

Hreod Parkway School North Swindon Wiltshire



Archaeological Evaluation Report



Oxford Archaeology

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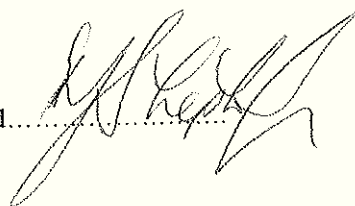
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**Hreod Parkway School
North Swindon
Wiltshire**

NGR SU 1285 8760

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

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Summary

In August 2003 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at Hreod Parkway School, North Swindon, Wiltshire (NGR SU 1285 8760) on behalf of Swindon Borough Council. The evaluation followed an earlier phase of work at the same site carried out by OA in March 2003. Five trenches measuring 50 m in length were opened in the course of the works, targeting anomalies identified by geophysical survey as being of potential archaeological significance. The evaluation revealed significant archaeological remains in one trench only, suggesting localised Iron Age activity in the form of postholes. An undated hollow was also recorded. The majority of the site exhibited extensive layers of imported soil, "made ground deposits", of recent date.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In August 2003, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation in advance of a proposed schools PFI development at Hreod Parkway School, North Swindon, Wiltshire (NGR SU 1285 8760) on behalf of Swindon Borough Council.
- 1.1.2 In accordance with PPG 16 and local planning policy, and following a geophysical survey and earlier phase of evaluation at the same site, the County Archaeological Officer (CAO) recommended a programme of further archaeological evaluation prior to the development in order to ascertain the archaeological potential of part of the site due south of the school buildings.
- 1.1.3 The work was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by OA for the previous phase of work and based on the requirements of a Design Brief prepared by the CAO (WCC 2003).
- 1.1.4 The area subject to evaluation consisted of ground situated south of the school comprising an area of 6 hectares, currently used as a sports/playing field.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The underlying geology of the site is Oxford Clay, although the interface between the Corallian 'Coral Rag' and the Oxford Clay is often marked by a thin layer of sand and gravel (EH, 1996). Some alluvial deposits associated with the River Ray were also encountered.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 Hreod Parkway School is located south-west of Ermine Street, within 3 km of the major Roman site at Groundwell Ridge. This site was revealed during a housing development in 1997, and was subsequently purchased by English Heritage. The precise nature and extent of the site are uncertain. Although originally thought to be a

large villa, a geophysical survey and small-scale evaluation suggested a potential temple complex located on the terraced slope.

- 1.3.2 Although the Hreod Parkway site lies outside the known boundaries of the Groundwell Ridge complex, there was potential for Roman remains. Roman-period pottery was recovered during the excavation of a pipe trench in the grounds of Hreod Parkway School and further sherds of pottery have been recovered from the bank of the River Ray, together with *pilae* tile fragments and a brooch. A number of Roman kiln complexes have also been found west of Swindon.
- 1.3.3 The earlier evaluation by OA in the field to the north-west of the site under current examination (OA 2003) revealed evidence of medieval activity in the form of two plough furrows and several sherds of Roman pottery were recovered from probable alluvial deposits. The area as a whole appears never to have been intensively occupied but preserves the remains of a medieval/post-medieval landscape in the form of ridge and furrow.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

- 2.1.1 To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the proposed development area.
- 2.1.2 To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present and to establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features.
- 2.1.3 To determine whether or not further archaeological investigation is required and to make available the results of the investigation.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork

- 3.1.1 The fieldwork comprised 5 trenches measuring 50 m in length, with an additional trench forming a 'T' junction. The trenches were positioned to investigate archaeological anomalies identified by the gradiometer survey (OA 2003).

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

- 3.2.1 A mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket removed overburden under close archaeological supervision. The trenches were infilled after examination by the County Archaeological Officer, and a professional turfing company made good the trenches.
- 3.2.2 The trenches were cleaned by hand and the revealed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds. All archaeological features were planned and where excavated their sections drawn at a scale of 1:20.

3.2.3 All features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992) and in accordance with Institute of Field Archaeologists guidelines (IFA 1999).

3.3 Finds

3.3.1 Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation and bagged by context.

3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

3.4.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified.

4 RESULTS:

4.1 Soils and ground conditions

4.1.1 The general soil type was a dark brown clay loam topsoil containing few inclusions, overlying a brown-grey clay layer, interpreted as imported soil to make up the ground level.

4.1.2 The natural geology located in the trenches was an alluvial clay. Natural limestone patches were observed within the clay matrix in Trench 1.

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Description of deposits

5.1.1 Trench 1 (Fig. 2)

5.1.2 The natural geology consisted of limestone and patches of light grey alluvial clay, which was identified at a depth of 0.2 m below the present ground surface and was recorded along the full length of the trench. No archaeological features or finds were recorded.

5.1.3 Trenches 2, 4, 5 and 5B (Fig. 2)

5.1.4 These trenches revealed no significant archaeological features or deposits. A brown-grey to light yellow clay alluvium was recorded and was overlain by a mid to dark brown yellowish clayey loam with inclusions of brick. This comparable deposit was recorded in Trench 3 and suggests that make up layers were consistently spread around the field, presumably in preparation for the sports pitch(es) here. A few modern land drains were observed cutting this horizon.

5.1.5 These layers were capped by a dark brown clay loam topsoil. The only finds that were retrieved consisted of ceramic building materials from topsoil 401 and a single sherd of residual Iron Age/ Roman pottery from topsoil 501.

5.1.6 *Trench 3 (Fig. 3 Trench plan and sections 1-4)*

5.1.7 Trench 3 (Fig.3) was located to the north-west of the development site and was aligned north-east/south-west. The underlying geology consisted of a light grey yellow mottled brown clay silt with inclusions of limestone (303), located at a depth of 0.64 m below present surface (at 94.13 m O D) at the NE end of the trench and at a depth of 1.26 m below present surface (93.71 m O D) at the south-west end.

5.1.8 Three circular features, interpreted as postholes (307, 309 and 314) were investigated. The latter feature contained a post-pipe (313). These postholes (Fig. 3, sections 1-3) were filled by similar deposits of mid grey-brown clay silt, with flecks of charcoal. The fill of the post-pipe (310=312) contained sherds of early to middle Iron Age pottery.

5.1.9 Also revealed in the trench was a natural hollow (Fig. 2) containing alluvial material, though the function of the feature was unclear. The feature may represent part of a relict watercourse though this was not observed in any of the other trenches.

5.1.10 The postholes were sealed by a layer of mid-grey mottled brown clay silt (302), possibly alluvial derived material that was overlain by a dark brown organic deposit (311) located to the middle of the trench (section 4). Two layers overlay this deposit; a limestone spread (305) and clay loam (304) with modern inclusions of modern glass, brick, metal and tarmac. Both layers are interpreted as modern ground levelling deposits and were consistently recorded along the full length of the trench. These layers were then capped by a dark brown clay loam topsoil (301) that yielded a fragment of ceramic building material (301).

5.2 **Finds**

5.2.1 Ten abraded sherds of pottery were recovered from the fill of post-pipe 313 in posthole 314 in Trench 3. An early to middle Iron Age date is suggested for these sherds based on fabric type (Alistair Barclay, OA). Further sherds were clearly residual in topsoil deposits.

5.2.2 Other finds which were recovered from the evaluation consisted of ceramic building material, dated to the 20th century and which originated from the imported material used as made ground to level up the area for the surface of the school playing field.

6 **DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION**

6.1 **Reliability of field investigation**

6.1.1 The coverage of the proposed development area was comprehensive and obtained a representative sample across the site in accordance with the requirements of the County Archaeologist.

6.1.2 Weather conditions were good and the soils dry during the evaluation.

6.2 Overall interpretation

- 6.2.1 The evaluation demonstrated that a great deal of made ground existed across the site and thus confirmed the geophysical results of modern activity. However discrete archaeological features were identified to the north-west of the development site, in Trench 3 and consisted of postholes that yielded Iron Age pottery.
- 6.2.2 These features, arranged possibly in an arc, could have formed a post-built structure and could suggest Iron Age occupation in the vicinity, if the pottery is genuinely contemporary with the features.
- 6.2.3 Also revealed in Trench 3 was the natural hollow (Fig. 2) containing alluvial material, though it is unclear what function this feature may have had.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench	Ctx No	Type	Width (m)	Thick. (m)	Comment	Finds	No./wt	Date
001								
	101	Layer		0.20	Topsoil	-		
	102	Layer			Natural limestone/clay	-		
002								
	201	Layer		0.20	Topsoil	-		
	202	Layer		0.40	Made ground	-		
	203	Layer		0.30	Natural alluvium	-		
	204	Layer			Natural alluvium	-		
003								
	301	Layer		0.20		CBM	1	20 th C
	302	Layer		0.50	Alluvium	-		
	303	Layer			Natural clay / limestone	-		
	304	Layer		0.60	Made ground	-		
	305	Layer		0.60	Made ground	-		
	306	Fill		0.20	Fill of posthole 307	-		
	307	Cut	0.31 dia	0.20	Posthole	-		
	308	Fill		0.13	Fill of posthole 309	-		
	309	Cut	0.27 dia	0.13	Posthole	-		
	310	Fill		0.25	Fill of posthole 312	-		
	311	Layer	3.5 m	0.30	Organic tree material	-		
	312	Cut	0.34 dia	0.25	Posthole	-		
	313	Fill		0.25	Fill of post pipe	Pottery	10	E-MIA
	314	Cut	0.16 dia	0.25	Post pipe			
004								
	401	Layer		0.30	Topsoil	CBM	1	20 th C
	402	Layer		0.20	Made ground	-		
	403	Layer			Natural alluvium	-		
005								
	501	Layer		0.30	Topsoil	Pottery	1	LIA
	502	Layer		0.50	Made ground	-		

	503	Layer			Natural alluvium	-		
	504	Layer			Natural alluvium	-		
005B								
	501B	Layer		0.25	Topsoil	-		
	502B	Layer		0.50	Made ground	-		
	503B	Layer			Natural alluvium	-		
	504B	Layer			Natural alluvium	-		

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Booth, P, 1997 *Groundwell Ridge, Haydon, Swindon: Roman Site: An Assessment of the Archaeological Potential*

English Heritage, 1999 *Groundwell Ridge, Roman Villa, Blunsdon St. Andrew, Swindon, Wiltshire*, Report on Geophysical Survey

IFA, 1999 *Standard and Guidance for archaeological evaluations*

OAU, 1992 *Fieldwork Manual* (1st edition, ed. D Wilkinson)

OA 2003 *North Swindon Schools PFI. Archaeological Evaluation Report*

WCC, 2003 *Archaeological Brief for a Field Evaluation*, Wiltshire County Council

Wilkinson, D, 1992 *Field Manual*, Oxford Archaeological Unit

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Hreod Parkway School PFI

Site code: SWINP03

Grid reference: SU 1285 8670

Type of evaluation: Total of 5 trial trenches following geophysical Survey (Fluxgate Gradiometer)

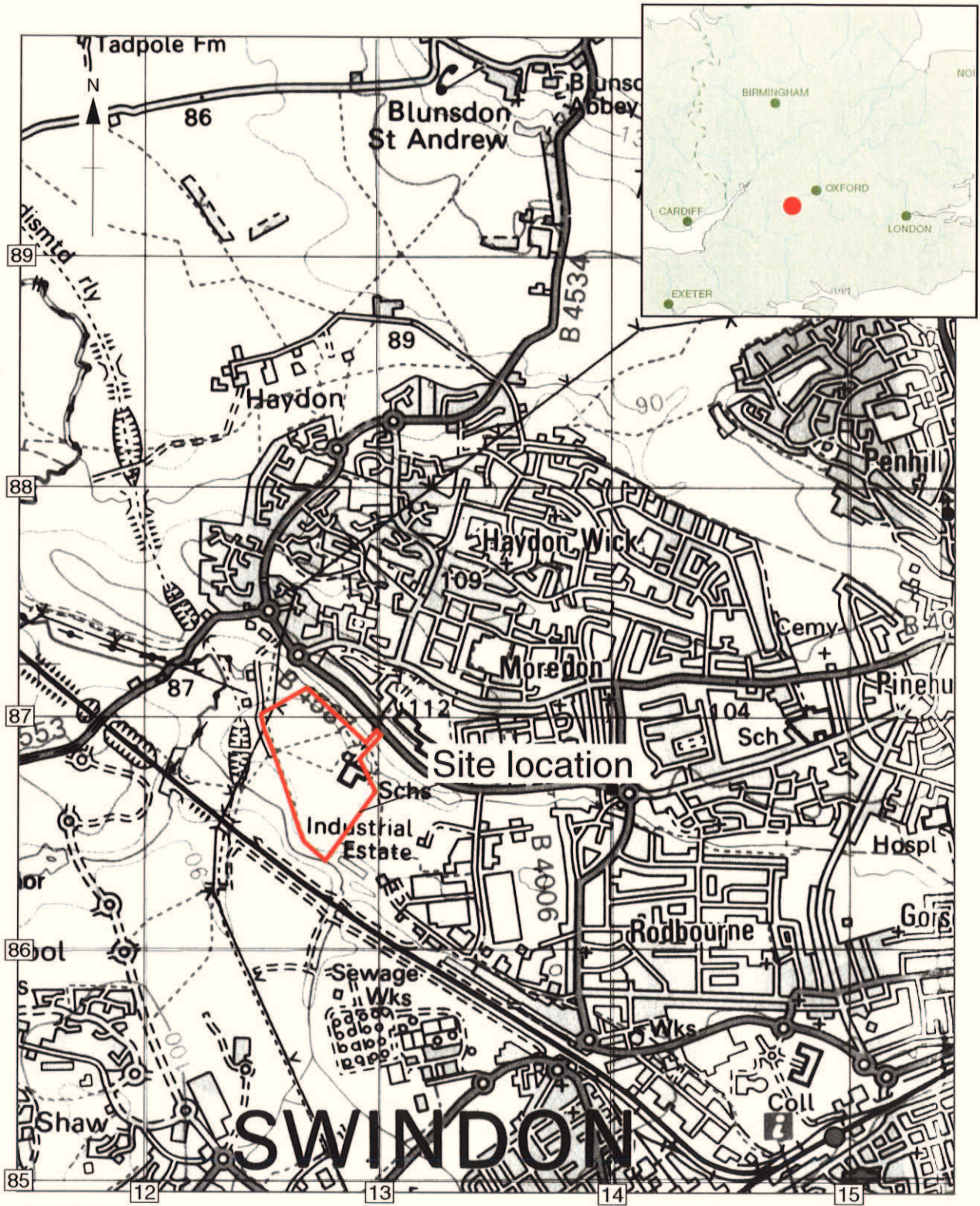
Date and duration of project: From 18-20th August 2003

Area of site: 6 Hectares

Summary of results: Archaeological features consisting of 3 postholes that contained E-mid Iron Age pottery from Trench 3; part of an undated hollow was also identified. Made ground deposits were revealed in the remainder of the trenches.

Location of archive: Currently at OA. Will be deposited with Swindon Museum and Art Gallery in due course.

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Figure 1: Site location

Hreed Parkway School
North Swindon



Key

- Archaeological trench
- Iron Age postholes
- Land drains



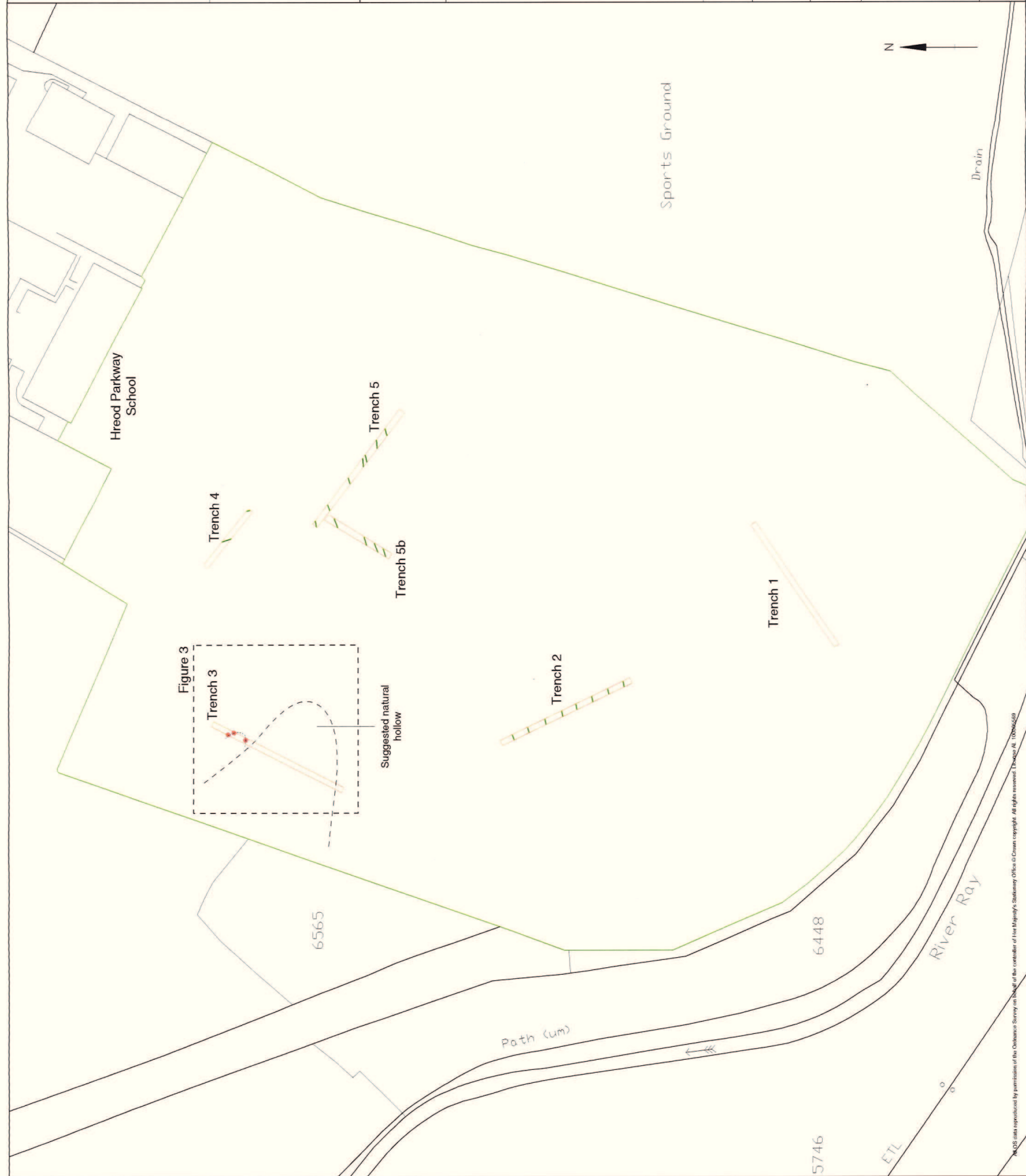
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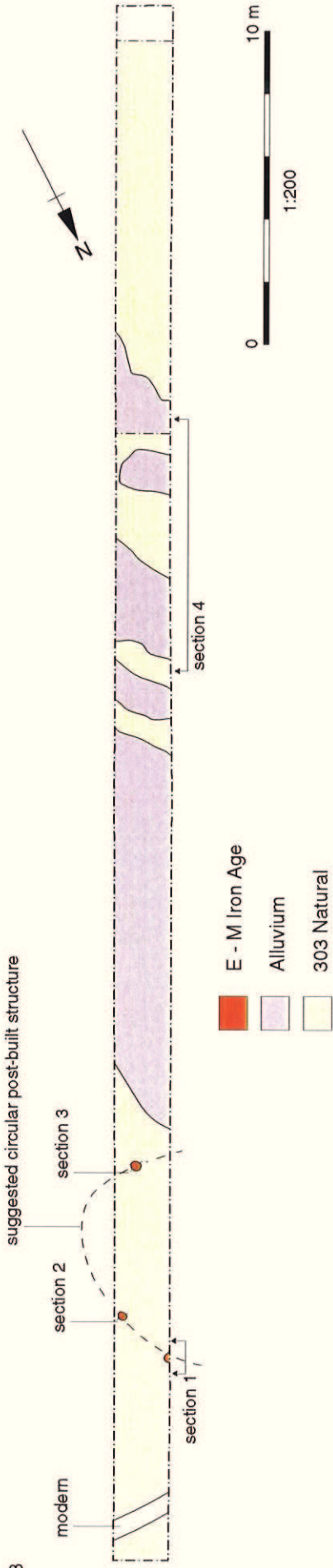
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Figure 2: Trench location

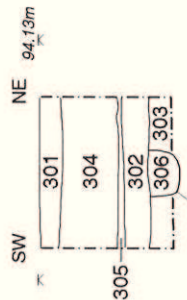
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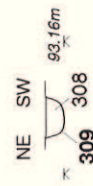
Trench 3
Plan



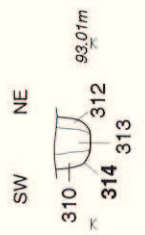
Section 1



Section 2



Section 3



Section 4

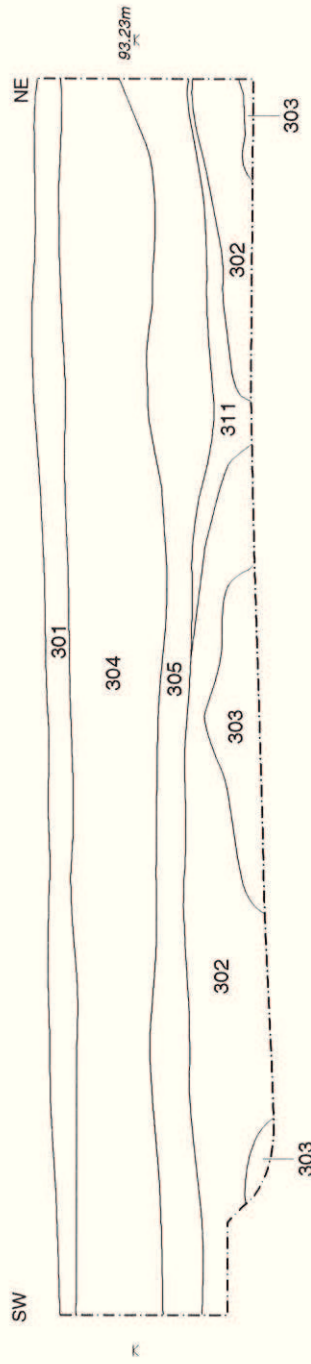


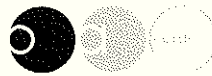
Figure 3: Trench 3, plan and sections



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