

**An Archaeological Evaluation
by Trial Trenching at The Vicarage,
St. Mary's Road, Hinckley,
Leicestershire
NGR: SP 4276 9376**

Jennifer Browning



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Jennifer Browning

For: CgMs Consulting

Checked by:

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Archaeological Evaluation by Trial Trenching at The Vicarage, St. Mary's Road, Hinckley, Leicestershire (NGR SP 4276 9376)

Jennifer Browning

Summary

Five trial trenches, totalling 122m², were excavated in the grounds of The Vicarage St. Mary's Road, Hinckley, Leicestershire (NGR SP 4276 9376) in order to establish the presence or absence, nature and extent of any archaeological features. Four of the trenches produced positive evidence for archaeology in the form of ditches and a possible channel or pond. The features were generally well defined but no closely dateable finds were recovered and their date is therefore tentative. However, they clearly pre-date the use of the land as gardens and are likely to be medieval or post-medieval, possibly related to fishponds associated with the former priory.

The archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council under the Accession Code X.A36 2012.

Introduction

Five trial trenches were excavated in the grounds of The Vicarage, St. Mary's Road, Hinckley, Leicestershire (NGR SP 4276 9376) between the 13th and 19th March 2012. The trenches were excavated by machine to the top of archaeology or undisturbed natural substratum. The fieldwork was carried out in accordance with Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5): Planning for the Historic Environment (2010), PPS5, now replaced by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF Dept Communities and Local Government; 27th March 2012) and was undertaken as part of a pre-application enquiry to evaluate the character and extent of any buried archaeological remains in order that the potential impact of development may be assessed by the Planning Authority. The work follows a desk-based assessment produced by CgMs Consulting, which indicated that there was potential for the survival of archaeological remains within the site.

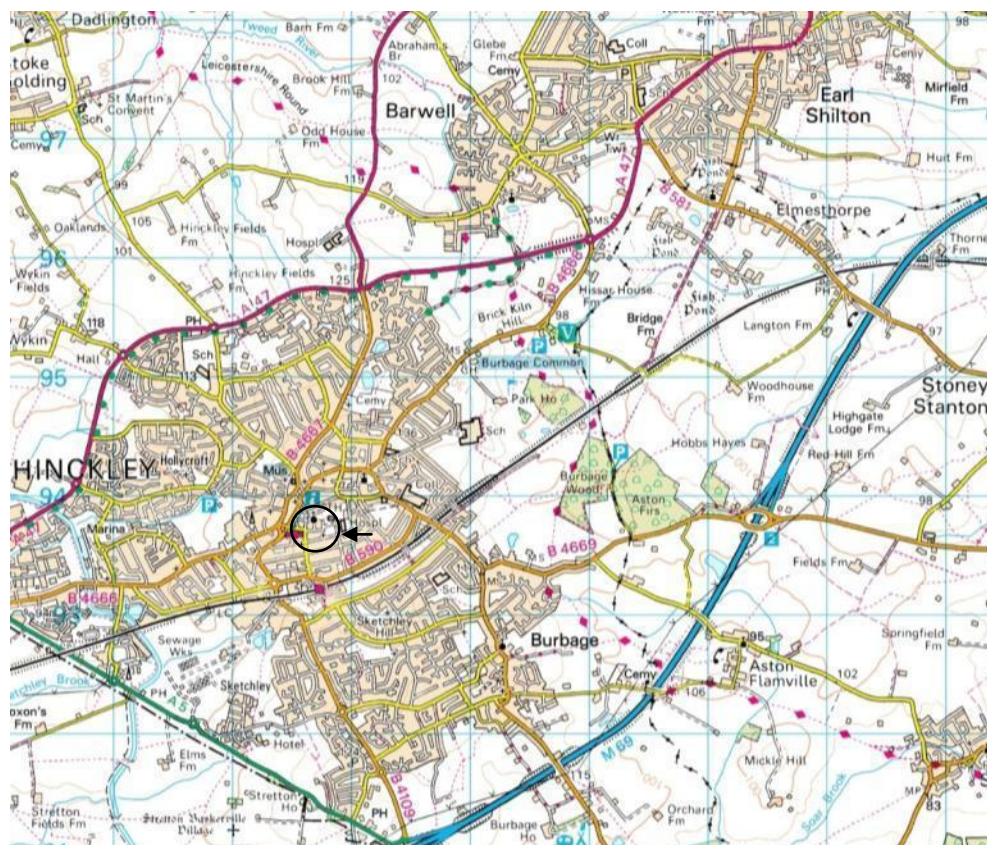


Figure 1: Location plan © Crown Copyright

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Site description, Topography and Geology

The site covers approximately 0.42ha in the centre of Hinckley, Leicestershire and is located to the south of St. Mary's Church (Fig. 1). It is surrounded on the east and south by access roads, which also lead to the Council Offices. To the north of the site is the Scout Hut and St. Mary's Churchyard, while beyond the western boundaries are Florence House and the Masonic Hall. The site itself is currently occupied by a single dwelling within its own grounds. The Vicarage, a detached residence constructed in the 1950s, is located in the centre of the plot. To the north of the building, there are dense trees and shrubs and a gravelled car parking area, while to the south there are lawns bordered by trees and shrubbery.

The bedrock geology of the site comprises Mudstone of the Mercian Mudstone Formation, while the superficial geology is diamicton of the Oadby Member formation (Geology of Britain viewer: (<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/opengeoscience/> Accessed 26th March 2012). The northern part of the site, adjacent to the churchyard lies at 120m OD. From this highest point, the land slopes to the south, dropping by around 3-4m overall. The ground level drops steeply close to the western boundary in the vicinity of a pond.

Historical and Archaeological Background

Prior to the trial trenching an archaeological desk-based assessment was produced by CgMs Consulting (Patrick and Gidman 2011) and the results are summarised below. The document examined the potential impact of the development by assembling data from available sources such as the National Monuments Record (NMR), the Historic Environment Record (HER), aerial photographs and previous maps of the site. The site lies within the Hinckley Conservation Area. Although there are no Scheduled Monuments within the site, Hinckley's Motte and Bailey Castle (Scheduled Monument 17039) is located 105m to the north-east.

No previous archaeological work has taken place within the site but a small excavation to the north-west was carried out by Hinckley Fieldwalking Group in 2007. Archaeological remains associated with the medieval Benedictine Priory and post-medieval Hall House were identified and recorded, along with evidence for the manufacture of building ceramics. Some remains relating to 19th century cottages, known as Hunter's Row were also recorded. A geophysical survey undertaken the same year identified possible linear anomalies, which may also relate to the medieval priory. Robinson's Plan of 1782 shows the Priory extending into the northern part of the site, which would correspond with the geophysical anomalies. The site appears to have been within the area enclosed by a U-shaped moat.

The desk-based assessment identified a number of HER entries in the vicinity of the site, based on a search carried out in January 2011 covering a 500m radius. The only HER entry relating to the prehistoric period refers to an Iron Age brooch found at Hinckley Castle (MLE 6500). Similarly the only known evidence for Roman activity was two sherds of pottery (MLE 18561) found during the excavation of the Priory, directly to the north of the site. Its presence in the Domesday Book indicates that Hinckley was a settlement by the late Saxon period but there are no HER entries relating to this period.

There is considerable activity in and around the site in the medieval period. The site is located within the historic core of Hinckley (MLE 2901) and the HER also records an entry relating to the Priory (MLE 2878). The Priory was founded by the Benedictine Order before 1209 and was dependent on the Abbey of Lire in Normandy, however it seems to have been a small establishment. The last Prior was recorded in 1404, after which it may have been privately owned (Nichols 1812). The Priory was adapted to form Hall House in the late 16th century, and is recorded immediately to the north and north-west of the site (MLE 2879), while fishponds associated with the Priory are recorded to the west, south and east, forming a U-Shaped moat (MLE 2880). The Scheduled Hinckley Castle (MLE 2890) and its possible rampart (MLE 16342) are located to the north-east. Further medieval remains within the search area include a Dominican Priory to the north-east of the site and the Castle (MLE 9162), medieval pottery to the north (MLE 16343), a possible well on Lower Bond Street (MLE 2877), the Market Place (MLE 2884) to the north-west and, to the west, a possible medieval road (MLE 2896).

In the post-medieval period, there is one entry for the site itself, relating to the post-medieval garden of Hall House (MLE 2881). Hall House itself was demolished in 1827. Further HER entries refer to the moated fishponds, which were extant into the

post-medieval period (MLE 2880) and timber-framed cottages (no longer present) on Church Walk to the north of the site (MLE 2876).

There are no Listed Buildings within the site itself but there are 23 within a 200m radius, including the Church of St. Mary to the north of the site, the Council Offices to the east and the Masonic Hall directly to the west of the site.

Aims and Objectives

The main objectives of the evaluation were to:

- Clarify the presence/absence and extent of any buried archaeological remains within the site that may be impacted on by development
- Identify, within the constraints of the evaluation, the date, character, condition and depth of any surviving remains within the site
- Report any results and produce an archive

Within these stated objectives, the principal aim of the trial trenching was to establish the nature, extent, date, depth, significance and state of preservation of archaeological deposits on the site in order to determine the potential impact upon them from the proposed development.

Methodology

The location of six proposed trial trenches within the development area was guided by a plan supplied by CgMs Consulting, with allowance for re-positioning due to ground constraints. Service plans were consulted and a CAT scan was undertaken in the area of each trench before excavation commenced. Due to extensive tree cover in the northern part of the site as well as the presence of a marked gas pipe, it was not possible to excavate Trench 1, and the presence/absence and nature of any potential archaeology in this area is therefore currently unknown. It was possible to excavate the remaining five trenches in the areas of the site suggested, with minor adjustments made to accommodate trees and space to manoeuvre the machine. The topsoil and underlying layers were excavated under continuous archaeological supervision using a JCB 3CX with a 1.6m ditching bucket, until either the top of archaeology or the natural substratum/undisturbed ground was reached or to a maximum depth of 1.2m.

The bases of the trenches were cleaned in areas where potential archaeological deposits were observed. All features were sample excavated in order to determine the character and date of any remains and they were photographed, described and drawn to scale. Environmental samples were taken as appropriate.

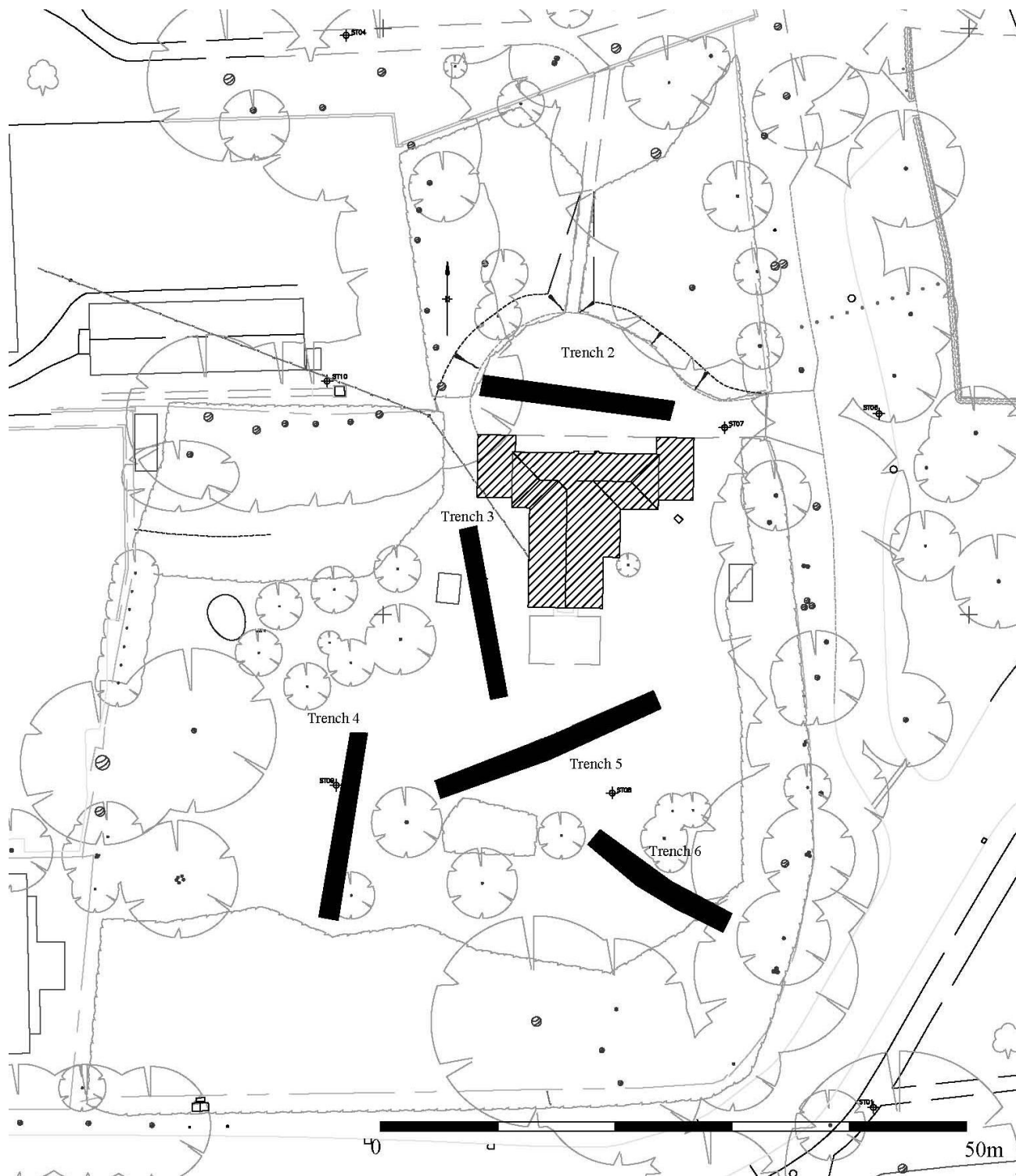


Figure 2: Trench location plan

All the work followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations*. The archaeological deposits were given context numbers and in the following text, cuts appear in square brackets (e.g. [1]) and fills in round brackets (e.g. (3)). The trenches and planning points were surveyed using a Leica Total Station and superimposed onto a previous survey supplied by CgMs Consulting and produced with the aid of TurboCad v.15 design software.

Results

Figure 2 shows the location of the trenches and each trench is summarised in Table 1. The topsoil was predominantly dark grey brown silty clay loam, with moderate stones and pebbles, frequent charcoal flecks and occasional ceramic building material.

Table 1: Summary of trench details

TRN	Orient- ation	Length (m)	Width (m)	Ground levels (m OD)	Base trench (m OD)	of Context No:	Comments
1	-	-	-	-	-	-	Unexcavated
2	E-W	15.90	1.60	117.77(E); 117.50 (W);	117.29 (E); 117.10 (W);	-	No archaeology identified.
3	N-S	14.00	1.60	117.13(N); 116.57 (S);	117.48 (N); 115.67 (S);	[9] (10)	
4	NNE- SSW	15.00	1.60	115.69(N); 115.28 (S);	115.04 (N); 114.48 (S);	[11] (12); (13)	
5	E-W	19.40	1.60	117.11(E); 116.09 (W);	116.29 (E); 115.26 (W);	[1] (2) (3)	
6	SE-NW	12.00	1.60	116.38(NW); 116.14 (SE);	115.47 (NW); 115.39 (SE);	[4] (5); [6] (7); (8)	

Trench 1

Trench 1 was to be located at the northern end of the plot. However, due to dense tree cover and the possible presence of a gas pipe and with the agreement of CgMs Consulting and the Planning Archaeologist, this trench was not excavated.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was located on the northern side of the site, to the front of the Vicarage, in an area currently used as a driveway. The trench was excavated on fairly flat ground (c.117.50m OD) through a layer of gravel over old tarmac <0.36m thick. The subsoil generally consisted of mid orange-brown silty clay, between 0.04m and 0.16m thick, overlying the natural subsoil which consisted of bright orange brown clay with some mottling. Approximately 2.3m from the west end of the trench a brick footing was encountered, bounding a linear feature approximately 2.5m wide containing disturbed clay subsoil with brick and concrete rubble. In the centre of the trench (c. 9.5m from the western end), an area of blue clay contained a rectangular feature, which was

believed to be a modern service. Towards its eastern end, the trench was crossed by two north-south aligned land-drains, presumably obsolete, and a pipe or cable of unknown origin (orientated north-north-east to south-south-west).

No archaeological deposits were identified however the topography, together with the occurrence of natural subsoil at such a shallow depth, suggests that the ground level has been reduced in this area.

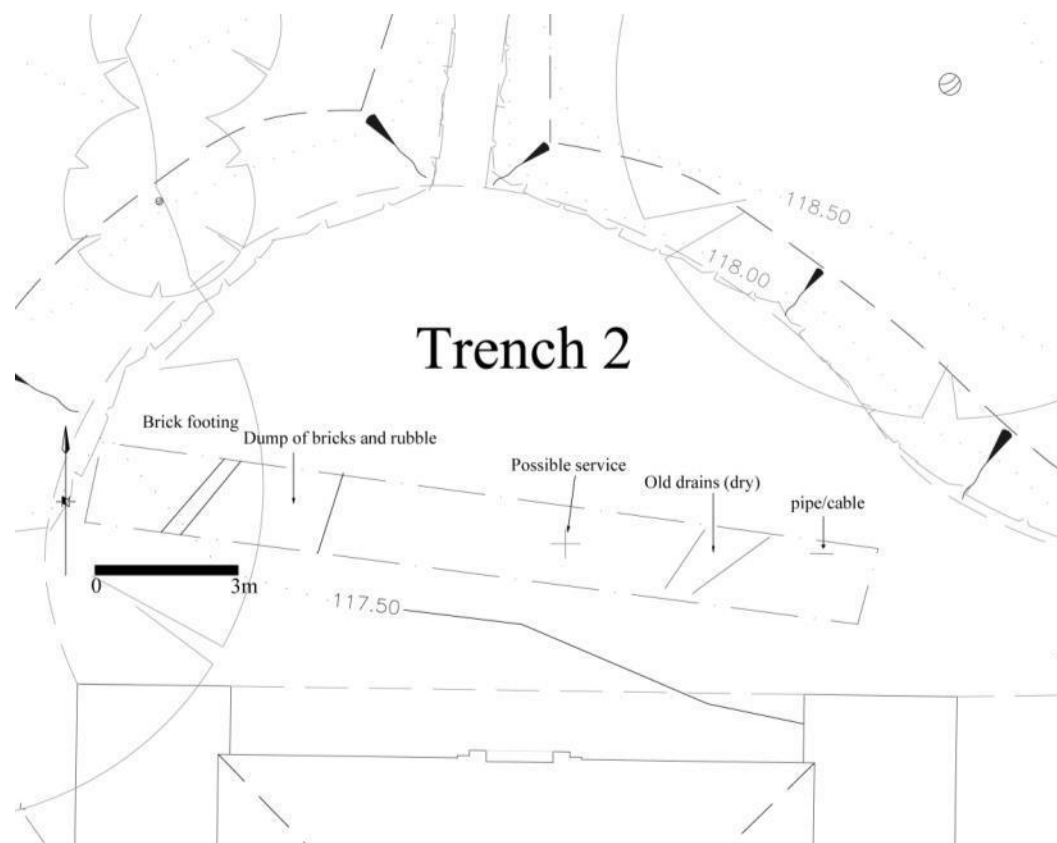


Figure 3: Plan of Trench 2

Trench 3

Trench 3 was located adjacent to the western wall of the Vicarage. There was a gentle slope down from *c.* 117.1m OD at the north *c.* 116.6m OD at the south. The trench was excavated through topsoil (*c.* 0.20m thick) below which was a layer of re-deposited subsoil with frequent mill-waste and brick rubble, between 0.10m and 0.20m thick. Below this, was a buried topsoil 0.20m thick, overlying a second subsoil consisting of firm, dark orange brown sandy clay with occasional pebbles. The natural subsoil, encountered at *c.* 0.85m below the current ground level, consisted of mottled red clay with patches of sand and gravel. The first 2.5m at the north end of the trench was not excavated down to natural subsoil, due to the presence of several drain pipes. A single feature was encountered in this trench.

Ditch [9] (10)

A north-south aligned ditch with a butt end was present in the northern half of Trench 3, and was encountered at a level of 116.3m OD. The feature was a minimum of 2.5m long and 0.8m wide, although neither the full width nor the full length was revealed

by the evaluation trench. It was 0.28m deep and had steeply sloping sides and a flattish but irregular base. The fill (9) consisted of dark grey brown silty clay, with frequent charcoal flecks and occasional to moderate small and medium pebbles. An area of re-deposited subsoil (red clay) was noted in the centre of the feature.

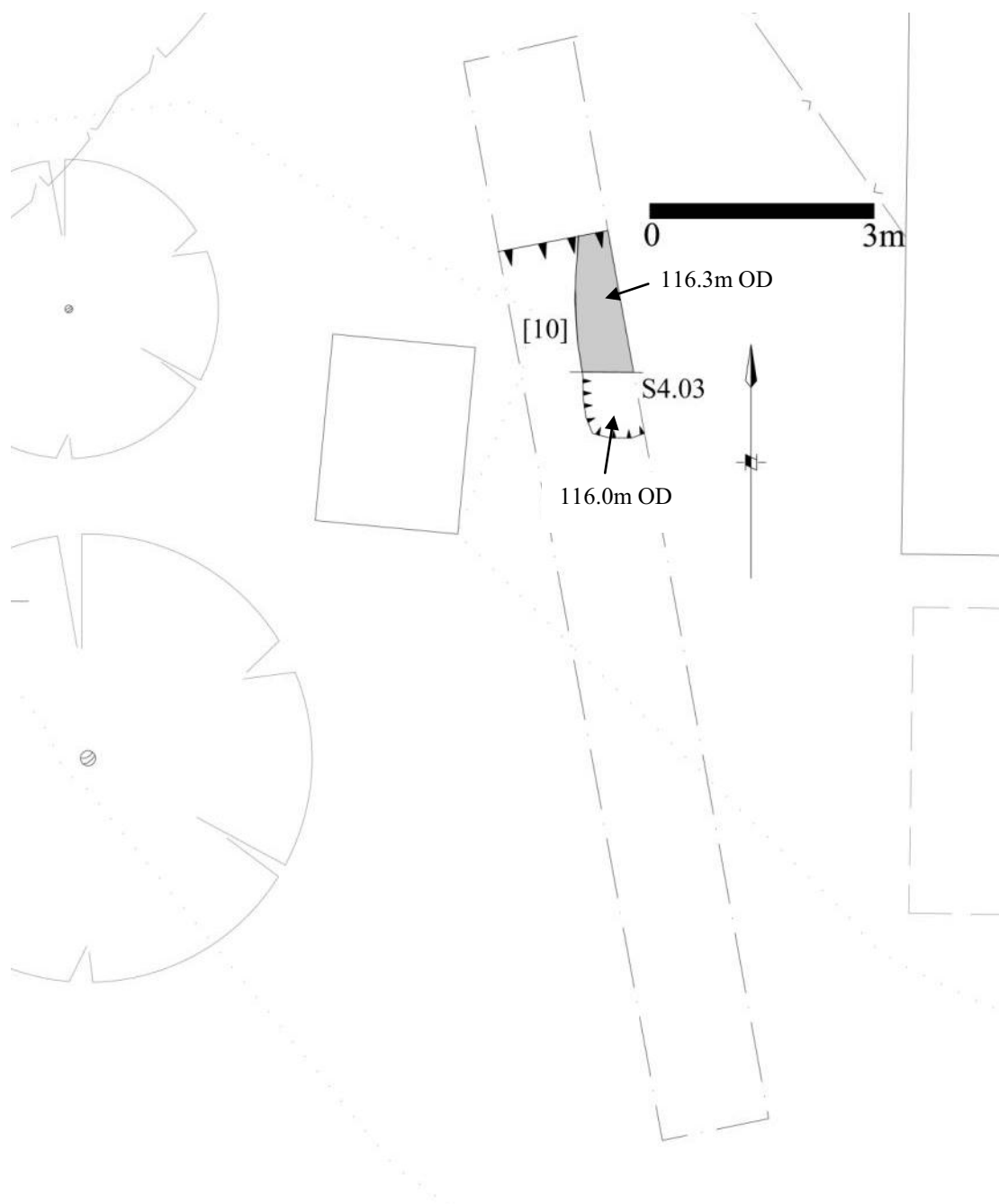


Figure 4: Plan of Trench 3

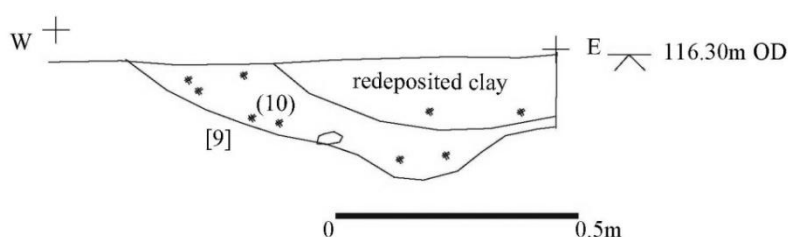


Figure 5: Section through ditch [9]

Trench 4

Trench 4 was located towards the southern boundary of the site, on a slope down from 115.7m OD at the northern end, to the south at 115.3m OD. The topsoil was between 0.25m and 0.34m deep and consisted of dark grey brown silty clay, with some sand, moderate stones and pebbles and occasional ceramic building material. At the southern end of the trench, re-deposited subsoil (orange-brown sandy clay with occasional pebbles) was noted, disappearing approximately 6m along the trench. Below this layer and, directly below the topsoil at the northern end of the trench, a second subsoil consisted of dark grey brown sandy clay with pebbles and occasional brick/tile fragments. The natural subsoil (mottled red clay with sand and gravel patches) was encountered at 0.65m at the north end of the trench, sloping down to 0.94m at the southern end (c. 114.5m OD). The water table appeared to have been reached here, as water seeped into the trench at this low lying point.

The base of an east-west aligned drain, (13), crossed the north end of the trench, seen as a shallow stripe of black humic silty soil, 0.02m deep. Some large stones noted above could have formed capping; these were not laid neatly but appeared to be natural until the dark soil was revealed beneath.

A rounded feature was encountered at the southern end of the trench [11] (12) (c. 114.8m OD), primarily seen in the eastern section, however the western end of the feature projected into the trench. It was possibly of oval shape, 0.42m wide and 0.25m deep. The fill consisted of dark grey sandy silt, with some small and medium pebbles and frequent charcoal flecks. A bulk environmental sample was taken from this feature (Sample no: 3).

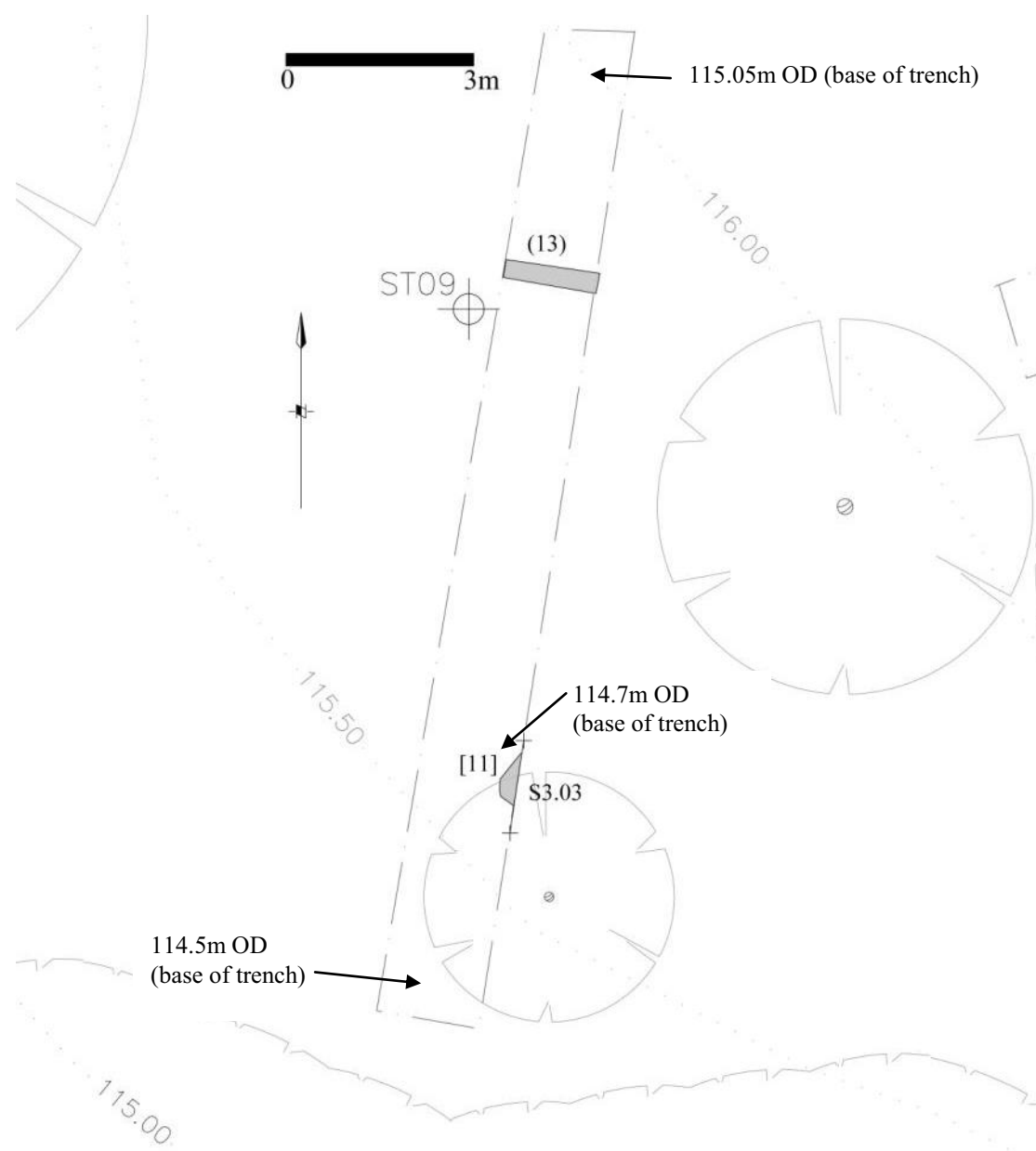


Figure 6: Plan of Trench 4

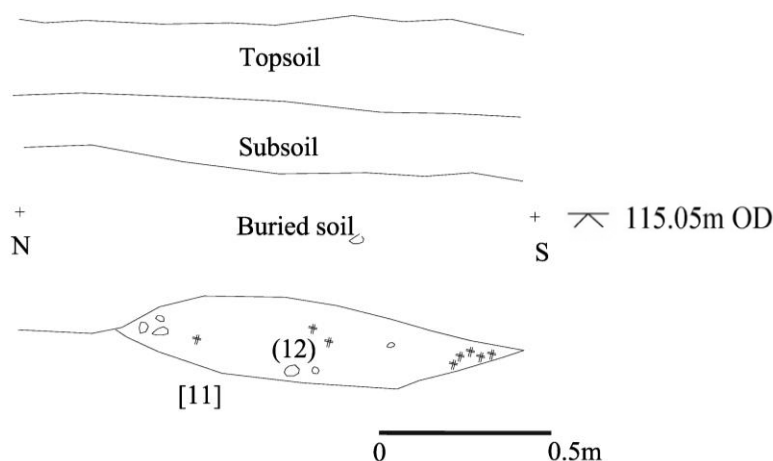


Figure 7: Section through feature [11]

Trench 5

Trench 5 was located on an east-west alignment across the lawn to the rear of the Vicarage; levels ranged from 117.1m OD at the east end to 116.1 OD at the west end. Topsoil ranged in depth from 0.28m at the western end, to a maximum depth of 0.40 towards the eastern end of the trench. Below this there was a thick layer of subsoil consisting of dark grey brown sandy clay, with moderate pebbles, charcoal flecks and ceramic building material. The natural subsoil was encountered at approximately 0.80m below the ground surface and consisted of light orange brown sandy clay with orange brown mottle and frequent pebbles. A service trench, visible in section from just below the topsoil and filled with re-deposited natural subsoil, was located 3m from the western end of the trench.

Feature [1], (2), (3);

A linear feature, 7.5m wide and orientated north-south, occupied the centre of the trench at 116.3m OD. Sections were excavated on both sides to examine its profile and test the depth. In addition, the depth in the centre of the feature was ascertained using an auger. The eastern edge had a gradual slope down to a flattish base. The western side of the feature had a steeper edge down to a fairly flat base and on this side two fills were noted; the lower fill (2) which also lay along the edge itself consisted of dark grey brown silty clay with frequent charcoal, small pebbles and flecks of ceramic building material. It is suggested that this represents an initial silting, prior to backfilling. A bulk environmental sample was taken for this fill (Sample no. 1). The boundary between the two fills was fairly diffuse. The upper fill (2) was a dark reddish brown silty clay, mottled with yellow brown and contained small and medium pebbles and moderate charcoal, however it appeared fairly sterile compared with context (2). A small fragment of slate and six fragments of burnt daub were recovered from context (2). Context (3) was the main fill and was the only one seen on the eastern side. The auger holes also indicate that this fill runs along most of the feature to the base. Both sections and auger holes suggest that the feature has a maximum depth of 0.95m (c. 115.35- 115.00m OD).

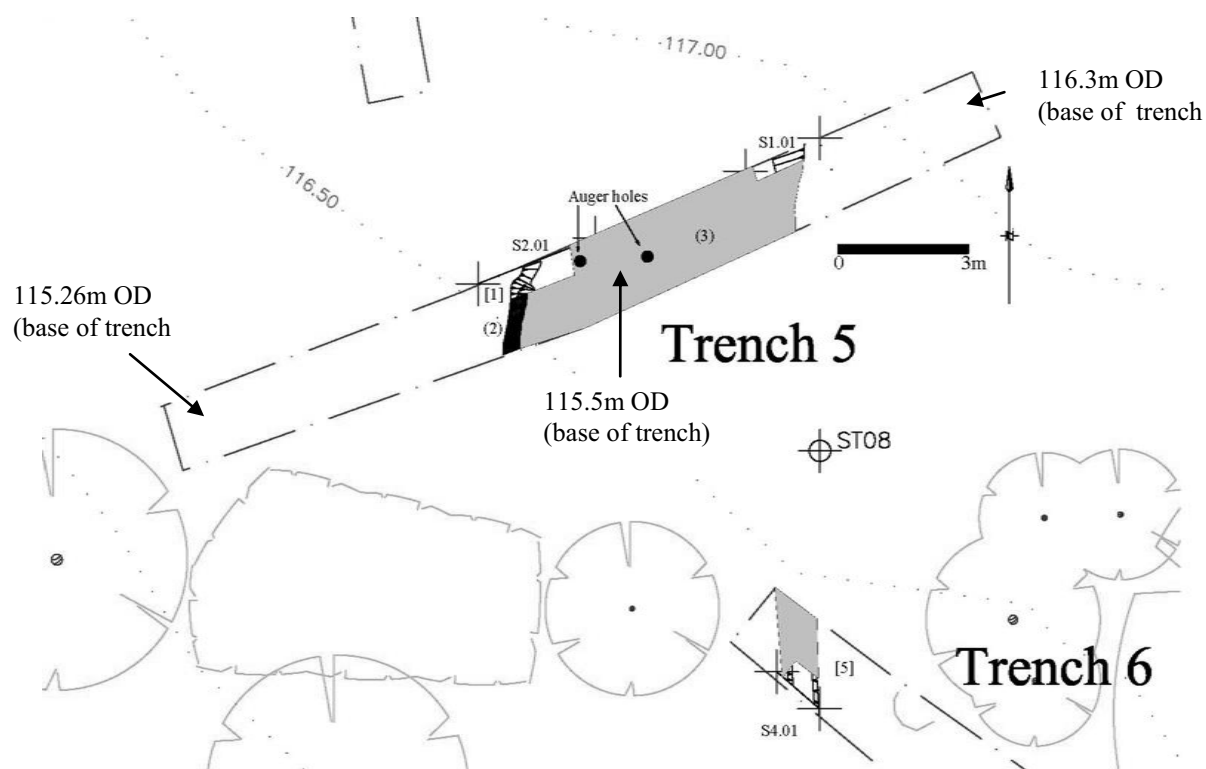


Figure 8: Plan of Trench 5, also showing northern part of Trench 6

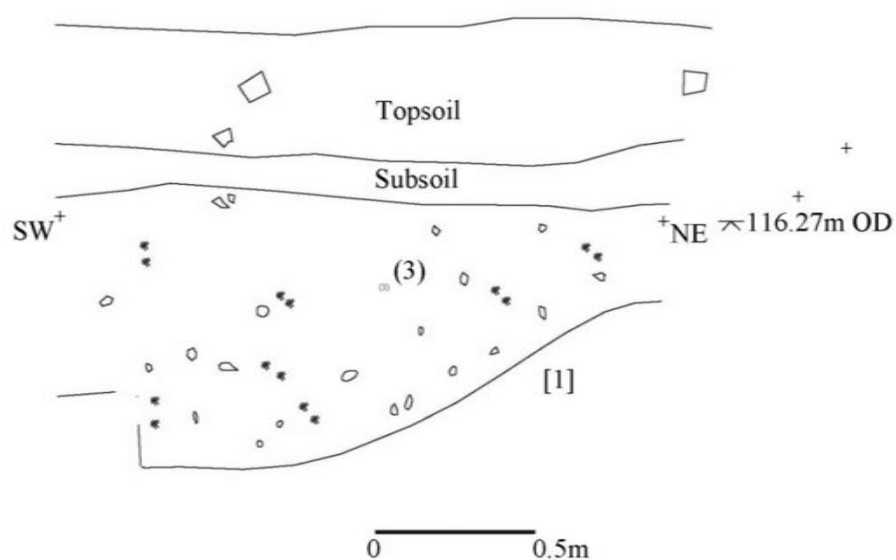


Figure 9: Section through eastern side of feature [1]

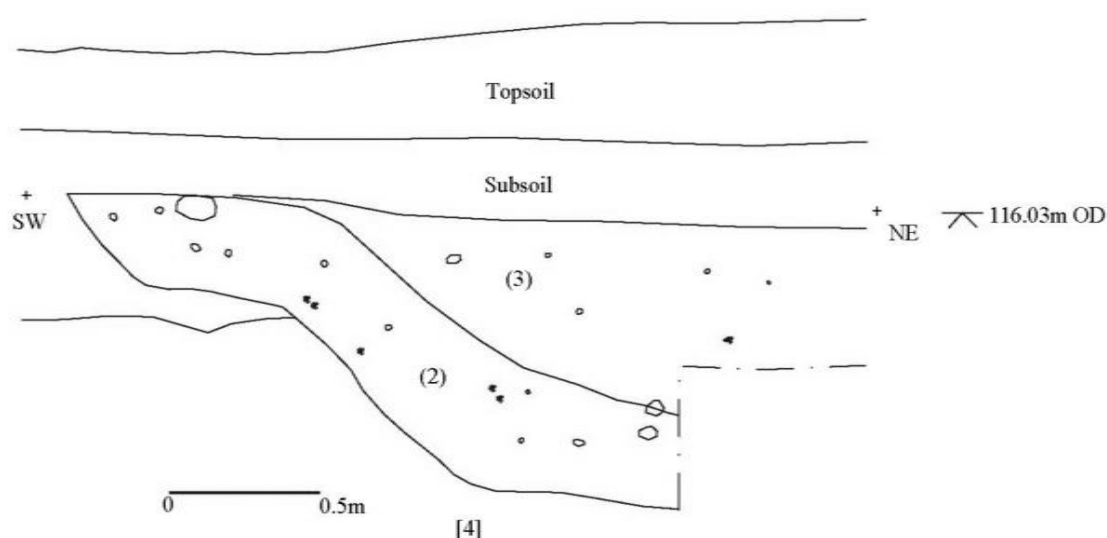


Figure 10: Section through western side of feature [1]

Trench 6

Trench 6 was located in the south-eastern corner of the site, with ground levels (OD) of 116.38m at the north-west end and 116.14m at the south-east end. Due to the presence of trees, the machine had to alter its position during excavation, therefore creating a slightly curving trench. Topsoil was 0.20-0.30m thick and lay above subsoil consisting of dark orange brown sandy clay, frequently disturbed by root activity. Natural subsoil was reached at 0.75m below ground level at the north-west end of the trench and was 0.91m deep at the south-east end. Three features were initially identified in this trench but, on investigation, one of these (context 8) had very diffuse edges and appeared to be of natural origin, probably caused by root activity.

Ditch [4] (5)

At the north-west end of the trench there was a north-south aligned ditch, which was encountered at c. 115.45m OD. Unfortunately, due to the ground conditions, the machine was not able to fully expose the feature on its north-western edge. It was initially suspected to be a continuation of the large feature seen in Trench 5 and certainly the edge does appear to be on the correct alignment (Figure 8). However, the excavated section suggested that the feature was much narrower, 0.85m wide, with sloping sides and a flat base. The ditch was 0.30m deep (c.115.15m OD) and had a single fill consisting of firm mid greyish brown silty clay, with moderate stones and pebbles and charcoal flecks. Seven small fragments of burnt daub were recovered from the fill.

Ditch/gully [6] (7)

A second ditch or gully was present at the south-east end of the trench at a level (OD) of c. 115.6m. The feature measured 0.7m wide and was 0.4m deep, with gently sloping sides and a rounded base. The fill consisted of dark grey brown sandy clay with frequent charcoal and occasional pebbles and there was a fairly diffuse boundary between it and the overlying subsoil. The fill was noticeably harder and paler in

colour close to the base of the feature (115.15m OD). Five fragments of burnt daub were collected during excavation of the feature. A bulk environmental sample was taken from this feature (Sample No 2).

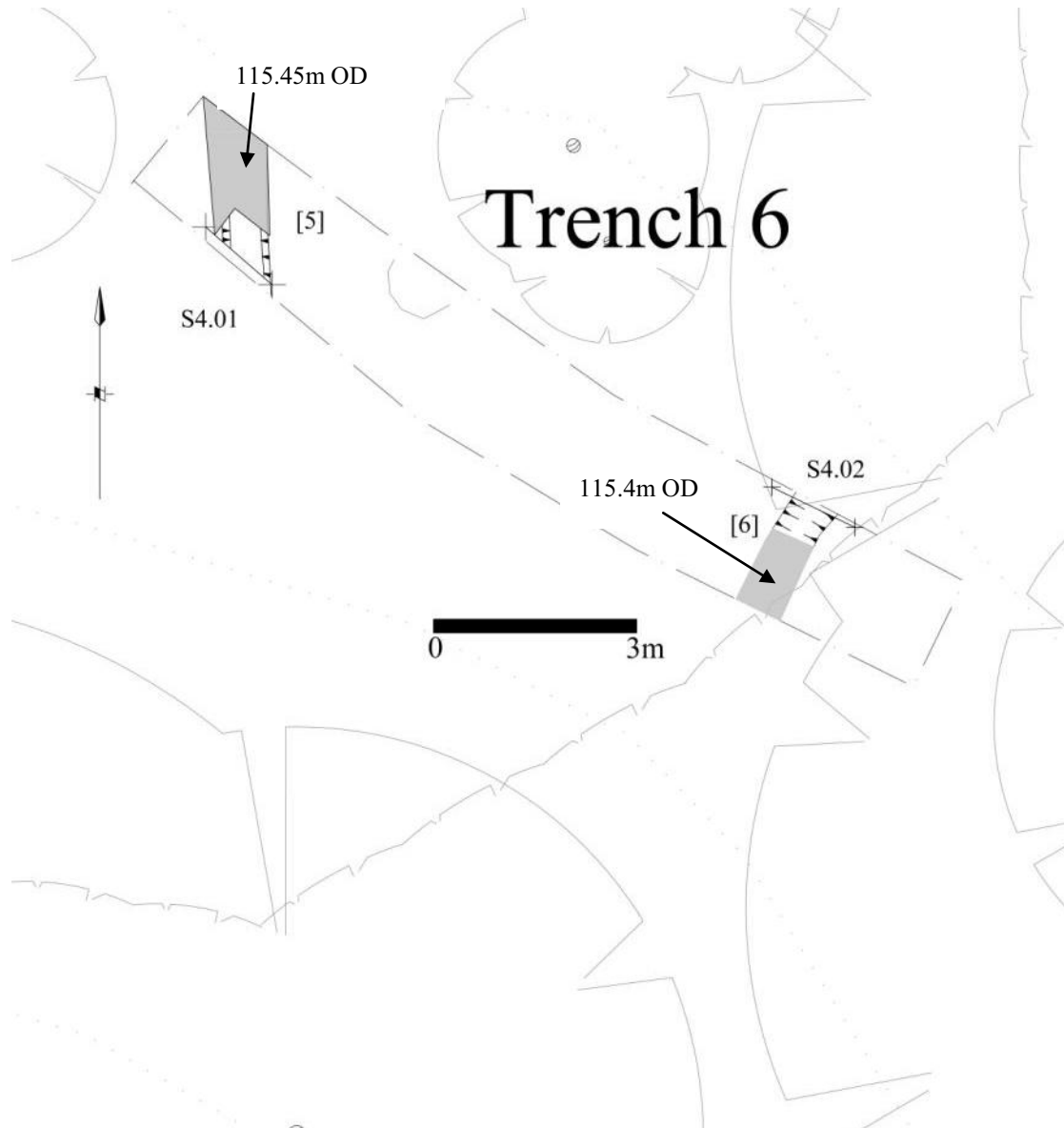


Figure 11: Plan of Trench 6

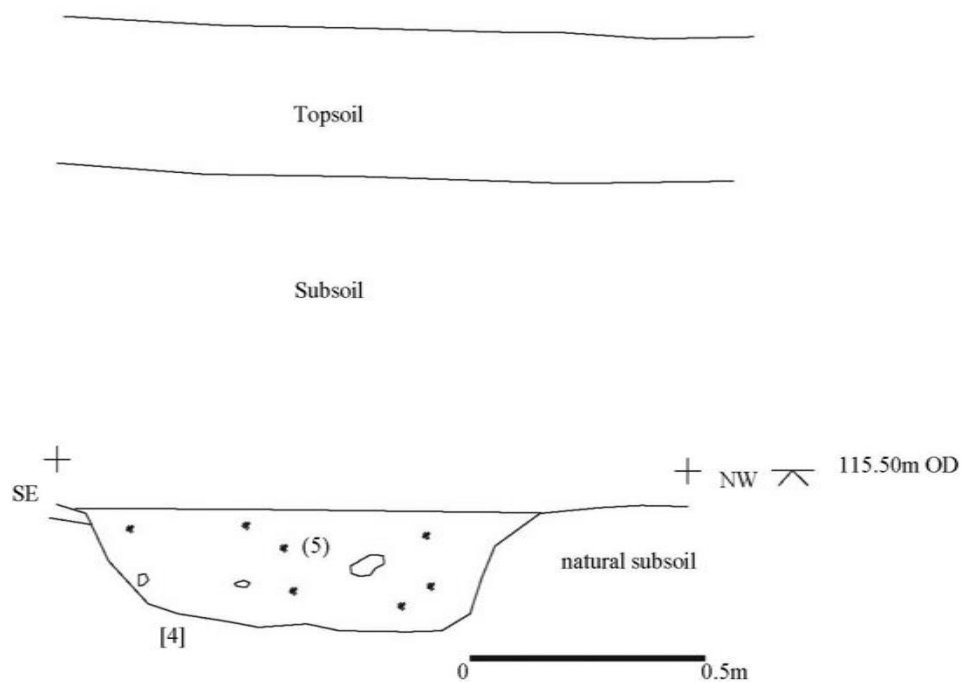


Figure 12: Section through ditch [4]

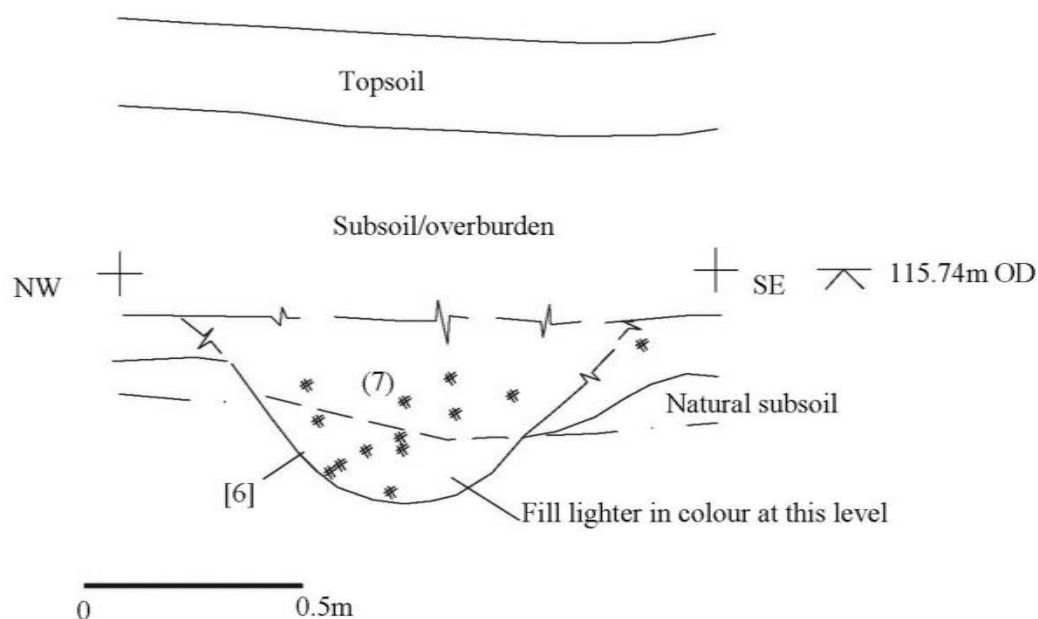


Figure 13: Section through gully [6]

Discussion

The trial trenching revealed five archaeological features located within Trenches 3, 4, 5 and 6, mostly consisting of ditches and gullies. The largest feature, seen in Trench 5, can best be described as a large ditch or channel [1] and it is likely that it represents a fishpond. The early map evidence summarised in the desk-based assessment (CgMs 2011), shows that the proposed development was formerly bounded by the arms of a U- shaped moat or fishpond on the south and east.

Unfortunately, none of the identified features provided good dating evidence, such as pottery or other dateable finds and, in the absence of such materials, the date of the features is tentative.

To summarise the available evidence, all of the features were well-sealed under a considerable depth of topsoil and subsoil or garden soil, which were only less than 0.6m thick in Trench 2, where the original ground level is likely to have been reduced. In trenches 3-6, the level (OD) of the natural subsoil ranged from the highest point of 116.3m in Trench 3, through c 115.3- 115.5m in Trenches 5 and 6 to a low point of 114.5m OD in the southern end of Trench 4, reflecting the natural slope. None of the features produced modern finds, which suggests that they pre-date the use of the area as a garden. Fragments of burnt daub were recovered from three of the features, [1], [4] and [6] in Trenches 5 and 6, which indicate that structures with wattle and daub walls may have been destroyed by fire in the vicinity and the debris incorporated into any open features on the site. Examination of the environmental samples suggests that

they have good potential for the preservation of plant remains. The lack of animal bones seen either during excavation or in the samples may, however, suggest that soil conditions are not conducive to their survival.

Since it was not possible to excavate Trench 1, the presence and nature of any potential archaeology in the northern part of the site remains unknown.

Archive

A full copy of the archive as defined in Brown (2008) includes all written, drawn and photographic records relating to the investigations undertaken.

The archive consists of:

A copy of the report,

6 x trench recording sheets

Context index and sheets for 13 contexts

4 x permatrace plan/section drawing sheets

Digital and B&W photos with contact prints and photographic index

Finds (as detailed within the Appendices)

The report will be listed on the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) held by the Archaeological Data Service at the University of York. Available at: <http://oasis.ac.uk/>

Oasis Summary

INFORMATION REQUIRED	
Project Name	The Vicarage, St. Mary's Road, Hinckley
Project Type	Evaluation (Trial Trenching)
Project Manager	Patrick Clay
Project Supervisor	Jennifer Browning
Previous/Future work	Desk-based assessment/TBA
Current Land Use	Single detached residence and gardens
Development Type	Residential
Reason for Investigation	PPS5
Position in the Planning Process	Pre-planning enquiry
Site Co ordinates	NGR SP 4276 9376
Start/end dates of field work	13.03.12 to 19.03.12
Archive Recipient	Leicestershire Museums Service
Study Area	c. 0.42 hectares

Acknowledgements

The site work was carried out by the author and Leon Hunt. Heidi Addison processed the finds and they were examined by Nick Cooper. Anita Radini examined the environmental samples and the project was managed by Patrick Clay. ULAS would like to thank Cathy Patrick of CgMs Consulting and Mr and Mrs. Topham for their help and assistance during the fieldwork.

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Brown, D., 2008 *Standard and Guidance for the preparation of Archaeological Archives* (Institute for Archaeologists)

ULAS Report 2012-056

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Appendix 1: Context Summary

Table 2: Context Summary

Trench	Context	Cut	Below	Description	Finds?
05	1	-	2	Cut of channel/pond	
05	2	1	3	Dark lower fill	BM
05	3	1	-	Upper fill	
06	4	-	5	Cut of ditch	
06	5	4		Fill of ditch	BM, B
06	6	-	7	Cut of gully	
06	7	6	-	Fill of gully	BM
06	8	-	-	Tree bole/garden feature	
03	9	-	10	Cut of shallow ditch	
03	10	9	-	Fill of shallow ditch	
04	11	-	12	Cut of dark feature in section	
04	12	11	-	Fill of dark feature in section	
04	13	-	-	Fill of drain	

Key: BM=ceramic building material; B=bone

Appendix 2: The Finds by *Nicholas J. Cooper and Jennifer Browning*

Building Materials by *Nicholas J. Cooper*

A total of 18 fragments of fired clay building material (burnt daub) was recovered from three contexts. The material has been examined under low power microscopy and quantified by fragment count and weight.

Six fragments weighing 375g came from (2) [1] in Trench 5. Seven small fragments (70g) came from (5) [4], and five fragments (30g) came from (7) [6].

All of the material occurs in a sandy clay containing rounded to sub-rounded quartz grains ranging from 0.1-1mm but with occasional fragments of stone up to 5mm. The fragments are amorphous apart from the occurrence of some smoothed surfaces and the semicircular impressions indicative of wattle.

Although it cannot be dated with certainty, it is likely that it is medieval. The fact that the material can barely be scratched with a fingernail indicates that the wattle and daub structure to which this material belonged was destroyed by fire with temperatures of up to 800-1000 degrees centigrade, normally used to fire pottery.

The Bone by *Jennifer Browning*

Three small fragments of tooth enamel, probably from a cattle tooth were recovered during excavation of gully [6]. The lack of bones seen in other features or in the samples may be indicative of poor preservation conditions. Tooth enamel tends to be more durable than bone.

Appendix 3: Statement on the Potential of Environmental Archaeology by *Anita Radini*

During an evaluation at the Vicarage, St. Mary's Road, Hinckley, Leicestershire (site code XA36 2012) conducted by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services, samples were taken from three features, as shown below:

Sample 1, Context 2 Cut 1: fill of possible pond/channel/moat, 2 bags – 40 litres

Sample 2, Context 7, Cut 6: charcoal rich gully, 2 bags – 40 litres

Sample 3, Context 12, Cut 11: small dark feature, 2 bags – 40 litres

All the samples were from features of unclear dates but likely to be medieval – early post-medieval. The samples of dark brown, sandy clayey deposits were examined and revealed fragments of charcoal but no animal bone was observed. The samples did not show any evidence of any artefactual record that could shed light either on the date of the features themselves or on the nature of the human occupation on site. Very few rootlets were observed, pointing to low level of soil disturbance. This suggests good potential for the recovery of plant remains and other environmental evidence.

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