



# Iffley Academy, Oxford

## Archaeological Evaluation Report

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## Iffley Academy, Oxford

### *Archaeological Evaluation Report*

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## Summary

In February and March 2019 Oxford Archaeology undertook a trial trench evaluation for Kier Construction as part of the planning condition for the redevelopment and construction of new school buildings at Iffley Academy, Oxford. Seven trenches were excavated covering the footprint of the new construction and the temporary compound. No archaeological deposits or artefacts were encountered.

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## Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Kier Construction for commissioning this project. Thanks are also extended to David Radford, who monitored the work on behalf of Oxford City Council, for his advice and guidance.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Steve Lawrence. The fieldwork was directed by Jim Mumford and Bob Macintosh, who were supported by Chris Richardson and Caroline Souday. Survey and digitizing was carried out by Diana Chard and Ann Kilgour. Thanks are also extended to the teams of OA staff that cleaned and packaged the finds under the management of Leigh Allen and prepared the archive under the management of Nicky Scott.



## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Project background and scope of work**

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Kier Construction to undertake a trial trench evaluation ahead of redevelopment and construction of a new building at the Iffley Academy, Oxford. The proposed development comprises the demolition of several of the current school buildings and the construction of a new two-storey structure with associated parking and play areas.
- 1.1.2 The evaluation was undertaken as a condition of planning permission (planning ref. 17/03380/FUL). An archaeological brief was set by David Radford of Oxford City Council detailing the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary to discharge the planning condition (OCC 2018). This brief addressed the archaeological strategy for the main development site. Subsequent to the issue of the brief, potential impacts were also identified for the location of the temporary construction compound. Discussions between OA and David Radford established an appropriate level of evaluation to also include this area within the investigation.
- 1.1.3 The work comprised the excavation of seven trenches, three measuring 20m by 1.6m and four measuring 10m by 1.6m. The larger trenches were positioned to investigate the footprint of the proposed structure with the smaller array investigating the temporary construction compound.
- 1.1.4 Prior to the fieldwork, OA produced a written scheme of investigation (WSI) outlining how the evaluation would be undertaken to fulfil the requirements of the brief and subsequent expansion of the scope (OA 2018). This document was approved by David Radford before commencing the evaluation.

### **1.2 Location, topography and geology**

- 1.2.1 The site is located within the north-western boundary of Iffley, less than 3 miles from Oxford city centre, and is centred on SP 52950 04080 (Fig. 1). The site currently consists of Iffley Academy buildings, parking areas and playing fields. It is bounded to the north by further playing fields, to the west by housing running along Meadow Lane, to the east by housing developments and to the south by residential housing on Church Way. The site lies within the administrative area of Oxford City Council.
- 1.2.2 The British Geological Survey (BGS) records the underlying solid geology as West Walton Formation Mudstone which was laid down as a sedimentary deposit between 156 and 161 million years ago in an environment of shallow seas. Sand and gravel of the Northmoor Sand and Gravel Member are recorded as superficial deposits in the north-western part of the site (BGS website data).

### **1.3 Archaeological and historical background**

- 1.3.1 OA completed a desk-based assessment (OA 2017) of the site as part of the planning application. The following is a summary from that document.
- 1.3.2 The site lies within a general area of Romano-British pottery production, one of the largest in Roman Britain. Large-scale settlement remains and pottery production sites

have been recorded in the vicinity of the site, although there is no evidence of activity of this date and nature within the site itself.

- 1.3.3 The site is also located within closes that were established off Church Road by the 18th century and may represent plots of greater antiquity within the historic core of Iffley village. These closes may have had an agricultural function but may also have been occupied in the 12th-13th century as the local economy expanded.
- 1.3.4 The date and character of the long north-south boundary depicted on the 1789 Davis and later maps is of local interest and may indicate earlier settlement or access arrangements within this part of the site.

## 2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The project aims and objectives as outlined in the WSI were as follows:

- i. to determine or confirm the general nature of any remains present,
- ii. to determine or confirm the approximate extent, date or date range of any remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence,
- iii. to assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape,
- iv. to determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence, and the forms in which such evidence may survive.

### 2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The evaluation was completed in two phases. The first phase was undertaken in February 2019 and consisted of four trenches within the temporary compound, arranged around the existing hard standing of the former all-weather pitch foundation (Fig. 2). The second phase was completed in March 2019 with the three larger trenches excavated within the former car park area (Fig. 3). The asphalt surface was removed by the construction contractor in this area prior to OA's attendance.

2.2.2 All trenches were located using GPS survey immediately prior to excavation with minor amendments to the layout presented in the WSI to take into account the site conditions and limitations such as existing fences and revised compound extent. Following survey, machine excavation was undertaken by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket under strict archaeological supervision. All overburden deposits were removed down to the level of the natural geology or archaeological deposits depending on which were encountered first.

2.2.3 Following machine excavation, all trenches were assessed for the presence or absence of archaeological deposits. Any features were appropriately sample excavated and all trenches were fully recorded before the results were conveyed to David Radford. In the absence of any positive results David Radford did not visit the site and the trenches were backfilled by OA or the construction contractor (compound area) following his approval.

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

- 3.1.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below, and include a stratigraphic description of the trenches that contained features that cannot be fully described in Appendix A. The details of all trenches with dimensions and depths of deposits can be found in Appendix A. Finds data and spot dates are tabulated in Appendix B.
- 3.1.2 Context numbers reflect the trench numbers unless otherwise stated, e.g. pit 102 is a feature within Trench 1, while ditch 304 is a feature within Trench 3.

### 3.2 General distribution of archaeological deposits

- 3.2.1 No archaeological features or deposits were present in any of the trenches. Relatively undisturbed soil sequences were recorded in Trenches 1-4 (Fig. 4, Plates 1 and 3) whilst truncated and modern made-ground deposits relating to the asphalt hard standing were recorded in Trenches 5-7 (Fig. 4, Plates 2 and 4). A single modern feature was recorded in Trench 2 and evidence of the modern landscaping and terracing of the topography was recorded in Trenches 5-7.

### 3.3 Trench 2

- 3.3.1 A large sub-rectangular pit (204) was cut into the subsoil horizon in Trench 2. This measured at least 3.2m across and was infilled with orange-brown clayey silt (203) containing obviously modern white ceramic and glass fragments (not retained). The pit was partly excavated to establish that it had an entirely modern origin before being recorded and backfilled. The fill was overlain by the topsoil (200).

### 3.1 Trench 5

- 3.1.1 Trench 5 produced a sequence of deposits raising the former ground level to form the level playing area and car park. The former subsoil and topsoil horizons were encountered (504 and 500) overlying the clay geology. A redeposited clayey soil horizon (503) sealed the former topsoil and was overlain by modern rubble and crushed materials (502 and 501) forming the foundation for the current asphalt surface. Nineteenth-century pottery was recovered from the former topsoil horizon (500).

### 3.1 Trench 6

- 3.1.1 Trench 6 also produced evidence of terracing and levelling. More limited raising of the existing topography was recorded along with truncation and removal of the former topsoil and subsoil horizons across part of the trench. The former subsoil horizon (603) and topsoil (600) were sealed by a redeposited clay (602) with crushed asphalt (601) above this forming the base for the existing asphalt surface. The crushed asphalt lay directly over the former subsoil across part of the trench where the land had been terraced.

## 3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 The evaluation produced four small pottery sherds from two of the buried topsoil horizons in Trenches 5 and 6. Context 500 produced two sherds of transfer printed ware (TPW) willow pattern dish and one base sherd of refined white ware (REFW) from a cylindrical preserve jar dating from 1805 to 1900. Context 600 produced a single sherd of transfer printed ware (TPW) from a tea cup rim dating from 1830 to 1850.

## **4 DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Interpretation**

- 4.1.1 The results from the evaluation demonstrate the absence of archaeological features and deposits.
- 4.1.2 Various levels of modern disturbance were recorded across the evaluation, although some area of raised ground did preserve the former topsoil and subsoil horizons in Trenches 5 and 6. These produced a small quantity of 19th-century pottery.
- 4.1.3 The soil horizon that was sealed below these layers dated to the mid to late 19th century and relates to the open fields show on the early maps.
- 4.1.4 The evaluation has shown the site was open agricultural land as shown on maps and in records until the construction of the school and academy with associated playing fields in the mid to late 20th century.

## APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology.					Length (m)	10
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.40
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
100	Layer	-	0.28	mid grey-brown silty clay topsoil	-	-
101	Layer	-	0.12	light brown silty clay subsoil	-	-
102	Layer	-	-	Natural geology (orange-brown clay)	-	-

Trench 2						
General description					Orientation	N-S
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil overlying a modern feature cutting the subsoil overlying natural geology.					Length (m)	10
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.45
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
200	Layer	-	0.15	mid grey-brown silty clay topsoil	-	-
201	Layer	-	0.15	light brown silty clay subsoil	-	-
202	Layer	-	-	Natural geology (orange-brown clay)	-	-
203	Fill	-	-	Fill of a modern pit	Modern ceramics and glass (not retained)	-
204	Cut	-	-	Modern feature (pit)	-	-

Trench 3						
General description					Orientation	N-S
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology.					Length (m)	10
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.48
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
300	Layer	-	0.23	mid grey-brown silty clay topsoil	-	-
301	Layer	-	0.25	light brown silty clay subsoil	-	-
302	Layer	-	-	Natural geology (orange-brown clay)	-	-

Trench 4						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of present topsoil, over made ground levelling for the playing field, overlying buried soil horizon over subsoil overlying natural geology.					Length (m)	10
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.55
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
400	Layer	-	0.13	mid grey-brown silty clay topsoil	-	-
401	Layer	-	0.13	light brown silty clay made ground	-	-
402	Layer	-	0.15	mid grey-brown silty clay buried topsoil	-	-
403	Layer	-	0.20	light brown silty clay subsoil	-	-
404	Layer	-	-	Natural geology (orange-brown clay)	-	-

Trench 5						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of series of modern made ground over the former topsoil and subsoil horizons overlying natural geology.					Length (m)	14
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	1
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
500	Layer	-	0.32	Buried former topsoil, dark grey-brown silty clay	Pottery	19th C
501	Layer	-	0.12	Limestone rubble, made ground (with asphalt over)	-	-
502	Layer	-	0.20	Made ground, clay with cement, brick and tile fragments	-	-
503	Layer	-	0.28	Made ground, redeposited and compacted clay/soil	-	-
504	Layer	-	0.08	Former subsoil, light brown silty clay	-	-
505	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 6						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of series of made up material over topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of silty clay.					Length (m)	20
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.48
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
600	Layer	-	0.18	Buried former topsoil, dark grey-brown silty clay	Pottery	19th C



601	Layer	-	0.18	Made ground, crushed asphalt	-	-
602	Layer	-	0.20	Made ground, redeposited clay	-	-
603	Layer	-	0.10	Former subsoil, light brown silty clay	-	-
604	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 7						
<b>General description</b>					<b>Orientation</b>	E-W
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of made ground layered and pressed into soft natural geology as a foundation for the asphalt hard standing.					<b>Length (m)</b>	20
					<b>Width (m)</b>	1.5
					<b>Avg. depth (m)</b>	0.40
<b>Context No.</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Width (m)</b>	<b>Depth (m)</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Finds</b>	<b>Date</b>
700	Layer	-	0.40	Made ground (tarmac above)	-	-
701	Layer	-	0.18	Made ground	-	-
702	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

## APPENDIX B FINDS REPORTS

### B.1 Pottery

*By John Cotter*

Context	Description	Date
500	2 sherds transfer printed ware (TPW) willow pattern dish; 1 base sherd refined white ware (REFW) cylindrical preserve jar. 41g	1805–1900
600	1 sherd transfer printed ware (TPW) tea cup rim. 3g	1830–50

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## APPENDIX C      BIBLIOGRAPHY

BGS <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> accessed 09/05/2019

OCC, 2018 The Iffley Academy, Iffley Turn Oxford, Brief for Archaeological Recording, Oxford City Council Urban Design and Heritage Team, unpublished planning document produced by David Radford for Oxford City Council 24/9/2018

Oxford Archaeology, 2017 Proposed Development at Iffley Academy, Oxford Archaeological Desk-based Assessment, unpublished document

Oxford Archaeology, 2018 Proposed Development at Iffley Academy, Oxford Written Scheme of Investigation Archaeological Evaluation, unpublished document

**APPENDIX D****SITE SUMMARY DETAILS**

<b>Site name:</b>	Iffley Academy, Oxford
<b>Site code:</b>	OXIA 19
<b>Grid Reference:</b>	SP 52950 04080
<b>Type:</b>	Evaluation
<b>Date and duration:</b>	Four trenches excavated on 6 February and three trenches excavated on 18 March 2019.
<b>Area of site:</b>	4 x 10m trenches and 3 x 20m trenches.
<b>Location of archive:</b>	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museum Services in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS: 2019.33.
<b>Summary of results:</b>	In February and March 2019 Oxford Archaeology undertook a trial trench evaluation for Kier Construction as part of the planning condition for the redevelopment and construction of new school buildings at Iffley Academy, Oxford. Seven trenches were excavated covering the footprint of the new construction and the temporary compound. No archaeological deposits or artefacts were encountered.



Figure 1: Site location

X:\o\OXIAEV\_Iffley\_Academy\_Oxford\010\geomatrics\02 CAD\OXIAEV\_Iffley\_Academy\_Proposed\_trench\_locations\_2019-02-05.dwg(Figure 2 A4)\*\*\*\*steve.lawrence\* 10 May 2019

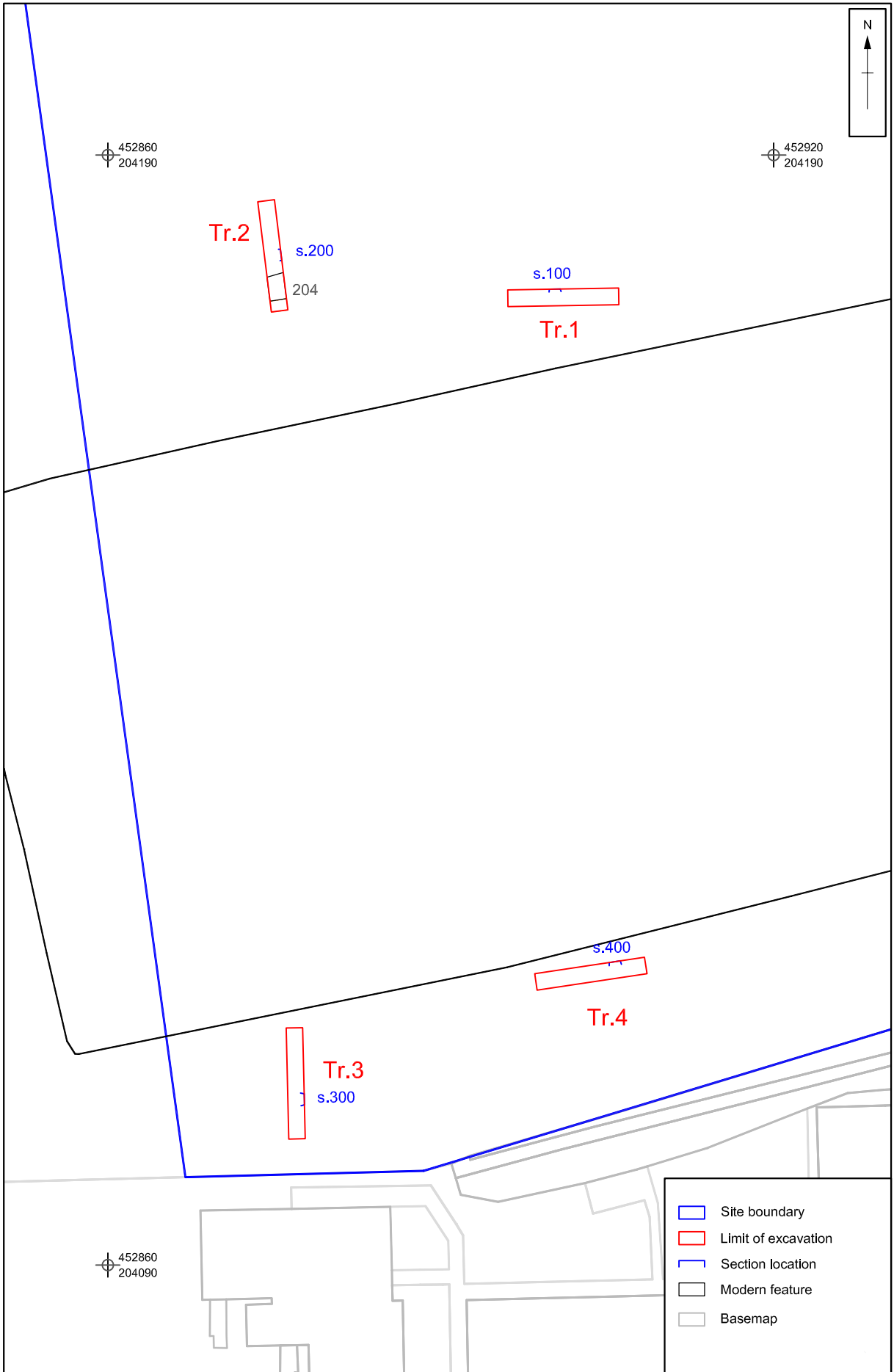


Figure 2: Trenches 1-4

0 20 m  
Scale at A4 1:500

X:\o\OXIAEV\_Iffley\_Academy\_Oxford\010\geomatics\02 CAD\OXIAEV\_Iffley\_Academy\_Proposed\_trench\_locations\_2019-02-05.dwg(Figure 3 A4)\*\*\*\*steve.lawrence\* 10 May 2019

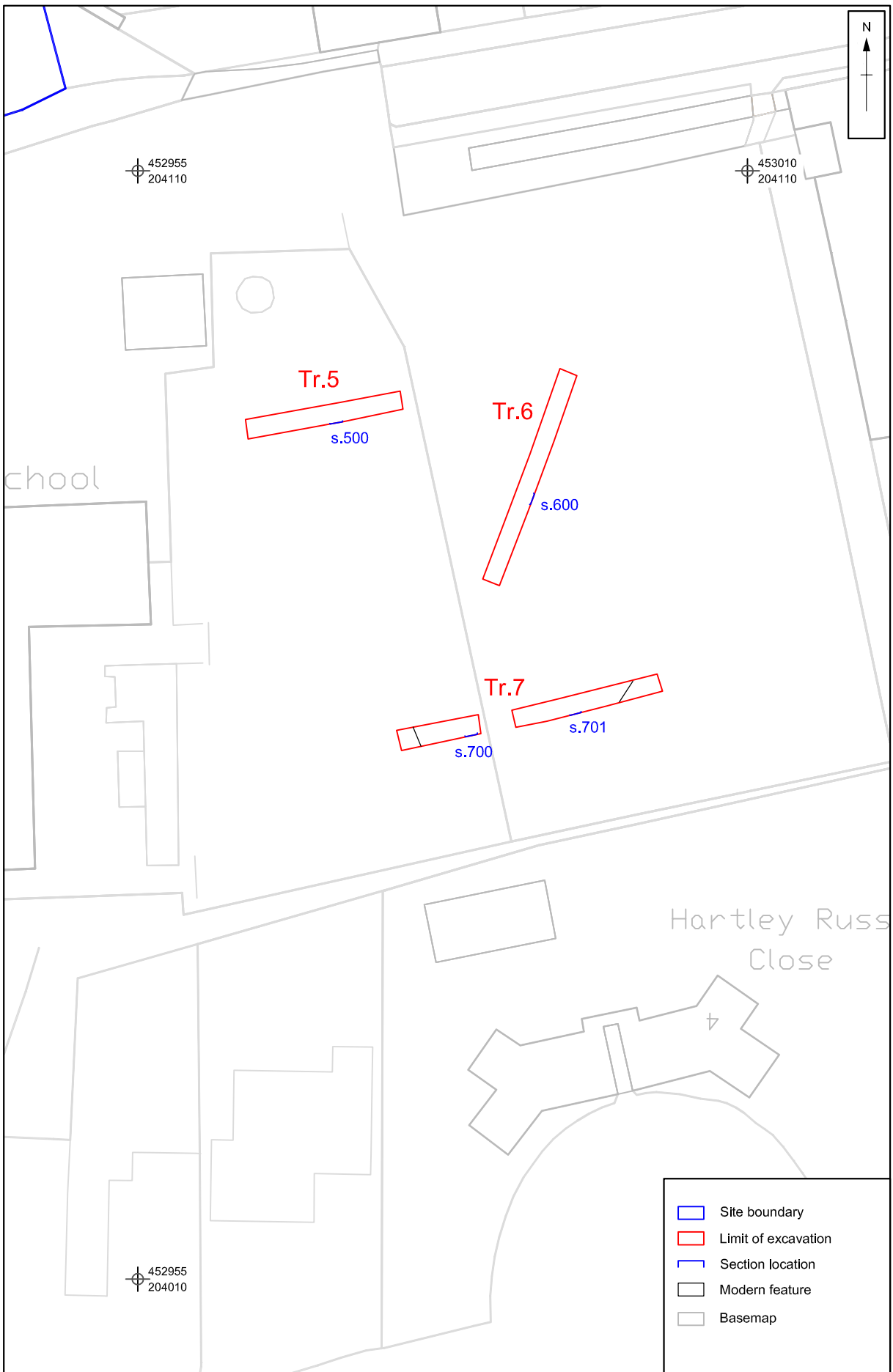


Figure 3: Trenches 5-7

0 20 m  
Scale at A4 1:500

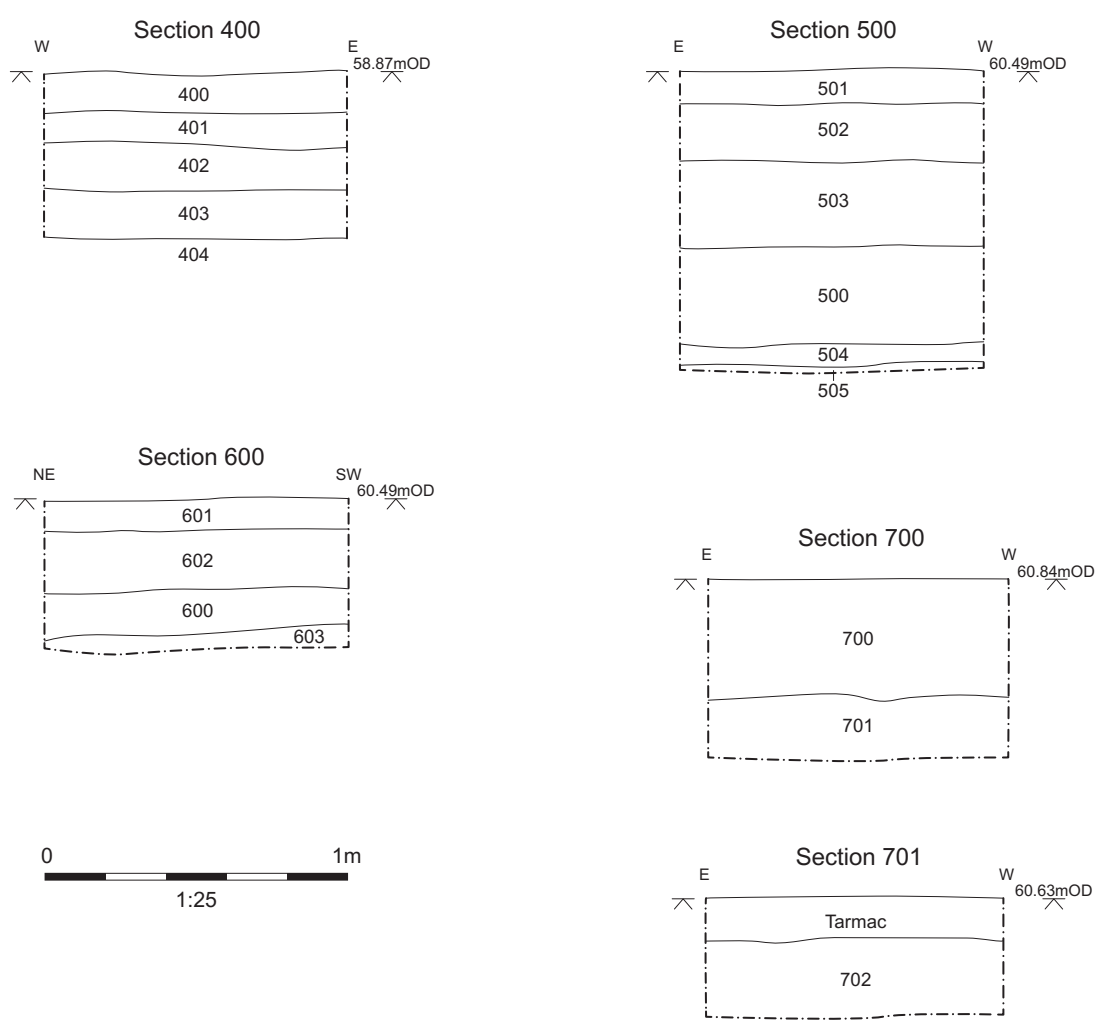


Figure 4: Sections 400, 500, 600, 700 and 701





Plate 1: Trench 2, view north



Plate 2: Trench 6 showing slope, view NE



Plate 3: Trench 4, section 400



Plate 4: Trench 5, section 500



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