

**LAND AT GREY'S HOUSE,
KEMPSTON,
BEDFORD**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
FIELD EVALUATION**

Document: 2002/62
Project: GHK 861

31st October 2002

Produced for:
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Preface

Every effort has been made in the preparation of this document to provide as complete a summary as possible within the terms of the specification. All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. Albion Archaeology cannot accept responsibility for errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by a third party, or for any loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in this document.

This report has been prepared by Gary Edmondson (Project Officer) and Tracy Preece (Archaeological Supervisor). The archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Tracy Preece assisted by Julian Watters. The project was under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Project Manager). Joan Lightning (CAD Technician) produced all the figures.

Albion Archaeology would like to acknowledge the assistance of Mr Espa of Mouchel Property Services and the Assistant County Archaeological Officer, L-A Mather.

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31st October 2002

Structure of the Report

After the introductory Section 1, a summary of the evaluation results is presented in Section 2, followed by a brief conclusion (Section 3).

Key Terms

Throughout this project design the following terms or abbreviations are used:

<i>Albion</i>	Albion Archaeology (formerly Bedfordshire County Archaeology Service)
<i>Client</i>	Mouchel Property Services
<i>IFA</i>	Institute of Field Archaeologists
<i>ACAO</i>	Assistant County Archaeological Officer
<i>Procedures Manual</i>	<i>Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork, 2nd Edition 2001.</i> Bedfordshire County Council



Non-Technical Summary

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Mouchel Property Services, to undertake an archaeological evaluation of the site of a proposed car park extension on the area immediately to the west of Grey's House residential school, Manor Drive, Kempston. The site is situated at the western edge of the suburb of Kempston, Bedford, centred on National Grid Reference TL (5/2) 0272 4761.

Situated at the edge of the built-up area, on higher ground overlooking a meander in the River Great Ouse, the site is located on gently sloping ground at c.30m above Ordnance Datum. The adjacent area contains evidence of human activity extending from the Mesolithic to the post-medieval period. The site is close to Kempston Manor, which during archaeological investigations in the mid 1990s, revealed evidence of Saxon-Norman structures and boundaries. Archaeological investigations in this area have also revealed evidence of substantial dumps of modern material, which have been used to raise the level of the ground. However, both the extent and thickness of such material is very variable.

In response to the pre-application planning enquiry the Assistant County Archaeological Officer advised that the site was in an archeologically sensitive location, and that insufficient information was available to determine the impact of the proposal. In order to address this, a Brief was issued for an archaeological evaluation to determine the location, extent, nature and preservation of any remains, utilising a programme of trial excavation. In response Albion formulated a Project Design, which defined the scope and nature of the project. This was approved by the Assistant County Archaeological Officer, prior to the commencement of work.

At the time of the evaluation the area of approximately 440 square metres was under grass. This grass was sub-divided into two areas by a pathway leading to Grey's House. The larger southern area was defined by a hedge to the west and car park with associated brick garages to the south. The grassed area was undulating, being approximately 0.5m lower than Manor Drive immediately beyond the hedge. The second area of grass was defined by the drive to the west and a car park to the north.

Trial excavation of the site was undertaken on 22nd October 2002. In accordance with the approved trenching proposal, a single trench 11.5m long was opened across the southern grassed area. Immediately below the turf and topsoil horizon a cable duct was exposed, which truncated compact dumps of modern building debris. The debris included brick fragments, glass shards and plastic. At the ends of the trench, test pits were excavated through this material in order to investigate the thickness. This revealed between 0.4 and 0.55m of modern deposits, directly above undisturbed natural strata. This would indicate that as part of a construction programme, probably associated with building the school, the ground level was reduced to the undisturbed natural strata. Then dumps of building debris were used to raise the ground level. The area was then landscaped, with topsoil and turf being laid directly onto the undulating upper boundary of the building debris.

The site archive, which contains all records of the project (Project number GHK 861), is currently held at St Mary's Church. It will eventually be transferred to Bedford Museum, under Accession Number BEDFM 2002/118.

It is essential that the above summary is read in conjunction with the main body of the report.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Mouchel Property Services to undertake an archaeological evaluation of the proposed site of a car park extension. In response to the submission of a pre-application enquiry, the Assistant County Archaeological Officer (ACAO) indicated that the site was in an archaeologically sensitive area and that insufficient information was available to determine the impact of the development, or to allow an appropriate mitigation strategy to be devised.

In order to obtain sufficient information to assess the potential impact of the development the ACAO issued a *Brief* for an archaeological evaluation of the land¹. This required a scheme of trial excavation in order to characterise the location, extent, nature, date and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits. In response Albion produced a *Project Design* which detailed the scope and methodology of the proposed project². This was approved by the ACAO prior to the commencement of trial excavation.

1.2 Site Location and Description

The site is situated at the western edge of Kempston, a suburb of Bedford, centred on National Grid Reference TL (5/2) 0272 4761. Extending 25 metres north-south by c.15m wide, the irregular area covers approximately 440 square metres of grass, immediately to the west of Grey's House (Fig 1).

At the time of the evaluation the site was sub-divided into two areas by a pathway, leading to Grey's House. The larger southern area was defined by a hedge to the west and a car park with associated brick garages to the south. The grassed area was undulating, being approximately 0.5m lower than Manor Drive immediately beyond the hedge. The second area of grass was defined by the road to the west and a car park to the north. A lamp standard and telephone junction box were situated in the western part of this area.

Located on an area of higher ground on the southern bank of the River Great Ouse, the site is on gently sloping ground at c.30m above Ordnance Datum. The geology of the site is loamy drift above gravel. Investigations in the vicinity have indicated that dumps of modern material, with a combined thickness of up to 1.2m have been used to raise the level of the ground. However, the extent and thickness of the dumps is very variable.

The valley of the River Great Ouse has been a focus of human activity from at least the Mesolithic period. Archaeological investigations to the north of the site, at Kempston Manor have revealed Saxo-Norman archaeological features, including structures.

¹ Bedfordshire County Council 2002, Brief for the Archaeological Field Evaluation of Land at Grey's House, Kempston, Bedfordshire, V1 8th August 2002

² Albion Archaeology 2002 Land at Grey's House, Kempston, Bedford: Project Design for Archaeological Field Evaluation



2. RESULTS OF THE TRIAL EXCAVATION

2.1 Introduction

The proposed trenching strategy was sent to the ACAO on the 16th October and approved on the 17th October. Originally the single trench was to be 12m long, though, this had to be shortened to 11.5m, due to the proximity of an access route into Grey's House. The trench was located within the larger southern grassed area, avoiding various services that crossed the small adjacent area (Fig 1). The evaluation was undertaken on the 22nd October 2002.

2.2 Methodology

- The trench was opened using a JCB fitted with a 1.6m toothless bucket. The operation of this machine was supervised by an archaeologist.
- Topsoil was removed by machine, down to the top of the building debris. This was cleaned to check for any truncating features and then small test pits were excavated through the debris to the top of underlying deposits.
- Backfilling of the trenches only occurred after the ACAO had been informed of the results and permission to backfill the trench had been obtained.

All archaeological and geological deposits (contexts) were assigned an individual number in a single sequence commencing at (1). Numbers in brackets within the text refer to the context number issued on site. Within this report context numbers referring to cut features are expressed [**], layers or deposits within cut features are expressed (**). Details of all contexts are listed in Appendix 1.

2.3 Results of the Trial Excavation

2.3.1 Topsoil

A thin turf horizon was removed by machine to expose a topsoil comprising a dark grey brown clay silt (1) which became a mid grey brown clay silt (2) with depth. This deposit was generally 0.2m thick (Fig 3: sections 1, 2 and Fig 5: photographs 3 and 4). This is interpreted as dumped material used to landscape the area, rather than a naturally developed soil profile.

2.3.2 Modern Dumps

Immediately below the topsoil a series of layers were revealed varying from a mid grey clay (7) to a light white-yellow silty sand (4) (Fig 4: photograph 2). A variety of modern building materials including fragments of brick, glass and plastic were distributed through these layers. The presence of modern material was noted on the relevant context sheet, but not retained. Although the deposits were scanned for any artefacts that were not obviously modern, none were identified.

In order to investigate the thickness of these deposits two test pits were opened at either end of the trench (Fig 2). The western test pit exposed three roughly horizontal dumps (4-6) (Fig 3: section 1 and Fig 5: photograph 3). The layers varied from white sandy silty, to mid grey brown clay silty and redeposited orangy brown natural strata, which contained fragments of brick and charcoal. These deposits had a combined thickness of up to 0.55m.



The eastern pit was started by machine, though quickly revealed a modern trench filled with loose pea gravel, suggesting that it was probably associated with drainage (Fig 2). Excavation continued by hand to the top of the undisturbed natural strata. Four roughly horizontal dumps of material were identified (7-10), with a combined thickness of 0.4m (Fig 3: section 1 and Fig 5: photograph 4).

This indicates that the dumps increased in thickness slightly towards the western end of the trench.

2.3.3 Modern Services

A cable duct, aligned roughly north-east to south-west was exposed immediately below the topsoil. This duct was located approximately 3.50m from the eastern end of the trench. At the eastern limit of the trench a linear band of loose pea gravel orientated roughly north to south, defined another modern disturbance, probably associated with drainage of the vicinity.

2.3.4 Natural Strata

The undisturbed stratum of red orange clay (3) was only exposed in the base of the test pits. The upper boundary of this deposit had a sharp division with the overlying dumped deposits (see section 2.3.2). The top of the natural strata was 0.6m below the present ground surface in the east, increasing to 0.7m in the west.



3. CONCLUSION

3.1 Overview

The adjacent area contains evidence of human activity extending from the Mesolithic to the post-medieval period, with evidence of Saxon-Norman structures and boundaries in the area to the north of the current site. However, the evaluation only identified material associated with modern disturbance, probably associated with construction of the adjacent school. This had removed the former soil horizons to the level of the natural strata, which was then buried under between 0.4 and 0.55m of compacted modern building. Topsoil and turf were then laid over this material, probably as part of a scheme of landscaping of the area. This indicates that modern material with a combined thickness of at least 0.6m had been deposited in this area.

The evaluation has confirmed other observations made during archaeological observation in the area, where modern levelling deposits up to 1.2m thick have been recorded. Whilst it is possible that archaeological features can be preserved under this material, the test pits excavated at either end of the evaluation trench only revealed undisturbed natural strata. The sharp boundary with the overlying dumps indicates that an unknown thickness of this stratum had also been removed.



4. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Albion Archaeology 2001 *Procedures Manual, Volume 1: Fieldwork. 2nd Edition*

Albion Archaeology 2002 *Land at Grey's House, Kempston, Bedford: Project Design for Archaeological Field Evaluation Report 2002/59*

Bedfordshire County Council 2002, *Brief for the Archaeological Field Evaluation of Land at Grey's House, Kempston, Bedfordshire, V1 8th August 2002*



APPENDIX 1

TRENCH SUMMARY



Trench: 1

Max Dimensions: Length: 11.50 m. Width: 1.70 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: m. Max: m.

OS Co-ordinates: Ref. 1: TL0272447605 Ref. 2: TL0273647604

Reason: Investigation for possible archaeological remains.

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
1	Topsoil	Friable dark grey brown clay silt occasional small ceramic building material, occasional small stones Merged into (2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Topsoil	Firm mid grey brown clay silt occasional small stones Occasional fragments of glass.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Natural strata	Firm mid red orange clay	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Dump material	Loose light yellow white silty sand	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Dump material	Firm mid grey brown clay silt moderate small ceramic building material, occasional flecks charcoal Fragments of modern material throughout deposit including concrete, tarmac lumps and plastic bags.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Dump material	Firm light orange brown silty clay occasional small ceramic building material, occasional flecks charcoal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Dump material	Friable mid grey silty clay	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Dump material	Loose dark grey black sandy sand	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Dump material	Firm dark brown silty clay	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Dump material	Firm mid brown grey silty clay occasional small ceramic building material, frequent small-medium stones Occasional fragments of reinforced glass	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



FIGURES

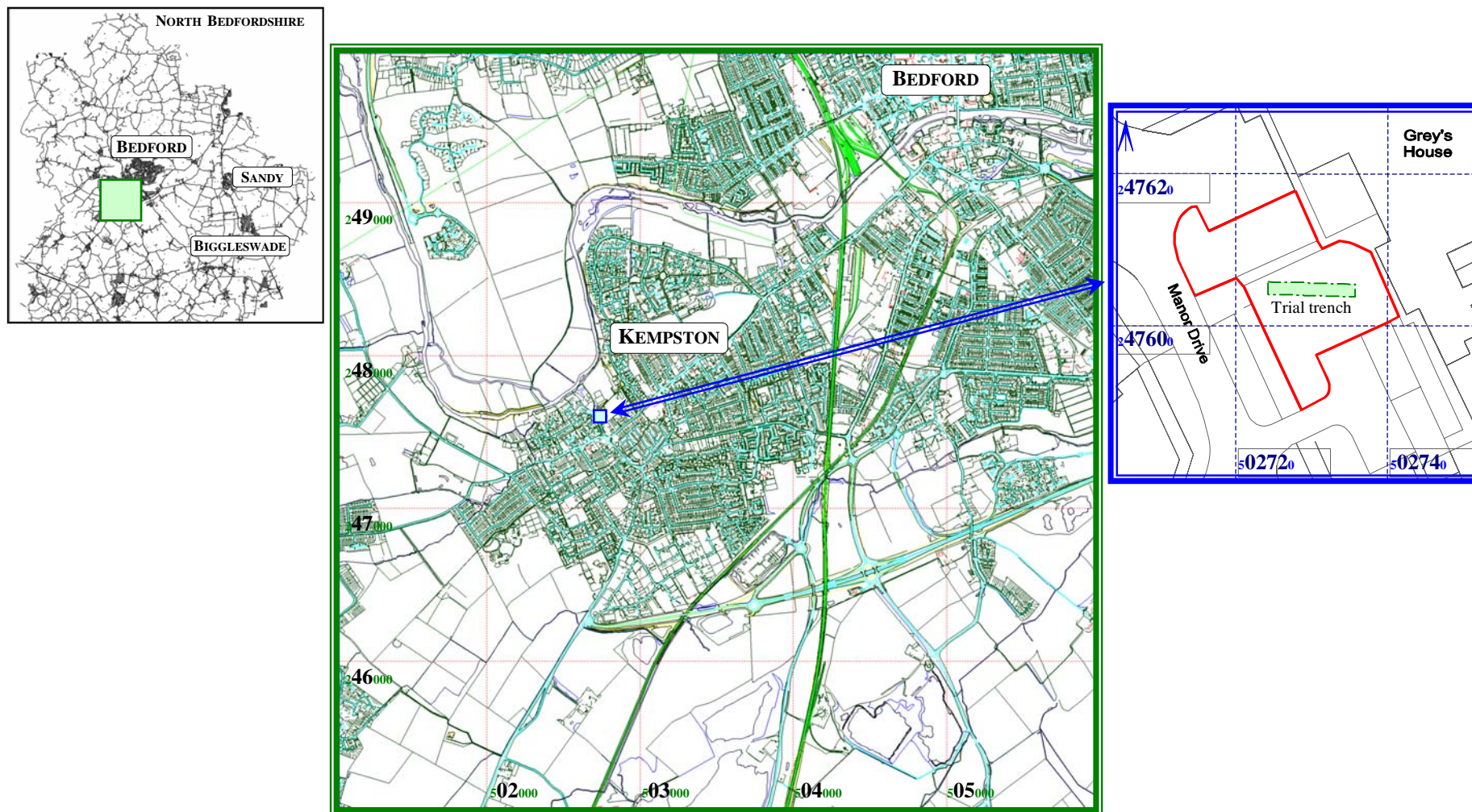


Figure 1: Site location plan

Base map reproduced from the Ordnance Survey Map with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, by Bedfordshire County Council, County Hall, Bedford. OS Licence No. 076465(LA). © Crown Copyright.

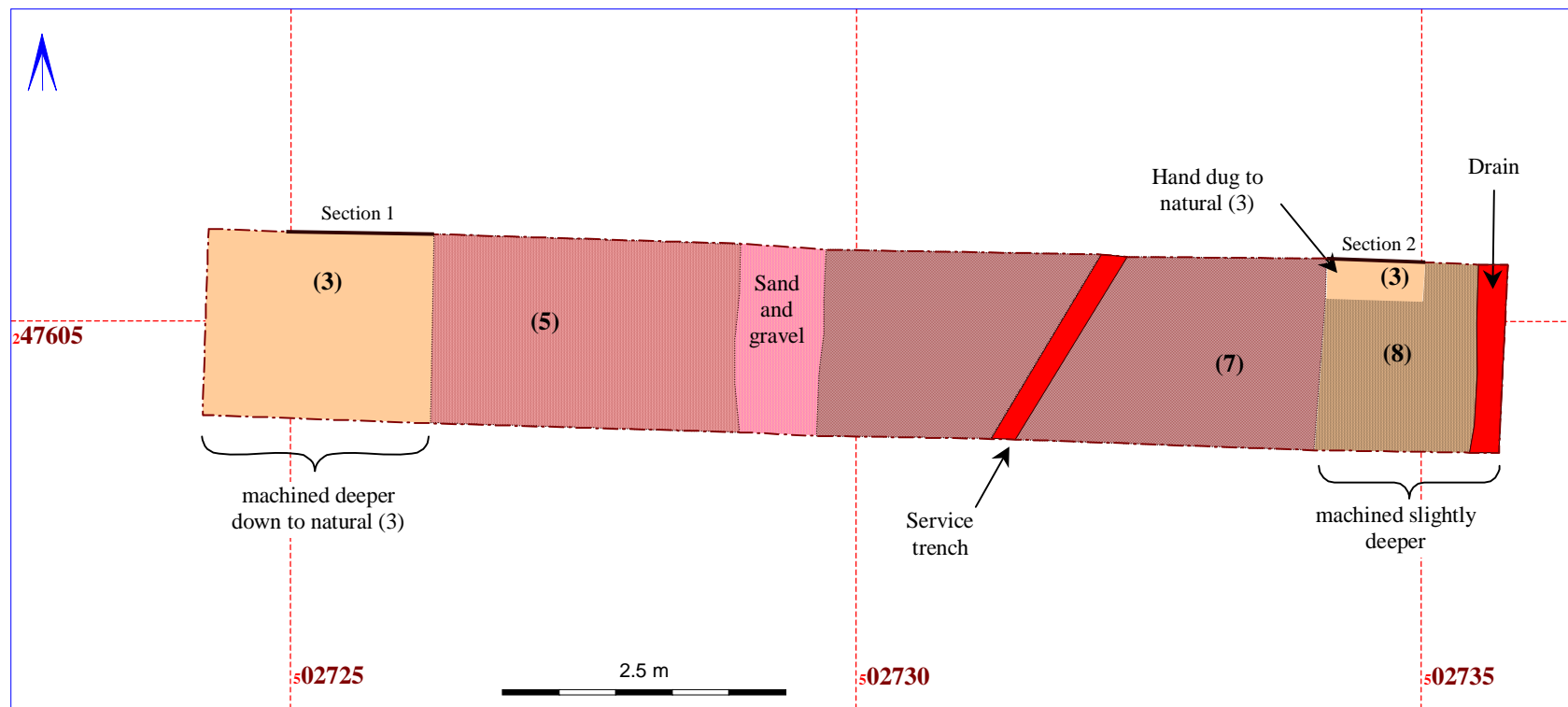


Figure 2: Archaeological all-features plan

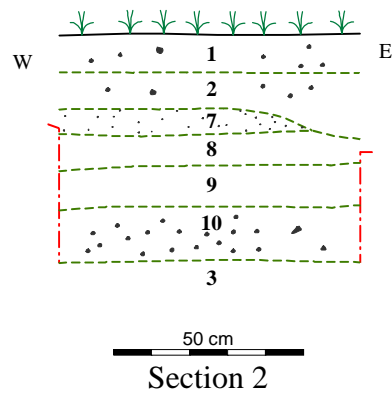
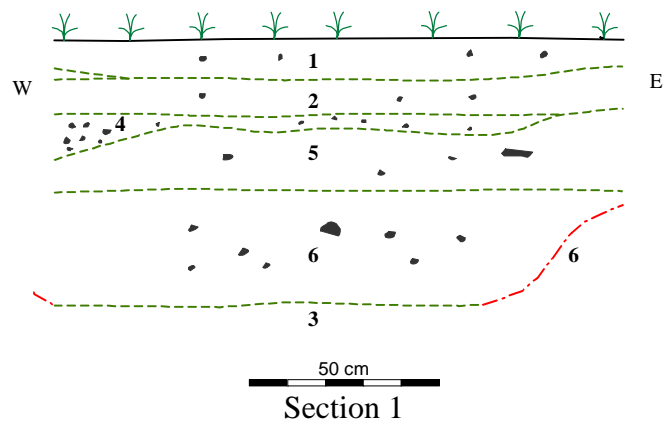


Figure 3: Section drawings



Photograph 1; Machine excavation of the trial trench



Photograph 2; General view of trench, looking towards Manor Drive, with drain and hand excavated test pit in foreground and dumps of modern debris beyond.

Figure 4 Selected photographs: 1 and 2



Photograph 3; Machine excavated test pit, revealing sequence of dumps directly above the natural strata



Photograph 4; Section of hand excavated test pit, indicating a sequence of dumps of modern debris

Figure 5 Selected photographs: 3 and 4