

T H A M E S V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Alton Leisure Centre, Chawton Park Road,
Alton, Hampshire**

An Archaeological Evaluation

By Steve Ford and Danielle Milbank

ALA17/149ev
(SU 7068 3816)

**Alton Leisure Centre, Chawton Park Road,
Alton, Hampshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Metnor Construction**

by Steve Ford and Danielle Milbank
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code ALA17/149

May 2018

Summary

Site name: Alton Leisure Centre, Chawton Park Road, Alton, Hampshire

Grid reference: SU 7068 3816

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 23rd to 25th May 2018

Project coordinator: Danielle Milbank

Site supervisor: Danielle Milbank, Steve Ford

Site code: ALA17/149

Area of site: 0.5ha

Summary of results: The evaluation revealed that the site had formerly been levelled with both cut and fill recorded in the trenches. However, the amount of cut was minimal and the top of the natural geology had not been significantly reduced. Nevertheless, no artefacts nor deposits of archaeological interest were revealed and the site is considered to have no archaeological potential.

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

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www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp.*

Report edited/checked by: Steve Preston✓ 29.05.18

Alton Leisure Centre, Chawton Park Road, Alton, Hampshire An Archaeological Evaluation

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Report 17/241

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out on land located south of Chawton Park Road, Alton, Hampshire (SU 7068 3816) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr David Lovatt of Metnor Construction, Metnor House, Mylord Crescent, Killingworth, Newcastle, NE12 5YD.

Planning permission (21068/040) has been gained from East Hampshire District Council to construct a new leisure centre. The consent is subject to conditions (7-9) that require a programme of archaeological investigation on the site. This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012), and the District Council's policies on archaeology. This investigation was to take the form, initially, of evaluation by means of trial trenching to establish if the site has any archaeological potential and to inform a mitigation strategy if required. The investigation followed a written scheme of investigation approved by Mr Neil Adam, Senior Archaeologist for Hampshire County Council, advising the District, and the fieldwork was also monitored by him.

The fieldwork was supervised by Danielle Milbank and Steve Ford from 23rd-25th May 2018. The site code is ALA17/149. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Hampshire Cultural Trust in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located south of Chawton Park Road and north of the Mid Hants Railway line to the south-west of Alton (Fig. 1). The area evaluated occupies only part of the planning application area, namely an area previously used for an artificial turf pitch (Fig. 2). The site lies on the end of a ridge on ground that slopes from 125m above Ordnance Datum in the south-west, gently down to the north-east but markedly down to the north-west towards Chawton Park Road (where Trenches 1-3 were located) to below 120m aOD. The underlying geology is mapped as Middle Chalk (BGS 1975), which, with a clay capping, was confirmed in the trenches.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a briefing note prepared by Neil Adam of Hampshire County Council. In summary Alton lies within a part of East Hampshire with a rich and varied archaeological record (HCC 2002). The site lies in an area where a number of sites and finds of Roman date are recorded in the county Historic Environment Record. More specifically the projected line of a Roman road from Neatham (NE of Alton) to Winchester passes just to the south of the proposal site and there is a possibility of Roman roadside settlement or burial being present.

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.

The specific aims were to:

- determine if archaeological relevant levels survived on the site;
- determine if archaeological deposits of any period were present; and to
- inform a strategy for mitigation if required.

Ten trenches were originally to be excavated 25m long and 1.6-2m wide. However two trenches were subsequently found to be located in a zone not to be affected by the development and were not required to be dug. Topsoil and any other overburden were to be removed to expose archaeologically sensitive levels by a machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under constant archaeological supervision. Where archaeological features were certainly or probably present, the stripped areas were to be cleaned using appropriate hand tools. Sufficient of the archaeological features and deposits exposed were then to be excavated or sampled by hand to satisfy the aims of the project, without compromising the integrity of any features that might warrant preservation *in situ* or might better be investigated under the conditions pertaining to full excavation.

Results

Eight trenches were dug more or less in the positions intended (Fig. 3). They ranged in length from 19.6–31.3m and in depth from 0.1-1.4m. All were 1.6m wide. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trench 1 (Fig. 3)

Trench 1 was aligned E - W and was 20.2m long and 0.8m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.23m of topsoil and made ground above 0.21m of reddish brown silty clay above fractured chalk which was streaked with clay-filled periglacial stripes at the western end (Pl. 1).

Trench 2 (Fig. 3)

Trench 2 was aligned SW - NE and was 24.8m long and 1.3m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.8m of topsoil and made ground above 0.1m of buried soil (dark brown silty clay with chalk flecks) above 0.36m of silty clay with chalk subsoil, above chalk with brown clay patches.

Trench 3 (Fig. 3)

Trench 3 was aligned SW - NE and was 19.6m long and 0.82m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.49m of topsoil and made ground above 0.2m of buried soil, above 0.08m of subsoil above chalk with brown clay patches and peri-glacial stripes.

Trench 4 (Figs 3 and 4; Pl. 2)

Trench 4 was aligned NW – SE and was 31.3m long and up to 0.65m deep. The stratigraphy to the north-west consisted of 0.4m of made ground above 0.15m of buried soil above 0.1m of subsoil above chalk natural geology. The stratigraphic sequence was examined by a test pit dug through the natural chalk to a depth of 1.2m. The natural geology rose up towards to the south-eastern end of the trench where it lay beneath a thin skim of made ground only.

Trench 5 (Fig. 3; Pl. 3)

Trench 5 was aligned N - S and was 19.9m long and up to 1.4m deep. The stratigraphy at the north end consisted of 0.95m of made ground above 0.1m of buried soil above 0.1m of subsoil, above chalk with a periglacial stripe (natural geology). The natural geology rose up towards to the south end of the trench and lay beneath a thin skim of made ground only.

Trench 6 (Fig. 3; Pl. 4)

Trench 6 was aligned N - S and was 22.8m long and up to 0.3m deep. The stratigraphy at the north end consisted of 0.05m of made ground above 0.1m of buried soil above 0.1m of subsoil above chalk with a clay patch (natural geology). The natural geology again rose up towards to the south end of the trench and lay beneath a thin skim of made ground only.

Trench 7 (Fig. 3; Pl. 5)

Trench 7 was aligned SW - NE and was 25.6m long and uniformly 0.15m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.05m of scalpins above chalk.

Trench 8 (Figs 3 and 4; Pl. 6)

Trench 8 was aligned SW - NE and was 25.4m long and 0.45m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.05m of scalpins above 0.2m of buried topsoil above 0.1m of subsoil above chalk with a clay patch (natural geology). A wide cut for a drain was present at 20m from the SW end.

Finds

No finds of archaeological interest were recovered.

Conclusion

The evaluation has revealed that much of the site had been previously stripped of topsoil and subsoil down to the top of the natural chalk geology. However, the presence of peri-glacial clay patches and coombe-rock filled periglacial stripes indicates that truncation of the natural geology had been minimal. Whilst some shallow archaeological deposits could have been removed by this action, any substantial features that might have been present would be expected to have survived more or less intact. Areas to the north of the site had been relatively deeply buried by made ground with the old topsoil more or less intact. Despite these favourable conditions, no artefacts nor deposits of archaeological interest were revealed and the site is considered to have no archaeological potential.

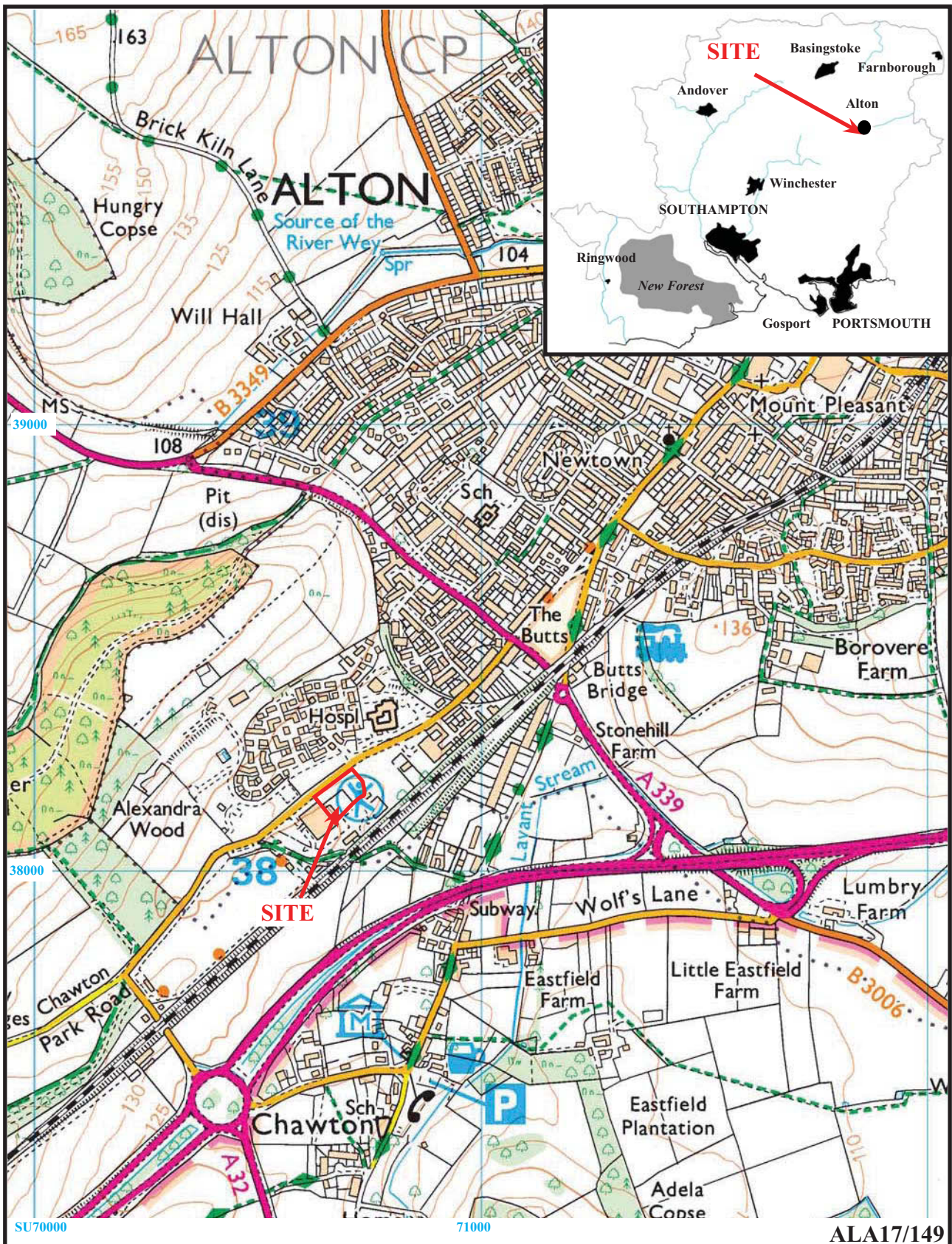
References

- BGS, 1975, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50 000, Sheet 300 , Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
HCC 2002, *An extensive urban survey of Hampshire's and the Isle of Wight's Towns: Alton*, Hampshire County Council, Winchester
NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London

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	20.2	1.6	0.8	0-0.23m Topsoil over made ground; 0.23-0.44m reddish brown silty clay; 0.44m+ chalk with periglacial stripes (natural geology). [PI. 1]
2	24.8	1.6	1.3	0-0.8m Made ground; 0.8-0.9m old topsoil; 0.9-1.26m subsoil (loose chalk with some clay and soil); 1.26m+ chalk with brown clay patches (natural geology).
3	19.6	1.6	0.82	0-0.49m Made ground; 0.49-0.69m old topsoil; 0.69-0.77m subsoil; 0.77m+ chalk with brown clay patches and periglacial stripes (natural geology).
4	31.3	1.6	0.1 (SE) 0.65 (NW)	0-0.4m Scalpins over made ground; 0.4-0.5m old topsoil; 0.5-0.6m subsoil; 0.6m+chalk (natural geology). Test pit at 23m to 1.2m. [PI. 2]
5	19.9	1.6	0.2 (S) 1.4 (N)	0-0.95m Scalpins over made ground; 0.95-1.15m old topsoil; 1.15-1.25m subsoil; 1.25m+chalk with periglacial stripe (natural geology). [PI. 3]
6	22.8	1.6	0.3	0-0.1m Scalpins over made ground; 0.1—0.15m old topsoil; 0.15—0.25m subsoil; 0.25m+chalk with clay patch (natural geology). [PI. 4]
7	25.6	1.6	0.15	0-0.05m Scalpins; 0.05m+ chalk (natural geology). [PI. 5]
8	25.4	1.6	0.45	0-0.05m Scalpins; 0.05- 0.25, Buried topsoil; 0.25-0.35m subsoil; 0.35m+ chalk with a clay patch (natural geology) Modern drain at 20m. [PI. 6]



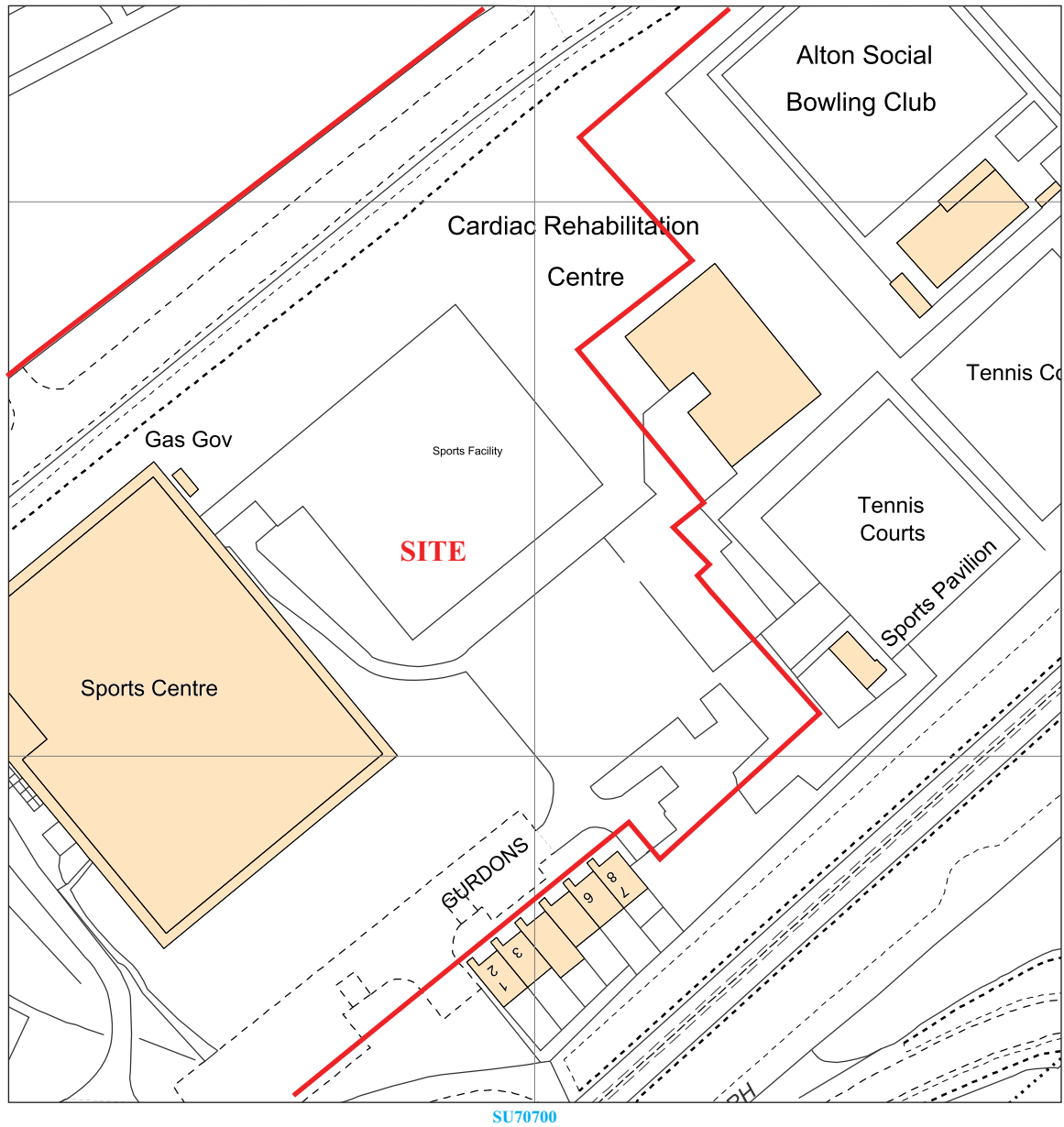
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Figure 1. Location of site within Alton and Hampshire.

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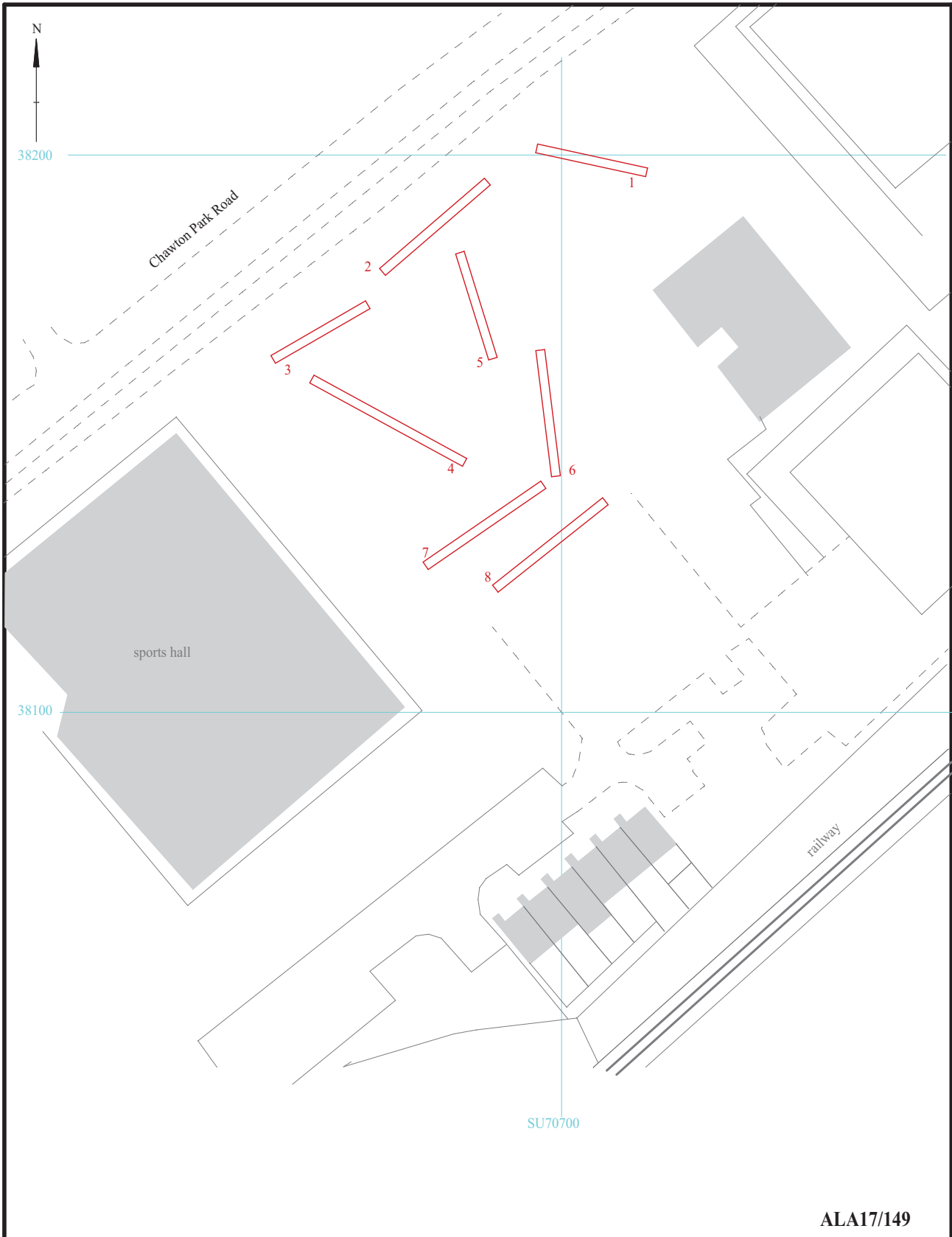
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site on Chawton Park Road

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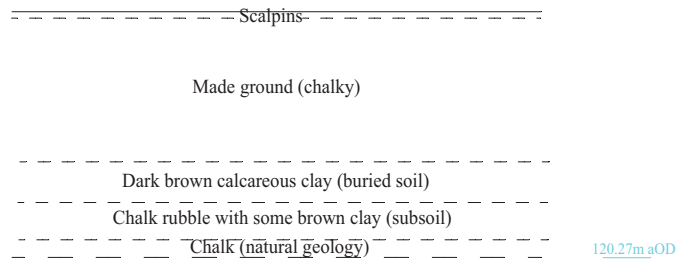
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Figure 3. Location of trenches.

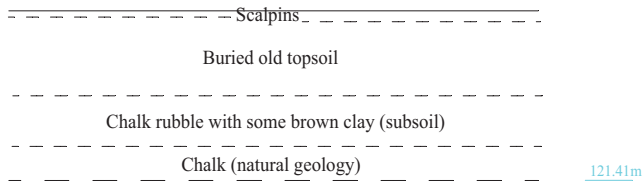


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Trench 4 (NW end)



Trench 8



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Figure 4. Representative sections





Plate 1. Trench 1, looking east, Scales: 2m, 1m, and 0.5m.



Plate 2. Trench 4, looking north west, Scales: 2m and 1m.

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Plates 1 - 2.

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Plate 3. Trench 5, looking north east, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 4. Trench 6 detail of clay patch (natural) looking north, Scale: 1m.

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Plates 3 - 4.

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Plate 5. Trench 7, looking south west, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 6. Trench 8 looking south west, Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.5m.

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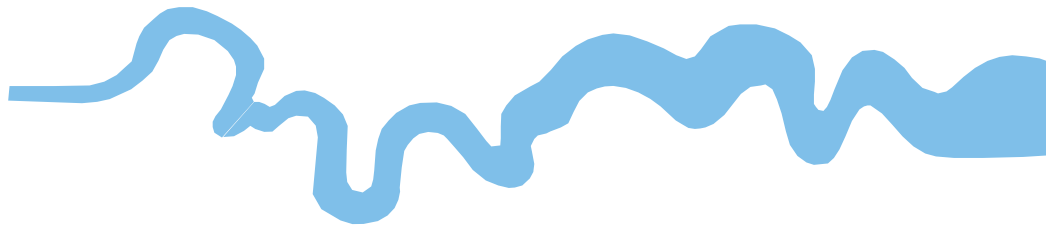
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Plates 5 - 6.

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TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43 AD 0 BC
Iron Age _____	750 BC
Bronze Age: Late _____	1300 BC
Bronze Age: Middle _____	1700 BC
Bronze Age: Early _____	2100 BC
Neolithic: Late	3300 BC
Neolithic: Early	4300 BC
Mesolithic: Late	6000 BC
Mesolithic: Early	10000 BC
Palaeolithic: Upper	30000 BC
Palaeolithic: Middle	70000 BC
Palaeolithic: Lower	2,000,000 BC





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