

Wexham Road East, Wexham, Slough, Berkshire

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Care UK Community Partnerships**

by Steve Ford

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code WRE07/55

May 2007

Summary

Site name: Wexham Road East, Wexham, Slough, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 9880 8185

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 2nd-18th May 2007

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Steve Ford

Site code: WRE 07/55

Area of site: 1ha

Summary of results: The evaluation has revealed a range archaeological deposits on the site comprising a large Bronze Age/Iron Age ditch and postholes; Roman ditch and posthole; and Saxon postholes and a possible sunken floored building. Stray finds of Saxon pottery and prehistoric struck flints were also recorded. The archaeological potential of the site is considered to be high.

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

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Wexham Road East, Wexham, Slough, Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation

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Report 07/55

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out on land to the east of Wexham Road, Wexham Park, Slough, Berkshire (SU 9880 8185) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Stewart Lang of Lang Daniels Patterson, The School Hall, 10 Wiseton Road, London, SW17 7EE, on behalf of Care UK Community Partnerships, Connaught House, 850 The Crescent, Colchester Business Park, Colchester, Essex, CO4 9QB.

Planning permission (P/09013/002) has been granted by Slough Borough Council for the construction of a new care home, landscaping and ancillary facilities. In order to determine the archaeological potential of the site a field evaluation has been requested. This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and Slough Borough Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr David Thomason of Berkshire Archaeology, archaeological advisers to the council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Steve Ford, Andrew Lawler and Simon Cass between 2nd and 18th May 2007 and the site code is WRE 07/55. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Reading Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the northern margins of Slough and comprises a roughly rectangular parcel of land which is currently rough pasture but was formerly a nursery. To the north lies the current nursery and to the east and south are various community sports facilities (Plate 1). The field in which the site lies continues beyond the site boundary to Wexham Road to the west (Figs 1 and 2). The site lies on level ground at a height of *c.* 35m AOD. The underlying geology comprises Boyn Hill terrace gravel with Brickearth just to the south (BGS 1974). The natural geology observed was predominantly gravel but with some patches of a loam overburden (brickearth) in places.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a brief prepared by Mr David Thomason of Berkshire Archaeology. In summary, the site lies in an area which until recently, had revealed few archaeological deposits (Ford 1987). However, from the results of recent fieldwork, the site can now be considered to lie in a locally rich area of archaeological deposits. To the south east lies the Wexham Court Moat - a medieval manorial complex - and to the north lies the site of a hamlet of Stoke Green that is of post-medieval date but which may have earlier origins. To the east, just beyond the county boundary lies an extensive Roman settlement (Ford in prep). The site is also situated on a gravel terrace associated with Palaeolithic occupation and a number of findspots of this date are recorded for the area. However, *in-situ* remains of this date are rare and are usually located deeply buried beneath the gravel deposits (Wymer 1999, map 7).

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.

It was proposed to dig 13 trenches, each 20m long and 1.6m wide (c. 4.1% of the developable site area). The trenches were to be dug by a machine fitted with a ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. Spoilheaps were to be searched for finds. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Results

Fourteen trenches were eventually dug ranging in length from 10.6m to 24.2m (Fig. 3). The trenches were initially opened in extremely dry weather and this generated uncertainty as to whether a sandy clay revealed was a natural brickearth cap to the gravel, or was a relatively modern subsoil. As a consequence several of the trenches were subsequently restripped of this deposit, which was revealed to be subsoil in the majority of cases. A range of archaeological deposits were revealed.

Trench 1

This trench was 20.1m long and 0.5m deep aligned east-west. The stratigraphy comprised 0.2m of turf and topsoil above 0.15m of sandy clay subsoil above gravel. The trench was restripped to check the geology. No archaeological deposits were revealed.

Trench 2

This trench was 20.3m long and between 0.4m and 0.5m deep aligned SW–NE. The stratigraphy comprised 0.2m of turf and topsoil above 0.15m of sandy clay subsoil above gravel. A service trench was revealed at the western end of the trench and an area of modern disturbance to the east. No archaeological deposits were revealed.

Trench 3

This trench was 18.9m long and 0.4m deep aligned roughly east-west. The stratigraphy comprised 0.2m of turf and topsoil above 0.15m of sandy clay subsoil above gravel. No archaeological deposits were revealed.

Trench 4

This trench was 18.2m long and between 0.38m and 0.45m deep aligned north-south. The stratigraphy comprised 0.2m of turf and topsoil above 0.15m of sandy clay subsoil above gravel. The southern end of the trench was restripped. A small posthole (5) was revealed, 0.36m across and 0.12m deep but its single fill (55) contained no finds (Figs 4 and 5).

Trench 5

This trench was 19.4m long and 0.35m deep aligned SW–NE. The stratigraphy comprised 0.2m of turf and topsoil above 0.15m of sandy clay subsoil above gravel. The trench was restripped . No archaeological deposits were revealed.

Trench 6

This trench was 21.2m long and 0.3m deep aligned SW–NE. The stratigraphy comprised 0.2m of turf and topsoil above 0.08m of sandy clay subsoil above gravel. No archaeological deposits were revealed.

Trench 7

This trench was 20.7m long and between 0.55m and 0.65m deep aligned north-south. The stratigraphy comprised 0.2m of turf and topsoil above 0.25m of sandy clay subsoil above gravel. At the southern end of the trench an area of burning/dumping had taken place within the subsoil. At the southern end of the trench was revealed part of a cut feature with a markedly square plan. The trench was extended to reveal more of this deposit in plan. On investigation it was found that this deposit comprised two features; a posthole (4) and a shallow flat-based feature (3). The shallow feature (3) produced several sherds of Saxon pottery. Posthole (4) was 0.42 across and 0.15m deep but produced no dating evidence. It is considered that these features are associated and that they represent part of a sunken floored building- a distinctive structural deposit of Saxon date (Figs 4 and 5).

Trench 8

This trench was 20.1m long and 0.5m-0.7m deep aligned east-west. The stratigraphy comprised 0.2m of turf and topsoil above 0.5m of sandy clay subsoil above gravel. The eastern end of the trench was restripped. A service trench (power?) occupied much of the western end of the trench. A large ditch (12) was revealed, 2.3m across and 0.85m deep with a u-shaped profile, aligned north-south (Plate 5). It contained four fills (60-63). One of the lower fills (60) contained a moderate quantity of burnt flint, sherds of prehistoric pottery and some fired clay fragments (Figs 4 and 5).

Trench 9

This trench was 20.1m long and 0.55m deep aligned east-west. The stratigraphy comprised 0.2m of turf and topsoil above 0.3m of sandy clay subsoil above gravel. The trench was restripped. Five certain and possible postholes were revealed (7-11). Posthole (7) was 0.52m across and 0.18m deep and produced three sherds of prehistoric pottery. Immediately adjacent, and presumably associated was probable posthole (8) which was not excavated. Posthole (9) was 0.23m across and 0.32m deep. It produced two sherds of Saxon pottery. Possible posthole (10) was unexcavated but its upper fill was notably burnt with charcoal present. Posthole (11) was 0.33m across and 0.3m deep and produced a single sherd of Roman pottery (Figs 4 and 5, Plate 4).

Trench 10

This trench was 19.1m long and 0.38m-0.5m deep aligned north-south. The stratigraphy comprised 0.2m of turf and topsoil above 0.15-0.3m of sandy clay subsoil above gravel. The trench was restripped at the north end. A gully (2) was fully dug within the extent of the trench and was 0.54m wide and 0.17m deep and aligned east-west. No dating evidence was recovered from it (Figs 4 and 5).

Trench 11

This trench was 24.2m long and 0.4m deep aligned north - south. The stratigraphy comprised 0.2m of turf and topsoil above 0.15-0.2m of sandy clay subsoil above gravel. The southern end of the trench was restripped and extended to traverse the projected line of gully 1 in trench 12. This gully was not located but a large posthole (6) was located (Plate 3). The posthole was 0.39m across and 0.25m deep and produced 4 sherds of Saxon pottery (Figs 4 and 5).

Trench 12

This trench was 22.1m long and 0.5m deep aligned east-west. The stratigraphy comprised 0.2m of turf and topsoil above 0.15m of sandy clay subsoil above gravel. The eastern end of the trench was restripped. A gully (1) was revealed at the western end of the trench aligned east-west (Plate 2). It was 0.8m across and 0.29m deep and produced five sherds of Roman and one sherd of prehistoric pottery, two prehistoric struck flints and a fragment of burnt flint (Figs 4 and 5).

Trench 13

This trench was 20.0m long and 0.5m deep aligned north- south. The stratigraphy comprised 0.2m of turf and topsoil above 0.25m of sandy clay subsoil above gravel. The northern end of the trench was restripped. A power cable was located at 17m. No archaeological deposits were revealed.

Trench 14

This trench was 10.6m long and 0.4m deep aligned north- south. The stratigraphy comprised 0.2m of turf and topsoil above 0.15m of sandy clay subsoil above gravel. An engineer's test pit was noted between 1 and 4m. No archaeological deposits were revealed.

Finds

Pottery by Jane Timby

The archaeological work resulted in the recovery of a small assemblage comprising 36 sherds (187g) of pottery. In addition three small fragments of fired clay were recovered. The assemblage includes sherds of Iron Age, Roman and Saxon dates. Pottery was recovered from six of the trenches investigated, a total 10 individual contexts. Generally speaking the sherds are quite fragmented and the Roman sherds in particular comprise quite worn abraded sherds; the Saxon and Iron Age sherds are in slightly better condition. For the purposes of the assessment the assemblage was scanned to assess its likely chronology and quantified by sherd count and weight for each recorded context. The resulting data are summarized in Appendix 3.

Later Prehistoric

Some 11 sherds of Iron Age date were recovered from trenches 8, 9 and 12. All the sherds are handmade with a fine calcined flint-tempered fabric. The only featured sherd is part of a base, which shows additional flint gritting on the underside. The sherd from gully 1 (Trench 12) is redeposited. The seven sherds from Trench 8 came from a large ditch (12).

Roman

A small group of six sherds of Roman date are present from Trenches 9 and 12. None of the sherds are featured and apart from two possible Oxfordshire products appear to be local wares.

Saxon

Some 19 sherds of Saxon date were recovered. Sherds were present in Trenches 7, 9, 11 and 12. Ten sherds were recovered from a possible sunken-featured building (3) in Trench 7. These sherds appear to be largely from one vessel, a thin-walled handmade bowl or cup in an organic-tempered fabric. Most of the remaining sherds are also in organic-tempered fabrics, the exception being a sandy ware rim from a jar from Trench 12 (unstratified). Material of this type is traditionally dated to the 6th-9th centuries.

Struck flint by Steve Ford

Just three prehistoric struck flints were recovered from the evaluation. These comprised a flake from Trench 13 and a flake and a core from Roman ditch 1 in Trench 12. None of the pieces is closely datable and only a broad Neolithic -Bronze Age date can be suggested.

Conclusion

The evaluation has successfully demonstrated the presence of a range archaeological deposits on the site, despite the poor field conditions initially encountered. Several periods of activity are represented with prehistoric (Bronze Age/Iron Age), Roman and Saxon periods being represented both from artefacts and dated deposits. The types of deposits represented and the numbers of artefacts recovered, when compared to the limited extent of the interventions, would suggest that occupation deposits of all three phases are present. It is also possible that the large prehistoric ditch in trench 8 is part of a ring ditch (remains of a levelled round barrow) though further work would be required to confirm this interpretation as it is also possible that it is an enclosure ditch or boundary feature (linear earthwork).

The archaeological potential of the site can therefore be considered as high.

References

- BGS, 1974, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 255, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Ford, S, 1987, *East Berkshire Archaeological Survey*, Berkshire County Council Dept Highways and Planning Occas Pap 1, Reading
- Ford, S, in prep, Roman occupation at Wexham, near Slough, Buckinghamshire. Thames Valley Archaeological Services project 04/109, Reading
- PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO
- Wymer, J J, 1999, *The Lower Palaeolithic occupation of Britain*, Salisbury

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

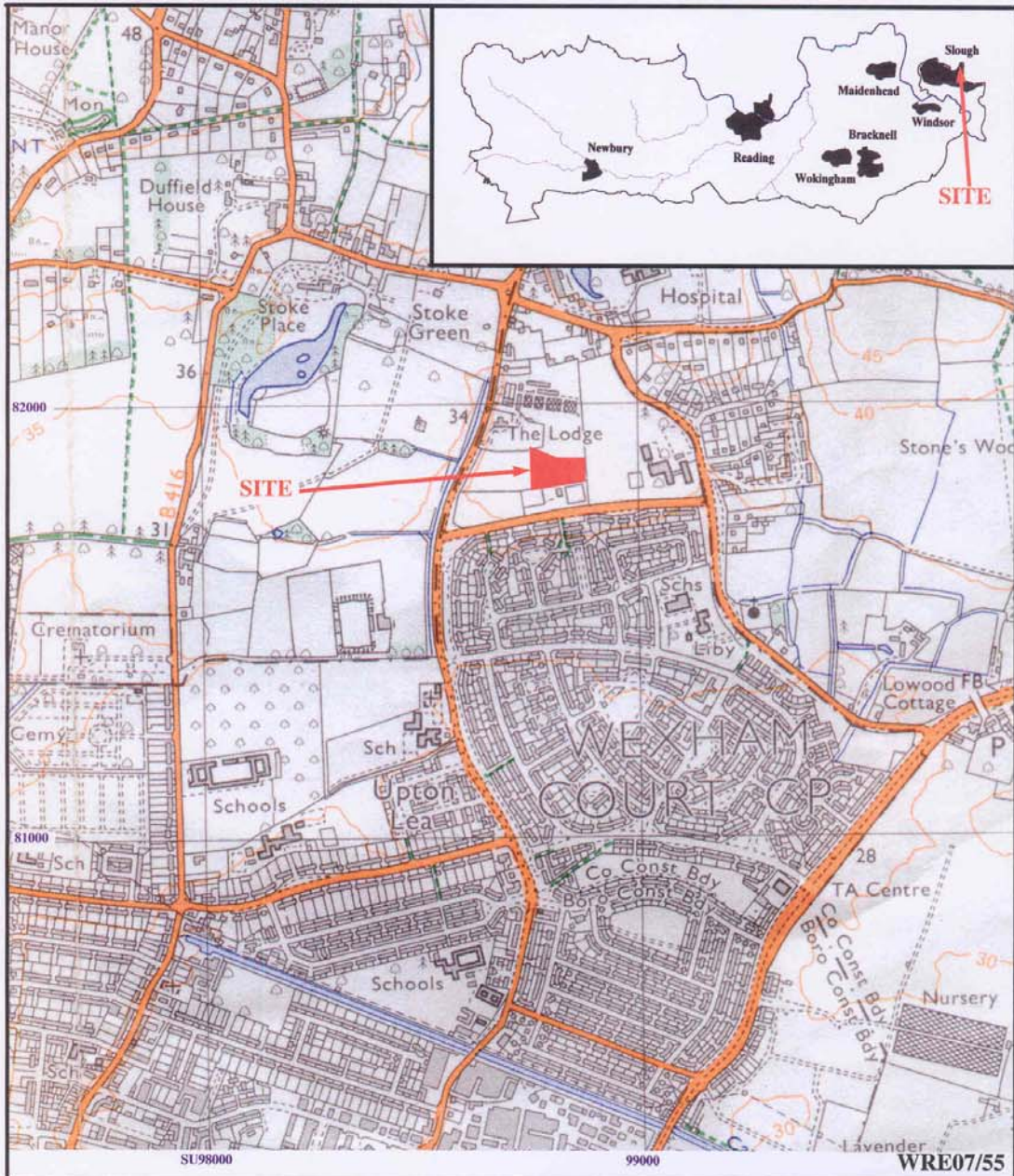
<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	20.1	1.6	0.5	0-0.2m turf/topsoil; 0.2-0.35m subsoil (sandy clay); 0.35m+ gravel (restripped)
2	20.3	1.6	0.4E; 0.5W	0-0.2m turf/topsoil; 0.2-0.35m subsoil; 0.35m+ gravel; Service trench at 2m; modern disturbance at 16m
3	18.9	1.6	0.4	0-0.2m turf/topsoil; 0.2-0.35m subsoil; 0.35m+ gravel
4	18.2	1.6	0.38N; 0.45S	0-0.2m turf/topsoil; 0.2-0.35m subsoil (sandy clay); 0.35m+ gravel (restripped south end). Posthole 5
5	19.4	1.6	0.35	0-0.2m turf/topsoil; 0.2-0.35m subsoil; 0.35m+ gravel (restripped)
6	21.2	1.6	0.3	0-0.2m turf/topsoil; 0.2-0.28m subsoil; 0.28m+ gravel
7	20.7	1.6	0.55N; 0.65S	0-0.2m turf/topsoil; 0.2-0.6m subsoil and dumping (south end); 0.6m+ gravel. Service trench at 5m; Sunken floored building? 3 and posthole 4
8	20.1	1.6	0.7	0-0.2m turf/topsoil; 0.2-0.65m subsoil; 0.65m+ gravel (restripped east end). Service trench 0-7m; Ditch 12 [Plate 5]
9	20.1	1.6	0.55	0-0.2m turf/topsoil; 0.2-0.55m subsoil; 0.55m+ gravel (restripped). Postholes 7-10 [Plate 3]
10	19.1	1.6	0.38S; 0.5N	0-0.2m turf/topsoil; 0.2-0.35m subsoil; 0.35m+ gravel (restripped north end). Gully 2
11	24.2	1.6	0.4	0-0.2m turf/topsoil; 0.2-0.35m subsoil; 0.35m+ gravel (restripped south end). Posthole 6 [Plate 2]
12	22.1	1.6	0.5	0-0.2m turf/topsoil; 0.2-0.4m subsoil; 0.4m+ gravel (restripped east end). Gully 1 [Plate 4]
13	20.0	1.6	0.5	0-0.2m turf/topsoil; 0.2-0.45m subsoil; 0.45m+ gravel (restripped). Service trench 17m
14	10.6	1.6	0.4	0-0.2m turf/topsoil; 0.2-0.35m subsoil (sandy clay); 0.35m+ gravel. Engineers test pit at 2m

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
12	1	51	Gully	Roman	pottery
10	2	52	Gully	-	-
7	3	53	Sunken floored building?	Saxon	pottery
7	4	54	Posthole	Saxon	by association with 3
4	5	55	Posthole	-	
11	6	56	Posthole	Saxon	pottery
9	7	57	Posthole	Bronze Age/Iron Age	pottery
9	8	-	Posthole	Bronze Age/Iron Age?	un excavated ; by association with 7
9	9	58	Posthole	Saxon	pottery
9	10	-	Posthole	-	unexcavated
9	11	59	Posthole	Roman	Pottery
8	12	60-63	Ditch	Prehistoric	pottery

APPENDIX 3: Pottery summary

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>Prehistoric</i>	<i>Roman</i>	<i>Saxon</i>	<i>Fired clay</i>	<i>Total Number</i>	<i>Total Weight (g)</i>
7	3	53			10		10	30
8	12	60	7			3	7	47
9	7	57	3				3	9
9	9	58			2		2	24
9	11	59		1			1	9
11		5-10m			2		2	2
11	6	56			4		4	31
12		5-10m			1		1	5
12	1	51	1	5			6	30
Total			11	6	19	3	36	187



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Berkshire, 2007**
An archaeological evaluation

Figure 1. Location of site within Slough
and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site on Wexham Road.

Scale: 1:1250.

T H A M E S V A L L E Y
 A R C H A E O L O G I C A L
 S E R V I C E S

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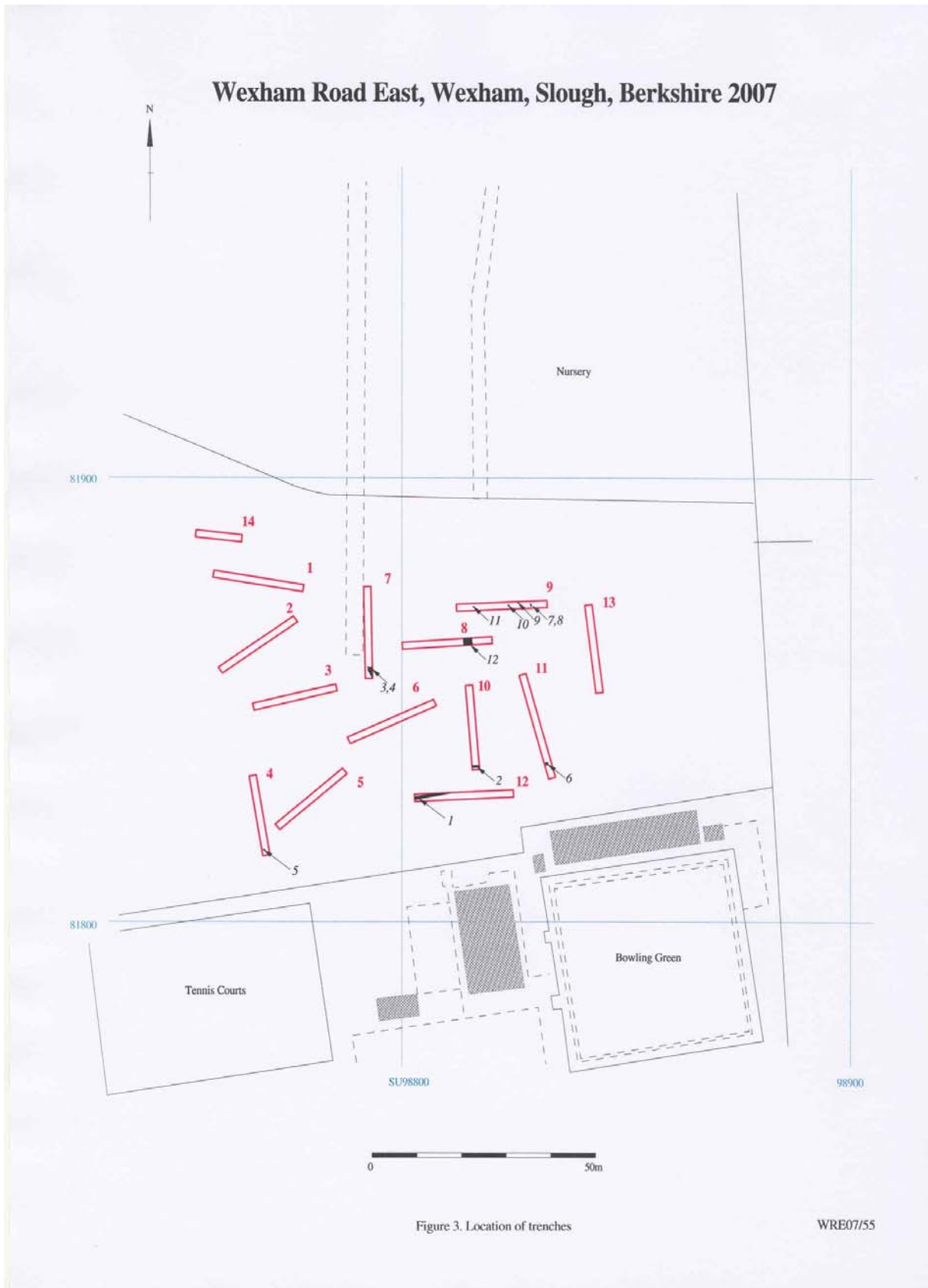


Figure 3. Location of trenches

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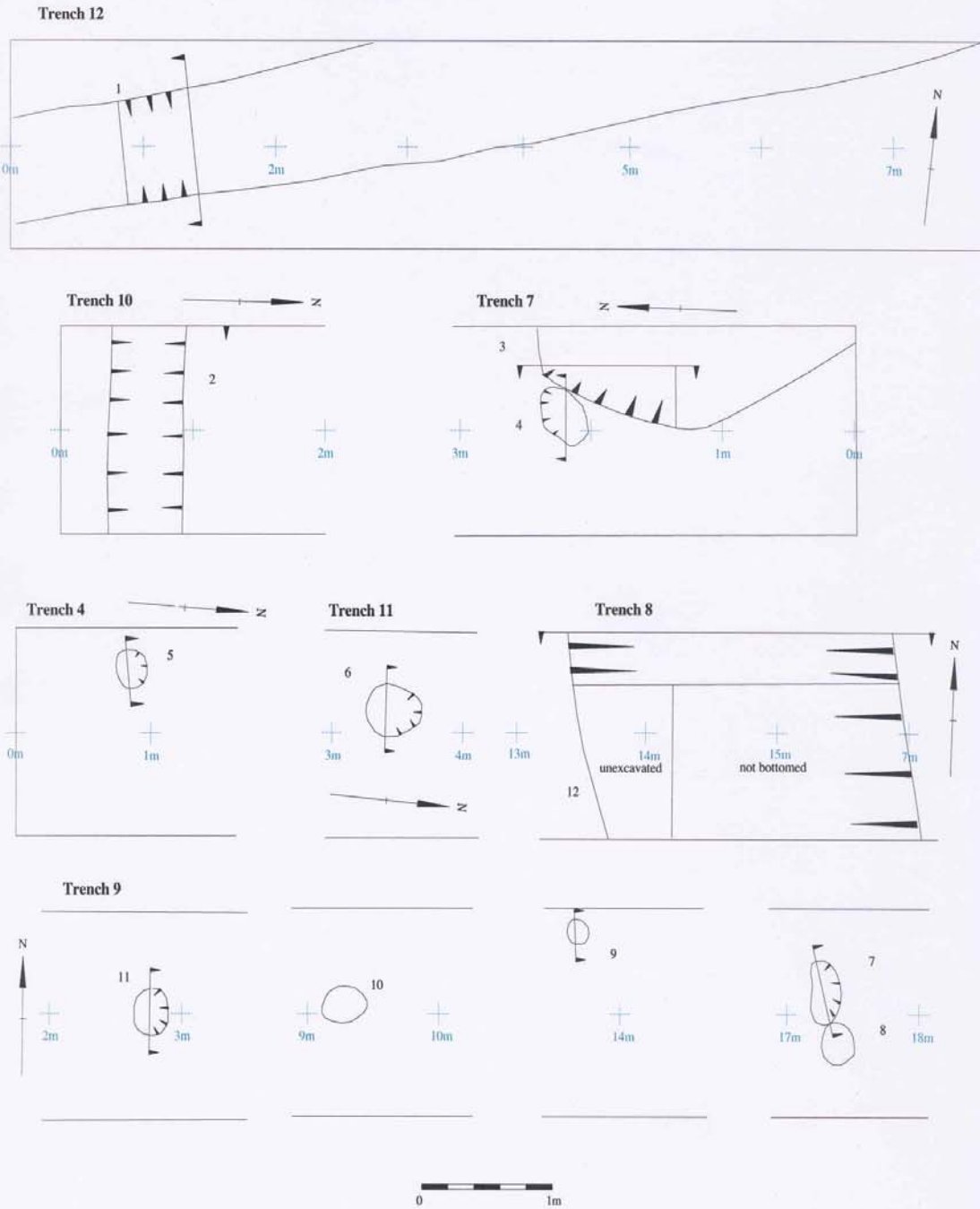


Figure 4. Plans

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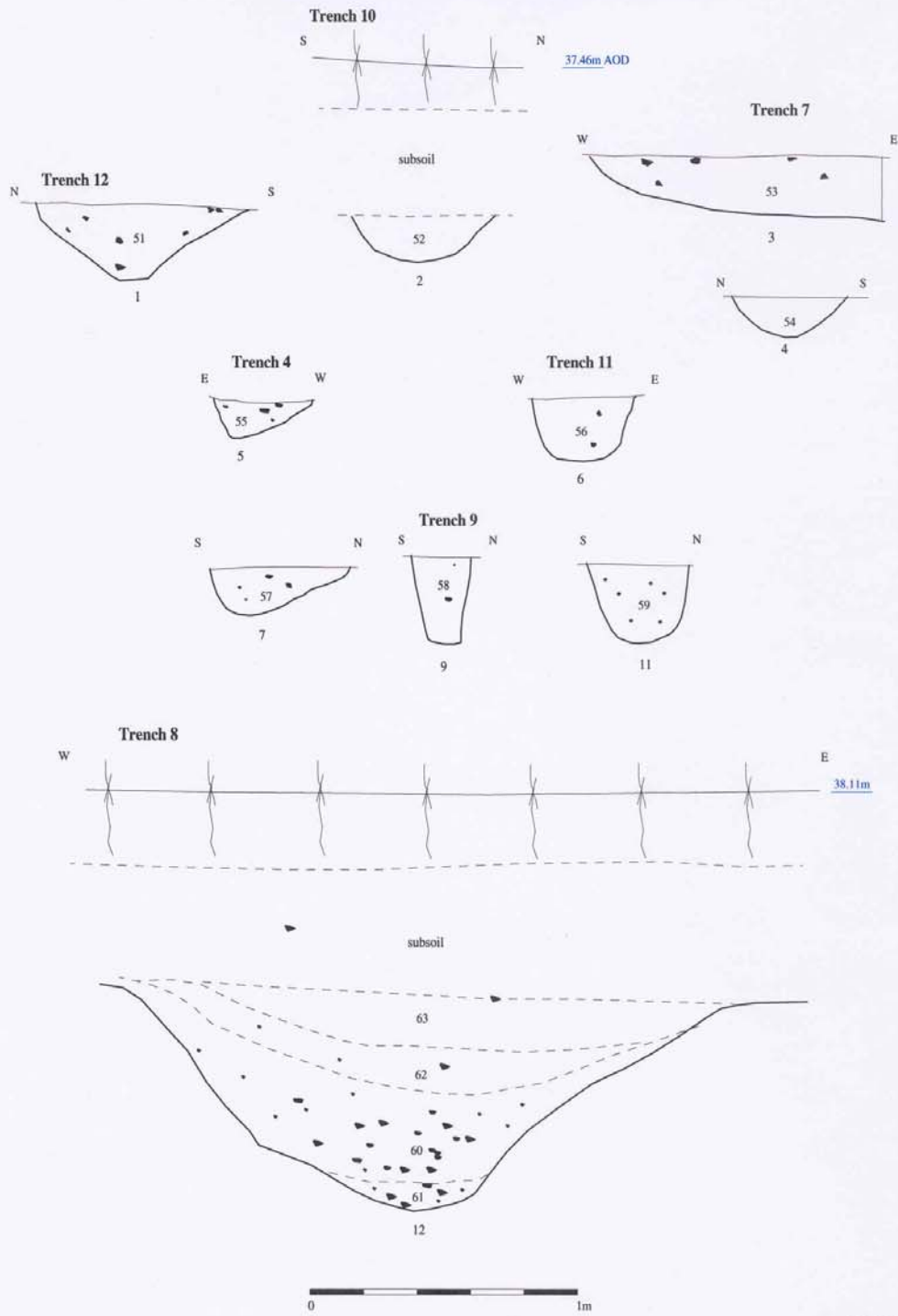


Figure 5. Sections of excavated features.

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Plate 1. General view of site looking east



Plate 2. Gully 1, Trench 12 looking east, horizontal scale 2m, vertical scale 0.1m.



Plate 3. Posthole 6, Trench 11 looking south, horizontal scale 0.5m, vertical scale 0.1m



Plate 4. Posthole 11, Trench 19 looking west, horizontal scale 0.5m, vertical scale 0.1m.



Plate 5. Ditch 12, Trench 8 looking north, horizontal scale 1m, vertical scale 2m