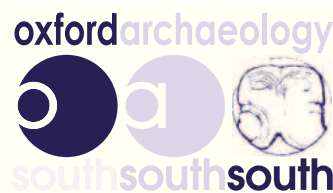


Townlands  
Community Hospital  
York Road  
Henley-on-Thames  
Oxfordshire



**Archaeological  
Evaluation Report**



October 2012

**Client: Vinci Construction**  
on behalf of Amber Construction  
and Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust

Issue No: 1  
Invoice Code: HETHSEV  
NGR: SU 7575 8279





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**Townlands Community Hospital,  
York Road, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire**

*Archaeological Evaluation Report*

*Written by Steve Leech*

*and illustrated by Markus Dylewski*

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## **Summary**

*Between the 8th and 10th of October 2012 Oxford Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation at the Townlands Hospital site, Henley on Thames, Oxfordshire. The evaluation consisted of three 30m trenches located within the gardens and car park of the hospital. Excavation of the trenches revealed widespread truncation throughout the site. Two of the trenches contained no significant archaeology with the third containing narrow cultivation strips overlying two post-medieval pits, all probably associated with the Victorian workhouse which previously occupied the site.*





## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 A planning application has been submitted to South Oxfordshire District Council for the construction of a Health and Social Well-being campus comprising the conversion and demolition of the existing Townlands Community Hospital buildings and redevelopment of the site. Due to the potential presence of archaeological features an archaeological field evaluation was requested in line with the National Planning Policy Committee (NPPF 2012).
- 1.1.2 The Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS), Richard Oram, provided a design brief establishing the scope of work required (OCAS 2012).
- 1.1.3 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Vinci Construction on behalf of Amber Construction and Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust to undertake the requested archaeological investigation prior to the development of the site, and produced a Written Scheme of investigation (WSI) showing how it meet the requirements laid down within the design brief (OA 2012a).

### 1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is located within the centre of Henley itself, on the northern side of West Street and south of Northfield Road (centred at NGR: SU 7575 8279) (Fig. 1). The local topography slopes down towards the south-east running from approximately 59m OD down to 52m OD across the site.
- 1.2.2 The area of proposed development formed part of the hospital grounds and is currently occupied by existing hospital buildings, open land and access roads. The hospital itself is completely bounded by residential developments.
- 1.2.3 The underlying geology is shown as alluvium over Upper Chalk (Geological Survey of Great Britain sheet no. 254). A ridge of plateau gravel which intruded upon the site is located immediately to the west.

### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background has been highlighted in a desk based assessment by Oxford Archaeology (OA 2012b) and is summarised below.
- 1.3.2 The proposed development area is located in an area of archaeological potential located close to, but outside, the area of the planned medieval town. An archaeological excavation 200m east of the proposal area recorded the chalk foundations of a substantial rectangular Roman building (PRN 16736) along with 1st century Roman pottery. Evidence of late Saxon and medieval deposits were also recorded. A Roman coin has been found 180m north of the site. The Roman settlement of the area is not well understood and there is potential for further evidence surviving on the site.
- 1.3.3 In 1790 a workhouse was constructed on the site, and in 1835 the Henley Poor Law was formed and took over the running of the workhouse and enlarged the site adding various buildings. In 1948 the site became Townlands Hospital.



## **1.4 Acknowledgements**

- 1.4.1 The evaluation was undertaken by Steve Leech, Thomas Black and Jane Smallridge of Oxford Archaeology on behalf of Vinci Construction. We are also grateful to Richard Oram of Oxfordshire County Council for enabling the archaeological work to take place.



## 2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The aims and objectives of the evaluation were to:

- determine, as far as reasonably practicable, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains;
- establish the eco-factual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features encountered;
- assess the degree of existing impacts to sub-surface horizons and to document the extent of archaeological survival of buried deposits.

2.1.2 The specific aims and objectives of the evaluation were to:

- (i) To provide sufficient information to allow decisions to be made on any further appropriate action during the development.
- (ii) To define any research priorities that may be relevant should further investigation be required.

### 2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The brief required the excavation of three evaluation trenches located within the grounds of Townlands Hospital (Fig. 2). The location of the trenches was constrained by the presence of standing buildings, trees and live services and were selected to provide the maximum coverage of potentially undisturbed areas.

2.2.2 The evaluation comprised the excavation and recording of three trenches, each measuring 30m in length. All the trenches measured approximately 1.5m in width.

2.2.3 The trenches were set out using a GPS system according to Ordnance Survey coordinates prior to their excavation. The topsoil and any modern overburden was removed by a mechanical excavator (JCB) fitted with a toothless grading bucket. The overburden was removed in 0.1m spits under archaeological supervision until either the top of the first significant archaeological horizon or undisturbed natural was encountered.

2.2.4 All excavated material was examined for archaeological material.

2.2.5 Where archaeological features could be identified, these were excavated and recorded sufficiently to characterise and date them wherever possible. In trenches devoid of archaeological features samples of the prevailing stratigraphy were recorded.

2.2.6 All features and deposits were issued with unique context numbers, and context recording was in accordance with established OA practices. Black-and-white negative photographs and a digital photographic record were taken of all interventions, general settings and archaeological sections.

2.2.7 A site plan showing the location of any excavations and any recorded sections was maintained. Trench plans were normally recorded at a scale of 1:50 and any section drawings of features and sample sections of trenches were drawn at a scale of 1:20.



## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 The following section summarises the results of the evaluation. The location of the trenches is shown in Fig. 2, and the details of Trench 2 in Fig. 3. Detailed archaeological descriptions are presented in the context inventory (Appendix A), and within the descriptive text where they are integral to the interpretation of the context in question.

### 3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 All the trenches were excavated down to the underlying natural. The soil conditions were dry with the context divisions clearly defined.

3.2.2 All the trenches were scanned for services using a Cable Avoidance Tool, and some of the trenches had to be shortened due to the location of trees.

### 3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 Archaeologically significant deposits were only encountered within Trench 2. The other two trenches were devoid of any significant archaeological remains.

### 3.4 Trench 1

3.4.1 Trench 1 was orientated north–south, and measured 26m in length. The trench was shortened at the Southern end due to the location of trees (Plate 1).

3.4.2 The underlying natural, a orange-brown sandy clay with gravel inclusions (102), was encountered at a depth of 0.66m below ground level.

3.4.3 Overlying the natural was a 0.4m deep layer of dark orange-brown clayey silt (101) containing numerous fragments of stone, brick and tile together with much chalk and charcoal flecking. This had been covered with a 0.26m deep layer of dark grey-brown sandy silt (100), the present day topsoil and turf.

3.4.4 A modern disturbance was observed cut into the surface of the natural within the centre of the trench, but no archaeology was encountered.

### 3.5 Trench 2

3.5.1 Trench 2 was orientated north-east/south-west, and measured 24m in length. The trench was shortened at the south-western end due to the location of trees (Plate 2).

3.5.2 A continuation of the underlying sandy clay natural (210) was exposed throughout the length of the trench at 0.8m below the current ground level (Fig. 3, Section 200).

3.5.3 Two rectangular steep sided pits (206) and (209) were cut into this deposit (Fig. 3, Plan 200 and Section 200). Pit 206 measured 2.6m north-south with its eastern and western sides extending beyond the edge of the trench. This feature was excavated to a depth of 1.3m below ground level but due to health and safety considerations was not bottomed. It was filled by a mid grey-brown silty sand (205) containing frequent charcoal, chalk and gravel inclusions and producing fragments of clay pipe, pottery, brick and tile which dated to the 18th and 19th centuries.

3.5.4 Pit 209 was observed within the north-west corner of the trench with its northern, western and part of its southern extent continuing beyond the trench. This feature



displayed similar steeply sloping sides to 206 and was also excavated to a depth of 1.3m below ground level, but again was not bottomed due to health and safety considerations. The northern half of the pit was filled by a tipline of a mid orange-brown sandy clay with frequent charcoal, chalk and gravel inclusions (208). This deposit produced fragments of clay pipe and pottery dating to the 18th and 19th centuries together with similarly dated fragments of brick and tile and a single fragment of possible 17th century peg roof tile. The remainder of the pit was filled by a mid grey-brown silty sand which also displayed frequent charcoal, chalk and gravel inclusions (207). No dating evidence was recovered from this context.

- 3.5.5 Overlying the pit fills and the natural within the northern half of the trench was a 0.46m thick layer of a grey-brown sandy silt (204). This layer contained numerous fragments of chalk, brick and tile together with charcoal flecking. The upper surface of this deposit exhibited a number of parallel features running east to west across the trench (203). These features consisted of a series of ridges and gullies measuring 0.2m in depth at approximately 0.7m centres. These may indicate cultivation.
- 3.5.6 Overlying 203/204 at the northern end of the trench, and the natural at the southern end, was 0.46m deep layer of orangery grey-brown sandy silt (202). This contained frequent fragments of chalk, brick and tile together with extensive charcoal flecking.
- 3.5.7 The northern 7m extent of 202 was sealed by a tarmac surface (200) whilst the remainder was covered by a 0.15m deep layer of dark grey-brown sandy silt (201), the present day topsoil and turf.

### **3.6 Trench 3**

- 3.6.1 Trench 3 was orientated north–south, and was excavated to a length of 28m. Because of the location of standing trees it was necessary to shorten the trench at the northern end (Plate 3).
- 3.6.2 The stratigraphy recorded was similar to that within Trench 1, with the prevailing natural (302) encountered at a depth of 0.76m below the current ground level. Overlying the natural was 0.5m deep layer of clayey silt (301), identical with layer 101. This was covered by a 0.26m deep layer of topsoil and turf (300), similar to layer 100.
- 3.6.3 No archaeologically significant features or deposits were observed within the trench.

### **3.7 Finds summary**

- 3.7.1 Finds were recorded from the fills of two pits in trench 2 (contexts 205 and 208). Seven sherds of pottery dating from the late 18th to early 20th century, four clay pipe stems dating from the late 18th to 19th century, and nine fragments of ceramic building material of a post-medieval date.
- 3.7.2 Fragments of modern (19th/20th century) brick and tile were observed within layers 101, 201 and 301. The presence of this material was recorded but the material was not retained.
- 3.7.3 Due to the relatively modern date of the deposits encountered, it was felt that no additional information would be obtained by environmental sampling.



## 4 DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 The underlying natural was exposed within all the trenches precluding the presence of buried archaeological horizons. This, together with the similarity of the observed stratigraphy within all three trenches and combined with the spacial distribution of the trenches suggest that the observations may be applied throughout the site.

### 4.2 Evaluation objectives and results

4.2.1 The trenches were positioned around the hospital grounds to clarify the presence or absence of archaeological deposits across the site. This was achieved by the presence of post-medieval features within Trench 2, together with the made ground layer (101, 202 and 301) also present in all the trenches containing post-medieval material, suggests a degree of landscaping / terracing of the hillside dating to this period.

4.2.2 No earlier archaeological deposits were encountered in any of the trenches.

### 4.3 Interpretation

4.3.1 The sandy clay with gravel inclusions (102, 210 and 302) represents the underlying natural geology. The features 206 and 209, together with their respective fills (205, 207 and 208) are both examples of post-medieval rubbish pits. The dating evidence recovered from their fills suggest the pits were in use within the period 1790 to 1900, which is broadly contemporary with the use of the Henley Union Workhouse and which may indicate an association.

4.3.2 Layer 204 is indicative of cultivated soil. The ridges and gullies, 203, visible in its surface are suggestive of potato or asparagus planting. Its location suggests the use of the open areas around the workhouse for agriculture or horticulture (Plate 4). The cultivation of a garden and the rearing of livestock was frequently a feature of workhouse operation. There were a number reasons for this, mostly aimed at reducing the cost of providing poor relief. First, a garden could provide the workhouse with a cheap and ready source of food. Any surplus or unwanted produce could be sold off and provide funds for the running of the house. Another benefit of a garden was that it offered a convenient and regular form of employment the inmates of the workhouse. Finally, training pauper children in agricultural or horticultural work could equip them with skills that would make them employable in their later life, rather than being a burden on the parish (Alasia 2007).

4.3.3 The survival of layer 204 within Trench 2 is probably due to the natural slope of the ground tipping down to the south-west at this point, causing this area to be below the impact level of later phases of construction/activity within the site.

4.3.4 The absence of any similar layers within the rest of the site together with presence of modern deposits directly overlying the natural within Trenches 1 and 3 suggest that the majority of the area of the hospital grounds has been truncated or reduced in level, probably during the construction of later phases of the current hospital buildings. The similarity of the composition of layers 101, 202 and 301 suggest that they are all part of the same phase of deposition, probably as a levelling layer of made ground laid down following this truncation and prior to final landscaping (layers 100, 200, 201 and 300).



#### **4.4 Significance**

- 4.4.1 The results of this evaluation indicate an absence of any archaeological deposits dating earlier than the late post-medieval. It is unclear if this is due to the truncation of area or to lack of activity. The lack of truncated earlier features within the natural, or of residual finds within layer 204 or the pit fills may suggest that the latter is the case.
- 4.4.2 No evidence pertaining to the earlier history of Henley-on-Thames, particularly the Romano-British, Saxon and medieval periods, was encountered during the course of the evaluation. The results from the evaluation suggest that there is only limited archaeological potential surviving within the site.



## APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
<b>General description</b>					<b>Orientation</b>	N-S
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and made ground overlying a natural of gravels and clay.					<b>Avg. depth (m)</b>	0.55
					<b>Width (m)</b>	1.5
					<b>Length (m)</b>	26
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
100	Layer	-	0.26	Topsoil	-	-
101	Layer	-	0.4	Made ground	Brick, tile	20th Century
102	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 2						
<b>General description</b>					<b>Orientation</b>	NE-SW
Trench containing two pits and cultivation strips. Consists of topsoil and made ground overlying a natural of gravels and clay.					<b>Avg. depth (m)</b>	0.75
					<b>Width (m)</b>	1.5
					<b>Length (m)</b>	24
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
200	Layer	-	0.1	Tarmac	-	20th Century
201	Layer	-	0.15	Topsoil / turf	-	20th Century
202	Layer	17	0.45	Made ground	Brick, tile	20th Century
203	Cut	17	0.45	Cultivation gullies and ridges	-	-
204	Layer	24	0.46	Cultivated soil	Brick, tile	19th Century
205	Fill	2.74	0.48	Pit fill	Clay pipe, pottery, brick, tile	18th/19th centuries
206	Cut	2.74	0.48	Pit	-	18th/19th centuries
207	Fill	1.8	0.56	Pit fill	-	18th/19th centuries
208	Fill	1.52	0.42	Pit fill	Clay pipe, pottery, brick, tile	18th/19th centuries
209	Cut	2.74	0.56	Pit	-	18th/19th centuries
210	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-





<b>Trench 3</b>						
<b>General description</b>				<b>Orientation</b>	N-S	
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and made ground overlying a natural of gravels and clay.				<b>Avg. depth (m)</b>	0.8	
				<b>Width (m)</b>	1.5	
				<b>Length (m)</b>	28	
<b>Contexts</b>						
<b>context no</b>	<b>type</b>	<b>Width (m)</b>	<b>Depth (m)</b>	<b>comment</b>	<b>finds</b>	<b>date</b>
300	Layer	-	0.26	Topsoil	-	-
301	Layer	-	0.5	Made ground	Brick, tile	20th Century
302	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-





## APPENDIX B. FINDS REPORTS

### B.1 Clay Pipe (*by John Cotter*)

- B.1.1 Four pieces of clay pipe stem weighing 15g were recovered from two contexts, 205 and 208, - the same as those producing the pottery below. These have not been separately catalogued but are described below. No further work is recommended.
- B.1.2 Context (205): Description: Fairly fresh stem fragment (3g.) with narrow stem bore c 2mm. Spot-date: Late 18th to 19th century.
- B.1.3 Context (208): Description: Three fairly fresh stem fragments (12g). One has a narrow stem bore of c 1.8mm. The other two have larger stems bores of c 2.5mm and are probably of 18th century date. Spot-date: Late 18th to 19th century.

### B.2 Pottery (*By John Cotter*)

#### ***Introduction and methodology***

- B.2.1 A total of seven sherds of pottery weighing 298g were recovered from two contexts. These are all of late post-medieval date. All the pottery was examined and spot-dated during the present assessment stage.
- B.2.2 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.).

#### ***Date and nature of the assemblage***

- B.2.3 Overall the pottery is in a fragmentary, though fresh, condition with some quite large sherds present. Ordinary domestic pottery types are represented. These are detailed in the spreadsheet and summarised here. Nothing of any importance was found.
- B.2.4 The commonest type present (in both contexts) is post-medieval glazed red earthenware. The few vessels present in this fabric may have been made at the Nettlebed kilns near Henley. The pottery from Context (205) is dated to c 1825-1900 by a piece of Staffordshire-type whiteware dish with blue transfer-printed decoration. That from Context (208) is dated to c 1750-1780 by a piece of Staffordshire white stoneware dish with moulded decoration. No further work is recommended.

### B.3 The Ceramic Building Material (CBM) (*By John Cotter*)

- B.3.1 A total of nine pieces of CBM weighing 905g were recovered. These came from the same two contexts as the pottery and pipes above. 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.



B.3.2 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 table below and summarised only briefly here as there is little of much note. The pieces present include 19th-century red brick and pale orange peg tile of similar date from (205), and worn pieces of broadly post-medieval peg tile from (208). No further work is recommended.

Table 1 Ceramic Building Material

Context	Spot-date	No.	Weight	Comments
				Range L18-19C. 2x brick frags incl red brick edge 70mm thick, with partial clear & brownish ash glaze over top, side & bottom surfaces. 4x pale orange sandy pegtile frags, mostly fresh. 1 pegtile corner frag has trails of clear light brown lead glaze over edge & surfaces - must have been fired in a kiln with glazed items. 2 smallest tile frags worn - 1
205	19C	6	862	poss earlier post med?
208	17-19C	3	43	Scrappy worn frags post-med pale orange pegtile
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>9</b>	<b>905</b>	



## APPENDIX C. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

- Alasia, V 2007                      Journal of the Henley Archaeological and Historical Group No.22:  
Henley Union Workhouse 1861-1901
- OA 2012a                              Townlands Community Hospital, York Road, Henley-on-Thames,  
Oxfordshire: Written Scheme of Investigation, Oxford Archaeology
- OA 2012b                              Townlands Community Hospital, York Road, Henley-on-Thames,  
Oxfordshire: Desktop Assessment, Oxford Archaeology
- OCAS 2012                            Townlands Community Hospital, York Road, Henley-on-Thames,  
Oxfordshire: Design Brief for an Archaeological Evaluation,  
Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service



## APPENDIX D. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

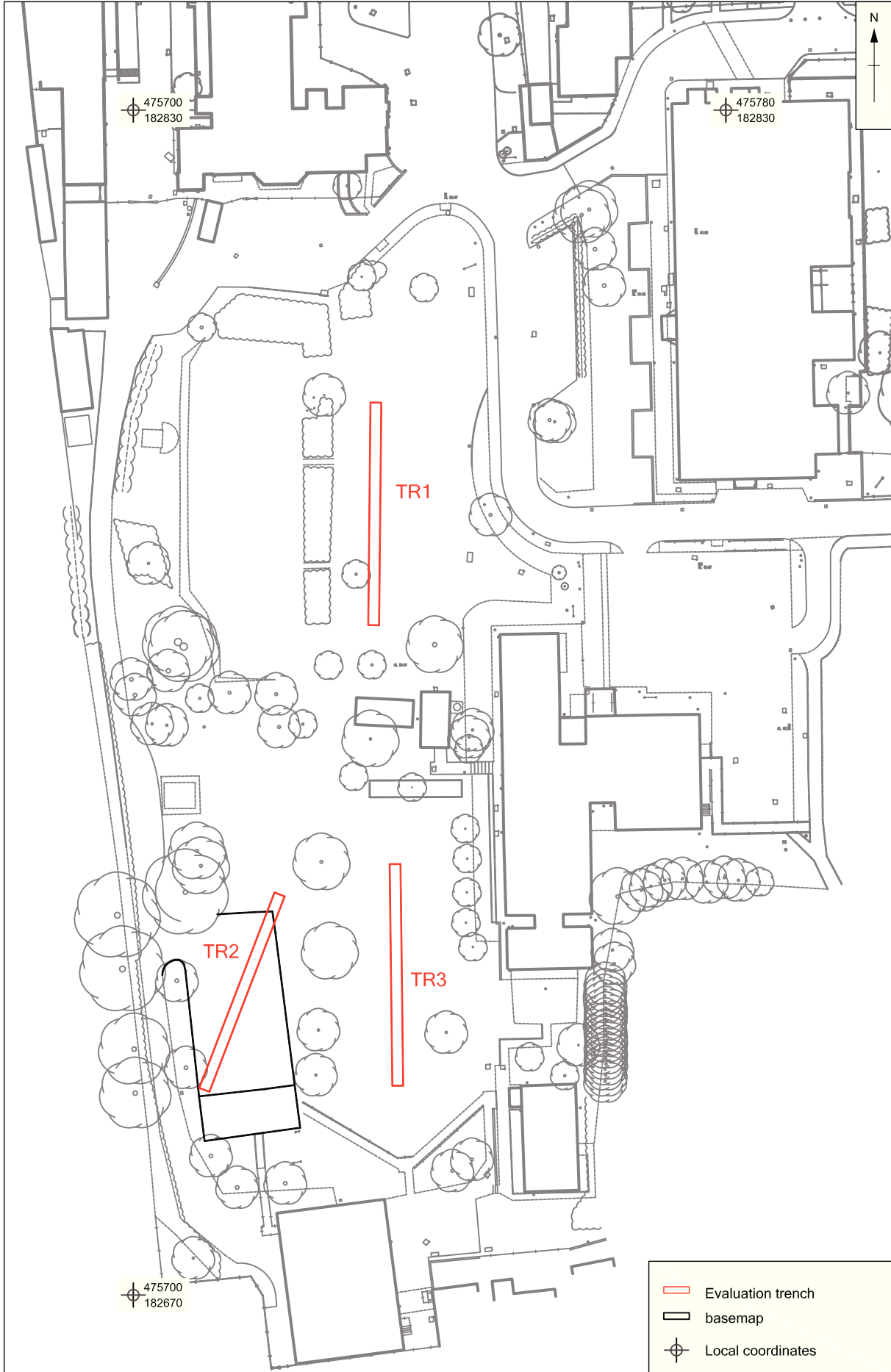
<b>Site name:</b>	Townlands Community Hospital, York Road, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire
<b>Site code:</b>	HETHS 12
<b>Grid reference:</b>	Centred at NGR: SU 7575 8279
<b>Type:</b>	Evaluation
<b>Date and duration:</b>	8th to 10th of October 2012, 3 days
<b>Area of site:</b>	Approximately 1.5 Hectares
<b>Summary of results:</b>	The evaluation consisted of three 30m trenches located within the gardens and car park of the Hospital. Excavation of the trenches revealed two trenches devoid of any archaeological deposits, and one trench containing narrow cultivation strips overlying two post-medieval pits, all probably associated with the Victorian Workhouse which previously occupied the site.
<b>Location of archive:</b>	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Oxfordshire County Museum Service in due course, under the accession number: OXCMS: 2012.136



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Figure 1: Site location

X:\Townlands Hospital, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire\Geomatics\02 CAD\001 current\Townlands\_trench\_layout\_081012.dwg(A4 Trench Layout)\code-BIDOPFW 14438\Townlands Hospital Site, Henley\katrina.anker 15 Oct 2012



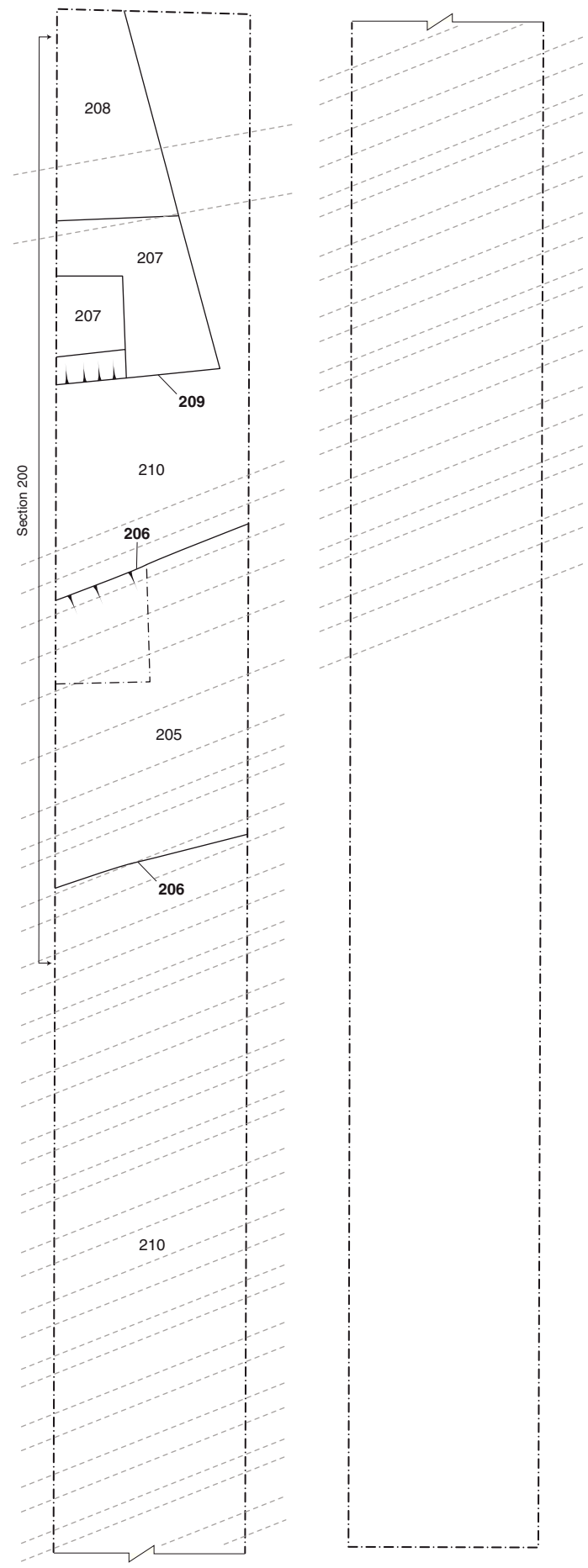
CHECKED BY: DRAFT





Limit of cultivation strips (203)

### Trench 2 Plan 200



### Trench 2 Section 200

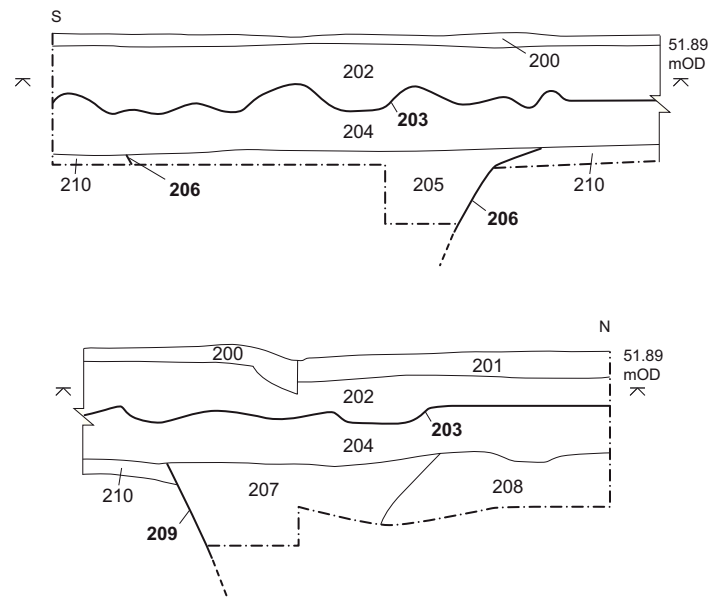


Figure 3: Trench 2, plan and section



Plate 1: Trench 1, facing south



Plate 2: Trench 2, facing south



Plate 3: Trench 3, facing south



Plate 4: Inmates working in the garden under supervision



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