

**Begbroke Business and Science Park,
Sandy Lane, Yarnton, Oxfordshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for The University Surveyor's Office, Oxford**

by Clare A Challis
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code BPY 01/67

August 2001

Summary

Site name: Begbroke Business and Science Park, Sandy Lane, Yarnton

Grid reference: SP 4790 1355

Site activity: Evaluation

Site supervisors: Clare Challis and Andy Taylor

Date and duration of project: 20th–22nd August 2001

Site code: BPY 01/67

Area of site: 3.3ha

Summary of results: One undated cut feature

Monuments identified: None

Location of archive: The archive is currently held by Thames Valley Archaeological Services, 47–49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5NR. It is anticipated that the archive will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museum Service in due course.

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Begbroke Business and Science Park, Sandy Lane, Yarnton, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Clare A Challis

Report 01/67

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Begbroke Business and Science Park, Sandy Lane, Yarnton, Oxfordshire (SP 4790 1355) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr V Allison of The University Surveyor's Office, The Malthouse, Tidmarsh Lane, Oxford OX1 1NQ.

In March, 2001, planning permission was sought from Cherwell District Council for the construction of a series of research buildings. Due to the potential disturbance of below-ground archaeological features, an archaeological field evaluation has been required prior to the determination of the application, in line with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990) and Cherwell Local Plan Policy C26. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Steven Weaver, Conservation Archaeologist with Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services. The fieldwork was undertaken by Clare Challis and Andy Taylor from 20th to 22nd August 2001. The site code is BPY 01/67.

Location, topography and geology

The site is currently a University Research facility, located to the north-east of Yarnton Nurseries Garden Centre and accessed via Sandy Lane, Yarnton. It lies between the River Cherwell and the River Thames and near the Oxford Canal which links these two rivers (Fig. 1). Geological maps (BGS 1982) show that the site occupies the Second (Summertown-Radley) gravel terrace, and gravel was identified on site overlain by a fine loamy subsoil. The land is more or less level at approximately 69m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The area around Yarnton, as well as Yarnton itself, has been noted for an abundance of archaeological sites and finds. Extensive archaeological investigations over several seasons have taken place on the Yarnton stretch of the Thames floodplain, with sites including Neolithic and Bronze Age occupation, a Bronze Age causeway, middle Iron Age burials and a Roman field system (Hey and Bell, 1999). The design brief for the project (Weaver 2001) highlighted the importance of aerial photographs of the region, which have revealed a series of cropmarks to the west of the proposal area including an oval enclosure, sub-circular enclosures and pits of probable Bronze Age

date (Benson and Miles 1974). To the north photographs identified a series of small rectangular enclosures, possible pits of unknown date with a probable Bronze Age ring ditch, and to the south a square enclosure of unknown date. Finds from the surface of ploughed fields from the immediate vicinity of the site would suggest activity from the Neolithic through to the Roman and Medieval periods.

Begbroke Hill Farmhouse lies within the proposal area and is a Grade II listed building, constructed around 1604 by Humphrey Fitzherbert. It was considered possible that remains of ancillary buildings relating to the 17th-century farmhouse (or a predecessor thought to be represented in the cellar of the existing building) may be present.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development. These objectives were to be met by digging 21 trenches, each 1.6–1.8m wide and 20m long, using a machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under continuous archaeological supervision. Where archaeological features were certainly or probably present the stripped areas were cleaned using the appropriate hand tools. Sufficient of the archaeological features or deposits exposed were excavated to satisfy the aims of the brief. The work was to be carried out in a manner that would not compromise the integrity of any archaeological features that might warrant preservation *in situ* or might better be excavated under conditions pertaining to full excavation. All spoil heaps were monitored for finds.

Results

Nineteen trenches were eventually dug (Fig. 2). The further two trenches that were planned were not dug, due to the difficult logistical considerations. This decision was taken following an assessment of the dug trenches, in an on-site consultation with Mr Weaver, of Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services. The stratigraphy of the trenches varied little across the site and is described in Appendix 1.

Trench 1 (Fig 2, 3)

The trench was 1.8m wide and was excavated to a depth of 0.70m along its entire length, to the top of the gravel natural. The stratigraphy showed a 0.25m depth of topsoil directly overlying an orangey-brown loam subsoil, 0.45m thick, and then the orange natural gravel. The only potentially archaeological feature was a shallow pit (1) cut into the natural gravel and measuring 0.71m in diameter and 0.23m deep (Fig. 3, Plate 1). It was filled with

an orangey-grey sandy silt with charcoal flecking (50) and was directly overlain by the subsoil. It was fully excavated within the trench, half sectioned against the baulk, but produced no finds or other means of dating the feature.

Trenches 2-19

These trenches were all 1.8m wide, excavated to a depth between 0.55-1.13m to the top of the natural in each case, and between 18.40–21.30m long. Trench nine had to be shortened to 14.20m for logistical reasons. Most trenches had topsoil/turf either directly overlying the subsoil or over a thin layer of made ground. Trenches 15, 16 and 17 had no topsoil but made ground 0.42m thick onto the subsoil (Plate 2). No features or finds were uncovered during the excavation of these trenches, nor from a search of the spoilheaps.

Conclusion

The evaluation resulted in the recording of one cut feature in Trench 1, a small pit with charcoal within its fill, which produced no dating evidence. No other trenches contained archaeological features or finds. The majority of the proposal site therefore would appear to have no archaeological potential. There is some doubt over the significance of the small pit in Trench 1, but its apparent isolation and lack of associated artefacts suggests that it does not indicate the presence of a large or dense occupation site of archaeological interest. It is possibly a feature which relates to agricultural use of the land such as scrub- or woodland-clearance, not necessarily of any great antiquity.

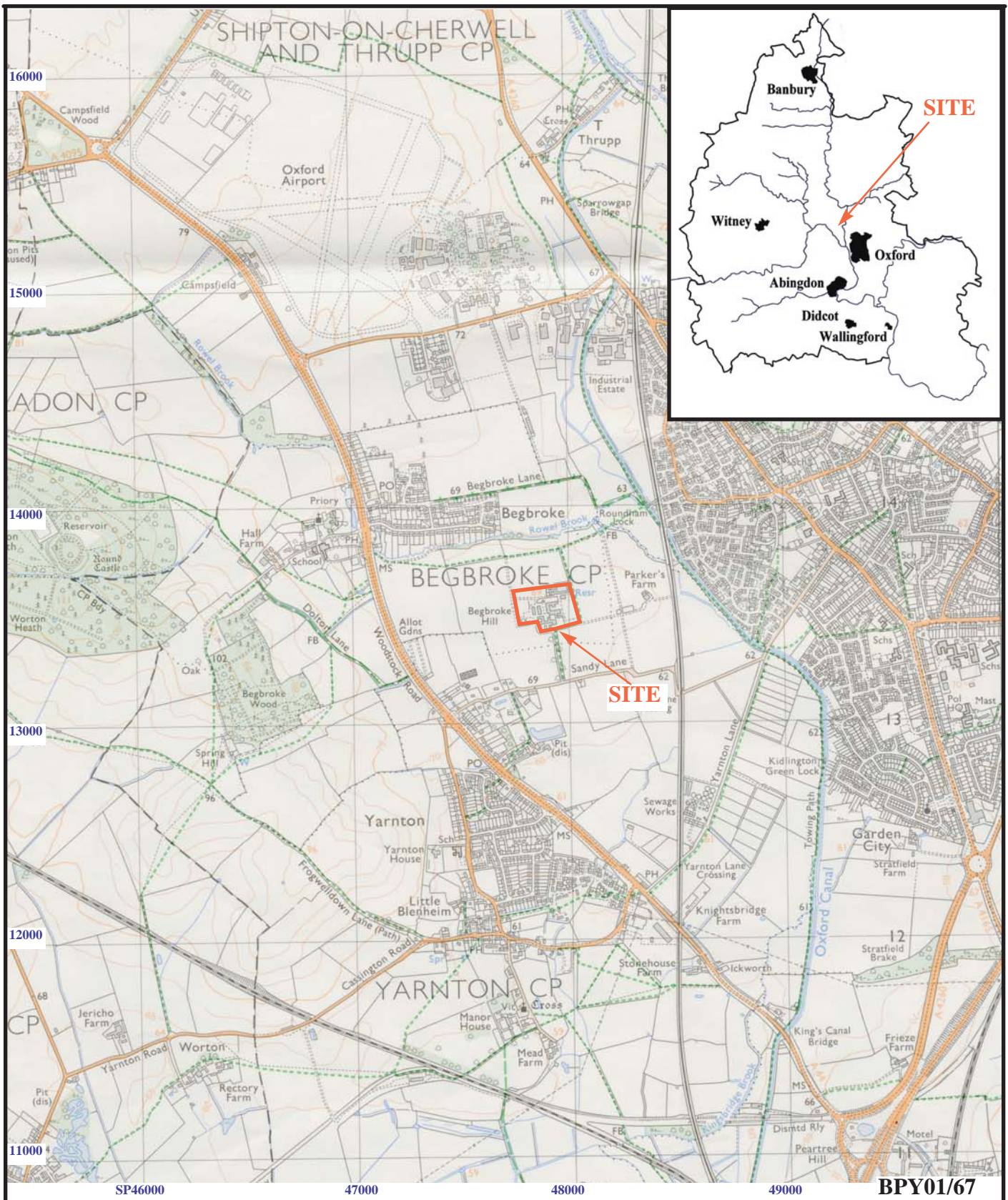
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PPG 16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO
Weaver, S, 2001, 'Begbroke Business and Science Park, Sandy Lane, Yarnton: design brief for archaeological field evaluation', County Archaeological Service, Oxford

APPENDIX 1: Trench details

<i>Trench No.</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	20.40	1.8	0.70	0.00-0.25m topsoil, 0.25-0.70m subsoil, 0.70+ natural gravel; Pit 1 [Plate 1]
2	21.20	1.8	0.96	0.00-0.31m topsoil, 0.31-0.81m subsoil, 0.81+ natural gravel
3	20.50	1.8	0.97	0.00-0.27m topsoil, 0.27-0.84m subsoil, 0.84+ natural gravel
4	19.30	1.8	0.72	0.00-0.22m topsoil, 0.22-0.74m subsoil, 0.74+ natural gravel
5	20.00	1.8	0.80	0.00-0.25m topsoil, 0.25-0.75m subsoil, 0.75+ natural gravel
6	20.00	1.8	0.85	0.00-0.18m topsoil, 0.18-0.48m subsoil, 0.48+ natural gravel
7	20.80	1.8	0.85	0.00-0.25m topsoil, 0.25-0.70m subsoil, 0.70+ natural gravel
8	20.60	1.8	0.95	0.00-0.35m topsoil, 0.35-0.85m subsoil, 0.85+ natural gravel
9	14.20	1.8	1.02	0.00-0.42m topsoil, 0.42-0.85m subsoil, 0.85+ natural gravel
10	19.30	1.8	0.77	0.00-0.20m topsoil, 0.20-0.52m made ground, 0.52+ natural gravel
11	20.04	1.8	0.75	0.00-0.15m made ground, 0.15-0.70 subsoil, 0.70+ natural gravel
12	19.40	1.8	0.60	0.00-0.20m topsoil, 0.20-0.60m subsoil, 0.60+ natural gravel
13	20.20	1.8	0.65	0.00-0.30m topsoil, 0.30-0.55m subsoil, 0.55+ natural gravel
14	21.00	1.8	0.55	0.00-0.30m topsoil, 0.30-0.48m subsoil, 0.48+ natural gravel
15	20.50	1.8	1.13	0.00-0.32m made ground, 0.32-0.97m subsoil, 0.97+ natural gravel [Plate 2]
16	20.30	1.8	1.05	0.00-0.42m made ground, 0.42-0.97m subsoil, 0.97+ natural gravel
17	18.40	1.8	1.08	0.00-0.42 m made ground, 0.42-1.08m subsoil, 1.08+ natural gravel
18	21.30	1.8	0.55	0.00-0.35m topsoil, 0.35-0.50m subsoil, 0.50+ natural gravel
19	20.40	1.8	0.70	0.00-0.10m topsoil, 0.10-0.22m made ground, 0.22-0.57m subsoil, 0.57+ natural gravel

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Figure 1. Location of site within Yarnton and Oxfordshire.

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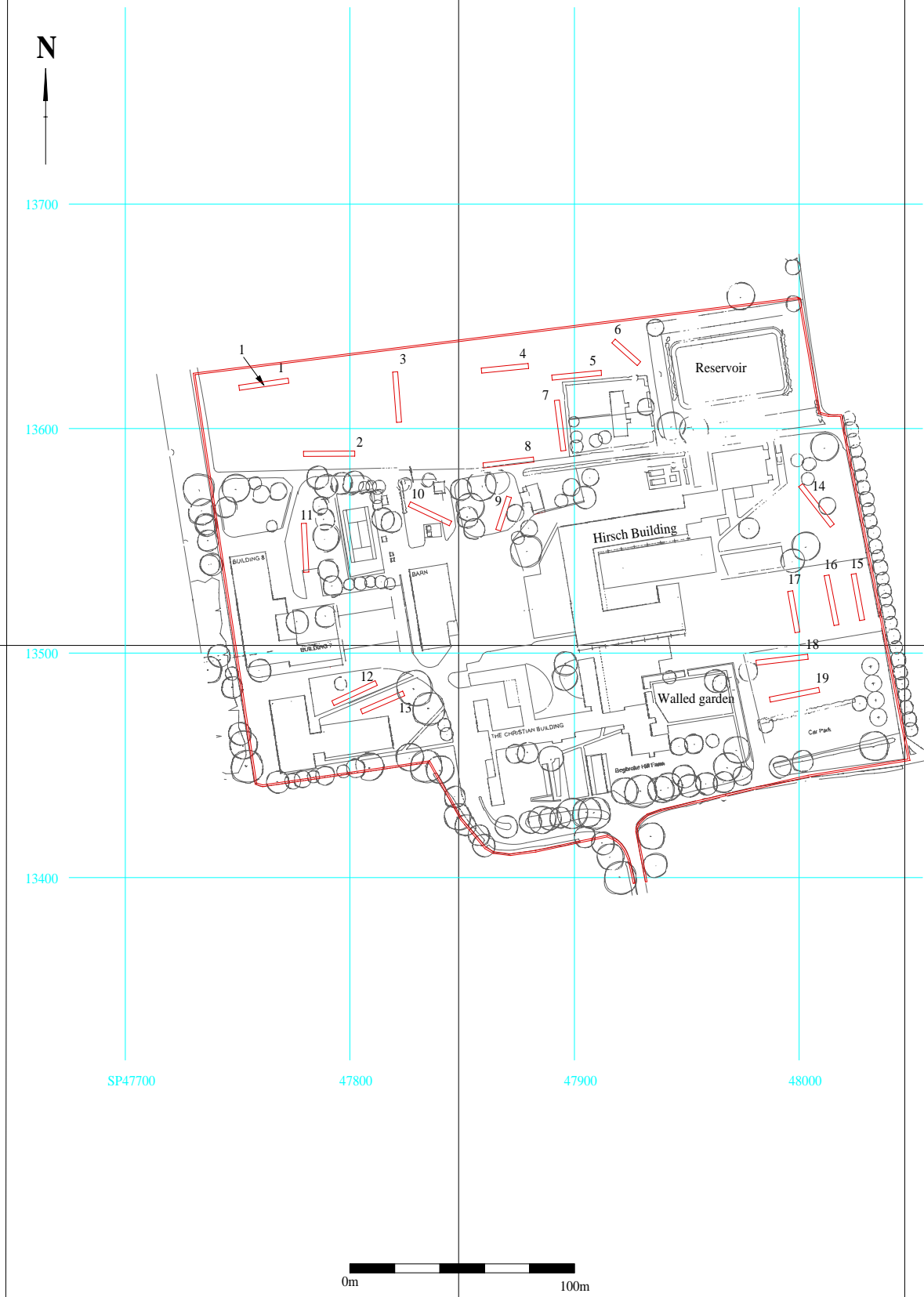


Figure 2. Plan of Trenches.

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Trench 1

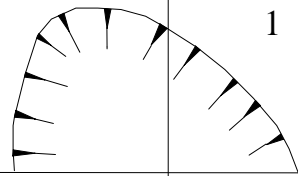


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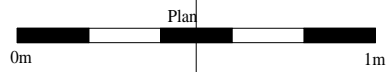
8m

9m

10m

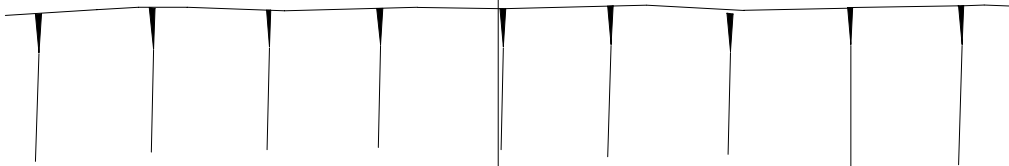


1



E

W



1

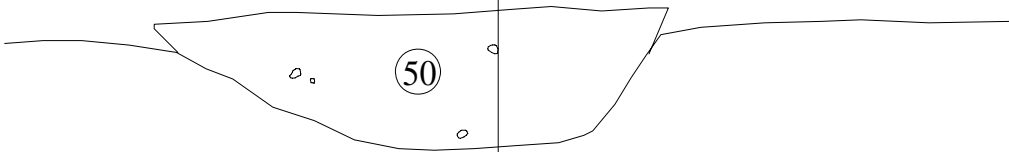


Figure 3. Plan and section of pit 1 in trench 1.

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Plate 1. Trench 15 looking north, scales 2m and 1m.



Plate 2. Trench 1, pit 1, looking south, horizontal scale 1m, vertical scale 0.5m.