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New Schools, Eton College

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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Summary

Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by CSK Architects on behalf of Eton College to undertake an archaeological watching brief at the site of proposed new extension, and related groundworks at New Schools, Eton College. The watching brief was carried out between October-November 2017.

The watching brief recorded landscaping deposits associated with the construction of the New Schools buildings in the 1860s. A buried soil horizon was recorded in a single location, indicating some potential for undisturbed deposits, predating the 19th century construction of the school, to survive.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by CSK Architects on behalf of Eton College to undertake an archaeological watching brief at the site of proposed new extension, and related groundworks at New Schools, Eton College.

1.1.2 The work was undertaken as a condition of Planning Permission (planning ref. 17/00223/FULL). This document outlines how OA implemented the specified requirements.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

1.2.1 The site lies to within the New Schools range of College buildings (NGR SU 96656 77997, FIG. 1). The site is bounded to the south-east by Slough Road, to the southwest by Common Lane and to the north by further College buildings.

1.2.2 The area of proposed development consists of the New Schools Yard with the existing College buildings on all sides, except where there is access from Slough Road to the south-east.

1.2.3 The geology of the area is mapped as Seaford and Newhaven Chalk Formation. There is no recorded superficial geology (BGS website).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background of the site was summarized in the Written Scheme of Investigation (OA 2017) and a Desk Based Assessment (OA 2016), the results of which are outlined below.

Prehistoric periods

1.3.2 There is an underlying potential for prehistoric material to be recovered from within the site as it is located near to the river which is known to have been attractive to prehistoric populations. The Study Area contains a wide range of finds as well as evidence of later prehistoric settlement.

Roman period

1.3.3 The area is deemed to have an underlying potential for Roman remains to be present as there is evidence of Roman activity and settlement throughout the Study Area. Of particular significance is the presence of a ladder settlement which would have been surrounded by associated agricultural field systems.

Anglo Saxon period

1.3.4 The Site has low potential for Saxon remains to be identified. Although Eton is known to have been a settlement in the Saxon period archaeological evidence appears to indicate that the core of the settlement lay to the south of the proposed development area in close proximity to the river. There is not thought to have been any occupation on the immediate area prior to the construction of the parish church which is known to have occurred after 1086 as it is not mentioned in Domesday.

Medieval period

1.3.5 At the time of Domesday Eton was held in chief by Walter son of Other and valued at £6, its appurtenances included two mills and fisheries for 1,000 eels. Walter held the barony of Windsor to which the manor of Eton was attached.

1.3.6 Eton College was founded in 1440 by King Henry VI as "Kynge's College of Our Ladye of Eton besyde Windesore" mainly as a place of pilgrimage but also to provide free education to 70 poor boys who would then go on to King's College, Cambridge, which he founded 1441. The buildings of the church and college are grouped round a large courtyard known as the School Yard. The southern range is formed by the church, and the western and northern ranges by the buildings of the upper and lower schools respectively, while on the east the school yard is bounded by the western range of the cloister buildings, which themselves enclose a second and smaller courtyard, having the college hall and kitchen on the south. The buildings are placed at the south west corner of the site acquired by King Henry VI, which is at the north end of the town, and is bounded on the north by Datchet Lane, on the east and south by the River Thames, and on the west by the Slough road.

1.3.7 Remains of medieval settlement within Eton have been recorded at a number of locations. Late medieval occupation remains have been identified at Eton Court and medieval activity has also been identified at Rafts Boathouse. At King Stable Street extensive archaeological deposits were identified that showed continuous occupation of the area from the later 11th century onwards.

1.3.8 Evidence of medieval occupation in Windsor has also been identified, most notably at Jennings Yard and the site of the Adam and Eve Public House where continuous occupation dating from the 11th century onwards was recorded.

Post-medieval period

1.3.9 Prior to the construction of the New Schools buildings the location of the site is shown (on Collier's plan of 1742) as an orchard. The New Schools ranges were initially constructed in 1861-1863, and formed a western and eastern range, initially open on the northern side. The Mathematics Schoolrooms were added in 1876-1877 and form the northern range.

Previous archaeological work

1.3.10 The watching brief undertaken by OAU in 1999 involved the monitoring of excavations for new services and structures. These revealed soil layers interspersed with layers of building rubble suggesting that the ground level was raised prior to the 19th-century construction of the current buildings. A wall, also thought to be of 19th-century date was also uncovered. The only finds recovered comprised a clay pipe bowl of 18th-century date and a piece of prehistoric struck flint which could not be more closely dated.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The general aims and objectives were as follows:

- i. To determine the presence or absence of any archaeological remains which may survive.
- ii. To determine or confirm the approximate extent of any surviving remains.
- iii. To determine the date range of any surviving remains by artefactual or other means.
- iv. means.
- v. To determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains.
- vi. To determine the degree of complexity of any surviving horizontal or vertical stratigraphy if appropriate.
- vii. To assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape.
- ix. reference to the historic landscape.
- x. To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence, and the forms in which such evidence may survive.
- xi. To disseminate the results through the production of a site archive for deposition with an appropriate museum and to provide information for accession to the Berkshire HER.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 Site specific methodologies were as follows:

- xii. A detailed watching brief was undertaken during all significant ground works, with the OA supervisor liaising with the ground work contractor regarding the works programme and timing of visits.
- xiii. Where archaeological remains were uncovered the construction work ceased until a suitable record had been made.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Presentation of results

3.1.1 The results of the watching brief are presented below, and include a stratigraphic description of the areas investigated. A context inventory can be found in Appendix A. Finds data and spot dates are tabulated in Appendix B.

3.1.2 The watching brief monitored the excavation of the deeper impacts, namely test pits to examine existing wall foundations (Test Pits 10, 11, 12 and 13), new service trenches (numbered 1, 2 and 3) and three new locations for manholes (labelled A, B and C). The locations of these are shown on Figure 2. The resulting section drawings are shown on Figures 3 and 4. In the light of the results of this work, other shallower construction impacts relating to the new build were not monitored.

3.2 Service Trench 1

3.2.1 The trench was oriented in north-east to south west and measured 15.4m in length and was 0.6m wide and up to 1.1m deep (Fig. 2).

3.2.2 The trench contained numerous cuts for recent services (not numbered). The earliest deposit encountered was 105 (Fig. 3), a soft dark greyish-brown silty sand which yielded a Victorian pottery fragment, dated to 1830-1860, and interpreted as made ground. This layer was sealed by 104, a mid greyish brown silty sand used to form the base for a layer of concrete (103). Concrete layer, 103, measured 0.2m thick and was likely to have been a component of the construction of the nearby footpath, 101. Overlying the concrete was 102, a modern light greyish-yellow silty sand which sat underneath the current brick footpath, 101. Natural geology was not reached in Service Trench 1.

3.3 Service Trench 2

3.3.1 The trench was oriented WNW-ESE and measured 18.3m long by 0.6m wide and was up to 1.42m deep (Fig. 2).

3.3.2 The trench contained numerous cuts for recent services (not numbered). The lowest deposit encountered, 2005 (Fig. 3), was equivalent to 1005 in Trench 1, but in this instance did not contain any datable material. Up to 0.58m of the deposit was present within the trench, although the base was not revealed. Layer 2005 was sealed by 2004, the rubble foundation layer for concrete layer 2003 (equivalent to 1004 and 1003 in Trench 1 respectively). The current brick footpath and associated sub-base (2001 and 2002) were again present at the top of the sequence.

3.4 Service Trench 3

3.4.1 The trench was orientated north-south, and measured 10m in length and was 0.6m wide. The trench contained two larger excavations for inspection chambers, the northern of which measured c 3m x 3m, and the southern c 2m x 2m (Fig. 2). The trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 2.1m.

3.4.2 The geological horizon (313) was encountered at a depth of 1.9m (Fig. 3), this was a light grey sandy clay. This was overlain by 310, a fine grained dark grey-brown silty sand 0.8m thick interpreted as made ground. No finds were recovered from this deposit. Layer 310 was

sealed by 309 / 304, a soft dark yellow-grey silty sand, 0.6m deep, and interpreted as the backfill of construction cut for a pipe trench (308), the pipe itself having been surrounded with gravel/concrete mix 307. This in turn was overlain by a second pipe, the cut for which was filled by 304. Fill 304 was sealed by concrete 303, make up layer 302 and brick surface 301.

3.5 Manhole A

3.5.1 Manhole A (Fig. 2) was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.15m below the base of the existing building.

3.5.2 The earliest deposit encountered was 5006 (Fig. 4), a mid-brown silt with a low gravel component, with a depth of at least 0.5m, and containing occasional fragments of brick. The deposit is interpreted as made ground, and contained seven sherds of medieval pottery dating from AD1200-1330, and a single sherd from a Roman grey ware bowl. Deposit 5006 was overlain by the stepped brick wall footing (5005) of the extant building.

3.6 Manhole B

3.6.1 Manhole B was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.6m.

3.6.2 The earliest deposit, 5004 (Fig. 4), was a mid-yellow brown silty clay at least 0.55m thick, and containing occasional brick fragments and charcoal in addition to a single small piece of burnt flint. This deposit had the leached appearance of a buried former plough soil. Layer 5004 was sealed by 5003, a buried dark brown silt topsoil containing fragments of brick and slate, which survived to a depth of 0.6m. Layer 5003 was cut by 5002, the construction cut for a drain, backfilled with rubble 5001, and sealed by 5000, the current brick surface.

3.7 Manhole C

3.7.1 Manhole C was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.46m.

3.7.2 The earliest deposit encountered was 5009 (Fig. 4), at least 1.1m depth of mid brown gritty silt containing rare brick and charcoal fragments. A single sherd of grey ware pottery dating from AD 1150-1300 was recovered from the layer. Layer 5009 was overlain a buried brick surface (5010), potentially of Victorian date, and cut by 5007, the stepped brick footing of the current boundary walls. Surface 5010 was overlain by rubble and mortar make up layer 5008 (which abutted 5007) and was in turn sealed by 0.2m of type 1 supporting the current tarmac surface.

3.8 Test Pits 10-13

3.8.1 All of the test pits measured c 1.2m x 1.2m, and were excavated to maximum depths of between 1.4 and 2.1m below current ground level.

3.8.2 They all revealed the same sequence of current wall foundations overlying a deep deposit of dark grey sandy silt soil, 5011, which was recorded to a maximum thickness of just over 1m, although natural geology was not encountered at any location. Test pit 13 was within an area extensively disturbed by services and tree roots. No finds were recovered from any of the test pits.

3.9 Finds summary

3.9.1 Finds were recovered from four deposits, in four locations. Pottery of Victorian date was retrieved from 105 in Trench 1, and pottery of medieval and Roman dates a deposit in manhole A. A further sherd of medieval pottery was recovered from Manhole C. A single fragment of burnt flint was recovered from Manhole B.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 The watching brief comprised four visits in coordination with the contractor's programme, and monitored all of the deeper construction impacts. Time was allowed within the construction programme for archaeological access to record all of the sediment sequences, and weather and ground conditions remained good throughout the duration of the watching brief.

4.2 Interpretation

4.2.1 The majority of the earliest deposits encountered are interpreted as made ground, presumably created when the New Schools buildings were constructed in the 1860s. Although several of these deposits, (e.g. 105, 309, 310, 5006 and 5009) had the appearance of former agricultural soils, their recorded thicknesses (over 1.1m in the case of 5009) are deeper than would be anticipated had they survived in situ. The soils may have originated within the orchard that existed prior to the School's construction, but disturbance from the construction of wall footings, successive service trenches surfaces is evident.

4.2.2 The presence of medieval pottery in deposits 5006 and 5009 (and a clearly residual Roman sherd in 5006) clearly indicates activity at this time, but the fragments of brick also present would seem to preclude their dating from this period.

4.2.3 Only within Manhole B was a buried plough soil and topsoil present, a sequence that might be anticipated having existed prior to the construction of the school. This suggests that some limited pockets within the site may have the potential to remain undisturbed.

APPENDIX A CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Description	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Date / Finds
101	Brick footpath	-	0.06	Modern
102	Make up for 101	-	0.04	Modern
103	Concrete levelling	-	0.2	Modern
104	Sand basal layer for 10		0.04	Modern
105	Made ground	-	0.7 +	Pottery 1930-1860
201	Brick footpath	-	0.06	Modern
202	Make up for 201	-	0.04	Modern
203	Concrete levelling	-	0.2	Modern
204	Rubble basal layer for 203	-	0.04	Modern
205	Made ground (equivalent to 105)	-	0.58+	Victorian
301	Brick footpath	-	0.06	Modern
302	Make up for 301	-	0.04	Modern
303	Concrete levelling	-	0.2	Modern
304	Sand basal layer for 303	-	0.36	Victorian
305	Backfill of 306	0.6	0.36	Modern
306	Cut for pipe trench	0.6	0.36	Modern
307	Backfill of 308	0.5	0.4	Modern
308	Cut for pipe trench	0.5	0.4	Modern
309	Made ground	-	0.6	Victorian
300	Made ground	-	0.8	-
311	Sand layer below 304		0.02	Modern
312	Made ground above 309	-	0.5	-
313	Natural light grey sandy clay	-	-	-
5000	Brick footpath	-	0.2	Modern
5001	Fill of 5002	-	1.55	Modern
5002	Cut for drain	-	1.55	Modern
5003	Garden soil	-	0.6	-
5004	Subsoil	-	0.55	Burnt flint
5005	Brick wall footing	-	0.65	-
5006	Made Ground	-	0.5+	Brick, Pottery AD 1200-1300, Roman
5007	Brick footing for boundary wall	-	0.9	
5008	Rubble and mortar make up layer sealed by tarmac	-	0.36	Modern
5009	Made ground	-	1.1	Brick, Pottery AD 1150-1300
5010	Brick surface	-	0.08	-
5011	Made ground	-	0.5m+	-

APPENDIX B FINDS REPORTS

By John Cotter and Geraldine Crann

Context	Description	Date
105	Pottery: 1 large unusual body sherd from a jug or pitcher in white stoneware (WHIST) with a broad horizontal band of engine-turned decoration with inlaid coloured slips. 76g	1830 - 1860
506	Pottery: 7 sherds, 3 sherds local shelly sandy wares; 1 jug body sherd with vertical white strip clear glazed, probably a local orange sandy ware with some shell inclusions (resembles London-type ware (LOND)); 2 coarse medieval sandy ware sherds; 1 residual rim sherd from Roman grey ware bowl (1 st -4 th c). 44g	1200 – 1300
509	Pottery: 1 body sherd medieval grey ware	1150 – 1300
504	Burnt unworked flint, 1 fragment. 11g	-

APPENDIX C BIBLIOGRAPHY

BGS website <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>

OAU 1999 New Schools, Common Lane, Eton College, Berkshire. Archaeological Watching Brief Written Scheme of Investigation. Oxford Archaeological Unit unpublished client document

OA 2016 Proposed Resurfacing School Yard Eton College. Desk Based Assessment. Oxford Archaeology unpublished client document

OA 2017 New Schools Eton College. Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief. Oxford Archaeology unpublished client document

APPENDIX D**SITE SUMMARY DETAILS**

Site name:	Eton College, New Schools
Site code:	ETONNS17
Grid Reference	SU 96656 77997
Type:	Watching brief
Date and duration:	October-November 2017
Area of Site	750m ²
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the appropriate museum in due course, accession number to be confirmed.
Summary of Results:	The watching brief recorded landscaping deposits associated with the construction of the New Schools buildings in the 1860s. A buried soil horizon was recorded in a single location, indicating some potential for undisturbed deposits, predating the 19th century construction of the school, to survive.



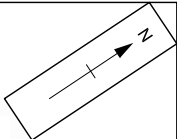
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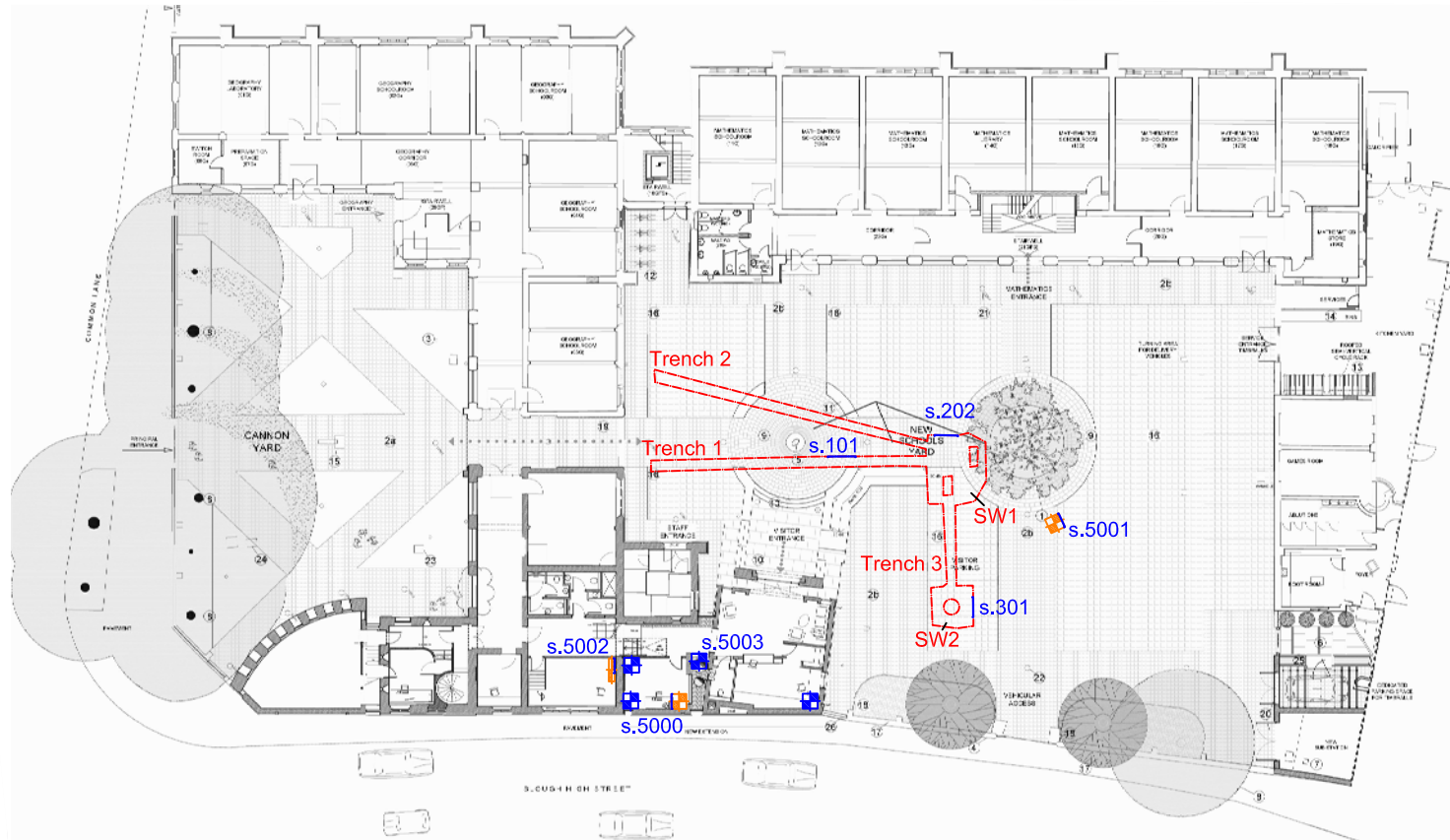
Figure 1: Site location







496585
177970



496665
178050



496665
177970

-  Section location
-  Test pit
-  Manhole pit
-  Evaluation trench

CHECKED BY: MB*22/05/18

0 20 m



Scale at A4 1:500

Figure 2: Location of excavations

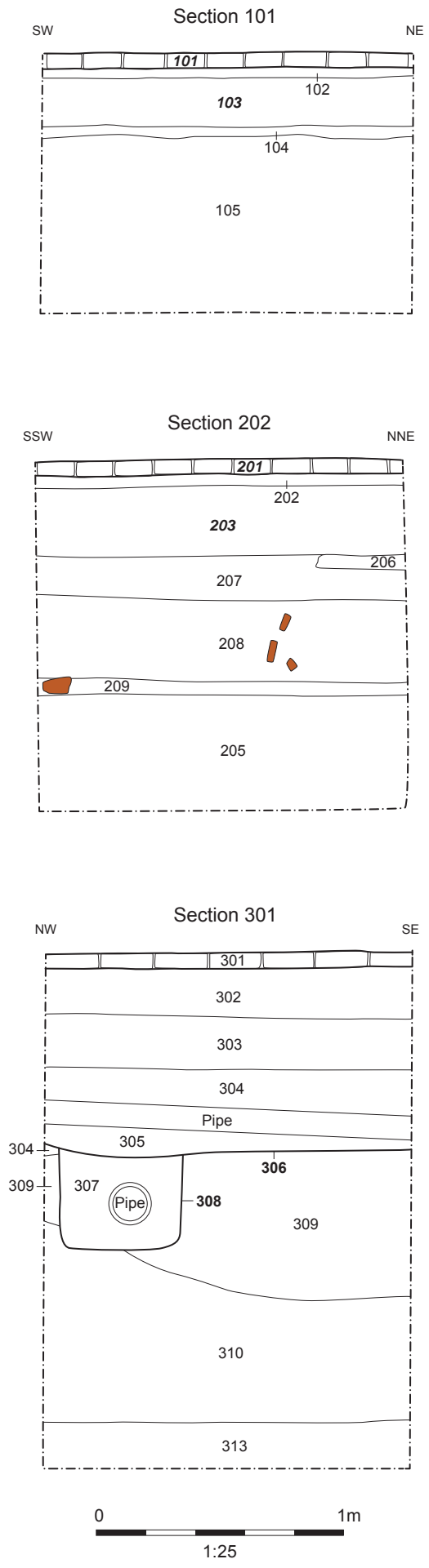


Figure 3: Sections

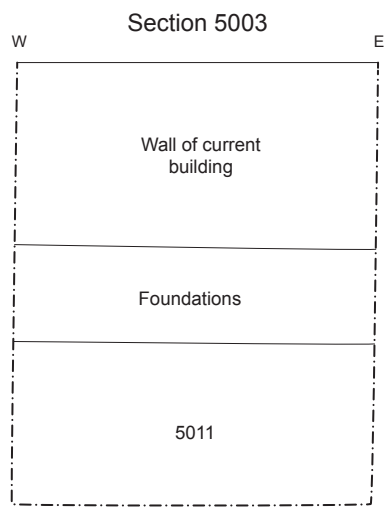
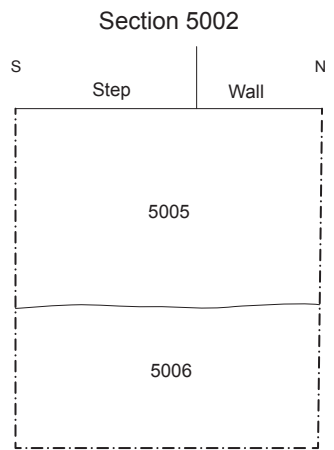
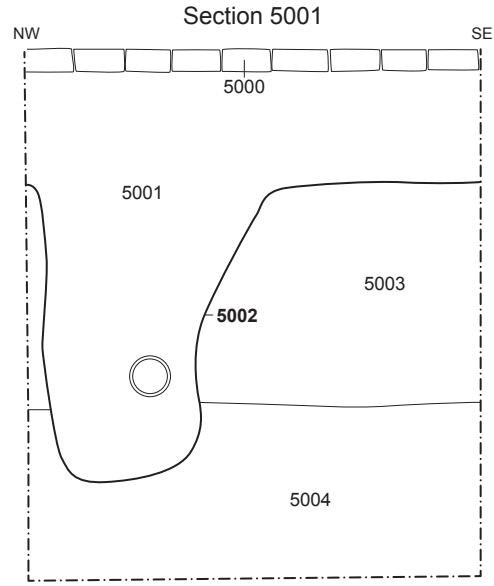
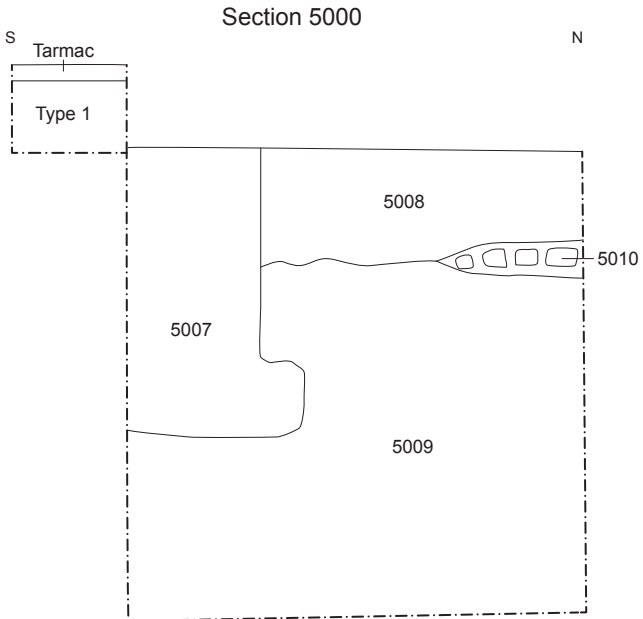


Figure 4: Sections



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