

Archaeological Evaluation Report

# **BARNSTON MEWS FARNDON**

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For Stewart Milne Homes (North West England)

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Matthew Williams MA MCIfA

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L~P:ARCHÆOLOGY

Archaeological Evaluation Report

# BARNSTON MEWS FARNDON

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Client: Stewart Milne Homes (North West England)

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Local Authority: Cheshire West and Chester

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NGR: 341510, 354700

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Planning App: 12/01277/OUT

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Author(s): M. Williams

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## L~P: ARCHAEOLOGY

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# Abstract

An archaeological evaluation was carried out on land off Barnston Mews, Farndon. The main aim of the work was to investigate the cropmarks visible in the 1940s RAF aerial photograph.

Five trenches were excavated. The only feature recorded was a drainage ditch in the west of the site which did not correlate with any cropmarks, it contained one fragment of 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century clay pipe. One very abraded fragment of Roman mortaria was recovered from the spoil heap of trench 2.

No further archaeological features were recorded; it is likely that most of the cropmarks visible in the photo were caused by changes in natural geology. Given the results, no further archaeological work is recommended.

# 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This document has been prepared by Matthew Williams of L - P : Archaeology on behalf of Stewart Milne Homes. The fieldwork was carried out by Dan Garner and Chris Matthews of L – P : Archaeology on 19<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> January 2016. The work was carried out in accordance with a Method Statement (WILLIAMS 2015) prepared by Matthew Williams and agreed with the client and Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWAC). CWAC take archaeological planning advice from the Cheshire Archaeological Planning Advisory Service (CAPAS).
- 1.2. The application reference is 12/01277/OUT.
- 1.3. The site is located within a level grass field c.10m AOD on the north side of the village of Farndon. The River Dee runs through the village 350m to the south west (FIGURE 1). It is bounded to the south by modern housing development, to the north and east by fields, and a school to the west (FIGURE 2).
- 1.4. The site consists of a single field which was pasture during the time of the evaluation.
- 1.5. The British Geological Survey GeoIndex for the site records the superficial (drift) deposits as Chester Pebble Beds and the solid deposits as Devensian Till (BRITISH GEOLOGICAL SURVEY 2015).

## 2. Archaeological and Historic Background

- 2.1.1. Assets recorded in the Cheshire Historic Environment Record (CHER) are referenced with their preferred reference number in brackets.
- 2.1.2. There are no prehistoric sites known in the vicinity (CHESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL 2003) and no records of prehistoric finds within the study area.
- 2.1.3. The Roman road joining Watling Street to Holt is thought to pass through Farndon and cross the River Dee (1838/1). Holt was an important Roman pottery production site (CHESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL 2003). One sherd of Roman pottery, possibly associated with an occupation layer, was discovered during evaluation work at the Church of St Chads (4505) and a Wirral type bow broach (5124) was found north of the village.
- 2.1.4. The circular churchyard and dedication to St Chad are both indicative of an early Medieval origin for the church, in addition the High Street runs parallel to the church yard which suggests a curved outer enclosure indicating an important early minster or monastic site. Farndon was a royal estate in the early 10<sup>th</sup> century (1791/0/0) and there are various references to royal associations with Farndon, however these may not relate to the modern town as historically Farndon included Aldford (CHESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL 2003). Despite the documentary and town plan evidence, no Early Medieval finds have been recovered within the town.
- 2.1.5. The town prospered in the Medieval period. The earliest surviving fabric of the church dates to the 14<sup>th</sup> century (the majority having been destroyed during the Civil War) and one burial exposed during work in the churchyard was dated to the late Medieval or Early Post Medieval period (4505, note this is incorrectly located to the west of the churchyard in the HER). The existing bridge was built around 1345 (CHESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL 2003). There is no further evidence for the extent and type of settlement, although two lead spindle whorls (7141 and 7142) and 13<sup>th</sup> century silver penny (5123) were found in the east of the historic core of the village.
- 2.1.6. Farndon expanded very little during the Post Medieval period although much of the existing fabric of the town dates to this period including two of the

three Grade II\* Listed buildings; these are the 19<sup>th</sup> century Barnston Memorial obelisk (1279425) to the north of the town and Holly Bank (1228774), a late 17<sup>th</sup> century house (the third Grade II\* building is the Church of St Chad).

2.1.7. The remaining Listed and locally Listed buildings date from the late 17<sup>th</sup> to mid 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and are located in the town centre.

2.1.8. RAF aerial photographs from 1940 show various cropmarks within the site which show of very faint ridge and furrow in the central area and an enclosure of ridge and furrow in the northeast part of the site (which appears to be rubbed out of the 1840 Farndon Tithe map); there are also diagonal lines that do not respect the ridge and furrow or correlate with old field boundaries shown on the 1840 Tithe map.



## 3. Aims

3.1. The aims of the evaluation are:

- ◆ To determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits or remains, in particular any deposits related to the cropmarks shown on the 1940 aerial photographs
- ◆ To assess the character, date, location and preservation of any archaeological remains on the site.
- ◆ To assess the nature and extent of any previous damage to archaeological remains on the site.
- ◆ To assess the anticipated impact of the development proposals on any surviving archaeological remains.
- ◆ To collect enough information to allow a suitable mitigation strategy to be devised, if required. The strategy could consist of further fieldwork such as watching brief and/or excavation, followed by a programme of post excavation reporting and possible publication and dissemination.

## 4. Methodology

4.1. The trenches were set out using GPS. Trench 1 was relocated to avoid a badger set in the north of the field. The relocation was agreed with Mark Leah of CAPAS during a site meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2016 (FIGURE 1).

4.2. Topsoil and modern deposits were removed by machine fitted with a toothless bucket. Archaeological deposits were hand cleaned and recorded in section. A full description of the methodology employed is given in the WSI.

4.3. No environmental samples were taken.

## 5. Results

5.1. Results are described by trench. Deposit numbers are given in (parentheses). In all trenches the topsoil was a friable, dark brown loam and the subsoil a mid yellow or orange sandy silt. The natural deposits comprised a layer of degraded sandstone overlying solid sandstone bedrock in trenches 1 to 3, red sand in trench 4 and compact yellow clay in trench 5.

### **TRENCH 1**

5.1.1. Trench 1 was at the east side of the site (FIGURE 2). It measured 30m long and 1.6m wide. Natural sandstone deposits (20) were seen at 29.20m OD, it was overlain by 0.20m of subsoil (18) and 0.35m topsoil (17).

### **TRENCH 2**

5.1.2. Trench 2 was at the north side of the site (FIGURE 2). It measured 30m long and 1.6m wide. Natural sandstone (15) was at 28.92m OD, it was overlain by 0.50m of subsoil (14) and 0.25m of topsoil (13).

### **TRENCH 3**

5.1.3. Trench 3 was at the southwest side of the site (FIGURE 2). It measured 30m long and 1.6m wide. Natural sandstone (3) was at 29.04m OD, it was overlain by 0.65m of subsoil (2) and 0.20m of topsoil (1). The thickness of the subsoil suggests that the site has been ploughed for many years, at least since the Medieval period.

### **TRENCH 4**

5.1.4. Trench 4 was at the south side of the site (FIGURE 2). It measured 30m long and 1.6m wide. Natural sand (6) was at 18.99m OD, it was overlain by 0.30m of subsoil (5) and 0.40m of topsoil (5).

### **TRENCH 5**

5.1.5. Trench 4 was at the west side of the site (FIGURE 2). It measured 30m long and 1.6m wide. Natural sand (6) was at 18.99m OD, it was overlain by 0.30m of subsoil (8) and 0.30m of topsoil (5). At the base of the trench was a linear ditch [9] which measured 0.90m wide and 0.20m deep; the primary fill (12)

was compact clay with angular pebble inclusions, the upper fill (10) was a light brown sand loam. The ditch appeared to be sealed by the subsoil but the interface between the upper fill (10) and the subsoil (8) was unclear. One fragment of clay pipe stem was recovered from (10).

- 5.1.6. The ditch does not correlate with any old field boundaries, nor does it appear as a cropmark on the 1940s aerial photograph. It may be an 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century drainage ditch.
- 5.1.7. The ditch does not correlate with the dark trapezoid cropmark seen on the 1940s RAF photo which appears to follow around the southern side and run into a pond (the pond is shown on historic maps but no longer exists). This cropmark is too regular to be geological; it may be an enclosure associated with the pond.

## 6. Finds

6.1. All finds were from the topsoil, they are listed below in (TABLE 1).

CONTEXT	NOTES	PERIOD
Unstratified from field	Spherical Pb musket ball, 18mm across, unfired	17 <sup>th</sup> /18 <sup>th</sup> century
(10) fill of ditch [9]	30mm fragment of clay pipe stem. Large central bore offcentre.	18 <sup>th</sup> /19 <sup>th</sup> c.
Unstratified from Tr. 2	Abraded sherd of mortaria rim. Dark orange/red fabric, no inclusions or grit	Roman

*Table 1 - Artefacts recovered by context*

6.2. The mortaria and musket ball indicate some Roman and Post Medieval activity in the area. The lack of archaeological features within the trenches and the lack of any further finds suggests that any such activity was not centred in this part of Farndon.

6.3. The pipe stem from (10) indicates that the ditch was open in the 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century.

## 7. Summary and Conclusions

- 7.1. The cropmarks in trenches 1 to 4 probably relate to changes in natural geology. The cropmark in trench 5 is an enclosure associated with a pond shown on historic maps.
- 7.2. A single drainage ditch was recorded in trench 5 which did not correlate with any cropmarks.
- 7.3. The thick topsoil and subsoil in various trenches suggests that the site has been ploughed for many years, probably since the Medieval period.
- 7.4. No further archaeological features were noted during the evaluation. No further work is recommended.

## 8. Archive

8.1. The paper archive consists of:

- ◆ 1 x Drawing Register
- ◆ 3 x Drawing Film
- ◆ 1 x Photographic Register
- ◆ 1 x Context Register
- ◆ 12 Context sheets

8.2. The finds archive consists of:

- ◆ 1 x box artefacts as described in Section 5 (all materials).

8.3. The archive is to be deposited with the Grosvenor Museum.

# SOURCES CONSULTED

BRITISH GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, 2015. 'BRITISH GEOLOGICAL SURVEY GEOINDEX'. AVAILABLE AT:  
[WWW.BGS.AC.UK/GEOINDEX](http://WWW.BGS.AC.UK/GEOINDEX).

CHESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL, 2003. *Farndon Archaeological Assessment*.

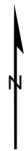
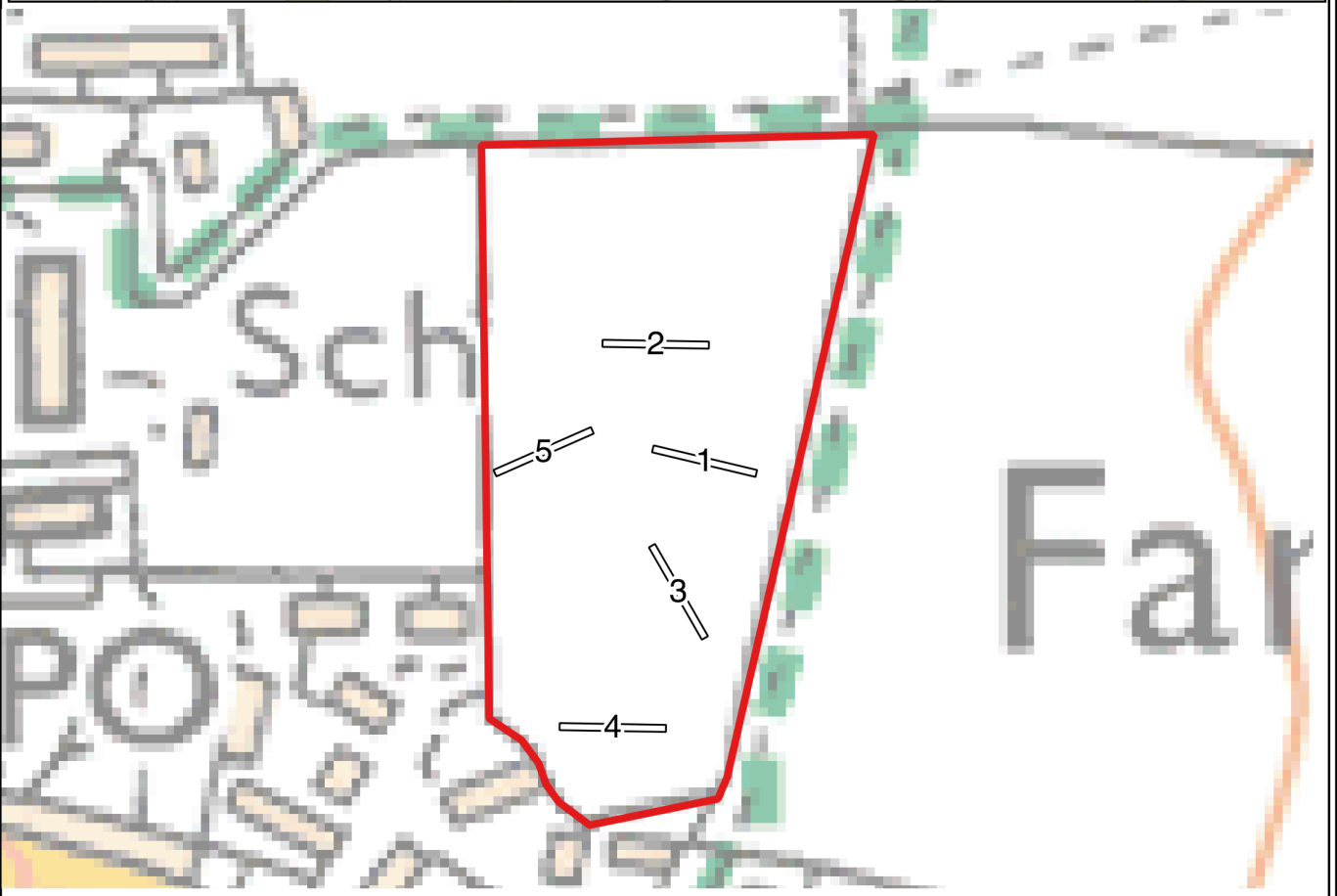
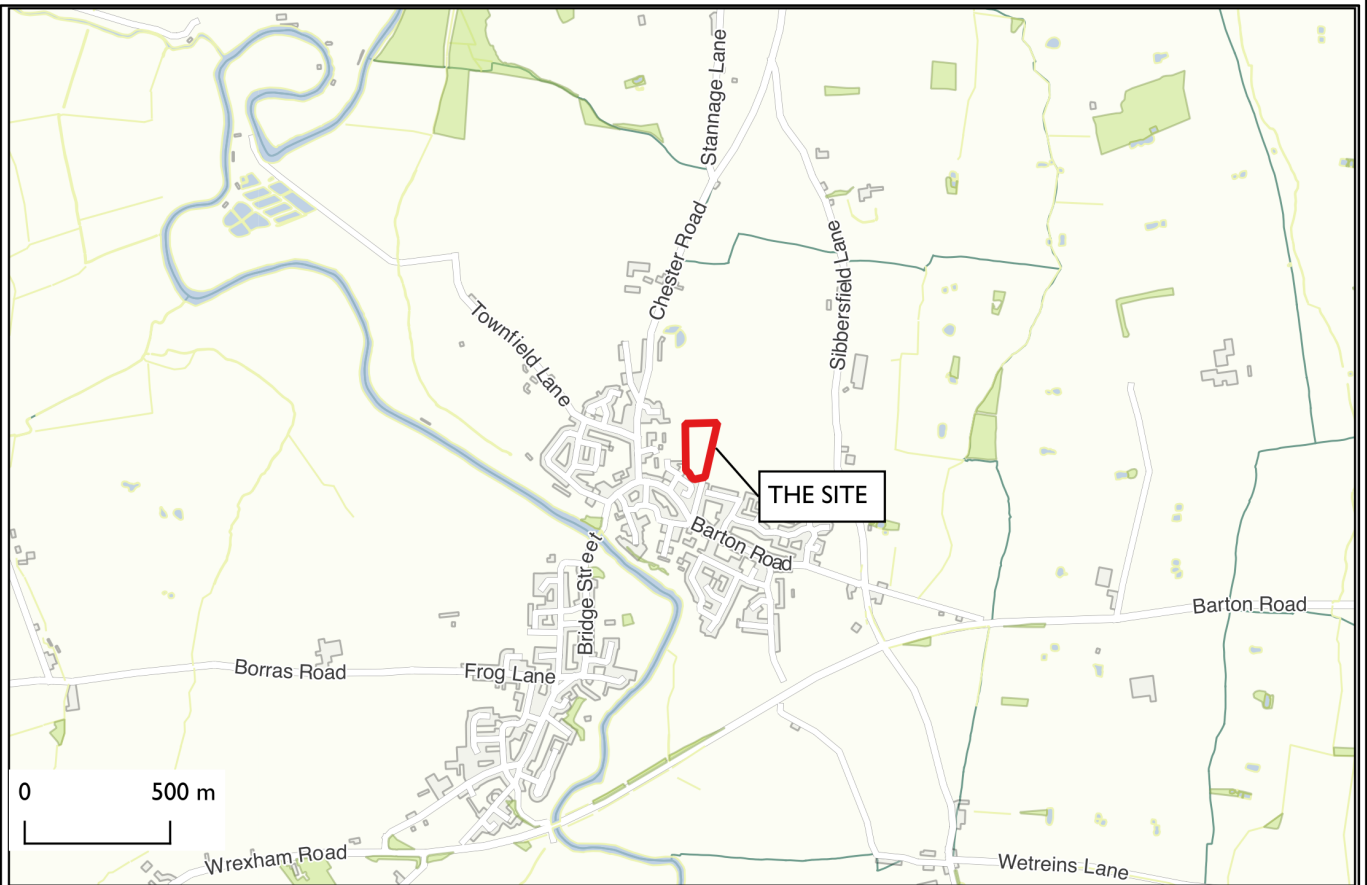
WILLIAMS, M., 2015. *Specification for Archaeological Evaluation Barnston Mews Farndon*. L - P :  
Archaeology.



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# FIGURES

FIGURE I // Site and trench location



PROJECT // 1968M - Barnston Mews, Farndon

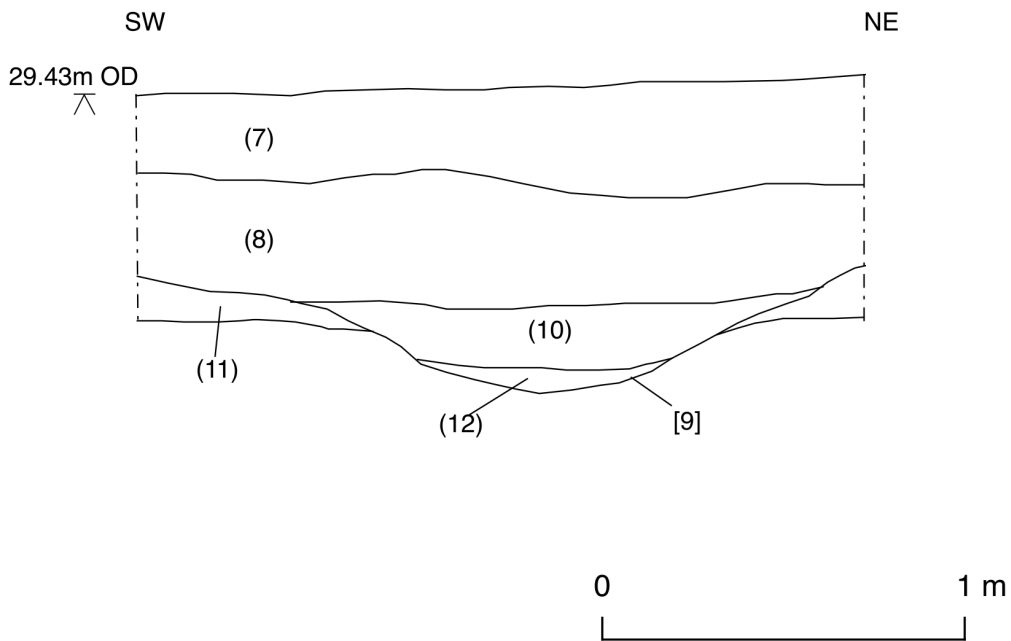
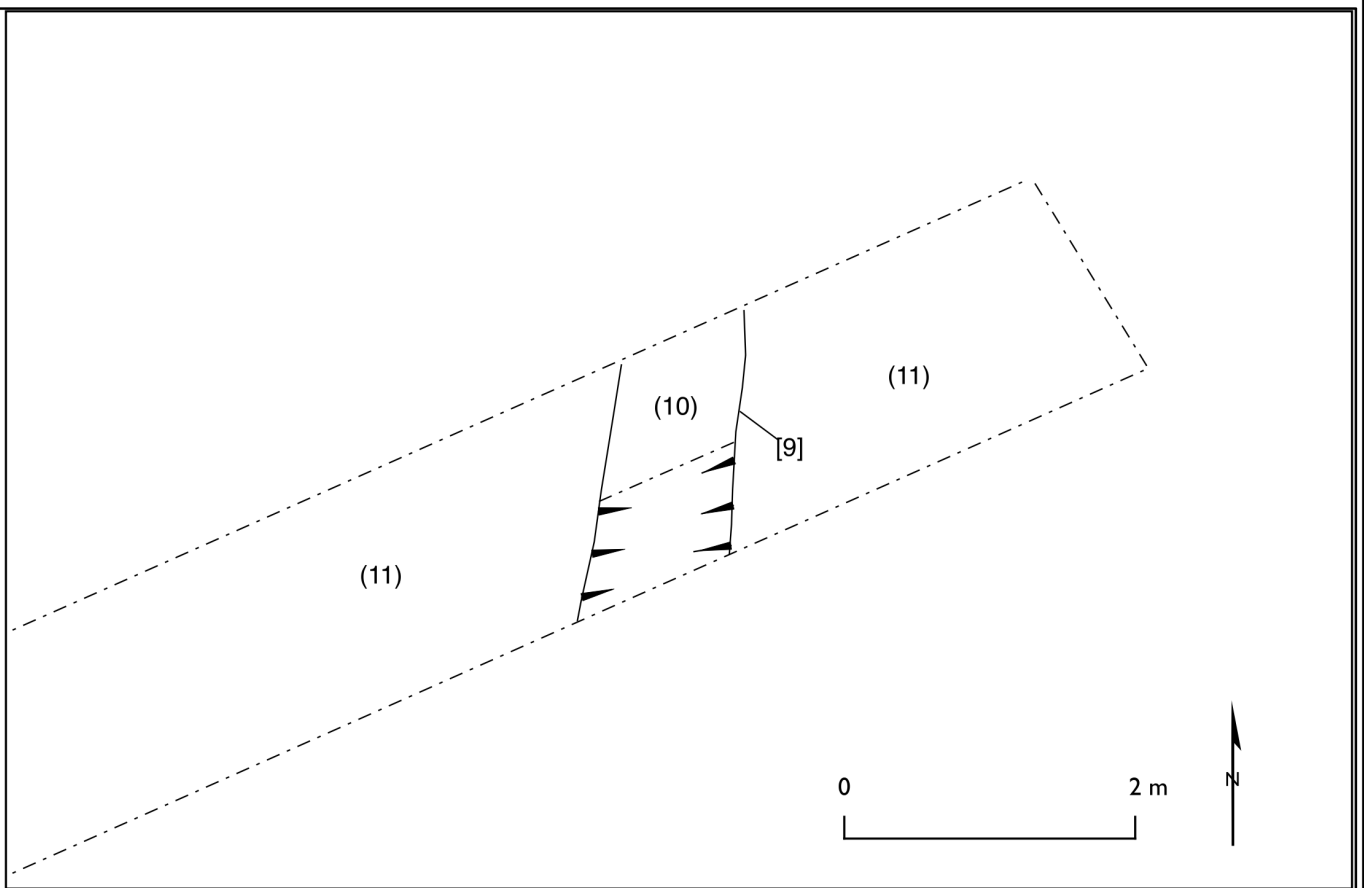
DESCRIPTION // Site and trench location

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FIGURE 2 // Trench 5 plan and section



PROJECT // 1968M - Barnston Mews, Farndon

DESCRIPTION // Trench 5 plan and composite section showing ditch  
and overlying layers

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# PLATES



Plate 1 - Trench 5 pre-excitation looking SW. 1m scale



Plate 2 - Ditch [9] in trench 5 looking SW. 1m scale

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# OASIS FORM

## APPENDIX I