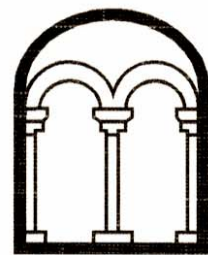


**PRAE WOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL
ST ALBANS
HERTFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS COMPRISING STRIP,
MAP AND RECORD INVESTIGATION AND
ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING
AND RECORDING**

Albion
archaeology



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ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING**

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Compiled by	Checked by	Approved by
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Preface

Every effort has been made in the preparation of this document to provide as complete an assessment as possible, within the terms of the specification. All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. Albion Archaeology cannot accept responsibility for errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by a third party, or for any loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in this document.

The project was commissioned by Hertfordshire Property and was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Andy Instone, County Planning Archaeologist (CPA), County Historic Environment Unit.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Iain Leslie (Supervisor). This report has been prepared by Iain Leslie with figures by Joan Lightning (CAD Technician). All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

The assistance and co-operation of the principal contractor, Boyton-BRJ System Buildings Ltd, throughout the project is gratefully acknowledged.

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<i>1.0</i>	<i>2nd September 2011</i>	<i>n/a</i>

Key Terms

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

ALGAO	Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers
CHEU	County Historic Environment Unit
CPA	County Planning Archaeologist
HER	Heritage Environment Record
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation
Procedures Manual	<i>Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> , 2nd ed, 2001 Albion Archaeology



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Planning Background*

Planning permission was granted for the construction of a new classroom, new car parking and associated works at Prae Wood Primary School, St Albans. Because the development had the potential to impact upon significant heritage assets, conditions were attached to the permission requiring the submission and approval of a written scheme of investigation followed by its implementation.

The County Historic Environment Unit (CHEU) issued a Design Brief detailing the requirement for archaeological work at the site (CHEU 2011) comprising strip, map and record investigation and archaeological monitoring and recording. In response to the brief, a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared (Albion 2011) and agreed with the CHEU.

The archaeological investigation and monitoring took place between 4th July and 12th August 2011. The results are presented in this report.

1.2 *Site Location and Description*

Prae Wood Primary School is located off King Harry Lane on the western edge of St Albans City Centre; it is centred on OS grid reference TL13390 06480 (Fig. 1).

The areas affected by the groundworks consist of grassed and tarmac areas lying at a height of *c.* 115m OD.

1.3 *Archaeological Background*

The CHEU Design Brief (2011) describes the archaeological context of the site as follows:

“The school lies 100m to the south of Scheduled Monument no. 6, part of the town wall and ditch of the major Roman town of Verulamium. This is also noted by the Historic Environment Record (HER14510). The site is bounded on its south side by a late Iron Age earthwork found by Sir Mortimer Wheeler (HER14306). A Roman cemetery containing over 50 cremations and 28 inhumations was uncovered at the western edge of the school site (HER14146).”

A recent Archaeological Impact Assessment (Archaeological Solutions Ltd 2011) submitted with the planning application identified twelve entries recorded in the Historic Environment Record within a 250m radius of the site, including significant Iron Age, Roman and Saxon remains. The assessment suggested a high possibility for associated remains to extend within the site.

1.4 *Project Objectives*

The immediate objective of the archaeological fieldwork was to monitor and supervise all groundworks that had the potential to reveal archaeological remains, and to investigate, characterise and record any archaeological deposits encountered within them.



The close proximity of significant Iron Age, Roman and Saxon remains indicated the investigation could potentially contribute to regional research topics identified within Brown and Glazebrook (2000) and Medlycott and Brown (2008).

1.5 Methodology

The groundworks comprised the following main elements (Fig. 2):

- classroom footings comprising the excavation of six footing trenches, measuring 1.1 x 0.6 x 1m deep, and a further fifteen footing trenches, measuring 2.4 x 1.6 x 1m deep;
- classroom area excavated to depths of up to 0.65m;
- a play area adjacent to the classroom excavated to a depth of 0.3m;
- two areas of car parking excavated to a depth of 0.3m;
- drainage and service trenches excavated to a depth of 0.3–1.7m;
- a soak-away measuring 0.2 x 2.5 x 3m deep excavated within the play area;
- a soak-away measuring 0.2 x 2.0 x 3m deep excavated within one area of car parking.

The CHEU Design Brief specified strip, map and record for the areas of the new classroom, new car parking and play area. This involved machine excavation to formation level or archaeological remains, whichever was encountered first. Where possible, machine excavation was undertaken with a toothless bucket to ensure that any sub-surface archaeological remains could be clearly identified.

All other groundworks that had the potential to reveal archaeological remains were archaeologically monitored. These included excavation of the drainage and service trenches and soak-away.

Throughout the project the standards set out in the following documents were adhered to:

- IfA's *By-Laws and Code of Conduct (2010)*;
- IfA's *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs and Field Excavations (updated 2008) and finds (updated 2008)*;
- Albion Archaeology's *Procedures Manual for Archaeological Fieldwork and the Analysis of Fieldwork Records (2001)*;
- English Heritage's *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) Project Managers' Guide (2006)*;
- The ALGAO *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England. EAA Occasional Paper No. 14 (2003)*;
- The CHEU *Design Brief for Archaeological Excavation, via 'Strip, Map and Record', and Archaeological Monitoring and Recording: Prae Wood JMI, King Harry Lane, St Albans. 8/6/2011.*



2. RESULTS

2.1 Introduction

The majority of the groundworks did not fully penetrate the overburden, particularly within the areas specified for strip, map and record. The underlying geology was mostly revealed within the deeper excavations associated with services and soak-aways. The deposits revealed are summarised below.

2.2 Overburden and Geological Deposits

The first stage of the groundworks involved the excavation required for the classroom footing trenches. The revealed overburden consisted of a 0.4–0.5m thick sandy clay topsoil (100), overlying a 0.35–0.5m thick layer of grey brown sandy gravel (101). Layer (101) contained occasional brick fragments as well as five shell- and grog-tempered pottery sherds (6g) deriving from the base of a single vessel, likely to be of transitional late Iron Age-early Roman date. All the sherds are highly abraded and survive in poor condition. Sooting on their exterior surfaces suggests use as a cooking vessel. An abraded sherd of 17th-century glazed earthenware (1g) was also recovered.

The depth and nature of these layers indicate that they are likely to have been deposited during landscaping of the school grounds. The underlying geology (102), consisting of orange clay with flints, was reached at depths of 0.6–0.9m below ground level, being at its deepest in the south-eastern area of the classroom.

Subsequent removal of the overburden to the required formation level within the classroom area reached depths of 0.45–0.65m below ground level. As a result, the underlying geology was only exposed within a small part of the eastern end of the area.

Identical deposits were revealed during excavation of the adjacent play area and soak-away, though the natural geology was only reached within the soak-away, at a depth of 0.6m below ground level.

These deposits were again present and of a similar depth within the southern half of the drainage trench excavated to the north-west of the class room. Within its northern half where it crossed the playground, a *c.* 0.5m thick make-up layer (111) of brick rubble, sand and clay was revealed between the underlying geology and tarmac hardstanding.

A similar make-up layer was revealed beneath the topsoil within the excavated car park areas and associated soak-away. The underlying geology was only reached within the soak-away, at a depth of 1.3m below ground level.

2.3 Archaeological Features

Four archaeological features were revealed during construction of the NW-SE aligned drainage trench beneath layer (101) (Fig. 3).



The size of the drainage trench and the fact that it may have crossed the features at oblique angles means that their exact form and function could not be easily determined. The features are summarised in Table 1.

Features [103] and [105] were only visible in one side of the service trench and are, therefore, likely to represent features such as pits. Features [107] and [109] were 0.7m apart and visible on both sides of the trench and are, therefore, likely to represent ditches.

All feature fills were very homogenous in nature and produced no finds. They were formed through natural silting and erosional processes after the features had fallen out of use.

Context	Type	Description	Interpretation
103	Cut	Unclear in plan, concave sides and base. 1.8m wide, 0.3m deep.	Pit
104	Fill	Mid brown gravely sand	Fill of [103]
105	Cut	Unclear in plan, concave sides and base. 1.3m wide, 0.35m deep.	Pit
106	Fill	Light brown gravely sand	Fill of [105]
107	Cut	Unclear in plan, concave sides and base. 1.8m wide, 0.35m deep.	Ditch. Parallel with [109]?
108	Fill	Light brown gravely sand.	Fill of [107].
109	Cut	Unclear in plan, Steep, straight sides and a flat base. 0.55m wide, 0.30m deep.	Ditch. Parallel with [107]?
110	Fill	Light brown gravely sand.	Fill of [109]

Table 1: Summary of archaeological features revealed in the drainage trench



3. CONCLUSIONS

Investigations during the groundworks at Prae Wood Primary School revealed the presence across the site of typically thick deposits associated with the landscaping and construction of the school and its grounds. The majority of the groundworks did not fully penetrate these deposits.

Four features were partially revealed beneath these deposits within a drainage trench; they may represent two ditches and two pits. Unfortunately no dating evidence was retrieved from these features. The recovery of abraded sherds of late Iron Age-early Roman pottery within the overlying landscaping deposits is testimony to the proximity of known late Iron Age and Roman remains in this part of St Albans.

It is possible that the landscaping/make-up deposits may mask further archaeological remains. However, any such remains are likely to have been damaged during the landscaping; the lack of any visible buried soils beneath the landscaping layers suggests that the previous overburden had been removed prior to the deposition of these layers.

The project archive will be deposited with Verulamium Museum (accession no. PWS11). This report will be uploaded onto the Archaeology Data Service's OASIS website.



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Archaeological Solutions Ltd, 2011. *Prae Wood Primary School, St Albans, Hertfordshire: Archaeological Impact Assessment*

Brown, N. and Glazebrook, J., 2000. *Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties – 2 Research Agenda and Strategy*. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 8.

CHEU, 2011. *Design Brief for Archaeological Excavation, Via 'Strip, Map and Record', and Archaeological Monitoring and Recording: Prae Wood JMI, King Harry Lane, St Albans*

Medlycott, M. and Brown, N. 2008., *Revision of the Regional Archaeological Framework for the Eastern Region*. ALGO East of England.



5. APPENDIX 1: HER SUMMARY SHEET

Site name and address: Prae Wood JMI School, King Harry Lane		
County: Hertfordshire	District: St Albans	
Village/Town: St Albans	Parish: N/A	
Planning application reference: N/A		
HER Enquiry reference: HER was not contacted in this instance due to sufficient information contained within the recent Impact Assessment (see below)		
Client name, address, and tel. no.: Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire Property, Hertford Tel: (01992) 588118		
Nature of application: Construction of temporary classroom and car park areas		
Present land use: School grounds		
Size of application area: 680sq m	Size of area investigated: 680sq m	
NGR (to 8 figures): TL1339/0648		
Site code (if applicable): PW1824		
Site director/Organization: Drew Shottliff/Albion Archaeology		
Type of work Strip, map, record investigation and watching brief		
Date of work:	Start: 04/07/11	Finish: 12/08/11
Location of finds & site archive/Curating museum: Verulamium Museum		
Related HER Nos:	Periods represented: Modern / Unknown	
Relevant previous summaries/reports Prae Wood Primary School, St Albans, Hertfordshire. Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Works comprising Strip, Map and Record Investigation and Archaeological Monitoring and Recording (Albion Archaeology, 2011). Prae Wood Primary School, St Albans, Hertfordshire: Archaeological Impact Assessment (Archaeological Solutions Ltd, 2011).		
Summary of fieldwork results: Investigations during the groundworks at Prae Wood Primary School revealed the presence across the site of typically thick deposits associated with the landscaping and construction of the school and its grounds. The majority of the groundworks did not fully penetrate these deposits. Four features were partially revealed beneath these deposits within a drainage trench; they may represent two ditches and two pits. Unfortunately no dating evidence was retrieved from these features. The recovery of abraded sherds of late Iron Age-early Roman pottery within the overlying landscaping deposits is testimony to the proximity of known late Iron Age and Roman remains in this part of St Albans. It is possible that the landscaping/make-up deposits may mask further archaeological remains. However, any such remains are likely to have been damaged during the landscaping; the lack of any visible buried soils beneath the landscaping layers suggests that the previous overburden had been removed prior to the deposition of these layers.		
Author of summary: W. Keir	Date of summary: 22.09.11	

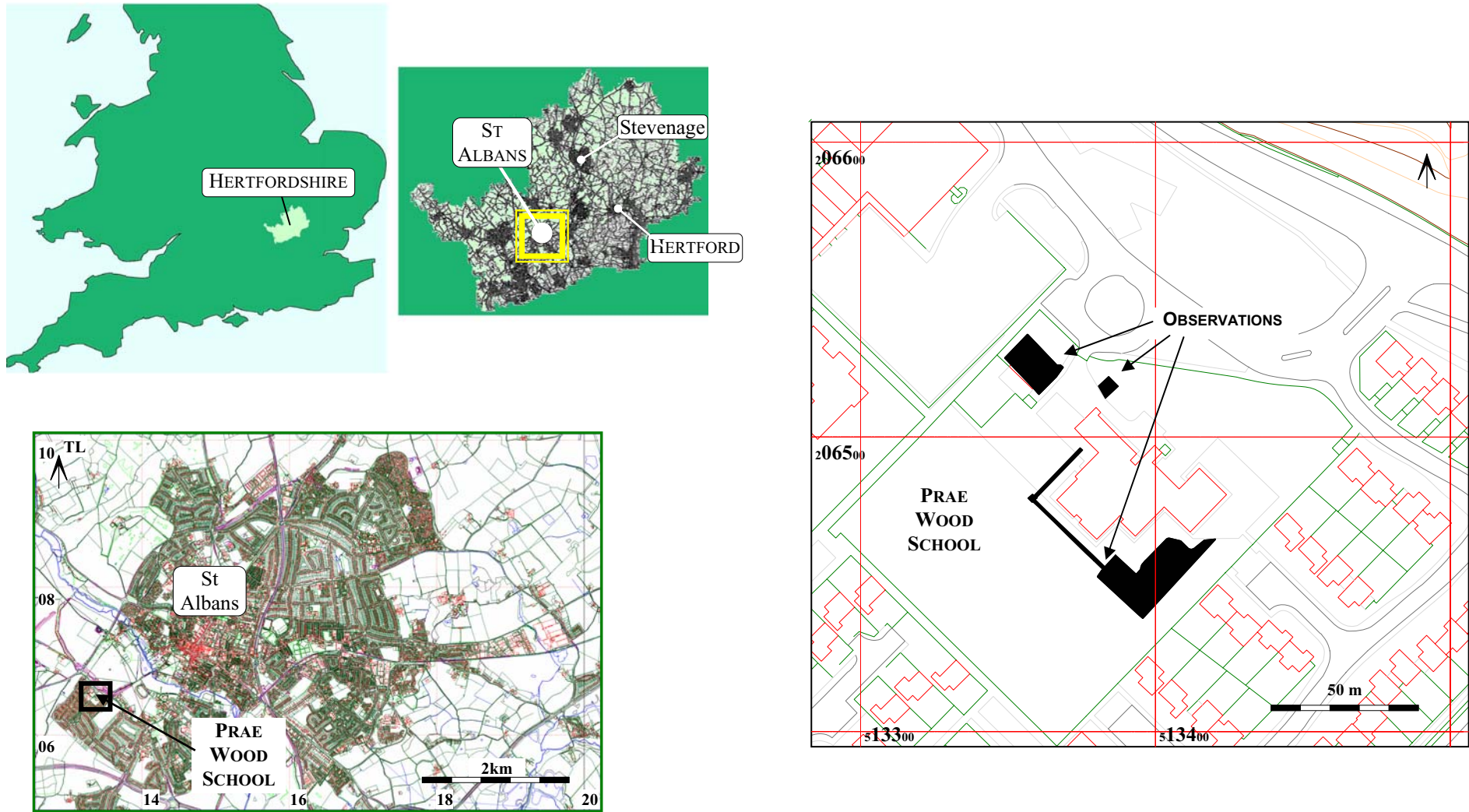
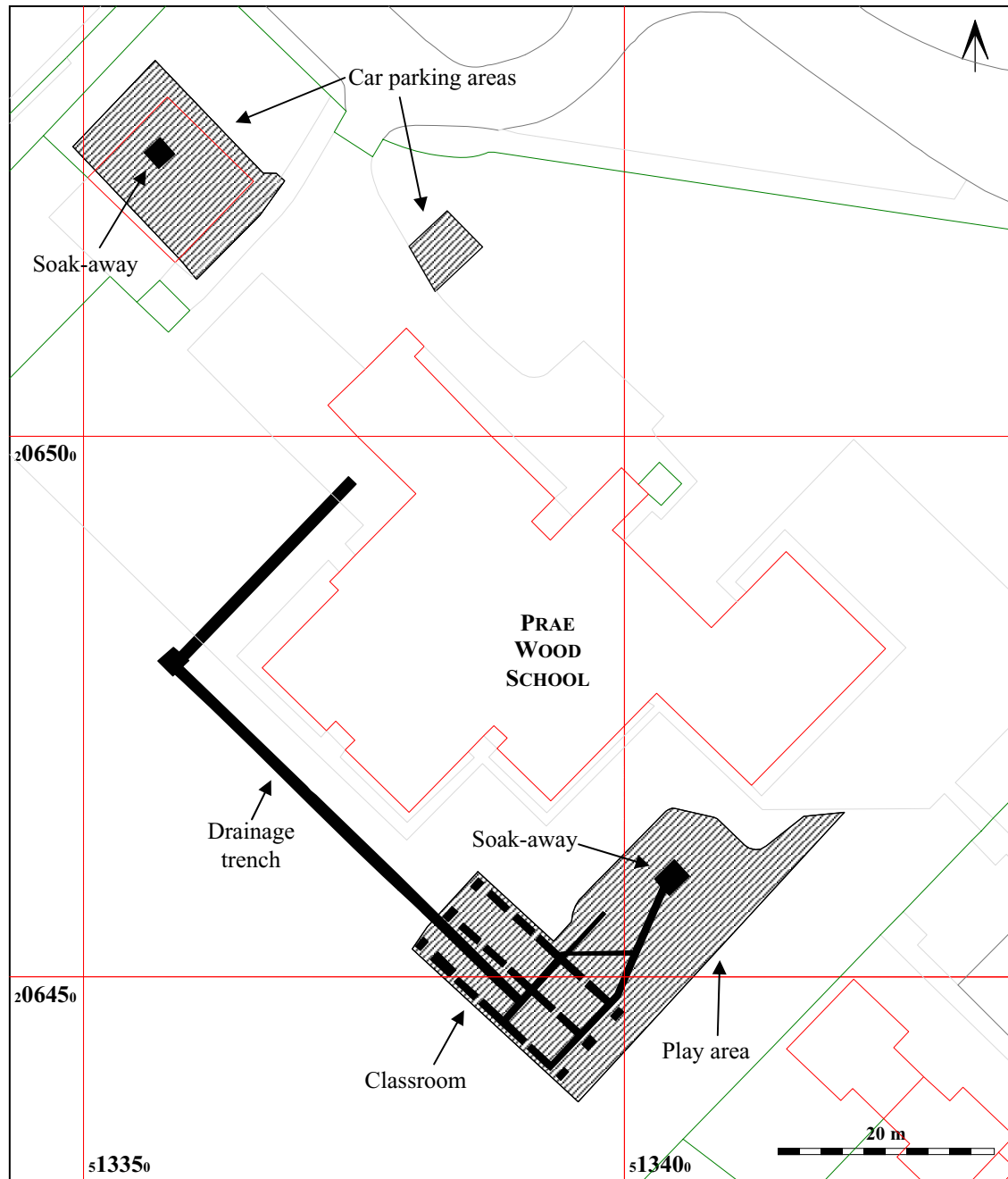


Figure 1: Site location plan

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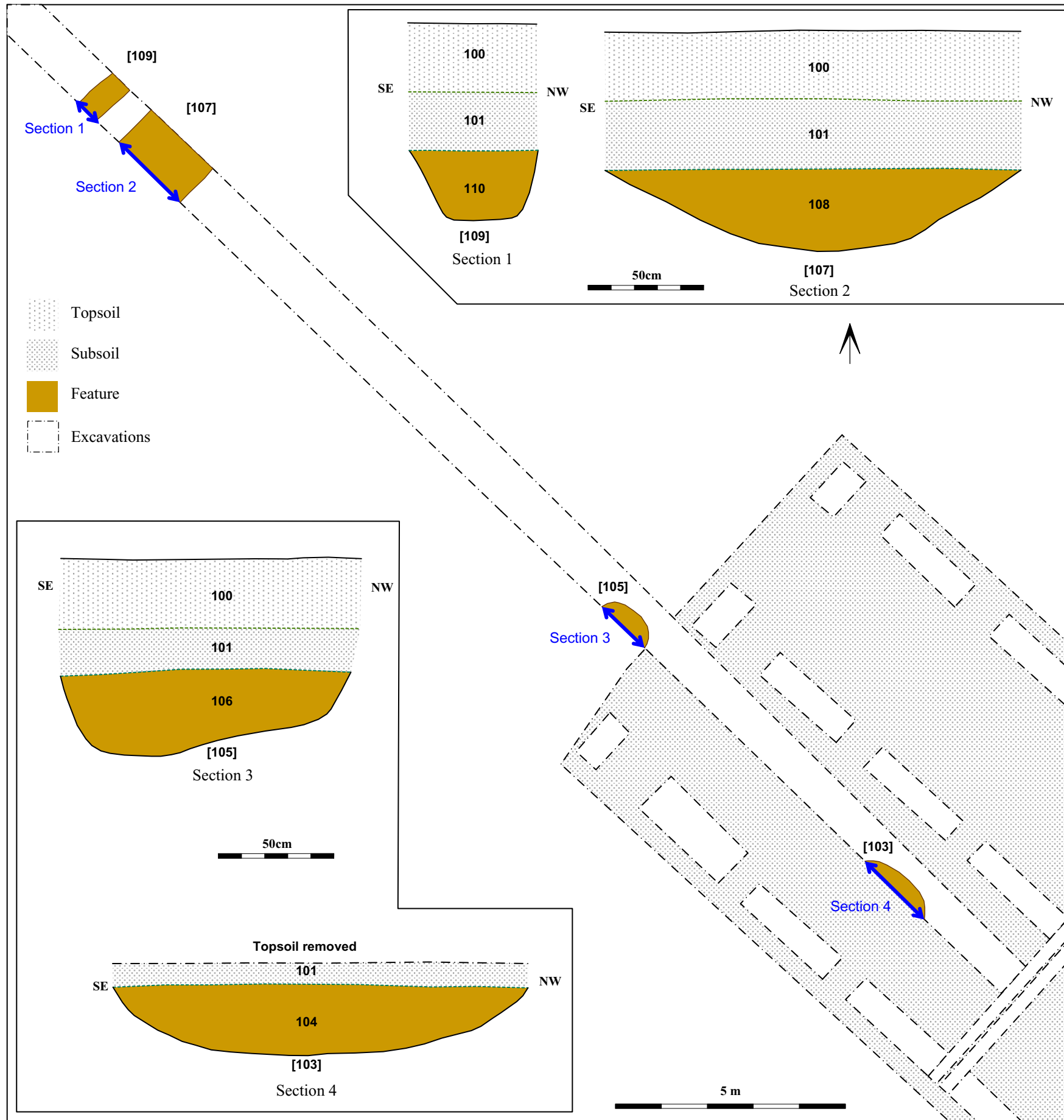
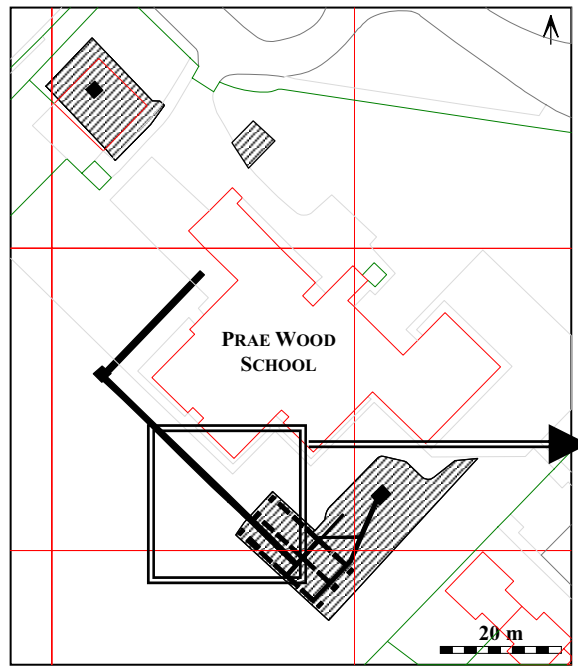
-  Overburden stripping
-  Foundation and service trenches

Figure 2: Plan of observations

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Pit [105] looking SW. Scale 1m



Ditch [107] looking SW. Scale 1m

Figure 3: Location of groundworks and archaeological features

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