

**Thames Valley University, Kings Road,
Reading, Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Thames Valley University**

by Danielle Milbank and Steve Ford
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code TVU08/15

March 2008

Summary

Site name: Thames Valley University, Kings Road, Reading, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 7276 7330

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 18th–21st February 2008

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Danielle Milbank

Site code: TVU08/15

Area of site: c.0.2ha within 0.5ha site

Summary of results: A small gully terminal was revealed containing probable post-medieval brick and tile fragments. It was buried by a subsoil deposit which contained two pottery sherds, one of medieval and one of early post-medieval date. The site is considered to have low archaeological potential.

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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Thames Valley University, Kings Road, Reading, Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation

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Report 08/15

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Thames Valley University, Kings Road, Reading, Berkshire (SU 7276 7330) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Diane Gardiner of Nick Evans Architects, Unit 1 West, Coate House 3 Coate Street, London, E2 9AG on behalf of Thames Valley University, Kings Road, Reading.

Planning consent (07/01015/FUL) has been sought from Reading Borough Council for the construction of a new teaching block on the site along with associated remodelling of car parks. The results of field investigation were required to assess the archaeological potential of the site prior to the development.

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 Ms Mary O'Donoghue of Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the Borough on archaeological matters. The fieldwork was undertaken by Danielle Milbank and Kayleigh Harrison between 18th and 21st February 2008 and the site code is TVU08/15. 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 within the centre of modern Reading but well to the east of the historic centre. It is located on a gravel terrace of the Rivers Kennet/Thames just to the south of the Kennet. (Fig. 1). The site (including areas of refurbished car parking and access roads) occupies an irregular area of c.9.6ha, on ground that slopes gently to the west. The area to be developed is around 0.5ha, and the footprint of the proposed new building covers 0.2ha. The main university buildings stand to the west. (Fig. 2). The site lies at a height of 43m above Ordnance Datum. According to the British Geological Survey (1946) the underlying geology is gravel which was observed in the excavated trenches.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a brief prepared by Berkshire Archaeology. In summary the site lies in an area where medieval activity dating from the 11th - 15th centuries was noted at 209–223 Kings Road to the east. These deposits were possibly associated with a medieval leper hospital located somewhere in the immediate vicinity. Artefacts of prehistoric and Roman dates were also recovered during these works suggesting activity of these dates in the near vicinity. However additional work at 209–211 Kings Road suggested extensive disturbance in this area which may have led to dispersal and removal of material from *in-situ* contexts. No finds nor deposits of archaeological interest were noted in an evaluation carried out to the north (Colls 2006). At a more general level of analysis, the site lies in a topographic location on the margin of the Kennet Valley which is often a preferred location for earlier prehistoric occupation.

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. More specific research aims of the project were:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present;
- to determine if any deposits of medieval date are present.

Two trenches were to be excavated using a JCB-type machine under constant archaeological supervision. The trenches were located to target the footprint of the new building proposal. The trenches were to be 1.6m wide and 20m long. Spoilheaps were to be searched for finds. Where archaeological features were certainly or probably present, the stripped areas were to be cleaned using appropriate hand tools. This work was to be carried out in a manner which would not compromise the integrity of archaeological features or deposits which might warrant preservation *in situ*, or might better be excavated under conditions pertaining to full excavation.

Results

The two trenches were excavated as intended (Fig. 3). The trenches were 1.6m wide and 20.0m and 20.1m in length and varied in depth between 0.40m to 0.9m. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trench 1 (Plate 1)

This trench was orientated north-south and was 20.1m long and 0.4m deep (Fig. 3). The stratigraphy encountered comprised 0.07m of Tarmac above 0.33m of made ground/hardcore above the natural geology which was a mottled orange sandy clay with clayey sand patches and some fine gravel. Four modern service runs traversed the trench. No archaeological finds or features were encountered in this trench.

Trench 2 (Plates 2 and 3)

Trench 2 was 20.0m long and was orientated west - east (Fig. 3). It was between 0.9m (east) and 0.48m (west) deep, with a test pit at the east end down to 1.2m. The stratigraphy encountered at the eastern end comprised 0.08m of Tarmac above 0.32m of made ground/hardcore above 0.5m of brown clayey silt (50) containing brick/tile and pottery (Fig. 5). The pottery recovered comprised two sherds, one of medieval date and one of early post-medieval date. This latter deposit shallowed out and was absent from the western half of the trench. Beneath this was the natural geology which was an orange sandy gravel.

Two features were observed beneath the subsoil deposit (50) and cutting the natural geology (Figs 4 and 5). One of these (2), a roughly circular feature with bowl-shaped profile, was examined but had a mixed fill and irregular sides and was considered to be natural feature such as a tree hole. A second feature (1) was a small gully aligned SW-NE, which terminated in the trench. It was 0.36m wide and 0.1m deep with a single fill (51). From this fill were recovered two small fragments of medieval or, more probably, post-medieval brick and tile but no other dating evidence.

Finds

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The assemblage comprised 2 sherds with a total weight of 19g. They both occurred in a single context, (50), with the fabric types as follows:

Ashampstead ware, 12th–14th century (Mephm and Heaton, 1995). Sandy ware, the main products of the industry being jars and highly decorated glazed jugs, the latter often having painted geometric slip designs. The manufactory was located c. 15km to the west of Reading. The sherd from this site is from the base of a jug. 1 sherd, 15g.

Border Ware, 1550-1700 (Pearce 1992). Generic term for the late 15th/early 16th century pottery industry of the Hampshire/Surrey border area. The range of fabrics comprised fine, sandy whitewares with an off-white to buff fabric and with yellow, green olive or brown glaze, and fine redwares with clear green to olive or brown glaze. The manufacture of whitewares ceased during the 18th century. Wide range of late medieval and early post-medieval vessel types. The sherd from here is from the body of an internally-glazed vessel, probably an open form such as a dish or a platter. 1 sherd, 4g.

Brick/tile

A fragment of tile (15g) and a fragments of brick (8g) were recovered from gully 1 (51) in Trench 2. Their fabrics suggest a post-medieval date though it is possible that they could be slightly earlier and of late medieval date.

Conclusion

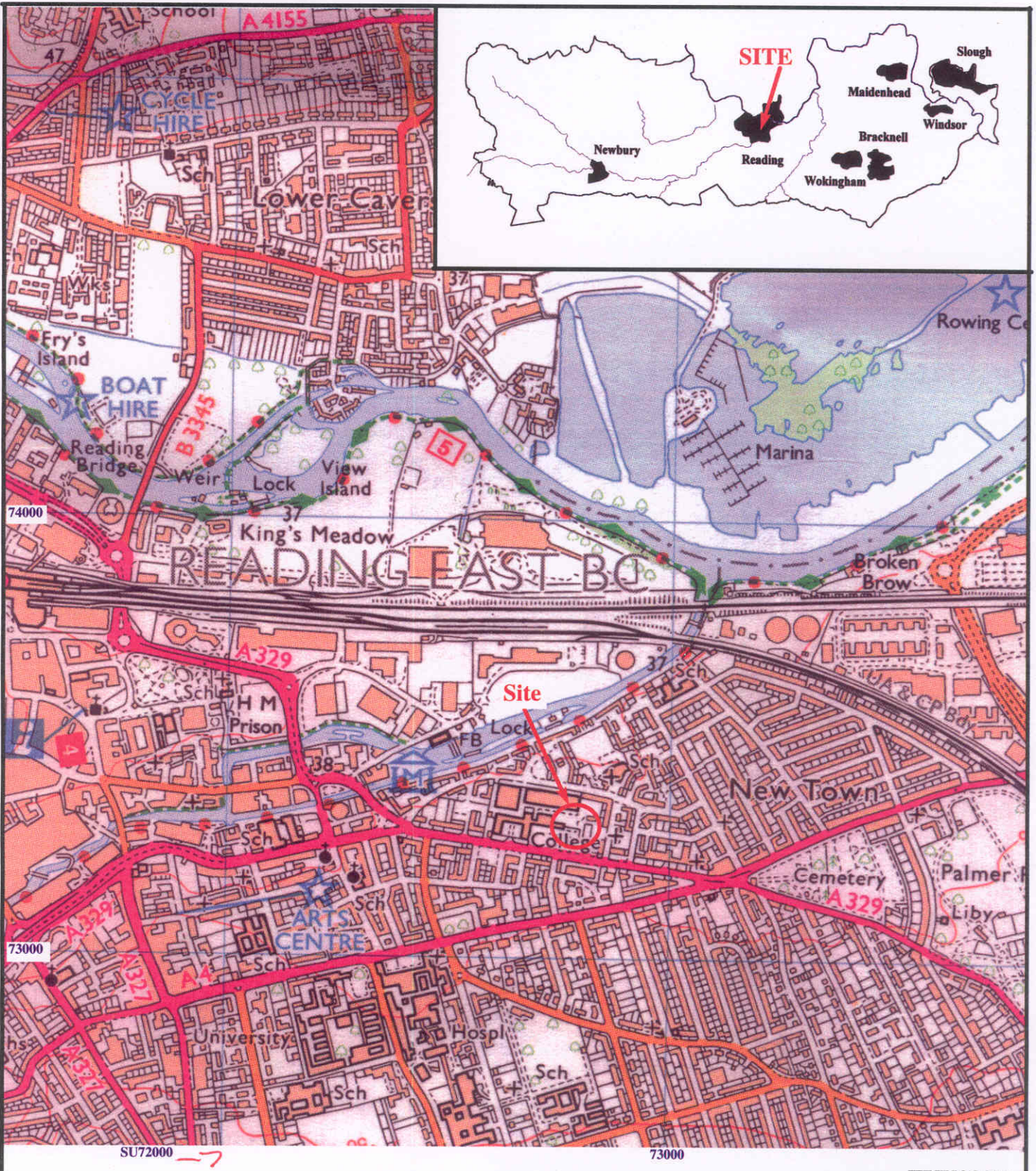
A single deposit of possible archaeological interest was recorded comprising a small gully, probably a boundary feature in an agricultural landscape. Brick and tile recovered from its fill suggests a probable post-medieval date. Two sherds of pottery, one of medieval and one of early post-medieval date were recorded from a subsoil deposit beneath modern made ground and presumably relate to manuring practice of arable fields in those times. On the basis of these trenches, the site appears to have low archaeological potential.

References

- BGS, 1946, *British Geological Survey*, 1:63360, Sheet 268, solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Mepham, L and Heaton, M J, 1995, 'A Medieval pottery kiln at Ashampstead, Berkshire', *Medieval Ceram* **19**, 29–44
- Colls, D, 2006, 'Land at the former Dove Public House, Orts Road, Reading, Berkshire', Thames Valley Archaeological Services rep 06/35, Reading
- Pearce, J, 1988, *Border Wares*, London
- PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO

APPENDIX 1: Trench details
 0m at south or west end

Trench	Length (m)	Breadth (m)	Depth (m)	Comment
1	20.1	1.6	0.40	0-0.07m Tarmac; 0.07-0.4m hardcore/made ground; 0.40m+ natural geology, clayey sand with some gravel [Plate 1]
2	20.0	1.6	0.90 (E) 0.48 (W)	0-0.08m Tarmac; 0.08-0.4m hardcore/made ground; 0.4m-0.9m brown clayey silt with brick/tile etc (subsoil?) 0.9m + natural geology, orange sand with gravel. Test pit at east end to 1.2m. Gully 1 and treehole 2 [Plates 2 and 3]



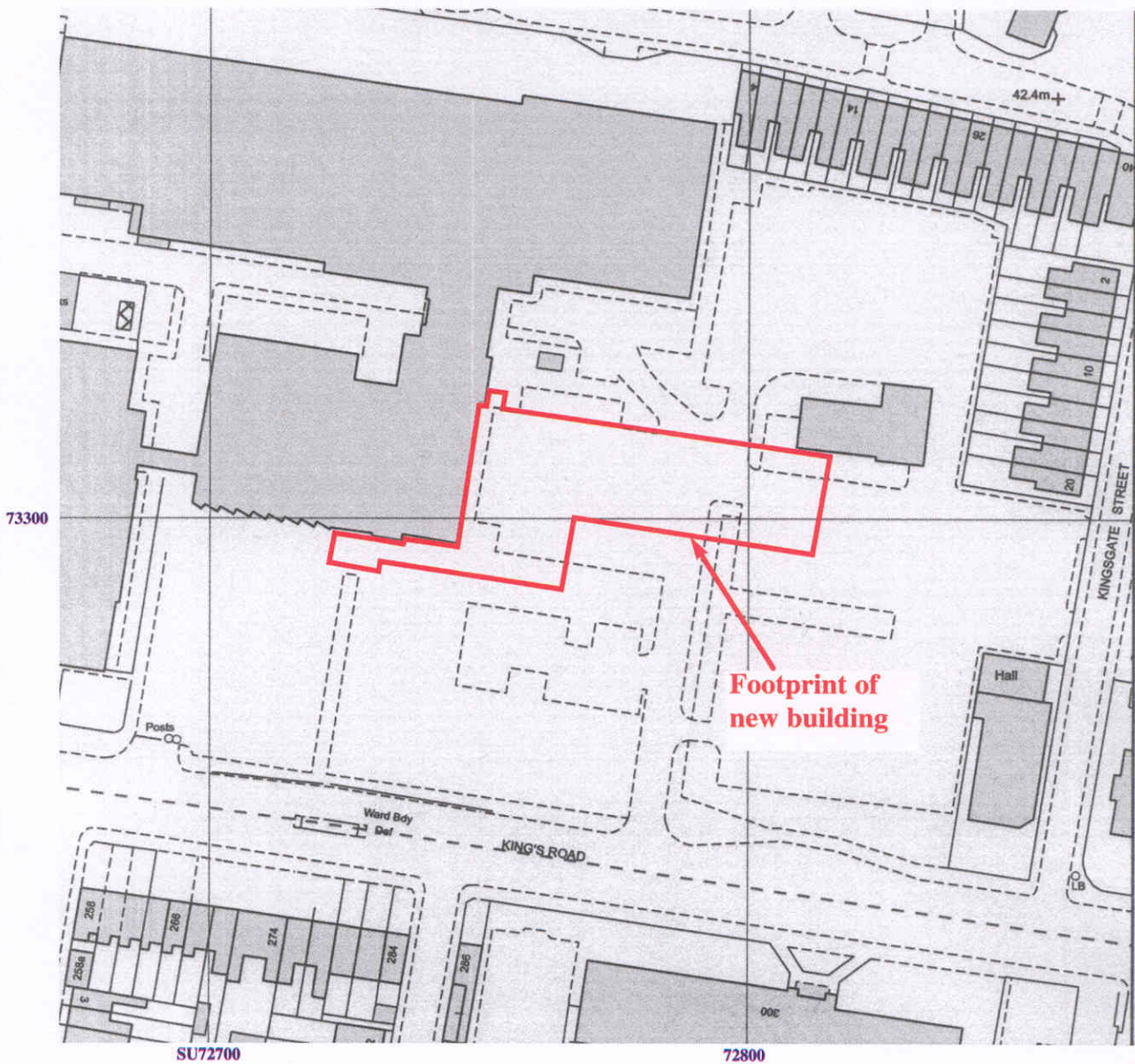
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Figure 1. Location of site within Reading
and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site on Kings Road.

Scale 1:1250.
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Figure 3. Plan of trench 2.

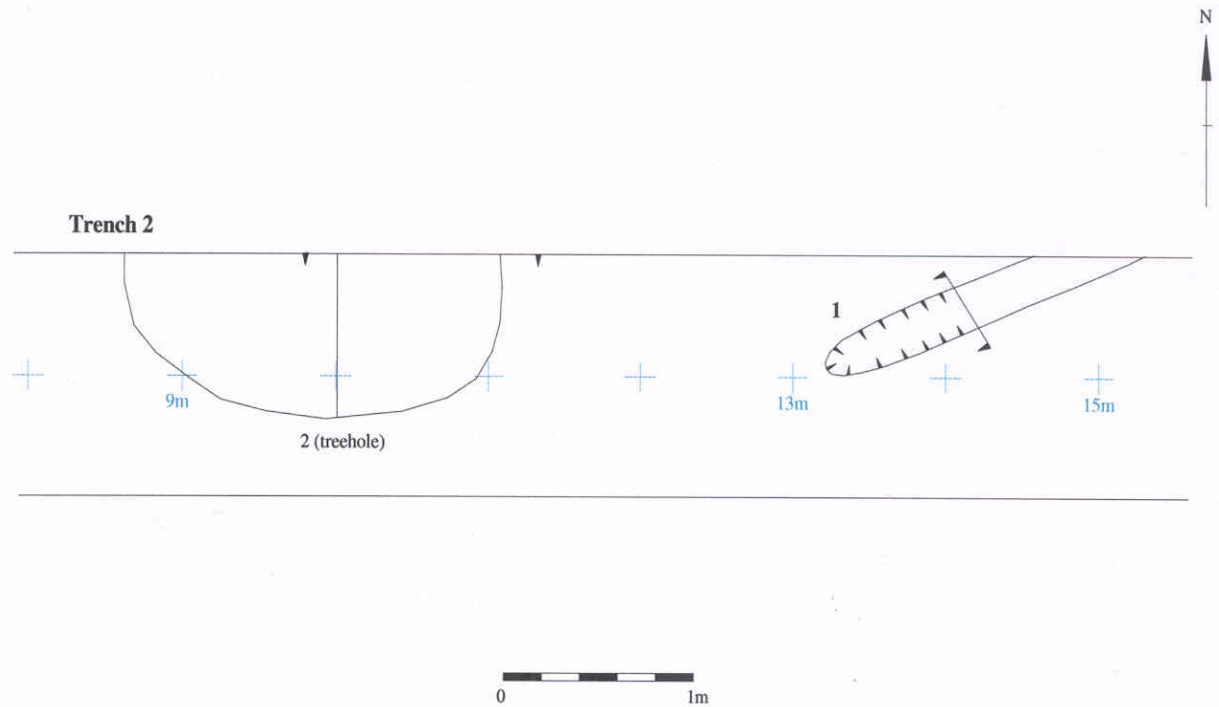


Figure 4. Plan of trench 2.

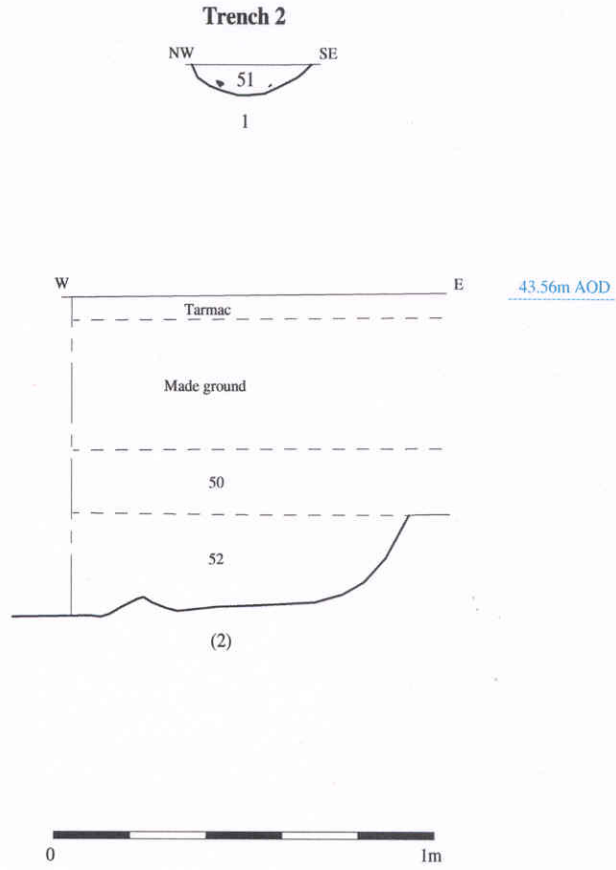


Figure 5. Sections of trench 2.



Plate 1. Trench 1, looking north, horizontal scales 0.5m.



Plate 2. Trench 2, Gully 1, looking north east, horizontal scale 0.5m, vertical scale 0.1m.



Plate 3. Trench 2, Representative section looking north, scale 0.5m.