



making sense of heritage

Downton Primary School Downton, Wiltshire

Archaeological Evaluation Assessment Report



Ref: 107301.02
March 2015



**Downton Primary School
Downton, Wiltshire**

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Downton Primary School Downton, Wiltshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Ridge Partners LLP to undertake an archaeological evaluation of land proposed for redevelopment at Downton Primary School, Downton, Wiltshire, centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 417397 121553.

The proposed development comprises construction of an extension to the main school building via a covered link corridor, expansion of the current playground arrangements, tree-planting on the new playground perimeter, and all associated ancillary developments (drainage, utilities etc.). The playground expansion will extend into a portion of the adjacent Downton Memorial Gardens to the west.

The original 19th century school building is a Grade II Listed Building, and the existing extension and original boundary wall are considered to form part of the curtilage of the building. The Site is also located within Downton Conservation Area.

Three evaluation trenches were originally proposed, and accurately located prior to excavation using GNSS survey equipment. However, due to various access, Health & Safety and other constraints, the alignment of Trench 1 was altered slightly to avoid a tree canopy, but otherwise remained as proposed; Trench 2 was undertaken by machine excavating three test pits along the length of the proposed trench, due to the rapid inundation of water at 0.5m below ground level; and Trench 3 was excavated as hand-excavated Test pit 3 within a small grassed area just to the south of the playground.

The evaluation has revealed a series of low-grade deposits across the proposed development area, likely predominantly of relatively late post-medieval and/or modern date. Towards the base of Test pit 3 a chalk rubble layer containing medieval pottery was encountered. A 1972 Ordnance Survey Map (Wessex Archaeology 2014) records a track within the close vicinity of Test pit 3 thus it is possible this deposit relates to a levelling of the ground surface associated with the construction of this track. No deposits or other remains of significance were encountered during the investigations at the Site.



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Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned to carry out the archaeological evaluation by Ridge Partners LLP, and the assistance and support of Luke Martin in this regard, and indeed throughout the project, is very gratefully acknowledged. Our gratitude is also extended to Clare King, Assistant County Archaeologist at Wiltshire Council, for her help and advice during the project, and in particular her feedback concerning the project Written Scheme of Investigation. Thanks also go to Bev Cornish, Clerk to Downton Parish Council, and Carol of Downton Primary School for facilitating access to the site to carry out the evaluation.

The evaluation was directed in the field by Susan Clelland, assisted by Natalie Hunt, and supported by plant provided by Readypower Engineering Ltd. This report was compiled by Susan Clelland, with finds analysis by Lorraine Mephram, figures prepared by Karen Nichols, and report edited by Andy Crockett. The project was managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology by Andy Crockett.



Downton Primary School Downton, Wiltshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology (WA) was commissioned by Ridge Partners LLP (hereafter the Client), to undertake an archaeological evaluation of land proposed for redevelopment at Downton Primary School, Downton, Wiltshire (hereafter the Site, **Figure 1**), centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 417397 121553.

1.1.2 The proposed development comprises construction of an extension to the main school building via a covered link corridor, expansion of the current playground arrangements, tree-planting on the new playground perimeter, and all associated ancillary developments (drainage, utilities etc.). The playground expansion will extend into a portion of the adjacent Downton Memorial Gardens to the west.

1.1.3 The archaeological evaluation was advised as a requirement by Wiltshire Council Archaeology Service (WCAS), who advise the Local Planning Authority (LPA). It follows on from the results of a Heritage Statement (WA 2014).

1.2 Project scope

1.2.1 The evaluation was governed by a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI; WA 2015), submitted to and approved by WCAS prior to the commencement of fieldwork. It was originally proposed to excavate two 15m by 2m machine-excavated evaluation trenches (Trenches 1 and 2) within the proposed playground extension area within the adjacent Downton Memorial Gardens; and one 10m machine-excavated evaluation trench (Trench 3) within the footprint of the proposed school building extension.

1.2.2 However, on site constraints, including rapid groundwater ingress, resultant H&S-related reinstatement concerns, and existing hardstanding areas required a reconsideration of the evaluation trench array, which resulted in the following variations:

- *Trench 1 – essentially excavated as proposed, though slightly realigned to avoid trenching beneath a tree canopy;*
- *Trench 2 – excavated as three machine-excavated sondages (Trenches 2a, 2b and 2c at the approximate south, midpoint and north end respectively of the original trench footprint); and*
- *Trench 3 – hand-excavated as Test Pit 3 within a small grassed area immediately adjacent to the original Trench 1 footprint.*

1.3 Location, topography and geology

1.3.1 The Site is located in the centre of Downton, about 40m north-west of the village cross (**Figure 1**). The redline boundary comprises a parcel of land approximately 0.7 hectares in



area, predominantly comprising Downton Primary School grounds, but including a smaller subrectangular extension into the adjacent Downton Memorial Gardens to the west.

- 1.3.2 The Site is bounded to the north by houses along Long Close, to the east by Gravel Close, to the south by the Borough Road and houses adjoining it, and to the west by the Memorial Hall and Gardens.
- 1.3.3 The site is relatively flat and is located near the bottom of the river valley, with a drainage ditch running north to south through the Site called the Bunney, forming the boundary between the current school and the Memorial Gardens. The elevation is approximately 36m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) across the Site. The underlying geology of the Site is mapped as Newhaven Chalk Formation, with superficial 3rd River Terrace deposits of sand and gravel (British Geological Survey).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 The archaeological and historical background to the Site has been extensively described in WA's Heritage Statement (WA 2014), in part derived from a variety of published sources (e.g. Crowley 1980; Ekwall 1991; McMahon 2004; Rahtz 1962 etc.). Details therein are repeated here only in summary.

2.2 Designated heritage assets

- 2.2.1 The original 19th century school building is a Grade II Listed Building, and the existing extension and original boundary wall are considered to form part of the curtilage of the building. The Site is also located within Downton Conservation Area.

2.3 Non-designated heritage assets

- 2.3.1 The Bunney has been identified as a potential heritage asset. Through consultation with historic maps and during the site visit, it is apparent that although it has modern features, it is of considerable antiquity, possibly contemporary with the historic water meadows. In addition it preserves the line of the burgage plots within the historic landscape of the village.

2.4 Potential buried archaeological remains

- 2.4.1 Based on the evidence presented within the Heritage Statement there is considered to be the potential for as yet unknown buried archaeological remains within the Site relating to the following periods: Prehistoric, Saxon, Romano-British, medieval and post-medieval.
- 2.4.2 Consultation of cartographic and documentary sources suggests that although the Site was within the medieval borough it remained rural in character. The majority of the borough north of the road seems to have never fully developed. The Bunney is depicted on the earliest map of 1784, which could have disturbed any potential earlier archaeological remains along its course. The tithe map and corresponding apportionment shows the Site to have been pasture, therefore impacts from previous agricultural activity within the Site are likely to be limited. The proximity of the Site to medieval occupation means that there is potential for outbuildings or rubbish pits however.
- 2.4.3 The OS map of 1972 depicts a small building on part of the area proposed for development. No plans or details of this building were found, but it is likely that the foundations for this would have impacted any below ground remains.



2.4.4 It is also uncertain how much landscaping was required to level the playground, however the surrounding area is relatively flat therefore impacts may be minimal. There is evidence of landscaping, possibly for modern flood defences in the Memorial Gardens and the OS map of 1926 shows paths, although not in the area covered by the Site.

3 AIMS & OBJECTIVES

3.1 Aim

3.1.1 With due regard to the ClfA's *Standard and guidance: archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014a), the primary aim of the archaeological evaluation was to determine, as far as was reasonably possible, the nature of the archaeological resource within the Site, using appropriate methods and practices

3.2 Objectives

3.2.1 In order to achieve the project aim, through a limited programme of intrusive fieldwork, the following objectives were defined:

- *Determine the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts at the Site;*
- *If such remains are present, define their character, extent, quality and preservation;*
- *Enable an assessment of their significance in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate; and*
- *Disseminate the results through an appropriate illustrated report, to inform consideration of further strategies to mitigate the potential impact of the proposed development.*

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 A detailed methodology is contained within the original WSI (WA 2015), and will only be summarised here. To confirm, all works were carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance: archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014a) excepting where superseded by statements made below.

4.2 Trench excavation

4.2.1 The evaluation trenches were accurately located before excavation using GNSS survey equipment. Required variations to the proposed array are summarised above, and considered further below:

- *The alignment of Trench 1 was altered slightly to avoid a tree canopy, but otherwise remained as proposed;*
- *Trench 2 was undertaken by machine excavating three test pits along the length of the proposed trench, due to the rapid inundation of water at 0.5m below ground level: Test pit 2A measured 2.5m x 1.7m; 2B measured 1.9m x 1.7m; and 2C measured 2.4m x 1.7m (a consistent sequence of deposits were encountered throughout); and*
- *Trench 3 was proposed for excavation through the existing Downton Primary School playground surface – however, as there was insufficient time to guarantee specialist reinstatement to required standards (the evaluation was carried out during half*



term), in its place a hand-excavated 1m square test pit was undertaken in a small grassed area just to the south of the playground.

- 4.2.2 Prior to excavation, investigation locations were scanned by WA using a Cable Avoidance Tool (CAT) and Genny.
- 4.2.3 The trenches were excavated using a tracked mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless bucket and under constant supervision by WA. Machine excavation proceeded to a depth at which the top of archaeological levels, or the top of natural deposits, were exposed, whichever was the higher.

4.3 Archaeological excavation and recording

- 4.3.1 Archaeological features and deposits were excavated and recorded in accordance with the methodology as laid out in the project WSI (WA 2015). All survey was carried out with a Leica Viva series GNSS unit using the OS National GPS Network through an RTK network with a 3D accuracy of 30mm or below and included heights above OS datum (Newlyn).
- 4.3.2 All exposed archaeological deposits were recorded using the WA's pro forma recording system. A complete drawn record of excavated archaeological features and deposits was compiled. This included both plans and sections, drawn to appropriate scales (1:20 for plans, 1:10 for sections), and with reference to a site grid tied to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. The Ordnance Datum (OD) height of all principal features and levels were calculated and plans/sections have been annotated with OD heights. A full photographic record was maintained using digital photography. The photographic record illustrates both the detail and the general context of the principal features, finds excavated, and the Site as a whole.
- 4.3.3 All finds were processed in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (CIfA 2014b). All artefacts were, as a minimum, washed, marked, counted, weighed and identified. The environmental sampling strategy followed the guidance set out in *Environmental Archaeology: a guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation* (EH 2002a).

4.4 Health and Safety

- 4.4.1 All work was carried out in accordance with the *Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974*, the *Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1992*, and all other relevant Health and Safety legislation and regulations and codes of practice in force at the time. Prior to the commencement of the fieldwork, a site-specific Risk Assessment was produced for approval by the WA Safety, Health & Environment Manager.

5 RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 The following sections provide a summary of the information held in the Site archive. Details of individually excavated contexts are retained in the Site archive and a tabulated version of these can be found in **Appendix 1**. The archaeological evaluation was undertaken on Tuesday the 18th and Wednesday the 19th of February 2015. A total of 3 trenches were excavated during the evaluation.



5.2 Stratigraphy

- 5.2.1 The depth and makeup of the overlying topsoil was relatively consistent across the Site; however the sequence, depth and makeup of the underlying made ground and subsoil varied greatly, and will therefore be considered on a trench by trench basis below.

5.3 Trench 1

- 5.3.1 Trench 1 was located within the Memorial Gardens, in an area used as a playing field (see cover photo). The trench was aligned approximately north-south, slightly realigned to avoid a tree canopy, and measured 15m x 1.7m. The trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.6m (**Plate 1**) before rapid groundwater ingress prevented any further excavation.
- 5.3.2 A 0.2m thick topsoil (101) of dark blackish brown silty loam contained moderate flint gravel and frequent rooting, with trace amount of modern detritus. The topsoil overlay a 0.05m thick layer of buried topsoil (102), very similar to the layer above it, which suggests that the area was possibly re-turfed/resurfaced when it became public gardens. This in turn overlay 0.05m thick dark brownish-grey silty clay subsoil (103), containing rare gravel.
- 5.3.3 Below the subsoil was a 0.20m thick layer of poorly sorted alluvial gravel (104) in a dark grey matrix, capping light grey alluvial clay (105) of at least 0.1m thickness. At this point rapidly flowing groundwater was encountered, preventing any further excavation.
- 5.3.4 Although a well-defined sequence of deposits was recorded, no archaeological remains were detected, and no dating evidence was recovered from the soil layers.

5.4 Trench 2

- 5.4.1 Trench 2 was also located within the Memorial Gardens, in an area used as a playing field. As noted above, and as a result of observations concerning the groundwater during the excavation of Trench 1, the proposed 15m trench was replaced by three smaller machine-excavated test pits (**Plate 2**) along the length of the proposed trench. A consistent sequence of deposits was encountered throughout the three test pits.
- 5.4.2 A dark blackish brown silty loam topsoil (201) measuring 0.20m thickness, overlay a 0.28m thick layer of made ground (202) formed of reworked river gravels in a sandy loam matrix. This capped a 0.12m thick layer of river terrace gravel (203) within a coarse yellow sandy matrix.
- 5.4.3 In each of the test pits the water table was breached at around 0.45m below ground surface, effectively at the base of layer 202. Inundation became very rapid at 0.6m depth, preventing any further excavation.
- 5.4.4 No archaeological remains were detected, and no dating evidence was recovered from the deposits.

5.5 Test Pit 3

- 5.5.1 Test Pit 3 (**Plate 3**) measured 1m by 1m, and was located on a small strip of grassed area on the fringe of the car park area of Downton Primary School, immediately to the south of the school playground.
- 5.5.2 A 0.10m thick turf and topsoil layer (300) overlaid a sequence of made ground deposits, buried soils and alluvial gravels. Directly beneath the turf was a 0.05m thick gravel construction deposit layer of type 1 hoggin (301), which capped a 0.32m thick dark brown

silty loam buried topsoil layer (302), containing occasional CBM, pottery and other artefacts of clearly modern origin; these were noted on the archive records but not retained.

5.5.3 Below this deposit, a 0.18m thick chalk rubble levelling layer (303), comprising large angular chalk nodules and crushed chalk within a light grey sandy clay matrix, was encountered, with pottery and CBM recovered suggesting a medieval or later date. This in turn overlaid a 0.05m thick dark grey-brown coarse sand layer with frequent gravels (304), which in turn capped a 0.22m thick layer of small-medium alluvial flood gravel in a coarse sand matrix (305).

5.5.4 At the base of the test pit a 0.15m thick mid-dark brown silty sand peat layer (306) was encountered, at which point the water table was breached. The layer contained a small amount of animal bone, and hence although undated a precautionary environmental sample was also taken. Notwithstanding the groundwater ingress, the test pit had reached the maximum permissible depth on H&S grounds; however, rapid 'mattock testing' suggested another layer of alluvial gravels lay immediately below this organic deposit.

6 FINDS

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 A very small quantity of finds was recovered during the evaluation, deriving from two contexts (layers 303, 306). Quantities by material type and by context are given in **Table 1**.

Table 1: All finds by context (number / weight in grammes)

Context	Animal Bone	Burnt Flint	CBM	Worked Flint	Pottery
303	1/39	1/30	3/159	1/33	2/15
306	2/54				
Totals	3/93	1/30	3/159	1/33	2/15

6.2 Dateable artefacts

Dateable material comprises a single prehistoric flint flake, two sherds of medieval pottery (Laverstock-type wares of 13th or early 14th century date), and three pieces of medieval peg (roof) tile, in typical coarse fabrics.

6.3 Animal bone

6.3.1 The animal bone includes cattle (ulna, femur) and horse (tooth). The burnt, unworked flint is of uncertain date and origin.

6.4 Recommendations

6.4.1 This is a very small assemblage and has little or no potential for further research. Unless further work takes place on the Site, retention for long-term curation is not recommended. If further work does take place, then these finds should be amalgamated and reassessed with any additional finds recovered.

7 DISCUSSION

7.1.1 The evaluation has revealed a series of low-grade deposits across the proposed development area, likely predominantly of relatively late post-medieval and/or modern

date. Underlying modern construction deposits towards the base of test pit 3, a chalk rubble layer containing medieval pottery was encountered. A 1972 Ordnance Survey Map (Wessex Archaeology 2014) records a track linking the school buildings to Borough Road within the close vicinity of Test pit 3 thus it is possible this deposit relates to a levelling of the ground surface associated with the construction of this track and/or the related school buildings. No deposits or other remains of significance were encountered during the investigations at the Site.

- 7.1.2 On the basis of the results it is suggested that the evaluation should be entered as a short note in the *Wiltshire Proceedings* yearly round-up of archaeological projects.

8 THE ARCHIVE

8.1 Museum

- 8.1.1 The designated receiving museum will be Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum, Kings House, Salisbury.

8.2 Preparation of Archive

- 8.2.1 The complete Site archive, which will include paper records, photographic records, graphics, artefacts, ecofacts and digital data, will be prepared following the standard conditions for the acceptance of excavated archaeological material by the appropriate Museum, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; EH 2002b; Brown 2011; ADS 2013; ClfA 2014c).
- 8.2.2 All archive elements will be marked with the Site/accession code and a full index will be prepared.
- 8.2.3 The site archive will be prepared for long-term storage in accordance with current guidelines (e.g. Walker 1990; MGC 1992 etc.). It is proposed in principle that, subject to the wishes of the landowner, the entire archive (including the finds) will be donated to and deposited with recipient museum.

8.3 Storage of archive

- 8.3.1 Until final deposition with the museum the archive will be stored at the offices of WA Southern Region in Salisbury. No charge will be made for the temporary storage of finds or archives during the period when WA are undertaking analysis or report preparation.
- 8.3.2 However, if, after completion and submission of the report, finds and archives cannot be deposited with the relevant museum due to circumstances beyond WA's control, a charge will be made for storage. A charge for storage may also be made where a delay is caused by a lack of confirmation of post-fieldwork analyses and reporting, if the delay exceeds three months.

8.4 Discard policy

- 8.4.1 WA follows the guidelines set out in *Selection, Retention and Dispersal of Archaeological Collections* (SMA 1993), which allows for the discard of selected artefact and ecofact categories which are not considered to warrant any future analysis. Any discard of artefacts will be fully documented in the project archive.
- 8.4.2 The discard of environmental remains and samples will follow nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1993, 1995; EH 2002a, 2002b).

8.5 Security copy

- 8.5.1 In line with current best practice (e.g. Brown 2011), and on completion of the project, a security copy of the written records will be prepared, in the form of a digital PDF/A file. PDF/A is an ISO-standardised version of the Portable Document Format (PDF) designed for the digital preservation of electronic documents through omission of features ill-suited to long-term archiving.

8.6 Copyright

- 8.6.1 The full copyright of the written/illustrative archive relating to the Site will be retained by WA Ltd under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988* with all rights reserved. The Museum, however, will be granted an exclusive licence for the use of the archive for educational purposes, including academic research, providing that such use shall be non-profitmaking, and conforms to the *Copyright and Related Rights Regulations 2003*.

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10 APPENDICES

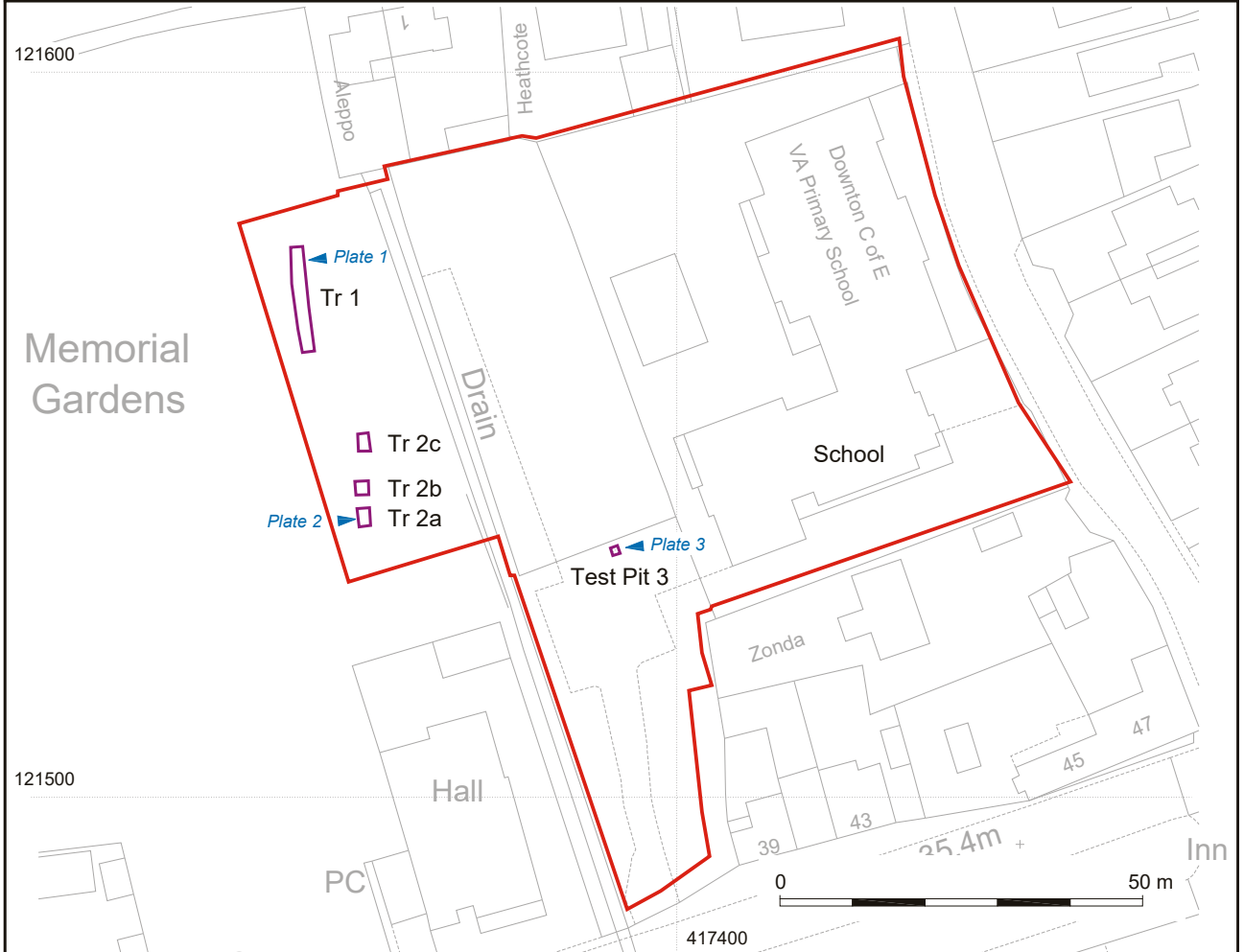
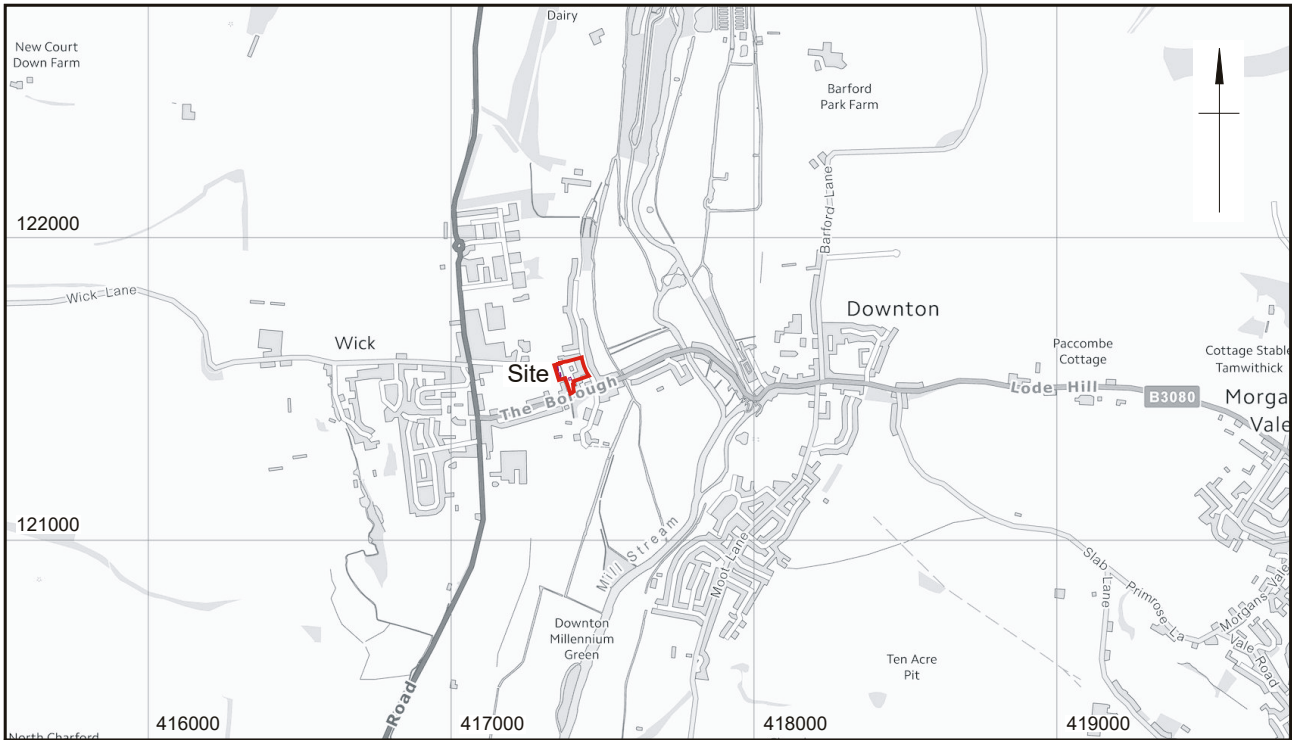
10.1 Appendix 1: Trench tables

Trench 1	Dimensions: 15m x 1.7m x 0.60m		
	Land use: Playing field		
	Coordinates: (N) 417347.6635, 121575.9103; (S) 417349.3366, 121561.4580		
Context	Category	Description	Depth
101	Layer	Topsoil and turf – Dark blackish brown silty loam. Sparse-moderate, fairly poorly-sorted sub-angular to sub-rounded flint gravel and rooting throughout.	0 - 0.20m
102	Layer	Buried topsoil – Dark brownish grey silty loam with sparse fine rooting and Sparse-moderate, fairly poorly-sorted sub-angular to sub-rounded flint gravel.	0.20 – 0.25m
103	Layer	Subsoil – Dark brownish grey silty clay with sparse iron staining and rare fairly poorly-sorted sub-angular to sub-rounded flint gravel.	0.25 – 0.30m
104	Layer	Alluvial gravel – Densely packed, poorly-sorted sub-angular to sub-rounded flint gravel in a dark grey clay matrix.	0.30 – 0.50m
105	Layer	Alluvial clay – Mid-light grey clay with sparse light brown streaks. No inclusions	0.50 – 0.60m

Trench 2	Dimensions: (2A) 2.5m x 1.7m x 0.6m (2B) 1.9m x 1.7m x 0.6m (2C) 2.4m x 1.7m x 0.6m		
	Land use: Playing field		
	Coordinates: (N) 417356.7816, 121550.1825; (S) 417357.1626, 121537.4085		
Context	Category	Description	Depth
201	Layer	Topsoil and turf - Dark blackish brown silty loam with fine rooting throughout. Sparse fairly poorly-sorted sub-angular to sub-rounded flint gravel.	0 – 0.20m
202	Layer	Made ground – Levelling deposit of reworked river gravels within a mid-dark brown coarse sandy loam. Occasional glass and CBM (brick) inclusions	0.20 – 0.48m
203	Layer	River terrace gravels – Small to large rounded pebbles within a coarse yellow sandy matrix	0.48 – 0.60+ m



Test Pit 3	Dimensions: 1m x 1m x 1.1m		
	Land use: Car park verge		
	Coordinates: (Centre) 417391.5617, 121534.0894		
Context	Category	Description	Depth
300	Layer	Topsoil and turf horizon	0 – 0.10m
301	Layer	Hoggin – type 1 gravel construction deposit.	0.10 – 0.15m
302	Layer	Post-med to modern topsoil – Dark brown silty loam with occasional small to large rounded gravel, occasional chalk flecking and occasional CBM and pottery (not retained).	0.15 – 0.48m
303	Layer	Medieval to post-med chalk rubble levelling layer – Large angular to crushed chalk within a light grey sandy clay matrix. Occasional pottery.	0.48 – 0.66m
304	Layer	Dark grey-brown coarse sand with frequent small to grit sized gravel.	0.66 – 0.71m
305	Layer	Alluvial gravels – Small to medium rounded gravel within a mid brown coarse sand matrix; flood gravels and reworked topsoil	0.71 – 0.93m
306	Layer	Peat/buried soil – Mid-dark brown silty sand with occasional small to large gravel and rooting. One large piece of sandstone and occasional animal bone.	0.93 – 1.08m
307	Layer	Alluvial gravels – unseen, only felt. Medium to large rounded gravel within a coarse sandy matrix	1.08m+



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Site and trench location

Figure 1



Plate 1: West facing section Trench 1



Plate 2: Machine excavation of Trench 2A taken from the south west



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Plate 3: View of Test Pit 3 taken from the east

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