

Land to the rear of  
No. 24 High Street  
Highworth  
Wiltshire



**Archaeological Evaluation Report**



**Oxford Archaeology**

May 2005

**Client: Gregory Gray Associates**

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Prepared by: Mike Sims  
Position: SWD Project Supervisor  
Date: 26th April 2005

Checked by: Andrew Holmes  
Position: Head of Small Works  
Date: 28th April 2005

Approved by: Nick Shepherd  
Position: Head of Fieldwork  
Date: 16th May 2005

Signed.....



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**Oxford Archaeology**

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Janus House

Osney Mead

Oxford OX2 0ES

t: (0044) 01865 263800

f: (0044) 01865 793496

e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk

w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk

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# Land to the Rear of No. 24, High Street, Highworth, Wiltshire

## *ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT*

### CONTENTS

Summary .....	1
1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Scope of work .....	1
1.2 Location, geology and topography .....	1
1.3 Archaeological and historical background .....	1
2 Evaluation Aims .....	2
3 Evaluation Methodology.....	2
3.1 Scope of fieldwork.....	2
3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording .....	2
3.3 Finds.....	3
3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence .....	3
3.5 Presentation of results.....	3
4 Results: General.....	3
4.1 Soils and ground conditions.....	3
4.2 Distribution of archaeological deposits .....	3
5 Results: Descriptions .....	3
5.1 Description of deposits .....	3
5.2 Finds.....	4
6 Discussion and Interpretation .....	5
6.1 Reliability of field investigation .....	5
6.2 Overall interpretation.....	5
Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory.....	6
Appendix 2 References.....	7
Appendix 3 Summary of Site Details .....	7

### LIST OF FIGURES

- Fig. 1 Site location
- Fig. 2 Trench location
- Fig. 3 Trench 1, plan and sections
- Fig. 4 Trench 2, plan and sections
- Fig. 5 Trench 3, plan and sections
- Fig. 6 Trench 4, plan and sections

## SUMMARY

*Between the 21st and 22nd of April 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation on land to the rear of No. 24 High Street, Highworth, Wiltshire (NGR: SU 201 922) on behalf of Gregory Gray Associates. The evaluation revealed 18th, 19th and 20th century worked soils overlying cornbrash. An 18th century cobbled path associated with the standing dwellings was also observed. No deposits, features or artefacts earlier than these dates were encountered.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Between the 21st and 22nd of April 2005 OA carried out a field evaluation on land to the rear of No. 24 High Street, Highworth, Wiltshire (NGR: SU 201 922) on behalf of Gregory Gray Associates in respect of a planning application for the construction of a new dwelling (Planning Application No. S/04/01284RM).
- 1.1.2 A letter (Ref: 04RAC18) was produced by Roy Canham, the County Archaeologist for Wiltshire County Archaeological Services (WCAS) outlining an archaeological requirement for a 3% sample of the development area by trial trenching.
- 1.1.3 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was produced by OA, and agreed with Roy Canham, showing how it would meet these requirements (OA 2005).

### 1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is located on the southern side of the town of Highworth (Fig. 1) and is a linear block of land running north-south from the rear of the houses fronting the High Street, back to the B4019, Brewery Street. The land is roughly level and is currently hardstanding, driveways, gardens and outbuildings lying at approximately 133.5 m above OD and occupies 0.3 hectares. The underlying geology is first and second terrace gravels overlaid by alluvium (British Geological Survey Sheet No. 252).

### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the evaluation was prepared for the WSI (OA 2005), the results of which are presented below.
- 1.3.2 The site of the proposed residential development lies within the medieval town of Highworth. However, evidence of earlier activity and settlement has been discovered in and around the town from the Mesolithic to the Saxon period. Finds such as Mesolithic and Neolithic flint tools, Iron Age pottery, Romano-British coins and ceramics and Saxon pottery have been retrieved from within 1 km of the proposed development site.

- 1.3.3 South of Westrop House, within 150 m of the site, Roman pottery (SMR 34013) and a bronze coin (SMR 41143) was found and 200 m south-west was discovered a 3rd century crouched inhumation of a young woman during excavations on a small mound (SMR33991). Both Saxon and medieval pottery (SMR 41146 and 41175) have been retrieved some 250 m east and south-east of the proposed development and it is thought that there may exist remains of medieval burgage plots within the south-west corner of the site now enclosed by post-medieval stone walls.
- 1.3.4 The site itself has produced no archaeological evidence.

## **2 EVALUATION AIMS**

- 2.1.1 To establish the presence or absence, extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of archaeological remains within the development area. In particular, attention will be paid to remains relating to the earlier development of the village and evidence of early farming practices.
- 2.1.2 To establish the palaeo-environmental potential of any features or deposits within the site.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the investigation.

## **3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Scope of fieldwork**

- 3.1.1 The evaluation consisted of four machine dug trenches, all 1.8 m wide (Fig. 2). Trench 1 measured 7 m long and was located within the rear garden of No. 24 High Street, Trench 2 measured 8 m long and was located within the driveway adjacent to the outbuildings against the eastern boundary within the centre of the site, Trench 3 was 7 m long and was located on hardstanding abutting the eastern boundary of the development area, while Trench 4 measured 20 m long and was located running up to the southern boundary of the development area.
- 3.1.2 The overburden was removed under close archaeological supervision by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket. Excavation proceeded in spits down to either undisturbed natural deposits or to the first significant archaeological horizon, whichever was encountered first.

### **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, where possible, to retrieve finds and environmental samples. The trenches were planned at a scale of 1:50 and any sections recorded were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All features, trenches and sections were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OA Field 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.

### 3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

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

### 3.5 Presentation of results

- 3.5.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below, starting with the stratigraphic accounts of each trench, followed by an overall discussion and interpretation.

## 4 RESULTS: GENERAL

### 4.1 Soils and ground conditions

- 4.1.1 Trench 1 comprised garden soils overlying a cobbled path and cornbrash while Trenches 2, 3 and 4 comprised modern tarmac and hardcore surfaces overlying worked soils which, in turn overlaid cornbrash. The boundaries of the layers were well defined. Soil conditions were moist with no waterlogging.

### 4.2 Distribution of archaeological deposits

- 4.2.1 Post-medieval deposits were encountered in all the trenches, while the only significant archaeological feature was encountered within Trench 1.

## 5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

### 5.1 Description of deposits

#### ***Trench 1 (Fig. 3)***

- 5.1.1 The undisturbed natural, a yellow-brown cornbrash (14), was reached at a depth of 0.75 m below ground level. This was sealed by a layer of green-grey silty loam (13) of between 0.15 m and 0.28 m in depth. This contained charcoal flecking and fragments of brown glazed earthenware suggesting an 18th to early 19th century cultivated soil. At the western end of the trench a 1.18 m wide north-south aligned cobbled path (12) was set into this layer. This pathway was composed of roughly squared large river pebbles measuring on average 100 mm x 80 mm x 70 mm. The projected alignment of this path matches a blocked up doorway within the wall immediately south of the trench while its northern projection matches an alleyway between two of the High Street buildings. This feature and layer 13 was sealed below a layer of very dark grey-brown silt loam (11), approximately 0.5 m deep and representing a later garden soil. Many fragments of transfer printed china were recovered from this layer suggesting a 19th to 20th century date.

**Trench 2 (Fig. 4)**

- 5.1.2 The natural, a yellow-brown cornbrash (25), was encountered at a depth of between 0.5 m and 0.7 m below ground level. This was overlaid by a 0.15 m thick layer of grey-brown clay silt (24) containing charcoal flecking and small sub-angular limestone fragments and which represents a cultivated soil. Sealing this was a layer of grey-brown clay silt (23) between 0.18 and 0.38 m in depth. This contained many small, medium and large limestone fragments as well as numerous brick fragments and was an area of made ground, probably a driveway. The size of the brick fragments suggest a 19th century date.
- 5.1.3 Overlying this was a 0.1 m thick layer of crushed stone (22), the hardcore base for the current 0.08 m thick tarmac driveway surface (21).

**Trench 3 (Fig. 5)**

- 5.1.4 The natural cornbrash (34) was encountered at a depth of between 0.6 m and 0.8 m below ground level. This was sealed by a layer of grey-brown clay silt (33), of between 0.15 m and 0.28 m in depth. This layer contained many medium to large limestone fragments as well as brick fragments and represents made ground, probably a base for a driveway or courtyard and probably part of the same phase of activity as layer (23) within Trench 2. Within the southern end of the trench this was overlaid by a 0.2 m thick lens of a light grey-brown silt clay (35), a probable dump of made ground. Sealing both 35, and 33 within the remainder of the trench, was a layer of very dark grey-brown silt loam (32). This contained fragments of transfer printed pottery as well as bottle glass and may represent an accumulation of garden soils over the edge of the made ground. A 0.12 m thick layer of modern gravels and thin tarmac (31) completes the section.

**Trench 4 (Fig. 6)**

- 5.1.5 Natural cornbrash was reached at a depth of 0.75 m below ground level. This was overlaid by a 0.2 m thick layer of dark green-grey clay loam (44). This produced charcoal flecking, glazed earthenware pottery and a fragment of clay pipe stem, all indicative of a 18th century date. This layer represents a worked soil, either a ploughsoil or a garden soil. Sealing this was a 0.3 m deep layer of grey-brown sandy clay loam (43). This layer contained charcoal flecking and transfer printed pottery and probably represents a 19th or early 20th century garden soil. This was overlaid by a 0.15 m deep layer of black pulverised clinker and ash (42), which also contained many brick and paver fragments and represents a layer of hardcore, possibly a 20th century courtyard surface. A modern gravel and tarmac tennis court surface (41) 75 mm thick had been laid directly on top of this.

**5.2 Finds**

- 5.2.1 All the finds recovered during the course of the evaluation were of a late post-medieval date notably the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries. These finds included glazed earthenware and transfer printed pottery, bottle glass, clay pipe, brick and tile.

The pottery, glass and clay pipe were retained, while the brick and tile was evaluated on site but not retained.

## **6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION**

### **6.1 Reliability of field investigation**

- 6.1.1 The percentage sample of the proposed development area (2.8 %) and the similarity of the lower deposits in all the trenches gives a high confidence that the interpretation will apply throughout the site.

### **6.2 Overall interpretation**

- 6.2.1 The deposits observed appear to relate directly to the construction, occupation and use of the surrounding buildings. These buildings appear to be originally coach houses and stables belonging to the houses facing the High Street. While layer (44) within Trench 4 may represent a ploughsoil, it is more likely that it, and the other worked soils 11, 12, 24, 32 and 43 represent late post-medieval garden or allotment soils associated with these houses, as does the pathway (12). The deposition of the hardcore layers 23, 33 and 42 appear to represent a change of use of the southern extent of the site, possibly in the late 19th century: suggested uses are as a stable yard or small works (the plot to the east of the site was used as a slaughter house up to the 1960's).
- 6.2.2 The absence of earlier residual finds or truncated intrusive features suggests that this area was predominately open land in nature prior to the construction of the standing buildings. The evaluation observed no evidence of any pre-18th century development of the village or evidence for any early farming practises.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Thick. (m)</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
1							
	11	Layer	-	0.5 m	Garden soils	Pottery	C19th/ C20th
	12	Surface	1.18 m	0.1 m	Garden path	-	C18th/ C19th
	13	Layer	-	0.25 m	Cultivated soils	Pottery	C18th
	14	Layer	-	>0.1 m	Cornbrash	-	-
2							
	21	Surface	-	0.08 m	Tarmac	-	C20th
	22	Layer	-	0.1 m	Crushed stone	-	C20th
	23	Layer	-	0.3 m	Made ground / hardcore and soil	Brick	C19th
	24	Layer	-	0.15 m	Garden soils	-	C18th/ C19th
	25	Layer	-	>0.1 m	Cornbrash	-	-
3							
	31	Surface	-	0.12 m	Tarmac and gravel base	-	C20th
	32	Layer	-	0.25 m	Garden soil	Pottery	C19th
	33	Layer	-	0.2 m	Made ground / hardcore and soil	Brick	C19th
	34	Layer	-	>0.1 m	Cornbrash	-	-
	35	Layer	-	0.2 m	Garden soil	-	C19th
4							
	41	Surface	-	0.07 m	Tarmac tennis court	-	C20th
	42	Layer	-	0.15 m	Hardcore layer	Brick, tile	C19th/ C20th
	43	Layer	-	0.35 m	Garden soils	Pottery	C19th
	44	Layer	-	0.2 m	Cultivated soils	Brick, pottery, clay pipe	C18th
	45	Layer	-	>0.1 m	Cornbrash	-	-

**APPENDIX 2 REFERENCES**

IFA, 1999 *Standard and Guidance for archaeological evaluations*

OA, 1992 *Field Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson)

OA, 2000 *Environmental Sampling Guidelines and Instruction Manual*

OA, 2005 *Land to the Rear of No. 24 High Street, Highworth, Wiltshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation*

WCAS, 1995 *Standards for Archaeological assessment and Field Evaluation in Wiltshire.*

**APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS**

**Site name:** Land to the rear of No. 24 High Street, Highworth, Wiltshire

**Site code:** HIBS 05

**Grid reference:** SU 201 922

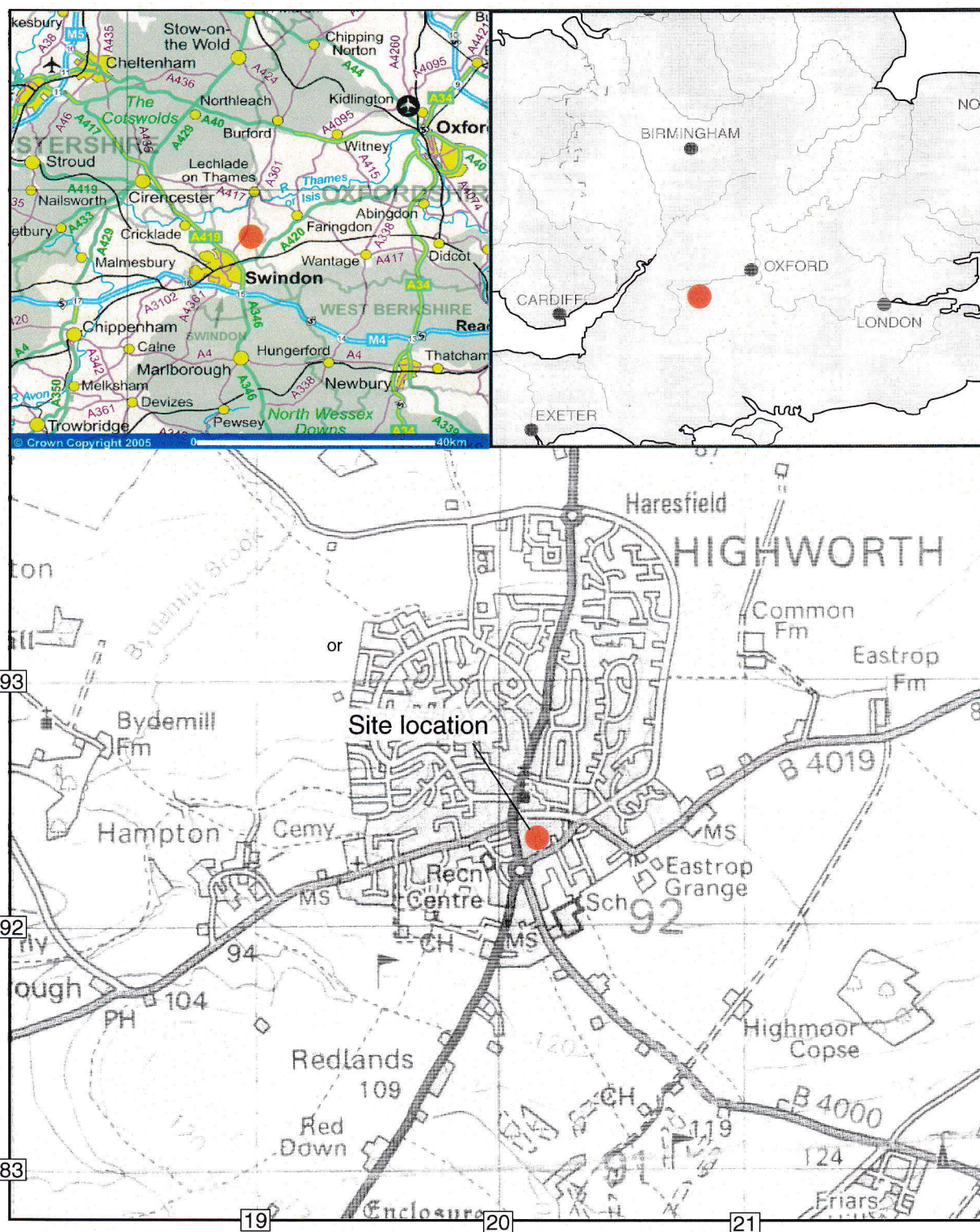
**Type of evaluation:** Four machine dug trenches, 42 m total length

**Date and duration of project:** 21st and 22nd April 2005, 2 days

**Area of site:** 0.3 hectares

**Summary of results:** 18th, 19th and 20th century garden soils overlying cornbrash.  
18th/19th cobbled path within Trench 1

**Location of archive:** The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Swindon Museum and Art Gallery in due course, under the following accession number: B2005/06



Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site Location

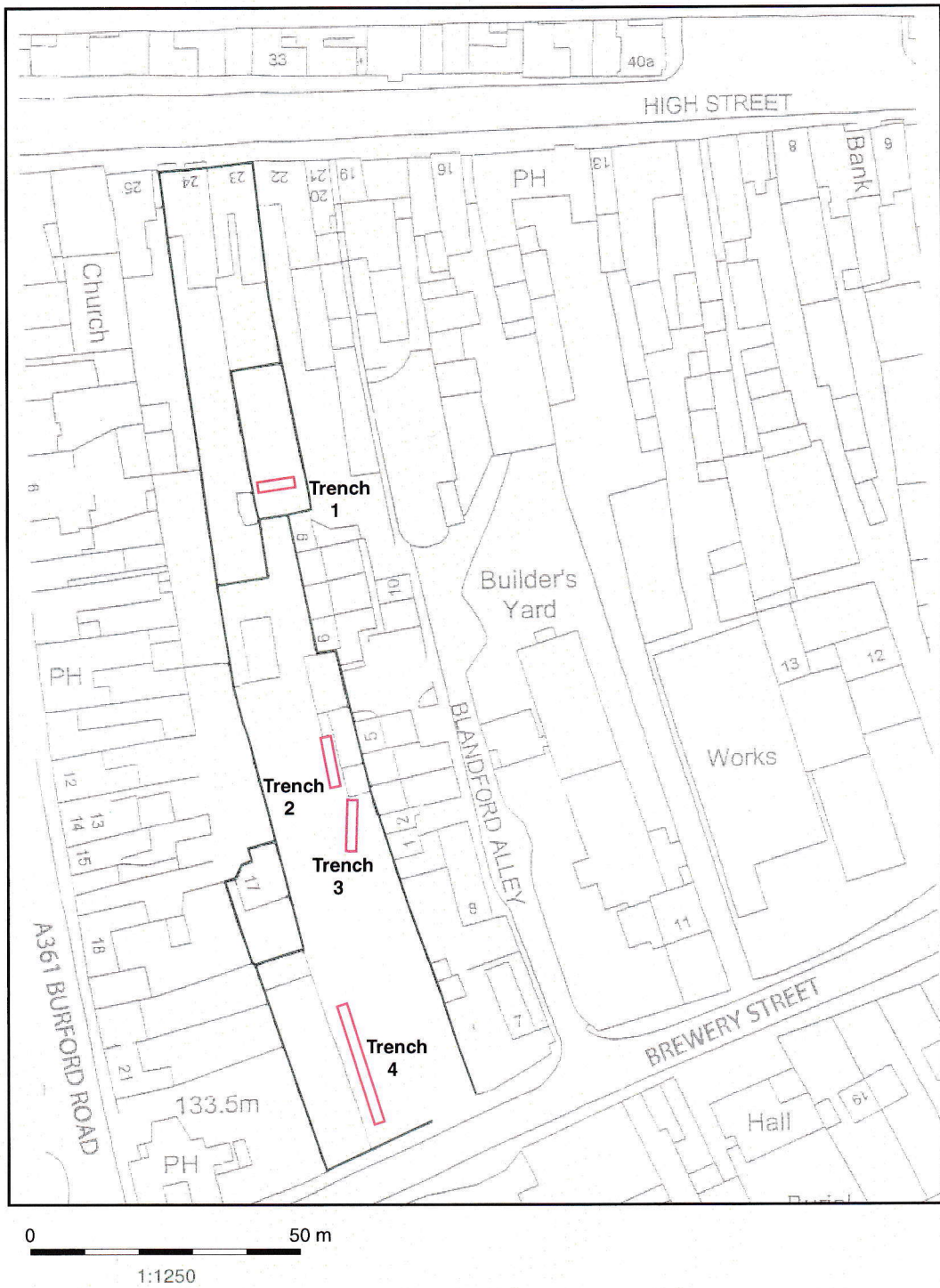


Figure 2: Trench location

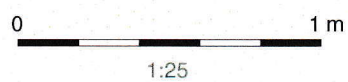
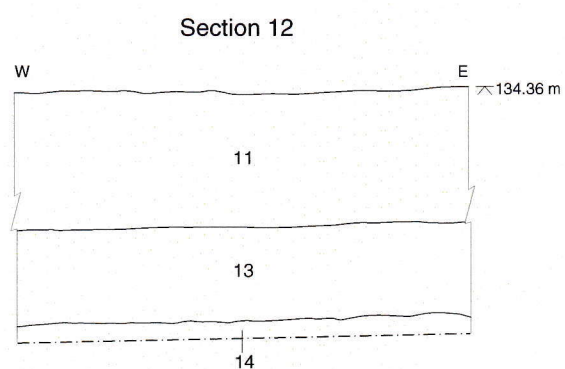
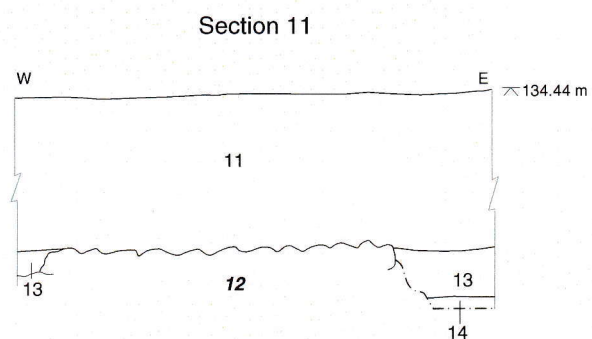
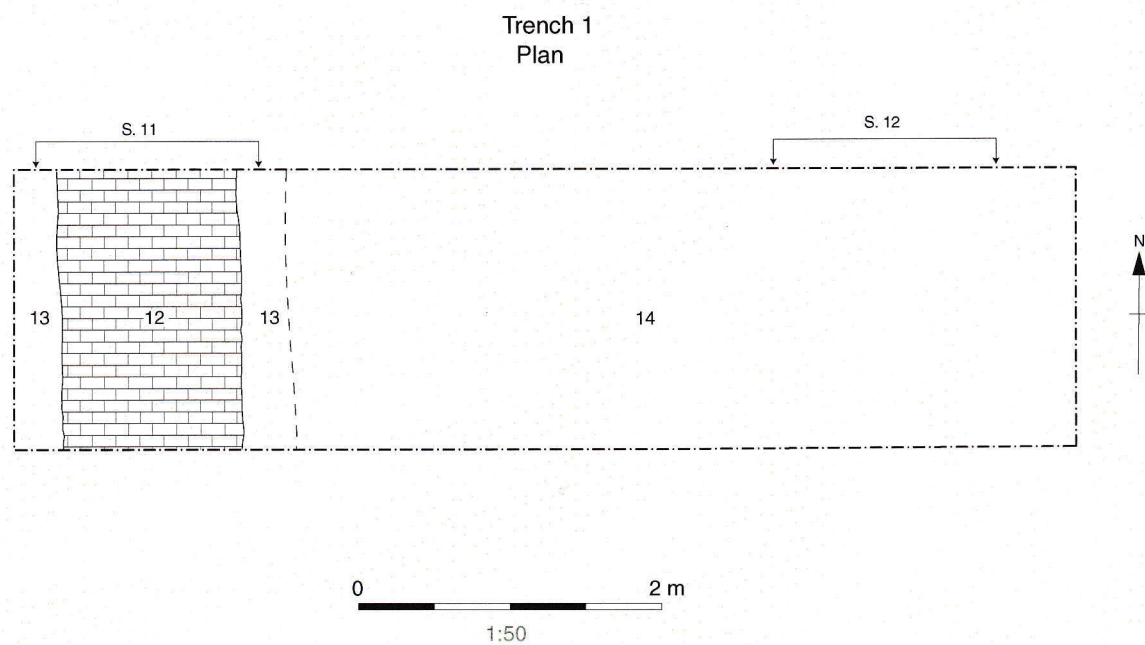


Figure 3: Trench 1, plan and sections

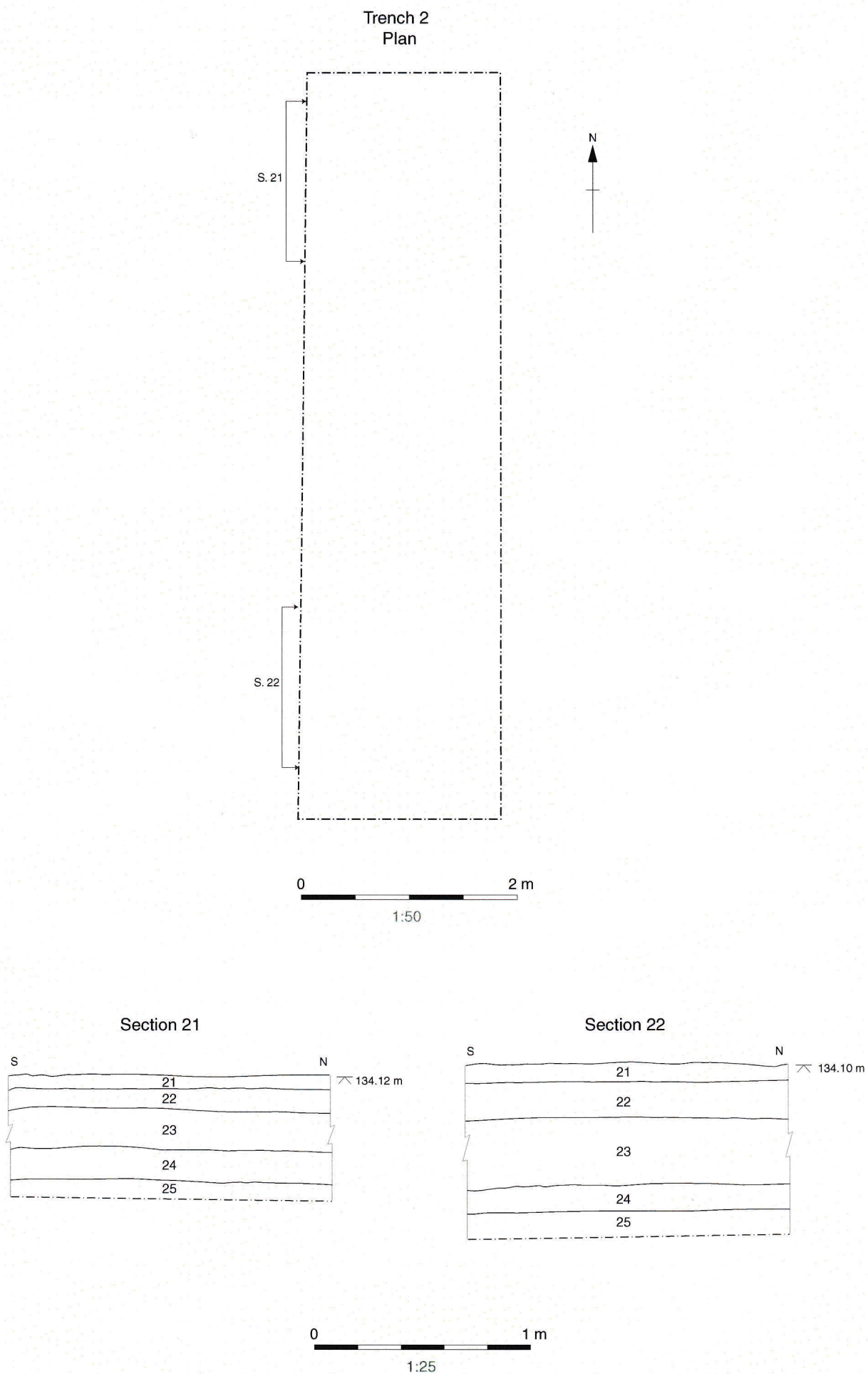


Figure 4: Trench 2, plan and sections

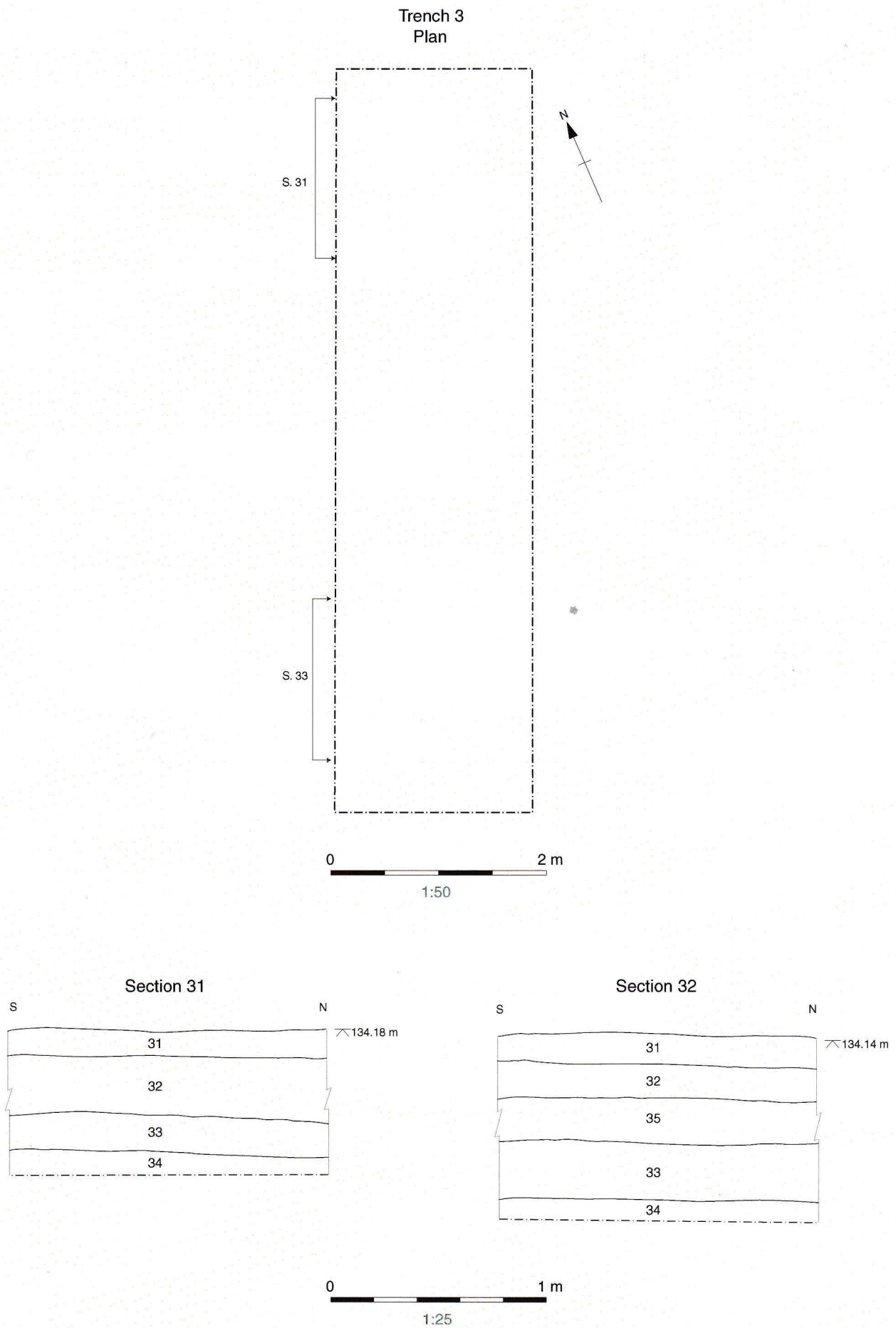


Figure 5: Trench 3, plan and sections

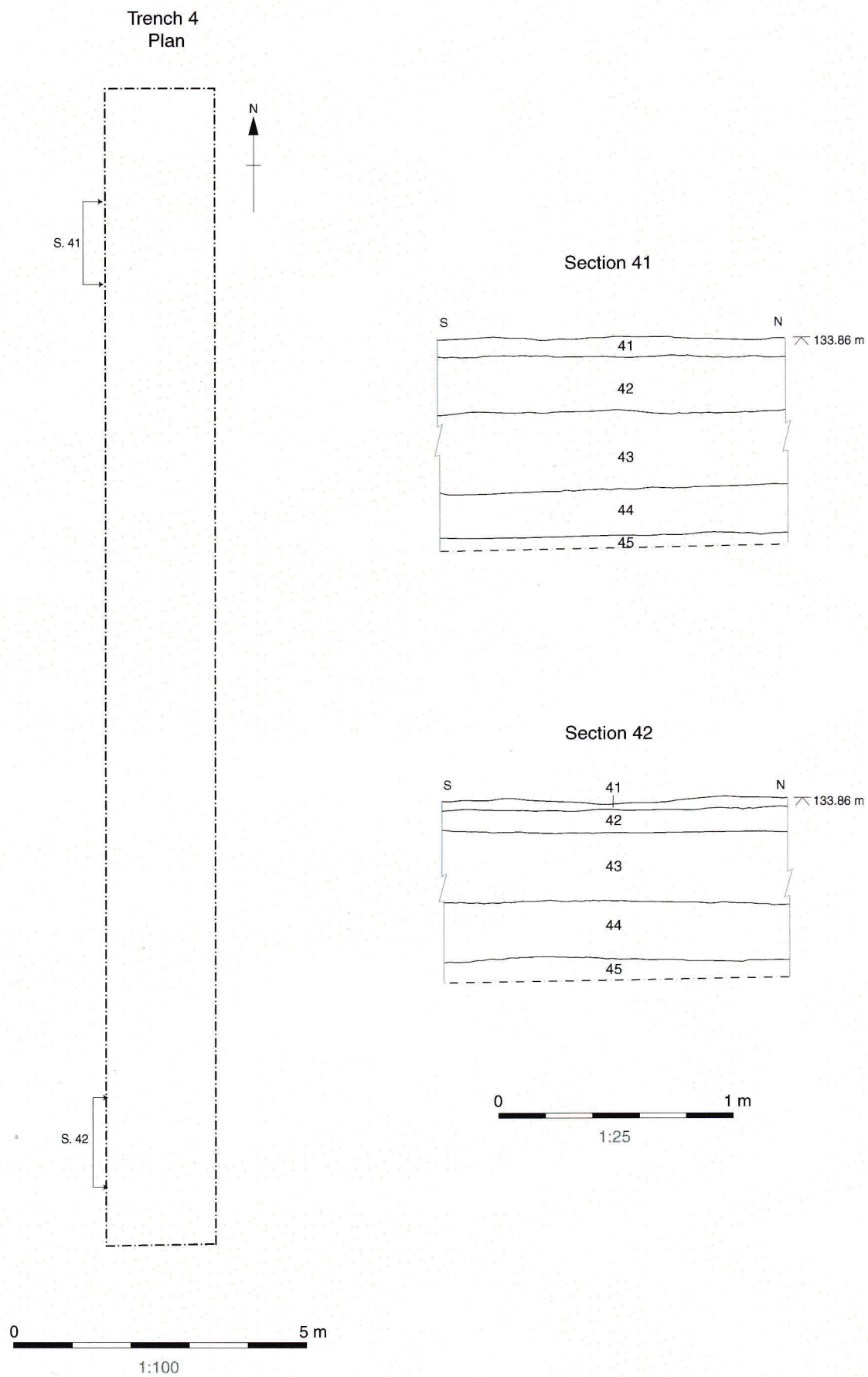


Figure 6: Trench 4, plan and sections



### **Oxford Archaeology**

Janus House  
Osney Mead  
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: (0044) 01865 263800  
f: (0044) 01865 793496  
e: [info@oxfordarch.co.uk](mailto:info@oxfordarch.co.uk)  
w: [www.oxfordarch.co.uk](http://www.oxfordarch.co.uk)



### **Oxford Archaeology North**

Storey Institute  
Meeting House Lane  
Lancaster LA1 1TF

t: (0044) 01524 541000  
f: (0044) 01524 848606  
e: [lancinfo@oxfordarch.co.uk](mailto:lancinfo@oxfordarch.co.uk)  
w: [www.oxfordarch.co.uk](http://www.oxfordarch.co.uk)



**Director:** David Jennings, BA MIFA FSA

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Oxford Archaeological Unit  
Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES