

Broadway Malyan

Prior's Court School, Chieveley, West Berkshire.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

NGR SU 487 736

planning ref: AS/PCJ/8649

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SUMMARY

In December 2000, an archaeological evaluation was undertaken by the Oxford Archaeological Unit on the site of Prior's Court School, in Chieveley, West Berkshire. The work was carried out in advance of a proposed development of the school land. Six trenches were opened and investigated to give an indication of the impact from the proposed development on any archaeological deposits or remains that might be present. The evaluation revealed no archaeological deposits or remains. A brick structure revealed in Trench 2 in the north-east part of the site may represent the remains of a building associated with the 19th century arrangement at Prior's Court.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In December 2000, Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) carried out a field evaluation at Prior's Court School for Broadway Malyan Architects acting on behalf of Prior's Court School. The work was carried out in respect of a planning application (planning ref: AS/PCJ/8649) for the construction of residential accommodation, a technology teaching centre, teaching building, training farm and shop, car park, access road, sports facilities and associated works as well as the restoration of the kitchen garden. Due to the potential disturbance of archaeological remains the West Berkshire District Council's Archaeological Officer required an evaluation of the site. The work was carried out to the specifications of a brief set by the Archaeological Officer and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by OAU and agreed by the Archaeological Officer.

1.1.2 The site (Fig. 1) is located to the east of Chieveley village on the north side of Prior's Court Road (NGR SU 4875 7370). The M4 runs to the south and east of the school with the A34 running north-south to the west of the site. Priors Court Road, which links Chieveley and Hermitage, forms the southern boundary of the site.

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The area of investigation is relatively flat with an underlying geology of chalk covered by a loam topsoil. There is some clay located to the east of Prior's Court on the higher ground, and the geology changes to include sand at Oare c.2 km to the north-east. The site lies at c.115 m above OD. The site is surrounded by open country and woodland to the north.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 A desk-based assessment was carried out by OAU and incorporated into the WSI (OAU 2000) prior to the evaluation. The assessment includes an SMR search, an archaeological and historical background as well as a map regression and interpretation. The archaeological and historical background is reproduced here.

Prehistoric

- 1.3.2 There is no known archaeology dating to the prehistoric period from within the development area of Prior's Court. However during fieldwalking 397 prehistoric flints (SMR WB12301), some retouched were recovered from an area to the east of the A34, about 0.5 km from the school. The majority of the flints were of Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age type (Richards 1978 p22). An aerial photograph shows a possible cropmark (SMR WB3283), 0.15 km north west of the Lodge. This may represent a ring ditch or a small enclosure, but the quality of the photograph is poor.
- 1.3.3 There is clear evidence for Iron Age activity in the vicinity. Prior's Court lies in a triangle between three hillforts; Bussock Wood Camp c2.5 km to the south west, Grimsbury Castle 2.5 km to the south east and Oareborough Hill 1.5 km north east (Aylwin Cotton 1962 p30).

Roman

- 1.3.4 No archaeology from the Roman period has been found at Prior's Court. However, stray finds of Roman material have been made at several locations within Chieveley parish. In 1839 tile and brick suggesting a possible kiln were recorded at Awbury, believed to be Oareborough Hill, some 1.5 km to the north west of Prior's Court (Peake 1931 p103). There are also a number of villa sites in the vicinity, at Well House, Hermitage 2 km south east and at Eling, c3.5 km to the north east (Lobb & Rose 1996 p90). The villa at Eling contained a mosaic pavement (Percival 1976 p96).

Medieval

- 1.3.5 No early medieval archaeology has been found at Prior's Court or in the surrounding area. By the time of the Conquest in 1066 a numbers of manors existed within the township of Curridge, which included Prior's Court. Two of these manors, held by freemen from Edward the Confessor, were combined before the Domesday Survey and granted to Ralph of Mortimer (Morgan 1979 46.2).
- 1.3.6 Ralph de Mortimer initially granted his land in Curridge to Baldwin, but by 1225 it had passed to Roger de Curridge, whose son granted the manor to the Augustinian Priory of Poughley, a grant confirmed by the king in 1248. The Priory itself was located in Chaddleworth parish, c. 7 km west of Prior's Court. The Augustinians held a number of neighbouring manors around Curridge, but that was the principal messuage in the area where their court was held (VCH IV 1915 p59-60).

- 1.3.7 Poughley Priory was dissolved by Cardinal Wolsey in 1524, and he held their estates for a few years. In 1542 the Prior's Court manor passed to the Dean and Chapter of Westminster Abbey, who continued to hold it until 1871. There are continuous tenancy records for that period, showing that the modern Prior's Court site lies within the lands of the medieval manor.

Modern

- 1.3.8 Prior's Court was held by a number of tenants, and by the 18th century was held by the Barton family, who included the Warden of Merton College. No major changes took place at Prior's Court from the 18th century until it became a school. In 1824 the tenancy passed to the Vasey family who redeemed the copyhold from Westminster Abbey in 1871. Around that time the link to Poughley Priory was revived when twelve quarries of stained glass from the priory chapel were installed in the entrance porch of the house by J T Vasey. These panels showed monkeys playing musical instruments.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

- 2.1.1 To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the proposal area.
- 2.1.2 To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present.
- 2.1.3 To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features.
- 2.1.4 To make available the results of the investigation

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

- 3.1.1 The evaluation consisted of six trenches, five measuring 1.8 m x 30m and one trench measuring 1.8 m x 15 m. The trenches were located across the site so as to provide a representative sample of the impact area of the proposed development site (Fig. 2). The overburden was removed under close archaeological supervision by a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket.
- 3.1.2 All trenches were planned at a scale of 1:100, and sample sections from each trench were recorded at a scale of 1:20. All features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds. All trenches were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation and bagged by context.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental evidence

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were revealed during this evaluation.

4 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

Trench 1 (Fig. 4)

- 4.1.1 Natural clay (14) was revealed in Trench 1 at 0.70 m below existing ground level. This was overlaid by a 0.60 m thick sequence of demolition/dump layers (13, 12 and 11). All these deposits contained inclusions of modern building material (concrete, brick etc). These deposits were cut to the south-east end of the trench by a modern service (15). The demolition layers were overlain by a deposit of loam topsoil (10) 0.10 m thick.

Trench 2 (Fig. 3)

- 4.1.2 Natural clay (22) was revealed in Trench 2 at a depth of 0.46 m below existing ground level. At the north-east end of the trench, Deposit 22 was cut by Structures 23 and 24. Structure 23 was a floor surface measuring 3 m x 1.8 m (visible). It comprised hard-fired, unfrosted, unstamped red bricks (230mm x 100 mm x 70 mm) laid in an approximately north-south English stretcher pattern and bonded with white lime mortar. Structure 24 lay immediately to the south of structure 23 on a parallel alignment. This structure comprised two parallel walls 1.5 m apart, both measuring 0.30 m by at least 1.8 m. Both walls were constructed of bricks measuring 230 mm x 110 mm x 70 mm which were hard fired, red and bonded in an English stretcher coursing with white lime mortar. A deposit of disturbed chalk (21) 0.10 m thick containing red brick fragments abutted Structure 24 and ran throughout the length of the trench. All deposits were overlaid by loam topsoil (20), 0.25 m thick.

Trenches 3, 4, 5, and 6

- 4.1.3 All of these trenches contained a dark loam topsoil (average depth 0.40 m) overlying the natural clay (Fig. 4). No other deposits or features, archaeological or otherwise were present in these trenches.

4.2 Distribution of archaeological deposits

- 4.2.1 Trench 2, at the north-east of the site, contained a brick surface associated with two parallel wall footings as well as a 0.46 m sequence of deposits suggestive of demolition and leveling episodes. Trench 1, which was located c.20 m to the north of Trench 2, contained a comparable build-up of deposits.
- 4.2.2 All other trenches were devoid of features, except for modern services, and exhibited the same sequence of c 0.40 m of loam overlying clay natural.

4.3 Artefactual data

- 4.3.1 Four brick samples were recovered from the evaluation. No other artefacts were recovered.

4.4 Ecofactual data

- 4.4.1 No environmental samples were taken from any of the trenches on this site investigation.

5 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

- 5.1.1 The only deposits of note revealed by the evaluation were the elements of a brick structure located within Trench 2. The location of this structure (to the north of the kitchen garden) and its approximately north-south east-west orientation suggest it is one of two buildings that appear in this position on the Ordnance Survey map of 1933. Only the northern most of these structures appears on the Ordnance Survey map of 1913 and therefore the southern building must be later than this date. The character of the bricks and bonding used in the construction of the building are likely to be of an earlier date than this, and so it is likely that the walls and floor surface revealed in Trench 2 relate to the northern-most building, which can be placed through the map regression as having been constructed after 1870 and prior to 1913.

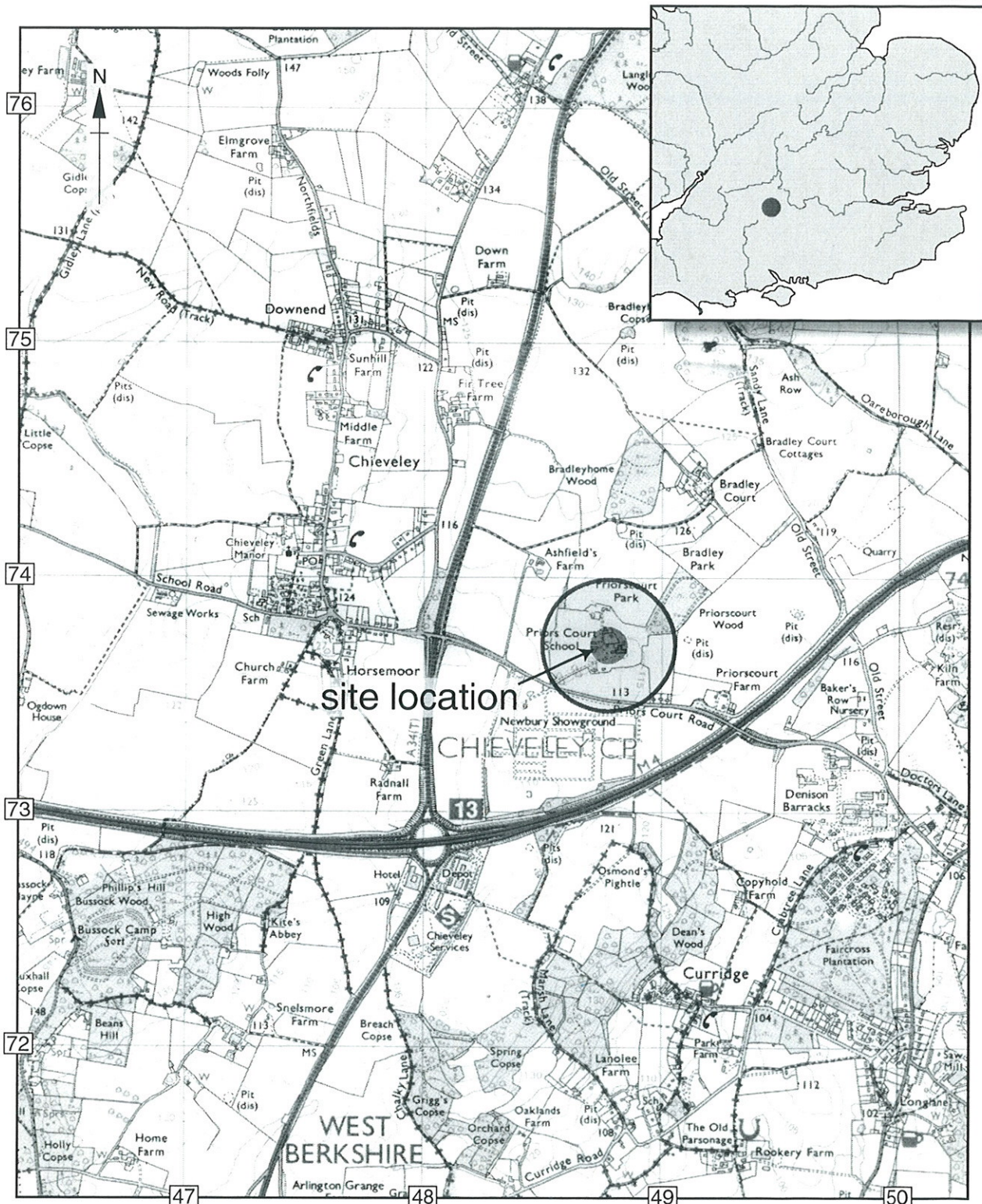
APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench	Ctx	Type	Width (m)	Thick. (m)	Comment	Finds	No.	Date
001								
	10	Layer		0.15	Topsoil	N/A	0	
	11	Layer		0.35	Rubble	N/A	0	
	12	Layer		0.15-0.20	Make-up	N/A	0	
	13	Layer		0.20	Rubble	N/A	0	
	14	Layer			Natural	N/A	0	
	15	Layer		2.50	Modern drain	N/A	0	
002								
	20	Layer		0.25	Topsoil	N/A	0	
	21	Layer		0.10	Chalk deposit	N/A	0	
	22	Layer			Natural	N/A	0	
	23	Structure			Surface	N/A	0	
	24	Structure		0.30	Walls	N/A	0	
003								
	30	Layer		0.25	Topsoil	N/A	0	
	31	Layer			Natural	N/A	0	
004								
	40	Layer		0.25	Topsoil	N/A	0	
	41	Layer			Natural	N/A	0	
	42	Layer			Natural	N/A	0	
005								
	50	Layer		0.25	Topsoil	N/A	0	
	51	Layer			Natural	N/A	0	
006								
	60	Layer		0.15	Topsoil	N/A	0	
	61	Layer			natural	N/A	0	

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Figure 1: Site location

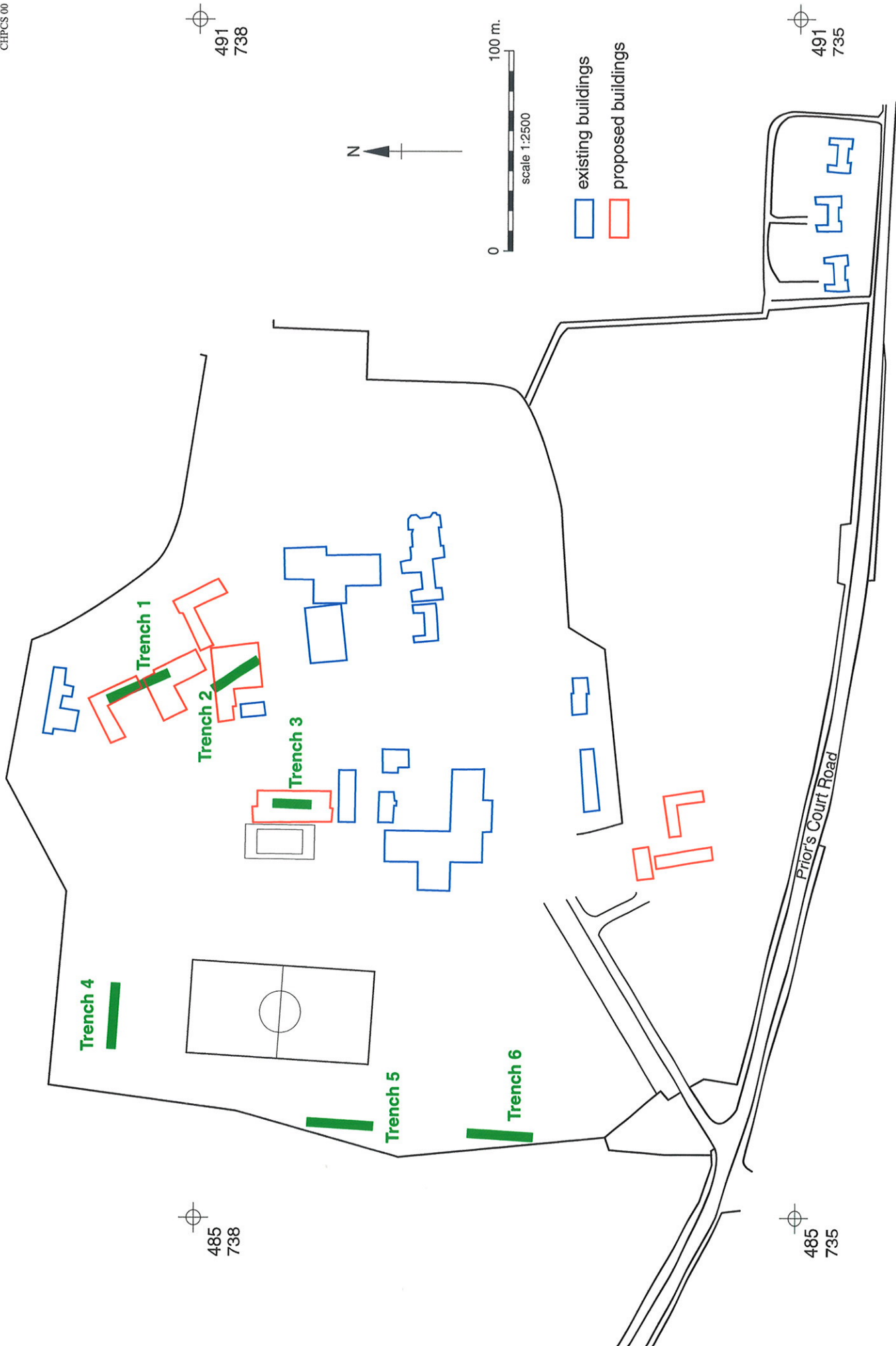


Figure 2: Trench Locations

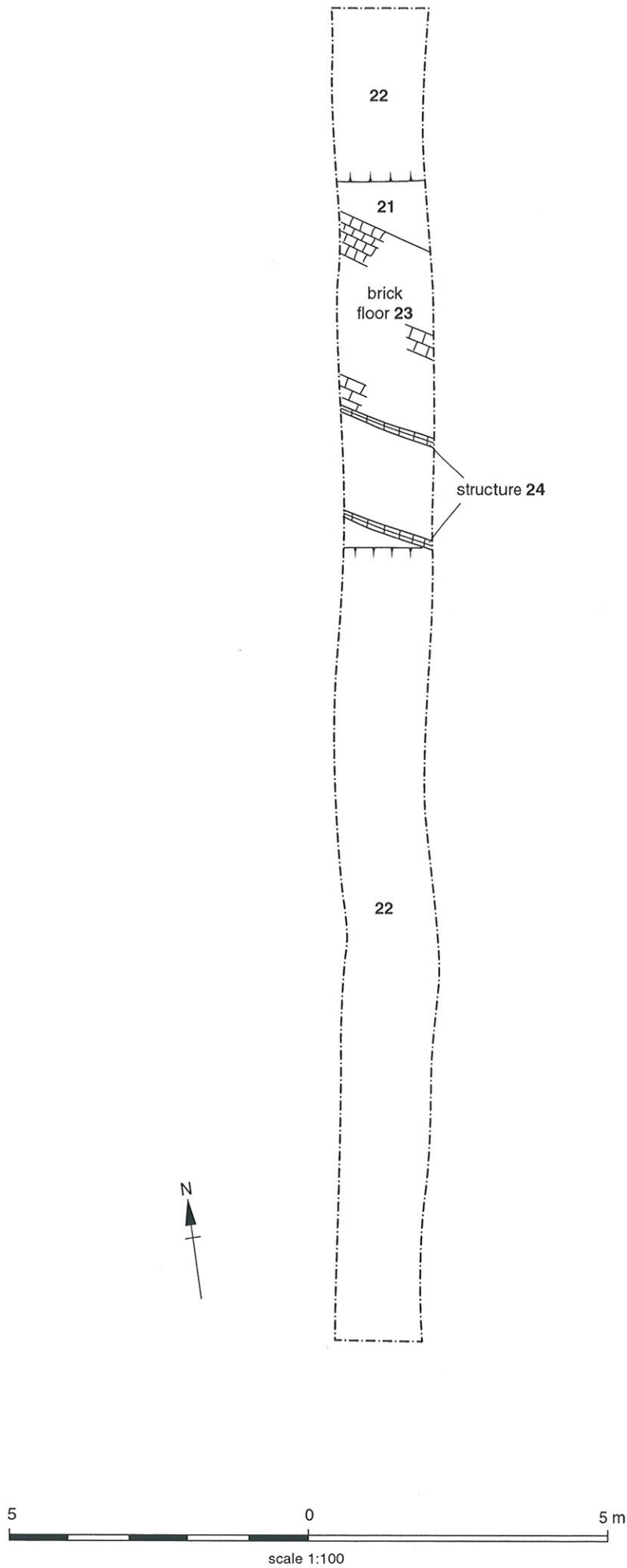
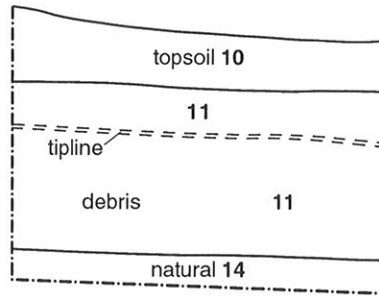
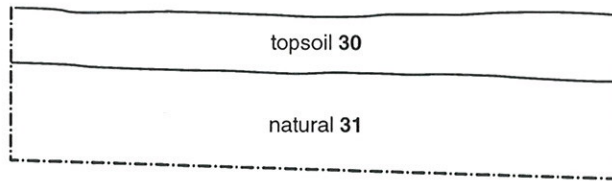


Figure 3: Trench 2 plan

Trench 1



Trench 3



Trench 4

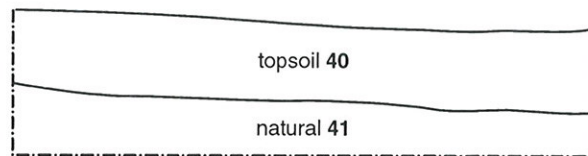


Figure 4: Trenches 1, 3 and 4, sections



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