

# Archaeological Evaluation at Oakington Church of England Primary School Cambridgeshire



## Archaeological Evaluation Report



July 2011

**Client: Diocese of Ely**

OA East Report No: 1288

OASIS No: oxfordar3-105628

NGR: TL 413 645

**Archaeological Evaluation at Oakington Church of England Primary School,  
Cambridgeshire.**

*Archaeological Evaluation*

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*Report Date: July 2011*

**DRAFT**

**Report Number:** 1288  
**Site Name:** Oakington Church of England Primary School  
**HER Event No:** ECB 3634  
**Date of Works:** 22nd July 2011  
**Client Name:** Diocese of Ely  
**Client Ref:** n/a  
**Planning Ref:** S/0849/11/F  
**Grid Ref:** TL 413 645  
**Site Code:** OAKPRS11  
**Finance Code:** OAKPRS11  
**Receiving Body:** CCC Stores, Landbeach  
**Accession No:** OAKPRS11  
**Prepared by:** Nick Gilmour  
**Position:** Project Officer  
**Date:** July 2011  
**Checked by:** Richard Mortimer  
**Position:** Project Manager  
**Date:** July 2011  
**Signed:** .....

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## **Summary**

*On 22nd July 2011, Oxford Archaeology East carried out an archaeological evaluation at Oakington Church of England Primary School, Cambridgeshire. This was in advance of the construction of a new classroom. The evaluation involved the excavation of a single trench 6m long. This revealed a medieval to post medieval furrow and a modern posthole.*



## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 An archaeological evaluation was conducted at Oakington Church of England Primary School, Oakington, Cambridgeshire.
- 1.1.2 This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Andy Thomas of Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC), supplemented by a Specification prepared by OA East.
- 1.1.3 The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, in accordance with the guidelines set out in *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* (Department for Communities and Local Government 2010). The results will enable decisions to be made by CCC, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority, with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.
- 1.1.4 The site archive is currently held by OA East and will be deposited with the appropriate county stores in due course.

### 1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The development area lies on the Lower Greensand, which is overlain with sands, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> terrace gravels and alluvium in places. All this overlies the Gault clay. Previous investigations in the area have recorded the geology contorted by periglacial activity. The land is low lying (<10m OD) and flat within the immediate area, the result of later deliberate levelling/rolling for the school playing fields, with earthworks of ridge and furrow surviving to the east and north.

### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background (Richard Mortimer)

- 1.3.1 While much is known about the development of the village centre to the north, and particularly with reference to the Early Saxon cemetery and middle to late Saxon enclosures on the Recreation Ground, little is known in the area of the school. The development site is close to what may have been the medieval street frontage on Water Lane, and the field from which the school ground was taken remains under pasture and contains a series of earthworks of ridge and furrow with potential ponds and house platforms.
- 1.3.2 A series of 1m x 1m test pits have been excavated across the village over the last three years as part of a community archaeology project. A test pit excavated on the northeastern boundary of the school field identified a ditch running parallel to the modern boundary and produced 54 sherds of pottery, one of the largest assemblages of any of the test pits excavated thus far, and included Romano-British, Late Saxon, early Medieval, late Medieval and post-Medieval wares.

#### ***Prehistoric***

- 1.3.3 Very few earlier prehistoric finds are known from Oakington, though palaeolithic handaxes have been found less than a kilometre to both the east and west of the excavation (MCB16267 and HER11065).
- 1.3.4 To the north-east of the site, in the pasture field beyond the town cemetery are the cropmarks of one, possibly two, potential Bronze Age ring ditches as part of a larger



cropmark and earthwork complex (HER08958). A line of three, possibly four barrows lie over the Histon parish boundary to the east, on the north bank of the Beck Brook (HER05180). A scatter of Neolithic flintwork has been collected from recent excavations and test pits within the recreation ground to the northeast, but no subsurface features have as yet been recorded.

### **Roman**

- 1.3.5 Roman occupation has been recognised from occasional pot sherds found in gardens and fields both within and close to the village. Sherds were found in the vicarage to the north (HER05175) and in the area around the Manor to the north-west (HER05176), the latter suggesting steady occupation from the middle of the 2nd century into the 4th (see Phillips 1970). A substantial number of Roman pottery sherds were found at TL 424 637 & TL 423 637 in the area of the Histon Barrows to the east (HER05180).
- 1.3.6 At Coles Lane to the west Roman pits, ditches and enclosures were recorded during an excavation in advance of housing development (MCB16820) and further enclosures may lie within the cropmark complex to the north of the site at HER08958. Potentially Roman ditches were recorded at both the 1994 cemetery excavation (HER10912) and the 2006 recreation ground evaluation (MCB17253).
- 1.3.7 The main Roman road, known as the Via Devana, passes along the parish boundary just over a mile south of the village. A route from this road via Oakington and Cottenham to the Fens, was in use by the 11th century at least (Taylor *et al* 1997) and can be seen both on the 1833 tithe map, departing north-eastwards from Water Lane to the north of the school, and as an earthwork in the pasture field here. There is potential for a route here in the Roman period.

### **Saxon**

- 1.3.8 Saxon activity has been recognised through the presence of a 6th-century cemetery for many years. The cemetery is of unknown size and located to the northeast of the current development. The existence of the cemetery was first officially noted in 1928 when three skeletons, with a spear, knives and a shield boss were dug up in what was then Blooms nursery (HER05270).
- 1.3.9 During 1993 excavation work on the children's playground, adjacent to Queens Way, human bones and Early Anglo-Saxon grave goods were uncovered. Following these discoveries a larger part of the cemetery was investigated before further earth disturbance in 1994 (HER10912). There were 24 burials (including those found in 1993).
- 1.3.10 The area immediately to the southeast of the playground was evaluated prior to this development in 2006, and further graves were recorded along with ditches dating to the Early, Middle and Later Saxon periods. Excavation of this area revealed a further 17 burials, with associated grave goods.
- 1.3.11 Two excavations undertaken by the University of Central Lancashire (2010 & 2011) have now defined the northern and southern limits of the cemetery, and excavated a further 22 graves.
- 1.3.12 Evidence is also growing for an extensive middle Saxon enclosure complex in the area of the recreation ground and to its east and north

### **Medieval**

- 1.3.13 In 1086, at the time of the Domesday survey, there was a relatively substantial population in Oakington, about 275 people were recorded, alongside a priest. Most land was held by the Abbot of Crowland, who had the manor house close to the church. By the mid 14th century the population in Oakington had apparently shrunk somewhat (Taylor *et al* 1997).
- 1.3.14 St Andrew's Church (HER05557) is built primarily of pebble and stone rubble. Its tower dates to c. 1300 and the chancel is earlier still, of the 13th century. Both appear to cut through a pre-existing, potentially Norman wall.
- 1.3.15 The only other sizeable excavation to have taken place in the village was at Coles Lane in 2004 (MCB16820). A Roman enclosure was thought to have been extant in the late 11th - early 12th century when a possible drove road and a metalled road were constructed. The site was more intensively used in the 12th and 13th centuries with an enclosure created with two broad openings, possibly associated with stock control. A second drove road was constructed, and a hearth and other ditches were recorded. Two further enclosures were dated to this period, one containing a possible temporary structure surrounding a small heath. The 13th and 14th centuries saw little change in land use, with their boundaries recut on similar alignments.

## **1.4 Acknowledgements**

- 1.4.1 The author would like to thank Sally Daggianti, head teacher of Oakington Church of England Primary School for her support and the Diocese of Ely who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. Thanks also for the constant supply of tea and biscuits. The project was managed by Richard Mortimer. The site was excavated by the author. Andy Thomas of CCC monitored the investigations.

## 2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The objective of this evaluation was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

### 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The Brief required that one trench, 6m long be excavated, representing an approximate 5.5% of the total development area (179 sq m).
- 2.2.2 Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a 3 ton, 360 excavator using a toothless ditching bucket.
- 2.2.3 Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds were retained for inspection, other than those which were obviously modern.
- 2.2.4 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA East's *pro-forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.
- 2.2.5 Site conditions were good, with bright sunny weather predominating.

### 3 RESULTS

#### 3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Further details, including measurements are given in Appendix A.

#### 3.2 Topsoil and Subsoil

3.2.1 The topsoil (1) was a dark greyish brown sandy loam, which contained modern debris, including brick and tile, it was up to 0.24m thick.

3.2.2 Below this was the subsoil (2), which was a mid greyish brown sandy loam, up to 0.38m thick. Several fragments of animal bone, slag and pottery of Roman and medieval date was recovered from this layer. This subsoil layer probably represents a medieval to post-medieval ploughsoil.

#### 3.3 Posthole 4 and furrow 6

3.3.1 Posthole 4 was located towards the northern end of the trench. It had a diameter of 0.35m and a depth of 0.46m. It appeared circular in plan, although it continued out of the trench to the west. It was filled by 3, a dark greyish brown sandy loam, which contained no finds. Posthole 4 was cut through the subsoil, from the base of the topsoil, it was filled with material similar to the topsoil and is of recent date.

3.3.2 Furrow 6 was aligned approximately east to west at the southern end of the trench. It was 1.02m wide and 0.12m deep, with gently sloping sides and a flat base. It was filled by 5, a mid greyish brown sandy loam, which contained a cow horn core and a fragment of late Saxon pottery.

#### 3.4 Finds Summary

3.4.1 Few finds were recovered from the site, with the majority coming from the subsoil.

##### *Pottery*

3.4.2 A sherd of Roman pottery (12g) was recovered from subsoil layer 2. This was an abraded greyware body sherd, which could not be closely dated. Alongside this a sherd of Thetford ware (5g), of Late Saxon date, was found. In addition, a single sherd (14g) of internally glazed sandy greyware, also found in subsoil layer 2, is of 12th to 14th century date.

3.4.3 A single sherd of Thetford ware (6g), of late Saxon date, was found in furrow 6. This was heavily abraded.

##### *Metalworking Debris*

3.4.4 A large fragment of ironworking slag (269g) was recovered from subsoil layer 2. This represents a smithing hearth bottom and demonstrates the likely presence of a smith nearby. Such waste is produced during the secondary working of iron to remove slag.

##### *Animal bone*

3.4.5 A mixed assemblage of animal bone, including a fragment of pig mandible and parts of cow long bones, was recovered from subsoil layer 2. Given the mixed, broken and abraded nature of this assemblage, it is likely it derived from medieval and post medieval manuring of the area. In addition, a single cattle horn core was recovered from fill 5 of furrow 6.

## 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

### 4.1 Ridge and Furrow

4.1.1 The single furrow identified is likely to represent part of a ridge and furrow cultivation system. The rest of this system is visible in the field to the north and east both as earthworks and on aerial imagery, as seen on google earth (October 2008 image, viewed 25th July 2011). This form of agriculture developed in the medieval period and continued in use through the post-medieval period. This system is aligned perpendicular to Water Lane, but it is not clear whether it continued up to the road's edge.

### 4.2 Significance

4.2.1 This evaluation revealed evidence of medieval to post medieval ploughing and thus shows this small area was outside of the medieval settlement of Oakington

### 4.3 Recommendations

4.3.1 Recommendations for any future work based upon this report will be made by the County Archaeology Office.

## APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description				Orientation		N-S
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of soil and subsoil overlying a natural of silty sand.				Avg. depth (m)		0.60
				Width (m)		1.60
				Length (m)		6.00
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
1	Layer	-	0.24	Topsoil	-	-
2	Layer	-	0.38	Subsoil	Pottery, bone, slag	-
3	Fill	0.35	0.46	Fill of posthole <b>4</b>	-	-
4	Cut	0.35	0.46	Cut of posthole	-	Modern
5	Fill	1.02	0.12	Fill of furrow <b>6</b>	Pottery, bone	Medieval-post medieval
6	Cut	1.02	0.12	Cut of furrow	Pottery, bone	Medieval – post medieval

## APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Philps, C. W (ed.) 1970. *The Fenland in Roman times: studies of a major area of peasant colonization with a gazetteer covering all known sites and finds*. Royal Geographic Society Research Series Number 5.
- Taylor, A; Duhig, C and Hines, J. 1997. 'An Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Oakington, Cambridgeshire' *Proc. Cambridge Antiquarian Society* LXXXVI

## APPENDIX C. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

### Project Details

OASIS Number	oxfordar3-105628		
Project Name	Archaeological evaluation at Oakington Church of England Primary School, Cambridgeshire		
Project Dates (fieldwork) Start	22-07-2011	Finish	22-07-2011
Previous Work (by OA East)	No	Future Work	Unknown

### Project Reference Codes

Site Code	OAKPRS11	Planning App. No.	S/0849/11/F
HER No.	ECB3634	Related HER/OASIS No.	n/a

### Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS 5
Development Type	Public Building

### Please select all techniques used:

<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - interpretation	<input type="checkbox"/> Grab-Sampling	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - new	<input type="checkbox"/> Gravity-Core	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sample Trenches
<input type="checkbox"/> Annotated Sketch	<input type="checkbox"/> Laser Scanning	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey/Recording Of Fabric/Structure
<input type="checkbox"/> Augering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Measured Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Targeted Trenches
<input type="checkbox"/> Dendrochronological Survey	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Metal Detectors	<input type="checkbox"/> Test Pits
<input type="checkbox"/> Documentary Search	<input type="checkbox"/> Phosphate Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Topographic Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Sampling	<input type="checkbox"/> Photogrammetric Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Vibro-core
<input type="checkbox"/> Fieldwalking	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Photographic Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Visual Inspection (Initial Site Visit)
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysical Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Rectified Photography	

### Monument Types/Significant Finds & Their Periods

List feature types using the [NMR Monument Type Thesaurus](#) and significant finds using the [MDA Object type Thesaurus](#) together with their respective periods. If no features/finds were found, please state "none".

Monument	Period	Object	Period
ridge and furrow	Medieval 1066 to 1540	pottery	Roman 43 to 410
	Select period...	pottery	Early Medieval 410 to 1066
	Select period...	pottery	Medieval 1066 to 1540

### Project Location

County	Cambridgeshire	Site Address (including postcode if possible)
District	South Cambridgeshire	Oakington C of E Primary School, Water Lane, Oakington, Cambridgeshire CB24 4AL
Parish	Oakington	
HER	Cambridgeshire	
Study Area	180 sqm	National Grid Reference
		TL 413 645



### Project Originators

Organisation	OA EAST
Project Brief Originator	Andy Thomas
Project Design Originator	Richard Mortimer
Project Manager	Richard Mortimer
Supervisor	Nick Gilmour

### Project Archives

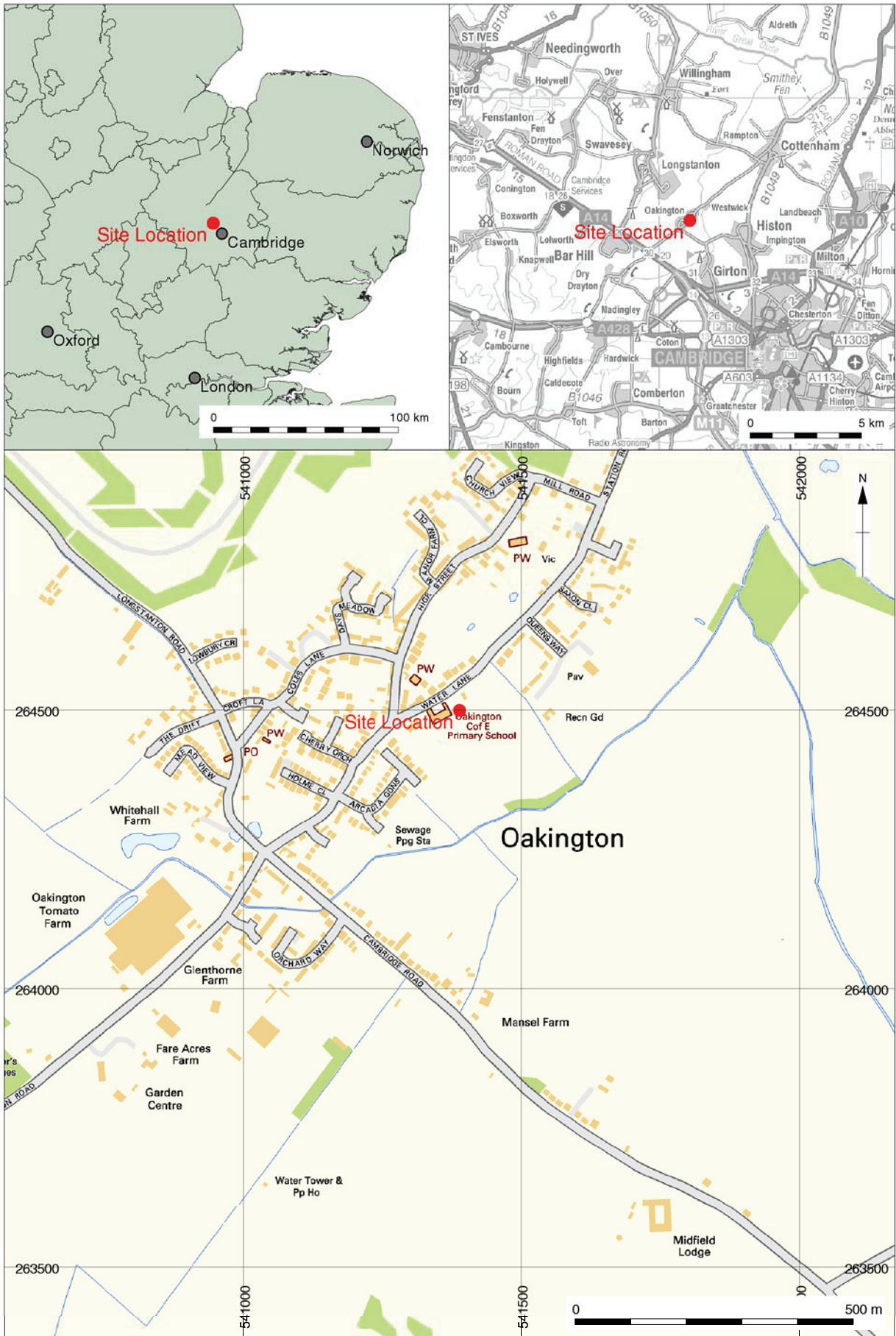
Physical Archive	Digital Archive	Paper Archive
CCC stores, landbeach	OA East, Bar Hill	CCC stores, Landbeach
OAKPRS11	OAKPRS11	OAKPRS11

### Archive Contents/Media

	Physical Contents	Digital Contents	Paper Contents
Animal Bones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Ceramics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Environmental	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Glass	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Industrial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Leather	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Metal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stratigraphic		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Survey		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Textiles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wood	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Bone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Stone/Lithic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Digital Media	Paper Media
<input type="checkbox"/> Database	<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photos
<input type="checkbox"/> GIS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Context Sheet
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysics	<input type="checkbox"/> Correspondence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Images	<input type="checkbox"/> Diary
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Illustrations	<input type="checkbox"/> Drawing
<input type="checkbox"/> Moving Image	<input type="checkbox"/> Manuscript
<input type="checkbox"/> Spreadsheets	<input type="checkbox"/> Map
<input type="checkbox"/> Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Matrices
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Text	<input type="checkbox"/> Microfilm
<input type="checkbox"/> Virtual Reality	<input type="checkbox"/> Misc.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Research/Notes
	<input type="checkbox"/> Photos
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Plans
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Report
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sections
	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey

**Notes:**



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Figure 1: Site location with development area outlined red

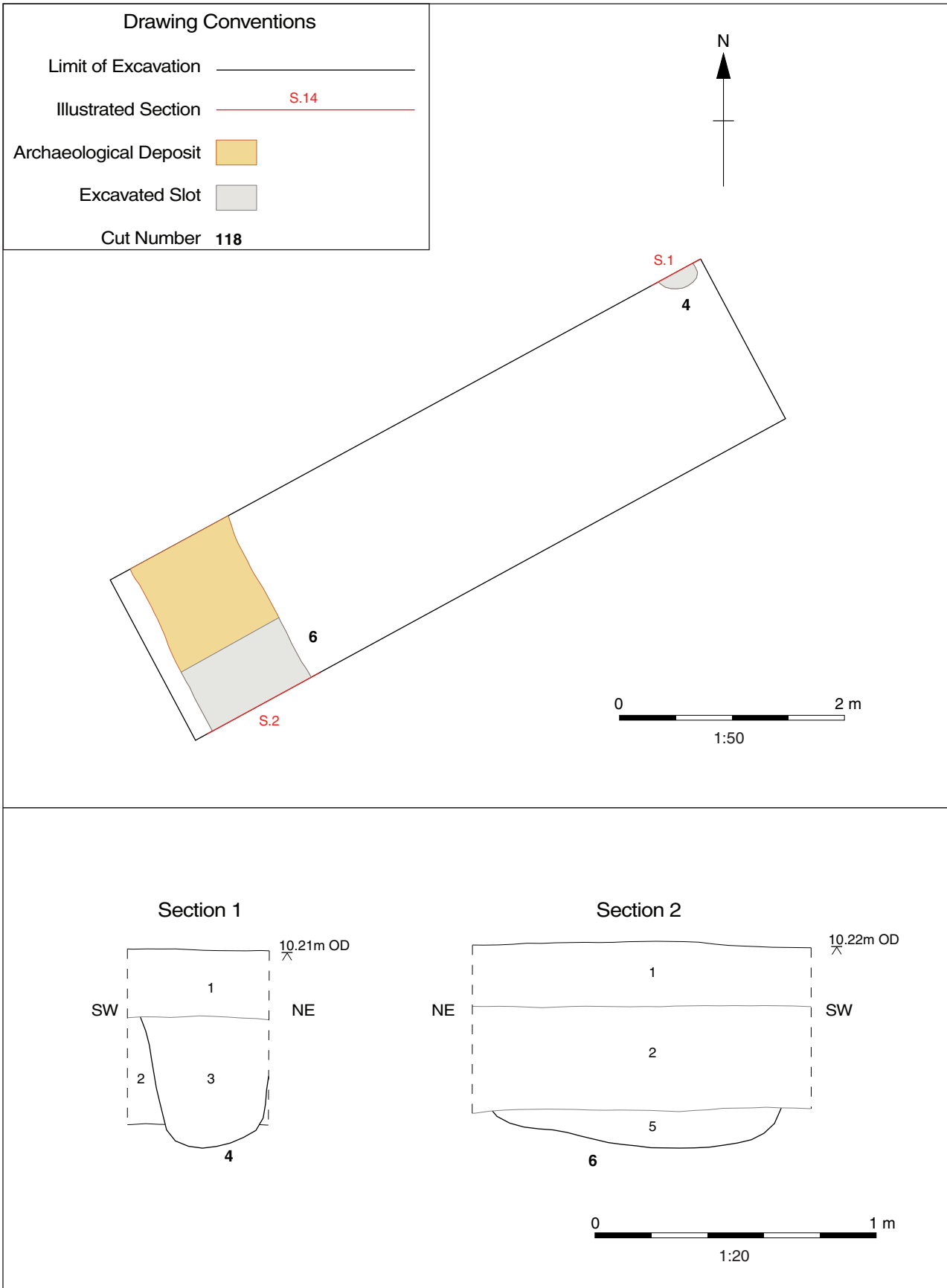


Figure 2: Trench Plan and Sections



Plate 1: Trench 1 from the north east



Plate 2: Furrow 6 from the north west



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