



ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT
98-100 EVESHAM ROAD
CHELTENHAM
GLOUCESTERSHIRE

FOR MR. R. DEACON

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ARCHAEOLOGY SERVICE
Environment Department

GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL 2000

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Summary

In November 2000, Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology Service carried out an archaeological evaluation of land to the rear of 98 and 100 Evesham Road, Cheltenham (OS NGR SO 9527 2332). Planning permission has been given by Cheltenham Borough Council for the construction of two houses on the site (CBC refs: CB18964/04 and CB18965/02). The site lies in close proximity to archaeological remains of Bronze Age, Iron Age and Romano-British date, which are poorly-represented in Cheltenham. The Senior Archaeological Officer of Gloucestershire County Council therefore recommended that a condition be attached to outline planning consent, requiring that the site is evaluated to determine the impact of the development on the archaeological resource. The evaluation recorded Romano-British ditches demonstrating signs of re-use that represent the continuation of field systems found nearby at Dunalley School and Rose Cottage. In addition, several discrete features of similar date were recorded. Finds included 3rd- to 4th-century pottery and burnt building stone.

1 Introduction

1.1 Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology Service (GCCAS) were commissioned by Mr. Robert Deacon to undertake a programme of archaeological evaluation to the rear of 98 and 100 Evesham Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire (OS NGR SO 9527 2332).

1.2 The archaeological monitoring was a condition attached to outline planning permission granted by Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC refs: CB18964/04 and CB18965/02) on the advice of the Senior Archaeological Officer of Gloucestershire County Council. The development will comprise the construction of two houses that will front onto West Drive. The evaluation was requested by Cheltenham Borough Council on the advice of the Senior Archaeological Officer of Gloucestershire County Council in order to determine the impact of the development on the archaeological resource. A minimum of 2% and maximum of 4% of the site area was to be evaluated by trial trenching.

1.3 The site is shown on a plan by John Broom Architects. The area affected by the development measures c. 1176m² alongside West Drive that currently holds a tennis court, a small garden and sheds.

1.4 The archaeological method was outlined in the standard '*Brief for an archaeological field evaluation*' issued by the Senior Archaeological Officer of Gloucestershire County Council and was detailed in the project design prepared by Paul Nichols for GCCAS (Nichols 2000a). The archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' '*Standards and Guidance for an archaeological evaluation*' (IFA 1999).

1.4 The evaluation was undertaken on 9th November 2000 by Louise Bashford, Assistant Project Officer, and Richard Barratt for GCCAS. Toby Catchpole (GCCAS Senior Project Officer) managed the project.

2 Site location and geology

The development site is located in the Pittville area of North Cheltenham, and is centred on OS NGR SO 9527 2332. Evesham Road, the A435, is located to the north of Cheltenham town centre and to the west of Pittville Park. Numbers 98 and 100 are situated on the west side of Evesham Road, and are bounded to the west by West Drive. The proposed development lies to the rear of these two properties. The site is geologically located in an area of Cheltenham Sand and undifferentiated Lower Lias silty clays (OS 1981) at a height of c.55m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD).

3 Background information

3.1 Published and unpublished reports, the Gloucestershire Sites and Monuments Record (GSMR) and Ordnance Survey and tithe maps have been consulted in order to assess the known historical and archaeological background of the area. Much of this section is taken from the project specification (Nichols 2000).

3.2 Prehistoric activity has been recorded within Cheltenham, notably during excavations at Chester Walk in the centre of the town where Iron Age ditches and undated linear features, post holes and a dog burial were recorded (Wills 1987; GSMR 9200). At Arle Court an evaluation and subsequent excavation (Nichols 1999; Cutler and Dingwall 1999; GSMR 20430) have provided evidence of Iron Age and Romano-British activity in the form of enclosure ditches. Earlier prehistoric activity of Neolithic and Bronze Age date was recorded at Sandy Lane, Charlton Kings in 1971 (Leah and Young 1999).

3.3 Occupation in the area during the Romano-British period appears to have been of an agricultural nature rather than the higher status settlement seen at towns like Gloucester and Cirencester. Romano-British enclosure ditches were recorded at Arle Court (GSMR 20430) and a recent evaluation on the site of St. James' Station uncovered a single ditch of the Roman period, along with numerous undated features which might suggest that more complex deposits survive in the area (Coleman 1999). Chance finds of Romano-British artefacts indicate a typical Severn Vale distribution of Romano-British farming settlements, subject to the greater finds recovery rate liable to occur in a modern town.

3.4 Prior to a recent programme of excavations to the west of 98 and 100 Evesham Road very little archaeological work had been carried out in the immediate area of the site. The earliest recorded archaeological work carried out in Cheltenham was antiquarian activity in the early 19th-century. Burials in lead coffins along with coins, pottery and glass were recorded in the 1820s in the area between the River Chelt and St. James' Station, c.1.5km to the south-west of Evesham Road (GSMR 5433). In the same area a "Villa Rustica" and a bath house were recorded to have produced "many coins, bath tiles, tessellated pavement and portions of pottery", which were subsequently lost (Goding 1863, GSMR 6615).

3.5 A number of objects dating from the Romano-British period have been reported from the area surrounding the site. At least ten sherds of Romano-British pottery, along with iron slag and a bronze pin were retrieved during the planting of fruit trees at 104 Evesham Road, to the north of the site (GSMR 9741). A coin of Theodosius (379-395 AD) was found c.400m to the south-east (GSMR 5472) and a coin of Maximinus I (235-238 AD) was found c.350m to the south-west (GSMR 5436).

3.6 A programme of archaeological fieldwork took place in 1997 and 1998 on a former playing field on the western side of West Drive, and to the immediate west of 98 and 100 Evesham Road (see Figure 1). Five phases of work were undertaken prior to the construction of the new Dunalley County Primary School and a separate housing development (Thomas and Catchpole 2000; GSMR 18486). The work recorded a rectilinear system of stock enclosures or garden plots of Romano-British date. The system was first laid out in the late 1st- or early 2nd-century on a roughly east-west / north-south alignment. Substantial changes were made in the late 2nd-century and then slight modifications, indicating ongoing maintenance, were carried out until some time in the 3rd-century. The ditches were delineated to the east and south by a wide track or driveway. The ditches to the east of the trackway appeared to form a curvilinear system of enclosures which did not conform to the rectilinear system to the west.

3.7 Although no structures were identified during the excavations, finds of building materials and domestic objects such as quern fragments suggested the presence of nearby settlement. The increase in the density of finds towards the eastern side of the site suggests that settlement was located to the east of the excavated area, towards Evesham Road. Larger enclosures were present to the west, further away from this proposed settlement. Evidence regarding the status of the site was somewhat contradictory, pottery evidence suggesting a farmstead type settlement whereas the animal bone evidence indicated occupation by a highly Romanised population. An interpretation of the combined evidence suggests that the West Drive settlement was providing food for a Romanised elite, perhaps at a nearby villa site.

3.8 An archaeological evaluation and excavation were carried out prior to development at Rose Cottage, West Drive, to the north of the evaluation site (Hicks 1999; Nichols 2000b; GSMR 20466, see Figure 1). Two ditches of Romano-British date and a ditch of prehistoric date were recorded. The Romano-British ditches appeared to be part of the system of enclosures recorded to the west at Dunalley Primary School. A watching brief carried out at Rose Cottage in March 2000 (Bashford 2000; GSMR 20466) identified a large feature of undetermined character. Six sherds of Severn Valley Ware pottery of probable second century date were retrieved from the fill of this feature.

3.9 The First Edition County Series Plan of 1887 shows two small outbuildings in the north-western and south-western corners of 100 Evesham Road. The Third Edition of 1923 shows an additional small outbuilding in the garden of number 100 and two small outbuildings in the garden of number 98 (OS c. 1880, c. 1925).

4 Results of the evaluation

4.1 Two trenches totalling 20.4m in length were excavated within the tennis court. A sample of 3.12% of the proposed development was excavated. An attempt was made to locate the trenches according to the footprints of the proposed development, however, Trench 1 was located in the north-eastern corner to maximise coverage of the width of the site.

4.2 Trench 1

4.2.1 Trench 1 measured 4.8m in length and 1.8m in width and was excavated to a depth of c.1.26m (55.01m-54.56m AOD) (see Figure 2). The deposits excavated within the trench were homogeneous, the earliest being a clean bright orange sandy natural [5] encountered at a depth of 1.1m (Figure 3). This was overlain by a thin layer of light greyish-orange mottled with yellow and grey compact sandy silt with occasional small sub-angular and sub-rounded stones [4]. One ephemeral feature was visible cut into layer [4], but this appeared to result from tree or root damage when excavated.

4.2.2 Above layer [4] was a layer of mid orangey-brown friable sandy silt with rare small sub-angular stones, occasional charcoal flecks and fragments of burnt limestone [3]. This layer was 0.46m in depth at its greatest point, and appeared to have extended across site, first seen at a depth of 0.64m below the ground surface. It was overlain by a layer of dark orangey-brown compact sandy silt with rare inclusions of small sub-angular stones and occasional charcoal flecks [2]. This was overlain by a layer of dark bluish-grey plastic sandy clay [1] containing stones, modern ceramic building material (CBM) and glass, that had been partially stained by the tarmac layer [14] laid immediately above it.

4.3 Trench 2

4.3.1 Trench 2 was aligned north-south through the centre of the tennis court, and was located to assess the type of deposits and features that would be affected by the footprints of the two proposed houses. The trench measured 15.6m by 1.8m and was machine excavated to a depth of c.0.94m (54.90m AOD) below the ground surface (Figures 2 and 4). The earliest deposit encountered in Trench 2 was a bright orange compact sandy silt thought to be natural Cheltenham Sand [5], observed near the southern end of the trench (Figure 4a). At the extreme southern end of the trench a deposit of light greyish-yellow mottled with orange and dark grey compact silty clay [16] was observed crossing the trench from north-east to south-west at an oblique angle. This deposit was not excavated, but appeared to be redeposited and may have been the fill of a linear feature.

4.3.2 Approximately 3.2m from the southern end of the trench, a linear deposit of light yellowish-grey mottled with yellow compact silty clay [17] was observed crossing the trench at a slightly oblique angle from west-north-west to east-south-east (Figures 4a and 4b). Further north, a 4.7m wide band of dirty natural [18], comprising a mid orange mottled with mid greyish-brown compact clayey silt, crossed the central part of the trench. This layer appeared to have been redeposited, and may be masking other features. The northern edge of layer [18] was difficult to discern, since the deposit merged into layer [19], a light yellowish-grey mottled with yellow and grey compact sandy silt. This deposit had been partly disturbed by rootlets and had occasional flecks of manganese and iron, and may have been the fill of an unidentified feature.

4.3.3 The northern edge of deposit [17] and the southern edge of layer [18] was obscured by a linear feature that excavation of a section showed to be a multi-phase ditch (Figure 4b). The earliest observed cut of this ditch was [13], which had straight sloping sides and a flat base, indicating that it was originally a truncated 'v'-shape. The primary fill was a dark bluish-grey plastic clayey silt [12] containing occasional mineralised animal bone, but no dateable material. Fill [12] was truncated by a recut of the ditch, [8] that was over 1.30m in width and 0.50m in depth with sloping sides and a flat base. It was filled by a mid grey mottled with orangey-brown compact sandy silt [15] that contained flecks of charcoal and had occasional gravel in patches at the sides. Fills [12] and [15] displayed signs of leaching and iron panning, and their dense, silty nature indicated that they were most likely water lain deposits. Fill [15] had been overlain by a secondary fill of compact orange sandy silt containing small sub-angular stones [11], that represents either

upcast from another feature or slippage of the ditch sides. This fill had been truncated by the latest recut [10] of the ditch, which was clearly visible in plan and section, and was 1.90m in width and 0.50m in depth with gently sloping sides and a rounded base. This last phase of the ditch had a fill [9] of mid greyish-brown compact/ friable clayey silt that contained occasional charcoal and 3rd to 4th-century pottery, and appeared to have been truncated [2], probably by medieval or later ploughing.

4.3.4 At the northern end of the trench, the earliest deposits [24] and [25] were encountered in a slot excavated through layer [26] (Figure 4a). Deposits [24] and [25] both consisted of light whitish-grey compact sandy silt, but a wider area of [25] was exposed, and flecks of iron panning, ceramic building material (CBM) and pottery were visible, indicating that this deposit is probably a fill of an unidentified feature. Deposits [24] and [25] may be the same, due to their similar character and since both were cut by a linear ditch [6] with a 'u'-shaped profile (see Figures 4a and 4c).

4.3.5 Ditch [6] was 1.35m in width and 0.6m in depth, exposed at c.54.7m AOD, or c. 1.08m below the ground surface. It was aligned north-west by south-east and was filled by a dark greyish-brown compact sandy silt [7] with occasional stones, including large fragments of burnt limestone, animal bone and late 4th-century Romano-British pottery (see 5 below). The finds assemblage contains artefacts from the layer [26] above, which was originally thought to be part of the same feature. Layer [26] was a mid-greyish brown friable sandy silt containing occasional large burnt limestone blocks, charcoal, animal bone and Romano-British pottery, that was c.0.20m in depth and sealed ditch [6]. The northern extent of this layer was not found, but the southern edge overlay layer [19], (described above) and had partially obscured a series of deposits that are most likely to be the fills of discrete features [20], [21], [22], [23].

4.3.6 Deposit [21] was a light grey compact silty sand with occasional charcoal flecks, which may have been associated with deposit [22], a mid grey friable silty sand with evidence of iron panning. Deposit [23] had masked the western edge of these deposits, and was a light whitish-grey compact clayey silt of similar appearance to [24] and [25]. Context [20] was a linear or ovate deposit of dark grey friable silty sand with occasional pottery and bone that appeared to have truncated these deposits. None of these deposits were excavated, but they are thought to be the fills of a ditch or gully, or a series of intercutting pits.

4.3.7 These features and deposits were overlain by the ploughsoil [2], topsoil [1] and tarmac surface [14] described above.

5 Pottery assessment by Dr. J. R. Timby

5.1 The evaluation resulted in the recovery of a small assemblage of 71 sherds of pottery (845 g) dating to the Roman, Medieval and post-Medieval periods. Pottery was recovered from five contexts, with most of the sherds, 51 in total, coming from context [7]. The assemblage was of mixed condition, some fairly abraded sherds but also some fairly large, well preserved pieces, some joining, notably from context [7]. For the purposes of this assessment the material was briefly scanned to assess its likely chronology. The resulting information is summarised in Table 1, below.

5.2 Roman

Sixty-seven sherds date to the later Roman period. These were associated with contexts [3], [7] and [9]. The larger assemblage from [7] contained a large sherd of burnt, abraded, Spanish amphora (Dressel type 20) along with local Severn Valley and Malvernian wares. Regional imports include sherds of Dorset black burnished ware (DOR BB1) and a single sherd of Midlands late Roman shelly ware. This sherd dates the group as a whole to the period after 360-70 AD. The smaller groups from [3] and [9] contained mainly local wares and a single DOR BB1 jar sherd decorated with an oblique lattice from [9]. Although local wares are not closely datable the lattice indicates a date in the 3rd or 4th century and the other sherds would be compatible with such a date.

5.3 Medieval-post-Medieval

Just four sherds of post-Roman date were present, from context [2]. In addition a small fragment of abraded ceramic building material was present in context [2]. The sherds include two pieces of Malvernian ware, a long-lived industry spanning the 14-17th centuries, one sherd of sandy Medieval cooking pot probably from the Hereford region and one sherd of post-medieval glazed red earthenware.

Context	Roman	Medieval	Post medieval	Total no./ weight (g)	Date
2 (Tr.1)	-	2	-	2/ 11	?14-17thC
2 (Tr.2)	1	-	2	3/ 23	Roman; 17-19thC
3	9	-	-	9/ 60	?C3+
7	51	-	-	51/ 615	late C4th
9	6	-	-	6/ 136	C3/C4
TOTAL	67	2	2	71/ 845	

Table 1: Summary of pottery

6 Discussion and conclusions

6.1 The archaeological remains beneath the tennis court appear to be buried at a depth of c.1m (c.54.90m AOD), although this depth does not account for the possibility of upstanding remains such as walls. The earliest features identified were two ditches [6] and [13], the latter displaying evidence for recutting [8], [10]. Most of the pottery recovered from these ditches indicate that they are late Romano-British in origin, dating from the 3rd to 4th century AD. This differs from the findings of the Dunalley School excavations c.50m to the west, where the majority of the features were of the early Romano-British period, and little evidence was uncovered of activity later than the mid 3rd century (Thomas and Catchpole 2000).

6.2 On this site, the sealing of features [6], [24], and [25] by a Romano-British layer, (layer [26]), is consistent with the Dunalley excavations. At Dunalley school (Thomas and Catchpole 2000), Rose Cottage to the north (Hicks 1999, Bashford 2000) and on this site, it has been noted that features are not always clearly visible due to redeposition of natural deposits and sealing by later layers.

6.3 The features in this evaluation produced a relatively high quantity of domestic refuse, certainly more than would be expected in rural ditches. In addition to the pottery, which includes both local and imported wares, including a sherd of Spanish amphora, there was a noticeable quantity of large, mainly burnt, Oolitic limestone which is not native to the site, especially in ditch [6] and layer [26].

6.4 The features on this site can tentatively be placed in the agricultural sphere, although the discrete features, the quantity of pottery, and possible building stone in Trench 2 indicates the possibility of a nearby late Roman domestic complex. The density of finds recovered from the excavated features was greater than at any of the surrounding investigated areas. Medieval use of the site appears to have been limited, the pottery indicating late medieval farming activity, and it is therefore likely that this Roman complex was abandoned or scaled-down in the late 4th-century AD.

6 References

ABBREVIATIONS

BUFAU	Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
CAT	Cotswold Archaeological Trust
GCCAS	Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology Service
IFA	Institute of Field Archaeologists

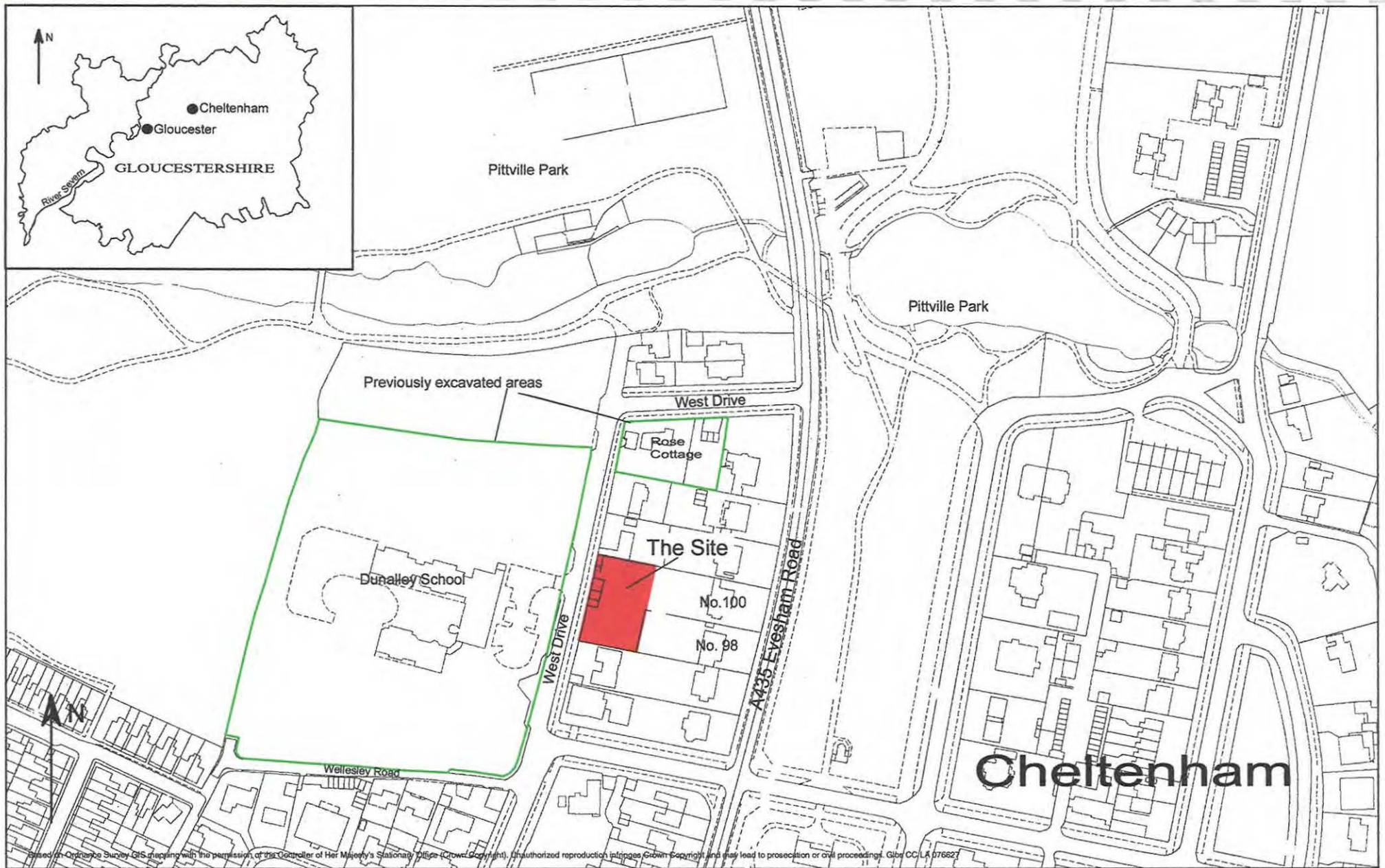
- | | | |
|------------------------------|--------|---|
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| Cutler, R. and Dingwall L | 1999 | <i>Excavations at Arle Court, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire. Site narrative and post excavation assessment.</i> BUFAU typescript report |
| Goding, J. | 1863 | <i>Norman's History of Cheltenham</i> |
| Hicks, D. | 1999 | <i>Archaeological Evaluation at Rose Cottage, West Drive, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire.</i> GCCAS typescript report |
| IFA | 1999 | <i>Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluations</i> |
| Leah, M. and Young, C. J. | 1999 | <i>A Bronze-Age burnt mound at Sandy Lane, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire. Excavations in 1971.</i> CAT typescript report |
| Nichols, P. | 1999 | <i>An Archaeological Evaluation at Arle Court, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire.</i> GCCAS typescript report |
| Nichols, P. | 2000a | <i>Archaeological Evaluation at 98-100 Evesham Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire.</i> GCCAS typescript report |
| Nichols, P. | 2000b | <i>An archaeological excavation at Rose Cottage, West Drive, Cheltenham.</i> GCCAS typescript report |
| OS | c.1880 | Ordnance Survey County Series Plans, 1st edition. OS digital data |
| OS | c.1900 | Ordnance Survey County Series Plans, 2nd edition. OS digital data |
| OS | c.1925 | Ordnance Survey County Series Plans, 3rd edition. OS digital data |
| OS | 1988 | <i>Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain (England and Wales) Tewkesbury Sheet 216, 1:50,000 series</i> |
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Appendix 1: Summary of contexts

Context	Area	Type	Description	Date
1		Layer	Dark bluish-grey plastic sandy clay [1] containing stones, modern CBM and glass. Partially stained	Modern
2		Layer	Dark orangey-brown compact sandy silt with rare inclusions of small sub-angular stones and occasional charcoal flecks	Medieval/ Post-medieval
3		Layer	Mid orangey-brown friable sandy silt with rare small sub-angular stones, occasional charcoal flecks and fragments of burnt limestone	Romano-British/ sub-Roman
4		Layer	Light greyish-orange mottled with yellow and grey compact sandy silt with occasional small sub-angular and sub-rounded stones	Redeposited natural
5		Layer	Bright orange sand	Natural Cheltenham Sand
6	Tr.2	Cut	Linear feature 1.35m in width and 0.6m in depth. Aligned north-west by south-east	Roman ditch
7	Tr.2	Fill	Fill of [6]. Dark greyish-brown compact sandy silt with occasional stones, including large fragments of burnt limestone, animal bone and Romano-British pottery	Roman
8	Tr.2	Cut	Linear feature with sloping sides and a flat base. 1.30m in width and 0.50m in depth	Recut of ditch [13]. Roman
9	Tr.2	Fill	Fill of [10]. Mid greyish-brown compact/ friable clayey silt that contained occasional charcoal and pottery	Roman
10	Tr.2	Cut	Linear feature with gently sloping sides and a rounded base. 1.90m in width and 0.50m in depth	Recut of ditch [13]. Roman/ sub-Roman
11	Tr.2	Fill	Fill of [8]. Compact orange sandy silt containing small sub-angular stones	Roman
12	Tr.2	Fill	Fill of [13]. Dark bluish-grey plastic clayey silt with occasional mineralised animal bone	Roman
13	Tr.2	Cut	Primary cut of linear feature with straight sloping sides and a flat base	Roman ditch
14		Layer	Tarmac	Modern
15	Tr.2	Fill	Mid grey mottled with orangey-brown compact sandy silt containing flecks of charcoal, pottery and had occasional gravel at the sides. Some iron panning	Roman
16	Tr.2	Layer/Fill	Light greyish-yellow mottled with orange and dark grey compact silty clay	Roman?
17	Tr.2	Layer/Fill	Linear deposit of light yellowish-grey mottled with yellow compact silty clay	Probably Roman
18	Tr.2	Layer/Fill	Mid orange mottled with mid greyish-brown compact clayey silt	Probably Roman
19	Tr.2	Layer/Fill	Light yellowish-grey mottled with yellow and grey compact sandy silt	Probably Roman. same as [24] and [25] ?
20	Tr.2	Cut and fill	Linear or ovate deposit of dark grey friable silty sand with occasional pottery and bone	Roman
21	Tr.2	Cut and fill	Light grey compact silty sand with occasional charcoal flecks	Roman
22	Tr.2	Fill	Mid grey friable silty sand with iron panning	Roman?
23	Tr.2	Fill	Light whitish-grey compact clayey silt	Roman?
24	Tr.2	Layer/ Fill	Light whitish-grey compact sandy silt	Roman?
25	Tr.2	Layer/ Fill	Light whitish-grey compact sandy silt with flecks of iron panning, CBM and pottery	
26	Tr.2	Layer/ Fill	mid-greyish brown friable sandy silt containing occasional large burnt limestone blocks, charcoal, animal bone and Romano-British pottery. .)20m in depth	

Appendix 2: Summary of finds

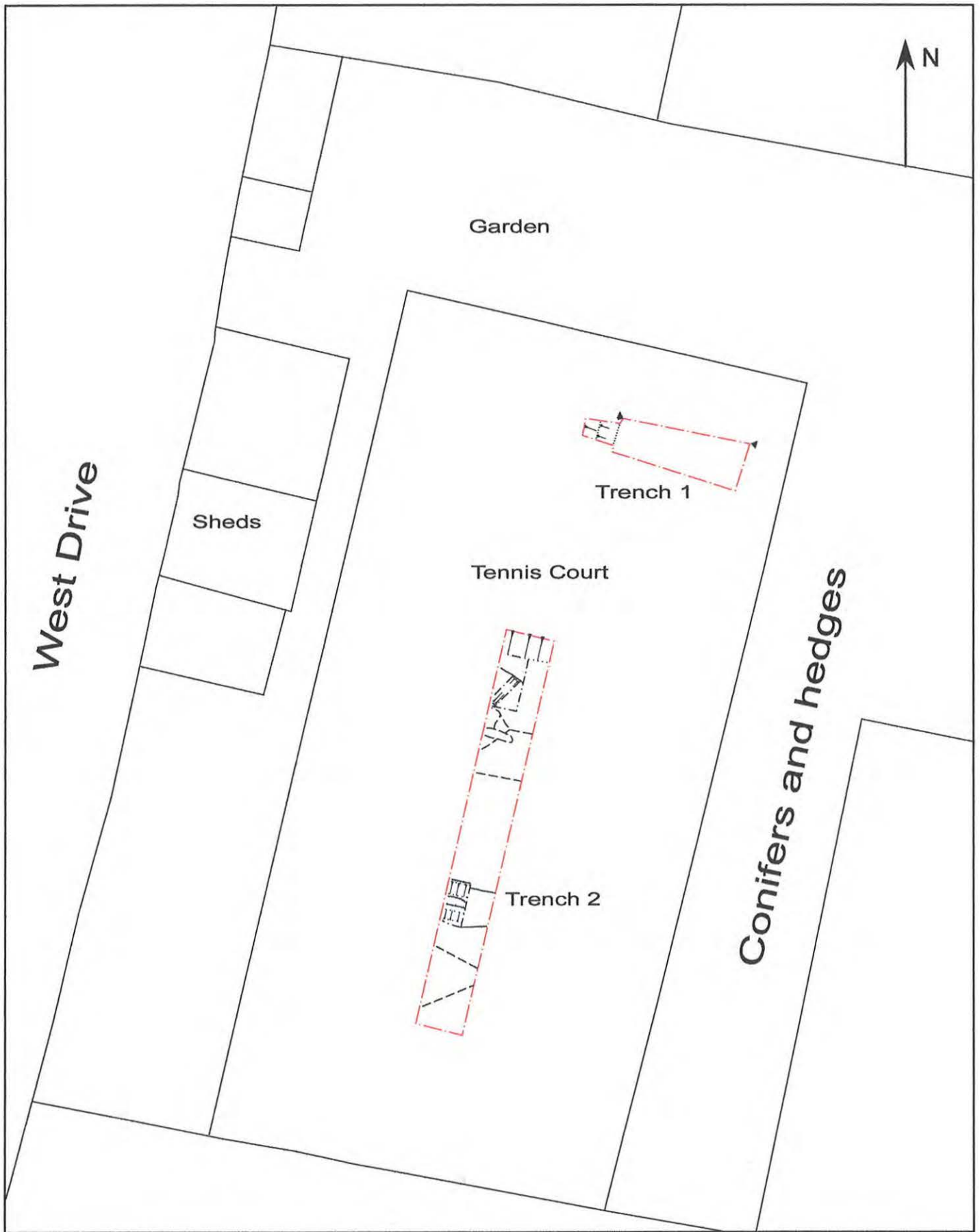
Context	Trench	Artefact	No Artefacts	Weight (g)	Notes
2	Tr.1	Pot	2	11	14 th -17thC
2	Tr.2	Foreign stone	1	88	Red sandstone. Worked
3	Trs. 1 and 2	Pot	9	68	?C3+
9	Tr.2	Pot	8	115	3C-4C
9	Tr.2	Bone	5	72	
2	Tr.2	CBM	1	11	
2	Tr.2	Pot	3	23	Roman; 17 th -19thC
2	Tr.2	Bone	5	46	
2	Tr.2	Fe obj.	1	21	nail
2	Tr.2	Stone	1	558	Sample of burnt limestone
7	Tr.2	Pot	49	714	late 4C
7	Tr.2	Bone	7	388	Includes mandibles. Some butchery on long bones
7	Tr.2	Foreign stone	1	47	Light brown chert, with small area of cortex retained. Snapped although one edge may be worked



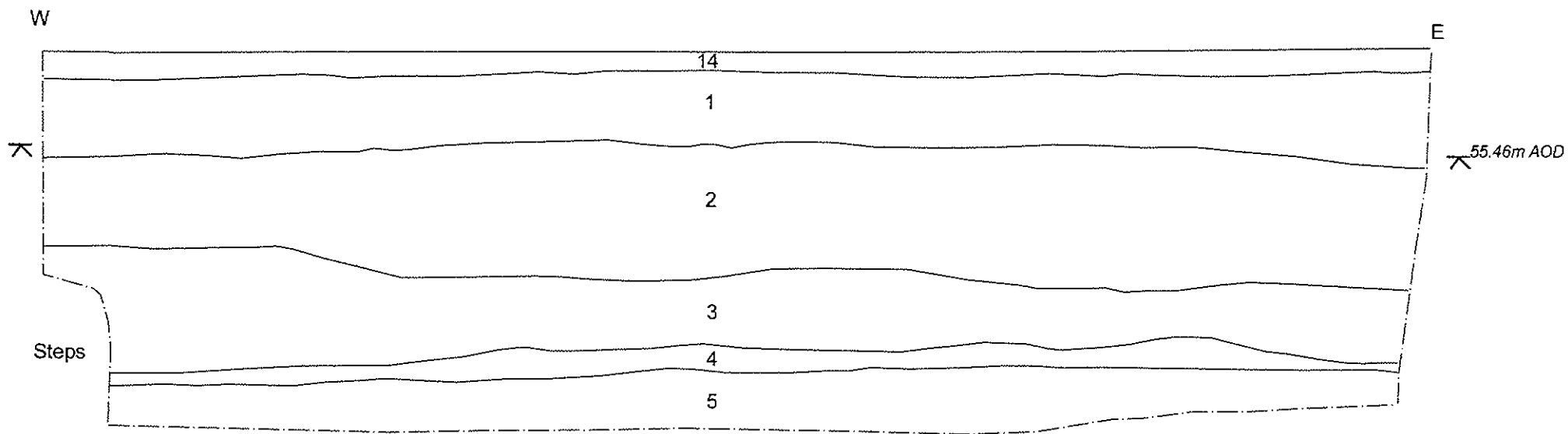
98-100 Evesham Road, Cheltenham

Figure 1: Location Plan (Scale 1:2500)

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98-100 Evesham Road, Cheltenham
Figure 2: Trench location plan (Scale 1:200)



98-100 Evesham Road, Cheltenham

Figure 3: Trench 1, south-facing section (Scale 1:20)

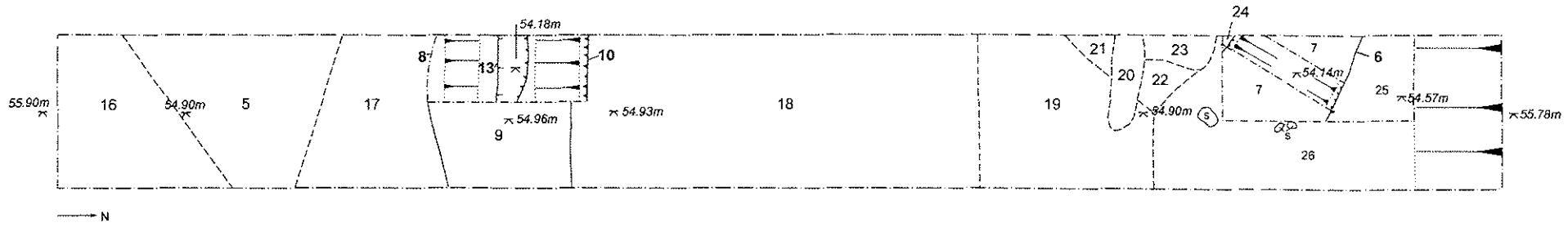


Figure 4a: Plan of Trench 2 (Scale 1:50)

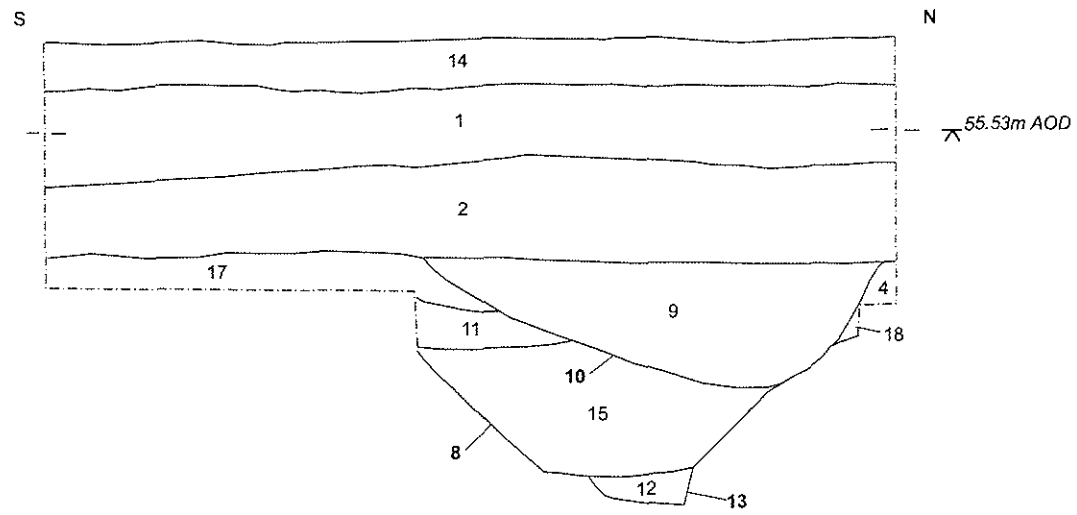


Figure 4b: Trench 2, east-facing section through ditch [13]/[8]/[10]. (Scale 1:20)

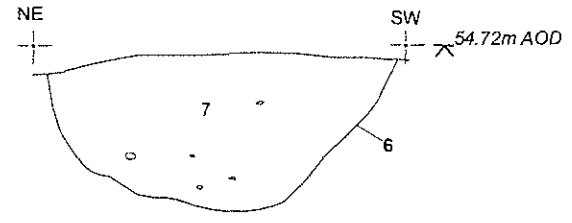


Figure 4c: South-east facing section through ditch [6]. (Scale 1:20)