

**Holyport Manor Special School, Highfield Lane,
Cox Green, Maidenhead, Berkshire, Phase B**

An Archaeological Recording Action

For CgMs Consulting

by James McNicoll-Norbury
and Natasha Bennett
Thames Valley Archaeological Services
Ltd

Site Code HMS 08/87

June 2009

Summary

Site name: Holyport Manor Special School, Highfield Lane, Cox Green, Maidenhead, Berkshire, Phase B

Grid reference: SU8630 7935

Site activity: Archaeological Recording Action

Date and duration of project: 6th February – 9th June 2009

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: James McNicoll-Norbury and Natasha Bennett

Site code: HMS 08/87

Area of site: c. 1.3 ha

Summary of results: One possible post hole of Middle/Late Bronze Age date was recorded along with several undated and modern postholes. A small collection of Bronze Age pottery and Neolithic or Bronze Age stuck flint was recovered from the topsoil and subsoil.

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 ✓ 22.06.09
	Steve Preston ✓ 22.06.09

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Report 08/87b

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological recording action carried out at Holyport Manor Special School, Highfield Lane, Cox Green, Maidenhead, Berkshire (SU 8630 7935) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Lorraine Darton of CgMs, Morley House, 26 Holborn Viaduct, London, EC1A 2AT on behalf of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

Planning permission (08/00402) has been granted by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead for the construction of new school buildings to house the Holyport Manor Special School in the grounds of the existing Cox Green School. The proposed development also includes the construction of a new access road from Cannon Lane, associated car parking and the construction of playing fields to the south-east of the existing school. The consent gained is subject to a condition (11) which requires a phased programme of archaeological work to be carried out during the course of the development.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the District's policies on archaeology. The project involves a recording action on various ground disturbing activities. The preliminary site works have already been reported on in a previous report (Lowe 2008). That report did not reveal any archaeological deposits in the area covered by the western part of the access road and the sports pitches. This report documents the work carried out on the remainder of the access road and the area of the new buildings.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification produced by Ms Lorraine Darton of CgMs and approved by Ms Fiona MacDonald of Berkshire Archaeology, the archaeological adviser to the Royal Borough. The fieldwork was undertaken by Natasha Bennett, James McNicoll-Norbury, Dan Bray, Henrietta Longdon and Susan Colley in stages between 6th February and 9th June 2009 and the site code is HMS 08/87.

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 the south-western fringes of Maidenhead in the Cox Green area (Fig. 1). The site lies within the grounds of Cox Green School and is bounded by a railway line to the north-west, Cannon Lane to the west and Highfield Road to the north-east, while residential properties mark out its southern and eastern boundaries (Fig. 2). The site slopes downwards from the north-western edge, where it is approximately 38m above Ordnance Datum to the south-eastern corner of the site, which lies at 34m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is Upper Chalk (BGS 1981) and this was observed, along with light orange brown clay capping, during the course of the fieldwork.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a desk-based assessment (Darton 2007) as well as in the archaeological project design supplied by CgMs Consulting (Darton 2008). In summary, the site's archaeological potential stems from its location on the chalk outcrop within East Berkshire, an area which is relatively rich in archaeological finds of prehistoric and Roman dates (Ford 1987). In addition a Roman villa is recorded close to the site. The winged corridor villa, excavated in 1959, was constructed in four phases and was probably in use from the early Antonine period (mid 2nd century AD) until the second half of the 4th century (Bennet 1962). A Roman corn drier and well have been recorded to the north of the site at Altwood Bailey. A watching brief also to the north recorded a ditch which contained a single sherd of Saxon pottery (Coles 2005).

A geophysical survey of the site identified several linear anomalies which may relate to medieval ridge and furrow identified in a field to the south-west of the site. Monitoring of the previous phase of groundworks work did not reveal any archaeological deposits (Lowe 2008).

Objectives and methodology

The objectives of the recording action were to excavate and record any archaeological deposits revealed along the remainder of the access road and in the areas covered by the proposed new buildings on the site, and other intrusive groundworks such as soakaways and drainage trenches. The overburden of the site was removed using a 360⁰ machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. In the area of the access road and the northern half of the building footprint this overburden was removed down to the top of the natural geology. The spoil arising was then taken from these areas and used to raise the level of the ground for the southern half of the building prior to the footings (piles and groundbeams) being dug in that area.

Identified archaeological features were excavated by hand and samples were taken from a selection of the excavated features. Metal detectors were used on site and spoil heaps were monitored from finds.

Results

Access road and building footprint

The access road and the northern half of the building were stripped of their overburden (topsoil and subsoil) down to the natural geology that comprised yellow/brown chalk with patches of red/brown clay and flints, between 0.90–1.30m below the original surface levels. Nothing of archaeological interest was observed in the access road strip. A number of modern drains were noted in the stripped area.

A total of nine postholes were found in the north-western part of the building area (Fig. 3). The postholes were between 0.22-0.54m wide and 0.10-0.29m deep (Fig. 4) and were filled with light brownish/grey sandy clay or reddish/brown sandy clay. Six of these (2-7) formed a group with four forming a line, perhaps the remnants of a fence. These were half-sectioned and recorded but no dating evidence was recovered except for two flint flakes from the surface of posthole 2. Posthole 9 adjoined posthole 8. A fragment of wood with a nail was recovered from posthole 8 indicating that it, and probably posthole 9 are of fairly modern date.

Posthole 1, which was located away from the other features, but which was considered to be a doubtful feature, was the only one to contain dating evidence. This comprised a single struck flint and 3 sherds of Middle/Late Bronze Age pottery. This posthole was later fully excavated but no additional finds were recovered.

An additional 12 small sherds of Middle/Late Bronze Age pottery were found in the subsoil layer (51) during its removal for the northern half of the building. In addition a small collection of Neolithic or Bronze Age struck flints from both topsoil and subsoil contexts was also recovered during stripping.

Disturbance or exposure of the archaeologically relevant levels on the southern half of the building footprint was limited to piles and some pile caps where the makeup level was shallow. These foundations were not examined.

Soakaway

A soakaway and pipe trench located on the southern margins of the site was observed. The soakaway was 6m deep and was 3m long and 1m wide. The stratigraphy comprised 0.7m of dumped subsoil above 0.15m of a grey silt (original subsoil with topsoil removed?) above 0.4m of brown clay above chalk. The brown clay was

possibly the top of the natural geology. No archaeological deposits were observed no find recovered from this feature.

Finds

Pottery by James McNicoll-Norbury

Middle to Late Bronze Age

A small collection of Bronze Age pottery was recovered from the site. This assemblage comprised 3 sherds (83g) from feature 1 in the northern area of the site and 15 sherds from overlying deposits (70g) comprising further Bronze Age sherds and modern sherds.

The largest two sherds, recovered from posthole 1, appear to have formed part of a base of an unknown type of vessel. They are tempered with very common, well sorted, coarse, angular calcined flint. The exterior varies in colour from mid-brown to very dark grey, with a black core. The third sherd from feature 1 is tempered with a low amount of angular calcined flint along with fine quartz sand. This sherd has a smooth exterior varying between light brown to dark grey in colour, and again with a black core.

The remainder of the assemblage, from the overlying subsoil (51) is comprised of small sherds with a common amount of angular unsorted calcined flint with brown/red to very dark grey exteriors.

These small sherds are not closely datable but are most probably of middle to late Bronze Age date.

Modern

An additional three sherds (37g) of modern 'Spode's Tower' white china with blue decoration were recovered from the topsoil (50), two of the sherds forming part of the base and sides of a vessel.

Struck Flint by Steve Ford

A collection comprising 25 struck flints was recovered from the site, of which 22 were recovered from topsoil/subsoil contexts, one from posthole 1 and two others from the surface of posthole 2. Apart from two spalls (pieces less than 20x20mm), all the remaining items were flakes. The flakes were in a poor condition with excessive edge damage from their exposure to ploughing and it is possible that some pieces were in fact made by the plough in relatively modern times. All of the flint is available locally either from the chalk, Reading Beds or from within the clayey deposit overlying the other two geological outcrops in this general area. None of the flint was the distinctive bull head flint typical of the Reading Beds/chalk interface.

None of the pieces have distinctive chronological attributes and only a broad Neolithic or Bronze Age date can be suggested. The most noteworthy aspect of the collection is the relatively large number recovered.

Brick and Tile by James McNicoll-Norbury

A small assemblage of brick and tile consisting of 18 fragments (397g) was recovered from the topsoil (50) and subsoil (51) layers of the building area. The pieces are all various sizes and are all fairly abraded pieces with no diagnostic designs or features visible.

Conclusion

The fieldwork revealed a small number of probable and possible archaeological deposits on the site along with a number of archaeological finds. The cut features all comprised posthole-sized features in the northern area of the building footprint. One feature, and by association, another one, were unambiguously of modern date. Six features were undated. Just one feature is possibly of prehistoric origin, though in itself its status is ambiguous. Nevertheless it produced Middle/ Late Bronze Age pottery and a struck flint. More Bronze Age pottery and Neolithic or Bronze Age struck flints were recovered from the topsoil and subsoil.

Whilst the below-ground survival of deposits is slight at best, the small cluster of material recovered from this location does point to some prehistoric (Bronze Age) activity on the site though, as suspected for many sites of this period, mostly now only surviving as artefact scatters in topsoil and subsoil contexts.

References

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APPENDIX 1: Catalogue of all excavated features

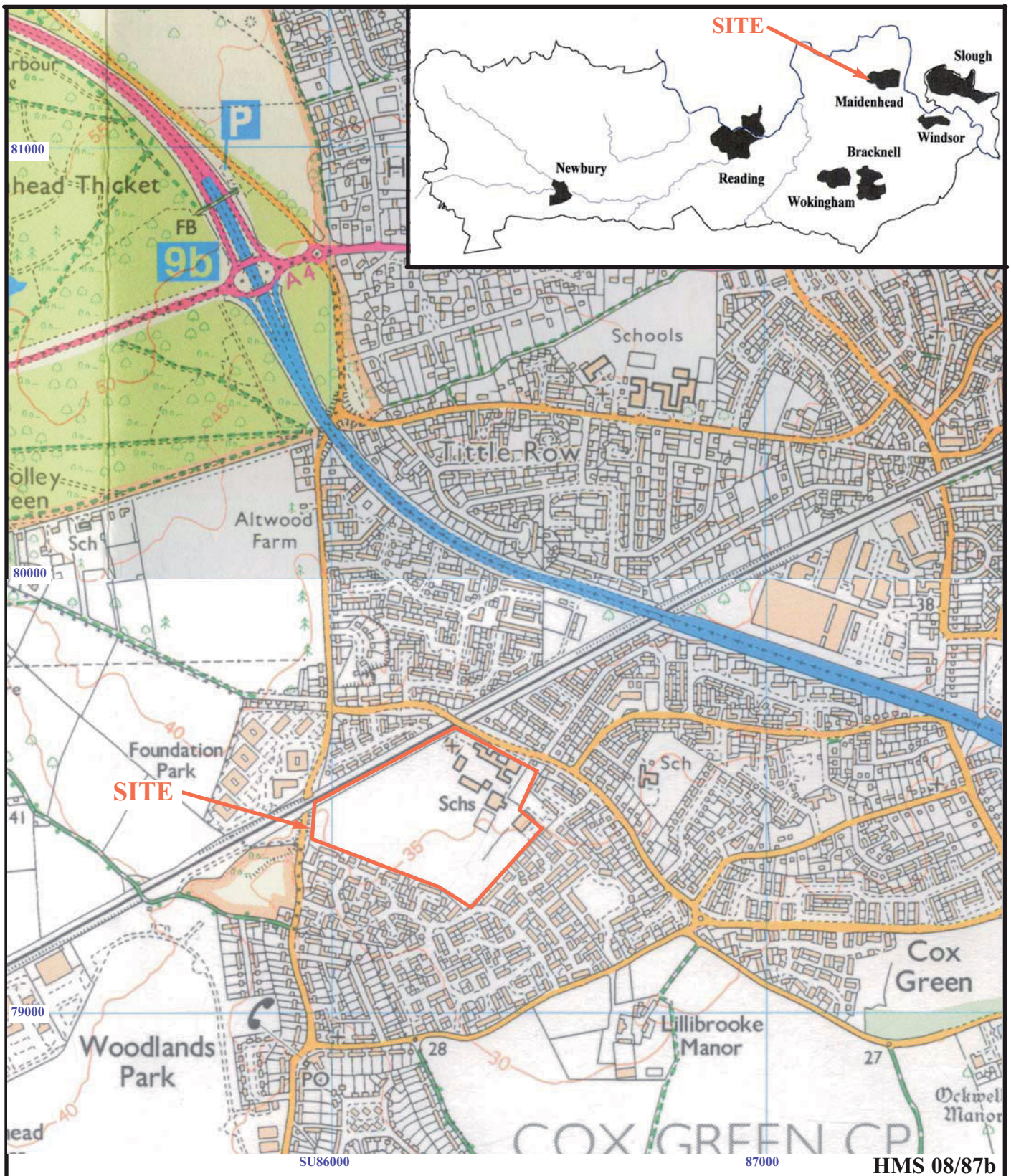
<i>Area</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Phase</i>	<i>Dating Evidence</i>
B		50	Topsoil		
B		51	Subsoil		
B	1	52	Posthole?	Middle to late Bronze Age	Pottery
B	2	53	Posthole	Unphased	None
B	3	54	Posthole	Unphased	None
B	4	55	Posthole	Unphased	None
B	5	56	Posthole	Unphased	None
B	6	57	Posthole	Unphased	None
B	7	58	Posthole	Unphased	None
B	8	59	Posthole	Modern	Wood and iron
B	9	60	Posthole	Modern?	By association with 8

APPENDIX 2: Pottery by context

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>Date</i>
	50	Topsoil	3	37	19 th Century
	51	Subsoil	12	33	Middle to late Bronze Age
1	52	Posthole	3	83	Middle to late Bronze Age
	Totals		18	153	

APPENDIX 3: Struck Flint by context

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Intact Flake</i>	<i>Broken Flake</i>	<i>Spall</i>
	50	4	3	1	
	51	18	8	8	2
1	52	1	1		
2	53	2		2	
	Totals	25	12	11	2



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Figure 1. Location of site within Maidenhead and Berkshire.

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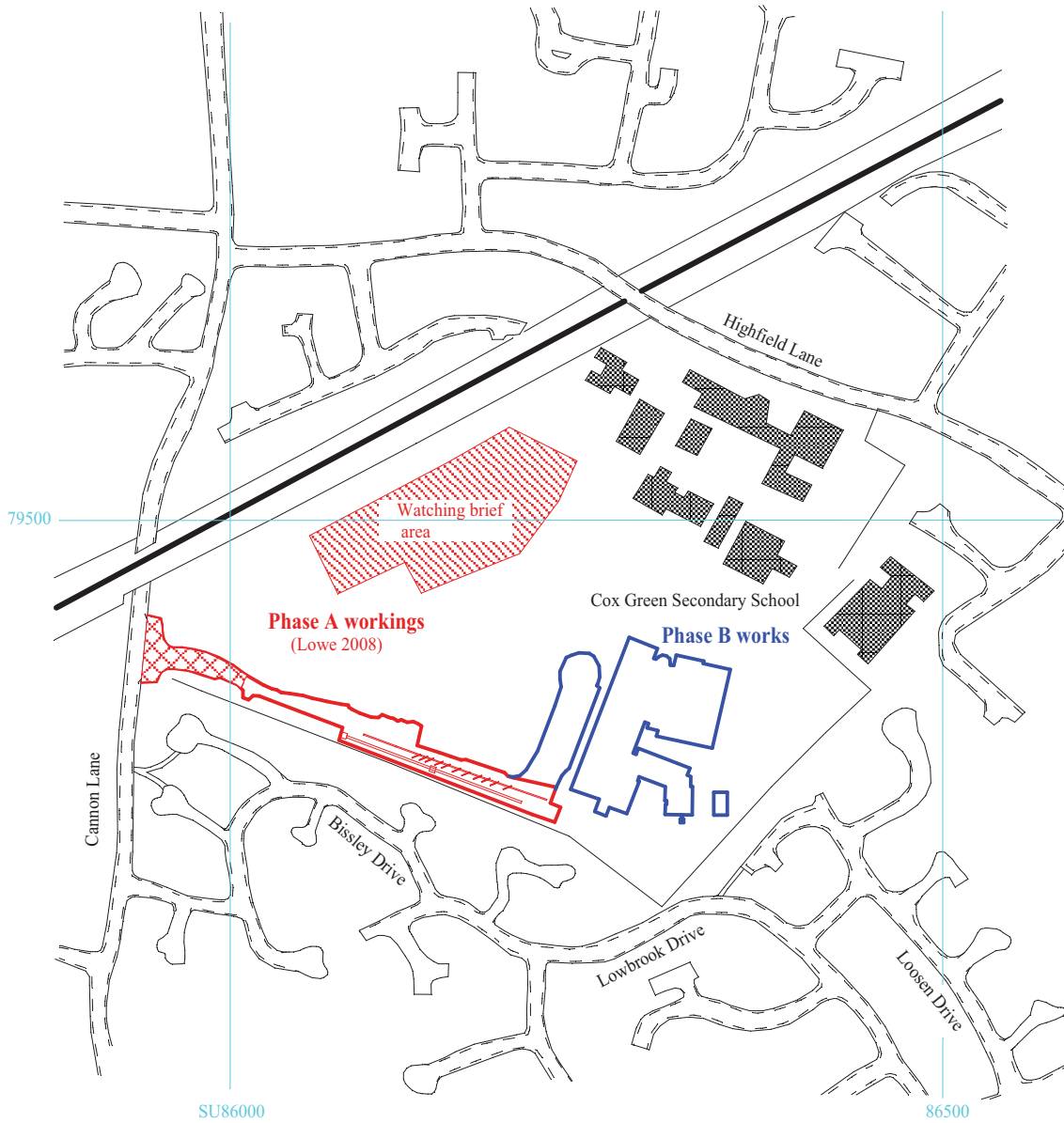


Figure 2. Location of areas observed during the recording action.

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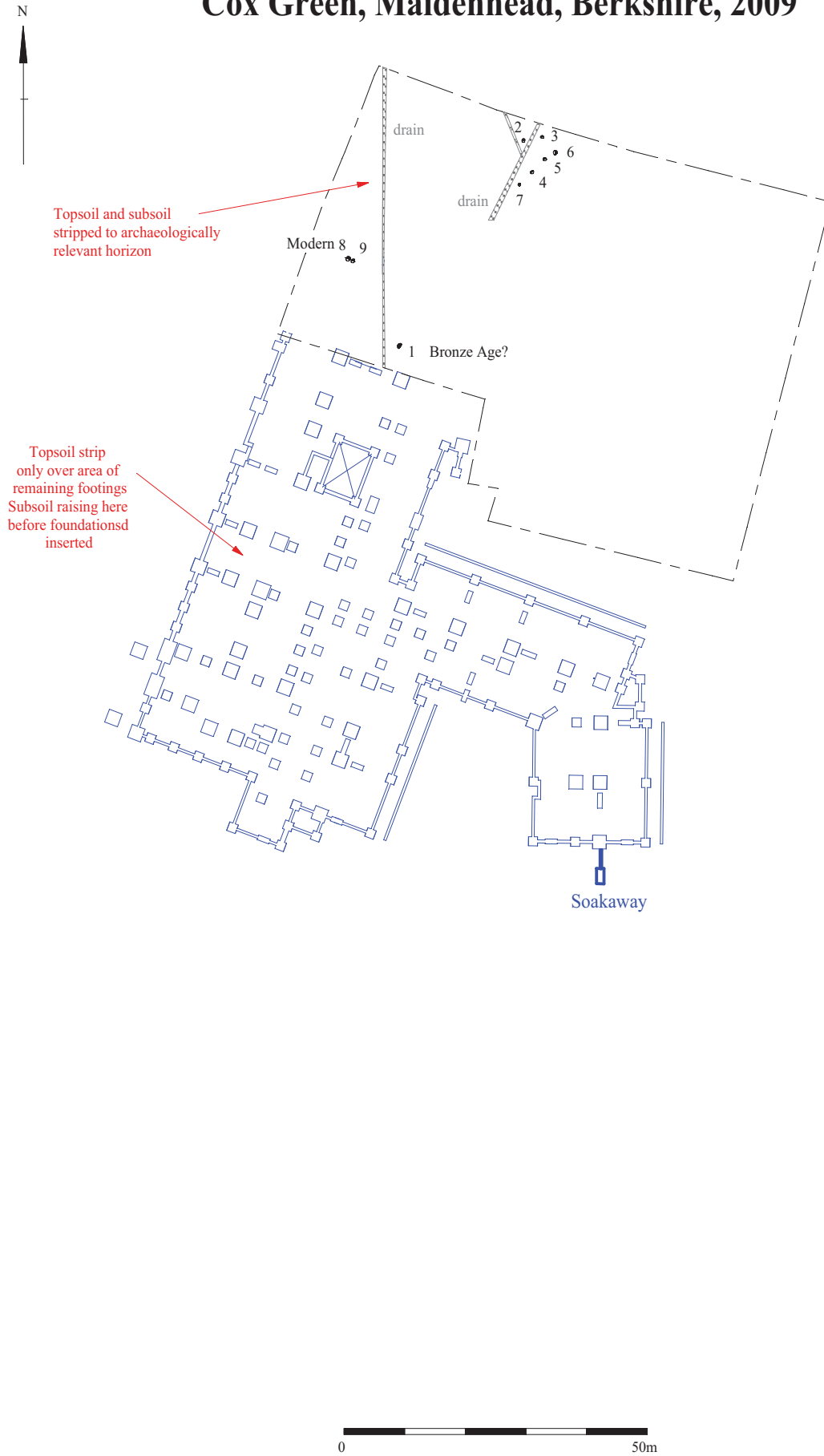


Figure 3. Detail of footings and area of phase B watching brief

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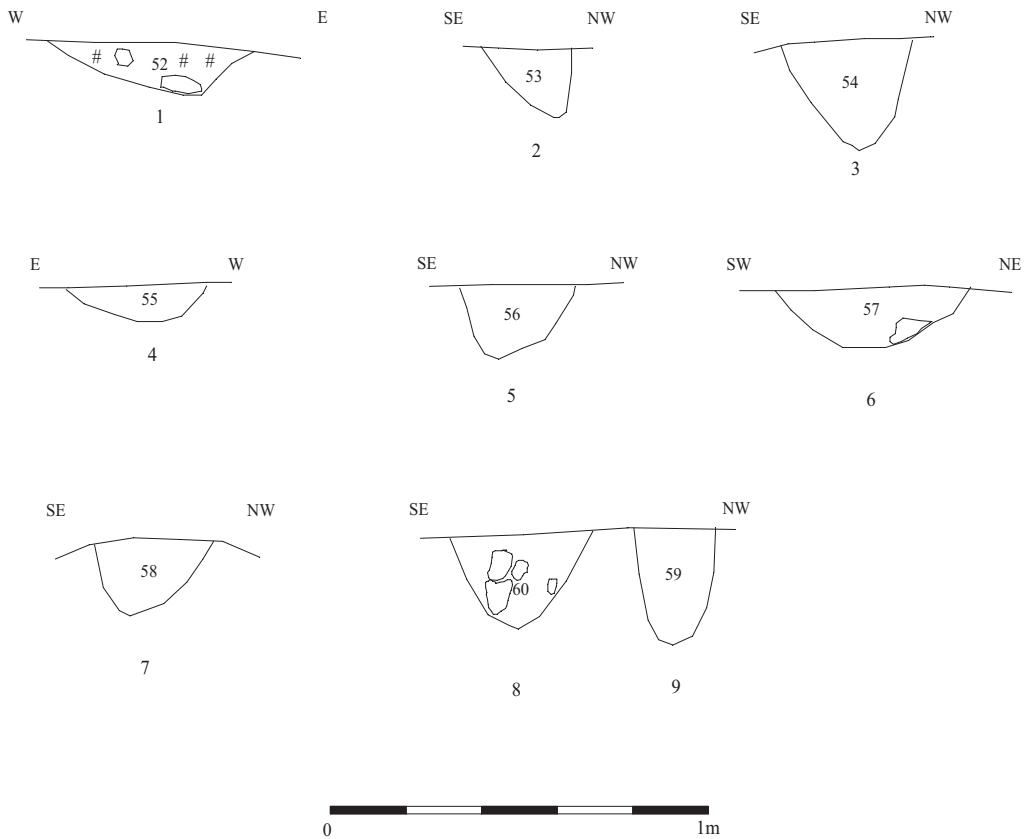


Figure 4. Sections of Features