Bicester Heritage New Technical Site Bicester Oxfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

August 2019

Client: Bicester Heritage

Issue No: 2
OA Reference No: 7246
NGR: SP 59108 24300

oxfordarchaeology
southsouthsouth

Client Name:	Bicester Heritage
Document Title:	Bicester Heritage New Technical Site, Bicester, Oxfordshire
Document Type:	Evaluation Report
Report No.:	7246
Grid Reference:	SP 59108 24300
Site Code:	LABH18
Invoice Code:	LABHEV
Receiving Body:	Oxfordshire County Museum Service
Accession No.:	
OA Document File Location:	X:\o\Oxfordshire Bicester Heritage\NTS_Trench_Evaluation\Report
OA Graphics File Location:	X:\o\Oxfordshire Bicester Heritage\NTS_Trench_Evaluation\010Geomatics\01 PDFs
Issue No:	2
Date:	09/08/2019
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Bicester Heritage, New Technical Site, Bicester, Oxfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Summary

Between 9th and 14th January 2019, Oxford Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation on behalf of Bicester Heritage on the site of a proposed New Technical Site, Bicester Heritage, Oxfordshire. Seven evaluation trenches were excavated within the historic Bicester Aerodrome (now known as Bicester Heritage and formerly RAF Bicester). The site covers *c* 2.45 Ha and lies in the south-west corner of the aerodrome at the junction of Skimmingdish Lane and the A4421 Buckingham Road. The latter road follows the line of the Roman Road from Alchester to Towcester.

The site was first developed in the latter stages of WW1 as a Royal Flying Corps (RFC) Training Depot Station. By the end the war, in 1918, facilities within the site boundary comprised a series of workshops. The site was redeveloped in 1920 and for a short time returned to agricultural use. From 1925 the site was redeveloped as part of the RAF Bicester bomber station.

The evaluation did not reveal any significant archaeological features pre-dating the WW1 phase of construction. Parts of the site were either truncated to the level of the natural geology or a thick leveling layer of clayey silt was placed above the original topsoil. These groundworks may be connected with a re-alignment of Skimmingdish Lane, which until the latter part of the 20th century ran from east to west across the site.

Traces of activity relating to the RAF station were identified in six trenches, mostly comprising electrical and other utility trenches, hardcore/surface layers, one concrete floor, and remains of two foundation walls. The foundation walls roughly match the position of buildings shown on the 1996 OS Map, which were subsequently demolished. The buildings were probably constructed during the 1925 phase of development of the northern part of the site. The features had been heavily disturbed by post-war development.

The most recent phases of activity were evidenced by a metal scrapyard rubbish layer in one trench in the southern part of the site, as well as tarmac car park and yard surfaces.

Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Bicester Heritage for commissioning this project and in particular Jonty Ashworth and Brian Pallett for all their help on site. Thanks are also extended to Richard Oram (Planning Archaeologist, Oxfordshire County Council), who monitored the work on behalf of the local planning authority, for his advice and guidance.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Stuart Foreman. The fieldwork was directed by Mariusz I. Górniak, who was supported by Thomas Lawrence. Survey and digitizing were carried out by Diana Chard.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) has been commissioned by Bicester Heritage to undertake an archaeological trench evaluation for the New Technical Site, part of Bicester Heritage, formerly RAF Bicester, henceforth known as 'the site'. The site is centered on NGR SP 59108 24300, and its location is shown in Figure 1. The trenching work follows on from a desk-based assessment (DBA) report which comprised a preliminary assessment of the site's archaeological potential based on evidence from the Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record, aerial photographs and historic maps (OA July 2018a).

1.1.2 The work was undertaken to inform the local planning authority in advance of submission of a Planning Application. Although the Local Planning Authority has not set a brief for the work, discussions with Richard Oram (Planning Archaeologist, Oxfordshire County Council) have established the scope of work required.

1.1.3 All work was undertaken in accordance with local and national planning policies, which are fully detailed in the DBA:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), March 2012;
- Cherwell District Council Local Plan 2011 – 2031 (Part 1), Policy ESD 12: The Character of the Built and Historic Environment.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

1.2.1 The site is located on the northern edge of Bicester, 2.5 km north-east of Bicester town centre. The site is situated at the south-western end of Bicester Aerodrome (now known as Bicester Heritage and formerly RAF Bicester) on the eastern side of the A4421. The site is 2.45 ha in extent and currently comprises a small part of the existing technical site, located to the south-west of the southernmost hangar and a formerly wooded area along the boundary of the aerodrome. The site is bound by Skimmingdish Lane to the south-west and the A4421 to the north-west.

1.2.2 The site slopes gently from north-west to south-east (*c* 79m OD to 77m OD). The underlying bedrock geology is recorded as Cornbrash Formation, a limestone bedrock formed *c* 164 to 168 million years ago in the Jurassic Period when the local area was dominated by shallow seas (BGS website).

1.2.3 Trenches 1-3, 5, and 7 were located in the formerly wooded area in between Skimmingdish Lane and Bicester Heritage main site. Trench 4 was located in between existing buildings, and Trench 6 was in an open car park/yard area.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background of the site has been described in detail in the DBA (OA 2018a) and is summarised here.

1.3.2 The site is located adjacent to the line of the major Roman road from Alchester to Towcester.

1.3.3 Three Roman villas/ settlement sites have been identified in the vicinity of the site. To the north a Roman villa was discovered during landscaping work at Fringford Lodge in 1860. Two inhumation burials and pottery were also found.

1.3.4 The remains of a Romano-British settlement have been found directly to the south of the site and burials of Roman date are also recorded to the north within the technical site.

1.3.5 The site appears to have remained undeveloped throughout recorded history until the beginning of the twentieth century, when it formed part of a Training Depot Station (TDS) and then RAF Bicester. Three buildings associated with the TDS were present within the northern part of the site. The TDS was short lived and the land reverted back to agricultural use until it was chosen as a permanent bomber base in 1925. The airfield was substantially enlarged, and the western side of the site was developed as the aerodrome technical site. New development associated with the technical site comprised air raid shelters and a railway line in the northern part of the site.

1.3.6 In May 2018 Oxford Archaeology carried out an evaluation on behalf of Bicester Heritage on the site of a proposed hotel development. Twelve evaluation trenches, located to the north-west of the New Technical Site revealed part of a field boundary ditch of probable Roman date aligned parallel to the Roman Road. Traces of buildings relating to the RFC Training Depot Station were identified in a few trenches, and mostly comprised drains, electrical services and concrete strip foundations. Some of the utilities encountered could relate to the later RAF station (OA 2018b).

2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The project aims and objectives were to:

i. establish the character, date and state of preservation of archaeological remains within the proposed development area;
ii. identify and characterise features specifically relating to the WWI usage of the site;
iii. identify and characterise features specifically relating to the nearby Roman Road;
iv. determine or confirm the approximate extent of any surviving remains;
v. determine the date range of any surviving remains by artefactual or other means;
vi. determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains;
vii. determine the degree of complexity of any surviving horizontal or vertical stratigraphy;
viii. assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape;
ix. determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence, and the forms in which such evidence may survive;
x. determine the implications of any remains with reference to economy, status, utility and social activity;
xi. determine or confirm the likely range and quality of the artefactual evidence present.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 Seven evaluation trenches were laid out as shown on Figure 2 using a GPS with sub-50 mm accuracy. The trenches targeted planned foundations for the NTS buildings and were placed so as to leave a 5m safety buffer from the recorded live services on the site.

2.2.2 The trenches mostly measured 30 x 1.8 m, although the locations and length of some of them had to be modified due to constraints encountered during excavation (see Section 3 below for details).

2.2.3 The trench locations were scanned using a Cable Avoidance Tool both prior to and during the machine excavation.

2.2.4 The trenches were excavated using a 9T mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket, except for Trench 6 where a narrow bucket with teeth had to be used to break through a concrete surface. All machine work was conducted under the strict supervision of an archaeologist. Spoil was stored adjacent to, but at a safe distance from, the trench edges. Mechanical excavation was continued in spits down to the top of the undisturbed natural geology or the first archaeological horizon, whichever was encountered first.

2.2.5 The exposed surfaces were sufficiently cleaned to establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains. A sample of each potential feature was excavated by hand and

recorded. Modern features consisting of service trenches were only cleaned up and recorded. The foundation walls found in Trench 6 were partially excavated by hand and recorded.

2.2.6 All features and deposits were issued with unique context numbers, and context recording was in accordance with established best practice and the OA Field Manual. Digital photographs were taken of the deposits, features, trenches and evaluation work in general. Plans were drawn at a scale of 1:50. Section drawings of features were drawn at a scale of 1:10 and were located on the appropriate plans. The trench and sample sections were located using a GPS unit. 3D co-ordinates relative to Ordnance Survey National Grid and Ordnance Datum were obtained for each sampling location. The height above Ordnance Datum (mOD) of all principal strata and features, and the section datum lines have been calculated and indicated on the drawings.

2.2.7 Following agreement with Richard Oram (OCC), the trenches were backfilled using the mechanical excavator.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below and include a stratigraphic description of the trenches that contained archaeological remains. The full details of all trenches with dimensions and depths of all deposits can be found in Appendix A.

3.1.2 Context numbers reflect the trench numbers unless otherwise stated (eg: pit 102 is a feature within Trench 1, while ditch 304 is a feature within Trench 3).

3.1.3 The general distribution of archaeological features is shown on Figure 3. Figures 4 and 5 are more detailed drawings showing hand excavated interventions and context numbers. Sections through selected features are illustrated on Figure 6.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 The soil sequence varied between the evaluation trenches. The natural geology comprised light yellowish grey limestone cornbrash in all trenches, except for parts of Trenches 7 and 2, where the geology consisted of a light brownish yellow silty clay. The subsoil was fairly uniform in all trenches, except for Trench 1 where it had been truncated down to the natural geology.

3.2.2 In Trenches 2, 4, and 6 the subsoil was overlain by a thin layer of dark greyish brown silt, interpreted as buried topsoil. In Trench 3 the buried topsoil horizon was stripped, probably in the latter part of the 20th century, to form a yard surface.

3.2.3 A thick layer of a minerogenic light brown silt overlay the buried topsoil horizon and was recorded in Trenches 2, 4, and 6. No artefacts were recovered from multiple sections excavated through this deposit. It was interpreted as a made ground/levelling layer – possibly connected with the diversion of Skimmingdish Lane in the late 20th-century (see description below).

3.2.4 In Trenches 3, 4, and 6 there were 20th-century deposits overlying the made ground horizon. In Trench 3 this was a thick layer of waste metal and other rubbish material dating from the second half of the 20th-century. In Trench 4 was an early 20th-century surface layer made up of building rubble and pieces of tarmac. In Trench 6 there was a recent tarmac surface with a hardcore rubble layer, overlying a levelling layer with building rubble material of earlier 20th-century date. A thin horizon of modern woodland soil was at the top of the stratigraphic sequence in Trenches 1, 2, 3, and 5, whilst Trench 4 had a thin layer of modern turf as the current topsoil.

3.2.5 In summary, only Trenches 5 and 7 had an undisturbed soil sequence (topsoil, subsoil/B-Horizon and natural geology).

3.2.6 Ground conditions were generally good, and the trenches remained dry throughout. Features, where present, were relatively easy to identify.

3.3 General distribution of deposits and features (Fig. 3)

3.3.1 The only archaeological feature that could potentially pre-date the 20th-century was a small pit with patches of charcoal and traces of *in situ* burning, which was excavated in Trench 5. However, it contained no artefactual material and is therefore undated.

3.3.2 Five other excavated features appeared to be tree-throw holes (Trenches 4, 5, 6 and 7).

3.3.3 The made ground layer present in Trenches 2, 3, 4 and 6 contained no dateable material. The deposit may be of early 19th century date – i.e. a levelling layer for the original line of Skimmingdish Lane.

3.3.4 Building components of early 20th-century date were present in trenches located in the northern part of the site (i.e. north of the original line of Skimmingdish Lane). Trenches to the south of the old lane, in the woodland area adjacent to the aerodrome perimeter, contained only utility trenches from the same period and a late 20th-century metalworking rubbish layer.

3.3.5 Old service trenches were uncovered in Trenches 1, 2, 3, 6, and 7. Two of them (Trenches 3 and 6) contained old electrical cables. They are most likely to be connected with the 1920s and WW2 buildings located within the site.

3.3.6 Trenches 4 and 6 contained layers and structures probably related to the RAF base as developed in 1925. Trench 4 revealed a surface and a hardcore layer comprising early 20th-century building rubble, no doubt arising from demolition of the 1920s buildings.

3.3.7 Trench 6 revealed two wall foundations, which appear to correspond with the plan of a building that was still standing in the 1990s, but has since been demolished (see 1996 OS Map – Fig. 1 in OA 2018a). One wall had an adjacent concrete surface/floor with a hardcore layer underneath, whilst the second was found to have been heavily truncated when the modern tarmac surface was laid.

3.3.8 Both foundation walls were pre-dated by a levelling layer containing some early 20th-century building material within it. A small posthole with concrete post-packing, also in Trench 6, could not be closely dated but is likely to belong to the 1925 aerodrome redevelopment.

3.4 Trench 1 (Fig. 4, Plates 1 and 2)

3.4.1 Trench 1 was excavated in the south-western corner of the site and was aligned NW-SE (Fig. 4). The trench was shortened, and its north-west end moved a few metres to the west, because of large trees still growing in this part of the site.

3.4.2 The stratigraphic sequence in the trench consisted of relatively recent woodland topsoil overlying the cornbrash bedrock. The soil sequence was different from other trenches, and it appears that the ground had been truncated down to the natural geology.

3.4.3 An old north-south aligned service trench was partly exposed at the north-west end of the trench. Given some uncertainty as to whether it contained a dead or live cable, the feature was recorded but not excavated.

3.5 Trench 2 (Fig. 4, Plate 3)

3.5.1 Trench 2 was excavated in the north-western part of the site, on a NW-SE alignment (Fig. 2).

3.5.2 The soil sequence in Trench 2 (Fig. 4) consisted of woodland topsoil overlying made ground, which overlay buried topsoil (truncated throughout most of the trench) and buried subsoil (B-Horizon). The old subsoil overlay the natural geology.

3.5.3 The made ground (layer 203) did not contain any finds and comprised a clean, clay silt. However, given the stratigraphic sequence in other trenches, the artificial and fairly modern origin of this context seems very likely.

3.5.4 Trench 2 revealed a service trench (205) of 20th-century date and a spread of fragmented concrete (context 208). Both are likely to be associated with one of the periods of wartime activity.

3.6 Trench 3 (Fig. 4, Plate 4)

3.6.1 Trench 3 was located in the south-central part of the site and was aligned NNW-SSE.

3.6.2 It contained three east-west aligned utility trenches (features 304, 306, and 308). One of these was excavated (304) and contained a twisted iron electrical cable dating broadly from the first half of the 20th-century. The fills of the service trenches were overlain by a modern layer (303) formed from metalworking waste material, derived from a former scrap-yard.

3.6.3 The trenches cut through buried subsoil 301 (old B-Horizon), which overlay cornbrash bedrock.

3.7 Trench 4 (Fig. 5, Plate 5)

3.7.1 Trench 4 was located in the central part of the site. It was shortened to avoid an area of vegetation.

3.7.2 The soil sequence consisted of a thin turf topsoil overlaying remains of a 20th-century surface (layer 401) made of crushed concrete and cement with pieces of tarmac. The surface overlay layer 402, a sterile slightly clayey silt levelling layer, 0.6 m thick. Layer 402 overlay a 0.12m thick dark deposit of slightly clayey silt (buried topsoil) with a 0.15m thick layer of reddish brown clayey silt underneath (layer 404 – buried subsoil). Natural geology consisted of cornbrash.

3.7.3 Only one small, rounded feature was revealed in the southern part of the trench. Cut 407 (Figure 4) was 0.07m deep, with moderately steep sides and a flattish base. Its single fill had no inclusions. The feature was most likely of natural origin.

3.8 Trench 5 (Fig. 5)

3.8.1 Trench 5 was excavated in the central southern part of the site and was aligned NW-SE.

3.8.2 The soil sequence in the trench consisted of a 0.2m thick woodland topsoil overlying a 0.3m thick subsoil (B-Horizon) with natural cornbrash layer underneath.

3.8.3 Two tree throw holes were revealed and one of them was sample excavated (cut 503) (Figure 4). Its single fill consisted of a friable, yellowish brown clayey silt, which contained thin patches of charcoal and traces of burning *in situ*. The feature was interpreted as a possible fire pit, though it is also possible that it was actually a burned-out tree throw hole.

3.9 Trench 6 (Fig. 5, Plates 6-8)

3.9.1 Trench 6 was excavated in the central northern part of the site and was aligned NW-SE. The trench had to be shortened to almost half of its length and its south-west end had to be moved a few meters northwards because of constraints on site (man-holes, sewage pipe trenches).

3.9.2 The sequence of layers (Figure 4) consisted of a 0.1m thick layer of tarmac surface (600) with a 0.21m thick hardcore layer underneath (601). Layer 601 overlay layer 612, a 0.17m thick levelling deposit made of a compact, brownish grey silty clay with building rubble. Context 612 overlay layer 603 – a yellowish brown friable clayey silt with occasional angular pieces of limestone. This deposit seems to represent made ground. It overlay a thin band of darker soil (607), which probably represented buried topsoil. This overlay layer 613, a friable, reddish brown clayey silt with occasional pieces of angular limestone (buried subsoil). The natural geology in the trench was cornbrash.

3.9.3 Several features were exposed within the trench. Five tree-throws were revealed. One of them was relatively regular and symmetric in plan but when excavated had an irregular profile (cut 608, Fig. 4) with a homogenous fill and no finds within it.

3.9.4 An old electric cable trench (cut 618) was exposed at the south-eastern end of the trench. It was similar to that uncovered in Trench 3. It was aligned NW-SE and, as it was located within the former technical site, probably belonged to the 1925 RAF base development.

3.9.5 Post-hole 610 was observed cutting the natural geology level but it may have been cut from stratigraphically further up. The fill consisted of crushed pieces of concrete post packing.

3.9.6 Two foundation walls, both aligned NE-SW, were uncovered in the trench.

3.9.7 Foundation wall 604, in the northern part of Trench 6 was partially covered by tarmac surface 600. The structure consisted of two courses of unfrogged red bricks (measuring 0.7 x 0.23 x 0.11m) with cement. Concrete surface 615, with hardcore layer 614 underneath it, abutted the foundation wall. The construction cut for the wall (605) truncated layer 612. Hardcore layer 601 under the modern tarmac surface (600) abutted the foundation wall on its south-eastern side.

3.9.8 Foundation wall 616 did not extend all the way across Trench 6 and was significantly damaged. Its bricks were of the same type as those in wall 604 and they are likely to be contemporary, probably belonging to the 1925 RAF base development.

3.10 Trench 7 (Fig. 5, Plate 9)

3.10.1 Trench 7 was excavated in the south-western part of the site and was aligned NW-SE. The north-western end had to be relocated 2m northwards, to avoid trees growing in this part of the site.

3.10.2 The soil sequence in the trench consisted of a 0.32m thick topsoil (700) overlying subsoil 701, a light orange brown silty clay, 0.34m thick. In the northern part of the trench layer 701 overlay natural geology composed of a brownish yellow clayey silt containing limestone fragments. In the southern part of the trench the subsoil overlay

a 0.15m thick layer of friable, slightly brownish grey silty clay (704). The natural consisted of cornbrash formation.

3.10.3 Two features of probable natural origin were revealed and excavated in this trench (705 and 707). Feature 705 (Figure 4) was 1.78m wide and 0.2m deep with an asymmetric side (steep and gently sloping) and a slightly undulating base. Feature 707 was 2.17m wide and ovoid in shape, with an uneven, moderately steep side. Both cuts had single, very silty fills, which produced no finds.

Feature 707, at the southern end of Trench 7, was truncated by a NE-SW aligned service trench (709). The latter was not excavated in case it contained a live electrical cable. Feature 707 was cut through layers 701 and 702. Its fill (710) consisted of mixed patches of brown, greyish brown and black clay silt, with some fine charcoal inclusions.

3.11 Finds summary

3.11.1 No finds were collected from the excavated deposits, as there was nothing of significance. Modern artefacts, including CBM (ceramic building material) and small nails and screws from made ground layers and foundation walls, were noted in site records and included in the trench tables (Appendix A).

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 The excavation was undertaken in relatively dry weather and was not adversely affected by any other environmental conditions. The features were easy to distinguish from the natural geology.

4.2 Evaluation objectives and results

4.2.1 In summary, the aims of the evaluation were to establish the presence or absence of any archaeological features or deposits. Roman remains have been found in close proximity to the site, along the line of the major Roman Road from Alchester to Towcester. Any well-preserved remains of the WW1 RFC Training Depot Station would also be significant finds, as would well-preserved features associated with the later RAF station. If remains were present, the aim was to determine their character, date range and significance.

4.2.2 The evaluation did not reveal any significant archaeological features which pre-dated the 20th century. A significant amount of ground disturbance has clearly taken place within the site, including road construction, service trenches and post-WW2 light industrial use. Trenches 5 and 7, at the eastern end of the site, were the only ones where the pre-airfield soil sequence was found intact. Elsewhere within the site it is likely that any Roman or earlier features that may have been present would have been truncated by modern activity associated with the RAF station. Most extensive of the areas of modern ground disturbance is the realignment of Skimmingdish Lane in the late 20th century.

4.2.3 The remains of historic airfield features, including remains of two foundation walls with a concrete floor level, and a hardcore layer under the surfaces were identified in Trenches 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7. The foundation walls roughly match the location of workshop buildings still standing on the site in the 1990s (OS 1996 Map). The early 20th century features were poorly preserved, having been largely demolished and removed. The only surviving features comprised buried service trenches, the foundation walls and the concrete floor.

4.3 Interpretation

4.3.1 No features pre-dating the 20th-century were identified. Parts of the site were truncated down to the natural geology which may explain this absence, particularly at the south-western end of the site near the junction of Skimmingdish Lane and Buckingham Road. Earlier activity on site cannot be excluded, but none was recorded in the trenches.

4.3.2 Remains associated with the RAF station were poorly preserved and consisted of utility trenches and building foundations in the north-eastern part of the site. Two foundation walls, a concrete floor, and levelling layers with demolition debris.

4.3.3 Remains of later 20th century date included a layer of metal debris from a scrap yard that was formerly present on the site.

4.4 Significance and potential

4.4.1 Given the lack of deposits and dateable features of pre-20th century date, there is very low potential for archaeological remains of earlier date on the site. As Roman settlements and burials have been found in close proximity to the site, a complete absence of evidence from this period is slightly surprising, but can in part be explained by the extent of modern ground disturbance, which was especially severe close to the line of the Roman Road. The original construction, and late 20th century realignment, of Skimmingdish Lane is the most substantial source of ground disturbance within the site.

4.4.2 All of the building foundations and at least some of the buried services identified in the trenches appear to relate to the RAF bomber base constructed from 1925, specifically workshops within the technical site. Late 20th century civilian re-use of the buildings is also evident, as in the dump of metalworking debris from a scrap yard. While no features found in the trenches could be specifically identified as originating in WW2, some of the buried utilities could have supplied air raid shelters that still survive nearby. The airfield-related remains within the development site are very poorly preserved in comparison with the rest of the former RAF Bicester complex, the buildings having been demolished in the 1990s.

APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description					**Orientation**	NW-SE
Trench located in the south-western corner of the site. It was shortened, and its NW end moved a few meters westwards because of large trees growing still on site and a metal fence. The stratigraphic sequence consisted of topsoil overlaying natural geology. The southern end of the trench revealed part of a modern service trench.					**Length (m)**	14.75
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.2
Context No.	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Description**	**Finds**	**Date**
100	Layer – topsoil	-	0.2	Fine-grained sediment, soft, dark brownish grey clayey silt. Woodland topsoil. Relatively recent deposit.	-	-
101	Cut – service trench	+1.0	-	Aligned N-S linear, only partially exposed, extending eastwards beyond the evaluation trench. Not excavated	-	Modern
102	Fill – service trench	+1.0	-	Mixed – patches of loose dark brownish grey and brown clayey silt with pieces of angular limestone	A couple of iron finds - one 20th century screw, 2 pieces of 20th century nails	Modern
103	Layer – natural geology	-	-	Coarse- grained, compact, light yellowish grey-cornbrash.	-	-

Trench 2						
General description					**Orientation**	NW-SE
Trench located in the north-western part of the site. It contained a modern trench of 20th century date (either a robbed out foundation trench or a service trench) and a spread of friable concrete. The soil sequence consisted of topsoil overlaying made ground (modern), which overlay old topsoil (truncated in most of the trench) and subsoil (B-Horizon). The old subsoil sealed natural geology of cornbrash in the southern part of the trench and a clayey natural lens above the cornbrash natural geology.					**Length (m)**	30
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.75
Context No.	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Description**	**Finds**	**Date**
200	Layer – topsoil	-	0.2	Dark brown silty clay; overlaying 203	-	-
201	Layer – subsoil	-	0.3	Grayish brown clayey silt; overlain by 207 and 203	-	-

Trench 2						
202	Layer – natural geology	-	-	Coarse- grained, compact, light yellowish grey-cornbrash; overlain by 201 and 204	-	-
203	Layer	-	0.15	Made ground. Light yellowish brown clayey silt with angular pieces of limestone; overlain by 200, overlaying 201 and 207	-	Modern – early 20th century
204	Layer	-	0.17	Grey, firm very clayey silt with no inclusions. Natural lens overlain by layer 201 and overlaying 202. Only in the northern part of Tr. 2	Metal	-
205	Cut	1.15	+ 0.3	Linear, aligned NE-SW, cutting 201 and 202, filled with 206. Probably a service trench, but may represent a robbed-out foundation wall	-	Modern – early 20th century
206	Fill – service trench	1.15	+ 0.3	Friable, dark brownish grey and brown slightly clayey silt with pieces of angular limestone; overlain by 203	A piece of modern nail	Modern – early 20th century
207	Layer – old topsoil	0.1	-	Friable, brown clayey silt with occasional pebbles; sealed by 203 and sealing 201	-	-
208	Structure	+0.85	+0.2	A 1.3m long spread of friable concrete in at the NW corner of Tr. 2 - part of a remain of a concrete structure cutting made up soil 203 and sealed by topsoil 200	-	-

Trench 3						
General description					**Orientation**	NNW-SSE
Trench contained three service trenches aligned E-W; one of them was excavated and contained a twisted iron electric cable. Soil sequence consisted of recent woodland topsoil, overlaying a made up layer formed of waste from old scrap-yard, which overlay old subsoil, with cornbrash natural geology underneath.					**Length (m)**	28.5
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.7
Context No.	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Description**	**Finds**	**Date**
300	Layer – topsoil	-	0.1	Dark brownish grey silty clay – woodland topsoil	-	-

Trench 3						
301	Layer – subsoil	-	0.30	Friable, yellowish brown silty clay – old subsoil; overlaying 303.	-	-
302	Layer – natural geology	-	-	Fine grained, compact, light yellowish grey-cornbrash; overlain by 302	-	-
303	Layer – made ground	-	0.3	Lenses of loose and friable blackish and dark brownish grey silty clay with large amount of burnt material (charcoal, plastic and other); overlain by 300 and overlaying 302 A made up ground from an old scrap-yard	Frequent fragments of late 20th century motor vehicle fragments and other pieces of metal, occasional pieces of plastic, various types of pipes and cables	2nd half of 20th century
304	Cut – electric cable trench	0.5	+0.3	Linear, aligned E-W, cutting 301 and 302, filled with 305	-	Modern – first part of 20th century
305	Fill of electric cable trench	0.5	+ 0.3	Patches of dark brown and dark greyish brown silty clay, overlain by 303	Iron, twisted electric cable	Modern – first part of 20th century
306	Cut – service trench	0.55	+0.2	Linear, aligned E-W, cutting 301 and 302, filled with 307		Earlier (?) part of 20th century
307	Fill of service	0.55	+ 0.2	Patches of dark brown and dark greyish brown silty clay, overlain by 303	(not excavated)	Earlier (?) part of 20th century
308	Cut – service trench	0.57	+0.12	Linear, aligned E-W, cutting 301 and 302, filled with 308		Earlier (?) part of 20th century
309	Fill of service	0.57	+ 0.12	Patches of dark brown and dark greyish brown silty clay, overlain by 303	(not excavated)	Earlier (?) part of 20th century

Trench 4		
General description	**Orientation**	NNW-SSE

Trench 4						
Trench contained only one small rounded feature of probable natural origin. Soil sequence consisted of topsoil/recent turf overlaying a made ground over a buried topsoil and subsoil horizon. Natural geology consisted of cornbrash.					**Length (m)**	19.3
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	1.0
Context No.	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Description**	**Finds**	**Date**
400	Layer – topsoil	-	0.2	Brown and dark grey, loose slightly clayey silt – recent turf layer; overlaying 401	-	-
401	Layer – surface	-	0.25	Crushed concrete and mortar with pieces of tarmac; overlain by 400, overlaying 402	-	20th century (early?)
402	Layer – made up ground	-	0.6	Yellowish brown, friable clayey silt with angular pieces of limestone – made ground overlain by 401, overlaying 403	-	-
403	Layer – buried topsoil	-	0.12	Brown, friable clayey silt	-	-
404	Layer – old subsoil	-	0.15	Reddish brown clayey silt (old B-Horizon), overlain by 403, overlaying 405	-	-
405	Layer – natural geology	-	+ 0.1	Yellowish light brown clayey silt with frequent pieces of angular limestone (cornbrash); overlain by 404	-	-
406	Fill	0.42	0.07	Friable, reddish brown silt, no inclusions, single fill of 407	-	-
407	Cut	0.42	0.07	Round with a moderately steep sides and a flattish base – quite regular and symmetric but most likely a natural feature, filled with 407	-	-

Trench 5						
General description					**Orientation**	NW-SE
Trench contained one undated pit with traces of burning in situ. Soil sequence consisted of woodland topsoil sealing B-Horizon subsoil which overlay natural geology.					**Length (m)**	29.3
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	1.0
Context No.	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Description**	**Finds**	**Date**
500	Layer – topsoil	-	0.2	Dark brownish grey silty clay; overlaying 501 – woodland topsoil	-	-

Trench 5						
501	Layer – subsoil	-	0.30	Friable, yellowish brown silty clay – subsoil (B-Horizon); overlaying 303.	-	-
502	Layer – natural geology	-	-	Fine grained, compact, light yellowish grey- cornbrash; overlain by 501	-	-
503	Cut	0.6	0.12	Slightly asymmetric ovoid with gently sloping sides and a slightly undulating concave base, cutting 502, filled with 504. Possible pit	-	-
504	Fill	0.6	0.12	Friable, yellowish brown with patches of reddish brown clayey silt, small patches of charcoal and traces of in site burning, single fill of 503	-	-

Trench 6						
General description					**Orientation**	NW-SE
Trench relocated 2m eastwards and shortened in relation to the WSI trench location (because of man-holes and other obstructions in the ground). It contained two early 20th century foundation walls (one with a butting concrete floor surface), one modern posthole with concrete packing and one probable natural feature (tree-throw). Layer sequence consisted of fairly recent tarmac surface with a hardcore layer underneath, a levelling layer of early 20th century date, a made up ground sealing old topsoil and subsoil, with natural geology consisting of cornbrash in clayey silt.					**Length (m)**	15.2
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.75
Context No.	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Description**	**Finds**	**Date**
600	Layer – surface	-	0.1	Modern surface – tarmac – a fairly recent feature; overlaying 601	-	Modern
601	Layer	-	0.25	Hardcore layer under 600 – stones, sand, and some building debris material; overlain by 600; overlaying 612	-	Modern – later part of 20th century
602	Layer – natural geology	-	-	Fine grained, compact, light yellowish grey-cornbrash; overlain by 613		-
603	Layer	-	0.15	Made ground - Yellowish brown, friable clayey silt with angular pieces of limestone – made		

Trench 6						
				ground overlain by 612, overlaying 607		
604	Foundation wall	0.25	0.17	Foundation wall, aligned NE-SW, made of red unfrogged bricks (0.7 x 0.23 x 0.11m) with cement – only two courses, in cut 605, abutted by 614 and 615, partly overlain by 600	Red bricks	Modern – early part of 20th century
605	Foundation cut	0.28	0.18	Foundation cut for wall 604 – linear, aligned NE-SW, a vertical side, flat base; cutting 612	-	Modern – early part of 20th century
606	Fill	0.03	0.18	Fill of foundation cut 605 – material in between the cut and foundation wall 604	-	Modern – early part of 20th century
607	Layer – buried topsoil	-	0.15	Brown, friable clayey silt; overlain by 603, overlaying 613		
608	Cut	+ 0.58	0.22	Sub-oval (extending south-westwards beyond the evaluation trench), 1.8m long, with a steep side, a slightly undulating base, filled with 609, cutting 602 and 613 – probably a tree throw	-	-
609	Fill	+ 0.58	0.22	Friable slightly reddish brown clayey silt with relatively frequent pieces of angular limestone, single fill of 608, sealed by 607	-	-
610	Cut	0.37	-	Sub-rectangular cutting 602, filled with 611	-	Modern
611	Fill	0.37	-	Pieces of concrete – post-packing	Pieces of concrete	Modern
612	Layer	-	0.13	Friable, brownish grey silty clay with building rubble material – leveling deposit overlain 601, overlaying 603	-	-

Trench 6						
613	Layer	-	0.12	Friable, reddish brown clayey silt with occasional limestone pieces, made ground, overlain by 607, overlaying 602	-	-
614	Layer	-	0.09	Firm, lenses of brown and blackish silty clay with burnt material, occasional stones; hardcore layer under surface 615, overlaying 612	-	-
615	Surface		0.08	Concrete surface. Butting foundation wall 604, overlain by tarmac surface 600, overlaying layer 614	-	-
616	Structure	0.25	0.18	Foundation wall (similar to 604), aligned NE-SW, made of red unfrogged bricks (0.7 x 0.23 x 0.11m) with cement – only two courses, in cut 617	-	Early 20th century
617	Cut	0.3	0.25	Foundation wall cut – aligned NE-SW, filled with greyish brown clayey silt, cutting 612, truncated by 601	Red bricks	Early 20th century
618	Cut	0.16	0.6	Linear, aligned NE-SW, electric cable trench, filled with 619, cutting 602, 607, and 603	-	Early 20th century
619	Fill	0.16	0.6	Mixed – patches of brown and dark brownish grey clayey sand; fill of 618, overlain by 612	Iron twisted electric cable	Early 20th century

Trench 7		
General description	**Orientation**	NW-SE
Trench located in the south-eastern part of the site. Its NW end had to be relocated a couple of meters northwards because of large trees still growing on site. It contained one service trench and two natural features (tree-throws). Soil sequence consisted of topsoil and subsoil overlying silty clay horizon in the southern part of the trench and a clayey deposit over cornbrash geology in the northern part of the trench	**Length (m)**	29.7
	Width (m)	1.5
	Avg. depth (m)	0.65

Trench 7						
Context No.	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Description**	**Finds**	**Date**
700	Layer – topsoil	-	0.32	Dark brownish grey silty clay – woodland topsoil	-	-
701	Layer – subsoil	-	0.34	Subsoil. Light orangey brown silty clay	-	-
702	Layer – natural geology	-	-	Light brown yellow clayey silt with pieces of limestone, in southern part of the trench, overlain by 701	-	-
703	Layer – natural geology	-	-	Cornbrash formation in silty clay; in northern part of the trench, overlain by 704	-	-
704	Layer – natural geology	-	0.15	Friable, slightly brownish grey slightly silty clay, in the northern part of the trench, overlain by 701, overlaying 703	-	-
705	Cut	1.78	0.2	Ovoid (extending NE-wards beyond the evaluation trench), a moderate steep and vertical side, a slightly undulating base, filled with 706, cutting 701 and 702; probably a natural feature	-	-
706	Fill	1.78	0.2	Friable, orangey brown silty clay with occasional limestone fragments, single fill of 705, sealed by 700	-	
707	Cut	2.17	-	Irregular ovoid, an uneven moderately steep and gently sloping side (base not exposed), truncated by 709, filled with 708, cutting 702 and probably 701 – natural feature (tree-throw)	-	-
708	Fill	2.17	-	Friable, orangey brown silty clay with occasional limestone fragments, single fill of 707, sealed by 700, cut by 709	-	-
709	Cut	0.51	-	Linear, NE-SW aligned service trench (electric?), cutting 701, 702, and 708; filled with 710	-	-
710	Fill	0.51	-	Patches of brown slightly clayey silt, grayish brown	-	-

Trench 7						
				clayey silt, and blacking clayey silt with fine charcoal material, fill of 709, sealed by 700		

APPENDIX B BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDIX C SITE SUMMARY DETAILS

Site name:	Bicester Heritage Hotel, Bicester, Oxfordshire
Site code:	BIHH18
Grid Reference	SP 59250 24783
Type:	Evaluation
Date and duration:	09/01/2019- 14/01/2019
Area of Site	2.45ha
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxford County Museum in due course.
Summary of Results:	Between 9th and 14th January 2019, Oxford Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation on behalf of Bicester Heritage on the site of the proposed New Technical Site, Bicester Heritage, Oxfordshire. Seven evaluation trenches were excavated within the historic Bicester Aerodrome (now known as Bicester Heritage and formerly RAF Bicester). The site covers *c* 2.45 Ha and lies in the south-west corner of the aerodrome at the junction of Skimmingdish Lane and the A4421 Buckingham Road. The latter road follows the line of the Roman Road from Alchester to Towcester. The site was first developed in the latter stages of WW1 as a Royal Flying Corps (RFC) Training Depot Station. By the end the war, in 1918, facilities within the site boundary comprised a series of workshops. The site was redeveloped in 1920 and for a short time returned to agricultural use. From 1925 the site was redeveloped as part of the RAF Bicester bomber station. The evaluation did not reveal any significant archaeological features pre-dating WW1. Parts of the site were either truncated to the level of the natural geology or a thick leveling layer of clayey silt was placed above the original topsoil. These groundworks may be connected with a re-alignment of Skimmingdish Lane, which until the latter part of the 20th century ran from east to west across the site. Traces of activity relating to the RAF station were identified in six trenches, mostly comprising electrical and other utility trenches, hardcore/surface layers, one concrete floor, and remains of two foundation walls. The foundation walls roughly match the position of buildings shown on the 1996 OS Map, which were subsequently demolished. The buildings were probably constructed during the 1925 phase of development of the northern part of the site. The features had been heavily disturbed by post-war development. The most recent phases of activity were evidenced by a metal scrapyard rubbish layer in one trench in the southern part of the site, as well as tarmac car park and yard surfaces.

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Figure 1: Site location

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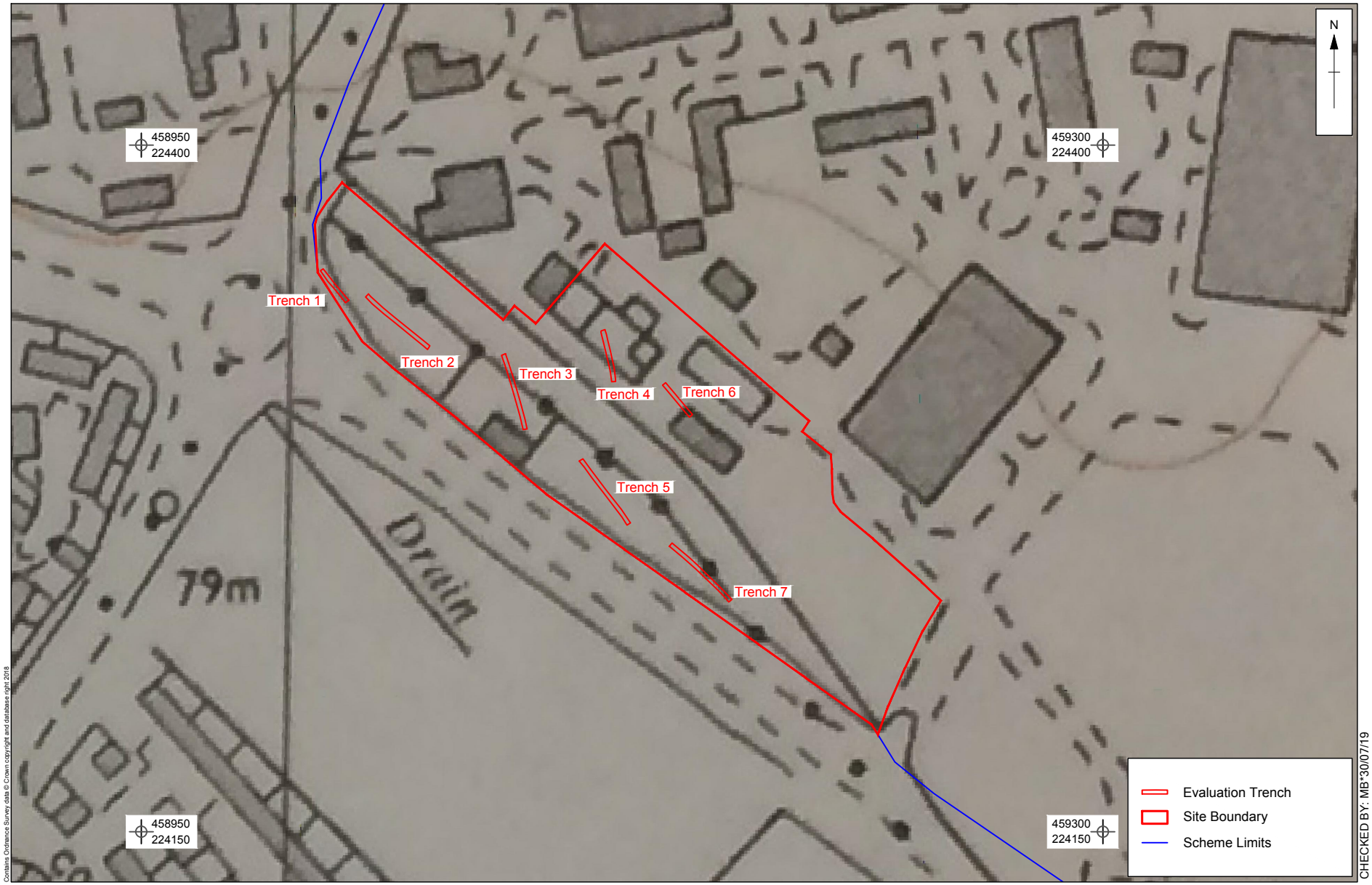

0 100m

Scale at A4 1:2000

Figure 2: Trench location plan overlaid on 1996 OS map

N

459000
224375

459300
224375

Trench 1

208
s.200

102

205

Trench 2

Trench 3

Trench 4

407
s.400

605
s.600

Trench 6

608 & 612
s.601

Trench 5

705
s.700

Trench 7

459000
224175

459300
224175

Archaeological feature
Archaeological intervention
Section
Natural feature
Modern feature
Cable
Evaluation trench
Site boundary
Scheme limits

0 50m

Scale at A3 1:1000

CHECKED BY: MB*30/07/19

X:\o\Oxfordshire Bicester Heritage\NTS_Trench_Evaluation\010Geomatics\02 CAD\LABHEV Bicester Heritage 2019-01-11.dwg(A3 Fig 3)*LABH18*LABHEV*Bicester Heritage*Conan Parsons* 30 Jul 2019

Figure 3: Plan of trenches 1 to 7

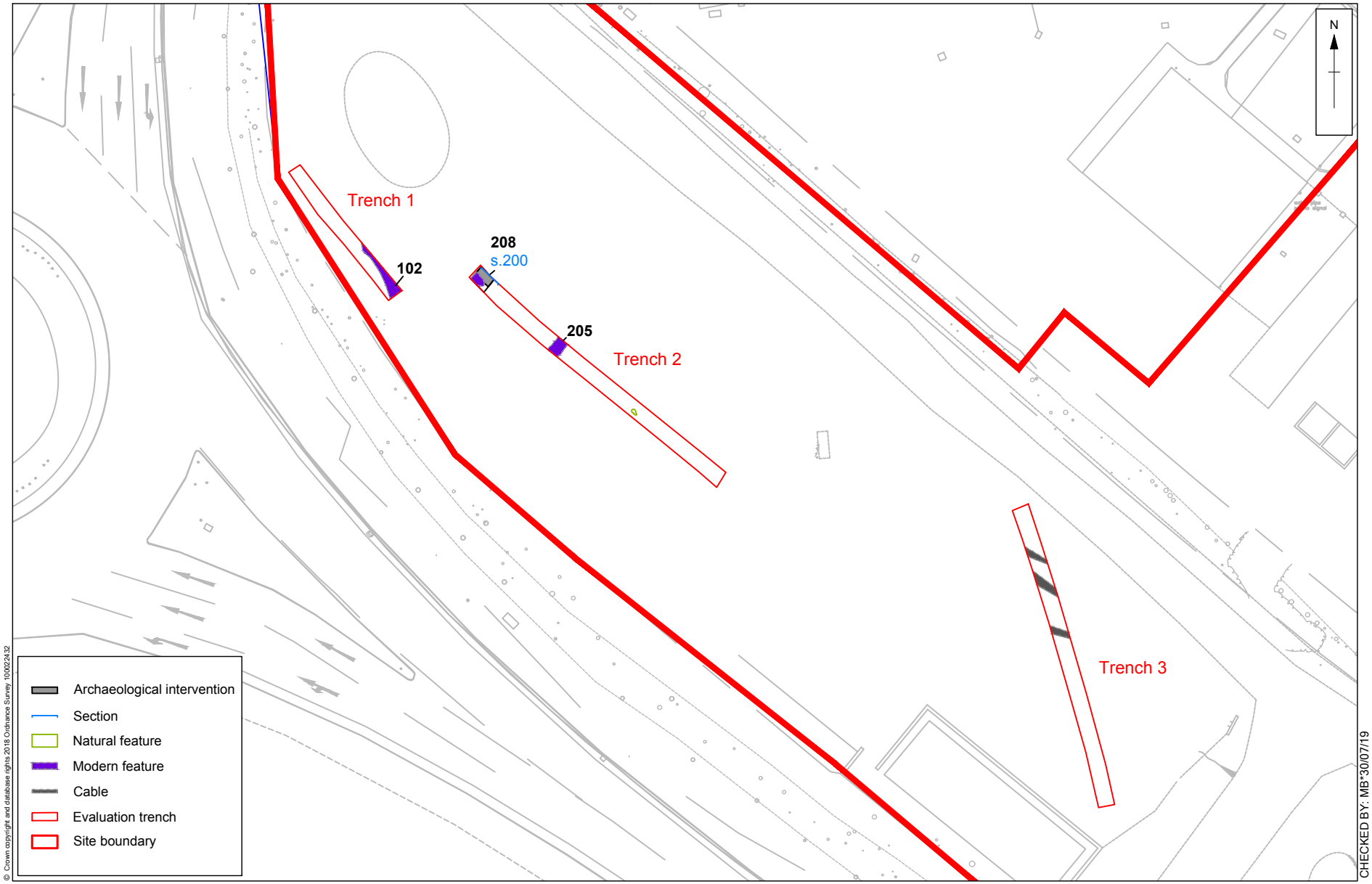

Figure 4: Detailed plan showing Trenches 1-3

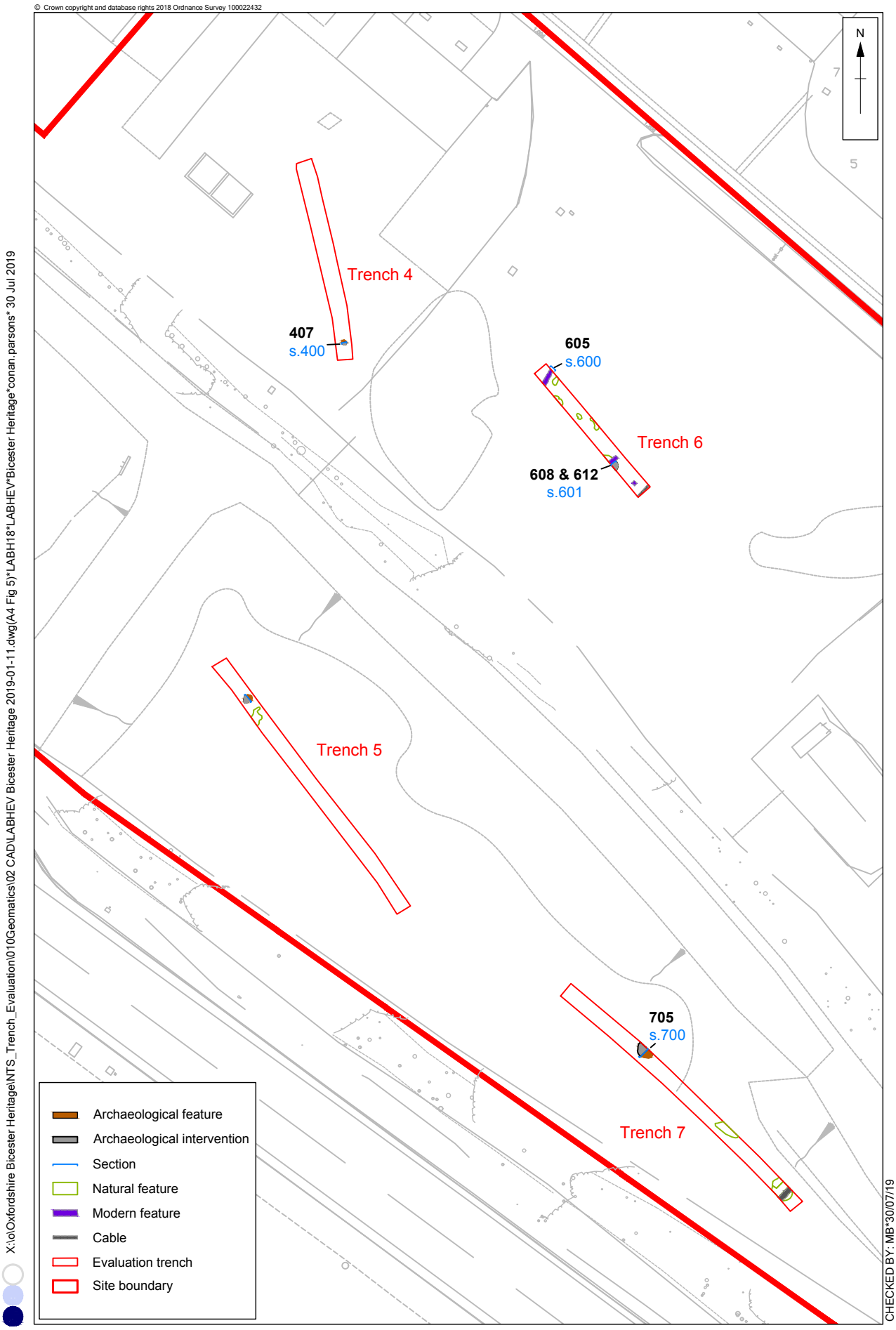

Figure 5: Detailed plan showing Trenches 4-7

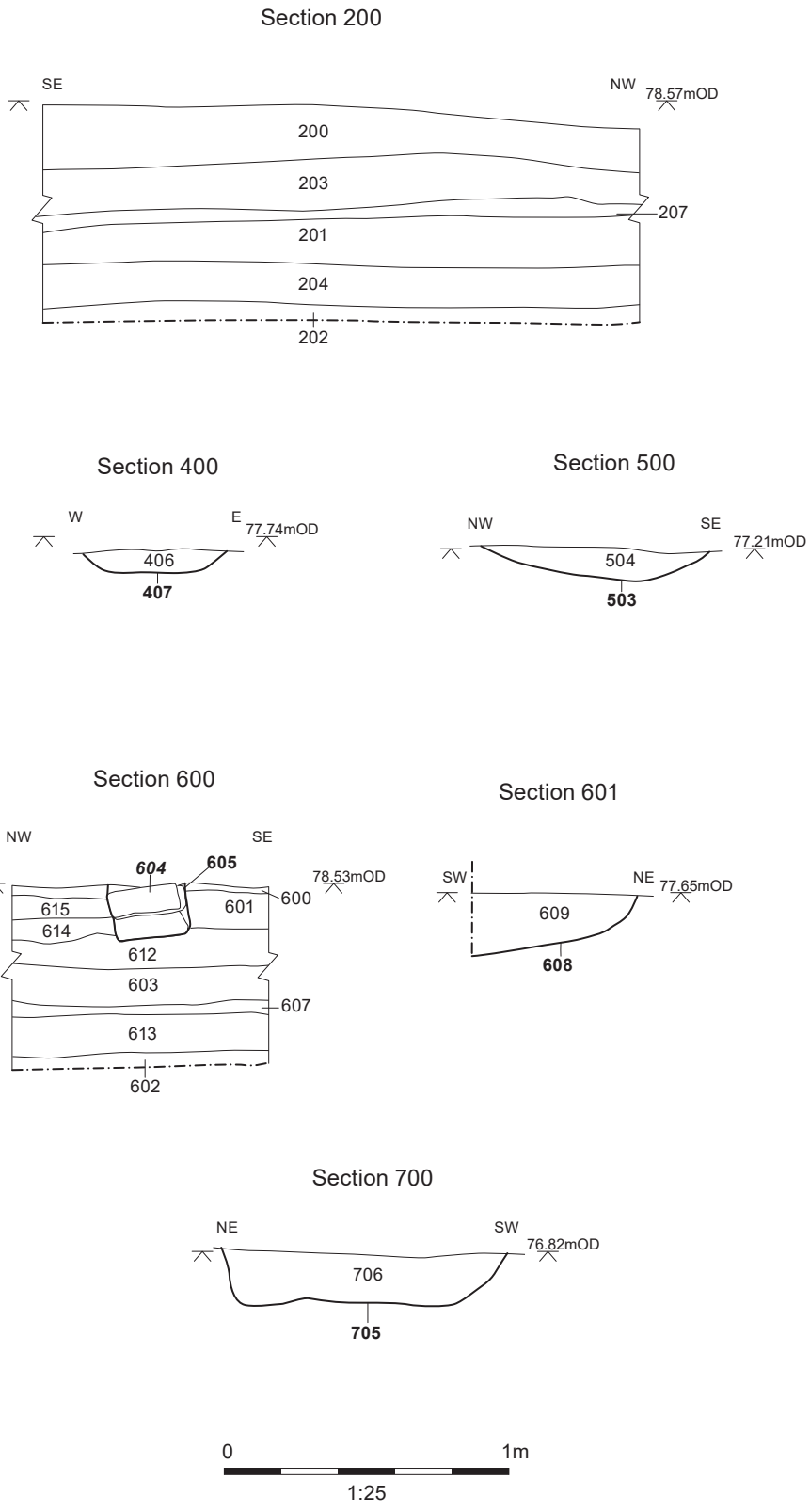

Figure 6: Sections

Plate 1: Trench 1, general view – looking south east

Plate 2: Trench 1, representative section – looking south west

Plate 3: Trench 2, general view – looking north west

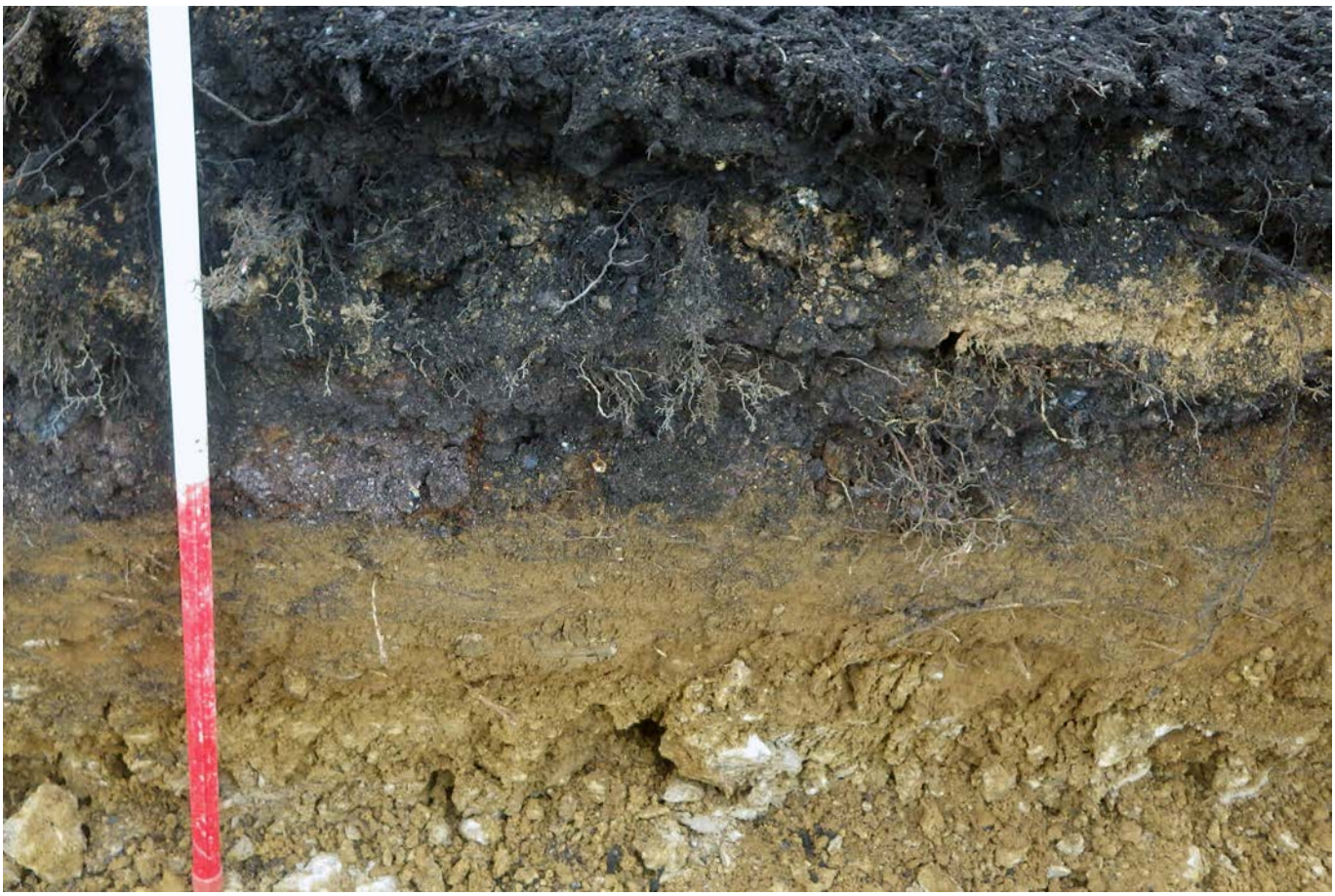

Plate 4: Trench 3, representative section – looking west south west

Plate 5: Trench 4, general view – looking north north west

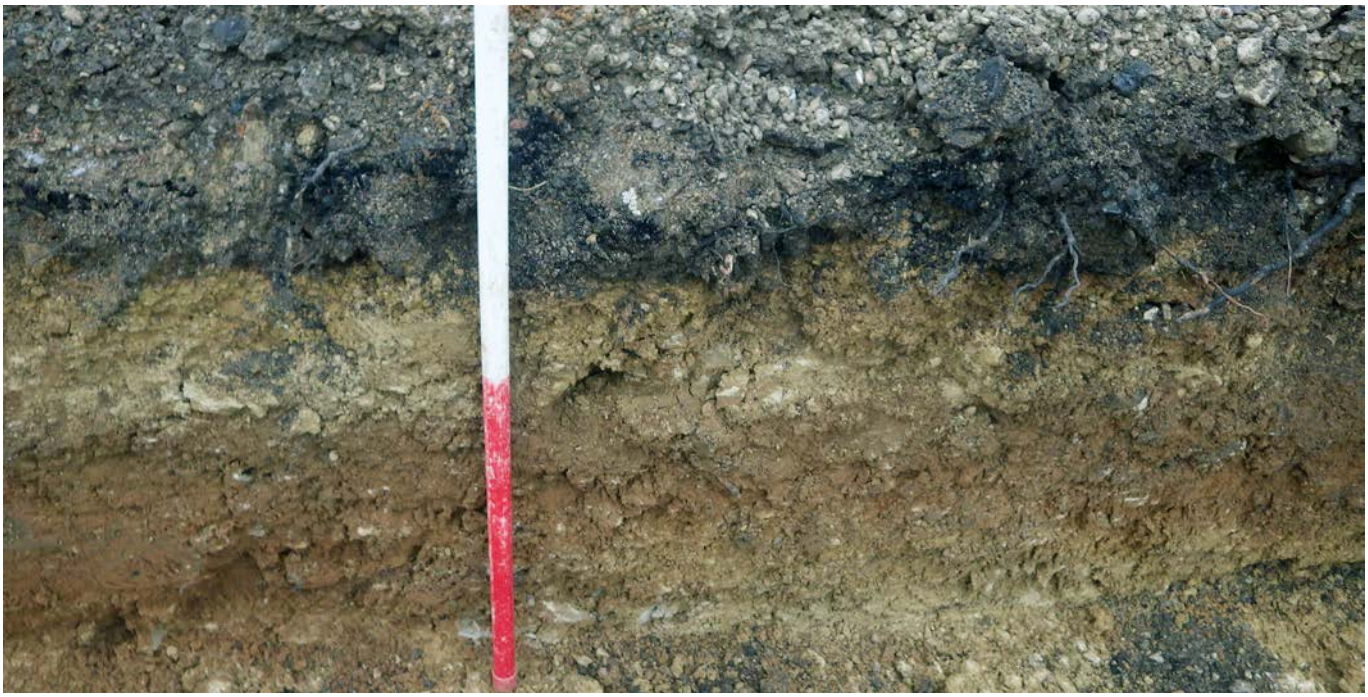

Plate 6: Trench 6, representative section – looking north east

Plate 7: Trench 6, section 600 with contexts 600-607, 612-615 – looking north east

Plate 8: Trench 6, section 601 with contexts 600, 601, 602, 612, 607, 608. 609, 616, and 617 – looking west

Plate 9: Trench 7, representative section – looking south west

Plate 10: Trench 7, section 600 with contexts 705 and 706 – looking south east

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