Land off Scots Hill, Croxley Green, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire

An Archaeological Evaluation

for Howarth Homes

by Andrew Weale and

James McNicoll-Norbury

Thames Valley Archaeological Services

Ltd

Site Code SHR09/06

April 2009

Summary

Site name: Land off Scots Hill, Croxley Green, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire

Grid reference: TQ 0680 9505

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 23rd - 27th April 2009

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Andrew Weale

Site code: SHR 09/06

Area of site: *c*. 0.6 Ha

Summary of results: The evaluation revealed residual Neolithic/Bronze Age struck flints, a medieval gully and Victorian and modern building foundations On the basis of these results it is considered that the evaluation has shown that the site has low or no archaeological potential.

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

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 11.05.09
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Report 09/06

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out on land off Scots Hill, Croxley Green, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire (TQ 06800 95050) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Brian Nason of Howarth Homes, Elthorne Gate, 64 High Street, Pinner, Middlesex, HA5.

In response to an outline planning application (Planning ref.: 8/2054/06) for the erection of seven 4 bedroom and eight 3 bedroom detached dwellings with associated access, parking and landscaping, Three Rivers District Council has placed a condition (13) on the planning consent requiring a programme of archaeological investigation in advance of the development.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and Policy C14 of the Three Rivers Local Plan 1996-2011. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Andy Instone, County Planning Archaeologist of the Historic Environment Unit of Hertfordshire County Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Weale, James McNicoll-Norbury and James Earley between the 23rd and 27th April 2009 and the site code is SHR 09/06. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Rickmansworth (Three Rivers) Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located in the south west of Croxley Green, with Rickmansworth to the south-west, Chorley Wood to the west and Watford to the north-east (Fig. 1). The site lies on the break of slope from the upland plateau to the south-west facing slope of the Chess river valley, with the confluence the Rivers Chess, Colne and Gade 0.75 km to the south. The site covers *c.* 0.6 ha at approximately 71m above Ordnance Datum on geology mapped as the boundary of Seaford and Newhaven Formations (Chalk) and Winter Hill Gravel (BGS 2005), however only the Winter Hill Gravel was observed within the trenches. The site is bounded to the north by the A412, the east and west by housing and the south by school playing fields and is currently derelict covered with trees, large shrubs, concrete footings with a Tarmac tennis court in the south-west corner (Fig. 2)

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its topographical position on the edge of the plateau on the slope down to the confluence of the Rivers Chess, Colne and Gade. Such a location has been found to be an ideal site for settlement of all periods in the past. Extensive evidence of prehistoric and Roman occupation has been found along the courses of the rivers. A number of entries from the Hertfordshire HER relating to prehistoric and medieval finds have been noted close to the proposed development site. The medieval manor of Croxley Green lies near the site, close to the River Gade. Ordnance Survey maps from the 19th century show that there were buildings present on parts of the application site.

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 research aims of the project are;

To determine if archaeological relevant 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.

To determine if any medieval deposits are present.

To determine if any features relating to buildings shown on the 19th century Ordnance Survey are present.

The potential and significance of any such deposits located will be assessed according to national and regional research priorities (Brown and Glazebrook 2000).

It was proposed that nine trenches 20m long and 1.6m wide would be excavated. The trenches were to target those parts of the site which would be most affected by the proposed development and represent a c. 5% sample of the site area.

The topsoil and other overburden was removed by a JCB-type machine using a toothless ditching bucket to expose the archaeological levels under constant archaeological supervision. The exposed archaeological areas were cleaned using appropriate hand tools. All exposed archaeological features were sampled by hand; discrete features with 50% minimum and linear features with a 25% minimum or 1m which ever was greater. Structural elements such as walls were exposed and recorded only. All spoil heaps were monitored and a metal detector was employed to enhance the recovery of metal finds. All finds and artefacts were retained.

Results

All nine trenches were excavated as near to their intended locations as possible. The locations of trenches 4, 5 and 9 had to be changed due to the presence of large concrete bases present on site and the fact that the wall forming the eastern boundary of the site was unstable (Fig. 3). The County Planning Archaeologist was informed of these changes. A large number of modern services, both gas and electric, were encountered within Trenches 2, 3, 4 and 9. The presence of large amounts of modern metal within the topsoil and overburden together with modern electrical services on site reduced the effectiveness of the metal detector on site.

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

Trench 1 (Plate 1)
Trench 1 was 20.2m long and orientated SW - NE. The stratigraphy comprised 0.29m of loamy topsoil, above foundation trench 1, which was cut into natural gravels which here, as in all trenches, consisted of clay with gravel patches. Foundation trench 1 was 0.82m long 0.23m and 0.43m deep, 'L' shaped in plan with vertical sides and a flat base (Fig. 4,6). The cut was filled with wall 52 which was made of frogged bricks with a light whitish yellow mortar. The foundation cut was backfilled with loose brownish yellow sand with frequent gravel (53).

Trench 2 (Plate 2)
Trench 2 was 20.0m long and orientated SSE - NNW. The stratigraphy comprised 0.18m of loamy topsoil, beneath which was 0.35m mid brown gravelly sand subsoil. Beneath the subsoil was gully 3, linear in plan with a bowl-shaped profile (Fig. 4,6). It was filled with friable mid brown grey silty sand with moderate gravel (57) which contained two pieces of prehistoric worked flint and six sherds of medieval pottery. A 10L sample was taken from the gully which produced a further three tiny crumbs of burnt clay, or possibly very badly degraded pottery, a very small piece of charcoal, and three tiny lumps of undiagnostic iron slag (5g). The flot from the same sample was dominated by modern roots.

Trench 3 (Plate 3)
Trench 3 was 20.0m long and orientated SE - NW. The stratigraphy comprised 0.30m of loamy topsoil, beneath which was 0.28m of mid brown gravelly sand subsoil overlying natural geology. Ditch (8) was linear in plan a bowl-shaped profile (Fig. 4,6). It was filled with friable mid brown silty sand with a moderate gravel(62) from which no finds were recovered. Two walls 12 (66) and 13 (67) and a concrete base of a wall were identified in

the trench. The walls were both aligned SW–NE and were made of frogged bricks with a yellow mortar. The concrete base was just a few degrees off this alignment.

Trench 4 (Plate 4)

Trench 4 was 20.0m long and orientated S - N. The stratigraphy comprised 0.36m of loamy topsoil directly overlying natural geology. A wall 14 (68) with a concrete foundation running southeast-northwest was recorded set in the topsoil of the trench (Fig. 4). The wall was made up of frogged bricks with a sandy bonding and was clearly on the line of a recently demolished structure (Fig. 2). A second internal wall foundation butted wall 14 at right angles on the east side.

Trench 5 (Plate 5)

Trench 5 was 20.8m long and orientated SSE - NNW. The stratigraphy comprised 0.28m of loamy topsoil overlay 0.21m of mid brown gravelly sand subsoil overlying natural geology. A large pit (2) and two postholes (4 and 5) were identified in the trench (Fig. 5, 6). Pit 2 contained five pottery sherds with a *terminus post quem* of the 19th century, and a pet dog burial. All three features were filled with mid brown grey silty sand with occasional gravel occurrences. No finds were recovered from the postholes.

Trench 6 (Plate 6)

Trench 6 was 20.0m long and orientated SE - NW. The stratigraphy comprised 0.06m of Tarmac, beneath which was 0.11m of made ground consisting of orange brown gravel; this in turn overlay 0.22m loamy buried topsoil overlying 0.11m mid brown gravelly sand subsoil which in turn overlay natural geology. A wall (15, (69)), a ditch (6) and a pit (7) were recorded (Fig. 5). The ditch had sloping sides and a flat base and was filled with a mid brown grey silty sand. It contained nine pottery sherds, five of which are of 19th century or later. The wall was made of frogged bricks with a sandy mortar. A second parallel wall may have lain 0.45m to the west but lay mostly beneath the baulk.

Trench 7 (Plate 7)

Trench 7 was 20.0m long and orientated SSW - NNE. The stratigraphy comprised 0.05m of Tarmac, beneath which was 0.19m of made ground consisting of orange brown gravels. This in turn overlay 0.52m loamy topsoil overlying 0.20m mid brown gravely sand subsoil which in turn overlay natural geology. Wall (16, 70) formed a rectilinear plan and possibly formed the foundations of an outhouse (Fig. 5). The wall was made of fogged bricks with a yellowish brown grey mortar and was filled in the centre with demolition rubble containing further broken bricks.

Trench 8 (Plate 8)

Trench 8 was 20.0m long and orientated SW - NE. The stratigraphy comprised 0.06m of Tarmac above 0.17m of made ground consisting of orange brown gravels, which overlay 0.34m mid brown gravelly sand subsoil which in turn overlay natural geology. Pit 11 had shallow sides and a flat base, filled with mid grey brown silty sand. No finds were recovered (Fig. 5, 6).

Trench 9 (Plate 9)

Trench 9 was 20.2m long and orientated SSE - NNW. The stratigraphy The stratigraphy comprised 0.33m of loamy topsoil beneath which was 0.31m mid brown gravelly sand subsoil overlying natural geology. No archaeological features were identified.

Finds

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 16 sherds with a total weight of 252g. A single small assemblage of medieval pottery was present, with the rest of the material dating to the post-medieval or modern periods. The following fabrics were noted:

Hertfordshire Grey ware. Reduced sandy wares, probably from a number of sources, some of which are as-yet unknown (Turner-Rugg 1993). Mid 12th–14th century (Turner-Rugg 1993). 6 sherds, 94g.

Brown Border ware (Pearce 1988). AD1620–1700. Brown-glazed utilitarian earthenware, manufactured in the Surrey/Hampshire border region. 1 sherd, 7g.

Anglo-Dutch Tin-glazed Earthenware 17th–early 18th century (Orton 1988). Fine white earthenware, occasionally pinkish or yellowish core. Thick white tin glaze, with painted cobalt blue or polychrome decoration. 1 sherd, 20g.

Staffordshire Slipware. AD1680–1750. Fine cream fabric with white slip and pale yellow lead glaze, commonest decoration is feathered dark brown trailed slip. 1 sherd, 11g.

Miscellaneous 19th and 20th century wares. Mass-produced white earthenwares, stonewares etc. 7 sherds, 120g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Appendix 3. All the fabric types are well-known in the region. The medieval sherds are fairly large, unabraded and appear to be a primary deposit.

Struck flint by Steve Ford

Just three struck flints were recovered from the site. One piece from pit 2 (55) was a natural flake with large retouch scars which may indicate it is a denticulate scraper. Two pieces were recovered from medieval gully 3 (57). One of these was a flint flake. The other was also a flake but it had been removed from a polished flint axe as a small portion of the polished surface remained. None of the pieces are closely datable but a later Neolithic or Bronze Age date is likely.

Conclusion

The evaluation has revealed a modest range of activity on the site. The majority of this activity comprised foundations, service runs, cut features and demolition debris from structures of 19th and 20th century date. Deposits of archaeological interest were few. These comprised stray and residual struck flints of later neolithic or Bronze Age date, and a gully containing medieval pottery. It is possible that some undated features could be of similar date but could also be contemporary with the modern activity recorded.

Relatively few walls were identified on site suggesting that demolition had been comprehensive. The wall in Trench 4 appeared to be a surviving part of the foundations of a building that has been recently demolished and was present on a current Ordnance survey map (Fig. 2). Walls found in Trenches 1 and 3 seem to relate to remnants of a building that existed on the site in 1898 (Fig. 7). The small fragment of wall visible in Trench 1 is likely to be a corner of this building. The wall in Trench 7 appears to match a small out-building (summerhouse?) that adjoins a greenhouse on the map.

On the basis of these results it is considered that the evaluation has shown that the site has low or no archaeological potential.

References

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Brown, N and Glazebrook, J, 2000, *Research and Archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties- 2, Research agenda and strategy* E Anglian Archaeol Occas Pap **8**

PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO

Orton, C, 1988, Post-Roman Pottery in P Hinton (ed.) *Excavations in Southwark 1973-76 and Lambeth, 973-79.* MoLAS and DGLA Joint Publication **3**, 295-364

Pearce, J, 1988, *Border Ware* HMSO

Turner-Rugg, A, 1993, Medieval pottery in Hertfordshire: a gazetteer of the principle collections *Hertfordshire Archaeol* **11**, 30 – 53

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

Trench	*Length (m)*	*Breadth (m)*	*Depth (m)*	*Comment*
1	20.2	1.6	0.67	0.00–0.29m Topsoil; 0.29–0.60m Subsoil; 0.60m+ clay with gravel patches (Natural geology) Wall 1. **[Plate 1]**
2	20.0	1.6	0.63	0.00–0.18m Topsoil; 0.18–0.53m Subsoil; 0.53m+ natural geology. Gully 2. **[Plate 2]**
3	20.0	1.6	0.61	0.00–0.30m Topsoil; 0.30–0.58m Subsoil; 0.58m+ natural geology. Ditch 8, Walls 12, 13. **[Plate 3]**
4	20.0	1.6	0.45	0.00–0.36m Topsoil; 0.36m+ Natural geology. Wall 14. **[Plate 4]**
5	20.8	1.6	0.52	0.00–0.28m Topsoil; 0.28–0.49m Subsoil; 0.49m+ natural geology. Pit 2, Postholes 4, 5. **[Plate 5]**
6	20.0	1.6	0.61	0.00–0.06m Tarmac; 0.06–0.17 orange brown gravels (Made ground); 0.17–0.39 topsoil; 0.39–0.48m subsoil; 0.48m+ natural geology. Ditch 6, Pit 7, Wall 15. **[Plate 6]**
7	20.0	1.6	1.20	0.00–0.05m tarmac; 0.05–0.24 made ground; 0.24–0.76 buried topsoil; 0.76–0.96m subsoil; 0.96m+ natural geology. Wall 16. **[Plate 7]**
8	20.0	1.6	0.62	0.00–0.06m Tarmac; 0.06–0.23m made ground; 0.23–0.57m subsoil; 0.57m+ natural geology. Pit 11. **[Plate 8**
9	20.2	1.6	0.70	0.00–0.32m topsoil; 0.32–0.61m subsoil; 0.61m+ natural geology. **[Plate 9]**

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

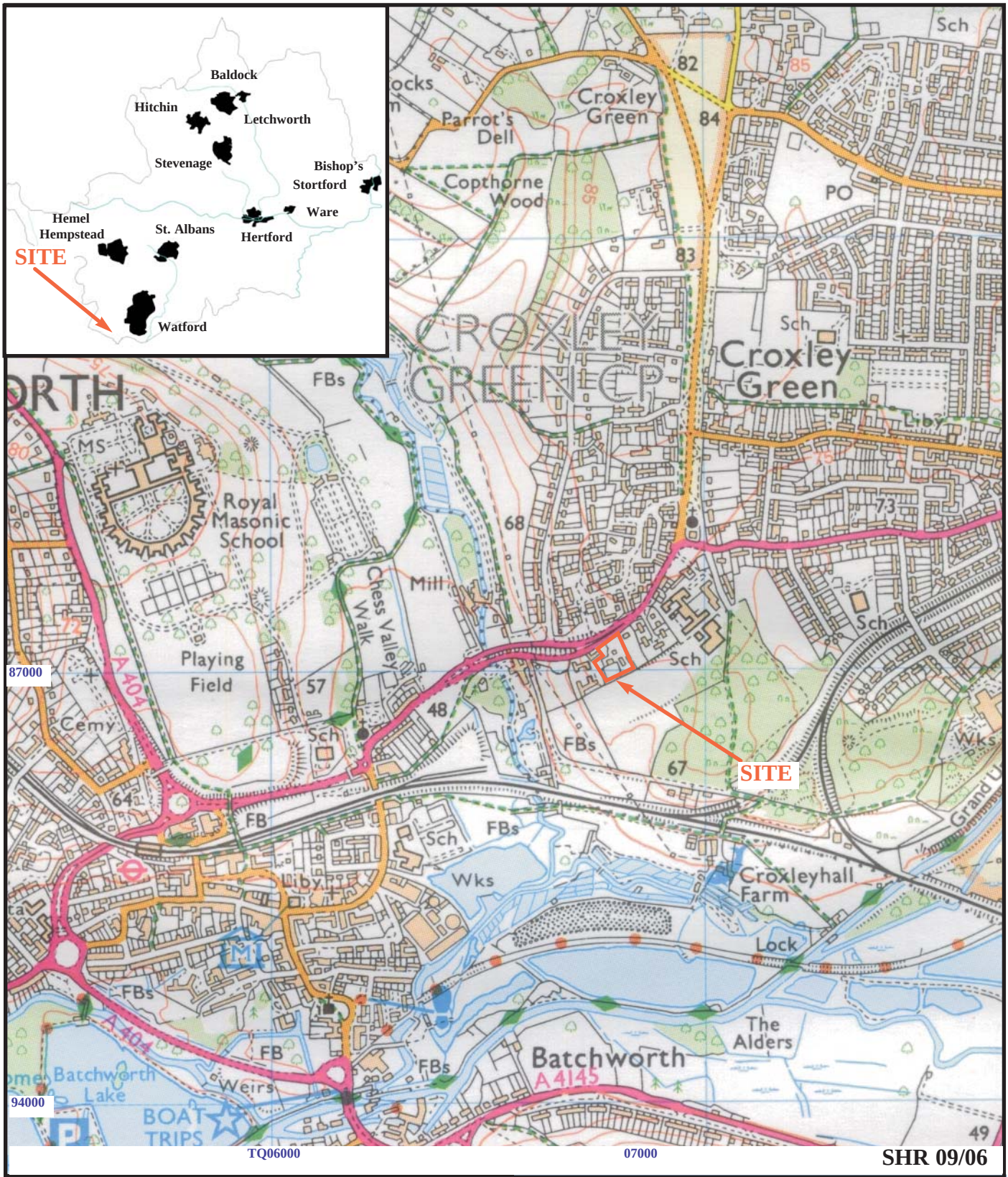
Trench	*Cut*	*Fill (s)*	*Type*	*Date*	*Dating evidence*
1	1	52	Wall	19th Century	Cartographic
2	3	57	Gully	12th-14th Century	Pottery
3	8	62	Ditch	Unphased	None
3	12	66	Wall	19th Century	Cartographic
3	13	67	Wall	19th Century	Cartographic
4	14	68	Wall	20th Century	recent demolition
5	2	55	Pit	19th Century	Pottery
5	4	58	Posthole	Unphased	None
5	5	59	Posthole	Unphased	None
6	6	60	Ditch	19th Century	Pottery
6	7	61	Pit	Unphased	None
6	9	63	Ditch	19th Century	Associated ceramics
6	10	64	Pit	Unphased	None
6	15	69	Wall	19th Century?	
7	16	70	Wall	19th Century?	Cartographic
8	11	65	Pit	Unphased	None

APPENDIX 3: Pottery by context

			HG		*GRE*		*BBW*		*TGE*		*SS*		*19th*	
Trench	*Feature*	*Context*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*
5	2	55			2	7	1	7					2	8
2	3	57	6	94										
6	6	61			2	6			1	20	1	11	5	112
		Total	**6**	**94**	**4**	**13**	**1**	**7**	**1**	**20**	**1**	**11**	**7**	**120**

APPENDIX 4: HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD SUMMARY SHEET

Site name and address: Land off Scots Hill, Croxley Green, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire		
County: Hertfordshire	District: Three Rivers	
Village/Town: Rickmansworth	Parish: Croxley Green	
Planning application reference: 8/2054/06		
Client name, address, and tel. no.: Howarth Homes, Elthorne Gate, 64 High Street, Pinner, Middlesex, HA5. 0208 429 8891		
Nature of application: Housing		
Present land use: Derelict		
Size of application area: 0.6ha	**Size of area investigated:** 0.6ha	
NGR (to 8 figures): TQ 0680 9505		
Site code (if applicable): SHR09/06		
Site director/Organization: Andrew Weale, Thames Valley Archaeological Services		
Type of work Evaluation		
Date of work:	Start: 24/4/09	Finish: 27/4/09
Location of finds & site archive/Curating museum: Three Rivers		
Related HER Nos:	Periods represented: Modern, Victorian, Medieval, Neolithic/Bronze Age	
Relevant previous summaries/reports		
Summary of fieldwork results: A nine trench evaluation revealed residual Neolithic/Bronze Age struck flints, a medieval gully and Victorian and modern building foundations		
Author of summary: A Weale	Date of summary: 11/5/09	



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Land off Scot's Hill, Croxley Green, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire, 2009 Archaeological Evaluation

Figure 1. Location of site within Croxley Green and Hertfordshire.

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Figure 2. Location of site off Scot's Hill.

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Land off Scot's Hill, Croxley Green, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire, 2009

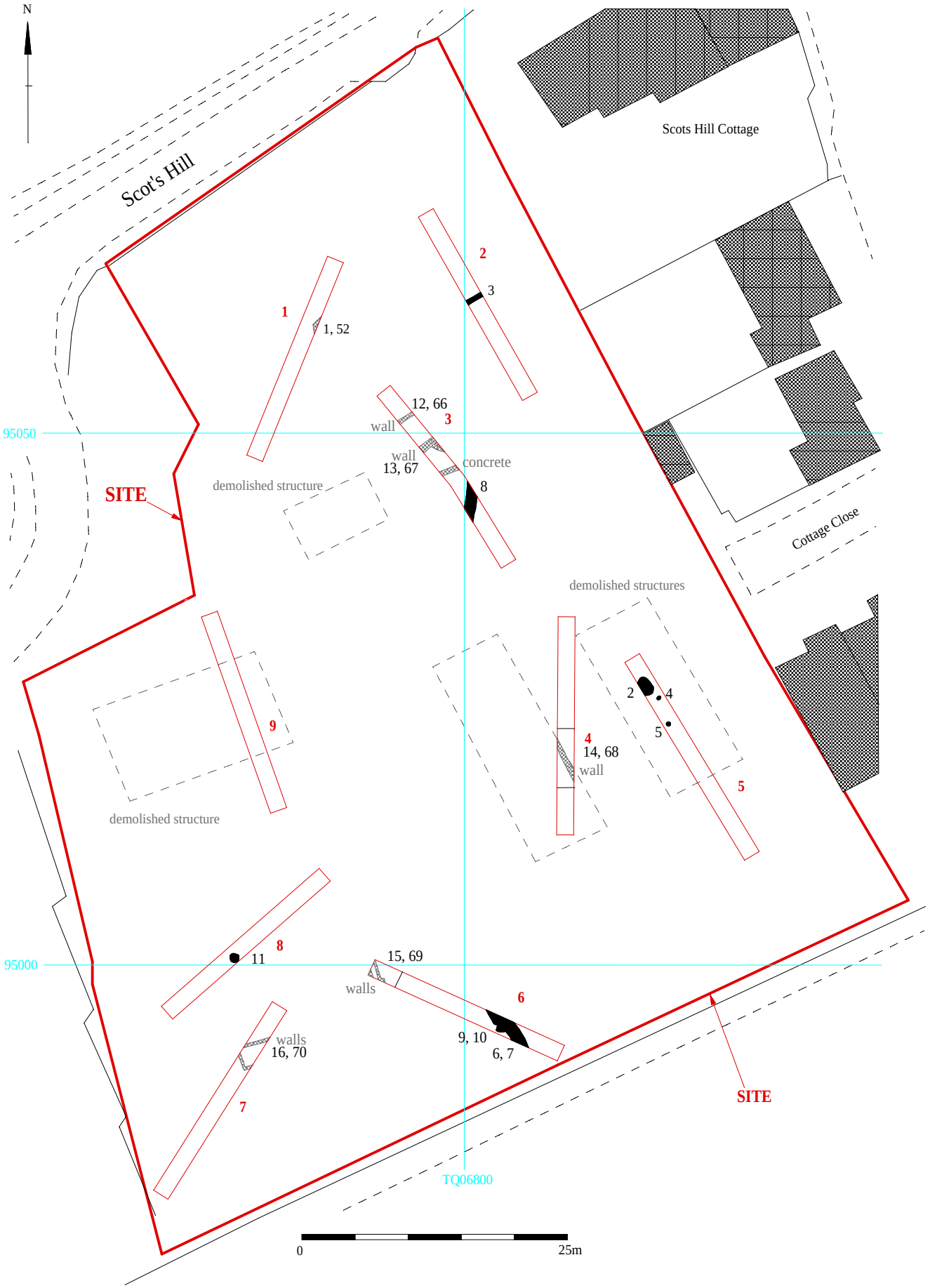

Figure 3. Location of trenches.

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Land off Scot's Hill, Croxley Green, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire, 2009

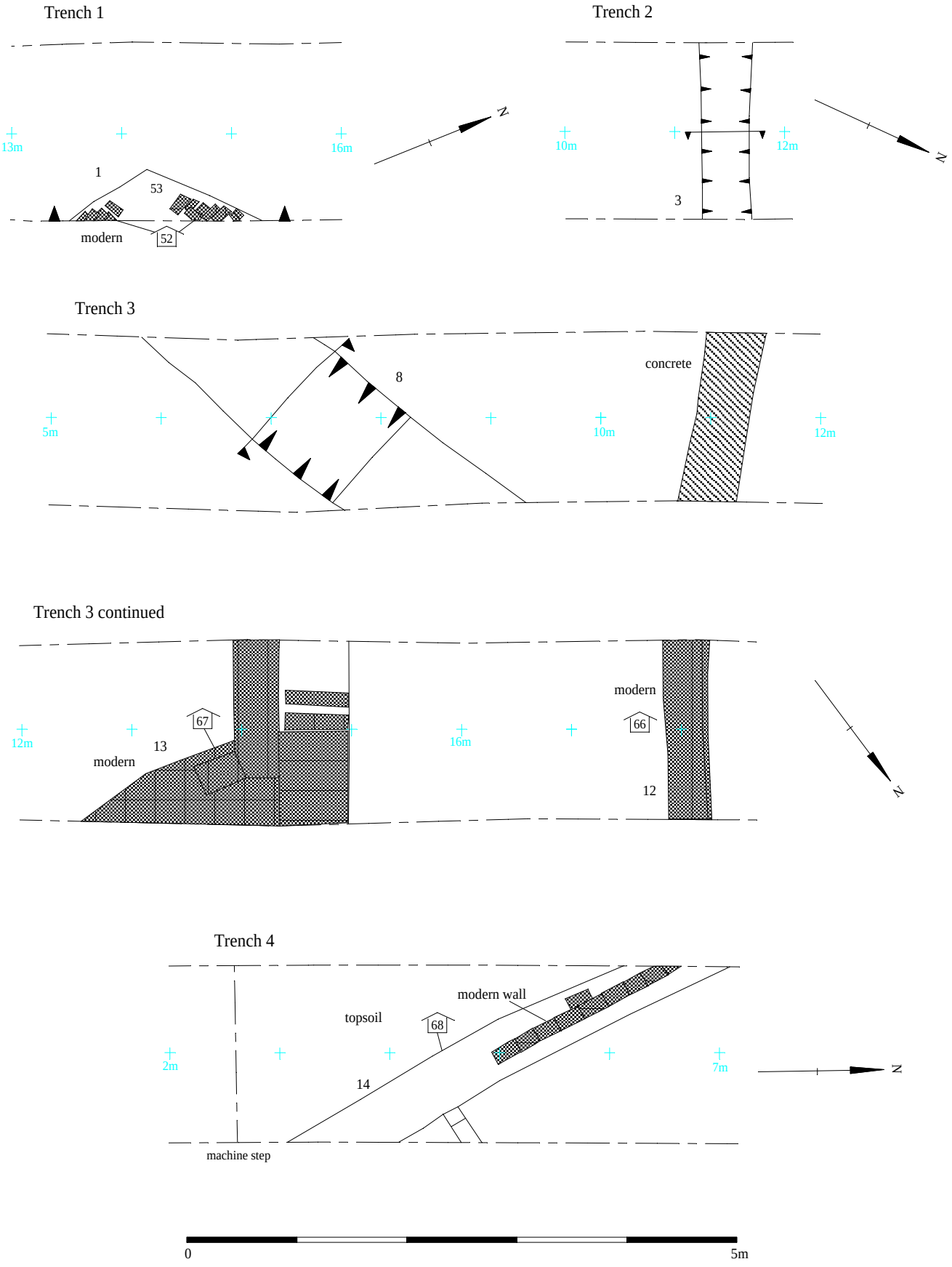


Figure 4. Detail of trenches.

Land off Scot's Hill, Croxley Green, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire, 2009

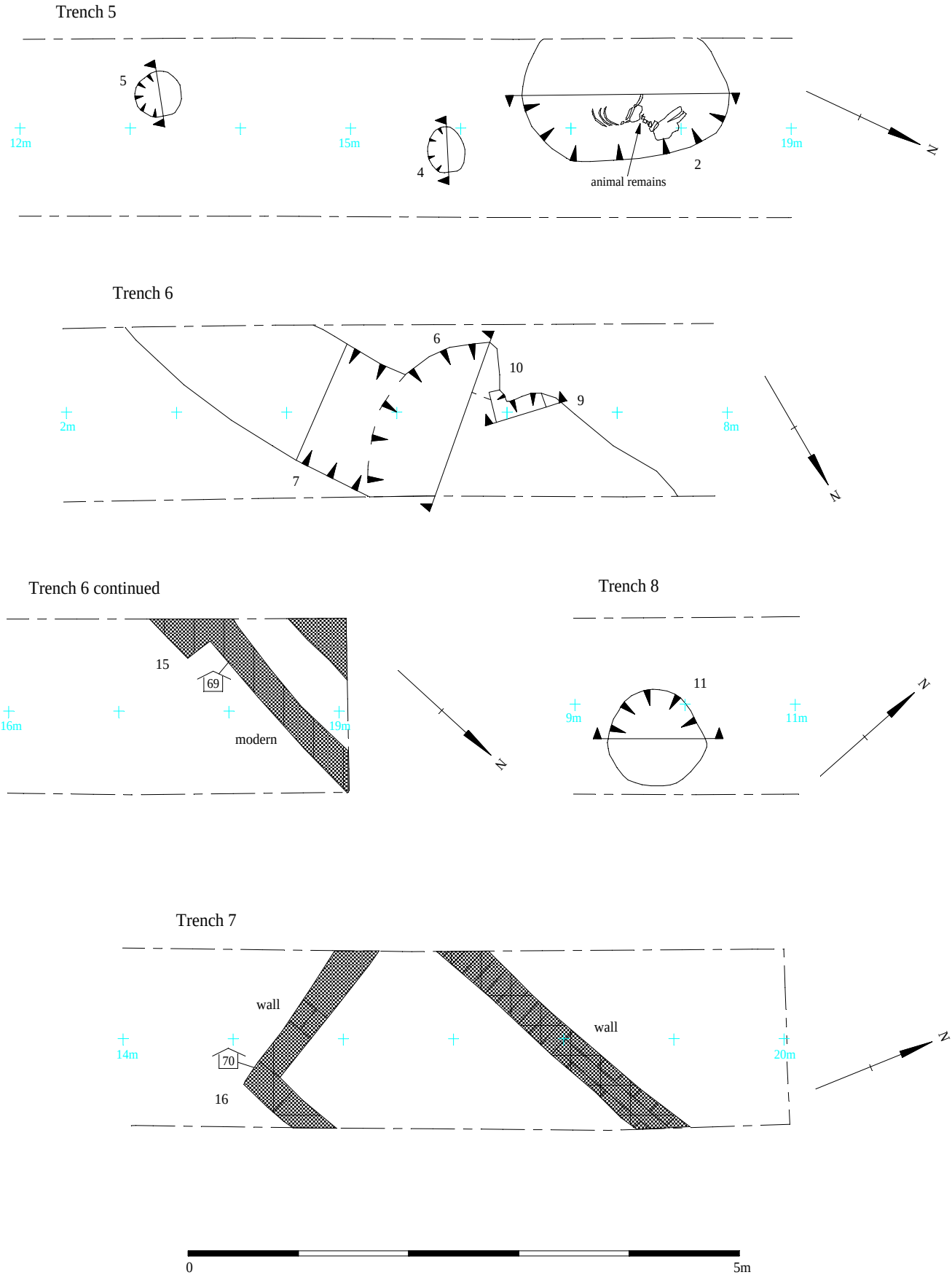


Figure 5. Detail of trenches.

Land off Scot's Hill, Croxley Green, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire, 2009

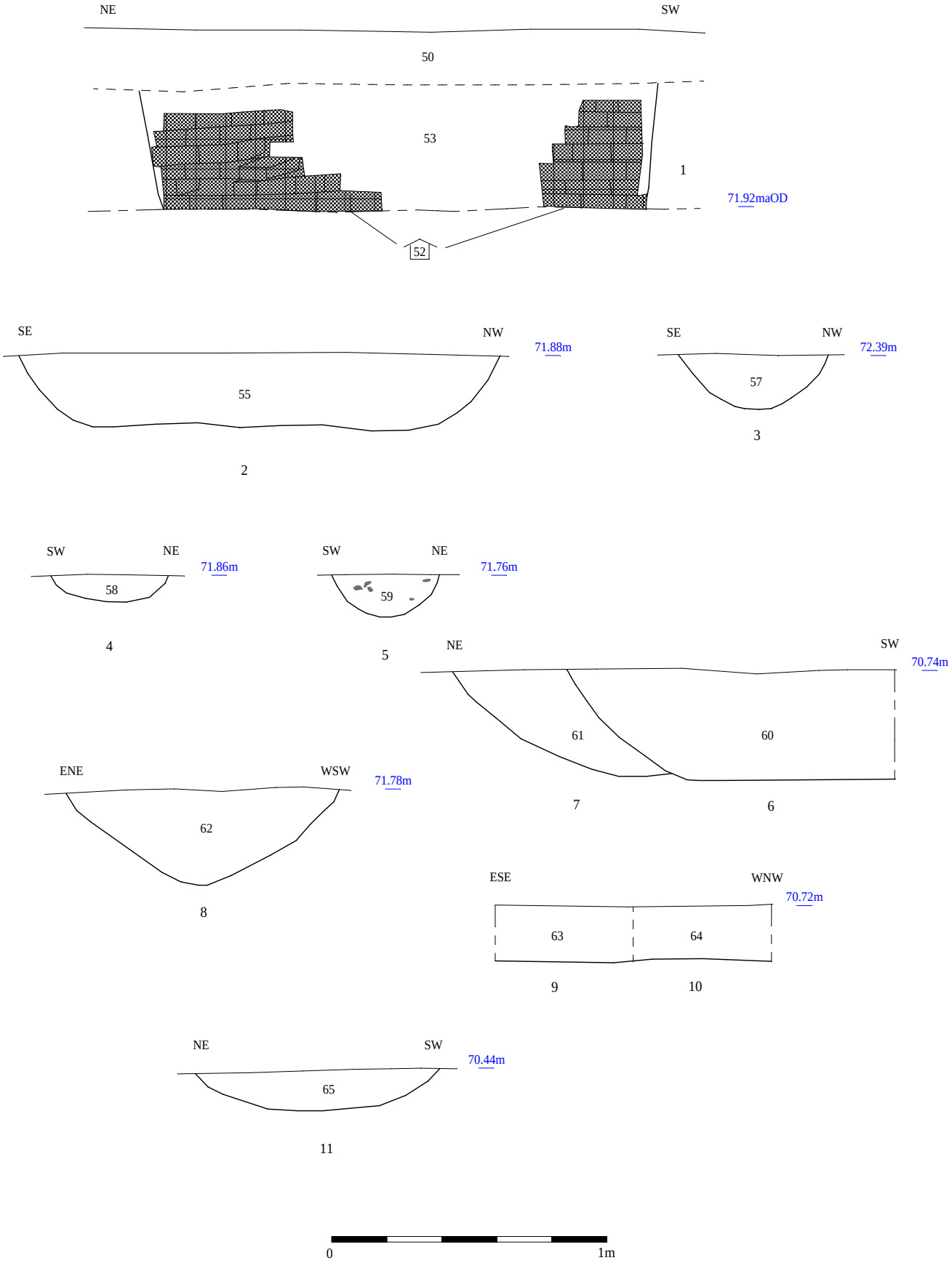
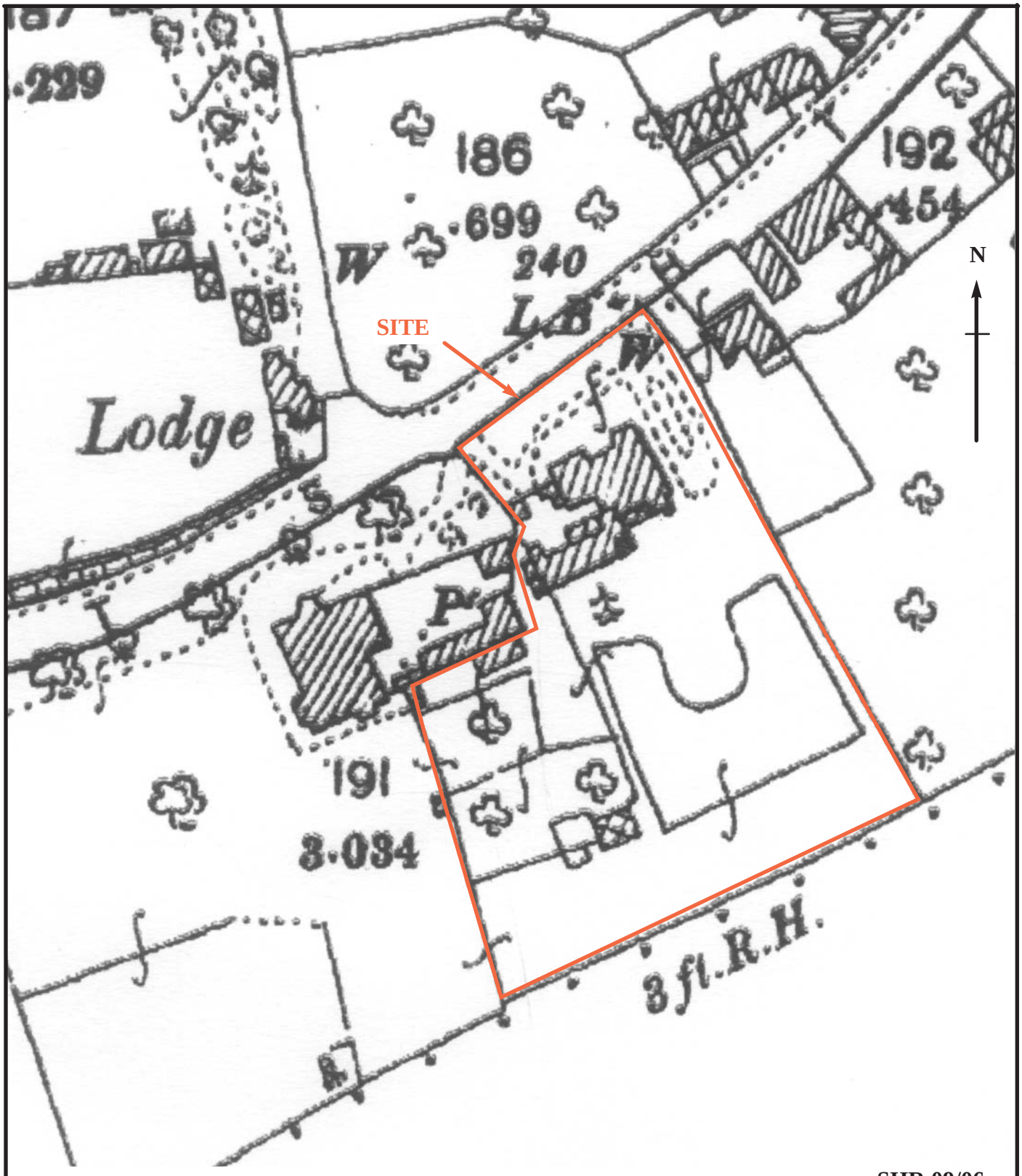


Figure 6. Sections.



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Land off Scots Hill, Croxley Green, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire
Archaeological evaluation

Figure 7. Location of site in 1898

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

Plate 2. Trench 2, looking north;
Scales, 2m, 1m and 0.5m.

Plate 3. Trench 3, looking north;
Scales, 2m, 1m and 0.5m.

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Plate 4. Trench 4, looking north;
Scales, 2m, 1m and 0.5m

Plate 5. Trench 5, looking south;
Scales, 2m, 1m and 0.5m.

Plate 6. Trench 6, looking north;
Scales, 1m and 0.5m.

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Plate 7. Trench 7, Wall 16 looking south west;
Scale, 1m

Plate 8. Trench 8, looking north;
Scales, 2m, 1m and 0.5m.

Plate 9. Trench 9, looking north;
Scales, 2m, 1m and 0.5m.

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