

New Secondary School
St Gregory the Great
Cardinal Newman School Site
Cricket Road, Oxford



**Archaeological
Watching Brief Report**



January 2006

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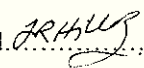
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New Secondary School, St. Gregory the Great, Cardinal Newman School Site, Cricket Road, Oxford

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

Between November 2004 and July 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at the Cardinal Newman School Site, Cricket Road, Oxford (NGR: SP 5339 0458). The work was commissioned by Leadbitter Construction in advance of the erection of new school buildings. The watching brief revealed evidence of the raising of ground levels throughout the site, achieved by the stripping of the original top and subsoil, deposition of a 0.3 m thick layer of imported gravels and reinstatement of the soils. No deposits, features or artefacts earlier than the 19th century were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Between November 2004 and July 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at the Cardinal Newman School Site, Cricket Road, Oxford (NGR: SP 5339 0458). The work was commissioned by Leadbitter Construction in respect of a planning application for the erection of new school buildings. These were to include a new sports hall, alterations to existing buildings, road extensions and an all weather sports pitch (Planning Application No.0.14/03).
- 1.1.2 A project brief was set by Paul Smith, County Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council, outlining the requirements and standards for the Archaeological work (OCAS 2004).
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA, 2004).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The development site lies off Cricket Road in the suburb of Cowley on the eastern edge of Oxford (centred on NGR: SP 5339 0458) (Fig. 1). The current use is by the present Cardinal Newman School, the sports field adjacent to the school, part of the Donnington Middle School site, and Cricket Road Centre adult education facility.
- 1.2.2 The site is situated at approximately 59 m OD and comprises 5.83 hectares of land. The underlying geology comprises alluvium and primary river terrace deposits around the brook, with Oxford Clay and Kellaways Beds to the north and south (British Geological Survey Sheet no. 237).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA, 2004) and is reproduced overleaf.

1.3.2 In 'An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the City of Oxford' published by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments of England (1939) there is a map showing the position of the monuments scheduled. The map indicates that in the early 20th-century the proposed development site was occupied by garden allotments with no substantial structures in the vicinity.

1.3.3 There is no known archaeology to date within the limits of the site. However, given the former use of the site and its history of being undeveloped, there is a potential for archaeology to be affected or destroyed by the proposed development.

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 removed during the course of the works.

2.1.3 To establish the paleo-environmental potential of any features or deposits within the development site.

2.1.4 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The site was monitored as a series of site visits during works likely to disturb or destroy deposits with archaeological potential. These works included top and subsoil stripping, excavation of access roads, excavation of service trenches and excavation of the pile heads.

2.2.2 A record of the excavations was kept at a scale of 1:500 (Fig. 2) and any sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20 (Fig. 3). The sections and excavated areas 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

3.1.1 Within the northern and central areas of the site the same stratigraphy was exposed within all the excavations, including those for the all weather pitch and the tennis courts (Fig. 3, section 1), the excavation of the piling mats (Fig. 3, section 2), the stripping for the haul roads (Fig. 3, section 3) and the excavation of a culvert (Fig. 3, section 4).

- 3.1.2 Within the deep trench for the culvert a layer of tenacious blue-grey clay (7) was encountered at a depth of 1.6 m below the existing ground level. This was a layer of Oxford clay. This was overlaid by a 0.7 m thick layer of tenacious olive-grey clay (4). This was a very clean deposit and represents a layer of alluvial clay.
- 3.1.3 Overlying this deposit was a layer of tenacious dark brown silt clay (3) measuring between 0.15 m and 0.42 m in depth. This layer contained much charcoal flecking and numerous examples of post-medieval finds and represents a layer of modern worked soil.
- 3.1.4 This layer was sealed by a friable layer of small gravels (2), between 0.15 m and 0.35 m in depth. This layer was very clean and represents a layer of made ground formed by the importation of alluvial gravels.
- 3.1.5 This was sealed by a layer of friable dark brown clay loam (1) measuring between 0.15 m and 0.2 m in depth. This contained some post-medieval brick and pottery fragments and represents a modern landscaping layer.
- 3.1.6 Within the southern area of the site an area was stripped for the new sports hall, and a deep service trench was excavated (Fig. 3, sections 5 and 6).
- 3.1.7 Within the service trench (Section 5), a layer of tenacious dark yellow -brown silt-clay was encountered at a depth of 0.95 m below the existing ground level. A very clean deposit, this was a layer of alluvial clay. This was sealed by a 0.4 m deep layer of a dark orange-brown silt clay (5), also a very clean deposit and representing a layer of alluvial clay. Overlying this layer was a 0.3 m deep layer of friable small gravel, a continuation of layer (2). A layer of dark brown clay loam (1), a modern landscaping layer completed the stratigraphy.
- 3.1.8 Similar stratigraphy was observed within section 6, with the base of the stripping cutting 0.18 m deep into the layer of gravel (2), which was sealed by a 0.25 m thick layer of dark brown loam (1).

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 Many examples of 19th and 20th century brick, tile, pottery and glass were recovered during the course of the watching brief. A representative sample of these were retained, while the remainder were evaluated on site but 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 stratigraphy exposed during the course of the watching brief showed that there had been a raising of the ground level throughout the site. This had been achieved by

- the stripping off of the subsoil and topsoil, the deposition of a layer of imported gravels and the reinstatement of the soils.
- 4.1.2 During the excavations, evidence was observed of the wheel rutting caused by the dumpers during this operation, which probably occurred during the construction of the standing school buildings.
- 4.1.3 Evidence was also observed of the previous use of the land as allotments, in the form of truncated pits and trenches filled with a loamy silt and numerous post-medieval artifacts.
- 4.1.4 No evidence for the earlier use of the land, either in the form of deposits, truncated features or residual finds was encountered during the course of the watching brief.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Depth	Comments	Finds	Date
1	Layer	0.15 m - 0.2 m	Modern landscaping layer	Brick, pottery, glass	C20th
2	Layer	0.15 m - 0.35 m	Made ground composed of imported alluvial gravels	-	C20th
3	Layer	0.18 m - 0.42 m	Truncated base of allotment gardens	Brick, pottery, glass, stone, corrugated iron	C19th - C20th
4	Layer	0.7 m	Alluvial clay	-	-
5	Layer	0.4 m	Alluvial clay	-	-
6	Layer	> 1.0 m	Alluvial clay	-	-
7	Layer	> 1.2 m	Alluvial clay	-	-

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

IFA, 1992 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

OCAS, 2004 *Cardinal Newman School Site, Cricket Road, Oxford: New Secondary School St. Gregory the Great: Design Brief for Archaeological Watching Brief*

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

OA, 2004 *Cardinal Newman School Site, Cricket Road, Oxford: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

RCHME, 1939 *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the City of Oxford*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: St Gregorys School, Cardinal Newman School Site, Cricket Road, Oxford

Site code: OXSGS 05

Grid reference: SP 5339 0458

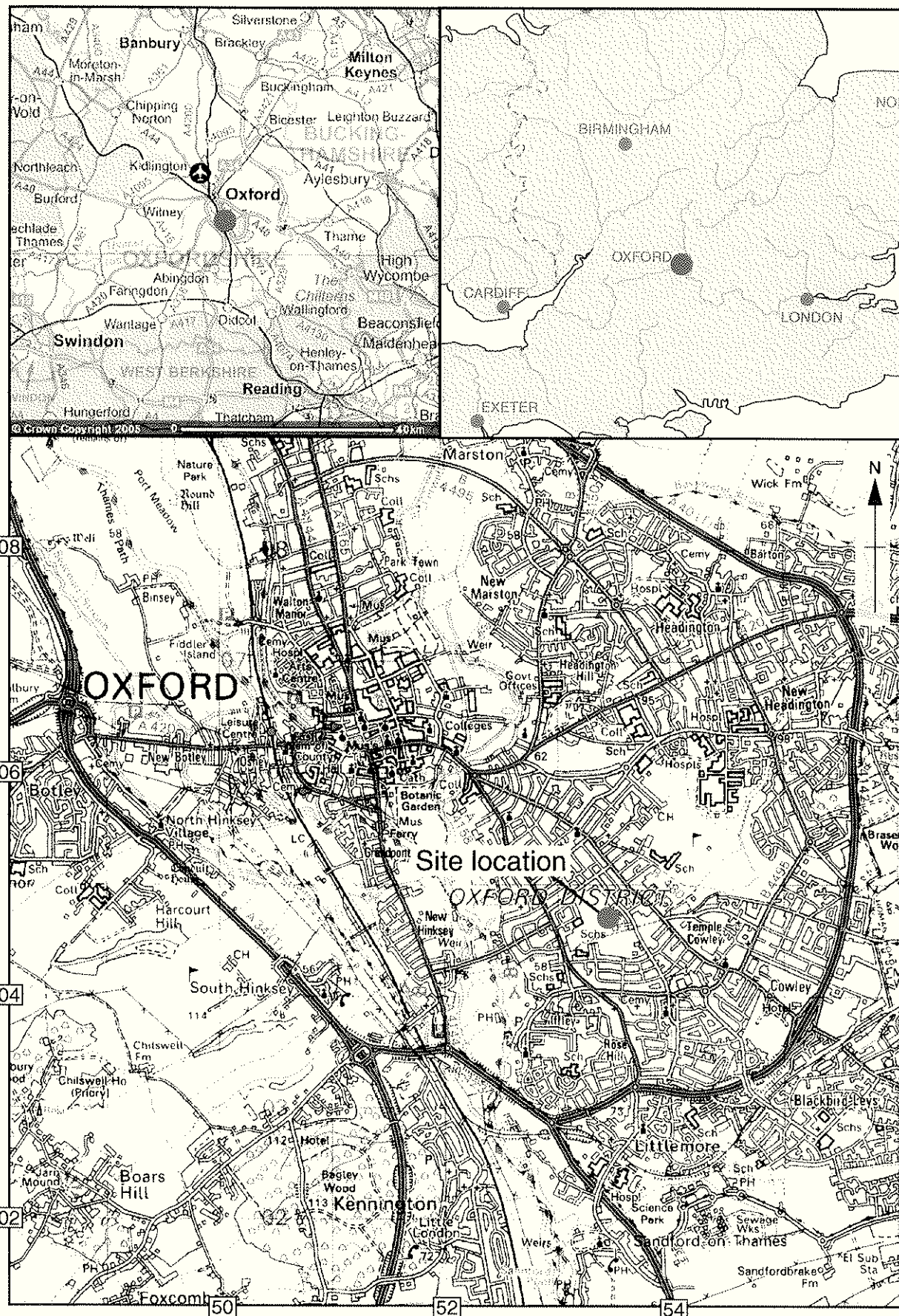
Type of watching brief: Machine excavation of piling mats, service trenches and topsoil stripping

Date and duration of project: Between November 2004 and July 2005

Area of site: 5.83 hectares

Summary of results: Evidence of raising of ground level throughout the site, 19th and 20th allotment gardens, no earlier significant archaeological evidence.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS:2004.146



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Figure 1: Site location

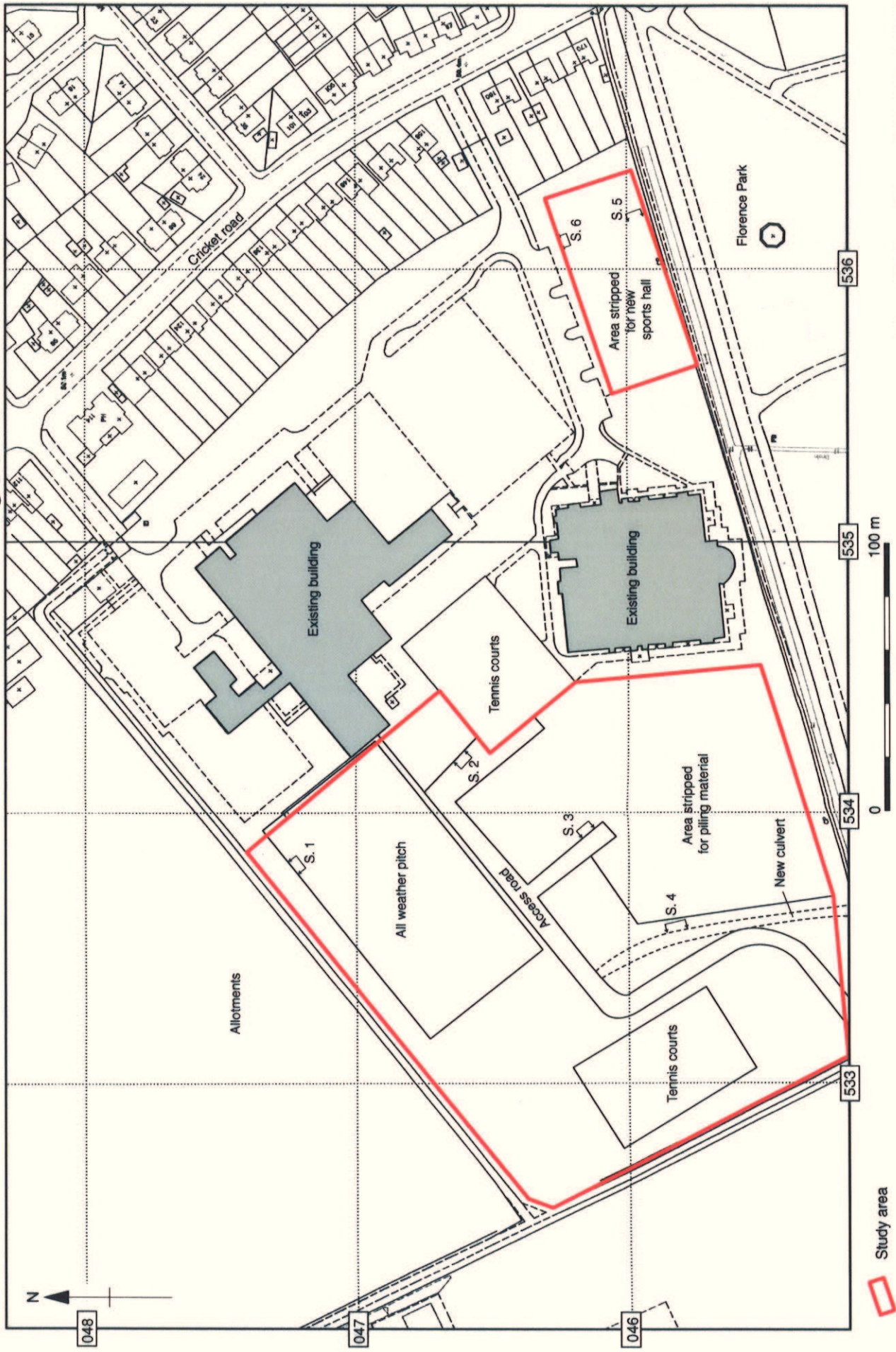


Figure 2: Plan of area of Watching brief

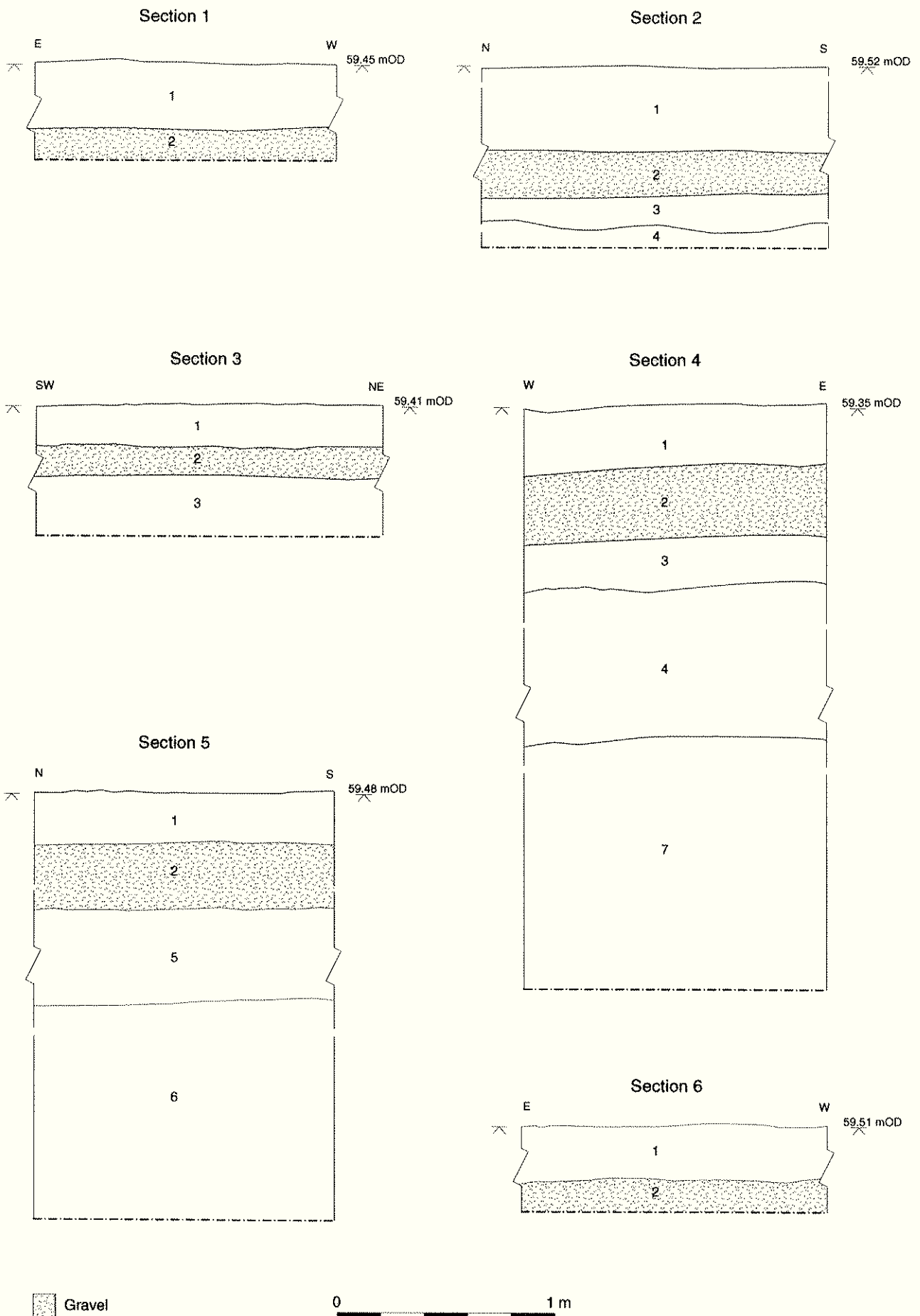


Figure 3: Sections 1-6



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