

Park View, Wells Lane, Whitchurch, Hampshire

An Archaeological Evaluation

for Bewley Homes plc

by Sean Wallis

Thames Valley Archaeological Services

Ltd

Site Code PVW 06/139

January 2007

Summary

Site name: Park View, Wells Lane, Whitechurch, Hampshire

Grid reference: SU 4585 4795

Site activity: Field Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 4th – 9th January 2007

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Sean Wallis

Site code: PVW 06/139

Area of site: 1.64ha

Summary of results: Three probable post-medieval post-holes were recorded in the far north west corner of the site.

Monuments identified: None

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

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 22.01.07
	Steve Preston ✓ 23.01.07

Park View, Wells Lane, Whitchurch, Hampshire An Archaeological Evaluation

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Report 06/139

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Park View, Wells Lane, Whitchurch, Hampshire (SU 4585 4795) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Brian Bradshaw of Bewley Homes PLC, Inhurst House, Brimpton Road, Baughurst, Hampshire, RG26 5JJ.

A planning consent (BDB/63412) has been gained from Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council for the construction of new housing on the site. This consent is subject to a condition (12) relating to archaeology, which requires the implementation of a programme of archaeological fieldwork to be carried out, 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 Stephen Appleby, Senior Archaeologist with Hampshire County Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Natasha Bennett, James Norbury and Sean Wallis between 4th and 9th January 2007, and the site code is PVW 06/139. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Hampshire Museum Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on open land to the south-west of the centre of Whitchurch, about 300m west of the River Test. Apart from an existing house, Park View, and various outbuildings, the site consists of uncultivated grassland, with a number of trees and shrubs. The eastern boundary of the site follows the line of a dismantled railway line, most of which is embanked. The southern part of the site is bounded by Church Street and a modern cemetery, whilst farmland lies to the west and north. According to the British Geological Survey, the underlying geology consists of River and Valley Gravel (BGS 1975). However, the natural geology encountered in the majority of trenches consisted of chalk, with evidence of peri-glacial weathering in the form of stripes and irregular patches of orange brown silty clay. The only exception to this was Trench 1, at the far south of the site, where the natural consisted of orange brown silty clay with moderate flint and gravel inclusions. The site is reasonably flat, although it does slope down from Park View towards Church Street, and there is a slight slope

westwards towards the adjacent field, becoming more pronounced in the northern part of the site. As a result, the site lies at a height of between 73m and 82m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its supposed close proximity to the historic core of the settlement. The parish church, which is usually considered to be close to the late Saxon and medieval centre of the settlement is less than 200m to the east of the current site. Of more significance, however, is the reporting of the presence of human burials during the construction of the nearby railway line in the 19th century, which are considered likely to be part of a Saxon inhumation cemetery, although no dating evidence exists (HCC 2002). It is thought that further burials or contemporary occupation deposits may be present nearby.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological or paleoenvironmental deposits within the area of development. The work was to be carried out in a manner which would not compromise the integrity of archaeological features or deposits which warrant preservation *in situ*, or might be better recorded under conditions pertaining to full excavation.

The specific research 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.

To determine if archaeological deposits and finds representing Saxon burial deposits or contemporary settlement on the site are present.

It was proposed to dig 28 trenches, each 15m long and 1.6m wide, using a JCB type mechanical excavator, fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under constant archaeological supervision. Where archaeological features or deposits are certainly or probably present, the stripped areas were to be cleaned using appropriate hand tools and sufficient of the features and deposits sampled to satisfy the project aims above. The trenches were located to target those areas of the site which will be most affected by the proposed buildings and associated roads and landscaping. Trenches would be relocated to avoid known services and trees, etc. A contingency for the equivalent of an additional 20m of trenching was included should this be required to clarify any deposits found in the initial trenching.

Results

Due to the presence of standing buildings, trees and public footpaths, a number of trenches had to be moved from their original intended locations, or shortened. Where trenches were less than 15m in length, nearby trenches were extended to make up the shortfall, and as a result the trenches varied in length from 10m to 18.7m. Due to the presence of two existing driveways, leading up to Park View and separated by a line of mature conifer trees, it was not possible to dig two of the proposed trenches (2 and 3). The changes to the original proposed evaluation were discussed and agreed with Stephen Appleby. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Out of the 26 trenches which were eventually excavated, only one (28) produced any features which were not 19th century or later in origin. Trenches 7, 8, 9 and 10 all contained some evidence of recent disturbance, either in the form of surfaces which may have belonged to demolished buildings (7 and 8), or large pits full of rubbish including concrete, corrugated iron panels and plastic fertilizer bags (9 and 10). Service pipes and other modern features were encountered in a number of trenches.

A large cut, varying in width between about 4m and 10m, was observed running north – south across much of the site. It was noted in trenches 4, 12 (Plate 1), 13, 18 and 25, but not recorded in detail. A test pit through the feature, in Trench 25, suggested that it was at least a metre deep, and seemed to date from the late 19th century. Brick fragments and a glass jar were noted from the test pit, but not retained. The fact that this feature seems to run almost parallel to the former railway line would suggest that it was associated with the latter's construction. The trench may have been excavated to provide chalk for the embankment.

For most of the trenches the stratigraphy simply consisted of turf and topsoil onto chalk natural, although in places the original topsoil had been buried beneath dumps of soil and rubbish. As mentioned above, the top of the chalk in many of the trenches showed evidence of peri-glacial weathering in the form of silty clay patches and stripes. Full details of the stratigraphy of each trench are given in Appendix 1.

Only one trench contained any features which were not obviously 19th century or later.

Trench 28

This trench was located in the north west corner of the site, aligned approximately north- south. Three post-holes (1, 2 and 3) were recorded in the middle of the trench, seemingly in a row. They were about 0.35 – 0.44m in diameter and up to 0.1m deep, filled with a dark brownish grey silty slay. The relative looseness of the fills suggests that they are likely to be quite recent in date. This is further suggested by the fact that two fragments of tile were found in post-hole 2, whilst post-hole 3 contained a small sherd of glazed post-medieval pottery.

Finds

Pottery

One small sherd of glazed post-medieval pottery was recovered from the fill of post-hole 3.

Brick and Tile

Two unfeathered fragments of brick and tile were found in the fill of post-hole 2.

Conclusion

Despite the presence of buildings and trees it was still possible to excavate 26 of the proposed 28 trenches, near to those areas which are most likely to be disturbed during construction work on the site. Apart from three probable post-medieval post-holes in Trench 28, no archaeological features were recorded during the evaluation. As regards the specific aims of the project, there was a complete absence of Saxon finds or features though few trenches could be positioned in locations nearest to the reported findspot due to restrictions on the main access to the site.

Based on the results of the evaluation, it seems that the archaeological potential of the site is very low, and the chance of archaeological deposits being destroyed during the groundworks for the new development is minimal.

References

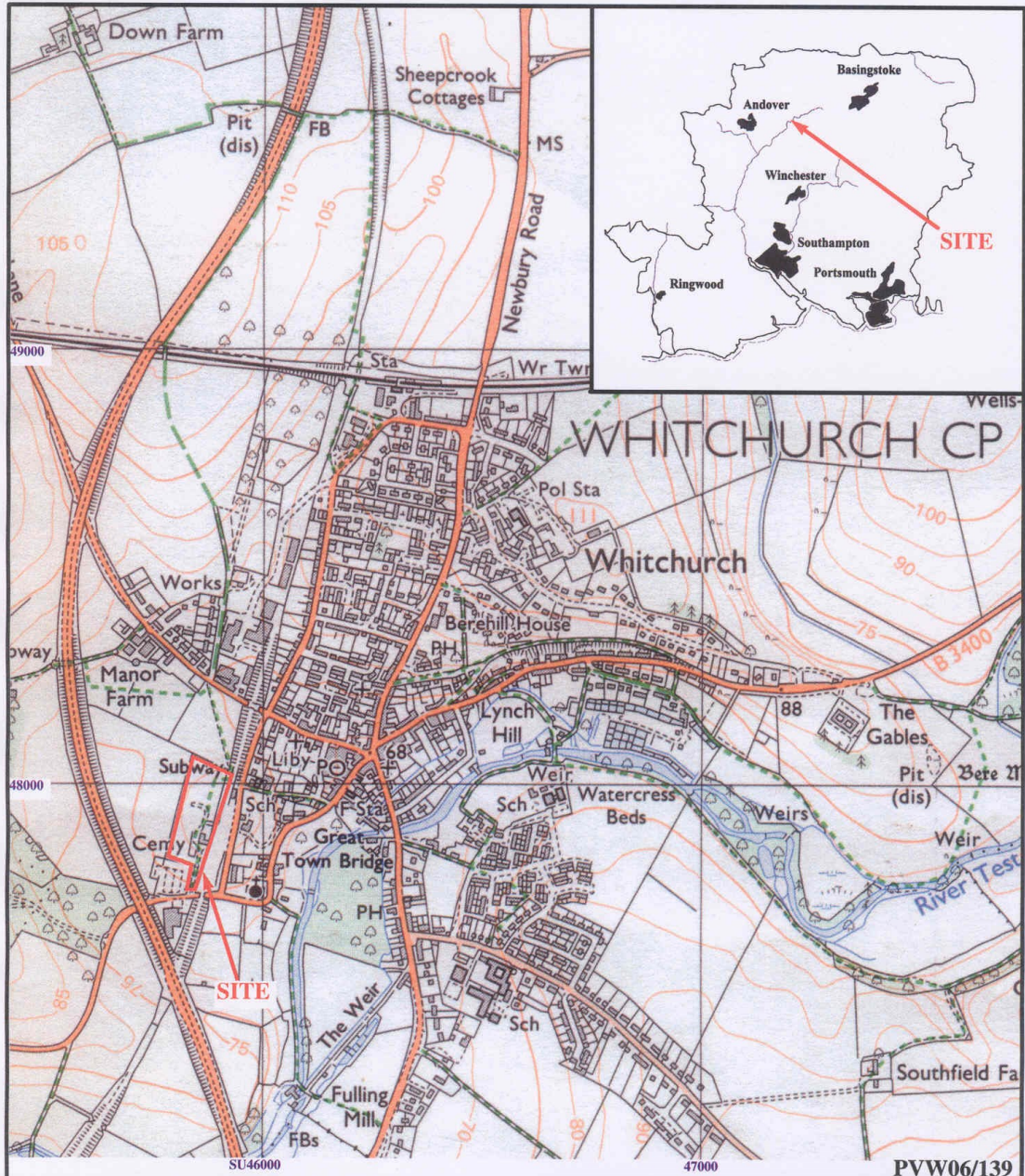
- BGS, 1975, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 283, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
HCC, 2002, *An Extensive Urban Survey of Hampshire and Isle of Wight's Historic Towns*, Hampshire County Council / English Heritage, Winchester
PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO

APPENDIX 1: Trench details

Trench	Length (m)	Breadth (m)	Depth (m)	Comment
1	16.2	1.6	0.9	0-0.45m turf and topsoil; 0.45-0.7m mid orange brown clayey silt subsoil; 0.7m+ mid orange brown silty clay with flint and gravel inclusions (natural). Possible 19th/ 20th century pit noted, but not recorded in detail.
2				Not excavated due to access road and trees.
3				Not excavated due to access road and trees.
4	10.0	1.6	0.6	0-0.05m Tarmac; 0.05-0.25m hardcore bedding layer; 0.25-0.53m buried topsoil; 0.53m+ chalk natural. 19th (?) century trench and modern water pipe noted, but not recorded in detail.
5	17.6	1.6	0.42	0-0.36m mixed topsoil and made ground; 0.36m+ chalk natural. Modern services and soakaway noted, but not recorded in detail.
6	13.6	1.6	0.6	0-0.35m made ground; 0.35-0.55m buried topsoil; 0.55m+ chalk natural.
7	16.0	1.6	0.9	0-0.75m disturbed topsoil; 0.75-0.9m made ground; 0.9m+ chalk natural. Remains of possible Tarmac surface noted at northern end of trench, but not recorded in detail. [Plate 2]
8	12.0	1.6	1.1	0-0.5m made ground; 0.5-0.9m buried topsoil; 0.9m+ mid orange brown silty clay natural with chalk at SW end of trench. Concrete slab floor noted at NE end of trench, but not recorded in detail.
9	15.0	1.6	1.4	0-0.9m made ground; 0.9-1.0m buried topsoil; 1.0m+ chalk natural. Large modern truncation noted in eastern half of trench, but not recorded in detail.
10	10.0	1.6	1.1	0-0.7m mixed topsoil and made ground; 0.7m+ chalk natural. Large modern truncation noted, but not recorded in detail.
11	15.4	1.6	0.8	0-0.16m topsoil; 0.16-0.76m made ground; 0.76m+ chalk natural.
12	18.7	1.6	0.42	0-0.3m topsoil; 0.3m+ chalk natural. 19th (?) century trench and modern services noted, but not recorded in detail. [Plate 1]
13	13.1	1.6	0.4	0-0.23m mixed topsoil and made ground; 0.23-0.32m buried topsoil; 0.32m+ chalk natural. 19th (?) century trench noted, but not recorded in detail.
14	15.2	1.6	0.7	0-0.5m topsoil; 0.5m+ chalk natural. Modern truncations noted at either end of trench, but not recorded in detail.
15	15.2	1.6	0.6	0-0.25m mixed topsoil and made ground; 0.25-0.45m buried topsoil; 0.45m+ chalk natural. Modern pit noted at southern end of trench, but not recorded in detail.
16	15.6	1.6	0.5	0-0.4m topsoil; 0.4m+ chalk natural.
17	16.1	1.6	0.45	0-0.35m topsoil; 0.35m+ chalk natural. Modern post-hole noted, but not recorded in detail.
18	15.1	1.6	0.4	0-0.2m made ground; 0.2-0.35m buried topsoil; 0.35m+ chalk natural. 19th (?) century trench noted, but not recorded in detail.
19	15.8	1.6	0.38	0-0.34m topsoil; 0.34m+ chalk natural.
20	15.4	1.6	0.4	0-0.3m topsoil; 0.3m+ chalk natural.
21	14.2	1.6	0.45	0-0.3m topsoil; 0.3m+ chalk natural.
22	14.2	1.6	0.37	0-0.3m topsoil; 0.3m+ chalk natural.
23	14.0	1.6	0.45	0-0.38m topsoil; 0.38m+ chalk natural. 19th (?) century trench and modern service noted, but not recorded in detail.
24	13.6	1.6	0.42	0-0.36m topsoil; 0.36m+ chalk natural.
25	15.9	1.6	0.45	0-0.35m topsoil; 0.36m+ chalk natural. 19th (?) century trench noted, but not recorded in detail.
26	15.5	1.6	0.4	0-0.35m topsoil; 0.35m+ chalk natural.
27	18.5	1.6	0.4	0-0.35m topsoil; 0.35m+ chalk natural.
28	15.5	1.6	0.35	0-0.3m topsoil; 0.3m+ chalk natural. Post-holes 1, 2 and 3, with tile and post-medieval pottery.

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
28	1	50	Post-hole	Post-medieval	Probably the same age as 2 and 3
28	2	51	Post-hole	Post-medieval	Tile
28	3	52	Post-hole	Post-medieval	Pottery

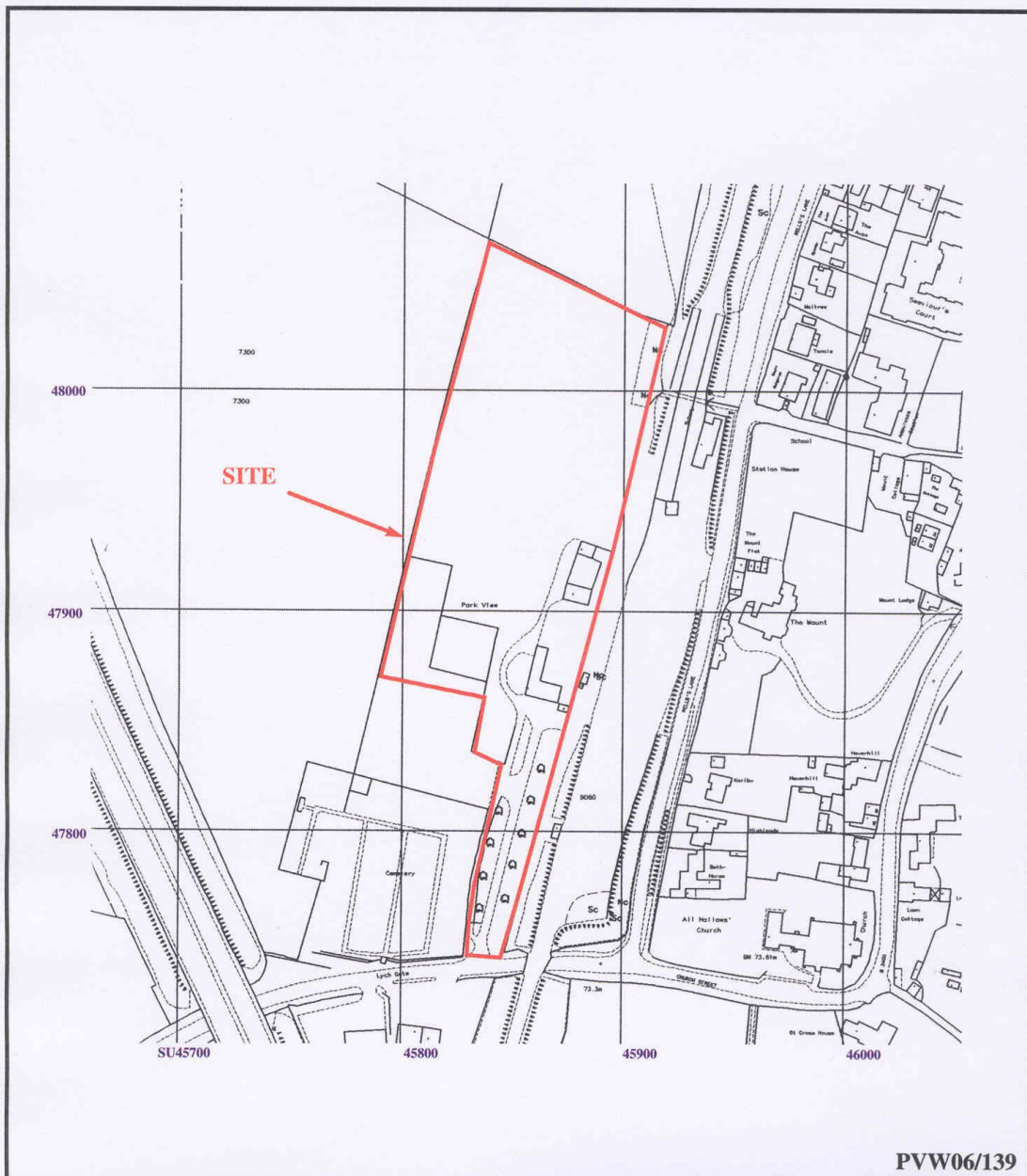


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Figure 1. Location of site within Whitchurch and Hampshire.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site on Wells Lane.

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Figure 3. Location of Trenches

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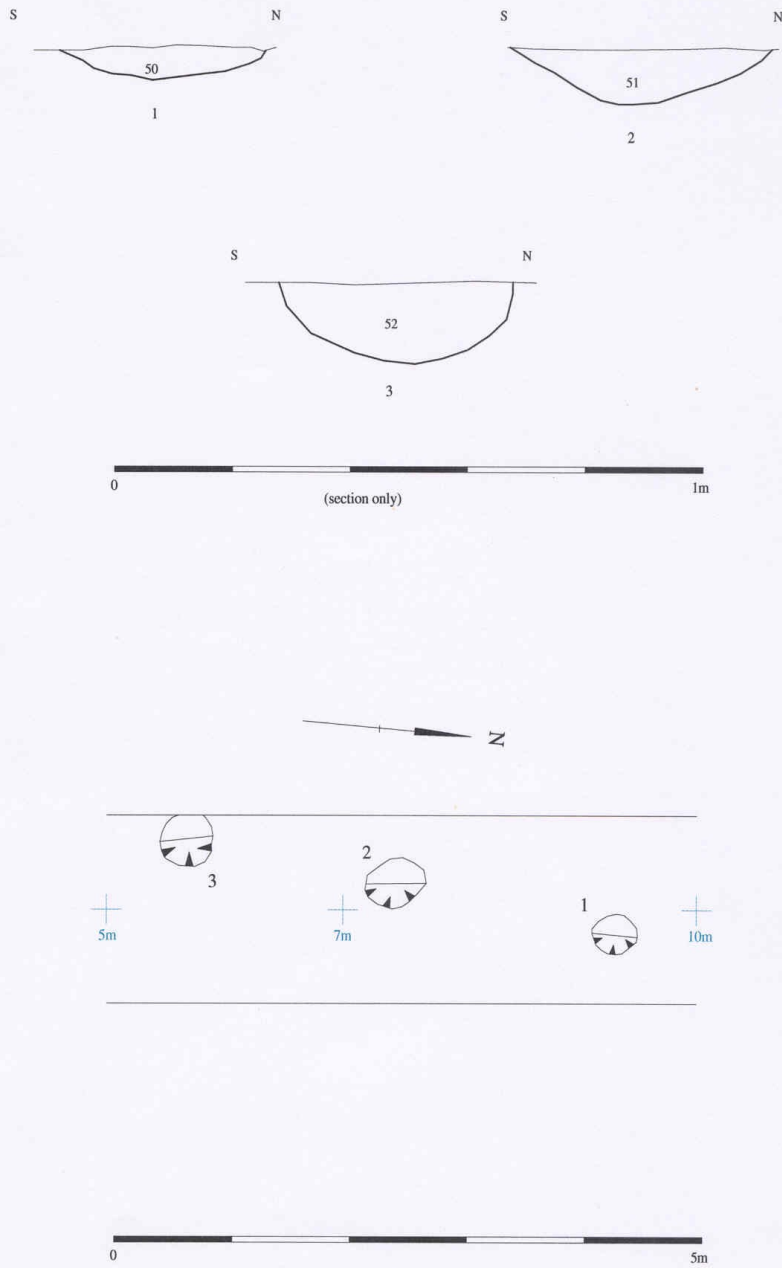


Figure 4. Sections and plan of Trench 28

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Plate 1. Trench 12 looking north-west, Scales 1m and 2m.



Plate 2. Trench 7 looking north, Scales 1m and 2m.