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Mountbatten Hall Site Langley Road Slough Berkshire



Archaeological Evaluation



Oxford Archaeology

5th February 2002

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Mountbatten Hall Site, Langley Road Slough, Berkshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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SUMMARY

In January 2002, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at Mountbatten Hall, Langley Road, Slough, Berkshire (NGR TQ 0048 7944) on behalf of Calford Seaden Partnership. The evaluation revealed two possible post-holes containing ?medieval pottery in Trench 1. These may have been truncated by ploughing, for which Trench 3 provided evidence in the form of a plough scar. These features were sealed below a possible plough soil/worked horizon of an uncertain date. A probable Victorian ditch cut from just below the topsoil may relate to the church boundary at this time. A small quantity of animal bone and late post-medieval /Victorian pottery was also recovered.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In January 2002, OA carried out a field evaluation at the Mountbatten Hall site at the junction of Saint Mary's Road and Langley Road, Slough, Berkshire (Fig.1). The evaluation was undertaken on behalf of the Calford Seaden Partnership in respect of a planning application for eight new flats, a new church hall and associated car parking and access (Planning Application No. P/01779/006).

1.1.2 A brief was set by and a WSI agreed with Kev Beachus (Babtie). The development site is situated at NGR TQ 0048 7944 and is 0.03 hectares in area (Fig. 2).

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site lies at c 28.4 m above OD. The site is situated on a River Brickearth sandy clay natural (Sheet 255, Geological Survey of Great Britain).

1.2.2 The site is currently rough lawn situated on the southern side of the Parish Hall building (Mountbatten Hall). The site has not been developed since the construction of the hall building in 1951.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological background to the evaluation was included as part of the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the site (OA, 2002), and is presented below.

1.3.2 The site is situated due south of the parish church of St. Mary that dates from the 12th century, though the nave may have been constructed before 1150; the north aisle and arcade were added in c 1180. In the mid-17th century the north-west tower was added and the north aisle and possibly the north chapel widened; the south transept was also built at this time.

1.3.3 Excavations by OA (formerly Oxford Archaeological Unit, OAU) in October 2000 on the north side of the church revealed a group of c 20 burials of Georgian and Victorian date. It is likely that burials of medieval date exist within the grounds of the church, and it remains possible that within the vicinity there is evidence of medieval occupation associated with the church.

- 1.3.4 The excavation of a service trench revealed a north-south ditch on the west side of the church which was probably a boundary line to the site dated to the Victorian period (OAU, forthcoming).
- 1.3.5 Excavations on the site of the old vicarage revealed occupation evidence dating from the 13th century onwards (Babtie, 2001).

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 OA extends its thanks to the Reverend Jeremy Hurst and all at Saint Mary's Parish for their patience during the evaluation work. Also thanks to Ashley Tett at Airways Housing for his help during the preparation stage of the archaeological works.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

- 2.1.1 The aims of the evaluation were to determine the location, extent, date character, significance, quality and state of preservation of any surviving archaeological remains likely to be threatened by the development. The degree of complexity of horizontal and/or vertical stratigraphy was to be determined, as well as the range, quality and quantity of artefacts.
- 2.1.2 Attention was to be given to sites and remains of all periods including evidence of past environments, with provision for environmental sampling included.
- 2.1.3 To determine, if applicable, the relationship of above ground structures to surviving deposits below ground to assess the character, condition, significance and quality of the above ground remains.
- 2.1.4 To clarify the nature and extent of existing disturbance and intrusion on the site and assess the degree of archaeological survival of all buried deposits and surviving structures of archaeological significance.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork

- 3.1.1 The evaluation consisted of three trenches. Trench 1 was aligned east-west and had a length of 15 m, Trenches 2 and 3 were aligned north-south and were both 7.5 m long (Fig. 2). The overburden was removed under close archaeological supervision using a JCB Sitemaster mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket.

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 were bagged by context.

3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

- 3.4.1 No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were encountered during the evaluation.

4 RESULTS: GENERAL

4.1 Soils and ground conditions

- 4.1.1 The site is located on a thick deposit of top soil overlying a soft clay sand and a sandy clay natural (river brickearth). The loose loam nature of the soils over the clay made the ground quite soft when wet, however conditions encountered during the evaluation were generally good.

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Description of deposits

- 5.1.1 The earliest deposit encountered was that of the natural brickearth (103, 203, 303). This was an orange brown sandy clay, moderately compacted and was encountered within every trench (Figs 3 & 4). A plough scar was seen within this context (303) in Trench 3.
- 5.1.2 In Trench 1, two sub-circular features (104 and 106) cut into the natural (Fig. 3). These had shallow profiles, being only *c* 0.05 m deep, and irregular in form. They had a combined width of *c* 0.4 m and were filled by a brownish grey sandy clay with some humic content (contexts 105 and 107). Abraded pottery and burnt flint were recovered from the fills of these cuts.
- 5.1.3 These were sealed by a layer that was encountered within all trenches (102, 202, 302). This was a mid to dark brown clay loam that had a maximum thickness of 0.4 m (Fig. 4). This deposit had traces of charcoal and degraded fragments of degraded building material within it.
- 5.1.4 In Trench 2, layer 202 was cut by a linear feature (204). This was an east-west aligned ditch that was *c* 1.55 m wide and 0.85 m deep. It had slightly concave sides that sloped at *c* 45° angle breaking sharply into a flat base. This was filled by a single deposit of loose dark brown silty loam with occasional inclusions of charcoal and building material fragments. Pottery was recovered from the fill of this feature.
- 5.1.5 The fill of the linear feature 204, and the layers 202 and 302 were all sealed by the top soil (101, 201, 301). This was a loose dark brown sandy loam, *c* 0.3 m thick.

5.2 Finds

Pottery

- 5.2.1 Pottery of a tentative medieval date was recovered from the fills (105 and 107) of the irregular features 104 and 106 respectively. These comprised two small sherds of very abraded pottery of less than 1 g each. The sherds were flint tempered, and were small and abraded enough to give a date range from the late Iron Age to the 14th century (Paul Booth, OA, personal comment). Although these sherds were *in-situ* and sealed by layer 102, they had definitely been rolled within the soil prior to their deposition. This may make them earlier than the features in which they were found.

- 5.2.2 Context 205 provided pottery dates for the ditch feature 204. These were three sherds of 18th - 19th century dates. Ceramic from the topsoil was also recovered and was dated to the late 19th -20th century and included white china, willow pattern and red glazed earthen ware.

Animal Bone

- 5.2.3 A total of 30 animal bone fragments were recovered from the topsoil in two trenches (101 and 201). The bones were in good condition and comprised fragments of sheep and cattle bone and also domestic fowl, probably chicken (Appendix 2).

Burnt Flint

- 5.2.4 Four small fragments of burnt flint were recovered from Trench 1, three from the fill of feature 106 and one from the fill of 104. These fragments had not been struck or worked in any way, and although they were located within sealed deposits, the features contained no signs of *in-situ* burning.

6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 6.1.1 The field investigation was reliable as limited truncation of stratigraphy had occurred prior to the evaluation with the possibility of cultivation or ploughing having been carried out on site.

6.2 Overall interpretation

Summary of results

- 6.2.1 The pre-excavation information collated from previous work and the WSI suggest reasonable potential for medieval occupation deposits existing in the location of the proposed development area. The proximity of the 12th century church and associated graveyard gives a location for the medieval centre of Langley Parish.
- 6.2.2 The only artefacts potentially relating to medieval activity were from the two features in Trench 1. It is possible that these represent root holes, though equally their irregular circular form and shallow depth suggests possible truncation from ploughing: a plough scar was identified within Trench 3 (Fig.3).
- 6.2.3 Deposit 102, 202, 302 may reflect a cultivation phase to the site, supported by the plough scar in Trench 3.. This may explain the truncation of the possible post-holes (104 & 106) in Trench 1.
- 6.2.4 The ditch located in Trench 2 was possibly related to a 19th century boundary or division of the site, and associated with the church. A continuation of this ditch was not encountered in either Trench 1 or Trench 3, and this suggests that this feature either turns to the south under Langley Road or terminates somewhere between Trenches 2 and 3 or continues between them. It is possible that this linear may be a continuation of the north-south ditch encountered during the OA Watching Brief of the service trench (OA 2001 forthcoming).

- 6.2.5 The evaluation suggest that limited medieval evidence may survive elsewhere on the site, though overall the sites potential appears limited. Indeed what features were located point to Victorian intrusion rather than medieval occupation.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench	CTX No	Type	Width (m)	Thick (m)	Comment	Finds	No/wt (g)	Date
1	101	layer		0.3	topsoil	pot/bone	7 sherds	19thC/ 20thC
1	102	layer		0.3	sub-soil			
1	103	layer			natural			
1	104	cut	0.2	0.05	roots/post-hole??			
1	105	fill	0.2	0.05	fill of 104	Pot/burnt flint	1sherd/1 fragment	med?
1	106	cut	0.2	0.05	roots/post-hole??			
1	107	fill	0.2	0.05	fill of 106	Pot/burnt flint	1sherd/ 3 fragments	med?
2	201	layer		0.3	topsoil	Pot / Bone	4 sherds	19thC/ 20thC
2	202	layer		0.4	sub-soil			
2	203	layer			natural			
2	204	cut	1.55	0.85	ditch			
2	205	fill	1.55	0.85	fill of 204	pot	3 sherds	18thC/ 19thC
3	301	layer		0.3	topsoil			
3	302	layer		0.3	sub-soil			
3	303	layer			natural			

APPENDIX 2 ANIMAL BONE

By Bethan Charles

A total of 30 fragments of bone were recovered from two contexts (101 and 102). The bone was in very good condition with no signs of attritional damage. The bone from context 101 consisted of 23 fragments of domestic fowl bones belonging to at least two individuals. The majority of the bones were mostly complete although most had minor damage as a result of excavation. None of the bones had butchery cut marks. A plastic coil was also found in association with the bones and may have been a tag placed around the leg of one of the birds.

The remaining material was from context 201 and consisted of the proximal half of an unfused sheep humerus (all of the proximal articulation was present). The bone had been butchered and had been sawn at the proximal end of the shaft. A section of the shaft of a sheep humerus unrelated to the one mentioned above was also recovered. The proximal half of a domestic fowl right humerus and all of a right coracoid bone were also recovered in addition to the remains of the unfused proximal articulation of a cattle humerus with many butchery cut marks. Both the cattle and sheep bones were large and indicative of improved animals, likely to be from a post medieval deposit.

APPENDIX 3 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OA 2002, *Corner of Saint Mary's Road and Langley Road (Mountbatten Hall Site), Slough, Berkshire : Written Scheme of Investigation*

OA 1992, *Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D. Wilkinson, first edition, August 1992)

OA 2000, *Archaeological excavations at St. Mary's Church, Slough*. Client report, in preparation

Babtie 2001, *Corner of St Mary's Road & Langley Road, Slough. Brief for an archaeological evaluation.*

APPENDIX 4 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Mountbatten Hall, Langley Road, Langley, Slough, Berkshire

Site code: LMBH 02

Grid reference: TQ 0048 7944

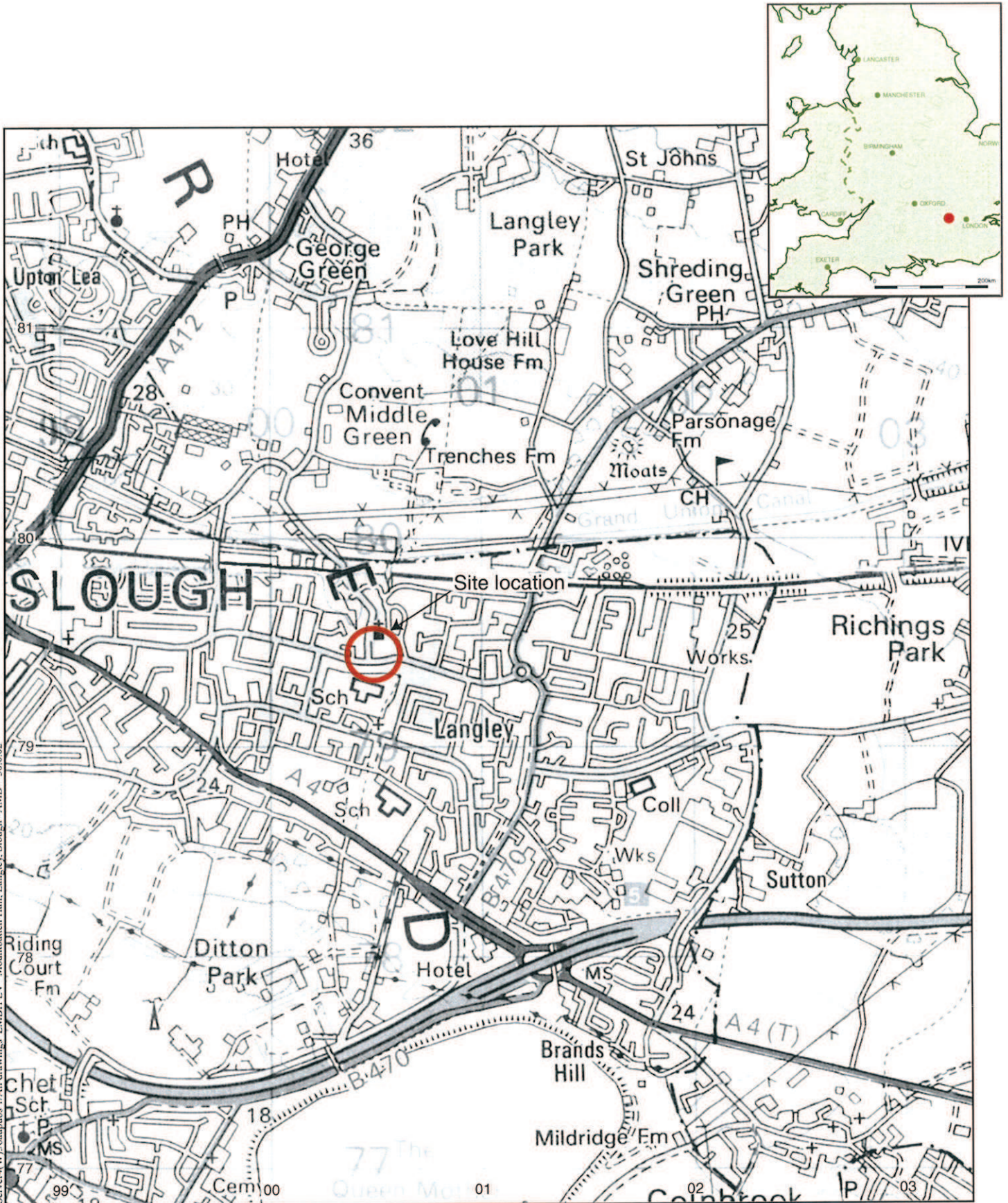
Type of evaluation: One 15 m long trench and two trenches of 7.5 m in length

Date and duration of project: 28.01.02 – 29.01.02

Area of site: 0.3 ha

Summary of results: Two possible postholes and a Victorian ditch.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Reading Museum in due course.



Source: (W:\outputs\1\All drawings\1.MBH EV *Mounbatten Hall, Langley, Slough*.AMD * 30.0.02

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Scale 1:25000

Figure 1: Site location

Figure 2: Trench Location Plan

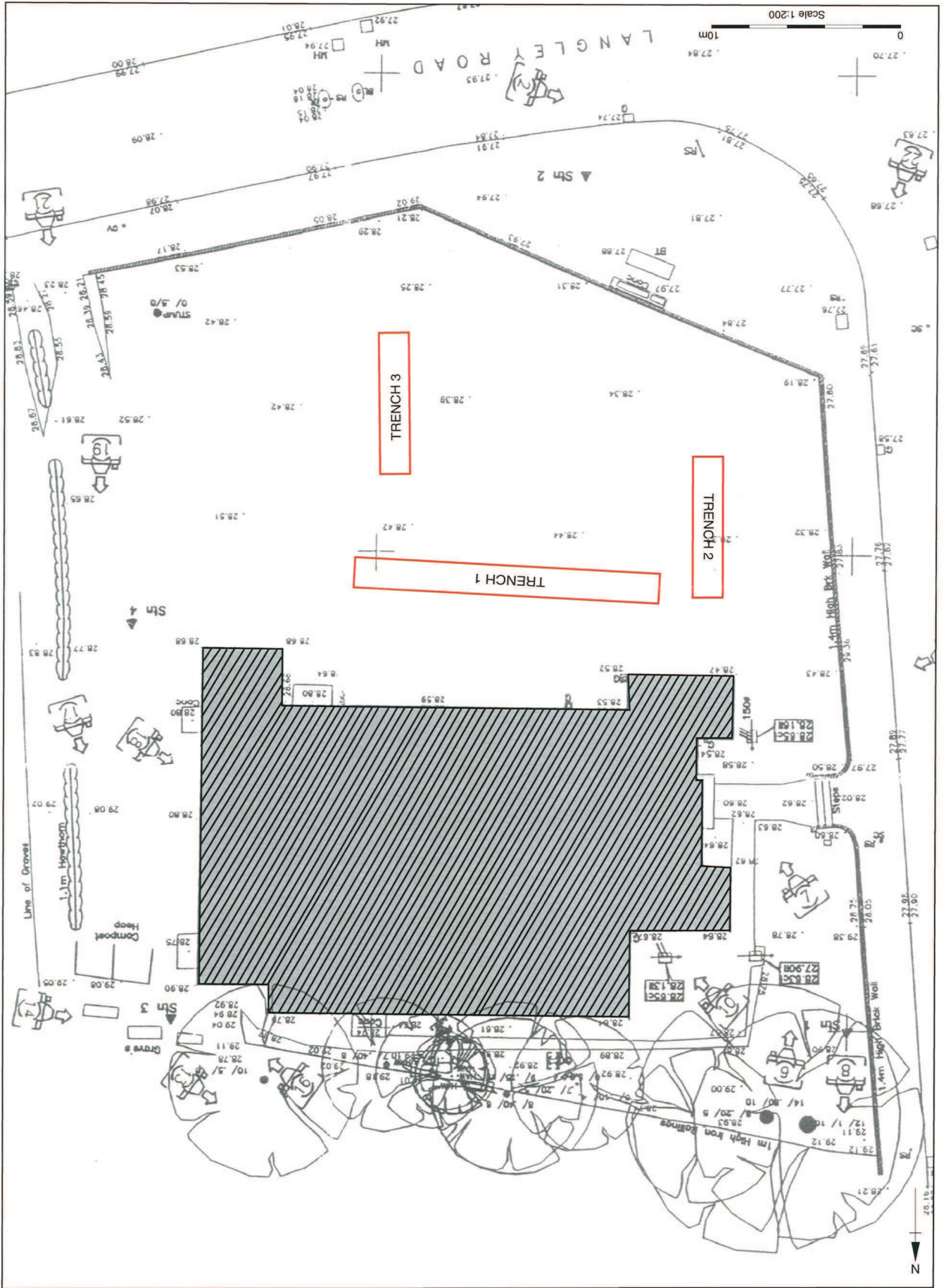


Figure 3a: Trench 1, Plan 100

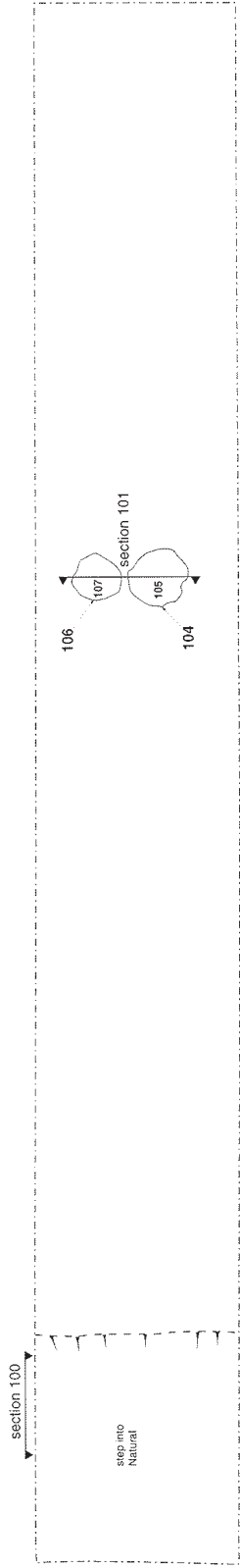


Figure 3b: Trench 2, Plan 200

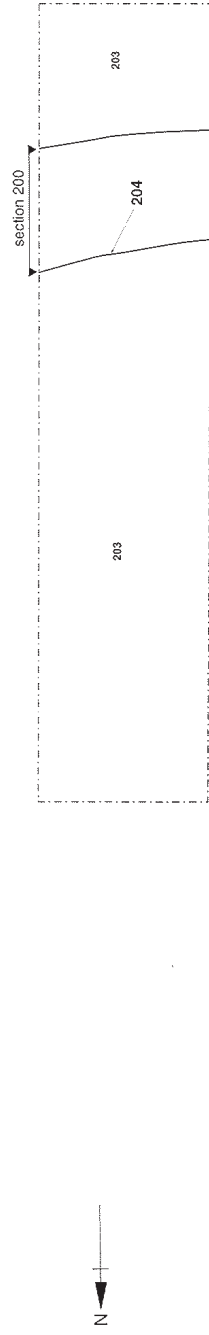


Figure 3c: Trench 3, Plan 300

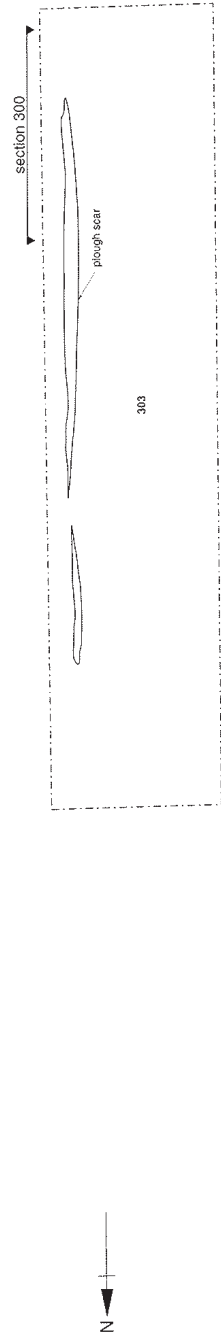


Figure 3: Trench Plans

Figure 4a: Trench 1, sections 100 and 101

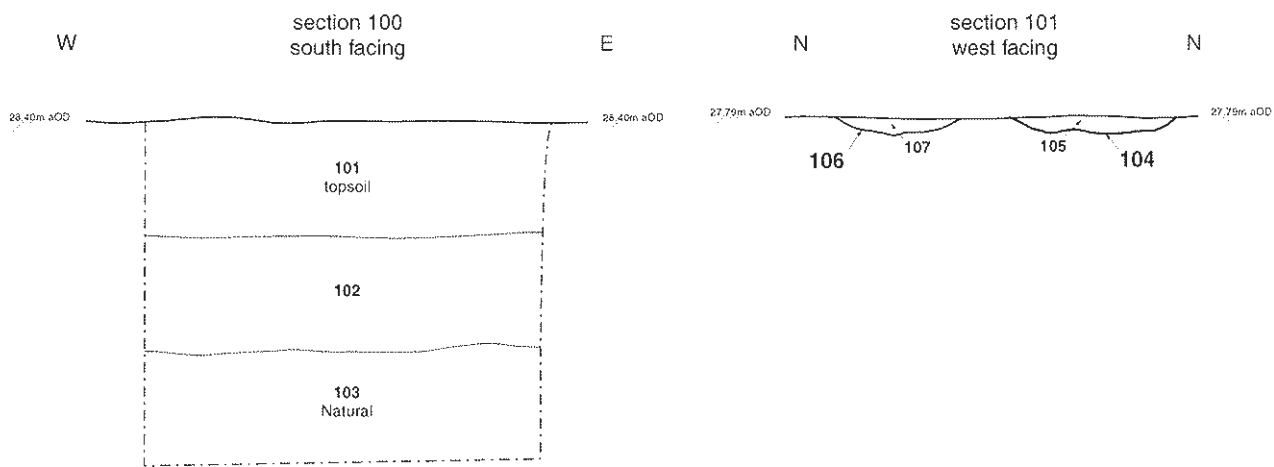


Figure 4b: Trench 2, section 200

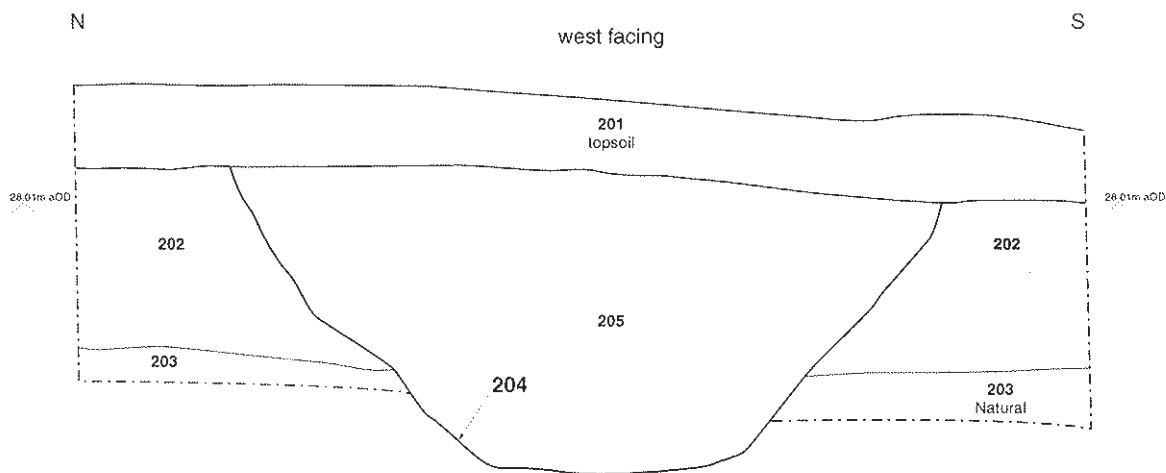
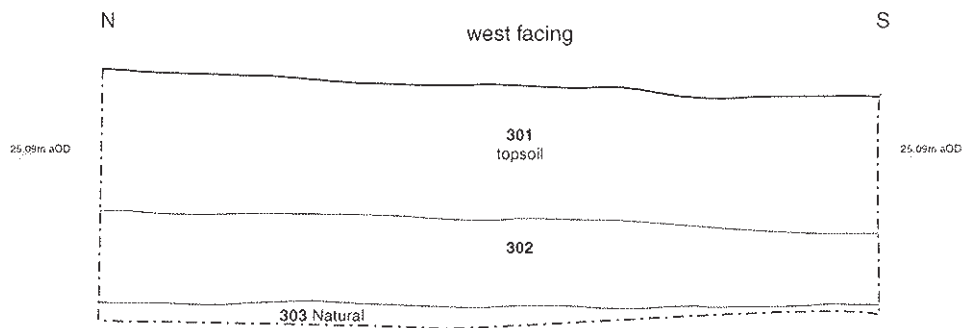


Figure 4c: Trench 3, section 300



Scale 1:20

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Figure 4: Trench Sections



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