

An Archaeological Evaluation at Bluntisham Baptist Church



Archaeological Evaluation Report



December 2008

Client: Bluntisham Baptist Church

OA East Report No: 1076

OASIS No: 51932

NGR: TL 3682 7460

An Archaeological Evaluation at Bluntisham Baptist Church

Archaeological Evaluation

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Summary

On the 17th and 18th of November 2008 Oxford Archaeology East undertook an archaeological evaluation within the grounds of Bluntisham Baptist Church. This was in advance of an extension to the recreational building, immediately to the south west of the Church. Two trenches were excavated with a total length of 17.75m. Trench 1 was located to the east of the recreational building, and south of the church. It contained three possible grave cuts and several small features which were thought to be medieval or post medieval in date. Trench 2 was located to the south of the recreational building. It contained evidence for probable quarrying and a discrete feature, again dating to the 15th or 16th Century.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 An archaeological evaluation was conducted at Bluntisham Baptist Church, Cambridgeshire.
- 1.1.2 This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Andy Thomas of Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC; Planning Application 0402557FUL), supplemented by a Specification prepared by OA East (formerly Cambridgeshire County Council's CAM ARC).
- 1.1.3 The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, in accordance with the guidelines set out in *Planning and Policy Guidance 16 - Archaeology and Planning* (Department of the Environment 1990). The results will enable decisions to be made by CCC, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority, with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.
- 1.1.4 The site archive is currently held by OA East and will be deposited with the appropriate county stores in due course.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies on 1st Terrace river gravels (British Geological Survey 1993) and was located at around 16.5m OD.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

Baptist Church

- 1.3.1 The Chapel was founded in 1786 and had been almost entirely rebuilt by 1874

Rectory Road, Bluntisham

- 1.3.2 Open area excavation to the south east of the proposed development area uncovered ditches, pits and post holes from the Bronze Age thorough to the Roman period. Most of this activity was dated to the late Iron Age and early Roman Periods. This consisted of enclosures and field boundaries and also included a crouched inhumation dating from the 2nd Century BC. Several post holes were also recorded, suggestive of structures and settlement. The earliest feature present was a pit containing Beaker pottery. Two Roman animal burials were recorded, dating from the later 1st or earlier 2nd Centuries AD (Burrow & Mudd 2008).

Previous evaluation on the site revealed substantial evidence for gravel quarrying in the post medieval period as well as several other unexcavated features assumed to be post medieval (Hatton 2004).

- 1.3.3 Other significant artefacts from the vicinity include two finds of Iron Age pottery and two Roman coins. These were located on the east side of the modern village, just beyond

Hollidays' Road (HER nos. 01722, 03930, 00929 & 01939). Lithic implements, including a Neolithic arrowhead, were discovered to the west of the village (HER nos. 03625 & 01761).

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 The work was funded by Bluntisham Baptist Church. Fieldwork was completed by the author and Zoë Ui Choileáin. James Drummond-Murray managed the project and Andy Thomas from CCC monitored the excavation.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The objective of this evaluation was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The Brief required that
- 2.2.2 Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a wheeled mini-digger using a 1.2m wide toothless ditching bucket.
- 2.2.3 Surveying was conducted manually and located using buildings located on the OS Grid.
- 2.2.4 Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds were retained for inspection, other than those which were obviously modern.
- 2.2.5 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA East's *pro-forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.
- 2.2.6 No environmental samples were taken.
- 2.2.7 Site conditions were good.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 Two trenches were opened within the proposed development area, one to the east of the existing recreational building and one to the south.

3.2 Trench 1

- 3.2.1 Trench 1 was located to the east of the recreational building and to the south of the Baptist Church. Approximately 2.5m to the east of, and parallel with, the trench was a row of headstones with graves presumed to be between them and the trench. Trench 1 was 10m long and excavated to a depth of 0.5, whereupon archaeological features were visible. Four possible grave cuts were identified, three at the north end of the trench (Plate 2) and one at the south end (Plate 1), none of which were excavated. At the north end of the trench two graves were conceivably intercut. The fill of these features (Contexts 12 & 13) was a mid brown gravel silt. The feature at the south end of the trench was linear and ran across the width of the trench. It was filled with a dark brown clay silt (Context 1).
- 3.2.2 Several small sub-rectangular features were present in the central part of the trench (**3, 5, 7, 9 & 11**). These were filled with a homogeneous and sterile mid/dark brown clay silt and were between 0.1m and 0.44m deep. Pottery was recovered from Features **3** and **7**. These were both single sherds of probable medieval pottery, although accurate dating was made difficult by the lack of further diagnostic material.

3.3 Trench 2

- 3.3.1 Trench 2 was located to the south of the recreational building and was L-shaped in plan. It was 7.75m long and excavated to a depth of up to 0.7m. Two archaeological features were revealed. Pit **27** was located at the east end of the trench and was almost entirely visible in plan, cut in to natural geology. It had a diameter of 1.5m and was 0.4m deep. It was filled by a single dark brown silty clay which contained relatively large amounts of animal bone and x sherds of late medieval pottery.
- 3.3.2 At the centre of the trench was Feature **25**. This initially appeared to be a linear feature but upon excavation proved to be a large, 0.4m deep, steep sided feature. It also contained fill 23, which occupied the west end of the trench, in plan. This was a redeposited sandy gravel and was initially thought to be natural geology, but upon excavation overlay the brown silty lower fill (24) of feature **25**.

3.4 Finds Summary

- 3.4.1 The two sherds of pottery in Trench 1 were pieces of Hunts Fen sandy wares, dating from the 12th or 13th Centuries.

The pottery recovered from Trench 2 was from the Late or Post medieval periods. Pit **27** yielded 9 sherds of late 15th Century and 16th Century pottery as well as a relatively substantial animal bone assemblage. Feature **25** (context 24) contained 5 sherds of Post medieval pottery as well as 5 pieces of Ceramic Building Material, some of it large. Context 24 also contained a piece of a glass vessel and part of a clay pipe, both Post Medieval in date.

- 3.4.2 Animal bone was recovered from Feature **25** in Trench 2. Context 24 contained a mixture of cattle, pig and sheep remains which consisted of mandible, vertebra, skull

and horn with a few rib fragments. The total weight of these remains was 0.51kg. Context 23 which overlay Feature **25** contained 0.214kg of animal bone, including cattle, horse and sheep remains.

- 3.4.3 Pit **27** also produced the same mixture of cattle, sheep and pig bone. Again, limb bones were rare with vertebrae, metatarsals, skull fragments and teeth predominating. The total weight of animal bones in context 26 was 1.87kg.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Trench 1

- 4.1.1 Of the features identified in Trench 1, those at the north end were more likely to be graves (Contexts 12 & 13). Context 1, at the south end of the Trench (Plate 1), was relatively dark in comparison to all other fills in the trench. This could have been a relatively modern fill of a feature associated with the recreational building, rather than a grave. It appeared linear and was orientated towards the corner of the building.
- 4.1.2 The other features in the trench were similar in size, shape but not necessarily contemporary. The two pieces of medieval pottery recovered from the fills were not enough to suggest with confidence that they were recovered from a primary context and therefore it remains difficult to assign a conclusive date to these features.

4.2 Trench 2

- 4.2.1 Feature **25** in Trench 2 went beyond the limits of the trench and was possibly very large indeed. It is interpreted as a quarry pit, presumably to provide gravels for a part of the Baptist Church or Churchyard. It could be contemporary with the gravel extraction noted in the evaluation at Rectory Road (Hatton 2004). Feature **25** had silted up naturally until it was only a shallow hollow. At this point it appeared to have been deliberately backfilled and made level by a layer of redeposited natural sand and gravel. The ceramic material recovered from contexts 23 and 24 make a post medieval date for this feature a certainty.

4.3 Significance

- 4.3.1 This evaluation has revealed the presence of likely grave cuts to the south east of Bluntisham Baptist Church, within the churchyard. Other features, which were not securely dated, were revealed that were likely to be either medieval or post medieval in date and perhaps contemporary with the first Baptist Church erected on the site in the late 18th Century.

4.4 Recommendations

- 4.4.1 Recommendations for any future work based upon this report will be made by the County Archaeology Office.

APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1					
General description				Orientation	N-S
Trench contained several small features and three possible graves.				Avg. depth (m)	0.5
				Width (m)	1.2
				Length (m)	10
Contexts					
context no	type	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
1	Fill		Dark (grave) fill (?)		-
2	Fill	0.1	Fill of [3]	Pottery	Medieval
3	Cut	0.1	Cut of Feature		
4	Fill	0.44	Fill of [5]		
5	Cut	0.44	Cut of Feature		
6	Fill	0.19	Fill of [7]	Pottery	Medieval
7	Cut	0.19	Cut of Feature		
8	Fill	0.12	Fill of [9]	Glass	Post medieval
9	Cut	0.12	Cut of Feature		
10	Fill	0.3	Fill of [11]		
11	Cut	0.3	Cut of Feature		
12	Fill		(Grave) Fill (?)		
13	Fill		(Grave) Fill (?)		
14	Layer	0.2	Topsoil		
15	Layer	0.25	Subsoil / Disturbed material		
Trench 2					
General description				Orientation	E-W / N-S
Trench contained one discrete pit and a probable quarry pit.				Avg. depth (m)	0.6
				Width (m)	1.2
				Length (m)	7.75
Contexts					
context no	type	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
21	Layer	0.25	Topsoil		
22	Layer	0.4	Subsoil / Disturbed material		
23	Fill	0.15	Redeposited material	CBM & pottery	Post medieval

24	Fill	0.5	Fill of [25]	Glass, tobacco pipe, CBM & pottery	Post medieval
25			Cut of Feature		
26			Fill of [27]	Pottery & Animal Bone	15 th & 16 th Century
27			Cut of Pit		

APPENDIX B. POTTERY TABLE

Context	Cut	Sherd no.	Weight (kg)
4	5	1	0.016
6	7	1	0.005
23	25	1	0.095
24	25	4	0.071
26	27	9	0.126

APPENDIX C. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Burrow, A. & Mudd, A. 2008 An early Bronze Age pit, an Iron Age burial and late Iron Age/early Roman settlement in Bluntisham, Cambridgeshire. Excavations 2005. Northamptonshire Archaeology Unpublished Report 08/54

Hatton, A. 2004 Iron Age and Roman Activity at 6 Rectory Road, Bluntisham. Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit Unpublished Report 740

APPENDIX D. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

Project Details

OASIS Number	<input type="text" value="oxfordar3-51932"/>			
Project Name	<input type="text" value="An Archaeological Evaluation at Bluntisham Baptist Church"/>			
Project Dates (fieldwork)	Start	<input type="text" value="17-11-2008"/>	Finish	<input type="text" value="18-11-2008"/>
Previous Work (by OA East)	<input type="text" value="No"/>	Future Work	<input type="text" value="Unknown"/>	

Project Reference Codes

Site Code	<input type="text" value="BLU BAP 08"/>	Planning App. No.	<input type="text" value="0402557FUL"/>
HER No.	<input type="text" value="ECB 3070"/>	Related HER/OASIS No.	<input type="text"/>

Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt	<input type="text" value="Planning condition"/>
Development Type	<input type="text" value="Public Building"/>

Please select all techniques used:

<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - interpretation	<input type="checkbox"/> Grab-Sampling	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - new	<input type="checkbox"/> Gravity-Core	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sample Trenches
<input type="checkbox"/> Annotated Sketch	<input type="checkbox"/> Laser Scanning	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey/Recording Of Fabric/Structure
<input type="checkbox"/> Augering	<input type="checkbox"/> Measured Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Targeted Trenches
<input type="checkbox"/> Dendrochronological Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Metal Detectors	<input type="checkbox"/> Test Pits
<input type="checkbox"/> Documentary Search	<input type="checkbox"/> Phosphate Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Topographic Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Sampling	<input type="checkbox"/> Photogrammetric Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Vibro-core
<input type="checkbox"/> Fieldwalking	<input type="checkbox"/> Photographic Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Visual Inspection (Initial Site Visit)
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysical Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Rectified Photography	

Monument Types/Significant Finds & Their Periods

List feature types using the [NMR Monument Type Thesaurus](#) and significant finds using the [MDA Object type Thesaurus](#) together with their respective periods. If no features/finds were found, please state "none".

Monument	Period	Object	Period
<input type="text" value="Unident. Features"/>	<input type="text" value="Post Medieval 1540 to 1901"/>	<input type="text" value="Pottery"/>	<input type="text" value="Select period..."/>
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<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="Select period..."/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="Select period..."/>

Project Location

County	<input type="text" value="Cambridgeshire"/>	Site Address (including postcode if possible)	
District	<input type="text" value="Huntingdon"/>	<input type="text" value="Bluntisham Baptist Church
High Street
Bluntisham"/>	
Parish	<input type="text" value="Bluntisham"/>		
HER	<input type="text"/>		
Study Area	<input type="text" value="0.02ha"/>	National Grid Reference	<input type="text" value="TL 3682 7460"/>

Project Originators

Organisation	OA EAST
Project Brief Originator	Andy Thomas
Project Design Originator	James Drummond-Murray
Project Manager	James Drummond-Murray
Supervisor	Thomas Lyons

Project Archives

Physical Archive	Digital Archive	Paper Archive
Cambs County Store	OA EAST	Cambs County Store
BLU BAP 08	BLU BAP 08	BLU BAP 08

Archive Contents/Media




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Human Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Worked Stone/Lithic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Digital Media	Paper Media
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<input type="checkbox"/> GIS	<input type="checkbox"/> Context Sheet
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysics	<input type="checkbox"/> Correspondence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Images	<input type="checkbox"/> Diary
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<input type="checkbox"/> Moving Image	<input type="checkbox"/> Manuscript
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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Report
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sections
	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey



Notes:

Drawing Conventions

Plans

Limit of Excavation	
Deposit - Conjectured	
Natural Features	
Sondages/Machine Strip	
Intrusion/Truncation	
Illustrated Section	S.14
Archaeological Deposit	
Excavated Slot	
Archaeological Feature	
Cut Number	118

Sections

Limit of Excavation	
Cut	
Cut-Conjectured	
Deposit Horizon	
Deposit Horizon - Conjectured	
Intrusion/Truncation	
Top Surface/Top of Natural	
Break in Section/ Limit of Section Drawing	
Cut Number	118
Deposit Number	117
Ordnance Datum	18.45m OD 
Inclusions	

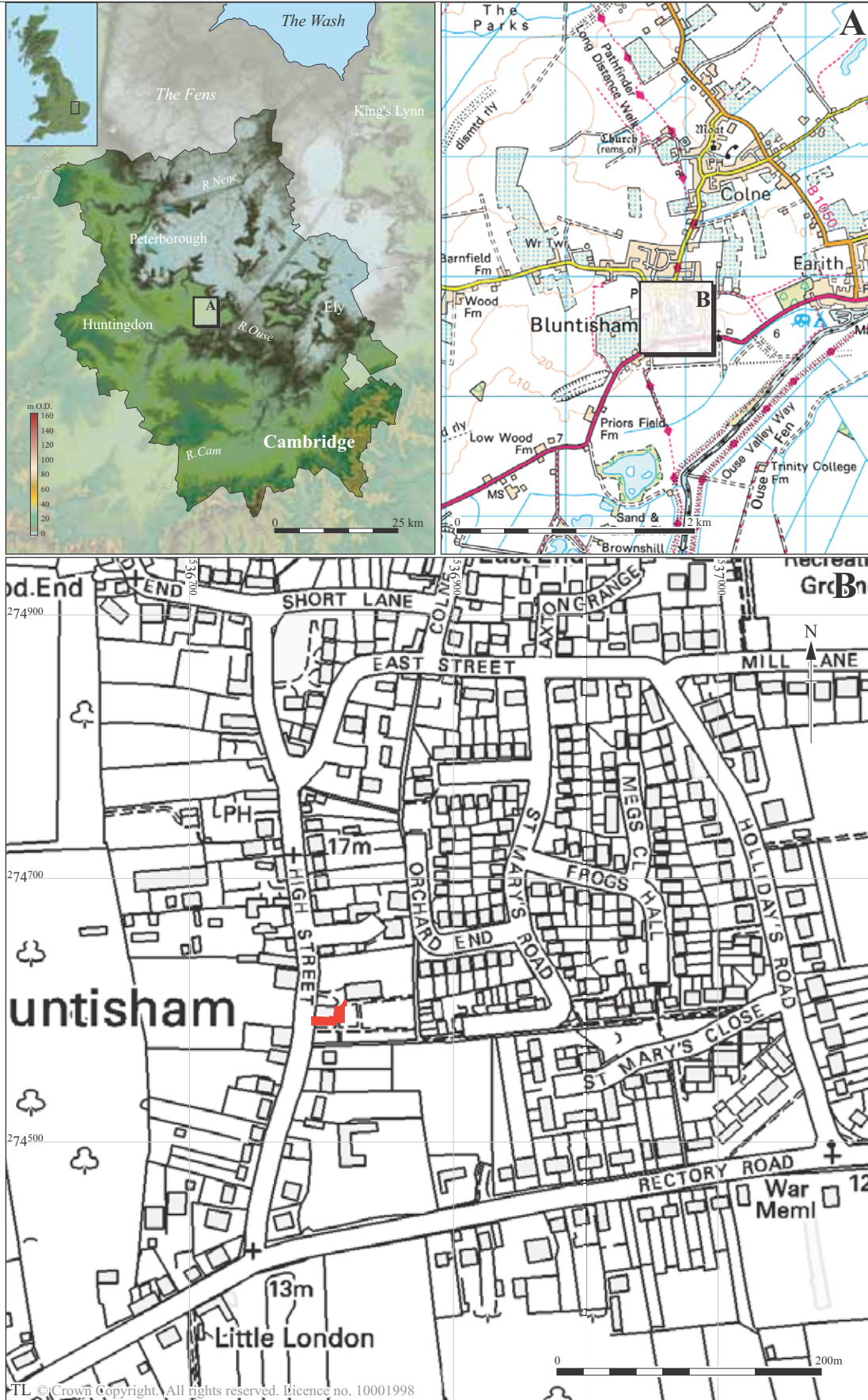


Figure 1: Location of the development area (red)



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Figure 2: Trench plans

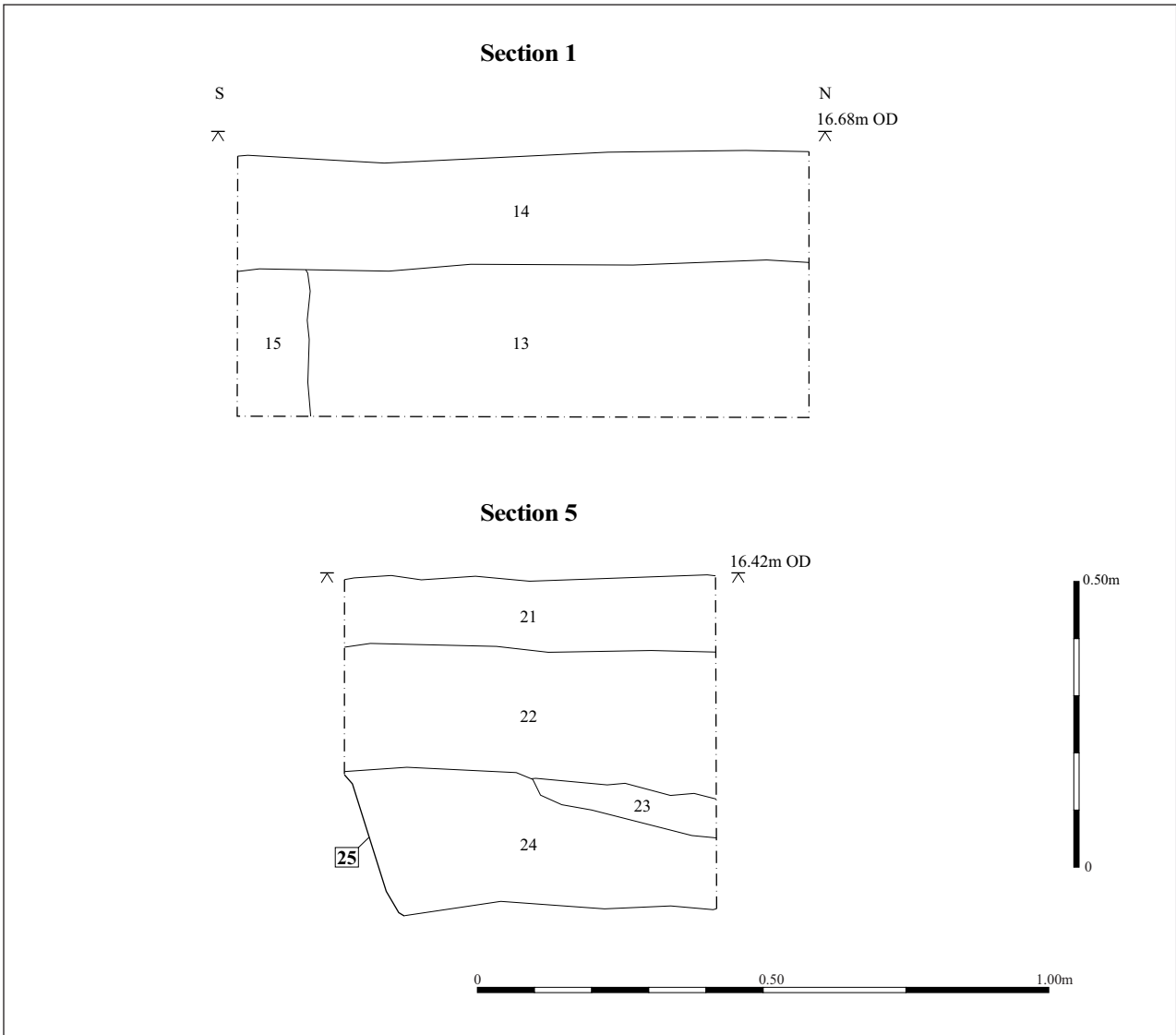


Figure 3: Section drawings



Plate 1: Trench 1, looking North



Plate 2: Putative graves at North end of Trench 1



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