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Issue	Prepared by	Checked by	Approved by	Signature
1	Kate Woodley Project Officer	Tim Allen Senior Project Manager	Edward Biddulph Senior Project Manager Post-Excavation	E.B.Biddulph

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Illustrated by	Leo Heatley and Georgina Slater

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES
t: +44 (0) 1865 263800 e: oasouth@thehumanjourney.net
f: +44 (0) 1865 793496 w: oasouth.thehumanjourney.net
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Abingdon School Science Centre, Abingdon, Oxfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Written by Kate Woodley and Tim Allen

with contributions from John Cotter and illustrated by Leo Heatley and Georgina Slater

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Summary

Between the 28th of February and 11th of April 2013 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation in the tennis courts, coach park and the area north of Waste Court rugby pitch on behalf of Abingdon School, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, ahead of the construction of a new science centre and coach park.

The evaluation consisted of eight trenches that were excavated within the footprint of the proposed new Science Centre and new access for coach and car parking north of Waste Court field.

The earliest archaeological evidence in the tennis court area comprised one residual sherd of Iron Age pottery. Otherwise the earliest features were two pits containing pottery of post-medieval date (18th-20th century). A number of other undated features including a probable segmented ditch and a posthole might be related and might represent a simple system of agrarian landscape use.

In the Coach Park a large 19th quarry pit was located, and contained a mixed assemblage of pottery dating from the 19th to the 20th century.

East of the Coach Park, evaluation was targeted upon a possible cropmark ring ditch halfway along the track between the Coach Park and the Sports Centre. No trace of any ring ditch, or of any associated features, was found in either of the two trenches dug to investigate this. The only potentially ancient feature was an undated gully found at the north-west corner of the grassed area in Waste Court field. The easternmost trench located the edge of another probable 19th century quarry close to the northern boundary of the school grounds, the quarry perhaps bounded by a recent ditch observed running north-south just to the west.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 The area approved for development (P12/V2373/FUL) is located on the north side of Abingdon (Fig. 1), within the grounds of Abingdon School and on the south side of Faringdon Road (NGR SU4923 9753). The site is within a Conservation Area.

1.1.2 The site is currently occupied by tennis courts, a coach park, a school medical centre and an area of tree screening alongside a track bordering the Waste Court sports pitches laid to grass (Fig. 2). The sports pitches themselves are not part of the development area.

1.1.3 The north-west end of the site is the site of a former quarry. Part of this has recently been infilled to form a temporary car park, but the surviving quarry shows that this was at least 2m deep, and extended right to the northern boundary of the site. Another quarry (shown on the 1st edition OS map of 1874) has been backfilled, and the medical centre is built within it. The edges of this quarry are still faintly visible on the ground.

1.1.4 A sample evaluation of 270 sq. m was requested in the Archaeological Design Brief, but in the light of the evidence for quarrying, and of the protected areas that will not be affected by the development, Hugh Coddington remitted this to an area of 225 sq. m, comprising a 3% sample.

1.1.5 The specification for the archaeological investigation was outlined in the Written Scheme of Investigations (WSI) (OA 2013) and agreed by Oxfordshire County Council. The evaluation as specified in the WSI consisted of eight trial trenches (Fig. 2). Two of the trial trenches in the Coach Park were later combined and moved to avoid a buried gas main, electric cable and foul sewer.

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The geology is sand and gravel overlying Kimmeridge clay. The site lies at approximately 60m aOD, sloping slightly downwards to the south. The Larkhill Stream lies about 750m west of the site.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background to the site was been described in detail in an Archaeological Desk Based Assessment (OA 2012), and the results of most direct relevance were summarised in the Written Scheme of Investigation (OA 2013). Those observations relating to the site itself are repeated below.

1.3.2 A cemetery of former burial mounds of early Bronze Age date (2500-1500 BC) is likely to be represented by a group of cropmark ring ditches identified from aerial photographs in the field on the north side of the Faringdon Road immediately opposite to the site (NMR 233925, OHER MOX8782, MOX8824, MOX8825, MOX23830; see also Benson and Miles 1974, Map 30). The mounds have been ploughed away, but the surrounding infilled ditches remain.

1.3.3 The largest of these would have extended into the north-west corner of the site, but this has been completely quarried away. Another of these, a smaller cropmark feature

thought to indicate a former barrow, is located north of the rugby pitch on Waste Court field within the eastern half of the site (see Fig. 2).

1.3.4 Excavations at the larger barrow cemetery of Barrow Hills, Radley on the north-east of Abingdon have shown that the ditches of such barrows often contain burials, as well as any inside, and that additional burials or pits containing offerings often exist in a peripheral zone outside the ditches (Barclay and Halpin 1999).

1.3.5 Abingdon Conduit is shown running just outside the southern boundary of the site on the Tithe Map of the Parish of St Helen's 1843. Conduit House is a 16th century building, showing that the conduit must have existed at least since the Tudor period. It is not known whether this reflects the line of an earlier unmanaged stream course close to the site, or was simply diverting water from the Larkhill Stream further north.

1.3.6 In the post-medieval period the use of the site remained arable or pastoral farmland until Abingdon School moved to its present location in 1870. Parts of the site had clearly been used for quarrying, as is shown by the 1st edition OS map of 1874.

1.4 Acknowledgements

1.4.1 OA would like to thank Helen Elliot of Ridge Property and Construction Consultants for help in setting up the project, and Nick Barnard and Paul Robson of Abingdon School for their assistance in facilitating the work. We are also grateful to Hugh Coddington, Principal Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council, who monitored the work. The field work was managed for OA by Tim Allen and supervised on site by Kate Woodley and John Boothroyd, ably assisted by Leanne Waring, Ashley Strutt and Ben Attfield.

2 Evaluation Aims and Methodology

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The aims of the project as detailed in the WSI were:

(i) To determine the presence or absence of any archaeological remains which may survive.

(ii) To determine or confirm the approximate extent of any surviving remains

(iii) To determine the date range of any surviving remains by artefactual or other means.

(iv) To determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains.

(v) To determine the degree of complexity of any surviving horizontal or vertical stratigraphy.

(vi) To assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape.

(vii) To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeo-environmental and/or economic evidence, and the forms in which such evidence may survive.

(viii) To determine the implications of any remains with reference to economy, status, utility and social activity.

(ix) To determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of the artifactual evidence present.

2.1.2 The specific aims and objectives of the evaluation were:

(x) To establish the character, date and function of the cropmark circle in the eastern half of the site.

(xi) Should this prove to represent the remains of an early Bronze Age burial mound, to assess whether associated archaeological features exist outside the limits of the ditch, and if so, how far these extend.

(xii) To attempt to determine whether other Bronze Age (or earlier) features exist in the area surrounding the large cropmark ring ditch that formally extended into the very north-west corner of the site.

(xiii) To investigate whether other Bronze Age ring ditches or burials exist within the development site, in order to assist in establishing the limits and scale of the barrow cemetery.

(xiv) To investigate whether there is any evidence of former stream courses within the site in the vicinity of the suggested line of the Conduit on the 1843 Tithe Map.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 All of the trenches (Fig. 2) were opened up using a JCB or mini-digger fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under the continuous supervision of an archaeologist. No significant archaeological horizons were encountered, and so machine-excavation proceeded either to the top of the natural geology, or to the maximum safe working depth where no natural was encountered. The methodologies as outlined in the WSI were followed at all times.

2.2.2 For practical reasons slight modifications were made to the positions of some of the trenches from those marked in the WSI. Trench 1 was split to avoid existing tennis nets, Trenches 2 and 4 were realigned to avoid buried services, and Trench 8 was realigned due to a high modern bank and an underlying modern feature.

2.2.3 All work was carried out in accordance with the OA excavation manual (Wilkinson 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 The results of the evaluation are summarised in section 3.3, and discussed by trench in section 3.4 below. Trench plans and sections are illustrated on Figures 3, 4, 5 and 6. A full context inventory is presented in the table in Appendix 1. Finds identification, discussion and quantification are presented in Section 4, and the evidence is discussed in Section 5.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 Tarmac was present within Trenches 1 to 4 and 8, with a sub base and make up layers underneath. In Trench 1 these overlay a subsoil that sat on top of the natural gravels. Within Trenches 2, 3 and 4 tarmac overlay up to 0.6m of Type 1 grade stone make-up, and this covered recent backfill throughout these trenches, which was at least 0.5m deep, but was not bottomed. The natural gravels were not encountered in these trenches, and had clearly been truncated.

3.2.2 Trenches 5, 6 and 7 were excavated in grassed areas, and topsoil varied between 0.1m (Trench 6) and 0.25m deep (Trench 7). A subsoil was present within Trenches 1, 5, 6, 7 and 8. The natural geology was fairly consistent across all of these trenches, and comprised a brownish orange mix of sandy gravel in a matrix of silt overlying a cleaner, cream gravel deposit with occasional pockets of sand. The upper part was the weathered surface of the gravels containing an element of post-Glacial silt, the lower the undisturbed Pleistocene gravel.

3.2.3 Ground conditions were dry throughout, although waterlogging was observed in the base of Trench 2.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 Trench 1 contained two pits, a probable segmented ditch and a posthole, all of post-medieval date. Trench 5 contained a small, undated ditch and Trench 8 contained two modern ditches and one modern pit. Trenches 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7 contained no archaeological features or deposits.

3.4 Trench 1 (Fig.3, Plate 1)

3.4.1 Trench 1 was located within the eastern tennis courts, and was orientated south-north along the space between the two tennis courts. It had a gap in the middle where the net posts protruded across the line of the trench. Together the two parts of the excavated trench measured 25m long by 1.5m wide.

3.4.2 The southern half of the trench contained a large pit [104] at the very southern end cut through the mid brownish-orange sandy gravel (112). Only the north-eastern quarter of the pit lay within the trench, and this suggested that it was sub-circular or sub-rectangular. The pit was excavated to a depth of just over 0.7m; the bottom of the pit was not reached. The pit sides were regular, vertical at the top, but curving in slightly lower down. It contained at least six fills (105, 106=117, 107,116, 118 and 119). The uppermost fills (116 and 105) were a yellow silty sand and a grey sandy silt, and these overlay (118), a dark grey clayey silt. Below this the numbers (106) and (117) were given to a brownish-yellow silty sand that surrounded fill 118. This layer was 0.3m deep and had a flat base, and overlay a similar but more mottled fill 107, again of similar

depth. The lowest fill exposed was (119), a soft brownish-grey silt. Fills (105), (106) and (107) all contained pottery, bone, metal and ceramic building material (CBM) of 19th century date, and probably indicate deliberate backfill, probably levelled off and compacted between layers. Layer 107 also included clay pipe-stem of 19th century date and a few residual potsherds, one of Roman date, others of 16th/17th century or 18th century manufacture. Layer 106 included residual fragments of late 17th/early 18th century clay pipe and one sherd of early Iron Age pottery. Layer (118) may represent slower silting, capped by sand (116).

3.4.3 To the north of this a smaller pit [114] was identified, only the eastern half of which lay within the trench. It appeared to have been circular. The pit had sloping sides, steeper on the north than the south, and slightly concave, and a flat sloping base, deeper on the north. It contained one fill (115), a loose mid grey silty sand with fragments of pottery, metal, clay pipe and CBM, again of 19th century date.

3.5 Trench 1 (N) (Fig. 3)

3.5.1 Two small features partly exposed on opposite sides of the trench halfway along were interpreted as termini of an east-west segmented ditch, which was numbered [108]. Both cut the upper natural (112). The western terminal was slightly wider than that on the east, and this was excavated, while the eastern terminal was not. The western terminal had sloping sides, slightly concave, and a rounded base. There was a spill of primary silt down the south edge, but the main fill was (109), a soft mid-grey silty sand containing rare sub-angular flint and several fragments of pottery and metal of 19th century date.

3.5.2 To the north of [108] was an isolated posthole [110]. This also truncated the upper natural (112) and had straight, steep sides with a concave base. The only fill (111) comprised a loose mid – pale grey silty sand tat contained rare, sub rounded gravels and fragments of abraded tile of 13th-17th century manufacture. These were probably of post-medieval date. The posthole was sealed by a mid orange brown subsoil (103) that contained mixed pebbles. The subsoil was overlain by make-up layer (102), foundation for the tarmac (101) that overlay it.

3.6 Trench 2 (Plate 2)

3.6.1 Trench 2 was located on the north side of the coach park, and was orientated north-west to south-east. Its north-western end had to be pivoted south by approximately 0.5m from its position as marked in the WSI to avoid a buried drain. It measured 20m long by 1.5m wide, and was excavated by machine to a maximum depth of 1.2m. No natural gravels were encountered; the base and lower part of the whole trench consisted of a mixed deposit of brick rubble and dark grey-black clayey silt with brick fragments and patches of redeposited sandy gravel, together numbered (201). This deposit produced frogged bricks and white tile fragments, and is interpreted as the late 19th or early 20th century infilling of a 19th century quarry. It was overlain by up to 0.5m of type 1 sorted stone topped with tarmac (200).

3.7 Trenches 3 and 4 (Plate 3)

3.7.1 These two trenches were laid out east-west in line with one another in the southern part of the coach park, in order to investigate the likely impact of the science centre. They were originally intended to investigate the west and east sides of the coach park, but due to the number of services on the east were subsequently combined into a single longer trench. Together they measured 33m long by 1.5m wide.

3.7.2 The trench was excavated by machine to a maximum depth of 1.2m, but like Trench 2 showed no sign of any natural gravels. The base and lower part of the whole trench consisted of a deposit of dark grey-black clayey silt with patches of brick rubble and, redeposited orange-brown sandy silt (301). Finds included frogged bricks and the base of a white porcelain bottle. This was very similar to the material in Trench 2, and was presumably also later 19th or early 20th century infill of the 19th century quarry. It was overlain by up to 0.7m of type 1 sorted stone, make-up for tarmac (300).

3.8 Trench 5 (Fig 4; Plate 4)

3.8.1 Trench 5 was located to the south-east of the coach park at the north-west corner of Waste Court field, and was orientated east to west. It measured 15m long by 1.5m wide. This trench A small N-S aligned ditch was present towards the west end of the trench. The ditch [502] truncated the reddish brown sandy gravels of the weathered natural (505) and had straight, steep sides and a flat base. The lower fill (504) was similar to the upper natural but had a higher silt content. The upper fill (503) comprised a dark greyish brown silty loam. The ditch was sealed by a dark brownish grey sandy silt subsoil (501) which was overlain by topsoil and turf (500).

3.9 Trench 6 (Fig. 5; Plate 5)

3.9.1 Trench 6 was north of the rugby pitch in Waste Court Field, and ran along a grassed bank north of the track leading from the Coach Park to the Sports Centre. It was laid out to cross the cropmark interpreted as a ring-ditch on aerial photographs (NMR and OHER). The trench was orientated east to west with a short arm running south at the east end. The main trench was 20m long and 1.5m wide, the southern arm 3m long by 1.5m wide.

3.9.2 The clean natural gravel (604) was overlain by a weathered natural (603), and this in turn was overlain by orange-brown sandy clay subsoil (602). The subsoil was overlain by a topsoil of dark brown silty loam some 0.1m thick, and this was buried by material dumped to make the bank (601). This consisted of a friable brown silty loam containing abundant small stones with occasional larger fragments of irregular limestone, brick and other modern materials. A thin topsoil (600) had formed on top of this, and this was a darker brown silty loam like the buried soil below.

3.9.3 No archaeological features were found in this trench. The surface of the upper natural was cleaned by hand, and a hand-excavated slot dug along almost all of the south side of the trench down to the lower, undisturbed natural to ensure that the ditch of the cropmark feature had not been missed.

3.10 Trench 7 (Fig. 5; Plate 6)

3.10.1 Trench 7 was located to the east of trench 5 and to the south of trench 6 and consisted of two lengths at right angles, one oriented north-south in line with the southern arm of Trench 6, the other extending eastwards from it close to the northern end. Both arms were 10m long and 1.5m wide.

3.10.2 In this trench the undisturbed gravel (703) was overlain by weathered gravel including dark orange-brown sandy silt (702), and this in turn was overlain by orange-brown sandy clay subsoil (701). None of these layers contained any archaeological features or finds. The subsoil was overlain by topsoil (700).

3.10.3 The weathered gravel (702) was removed by machine along most of the north-south trench, and again in the eastern half of the east-west trench, to ensure that the absence of archaeological features was genuine.

3.11 Trench 8 (Fig 6; Plate 8)

3.11.1 Trench 8 was located to the east of trenches 6 and 7, and was orientated north-east to south west. The east end of this trench was excavated through a grass bank nearly 1m high, and after 3m it became clear that the bank did not overlie undisturbed topsoil, but instead backfill of a probable modern feature. It was also clear that it would not be possible to excavate this to much greater depth without stepping the trench, which would have impinged upon the roots of protected trees. This trench was therefore pivoted slightly southwards off the bank onto the edge of the flat area surfaced with tarmac to the south. The re-orientated trench measured 16m long by 1.5m wide.

3.11.2 As in Trench 6 further west, the bank was constructed of a mixture of topsoil, small stones and redeposited gravel, with occasional fragments of brick and other modern material. Again as in Trench 6, this overlay a buried topsoil of similar composition. On the south side of the trench was tarmac (800), underlain by topsoil, but containing chalk flecks and small stones. Below this was the orange-brown subsoil (801).

3.11.3 On the north side of the trench the subsoil was cut towards the western end by a ditch [803] aligned north-south. This was 1.4m wide. A hand-excavated slot was begun across this, but when iron sheeting and modern brick fragments were found, the slot was abandoned. The fill of the ditch was very firm, and consisted of a brownish-grey clayey silt containing small pebbles and occasional brick fragments.

3.11.4 Towards the east end the subsoil was cut by one or more recent features. On site these were interpreted as a large pit or ditch [805] cutting an east-west ditch [807], but the south edge of [807] was irregular, and the fills of both features were very similar, consisting of brownish-grey clayey silt with lenses of darker grey silt and gravel, with occasional brick fragments, small stones, pebbles and fragments of late 19th or 20th century pottery. Due to their clearly recent date, neither feature was investigated by hand. It is possible that both elements were parts of a single quarry, like those seen in Trenches 2-4 further west.

4 Finds and Environmental Evidence

4.1 Assessment of the pottery

by John Cotter

Introduction and methodology

4.1.1 A total of 22 sherds of pottery weighing 283g. was recovered from 6 contexts. This nearly all of 'Victorian' date apart from two small residual sherds, one of Iron Age and one of Roman date (together weighing 16g). All the pottery was examined and spot-dated during the present assessment stage. For each context the total pottery sherd count and weight were recorded on an Excel spreadsheet, followed by the context spot-date which is the date-bracket during which the latest pottery types in the context are

estimated to have been produced or were in general circulation. Comments on the presence of datable types were also recorded, usually with mention of vessel form (jugs, bowls etc.) and any other attributes worthy of note (eg. decoration etc.). The single sherds of Iron Age and Roman pottery were identified by Edward Biddulph.

Date and nature of the assemblage

4.1.2 The post-Roman assemblage is in a very fragmentary and fairly poor condition. The two earlier sherds are also small and worn. Ordinary domestic pottery types are represented. The pottery is described in detail in the spreadsheet and is summarised below. Post-medieval pottery fabric codes used in the spreadsheet are those of the Museum of London (MoLA).

4.1.3 The single Iron Age sherd from context (106) is in a calcareous- or limestone-tempered fabric, which suggests that it belongs to the earlier part of the Iron Age (750-400 BC) This is probably residual, as a small piece of clay pipe occurs in the same context. Likewise, the small worn sherd of Roman greyware in context (107) also occurs with much later material. The Roman sherd can only be given a wide date range of AD50-400.

4.1.4 The rest of the assemblage consists almost entirely of 'Victorian' tablewares (blue 'Willow Pattern' etc) and a few pieces of kitchen crockery. Most of this falls within the period c 1830-1900, but a mid 19th-century date would be appropriate for the most of the pieces here. The two exceptions comprise a small sherd of early post-medieval red earthenware (PMRE, c 1480-1600) and a small worn sherd of Staffordshire white stoneware (SWSL, c 1710-1760). The 'Victorian' assemblage is typical of just about any site in Britain during this period. No further work is recommended.

4.2 The clay tobacco pipe

by John Cotter

4.2.1 Five fairly small pieces of clay pipe weighing 17g. were recovered from four contexts - mostly the same as those producing the pottery above. These have not been separately catalogued but are described below. No further work is recommended.

Context (102) Spot-date: Late17th/early 18th century
Description: A single short stem fragment (4g.). Fairly worn. Fairly wide stem bore (c 3mm). Probably of late 17th/early 18th-century date.

Context (106) Spot-date: Late17th/early 18th century
Description: Two fairly worn short stem fragments (6g.). As (102) above.

Context (107) Spot-date: 19th century
Description: A single fresh stem fragment (4g.). Of narrow-bored 19th-century type with traces of moulded (ribbed?) decoration leading up to the (missing) pipe bowl.

Context (115) Spot-date: 19th century
Description: A single short stem fragment (3g.). Stained brown. Of narrow-bored 19th-

century type.

4.3 The ceramic building material (CBM)

by John Cotter

4.3.1 A total of 9 pieces of CBM weighing 408g. was recovered from 5 contexts in Trench 1. This was examined and spot-dated during the present assessment stage in a similar way to the pottery (see elsewhere) and the data recorded on an Excel spreadsheet. As usual, the dating of broken fragments of ceramic or other building materials is an imprecise art and spot-dates derived from them are necessarily broad and should therefore be regarded with caution. The fragmentary assemblage is described in the spreadsheet and summarised only briefly here as it does not significantly affect the pottery spot-dates, and there is little present of much note. Pieces (fresh or worn) of post-medieval orange-red peg tile are the most numerous type present. There are also three small very worn pieces of post-medieval red brick. Further examples of frogged bricks and of plain white glazed tiles were photographed from Trenches 2, 3 and 4, but were not kept. Yet other examples were noted from Trench 8 on site. No further work is recommended.

4.4 Environmental evidence

4.4.1 Due to the late date of the features that were found, and the lack of environmental potential of the one undated ditch in Trench 5, no environmental samples were taken.

4.5 Summary of the finds evidence

4.5.1 Apart from a single sherd of pottery, whose fabric suggests that it was made during the Early Iron Age (750-350 BC), and another of Roman date, no finds were recovered that date earlier than the post-medieval period. The Iron Age and Roman sherds were found within large pit [104] at the south end of Trench 1, but were residual, being in contexts that also contained 19th/20th century material.

4.5.2 The clay pipe includes fragments of late 17th or early 18th century type, but these are in contexts that also contain pottery or CBM of later date, and so are residual. Two fragments were of later 18th or 19th century type, and are more likely to have been contemporary with the deposits in which they were found. While the roof tile was not closely datable, the ceramic building material included frogged bricks and white glazed plain ceramic tiles of later 19th or 20th century manufacture.

5 Discussion

5.1 Reliability of field investigation

5.1.1 The evaluation covered a 3% sample of the footprint of the proposed development and is likely to represent a valid sample of below-ground conditions and of the potential for archaeological remains. Ground conditions were dry throughout and this contributed to good visibility of archaeological deposits.

5.2 Evaluation objectives and results

5.2.1 The presence of archaeological features and deposits was confirmed by the evaluation, and the extent of these within the trenches was recorded. Datable material was either recovered or (in the case of recent ceramic building material) was photographed on

site. All of those that were dated were of post-medieval, and probably of 19th or 20th century date.

5.2.2 The evaluation located no evidence for the cropmark feature interpreted as a Bronze Age ring ditch, nor did it find any other Bronze Age activity, whether features or finds.

5.2.3 The evaluation did not encounter any evidence of the former stream courses within the site in the vicinity of the suggested line of the Conduit on the 1843 Tithe Map.

5.3 Interpretation

5.3.1 The features in Trench 1 all appear to be of post-medieval date. Pit [104] had a relatively large amount of cultural material in the upper fills, and may have been a refuse pit or old cess pit. The ditch [108] is shallow, and may represent the truncated remains of a small field boundary, especially given the close association of posthole [110]. These features probably represent part of the post-medieval agrarian landscape.

5.3.2 Trenches 2, 3 and 4 show a large modern truncation that spans nearly the whole coach park. This almost certainly represents quarry backfill, and could be an extension of the 19th quarry located to the west, or of the quarry now occupied by the Medical Centre to the south.

5.3.3 The small ditch in Trench 5 [502] remains undated. Given its close proximity to the rugby pitch it may represent a drainage gully associated with the sports pitches, now defunct.

5.3.4 Trenches 6 and 7 are devoid of archaeology, and have clearly demonstrated that the cropmark seen in the 1957 aerial photograph of the site does not represent a ploughed out Bronze Age ring-ditch. This feature, which is more sub-rectangular than circular, was not included in the cropmark survey of the Upper Thames gravels (Benson and Miles 1974), but was subsequently considered a suitable candidate for a prehistoric ring-ditch. The evaluation has shown that this is not the case.

5.3.5 The features in Trench 8, [803], [805] and [807], represent a recent boundary, probably a field or enclosure boundary, and more evidence of gravel quarrying at the north end of the school site.

5.3.6 In general, the character of the natural on this site consists of clean gravel overlain by a mixed deposit of silt and gravel, in turn overlain by a more recent orange-brown subsoil. Elsewhere in the Upper Thames valley on the gravels, clean gravel is often overlain by a clean silt without much gravel, and this is interpreted as the early Holocene soil developing over the late Pleistocene gravels. The character of the gravel surface here suggests mixing of the gravel and the overlying early Holocene soil, probably by ploughing or other cultivation, at some point. It is possible that the subsoil and the mixed deposit below indicate the effects of subsequent worm-sorting, but it seems more likely that the subsoil relates to a later stage of cultivation and soil accumulation.

5.3.7 The results show that much of the site has been destroyed by gravel quarrying. To the quarries known from historic maps (the quarry under the Medical Centre) and from surviving surface indications (at the north-west end of the site) can now be added a quarry underlying most of the Coach Park, and further quarrying north of Trench 8 to the east (Fig. 7).

5.4 Conclusions

5.4.1 The evaluation has demonstrated that much of the site has been quarried, and that nothing of significance is likely to survive in the immediate vicinity of the large ring-ditch

known from cropmarks north of the Faringdon Road adjacent to the north-west corner of the site.

5.4.2 The cropmark interpreted as a ring ditch from the 1957 aerial photograph does not appear to exist, reducing the area covered by the barrow group, and the absence of other archaeological features in this area suggests that there is nothing of significance within this part of the site.

5.4.3 The features in Trenches are of 19th-20th century date, and appear to represent elements of a dispersed post-medieval landscape of limited significance.

Appendix A. Trench Descriptions and Context Inventory

Trench 1						
General description					**Orientation**	N-S
Trench contained two pits, a posthole, and a segmented ditch, all of Post Medieval date.					**Avg. depth (m)**	0.46
					Width (m)	1.5
					Length (m)	25
Contexts						
context no	**type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Description/comment**	**finds**	**date**
100	Layer	-	0.1	Tarmac	-	-
101	Layer	-	0.08	Sub base	-	-
102	Layer	-	0.08	Make-up layer	-	-
103	Layer	-	0.16	Subsoil	-	-
104	Cut	1.2	0.73	Pit	-	-
105	Fill of 104	0.70	0.16	Mid grey sandy silt fill of 104	Pottery, bone, glass	post -medieval
106	Fill of 104	0.79	0.17	Brownish yellow sandy silt = 117	Pottery, Bone, CBM, Metal	post-medieval
107	Fill of 104	1.2	0.32	Mottled yellow and brownish grey	Pot, bone, metal, CBM	Post-medieval
108	Cut	0.6	0.23	Ditch	-	-
109	Fill of 108	0.6	0.23	Mid grey silty sand	Pottery, metal	post -medieval
110	Cut	0.24	0.12	Posthole	-	-
111	Fill	0.24	0.12	Mid-pale grey silty sand fill of 110	CBM	post-medieval
112	Layer	-	0.1	Natural gravels	-	-
113	Layer	-	-	Natural sandy gravels	-	-
114	Cut	0.5	0.15	Pit	-	-
115	Fill of 114	0.5	0.25	Mid grey silty sand	Pottery, Metal, CBM	post-medieval
116	Fill of 104	0.7	0.15	Soft, loose, brown mottled yellow silty sand	-	-
117	Fill of 104	0.79	0.32	Soft, brownish yellow sandy silt = 106	-	-
118	Fill of 104	1.46	0.25	Dark grey sandy clay silt	-	-
119	Fill of	1.2	0.13	Soft mid brownish grey	-	-

	104			silt		

Trench 2						
General description					**Orientation**	NW-SE
Trench devoid of archaeology					**Avg. depth (m)**	1
					Width (m)	1.5
					Length (m)	20
Contexts						
context no	**type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Description/comment**	**finds**	**date**
200	Layer	-	0.5	Tarmac and Type 1 stone levelling deposit	-	21st century
201	Fill	-	0.5	Mixed dark clayey silt and brick rubble and sand and gravelpatches. Backfill of 19th century quarry pit	-	19th/20th century

Trench 3 and 4						
General description					**Orientation**	W-E
Trench devoid of archaeology					**Avg. depth (m)**	1
					Width (m)	1.5
					Length (m)	33
Contexts						
context no	**type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Description/comment**	**finds**	**date**
300	Layer	-	0.7	Tarmac and Type 1 stone levelling deposit	-	21st century
301	Fill	-	0.3	Mixed deposits of dark clayey silt, orange-brown redeposited natural silt and brick rubble/sand and gravel patches. Backfill of quarry pit	-	19th/20th century

Trench 5						
General description					**Orientation**	W-E
Trench contained a N-S aligned small ditch located in the west end of the trench cut through 505					**Avg. depth (m)**	0.76
					Width (m)	1.5
					Length (m)	15
Contexts						

context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description/comment	finds	date
500	Topsoil	-	0.14	Dark grey brown sandy loam	-	-
501	Subsoil	-	0.4	Dark brown grey sandy silty loam	-	-
502	Cut	0.3	0.32	Ditch	-	-
503	Fill	0.3	0.26	Dark grey brown sandy silty loam fill of 502	-	-
504	Fill	0.3	0.04	Mid reddish-brown sandy silty loam fill of 502	-	-
505	Natural	-	0.22	Mid reddish-brown sandy gravel	-	-
506	Natural	-	-	Cream and orange sandy gravel	-	-

Trench 6						
General description					**Orientation**	W-E
Trench devoid of archaeology					**Avg. depth (m)**	0.8
					Width (m)	1.5
					Length (m)	20
Contexts						
context no	**type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Description/comment**	**finds**	**date**
600	Topsoil	-	0.1	Dark greyish brown sandy silt	-	
601	Dumped bank	-	0.12	Friable brown silty loam with abundant small stones, occasional larger limestone and brick/pottery fragments	-	19th /20th century
602	Subsoil	-	0.4	Orange-brown sandy clay	-	
603	Natural	-	0.16	Dark orange sandy silt gravel (40%)	-	
604	Natural	-	-	Cream and orange sandy gravel (80%)	-	

Trench 7		
General description	**Orientation**	N-S/W-E
Trench devoid of archaeology	**Avg. depth (m)**	0.8
	Width (m)	1.5
	Length (m)	10x10
Contexts		

context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description/comment	finds	date
700	Topsoil	-	0.25	Dark greyish brown sandy silt.	-	-
701	Subsoil	-	0.3	Orange-brown sandy clay	-	-
702	Natural	-	0.26	Dark orange sandy silt gravel (40%)	-	-
703	Natural	-	-	Cream and orange sandy gravel (80%)	-	-

Trench 8						
General description					**Orientation**	W-E
Trench devoid of archaeology but contained modern truncations probably associated with 19th century gravel quarrying.					**Avg. depth (m)**	0.66
					Width (m)	1.5
					Length (m)	20
Contexts						
context no	**type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Description/comment**	**finds**	**date**
800	Layer	-	0.2	Tarmac and road makeup	-	-
801	Layer	-	0.44	Greyish brown sandy silt, subsoil	-	-
802	Natural	-	-	Dark orange sandy silt gravel (40%)	-	-
803	Cut	1.4	0.76	Modern ditch	-	-
804	Fill of 803	1.4	0.76	Very firm brownish-grey clayey silt + small pebbles	-	19th/20th century
805	Cut	2.2	-	Modern pit, ditch or quarry	-	-
806	Fill of 805	2.2	-	Brownish-grey clayey silt with lenses of dark grey silt and of gravel, brick/tile fragments. Modern backfill of 805	-	19th/20th century
807	Cut	>0.77	-	Modern ditch or quarry	-	-
808	Fill of 807	>0.77	-	Brownish-grey clayey silt with lenses of dark grey silt and of gravel, brick/tile fragments. Modern backfill of 807	-	19th/20th century

Appendix B. Bibliography and References

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Benson, D, and Miles, D, 1974 The Upper Thames Valley: an Archaeological Survey of the River Gravels, Oxford Archaeological Unit Survey No. **2**

Oxford Archaeology, 1992, Fieldwork Manual, (Ed. D Wilkinson, first edition, August 1992)

OA, 2012, *Abingdon School Science Centre,* Abingdon. Desk Based Assessment, unpublished report prepared by Oxford Archaeology on behalf of Ridge and Partners LLP

OA, 2013, *Abingdon School Science Centre*, Abingdon. Written Scheme of Investigation, unpublished report prepared by Oxford Archaeology on behalf of Ridge and Partners LLP

Appendix C. Summary of Site Details

Site name: Abingdon School Science Centre, Abingdon, Oxfordshire

Site code: ABSC 13

Grid reference: NGR SU 4923 9753

Type: Evaluation

Date and duration: insert dates of the fieldwork

Area of site: 1.1ha. Including known former quarries

Summary of results: Eight evaluation trenches covering an area of 225 sq m in total were excavated. The main focus of interest was a cropmark believed to represent a ploughed-out ring ditch in the eastern part of the site, and the periphery of a larger cropmark ring-ditch at the north-west corner of the site. The eastern cropmark proved to be illusory, and that part of the site peripheral to the other ring-ditch to have been largely quarried away. A scatter of post-medieval features of 19th-20th century date was found further south beneath the school tennis courts, including one residual Early Iron Age sherd, but nothing else.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS 2013.46.

Figure 1: Site location

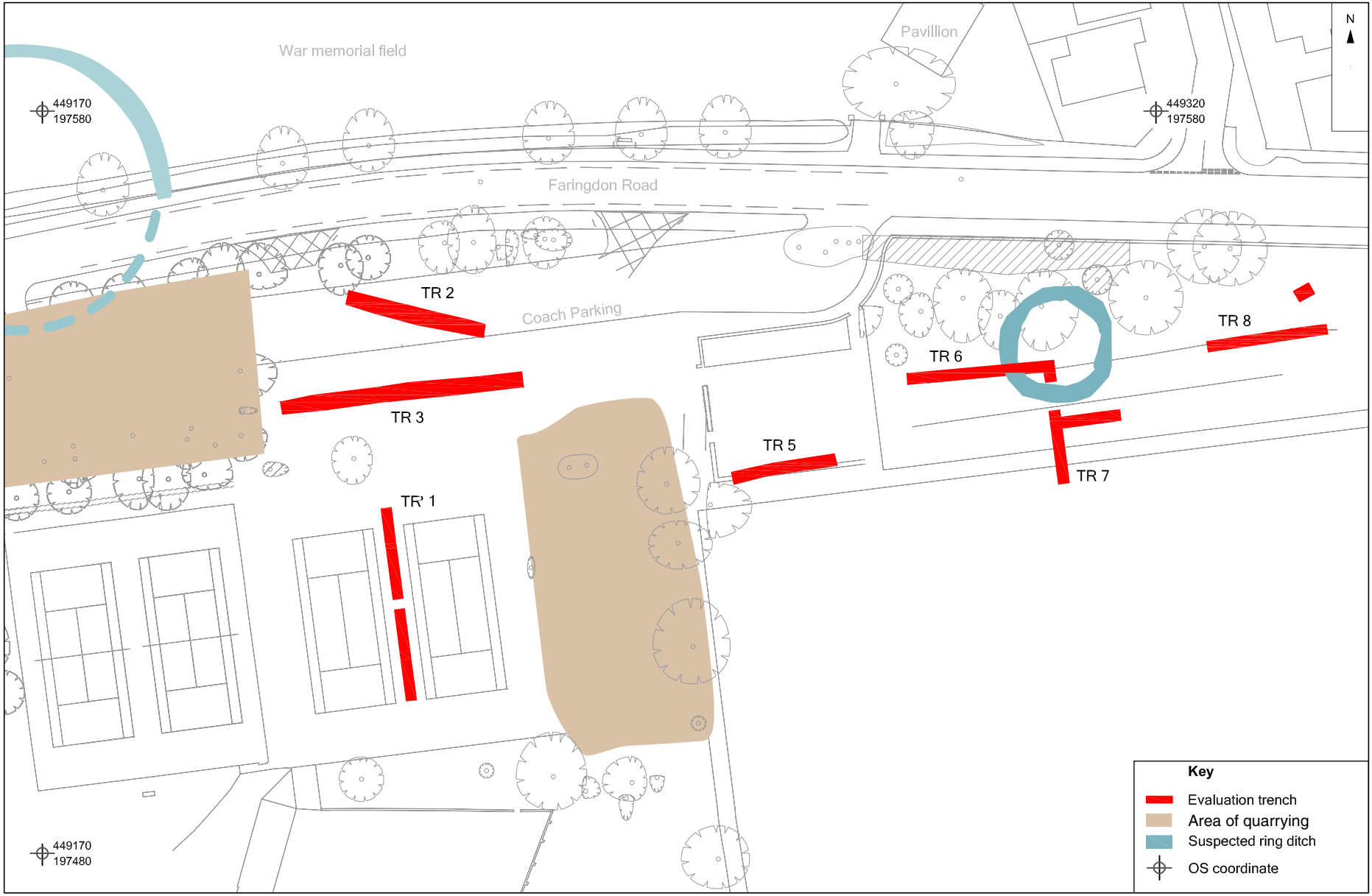

Figure 2: Trench location plan, showing cropmarks and areas of earlier quarrying

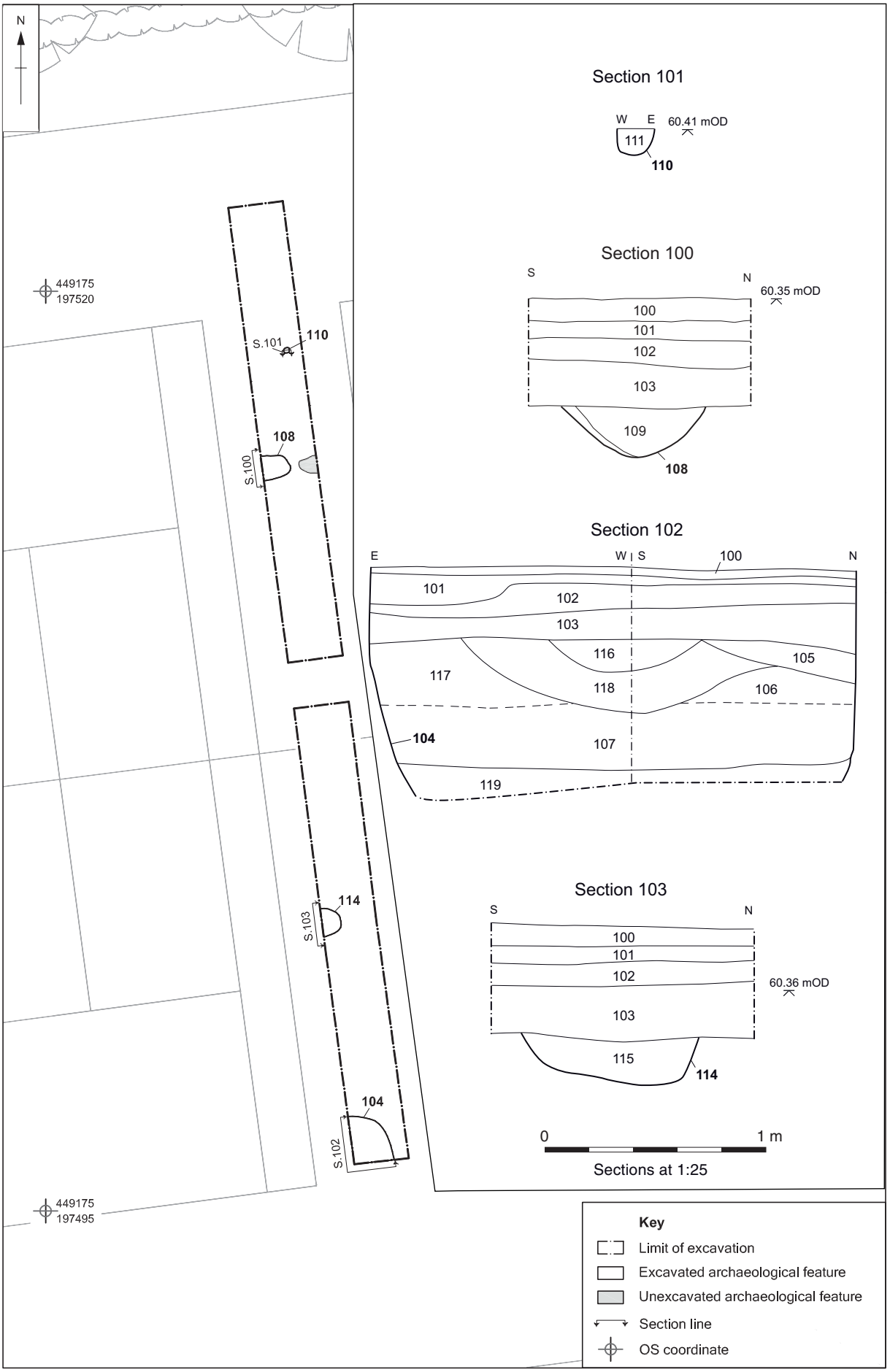

Figure 3: Trench 1: plan and sections 100, 101, 102 and 103

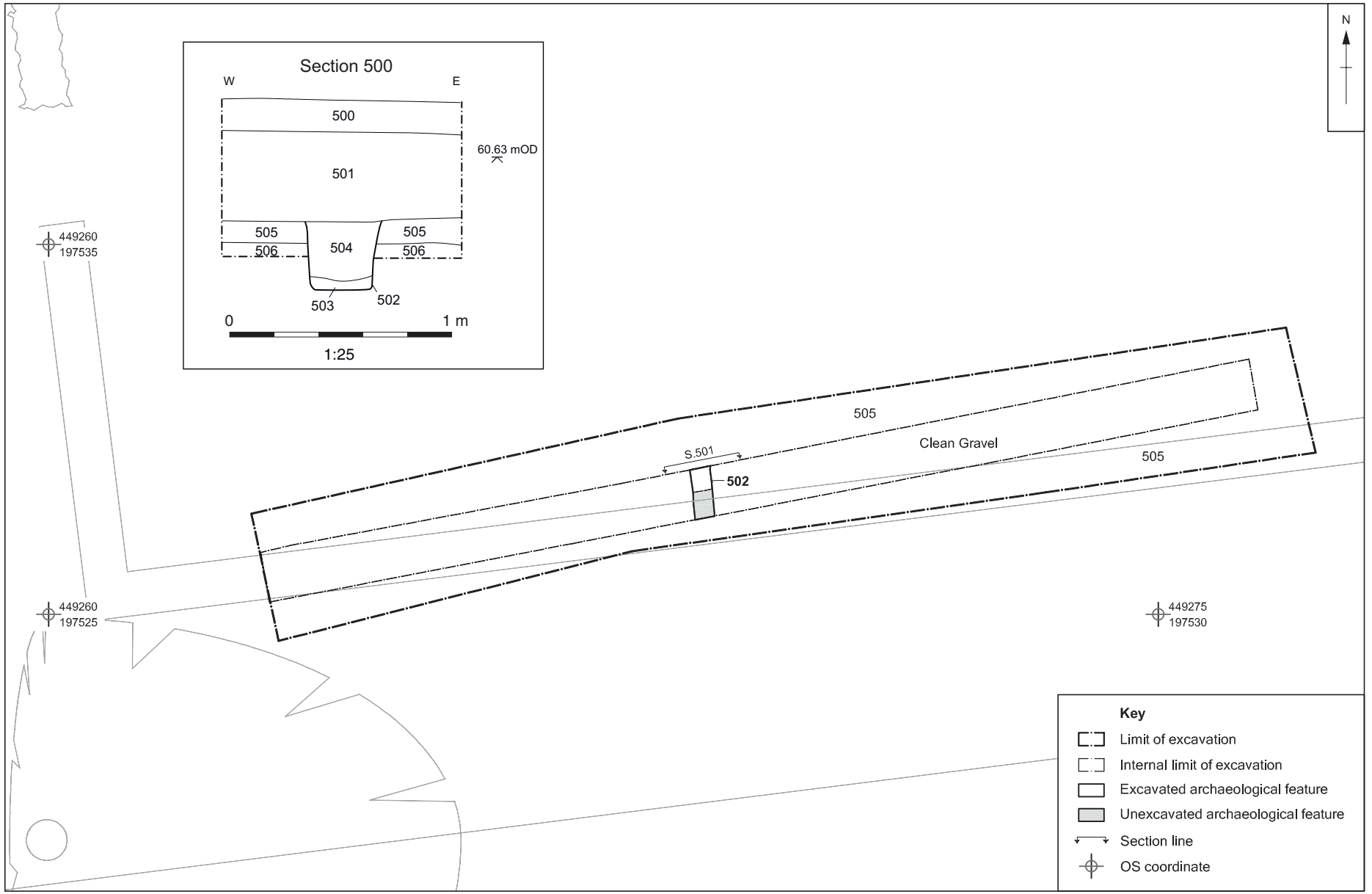

Figure 4: Trench 5: plan and section 500

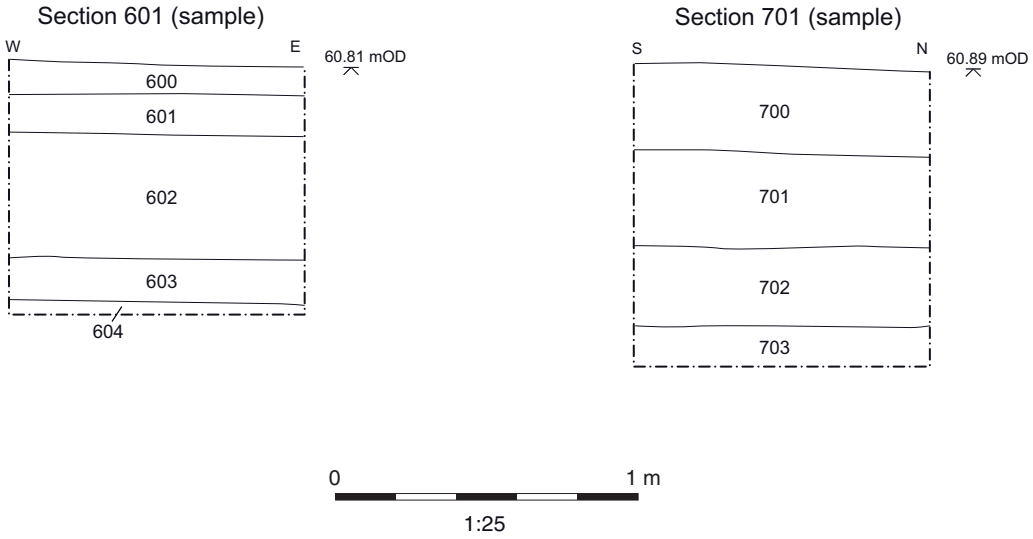

Figure 5: Trenches 6 and 7: representative sections

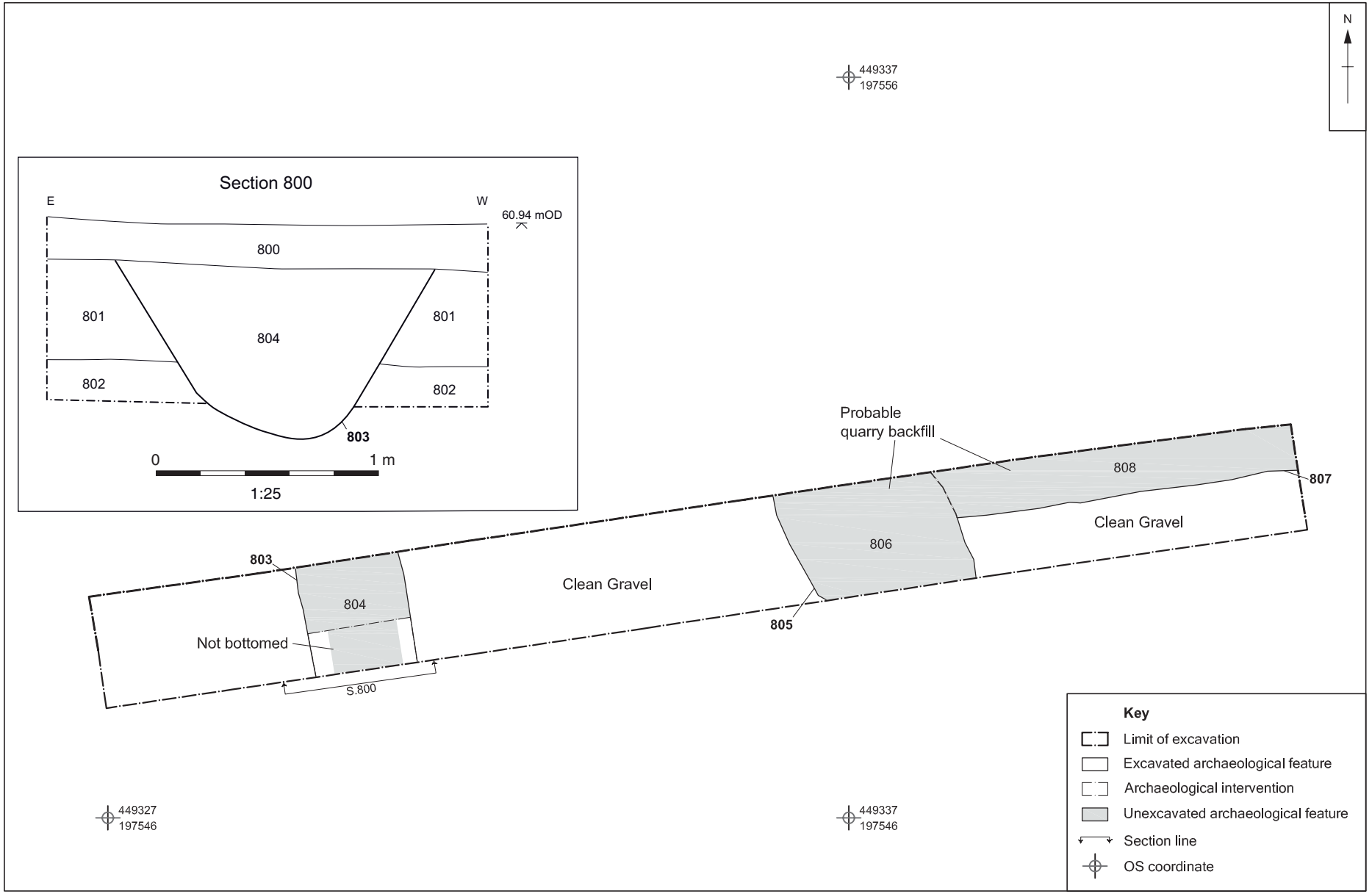

Figure 6: Trench 8: plan and section 800

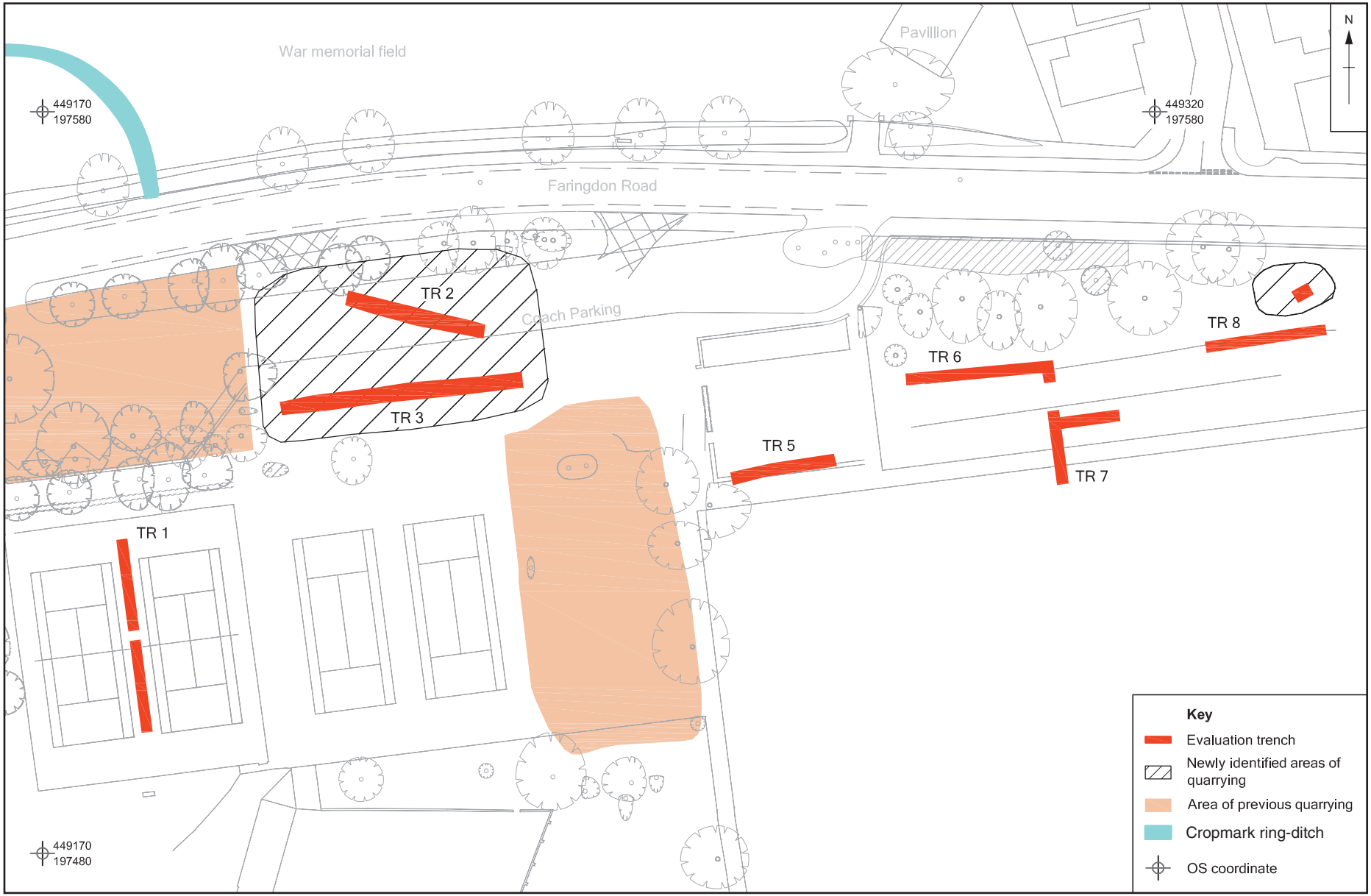

Figure 7: Revised site plan showing prehistoric cropmarks and areas of quarrying

Plate 1: Trench 1 (south) looking south

Plate 2: Trench 2 looking north-west

Plate 3: Trench 3 and 4 combined, looking east

Plate 4: Trench 5 looking west

Plate 5: Trench 6 looking west

Plate 6: Trench 7 eastern arm, looking west

Plate 7: Trench 7 southern arm, looking north

Plate 8: Trench 8 looking north-east

Head Office/Registered Office/ OA South

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: +44 (0) 1865 263 800
f: +44 (0) 1865 793 496
e: info@oxfordarchaeology.com
w: http://oxfordarchaeology.com

OA North

Mill 3
Moor Lane
Lancaster LA1 1GF

t: +44 (0) 1524 541 000
f: +44 (0) 1524 848 606
e: oanorth@oxfordarchaeology.com
w: http://oxfordarchaeology.com

OA East

15 Trafalgar Way
Bar Hill
Cambridgeshire
CB23 8SQ

t: +44 (0) 1223 850500
e: oaeast@oxfordarchaeology.com
w: http://oxfordarchaeology.com