

North Swindon Schools PFI Swindon Wiltshire



Archaeological Evaluation Report



Oxford Archaeology

15th May 2003

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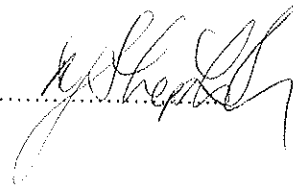
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North Swindon Schools PFI Swindon

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

CONTENTS

Summary.....	1
1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Location and scope of work.....	1
1.2 Geology and topography.....	1
1.3 Archaeological and historical background	1
2 Evaluation Aims.....	3
3 Evaluation Methodology.....	4
3.1 Scope of fieldwork.....	4
3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording.....	4
3.3 Finds.....	4
3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence	4
3.5 Presentation of results	4
4 Results: General Sites 1 and 2.....	5
4.1 Soils and ground conditions.....	5
4.2 Distribution of archaeological deposits.....	5
5 Results: Descriptions.....	6
5.1 Description of deposits.....	6
5.2 Finds.....	7
6 Discussion and Interpretation.....	8
6.1 Reliability of Field Investigation	8
6.2 Overall Interpretation.....	8
Appendix 1 Context Inventory	9
Appendix 2 Bibliography and References.....	11
Appendix 3 Summary of Site Details.....	11

LIST OF FIGURES

- Fig. 1 Site location
 Fig. 2 Hreod Parkway School -Site 1, areas A and B
 Fig. 3 Site 2, Evaluation trench plan
 Fig. 4 Site 1, Evaluation trench plan
 Fig. 5 Site 1 , Area A, Geophysical Survey

SUMMARY

Oxford Archaeology carried out a field evaluation in the northern area of Swindon, Wiltshire on behalf of Swindon Borough Council. Two sites were investigated situated approximately 2 km apart. These comprised land utilised for pasture and the playing fields of Hreod Parkway School.

There was no evidence for occupation at either site. The northern part of Site 1 preserves the relict remains of a medieval/post-medieval landscape in the form of ridge and furrow and the evaluation revealed two medieval plough furrows.

The finds from Site 1 comprised two worked flints, two sherds of Romano-British pottery and a sherd of possible Iron Age pottery, all of which were recovered from alluvial deposits, whilst a single sherd of post-medieval pottery which was recovered from a field drain.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 LOCATION AND SCOPE OF WORK

1.1.1 In December 2001 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation in advance of a proposed schools PFI development in the northern area of Swindon on behalf of Swindon Borough Council. In accordance with PPG 16 and local planning policy the County Archaeological Officer (CAO) recommended a program of archaeological investigation prior to development in order to ascertain the archaeological potential of the site. A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was produced by OA based on the requirements of a Design Brief prepared by the CAO (WCC 2003).

1.1.2 The area subject to evaluation consisted of two sites situated approximately 2 km apart. Site 1 (SU 1285 8670), an area of 14.6 ha (Fig. 2), comprises land utilised for pasture and the playing fields of Hreod Parkway School in Swindon. Site 2 (SU 1291 8867), 2 km to the north of Site 1 and 0.5km north of Haydon Wick (Fig. 3), is situated on pasture at the foot of a ridge.

1.2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

1.2.1 The underlying geology of sites 1 and 2 is Oxford Clay, although the interface between the Corallian 'Coral Rag' and the Oxford Clay is often separated by a thin layer of sand and gravel (EH, 1996). Some alluvial deposits associated with the River Ray were encountered.

1.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1.3.1 Both sites are located south-west of Ermine Street, within 3 km of the major Roman site at Groundwell Ridge. This previously unknown site was revealed during a housing development in 1997, and was subsequently purchased by English Heritage. The precise nature and extent of the site are uncertain. Although originally thought to be a large villa, a geophysical survey and small scale evaluation suggested a potential temple complex located on the terraced slope.

1.3.2 Although each site lies outside the known boundaries of the Groundwell Ridge complex, there was potential for Roman remains. Roman-period pottery was recovered during the excavation of a pipe trench in the grounds of Hreod Parkway School and further sherds of pottery have been recovered from the bank of the River

Ray, together with *pilae* tile fragments and a brooch. A number of Roman kiln complexes have also been found west of Swindon.

- 1.3.3 At Site 2, a system of ditches may be indicated on photographs. The complex may represent the remains of a medieval settlement, especially as a number of 13th-14th century sherds were recovered from a metalled surface beyond the stream, to the south of the site.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

- 2.1.1 To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the proposed development 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 determine whether or not further archaeological investigation is required.
- 2.1.5 To make available the results of the investigation.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork

- 3.1.1 Site 1 was subdivided into Areas A and B as area A was still in use as a school playing field. Area A was evaluated by a geophysical survey, using an FM36 fluxgate gradiometer with sample trigger (STI) (Northamptonshire Archaeology, forthcoming). The area was divided into 20 x 20 m grid squares and four readings per metre were taken at 1 m traverse intervals. The results of this survey will inform the location of future trial trenches. Area B was subjected to an evaluation comprising 24 trenches (nos. 5 - 26), each measuring 50 m x 2 m. Their location was specified in the *Design Brief*.
- 3.1.2 The linear features at Site 2, (*ante*. 1.3.3), were targeted with four 50 m x 2 m trenches and located as specified in the *Design Brief*.
- 3.1.3 The overall layout of the trenches was initially designed by the county archaeological officer, then modified with the agreement of the county archaeological officer in order to target specific medieval earthwork features and other topographical anomalies noted on site.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

- 3.2.1 Overburden was removed under close archaeological supervision by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket.
- 3.2.2 The trenches were cleaned by hand and the revealed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds. All archaeological features were planned and where excavated their sections drawn at a scale of 1:20. All features 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) and in accordance with Institute of Field Archaeologists guidelines (IFA 1999).

3.3 Finds

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

3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

- 3.4.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified.

3.5 Presentation of results

- 3.5.1 Section 5 includes individual context descriptions, with archaeological deposits and features described from earliest to latest. Context information is summarised in the context inventory (Appendix 1).

4 RESULTS: GENERAL SITES 1 AND 2

4.1 Soils and ground conditions

4.1.1 Sites 1 and 2: Across both sites the general soil type was clayey loam containing few inclusions, overlying a clayey subsoil. In the north eastern part of Site 1 alluvium overlay the glacial “drift” geology (referred to as “natural” in the remainder of the report).

4.2 Distribution of archaeological deposits

4.2.1 *Site 1* (Fig. 2) No significant archaeological deposits were recorded. Two probable Medieval plough furrows (context nos.) were revealed situated in the south-western corner of the development area.

4.2.2 *Site 2* (Fig. 3) No significant archaeological deposits were recorded. Modern drainage channels (context nos. 202 and 204) were revealed in Trenches 2 and 3 and a rubble platform for a barn (context no. 104), comprising re-used 17th or 18th century building materials was found in Trench 1. Trench 4 was empty.

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Description of deposits

Site 1: Area A Geophysical Survey Fig.5

- 5.1.1 Gradiometer survey was carried out over approximately 4 hectares of playing field at Hreod Parkway School. Figure 5 displays the results in greyscale format, with interpretations overlain upon this. Numerous magnetic anomalies were identified, dominated by intense dipolar responses reflecting buried ferrous and thermoremanent deposits. Large areas of such anomalies were found on the western margins of the site, beyond the apparently main levelled area of playing field which are believed to be the result of modern disturbance. Within the playing field, intense dipolar anomalies, several of which appear in pairs, are thought likely to reflect buried iron sockets for former goal posts. In the south of the site a number of linear and curvilinear positive magnetic anomalies are thought likely to represent buried ditches. These may be of archaeological significance, although modern drainage channels are also a possibility for some of the anomalies, considering that the field is likely to have been landscaped.

Site 1: Trenches 5 -15 (all trenches measured 50 m x 2 m) Fig. 4

- 5.1.2 Trenches 7 and 9 exposed a land drain of 19th or 20th century running north-east/south-west across the north-central part of the development area. In Trench 11 to the south-west of this was a second land drain of similar date running north-west/south-east and a hedge line running north-west/south-east. In Trenches 7 and 12 two tree-throw holes were revealed. All the features cut the natural geology which comprised a yellowish-blue clay. This was overlain in places by an alluvial deposit of yellowish brown sandy silt up to 0.30 m in depth and in turn, overlain by a subsoil of greenish to bluish brown silty clay 0.10 - 0.20 m in depth. In many areas, the friable grey-brown clayey loam topsoil, 0.15 - 0.30 m in depth, lay directly over the natural geology

Site 1: Trenches 16 - 26 (all trenches measured 50m x 2 m apart from trench 17 which measured 100 m x 2 m) Fig.4

- 5.1.3 Trench 21 revealed two plough furrows of probable medieval date which ran parallel to one another and were orientated north-east/south-west. These were situated in the southwestern corner of the development area and were overlain by the subsoil. The natural geology in the southern half of site 2 mostly consisted of clays varying in colour from orangey-blue to brownish-white, with sparse inclusions of chalk. There was some limestone outcropping in the eastern part of the site and some alluvium overlying the natural geology. A brown clay subsoil, between 0.10 and 0.40 m thick, overlay the natural geology and this in turn was overlain by a brown clay loam topsoil between 0.20 and 0.44 m thick.

Site 2:Trenches 1-4 (all trenches were 50 m x 2 m) Fig 3

- 5.1.4 Trenches 1-4 revealed a foundation layer of brick and limestone (context no. 104), some of which were worked, towards the northern end of the proposed development area. To the south of this was a 19th or 20th century land drain and a ditch, both running east-west. In the south eastern corner of the proposed development area was a second ditch running north-south. All features cut natural which comprised a compact yellowish grey-blue clay. This was overlain in places by a compact grey-

blue clay subsoil 0.10 m in depth, which was in turn, overlain by a brown clayey loam topsoil 0.20 m in depth.

5.2 Finds

5.2.1 **Worked Flint** A flint flake with blade scars of possible Neolithic date (Trench 15, context 1501) and a possible piece of irregular waste were recovered from the alluvium.

5.2.2 **Pottery** Two sherds of Romano-British grey ware, comprising the rim of a shouldered jar and a body sherd (Trench 10, context 1001 Trench 15, context 1501, respectively), and one sherd of possible Iron Age flint tempered ware (Trench 6, context 600) were recovered from the alluvium. A single sherd of post medieval glazed pottery was found in the fill of a drainage ditch (Trench 2, context 204).

6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 Reliability of field investigation

6.1.1 The coverage of the proposed development area was comprehensive with a representative sample across each site. The trial trenches at Site 2 targeted specific features seen on aerial photographs which were revealed to have no archaeological significance.

6.1.2 The development area has not suffered from recent agricultural activity Site 1 having been under pasture and used as a school playing field and Site 2 having been under pasture. Remains of a pre-enclosure field system, comprising ridge and furrow and headlands, were observed on the ground and were confirmed in one of the trenches as plough furrows. However the absence of finds in the topsoil and subsoils suggests that this activity did not disturb archaeology of any significance. The Roman and Romano-British / Iron Age pottery and the flint appears to have been re-deposited in alluvium.

6.2 Overall interpretation

6.2.1 *Site 1 Area A* Geophysical survey of Hreod Parkway School has demonstrated a great deal of disturbance across the site, which is likely to be by relatively modern deposits of iron and brick-type material. However, archaeological features comprising ditch-like anomalies may survive toward the southern end of the field.

6.2.2 *Site 1 Area B* The development area was subject to extensive trial trench coverage which also targeted topographical anomalies. But apart from evidence of extensive medieval field systems, nothing of archaeological significance was revealed.

6.2.3 *Site 2* Nothing of archaeological significance was revealed.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Ctxt No</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i> Finds</i>	<i>No./ wt</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	100	Layer	Topsoil	None		
1	101	Layer	Subsoil	None		
1	102	Layer	Natural	None		
1	104	Layer	Foundation layer	None		
2	200	Layer	Topsoil	None		
2	201	Layer	Natural	None		
2	202	Cut	Cut for Land Drain	None		Modern
2	203	Fill	Brick Land Drain	None		Modern
2	204	Cut	Ditch	None		Modern
2	205	Fill	Ditch Fill	Pottery	1	Modern
3	300	Layer	Topsoil	None		
3	301	Layer	Natural	None		
3	302	Layer	Ditch	None		Modern
3	303	Fill	Ditch Fill	None		Modern
4	400	Layer	Topsoil	None		Modern
4	401	Layer	Natural	None		Modern
5	500	Layer	Topsoil	None		
5	501	Layer	Subsoil	None		
5	502	Layer	Natural	None		
6	600	Layer	Topsoil	None		
6	601	Layer	Natural	None		
7	700	Layer	Topsoil	None		
7	701	Fill	Tree-throw fill	None		
7	702	Cut	Tree-throw	None		
7	703	Layer	Natural	None		
7	704	Layer	Alluvium	None		
7	705	Cut + Fill	Land Drain	None		
8	800	Layer	Topsoil	None		
8	801	Layer	Alluvium	Pottery Flint	1 1	
9	900	Layer	Topsoil	None		

9	901	Layer	Alluvium	None		
9	902	Cut + Fill	Land Drain	None		
9	903	Layer	Natural	None		
10	1000	Layer	Topsoil	None		
10	1001	Layer	Natural	None		
11	1100	Layer	Topsoil	None		
11	1101	Layer	Subsoil	None		
11	1102	Layer	Natural	None		
11	1103	Cut + Fill	Land Drain	None		
11	1104	Cut	Hedge Line	None		
11	1105	Fill	Fill of Hedge Line	None		
12	1200	Layer	Topsoil	None		
12	1201	Layer	Subsoil	None		
12	1202	Layer	Natural	None		
13	1300	Layer	Topsoil	None		
13	1301	Layer	Subsoil	None		
13	1302	Layer	Natural	None		
14	1400	Layer	Topsoil	None		
14	1401	Layer	Alluvial	Flint		
15	1500	Layer	Topsoil	None		
15	1501	Layer	Alluvium	None		
15	1502	Layer	Natural	None		
16	1600	Layer	Topsoil	None		
16	1601	Layer	Subsoil	None		
16	1602	Layer	Natural	None		
17	1700	Layer	Topsoil	None		
17	1701	Layer	Subsoil	None		
18	1800	Layer	Topsoil	None		
18	1801	Layer	Subsoil	None		
18	1802	Layer	Natural	None		
19	1900	Layer	Topsoil	None		
19	1901	Layer	Subsoil	None		
19	1902	Layer	Natural	None		
19	1903	Cut + Fill	A shallow undulation in natural filled by subsoil	None		

20	2000	Layer	Topsoil	None		
20	2001	Layer	Alluvium	None		
21	2100	Layer	Topsoil	None		
21	2101	Layer	Subsoil	None		
21	2102	Layer	Natural	None		
21	2103	Layer	Natural	None		
21	2104	Fill	Fill of plough furrow	None		Medieval
21	2105	Cut	Plough furrow	None		Medieval
21	2106	Fill	Fill of plough furrow	None		Medieval
22	2200	Layer	Topsoil	None		
22	2201	Layer	Natural	None		
23	2301	Layer	Subsoil	None		
23	2302	Layer	Natural	None		
24	2400	Layer	Topsoil	None		
24	2401	Layer	Subsoil	None		
24	2402	Layer	Natural	None		
25	2500	Layer	Topsoil	None		
25	2501	Layer	Subsoil	None		
25	2502	Layer	Natural	None		
26	2600	Layer	Topsoil	None		
26	2601	Layer	Subsoil	None		
26	2602	Layer	Alluvial	None		

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

IFA, 1999 *Standard and Guidance for archaeological evaluations*

OAU, 1992 *Fieldwork Manual* (1st edition, ed. D Wilkinson)

English Heritage, 1999 *Groundwell Ridge, Roman Villa, Blunsdon St. Andrew, Swindon, Wiltshire*, Report on Geophysical Survey

WCC, 2003 *Archaeological Brief for a Field Evaluation*, Wiltshire County Council

Wilkinson, D (ed.) 1992 *Field Manual*, Oxford Archaeological Unit

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: North Swindon Schools PFI

Site code: SWINP03

Grid reference: SU 1285 8670 & SU 1291 8867

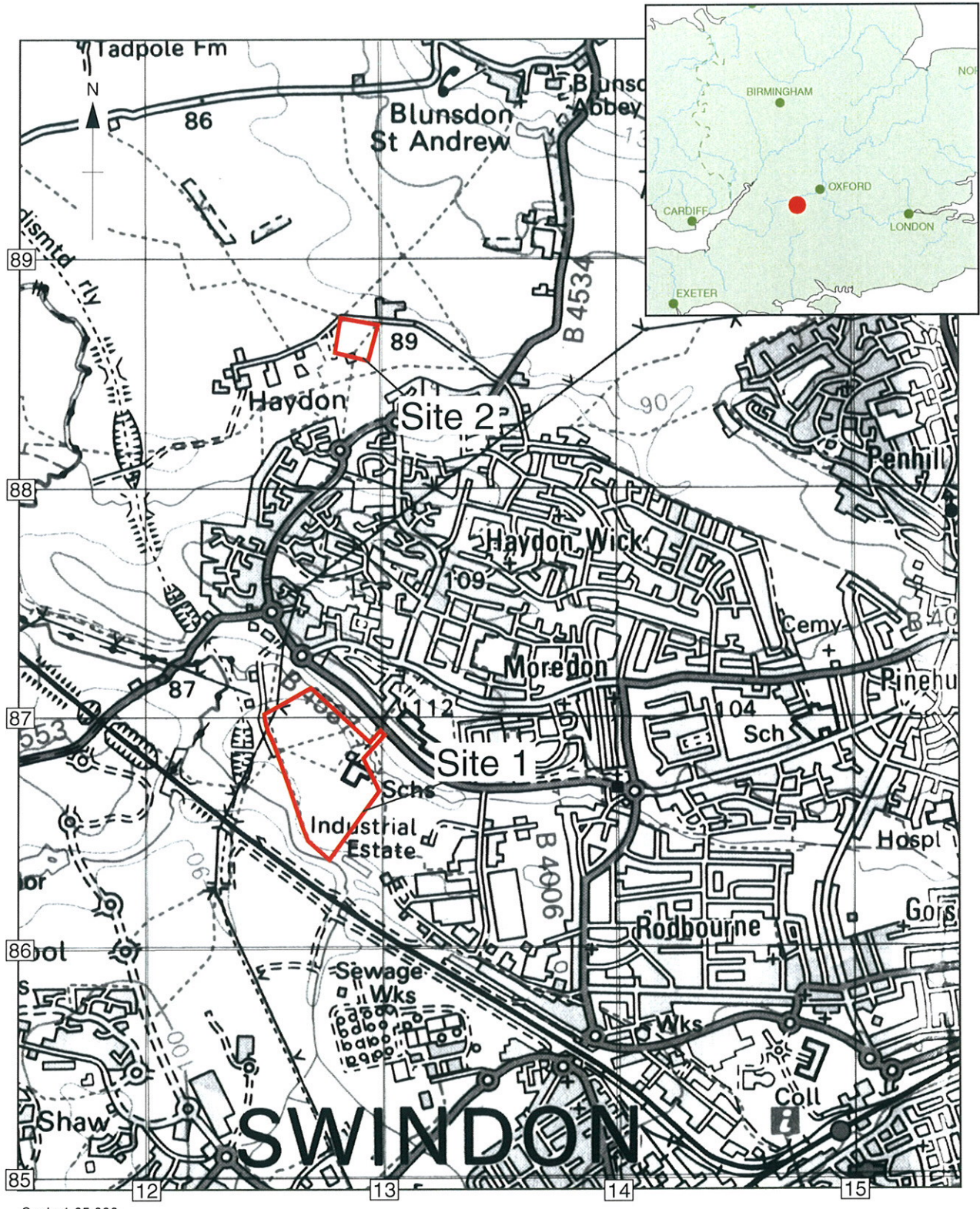
Type of evaluation: Trial Trenching and Geophysical Survey (Fluxgate Gradiometer)

Date and duration of project: April 2003

Area of site: Site 1 14.6ha; Site2 2ha

Summary of results: Area of medieval agricultural landuse. Nothing of archaeological significance.
Three sherds IA/Romano-British pottery 2 worked flints.

Location of archive: Swindon



Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location

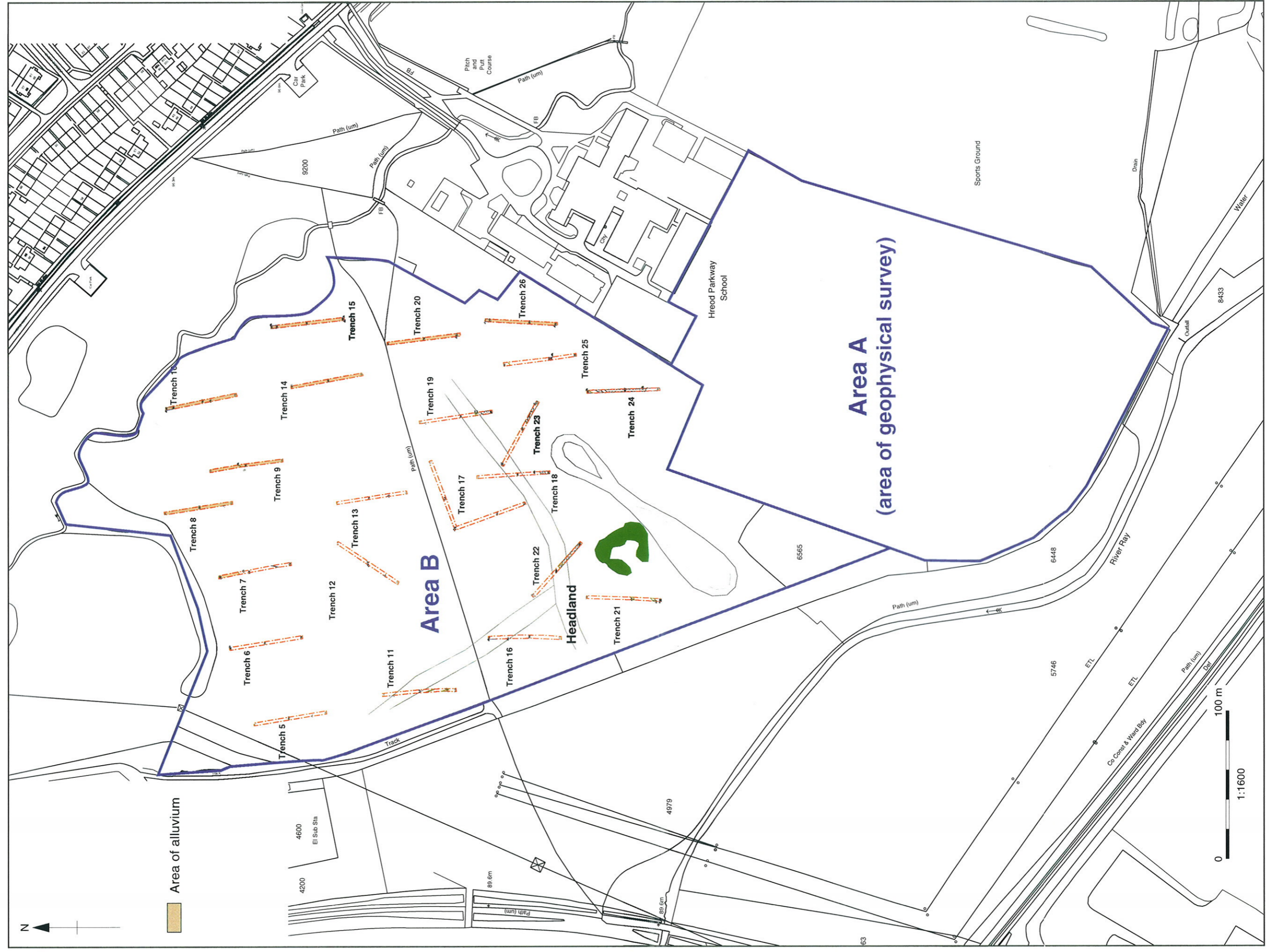


Figure 2: Hreod Parkway School - Site 1, areas A and B

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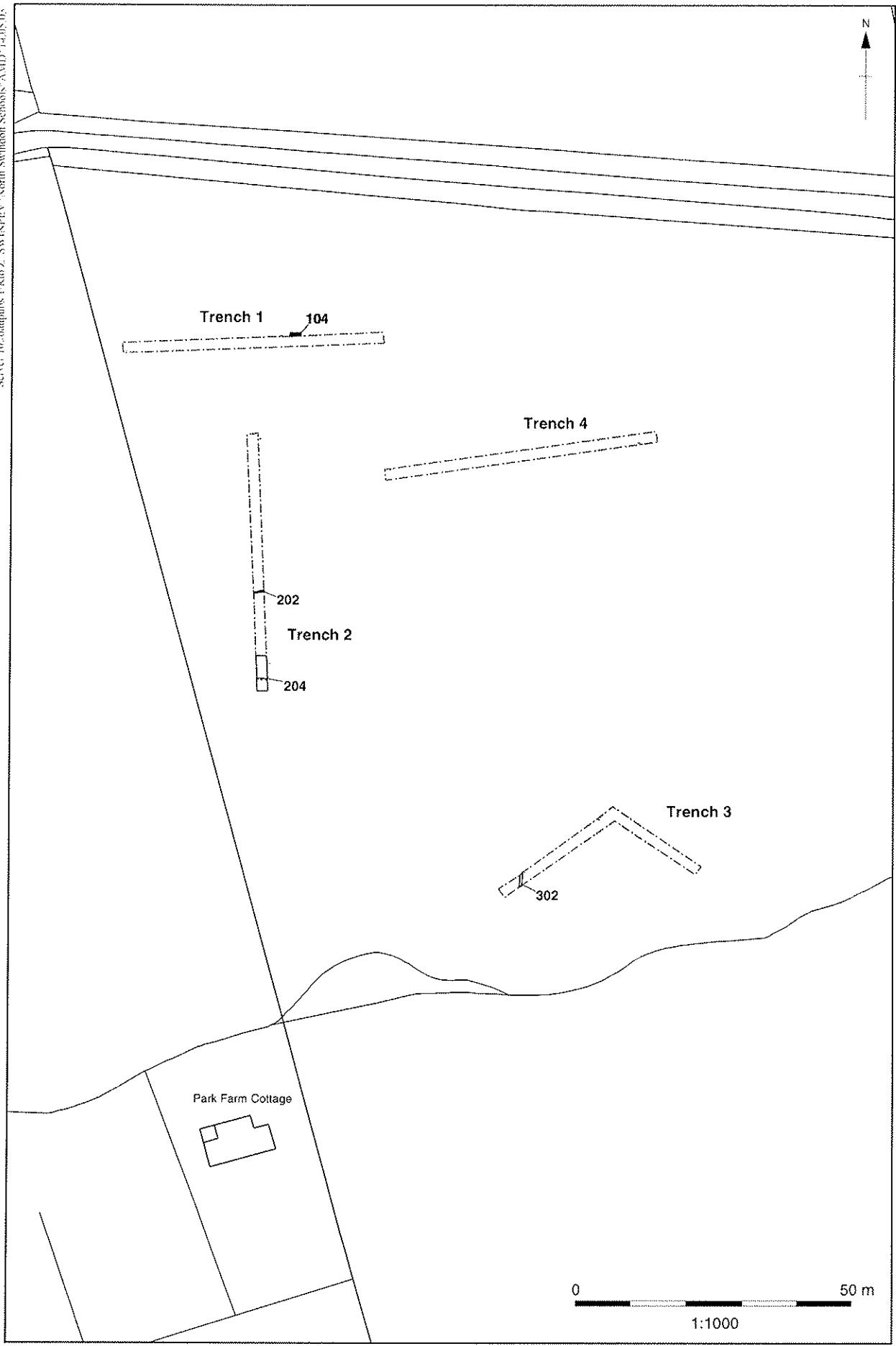


Figure 3: Site 2, Evaluation trench plan



Figure 4: Site 1, Evaluation trench plan.

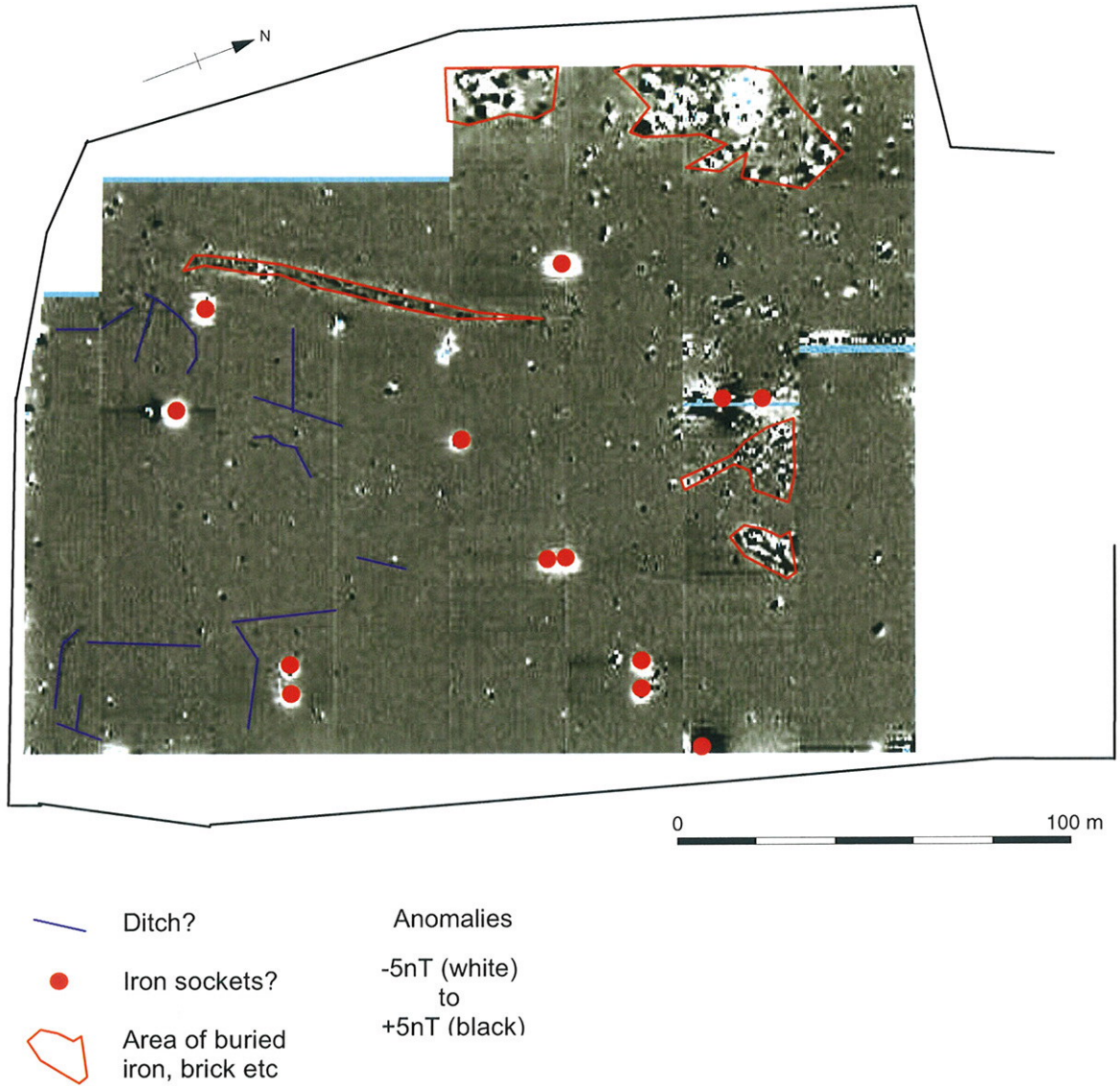
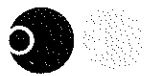


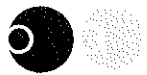
Figure 5: Site 1 - Area A, Geophysical survey



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