

**Search and Recovery Report CIL 2013-180-R, a Burial Site
(FR-02212) Associated with JPAC 00973, in the city of Dambach,
Bas-Rhin Department, Alsace Region, The French Republic
9 through 11 September 2013**

JPAC CENTRAL IDENTIFICATION LABORATORY

24 March 2014

INTRODUCTION

From 9 through 11 September, during the 13-4EU mission in Germany, the Recovery Leader/Anthropologist (RL/A) of Recovery Team Two (RT2), Ms. Hedy Justus, and the mission Officer in Charge (OIC), Lt Landis Fouts, conducted a special recovery operation at burial site FR-02212 associated with JPAC 00973 in the city of Dambach, Bas-Rhin District, Alsace Region, the French Republic (Figure 1). During recovery operations, a grave feature was excavated with a surface area of approximately 2.2 m² (1-x-2.2 m area) to an average depth of 60 cm below surface (cmbs). In addition, approximately 7 m² surrounding the grave was excavated to an average depth of 3 cmbs. Possible human remains and material evidence were recovered and retained and later accessioned at the CIL as CIL 2013-180. An identification tag allegedly recovered from the burial was unilaterally turned over to the RL/A on 9 September 2013 and later transported to the JPAC-CIL where it was accessioned CIL 2013-179. This identification tag was later consolidated with the excavated material and re-designated CIL 2013-180. The Recovery Leader/Anthropologist (RL/A) closed the site on 11 September 2013 and recommends no further excavation.

BACKGROUND

JPAC incident 00973 involves a 2 January 1945 ground loss during a battle between an American rifle platoon and German troops on a forested hilltop, referred to as Hill 9346. The day after the Americans made a hasty retreat, it was discovered that Private First Class (Pfc) Cecil E. HARRIS was unaccounted for. Due to enemy occupation, an immediate search could not be conducted (REF: American Graves Registration Command Europe Area statement on non-recoverable remains, by Capt. John M. Neff, HQ American Grave Registration, not dtd). When the American Graves Registration Command (AGRC), Europe Area conducted a search of Dambach in January 1949, severe snowstorms prevented a search of Hilltop 9346 (REF: Investigation of Isolated Burial [Bas-Bhin] 12345, by Major Leonard M. Litmán, AGRC, dtd 14 January 1949) and the local forest guard reported that no additional American graves existed in the area (REF: Statement, by M. Paschke, Dambach forest guard, dtd 12 January 1949). In May 1949, another search was attempted but no additional American graves were located and the local forest guard again reported that there were no such additional graves (REF: Diary, by Howard F. Ephraim, HQ AGRC IBS Investigator, dtd 20 May 1949).



Figure 1. The general location of Site FR-02212 (red circle), associated with JPAC 00973 in The French Republic.

Prior to the current excavation, no investigations had been conducted by JPAC at this site (designated FR-02212) or any other site related to JPAC 00973. On 23 August 2013, Mr. Jeffrey Brlecic, the Director of the JPAC Liaison Office in Europe, was contacted by the Foreign Liaison Officer of the Baden-Württemberg State of Germany, Mr. T. Sean Schultz, concerning a grave containing the remains of a possible American soldier discovered by French war enthusiasts. The enthusiasts contacted the German Military Cemetery in nearby Niederbronn-Les-Bains and reported the discovery of human remains and an identification tag. On

5 September 2013, a representative of the Lorraine American Cemetery and Memorial in St. Avold, France invited JPAC to take charge of the site and excavate the burial. Until RT2's arrival the *Gendarmerie nationale*, the national French military police, secured the site.

RECOVERY SCENE LOCATION

Site FR-02212 is located near the town of Dambach, Bas-Rhin Department, Alsace Region, of the French Republic. The applicable map sheet for the site is: Name: Pirmasens Sud France/Germany; Sheet: L6910; Series: M745; Edition: 6; Scale: 1:50,000; Datum: WGS 1984 (Figure 2). The Military Grid Reference System grid coordinates (GC) for the FR-02212 reference datum are 32U MV 00158 29615 using the WGS-84 datum. The GC were determined with a Garmin GPSmap 60CSx Global Positioning System receiver tracking nine satellites with an average estimated positional error of ± 8 m. The elevation of the site datum is approximately 359 m above mean sea level.

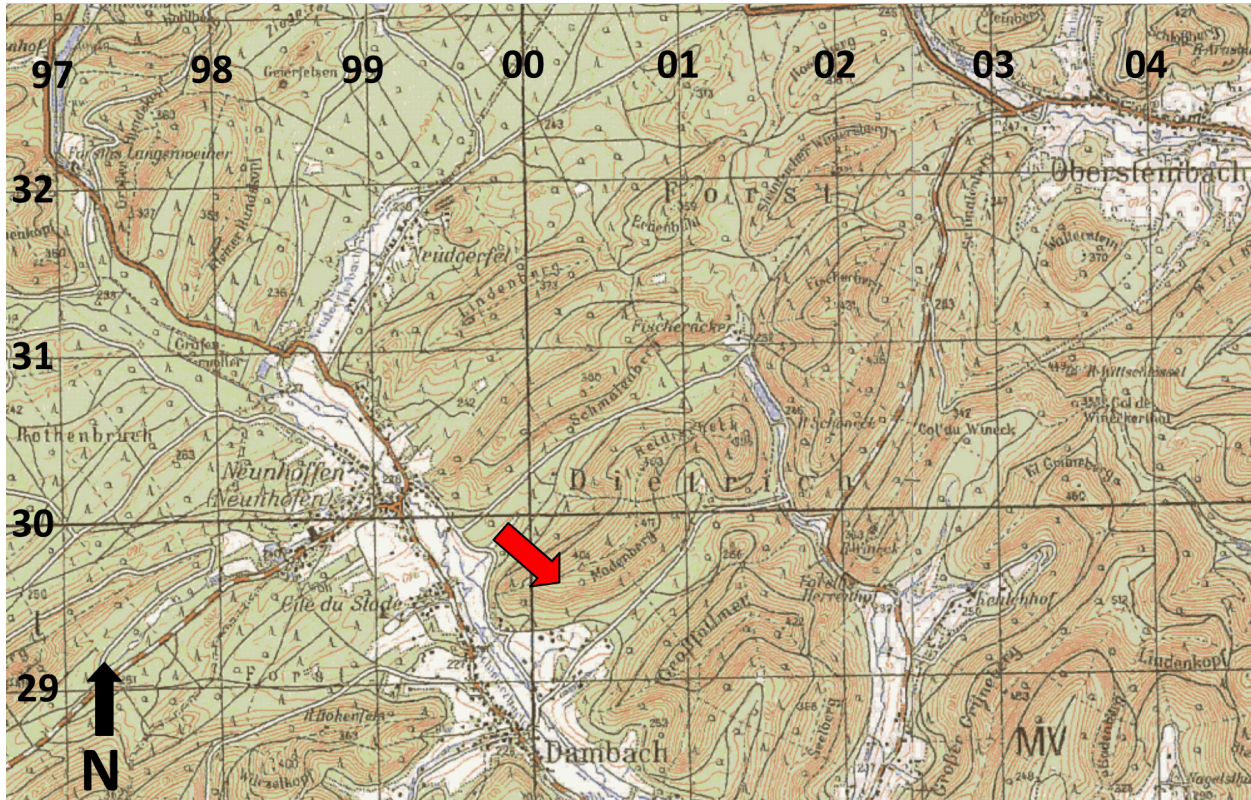


Figure 2. Topographic map of site FR-02212 (red arrow) recovery scene location associated with JPAC 00973. Black grid lines correspond to the WGS 1984 datum. Each black box in the figure is 1 km²

DESCRIPTION OF RECOVERY SCENE

Site FR-02212 is located on a hilltop, dotted with sandstone outcroppings, and deciduous and coniferous trees. The area also contains short grasses, moss, and leaf litter (Figure 3). During WWII, following the incident associated with JPAC 00973, the Germans cut down the trees to permit visibility of the Maginot Line which ran through the towns of Philippsbourg and Jaegerthal. Following the war, the trees grew back naturally. According to the forest guard, the recovery area property belonged to the Dietrich family, between 1648 and 1999. The trees have been used over the years for metallurgy activities. The nearby Dietrich family metallurgy shop was the first of its kind in France and the first in France to produce cannons. During World Wars I and II, this region of France was taken over by the Germans at least three times. Although the metallurgy shop was seized by the Germans each time, the family was allowed to keep the property in their name. In 1999, the property was sold to Mademoiselle de Pimodan, who resides in Paris.

The burial location was indicated to the RL/A by Mr. Pierre Lindauer, one of the French war enthusiasts. Mr. Lindauer indicated the area where he recovered human remains and pointed out the sandstone overhang inscribed with what appears to be a cross and the letter “H” (Figure 4). The RL/A determined the burial perimeter through careful removal of the loose grave fill to expose the more compact grave shaft walls. The burial feature was found to be approximately 100 cm wide (north to south) and 220 cm long (east to west).



Figure 3. Overview of site FR-02212. View is north.



Figure 4. Detailed views, unenhanced (top) and highlighted (bottom), of the sandstone overhang above the burial. Figures engraved in the sandstone are consistent with a cross (right) and the letter “H” (left), presumably for the name “Harris”.

FIELD METHODS

Standard archaeological methods for burial excavation were employed. Magnetic north was maintained as the site azimuth. A small sandstone outcrop was established as the site datum and designated N500/E500 (Figure 5). At N500/E501, a wooden stake was emplaced as the southwest corner of the excavation unit. Because the sandstone overhang runs through the unit, the northwest-most extent of the unit was only 1.5 m to the north, while the northeast-most extent of the unit was 2.64 m to the north (Figure 6).

The RL/A directed and monitored all activities on site, digitally photographed recovery operations, maintained daily field notes, prepared section drawings, and created maps. The burial feature was excavated with hand tools. The loose overburden was removed by gloved hands and a trowel. When the majority of grave fill was removed, wooden tools and brushes were used to remove soil from the skeletal remains. The *Gendarmerie nationale* were required to make observations and photographic documentation of the grave before any *in situ* osseous remains were removed.

Excavated sediment was placed in buckets and transported to a dry-screening station, containing two screens with quarter-inch mesh. The mission OIC supervised up to three volunteers at a time as they screened the excavated sediment (Figure 7). All personnel wore latex gloves while handling possible evidence. All materials were examined by the RL/A for evidentiary value. Possible evidence was retained, then bagged and labeled with pertinent information.



Figure 5. Photograph of the southern tip of a sandstone outcrop established as the site datum (red triangle) and the southwest unit corner stake emplaced at 1 m to the east of the datum designated N500/E501. View is northeast.

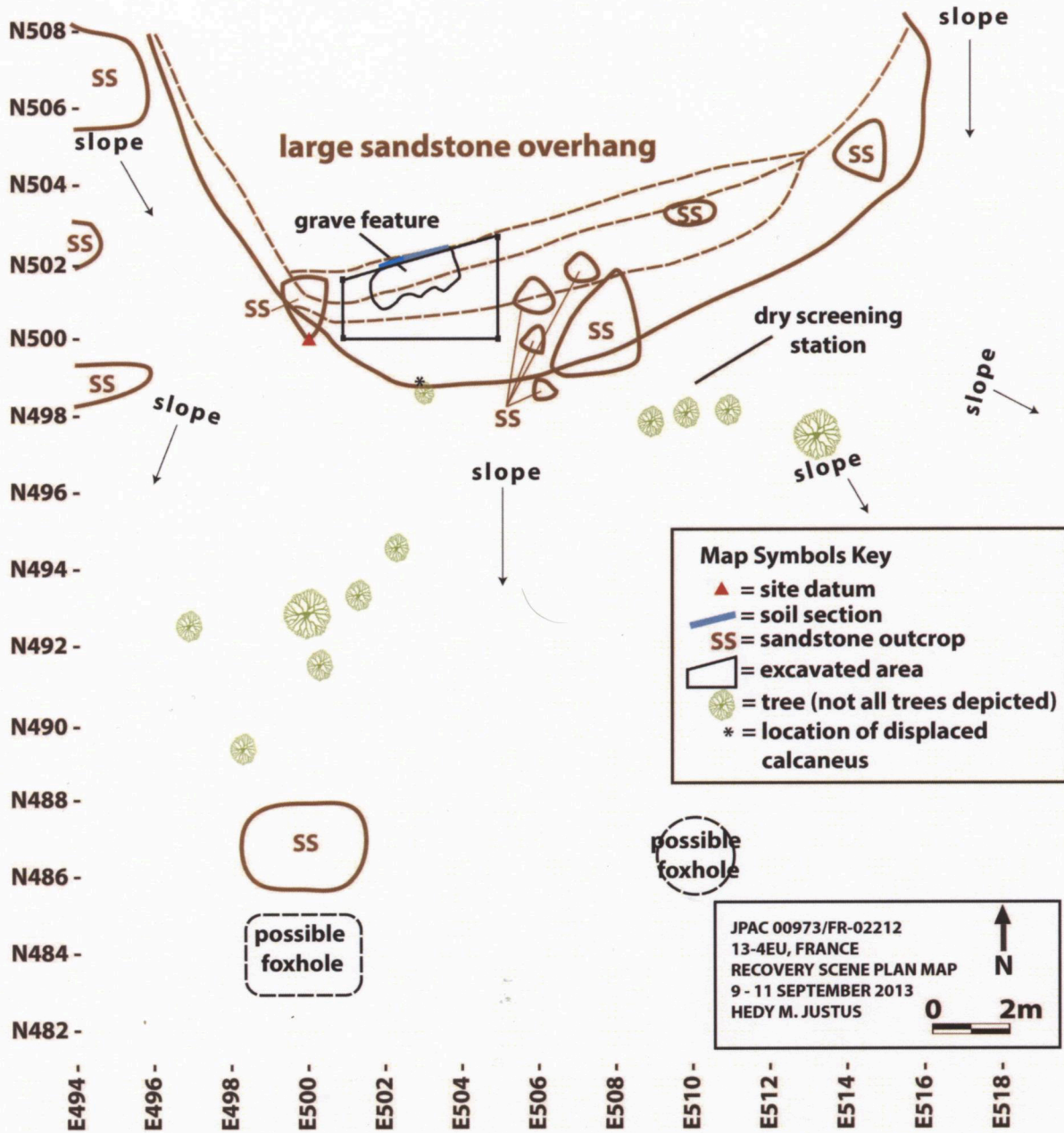


Figure 6. Site FR-02212 recovery scene plan map.



Figure 7. Dry screening operations at Site FR-02212 associated with JPAC 00973.

Possible human remains were transferred to the local funeral home after each day of excavation, where they were secured until transfer back to the RL/A at the end of the mission. Possible material evidence was secured by the RL/A and stored in a safe box until it was transferred to the JPAC-CIL at the end of the mission. Given the remote location of the recovery scene, no security measures were taken to protect the site and no security violations occurred during recovery operations. All recovered ammunition was given to the *Gendarmerie nationale*.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS

The burial feature was approximately 100-x-220 m in surface area (Figures 8 and 9). This 2.2 m² area was excavated to an average depth of 60 cmbs, to include the feature walls and floors that were scraped until no more evidence was visible (Figure 10). In addition, approximately 7 m² of surface area surrounding the grave feature was excavated to an average depth of 3 cmbs to ensure that no evidence had been deposited around the grave. Within the grave unit, possible human remains were recovered along with material evidence, to include buttons and possible fabric. At the end of the first day of operations, a calcaneus with adherent loose soil was discovered on the ground approximately 2 – 2.5m south of the burial feature (see Figure 6). This was an area where observers watched the recovery operations. From the surrounding area, only a few pieces of ammunition were recovered. Also within the burial matrix were recovered large amounts of ammunition that were not retained by the RL/A (Figure 11).



Figure 8. Photograph of the exposed burial prior to the initial removal of osseous remains at site FR-02212. Long scale is in dm. Arrow indicates north.

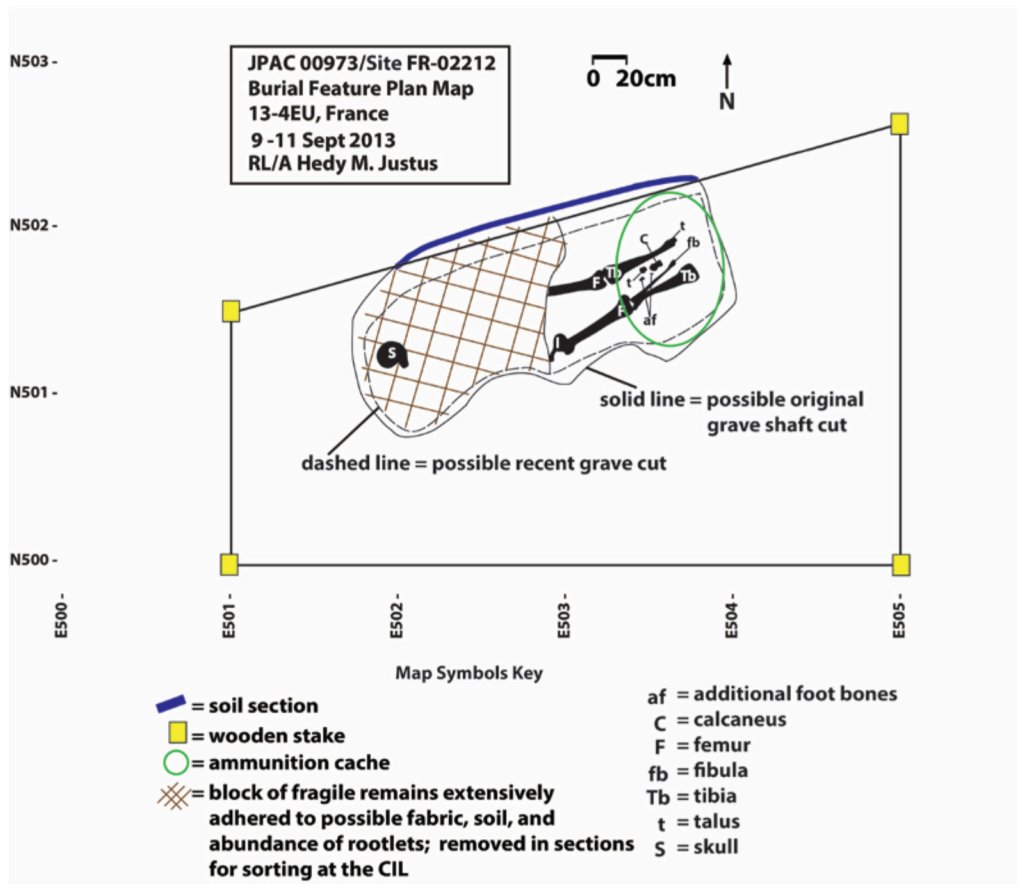


Figure 9. Site FR-02212 excavation plan map.



Figure 10. Final photograph of the 13-4EU recovery of Site FR-02212 associated with JPAC 00973 after excavation. View is to northeast.



Figure 11. Consolidation of ammunition recovered from the grave feature during the 13-4EU mission at Site FR-02212 associated with JPAC 00973. Scale is in dm.

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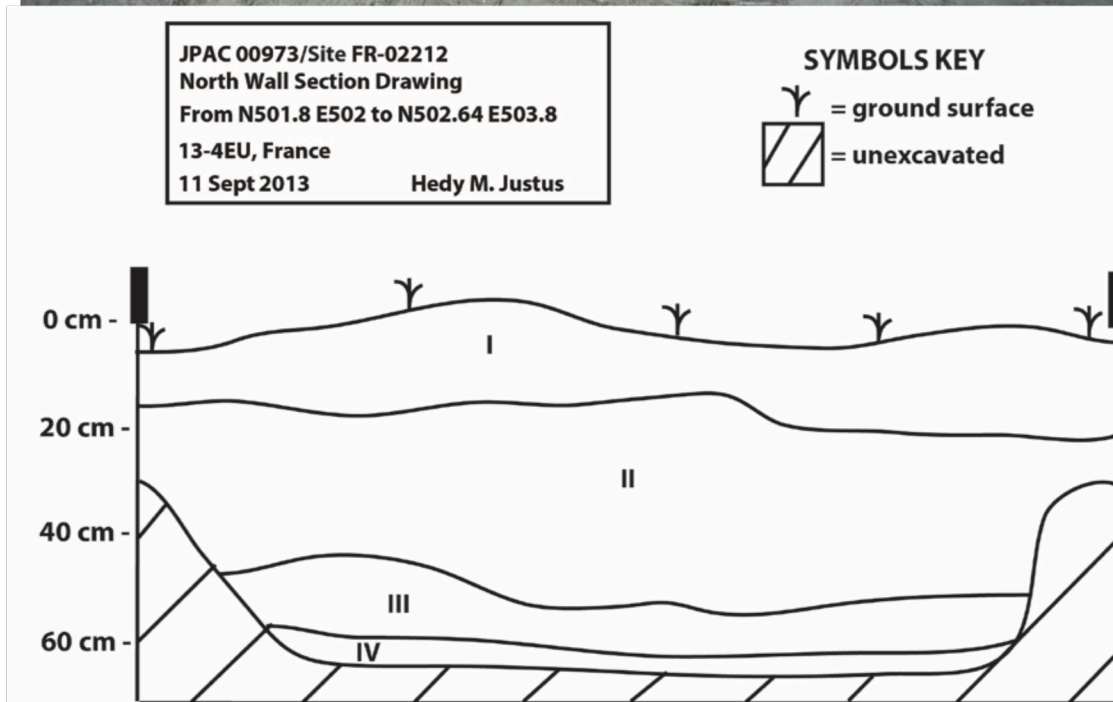
During excavation, osseous remains were not readily visible in the thoracic region. Fabric in this area included ribs held in place by an extensive network of rootlets. The fragile, poorly preserved remains were not easily separated from the other material. For this reason, as well as time constraints, the RL/A removed this portion in blocks to be separated at the JPAC-CIL. The majority of buttons were recovered in the thoracic region, in addition to metal pieces consistent with shrapnel. Pieces of fabric were also adhered to the left fibula. Possible food rations (coffee packets) were found in the grave fill. Evidence of recent disturbance includes recently cut rootlets that follow the grave shaft and fresh leaves and pine needles and recently cut twigs observed in the grave fill.

The soil encountered at site FR-02212 consisted of coarse sand that varied in color from white, to gray, to reddish hues (Figure 12). The first layer is the loosest and exhibits disturbance with the leaf litter and other organic material and loose displaced osseous remains and ammunition throughout. The second layer is slightly more moist and contained intact *in situ* remains and ammunition. The third layer is slightly more compact and devoid of remains, but contains an abundance of ammunition and very little organic material. The fourth layer is a grayish-white layer of more compact coarse sand that is devoid of remains and almost devoid of rootlets.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From 9 through 11 September 2013, during the 13-4EU mission, the RL/A from RT2 and the mission OIC excavated approximately 2.2 m² at Site FR-02212 to an average depth of 60 cmbs. Additionally, an approximately 7 m² area surrounding the grave feature was excavated to an average depth of 3 cmbs. Possible human remains and material evidence were recovered and returned to the JPAC-CIL for analysis. Copious amounts of ammunition were recovered, photographed, and turned over to local authorities. The RL/A closed the site on 11 September 2013 and recommends no further excavation. Measures were taken to recover all possible human remains and material evidence; the probability of recovering additional materials is very low.

FOR 
HEDY M. JUSTUS, MSc
Recovery Leader/Anthropologist



Description of Soil Section using Munsell color chart

I. 2.5YR 4/3 reddish brown coarse sand with rootlets, leaf litter, fresh pine needles, recently cut twigs, loose osseous remains and ammunition throughout.

II. 2.5YR 3/2 dusky red and 2.5YR 5/4 reddish brown coarse sand with rootlets and small roots. Osseous remains and ammunition were *in situ* in this layer.

III. 2.5YR 5/2 weak red coarse sand (appears gray when dry) mostly beneath the remains, but contains ammunition *in situ* and very few rootlets.

IV. 10YR 7/2 light gray moist, more compact coarse sand (looks almost white before further moistening), almost devoid of rootlets; incident sterile.

Figure 12. Photograph (top) and section drawing (bottom) of north wall of burial feature from unit N500/E501. Scale in photograph is in dm.