

Bekynton Field Eton College



Archaeological Evaluation Report




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Eton College, Bekynton Field

Eton

Berkshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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and illustrated by Leo Heatley and Hannah Kennedy

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Summary

In April 2011 Oxford Archaeology conducted an archaeological evaluation at Eton College, Bekynton Field, Eton, Berkshire NGR SU 96388 77746. The evaluation was in advance of construction work at the site and comprised 4 trenches ranging in length from 5 to 15 m. No archaeological deposits or remains were present in the trenches.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 Between the 4th and 6th April 2011 Oxford Archaeology (OA) conducted an archaeological evaluation at Bekynton Field, Eton College, Eton, Berkshire, centred on NGR SU 963 777 (Fig. 1). The evaluation was commissioned by Eton College and was undertaken as a condition of Planning Permission (ref: 10/01663). A brief for the work was set by Paul Falcini of Berkshire Archaeology on behalf of Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council, detailing the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary in respect of the planning application. The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing how OA would implement the requirements specified within the brief (OA 2011). Four trenches, varying in length from 5 m to 15 m, were excavated across the site (Fig. 2).
- 1.1.2 The site is located on the north side of Keats Lane, Eton between the Laundry building and the music schools.

1.2 Topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The site area comprises approximately 0.95 ha and is currently occupied by college buildings and associated access road, parking and landscaping. The site slopes imperceptibly from a height of approximately 19.9 m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) to the north-east to 19.2 m aOD to the south-west. The underlying geology of the area is Shepperton gravels and sands. The evaluation revealed the local site geology to be an 'upward fining sequence' with the gravels overlain by a fine sandy clay (brickearth) deposit.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background has already been discussed in a Desk Based Assessment (DBA) of the site produced by OA (OA 2010) and is only briefly summarised below.
- 1.3.2 No previous archaeological activity has taken place previously within the Site and the National Monuments Record and the Berkshire Sites and Monument Records list no areas of archaeological interest within the Site.
- 1.3.3 The location of the Site on the first gravel terrace of the River Thames is similar to that of large multi-period prehistoric sites recorded less than 4 km to the west. Romano-British activity has also been recorded at the same locations.
- 1.3.4 The Site is located on the edge of Eton which is medieval in origin and contains significant built heritage from the period.
- 1.3.5 Cartographic evidence shows that the south-east quarter of the Site was occupied by potentially post-medieval cottages up to the later half of the 20th Century. The foundations of possibly 19th Century structures have been noted within the site during a walkover survey.



2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The aims of the evaluation were:

- to determine the existence or absence of archaeological remains and, shall archaeological remains be present, to assess their general nature and significance
- to determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of the remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence
- to determine or confirm the approximate extent of the remains
- to determine the condition and state of preservation of the remains
- to determine the degree of complexity of the horizontal and/or vertical stratigraphy present
- to assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape
- to determine the implications of the remains with reference to economy, status, utility and social activity
- to determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of the artefactual evidence present
- to determine the potential of the site to provide palaeo-environmental, geo-archaeological and/or economic evidence
- to determine the date and character of existing strata in order to further assess the potential impact of the development on any archaeological remains, to the end that full confidence can be achieved of either the absence of archaeological remains within the impact area of development or a strategy approved by the archaeological planning advisor for mitigating any such remains as exist by excavation and preservation by record.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The evaluation consisted of a 5% sample across the areas of building construction impact. Four trenches were laid out using taped measurements and triangulation from base map reference points.

2.2.2 All trenches were scanned with a Cable Avoidance Tool prior to excavation. Trenches were excavated using a toothless ditching bucket under close archaeological supervision. The car park hardcore surface of Trenches 1, 2 and 4 and the topsoil of Trench 3 were stored separately to facilitate reinstatement in reverse order of excavation. Undetected electrical services were present within Trenches 2 and 3. Trench 3 was slightly realigned to avoid the cable, while Trench 2 was split into two parts and relabelled Trench 2A and 2B.



- 2.2.3 A representative section of each trench was cleaned, photographed and recorded. Ordnance datum (OD) levels were recorded at current ground level at both ends of trench and at three points along the base.

3 RESULTS DESCRIPTION

3.1 General soils and ground conditions

- 3.1.1 All trenches were excavated in good conditions. Shepperton terrace gravels were recorded at depths of between 0.9 m and 1.30 m below current ground level. The gravels were overlain by undisturbed sandy clay deposits ('brickearth') except in Trench 3 which is adjacent to modern buildings and appears to have been truncated to the depth of gravel and then built up with imported loams.
- 3.1.2 In Trenches 1, 2 (A and B) and 4 a gradually accumulated subsoil and topsoil were present in the soil sequence. These had been buried below layers comprising modern construction and demolition materials.

Trench 1

- 3.1.3 Trench 1 measured 8 x 1.8 m. Natural gravels (107) were encountered at 1.10 m below the current ground level (18.61 m aOD). The gravels were overlain by sandy clay natural brickearth (106). A subsoil (105) overlay the brickearth. This was 0.21 m thick and was a graded interface between the brickearth natural and a 0.2 m thick buried topsoil (104). A geotextile membrane followed by 0.57 m thick sequence of modern construction and demolition materials (103-101) overlying the topsoil (Fig. 3, photograph section 101).

Trenches 2A and 2B

- 3.1.4 Trench 2A measured 6 x 1.8 m. Trench 2B measured 9 x 1.8 m.
- 3.1.5 Natural gravels (207) were encountered at 1.30 m below the current ground level (18.60 m aOD). The gravels were overlain by sandy clay natural brickearth (206). A subsoil (205) overlay the brickearth. This was 0.15 m thick and was a graded interface between the brickearth natural and a 0.15 m thick buried topsoil (204).
- 3.1.6 Trench 2B contained 4 modern substantial concrete piles spaced at regular 2.5 m intervals (Fig. 2). Each circular concrete pile was approximately 0.55 m in diameter and encountered at a consistent depth of 19.60 m OD. The tops of the piles did not appear to be truncated and likely reflect genuine construction level. The base of the piles were not reached. Similar circular concrete structures were observed underneath the existing temporary prefabricated buildings in the surrounding area.
- 3.1.7 Deposit (204) was overlain by a 0.67 m deep sequence of modern construction and demolition materials (203=210, 202 and 201) lying on a geotextile membrane and forming the existing hardstanding. A modern geotextile lined tarmac filled feature (209), was cut into layer (210) (Fig. 3, photograph section 201).

Trench 3

- 3.1.8 Trench 3 measured 5 x 1.8 m. Natural gravel (303) was encountered 0.75 m below current ground level at 18.81 m aOD. The gravel was not capped in this trench by brickearth deposits but overlain by a dark brown sandy clay subsoil containing modern



refuse (302). This contained modern refuse including a fragment of scaffold bar and three modern Unigate milk bottles and is likely to be formed from modern landscaping around the existing building, (Fig. 3, photograph section 301). The finds were recorded and discarded.

Trench 4

- 3.1.9 Trench 4 measured 10 x 1.8 m. The natural brown yellow gravel (408) was encountered 0.95 m below current ground level at 18.50 m aOD. This was overlain by brick earth (407). The brickearth was directly overlain by a 0.26 m thick grey brown buried topsoil (403). Modern overburden layers (402) and (401) overlaid the topsoil and formed the existing hardstanding. These deposits were 0.37 m thick.
- 3.1.10 Trench 4 contained a circular feature (406) which measured 1.2 m in diameter and 0.5 m deep. The feature contained two fills; the lower comprised gravel upcast, the upper was similar in nature to the buried topsoil. The character of the fills defined the feature as a tree hole (trees are shown in this area on the 1881 OS map but have been removed by the 1900 OS edition) see Fig. 3, Section 401.

3.2 Finds and ecofactual summary

- 3.2.1 No finds were retained and no environmental samples were taken.

4 RESULTS SUMMARY

- 4.1.1 Trench 1 exhibited an untruncated sequence with potential archaeological horizons existing beneath buried topsoil (104) and layers of modern building material at 0.77 m below existing ground level. No archaeological features remains or artefacts were found within subsoil 105 or the underlying natural brickearth.
- 4.1.2 Trench 2 exhibited a sequence which was untruncated, although impacted by the insertion of concrete piles. The potential archaeological horizons were below the buried topsoil (204) and layers of modern building material at 0.82 m below existing ground level. No archaeological features remains or artefacts were found within the lower subsoil (205) or the underlying natural brickearth and gravels.
- 4.1.3 Trench 3 had been truncated to the level of natural gravel and the sequence reformed with landscaped garden soils. This event is likely to be associated with construction of the relatively modern street frontage buildings. The surviving potential archaeological horizon (gravel) was at 0.75m below existing ground level. No archaeological features remains or artefacts were found at this level.
- 4.1.4 Trench 4 notably contained no subsoil but a sequence of natural gravel and brickearth overlain by topsoil buried below modern materials forming current hardstanding. The potential archaeological horizon was at the level of brickearth at 0.63 m below existing ground level.

5 DISCUSSION

- 5.1.1 No archaeological artefacts or deposits were identified within the 5 % sample of the area of building impact. In accordance with Hey and Lacey 2001 'The Evaluation of Archaeological Decision Making Processes and Sampling Strategies' this can be taken as a reliable indicator of the absence of such remains. The evaluation also characterised the **potential** archaeological horizon (undisturbed natural strata) as existing at a minimum of 0.63 m below existing ground level.





APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1							
General description					Orientation	NE-SW	
Trench devoid of archaeological remains. The trench consisted of made ground, truncated topsoil, subsoil and brickearth overlying natural gravel.					Avg. depth (m)	1.14	
					Width (m)	1.8	
					Length (m)	8	
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date	
101	Layer	-	0.22	Modern car park hardcore surface. Compacted small-medium angular and sub-angular stones. Same as 201.	-	Modern	
102	Layer	-	0.12	Compact crushed tarmac. Levelling/base layer for finished car park surface. Same as 202.	-	Modern	
103	Layer	-	0.23	Made ground comprising brick, concrete, plastic, brick and steel reinforcing in a mid brown clay deposit sitting on a layer of geotextile membrane. Same as 203.	-	Modern	
104	Layer	-	0.2	Mid grey brown firm sandy clay with occasional stone, brick, tile and charcoal flecks. Truncated former topsoil. Same as 204, 403.	-	-	
105	Layer	-	0.21	Firm mid orange brown slightly sandy clay with no visible inclusions. Same as 205.	-	-	
106	Layer	-	0.28	Soft light orange brown slightly clayey sand with patches of pale yellow white. Same as 206, 407.	-	-	
107	Layer	-	-	Natural gravels. Loose mid yellow brown slightly clay sand gravel with frequent medium and small rounded and sub-rounded flints and pebbles. Same as 207, 303, 408.	-	-	
108	Struct	0.55	>1	Concrete pile. Partially visible in the short northern end of trench. Not fully exposed by machine.	-	Modern	

Trench 2							
General description					Orientation	NW-SE	
Trench devoid of archaeological remains. Trench split into two segments to avoid power cable with TR 2A measuring 6 m and TR 2B measuring 9 m in length. Four modern concrete piles were observed in 2B. The trench consisted of made ground, truncated topsoil, subsoil and brickearth overlying natural gravel.					Avg. depth (m)	1.3	
					Width (m)	1.8	
					Length (m)	15	
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date	



201	Layer	-	0.22	Modern car park hardcore surface. Compacted small-medium angular and sub-angular stones. Same as 101.	-	Modern
202	Layer	-	0.05	Compact crushed tarmac. Levelling/base layer for finished car park surface. Same as 102.	-	Modern
203	Layer	-	0.4	Made ground comprising crushed brick, concrete, steel reinforcing, plastic sitting on top of a geotextile membrane. Same as 103.	-	Modern
204	Layer	-	0.15	Firm mid grey brown silty clay with occasional flecks of charcoal, tile, and small sub rounded stones. Truncated former topsoil. Same as 104, 403.	-	-
205	Layer	-	0.15	Firm mid orange brown sandy clay with occasional small sub rounded stones and small tree roots.	-	-
206	Layer	-	0.4	Soft mid to light yellow brown sandy clay with occasional patches of light yellow. Same as 106.	-	-
207	Layer	-	-	Natural gravels. Loose light yellow brown sandy gravel with frequent medium and small rounded and sub-rounded flints and pebbles. Same as 107, 303, 408.	-	-
208	Fill	-	0.5	Fill of 209. Friable crushed tarmac sitting on top of a geotextile membrane. TR 2B only.	-	Modern
209	Cut	4.1	0.5	Probably pit. Not fully exposed within trench. Filled by 208.	-	Modern
210	Layer	-	0.12	Made ground. Firm dark grey brown with medium to large fragments of sandstone, concrete and occasional brick.	Small fragment of Willow pattern pottery (not retained)	Modern
211	Struct	0.55	>1	Concrete pile.	-	Modern
212	Struct	0.55	>1	Concrete pile.	-	Modern
213	Struct	0.55	>1	Concrete pile.	-	Modern
214	Struct	0.55	>1	Concrete pile.	-	Modern

Trench 3						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Trench devoid of archaeological remains.					Avg. depth (m)	0.8
					Width (m)	1.8
					Length (m)	5
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
301	Layer	-	0.3	Modern topsoil. Firm dark grey brown	-	Modern



				silty clay with occasional charcoal, brick fragments and sub rounded stones.		
302	Layer	-	0.5	Subsoil. Firm dark brown sandy clay with rare small sub rounded stones.	3 Unigate milk bottles, scaffold fragment retained)	Iron bar (not retained) Modern
303	Layer	-	-	Natural gravel. Loose mid yellow brown slightly sandy clay with frequent medium and small rounded and sub-rounded flints and pebbles. Same as 107, 207, 408.	-	-

Trench 4						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Trench devoid of archaeological remains. A small area of bioturbation or tree removal deposits were extending underneath the north-western trench edge was observed.					Avg. depth (m)	0.96
					Width (m)	1.8
					Length (m)	10
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
401	Layer	-	0.12	Compact small sub-angular stones in a slightly pink silty clay matrix, sitting on a geotextile membrane. Modern car park surface.	-	Modern
402	Layer	-	0.2	Compact small to medium sized sub-angular stones, chalk fragments and medium lumps of concrete fragments in a mid yellow brown silty clay matrix. Probable earlier parking surface.	-	Modern
403	Layer	-	0.26	Firm mid grey brown sandy clay topsoil with rare small fragments of brick.	-	-
404	Fill	-	0.34	Fill of 406. Mid orange brown sandy clay. No inclusions.	-	-
405	Fill	-	0.26	Fill of 406. Mid orange brown sandy gravel.	-	-
406	Cut	1.2	0.5	Bioturbation. Tree hole.	-	-
407	Layer	-	0.4	Soft light yellow brown silty clay. Mineralisation bands visible.	-	-
408	Layer	-	-	Natural. Soft mid brown yellow sandy gravel.		



APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

English Heritage, 1991, Management of Archaeological Projects.

Hey, G. and Lacey, M. 2001, Evaluation of Archaeological Decision-making Processes and Sampling Strategies.

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

Oxford Archaeology, 2000, OA Environmental Sampling Guidelines and Instruction, Manual.

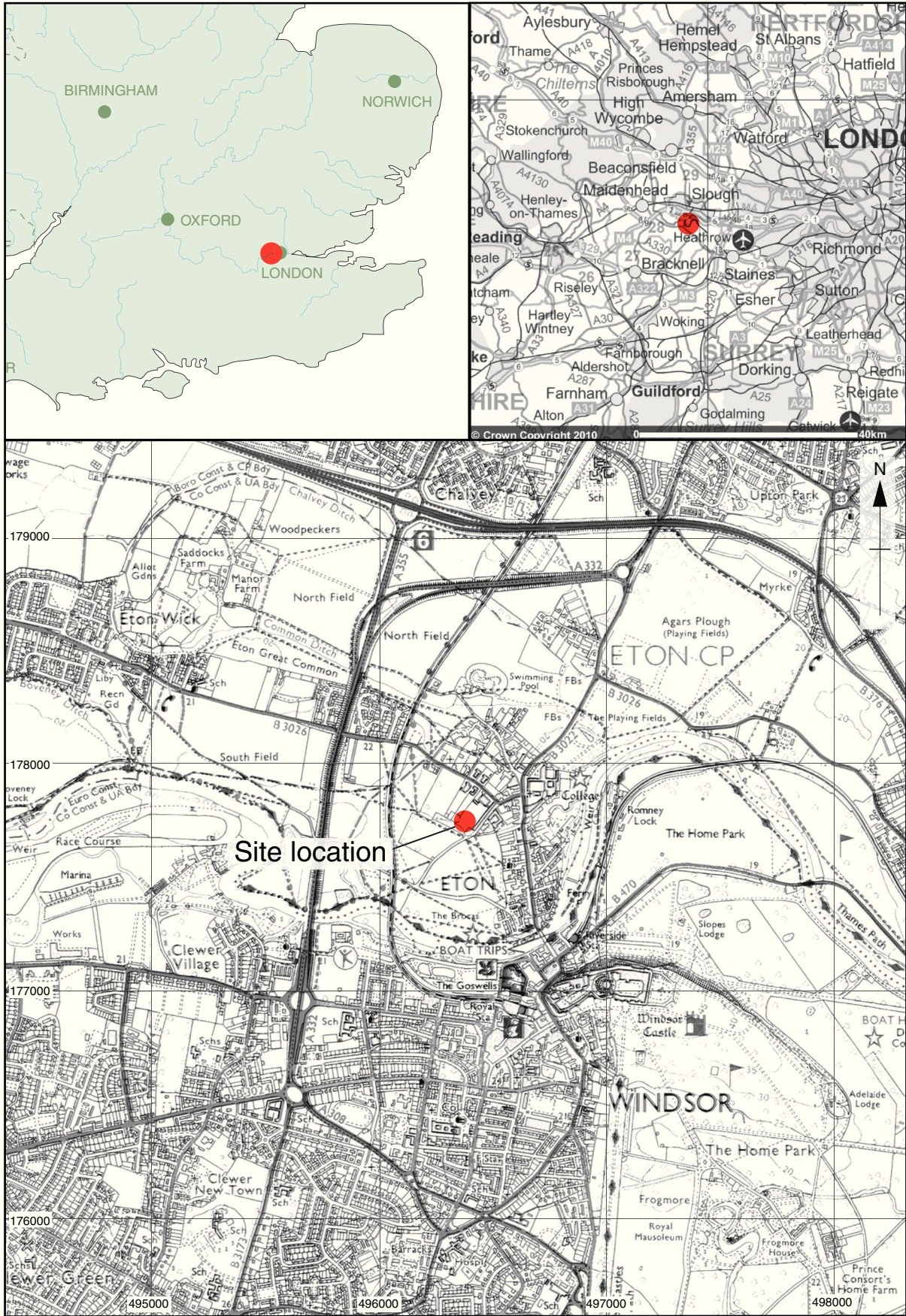
Oxford Archaeology, 2010, Eton College, Bekynton Field. Archaeological Desk-based Assessment.

Oxford Archaeology, 2011, Bekynton Field, Eton College. Written Scheme of Investigation.



APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Eton College, Bekynton Field, Eton, Berkshire
Site code:	ETBK 11
Grid reference:	SU 963 777
Type:	Evaluation
Date and duration:	4-6 April 2011
Area of site:	0.95 ha
Summary of results:	Four trench evaluation. No archaeological remains observed.
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES.



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Figure 1: Site location



Key	
	Area of proposed development
	Zone 2: Pad foundations
	Zone 3: Piled foundations
	Limit of excavation
	Possible tree hole
	Modern feature
	Building
	Electricity service
401	Context number
	OS coordinate

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Figure 2: Trench location





Northwest facing Section 101



Southwest facing Section 201



Northwest facing Section 301

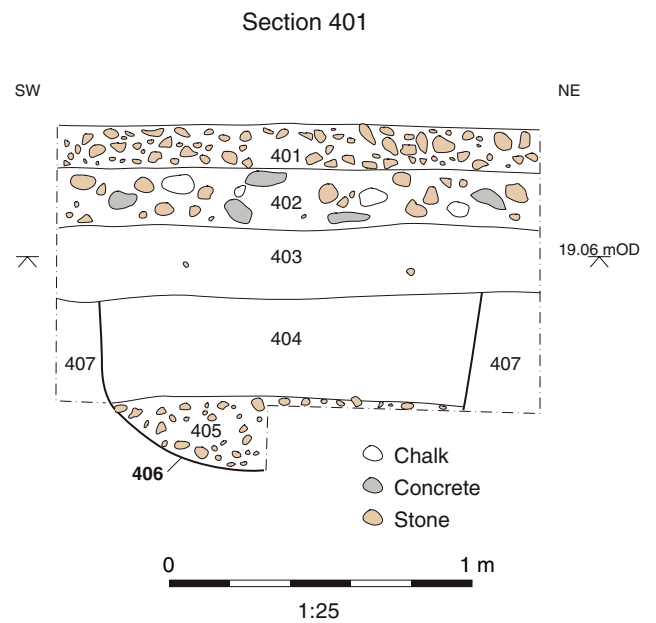


Figure 3: Photographs of sections 101, 201 and 301 and section drawing 401