

**Cedarcot, Lyefield Court, Emmer Green,  
Reading, Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation  
for English Courtyard Developments Limited**

by Steve Ford

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code LCR 06/132

**December 2006**

## Summary

**Site name:** Cedarcot, Lyefield Court, Emmer Green, Reading, Berkshire

**Grid reference:** SU 7178 7657

**Site activity:** Evaluation

**Date and duration of project:** 6th December 2006

**Site supervisor:** Steve Ford

**Site code:** LCR06/132

**Area of site:** 0.39 hectares

**Summary of results:** A gully of Iron Age date and three undated postholes were found representing Iron Age occupation on part of the site.

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Reading Museum in due course.

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Report edited/checked by: Jo Pine ✓ 15.12.06
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# **Cedarcot, Lyefield Court, Emmer Green, Reading, Berkshire**

## **An Archaeological Evaluation**

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**Report 06/132**

### **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out Cedarcot, Lyefield Court, Emmer Green, Reading, Berkshire (SU 7178 7657) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Rizwan Chattha of Sidell Gibson Architects, The Canal Building, 37 Kentish Town Road, London, NW1 8NX on behalf of English Courtyard Developments Limited.

Planning permission (06/00901/FUL) has been granted by Reading Borough Council for the construction of new housing with associated car parking and landscaping following demolition of the existing house. The consent is subject to a condition (12) relating to archaeology.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the Borough Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr David Thomason, Archaeology Officer with Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the council on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Steve Ford and Steve Hammond on 6th December and the site code is LCR06/132. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Reading Museum in due course.

### **Location, topography and geology**

The site is located on an subrectangular parcel of land of c. 0.39 hectares on the west side of Lyefield Court (Fig. 2). To the west lies the grounds of Emmer Green Primary School and to the south allotments fronting Grove Road. The site is currently occupied by a single house and garage with a large garden overgrown with conifer trees. The underlying geology comprises plateau gravel (BGS 1947) which is one of the older terraces of the Thames representing the ancient channel from Caversham to Henley (Wymer, 1999map 3). The site lies on level ground at a height of approximately 82m above Ordnance Datum.

### **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a brief prepared by David Thomason of Berkshire Archaeology. In summary the site lies in an area where some prehistoric and Roman artefacts have been

recorded most notable of which is a hoard of three late Bronze Age socketed axes and a late Iron Age gold coin found at the nearby primary school. relatively rich in archaeological deposits. Few contemporary occupation deposits are recorded though a later Roman occupation site is recorded some 450m to the north west. The site also lies on one of the older gravel terraces of the river Thames and this outcrop has produced a moderate amount of Palaeolithic stone tools (Wymer 1999).

## **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.

Specific aims of the project were;

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

To determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present.

A total of 4 trenches, measuring 20m long and 1.6m wide were to be dug using a JCB-type machine fitted with a toothless grading bucket and under constant archaeological supervision. Spoilheaps were to be searched for finds. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

## **Results**

Due to restrictions from the presence of mature and densely planted trees, some of which had tree preservation orders, the location and number of trenches had to be varied from the agreed scheme. In the end five trenches were dug ranging in length from 7.1m to 26.8m as shown on Figure 3.

### Trench 1

This trench was 26.8m long and 0.38m deep aligned north west - south east. The stratigraphy comprised turf above a gravelly topsoil/subsoil above gravel. A linear stripe and circular patch slightly cutting the natural gravel were both investigated and found to contain small fragments of coal/clinker indicating a relatively modern date. No archaeological deposits were observed.

### Trench 2 (Plate 1)

This trench was 17.8m long and 0.5m deep aligned east- west. The stratigraphy comprised a humic topsoil above a gravelly subsoil above gravel. A length of gully (1) which terminated within the trench was excavated and found to contain 20 sherds of Middle Iron Age pottery, three flint flakes and a few fragments of burnt flint (Figs

4 and 5; Plate 1). The gully did not extend as far as trench 4 to the west. A sample of the fill (50) of the gully was sieved for charred plant remains. The flot contained some wood charcoal and a few weed seeds but no subsistence species. Three postholes (2-4) were also located and half-sectioned but contained no dating evidence.

#### Trench 3 (Plate 2)

This trench was 13.6m long and 0.28m deep aligned east - west. The stratigraphy comprised turf above a gravelly topsoil/subsoil above gravel. A slightly disturbed area at the eastern end of the trench was not examined as it was considered that this was the location of live services. No archaeological deposits were observed.

#### Trench 4

This trench was 15.0m long and 0.50m deep aligned north west - south east. The stratigraphy comprised humic topsoil above a gravelly subsoil above gravel. A test pit was dug at 5m to a depth of 0.7m to confirm the stratigraphy. The south eastern end of the site was root disturbed but was subject to additional cleaning to confirm the lack of continuity of gully (1) from trench 2. No archaeological deposits were observed.

#### Trench 5

This trench was 7.1m long and 0.4m deep aligned east - west. The stratigraphy comprised turf above a gravelly topsoil/subsoil above gravel. The western 2m portion of the trench was occupied by a service trench and was not stripped to the natural gravel. No archaeological deposits were observed.

### **Finds**

#### *Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn*

The assemblage comprised 21 sherds of hand-built, Iron Age pottery with a total weight of 191g. It all occurred in a single context, 50, with the fabric types as follows:

F1: Fine sandy ware, few visible inclusions other than a groundmass of quartz < 0.1mm. 18 sherds, 154g.

F2: Sandy shelly ware. Moderate sub-angular quartz up to 1mm, sparse calcareous material up to 3mm, very rare red ironstone up to 1mm. 3 sherds, 37g.

All the sherds were plain bodysherds with the exception of a single base sherd in fabric 2. The sherd has a moulded foot, and there are traces of what could be vertical scoring, suggesting a middle Iron Age (5<sup>th</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup>/1<sup>st</sup> C BC) date for the assemblage. A number of the sherds in F1 were quite thick, with a smooth, burnished outer surface. They appear to be from a single vessel with an ovoid profile, which again could be of Middle Iron Age date. Certainly, there have been finds of small amounts of Middle Iron Age pottery in past excavations in Reading, on the Waterfront sites (Underwood 1997, 151-2).

#### *Fired clay* by Steve Ford

Eight fragments (15g) of fired clay were recovered from the fill of gully 1 (50).

#### *Struck flint* by Steve Ford

Three pieces of struck flint (all flakes) were recovered from the fill of gully 1 (50). Their association with Middle Iron Age pottery is unusual in that there are no well documented sites of Middle Iron Age date associated with flint usage other than on a low level, *ad hoc* basis (Saville 1981; Humphrey and Young 1999). It is possible that these items are residual or are accidental by-products of gully digging through gravel (all three pieces are cortical flakes). They could also indicate that the pottery dates from the very start of the Middle Iron Age as flint use in Late Bronze Age and Early Iron age times, by contrast, is well documented.

#### *Charred plant remains* by Steve Ford

A single sample of 32L taken from gully 1 (50) was floated and wet sieved using a 0.2mm mesh. This produced a low amount of charred plant remains comprising some wood charcoal but including at least two unidentified weed seeds. No grain or other food species such as hazel nuts, apple pips or pulses were observed.

### **Conclusion**

The evaluation has successfully revealed the presence of a small amount of prehistoric activity on the site represented by a gully terminal of middle Iron Age date and three undated postholes all found within just one

trench. It is likely that these reflect the presence of a small occupation site, and it is tentatively suggested that the gully could represent a ring gully forming a house site. Apart from the presence of pottery, few other finds were recovered from these features.

From a wider perspective, as the background section indicates, relatively few deposits of any period are recorded for the plateau gravel topography of northern Reading and those of Iron Age date are generally rare for the Reading area as a whole.

## References

- BGS, 1947, *British Geological Survey*, 1:63360, Sheet 268, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Humphrey J and Young R, 1999, 'Flint use in Later Bronze Age and Iron Age England- still a fiction?', *Lithics*, **20**, 57–61
- PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO
- Saville, A, 1981, 'Iron Age flintworking: fact or fiction?', *Lithics*, **2**, 6–9
- Underwood, C, 1997, Pottery in JW Hawkes and PJ Fasham *Excavations on Reading Waterfront Sites, 1979-1988* Wessex Archaeol Rep **5**, 142-61
- Wymer, J J, 1999, *The Lower Palaeolithic occupation of Britain*, Salisbury

**APPENDIX 1: Trench details**

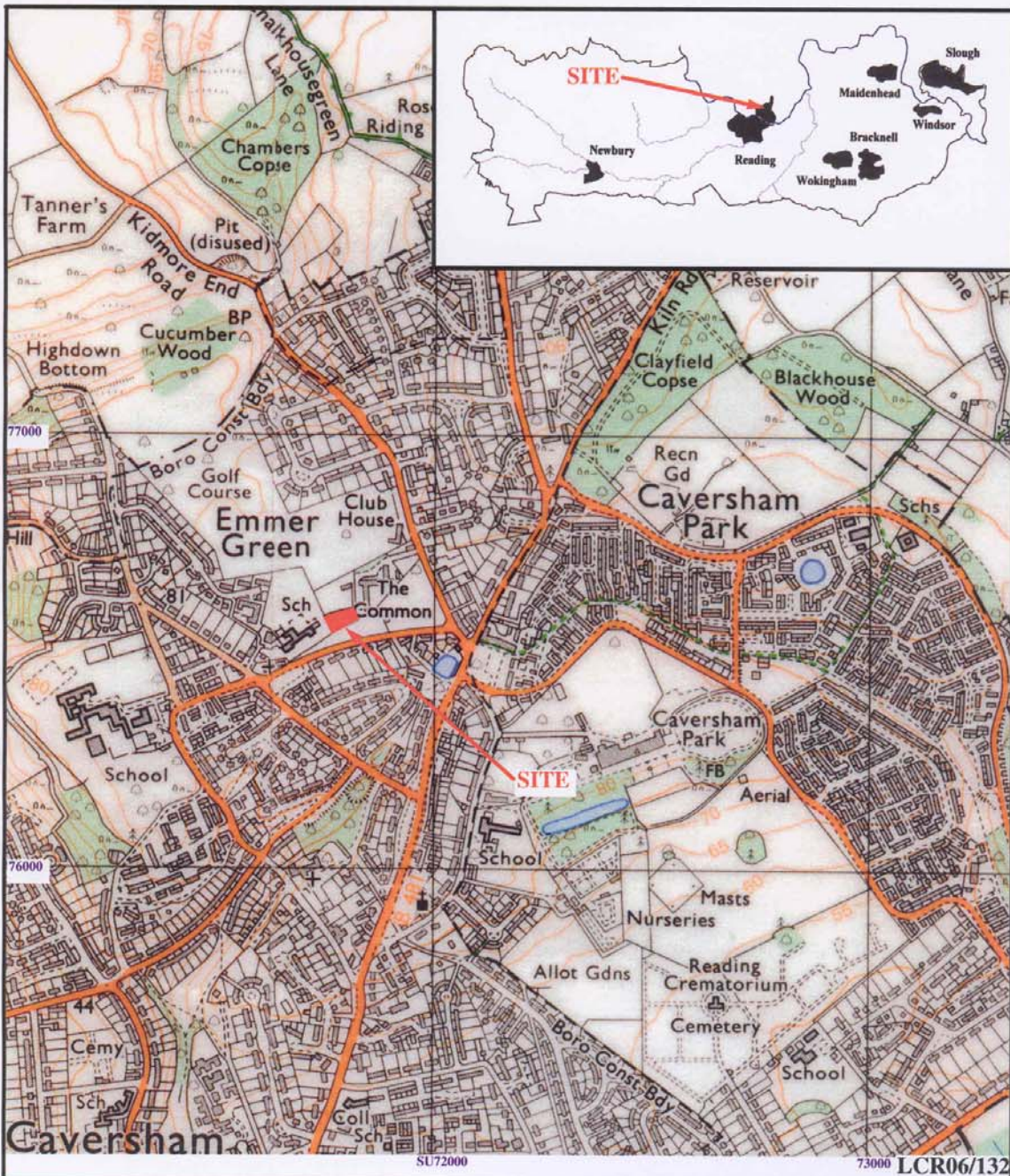
0m at S or W end

Trench	Length (m)	Breadth (m)	Depth (m)	Comment
1	26.8	1.6	0.38	0-0.05m Turf; 0.05-0.3m Topsoil/gravelly subsoil; 0.30m + Natural gravel
2	17.8	1.6	0.50	0-0.05m Humic topsoil; 0.05-0.3m Topsoil/gravelly subsoil; 0.30m + Natural gravel. Gully 1, postholes 2-4, 2 service runs <b>[Plate 1]</b>
3	13.6	1.6	0.28	0-0.05m Turf; 0.05-0.28m Topsoil/gravelly subsoil; 0.28m + Natural gravel <b>[Plate 2]</b>
4	15.0	1.6	0.50	0-0.05m Topsoil/leaf litter; 0.05-0.45m gravelly subsoil; 0.45m + Natural gravel. Test pit at 5m to 0.7m
5	7.1	1.6	0.40	0-0.05m Turf; 0.05-0.35m Topsoil/gravelly subsoil; 0.35m + Natural gravel. Service run

**APPENDIX 2: Feature details**

Trench	Cut	Fill (s)	Type	Date	Dating evidence
2	1	50	Gully terminal	Middle Iron Age	Pottery
2	2	51	Posthole	Undated	
2	3	52	Posthole	Undated	
2	4	53	Posthole	Undated	





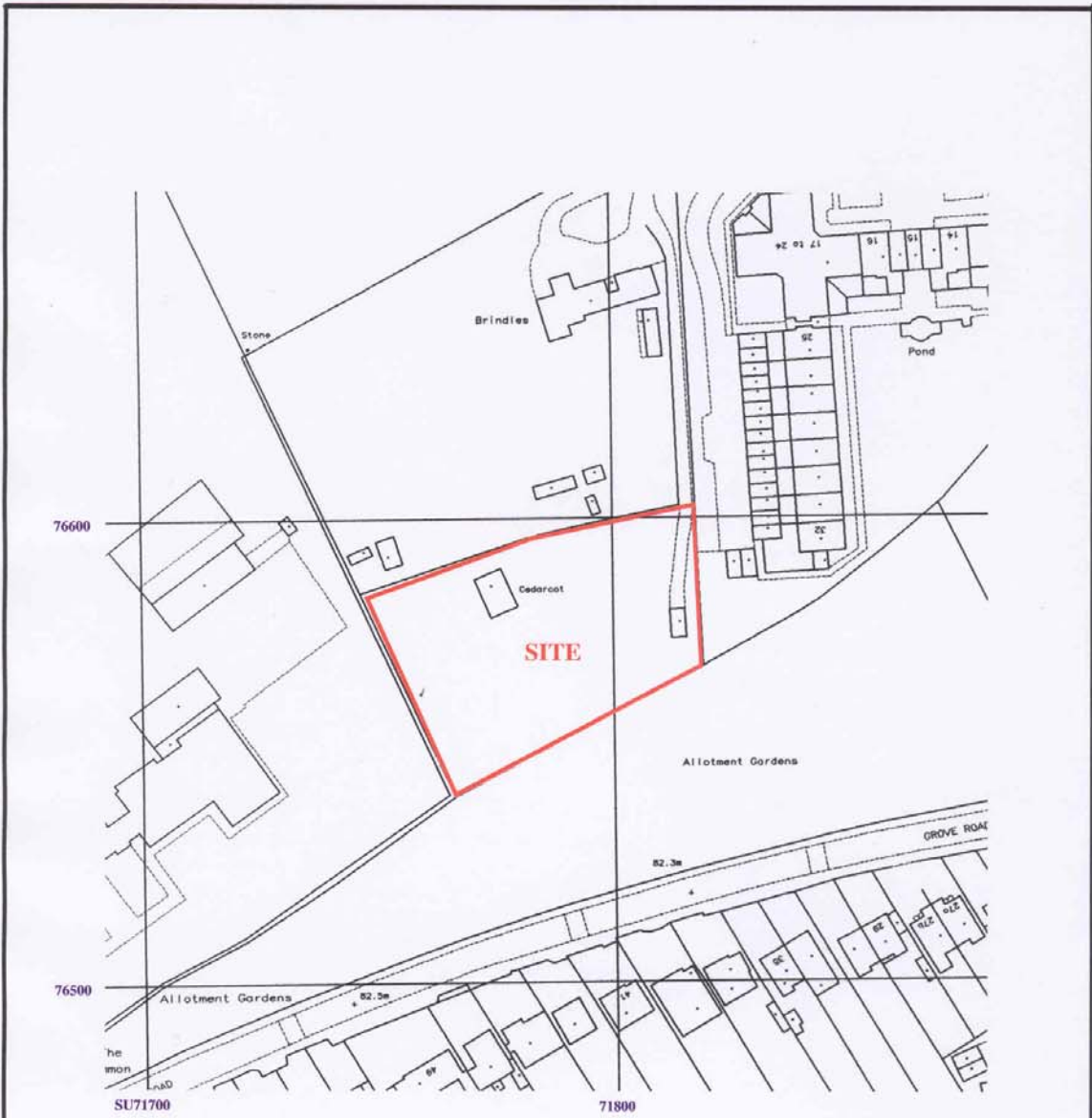
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An archaeological evaluation**

Figure 1. Location of site within Emmer Green and Berkshire.

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Reading, Berkshire, 2006  
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site at Lyfield Court.

Scale: 1:1250

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

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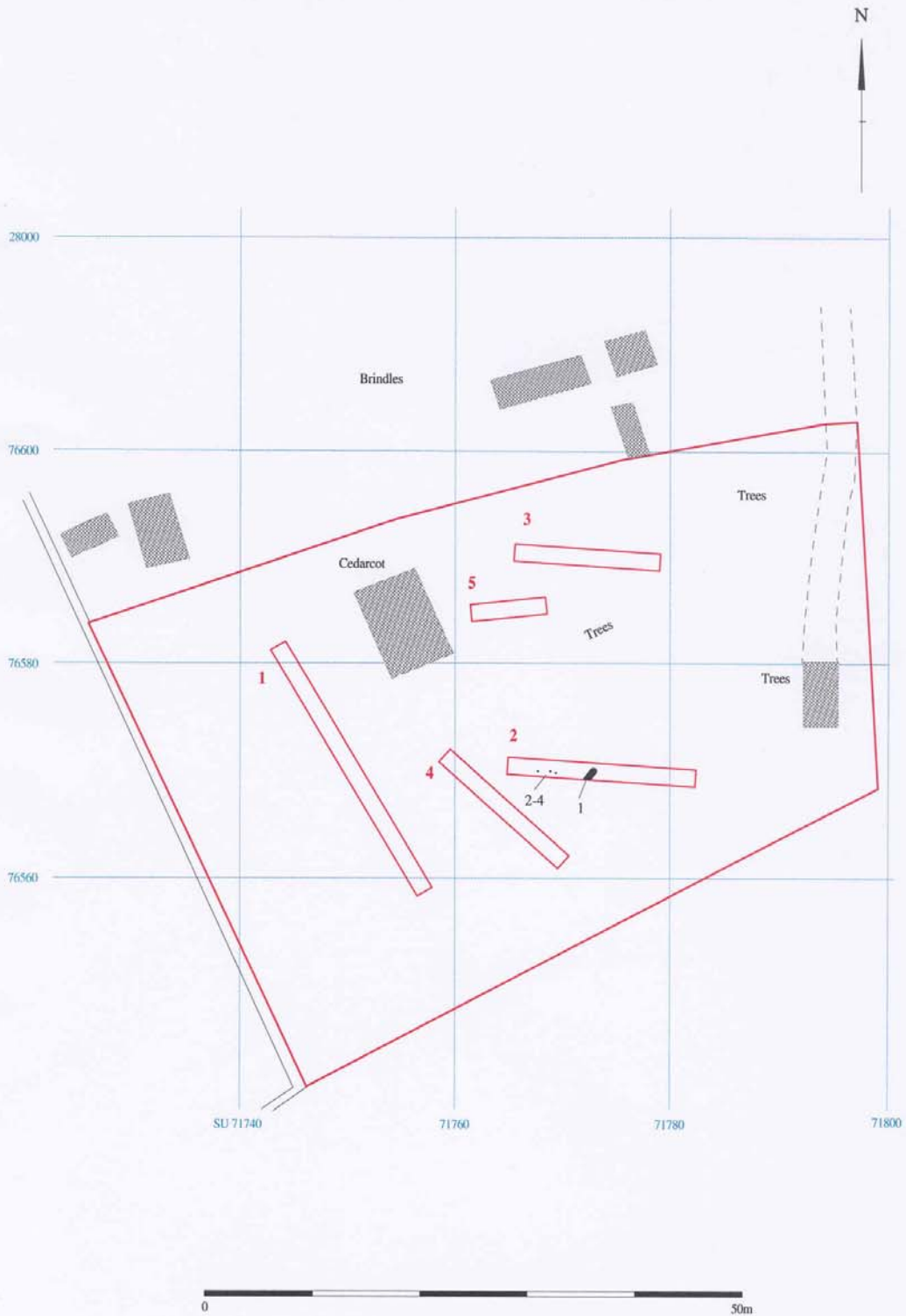


Figure 3: Trench Locations

LCR06/132

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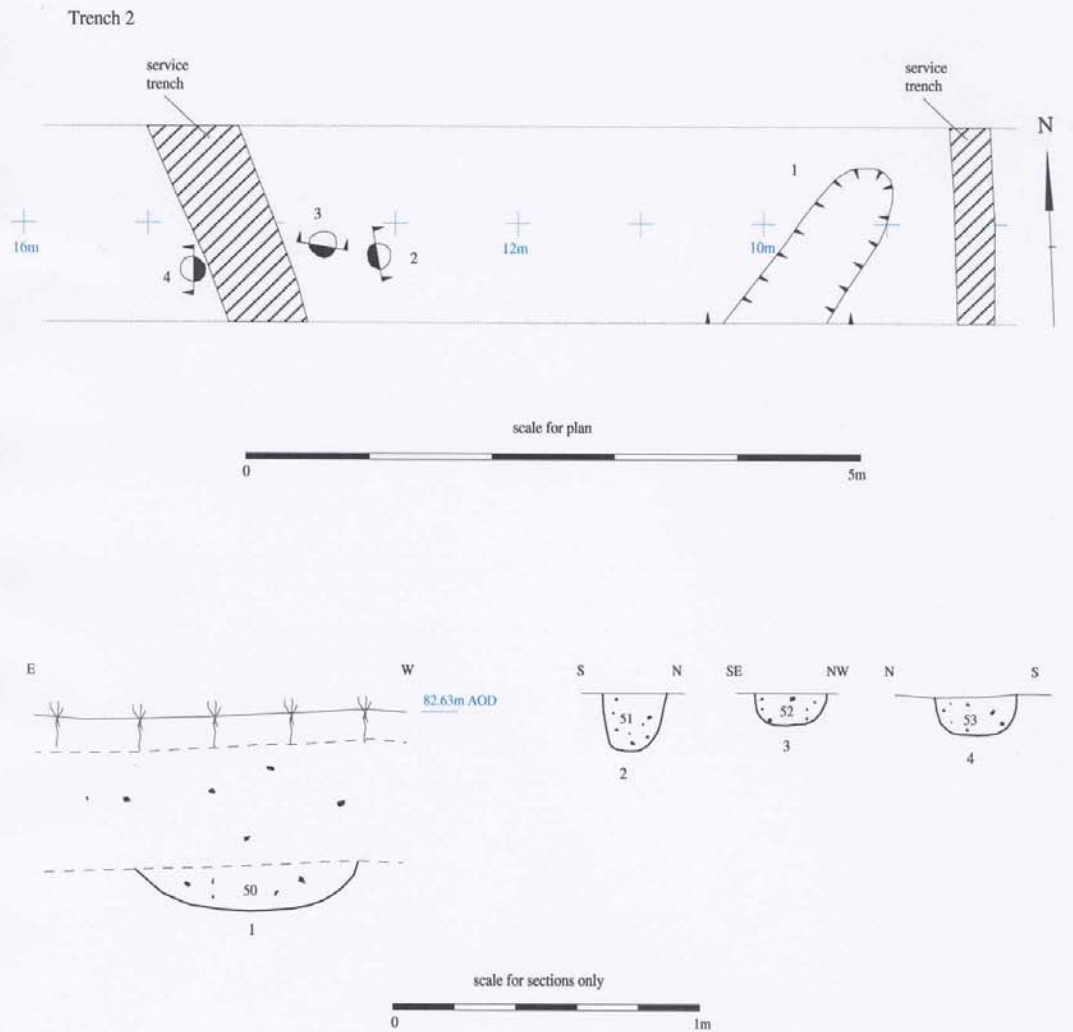


Figure 4: Plan and sections of deposits in trench 2.

LCR06/132



Plate 1. Trench 2, Gully 1 looking south, Scales: 0.3m and 1m.



Plate 2. Trench 3 looking south-east, Scales: 0.3m and 1m