

HERITAGE NETWORK



THE RECTORY Barton-le-Clay, Beds.

HN460

Archaeological Evaluation Report



THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD

Registered with the Institute of Field Archaeologists as an Archaeological Organisation

Archaeological Director: David Hillelson, BA MIFA

Land adjacent to
THE RECTORY
Church Road, Barton-le-Clay, Beds.

HN460

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Prepared on behalf of the St Albans Diocesan Board of Finance

by

Geoff Saunders, BA

Report No.230

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The cover photograph shows a view of the Rectory from the south (photo by Linda Greenaway)

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork for this project was carried out by Chris Turner and Geoff Saunders, and the finds assessment was undertaken by Helen Ashworth. Illustrations were prepared by Karin Semmelmann, and the report was edited by David Hillelson.

The Heritage Network would like to express its thanks to Alistair Woodgate, Rumbold Sedgewick, Chartered Surveyors; R W Bennett and Son, plant hire; and Leslie-Ann Mather, Archaeological Officer, Heritage and Environment Section, Bedfordshire County Council, for their co-operation and assistance in the execution of this project.

Summary

Site name and address:	Land adjacent to The Rectory, Church Road, Barton-le-Clay, Bedfordshire		
County:	Bedfordshire	District:	South Bedfordshire
Village/town:	Barton-le-Clay	Parish:	Barton-le-Clay
Planning reference:	03/0526	NGR:	TL 0862 3046
Client name and address:	St Albans Diocesan Board of Finance, c/o Rumbold Sedgewick, St Albans, AL1 3HG.		
Nature of work:	New Rectory	Present land use:	Walled garden
Size of affected area:	c.165m ²	Size of area investigated:	c.40m ²
Site Code:	HN460	Other reference:	N/a
Organisation:	Heritage Network	Site Director:	David Hillelson
Type of work:	Evaluation	Archive location:	Luton
Start of work	21 st April 2004	Finish of work	23 rd April 2004
Related SMR Nos.:	N/a	Periods represented:	Prehistoric, late Saxon-P/Med
Previous summaries/reports:	N/a		

Synopsis:

In order to determine the archaeological risk posed by a proposal to construct a new Rectory on land adjacent to The Rectory, Church Road, Barton-le-Clay, the Heritage Network was commissioned by the St Albans Diocesan Board of Finance to undertake a programme of archaeological evaluation.

Two trenches measuring c.2 x 10m each were excavated. Trench 1 contained a boundary ditch on an east to west alignment which contained two sherds of prehistoric pottery. Trench 2 contained a number of probable natural springheads or ponds which had apparently been used for small scale disposal of domestic refuse from the late Saxon to the post-medieval period, when the present garden was landscaped and the ponds filled in.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report has been prepared on behalf of the *St Albans Diocesan Board of Finance*, as part of the archaeological evaluation of a development site on land adjacent to the Rectory, Church Road, Barton-le-Clay, Beds. The determination of the planning application for the development by the South Bedfordshire District Council (SBDC), has been referred back to the applicants for further information on the archaeological potential of the site. This is in accordance with the provisions set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note No.16 (PPG16) on Archaeology and Planning. The scope of the required investigation has been set out in a *Brief for a Programme of Archaeological Investigation* and a *Brief for an Archaeological Field Evaluation* both dated 6 December 2003 prepared by the County Archaeological Officer (CAO) of Bedfordshire County Council, acting as adviser to the planning authority. A full specification was contained in the Heritage Network's approved Project Design dated April 2004.

1.2 The site lies within landscaped gardens immediately to the east of the existing Rectory, and approximately 60m south-east of the parish church of St Nicholas, centred on NGR TL 0862 3046 (see Figure 1).

1.3 Lying in the medieval core of Barton, and adjacent to the former line of the High Road between Luton and Bedford, there was considered to be a high probability that remains of a medieval or earlier date might be affected by the development.

1.4 The aim of the evaluation has been to consider the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any remains that are liable to be threatened by the development, and to provide a local and regional, archaeological and historical context for any such remains, in accordance with the current published regional research agenda (Glazebrook 1997, Brown and Glazebrook 2000), if they were discovered.

1.5 The present report has been prepared in order to provide the planning authority with sufficient data to allow it to consider the archaeological implications of the proposed development, and to determine what further mitigation measures, if any, may be required.

2. Fieldwork

TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

2.1 The site lies at c.81m AOD, on level ground within a landscaped walled garden at the northern foot of the Barton Hills.

2.2 The underlying geology consists of light grey (2.5Y 7/2) clay, with yellowish mottling and occasional chalk fragments.

METHODOLOGY

2.3 All work was carried out in accordance with the approved *Project Design*, current health and safety legislation, and IFA standards.

2.4 The trenches were triangulated from known points using fibreglass tape measures.

2.5 Two trenches were opened using a tracked 360° mini-digger fitted with a 0.8m wide toothless bucket, under close archaeological supervision (see Figure 2). Spoil from the machining was inspected for archaeological artefacts. Trenches were machined to the first significant archaeological horizon.

2.6 The trenches were cleaned by hand, and all potential archaeological features and deposits were sampled to ascertain their nature, depth, date, and quality of preservation.

2.7 All identified contexts were photographed and recorded using the appropriate pro-forma. Scaled plans and sections were drawn on drafting film at scales of 1:20 and 1:50.

2.8 A small step was machine excavated along the southern baulk at the western end of Trench 2 to allow for the safe hand excavation of features in the base of the trench.

2.9 An auger was used on the features in Trench 2 to ascertain their depth where the high water table made further hand excavation impractical.

RESULTS

Trench 1 (see Figures 2 & 3)

2.10 Trench 1 was located inside the footprint of the proposed new Rectory and was aligned north to south. The trench measured 2 x 10.2m and was 0.92m in depth.

2.11 The stratigraphy in this trench consisted of three layers above natural sand. The very dark brown topsoil (107) overlaid a greyish brown subsoil (108). Below this was a silty clay layer (106) only observed in the southern end of the trench above ditch [101]. Beneath this lay the natural geology (109) of light grey clay.

2.12 One linear feature [101] was observed cutting into the natural clay, orientated E-W across the southern end of the trench. This feature was 0.77m wide and approximately 0.26m deep, with moderately steep concave sides and a rounded 'U' shaped base. The solitary

friable, mid grey, silty clay fill yielded 2 small sherds of prehistoric pottery. Layer [106] was observed beginning immediately above this ditch and continuing to the south, this layer may represent evidence of slumping into the ditch as well as the remains of a former bank on its southern side. The small finds assemblage recovered from the feature indicates that it likely represents a boundary ditch located away from areas of occupation.

2.13 A sub-circular rubbish pit [103] was observed cut through the subsoil at the northern end of the trench. The full dimensions of the pit are unclear as it ran beneath the northern and western limit of the trench, but it had a maximum depth of 0.65m. The pit had steep slightly concave sides, a rounded base, and was aligned east to west. The solitary firm, dark greyish brown, silty clay fill contained a large amount of 19th century tile fragments. The feature was also observed in the eastern end of Trench 2.

2.14 A path [105] was observed cut through the fill of pit [103] in the northern end of the trench, aligned east-west and formed of loose, yellowish brown, gravel. The path, which was sealed by the topsoil, appears to be a continuation of the existing gravel path which runs east to west immediately to the south of the present Rectory. The path was also observed running the entire length of Trench 2 along its northern half.

Recorded contexts

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)
101	Cut	Linear cut feature with moderately steep concave sides and 'U' shaped base aligned east to west. Boundary ditch.	Length: 2.00m+ Width: 0.77m Depth: 0.26m
102	Fill	Friable, mid grey (10YR 6/1), silty clay with occasional small flints. Fill of [101].	Length: 2.00m+ Width: 0.77m Depth: 0.26m
103	Cut	Sub-circular cut feature with steep slightly concave sides and a rounded base. Pit.	Length: 1.65m+ Width: 2.0m+ Depth: 0.65m
104	Fill	Firm, dark greyish brown (2.5Y 4/2), silty clay with moderate chalk flecks and occasional small flints and roots. Fill of [103].	Length: 1.65m+ Width: 2.0m+ Depth: 0.65m
105	Path	Loose, yellowish brown (10YR 5/6), sandy gravel path on an east to west alignment.	Width: 1.2m+ Depth: 0.30m
106	Layer	Firm, very dark grey (10YR 3/1), silty clay with occasional small flints.	0.10m thick
107	Layer	Friable, very dark brown (10YR 2/2), silty clay. Topsoil.	0.30m thick
108	Layer	Firm, greyish brown (2.5Y 5/2), slightly silty clay. Subsoil.	0.40m thick
109	Layer	Plastic, light grey (2.5Y 7/2), clay with yellowish mottling and occasional small chalk flecks. Natural geology.	-

Trench 2 (see Figures 2 & 3)

2.15 Trench 2 was located at right angles to the northern end of Trench 1 on its western side in the footprint of the new Rectory. The trench measured 2m x 10m and was 1.1m in depth.

2.16 The stratigraphy in the trench indicated that the ground in the trench had been significantly disturbed. The very dark brown topsoil (215), overlay an olive grey silty clay deposit (214) of levelling material containing post-medieval CBM, and chalk fragments. Beneath this was the natural geology (216) of light grey clay.

2.17 A large sub-circular feature [201] was observed cut through the natural clay, the full dimensions of the feature were not clear as it ran beneath the baulk on both the northern and southern side of the trench, it was approximately 6.1m across with a maximum depth of 0.44m (measured through augering). The feature had steep sides, the base of the feature was not reached as high ground water made this impractical. The single plastic, mid grey, silty clay fill (202) contained mottling indicative of vegetation growing in the feature when it was open. The fill contained artefacts ranging in date from the late Saxon to the post-medieval period. It seems likely that the feature represents the remnants of a large pond or spring, the dating evidence for which suggests it was open for a considerable length of time. The mixed range of artefacts suggests that the feature was used for small scale refuse disposal over a prolonged period. It is likely that the feature was backfilled when the present garden was landscaped. A further section [205] was excavated across the east side of the feature.

2.18 A sub-ovoid feature [203] was observed cut through the natural clay. The full dimensions of the feature were not clear as it ran beneath the southern limit of the trench, but it had a depth of 0.35m (measured through augering). The feature had steep sides and a flattish base. The single plastic, mid grey, silty clay fill (204) contained mottles indicative of vegetation growing in the feature when it was open. The fill contained artefacts ranging in date from the 12th-14th century AD to the 17th century AD. This feature is most likely auxiliary to pond [201] to the west, though the artefacts recovered from the feature suggest a slightly later date.

2.19 A sub-ovoid feature [207] was observed cut through the eastern edge of pond [201]. The full dimensions of the feature were not clear as it ran beneath the northern limit of the trench, but it had a depth of 0.20m (measured through augering). The feature had steep sides and a flattish base. The secondary plastic, mid dark grey, silty clay fill (208) contained mottles indicative of vegetation growing in the feature when it was open. The fill contained artefacts ranging in date from the 12th-14th century AD to the 18th century AD. Primary fill (210) was a plastic, light grey, silty clay and is most likely the result of slumping into the feature. This feature is most likely auxiliary to pond [201] to the west. The artefacts recovered may be residual within the fills and indicate that they may either have been imported on to the site, or that the formation of this feature truncated evidence of earlier activity.

2.20 It is likely that levelling layer (214) was laid down to consolidate the ground above these features prior to the landscaping of the garden.

2.21 Also observed in this trench was pit [211] which was the continuation of pit [103], recorded in Trench 1, and gravel path [213] which was the continuation of feature [105].

Recorded contexts

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)
201	Cut	Sub-circular cut feature with steep sides. Large pond, possibly on a natural spring.	Length: 2.0m+ Width: 6.10m Depth: 0.44m
202	Fill	Plastic, mid grey (10YR 5/1), silty clay with occasional flints. Fill of [201].	Length: 2.0m+ Width: 6.10m Depth: 0.44m
203	Cut	Sub-ovoid cut feature with steep sides and a flattish base aligned northwest to southeast. Auxiliary pit to [201].	Length: 2.15m+ Width: 1.50m+ Depth: 0.35m
204	Fill	Plastic, mid grey (10YR 5/1), silty clay with occasional flints. Fill of [203].	Length: 2.15m+ Width: 1.50m+ Depth: 0.35m
205	Cut	Sub-circular cut feature with steep sides and a flat base. Same as [201]. Large pond possibly on a natural spring.	Length: 2.0m+ Width: 6.10m Depth: 0.24m
206	Fill	Plastic, mid grey (10YR 5/1), silty clay with occasional small flints. Fill of [205].	Length: 2.0m+ Width: 6.10m Depth: 0.24m
207	Cut	Sub-ovoid cut feature with steep sides and a flattish base aligned northwest to southeast. Auxiliary pit to [201].	Length: 2.40m+ Width: 0.80m+ Depth: 0.29m
208	Fill	Plastic, mid dark grey (10YR 3/1), silty clay with occasional roots. Fill of [207].	Length: 2.40m+ Width: 0.80m+ Depth: 0.29m
209	Layer	Firm, light grey (10YR 6/1), plastic silty clay with small roots. Natural geology leached grey by large pond feature [201].	0.25m thick
210	Fill	Firm, light grey (10YR 6/1), plastic silty clay. Redeposited natural probably as a result of slumping. Primary fill of [207].	Length: 2.40m+ Width: 0.80m+ Depth: 0.15m
211	Cut	Sub-circular cut feature with slightly concave steep sides and a rounded base. Same as [103] in trench 1.	Length: 0.90m+ Width: 0.90m+ Depth: 0.70m
212	Fill	Firm, dark greyish brown (2.5Y 4/2), silty clay with moderate chalk flecks and occasional small flints and roots. Fill of [211].	Length: 0.90m+ Width: 0.90m+ Depth: 0.70m
213	Path	Loose, yellowish brown (10YR 5/6), sandy gravel path on an east to west alignment.	Length: 10.0m+ Width: 1.2m+ Depth: 0.30m
214	Layer	Firm, olive grey (5Y 5/2), slightly silty clay with frequent CBM, chalk, and clunch fragments. Levelling deposit.	0.50m thick
215	Layer	Friable, very dark brown (10YR 2/2), silty clay. Topsoil.	0.30m thick
216	Layer	Plastic, light grey (2.5Y 7/2), clay. Natural geology.	-

FINDS CONCORDANCE

Ctxt	Pottery		CBM		An.bone		Fe nail		Mortar/ plaster		Stone		Shell		Cu alloy		Comments
	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	
102	5	2			2	2											
202	50	9	1145	9	25	6	10	1	55	2	20	1*	115	12	70	1	*discarded – not worked
204	2	1	345	9	3	2							55	2			
206			85	4													
208	15	4	10	1	10	2											
Tr 1 U/S	10	1															
Total	82	17	1585	23	40	12	10	1	55	2	20	1	170	14	70	1	

ARTEFACTS**Pottery**

2.22 A total of 17 pottery sherds, weighing 82g, was recovered from 1 unstratified and 4 stratified contexts during the present investigation. The pottery ranged in date from the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age to the post-medieval period. The bulk of the assemblage consisted of abraded, undiagnostic, bodysherds that are likely to have been residual in later features.

2.23 The earliest pottery consisted of a fragment of late Bronze Age/early Iron Age flint-tempered ware and a rim sherd of sand-and grog-tempered ware of probable middle Iron Age date. Both were recovered from context (102), the fill of linear feature [101], suggesting that this feature may have been prehistoric in origin.

2.24 No evidence of Romano-British pottery was recovered from the site, indicating a possible hiatus in activity in the area between the late Iron Age and late Anglo-Saxon periods. Three sherds of late Anglo-Saxon shell-tempered ware, including 2 St Neots-type ware dated to the 9th-11th centuries AD, were recovered from context (202) and as unstratified material in Trench 1.

2.25 The largest group comprised medieval sandy grey wares of probable 12th to 14th century date. These were represented by abraded bodysherds and were recovered from contexts (202), (204) and (208) that also produced post-medieval peg tile. A single sherd of post-medieval pottery, comprising a fragment of slip-trailed ware of possible 17th century date, was recovered from context (202).

Recommendations

2.26 As the pottery is largely abraded and undiagnostic, and is mostly residual within later features, no further work is proposed on this assemblage.

Ceramic Building Material

2.27 A total of 23 ceramic building material fragments, weighing 1585g, were collected from 4 stratified contexts during the present investigations. The bulk of the assemblage consisted of small fragments of post-medieval peg tile, ranging in date from the 17th to the 19th centuries AD.

Recommendations

2.28 Post-medieval peg-tile is a common find on urban sites of medieval and post-medieval date. This material may have been imported onto the present site as part of the backfill for later features. On this basis, and the small size of the assemblage, no further work is proposed on this material.

Mortar/plaster

2.29 A single fragment of plain white wall plaster, and a fragment of lime mortar, were recovered from context (202).

Recommendations

2.30 Given the small size of the assemblage, no further work is proposed on this material.

Iron Objects

2.31 A single, very corroded, iron nail, weighing 10g, was collected from context (202). It measured 50mm in length, with a shank width of approximately 8mm, narrowing to 2mm. The head may originally have been circular, with a diameter of approximately 15mm.

Recommendations

2.32 Given the small size of the assemblage, no further work is proposed on this material.

Copper Alloy

2.33 Part of the rim of a metal funnel-rimmed vessel, weighing 70g, was recovered from context (202). The vessel appears to have been made from copper alloyed with lead. It has a rim radius of approximately 22cms. The remains of two small holes in the rim suggest that it was broken and mended at some point during use. A heavy soot deposit on the exterior of the rim indicates that it stood over an open fire and may have been used in cooking.

Recommendations

2.34 Given the small size and fragmentary nature of this object, no further work is proposed.

ECOFACTS

Animal bone

2.35 A total of 12 animal bone fragments, weighing 40g, was collected from 4 stratified contexts. The assemblage consisted of small, mostly undiagnostic, fragments.

Recommendations

2.36 Given the small size and fragmentary nature of this material, no further work is proposed on this assemblage.

Shell

2.37 A total of 14 shells, weighing 170g, was collected from 2 stratified contexts. The bulk of this material (11 pieces) consisted of oyster shell, with 1 snail shell and 2 mussel shells.

2.38 The presence of oyster and mussel shells from the fills of the large open feature are further indication of its use for depositing domestic rubbish. Such items were common foodstuffs in the medieval and post-medieval periods.

Recommendations

2.39 Given the small size of the assemblage, no further work is proposed on this material.

3. Discussion

3.1 The present evaluation revealed a single ditch, [101], in Trench 1, and a series of probable springhead ponds, [201], [203], and [207], in Trench 2.

3.2 Ditch [101], observed crossing the southern edge of Trench 1 on an east – west alignment, appears to be a prehistoric boundary ditch. The nature of its profile and the finds assemblage recovered from the fill indicates that it is probably a field boundary located outside any area of domestic occupation dating to this period.

3.3 The features identified in Trench 2 predate the landscaping of the present garden. These features are likely to be the remnants of ponds, formed around natural springheads, which were used for the small scale disposal of domestic refuse. The material recovered from the features indicates they were used for this purpose from the late Saxon to the post-medieval period. Layer (214) appears to have been laid down to consolidate the ground above the features, probably when the present landscaped gardens were created. Groundwater was encountered at the base of this trench as opposed to the dry clay observed in Trench 1. This further suggests the existence of a natural spring line or perched water table in the vicinity of the trench.

3.4 The fieldwork demonstrates that the natural clay lies approximately 0.9-1.10m below the present ground surface. This depth of overburden is consistent with the ground having been built up, possibly in association with the landscaping of the Rectory grounds.

Conclusions

3.5 The archaeological evaluation has demonstrated the presence of boundary features of prehistoric date within the grounds of the former Rectory. No evidence of significant nearby occupation of this period was recovered.

3.6 The artefacts recovered from the ponds in Trench 2, which range in date from the late Saxon to the post-medieval period, indicate domestic activity during these periods in the vicinity.

3.7 The earlier stratigraphy on the site, particularly in Trench 2, has been disturbed by post-medieval or Victorian landscaping.

3.8 On the basis of these findings, it is considered that there is a low to moderate risk that further significant archaeological features, deposits or artefacts dating to the prehistoric period will be disturbed by the proposed development. In addition there is considered to be a low to moderate risk that significant archaeological features, deposits or artefacts dating from the late Saxon to the post-medieval periods will be disturbed by the proposed development.

CONFIDENCE RATING

3.9 Despite the waterlogging encountered in Trench 2 during the course of the fieldwork, the conditions were generally acceptable for the identification of potential features and deposits, and for their investigation.

3.10 There are no other circumstances which would lead to a confidence rating for the present evaluation which is less than High.

4. Bibliography

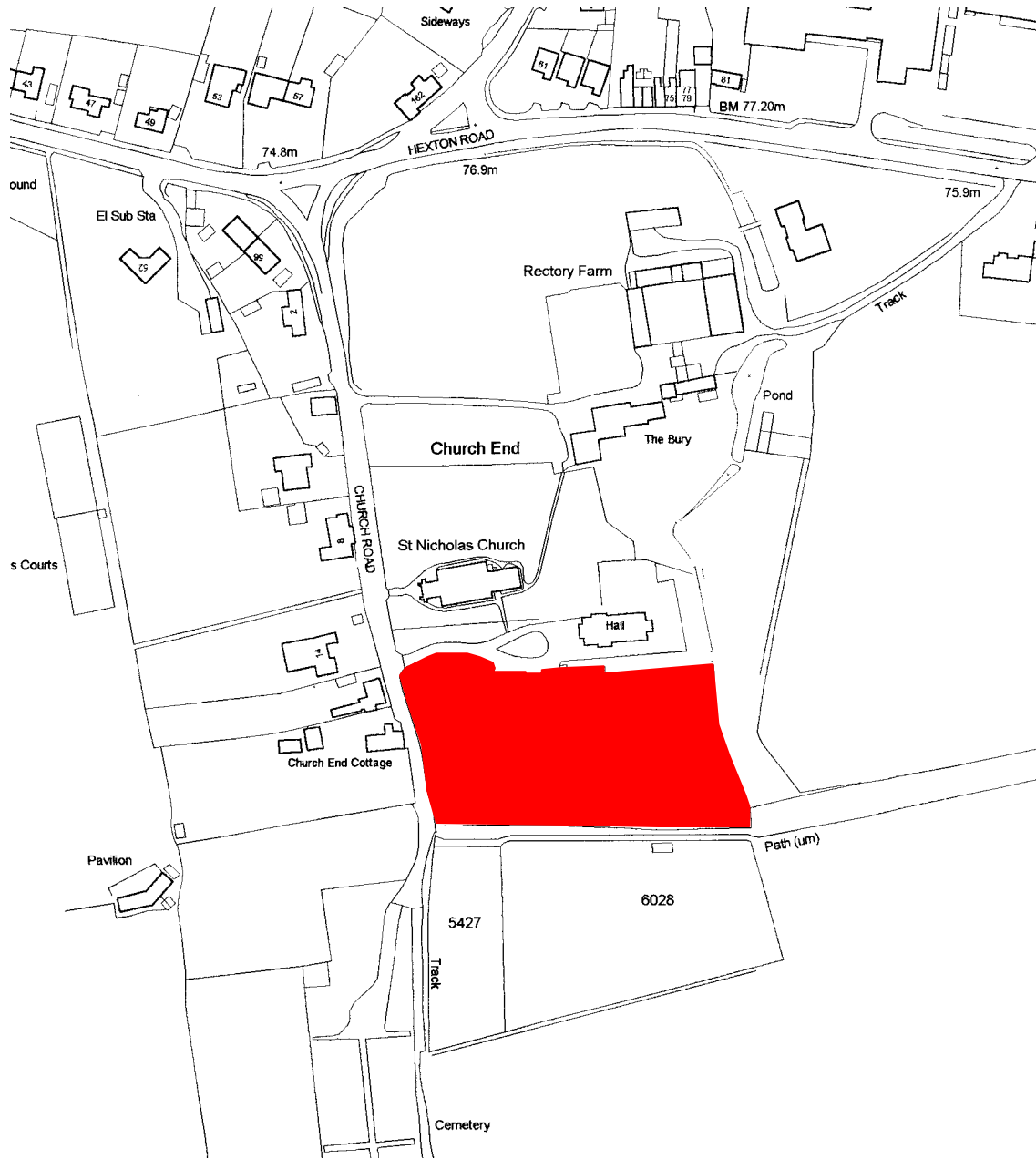
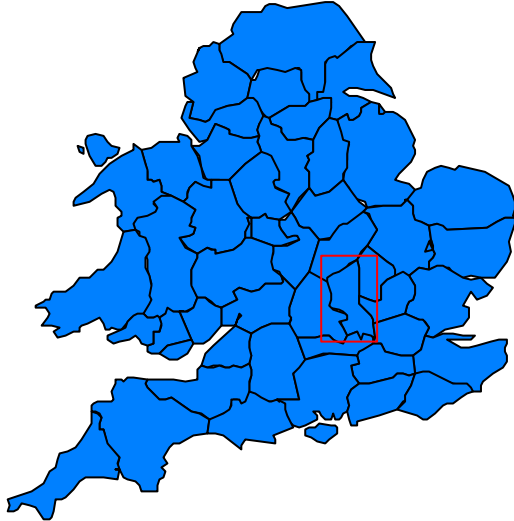
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5. Illustrations

Figure 1 Site location
Figure 2 Site layout
Figure 3 Trench plans and sections
Figure 4 Feature sections

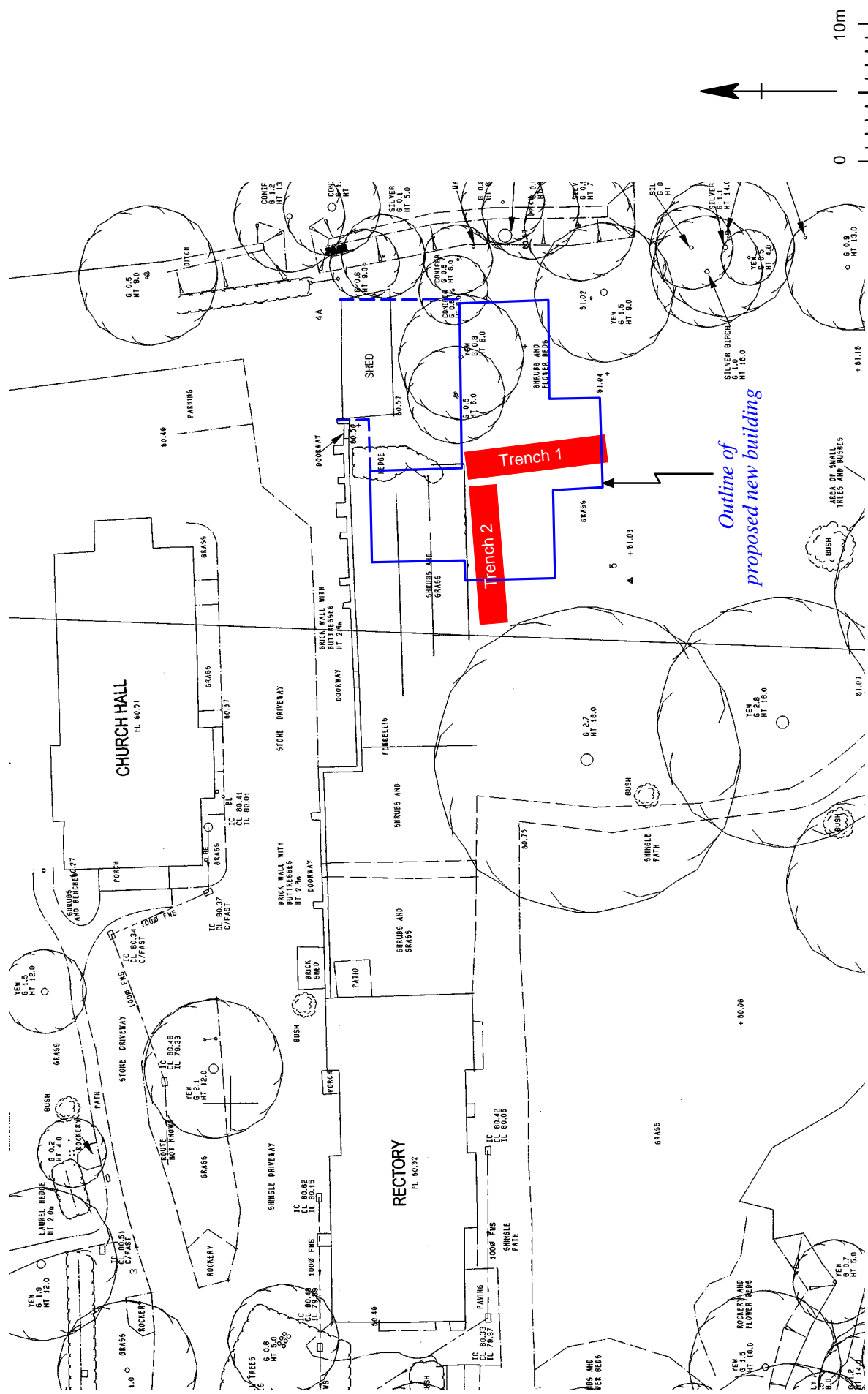


Site Location

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Scale 1:2500

Figure 1



Trench Location

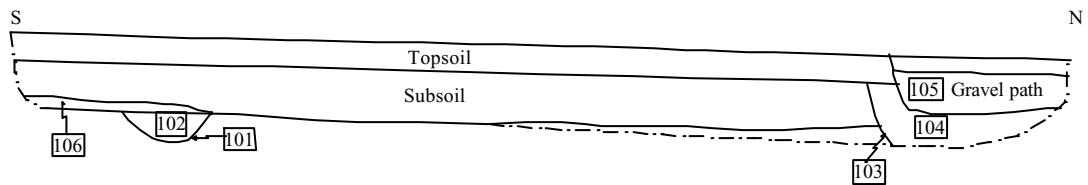
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Figure 2

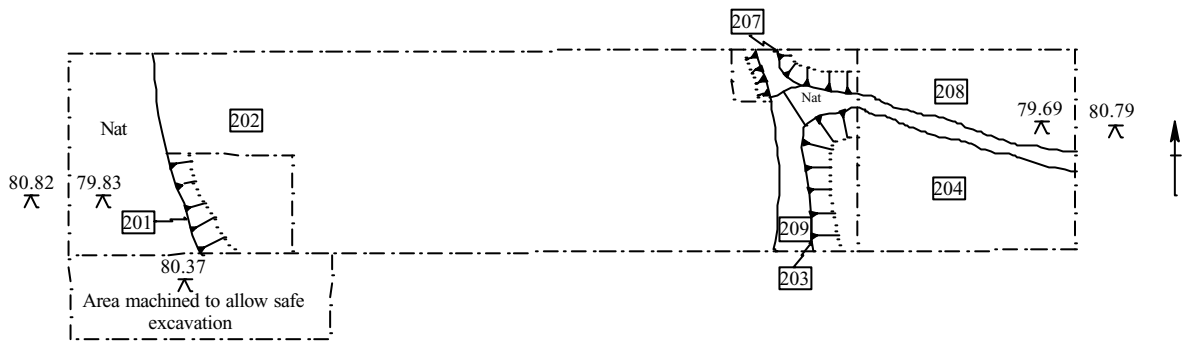
Trench 1



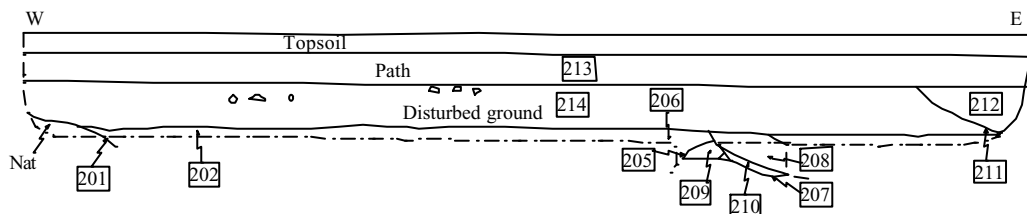
East facing section of Trench 1



Trench 2



South facing section of Trench 2

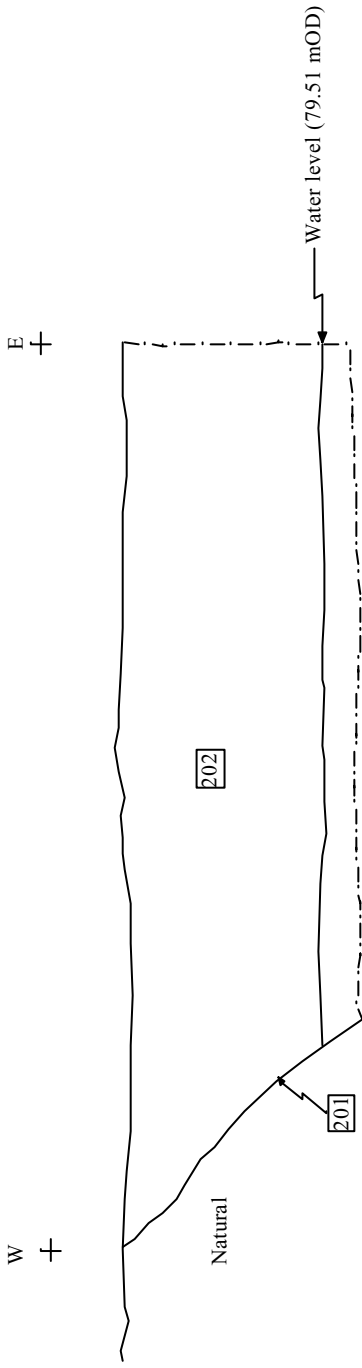


Trench plans & sections

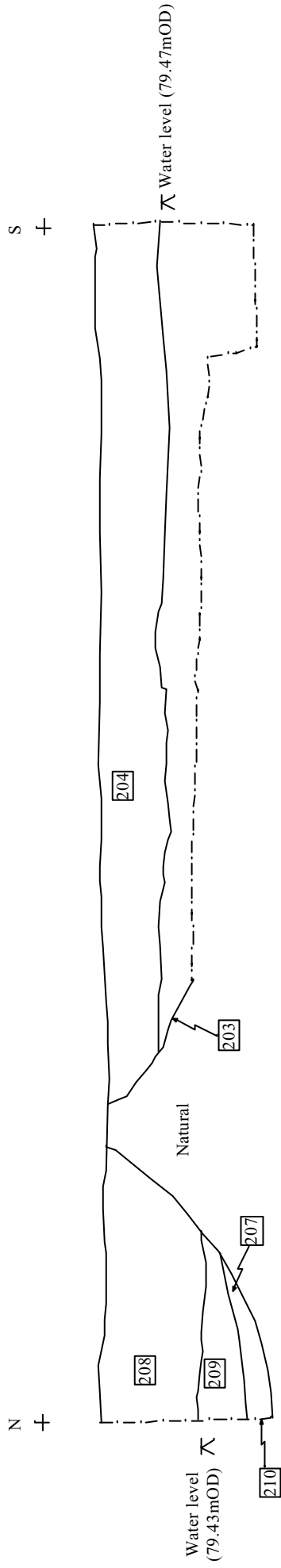
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Figure 3

South facing section of [201]



West facing section of [203]



Feature sections