

**Land at Ashford Avenue,
Sonning Common, Oxfordshire**

An Archaeological Evaluation
for Croudace Limited

by Jo Pine
Thames Valley Archaeological Services

Site Code AASC99/1

February 1999

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Report 99/1

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out on land at Ashford Avenue, Sonning Common (NGR SU 7025 8001) (Fig 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Mark Pantry of Croudace Limited, Croudace House, Godstone Road, Caterham, Surrey, CR3 6XQ.

A planning application (P98/SO773) has been submitted to South Oxfordshire District Council for the construction of fifteen new houses with associated access road, carparking and landscaping and the field evaluation was required to allow an informed decision to be made concerning this application. This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Policy and Planning Guidance Note, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG 16, 1990) and the South Oxfordshire District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Paul Smith, County Archaeological Officer for Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service, who advise South Oxfordshire District Council on archaeological matters relating to planning. The field work was supervised by Jo Pine, assisted by Sarah Coles and took place on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd of February 1999. The site code is AASC 99/1.

Location, Topography and Geology

The site comprises a triangular block of land of 0.6 ha which lies at the junction of Ashford Avenue and Reade's Lane, Sonning Common (Fig 2). At the time of the evaluation the land was in agricultural use, lying at a height of approximately 90 m above Ordnance Datum. According to geological maps (BGS 1946) the underlying geology is Plateau Gravels, however, in a number of trenches, glaciofluvial drift was also encountered.

Archaeological Background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from the discovery of a hoard of about a hundred coins found somewhere close to the northern boundary of the site (SU 7023 8003) in 1965. Its location indicates the presence of Roman settlement in the vicinity.

Objectives and Methodology

The purpose of the field evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development. Because of the possibility that part of the recorded coin hoard may have extended into the development area, the first stage of fieldwork involved a metal detector survey of the northern part of the site. Should significant anomalies occur these would be examined by alteration/extension of the evaluation trenches. The survey involved metal detecting along transects at 5 m intervals with each transect divided into 5 m collection blocks (Fig 3). A number of pieces of modern metalwork were found but these were not retained. However, two large anomalies were identified and these were examined by an alteration/extension of evaluation Trenches 1 and 2.

The second phase of fieldwork comprised the excavation of 8 trenches each 20 m long and 1.60 m wide. The positions of the trenches were targeted at the footprints of the proposed new buildings and the anomalies identified during the metal detector survey (Fig 4). The trenches were excavated using a JCB-type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under constant archaeological supervision. All spoilheaps were monitored and metal detected for finds, and all certain or possible archaeological features or deposits were hand-cleaned and sufficient of these excavated to satisfy the aims of the brief.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Results

The trenches typically revealed a thick layer of humic topsoil (50) overlying a light greyish brown silty clay with frequent gravel inclusions (51), although in Trench 5 this subsoil contained fewer gravel pieces. This in turn overlay gravels with sands and/or mid orangey brown clay with flints and chalk patches. This layer was skimmed in order to define and clarify the natural.

Within Trench 7 a small pit (1) was recorded (Fig 5). This was ovoid in shape and quite shallow, being 0.08 m deep. Its dark brown silty clay fill (52) contained a large amount of charcoal and one piece of burnt flint, but no pottery was recovered. This fill does not appear to be of great antiquity.

A possible pit (2) was excavated in Trench 6, but no finds were retrieved from its fill and it is possible that this was either a solution hollow or formed by tree root action.

At the eastern end of Trench 2 a large hollow was recorded (Fig). However, as this contained subsoil (51) and no archaeological finds were retrieved, or tiplines observed, this was probably also a natural geological feature.

No metal finds of archaeological interest were recovered from Trenches 1 and 2, where anomalies had been identified during the metal detecting survey. Worked flint and a piece of post-Medieval pottery were recovered from the spoilheaps of Trenches 1, 2 and 5. Nothing of archaeological interest was present in the remaining trenches.

The Finds

Pottery

One sherd of glazed post-Medieval pottery weighing 2 gms was recovered from the spoilheap of Trench 2.

Worked Flint by Steve Ford

Five pieces of worked flint were recovered from the spoilheaps of Trenches 1, 2 and 5 including one piece of dubious antiquity. These were not individually diagnostic and the collection as a whole is too small to provide more than a general indication of a Neolithic-Bronze Age date.

Catalogue:

Trench 1, 15-20m	Broken flake (patinated)
Trench 2, 0-5 m	Intact flake
Trench 2, 15-20 m	Broken flake; Intact flake (plough struck?)
Trench 5 0-5 m	Broken flake

Burnt flint

One piece of burnt flint weighing 14 gms was recovered from feature 2 (52).

Conclusion

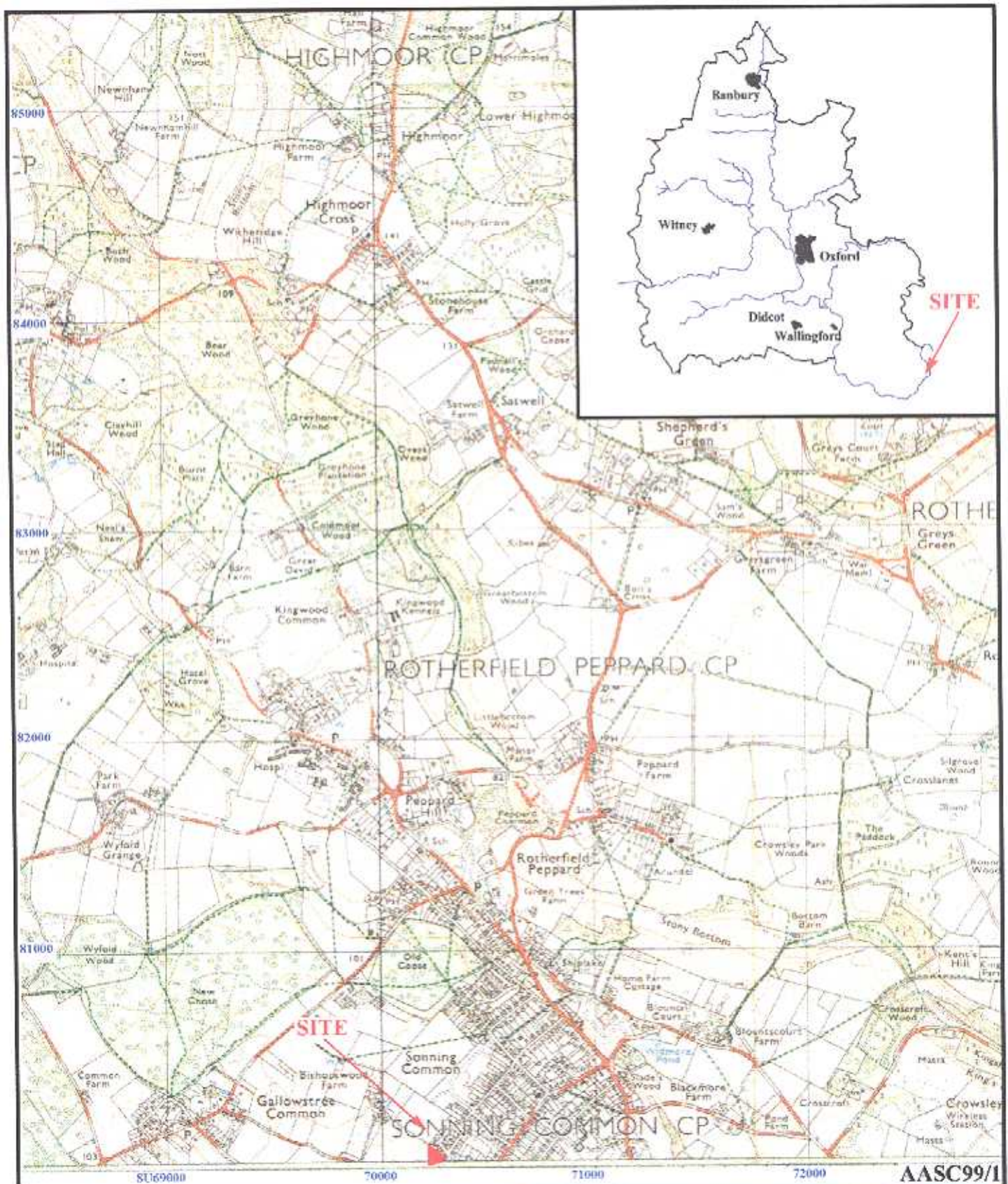
The field evaluation identified a single small shallow pit (1) This was undated but the nature of its fill (52) did not suggest any great antiquity. A sherd of post-Medieval pottery and a small number of prehistoric struck flints were also found but quite possibly could have been introduced to the site during manuring and have little archaeological significance. On the basis of the above results the site appears to have no archaeological potential.

References

- BGS, 1946, *British Geological Survey*, 1:63360, Sheet 268, Drift Edition, Keyworth
PPG 16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Department of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance Note 16, HMSO

Appendix 1: Trench Details

<i>Trench No.</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	20	1.6	0.56-0.69	0.20 m topsoil onto light grey brown silty clay with gravels 0.25 m (max) onto gravels, sands and chalk patches. Test pit dug at southern end. One flint flake from spoilheap.
2	20	1.6	0.53-1.22	0.27 m topsoil onto light grey brown silty clay with gravels 0.50-1.40 m deep onto mid orangey brown clay with flints and chalk patches. Three flakes and a sherd of post-Medieval pottery from the spoilheap.
3	20	1.6	0.66-0.70	0.25 m of topsoil onto light grey brown silty clay with gravels 0.27m (max) onto mid orange brown clay with flints, gravels and chalk patches. No archaeology.
4	20	1.6	0.55-0.60	0.20 m of topsoil onto light grey brown silty clay with gravels 0.20 m (max) onto gravels. No archaeology.
5	20	1.6	0.50-0.70	0.20 m topsoil onto light grey brown silty clay 0.25 m (max) onto gravels and sand. One flake from the spoilheap.
6	20	1.6	0.50-0.70	0.25 m topsoil onto light grey brown silty clay with gravels 0.22 m (max) onto gravels. No archaeology.
7	20	1.6	0.60-0.65	0.25 m topsoil onto light grey brown silty clay with gravels 0.27 m (max) onto mid orangey brown clay with flints, chalk patches and gravels. Pit 1.
8	20	1.6	0.47-0.50	0.20 topsoil onto light grey brown silty clay with gravels 0.20 m (max) onto mid orangey brown clay with flints, gravels and chalk patches. No archaeology.



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Figure 1. Location of site within Sonning Common
and Oxfordshire.

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T H A M E S V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

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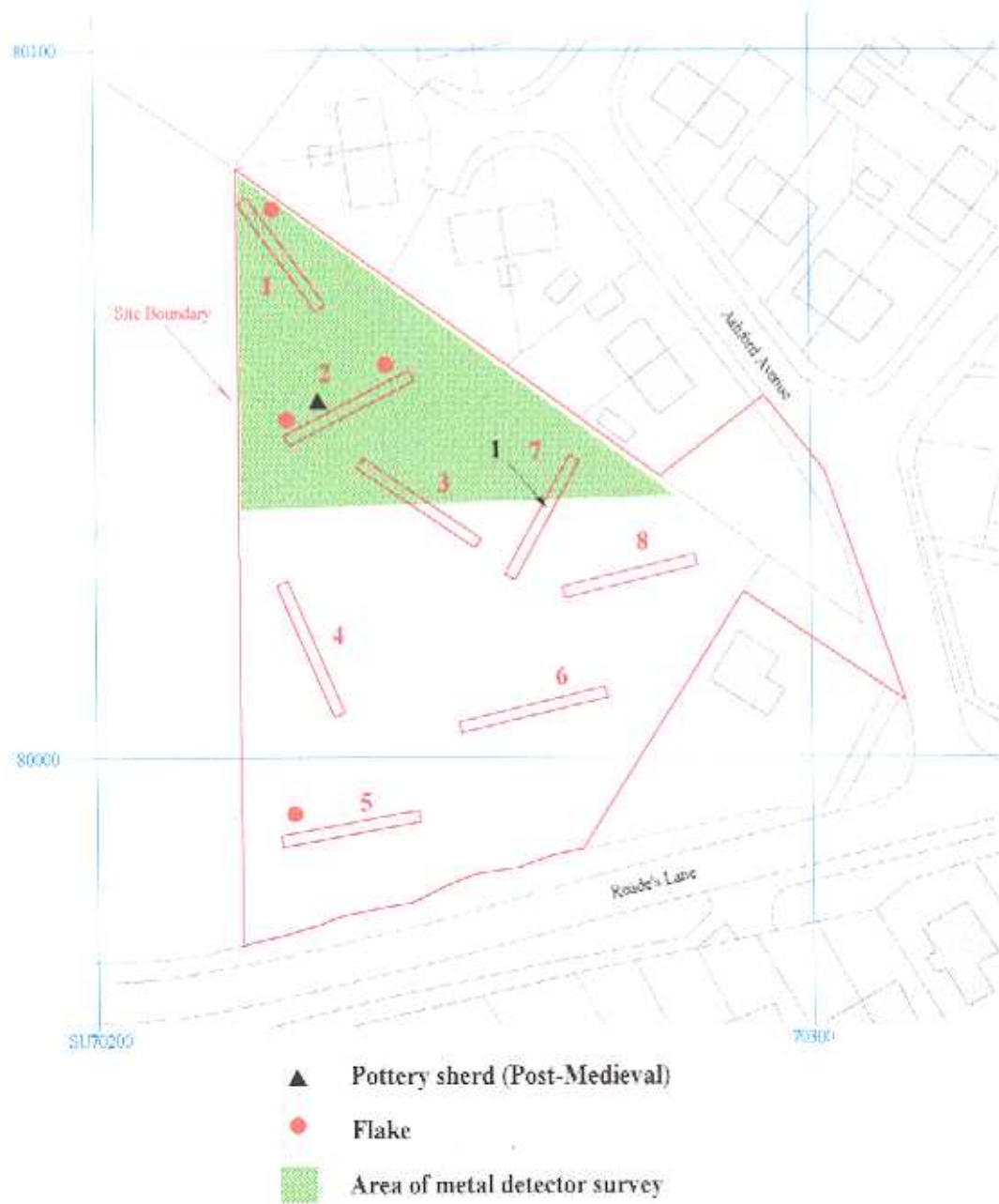


Figure 2. Location of Trenches.

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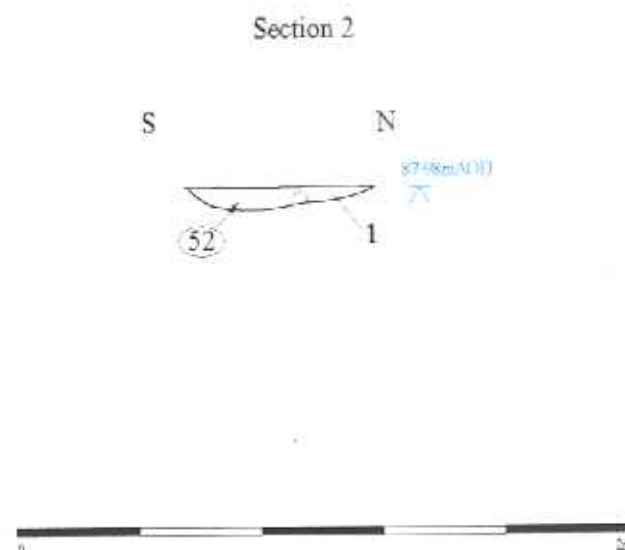
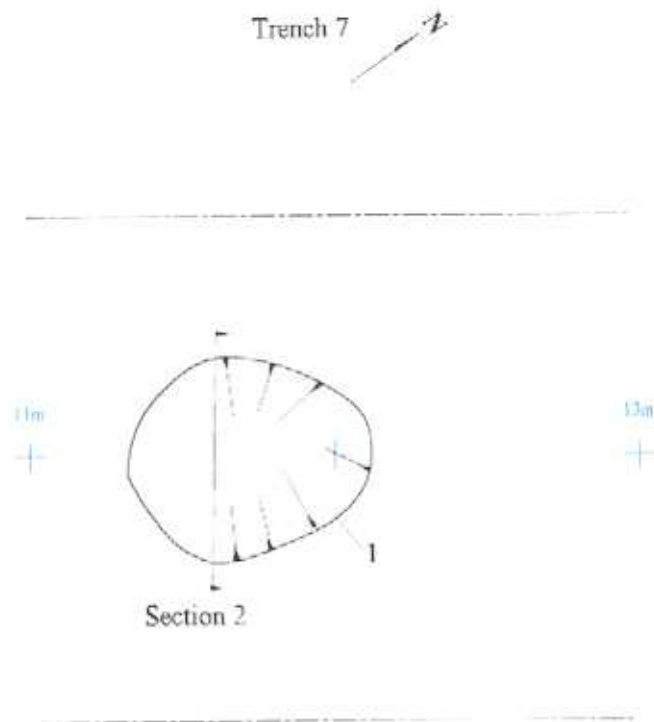


Figure 3. Plan and section of pit 1, Trench 7.

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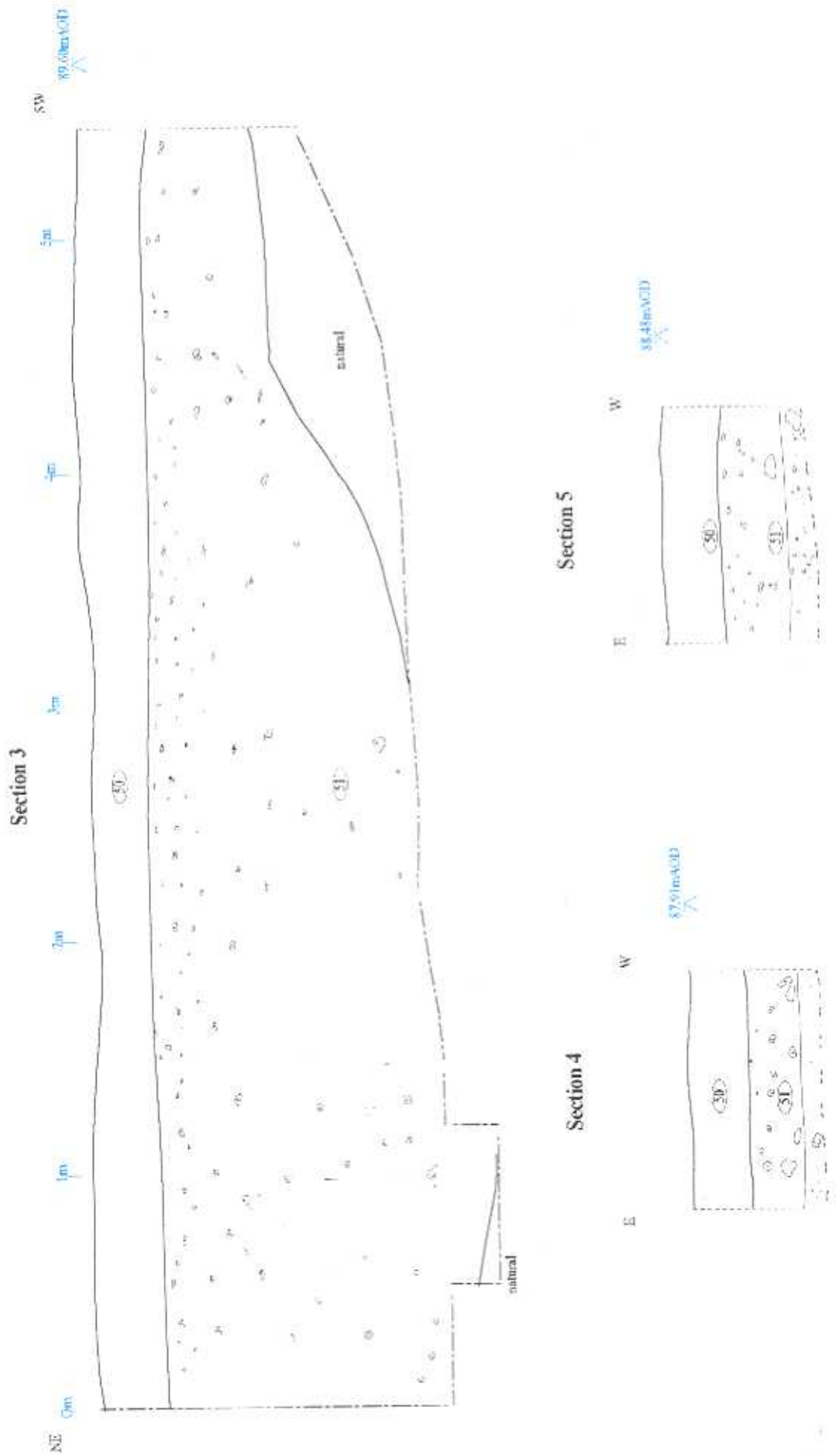


Figure 4. Representative sections of trenches 2, 6 and 7.



Plate 1. Trench 1 looking north-west, scale: 2m.



Plate 2. Trench 6 looking north-east, scale: 2m.