

Lawson-Price

Land Off Buckland Lane, Maidstone, Kent
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

TQ7487 5656

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

September 1997

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Prepared by: Greg Pugh

Date: 26th Sept

Checked by: Jon Hiller

Date: 26th Sept

Approved by: Mark Roberts

Date: 29th Sept

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September 1997

Buckland Lane, Maidstone

SUMMARY

In September 1997 the Oxford Archaeological Unit carried out a field evaluation at the old sports ground off Buckland Lane, Maidstone, on behalf of Lawson-Price for Cadbury Schweppes. The evaluation revealed no archaeological features and no evidence for the presence of the Roman Villa which was documented nearby at Buckland Farm during the 19th century. The Evaluation did confirm that the site had been landscaped. The area to the west was heavily truncated and the excavated natural soils had been redeposited to the north east of the site. This part of the site was bounded the old pavilion to the south and west and the redeposited material was up to 3 m deep. A possible turf line which pre-dates the backfill deposits was encountered to the south of this building.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

In September 1997 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) carried out a pre-planning determination field evaluation at the land off Buckland Lane on behalf of Lawson Price for Cadbury Schweppes in respect of a planning application for possible residential development. A brief was prepared by the County Archaeologist as the area is considered to be of considerable archaeological potential. A trench plan was produced by the OAU and agreed by the County Archaeologist. The development site is situated at the junction of London Road and Buckland Lane in Maidstone and is 1 hectare in area (Fig. 1).

1.2 Geology and topography

The site lies on Hythe Beds (sandy limestone) at 29.50 m above OD. The site is situated on a terrace cut into the side of a hill that slopes down from the north-east and is bounded by London Road (Watling Street) to the west. Buckland Lane runs to the north and Little Buckland Avenue to the east a bowling green and the related pavilion lie in the south of the site.. The site is at present out of use but until recently was used as a public sports and recreation field. This was also the original use for the field when it was created out of the hill side in the 1930's and was known as *Sharps Sports Ground*. The landscaping of this sports ground involved the excavation of the higher slopes to the west and the subsequent redeposition of the excavated material to the north-east area of the site. A disused, brick pavilion lies in the north-east corner of the site at the original ground surface. The pavilion is bounded to the south and west by a retaining wall that supports the terrace. During the late 18th century and 19th century and before the landscaping the site was used as an orchard (Lawson-Price 1997).

1.3 Archaeological background

The archaeological background to the evaluation has been the subject of a separate desktop study (Lawson-Price 1997), the results of which are summarised below.

There are some known sites with archaeological finds adjacent to the development site:

- (i) Iron Age sites have been recorded along the London Road including the quarry site of Tassell's Pit (SMR ref TQ 75 NW 17). The site produced cremations and their vessels. Pottery was also discovered during construction work in the 19th century at the junction of Buckland Hill and London Road.
- (ii) An extensive Roman villa was located north-east of the development site (TQ 75 NW 3). The foundations were discovered in the orchard at little Buckland Farm during the 1830's. The discovery was recorded by the Rev. Beale Poste. Roman pottery and tiles were recorded when Sharp's Sports Ground was being laid out in

1930 though this was not recorded in the Victoria County History published in 1932 (VCH 1932 Vol 3). The villa is shown on early 20th-century editions of the Ordnance Survey.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

The evaluation was carried out to establish the presence or absence of archaeological deposits, their extent, their depth below the ground surface and their date, character and quality. The nature, depth and extent of the landscaping carried out to create the terrace also needed to be confirmed and assessed in accordance with the brief.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork

The evaluation consisted of 6 trenches measuring 30 m long and 2 m wide (Fig 2). The overburden was removed by a mechanical 360^o excavator under close archaeological supervision.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

The trenches were cleaned by hand and any features were hand excavated. Deeper excavation through the redeposited material was carried out at the ends of trenches 1 and 2. The unstable nature of the sides of these trenches meant that for Health and Safety reasons recording was carried out from ground surface. In some trenches deeper excavation was carried out to clarify the level of the undisturbed natural. All archaeological features were planned and where excavated their sections drawn at scale of 1:20. Trench soil profiles were drawn at a scale of 1:20 and 1:50. All features and 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).

3.3 Finds

The finds encountered were of Victorian or later date and a sample was collected.

3.4 Environmental data

No environmental samples were taken.

4 RESULTS: GENERAL

4.1 Soils and ground conditions

Beneath the topsoil the site was covered by sand and limestone and occasional pockets of reddish brown silt. Ground conditions were dry.

4.2 Distribution of Archaeological Deposits

The deposits encountered during the evaluation were mostly redeposited natural that had been removed from the west of the site and deposited in the north-east corner. The exception being in trench 2.

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Description of deposits

See Fig. 3 for sections from east-west trenches 5 and 2 depicting the deposits across the site.

5.1.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was located 3 m to the south-west of the retaining wall in front of the pavilion and was orientated north-west - south-east. The trench contained no archaeological features and deeper excavations, or sondages, at both ends of the trench (1.7 m deep at the north-west end and 3.1 m deep at the south-east end) clearly showed several layers of clean redeposited sand and limestone (04-13) tipping down towards the retaining wall with similar deposits levelling off toward the present ground level. In the sondage at the south-east end a 0.25 m-thick reddish brown clayey silt (13) was encountered at 26.5 m OD and overlay the undisturbed natural.

5.1.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was located c. 15 m to the south-east of the south stretch of the retaining wall by the pavilion and was aligned north-east-south-west. This trench also contained no archaeological features but sondages at the north-east end and the south-west part of the trench showed clean redeposited natural soils (21, 22 and 26), a single layer of mid brown silt containing frogged brick and flecks of charcoal (23), and a further layer of redeposited natural tipping toward the retaining wall. The original slope of the hillside was also visible at the south-west end falling from 28.63 m OD to 27.92m OD. A 0.2 m-thick layer of dark brown clay silt (28) was encountered at 28 m OD in the north-east sondage below the redeposited natural and was probably the original turf line but was undated. A deposit of reddish brown silt ran south across the trench below the backfill deposits and the undated turf line.

5.1.3 Trench 3

Trench 3 was located in the south-east corner of the site and was aligned north-west-south-east. The trench contained no archaeological features. The natural (32-36) was directly overlain by a shallow layer of backfill (31) which was under the topsoil (30) sloping gently down to the north-west toward the area of the pavilion. A 1.7 m deep sondage was dug at the south-east end of the trench to confirm that the lower deposits were undisturbed natural.

5.1.4 Trenches 4, 5 and 6

Trenches 4, 5 and 6 were located in the south and west area of the site where the hillside had been cut away. They were all aligned north-east -south-west. No archaeology was present in these trenches. A modern shallow linear feature (63) was cut into the natural and lay under the topsoil and extended north-south across the middle of trench 6 and contained part of a metal railway sleeper and related bolts. The natural sand and limestone had been truncated in all the trenches and a large patch of clean reddish brown silt extended roughly east-west across trenches 4 and 5 (41, 51).

5.2 Finds

5.2.1 Post-medieval pottery

All the pottery recovered was Victorian or later in date.

6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 Reliability of field investigation

The sample size (3%) was sufficient to determine the extent and type of deposits on the site. The trenches were large enough to determine the nature and character of the deposits. Natural was reached in all the trenches.

6.2 Overall interpretation

6.2.1 *Summary of Results*

No archaeological features were encountered during the evaluation other than 19th-century deposits nor were any archaeological artefacts (other than modern finds) recovered. The large scale removal of material from the west side of the site and its redeposition to the north-east area (which at present surrounds the pavilion) to create a level playing surface was confirmed. From the absence of residual material in the evaluation it would appear that the presence of Roman activity on the site would seem unlikely. The reports of Roman pottery and tile from the site in the 1930's do not seem to indicate any specific deposits on the site but may indicate Roman activity nearby; a Villa is documented.

6.2.2 *Significance*

The evaluation shows that the reported site of the Roman Villa did not extend as far west as the development site and that the terrace of the sports ground was created by landscaping the hillside.

Bibliography and references

- Wilkinson, D (ed) 1992 *Oxford Archaeological Unit Field Manual*, (First edition, August 1992)
- Lawson-Price 1997 *Archaeological Desk Based Assessment of Land at London Road, Maidstone, Kent*
- VCH 1932 *Victoria County History Volume 3*

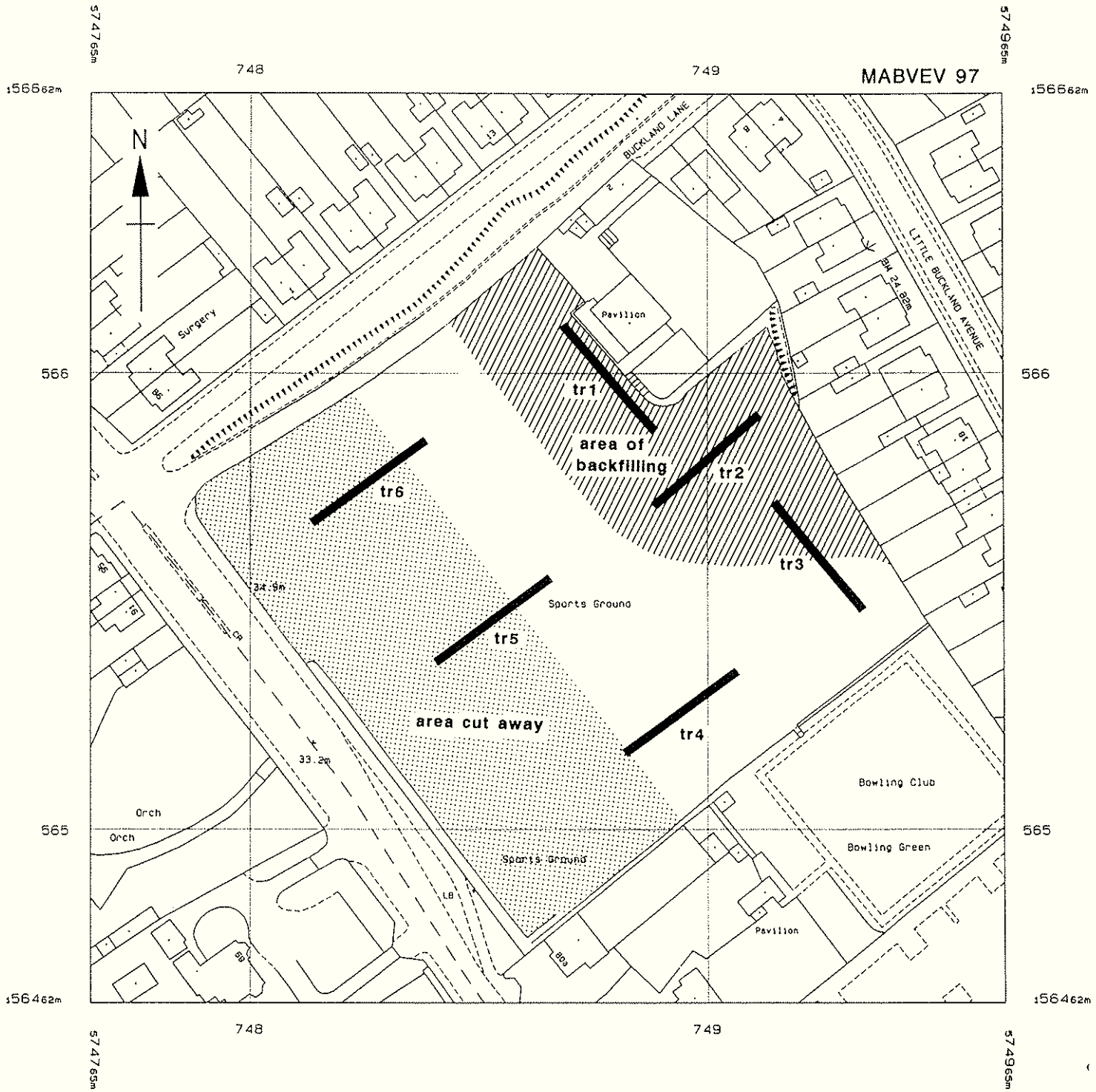
Appendices

Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory

Trench	Ctx	Type	width (m)	thick. (m)	Comment	Finds	No.	Date
01								
	01	layer		0.1	modern make-up	pot glass		mod
	02	layer		0.15	backfill			
	03	layer		0.22	backfill			
	04	layer		0.4	backfill redeposited natural			
	05	layer		0.18	backfill redeposited natural			
	06	layer		0.22	redeposited natural			
	07	layer		0.18	redeposited natural			
	08	layer		0.35	redeposited natural			
	09	layer		0.18	redeposited natural			
	10	layer		0.18	redeposited natural			
	11	layer		0.3	redeposited natural			
	12	layer		0.22	redeposited natural			
	13	layer		0.1+	redeposited natural			
	14	layer		0.18	turfed topsoil			

02								
	20	layer		0.3	turfed topsoil			
	21	layer		0.55	redeposited natural			
	22	layer		0.15	redeposited natural			
	23	layer		0.5	backfill deposit with charcoal	CBM		mod
	24	layer		0.1	backfill			
	25	layer			Natural sand and limestone			
	26	layer		0.6	redeposited natural			
	27	layer		0.5	redeposited natural			
	28	layer		0.2	dark brown clay			
	29	layer		0.8	natural?			
03								
	30	layer		0.12	turfed topsoil			
	31	layer		0.15	backfill			
	32	layer			natural sand			
	33	layer			natural limestone			
	34-36	layer			natural sand			
04								
	40	layer		0.2	topsoil			
	41	layer			natural sandy silt			
	42	layer			natural sand and limestone			
05								
	50	layer		0.27	topsoil			
	51	layer			natural sandy silt			
	52	layer			natural sand and limestone			
06								
	61	layer		0.23	topsoil			
	62	layer			natural limestone			
	63	cut	1.3	0.3	irregular linear			
	64	fill		0.3	fill of 63	metal		mod

Illustrations



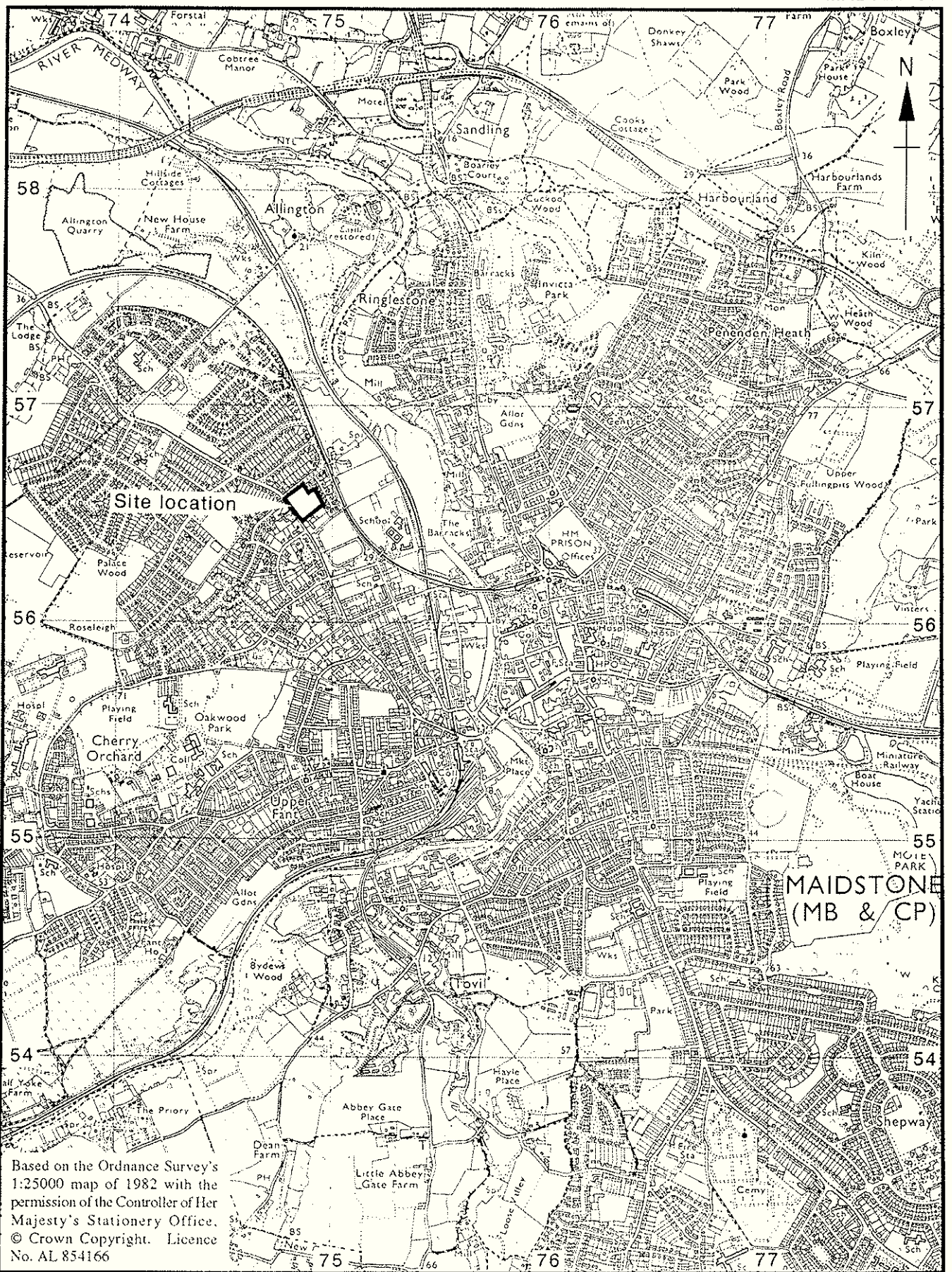
Produced 19 Sep 1997 from Ordnance Survey digital data and incorporating surveyed revision available at this date. © Crown Copyright 1997.

Trench location

scale 1:1250

Based on the Ordnance Survey's 1:1250 map of 1997 with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright. Licence No. AL 854166

Figure 1



scale 1:25000

Site location

Figure 2

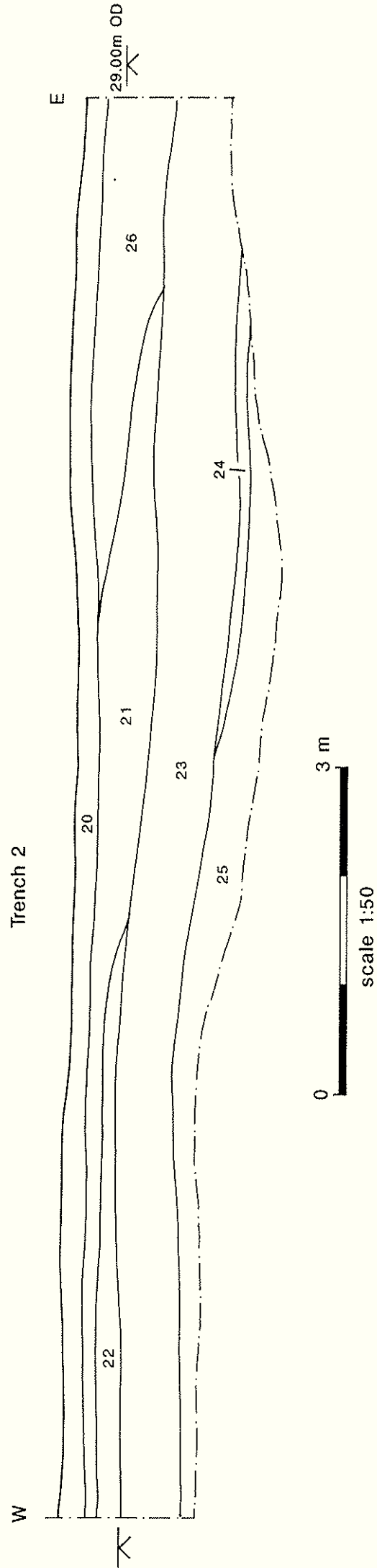
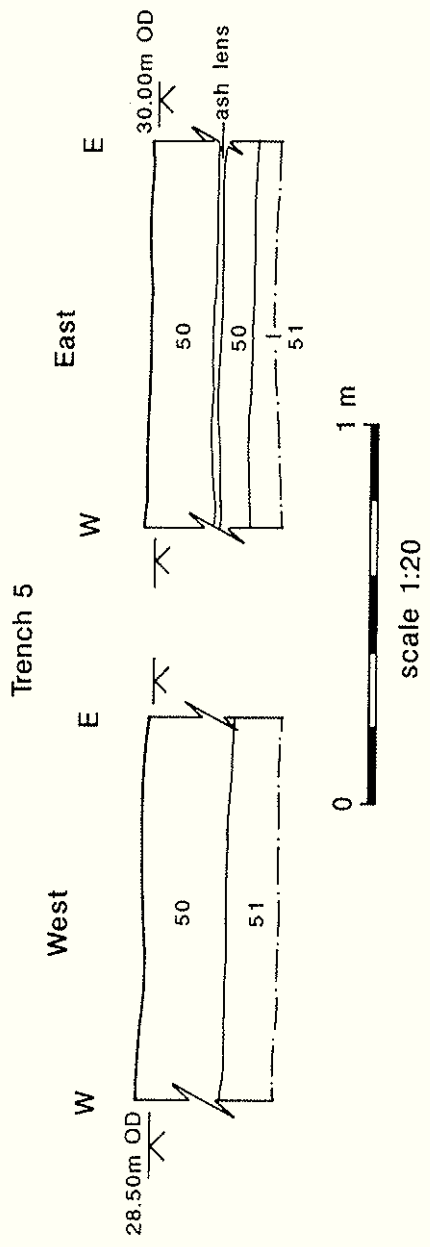


Figure 3