

**PRIOR PARK PREPARATORY SCHOOL
CALCUTT STREET, CRICKLADE, WILTSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
PP98**

FOUNDATIONS ARCHAEOLOGY

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CONTENTS

Summary

- 1 INTRODUCTION
- 2 PROJECT BACKGROUND
- 3 AIMS
- 4 METHODOLOGY
- 5 CONCLUSIONS
- 6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FIGURE LIST

- Figure 1 Location of the Study Area

Summary

On 21st December 1998 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken in the sports fields of Prior Park Preparatory School, Cricklade as the result of an application to build a new sports hall. No archaeological deposits were revealed although a scatter of medieval pottery was recovered from the subsoil.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This document sets out the results of an archaeological evaluation on the sports ground of Prior Park Preparatory School, Cricklade, Wiltshire based upon a project design prepared by Foundations Archaeology (18/12/98). The project design was itself prepared on the basis of the letter supplied by Wiltshire County Council (15/12/98 RAC/MJU/98RAC011), and in accordance with the *Standards for Archaeological Assessment and Field Evaluation in Wiltshire* (WCC 1995) and the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations* issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994).

2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

2.1 A proposal has been submitted to create a new school building development on the sports field of Prior Park Preparatory School, Cricklade, Wiltshire.

2.2 Cricklade originated in the late 9th or early 10th century as a fortified settlement on the northern boundary of Wessex, against the depredations of the Danes, although traces of an earlier Roman settlement are also known. The remains of the town wall run in close proximity to the proposed sports hall and, although outside the scheduled area, traces of the Saxon defensive ditches were expected within the study area.

3 AIMS

3.1 The aims of the archaeological evaluation were to gather high quality data from the direct observation of archaeological deposits in order to provide sufficient information to establish the nature, extent, preservation and potential of any surviving archaeological remains; as well as to make recommendations for management of the resource, including further archaeological works if necessary. In turn this would allow reasonable planning decisions to be taken regarding the archaeological provision for the areas affected by the proposed development.

4.2 These aims were achieved through pursuit of the following specific objectives:

i) to define and identify the nature of archaeological deposits on site, and date these where possible;

ii) to attempt to characterise the nature of the archaeological sequence and recover as much information as possible about the spatial patterning of features present on the site;

iii) to recover a well dated stratigraphic sequence and recover coherent artefact, ecofact and environmental samples.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 A single trial trench 20m long by 2m wide was excavated within an area of grassland comprising a rugby field belonging to the school. Topsoil and non-significant overburden was removed to the top of natural through use of a mechanical excavator with a toothless grading bucket. Thereafter excavation was conducted by hand.

4.2 All archaeological deposits and features will be subjected to appropriate levels of investigation in accordance with the project design. All site recording was undertaken in accordance with Foundations Archaeology Technical Manual 3 (Excavation Manual).

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 No archaeological deposits were identified during the course of the evaluation. Stratigraphy within the trench consisted of 0.35m of topsoil over a layer of clay and brick made ground between 0.30m and 0.40m thick. This in turn sealed a layer of silty clay subsoil up to 0.40m thick from which twelve sherds of 12th to 13th century medieval pottery (Minety Ware) were recovered over natural clay at c. 77.80m OD. At the eastern end of the trench natural clays were not reached as the ground sloped down slightly towards the brook and ground water proved a serious constraint. Observation of the deposits at this end of the trench, however, revealed alluvially deposited sediments related to flooding from the brook.

5.2 Previous excavations in Cricklade have identified the defensive ditches at distances of c. 8m from the walls. Although the town wall has previously suffered damage in this place (Roy Canham pers com) and the precise front of the feature cannot be identified on the ground, no ditches were identified during the evaluation. There is a slight possibility that the ditches may be masked by the alluvial deposits at the eastern end of the trench, but equally they may have not existed in this place due to the wet and probably marshy conditions with the brook itself forming a perfectly adequate obstacle. No investigation was undertaken to ascertain whether the course of the brook in this place was entirely natural. In any event the depth of overburden is such that the proposed development is unlikely to affect any surviving archaeological deposits within the site.

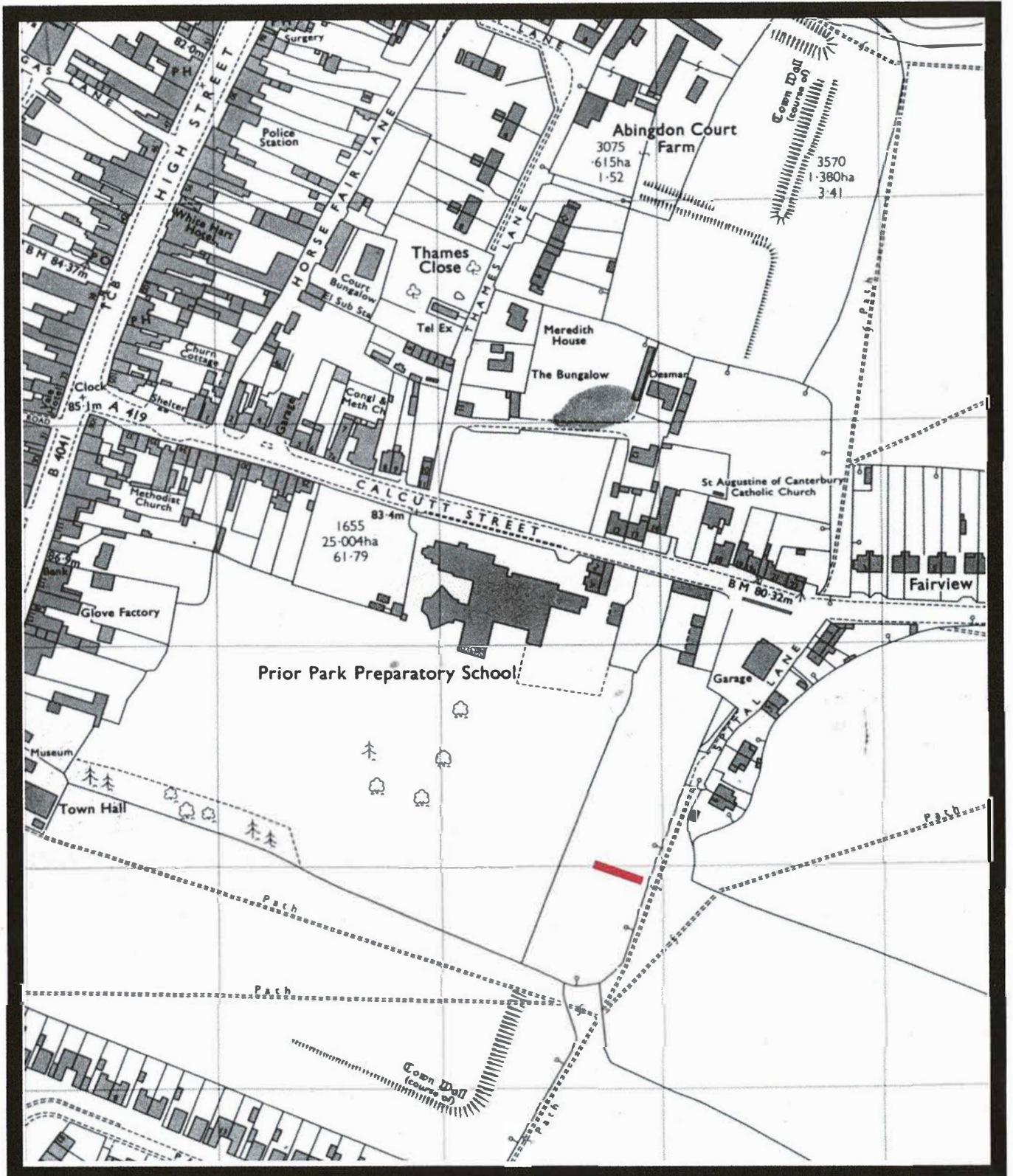
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Figure 1 : Trench Position