

**Water Research Centre, Ferry Lane,
Medmenham, Buckinghamshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Lamron Developments (Medmenham) Limited**

by Andy Taylor

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code FLM 02/51

June 2002

Summary

Site name: Water Research Centre, Ferry Lane, Medmenham, Buckinghamshire

Grid reference: SU 805 838

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 6th–11th June 2002

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Andy Taylor

Site code: FLM 02/51

Area of site: *c.* 1 hectare

Summary of results: No archaeological deposits or artefacts were observed

Monuments identified: None

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

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 14.06.02
	Steve Preston✓ 14.06.02

Water Research Centre, Ferry Lane, Medmenham, Buckinghamshire An Archaeological Evaluation

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Report 02/51

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at the Water Research Centre, Ferry Lane, Medmenham, Buckinghamshire (SU805 838) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Ian Sowerby of the Bell Cornwell Partnership on behalf of Lamron Developments (Medmenham) Limited, Brinkletts House, 15 Winchester Road, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG21 8UE.

Several planning applications have previously been made for this site and consent obtained from Wycombe District Council. This report was commissioned as a contribution towards two new applications (02/05281/OUT and 02/05282/FUL). The evaluation had been requested by Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service, the archaeological adviser to the District, in order to provide information to mitigate the effects of development on any archaeological deposits which might be present.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the County's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr David Radford, Archaeological Officer with Buckinghamshire County Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andy Taylor and Danielle Colls in June 2002 and the site code is FLM 02/51.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Buckinghamshire County Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the western side of Ferry Lane and to the north of the river Thames (Fig. 1). The underlying geology is river gravels (BGS 1980), which was observed in all trenches. The site lies at a height of c.30m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

A previous desktop survey detailed the archaeological and historical context of the site (AOC 2000). The most significant finding is that the site lies to the west of Medmenham Abbey, a Cistercian Abbey founded in

AD1204–13. Details of the layout of the Abbey, especially the ancillary buildings are not well known. The village of Medmenham itself is mentioned in Domesday Book as *Medemeha* and the importance of the river resources to its economy is emphasized by records of its having ‘1000 eels in its fisheries’.

The site also lies on the floor of the Thames Valley which is generally considered to be rich in remains of prehistoric and Roman activity. For example, nearby there are several Bronze Age ring ditches (levelled burial mounds) which are visible from the air, along with two Iron Age hillforts located on the high ground forming the valley side to the north. A large Roman villa is present at Hambledon to the west.

Objectives and methodology

The general 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. Specific aims of the project are:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present;
- to determine if there are any early prehistoric (especially Mesolithic) deposits on the site;
- to determine if there are any Medieval deposits present which would have been associated with the Abbey.

The potential and significance of any deposits located would be assessed according to research priorities such as those set out in *Exploring our Past* (English Heritage 1991, 36) and the English Heritage *Research Agenda* (English Heritage 1997, 44) or any more local or thematic research priorities as necessary.

The agreed scheme was for the digging of nine trenches. Eight trenches were dug as near as possible to their intended positions but one trench could not be so located due to the presence of live electricity and water services both in the intended position and in the near vicinity. Some trenches were shortened due to the presence of live services and other access difficulties. However, other trenches were lengthened where possible in order to compensate for this. All trenches were dug under constant archaeological supervision and all spoilheaps were 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 (Plates 1 and 2)

The eight trenches dug ranged in length from 5.0m to 21.1m and in depth from 0.70m to 1.40m (Figs 2 and 3). They were all 1.60m wide. Trench 1 revealed Tarmac and made ground overlying grey silty clay alluvium above

gravel natural. A similar stratigraphy was noted in Trenches 3 and 8, although the alluvium was not so thick in either of these. Trench 4 showed made ground directly overlying gravel natural. Trench 5 revealed turf and topsoil overlying a gravelly subsoil overlying gravel natural. Similar stratigraphy was noted in Trenches 2, 6 and 7. Trenches 5 and 6 had modern dumps, of glass bottles and brick rubble respectively. No other finds were recovered either from the trenches or from the spoilheaps. Pieces of modern brick and tile, china and glass bottles were observed in the topsoil but were not retained.

Conclusion

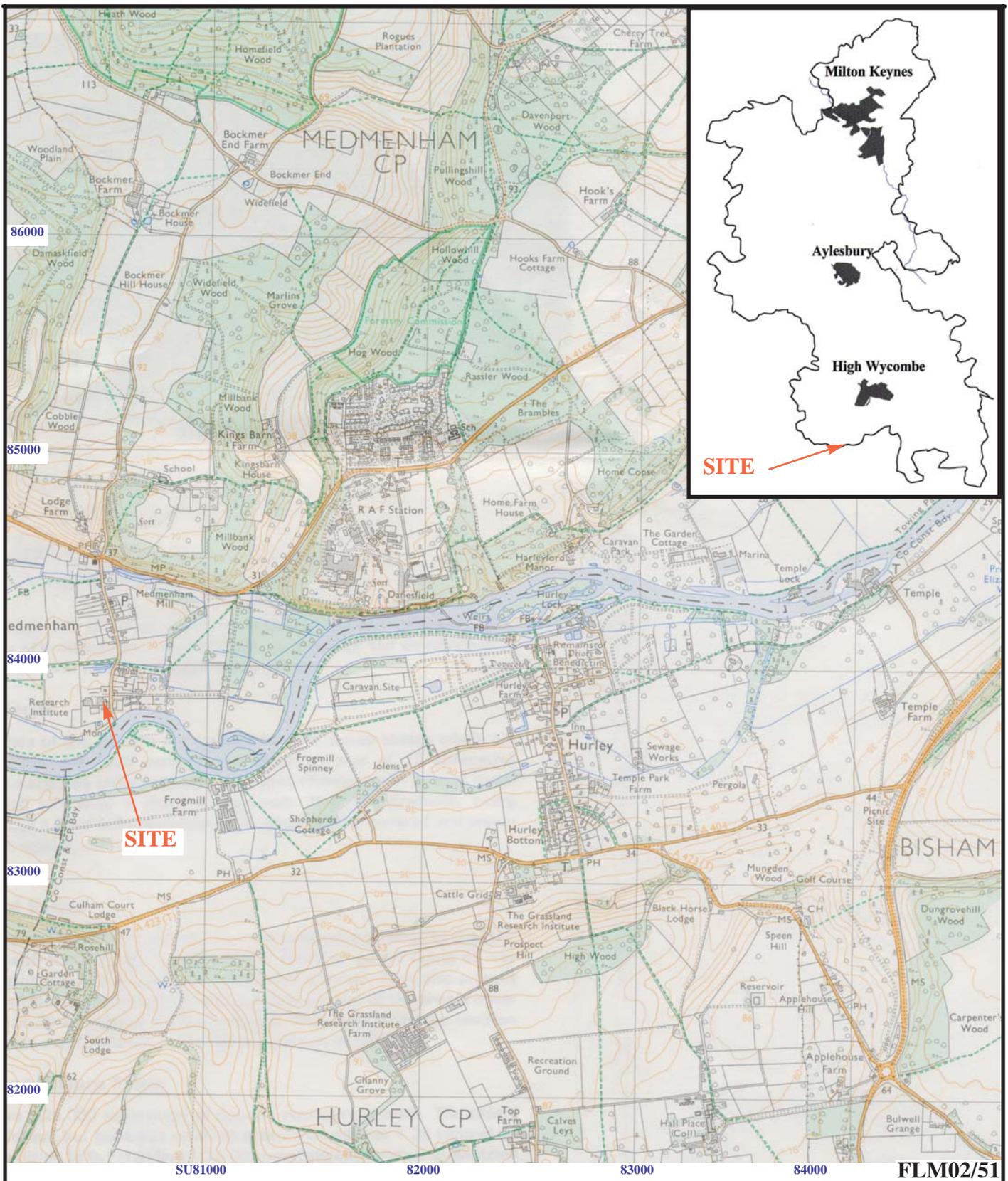
Despite the close proximity of the medieval Cistercian Abbey, and the historic core of the village, no archaeological features or deposits were located in any of the eight evaluation trenches. It is therefore unlikely that the demolition process and construction of the proposed new buildings will cause any damage or destruction to buried archaeological deposits.

References

- AOC 2000, An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment of the Water Research Centre, Henley Road, Medmenham, Buckinghamshire, AOC Archaeology Group, Twickenham
BGS, 1980, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 254, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
English Heritage, 1991, *Exploring our past*, English Heritage, London
English Heritage, 1997, *Research Agenda* (Draft, 8th April), Archaeology Division, English Heritage, London
PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 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	14.70	1.60	1.40	0m-0.55m Tarmac and made ground; 0.55m-1.35m mid grey alluvium; 1.35m+ mid grey gravel natural.
2	7.00	1.60	0.90	0m-0.30m turf and topsoil; 0.30m-0.40m made ground; 0.40m-0.90m mid brown silty clay; 0.90m+ mid brown gravel natural.
3	21.10	1.60	0.90	0m-0.40m Tarmac and made ground; 0.40m-0.85m mid grey alluvium; 0.85m+ mid brown gravel natural. Baulk left between 7.00m-9.80m due to the presence of live electricity cables. [Plate 1]
4	15.00	1.60	1.00	0m-0.50m Tarmac and made ground; 0.50m-0.95m brick rubble; 0.95m+ mid brown gravel natural with mid grey alluvium patches. 5.00m from the W end was a 4.00m concrete slab containing services.
5	5.00	1.60	0.45 (S) 1.00 (N)	0m-0.40m turf and topsoil; 0.40m+ mid brown gravel natural. Modern pit at northern end containing fragments of brick and china. [Plate 2]
6	5.00	1.60	0.70	0m-0.60m turf and topsoil; 0.60m+ mid brown gravel natural. Modern pit containing bottles at east end
7	9.00	1.60	0.75	0m-0.20m turf and topsoil; 0.20m-0.40m made ground; 0.40m-0.75m mid grey alluvium; 0.75m+ mid brown gravel natural. Baulk left across the middle due to patio footpath. Density of services noted from north-west corner.
8	20.00	1.60	0.85	0m-0.25m Tarmac and made ground; 0.25m-0.80m mid grey alluvium; 0.80m+ mid brown gravel natural.



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Figure 1. Location of site within Medmenham and Buckinghamshire.

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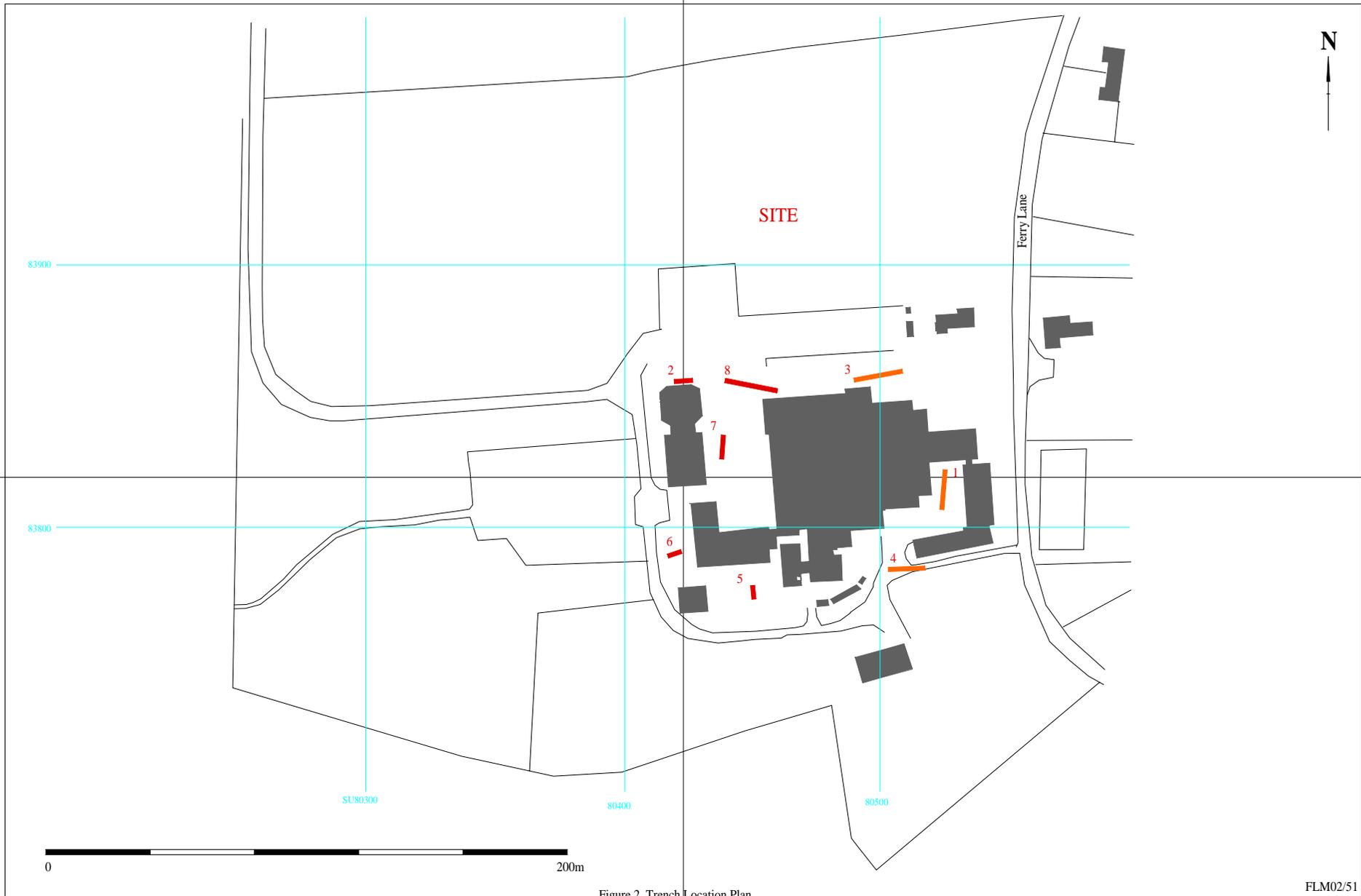


Figure 2. Trench Location Plan

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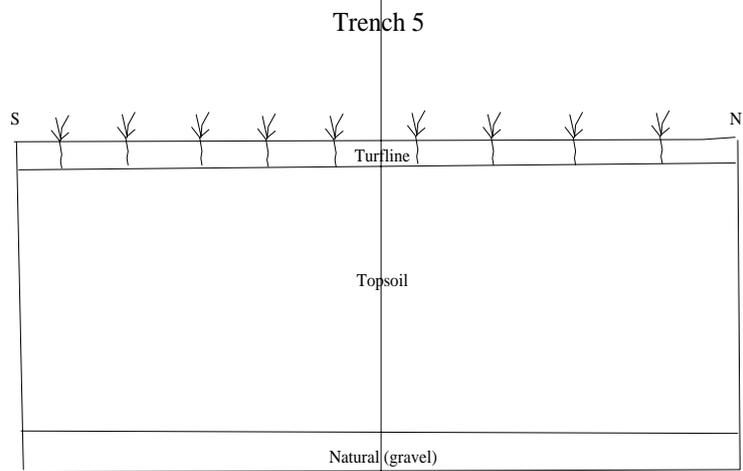
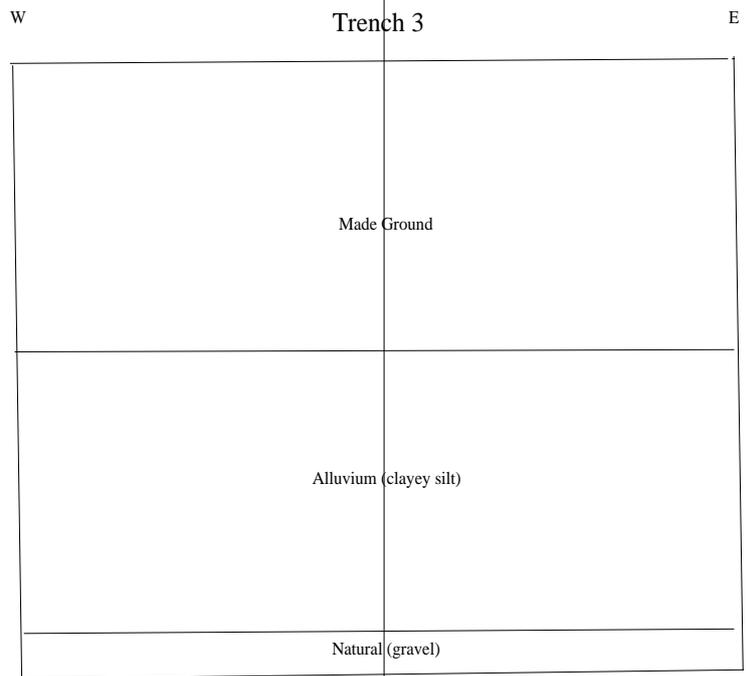


Figure 3: Selected sections of trench stratigraphy.



Plate 1: Trench 3 looking north. Scales 2m and 1m



Plate 2: Trench 5 looking south. Scales 2m and 1m