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Bluebell Residencies, University
of Warwick, Archaeological
Evaluation

Project No. 2013

December 2009

Bluebell Residencies

The University of Warwick

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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Edited by/ Reviewed by:	Chris Hewitson	Project Manager
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Version: v1a		Version Date: 15.01.2010.
File location: P:\PROJECTS BY NO\2000-2099\2013 Bluebell Residencies, Warks Uni EVAL\05_Post Excavation & Post Fieldwork\01_Reports\02_Final Report\01_Cover and Text\2013 Bluebell Residencies, The University of Warwick, Archaeological Evaluation v1a.doc		

for

The University of Warwick
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Bluebell Residencies, The University of Warwick

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SUMMARY

A proposed development at Bluebells residencies in Warwick University Campus had the potential to affect important below ground archaeological remains. Birmingham Archaeology was commissioned by the University of Warwick to undertake an archaeological evaluation of the land (NGR SP 301 755) between the 8th and 16th December 2009.

The work involved the excavation of twelve trenches measuring between 10 and 15m in length and 2m in width. The trenches were situated within the area of the four proposed development blocks.

A possible dog burial and a shallow linear gully were uncovered in Trench 5, both of which were probably modern in date. Excavation of the remaining eleven trenches failed to identify any archaeological features, structures, deposits or horizons. No artefactual material predating the modern period was retrieved. It was evident that the evaluation area had been landscaped during the construction of the halls of residence in the 1960s. Therefore any potentially surviving archaeological remains would have been scoured out as the ground level was reduced then built up with over 1m of redeposited natural silty clay.

Bluebell Residencies, The University of Warwick

Archaeological Evaluation, December 2009

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1. Birmingham Archaeology was commissioned by the University of Warwick to undertake an archaeological evaluation prior to development at Bluebells residencies, University of Warwick (hereinafter referred to as the site).
- 1.1.2. This report outlines the results of the evaluation which was carried out between 8th and 16th December 2009 and has been prepared in accordance with a brief produced by Coventry City Council (Coventry CC 2009) and a Written Scheme of Investigation (Birmingham Archaeology 2009) which was approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to implementation in accordance with guidelines laid down in Planning Guidance Note 16 (DOE 1990). The report has been prepared in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Standards and Guidance Notes for Archaeological Evaluation and Watching Briefs (IFA 2008).

2. LOCATION AND GEOLOGY

- 2.1.1. The site is located to the southeast of Warwick University campus, and to the northwest of Tocil Wood (SMR 4592). To the southwest the site is bounded by Gibbet Hill, while to the northwest and southeast it is bounded by the Rootes residential buildings and the Tocil Ponds respectively. The site is centred on NGR SP 301 755.
- 2.1.2. The underlying geology of the area is Carboniferous mudstone of the Tile Hill Mudstone formation, inter-layered with sandstone deposits, with alluvial deposits present throughout (British Geological Survey 1984).
- 2.1.3. The present character of the site is 3.3 hectares of well maintained lawn, with a carpark bounding both the southeast and northwest ends and a pathway running southeast to northwest through the middle. A tennis court is also situated directly to the northeast of the path. The ground generally slopes down from the northwest to the southeast towards Canley Brook and the Tocil ponds.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1.1. An archaeological desk based assessment has been carried out for the site and will not be repeated in full here (McNichol 2008). The assessment showed that the site had been agricultural fields from the medieval period until the university was built in 1965. The proximity of known archaeological sites to the development area, including the multi-period sites in Tocil Wood and at Cryfield House Farm, indicate that there may be Prehistoric or Roman archaeological remains surviving on the site. The presence of a palaeochannel was recorded in 2006 in fields to the north of the site, which dated to the Iron Age (Bain 2006).
- 3.1.2. An archaeological watching brief was carried out in the proposed development area (Krawiec 2009). The work involved the excavation of 12 geotechnical test pits. No archaeological features, structures, deposits or horizons were identified during the course of the groundworks.

4. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 4.1.1. The principal aim of the evaluation was to determine the character, state of preservation and the potential significance of any buried remains.
- 4.1.2. More specific aims were to:
- to achieve better definition of the archaeological remains
 - to assess the impact of development on the archaeological remains
 - to recover evidence for prehistoric and Roman period activity
 - to recover evidence for medieval land use and pottery production
 - to prepare recommendations, where warranted, for further archaeological investigations
 - to create and deposit a satisfactory archaeological archive and publication

5. METHODOLOGY

- 5.1.1. Twelve trenches were excavated within the area of the four proposed development blocks. The trenches were numbered 1-12 and measured between 10 and 15m in length and 2m in width, with the exception of trench 6 which was divided into two four and a half metre trenches due to problems of access. The location of a number of the other trenches was altered slightly due to the presence of a number of mature trees, the tennis court and the car park. The trenches were excavated under archaeological supervision with a JCB excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. Each trench was excavated down to the natural subsoil or first significant archaeological horizon.
- 5.1.2. All stratigraphic sequences were recorded, even where no archaeology was present. Features were planned at a scale of 1:20 or 1:50 and sections were drawn of all cut features and significant vertical stratigraphy at a scale of 1:20. A comprehensive written record was maintained using a continuous numbered context system on pro forma cards. Written records and scale plans were supplemented by photographs using black and white monochrome, colour slide and digital photography.
- 5.1.3. Recovered finds were cleaned, marked and remedial conservation work undertaken as necessary. Treatment of all finds conformed to guidance contained within the Birmingham Archaeology Fieldwork Manual and First Aid for Finds (Watkinson and Neal 1998).
- 5.1.4. The full site archive includes all artefactual remains recovered from the site. The site archive will be prepared according to guidelines set down in Appendix 3 of the Management of Archaeology Projects (English Heritage, 1991,) the Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-term storage (UKIC, 1990) and Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological collections (Museum and Art Galleries Commission, 1992). The paper archive will be deposited with the appropriate repository subject to permission from the landowner.

6. RESULTS

6.1. Introduction

6.1.1. The following section is arranged in trench order and both feature (cut) and a selection of trench plans and sections are illustrated.

6.2. Trench 1 (Fig. 5, Plate 1)

6.2.1. Trench 1 measured 15m in length and 2m in width and was aligned northeast - southwest. The natural red silty clay (103) was identified at a depth of 2.70m below the current ground level. The natural subsoil was overlain by mid grey-brown silty sandy clay (102) which measured a maximum of 0.80m in depth and did not contain any datable evidence. The layer may represent a buried topsoil and had been overlain by a deep layer of red brown silty clay (101). The layer measured a maximum of 1.50m and contained pieces of land drain, it apparently represented a modern levelling layer and was sealed by 0.30-0.40m of topsoil (100).

6.3. Trench 2 (Fig. 5, Plate 2)

6.3.1. Trench 2 measured 11m in length and 2m in width and was aligned northeast - southwest. The natural red silty clay subsoil (203) was uncovered at a depth of 1.60m below the current ground level. It was overlain by mid grey-brown silty sandy clay (202), which measured 0.50m in depth and was overlain by the modern make up layer (201). The red brown levelling layer measured 0.80m in depth and contained pieces of modern land drain. It was sealed by 0.30m of topsoil (200).

6.4. Trench 3 (Fig. 5, Plate 3)

6.4.1. Trench 3 measured 11m in length and 2m in width and was aligned east - west. The natural red silty clay subsoil (303) was exposed at a depth of 3.00m below the current ground level. The natural subsoil was overlain by mid grey-brown silty sandy clay (302), which measured 0.40m in depth and was possibly a buried topsoil. It contained possible straw fragments and was overlain by red silty clay levelling layer (301). The modern make up layer was sealed by 0.40m of topsoil (300).

6.5. Trench 4 (Fig. 5, Plate 4)

6.5.1. Trench 4 measured 10.50m in length and 2m in width and was aligned northeast - southwest. The natural red silty clay (405) was identified at a depth of 3.60m below the current ground level. It was sealed by a sterile mid grey-brown silty clay (404). It may have represented a palaeo-deposit and measured between 0.80-1.05m in depth. It was overlain by a layer of red silty clay (403) measuring 0.60m in depth and sealed by mid grey-brown silty clay buried topsoil (402). It measured 0.25m in depth and was overlain by the red brown silt clay modern levelling layer (401), which was 1.40m deep and was sealed by 0.30m of topsoil.

6.6. Trench 5 (Fig. 5, Plate 5 and 6)

6.6.1. Trench 5 measured 11m in length and 2m in width and was orientated east - west. The natural red silty clay subsoil was located at a depth of 1.00m below the current ground level. At a distance of 5m from the eastern end of the trench the natural subsoil had been cut by a pit (504). The elongated pit measured 1.40m by 1.00m

and 0.10m deep. It was filled with reddish brown silty sandy clay (505) which contained a number of bones perhaps representing a dog burial. A linear gully (507) was located 2m to the west of the aforementioned pit. The gully measured 0.64m wide and 0.15m deep and ran north - south across the trench. It was filled with reddish brown silty sandy clay (506) which contained two very small fragments of fired clay. The aforementioned features were sealed by a red brown silty clay levelling layer (502). The layer was sealed by a thin grey silty clay layer (501) which was overlain by 0.25m of topsoil.

6.7. Trench 6 (Fig. 5, Plate 7 and 8)

6.7.1. Trench 6 was divided into two halves, each measuring 4.50m in length and 2m in width and aligned northwest - southeast. The natural red silt clay subsoil (602) was located at a depth of 0.90-1.00m below the current ground level towards the southeast end of the trench and 0.40m at the northwest end. The natural subsoil was overlain by the red brown silty clay levelling layer (601) which measured 0.30-0.60m in depth and was sealed by 0.25m of topsoil.

6.8. Trench 7 (Fig. 5, Plate 9)

6.8.1. Trench 7 measured 11m in length and 2m in width and was aligned northeast - southwest. The natural brownish red silty clay subsoil (703) was uncovered at a depth of 1.40m below the current ground level. The natural subsoil was overlain by a mid grey-brown silty sandy clay (702) which measured 0.25m in depth and may have represented a buried topsoil. It was sealed by reddish brown silty clay levelling layer (701) which measured 0.90m in depth and was sealed by 0.30m of topsoil.

6.9. Trench 8 (Fig. 5, Plate 10)

6.9.1. Trench 8 measured 11m in length and 2m in width and was orientated east - west. The natural brownish red silty clay subsoil (804) was identified at a depth of 1.70m below the current ground level. It was overlain by a mid grey-brown silty clay layer (803), which measured 0.25m in depth and was sealed by the modern levelling layer (802). The aforementioned layer was 0.90m deep and contained pieces of brick and concrete and was sealed by a thin grey silty clay layer (801) which was sealed by 0.30m of topsoil.

6.10. Trench 9 (Fig. 5, Plate 11)

6.10.1. Trench 9 measured 11m in length and 2m in width and was aligned east - west. The natural brownish red silty clay subsoil (903) was identified at a depth of 1.40m below the current ground level. It had been sealed by mid grey-brown silty clay (902). The possible buried topsoil measured 0.30m in depth and was overlain by the reddish brown silty clay levelling layer (901) measuring 0.70m which contained brick and pieces of land drain. The levelling layer was sealed by 0.30m of topsoil (900).

6.11. Trench 10 (Fig. 5, Plate 12)

6.11.1. Trench 10 measured 11m in length and 2m in width and was aligned northeast - southwest. The natural brownish red silty clay subsoil (1003) was uncovered at a depth of 1.50m below the current ground level. It was sealed by the mid grey brown silty clay possible buried topsoil (1002) which measured 0.25m in depth. It

was sealed by 0.90m of modern levelling layer (1001) which lay beneath 0.35m of topsoil (1000).

6.12. Trench 11 (Fig. 5, Plate 13)

6.12.1. Trench 11 measured 11m in length and 2m in width and was aligned east - west. The natural brownish red silty clay subsoil was exposed at a depth of 1.35m below the current ground level. It was overlain by mid grey-brown silty clay layer (1102), which was 0.25m in depth and was sealed by the red brown silty clay levelling layer (1101) which measured 1.00m in depth. The make up layer was sealed by 0.25m of topsoil (1100).

6.13. Trench 12 (Fig. 5, Plate 14)

6.13.1. Trench 12 measured 11m in length and 2m in width and was orientated northeast - southwest. The natural brownish red silty clay subsoil (1203) was identified at a depth of 1.95m below the current ground level. It was overlain by a layer of grey-brown organic rich silty clay (1202) which measured 0.25m in depth. The aforementioned layer was sealed by 1.40m of brownish red silty clay levelling layer (1201). The make up layer was overlain by 0.35m of topsoil.

7. FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL

7.1. Finds Summary by Erica Macey-Bracken

7.1.1. The only finds recovered from the site were from Trench 5. The assemblage consisted of a small fragment of fired clay (506), weighing 1g and a partial dog (*canis familiaris*) skeleton (505) weighing 918g.

7.1.2. One small sherd of pottery was recovered during environmental sieving (302, Sample 4). The sherd is a thin-walled, undiagnostic and abraded, but appears most likely to be medieval in date.

7.2. Environmental Summary by Kristina Krawiec

7.2.1. Samples were taken from two layers 302 and 1203. Layer 302 contained the possible medieval pottery whilst layer 1203 was sampled and contained fragments of ceramic building material.

7.2.2. The sediments (302 and 1203) were water-lain silt clay with gritty material and fragments of charcoal throughout. It may represent a patch of water-lain boggy ground but without examining the deposits in section this cannot be fully established. There is some organic content in the sample. The deposits appear to be buried topsoil probably associated with the landscaping works associated with the halls.

7.2.3. If further work is required it is recommended an environmental specialist visits the site to examine potential deposits and decide on a suitable sampling policy.

8. DISCUSSION

8.1.1. The evaluation has illustrated that the original topsoil exists beneath a deep layer of modern overburden which ranges in depth between 0.50-2.20m. The depth of

material suggests that the natural slope of the land is from northwest-southwest in common with the surrounding topography. The site has been landscaped and it appears likely that surviving archaeological deposits have been scoured out in the location of the car park and the tennis courts during the construction of the university buildings in the 1960s. It is possible that archaeological features could survive beneath the buried topsoil although no archaeological features which clearly predated the modern period were identified in the evaluation.

8.1.2. The archaeological deposits located in Trench 5 may relate to activity associated with the post-medieval field boundary illustrated on the 1766 Baker map of Stoneleigh, defined as Gully 507 in the evaluation. This survived as a boundary until at least the 1920s (Ordnance Survey 3rd Edition) and presumably was still visible prior to the 1960s landscaping episode. This also suggests that the dog (*canis familiaris*) skeleton (505) was probably associated with this field boundary and can be suggested as modern in date.

8.1.3. The depth of the buried ground is defined below and in Fig. 4;

Trench	Ground Level (m AOD)	Buried Ground Level (m AOD)
1	79.49	77.99
2	79.32	78.52
3	79.38	77.18
4	79.19	77.79
5	77.64	76.89
6	78.99	78.24
7	78.52	77.57
8	78.91	77.81
9	80.23	79.53
10	80.52	79.62
11	80.62	79.67
12	78.82	77.48

Table 1: Depth of the Buried Ground Levels

8.1.4. There is a clear suggestion that the landscaping has deposited a depth of overburden across the site of around 0.80m to 1.50m below current ground levels and in so doing removed the natural slope of the ground e north to south in the direction of the Tocil Ponds. The depth of the ground around Trench 5 suggests there is partial evidence of a gradual slope towards the field boundary defined by Gull 507.

9. ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPLICATION

9.1.1. The original written scheme of investigation detailed that three trenches, 15 x 2m in size would be excavated in the template of each building block. Some slight alteration in scope due to logistical complications has occurred and as such some of trenches are smaller in size; See table 1 below.

9.1.2. Two of the four blocks are largely covered by a tennis courts (Block 2) and car park (Block 4). In the instance of Block 2 (Trenches 4-6), further trenching would be unlikely to yield further results. The potential for remains has been largely destroyed by the tennis court which can be seen to truncate a large portion of the site (it is sunken and the results of Trench 6 reveals the depth of overburden). In Block 4 (Trenches 11 and 12) about half the original area of the scheme has been

covered. However, the car park has resulted in truncation of potential remains as it is again sunken below the level of the surrounding ground.

- 9.1.3. Further trenching is required in Block 1 (Trenches 1-3) but as results proved negative this may not be necessary. Block 3 (Trenches 7-10) have covered the area stated in the written scheme of investigation achieved the results.
- 9.1.4. Given the original scope of the brief and original proposals in the written scheme, the precise level of trenching is still to be achieved. However, in the instances of Block 2 and Block 4 these areas have been truncated by the Tennis Court/ Car Park and as such would be unlikely to yield further results (see Fig. 4).
- 9.1.5. Archaeological trenching may be required to complete the scope of the brief on consultation with the Coventry City Planning Archaeologist. At the present time the results of this evaluation suggest there will not be a requirement for further archaeological mitigation beyond this. However, this is dependent on the decision of the Coventry City Planning Archaeologist.

Block (north to south)	Original Trenching Scope	Trenching Completed	Mitigating Factor
Block 1	90m ² (3 - 15 x 2m)	74m ²	None
Block 2	90m ² (3 - 15 x 2m)	61m ²	Tennis Court
Block 3	90m ² (3 - 15 x 2m)	88m ²	None
Block 4	90m ² (3 - 15 x 2m)	44m ²	Car Park

Table 2: Trenches completed by size compared to scope of WSI

10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

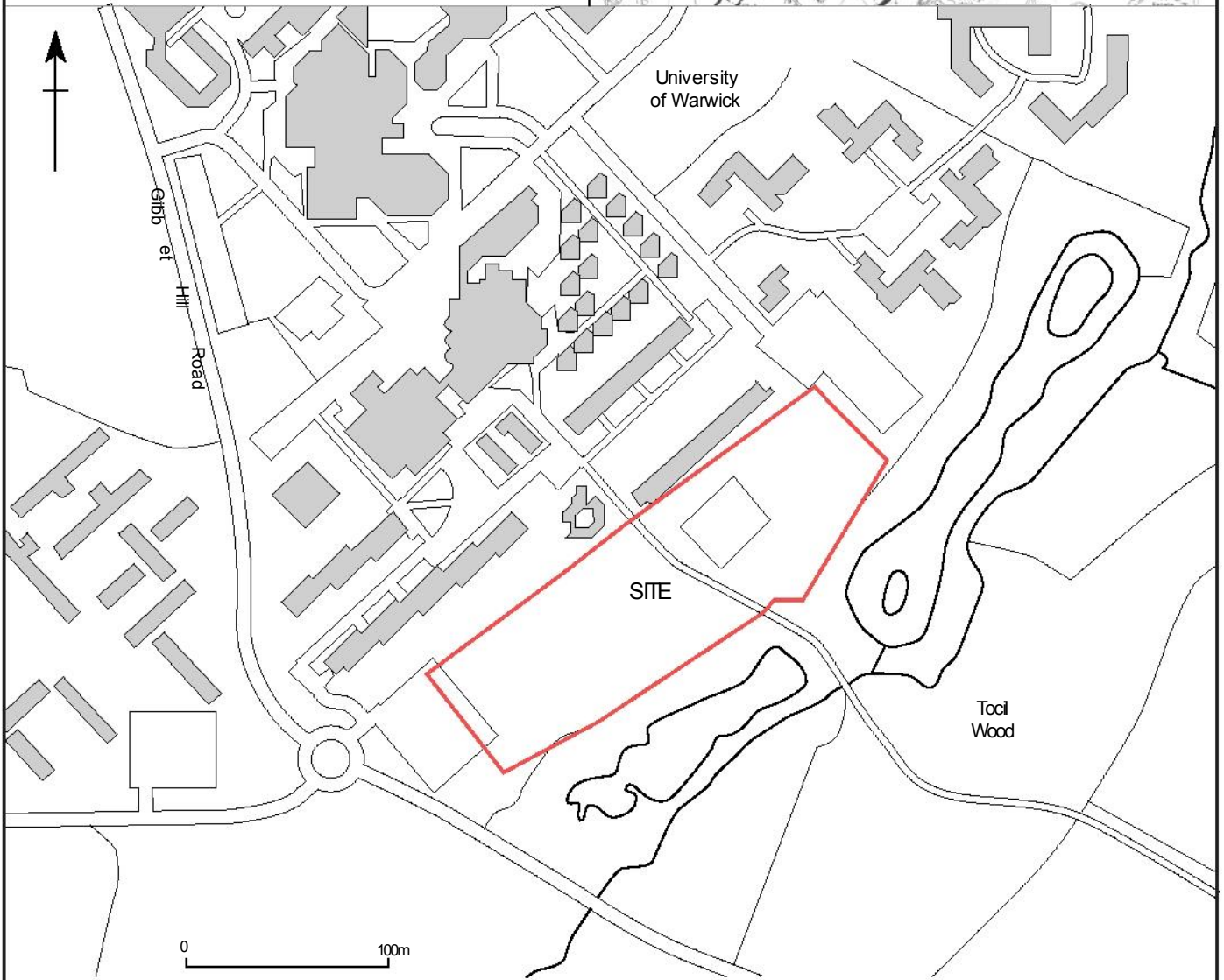
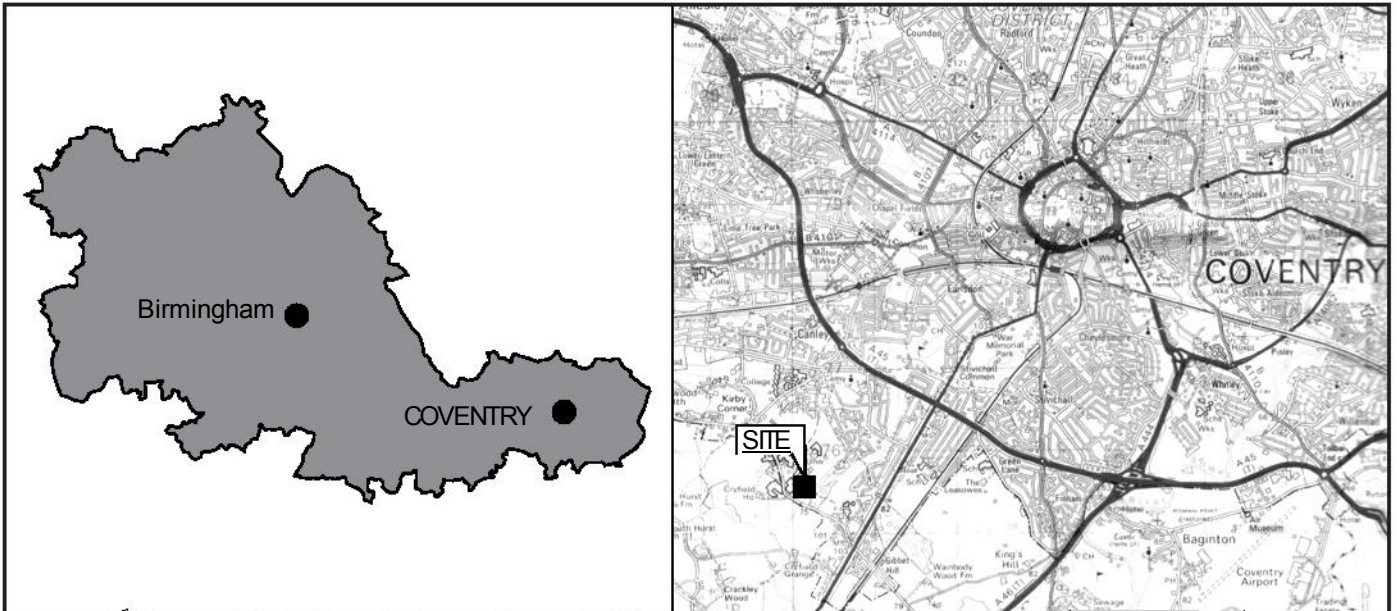
The project was commissioned by Robert Gamble of The University of Warwick Estates. The project was managed overall by Kerry Sharpe of Kier Moss Construction. Thanks are due to Laura Cunningham of Kier Moss who supervised the project on site and the machine operator for their co-operation and assistance throughout the project. Thanks also go to Chris Patrick, who monitored the project on behalf of Coventry City Council. Work on site was undertaken by Bob Burrows, Mark Charles and Emily Hamilton. The finds were examined by Erica Macey-Bracken. Bob Burrows produced the written report which was illustrated by Nigel Dodds, and edited by Chris Hewitson who also managed the project for Birmingham Archaeology.

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Figures and Plates



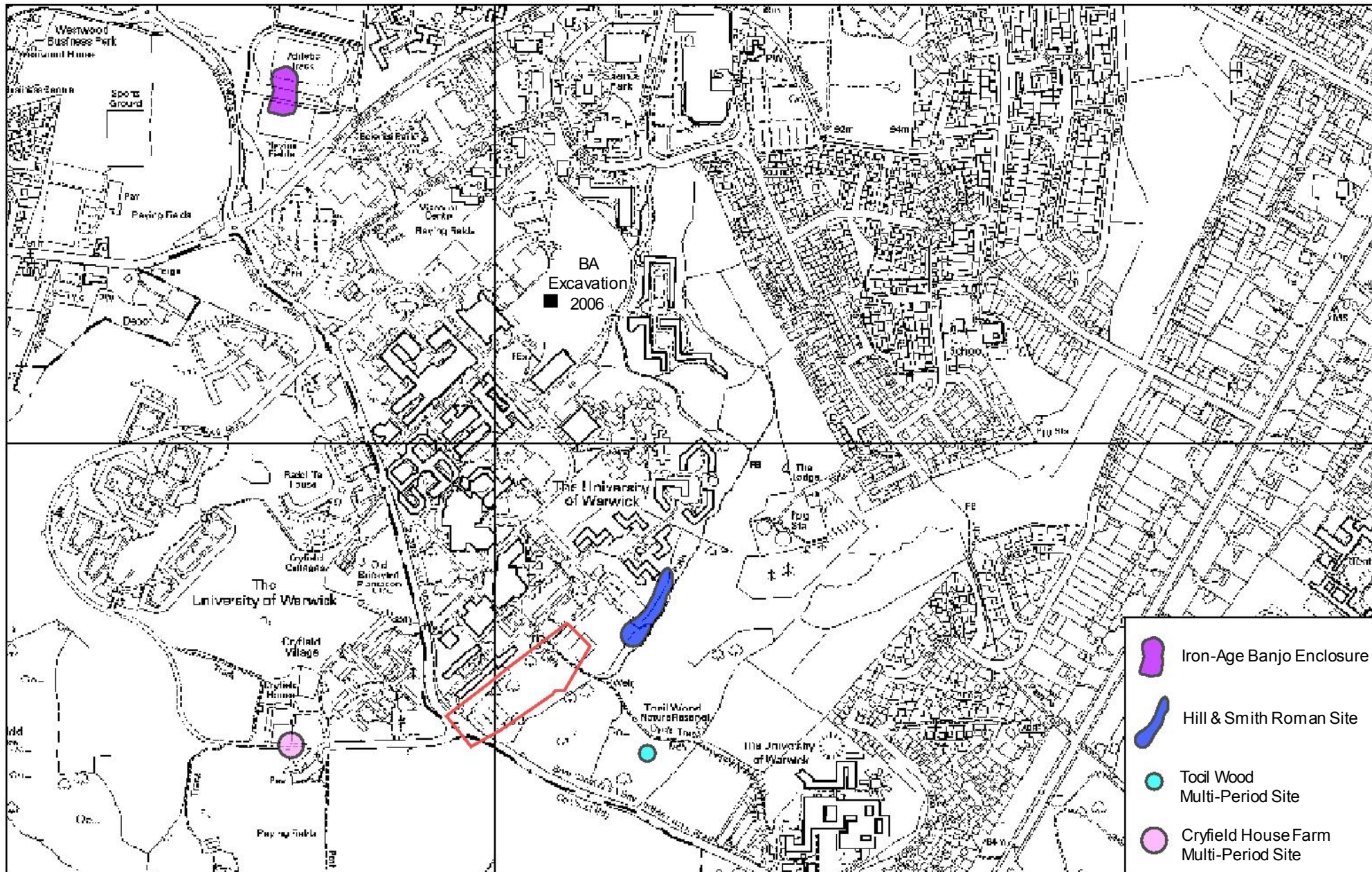
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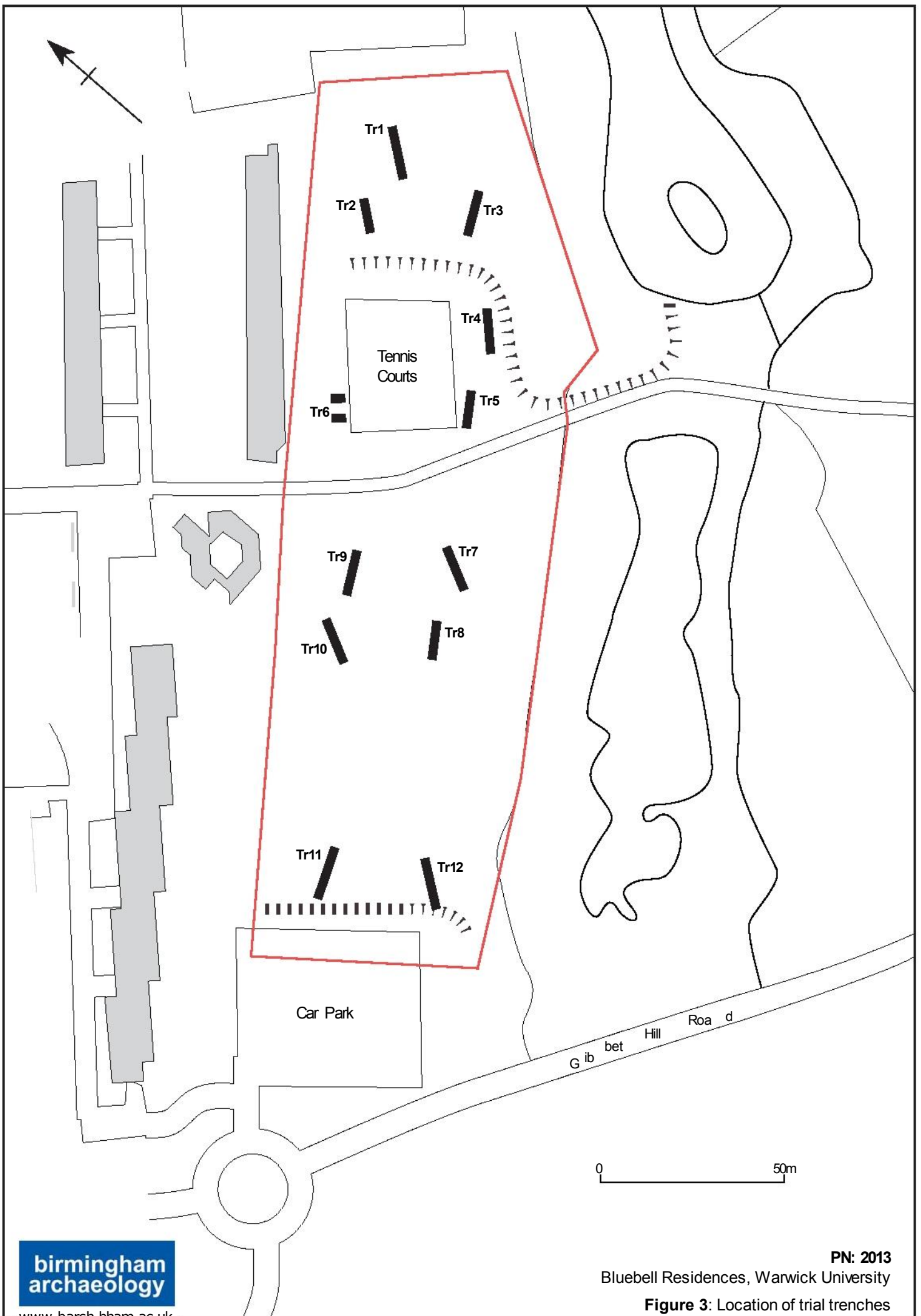
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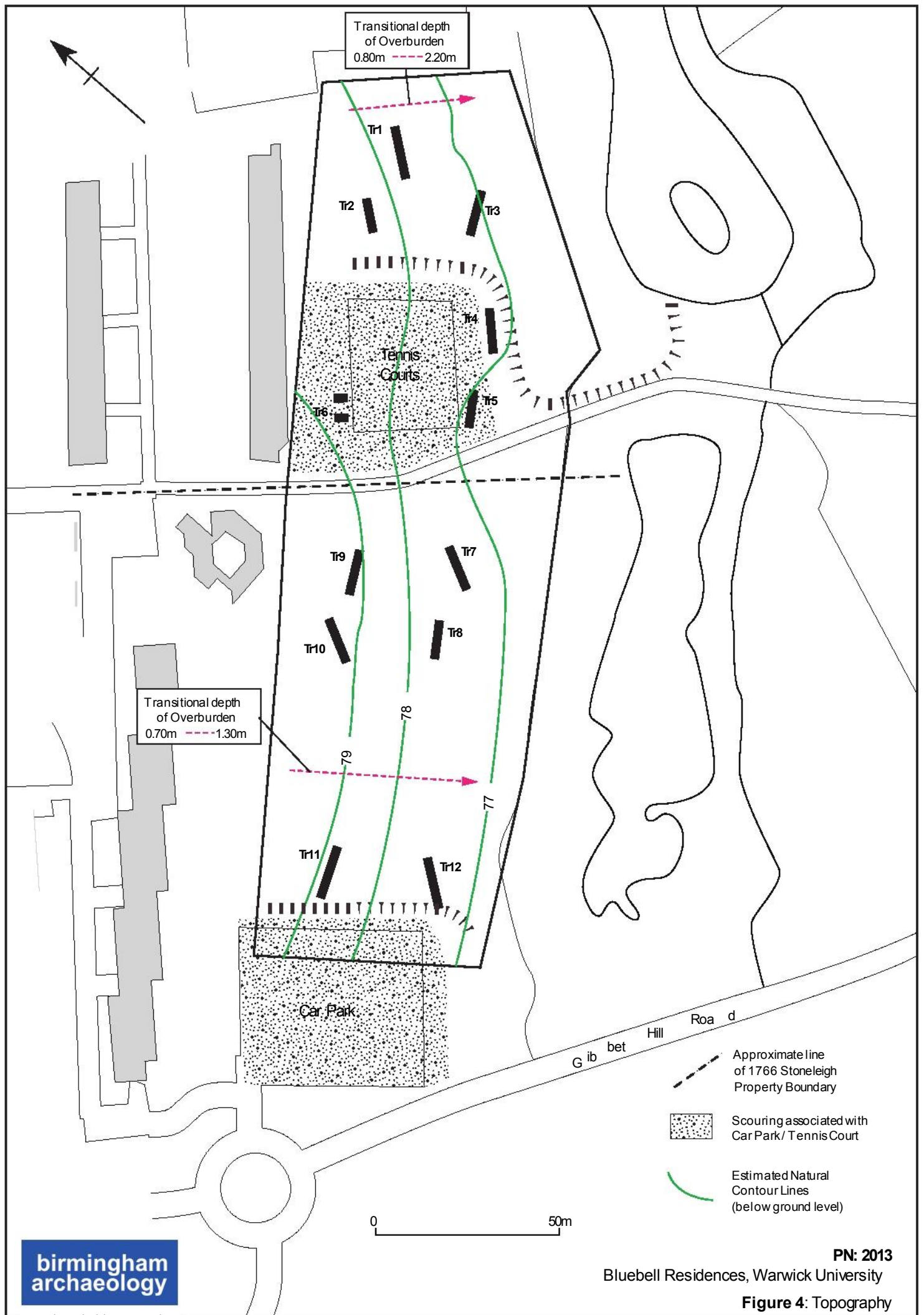
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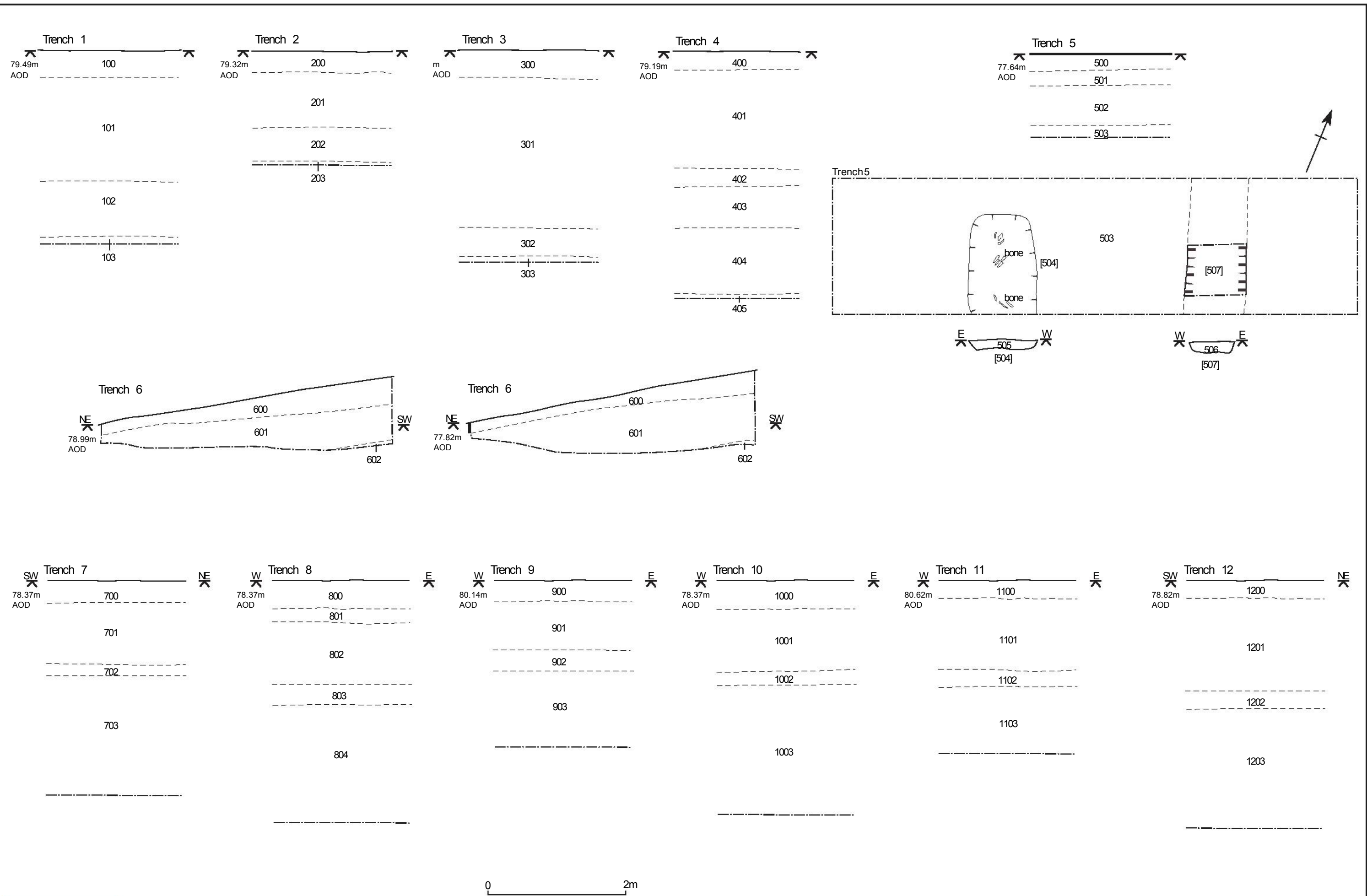
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Figure 1: Site Location























Appendix 3: List of Contexts

Context	Assoc Cut	Trench No .	Type	Description
100		1	layer	topsoil
101		1	layer	reddish brown silty clay
102		1	layer	greyish brown silty sandy clay
103		1	layer	red silty clay natural subsoil
200		2	layer	topsoil
201		2	layer	reddish brown silty clay
202		2	layer	greyish brown silty clay
203		2	layer	red silty clay natural subsoil
300		3	layer	topsoil
301		3	layer	red brown silty clay
302		3	layer	greyish brown silty sandy clay
303		3	layer	brownish red silty clay natural subsoil
400		4	layer	topsoil
401		4	layer	red brown silty clay
402		4	layer	greyish brown silty clay
403		4	layer	red silty clay
404		4	layer	mid grey brown silty clay
405		4	layer	red silty clay natural subsoil
500		5	layer	topsoil
501		5	layer	greyish brown silty clay
502		5	layer	red brown silty clay
503		5	layer	red silty clay natural subsoil
504		5	pit	pit with animal burial
505	504	5	fill	reddish brown silty sandy clay
506	507	5	fill	reddish brown silty sandy clay
507		5	gully	linear gully
600		6	layer	topsoil
601		6	layer	reddish brown silty clay
602		6	layer	red silty clay natural subsoil
700		7	layer	topsoil
701		7	layer	reddish brown silty clay
702		7	layer	mid grey brown silty sandy clay
703		7	layer	brownish red silty clay natural subsoil
800		8	layer	topsoil
801		8	layer	mid grey brown silty clay
802		8	layer	brownish red silty clay
803		8	layer	grey brown silty clay
804		8	layer	brownish red silty clay natural subsoil
900		9	layer	topsoil
901		9	layer	reddish brown silty clay
902		9	layer	grey brown silty clay
903		9	layer	brownish red silty clay natural subsoil
1000		10	layer	topsoil
1001		10	layer	brownish red silty clay
1002		10	layer	mid grey brown silty clay
1003		10	layer	brownish red silty clay natural subsoil
1100		11	layer	topsoil
1101		11	layer	brownish red silty clay
1102		11	layer	mid grey brown silty clay

Context	Assoc Cut	Trench No .	Type	Description
1103		11	layer	brownish red silty clay natural subsoil
<u>1200</u>		<u>12</u>	<u>layer</u>	<u>topsoil</u>
<u>1201</u>		<u>12</u>	<u>layer</u>	<u>brownish red silty clay</u>
1202		12	layer	mid grey brown silty clay
1203		12	layer	brownish red silty clay natural subsoil