

Woolston Riverside, Southampton, Hampshire

**An Archaeological Evaluation
For SEEDA and BAM Nuttall Ltd**

by Andrew Weale
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code SOU1483

December 2008

Summary

Site name: Woolston Riverside, Southampton, Hampshire

Grid reference: SU 4350 1075

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 2nd July to 18th December 2008

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Andrew Weale

Site code: SOU1483

Area of site: 12.5 ha

Summary of results: The evaluation has revealed a range of evidence bearing on the site's archaeological potential. As anticipated, much of the archaeologically relevant horizon on the site has been heavily truncated or disturbed by 19th century and modern activity. The only deposits revealed were 19th and 20th century foundations and layers of made ground, and undated (but probably late 19th century) wooden structures. Two silt-filled river palaeo-channels traversed the gravel terrace. They were unassociated with any archaeological deposits. On the basis of this sample, the site is considered to have no archaeological potential.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Southampton City Museum in due course, with site code SOU1483.

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Woolston Riverside, Southampton, Hampshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Andrew Weale

Report 08/65

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out the Former Vosper Thornycroft Woolston Shipyard, Victoria Road, Woolston, Southampton, Hampshire (SU 4350 1075) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr David Bailey of Davis Langdon LLP, Brunswick House, Brunswick Place, Southampton, Hampshire SO15 2AP, on behalf of SEEDA, SEEDA Headquarters, Cross Lanes, Guildford, Surrey GU1 1YA, and BAM Nuttall Ltd, St James House, Knoll Road, Camberley, Surrey, GU15 3XW.

The site is proposed to be redeveloped for a mixed-use scheme of residential and light industrial use. In accordance with Draft Planning Condition No. 27 [05/00816/OUT], an archaeological watching brief was commissioned to assess the potential for archaeological deposits on site (Russel 2003; SCCAU 2004a, 2004b). A review of these results identified those areas of the site where excavations associated with the remediation and future development of the site were likely to coincide with potential archaeological deposits (CampbellReith 2007a).

The proposed remediation of the site benefits from a *Minded to Grant Planning Consent* (ref. 05/00816/OUT). Draft Condition 27 of the *Minded to Grant Consent* requires the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in advance of redevelopment. In this instance this was to take the form, first, of field evaluation, based on the results of which, further mitigation measures could be designed as appropriate.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, Archaeology and Planning (PPG16 1990), and the City Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out in accordance with a Scope of Works issued by CampbellReith (CampbellReith 2007b) and a specification approved by Alan Morton, Planning Archaeologist for Southampton City. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Weale and Robert Skinner, from 2nd to 8th July 2008 and 1st to 18th December 2008 and the site code is SOU1483. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Southampton City Museum.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the western shore of the River Itchen facing an area of former docks, to the south of the present Itchen Bridge and the location of the former floating bridge, with present day Woolston to the east and Itchen to the north (Fig. 1). Netley and Netley Abbey lie to the south east and Southampton lies to the west across the River Itchen. The site is bounded to the north by Wharf Road and Keswick Road; to the east by Victoria Road; to the south by the existing Southern Water Sewage Treatment works and to the west by the River Itchen (Fig. 2). The site covers approximately 12.5 ha and consists of roadways, slipways, concrete bases, standing buildings, and floor slabs of demolished buildings from the former Vosper Thornycroft shipyard. The site is at an elevation of 6m above Ordnance Datum and slopes down from the east, to the River Itchen foreshore to the west. The underlying geology is mapped as Estuarine Alluvium along the Itchen foreshore, made ground through the middle of the site and Earnley sand (part of the Bracklesham Group) towards the eastern edge of the site (BGS 1987), all of which was confirmed within the trial trenches, with the addition of alluvium from what appears to be a palaeochannel within Trench 2.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential for the site has been set out in an archaeological scope of works (CampbellReith 2007b). The site lies within an area of potential archaeological importance as defined by policy ENV4 of the Southampton Local Plan. Archaeologically excavated test pits and observed geotechnical pits (SCCAU 2004a and b) together with known find spots confirmed the general archaeological context of the site. The site lies in an area of scattered prehistoric finds, although none have been recorded within the site itself. Along the western boundary of the site, adjacent to the present course of the river Itchen, a former foreshore area has been reclaimed. It is possible that until the most recent rise in sea level, this foreshore area was dry land and may therefore contain environmental evidence of Palaeolithic and later prehistoric periods given the periodic regression and transgression of sea levels. This material (if present) may be expected to lie under, in or over foreshore muds.

The site was unoccupied in historic times but 19th century quarrying appears to have occurred within the area of the site. The full extent of these works could not be established prior to the work reported here, although the limits of quarrying in 1866 were mapped (CampbellReith 2007). Part of the site was wooded in the late 19th century (CampbellReith 2007). Later in the 19th and 20th centuries the site was the location of an important

shipbuilding yard which is believed to have been constructed over the 19th and early 20th century foreshore muds and 19th century quarrying.

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 work was to be carried out in a manner which would not comprise the integrity of archaeological features or deposits which might warrant preservation *in situ*, or might better be excavated under conditions pertaining to full excavation.

The specific research aims of the project are:

To determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on the site;

To determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present;

To determine if any Palaeolithic and later prehistoric activity occurred on the site and to determine its character and extent;

To determine the nature of the landscape in prehistoric times and the nature and extent to which environmental evidence survives;

To determine the extent of 19th-century gravel extraction across the site;

To determine if any deposits relating to the later use of the site exist, including any related to the industrial use of the site.

It was proposed to excavate six trenches, five of them between 10 and 69m long and 2.0m wide with a sixth trench 9m by 9m. The trenches would be located as per the scope of works (CampbellReith 2007b, fig. 5.1) as close as possible to the positions intended, with allowance for the need to reposition or subdivide trenches once details of site services or other restrictions were known, and to manage water ingress. The trenches were to be excavated before the main site remediation works due to the difficulty of implementing an Archaeological Evaluation whilst large-scale earthworks and spoil storage were being carried out.

Results

Five of the six trenches were started in July 2008 but asbestos waste was encountered in all locations apart from Trench 2a. Due to the extent of the asbestos contamination the evaluation was halted until a detailed de-contamination programme was available.

The evaluation recommenced during the remediation works, which necessitated the moving of all the trenches except Trenches 1 and 2a. The repositioning took place in consultation with the City archaeological officer. The trenches were placed where they would not interfere with the remediation works and where there was space available between the remediation spoil heaps and as close to their original positions as possible (Fig. 2). Trenches 2, 3 and 4, which were over 3m deep, were widened to allow stepped access.

The trenches were excavated by a 360° tracked machine with the concrete removed by breaker and toothed bucket and the overburden removed with a toothless ditching bucket down to archaeological levels. All machining was supervised by an archaeologist and where contamination was encountered, with the advice of a decontamination specialist. Spoil heaps were monitored for finds but a metal detector was not employed due to the high concentration of metallic minerals within the made ground.

It was not possible to examine some areas of the bases of Trenches 3 and 6 due to their depths and the presence of water within the made ground. An area of Trench 3 where wood was encountered was only recorded by plan, section and photographs, in consultation with the City archaeological officer. This was due to the unstable nature of the overburden, the presence of ground water and spoil heaps. Where archaeological features were thought to be present the deposits were hand cleansed and excavated with the appropriate hand tools. Where well stratified subsoil deposits were encountered a programme of environmental sampling took place in consultation with the City archaeological officer. Trench 1 and 2a were excavated where intended, all other trench positions were changed due to access problems. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1. A list of excavated features forms Appendix 2.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was 20m long and between 2.2m and 3.5m wide and a maximum of 1.85m deep. The stratigraphy of trench 1 consisted of 0.18m of concrete floor slab above 0.34m of mixed black and dark brown made ground with modern brick, tile, safety glass and iron. Beneath this was 0.42m of mixed dark grey, and mid yellow made ground with ceramic building material, iron, asbestos tile and lagging. Beneath this was yellow clayey sand with small rounded gravel (natural geology) which had been truncated by service trenches and concrete foundations. No pre-modern artefacts or deposits were encountered within the trench.

Trench 2a

Trench 2 was excavated in two episodes. Trench 2a was in the originally intended position, but was shorter than intended, at 20.45m long, between 2.1 and 3.30m wide and a maximum of 3.30m deep. Trench 2b had to be moved to the north-east.

Trench 2a itself consisted of two sections, separated by 6m of heavily reinforcement concrete which truncated natural geology. The stratigraphy of the eastern 4m of Trench 2a consisted of 0.37m of reinforced concrete, above 0.33m of brick rubble with occasional wood and glass. Beneath this was 2.55m of black made ground with a high concentration of iron slag and furnace waste and asbestos lagging. Beneath this was fine yellow sand natural geology.

The stratigraphy of the remaining 10.45m of Trench 2a consisted of 0.42m of reinforced concrete slab over 0.58m of mixed made ground with blue sand and gravel with modern brick, tile, metal and glass. Beneath this was another 0.20m of reinforced concrete slab. Beneath this was 0.70m of blue sandy clay alluvium with no visible organic content, or artefacts. Beneath this was fine yellow sand natural geology.

No pre-modern artefacts or features were encountered within the trench.

Trench 2b (Fig. 3; Plate 1)

Trench 1 was 50m long 2.1m wide and a maximum of 2.8m deep. The stratigraphy on the surface, consisted of 0.20m of concrete floor slab. Beneath this in the centre of the trench was 0.28m of mixed black and yellow gravel made ground with concrete, ceramic building material, and iron slag, with the depth increasing to 0.35m at the eastern end, and to a maximum of 1.5m in the western part of the trench. Within this (Fig. 4) in the western 17m of the trench were two brick and concrete foundations which were also cut down into a fine yellow and white natural sand. At 17m from the west end of the trench, and extending eastwards, layers of clayey alluvium was observed throughout the rest of the trench. These layers consist of a series of bluish grey silty clay, brownish grey plastic clay, and laminated bluish sandy grey clay. At the base of these layers was a hard pale whitish brown clay with lenses of yellow and white sand. These layers of alluvium fill two channels; Channel 1 was over 10m wide, 1.9m deep running approximately north-east to south-west across the trench. It had gently sloping sides and a concave base. Channel 2 was 12m wide, 2.6m deep aligned north to south across the trench. The western edge was steeply sided with a gentler slope on the east to a concave base. A 5m long extension was excavated at right angles to the main trench so that a column sample of the alluvial deposits within channel 2 could safely be taken (Fig. 4; Pl. 2)(Appendix 3). No pre-modern artefacts were encountered within the trench.

Trench 3 (Plate 3)

Trench 3 was 31m long, 7m wide at the top and a maximum of 3.51m deep with a 2.7m wide and 7m long extension along the southern face (Fig. 3). The stratigraphy of Trench 3 consisted of 0.35m of reinforced concrete slipway slab and 0.65m of brick and concrete rubble that had been removed during the remediation works. This overlay ten layers of variously constituted made ground, all containing clearly modern finds (including hemp rope).

In the middle part of the trench, two wooden structures (50 and 51) were encountered. Structure 50 appeared to be a rectangular wooden box 2.2m square in plan and 0.45m deep (Pl. 3). It consisted of planks of timber 2.2m long, between 0.15m and 0.20m wide and 0.05m wide, with vertical wooden posts on the outside of the box on the landward side. The structure was held together with iron fixings. The structure was open topped and deposit (52) appeared to be its uppermost fill, but could not be recorded in detail for safety reasons.

Structure 51 was of similar construction, 2.30m to the east with its northern edge aligned on the centre line of structure 50. The structure was also open topped and deposit (56) appeared to make up its uppermost fill. Due to the unstable condition of the southern edge of Trench 3 together with the rising contaminated water, no investigation of these structures was attempted at this stage except that a section of one of the planks from structure 50 was retained for a possible dendrochronology date. It is thought that structures 50 and 51 may be part of a wharf or slipway, presumably pre-dating the modern shipyard (although also presumably not by very long), but at present they remain undated.

No pre-modern artefacts were encountered within the trench.

Trench 4 (Plate 4)

Trench 4 was 13m by 11m at the top and a maximum of 3.85m deep. The south and western edges were battered, the eastern stepped and the northern vertical. The stratigraphy of Trench 4 consisted of 0.35m of reinforced concrete slipway slab that had been removed during the remediation works, above up to 3.20m of made ground in a series of layers and dumps, all of these layers contained modern bricks, pieces of concrete, metal fixings or asbestos. Within these layers were a number of service trenches for surface water and electric cables. The unstable nature of these layers of made ground together with the presence of ground water within the trench made detailed descriptions of the individual layers impossible and they were recorded by a measured sketch and photographs. The bottom layer of made ground extended across the base of the trench beneath the ground water and consisted of a layer of metallic slag or furnace run off waste up to 0.14m thick which also contained frogged bricks and concrete fragments. This layer was above what appeared to be natural yellow sand and gravel, the

edge of which towards the north-eastern corner of the trench and along the eastern edge, had been cut away in a series of steps with steep sides between each step [3]. This presumably represents the edge of 19th-century (and later) quarrying.

No pre-modern artefacts were encountered within the trench.

Trench 5

Trench 5 was 30m long and 2.1m–2.5m wide and a maximum of 2.30m deep. The stratigraphy in this trench consisted of 0.21m of made ground a black sandy clay with large pieces of concrete, brick, tile, window glass and iron fragments, above 0.20m of reinforced concrete floor slab. Beneath this was 0.48m of made ground consisting of a mixed yellow and black sand with ceramic building material, concrete, metal, moulded glass and wood. Between 9.4m and 14.6m from the western end of the trench was a linear cut [4], which was steep sided on the eastern edge and stepped on the western edge with a flat base and 1.41m deep. It was filled with a mixed deposit of black sand and reddish yellow sand together with large pieces of concrete, frogged bricks, asbestos lagging, moulded glass and large undecayed timbers. Cut 4 was cut through pale yellow to white natural sand. The natural sand was further truncated by modern concrete bases and a concrete-lined brick-skinned tank.

No pre-modern artefacts or features were encountered within the trench

Trench 6

Trench 6 was 36.5m long, 2.4m–3.0m wide and a maximum of 1.95m deep. Trench 6 had to be shortened due to the presence of tidal water at the western end and large spoil storage heaps at the eastern end. The western 23m of this trench was excavated in separate 5m long sections due to the ingress of water. The stratigraphy of the western 23m consisted of between 0.80m and 1.2m of mixed reddish yellow and black gravel that contained plastic boat fittings, plastic and glass bottles, wood, metal and pieces of concrete. Beneath this was a bluish grey sand and gravel estuarine natural. From 23m to 23.8m was a large heavily reinforced concrete base which extended more than 1.9m below the top of the trench into the natural sand and gravel. From 23.8 to 36.5m the trench consisted of 1.3m of made ground, a mixture of black and yellow sands containing brick and tile, concrete and moulded glass. Within this made ground were electric cables and oil pipes. Beneath the made ground was the same natural geology as the western 23m of the trench.

No pre-modern artefacts were encountered within the trench

Finds

No pre-modern artefacts were recovered from any of the trenches.

Conclusion

The evaluation has revealed a range of evidence bearing on the archaeological potential, or otherwise, of the site. Much as expected, much of the archaeologically relevant horizon on the site has been heavily truncated or disturbed by 19th century and modern activity. Where the natural geology is recorded *in situ*, no deposits or artefacts of archaeological interest were observed.

The two wooden structures (50 and 51) in Trench 3 are undated, but appear to be underneath the made ground used to level this part of the site for the construction of the shipyard. They may represent an earlier phase to the shipyard such as a wharf or wooden constructed slipway, or may date to the 19th century quarrying of the site prior to the construction of the shipyard. It is possible that they are earlier than the 19th century but conditions were such that no detailed examination of the structures were possible during the evaluation, and no other source of evidence suggests use of this area that would require such structures. They lay at a depth that is below the scope of the current remediation works.

The edge of the natural sand and gravels exposed in the eastern edge of Trench 4 may represent the edge of the quarrying known to have begun in the 19th century, or possibly groundworks associated with the early shipyard, which had been back filled with shipyard waste to level this area of the site for the construction of the modern shipyard. The bottom fill of this area (which was under water when recorded) seemed to consist of metallic slag that appeared to have been poured in. This may be associated with part of the iron or steel furnaces that were present on the site in the earlier part of the 20th century (and if so, quarrying may still have been going on then).

No other pre-shipyard features were encountered during the evaluation. No evidence of foreshore muds were encountered in Trenches 3 and 6. Trenches 3, 4, 5 and 6 had large modern intrusions through the natural subsoils and show little potential for archaeological features to be present in these areas. Trenches 1 and 2 had areas of undisturbed natural and a higher potential for archaeological features to have survived, however none were encountered.

On the basis of the sample trenching exercise, the site can be considered to have no archaeological potential.

References

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APPENDIX 1: Trench details
0m at S or W end

Trench	Length (m)	Breadth (m)	Depth (m)	Comment
1	20	2.2–3.5	1.85	0–0.18m Floor slab; 0.18–0.96m made ground; 0.96m+ whitish yellow sand natural geology at 5.12m AOD.
2a	20	2.1–3.30	3.30	West end: 0–0.37m Floor slabs and concrete bases; 0.37–0.70m brick rubble; 0.70–3.25m black made ground 3.25m+ 1 whitish yellow sand natural geology. Rest of Trench: 0–0.42m reinforced concrete slab; 0.42–1.00m mixed made ground; 1.00–1.20m reinforced concrete slab; 1.20–1.90m blue sandy clay alluvium; 1.90m+ fine yellow sand natural geology
2b	50	2.1	2.8	0–0.20m floor slabs; 0.20–0.28 (centre) or 0.35m (east) or 1.85m (west) made ground over alluvial deposits. West end 1.85m+ white sand natural geology at 4.75m AOD. Concrete foundations. Palaeochannels 1 and 2. [Pls 1, 2]
3	31	7.0	3.51	0–0.35m reinforced concrete 0.35–1.00m brick and concrete rubble; 1.00–2.68m ten layers of made ground; 2.68m+ bluish grey sand and gravel natural geology at 2.86m AOD. Wooden structures 50 and 51. [Pl. 3]
4	13	11	3.85	0–0.35m reinforced concrete; 0.32–3.55m made ground dumps; 3.55m+ whitish yellow sand natural geology at 1.65m AOD. Quarry cut 3. [Pl. 4]
5	30	2.1–2.5	2.30	0–0.21m made ground; 0.21–0.41 reinforced concrete; 0.41–0.89m made ground; 0.89m+ whitish yellow sand natural geology at 1.97m AOD. Modern ditch cut 4, concrete bases, brick/concrete tank.
6	36.5	2.4–3.0	1.95	West: 0–0.80/1.20m made ground over bluish grey sand and gravel natural geology. Middle: 0–1.90m reinforced concrete East: 1.30m made ground over bluish grey sand and gravel natural geology at 4.06m AOD.

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

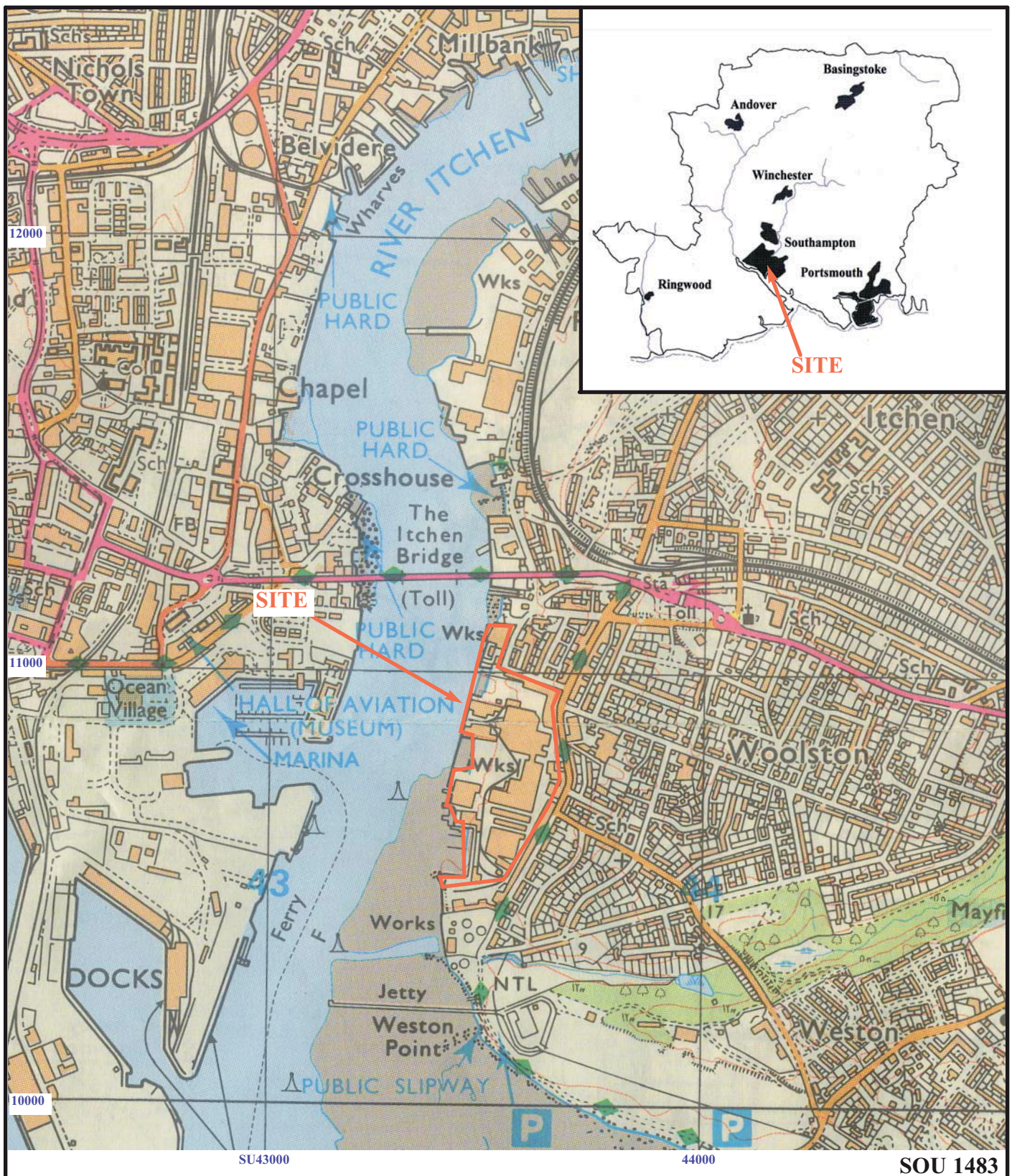
Trench	Cut	Fill (s)	Type	Date	Dating evidence
2b	1		paleochannel	undated	
2b	2		palaeochannel	undated	
3		50, 51	Wooden structures	undated	
4	3	3	Quarry?	modern	Concrete and bricks
5	4		Ditch	modern	Concrete and bricks

APPENDIX 3: Description of Sample column (trench 2b)

The lithology of the palaeochannel sampled is presented below. ‘Depth’ was measured from the base of column.

Colours refer to Munsell soil colour charts.

Depth (cm)	Description
0.00–10	Medium coarse 7.5YR 7/8 reddish yellow sand
10–19	Bands of very finely grained gleyed clayey silt very dark grey (N3/) and coarse 7.5YR 7/8 reddish yellow sand
19–37	Bands of very fine gleyed clayey silt very dark grey (N3/) and very fine grained sandy silt light grey (N7/).
37–43	Frequent lens of fine grained sandy silt light grey (N7/) with thinner layers of very fine clayey silt gleyed very dark grey (N3/)
43–63	Bands of very fine grained clayey silt very dark grey (N3/) and fine grained sandy silt light grey (N7/).
63–80	Bands of very fine clayey silt gleyed very dark grey (N3/) and fine grained sandy silt light grey (N7/) together with thin black lens (N2/1) of clayey silt less than 1mm thick
80–82	Wavy/feathered deposit of fine grained silty sand light grey (N7/)
83–90	Very fine clayey silt gleyed dark greenish grey (5GY4/1) with very occasional thin bands less than 1mm thick of very fine grained sandy silt light grey (N7/)
94–97	Bands of very fine clayey silt black (N2/1) of clayey silt and bands of fine grained sandy silt light grey (N7/)
97–101	Very fine clayey silt gleyed dark greenish grey (5GY4/1) with very occasional thin bands less than 1mm thick of very fine grained sandy silt light grey (N7/)
101–133	Bands of very fine clayey silt gleyed very dark grey (N3/) and fine grained sandy silt light grey (N7/). At 20.5 and 22 cm black lens (N2/1) of clayey silt less than 1mm thick
133–137	Bands of very fine clayey silt gleyed very dark grey (N3/) and fine grained sandy silt light grey (N7/). At 20.5 and 22 cm black lens (N2/1) of clayey silt less than 1mm thick
137–144	Very fine clayey silt gleyed dark greenish grey (5GY4/1) with very occasional thin bands less than 1mm thick of sandy silt light grey (N7/)
144–154	Very fine clayey silt gleyed dark greenish grey (5GY4/1) with bands of fine grained sandy silt light grey (N7/)
154–158	Bands of very fine clayey black (N2/1) clayey silt and bands of fine grained sandy silt light grey (N7/)
158–171	Bands of very fine clayey silt gleyed very dark grey (N3/) with occasional bands of sandy silt light grey (N7/)
171–181	Made ground



**Woolston Riverside, Southampton, 2008
Archaeological Evaluation**

Figure 1. Location of site within Southampton and Hampshire.

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T H A M E S V A L L E Y
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
 S E R V I C E S

Woolston Riverside, Southampton, 2008

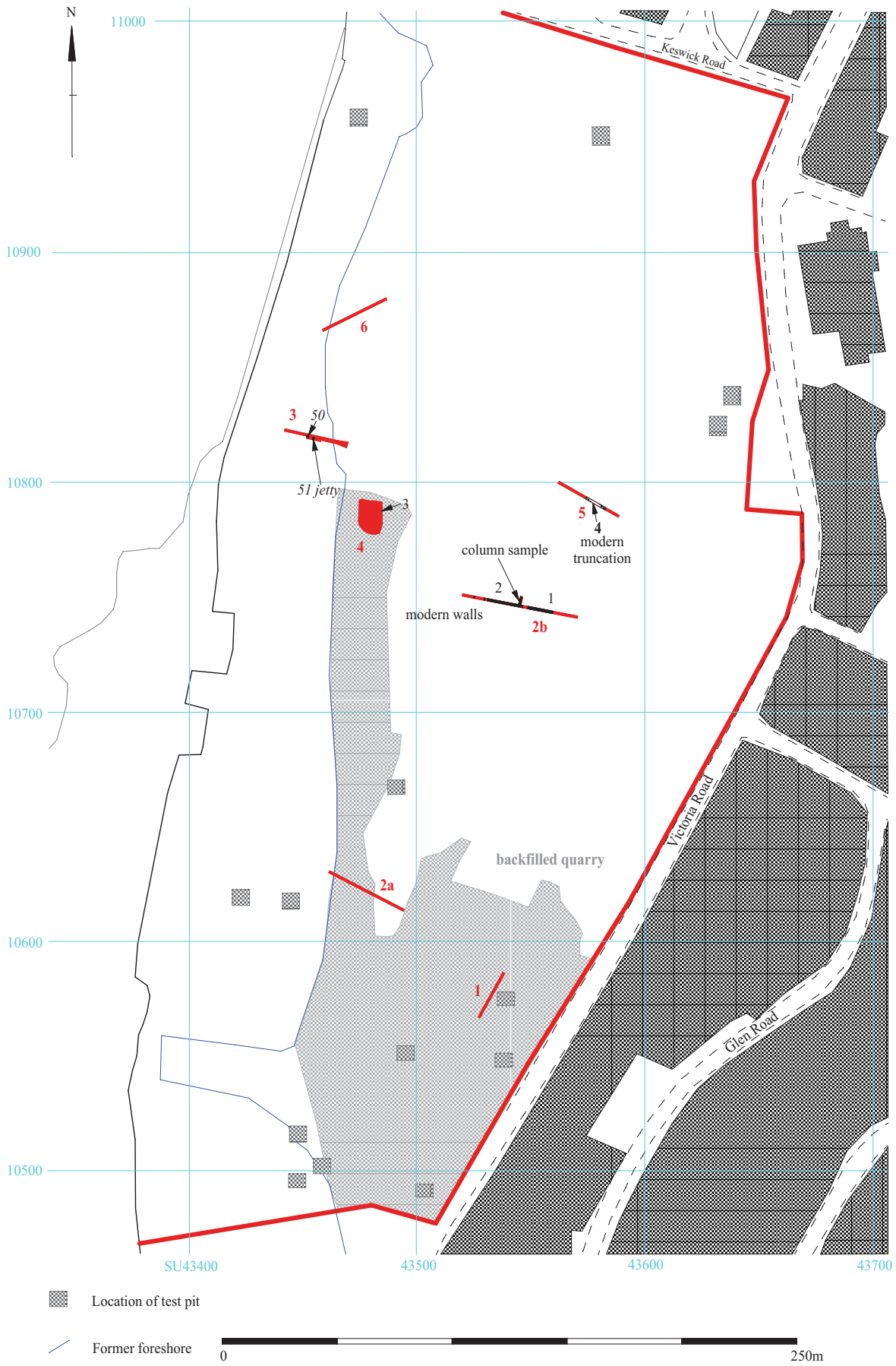


Figure 2. Location of trenches in relation to previous test pitting.

Woolston Riverside, Southampton, 2008

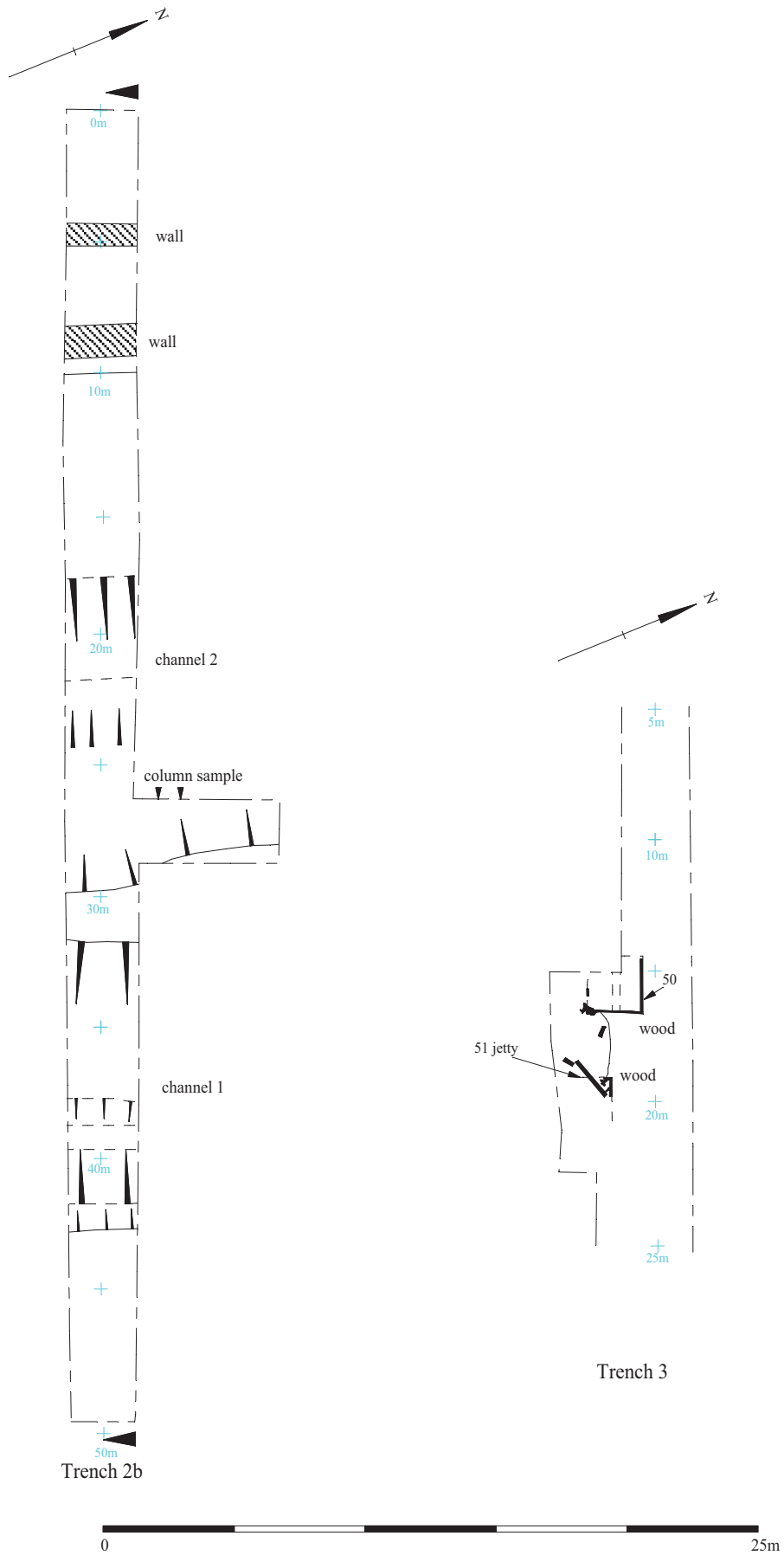


Figure 3. Plan of trenches.

Woolston Riverside, Southampton, 2008

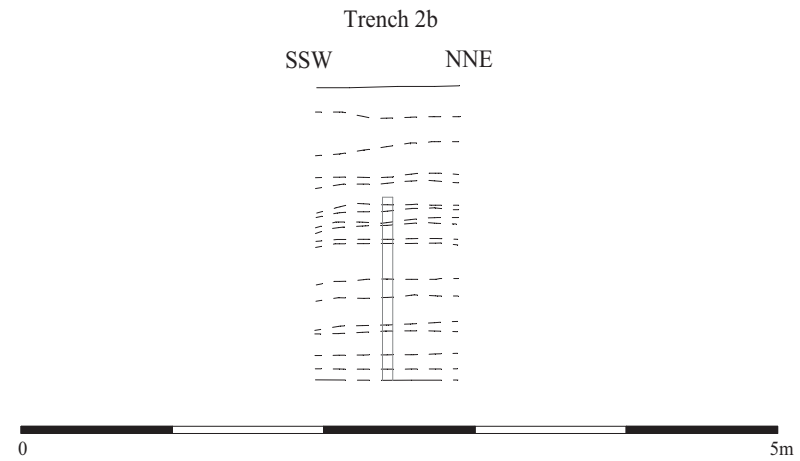
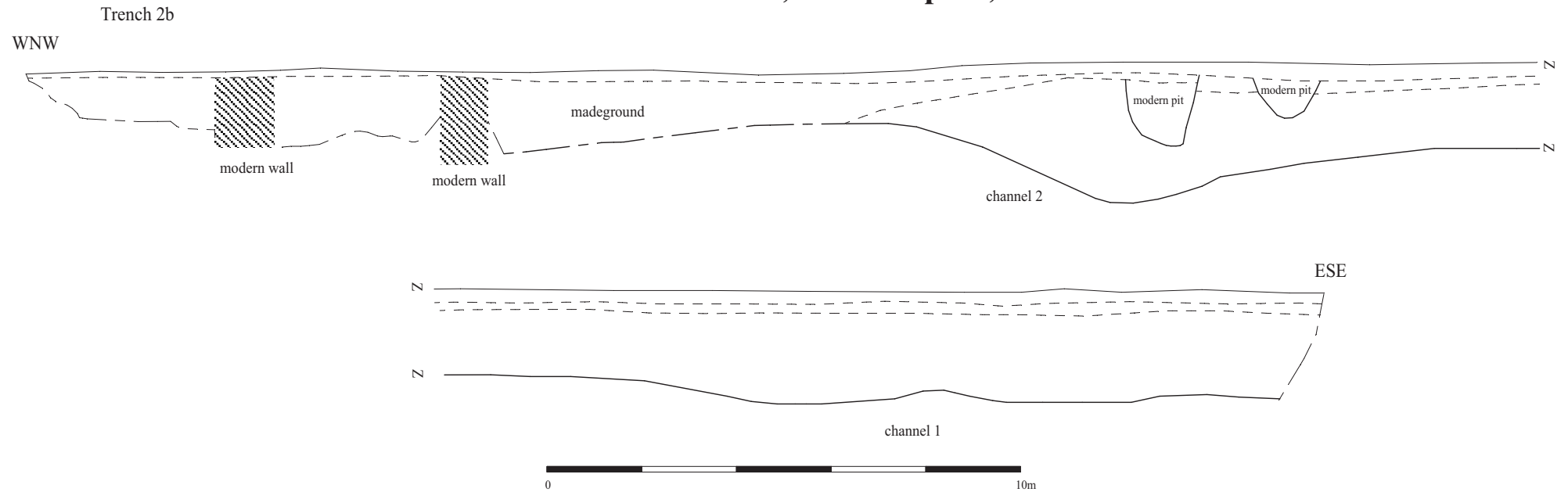


Figure 4. Sections from Trench 2b..



Plate 1. Trench 2a, location of column sample through palaeochannel, looking north-west.
Scale: 2m.



Plate 2. Trench 2b before extension, looking west:
scale: 2m.



Plate 3. Trench 3, wooden structure 50, looking south-west; scales, 2m and 0.5m.



Plate 4. Trench 4, section [3] of quarry backfill, looking north, scale 2m.