

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF FOR A NEW CLASSROOM UNIT AT REIGATE PRIORY JUNIOR SCHOOL BELL STREET REIGATE



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An archaeological watching brief

Summary

A Watching Brief was conducted by Surrey County Archaeological Unit (SCAU) during the preliminary excavation works associated with the emplacement of a temporary classroom, to be set above ground level. The excavation associated with this development removed the topsoil from the area of the building footprint and an associated drainage pipe run. Archaeological remains of walls and areas of surfacing dated to the post medieval period were revealed within the main building footprint, and these probably represent parts of an 18th century stable block. It is recommended that further recording of these is undertaken when the temporary classroom is removed.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 A Watching Brief was conducted by Surrey County Archaeological Unit (SCAU) on the preliminary excavation works associated with the emplacement of a temporary classroom. The site was visited on two occasions, the first on 31st May to monitor the main area reduction, followed by a return visit on the 22nd of June to monitor the excavation of the drainage pipe spur. Because of the sensitive nature of the site the new structure was set above ground level upon a series of jack supports. The only excavation associated with this development was the mechanical removal of around 0.25m thickness of topsoil from the area of the building footprint, excavated to accommodate a crushed stone sub-base and the cutting of a narrow drainage spur, which reached a maximum depth of 0.35m.

Planning Background

1.2 Planning permission was granted to Surrey County Council for the construction of a temporary classroom at Reigate Priory Junior School, Bell Street, Reigate. (fig 1). The school is located within an Area of High Archaeological Potential (AHAP), and includes a Scheduled Ancient Monument, (site of the medieval priory at Reigate). A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), produced by SCAU (Collie 2016) recommended that a watching Brief be implemented as part of the proposed development.

1.3 Surrey County Archaeological Unit (SCAU) was commissioned by Surrey County Council Property Services to undertake the archaeological work required to comply with the planning consent.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 The main area strip was undertaken using a small rubber tracked, hydraulic mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.2m wide toothless bucket, whilst the associated drainage pipe run was cut using a combination of 1.2m and 0.25m wide toothless buckets, augmented with hand tools.

2.2 The main excavation area equated approximately to the foot print of the proposed new classroom, measuring around 10 x 10 metres square, whilst the associated drainage pipe run extended as a linear spur for approximately 2.80m from the northeast corner of the main excavation. Because of the sensitive nature of the site the excavated depth of the main area was kept shallow, with only around 0.25m of soil being removed. The depth of the removed soil corresponded roughly with the thickness of the existing topsoil horizon, although in places some unexcavated remnants of the topsoil remained. This soil

was left in-situ and served as a protection for any archaeological deposits lying beneath. The drainage spur was of similar depth, reaching a maximum of 0.35m at its northeast end.

2.3 The exposed archaeology was generally recorded in plan only, although some small selective interventions were hand dug in order to augment the archaeological archive.

2.4 Upon completion of the main archaeological work on the 31st of May, it was agreed with the site contractors that the newly exposed archaeological horizon would be protected, prior to the laying of a crushed stone sub-base with a geo-textile membrane. The crushed stone sub base serves as the foundation for the sighting of the class room base pads, which form the supports for the new structure.

2.5 Only the soil removal was monitored by the archaeologist, whilst the laying of the geo-textile and deposition of the stone sub base was considered outside the scope of archaeological monitoring.

3 RESULTS

3.1 The Geological Survey of Great Britain covering the area, (Sheet 286, Reigate), at scale 1:50,000, was consulted for the geological background to the site. The map shows the area of the development as lying upon the Folkestone Beds, which form part of the Lower Greensand formation. To the south of the site lies Park Hill, from which the land drops over 40 metres towards the Priory and Reigate town centre. The site lies at an approximate height of 77m OD. The Wallace Brook (sometimes also referred to as the Wray) crosses the site of the Priory, but is now mostly enclosed within a brick culvert.

Stratigraphic Sequence (figs 3-5)

Hand excavated intervention

3.2 The earliest deposits revealed were only observed within a small hand dug intervention, excavated to augment our understanding of the remains revealed across the stripped area, which were otherwise only viewed in plan. The excavation was kept as small as possible (around 0.35m N-S x 0.22m E-W) so as to minimise disturbance to the in-situ archaeological horizon. Aside from wall <02> all of the contexts encountered were only seen within the intervention itself.

- 08 The earliest deposit revealed comprised a mid brown homogenous silty sand containing very occasional pebble inclusions. This context was only observed within the hand dug intervention. The extent of the deposit as seen measured 0.15m N-S x 0.22m E-W, whilst a thickness of 0.27m represents the excavated extent, rather than the thickness of the deposit in its entirety. The very limited amount of the deposit revealed makes any confident interpretation impossible, although the visually homogenous nature of the soil does suggest that it may represent an undisturbed, naturally derived subsoil horizon.
- 10 Directly overlying 08 was a layer of dark brown silty sand containing moderate amounts of pebble inclusions. This deposit was also only observed within the same small intervention as described previously, with the revealed extent here measuring 0.22m N-S x 0.22m E-W x 0.25m thick. Once again, the limited extent of the deposit revealed makes interpretation difficult and the deposit could represent a disturbed earlier topsoil or even a deliberate levelling deposit associated with unrecorded landscaping episodes
- 07 Linear cut [07] was orientated E-W and was partly revealed within the small intervention described previously. Only the northern edge of the cut was seen, which here revealed a steep, straight, side profile, which truncated the previously described deposits. The visible extent of the cut measured 0.50m N-S x 0.22m E-W x 0.50m deep, whilst its function was clearly to accommodate E-W orientated wall <02> (described below).
- 02 Wall <02> was housed within construction cut [07] and comprised at least seven courses of red brick lain so as to form a single stepped foundation arrangement. It was linear in plan, orientated E-W and bonded by a very sandy yellow mortar mix. The western limit of the wall was seen to continue beyond the excavation limits, whilst to the east it ended abruptly as an irregular edge that clearly represents the result of a subsequent truncation. Only a part of the wall's northern face was revealed within the small intervention mentioned earlier and here an excavated depth of 0.50m failed to reveal the wall's base. The final, upper course of the wall was the width of three bricks, which equates to around 0.35m, whilst the preserved stepped foundation on the northern face extended a further 0.08m beyond this, giving a combined width of 0.43m. This however is unlikely to represent the true overall width of the wall, as it seems probable that a similar stepped foundation

would be repeated on the wall's southern, unseen, face. Within the wall's northern face, towards its western limit, a shallow cut was preserved, which appeared to be the remains of an architectural element rather than a later truncation. Approximately 4.50m from the wall's eastern limit and abutting its southern face a second N-S orientated wall was observed (wall <03>).

- 06 Deposit (06) was also contained within construction cut [07], both abutting the face and overlying the stepped foundation of wall <02>. The revealed extent measured 0.12m N-S x 0.22m E-W and comprised a dark blackish- grey silty sand with a moderate amount of pebble inclusions. The recorded thickness of 0.50m represents only the thickness as seen, within the intervention. This deposit is clearly associated with the construction phase of wall <02> , representing as it does a construction cut, infilling deposit.

Remaining stratigraphy, stripped area and drainage spur

- 03 Wall <03> was orientated N-S, constructed of red bricks bonded with a sandy yellow mortar mix. The wall was linear in plan, with its northern limit defined by an abutting relationship with wall <02>, whilst to the south it was seen to continue beneath unexcavated topsoil deposit (01).The width of the wall was 0.35m at its northern end, but narrowed after approximately 0.25m down to only 0.23m. Whether this narrowing was the result of a later truncation or a genuine architectural feature associated with the wall's construction was unclear. Both faces of the wall as well as the south facing side of wall <02> were abutted by deposit (09), described below.
- 09 Context (09) is a generic number allocated to encompass a combination of deposits located exclusively to the south of main E-W wall <02>.The deposits comprised various mixtures of crushed chalk, crushed mortar as well as CBM and mixed soils that extended for an area measuring approximately 2.20m N-S x 7.00m E-W. The northern limit of the deposit was defined by wall <02>, whilst to the east and south the limit was delineated by the presence of a remnant of the overlying topsoil (01), which effectively masked the deposit's true extent. The western extent was defined by the limit of excavation. These deposits are generally thought to represent deliberate levelling deposits, with some areas of crushed chalk, especially, resembling floor make-up deposits. Evidence from the deposits located

to the north of wall <02>, which appear to be external, suggests the possibility that these deposits are associated with internal areas of surfacing.

- 05 Context (05) was located to the north of main E-W wall <02> and comprised a mid yellowish brown silty sand containing frequent small fragments of CBM as well as moderate amounts of chalk and pebbles. The deposit was revealed both to the east and western limits of the excavation area, being divided centrally by the presence of a remnant of the overlying topsoil (01), which effectively masked the deposit's true extent. A small area of visually similar material, measuring approximately 1.00m NE-SW x 0.28m NW-SE was revealed at the northeast end of the drainage pipe spur and was assigned the same number. Within the main area strip, the westernmost part of the deposit was by far the largest measuring approximately 2.45m N-S x 2.90m E-W, whilst to the east only a limited area of the deposit was revealed. This limited area was seen to continue beneath a well constructed pebble surface (04), described below. Context (05) almost certainly represents a deliberate levelling deposit associated with the construction of surface (04).
- 04 Deposit (04) was also located to the north of main E-W wall <02>.and comprised a compacted mass of small rounded and sub-rounded pebbles bonded within a dark soil matrix. The deposit generally appeared irregular in plan, although this was mainly due to the differential removal of the overlying topsoil which effectively defined the visible area of the deposit in many places. The extent, as revealed, measured 2.65m N-S x 3.85m E-W, whilst the overall thickness amounted to only around 0.04m. This deposit almost certainly represents a deliberately lain surface, which seems likely to be part of an external.area.
- 01 Deposit (01) comprised a dark greyish black silty sand with frequent pebbles and CBM fragments. The recorded thickness of this deposit measured 0.25 to 0.35m, whilst the excavated extent measured 10.00m N-S x 10.60m E-W, within the main area strip, plus a further 2.80m NE-SW x 0.56m NW-SE, within the associated drainage spur. This deposit equates to the existing vegetated topsoil as seen prior to excavation, which in reality continued beyond the excavation limits to the north, south and west.

4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 It is clear from the watching brief that the archaeological horizon within this area of the Priory School is very close to the existing ground surface, immediately below the existing topsoil horizon.

All of the archaeology revealed within this brief is likely to be of post medieval date and may itself have impacted on any earlier archaeological remains.

The surviving walls and associated surfacing can be directly superimposed upon Richard Ireland's Estate Plan of c1770 with a surprising degree of accuracy. The surviving depth and substantial thickness of the main east-west wall (context <02>) indicates the likelihood that this represents a wall of some height. Evidence from Ireland's plan would suggest it forms the northern side of a fairly narrow corridor like structure constructed around a central (open) courtyard (see figs 3 and 4). What the structure itself represents is less certain, although the lack of obvious garden ornamentation within the central courtyard would probably preclude a covered and sheltered garden area. The form and position of the court and surrounding buildings is entirely consistent with what would be expected of an 18th century stable court. The observed features would, on that basis, then form one side of a stable block (<02>) around 2.5m wide,, an internal (stable) partition (<03>), and an access path behind (<04>).

The extent over which the archaeological remains extend, beyond the watching brief area, remains unknown, although evidence from monitoring work undertaken during the construction of a new staircase in 2013, which was located around five metres to the northeast, indicated that there, at least, no obvious archaeological horizon was preserved. (Stevens, 2013).

4.2 It is recommended that the removal of the temporary classroom should be archaeologically monitored and, if possible, some limited cleaning and more detailed recording of the exposed archaeology undertaken, so as to ensure that any future works start from as secure an archaeological base as possible.

4.3 The statements and recommendations in 5.1-5.2 are the considered views of the Surrey County Archaeological Unit, based on the evidence presented in the earlier part of this report. It must be emphasised, however, that whether further archaeological work is required, what form it should take and when it might be scheduled are decisions to be made by the Local Planning Authority (generally acting under the advice of Surrey County Council's Heritage Conservation Team) and any further action in response to this report should await their opinion.

5 REFERENCES

Aecom, 2015 *Heritage Impact Assessment, Reigate Priory School Surrey*

Collie, 2015 *Written Scheme of Investigation Reigate Priory Junior School, Bell Street, Reigate*, SCAU client report

Stevens, S, 2013 *Archaeological watching brief report Reigate Primary School , Bell Street, Reigate, Surrey*, ASE client report

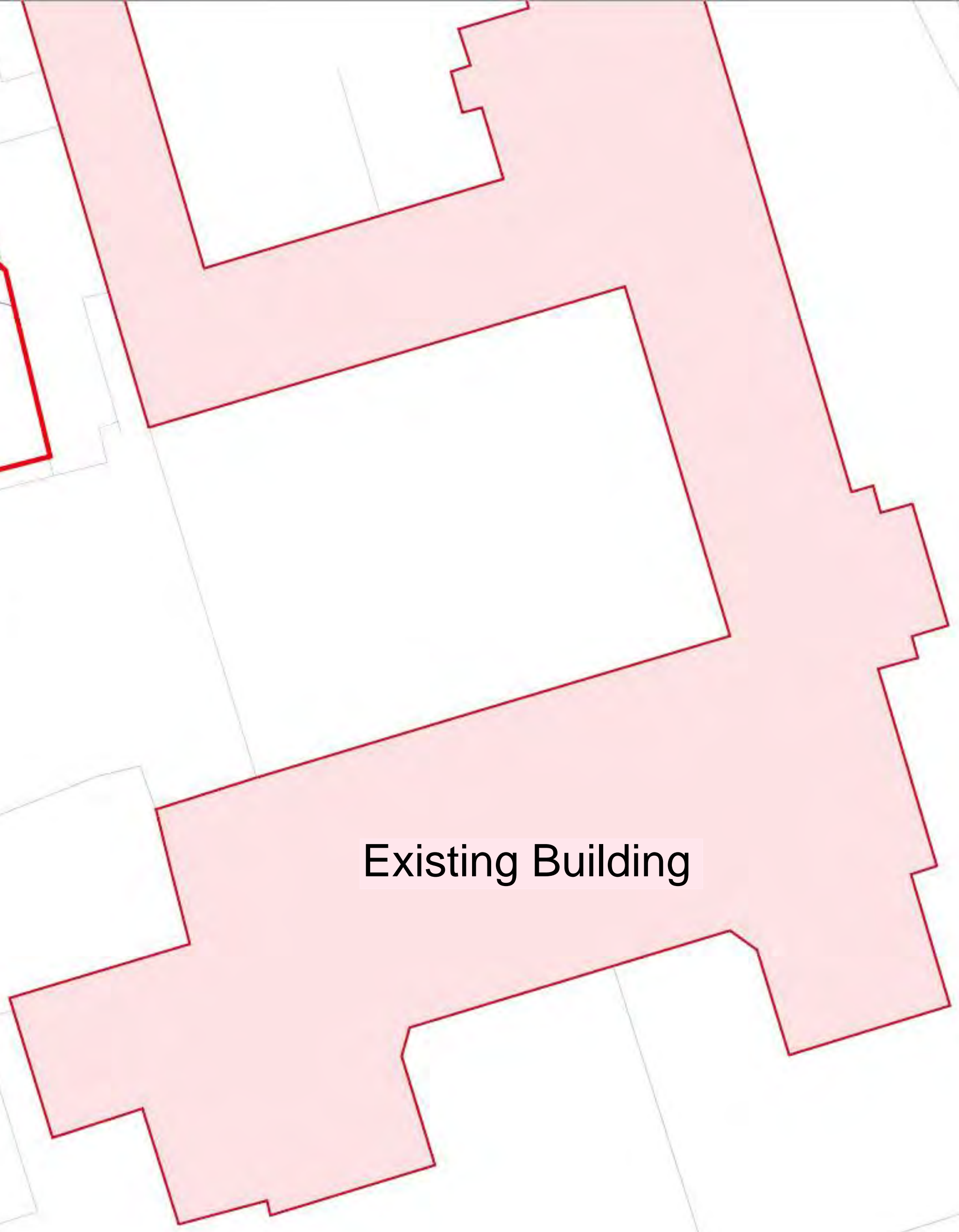
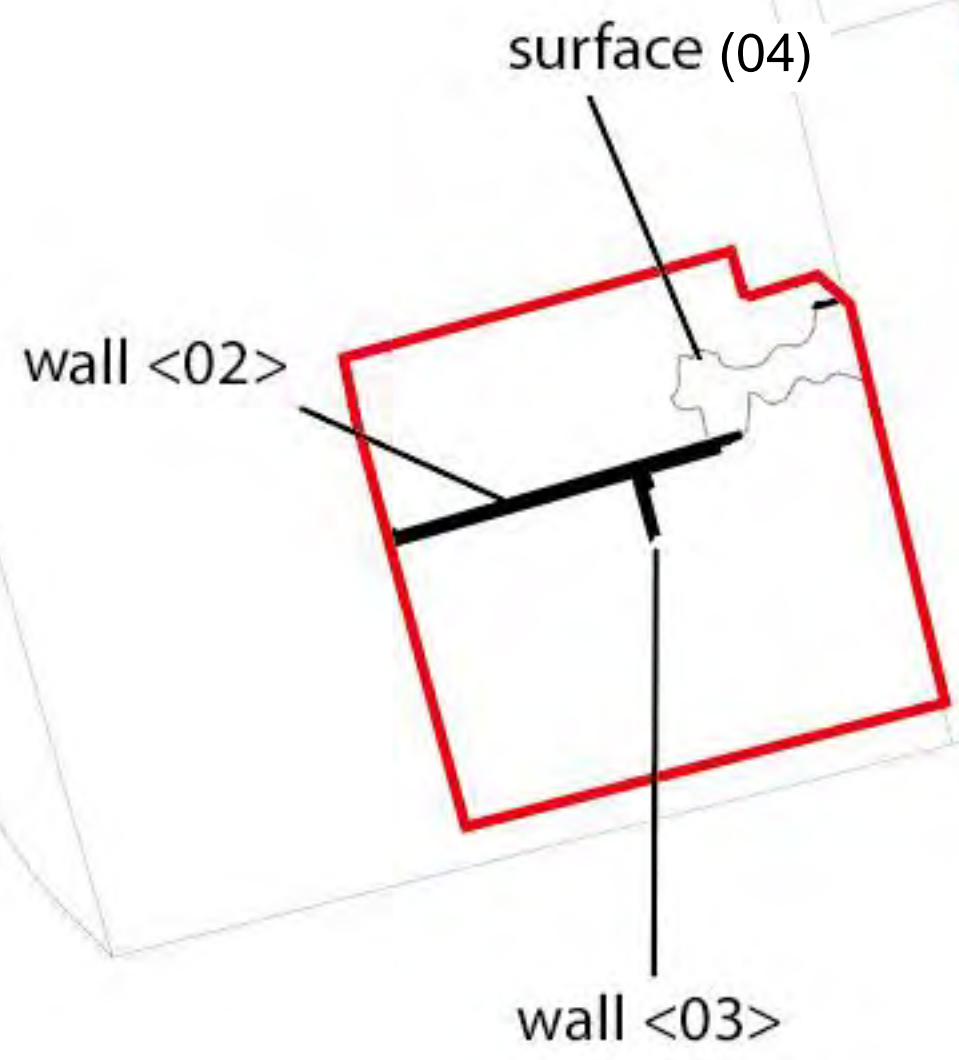


Fig 2 Reigate Priory Junior School, Reigate: General trench plan, showing archaeology in relation to existing buildings.



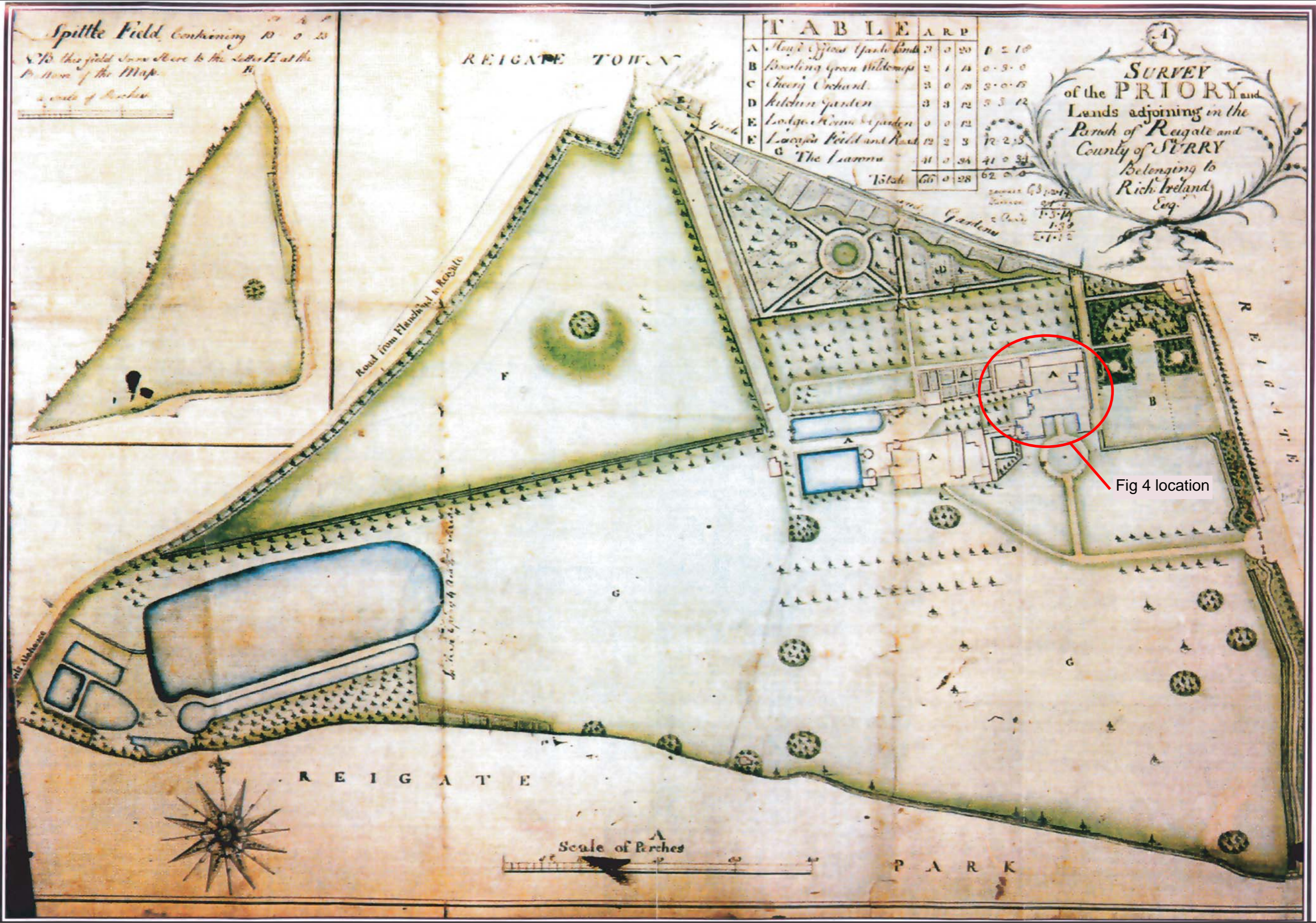


Fig 3 Reigate Priory Junior School, Reigate; Richard Irelands Estate Plan, 1770, with Fig 4 location.

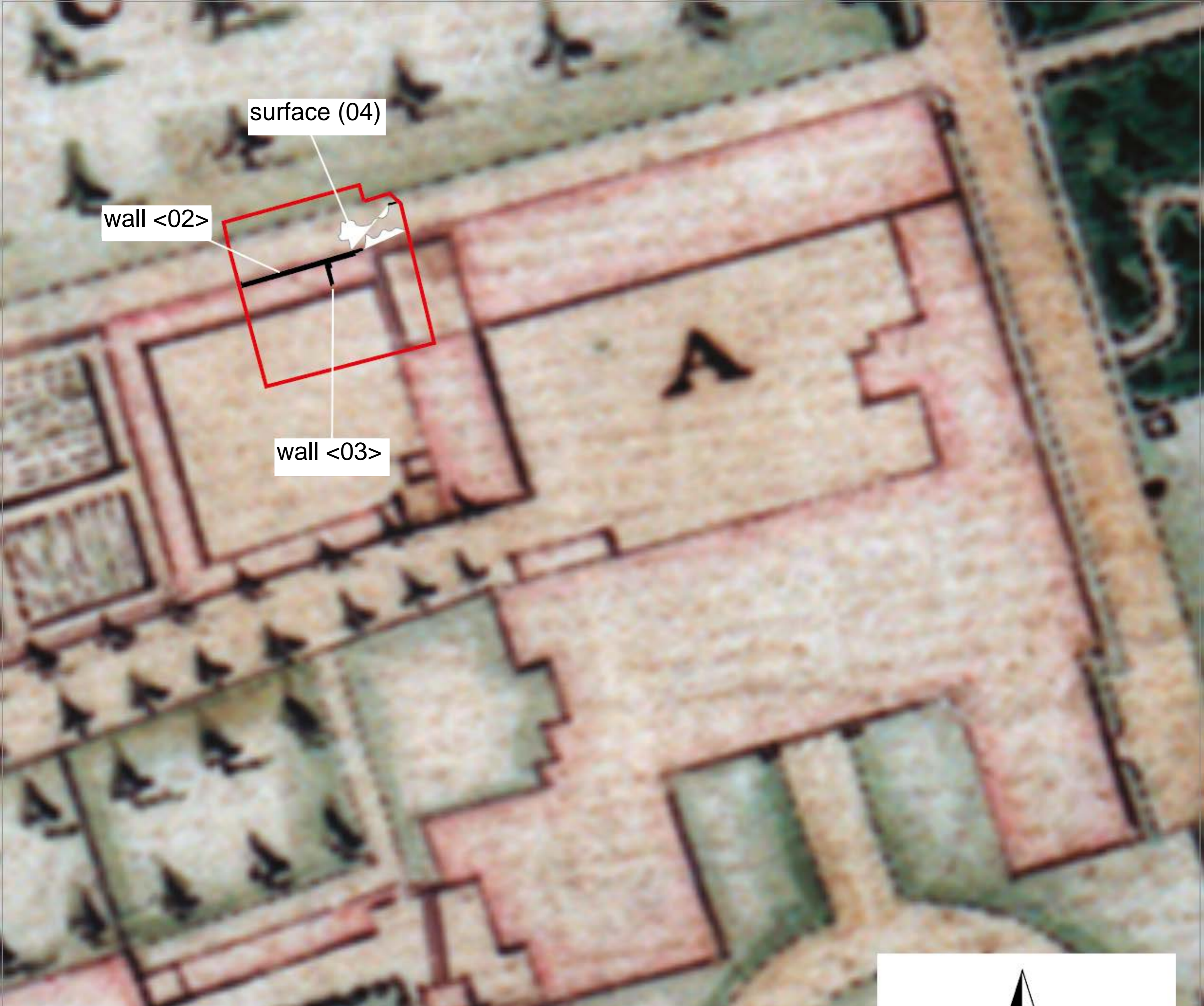


Fig 4 Reigate Priory Junior School, Reigate: revealed archaeology, overlain onto Richard Ireland's Estate plan of 1770



Fig 5 Reigate Priory Junior School, Reigate: detail plan and section of revealed archaeology.

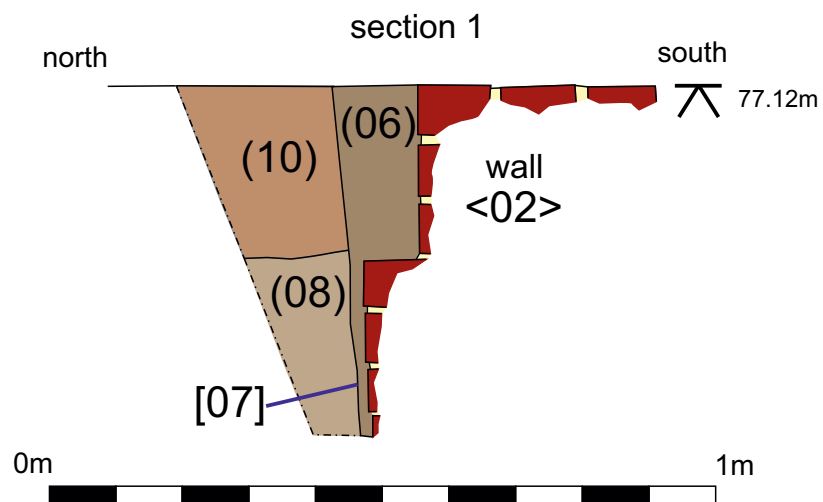
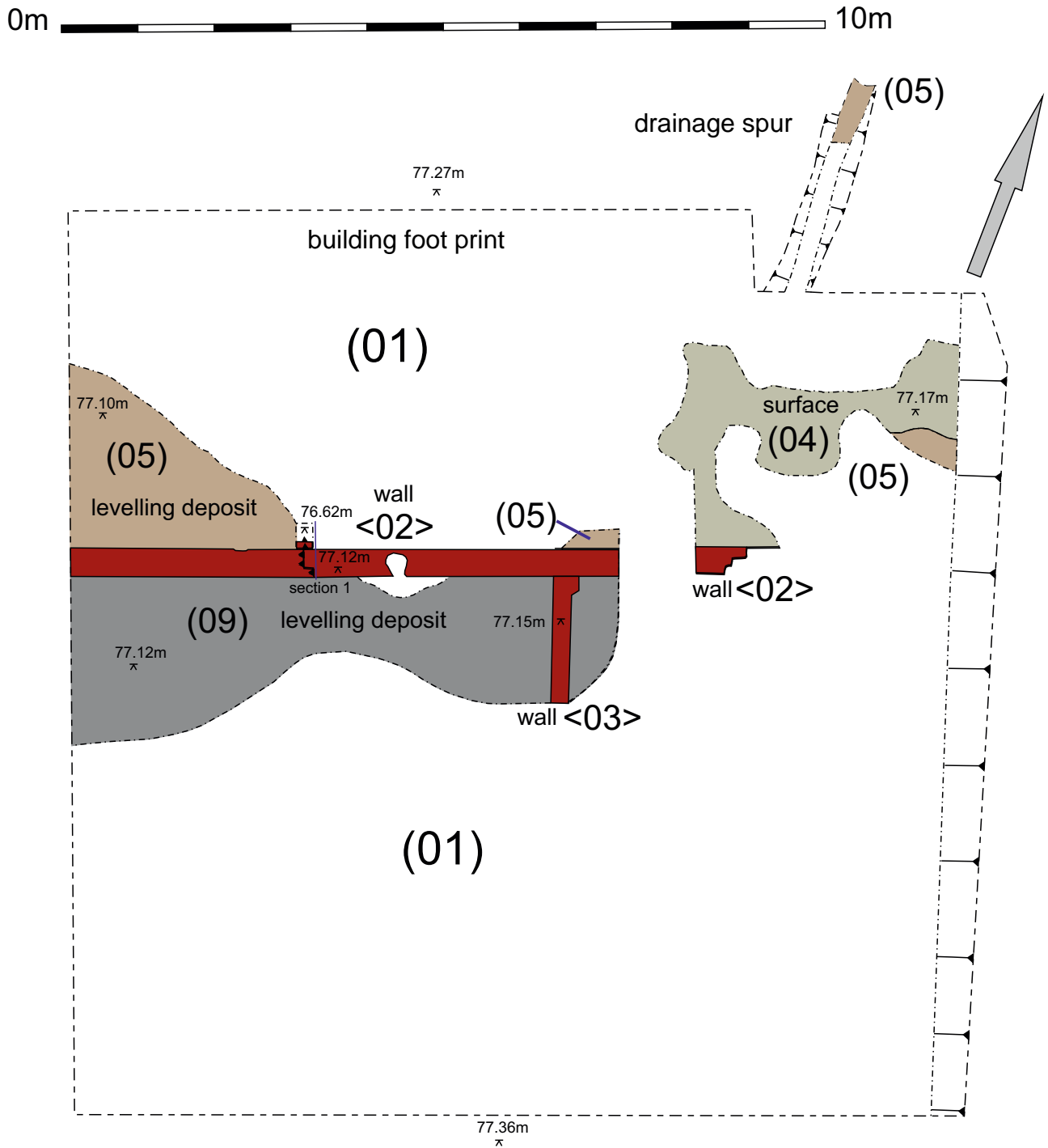




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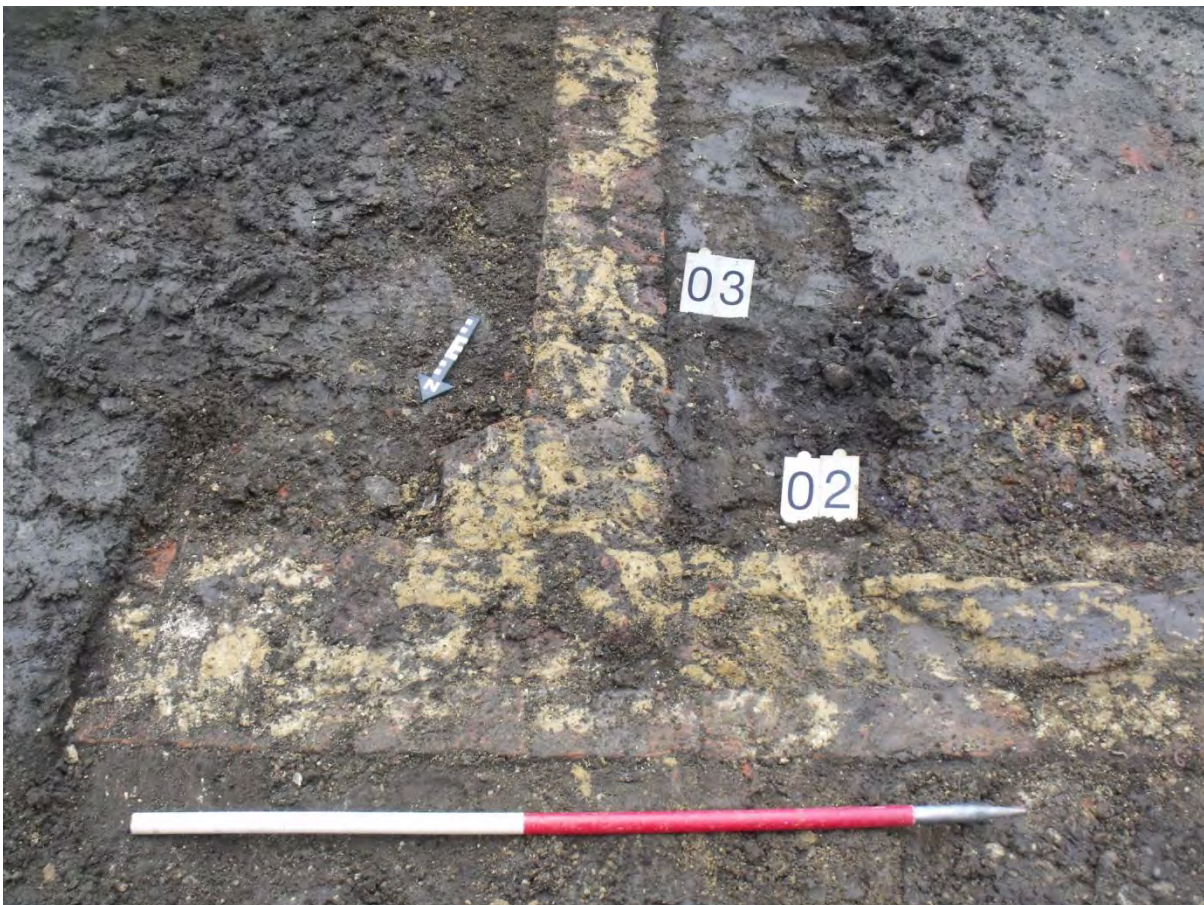


Fig 11 Reigate Priory Junior School, Reigate; junction of walls <02> and <03>. View to the south.



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Fig 15 Reigate Priory Junior School, Reigate; drainage pipe spur trench, view to the southeast.

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