

St Neots Community College



Archaeological Evaluation Report



May 2009

Client: Capita Architecture

OA East Report No: 1106

OASIS No: 59132

NGR: TL 1839 5899

St Neots Community College

Archaeological Evaluation

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Summary

On 7th April 2009 OA East conducted an archaeological evaluation at St Neots Community College, St Neots, centred on TL 1839 5899. The proposal was for the development of the Community Centre facilities within the grounds of the existing college.

Initially two trenches were to be excavated. One 10m x 2m and the second 5m x 2m. However, due to the very high density of modern services crossing the development area a single 10m x 2m trench was excavated with a second phase of work to be undertaken once the site had been cleared of modern services, prior to development.

A significant level of modern make-up was recorded throughout the trench, which varied in depth between 0.62m and 0.57m from north to south. The modern soil deposits sealed a 0.25m thick layer of dark grey brown sandy silt that appeared to form a layer of earlier topsoil, probably buried during the construction or landscaping of the College grounds. The underlying geology comprised silty gravel deposits. No archaeological features were recorded during the evaluation.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 An archaeological evaluation was conducted at St Neots Community College, St Neots, centred on TL 1839 5899. The proposal was for the development of the Community Centre facilities within the grounds of the existing college.
- 1.1.2 This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Andy Thomas of Cambridgeshire County Council, supplemented by a Specification prepared by OA East (formerly Cambridgeshire County Council's CAM ARC).
- 1.1.3 The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, in accordance with the guidelines set out in *Planning and Policy Guidance 16 - Archaeology and Planning* (Department of the Environment 1990). The results will enable decisions to be made by CCC, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority, with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.
- 1.1.4 The site archive is currently held by OA East and will be deposited with the appropriate county stores in due course.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies on 1st and 2nd River Terrace deposits to the south-west of the historic core of St Neots, close to the flood plain of the River Great Ouse.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The background for this report is drawn from the Specification produced for the project (Drummond Murray, 2009). Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record identifies extensive prehistoric monumental, funerary, ritual and settlement sites in the surrounding area, known through both aerial photography and archaeological investigation (e.g. CHER nos: 550, 567a, 567c, 8405a and CB322 etc.). Later archaeology includes a possible Roman Legionary fort (Coneygeare Common) and Pagan Saxon funerary urns to the south (CHER 392).
- 1.3.2 Several phases of work have previously been undertaken in and around the school. Excavations in the grounds of the Community College revealed a Roman settlement, dating from the late 3rd century and possibly continuing into the 5th century, which consisted of stone buildings, ditches and pits immediately to the east of the college buildings. Bronze Age remains were also recorded under the present all-weather pitch .
- 1.3.3 Cropmark evidence and archaeological work have shown that the area to the south of the school was part of an extensive ritual landscape with a cursus monument some 700m long and 300m wide. This landscape consisted of monuments dating from c.4000BC through into the Iron Age of c.700 BC (CHER Nos. 376, 381, 447, 6150 and 11671).
- 1.3.4 Prehistoric settlement and burial evidence has also been recorded to the north, west and south of the site. These were excavated by both CCC AFU and Wessex Archaeology.
- 1.3.5 The most extensive archaeological investigation relevant to the subject site is the work undertaken between July 2000 and January 2001 by Wessex Archaeology. This site lay

to the south of the subject site and covered an area of 12ha, revealing remains of a ritual ceremonial and funerary complex dating from the Neolithic and Bronze Age, as well as evidence for Romano-British land use and Saxon occupation. The prehistoric complex contained two Early Neolithic cursus monuments which dated from c.4000BC. A Neolithic long barrow with placed deposits that included human and animal remains as well as artefacts, radiocarbon dated to 2900B. A possible undated double enclosure is believed to represent another Neolithic ritual or funerary monument while discrete Neolithic pits containing placed deposits were also observed.

- 1.3.6 Later funerary activity included an Early Bronze Age urned cremation burial and a small number of unurned cremation burials, at least one of which was of Middle Bronze Age date. A large enclosure made up of 440 Late Bronze Age /Early Iron Age pits may also have been of ritual significance. In addition evidence for Late Bronze Age metalworking was uncovered.
- 1.3.7 In the Romano-British period the site was part of an agricultural landscape as evidenced by field boundaries and associated stock management and droveways.
- 1.3.8 This site also provided evidence for Saxon occupation including sunken featured buildings recorded in the western part of the site. These dated to the 7th century AD. A small number of associated features were excavated including a pit and smithing furnace.

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 The author would like to thank Margherita Cesca of Capita Architecture who commissioned and funded the project and Andy Thomas who monitored the archaeological works. The project was managed by Richard Mortimer. Fieldwork was undertaken by the author.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The objective of this evaluation was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 It was originally determined that two trenches would be excavated. One 10m x 2m and the second 5m x 2m. However, due to the profusion of modern services crossing the development area a single 10m x 2m trench was excavated initially with a second phase of work to be undertaken once the site has been cleared of modern services, prior to construction of the new building.
- 2.2.2 Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a wheeled JCB-type excavator using a toothless ditching bucket.
- 2.2.3 Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds were retained for inspection, other than those which were obviously modern.
- 2.2.4 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA East's *pro-forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.
- 2.2.5 A single 10L environmental sample was taken from the lowest horizon visible in the trench.
- 2.2.6 Conditions on site were bright and dry, the ground was very compacted, with a significant level of modern make-up recorded throughout the trench.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Trench 1

- 3.1.1 A single trench measuring 10m x 2m was excavated within the development area. This varied in depth between 0.62m and 0.57m from north to south. Silty gravel natural deposits were recorded along the whole length of the base of the trench.
- 3.1.2 The soil sequence was sealed by a 0.10m thick layer of mid grey brown modern topsoil (100), which overlay a layer of orange silty gravel (101) and a mid grey brown stony gravel layer laid down as a modern levelling deposit.
- 3.1.3 Lying below the modern soil deposits was a 0.25m thick layer of dark grey brown sandy silt that appeared to form a layer of earlier topsoil, probably buried during the construction or landscaping of the College grounds.
- 3.1.4 No archaeological features were recorded during the evaluation.

3.2 Finds Summary

- 3.2.1 No archaeological finds or artefacts were recovered during the course of the excavation despite concerted effort, chiefly directed at the basal soil layer.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Conclusions

- 4.1.1 No pre-modern features or deposits were recorded during the evaluation. The basal layer within the sequence appears to represent a recently buried topsoil. No subsoils/ploughsoils were recorded beneath this layer, which directly overlay plough-truncated natural silty gravels.

4.2 Recommendations

- 4.2.1 Recommendations for any future work based upon this report will be made by the County Archaeology Office.

APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of modern topsoil and levelling deposits overlying a possible buried topsoil and natural silty gravel.					Avg. depth (m)	0.58
					Width (m)	1.6
					Length (m)	10
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
100	Layer	-	0.1	Topsoil	-	Modern
101	Layer	-	0.18	Modern levelling layer	-	Modern
102	Layer	-	0.06	Modern levelling layer	-	Modern
103	Layer	-	0.26	Buried topsoil	-	-
104	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Kenney, Scott 2002 A Prehistoric Ditch at Ernulf Community College, Eynesbury, St Neots: An Archaeological Evaluation
- Drummond-Murray, James 2009 Specification for Archaeological Evaluation at St Neots Community College
- Thomas, Andy 2009 Brief for an Archaeological Evaluation at St Neots Community College

APPENDIX C. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

Project Details

OASIS Number	Oxfordar3-59132		
Project Name	Archaeological Evaluation at St Neots Community College		
Project Dates (fieldwork) Start	06-04-2009	Finish	07-04-2009
Previous Work (by OA East)	No	Future Work	Unknown

Project Reference Codes

Site Code	STN COM 09	Planning App. No.	Pre-Planning
HER No.	ECB3156	Related HER/OASIS No.	

Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16
Development Type	Public Building

Please select all techniques used:

<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - interpretation	<input type="checkbox"/> Grab-Sampling	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - new	<input type="checkbox"/> Gravity-Core	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sample Trenches
<input type="checkbox"/> Annotated Sketch	<input type="checkbox"/> Laser Scanning	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey/Recording Of Fabric/Structure
<input type="checkbox"/> Augering	<input type="checkbox"/> Measured Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Targeted Trenches
<input type="checkbox"/> Dendrochronological Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Metal Detectors	<input type="checkbox"/> Test Pits
<input type="checkbox"/> Documentary Search	<input type="checkbox"/> Phosphate Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Topographic Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Sampling	<input type="checkbox"/> Photogrammetric Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Vibro-core
<input type="checkbox"/> Fieldwalking	<input type="checkbox"/> Photographic Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Visual Inspection (Initial Site Visit)
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysical Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Rectified Photography	

Monument Types/Significant Finds & Their Periods

List feature types using the [NMR Monument Type Thesaurus](#) and significant finds using the [MDA Object type Thesaurus](#) together with their respective periods. If no features/finds were found, please state "none".

Monument	Period	Object	Period
None	Select period...		Select period...
	Select period...		Select period...
	Select period...		Select period...

Project Location

County	Cambridgeshire	Site Address (including postcode if possible)	
District	St Neots	Barford Road, Eynesbury, St Neots, PE19 2SH	
Parish	St Neots		
HER			
Study Area	0.1ha	National Grid Reference	TL 1839 5899

Project Originators

Organisation	OA EAST
Project Brief Originator	Andy Thomas
Project Design Originator	James Drummond Murray
Project Manager	Richard Mortimer
Supervisor	Chris Thatcher

Project Archives

Physical Archive	Digital Archive	Paper Archive
Cambs County Store	OA East - Bar Hill	Cambs County Store
STN COM 09	STN COM 09	STN COM 09

Archive Contents/Media

	Physical Contents	Digital Contents	Paper Contents
Animal Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ceramics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Glass	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leather	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Metal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stratigraphic		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Survey		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Textiles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wood	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Bone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Stone/Lithic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
None	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Digital Media	Paper Media
<input type="checkbox"/> Database	<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photos
<input type="checkbox"/> GIS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Context Sheet
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Correspondence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Images	<input type="checkbox"/> Diary
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Illustrations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Drawing
<input type="checkbox"/> Moving Image	<input type="checkbox"/> Manuscript
<input type="checkbox"/> Spreadsheets	<input type="checkbox"/> Map
<input type="checkbox"/> Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Matrices
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Text	<input type="checkbox"/> Microfilm
<input type="checkbox"/> Virtual Reality	<input type="checkbox"/> Misc.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Research/Notes
	<input type="checkbox"/> Photos
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Plans
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Report
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sections
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Survey

Notes:



Figure 1: Location of trench with the development area outlined (red)

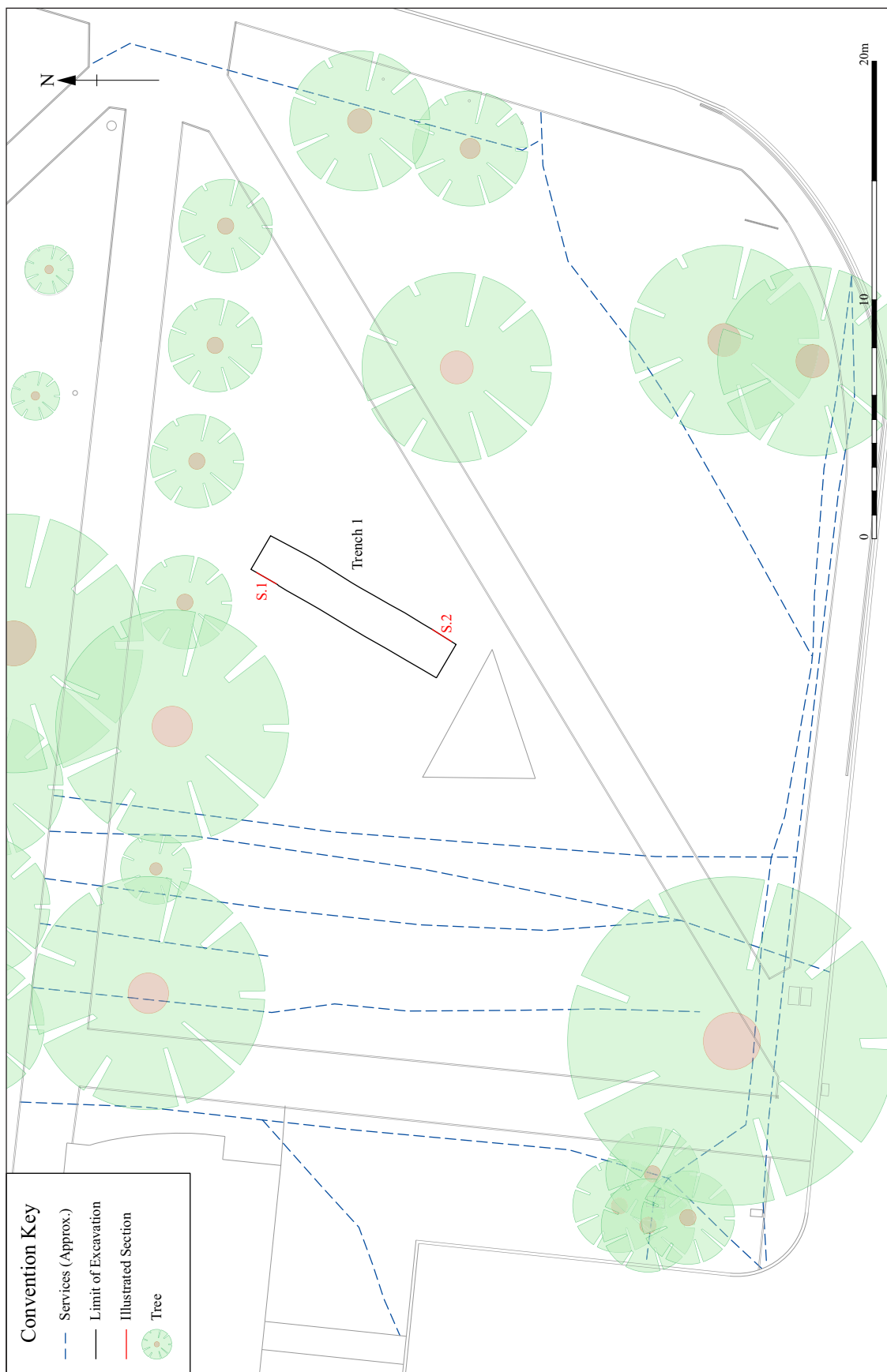


Figure 2: Excavation plan at 1:250

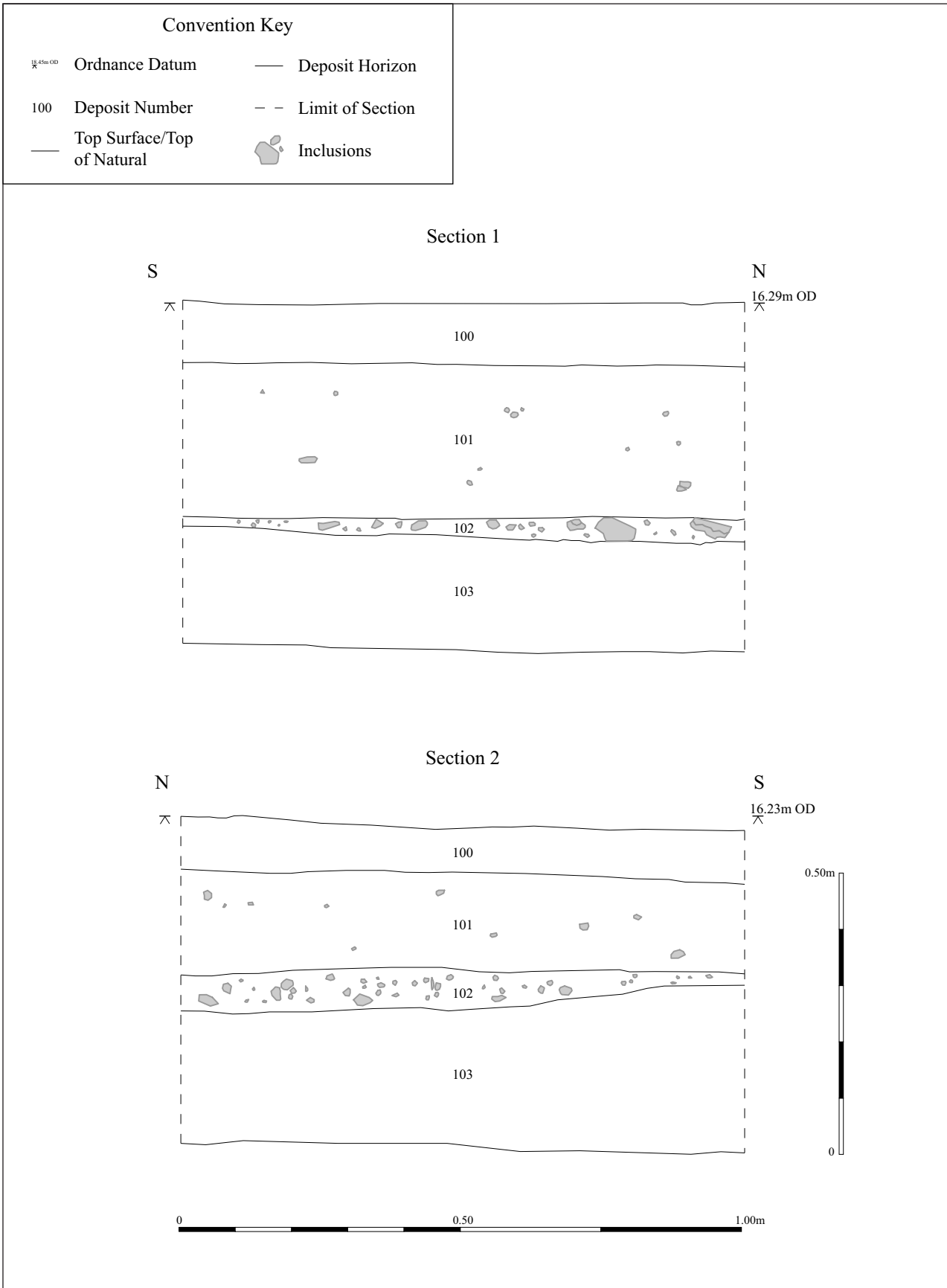


Figure 3: Section Drawings at 1:10



Plate 1: Soil Profile



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