

ROBINSWOOD HILL FARM, GLOUCESTER, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

(NGR SO 83595 15704)

Results of a archaeological watching brief

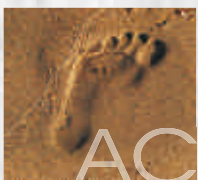
Gloucester City Council planning reference 13/01018/FUL

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On behalf of:
CgMs Consulting Ltd

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AC archaeology

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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by AC archaeology in June 2015 during initial groundworks for a residential development at Robinswood Hill Farm, Gloucester, Gloucestershire (NGR SO 83595 15704). The site is located within an area where Romano-British finds have been recovered. The present farmhouse is a 19th-century building.

A topsoil strip of a portion of the site was monitored. This was excavated into made ground deposits. Test pits dug within this area exposed the natural subsoil at a depth of approximately 1m below existing levels, with overlying layers comprising up to 0.6m of modern dumped deposits overlying earlier subsoils. No archaeological features or deposits were exposed within the two test pits.

Further investigations in a part of the site occupied by a former farm complex demonstrated that terracing associated with the complex had completely removed any soils pre-dating the 19th century.

No evidence for archaeological activity pre-dating the 19th century was exposed and no pre-modern finds were recovered.

1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

- 1.1 This document presents the results of archaeological investigations carried out by AC archaeology in June 2015 during construction of a residential development at Robinswood Hill Farm, Gloucester, Gloucestershire (NGR SO 83595 15704). The work was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd on behalf of New Dawn Homes, and was required under condition 10 of the grant of planning permission by Gloucester City Council (reference 13/01018/FUL) for "demolition of 2 existing barns, demolition of existing two storey rear extension on farmhouse, use of existing farmhouse building as 1 no. dwellinghouse and erection of 4 no. detached dwellings and 2 no. semi-detached dwellings".
- 1.2 The site is located 2.8km south of the historic centre of Gloucester, on the northwest side of Robinswood Hill. It is situated at a height of approximately 57m aOD with the local topography generally sloping downhill from the southwest to the northeast. The underlying geology comprises Blue Lias clays and Charmouth mudstones.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The archaeological background to the area has been set out in a desk-based assessment prepared by CgMs Consulting (Bedford 2012). The site is located 2.5km to the south of the Roman Colonia of Gloucester (Glevum); however, only scattered finds and features of this date are recorded within 1km of the site. This includes a coin (HER 1172) located 354m to the north of the site, a funerary urn approximately 275m to the northeast (HER 1182), and a stray find of Roman pottery 260m to the southwest.
- 2.2 A medieval well house, recorded as being rebuilt during the Victorian period, is located approximately 400m east of the site (HER 1159).

- 2.3 The earliest evidence for the existence of a farm comes from Tuffley Tithe Map of 1839 (where it is unclear); the farmhouse is depicted on the 1884 Ordnance Survey map. It has been tentatively suggested that the site originated in the 16th Century following the clearance of Sudgrove Wood.

3. AIMS OF THE WORK

- 3.1 The main aim of the watching brief was monitor groundworks associated with the new development to identify, excavate and record any archaeological features or remains present, with an emphasis on the potential for rural Roman activity or earlier phases of the post-medieval farm.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The monitoring was undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by CgMs (Smalley 2014), and adhered to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (2014) *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief*. The proposed methodology required monitoring of topsoil stripping on the northwest half of the site, and if significant archaeological deposits were present, the monitoring was to be extended to the remainder of the site. For the northwest part of the site, the topsoil and part of modern levelling deposits were stripped. Following consultation with CgMs three test pits were excavated, and in one part of the site a larger area excavated (Trench 1) to more fully expose the deposit sequence.

- 4.2 All excavation was carried out by a mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless bucket under the direct supervision of the attending archaeologist. All excavations carried out by AC archaeology were located to avoid tree protection zones. Recording was carried out in accordance with the AC archaeology *General Site Recording Manual, Version 2*, and an AC archaeology generic method statement for an archaeological watching brief during initial stripping, which was included with the CgMs WSI.

5. RESULTS (Figs 2-3; Plates 1-4)

- 5.1 The initial topsoil stripping in the northwest half of the site exposed only modern topsoil (100) and a modern dumped layer (101). Two test pits (pits 1 and 3) were subsequently excavated in this area to expose and record underlying deposits. These are summarised in tables 1 and 2 below.

Test pit 1		Length 2.7m	Width 1.9m	Alignment NE-SW
Context	Description	Average Depth	Interpretation	
100	Friable dark greyish-brown humic silty clay-loam containing sparse well-sorted, sub-angular to sub-rounded mixed stone up to 40mm long, ceramic building material, charcoal and plaster fragments.	0-0.25m	Modern topsoil that has formed over deposit 101	
101	Moderately friable dark grey humic silty clay-loam containing sparse well-sorted sub-angular to rounded stone up to 40mm long and charcoal, ceramic building material (including whole bricks), as well as plastic and modern pottery. Similar to 100 but with fewer inclusions	0.25-0.44m	Modern levelling deposit	
102	Compact pale brownish-grey, clay-loam, with yellow hues, containing rare well-sorted coarse stone, common ceramic building material and charcoal fragments.	0.44-0.63m	Modern levelling deposit	
103	Compact pale yellowish-grey clay, with brown hues, containing sparse poorly sorted, rounded ironstone up to 110mm long and three fragments of a mammal long bone (species unidentified)	0.63-0.97m	Subsoil	
104	Very compact pale grey-blue clay with occasional yellow and brown hues.	0.97m +	Natural	

Table 1: deposit sequence in test pit 1.

Test pit 3		Length 2.2m	Width 1.9m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Average Depth	Interpretation	
100	Very friable dark greyish-brown humic silty clay-loam containing sparse well-sorted, sub-angular to sub-rounded mixed stone up to 40mm long, ceramic building material, charcoal and plaster fragments and organic debris.	0-0.07m	Modern topsoil that has formed over deposit 101	
101	Moderately friable dark grey-black humic silty clay-loam containing sparse well-sorted sub-angular to rounded stone up to 40mm long and abundant charcoal, ceramic building material (including whole bricks), as well as plastic and modern ceramics. Similar to 100 but with fewer inclusions	0.07-0.21m	Modern levelling deposit	
109	Clean pale whitish-yellow and green clay that did not extend across the entire test pit.	0.21-0.27m	Modern dumped deposit	
102	Compact pale brownish-grey, clay-loam, with yellow hues, containing rare well-sorted coarse stone, common ceramic building material and charcoal fragments.	0.28-0.38m	Modern levelling deposit	
107	Compact pale yellowish-grey clay-loam with brown hues. It measured 0.14m thick and contained rare moderately sorted, sub-angular to sub-rounded stone up to 40mm long, and rare charcoal specks probably derived from (102) via bioturbation.	0.38-0.52m	Subsoil	
108	Soft pale yellowish-grey clay-loam with brown hues containing common poorly sorted, angular to sub-rounded stone up to 70mm long.	0.52-0.62m	Subsoil	
103	Compact pale yellowish-grey clay, with brown hues, containing sparse poorly sorted, rounded ironstone up to 110mm long and animal bone.	0.62-0.86m	Subsoil	
104	Very compact pale grey-blue clay with occasional yellow and brown hues.	0.86m +	Natural	

Table 2: deposit sequence in test pit 3.

5.2 At the southeast edge of site a small area (Trench 1) was stripped to investigate the extent of disturbance in this part of the development site. This was targeted to pick up the footprints of the now demolished barns along with the undeveloped ground between them. The upper deposits comprised up to 0.40m of crushed building material from the demolition of the barns (106), the former yard surface, down onto an older hardstanding consisting of tarmac, gravel and concrete at the southwest end of the excavation. At this depth modern deposits were exposed in the centre of the trench with disturbed subsoil present at the northeast end of the trench. A test pit (2) was then excavated through the exposed deposits at this level. The results are summarised in table 4 below.

Test pit 2		Length 2.2m	Width 1.9m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Average Depth	Interpretation	
106	Crushed demolition debris	0-0.09	Debris from modern demolition of the former farm buildings	
105	Sticky dark brown clay-loam containing a mix of inclusions, including metal, whole bricks and sparse sub-rounded stone up to 150mm long.	0.09-0.30m	Modern dumped deposit, possibly a levelling deposit for farmyard surfaces	
110	Soft and sticky pale yellowish-grey clay-loam with brown hues containing post-medieval brick as well as a large unabraded sherd from a 19th-century chamber pot	0.30-0.53m	Subsoil	
104	Hard compact pale grey-blue clay with occasional yellow and brown hues.	0.53m +	Natural	

Table 3: deposit sequence in test pit 2.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 The topsoil stripping across the northwest portion of the site extended into made ground deposits and did not expose the natural subsoil. Excavation of two test pits within this area demonstrated that soil coverage was up to c.1m deep, with up to 0.6m of modern dumped deposits overlying earlier subsoils. No archaeological features or deposits were exposed within the two test pits.

6.2 The investigations in the southeast half of the site have demonstrated that modern activity (relating to the construction of the recently demolished farm buildings) had completely removed any soils pre-dating the 19th century; the character of the natural indicates that the hillside has been terraced into, probably for the construction of the farmhouse and associated farm buildings.

6.3 No evidence for archaeological activity pre-dating the 19th century was exposed, either in the form of physical features or residual finds. The monitoring of the topsoil strip and the excavation of three test pits and a trench demonstrated that the site had been previously levelled and terraced, with this likely to have taken place during the construction of the current farmhouse and associated buildings.

7. ARCHIVE AND OASIS ENTRY

7.1 The paper and digital archive are currently held at the offices of AC archaeology, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, Bradninch, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ, and will be deposited at the Gloucester City Museum.

7.2 An OASIS (Online AccesS to the Index of Archaeological InvestigationS) entry has been created using the unique identifier 214122, and includes a copy of this report.

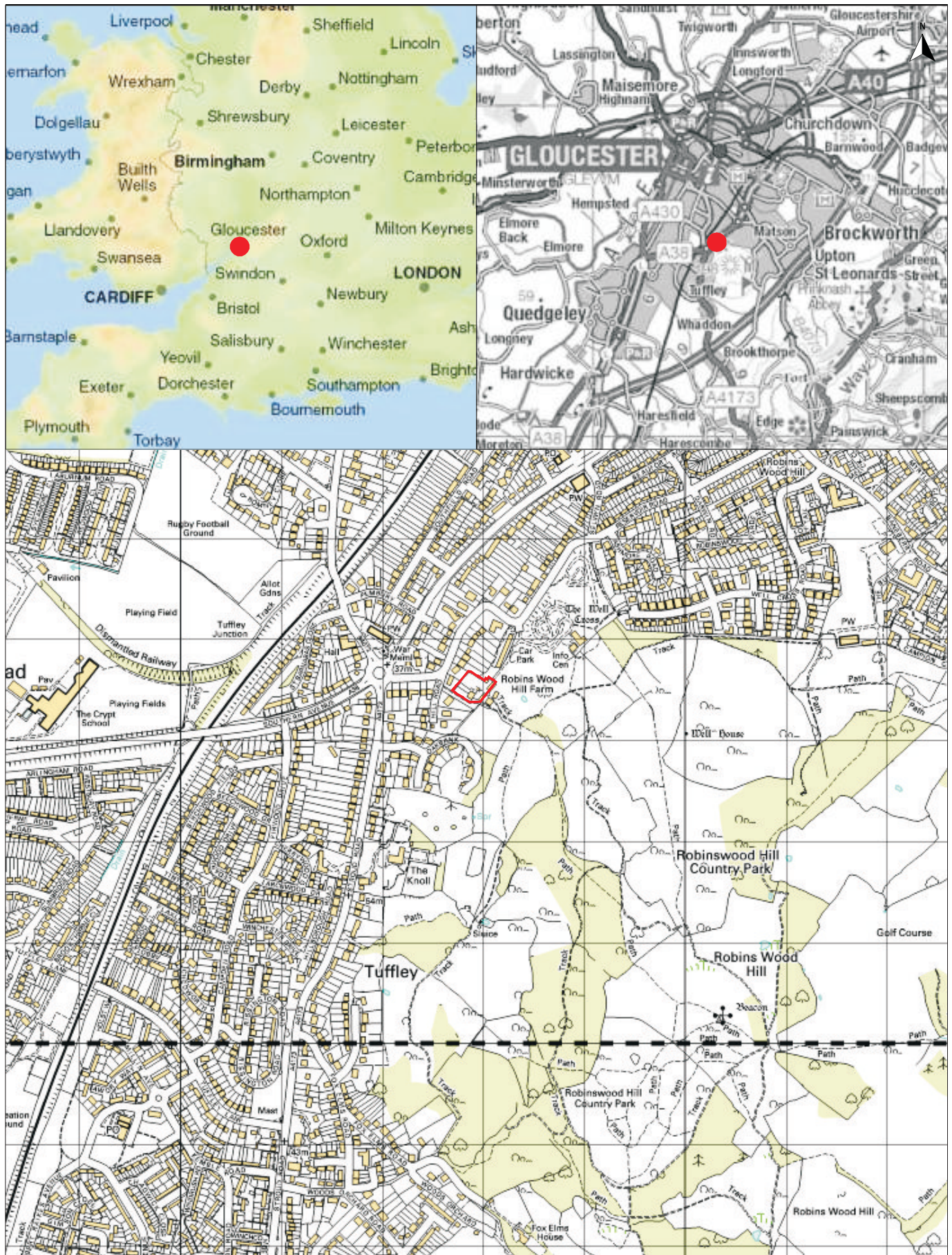
8. **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

8.1 This watching brief was commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of New Dawn Homes, and managed for CgMs by Richard Smalley and for AC archaeology by Simon Hughes. The fieldwork was carried out by Paul Cooke, who also produced the report. The figures were prepared by Stella De-Villiers. Thanks are due to the groundwork contractor, Milbrooke Construction Ltd, who were very cooperative throughout the investigations.

9. **SOURCES CONSULTED**

Bedford, W., 2012, *Archaeological Desk Based Assessment: Robins Wood Hill Farm, Gloucester*, CgMs ref. **WB/13776**

Smalley, R., 2014, *Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological works in respect of Robinswood Hill Farm, Gloucester, Gloucestershire*, CgMs ref. **RAJS/18580**

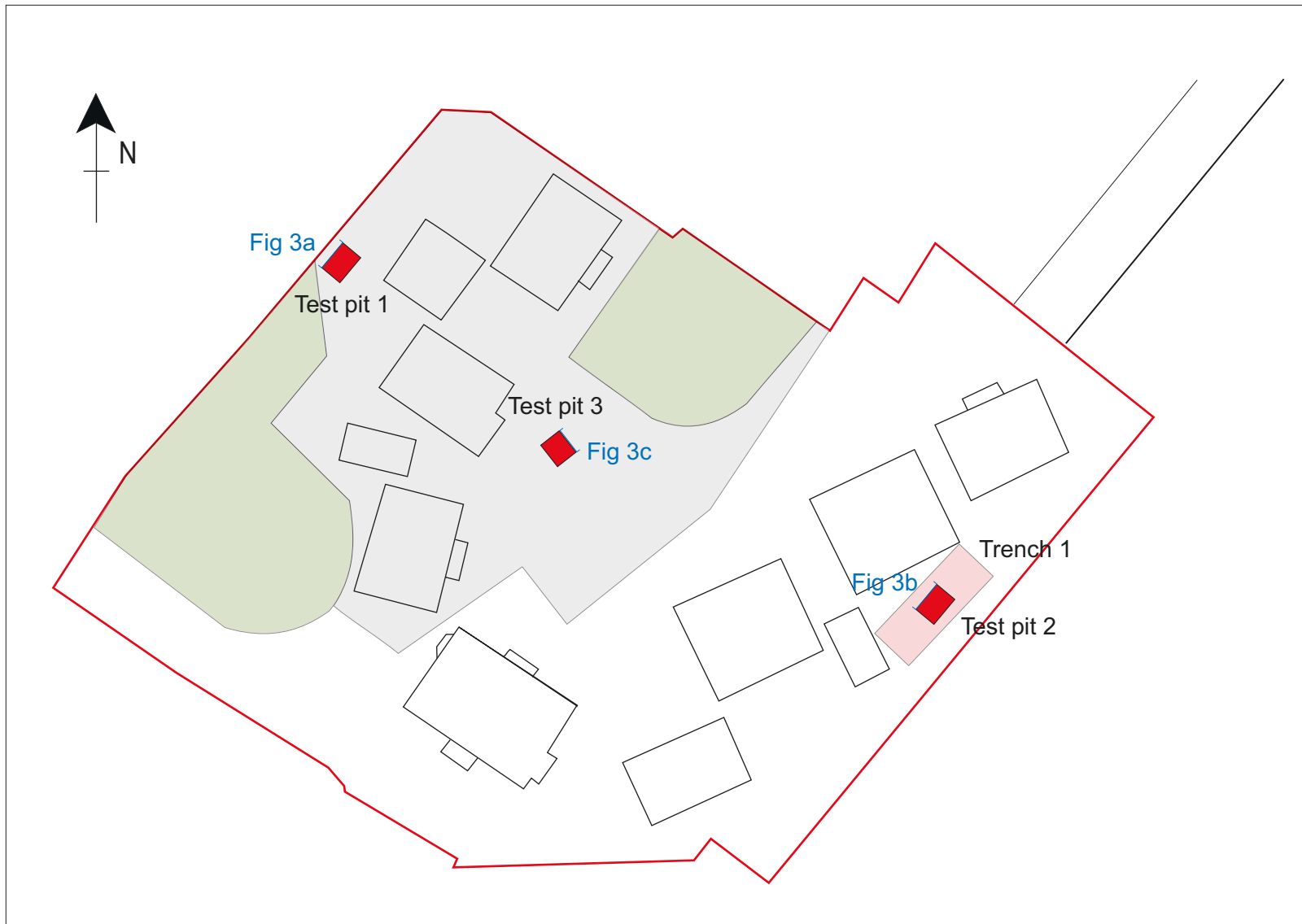






PROJECT

Robinswood Hill Farm, Gloucester,
Gloucestershire

TITLE

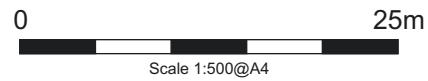
Fig.1: Site location



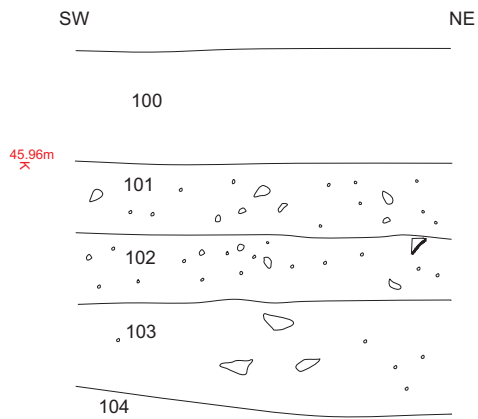
-  Test pits
-  Trench
-  Area of topsoil strip under archaeological supervision
-  Tree protection zone

PROJECT
 Robinswood Hill Farm, Gloucester,
 Gloucestershire

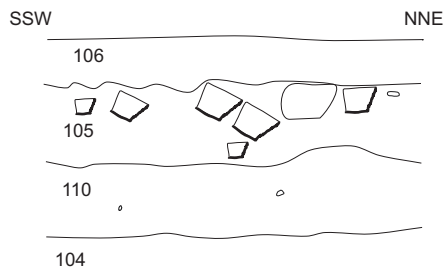
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 Fig. 2: Location of observations



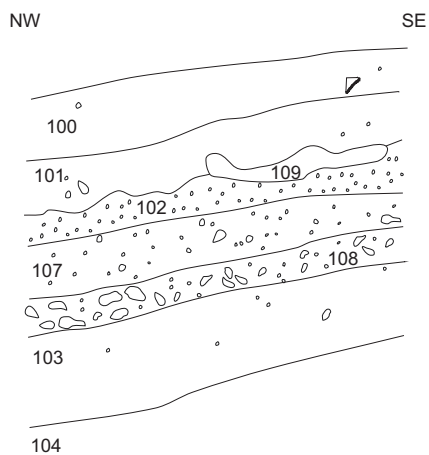
a) section of test pit 1



b) section of test pit 2



c) section of test pit 3



 Brick
 Stone



PROJECT

Robinswood Hill Farm, Gloucester,
Gloucestershire

TITLE

Fig.3: Sections of test pits



Plate 1: General site shot, looking west



Plate 2: Section of test pit 1, looking northwest (1m scale)



Plate 3: Trench 1,
looking northeast (1m scale)



Plate 4: Section of test pit 2,
looking northwest (1m scale)

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