

43302 - Prehist  
43303 - Med  
43695 - Early Med  
43696 - Post Med  
95/9  
EVLS961

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# LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

FRANCIS HOUSE SILVER BIRCH PARK GREAT NORTHERN TERRACE LINCOLN LN5 8LG

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## Alford, John Spendluffe School:

### Archaeological Watching Brief during groundworks for a New Sports Hall

*NGR: TF 4574 7571*

Site Code: **ASH 95**  
LCNCC Museum Accn. No. **5.95**  
Planning Application No. N3/1021/94

Report prepared for Land and Buildings Consultancy

**September 1995**

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**Summary**

*A watching brief during groundworks for the Sports Hall found no conclusive evidence to confirm or reject the tradition of a prehistoric burial mound on the site. 2 worked flints were found but no prehistoric pottery. Seven fragments of medieval pottery found in the footing trenches included 4 sherds which had become worn in water. Part of 5 features thought to be pits (of no known function) were exposed; although no secure dating was obtained, these were probably backfilled after the medieval period.*

**Introduction**

Lindsey Archaeological Services (LAS) was commissioned by Land and Buildings Consultancy to undertake a watching brief during groundworks for a new Sports Hall building at the John Spendluffe School, Hanby Lane, Alford (Fig. 1). The work involved monitoring ground clearance and the mechanical excavation of trench foundations for the 33m x 18m building. A project brief was prepared by the Lincolnshire County Archaeology Section in September 1994 in response to a condition on the Planning Consent (N3/1021/94).

Fieldwork, by the author and Naomi Field, started on 9th March 1995 and continued intermittently until April 18th. 9 monitoring visits were made.

**Archaeological Background**

The John Spendluffe School (previously Alford Secondary Modern School) lies outside the present, and medieval, core of Alford at the edge of the marine silts of the Lincolnshire Marsh (Figs. 2 and 3). The land to the east is fairly level and low-lying, but the school buildings are sited on a pronounced higher area (Pl. 2). The earliest Ordnance Survey map (OS 1824) marked a prehistoric burial mound on the site of the school, slightly south of the construction site, but this interpretation is uncertain and has been omitted on more recent editions including the earliest 6 inch survey (OS 1891; Fig. 2). The same source marked another 'tumulus' about 1km to the west on land occupied in 1964 solely by medieval ridge and furrow cultivation marks (OS Record Card; copy held by LAS). One of the aims of the watching brief was to record evidence for a natural hill on the site, or to determine the date of any artificial mound.

Prehistoric finds from the vicinity include an Early Bronze Age axe hammer found by a schoolboy in 1962 (about 450m NE), and a polished stone axe found in 1969 (near the Wold Grift Drain, about 250m NW of the Sports Hall location). Another 'stone battle axe' from the school site is probably a

duplication of the schoolboy's find. The only reported Roman artefact from nearby was a single pottery sherd from New Cemetery, 250m SW .

### **The Watching Brief**

The building design consisted of pillar bases connected by trench foundations (Fig. 4). The site plan used by the contractors identified pillar base positions by rows and columns (1-8; A-D) and the same numeration has been used in this report (Sheard 1995). Context numbers were assigned to archaeological observations or findspots.

Before groundworks began, the site consisted of the western edge of the grassed playing field, sloping up abruptly to an area of tarmac formerly used as part of the school playground (Pl. 3). Foundations of a demolished changing room occupied the south west corner of the site (Pl. 4).

The turf and topsoil were stripped at the eastern edge of the site to the tarmac edge. Trenching began with the eastern wall of the new building, after which the southern wall and its internal trenches were excavated (Pls. 5 and 6). The western wall was then trenched (encountering water) followed by the northern side. When construction had begun, the interior was levelled for the floor to be laid (Pl. 7).

### **Observation 1 (A8)**

In the SE corner the turf and topsoil layer (up to 0.19m thick where it sloped to the tarmac) overlay 0.32m of coarse brown loam above 0.2m of very light brown silt. Two layers of gritty boulder-clay were present; an upper red layer 0.4m thick and a lower layer at least 0.2m thick (Pl. 8).

The grass sloped up from A8 for 2.7m before reaching the tarmac surface (Pl. 9). Here the upper stratigraphy consisted of a thin rolled surface above 0.08m of asphalt, based on 0.15m of chalk lumps mixed with orange clay loam, imported to the site as hardcore. The former topsoil survived below the chalk, retaining impressions of compressed vegetation.

### **Observations 2-8 and 11: Topsoil Finds**

One water-worn sherd of late medieval pottery (2) was found 0.1m deep below the turf in the topsoil between A6 and A7. Other finds from the topsoil included:

- 3 a flint, discarded as unworked;
- 4 a decorated 13th/14th century pottery jug sherd from a Toynton All Saints kiln;
- 5 a rim fragment, too worn to be identified; a flint, discarded as unworked;
- 6 post-medieval brick fragment (discarded)
- 7 one water-worn sherd and another unidentifiable tiny sherd fragment
- 8 a very small late Anglo-Saxon or medieval sherd
- 10 pottery base sherd in the fill of Pit 10
- 11 a flint end-scraper in topsoil by A1

### **Observation 9 : Subsoil Finds**

**9** A second worked flint was found in the orange subsoil below the asphalt on the southern side of the area.

### **Pit 10**

An extensive feature was revealed in the trench faces in the SW part of the site (Pls. 10-13). Upon investigation, a water-worn pottery base sherd was found well stratified, 0.15m below the top of the backfilled feature (Fig. 5). This sherd was initially identified to be of Romano-British date but may be medieval; insufficient survives for a satisfactory identification.

The feature had cut orange sandy subsoil and was filled with a silty clay of dark brown or green hue, easily distinguished when the topsoil and later disturbances were removed. The southern limit of the backfilled feature was recorded in C8, but attempts to locate precisely the full extent were thwarted by the demolished foundations and the manner in which the Sports Hall was constructed (Fig. 6). The western edge was identified at the western edge of D7 and D8 and the northern edge cut between D6 and D7 (Pl. 14). Glimpses of the eastern side were seen in C7 and slightly east of C8 (Pl. 15). If these observations were of the same feature, the sub-circular pit was about 7m diameter and 0.65m deep. Its sides sloped sharply to a fairly flat base.

### **Observation 12**

Two fragments of fired clay (possibly brick) and a piece of daub with an impression were found between D7 and D8 in the top of the exposed green/brown loam fill of Pit 10.

### **Pit 13**

The western end of another pit-like feature was exposed in D5 and D6, but not revealed elsewhere (Pl. 16). A peak of orange subsoil visible after the interior of the new building was lowered restricts its possible extent, and it is likely that it was of similar size to Pit 10. The pits were separated by about 1m and may have been carefully aligned on at least their western side, suggesting that these were contemporary.

As recorded in the foundation trench, Pit 13 was 7m wide north-south and 0.35m deep. The edge dropped almost vertically.

### **Pit 14**

A much shallower feature, thought to be linear and aligned east-west, was noted in the northern face of the trench between B8 and C8. It was initially interpreted as part of Pit 10, but later thought to be a separate feature containing a similar fill. The dimensions are unknown, but it was observed to be at least 2.5m west-east and 0.14m deep on its southern side. Orange subsoil was observed to the north and east, restricting its possible extent.



### **Pit 15**

Pit 15 was about 15m north-south and at least 5m east-west. Its northern edge was seen in the footing trench beside D2, separated from Pit 16 by 2.5m of undisturbed subsoil; the southern face clipped D5 (Pl. 17). This pit or pond continued to the west below the school wall; no clue as to the eastern extent was observed.

The feature fill was very similar to that in 10, varying in depth from 0.55m close to the school wall, to 0.2m deep further north (possibly the result of later disturbance).

### **Pit 16**

Part of the western end of an apparently narrow curvilinear feature, Pit 16, was seen in D1 at the NW limit of the construction area. At its west end it was about 2.5m north-south, extending eastwards 12.5m to B1, and it may have been aligned NE. Like feature 14, this feature also closely coincided with the limit of the tarmac surface but was not thought to be of recent date, although a brick fragment was found in its upper fill at B1. From the evidence at its SE corner (in B1) the southern side had a slight shelf or several disturbances filled with the same grey material (Pls. 18 and 19).

At the western end the stratigraphic sequence was

- 0.12m tarmac on top of 0.2m chalk rubble
- 0.2m black soil, probably 20th century topsoil
- 0.25m redeposited orange subsoil
- 0.7m grey river silt with small stones
- orange sandy clay at trench base (Pls. 20 and 21).

### **Observation 17**

During the watching brief it was noted that the pasture field to the north contained undulations which seemed regular (Fig. 3; Pl. 22). These are thought to reflect building foundations but there was no indication as to their date or function.

### **Conclusion**

Small peaks of orange subsoil surrounded by large areas of darker soil were identified from the trench faces or the stripped surface, delimiting the extent of disturbed ground; it is likely that a minimum of 5 depressions filled with similar soil were present. It was not easy to interpret the rather confused glimpses of disturbed ground revealed on this site, and an entirely different combination of activities may have produced the observed features. It does seem probable that the land had been considerably disturbed by human intervention after the development of the orange sandy clay subsoil, considerably after the glacial period, but no function is obvious for the features. From the incorporation of a pottery sherd and a daub fragment, it is likely that the hollows became entirely filled after the medieval period.

The worn, often apparently water-worn, condition of several medieval pottery sherds indicates post-depositional events before discarded domestic rubbish

became part of the topsoil layer. The hollows may have been linked with a small flowing water source, or material dredged from nearby water-courses may have been used to level the land.

The watching brief was able to record some information about the relative levels of the boulder-clay horizon across the site, thought to be the most reliable indicator as to whether the natural landscape had formed a hill on the school site. Levels taken before the works began showed a rise in the ground of about 1.5m between the playing field and the east side of the existing school building (LBC D602 K /103). This reflected an underlying rise of the upper surface of glacial boulder-clay of 1m between an undisturbed exposure in A8 and the base of Pit 15 by the school wall. The minimum slope of the prehistoric natural ground surface would have been 5% at this point.

The coincidence of the recorded extents of Pits 10, 13, 14 and 16 with the school building and the tarmac area was noted, and a slight possibility exists that they represent groundworks or borrow pits when the school was first built. The colour and texture of the fills seemed too distinct to support such late deposition, and the buried topsoil layer above did not appear to have been redeposited.

Although there were hints of some low level of archaeological activity beside the John Spendluffe School, there was no reason to suspect a prehistoric burial mound on the school's site from the evidence of this watching brief.

### **Acknowledgements**

LAS would like to thank Trevor Mundy (Land and Buildings Consultancy) and both Mr. Penney (Langwith Builders) and Mr. Church the Site Agent, for their co-operation. Considerable interest was expressed by the Headteacher, members of staff and pupils.

The fired clay was examined by Jenny Mann, and the pottery was identified by Jane Young and Judy Wilkinson (City of Lincoln Archaeology Unit). Flints were examined by Ian Brooks, Engineering Archaeological Services Ltd.

Geoff Tann  
Lindsey Archaeological Services  
11th September 1995

### **References**

- LBC D602 K /103 1994 *Site Plan of the Proposed Sports Hall, John Spendluffe Secondary School*. Land and Buildings Consultancy.
- OS 1824 1st edition 1 inch Ordnance Survey map
- OS 1891 1st edition 1:10,560 Ordnance Survey map, Sheet 66 NE
- Sheard 1995 *Foundation Details Plan, Proposed Sports Hall, John Spendluffe School*. Drawing No. 2142 / 01A. Sheard Partnership.

## Appendix 1

### **Lincolnshire County Sites and Monuments Record Summary**

<b>SMR</b>	<b>NGR. (all TF)</b>	<b>Description</b>
42535 O	4572 7566	?site of prehistoric burial mound, early 19th century. Also, stone battle axe (possibly duplication of 47539)
42549 S	458 754	Roman pottery sherd
42546 L	456 759	Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age polished stone axe, found 1969
47539 X	4602 7584	?Early Bronze Age stone 'axe-hammer' (see 42535)

## Appendix 2

### **Flint Artefacts from John Spendluffe School**

by I.P. Brooks (Engineering Archaeological Services Ltd)

#### **Findspot 9 (south of Pit 10)**

An end-scraper on the proximal end of a broken secondary flake. The tool was produced by a series of inverse, short scalar removals. The tool was on a translucent dark yellowish brown (10 YR 4.2) flint with eroded cortex, suggesting a derived source.

#### **Findspot 11**

An end scraper on the distal end of a tertiary flake. The working edge was produced by a series of inverse, short to long, scalar and sub-parallel removals forming a slightly concaved end. The tool is on an opaque, greyish orange (10 YR 7.4) flint probably from a glacial till source.

### Appendix 3

## Pottery from John Spendluffe School

by Jane Young and Judy Wilkinson (City of Lincoln Archaeology Unit)

### ASH95 POST-ROMAN POTTERY ARCHIVE

Context	Ware	Sherds	Form	Comments
2	HUM	1	-	WELL WORN;? WATER WORN;BASE
4	TOY	1	JUG	FE STRIP DEC
5	MISC	1	-	WELL WORN;?WATERWORN;RIM
7	MISC	1	-	WELL WORN;? WATER WORN;? HUMB
7	UNGS	1	-	TINY FRAG;? ID
8	UNGS	1	-	TINY FRAG
10	TB	1	-	WELL WORN;?WATERWORN;BASE;?ID

### ASH95 POST-ROMAN POTTERY DATING ARCHIVE

Context	Earliest horizon	Latest horizon	Probable horizon
2	MH7	PMH2	-
4	MH5	MH6	-
5	MH1	PMH8	-
8	ASH11	MH7	-
7	ASH11	MH10	-
10	MH10	PMH8	-

#### fabric codes:

TB Toynton All Saints/ Bolingbroke kilns :mid 15th/mid 18th centuries  
Misc undated wares  
Hum Humber ware: mid 14th/late 16th centuries  
Ungs Unglazed greensand : late 10th/late 12th centuries  
Toy Toynton All Saints ware, Kiln 1 (Roses) ; early 13th-mid 14th century

#### date code ranges:

ASH11 late Saxon; late 10th century  
MH1 early medieval; early-mid 12th century  
MH5 medieval; early-late 13th century  
MH6 medieval; late 13th-mid 14th century  
MH7 late medieval; mid-late 14th century  
MH10 late medieval; mid-late 15th century  
PMH 2 early post-medieval; mid-late 16th century  
PMH 8 late post-medieval; early 18th - mid 18th century

ASH95: BULK FINDS

Context	Type	Count	Comments
12	FIRE	3	49GMS DIFF FABRIC;DAUBX1?

## **Archive Summary**

Developer's plans, annotated

Field section drawing

Photographs LAS Film No. 95/11 22-25

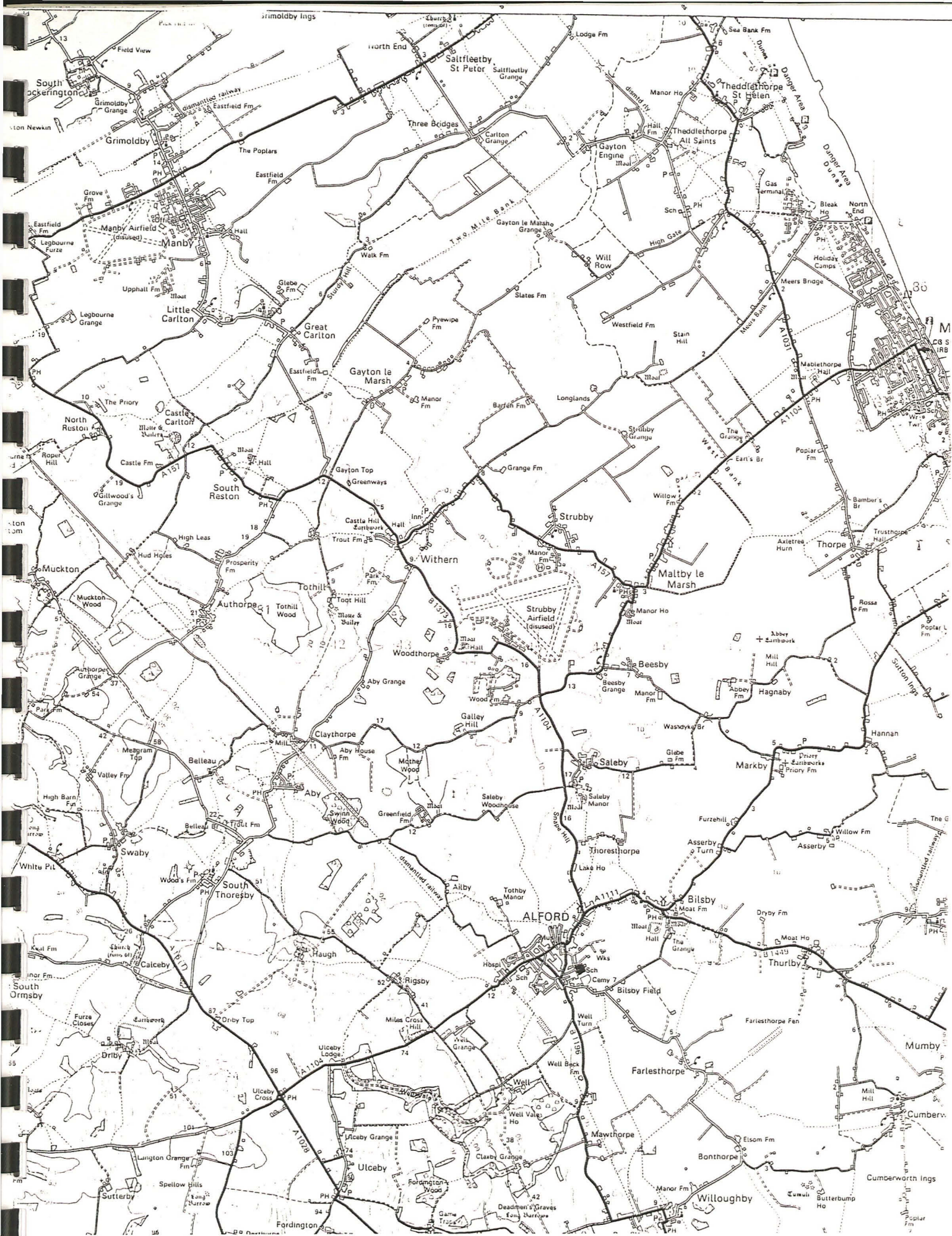
95/12 0A-22A; 24A-36A

### **Specialists' Reports:**

- Pottery
- Fired Clay
- Flints

### **Finds:**

- Pottery **2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10**
- Fired Clay **12**
- Flints **9, 11**



**Fig. 1** Location of John Spendluffe School (based on a reduced copy of the 1980 Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 map, Landranger Sheet 122. Crown Copyright; reproduced with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. AL 50424A)

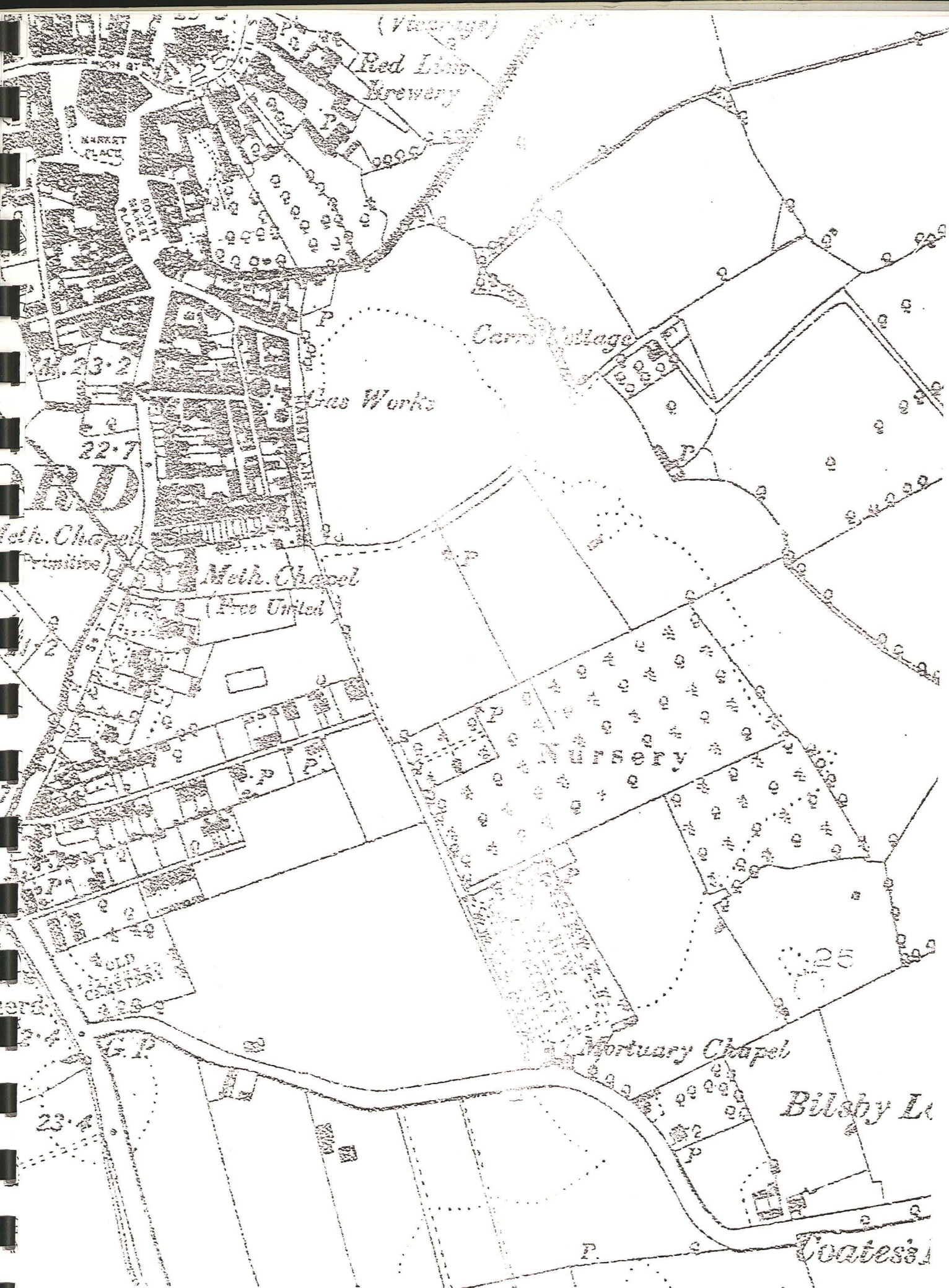
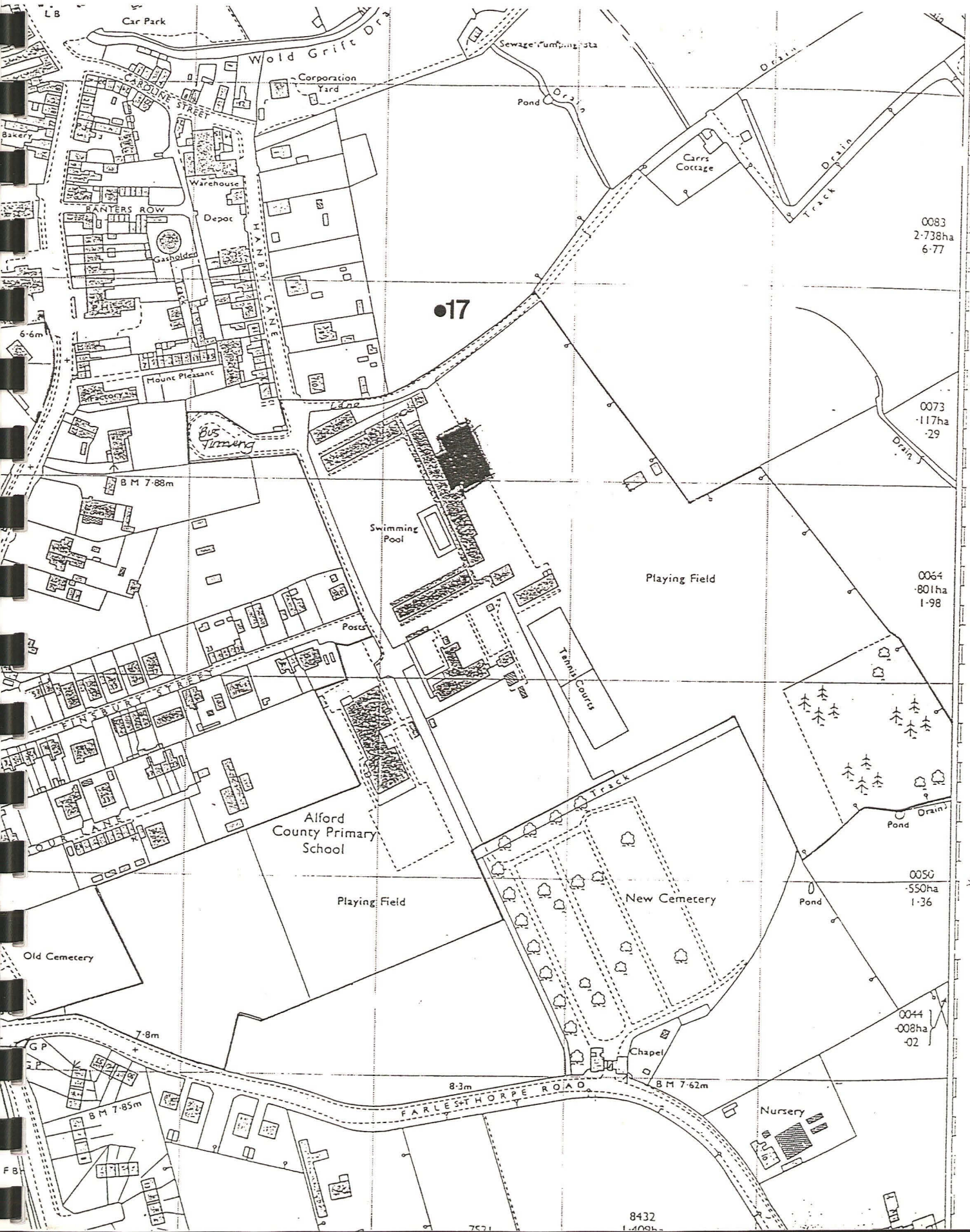


Fig. 2 OS 1891 1st edition 1:10,560 map, Sheet 66 NE (enlarged). Crown Copyright; reproduced with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. AL 50424A)



**Fig. 3 Position of the new Sports Hall (based on the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map. Crown Copyright; reproduced with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. AL 50424A)**



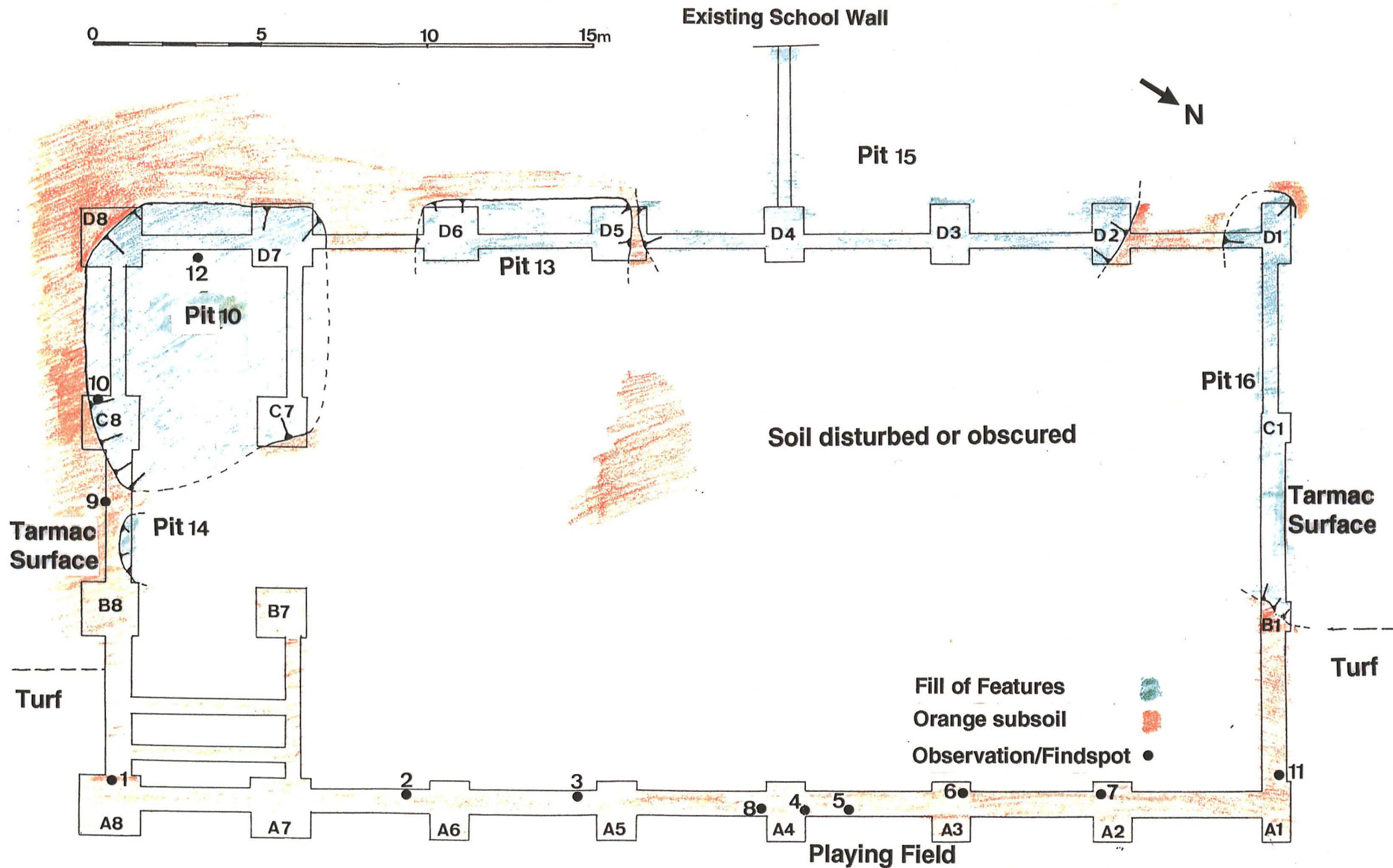


Fig. 4 Plan of the Foundation Trenches excavated for the new Sports Hall, showing archaeological features and findspots (after Sheard 1995)

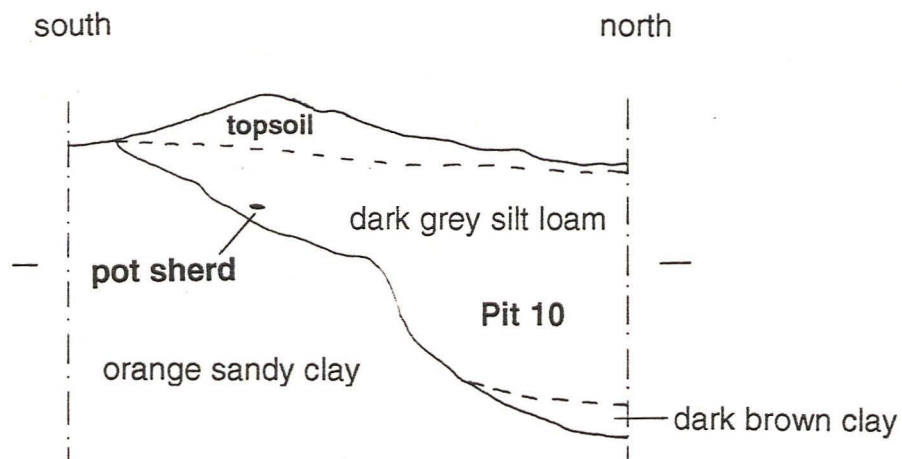


Fig. 5 Section across the southern edge of Pit 10, within the western face of C8 (G. Tann)

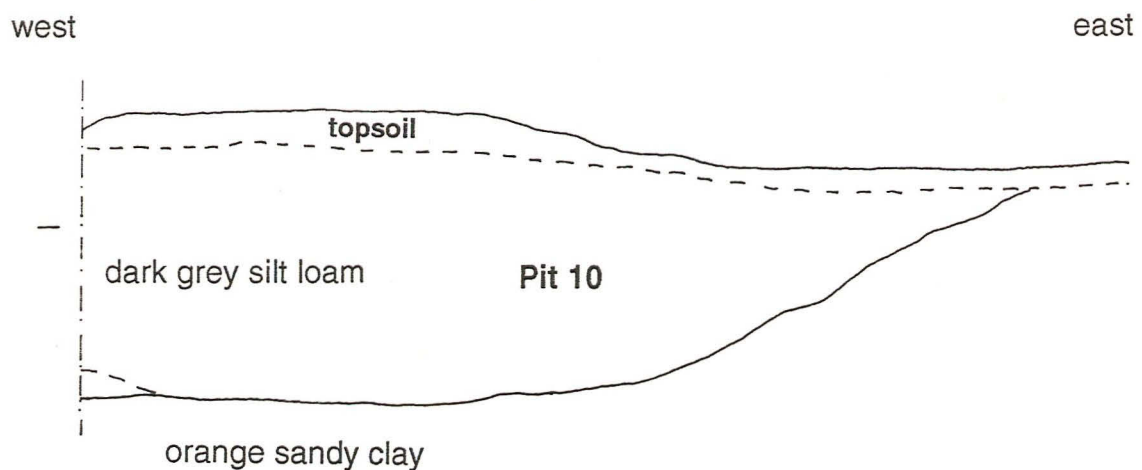


Fig. 6 Section across the eastern edge of Pit 10, within the northern face of C8 (G. Tann)



Pl. 1 Groundworks in progress at Sir John Spendluffe School. Modern brick rubble has been used to raise the ground in place of a former slope. Looking south.

Pl. 2 The turf and topsoil slope was removed before trenching began. (Looking north; scale divisions 0.2m).





Pl. 3 Surface of subsoil after removal of turf and topsoil; looking west to the school building with the tarmac playground on chalk rubble and buried topsoil. Scale divisions 0.2m).

Pl. 4 Foundations of demolished changing rooms. The dark fill of Pit 10 is visible in the foreground, with undisturbed orange subsoil to the left of the white chalk mark. Looking NW.





Pl. 5 The eastern wall trench with pillar positions at intervals. Looking north.

Pl. 6 The western wall trench, after concreting. Looking NW from D7.





PI. 7 Lowering of deposits within the new Sports Hall. The orange soil probably marks the limits of Pits 13 and 15. Looking NW from C7.

PI. 8 Stratigraphy at A8, with undisturbed subsoil overlying red boulder-clay. Looking west; scale divisions 0.2m.





PI. 9 Situation of A8 with tarmac area to west.

PI. 10 Dark soil of Pit 10 revealed in C8; looking west.

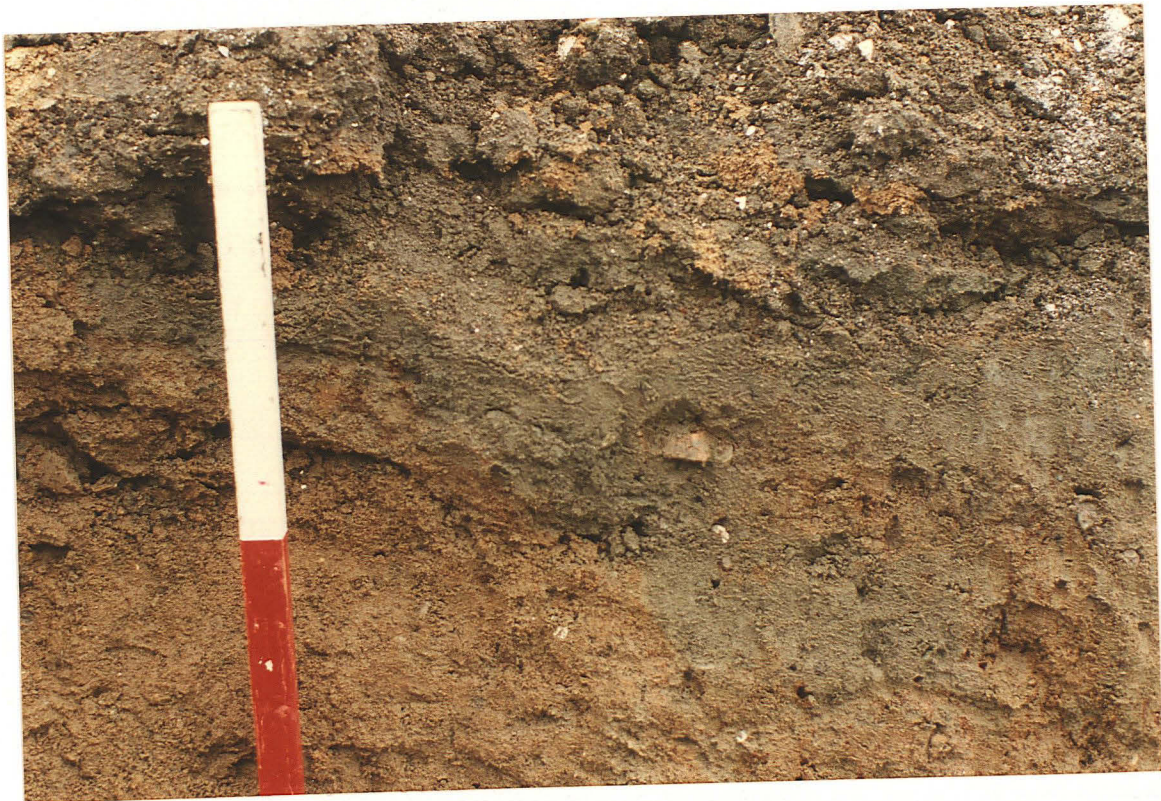






Pl. 11 Southern edge of Pit 10 in face of C8; looking west, scale divisions 0.2m.

Pl. 12 Detail of Pl. 11, showing pottery sherd within the fill of Pit 10.





Pl. 13 Composite view of the eastern edge of Pit 10; looking north from C8. Scale divisions 0.2m.



Pl. 14 The dark soil/orange subsoil interface marks the northern edge of Pit 10, looking NW from D7.

Pl. 15 NE edge of Pit 10, cut by the recent drain in C7. Looking NW.





Pl. 16 Thin peak of orange subsoil in D6 marking the almost vertical southern side of Pit 13. Looking south; scale divisions 0.2m.

Pl. 17 Southern limit of the fill of Pit 13 in D5, cutting red boulder-clay. Looking NW after concreting, scale divisions 0.2m.





PI. 18 Northern wall trench, with dark soil of Pit 16 crossing the left side. Looking NE.

PI. 19 SE edge of Pit 16, showing dark fill of the pit and other peripheral disturbances in B1. Looking west, scale divisions 0.2m.





Pl. 20 Pit 16 deepening below the trench base, with redeposited layers of subsoil forming its upper layers. Looking west from B1.

Pl. 21 Stratigraphy of Pit 16 in D1, with dark soil below redeposited material. Looking west.





**Pl. 22 Undulations thought to reflect foundations of unknown date in the pasture field north of the playing field. Looking north towards the sewage treatment works.**