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Former British Telecom Site,
Willow Road,
New Malden

An Archaeological Evaluation

for

Lawson-Price Environmental

Former British Telecom Site, Willow Road, New Malden
Archaeological Evaluation

Project 95/30

by Melanie Hall

INTRODUCTION

This report details the results of an archaeological evaluation commissioned by Mr. Duncan Hawkins of Lawson-Price Environmental, 95 Week Street, Maidstone, Kent, according to the specification set out by the same. The evaluation is in connection with a planning application to build housing at the former British Telecom site in Willow Road, New Malden. The total area of the site is c. 1 ha. and it is located at the end of Willow Road, close to the A2043 Kingston Road and 125 m. north east of the Hogsmill River (TQ 201 683) (Figs 1 and 2). The fieldwork took place in May 1995 and the site code is WWR95.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The archaeological potential of the site is derived from its proximity to the River Hogsmill, which may have acted as a focus for settlement in the past, and to a nearby farm (now beneath an adjacent housing estate). A field evaluation was therefore commissioned to determine the presence/absence of archaeological deposits in the development area, as set out in *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG 16, 1990).

TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The area in question lies on slightly raised ground north-east of the Hogsmill River at the point where the Hogsmill begins to curve west towards the River Thames (Figs. 1 and 2), at a height of approximately 14 m. above O.D. The underlying geology is London Clay with local outcrops of sand and gravel.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the evaluation was to discover the location, extent, condition, character, significance and quality of any archaeological remains liable to be threatened by the proposed redevelopment.

The specification called for seven trenches, all 2 m. wide; two at 10 m., two at 5 m. and three at 2.5 m. This constitutes 75 sq. m. of trenching which is, approximately, a 0.75% sample of the redevelopment area. There was also a contingency for additional trenching (one 2 x 10 m. trench, three 2 x 5 m. trenches and a single 2 x 2.5 m. trench) if certain areas were deemed worthy of further investigation. In the event the contingency was not used. The location of some trenches had to be adjusted to avoid areas that contained or had contained foundations for the British Telecom buildings. All of the trenches were coincident with proposed building plots.

RESULTS

A total of seven trenches were dug by a JCB fitted with a toothless ditching bucket (a toothed bucket was used in some trenches to remove building rubble from upper layers) exposing 75 sq. m. of natural geological surface (Figs. 2 and 3). Sections of each trench can be seen in Figure 4 and descriptions of stratigraphy in Appendix 1.

Three of the trenches, numbers 1, 3 and 4, were more than 1.20 m. deep and, as no features or possible features could be seen in the trench bottoms, the only recording action possible was measured sketch sections and photographs.

In three of the trenches (1, 3 and 4) a black clay mixed with some building rubble was present underneath the layer of rubble that overlay the whole site. In two cases a green silty clay layer, thought to be contaminated, was below the black clay and overlying an orange/brown clay natural. In the third case the black clay overlay blue/grey clay natural (trench 3).

Clay that appeared to be redeposited was found in trench 5 where it seemed to surround a lens of grey gravel over a gravel and sand mix. A cleaner grey/orange clay was encountered below this.

Three trenches in the north-eastern section of the site proved much shallower than the rest at less than a metre deep; trench 2 consisted of rubble over green silty clay above dirty brown/orange clay with an orange/brown natural base, trench 6 consisted of building rubble over orange clay natural and trench 7 was similar with a dirty orange/brown layer of clay over the brighter orange clay natural.

No archaeological features or finds were found in any of the trenches. Indeed, the evidence would suggest that severe truncation may have taken place in this area. No topsoil or buried topsoil was present on the site and the level at which natural orange/brown clay was encountered varies greatly from the eastern part of the site to the west. Both the black clay layer and the green silty clay (which had a very strong odour) would indicate contamination of the soil, perhaps from diesel. If the green silty clay was naturally occurring on the site it may have become stained with contaminants to produce the layer now present.

CONCLUSIONS

It would appear that the site has been severely truncated at some time in the past. No topsoil, or buried topsoil of any kind was seen in any of the trenches. Also, the level at which the orange clay natural was encountered was very different from one side of the site to the other and some areas show clear signs of contamination. These points, and the fact that none of the trenches produced archaeological finds or deposits, reinforce the conclusion that it is highly unlikely that any archaeology would have survived at this site. Therefore, the archaeological potential of the site is negligible and is unlikely to require any further action.

REFERENCES

PPG16 1990: **Archaeology and Planning** Department of the Environment
Planning Policy and Guidance Note 16. HMSO.

APPENDIX 1 Trench details.

0 m. at south or west

Trench No.	Length (m.)	Depth (m.)	Comment
1	10	1.15/	No topsoil; 0-0.45/0.70 m. - building rubble; 0.45/70-0.80 m. - black clay with some building rubble; 0.80-1.00 m. - contaminated green silty clay with black patches; base - orange/brown clay.
2	10	1.10	No topsoil; 0-0.40 m. - building rubble; 0.40-0.70 m. - contaminated green silty clay; 0.70-1.00 m. - dirty brown/orange clay; orange/brown clay natural below this. Several patches of sand and gravel in bottom of trench, especially from 2.5 to 5 m. and sandy silt from 0 m. to 1.7 m.
3	5	1.50	No topsoil; 0-0.60 m. - building rubble; 0.60-1.15 m. black clay with some building rubble; 1.15-1.35 m. grey/blue clay over orange/brown clay.
4	5	1.70	No topsoil; 0-0.62 m. - building rubble; 0.62-1.10 m. - black clay with some building rubble; 1.10-1.55 m. - contaminated green silty clay; orange/brown clay below this.
5	2	1.60	No topsoil; 0-0.60 m. - building rubble; 0.60-0.80 m. - brown clay; 0.80-1.40 m. - large patch of gravel and sand with layers of clay and sand below (may be natural); orange/grey clay below this.
6	2	0.68	No topsoil; 0-0.62 m. - building rubble; 0.62-0.68 m. orange clay.
7	2	0.55	No topsoil; 0-0.35 m. - building rubble; 0.35-0.52 m. - dirty orange clay; 0.52-0.55 orange clay. Base of trench - clean orange clay with some gravel.

Willow Road, New Malden,
Borough of Kingston upon Thames, 1995



Figure 1. Location of site within Greater London.

Willow Road, New Malden, Borough of Kingston upon Thames, 1995

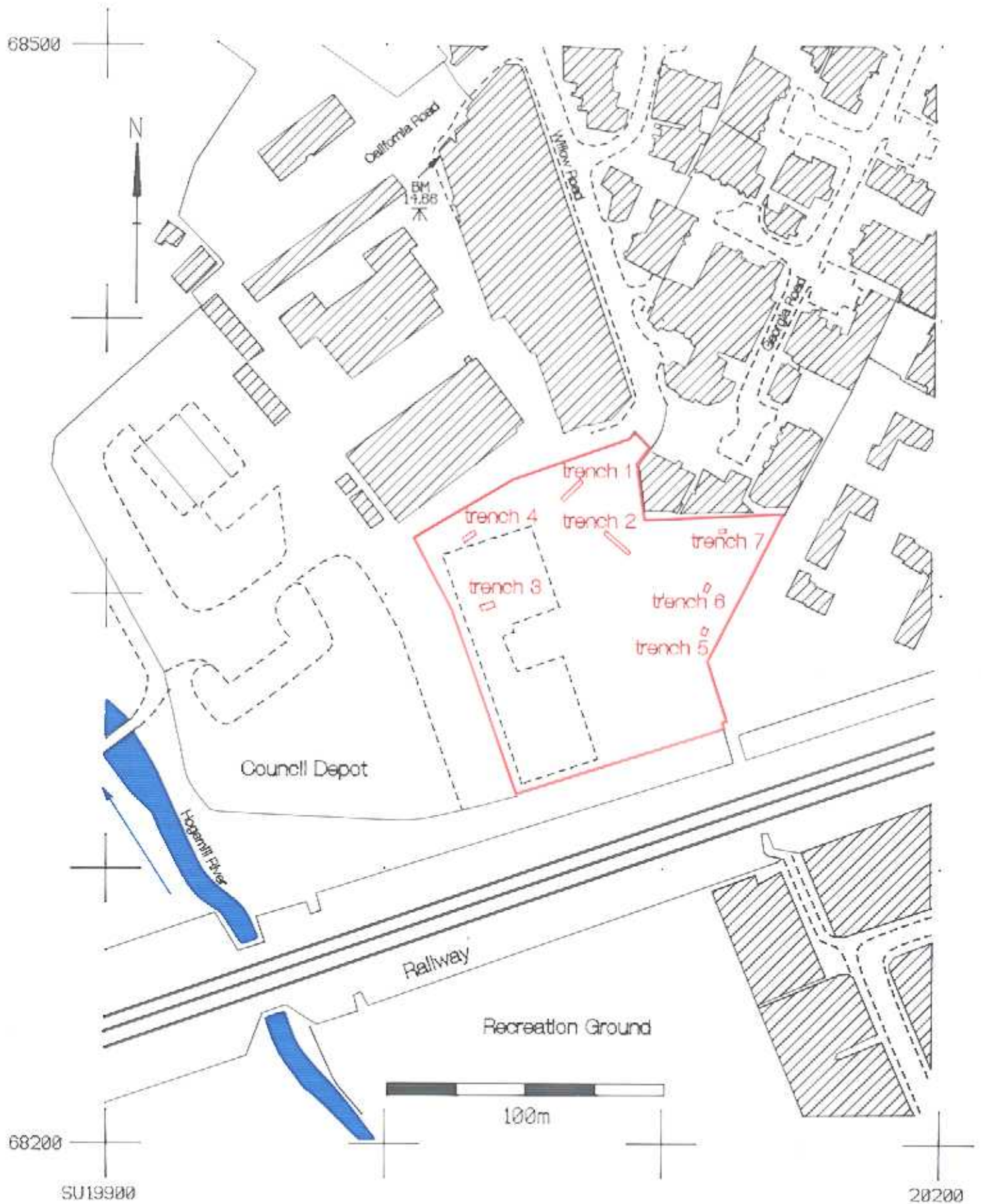
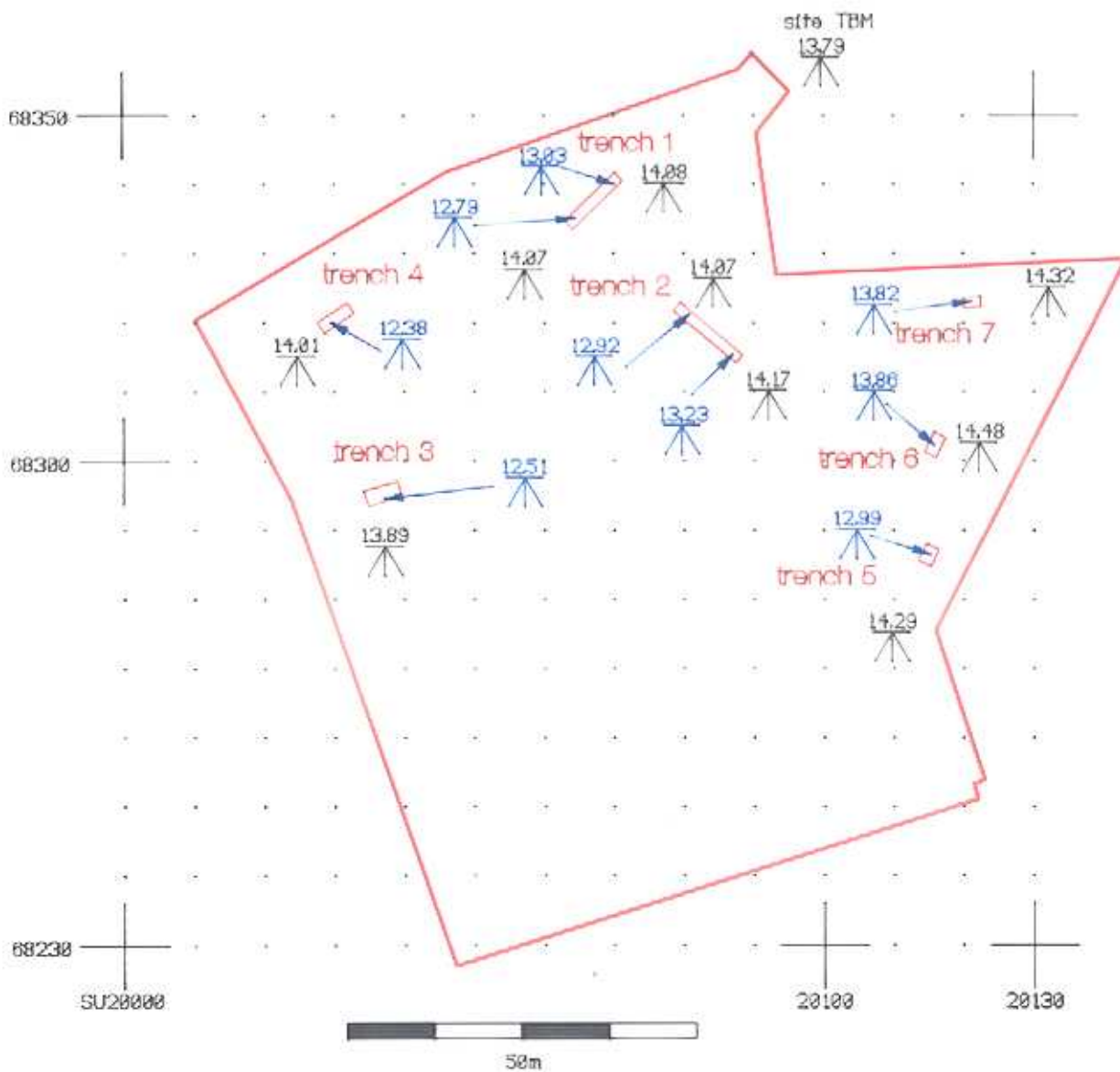


Figure 2. General location of site and trenches.

Willow Road, New Malden, Borough of Kingston upon Thames, 1995



all heights are in metres above OD
heights in blue are trench depths

Figure 3. General location of site and trenches.

Willow Road, New Malden, Borough of Kingston upon Thames, 1995

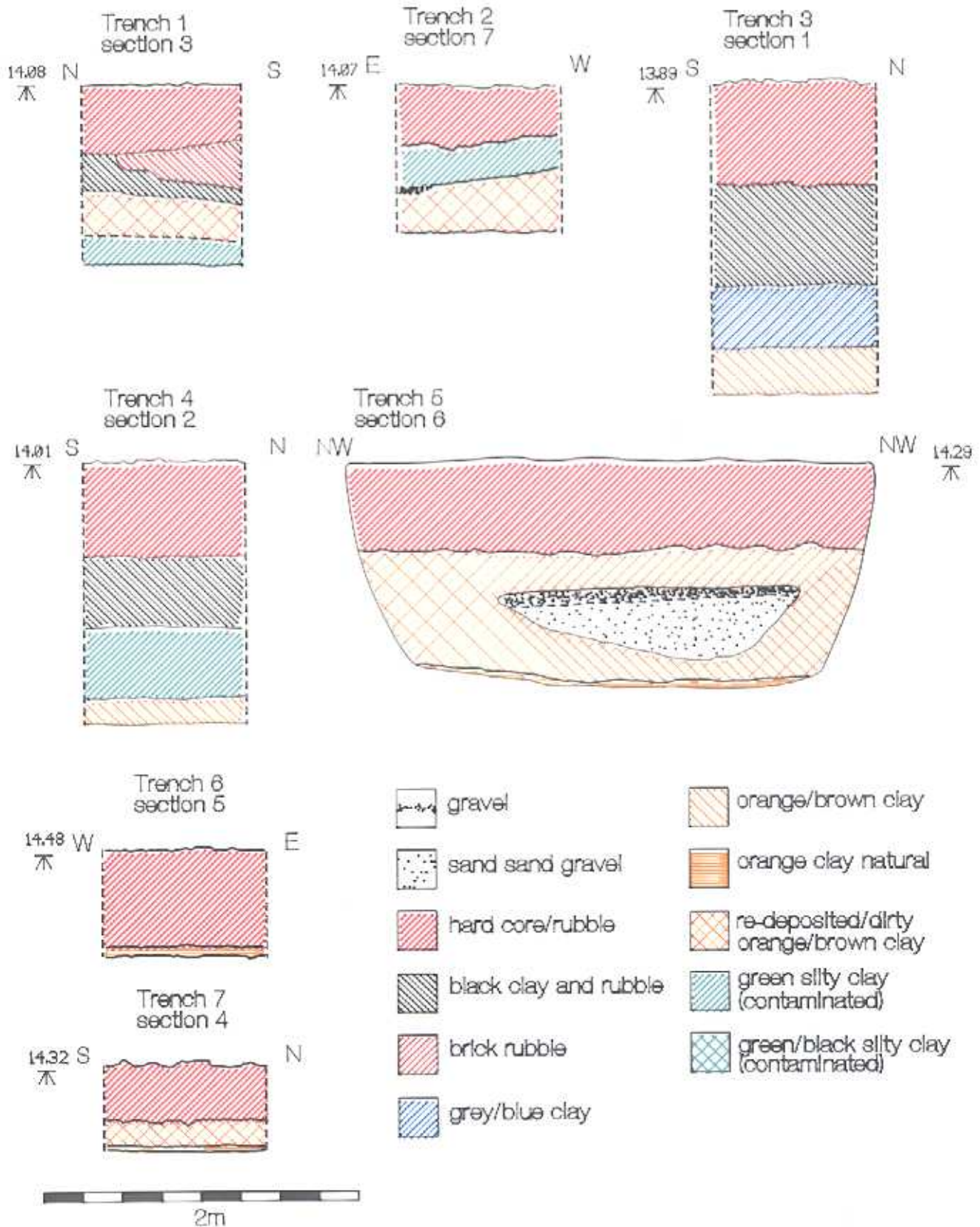


Figure 4. Trench sections.



Plate 1. View of trench 1 looking south.



Plate 2. View of trench 2 looking north west.



Plate 3. Trench 3 looking north.



Plate 4. Trench 4 viewed from the south.



Plate 5. Trench 5 viewed from the south.



Plate 6. View of trench 6 from the east.



Plate 7. View of trench 7 from the south west.