

**37 Elm Lane, Lower Earley  
Reading, Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation  
for A & G Limited**

by Clare Challis and Jo Pine  
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code Elle 02/104

**December 2002**

## Summary

**Site name:** 37 Elm Lane, Lower Earley, Reading, Berkshire

**Grid reference:** SU 7418 7042

**Site activity:** Evaluation

**Date and duration of project:** 16th–20th December 2002

**Project manager:** Jo Pine

**Site supervisor:** Clare Challis

**Site code:** ELLE 02/104

**Area of site:** 1160 sq m

**Summary of results:** One small sherd of Roman pottery, three possible features

**Monuments identified:** Possible pits and posthole

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at 47-49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading, RG1 5NR but it is anticipated it will be deposited with Reading Museum in due course.

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 23.12.01
	Steve Preston✓ 23.12.02

# **37 Elm Lane, Lower Earley, Reading, Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation**

by Clare Challis and Jo Pine

**Report 02/104**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out 37 Elm Lane, Lower Earley, Reading, Berkshire (SU 7418 7042) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr John Challis of John Challis Architects, 72 Wargrave Road, Twyford, Berkshire, RG10 9PH on behalf of A & G Limited.

Planning permission has been sought from Wokingham District Council (app no F/2002/8009) for the demolition of an existing structure and its replacement by eight new dwellings and associated services. As the site is considered to have archaeological potential, a field evaluation was requested, to provide sufficient information so to mitigate the effects of the development on any archaeological deposits that might be present. This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the District's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Kev Beachus of Babtie Environmental, archaeological adviser to the District Council. The fieldwork was supervised by Clare Challis who was assisted by Jo Pine between the 16th and 20th of December 2002. The site code is ELLE02/104.

## **Location, topography and geology**

The site is located within Lower Earley which lies to the south-east of Reading (Fig. 1). The site comprises a rectangular plot of 1160sq m on the eastern side of Elm Lane and backing onto Beaconsfield Way. The site is at present occupied by a house and garage with gardens at the front and rear of the property. The site lies at approximately 69m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is London Clay or Pebble Gravel (BGS, 1946). This was encountered within the evaluation trenches together with silty clay in Trenches 4 and 5.

## **Archaeological background**

The site lies on the fringes of the Loddon Valley which is considered to be archaeologically rich as revealed by field survey and aerial photography (Ford 1997; Gates 1975). Recent evaluations and excavations to the south at

Shinfield have uncovered occupation Iron Age and Roman occupation and landscape features (Pine 2002, Saunders 2001, Taylor 2001; 2002).

## **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. The specific aims of the project were

- a) To determine if archaeological relevant levels have survived on site.
- b) To determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present.
- c) To determine if any Iron Age deposits are present on site.

It was proposed to excavate 5 trenches, three at 12m long and two at 18m long, all 1.6m wide (amounting to a 10% sample of the site area). The trenches were to be located to examine all areas of the plot as far as practicable. In the event the location and lengths of the trenches had to be altered due to access restrictions (Fig. 2). All trenches were excavated by a Kubota-type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. Topsoil and overburden were removed onto the natural geology, under direct and continuous archaeological supervision. The resultant spoilheaps were monitored for finds and all possible archaeological features observed in the bases of the trenches were hand cleaned and appropriate excavation strategies employed to clarify their nature and date. In addition the fills of the features identified were dry sieved through a 5mm mesh.

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

## **Results**

### **Trench 1** (Figs. 3 and 4)

This trench was aligned NE–SW, was 10m long and between 0.28m and 0.53m deep. Topsoil 0.20m-0.35m deep, sealed a grey-brown sandy silt subsoil which was 0.10m deep. This in turn overlay light brownish orange sands and gravels. At the northern end of the trench were two features (1 and 2). Feature 1 was irregular in plan, it had concave sides and a rounded base (Figs 3 and 4). A single sherd of Roman pottery was retrieved from its fill (52). It is possible that this was a posthole but it is just as likely that it is a burrow or root hole. Feature 2 (Plate 2) was more convincing as having a man-made origin and was probably a small pit. It was oval in plan

(0.50m by 0.45m and 0.30m deep) with concave sides and a rounded base, but no finds were recovered from its sandy silt fill (53).

#### Trench 2

This was aligned north–south, was 9.50m in length and 0.46m deep. Topsoil 0.30m deep, sealed a grey-brown sandy silt subsoil which was between 0.04m and 0.10m deep. This in turn overlay brown-orange sand and gravel. At the northern end of the trench a probable pit, 3, was recorded (Figs 3 and 4). This was 1.20m by 0.90m and 0.38m deep. It was completely excavated and the fill (54) was dry sieved through a 5mm sieve but failed to produce any dating evidence.

#### Trench 3 (Plate 1)

This was aligned approximately east–west, was 13.60m in length and between 0.24m and 0.39m deep. Topsoil 0.30m deep sealed brown- orange sand at the eastern end, orange-brown silty sand in the middle of the trench and brown-orange sandy clay at the south-western end. No archaeology was observed.

#### Trench 4

This was aligned NE–SW, was 9.60m long and between 0.45m and 0.50m deep. Topsoil 0.22m deep, sealed a grey-brown sandy silt layer which contained brick and tile fragments, and charcoal. This layer was between 0.10m and 0.22m deep. This in turn overlay brown-orange clay. At the northern and southern ends of the trench land drains were observed.

#### Trench 5

This was aligned NE–SW and was 13.60m long and 0.27m deep. Topsoil 0.18m deep sealed grey-brown sandy silt between 0.04m and 0.08m deep. This overlay brown-orange clay with gravel patches at the southern end.

### **Finds**

#### *Pottery by Joanna Pine*

A single thin body sherd of Roman sandy greyware was recovered from a doubtful posthole (1) in Trench 1.

## Conclusion

Five evaluation trenches were excavated and revealed the presence of possible archaeological deposits in two of the trenches (1 and 2). The features identified took the form of two small pits (2 and 3) which, unfortunately, did not contain any datable evidence even though their fills were sieved on site. It is not entirely clear if they are of human origin though they were moderately deep and well defined. They are not necessarily of any great antiquity.

A single sherd of Roman pottery was recovered from a dubious posthole (1) which suggests some activity of this period in the near vicinity, though this may be no more than the manuring of farmland.

Whilst the findings of the evaluation were not wholly negative, the paucity of finds and doubt as to the origins of the subsoil features observed suggests that the archaeological potential of the site is low.

## References

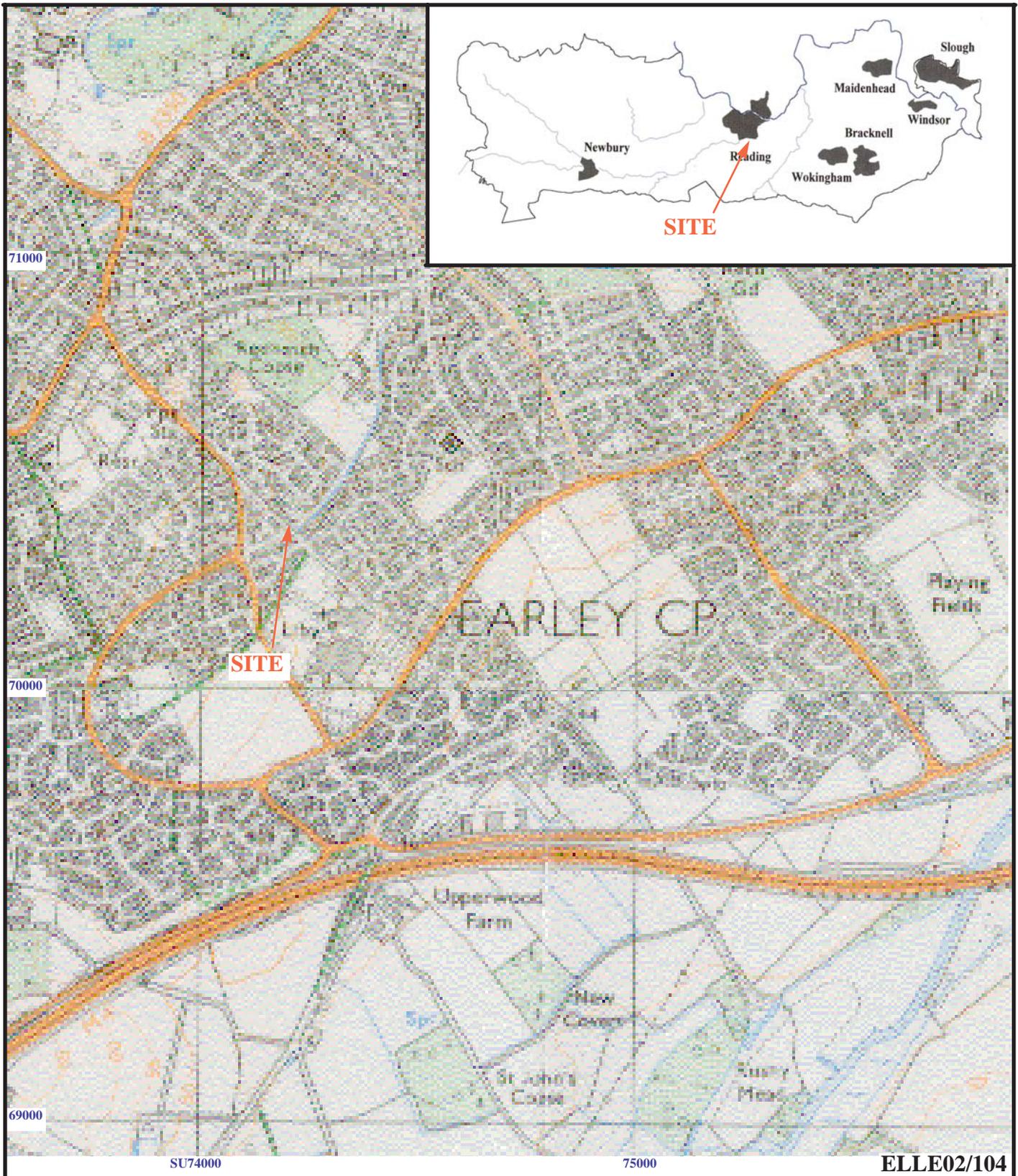
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**APPENDIX 1: Trench details**  
 0m at S and SW end

<i>Trench No.</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	9.80m	1.55	0.28-0.53	Topsoil 0.20m-0.35m deep, sealed a light greyish brown sandy silt subsoil which was 0.10m deep. This in turn overlay light brownish orange sands and gravels.
2	9.50	1.6	0.45 - 0.46.	Topsoil 0.30m deep, sealed a light greyish brown sandy silt subsoil which was between 0.04m and 0.10m deep. This in turn overlay light brownish orange sands and gravel.
3	13.60	1.6	0.24-0.39	Topsoil 0.30m deep sealed light brownish orange sands at the eastern end, light orangey brown silty sand in the middle of the trench and light brownish orange sandy clay at the south-western end.
4	9.60	1.6	0.45-0.50	was 9.60m in length and between 0.45m and 0.50m deep. Topsoil 0.22m deep, sealed a light greyish brown sandy silt layer which contained brick and tile fragments and charcoal. This layer was between 0.10m and 0.22m deep. This in turn overlay light brownish orange clay.
5	10.65	1.6	0.24- 0.27	Topsoil 0.18 m deep sealed light greyish brown sandy silt which was between 0.04m and 0.08m deep. This overlay light brownish orange clay with gravel patches at the southern end.

**APPENDIX 2: Feature details**

<i>Trench No</i>	Cut	Fill	Description	Date
1	1	52	Posthole?	Roman?
1	2	53	Pit	Undated
2	3	54	Pit	Undated



**37 Elm Lane, Lower Earley, Berkshire, 2002**

Figure 1. Location of site within Lower Earley and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Location of trenches within site.

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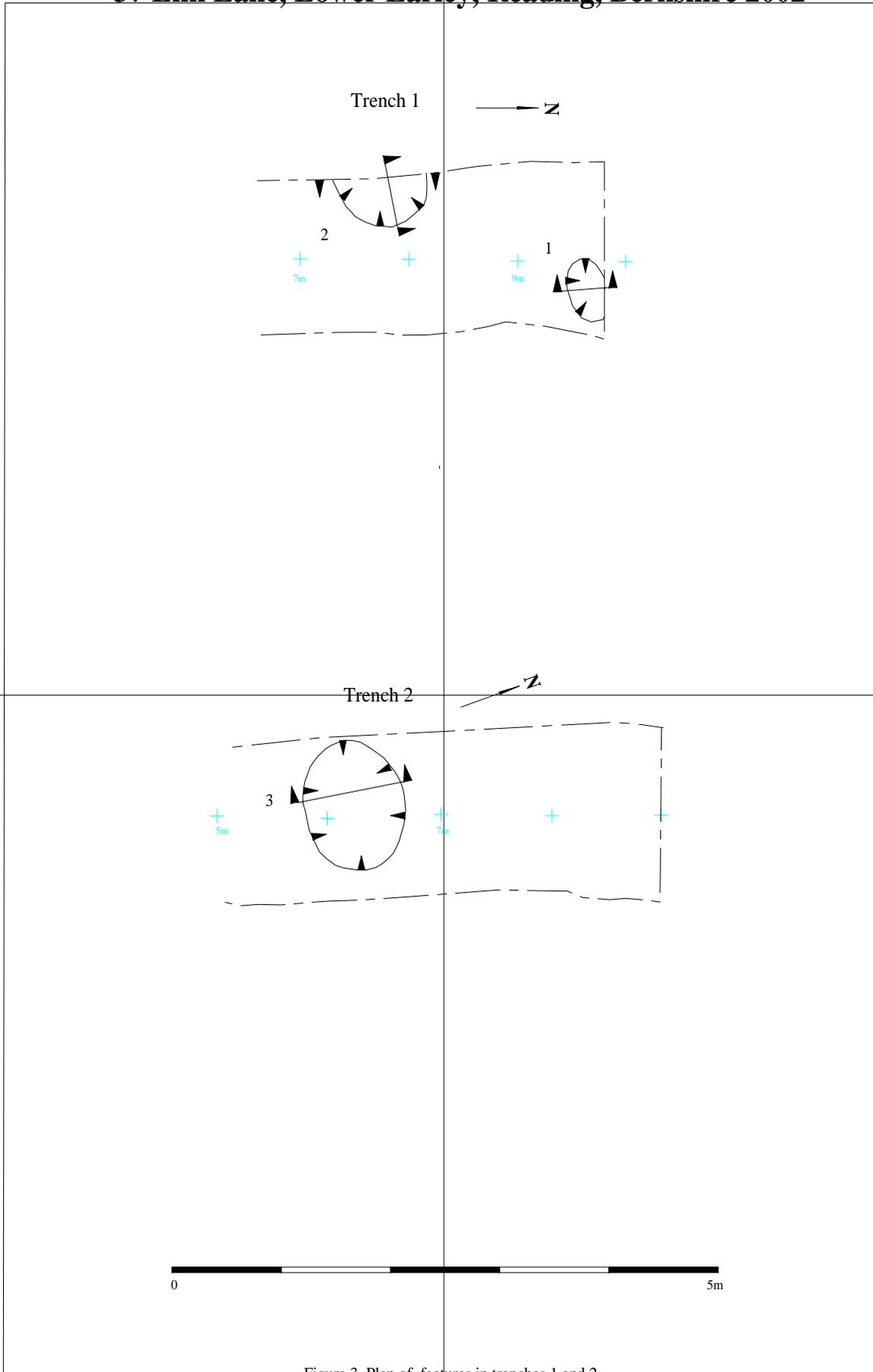


Figure 3. Plan of features in trenches 1 and 2.

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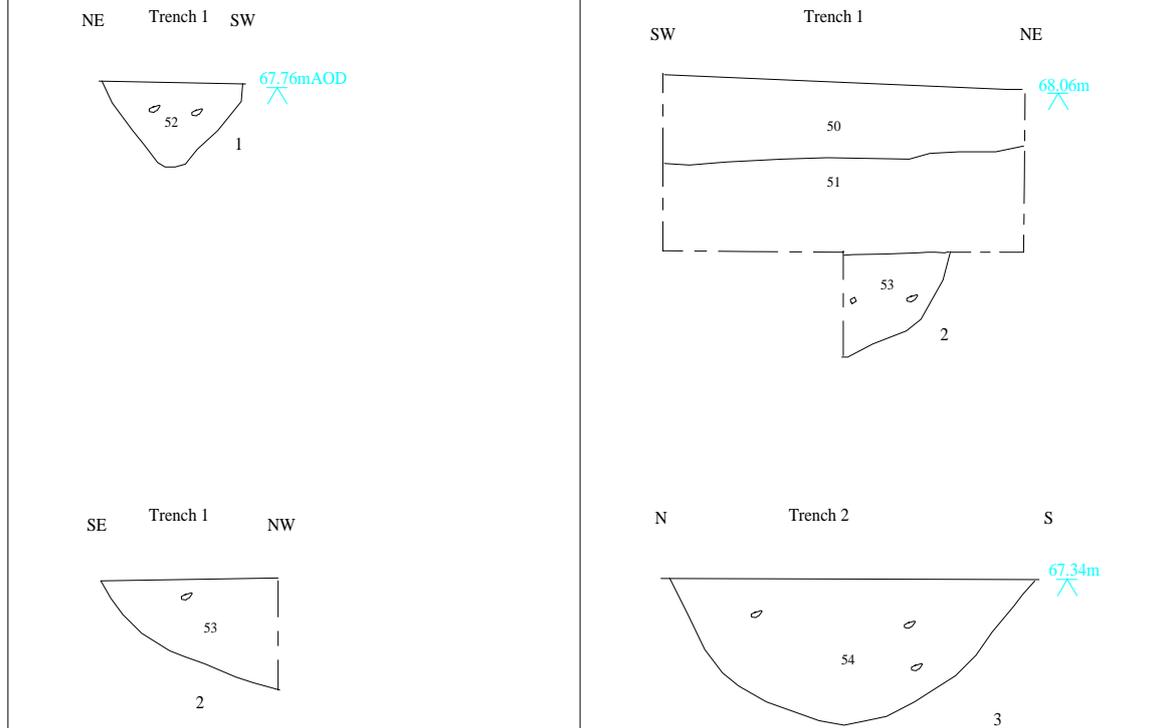


Figure 4. Sections



Plate 1. Trench 3 looking east, horizontal scales 2m and 1m.



Plate 2. Trench 1, Feature 2, north facing section, horizontal scale 0.5m, vertical scale 0.1m.