

**182 - 184 STANSTED ROAD,  
BISHOPS STORTFORD,  
HERTFORDSHIRE**

**NGR: TL 4957 2210**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

**Quality Assurance**

This Document has been compiled and authorised in accordance with  
AMS's Quality Procedures (BS EN ISO 9001: 2000)

Author Andrew Hood

Date 11<sup>th</sup> April 2008

Approved Tracy Michaels

QA Checked Diana King

Report No. 587

*This report has been compiled with all reasonable skill care and attention to detail within the terms of the project as specified by the client and within the general terms and conditions of Archaeological Management Services Ltd trading as Foundations Archaeology but no explicit warranty is provided for information and opinions stated. AMS Ltd accepts no responsibility whatsoever to third parties to whom this report or any part thereof is made known. Any such party relies on this report at their own risk. Copyright of this document is retained by AMS Ltd, but unlimited licence to reproduce it in whole or part is granted to the client and/or their agents and/or assignees on payment of invoice.*

## **CONTENTS**

Summary

Glossary

- 1 INTRODUCTION
- 2 BACKGROUND
- 3 AIMS
- 4 METHODOLOGY
- 5 RESULTS
- 6 DISCUSSION
- 7 BIBLIOGRAPHY
- 8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: Iron Hobnails

Appendix 2: Historic Environment Record Summary Sheet

## **FIGURE LIST**

Figure 1: Site Location

Figure 2: Trench Locations

Figure 3: Trench Photographs

## **SUMMARY**

From the 19<sup>th</sup> until the 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2007 Foundations Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological evaluation, on behalf of CgMs Consulting Ltd., on land at 182-184 Stansted Road, Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire (NGR: TL 4957 2210). The evaluation comprised the excavation and recording of seven trenches.

A small patch of probable Roman iron hobnail and timber/masonry nail fragments was present in Trench 1, at the western end of the study area.

No other archaeological features, artefacts or deposits were present within the study area.

## 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, in this case, glacial gravel and sand overlying London Clay.

### 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.

### Roman

The period traditionally dated between AD 43 and AD 410

## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of an archaeological evaluation undertaken by Foundations Archaeology in November 2007 on land at 182-184 Stansted Road, Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire (NGR: TL 4957 2210). The project was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd.
- 1.2 Planning permission has been granted for the demolition of existing buildings and the construction of 8 dwellings, access road, landscaping and parking (3/07/0704/FP). In accordance with the general principles of PPG 16 (Archaeology and Planning, DoE 1990) and the archaeological policies of Hertfordshire County Council and East Hertfordshire District, an archaeological condition (Condition 21) was attached to the planning permission.
- 1.3 The archaeological work was undertaken in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by CgMs Consulting (2007).
- 1.4 This report constitutes the results of the archaeological works.

## 2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The study area is located immediately to the east of Stansted Road and comprises an area of 0.3ha. At the time of the archaeological works the site consisted of an unoccupied domestic dwelling with associated garden.
- 2.2 The study area lies to the east of a Roman settlement focused along the line of *Stane Street* Roman road. The discovery of several burials and a group of cremations have led to the conclusion that there was a cemetery on the eastern side of the settlement. The eastern boundary of this cemetery is thought to roughly coincide with Stansted Road but it is possible that it could extend to the east of Stansted Road and therefore into the site.

## 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 WSI required the excavation of four trenches. Due to on-site space constraints, it was necessary to amend the trench locations. In the event, and in agreement with the archaeological representatives of CgMs Consulting and Hertfordshire County Council, seven trenches were excavated across the proposed development area. The final trench locations are shown in Figure 2.

4.2 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 trench was cleaned and all additional excavation was conducted by hand.

4.3 All excavation and recording work was undertaken in accordance with the Specification and the Foundations Archaeology Technical Manual 3: Excavation Manual.

4.4 Two archaeologists undertook the fieldwork between 19<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2007.

## 5 RESULTS

5.1 **Trench 1** (12m by 1.3m) was excavated onto natural clay and gravel deposits at an average depth of 0.58m (66.17m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural deposits were overlaid by an orange brown silt clay (104), up to 0.28m thick, which contained a small patch of iron hobnail fragments (107). Context (107) was located 6.5m from the west end of the trench and was not associated with a cut feature. Layer (104) was overlaid by context (103), up to 0.24m thick, which comprised a grey brown silt clay. Context (103) was overlaid by topsoil (102), up to 0.14m thick, which consisted of a dark brown silt clay. No archaeological features were present within the trench.

5.2 **Trench 2** (10m by 1.3m) was excavated onto natural clay and gravel deposits at an average depth of 0.76m (66.33m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural deposits were overlaid by a dark yellow brown silt clay (204), up to 0.08m thick. This was sealed by layer (203), up to 0.20m thick, which comprised a yellow brown silt-clay-sand. Context (203) was overlaid by subsoil (202), up to 0.38m thick, which consisted of a brown silt clay. Subsoil (202) was overlaid by topsoil (201), up to 0.10m thick, which comprised a

dark brown silt clay. No archaeological features were present within the trench.

- 5.3 **Trench 3** (5m by 1.3m) was excavated onto natural clay and gravel deposits at an average depth of 0.65m (69.64m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural deposits were overlaid by a yellow brown silt clay (303), up to 0.25m thick. This was sealed by context (302), up to 0.30m thick, which consisted of a grey brown compact silt clay. Layer (302) was overlaid by topsoil (301), up to 0.10m thick, which comprised a dark brown loose silt clay. No archaeological features were present within the trench.
- 5.4 **Trench 4** (10m by 1.3m) was excavated onto natural clay and gravel deposits at an average depth of 0.26m (71.18m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural deposits were overlaid by a yellow brown silt clay (402), up to 0.20m thick. Layer (402) was overlaid by topsoil (401), up to 0.06m thick, which comprised a dark brown loose silt clay. No archaeological features were present within the trench.
- 5.5 **Trench 5** (10m by 1.3m) was excavated onto natural clay and gravel deposits at an average depth of 0.49m (69.76m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural deposits were overlaid by a yellow brown silt clay (503), up to 0.08m thick. This was sealed by context (502), up to 0.31m thick, which consisted of a grey brown compact silt clay. Layer (502) was overlaid by topsoil (501), up to 0.10m thick, which comprised a dark brown silt clay. No archaeological features were present within the trench.
- 5.6 **Trench 6** (5m by 1.3m) was excavated onto natural clay and gravel deposits at an average depth of 0.35m (68.29m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural deposits were overlaid by a grey brown silt clay (602), up to 0.25m thick. Layer (602) was overlaid by topsoil (601), up to 0.10m thick, which comprised a dark brown loose silt clay. No archaeological features were present within the trench.
- 5.7 **Trench 7** (5m by 1.3m) was excavated onto natural clay and gravel deposits at an average depth of 0.36m (68.64m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural deposits were overlaid by a grey brown silt clay (702), up to 0.26m thick. Layer (702) was overlaid by topsoil (701), up to 0.10m thick, which comprised a dark brown loose silt clay. Frequent brick fragments, glass and chinaware pottery sherds were present within context (701). No archaeological features were present within the trench.

## 6 DISCUSSION

- 6.1 The iron hobnail fragments (107) are almost certainly of Roman date (see Appendix 1) and are probably derived from a shoe or sandal. The presence of possible timber or masonry nails from the same context may indicate funerary activity. The lack of any associated features, along with the absence of evidence for truncation within Trench 1, suggests that context (107) is most likely to represent re-deposited material as opposed to an *in-situ* inhumation.

- 6.2 The evaluation works have indicated that there is a low potential for archaeological remains to be present within the study area.
- 6.3 The archive is currently held at the offices of Foundations Archaeology, but will be deposited with Bishops Stortford Museum (Accession code: BISHM352) within twelve months. A short note will be submitted for publication in the relevant local journal and an OASIS form will also be submitted to ADS.

## **7 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

CgMs Consulting. 2007. *182-184 Stansted Road, Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire: Specification for an Archaeological Evaluation.*

Institute of Field Archaeologists. 1994 (revised 2001). *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation.*

## **8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Foundations Archaeology would like to thank Rob Bourne of CgMs Consulting and Alison Tinniswood of Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Unit for their assistance with this project.



## Appendix 1: Iron Hobnails

By Lynne Bevan

A total of c. 20 small iron nails (107), all of which came from Context (104) and all of which were very corroded, were found. Despite their poor condition, these nails are almost certainly hobnails of the type used in Roman footwear, since those with the more complete heads conformed to the general size of hobnails in Manning's catalogue of Roman-British ironwork in the British Museum (Manning 1985, Fig. 32: 10, 133, 135, Plate 63: R104). Hobnails are common finds on Roman sites, and corroded groups from shoes, sometimes including complete or near-complete shoe soles, formed by fused hobnails, are often found at the feet of inhumation burials (Manning 1985, 136). Two broken, corroded shanks from larger nails from the same context were also examined. These were identified as the more common type of nails which were probably used for timber or masonry.

While hobnail-like nails could have been used for purposes other than the shodding of shoes or boots (see, for instance, the lead object with hobnails driven into it from Skeleton Green, Hertfordshire (Partridge 1981, 110-111 No. 51) and improbably identified as a herb pounder) it is assumed here, in the absence of evidence to suggest otherwise, that this small collection of hobnails was associated with, or derived from, Roman footwear.

Inclusion of footwear in burials is a well-known and relatively common rite in Roman Britain (Philpott 1991, 165-175). However, in this instance this small incomplete collection may have derived from a discarded shoe or sandal rather than indicating a Roman burial. This small number of hobnails is lower than the figure of 67 hobnails per shoe which was produced as an average across a number of British and continental sites and published in the Folly Lane, Verulamium report (Niblett 1999, 167 Table 19). Small collections of hobnails like the one from Stansted Road, of under 25 nails in total, have been taken to represent the remains of Roman sandals or *soleae*, rather than other forms of footwear such as the *calceus*, a usually openwork shoe, or the *caliga*, a military boot (van Driel-Murray 1998, 293). Alternatively, the nails may represent the remains of an incomplete shoe or sandal.

Foot and shoe symbolism occurs widely in religious contexts in the Graeco-Roman world (see, for instance, broad discussion on this in van Straten 1981, 144-145 and Ferris 1999, 9, and for examples at specific Roman sites in Italy and Spain see Arce *et al.* 1997, 405 and Nottingham Museums 1983, 50). Plate brooches in the shape of sandals have been found at many religious sites in Britain, where they were dedicated as *ex votos* (see, for instance, Simpson and Blance 1998, 277). It is within this broader religious context that the inclusion of shoes in burials should be understood.

## Bibliography

Arce, J., Ensoli, S., and La Rocca, E. (eds) 1997 *Hispania Romana. Da Terra di Conquista a Provincia dell'Impero*. Electa, Milan.

Driel-Murray, C. van 1998 The Leatherwork from the Fort. In Cool, H.E.M. and Philo, C. Roman Castleford Excavations 1974-85. Volume 1 The Small Finds, 285-334. West Yorkshire Archaeology Service, Wakefield.

Ferris, I.M. 1999 Alchemy of Suffering. Hope and Faith Beyond the Healing Arts in Roman Britain. In Leslie, A. (ed) 1999 Proceedings of the Third Theoretical Roman Archaeology and Architecture Conference, Glasgow 1993, 1-13. Cruithne Press, Glasgow.

Manning, W.H. 1985 Catalogue of the Romano-British Iron Tools, Fittings and Weapons in the British Museum. British Museum Publications Ltd, London.

Niblett, R. 1999 The Excavation of a Ceremonial Site at Folly Lane, Verulamium. Britannia Monograph Series No. 14. London.

Nottingham Museums 1983 Mysteries of Diana. The Antiquities from Nemi in Nottingham Museums. Castle Museum Nottingham.

Partridge, C. 1981 Skeleton Green: a Late Iron Age and Romano-British Site. Britannia Monograph Series No. 2. London.

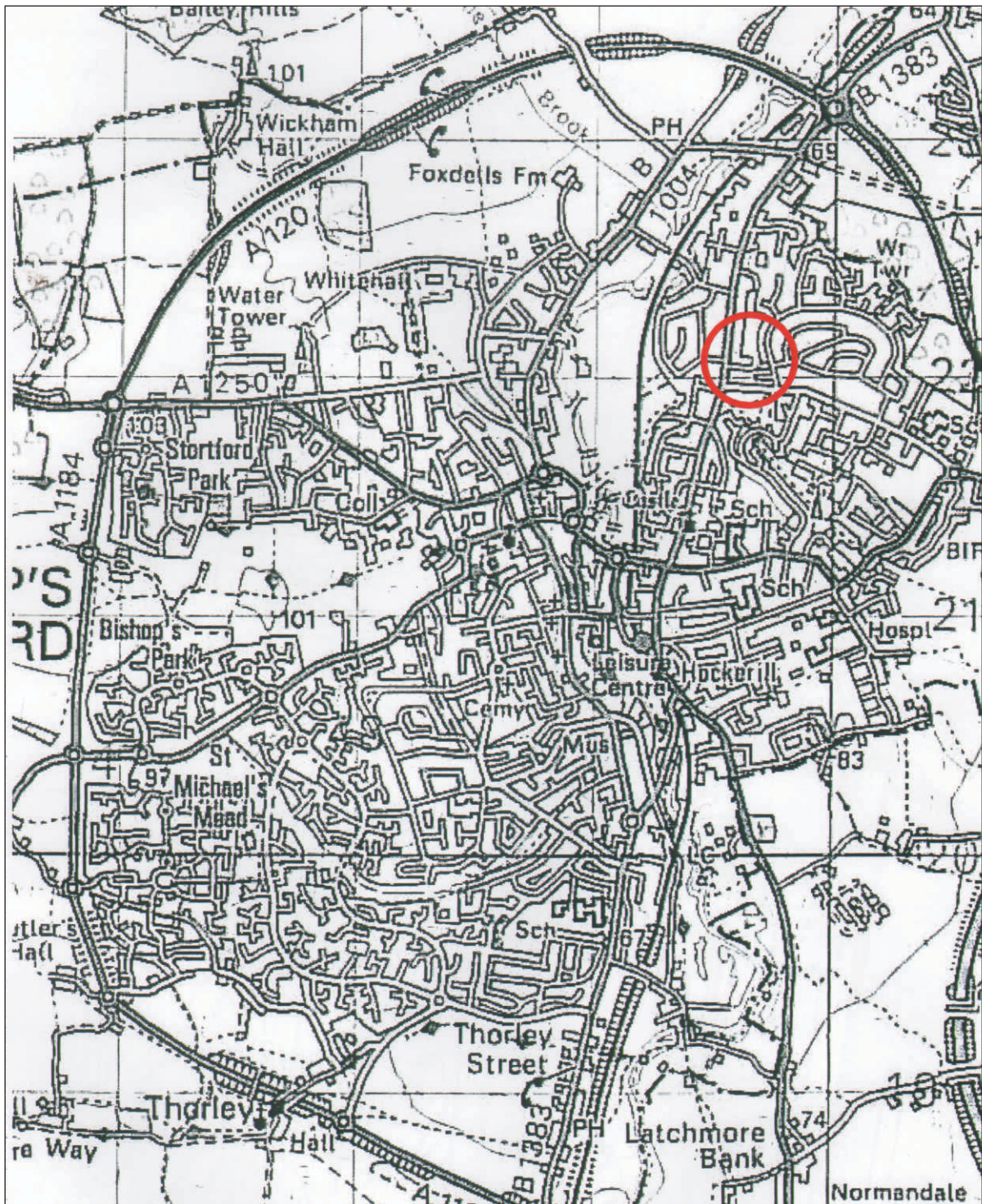
Philpott, R. 1991 Burial Practices in Roman Britain. A Survey of Grave Treatment and Furnishing A.D. 43-410. BAR British Series 219. Oxford.

Simpson, G. and Blance, B. 1998 Do Brooches Have Ritual Associations? In Bird, J. (ed) Form and Fabric. Studies in Rome's Material Past in Honour of B.R. Hartley. Oxbow Monograph 80, 267-279. Oxbow Books, Oxford.

van Straten, F.T. 1981 Gifts for the Gods. In Versnel, H.S. (ed) Faith, Hope and Worship. Aspects of Religious Mentality in the Ancient World, 65-151. Brill, Leiden.

**Appendix 2: Historic Environment Record Summary Sheet**

|  |                                    |  |
|--|------------------------------------|--|
| Site name and address:<br>182 – 184 Stansted Road.   |                                    |  |
| County: Hertfordshire.   |                                    | District:                                      |
| Village/Town: Bishops Stortford.   |                                    | Parish:  |
| Planning application reference: 3/07/0704/FP   |                                    |  |
| Client name, address, and tel. no.: Foundations Archaeology, 109 Albion Street, Swindon, Wilts. SN1 5LP.   |                                    |  |
| Nature of application: Domestic dwellings with associated access road, landscaping and car park.   |                                    |  |
| Present land use: Domestic dwellings with gardens.   |                                    |  |
| Size of application area: 3000m <sup>2</sup>   |                                    | Size of area investigated: 74m <sup>2</sup>    |
| NGR (to 8 figures): TL 4957 2210   |                                    |  |
| Site code (if applicable): SBS07   |                                    |  |
| Site director/Organization: Ian Powlesland.  |                                    |  |
| Type of work: Archaeological Evaluation.   |                                    |  |
| Date of work:  | Start: 19 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2007. | Finish: 22 <sup>nd</sup> Nov. 2007.            |
| Location of finds & site archive/Curating museum: Rhodes Arts Complex & Bishop's Stortford Museum (Accession code: BISHM352).  |                                    |  |
| Related HER Nos:   |                                    | Periods represented: Roman.                    |
| Relevant previous summaries/reports: CgMs Consulting. 2007. <i>182-184 Stansted Road, Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire: Specification for an Archaeological Evaluation</i> . Unpublished Report.   |                                    |  |
| Summary of fieldwork results: A small patch of probable Roman iron hobnail fragments was present in Trench 1, at the western end of the study area.<br><br>No other archaeological features, artefacts or deposits were present within the study area. |                                    |  |
| Author of summary: A. Hood.  |                                    | Date of summary: 27 <sup>th</sup> August 2008. |



© Crown Copyright  
Reproduced under licence AL523064A

FIGURE 1: Site Location

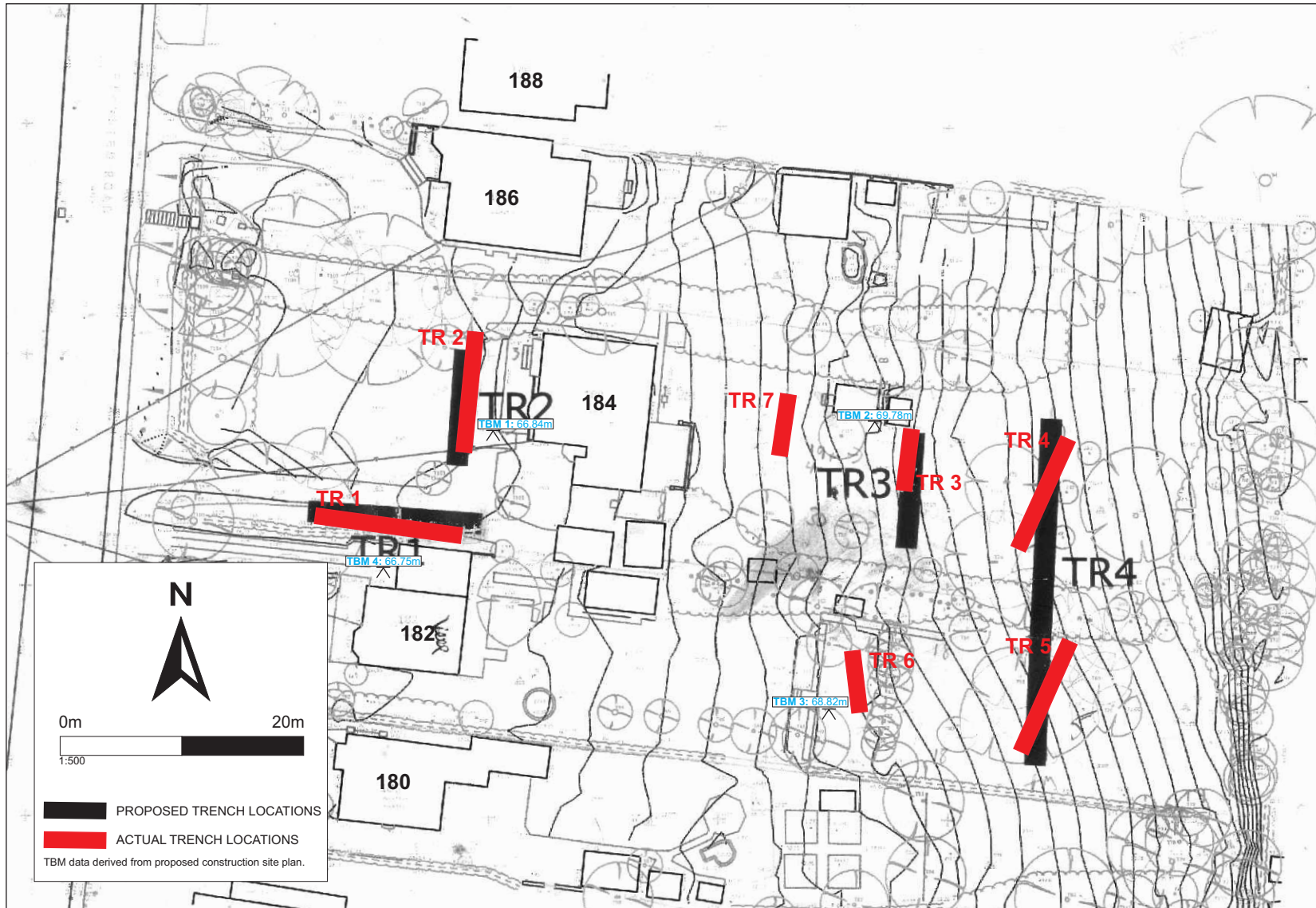


FIGURE 2: Trench Locations



TRENCH 1 LOOKING WEST



TRENCH 2 LOOKING NORTH



TRENCH 3 LOOKING NORTH



TRENCH 4 LOOKING NORTHEAST



TRENCH 5 LOOKING NORTHEAST



TRENCH 6 LOOKING NORTH



TRENCH 7 LOOKING NORTH

**FIGURE 3: Trench Photographs**