
**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
AT REMENHAM PARK PLACE
HEADMASTERS HOUSE,
REMENHAM,
BERKSHIRE
(RPPH 09)**

**Work Undertaken For
Spink Property Ltd**

January 2010

Report Compiled by
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
PROJECT
SERVICES**



Quality Control
Remenham Park Place Headmaster's House,
Remenham, Berkshire
(RPPH 09)

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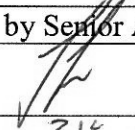
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1. SUMMARY

A watching brief was undertaken during groundworks at Remenham Park Place Headmasters House, Remenham, Berkshire. The watching brief monitored the removal of a concrete slab and slight reduction of ground from beneath the former Headmasters house.

The development site lies in an area of known archaeological potential. Evidence of Iron Age and Early Romano-British occupation was uncovered during an evaluation of the Aspect Golf course east of Parkplace Farm (Oxford Archaeological Unit 1995).

However, the watching brief revealed no remains of Iron Age or Romano-British date. Instead the investigation revealed the foundations of the headmaster's house along with a sequence of recent dumped levelling deposits associated with the construction of the house. Some internal foundations were also observed which raise the possibility that an earlier building may have existed at the site. Outside of the external perimeter of the house foundations the levelling deposits were capped by a layer of topsoil.

No finds or features were revealed during the investigation.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Definition of a Watching Brief

An archaeological watching brief is defined as “*a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits maybe disturbed or destroyed.*” (IFA 1999).

2.2 Planning Background

Archaeological Project Services was commissioned by Spink Property Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the demolition of the former headmaster's house at Remenham Park Place Estate, Remenham, Berkshire. Approval for the development was sought through the submission of planning application 0/2008/1353 to Wokingham Borough Council. The watching brief was carried out between the 18th and 19th of November 2010.

2.3 Topography and Geology

Remenham is located 12km northeast of Reading and 12km west of Maidenhead in the administrative district of Wokingham, Berkshire (Fig 1).

Park Place Estate is located towards the southern end of the Chiltern Hills within a loop of the River Thames. Henley upon Thames lies at the base of Remenham Hill 1km west of the site and marks the county boundary between Berkshire and Oxfordshire. The highest part of the estate lies adjacent to Park Place at a height of c.105m OD. The land drops sharply from the west down towards the River Thames, which lies at c. 35m OD. The ground slopes more gently towards the east. The current work took place to the north of the house and east drive situated on fairly level high ground at National Grid Reference SU 7774 8227.

Local soils are of the Frilsham Association, typically composed of argillic brown earths. These soils overlie solid geology of Cretaceous Upper Chalk, although outcrops of Older River Gravels above clay with flints occur along the northern edge of the application area (Hodge *et al* 1984).

2.4 Archaeological Setting

The development site lies within the Thames Valley, an area rich in well documented archaeological remains ranging in date from the Palaeolithic to the present day. Palaeolithic finds including hand-axes have been found at Harpsden, Remenham Hill and gravel quarries near Remenham village, all close to the development area (Wymer 1968, 202).

Mesolithic and Neolithic artefacts are known from the local area, including early Neolithic pottery and flints from a pit excavated in advance of a gas pipeline at Remenham (Holgate and Start 1985, 6). Numerous Bronze Age find spots in the area probably derive from the River Thames and may represent votive deposition. Furthermore, two Bronze Age barrows and a boundary ditch lie to the north of the development site.

Ritual deposition into the Thames appears to have continued well into the Iron Age, although the number of sites is reduced from that of the preceding period. Two occupation sites are known of this period, one in the river valley south of Henley-on-Thames and the second within the development area itself. This latter site was revealed during an evaluation of the Aspect Golf course east of Parkplace Farm (Oxford Archaeological Unit 1995), as was evidence of Early Roman occupation.

Remenham is mentioned in the Domesday Book *c.* 1086 as *Rameham*, derived from the Old English meaning settlement ‘*ham*’ by the ‘*rima*’ meaning bank; indicating its position by the River Thames (Ekwall 1974, 384). The King held Remenham from Queen Edith at the time of the Domesday survey when it contained a mill, 52 acres of meadow and woodland for fencing.

The manor of Remenham was granted to the Earls of Warwick in 1090 with whom it remained until the end of the 15th

century when it once again became royal property. Remenham parish formerly lay within the Forest of Windsor and was kept largely as park and hunting grounds throughout the medieval period (APS 2004, 3).

In 1719 a manor house was constructed on the site of the current Park Place building. This house was partially destroyed by fire in 1870 and the present mansion was rebuilt by architect Thomas Cundy in the French Renaissance style.

During the early twentieth century, the mansion house was used by Middlesex County Council as a residential school, being taken over by Hillingdon Council in 1965, which maintained the school until its closure in 1988.

An archaeological evaluation prior to redevelopment and extension of Park Place golf course in 2005 revealed deposits of Middle Iron Age to 4th century AD date 1km southeast of the laundry. Evidence for malting, grain storage and rubbish disposal probably associated with settlement was recorded. A medieval gully and post-medieval trackway were also identified (Wood 2005).

A recent evaluation at the Remenham Park Place Laundry (Peachey 2009) revealed a sequence of layers of made up ground, two fragments of redeposited Roman and medieval tile, and two sherds of 16th to 17th century pottery which represent activity at the site prior to the construction of the original house in 1719.

A Watching brief on groundworks associated with the construction of a new access road (Failes 2010) approximately 85m downslope from the western façade of the mansion house revealed two shallow pits that were probably post-medieval in date, two circular features (probably pits) and two dumped deposits of post-medieval or later date and a number of undated features and deposits.

3. AIMS

The aim of the archaeological investigation was to ensure that any archaeological features exposed during the groundworks were recorded and, if present, their date, function and origin determined.

4. METHODS

The former headmasters house was demolished then the concrete slab it was built upon removed by machine. After the slab was removed the ground was reduced slightly with a toothless bucket in order to clarify the extent of the deposits beneath. Each deposit was allocated a unique reference number (context number) with an individual written description. A list of all contexts and their descriptions appears as Appendix 1. A photographic record was compiled and sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10 and 1:20. Recording was undertaken according to standard Archaeological Project Services' practice.

Following excavation the records were checked and a stratigraphic matrix produced. Phasing was assigned based on the nature of the deposits and recognisable relationships between them and supplemented by artefact dating.

5. RESULTS

Following post-excavation analysis one phase was identified;

Phase 1 Recent deposits

Archaeological contexts are listed below and described. The numbers in brackets are the context numbers assigned in the field.

Phase 1 Recent deposits

The earliest deposit encountered during the investigation was a firm dark brown to

dark greyish brown sandy clay (104) with white speckles of chalk, frequent pebbles and patches of lighter clay (Fig 4) (Plates 2-3).

Deposit (104) was overlain by a firm mid greyish brown and yellowish brown sandy clay (103) with frequent brick fragments, patches of clay, pebbles and chalk fragments and flecks (Fig 4) (Plates 2-3).

In the south-western corner of the area of investigation, deposit (103) was sealed by a 0.34m thick deposit of plastic light yellowish brown clay (102) containing frequent fragments of brick (Figs 4 & 5) (Plate 4).

Overlying clay deposit (102) was a 0.13m thick friable mid brownish grey and red sandy clay (101) containing frequent charcoal flecks, fragments of chalk and fragments of brick (Fig 5) (Plate 4).

The uppermost deposit in the sequence was composed of firm and slightly friable dark greyish brown sandy clay (100) topsoil with frequent flecks of CBM, pebbles, chalk flecks and fragments and occasional charcoal flecks (Fig 5) (Plate 4).

6. DISCUSSION

It is interesting to note that when the slab was removed to expose the underlying deposits, internal foundations (albeit very thin ones) were observed (Fig 4) along with the external perimeter foundation. As the headmaster's house was constructed upon a concrete slab above the foundations (and any internal partitions would be above the concrete) this suggests the possibility that there may have been an earlier building at the site.

The two earliest sandy clay deposits exposed in plan contained a good deal of inclusions and were clearly dumped deposits associated with construction of

the headmaster's house. No construction cuts for the foundations were observed, so it is probable that these deposits were laid down as levelling deposits after the foundations had been finished.

These levelling deposits were overlain by two more deposits made ground containing frequent demolition debris.

The latest levelling deposit in this sequence occurred both inside and outside of the building. Outside of the external perimeter foundation this deposit was capped by a layer of topsoil.

7. CONCLUSION

A watching brief was undertaken during groundworks at Remenham Park Place Headmasters House, Remenham, Berkshire.

The work was required due to the site's location in an area of archaeological potential. Evidence of Iron Age and Early Romano-British occupation was uncovered during an evaluation of the Aspect Golf course east of Parkplace Farm (Oxford Archaeology Unit 1995).

The watching brief monitored the removal of a concrete slab and slight reduction of ground from beneath the former Headmasters house.

The investigation revealed a sequence of recent dumped levelling deposits within the interior of the building (associated with its construction). The latest of these levelling deposits occurred both inside and outside the perimeter of the external foundation, where it was overlain by a layer of topsoil.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Project Services wishes to acknowledge the assistance of John Bateman of Spink Property Ltd who

commissioned the fieldwork and post-excavation analysis. This project was coordinated by Tom Lane who also edited the report.

9. PERSONNEL

Project Coordinator: Tom Lane
Site Supervisors: Andrew Failes
Photographic reproduction: Sue Unsworth
Illustration: Andrew Failes
Post-excavation analysis: Andrew Failes

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11. ABBREVIATIONS

APS Archaeological Project Services

IFA Institute of Field Archaeologists

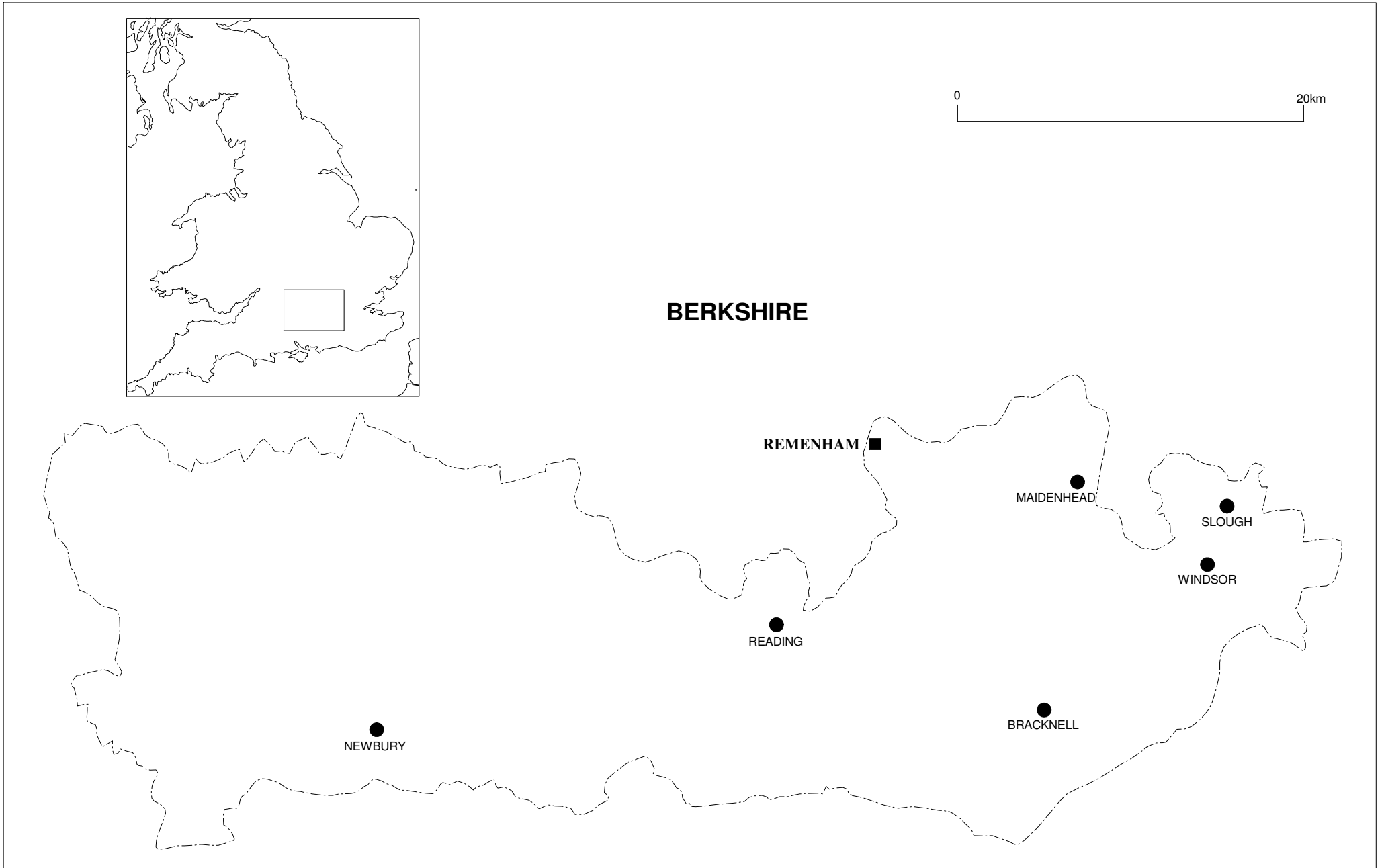


Figure 1 - General location plan

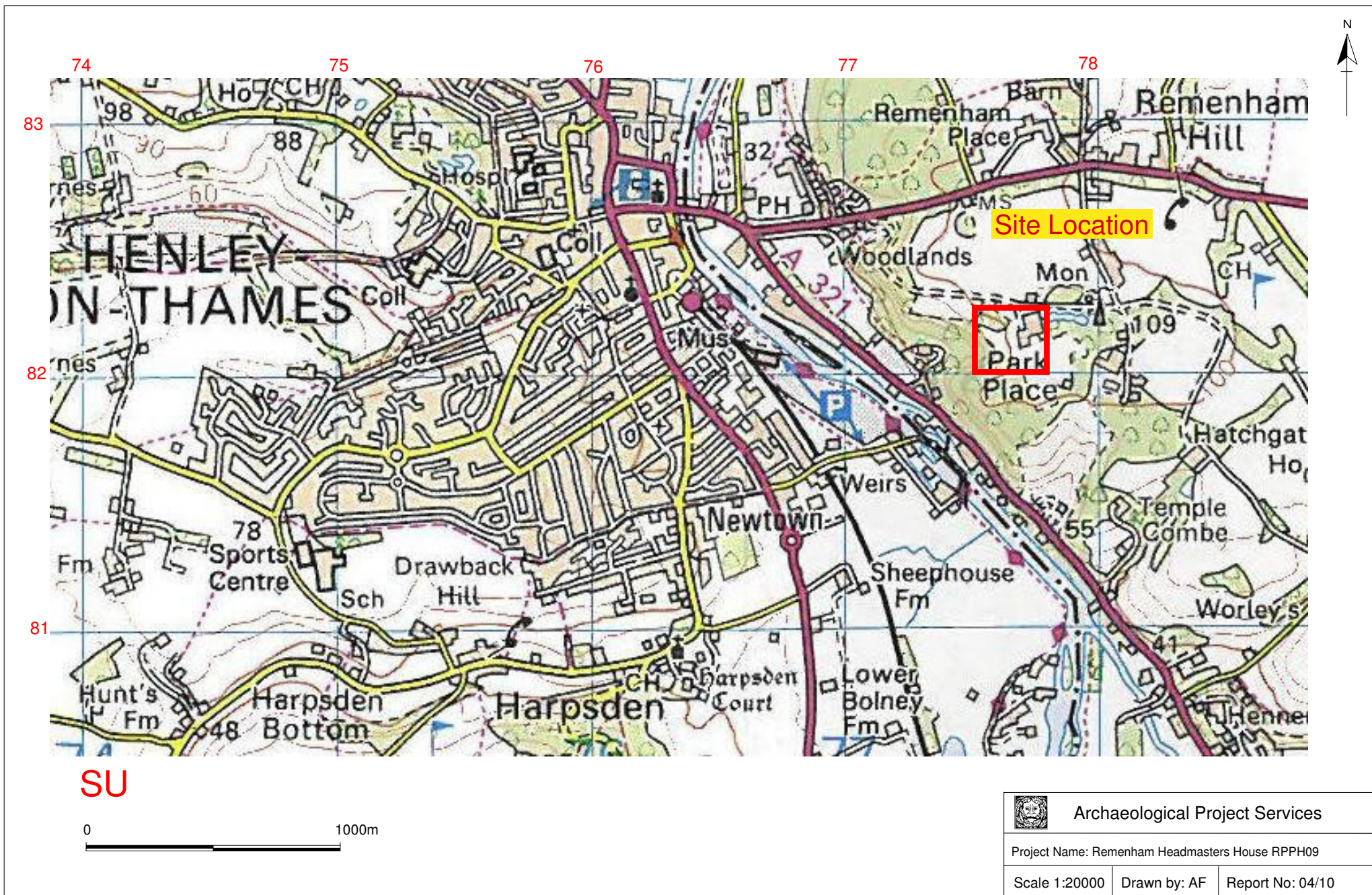
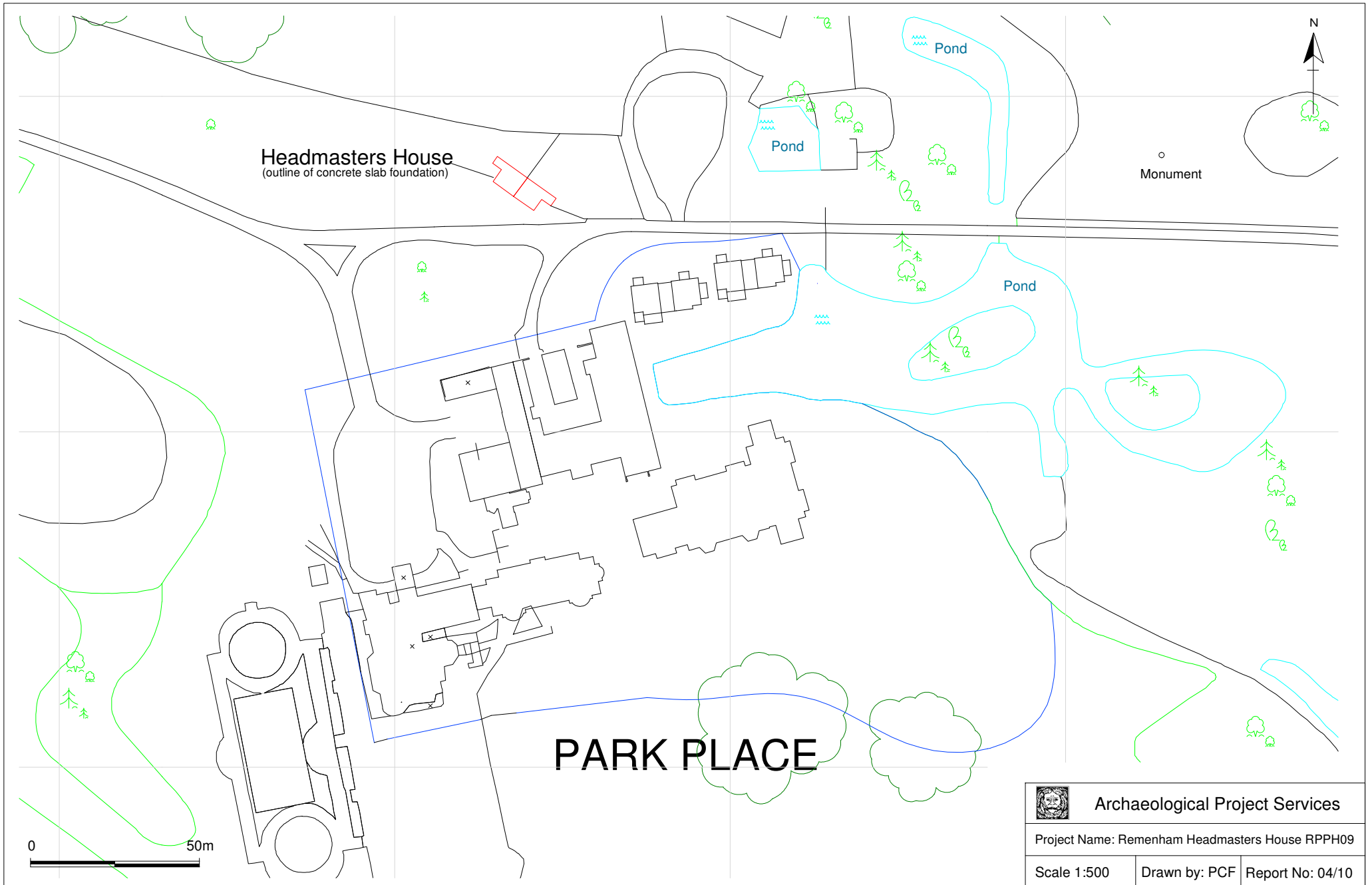


Figure 2 Site Location




 Archaeological Project Services		
Project Name: Remenham Headmasters House RPPH09		
Scale 1:500	Drawn by: PCF	Report No: 04/10

Figure 3 - Location of Headmasters House

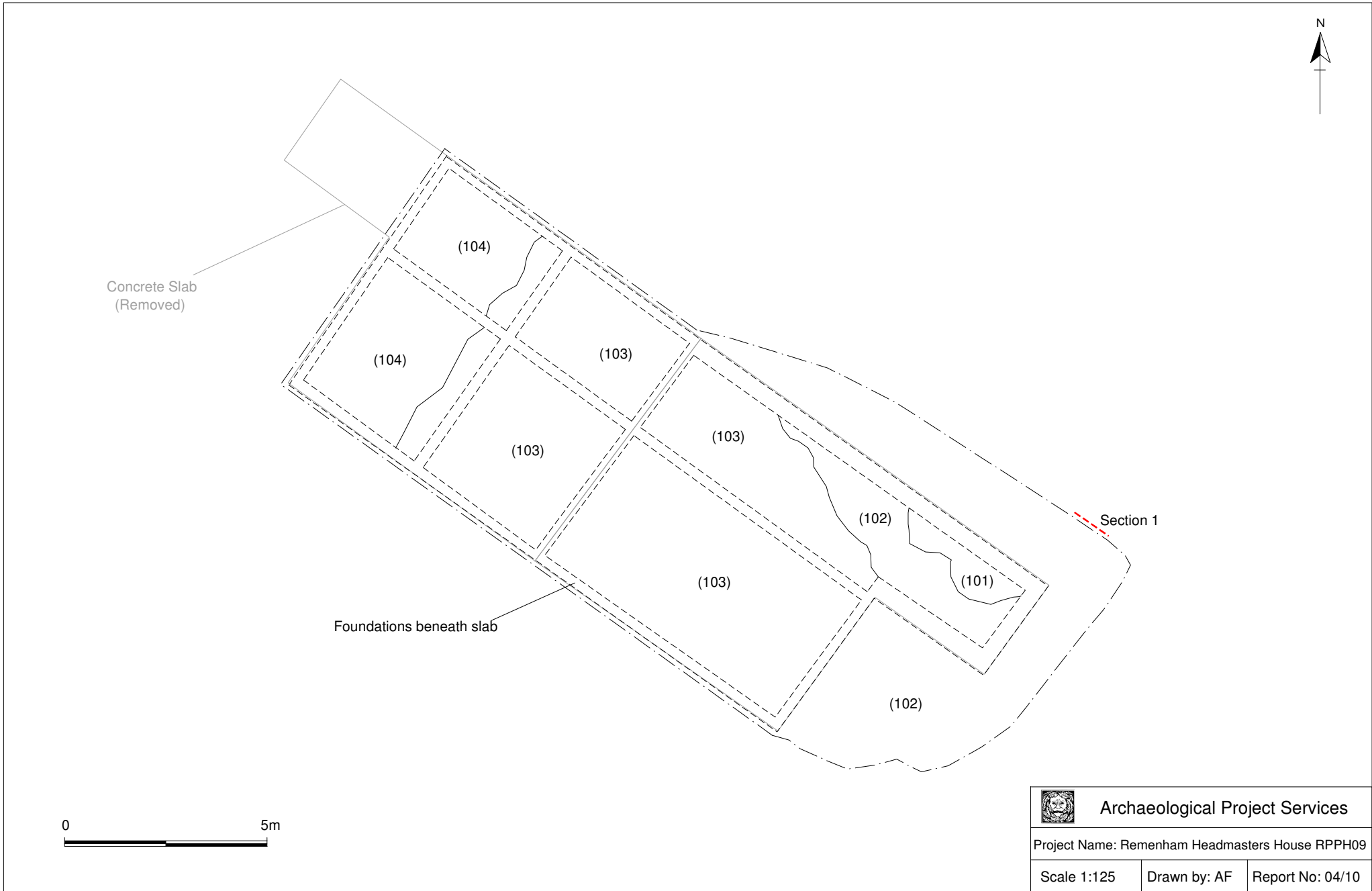
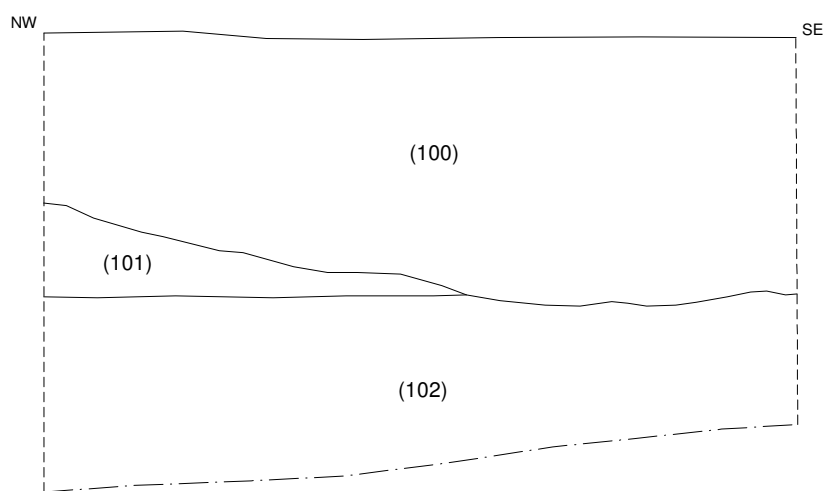


Figure 4 - Plan and Section location

Section 1




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Scale 1:10	Drawn by:AF	Report No: 04/10

Figure 5 - Section 1



Plate 1 – Removal of concrete slab



Plate 2 – Area underneath concrete slab looking north-west



Plate 3 – Area underneath concrete slab looking south-east



Plate 4 – Section 1

APPENDIX 1

Context Descriptions

No.	Description	Interpretation
100	Firm, slightly friable, dark greyish brown sandy clay with frequent flecks of CBM, frequent pebbles, Frequent Chalk flecks and fragments and occasional charcoal, up to 0.34m thick	Disturbed topsoil
101	Friable, mid brownish grey with dark red hue, sandy clay and brick dust with frequent charcoal flecks, frequent small pieces of chalk and frequent fragments of brick, 0.13m thick	Dumped deposit
102	Plastic light yellowish brown clay with frequent fragments of brick	Dumped deposit
103	Firm mid greyish yellowish brown sandy clay with white speckles of chalk, frequent fragments of brick, frequent patches of clay and frequent pebbles	Dumped deposit
104	Firm dark brown to dark greyish brown (with white speckles) sandy clay and chalk fragments with frequent pebbles and patches of lighter clay	Dumped deposit

Appendix 2

GLOSSARY

Context	An archaeological context represents a distinct archaeological event or process. For example, the action of digging a pit creates a context (the cut) as does the process of its subsequent backfill (the fill). Each context encountered during an archaeological investigation is allocated a unique number by the archaeologist and a record sheet detailing the description and interpretation of the context (the context sheet) is created and placed in the site archive. Context numbers are identified within the report text by brackets, e.g. [004].
Cut	A cut refers to the physical action of digging a posthole, pit, ditch, foundation trench, etc. Once the fills of these features are removed during an archaeological investigation the original 'cut' is therefore exposed and subsequently recorded.
Domesday Survey	A survey of property ownership in England compiled on the instruction of William I for taxation purposes in 1086 AD.
Fill	Once a feature has been dug it begins to silt up (either slowly or rapidly) or it can be back-filled manually. The soil(s) that become contained by the 'cut' are referred to as its fill(s).
Iron Age	A period characterised by the introduction of Iron into the country for tools, between 800 BC and AD 50.
Layer	A layer is a term used to describe an accumulation of soil or other material that is not contained within a cut.
Medieval	The Middle Ages, dating from approximately AD 1066-1500.
Mesolithic	The 'Middle Stone Age' period, part of the prehistoric era, dating from approximately 11000 - 4500 BC.
Natural	Undisturbed deposit(s) of soil or rock which have accumulated without the influence of human activity
Neolithic	The 'New Stone Age' period, part of the prehistoric era, dating from approximately 4500 - 2250 BC.
Palaeolithic	The 'Old Stone Age' period, part of the prehistoric era, dating from approximately 500000 - 11000 BC in Britain.
Post-medieval	The period following the Middle Ages, dating from approximately AD 1500-1800.
Romano-British	Pertaining to the period dating from AD 43-410 when the Romans occupied Britain.