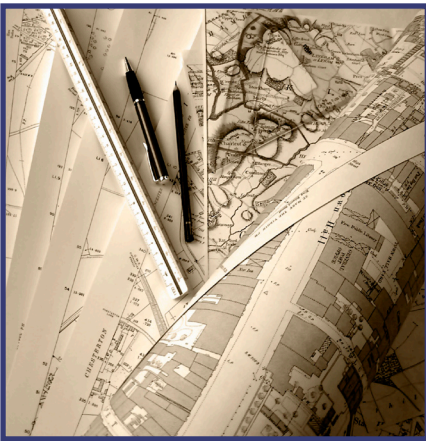


King Ethelbert School Birchington Kent



Archaeological
Watching Brief Report



March 2012

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Signed.....

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Plate 1 Section 600

SUMMARY

Between December 2008 and February 2009 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at King Ethelbert School, Gravesend in Kent. Kent County Council commissioned the work in advance of works carried out by Denne Construction. The watching brief formed the last phase of archaeological investigations at the site during part of Wave 3 of the Kent Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme and revealed one possible archaeological feature.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 During December 2008 and February 2009 as part of the Government's Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme, OA carried out a watching brief at King Ethelbert School, Birchington, Kent on behalf of the construction contractor, Denne Construction and the developer, Kent County Council (KCC). The watching brief took place in accordance with KCC's archaeological specification which incorporates standard requirements for archaeological watching briefs in Kent (KCC 2008). The present watching brief is the last stage of the fieldwork and is one of a series carried out in compliance with archaeological planning conditions attached to each of the Wave 3 BSF Schools (Planning Application No. TH/08/534).

1.1.2 The Wave 3 BSF programme includes redevelopment of 11 schools in the County of Kent. Through the BSF programme, significant investment in buildings and in Information and Communication Technology is being made to support the Government's education reform agenda. Funds are intended to be devolved to local authorities and schools throughout England to spend on maintaining and improving their schools buildings and in some cases for major rebuilding and remodelling projects. The redevelopment at King Ethelbert School will include foundations for a new school building and associated works including access, services and landscaping.

1.1.3 The proposed development site is centred on NGR TR 313 693 and encompasses c 5.4 hectares currently comprising school buildings, recreation areas and playing fields (Fig. 1). It is divided between the parishes of Birchington to the west and Acol to the east, although in the 19th century it lay entirely within the historic parish of Birchington. It is currently situated within the administrative area of Thanet District Council.

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The underlying geology of the site is Cretaceous Upper Chalk overlain by Pleistocene and recent Head Brickearth (younger) (GSGB, 1980, Sheet 274). The site is located at an approximate height of 22m above Ordnance Datum and has been landscaped into a series of three terraces to the north of the present development area.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief has been the subject of a separate archaeological desktop study. OA was commissioned to undertake the desktop assessment on behalf of KCC in 2007. A walkover survey of the development area formed part of the assessment strategy. The archaeological assessment examined a study area of 1km radius around the school and included a gazetteer of known archaeological findspots/investigations and historic buildings in the vicinity of the development. Each of these was allocated an OA gazetteer number in the assessment document (OA 2008). The results are summarised below.
- 1.3.2 No Scheduled Monuments, Registered Parks and Gardens, Historic Battlefields or Listed Buildings were identified on the site. One archaeological investigation has previously been undertaken within the site, no report of these investigations was available, but it is understood that nothing of archaeological significance was found. Two cropmarks of potential Bronze Age round barrows and a linear feature have been noted within the southern half of the school playing field. The scheduled Quex Iron Age and Roman settlements also lie within 1km of the site.
- 1.3.3 In April 2008 OA carried out an evaluation within the school grounds (OA 2008b). The results of this evaluation suggested that there was limited potential for significant archaeology to survive in patches of undisturbed ground in the north-east corner of the King Ethelbert School grounds. With regard to the present development, the area of archaeological potential is limited to the western part of the new building footprint, as demonstrated by the presence of a ditch, of possible mid to late Iron Age date.
- 1.3.4 There has also been one dubiously dated archaeological find from the early prehistoric period, and there are no known early prehistoric sites in the immediate vicinity. No early prehistoric finds were made during the 2008 evaluation. As suggested by the presence of the cropmarks, and the recorded later prehistoric evidence from the 2008 evaluation, there is still potential for the site to contain further archaeological deposits of the later prehistoric period.
- 1.3.5 Within 1km of the site there are numerous findspots of Roman material, although none within the site. No Roman features or finds were noted during the 2008 evaluation.
- 1.3.6 There is only one findspot of early medieval origin within 1km of the Site, and only one example of later medieval activity. No early medieval or medieval evidence was recorded during the 2008 evaluation.
- 1.3.7 Map regression has shown that before the construction of the school, there may have been no buildings located on the site during the post-medieval period. The site lay outside the post-medieval settlements of Westgate-On-Sea and Birchington until the end of the 20th century and was used mainly as arable land. No significant post-medieval evidence was recorded during the 2008 evaluation.
- 1.3.8 In April 2008, a rapid assessment survey and photographic record of the existing school buildings was carried out. The survey was carried out as part of a wider

programme of assessment of 11 Kent BSF Schools (OA 2008). The buildings are considered to be of no particular architectural merit, but may have some local interest from a social historical point of view. No further building recording work is recommended.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The aims of the archaeological watching brief were to contribute to heritage knowledge of the area through the recording of any archaeological remains exposed as a result of excavations in connection with the groundworks. Particular attention was to be paid to the character, height below ground level, condition, date and significance of the deposits.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The watching brief monitored the excavations for the groundwork comprising foundations for the proposed new school buildings and associated works including access, service and landscaping. The groundworks were monitored regularly during the initial excavation of the building footprint and then periodically throughout the construction process.

2.2.2 Excavation was undertaken by a mechanical 360 degree excavator using a flat-bladed bucket to reveal any archaeological remains. If possible archaeological remains were encountered, machine excavation was to cease to allow the remains to be investigated further.

2.2.3 The archaeologist on site inspected the surfaces revealed. Any archaeological structures or features revealed were to be recorded in plan and section as appropriate to Section 6 of KCCs Specification for Archaeological Watching Brief Part B.

2.2.4 A general photographic record of the work was maintained.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

3.1.1 The watching brief revealed an undated recut ditch running in an east-west alignment (Fig. 2). It was observed for approximately 6m before becoming obscured under the new building foundations. This ditch, however, had not been observed in earlier visits monitoring the building foundation strip, suggesting that the ditch is likely to terminate within this area. The possible terminal end of the ditch was probably truncated away by an area of deeper excavation for building footings. The earlier ditch (608) measured 1.95m in width and reached a depth of 1.05m. It contained a single fill of a pale orange brown silty loam. The recut (604) measured 1.64m in width and 0.64m in depth. This ditch contained three fills: 605, a powdery chalk deposit that was present only on the south side, 606, a pale pinkish brown silty loam

and 607, the upper fill comprising a mixed banded pale orange brown silty clay. The extent of the ditch to the west is unknown.

3.2 **Finds**

3.2.1 No finds were recovered during the watching brief.

3.3 **Palaeo-environmental remains**

3.3.1 No deposits were encountered which were considered suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling.

4 **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

4.1.1 The groundworks monitored during the watching brief revealed an undated recut ditch running in an east-west alignment for approximately 6m. This ditch had not been encountered in the earlier evaluation phase.

4.1.2 No evidence of the small prehistoric linear feature observed during the evaluation was detected.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>
600	Layer	-	-	0.30	Topsoil - dark brown silty clay.	No
601	Layer	-	-	0.10	Made ground.	No
602	Not used					
603	Layer	-	-	-	Natural chalk.	No
604	Cut	-	1.64	0.64	Recut E-W ditch. 'U' shaped.	No
605	Fill	-	-	0.40	Fill of 604. Chalky side fill.	No
606	Fill	-	1.40	0.58	Fill of 604. Pale pinkish brown silty loam.	No
607	Fill	-	1.22	0.36	Fill of 604. Mixed banded very pale orange upper fill.	No
608	Cut	-	1.95	1.05	E-W ditch. Roughly 'V' shaped.	No
609	Fill	-	-	0.90	Fill of 608. Pale orange brown silty loam.	No

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

KCC, 2008, King Ethelbert School, Birchington, Kent. Specification for Archaeological Watching Brief. Part A

KCC, 2008, King Ethelbert School, Birchington, Kent. Specification for Archaeological Watching Brief. Part B

OA, 2008, Kent Schools BSF Programme. Historic Buildings Assessment and Recording

OA, 2008b, King Ethelbert School, Birchington, Kent. Archaeological Evaluation Report

OA, 2008a, King Ethelbert School, Birchington, Kent. Archaeological Desktop Assessment

Wilkinson, D (ed.), 1992, OAU Fieldwork Manual, Oxford Archaeological Field Unit

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: King Ethelbert School, Birchington, Kent.

Site code: KS3ACK 08

Grid reference: NGR TQ 313 693

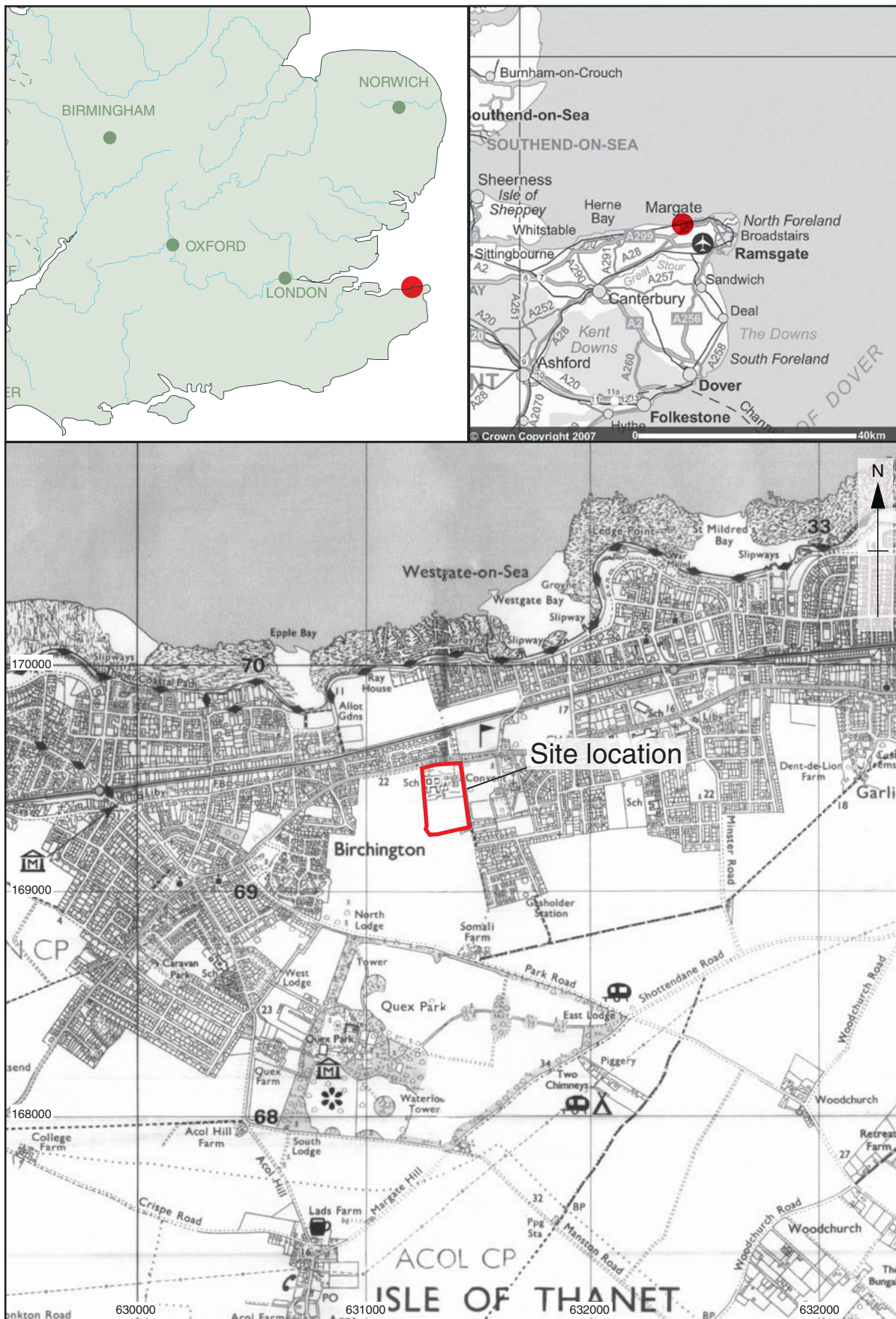
Type of watching brief: General Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: December 2008 - February 2009.

Area of site: 5.4 hectares

Summary of results: The watching brief identified no archaeological remains.

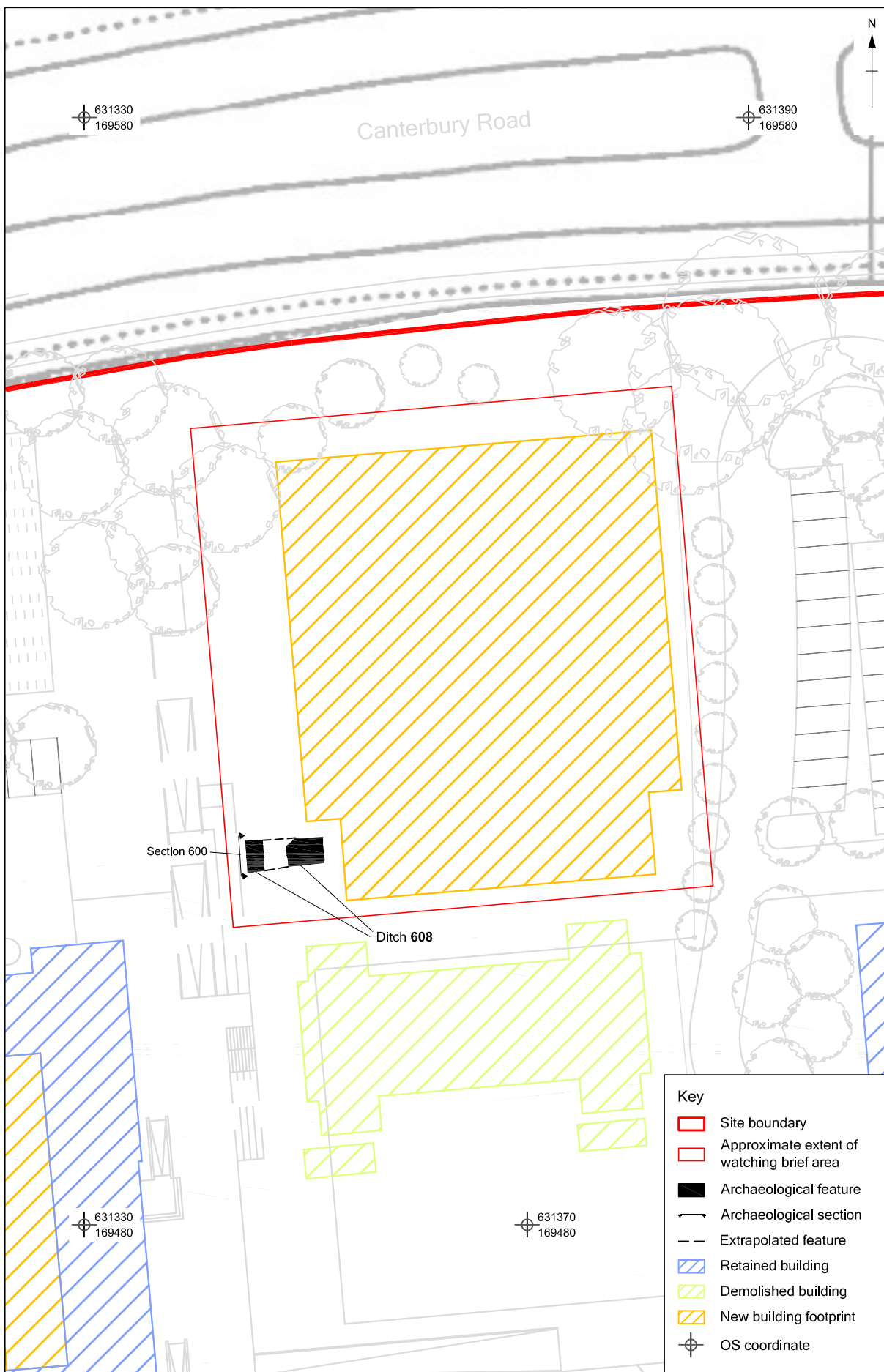
Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES.



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Figure 1: Site location

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Key	
	Site boundary
	Approximate extent of watching brief area
	Archaeological feature
	Archaeological section
	Extrapolated feature
	Retained building
	Demolished building
	New building footprint
	OS coordinate

CHECKED BY: MB 13.03.2012

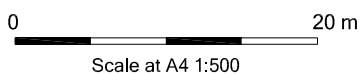


Figure 2: Plan of watching brief area

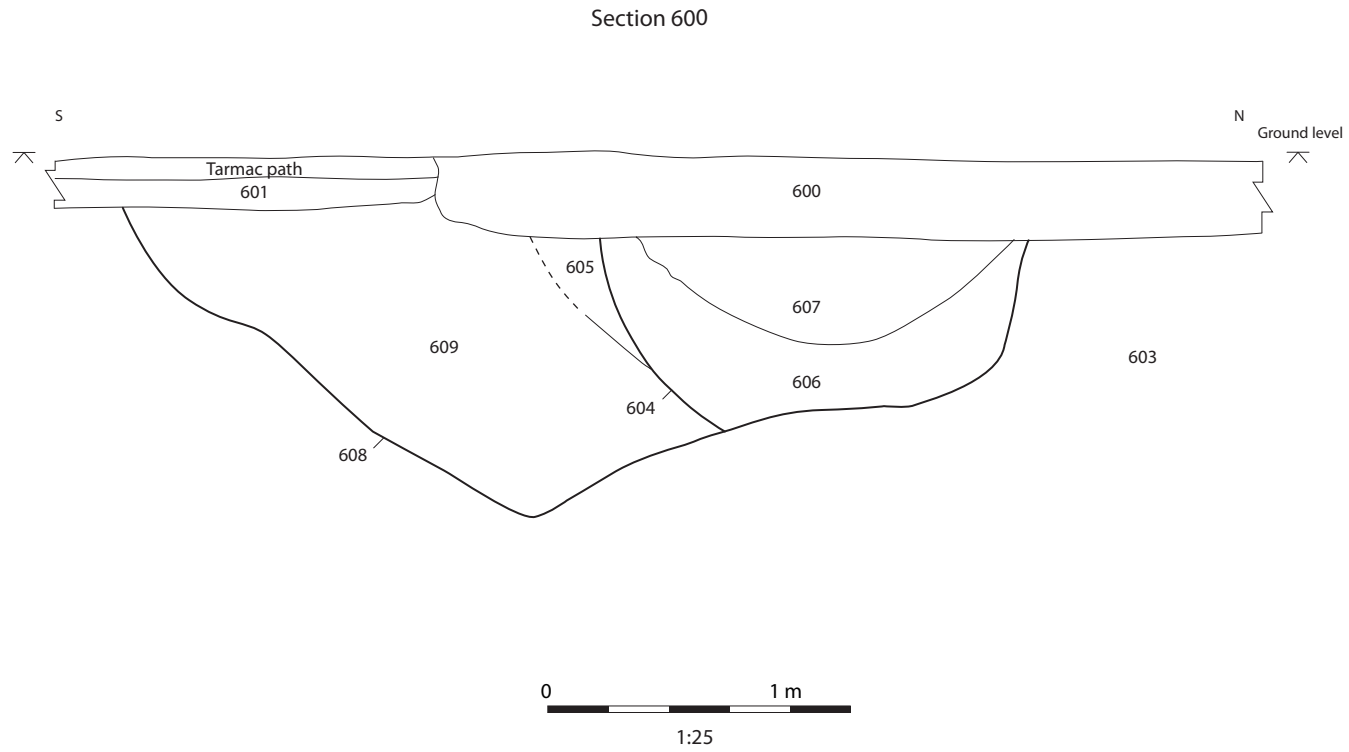


Figure 3: Section 600

Plates



Plate 1: East facing section of ditches 608 and 603



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