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T H A M E S V A L L E Y

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL

NON-UAD

S E R V I C E S

Stowford Road/
Bayswater Road
Barton

Evaluation

1998

**Stowford Road/Bayswater Road,
Barton, Oxford**

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Wilmott Dixon Housing Limited**

by Jo Pine
Thames Valley Archaeological Services

Site Code SRO 98/66

September 1998

Stowford Road/Bayswater Road, Barton, Oxford

An Archaeological Evaluation

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Report 98/66

Introduction

This report documents the results of a rapid desk-based assessment and archaeological field evaluation carried out on land at the corner of Stowford Road and Bayswater Road, Barton, Oxford (SP 5582507962) (Figs 1 and 2). The work was commissioned by Ms E Nobles of Wilmott Dixon Housing Limited, Bredon House, Almondsbury Business Centre, Bristol, BS32 4QH.

A revised planning application (98/360/NF) has been made to Oxford City Council for the construction of housing (flats) for the elderly. As it is possible that the building works may destroy archaeological deposits a field evaluation has been requested, according to the Department of the Environment's Policy and Planning Guidance Note, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG 16, 1990) and policies EN40-43 of the deposited Oxford Local Plan. The findings might then provide information on the site which could be used to draw up a mitigation strategy to minimise the impact of the development on possible archaeological deposits. The scheme of archaeological investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr B Durham of Oxford Archaeological Advisory Service who advise Oxford City Council on archaeological matters.

The first component of the archaeological investigation was a rapid desk-based assessment of the site to determine the optimum location of the evaluation trenches. This was followed by a field evaluation which was undertaken on the 16th and 17th of September 1998. The desk-based assessment was researched by Steven Weaver and written by Jo Pine and the fieldwork was supervised by Jo Pine with the assistance of Graham Hull and Sarah Whittaker. The site code is SRO 98/66.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the corner of Stowford Road and Bayswater Road, Barton, Oxford (Fig 2) and occupies an area of sloping land, 0.18 hectares in extent at a height of between 74 m and 77 m above Ordnance Datum (AOD). At the time of the evaluation the site was an open area of grassland. According to the British Geological Survey (BGS 1994), the underlying geology is Temple/Cowley Member (fine grained sandstones,

sands and siltstones) and West Walton Formation (dark grey silty mudstone). The location of the site on sloping ground appears to have led to an accumulation of hillwash^{↑ Alluvium} which overlies the archaeologically relevant levels to a depth of 0.40–0.60 m.

Rapid desk-based assessment

Cartographic study

Seven maps were examined at the Oxfordshire County Record Office. The earliest were the 1797 map by Davis and the 1802 Plan of the Parish of Headington. A range of Ordnance Survey maps were also consulted; the First Edition of 1881 (Fig 3), the Second Edition of 1889, and OS maps of 1921 and 1956. All the maps apart from that of 1956 show that the site has remained undeveloped, probably comprising agricultural land. The 1956 map (Fig 4) shows the presence of three structures and these are likely to be prefabricated buildings^{houses} which are known to have stood on the site at the time. ^{in the floor}

Oxfordshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR)

A search was made of the Oxfordshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) for all entries within a 0.5 km radius of the site. No archaeological finds or deposits were listed for the site itself but Roman activity was recorded within the immediate area. Roman pottery, coins and skeletons were discovered during the main development of the Bayswater Hill area, which took place during the 1940's (SMR nos 3364–6). Evidence for Roman activity closest to the site includes an occupation site with burials approximately 200 m to the south, which was discovered during development in 1946 and 1949 (SMR no 3664), and three Roman cremation burials which were found in 1949 (SMR no 3667) 150 m to the north-west of the site. Approximately 100 m to the north-east, at 102 Bayswater Road, human and animal bones and pottery dating to the 3rd or 4th century AD were uncovered in 1991. These appear to have been disturbed and were not in-situ remains (OAU 1991). Furthermore, the Bayswater Road^{not all of it.} is a Roman road which runs from the Roman town of Alchester to Dorchester-on-Thames (SMR no 8923). The projected line of this road lies approximately 10 m to the east of the proposal site.

Objectives and Methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development. This was to be accomplished by excavating four trenches 6 m long and 1.6 m wide. In the event, due to the presence of a footpath and the discovery of archaeological deposits, five trenches were excavated. These ranged in length from between 6.10 m and 10.70 m and all were 1.8 m wide and positioned as shown on Figure 2.

The trenches were excavated using a wheeled 360°-type mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. This was employed under direct and continuous archaeological supervision to remove topsoil and subsoil until the correct archaeological levels were reached. All archaeological deposits were hand-cleaned and excavated and the subsoil (hillwash) layers in Trench 2 were hand-cleaned, planned and photographed. All spoilheaps were monitored for finds.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Results

Trenches 1, 3 and 4 (Fig 2)

These three trenches showed a typical transect approximately north-south across the site and each section showed a similar sequence of strata, all of which sloped down to the river following the natural contours of the site. Topsoil (50) overlay a thin layer of made-ground (66) which overlay an apparently sterile mid-greyish brown clayey sand (65). This was cut by modern features including two service trenches. Layer 65 was between 0.35 m and 0.63 m thick, deepening to the north, and is thought to be hillwash (colluvium). This overlay a dark brown sandy clay layer (54/55/56) which contained sherds of Roman pottery dating to between the late 3rd-4th century AD and a small amount of animal bone. This layer may be a buried topsoil or an occupation layer. This was removed to reveal a yellow clayey sand and blue grey clay, which, in Trench 3 had been cut by a ditch (3) (Fig 5). This feature had been truncated by a modern drain and only partially survived in plan, but was observed in section (Fig 6, section 5). It was >2.50 m wide and 0.50 m deep and aligned approximately east-west. It contained two fills, 57 and 58, the former of which contained two sherds of pottery datable only to

the Roman period and six fragments of animal bone. Roman pottery of 3rd-4th century date was also recovered from the spoilheaps of Trenches 3 and 4. ✓

Trenches 2 and 5

Trench 2
Trenches 2 and 5 showed a different sequence of stratification. In Trench 2 (Figs 5 and 7, section 7) topsoil and made-ground were removed to reveal greyish brown clayey sand (65), probably hillwash. Below this layer the stratification varied from Trenches 1, 3 and 4 and comprised a mottled orange sand layer (67), which was between 0.10 m and 0.50 m deep and may also be a layer of hillwash. This overlay layers 59 and 68. Layer 59 was a dark brown sandy clay with shell inclusions, 0.35 m deep (max), which contained 83 sherds of mid to late 4th century AD pottery, four pieces of bone, three pieces of quernstone and two tile fragments. Layer 68 was a sterile fine grey brown silt, which could possibly be a leached fill of a linear feature (9) that cut layer 59. This possible feature, obscured and truncated a gully (5). This was aligned approximately north-south and was 0.45 m wide and 0.08 m deep. Its fine silty clay fill (61) contained three sherds of pottery dating to the 2nd/3rd century AD and one piece of tile. These finds are probably residual. ✓

Layer 59 was removed to reveal yellow sands and Oxford clay which had been cut by two features, a posthole (4) and a pit (6) (Figs 5 and 7). Posthole 4 (Plate 1) was 0.30 m in diameter and 0.09 m deep and although fully excavated contained no finds. Pit 6 was 0.50 m long, 0.45 m wide and 0.09 m deep and contained four sherds of Roman pottery dating to the later 1st or early 2nd century AD. Two sherds of pottery were recovered from the spoilheap dating from between 240 and 400 AD. ✓

Trench 5
In Trench 5 topsoil (50), modern overburden (66) and a mid-greyish brown clayey sand layer (65) lay above a light greyish brown sandy clay layer (64). This in turn overlay a yellow sandy clay and appeared to have been cut by feature 8 (Fig 5). Feature 8 was probably a ditch, although its full extent could not be ascertained due to the presence of a main drainage trench which lay at the northern end of the excavation trench. A section through the ditch showed it to have a steep concave southern side (Fig 6, section 6). Within this feature a wall (7) (Plate 2) was also present. This was of dry stone construction and was 0.25 m high, 0.12 m wide and consisted of four courses. No construction cut was observed and it appeared to be resting on, and butted by, fill 63 in feature 8. The fill (63) of feature 8 contained 12 sherds of Roman pottery dated to the 3rd-4th century AD, 20 pieces of tile and 8 fragments of bone. The stratigraphy suggests that ditch 8 was not completely filled when wall 7 was constructed.

(think this must be an early field drain? Roman)

The Finds

Pottery by Jane Timby

A small group of 127 sherds of pottery (1515 gms) was recovered from the five evaluation trenches. With the exception of three post-Medieval/modern sherds all the assemblage dates to the Roman period. The pottery was briefly scanned to assess its composition and likely date range. No further work was carried out at this stage to consider the wares in their local or regional context. The sherds were quantified by weight and the information is summarised in Appendix 3.

Generally speaking the sherds are in poor condition, many with very abraded surfaces and edges suggesting either prolonged exposure or hostile ground conditions, for example waterlogging. The majority of wares are of local manufacture, particularly products from the Oxfordshire industries. There are few featured wares present. Two small sherds of Samian, one sherd of Savernake ware and one sherd of late Roman shell-tempered ware indicate a low level of trade.

Trench 1 produced just four sherds which possibly indicate a 2nd century AD period of activity, although they could be later. Of particular note is a sherd from a barbotine decorated fine grey ware beaker. A higher concentration of sherds from Trench 2, (92 in total), suggests quite a chronological range. The earliest sherds came from posthole 6 (62) including a sherd of Savernake ware from Wiltshire, dating to the later 1st-early 2nd century AD. Slightly later material was associated with 5 (61) with a sherd of Oxfordshire whiteware and a sherd from an Oxfordshire grog-tempered storage jar, more typical of the 2nd-3rd centuries AD. The biggest group came from context 59 and includes several sherds of late 3rd-4th century AD Oxfordshire mortaria. A single sherd of late Roman shell tempered ware gives a *terminus post quem* for this deposit somewhere in the last quarter of the 4th century AD. Two sherds of Samian suggest possible mixing of material or redeposition of earlier pottery.

Trench 3 produced just nine sherds, of which three from the brick drain and modern gully are post-Medieval. A small sherd from a modern posthole is difficult to date but may well be Roman. The presence of Oxfordshire colour coated ware, parchment ware and mortaria from 56 indicate activity in the late 4th century AD in this area. Three thick walled joining fragments from 56 suggest the presence of some sort of refractory material, perhaps a crucible or mould. Although there is no trace of any residue the pieces appear to be quite heavily burnt on the exterior surfaces.

A similar late Roman date is suggested for the occupation layer (54) in Trench 4 with just two sherds of pottery (one from the spoilheap) and one tile fragment. Only one context in Trench 5 contained pottery (63) with further examples of Oxfordshire colour coated ware and whiteware mortaria again suggesting a 3rd–4th century AD phase of use.

Faunal Remains

A total of 23 fragments (376 gms) of animal bone was recovered from the evaluation. These are catalogued in Appendix 4.

Brick and Tile

A total of 25 fragments of brick and tile (160 gms) were recovered from the evaluation. A catalogue is to be found in Appendix 5.

Quern

Three fragments of quern made from Mayen lava (444 gms) were recovered from layer 59 in Trench 2.

Clay Pipe

A single clay pipe stem was recovered from the cut of the modern drain in Trench 3.

Metalwork

Two nails were recovered during the evaluation. One came from Roman layer 59 in Trench 3. The other is from a modern drain cut in Trench 3.

Coins by Paul Cannon

A single coin was recovered from the topsoil in Trench 2. This was identified as follows: AE4, Constantius II or Constans. Rev: (VICTORIAE DD AVGG Q NN). Mint mark = Arles, 341–346 AD.

Shell

Three oyster shells were recovered from layer 56 in Trench 3. These appear to be fossilised.

Conclusion

The evaluation produced evidence for Roman occupation dating between the later 1st and 4th centuries AD. The earliest feature was pit 6 (Trench 2) which was of 1st–2nd century AD date. Based on their stratigraphic relationships, ditch 3 and posthole 4 are of similar date. Stratigraphically these were sealed by a dark brown

sandy clay (54/55/56/59) which contained late 3rd–4th century AD material. In Trench 2 this layer was cut by gully 5 and ditch 9. The origin of this dark deposit is not fully understood, but it could be an artefact-rich buried topsoil or 'occupation layer'.

In Trench 2, which is located closest to the line of the Roman road, this layer (59) is sealed by a fine sand layer (67) which may be a colluvial deposit formed due to disturbance caused by passing traffic. This may have occurred if any flanking ditches were poorly constructed or had become infilled, causing localised flooding (Brian Durham, pers comm).

In Trench 5 the sequence is not fully understood as the dark brown 'occupation layer' was not present. However, the footings of a dry stone wall (7), and a ditch (8) of 3rd–4th century AD date were discovered.

Layer 65 was encountered within all the trenches and is thought to be hillwash (colluvium). This layer, although producing no finds, sealed deposits containing Roman finds of 4th century date, and could belong to any period from the late Roman to post-Medieval.

The evaluation trenches have shown that the Roman levels are buried beneath later hillwash and this appears to have led to a better preservation of occupation deposits than is typical of most plough-damaged rural sites in exposed positions.

References

- BGS, 1994, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 237, Solid and drift edition, Keyworth
PPG 16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Department of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance Note 16, HMSO
Roberts, M, 1991, 102 Bayswater Road, Barton, Archaeological watching brief, Oxford Archaeological Unit Report, Oxford

Appendix 1: Trench Details

<i>Trench No.</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	6.10	1.8	1.00	Topsoil 0.10 m deep over 0.10 m of made-ground over brown clayey layer 65 which was 0.35 m deep. This overlay dark brown sandy clay (55) which was 0.25 m deep above yellow clayey sand.
2	10.70	1.8	1.15	Topsoil 0.10 m deep over 0.10 m of made-ground. This overlay brown clayey sand layer 65 which was 0.45 m deep (max), which in turn overlay an orange/brown sand (67) 0.50 m deep (max). This in turn overlay a dark brown sandy clay layer (59) which was 0.35 m deep and a possible feature 9 (68). These overlay yellow sands and blue grey clay. Features 4, 5 and 6 cut this layer. Roman pottery from was recovered from the spoil heap.
3	6.30	1.8	1.45	Topsoil 0.10 m deep over made-ground 0.10 m deep over brown clayey sand (65) which was 0.43 m deep. This overlay a dark brown sandy clay (56) which was 0.24 m deep which in turn overlay yellow clayey sand which was cut by ditch 3. Roman pottery was recovered from the spoilheap.
4	7.30	1.8	1.70	Topsoil 0.10 m deep over made-ground 0.30 m deep over brown clayey sand (65) which was 0.62 m deep. This overlay a dark brown sandy clay layer (54) which was 0.30 m deep. This in turn overlay yellow clayey sands and blue grey clay 0.35 m deep. Roman pottery was recovered from the spoilheap.
5	8.00	1.8	0.90	Topsoil 0.15 m deep over made-ground 0.12 m deep over brown clayey sand (65) which was 0.38 m deep. This overlay a brown clayey sand (64) which was 0.15 m deep which in turn overlay yellow clayey sand. Features 7 and 8 observed.

Appendix 2: Feature List

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Deposit/fill</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dug</i>
1	52	Geological feature	Y
2	53	Geological feature	Y
3	57, 58	Ditch	Y
4	60	Posthole	Y
5	61	Gully	Y
6	62	Pit	Y
7	-	Wall	Y
8	63	Ditch	Y
9	68	?Ditch	N
-	50	Topsoil	N
-	51	Not used	
-	54	Layer	N
-	55	Layer	N
-	56	Layer	N
-	59	Layer	Y
-	64	Layer	N
-	65	Hillwash	Y
-	66	Made ground	N
-	67	Layer	Y

Appendix 3: Pottery Catalogue

Trench	Cut	Deposit/ fill	Fabric	Wt (gms)	No	Date
1	0	55	GREY, OXWW, OXID, GROG	4	58	?2nd century
2	0	59	SHEL, SAM, OXID, WW, GROG, OXCC, OXWWM, GREY	83	1006	M-L 4th century
2	5	61	GROG, GREY, OXWW	3	44	2nd/3rd century
2	6	62	SAV, GREY	4	16	?1st-2nd century
2	Spoil	-	GROG, OXCC	2	11	240-400 AD
3	0	56	OXPA, GR, OG, OXCC, OXID	8	69	4th century
3	3	57	GREY, OXID	2	5	Roman
3	Modern drain	-	CHINA, GREY	2	64	Roman/19th
3	Modern gully	-	GREY, CHINA, OXWWM	3	12	Roman/19th
3	Modern posthole	-	OXID	1	3	Undated
3	Spoilheap	-	OXWWM	1	92	240-300 AD
4	0	54	OXCC	1	20	240-400 AD
4	Spoilheap	-	GROG	1	74	2nd-4th
5	8	63	OXWWM, OXID, GREY, OXCC	12	61	240-300 AD
Total				127	1515	

Key to Codes

CHINA - modern china
 GRE - glazed red earthenware
 GREY - grey/black reduced ware
 GROG - grog-tempered
 OXCC - Oxon colour-coated ware
 OXID - misc. orange sandy wares
 OXPA - Oxon parchment ware
 OXWW - Oxon whiteware
 OXWWM - Oxon whiteware mortaria
 SAM - Samian
 SAV - Savernake ware
 SHEL - late Roman shell-tempered ware

Appendix 4: Faunal remains

<i>Trench 2</i>			
<i>Feature</i>	<i>Deposit/fill</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (gms)</i>
-	59	4	78

<i>Trench 3</i>			
<i>Feature</i>	<i>Deposit/fill</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (gms)</i>
-	556	5	4
3	57	6	278
Modern drain	-	1	6

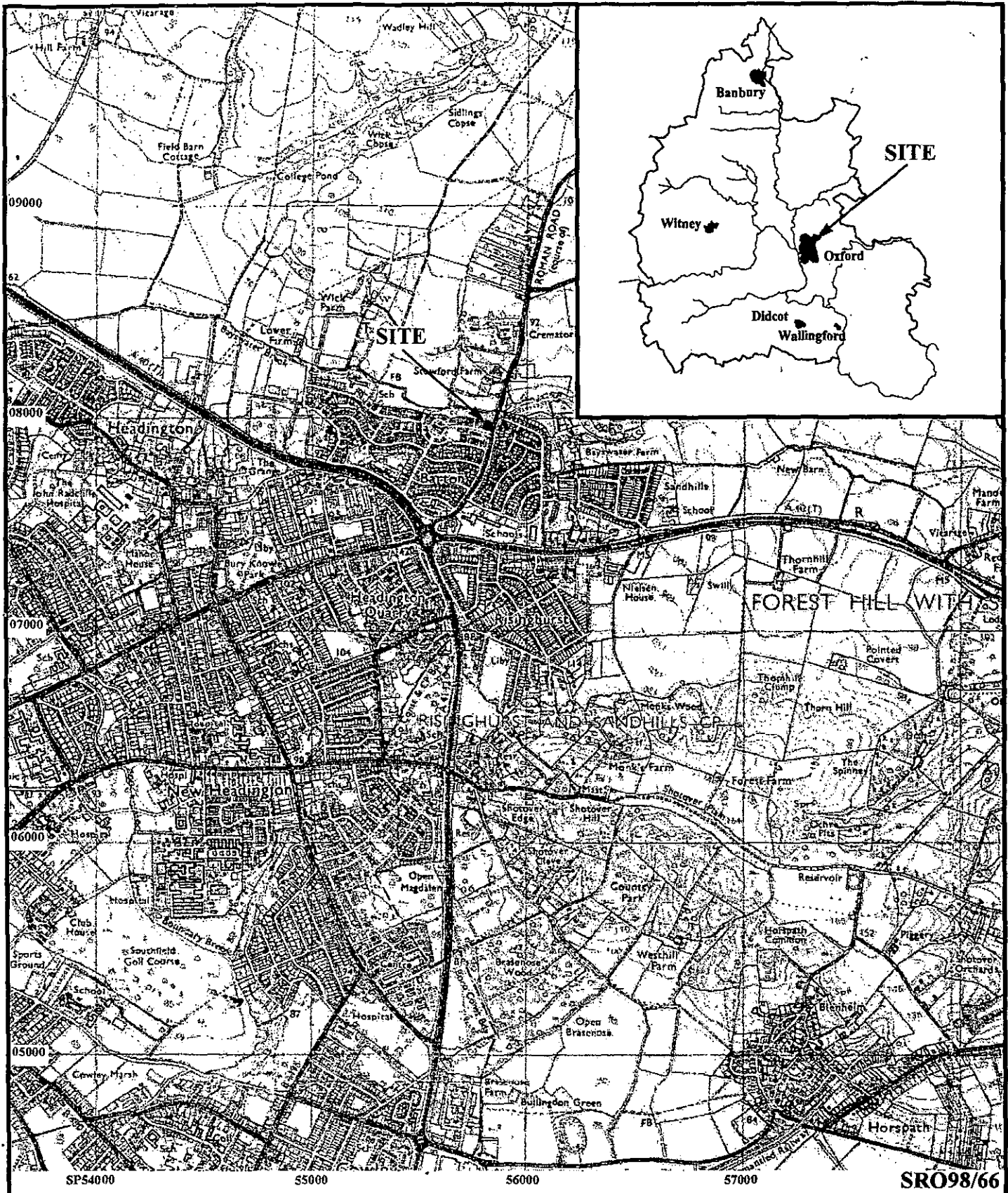
<i>Trench 5</i>			
<i>Feature</i>	<i>Deposit/fill</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (gms)</i>
8	63	8	18

Appendix 5: Brick and Tile

<i>Trench 2</i>			
<i>Feature</i>	<i>Deposit/fill</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (gms)</i>
-	59	4	5

<i>Trench 3</i>			
<i>Feature</i>	<i>Deposit/fill</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (gms)</i>
Modern gully	-	2	4

<i>Trench 5</i>			
<i>Feature</i>	<i>Deposit/fill</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (gms)</i>
8	63	20	152



Stowford Road, Barton, Oxford, Oxfordshire,
1998

Figure 1. Location of site within Barton and
Oxfordshire.

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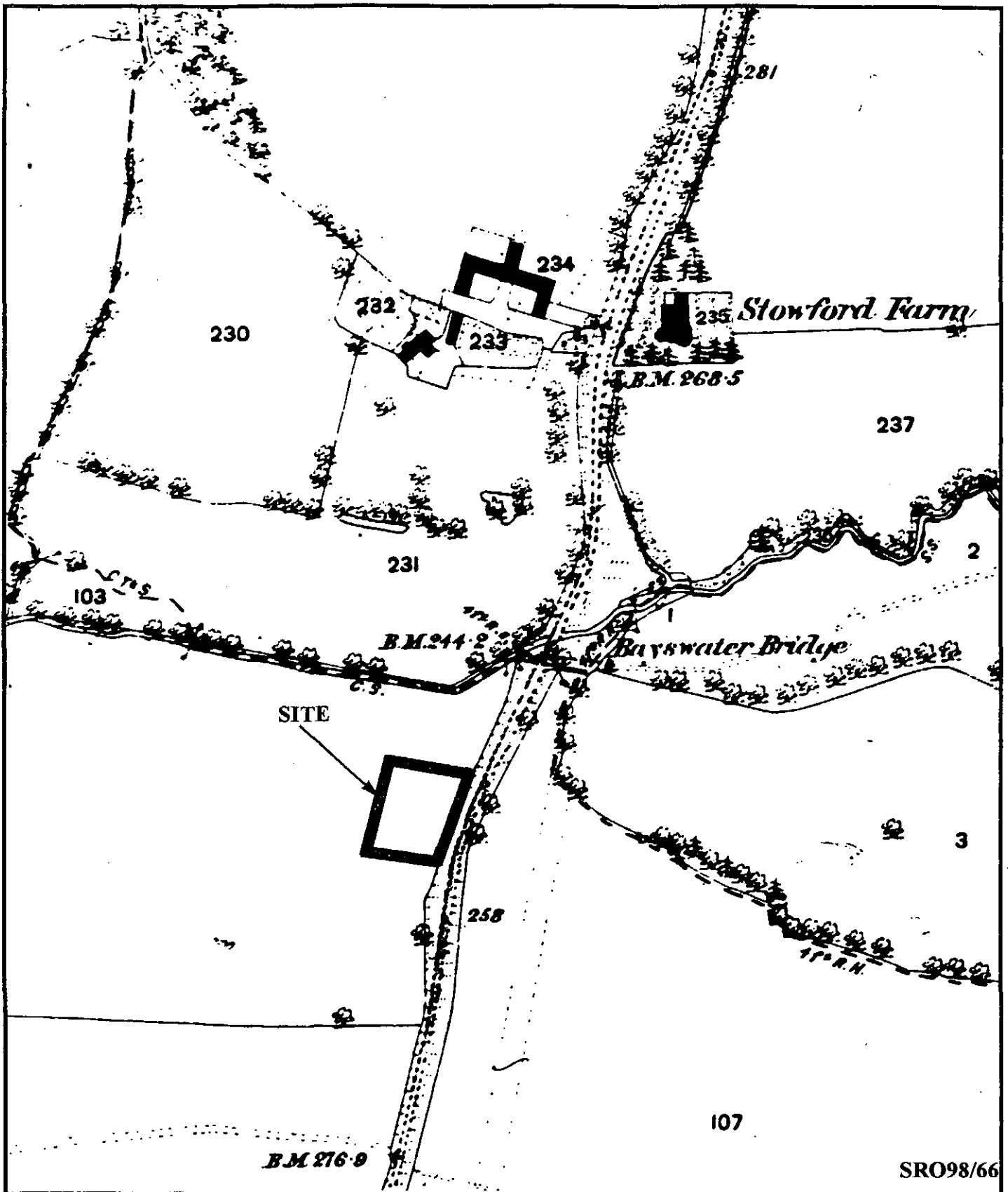
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Figure 2. Trench location plan showing boreholes and all archaeological features.

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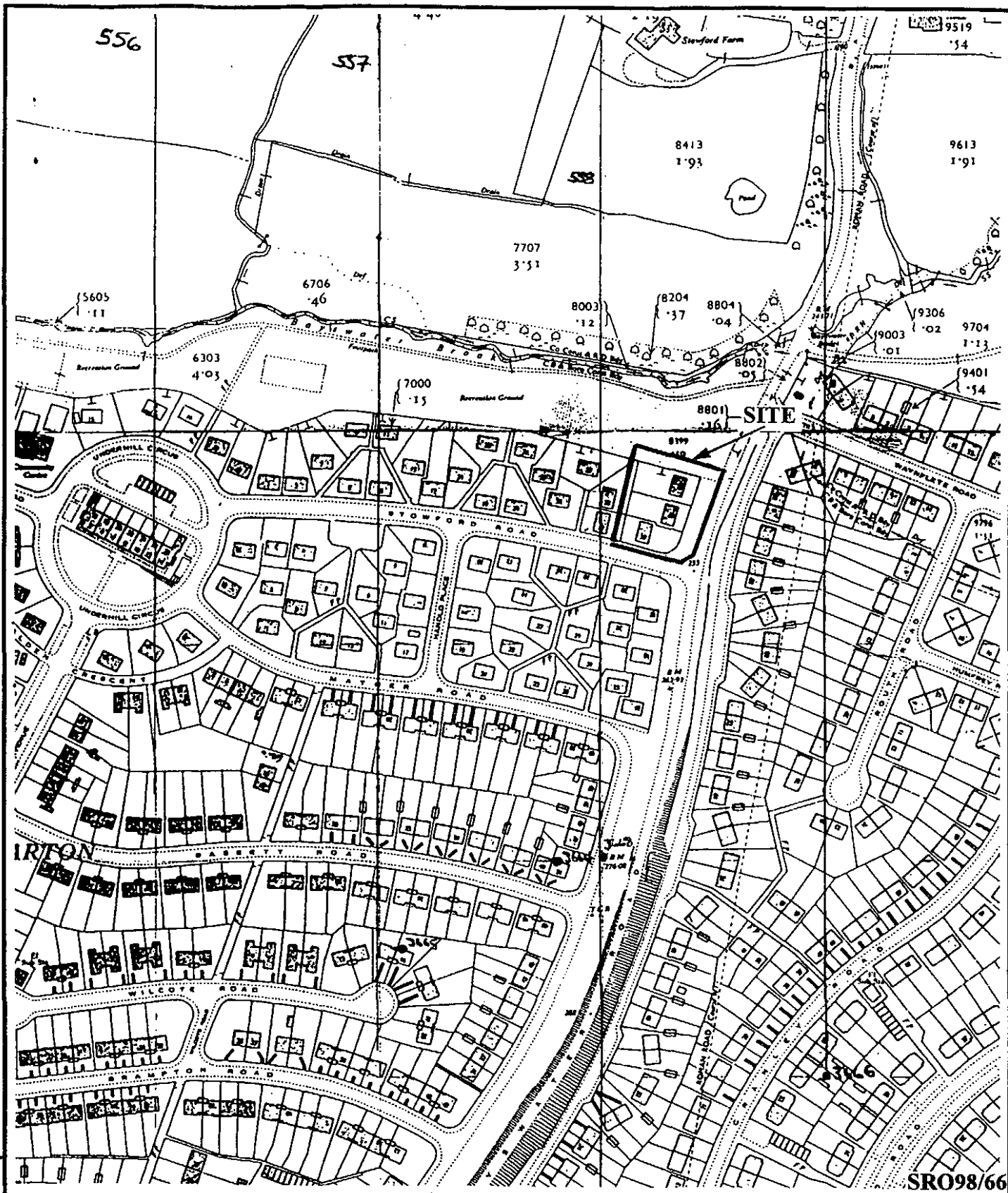
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1998

Figure 3. Ordnance Survey 1st. Edition, 1881.

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1998

Figure 4 Ordnance Survey, 1956.

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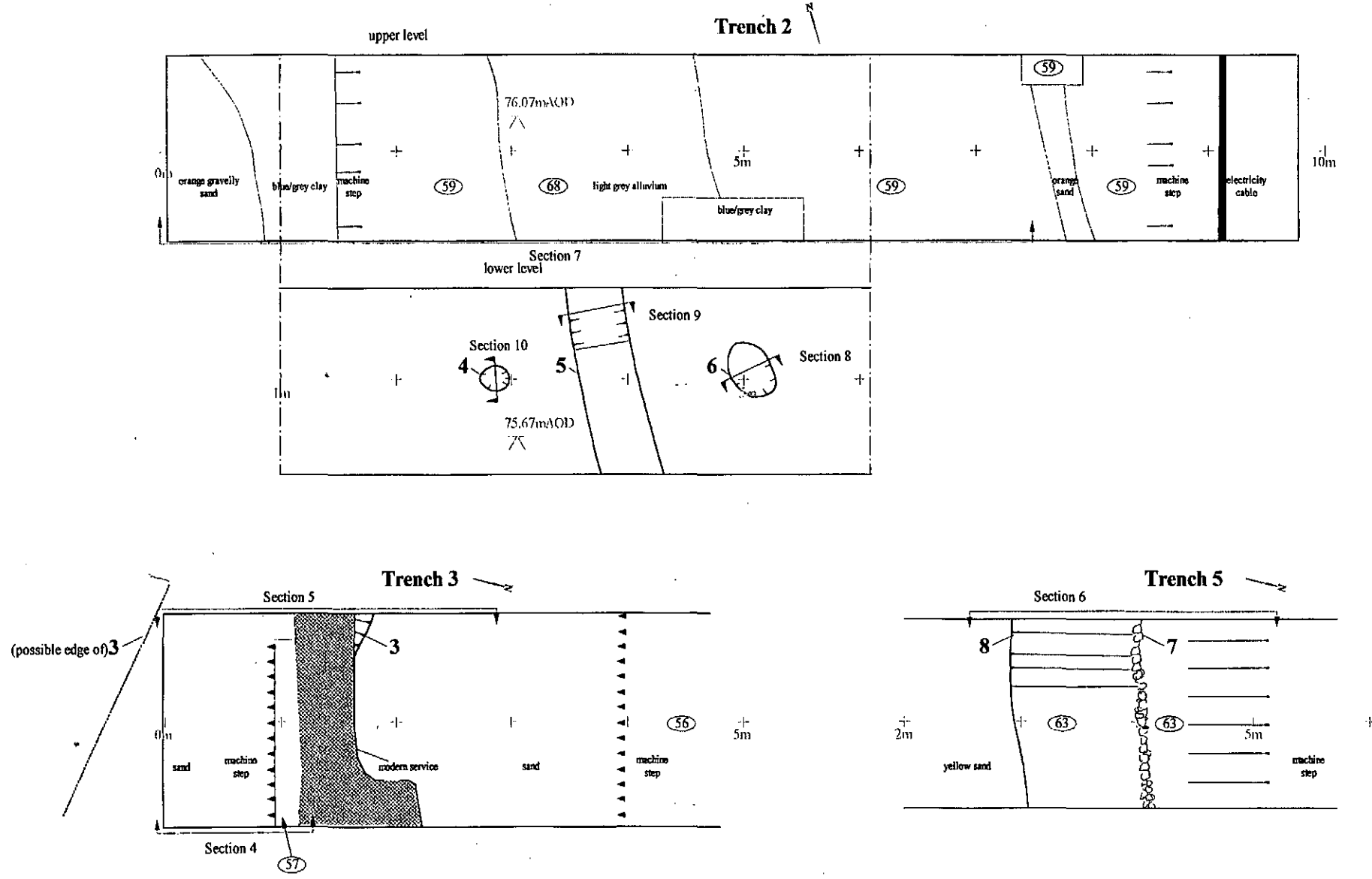
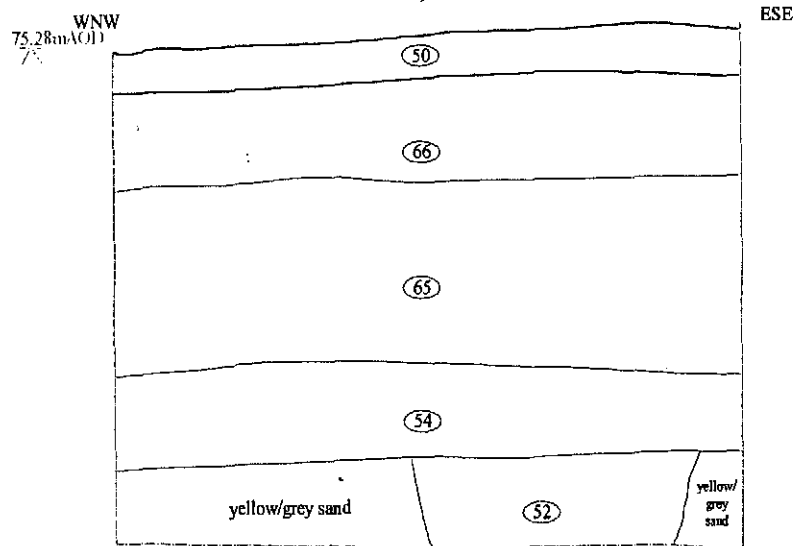


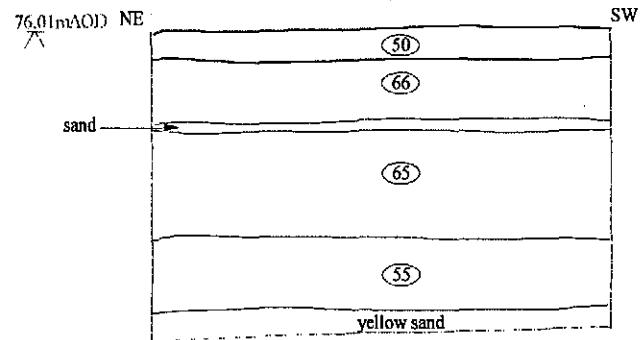
Figure 5. Plans of archaeological features in trenches 2, 3 and 5.

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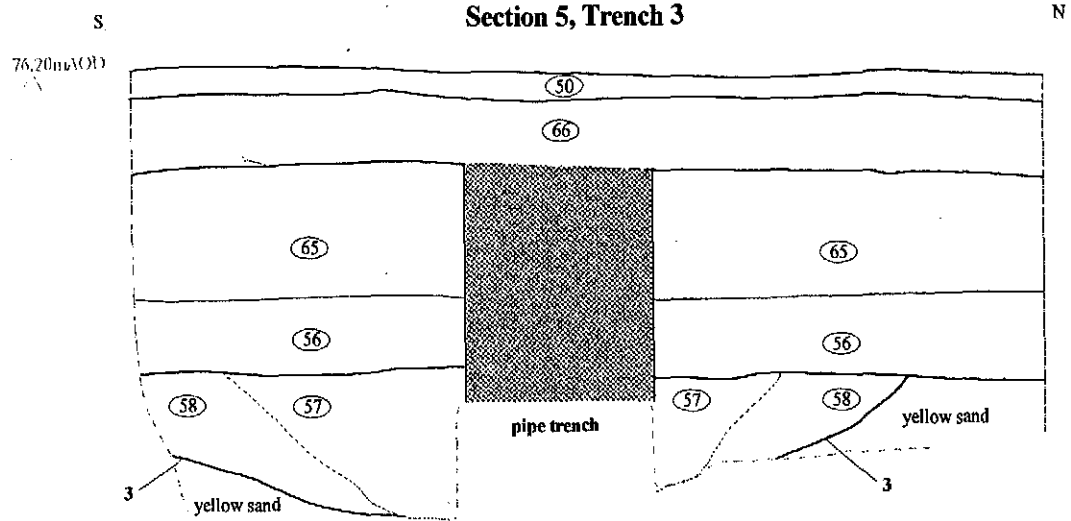
Section 1, Trench 4



Section 2, Trench 1



Section 5, Trench 3



Section 6, Trench 5

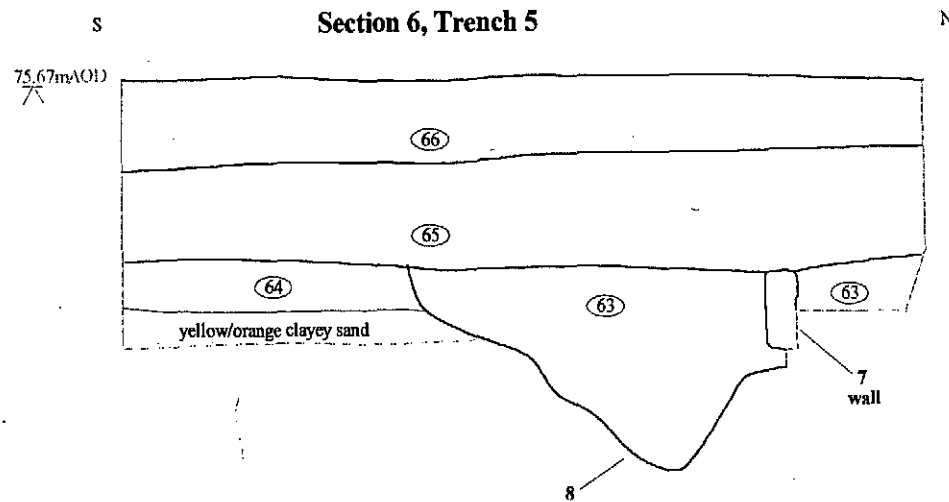
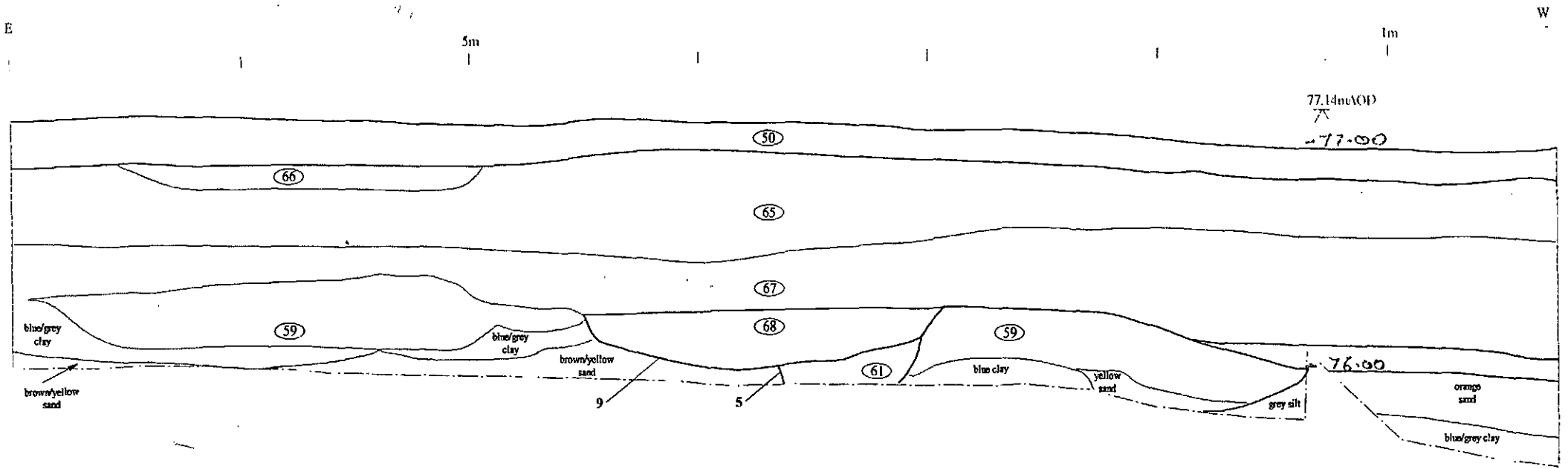


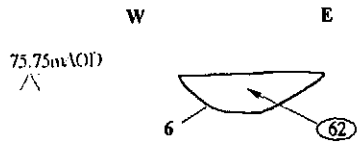
Figure 6. Sections 1, 2, 5 and 6.

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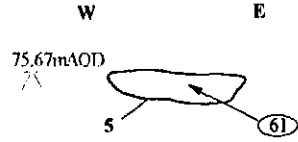
Section 7, Trench 2



Section 8, Trench 2



Section 9, Trench 2



Section 10, Trench 2

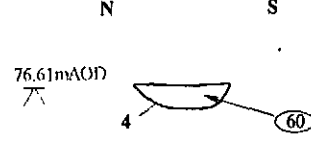


Figure 7. Section 7, 8, 9 and 10.

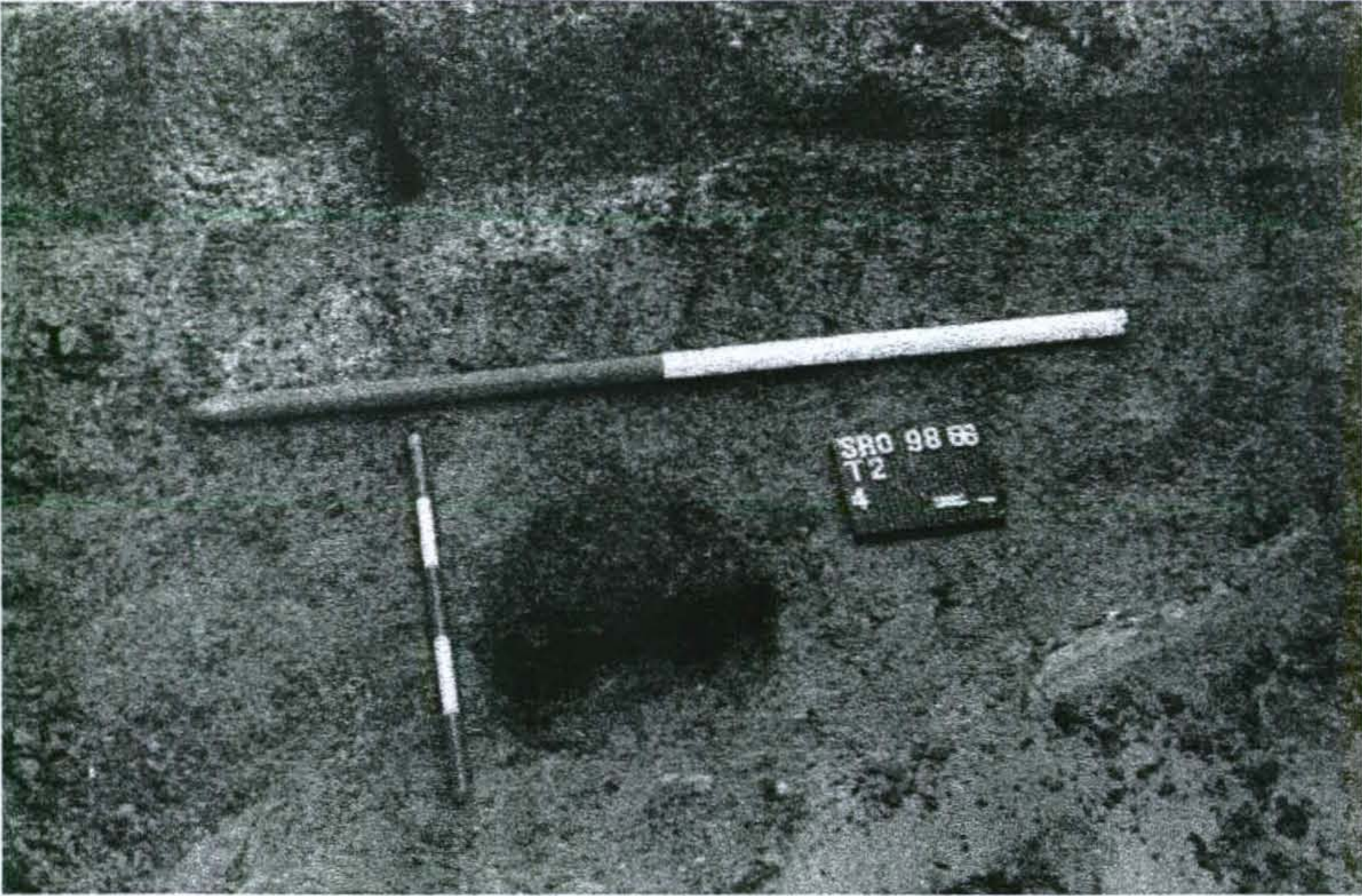


Plate 1. Trench 2, posthole 4 looking east, scales: 0.50m and 1m.

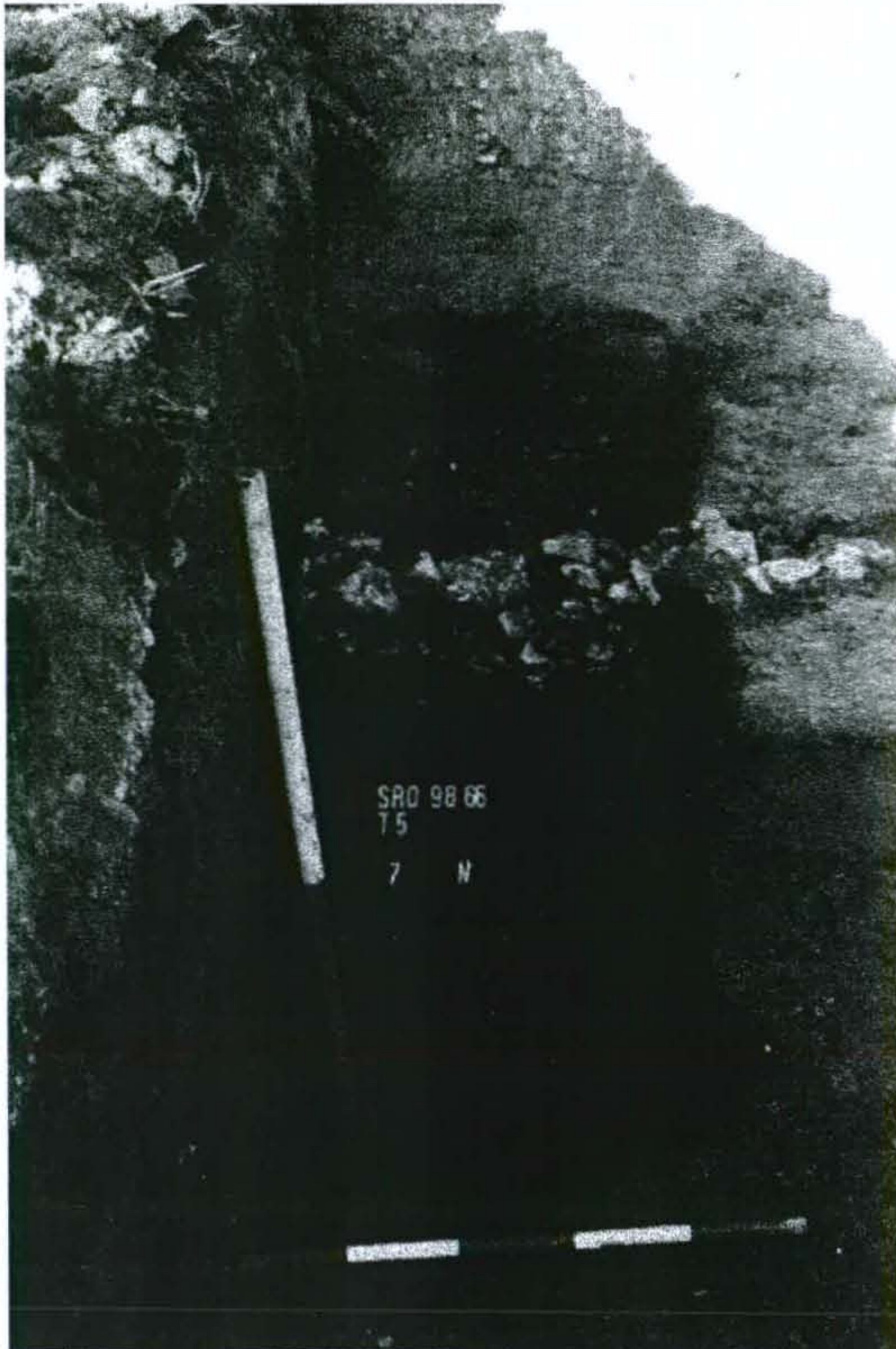


Plate 2. Trench 5, wall 7 looking south, scales: 0.50m and 1m.

TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43
Iron Age _____	AD 0 BC 750 BC
Bronze Age: Late -----	1300 BC
Bronze Age: Middle -----	1700 BC
Bronze Age Early -----	2100 BC
Neolithic: Late	3300 BC
Neolithic: Early	4300 BC
Mesolithic: Late	6000 BC
Mesolithic: Early	10,000 BC
Palaeolithic: Upper	50,000 BC
Palaeolithic: Middle	70,000 BC
Palaeolithic: Lower	2,000,000 BC

