

BHSB (H0)
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Albany Place
Brentford High Street

Phase 3

Archaeological Evaluation

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

January 1994

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Brentford High Street, Phase 3
Archaeological Evaluation
HSB 94
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INTRODUCTION

The Oxford Archaeological Unit excavated two evaluation trenches on behalf of Kier of London Ltd in advance of proposed housing development. The evaluation was carried out according to an English Heritage brief which was provided on behalf of the local Planning Authority. The original specified positions of the trenches had to be changed due to contractor's equipment and other obstructions. No significant archaeological deposits were located. The S of the site has been affected by 19th-century cellars and the N appeared to have been used as a garden and for outhouses.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site (Fig. 1) lies across the projected alignment of the Roman road that ran W from London (Londinium) and crossed the Thames at Staines (Pontes) (the Roman road is not shown on Fig. 1). The road has been located in 'Old Brentford' to the W. The nearest known Roman settlement lies 200 m to the W. Excavations have been carried out on the site to the W of the proposed development. No traces of activity earlier than the 18th century were found. Eighteenth century pits were found which contained interesting ecofactual and environmental evidence. The 19th-century maps show that until the later 19th-century the area E of 'Old Brentford' was relatively undeveloped (Canham 1978).

The site lies at 8-10 m OD on the Thames gravel which is overlain by brickearth. In excavations further W in Brentford the top of the brickearth was found to have been disturbed. The disturbed layer buries Neolithic and later features which have been cut into the undisturbed brickearth.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

The general purpose of the evaluation was to establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains on the site and to determine, as far as reasonably possible, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains and to establish the ecofactual/environmental potential of the site. The location of traces of the Roman road and its alignment and the detection of Roman or medieval occupation were particular aims. The sampling of post medieval pits to assess the quality of ecofactual and environmental assemblages was another goal.

Two trial trenches were excavated by a JCB Sitemaster using a toothless bucket. The trenches were to have been 15 m long and 3 m wide however due to constraints of space on the site Trench 2 was only 11.5 m long. Trench 1 was curtailed when modern cellars which truncated the brickearth were discovered (Fig. 2).

In Trench 1 the top of the clean brickearth was reached by machine excavation after the top of the dirty brickearth was partly hand cleaned (Fig. 3). In Trench 2 the clean brickearth was reached by machine excavation over the S half the trench after the top of dirty brickearth was hand cleaned. The dirty brickearth over the N half of the trench was hand excavated and the surface of the clean brickearth hand cleaned.

DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS

Details of the dimensions and depths of these layers is contained in Table 1.

Trench 1 (Fig. 3)

The brickearth was overlain by a layer of dirty brickearth (108) which was overlain in turn by a layer of garden soil (102). The garden soil contained 19th-century pottery and one struck flint. The garden soil was cut by a modern soakaway (106) and a large pit (117) the full extent of which was not determined within the confines of the trench. This pit had been dug in order to construct a cellared building (group number 107). This building had two levels of floors (112 and 113) both of which were lower than the top of the undisturbed brickearth (Fig. 3). The building and its walls had been demolished and the demolition material had been used to backfill (109, 110 and 111) the cellars. Layer 109 contained part of a sink and a broken plastic doll which dates the demolition of the building as very recent. The demolition material also extended to the N outside the confines of the building (101) and overlay the garden soil (102). The demolition layer was cut by a very modern pit (104). The area had been grassed (100) over the demolition layer 101. Another wall (118) similar to those of the cellared building was seen at the NW of the trench (Fig. 3).

Trench 2 (Figs 3 and 4)

The undisturbed brickearth (215) was cut by two postholes (214 and 217) which were 0.05 m apart (Fig. 4). One of the postholes (214) contained a piece of burnt flint and the other (217) contained two pebbles. Posthole 214 had an impression of a squared timber in its base (Fig. 4). The surface of the brickearth provided 2 struck flints and a sherd of 17th-century pottery. The postholes and the brickearth were overlain by dirty brickearth (212) which contained 19th-century pottery and two struck flints. The dirty brickearth was cut by a rectangular pit (211, Section 3, Fig. 4) which contained most of a 17th-century chamberpot whose handle had been broken off and which had been inverted in the pit. The dirty brickearth was overlain by a garden soil (208). A soakaway (209) had been dug through the garden soil and connected to drain aligned to the W. The soakaway had been filled with very recent rubbish. One drain (207) cut the garden soil and two walls (204 and 205) had been built on the top of the garden soil. A levelling up layer of construction debris (201) surrounded the walls. The levelling layer was cut by a drain (203). The trench was topped with rubble and tarmac to form the car park.

Deposit Survey

The current levels above sea level are shown on Fig. 2. The proposed development will consist of roadside building and a car park in the current area of tarmac. The roadside area has already been disturbed by the 19th-century cellared building which is almost certainly part of a terrace of shops of similar design. The surviving postholes are deeper than the likely impact of development.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE

There are two main periods of activity on the site; the first is represented by prehistoric artefacts in disturbed brickearth and the second by 17th- to 18th-century activity and modern buildings.

The most significant deposits located are the postholes. Although they are undated they may predate the 17th century as they are overlain by the disturbed brickearth which is cut by a pit; both of which contain 17th-century pottery. As posthole 214 had a squared timber impression which are uncommon before the Iron Age (F Healy and P Bradley pers comm.) is unlikely that the postholes reflect early prehistoric activity. The two postholes lie equidistant (30 m) from the High Street and Albany Road so they may form a mid/late 17th-century land division.

The small flint assemblage recovered indicates slight prehistoric activity. As the site lies on a small eminence overlooking both the Thames and a small valley to the W it may have been a preferred spot for early prehistoric activity. However, evidence for this activity is confined to the disturbed brickearth and is not likely to be affected by the development. The disturbed and undisturbed brickearth can be predicted to be present over most of the site from the evaluation trenches and the ground investigation (see appendix below).

It was unclear from the trenches why the top of the brickearth had been disturbed. Ploughing may have caused the mixing of the topsoil and brickearth or it may have been garden activity. Certainly, horizontal layers had truncated the postholes and the pit in turn and the most likely explanation for such horizontal disturbance may be ploughing.

The brick walls in Trench 2 are remnants of rear of property outhouses. The walls in Trench 1 are from recently demolished shops.

APPENDICES

Flint Assessment

By Philippa Bradley

Five pieces of struck flint and two pieces of burnt unworked flint were recovered from the evaluation. None of the flint is particularly diagnostic. The flint is summarised below:

Context	Flake	blade	core	burnt unworked
108	1	-	-	-
212	1	1	-	1
213	-	-	-	1
215	1	-	1	-

The flakes are hard-hammer struck, the core has several hinge fractures and evidence for hard-hammer removals. This material may be Bronze Age in date. The single blade may indicate an earlier element to the flintwork. However, any dating must remain tentative due to the size of the collection and the lack of diagnostic pieces.

Pottery Assessment

By Lucy Bown

Thirty-eight sherds weighing 1.05 kg of post-medieval pottery were recovered from five contexts.

The majority of the sherds (34) came from a single chamber pot in Surrey/Hampshire Borderware (BORDG). Approximately three quarters of the vessel survives with the base and rim intact. The flat everted rim form dates to the late 17th century (Pearce 1992). The vessel has a continuous copper green glaze on both internal and external surfaces.

A small sherd of post-medieval Fine Redware (PMFR) dates from 1600 to 1650 but is too small to be able to identify the vessel form.

Three further sherds of 18th- and 19th-century date are a Staffordshire White Salt Glazed (SWSG) cup and a Transfer Printed Ware (TPW) plate.

Pottery Summary

Context	No of sherds	period	date range
108	1	PM	1720-1770
210	34	PM	1550-1750
212	2	PM	1800-1900

215	1	PM	1600-1650
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Ground Investigation

The developers have provided a summary of the ground investigation. A long trench was dug parallel to the High Street and two pits were dug further back from the road. The results were summarised as 400 mm of brick rubble over sandy clay brickearth which overlies 1.5 m of gravel.

Bibliography

Canham R 1978 2000 Years of Brentford HMSO

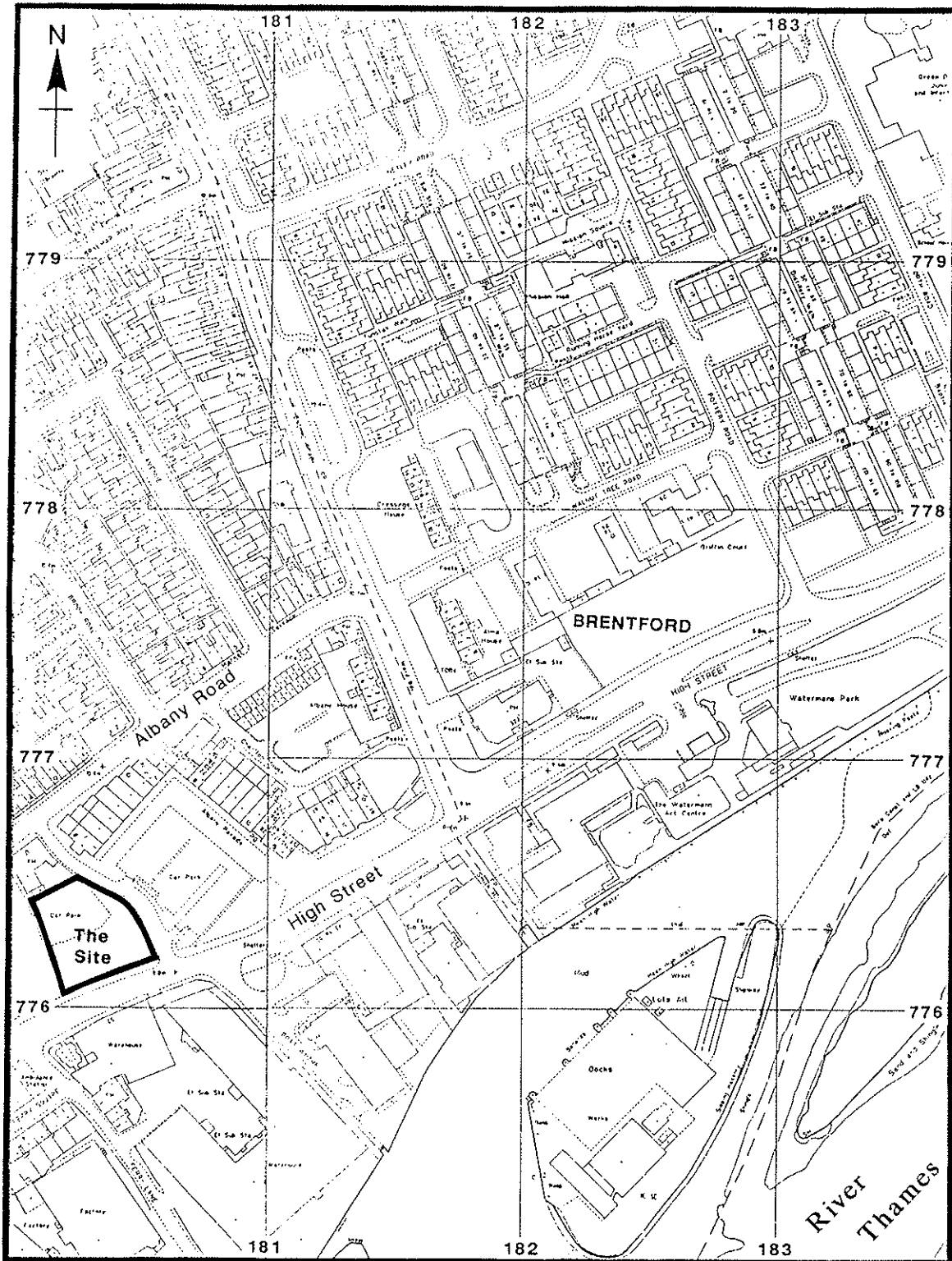
Pearce J 1992 Post Medieval Pottery in London, 1500-1700: Border Wares HMSO

Table 1 Contexts

Context description Extent depth date of pottery (and number of sherds)

100	topsoil	-	0.21	
101	demolition layer	3.8		
102	garden soil	3.8	0.31	
103	fill of 104			
104	modern pit	0.5	>0.58	
105	fill of 106			
106	modern soakaway	>1.1	>1	
107	modern cellared building			includes contexts 109-117
108	upper brickearth	3.8		1720-1770, 1 flake
109	demolition rubble			plastic doll and part of a sink.
110	demolition rubble			
111	brick rubble			
112	concrete floor			
113	concrete floor			
114	brick wall			
115	brick wall			
116	fill of 117			

117	construction pit for cellar			
118	brick wall			
200	tarmac		0.16	
201	modern make-up		0.31	
202	fill of 203			
203	cut for drain	0.32	0.49	
204	brick wall	0.36	0.36	
205	brick wall	0.3	0.49	
206	fill of 207			
207	cut for drain	0.3	0.3	
208	garden soil	-	0.3	
209	soakaway	1.06		
210	fill of 211			1550-1750
211	cut for small square pit	0.84	0.08	
212	upper brickearth		<0.23	1800-1900, 1 flake, 1 blade and a burnt flint
213	fill of 214			burnt flint
214	cut for posthole			
215	brickearth	-	-	1600-1650, 1 flake and 1 core
216	fill of 217			
217	cut for posthole			



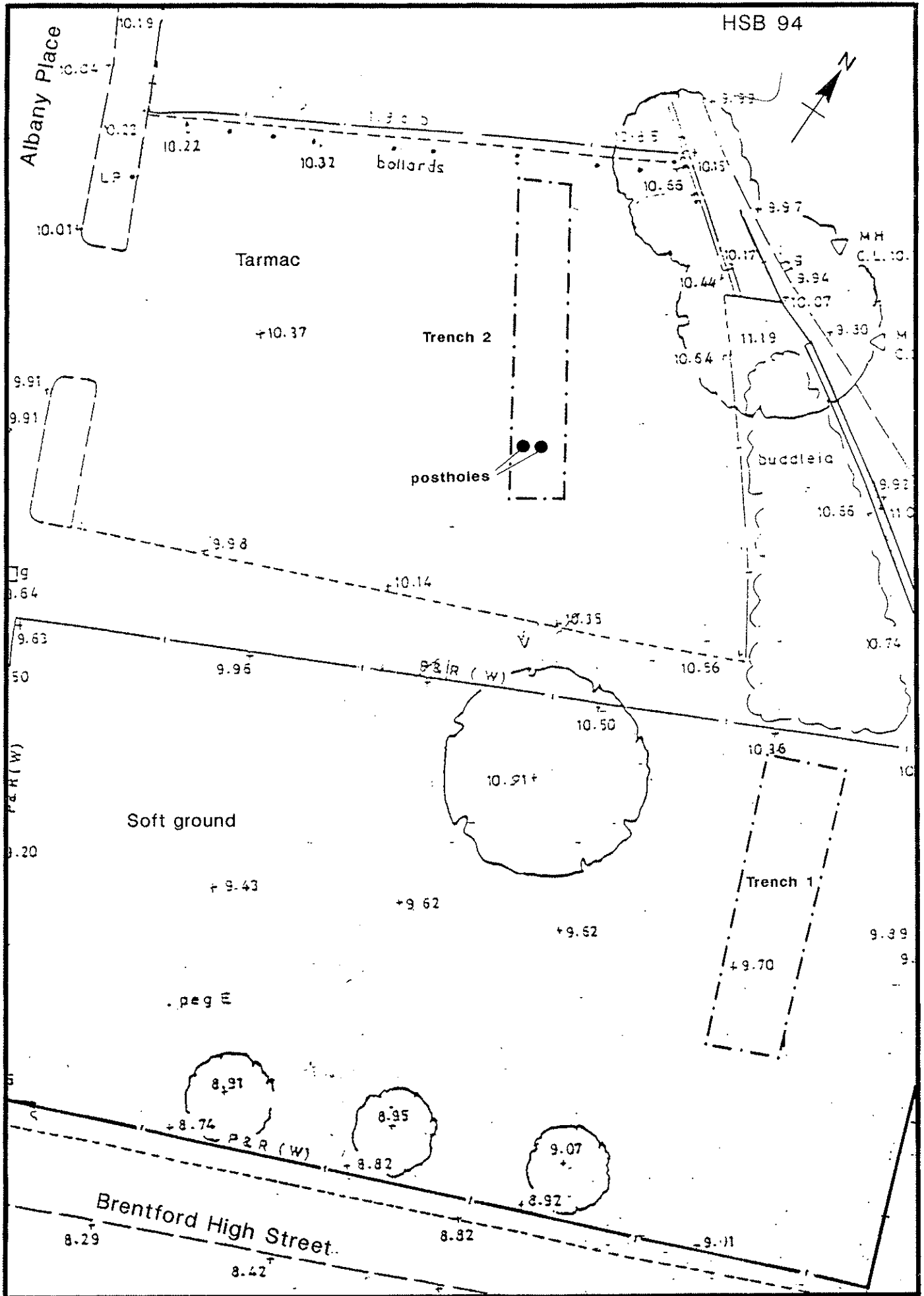
Site location

scale 1:2500

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figure 1



Trench location

scale 1:200

figure 2

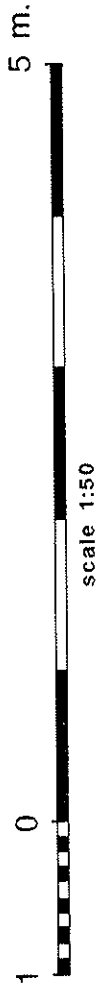
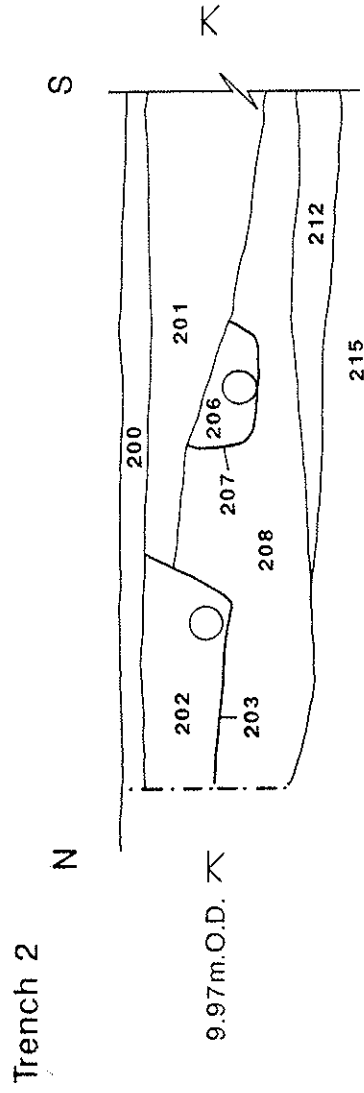
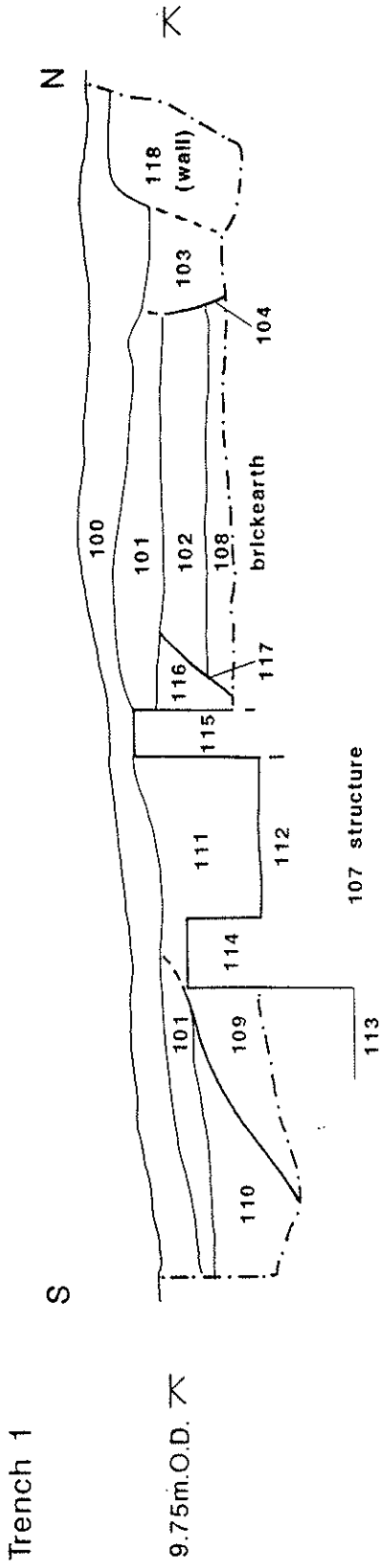
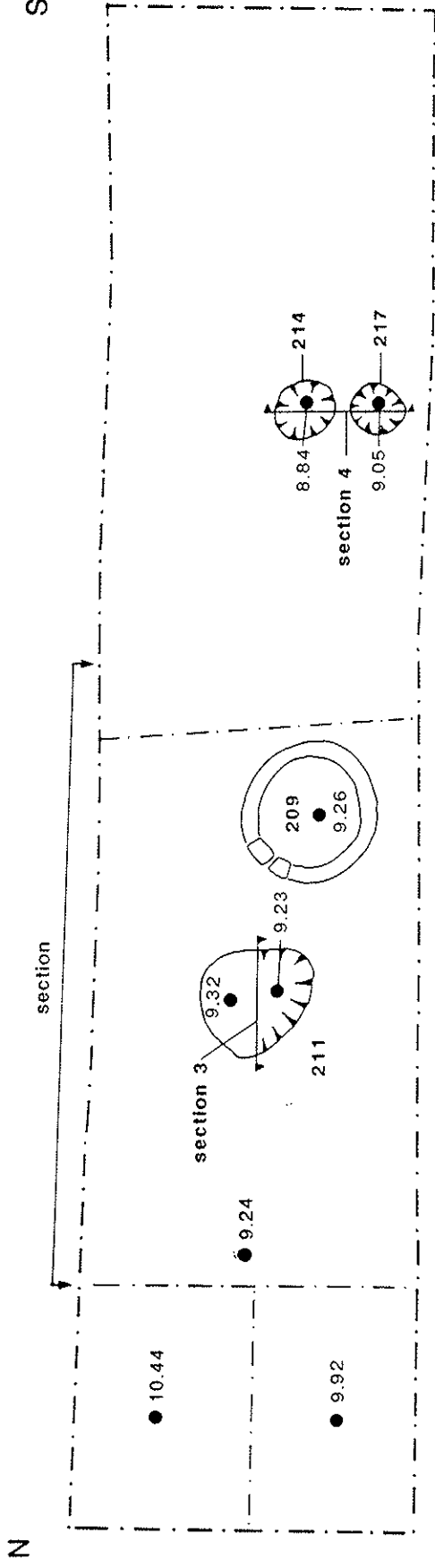
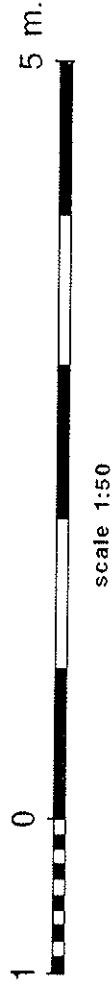


figure 3



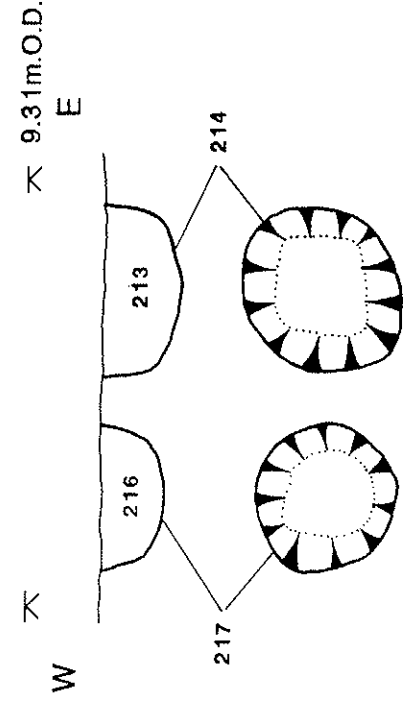
● levels in metres O.D.



section 3

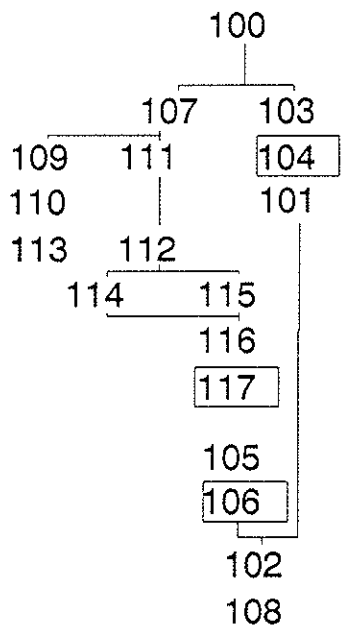


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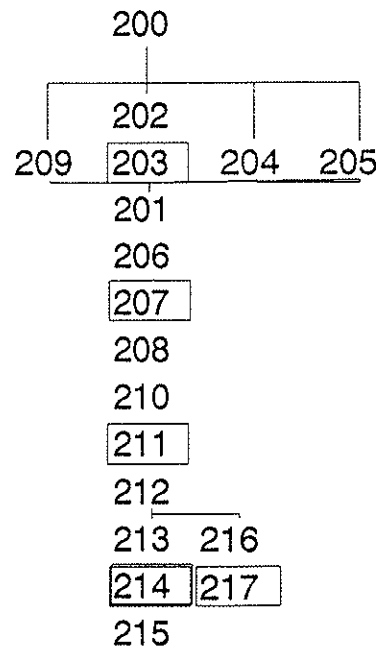


High Street, Brentford, trench matrices

Trench 1



Trench 2





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