

**An Archaeological Evaluation of an
Earthwork at Hadley. Shropshire**

by

Jon Cane

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit 1989

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Shropshire

Introduction

In August 1989 Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit carried out an evaluation of an earthwork adjacent to Blockleys brickworks (SJ 68031217). The work was commissioned by Blockleys PLC and was carried out in advance of the construction of a new road across the site.

The scant documentary evidence relating to the site has already been described (Howlett, 1989), as have the results of geophysical surveys carried out on the site (Bartlett, 1989). The geophysical surveys indicated the presence of a large ditch running under the earthwork but there was little evidence for activity within it. The documentary work was equally inconclusive, but suggested that the earthwork may have been a running track used in the late 19th century for athletics meetings. The inconclusive results from these studies necessitated the trial excavations reported here.

The site consists of a fragment of a low, wide bank (Fig 1), representing the side of a large oval enclosure. It lies on a gentle north-east facing slope, on arable land which has been fairly recently ploughed. An aerial photograph of the site shows that the upstanding bank extends for about 120 metres but a soil mark suggests that it continues for another 75 metres.

The Excavation

Two trenches, each a metre wide, were excavated by machine (Fig 1). The first (Trench 1) was 50 metres long and ran north-south across the earthwork and into the 'interior' of the site. The natural subsoil at this point was a mixed silty gravel overlying a clean compact gravel. The earthwork had been positioned to take advantage of a natural break in slope and was made of a series of layers of fine gravel and clay (1001,1002,1007), which overlay a thin but well-defined layer

of ash and clinker (1004). This layer sloped slightly against the natural sloping ground.

The layer of clinker and ash was neatly cut into a stone-free silty soil (1005) within which traces of iron-panning, suggested the presence of buried turfs.

There was no trace of the ditch suggested by the geophysical survey and no other negative features were seen. A second trench (Trench 2) was dug across the earthwork to the east to confirm the absence of such features. This trench was cut c.1.0 metres into the clean natural gravel and no features were seen.

Finds

One fragment of modern glass was recovered during the initial cleaning of Trench 1 but no other finds were recovered.

Discussion

The excavated evidence suggests that the interpretation of the site as the remains of a 19th-century running track is most likely correct. The bank is very slight and has no accompanying ditch, and the layer of clinker and ash is probably the remains of a 'sound cinder track', as the nearby St Georges' Athletics Association track was described in 1883.

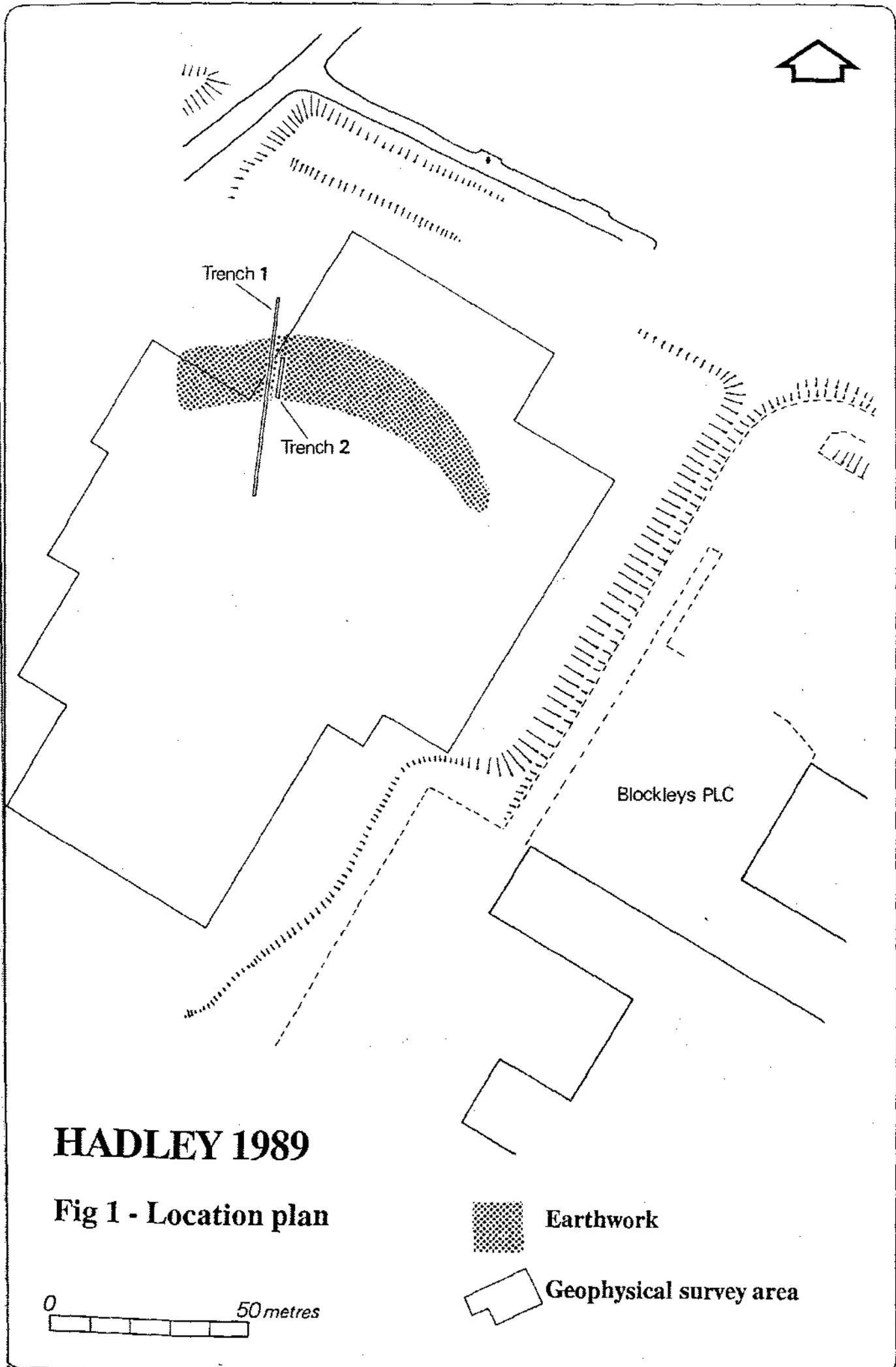
Subsequent use as a cricket field probably led to the covering of the track with the dumps of clay and gravel which make up the bulk of the bank.

Recommendations

The presence of a 19th-century running track at Hadley is of some historical interest, but the physical remains themselves do not merit further archaeological work.

References

- Howlett, C.E. 1989 'An Archaeological Assessment of a Site in New Leasow (field), Hadley, Telford, Shropshire'
- Bartlett, A.D.H. 1989 'Geophysical Survey at Hadley, Telford' & Turton, B.Y.

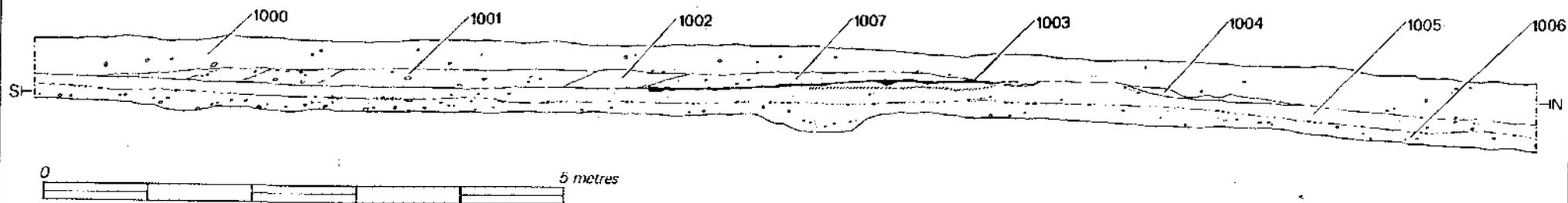


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Fig 1 - Location plan

-  **Earthwork**
-  **Geophysical survey area**

0 50 metres



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Fig 2 - TRENCH 1 - East-facing section

- 1000 Turf and topsoil
- 1001 Dump of soil and gravel
- 1002 Dump of clay
- 1003 Cliaker and ash
- 1004 Gravel spread
- 1005 Silty soil (possible buried turf-line)
- 1006 Silty gravel (natural)
- 1007 Dump of fine gravel