

**LAND AT CHURCH END LOWER SCHOOL  
CHURCH WALK  
MARSTON MORETAINE**

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

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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.*

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## **Structure of the Report**

After the introductory Section 1, there is a summary of the results of the programme of archaeological observation and recording in Section 2, followed by a brief conclusion (Section 3). Section 4 is a bibliography and Appendix 1 contains an archaeological context summary.

## **Key Terms**

Throughout this report the following terms or abbreviations are used:

<i>Albion</i>	Albion Archaeology
<i>Client</i>	Mouchel Parkman UK Ltd
<i>IFA</i>	Institute of Field Archaeologists
<i>BCC's AO</i>	Bedfordshire County Council's Archaeological Officer
<i>Procedures Manual</i>	<i>Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 2001.</i> Bedfordshire County Council





### **Non-Technical Summary**

*During July 2005 Albion Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological observation, investigation, recording, analysis and publication on behalf of the Mouchel Parkman UK Ltd. The work was occasioned by the construction of an extension at Church End Lower School, Marston Moretaine, Bedfordshire. This involved ground disturbance in the form of removal of overburden and the excavation of a foundation trench.*

*The study area is located within the historic core of Marston Moretaine, where archaeological remains of the late Saxon period (and earlier) are known to survive. In 1998, excavations at the school, immediately south-east of the study area, uncovered a Saxo-Norman hall and associated buildings, as well as medieval saw pits. The north-western part of this site had been overlaid by modern overburden (Edmondson and Steadman 2001).*

*Within the footings for the new extension, an early medieval boundary ditch was investigated and recorded, confirming once again the high archaeological potential of the area. The limits of the modern overburden observed in 1998 were ascertained, which should assist in assessing the archaeological impact of any future works within the vicinity.*

*The project archive has been accessioned with Bedford Museum under the code BEDFM 2005.333.*



## 1 INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 Background

It was proposed to construct a new extension on the western side of the main building at Church End Lower School, Marston Moretaine. The footprint of the proposed building was approximately 110sqm in extent. Construction work included the removal of existing surfaces and the excavation of foundation trenches, c.600mm wide and 1.2m to 1.3m deep.

Because the work had the potential to disturb archaeological deposits, the CAO issued a brief for a programme of archaeological work (BCC 2005). Albion Archaeology was commissioned to undertake the work in accordance with a project design (Albion Archaeology 2005), approved by the CAO.

### 1.2 Site Location and Description

The site of the new building was centred at SP 9958 4126, only some 50m north of the churchyard of the parish church, St Mary's the Virgin (Figure 1). The site was partly grassed and partly paved (next to the existing school buildings).

The geology of the area is generally Oxford Clay, with underlying sandy gravel.

### 1.3 Archaeological Background and Objectives

#### 1.3.1 Archaeological Background

The school lies within the historic core of Marston Moretaine, which is of, at least, late Saxon origin. The village contains a number of moated, medieval sites. An archaeological investigation on the southern side of the school in 1998 revealed the remains of a Saxo-Norman hall, and a number of other later, medieval features (Edmondson and Steadman 2001).

#### 1.3.1 Research Objectives

Although the footprint of the proposed building was relatively small, it was clearly in an area of high archaeological potential, with the possibility of impacting archaeological remains from the late Saxon period (or earlier) onwards. Within this framework the aims of the investigation were set out in the CAO's brief (section 4) as:

- i. Establishing the date, nature and extent of activity or occupation in the development site;
- ii. Establishing the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscapes;
- iii. Recovering artefacts to assist in the development of type series within the region;
- iv. Recovering palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.



## 2. RESULTS OF OBSERVATION AND RECORDING

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### 2.1 Introduction

The programme of archaeological observation was undertaken between the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> July 2005. During this period all excavations which required monitoring were completed. The observed archaeological deposits were also tied into the OS benchmark on St Mary's Church.

### 2.2 Methodology

The programme of archaeological observation adhered to the field methods set out in section 5 of the brief.

- 1 Any stripping of overburden or excavation of foundation or service trenches was monitored to try to identify *in situ* archaeological deposits.
- 2 All disturbed soil was scanned for artefacts.
- 3 Any excavated features and deposits were fully recorded in accordance with the Albion's *Procedures Manual* and the detailed requirements in section 3 of the *Brief*.
- 4 All archaeological observations were recorded at a suitable scale on base plans that were tied in to the OS national grid.
- 5 Significant features were photographed using a digital camera.

Throughout the project the standards set out in the Institute of Field Archaeologists Codes of Conduct and Standards and Guidance documents (specifically *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief*, September 1999), in English Heritage's *Management of Archaeological Projects* (1991) and Albion Archaeology's *Procedures Manual* were adhered to.

### 2.3 Topsoil, Subsoil and Undisturbed Geological Deposits

A firm, mid brown, silty-clay topsoil (100), *c.* 0.1m thick, overlay a firm, mid orange-brown, silty-clay subsoil (107), up to 0.87m thick. The former contained a piece of post-medieval clay pipe stem (3g) and an animal vertebra (11g) of unknown species, of probable post-medieval or modern date. The natural stratum (108) was revealed at a depth of *c.* 1.2m within the foundation trench. It comprised a firm, mid grey-orange clay.

### 2.4 Deposits Associated with Previous Construction Work

The excavation required the reduction of existing surfaces by a depth of 0.1m, revealing the topsoil (100) and subsoil levels.

A concrete slab pavement (101) ran round the perimeter of the development area (Figure 2). Where the slabs were removed, next to the existing school buildings, a layer of hardcore (102) (a compact, light grey-brown concrete rubble, 0.2m thick) was revealed. This sealed a friable, dark brown, silty-clay (103), 0.16m thick. On the western margins of the site, removal of the slabs revealed a compact, light brown, silty-clay (104), containing modern construction debris. It was a maximum of 0.29m thick.

These deposits appear to be related to previous construction work at the school.



## **2.5 Medieval Ditch**

A NE to SW aligned ditch [106], with concave sides and a flat base (Figure 2), was found at the NW end of the foundation trench, sealed by the modern construction debris (104). It was at least 3.2m wide and 0.78m deep.

Ditch [106] was filled by a firm, dark brown, clay-silt (105), with occasional small stones and frequent charcoal flecks. It produced twenty-six sherds of early medieval (12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century), sand-tempered pottery, weighing 320g (fabrics C01, C03 and C04<sup>2</sup>). These types are comparable with fabrics recovered from the previous excavations in the vicinity (Edmondson and Steadman 2001, 53). Although fairly small (average sherd weight 12g), the material is generally unabraded and includes 18 sherds from a hand-made, everted rim jar.

## **2.6 Layer (109)**

A firm, light grey-brown, clay (109), up to 1.2m thick was present at the SE end of the foundation trench (Figure 2). It may have been filling a depression, although this was difficult to determine within the confines of the foundation trench.

This deposit may be equivalent to the unexcavated layer of modern overburden, identified during the 1998 archaeological investigation.

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<sup>2</sup> Defined in accordance with the Bedfordshire Ceramic Type Series, held by Albion Archaeology.



## 3 CONCLUSIONS

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### 3.1 *Synthesis*

The archaeological investigation, associated with the construction of the extension, successfully demonstrated the presence of, and recorded, significant medieval archaeological deposits. These probably relate to the site excavated in 1998 during previous extension work at the school (Edmondson and Steadman 2001). It was also possible to define the NW limit of an unexcavated deposit of modern overburden, recorded during the same excavation.

A series of make-up layers, associated with previous construction works, sealed the entire site. These are likely to have partially truncated an early medieval ditch [106]. The width and depth of this feature suggest it would have represented a substantial boundary within the landscape. It produced a moderate assemblage of 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century pottery, suggesting it may be associated with an occupation site.

An extensive, thick layer of clay (109) was present in the SE part of the foundation trench. This may be the same deposit as the unexcavated layer of modern overburden recorded during the 1998 excavations. If so, the recent work has helped to define the NW limit of this deposit and has suggested that it may truncate all but the deepest archaeological features. It is even possible that it represents the backfill of a small quarry dug to extract clay. However, given the narrow confines of the foundation trench, this interpretation must remain tentative.

### 3.2 *Significance of Results*

Despite the limited area available for archaeological investigation, the works have increased our knowledge and understanding of the archaeological potential of the school site. Additional evidence for medieval occupation, similar to that recorded in 1998, was recovered. This, again, has demonstrated that the centre of Marston Moretaine preserves significant archaeological deposits, with the potential to elucidate its medieval past.

The work on the school extension also helped to confirm the nature of, and determine the extent of, areas of modern disturbance within the school site. This may assist in evaluating the archaeological impact of any future building work at the school.

### 3.3 *Project Archive*

The project archive of finds and records has been accessioned with Bedford Museum under accession code BEDFM 2005.333. It comprises:

- finds (one box)
- site records (one file)
- site drawings (one sheet)
- photographs (three films)



## 4 REFERENCES

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- Albion Archaeology 2001, *Procedures Manual, Volume 1: Fieldwork*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition
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- Bedfordshire County Council 2005, *Brief for a programme of archaeological observation, investigation, recording, analysis and publication of land at Church End Lower School, Church Walk, Marston Moretaine, Bedfordshire*
- Bedford Museum 1998, *Preparing Archaeological Archives for Deposition in Registered Museums in Bedfordshire*
- Edmondson G and Steadman S 2001, 'Archaeological investigations at Church End Lower School, Marston Moretaine', *Beds Arch*, 24, 47-56
- English Heritage 1991 *Management of Archaeological Projects*
- IFA 1999 *Codes of Conduct*
- IFA 1999 *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief*
- IFA 2001 *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials*



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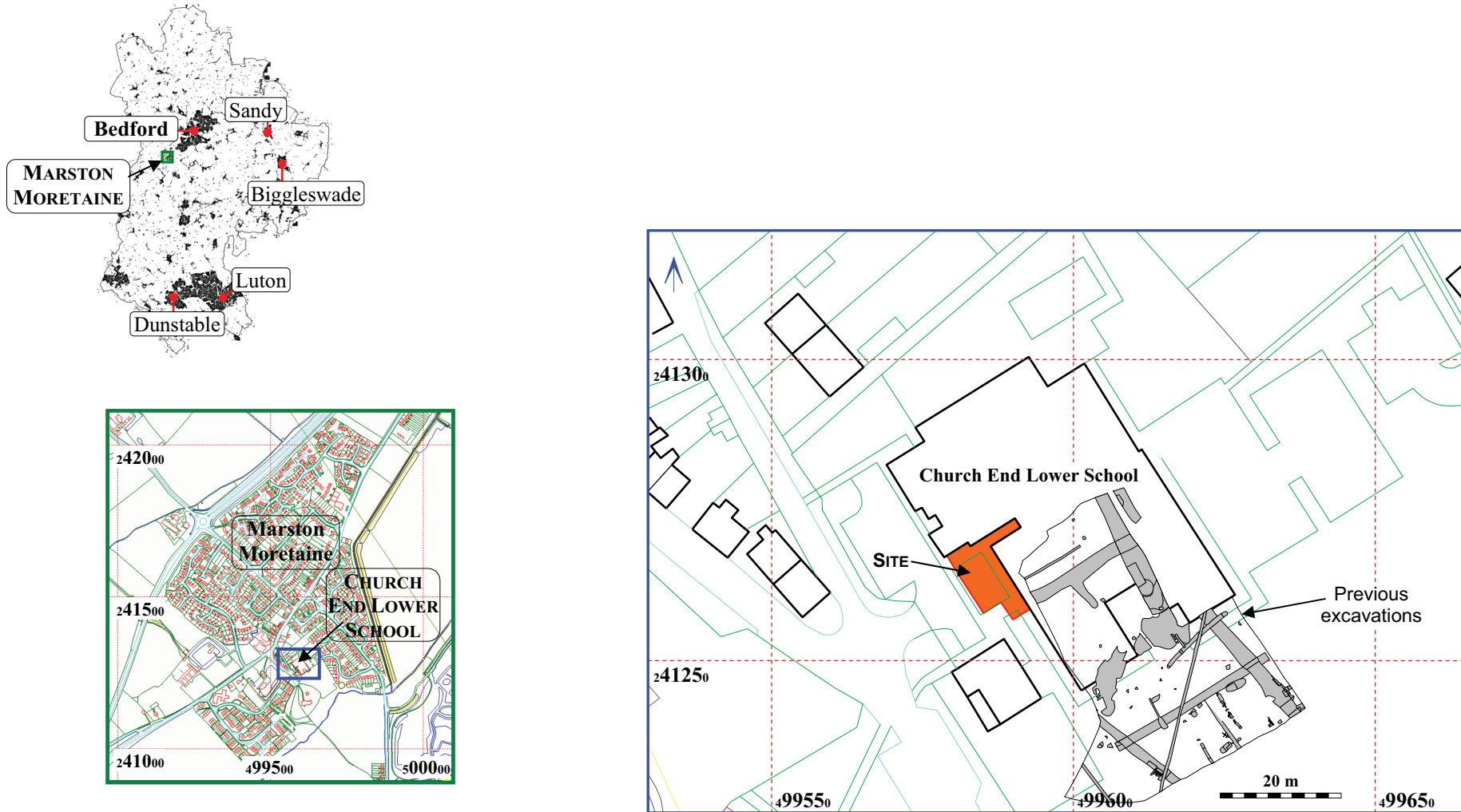
## **5 CONTEXT SUMMARY**

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**Trench: 1****Max Dimensions: Length: 11.20 m. Width: 0.63 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.15 m. Max: 0.95 m.****OS Co-ordinates: Ref. 1: TL4995079150 Ref. 2: TL2412664900****Reason: Foundation trench for school extension.**

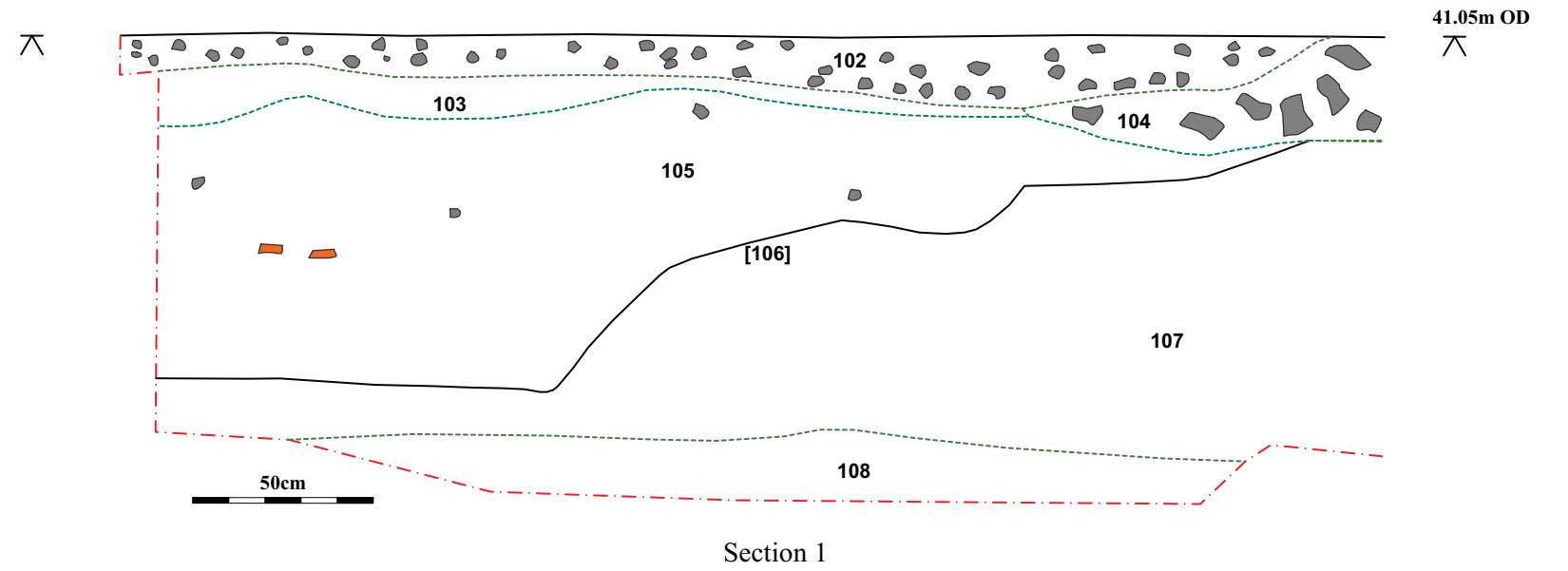
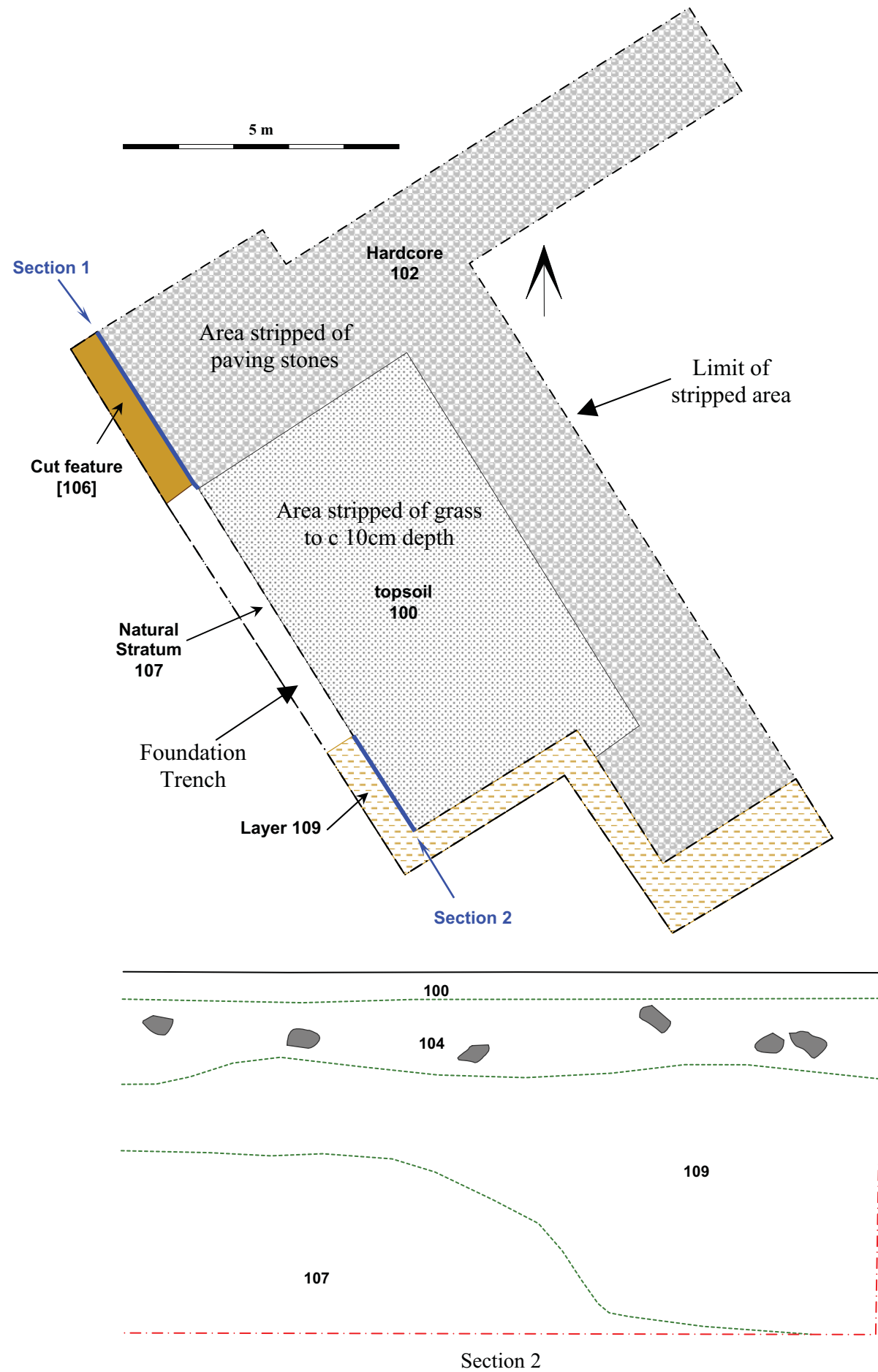
<b>Context:</b>	<b>Type:</b>	<b>Description:</b>	<b>Excavated:</b>	<b>Finds Present:</b>
100	Topsoil	Firm mid brown silty clay frequent small-large ceramic building material, occasional small stones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
101	Paving	Hard light grey concrete Concrete paving slabs around perimeter of site.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
102	Make up layer	Hard light grey brown hardcore	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
103	Make up layer	Friable dark black silty clay Construction debris.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
104	Make up layer	Compact light brown silty clay frequent small-large ceramic building material Construction debris from earlier building works.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>106</b>	<b>Ditch</b>	<b>Linear N-S profile: concave base: flat dimensions: max breadth 3.2m, max depth 0.78m, min length 0.6m Cut of SW-NE aligned boundary ditch.</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
105	Fill	Firm dark brown clay silt frequent flecks charcoal, occasional small stones Fill of ditch [106].	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
107	Subsoil	Firm mid orange brown silty clay	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
108	Natural	Firm mid grey orange clay Unexcavated natural stratum.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
109	Layer	Firm light grey brown clay Layer possibly filling a depression. Possibly contemporary with overburden recorded during 1998 excavation on adjacent site.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>





**Figure 1:** Site location map

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Photograph showing cut [106]. Scale 1m



Photograph showing layer 109.

**Figure 2: All features**

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