

St Michael's Close Fringford Oxfordshire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report

oxfordarchaeology

southsouthsouth
April 2013

Client: Anglian Water

Issue No: 1
OA Job No: 5568
NGR: SP 6080 2905



Client Name: Anglian Water
Client Ref No:
Document Title: St Michael's Close, Fringford, Oxfordshire
Document Type: Archaeological Watching Brief Report
Issue/Version Number: 1
Grid Reference: SP 6080 2905
Planning Reference:
Invoice Code: FRSMCWB
OA Job Number: 5568
Site Code: FRSMC13
Receiving Museum: Oxfordshire County Museum Service
Museum Accession No.: OXCMS:2013.35
Event No.:

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Document File Location: Projects on Server 1/Fringford St Michael's Close/FRSMC/WB Report.odt
Graphics File Location: Invoice codes_a-h*FRSMC13*Fringford St Michael's Close*HK*27.03.13
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St Michael's Close, Fringford, Oxfordshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Written by Mike Sims and Tim Allen

and illustrated by Julia Collins

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Summary

In March 2013 Oxford Archaeology carried out an archaeological watching brief during the construction of a new water pipe and storage tank by Anglian Water at St Michael's Close, Fringford, Oxfordshire (NGR: SP 6080 2905). No archaeological deposits were observed, and there were no finds.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 In March 2013 Oxford Archaeology (OA) conducted an archaeological watching brief for Anglian Water during the construction of a new sewer pipeline with manholes and an associated storage tank at St Michael's Close, Fringford, Oxfordshire.
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken as the site lay close to a known area of archaeological interest (see Section 1.3 below). Oxfordshire Planning Archaeologist Richard Oram therefore requested that the excavation of the pipe trench and footing for the storage tank be monitored archaeologically.
- 1.1.3 OA produced a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) showing how it would meet the requirements (OA 2013).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is located on the north-east side of Fringford (NGR: SP 6085 2905), beginning at the north-east end of St Michael's Close and running north-east and then east over a total distance of around 200m (Figures 1 and 2). A southern spur ran from the eastern part of the pipeline down to a new storage tank.
- 1.2.2 The pipeline traverses several fields laid to grass, and ends at an existing water works approached by a track to the south (Figure 2). The Padbury brook runs around the north end of the village only 300m from the site and continues east, eventually joining the Claydon Brook and then the Great Ouse.
- 1.2.3 The geology is Kellaway Sandstone, siltstone and mudstone in the western part of the pipeline, overlain at the south-east end by mid-Pleistocene Till (BGS online mapping 2013). The site lies at approximately 100m aOD at the south-west end, sloping downwards as it runs north and east towards the brook.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 Archaeological excavations by the Oxford Archaeological Unit (now OA) at Crosslands (Moore and Parkinson 1993; Mudd 1993; Mudd 1994), just north of Main Street, and at The Paddock, Rectory Road (Hardy 1994; Blinkhorn et al. 2000) revealed a late Iron Age and Romano-British settlement continuing into the 4th century AD (PRN 15925). A Watching Brief carried out in The Close, Church Lane, to the north-east by John Moore Heritage Services did not find any continuation of this settlement (Gray Jones 2002).
- 1.3.2 These same excavations also revealed late Saxon occupation of 11th century date, continuing through the 12th and into the 13th century, when timber buildings were replaced by masonry buildings. These continued in use until the 14th century, when the site was largely abandoned.
- 1.3.3 The name Fringford suggests that this was also an early Saxon settlement based upon a ford across the Fringford brook (VCH 1959, 128).
- 1.3.4 An Archaeological Watching Brief carried out in 1996 at the north-east end of the village, on the site of Fringford Manor (PRN 1126) opposite St Michael's Church, revealed evidence of a medieval moated site with an associated boundary and fish pond (OAU 1996).



- 1.3.5 An archaeological Watching Brief at land south-east of Glebe Court did not find any evidence of archaeological activity other than the furrows of former cultivation (Sims 2008).

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 General

- (i) To determine the presence or absence of any archaeological remains which may survive.
- (ii) To determine or confirm the approximate extent of any surviving remains
- (iii) To determine the date range of any surviving remains by artefactual or other means.
- (iv) To determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains.
- (v) To determine the degree of complexity of any surviving horizontal or vertical stratigraphy.
- (vi) To assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape.
- (vii) To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence, and the forms in which such evidence may survive.
- (viii) To determine the implications of any remains with reference to economy, status, utility and social activity.
- (ix) To determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of the artefactual evidence present.

2.2 Specific Aims and Objectives

2.2.1 The specific aims and objectives of the evaluation were:

- (x) To determine whether the late Iron Age and Romano-British settlement found to the south-west extends into the site.
- (xi) To determine whether the late Saxon and medieval village extended this far to the north-east, beyond the limits of the later surviving settlement.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits (Figure 3 and Plates 1-3)

3.1.1 The area for the base of the new storage tank was stripped first, followed by the excavation of the new pipe trench and associated manholes, working from west to east (see Figure 2). The work was carried out using a 13-ton mechanical excavator with a toothless grading bucket, in spits approximately 0.2m deep.

3.1.2 The excavation for the tank base was approximately 14m in diameter and 1m deep. Topsoil (layer 1) was a friable dark brown silty loam with occasional gravel and small stone inclusions, and was generally 0.25m deep. This overlay a reddish-brown clayey silt (layer 2) up to 0.4m deep, with some sand and gravel inclusions, which may represent an earlier ploughsoil, though no finds were recovered from it. This in turn overlay a yellowish-brown silty clay with occasional gravel (layer 3), which represented



the undisturbed geology, and continued down below the base of the trench. No finds were seen in any of these deposits.

- 3.1.3 The new pipe trench was nearly 160m in length and 0.5m wide, and varied in depth from 0.5m to 0.8m. The same sequence of topsoil, subsoil and natural silty clay was seen throughout (see Figure 3 and Plates 1-3), except where the trench cut through the concrete base for a modern sheep-dip filter well.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 Occasional very small fragments of ceramic building material (red brick or tile) were observed within the topsoil. The presence of this material was noted, but it was not retained. No other artefacts were observed during the course of the investigations.

3.3 Environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were observed during the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 No archaeological deposits or finds were recovered; the deposits were very clean.
- 4.1.2 No trace of the Romano-British or medieval occupation found within Fringford to the south-west was encountered during these works, and it must be presumed that this area lies beyond the limits of these settlements.



APPENDIX A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Depth	Description	Finds	Date
1	Topsoil	0.25m	Friable dark brown silty loam with occasional gravel and small stones	Very small fragments of brick or tile	Late 19th/ 20th century
2	Layer	Up to 0.4m	Reddish-brown clayey silt with some sand and gravel	-	-
3	Natural	0.4m +	Yellowish-brown silty clay with occasional gravel	-	-



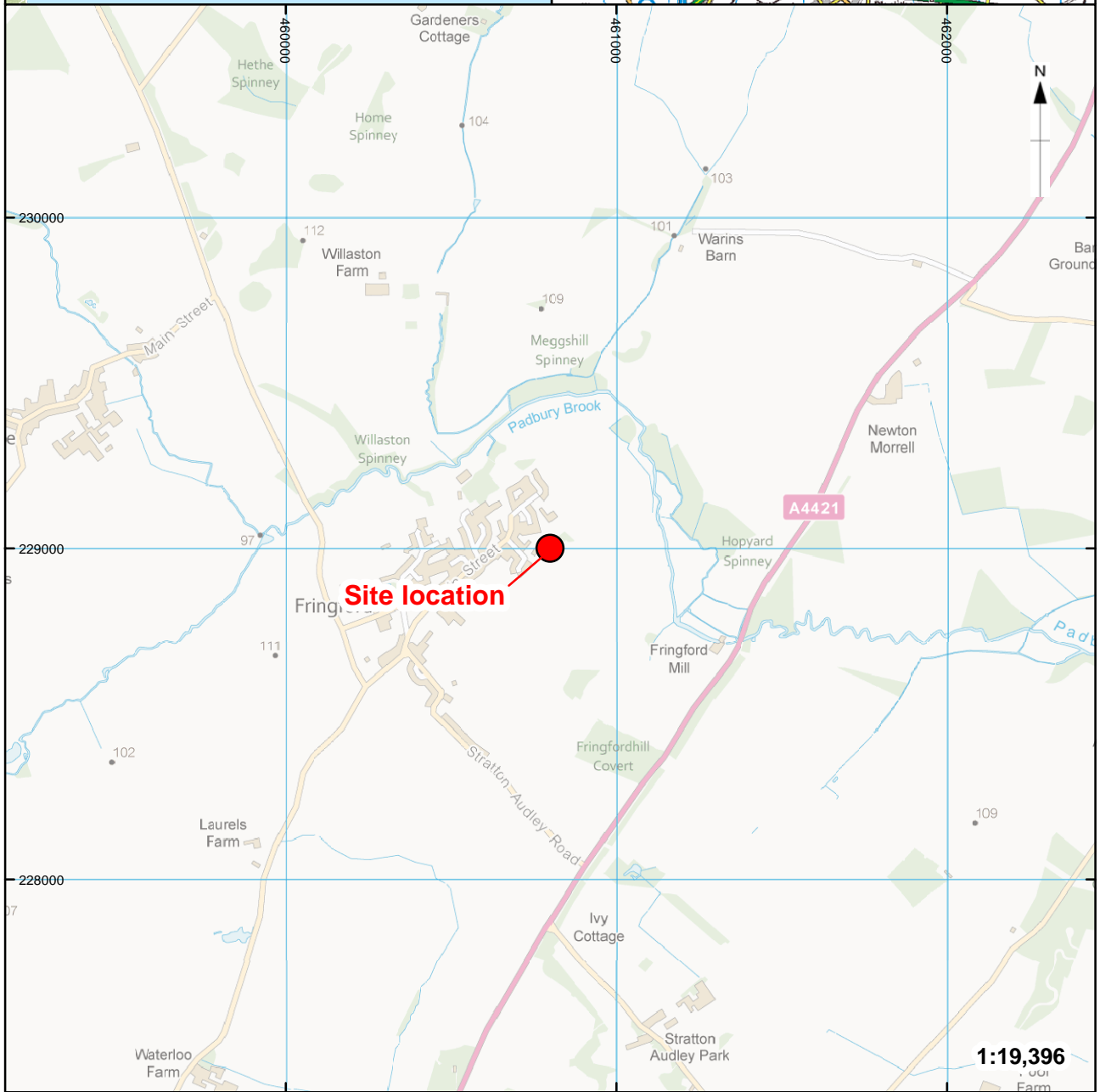
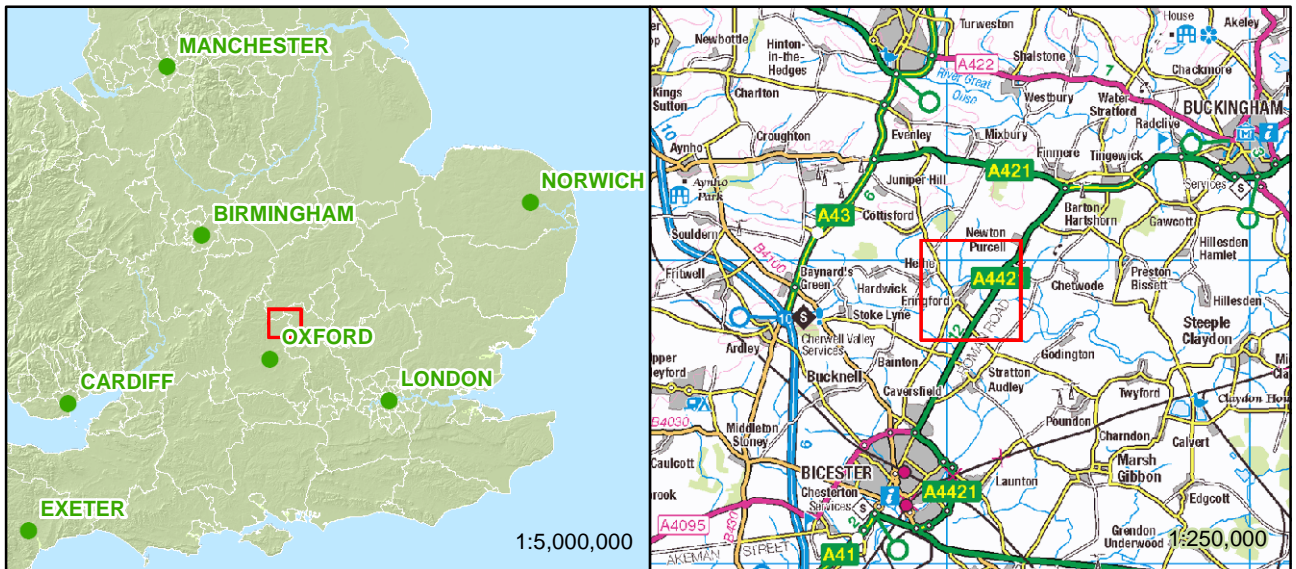
APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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- VCH, 1959 *A History of the County of Oxfordshire*, Volume **VI**, Victoria County History



APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	St Michael's Close, Fringford, Oxfordshire
Site code:	FRSMC13
Grid reference:	Centred at NGR SP 5216 0466
Type of investigation:	Watching Brief upon excavation of a new sewer pipe and associated storage tank
Date and duration of project:	11th-18th March 2013
Area of site:	Approximately 300m ²
Summary of results:	The machine-excavation exposed the same sequence of deposits throughout: topsoil, subsoil (possibly an earlier ploughsoil) and then undisturbed natural clay. No archaeological features or other deposits was seen and there were no finds of interest.
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at Janus House Oxford, and will be deposited with The Oxfordshire County Museum Service under the Accession Number OXCMS:2013: 35



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Figure 1: Site location

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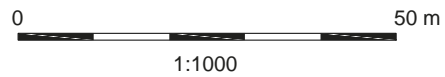
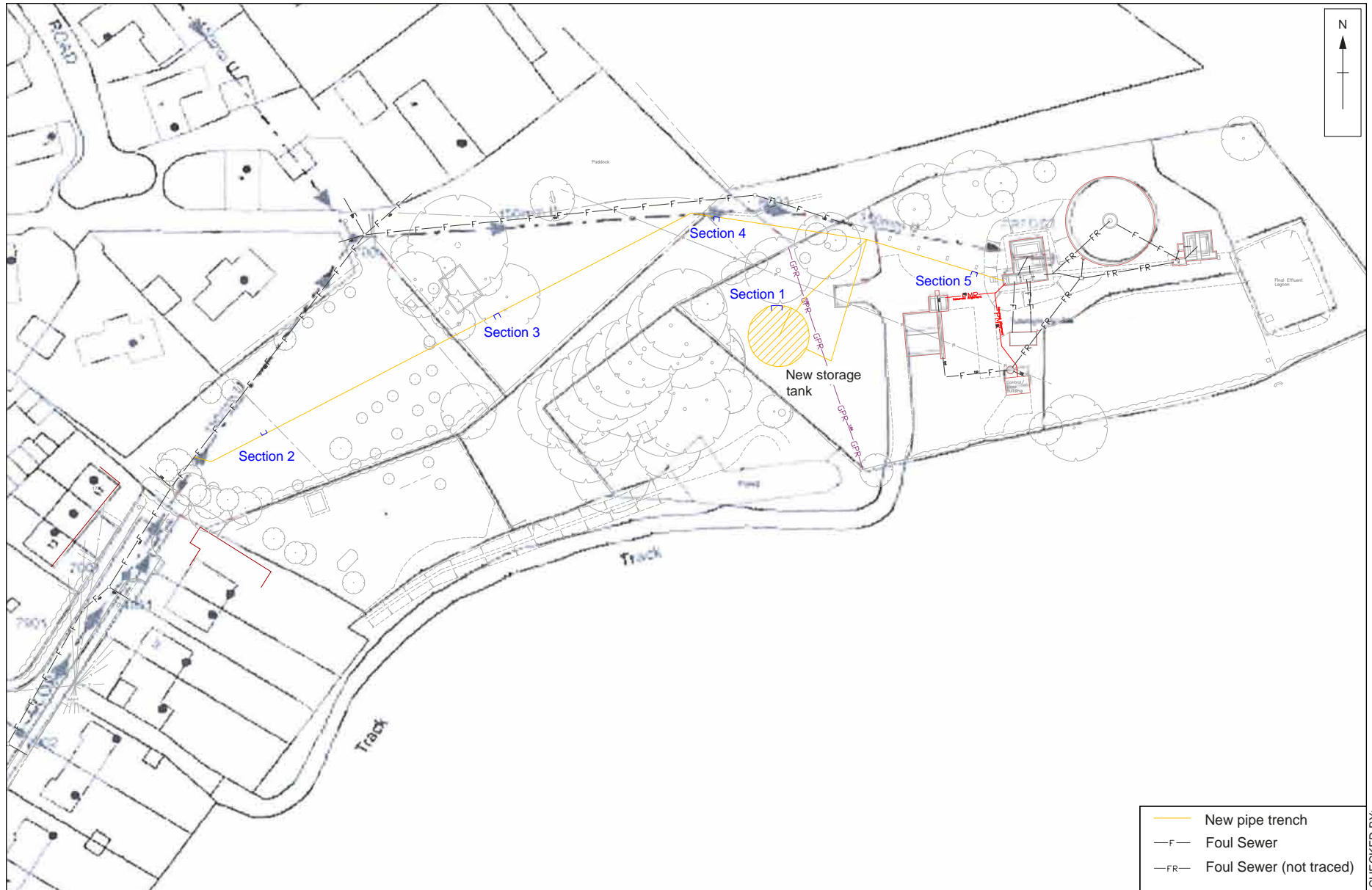


Figure 2: Line of works and location of drawn sections

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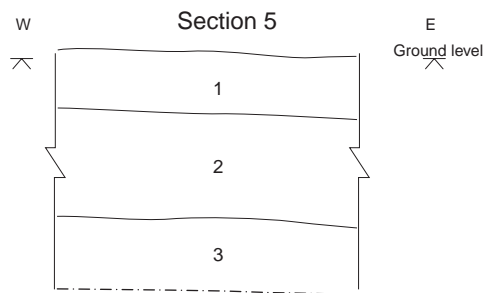
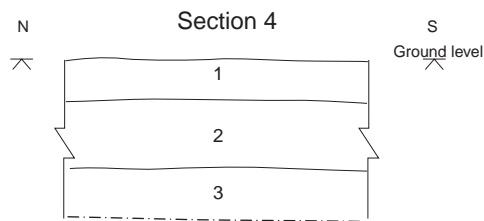
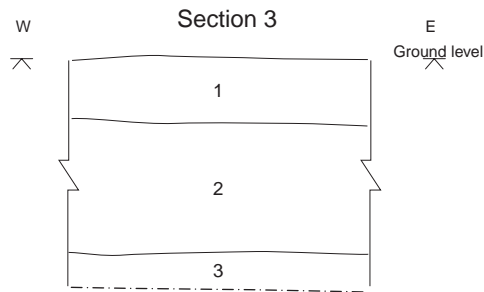
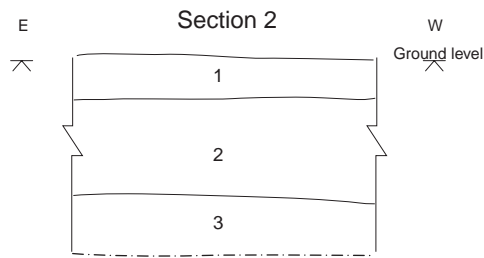
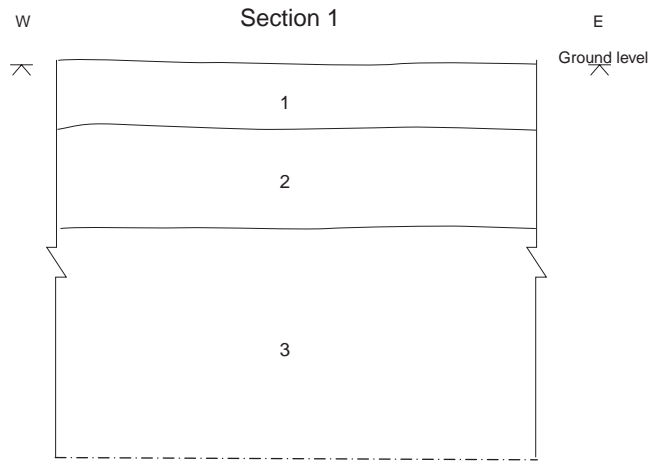


Figure 3: Sections



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