

**LAND AT PRIORY FIELDS,  
HORSLEY,  
GLOUCESTERSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

**NGR: ST 8480 9800**

**January 2005**

**Author: T. Michaels**

**Report No: 388**



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109 Albion Street, Swindon, Wilts SN1 5LP  
Tel/Fax 01793 525993 / 08700 780 555 Email Admin@foundations.co.uk  
Website <http://www.foundations.co.uk>**

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## **SUMMARY**

In January 2005 Foundations Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological evaluation on land at Priory Fields, Horsley, Gloucestershire at NGR: ST 8480 9800. The project was commissioned by David Austin of David Austin Architects on behalf of Horsley Parish Council.

The evaluation comprised the excavation and recording of three 1.50m<sup>2</sup> test-pits across the proposed development area. (Figure 2)

A Post-medieval stone-lined drain, a probable late Post-medieval/early modern demolition event and a charcoal rich deposit with associated material dated to 17th century, were revealed during these works.

No structural evidence was revealed which can be firmly linked to the post Norman Conquest Priory, postulated to be situated in or near to the study area.

Good archaeological preservation conditions were noted across the site.

## GLOSSARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

### Archaeology

For the purpose of this project, archaeology is taken to mean the study of past human societies through their material remains from prehistoric times to the modern era. No rigid upper date limit has been set, but AD 1900 is used as a general cut-off point.

### CBM

Ceramic Building Material.

### Medieval

The period between the Norman Conquest (AD 1066) and *circa* AD 1500.

### Natural

In archaeological terms this refers to the undisturbed natural geology of a site.

### NGR

National Grid Reference from the Ordnance Survey Grid.

### OD

Ordnance datum; used to express a given height above sea-level. (AOD Above Ordnance Datum).

### OS

Ordnance Survey.

### Post-Medieval

Period from *circa* AD 1500 onwards.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of an archaeological evaluation undertaken by Foundations Archaeology in January 2005 on land at Priory Fields, Horsley, Gloucestershire (NGR: ST 8480 9800). The project was commissioned by David Austin of David Austin Architects on behalf of Horsley Parish Council.
- 1.2 There has been a proposal to construct a pavilion for sports and community use at Priory Fields, Horsley. A programme of archaeological works was required by Gloucestershire County Council prior to the determination of planning permission in accordance with the principals of Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning (DoE 1990) and the archaeological policies of Gloucestershire County Council.
- 1.3 This report constitutes the results of the archaeological works. The project was undertaken in accordance with the Project Design prepared by Foundations Archaeology (2005), based upon the Brief by Gloucestershire County Council (2004) and agreed by the Senior Archaeological Officer of Gloucestershire County Council. The fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with IF A *Standards and Guidance on Archaeological Evaluation* (1994, revised 2001).

## 2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The site lies within the village of Horsley. The name of the village has Anglo-Saxon origins and has been known as *Horkesleigh, Hurstleigh and Hoslei*. Hyrst is the Anglo-Saxon name for wood or wooded hill and *Leah* refers to a wood, grove or clearing. The site itself is bordered to the north by St Martins Church, to the east by housing, to the south by the old prison and to the west by a playing field and open land.
- 2.2 After the Norman Conquest, the Manor of Horsley was taken from Goda, the sister of Edward the Confessor and given to Roger de Montgomery, Earl of Shrewsbury by William the Conqueror. Roger subsequently presented it to the Abbey of St Martin, which had recently been founded at Troarn in Normandy. In the Domesday Book the parish is recorded as containing a Prior and a few Monks from Troarn, who had recently settled there and formed a cell. A Priory and church would have been constructed soon after this time.
- 2.3 There is good evidence to suggest that the site of the original Norman church was on the site of the current Church of St Martins. The current church was erected in 1838, when the old church was demolished. It is recorded that this older church was re-built around 1376 to 1380 by the "Abbey of Bruton in the middle centuries" (Bigland, 1786). The Abbey of Bruton came into possession of Horsley in 1372 and it is likely that there was already a church on the same land which predated the late 14<sup>th</sup> century church. This would have been the church built by the Monks of Troarn after the Norman Conquest. It was also recorded that the chief entrance of the old church was on the south side; towards the Priory, while the chief entrance for the current church is on the

north side; towards the village, indicating that when the church was re-built in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century the Priory was still in use, but that this was not the case by 1838. The information within the church, discussing the history of the church states that the Priory was a ruin located 80 yards south of the church, which was knocked down 100 years ago.

- 2.4 The Priory itself is thought to be on or near the site of the old prison, which is located approximately 100 metres south of St Martins Church. Rudder, in 1779 writes, "The Prior of Bruton had a seat here, of which little more than the gateway remains. There was also near the church, a building called a chapel, now reduced to ruins", Bigland (1786) writes, "Still to be discovered are the foundations of a considerable building and the old gateway remains entire, standing near the church". It is thought that these ruins were cleared prior to the construction of the prison and a number of features from the Priory are reported to have been reused in other buildings, including the painted windows which "were built up in the house at Chavenage" (Wedlake and Brayley, 1810).
- 2.5 The study area therefore contained the potential for the preservation of archaeological features and deposits, associated with the Medieval period, predominately with the Priory. This in no way prejudiced the evaluation works against the recovery of finds or features relating to other periods.

### **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.
- 3.2 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 The project required the excavation of three test pits, each measuring a minimum of 1.50m<sup>2</sup>. Trench locations are shown on Figure 2.
- 4.2 Topsoil and non-significant overburden was removed to the top of archaeological deposits or natural, whichever was encountered first. This was achieved with the use of a mechanical excavator with a toothless grading bucket. Thereafter the trenches were cleaned and all additional excavation was conducted by hand.
- 4.3 All excavation and recording work was undertaken in accordance with the Foundations Archaeology Project Design and the Foundations Archaeology Technical Manual 3: Excavation Manual.

## 5 RESULTS

- 5.1 **Trench 1** (1.90m by 1.50m) was excavated onto natural limestone and limestone brash at an average depth of 1.12m (133.54m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural deposits were sealed beneath an orange brown plastic silt clay (107), up to 0.07m thick. This deposit was root disturbed but, with the exception of very rare charcoal flecks, which may have been deposited there through root action, was archaeologically sterile. This layer was overlaid by (106), a mid brown plastic clay silt, up to 0.26m thick, which contained frequent limestone pieces and was heavily root disturbed. This was in turn overlaid by (105), a dark brown plastic clay silt, up to 0.30m thick, which contained occasional charcoal and limestone inclusions. This context most likely represented a buried topsoil, which was heavily root disturbed and contained three fragments of animal bone and two fragments of fired clay. This buried surface had been sealed by (104), a mid yellow brown clay silt fill, up to 0.20m thick, which contained frequent limestone blocks and pieces, occasional charcoal flecks, one fragment of window glass and one sherd of transfer printed chinaware. This was overlaid by (103), a layer of purple pea-gravel, 0.09m thick. This was sealed by a layer of grey pea-gravel (102), 0.08m thick, which contained frequent modern artefacts, which included a coke can, fragments of modern window glass and red glazed china. This was then sealed by (101), a heavily root disturbed mid brown humic topsoil, up to 0.23m thick. No archaeological features were present within this trench.
- 5.2 **Trench 2** (2.30m by 2m) was excavated onto natural limestone and limestone brash at an average depth of 1.57m (133.08m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural deposits of limestone were sealed beneath (206), a degraded natural of frequent limestone fragments in a clay silt matrix, up to 0.63m thick. This context was heavily root disturbed and contained rare/occasional charcoal flecks. Located near the top of the context and possibly deposited through root action, one small sherd of 19th century red glazed earthenware. This was then in turn overlaid by (205), a dark brown plastic clay silt, up to 0.42m thick, which contained occasional charcoal and



limestone inclusions. The context most likely represented a buried topsoil, which was heavily root disturbed and contained a sherd of ceramic drainpipe. This buried surface had been sealed by (204), a mid yellow brown clay silt fill, up to 0.27m thick, which contained frequent limestone blocks and pieces, occasional charcoal flecks, a piece of plastic, one very small fragment of china and one sherd of 17th century green glazed red earthenware; the plastic was however located at the top of this deposit. This was overlaid by (203), a layer of purple pea-gravel, 0.08m thick. This was sealed by a layer of grey pea-gravel (202), 0.10m thick. This was then sealed by (201), a heavily root disturbed mid brown humic topsoil, up to 0.05m thick. No archaeological features were present within this trench.

- 5.3 **Trench 3** (1.95m by 1.95m) was excavated onto a degraded natural limestone and limestone brash at an average depth of 1.01m (133.54m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural substrates were sealed beneath (306), a dark grey brown plastic silt clay, up to 0.31m thick, which contained frequent charcoal and mortar flecks, as well as occasional limestone inclusions. Finds were restricted to two fragments of animal bone, a fragment of iron horseshoe and three sherds of 17th-19th century red glazed earthenware. This layer was then sealed by (307), a thin layer of mottled yellow/brown silty clay, up to 0.02m thick, which contained a handmade iron nail and a rib fragment from a cow. This was only present on the south western side of (306), for a length of up to 1m. Layer (307) and the rest of (306) was sealed by (305), a mid yellow brown clay silt fill, up to 0.15m thick, which contained frequent limestone blocks and pieces and occasional charcoal flecks. This was in turn overlaid by (304), a dark brown silty sand buried soil, up to 0.36m thick, which contained a piece of plastic, scrap metal, two animal bone fragments, a piece of bottle glass, two sherds of 17th-19th century red glazed earthenware, a sherd of early Post-medieval green glazed pottery and a rim fragment of transfer printed chinaware. This deposit was sealed by a layer of purple pea-gravel (303), 0.12m thick. This was in turn sealed by (302), a layer of compacted sand and small gravels, up to 0.22m thick, which was only present in the southern corner of the trench. This layer, and the rest of (303), was then sealed by (301), a heavily root disturbed mid brown humic topsoil, up to 0.12m thick. A single archaeological feature was present within this trench and an unstratified sherd of 12th-14th century Minety type Medieval pottery, was recovered from the spoil tip during trench excavation.
- 5.4 Feature [308] was sealed by (305), cut through (306) and directly overlaid the natural and comprised a stone drain. It was orientated approximately northwest-south east and possibly curved west northwest slightly at the northwestern end, although it is difficult to prove this with the small sample revealed. The linear was present for a length of over 1.5m, with a width of 0.24m and depth of 0.25m. No cut was visible for the drain and the drain seemed to have been constructed through the excavation of a 'slit trench', which then had small limestone slabs (309) rammed into the open cut and partly into the sides of (306). The limestone slabs had dimensions of up to 0.20mx0.20mx0.05m and contained a loose dark brown fill (310), which yielded two small fragments of animal bone, but no dating evidence.

## 6 DISCUSSION

- 6.1 The ground level of the study area had been raised by the introduction of layers of pea-gravel. Post-medieval and modern material was recovered from the topsoil and rubble layer, which were directly sealed by the pea-gravel and pieces of plastic and a coke can were recovered from the pea-gravel, giving a recent date for the deposition of the make-up layers. Below this modern pea-gravel, the stratigraphy of the site was undisturbed and, with the exception of some root disturbance, on-site preservation conditions were good.
- 6.2 Layers (104), (204) and (305) were equivalent to each other and contained a high quantity of limestone blocks, some of which may have been roughly shaped. This probably represents demolition rubble from a stone wall or building and also contributed to the increase in ground level for the study area. Artefactual evidence associated with the demolition would suggest a late Post-medieval/early modern date for this event. The plastic found in Trench 2 was located at the interface with the gravels and is most likely intrusive from the gravels. The limestone blocks in (305) were not as frequent as in (104) and (204), which could suggest that Trench 3 was further away from the demolished structure.
- 6.3 Stone drain [308] was directly sealed by the layers associated with the probable demolition event. No dating evidence was contained within the evaluated sample, but the feature cut through layer (306), which contained pottery of 17th-19th century date. Layer (306) directly sealed the degraded natural and appeared to be an archaeological deposit, with a high quantity of charcoal and some small mortar flecks, although the layer itself was not compact enough to represent a laid surface. Further work may however yield more information about the function.
- 6.4 Layers (106) and (107) did not occur in the other trenches and no degraded natural was present in Trench 1. This could be the result of a different land use on this part of the site or could be a natural change in the local geology.
- 6.5 Medieval artefactual evidence was restricted to a single sherd of Minety type (northwest Wiltshire/south Cotswolds) ware of 12th-14th century date. The remaining pottery comprised 17th-19th century wares and late 19th-20th century transfer painted ware. Other finds were restricted to animal bone fragments; mainly bovine, window and bottle glass, metal objects including one handmade iron nail and modern material, including pieces of plastic and a tin can.

## 7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Although only one cut feature, a Post-medieval drain, was present within the evaluated area, the general evidence from the evaluation does suggest the former presence of a stone structure within the vicinity.

## **Priory Fields, Horsley: Archaeological Evaluation**

- 7.2 Further work would need to be carried out in order to understand if the evidence from the evaluation can be connected to the church and Priory, and if any evidence of the post Norman Conquest buildings survives within the study area. However, the date suggested from the church history within St Martins for the demolition of the Priory ruins is contemporary with the dating evidence identified within layer (104/204/305).
- 7.3 In general, on the basis of the evaluation evidence, the archaeological potential of the site appears to be medium and any archaeological features or deposits that are present are likely to be well preserved.

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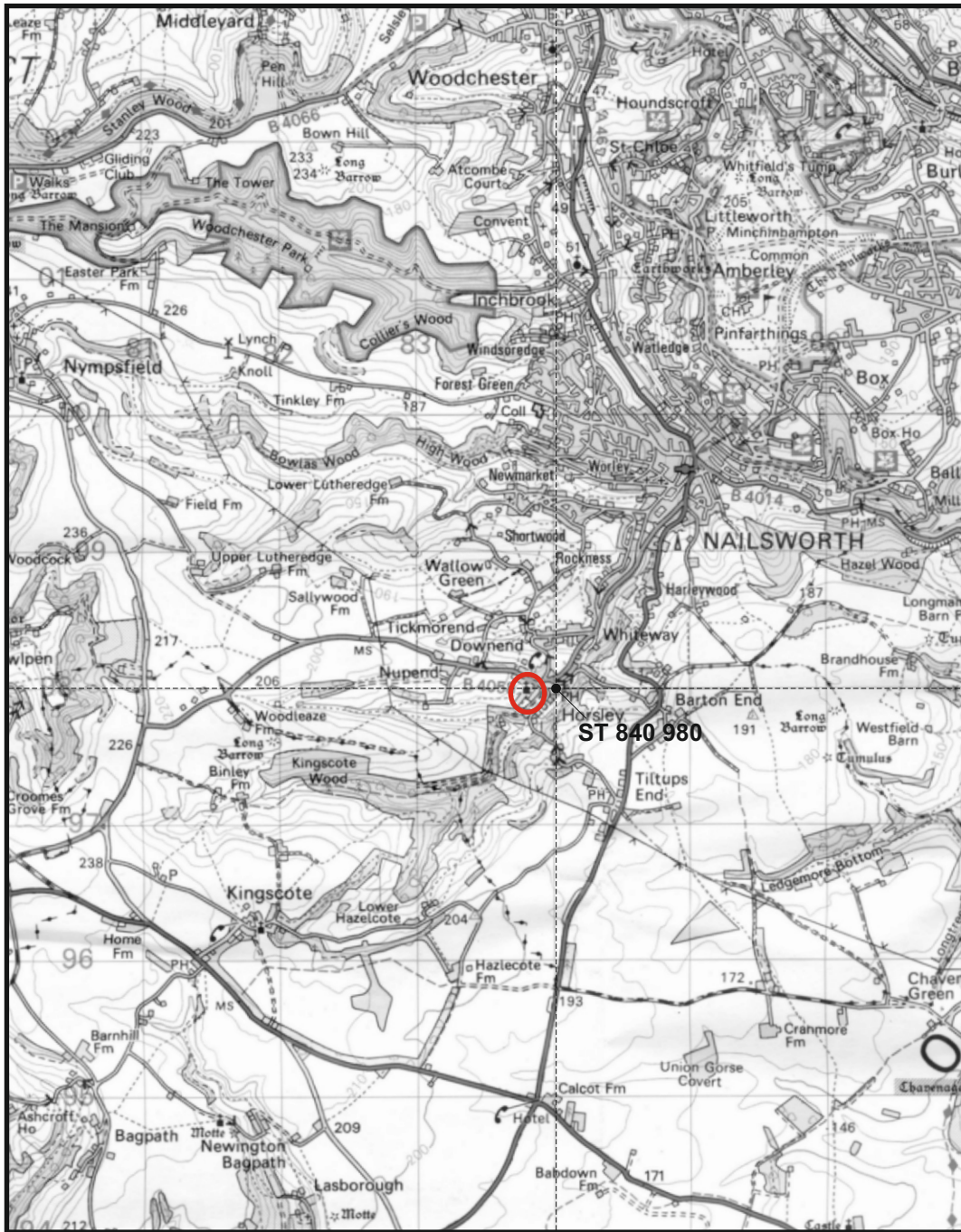
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## **9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

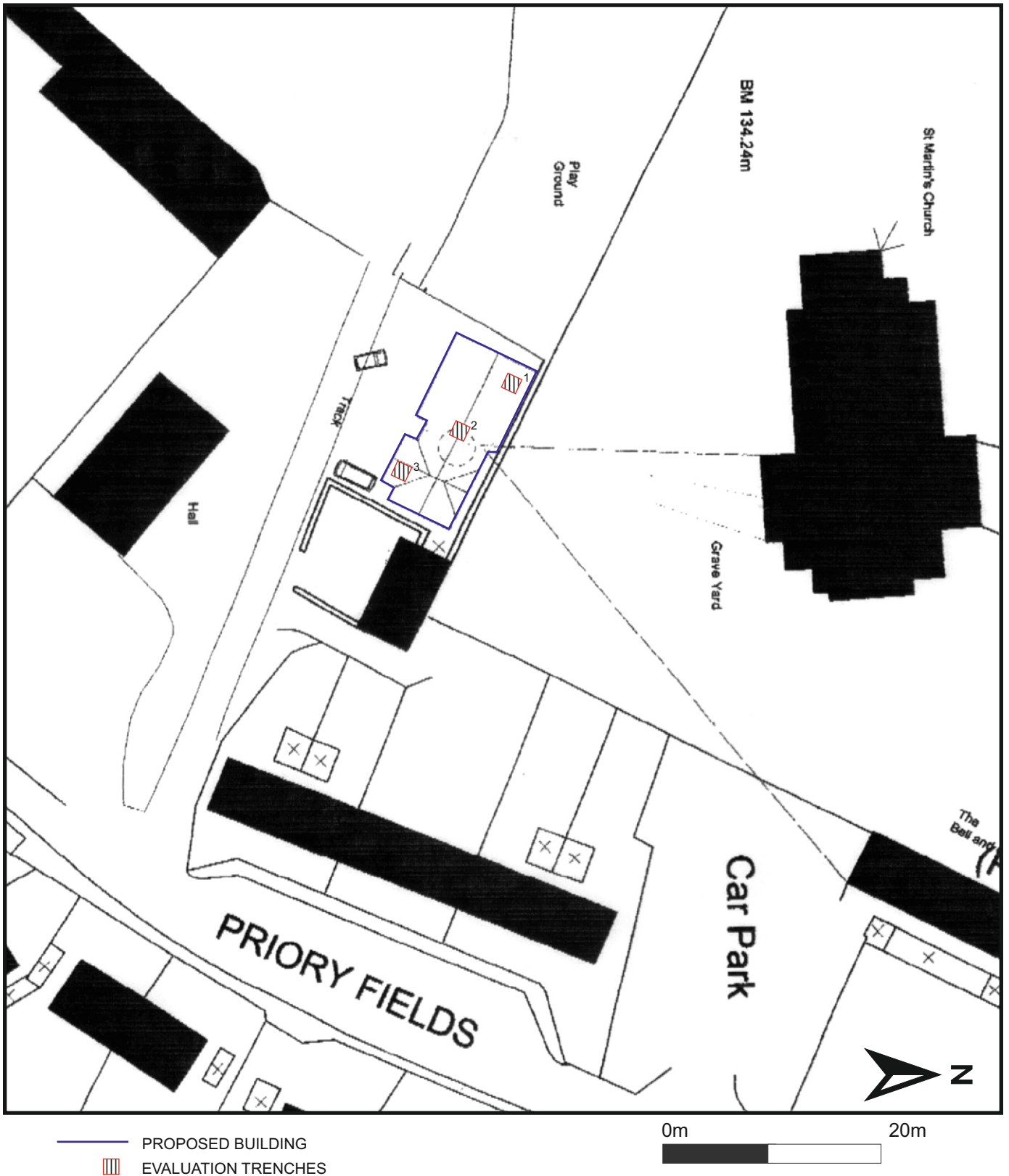
Foundations Archaeology would like to thank Charles Parry of Gloucestershire County Council David Austin of David Austin Architects and Horsley Parish Council for their assistance with this project.





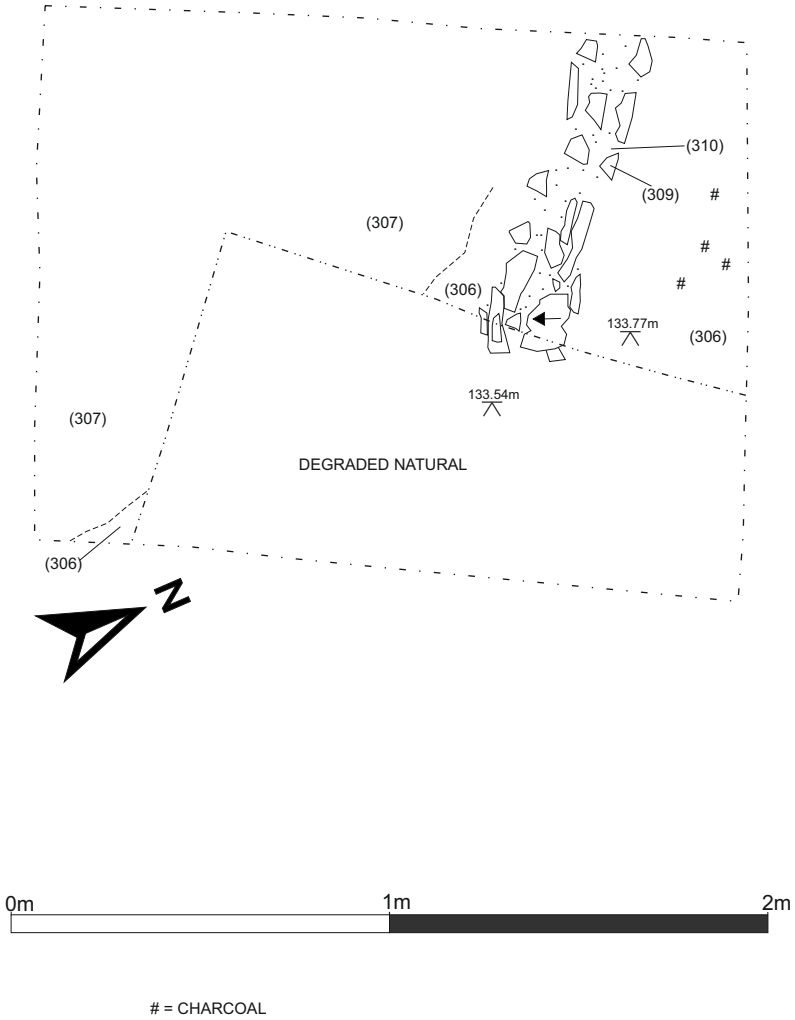
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FIGURE 1: Site Location



**FIGURE 2: Trench Location**

### TRENCH 3 PLAN



### SOUTH EAST FACING SECTION (309) AND (310)

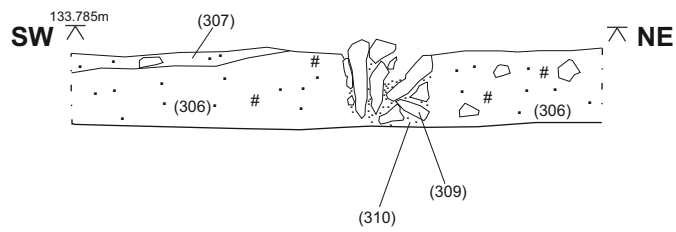


FIGURE 3: Trench 3, Plan and Section