

Summary

John Moore Heritage Services conducted an archaeological evaluation between 27th February – 7th March 2008 on land to the rear of Twickenham House, just to the north west of the Old Gaol, Abingdon. The investigation involved the mechanical excavation of a trench down onto the uppermost archaeological horizons supplemented by the hand digging of four sondages onto the latest surviving Roman remains. This was done to determine the level above Ordnance Datum at which Roman archaeology survived in comparison to those found previously in earlier investigations and to assess the impact recent activity (from 1989 onwards) has had on any surviving remains.

OVERVIEW:

Following the initial excavation of the trench by machine, (down to depth of 53.09m AOD to the NW, 52.83m AOD in the middle and 52.67m AOD to the SE) the trench was hand cleaned and planned. At the NW end of the trench a series of spreads and probable pits were noted into which one sondage was dug. Towards the middle and the SE end of the trench a post-medieval soil horizon (1/11) was observed into which three sondages were dug. The middle area of this deposit was noteworthy in the fact that it contained a moderate quantity of stone fragments not seen elsewhere in the deposit (see plan). This layer was not machined through so the trench could be stepped in safely.

The section revealed a made ground car parking level (1/01) overlaying two garden soil horizons (1/02) and (1/18). (1/02) was likely to have been used to level up (1/18) prior to the construction of the car park. (1/18) was cut by various very late post medieval/modern pits and the cut [1/22] for a stone capped brick drain (1/24) with backfill (1/23).

The trench was dug to a depth of 1.34m below the existing ground level at the NW end of the trench and 1.23m below the existing ground level at the SE end of the trench.

Sondage 1

This sondage was 2.10m by 1.60m and was the furthest SE. Initially (1/11) was removed first. Excavation within this sondage showed a complex series of intercutting pits and postholes. Two post-medieval pits [1/58] and [1/55] were excavated first, but it is thought that the other features ([1/60], [1/63], [1/66], [1/68] and [1/70]) are likely to be Roman in date. These features were physically cutting through layer (1/71). Roman archaeology was reached at a depth of 52.52m AOD (c. 1.38m below the existing ground level). The features were extremely difficult to see initially. No natural was observed.

Sondage 2

Measuring 1.20m by 1.20m this sondage revealed two layers (1/11) and (1/12) and a probable Roman soil horizon (1/13) before two distinct Roman features, [1/39] and

[1/30], thought likely to be pits, were reached at a depth of 52.27m AOD (c. 1.63m below the existing ground level) cutting through (1/15) (see section). No natural was observed.

Sondage 3

This sondage measured 1.20m by 1.20m. Several layers and intercutting pits, probably medieval, ([1/40], [1/43] and [1/73]) were excavated in sequence before two likely Roman/Iron Age features [1/88] containing fill (1/89), and [1/86] containing (1/87) were investigated. These were found below spread (1/76) and were revealed at a depth of 52.25m AOD (c. 1.95m below the top of the existing ground level). The relationship between the two was not clear but both were found to be cutting through deposit (1/85). No natural was observed.

Sondage 4

Sondage 4 was 0.90m by 1.20m. This sondage was dug not only to investigate the presence and depth of any Roman activity but also to check the nature of a sandy gravel deposit (1/07). On initial inspection this deposit was tentatively thought of as a possible natural horizon despite its perceived shallow depth within the trench. However, closer investigation proved this deposit to be merely re-deposited natural with archaeology continuing below. This sondage was stopped at a depth of 52.52m AOD (c. 1.91m below the existing ground level) once a very dark grey/black burnt deposit (1/78) was revealed. The nature of which was thought better to investigate in conditions pertaining to full excavation. No natural was observed. (1/78) is thought to possibly be a lens within (1/61). (1/61) overlay (1/79).

COMPARISONS WITH PREVIOUS TRENCHES 89/1 and 89/2

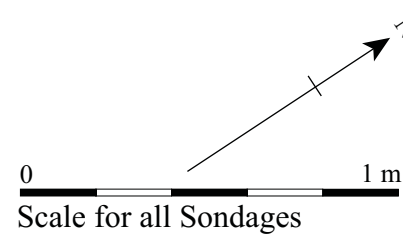
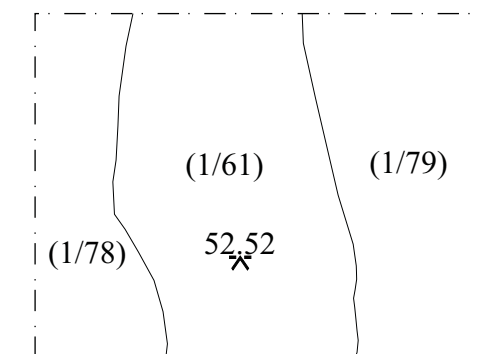
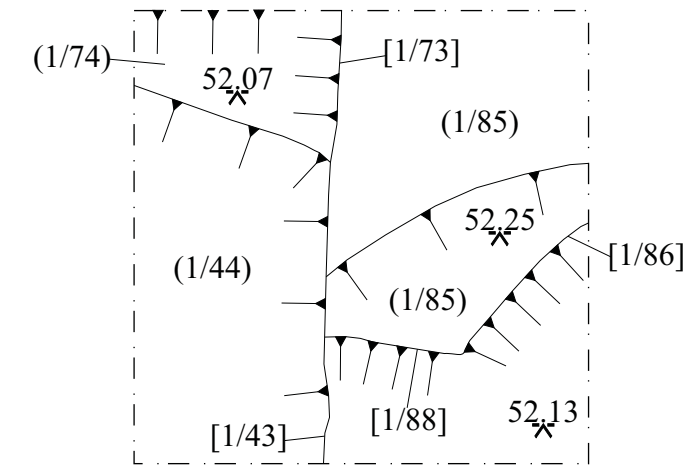
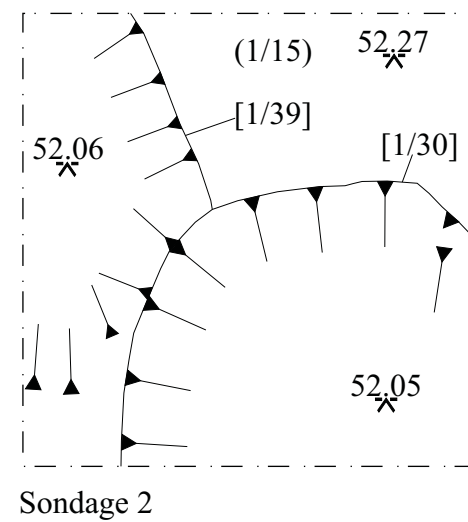
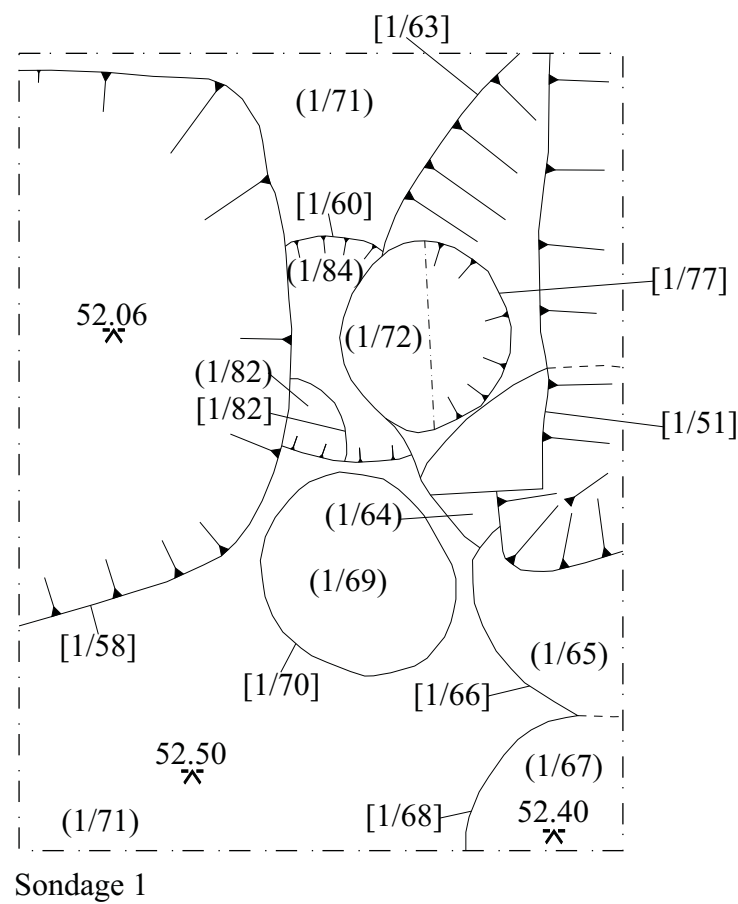
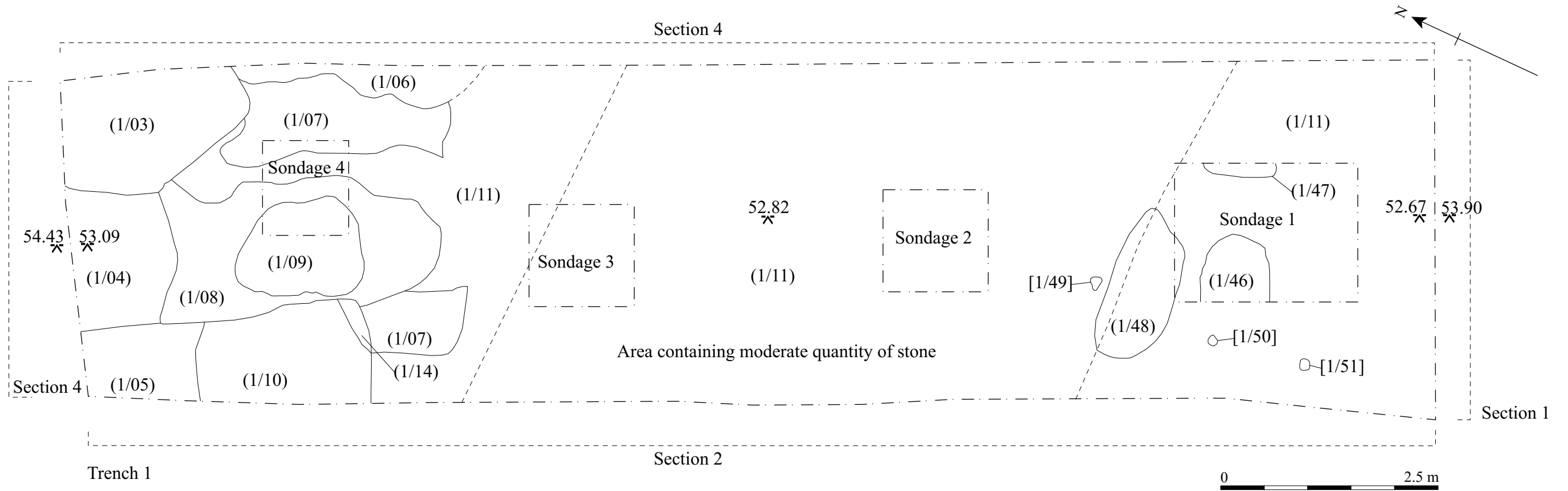
The new trench has established the presence of possibly prehistoric, Roman, medieval and post-medieval remains similar to the remains discovered in the previous trenching on the site dug in 1987 and 1989. Modern activity between the digging of the original trenches in the late 1980's and the new one has made very little impact on any surviving remains and has certainly not truncated any of them below the garden soil (1/18). The archaeological sequence can reasonably be expected to be similar in this trench to the other two previous examples.

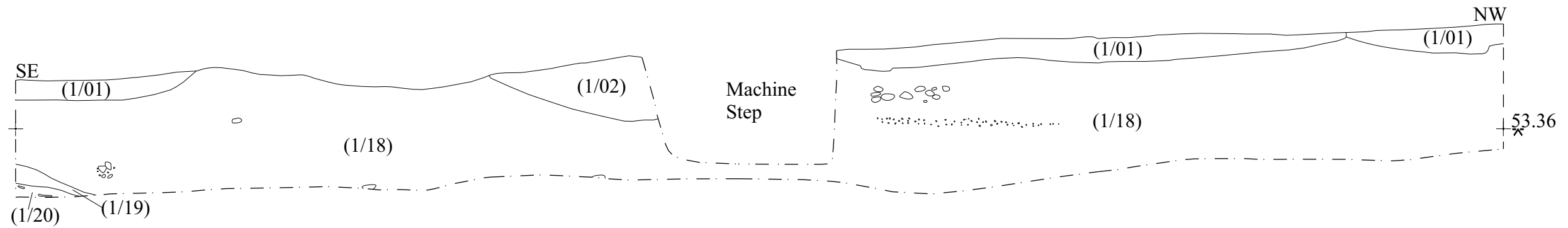
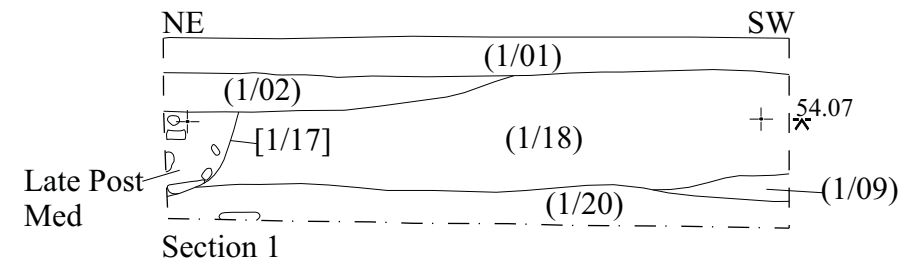
RELIABILITY OF TECHNIQUES AND RESULTS

The reliability of results is considered to be good. However, the exact nature of many of the features is not certain due to the restrictive nature of the sondages. The archaeological investigation work took place in conditions varying from dry with sunshine and cloud to dry and sunny.

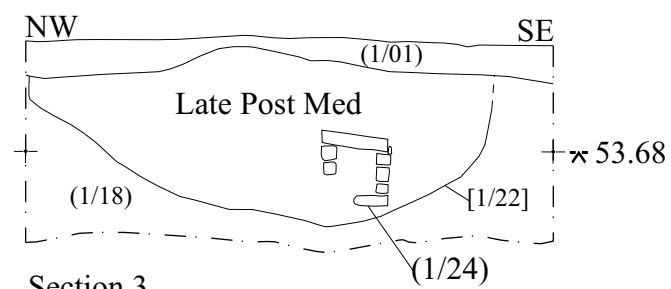
Dating given above is based on an assessment of the sherds from the various deposits and feature fills. It is possible that some may be slightly later in date than that given due to later sherds not being identified. However it is felt that the majority of the dating is correct. Further confidence is taken from the fact that the levels that the

Roman material was encountered within the sondages were similar to each other and also to those in the earlier trenches.

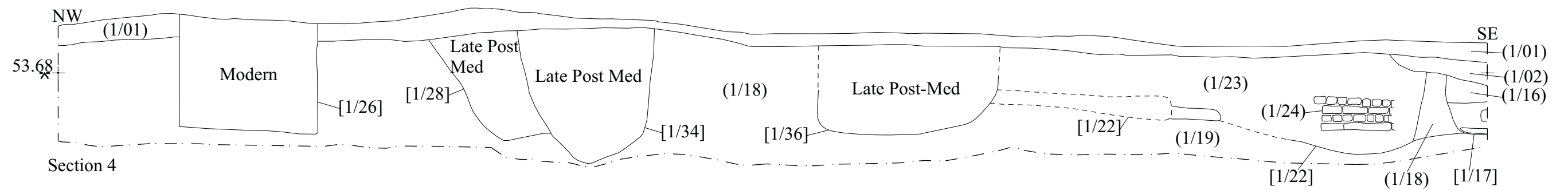




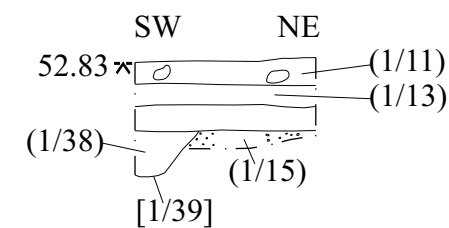
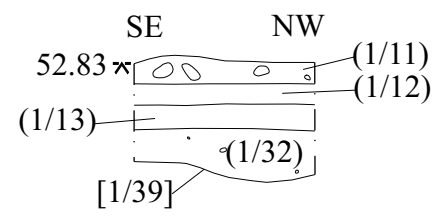
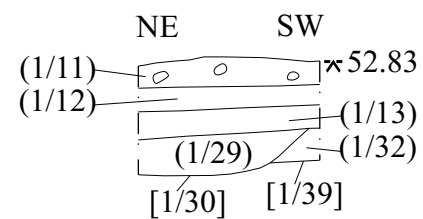
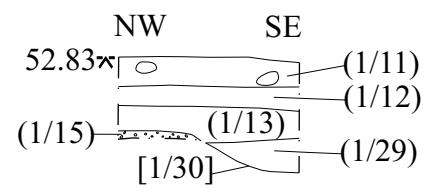
Section 2



Section 3



Section 4



Sections from Sondage 2

