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Southampton Archaeology Unit Report 1289

Archaeological Evaluation of Land at 34-118 Round Hill Close, Townhill, Southampton, SOU 1759.

Planning Reference 17/00247/FUL.

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2017

Client: Drew Smith Group



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Front cover: Strata in Trench 1.

Summary Sheet

Site name/address: Land at 34-118 Round Hill Close.
SOU site code: SOU 1759
Contractor site code: SOU 1759
HET consultation number: 8439
Grid reference: 445432 114242
Fieldwork dates: 5/6/17 – 8/6/17
Type of fieldwork: evaluation
Name of contracting unit: Southampton City Council Archaeology Unit
Report author: Dr AD Russel BA PhD MCIfA
Report number: 1289
Name of client: Drew Smith Group
<p>Summary:</p> <p>The Archaeology Unit of Southampton City Council carried out an evaluation of land at 34-118 Round Hill Close in June 2017 in advance of redevelopment. The site lay on the London Clay and the Portsmouth Sand. The site had been agricultural land for at least 100 years and all six trenches revealed a ploughsoil overlying the natural. A few burnt flints were recovered, indicative of prehistoric activity. A sherd of medieval pottery recovered from the same context on an earlier archaeological watching brief, suggests the ploughsoil dates back at least to the medieval period. The only features were tree disturbances, probably all dating to the 20th century when the site was developed with three blocks of council housing surrounded by landscaped gardens. Given the lack of evidence of significant human activity on the site it is recommended that no further work should be required during the development phase.</p>

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1. Summary

Summary:

The Archaeology Unit of Southampton City Council carried out an evaluation of land at 34-118 Round Hill Close in June 2017 in advance of redevelopment. The site lay on the London Clay and the Portsmouth Sand. The site had been agricultural land for at least 100 years and all six trenches revealed a ploughsoil overlying the natural. A few burnt flints were recovered, indicative of prehistoric activity. A sherd of medieval pottery recovered from the same context on an earlier archaeological watching brief, suggests the ploughsoil dates back at least to the medieval period. The only features were tree disturbances, probably all dating to the 20th century when the site was developed with three blocks of council housing surrounded by landscaped gardens. Given the lack of evidence of significant human activity on the site it is recommended that no further work should be required during the development phase.

2. Introduction

2.1 Permission has been sought for a new building to be constructed on Plot 1 of the Townhill Redevelopment Project under planning reference 17/00247/FUL. The site lies in an area of Local Archaeological Potential 16. A desk-based assessment of the larger project area identified that the groundworks for the 1960s housing estate had probably destroyed most of any archaeology that was present within the area but islands of undisturbed ground did survive. Observations of soil investigation work suggested there was potential for archaeological remains, most likely prehistoric, but including medieval farming activity, to survive in the grassed areas between the elements of the estate (Russel and Fedorowicz 2015a).

2.2 A written scheme of investigation for a programme of archaeological evaluation to cover the areas where archaeology might survive was produced by Southampton Archaeology Unit (Russel 2014). This was written to the recommended guidelines for archaeological projects laid down by English Heritage in *The Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* 2006. All work was to be carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct*.

2.3 The definition of an archaeological evaluation is a limited programme of non-intrusive and/or intrusive fieldwork which determines the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater. If such archaeological remains are present field evaluation defines their character, extent, quality and preservation, and enables an assessment of their significance in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate. (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists 2015).

3. Site Location, topography and geology

3.1 The site lies on the southwest corner of Meggeson Avenue, in the Townhill area of Southampton, on the east side of the River Itchen. The site centre is at 445432 114242.

3.2 The natural topography of the area has been altered by modern development, but there is a general slight slope down to the north-east. There is a spot height of 46.3m in Townhill Way to the south of the site.

3.3 The geology map (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>) shows that the deposits in the area are London Clay, overlain in places by the Portsmouth Sand Member.

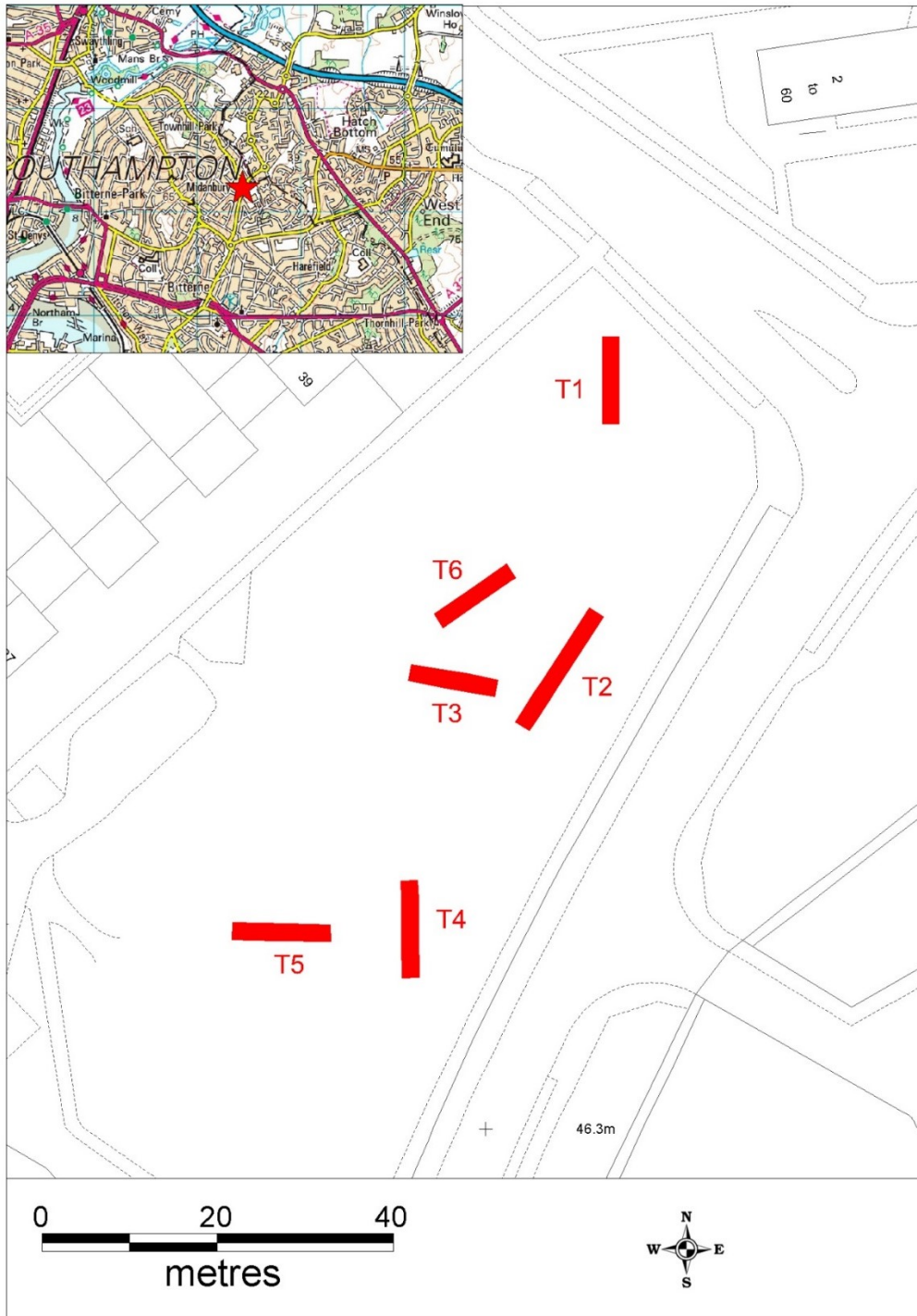


Figure 1. Location of site (red star) and evaluation trenches (red)

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4. Historical background.

4.1. The site lies in the old parish of South Stoneham. The Parish was once very large but in the late 19th century it was divided into a number of new civil parishes as Southampton and Eastleigh grew in size.

4.2 At the time of Domesday the manor of South Stoneham was held by the bishop of Winchester. Two fisheries were recorded, and the manor was valued at £8 as against its value of £7 in the time of King Edward. The manor of *Mainsbridge* (Manesbrigge, xii cent.) *alias Townhill* was held of the king in chief in the thirteenth century. Part of the manor was held by the Sandford family and in 1329 they granted their portion to the abbot and convent of Netley for the purpose of supporting a chantry of two monks to pray there for the souls of himself, his ancestors, and descendants. The other part of the manor was held by the De Mainsbridge family, passing to the Peverels, who sold it to Sir Thomas Tyrell of Essex. He sold it almost immediately to Thomas Dacombe, and from him it was bought by John Smyth before 1372. The estate was forfeited to the crown and it is probable that it was purchased from the crown by Netley Abbey. After this date the manor of Mainsbridge *alias* Townhill is known only under the latter name (Page 1908).

4.3 At the Dissolution Townhill was granted with other lands of Netley to Sir William Paulet, marquis of Winchester. In the late 16th century the house and gardens at Townhill were rented out to Sir Oliver Lambert and his steward's papers give details of the estate (Rutherford 1932).

4.4 In 1605 the manor was sold to Gideon Amondsham and others, nine years later being sold to John Serle, and at his death in 1624 passed to his brother. Before 1665 it had passed into the possession of John Dunch, lord of North Baddesley manor, and with it Townhill descended to Francis Keck. In 1750 it was purchased by John White, and by him conveyed to Nathaniel Middleton, sheriff of Hampshire in 1800. Middleton sold Townhill in 1799 to William Cator *alias* Gater, and it remained in his family until sold by Mr. Caleb William Gater of Salisbury to Lord Swaythling in 1910 (Page 1908).

4.5 The house was altered under architect Leonard Rome Guthrie to become an Italianate mansion with new terraces, a rose garden, and tennis lawns. Informal gardens including a woodland dell and an arboretum were developed when the second Lord Swaythling inherited in 1911. The second Lord Swaythling died in 1927 and the family continued in residence until the outbreak of the Second World War when the house became a Red Cross convalescent home.

4.6 After the war, Townhill proved too expensive to maintain; the family moved out in 1945, many of the interior furnishings and pictures were sold, and the estate was put on the market in 1948. The house and 30 acres were purchased by Middlesex County Council as a residential school for children with special needs while the remainder of the estate and parkland was developed as the Townhill Park housing estate. The school closed in the late 1960s and Townhill was bought by Southampton City Council as a hostel for cadets.

4.7 Marlhill Copse was sold separately to a private buyer c 1990 while the house and gardens were sold again in 1994 to the Gregg School which since then has begun a programme of restoration of the gardens with the help of the Friends of Townhill Park Gardens (<http://list.historicengland.org.uk/resultsingle.aspx?uid=1000868>).

4.8 The site was agricultural land until recently (fig 2.)



Figure 2. The Townhill Park area on an RAF compilation aerial view of the assessment area in the late 1940's, used to compile 1:1250 mapping for post-war Southampton. Townhill House to the top, approximate location of site show as red rectangle. The area appears to be used as a market garden.

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5. Historic maps

5.1 Historic maps from the late 18th century onwards suggest the site was fields. The first large scale map of the area, the Ordnance Survey map of 1866 to 1869, illustrates this (fig 3).

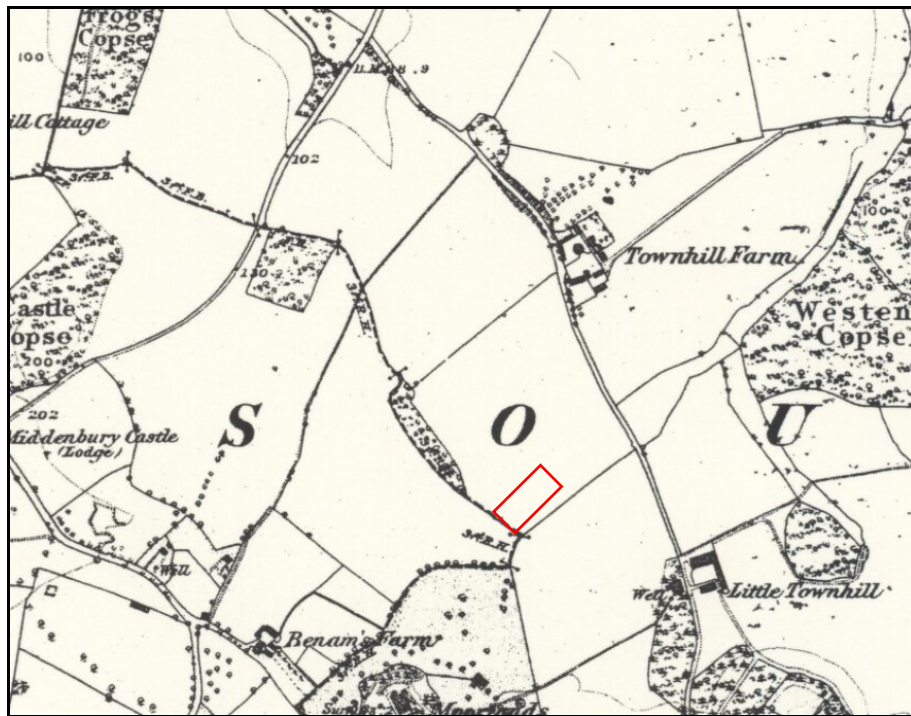


Figure 3. Ordnance Survey Hampshire & Isle of Wight sheet LXV, surveyed 1866 to 1869, published: 1871. Red rectangle shows approximate position of the site.

6. Archaeological background

6.1. The site lies in Area 16 of the Local Areas of Archaeological Potential (LAAP) as defined in the City of Southampton Core Strategy 2010.

6.2 There has been little archaeological work in the immediate area, and the estate was constructed without the benefit of archaeological observations.

6.3 A desk-based assessment and site walk-over of the larger project area identified that the groundworks for the 1960s housing estate had probably destroyed most of any archaeology that was present within the area but islands of undisturbed ground did survive.

6.4 Observations of soil investigation work in 2015 (SOU 1680) in the north-east corner of the site recorded a buried soil containing burnt flints, a flint flake, and a sherd of abraded medieval cooking pot, suggesting probable prehistoric activity, followed by a period of medieval agricultural use (Russel and Fedorowicz 2015b).

6.5 The nearest heritage asset recorded on the Southampton City Council Historic Environment Record is MSH 4049 at NGR: SU 45485 14524. It was a 19th century farmhouse and farmyard on the east side of Cutbush Lane, built before 1869, and demolished c1970.

7. Aims

7.1 The evaluation aimed to determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality, and date of any archaeological remains encountered, as dictated by current best practice.

7.2 For the purposes of the project, archaeologically significant remains and contexts were defined as remains and contexts relating to pre-19th-century human use of the area.

7.3 An additional aim was to identify and record the nature, dimensions, and relationship of natural deposits on the site.

7.4 The objective of the evaluation was to provide enough evidence so that the scale of the threat posed by redevelopment could be gauged, to help in decision making in regard to determine if further archaeological work is required and what the nature of that work will be.

8. Methodology

8.1. The proposed evaluation trenches were set out as in the Written Scheme of Investigation as agreed by Southampton City Council (Russel 2014). The trenches were targeted on the grassed areas between the three blocks of flats that occupied the site. The position of the trenches was adjusted on site to avoid services and areas of modern disturbance (fig 1).

9. Results

The results are presented with the oldest period first. Soil descriptions are as in the British Soil Classification System. Colours were recorded using the Munsell Soil Color Chart. Appendix 1 gives plans of the trenches, Appendix 2 contains a selection of photographs of the deposits encountered on site. Appendix 3 gives details of contexts issued. Appendix 4 lists the finds.

9.1 Natural

9.1.1 The earliest deposit encountered was a pale yellow (2.5Y 7/4) deposit of sand, context 8, seen only in the north end of Trench 2. It was at least 200mm thick. The Portsmouth Sand is recorded to lie in the southwest part of the site and just outside the site to the northeast, and context 8 suggests it may be wider spread than is shown on the geology map. The sand was overlain by context 10 a loamy sand, dark yellowish brown (10YR 3/6) in colour that was over 650mm thick. Above context 10, also present in Trench 1m, was context 2, allocated to the weathered top of the natural. It was a loamy sand, dark yellowish brown (10YR 3/6) in colour and was some 300mm thick. Context 2 was also seen in Trenches 1, 3 and 6.

9.1.2 In Trenches 3, 4 and 5 the natural was London Clay. It was at least 200mm thick and was 10YR 3/6 in colour. It was allocated context 9 in Trenches 3 and 6, and context 14 in Trenches 4 and 5. The top of the London Clay was weathered to a depth of some 120mm. This was allocated context 18, and was recorded as a silty clay, yellowish brown (10YR 5/8) in colour and some 300mm thick.

9.2 Ploughsoil

9.2.1 Above the weathered natural was a layer of brown (10 YR 4/3) sandy clay loam ploughsoil. It varied between 190mm and 290mm in thickness. It was numbered 5 in Trench 1, 7 in Trench 2, 13 in Trench 3, 17 in Trenches 4 and 5, and 21 in Trench 6. It contained occasional flecks of charcoal and ceramic building material.

9.3 20th century

9.3.1 Above the ploughsoil was context 4/12, a deposit of garden soil with brick and concrete some 140mm thick. It was a strong brown (7.5YR 5/8), sandy clay loam. This layer was spread over the site after the 1960s construction phase.

9.4 21st century

9.4.1 Above context 4/12 was context 1/3/6/11, a deposit of soil mixed with demolition material. It was up to 450mm thick and was the product of the recent demolition.

9.4.2 Context 19 was a large modern disturbance in the northeast part of Trench 6. It appeared to be where a large tree was uprooted during the demolition phase. It was filled with 20, demolition rubble mixed with sandy silt loam soil.

9.4.3 Context 15 was allocated to a modern disturbance in Trench 4. It appeared to be where a tree was uprooted during the demolition phase. It was filled with 16, soil which produced nylon string and a modern iron nail.

10. Conclusions

10.1 The natural was Portsmouth Sand in the lower, northern, part of the site, with London Clay in the southern part. The upper part of the natural exhibited evidence of bioturbation and weathering. The natural was overlain by a ploughsoil. The presence of burnt flint in the ploughsoil suggests prehistoric activity, but the flints may have been incorporated into the soil at a later date, rather than indicating prehistoric agriculture. The recovery of a medieval pot sherd from the site when SOU 1680 was undertaken, suggest that the ploughsoil has been building up from the medieval period. The ploughsoil was truncated by modern disturbances in some trenches, and was covered by deposits that can be dated to the 1960s. The only features were tree disturbances, probably all dating to the 20th century when the site was developed with three blocks of council housing surrounded by landscaped gardens. No features of archaeological interest were found.

10.2 Given the lack of evidence of significant human activity on the site it is recommended that no further work should be required during the development phase.

11. Bibliography

Page, W (ed), 1908, *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight*. Volume iii.

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Russel, AD and Fedorowicz, A, 2015a Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment of Land at Townhill Park, Southampton. Southampton Archaeology Unit Report 1208.

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Rutherford J, 1932 *The Miscellaneous Papers of Captain Thomas Stockwell, 1590–1611*. Southampton Record Series.

Appendix 1. Trench plans

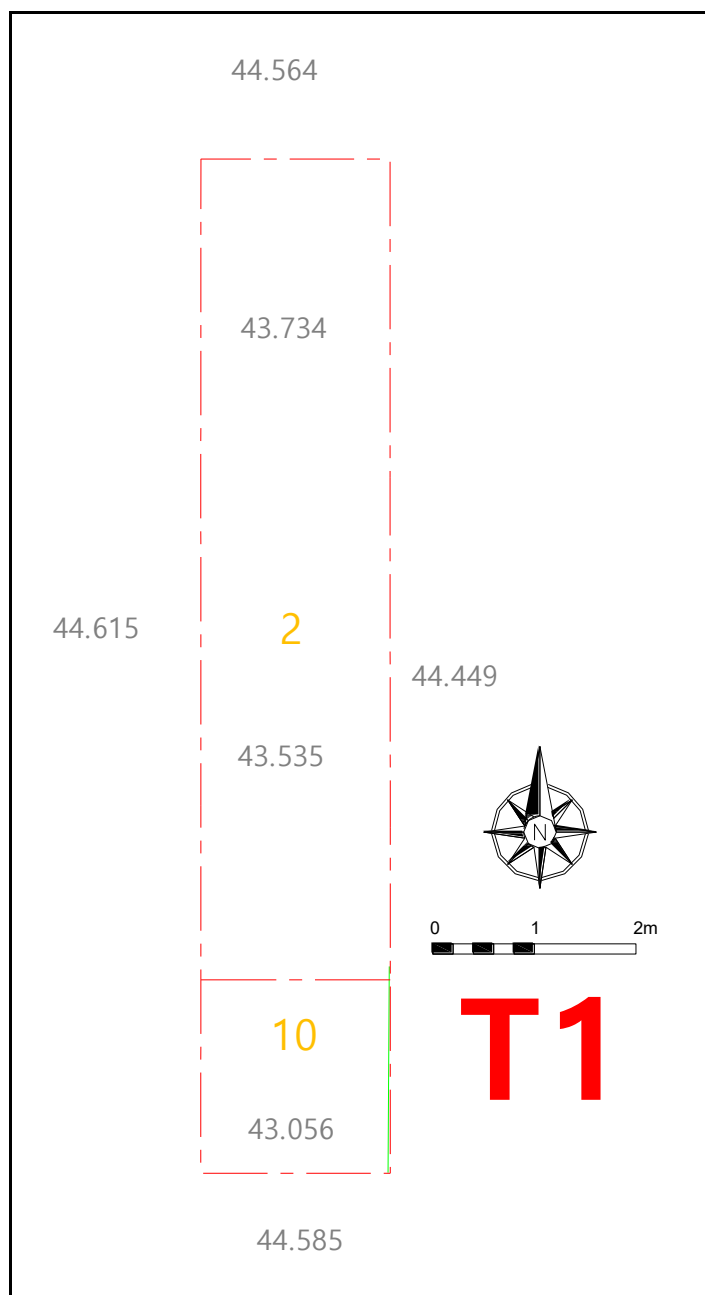


Plate 1. Plan of Trench 1. Trench in red dot dash line, layers in orange, location of section drawing in light green, spot heights in grey.

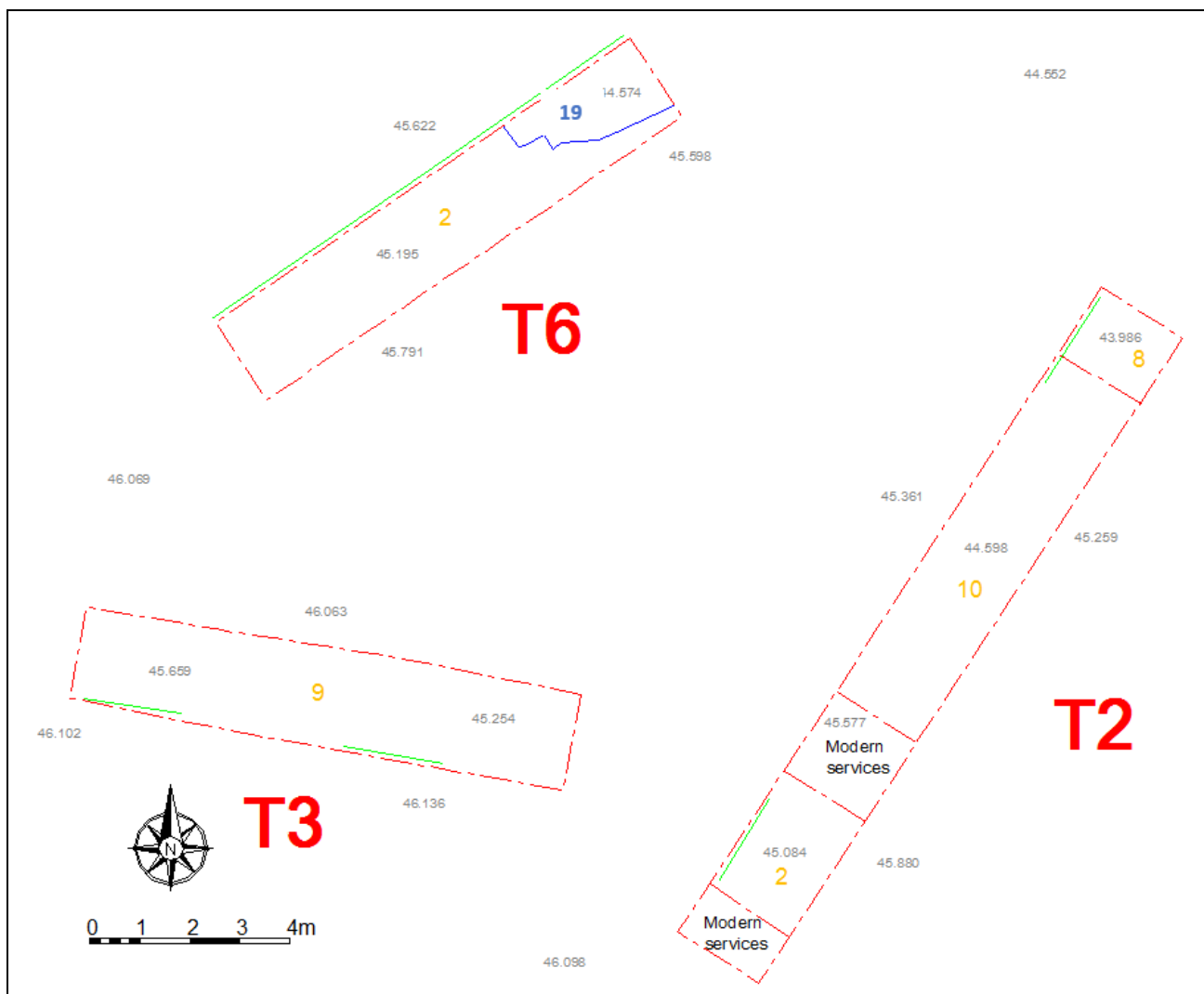


Plate 2. Plan of the middle part of the site, showing trenches 2, 3 and 6. Trenches in red dot dash line, features in blue, layers in orange, location of section drawings in light green, spot heights in grey.

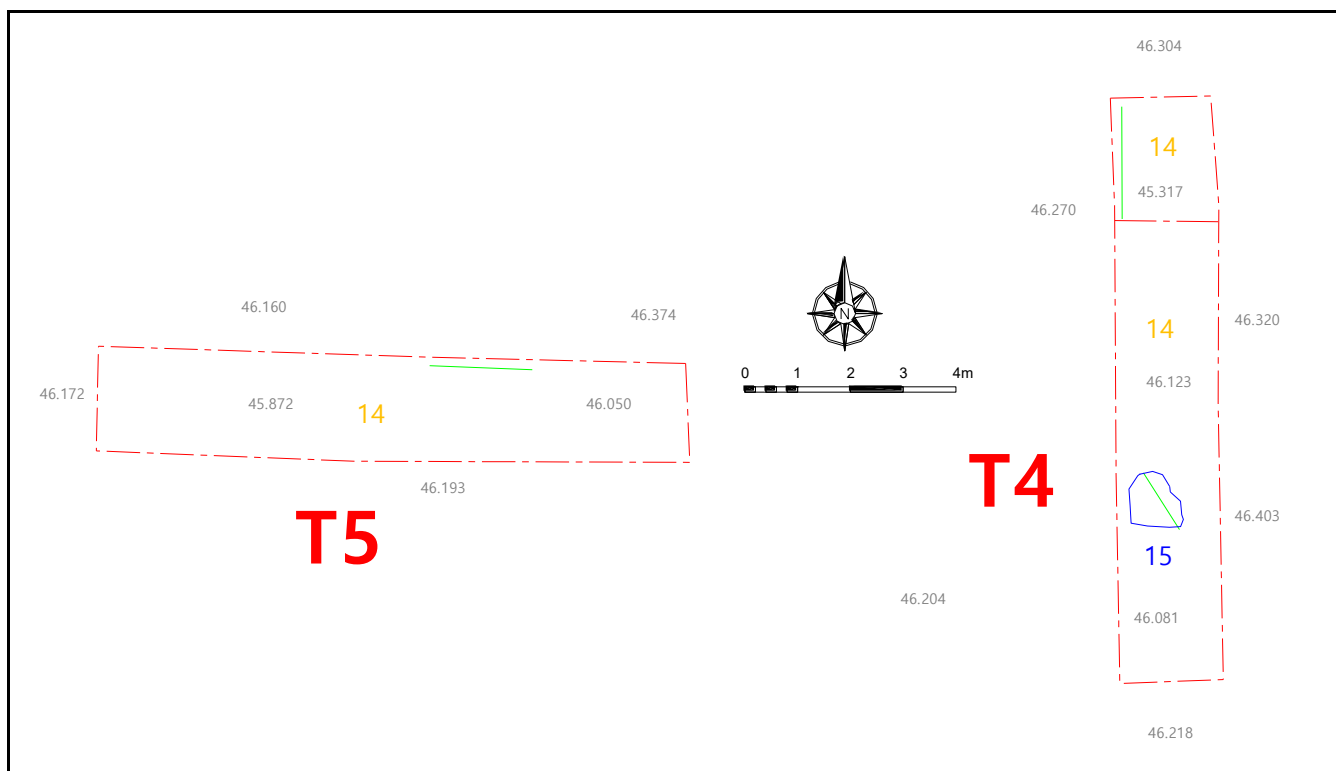


Plate 3. Plan of the south part of the site, showing trenches 4 and 5. Trenches in red dot dash line, features in blue, layers in orange, location of section drawings in light green, spot heights in grey.

Appendix 2. Photographs



Plate 4. Section showing strata in Trench 1.



Plate 5. Showing strata in Trench 2.



Plate 6. Showing strata in Trench 3. Note that label 2 at base of sequence should read 9.



Plate 7. Showing strata in Trench 4.



Plate 8. Showing strata in Trench 5.



Plate 9. Showing strata in Trench 6



Plate 10. Showing feature 15 in Trench 4, half sectioned.

Appendix 3 Context list

Context	Trench	Category	Description	Munsell page	Col	Texture	Fill of	Filled by
1	1-6	Layer	Topsoil	10YR	3/3	Silt loam		
2	1, 2, 3, 6	Layer	Weathered Natural	10YR	3/6	Loamy sand		
3	1	Layer	Demolition rubble	10YR	5/4	Loamy sand		
4	1	Layer	Garden soil	7.5YR	5/8	Sandy clay loam		
5	1	Layer	Ploughsoil	10YR	4/3	Sandy clay loam		
6	2	Layer	Demolition	10YR	5/4	Loamy sand		
7	2	Layer	Ploughsoil	10YR	4/5	Sandy clay loam		
8	2	Layer	Natural sand	2.5Y	7/4	Sand		
9	3, 6	Layer	Natural Clay	10YR	3/6	Clay		
10	1-2	Layer	Natural	10YR	3/6	Loamy sand		
11	3	Layer	Demolition	10YR	5/4	Loamy sand		
12	3	Layer	Garden soil	10YR	5/8	Sandy clay loam		
13	3	Layer	Ploughsoil	10YR	4/3	Sandy clay loam		
14	4-5	Layer	Natural clay	7.5YR	5/6	Silty clay		
15	4	Feature	Modern disturbance					16
16	4	Fill	Tree disturbance	10YR	3/3	Silty clay loam	15	
17	4-5	Layer	Ploughsoil	10YR	4/4	Silt loam		
18	4-5	Layer	Weathered natural	10YR	5/8	Silt clay		
19	6	Feature	Modern disturbance					20
20	6	Fill	Modern disturbance	10YR	5/4	Sandy silt loam	19	
21	6	Layer	Ploughsoil	10YR	3/2	Silty clay loam		

Appendix 4 Finds list

Finds recording form					
Context no	Mat Type	Find Type	No of frag	Wgt(gm)	Description
2	FLNT	BURN	2	29	
5	FLNT	BURN	2	24	
7	FLNT	BURN	1	5	