

NEW PLATEAU CLASSROOMS AT BRYANSTON SCHOOL, BLANDFORD FORUM, DORSET (NGR ST 870 075)

(Planning ref. 2/2003/0403)

Results of an archaeological watching brief

Prepared by
D.J.M. Sykes BSc
with contributions from
M. Laidlaw BSc and Paul Martin BSc AIFA



AC
archaeology

Manor Farm Stables
Chicklade
Hindon
Near Salisbury
Wiltshire SP3 5SU

Report No. 5104/2/0
October 2004

Tel: (01747) 820581

e-mail: ac.archaeology@virgin.net

Fax: (01747) 820440

NEW PLATEAU CLASSROOMS AT BRYANSTON SCHOOL, BLANDFORD FORUM, DORSET (NGR ST 870 075)

(Planning ref. 2/2003/0403)

Results of an archaeological watching brief

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by AC archaeology in August 2004 during groundworks associated with the construction of new classrooms on land at Bryanston School, Blandford Forum, Dorset (ST 870 075).

Monitoring was undertaken during the machine-excavation of footings trenches, many of which contained pit and ditch-like features probably dating from the Bronze Age through to the Late Iron Age or Early Romano-British period. Finds recovered comprise mainly pottery, animal bone and worked and burnt flint, suggesting that an area of in situ settlement has been identified close to where previous discoveries of later prehistoric and Roman date have been made.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report sets out the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken during construction of new classrooms at Bryanston School, Blandford Forum, Dorset (NGR ST 870 075). The work, commissioned by the Denley King Partnership on behalf of Bryanston School, was carried out by AC archaeology during August 2004. The location of the site is shown on Fig.1.
- 1.2 The watching brief was carried out as a condition of planning permission (ref.2/2003/0403), required by North Dorset District Council, acting on the advice of the Senior Archaeologist (Development Control) Dorset County Council.
- 1.3 The development site is situated on a chalk outcrop, known as the Plateau, which is located immediately to the northwest of the main school building. The site lies at around 90mOD and the underlying solid geology consists of Upper Chalk.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Previous archaeological discoveries on the Plateau, immediately to the west of the present site, comprise a Romano-British inhumation burial and associated settlement evidence (RCHME 1970, 48). Finds recovered include native and traded pottery and coins.

3. METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The watching brief was undertaken in accordance with a specification prepared by AC archaeology (Valentin 2004), submitted to and approved by the Senior Archaeologist (Development Control), Dorset County Council, prior to commencement of groundworks.

- 3.2 Attendance during the work was *comprehensive* within the meaning of the term set out in the IFA standard for archaeological watching briefs Section 3. 2. 10:- ‘an archaeologist will be present during all groundworks’.
- 3.3 The work consisted of archaeological monitoring during the excavation of footings trenches for the new classrooms.
- 3.4 On site recording was carried out using detailed *pro forma* written records, digital photographs and where applicable, detailed section drawings at a scale of 1:20. The archive has been prepared using the site code AC 909.

4. RESULTS

4.1 The layer sequence

Excavation of footings trenches revealed a generally consistent soil layer sequence (Table 1), although thickness of particular layers was variable across the site. The layers recorded principally relate to modern landscaping that may be associated with the construction of other buildings nearby. Most archaeological features were only visible once the level of the natural chalk subsoil was reached.

Table 1: The recorded layer sequence (thickness of deposits are a maximum)

Context No.	Thickness	Description	Interpretation
101	<200mm	Mid greyish-brown clay silt	Most recent topsoil, mainly removed prior to these works
102	<1000mm	Light grey silt and chalk rubble	Modern landscaping/infilling layer
104	<250mm	Mid to dark brown clay silt	Buried former topsoil
106	<450mm	Mid brownish-grey clay silt and chalk rubble	Recent landscaping/infilling layer
107	<350mm	Mid brown clay silt	Buried former topsoil
108		Chalk	Natural subsoil

4.2 Archaeological features

The archaeological monitoring revealed a series of features which is likely to represent possible ditches, gullies and pits. The full extent in plan of all features was not revealed, and it is not always clear whether the features revealed are discrete or linear. Interpretations have been based on revealed profiles and on whether features extend into neighbouring trenches.

Feature F109 (Plan Fig. 2, section Fig. 3a)

This was a flat-bottomed, steep-sided feature, possibly a pit, that was 1.2m long and at least 600mm wide (trench width). It was 540mm deep and contained two fills. The lower of two fills (context 110) was composed of a light yellowish-brown silty clay containing frequent chalk fragments and occasional unworked flint nodules and fragments. The upper fill (111) was a friable mid orange-brown clay silt with very frequent chalk fragments and occasional unworked flint fragments. A small quantity of worked and burnt flint was recovered.

Feature F112 (Plan Fig. 2, section Fig. 3b)

This was a small v-shaped feature, possibly a ditch or gully aligned approximately NE-SW. It had a width of 860mm and was 340mm deep. The lower fill (117) was a mid yellowish-brown clay silt with very frequent chalk fragments and occasional flint fragments. The upper fill (113) may have been within a recut and was a dark brown silty clay containing very frequent flint fragments. A single piece of prehistoric worked flint was recovered from context 113.

Feature F114 (Plan Fig. 2, section Fig. 3c)

This was a large v-shaped linear feature, probably a ditch aligned approximately N-S. The feature was at least 4.75m long, was 3.4m wide and 1.2m deep. It was situated at the eastern extremity of both the new buildings footprint and the Plateau itself. The lower, primary fill (115) was a mid yellowish-brown clay silt with inclusions of very frequent chalk grits/fragments and occasional unworked flint fragments. The upper fill (116) was a mid to dark brown silt with flint and chalk inclusions. Finds recovered from the feature comprised small quantities of Late Iron Age/Early Romano-British pottery, animal bone and worked flint.

Feature F119 (Plan Fig. 2, section Fig.3d)

This was a large v-shaped parallel-sided linear ditch aligned approximately N-S and on the same orientation as F114 (see above). The feature was visible for a distance of at least 5m and it seemingly terminated within the footprint of the new classrooms (see Fig. 2). The cut was 3.2m wide, 1.4m deep and contained four distinct fills. The lower primary fill (120) was a mid orange-brown clay silt within an 80% chalk rubble matrix with occasional flint fragments. The secondary fill (121) was a mid brown clay silt with very frequent chalk fragments and occasional flint fragments. This deposit appeared to have slumped in from the east side. Tertiary fill (122) was a light brown clay silt within rubble consisting of 70% chalk and 20% flint fragments and nodules. The upper fill (123) was a mid orange-brown silt with inclusions of frequent flint and chalk fragments. Finds recovered from the feature include a near complete cattle skull and small quantities of burnt and worked flint.

Features F124 and F141 (Plan Fig. 2, section Fig. 3e)

Feature F124 was a probable flat-bottomed pit, measuring 1.15 metres wide and 900mm deep that had been truncated by F141. There were two fills present within F124, with the lower fill (125) 80mm thick and composed of mid orange-brown silty clay with inclusions of frequent chalk fragments and rare charcoal flecking. The upper fill (126) consisted of a grey calcareous silt within a 90% chalk rubble. This latter fill contained a large quantity of Late Iron Age/Early Roman pottery.

Feature F141 was also a probable pit measuring 4.9m wide and 800mm deep. This feature would appear to be the latest feature on site as it cuts through layer (107) which seals the remainder of the recorded archaeological features. It contained three fills, with the lower fill (127) 300mm deep and composed of a mid orange-brown clay silt with frequent chalk grits and fragments and occasional flint fragments. This was overlain by (128), a 400mm thick layer of mid to dark orange-brown clay silt, with inclusions of frequent chalk and flint fragments. The upper fill (129) was a 600mm thick, possibly redeposited, mid orange-brown clay silt with inclusions of frequent chalk and occasional flint fragments. A small quantity of worked and burnt flint was recovered from context 128.

Feature F130 (Plan Fig. 2, section Fig. 3f)

This was a probable shallow, flat-bottomed pit or linear feature measuring at least c.2m wide and 420mm deep. It had two fills, with the lower fill (131) a light greyish-brown clay silt with frequent chalk and occasional flint fragments. The main fill (132), was a mid brown clay silt containing frequent chalk and flint fragments. A small quantity of Late Iron Age/Early Roman pottery, fired clay and worked and burnt flint was recovered.

Feature F136 (Plan Fig. 2, section Fig. 3g)

This was a possible shallow pit c.1.4m wide and 400mm deep. It contained a single fill (137) composed of a light brown clay silt with inclusions of frequent chalk and occasional flint fragments. A small quantity of worked and burnt flint was recovered.

Feature F139 (Plan Fig. 2, section Fig. 3g)

This was a probable small pit with a diameter of 600mm and depth of 300mm. A single fill was present (140), composed of a mid orange-brown clay silt containing frequent chalk and occasional flint fragments. A single sherd of Late Bronze Age pottery was recovered.

5. THE FINDS

by M. Laidlaw with a contribution on the worked and burnt flint by Paul Martin

5.1 Introduction

A small finds assemblage was recovered comprising animal bone, fired clay, pottery, burnt flint and worked flint. The pottery is mainly Late Iron Age/Early Roman in date.

The finds have been washed, quantified by material type within each context and briefly scanned in order to ascertain their broad nature, date range and condition. The artefacts are briefly discussed by material type below and summary totals are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Finds totals by material type (weight is in grammes)

Context	Feature	Animal bone		Fired clay		Pottery		Burnt flint		Worked flint	
		No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt
106	Overburden layer							2	152	2	15
107	Subsoil							5	206	3	85
111	Upper fill F109							7	129	2	22
113	Fill of F112									1	176
115	Lower fill F114							6	366	2	15
116	Upper fill F114	1	2	1	4	2	9	1	55		
120	Fill of F119	21	388							1	2
121	Fill of F119									2	8
122	Fill of F119							2	58	3	57
123	Fill of F119							1	27	1	54
126	Fill of F124					71	629	3	263		
128	Fill of F141							3	672	2	19
132	Fill of F130			4	23	3	49	9	487	1	11
137	Fill of F136							1	1		
140	Fill of F139					1	12				
	Total	22	390	5	27	77	699	40	2,416	20	464

5.2 Pottery

A total of 77 sherds (699g) was recovered from four features. One plain body sherd in a coarse flint-tempered fabric is tentatively attributed to the Late Bronze Age period but it could easily fit within the Middle/Late Iron Age period. The sherd was recovered from possible pit F139. The remaining sherds are all unoxidised sandy wares which date to the Late Iron Age/Early Roman period. The bulk of the sherds (71) were recovered from probable pit F124, and includes one globular jar with a proto-bead rim and one thicker walled jar with a countersunk handle. Three conjoining rim sherds from an everted rimmed jar were found in possible pit F130 and two plain body sherds were recovered from probable ditch F114. The diagnostic forms date to the 1st century BC to the AD 1st century.

5.3 Animal bone

The animal bone consists of one small longbone fragment (2g) recovered from the upper fill of probable ditch F114 and 21 fragments (388g) from the probable ditch F119. The bulk of the fragments from F119 are from a near complete cattle skull. Other diagnostic fragments include two loose pig teeth.

5.4 Fired clay

Five small featureless fragments of fired clay were recovered from the upper fill of F114 and possible pit F130. The one fragment from F114 is in a sandy and calcareous fabric. The remaining fragments comprise three in a moderately coarse sandy fabric and one in a fine sandy fabric which is poorly wedged. On the basis of associated pottery, the fragments are likely to be Late Iron Age to Early Roman in date.

5.5 Worked flint

A total of 20 pieces of worked flint weighing 464g was recovered from eleven different contexts (Table 2). Of these, 80% were patinated and 20% non-patinated. Waste material consists of eight complete flakes, one broken flake, one blade flake and one blade. Five of the worked flints show signs of retouch. One serrated flake, a scraper and two rough cores make up the remainder of the assemblage. Chronologically the assemblage is mixed, although in general it can mainly be assigned to the early/middle Bronze age periods. The exceptions are the blade (ditch F119) and blade flake (layer 106) which are usually associated with the Mesolithic, while the serrated flake (ditch F119) is probably earlier Neolithic in date.

5.6 Burnt flint

Unworked burnt flint numbering 40 fragments and weighing 2416g was found from eleven different contexts.

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The watching brief has established the presence of archaeological features in a number of excavated footings trenches. All features are likely to relate to *in situ* archaeological activity on the site, perhaps dating from as early as the Bronze Age, with more permanent settlement probably during the Late Iron Age or Early Romano-British period. Earlier activity, limited in scale and intensity, is indicated by the presence of Mesolithic and earlier Neolithic worked flint. The new classrooms are located in an area which has been artificially raised, but still occupies a prominent hilltop position overlooking the River Stour. This type of topography was a favourable location for permanent settlement during later prehistory.

6.2 Finds of Iron Age and Roman date have been previously found to the west of the site (RCHME 1970), which suggests that the discoveries during this watching brief relate to archaeological activity over a much wider area. It is probable, therefore, that similar remains are present nearby in areas not yet subjected to recent development.

7. REFERENCES

RCHME, 1970, *Historical monuments in the County of Dorset*, Volume III, Central, Part 1

Valentin, J., 2004, *New plateau classrooms at Bryanston School, Blandford Forum, Dorset: Project Design for an archaeological watching brief*, unpublished AC archaeology document, ref. 5104/1/0

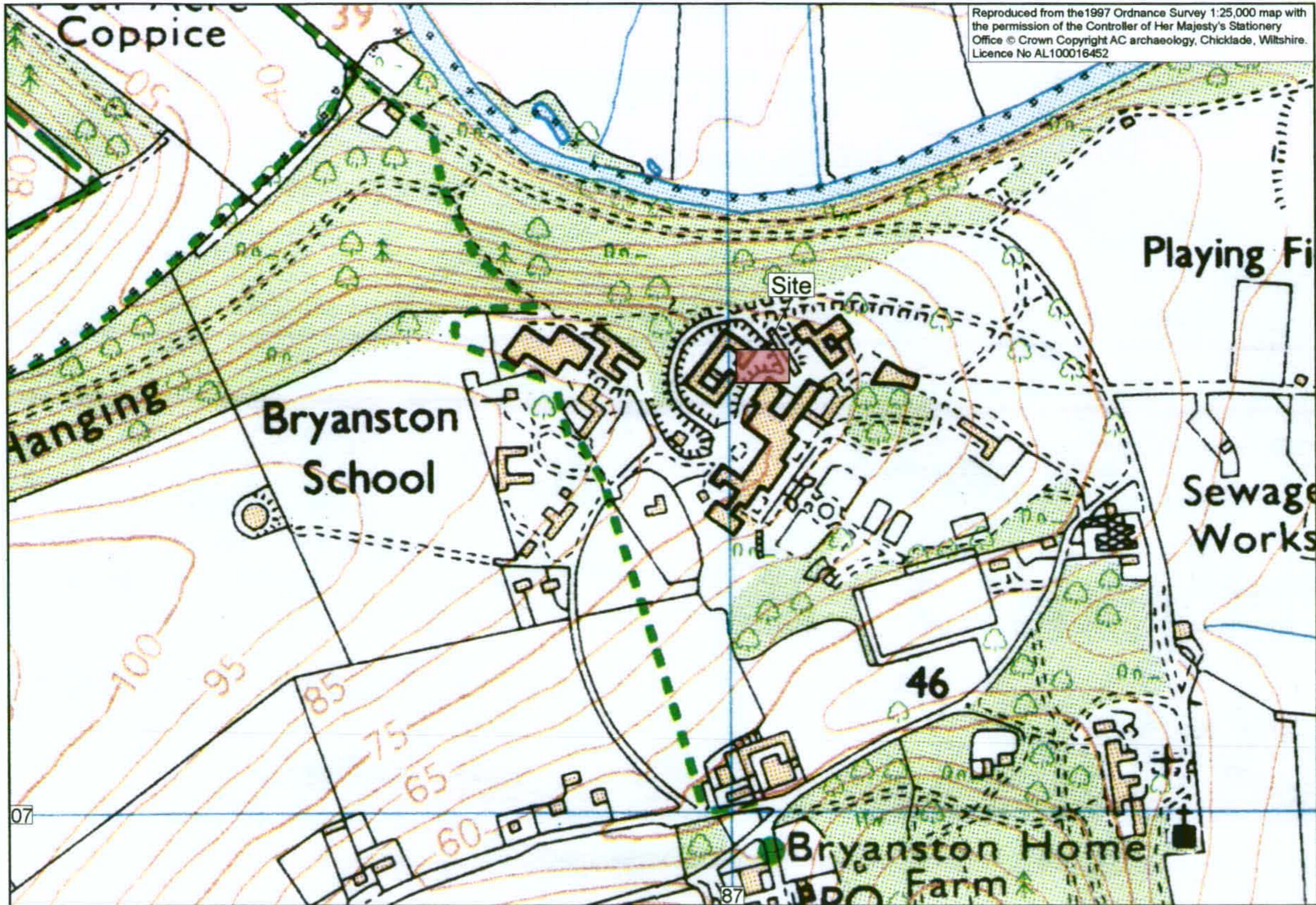


Fig. 1: Site Location

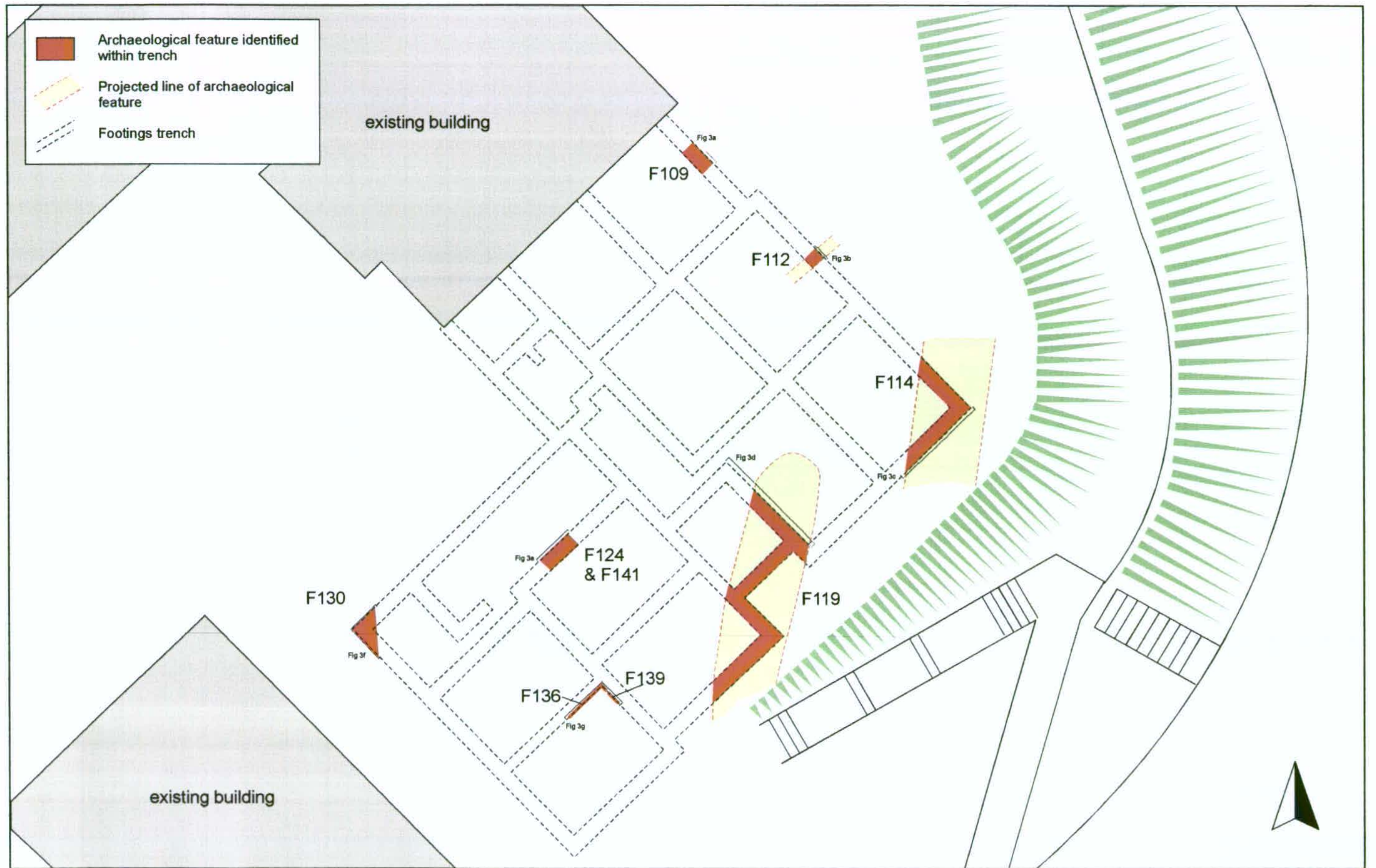


Fig. 2: Location of monitored trenches

0 10m

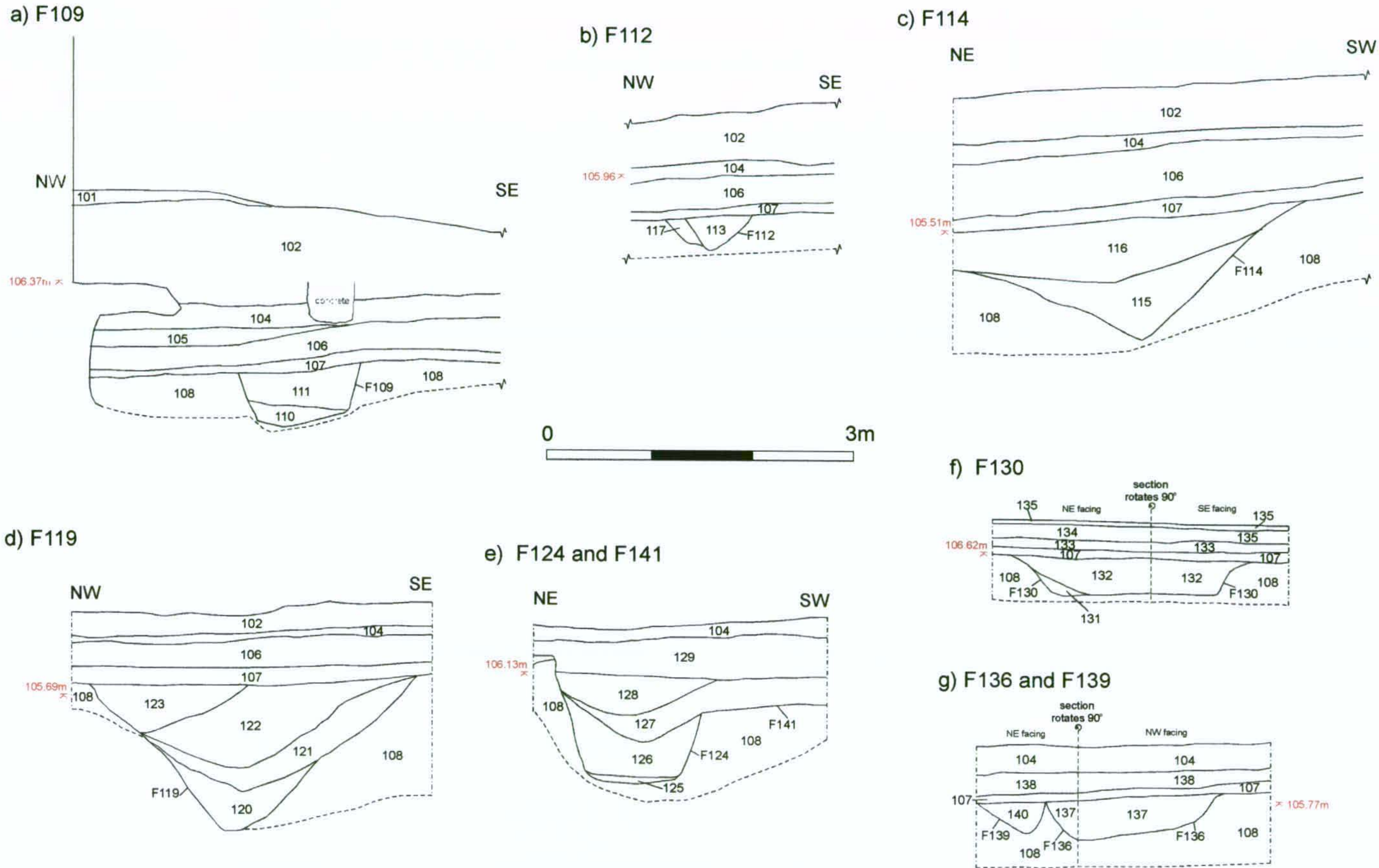


Fig. 3: Selected sections