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Gloucestershire

COUNTY COUNCIL

An Archaeological Evaluation of land at

**65 Denmark Road, Gloucester,
Gloucestershire**

John F. Evans Partnership on behalf of
Mr Roger Francis



Richard Barrett
Archaeology Service
Environment Directorate

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Site details

Site address: Land at 65 Denmark Road, Gloucester, Gloucestershire.
OS NGR: 38383 21925
GSMR No: 27938
Site type: Evaluation
Client: John F. Evans Partnership on behalf of Mr Roger Francis
Planning No: 05/00199/FUL
Date of fieldwork: 6th September 2005
Recipient museum: Gloucester City Museum and Art Gallery
Archived finds: Yes
Author: Richard Barrett
Date of Report: September 2005

Contents

	page
1 Introduction	3
2 Site location	3
3 Archaeological, historical and cartographic background	4
4 Purpose of the evaluation	5
5 Methodology	5
6 Results	6
7 Artefacts	7
8 Discussion and conclusions	7
9 References	8

Figures

Figure 1	Site location plan
Figure 2	Trench location plan
Figure 3	Plan and sections of trench 1
Figure 4	Plan and section of trench 2

Summary

Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology Service were commissioned by Mr Bowles of John F. Evans Partnership on behalf of Mr Roger Francis, to carry out an evaluation on land at 65 Denmark Road, Gloucester, (OS NGR 38383 21925). On the advice of the Phil Greatorex, Historic Environment Team at Gloucester City Council an evaluation was required prior to the determination of the planning application on the site, as the development area is within the Kingsholm Area of Principal Archaeological Interest.

Deposits and features from two distinct phases of early Roman activity were encountered during the evaluation, these consisted of two ditches, one cut by a probable pit and a separate gully. The Roman deposits were in excess of 1m beneath the modern ground surface, at 1.04m (42.11m AOD) in trench 1 and 1.01m (42.05m AOD) in trench 2.

1 Introduction

1.1 Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology Service were commissioned by Mr Bowles of John F. Evans Partnership on behalf of the owner Mr Roger Francis, to carry out an evaluation land at 65 Denmark Road, Gloucester, (OS NGR 38383 21925). On the advice of the Phil Greatorex, Historic Environment Team at Gloucester City Council an evaluation was required prior to the determination of the planning application on the site, as the development area is within the Kingsholm Area of Principal Archaeological Interest. Richard Barrett, Assistant Project Officer and Julian Newman, Site Assistant of GCCAS, carried out the site work on the 6th September 2005.

1.2 The evaluation was completed in accordance with the requirements of the 'Brief for Archaeological Field Evaluation' issued by the Phil Greatorex. The specific requirements for the evaluation were detailed in the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (Mullin 2005). The evaluation was also carried out in accordance with the 'Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations' produced by the Institute of Field Archaeology (IFA 2001). The Archaeology Service is an Institute of Field Archaeologists, Registered Archaeological Organisation (IFA RAO 42).

1.3 Thanks are due to: Mr Bowles (John F. Evans Partnership), Roger Francis, Jo Vallender, and Julian Newman, of GCCAS and Gloucestershire Sites and Monuments Record (GSMR) for providing background information.

2 Site location (see Figure 1)

The site is located on the corner of Denmark Road and Oxford Road, c.1km to the north east of Gloucester city centre, and is within the Kingsholm Area of Principal Archaeological Interest. This is an area with surviving settlement activity associated with the Roman road to the Kingsholm Roman fortress. The site is located on the Cheltenham Sand and Gravel, which overlies Blue Lias and Charmouth Mudstone formations (British Geological Survey 2005).

3 Archaeological, historical and cartographic background

3.1 Prehistoric

3.1.1 The nearest finds of prehistoric material to the site are from the Gloucester Gambier Parry Lodge Site (GSMR 5772), c.600m to the north of Denmark Road. Occasional finds of Neolithic and Bronze Age material have been made here, but no contemporary features have been discerned to date. A Celtic decorated bronze harness piece and 5 silver quarter staters were found by metal detectorists at the site and were assumed to have come from a mid 1st century Roman pit context.

3.2 Roman

3.2.1 The main period of activity in the area dates to the Roman period, when a fort was built at Kingsholm in the late 50s/early 60s AD (Hurst 1985, GSMR 11273). This fort was replaced by a stone built legionary fortress, c.800m to the south, in the present day city centre. The Kingsholm site was subsequently used as a cemetery during the second to fourth centuries AD.

3.2.2 The line of the Roman Road of Ermin Street (GSMR 7542) crosses the site, following a line parallel with Denmark Road. This road is assumed to have been built in the early Roman period, although later development along its margins possibly exists and roadside burials are known at other locations within the city (GSMR 14409, 14694 and 11278). Indeed GSMR 14409 is the record of a Roman cemetery marked on the 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map c.95m to the west of the site.

3.2.3 65 Denmark Road lies directly to the south of Denmark Road High School for Girls. The Gloucester Urban Archaeological Database lists four sites in the immediate vicinity of the school. These consist of a Roman burial found during the construction of an air raid shelter in WWII (GUAD 64), a Roman stater (GUAD 68), Roman pottery (GUAD 69/GSMR 14410) and Romano-British pottery (GUAD71). The latter three finds were all from the area presently occupied by the school.

3.2.4 Observations on a trench to replace the water mains along Denmark Street in 1991 (Garrod 1992, GSMR14696) located the remains of a pebble surface under the north side of the carriageway close to the school at a depth of 0.74m. Two undefined pits cut this surface and probably represent part of the Kingsholm burial site mentioned above. No location plan or levels above OD are given in the published report.

3.2.5 Several pieces of archaeological work at the school since 1991 have recorded Roman activity from the 1st to 4th centuries, probably associated with the 1st century Roman fort at Kingsholm (GSMR 11273) and later settlement off Ermin Street (GSMR 7542). The earliest Roman occupation at Gloucester was sited at the Kingsholm fort, the eastern boundary of which may have been c.350m to the west of the school. The date of the features excavated June 2004 (Barrett 2005) in connection with the construction of new classrooms are consistent with the early military occupation at Kingsholm. Consisting of three dated features, two pits and a possible well, all of early Roman date. Other archaeological work carried out at the school has also recorded features of Roman date. The 1995 excavation of the gymnasium area (GSMR 15641/9-12 – Piper 1995b), was carried out following an evaluation (GSMR 15641/6-8 – Piper 1995a). It revealed a ditch and two pits from the 1st or 2nd centuries. Similar evidence was recorded during an excavation in 1996 (GSMR 15641/13-15 – Vallender 1997a), where three pits dated to the same period. The features recorded in these pieces of work are suggestive of an area of managed landscape, where extra mural activity associated with the fort may have been taking place. Outside the grounds of the school, an evaluation in 2003 (GSMR 22277- Barrett 2003) c.140m to the east, recorded three ditches and three post holes, which may suggest the area of extra mural activity continued to the east.

3.2.6 An evaluation was undertaken in 1997 on the site of new tennis courts and associated car parking and landscaping to the east of Seabroke Road, c.175m north east of 65 Denmark Road (GSMR 19680). The evaluation produced evidence of medieval ridge and furrow cultivation. The surviving topsoil appear to have been worked in the 19th century, which served to abrade all earlier finds and may have destroyed archaeological deposits of the Romano-British period, for which there was no evidence. A number of pottery sherds of this period were retrieved but they were mostly abraded and residual within 18th century and 19th century contexts (Vallender 1997b). The natural sand and gravel deposits lay between c.0.30m and 0.50m below the existing ground surface, apart from in Trench 3, where it lay at 1.45m.

3.2.7 An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Gloucestershire Archaeology Service in May and August 2002 during groundworks associated with a development on the east side of Seabroke Road (GSMR 21781). The development comprised the excavation of a sand-pit, soakaway, drains and footings for a tennis pavilion. The sand-pit was excavated to a depth of 0.60m below ground level without encountering natural deposits. All other groundworks were excavated to a depth of between 0.80m (soakaway and drains) and 1.00m (footings) and encountered the natural sand with patches of clay and gravel c.0.70m below ground level. No archaeological features and deposits were recorded.

3.3 Medieval and later periods

3.3.1 The Gloucestershire SMR and Gloucester City UAD do not record any material of later than Roman date from within 250m of the development area at 65 Denmark Road, although evidence from medieval ploughing was noted in an evaluation at Seabroke Road, c.175m north east of the site (GSMR 19680). An Anglo-Saxon royal palace was located in Kingsholm, probably at Kingsholm Close, 500m to the west of 65 Denmark Road. Evidence from historic maps suggests that this part of Kingsholm was used for horticulture until the early 20th century.

3.4 Cartographic evidence

3.4.1 The First Edition Ordnance Survey map (c.1880) shows the site of 65 Denmark Road as a small plot to the south of Kingsholm Nursery. There are no buildings on the plot and Oxford Street is not present on this map. Oxford Street is represented on the Second Edition Ordnance Survey map (c.1900), and forms the western boundary of the area now occupied by 65 Denmark Road. This is shown as two properties (No 63 and 65) in long, narrow, rectangular plots running south from Denmark Road. The 1925 and 1938 Ordnance Survey maps show a similar layout, which seems to have continued until between 1980 and 2005, when the two properties were combined into one, shown on the most recent edition Ordnance Survey map.

4 Purpose of the evaluation

In the IFA document referred to at 1.2 above:

The purpose of the evaluation will be "to gain information about the archaeological resource ... including its presence or absence, character and extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and relative quality, in order to make an assessment of its worth in the appropriate context, leading to: the formulation of a strategy for the preservation or management of those remains; and/or the formulation of an appropriate response or mitigation strategy to planning applications or other proposals which may affect adversely such archaeological remains, or enhance them; and/or the formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigation within a programme of research." (IFA 2001).

5 Methodology

5.1 Two trenches were excavated within the area of the proposed development. These were excavated to the top of significant archaeological deposits or to a maximum depth of 1.20m, as required by the project brief. A total of c. 12.6m of trenching was excavated, the locations of which are shown on Figure 2. These were excavated by a three tonne machine equipped with a 1.30m ditching bucket.

5.2 All deposits were recorded on a pro-forma context sheet and photographed. These photographs included black and white prints, colour transparencies (on 35mm film) and digital, illustrating in both detail and general context the principal features. A site location plan indicating north and based on the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map (OS 2005) was prepared. Levels above Ordnance Datum (AOD) were recorded for archaeological deposits as required in the brief.

5.4 The site archive will be stored at Shire Hall, Gloucester under a unique site code (GSMR 27938), issued by the County Sites and Monuments Record Officer. It is intended that it will eventually be deposited with Gloucester City Museum and Art Gallery.

6 Results

6.1 The results of the evaluation are outlined below, with the deposits discussed in stratigraphic order starting with the earliest. Cut numbers are shown in square brackets [] and other context numbers are shown in rounded brackets (). Measurements are given in the report using the MoLAS standard (i.e. 1-99mm, 0.1-0.9m, 1m) (MoLAS 1994).

6.2 Trench 1 (Figure 3)

Trench 1 was located on the western side of the evaluated area, and was orientated north-east to south-west.

The natural sandy gravels (109) were recorded at a level of 42.07m AOD, 1.03m beneath the modern ground level. These were truncated by two features [103] and [105], the largest of which [105] was cut by two separate features [110] and [107].

[103] cut into the natural and was a north-west to south-east orientated small linear feature in the northern part of the trench. It measured 1.30m long, 0.33m wide and 0.16m deep, with a V-shaped profile. The single fill was a mid to dark yellow brown sandy clay (104), with 15% small stone inclusions and no datable artefacts. This feature was interpreted as an undated gully, probably of Roman date.

The majority of the trench contained a large north-west to south-east orientated possibly linear feature [105] which truncated the natural, with only its vertically cut northern edge within the evaluation area. It measured 3.50m by 1.30m and in excess of 0.46m deep, the base of the feature was not exposed as this was beyond the limit of safe excavation. The single fill was seen in the two slots excavated into this feature, these were recorded separately for artefact dating purposes (106) on the northern side of cut [110] and (112) on the southern. The fill (106/112) was a dark brown yellow sandy clay, with 5% small to medium stone inclusions. This feature has been interpreted as a large early Roman ditch or could be a gravel extraction pit.

Two features were cut into the top of the large Roman feature [105], a modern foul water pipe [110] and a sub-circular feature [107]. [107] measured 1.30m by 1.18m and was 120mm deep, with what appeared to be only the north-east quadrant within the trench. The single fill of this shallow feature was a very dark brown sandy clay (108), with 10% small to medium sized stone inclusions. This feature has been interpreted as a shallow pit cut into an earlier feature and illustrates that the site contains at least two phases of Roman activity.

Sealing the Roman deposits and features, and also the modern foul water pipe [110], was a 0.25m deep layer of grey brown sandy clay (102), with 2% small stone inclusions. This has been interpreted as an undated soil deposit. Above this was a mid grey brown sandy clay (101), 0.31m deep with 2% small stone inclusions and residual Roman pottery mixed with post-medieval artefacts. This has been interpreted as a post-medieval soil, which was sealed by the modern topsoil (100) a grey brown silty clay, up to 0.43m deep.

6.3 Trench 2 (Figure 4)

Trench 2 was located on the eastern side of the evaluated area, and was orientated east to west.

The natural sandy gravels (204) were recorded at a level of 42.05m AOD, 1.01m beneath the modern ground level. These were truncated by a U-shaped north-west to south-east orientated linear cut [205], in the eastern part of the trench. It measured 2.10m by 0.70m and was 0.24m deep, with a single fill of grey brown sandy clay (206), containing 5% small stone inclusions and Roman artefacts. This feature has been interpreted as an early Roman ditch. The excavated section appears to be close to a possible terminus, as the ditch sloped up to the east whilst narrowing at the base.

Sealing the Roman ditch, was a 0.26m deep layer of grey brown sandy clay (203), with 2% small stone inclusions and residual Roman pottery, interpreted as a post-Roman deposit. Above this was a light to mid grey brown sandy clay (202), 0.30m deep with 2% small stone inclusions and post-medieval artefacts, interpreted as a post-medieval soil. Sealing the post-medieval soil was a 0.20m deep layer of compact post-medieval building rubble within a grey brown sandy clay matrix (201). The layer of post-medieval building rubble was sealed by the modern topsoil (200) a grey brown silty clay, up to 0.24m deep, with 10% small sized stone inclusions.

7 Artefacts

Pottery report – Jane Timby

The archaeological work resulted in the recovery of 82 sherds (1222g) of pottery dating to the early Roman period. Pottery was recovered from four contexts. The assemblage was scanned to assess its likely chronology and recorded by sherd count and weight for each recorded context. The resulting data is summarised in Table 1.

The complete assemblage dates to the early Roman period, specifically the 1st century AD. The sherds are in relatively good condition with an overall average sherd weight of 14.9g.

The group includes continental imports (South Gaulish samian and whiteware flagon), a single sherd of Dressel 20 amphora and local wares. Most of the local wares are products from the Gloucester kilns, both the Kingsholm military related kilns and the early Gloucester City kilns. Context (206) produced two decorated grey wares, one with rustication and one with barbotine hairpins. The latter type is known to be amongst the wares associated with a kiln excavated at Kingsholm Rugby Ground. Other local wares include a few sherds of Severn Valley ware, local handmade grog-tempered ware and Wiltshire black burnished ware.

The location of the trenches fall within or close to the legionary fortress at Kingsholm and the assemblage could be seen as associated with this. Alternatively it could just post-date the postulated Neronian occupation of the fort falling into the Flavian period. The moderately low incidence of imports, the presence of a higher proportion of Gloucester kiln wares as opposed to Kingsholm local military wares along with the rusticated jar which is generally dated as a Flavian and later type would support a possibly post-Neronian date.

Table 1: Artefacts recovered from the site

Context	Artefact material	Artefact type	No.	Wt gms	date	Notes	Bags	Box
106	Bone	Animal	7	86			1	1
106	Ceramic	Pottery	29	730	Roman	50-100 AD	1	1
106	Shell	Oyster	1	9			1	1
108	Bone	Animal	12	128			1	1
108	Ceramic	Pottery	29	230	Roman	50-100 AD	1	1
112	Bone	Animal	10	182			1	1
112	Ceramic	Pottery	15	164	Roman	50-100 AD	1	1
206	Bone	Animal	9	162		1 burnt end & butchery marks	1	1
206	Ceramic	Pottery	9	98	Roman	50-100 AD	1	1
206	Metal	Fe	1	3		Nail	1	1
206	Stone	Sedimentary	1	208		Burnt	1	1

All other dateable artefacts from the recorded deposits were of modern date or post-medieval, and subsequently were not retained.

8 Discussion and conclusions

Deposits and features from two distinct phases of early Roman activity were encountered during the evaluation, at c.1m beneath the modern ground surface, at 1.04m (42.11m AOD) in trench 1 and 1.01m (42.05m AOD) in trench 2. These consisted of two ditches (although one possible may be a gravel extraction pit), one cut by a probable pit and also a separate gully. Trench 2 contained a single ditch only, with the smaller trench 1 containing the majority of the features.

No evidence for Roman Ermine Street was established during this project given that its projected line is to the immediate north (through the southern portion of the existing structure). However, the gully in the northern part of trench 1 does appear to be on the same alignment as the postulated Roman road. It is possible that the large feature [105] may be a large ditch or the backfilled remains of a localised gravel quarry excavated during the construction of Ermine Street.

9 References

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|---------------------------|--------|---|
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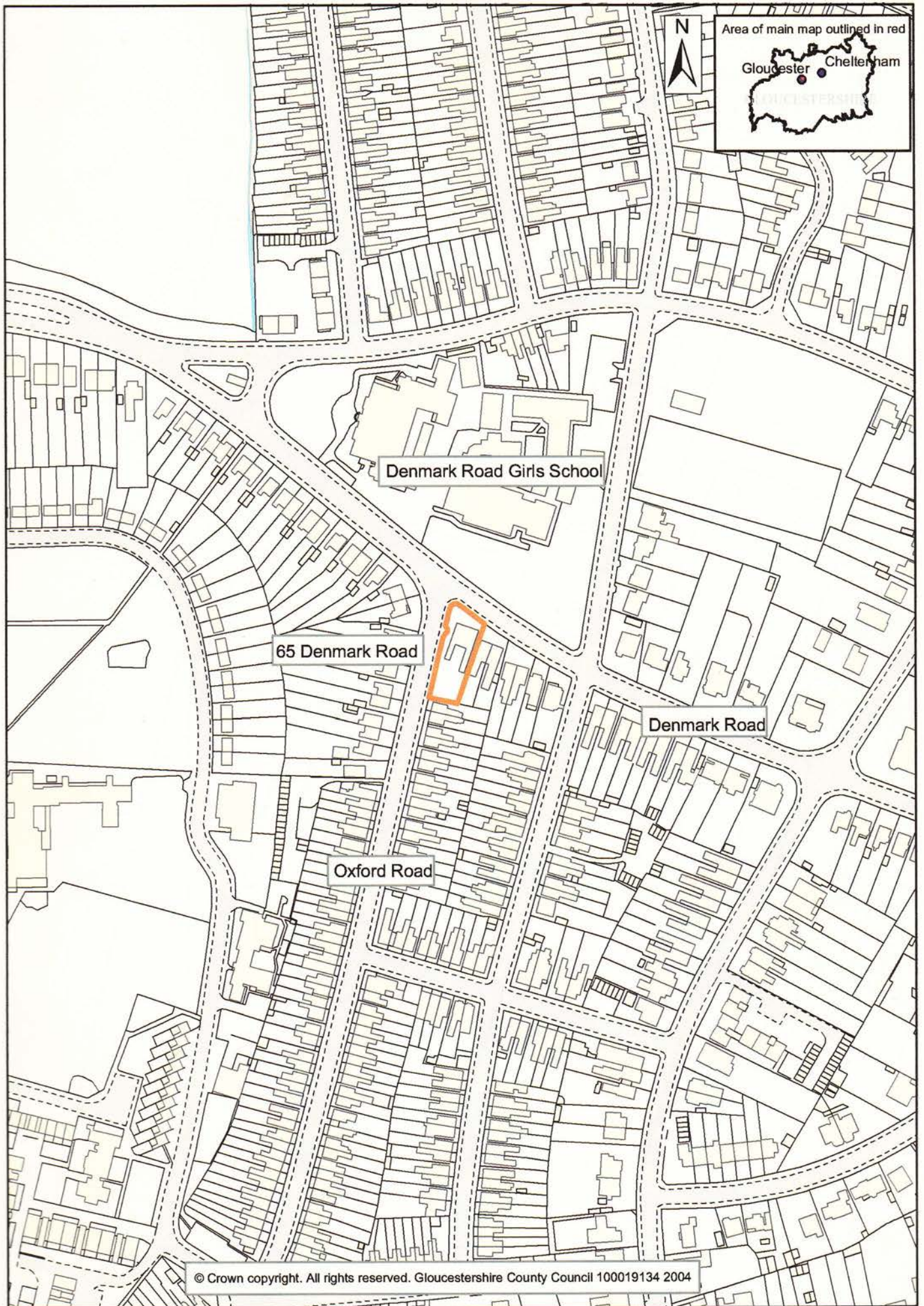


Figure 1: Site location plan (Scale 1:2500)

0 80 m

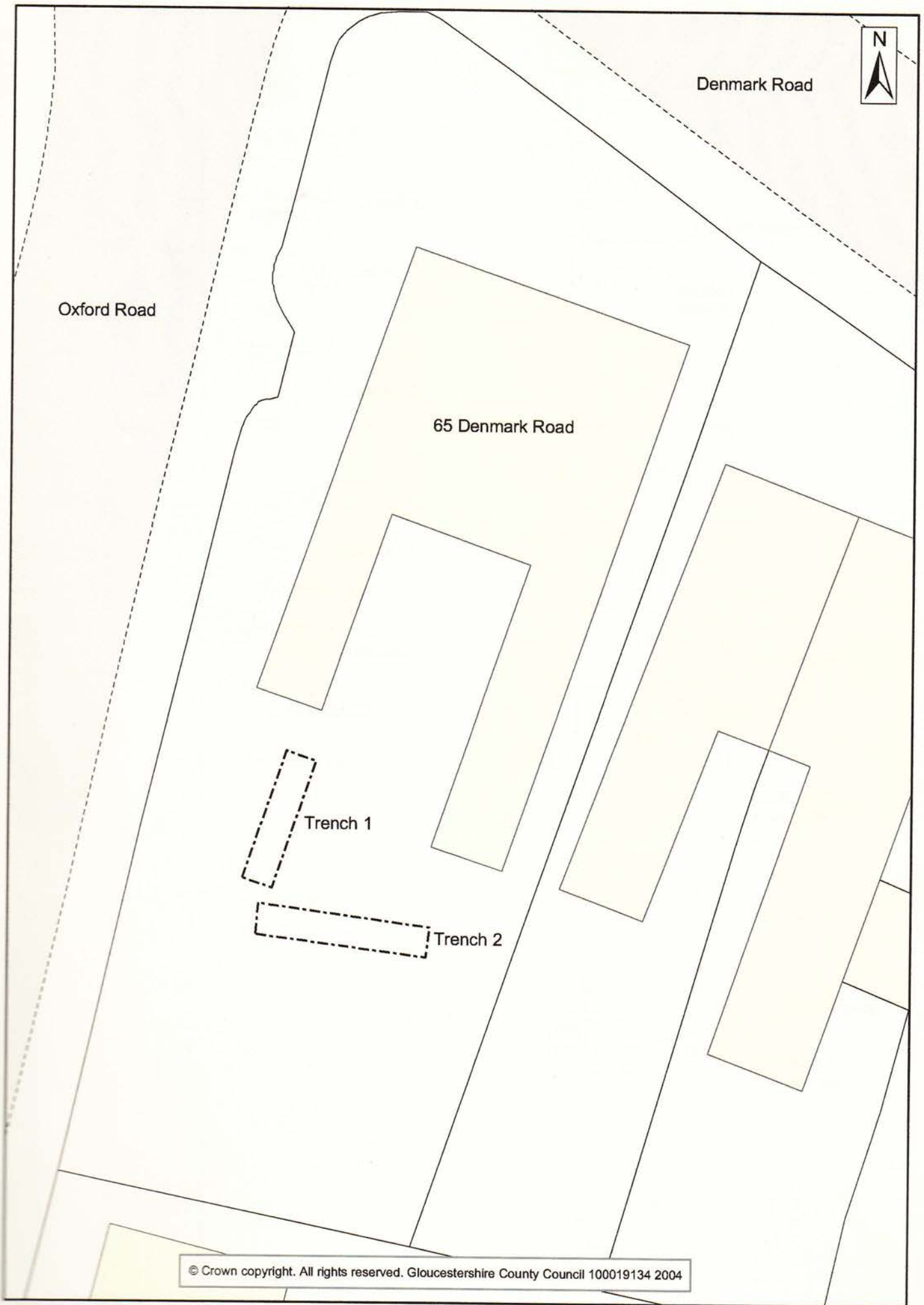


Figure 2: Trench location plan (Scale 1:200)

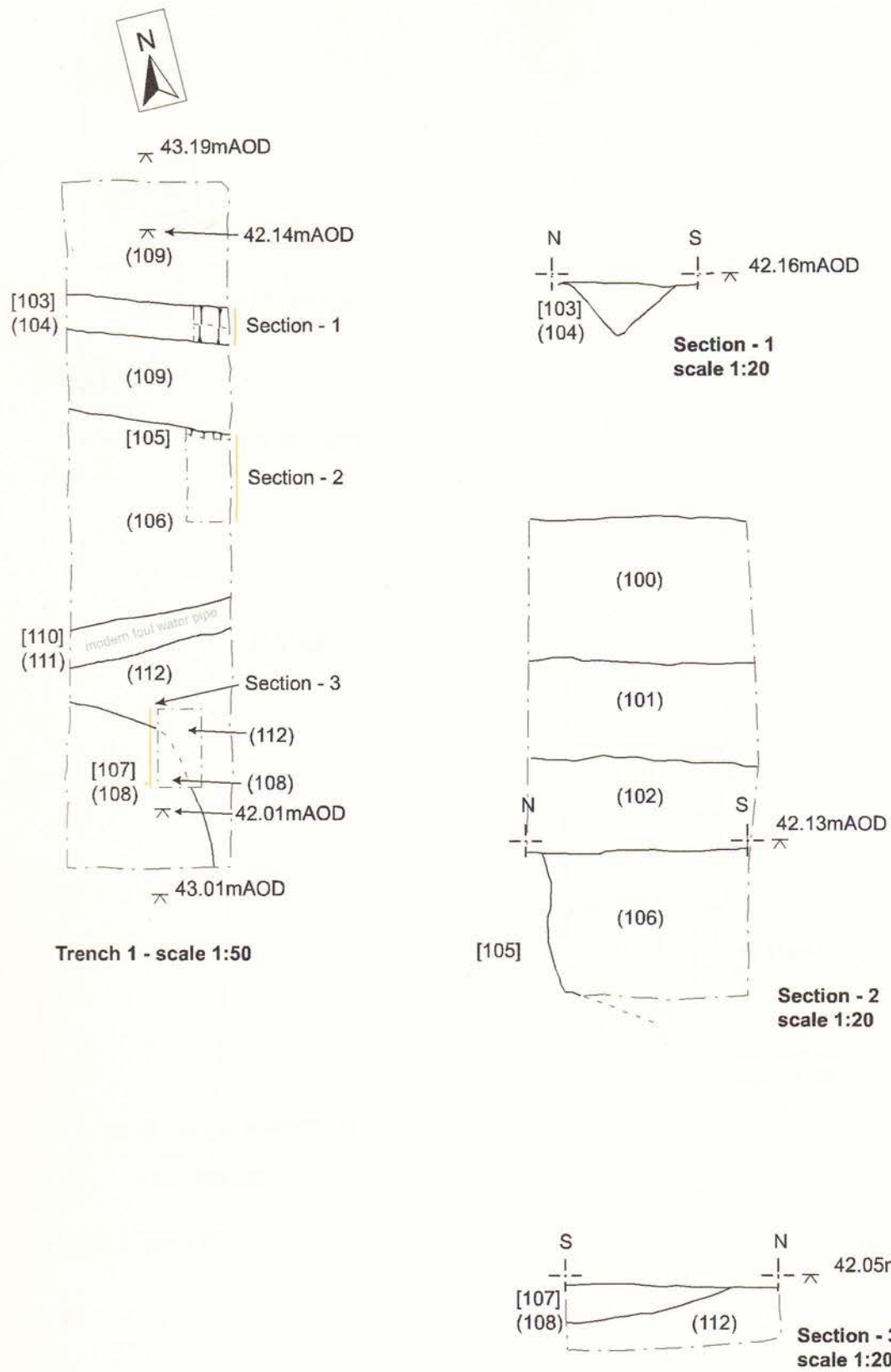


Figure 3: Plan and sections of trench 1

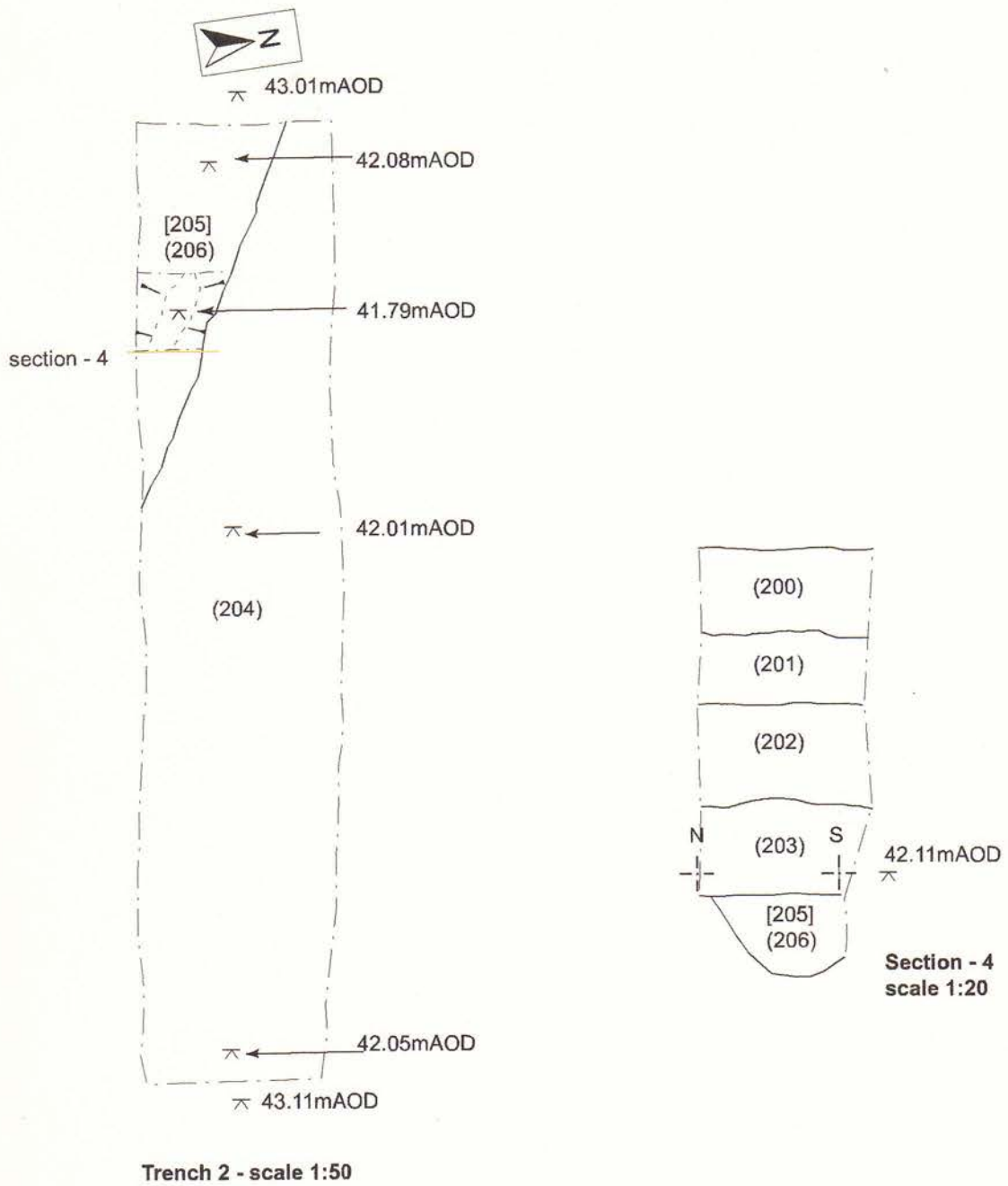


Figure 4: Plan and section of trench 2