

**BEDFORD ACADEMY  
MILE ROAD  
BEDFORD**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION,  
INVESTIGATION, RECORDING, ANALYSIS AND  
PUBLICATION**

**Albion**  
archaeology



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## Preface

*Every effort has been made in the preparation of this document to provide as complete a summary as possible within the terms of the method statement. 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.*

## Acknowledgements

*Albion Archaeology was commissioned to carry out the archaeological works by Willmott Dixon Construction Ltd. The project was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Geoff Saunders, Archaeological Officer of the Historic Environment Team of Bedford Borough Council.*

*Fieldwork was carried out by Wiebke Starke and Marcin Koziminski (Archaeological Supervisors). This report has been prepared by Marcin Koziminski with figures by Joan Lightning (CAD Technician).*

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## Key Terms

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

HER	Bedford Borough Council's Historic Environment Record
HET	Bedford Borough Council's Historic Environment Team
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists



## **Non-Technical Summary**

*Planning permission for the demolition of the John Bunyan Upper School and the construction of a new Bedford Academy together with sports pitches and associated parking and landscaping was granted by Bedford Borough Council.*

*As the development lies within an area of archaeological sensitivity, the Historic Environment Team of Bedford Borough Council recommended that a condition was attached to any planning consent requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological works.*

*This programme initially comprised trial trenching which was followed by an area excavation at the site of the new building on open ground to the rear of the existing school in 2011. The final phase of works comprised the monitoring of the demolition of the existing school and the creation of a new car parking area and landscaping work in the same area.*

*The majority of the groundworks associated with the construction of the car park and landscape features did not impact significantly below ground level. In most cases, the works involved building up of the ground level rather than excavating into it.*

*The only work that required monitoring was the excavation of a series of tree planting pits. The deposits recorded in these pits confirmed a sequence of recent deposition of construction levelling material overlying buried topsoil and subsoil.*

*The tree pit excavations also confirmed that there was potential for archaeological remains to be preserved beneath in-situ former topsoil and subsoil, although none were actually found. This was probably due to the limited size and number of these excavations rather than a true reflection of the archaeological potential of the site.*



## 1. INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 *Project Background*

Planning permission (10/02894/MAF) for the demolition of the John Bunyan Upper School and the construction of a new Bedford Academy together with sports pitches and associated parking and landscaping was granted by Bedford Borough Council.

As the development lies within an area of archaeological sensitivity, the Historic Environment Team (HET) of Bedford Borough Council recommended that a condition was attached to any planning consent requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological works. This advice was in accordance with *National Planning Policy Framework – Section 12: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment*<sup>1</sup>.

This programme initially comprised trial trenching which was followed by an area excavation at the site of the new building on open ground to the rear of the existing school in 2011 (Albion Archaeology 2013a).

The final phase of works comprised the monitoring of the demolition of the existing school and the creation of a new car parking area and landscaping work in the same area. This document presents the results of this final phase of archaeological works.

### 1.2 *Site Location and Description*

Bedford Academy lies towards the southern edge of Bedford on the river terrace gravels of the Great Ouse, centred on (NGR) TL 06170 47710. The Academy site in its entirety measures around 9.4ha in area. It is bounded to the north by Mile Road, to the south by the Elstow Brook, to the west by allotments and to the east by a housing estate.

### 1.3 *Archaeological and Historical Background*

During and prior to construction of the original school buildings during the 1960s and 1970s, archaeological investigations uncovered late Iron Age remains including enclosures and at least one building (HER 979). The remains of a late Iron Age and Romano-British pottery-production site were also uncovered to the west of the school, along with limited evidence of Saxon activity. To the east, archaeological investigations in advance of housing development in the 1990s identified evidence for Neolithic and early Bronze Age activity in the form of an oval barrow and hengiform monument (HER 18235).

The 2011 excavation at Bedford Academy revealed part of a late Iron Age to early Roman agricultural settlement, overlying the fragmentary remains of prehistoric fields and late Neolithic activity. The excavated part of the settlement seems to have related primarily to the management of livestock, with a complex system of interconnecting enclosures that were reworked on several occasions. Few signs of

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<sup>1</sup> National Planning Policy Framework, published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (2012). Available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/nppf>.



human habitation were found, with no buildings conclusively identified, suggesting that the domestic part of the settlement lay elsewhere.

There was no indication that the settlement continued in use beyond the early 2nd century AD, although the site was re-used for small-scale settlement in the early Saxon period. Evidence of post-Saxon activity was limited to medieval ridge and furrow cultivation, prior to the 20th century.

#### **1.4 Project Objectives**

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



## 2. METHODOLOGY

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

Albion Archaeology	<i>Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> (2 <sup>nd</sup> edn., 2001).
Bedford Borough Council	<i>Preparing Archaeological Archives for Deposition in Registered Museums in Bedford</i> (1998)
English Heritage	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment</i> (2009) <i>Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation</i> (Second Edition) (2011)
East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 14	Gurney, D. <i>Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England</i> (2003)
IfA	<i>By-Laws and Code of Conduct</i> <i>Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief</i> (2008)

The project archive will be deposited with Bedford Museum (accession no. 2011.44). This report will be uploaded onto the Archaeology Data Service's OASIS website (albionar1-100648).

A detailed methodology is provided in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Albion Archaeology 2013b) which was approved by the HET prior to commencement of site works.





### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1 Demolition Works

Demolition of existing school buildings commenced in February 2013 and concluded in April with the removal of floor slabs. Building foundations were left *in situ* as there was no necessity to remove them prior to creation of the new car park.

The impact from these works was very superficial and did not extend below ground consolidation deposits laid down prior to construction of the old school buildings. No deposits with the potential to contain archaeological remains were affected.

#### 3.2 Car Park Construction and Landscaping

The construction of the car park and associated pedestrian footpaths comprised the building up and levelling of the existing ground surface with crushed stone and rubble, the latter derived from the demolition of the old school. The tarmac and paved surfaces were then laid.

Landscaping work comprised the re-depositing of stockpiled soils to create a grassed training area and earth bunds in and around the car park (Figure 1). A number of pits were also excavated for planting trees. Several were located on top of new earth bunds and were not excavated below former ground levels. However, eight of the pits were located on lower ground and these were archaeologically monitored.

The excavation work was carried out by a mechanical excavator fitted with a flat-edged bucket under the supervision of an archaeologist. The base and sides of each pit were cleaned by hand to help reveal any potential archaeological remains. All the pits were photographed and all deposits recorded (see below and Figure 2). Excavated soil was checked on a regular basis for artefact recovery.

No artefacts were recovered or archaeological features observed during the excavation of the tree pits.

These excavations in August 2013 concluded the construction groundworks and the archaeological monitoring.

##### Tree Pit 1: 1m x 1m x 1.05m deep

Context	Thickness (m)	Description
1	0.30	Topsoil — re-deposited during landscaping works
2	0.22	Demolition rubble
3	0.25	Buried subsoil
9	0.28+	Geological deposit — river terrace sand/gravel

**Tree Pit 2:** 1m x 1m x 1.35m deep (see Figure 2)

Context	Thickness (m)	Description
1	0.55	Topsoil — re-deposited during landscaping works
2	0.35	Demolition rubble
3	0.10	Buried subsoil
9	0.35+	Geological deposit — river terrace sand/gravel

**Tree Pit 3:** 1m x 1m x 1.30m deep (see Figure 2)

Context	Thickness (m)	Description
1	0.25	Topsoil — re-deposited during landscaping works
2	0.20	Demolition rubble
7	0.70	Gravel – probably associated with construction of former school
9	0.15+	Geological deposit — river terrace sand/gravel

**Tree Pit 4:** 1m x 1m x 1.20m deep

Context	Thickness (m)	Description
1	0.45	Topsoil — re-deposited during landscaping works
5	0.20	Crushed stone — laid down following demolition of old school
8	0.15	Buried topsoil
3	0.40+	Buried subsoil

**Tree Pit 5:** 1m x 1m x 1.00m deep

Context	Thickness (m)	Description
1	0.35	Topsoil — re-deposited during landscaping works
5	0.20	Crushed stone — laid down over plastic membrane following demolition of old school
3	0.35	Buried subsoil
9	0.10+	Geological deposit — river terrace sand/gravel

**Tree Pit 6:** 1m x 1m x 1.15m deep

Context	Thickness (m)	Description
1	0.25	Topsoil — re-deposited during landscaping works
2	0.10	Demolition rubble
3	0.30	Buried subsoil
7	0.60	Gravel — probably associated with foundations/services of former school
9	0.20+	Geological deposit — river terrace sand/gravel

**Tree Pit 7:** 1m x 1m x 1.00m deep

Context	Thickness (m)	Description
4	0.06	Tarmac car park surface
5	0.24	Crushed stone — laid down following demolition of old school
8	0.50	Buried topsoil
3	0.20+	Buried subsoil

**Tree Pit 8:** 1m x 1m x 1.08m deep

<b>Context</b>	<b>Thickness (m)</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	0.35	Topsoil — re-deposited during landscaping works
5	0.13	Crushed stone — laid down over plastic membrane following demolition of old school
6	0.20	Additional layer of crushed stone — laid down over plastic membrane following demolition of old school
3	0.06	Buried subsoil
9	0.34+	Geological deposit — river terrace sand/gravel



## 4. CONCLUSIONS

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The majority of the groundworks associated with the construction of the car park and landscape features at Bedford Academy did not impact significantly below ground level. In most cases, the works involved building up of the ground level rather than excavating into it.

The only work that required monitoring was the excavation of a series of tree planting pits. The deposits recorded in these pits confirmed a sequence of recent deposition of construction levelling material overlying buried topsoil and subsoil.

The tree pit excavations confirmed that there was potential for archaeological remains to be preserved beneath *in-situ*, former topsoil and subsoil, although none were actually found. This was probably due to the limited size and number of these excavations rather than a true reflection of the archaeological potential of the site.

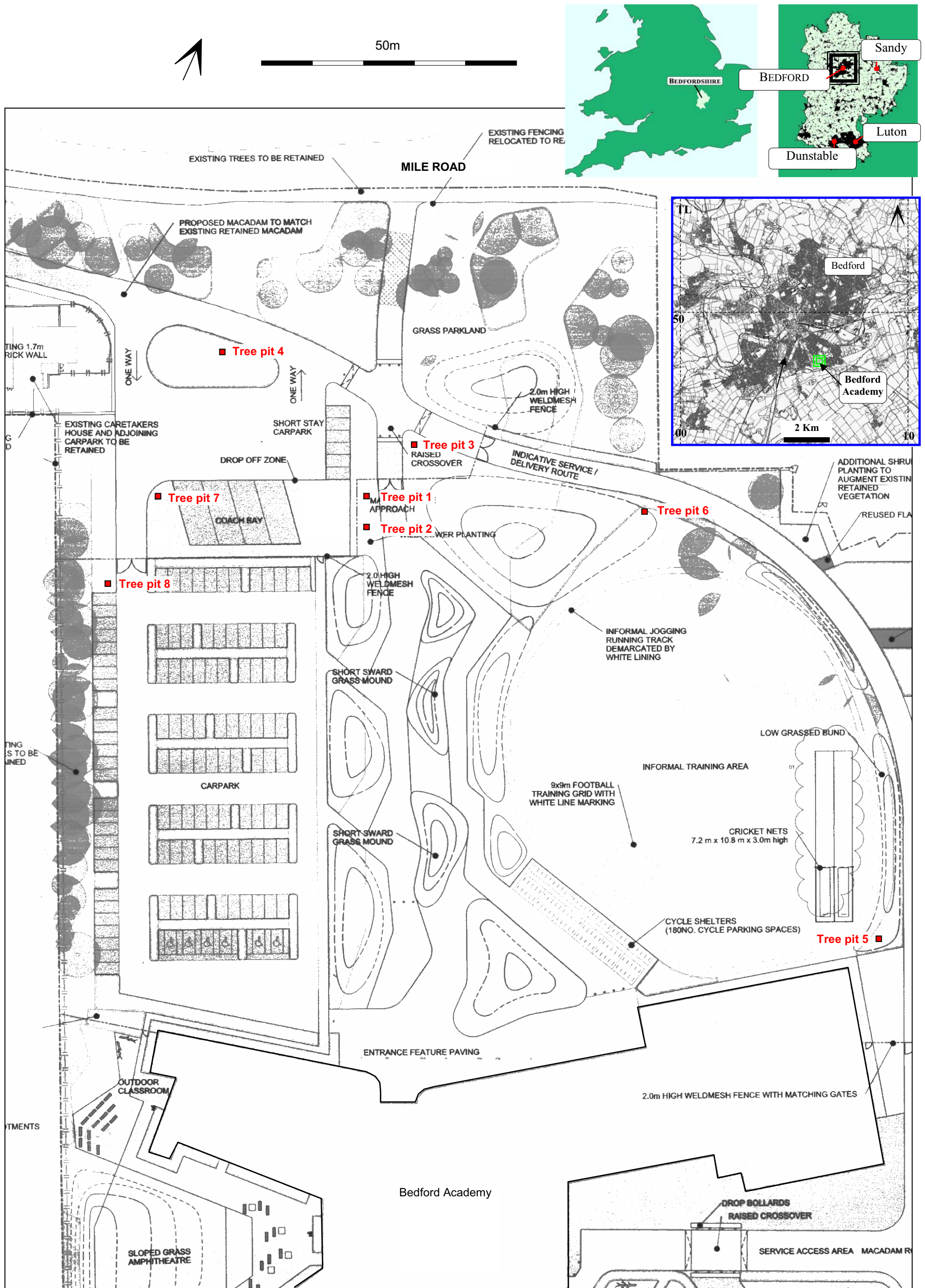


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Albion Archaeology 2013b, *Bedford Academy, Mile Road, Bedford: Written Scheme of Investigation for a Programme of Archaeological Observation, Investigation, Recording, Analysis and Publication*. Document ref. 2013/39.



**Figure 1: Plan of new car park and landscaping features**

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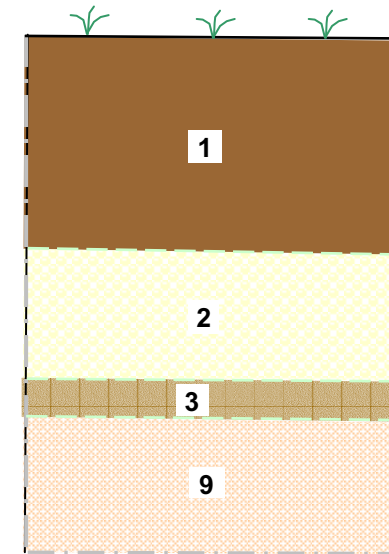




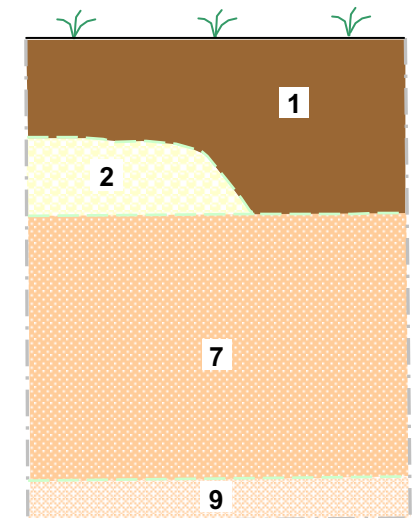
**General view:**  
Tree planting pits; looking E



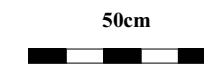
**Pit 7:** Looking  
NW; 1m scale



**Pit 2:** Section



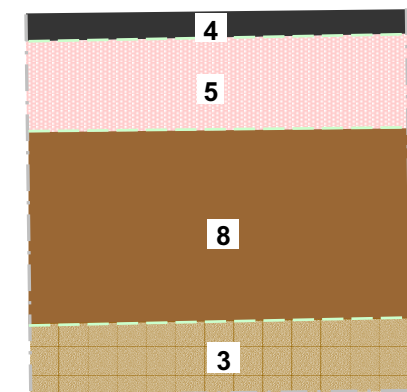
**Pit 3:** Section



**Pit 2:**  
Looking SE;  
1m scale



**Pit 3:** Looking NW;  
1m scale

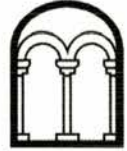


**Pit 7:** Section

**Figure 2:** Representative  
photographs and section drawings

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