

New School Buildings  
Wraysbury Primary School  
Wraysbury  
Royal Borough of Windsor  
and Maidenhead



**Archaeological  
Watching Brief Report**



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# **New School Buildings, Wraysbury Primary School, Wraysbury, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead**

*Archaeological Watching Brief Report*

*Written by Mike Sims*

*and illustrated by Markus Dylewski*

## **Table of Contents**

<b>Summary.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1 Scope of work.....	4
1.2 Location, geology and topography.....	4
1.3 Archaeological and historical background.....	4
<b>2 Project Aims and Methodology.....</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1 Aims.....	5
2.2 Methodology.....	5
<b>3 Results.....</b>	<b>6</b>
3.1 Introduction and presentation of results.....	6
3.2 General soils and ground conditions.....	6
3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits.....	6
3.4 Description of deposits.....	6
3.5 Finds.....	7
3.6 Environmental remains.....	8
<b>4 Discussion and Conclusions.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Appendix A. Archaeological Context Inventory.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Appendix B. Bibliography and References.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Appendix C. Summary of Site Details.....</b>	<b>12</b>



## List of Figures

Fig. 1 Site location

Fig. 2 Site plan

Fig. 3 Plan of “Rollalong” prefabricated building

Fig. 4 Plan of “Traditional” build

Fig. 5 Sections 1- 6

Fig. 6 Sections 7, 8, 10-12



## Summary

*In June and August 2011, Oxford Archaeology undertook a watching brief during the erection of new classrooms and an extension at Wraysbury Primary School, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (NGR: TQ 0011 7422). The watching brief observed evidence of deposits of modern made ground throughout the site and for modern small scale gravel extraction. The demolished remains of a former telephone exchange were also observed. No definitive evidence for the continuation of the interments recorded in the 1984 excavations into the area of the traditional build was observed, but the presence of a single piece of human bone which had been redeposited within a service trench may suggest the presence of further burials.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) to undertake a watching brief on new buildings at Wraysbury Primary School.
- 1.1.2 The proposed works are an extension in the playground at the eastern end of the school and the installation of Rollalong temporary buildings on pad foundations on the playing fields. This work involved the removal of the hard surfaces and the reduction of the present ground level in the footprint of the traditional extension and the excavation of pad foundations for the temporary buildings. There were also excavations for associated services and and some ground reduction for flood compensation works.
- 1.1.3 Planning Permission for the development has been granted (planning ref: RBWM planning application 11/00663). OA produced a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) describing how an archaeological watching brief would be conducted on the works (OA, 2011). This was in accordance with a brief set by Fiona MacDonald of Berkshire Archaeology (MacDonald, 2011) on behalf of the local planning authority.
- 1.1.4 All work was undertaken in accordance with local and national planning policies.

### 1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is located at Wraysbury Primary School, Welley Road, Wraysbury, Staines TW19 5DJ and is centred on NGR TQ 0011 7422 (Fig. 1). The proposed area of works lies to the rear of the primary school, on the east side.
- 1.2.2 The development area is approximately 0.4ha in size and lies at approximately 17m AOD. The traditional extension was built in an area originally part of the tarmac playground while the Rollalong (prefabricated) buildings were placed within the playing fields.
- 1.2.3 The geology of the area is described as Shepperton gravels, part of the first terrace, overlying London Clay. (KF Geotechnical 2010).

### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background to the site is provided in the brief and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 The site is identified as being of archaeological potential because three undated inhumation burials were found in the school playground in 1984 during previous building work to construct a new swimming pool and dealt with by representatives of Reading Museum. It has been suggested that these represent a burial ground pre-dating the present church and cemetery sited c. 300m to the south. The Waylands Nursery site 150m to the north of the site produced late Bronze Age / early Iron Age settlement evidence, Roman linear features and pits dated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries and early Saxon settlement evidence including a sunken floor building and large quantities of 5<sup>th</sup> century pottery.
- 1.3.3 The present parish church building dates from the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, historical sources provide no evidence of a church before that date. Investigations around the church have identified limited settlement evidence from the Roman period including an inhumation. These investigations also identified a Saxon settlement dating to the late

9<sup>th</sup> to early 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, after which settlement is suggested to have shifted to the area around the junction of Ouseley Road and Welley Road.

- 1.3.4 In the post-medieval period the site is shown as being part of the Glenmore House estate and the area of the site itself as being an orchard. The school is first shown on the 1978 Ordnance Survey mapping.
- 1.3.5 The three inhumation burials found in the school playground in 1984 were found within 0.5 - 0.7m of the ground surface and approximately 20m from the proposed site for the Rollalong buildings but only a few meters from the area of the traditional build extension. The burials were undated at the time of their discovery and they may belong to any period from the Prehistoric to the Early Medieval. Given the evidence of settlement activity in the vicinity, corresponding to this time frame, the burials may be associated with the settlements. It is unknown whether they formed a small discrete cluster or whether they may be part of a wider spacial distribution of features.

## 2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The specific aims and objectives of the watching brief are:

- (i) To determine the existence or absence of any archaeological remains; and should remains be found to be present to ensure their preservation by record to the highest possible standard;
- (ii) To determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of the remains, by mean of artefactual or other evidence;
- (iii) To determine the range, quality and quantity of the artefactual evidence present;
- (iv) To assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered including reference to the previous investigations in Wraysbury;
- (v) To determine the implications of the remains with reference to economy, status, utility and social activity and to examine those in relation to existing knowledge about the archaeology and history of Wraysbury;
- (vi) To determine and investigate the palaeoenvironmental and / or economic evidence present;
- (vii) To review the evidence available from the site against the Solent Thames Research Framework and apply that evidence to the Research Agendas.

### 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The archaeological work on the site was undertaken in two phases (Fig. 2). In June 2011 OA undertook a watching brief during the groundworks conducted prior to the installation of the "Rollalong" prefabricated buildings. These works included the excavation of foundation trenches, foundation pads, soakaway pits and associated service trenching.
- 2.2.2 The second phase was undertaken during the construction of a traditionally built extension on the south side of the main school building during August 2011.
- 2.2.3 This watching brief was maintained as a continuous archaeological presence during all groundworks that had the potential to affect or reveal archaeological deposits.



- 2.2.4 All features and deposits were issued with unique context numbers, and context recording was in accordance with the established OA Field Manual (OAU 1992). Black-and-white negative and colour digital photographs were taken of all excavations and archaeological features.
- 2.2.5 Site plans were drawn at an appropriate scale (normally 1:50 or 1:100) with larger scale plans of features as necessary. Section drawings of features and sample sections of trenches were drawn at a scale of 1:20.

### 3 RESULTS

#### 3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

- 3.1.1 The results from each phase of work will be described separately followed by an overall discussion and conclusion. Contexts are listed in an inventory in Appendix A.

#### 3.2 General soils and ground conditions

- 3.2.1 The soil conditions were dry and the context boundaries were clearly defined. The groundwater was not encountered.

#### 3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

- 3.3.1 The stratigraphy observed was broadly similar in both phases of work with comparable dating evidence recovered from the deposits.

#### 3.4 Description of deposits

##### *Phase 1 (The “Rollalong” buildings)*

- 3.4.1 The works included the topsoil strip and leveling within the footprint of the development, the excavation of foundation trenches for the brick skin (0.5 m wide and averaging between 1 m and 1.2 m in depth), the excavation of 73 pits for foundation pads (each nominally 1 m square and between 1m and 1.2 m in depth), 4 soakaway pits, each 2.6 m square by up to 3.1 m in depth and associated service trenching 0.5 m width and up to 0.6 m in depth (Fig. 2 and Fig. 3).
- 3.4.2 The majority of the stratigraphy encountered during the excavations was broadly similar and a general description can be applied with localised exceptions being included in more detail.
- 3.4.3 The underlying natural, a yellow-brown compacted terrace gravel (5), was encountered at a depth of between 0.9 m and 1.1 m below the current ground level (Figs. 5 and 6, Sections 1 to 8). Within the majority of the site the gravel was overlain by a layer of fine yellow-brown clay silt containing coarse sand and fine gravel (4), measuring between 0.2 m and 0.4 m in depth. Within the area around Section 4 the gravel was overlaid by a lens of orange-brown sandy silt clay (6) measuring 0.25 m deep and 3 m wide.
- 3.4.4 These contexts were overlaid by a 0.2 m deep layer of a grey-brown fine silt loam, (3). This is a probable buried topsoil horizon but no dating evidence was recovered.
- 3.4.5 This layer had been cut by a roughly circular vertical sided pit (10) measuring approximately 1.2 m deep and 5.5 m in diameter (Section 7). This was filled by a sequence of redeposited material (7, 8 and 9) which produced modern finds such as lengths of pipe and angle iron.

- 3.4.6 Sealing Pit 10 and overlying layer 3 elsewhere was a layer of yellowish grey-brown sandy silt (2), up to 0.5 m in depth. This deposit contained numerous fragments of modern brick, tile and salt glazed sewer pipe together with charcoal flecking and gravel inclusions. This material measured 0.5 m deep at the southern extent of the site, increasing slightly towards the centre before tapering sharply off towards the north to a depth of 0.25 m forming a low east – west rise running across the playing field.
- 3.4.7 Within the south-eastern corner of the development this layer had been cut by a vertically sided rectangular feature (11), up to 1.2 m in depth and protruding into the development area for approximately 1 m (Fig. 3). Built within this feature was a brick structure (12). This had been constructed using deeply frogged bricks (stamped LBC) and yellow London Stocks bonded with a weak cement mortar and was composed of stepped brick foundations and vertical walls. The structure had been demolished down to the current ground level and the interior filled with demolition debris.
- 3.4.8 The demolished structure was sealed by a landscaping layer of grey brown silty clay loam topsoil and turf (1), measuring up to 0.3 m in depth which also overlaid layer 2 elsewhere.

### ***Phase 2 (The Traditional Build)***

- 3.4.9 The works included the removal of the tarmac playground surface, ground reduction within the footprint of the development and the excavation of foundation trenches for the external and internal walls and measured approximately 2.2 m by 7.4 m (Fig. 2 and Fig. 4). The stratigraphy observed was similar throughout the site and a general description can be applied with local variations described as appropriate.
- 3.4.10 The underlying natural gravel (26), was encountered at a depth of between 0.9 m and 1.2 m below the level of the playground (Fig. 6, Sections 10-12). This was overlaid by a second undisturbed natural deposit of a coarse reddish orange sand and small gravel (25) measuring up to 0.35 m in depth.
- 3.4.11 Covering layer 25 was a layer of brownish yellow coarse sand (22) up to 0.28 m in depth. This was also a probable natural deposit. All these deposits tipped down towards the east (towards the Thames). Cutting this layer was a 0.7 m wide service trench (28). This trench contained 3 separate pipes and had been backfilled with redeposited material (27). This backfill produced a single fragment of human bone.
- 3.4.12 Sealing layer 22 and exposed throughout the footprint for the new build was a layer of light grey sandy silt (21), 0.2 m – 0.3 m in depth. This layer contained numerous fragments of modern building materials such as brick, concrete and plastic sheeting. Cutting this layer was a modern service trench (23) containing a cable duct. This had been backfilled with redeposited material (24).
- 3.4.13 The tarmac playground surface (20) had been laid directly over layer 21 and the backfilled service trench 23.

## **3.5 Finds**

- 3.5.1 The majority of the artifacts collected consisted of fragments of brick and salt glazed pipe dating to the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. A number of iron objects such as offcuts of piping and re-inforcing bar and lengths of rubber tubing (compressor hose ?) were recovered from the backfilled pit 10. The presence of these artifacts was recorded but they were not retained.



- 3.5.2 A single piece of human bone, the shaft of an adult left femur, was recovered from the backfill (27) of a service trench. No other human remains were recovered or observed.

### 3.6 Environmental remains

- 3.6.1 The deposits of archaeological significance could all be dated to the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries by artifactual evidence and it was felt that no additional information would be obtained by archaeo-environmental sampling.

## 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

### *Discussion*

- 4.1.1 The stratigraphy observed can be divided into three main categories, natural deposits such as the terrace gravel and the alluvium, later deposits such as the buried soil horizon and modern deposits including landscaping, made ground, service trenching and structures .
- 4.1.2 The underlying terrace gravel (5 and 26) is primarily a glacial deposit. This was overlain in places by lenses of other glacially deposited material (probably fluvial) such as layer 6 within the area of the “Roll-a-long” Building and layers 22 and 25 within the area of the traditional build. The layer of alluvium (4) can also probably be grouped within these glacially associated deposits.
- 4.1.3 A buried soil horizon was only recorded within the area of the “Roll-a-long” building, presumably being truncated elsewhere. The fine silty structure of the deposit suggests that it was a mixture of flood deposits mixed with organic debris. There was no evidence observed to suggest that it had been worked (such as ridge and furrow) or evidence for activity such as cut features or residual finds. It is probable that because of the low lying nature of the land it remained pastoral in nature, only being used for seasonal grazing.
- 4.1.4 This layer has been cut by a large pit (10), probably dug for small scale gravel extraction, backfilled with material containing 20<sup>th</sup> century artefacts. The absence of washed in soils or slumping would suggest that it had been backfilled soon after extraction finished giving a 20<sup>th</sup> century date for its excavation.
- 4.1.5 This area had been overlaid with a layer of made ground measuring between 0.35 m and 0.5 m in depth (2). This produced numerous 20<sup>th</sup> century artifacts including bricks, metal piping, cable and glass. It is probable that this was done to raise the level of the ground above the projected flood line. This may have been contemporary with the construction of building (12). An examination of earlier OS maps covering the site shows a telephone exchange as occupying this position in 1963, and the foundations observed are the remnants of this building. The replacement exchange has been constructed outside the school boundary (to the immediate south of the development site), presumably during the construction of the school (which is not shown on the 1963 map when the site is still open ground) and the old exchange demolished and the site landscaped. A further layer of made ground, a layer of topsoil and turf (1) forms the playing field surface.
- 4.1.6 As has been noted in paragraph 4.1.3, the original soil horizon is absent within the area of the traditional build. Cutting the natural deposits (22, 25 and 26) was an east-west running service trench (28). This contained a gas pipe and two water pipes. It had been backfilled with with a mix of excavated material and modern deposits (27). Recovered from within this fill was a single fragment of human bone (shaft of an adult left femur).



The backfilled service trench and the natural elsewhere was covered by a thick deposit of modern made ground (21). This was composed of a mixture of construction debris and a grey sandy clay silt (possibly imported to site ?) and is presumably a levelling layer forming the base for the tarmac playground surface (20). A modern cable trench (23) had been dug through layer 21 and backfilled with crushed stone (24) before being sealed by the tarmac.

### **Conclusions**

- 4.1.7 The deep deposit of made ground, 21, directly overlying the top of the natural gravels suggests that the area of the traditional build had been heavily truncated, possibly during the construction of the school building. Immediately to the south and south-west of the traditional build is a bank of ground rising to approximately 1 m above the level of the playground. It is possible that this bank was constructed using the soils stripped from this area.
- 4.1.8 It is unclear if the piece of human bone recovered from context 27 originated from the interments observed during the 1984 excavations or if it indicates the presence of additional burials. No grave cuts were observed, but it is possible that they still survive in situ under layer 21.
- 4.1.9 The layer of made ground (2) observed during the installation of the "Roll-a-long" building was probably intended as a measure of flood relief and appears to relate to the construction of the demolished telephone exchange.



## APPENDIX A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Depth	Width	Length	Comments	Findings	Date
1	Layer	Up to 0.3 m			Landscaping layer of topsoil and turf	Brick	C20th
2	Layer	Up to 0.5 m			Modern made ground, probable anti flooding measure	Brick, sewer pipe, iron	C20th
3	Layer	0.2 m			Buried soil horizon	-	-
4	Layer	0.2 m – 0.4 m			Probable alluvium	-	-
5	Layer	> 2 m			Terrace gravel	-	-
6	Layer	0.25 m			Mixed alluvium and soil, possible fluvial deposit	-	-
7	Fill	Up to 0.6 m	8 m	8 m	Backfill of quarry pit (10)	-	C20th
8	Fill	Up to 0.4 m	8 m	8 m	Backfill of quarry pit (10)	Brick, iron, rubber hose	C20th
9	Fill	Up to 0.5 m	8 m	8 m	Backfill of quarry pit (10)	Brick, iron, wood	C20th
10	Cut	1.2 m	8 m	8 m	Small scale gravel extraction pit	-	C20th
11	Cut	1 m	> 10 m	> 1.2 m	Foundation trench for old telephone exchange	-	C20th
12	Structure	1 m	> 10 m	> 1.2 m	Demolished remains of old telephone exchange	Brick, iron, salt glazed pipe	C20th
20	Layer	0.18 m	> 4 m	> 8 m	Modern tarmac playground surface	-	C20th
21	Layer	0.25 m – 0.3 m	> 4 m	> 8 m	Made ground, leveling layer	Brick, iron, plastic	C20th
22	Layer	0.28 m	> 4 m	> 8 m	Natural sand	-	-
23	Cut	0.5 m	0.5 m	> 4 m	Modern cable trench	-	C20th
24	Fill	0.5 m	0.5 m	> 4 m	Backfill of cut 23	-	C20th
25	Layer	0.35 m	> 4 m	> 8 m	Natural sand	-	-
26	Layer		> 4 m	> 8 m	Natural gravel	-	-
27	Fill	0.55 m	0.7 m	> 5 m	Backfill of cut 28	Brick, plastic, bone	C20th
28	Cut	0.55 m	0.7 m	> 5 m	Service trench	-	C20th



## APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

- KF Geotechnical, 2010     *Ground Investigation and Preliminary Contamination Assessment at Wraysbury Primary School*
- MacDonald, F, 2011     *Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief Project at Wraysbury Primary School (Berkshire Archaeology)*
- OA, 2011     *Wraysbury Primary School: Written Scheme of Investigation*
- OAU,1992     *Field Manual (1<sup>st</sup> Edition, edited Wilkinson D)*



## APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	New School Buildings, Wraysbury Primary School, Wraysbury, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Site code:	WRAY11
Grid reference:	Centred at TQ 0011 7422
Type of watching brief:	Excavation of foundation trenches and foundation pads for a pre-fabricated building and new extension together with associated service trenching.
Date and duration of project:	June and August 2011, approximately 6 weeks, intermittent visits.
Area of site:	Approximately 0.7 hectare
Summary of results:	The watching brief observed evidence of modern made ground throughout the site and modern small scale gravel extraction. No definitive evidence for the continuation of the interments recorded in the 1984 excavations continuing into the area of the traditional build was observed but the presence of human bone within a service trench may suggest the presence of further burials. The remains of a former telephone exchange were also exposed.
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with a suitable museum in due course.



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Figure 1: Site location





Traditional build  
 "Rollalong" building  
 Existing school building

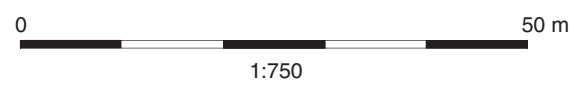


Figure 2: Site plan

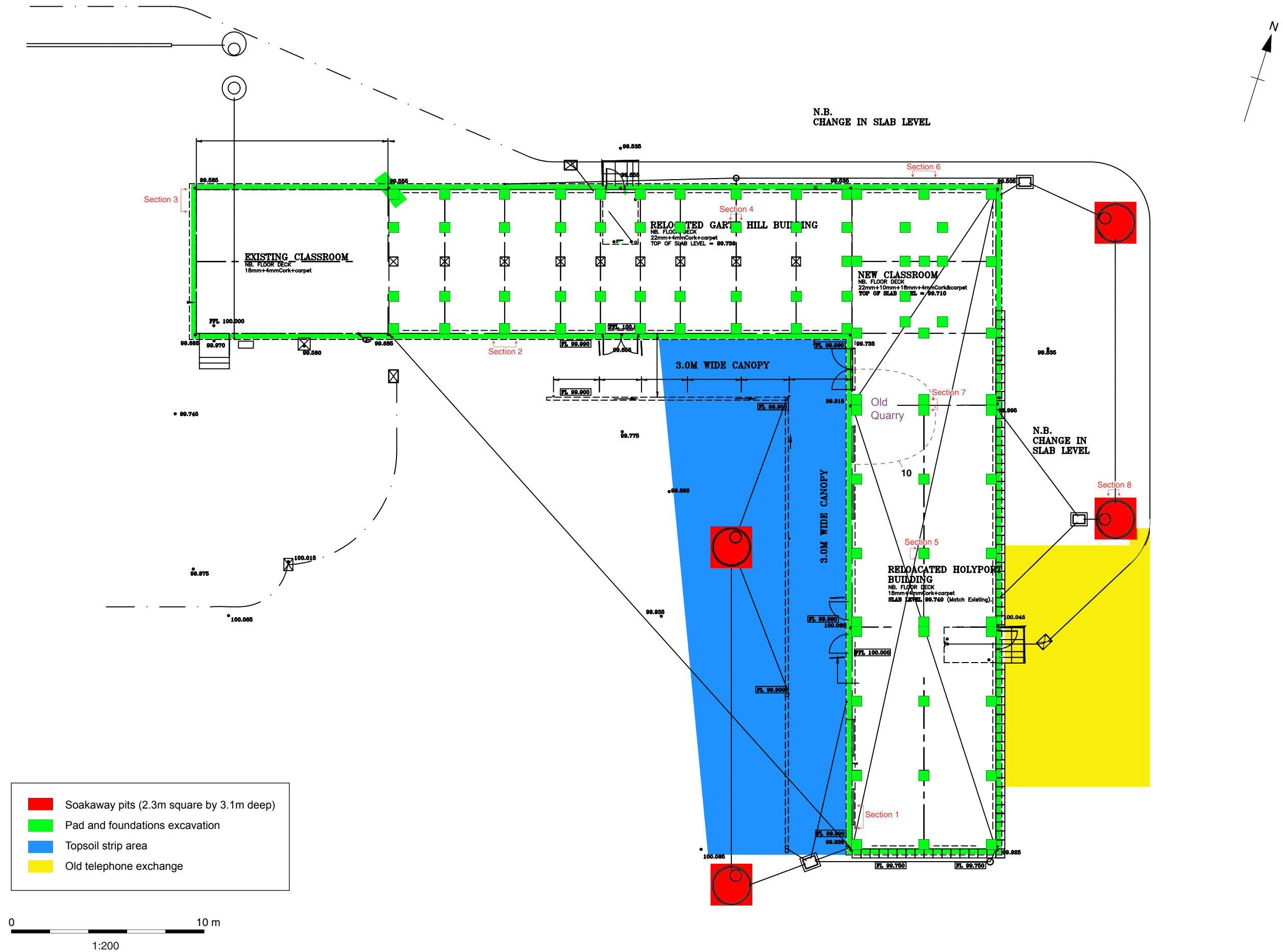


Figure 3: Plan of "Rollalong" prefabricated building

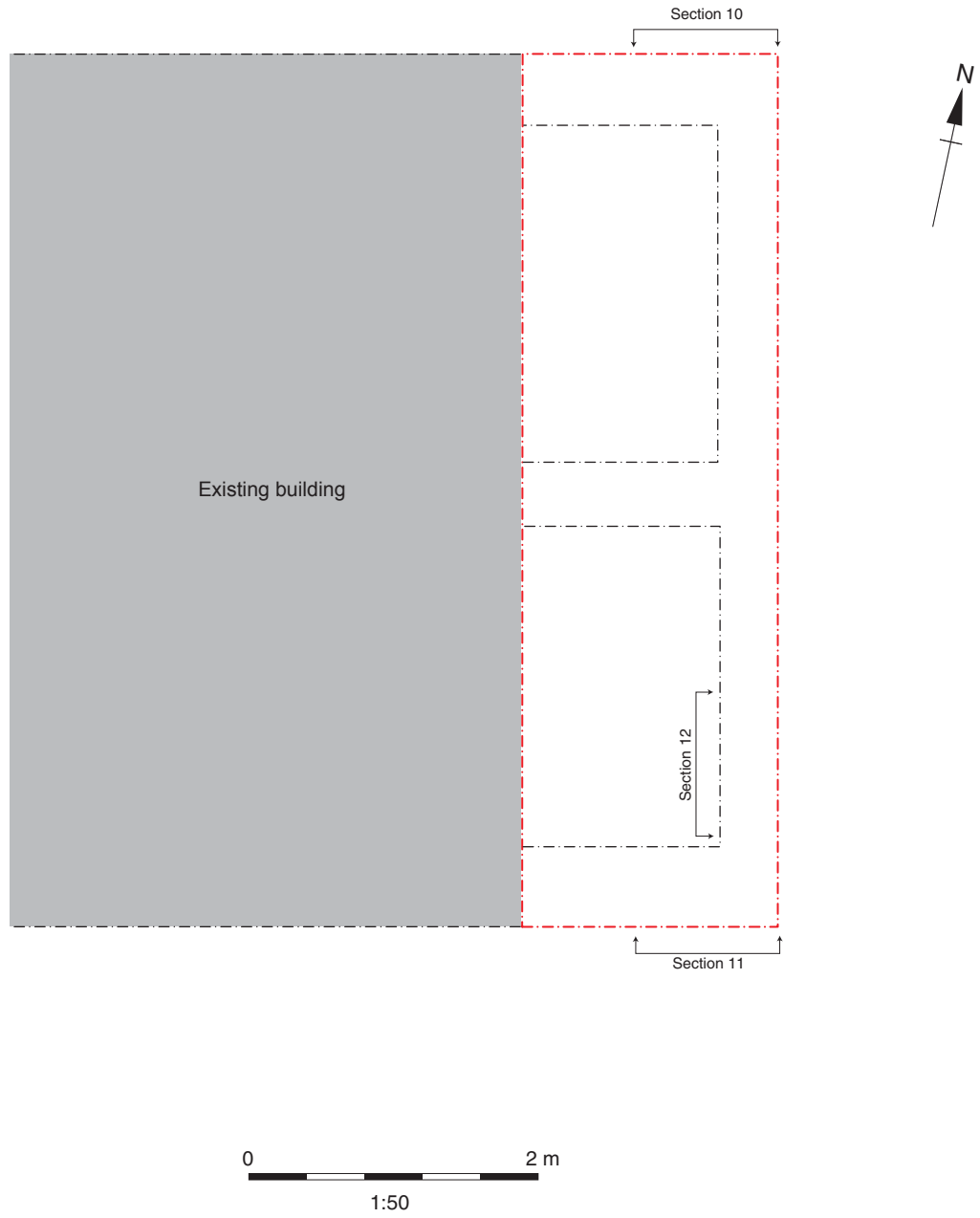


Figure 4: Plan of "Traditional" build

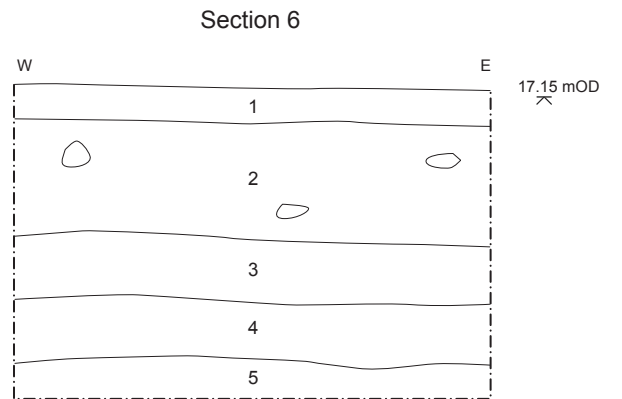
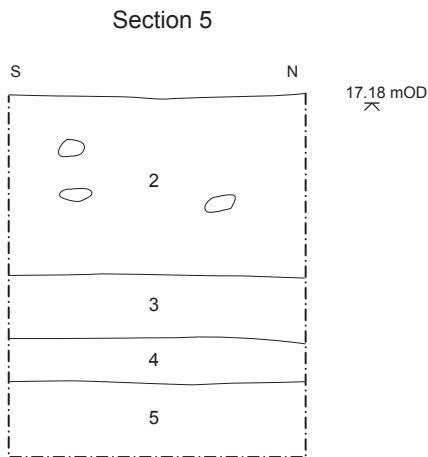
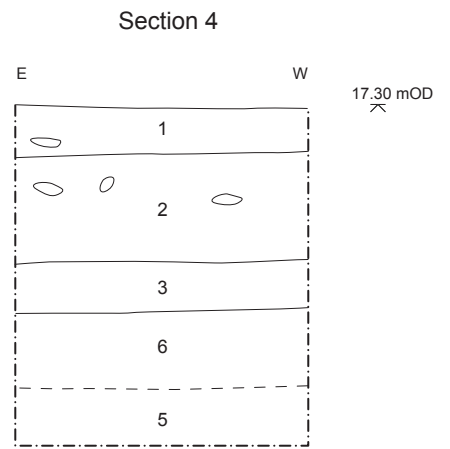
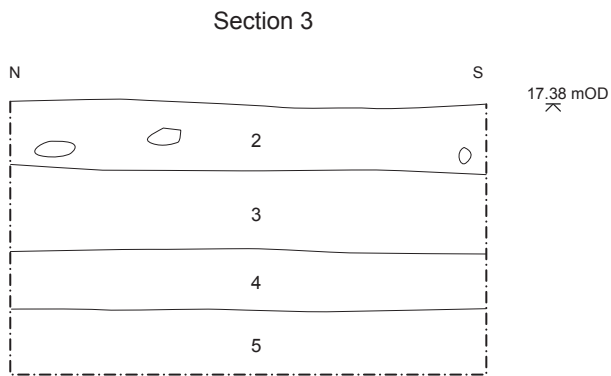
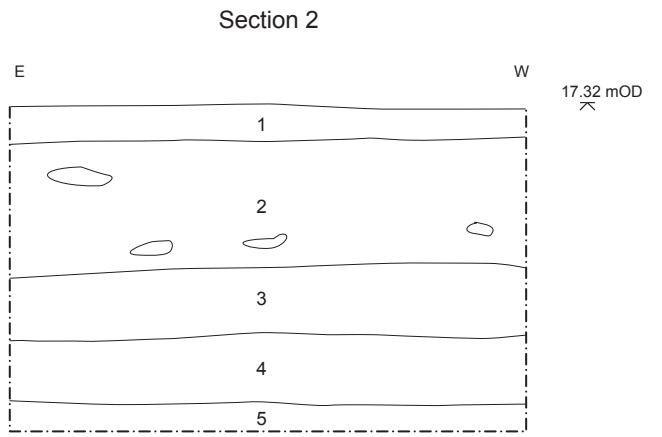
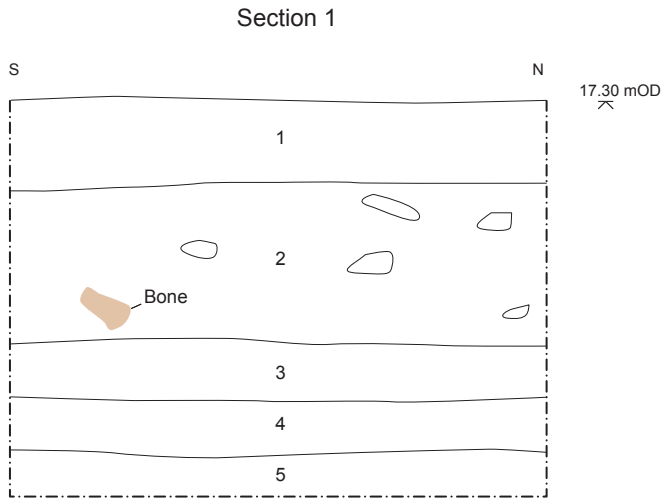
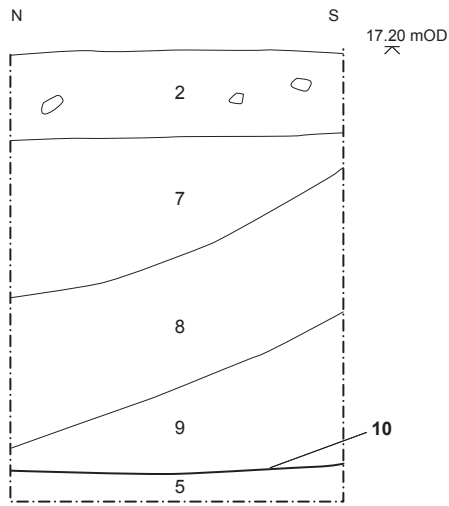


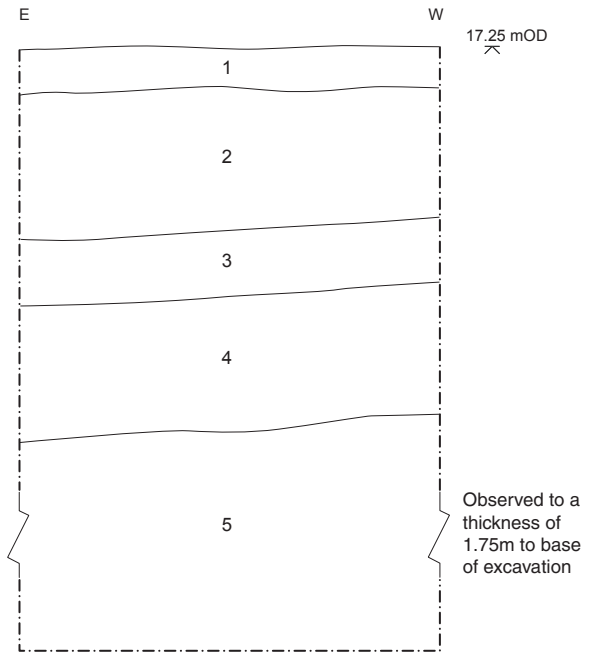
Figure 5: Sections 1-6



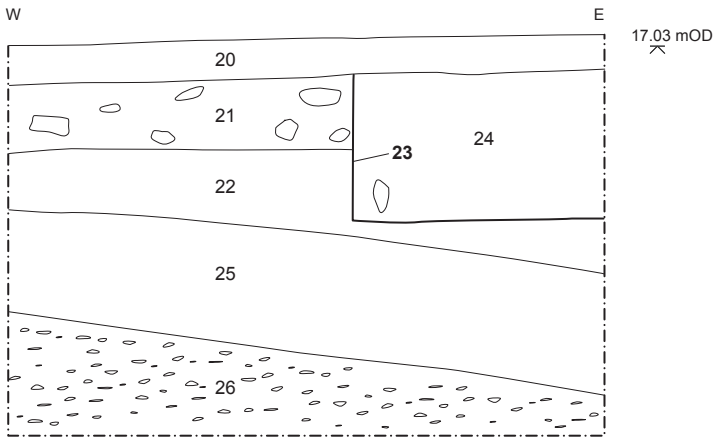
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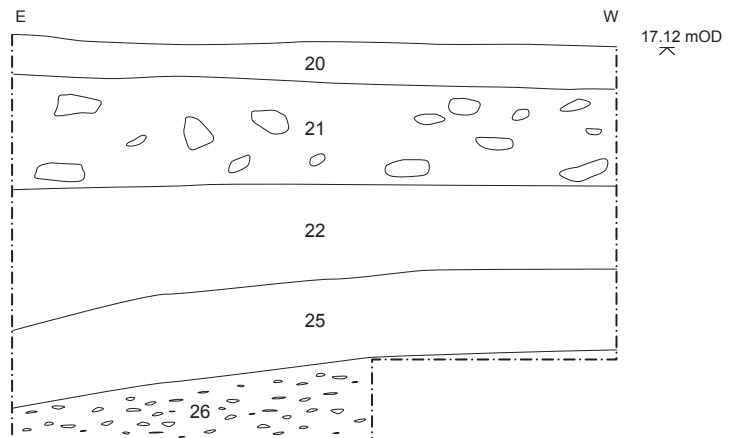
### Section 8



### Section 10



### Section 11



### Section 12

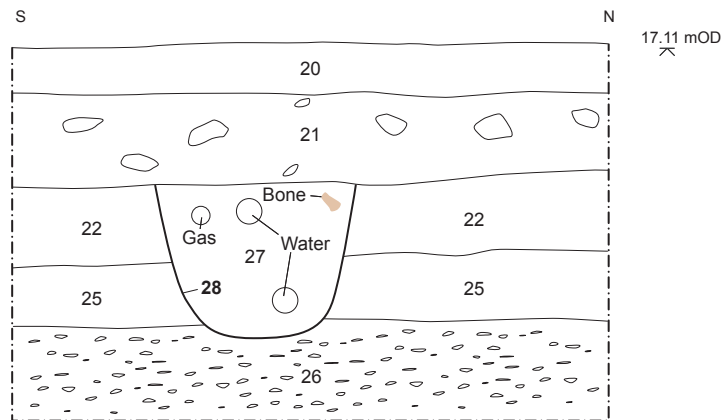


Figure 6: Sections 7, 8, 10-12



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