



# North Side Cable Trench, Basildon Park

## Archaeological Watching Brief Report

October 2017

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2	Robert M <sup>c</sup> Intosh, Supervisor & Cynthia Poole Project Officer (Post-ex)	Ianto Wain  Senior Project Manager	Cynthia Poole Project Officer (Post-ex)	Ianto Wain  Senior Project Manager	

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Janus House

Osney Mead

Oxford OX2 0ES

t: +44 (0) 1865 263800

e: [info@oxfordarch.co.uk](mailto:info@oxfordarch.co.uk)

f: +44 (0) 1865 793496

w: [oxfordarchaeology.com](http://oxfordarchaeology.com)

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## North Side Cable Trench, Basildon Park

*Archaeological Watching Brief Report*

*Written by Robert M<sup>c</sup>Intosh*

*and illustrated by Gary Jones, Conan Parsons and Charles Rousseaux*

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## Summary

*Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by the National Trust to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of a cable trench to the east of the main house at Basildon Park, Berkshire.*

*The trenching did not go deep enough to reveal the natural geology or any archaeology for much of its length. However, in areas where the natural was revealed two undated ditches were identified. Running along the east edge of a known lynchet were the remains of a wall and intentionally backfilled ditch containing 18th-19th century brick, cutting through the subsoil.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by the National Trust to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of a cable trench running to the east of the manor house at Basildon Park. Works were carried out between 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> February 2017. These works are covered by National Trust HBSMR event no ENA8669.
- 1.1.2 All work was undertaken in accordance with local and national planning policies.
- 1.1.3 All fieldwork undertaken by Oxford Archaeology (South) is overseen by the Head of Fieldwork, David Score MCIfA.

### 1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 Basildon Park is a country house situated 3 kilometres south of Goring-on-Thames and Streatley in Berkshire, between the villages of Upper and Lower Basildon. Its location and the location of the works within the Park are shown on **Figure 1**.
- 1.2.2 The cable trench runs through the lawn to the south of the house for a short distance and then runs east down the slope into the valley bottom. It then continues a short way up the opposing slope and turns north-east upon reaching a track, which it then follows to the edge of the A329. The line of the trench can be seen on **Figure 2**.
- 1.2.3 The geology of the area is in the Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation (BGS website).

### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 A quantity of Roman tile and pottery sherds were found during excavations of a now dried up pond on the eastern edge of the park in 1856. These probably relate to the site of a Roman villa which appears to have lain immediately to the east of the park and which was identified during (and then destroyed by) the construction of the Great Western Railway line along the eastern edge of the park in the 1830's. The line of the railway can be clearly seen on Figure 2.
- 1.3.2 The original garden was situated to the north of the house and subsequently enlarged by JB Papworth in the 1840's. There is a terraced garden with a balustraded walk on the east side of the house, designed by David Brandon, one of Papworth's successors.
- 1.3.3 The house was built between 1776 and 1783 by John Carr of York, replacing an earlier house that stood about 200m to the west. In 1838, the house was purchased by James Morrison and further improvements to the estate and building were made.

1.3.4 Basildon Park was largely abandoned after 1910 until the 1930's when plans were made to export the house to the USA. During WW2, the house was requisitioned causing much damage and it wasn't until Lord and Lady Iliffe purchased the house in 1952 that a programme of repair, restoration and alteration began. The Ilffe's bequeathed the house and park to the National Trust in 1978.

## 1.4 Previous work

1.4.1 The area crossed by the scheme was the subject of a Geophysical Survey conducted in 1995 in advance of the potential installation of a sewer pipe across the park. A plan showing the line of the survey (and the key features as identified) is presented in the current report (Figure 7). The works identified an area of east-west features (interpreted as an area of ridge and furrow) and two large possible quarry pits in the northern and central section of the survey corridor and two parallel ditched features running north-south across the southern end of the scheme. The 1995 survey route and the 2017 scheme intersect towards the southern end of the scheme (Figure 7).

1.4.2 The possible co-relation between the results of the two surveys is discussed in Section 3 below.

## 2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

2.1.1 To identify and record any significant archaeological remains revealed during the ground works, with particular regard to any remains located at the west end near the house and at the eastern end commencing at the lynchet.

### 2.2 Specific aims and objectives

2.2.1 The specific aims and objectives of the watching brief are:

- To mitigate the impact of the intrusive works through preservation by record.
- To identify, recover and date potential Roman and medieval archaeological remains and to contextualise these with other such findings in the local landscape.

### 2.3 Methodology

2.3.1 The cable trench was excavated to a depth of between 0.4m and 0.5m, and a width of 0.3m, using a toothless bucket on a 360° excavator. All excavations were monitored by an OA supervisor.

2.3.2 When archaeological remains were uncovered construction work ceased until a suitable record had been made.

2.3.3 All recording was done in accordance with OA's standard methodologies.

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Description of deposits

#### *Garden Area (Fig.3, Plates 1-2)*

3.1.1 The garden area was a small area fenced off around the southern part of the manor house. It was predominantly covered in a croquet lawn. The excavation in this area never reached the natural. The topsoil (100) for all of the grassed area was 0.3m in depth closest to the house and reduced in thickness towards the edge of the garden to

a minimum of 0.1m. Outside of the garden area layer 100 was a fairly consistent 0.3m to 0.4m in depth. It was a loose, dark brown silty sand with occasional pebble inclusions.

- 3.1.2 The topsoil sealed two subsoil layers (Layers 101 and 102) which both probably represent layers created during the landscaping of the garden. Deposit 101 was a friable, yellowish brown silty sand with a high gravel content, and occasional flecks of ceramic building material (CBM) visible, it exceeded 0.15m in depth but its full height was not seen. Deposit 102 was a friable, grey sandy silt with charcoal and CBM flecks. It was 0.3m in depth. Layer 101 was present beneath layer 102 in the eastern edges of the garden however closer to the house layer 102 was entirely absent.
- 3.1.3 Illustration of the layers within this area can be seen on Sections 1 & 2 (Figure 3).

***The Slope (Figs 3 and 5, Plates 3 and 5)***

- 3.1.4 The slope ran gently downwards, in an easterly direction, from the fence of the garden until it reached a false crest from which point it ran steeply down as far as a large lynchet. The natural (Layer 106) was only revealed intermittently in this area and predominantly the trench only revealed subsoil (Layer 103). Two ditches were observed in this area (107 and 114) both in the gently sloped portion.
- 3.1.5 Deposit 103 was a subsoil layer present before the false crest of the hill. It was a friable, light greyish brown sandy silt with occasional small and medium stones, it was 0.3m in depth.
- 3.1.6 Deposit 104 was observed beneath layer 103, but only to the western end of the area. It was a firm, yellow gravelly sand, with flint inclusions. It was interpreted as potentially being a landscaping deposit.
- 3.1.7 Where the natural (106) was observed it was a compact white chalk.
- 3.1.8 Ditch 107 cut the natural (106). It was orientated north-east south-west and was 1m in width. Only the top 0.1m of it was excavated, showing that the sides were quite steep (Fig. 3, section 6). It was filled by (108) a compact, medium to light yellowish brown clay, with moderate amounts of stone inclusions. It was located half way between the garden area fence and the false crest.
- 3.1.9 Ditch 114 was located just before the false crest of the hill, it was 3.5m in width and was orientated north south, following the false crest. It was only observed in plan. Its fill (115) was a compact, medium yellowish brown clay with occasional chalk flecks. The feature lies within the area which was surveyed during the 1995 Geophysical Survey (Geoquest 1995) but was not picked up by this survey (see Figure 7) which superimposes the results of the 1995 survey and the 2017 Watching Brief.
- 3.1.10 Along the steeper section on the slope the subsoil (109) was a firm, medium yellowish brown silty clay with occasional small stone inclusions. It was 0.2m in depth.
- 3.1.11 The locations of the drawn sections and an illustration of the layers within this area can be seen on Figures 2 and 3.

***The Lynchet and Valley Bottom (Figs 3 and 4, Plates 4 and 6)***

- 3.1.12 A lynchet running north south sits at the bottom of the slope, bordered to the east by the largely flat valley bottom. Throughout this area the top soil is deposit 100 and the subsoil is deposit 109. The natural was not uncovered anywhere within this area.





3.1.13 Bordering the lynchet to the eastern side and cutting through the subsoil (109) was a ditch (117) and the base of a wall (116) running parallel to the lynchet (Figure 4, section 11). Wall 116 was constructed of chalk blocks roughly 0.15m sub-square and without any mortar. It was 0.65m in width, and of unknown height. Ditch 117 was located 0.9m to the east of wall 116. It was 2.1m in width, had steep sloping sides and its base was unseen. It was excavated to a depth of 0.3m and was filled by a loose, brownish grey clayey silt (118) with very frequent broken chalk blocks and occasional ceramic building material (CBM) pieces. The feature lies just to the north of the area which was subject to geophysical survey in 1995. The 1995 survey did pick up a substantial north-south feature to the south of the 116 and 117 (see Figure 7) and it would appear likely that this feature represents the line of the wall and ditch within the parkland to the south of the area crossed by the scheme.

### ***Eastern Track-ways***

- 3.1.14 At the eastern limit of the site the land rises up again towards the east and the cable trench followed a track-way leading to the A329.
- 3.1.15 At the easternmost extent of the track, layer 105 sat directly atop the natural chalk (106). Deposit 105 was a loose, very dark greyish brown silty clay with a lot of plant material in it; it was 0.3m deep.
- 3.1.16 In the middle of the track both layers 106 and 105 were still present but overlying them was 0.15m of layer 110 and then 0.1m of layer 111. Layer 110 was a compact white chalk deposit. Layer 111 was a loose black leaf litter deposit.
- 3.1.17 At the western extent of the track layer 113 sits on the natural (106) and is 0.3m in depth. It was a compact, light grey sandy silt, with occasional chalk flecks. Overlying layer 113 was layer 112, a loose, dark brown silty clay riddled with roots, which was 0.1m in depth.

## **3.2 Finds**

- 3.2.1 The only finds located during the works were three fragments of CBM (ceramic building material) recovered from the fill (118) of the ditch (117) located to the east of and downslope from a large north-south lynchet. The material consisted of two fragments of brick and a piece of architectural special<sup>1</sup> (most likely a window or door surround). The material all dated to the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century. Further details of the material are provided in Appendix D.

## **4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1.1 The archaeology monitored throughout the majority of the areas of this work was quite limited as the excavations only rarely reached the natural geology. Of the four main areas, no archaeology was witnessed within the western (garden) area or the eastern extremities of the scheme. The central area did however contain features.
- 4.1.2 Within the slope area only a few short sections of natural geology were observed, however within these, two ditches were observed. Ditch 107 produced no finds and probably represents an internal boundary within the park. Ditch 114 was of substantial size and followed the false crest of the slope, possibly representing an older outer boundary for the site, it also contained no finds. As the two ditches were undated it is difficult to interpret them beyond a general conclusion that they represent internal

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<sup>1</sup> The term special is used for a non standard brick usually with some special shaping. They were used to make up architectural details, particularly around doors and windows. They were sometimes left bare, but sometimes intended to be plastered to look like masonry dressings. The great period of moulded brickwork was the Victorian.



boundaries of some kind. The features were not truncated by the excavations, only revealed in plan.

- 4.1.3 The lynchet and valley bottom area excavation did not reach the natural geology at any point. However, the remains of a wall (116) and ditch (117) running along side of the lynchet were revealed. As the ditch was cut through the subsoil it is unlikely to be ancient in origin and this assertion is supported by the fact that it contained pieces of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century ceramic building material. The fill of the ditch (118) indicated that it had been intentionally backfilled with the demolished remains of the wall, although the bricks which showed traces of both lime mortar and whitewash and interestingly contained a piece of possible window or door surround, may have come from a (nearby?) demolished building rather than from the adjacent wall.
- 4.1.4 The feature is of uncertain function but its location at the bottom of the slope, just to the east of the prominent lynchet feature would suggest that it represents the remains of a previous boundary wall either an internal parkland wall or a previous outer boundary wall. Evidence for the feature is provided by a sketch plan of a possible new road<sup>2</sup> within the park, drawn by JB Papworth<sup>3</sup> and dated to 1844 (Figure 9). This plan appears to mark the lynchet in this area as 'Old Wall' (although whether this means an internal or an external wall is unclear). It may however be worth noting that the slightly earlier (1838) Park Sale Plan (Figure 8), which shows the lynchet as a large wooded feature, does not appear to show the line of a wall on its eastern side, although clearly the scale of this plan means that its absence is inconclusive.
- 4.1.5 In conclusion it is clear that for the majority of the excavation the archaeological horizon was not reached, and therefore any buried archaeology that may have been present was not impacted by the works. Any potential Roman archaeology appears to have been either buried more deeply than the impact level of the cable trench or was simply not present within the footprint of the trench.

## **Oxford Archaeology**

**October 2017**

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2 The road was never actually built.

3 Papworth had been advising the new owner (the estate was sold in 1838) on changes to the park since 1839.



## APPENDIX A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Comments	Finds	Date
100	Layer	0.3	-	-	Top soil, a loose dark brown silty sand, with occasional pebbles	-	-
101	Layer	0.15	-	-	A friable, medium yellowy brown silty sand, frequent gravel and occasional CBM flecks	-	-
102	Layer	> 0.3	-	-	A friable, medium grey sandy silt, with both charcoal and CBM flecks	-	-
103	Layer	0.3	-	-	A friable, light greyish brown sandy silt, with occasional small to medium sized stones	-	-
104	Layer	-	-	-	Natural, a firm, medium yellow gravelly sand, with flint inclusions	-	-
105	Layer	0.3	-	-	A loose, very dark brownish grey silty clay, very frequent root inclusions	-	-
106	Layer	-	-	-	Natural, a compact white chalk	-	-
107	Cut	-	1	-	Cut of unexcavated linear feature	-	-
108	Fill	-	1	-	A compact, medium to light yellowish brown clay, with moderate stone inclusions. Unexcavated	-	-
109	Layer	0.2	-	-	Sub-soil, a firm, medium yellowish brown silty clay, with occasional small stones	-	-
110	Layer	0.15	-	-	A compact, white chalk surface	-	-
111	Layer	0.1	-	-	A loose, black leaf litter	-	-
112	Layer	0.1	-	-	Turf, a loose, dark brown silty clay, with large number of root inclusions	-	-
113	Layer	0.3	-	-	A compact, light grey sandy silt, with occasional chalk flecks	-	-
114	Cut	-	3.5	-	Cut of linear feature, unexcavated	-	-
115	Fill	-	3.5	-	A compact, medium	-	-



					yellowish brown clay, with occasional chalk flecks		
116	Structure	0.05	0.65	-	Base of a drystone wall constructed of chalk blocks averaging 0.15m x 0.15m. No obvious mortar	-	-
117	Cut	>0.3	2.1	-	Cut of a partially excavated ditch. Steep sides, base not seen.	-	-
118	Fill	>0.3	2.1	-	A loose, medium brownish grey clayey silt, with large amounts of broken up chalk blocks and occasional CBM. Partially excavated	CBM	-



## APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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## APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: North Side Cable Trench, Basildon Park

Site code: UBPA17

Grid reference: Centred at NGR SU 61359 78139

Type of watching brief:

Date and duration of project: 6/2/17-7/2/17

Area of site:

Summary of results: *Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by the National Trust to undertake an archaeological watching brief on the site of the excavation of a cable trench to the east of the manor.*

*The trenching did not go deep enough to reveal the natural geology or any archaeology for much of its length. However, in areas where the natural was revealed two undated ditches were identified. Running along the east edge of a known lynchet were the remains of a wall and an intentionally backfilled ditch containing 18th-19th century brick, cutting through the subsoil.*

Location of archive: West Berkshire Heritage Service

## APPENDIX D: FINDS REPORT

### Ceramic Building Material

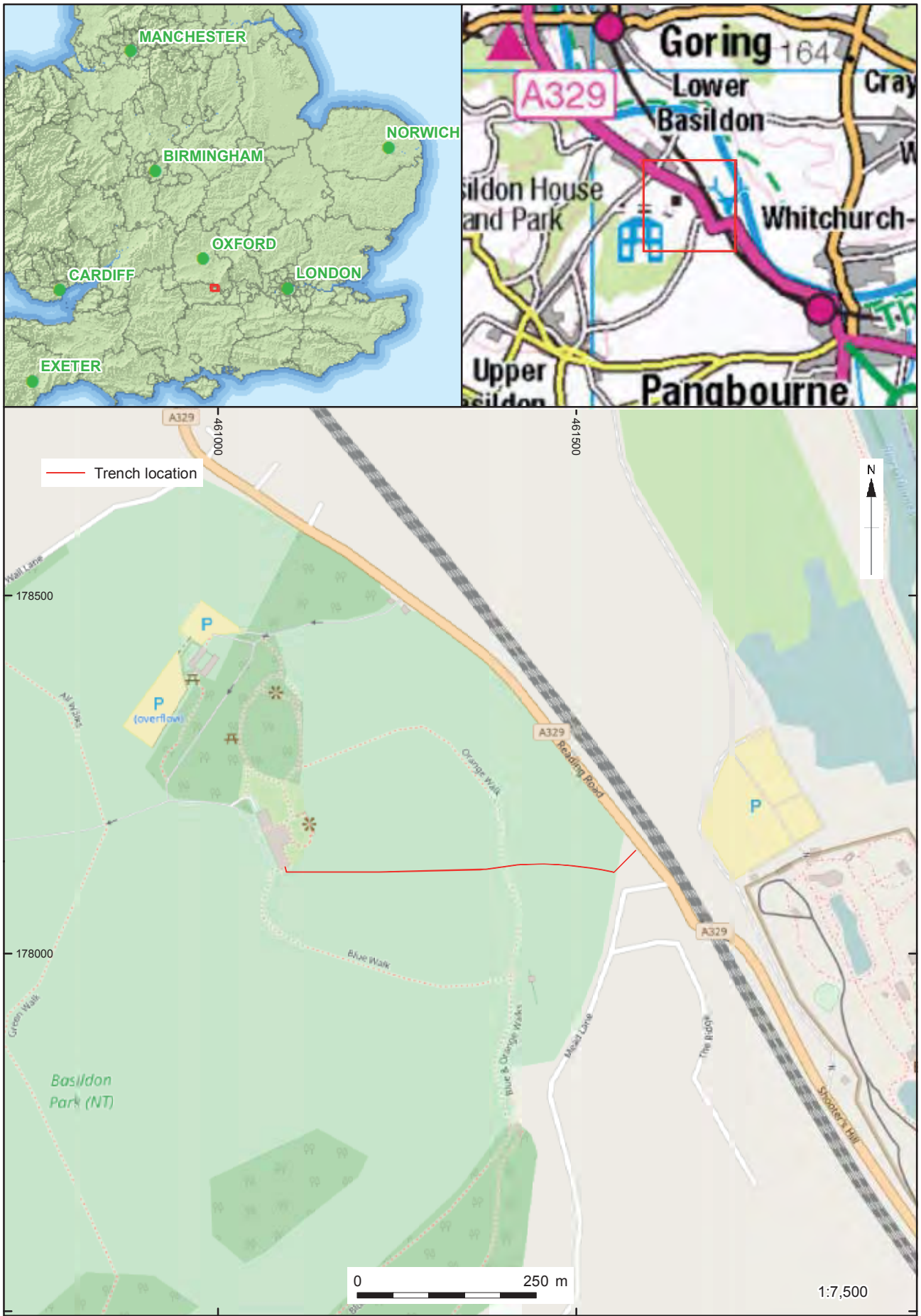
*By Cynthia Poole*

Ceramic building material amounting to three fragments weighing 304g was found in context 118 (the fill of a ditch which ran parallel to a lynchet at the bottom of steep slope). The material dates to the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century. The group is recorded in the table below. All pieces were made in an orange-red firing clay fabric, which contained frequent medium-coarse quartz sand, small angular flint and red iron oxide grits both up to 2mm in size. One piece appears to be part of a standard brick with a vitrified surface, possibly as a result of a salt glaze to create the darker surface used for diaper work. The second is the corner of an architectural special with part of curved moulding, probably for use in a door or window surround. The third piece was broken with little evidence of a moulded surface, but was probably a fragment of brick. Both of the larger pieces had evidence of lime mortar on one of their surfaces and whitewash on the exposed face.

Context	Nos	Wt	Form	Fabric	Dimensions	Spot date	Description
118	1	144	Brick: special	Orange-red sandy	62mm th, >50mm w, >45mm l	C19	Corner fragment of architectural brick with 2 edges set at 110°. Curved S profile moulding on one edge coated in white wash. Skim of lime mortar occurs on the adjacent surface.
118	1	137	Brick	Orange-red sandy	>52mm th	C17-C18	Two flat even surfaces with sharp angular arris. One surface is lightly vitrified – possibly salt glaze to create dark surface for diaper work. A small patch of lime mortar occurs on the vitrified surface and the other has remnants of white wash
118	1	23	Indet.	Orange sandy	>35mm th	Pmed	Broken fragment with small area of flat moulded surface. Probably brick.
Total	3	304					







X:\lib\Basildon Park\_Cable Trench\_WB1010\Geomatics\03 GIS Projects\UBPAWB\_Fig1.mxd\gary.jones'09/02/2017

(c) OpenStreetMap and contributors, Creative Commons-Share Alike License (CC-BY-SA)

Figure 1: Site location



461000  
1778300

461000  
177900

461660  
178300



s.11	Section number
p.3	Plan number
—	Section location
—	Structure
—	Archaeological feature
—	Limit of excavation

0 1:2000 @ A3 100Meters

Figure 2: Ducting route with section locations and plan locations.

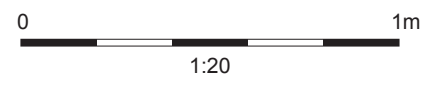
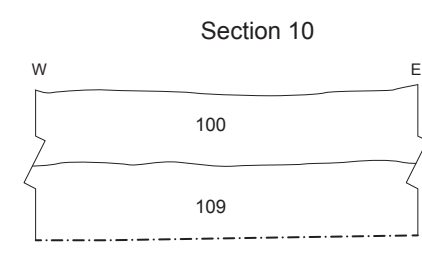
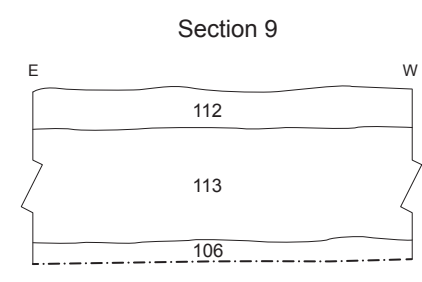
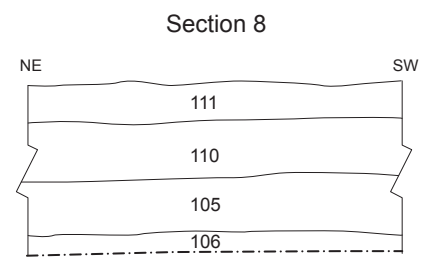
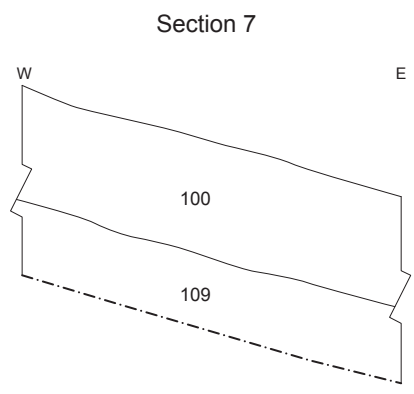
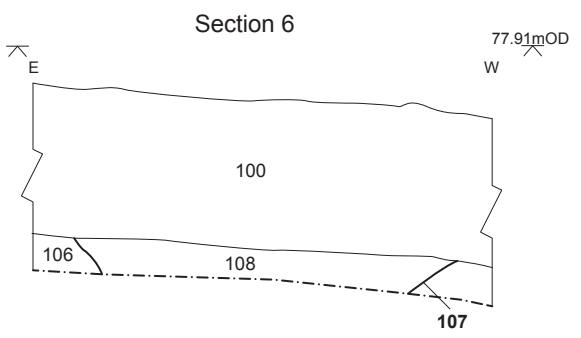
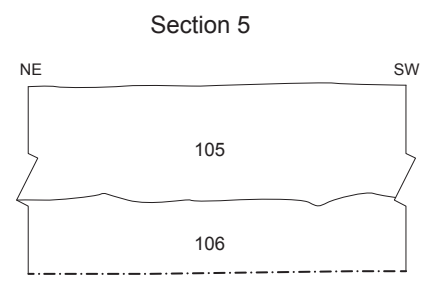
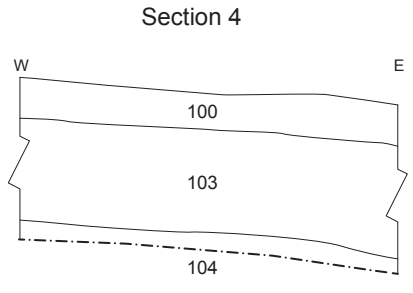
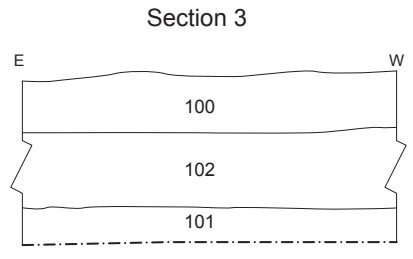
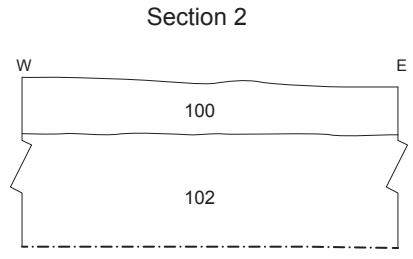
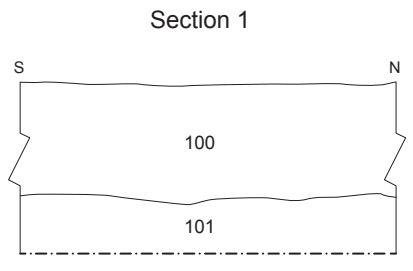


Figure 3: Sections 1 - 10

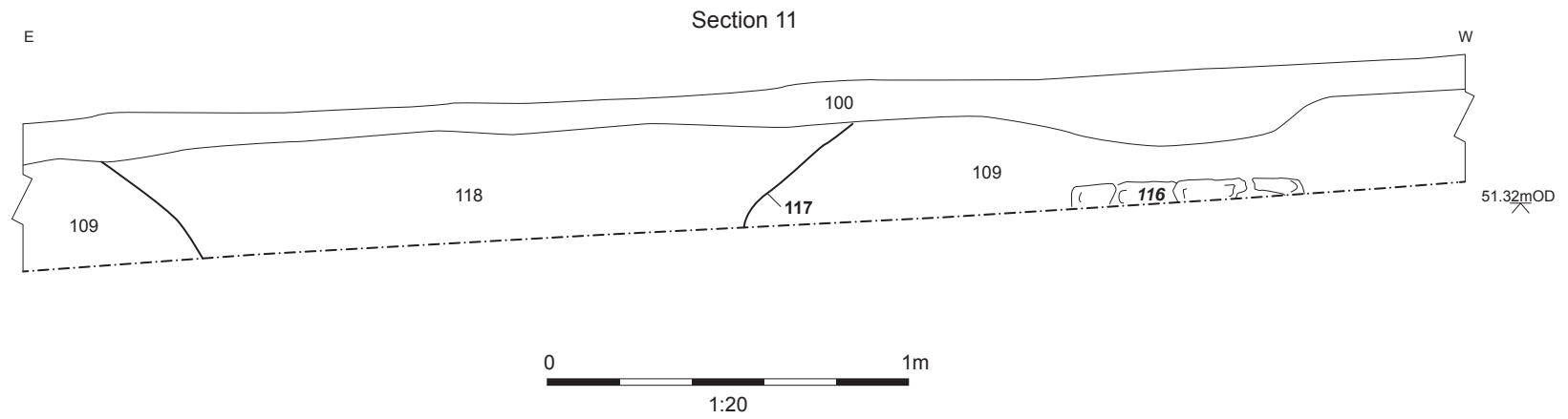


Figure 4: Section 11

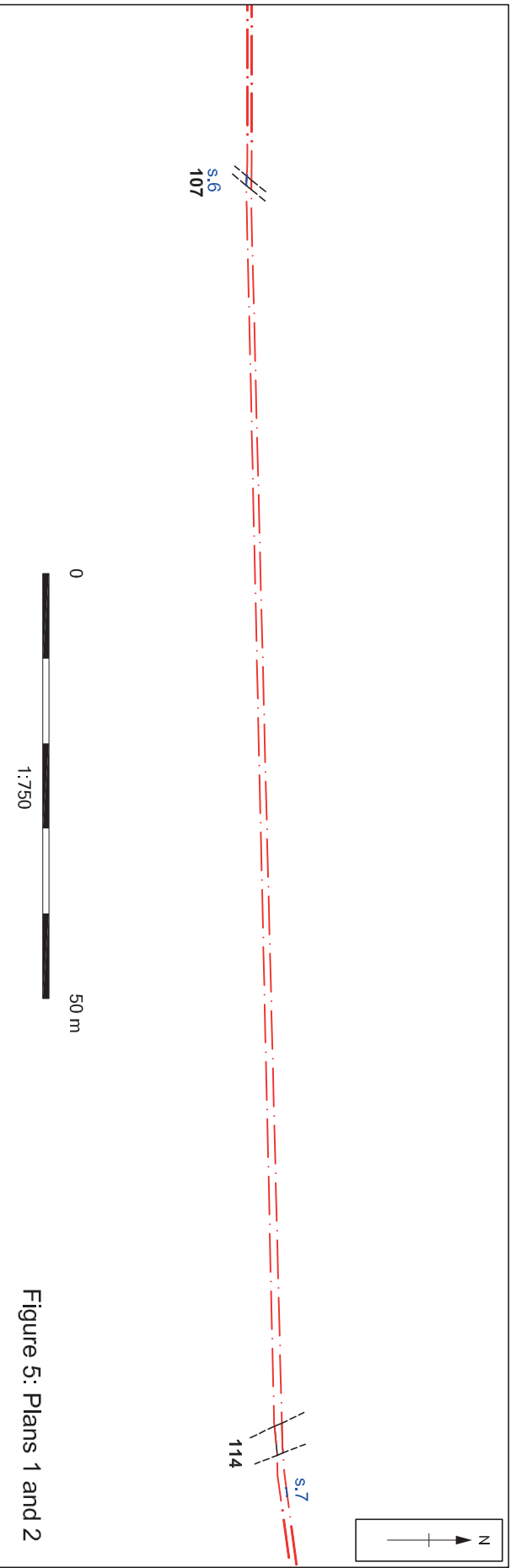


Figure 5: Plans 1 and 2

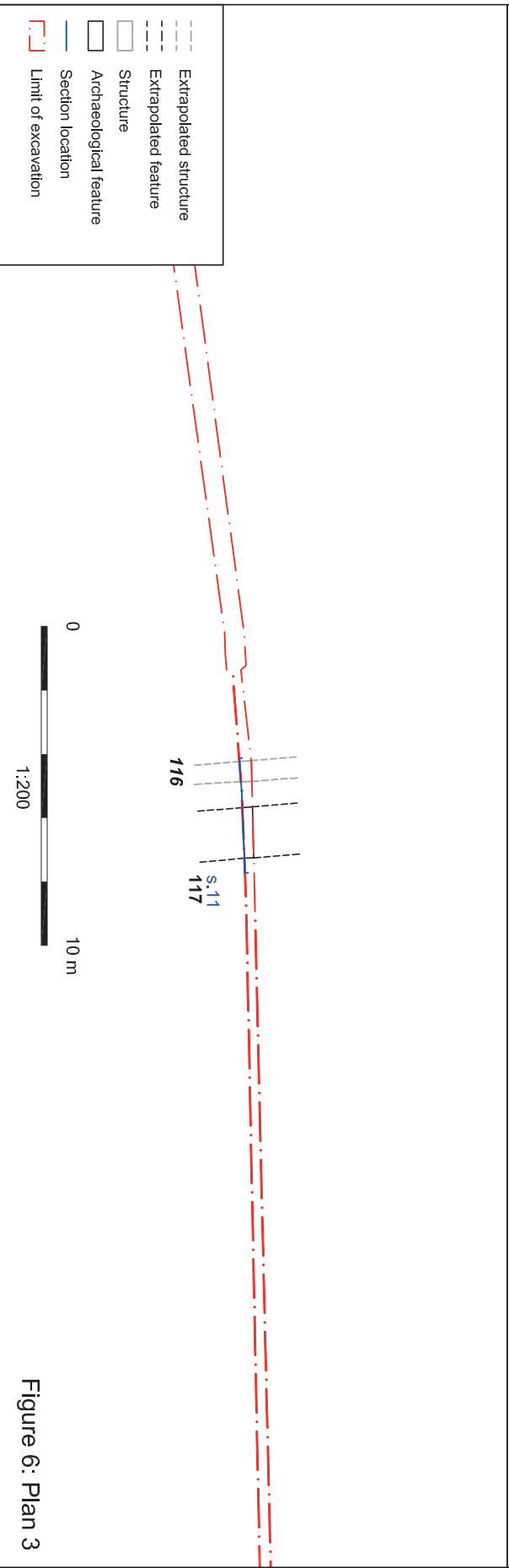
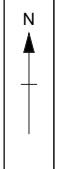


Figure 6: Plan 3

- Extrapolated structure
- - - Extrapolated feature
- Structure
- Archaeological feature
- Section location
- Limit of excavation

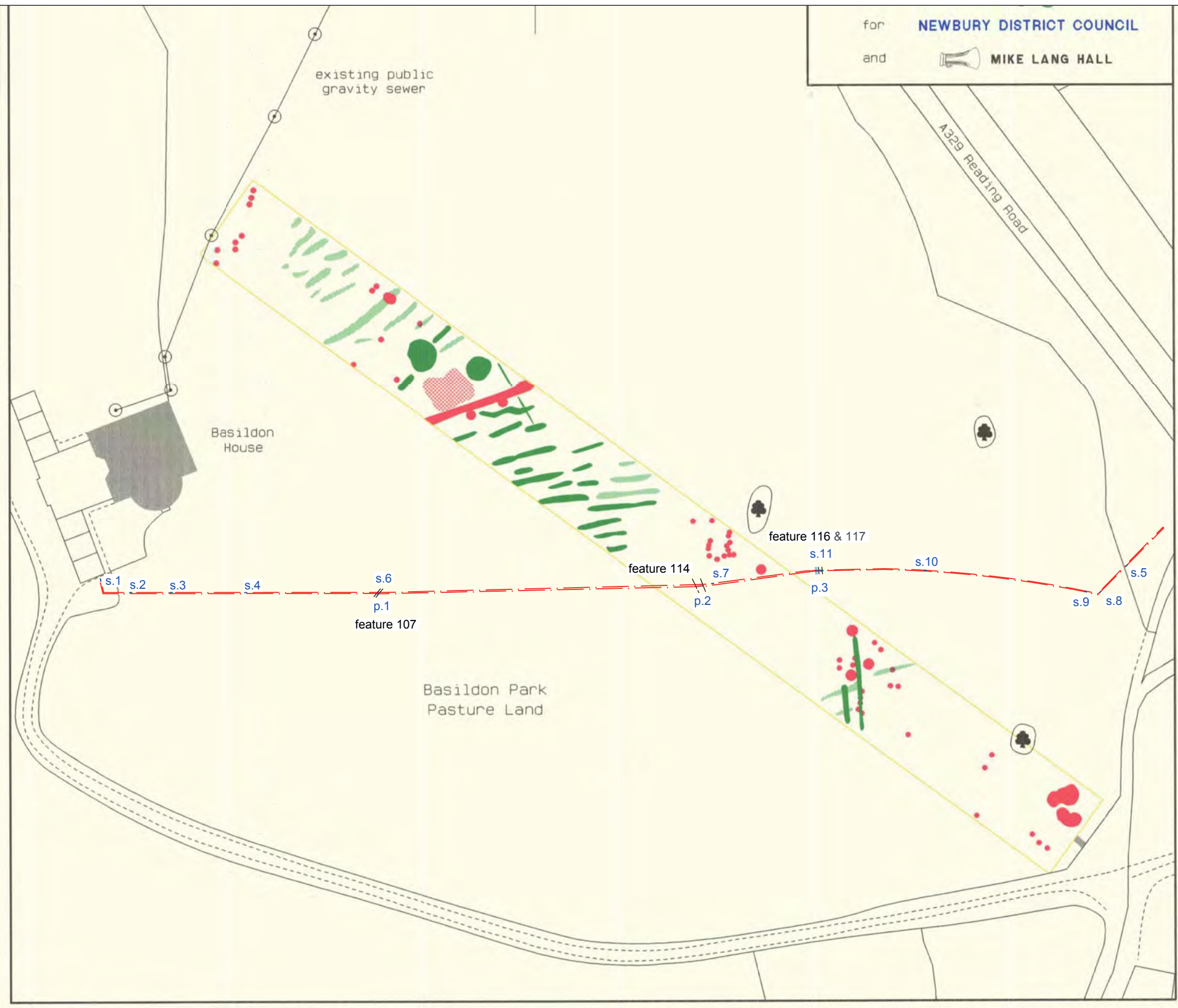


for **NEWBURY DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
and **MIKE LANG HALL**



461000  
178300

461660  
178300



- s.11 Section number
- p.3 Plan number
- Section location
- // Structure
- // Archaeological feature
- - - - Limit of excavation

**FIGURE 3**

X:\b\Basildon Park\_Cable Trench\_WB\010\Geomatics\02 CAD\UBPAWB Basildon Park 2017-02-09.dwg(A3 Fig2 (2))\UBPA17\UBPAWB\Basildon Park, W. Berkshire\Conan Parsons\* 30 Jun 2017

461000  
177900

CHECKED BY: MB\*09/02/17

Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, USDA, USGS, AEX, IGN, IGP, and the GIS User Community

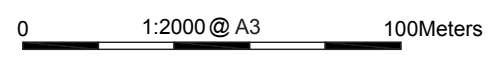


Figure 7: 1995 geophysical survey and 2017 scheme compared

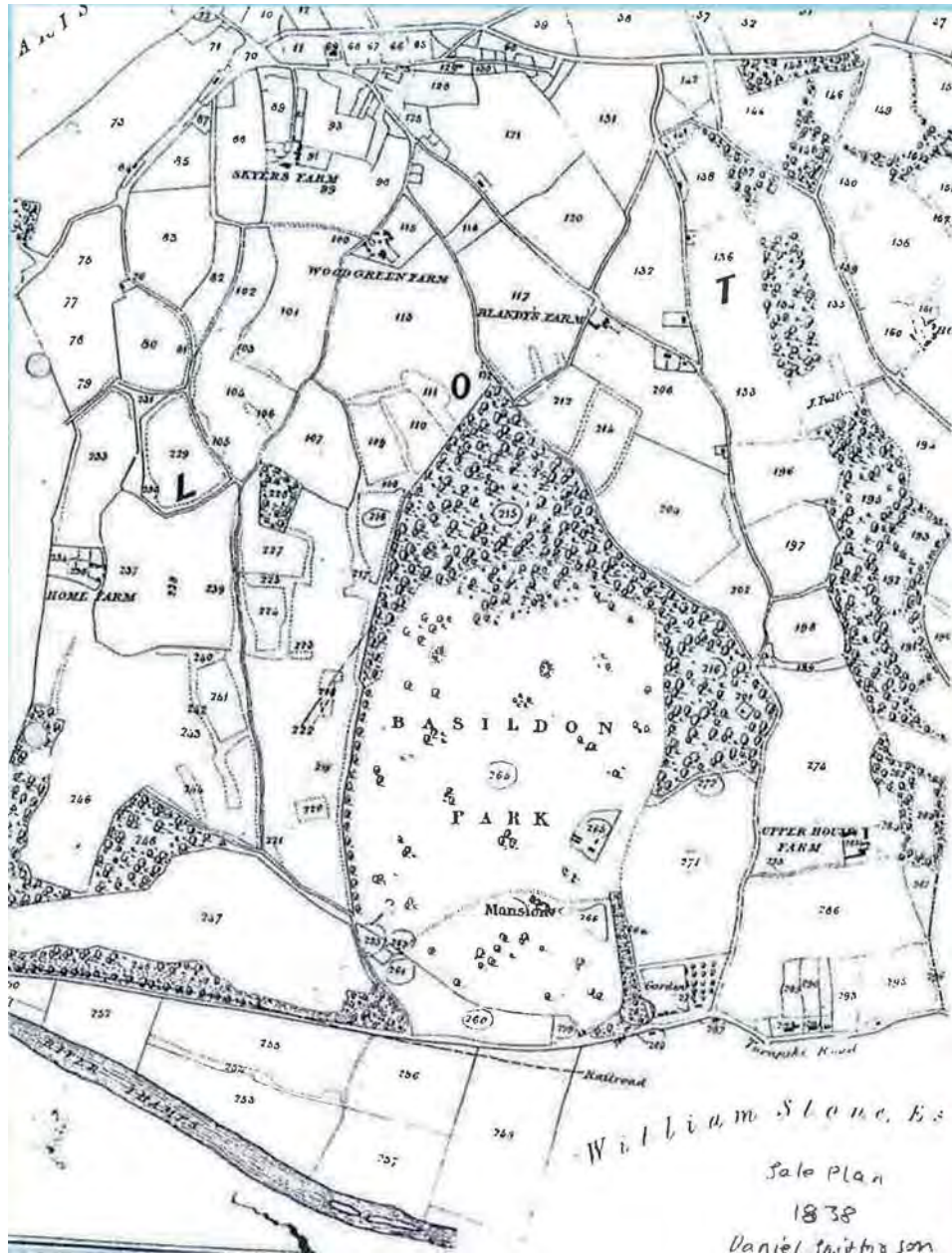
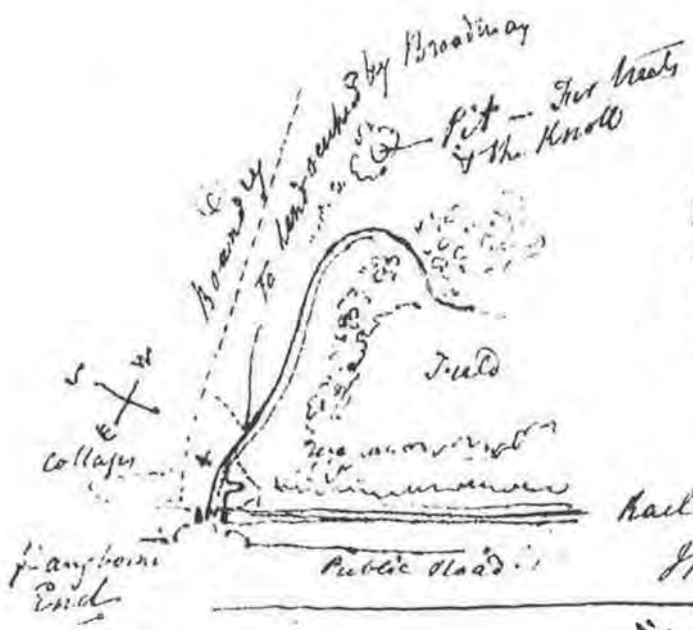


Figure 8. 1838 Sale Plan of Basildon Park



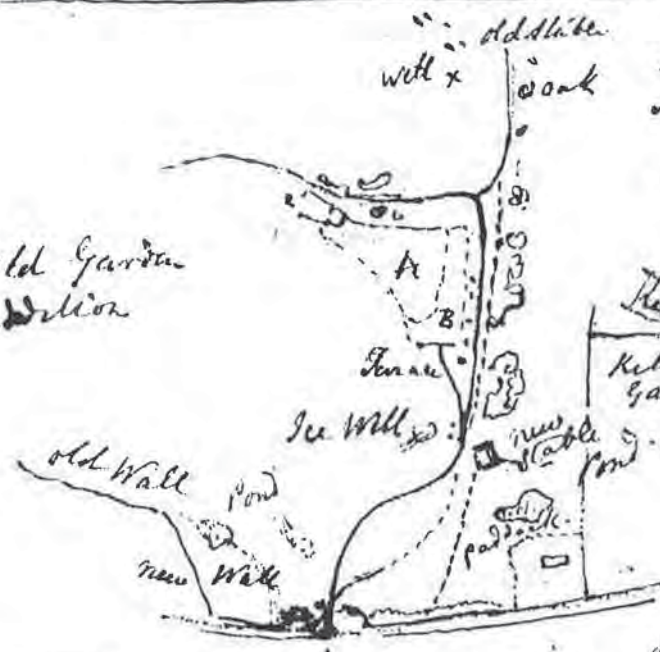
Jan 7. 18. 1844

The embankment north of the Basildon Hall should be made to slope down the road gracefully & which may be done with moderate labor



Rail Road to S. Basildon  
J.B.P. to Morrison Esq M.P.

- A old Garden
- B addition



The black lines show the present Road  
The Red the proposed Road

To be fed from the ditch & road

Road to Steathly as often marked out

J.B.P. 1844 Jan 10 1844

Rail Road  
Mail Road

All may be brought executed but it will require care to finish

Figure 9: Sketch by J. B. Papworth of a new road to Basildon House showing the position of the "Ice Well" and other features.





Plate 1 Layers 100 and 101 through garden area, looking east



Plate 2 Excavation trench through sub-soil, looking east











**Head Office/Registered Office/  
OA South**

Janus House  
Osney Mead  
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: +44 (0) 1865 263 800  
f: +44 (0) 1865 793 496  
e: [info@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto:info@oxfordarchaeology.com)  
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>

**OA North**

Mill 3  
Moor Lane  
Lancaster LA1 1QD

t: +44 (0) 1524 541 000  
f: +44 (0) 1524 848 606  
e: [oanorth@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto: oanorth@oxfordarchaeology.com)  
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>

**OA East**

15 Trafalgar Way  
Bar Hill  
Cambridgeshire  
CB23 8SQ

t: +44 (0) 1223 850500  
e: [oaeast@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto: oaeast@oxfordarchaeology.com)  
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>



**Director:** Gill Hey, BA PhD FSA MCifA  
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