

# Slough Bottom Farm Saunderton Buckinghamshire



## Archaeological Watching Brief Report



January 2009

**Client: Mr Ian Martin**

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OA Job No: 4269

NGR: SU 810 974



# Slough Bottom Farm, Saunderton, Buckinghamshire

## *ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT*

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## SUMMARY

*Between the 8th and 10th of December 2008 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Slough Bottom Farm, Saunderton, Buckinghamshire (NGR: SU 810 974). The work was commissioned by Mr Ian Martin in advance of the proposed conversion of an existing barn to a music room. The watching brief revealed evidence of the construction of the standing building, and an earlier worked soil, but no evidence for the continuation of the earthworks to the east of the site continuing over the development area was observed.*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Between the 8th and 10th of December 2008 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Slough Bottom Farm, Saunderton, Buckinghamshire (NGR: SU 810 974). The work was commissioned by Mr Ian Martin in respect of a planning application for the conversion of an existing barn to a music room.
- 1.1.2 A project brief was agreed with Sandy Kidd, the County Archaeologist representing Buckinghamshire County Council. This required that a Watching Brief be maintained during the period of intrusive ground works.
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA 2008).

#### 1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is located approximately 6 km north-west of High Wycombe and 600 m south of the village of Saunderton (Fig. 1). The farm is sited on level ground at the base of a south-west facing slope. The barn to be converted is situated parallel to Slough Lane, on the northern edge of the farmyard at approximately 122 m OD. The building is bounded to the north by a pond, to the west by the farm entrance and to the south and east by the farmyard. The underlying geology is London Clay over Upper chalk (Geological Survey of England and Wales, Sheet 254).

#### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA 2008) and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 A ditched earthwork appears on maps to run through the application site in a north easterly direction (Fig. 2). It is unclear from maps and aerial photographs whether this monument respects the existing farm buildings or whether the buildings are erected on an infilled section of the ditch.

## 2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains revealed by the groundworks, paying particular attention to any stratigraphy that will shed light on the nature and date of the adjacent earthwork.
- 2.1.2 To preserve by record any archaeological remains that may be truncated or disturbed during intrusive ground works.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

### 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The watching brief was conducted as an archaeological presence during the excavation of new foundation trench. series of periodic visits to examine intrusive works and excavations as development work proceeded. These works included the excavation of a new foundation trench for the north wall of the building. The excavated areas were closely examined for any features and the spoil was examined in order to collect dating evidence.
- 2.2.2 A plan of the extent of any excavations was maintained (Fig. 3) at a scale of 1:100 and sections of exposed features and sample sections showing the stratigraphy were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All excavated features were photographed using digital photography, colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was also made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 A layer of frost-shattered natural chalk (9) was encountered throughout the length of the foundation trench at a depth of 0.95 m below the current ground level (Fig. 4, Sections 1 and 2). This was overlaid by a 0.25 m deep layer of red-brown clay silt (6). This was a very clean deposit and probably represents a layer of colluvium. Cut through the surface of this deposit was a 0.4 m diameter by 0.6 m deep slightly tapering feature (8) (Fig. 4, Section 1). This was filled by a grey-brown silt clay (7). Sealing the fill and overlying layer 6 was a 0.3 m deep layer of light grey-brown clay silt (5). This contained chalk flecking and is a probable layer of earlier worked soil.
- 3.1.2 Overlying this was a 0.3 m deep layer of dark brown clay silt (4), probably the original topsoil. Built directly upon this layer was a 0.35 m thick chalk and flint wall with horizontal brick stringers (1), forming the western gable of the stables.

3.1.3 Immediately east of this wall layer 4 was cut by a 0.6 m deep vertical foundation trench (3) into which the brick built wall (2) had been built. This formed the north-east corner of a rectangular building constructed abutting the east gable of the stables. This was constructed using hand-moulded bricks measuring 0.225 m x 0.105 m x 0.072 m and lime mortar laid using English stretcher bonding. The size of the bricks suggested a mid to late 19th-century construction date.

## 3.2 Finds

3.2.1 No dating evidence was recovered during the course of the watching brief. Numerous fragments of brick and tile were observed within layer 4 and are probably related to the construction of the stables. The presence of these was noted but they were not retained.

## 3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

3.3.1 No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

## 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 The majority of the deposits, features and structures observed during the course of the watching brief relate to the construction and use of the standing farm buildings and date from the 18th century or later. The layer of earlier worked soil (5) predates the construction of the standing stables, but is probably post-medieval in origin.

4.1.2 The size of post hole 8 suggests that it may have originally contained a structural timber rather than a fence post, possibly an earlier phase of farm building ?

4.1.3 Examination of the timber framing in the roof of the building observed an inscription carved into the horizontal tie beam of the central roof truss "*Mr William Couper Built this Stable In ye year 1734 Charles Rufsell Carpenter*". The roof timbers appear to be contemporary with the walls giving a construction date for the stable block.

4.1.4 No evidence for the ditch associated with the earthworks to the east of the site continuing under the stable was observed. There is a possibility that the building may have stood on the site of the old bank. The presence of worked soil directly overlying natural colluvium rather than layers of made ground could indicate that the feature may have been levelled and ploughed out, but could equally imply that the bank was not present in this location.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

| <i>Context</i> | <i>Type</i> | <i>Depth/<br/>Height</i> | <i>Width</i> | <i>Comments</i>                                  | <i>Finds</i> | <i>Date</i> |
|----------------|-------------|--------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| 1              | Structure   | 4.5 m                    | 0.35 m       | Brick and flint wall, east gable of stable block | Brick        | C 18th      |
| 2              | Structure   | 3.5 m                    | 0.22 m       | Brick building abutting east gable               | Brick        | C 19th      |
| 3              | Cut         | 0.6 m                    | 0.22 m       | Foundation cut for structure 2                   | -            | C 19th      |
| 4              | Layer       | 0.3 m                    | -            | Original topsoil horizon                         | Brick, tile  | C 18th      |
| 5              | Layer       | 0.3 m                    | -            | Earlier worked soil                              | -            | -           |
| 6              | Layer       | 0.25 m                   | -            | Colluvium                                        | -            | -           |
| 7              | Fill        | 0.6 m                    | 0.4 m        | Fill of posthole 8                               | -            | -           |
| 8              | Cut         | 0.6 m                    | 0.4 m        | Posthole, probably structural                    | -            | -           |
| 9              | Layer       | > 0.75 m                 | -            | Weathered chalk natural                          | -            | -           |

## APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

IFA, 2008 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

OA 2008 *Slough Bottom Farm, Saunderton, Buckinghamshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

OAU, 1992 *Field Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson)

## APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

**Site name:** Slough Bottom Farm, Saunderton, Buckinghamshire

**Site code:** SASBOT 08

**Grid reference:** SU 810 974

**Type of watching brief:** Machine excavation of foundation trenches

**Date and duration of project:** December 2008, 4 site visits

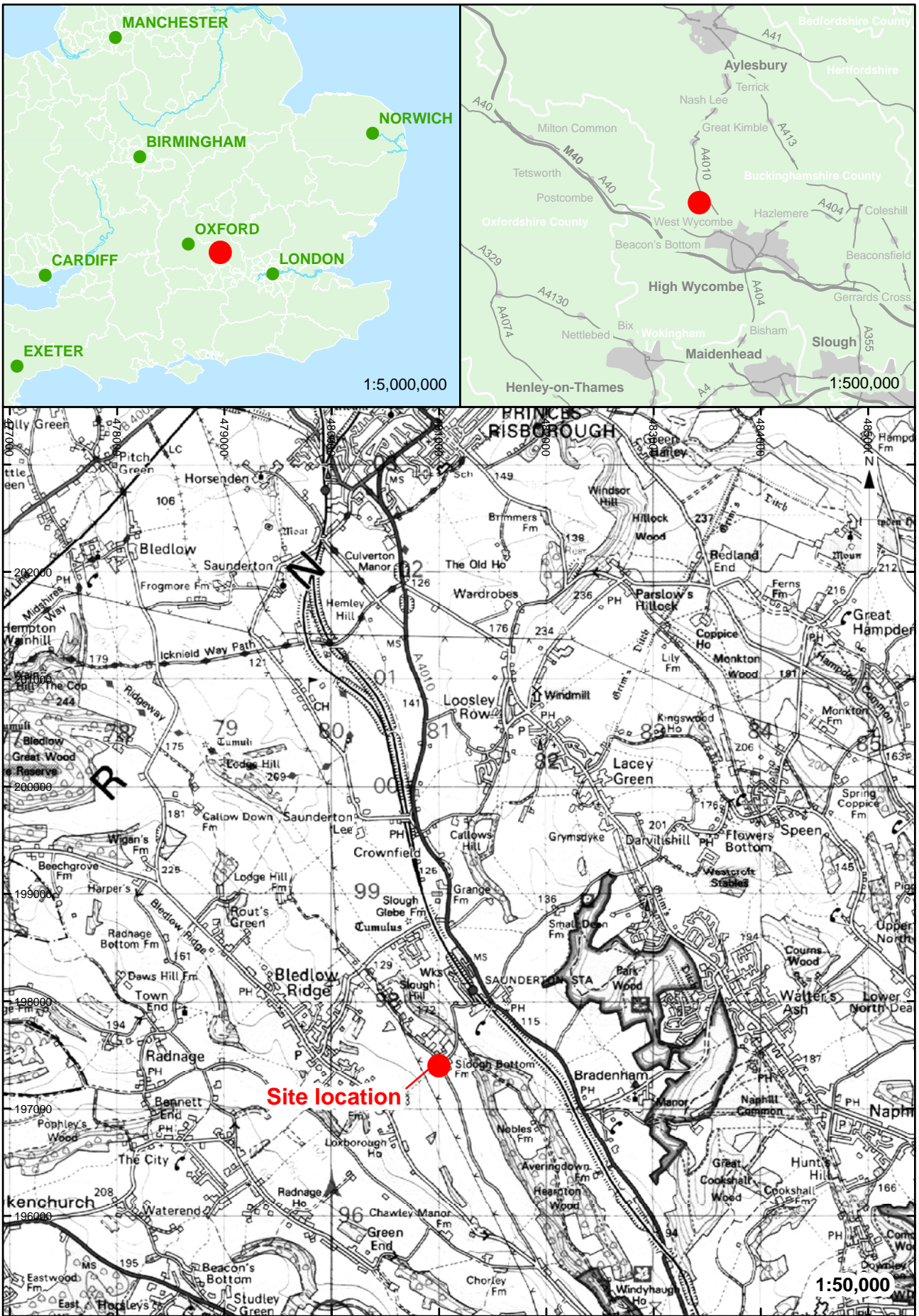
**Area of site:** 400m<sup>2</sup>

**Summary of results:** All deposits and features encountered relate to the 18th century construction of the standing farm building. No evidence for earlier activity was encountered.

**Location of archive:** The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museum in due course, under the following accession number: AYBCM.2008.208







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Figure 1: Site location

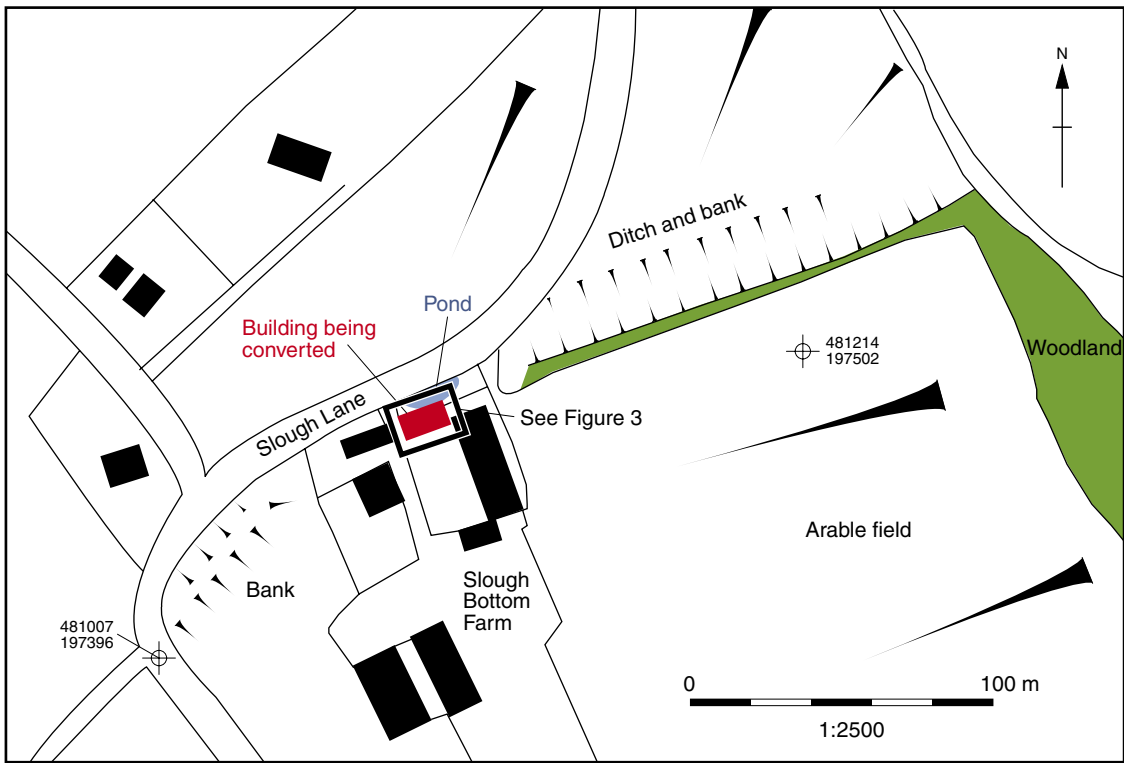


Figure 2: Plan showing relationship of earthworks to farm

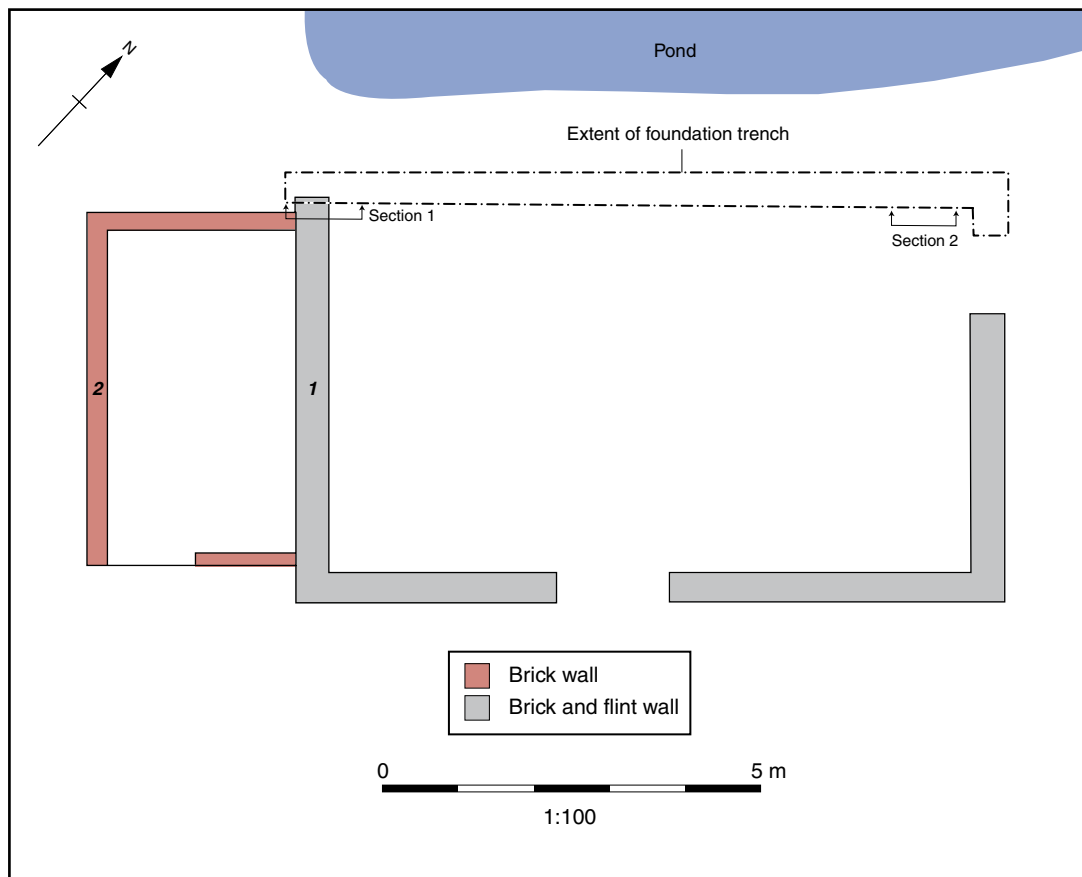


Figure 3: Trenching plan

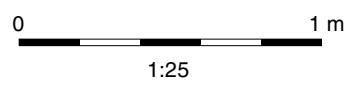
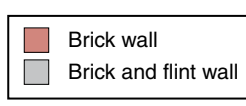
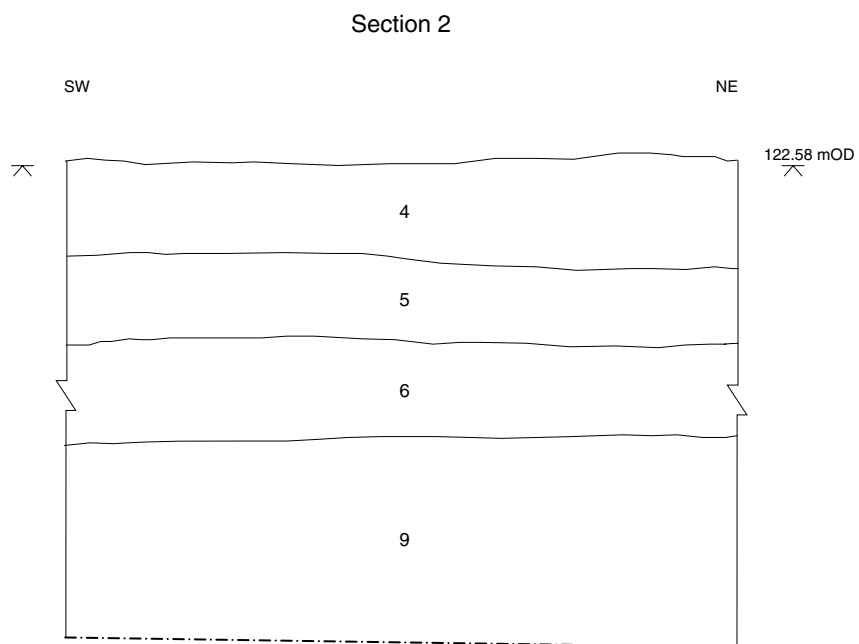
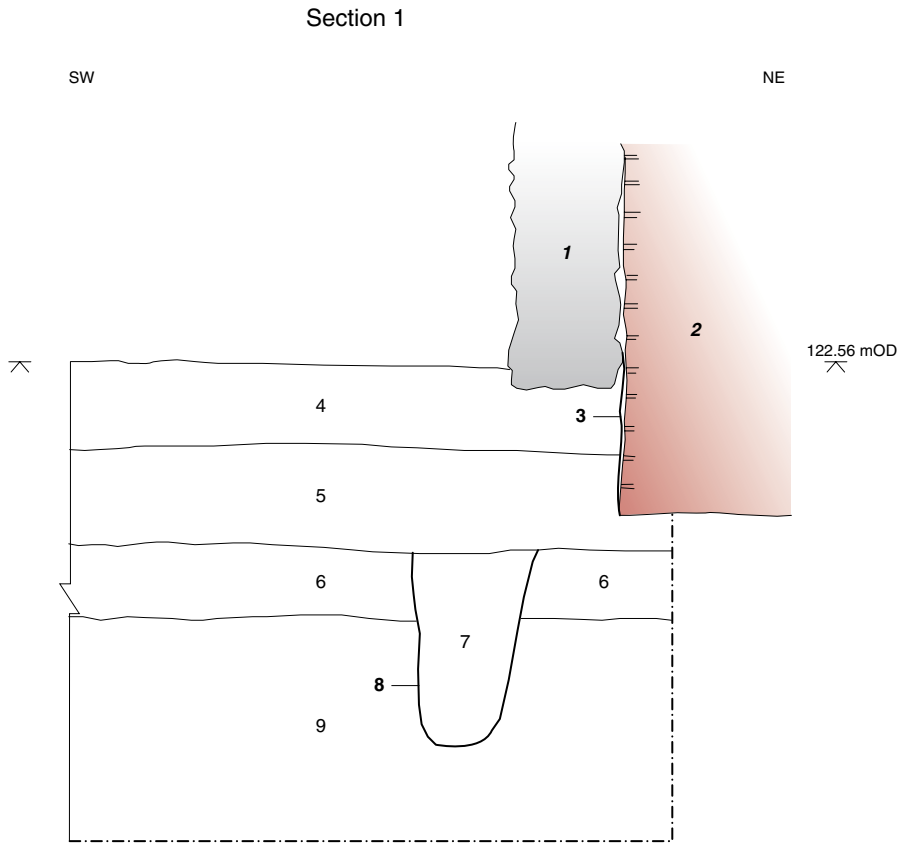


Figure 4: Sections



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