

**EXTENSION TO CITIZEN'S ADVICE BUREAU,
1 ACLAND ROAD, DORCHESTER, DORSET
Archaeological Observations and Recording**



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May 2004

**Extension to Citizen's Advice Bureau,
1 Acland Road, Dorchester, Dorset**

Archaeological Observations and Recording, April 2004

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Report written by: Peter Bellamy

Prepared on behalf of: Dorchester and District Citizens Advice Bureau
1 Acland Road
Dorchester
DT1 1JW

Through their agent: David Illingworth Architects
4 The Square
Puddletown
Dorchester
DT2 8SL

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SUMMARY

Archaeological observations and recording were carried out by Terrain Archaeology during the construction of a new extension to the rear of the Citizen's Advice Bureau, 1 Acland Road, Dorchester (SY69359064). The size of the footings trench was too small to give a clear picture of the archaeology, but parts of five pits were exposed, of which only two were bottomed. Part of one large Roman pit containing a large quantity of roof tile and some 2nd century pottery was found in the northern end of the trench. A single pit containing early medieval pottery was also found. This pit had been largely destroyed by a large stone-lined pit probably dating to the 18th century. The remaining two pits were probably 19th or 20th century in date.

INTRODUCTION

Terrain Archaeology was commissioned by Dorchester and District Citizens Advice Bureau, through their agents David Illingworth Architects, to undertake archaeological observations and recording during the construction of a new extension to the rear of 1 Acland Road, Dorchester. This is in fulfilment of Condition 3 of the consent for Planning Application No. 1/E/2002/1245.

The proposed development is to erect a new single storey extension to the rear of the Citizens Advice Bureau offices at 1 Acland Road, Dorchester.

The site lies on the corner of Acland Road and Durngate Street, Dorchester at NGR SY69359064 (Figure 1). The general topography slopes down to the east but the area to the rear of the property has been levelled and has been surfaced with concrete paving and a raised planting area against the rear wall of the existing building. It lies about 62 m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is mapped as Upper Chalk.

The fieldwork was carried out between 27–30th April 2004 by Peter Bellamy.

Terrain Archaeology would like to acknowledge the following for their help and cooperation during this project: David Illingworth, Steve Wallis (Dorset County Council), and the groundwork contractors, E.C.G. Belt.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1 Acland Road lies within the core of the Roman and medieval town of Dorchester. There have been a number of archaeological excavations and observations in the vicinity of the site, which allow it to be placed within its setting from the prehistoric period onwards (RCHME 1970). The primary source of evidence comes from the large-scale excavations on the site of the present Waitrose supermarket at Greyhound Yard, immediately adjacent to the south (Woodward *et al.* 1993).

The remains of a massive Neolithic monument, dated to about 2700BC, comprising an arc of closely-spaced large timber posts, have been uncovered at Greyhound Yard (*ibid.*) and also at the former Egg Packing Station in Church Street (Batchelor 1983). The projected line of this monument passes immediately to the west of the site, almost clipping the northwest corner of the footings trench. The site lies immediately inside this arc of posts.

After the decay of the Neolithic monument, the area became agricultural land (Woodward *et al.* 1993, 30).

The Roman town of *Durnovaria* was established in c. AD75 and the site lies in the corner between two Roman streets, one to the north and one to the east. The line of the east–west street is relatively clear as it has been excavated on the site of the Old Methodist Chapel at the junction of Durngate Street and South Street (Woodward *et al.* 1993) and also has been observed under Durngate Street immediately northwest of the site (Green, 1967, 127) and under Church Street (Keen 1979, 135). The projected line of this street passes on the northern side of Durngate Street opposite the site. Part of the north–south Roman street was excavated on the eastern edge of the Greyhound Yard excavations and the line of this road was confirmed by two observations in Charles Street (now Acland Road) (Keen 1979, 135) further south. The projected line of this street runs underneath the present buildings on the site. Thus the site lies within the northeastern corner of the insula; parts of the northern, eastern and southern frontages were excavated at Greyhound Yard and Old Methodist Chapel sites (Woodward *et al.* 1993). These excavations revealed a long period of use and development of the buildings on the site during the Roman period, before abandonment in the 5th century AD.

In the medieval period, the site lies within the burgage plot on the south frontage of Durngate Street, first mentioned in the late 13th century (Draper 1993). There is likely to have been a house on the street frontage. Hutchins' map of 1772 shows buildings along the Durngate Street frontage and gardens behind.

In 1786, with the construction of Wollaston House, the road pattern in this area was changed as a large number of houses on the south side of Durngate Street were demolished and a new road, Charles Street, was constructed running north-south to the west of Wollaston House and forming a new street frontage on the eastern side of the site. This is the forerunner of the present Acland Road. The present building on the site was probably constructed at the end of the 18th or early 19th century.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

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

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.

METHODS

The work was carried out in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Code of Conduct and *Standard and guidance for archaeological watching briefs*, although there was no written brief issued for this work.

The groundworks comprised the hand excavation of the footings trench. This was 0.6 m wide, 1.0 m deep and measured 6.6 m north to south and 3.2 m west to east (Figure 2).

The observations of the footings trench was partial, as defined by the Institute of Field Archaeologists, with a suitably qualified archaeologist present as and when seemed appropriate. A number of brief visits were made during the early phases of the excavation of the footings trench and it was clear that there was considerable post-medieval and modern disturbance of the area. It was difficult to clearly identify individual archaeological features during the early phases of the work and the decision was taken to record the archaeology in section once the footings trench had been excavated to the required depth.

All deposits exposed in the trenches were recorded using elements of Terrain Archaeology's recording system of complementary written, drawn and photographic records. The position of the footings trench was located on a plan provided by the client. 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. The archive will be deposited with the Dorset County Museum.

RESULTS

Natural Deposits

Natural chalk bedrock (7) was only encountered in a small part of the northern end of the trench at a depth of 0.88 m below present ground level (Figure 2). Overlying the chalk was a 0.25 m thick layer of reddish-brown clay with frequent chalk lumps (6), which may be the eroded upper part of the chalk bedrock (Figure 3).

Roman Features and Deposits

A single feature dated to the Roman period was exposed in the northern part of the trench. This was a large feature (23) only partially within the trench (Figure 2). It measured over 2.0 m wide with a straight southern edge cut vertically into the natural chalk. It was filled with dark brown clay loam (22) with frequent red burnt flecks, charcoal flecks, some burnt flint (Figure 3; Plate 2). A large quantity of roof tile was found within this feature, particularly in the western part where a number of large pieces of tegula were found together dipping steeply into the pit. A number of these tiles still had the remains of the mortar bonding. A small quantity of pottery was also found, indicating a probable 2nd century date for this feature.

Medieval Features and Deposits

In the northern end of the trench are a number of layers, which have been tentatively assigned to the medieval period on the basis of their stratigraphic position. No dating evidence was found in any of these contexts. Overlying the reddish-brown clay (6) was a 0.25 m thick layer of dark brown clay loam (5) with common small chalk lumps, occasional small stone rubble and occasional charcoal flecks (Figure 3). A similar layer (24) was identified in the north baulk of the trench overlying the fill of Roman pit 23 and is probably part of this same deposit. Overlying Pit 23 in the northwest corner of the trench was a 0.15 m thick layer of dark grey brown clay loam (21) with frequent charcoal flecks sealed beneath a 0.06 m thick layer of decayed yellowish mortar (20).

The southern end of layer 5 was cut by a pit (9) with steeply sloping sides over 0.6 m deep. The northern side of this feature had a curving edge cut into the natural chalk but the southern side had been destroyed by later activity (Figures 2–3; Plate 3). This pit was filled with dark brown clay

loam with moderate small stone rubble, occasional small stone rubble and chalk flecks (8). It contained a small quantity of animal bone and some sherds of earlier medieval cookpots.

Post-Medieval Features and Deposits

Most of the southern part of the trench was taken up by one large feature (Pit 38). This was probably originally rectangular in plan shape with vertical sides and measured over 2.5 m by 1.8 m across and over 0.6 m deep. This pit appears to have had a stone lining (10), most clearly seen on its northern side where the footings trench had cut through it revealing it to be 0.5 m thick and composed of a mixture of flint nodules and limestone rubble set in rough courses (Plate 3). Part of the trench edge on the west side had collapsed revealing a large quantity of flint nodules behind. This is probably part of the stone lining on the west side of the pit, running about 0.2 m to the west of the trench. The evidence from the western and southern baulk of the trench indicates a single fill of loose very dark brown clay loam (34) with frequent stone rubble, brick fragments and a number of thin lenses of chalk. This layer contained quantities of animal bone and oyster shell, together with a very small quantity of 17th century pottery. In the southeast corner of the pit was a layer of reddish-grey clay with chalk flecks (35) beneath layer 34 (Figure 3). The eastern baulk has a more complex series of fills, generally dipping down to the north (Figure 3). The stratigraphically earliest layer is a dark brown clay loam layer (18). This is overlain by a layer of dark brown clay loam (17) with frequent chalk flecks and some oyster shell. The lower part of context 17 was overlain by a layer of dark reddish-brown clay loam (16) that butted against the stone lining (10). Layers 16 and 17 were sealed by a layer of chalk rubble (15) with occasional flint nodules. The upper part of the pit was filled with a greyish brown clay loam (14) with chalk flecks and some brick fragments. This pit has been tentatively dated to the 17th century based on the very small quantity of pottery recovered from this feature.

Pit 38 was sealed by a 0.25 m thick layer of greyish-brown clay loam (2, 19, 33) that covered the whole of the trench sealing all the features and deposits described above. A single sherd of late 18th century pottery was recovered from it. The remaining features described below all cut through this layer. This extensive deposit may be the remains of a levelling layer, perhaps part of the redevelopment of the site when the existing building was constructed in the late 18th or early 19th century.

In the northern end of the trench, the remains of a stone-lined pit (26) were revealed in the northern baulk (Figure 3; Plate 2). Most of this feature had been removed during the digging of the footings trench. It appeared to be roughly square and oriented approximately NE–SW. It probably measured about 0.9 m across and was 0.7 m deep. It had vertical sides and a flat bottom with a 0.1 m thick limestone and brick lining constructed in rough courses. It was filled with very loose soft dark brown silty soil (25). No finds were recovered from this feature.

In the northwest part of the trench, the eastern end of a probably rectangular pit (29) was exposed. This pit was 1.1 m wide and 1.15 m deep with vertical sides and a flat bottom (Figures 2–3; Plate 5). The bottom of the pit was filled with two neatly stacked layers of unused ceramic drain pipes sealed beneath a covering of carefully placed ceramic pantiles in a red sand matrix (30). The remainder of the pit was filled with dark brown loam with frequent brick fragments, chalk flecks and clinker (31).

Modern Features and Deposits

There are a number of modern service trenches exposed in the footings trench. The southeast part of the trench against the rear wall of the building was completely disturbed by a manhole and a drain trench (36) that cut the eastern side of Pit 38 (Figure 3). Excavation in this area was halted on top of a thick layer of concrete at a depth of 0.5 m below the surface.

A drainpipe trench (4) ran across the northern part of the trench in a NNW–SSE direction (Plates 1, 3, 5) and another pipe trench crossed the northeast end of the trench in a N–S alignment (Plates 1–2). The remains of another pipe trench (13) were found on the eastern side of the southern end of the trench (Figure 3).

Overlying layer 33 on the west side of the trench was a 0.1 m thick layer of dark brown loam (32) with occasional chalk lumps and with fairly frequent small roots. This may be the remains of a garden soil. It was sealed beneath the present concrete paving bedded on a thin layer of sand (1).

Finds

Context	Roman pottery		Medieval pottery		Post-medieval pottery		Ceramic building material		Clay tobacco pipe		Iron objects	
	No.	Wt. (g)	No.	Wt. (g)	No.	Wt. (g)	No.	Wt. (g)	No.	Wt. (g)	No.	Wt. (g)
8			4	49							1	14
10	1	4										
16	1	2										
17	1	8										
22	7	126					17	10560				
33					1	1			1	4		
34	1	19			1	25	1	1052				
Unstratified	1	10	2	139	8	149						
<i>Total</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>169</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>188</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>175</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>11612</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>14</i>

Table 1: Finds assemblage by context

Pottery

A total of thirty-six sherds of pottery (532 g) were recovered from the site with a wide date range from the Roman to the post-medieval period (Table 1). Pottery identification was by Jo Draper and J. M. Mills (Samian). The Roman pottery was primarily small sherds of Black-Burnished Ware coarsewares. This included one 1st/2nd century BB1 storage jar sherd from context 22 and one unstratified rim sherd from a 2nd century BB1 bowl. The remainder of the coarsewares were not closely datable. The only fineware was a fragment of a plain Central Gaulish Samian Dr31 bowl of Antonine date.

The medieval pottery assemblage comprised body sherds of earlier medieval cookpots from context 8, an unstratified rim sherd from a mid-late 13th century cookpot (as Draper 1993, fig. 157 no. 37), and an unstratified body sherd from a green-glazed jug of possible 13th century date.

The post-medieval pottery assemblage was mainly unstratified and comprised mainly 19th century Verwood earthenwares with a small quantity of 17th and 18th century earthenwares. The rim of a late 18th century white stoneware jar was recovered from context 33 and a sherd of 17th century brown-glazed earthenware was recovered from context 34.

Ceramic Building Material

Seventeen pieces of Roman roof tile were recovered from context 22, the fill of pit 23. These comprised 14 tegulae fragments, 2 imbrex pieces and one tessera. The tegulae were mainly large pieces, though none was sufficiently complete to enable any measurements to be taken. Two pieces still retained some of the mortar bonding for the accompanying imbrex along one side. One tegula had a drilled hole 7 mm in diameter in its central part. One fragmentary tile signature was present. This was a curving (?ellipsoidal) mark of three grooves which gradually merge together, made by dragging the fingertips through the wet clay. This ‘signature’ was not paralleled in the large assemblage from the Greyhound Yard excavations (Woodward *et al.* 1993, 173–4).

One half of a soft hand-made, probably Broadmayne, brick was recovered from context 34, the fill of pit 38.

CONCLUSIONS

The small size of the footings trench, together with the fact that the lower parts of most of the archaeological features were not exposed, makes it difficult to confidently characterise the archaeology of this site.

No evidence of prehistoric activity was encountered. Evidence for Roman activity comprised part of a single large pit of probable 2nd century date, possibly similar to a number of large square cess pits of late 1st and 2nd century date found at Greyhound Yard (Woodward *et al.* 1993, figs 26–27). Without further evidence it is not clear how this pit relates to the likely sequence of buildings along the street frontages. The single medieval pit is another example to add the large number of medieval pits found within the burgage plots behind the Durngate Street frontage in Greyhound Yard (*ibid.*, fig. 50).

Overall, although little can be said in detail about the archaeology discovered on this site, it adds one more small piece to our knowledge of this part of Dorchester and appears to fit well with the sequence exposed in the adjacent large-scale excavations of Greyhound Yard.

PROJECT ARCHIVE

The archive (Terrain Archaeology Project No. 53154) will be deposited with 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

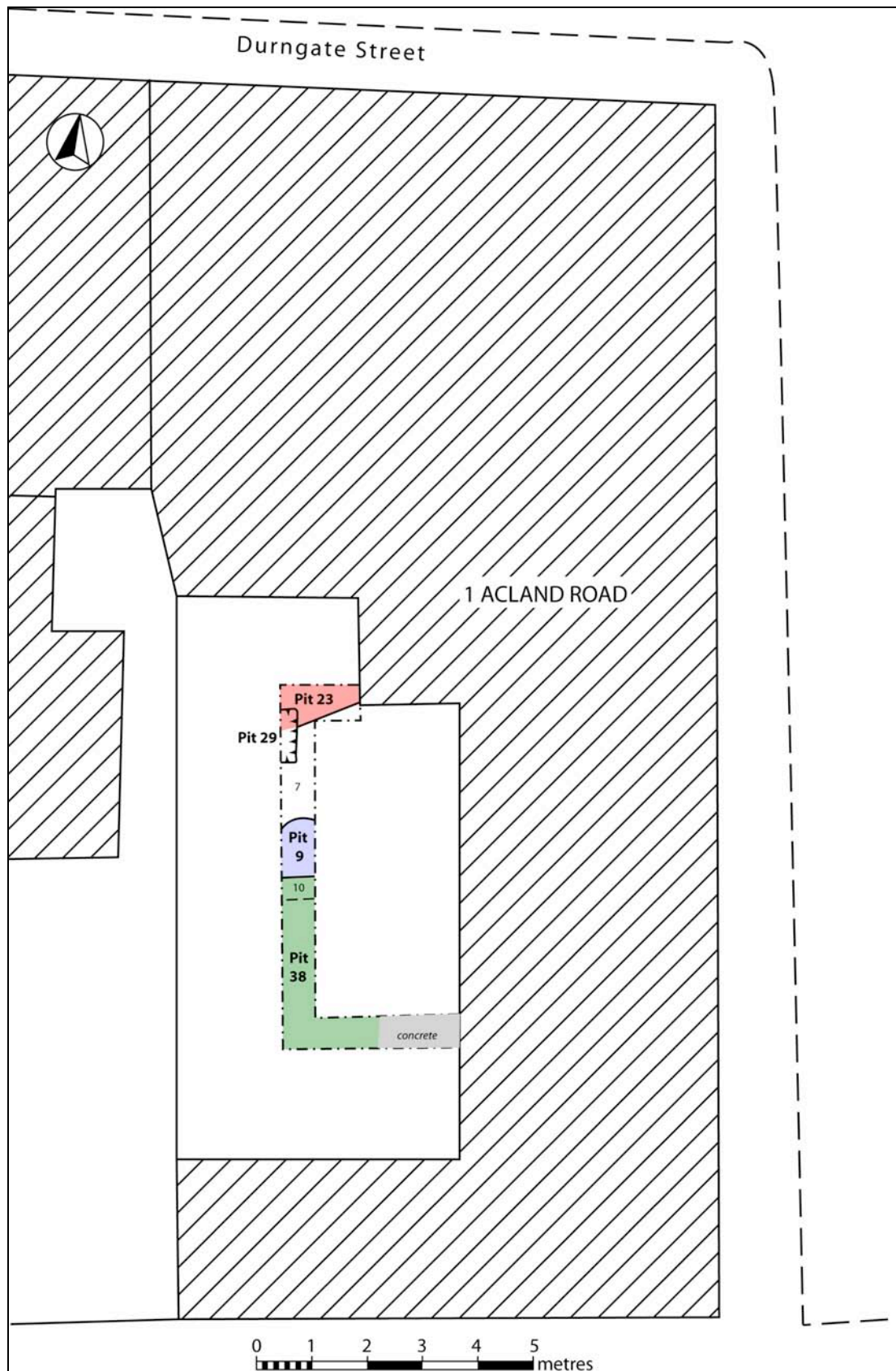
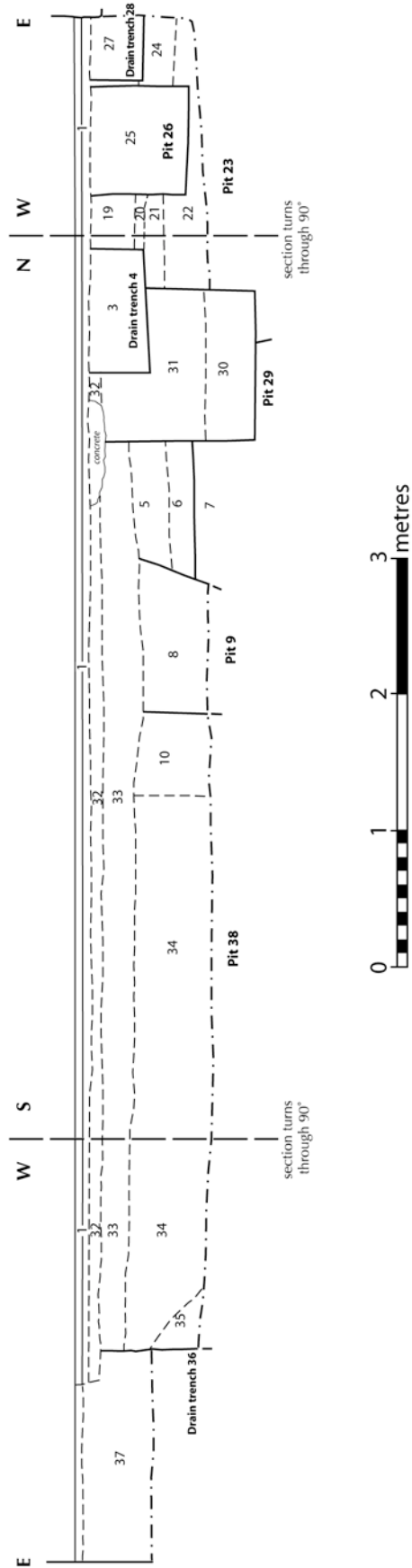


Figure 2: Plan of the site

North, East, and South-facing Section



West-facing Section

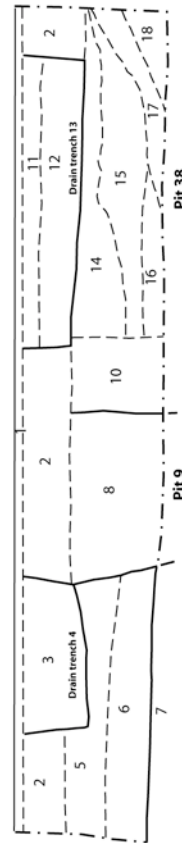


Figure 3: Sections.



Plate 1: General view of the footings trench viewed from northwest.



Plate 2: North end of trench showing stone-lined pit 26 and Pit 23 below.



Plate 3: Pit 9 viewed from west.



Plate 4: Pit 38 viewed from northeast.



Plate 5: Pit 29, viewed from southeast.