

Highworth Cemetery  
Highworth  
Swindon  
Wiltshire



**Archaeological  
Watching Brief Report**



**Oxford Archaeology**

December 2005



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## SUMMARY

*In May and November 2005, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Highworth, Wilts. (NGR SU 201 922) in advance of redevelopment. The work was commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of McCarthy and Stone (Developments) Ltd.. No archaeology was uncovered during the excavation.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In May and November 2005, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Brewery Street, Highworth, Wiltshire (NGR SU 201 922). The work was commissioned by CgMs Consulting, prior to redevelopment of the site of a former coconut matting works.

1.1.2 The site is located in the southern part of Highworth, and is about 4 km north-east of the outskirts of Swindon (Fig.1). The site is bounded to the north by Brewery Street and to the west by Shrivenham Road (Fig.2). To the east is a small children's nursery in a former 19th-century school building, and a former non-conformist burial ground. Southfield County Junior School is situated to the south of the site.

1.1.3 The work comprised a watching brief on the excavation of two areas (Areas 1 and 2) in advance of redevelopment. Area 1, measuring 625 m<sup>2</sup>, was mechanically stripped under archaeological supervision due to the potential for post-medieval burials to be present. Area 2, measuring an area of 320 m<sup>2</sup> was excavated down to disturbed natural geology prior to the laying of a road.

## 1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site lies on Jurassic, Upper Corallian and Coral Rag strata, which consists of fossiliferous rubbly limestone with some clay horizons and mudstone at 107 m above Ordinance Datum (BGS 252).

## 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological background to the excavation was researched by Crossfield Consulting Limited (Crossfield Consulting Ltd 2003), and is summarised below.

1.3.2 A map dated to 1876 indicates a relatively small complex of workshop buildings near the northern and eastern site boundaries within the area of archaeological investigation. The workshops were used for the production of matting from imported coconut fibres. By 1923, further buildings had been added along the eastern site boundary, as well as elsewhere within the present area of redevelopment. The buildings were part of a manufacturing complex known as Vorda Works. The use of the buildings as a matting factory continued into the 1970s. The buildings were still shown on a 1987 map but their function is not recorded.

1.3.3 A small burial ground, associated with a school hall immediately to the east of the site, is shown on the map of 1876. Its full extent is not known. It is possible that the burial ground extends into the eastern end of the study area. It was believed that the expansion of the matting works between 1876 and 1923 may have encroached upon the burial ground.

## 2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

- To locate and record any burials or other archaeology within the excavation area
- To carry out low resolution analysis of human skeletal remains prior to reburial
- To make available the results of the archaeological investigation in the form of a client report.

## 2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The overlying made-up ground was mechanically excavated using a JCB under archaeological supervision. Any archaeological features uncovered were to be planned and sections to be drawn at a scale of 1:20. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (Wilkinson 1992).

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Description of deposits

3.1.1 The earliest deposit recorded in the excavation area was a compact, firm, light yellowish-brown sandy-silt (2), which contained frequent sub-angular limestone fragments and patches of clay. This was interpreted as the natural geology.

### 3.2 Area 1 (Fig. 2)

3.2.1 No archaeological features were revealed, the remains comprising only modern made ground (1) and three 20th-century ceramic drains (3, 4 and 5) overlying the natural (2) (Fig. 2). Drains 3 and 4 were situated at the south-eastern end of the site, running north-south to a manhole, which was located just outside the excavation area c. 1 m from the eastern boundary wall. Drain 5 was uncovered in the south-western corner of the excavation area running north-west - south-east.

3.2.2 Made ground (1) overlay the natural geology (2) and extended across both Areas 1 and 2. The former layer broadly consisted of brick-rubble, wood fragments, and very infrequent animal bones in a mid-brown clayey-sand. Distinct tipping layers were present within the made ground with varying proportions of the rubble present. These were interpreted as a succession of dumps, essentially comprising one event, and hence were recorded as one context. The depth of the made ground varied across the excavation area.

3.2.3 The depth of the rubble (1) in the north-western quadrant of the excavation area was 0.3 m. It was fairly uniform until approximately 10 m from the eastern edge of the excavation area where the natural geology (2) sloped



sharply downwards. The maximum thickness of the made ground was 1.5 m in this area.

3.2.4 In the south-eastern quadrant of the site the depth of the rubble backfill (1) increased again to 1.9 m in depth, again due to the undulation of the upper surface of the natural geology (1). In this area there was the highest potential for burials to survive. The rubble again decreased in depth towards the south-western quadrant to 0.3 m before dipping sharply at the western edge to a depth of *c.* 1.6 m.

### 3.3 Area 2 (Fig. 3)

3.3.1 This area contained no archaeological features, and no modern structures or services. The earliest deposit in this area was the natural geology (2). This was overlaid by made ground (1) consisting principally of building rubble. This varied in thickness from 1 m to 1.6 m. The depth of rubble increased to the southern end of the area, tapering out at the north-west and north-east ends.

### 3.4 Finds

3.4.1 The ceramic building material and mortar that were encountered were modern and therefore, were not retained.

## 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 The undulating nature of the underlying natural geology (2) is likely to be the result of truncation by earlier foundation trenches and services associated with the matting factory and ancillary buildings. The drains (3, 4 and 5) date from the mid-19th-century onwards and may therefore be associated with the original matting works, or later structural additions to the factory that stood on this part of the site. If burials had been located here, it appears that earlier building work had obliterated all evidence of them.

4.1.2 No burials, nor any evidence of them (such as charnel) were discovered in either area. The severe truncation of the natural geology (2) in the south-eastern quadrant may signify that any burials that may have been present had been destroyed between 1857 and 1923 when several ancillary buildings were

added to the matting works. Alternatively, the burial ground may not have extended into the study area at all.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Height</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>
1	Layer	0.3m- 2.0m	-	-	Made-up ground	Modern CBM and mortar
2	Layer	-	-	-	Natural geology	None
3	Structure				Modern drain	None
4	Structure				Modern drain	None
5	Structure				Modern drain	None

## APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

British Geological Sheet 252

Crossfield Consulting Limited, 2003, *McCarthy and Stone (Developments) Limited Brewery Street, Highworth, Wiltshire site investigation report*, unpublished report no. **CCL00637.AN36**

Wilkinson, D.1992, *Fieldwork Manual*, Oxford Archaeology

### **APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS**

**Site name:** Highworth Cemetery, Wiltshire

**Site code:** HICEM 05

**Grid reference:** NRG SU 201 922

**Type of watching brief:** Two areas measuring 625 m<sup>2</sup> and 320 m<sup>2</sup>

**Date and duration of project:** 6 days on site, from the 2nd March to the 9th March; and the day of the 17th November 2005.

**Area of site:** Area 1: 625 m<sup>2</sup>; Area 2: 320 m<sup>2</sup>

**Summary of results:** Made ground overlying disturbed natural and three drains dated to mid-19th - 20th century. No other features were uncovered.

**Location of archive:** The archive will be deposited with Swindon Museum and Art Gallery in due course, under the following accession number: B2005/09





Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location





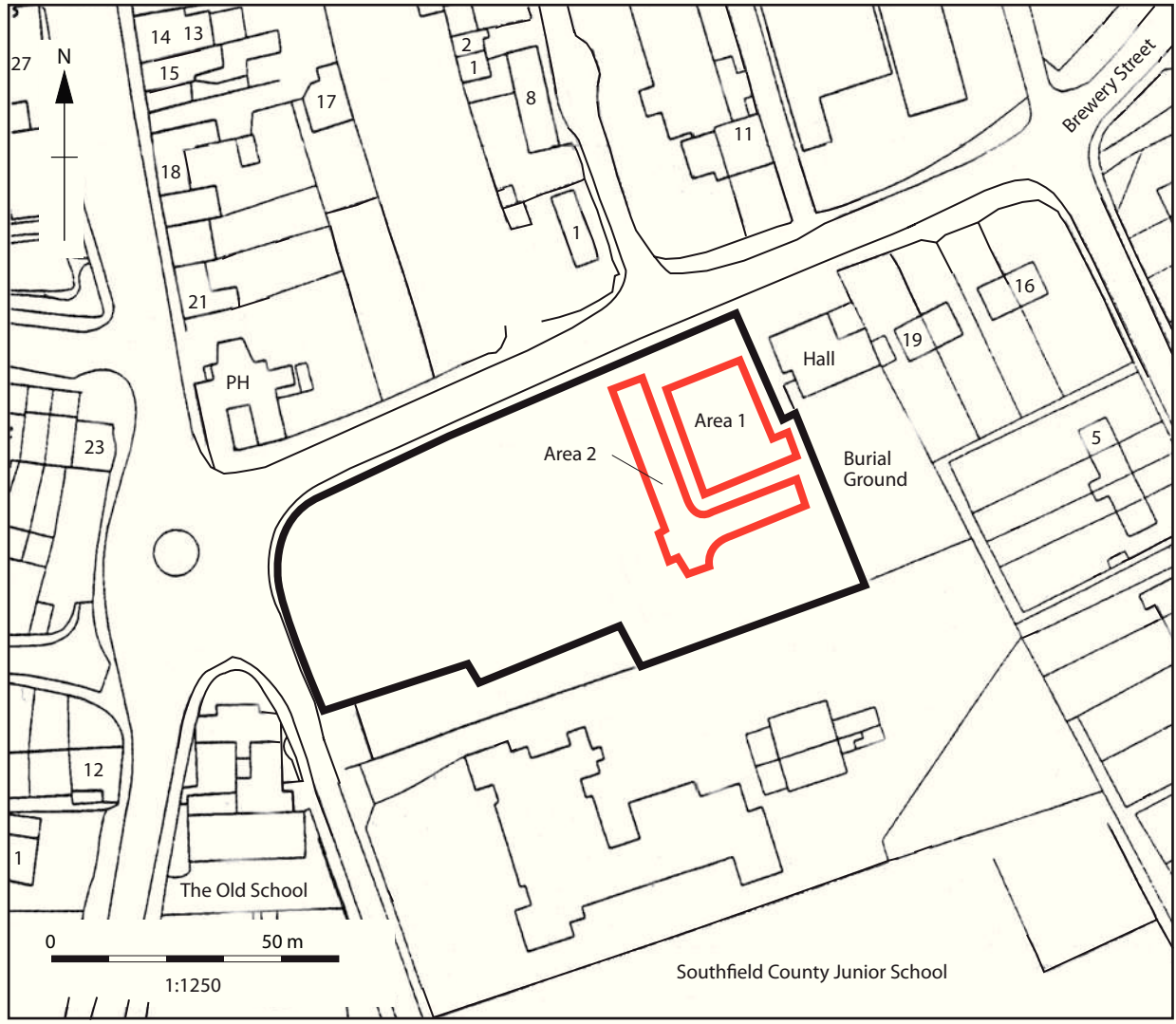


Figure 2: Location of Areas 1 and 2



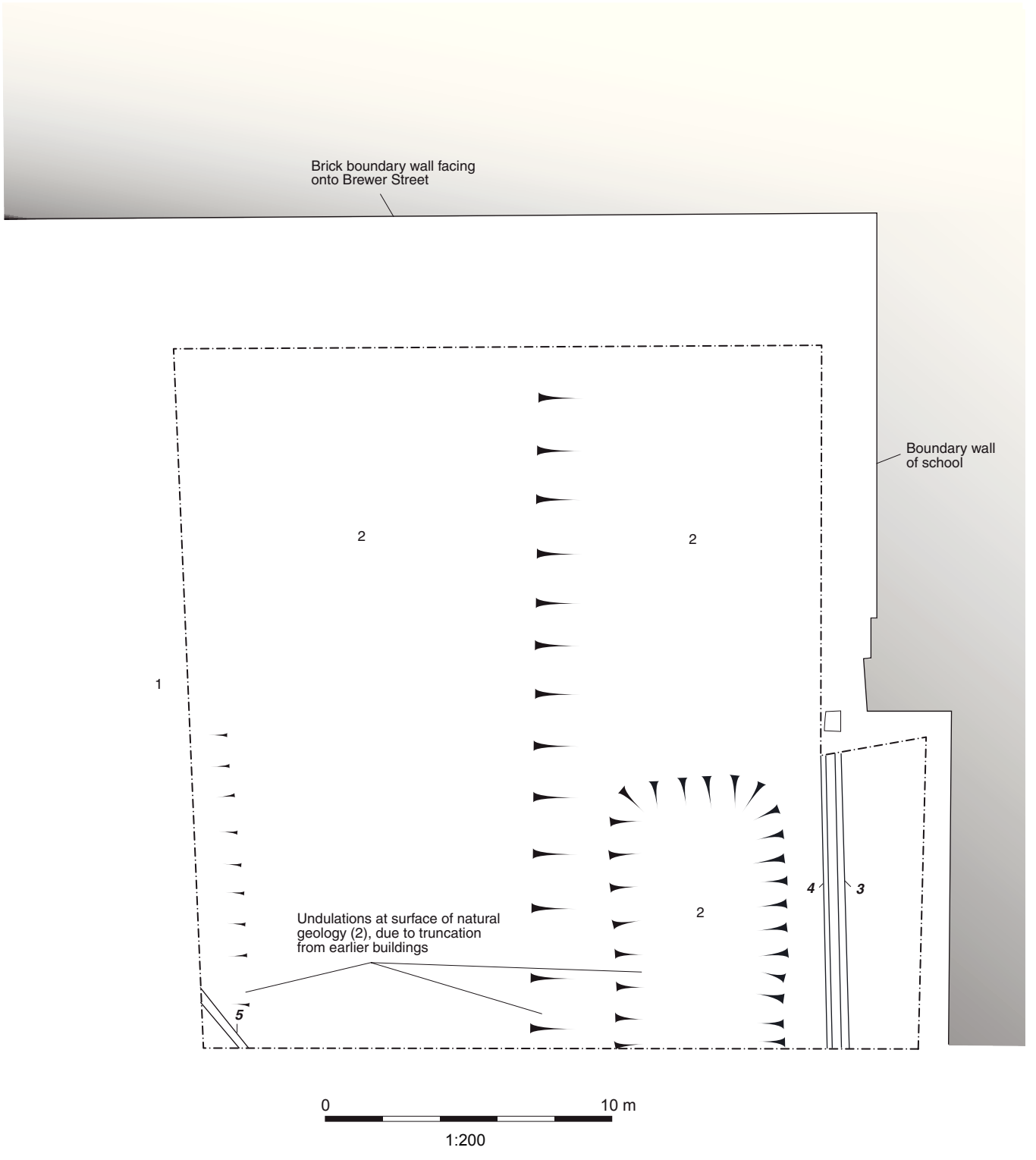
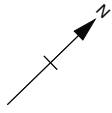


Figure 3: The Excavation Area 1



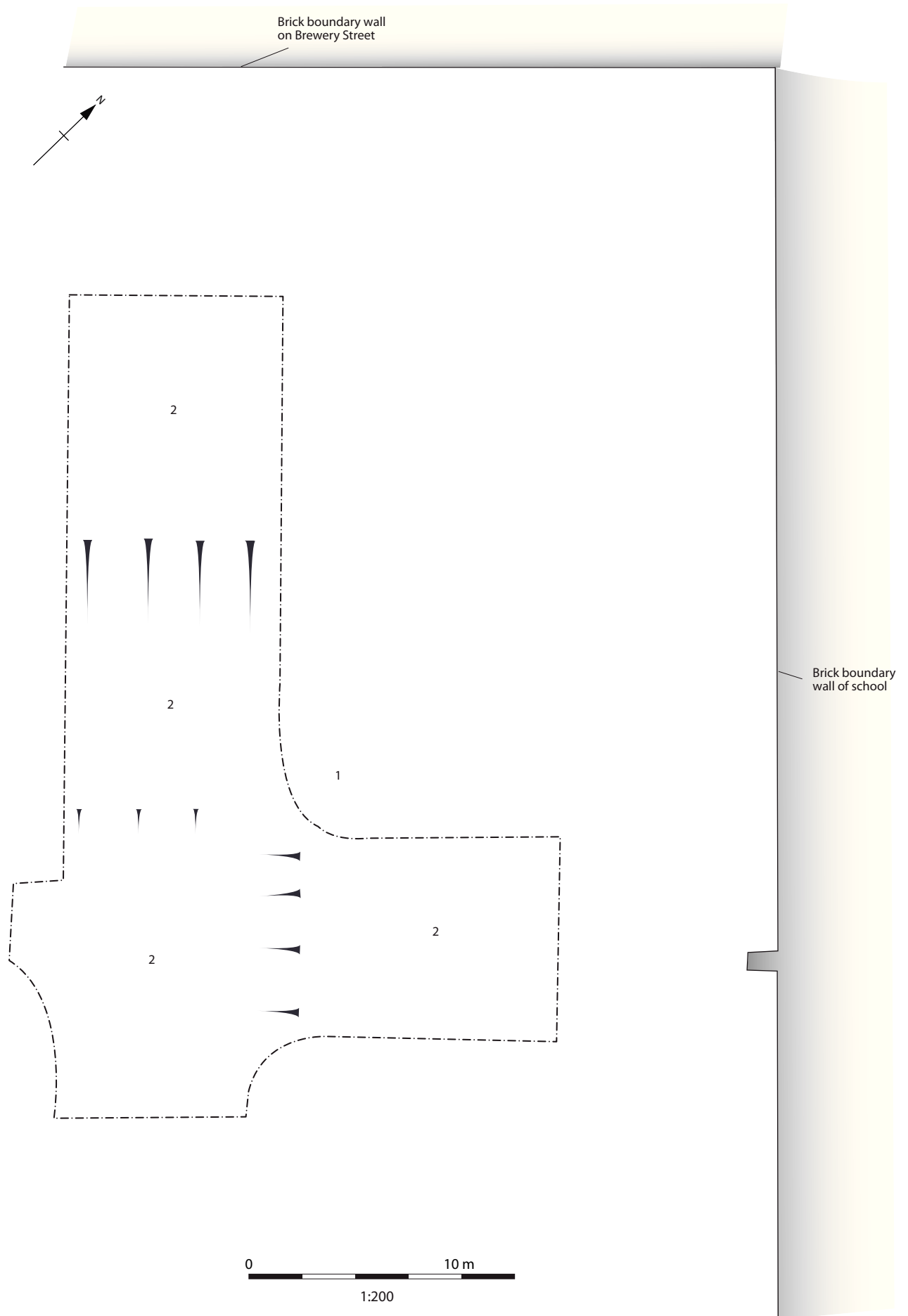




















Figure 4: The Excavation Area 2



	Section line and number
	Section through feature not illustrated with section drawing
	Limit of excavation
	Sondage / Interior limit of excavation
	Fill line and number
	Cut line and number
	Structure number
	Unclear boundary
	Hachures indicate inclination of slope inside excavated feature
	Grid point
	Continuation line (trench edge continues)
	Charcoal
	Clay
	Clay nodule
	Stones
	Ceramic building material
	Bone
	Pot



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