

Westbury Homes Ltd

Bicester Fields Farm, Bicester, Oxfordshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

SP 5920 2220

CHN 98/00075/OUT



OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

July 1998

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SUMMARY

The Oxford Archaeological Unit carried out a field evaluation at Bicester Fields Farm, Bicester, Oxfordshire, on behalf of Westbury Homes Ltd. The evaluation, which included geophysical survey and trenching, revealed evidence of later prehistoric settlement, in the form of a sub-rectangular enclosure and associated pits and gullies. A possible circular structure was also revealed on the outer edge of the enclosure ditch. The pottery recovered from these features indicated a middle- to late Iron Age date range, with no indication of occupation extending beyond the Roman conquest. The site appears to have been occupied only during this period.

Subsequent medieval or post-medieval agricultural use has resulted in extensive ridge and furrow, which survives in a good state of preservation across most of the site. The only part of the site without surviving ridge and furrow is the south-western field, which seems to have been quarried for brickearth.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work (Fig.1)

In June 1998 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) carried out a field evaluation at Bicester Fields Farm, Bicester, Oxfordshire on behalf of Westbury Homes Ltd in respect of a planning application for the erection of dwellings, new access roads and Public Open Space (Planning Application No.CHN 98/00075/OUT). The work was conducted in accordance with a brief prepared by Oxford County Archaeological Services, and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) by the OAU. The development site (Fig. 1) lay on the south-eastern periphery of Bicester (centered at SP 592 222) and is bounded to the north by a railway line, to the south by Langford Brook and the outskirts of Langford Village, to the west by the B4100 London Road and to the east by Gavray Drive. The development area is 33.1 hectares in area, of which 14.6 hectares are designated for housing.

1.2 Geology and topography

The site lies about 300 m east of the confluence of Langford Brook and Pringle Stream (both Thames headwaters) at c.70 m above Ordnance Datum (OD). The geology is mapped as being Cornbrash limestone, Oxford Clay and Great Oolite (Geo. Surv. Map 236, 1946). The site lies in an area that is currently under pasture (semi-improved grassland). Medieval/ post-medieval agricultural use has resulted in extensive ridge and furrow, which survives in a good state of preservation across most of the site. The only part of the site without surviving ridge and furrow is the south-western field, which seems to have been quarried for brickearth.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

The archaeological background to the evaluation was included in a desk-top study by Countryside Planning and Management (Heywood, 1997). The site has also been the subject of an archaeogeophysical survey, conducted by the Bartlett-Clark Consultancy.

The information presented indicates that Prehistoric and Romano-British occupation on the periphery of Bicester including the floodplain of Langford Brook is greater than previously recognised, and that the area in general was extensively farmed during this period.

The site itself has previously produced no archaeological evidence but there are several known sites/locations with archaeological finds adjacent to the development site:

- (i) **Prehistoric:** Mesolithic, late Bronze Age and Iron Age occupation was revealed by excavations at Slade Farm to the north-west of Bicester (OAU 1998). A fragment of a Neolithic polished stone axe is recorded c.500 m to the south-west of the development area (SMR 7505). Excavations undertaken by the Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit produced evidence of transitional late Iron Age/Romano-British settlement within the floodplain of the Langford Brook, c.500 m to the west of the current site (Mould 1996).

- (ii) **Romano-British:** At Bicester Park, c.500 m south-east of the current site, an evaluation revealed evidence for a probable low status Roman settlement of 2nd century AD date (OAU 1996). Bicester itself is located 3 km north of the Roman town of Alchester, which lay close to the junction of Akeman Street and the Alchester to Towcester roads (SMRs 8920 & 8922).
- (iii) **Anglo-Saxon:** Anglo-Saxon pottery was also recovered from the Bicester Park site, though no settlement evidence was found. Bicester's Saxon origins are still unclear but St. Birinus is reputed to have founded the town in the 7th century AD. The town has developed from two manors, King's End and Market End that are both Saxon settlements. St. Edburg's parish church in King's End was a late Saxon Minster.
- (iv) **Medieval:** Evidence for this period is extensive within Bicester and its environs, including the scheduled deserted medieval village site of Wretchwick. (SAM 108, SMR 3257) c.500 m south-east of Bicester Fields Farm.
- (v) **Post-medieval:** The closest SMR reference to the development site is a builder's brickyard subsequently used as a rubbish tip (SMR 558).

2 EVALUATION AIMS

The aims of the evaluation are as set out in the WSI (OAU 1998, section 2):

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the proposal area.
- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present.
- To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features.
- To make available the results of the investigation.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Sample size (Fig.2)

The evaluation was based upon a 1.5% (3808 square metre) sample of the development area, and consisted of 35 trenches. Seven trenches were 50 m long, 28 were 30 m long and all were 2 m wide. The overburden was removed by a 360^o mechanical excavator under close archaeological supervision. The location of the trenches was targeted particularly on the geophysical anomalies identified by the Archaeogeophysical Survey (Bartlett 1998), but was designed to provide coverage of the whole site.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

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 (at a scale of 1:100) 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

All artefacts were retained for specialist identification and assessment (see Appendices 2-4).

3.4 Environmental data

Four soil samples were taken for purposes of environmental assessment. Three were from the primary fills of ditches to sample for waterlogged remains, snails and pollen and small bones/artefacts. The fourth, from the secondary fill of a ditch, was also expected to yield charred plant remains.

4 RESULTS: GENERAL

4.1 Soils and ground conditions

The general soil type was calcareous Oxford Clay with alluvium, containing few or no inclusions. Bone preservation was good, but terrestrial snails did not survive. Ground conditions were dry with poor preservation of waterlogged materials.

4.2 Distribution of Archaeological Deposits

The trenching results confirm and amplify the geophysical survey results. Archaeological features were concentrated in the south-eastern part of the development area (Trenches 3, 5, 6, 7, 12 and 14) and two ditches aligned directly with the sub-rectangular enclosure identified by the geophysical survey. A number of minor anomalies were shown to be of no archaeological significance. In the western part of the site, only Trench 35 produced any archaeological evidence.

Medieval/post-medieval ridge and furrow, mostly aligned east to west, or north-east to south-west, was evident across most of the site (except for the south-western field). Erosion of archaeological features by ploughing was particularly severe along the lines of the furrows in most trenches.

An orange-brown or grey clay silt subsoil sealed all archaeological features where present. However, this layer was not present over part of the site, notably in Trenches 10-12 and Trenches 30-32 in the south-western part of the site. Within the latter area post-medieval quarrying had removed the old ground surface or subsoil. The topsoil was a compact grey-brown silty loam. The natural subsoil was a mid-brown alluvial silty clay, with frequent patches of Oxford Clay and limestone gravels.

4.3 Presentation of Results

Trenches containing archaeological features are discussed individually (sections 5.1.1- 8), whereas the archaeologically sterile trenches are summarised collectively (section 5.1.9). Artefactual evidence is discussed briefly by material category (section 5.2) and the environmental evidence is summarised in section 5.3. A full listing of all contexts and other deposits is presented in Appendix 1.

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Description of deposits

5.1.1 Trench 3 (50 m x 2 m, NE-SW) Fig. 3

All features were overlain by subsoil (301) and topsoil (300).

A ditch (311) situated at the south-western end of the trench ran in a north-west to south-east direction, possibly curving slightly to the south. It was 1.1 m wide and 0.4 m deep, had a relatively flat base and steep, concave sides. The three fills were all silty clays with evidence of iron staining and leaching in the upper two. No finds were recovered.

A north-west to south-east aligned ditch (305), which was 2.8 m wide and a maximum of 0.9 m deep, had a U-shaped profile with gently sloping sides. Natural slumping was indicated by the two primary fills (309 & 310), both similar silty clays with some iron staining. Fill 309 produced fragments of fired clay. The two upper fills (306 & 307) were both friable grey-brown silty clays. Fill 306 contained a substantial amount of charcoal, and one fragment of middle Iron Age pottery. Fill 307 and the primary fill (308) both contained animal bone.

A shallow ditch or gully (317) ran parallel to ditch 305 c. 4 m to the north-east. The feature was U-shaped in profile, with steep sides. It was 0.42 m deep and a maximum of 0.2 m deep. The single fill (318), a friable silty clay, contained no inclusions and yielded no finds. Approximately 8 m north-east of 317 was a feature (303) aligned south-east to north-west and terminating 1 m beyond the long north facing section. Feature 303 had a flat base and vertical sides and measured 0.5 m in width and 0.38 m in depth. The single fill (304) was a compact silty clay containing a significant amount of burnt stone, five fragments of middle to late Iron Age pottery and bone.

Ditch 319 which was aligned from north-west to south-east, had a flat base and gently sloping concave sides (1.2 m wide, 0.28 m deep). The single fill (320) was a friable silty clay with occasional charcoal flecks and iron pan. No finds were recovered. Immediately to the north-east of 319 was a north-south aligned gully (321), which adjoined 319, although no relationship was discernable. Gully 321 had a flat base and concave sides and was 0.5 m wide and 0.26 m deep. The single fill (322) was a compact silty loam with occasional charcoal flecks that produced one sherd of late Iron Age pottery.

Six field drains, including 315, were present in the trench. All were aligned from north-west to south-east. A single sherd of middle Iron Age pottery was recovered from the fill (316) of feature 315 but is certainly residual.

5.1.2 Trench 5 (50 m x 2 m, N-S) Fig. 4

This trench revealed a small, shallow ring gully (520 & 522), 3.2 m in diameter. The gully had a rounded base with gently flaring sides. The width of the feature ranged from 0.30 m to 0.50 m and it was c.0.20 m deep. The single fill (521) was a friable grey-brown silty clay containing two sherds of middle to late Iron Age pottery. Gully 520 cut through the fill of an earlier feature (518). Feature 518, which was 1.3 m wide and 0.40 m deep, had a flat base and relatively steep

sides. The primary fill (517) was a friable sandy loam (environmental sample No.3-see Appendix 4) with no inclusions, which produced two sherds of undated pottery. The secondary fill (516), a friable sandy clay, was overlain by the upper fill (515), a friable light red-brown silty clay with minimal inclusions, but containing some bone and Iron Age pottery.

The ring gully was located immediately adjacent to a north-east to south-west aligned ditch (514), forming the south-eastern side of the enclosure identified by the geophysical survey. Ditch 514, which was 1.7 m wide and 0.80 m deep, had a broad, slightly concave base and steep sides. The proportion of clay in the four fills increased towards the base of the sequence, with the primary fill (513) being almost all clay (see Appendix 4). Middle to late Iron Age pottery and animal bone were recovered from this fill, as well as from the two upper fills (510-11).

Ditch 508 also followed a north-east to south-west alignment. It was c.3.1 m wide and 0.90 m deep and had a slightly rounded base and gently flaring sides. The primary fill (507) was a tenacious orange-mottled silty clay (see Appendix 4) that lay beneath the water table. The upper three fills were all friable grey-brown silty clays with varying inclusions. The upper fill (504) produced 12 fragments of late Iron Age pottery and the secondary fill one fragment of mid-late Iron Age pottery.

5.1.3 Trench 6 (50 m E-W) Fig.5

The topsoil (600) overlay subsoil (605) which in turn sealed all archaeological features.

Ditch (604), which was aligned north-west to south-east, had a flat base and steep sides. It was c.0.75 m wide and 0.20 m deep. The two fills (607, 602) were similar orange-brown silty clay with occasional charcoal. A larger ditch (603) converged with ditch 604 at the southern baulk, although their relationship is uncertain. Ditch 603 was a broad V-shaped feature, c.2.35 m wide and c.0.9 m deep. The primary fill (606), a silty clay with occasional charcoal, was overlain by a dark grey brown silty clay (601). The latter produced animal bone and 45 sherds of late Iron Age pottery (see also Appendix 4). At the north-western end of ditch 603 was a north-south aligned cut (626). It may be either the terminal of a separate feature or part of ditch 603.

Immediately to the west of feature 626 was a group of possible postholes. Feature 610 is the most regular, being nearly square in plan, with near vertical sides and a flat base. It was 0.24 m wide and 0.22 m deep. Feature 612, situated 0.4 m to the south of 610, was 0.13 m wide and 0.09 m deep, sub-circular in plan and V-shaped in profile. Feature 627, adjacent and to the east of feature 612, appeared to be roughly circular in plan and with steeply sloping sides. The feature was not excavated to the full depth but was at least 0.12 m deep and 0.5 m wide. The fills of all three features were compact dark grey-brown silty clays and one sherd of late Iron Age pottery was recovered from the fill (609) of posthole 610.

Approximately 1.5 m to the west of 612 was a second roughly square feature (615) (0.33 m deep) with near vertical sides. The fill was very similar to the three features described above, but no finds were recovered.

Feature 617 was a possible north-east to south-west linear gully. The profile was gently rounded and the depth varied, becoming shallower towards the south. It is possible that this is a natural feature, as may be feature (619), a sub-circular cut with an irregular profile. The mixed clay and

clay silt fill suggests that this may be part of a tree bole. No finds were recovered from either of these features.

Gully 622, which was 0.6 m wide and 0.22 m deep, was aligned from north-south and was U-shaped in profile. Ditch 632, which was also aligned from north-south, had a wide, flat bottom and gently sloping sides (2 m wide, 0.45 m deep). The single fill (633), a compact grey-brown silty clay with lenses of orange silty clay throughout, produced no finds.

Running alongside, and parallel to the western edge of ditch 632 were a pair of opposed terminals, 0.1 m apart. The relationship between the southern terminal (644) and ditch 632 is uncertain, but terminal 629 is truncated by 644. The northern terminal (629) had a U-shaped profile measuring 0.48 m deep and 1.1 m wide. The primary fill (631), a light grey-brown silty clay, was overlain by a secondary fill (630) that contained occasional lenses of orange silty clay and some charcoal flecking. One sherd of middle Iron Age pottery came from fill 631.

Immediately to the west of the terminals was a gully (634) aligned from north-west to south-east. This feature was V-shaped in profile and measured 0.35 m in depth and 0.80 m in width. The relationship between this feature and the southern terminal (644) is uncertain. The fill (635) was a grey brown silty clay with some lenses of orange silty clay and occasional charcoal.

Two post-holes (642, 640) were identified to the west of gully 634. Both were filled with a dark greyish brown silty clay.

An unexcavated linear feature on a north-east to south-west alignment contained an orange-brown silty clay fill (639). Pottery recovered from the surface of the feature was of post-medieval date.

A further ditch or gully (637) was aligned north-west to south-east. The base was flat and the sides were gently sloping. The feature was 0.45 m in width and 0.2 m in depth and with a single fill of dark grey-brown silty clay with charcoal flecks. No finds were recovered.

5.1.4 Trench 7 (30 m NE-SW) Fig.4

Four linear features were revealed: Gully (709) was aligned north-east to south-west. The gully had a rounded profile with a width of 0.44 m and a depth of 0.11 m. The single fill was a light grey-brown silty clay with occasional small gravel and charcoal flecking.

In the centre of the trench a ditch (702) followed the same alignment. The ditch had a roughly U-shaped profile with a width of 0.9 m and a depth of 0.5 m. The primary fill (705) was a compact light orange-brown silty clay with some manganese staining. This was overlain by fill 701, similar to 705 but with regular lenses of orange clay, and some flint finds.

A north-south aligned gully (704) ran up to the north end of ditch 702. The relationship was obscured by an overlying deposit (710). Gully 704 was U-shaped in profile with a width of 0.6 m and a depth of 0.1 m. The single fill (703) was a light orange-brown silty clay with small lenses of light grey silt and some manganese staining.

Running parallel to gully 704 was a further gully (707) 3 m to the south-west. The profile comprised a flat bottom and gently sloping sides, giving a width of 0.5 m and a depth of 0.15 m. No finds were recovered from the single light grey-brown silty clay fill.

Ploughmarks running in a north-west-south-east direction truncated the trench.

5.1.5 Trench 12 (30 m x 2 m, E-W) Fig.6

The base of a north-east-south-west aligned furrow (1202) was located at the western end of the trench. This produced modern finds only.

A gully (1204) was located at the eastern end of the trench on a north-west to south-east alignment. The gully had a rounded base and gently sloping sides (0.5 m wide, 0.2 m deep). The single fill (1205) was a tenacious grey-brown clay silt with some limestone gravel inclusions. No finds were recovered.

5.1.6 Trench 14 (30 m x 2 m, N-S) Fig.6

Towards the southern end of the trench was modern linear feature (1404) on a north-east to south-west alignment. An undated cigar-shaped feature on a parallel alignment to the north (1406), is probably also modern. A third north-west to south-east aligned gully (1408) produced a single fragment of post-medieval ceramic building material.

5.1.7 Trench 30 (30 m x 2 m, E-W) (not illustrated)

A single linear feature (3003) on a north-east to south-west alignment, showed evidence of recent root disturbance and is probably a former field boundary (hedgeline) of modern date. No finds were recovered.

5.1.8 Trench 35 (30 m x 2 m, N-S) Fig.6

The topsoil (3501) overlay the subsoil (3502) which in turn overlay all archaeological features.

Three features were concentrated at the northern end of the trench. The southernmost was a plough furrow (3510) running on a north-east to south-west alignment. Furthest to the north and partially beneath the northern baulk was a ditch (3504) aligned north-west to south-east. The visible base appeared to be broad and flat and the southern edge sloped gently. The estimated width was c.3 m and the depth was 0.68 m. The primary fill (3505), a blue-grey clay silt was overlain by secondary fill (3506), a mid-brown silt. The uppermost fill comprised a brown silt loam.

Ditch 3504 cut linear feature (3508). This measured c.0.85 m in width and 0.2 m in depth. The single fill (3509) was a grey-brown clay silt. No finds were recovered. In plan both features 3504 and 3508 appeared to be truncated by plough furrow 3510 but the relationship was not confirmed.

5.1.9 Trenches 1, 2, 4, 8-11, 13, 15-29, 31-34 (Fig.2)

The remaining 28 trenches revealed no significant archaeological features. The majority of trenches revealed medieval/post-medieval ridge and furrow. Trenches 30-32 were located within an area of probable quarrying that had removed the original ground surface in this area. One recent field boundary was located in trenches 20 and 22 and a second in trench 30. Land drains were evident within many of the trenches.

5.2 Finds

5.2.1 Worked Flint

Four worked flints were recovered. A retouched flake and a burnt flake came from ditch 702. A broken blade-like flake came from the single fill (633) of ditch 632 and a miscellaneous retouched piece from the primary fill (631) of feature 629. Two pieces of burnt unworked flint came from fills 701 and 703. The flint is undiagnostic and could be either Neolithic or Bronze Age.

5.2.2 Iron Age and Romano-British pottery (see Appendix 2)

Ninety-two sherds of middle- to late Iron Age pottery were recovered from trenches 3, 5 and 6. Of the identifiable vessels most were simple jar forms. The assemblage is important in that it contains at least some context groups which appear to represent the ceramic transition from the middle to the late Iron Age, something that is rarely seen in the region as clearly.

A single tiny fragment of fine white ware of a Roman date came from context 1203.

5.2.3 Medieval pottery (see Appendix 2)

Four sherds of medieval or early post-medieval pottery (Brill/Boarstall industry) came from contexts 301, 605 and 1203.

5.2.4 Post-medieval pottery (see Appendix 2)

Fourteen fragments of miscellaneous post-medieval pottery were recovered. They have no potential for further analysis. A piece of post-medieval tile came from context 1409.

5.2.5 Fired clay

Fired clay was recovered from two Iron Age contexts (306 and 601) and undated context 309.

5.2.6 Stone

A fragment of a possible quern stone and a piece of burnt stone came from context 601.

5.2.7 *Slag*

Metalworking slag was recovered in small quantity from ditch fill 513. This context also produced a fragment of crucible.

5.2.8 *Other finds*

Two fragments of post-medieval clay pipe came from the topsoil in trench 6 and the subsoil in trench 2. The latter also produced one fresh water oyster shell. Two pieces of glass came from the subsoil in trench 3. One fragment is from a post-medieval bottle and the other is possibly late Romano-British.

5.3 **Environmental data** (Appendix 4)

5.3.1 *Carbonised plant remains and charcoal*

Charred remains were present in all four samples, though much was recent and possibly intrusive. The majority comprised very small pieces of wood charcoal but grain was also present in all samples. Chaff, indicated by the presence of a single glume (probably oat) came from the primary fill (513) of ditch 514, and weed seeds were present in the primary fill (517) of ditch 518 and also the secondary fill (601) of ditch 603. The amount recovered overall was small but this probably reflects the low number of samples taken.

5.3.2 *Waterlogged plant remains*

Although sampled contexts 507 and 513 were beneath the present water table, no waterlogged plant remains were recovered.

5.3.3 *Mollusca*

Terrestrial snails were not well preserved and it is unlikely that any are contemporary with the sampled deposits.

5.3.4 *Animal Bone (see Appendix 3)*

Bone was very well preserved. All samples produced bone, the most significant amount coming from context 601. One piece is a possible fragment of human skull. The samples confirm butchery activity.

6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 Reliability of field investigation

The development area has not suffered from recent ploughing having been maintained as pasture (semi-improved grassland). However, deep field drains have caused substantial disturbance. Historic ridge and furrow was also present across most of the site, indicating intensive medieval/post-medieval ploughing. The evaluation indicates considerable truncation of archaeological features in the furrows, with less disturbance on the ridges.

Post-medieval quarrying has destroyed any archaeology in the south-east part of the development site.

The absence of features to the north and west of the main concentration indicates that middle to late Iron Age settlement was concentrated in and around the enclosure, with no evidence of an extensive field system or outlying activity in the surrounding area.

The ecofactual and artefactual material recovered from the Iron Age features is securely stratified. The Roman, medieval and post-medieval pottery seems to be redeposited, but the lack of intrusive material in the Iron Age features indicates the relative integrity of the prehistoric deposits.

6.2 Overall interpretation

6.2.1 *Summary of Results*

The archaeological evaluation of the site has identified a middle to late Iron Age enclosed settlement occupying c.1 hectare. The majority of finds and features were found within trenches 3, 5 and 6 indicating a considerable density of features present within the enclosure and further features present outside. Further undated features were located within trenches 4, 7 (in particular), 12 and 14. Those in trenches 4, 12 and 14 appear to be modern in date, either producing post-medieval finds or respecting the ridge and furrow. Features within trench 7, however, are potentially Iron Age and are likely to be peripheral boundary features.

6.2.2 *Significance*

The significance of these features is important on local and regional levels. The Bicester Fields site represents an important addition to a recently excavated group of settlement sites in the Bicester area and can therefore contribute to understanding developments in Iron Age settlement, economy and society in this region. The pottery assemblage indicates that the settlement at this site was short-lived and the prehistoric deposits have retained their integrity. As there is no evidence for continuity of occupation into the Roman period the site offers considerable potential for improving the late Iron Age pottery-based chronology for the region. The preservation of bone and charred plant remains is good. This fact, together with the possibility of metal-working activities indicates that the site has high potential for reconstructing the economic basis of the settlement and the range of subsistence economy in use on clay sites in the region in the Iron Age. This is particularly significant as clay sites are under-represented within the archaeological record and are seen as a regional research priority.

6.2.3 Impact of development

The impact of the development is restricted to the area designated for housing and roads, covering 14.6 hectares out of the total 33.1 hectares. The remaining area is to be left as Public Open Space and will not affect any archaeological deposits. The Iron Age settlement identified by the evaluation falls entirely within the eastern area designated for housing and is likely to be completely destroyed by the development.

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APPENDIX 1: Context Inventory

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Findings	Samples	Date
Trench 1								
100	Layer	Topsoil	0.2	2	30	None		
101	Layer	Subsoil	0.2	2	30	Bone, pot		Mod
102	Layer	Natural		2	30	None		
103	Cut	Field drain		0.2		None		Mod
104	Fill	Fill of 103		0.2		Pot		Mod
105	Cut	Field drain		0.2		None		Mod
106	Fill	Fill of 105		0.2		None		Mod
Trench 2								
200	Layer	Topsoil	0.25	2	30	None		
201	Layer	Subsoil		2	30	Pot		Mod
202	Layer	Natural		2	30	None		
203	Cut	Field drain				None		Mod
204	Fill	Fill of 203				None		Mod
205	Cut	Root disturbance?	0.2	2		None		
206	Fill	Fill of 205	0.2			None		
207	Layer	Subsoil	0.2			None		
Trench 3								
300	Layer	Topsoil	0.25			None		
301	Layer	Subsoil	0.2			Pot		Med+
302	Layer	Natural				None		
303	Cut	Pit ?	0.38	0.5	3.00+	None		
304	Fill	Fill of 303	0.38	0.5	3.00+	Pot; Bone		M/LIA?
305	Cut	Ditch	0.9	2.8	2.00+	None		
306	Fill	Fill of 305	0.3			Pot, FC		?MIA
307	Fill	Fill of 305	0.19			Bone		
308	Fill	Fill of 305	0.4			Bone, pot		Mod
309	Fill	Fill of 305	0.2			Fired clay		
310	Fill	Fill of 305	0.2			None		
311	Cut	Ditch	0.4	1.1	3.00+	None		
312	Fill	Fill of 311	0.08			None		
313	Fill	Fill of 311	0.17			None		
314	Fill	Fill of 311	0.25			None		
315	Cut	Field drain?	unexc.			None		
316	Fill	Fill of 315	unexc.			Pot		?MIA
317	Cut	Ditch ?	0.2	0.42	2.00+	None		
318	Fill	Fill of 317	0.2			None		
319	Cut	Ditch	0.28	1.2	2.00+	None		
320	Fill	Fill of 319	0.26			None		
321	Cut	Ditch	0.26	0.5	2.50+	None		
322	Fill	Fill of 321	0.26			Pot		LIA
Trench 4								
400	Layer	Topsoil	0.25			None		
401	Layer	Subsoil	0.2			None		
402	Layer	Natural				None		
403	Cut	Gully	0.2	0.5	2.00+	None		

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Findings	Samples	Date
404	Fill	Fill of 403	0.2			CBM		Mod
Trench 5								
500	Layer	Topsoil	0.24			None		
501	Layer	Subsoil	0.22			None		
502	Layer	Natural	0.50+			None		
503	Fill	Fill of 508	0.25			None		
504	Fill	Fill of 508	0.23			Pot; Bone		LIA
505	Fill	Fill of 508	0.08			Pot		?MIA
506	Fill	Fill of 508	0.24			None		
507	Fill	Fill of 508	0.24			None	Yes	
508	Cut	Ditch	0.9	3.1	2.3+	None		
509	Fill	Fill of 514	0.15			None		
510	Fill	Fill of 514	0.38			Pot; Bone		LIA
511	Fill	Fill of 514	0.23			Pot; Bone		?M/LIA
512	Fill	Fill of 514	0.08			None		
513	Fill	Fill of 514	0.14			Pot	Yes	M/LIA
514	Cut	Ditch	0.8	1.7		None		
515	Fill	Fill of 518	0.28			Pot; Bone		?MIA
516	Fill	Fill of 518	0.08			None		
517	Fill	Fill of 518	0.19			Pot	Yes	
518	Cut	Ditch	0.4	1.3	2.00+	None		
519	Fill	Fill of 520	0.23			None		
520	Cut	Gully	0.23	0.18		None		
521	Fill	Fill of 522	0.16			Pot		?M/LIA
522	Cut	Gully	0.16	0.3		None		
Trench 6								
600	Layer	Topsoil	0.35			Pot		Mod
601	Fill	Fill of 603	0.35	1.65		Pot, bone	Yes	LIA
602	Fill	Fill of 604	0.1	0.55		None		
603	Cut	Ditch	0.9	2.3		None		
604	Cut	Gully	0.2	0.75		None		
605	Layer	Old plough soil	0.37			Pot		Mod
606	Fill	Fill of 603	0.58	2.3		None		
607	Fill	Fill of 604	0.15	0.75		None		
608	Fill	Fill of 626	0.5+	0.3+		Bone, pot		?MIA
609	Fill	Fill of 610	0.3			Pot		LIA
610	Cut	?Posthole	0.22	0.22	2.6	None		
611	Fill	Fill of 612	0.09			None		
612	Cut	?Posthole	0.09	0.12	0.13	None		
613	Not used							
614	Layer	Alluvium	0.15	2.0+	3.2+	None		
615	Cut	Posthole	0.33	0.52	0.55	None		
616	Fill	Fill of 615	0.33	0.52	0.55	None		
617	Cut	Gully	0.2	0.6		None		
618	Fill	Fill of 617	0.18	0.6		None		
619	Cut	?Posthole	0.2	0.6	0.65	None		
620	Fill	Fill of 619	0.2	0.6	0.65	None		
621	Layer	?Old plough soil	0.13	1	2	None		
622	Cut	Gully	0.22	0.6	2.5	None		
623	Fill	Fill of 622	0.22	0.6	2.5	None		
624	Not used							

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Findings	Samples	Date
625	Not used							
626	Cut	Ditch	0.34+	1.2+		None		
627	Cut	?Posthole	0.12	0.6		None		
628	Fill	Fill of 627	0.12	0.6		None		
629	Cut	Ditch	0.48	1.1+	1.2+	None		
630	Fill	Fill of 629	0.25	0.65	1.2+	None		
631	Fill	Fill of 629	0.48	0.9	1.2+	Pot, flint		?MIA
632	Cut	Ditch	0.46	2.45		None		
633	Fill	Fill of 632	0.46	2.45		Worked flint		
634	Cut	Gully	0.35	0.8	2.5+	None		
635	Fill	Fill of 634	0.35	0.8	2.5	None		
636	Layer	Natural				None		
637	Cut	Ditch	0.2	0.45	2.5+	None		
638	Fill	Fill of 637	0.2	0.45	2.5+	None		
639	Fill	Fill of unex.ditch	0	0.22	0.85+	Pot		Mod
640	Cut	?Posthole	0.1	0.42	0.44	None		
641	Fill	Fill of 640	0.1	0.42	0.44	None		
642	Cut	?Posthole	0.15	0.35	0.5	None		
643	Fill	Fill of 642	0.15	0.35	0.5	None		
644	Cut	Gully	0.14	0.28	0.4+	None		
645	Fill	Fill of 644	0.14	0.28	0.4+	None		
Trench 7								
700	Layer	Topsoil	0.25			None		
701	Fill	Fill of 702	0.3	0.9		Flint		
702	Cut	Ditch	0.5	0.9	3.5+	Worked flint		
703	Fill	Fill of 704	0.1	0.6	3+	None		
704	Cut	Gully	0.1	0.6	3+	None		
705	Fill	Fill of 702	0.15	0.7		None		
706	Fill	Fill of 707	0.15	0.5	3+	None		
707	Cut	Gully	0.15	0.5	3+	None		
708	Fill	Fill of 709	0.13	0.44	3+	None		
709	Cut	Gully	0.13	0.44	3+	None		
710	Layer	?Natural		1.5	1.5	None		
711	Layer	Plough soil	0.25			None		
Trench 8								
800	Layer	Topsoil	0.28	2	30	None		
801	Layer	Subsoil	0.2	2	30	None		
802	Layer	Natural		2	30	None		
Trench 9								
900	Layer	Topsoil	0.3	2	30	None		
901	Layer	Subsoil	0.14	2	30	None		
902	Layer	Natural		2	30	None		
Trench 10								
1000	Layer	Topsoil	0.25	2	30	None		
1001	Layer	Natural		2	30	None		

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Findings	Samples	Date
Trench 11								
1100	Layer	Topsoil	0.2	2	30	None		
1101	Layer	Natural		2	30	None		
1102	Cut	Plough furrow	0.2	1.4	4+	None		
1103	Fill	Fill of 1102	0.04	0.44	4+	Clay pipe		
1104	Fill	Fill of 1102	0.16	1.4	4+	None		
1105	Cut	Plough furrow	0.3	2	1+	None		
1106	Fill	Fill of 1105	0.3	2	1+	None		
Trench 12								
1200	Layer	Topsoil	0.4	2	30	None		
1201	Layer	Natural		2	30	None		
1202	Cut	Plough furrow	0.2	1.7	3	None		
1203	Fill	Fill of 1202	0.2	1.7	3	Pot, bone, CBM		?Mod
1204	Cut	Gully	0.2	0.5	3	None		
1205	Fill	Fill of 1204	0.2	0.5	3	None		
Trench 13								
1300	Layer	Topsoil	0.3	2	30	None		
1301	Layer	Subsoil	0.12	2	30	None		
1302	Layer	Natural		2	30	None		
1303	Cut	Cut	0.07	0.5	0.5	None		
1304	Fill	Fill	0.07	0.5	0.5	None		
Trench 14								
1400	Layer	Topsoil	0.25			None		
1401	Layer	Subsoil	0.21			None		
1402	Layer	Natural				None		
1403	Fill	Fill of 1403	0.2	0.67	3+	Pot		Mod
1404	Cut	Gully	0.2	0.67	3+	None		
1405	Fill	Fill of 1406	0.06	0.75	1.25	None		
1406	Cut	?Pit	0.14	0.75	1.25	None		
1407	Fill	Fill of 1406	0.08	0.35	1.25	None		
1408	Cut	Ditch	0.36	0.68	3.5	None		
1409	Fill	Fill of 1408	0.28	0.68	3.5	CBM		?Mod
Trench 15								
1500	Layer	Topsoil	0.3	2	30	Pot		Mod
1501	Layer	Subsoil	0.4	2	30	None		
1502	Layer	Natural		2	30	None		
Trench 16								
1600	Layer	Topsoil	0.56	2	50	None		
1601	Layer	Natural		2	50	None		
Trench 17								
1700	Layer	Topsoil	0.22	2	30	None		
1701	Layer	Subsoil	0.38	2	30	None		
1702	Layer	Natural		2	30	None		
Trench 18								
1800	Layer	Topsoil	0.2	2	30	None		

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Samples	Date
1801	Layer	Subsoil	0.28	2	30	None		
1802	Layer	Natural		2	30	None		
Trench 19								
1900	Layer	Topsoil	0.22	2	30	None		
1901	Layer	Subsoil	0.3	2	30	None		
1902	Layer	Natural		2	30	None		
Trench 20								
2000	Layer	Topsoil	0.23	2	50	None		
2001	Layer	Subsoil	0.15	2	50	None		
2002	Layer	Natural		2	50	None		
2003	Fill	Fill of 2004		0.6	2+	None		
2004	Cut	Ditch		0.6	2+	None		
Trench 21								
2100	Layer	Topsoil	0.24	2	30	None		
2101	Layer	?Natural		2	30	None		
Trench 22								
2200	Layer	Topsoil	0.22	2	30	None		
2201	Layer	Subsoil	0.25	2	30	None		
2202	Layer	Natural		2	30	None		
2203	Fill	Fill of 2204	0.38	0.76	2.2	None		
2204	Cut	Ditch	0.38	0.76	2.2	None		
Trench 23								
2300	Layer	topsoil	0.2	2	30	None		
2301	Layer	Subsoil	0.3	2	30	None		
2302	Layer	Natural		2	30	None		
Trench 24								
2400	Layer	Topsoil	0.2	2	50	None		
2401	Layer	Subsoil	0.35	2	50	None		
2402	Layer	Natural		2	50	None		
Trench 25								
2500	Layer	Topsoil	0.26	2	47	None		
2501	Layer	Subsoil	0.4	2	47	None		
2502	Layer	Natural		2	47	None		
Trench 26								
2600	Layer	Topsoil	0.24	2	28	None		
2601	Layer	Subsoil	0.3	2	28	None		
2602	Layer	Natural		2	28	None		
Trench 27								
2700	Layer	Topsoil	0.25	2	30	None		
2701	Layer	Subsoil	0.26	2	30	None		
2702	Layer	Natural		2	30	None		
Trench 28								
2800	Layer	Topsoil	0.26	2	30	None		

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Findings	Samples	Date
2801	Layer	Subsoil	0.1	2	30	None		
2802	Layer	Natural		2	30	None		
Trench 29								
2900	Layer	Topsoil	0.2	2	30	None		
2901	Layer	Subsoil	0.15	2	30	None		
2902	Layer	Natural		2	30	None		
Trench 30								
3000	Layer	Topsoil	0.24	2	30	None		
3001	Layer	Natural		2	30	None		
3002	Fill	Fill of 3003	0.22	1	2.9+	None		
3003	Cut	Boundary	0.22	1	2.9+	None		
Trench 31								
3100	Layer	Topsoil	0.3	2	30	None		
3101	Layer	Natural		2	30	None		
Trench 32								
3200	Layer	Topsoil	0.3	2	22.5	None		
3201	Layer	Natural		2	22.5	None		
3202	Layer	Gravel spread	0.05	2	7.5	None		
3203	Layer	Alluvium		2	7.5	None		
Trench 33								
3300	Layer	Topsoil	0.22	2	30	None		
3301	Layer	Subsoil	0.28	2	30	None		
3302	Layer	Natural		2	30	None		
Trench 34								
3400	Layer	Topsoil	0.25	2	30	None		
3401	Layer	Subsoil	0.22	2	30	None		
3402	Layer	Natural		2	30	None		
Trench 35								
3500	Not used							
3501	Layer	Topsoil	0.2	2	30	None		
3502	Layer	Subsoil	0.15	2	30	None		
3503	Layer	Natural		2	30	None		
3504	Cut	Ditch	0.5	1.6+	2.5+	None		
3505	Fill	Fill of 3504	0.2	1+	2.5+	None		
3506	Fill	Fill of 3504	0.1	1.06+	2.5+	None		
3507	Fill	Fill of 3504	0.2	1.6+	2.5+	None		
3508	Cut	?Furrow	0.2	0.85	3+	None		
3509	Fill	Fill of 3508	0.2	0.85	3+	None		
3510	Cut	Furrow	0.1	1.7	3+	None		
3511	Fill	Fill of 3510	0.1	1.7	3+	None		

APPENDIX 2: The Pottery

by Paul Booth

Introduction

The evaluation produced some 111 sherds of pottery weighing 1315 g. The majority of this was of Middle to Late Iron Age date and derived from the three trenches (3, 5 and 6) placed to intersect the ditched enclosure already located. Later pottery consisted of single tiny fragment of a fine white ware of Roman date (context 1203), four sherds (37 g) of medieval or early post-medieval pottery, all probably from the Brill/Boarstall industry (contexts 301, 605 and 1203 – 2 sherds), and a slightly larger collection (14 sherds, 289 g) of miscellaneous post-medieval fabrics. None of this material is discussed further.

The pottery was scanned quite rapidly by context group, and quantities of material were noted in relation to broad fabric types (except for the post-medieval material, which was only quantified under that general heading). A 'spot date' was assigned to each context containing pottery.

Iron Age Fabrics and Forms

The Iron Age assemblage consisted of some 92 sherds (988 g). These ranged from substantial pieces to small fragments, with moderate preservation of surfaces. A range of fabrics was present, with four principal tempering agents, quartz sand, calcareous (limestone) grit, grog and shell, being employed (respectively A, C, G and S in the OAU pottery recording system). In a number of cases both C and S fabrics were characterised by voids on the surfaces of the sherds as a result of leaching.

The approximate breakdown of the pottery in terms of these broad fabric groupings was as follows:

A (sand)	19 sherds.
C (calcareous grit)	3 sherds.
G (grog)	14 sherds.
S (shell)	32 sherds.
Z (voids – mostly probably C but some S)	24 sherds.

All the fabrics were relatively fine and there were, for example, no instances of the large shell-temper fragments characteristic of the Early Iron Age. All were consistent with a date range of Middle to Late Iron Age. The grog-tempered fabrics, in particular, are characteristic of the Late Iron Age to early Roman period in the region. Sherds in these fabrics included one or two which were wheel thrown, while other G sherds and the remaining Iron Age material was all hand made. There was no evidence for decoration on any sherds except for the occasional use of zones of burnishing.

Only eight vessels were represented by rim sherds, most of which were small. The vessel types present appeared to be mostly simple jar forms, either with upright or slightly inturned rims, the latter tending to be quite fine. These forms occurred in C and S (and Z) fabrics. A complete profile of a necked bowl with an outcurving rim occurred in a sand-tempered fabric and two further everted jar or bowl rims were found in grog-tempered fabrics. These forms are typical of the Late Iron Age, and in this region continued in use after the Roman conquest. The sand-tempered necked bowl was the most notable piece in the assemblage. It is of a type which is datable to the later part of the Middle Iron Age and occurred in a context (504) otherwise associated only with grog-tempered sherds. The other contexts which produced grog-tempered material were 322, 510, 601 and 609. The only other important vessel, not clearly represented by a rim, was a fragment of a thin walled crucible in a sand-tempered fabric, from context 513.

Discussion

This small assemblage is important in that it contains at least some context groups which appear to represent the ceramic transition from the Middle to the Late Iron Age, something which is rarely seen in the region as clearly. It is possible that the entire Iron Age assemblage dates to this ceramic phase, but more evidence would be needed to confirm this suggestion. Fabrics and forms are consistent with an origin for the site in the Middle Iron Age, and it then runs into the Late Iron Age, which in this region is thought not to commence before the 1st

century AD, on ceramic evidence. The complete absence of Roman material (apart from one very small sherd in Trench 12) strongly suggests that the enclosure site does not extend significantly, if at all, into the post-conquest period. In this respect it appears similar to Site D of the 1991 A421 excavations, which may have been solely of Late Iron Age date. These sites contrast with that at Birmingham Road, Bicester, roughly equidistant from both and about 1 km distant south-west of Bicester Fields, where activity commenced in the Late Iron Age and continued into the early 2nd century before terminating (Mould 1996).

APPENDIX 3: Animal Bone Assessment

by N Scott

A total of 212 animal bone fragments were found of which 39% were identified to species and anatomical part. The bones were rapidly scanned for basic identification. Vertebrae and ribs were not identified. The predominant species was cow although caprine were also well represented. Several horse bones were recovered from context 308. Pig and bird bone was also represented. Some bone from context 510 was burnt, indicating food refuse.

In general the bones were in an excellent state of preservation and this together with their frequency would make them a good example for further study and sampling if the site were to be investigated further.

A quantification of bones by context is available in the archive.

APPENDIX 4: An assessment of the environmental indicators

By Greg Campbell

Four samples were taken from the site, three of 10 litres from primary fills of ditches in Trench 5 (contexts 507, 513 and 517) and one of 40 litres from the second fill in the main ditch in Trench 6 (context 601). The smallest three were processed by bucket-flotation, and the largest by flotation in a modified Siraf flotation machine. In all cases the charred remains were collected on 0.5 mm mesh, and the mineral residue washed through 10 and 4 mm sieves. The mineral fractions were then sorted for bones and artefacts. The charred remains flots were scanned at x20 magnification and their contents characterised.

Charred remains were present in all samples. Most of the material recovered by flotation was modern herbaceous roots, with some recent insects and seeds, so it is possible that some of the charred material is also intrusive. The charred material was principally wood charcoal, most too small to be identified. Each sample also contained charred grain in small amounts (two to six items). Other elements observed were chaff (a single glume, probably oat, in fill 513) and weed seeds in very small numbers (one in fill 517, and two in fill 601).

Terrestrial snails were present in very small numbers, and the majority of these were burrowing species. It seems unlikely that any of the snails seen were contemporary with the deposit.

Animal bones were found in all samples, but only in significant quantities from fill 601. The total number recovered (47 pieces of over 10 mm, 58 of 10-4 mm size) was not unusual from a sample of this volume. Much of the bone was fragmentary, but there was some butchery debris (including a sheep toe bone), and bones of small animals (two long bones and a rodent jaw). The calcined element of 22 pieces included one possible fragment of human skull (A Boyle pers. comm.).

Daub was found in fragmented state from ditch fill 601, and a single fragment from ditch fill 513.

Slag was recovered in small quantity from ditch fill 513, from which hand excavation recovered a fragmented crucible.

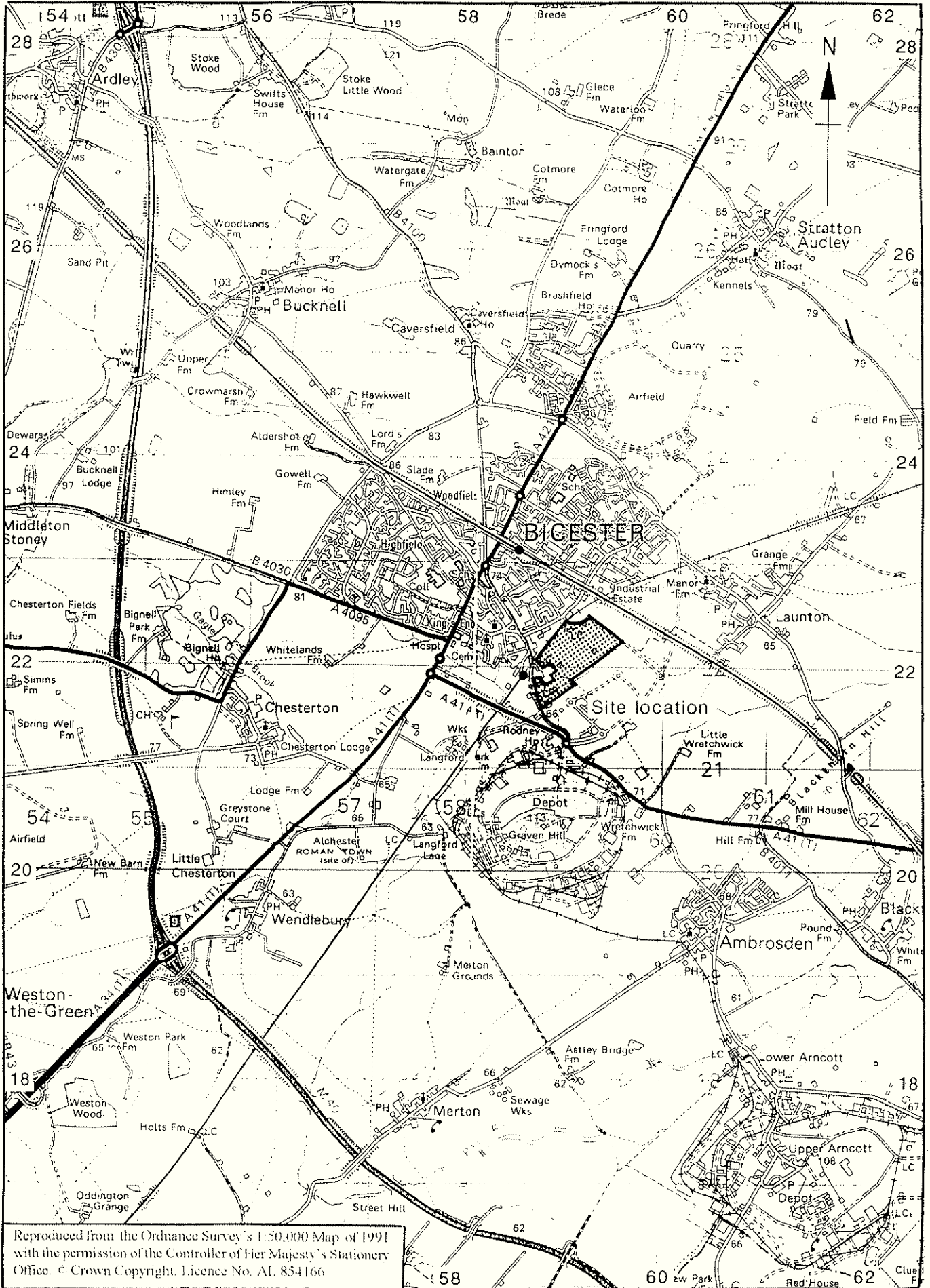
Conclusions

Charred remains preserved at the site include wood charcoal, cereal grain, chaff and weed seeds. The small numbers recovered in the evaluation could be an artefact of the small sample sizes and the small number of deposits sampled.

Animal bones are well preserved at the site, and the amount recovered is consistent with or richer than that from evaluations of similar sites. The samples confirm that butchery debris, and the bones of small animals are present. Any further excavation should include a structured programme of environmental sampling designed specifically to recover animal bones and other environmental indicators in an unbiased manner. The distribution of samples across site should be aimed at recovery of evidence for structured deposition of the bones, the charred remains, and the artefacts.

There is good evidence for some metal-working on the site, and an appropriate sampling strategy for this type of material should be carried out as part of any further excavation.

Materials not well preserved at the site include terrestrial snails. Reconstruction of land-use will have to rely on micro-morphological studies of buried ground surfaces (if any), and on pollen studies of waterlogged deposits (if any).



scale 1:50,000

Location of site

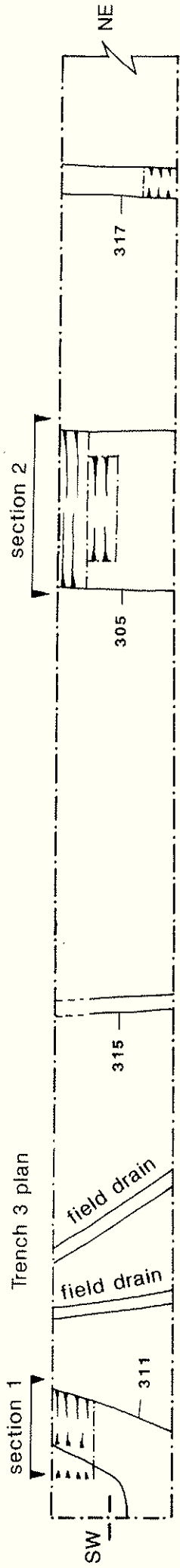
Figure 1



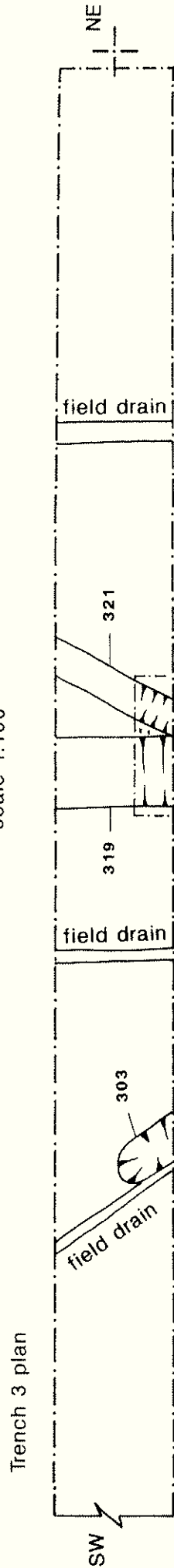
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Trench locations

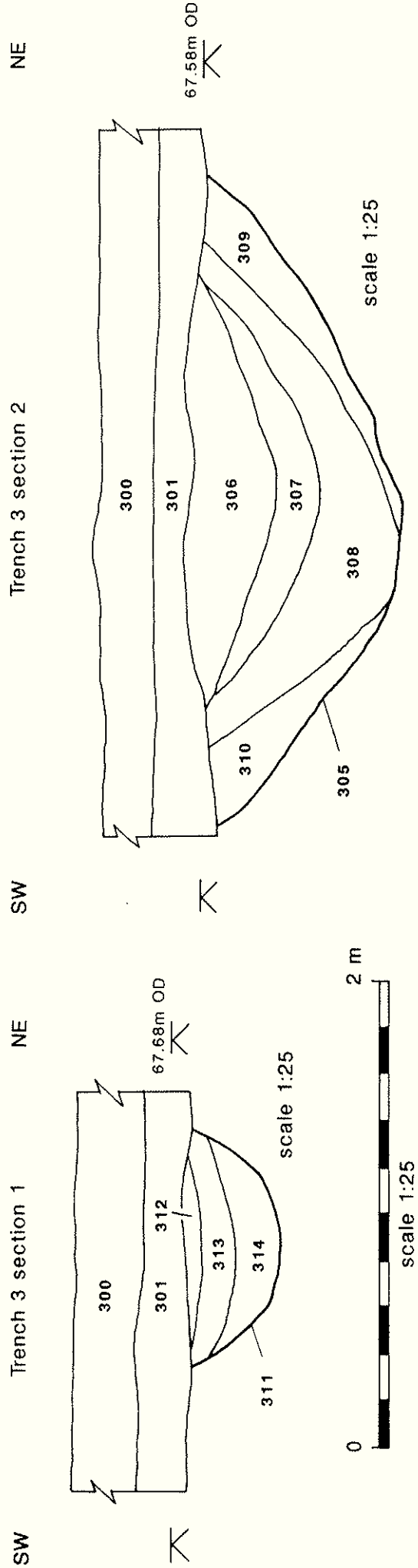
Figure 2



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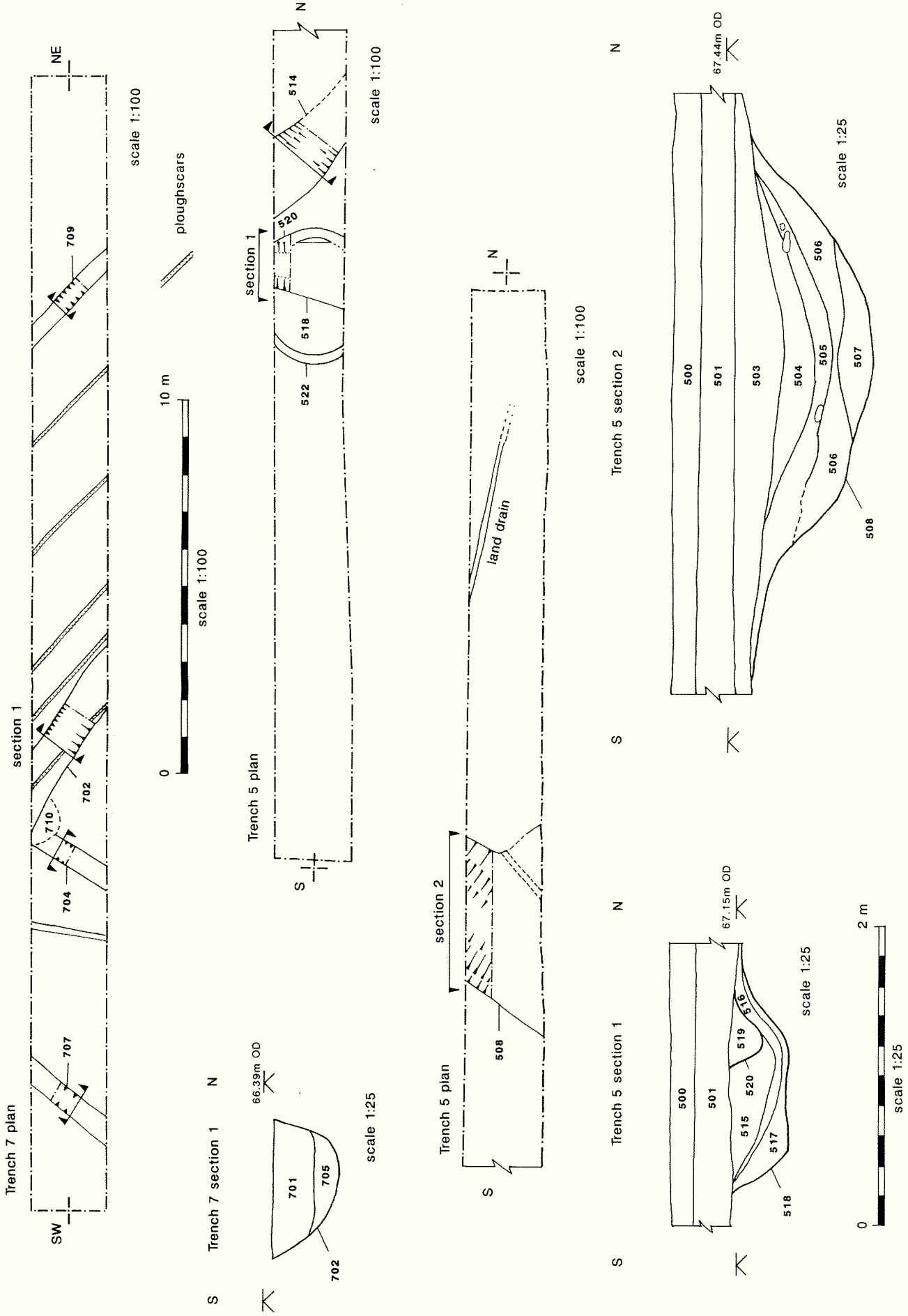


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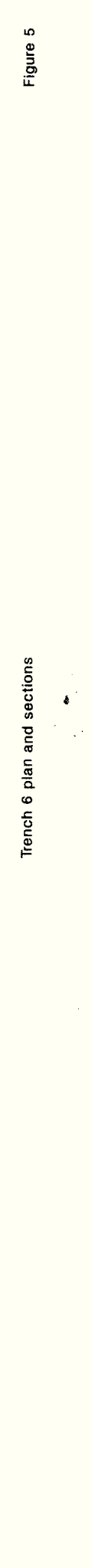
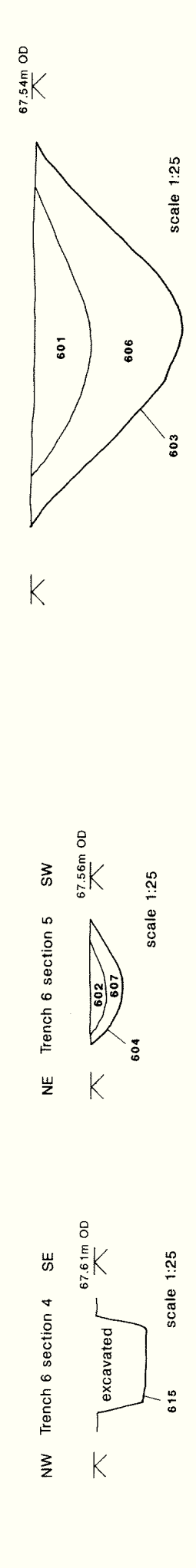
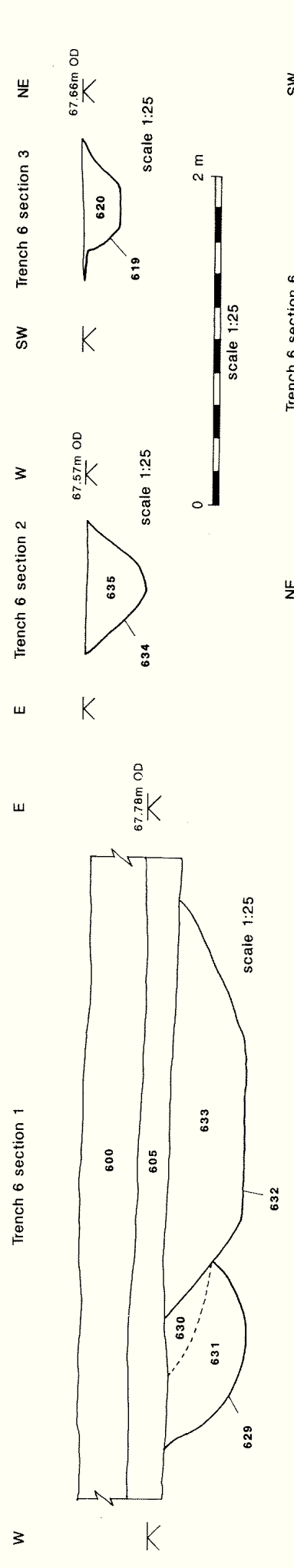
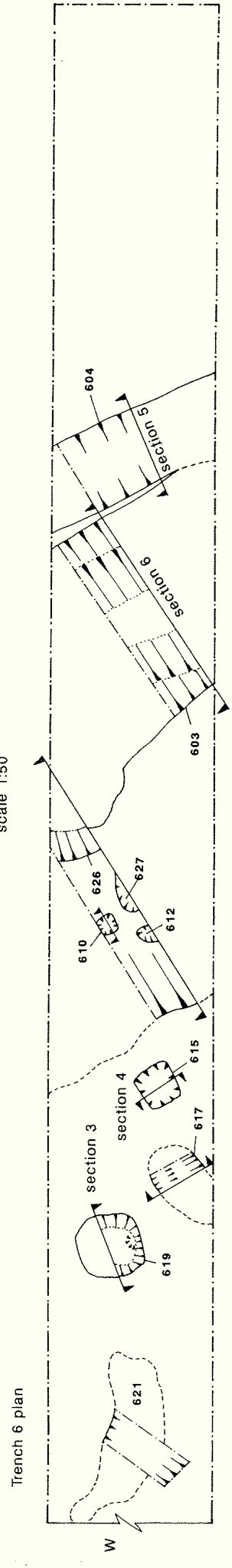
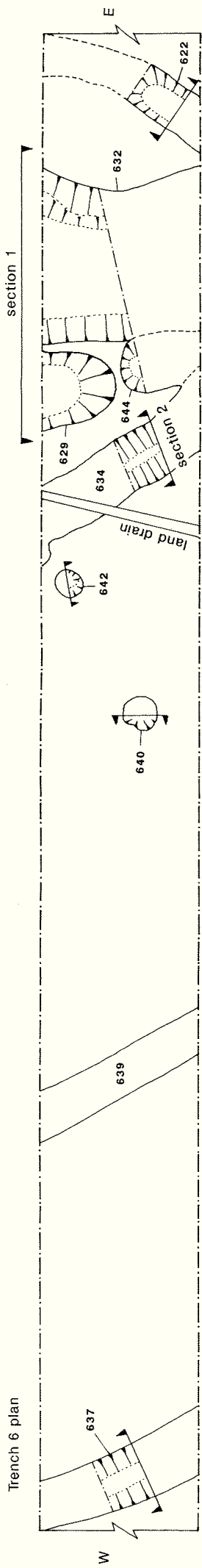
Trench 3 plan and sections

Figure 3



Trenches 5 and 7 Plans and sections

Figure 4

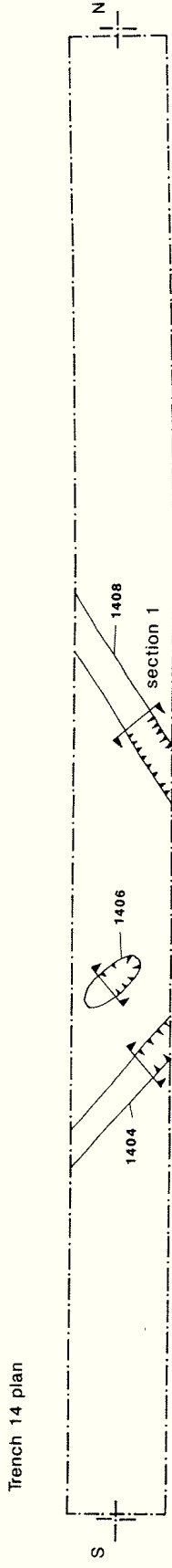


Trench 6 plan and sections

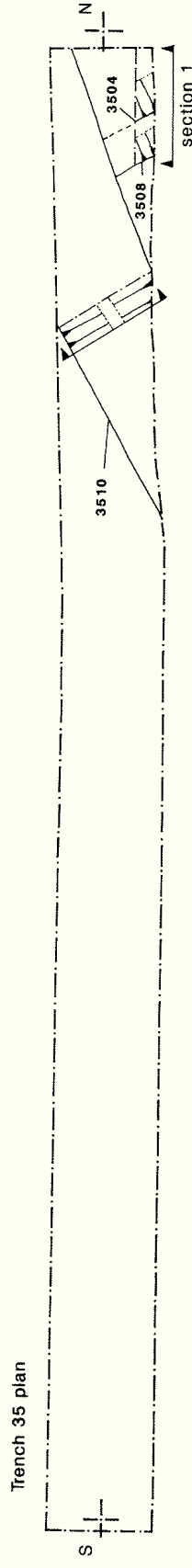
Figure 5



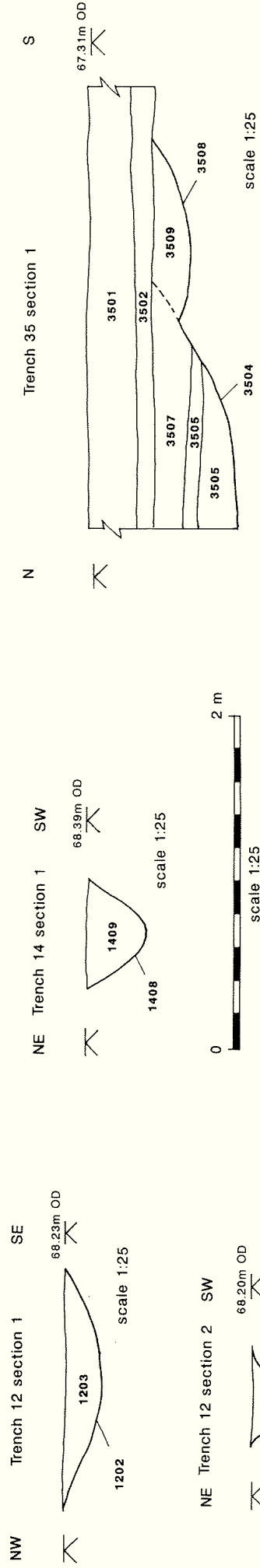
scale 1:100



scale 1:100

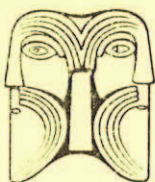


scale 1:100



Trenches 12, 14 and 35 plans and sections

Figure 6



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