

Dartford Fastrack Scheme

Sections A, B and D



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



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Dartford, Kent
Dartford Fastrack
Sections A, B and D

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

In October 2004, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with new sections of the Dartford Fastrack Scheme in Dartford, Kent. The work was undertaken by OA on behalf of Kent County Council (KCC). This report covers Sections A, B and D of the Scheme. Separate reports have been prepared by OA for Sections C, E and F of the Scheme. In the event no archaeological monitoring was required for Sections A and D, as these parts of the new transport route lie wholly within built up areas and roadways. The Section B results are from the RAFA Memorial Hall/`Glaxo Field` at the junction of the A226 and the Darenth Road (NGR TQ 54500 73900). The watching brief revealed natural chalk sealed beneath alluvial deposits associated with the line of the River Darenth. A well and brick wall with associated brick floor were located and are probably part of the 19th century mill complex that stood on the site. A drainage ditch to the south of these was also of 19th or 20th century date. No earlier archaeological remains were encountered.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In October 2004, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at `Section B` of the new Fastrack Public Transport route in Dartford, Kent (NGR TQ 54500 73900) (Fig. 1). The Fastrack scheme runs from central Dartford, down the east side of the Darenth Valley, and then east, crossing the M25, passing the Darenth Valley Hospital, before descending into Bluewater shopping Centre (Fig. 2). The scheme has been divided into six sections (A to F) for ease of location.
- 1.1.2 Sections A and B of the Fastrack route run approximately north-south from the town centre; `Section D` of the route extends eastward from `Section C` to `Section E` (Sections C and E are reported separately, OA 2006a and 2006b). No archaeological work was necessary in Sections A and D of the Fastrack route, as these lie in built up areas and roadways.
- 1.1.3 Two areas were monitored in Section B in the course of the topsoil stripping: at the junction of A226 and the Darenth Road, adjacent to the RAFA Memorial Hall and area of the current car park and to the south of this, a further area of the Fastrack route adjacent to the Darenth Road (in the `Glaxo Field`).
- 1.1.4 The project specification for the Fastrack Scheme produced by Kent County Council (KCC 2004) established that the whole line of the Fastrack route had archaeological potential, as it is in close proximity to Roman Watling Street. Roman and medieval findspots are known in the vicinity of the route.
- 1.1.5 The underlying geology of the site is a thin sporadic sheet of brickearth overlying a chalk solifluction deposit over chalk bedrock. The site of Section B occupies a former course of the river Darenth that was relocated in the 1920s. A water mill is known to have stood on the site.

1.2 Archaeological and historical background

1.2.1 The archaeological and historical background to the area has been the subject of a separate desk-based assessment study by Kent County Council (KCC 2004). The following is a brief summary of the background information provided within this document, which should be read in conjunction with this report.

Section A

1.2.2 Within the vicinity of this stretch of the route are Roman and medieval finds (at TQ 57 SW 176) relating to settlement and evidence for post-medieval settlement at TQ 557 SW 165 (also at TQ 75 SW 1010). Pottery and clay pipe findspots are known along the route here.

Section B

1.2.3 Roman building foundations are known on the site of Park Place, near to the River Darent and to the east of the route, a Roman cemetery is known at Chaucer Park. The RAFA Memorial Hall was the site of the former Victoria Mill and building foundations of Roman date have been found in Tenter's Field behind the Mill.

Section D

1.2.4 No remains were known along this part of the route, though a Roman coin was found c 100 m away - the route follows mostly built up areas at this point.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The aims of the watching brief were: to establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the proposal area and to determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present.

2.1.2 To establish the eco-factual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features and to establish the need for a mitigation strategy.

2.1.3 To define any relevant research priorities if additional archaeological investigation proved necessary and to make available the results of the investigation.

2.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

2.2.1 The area of Section B was stripped by mechanical excavator under archaeological supervision. The machined areas were cleaned by hand, planned and relevant sample sections recorded.

2.2.2 The plans of trenches were drawn at 1:100, sections at 1:20 scale. All trenches and sample sections were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

2.3 Finds and palaeo-environmental

- 2.3.1 No finds were recovered or retained from the watching brief.
- 2.3.2 There were no deposits suitable for environmental sampling identified during the works.

3 RESULTS : SECTION B SITE DESCRIPTION

3.1 RAFA Memorial Hall and Car Park by Overy Liberty

(Fig. 3 and Fig. 4)

- 3.1.1 At the base of the sequence was an extensive layer of brown sandy silt and gravel (19), an alluvial deposit associated with the line of the River Darent that occupied part of the site until its relocation in the early 1920s. Layer 18 was cut by a tree hole (17) and the construction cut (15) for a modern reused brick well with lead pipe attachment of 19th or 20th century date (Fig. 4, section 1).
- 3.1.2 The backfill of the construction cut (13) was overlain by a former topsoil layer (12), capped by a recent topsoil (11) that was sealed beneath the present hardcore and tarmac car park surface (10). The remnant of a brick wall (21) survived *in situ* comprising eight courses of red bricks bonded with compact lime-based mortar (Fig. 4, section 2). The wall was aligned east-west and is probably an outbuilding associated with the 19th/20th century water mill that once stood on the site here.
- 3.1.3 The wall was abutted by a layer of clay and gravels (19) that was overlain by a single layer of red brick (20), possibly a floor/yard surface associated with the wall. A layer of brick and stone rubble abutted wall 21, probably an infilling/demolition deposit.

3.2 Darent Road Area

(Fig. 3 and Fig. 4)

- 3.2.1 Natural chalk (27) was revealed at the base of the stripped area, overlain by alluvial material (28) similar in nature to layer 18 to the north.
- 3.2.2 The chalk was cut by an east-west aligned ditch (22) that was 0.7 m wide and 0.5 m deep and filled with silty materials with gravel inclusions (fills 23, 24, 25).
- 3.2.3 The ditch (Fig. 4, section 3) is probably modern and was used for drainage. The upper fill was overlain by topsoil (26), which also overlies layer 28. No other archaeology was revealed here.

3.3 Finds

- 3.3.1 No finds were recovered in the course of the watching brief. Bricks and mortar were analysed on site, but given their relatively modern date, they were not retained.

4 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

- 4.1.1 The integrity of the stratigraphic evidence encountered during the evaluation in 'Section B' is believed to be good. Natural chalk was exposed in large areas; otherwise machining came down onto a clearly defined layer of alluvium formed by the former course of the River Darent.
- 4.1.2 No Roman or medieval finds were discovered. Archaeological remains comprised the wall foundations of a building or ?cellar and floor probably associated with the Mill - probably an outbuilding - and a clearly modern brick-built well.
- 4.1.3 The ditch to the south was probably for drainage and is of modern date. The presence of alluvium suggest that the river was prone to flood in this area, possibly adversely affecting the likelihood of settlement activity on this part of the Fastrack route.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Width (m)	Thick. (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
10	layer	-	0.17	Tarmac and hardcore		C20th/C21st
11	layer	-	0.37	Garden soil		
12	layer	-	0.15	Former garden/topsoil		
13	fill	-	0.5	Construction cut fill in 15		
14	structure	1.5	3	Brick well		C19th/20th
15	cut	-	3	Cut for 14		
16	fill	-	0.2	fill of 17		
17	cut	-	0.2	tree hole		
18	layer	-	0.1+	Alluvium		
19	layer	-	0.9	Make-up for floor 20		C19th/20th
20	layer	-	0.2	Brick surface		
21	structure	1+	1+	Brick wall; mill out-building?		
22	cut	0.7	0.5	Drainage ditch		C19th/20th
23	fill	-	0.18	Fill of 22		
24	fill	-	0.12	Fill of 22		
25	fill	-	0.18	Fill of 22		
26	layer	-	0.18	Topsoil, Glaxo fields		
27	layer	-	0.1++	Natural chalk		
28	layer	-	-	Alluvium/brickearth mix		
29	layer	-	1+	Rubble abutting 21		C20th

APPENDIX 2 REFERENCES

Kent County Council 2004 *Specification for an Archaeological/Geo-archaeological Evaluation & Walkover Survey associated with the Fastrack Scheme, Phase 1, Dartford to Bluewater, Dartford Kent.*

OA 1992 *Fieldwork Manual (Ed. D Wilkinson, first edition, August 1992)*

OA 2006a *Dartford Kent. Dartford Fastrack Scheme. Section C. Geo-archaeological Report on test pits and bulk gravel extraction.*

OA 2006b *Dartford Kent. Dartford Fastrack Scheme. Sections E and F. Archaeological Evaluation and Watching Brief Report.*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Dartford, Kent. Dartford Fastrack: Sections A, B and D

Site code: DAFT EV

NGR: TQ 54500 73900

Type of watching brief: Area strip and record, principally Section B of Scheme

Date and duration of project: October 2004, 1 week

Area of site: 0.5 ha.

Summary of results: Natural chalk overlain by alluvial deposits associated with former course of the River Darent. Elements of 19th century mill/mill outbuilding and? associated or later well; 19th century or later drainage ditch. No investigations were undertaken on Sections A and D of the route.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with an appropriate Museum Service in due course, under the following accession code: DAFT 04



Scale 1:50,000

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Figure 1: Site location

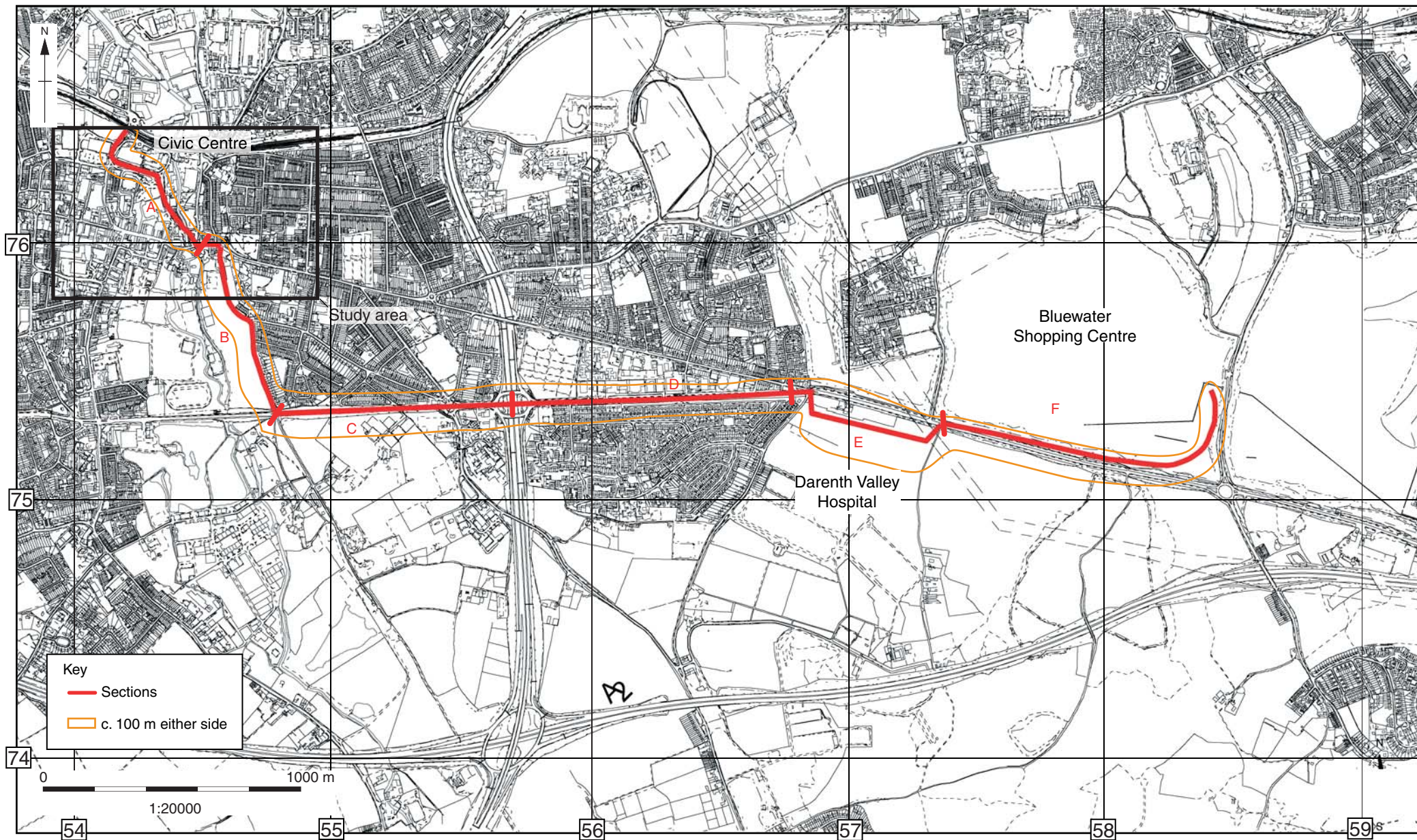


Figure 2: Route of Fastrack scheme, A to F

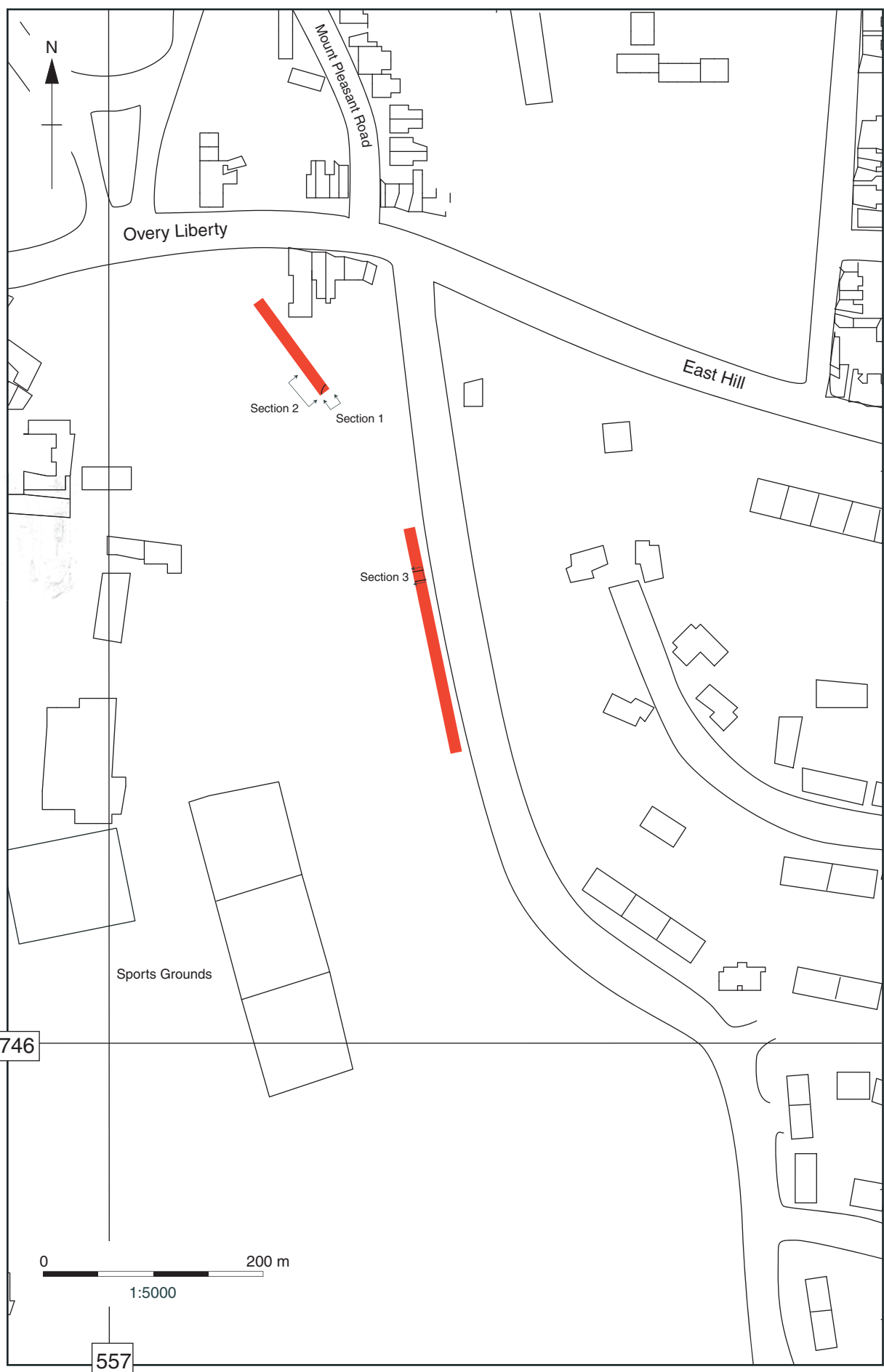
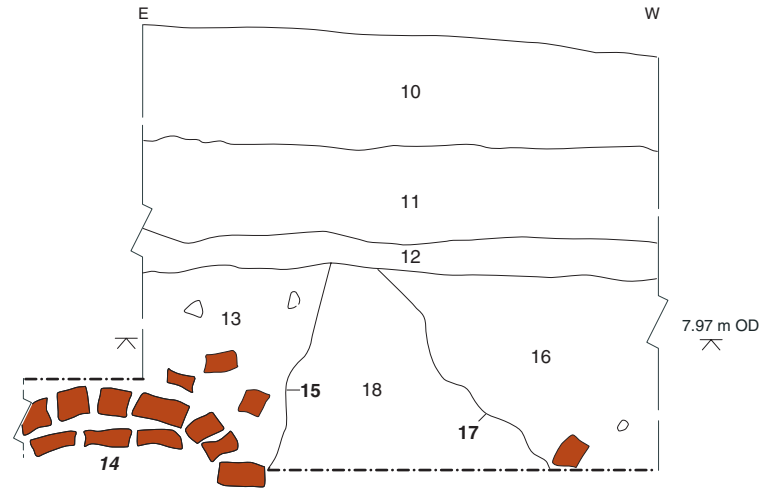
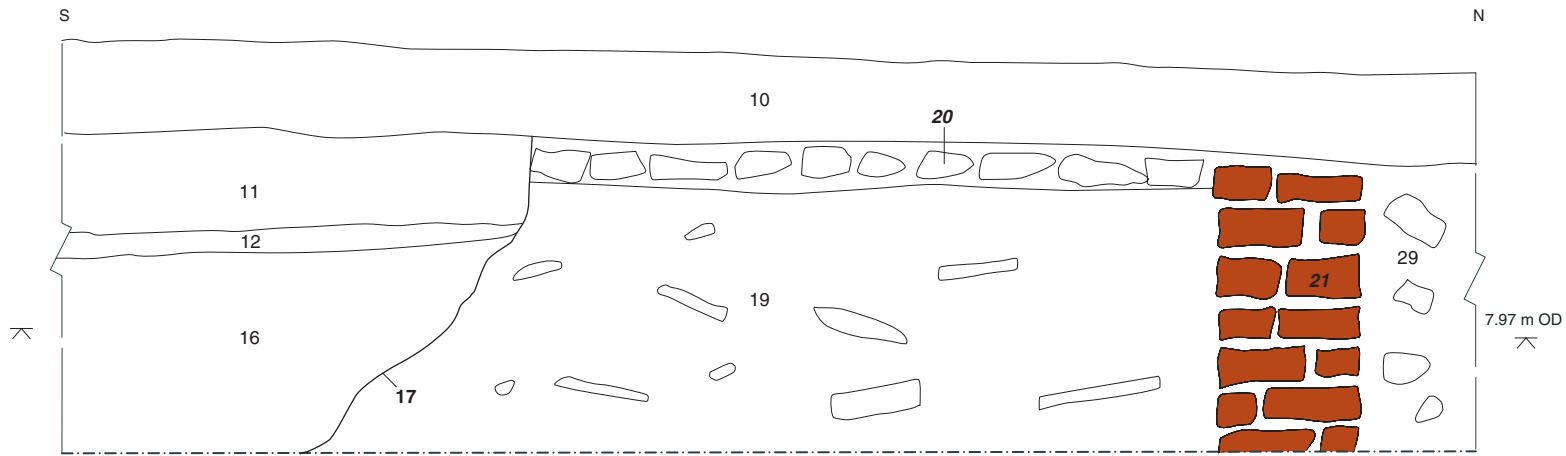


Figure 3: Area of Section B Watching brief

Section 1



Section 2



Section 3

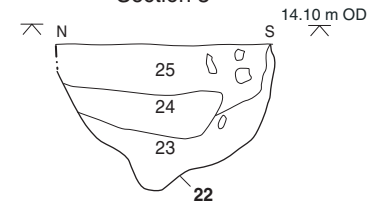


Figure 4: Sections