

Meadway School, The Meadway, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Reading Borough Council**

by Andy Taylor

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code MST 06/63

June 2006

Summary

Site name: Meadway School, The Meadway, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 6759 7307

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 30th May-2nd June 2006

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Andy Taylor

Site code: MST 06/63

Area of site: 7 hectares

Summary of results: The majority of the site was found to have been little disturbed by modern activity, the exception being dumping and levelling in the south eastern corner of the playing field. However, no deposits or finds of an archaeological nature were observed

Monuments identified: None

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Reading Museum in due course.

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 12.06.06 Steve Preston✓ 05.06.06
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Meadway School, The Meadway, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation

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Report 06/63

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out Meadway School, The Meadway, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire (SU 6759 7307) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Geoff Weeks, Property Project Manager, Reading Borough Council, Civic Centre-Level 11, Reading, RG1 7TD.

Planning applications (06/00253/REG3; 06/00258/REG3, and a third in preparation) have been submitted to Reading Borough Council to construct a new educational facility with associated parking and landscaping for one area and housing for other areas of the site.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, Archaeology and Planning (PPG16 1990), and the Borough Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr David Thomason, Archaeology Officer with Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the Borough on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andy Taylor and Jenny Ryder between the 30th May and the 2nd June 2006 and the site code is MST 06/63. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Reading Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on an irregular parcel of land to the south, west and east of the existing Meadway School, The Meadway, Tilehurst, which itself lies within the western suburbs of Reading (Fig 1). It is currently occupied by playing fields associated with the school and the gardens of a bungalow in the western area of the site. The underlying geology comprises Plateau Gravel (BGS 1971) and the site lies at a height of c.93m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The potential of the site has been highlighted in a brief for the project prepared by David Thomason of Berkshire Archaeology. In summary the site is located close to or within what is thought to be the historic medieval core of the village of Tilehurst. The parish church, which contains 13th-century elements, is located 150m to the south-

west of the proposal site. Finds from the churchyard include material of Roman date, such as building material, pottery, coins and fragmentary querns. Medieval artefacts have also been recorded from the area. Tilehurst means 'wooded hill' and although not mentioned in Domesday Book it is documented from AD1167.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development.

Specific aims of the project were:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on the site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present;
- to determine if any Roman or medieval features are present.

It was proposed by the Berkshire Archaeological officer that 20 trenches would be dug between 20m and 32m long located in three areas where development would take place.

Results

A total of 17 trenches were dug with a JCB-type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. These measured 1.60m wide and between 7.8m and 33.0m in length. A further four test pits were dug to replace trenches which could not be dug in the north-eastern area of the site which was fenced off and inaccessible, bringing the total to 21 (Fig 3). The test pits measured 1 sq m and all spoilheaps were monitored for finds. All trenches were dug as near as possible to their original intended positions although some were moved slightly to avoid mature trees. These adjustments took place in consultation with the monitor.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trenches 1–12

These trenches, distributed across most of the proposal area, showed consistent stratigraphy.

Trench 1

This trench was 7.9m long and 0.46m deep. It comprised topsoil overlying subsoil overlying gravel natural. No archaeological deposits were observed.

Trench 2

This trench was 12.3m long and 0.43m deep. It comprised topsoil overlying subsoil overlying gravel natural. No archaeological deposits were observed.

Trench 3

This trench was 18.4m long and 0.58m deep. It comprised topsoil overlying subsoil overlying gravel natural. No archaeological deposits were observed.

Trench 4

This trench was 18.3m long and 0.71m deep. It comprised topsoil overlying subsoil overlying gravel natural. A possible ditch observed but was found to contain a fragment of modern tile.

Trench 5 (Pl. 1)

This trench was 18.9m long and 0.4m deep. It comprised topsoil overlying subsoil overlying gravel natural. No archaeological deposits were observed.

Trench 6

This trench was 24.5m long and 0.58m deep. It comprised topsoil overlying subsoil overlying gravel natural (Fig. 4). No archaeological deposits were observed.

Trench 7

This trench was 33.0m long and 0.60m deep. It comprised topsoil overlying subsoil overlying gravel natural. No archaeological deposits were observed. A ditch was observed in this trench but a machine slot dug through it confirmed that it contained fragments of modern tile and plastic.

Trench 8

This trench was 22.6m long and 0.46m deep. It comprised topsoil overlying subsoil overlying gravel natural. No archaeological deposits were observed.

Trench 9

This trench was 21.2m long and 0.42m deep. It comprised topsoil overlying subsoil overlying gravel natural. No archaeological deposits were observed.

Trench 10

This trench was 21.4m long and 0.44m deep. It comprised topsoil overlying subsoil overlying gravel natural. No archaeological deposits were observed.

Trench 11

This trench was 20.4m long and 0.54m deep. It comprised topsoil overlying subsoil overlying gravel natural. No archaeological deposits were observed.

Trench 12

This trench was 320.5m long and 0.49m deep. It comprised topsoil overlying subsoil overlying gravel natural. No archaeological deposits were observed. A ditch was also observed in this trench but a machine slot dug through it again confirmed that it contained fragments of modern tile and plastic.

Trenches 13-17

These trenches were located in the south east corner of the proposal site where the stratigraphy differed from the rest of the site (Pl. 2; Fig. 4).

Trench 13

This trench was 21.2m long and 1.12m deep. It comprised topsoil overlying subsoil overlying subsoil overlying a mid orange brown silty sand made ground containing brick and tile. In turn this was overlying a dark brown sandy gravel containing brick and tile overlying gravel natural. No archaeological deposits were observed.

Trench 14

This trench was 21.8m long and between 0.57m and 1.34m deep. It comprised topsoil overlying subsoil overlying subsoil overlying a mid orange brown silty sand made ground containing brick and tile. In turn this was overlying a dark brown sandy gravel containing brick and tile overlying gravel natural. No archaeological deposits were observed.

Trench 15

This trench was 20.3m long and 0.98m deep. It comprised topsoil overlying subsoil overlying subsoil overlying a mid orange brown silty sand made ground containing brick and tile. In turn this was overlying a dark brown sandy gravel containing brick and tile overlying gravel natural. No archaeological deposits were observed.

Trench 16

This trench was 22.0m long and 1.15m deep. It comprised topsoil overlying subsoil overlying subsoil overlying a mid orange brown silty sand made ground containing brick and tile. In turn this was overlying a dark brown sandy gravel containing brick and tile overlying gravel natural (Fig. 4). No archaeological deposits were observed.

Trench 17 (Pl. 2)

This trench was 19.1m long and 1.46m deep. It comprised topsoil overlying subsoil overlying subsoil overlying a mid orange brown silty sand made ground containing brick and tile. In turn this was overlying a dark brown sandy gravel containing brick and tile overlying gravel natural. No archaeological deposits were observed.

Test Pits 18-21

The test pits were located on the north eastern portion of the site. They were all 1m square in extent.

TP 18

This test pit was 0.48m deep. It comprised topsoil overlying subsoil overlying gravel natural. No archaeological deposits were observed.

TP 19

This test pit was 0.25m deep. It comprised topsoil overlying subsoil overlying gravel natural. No archaeological deposits were observed.

TP 20

This test pit was 0.40m deep. It comprised topsoil overlying subsoil overlying gravel natural. No archaeological deposits were observed.

TP 21

This test pit was 0.37m deep. It comprised topsoil overlying subsoil overlying gravel natural. No archaeological deposits were observed.

Finds

No finds of an archaeological nature were observed.

Conclusion

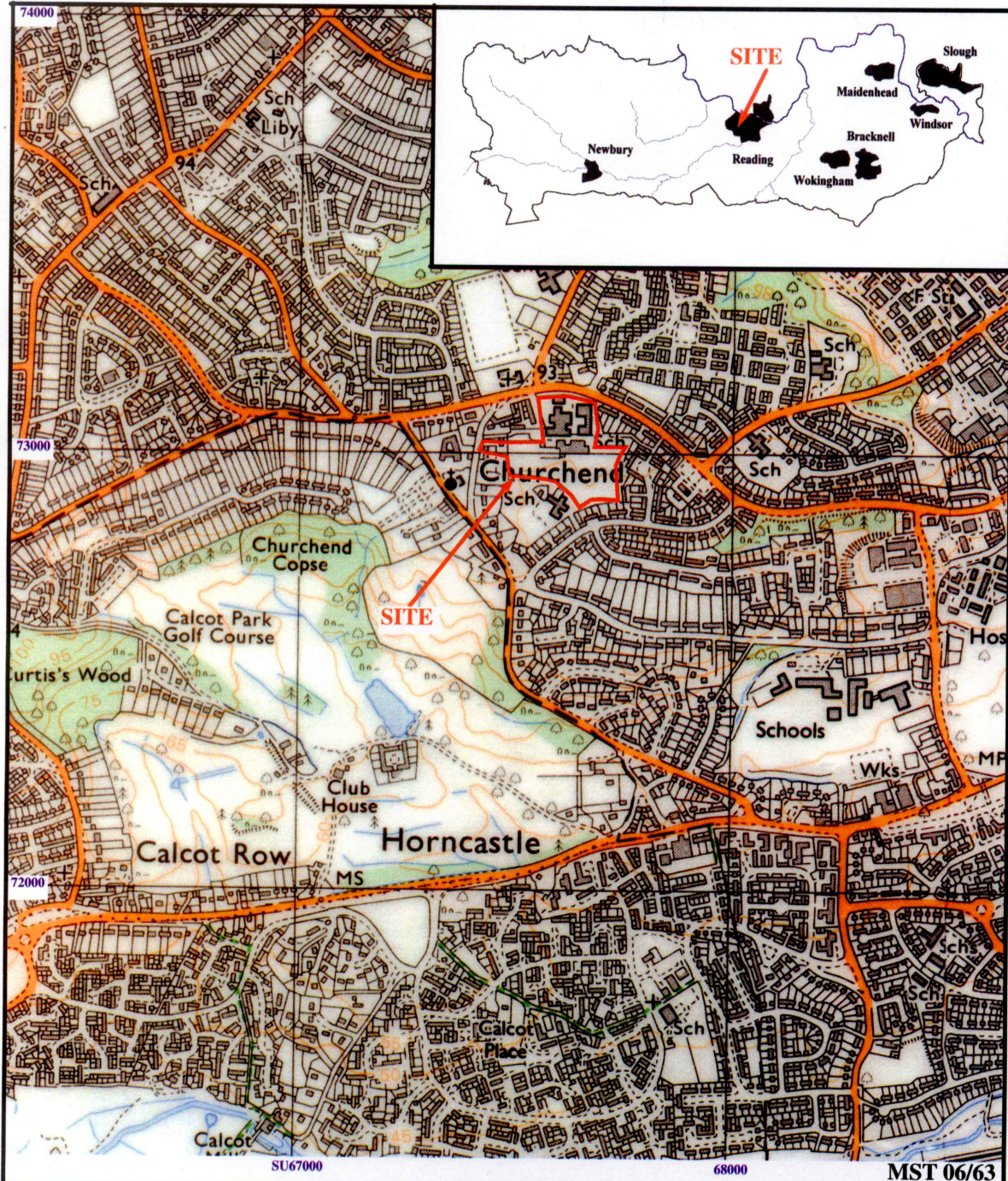
Despite the site's proximity to previously identified Roman material from the churchyard of St Michael's Church no deposits or finds of an archaeological nature were observed during the evaluation. The depth of the majority of the trenches was surprising shallow with little signs of modern disturbance. The exception to this lay within the southern end of the school field which appears to have has been built up to level it off, most likely from material used during the original construction of the Meadway School. On the basis of these results, the site appears to have low archaeological potential.

References

BGS, 1946, *British Geological Survey*, 1:63360, Sheet 268, Drift Edition, Keyworth
PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO

APPENDIX 1: Trench details
0m at S or W end

<i>Trench No.</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	7.80	1.60	0.46	0.00m-0.19m topsoil; 0.19m-0.41m subsoil; 0.41m+ gravel natural.
2	12.30	1.60	0.43	0.00m-0.22m topsoil; 0.22m-0.40m subsoil; 0.40m+ gravel natural.
3	18.40	1.60	0.58	0.00m-0.29m topsoil; 0.29m-0.51m subsoil; 0.51m+ gravel natural.
4	18.30	1.60	0.71	0.00m-0.35m topsoil; 0.35m-0.67m subsoil; 0.67m+ gravel natural. Modern ditch or trench
5	18.90	1.60	0.40	0.00m-0.16m topsoil; 0.16m-0.40m subsoil; 0.40m+ gravel natural. [Plate 1]
6	24.50	1.60	0.58	0.00m-0.16m topsoil; 0.16m-0.55m subsoil; 0.55m+ gravel natural.
7	33.00	1.60	0.60	0.00m-0.30m topsoil; 0.30m-0.55m subsoil; 0.55mm gravel natural. Modern ditch or trench
8	22.60	1.60	0.46	0.00m-0.12m topsoil; 0.12m-0.42m subsoil; 0.42m+ gravel natural.
9	21.20	1.60	0.42	0.00m-0.11m topsoil; 0.11m-0.38m subsoil; 0.38m+ gravel natural.
10	21.40	1.60	0.44	0.00m-0.10m topsoil; 0.10m-0.40m subsoil; 0.40m+ gravel natural.
11	20.40	1.60	0.54	0.00m-0.11m topsoil; 0.11m-0.49m subsoil; 0.49m+ gravel natural.
12	20.50	1.60	0.49	0.00m-0.14m topsoil; 0.14m-0.44m subsoil; 0.44m+ gravel natural. Modern ditch or trench
13	21.20	1.60	1.12	0.00m-0.19m topsoil; 0.19m-0.40m subsoil; 0.40m-0.71m orange brown silty sand; 0.71m-1.08m dark brown sandy gravel; 1.08m+ gravel natural.
14	21.80	1.60	1.34 (SE) 0.57 (NW)	SE-0.00m-0.16m topsoil; 0.16m-0.31m subsoil; 0.31m-0.82m orange brown silty sand; 0.82m-1.25m dark brown sandy gravel; 1.25m+ gravel natural NW-0.00m-0.16m topsoil; 0.16m-0.52m subsoil; 0.52m+ gravel natural.
15	20.30	1.60	0.98	0.00m-0.14m topsoil; 0.14m-0.32m subsoil; 0.32m-0.61m orange brown silty sand; 0.61m-0.95m dark brown sandy gravel; 0.95m+ gravel natural.
16	22.00	1.60	1.15	0.00m-0.13m topsoil; 0.13m-0.32m subsoil; 0.32m-0.89m orange brown silty sand; 0.89m-1.10m dark brown sandy gravel; 1.10m+ gravel natural.
17	19.10	1.60	1.46	0.00m-0.14m topsoil; 0.14m-0.41m subsoil; 0.41m-1.01m orange brown sandy silt; 1.01m-1.42m dark brown sandy gravel; 1.42m+ gravel natural. [Plate 2]
18	1.00	1.00	0.48	0.00m-0.15m topsoil;; 0.15m-0.48m subsoil; 0.48m+ gravel natural.
19	1.00	1.00	0.25	0.00m-0.15m topsoil; 0.15m-0.25m subsoil; 0.25m+ gravel natural.
20	1.00	1.00	0.40	0.00m-0.14m topsoil; 0.14m-0.40m subsoil; 0.40m+ gravel natural.
21	1.00	1.00	0.37	0.00m-0.15m topsoil; 0.15m-0.37m subsoil; 0.37m+ gravel natural

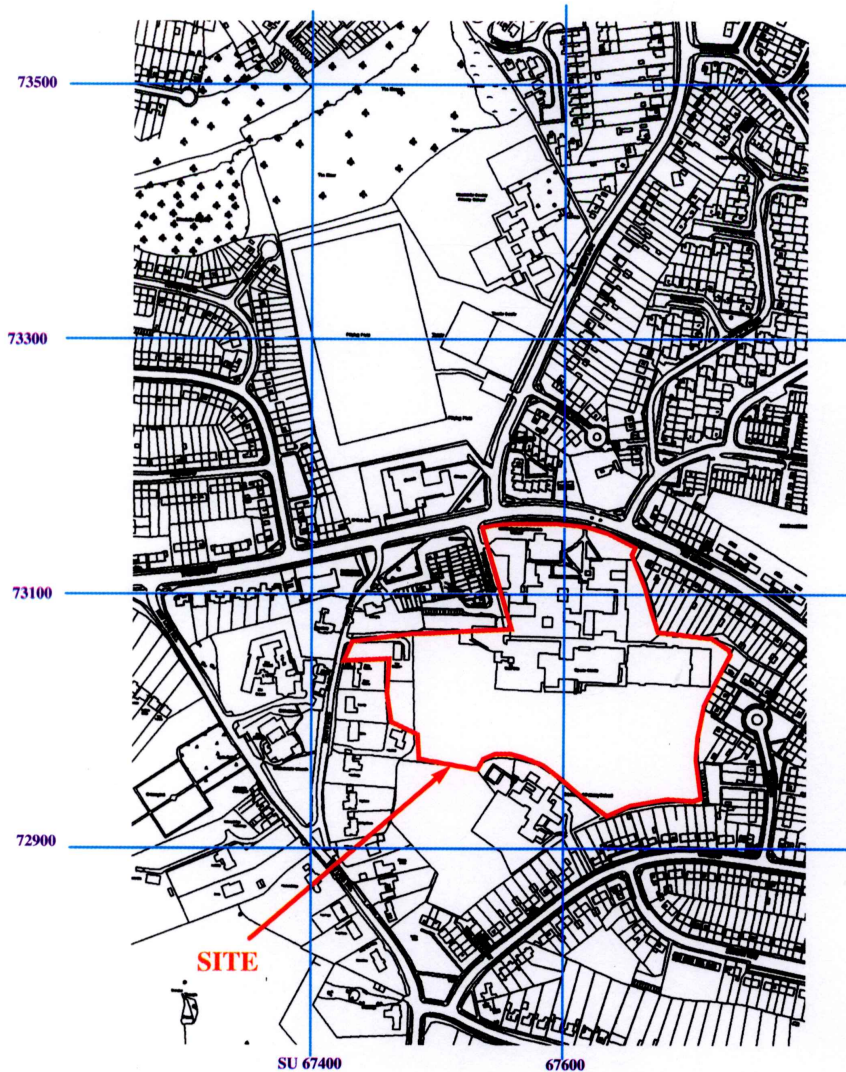


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Figure 1. Location of site within Reading
and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site within Reading.
Scale: 1: 5000

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Figure 3: Trench Locations

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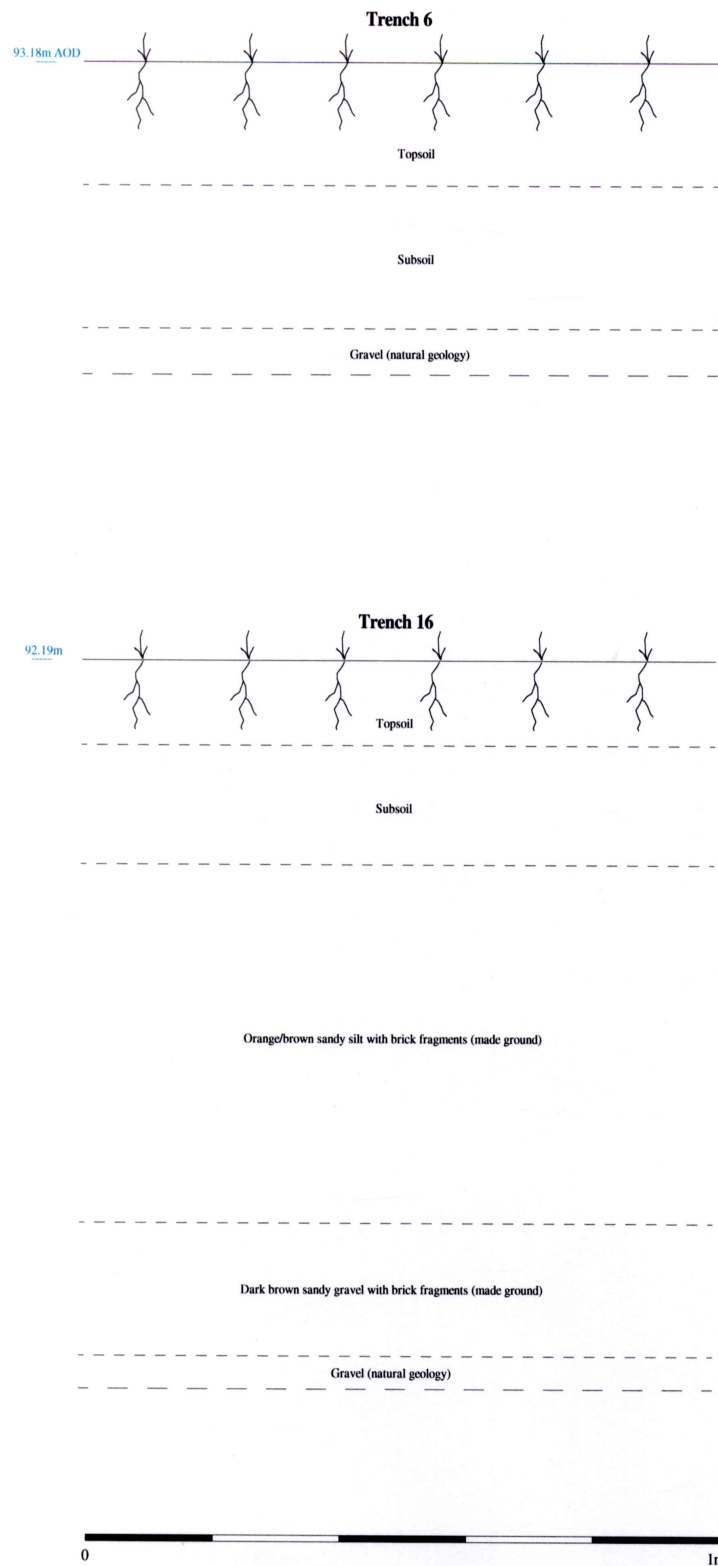


Figure 4: Representative Sections

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Plate 1. Trench 5 looking north west, further scale 1m, nearer scale 2m.



Plate 2. Trench 17 looking south west, nearer scale 1m, further scale 2m.