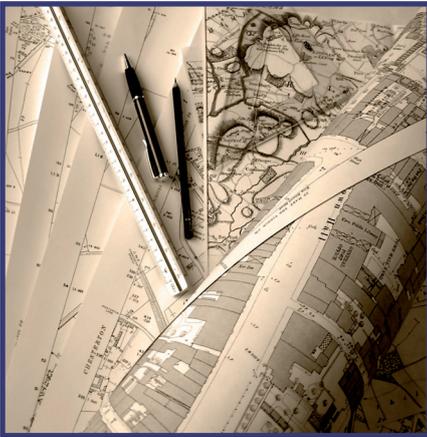


Tangiers Road
Taunton
Somerset



**Archaeological
Watching Brief Report**

oxfordarchaeology



southsouthsouth

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Former Gasworks Site Tangiers Road, Taunton, Somerset

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

In August 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Tangiers Road, Taunton, Somerset (NGR: ST 221 246). The work was commissioned by Yeandle Geotechnical Ltd in advance of a geotechnical investigation on the site. The watching brief revealed modern rubble layers associated with the former gasworks directly overlying the natural clay and gravels. No significant archaeology was observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 In August 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief on the former gasworks site at Tangiers Road, Taunton, Somerset (NGR: ST 221 246). The work was commissioned by Yeandle Geotechnical Ltd in advance of a geotechnical investigation on the site.

1.1.2 A verbal brief was agreed with Rachel Morse, Senior Archaeologist for Hyder Consulting Ltd.

1.2 Location

1.2.1 The site is situated on the western edge of the town of Taunton, Somerset (Fig. 1) and occupies a total area of approximately 1.3 hectares. The subject of the watching brief is a level area formerly occupied by a gasworks at a level of roughly 14 m above OD.

1.2.2 The site is located to the south and the south-west of the River Tone which forms the northern boundary, it is also bounded to the west by a road leading off Castle Street, and to the north-west and south east by standing buildings.

1.2.3 The underlying geology is alluvial deposits comprising of medium sized gravels and sand with clay horizons, overlying weathered Mercia Mudstone.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 Tradition states that Tangier is named after the Tangier Regiment, famously employed to round up Monmouth's rebels in 1685. They were billeted or encamped in this area, but it is unlikely that many archaeological traces remain of this episode. However, historian Robin Bush has shown that the name Tangier also belonged to a late 17th century inn in the area, and that this may have predated the arrival of the Tangier Regiment (Gathercole, 2002).

1.3.2 Preserved vegetation, trees and the bones of reindeer and woolly rhinoceros were found at a depth of about six metres on sites near Wilton Gaol (SMR 44412, 44413) and Tangier Gas Works (SMR 44414) in the 19th century.

- 1.3.3 During the construction of the gasworks at Tangier in 1868 a large number of human bones were found (SMR 44493). It is suggested in the SMR that they may have been part of the Saxon minster cemetery, or may represent reinterments of Saxon burials from the minster on the construction of the Castle moats and other building ranges in the 13th century. Again, dating evidence is insecure.

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 significant archaeological deposits or remains that may be disturbed or destroyed during the course of the development.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The watching brief was maintained during the excavation of eleven geotechnical test pits. These were excavated using a tracked excavator fitted with a 0.8 m wide toothless bucket. The test pits were mostly 3 m in length and a bucket width wide. Excavation proceeded down to a depth of approximately 4 m, although in some of the pits obstructions caused the excavation to be terminated. Both the sections and any spoil were closely examined to determine the presence of dating evidence, archaeological features or deposits.
- 2.2.2 A plan showing the location of the test pits was maintained (Fig. 2) and any recorded sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All excavations and any 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

- 3.1.1 Test pits 1, 6, 9, 10 and 11 were not excavated down to natural due to the presence of modern services (Test pits 9 and 10) or concrete layers (Test pits 1, 6 and 11).
- 3.1.2 Within Pit 1 a reinforced concrete surface (5), was encountered at a depth of 1.4 m below ground level (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4, Section 1). Constructed upon this slab was a wall (3), built of roughly dressed limestone blocks measuring 0.3 m x 0.3 m x 0.1 m. Overlying the concrete and butting up to the wall was a layer of sandy silt (2), up to 1 m in depth and containing numerous fragments of construction debris. This was sealed by a 0.6 m deep layer of compacted crushed stone and concrete, (1), the present day car park surface.

- 3.1.3 The stratigraphy exposed within the other test pits can be broadly divided into two groups and sample descriptions can be applied within the group.

Group 1 (Test pits 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10 and 11)

- 3.1.4 Within these test pits the top of the natural alluvial gravel (12, 16, 20 and 29) was reached at a depth of approximately 3.4 m below the current ground level (Fig. 4, Section 2). This was overlaid by a red-brown alluvial clay (11, 15, 19, 25 and 28), up to 1.7 m in depth.
- 3.1.5 Overlying these alluvial deposits was a layer of sandy silt (7, 10, 14, 18, 22, 24 and 30), up to 1.4 m in depth and containing numerous fragments of construction debris. This was overlaid by a layer of compacted crushed stone and concrete, (6, 9, 13, 17, 21, 23, 26 and 30), the present day car park surface.

Group 2 (Test pits 2 and 8)

- 3.1.6 Both these pits produced layers of redeposited material sealing alluvial deposits and have been grouped together.
- 3.1.7 Within Test pit 8 the top of the natural alluvial gravel (29) was reached at a depth of 3.1 m below the current ground level (Fig. 4, Section 3). This was overlaid by a layer of red-brown alluvial clay (28), 0.55 m in depth. Within Test pit 2, this alluvial deposit (4) was only exposed within the base of the pit at a depth of 2.8 m below ground level. Within Test pit 2 this was overlaid by a 0.5 m deep layer of redeposited and contaminated clay (8), while within Test pit 8 the natural clay was overlaid by a 1.8 m deep layer of redeposited and contaminated gravel (27). These were overlaid by continuations of the modern made ground (7)(Test pit 2), and the modern overburden (6 and 26).

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 No artefacts were observed during the course of the watching brief, and close inspection of the spoil could not be undertaken due to contamination.

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 majority of the deposits encountered can be dated to the 19th and 20th centuries. It is probable that the layers of made ground (2, 7, 8, 10, 14, 18, 22, 24, 27 and 31) are deposits associated with the construction of the gasworks and probably represent efforts to raise and reclaim the southern edge of the River Tone in order to construct a building platform for the gasworks above the flood level of the river. The wall (3)

and the concrete surface (5) are probably a later phase of construction forming a retaining or embankment wall between the site and the river.

- 4.1.2 The watching brief revealed no deposits or features predating the construction of the gasworks. The absence of any occupation or silting layers separating the natural alluvial deposits and the modern made ground suggests that the area had either been truncated during the initial construction of the gasworks or possibly during its demolition.
- 4.1.3 No truncated earlier features were observed nor were any residual finds recovered. This may imply that there was little or no earlier activity within the development area. No evidence for the continuation of the possible Saxon burials recorded during the construction of the gasworks was observed, although in both cases it is possible that the truncation noted above may have removed the evidence.
- 4.1.4 The maximum depth of excavation for this phase of test pitting was 4 m and excavation was terminated when undisturbed natural deposits were encountered. The preserved vegetation, trees and the bones of reindeer and woolly rhinoceros recovered during both the construction of the gasworks and at other sites within Taunton were recovered from depths c6 m below the current ground level suggesting that there may be significant potential for palaeo-archaeological deposits within the development area if deep excavations are proposed.

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	0.6 m	-	Modern overburden	-	C20th
2	Layer	0.8 m	-	Modern made ground	-	C19th/ C20th
3	Structure	0.8 m	>0.6 m	Retaining wall	-	C20th
4	Layer	> 0.2 m	-	Alluvial clay	-	-
5	Structure	> 0.3 m	> 0.1 m	Concrete slab / wall foundation	-	C20th
6	Layer	0.6 m	-	Modern overburden (same as 1)	-	C20th
7	Layer	1.7 m	-	Modern made ground (same as 2)	-	C19th/ C20th
8	Layer	>1.3 m	-	Redeposited gravels	-	C19th/ C20th
9	Layer	0.5 m	-	Modern overburden (same as 1)	-	C20th
10	Layer	0.9 m	-	Modern made ground (same as 2)	-	C19th/ C20th
11	Layer	2.1 m	-	Alluvial clay (same as 4)	-	-
12	Layer	>0.4 m	-	Alluvial gravel	-	-
13	Layer	0.1 m	-	Modern overburden (same as 1)	-	C20th
14	Layer	1.5 m	-	Modern made ground (same as 2)	-	C19th/ C20th
15	Layer	1.8 m	-	Alluvial clay (same as 4)	-	-
16	Layer	>0.4 m	-	Alluvial gravel (same as 12)	-	-
17	Layer	0.3 m	-	Modern overburden (same as 1)	-	C20th
18	Layer	-	-	Modern made ground (same as 2)	-	C19th/ C20th
19	Layer	2.1 m	-	Alluvial clay (same as 4)	-	-
20	Layer	>0.6 m	-	Alluvial gravel (same as 12)	-	-
21	Layer	0.4 m	-	Modern overburden (same as 1)	-	C20th
22	Layer	>1.6 m	-	Modern made ground (same as 2)	-	C19th/ C20th
23	Layer	0.4 m	-	Modern overburden (same as 1)	-	C20th
24	Layer	0.9 m	-	Modern made ground (same as 2)	-	C19th/ C20th
25	Layer	>2.2 m	-	Alluvial clay (same as 4)	-	-
26	Layer	0.7 m	-	Modern overburden (same as 1)	-	C20th
27	Layer	1.1 m	-	Redeposited clay	-	C19th/ C20th
28	Layer	0.5 m	-	Alluvial clay (same as 4)	-	-
29	Layer	<0.1 m	-	Alluvial gravel (same as 12)	-	-
30	Layer	0.3 m	-	Modern overburden (same as 1)	-	C20th
31	Layer	>0.7 m	-	Modern made ground (same as 2)	-	C19th/ C20th

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

IFA 2001 *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

OA 1992 *Field Manual* (1st edition. ed. D. Wilkinson)

Gathercole, C 2002 *An Archaeological Assessment of Taunton* English Heritage
Extensive Urban Survey

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Tangiers Road, Taunton, Somerset

Site code: TTNCM 105/2006

Grid reference: ST 221 246

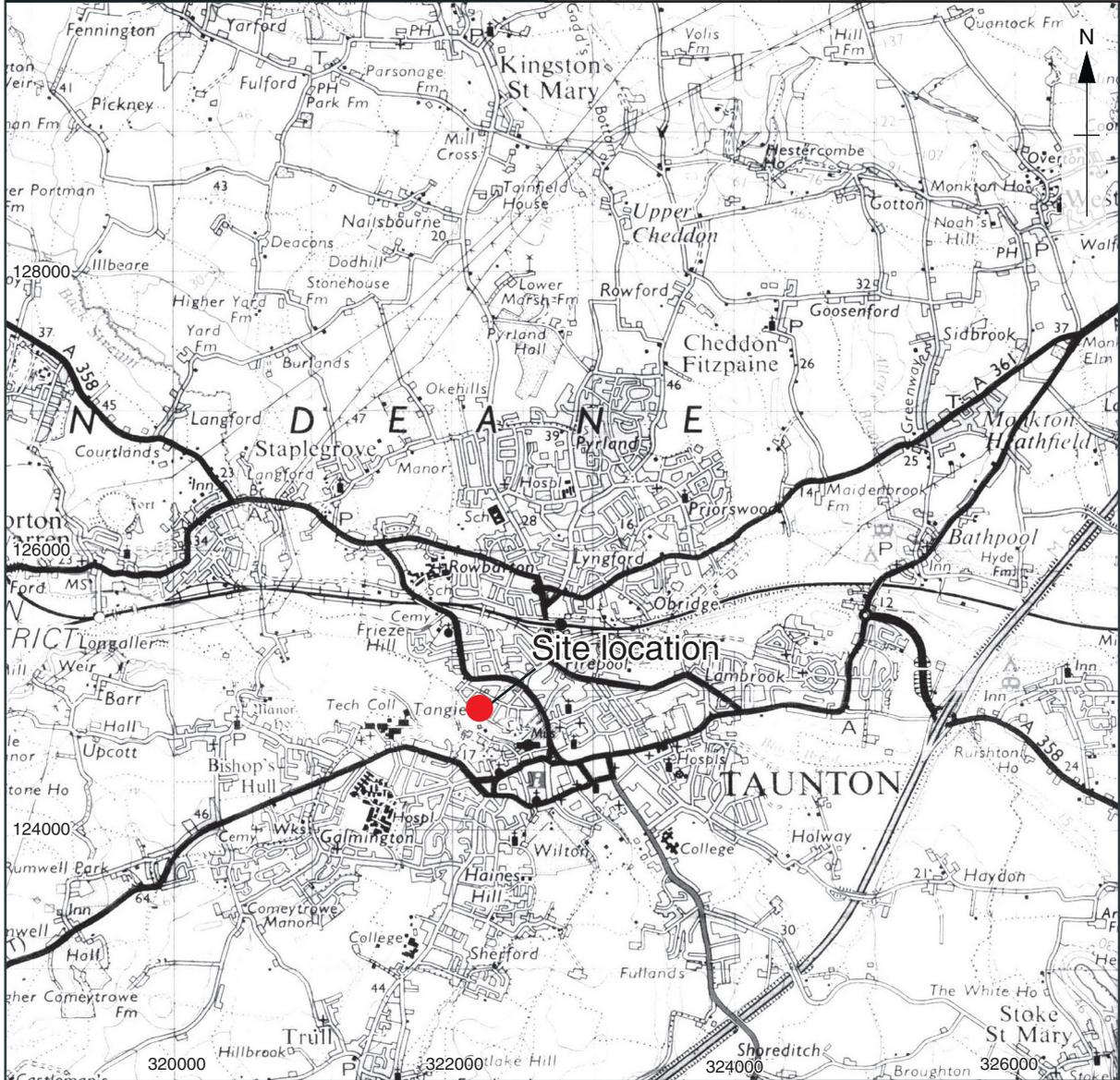
Type of watching brief: Geotechnical test pits

Date and duration of project: 13th and 29th of August 2006, 2 days

Area of site: 700m²

Summary of results: The results suggest that the area has been truncated. No significant earlier 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 the Somerset County Museum Service under the following accession number: TTNCM 105/2006



Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location

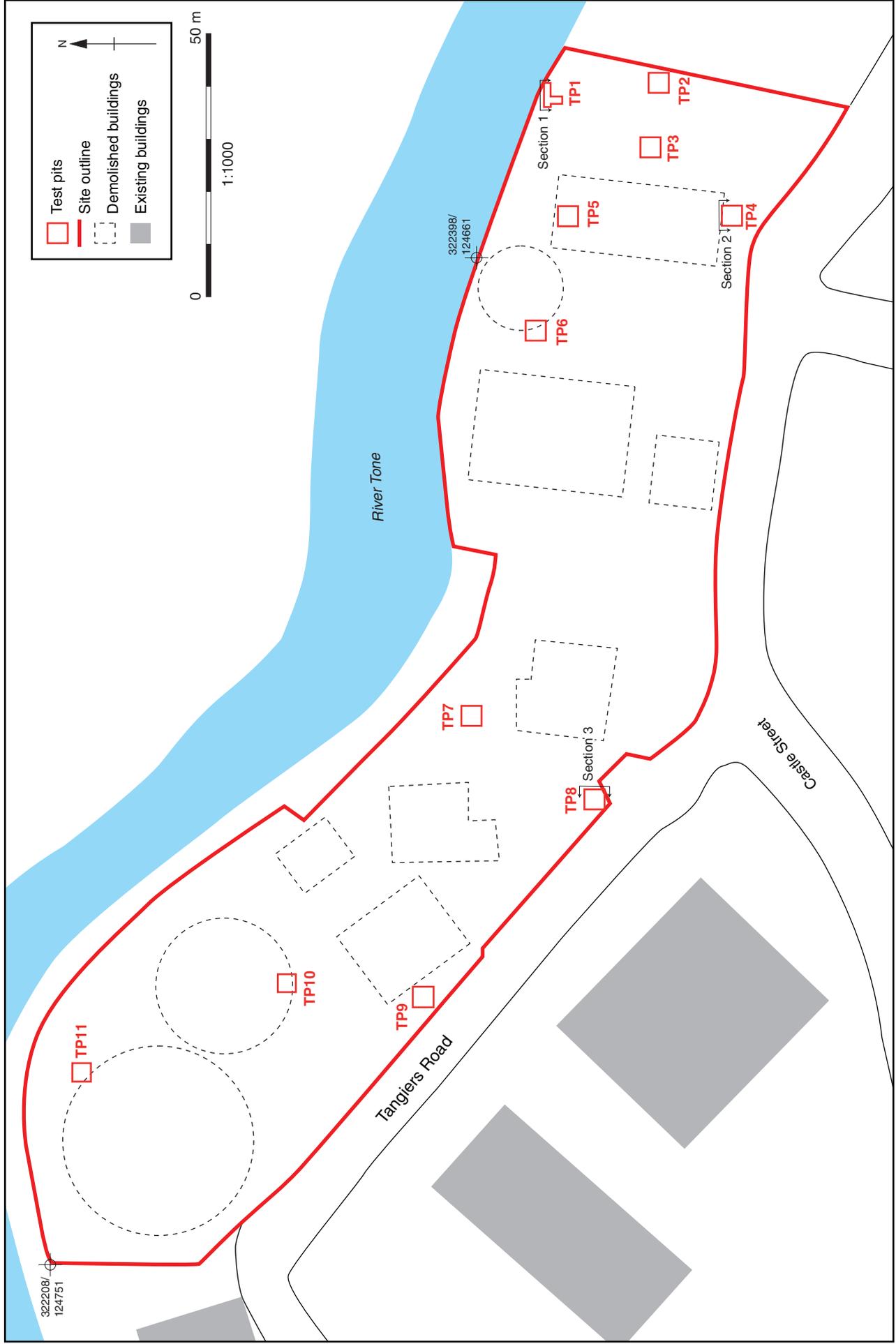


Figure 2: Site plan

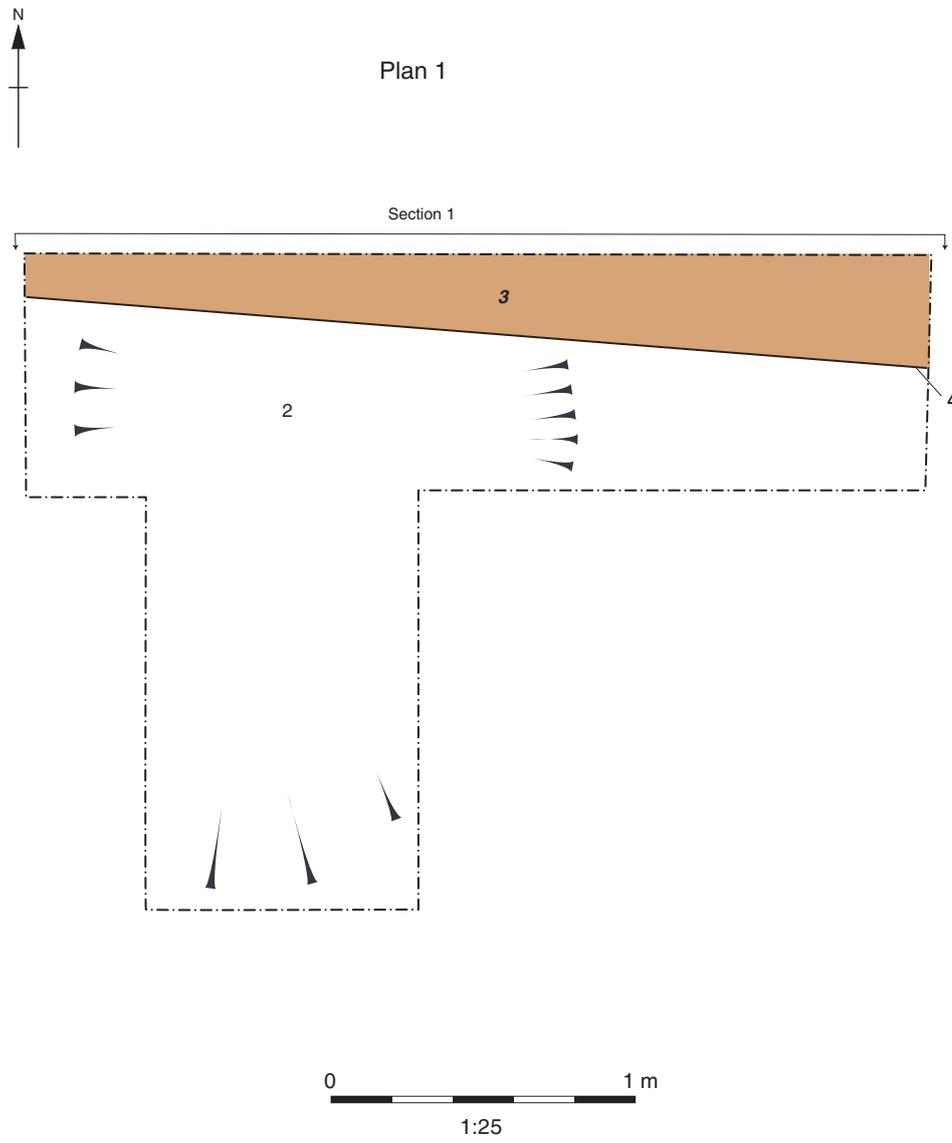
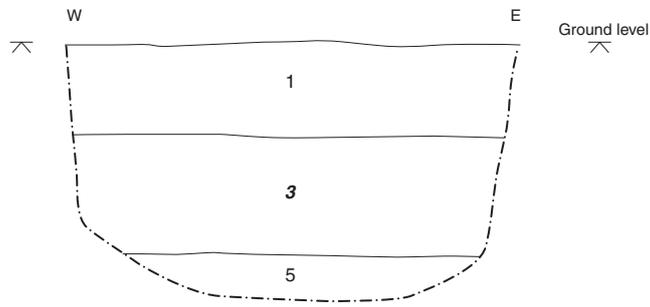


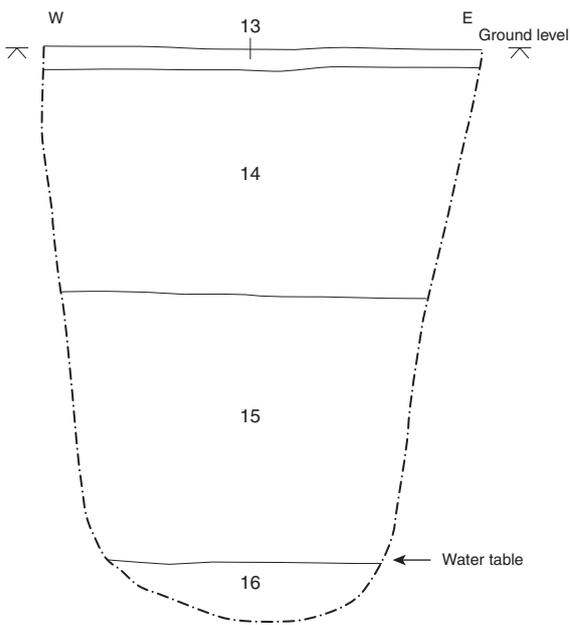
Figure 3: Plan 1



Test pit 1
Section 1



Test pit 4
Section 2



Test pit 8
Section 3

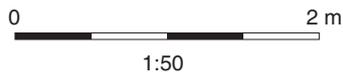
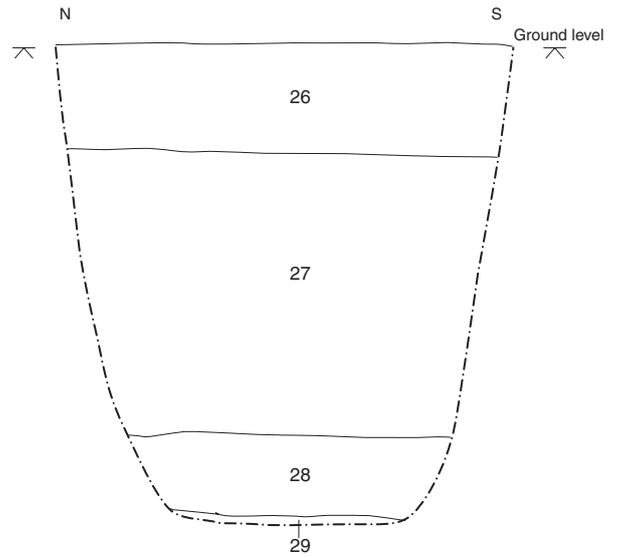


Figure 4: Sections



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