

**Checkendon Church of England Primary School,
Checkendon, Oxfordshire**

An Archaeological Watching Brief

for

The Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance

by Heather Hopkins and Tim Dawson
Thames Valley Archaeological Services
Ltd

Site Code CPO 09/88

October 2009

Summary

Site name: Checkendon C of E Primary School, Checkendon, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 6633 8307

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 17th – 23rd September 2009

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Tim Dawson

Site code: CPO 09/88

Summary of results: No features or artefacts of archaeological interest were discovered.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Service in due course.

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 23.10.09 Steve Preston ✓ xx.xx.06
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Checkendon Church of England Primary School, Checkendon, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

By Heather Hopkins and Tim Dawson

Report 09/88

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Checkendon Church of England Primary School, Checkendon, Oxfordshire, SU 6633 8307 (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by David Mitchell of the Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance, Diocesan Church House, North Hinksey Lane, Oxford, OX2 ONB. Planning consent (P08/E1363) has been gained from South Oxfordshire District Council for the construction of a new classroom following removal of an existing timber building. The planning consent includes a condition relating to archaeology which requires a watching brief to be carried out during groundworks.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service in response to a brief prepared by Mr Richard Oram that highlighted the archaeological potential of the area (Oram, 2009). The fieldwork was undertaken by Tim Dawson between 17th – 23rd September 2009 and the site code is CPO 09/88.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museums Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the north side of the village of Checkendon which lies within the Chiltern Hills of South Oxfordshire. Checkendon Primary School is just to the south of the parish church (Fig. 2). The site is currently a paved and Tarmaced area with an awning covering. A pergola lies to the west and south and a timber building to the east. The site has been previously levelled during original construction of the school. The site is located on 'sand and gravel of unknown origin' dating to the quaternary period overlying chalk (BGS 1980). A geology of bright red and grey clay with flint inclusions was observed on the site during the watching brief. The site is approximately 170m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The site lies just to the south east of the parish church of SS Peter and Paul. The church is of early medieval date but is also thought to have Saxon origins. The parish church is usually regarded as lying at the core of a historic settlement and Checkendon is mentioned in Domesday Book (Williams and Martin 2002). The current school grounds may also include part of the graveyard of the church which was formerly more extensive. A watching brief was undertaken on the site of the school in 2001 but excavation did not occur below the level of impact of the foundations. A series of pits and two possible linear features were discovered but these were undated (Oram, 2009).

Objectives and methodology

The aims of the project were to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the proposed development. This was to involve the monitoring and examination of all areas of intrusive groundworks, in particular any ground reduction, the digging of foundation trenches and the digging of service runs and soakaways. Archaeological deposits which were threatened by the groundworks will be excavated and recorded. Archaeological deposits which were exposed by overburden removal but were not otherwise to be damaged, would be recorded, and any artefacts indicative of date retrieved, but not further excavated.

Results

The new building

Construction of the new building initially comprised overburden stripping of its footprint to a depth of 0.3m which was insufficient to reveal the natural geology (Fig 3). The foundation trenches were 0.6m wide and between 1.5-1.9m deep. From the surface to a depth of 0.15m was a layer of Tarmac. From 0.15m to 0.28m was a mixture of topsoil and made ground. Between 0.28 to 0.49m was subsoil and beyond this was a red and grey clay with flint inclusions which was the natural geology (Fig. 4).

An area of modern brickwork (an old soakaway) occupied the south east corner. Similarly the north part of the footing trench revealed contained modern brickwork that on further investigation was revealed to be part of a manhole.

No features or artefacts of archaeological interest were discovered in the trenches.

Service trenches

Two existing service trenches were partially re-opened for the insertion of new services. This activity partially exposed the natural geology in the trench sides but no archaeology was observed.

Finds

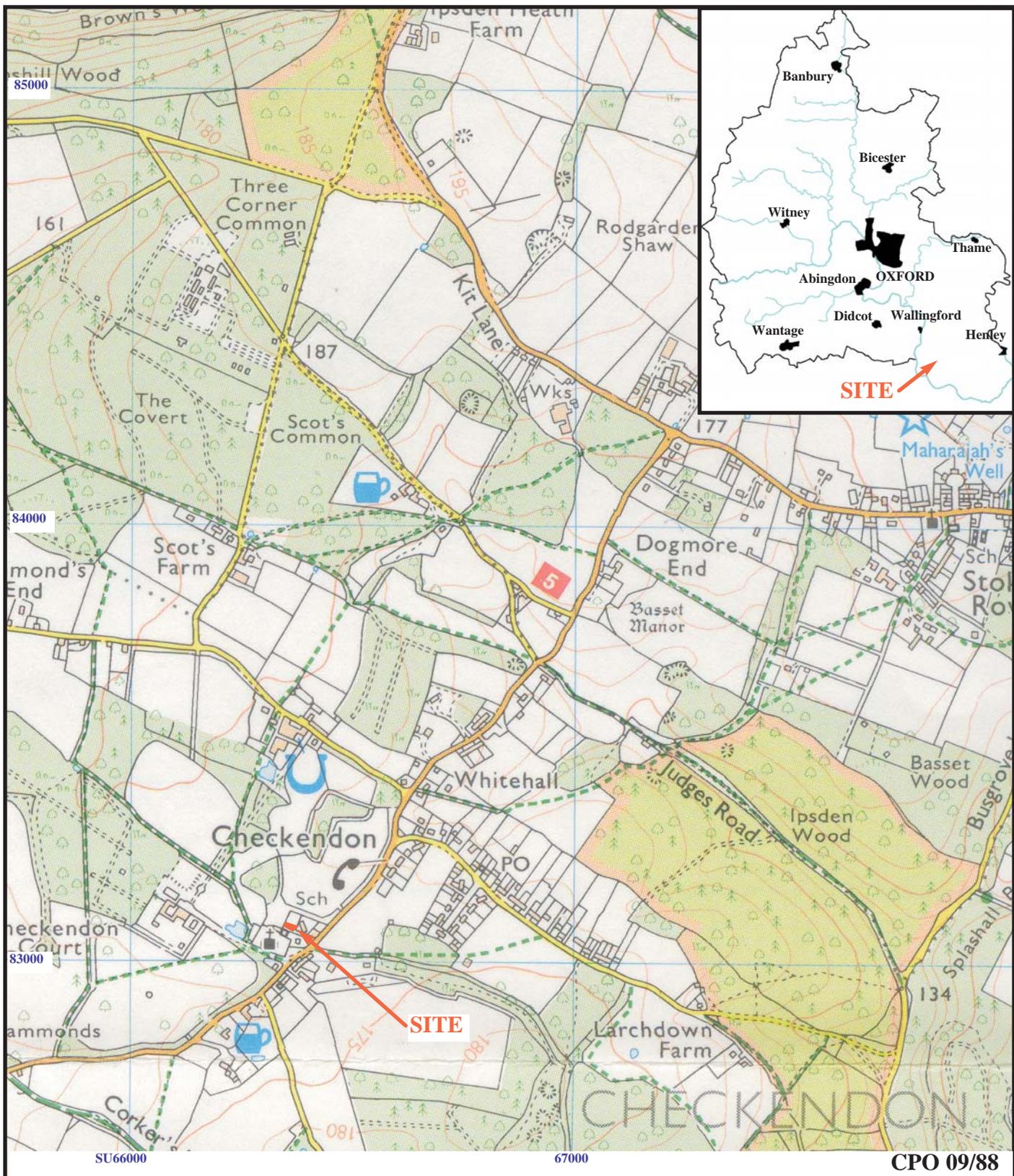
No finds of archaeological significance were discovered.

Conclusion

No finds or features of archaeological interest were discovered. The first 0.3m depth below the surface had been disturbed and contained made ground with modern inclusions. This may have formed part of the original levelling of the site prior to construction of the school. The excavation for the footings was to a depth of 1.5m. but no deposits or artefacts of archaeological interest were observed.

References

- BGS, 1980, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50,000, Sheet 254, Solid and drift Edition, Keyworth
Oram, R, 2009, Checkendon C of E Aided Primary School, Checkendon Design Brief for Archaeological Watching Brief, Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service, Oxford
PPG 16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO
Williams, A and Martin, G H, 2002, *Domesday Book, a complete translation*, London

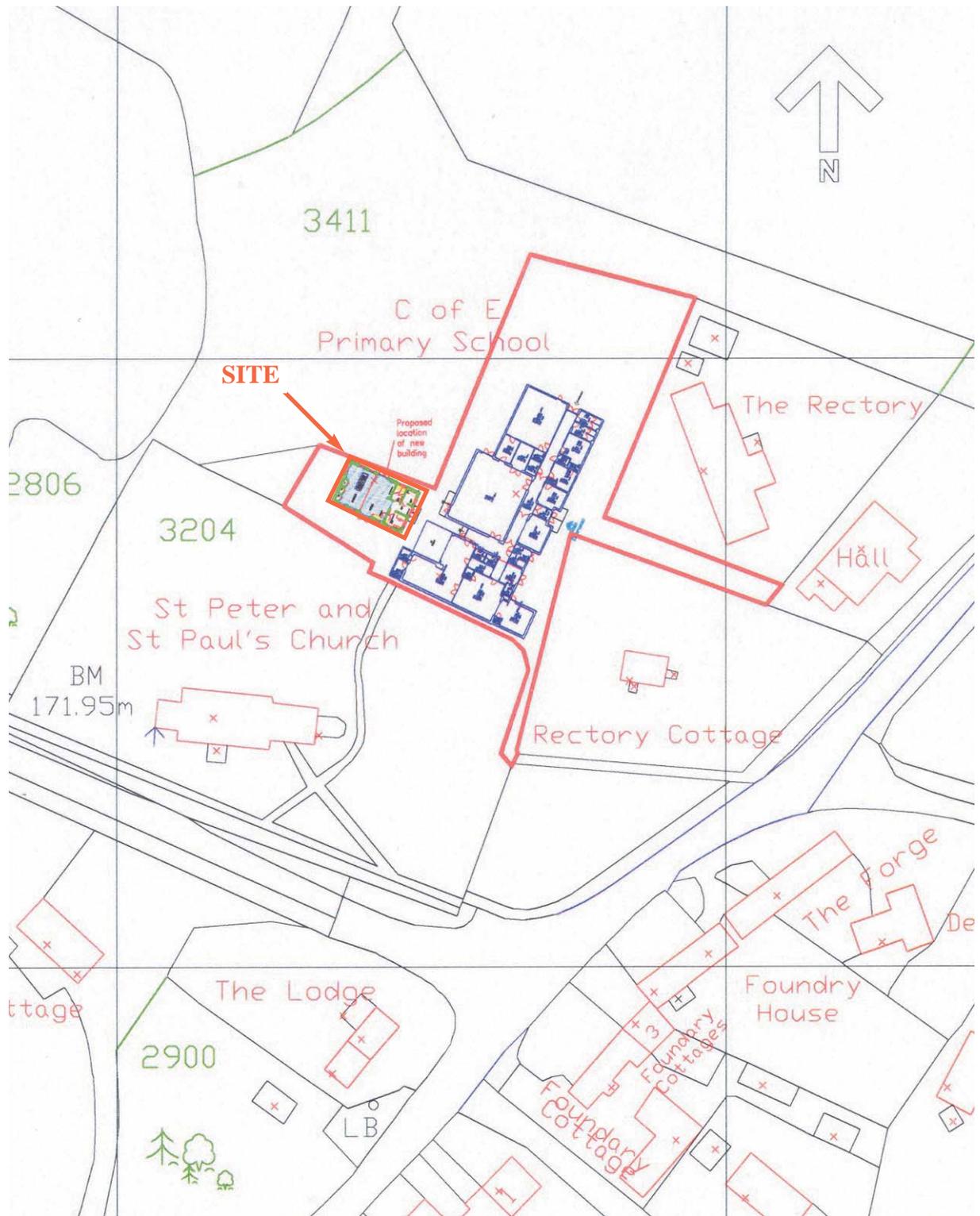


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Figure 1. Location of site within Checkendon and Oxfordshire.

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Figure 2. Location of site within Checkendon and Oxfordshire.

Scale 1:1000

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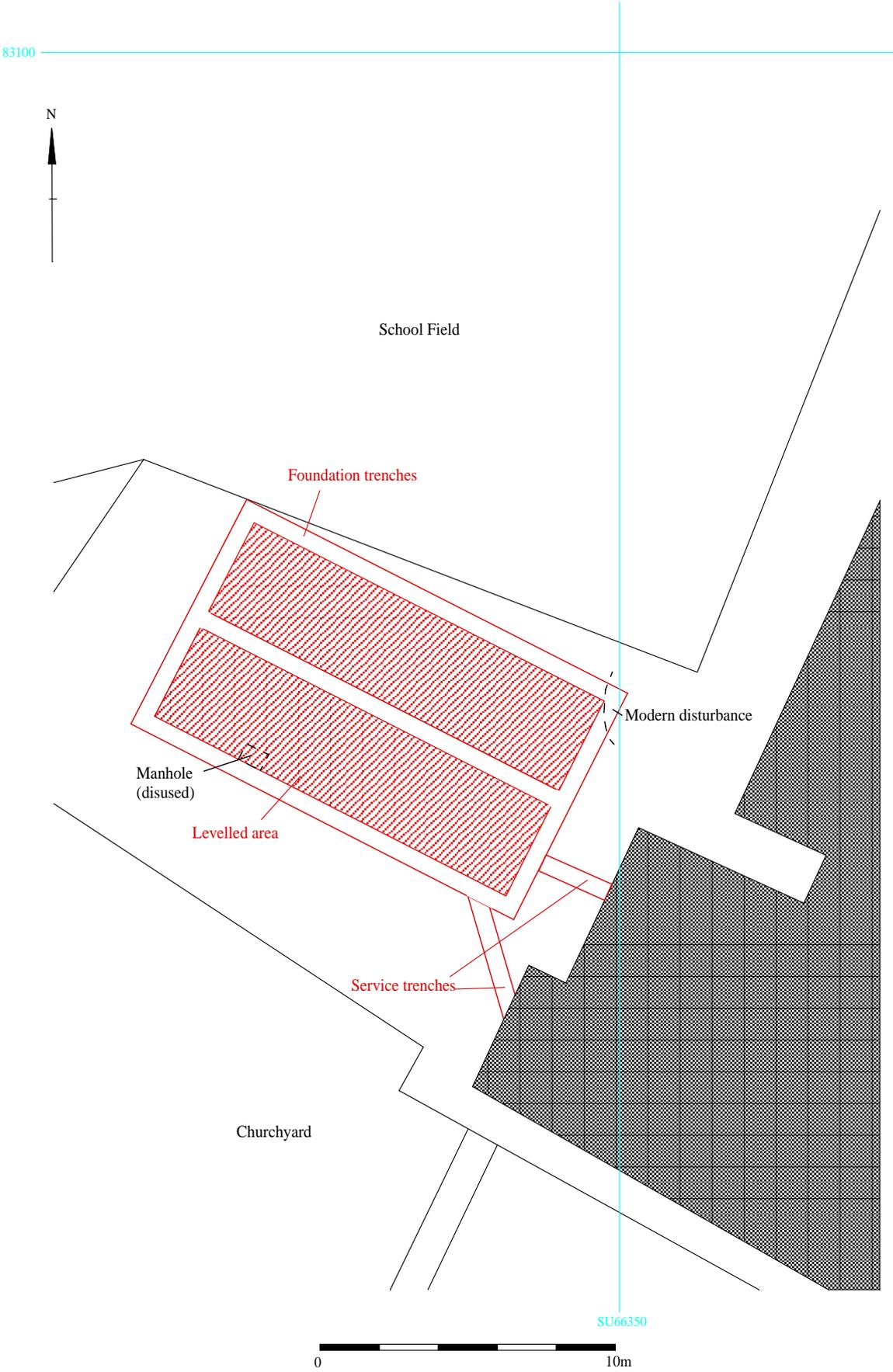


Figure 3. Plan showing the areas observed.

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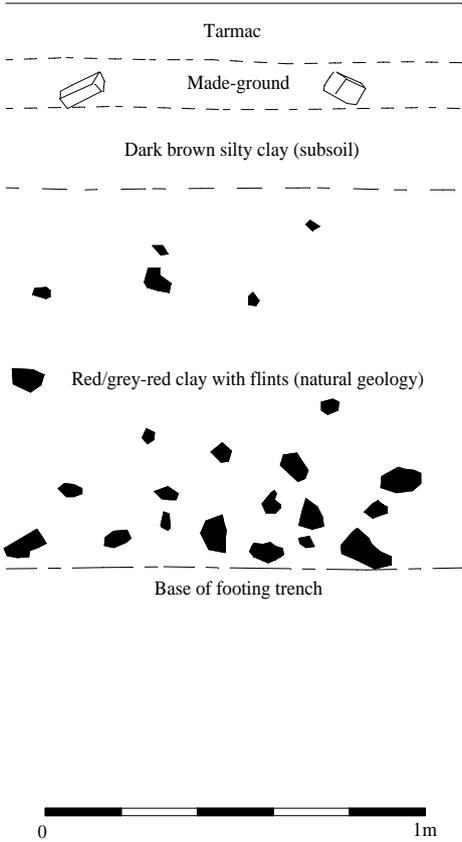


Figure 4. Representative section of the stratigraphy observed on site.