

**Access Road, Oxford Brookes University,
Wheatley Campus, Wheatley, Oxfordshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Oxford Brookes University**

by Andy Taylor

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code ARO 09/18

April 2009

Summary

Site name: Access Road, Oxford Brookes University, Wheatley Campus, Wheatley, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SP 6034 0600 to SP 5952 0638

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 6th–8th April 2009

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Andy Taylor

Site code: ARO 09/18

Area of Site: approximately 1.9 ha

Summary of results: No deposits of any archaeological interest 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 with Oxfordshire Museum Service in due course.

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 15.04.09
	Steve Preston ✓ 15.04.09

Access Road, Oxford Brookes University, Wheatley Campus, Wheatley, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Evaluation

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Report 09/18

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out on land at Oxford Brookes University, Wheatley Campus, Wheatley, Oxfordshire (SP 6034 0600 to SP 5952 0638) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Stephen Pickles, of West Waddy ADP, The Malthouse, 60 East St Helen Street, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 5EB on behalf of Oxford Brookes University

Planning permission is to be sought from South Oxfordshire District Council for the creation of a new access road for Wheatley Park School and the university, along with associated turning and car parking areas. A desk-based assessment was carried out (OA 2007), which highlighted that the area has a high potential for Roman, medieval and early post-medieval deposits. A field evaluation was therefore requested, to accompany the application and provide information on the archaeological potential of the site so as to inform the planning process.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist with Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service, advisers to the District on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andy Taylor and Henrietta Longdon between the 6th and 8th April 2009 and the site code is ARO 09/18. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the north side of Wheatley, on the northern side of the A40 and south of Holton (Fig. 2). The site is occupied by a footpath between the Wheatley Campus of Oxford Brookes University and Wheatley Park School (Pl. 1) and is an undulating piece of land sloping downwards from the school in the west to the university. The underlying geology consists of Corallian formation particularly Arngrove Spiculate Member (BGS 1994), which was observed in most trenches, with clay also evident in Trenches 2, 5 and 8–10. The site

lies at a height of approximately 94m above Ordnance Datum, at the school, down to approximately 80m at the university.

Archaeological background

A brief was provided by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (Oram 2008) together with an archaeological desk-based assessment (OA 2007), which highlighted the potential of the site. In summary the area has high potential for Roman, medieval and early post-medieval remains. In the western part of the proposal area is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (OX 30824), this being a roughly circular moat believed to be the original site of the medieval Holton Manor. This was probably the focus of other manorial buildings. Another Scheduled Monument (OX 30823) located about 240m to the north of the proposed new road, is another moat constructed in the late Medieval period as a replacement of the original site, to provide a more impressive location (Fig. 2). A succession of structures has stood on the island, with the 17th-century Manor House being demolished in 1805. A large part of the proposal area lies within the deer park associated with the manor and this is observable on early post-medieval maps by Saxton (1574) and Plot (1677). Medieval quarry pits and a possible medieval building were recorded 100m east of the site, together with Roman pottery. Further Roman activity, including a possible rectangular enclosure, has been noted about 70m west of the proposal site.

Aerial photography indicates a pair of ring ditches (probable levelled round barrows of Neolithic/Bronze Age date) which lie 400m to the north-east. Medieval ridge and furrow field systems once lay on the development site.

Much of the proposed site was previously occupied by a Second World War military hospital, which was used by the United States military during and after the D-Day landings of 1944. This was largely demolished in the 1960s, although a few buildings have survived within the grounds of the school and university.

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 evaluation 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 prehistoric or Roman deposits are present; and

To determine if any medieval deposits are present and relate to the moated structures on the site.

A total of 11 trenches, 30m long and 1.6m wide were intended to be dug using a JCB-type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. These were to be located at intervals along the line of the proposed new road. All spoilheaps were to be monitored for finds. Where archaeological features were certainly or probably present, the stripped areas were to be cleaned using appropriate hand tools, and sufficient of the archaeological features and deposits excavated or sampled by hand to satisfy the aims of the brief. This work was to be carried out in such a manner as not to compromise the integrity of features which might warrant preservation *in situ* or might better be investigated under the conditions pertaining to full excavation..

Results

Ten trenches were eventually dug (Fig. 3) These measured between 19.50m and 30.80m in length. One trench could not be dug due to the presence of large numbers of live services and this, along with other space restrictions, meant that the majority of the trenches were also shortened. These necessary alterations were made 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.

Trench 1 (Plate 2)

This trench measured 23.10m in length and was 0.85m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.3m of topsoil overlying 0.2m of crushed limestone made ground. This overlay 0.3m of brown clayey subsoil overlying clay and limestone natural geology. No archaeological deposits were observed.

Trench 2

This trench measured 21.50m in length and was 0.98m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.1m of topsoil overlying 0.26m of crushed limestone made ground. This overlay 0.22m of demolition rubble overlying brown clayey subsoil overlying orange brown clay natural geology. This trench was heavily truncated by redundant services, most likely from the former field hospital. No archaeological deposits were observed.

Trench 3

This trench measured 30.80m in length and was 0.75m deep, although the centre of the trench was only 0.35m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.33m of topsoil overlying 0.37m of brown clayey subsoil overlying limestone

natural geology. The north western end again showed evidence of truncation by services. No archaeological deposits were observed.

Trench 4

This trench measured 30.30m in length and was 0.56m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.36m of topsoil overlying 0.2m of crushed limestone made ground, containing brick fragments, overlying limestone and clay natural geology. No archaeological deposits were observed.

Trench 5

This trench measured 22.40m in length and was 1.10m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.2m of topsoil overlying 0.7m of brown clayey subsoil overlying orange brown clay natural geology. At its south western end, below topsoil was a significant quantity of demolition rubble above the natural geology. Again, this is most likely from the former field hospital. No archaeological deposits were observed.

Trench 6

This trench measured 29.50m in length and was 0.73m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.25m of topsoil overlying 0.12m of brown clayey subsoil. This overlay 0.36m of an orange brown silty clay subsoil/natural geology mix overlying orange brown clay and limestone natural geology. No archaeological deposits were observed.

Trench 7 (Fig. 4)

This trench measured 29.70m in length and was 0.58m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.21m of topsoil overlying 0.29m of brown clayey subsoil overlying orange brown clay and limestone natural geology. No archaeological deposits were observed.

Trench 8 (Pl. 3)

This trench measured 20.40m in length and was 0.67m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.19m of topsoil overlying 0.43m of brown clayey subsoil overlying orange brown clay natural geology. No archaeological deposits were observed.

Trench 9

This trench measured 19.50m in length and was 0.56m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.27m of topsoil overlying 0.26m of brown clayey subsoil overlying orange brown clay with occasional limestone natural geology. No archaeological deposits were observed.

Trench 10.(Pl. 4)

This trench measured 20.20m in length and was 0.80m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.29m of topsoil overlying 0.43m of brown clayey subsoil overlying orange brown sandy clay natural geology. No archaeological deposits were observed.

Finds

No finds of an archaeological nature were retrieved during the evaluation.

Conclusion

Despite the potential for archaeology being present on the site, no deposits or finds of an archaeological nature were observed during the evaluation. Much of the areas looked at, especially at the Wheatley Park School end, showed evidence of truncation from redundant services and other disturbance evidenced by the presence of demolition rubble, presumably from the former field hospital, demolished during the 1960s. On the basis of these results it therefore seems unlikely that any archaeology is present on the areas to be affected by construction of the new access road.

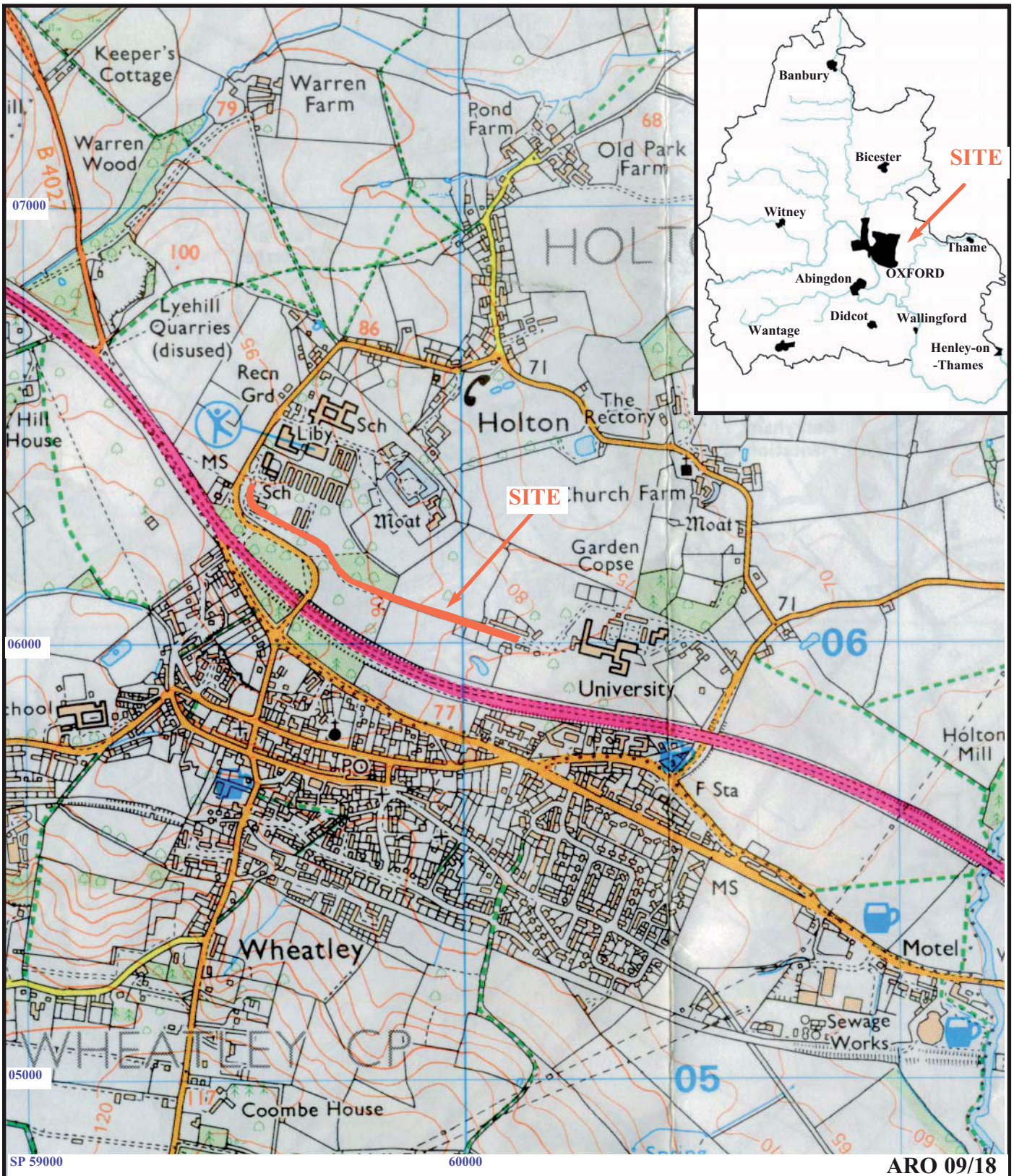
References

BGS, 1994, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 237, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
OA 2007, 'Oxford Brookes Masterplan, Desk Based Assessment', Oxford Archaeology Report 3528, Oxford
Oram, R, 2008, 'Access Road, Oxford Brookes University, Wheatley Campus, design brief for an archaeological field evaluation', Oxford
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</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	23.10	1.60	0.85	0-0.30m topsoil; 0.30-0.50m crushed limestone made ground; 0.50-0.80m brown clayey subsoil; 0.80m+ orange brown clay and limestone natural geology. [Plate 2]
2	21.50	1.60	0.98	0-0.10m topsoil; 0.10-0.36m crushed limestone made ground; 0.36-0.58m demolition rubble made ground; 0.58-0.98m brown clayey subsoil; 0.98m+ orange brown clay natural geology.
3	30.80	1.60	0.75	0-0.33m topsoil; 0.33-0.70m brown clayey subsoil; 0.70m+ limestone natural geology.
4	30.30	1.60	0.56	0-0.36m topsoil; 0.36-0.56m crushed limestone made ground; 0.56m+ limestone natural geology.
5	22.40	1.60	1.10	(NE end) 0-0.30m topsoil; 0.30-1.0m subsoil; 1m+ orange brown clay natural geology. (SW end) 0-0.15m topsoil; 0.15-1.10m demolition rubble made ground; 1.10m+ clay and limestone natural geology.
6	29.50	1.60	0.73	0-0.25m topsoil; 0.25-0.37m brown clayey subsoil; 0.37-0.73m orange brown silty clay; 0.73m+ clay and limestone natural geology.
7	29.70	1.60	0.58	0-0.21m topsoil; 0.21-0.52m brown clayey subsoil; 0.52m+ clay and limestone natural geology.
8	20.40	1.60	0.67	0-0.19m topsoil; 0.19-0.62m brown clayey subsoil; 0.62m+ clay natural geology. [Plate 3]
9	19.50	1.60	0.56	0-0.27m topsoil; 0.27-0.53m brown clayey subsoil; 0.53m+ clay and occasional limestone natural geology.
10	20.20	1.60	0.80	0-0.29m topsoil; 0.29-0.72m brown clayey subsoil; 0.72m+ clay natural geology. [Plate 4]

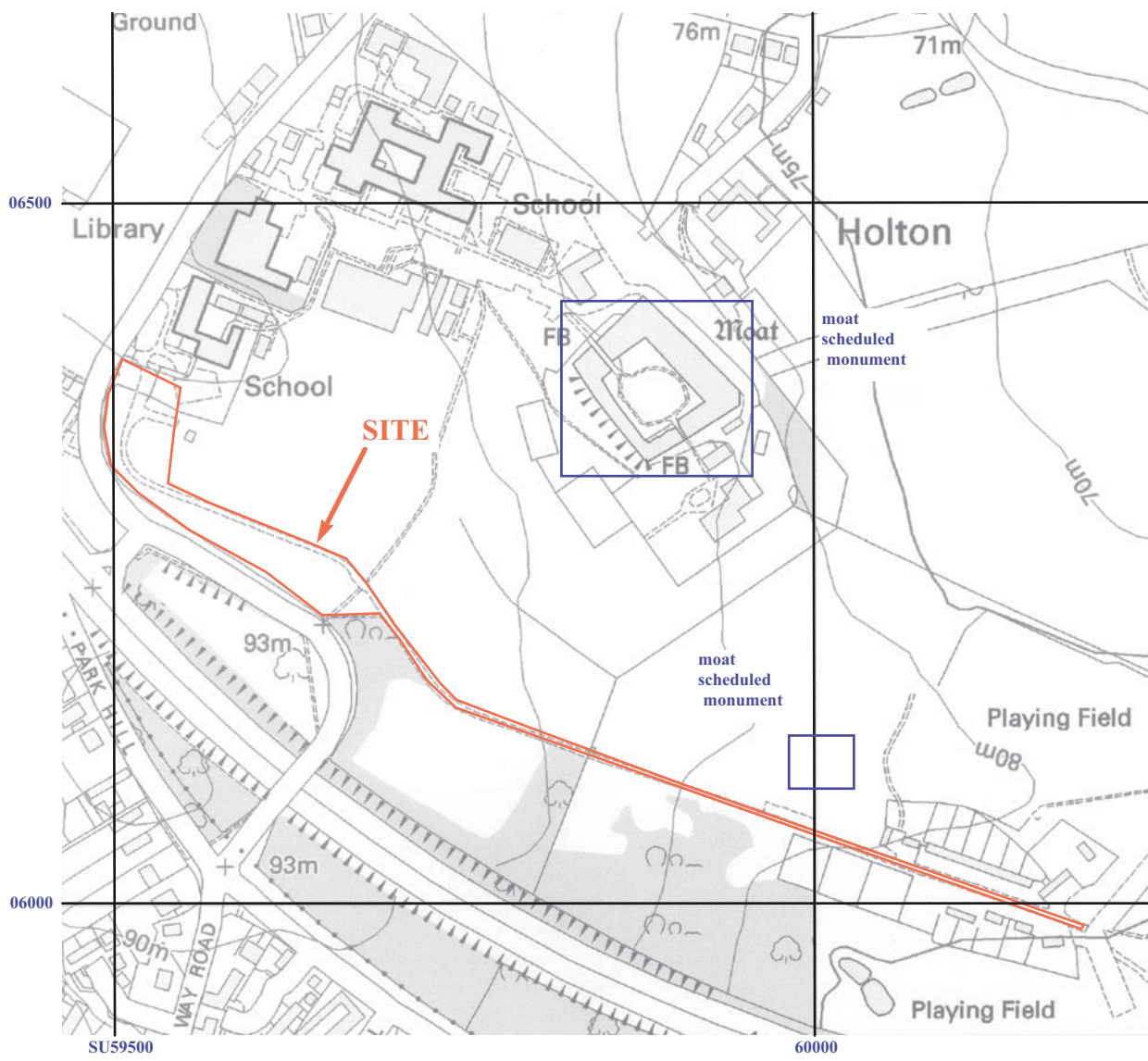


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Figure 1. Location of site within Wheatley and Oxfordshire.

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Figure 2. Location of site at Oxford Brookes University.

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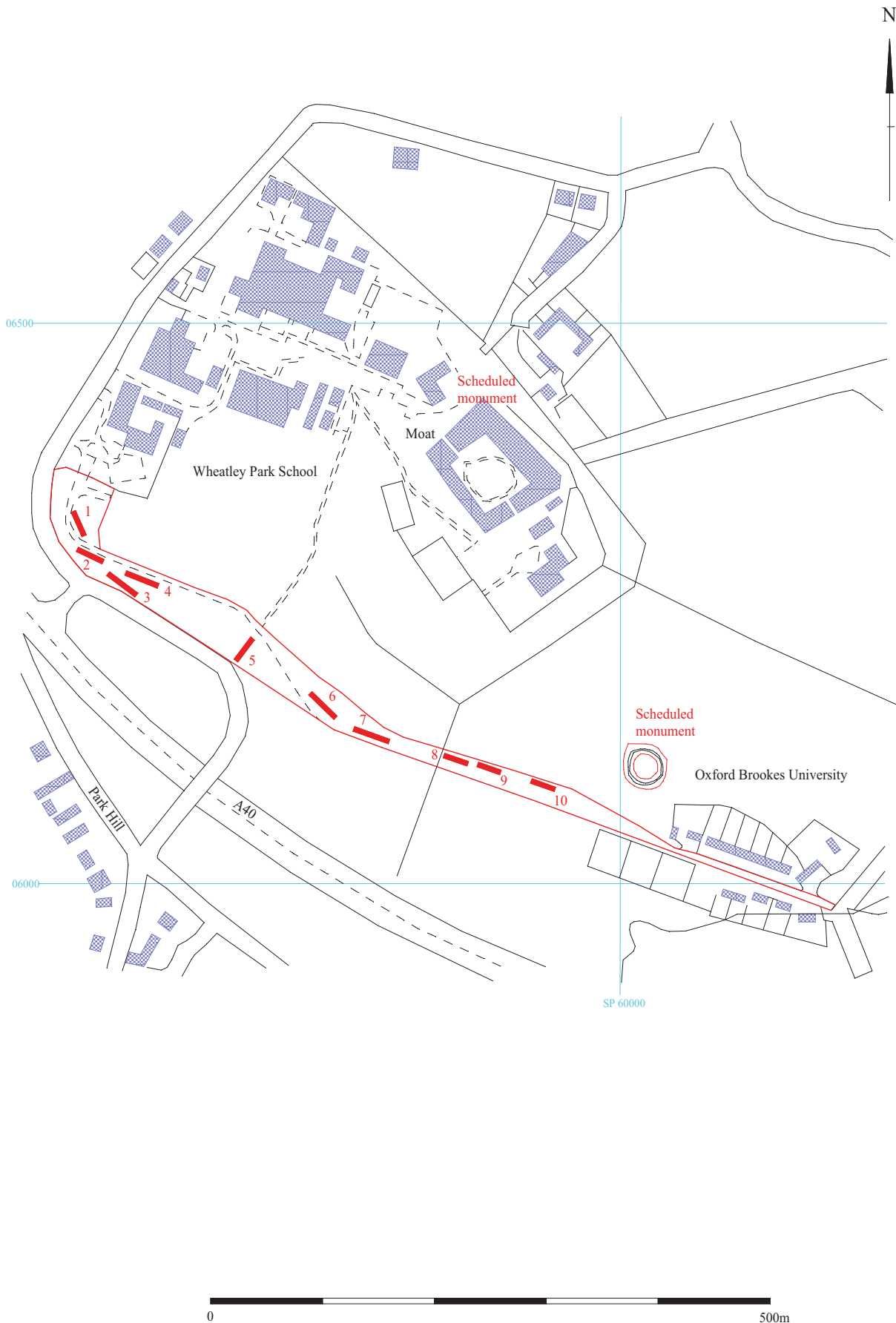


Figure 3: Trench Locations

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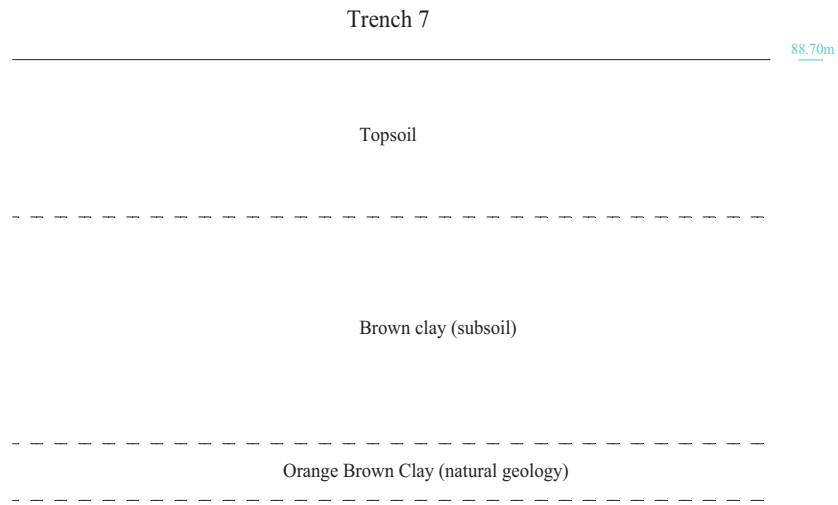


Figure 4: Representative Section



Plate 1. General site shot looking north west.



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



Plate 3. Trench 8, looking south east, scales: 1m and 2m.



Plate 4. Trench 10, looking north west, scales: 1m and 2m.