

# Flick Quarry Rollright Hertfordshire



## Archaeological Watching Brief Report



August 2008



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Issue No:1  
OA Job No: 4174  
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# Flick Quarry, Rollright, Oxfordshire

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## SUMMARY

*On the 13th and 14th of August 2008, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Flick Quarry, Rollright, Oxfordshire (NGR: SP 281 306). The work was commissioned by Hanson Quarry Products, Europe in advance of mineral extraction. The watching brief revealed evidence of post-medieval agricultural practices, but no significant archaeology was observed.*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 On the 13th and 14th of June 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Flick Quarry (also known as Rollright Quarry), Rollright, Oxfordshire (NGR: SP 281 306). The work was commissioned by Hanson Quarry Products, Europe Ltd in respect of a planning application for mineral extraction (Planning Application No. 03/2004/P/TCN)
- 1.1.2 The County Archaeological Service had prepared a project brief for previous work on the site conducted by OA in 1999 and this brief was used for this round of investigation.
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (OA 2005) detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief.

#### 1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is situated approximately 1.4 km north-west of the village of Little Rollright, Oxfordshire (Fig. 1) and is located on a high limestone spur overlooking the Glyme Valley and Chipping Norton to the south, and the Stour Valley (Warwickshire) to the north. The area comprises arable farmland, now currently lying fallow with the site gently rising towards the centre.
- 1.2.2 The site lies at approximately 240 m OD and occupies an area of roughly 0.7 hectares (Fig. 2). The underlying geology is loam overlying Great Oolitic Limestone (British Geological Survey, Sheet no. 218).

#### 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, 2005) and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 The site is situated just off the Saltway to Great Rollright Road (the Cotswold Ridgeway or Jurassic Way) which is the ancient road linking the East Midlands to the south-west. There is an early megalithic complex and barrow cemetery to the east of the site at the Rollright Stones (Oxfordshire County Monument No. 1). There are also Iron Age and Roman settlements and a Saxon cemetery near to the stones.

- 1.3.3 The site itself produced a Beaker vessel found in the 1940s and a Iron Age pit or ditch was exposed in the quarry face also at this date.
- 1.3.4 Previous work immediately to the north-east of the site in 1999 (OAU 1999), produced some evidence (pottery sherds and a pit) to suggest limited Middle Iron Age activity within the vicinity of the site and also evidence of small scale 18th - to 19th-century quarrying. Linear natural features caused by frost fractures were also observed.
- 1.3.5 A watching brief conducted by OA in 2005 on land immediately to the north-east of the present development observed continuations of the natural features but no evidence of activity of any period was observed (OA,2005).

## 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 in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To preserve by record any archaeological remains (if present) that the development may remove or damage within the impact area.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

### 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 A continuous archaeological presence was maintained during the period of the topsoil stripping. This consisted of a strip 30 m wide immediately to the south-west of the area stripped in 2005 and a 8 m wide by 90 m long haul road leading to the topsoil storage area in the south-eastern corner of the field.
- 2.2.2 The excavation was undertaken by a 21 ton mechanical excavator fitted with a 2 m wide toothless grading bucket. Machining proceeded in spits down to the required level.
- 2.2.3 After the removal of the topsoil and subsoil the exposed layers were identified as undisturbed deposits and recording proceeded at that level.
- 2.2.4 A plan of the machined areas was kept at a scale of 1:500 (Fig. 2) and sample sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. A photographic record of the work was made using digital photography, colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

### 3 RESULTS

#### 3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The underlying natural, a pale yellow-brown silt clay (3), which contained many fragments of weathered limestone with tilting bands of thinly bedded oolitic limestone erupting to the surface aligned roughly north to south was exposed throughout the whole of the stripped area (Fig. 3, Sections 1, 2 and 3). These beds are probably the result of frost heaving, lifting the edges of the beds to the surface. This deposit was encountered at approximately 0.4m below the current ground level at the western and eastern edges of the site, rising to 0.25 m below ground level within the centre.
- 3.1.2 Along the eastern edge of the stripped area a 0.08 m deep layer of reddish brown silt clay (4), was observed, overlying layer 3 (Fig. 3, Section 3). This deposit contained many small angular fragments of oolitic limestone and probably represents a layer of colluvium.
- 3.1.3 Overlying layers 3 and 4 was a 0.1 m deep layer of dark yellow-brown silt clay (2) containing many small sub-angular limestone fragments.
- 3.1.4 The entire excavated area was sealed by a layer of dark brown loamy clay (1) of between 0.18 m and 0.3 m in depth. This context contained many small abraded oolitic limestone fragments, a small percentage of which displayed signs of burning.

#### 3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 The deposits were closely examined during excavation and the spoil heaps checked afterwards but very little dating evidence was recovered. All the finds recovered during the course of the watching brief were of a late post-medieval date, probably the 19th and 20th centuries. These finds included fragments of brick, nails and slate, all of which were recovered from layer 1. These finds were evaluated on site but 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 Layer 3 is the upper surface of a weathered oolitic limestone deposit overlying beds of limestone. Layer 4 appears to be a colluvium. The limited extent of this deposit appears to be the result of deep ploughing truncating it in other areas of the site. Layer 2 probably represents an earlier layer of worked soil.



- 4.1.2 Layer 1 represents a layer of plough soil associated with the last known use of the land. The burnt limestone noted during the 2005 watching brief was also observed within this layer and is probably the result of the earlier agricultural practise of burning the cereal straw after harvest.
- 4.1.3 The absence of features cutting into the surface of the natural deposits suggest that this area was outside the focus of any settlements including the Iron Age activity observed during the 1999 excavations. There is the possibility that subsequent agricultural activity may have truncated or destroyed any shallow features although the absence of residual finds recovered from the topsoil or truncated deeper features would mitigate against this.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	Layer	0.18 m - 0.3 m	Modern ploughsoil	Brick, nails and slate	19th - 20th centuries
2	Layer	0.08 m	Earlier worked soil	-	-
3	Layer	> 0.1 m	Weathered limestone	-	-
4	Layer	0.08 m	Colluvial clay	-	-

## APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

IFA, 2001 *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

OA 1992 *Field Manual*, (Ed. D Wilkinson)

OA 2000 OA Environmental Guidelines for sampling (first edition, July 2000)

OA 2005 Flick Quarry, Rollright, Oxfordshire: Archaeological Watching Brief Report

OAU 1999 Rollright Quarry Archaeological Watching Brief Written Scheme of Investigation

OAU 1999 Rollright Quarry Archaeological Watching Brief Report

## APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

**Site name:** Flick Quarry, Rollright, Oxfordshire

**Site code:** RRFQ 08

**Grid reference:** SP 281 306

**Type of watching brief:** Machine stripping of topsoil prior to mineral extraction

**Date and duration of project:** 2 days, 13th and 14th August 2008

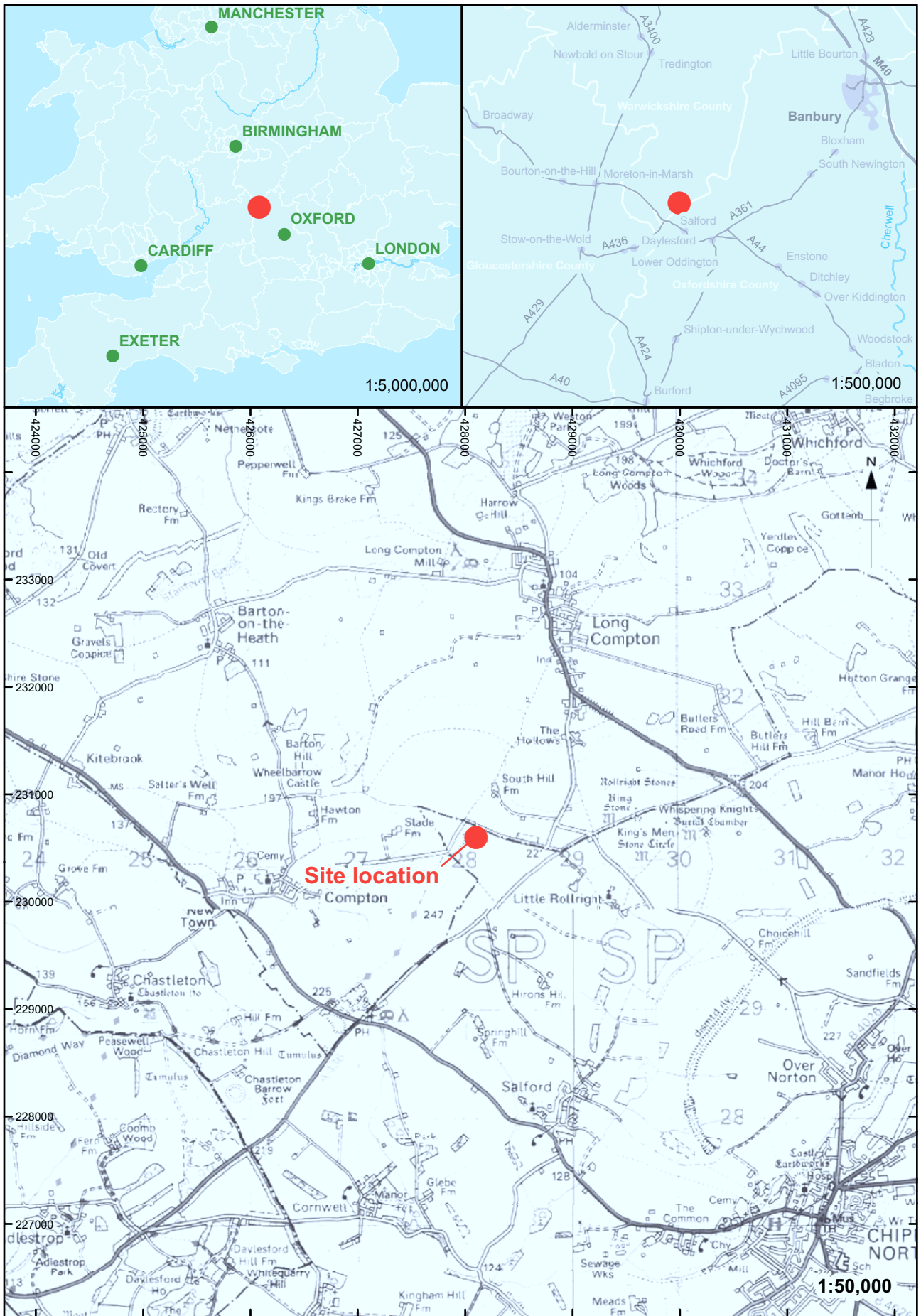
**Area of site:** c7,000 m<sup>2</sup>

**Summary of results:** Post-medieval agricultural soils sealing natural deposits

**Location of archive:** The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course.







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Figure 1: Site location

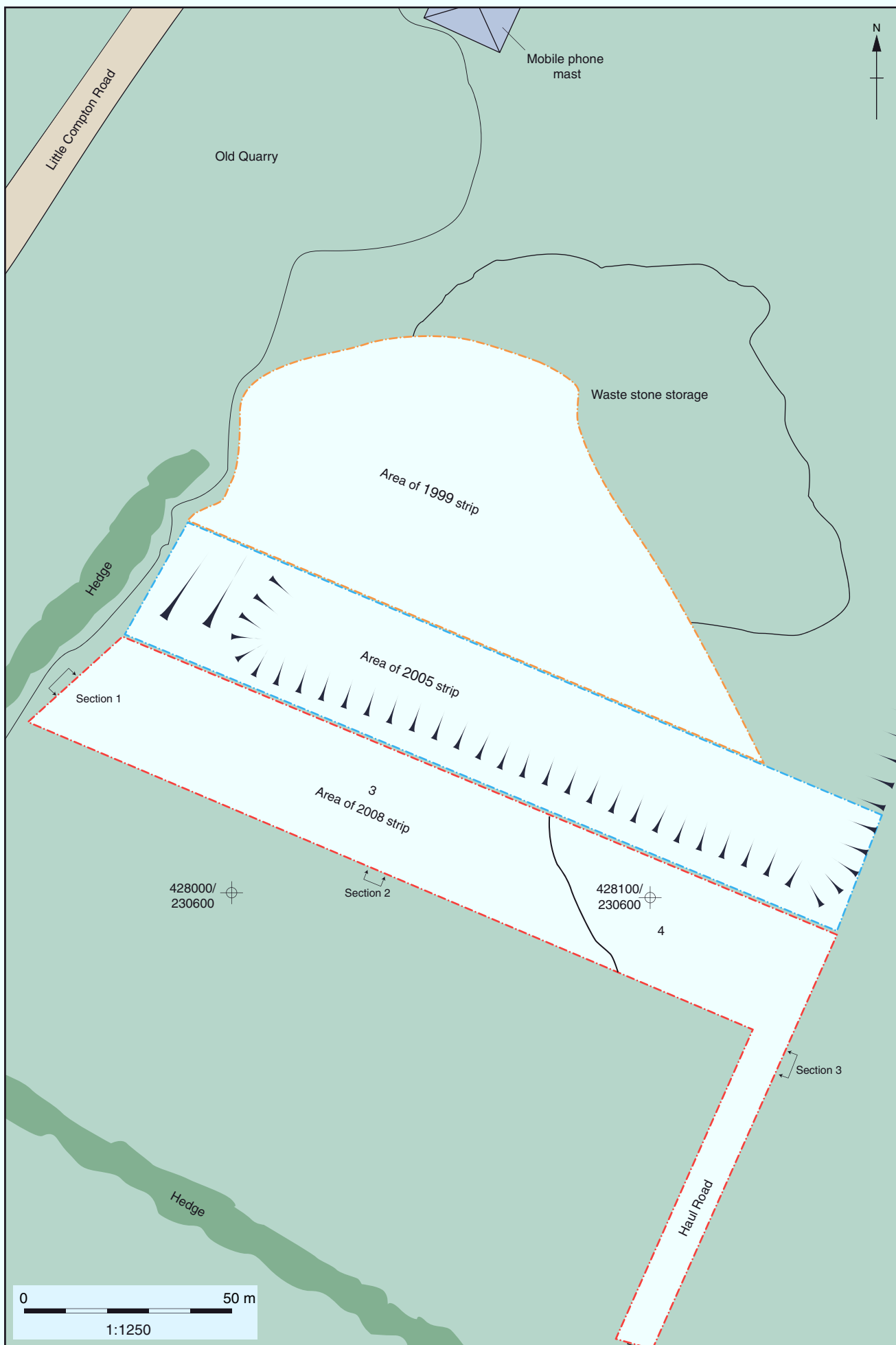


Figure 2: Site plan

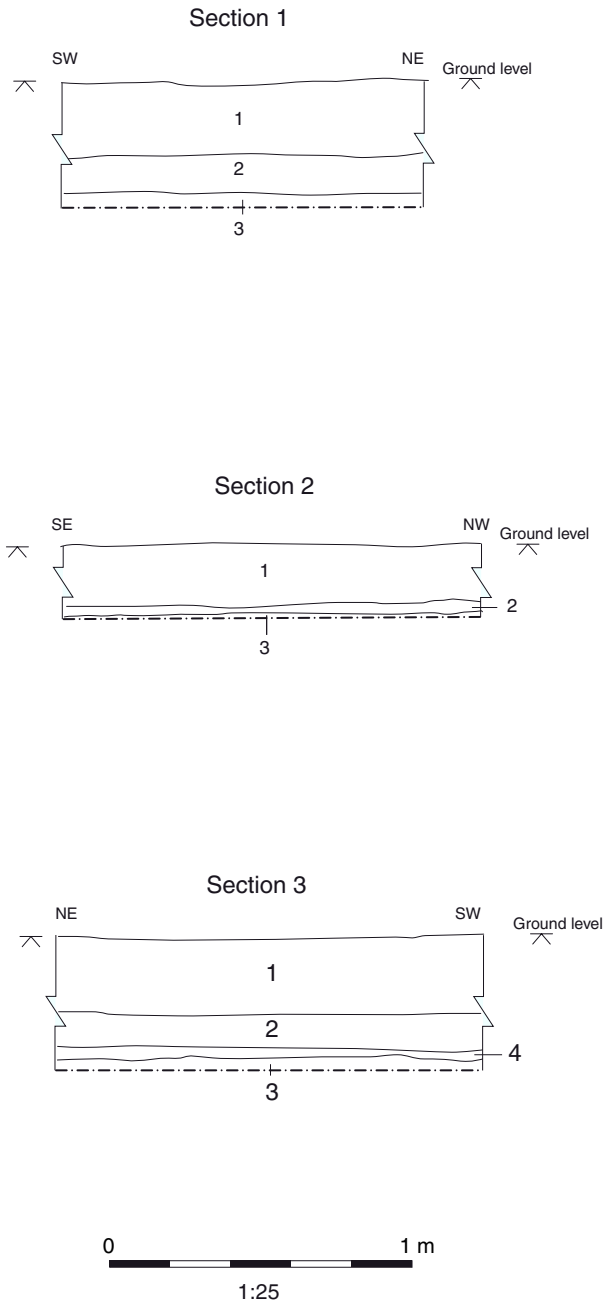


Figure 3: Sections







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