

99/21



LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

**Burgh-le-Marsh Primary School  
Groundworks for a Classroom Extension**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**NGR: TF 4990 6489  
Site Code BMP 99  
LCNCC Museum Accn. No. 124.99**

**Report prepared for  
Lincolnshire County Council**

**November 1999**

**LAS Report No. 367**

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Event LI933

43810 - Early med - present

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43813 - LIA/RB.



## Contents

### List of Figures and Plates

Summary	1
Introduction	1
The Application Site	1
Archaeological Background	1
The Watching Brief	2
Conclusion	3
Acknowledgements	4
Archive Summary	4
Appendix 1: Context List	



## List of Figures

- Fig. 1** Location of Burgh-le-Marsh. (Inset C based on the 1993 Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 Landranger map Sheet 122. Crown Copyright, reproduced at enlarged scale with the permission of the Controller of HMSO. LAS Licence No. AL 50424A).
- Fig. 2** Wainfleet Road, Burgh-le-Marsh (reproduced from the Ordnance Survey 1906 1:2,500 map, not to original scale).
- Fig. 3** Burgh-le-Marsh School, showing the position of the monitored groundworks (based on a plan supplied by the developer).
- Fig. 4** Plan of archaeological features revealed by the classroom extension (McDaid and Tann).
- Fig. 5** Section through deposits in Ditch 7: a) as seen in the rear wall trench; b) in the drain trench south of the new classroom (McDaid and Tann).

## List of Plates

- PI. 1 Site of the classroom extension, after removal of tarmac surface (looking NE).
- PI. 2 Sequence of deposits in the NE corner of the extension.
- PI. 3 Sand deposits at the northern edge of the extension (looking NW).
- PI. 4 Sand deposits extending across part of the extension area, replaced by clay in the southern part (looking SW).
- PI. 5 Clay fill 4 at the southern edge of the sand (foreground).
- PI. 6 Red/brown fill 4 within ditch 7, revealed along the eastern trench of the classroom extension. The clean sand (right foreground) may be undisturbed natural or an inclusion within the fill. Looking NE.
- PI. 7 The existing topography east of ditch 7 is probably the result of modern landscaping (looking east).
- PI. 8 Western edge of ditch 7 (dark soil to right of sand peak) with unidentified feature 8 to the north (looking east).
- PI. 9 Southern foundation trench of the classroom extension, with the sand peak (centre) marking the western edge of ditch 7. Looking east.
- PI. 10 Location of the cleared of topsoil for a new hardplay area, SW of the classrooms. Looking north.
- PI. 11 A medieval pot sherd was found at the base of the topsoil SW of the classrooms. No archaeological features were present on this part of the site. Looking west.
- PI. 12 Part of the new drain trench south of the classroom extension. The red/brown clay 3 (base of trench at far end) marks the western edge of ditch 7, with the lighter mixed material (below bucket) representing fill of the ditch.



**Burgh-le-Marsh Primary School**  
**Archaeological Watching Brief**  
**during Groundworks for a Classroom Extension**  
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**Summary**

*An archaeological watching brief during topsoil removal on the site of an extension to the school identified a feature thought to represent a ditch, containing prehistoric worked flints, Beaker-type pottery, Late Iron Age/Romano-British pottery and a possible sherd of eleventh-thirteenth century pottery. The ditch appeared to cut across the edge of a natural clay-filled depression within the surrounding sand. The edge of another feature was also identified.*

**Introduction**

Lindsey Archaeological Services (LAS) was commissioned in May 1999 by Lincolnshire County Council to conduct an archaeological watching brief during topsoil removal and groundworks for a new classroom extension SE of the existing school buildings off Wainfleet Road, Burgh-le-Marsh (Figs. 1-3).

Groundworks were monitored by G. Tann on 27th-28th May, and on 1st-2nd September 1999.

**The Application Site**

The planning consent was for a new classroom, with external groundworks including a brick barrier wall, an access ramp, hard-standing area and replacement drains. The extension lies to the SE of the previous Primary School buildings, 50m east of Wainfleet Road, on the western edge of Burgh-le-Marsh village (Fig. 3).

**Archaeological Background**

Mesolithic microlith cores and flakes were found during 1933 excavations at the nearby Cock Hill, but these had probably been introduced at a later date with the soil used to construct the mound.

Possible Late Iron Age routes have been identified apparently aligned towards Burgh-le-Marsh, mostly parallel to the modern coastline on the high land of the Wolds. The Bluestone Heath Road, thought to fossilise the course of a prehistoric trackway, diverges from the Caistor High Street (now B1125) and runs towards Burgh-le-Marsh along chalk ridges. Barton Street (another possible prehistoric route which runs along the eastern scarp of the Wolds, linking Barton on Humber with Alford) may have continued to Burgh-le-Marsh.

It is probable that the prehistoric and Roman road network linking the Lincolnshire Marsh with Lincoln and the Humber developed in response to a contemporary salt industry. Middle and Late Iron Age, and Roman, salterns have been recorded beneath flood sediments NE of Burgh-le-Marsh and



numerous others may await detection. No reliable date has been obtained for the cessation of the salt-making but it may have been during the early Roman period. Observation of water main trenches, sewer and electricity trenches since then (and particularly after the 1930s excavation of Cock Hill) has produced a number of records of Romano-British finds in Burgh le Marsh.

The town is known to have been a Roman settlement of some importance, perhaps as a port. The Ordnance Survey now mark the course of a Roman road from Lincoln, via Ulceby Cross, coinciding with the present A158 NE of Burgh-le-Marsh church.

The mound at Cock Hill was partly excavated in 1933 by Rev. Swalwell and found to contain part of a human burial, and a copper alloy buckle slide of late 6th or early 7th century date. Other Saxon finds from Burgh-le-Marsh (including pottery from north of the settlement, metalwork from cable trenches and coins from the Barnack Estate) attest to occupation and possibly to burials.

#### **The Watching Brief** (Figs. 4 and 5)

Context numbers were assigned by LAS for the recording of cut features, fills and soil layers identified during groundworks. These numbers were used on finds and on the plan and section drawings included in this report. A list of contexts is provided (Appendix 1). Dimensions are those of the surviving features, after removal of topsoil.

The area of the new building was stripped of tarmac and rubble prior to the commencement of monitoring (Pl. 1). After completion of the stripping, foundation trenches for the new building were excavated with a 0.6m toothed bucket to the required depth. The watching brief took place in good ground and lighting conditions.

Clearance of the extension site revealed that the previous school hard play area had been constructed over a topsoil layer 1 (surviving to a thickness of about 0.15m), preserving the stratigraphic sequence of the site (Pl. 2).

On the northern side of the extension, the topsoil layer overlay a 0.1m thick mixed clay subsoil layer, interpreted as a disturbed form of 4, with grey/brown sand 2 and yellow sand 5 below (Pls. 3 and 4). Within the extension itself, the topsoil sealed compact orange/brown clay loam 4, which extended across the area of the extension, forming the mixed thin layer on the northern side. This layer produced eight friable and fragmentary sherds of pottery, a worked flint flake and a possible flint core, and a fragment of a pelvis from a pig or sheep (Pls. 4 and 5). The pottery assemblage contained two possibly Late Iron Age grog-tempered sherd fragments, three pieces of a Late Iron Age rim sherd, a grog-tempered Late Iron Age/Romano-British sherd, a sherd of first-century Romano-British rusticated ware, and an unglazed greensand sherd of indeterminate date (but probably eleventh-thirteenth century). All the pottery sherds were found in the centre, or in the SE of the stripped area.



The colour of layer 4 was darker than the apparently undisturbed orange clay 3 which it overlay in the SW part of the site, but it is probable that 4 represents material from an upcast bank produced from a ditch 7 excavated through 3 (Pl. 6).

Along the eastern edge of the site, layer 4 was 0.65m thick and formed the fill of a SW-NE ditch 7 (Pls. 6-8). The small area of ditch 7 exposed was insufficient to obtain much information about its shape and size. The trench section to the SE of the new building indicated a probable depth of about 1.2m below modern ground level, with an additional mixed zone beneath it probably caused by nutrients leaching into the underlying sand (Fig. 5a). It was impossible to determine whether higher patches of clean sand near the trench base marked shallower parts of the feature or were the result of differential leaching. There remains a possibility that 4 was filling at least two features, and/or that ditch 7 changed alignment close to the SE corner of the extension (Pl. 9). The centre of the ditch is thought to have lain within the excavated eastern trench, but its total width, although over 1.5m, was not revealed.

At the northern end of the exposure of ditch 7, a small part of another feature 8 was seen at the edge of the foundation trench. This feature was about 0.35m deep, and filled with 9, a compact clay loam similar to 4. Insufficient of this feature was visible to allow its shape to be determined.

A second phase of groundworks was monitored several months later, when another area of topsoil was removed to the SW of the extension (Pls. 10 and 11). Although one sherd of late-medieval Toynton/Bolingbroke type pottery jug handle was found on the stripped surface beneath buried topsoil 1, no features were seen. A modern soakaway and its associated drain channels had disturbed part of the new area stripped.

During the visit to inspect the topsoil removal, it was found that a 0.25m thick brick barrier wall had been built to the north and east of the extension since the previous visit. The foundation trench for this structure had probably disturbed more of ditch 7, but the groundworks had not been monitored. A 1.5m length of replacement drain trench was to be excavated at the SE corner of the extension, and this operation was monitored in case it revealed more information about the extent of the ditch.

Within the drain trench, the western edge of ditch 7 was revealed in conditions unsuitable for good definition or recording (Pl. 12). Two distinct deposits, probably fills, sloped downwards towards the east (Fig. 5b). Both of these (4 and 6) were clayier in texture than the orange/brown sandy clay 3 to the west, which was again interpreted as probably of natural origin.

### Conclusion

The archaeological remains revealed during this watching brief were insufficient to allow any detailed interpretation of this site. Natural surface deposits in this vicinity were shown to be a white sand, possibly from dunes.

Layer 3 could be the fill of a natural depression, formed by glacial action. The depression is unlikely to have been created by water as it is cut into the fine white sand. Local drainage would have been interrupted by the clay deposit, and ditch 7 may have served to link areas of better natural drainage.

It is probable that 4 was either an upcast bank beside ditch 7, that later slumped back into the ditch or was thrown back in, or was a deliberately introduced levelling material. Most of the finds appear to be residual material, perhaps indicating that the ditch had cut through previously cultivated land or other archaeological features. The contemporary ground surface may have been removed by medieval or later ploughing, although no plough furrows were seen.

The wide date range of artefacts from this feature suggests that this part of Burgh-le-Marsh had been occupied since the Bronze Age, but most of the sherds were scraps too abraded to suggest that an occupation site lies immediately adjacent to the monitored area. However, this part of Burgh-le-Marsh clearly lay within the area exploited during the medieval period.

### **Acknowledgements**

LAS is grateful for the co-operation received from Lincolnshire County Council and their contractors Topcon Ltd. Further assistance was received from the Lincolnshire County Archaeological Section and the Headteacher and staff of Burgh-le-Marsh School.

Specialist identification of finds was by Jane Young and Barbara Precious. The illustrations were prepared by Mick McDaid and Geoff Tann, and the report was collated and produced by Jane Frost.

Geoff Tann  
Lindsey Archaeological Services  
26th November 1999

### **Archive Summary**

Correspondence

Archaeological finds: pottery

Specialists' archive lists

Developer's plans and annotated copies

Field plan and section drawings

Photographs: LAS colour print film nos. 99/32/28a-35a; 99/82/1-18; 99/133/25-27 (including those used in this report).



# Appendix 1

## Context List

Context No.	Description	Finds	Date
1	Dark brown/grey clay loam topsoil	1 sherd Toynton/Bolingbroke pottery; 14th/15th century	post-medieval/modern
2	grey/brown sand, below 3, above 5.	no finds	
3	?Natural fill of depression 3, cut by 7. Orange/red - red/brown clay loam, with varying sand content.	no finds	
4	Upper fill of ditch 7, forming thin spread to west of ditch. Red/brown clay loam with small stones. Above 6.	1 sherd Beaker pottery; 3 sherds Iron Age; 1 sherds 1st century AD Romano-British; 1 sherd ?11th-13th century pottery. 2 fragments pig/sheep bone; 1 flint ?core; 1 worked flint flake.	?medieval or later
5	yellow sand below 2.	no finds	
6	Lower fill of ditch 7. Red/brown sandy clay, with stones. Below 4.	no finds	
7	NE-SW aligned ditch, at least 3m wide. Depth uncertain, at least 0.6m. Cuts 3, filled by 4 and 6.		?medieval or later
8	Edge of feature. Cuts 2, filled by 9, no relationship visible with ditch 7. ?Pit.		
9	Fill of 8. Red/brown sandy clay loam.	no finds	
10	Natural Depression, filled by 3.		natural
11	Modern tarmac surface, seals 12.		modern
12	Modern brick rubble and soil, below 11, above 1.		mid-twentieth century

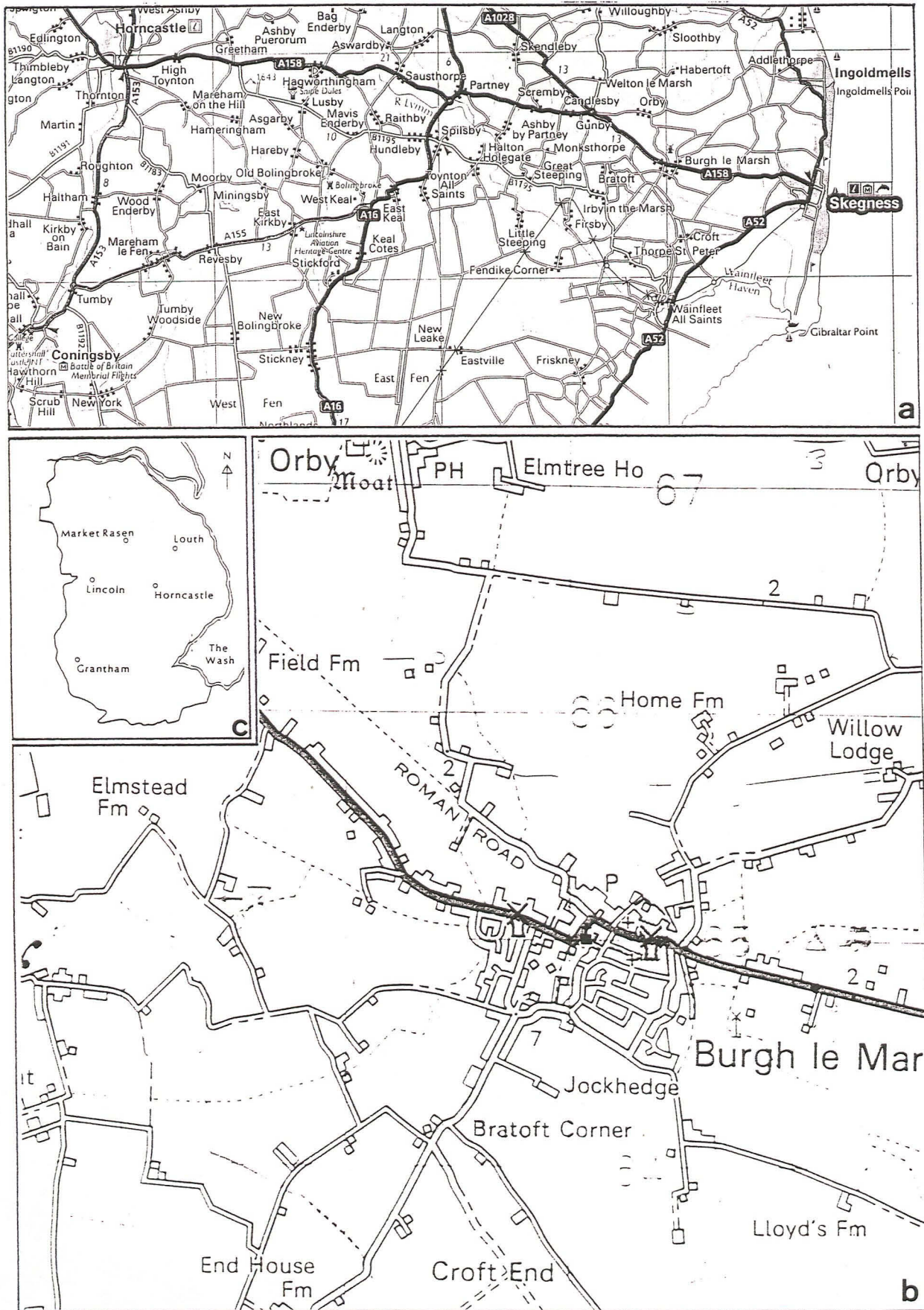


Fig. 1 Location of Burgh-le-Marsh. (Inset C based on the 1993 Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 Landranger map Sheet 122. Crown Copyright, reproduced at enlarged scale with the permission of the Controller of HMSO. LAS Licence No. AL 50424A).



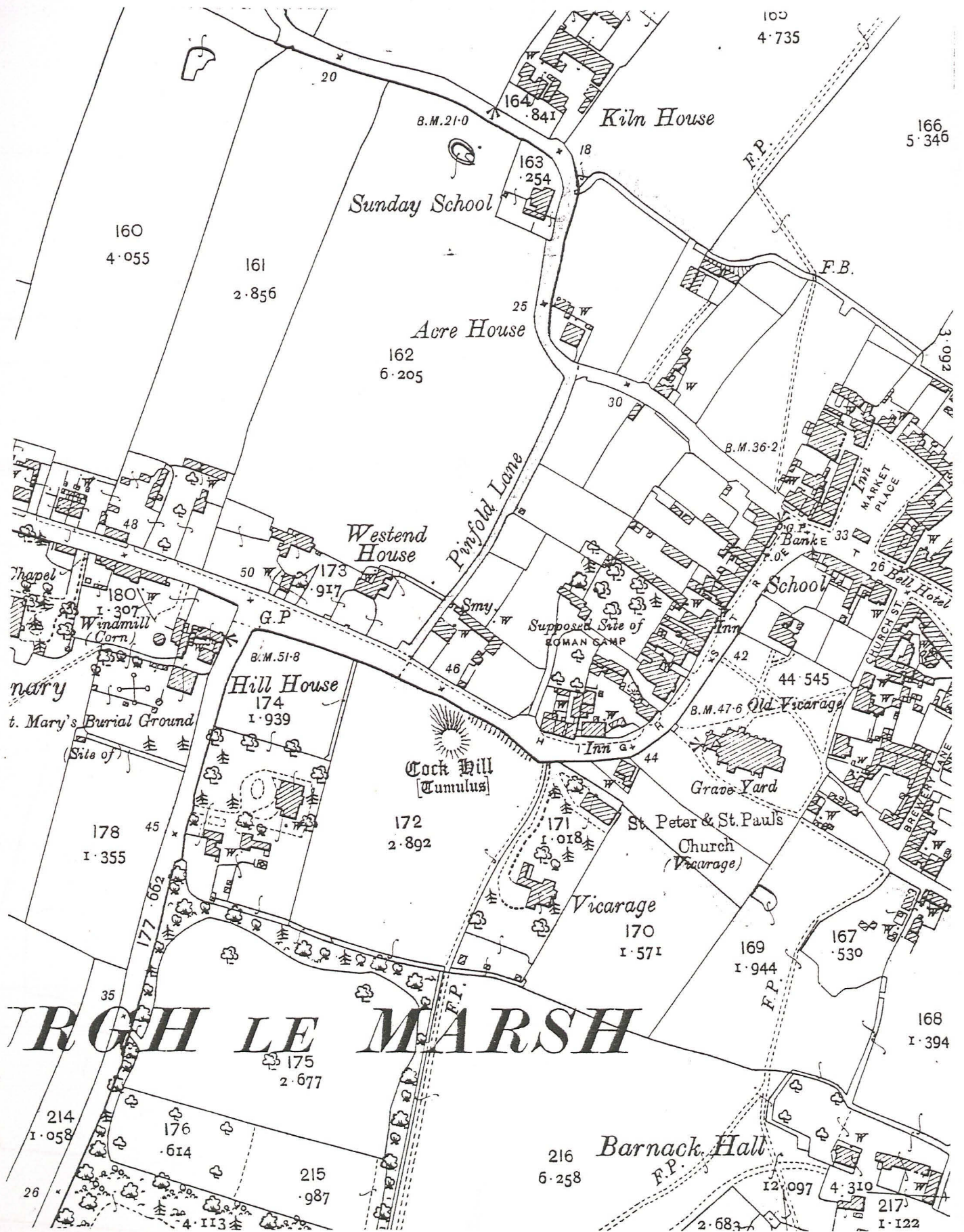


Fig. 2 Wainfleet Road, Burgh-le-Marsh (reproduced from the Ordnance Survey 1906 1:2,500 map, not to original scale).



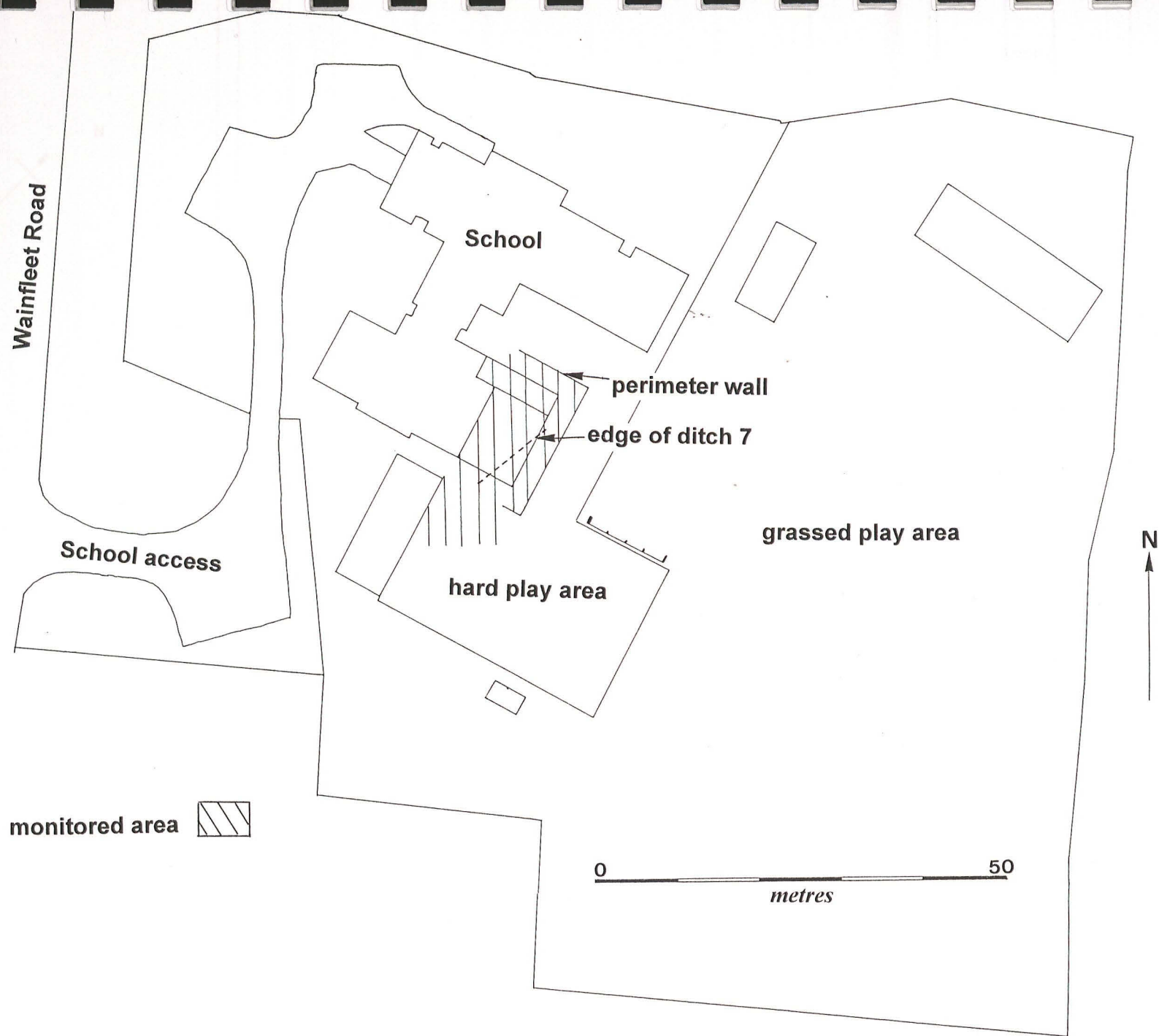


Fig. 3 Burgh-le-Marsh School, showing the position of the monitored groundworks (based on a plan supplied by the developer).

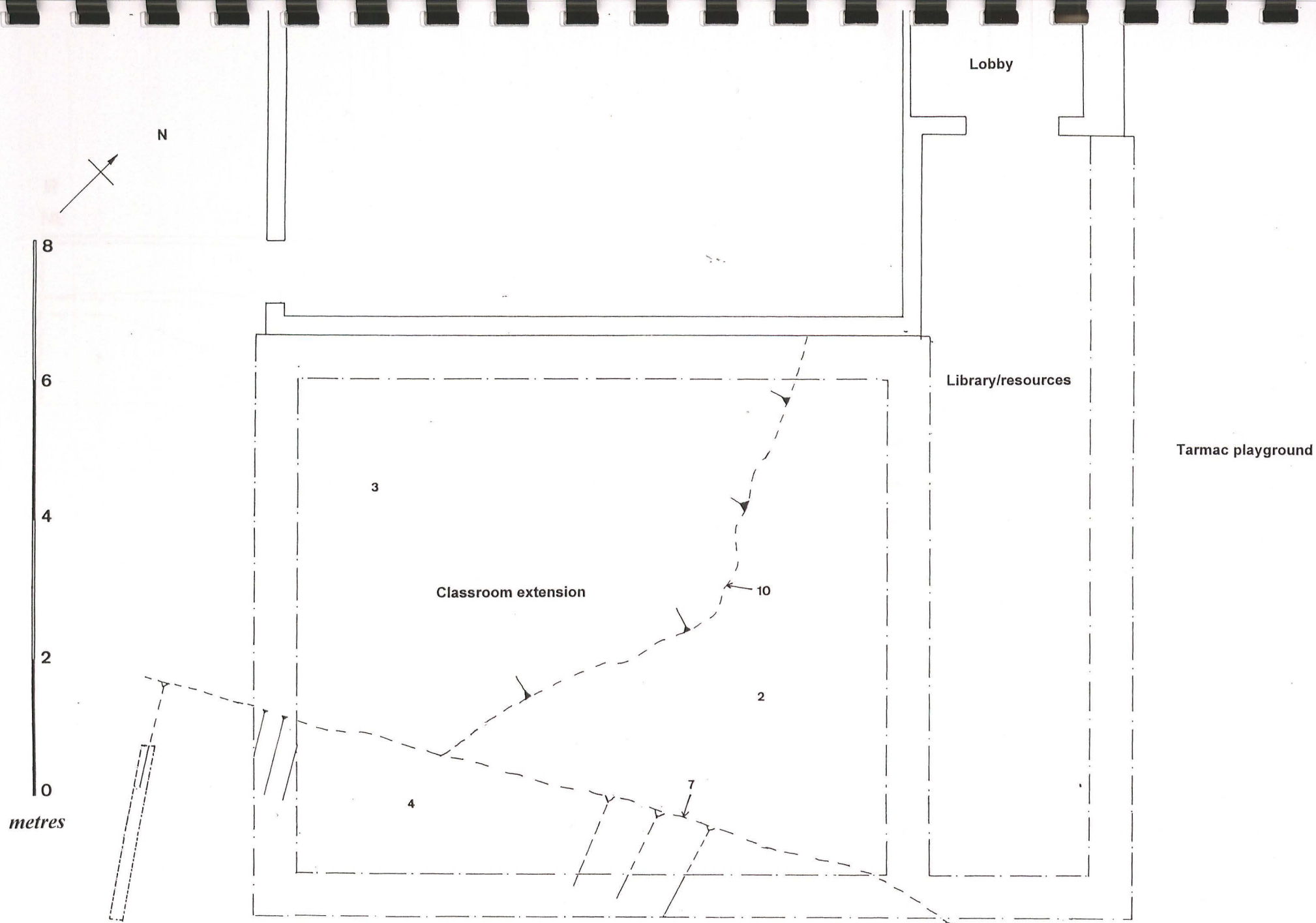
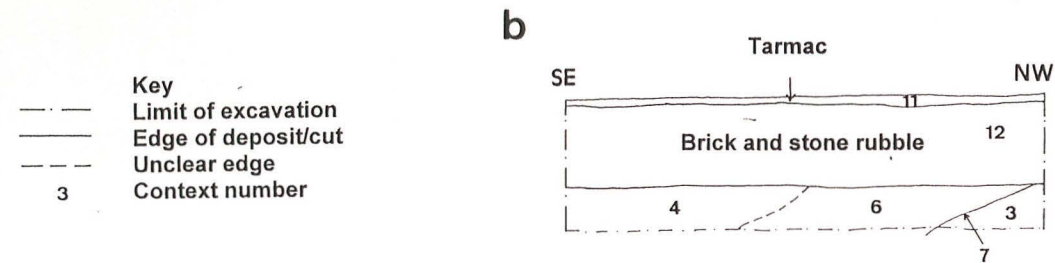
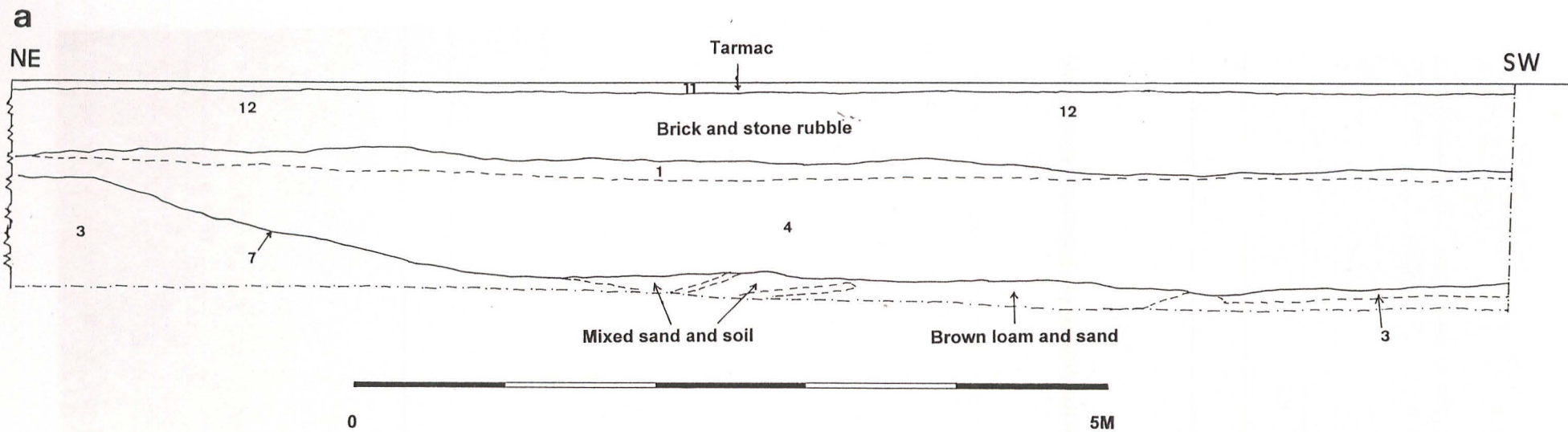


Fig. 4 Plan of archaeological features revealed by the classroom extension (McDaid and Tann).



Key

--- Limit of excavation

— Edge of deposit/cut

- - - Unclear edge

3 Context number

Fig. 5 Section through deposits in Ditch 7: a) as seen in the rear wall trench; b) in the drain trench south of the new classroom (McDaid and Tann).





PI. 1 Site of the classroom extension, after removal of tarmac surface (looking NE).





Pl. 2 Sequence of deposits in the NE corner of the extension.

Pl. 3 Sand deposits at the northern edge of the extension (looking NW).







**Pl. 4 Sand deposits extending across part of the extension area, replaced by clay in the southern part (looking SW).**





**Pl. 5** Clay fill 4 at the southern edge of the sand (foreground).

**Pl. 6** Red/brown fill 4 within ditch 7, revealed along the eastern trench of the classroom extension. The clean sand (right foreground) may be undisturbed natural or an inclusion within the fill. Looking NE.







**Pl. 7** The existing topography east of ditch 7 is probably the result of modern landscaping (looking east).





**Pl. 8** Western edge of ditch 7 (dark soil to right of sand peak) with unidentified feature 8 to the north (looking east).

**Pl. 9** Southern foundation trench of the classroom extension, with the sand peak (centre) marking the western edge of ditch 7. Looking east.







PI. 10 Location of the cleared of topsoil for a new hardplay area, SW of the classrooms. Looking north.

PI. 11 A medieval pot sherd was found at the base of the topsoil SW of the classrooms. No archaeological features were present on this part of the site. Looking west.







**PI. 12 Part of the new drain trench south of the classroom extension. The red/brown clay 3 (base of trench at far end) marks the western edge of ditch 7, with the lighter mixed material (below bucket) representing fill of the ditch.**