

**PROPOSED DWELLING ADJACENT 10A SWEET HILL
ROAD, SOUTHWELL, PORTLAND, DORSET
Archaeological Observations and Recording**



Report No. 53225/3/1

September 2006

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Archaeological Observations and Recording,
August 2006

Prepared for:

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Proposed Dwelling Adjacent 10A Sweet Hill Road, Southwell, Portland, Dorset

Archaeological Observations and Recording, August 2006

SUMMARY

Terrain Archaeology carried out a watching brief during the excavation of a footings trench for a new dwelling on land adjacent 10A Sweet Hill Road, Southwell, Portland, Dorset, in August 2006.

No features or deposits of archaeological interest were found. A small quantity of 12th-13th century medieval pottery was recovered from the topsoil.

INTRODUCTION

Terrain Archaeology was commissioned by Mr R. N. M. Warde to undertake a programme of archaeological observations and recording during the excavation of footings trenches for a proposed dwelling on land adjacent 10A Sweet Hill Road, Southwell, Portland (Planning Application No. 06E/00234/FUL).

The site is situated on land immediately to the northeast of 10A Sweet Hill Road at SY68607016. The ground slopes downward from the northwest to the southeast and has been partly built up using debris from the construction of 10A. It lies at a height of approximately 50 m above Ordnance Datum whilst the underlying geology is Lower Purbeck Beds (Geological Survey of England and Wales Sheet 342 *Weymouth Drift* 1976).

The fieldwork was carried out between 29th and 31st August 2006 by Steven Tatler.

Terrain Archaeology would like to acknowledge the following for their help and cooperation during this project: Mr R. N. M. Warde, Alan Welch (Site Manager) and Steven Wallis (Dorset County Council).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The earliest evidence for activity in the area dates from the Mesolithic period (c. 8000-4000BC). A sparse scatter of possible Mesolithic worked chert has been found on the northern slopes of Sweet Hill to the west of the present site (Terrain Archaeology 1999). An important Mesolithic site has been excavated at Culverwell (Palmer 1999) about 800 m to the south and

Important evidence of Early Neolithic (4000-3700BC) occupation has also been found by Terrain Archaeology on the northern slopes of Sweet Hill where the remains of a rectangular house with an associated pit with burnt hazelnut shells and grain have been excavated (Terrain Archaeology 2000a).

In the bottom of the coombe to the northwest of the site two burnt mounds of probable Late Neolithic/ Early Bronze Age date (c. 2600-1600BC) have been excavated by Terrain Archaeology (Terrain Archaeology 2000b). To the north of the site at Suckthumb Quarry further evidence of Bronze Age activity has been noted (RCHME 1970, 450).

Iron Age and Roman-British occupation appears to be centred on Avalanche Road and Sweet Hill Lane housing estate (RCHME 1970, 607-8; Putnam 1970). However a number of Roman burials,

including one in a stone sarcophagus, have been found to the southwest of the site along Sweet Hill Road (RCHME 1970, 608). A scatter of Roman pottery has also been found along this road.

In the medieval and post-medieval periods, the site lay within the open field system of Portland, in what was known as the "Great West Field". There is some evidence for medieval activity and occupation in Southwell. Adjacent to the site, during the construction of 10A Sweet Hill Road, a scatter of Roman and medieval pottery and a single medieval rubbish pit was found during a watching brief in 1996 (Brading 1996). The medieval pottery was mainly dated to the 12th-14th century.

Further evidence for medieval occupation has been found at the junction between Sweet Hill Road and Sweet Hill Lane, about 80 m south of the site, where the remains of a limpet shell midden containing 12th or early 13th century pottery were disturbed during excavations for a sewer trench along Sweet Hill Lane in 1951 (Farrar 1951). At the upper end of Sweet Hill Road, about 180 m south of the site, the remains of a midden of limpet shells containing 12th and early 13th century pottery, was found during the construction of the road to the former naval establishment on top of Sweet Hill (Farrar 1950). In 1962, during the construction of two houses at the western end of the triangle in Southwell, about 80 m southeast of the site, medieval pottery dating to the 14th or 15th century was recovered (Farrar 1962).

A rapid scan of the historic maps show no evidence for habitation on the site. The 1745 map of the lands held by the Crown (PRO MPE 356) shows the site as on the edge of the open field system. The 1811 one-inch Ordnance Survey map is too small scale to show much detail and unfortunately the labelling of the map obscures the site. The 1842 Tithe Map shows that the site had been enclosed by this date, when it was a meadow known as Wool Meadows.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The archaeological works aimed to observe and record all the *in situ* archaeological deposits and features revealed during the groundworks to an appropriate professional standard.

The objective of the archaeological observations was to establish and make available information about the archaeological resource existing on the site.

METHODS

The work was carried out in compliance with the Written Scheme of Investigation for the project, produced by Terrain Archaeology (Document 53225/1/1, August 2006). The project was undertaken in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Code of Conduct and *Standard and guidance for archaeological watching briefs*, although no written brief was issued for the project.

The groundworks consisted firstly of the machine excavation of the footprint of the building to level the site with up to 1.3 m excavated in the northwest corner. The footings trenches were then excavated to a depth of up to 1.3 m using a 0.6 m and a 0.4 m wide toothed bucket.

All deposits exposed in the trenches were recorded using elements of Terrain Archaeology's recording system of complementary written, drawn and photographic records. All depths recorded were below existing ground surface.

The records have been compiled in a stable, cross-referenced and fully indexed archive in accordance with current UKIC guidelines and the requirements of the receiving museum. It is intended to deposit the archive with Dorset County Museum.

RESULTS

After the initial stripping of the site, natural deposits were exposed across the western half the footprint of the new building, in places up to 1.1 m of deposits was removed (Figure 2). No features or deposits of archaeological significance were found during this initial strip. Subsequent observations were only undertaken during the excavation of the footings trenches in the eastern half of the site.

Natural deposits

The underlying natural consisted of a compact, very pale brown to yellow silty clay (104) containing bands of bedded limestone slabs. Due to the topography of the site this deposit was removed to a thickness of up to 1.1 m in the northwest corner of the site to level the ground prior to digging the footings (Plate 1).

Agricultural soils

Overlying the natural deposits was a mid yellowish-brown clayey loam subsoil (103), up to 0.1 m thick, with frequent peagrit and moderate limestone pieces.

Above this was a dark yellowish-brown clayey loam ploughsoil (102), up to 0.65 m thick, with occasional limestone pieces, peagrit. and tree roots. This deposit became thinner towards the northwest corner of the site and more organic in the southeast part. The organic nature of the deposit probably indicates waterlogging caused by a nearby spring. A small quantity of medieval pottery and animal bone was recovered from this layer.

Modern deposits

Overlying the ploughsoil, in the eastern half of the site only, was a dump of building debris (101), up to 0.5 m thick, consisting of limestone rubble, mortar and concrete. This was known to result from the construction of 10A Sweet Hill Road. This deposit was observed in the southeast corner of the site only and had been used to level the garden. Above this was a dark yellowish-brown clayey loam turf layer (100), up to 0.15 m thick, with occasional limestone pieces.

FINDS

The finds recovered from this watching brief were all from the ploughsoil layer 102 (Table 1).

context	Medieval pottery		Glass		Animal bone	
	No.	Wt. (g)	No.	Wt. (g)	No.	Wt. (g)
102	8	76	1	39	5	38

Table 1: Finds assemblage by context

Medieval Pottery

Eight sherds of medieval pottery were recovered. The majority were undiagnostic body sherds, but two folded-in rims and part of a sagging base sherd were also present. A range of fabrics were represented, the majority were coarse quartz, flint and/or shell tempered sherds, with two thin hard sandy ware sherds and a soft sandy greyware sherd. Most of the sherds were probably from cookpots or bowls. The sherds are probably 12th century in date. The fabrics were similar to some of those found in the 12th century midden uncovered near the top of Sweet Hill Road (Farrar 1950).

Other finds

A single sherd of a 19th century clear glass bottle and five fragments of sheep bone were also recovered.

CONCLUSIONS

No features or deposits of archaeological significance were found during the watching brief. Nevertheless, the discovery of medieval pottery of probable 12th century date, in the topsoil, confirms the results of the watching brief on the adjacent site of 10A Sweet Hill Road (Brading 1996), which suggested that this area was used in the medieval period for rubbish disposal and lay on the edge of an area of occupation. Given the indication of former waterlogged deposits, and the flooding of the footings trenches during the groundworks (Plate 2), it is likely that the settlement was located on higher ground further upslope to the north.

PROJECT ARCHIVE

The archive (Terrain Archaeology Project No. 53225) will be deposited with the Dorset County Museum, which has agreed in principle to accept the archive, subject to fulfilment of the Museum's requirements of the preparation of archaeological archives. A copy of the microfilmed archive will be deposited with the National Monuments Record.

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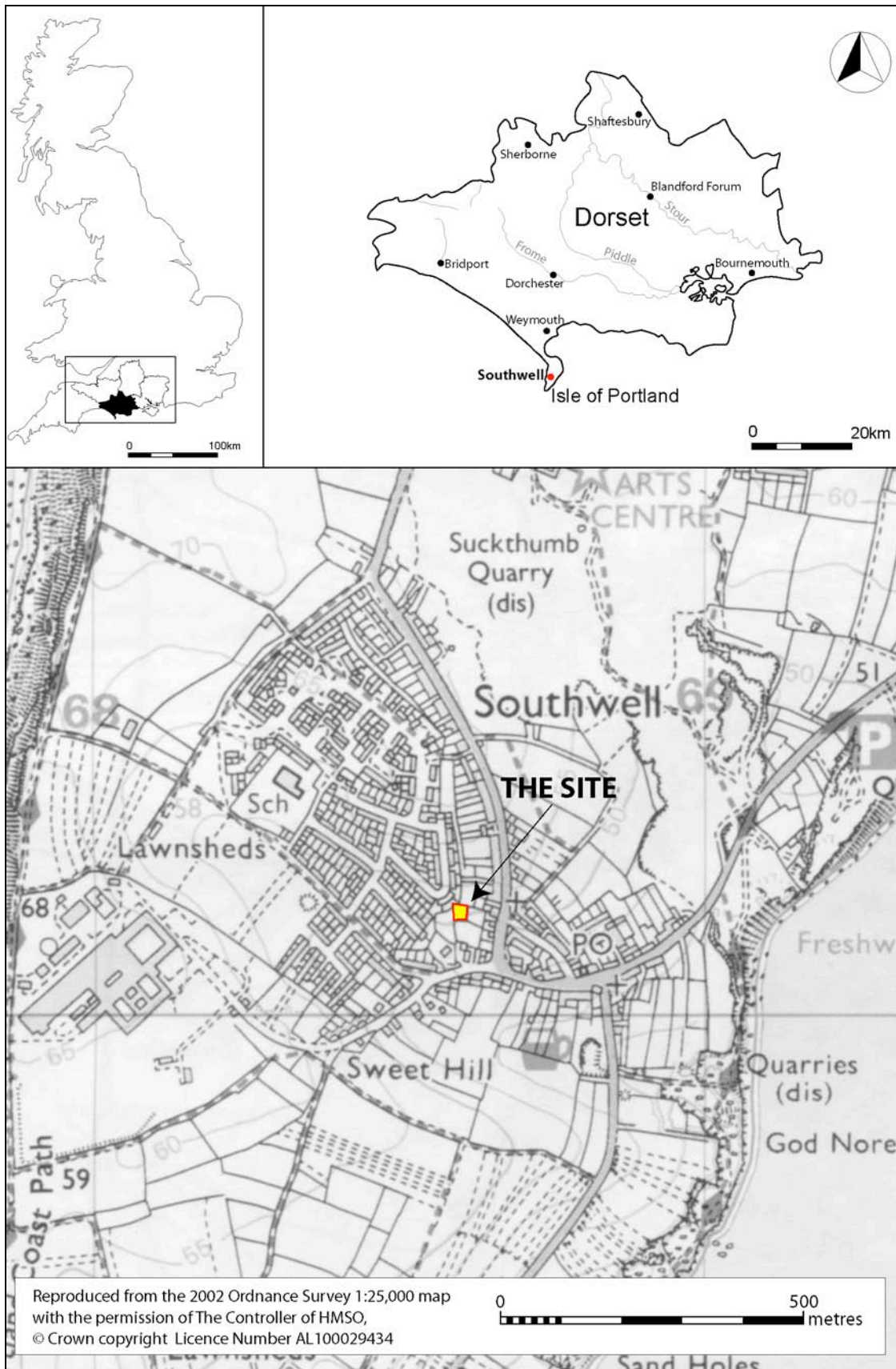


Figure 1: Location map

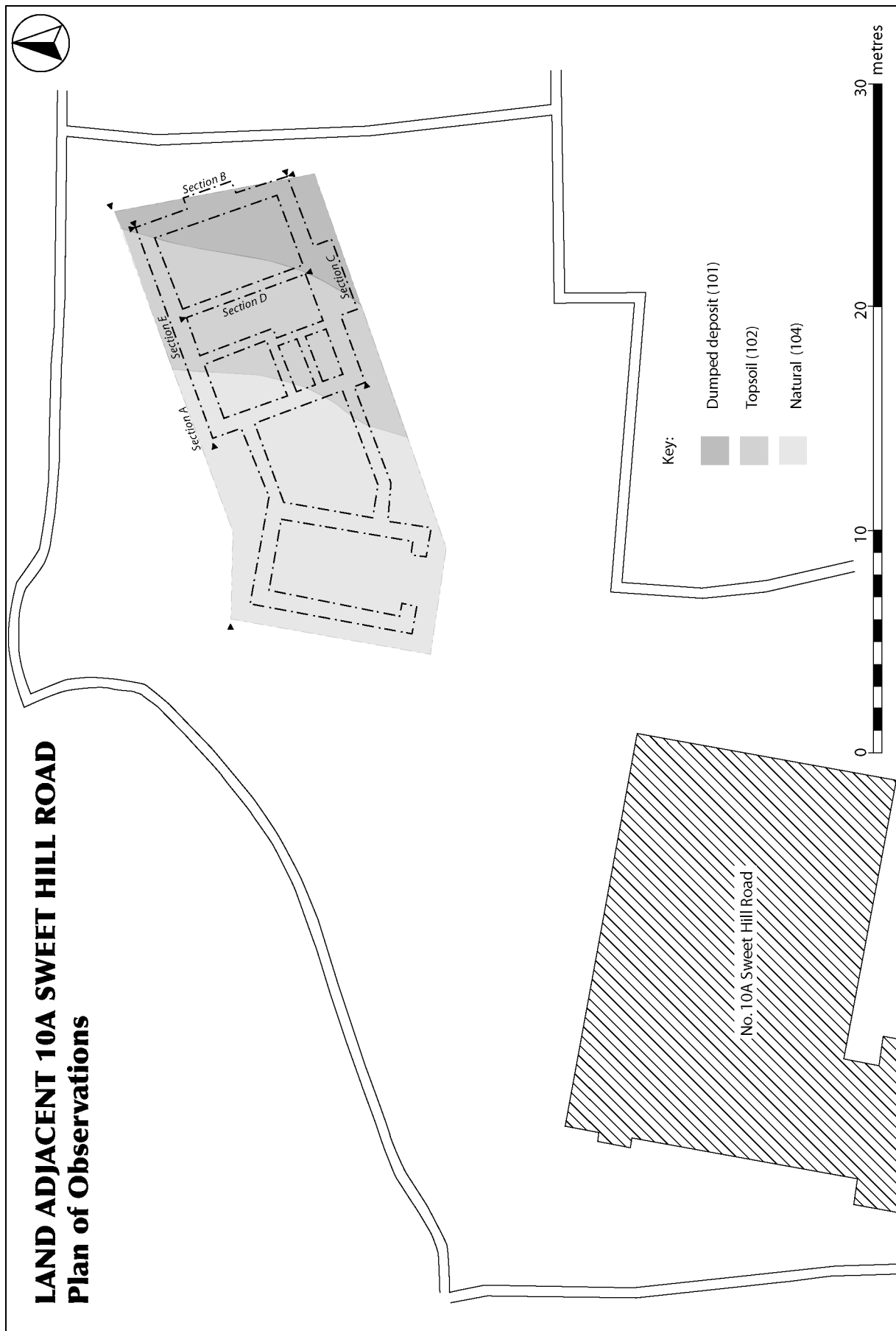


Figure 2: Plan of Observations showing the deposits at the base of the terrace for the house footprint.

LAND ADJACENT 10A SWEET HILL ROAD

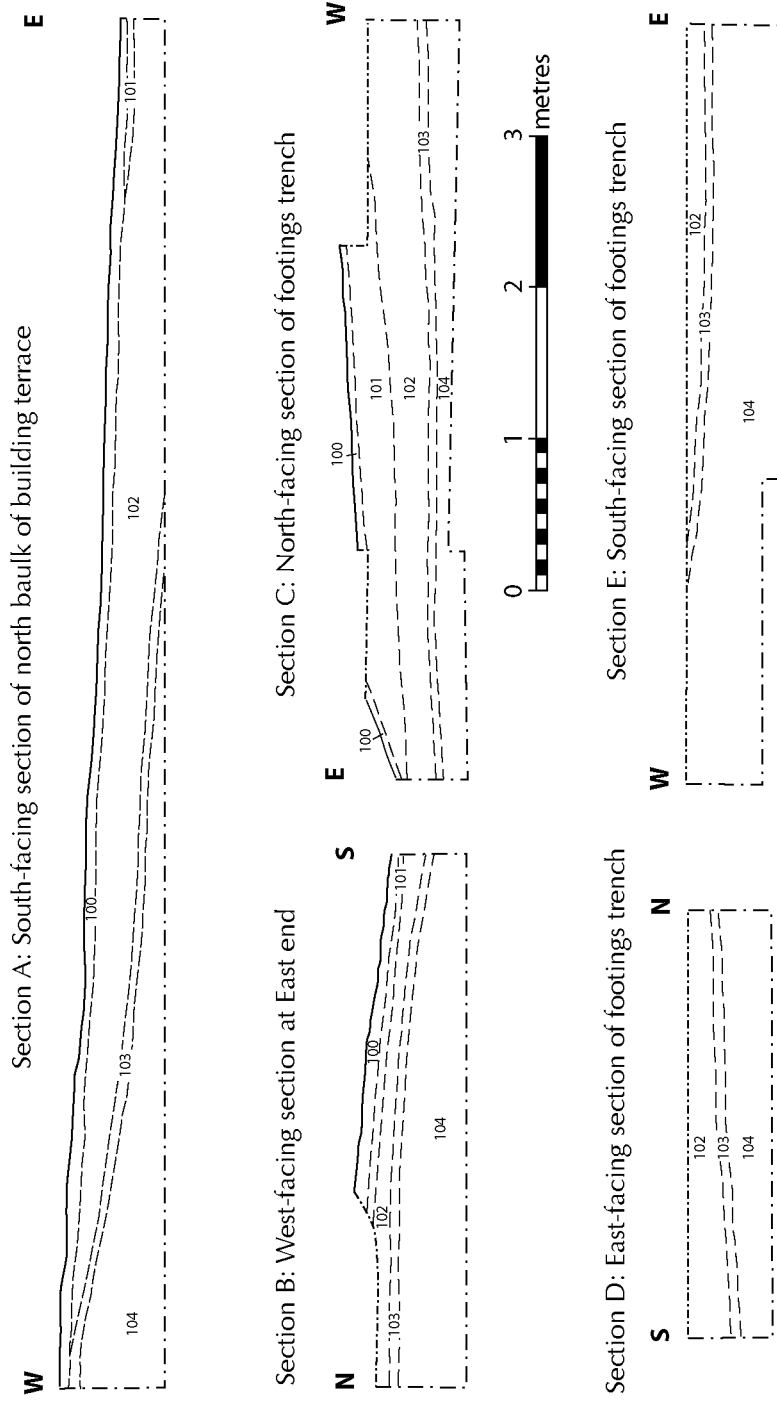


Figure 3: Selected sections



Plate 1: Northwest corner of site - Section A



Plate 2: Section B



Plate 3: Section C



Plate 4: Section D



Plate 5: Section E