

**Former Milesdown Children's Home, Northbrook Avenue,  
St Giles's, Winchester, Hampshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation**

**Phase 1 Report**

**for**

**Beechcroft Developments Ltd**

by Danielle Milbank

Thames Valley Archaeological Services

Ltd

Site Code AY415

October 2009

## Summary

**Site name:** Former Milesdown Children's Home, St Giles's Hill, Northbrook Avenue, Winchester, Hampshire

**Grid reference:** SU 4895 2930

**Site activity:** Evaluation

**Date and duration of project:** 1st – 2nd October 2009

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Danielle Milbank

**Site code:** AY415

**Area of site:** 0.7ha

**Summary of results:** A single undated inhumation burial was found

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Winchester Museum in due course, with accession code AY415.

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 16.10.09
	Steve Preston ✓ 16.10.09

# Former Milesdown Children's Home, St Giles's Hill, Northbrook Avenue, Winchester An Archaeological Evaluation (Phase 1)

by Danielle Milbank

Report 09/64

## Introduction

This report documents the results of a first phase of archaeological field evaluation carried out at the former Milesdown Children's Home, St Giles Hill, Northbrook Avenue, Winchester, Hampshire (SU 4895 2930) (Fig.1). The work was commissioned by Mr John Shelbourne on behalf of Beechcroft Developments Limited, 1 Church Lane, Wallingford, Oxfordshire, OX10 0DX.

Planning permission (08/02021/FUL) was gained from Winchester City Council for the refurbishment of the existing structure and construction of new apartments with basement parking on the site. As the site may contain important archaeological deposits, a field evaluation was required, in order to provide further information on the potential of the site with which to draw up an appropriate mitigation strategy prior to damage or destruction during groundworks. This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the City Council's policies on archaeology.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Tracey Matthews, Sites and Monuments Records Officer with the City Council, and was monitored by her on behalf of the Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Danielle Milbank and Paulina Pankiewicz on the 1st and 2nd October 2009, and the site code is AY415. The human remains were removed under licence (09-0158) from the Minister of Justice. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Winchester Museum in due course, with accession code AY415.

Not all of the evaluation could be completed at this time and this report describes those trenches which could be dug. The remain trenches to be dug will form a second phase of evaluation.

## Location, topography and geology

The site lies on the north side of Northbrook Avenue, on St Giles's Hill, at the eastern margins of Winchester (SU 4895 2930). The site comprises an L-shaped parcel of land of c.0.7 ha, which is currently occupied by the children's home building and garden areas (Fig. 2). The site lies at a height of c. 90 m. above Ordnance Datum and the underlying geology is mapped as chalk (BGS 1975), which was encountered in all trenches excavated.

## **Archaeological background**

The potential of the site has been highlighted by a brief for the project by Ms Tracy Matthews, Sites and Monuments Officer with the City Council. In summary, the site lies within an area which has revealed human burial deposits of various dates. An early Saxon cemetery was located at the top of St Giles's Hill and an undated inhumation to the south of the site. Medieval burials are associated with the site of the church and churchyards of St Giles which lies to the north east. The Fair of St Giles was sited within the environs of the site and a medieval structure thought to relate to the fair has been located to the north.

## **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 evaluation were:

- To determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site.
- To determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present.
- To determine if there are further deposits relating to Saxon burial deposits are present.
- To determine if any features relating to the use of the area for medieval fairs are present.

It was proposed to excavate eight trenches, each 20m long and 1.6m wide. This report relates to the digging of five of the trenches, namely trenches 1-4 and trench 7 (Fig. 3). Trenches 5, 6 and 8 are to be excavated once buildings on the site have been demolished and form phase 2. Topsoil, subsoil and overburden was removed by a JCB-type machine fitted with a ditching bucket. Where archaeological features were certainly or probably present, the stripped areas were cleaned using appropriate hand tools. A metal detector was used to aid retrieval of metal finds, and all spoilheaps were monitored for finds.

## **Results**

The trenches ranged in length from 15m to 21.1m, and in depth from 0.44m to 1.55m. A 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 north-south, was 18.80m long and 1.6m wide, and 0.60m deep. Here, the stratigraphy consisted of topsoil 0.20m thick, which overlay brown slightly sandy silt subsoil which was 0.30m thick. This contained frequent small and medium chalk fragments and moderate small and occasional medium flint inclusions. This in turn overlay slightly yellowish white degraded chalk with occasional flint nodules.

At the south end of the trench, a modern truncation (containing modern brick, tile and slate) c.7m long and the width of the trench cut the subsoil and natural geology. No archaeological finds or deposits were encountered in this trench.

#### Trench 2 (Fig.3, 4 and 5, Plate 2)

This trench was aligned SSW-NNE, was 20m long and 1.6m wide. Here, topsoil 0.16m overlay brown slightly sandy silt subsoil which was 0.22m thick and contained frequent small and occasional medium chalk inclusions. This overlay the natural degraded chalk geology.

At the south end of the trench, the modern truncation encountered in trench 1 was again identified. On the west side of the trench, a grave cut (2) was observed. This was 1.82m long, 0.60 wide and 0.27m deep, and was infilled with grave deposit 54, which comprised light brown friable silt with occasional chalk and flint fragments. This was 0.19m thick as seen in section. A further, very chalky silt deposit (58) overlay 54, which was 0.08m thick.

The grave cut contained a single skeleton which was aligned south-north. It was supine, with the shoulders and thoracic vertebrae c.0.02m from the south limit of the grave cut and the feet (though incomplete) were at the north of the cut. The skull was placed, face down, above the feet, and was visible in the east-facing section.

After consultation with Ms Matthews, it was decided that the skeleton should be removed as part of the evaluation, as it was not sufficiently robust to be re-covered and left *in situ* in order to be re-excavated at a later stage. A licence to remove the remains was granted by the Ministry of Justice (Licence number 09-0158).

Although some of the prominent elements of the skeleton were inevitably displaced when initially exposed, retrieval of the human bone present was thorough. The incomplete nature of the skeleton appears to be a result of amputation (in the case of the right arm) and damage to the bones of the feet and left arm. It could be argued that the left arm had been positioned over the pelvis and was subject to the most damage when the skeleton was uncovered. In summary, the individual appears to be a mature adult male, relatively tall and well built, with the right arm amputated and particularly well-healed. It was not possible to determine whether the decapitation was ante- or post-mortem. No finds or dating evidence was recovered from the grave deposit or the skeleton itself.

### Trench 3 (Fig 3)

Trench 3 was aligned SSE-NNW and was 21.1m long, 1.6m wide and ranged in depth from 0.97m deep at the south-south-east end to 0.51m deep at the north-north-west. The stratigraphy in the south-south-east comprised topsoil 0.16m thick, which overlay a loose garden soil with occasional glass and brick fragments which was 0.54m thick. This in turn overlay a brown, slightly sandy silt subsoil layer with occasional chalk inclusions. This was 0.20m thick and overlay the natural chalk geology. In the north-north west, topsoil 0.16m thick overlay a garden soil layer (as above) which was 0.14m thick. This overlay whitish brown chalky silt subsoil with moderate chalk inclusions, which was 0.17m thick and overlay the natural chalk geology. No archaeological finds or deposits were encountered in this trench.

### Trench 4 (Fig 3, Plate 1)

This trench was aligned south east-north west and was 20.1m long, 1.6m wide and 0.60m deep. Here, topsoil 0.20m thick overlay a mixed dark brown silty made ground layer, with frequent modern glass and brick fragments, which was 0.25m thick overall. This overlay the chalk geology.

A small area of truncation was observed, which contained a large quantity of oyster shells, glass and slate fragments and transfer-printed blue and white pottery (modern). No archaeological finds or deposits were encountered in this trench.

### Trench 7 (Fig 3)

Trench 7 was aligned east-west, was 15m long, 1.6m wide and 1.55m deep at its deepest point. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil and loose dark brown garden soil 0.70m thick, which contained occasional slate, brick and glass fragments. This overlay a made ground layer, which comprised fine grey sandy silt with occasional glass and brick fragments, which was 0.65m thick. This overlay the natural chalk geology. At the west end, a buried service was encountered, and the trench base was raised in this area. A truncation, possibly a result of landscaping, was present along the northern side of the trench, and was infilled with grey sandy silt and occasional gravel, with brick inclusions.

A wall was exposed in the south-facing section, at the west end of the trench. It was 2.7m wide as seen, and was observed from 0.23m to 1.08m deep. It comprised unfroged but sharp-edged, probably machine made, bricks which measured 320mm by 60mm by 100mm, mortared in a Flemish bond. The wall is of probable

Victorian date, and its alignment suggests it may be part of the site's development with the former children's home building. No archaeological finds or deposits were encountered in this trench.

### **Human Bone by Ceri Falys**

#### **Skeleton 57 – Trench 2 [2]**

Osteological analysis was undertaken using standard guidelines suggested by Brickley and McKinley (2004). The articulated post-cranial skeleton of a single adult individual was present for analysis, as well as the disarticulated skull and cervical vertebrae recovered from the individual's feet. The body was approximately 75% complete, with the notable exception of the right hand, much of the left shoulder and arm. Overall, the preservation of the skeletal elements was good, although frequent cortical bone etching made by root activity was observed. The majority of skeletal elements were excavated intact, except the cranium, cervical vertebrae, left shoulder, left arm, pelvis and feet. The latter four of these regions of the body were most likely disturbed by the machine at the time of discovery.

#### *Sex Determination*

Multiple morphological characteristics of the pelvis (i.e. acute subpubic angle and narrow greater sciatic notch), cranium (i.e. very pronounced supraorbital ridges and mastoid processes) and mandible (i.e. projecting mental eminence and gonial flare) strongly indicate Skeleton 57 are the remains of a male individual. These findings are very much supported by pronounced muscle attachments of the femora, pelvis, vertebral and sacral spinous processes.

#### *Age-at-death*

Age-at-death estimation of this individual was investigated using three separate macroscopic osteological techniques: the auricular surface of the ilium, the pubic symphysis and degree of dental attrition. Although the left auricular surface of the ilium (formed where the ilium meets the sacrum) is too damaged to assess, the right surface is sufficiently preserved for assessment. Using the method published by Lovejoy et al (1985) the auricular surface suggests an age ranging between 40 to 50 years of age at the time of death.

Assessment of the face of the pubic symphysis (found at the front of the pelvis, where the two halves meet) was undertaken using the Brooks and Suchey (1990) published descriptions and criteria. The right pubic symphysis is not complete, resulting in this estimation being made solely based on the morphology left, which is

very well preserved. The age demonstrated by the pubic symphysis was consistent with Brooks and Suchey's (1990) phase 5 (for a male individual), which suggests a mean age of 45.6 years, with a standard deviation of 10.4, and a 95% range of 27-66 years.

Lastly, dental attrition of the mandibular molars was scored following Brothwell's (1981) criteria. Due to the heavy wear demonstrated by the first and second molars, an age range of 35-45 years was suggested.

In summary, Skeleton 57 was most likely 40+ years at the time of death. Due to the current inability for adult skeletal age to be assessed over the approximate age of 45 years, an upper age limit could not be suggested for this individual.

#### *Stature*

The stature of Skeleton 57 was estimated following the regression equation proposed by Trotter (1995). Based on the maximum length of the right femur, the stature is approximately 175.7cm +/- 3.27cm (5'9").

#### *Palaeopathology*

Several pathological skeletal alterations were observed during osteological analysis. These are the result of five types of events: childhood stress, poor dental hygiene, a strenuous active lifestyle, possible anaemia in adulthood, and trauma/amputation.

Faint lines of enamel hypoplasia are present on the majority of teeth, which indicates the individual survived through a period(s) of malnutrition or illness during childhood. These linear defects of the tooth enamel are produced in response to systemic stresses placed on the body during the time the tooth crowns are developing in the jaw. The dentition display indicators of poor dental hygiene, most notably slight calculus (plaque), slight periodontal disease (gingivitis), and a small interproximal cavity (caries) located on the cemento-enamel junction of the right maxillary first molar on the surface facing the second premolar.

Skeleton 57 lived a very active lifestyle, which placed much strain on his spine. The fifth thoracic vertebrae through to the first lumbar vertebrae demonstrated Schmorl's nodes on their inferior surfaces, as well as slight osteoarthritic lipping to the anterior edges of the vertebral bodies. The osteophytic growths were the most pronounced on the sixth through the tenth thoracic vertebrae. Schmorl's nodes are formed following a sufficiently strong axial compressive force that pushes the intervertebral disc through the endplate of the vertebral body.



The cranium displayed lesions suggesting a period(s) of iron deficiency during adulthood, as porotic hyperostosis (porosity of the cranial vault) and cribra orbitalia (pitting of the orbital roofs) are observed. These lesions are believed to be related to anaemia produced by inadequate nutrition and/or excessive blood loss, and perhaps may be related to the following condition.

The most unusual pathological observation of Skeleton 57 is the completely healed amputation of the right wrist and hand. The distal portions of the right radius and ulna are parallel, slightly tapered and notably porous, although no actively remodelling bone is present. The right arm was still in use after the amputation, as the humerus and proximal aspects of the ulna and radius are still robust with strong muscle markings. No evidence of disuse atrophy is observed. This observation is remarkable, as it is "highly likely that most people who underwent amputation died from haemorrhage..." (Roberts and Cox 2003) within archaeological populations.

It is noted that the poor preservation of the cervical vertebrae did not allow for identification of any sharp-force trauma or other indications of how the head was removed from the rest of the body.

## **Conclusion**

Although the field evaluation is yet to be completed by the excavation of trenches 5, 6 and 8, the areas examined by trenching show that archaeologically relevant levels have survived on the site, with one definite archaeological feature present.

The area to the west of the building, which would be affected by the proposed underground car parking, appears to be largely undisturbed, with post-medieval truncation to the subsoil and natural chalk limited to two areas. In this area, the presence of the inhumation confirms that potential exists for further archaeological deposits to have survived beyond the areas already examined in trenches 1 to 4. The inhumation could not be dated but previously excavated burials close by might suggest a Saxon or medieval date. The notable characteristics of the skeleton, the apparently successful amputation of the right hand, and the decapitation of the individual, are both relatively unusual. The orientation suggests that the burial was non-Christian; however it could equally be that of a Christian individual who had been executed and deprived of the normal rites.

The natural geology appears to be somewhat truncated to the east of the building, where thick made ground deposits were also present, though the extent of this would be clarified by proposed trench 8.

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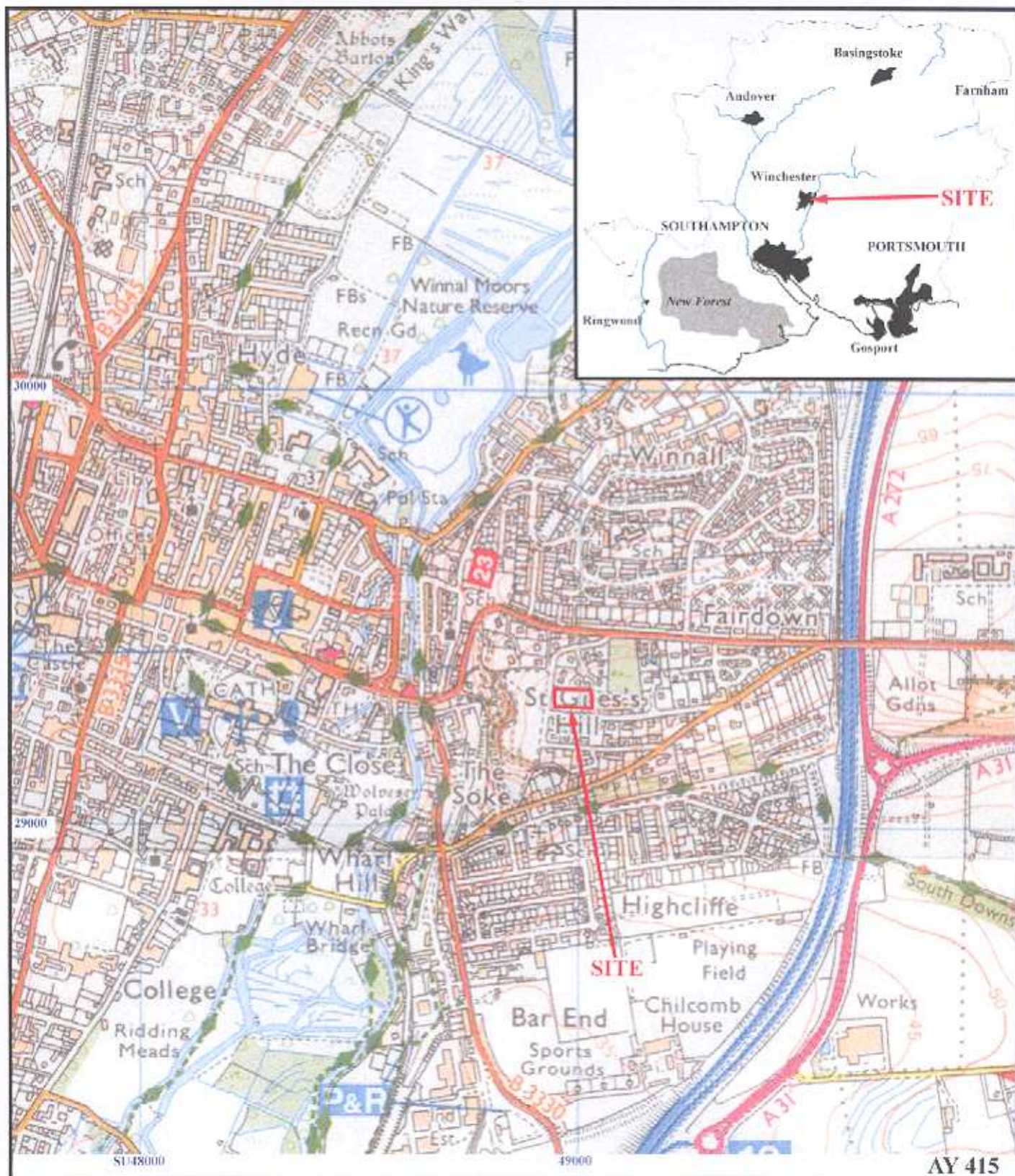
## APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at South or West end

Trench	Length (m)	Breadth (m)	Depth (m)	Comment
1	18.8	1.6	0.60	0-0.20m topsoil, 0.20-0.50m brown slightly sandy silt subsoil, frequent chalk, 0.50m+ degraded chalk natural geology. Modern truncation
2	20	1.6	0.44	0-0.16m topsoil, 0.16-0.38m brown slightly sandy silt subsoil, frequent chalk, 0.50m+ degraded chalk natural geology. Grave cut 2, SK57, deposits 54, 58 [Plate 2]
3	21.1	1.6	0.51-0.97	SSE: 0-0.16m topsoil, 0.16-0.70m garden soil, 0.70-0.90m brown slightly sandy silt subsoil, frequent chalk, 0.70m+ degraded chalk natural geology. NNW: 0-0.16m topsoil, 0.16-0.30m garden soil, 0.30-0.47m brown slightly sandy silt subsoil, frequent chalk, 0.47m+ degraded chalk natural geology.
4	20.1	1.6	0.60	0-0.20m topsoil, 0.20-0.45m mixed brown silt and rubble subsoil, 0.50m+ degraded chalk natural geology. Small post-medieval truncation. [Plate 1]
5				Not excavated
6				Not excavated
7	15	1.6	1.55	0-0.70m garden soil, 0.70-1.35m grey slightly sandy silt made ground, brick fragments, 1.35m+ degraded chalk natural geology.
8				Not excavated

**APPENDIX 2: Feature details**

Trench	Cut	Fill (s)	Type	Date	Dating evidence
1	3	52, 53	Truncation	Post-medieval	Slate, brick
2	2	SK57, 54, 58	Grave cut	Undated	None

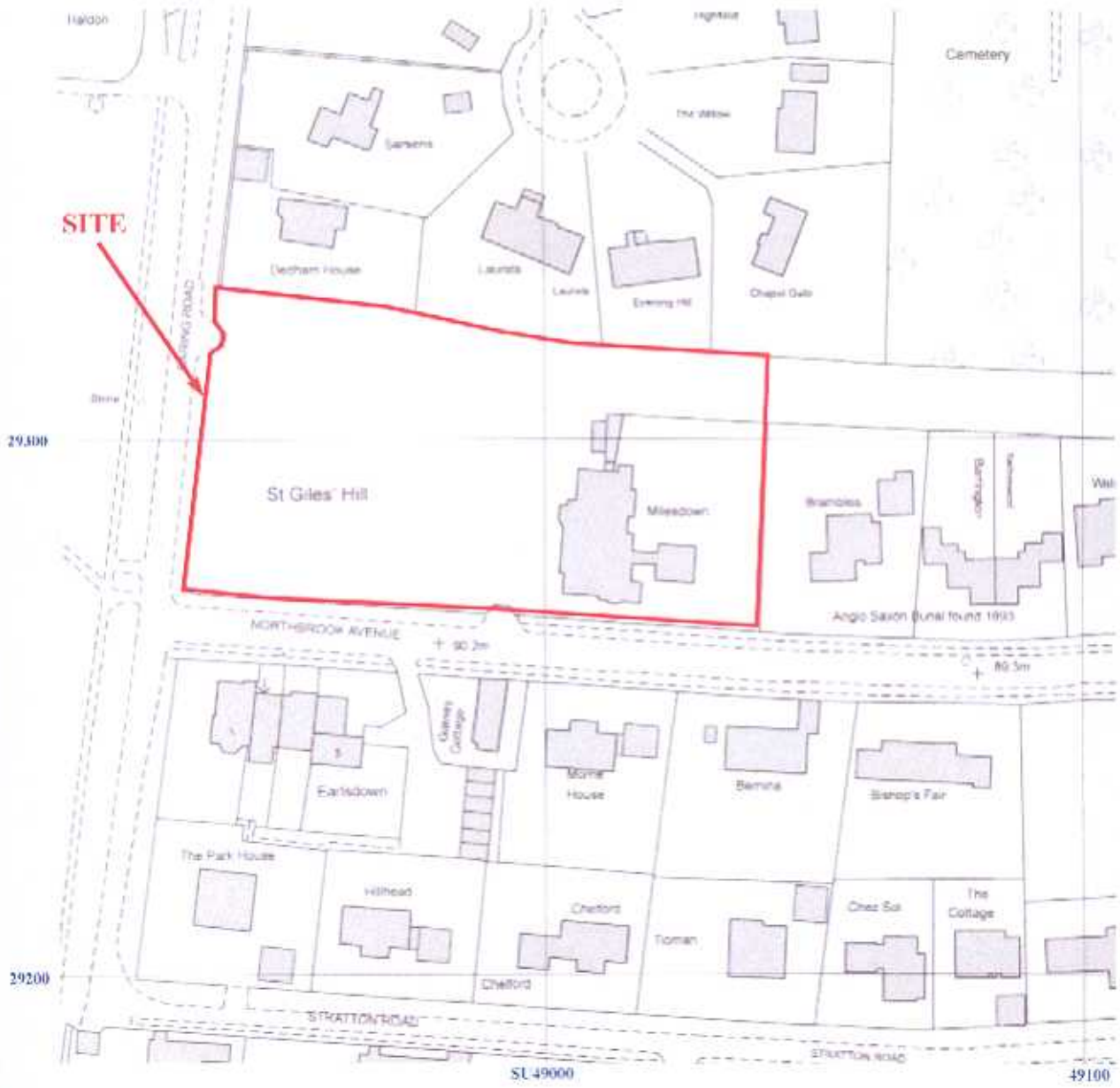


**Former Milesdown Children's Home, Northbrook Avenue, St Giles's Hill, Winchester, 2009 Archaeological Evaluation**

Figure 1. Location of site within Winchester and Hampshire.

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**Former Milesdown Children's Home, Northbrook Avenue, St Giles's Hill, Winchester, 2009 Archaeological evaluation**

Figure 2. Location of site off Northbrook Avenue.

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# Former Milesdown Children's Home, Northbrook Avenue, St Giles's Hill, Winchester, 2009



Figure 3. Location of trenches.

Former Milesdown Children's Home, Northbrook Avenue,  
St Giles's Hill, Winchester 2009

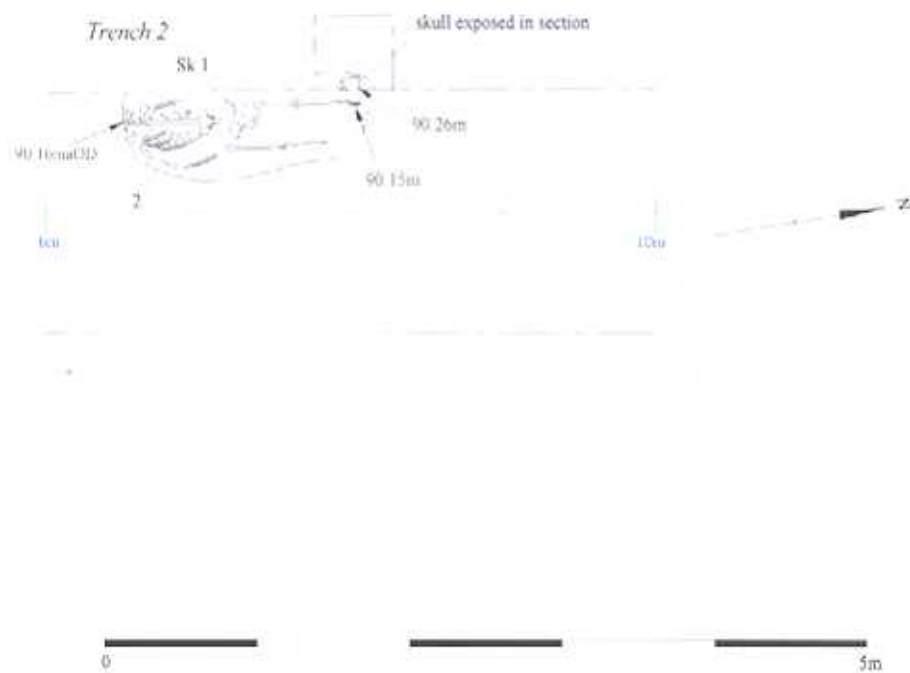


Figure 4. Detail of trench 2.



Former Milesdown Children's Home, Northbrook Avenue,  
St. Giles's Hill, Winchester 2009

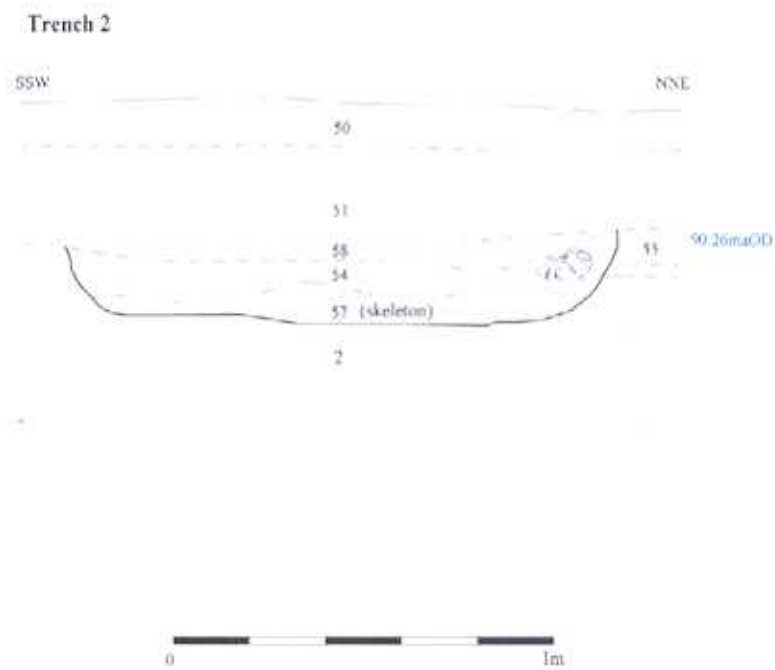


Figure 5. Trench 2, section of grave cut 2.



Plate 1. Trench 4, looking southeast. Scales 0.5m and 0.5m



Plate 2. Trench 2, cut 2 with skeleton. Looking west. Horizontal scale 0.5m, vertical 0.1m