaluation was carried out in respect of a planning application (Ref.00/79983) for the conversion of an existing guest house to form two four bed dwellings and the construction of a garage to the rear of the property. The work was undertaken according to a brief written by Kev Beachus of Babbie Group, and a Written Scheme of Investigation (OAU 2000). The site is located at 122/123 High Street, Eton at grid reference SU 966776. Two trenches were excavated.

### 1.3 Geology, topography and landuse

- 1.3.1 The site lies at approximately 22 m above OD. The proposal area comprises an area of approximately 250 square metres, and is currently occupied by a guest house. The underlying geology is first terrace river gravel overlain by alluvial silts.

### 1.4 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.4.1 The following is reproduced from the Written Scheme of Investigation.
- 1.4.2 The site is located on the Thames gravels which are of high archaeological potential particularly for evidence of prehistoric settlement. The site lies in the historic core of Eton, on the opposite bank of the Thames to the 12th century suburb of Windsor which was known as *Underore*. Medieval Eton is thought to have extended from Windsor Bridge to Baldwin's Bridge, although the previous low levels of archaeological work have not allowed this to be investigated. It is possible that the development of Eton followed a similar pattern to that of Windsor, as the two settlements were linked by a ford and, in the 13th century, a bridge. Excavations at the ABC cinema in Windsor in 1983 revealed that the area covered by *Underore* was probably an island at some point in the post-glacial period. Subsequent work at Jennings Yard, Windsor revealed the remains of successive substantial medieval buildings within a ditched enclosure or moat, along with substantial artefactual assemblages and a group of eight partially articulated horse skeletons.
- 1.4.3 Archaeological excavations carried out by OAU at King Stable Street in the spring of 1997 revealed a sequence of deposits ranging in date from the early medieval to the

late post-medieval periods, including evidence for the medieval origins and development of Eton (Blinkhorn and Pugh 2000).

- 1.4.4 As Eton High Street dates from the medieval period, it was felt that there was potential for archaeological deposits and structures of this period being present on the site.

## 1.5 Evaluation aims

- 1.5.1 To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the development area and to determine the extent, thickness, condition, nature, character, quality, date, depth below ground surface and overall depth of any archaeological remains present.
- 1.5.2 To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features.
- 1.5.3 If significant archaeological remains are discovered, to determine what further mitigation measures may be required and to agree these with Babtie, acting on behalf of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.
- 1.5.4 To make available the results of the investigation.

## 1.6 Scope of fieldwork

- 1.6.1 The evaluation consisted of one hand excavated trench and one machine excavated trench (Fig. 2): Trench 1 was located at the eastern end of the property inside the room fronting Eton High Street, and was 2 m long, 1.60 m wide and approximately 1.20 deep; Trench 2 was located to the rear of the property and was 6 m long, 1.80 m wide and 1.20 m deep.

## 1.7 Fieldwork methods and recording

- 1.7.1 Trench 1 was excavated by hand. Trench 2 was excavated under close archaeological supervision using a wheeled mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket.
- 1.7.2 The trenches were cleaned by hand and the revealed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds. The trenches were planned and their sections drawn at a scale of 1:50. 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).

## 1.8 Finds

- 1.8.1 Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation and bagged by context.

## **1.9 Palaeoenvironmental evidence**

1.9.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were encountered during the evaluation.

## **1.10 Presentation of results**

1.10.1 In the following sections the deposits are described trench by trench. There is additional comment on the finds and the reliability of the results. A context inventory, including finds lists, is included in Appendix 1. The stratigraphy of each trench is described individually, from earliest to latest, and a discussion and interpretation of the archaeology then follows.

## **2 RESULTS: GENERAL**

### **2.1 Soils and ground conditions**

2.1.1 Trench 1 was located inside the building adjacent to Eton high Street. Floorboards were removed to reveal brick rubble make up. Trench 2 was located in an area of concrete slab overlying gravel make up.

## **3 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS**

### **3.1 Trench 1 (Fig. 3)**

3.1.1 At the eastern end of the trench was a brick built wall (103) orientated roughly north to south. It was located beneath the frontage of the building. It was revealed for 1.16 m and was 0.80 m deep. Nine courses of bricks were present. The bricks measured 0.24 m by 0.11 m by 0.08 m. The wall was not bottomed.

3.1.2 Another brick wall (102) retained a large cellar seen at the western end of the trench. It ran parallel to wall 103, and was located 1.3 m to the west. It was revealed for 1.60 m in length and was 1.10 m deep. Twelve courses of bricks were present. They measured 0.24 m by 0.11 m by 0.08 m. The floorboards (101) of the room, in which Trench 1 was located, sat directly upon this wall.

3.1.3 Abutting both walls was a layer of make up comprised of mid blue-grey silty clay containing ceramic building material and mortar (106). It was revealed at the base of the trench and was seen to be at least 0.40 m thick. This deposit contained pottery of 19th century date.

3.1.4 A brick built foundation (104) pier was constructed upon make up layer 106. It was approximately 0.70 m square and 0.60 m high. The bricks measured 0.24 m by 0.11 m by 0.08 m in size. Seven courses were revealed.

3.1.5 Structure 104 was overlain by a second layer of make up comprised of light greyish brown sandy gravel (105) containing ceramic building material and pottery of 19th century date. It was 0.60 m thick.

3.1.6 The floorboards of the room (101) were laid upon the brick wall of the cellar (102).

### 3.2 Trench 2 (Fig. 3)

3.2.1 Trench 2 was orientated east to west and was located to the rear of the property in an area of hard standing.

3.2.2 A modern foundation was seen bounding the eastern and northern side of the trench (201). It was constructed of breeze blocks, and was revealed to a maximum depth of 1.20 m.

3.2.3 The foundation was abutted by a mixed silty clay containing large fragments of ceramic building material and clinker (203), which was seen to be at least 0.13 m thick, and extended across the full area of the trench.

3.2.4 A layer of mixed yellowish brown silty clay containing brick rubble (202) overlay 203. It was 1.06 m thick and also extended across the full area of the trench.

3.2.5 A concrete slab (200) overlaid the uppermost backfill (202).

### 3.3 Finds

3.3.1 A small assemblage of pottery was retrieved from the make up layers (105, 106, and 203) in both trenches. The pottery included sherds of glazed stoneware, glazed earthenware and blue and white china all of which date to the 19th century and 20th centuries.

## 4 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

### 4.1 Significance

4.1.1 No archaeological features were revealed during the evaluation. All of the structures and deposits present in the trenches appeared to be of 19th or 20th century date.

### 4.2 Reliability of field investigation

4.2.1 The integrity of the stratigraphic evidence encountered during the evaluation is believed to be good.



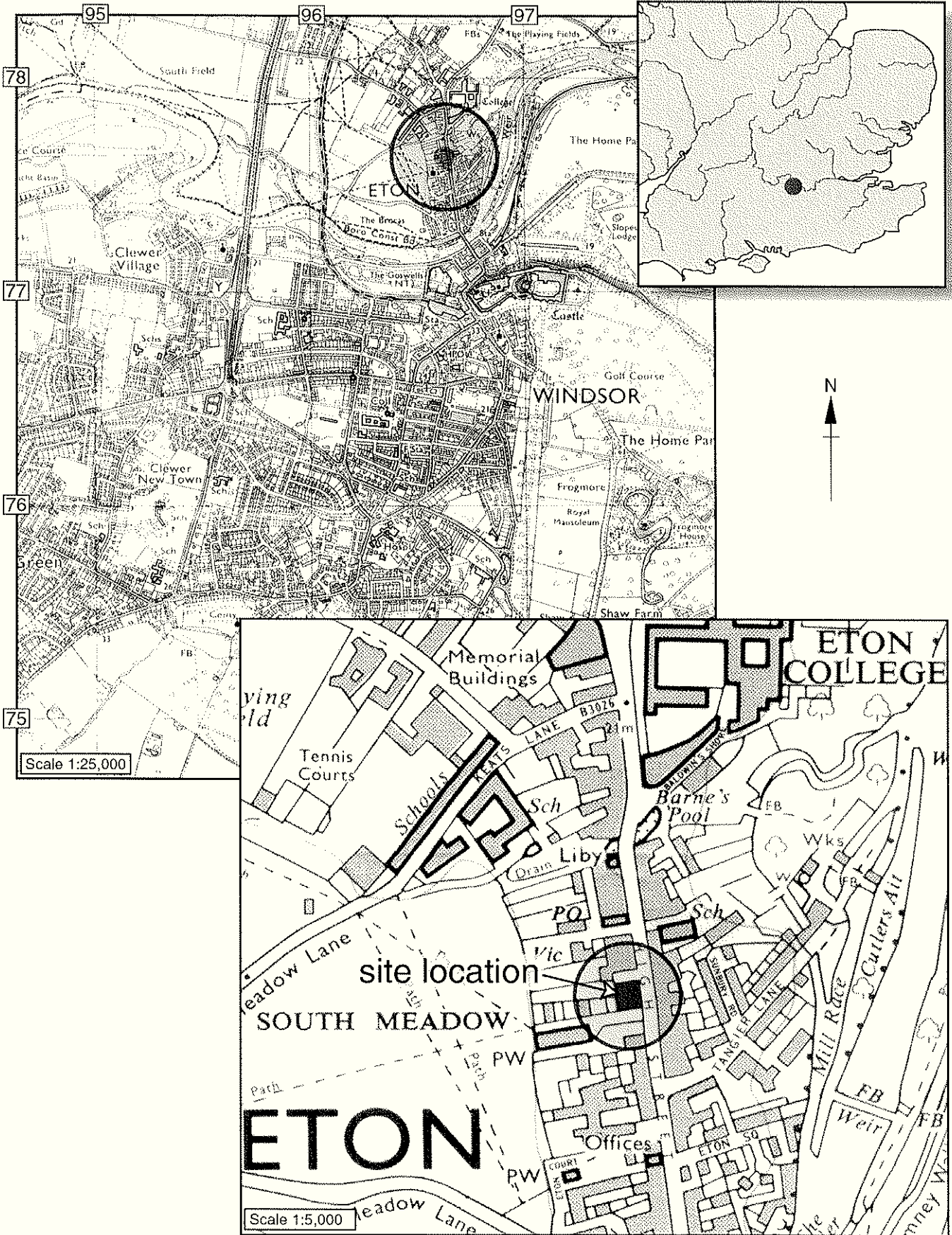
## Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Ctxt No</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Thick. (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i> Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
001							
	101	Layer	>1.80	0.05	Floorboards		
	102	Struct	>1.60	1.60	Brick Wall		19th c ?
	103	Struct	>1.60	0.80	Brick Wall		19th c ?
	104	Struct	>1.60	0.35	Brick Pier		
	105	Layer	>1.32	0.60	Make up	pot	19th c
	106	Layer	>1.24	0.40	Make up	pot	19th c
002							
	200	Layer	>1.80	0.10	Concrete Slab		
	201	Struct	>1.80	1.20	Breeze Blocks		20th c
	202	Layer	>1.80	1.06	Make up		19th c
	203	Layer	>1.60	0.13	Make up	pot	19th c

## Appendix 2

## Bibliography and references

- Hawkes, J W, 1985 Windsor: *ABC Cinema, Berks Archaeol J* 72, 83
- Blinkhorn, P and Pugh, G, 2000 *Excavation of the Medieval Waterfront at King Stable Street, Eton, Berks*, 1997 OAU Occasional Paper No 7
- Wilkinson D (ed) 1992 *Oxford Archaeological Unit Field Manual* (unpub.)



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Figure 1: Site location

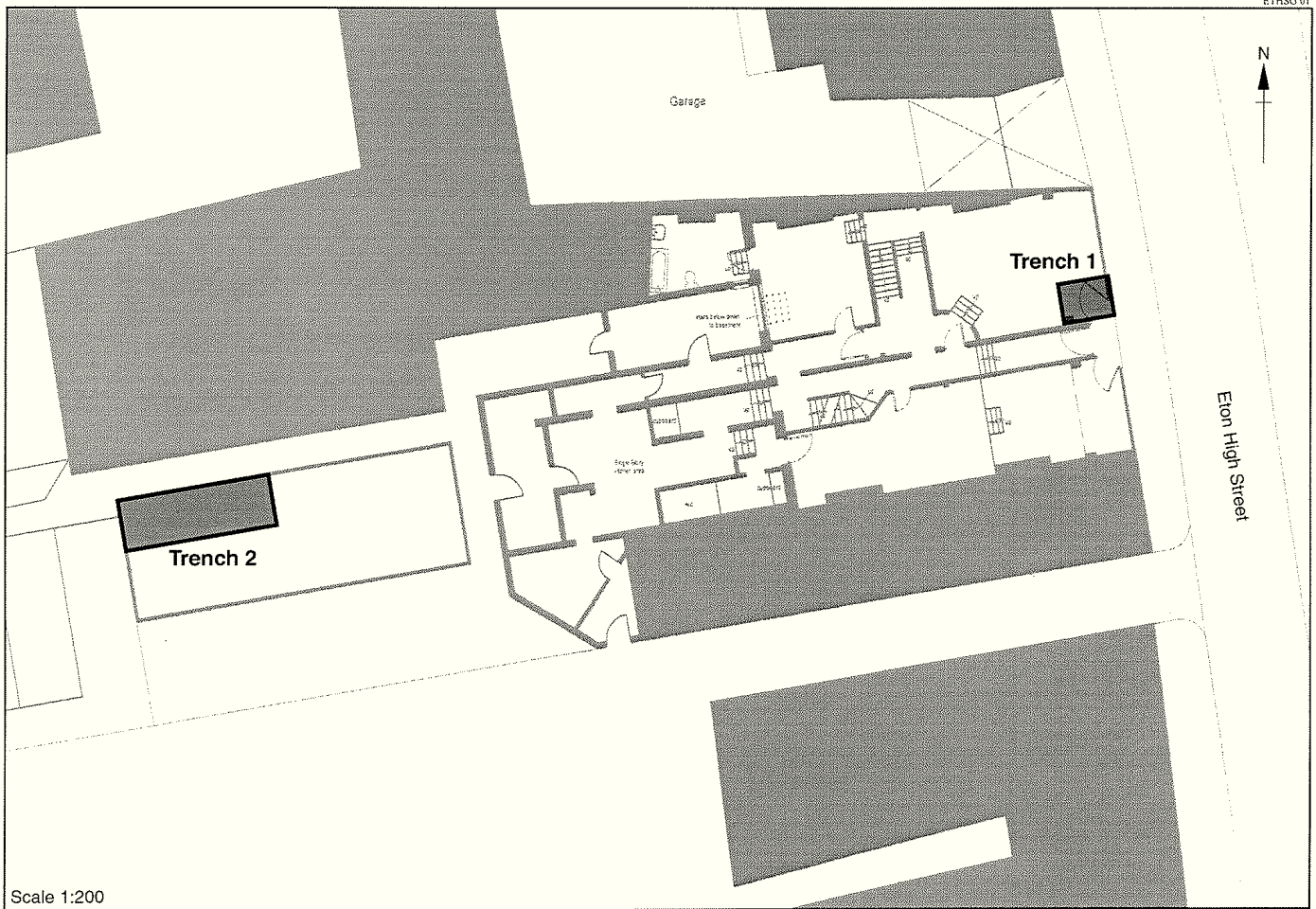


Figure 2: Trench locations

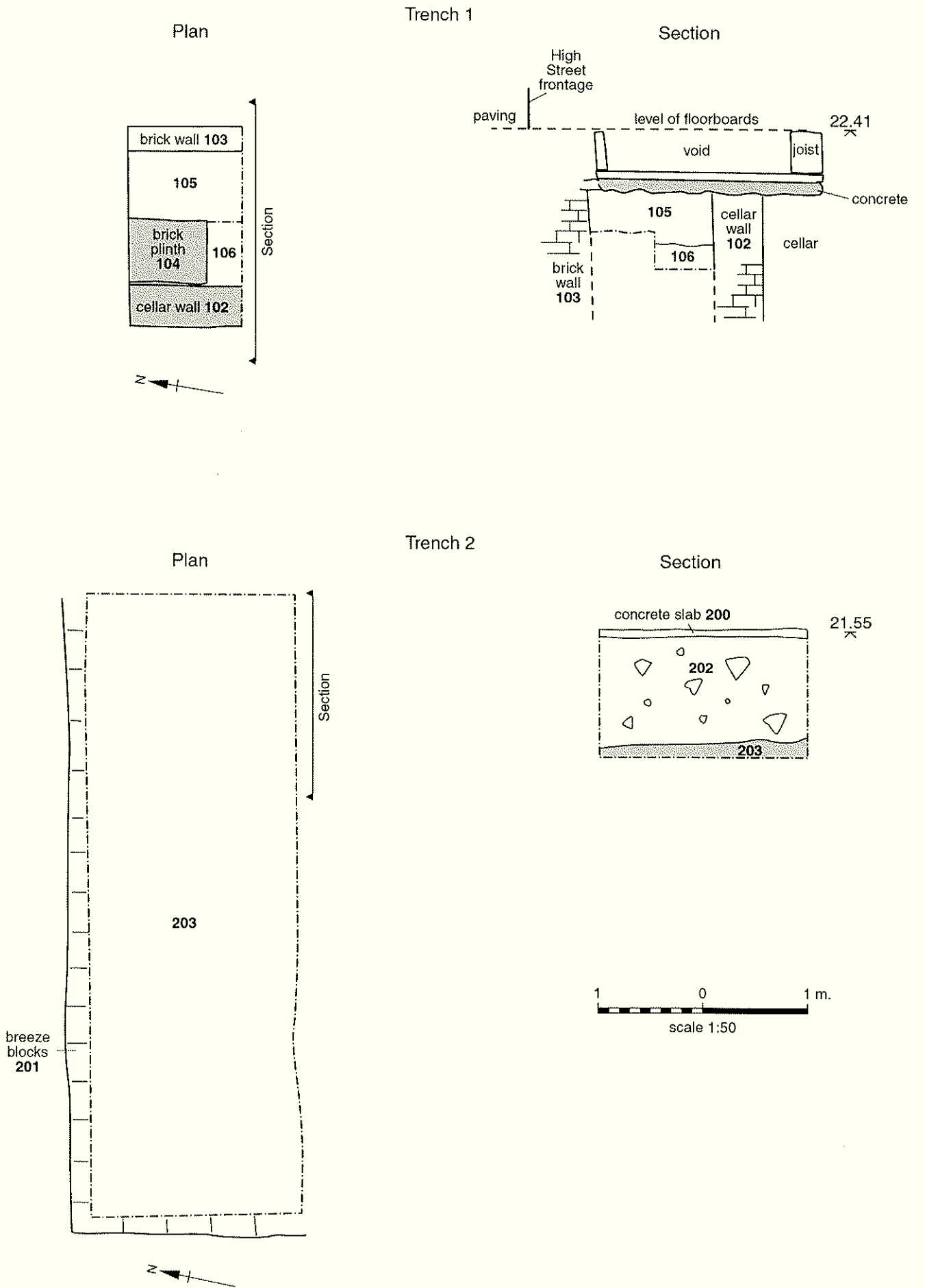


Figure 3: Plan and section of each trench





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