

Land at the site of the former
Carriers Arms,
Horcott Road, Fairford
Gloucestershire

NGR SP 153 006

Archaeological Evaluation Report

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

March 1996

LAND AT THE SITE OF THE FORMER CARRIERS ARMS,
HORCOTT ROAD, FAIRFORD, GLOS. (HOCA 96)

NGR SP153006

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

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LAND AT THE FORMER CARRIERS ARMS SITE, HORCOTT ROAD, FAIRFORD (HOCA 96)

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Summary

An archaeological evaluation on the site of the former Carriers Arms in Horcott Road, Fairford revealed slight evidence for Romano-British activity and later medieval field boundaries. The W side of the site had evidently been subjected to considerable disturbance and infilling in the 19th or early 20th century.

1.1 Introduction

The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) was commissioned to undertake an archaeological evaluation on the site of the former Carriers Arms in Horcott Road Fairford, Glos, on behalf of R.G. Lewis & Co. of Cirencester, in relation to a proposal to build four dwellings on the site. In accordance with the guidelines of PPG16, an archaeological evaluation was requested by Gloucester County Council, represented by Mr J Hunter, County Archaeological Officer (CAO).

1.2 Geography and Topography Fig. 1

The site lies immediately S of Fairford, beyond the River Coln, on the lower gravel terrace, which at this point is at approximately 83.80 m OD. The nucleus of the village of Horcott lies to the E of the site.

1.3 Historical and Archaeological Background

Horcott itself is first mentioned in the 12th century and probably belonged to the Lord of Kempsford Manor. The village remained of modest size until the late 19th/early 20th century.

The Carriers Arms public house was built in the late 1880's and was demolished two years ago. Still standing in the centre of the site is a storehouse, which at one time, according to a local unconfirmed source, was a laundry, although it may well have started life as a stable block or storehouse associated with the Carriers Arms. The site is now slightly overgrown.

The desktop study of the site (Detheridge, 95), forming an earlier stage of the investigation into the site, considers in detail the archaeological background of the area. In broad terms, while there is SMR and aerial photographic evidence to indicate the presence of Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age Roman and Medieval archaeology in the area, the desktop study failed to identify any specific archaeological significance for the site itself.

1.4 Aims

The aims of the evaluation were to establish, as far as was reasonably possible, the presence/absence of archaeological remains liable to be affected by the proposed development, their date, character, extent, and state of preservation.

1.5 Methodology Fig. 2

Four ten-metre trenches were sited as close as was reasonably practical to the footprints of the proposed buildings, while avoiding those areas which were known to have been disturbed by the construction of the Carriers Arms.

The trenches were machine excavated, using a JCB equipped with a 1.6 m wide toothless ditching bucket, down to the natural gravel surface, there being no significant archaeological horizon above that. Significant archaeological features and deposits were then manually cleaned and excavated to establish their character and, if possible, to recover dating evidence. The length of Trench 2 was curtailed by a modern sewage pipe crossing its NE end. The depth of excavation was slightly curtailed in Trenches 2 and 4 by safety requirements. However, this did not significantly hamper interpretation of the evidence.

Recording was by standard OAU procedures (OAU Fieldwork Manual ed. D. Wilkinson 1990) All features and deposits were allocated unique context numbers trench-by-trench (ie 4/2 = trench 4 context 2).

The fieldwork took place on Monday 11th March 1996.

2.1 Results Fig. 3

Natural gravel was reached in all trenches. The water table was not reached, nor was there any evidence of waterlogged deposits.

Trench 1 NW-SE 9.8 m x 1.6 m

The natural gravel was cut by a single posthole (1/5) 0.38 m in diameter by 0.30 m deep, and located approximately half way along the trench. The fill of the posthole (1/6) was a dark orange brown silty clay with 10-20% gravel and one small piece of limestone packing. Sealing the gravel, and possibly the posthole, was layer 1/4, a mix of fine gravel and dark

orange brown silty clay. In the SE corner of the trench this layer was cut by 1/7, a partly revealed small pit with steeply sloping sides and a rounded bottom, measuring approximately 0.90 m in diameter in the section. A small abraded sherd of RB pottery was recovered from the excavated fill.

1/7 and 1/4 were sealed by a 0.40 m deep layer of mid brown silty clay with 30% gravel (1/3), which in turn was overlain by 1/2, a loamy silt cultivation layer 0.20 m deep, and the modern topsoil (1/1) 0.20 m deep. No other artifacts were recovered from these layers.

Trench 2 SW-NE 8.0 m x 1.6 m

The natural gravel in the NE part of the trench was overlain by a layer of mid brown silty clay with 30 - 40% gravel inclusions (2/4). No finds were recovered from this layer. At the SW end of the trench this layer was truncated by considerable modern disturbance (2/6), extending beyond the confines of the trench. The depth of the trench precluded, on safety grounds, any further excavation of this disturbance. As 19th/20th century pottery and fragments of modern slate were recovered from the material, it was felt that further excavation in any event would be unnecessary.

Overlying this disturbance (2/6) and layer 2/4 was a 0.50 m deep layer (2/3) comprising lenses of dumped material including silty sand, mixed silty clay and gravel and loamy silt. Fragments of modern tile, pottery and glass were observed during the machining of this material. In the SW corner of the trench this layer abutted a 0.40 m layer of yellowish limestone hardcore (2/5), the E edge of which was oriented N-S, approximately parallel with the W boundary of the site. The W edge of 2/5 was not exposed in the trench. Layer 2/5 directly overlay the disturbed layer 2/6.

Sealing both 2/5 and 2/3 was a apparently recently buried topsoil 2/2, 0.20 m deep, and the modern topsoil layer (2/1) 0.25 m deep.

Trench 3 SW-NE 10.0 m x 1.6 m

The natural gravel was overlain by a thin layer of mixed gravel and orange brown silty clay (3/6). This was cut by a 1.0 m wide x 0.48 m deep ditch oriented NW -SE (3/4). The fill (3/5) was a friable mid brown silty clay with 30 - 40% gravel inclusions. Two small abraded sherds, probably 13th/14th century, were recovered from the fill. Sealing this ditch was a 0.30 m deep layer of mid brown silty clay (3/3), itself overlain by a 0.25 m deep layer of limestone hardcore oriented SW - NE (3/2). This was overlain by the modern topsoil (3/1). Excavation in the NE end of the trench was curtailed by the discovery of a modern lead service pipe, presumably associated with the Carriers Arms.

Trench 4 SW-NE 11.0 m x 1.6 m

The natural gravel was cut by a large linear feature (4/4) oriented N-S. Only the E edge of the feature was exposed, despite extending the trench to the SW. It was not possible to fully excavate 4/4, as the trench depth was limited by safety requirements. Therefore the dimensions of the entire feature can only be expressed as minima - at least 2.5 m wide x 0.30 m deep. Such of the exposed fill (4/5) as was excavated was a mid brown friable silty clay with 40% gravel, and produced finds of a fragmentary cow skull, leg bones of a dog, and a small sherd of glazed late medieval pottery.

The fill (4/5) of 4/4 was sealed by 4/3, a mid brown silty clay layer with 30% gravel inclusions. A fragment of post medieval clay pipe was recovered from this material.

At the NE end of the trench 4/3 was cut by a partly revealed pit (4/6), approximately 2 m in diameter. As the fill that was excavated by machine contained quantities of late 19th and 20th century china, it was considered unnecessary to excavate the feature further by hand.

Layer 4/3 and feature 4/6 were sealed by a deep cultivation/topsoil layer, possibly distinguishable as two layers 4/2 and 4/1, but both a very dark humic silty loam, totalling 0.40 m in depth.

2.2 Discussion

The earliest features revealed in the trenches would appear to be the pit 1/7 and the posthole 1/5. Although 1/5 was not identified until the gravel was exposed, it is felt by the excavator that it is probable that 1/5 cut layer 1/4, as did 1/7, and that the two features are likely to be contemporary.

As to their function, little can be determined. It is possible that 1/5 represents part of a fence line. Although it is substantial enough to have served as a building posthole, the complete absence of any signs of occupation in the vicinity, such as scattered pottery or bones, or patches of burning or charcoal, argue against such an interpretation. The small, possibly 2nd/3rd century Romano British sherd from the pit 1/7 gives a tentative date for the two features, however, given its abraded condition, it could possibly be residual.

The two ditches 3/4 and 4/4, appear to be related by their orientation and similarity of fill. The small abraded sherds of pottery recovered suggest that the ditches possibly formed part of a grid of field boundaries. The fact that 4/4 lies on a similar alignment to the present W boundary of the site would seem to support this possibility. The fills of both ditches, being very friable and with a high gravel content, suggest that they were deliberately filled in and ploughed over rather than just allowed to silt up naturally.

The deep layer of buried plough soil identified in each trench (1/3, 2/4, 3/3, and 4/3) suggests that the site was under cultivation until the 19th century. The deep disturbance in the SW corner of the site (2/6) is difficult to interpret, but could represent backfilled rubbish pits, or

even the result of quarrying. The recent roadway (2/5 and 3\2) presumably led from the gateway in the SW corner of the site to the main door on the W side of the storehouse in the centre of the site.

The modern topsoil/cultivation layer as seen in Trench 4 is appreciably deeper than elsewhere on the site, and could suggest that the N end of the site was cultivated as a garden in recent times.

2.3 Conclusion

The desk top study concluded that there was no known archaeological remains on the site. The evidence from the evaluation, given the qualifications inherent in any sample excavation, appears to indicate that the site has never been developed or occupied to any significant degree until modern times, and probably always served as agricultural land. The possible presence of slight evidence of Romano British activity is no surprise, given the evidence from the surrounding area, and suggests no more than very low intensity agricultural activity.

Therefore it is the conclusion of the excavator that there is no evidence from the evaluation that significant archaeological remains will be affected by the proposed development .

A Hardy
OAU
March 1996

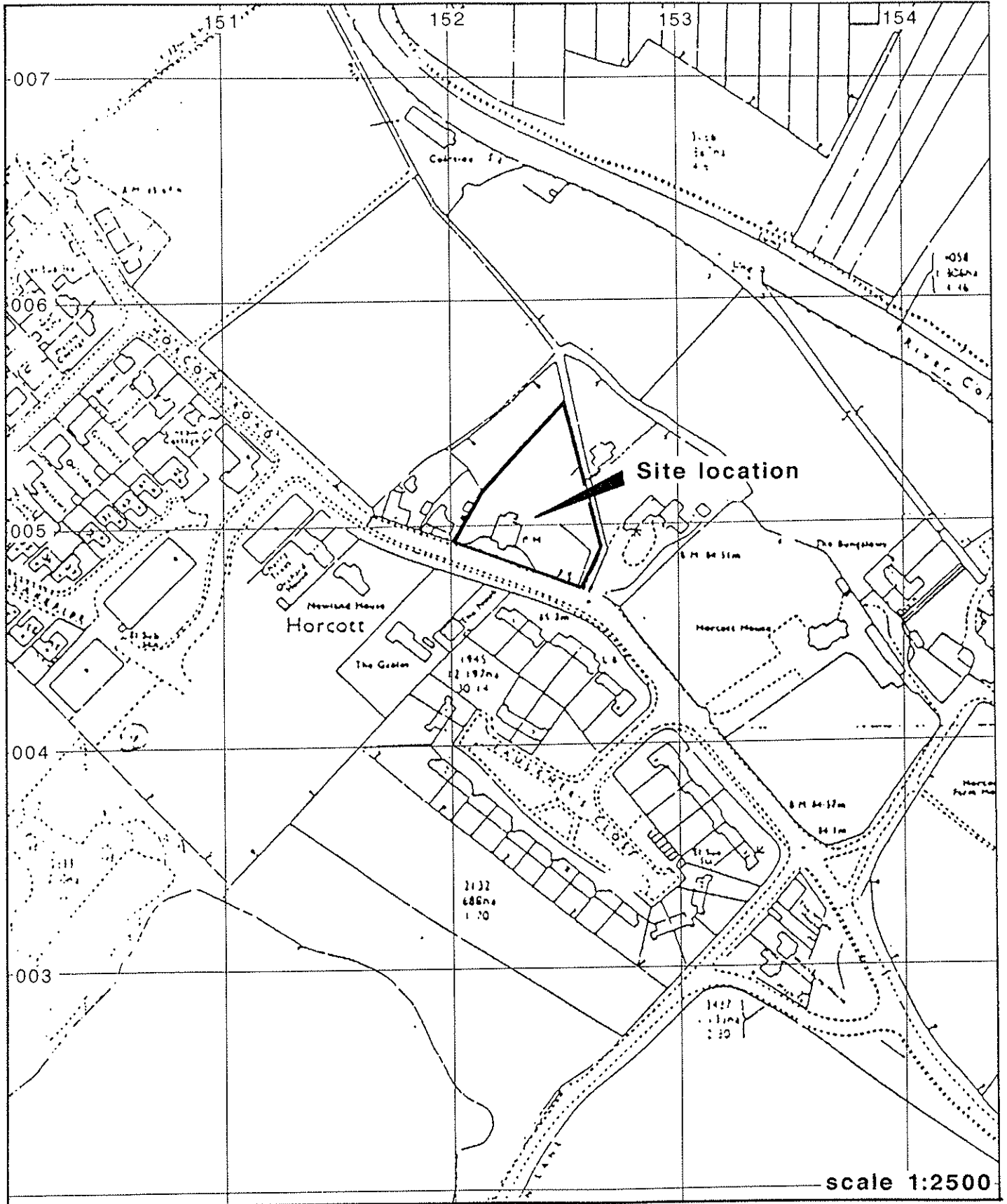
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CARRIERS ARMS, HORCOTT ROAD. FAIRFORD, GLOS.

TABLE OF CONTEXTS

CXT	TYPE	WIDTH	DEPTH	COMMENTS	FINDS
Tr 1					
1/1	LAYER	-	0.15	MODERN TOPSOIL	
1/2	LAYER	-	0.30	CULTIVATION SOIL	
1/3	LAYER	-	0.38	MED PLOUGHSOIL	
1/4	LAYER	-	0.15	PREHIST. SOIL	
1/5	P/HOLE	0.38	0.30		
1/6	FILL	0.38	0.30	FILL OF 1/5	
1/7	PIT	0.70	0.45		
1/8	FILL	0.70	0.45	FILL OF 1/7	?RB POT
Tr 2					
2/1	LAYER	-	0.20	MODERN TOPSOIL	
2/2	LAYER	-	0.27	BURIED TOPSOIL	
2/3	LAYER	-	0.50	DUMPING	
2/4	LAYER	-	0.30	P/MED PLOUGHSOIL	
2/5	FEATURE	-	<0.50	ROADWAY HARDCORE	
2/6	FEATURE	-	-	P/MED PITS?	
Tr 3					
3/1	LAYER	-	0.28	MODERN TOPSOIL	
3/2	LAYER	2.50	0.25	ROADWAY HARDCORE	
3/3	LAYER	-	0.30	P/MED PLOUGHSOIL	
3/4	DITCH	1.00	0.45	MED BOUNDARY	
3/5	FILL	1.00	0.45	FILL OF 3/4	MED POT
3/6	LAYER	-	0.10	PREHIST. SOIL?	
Tr 4					
4/1	LAYER	-	0.20	MODERN TOPSOIL	
4/2	LAYER	-	0.25	MOD. CULTIVATION	
4/3	LAYER	-	0.30	P/MED PLOUGHSOIL	CLAY PIPE
4/4	DITCH	>2.50	>0.30	MED BOUNDARY	
4/5	FILL	>2.50	>0.30	FILL OF 4/4	BONE, POT



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Figure 1

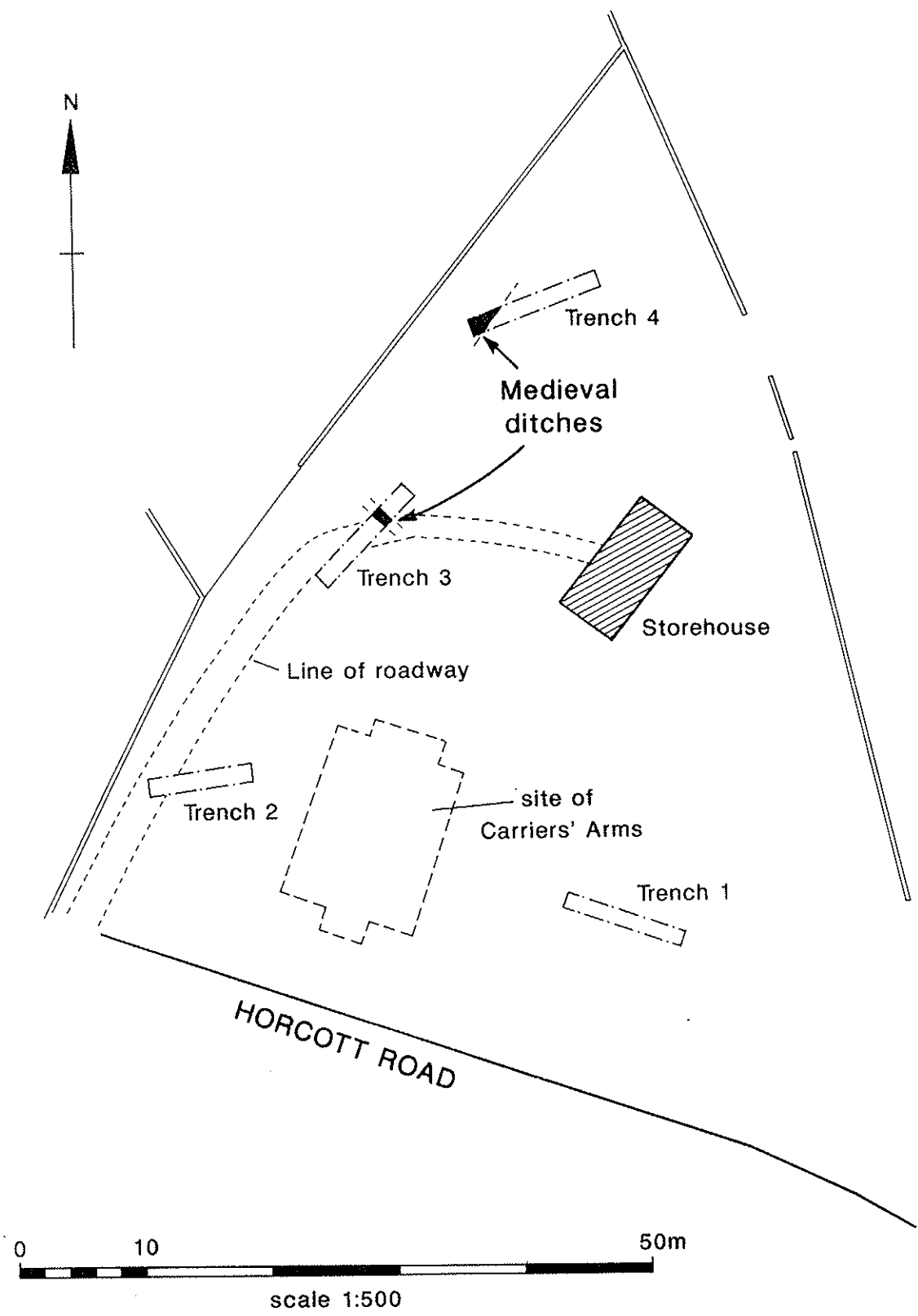


Figure 2

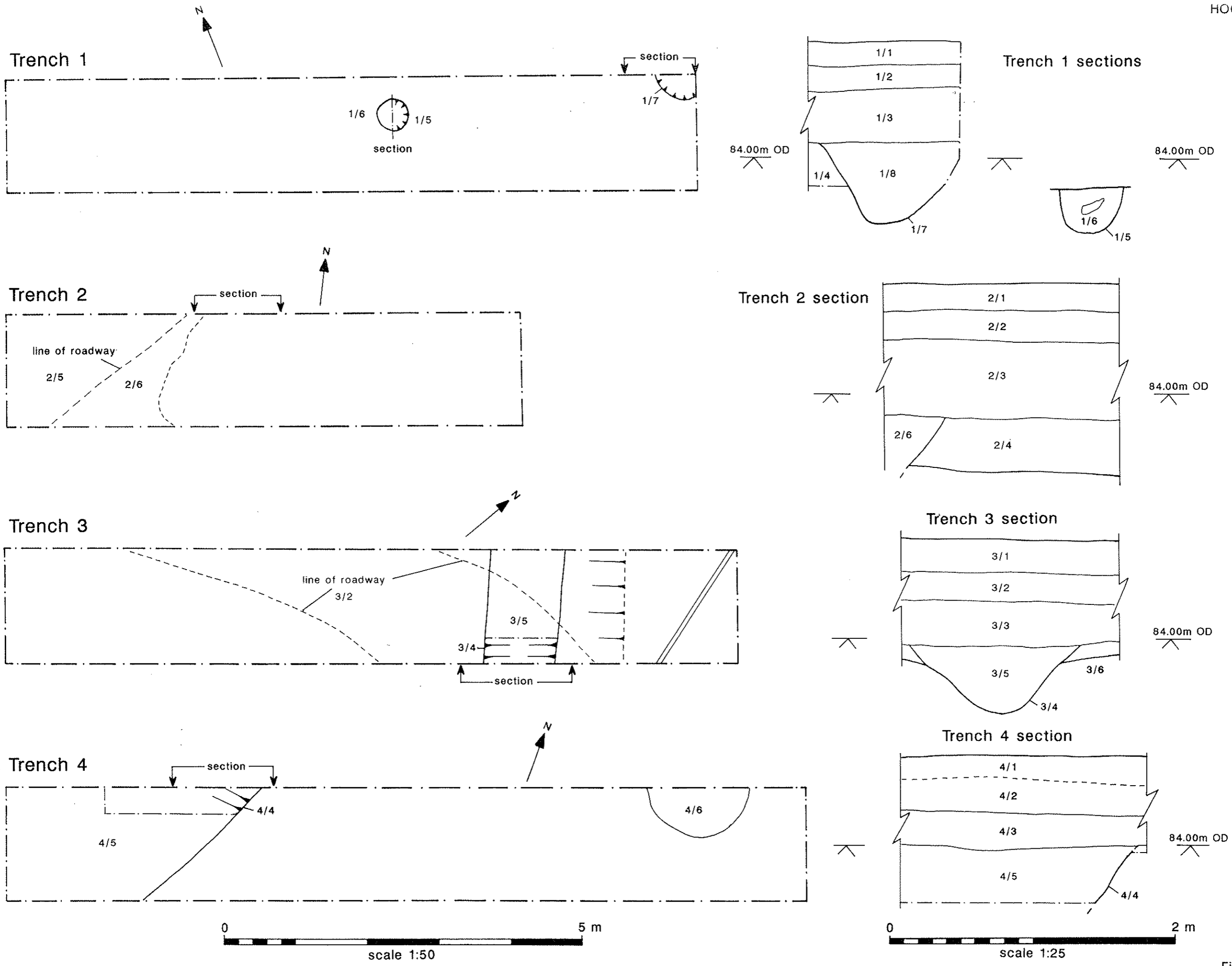


Figure 3



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