
**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
DURING THE REMOVAL OF FOUNDATIONS
FOR FOUR OBELISKS AT
REMENHAM PARK PLACE ESTATE,
REMENHAM, BERKSHIRE
(RPPO 10)**

**Work Undertaken For
Spink Property Ltd**

February 2010

Report Compiled by
Andrew Failes BA (Hons) MA

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
PROJECT
SERVICES**



Quality Control
Remenham Park Place Obelisks,
Remenham, Berkshire
(RPPO 10)

Project Coordinator	Tom Lane
Supervisor	Andrew Failes
Illustration	Andrew Failes
Photographic Reproduction	Sue Unsworth
Post-excavation Analyst	Andrew Failes

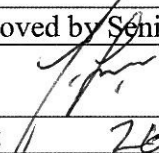
Approved by Senior Archaeologist
 Tom Lane
Date: 26-02-10

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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 four brick and stone foundations upon which four stone obelisks previously stood.

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 Archaeological Unit 1995).

The investigation revealed a sequence of dumped deposits which are probably part of a landscaping project relating to the changing of the main entrance of the house from the western façade to the northern. The entrance at the western façade led to the ground floor of the house while the northern entrance leads to the first floor. A large hill was constructed to the north of the house to facilitate this. Although the deposits remain undated, documentary evidence suggests this took place prior to 1797.

Above these deposits were more recent deposits of made ground associated with the laying of a recent tarmac surface and the current construction works at the site.

No finds or features were identified 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 removal and demolition of the foundations for four stone obelisks at Remenham Park Place Estate, Remenham, Berkshire. The four obelisks are located 50 metres north of the entrance to the house through the porte-cochere, with two of each standing either side of the drive leading to the north entrance. 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 on the 17th of February 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 (Fig 2). 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 50 metres north of the northern entrance to the house (Fig 3) on fairly level high ground at National Grid Reference SU 7769 8220.

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).

Lord Archibald Hamilton built a villa at Park Place shortly after he acquired the estate in 1719.

In 1752 the property was bought by General Henry Seymour Conway who made substantial alterations to the house during the 1750's. From 1760 through to the 1780s Conway enlarged the parkland and embellished the estate with various ornamental structures and buildings.

Lord Malmesbury purchased the property in 1797 and a sketch plan of this date shows a lane or drive ending in a U-shaped turning area at the north front of the house. The plan also shows a porch at the centre of the north front which by this stage was the principle entrance to the house.

The estate was sold to Spurling in 1816 who exchanged it in 1824 with his cousin, Ebenezer Fuller-Maitland. It was Fuller-Maitland who erected the four stone obelisks, two on each side of the drive leading to the north entrance, located 50 metres north of the entrance through the porte-cochere (Fig 3, Plate 1). They were set on what was grass immediately before the drive opens out at the entrance at the centre of the north end of the forecourt.

The obelisks measure 4.4 metres high and the bases are 70cm square. The central pair that flank the drive, are 4.9 metres apart

and overall the obelisks are spaced over 10.75 metres. There is evidence in the sides of the bases for channels for the ironwork of a fence and possibly sockets for the supports of the gate.

The obelisks probably date from the 18th century and were brought from Stanstead Hall in Essex by Fuller-Maitland.

The estate was sold again in 1867 to Charles Easton who made extensive alterations to the house (Page and Ditchfield 1923, 162).

The estate passed to Mr. J. Noble prior to a fire in 1870 which partially destroyed the house. As a result, Noble had the house extensively remodelled and reorganised by Thomas Cundy, architect to the Grosvenor estate in London and the third generation of the family to hold that position. The house was re-built of rendered brick in the French Renaissance style (English Heritage 1999).

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), 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 four stone obelisks were removed from their bases exposing the foundations upon which they were laid Plates (2 & 5). The brick and stone foundations were then removed by machine; as a result two rectangular trenches were created either side of the access road leading to the northern entrance of the house (Figs 3 & 4). The trenches were then cleaned and rendered vertical. 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. 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 two phases were identified;

Phase 1 Undated deposits
Phase 2 Recent deposits

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

Phase 1 Undated deposits

In Trench 1 the earliest deposit identified in the sequence was a firm, light brown and white mixture of clay and chalk (005), containing frequent fragments of ceramic building material (CBM) (Fig 5, Section 1) (Plates 3 & 4). This deposit was at least 0.15m thick.

Overlying deposit (005) was a 0.38m thick, firm, mid brown and white chalk speckled clay (004), containing frequent fragments of CBM and a moderate amount of pebbles (Fig 5, Section 1) (Plate 3).

Deposit (004) was sealed by a 0.15m thick, firm, mid brown and white mixture of clayey sand and chalk fragments (003), containing frequent fragments of CBM (Fig 5, Section 1) (Plate 3).

The earliest deposit identified in the base of Trench 2 comprised firm to hard white chalk fragments in a brown clay matrix (010) (Fig 5, Section 2) (Plates 6 & 7).

Deposit (010) was overlain by a 0.38m thick, firm, mid brown clay with white chalk speckles (009), which contained frequent fragments of CBM and a moderate amount of pebbles (Fig 5, Section 2) (Plate 6).

An 80mm thick layer of firm dark brown clayey sandy gravel (008) sealed deposit (009) (Fig 5, Section 2) (Plate 6).

Phase 2 Recent deposits

In Trench 1, deposit (003) was overlain by a 0.10m thick layer of mid orange sand and gravel (002) (Fig 5, Section 1) (Plate 3).

The sand and gravel deposit (002) was sealed by a 0.40m thick deposit of friable mid greyish brown sand and gravel (001) with frequent large stones (Fig 5, Section 1) (Plate 3).

In Trench 2 a recent deposit of friable mid orange sand and gravel (007) overlay deposit (008) and had a thickness of 0.28m (Fig 5, Section 2) (Plate 6).

The sand and gravel deposit (007) was in turn overlain by a 0.22m thick layer of loose, dark purple gravel (006) (Fig 5, Section 2) (Plate 6).

6. DISCUSSION

The earliest deposits recorded in Trench 1 and 2 (005)/(010) both occur at *c.* 0.90m below the current ground surface and contain a mixture of redeposited natural chalk in a clay matrix along with demolition or building debris in the form of frequent CBM inclusions. The similarities in the character of these deposits and the depth at which they occur suggest that these are the same deposit. The inclusions and redeposited natural chalk within the layer indicate the deposit does not have a natural origin and that the deposit has been deliberately dumped. The dumping of this deposit probably relates to landscaping work associated with the changing of the main entrance of the house from the western façade to the northern front. The entrance at the western façade led to the ground floor of the house while the northern entrance leads to the first floor. A large hill was constructed to the

north of the house to facilitate this. One source indicates that this occurred after about 1830 (Anon 2005, 55), however, this date is probably erroneous as a sketch plan from 1797 shows a lane or drive ending in a U-shaped turning area at the northern front of the house and a porch at the centre of the northern front which by this stage was the principle entrance to the house.

Deposits (009) and (004) occurred in Trenches 1 and 2 respectively and were similar in character and thus probably representative of the same episode of dumping over deposit (005)/(010). This deposit also probably relates to the building up of ground at the northern front of the house associated with the change of entrance from the western façade to the northern.

In Trench 1 a third dumped deposit (003) of uncertain date, but similar character to those below it, overlay (009)/(004) and was also probably made ground associated with the change of entrances at the house.

In Trench 2 the deposit overlying (009)/(004) was somewhat different in character containing a large quantity of gravel (008). This deposit is also clearly made ground, but its difference in character suggests the possibility that it may be associated with later groundworks than the deposits below it.

In both Trenches 1 and 2 a layer of orange sand and gravel (002)/(007) hardcore overlying deposits (003) and (008) represents made up ground of a much more recent date. This deposit probably formed the base upon which a recent tarmac surface, which was removed during the groundworks, was laid.

In Trench 1 deposit (001) overlies the orange sand and gravel (002)/(007) and represents made up ground associated with current construction works, as does the layer of dark purple gravel (006) recorded overlying deposit (002)/(007) in Trench 2.

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 with evidence of Iron Age and Early Romano-British occupation uncovered during an evaluation of the Aspect Golf course east of Parkplace Farm (Oxford Archaeological Unit 1995).

The watching brief monitored the removal of four brick and stone foundations upon which four stone obelisks previously stood. The obelisks themselves probably date from the 18th century and were brought from Stanstead Hall in Essex by E. Fuller-Maitland after he acquired the property in 1824.

The investigation revealed a sequence of dumped deposits which are probably part of a landscaping project relating to the changing of the houses main entrance from the western façade to the northern. The entrance at the western façade led to the ground floor of the house while the northern entrance leads to the first floor. A large hill was constructed to the north of the house to facilitate this. Although the deposits remain undated, a sketch plan from 1797 shows a lane or drive ending in a U-shaped turning area at the northern front of the house and a porch at the centre of the northern front which by this stage was probably the principle entrance to the house.

Above these deposits were more recent deposits of made ground associated with the laying of a recent tarmac surface and the current construction works at the site.

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
 CBM Ceramic Building Material
 DoE Department of the Environment
 GSGB Geological Survey of Great Britain
 IFA Institute of Field Archaeologists

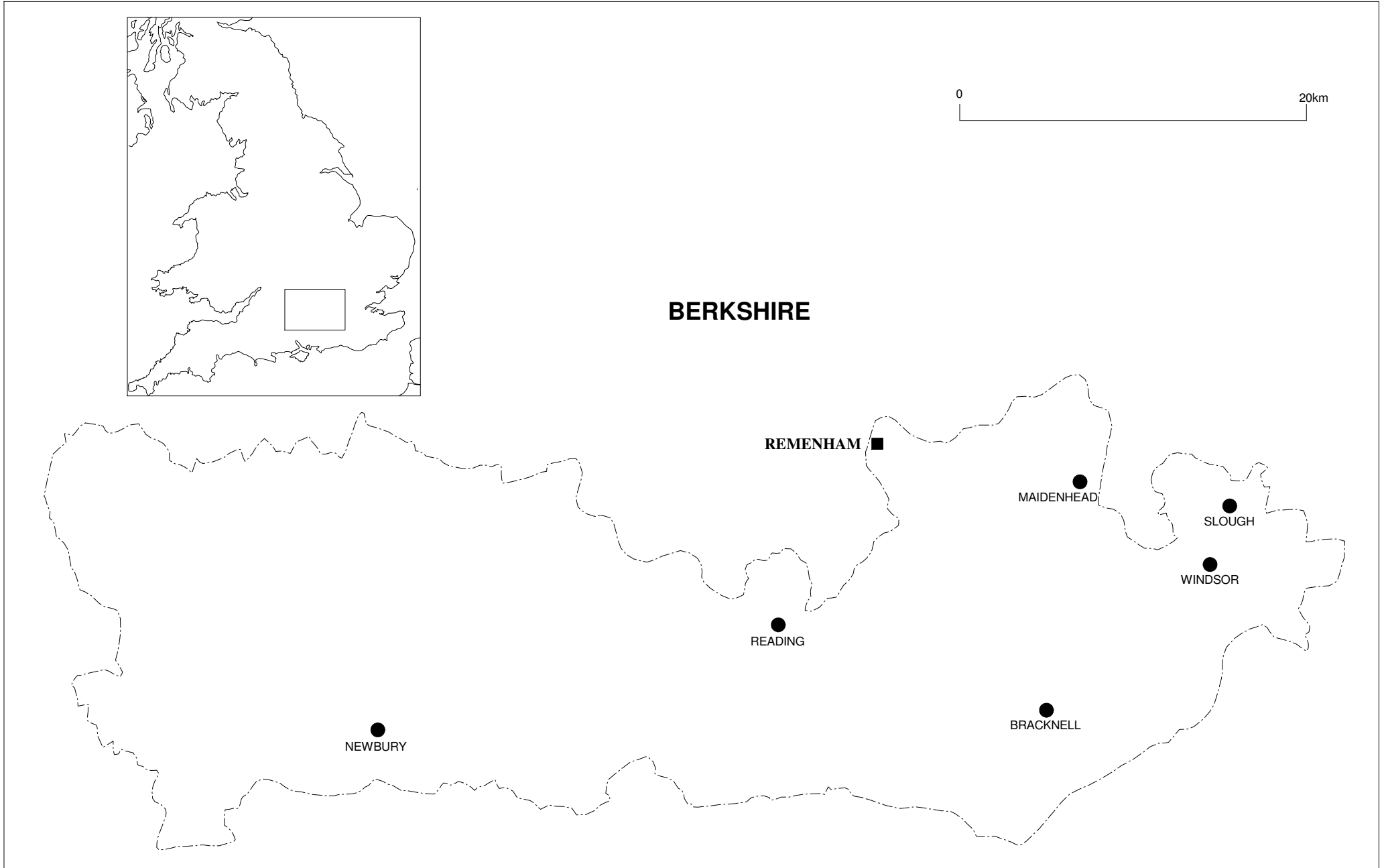


Figure 1 - General location plan

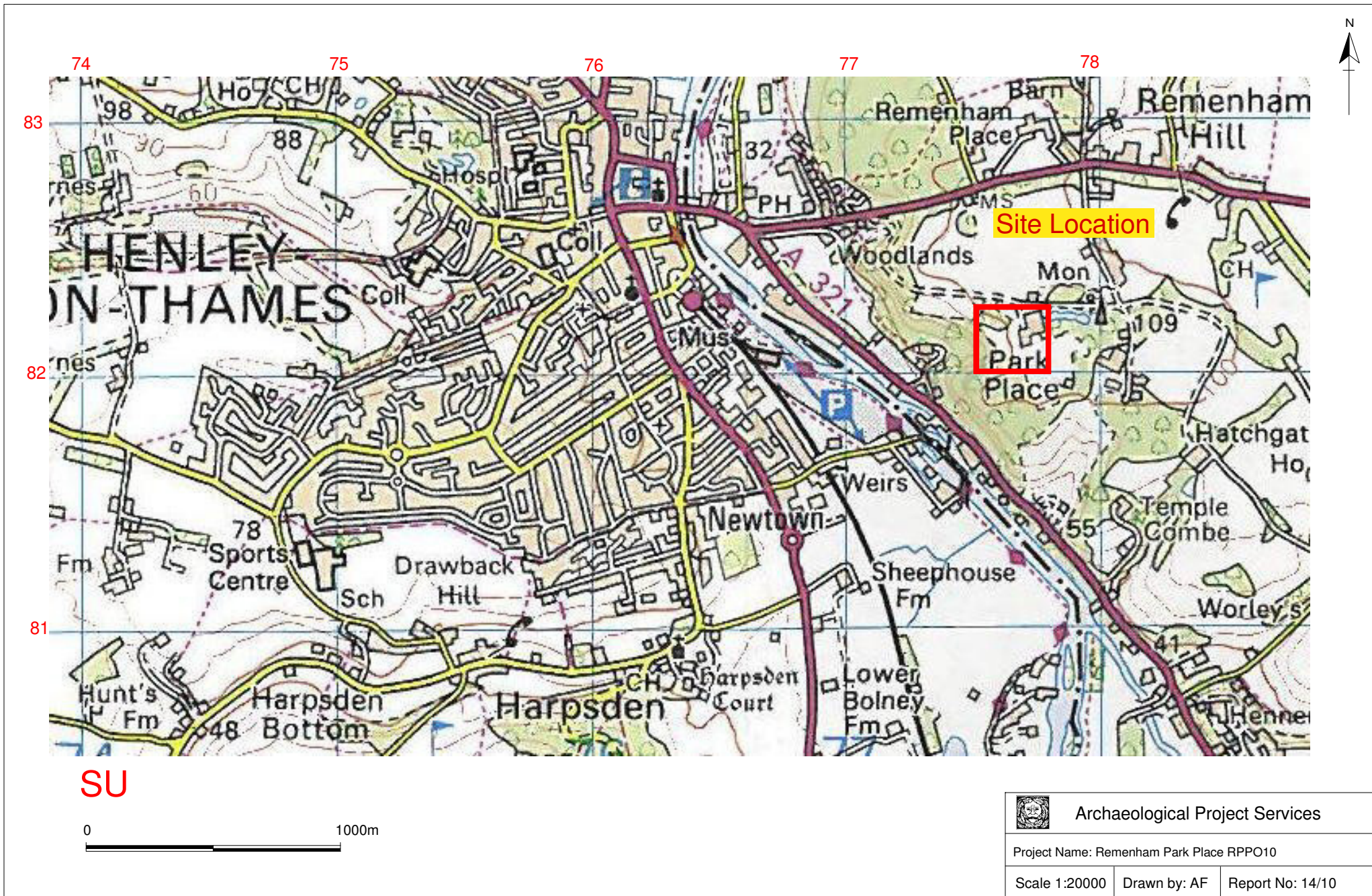


Figure 2 Site Location

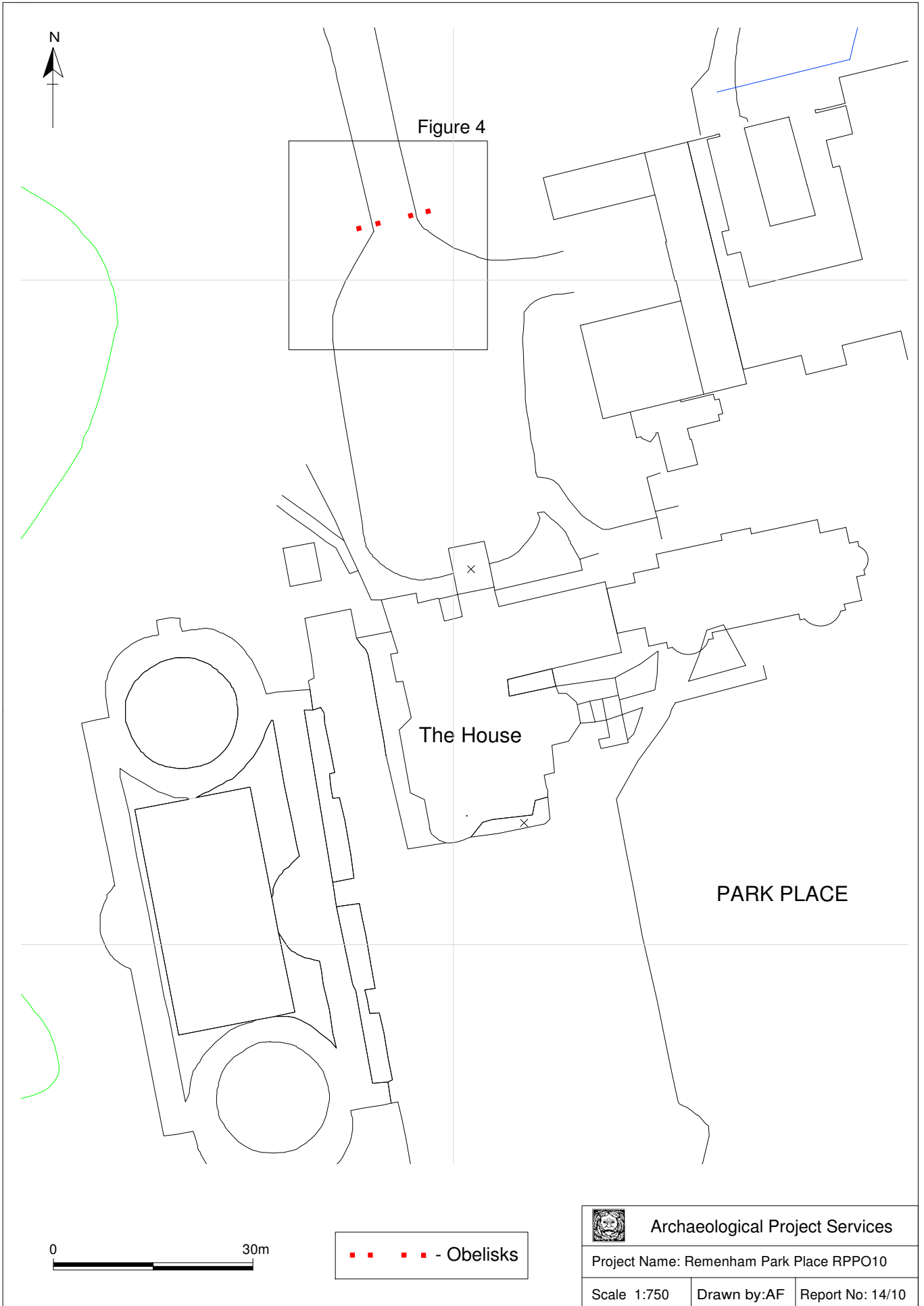


Figure 3 - Location of obelisks

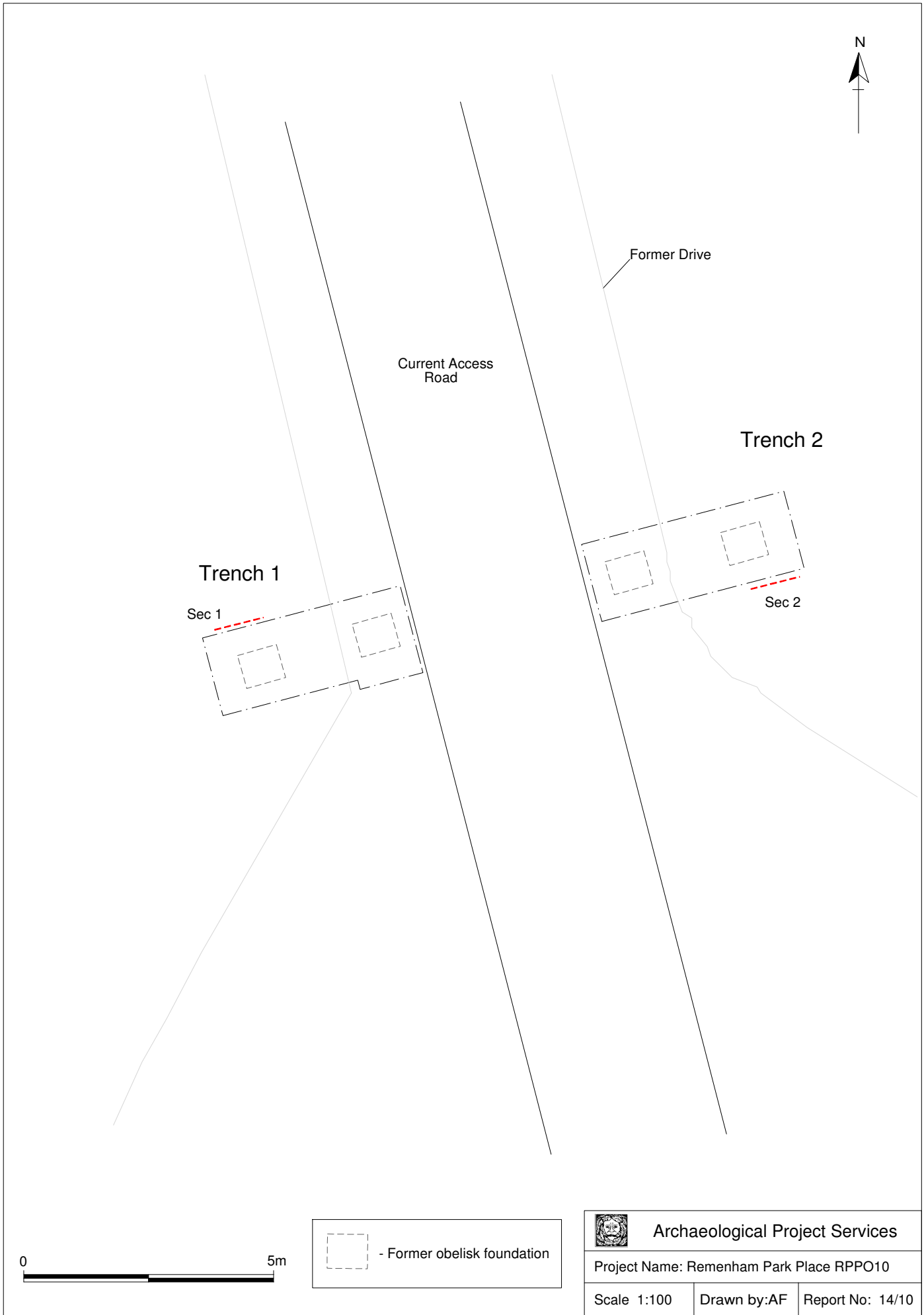
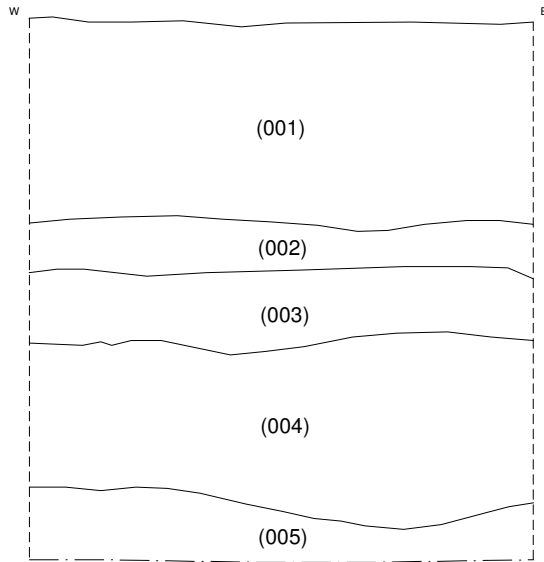
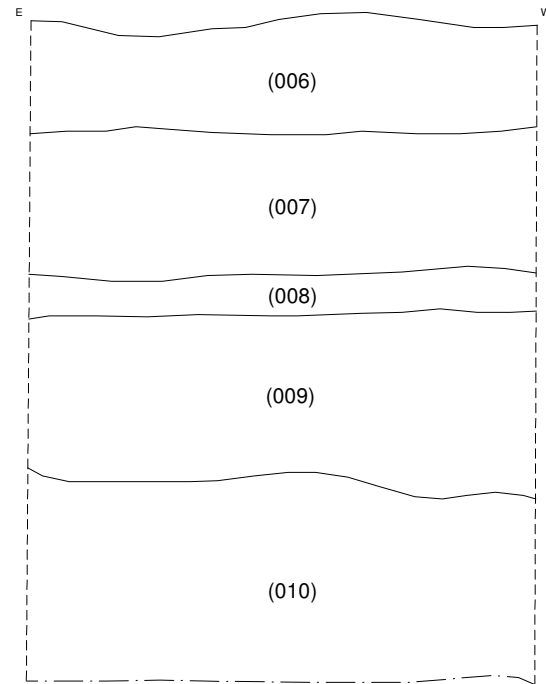


Figure 4 - Trench and Section locations

Section 1



Section 2



Archaeological Project Services

Project Name: Remenham Park Place RPPO10

Scale 1:15

Drawn by: AF

Report No: 14/10

Figure 5 - Sections 1 & 2



Plate 1 – Setting of stone obelisks prior to the current works



Plate 2 – Obelisk foundations in Trench 1 prior to excavation



Plate 3 – Section 1



Plate 4 – Base of Trench 1



Plate 5 – Removal of obelisk foundations in Trench 2



Plate 6 – Section 2



Plate 7 – Base of Trench 2

Appendix 1

CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

No.	Description	Interpretation
001	Friable mid greyish brown sand and gravel containing frequent large stones, 0.40m thick	Made up ground
002	Loose mid orange sand and gravel, 0.10m thick	Made up ground
003	Firm mid brown and white speckled clayey sand and chalk fragments containing frequent fragments of CBM, 0.15m thick	Made up ground
004	Firm mid brown and white speckled clay with frequent CBM fragments, chalk flecks and moderate pebbles, 0.38m thick	Made up ground
005	Firm light brown and white clay and chalk with frequent fragments of CBM, at least 0.15m thick	Made up ground
006	Loose dark purple gravel, 0.22m thick	Made up ground
007	Friable mid orange sand and gravel, 0.28m thick	Made up ground
008	Firm dark brown clayey sandy gravel, 80mm thick	Made up ground
009	Firm mid brown clay with white chalk speckles frequent CBM fragments and moderate pebbles, up to 0.38m thick	Made up ground
010	Firm brown and white chalk fragments in clay with moderate CBM fragments, at least 0.40m thick	Made up ground

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.

Appendix 3

THE ARCHIVE

The archive consists of:

10	Context records
1	Photographic record sheet
1	Section record sheet
1	Plan record sheet
1	Daily record sheet
1	Sheets of scale drawings

All primary records are currently kept at:

Archaeological Project Services
The Old School
Cameron Street
Heckington
Sleaford
Lincolnshire
NG34 9RW

The ultimate destination of the project archive is:

Museum of Reading,
Town Hall,
Blagrove St,
Reading
Berkshire
RG1 1QH

Accession Number: TBC.

Archaeological Project Services Site Code: RPPO 10

The discussion and comments provided in this report are based on the archaeology revealed during the site investigations. Other archaeological finds and features may exist on the development site but away from the areas exposed during the course of this fieldwork. *Archaeological Project Services* cannot confirm that those areas unexposed are free from archaeology nor that any archaeology present there is of a similar character to that revealed during the current investigation.

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