

Former Ambrose Garage, Burford Road,  
Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Evaluation  
for Berkeley Homes (Oxford) Ltd

by Steven D G Weaver  
Thames Valley Archaeological Services

Site Code BRCN98/59

August 1998

# Former Ambrose Garage, Burford Road, Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Evaluation

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Report 98/59

## Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out at the Former Ambrose Garage, Burford Road, Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire (SP 31352685)(Figs. 1 and 2). The work was commissioned by Mr Jon Neville of Berkeley Homes (Oxford) Ltd, Berkeley House, 20 Marcham Road, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 1AA.

The archaeological evaluation was required as a condition of the granting of planning permission (app no W98/0963) for the construction of 14 houses with associated access road, car parking and open space. This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Policy and Planning Guidance Note, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG 16, 1990) and the District Archaeological Policies. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Hugh Coddington, Deputy County Archaeological Officer, Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service, advisors to the Local Planning Authority. The fieldwork was undertaken by Steven Weaver and Jez Fry between the 19th and 21st of August 1998 and the site code is BRCN 98/59

## Location, Topography and Geology

The site is located to the south of the town centre of Chipping Norton, along the Burford Road (Figs. 1 and 2). The proposed development site was formerly used as a car show room, and the site is currently occupied by a series of structures with associated car parking and access roads. The site lies on uneven ground sloping from east to west at a height of c. 203 m. above Ordnance Datum. The British Geological Survey shows the underlying geology to be Chipping Norton Limestone (BGS 1968), although the evaluation trenches revealed a mixed orange-brown clayey sand and limestone natural.

## Archaeological Background

The archaeological background of the site has been highlighted in a brief provided by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service. The site lies to the south of the historic core of Chipping Norton along a road established in Medieval times that ran to Burford. It is therefore possible that the area may have significant Medieval deposits present, especially with regards to its street frontage.

Roman deposits, in the form of settlement and unstratified pottery finds have also been recorded nearby, and it is possible that Roman occupation may extend into the proposal area

## **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.

The evaluation was to comprise the excavation of five trenches, 1.6 m. wide and 10 m. long (a total of 80 sq m) targeted specifically to examine the Burford Road frontage. In the event, five trenches of varying length were excavated (a total of 82.6 sq m). The trenches were excavated using a JCB-type machine fitted with a concrete breaker and toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. Any possible archaeological deposits were hand cleaned and excavated and the spoilheaps monitored for finds.

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

## **Results**

### Trench 1

Trench 1 was located at the southeast end of the site, aligned east-west (Fig. 2). The trench was excavated through an existing tarmac surface and consisted of a c. 0.10 m. depth of made ground (51) above a mixed orange-brown clayey sand and limestone natural. Two modern services were present at the southwest end of the trench, however, no archaeological features were revealed and no finds were recovered from the spoilheap.

### Trench 2 (Plates 1 and 2)

Trench 2 was located at the southeast end of the site, aligned north-south (Fig. 2). The trench was orientated along the same alignment, and as close as possible to the Burford Road, so as to investigate whether any possible earlier street frontage was present. The trench was excavated through a tarmaced access route and consisted of a c. 0.26 m. depth of made ground (51) that overlay a mixed orange-brown clayey sand and limestone natural. Three posthole features (2, 3 and 4) were revealed at the base of the trench (Fig.3).

Posthole (2) was 0.28 m. in diameter by 0.10 m. deep and contained a single fill (52) which produced the remains of an iron nail (Figs. 3 and 4). Posthole (3) was 0.36 m. in diameter by 0.34 m. deep and contained a single fill (53) which produced a number of iron nails and a small brick fragment (Figs. 3

and 4)(Plate 2). Posthole (4) was more ovoid in character, 0.46 m. long by 0.33 m. wide and 0.20 m. deep with a single fill (54) which produced a small fragment of brick (Figs. 3 and 4).

No finds were recovered from the spoilheap.

#### Trench 3

Trench 3 was located centrally within the site, aligned east-west (Fig. 2). The trench was excavated partly through a raised rafted reinforced concrete base and a laid brick surface which overlay made ground (51). The base of the western end of the trench revealed a series of concrete foundations which provided the base for the rafted concrete floor. The foundations cut through the natural geology and the made ground lay at a greater depth between the foundations overlying a more truncated orange-brown clayey sand and limestone natural. At the eastern end of the trench it was believed that a possible partial topsoil was still present, however, it was similar in nature to the made ground between the foundations at the eastern end of the trench. At the base of the trench a mixed orange-brown clayey sand and limestone natural was revealed. No archaeological features were revealed and no finds were recovered from the spoilheap.

#### Trench 4 (Plate 3)

The trench was located at the northeast end of the site, aligned roughly north-south (Fig. 2). The trench was aligned as close to, and along the same orientation as Burford Road to investigate the possibility of the presence of any earlier street frontage. The trench was excavated through a tarmac surface which overlay a made ground consisting of brick and stone rubble which overlay a mixed orange-brown clayey sand and limestone natural. During excavation of the southern end of the trench, and observed in section, was the partial remains of a modern floor and structure. Modern disturbance was present at the southern end of the trench, which probably relates to the presence of the above structural activity. A c. 1.10 m. long by 0.45 m. deep slot was excavated through the deposit which consisted of layers of light white/grey sand and dark grey clay above a dump of mixed marlstone and limestone blocks. Modern floor tile fragments were present within the fills but not retained.

No finds were recovered from the spoilheap.

#### Trench 5 (Plate 4)

Trench 5 was located at the northwest end of the site, aligned northeast-southwest (Fig. 2). The trench was excavated through an area of tarmac car park which sat above a series of made ground layers that overlay a mixed orange-brown clayey sand and limestone natural. A c. 1.20 m. wide by 1.10 m. deep test pit was excavated at the southwestern end of the trench to examine the natural geology.

The base of the trench revealed a number of east-west aligned services and a single ?pit (1)(Fig. 3). Pit (1) was roughly sub-rectangular in plan (c. 4.10 m. long by 1.10 m. wide) and was truncated by two of

the service runs (Fig. 3). A slot was excavated through the features at its northeastern extent (Figs. 3 and 4)(Plate 4). Pit (1) was 0.80 m. deep and contained a series of fills (55-59) which produced animal bone, brick and six sherds of 17th-18th century pottery. The excavated slot appeared to indicate that the feature slightly undercut the natural geology along its northeastern edge.

## **The Finds**

### **Pottery by Cathy Underwood-Keevil**

A total of six sherds of pottery (156 gm) were recovered from within the fills of pit 1 (56, 58 and 59). These consisted of four bodysherds and two base sherds. The sherds had dark brown and greeny brown manganese glazes, and are all of a post-Medieval redware fabric dating to the 17th-18th century. The base sherds recovered consisted of a fragmented cup from fill (59) and a semi-complete base of a pancheon from fill (58). All of the pottery probably originated from kilns in the Bristol area.

### **Animal bone**

A total of six fragments of animal bone (126 gm) were recovered all present within pit 1 (56).

### **Brick and Tile**

A total of six fragments of brick/tile (371 gm) were recovered. Four brick fragments were present within pit 1 (55) and two small fragments of brick/tile were recovered from both posthole 3 (53) and posthole 4 (54).

### **Metalwork**

A total of four corroded iron nails (28 gm) were recovered. A single nail was present within posthole 2 (52) and three nail fragments within posthole 3 (53).

## **Conclusions**

The evaluation trenches have located a small number of post-Medieval deposits. The relative depths of the deposits excavated would appear to indicate that the site has probably undergone only a small degree of truncation in those areas that are currently tarmaced access roads and carparking.

The large pit (1) recorded in Trench 5 is of late post-Medieval origin (17th-18th century). The precise character of the pit is uncertain. If the pit was dug for rubbish disposal a relatively high density of finds may be expected, however, in the partial excavation of pit 1 the fills of the cut produced a low density of finds.

The postholes (2, 3 and 4) revealed in Trench 2 were similarly aligned to the Burford Road to the east. Although the postholes had dissimilar profiles their fills contained similar remains of post-Medieval nails and brick/tile fragments which would suggest that they are contemporary. It is likely that they represent an earlier boundary to the site adjacent to the roadway.

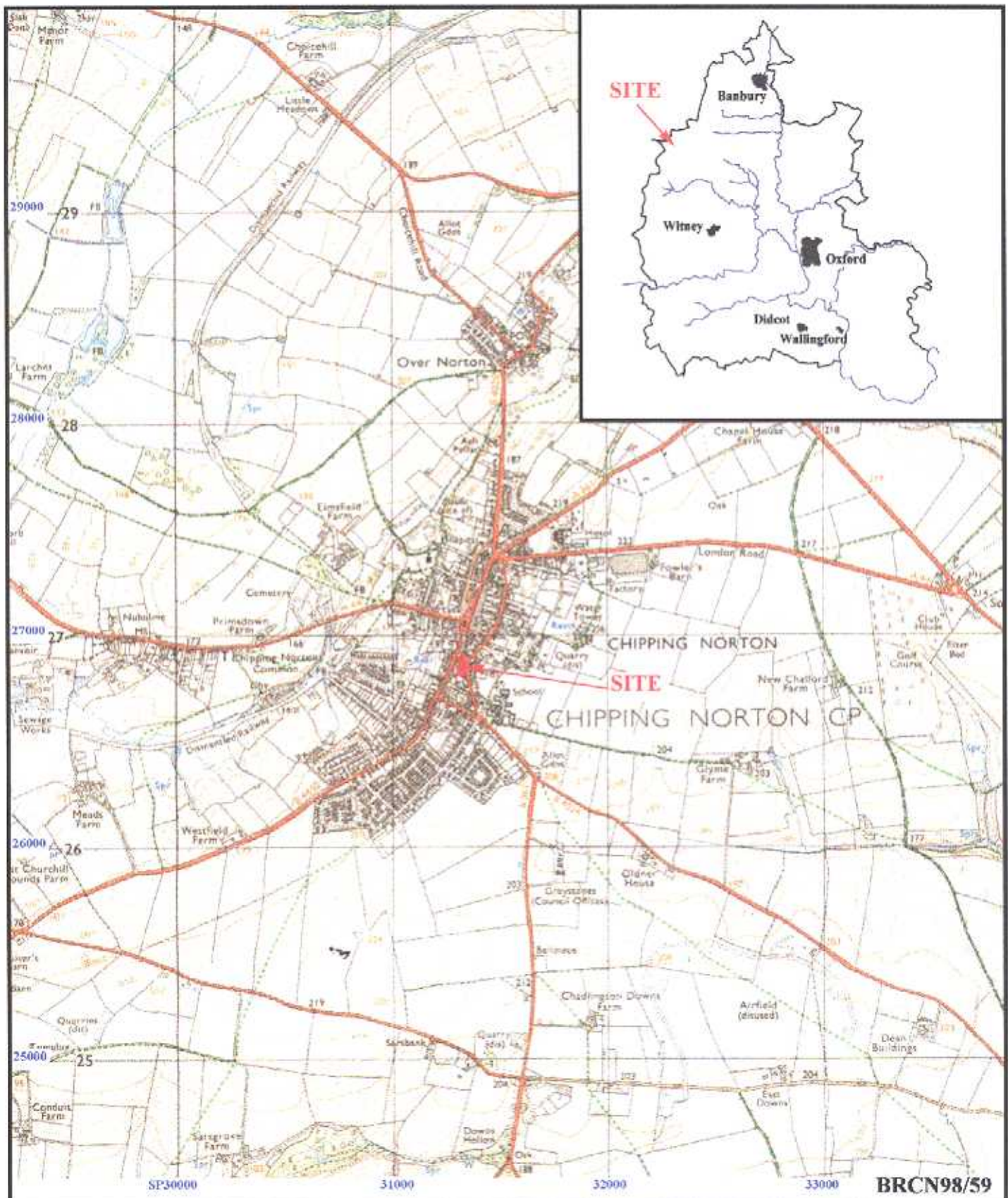
The trenches have confirmed that no Medieval street frontage is present on the site along the Burford Road as was thought possible due to its location close to the known southern extent of Medieval Chipping Norton. The absence of any Medieval street frontage or associated deposits may be due to the fact that the settlement did not extend as far south as the site, but equally it is possible, but unlikely, that Medieval deposits may have been destroyed by post-Medieval activity. On the basis of these results, the site would appear to have no archaeological potential for the Medieval or earlier periods.

## References

- BGS, 1968, *British Geological Survey*, 1:63360, Sheet 218, Solid and 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	12.50	1.60	0.30	Tarmac and madeground (51) overlying mixed orange-brown clayey sand and limestone.
2	6.30	1.60	0.29	Tarmac and madeground (51) overlying mixed orange-brown clayey sand and limestone. Postholes (2, 3 and 4).
3	9.60	2.00	W 1.34 E 0.98	Rafted concrete floor and brick lain surface above made ground (possible topsoil?) overlying mixed orange-brown clayey sand and limestone.
4	10.50	1.60	S 0.73 N 0.41	Tarmac and madeground (51) overlying mixed orange-brown clayey sand and limestone. Modern disturbance present.
5	10.30	1.60	0.60 Tpit 1.10	Tarmac and madeground (51) overlying mixed orange-brown clayey sand and limestone. Pit (1).



**Former Ambrose Garage, Burford Road,  
Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire, 1998**

Figure 1. Location of site within Chipping Norton and Oxfordshire.

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# Former Ambrose Garage, Burford Road, Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire, 1998



Figure 2. Trench location plan.

Former Ambrose Garage, Burford Road, Chipping Norton,  
Oxfordshire, 1998

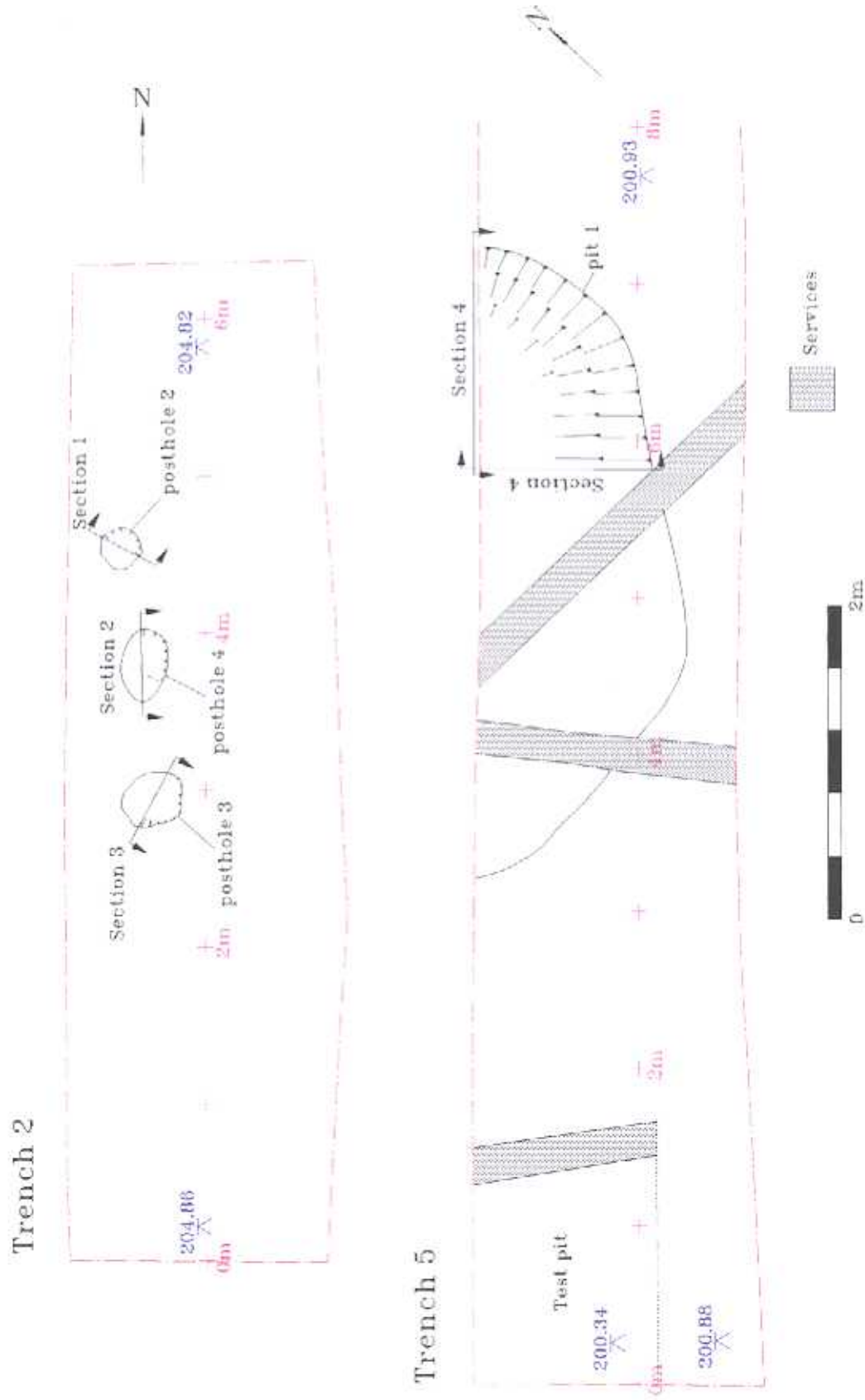


Figure 3. Plan of archaeological features in Trenches 2 and 5.

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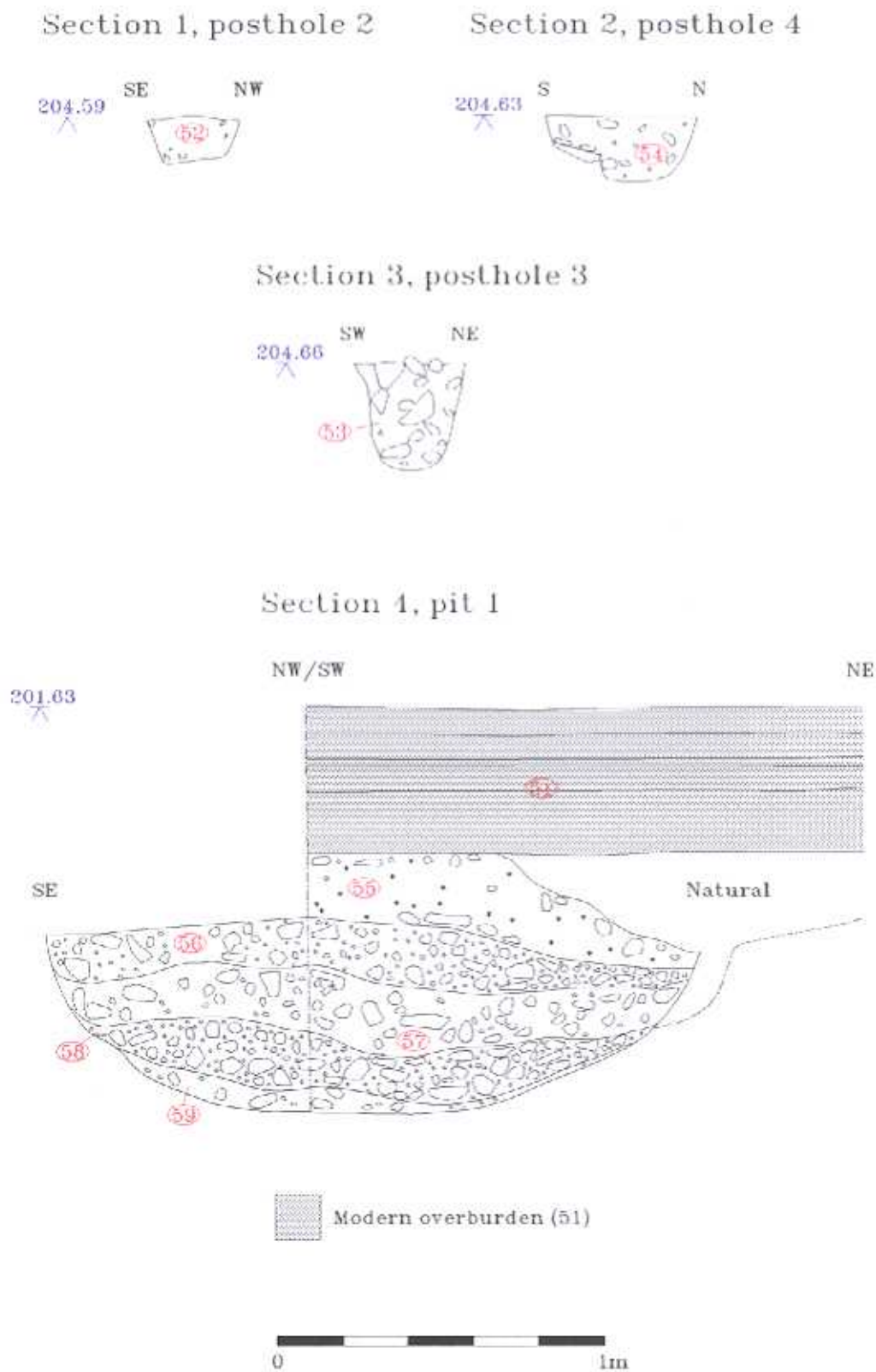


Figure 4. Sections 1-4.



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



Plate 2. Trench 2, looking west, showing posthole 3, scales:0.50m



Plate 3. Trench 4, looking north, scale: 2m



Plate 4. Trench 5, looking north-west, showing pit 1, scale: 2m.