

Harwood House Nursing Home,  
Cookham Dean, Berkshire

An archaeological evaluation for  
Harwood House Nursing Home

Harwood House Nursing Home, Cookham Dean, Berkshire  
An archaeological evaluation of the proposed extension

Report 93/2

by Steve Ford

**Introduction**

Thames Valley Archaeological Services were instructed to undertake this evaluation by Mr. Martin Lloyd of Martin Lloyd Associates, Holly House, 3 Lock Road, Maidenhead on behalf of Harwood House Nursing Home, Spring Lane, Cookham Dean, Maidenhead.

The site is subject to a planning application for an extension to the nursing home.

The brief issued by Berkshire County Archaeology Section highlighted the archaeological potential of this area. Finds and deposits of Early Iron Age date were found earlier this century, presumably during construction of Harwood House itself (Peake 1931, 66,190). The gardens of the house are terraced and it is possible that the landscapers utilised pre-existing features such as a hillfort rampart, 'Celtic' field lynchets or strip lynchets (Cultivation terraces) of Medieval date.

A field evaluation was requested by the Planning Authorities to assess the archaeological potential of the site to accompany the planning application as set out in Archaeology and Planning (PPG16, 1990).

## Geology and Topography

The site lies on Mount Hill at a height of 110 m. above O.D. (SU 8682 8429). The summit of the hill is broad and level and the site is located on its south east edge (Fig. 2). Below the site, the ground slopes away moderately steeply towards the south east providing good visibility over the Maidenhead area.

The local geology is Reading Beds which here comprises a sandy clay with sand and silt lenses.

## Results

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the date, nature, extent and state of preservation of any archaeological deposits within the area of the proposed extension.

Three trenches, 1.6 m. wide were dug as located on Figure 3.

**Trench 1** was located on the top terrace. Its length (1.7m) was constrained by the terrace edge, a car park and service trenches. Approximately 0.85 m. of modern overburden was deposited on top of 0.35 m. of an old topsoil (Victorian). The bedrock (sandy clay) dipped towards the south east and was located at a maximum depth of 2 m.

**Trench 2** was 7 m. long located across the break of slope forming the boundary between the top and second terrace (Plate 2). The maximum depth was 1.65 m. at the terrace edge. This trench showed that the terrace effect had

clearly been created by building up with relatively modern debris to bury the thick (0.55 m.) old topsoil. The latter had been truncated at its lower end to form the lower terrace. A probable ditch (F2) (Fig. 4) was located running north-north-east- south-south-west following the line of the terrace. It was sealed by the old topsoil but the latter appeared to have slumped into the upper levels. This ditch was not located in trench 1. No finds were recovered from this feature and it is undated.

Trench 3 was located along the second terrace (Plate 1). It was 14 m. long and 0.6 m. deep on average. Two test pits at 1 m. and 10 m. were dug down to 1 m. and 0.8 m. respectively to ensure that bedrock had been reached. A few irregular dark patches were investigated but could not be shown to be of archaeological origin. The bedrock within the trench appeared as a relatively level horizon. As the unaltered ground would have sloped, it is likely that some if not all of the original topsoil and subsoil was removed during construction of the terrace.

The spoilheaps were monitored for finds. Three pieces of struck flint and two sherds of pottery were recovered. (Appendix 1). The struck flint is undiagnostic but is probably of Neolithic/Bronze Age date. The small sherd from trench 2 could only be assigned a generalised Prehistoric date whereas the other larger sherd from trench 3 was probably of Iron Age date.

## Conclusions

The terrace features in the garden are clearly of modern (20th century) origin and are not re-using earthworks of archaeological origin such as hillfort ramparts, 'Celtic' field lynchets or strip lynchets.

The probable ditch located in trench 2 was undated. It did not contain finds such as struck and burnt flint, pottery or charcoal flecks which are to be expected if a contemporary occupation site is close by. It could be an enclosure ditch, albeit of small size, but perhaps a more plausible explanation is that it is a field boundary or drainage ditch, or a feature associated with the garden landscaping.

The small number of artefacts of struck flint and pottery which were recovered point to some prehistoric activity in the vicinity but this is to be expected given the proximity of the occupation site reported during construction of the house.

## References

- PEAKE, H. 1931:            **The Archaeology of Berkshire.**
- PPG16 1990:            **Archaeology and Planning.**  
Department of the Environment  
Planning Policy Guidance, 16.

## Appendix 1

### Finds catalogue

#### Trench 2

1m	2 Intact flakes
Old land surface 3m	Sherd: Prehistoric

#### Trench 3

1m	Intact flake
1m	Sherd: Iron Age

# BERKSHIRE

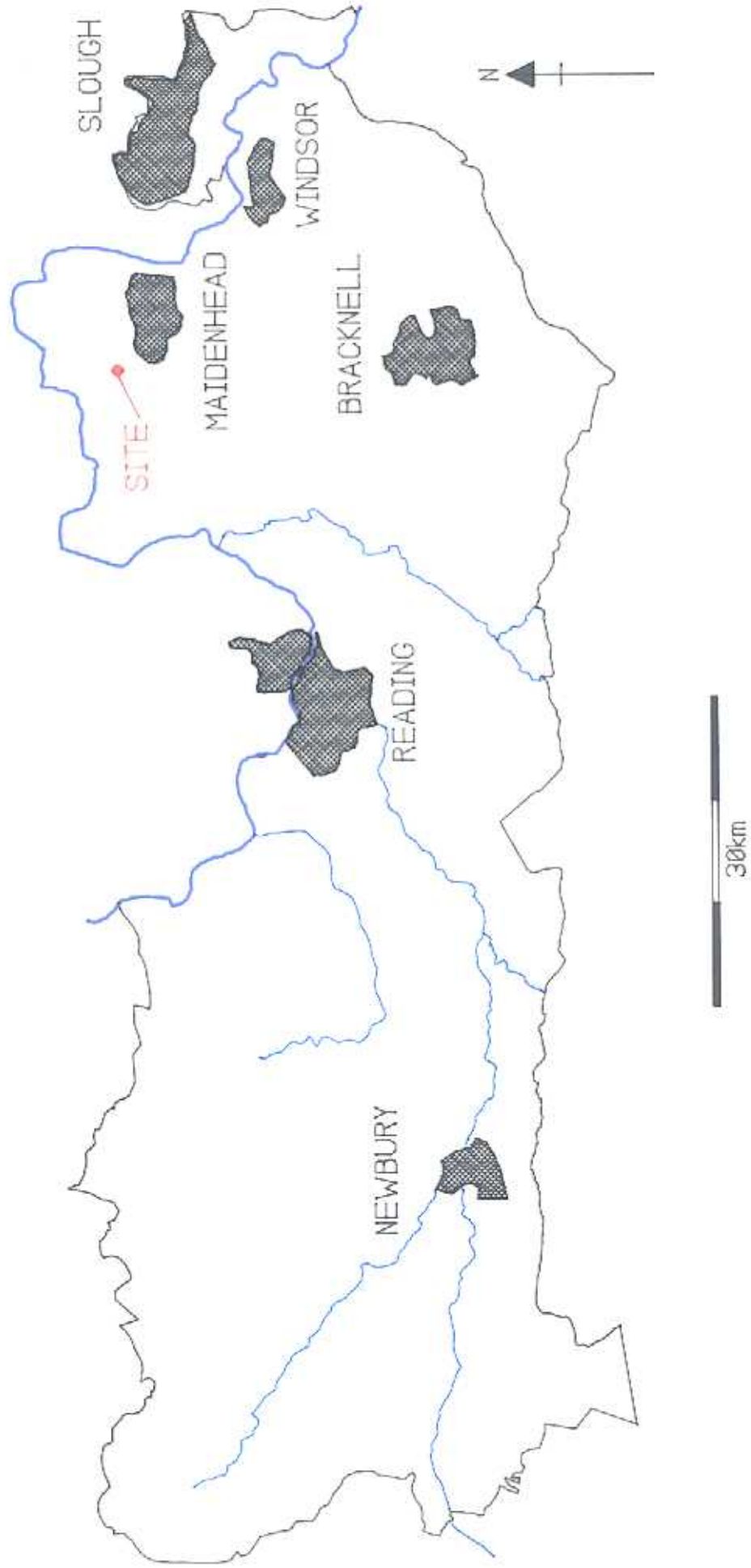


Figure 1. Location of site within county

# Harwood House, Cookham Dean 1993

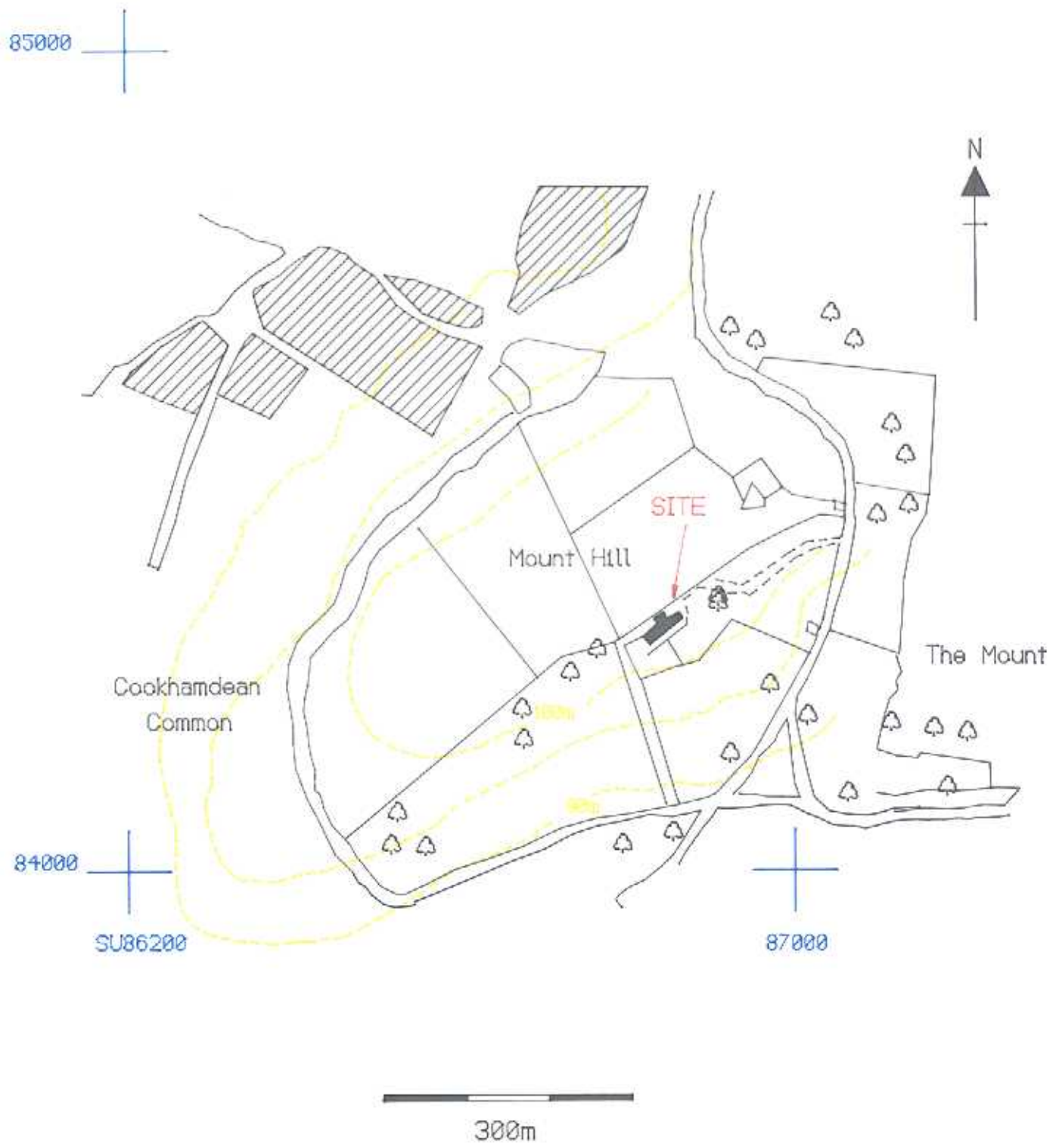


Figure 2. Location of site



# Harwood House, Cookham Dean 1993

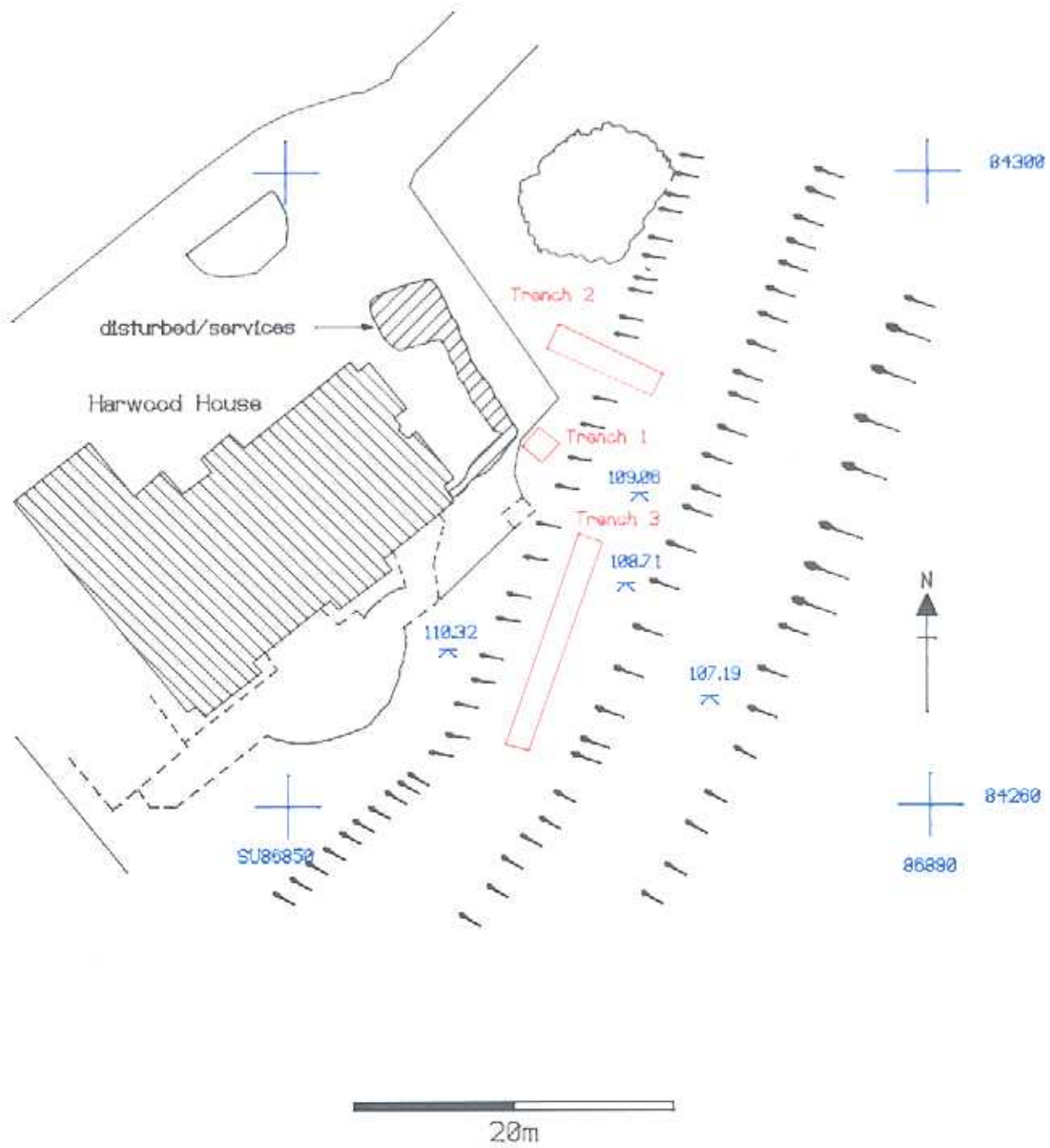


Figure 3. Location of trenches

# Harwood House, Cookham Dean 1993

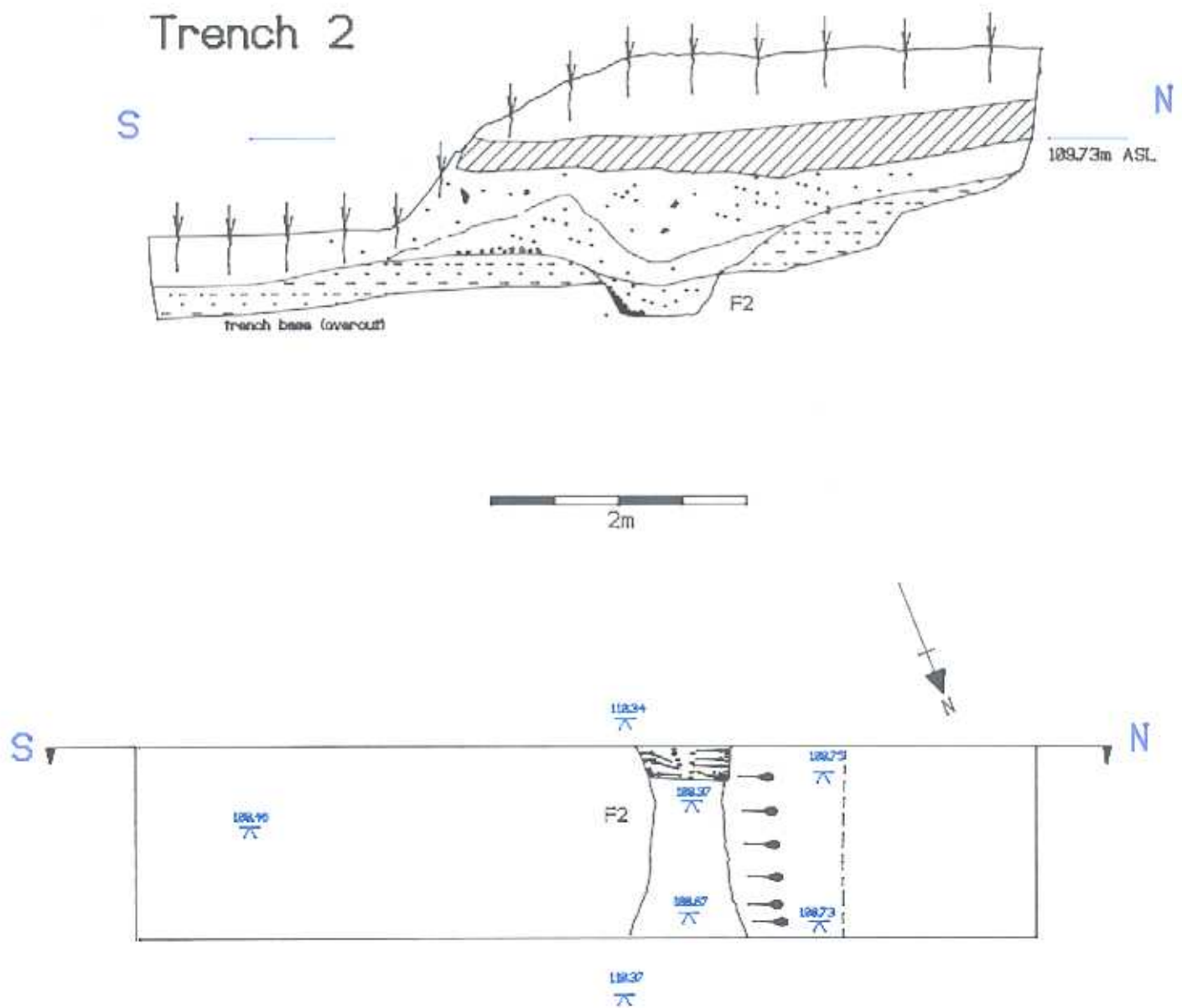


Figure 4. Plan and section of Trench 2



Plate 1 Harwood House, Cookham Dean 1993.  
Detail of south west end of Trench 3.



Plate 2 Harwood House, Cookham Dean 1993.  
Trench 2 looking south-west.