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Land adjoining
Middleton Stoney Road
and Oxford Road
Bicester
Oxfordshire



Archaeological Evaluation



Oxford Archaeology

10th May 2002

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Land adjoining Middleton Stoney Road and Oxford Road, Bicester, Oxfordshire

NGR SP 5780 2220

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

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SUMMARY

Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation between 2nd and 12th April 2002 at land adjoining Middleton Stoney Road and Oxford Road, Bicester, Oxfordshire on behalf of The John Phillips Planning Consultancy. Thirteen trenches were excavated. A cobbled surface of Roman date was revealed in Trench 5 (5023), two ditches (3003, 3005) also containing Roman pottery were revealed in Trench 3. A large shallow feature (6013) containing an organic deposit (6012) was revealed in Trench 6. A ditch (7015) and a gully (7008) of unknown date were revealed in Trench 7. A heavily disturbed wall foundation (1127), five intercutting pits (11009, 11011, 11013, 11015 and 11019), two postholes (11023, 11021) and two gullies (1107, 11025) were revealed in Trench 11. A single sherd of middle Iron Age pottery was recovered from the fill of pit 11019. All of the archaeological features revealed were excavated into the natural Cornbrash and sealed by a silty clay subsoil. Trenches 8, 9, 10, 12 and 13 were located in wet ground to the north of a brook that bisected the site. No archaeology was revealed in these trenches all of which contained a shallow sequence of peat overlying alluvial clay deposits and natural Cornbrash.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In April 2002, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation on land adjoining Middleton Stoney Road and Oxford Road, Bicester, Oxfordshire (Fig. 1) on behalf of The John Phillips Planning Consultancy in respect of a planning application for the development of a hospital (Planning Application No.01/02446/OUT). A brief was set by and a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Steven Weaver, Planning Archaeologist with Oxfordshire County Council.

1.1.2 The site is located at NGR SP 5780 2220 within an area of marshy and uneven pastureland.

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The underlying geology consists of sandy clay and Jurassic Cornbrash Limestone.

1.2.2 The proposed development is located at the edge of, and partially within, an area of arable farmland just inside (c. 300 m from), the southern parish boundary of Bicester, between Oxford Road and Middleton Stoney Road. The site lies at approx. 70 m. O. D. and comprises approximately 2.88 hectares of marshy and uneven pastureland with a stream, the Pingle Brook, running through the centre.

1.2.3 The topography of the site is dominated by the Pingle Brook in the low ground at the centre of the site. The land rises gradually to the north towards the Middleton Stoney Road, and to the south, particularly to the southwest corner of the field.

1.3 Archaeological background

- 1.3.1 The proposal area has been the subject of a desk-based assessment, *Land off Middleton Stoney Road, Bicester, Oxfordshire* produced by OA in February 2002.
- 1.3.2 The proposed development site is located in an area of known archaeological potential. Aerial photographs have shown a series of linear cropmarks (PRN 11214) crossing the site. This cropmark evidence has been supported by the results of a geophysical survey undertaken in 1997, which included land to the south of the development site. This survey revealed part of a large perimeter ditch, protecting a number of smaller enclosures. A possible trackway lies just within this perimeter ditch. A number of pits or possible hearths were also observed. All this activity appears to be focused around a structure centered on SP 5767 2208. This is likely to be a farmstead or similar habitation. The survey also revealed features containing possible iron objects.
- 1.3.3 Other investigations close to the site have revealed activity from several periods. Cropmarks located c. 250 m to the south of the proposal area (NGR SP 574 218) indicate the presence of two Bronze Age ring-ditches (PRN 5633). Further evidence of activity during this period was revealed by the recovery of part of a bronze sword, during the construction of the A41. A single sherd of 3rd century Roman pottery was recovered during a watching brief carried out by Oxford Archaeological Unit on the site of the Burger King/Little Chef complex to the immediate west of the proposal area. Subsequent metal detector survey of this site also revealed finds from the Roman, medieval and post-medieval periods. The A421 overlies the former Towcester to Alchester Roman Road (Alchester lies only 1 km to the south of the proposal site - NGR SP 573 204). An excavation of land on the east side of the Oxford Road in 1995 revealed a Romano-British rural settlement, sealed below a c. 300 mm thick layer of alluvium.
- 1.3.4 In light of the previous work in the area, it is likely that the features revealed by the geophysical survey of the area represent the remains of a late Iron Age or Romano-British farmstead with associated field systems. There is also good potential for Bronze Age deposits.

1.4 Evaluation Aims

- 1.4.1 To determine the condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present in the site area.
- 1.4.2 To make available the results of the investigation.

2 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

2.1 Scope of fieldwork

- 2.1.1 A 2.5% sample consisting of thirteen trenches (Fig. 2) was excavated by a mechanical excavator (JCB in the dry areas and 12 ton 360° excavator in the wet

areas) under archaeological supervision supplemented by hand excavation of archaeological deposits. An additional 68 m² of trenching out of the 72 m² allowed for was also excavated.

- 2.1.2 The trenches measured 30 m x 1.8 m, and were located across the site so as to provide a representative sample of the areas to be impacted by the development. Additional excavation included an open area 5 m² excavated at the north end of Trench 5, a 15 m long southward extension to Trench 2 and a 10 m southward extension at the north end of Trench 10.

2.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

- 2.2.1 The trenches were cleaned by hand and the revealed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds. All archaeological features were planned and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20.
- 2.2.2 All features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

2.3 Finds

- 2.3.1 Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation and generally bagged by context.

2.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

- 2.4.1 Nineteen deposits were sampled for environmental analysis. Six samples were selected for processing (Sample no's 1000, 1003, 1006, 1008, 1012 and 1017).

2.5 Presentation of results

- 2.5.1 In the following sections the deposits are described by trench. There is additional comment on the finds and the reliability of the results. A context inventory is included in Appendix 1. The stratigraphy of each trench is described individually, from earliest to latest, and a discussion and interpretation of the archaeology then follows.

3 RESULTS: GENERAL

3.1 Soils and ground conditions

- 3.1.1 The soils consist of silty and organic loams overlying silt clays and limestone Cornbrash. The topography of the site is dominated by the Pingle Brook in the marshy ground at the centre of the site. The land rises gradually to the north towards the Middleton Stoney Road, and to the south, particularly to the southwest corner of the field.

4 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

4.1 Description of deposits

Trench 1

- 4.1.1 Trench 1 was oriented north-north-east/south-south-west. It was 30 m long, 1.8 m wide and excavated to a maximum depth of 0.7 m. No archaeological features were revealed in this trench.
- 4.1.2 A compact natural deposit of orange sand with limestone (1003) (Cornbrash) and occasional patches of manganese was encountered at a depth of 0.7 m below ground surface (69.02 m OD). This became deeper orange in colour approximately 4 m from the northern end of the trench.
- 4.1.3 Two discrete areas of tree disturbance (1005, 1007) were revealed cutting into the natural (1003).
- 4.1.4 A subsoil, 0.35 m thick, of mid-orange sandy loam (1001) overlay the areas of tree disturbance (1005, 1007).
- 4.1.5 The subsoil (1001) was overlaid by a topsoil, 0.23 m thick, of sandy loam (1000).

Trench 2

- 4.1.6 The layout of Trench 2 comprised two elements. The main trench was orientated northwest-southeast. It was 30 m long and 1.8 m wide. An extension to the southwest off the main trench was also excavated in an effort to determine the eastern extent of ditch 5005 revealed in Trench 5. The extension was 15 m long and 1.8 m wide. Trench 2 was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.5 m.
- 4.1.7 A compact mid-orange natural clay sand and limestone (2003) was revealed at approximately 0.5 m below the ground surface (at 69.42 m OD). Irregular patches of manganese staining were present throughout the deposit. The upper 0.2 m of this deposit (2003) appeared to have undergone considerable root disturbance.
- 4.1.8 A possible circular pit [2004], was revealed towards the western end of the main trench. The pit [2004] was 0.5 m wide and 0.26 m deep. It contained a single fill of silty clay (2005) which did not contain any finds.

- 4.1.9 Two layers of subsoil (2001, 2002), each c. 0.25 m deep, overlaid the possible pit [2004].

Trench 3

- 4.1.10 Trench 3 (Fig. 3) was orientated north-north-east/south-south-west and was 30 m long and 1.8 m wide. It was excavated to a general depth of 0.5 m.
- 4.1.11 A compacted mid orange natural sandy clay and limestone (3002), with lighter bands and irregular patches of dark red manganese staining within it, was encountered at a depth of approximately 0.4 m below ground (69.90 m OD).
- 4.1.12 A large steep sided ditch (3003) orientated southeast-northwest was revealed cutting the natural (3002) at the north east end of the trench. It was 1 m wide and 1.34 m deep. The ditch (3003) contained five fills (3004, 3008, 3009, 3010, 3011). The primary fill (3011) lined the sides of the ditch at the base and was 0.08 m thick. It consisted of a pale yellow silty clay with limestone fragments and no finds. It was overlaid by a fine grey organic clay silt, 0.16 m thick containing numerous limestone fragments. A small number of potsherds dating to the late Iron Age and early Roman period were recovered from this fill. The three remaining fills were also of clay silt (3009, 3008 and 3004) and these too contained a small assemblage of pottery dating to the late Iron Age.
- 4.1.13 A much shallower ditch (3005) with a more irregular profile and on the same southeast-northwest alignment was located 0.75 m to the northeast of ditch 3003. No relationship between the two ditches was apparent. Ditch (3005) was 1.5 m wide and 0.42 m deep. The ditch contained three fills (3006, 3012, 3013) between 0.20 and 0.30 m thick and produced pottery of late 1st century-2nd century date.
- 4.1.14 Both ditches (3003, 3005) were overlaid by a subsoil of sandy clay with limestone fragments (3007) 0.18 m thick.
- 4.1.15 A similar though more disturbed subsoil (3001) overlaid 3007 throughout Trench 3 and was 0.16 m thick.
- 4.1.16 A clay loam topsoil (3000) 0.18 m thick overlaid subsoil 3001.

Trench 4

- 4.1.17 Trench 4 (Fig. 4) was orientated northwest-southeast and was 30 m long and 1.8 m wide. It was excavated to a general depth of 0.6 m.
- 4.1.18 Natural silt clay and limestone (4003) was revealed at a depth of 0.60 m (68.76 m OD).
- 4.1.19 A 0.22 m thick layer of yellow sandy clay (4002) overlaid the natural (4003). The alluvium was heavily root disturbed throughout the trench.
- 4.1.20 A subsoil of silty clay (4001), 0.18 m thick was seen throughout the trench where not truncated.

- 4.1.21 A shallow, possibly linear feature (4010) orientated northeast-southwest truncated the subsoil (4001) and the alluvium (4002) towards the centre of the trench. The feature was 3.6 m wide and 0.32 m deep and contained two fills (4008, 4009) of pale yellow grey clay silt. The uppermost fill (4008) contained pottery of post-medieval date.
- 4.1.22 A topsoil of silty loam (4000), 0.2 m thick overlaid the uppermost fill of feature 4010.

Trench 5

- 4.1.23 Trench 5 (Fig. 5) was orientated north-north-east/south-south-west and was 30 m long and 1.8 m wide. It was excavated to a general depth of 0.5 m. A 5 x 5 m extension was excavated to the east at the northern end of the trench in order to define the limits of the cobbled surface (5023).
- 4.1.24 A natural sandy clay and limestone (5003) was revealed for approximately 20 m of the main trench at a depth of 0.4 m (c. 69.06 m OD). A natural downward slope of 20° from south to north was apparent.
- 4.1.25 A pale yellow alluvial sandy clay (5014) was revealed at a point c. 20 m from the southern end of the trench. The depth of this deposit was not established.
- 4.1.26 Eleven features (5004, 5007, 5013, 5016, 5022, 5025, 5027, 5031, 5035, 5042, 5044) truncated the alluvium (5014). A sub circular feature (5004) was revealed 3.3 m from the northern end of the main trench. The feature was 2.4 m north to south and extended into the trench from the eastern baulk for 2.3 m. The Feature (5004) contained a layer of silty clay (5010) 0.12 m thick which was overlaid by a layer of cobbling (5006/5023) 0.15 m thick. The cobbles were of sub-angular limestone and varied in size between 0.2 m and 0.04 m. The cobbles (5006/5023) were set in a clay matrix (5005) throughout. Further excavation in the form of a 5 x 5 m open area to the east showed that the cobbles formed an irregular surface which extended beyond the eastern limits of excavation. The northern edge of the surface (5023) was irregular and extended to a maximum of 3.9 m and a minimum of 2.6 m to the north of the southern section. The upper surface of the cobbles (5023) had a highest point of 68.91 m OD. A small finds assemblage was retrieved from the cobbled surface which included a brooch pin dating to the 1st century AD, a single sherd of Roman pottery and several pieces of animal bone.
- 4.1.27 Two pits (5022, 5031) were located on an east west orientation 0.5 m to the north of the cobbled surface. Both were an irregular sub-oval shape and each cut the alluvial clay (4014). Pit 5022 was the larger of the two and was 2.2 m long and 1.1 m wide. The pit (5022) was 0.12 deep with very irregular base and sides. It was filled with a silty sand (5021) with occasional limestone fragments.
- 4.1.28 Pit fill 5021 was cut by two possible post/stakeholes (5020, 5018). Both of these were 1 m in diameter and 0.15 m deep. They were both filled with sandy silt (5020-

5019, 5018-5017) devoid of finds. Post/stakehole 5020 contained a fragment of timber, possibly a stake, driven into the alluvium (5014) at the base of the cut.

- 4.1.29 Located immediately to the west of pit 5022 and possibly related, pit 5031 was very similar in form. It was 1.1 m long and 1 m wide and 0.14 m deep. It was also filled with a silty sand containing limestone (5030). No finds were retrieved from either of the pit fills (5021, 5030).
- 4.1.30 A further pit or posthole (5027) was located close to the northern edge of the cobbled surface (5023) although it did not appear to be directly related. It was oval in shape and measured 0.8 m long, 0.6 m wide and was 0.15 m deep. It contained a single fill of yellow clay silt with limestone fragments (5026) and no finds.
- 4.1.31 A pit (5042) was also partially revealed along the western baulk of the open area extension trench. It was 1.1 m long (north-south), 0.4 m wide and 0.25 deep where revealed. It contained three fills of silty clay (5039, 5040 and 5041) which were devoid of finds.
- 4.1.32 An irregular linear feature (5016) extended along the entire northern baulk (6.8 m) of the area extension. The edge of the feature extended southward to a maximum of c. 1.2 m from the baulk. A sample section revealed a gently sloping profile, 0.2 m deep and a single fill of grey sandy silt (5015) which did not contain finds.
- 4.1.33 Several areas of root disturbance were apparent throughout the surface of alluvium 5014. An area of tree disturbance (5035) was apparent in the western section. The tree bole was filled with a silty clay deposit (5033) which was devoid of finds.
- 4.1.34 The silty clay (5033) filling the tree bole (5035) was sealed by deposit of sandy clay and gravel (5034) 0.16 m thick which appeared to form a low bank over the feature. This may have been deliberately deposited to consolidate the void caused by the tree bole.
- 4.1.35 A layer of silty clay (5002), 0.15 m thick, overlaid the archaeological features and the low bank (5034) in the western section.
- 4.1.36 The silty clay (5002) was overlaid by three thin lenses of colluvium (5032, 5037, 5038) each c. 0.08 m thick.
- 4.1.37 A subsoil of yellowish brown clay silt (5001), 0.18 m thick overlaid the colluvial layers (5032, 5037, 5038) and was apparent throughout the trench.
- 4.1.38 The subsoil (5001) was overlaid by a silty topsoil which was 0.2 m thick.

Trench 6

- 4.1.39 Trench 6 (Fig 6) was orientated northwest-southeast. It was 30 m long and 1.8 m wide and excavated to a maximum depth of 1 m in feature 6013.
- 4.1.40 Natural sandy clay and limestone (6003) was reached at 0.86 m (69.46 m OD).

- 4.1.41 A large but relatively shallow feature (6013) with an eastward curving edge truncated the natural (6003) at the northern end of Trench 6. The feature [6013] had a curving edge and gently sloping sides to a maximum depth of 0.32m at the eastern end of the excavation trench. It extended for c. 3 m to the east from the end of the trench. It contained three fills (6012, 6011 and 6010). The primary fill (6010) was 0.1 m thick and consisted of an organic clay silt containing peat. The second fill (6011) was of brown silty clay and was 0.2 m thick. The tertiary fill (6010) was also comprised of silt clay and was 0.2 m thick. No finds were retrieved from any of the fills.
- 4.1.42 A possibly east-west orientated linear feature (6004) was located towards the centre of the trench. It extended for 3.2 m and was 0.48 m wide and 0.2 m deep. It contained two fills of silty clay (6005, 6006) which were devoid of finds.
- 4.1.43 Two layers of subsoil (6001, 6002) sealed the cut features (6013, 6004). Subsoil 6002 consisted of a grey brown clay silt with sub angular limestone and was 0.2 m thick. It was overlaid by subsoil 6001 which was similar but contained less limestone inclusions.
- 4.1.44 Subsoil 6001 was overlaid by a silty topsoil 0.1 m thick throughout the trench.

Trench 7

- 4.1.45 Trench 7 (Fig 7) was orientated north-north-east/south-south-west and was 30 m long and 1.8 m wide. It was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.82 m.
- 4.1.46 Natural clay silt and limestone was revealed at 0.64 m (69.44 m OD). The natural sloped down from north to south towards the wet ground and the brook running through the centre of the site.
- 4.1.47 A shallow, east-west orientated ditch (7015) was revealed towards the centre of the trench. It was 0.83 m wide and 0.24 m deep and contained a single fill (7014) of silty clay which contained no finds.
- 4.1.48 The ditch [7015] was sealed by mixed sandy clay subsoil deposit (7002) which was 0.30 m thick.
- 4.1.49 The mixed subsoil (7002) was truncated by several land drains and areas of tree disturbance.
- 4.1.50 A further mixed subsoil (7001), 0.2 m thick, overlaid subsoil 7002.
- 4.1.51 A sandy silt topsoil (7000) overlaid 7001 to a maximum depth of 0.24 m.

Trenches 8, 9 (Fig. 8), 10, 12 and 13.

- 4.1.52 These trenches were located in the flat, marshy ground to the north of Pingle Brook which ran on a northwest/southeast alignment through the centre of the site. The trenches were all devoid of archaeological features. The stratigraphy of Trenches 8,

9, 10, 12 and 13 was very similar. The stratigraphy of Trench 9 provides a representative sample.

- 4.1.53 Natural clay with limestone (9004) was revealed at 0.6 m (68.60 m OD).
- 4.1.54 The natural (9004) was overlaid by a lens of brownish yellow silt clay (9005) which was 0.06 m thick.
- 4.1.55 A layer of peat (9003), 0.12 m thick overlaid the silt clay 9005. Several areas of tree disturbance were apparent throughout the surface of the peat deposit.
- 4.1.56 A layer of mixed yellow silt clay (9002), 0.16 m thick overlaid 9003.
- 4.1.57 A peaty topsoil (9001) with reeds overlaid the silt clay 9002. The topsoil was 0.22 m thick throughout the trench.

Trench 11

- 4.1.58 Trench 11 (Fig. 9) was orientated north-north-east/south-south-west and was 30 m long and 1.8 m wide. It was excavated to a total depth of 0.74 m. The southern half of the trench extended into marshy ground and required de-watering prior to excavation. No features were revealed in the wet ground.
- 4.1.59 Natural clay silt and limestone was revealed at 0.5 m (69.00 m OD) The natural sloped by 20° from north to south towards the wet ground.
- 4.1.60 Five inter-cutting pits (11009, 11015, 11013, 11019) and two post holes (11021, 11023) were revealed towards the northern end of the trench. All of the pits were sub-circular in plan. Each appeared to have been between 0.4 and 0.6 m in diameter and 0.3-0.32 m deep prior to truncation.
- 4.1.61 The earliest pit (11011) was filled with a reddish silty clay with sub-angular limestone (11010). This was truncated by two, possibly contemporary pits (11015, 11009) also containing single fills of silt clay (11008, 11014). A possibly contemporary pit (11019) was the northern-most of the pits. It contained three fills (11018, 11017, 11016). Fill 11018 contained a highly abraded sherd of pottery of middle Iron Age date. The fills of pit 11019 were truncated by a further pit (11013) which also truncated the fill (11014) of pit 11015. Pit 11013 was the upper-most feature of the sequence and contained a reddish silty clay fill (11012). No pottery was recovered from the fills of any of the pits.
- 4.1.62 To the south, pit fill 11008 was truncated by a northeast-southwest orientated gully (11007) which was 0.5 m wide and 0.22 m deep. It was filled with a reddish brown silty clay (11006) which contained fragments of limestone.
- 4.1.63 A similar gully (11025) was located 1.5 m to the south of 11007. It was orientated on an east-west alignment and was 0.7 m wide and 0.3 m deep. The gully (11025) contained a single fill of reddish brown silt clay (11024).

- 4.1.64 Posthole 11021 was located 0.3 m to the north of the inter-cutting pits. It was 0.6 m in diameter and 0.2 m deep. It contained a greyish brown clay silt (11020). No post pipe was visible in the section.
- 4.1.65 A small posthole (11023) located 0.4 m to the south of posthole 11021. It was 0.3 m wide and 0.2 m deep and contained a single fill of grey brown clay silt.
- 4.1.66 All of the cut features were overlaid by a layer of reddish brown silty clay (11003) which was 0.08 m thick.
- 4.1.67 An alluvial deposit of greyish brown silty clay (11002) overlaid 11003. It was 0.24 m thick. At the interface between the wet and the dry ground (68.60 m OD) the alluvial layer (11002) became much deeper reaching a maximum depth of 0.32 m.
- 4.1.68 Also at this point in the trench and sitting upon the surface of 11002 were the much truncated remains of a possible limestone wall foundation (11027). The feature consisted of a single course of un-worked limestone and was 0.25 m wide. No finds were recovered from the deposit (11002) under the wall foundation so the date of this feature remains unknown.

4.2 Finds

Pottery by Paul Booth

- 4.2.1 The evaluation produced 30 sherds of pottery (262 g) with a chronological range from middle Iron Age to post-medieval periods inclusive. The pottery was recorded rapidly, mainly using standard codes in the Oxford Archaeology Iron Age and Roman pottery recording system. The material came from nine contexts in six different trenches and was generally in moderate condition at best, a number of sherds being very small and preservation of surfaces being variable.
- 4.2.2 Four sherds were probably or possibly of middle Iron Age date. These were a ?limestone-tempered fragment from context 1119 and two shell-tempered (one with a simple squared rim) and one limestone ooloth-tempered fragments from context 3004, where they were associated with late Iron Age sherds. The latter comprised three joining fragments in a fine sand-tempered fabric (E20) and a single sherd in a wheel-thrown shell-tempered fabric (E40). The E20 sherds were from the rim of a jar or necked bowl, and the E40 sherd was from the shoulder of a similar vessel. These fabrics, in a south-eastern 'Belgic' tradition, may have been introduced into the region in the first quarter of the 1st century AD, but precise dating of them within the transitional late Iron Age-early Roman period is difficult
- 4.2.3 The Roman pottery (16 sherds, 216 g), comprising the bulk of the assemblage (82% by weight), was all assignable with varying degrees of confidence to a relatively limited period from the mid 1st century AD (or a little later) to about the middle of the 2nd century AD. The majority of the sherds were in fine reduced (R10) fabrics. Two small fragments of samian ware, from a South Gaulish form 27 cup, were the only non-local pieces in this group. The only other vessel represented by a rim sherd, in fabric R10, was perhaps from a straight-sided carinated bowl.

- 4.2.4 A single green-glazed medieval sherd from context 4008 was associated there with post-medieval fragments dating to the 18th century or later, while a Brill-Boarstall sherd from context 6012 was probably of late medieval to early post-medieval type
- 4.2.5 The pottery indicates activity on or in the vicinity of the site from the middle Iron Age into the early Roman period. The association of middle and late Iron Age material in context 3004 is reminiscent of the enclosure of this date at Bicester Fields Farm (Cromarty et al 2000), though at that site occupation did not continue into the Roman period. The quantity and chronology of the present material is insufficiently clear to demonstrate whether there was or was not continuity of activity from the late Iron Age into the early Roman period. None of the Roman pottery need have dated before the later 1st century AD (ie after c AD 70) and it is possible that the entire assemblage terminated in the early part of the 2nd century AD, in conformity with a pattern observed widely in the region, as for example at Oxford Road, Bicester (Mould 1997) but again the material is insufficiently diagnostic to allow certainty on this point. It is most unlikely, however, that any of the Roman material dated after about the mid 2nd century.
- 4.2.6 The assemblage is too small to permit assessment of site function or status at any period. The paucity of the material suggests a fairly marginal location in relation to foci of activity.

Animal bone by Beth Charles

- 4.2.7 **Introduction and Quantification.** A total of 20 fragments of bone (155 g) were recovered by hand by Oxford Archaeology during an evaluation of the land adjoining Middleton Stoney Road and Oxford Road, Bicester, Oxfordshire. Some of the fragments were re-assembled reducing the fragment count to 13.
- 4.2.8 **Methodology and Condition.** The calculation of the species recovered from the site was done through the use of the total fragment method.
- 4.2.9 The condition of the bone was measured by grading it from 1 to 5 using the criteria stipulated by Lyman (1996), grade 1 being the best preserved bone and grade 5 indicating that the bone had suffered such structural and attritional damage as to make it unrecognisable. The bone was in reasonable condition between grade 2 and 3. No butchery marks were identified on the fragments and none of the bones had signs of carnivore gnaw marks or burning.
- 4.2.10 **Results.** Two cattle teeth from context 3012 (undated) and 5024 (Roman), a cattle phalanx from context 4008 and two pig tibia fragments from context 5008 (undated) and 5024 (Roman) were the only elements identified to species. The distal articulation of the tibia from context 5008 was unfused and indicates that the animal was younger than 2 years of age (Silver 1969). It is unlikely that many of the pigs at the site were kept beyond 2 years of age since they provide little in the way of secondary products to justify their keep and would have been kept primarily for their meat.

4.2.11 **Conclusion.** The small number of bones identified do not provide meaningful information regarding animal husbandry or the economy of the site other than the presence of the animals. However, the condition of the bone is good and indicates that further excavation is likely to produce additional quantities of animal bone that may provide information on farming practices, diet and status of the inhabitant. It would be of value to implement an environmental sampling strategy in order to recover a more accurate sample of material in order to assess any bias in retrieval of elements (larger bones being more obvious and easier to recover) in addition to collecting very small elements from small mammal, bird and fish which can provide information on variety in diet, environment and the utilisation of wild resources.

Palaeoenvironmental remains by Elizabeth Huckerby

- 4.2.12 Four samples taken during the evaluation were examined for plant remains. Two samples were waterlogged. They were sample 1002, which was described as a wood peat, from the primary fill (context *6012*) of a shallow pond and sample 1006 from a peaty clay deposit (*1130*) beneath a wall foundation in Trench 11. The two non waterlogged samples 1008, from the primary fill (*3012*) of a shallow ditch (*3005*) which is possibly Romano-British, and 1003, from a posthole (*11022*), were scanned for charred remains.
- 4.2.13 The size of the waterlogged samples processed was 1kg and 10 litres for each of the other samples. The bulk samples were processed by flotation using a modified Siraf-type machine and the smaller samples hand-floated, with the flots collected onto a 250µm mesh. The flots from samples 1002 and 1006 were kept wet but those from 1003 and 1008 were air-dried. All the flots were scanned for plant material under a Leitz/Wild stereozoom binocular microscope.
- 4.2.14 The two flots scanned for charred material were small. Both contained charcoal, molluscs, mammal bone fragments and modern contamination. Sample 1003 was more contaminated than 1008. A few poorly preserved charred wheat grains were recorded in the sample (1008) from the shallow ditch. The wheat was from either spelt or emmer (*Triticum spelta/dicocum*) but as no chaff was noted it was not possible to distinguish which species was represented. Charcoal was present, as small fragments, in both these samples and some was from diffuse porous taxa.
- 4.2.15 The waterlogged sample (1002) from the possible shallow pond was extremely rich in organic debris both from wood and amorphous plant debris. There were very abundant elderberry seeds (*Sambucus nigra*) in the flot together with a number of weed taxa including common fumitory (*Fumaria officinalis*), sedges (*Carex* sp.) and common nettle (*Urtica dioica*). The latter species and the high concentration of elderberry seeds suggest a nitrogen rich soil close to the pond. Mammal bone fragments, insect remains and a little charcoal were noted. The second waterlogged sample (1006) from the peaty clay deposit (*1130*) was less organic and only a very few elderberry seeds were identified. This sample contained some modern roots, molluscs, some small fragments of charcoal, insect remains and mammal bone fragments.

- 4.2.16 These results demonstrate the potential for the recovery of limited charred remains from the site and for the good preservation of waterlogged material. It is recommended that a comprehensive palaeoenvironmental sampling strategy for plant remains, molluscs, insects and pollen, the latter from waterlogged deposits, be implemented if further archaeological work is undertaken at Middleton Stoney Road, Bicester. It is also recommended that the relevant specialists should be consulted about sampling procedures.

Assessment of the Mollusca by Mark Robinson

- 4.2.17 Two samples (contexts 3010 and 5024) were processed specifically for the recovery of snails. The samples were 1kg in size and floated onto a 500µm mesh, with the residues also retained to the same size. The samples were air-dried and submitted to Dr Mark Robinson of the Oxford University Museum for examination. The snails were badly crushed in both samples but some useable information was recovered.
- 4.2.18 **Sample 1012, context 3010:** The remains of a rich aquatic fauna was present, including *Planorbis planorbis* and *Anisus* sp. There was evidence for flowing water in the ditch, with species such as *Bithynia tentaculata* and *Valvata* sp. Shells of terrestrial species were few but included shade-loving species such as *Oxychilus cellarius* and dry ground open country species *Vallonia excentrica*. This indicates a mixed fairly dry habitat around the ditch which had flowing water in it.
- 4.2.19 **Sample 1017, context 5024:** Very degraded shells in this sample indicated a marsh surface which had probably experienced episodes of flooding. A few shells/operculae of *Bithynia tentaculata* and the aquatic bivalve *Pisidium* sp. were present, along with other aquatics such as *Anisus* sp. and *Gyraulus* sp. Marsh type snails included *Vertigo antivertigo*, *Succinea* or *Oxyloma* and *Anisus leucostoma*. Some barely waterlogged plant remains were noted, including aquatic species *Ranunculus flammula* and *Menthe aquatica*.
- 4.2.20 Further analysis on these samples would increase the species list and enable quantification of shells but is unlikely to add any useful interpretation. There is, nevertheless, potential for further sampling at the site to provide useable assemblages of snails.

5 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

- 5.1.1 Significant archaeology was revealed in six (Trenches 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 11) out of the 13 trenches excavated. Trenches 3 and 5, located to the south of the Pingle Brook, contained features of late Iron Age and early Roman date while features in the trenches to the north (Trenches 6, 7 and 11) contained few finds and could not be dated. All of the trenches located in the wet ground to the north of the brook (Trenches 8, 9, 10, 12 and 13) were archaeologically sterile.
- 5.1.2 The two northwest-southeast orientated ditches (3005, 3003) in Trench 3 were of late Iron Age or early Roman date. Although a direct relationship between the ditches was not discernible, their close proximity and similar finds assemblage suggests that

they were probably contemporary. They most likely represent a double ditched boundary perhaps relating to a farmstead of Romano-British date which may have been located on the higher ground c. 150 m to the south west. The extent of these ditches remains unknown but they were not revealed in a 15 m long extension to Trench 2, 5 m to the east. It seems likely that they either terminate or return (to the north or south) before this point.

- 5.1.3 The cobbled surface in Trench 5 (5023) was extensive (the eastern and southern limits were not defined) but very irregular. This irregularity suggests that it was probably not associated with a building but was more likely a means of consolidating the wet ground near the brook, perhaps at a crossing point. The existing bridge over the brook is located c. 15 m to the northeast of the cobbled surface and continuity of a crossing at this location seems likely. Evidence for the continuation of the cobbled surface was not revealed in Trenches 6, 7 or 8 on the north side of the brook but a track may have originally curved towards the spring located in the northwest corner of the site. Further evidence for the cobbled surface being associated with a crossing point lies in the possible bank (deposit 5023) running southeast-northwest, parallel to the brook and (deposit 5034) immediately to the north of the cobbled surface. A bank in this location would have afforded the cobbled surface some protection from flooding and/or provided a staging platform for a timber bridge. The sub-linear pits (5022, 5031), located immediately to the north of the possible bank, were shallow, irregular and contained a large quantity of limestone. They appeared to be contemporary with the cobbled surface and the bank and may have been associated with the timber supports to a bridge. All of the archaeological features in Trench 5 were sealed by a layer of silty alluvium (5002) which undoubtedly represents a phase of overbank flooding. The cobbled surface appears to have been abandoned following this event.
- 5.1.4 Archaeological activity revealed in the trenches to the north of the Pingle Brook comprised a small number of pits, gullies and shallow ditches in Trenches 6, 7 and 11. A pattern to the archaeology was not discernable and, due to an almost complete lack of finds, none of the features could be dated. The northwest-southeast orientated wall in Trench 11 (11027) was heavily plough disturbed and probably post-medieval in date. The large, probably circular, feature in Trench 6 [6013] was also probably post-medieval in date and most likely represents a shallow pond, perhaps a watering hole for livestock. The lack of domestic finds in the trenches located to the north of the Pingle Brook suggests that previous settlement was not located in the immediate vicinity.
- 5.1.5 The complete absence of archaeological features in the trenches located in the wet ground to the north of the brook (Trenches 8, 9, 10, 12 and 13) suggest that this area has probably been constantly waterlogged and therefore little utilised since at least the Roman period.

5.2 Reliability of field investigation

- 5.2.1 The integrity of the stratigraphic evidence encountered during the evaluation is believed to be good.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Ctxt No</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Thick. (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>No./ wt</i>	<i>Date</i>
001	1000	Layer		0.28	Topsoil			
001	1001	Layer			Subsoil			
001	1002	Layer		0.27	Mixed subsoil/natural			
001	1003	Layer			Natural			
001	1004	Fill		0.08	Tree throw fill			
001	1005	Cut			Tree throw			
001	1006	Fill		0.11	Tree throw fill			
001	1007	Cut			Tree throw			
002	2000	Layer		0.3	Topsoil			
002	2001	Layer		0.3	Subsoil			
002	2002	Layer		0.25	Subsoil			
002	2003	Layer			Natural			
002	2004	Cut			Pit			
002	2005	Fill		0.25	Pit fill			
003	3000	Layer		0.18	Topsoil			
003	3001	Layer		0.1	Subsoil			
003	3002	Layer			Natural			
003	3003	Cut			Ditch			
003	3004	Fill		0.46	Fill of 3003	pot	7/37	MIA/LIA
003	3005	Cut		0.45	Ditch			
003	3006	Fill		0.22	Fill of 3005	pot	10/162	LIC/E-M2C
003	3007	Fill		0.1	Fill of 3003			
003	3008	Fill		0.4	Fill of 3003			
003	3009	Fill		0.24	Fill of 3003			
003	3010	Fill		0.16	Fill of 3003			
003	3011	Fill		0.7	Fill of 3003			
003	30012	Fill		0.45	Fill of 3005			
003	3013	Fill		0.3	Fill of 3005	pot	2/23	L1C-2C
004	4000	Layer		0.26	Topsoil	pot	1/23	L1C-2C

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Ctct No</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Thick. (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>No./wt</i>	<i>Date</i>
004	4001	Layer		0.22	Subsoil			
004	4002	Layer		0.39	Alluvium			
004	4003	Layer			Natural			
004	4004	Fill		0.15	Pit fill			
004	4005	Cut		0.15	Pit			
004	4006	Fill			Tree throw fill			
004	4007	Cut			Tree throw			
004	4008	Fill		0.34	Pond fill	pot	5/7	18C+
004	4009	Fill		0.15	Pond fill			
004	4010	Cut		0.37	Pond ?			
005	5000	Layer		0.2	Topsoil			
005	5001	Layer		0.18	Subsoil			
005	5002	Layer		0.15	Alluvium			
005	5003	Layer			Natural			
005	5004	Cut			Pit/tree hole			
005	5005	Fill		0.12				
005	5006	Fill		0.15				
005	5007	Cut			Pit/tree hole			
005	5008	Fill		0.1				
005	5009	Fill		0.15				
005	5010	Fill		0.12				
005	5011	Layer		0.12				
005	5012	Fill		0.1	Posthole fill			
005	5013	Cut			Posthole			
005	5014	Layer			Colluvium			
005	5015	Fill		0.2	Fill of 5016			
005	5016	Cut		0.2	Edge of watercourse			
005	5017	Fill		0.1	Stakehole fill			
005	5018	Cut			Stakehole			
005	5019	Fill		0.15	Stakehole fill			
005	5020	Cut			Stakehole			
005	5021	Fill		0.12	Fill of 5022 ?			
005	5022	Cut			Cut for fence line ??			
005	5023	Surfa			Cobbling			

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Ctxt No</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Thick. (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>No./ wt</i>	<i>Date</i>
		ce						
005	5024	Fill		0.18	Matrix around cobbles	pot	2/3	L1C
005	5025	Cut			Foundation cut			
005	5026	Fill		0.15	Posthole fill			
005	5027	Cut			Posthole			
005	5028	Fill		0.12	Posthole fill			
005	5029	Cut			Posthole			
005	5030	Fill		0.18	Fill of fence line trench			
005	5031	Cut			Trench for fence line			
005	5032	Layer		0.08	Silting			
005	5033	Layer		0.06	Alluvium			
005	5034	Layer		0.14	Alluvium			
005	5035	Layer		0.25				
005	5036	Layer		0.06				
005	5037	Layer		0.06				
005	5038	Layer		0.08				
005	5039	Fill		0.08	Fill of 5042			
005	5040	Fill		0.18	Fill of 5042			
005	5041	Fill		0.2	Fill of 5042			
005	5042	Cut			Continuation of possible trench for fence line			
005	5043	Fill		0.2	Posthole fill			
005	5044	Cut			Posthole			
006	6000	Layer		0.2	Topsoil			
006	6001	Layer		0.4	Subsoil			
006	6002	Layer		0.2	Subsoil			
006	6003	Layer			Natural			
006	6004	Cut			Ditch			
006	6005	Fill		0.17	Ditch fill			
006	6006	Fill		0.03	Ditch fill			
006	6007				VOID			
006	6008	Cut			Tree bole			
006	6009	Fill		0.2	Tree bole fill			
006	6010	Fill		0.2	Fill of 6013			

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cxt No</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Thick. (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>No./wt</i>	<i>Date</i>
006	6011	Fill		0.1	Fill of 6013			
006	6012	Fill		0.1	Fill of 6013	pot	1/1	?15C-17C
006	6013	Cut			Pit/pond			
006	6014	Cut			Tree throw			
006	6015	Fill		0.05	Tree throw fill			
007	7000	Layer		0.2	Topsoil			
007	7001	Layer		0.18	Subsoil			
007	7002	Layer		0.15	Subsoil			
007	7003	Layer			Natural			
007	7004	Layer			Natural			
007	7005	Layer		0.25	Alluvium			
007	7006	Layer		0.1	Peat			
007	7007	Fill		0.2	Ditch fill			
007	7008	Cut			Ditch			
007	7009	Cut			Tree throw hole			
007	7010	Fill		0.1	Ditch fill			
007	7011	Cut			Ditch			
007	7012	Cut			Modern land drain			
007	7013	Cut			Land drain			
007	7014	Fill		0.2	Ditch fill			
007	7015	Cut			Ditch			
008	8000				VOID			
008	8001	Layer			Topsoil	pot	1/5	M1C-3C
008	8002	Layer			Natural			
008	8003	Cut			Ditch			
008	8004	Fill			Ditch fill			
008	8005	Layer			Alluvium			
009	9000				VOID			
009	9001	Layer			Topsoil			
009	9002	Layer			Alluvium			
009	9003	Layer			Peat			
009	9004	Layer			Natural			
009	9005	Layer			Alluvium ?			
010	10000	Layer		0.42	Topsoil			

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Ctxt No</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Thick. (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>No/wt</i>	<i>Date</i>
010	10001	Layer		0.14	Subsoil			
010	10002	Layer		0.12	Alluvium			
010	10003	Layer			Natural			
011	11000	Layer		0.18	Topsoil			
011	11001	Layer		0.22	Subsoil			
011	11002	Layer		0.18	Subsoil			
011	11003	Layer		0.08	Alluvium			
011	11004	Layer		0.18	Natural			
011	11005	Layer			Natural			
011	11006	Fill		0.22	Ditch fill			
011	11007	Cut			Ditch			
011	11008	Fill		0.18	Pit fill			
011	11009	Cut		0.1	Pit			
011	11010	Fill		0.1	Pit fill			
011	11011	Cut			Pit			
011	11012	Fill		0.45	Pit fill			
011	11013	Cut			Pit			
011	11014	Fill		0.35	Pit fill			
011	11015	Cut			Pit			
011	11016	Fill		0.1	Pit fill			
011	11017	Fill		0.3	Pit fill			
011	11018	Fill		0.18	Pit fill			
011	11019	Cut			Pit			
011	11020	Fill		0.2	Posthole fill			
011	11021	Cut			Posthole			
011	11022	Fill		0.2	Posthole fill			
011	11023	Cut			Posthole			
011	11024	Fill		0.28	Ditch fill			
011	11025	Cut			Ditch			
011	11026	Structure			Land drain			
011	11027	Structure	0.25		Wall			
011	11028	Layer			Alluvium			
011	11029				VOID			

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cxt No</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Thick. (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>No./ wt</i>	<i>Date</i>
011	11030	Layer		0.3	Alluvium			
012	12000	Layer		0.46	Topsoil			
012	12001	Layer		0.06	Subsoil			
012	12002	Layer		0.22	Alluvium			
012	12003	layer			Natural			
013	13000	Layer		0.15	Topsoil			
013	13001	Layer		0.2	Subsoil			
013	13002	Layer		0.2	Alluvium			

APPENDIX 2 POTTERY SPOT DATES

Context	No. sh	Weight (g)	Date	Ware code/comments
11019	1	1	?MIA	?limestone-tempered
3004	3	21	MIA	shell and oolitic limestone-tempered
3004	4	16	LIA	E20, E40
3006	10	162	late 1C-e/m 2C	O20, R10, C10
3013	2	23	late 1C-2C	R10
4000	1	23	late 1C-2C +	R30
4008	5	7	18C +	1 sherd medieval
5024	2	3	late 1C	S20 (Drag 27)
6012	1	1	?15C-17C	Brill-Boarstall
8001	1	5	mid 1C-3C	R37
TOTAL	30	262		

APPENDIX 3 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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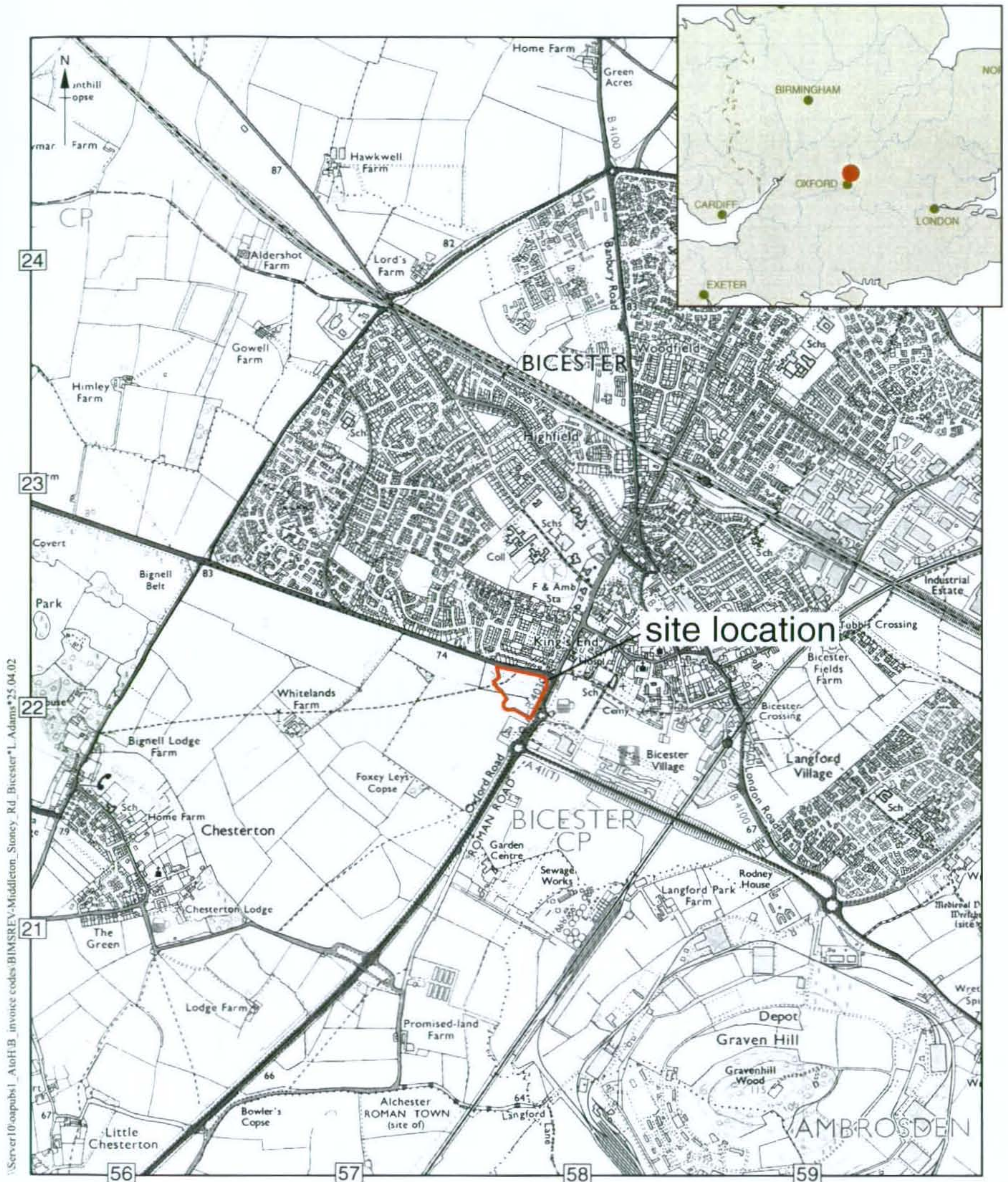
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APPENDIX 4 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS**Site name:** Land adjoining Middleton Stoney Road and Oxford Road, Bicester**Site code:** BMSR02**Type of evaluation:** Thirteen trenches**Date and duration of project:** 02-12/04/02

Summary of results: A cobbled surface of Roman date was revealed in Trench 5 (5023), two ditches (3003, 3005) also containing Roman pottery were revealed in Trench 3. A large shallow feature (6013), containing an organic deposit (6012), was revealed in Trench 6. A ditch (7015) and a gully (7008) of unknown date were revealed in Trench 7. A heavily disturbed wall foundation (11027), five intercutting pits (11009, 11011, 11013, 11015 and 11019), two postholes (11023, 11021) and two gullies (11007, 11025) were revealed in Trench 11. A single sherd of MIA? pottery was recovered from the fill of pit 11019. All of the archaeological features revealed were excavated into the natural 'cornbrash' and sealed by a silty clay subsoil. Trenches 8, 9, 10, 12 and 13 were located in wet ground to the north of a brook that bisected the site. No archaeology was revealed in these trenches all of which contained a shallow sequence of peat overlying alluvial clay deposits and natural 'cornbrash'.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with an appropriate museum in due course.



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Figure 1: Site location

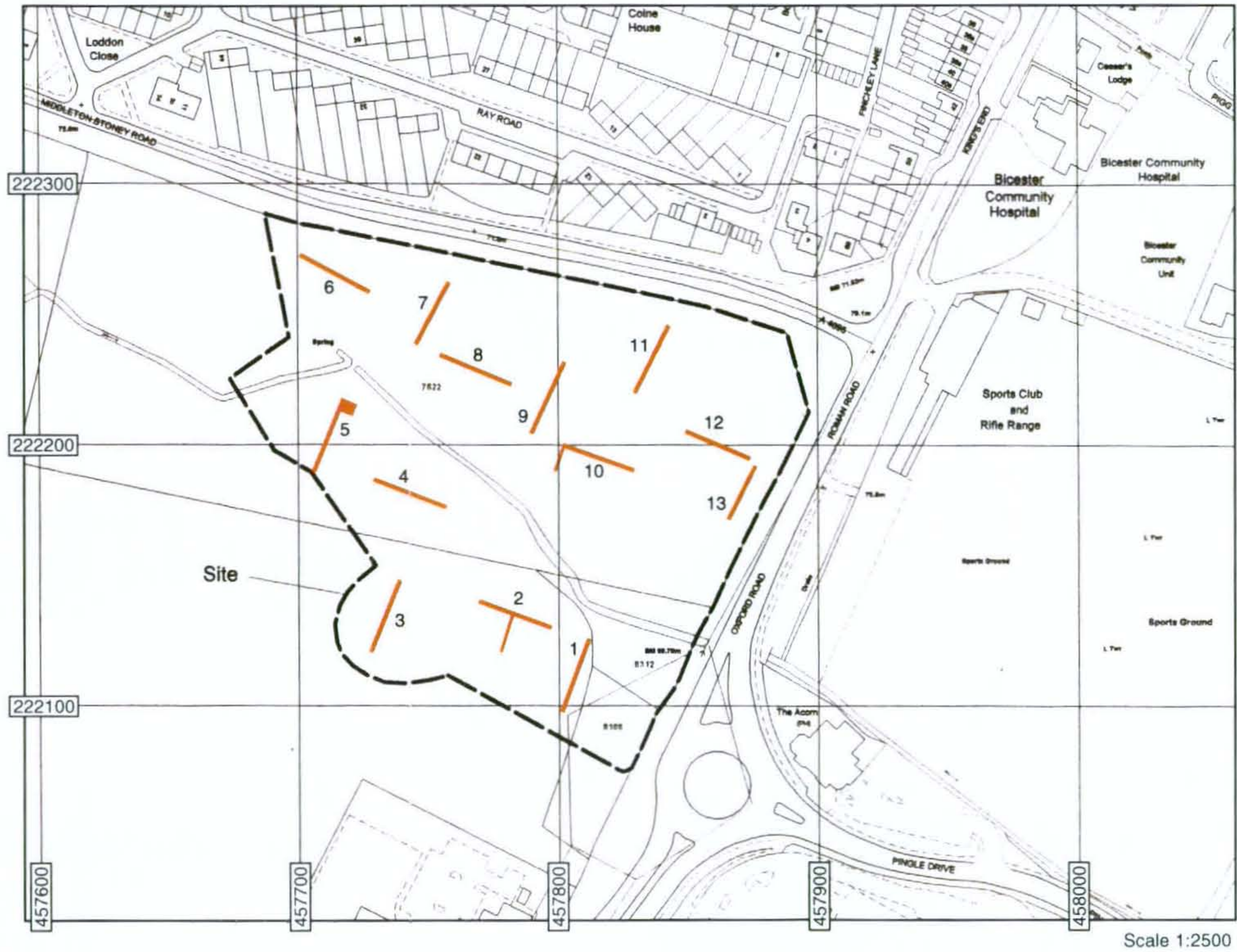


Figure 2: Trench locations

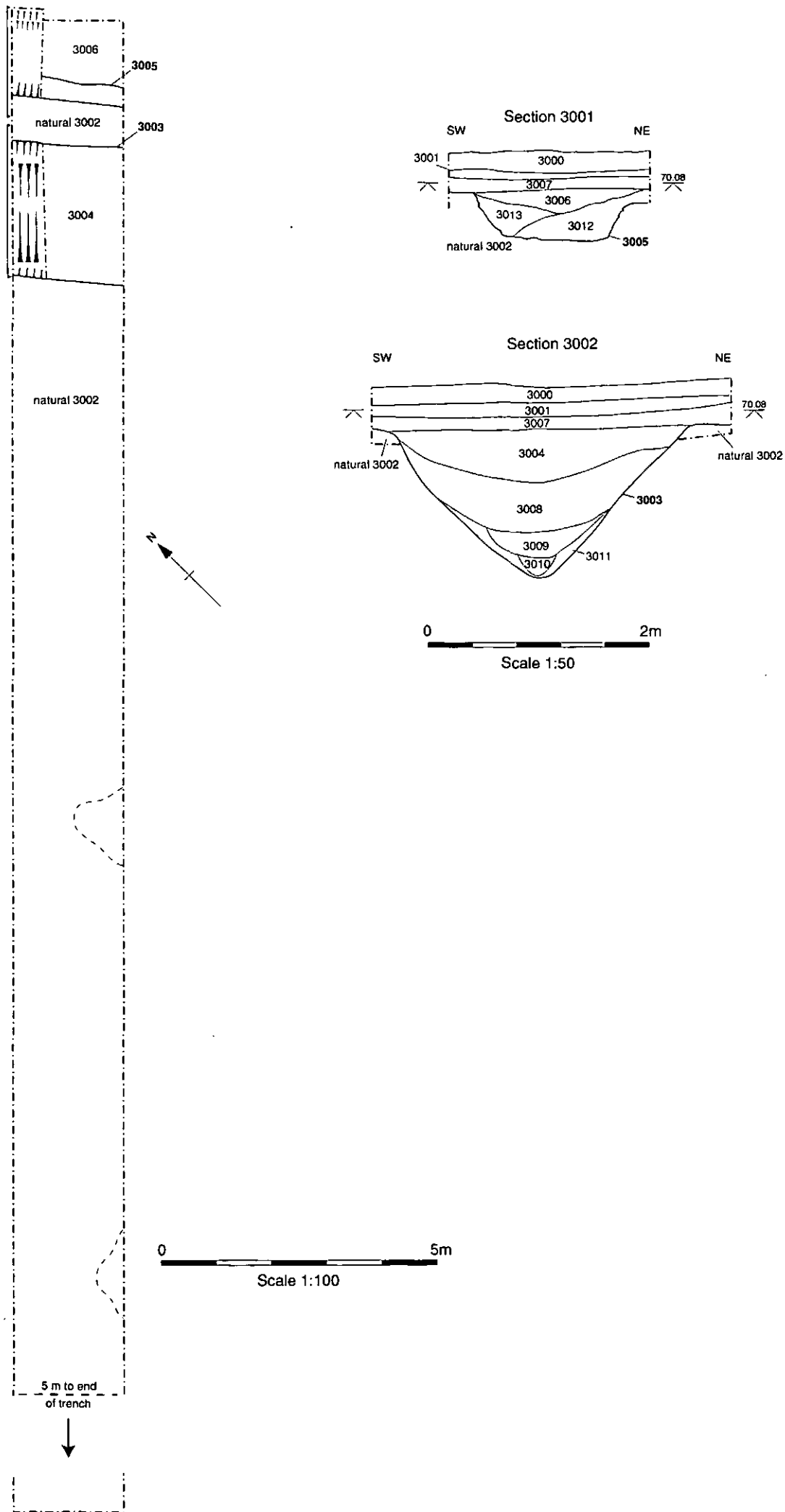


Figure 3: Trench 3 plan and sections

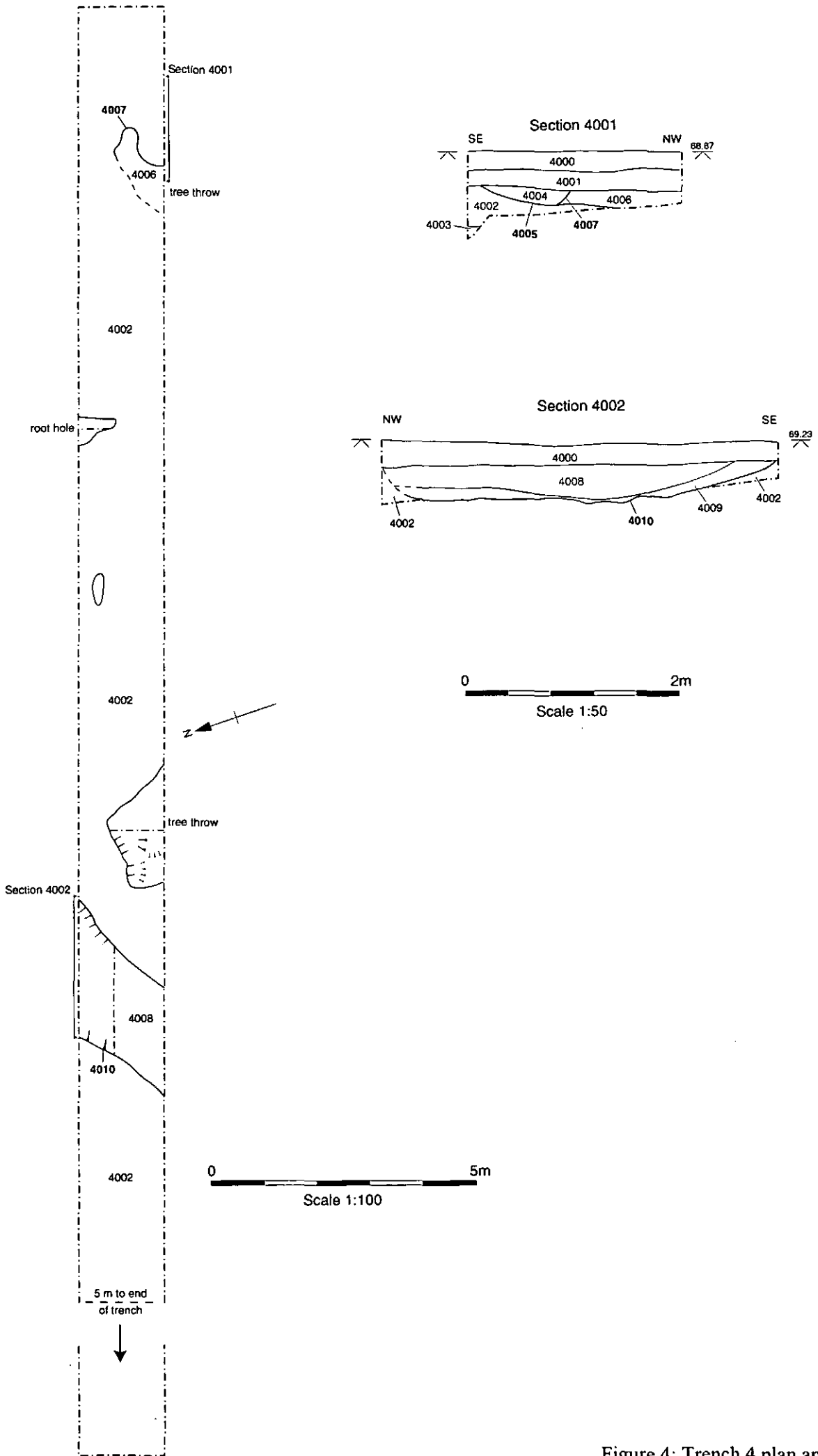


Figure 4: Trench 4 plan and sections

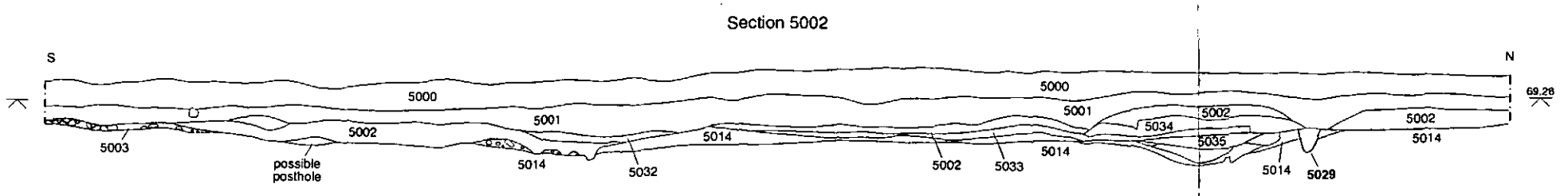
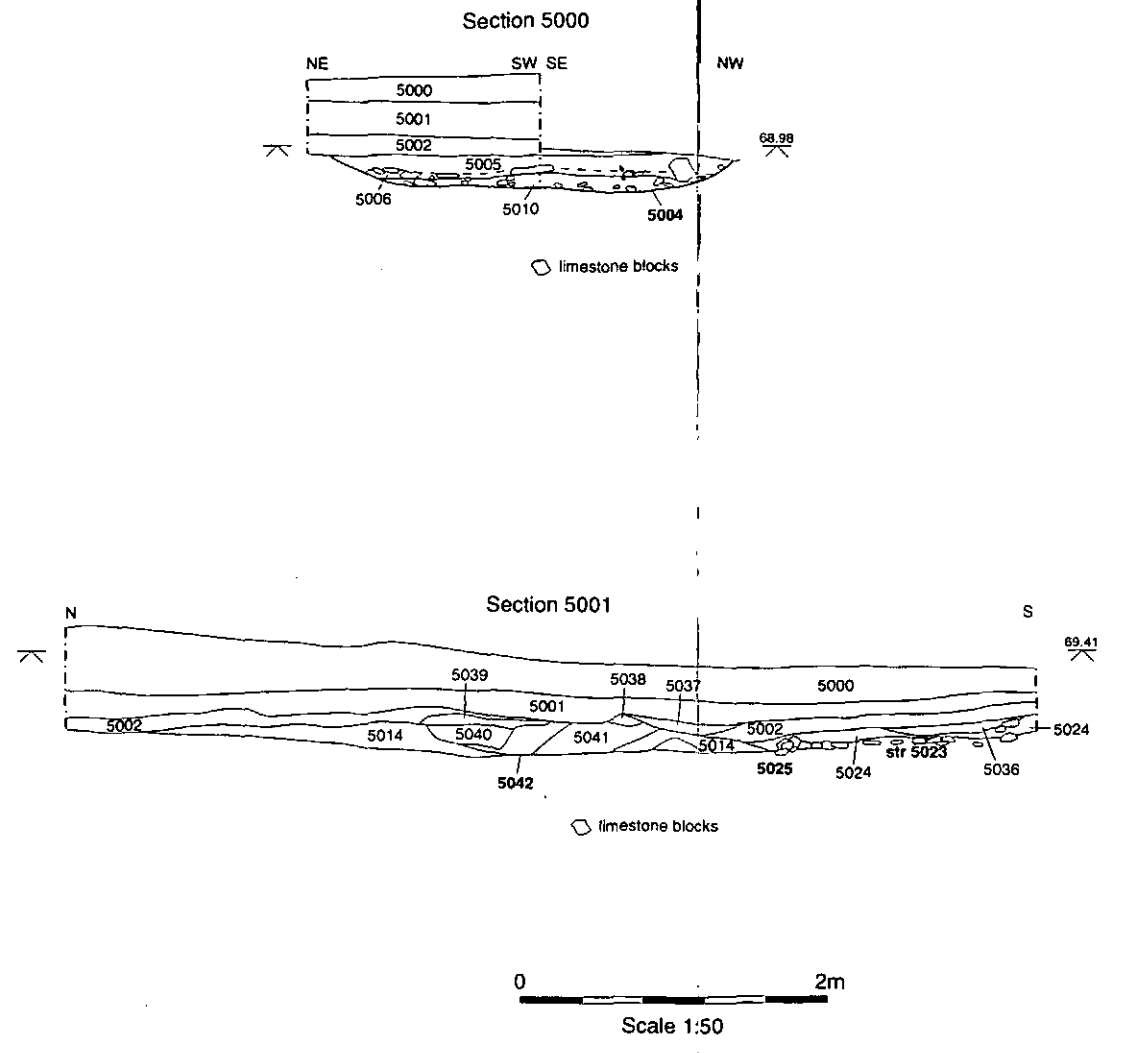
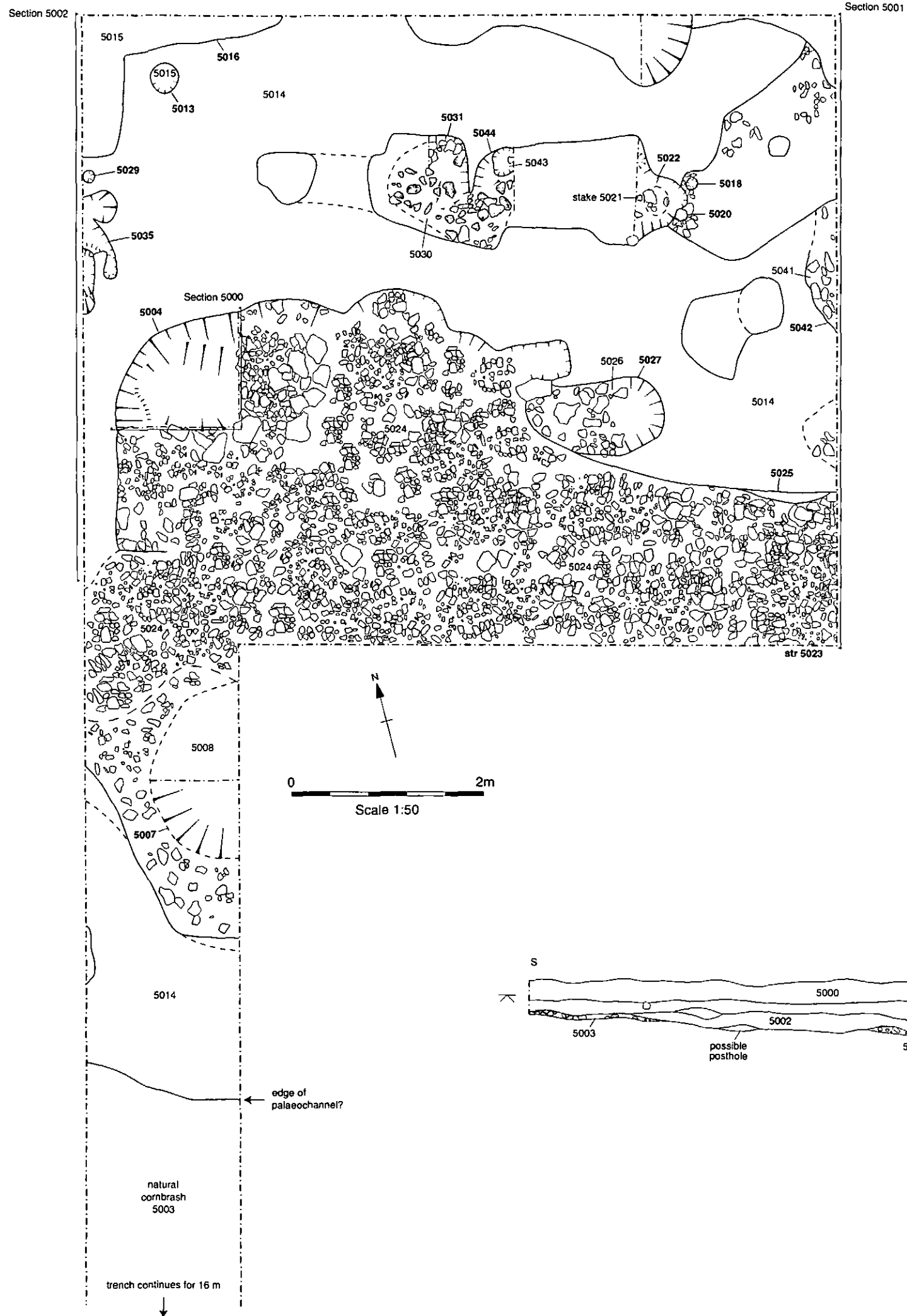


Figure 5: Trench 5 plan and sections

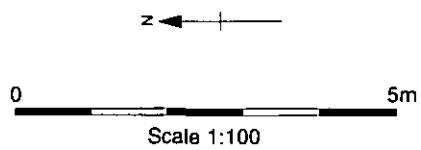
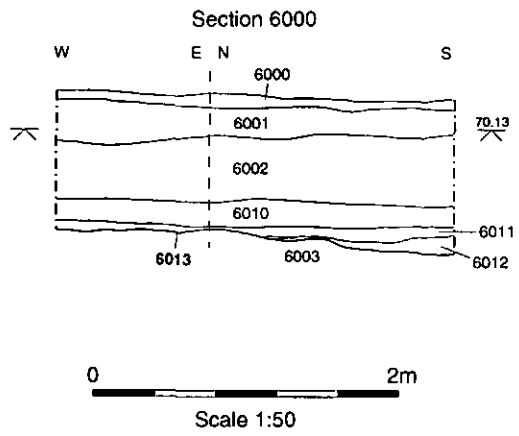
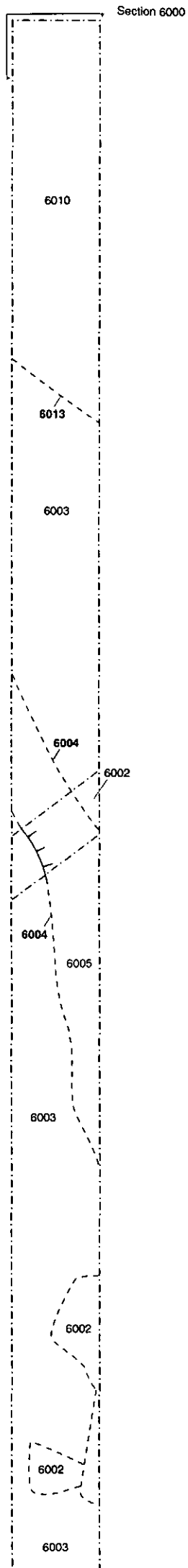


Figure 6: Trench 6 plan and section

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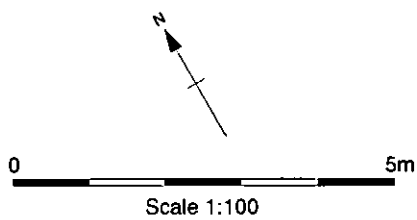
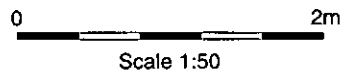
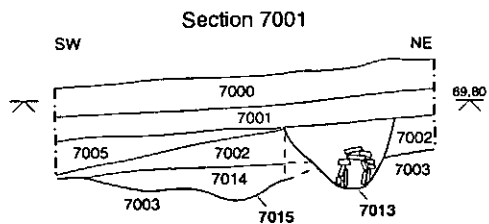
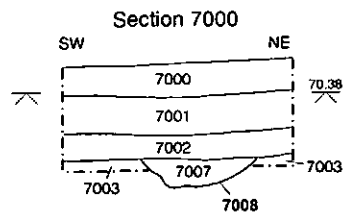
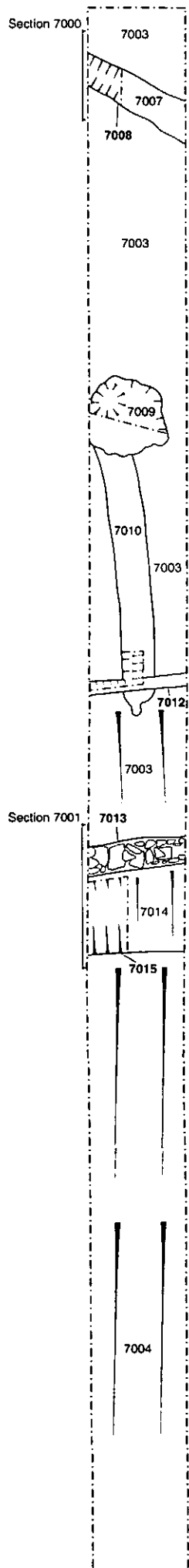


Figure 7: Trench 7 plan and sections

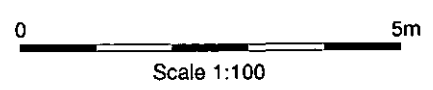
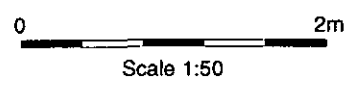
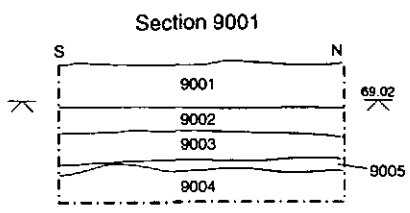
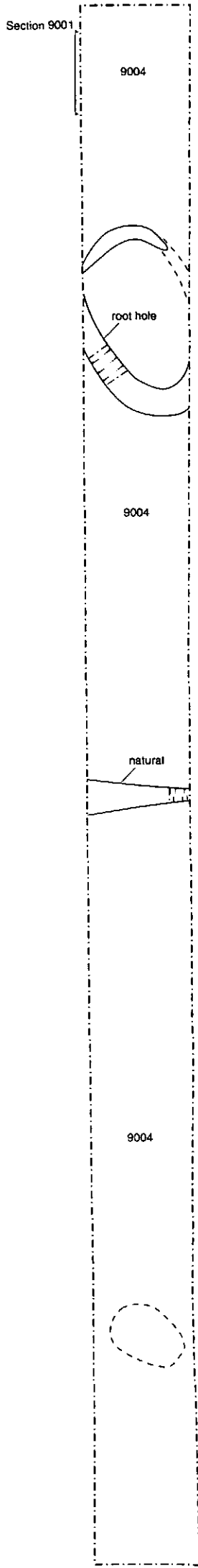
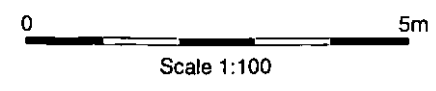
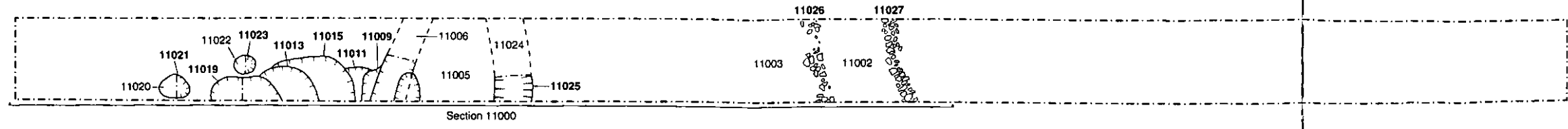
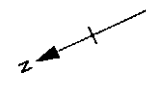


Figure 8: Trench 9 plan and sections



Section 11000

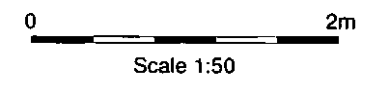
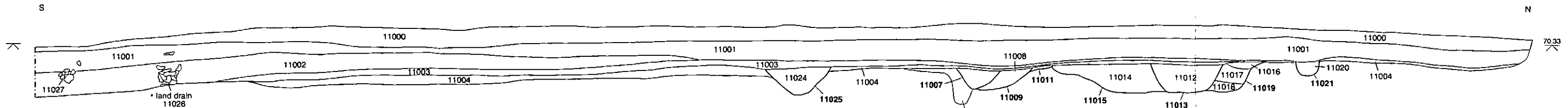


Figure 9: Trench 11 plan and sections



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