PN1278

birmingham archaeology

Daimler Green, Radford, Coventry

An Archaeological Watching Brief 2005

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

REGISTERED IFA ORGANISATION

Project No.1278
October 2007

Daimler Green, Radford, Coventry
An Archaeological Watching Brief 2005

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DAIMLER GREEN SEWER REQUISITION SCHEME, COVENTRY
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF 2005

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1.0: SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Daimler Green, Coventry, in April and May 2005. Seven Trent Water Limited commissioned the work, which was carried out by Birmingham Archaeology during the excavation of a trench for a new sewer. Groundworks were monitored as the site is located in the area of the grange and parks of St. Mary's Priory, a medieval monastic settlement (SMR 9371). The site is also in the vicinity of the medieval settlement of Whitmore (SMR 9239).

The red clay natural subsoil was noted at a depth of 3.5m at the southern end of the service trench, beneath layers of 19th and 20th century demolition rubble. The natural subsoil was less deeply buried towards the northern end of the sewer trench, where it was only 0.2m below the modern surface. No archaeological features were recorded, although a quantity of medieval pottery was recovered from modern deposits. It is not clear from where this medieval pottery was derived.

2.0: INTRODUCTION

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Daimler Green, Coventry (Fig. 1), in April and May 2005. Seven Trent Water Limited commissioned the work, which was carried out by Birmingham Archaeology during the excavation of a new sewer trench. Groundworks were monitored because the site is located in the area of the grange and parks of St. Mary's Priory, a medieval monastic settlement (SMR 9371). The site is also in the vicinity of the medieval settlement of Whitmore (SMR 9239).

The watching brief was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Birmingham Archaeology (Birmingham Archaeology 2005) and a Design Brief prepared by Coventry City Planning Archaeologist (Coventry City Council 2005). The work was undertaken following the Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1994).

3.0 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The site is located within an area of rough ground and playing fields between Capmartin Road and Joseph Cash Primary School in Radford, Coventry (NGR SP 3337 8132, Figs. 2-3).

The railway from Coventry to Nuneaton runs to the east of the site, with sidings at the former Daimler factory to the south. The Coventry Canal also runs close to the site, to the southeast, on the oppose side of the railway line. The district has been covered almost

entirely by housing estates during the 20th century. The site of the watching brief represents one of the few open areas where archaeological deposits may have survived.

The site lies within a suburban area of Coventry thought to contain important archaeological remains. The Coventry HER identifies a monastic grange and park belonging to St. Mary's Priory (SMR 9371) and the medieval settlement of Whitmore (SMR 9239) within the proximity.

4.0 BACKGROUND

This section of the report is mostly based on information provided by the Victoria County History (VCH 1969, 71-7).

The area examined during the watching brief lies on the northern outskirts of Radford. Radford was formerly a hamlet of Holy Trinity parish. It lay to the northwest of the city centre, and was strung out along along Radford Road, a medieval road and later a turnpike. The ancient hamlet lay along the road on both sides of the Radford Brook, which ran through the parish from north to south. The southeast of Radford is crossed by the Coventry-Nuneaton railway line, with sidings to the former Daimler factory, and in the extreme west by the Coventry Canal. The eastern half of Radford seems to have lain within the Prior's Half, since Hill Mill and Radford Mill on the Radford Brook were recorded as landmarks along the boundary between the Prior's Half and the Earl's Half in the 12th century. Details of the priory landholdings, taken in 1349 to assess the impact of the plague of that year records a watermill at Radford. The survey continues 'in Radford, Exhall, Keresley Willenhall and Coundon, income is reduced since the majority of the tenants are dead'. The same survey also indicates the spread of the plague to cattle, the Priory's cattle-grange at Whitmore Park being worthless, almost certainly because of the loss of the heard (Soden 2005, 53).

Radford originally included Whitmore Park, but by the early 18th century the two were for most purposes distinct. In the early 15th century Radford was bounded on its northern side by the park boundary, and to the east by the Endemere (Springfield brook). To the south the boundary crossed Sandy Lane and St Nicholas Street adjoining the church of that name, and extended to Radford Road cross and Hill Mill meadow. The southwestern bounds of Radford followed the line of the later Barkers Butts Lane, to Radford Road, and the southwestern corner of the park. Radford Road may have been mentioned in the 12th century as the road through Keresley to Astley, and also was recorded as the route to Coundon in the 15th century. There are documentary references to pottery production in Radford (Soden 2005, 167). During the 17th century it is recorded that the road was maintained by Coventry Corporation.

References to virgates and selions suggest that there were some open fields in Radford in the early 15th century. By 1410-1411 the priory had twenty tenants in Radford, including 16 cottages and other land. At that time most land seems to have been held in separable fields, and there was no trace of an open field arrangement in the 16th century. Radford

Green was mentioned in the early 17th century. Radford Common was allotted to the corporation when Radford Green and strips of common land along Radford Road were enclosed in 1875.

There was evidence of a medieval quarry in Radford. In the 16th century a kiln was also in operation there. Between 1841 and 1851 the population of Radford rose from 251 to 604, an increase attributed to the introduction of plush weaving in the district around 1844. The ribbon-weaving factory of J. and J. Cash was built by the side of the Coventry Canal at Kingfield in the east of the district in 1857. Development in the first half of the 19th century was confined to the area of the medieval village along the main road. Several groups and terraces of redbrick weaver's cottages of this period still survived up to 1965. In the southeast of Radford a number of larger dwellings were built.

The Daimler Motor Company was established in 1896 in a disused cotton factory between St. Nicholas Street, Sandy Lane, and the Coventry Canal. The company built a new factory on a site immediately to the west of the railway before the First World War, and greatly extended it during and after the war. An airfield was also laid out to the west of the factory, together with housing to the south of the factory. However, by 1920 most of the district still comprised agricultural land. A council estate was built at Radford beginning in 1924. This involved the construction of an arterial road, Moseley Avenue between Radford Road and Holyhead Road, and a complex of streets was laid out, also extending to the north on the Hill Farm estate. By 1927 there were 1,000 houses built by the corporation and 625 by private builders. The district had been completely built up by the Second World War, the only remaining open areas being playing fields and allotments.

Whitmore Park, once in Radford, lies about a mile north of the city, and formed part of Holy Trinity parish, extending northwards between Keresley and Foleshill. Whitmore Park was not mentioned by name in the charters of 1451, and was therefore presumably included within the parish of Radford at that time. Whitmore Park remained outside the city until the boundary extension of 1828.

In the 13th century Whitmore was an area of arable and waste in the north of Radford in the hands of a number of freeholders, among them Coventry Priory, Combe Abbey, and Geoffrey de Langley. It was not separately described in 1279 and was presumably then included in the Radford holdings. The priory made regular purchases of land there in the 13th and 14th centuries. In 1332 the priory obtained a licence to empark 436 acres of wood and waste, and added it to its earlier acquisitions to form the manor and park of Whitmore. A small part of the park lay in Foleshill parish, and was administered as an independent unit in 1410-11, although then recorded to be in Radford. By 1538-9 the priory's property in Radford was described as part of Whitmore. Although used for hunting, much of the land remained arable. The park was elaborately ditched and fenced, but the citizens of Coventry are recorded to have frequently trespassed there in the 15th century.

During the First World War onwards a number of factories, hostels for factory workers and council estates were built in the east of Whitmore Park. The largest of these factories was the Dunlop Rim and Wheel Company, which employed 1,400 workers in 1933. The remainder of the park was laid out with municipal housing after the Second World War.

5.0 AIMS AND METHODS

The general aim of the watching brief was to monitor all elements of the development programme likely to affect below-ground remains. In particular, it was intended to provide information concerning evidence of a monastic grange and park belonging to St. Mary's Priory, and the medieval settlement of Whitmore, as well as to consider the evidence for pre-medieval land-use.

The archaeological watching brief involved two stages of work. The first stage involved an assessment of the Coventry HER to consider the site within its historical and archaeological context. The second stage comprised monitoring by a qualified archaeologist during the removal of all soil and overburden, inspection of the subsoil for archaeological features, cleaning and hand-testing of any features/possible features identified, and finally, examination of spoil heaps for archaeological finds. These two stages were to be followed by the preparation of an illustrated report describing the results of the assessment and the archaeological watching brief. Initially the archaeological monitoring was continuous during the cutting of the service trench. Following agreement with the Coventry Planning Archaeologist, the watching brief was reduced to intermittent archaeological monitoring.

Where it was safe to do so, the sides and base of the trench were hand-cleaned to test possible archaeological features or deposits. In some areas it was not possible to inspect or clean the sides of the service trench because of metal shuttering. All stratigraphic sequences were recorded, even when no archaeology was present. Features were planned at a scale of 1:20, and sections drawn through all cut features and significant vertical stratigraphy. A comprehensive written record was maintained using a continuous numbered context system on *pro-forma* record sheets. Written records and scale drawings were supplemented by monochrome and colour print photography. These records, along with the finds comprise the site archive.

6.0 RESULTS

The sewer trench was dug to a maximum depth of *c* 4m and was *c* 1m wide, running north-south across the site (Fig. 3).

At the northern end of the trench, the red clay natural subsoil was observed at a depth of 3.5m below the modern surface. Above were several layers of demolition rubble. Layer 1003 was a thin black organic deposit directly overlying the natural, and measuring *c* 0.1m deep. This was sealed by layer 1002, a layer of brick rubble and mid brown silty

sand roughly 1.7m deep. The uppermost demolition deposit (1001) was a dark/mid brown sandy silt layer *c* 1m deep. The topsoil (1000) was a dark brown organic soil, 0.3m deep.

The natural subsoil was less deeply buried towards the south of the pipe trench, where it was exposed just 0.2-0.3m below the modern ground surface. Layers 1001-1003 became shallower towards the north of the pipe trench. In the southernmost 20m of the service trench the topsoil directly overlay the natural subsoil.

All the layers contained 19th and early 20th century brick and pottery and the uppermost layer (1001) also contained later 20th century debris, including plastic (not described in detail). Layer 1001 contained a quantity of medieval and later pottery (see below).

7.0: POTTERY by Stephanie Ratkai

A total of 87 sherds were recovered from layer 1001, together with five fragments of ceramic building material. There seemed to be an unbroken sequence of wares represented from 12th-13th century Coventry wares to late 19th century stoneware bottles (Table 1).

Most of the pottery could be matched to the County Type Series, with the exception of two sherds, which have been retained for addition to the County type series. Both sherds are probably regional imports, one possibly from Nottinghamshire and the other from Staffordshire or Derbyshire. The majority of the medieval pottery came from the Coventry area.

TABLE 1: Details of the pottery

Fabric/Ware	*Warws code*	*TS Qty*	*Date*
Coventry A ware	Sq20.3	9	12th-13th c
Sandy ware with clay pellets	Sq26	1	12th-early 13th c
Coventry D ware	Sq21	2	mid 12th-early 13th c
Nottinghamshire glazed ware?		1	13th-14th c
Oxidised glazed ware	Sq23	2	13th-14th c
Gritty ware (Staffs/Derbys?)		1	13th-15th c
Glazed Deritend ware?	Sg12	1	13th-early 14th c
Chilvers Coton A ware	WW01	15	mid 13th-14th c
Canon Park ware	Sq23.1	2	later 13th-14th c
Chilvers Coton C ware	Sq30	10	14th-15th c
Late Warwick ware?	Sg01	1	14th-15th c
Tudor Green ware	TG	1	15th-16th c
Midlands Purple	MP	2	15th-16th c
Late medieval/early post-medieval	LMT	5	15th-16th c
Blackware	MB	2	mid 16th-17th c
Yellow ware	MY	1	late 16th-early 18th c

Blackware	MB	1	17th c
Post-medieval coarseware	PMCW	2	17th-18th c
Yellow ware	MY	2	17th-early 18th c
Mottled ware	MANG	3	later 17th-mid 18th c
Feathered slipware	SLPWf	2	later 17th-mid 18th c
Slip-coated ware	SLIPCO	3	late 17th-mid 18th c
Post-medieval coarseware	PMCW	1	17th-18th c
Trailed slipware	SLPWtr	2	18th c
Blackware (shining black)	MB	1	18th c
Coarseware/flowerpot	MPCW	1	18th-19th c
Blue transfer printed ware	NGW	1	19th c
Misc glazed wares	MGW	4	19th c
Stoneware	STE	2	19th c
Industrial slipware	MGW	1	early 19th c
Painted ware	MGW	1	1830s-1840s
Blue shell edge	PLW02	1	mid 19th c
Stoneware bottle	STE	3	later 19th-20th c

No other finds were recovered during the watching brief.

8.0: DISCUSSION

The watching brief revealed no features of archaeological, or possible archaeological interest. The initial dumping layers (1002 and 1003) contained 19th and early 20th century pottery, and may be associated with clearance during the building of the railway station and sidings further to the south. The material is too late in date to be from the cutting of the original railway, which occurred in the 1830s, but could be from later work on the station and sidings or clearance for housing in the early 20th century.

The secondary layer of dumping (1001), which contained residual medieval pottery, may be associated with subsequent levelling of the area to form terraces for school playing fields. There is no evidence to suggest from where the material could have derived.

The pottery recovered from dumped layer 1001 is notable for its chronological range. The earliest material was of 12th-13th century date (12 sherds). A total of 22 sherds of 13th-14th century date were also found. Among the later medieval pottery were eleven sherds of 14th-15th century date, eight sherds of 15th-16th century date and four sherds of 16th-17th century date. The post-medieval pottery included 12 sherds of 17th-18th century material, and 17 sherds of post 17th century material.

The pottery could derive from extensive episodes of clearance in the city centre during the 1930s and after the Second World War. During 1930s Trinity Street and Corporation were built. After the Second World War large quantities of rubble were removed from the centre and deposited in the surrounding areas (Chris Patrick, pers. comm.). The pottery could derive from either of these clearance episodes. This watching brief may have

provided the first evidence of such clearance, including medieval material (pers. comm. C. Patrick).

9.0: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The watching brief was carried out by Mary Duncan, Emma Hancox, Erica Macey-Bracken and Helen Martin. Mary Duncan carried out the research and Emma Hancox wrote the report. The project was managed on behalf of Birmingham Archaeology by Alex Jones, who edited the report. The plates and figures were prepared by Nigel Dodds. We are grateful to Chris Patrick, Coventry City Council for additional background information.

10.0: REFERENCES

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Site
BEDWORTH
COVENTRY
Bedworth Woodlands
Bedworth Heath
Goodyers End
Exhall
Keresley Newlands
Ash Green
Neal's Green
Keresley
Hawkesbury
Barnacle
Bulkington
Longford
Foxford
Holbrooks
Whitmore Park
Little Heath
Foleshill
Alderman's Green
Brownshill Green
Coundon
Radford
Edgwick
Great Heath
Stoke Heath
Upper Stoke
Wyken
Walsgrave on Sowe
Henley Green
Potter's Green
Woodway Park
Hillfields
Spon End
Chapel Fields
Earlsdon
Middle Stoke
Gosford Green
Lower Stoke
Stoke Aldermoor
Binley
Cheylesmore
Whitley
Pinley
Stivichall
Willenhall
Tollbar End
Finham
Baginton
Coventry Airport
King's Hill
Wainbody Wood Fm
Ryton-on Dunsmore
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Fig.1

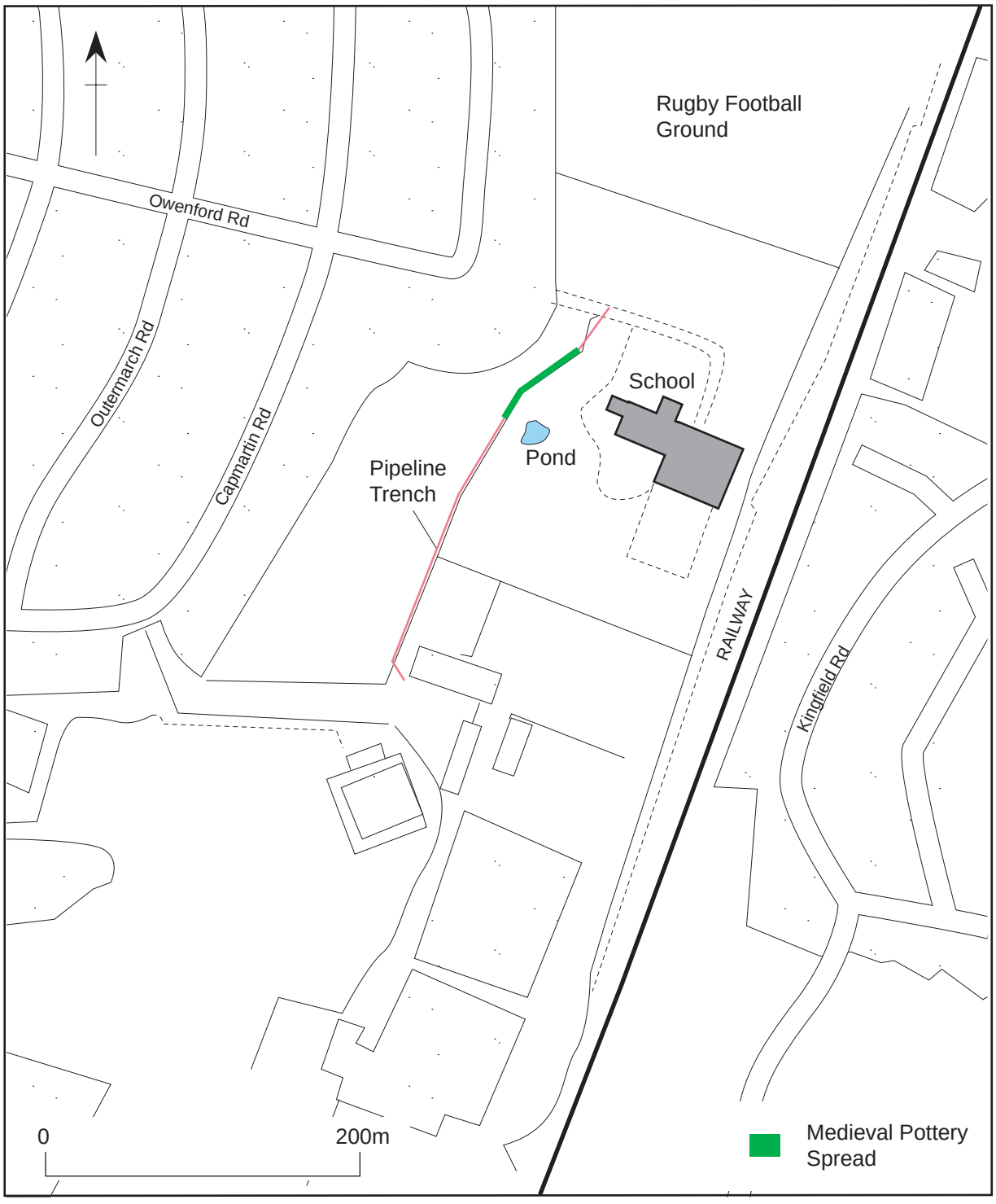
Rugby Football
Ground
Owenford Rd
Outermarch Rd
Capmartin Rd
School
Pond
Pipeline
Trench
RAILWAY
Kingfield Rd
0
200m
Medieval Pottery
Spread

Fig.2

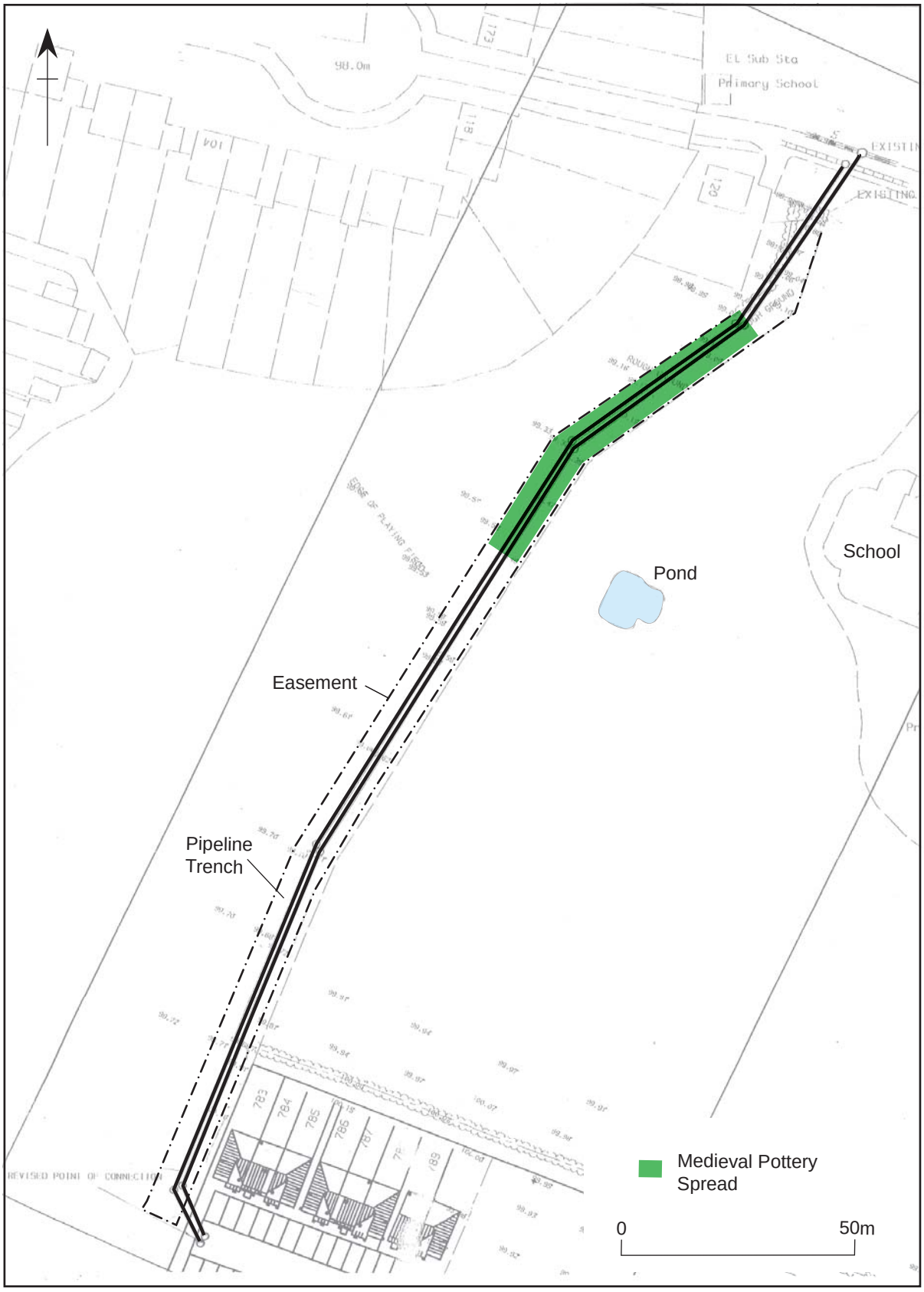
EL Sub Sta
Primary School
School
Pond
Easement
Pipeline
Trench
Medieval Pottery
Spread
0
50m

Fig.3