

East Cowes Well Road



Archaeological Evaluation Report




August 2012

Client: Kimberley Developments plc

Issue No: 1
OA Job No: 5412
NGR: SZ 503 957



Client Name: Kimberley Developments plc
Client Ref No:
Document Title: East Cowes, Well Road
Document Type: Evaluation Report
Issue/Version Number: 1
Grid Reference: SZ 503 957
Planning Reference:
OA Job Number: 5412
Site Code: IWCMS:2012.8400
Invoice Code: ECWREV
Receiving Museum: Isle of Wight County Museums Service
Museum Accession No: IWCMS:2012.8400
Event No:

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Document File Location X:\IOWGKNEV, East Cowes GKN siteWell Road East Cowes
Graphics File Location X:\IOWGKNEV, East Cowes GKN siteWell Road East Cowes
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East Cowes, Well Road

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Summary

Between 11th and 13th July 2012 Oxford Archaeology carried out an Archaeological Evaluation at Well Road, East Cowes on the Isle of Wight. The investigation was carried out on behalf of Kimberley Developments Plc and was monitored by Owen Cambridge, County Archaeological Officer.

A single T-shaped trench measuring 73m² was excavated within the proposed development area. The trench was positioned to allow maximum coverage of the site. The primary aim of the investigation was to assess whether a previously excavated burial formed part of a post-medieval cemetery. The secondary aim was to locate a culvert assumed to run through the site. Any further archaeological deposits were to be sampled and recorded.

No further burials were revealed, supporting the supposition that the previously located burial was an isolated event. However the culvert was located and found to be 2m NW of its assumed position. No further archaeological deposits were observed, and the evidence showed that the site had been markedly truncated by previous development.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 The site is located at NGR SZ 503 957 close to the waterfront of the River Medina on the junction of Well Road and Castle Street, East Cowes, Isle of Wight (Figs 1 and 2). Prior to redevelopment the site was an area of tarmac used as car-parking.
- 1.1.2 The main purpose of this investigation was to assess whether an isolated burial recovered on the adjacent Waitrose site (Oxford Archaeology 2012) formed part of a larger unrecorded post-medieval cemetery. The results of the investigation would allow informed consideration for the local planning authority in determining the planning application for redevelopment of the site.
- 1.1.3 The archaeological investigation required the excavation of a T-shaped trial trench encompassing an area of 73m² (Figs 2 and 3). The existing tarmac and concrete slab was broken up and removed along with other modern made ground deposits that were present. Any surviving archaeological deposits were to be mapped and sample excavations undertaken.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site was located at a level of 2.6m OD. The area was relatively level with no marked slope.
- 1.2.2 The underlying geology comprised clay deposits with occasional pockets of gravels of the Headon and Osborne Beds (BGS).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The site lies adjacent to the location of a post-medieval human burial that was found during an archaeological watching brief carried out during service diversion works related to the construction of a Waitrose store (see Fig. 3). A radiocarbon date from the coffin indicated a date between the 17th and 20th centuries, but certainly pre-dating 1950. Documentary searches by the Isle of Wight County Archaeological Officer in the County Records Office did not reveal any records of burials at this location. The burial may have been overspill from the nearby St James's churchyard, part of a private burial ground or an isolated burial, perhaps of a religious non-conformist.

2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The main aims of the investigation were
- (i) To assess whether the previously recovered burial was part of a larger post-medieval cemetery
 - (ii) To identify the extent and course of the culvert within the site area
 - (iii) To determine or confirm the general nature of any archaeological deposits present
 - (iv) To determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of any such remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence.



2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The investigation was carried out in accordance with English Heritage guidelines (English Heritage 1991) and Oxford Archaeology standard practices (Oxford Archaeology 1992). The investigation followed the strategy outlined in the Archaeological Method Statement (Oxford Archaeology 2012).
- 2.2.2 The trial trench location was set out by the OA Project Officer using a detailed site plan illustrating known services and other physical constraints in the vicinity. As a result of slight modification of the hoarding prior to OA's access to the site, the trench was repositioned slightly to the south-east of its proposed position (OA Method Statement, Fig. 1; for revised location see this report, Figs 2 and 3).
- 2.2.3 A CAT scan was carried out to ensure that no live services were located within the area of the trench.
- 2.2.4 Initial excavation involved the breaking out of the upper tarmac surface (100) by mechanical excavator. Following this made ground deposits (101) were excavated by machine and the underlying concrete (102) broken out.
- 2.2.5 Underneath this was a make-up deposit (103) of recent origin, which was therefore removed by a mechanical excavator utilising a toothless ditching bucket.
- 2.2.6 This revealed the natural clay, except in the south-eastern part of the trench, where layer (103) overlay (105), a dark clay containing rubble and brick (Fig. 3). This layer was not bottomed, as it continued below the safe limit of excavation (1.2m). At the very south-east end of the trench this layer overlay culvert [106]. Only a very small part of the culvert was exposed, as this was sufficient to meet the aims of the evaluation.
- 2.2.7 The excavated trench was recorded via a photographic record, both analogue and digital, hand drawn plans and sections and written records.
- 2.2.8 Once fully excavated the trench was inspected by the Isle of Wight County Archaeological Officer, who permitted the trench to be backfilled.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

- 3.1.1 A description of the deposits encountered are provided in tabular form in Appendix A. A description of said deposits is also provided below. The deposits described are illustrated in section (Fig. 4).

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

- 3.2.1 An upper surface of tarmac (100) was initially encountered on the site which had an average thickness of 0.12m across the area of the site. Underlying this was a make-up/levelling deposit (101) comprising a mix of small stones, gravel and sand which was, on average, 0.28m thick. This in turn overlaid a solid concrete bedding of up to 0.36m thick (102). A further modern deposit (103) was encountered below the concrete which comprised a dark blue grey clay with frequent fragments of brick and other building debris to a thickness of 0.15m (see Fig. 4 and Plates 2 and 3). The natural geology (104) of mixed mid green grey and yellow clay was observed below these latter deposits. In the south-easternmost 5m of the NW-SE leg of the trench a further modern in-fill deposit (105) was observed (Fig. 3). This was a dark brown black clay with rubble inclusions. Its maximum thickness was not ascertained as it extended below a depth of



1.2m. A culvert (106) was located at the south-eastern limit of the excavation below this (Fig. 3). This was constructed using stone slabs but was not further investigated

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 Other than the culvert, no archaeological deposits were encountered during the excavation of the trial trench.

3.4 Trench 1

3.4.1 Trench 1 was a T-shaped trench comprising a SW-NE arm and a NW-SE arm. The SW-NE arm was 23m long by 2m wide with the NW-SE arm being 13.5m long by 2m wide (Figs 2 and 3). The modern deposits ranged in depth from 0.42m to 0.78m within the SW arm of the trench, the natural clay sloping down from W to E, and reaching more than 1.2m (layer 105) at the south-east end of the NW-SE arm.

3.4.2 The culvert was encountered at the south-eastern limit of the trench but was not fully excavated on the recommendation of the Isle of Wight County Archaeological Officer.

3.5 Finds summary

3.5.1 No artefactual evidence was recovered during the investigation.

3.6 Reliability of field investigation

3.6.1 The trench location was such as to allow maximum coverage of the development area with a particular focus on the north-west side closest to the location of the previously recorded burial. The trench was also positioned to enable assessment of the position of the culvert.

3.6.2 The natural geology was found throughout the trench except at the SE end of the NW-SE leg where the depth of modern impact was beyond the safe limit for excavation.

3.6.3 There was some flooding of the trench due to both heavy rainfall and groundwater but this did not affect inspection and observation of the deposits during excavation. Hence the results are viewed as accurate and reliable.

3.7 Evaluation objectives and results

3.7.1 The primary aim of the investigation was to assess whether the previously excavated burial formed part of a larger post-medieval cemetery. No burials or human bones were found.

3.7.2 The secondary aim was to locate the culvert that was assumed to cross the site. This was achieved though full excavation was not requested.

3.7.3 No further archaeological deposits were encountered but the investigation did reveal the extent of impact from previous development within the site.

3.8 Interpretation

3.8.1 It was clear that the area under investigation had been stripped to natural in a previous phase of development. At its maximum the impact was beyond 1.2m below current ground level. The deposits observed were clearly the product of construction and in-filling. This was demonstrated by the presence of modern brick fragments at the lowest levels of the deposits.



- 3.8.2 The concrete deposit formed part of previous structures whilst the gravel deposits and tarmac relate to the use of the site for car-parking.
- 3.8.3 A SW-NE oriented culvert was observed c 2m north-west of its assumed location (Fig. 3).
- 3.8.4 Given the level of attained within the trial trench and the known depth of the previously excavated burial there was no evidence that the area excavated formed part of a post-medieval cemetery. There was a marked degree of impact from modern activity which may have removed archaeological deposits but no evidence of previous burials survived.

3.9 Significance

- 3.9.1 The presence of a consecrated burial ground would be a material consideration for the local planning authority in deciding whether to grant permission for the development. No archaeological or documentary evidence for one has however been identified. The burial excavated during development of the adjacent Waitrose site appears to have been an isolated event.



APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description				Orientation	SE-NW/ NW-SE	
Trench devoid of archaeology. Comprises a tarmac surface and its make-up, a concrete floor and its bedding deposits.				Depth (m)	0.4-1.2. +	
				Width (m)	2	
				Length (m)	36.5	
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
100	Layer	-	0.12	Tarmac surface	-	Modern
101	Layer	-	0.28	Made ground deposit	Brick	Modern
102	Layer	-	0.36	Concrete surface	-	Modern
103	Layer	-	0.15	Made ground deposit	Brick	Modern
104	Layer	-	-	Natural geology	-	Modern
105	Layer	-	>0.2	Modern construction in-fill	Brick	Modern
106	Structure	>1	-	Culvert	-	-



APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

English Heritage, 1991, Management of Archaeological Projects.

Oxford Archaeology, 1992, Fieldwork Manual, (Ed. D Wilkinson, first edition, August 1992)

Oxford Archaeology 2010 East Cowes Waitrose Energy Centre, Isle of Wight, Heritage Assessment. Prepared by Oxford Archaeology on behalf of Farrell and Clark Architects and Waitrose Stores limited.

Oxford Archaeology 2012, East Cowes, Well Road. Archaeological Method Statement.



APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: East Cowes, Well Road

Site code: IWCMS:2012.8400

Grid reference: SZ 503 957

Type: Evaluation

Date and duration: 11/7/20012-13/7/2012

Area of site: Trench=73m²

Summary of results: A single T-shaped trench measuring 73m² was excavated within the proposed development area. The trench was positioned to allow maximum coverage of the site. The primary aim of the investigation was to assess whether a previously excavated burial formed part of a post-medieval cemetery. The secondary aim was to locate a culverted waterway assumed to run through the site. Any further archaeological deposits were to be sampled and recorded. No further burials were revealed supporting the supposition that the previously located burial was an isolated event. However the culverted waterway was located and found to be 2m NW of its assumed position. No further archaeological deposits were observed and the area was seen to be markedly truncated through previous phases of development.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Isle of Wight County Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: IWCMS:2012.8400



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Figure 1: Site location

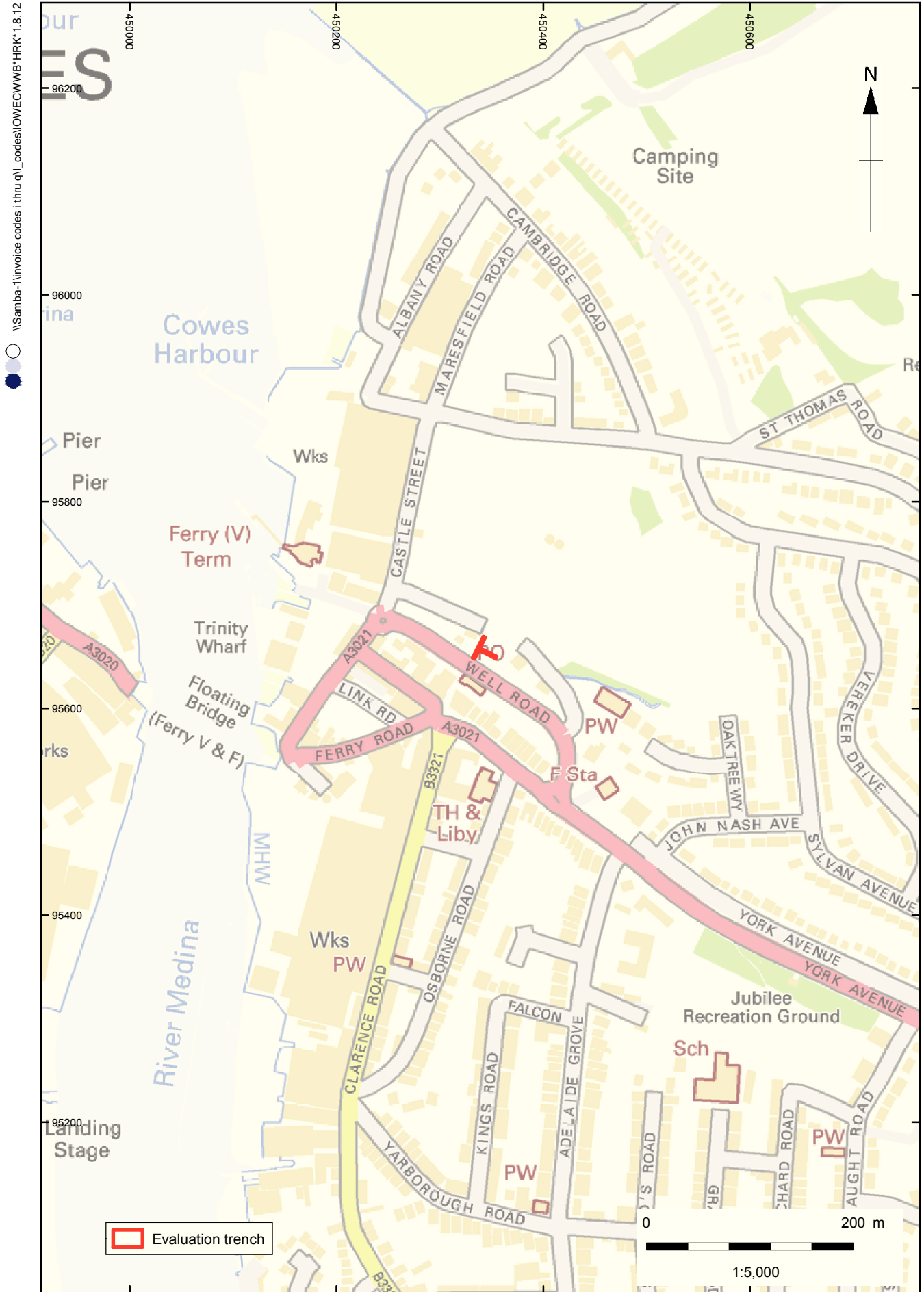


Figure 2: Trench location

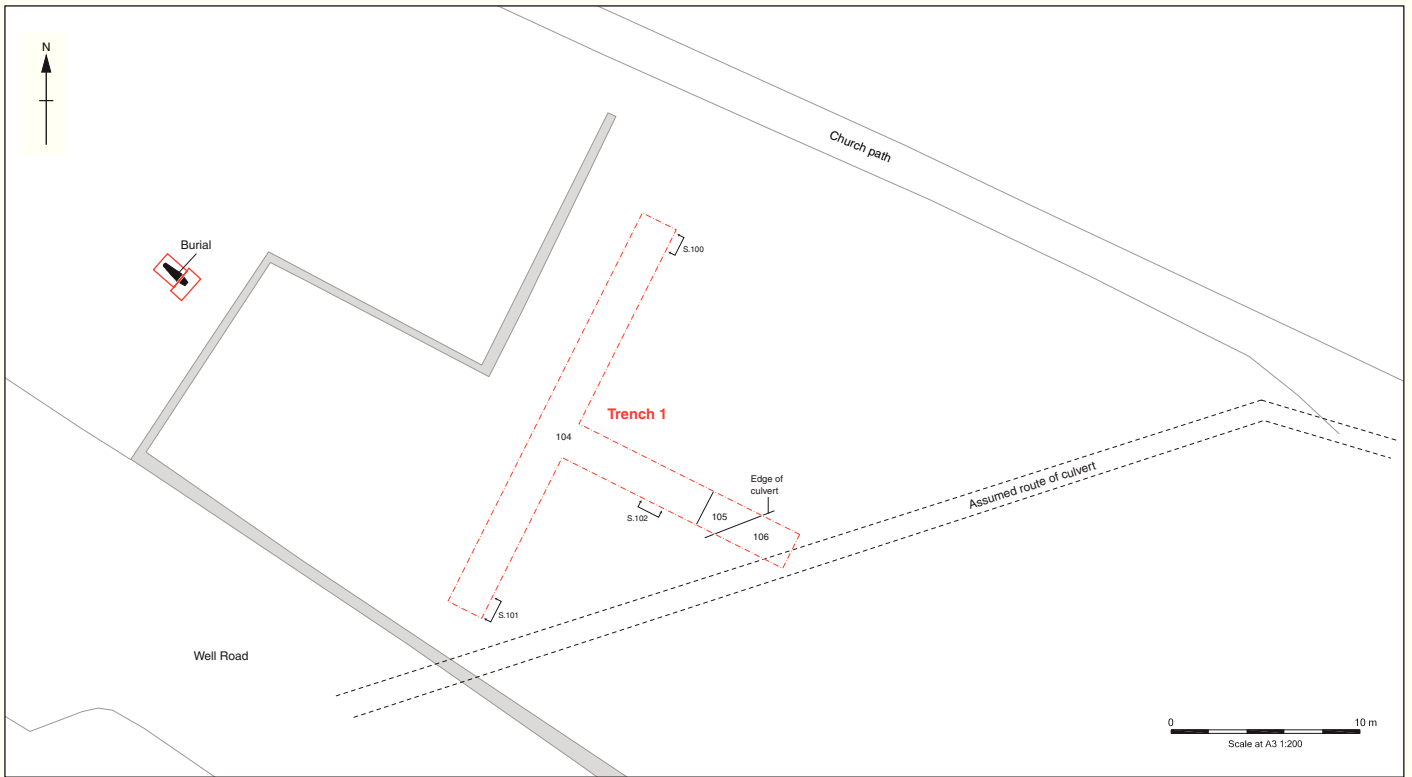


Figure 3: Post-excitation plan showing locations of sections and culvert

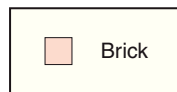
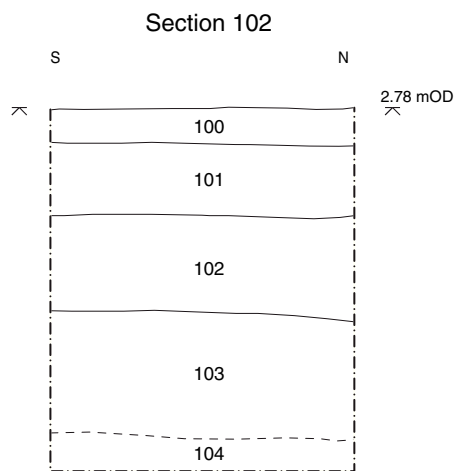
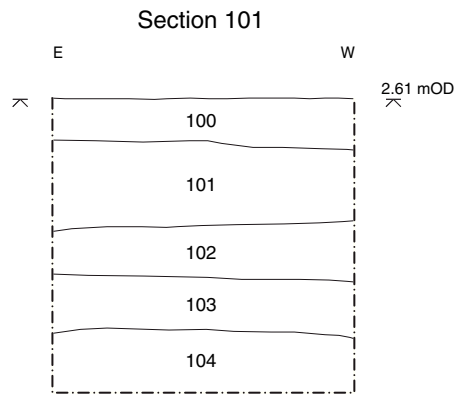
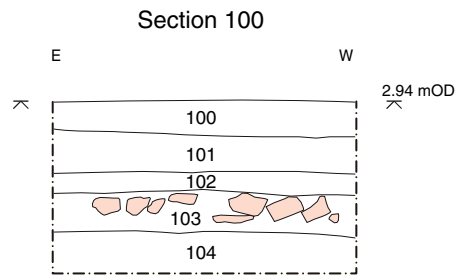


Figure 4: Representative section drawings



Plate 1 : General view of western arm of Trench 1 during excavation



Plate 2: Soil sequence at NE end of trench



Plate 3: Soil sequence at SW end of trench



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