

Claydon Road, Cropredy, Oxfordshire

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Ashley House Interbuild Plc**

by M J Saunders

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code CRC01/03

February 2001

Summary

Site name: Claydon Road, Cropredy, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SP 4665 4670

Site activity: Evaluation trenching

Date and duration of project: 31st January 2001

Project manager: M John Saunders

Site supervisor: Steve Ford

Site code: CRC01/03

Area of site: *c.* 0.13 hectares

Summary of results: Two trenches each produced a section of undated ditch, possibly representing parts of the same linear feature. A single, small undated pit (possibly modern) was also present.

Monuments identified: Undated ditch/ditches - function unknown. Small pit - possibly modern.

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

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 12.02.01
	Melanie Hall✓ 15.02.01

Claydon Road, Cropredy, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Evaluation

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Report 01/03

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at land off Claydon Road, Cropredy, Oxfordshire (SP 4665 4670) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Gail Mosley of Ashley House Interbuild Plc, Chalfont Hall, Gravel Hill, Chalfont St Peter, Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire, SL9 0NP, on behalf of their clients, the Partners of the Cropredy Surgery.

A planning application has been made to Cherwell District Council for the construction of a new doctors surgery. Prior to the determination of the planning application, and as a consequence of the possibility of archaeological deposits being present on the site which may be damaged or destroyed by groundworks, an archaeological field evaluation has been requested. This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Policy and Planning Guidance Note, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990) and the District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Steven Weaver, Conservation Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services. The fieldwork was undertaken by Steve Ford, assisted by Sian Anthony, on January 31st 2001. The site code is CRC01/03.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the west side of Claydon Road, Cropredy (Fig. 2) and is *c.* 0.13 hectares in area. It lies at a height of approximately 340m above Ordnance Datum and, according to geological maps (BGS 1982), the underlying geology is fine silty soil over lower lias. The site is currently farmland.

Archaeological background

The site is located along the western edge of the historic core of the village of Cropredy, which has late Saxon and medieval origins. Just to the south of the site are the remains of a medieval cross commonly known as 'the cup and saucer'. A description of the cross and its location, given in 1880 by the Reverend M A Royce, notes the presence of traces of buildings next to the cross. Davis' map of 1797 shows buildings present within the proposal area, along the Claydon Road frontage. These may have medieval origins. To the north there is evidence of Saxon deposits and to the north-east is a bank and ditch that is thought to represent the boundary of the

settlement around the minster. Medieval ridge and furrow field systems lie to the west of the site but are not thought to encroach eastwards onto the proposal site. This may suggest that the latter was occupied by houses and paddocks during the medieval period.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological or palaeoenvironmental deposits within the area of development. Specific research aims of the project were: to determine whether archaeological deposits of any period are present; to determine whether archaeologically relevant levels have survived; and to determine whether late Saxon and/or medieval deposits are present. This was to be achieved by digging three trenches, each 10m long and at least 1.5m wide, using a JCB-type machine fitted with a toothless bucket. In the event, and after consultation with Oxfordshire County Council Conservation Archaeologist, an additional trench was dug. Machining was to be carried out under continuous archaeological supervision and the trenches were to be targeted at the footprint of the new building, the access road and car parking area. Where archaeological features were certainly or possibly present, the stripped areas were to be cleaned using the appropriate hand tools and sufficient of the features and deposits exposed excavated or sampled by hand to satisfy the terms of the brief. This work was to be carried out in such a manner that would not compromise the integrity of archaeological features or deposits that might warrant preservation in-situ or might better be dealt with under conditions pertaining to full excavation. All spoilheaps were to be 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

The four trenches were excavated in the positions shown on Figure 3.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was located on the access road and aligned approximately east–west. It was 11.4m long, 0.28m deep and the stratigraphy comprised turf and topsoil over subsoil onto fine gravel natural with clay patches. A single small pit (3) was present towards the western end of the trench (Fig. 4). This was 0.40m in diameter and 0.25m deep (Fig. 5) and contained only a single sheep/goat astragalus, which was not retained. No dating evidence was recovered and this feature may be of fairly recent origin.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was located in the proposed car parking area, parallel with the western boundary of the site. It was 11.4m long, 0.33m deep and the stratigraphy comprised 0.05m of turf and topsoil over 0.25m of subsoil, onto fine gravel natural. A small ditch (2) crossed the trench on an east–west alignment (Fig. 4) and this was itself cut obliquely by a v-shaped stone filled land drain. The ditch was 1.40m wide and 0.39m deep (Fig. 5) and filled with a firm clayey sand with small limestone inclusions and some iron pan. No finds were recovered and this feature also could not be dated. A single prehistoric flint flake was recovered from the spoilheap of this trench.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was positioned within the footprint of the proposed new building and aligned north–south. It was 12m long and 0.40m deep and the stratigraphy comprised 0.33m of turf and topsoil onto fine gravel natural. A small ditch (1) crossed the southern end of the trench on an east–west alignment. This was 0.68m wide, 0.60m deep and filled with a firm light reddish-brown silty clay with rounded gravel inclusions. It is possible that this feature is the same as ditch 2 in Trench 2, although the alignment and profile are slightly different. Once again no finds were recovered and this feature also remains undated.

Trench 4

Trench 4 was located in the central eastern part of the site parallel with the site boundary. It was 5.6m long, 0.30m deep and the stratigraphy comprised 0.25m of turf and topsoil onto clay/gravel natural. No features were present and no finds were recovered from the spoilheaps.

Finds

Struck flint by Steve Ford

A single broken flint flake was recovered from the spoilheap of Trench 2. The flint is not closely datable and only a broad Neolithic–Bronze Age date can be suggested.

Conclusion

Although the evaluation located two, possibly three features, no traces were found of the buildings depicted on Davis' map of 1797. These were shown as lying within the proposal area along the Claydon Road frontage. However, it is possible that any remains of these buildings lie outside the eastern site boundary as this area coincides with a wide roadside verge. In this case, the ditch/ditches identified in evaluation Trenches 2 and 3 might represent elements of property boundaries to the rear of these dwellings. Although some undulation was

apparent in the stratigraphy of the trenches this was not spatially regular and is not thought to represent an extension of the medieval ridge and furrow cultivation apparent from aerial photographs to the north and west of the site.

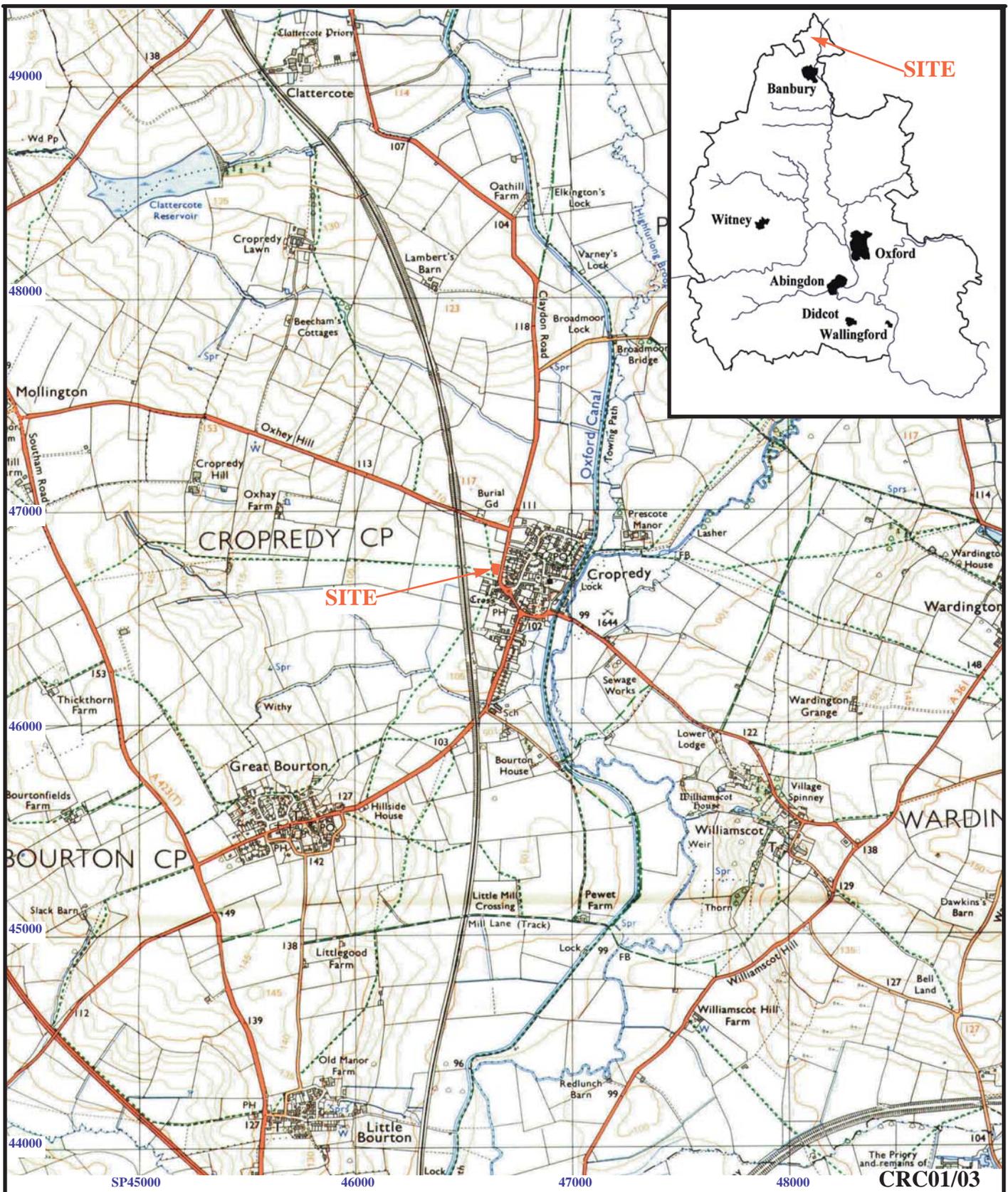
It is, therefore, concluded from the results of the evaluation that nothing of significant archaeological importance will be damaged or destroyed by groundworks for the proposed new development.

References

BGS, 1982, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 201, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Department of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance Note 16,
HMSO

APPENDIX 1: Trench details
0m at south or west end

<i>Trench No.</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	11.40	1.50	0.28	0.20m of turf and topsoil over 0.05m of subsoil onto fine gravel with clay patches. Small pit (3) towards north-west end.
2	11.40	1.50	0.33	0.05m of turf and topsoil over 0.25m of subsoil onto fine gravel. Ditch (2) aligned east-west and cut by land drain. One flint flake recovered from base of trench.
3	12.00	1.50	0.40	0.33m of turf and topsoil onto fine gravel. Ditch (1) aligned east-west. Land drains present, much root disturbance.
4	5.60	1.50	0.30	0.25m of turf and topsoil onto clay and gravel. Much root disturbance.

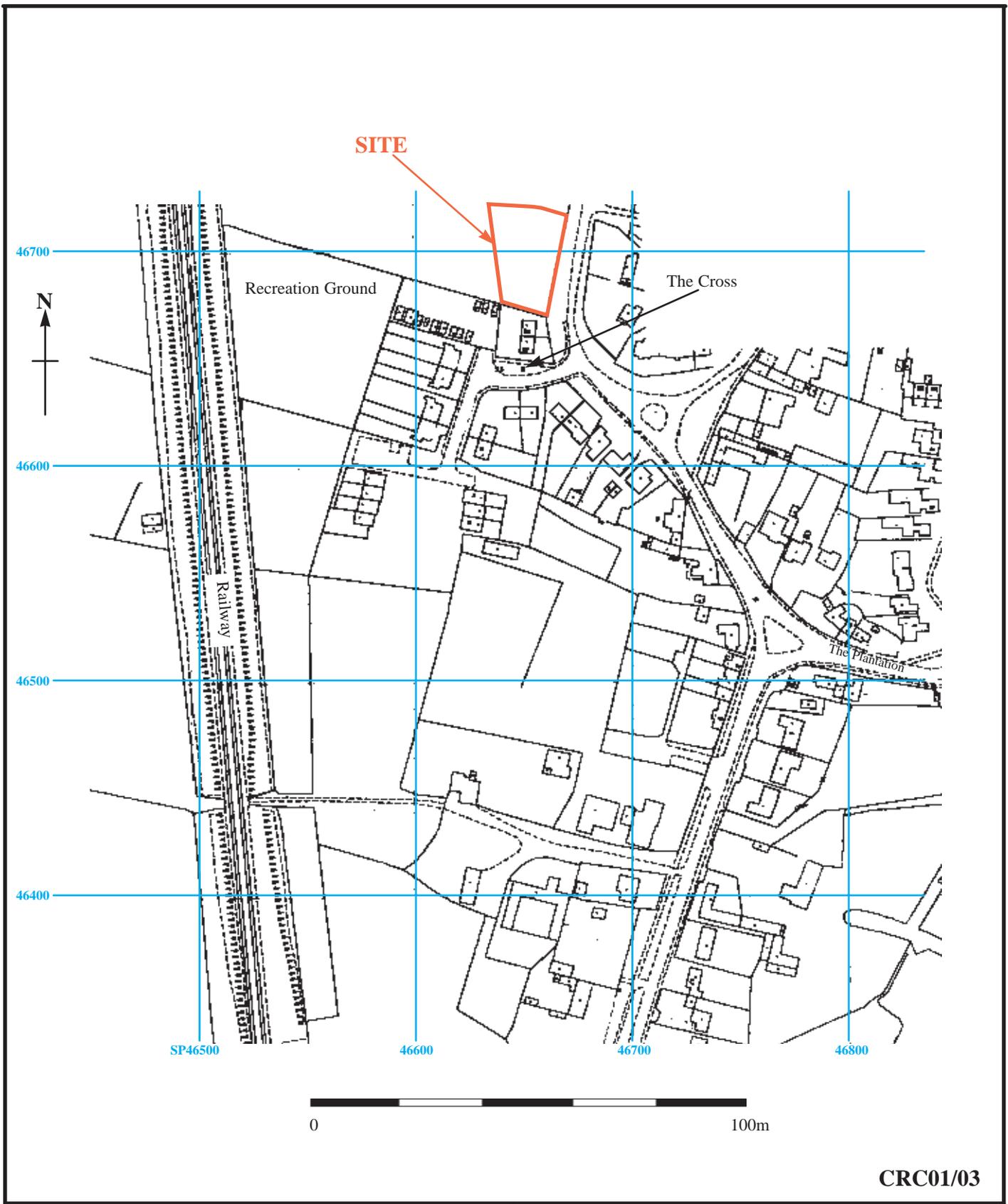


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Figure 1. Location of site within Cropredy and Oxfordshire.

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Figure 2. Location of site.

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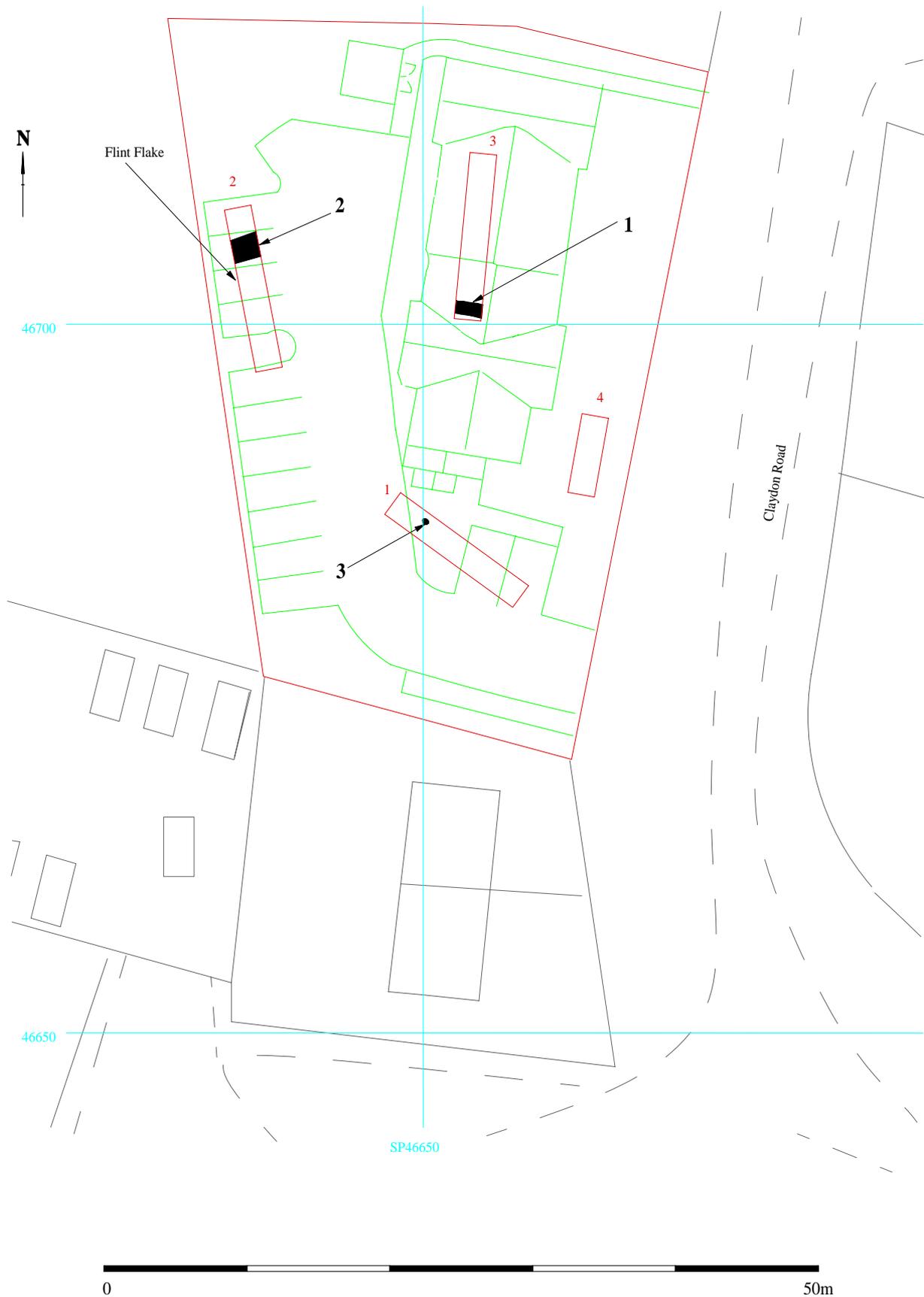


Figure 3. Location of trenches showing all archaeological features and development proposals.

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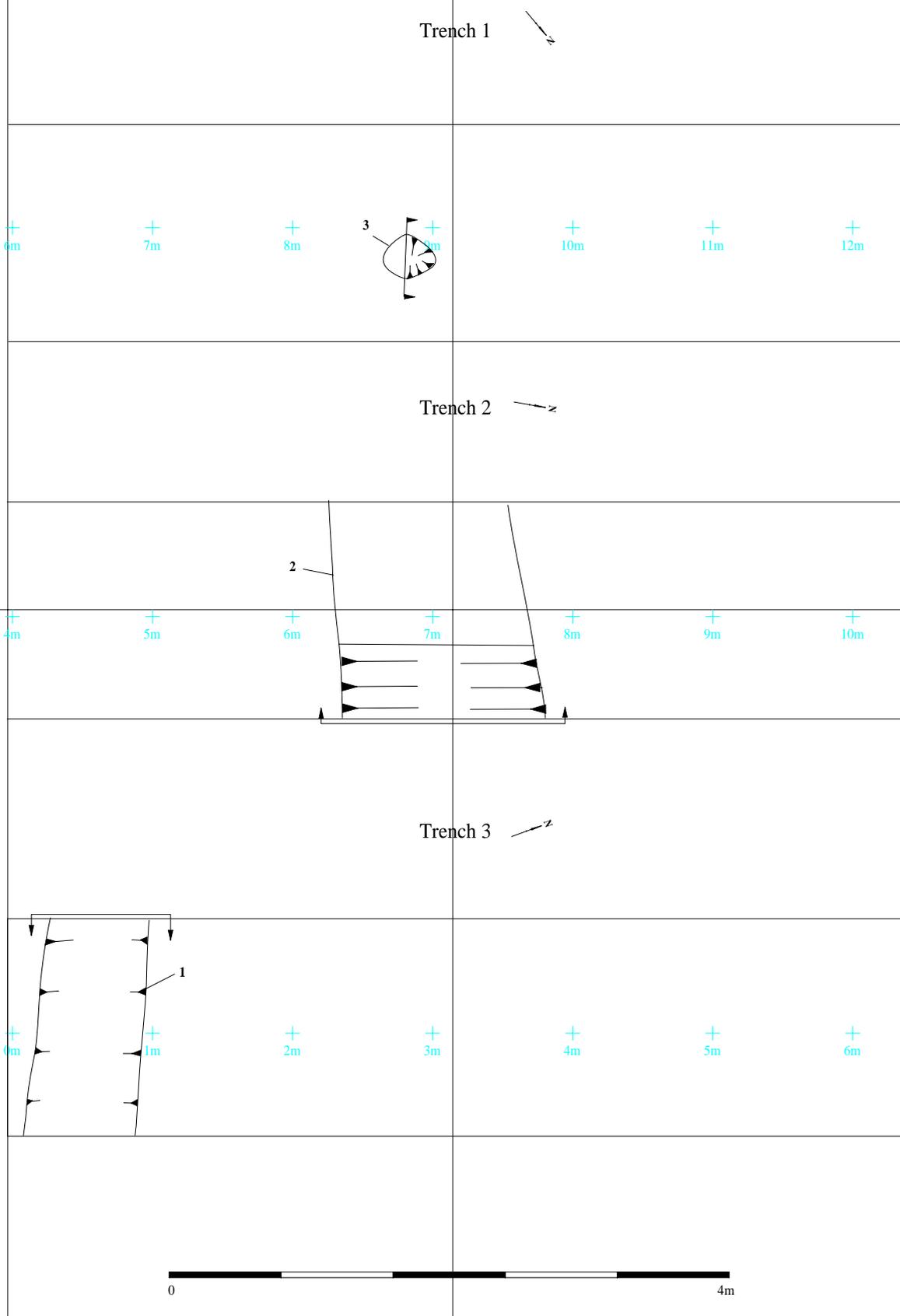


Figure 4. Plans of trenches 1, 2 and 3 showing all archaeological features.

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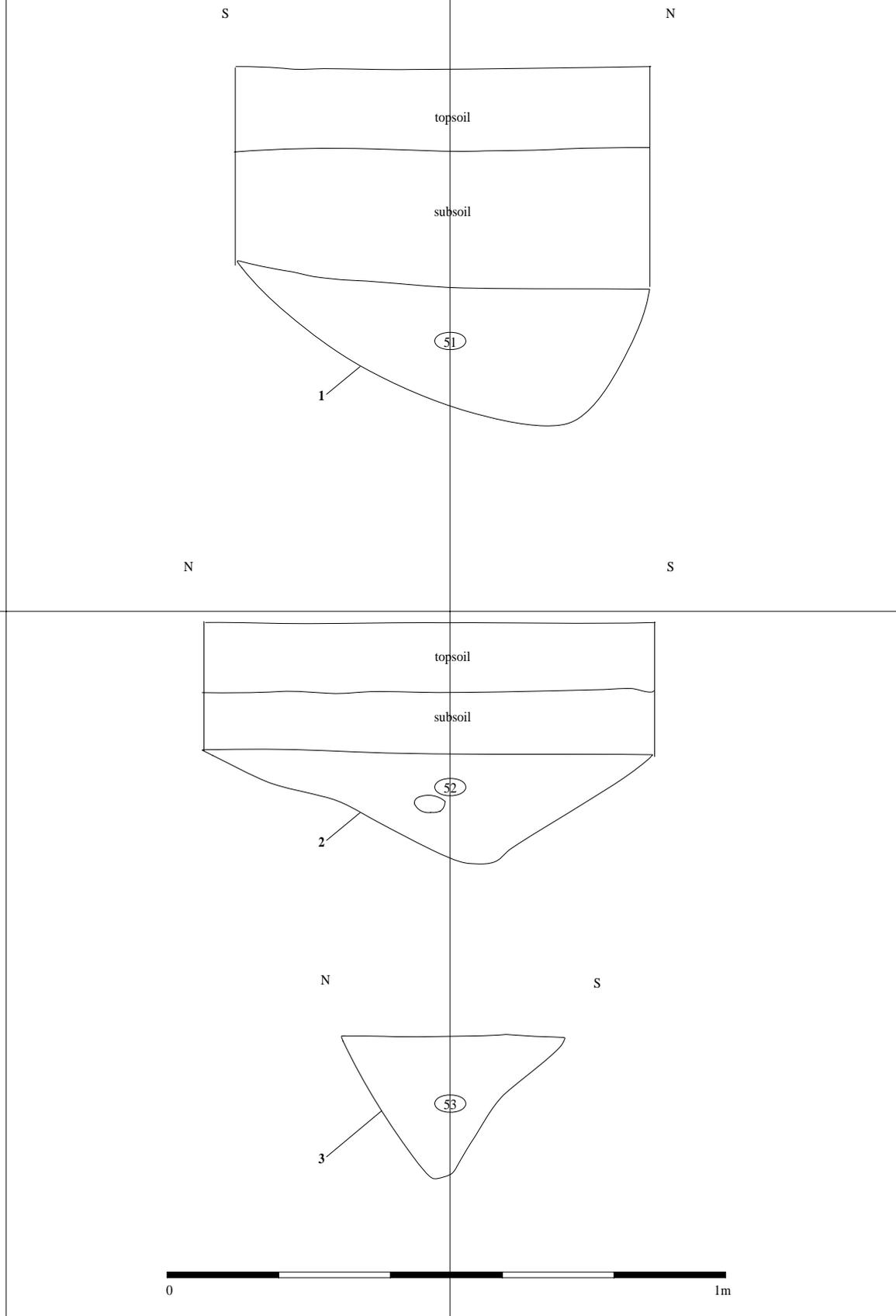


Figure 5. Sections.