

Radcliffe Infirmary:
Eye Hospital
Car Park
Oxford



Archaeological Evaluation Report



Oxford Archaeology

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NGR SP 4509 2070

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

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SUMMARY

On December 14th and 15th 2002, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a two-trench field evaluation within the car park of the Radcliffe Infirmary Eye Hospital in Oxford (NGR SP 4509 2070). The work was commissioned by architects Gray Baynes and Shew on behalf of the Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals NHS Trust. The evaluation revealed in one trench an 18th century garden soil, which was cut by three 19th century pits or garden features. The second trench was abandoned owing to the presence of live electricity cables.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In December 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at Radcliffe Infirmary Eye Hospital Car Park, Oxford on behalf of Oxford Radcliffe Hospital NHS Trust.
- 1.1.2 The evaluation was undertaken in respect of plans drawn up by Gray/Baynes/Shew architects for a new development within the car park of the Radcliffe Hospital Eye Infirmary, Oxford (NGR SP 4509 2070). The proposal concerns the construction of a new operating theatre for the Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals NHS Trust.
- 1.1.3 Architects Gray Baynes and Shew commissioned OA to carry out the work on behalf of the Trust, in respect of a proposal for the construction of the new operating theatre. On site consultations took place between OA, Brian Durham, Oxford City's Archaeological Advisor, the project architect and the hospital site manager as to the best way to mitigate the archaeological requirements of the Planning Permission for the project.
- 1.1.4 A brief, outlining the archaeological requirements of the project, was set by Brian Durham. OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing how it would implement the brief (OA 2002).
- 1.1.5 The evaluation took place over a weekend in order to minimise disruption to the busy car park area.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies on gravel at approximately 62.94 m OD and is located to the west side of the hospital grounds (Walton Street side) and is currently used for car parking.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the evaluation was prepared for the WSI (OA 2002), the results of which are presented below. The site itself has produced limited archaeological evidence. There are some known locations with archaeological remains adjacent to the development site.

- 1.3.2 Locally the earliest recorded archaeological finds are from St Bernard's Road (formerly St John's Road) where in 1871 a Roman quern stone was recovered when foundations were dug for a house (SMR 3412).
- 1.3.3 During 1975, pottery of late Saxon date was recovered from the rear of 75 Walton Street. The pottery was associated with oyster shells, possibly part of a midden, and medieval pottery was also recovered. Number 73 Walton Street may be the site of medieval Walton Farm (SMR 16284).
- 1.3.4 A Saxon gold bracteate was found within the Civil War defences in St Giles Field in 1646. This site was probably near to the gates of the Radcliffe Infirmary (SMR 3686).
- 1.3.5 During building work on the north side of the Radcliffe Infirmary in 1938 a bone heddle stick, probably Saxon, was recovered (SMR 6325). During excavations at the Radcliffe Infirmary in 1770 it was reported that three mounds or barrows existed on the site and reportedly two burials were found. The site is thought to have been an Anglo-Saxon cemetery (SMR 5774).
- 1.3.6 Excavations for drainage in King Street in 1874 recovered a medieval pitcher, while construction work at St Anne's College in 1998 an early 17th century clay pipe was found together with a decorative brass chain of post-medieval date. During excavations near to the Horse and Jockey, Woodstock Road (1873) an unusual 17th to 18th century white salt-glazed vessel was found.
- 1.3.7 The surface was decorated to resemble moss. Excavations at the Radcliffe Infirmary graveyard in the 1930s uncovered a number of skulls, thought to be 18th century in date. Later excavations at the Radcliffe Infirmary in 1957 the remains of three undated skeletons were discovered.

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 OA is grateful to staff from Leadbitter Construction for providing assistance during the site works. Nigel Spawton of Gray Baynes and Shew provided site plans and advice about the site.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

- 2.1.1 The aims of the evaluation were to determine the location, extent, date, character, and state of preservation of any archaeological remains surviving on the site. Attention was to be given to remains of all periods, including evidence for past environments, with provision for environmental sampling included.
- 2.1.2 A specific aim was to trace any further burials in addition to those located around the site of the Infirmary and to trace any further evidence for Saxon and medieval occupation known in the vicinity.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the investigation to inform on the next stage of the archaeological mitigation process.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork

3.1.1 Two trenches were excavated in the car park. Trench 1 measured 5.6 m long by 1.6 m wide and was located in the north-east corner of the car park within a grassed area. Trench 2 measured 6.5 m long by 1.8 m wide and was situated at the west side of the car park next to the Eye Hospital (Fig. 2). After consultation with Brian Durham, excavations were halted in Trench 2 due to the presence of live electricity services.

3.1.2 The overburden was removed under close archaeological supervision by a JCB mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket. The tarmac of the car park in Trench 2 was first cut and then broken out by Leadbitter Construction.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

3.2.1 The trenches were cleaned by hand and the revealed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds and environmental samples. All archaeological features were planned and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. 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).

3.3 Finds

3.3.1 Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation and bagged by context. Finds of special interest were given a unique small find number.

3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

3.4.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the watching brief.

3.5 Presentation of results

3.5.1 Section 5 includes individual context descriptions, with archaeological deposits and features described from earliest to latest. Context information is summarised in the context inventory (Appendix 1).

4 RESULTS DESCRIPTIONS

4.1 Description of deposits

Trench 1

4.1.1 Trench 1 measured 5.6 m by 1.6 m and was aligned E-W. Natural gravel (2) was seen at 0.3 m OD or 1.1 m below ground level. Two probable tree holes were seen (11 and 13) which were irregular in shape and 1.2 m and 0.8 m in diameter. The features were filled with deposits of red-brown silty sand (12 and 14) which were sealed by a silty loam cultivation layer (17) which contained 18th century pottery. Three pits (7, 8 and 16) were cut through this soil layer. Each pit was approximately 0.5 m deep

and just over 1 m in width. They were filled with brown silty loams (contexts 8, 10 and 16 respectively), which contained few finds. An 18th century spurred clay pipe stem was retrieved from fill 8 and 19th century pottery and a glass fragment from fill 10 in pit 9. The pits were sealed by a layer of mortar (4) probably derived from building work in the 19th century and by a layer of ?garden soil (3). These deposits were cut by 20th century services (5 and 6) that were sealed by a topsoil layer (1).

Trench 2

- 4.1.2 Trench 2 measured 6.5 m by 1.6 m and was aligned NW-SE. The trench was excavated to a depth of 0.6 m (at 62.7 m OD); natural gravel was not encountered in this trench. A 20th century soil (24) was revealed which was sealed by a levelling layer (22) for a tarmac surface (21). This was cut by electricity cable trenches (26 and 25) and a construction cut (27) for a concrete kerb (23). The trench was sealed by a tarmac surface (20).

4.2 Finds

Pottery by Duncan H Brown

- 4.2.1 A small assemblage of 22 sherds, weighing 251 grams and numbering 16 vessels was recovered from four contexts; 3, 6, 10 and 17. The material in each context was sorted by ware, vessel and sherd type and quantified by rim percent, weight, sherd count and vessel count. Processing was carried out in January 2003.
- 4.2.2 Every context contained transfer-printed ware, in every case coloured blue, which provides a *terminus post quem* of 1830. Context 6 also contained the complete profile of a plate that had a transfer printed roundel inside the base, with an armorial shield (bearing a bend) with part of a legend around it, and the remaining letters read 'RADCLIFF INF / MARLBOROUGH'. This probably gives a *terminus post quem* of 1850.
- 4.2.3 Context 6 also contained a sherd of Staffordshire black and yellow joggled slipware, which is the earliest piece in the assemblage, and is likely to be of 18th century date. This sherd is also abraded. Two sherds of white salt-glazed ware from the same context may also be 18th century.

Animal Bone by Bethan Charles

- 4.2.4 A total of 16 (137g) fragments of animal bone were recovered from Context 3 and mostly consisted of sheep bones including a butchered radius, metacarpal and a pelvis. Other fragments included carpal bones and an articulating navicular cuboid and astragalus in addition to a calcaneus bone.
- 4.2.5 The only cattle bone consisted of half a lumbar vertebrae, which had been sagittally cleaved. A broken fragment of a medium sized bird long bone shaft was also recovered but not identified to species.
- 4.2.6 All of the bones were quite large indicative of improved species and are almost certainly from the post-medieval period of occupation at the site. The small quantity

of bone recovered from this site does not provide much information regarding the economy of the site, though the preservation of the recovered bones was good.

Other finds

- 4.2.7 A clay pipe fragment of 18th century date was recovered in addition to one fragment of glass, probably of similar date.

DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 4.1.1 Deposits that pre-dated the construction of the hospital in Trench 1 were sealed by levelling layers and were relatively undisturbed, although truncation by landscaping may have occurred. Live services precluded detailed investigations in Trench 2.

4.2 Overall interpretation

Summary of results

- 4.2.1 The evaluation revealed an 18th century garden or cultivation soil in Trench 1, which was truncated by three 18th or 19th century pits. These may represent garden features rather than domestic rubbish pits due to the general lack of finds contained within them.
- 4.2.2 The other deposits encountered in Trench 1, in particular the mortar spread, relate to the construction of the hospital and its subsequent development. Soils above this level therefore relate to the grounds of the hospital.
- 4.2.3 Nothing archaeological can be said of Trench 2 and overall no evidence of prehistoric through to medieval activity was noted in the excavations.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

TRENCH	CONTEXT	TYPE	THICKNESS (M)	FINDS	DATE	COMMENTS
1	1	Layer	0.2			Topsoil
	2	Layer				Natural gravel
	3	Layer	0.2	CBM/Bone/Pot/Glass	19thC	Buried soil
	4	Layer	0.1			Levelling
	5	Cut	>0.50			Service
	6	Fill	>0.50	Pot	20thC	Service fill
	7	Cut	0.4			Pit
	8	Fill	0.4	Clay pipe	18thC	Pit fill
	9	Cut	0.7			Pit
	10	Fill	0.7	Pot/Glass	19thC	Pit fill
	11	Cut	0.18			Tree hole
	12	Fill	0.18			Tree hole fill
	13	Cut	0.25			Tree hole
	14	Fill	0.25			Tree hole fill
	15	Cut	0.5			Pit
	16	Fill	0.5			Pit fill
	17	Layer	0.4	Pot/Clay	18thC	Cultivation soil
2	20	Layer	0.1			Tarmac
	21	Layer	0.1			Tarmac
	22	Layer	0.1			Levelling
	23	Masonry	0.25			Kerb
	24	Layer	0.48			Soil
	25	Cut				Cable cut
	26	Cable				Cable cut
	27	Cut	0.1			Construction cut

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OA, 2002, *Radcliffe Infirmary Eye Hospital Car Park* Written Scheme of Investigation

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

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Radcliffe Infirmary Eye Hospital Car Park, Oxford, Oxfordshire

Site code: OXEYE 02

Grid reference: NGR SP 4509 2070

Type of evaluation: Two 6 m by 1.8 m trenches

Date and duration of project: Two days from the 14/12/2002 to 15/12/2002.

Area of site: 0.1 ha.

Summary of results: Three 19th century pits and an 18th century cultivation layer were seen. Modern live electricity services halted excavation in one of the trenches

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 2002.29



Figure 1: Site location

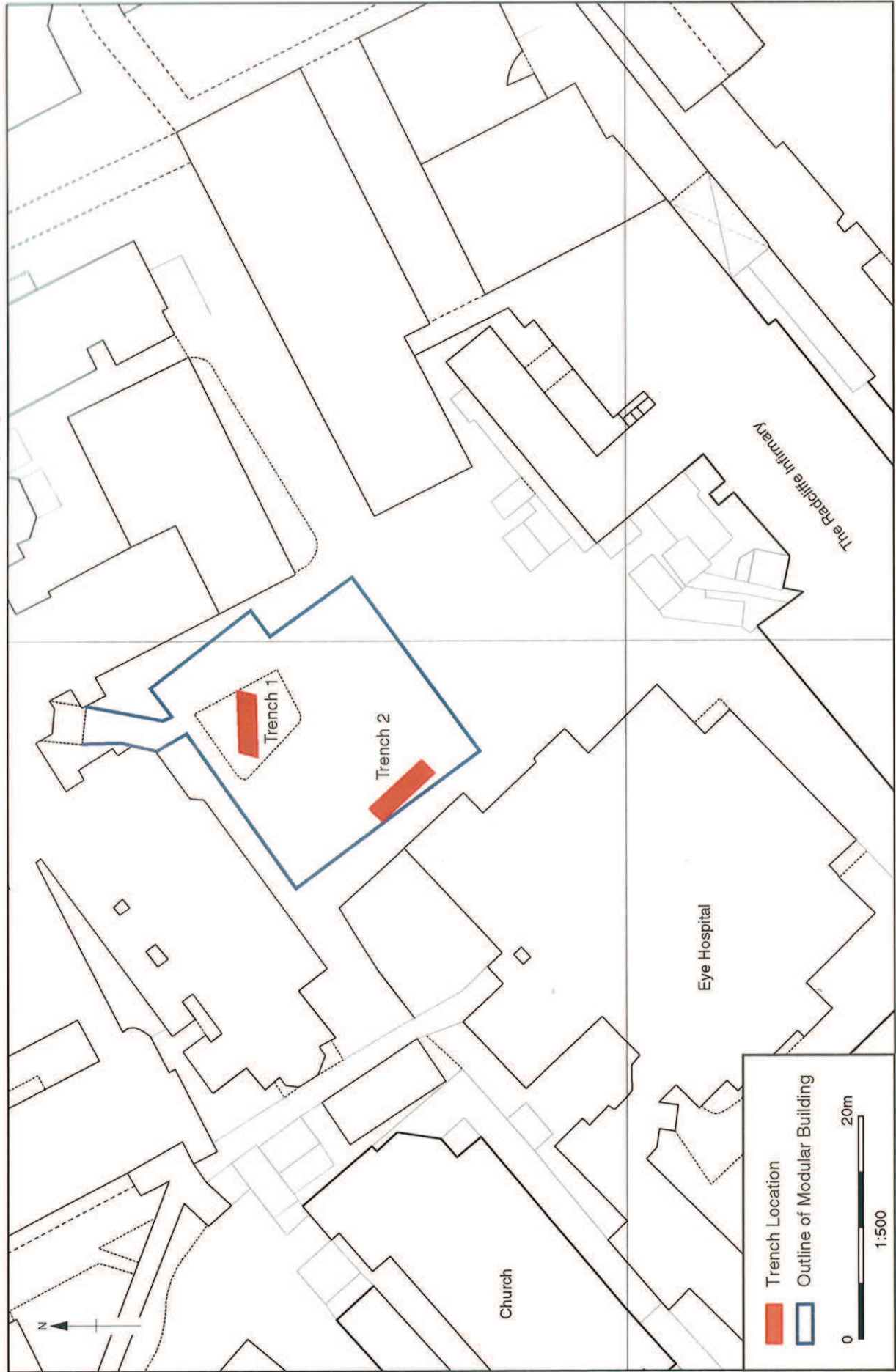
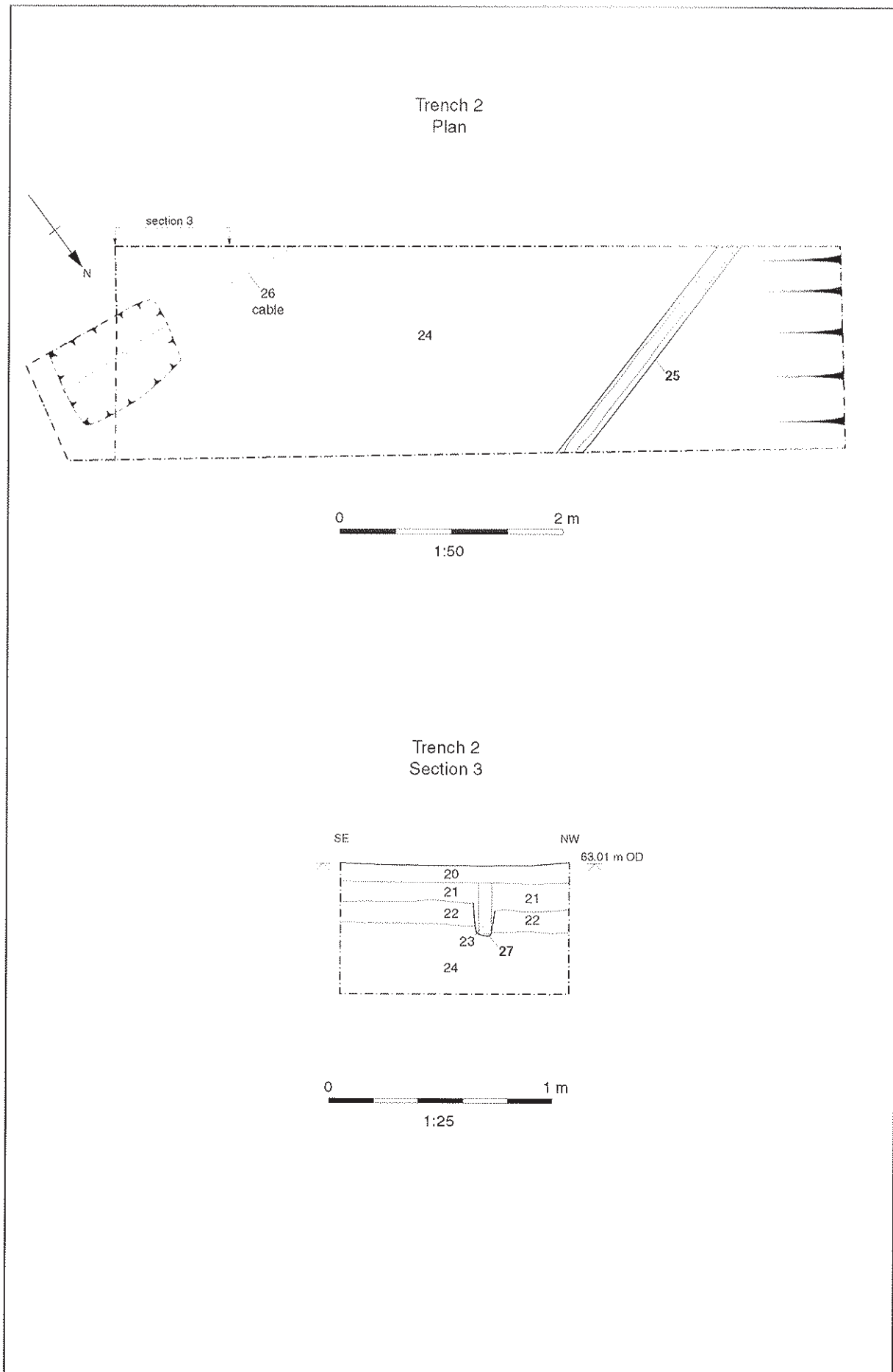


Figure 2: Trench Location plan

Figure 3: Trench 1, plan and sections





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