Archaeological Watching Brief

at

PRIOR PARK PREPARATORY SCHOOL, CRICKLADE, WILTSHIRE.

for

Prior Park Preparatory School



Report No. 2440/2011

By Ray Ducker







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PRIOR PARK PREPARATORY SCHOOL, CRICKLADE, WILTSHIRE.

Centred on N.G.R. SU 1015 9350

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Abbreviations

AD	Anno Domini	Km	Kilometre
aOD	Above Ordnance Datum	m	Metre
BaRAS	Bristol & Region Archaeological Services	NGR	National Grid Reference
BC	Before Christ	NMR	National Monuments Record
С.	Circa	OS	Ordnance Survey
HER	Historic Environment Record		

NOTE

Notwithstanding that Bristol and Region Archaeological Services have taken reasonable care to produce a comprehensive summary of the known and recorded archaeological evidence, no responsibility can be accepted for any omissions of fact or opinion, however caused.

April, 2011.

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SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was carried out during groundworks associated with excavation of a pond as part of a wildlife garden in the grounds of Prior Park Preparatory School in Cricklade.

The groundworks revealed two soil-cut features of medieval date that were probably rubbish pits and were partly removed by the excavation of the pond. A small assemblage of medieval pottery together with a larger assemblage of animal bones was recovered during the part excavation of the features. Portions of both features were preserved in-situ in the base and side of the pond at the completion of works.

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Bristol and Region Archaeological Services (BaRAS) were commissioned by Deputy Bursar, Julie Barclay on behalf of Prior Park Preparatory School to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the construction of a pond as part of a nature garden at Prior Park Preparatory School in Cricklade.
- 1.2 The watching brief was commissioned to comply with the condition of planning consent (Wiltshire Council planning consent reference 10/01916/FUL) and in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Bristol and Region Archaeological Services (BaRAS 2011).
- 1.3 The fieldwork was undertaken on 4th April 2011 under the supervision of Raymond K Ducker who also compiled this report.
- 1.4 The project archive will be deposited with Wiltshire Heritage Museum and a copy of the report will be made available to the National Monuments Record maintained by English Heritage. The project will be entered in the Wiltshire Historic Environment and in the OASIS Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations as: bristola1-98420.

2. THE SITE

- 2.1 The small town of Cricklade (population: 4,132 [2001]) is situated in north-west Wiltshire, close to the county border with Gloucestershire, about 8 miles north-west of Swindon and 9 miles south-east of Circhester.
- 2.2 Prior Park Preparatory School (centred on NGR SU 1015 9350) (**Fig. 1**) lies some 500m south-east of Cricklade town centre on the south side of Calcutt Street at a height of approximately 84m aOD. The main school buildings front onto Calcutt Street with Meadow Park Nursery School to the west. The school grounds (playing fields) are bounded west by the rear of properties on the High Street, south by Nos. 6 27 Waylands and east by the line of the town's West Saxon defences beyond which is Spital Lane. The area of the nature garden and new pond is situated near the south-west corner of the site, immediately to the south-west of the Astro-turf sports ground that was the subject of the 2007 watching brief (Longman 2008).
- 2.3 Topographically Cricklade is located on sloping ground that falls gradually towards flat alluvial gravels of the Upper Thames Valley with a discernable slope from west to east.
- 2.4 The geology of the study area comprises Oxford Clays of the Upper Jurassic period (British Geological Survey 1979).

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Immediately adjacent the study area (**Fig. 2**) there have been both intensive archaeological watching briefs (Phillips 2003 & Longman 2008) and a small evaluation (Heaton 2007). The full historical and archaeological background to these sites is contained within the reports. Relevant details are summarised below:

Prehistoric

3.2 There is no evidence of prehistoric activity within the immediate vicinity of the site, although some 150m north of the school at Abingdon Court Farm (Longman forthcoming; BaRAS Report 789/2003) two unstratified Mesolithic flint tools, a small assemblage of residual Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age flints and a collection of Iron Age pottery sherds were recovered during an excavation.

Romano-British

- 3.3 There is a known Romano-British settlement at Cricklade, dating from the 1st to the 4th century AD. A section of the Roman road known as Ermine Street (the modern A419) lies approximately 0.5km east of the town. The road linked *Glevum* (Gloucester) with *Calleva Atrebatum* (Silchester, Hants.) and a settlement developed at Cricklade where the route crossed the river Thames. The Romano-British settlement is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Wiltshire 872A).
- 3.4 Evidence of Romano-British activity has previously been recorded in the vicinity of the study area. Two ditches containing 2nd 4th century AD pottery were recorded during works on the corner of Calcutt Street and Thames Lane (WSMR 311). Two more sites along Thames Lane included Romano-British pottery (WSMR 318 & WSMR 323). Several sherds of residual Romano-British pottery were found at Prior Park School during salvage recording in 2003 (Phillips 2003) but none was recovered during an evaluation at the school in February 2007 (Heaton 2007).

Anglo-Saxon

- 3.5 King Alfred founded Cricklade as a West Saxon 'Burh' or fortified town in the late 9th century AD. The town is first mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in AD 903 when it was successfully defended against attack, and in the Burghal Hidage when describing the 1,500 hides pertaining to Cricklade.
- 3.6 The defences (Cricklade Town Banks Wiltshire Scheduled Ancient Monument 323) constructed around the town can still in part be seen today and in fact form the eastern boundary of Prior Park Preparatory School grounds. Excavations through the defences (Ralegh Radford 1972; Haslam 1975) have shown that the defences consisted of a large clay bank, faced in places with a stone wall. According to Jeremy Haslam (1976, 107) 'the lay-out of the defences....represents the closest approach of any new Alfredian burh to a perfect rectangle, in spite of the fact that its precise disposition was apparently further determined on the north and east sides by the edge of firm ground represented by the 80m contour, and on the south side by a steep-sided though shallow valley'.
- 3.7 A rectilinear grid of streets, namely High Street, Bath Road, and Calcutt Street, divided the town into quarters. Abingdon Court Lane, Thames Lane and Horsefair Lane are also a legacy of this period. Early cartographic evidence (Andrew & Jury 1773, 1841 Tithe Map & OS plans) shows surviving late Saxon burgage plots running back east from the High Street and south from Calcutt Street. They stop just short of the site suggesting that the majority of the school grounds were occupied by open ground only (Bryant 2007).

3.8 St Sampson's Church dates from the mid 10th century, although the earliest extant stonework dates from *circa* 1080 AD. At the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086 Westminster Abbey held the parish church at Cricklade. The church was extensively altered during the 11th century, as was St Mary's Church located at the north end of the High Street. St Sampson's is located approximately 150m west of the school grounds (Cricklade Town Council 2007).

Medieval

3.9 By 1257 the town had become the Manor of the Hundred and Borough of Cricklade. At this time, the right to hold markets and fairs in the town belonged to Baldwin de Revires. The old West Saxon market place had fallen into disrepair by the 14th century and was then built over. When reinstated, markets were held in the High Street.

Post-Medieval

3.10 To the north of the site, fronting Calcutt Street, stands the manor house formerly known as 'The Hermitage' (now the main school building). The house, built from Cotswold stone, dates originally from the 17th century, although it was largely rebuilt in the 19th century. It is reputed to have been built on the site of a medieval hermitage, although there is no direct evidence for this.

Twentieth Century

- 3.11 In 1946 a preparatory school was needed for Prior Park College in Bath, an independent Catholic senior school run by the Christian Brothers. They purchased the manor house, known as 'The Hermitage', in Calcutt Street, Cricklade. The land comprised about 31 acres, including vegetable gardens, greenhouses, an orchard and land suitable for playing fields.
- 3.12 The Christian Brothers took possession of the property on 26 August 1946 and the school opened with 62 boys on 18 September 1946. The drawing room of the house was converted to a chapel and blessed by the Bishop of Clifton when he formally opened the school. In 1947 more classrooms, a refrectory and recreation rooms were added. New dormitories were built in 1962 and by the mid-1960's there were 100 boarders. A new chapel and hall were added in 1967.
- 3.13 In March 1980 the Christian Brothers announced that they would be leaving Bath and Cricklade and the school was subsequently sold from 1981 it was under lay management. Girls were later admitted and the school is now a co-educational boarding and day preparatory school.
- 3.14 A trawl of the Wiltshire and Swindon Sites and Monument Record listed five known records in the immediate vicinity of the site (see Appendix 4).

4. AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The fieldwork complied with the methodology contained within the Written Scheme of Investigation (BaRAS 2010). The fieldwork also followed the IfA, 2008[a]. Institute for Archaeologists. Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief. The aim of the watching brief was to record any archaeological features or deposits revealed during the course of intrusive groundworks.
- 4.2 The watching brief involved the monitoring of the mechanical excavation of a pond forming the centre-piece of a new school wildlife garden.

5. RESULTS

5.1 All groundworks were carried out using a 360° mechanical mini excavator using both toothed buckets and a toothless grading bucket.

Excavation of the Pond, (Figs. 2 & 3, Plates 1 - 4)

5.2 The pond occupied an area of approximately 30m² and was excavated to a maximum of 1m deep, though the majority was excavated to 700mm depth. The uppermost deposit comprised topsoil and turf (101). Below the topsoil was an area of burning of relatively modern date (110) and a modern land-drain (111) which cut a possible subsoil or occupation layer (102) of irregular extent that was particularly thick over two soil cut pits, below.

Cut [103] (Fig. 3, Plate 2)

5.3 Appeared to form part of a subrounded feature that extended beyond the edge of excavation. The base of the cut was not observed but a number of medieval pottery sherds and fragments of animal bone were recovered from both of the fills (104 & 105). The feature is suggested to represent part of a rubbish pit of medieval date.

Cut [109] (Fig. 3, Plate 3)

- 5.4 Formed a part excavated, roughly oval feature in the base of the pond that was partly truncated by the deeper sump. Like Cut [103] it had two fills (107 & 108) that both contained animal bone and medieval pottery. The feature is also suggested to represent a rubbish pit of medieval date.
- 5.5 The two pits appeared to have been cut directly into the underlying archaeologically sterile clays of geological origin (106).

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Cricklade is an area of known historic and archaeological importance, particularly in regard to the Saxon and later medieval occupation and there are suggested streets and burgage plots recorded immediately to the south and west of the proposed pond. Nothing was observed during the monitoring to suggest that the plots extended into the study area, supporting the suggestion that the immediate vicinity of the study area had comprised open ground (Bryant 2007).
- 6.2 During excavation for the pond, the watching brief identified two soil cut features of medieval date that were most likely to have been rubbish pits. Neither was fully excavated so the full size and exact shape (and hence function) of the features remains uncertain. The presence of two pits of medieval date within the small area of ground excavated (30 metres square) and their extension beyond it reflects a relatively high level of activity although the lack of structures suggests that this is not in the core of the settlement.
- Portions of both features, including the bulk of Cut 109, were preserved in-situ in the base and side of the pond at the completion of works.

7. PROJECT TEAM

7.1 The fieldwork was undertaken by Raymond K Ducker who also produced this report. Cai Mason examined the pottery and bone finds. The illustrations were prepared and the report compiled by Ann Linge. The archive was compiled and prepared for deposition by the author. The project was managed by John Bryant.

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9. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

BaRAS would like to thank Julie Barclay, Deputy Bursar of Prior Park Preparatory School for her assistance and co-operation during the project.

APPENDIX 1: Policy Statement

This report is the result of work carried out in the light of national and local authority policies.

NATIONAL POLICIES

Statutory protection for archaeology is enshrined in the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979), amended by the National Heritage Act, 1983. Nationally important sites are listed in the Schedule of Ancient Monuments (SAM). Scheduled Monument consent is required for any work that would affect a SAM.

GOVERNMENT POLICY GUIDANCE

Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment (1994) and Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning (1990) have been replaced (23 March 2010) by Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (2010) which sets out the Government's national policies on conservation of the historic environment. Those parts of the historic environment that have significance because of their historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest are called heritage assets.

Of particular relevance within the Planning Policy Statement are:

Policy HE6: Information Requirements for Applications for Consent Affecting Heritage Assets

HE6.1 Local planning authorities should require an applicant to provide a description of the significance of the heritage assets affected and the contribution of their setting to that significance. The level of detail should be proportionate to the importance of the heritage asset and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on the significance of the heritage asset. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets themselves should have been assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary given the application's impact. Where an application site includes, or is considered to have the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where desk-based research is insufficient to properly assess the interest, a field evaluation.

Policy HE9: Additional Policy Principles Guiding the Consideration of Applications for Consent Relating to Designated Heritage Assets

HE9.1 There should be a presumption in favour of the conservation of designated heritage assets and the more significant the designated heritage asset, the greater the presumption in favour of its conservation should be. Once lost, heritage assets cannot be replaced and their loss has a cultural, environmental, economic and social impact. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. Loss affecting any designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, including scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, battlefields, grade I or II* listed buildings and grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.

Policy HE12: Policy Principles Guiding the Recording of Information Related to Heritage Assets

HE12.3 Where the loss of the whole or a material part of a heritage asset's significance is justified, local planning authorities should require the developer to record and advance understanding of the significance of the heritage asset before it is lost, using planning conditions or obligations as appropriate. The extent of the requirement should be proportionate to the nature and level of the asset's significance. Developers should publish this evidence and deposit copies of the reports with the relevant historic environment record. Local planning authorities should require any archive generated to be deposited with a local museum or other public depository willing to receive it. Local planning authorities should impose planning conditions or obligations to ensure such work is carried out in a timely manner and that the completion of the exercise is properly secured.

LOCAL POLICIES

Wiltshire County Council & Swindon Borough Council

Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan 2016 – Adopted April 2006

Chapter 7: Historic Environment

7.2 Archaeology

Policy HE2

FEATURES OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL OR HISTORIC INTEREST AND THEIR SETTINGS SHOULD BE PROTECTED FROM INAPPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT. WHERE NATIONALLY IMPORTANT ARCHAEOLOGICAL OR HISTORIC REMAINS, WHETHER SCHEDULED SITES OR NOT, ARE AFFECTED BY PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT THERE SHOULD BE A PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF THEIR PHYSICAL PRESERVATION ''IN SITU''.

Kennet District Council

Kennet Local Plan 2011 - Adopted 2004

Chapter 6: Conservation of the Historic Heritage

6.01 Archaeology

Policy HH1 Protection Of Archaeological Remains

Planning permission will not be granted for development which would have an adverse impact on the archaeological deposits or remains on or under a site of national importance (whether scheduled or not) or its character or setting. Sites of significant regional or local importance, especially those which make a positive contribution to the historic landscape, will also be protected from inappropriate development.

Policy HH2 Development On Sites With Archaeological Potential

Proposals for development involving ground disturbance on sites with archaeological potential will only be permitted if:

- (a) it can be demonstrated that the development will not have an adverse impact on any archaeological deposits or remains; or
- (b) appropriate mitigation measures are agreed to protect the archaeological interest of the site.

APPENDIX 2: Context Descriptions

Context No.	Description
101	Dark – very dark greyish brown, soft silt with turf surface. 1 or 2 small chert fragment inclusions and 1 or 2 small, abraded brick or tile fragment inclusions observed. Over whole pond to 150mm thick
102	Pale greenish grey, tacky, stiff clay with occasional small – medium chert fragments and animal bone fragments and rare medieval pottery inclusions. Forms an irregular layer below the topsoil that is thicker around the cut features (103 & 109) up to 300mm thick
103	Part of a partially excavated, sub-rounded feature that extended outside the area of excavation. The sides, where visible appeared to be steep and slightly concave but little else was observed. The fills were excavated to a maximum of 500mm deep. As recorded the cut measured approximately 1.3m x 1.9m in size. Contained Fills (104) & (105)
104	Pale greenish grey silty clay, similar to Deposit (102). Frequent small – medium chert fragments and animal bone inclusions and occasional medieval pottery sherds. Occasional – frequent charcoal flecks (rare lumps also) up to 450mm thick in section
105	Primary Fill of Cut [103] soft, sticky, dark greyish-green silty clay with frequent – abundant charcoal flecks and lumps. Forms a thin layer below deposit (104) between 50 and 70 mm thick
106	Stiff, plastic, yellowish-brown clay with occasional sub-angular limestone fragment inclusions. Archaeologically sterile natural deposit. Excavated to a maximum of 700mm deep
107	Firm, yellowish-brown clay with occasional large, subangular limestone fragment inclusions and charcoal flecking. Also contains animal bone. Cut in plan is 1.45 x 2.0m across, in the deep sump the fills reach 700mm deep without exposing the base of the feature. Redeposited natural clay forming upper fill of Cut [109]
108	Firm, Dark greyish – green silty clay with occasional, chert fragments and charcoal flecks. Forms primary fill of Cut [109] not fully excavated but reaches at least 500mm deep in a band 200mm wide in an area of approximately 1.45 x 2.0 m across
109	Mostly unexcavated, oval shaped cut in the base of the pond. Excavated to 800mm depth. Overall dimensions 1.45 x 2.0m across
110	Sub-rounded patch of burnt ground below the topsoil but above Deposit 102. Deposit is same as topsoil but with abundant evidence of burning in an area approximately 1.2 x 1.3 m and 100mm thick
111	Cut and fill for a modern land-drain filled with pea-gravel

APPENDIX 3: Artefactual Evidence

By Cai Mason

A total of 97 finds were recovered from the watching brief at Prior Park School, Cricklade, Wiltshire. These comprise 23 sherds of pottery, 51 fragments of animal bone and 2 iron objects. The majority of the finds are medieval, and none are likely to post-date the 13th century.

The finds were stored in labelled and pierced grip-seal polythene bags also containing tyvek labels.

The finds were identified and catalogued according to material type, and the pottery was catalogued according to type. The results are indicated below.

Although the finds serve to date two features on the site, they are thought to be of no more than site importance and no further work is required on these finds.

The Pottery

A total of 24 sherds of pottery were recovered from the site, all bar one of which were medieval coarsewares. The majority of the sherds were relatively large and unabraded suggesting the group has suffered little post-depositional disturbance.

A single residual sherd of Oxfordshire red-slipped ware mortarium, dating from the 3rd or 4th century AD, was recovered from pit fill (104).

Two sherds, also recovered from pit fills (104) and (108), have a fabric that appears to correspond with a late Saxon fabric (F30) uncovered at Abingdon Court Farm, Cricklade (Burchill 2003).

The medieval pottery were all coarseware fabrics that ranged from orange to buff greyish brown with grey cores and contained common to sparse limestone, flint/chert, quartz and iron ore inclusions. The pottery can be broadly dated to the 11th to 13th centuries and is likely to have been produced relatively locally. The absence of later medieval glazed medieval wares suggests that this small assemblage was deposited in the 13th century or earlier. The pottery is quantified by context in **Table 1** below.

Context	Context	Number	Description	Date
	type	of		
		sherds		
102	Soil	2	Medieval coarseware body sherds	11th - 13th century
	layer		-	-
104	Pit fill	1	Oxfordshire red-slipped ware body sherds	3rd - 4th century AD
		1	Probably late Saxon, body sherds	10th - 11th century
		4	Medieval coarseware body sherds	11th - 13th century
		1	Medieval coarseware jar rim (Fig 3.3)	11th - 13th century
105	Pit fill	3	Medieval coarseware body sherds	11th - 13th century
		1	Medieval coarseware jar rim (Fig 3.2)	11th - 13th century
		1	Medieval coarseware jar rim (Fig 3.1)	11th - 13th century
108	Pit fill	1	Probably late Saxon, body sherds	10th - 11th century
		8	Medieval coarseware body sherds	11th - 13th century

Table 1: Pottery quantified by context

Iron objects

Half an iron horseshoe was collected from context (107); the surviving fragment had three square nail holes, a calkin on the heel, and measured 108mm long, up to 20mm wide and 5mm thick. The outer edge of the shoe had a diagnostic 'wavy' pattern, produced by the outward pressure of nails driven through the shoe. This horseshoe corresponds with a type 2B (Clarke 2004), which have a date range

of c 1050 – 1350 AD. Most examples from excavation in London have however been recovered from contexts dated to the period c 1050 – 1150 AD (*ibid*).

A single small, unidentified iron object was collected from context (104).

Animal Bone

A total of 47 animal bone fragments were collected, the majority of which was recovered from the fills of pits [103] and [109]. The animal bone assemblage included cattle, horse, sheep/goat, pig, dog and bird bones, the majority of which are likely to derive from domestic food waste. The animal bones are quantified by species and context in **Table 2** below.

Context	Context	No.	Description	
	date &			
	type			
102	Medieval	1	Horse (equus) tooth	
	soil layer	1	Cattle (bos) pelvis	
		1	Dog (lupus) right ulna	
		7	Medium mammal	
		1	Small mammal	
104	Medieval	5	Sheep/goat (ovis): 1 proximal end of right femur with disarticulation	
	pit fill		cut marks, 1 left metacarpal, 1 scapula, 1 pelvis, 1 rib	
		4	Cattle (bos): 1rib, 1 tooth, 1 mandible fragment, 1 left radius	
		3	Bird	
		1	Horse (equus) distal end of left femur	
		1	Pig (sus) right mandible	
		6	Large mammal	
		4	Medium mammal	
105	Medieval	1	Sheep/goat (ovis) vertebra	
	pit fill	3	Large mammal	
		3	Medium mammal	
107	Medieval	2	Sheep/goat (ovis): 1right scapula, 1 tooth	
	pit fill	1	Large mammal	
		1	Medium mammal	
		1	Unidentified	

Table 2: Animal bone quantified by species and context

Discussion

The pottery from this site is broadly similar to a larger, but unstratified, assemblage, recovered during a watching brief undertaken at Prior Park School in 2007 (Longman 2008), the majority of which also comprised medieval pottery of 11th to 13th century date.

The majority of the finds were collected from the fills of pits [103] and [109], which are likely to have been backfilled between the 11th and 13th centuries. The finds themselves are indicative of domestic refuse and suggest occupation in the immediate vicinity of the site.

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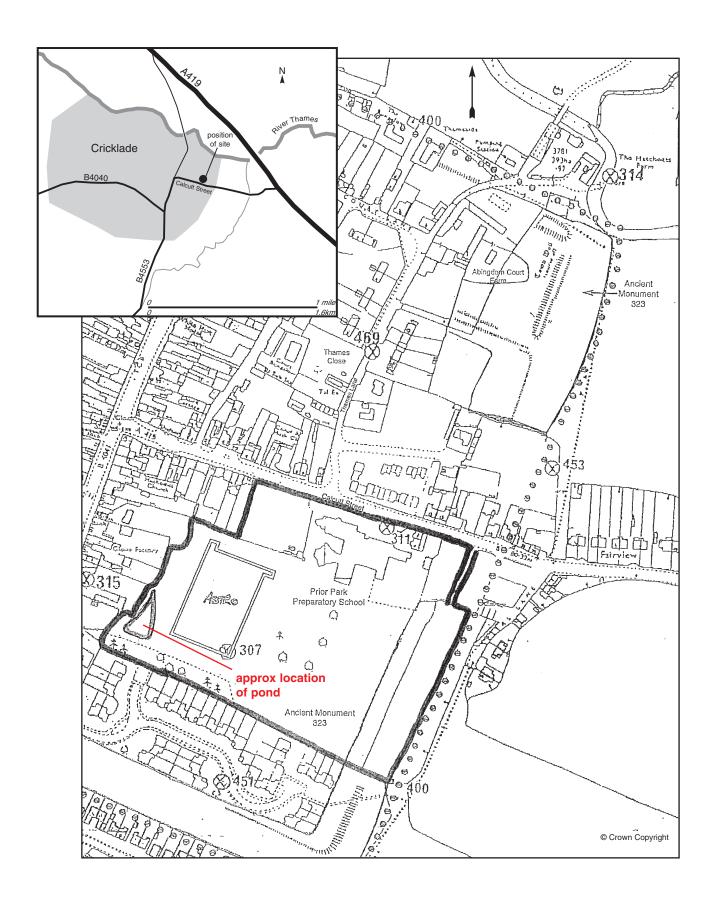
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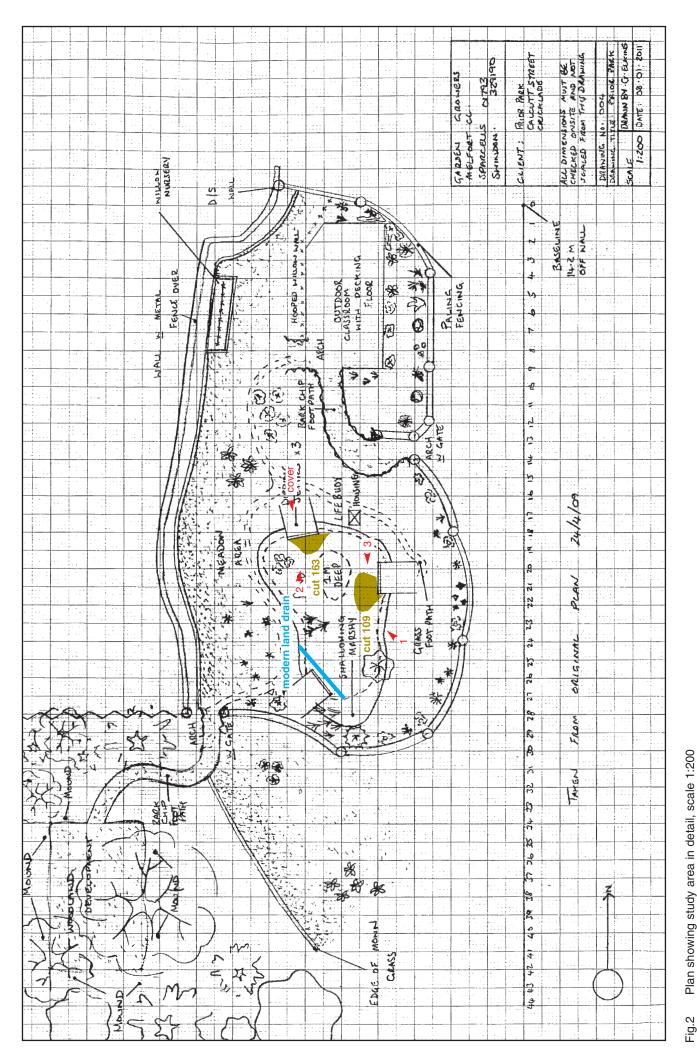
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APPENDIX 4: Table of Sites in the vicinity of the study area from Wiltshire and Swindon Sites and Monument Record Trawl

SMR	Site Name	Grid ref.	Description
Number			
SU19SW315	Alkerton House	SU 1002 9349	Romano-British pottery fragments
SU19SW471	The Brow	SU 1006 9356	Medieval Pottery fragments
SU19SW307	SE of Town Walls	SU 1013 9344	Romano-British pottery fragments
SU19SW451	SE Corner of Cricklade Town Wall	SU 1013 9334	Medieval pottery fragments
SU09SE310	High Street	SU 0997 9347	Romano-British pottery, plaster and tile fragments





Plan showing study area in detail, scale 1:200

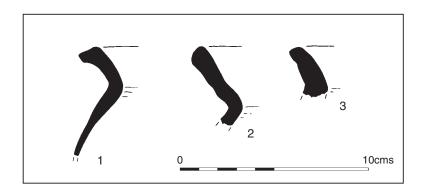


Fig.3 Prior Park School Pottery, half life size



Plate 1 General view of the pond area after removal of topsoil (101), looking north-west, scale 2 x 1m



Plate 2
Detail of the remaining portion of Cut [103] that will be preserved in-situ, in the pond section after cleaning, looking north, scale 2 x 1m



Plate 3 Detail of Cut [109] and Fills (107 & 108) as exposed, looking southwest, scale 2 x 1m



Plate 4 General working view of the pond excavation, looking south