

**Former St Catherine's School, Grand Drive,
Raynes Park, London Borough of Merton**

An Archaeological Evaluation

for Bewley Homes Ltd

by Steve Ford

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code GAV07

June 2007

Summary

Site name: Former St Catherine's School, Grand Drive, Raynes Park, London Borough of Merton

Grid reference: TQ 2335 6785

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 1st–5th June 2007

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Steve Ford

Site code: GAV07

Area of site: c. 1.26ha

Summary of results: The majority of the trenches dug revealed no finds nor deposits of archaeological interest and some trenches revealed extensive truncation of the archaeologically relevant horizon. One trench (2) revealed a shallow undated gully-like feature which is a possible gully or wheel rut. It is considered that the site has no archaeological potential.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Museum of London in due course, with accession code GAV07.

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Former St Catherine's School, Grand Drive, Raynes Park, London Borough of Merton An Archaeological Evaluation

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Report 07/62

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at the Former St Catherine's School, Grand Drive, Raynes Park, London Borough of Merton (TQ 2335 6785) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Gary Fish of Bewley Homes, Bewley House, Park Road, Esher, Surrey, KT10 8NP.

Planning permission (App no 02/P2691) was granted by the London Borough of Merton for the redevelopment of this site for housing. This consent was subject to a condition (12) relating to archaeology requiring a programme of archaeological works, beginning with the field evaluation detailed here but possibly requiring further, more extensive works dependent on the results of the evaluation.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the Borough's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Diane Walls of Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (English Heritage), archaeological adviser to the Borough. The fieldwork was undertaken by Steve Ford and James Haygreen between 1st and 5th June 2007 and the site code is GAV07. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at the Museum of London in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site comprises a basically rectangular parcel of land located on the west side of Grand Drive and to the east of Pyl Brook. Land to the north and south are former playing fields (Fig. 2). The majority of the school buildings had been demolished by the time of the fieldwork, although some active services were still present and zones of the site contained preserved trees. The site lies on virtually level ground at a height of approximately 16m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is shown as gravel on the British Geological Survey map with London Clay nearby (BGS 1981) Apart from a few relict traces of gravel, the underlying geology encountered in all the evaluation trenches was London Clay.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems partly from the relatively large size of the site and partly as it lies close to the Pyl Brook. Sites adjacent to water courses are regarded as being preferred locations of early (prehistoric) settlement. In general the site lies within an area with relatively little recorded archaeology though the medieval settlement of West Barnes lies to the north-west, though its exact location is unknown (MoLAS 2000). The Greater London Sites and Monuments Record was consulted on 11th May for a 750m radius around the site. Apart from records of sites of modern periods, this revealed only a single archaeological entry. From a location 150m or so from the northern border of the site, a small scale evaluation (GDD97: Fig. 1) recorded a collection of prehistoric (Neolithic/Bronze Age) pottery, struck flint and burnt flint. It was not considered by the excavators that this represented *in-situ* occupation but had been disturbed by water. The area of the former playing fields to the immediate south-east is known to have been a landfill site.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development. The specific aims of the project were to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on the site, given that parts of it have been previously developed and to determine if archaeologically relevant levels of any period are present.

Eight trenches were to be excavated, each measuring 20m in length and 1.6m in width using a machine fitted with a ditching bucket and under constant archaeological supervision. Spoilheaps were to be searched for finds. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Results

Nine trenches were eventually excavated using a 360⁰ machine fitted with a ditching bucket. They ranged in length from 7.3m to 23.6m (Fig. 3). The trenches were all 2.2m wide.

Trench 1

This trench was 7.3m long, and 0.5m deep and orientated NW–SE. The stratigraphy encountered for the southernmost part of the trench consisted of 0.25m of demolition debris overlying an orange/brown clay which was the natural geology. However, the natural geology was only observed for the first 2.5m of the trench from

the southern end with the remainder of the trench comprising clay and rubble backfill, presumably a product of the foundations and their removal during demolition. The natural geology had been excessively truncated in this part of the trench. No archaeological finds nor deposits were revealed.

Trench 2 (Pl. 1)

This trench was 16.1m long, and between 0.7m and 0.5m deep aligned roughly south-north. The stratigraphy encountered in this trench at the south end consisted of 0.25m of turf and topsoil above 0.15m of made ground comprising clay with some brick above a buried old topsoil/subsoil 0.1m thick above the orange/brown clay which was the natural geology. The buried topsoil/subsoil gradually petered out towards the northern end. At the northern end of the trench a small linear feature (1) was observed, 0.27m across and 0.14m deep, aligned west-east and cut into the natural clay. It lay beneath the level of made ground (Fig. 4, Plate 1) in an area where the buried soil was not present. It is possibly a gully. It contained two fragments of burnt flint but no other dating evidence. This feature lay approximately parallel to a nearby drain (beyond the trench) and it is considered that it might be a product of wheel rutting during the original construction of the drain and school.

Trench 3 (Pl. 2)

This trench was 23.6m long and 0.5m deep orientated SW-NE. The stratigraphy encountered consisted of 0.06m of Tarmac above 0.2m of concrete and hardcore above the natural clay geology, here blue/grey in colour due to lack of oxygen or possibly contamination. No archaeological finds nor deposits were revealed.

Trench 4

This trench was 20.4m long, and 0.35m deep orientated SE-NW. The stratigraphy encountered consisted of 0.3m of demolition rubble directly above the natural clay geology, here also blue/grey in colour when first revealed but becoming orange following exposure to the air. No archaeological finds nor deposits were revealed.

Trench 5

This trench was 20.7m long, and 0.4m deep orientated SE-NW. The stratigraphy encountered consisted of 0.06m of Tarmac above 0.35m of brick rubble above the natural clay geology, here also blue/grey in colour when first revealed but becoming orange following exposure to the air. No archaeological finds nor deposits were revealed.

Trench 6 (Pl. 3)

This trench was 17.1m long, and 0.6m deep orientated SE–NW. The stratigraphy encountered consisted of 0.1m of turf and topsoil above 0.32m of brown silty clay subsoil above the natural geology, orange/brown clay. Several small and large services were observed. One linear feature was investigated but found to contain wood, concrete and brick and is presumably a product of the school construction. No archaeological finds nor deposits were revealed.

Trench 7 (Pl. 4)

This trench was 20.7m long, and 0.6m deep orientated east–west. The stratigraphy encountered consisted of 0.2m of turf and topsoil above 0.1m of made ground (clay with some brick, etc) above 0.1m of buried old topsoil above the natural geology, orange/brown clay. Several service trenches including land drains were noted but no archaeological finds nor deposits were revealed.

Trench 8

This trench was 19.7m long, and 0.5m deep orientated SE–NW. The stratigraphy encountered consisted of 0.2m of turf and topsoil above 0.15m of made ground (clay with some brick, etc) above 0.1m of buried old topsoil/subsoil above the natural geology, which here comprised an orange/brown clay with gravel patches. Several service trenches including land drains were noted but no archaeological finds nor deposits were revealed.

Trench 9

This trench was 13.8m long, 0.65m deep and orientated east–west. It was dug to compensate for the shortening of Trench 1. The stratigraphy encountered consisted wholly of demolition debris and made ground within brick and concrete within a clay matrix. Undisturbed natural geology was not observed and it is clear that the trench lies within a zone of truncation from the digging of the school foundations and their removal during demolition. No archaeological finds nor deposits were revealed.

Finds

The only artefacts recovered not of obviously modern date were a fragment (5g) of burnt flint from Trench 8 and two fragments (8g) found in gully or rut (1) in Trench 2. These were not retained.

Conclusion

For the majority of the trenches no finds nor deposits of any possible archaeological interest were observed, with two trenches on or close to the footprints of the previous school showing extensive truncation of the natural geology. Several service trenches were noted. A single trench (2) revealed a shallow gully-like feature from which were recovered two fragments of burnt flint but no other dating evidence. However, it is most likely that this feature is a wheel rut associated with construction of a nearby drain. On the basis of these results, it is considered that the site has no archaeological potential.

References

BGS, 1981, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 270, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
MoLAS, 2000, *The archaeology of Greater London; an assessment of archaeological evidence for human presence in the area now covered by Greater London*, MoLAS Monogr
PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO

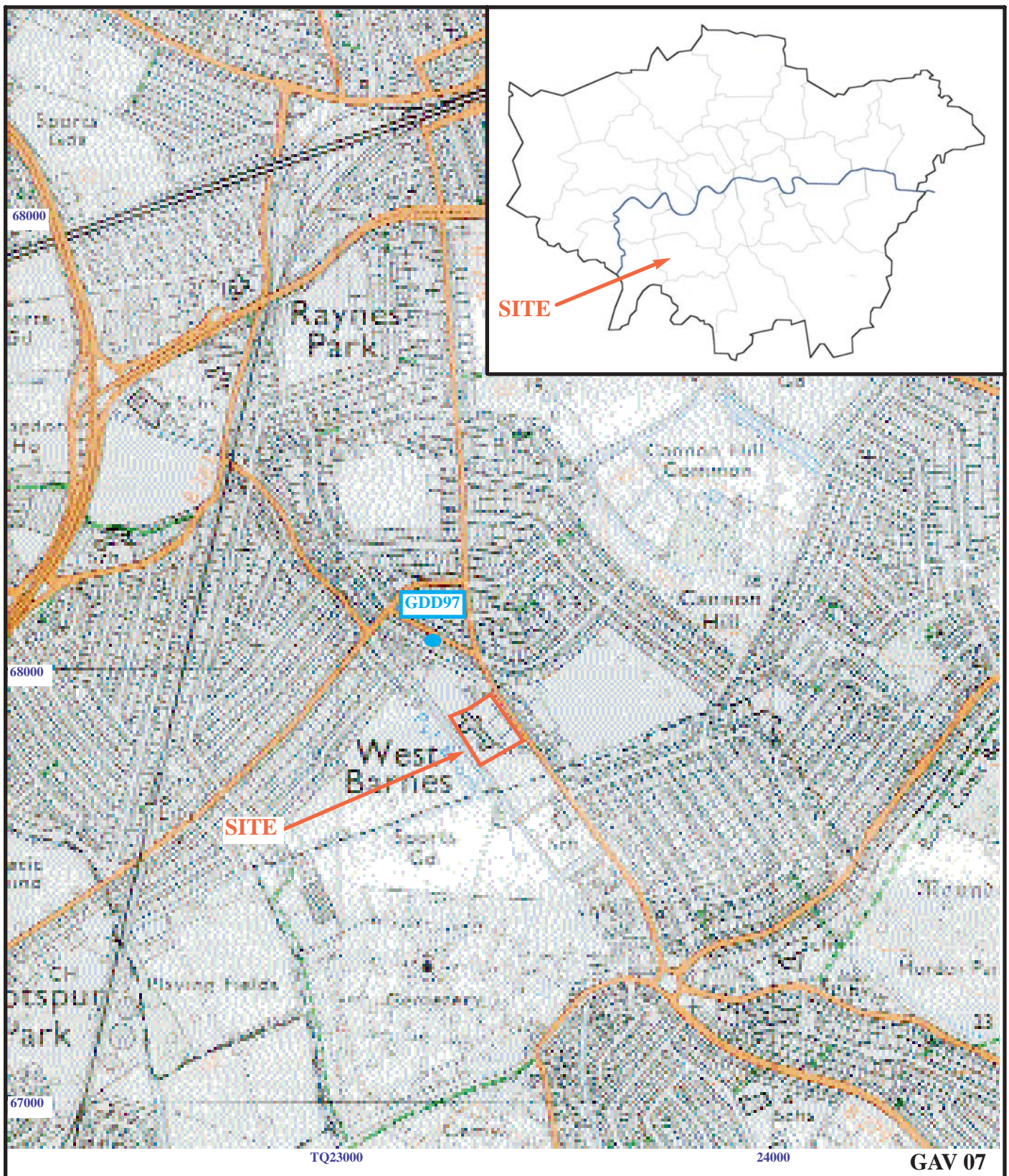
APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at south or west end

Trench	Length (m)	Breadth (m)	Depth (m)	Comment
1	7.3	2.2	0.5	0-0.25m demolition debris; 0.25m+ orange clay (natural geology) (south end only for 2.5m) (15.82m AOD) made ground (clay/brick) elsewhere.
2	16.1	2.2	0.7 (SW); 0.5 (NE)	0-0.25m turf/topsoil; 0.25-0.4m made ground (clay/brick); 0.4-0.5m buried old topsoil; 0.5m+ orange clay with some gravel patches (natural geology) Possible gully or rut at north end (1) (15.62m AOD). [Plate 1]
3	23.6	2.2	0.5	0-0.06 Tarmac; 0.06-0.18m concrete; 0.18-0.26m brick rubble hardcore; 0.26m+ blue/grey clay natural geology (16.04m AOD). [Plate 2]
4	20.4	2.2	0.35	0-0.3m demolition debris; 0.3m+ blue/grey clay natural geology (15.9m AOD).
5	20.7	2.2	0.4	0-0.06 Tarmac; 0.06-0.35m brick rubble hardcore; 0.35m+ blue/grey clay natural geology (15.79m AOD).
6	17.1	2.2	0.6	0-0.1m turf/topsoil; 0.1-0.42m brown silty clay subsoil; 0.42m+ orange clay (natural geology) (15.67m AOD) Several service trenches [Plate 3]
7	20.7	2.2	0.6	0-0.2m turf/topsoil; 0.2-0.3m made ground (clay/brick); 0.3-0.4m buried old topsoil; 0.4m+ orange clay with some gravel patches (natural geology) Several service trenches (16.01m AOD) [Plate 4]
8	19.7	2.2	0.5	0-0.2m turf/topsoil; 0.2-0.35m made ground (clay/brick); 0.35-0.45m buried old topsoil/subsoil; 0.45m+ orange clay with some gravel patches (natural geology) Several service trenches (16.10m AOD).
9	13.8	2.2	0.65	0-0.6m demolition debris; 0.6m+ made ground (clay/brick). Natural geology not observed

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
2	1	50	Gully or rut	Undated	Burnt flint

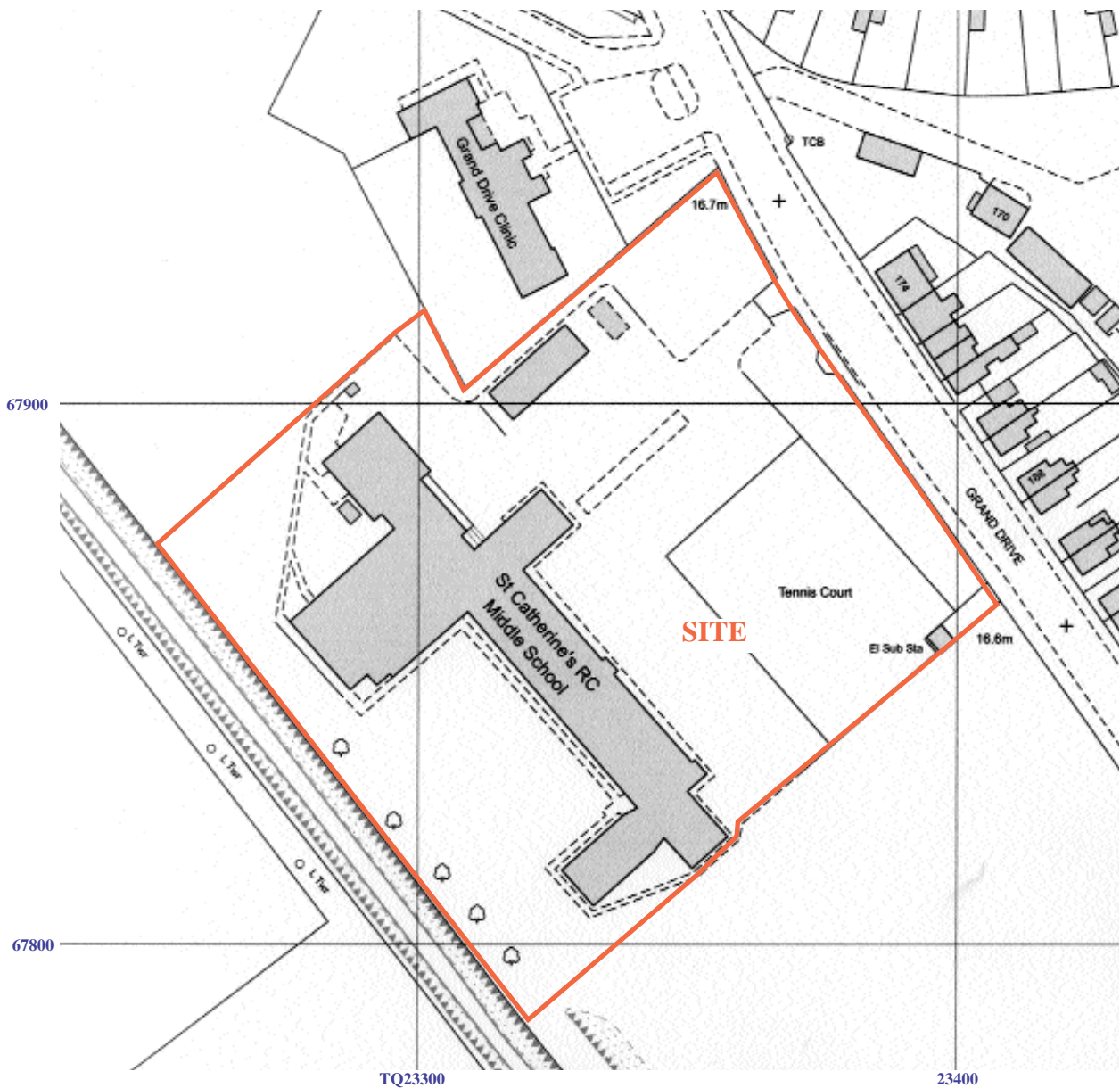


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Figure 1. Location of site within Raynes Park and Greater London.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site on Grand Drive.

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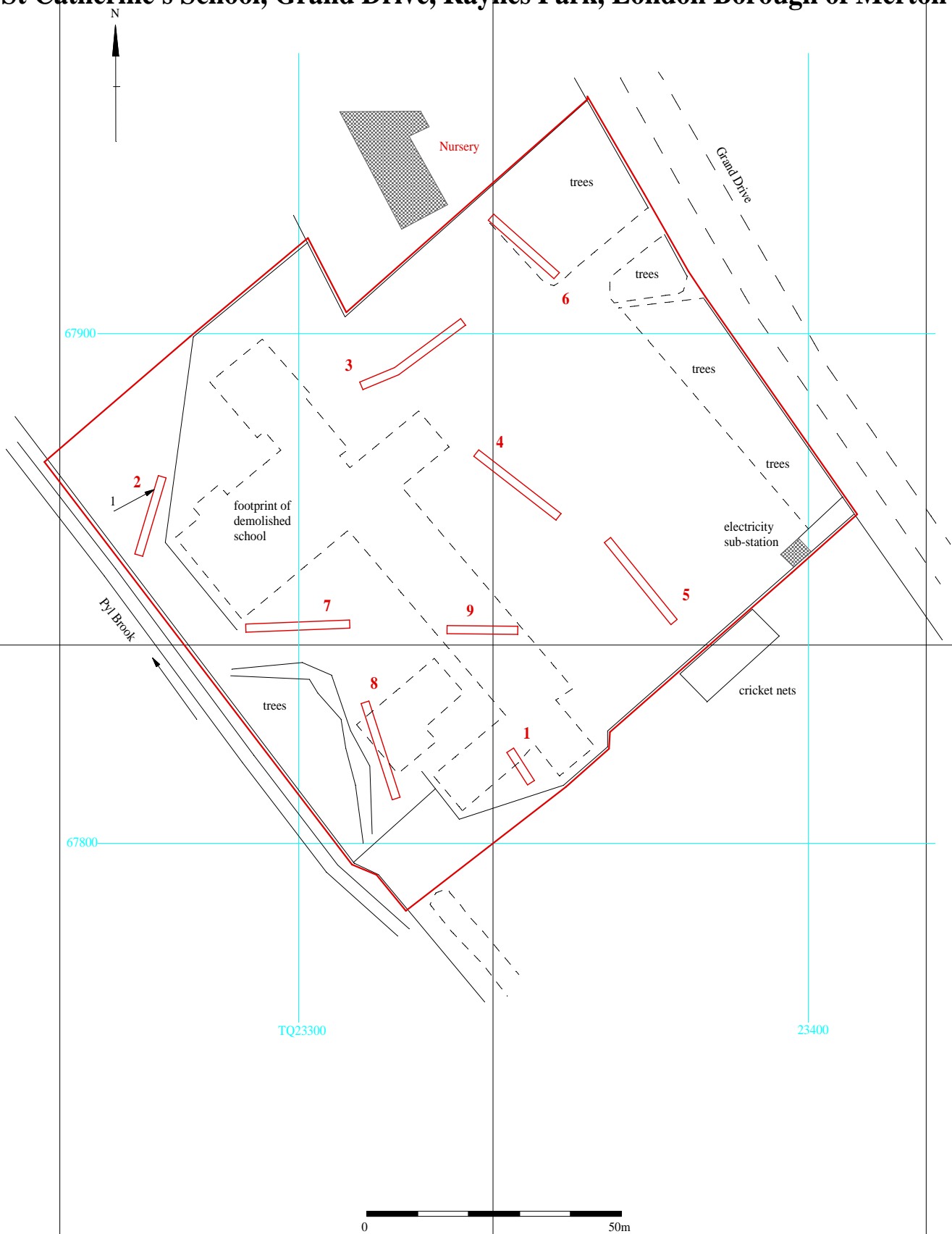


Figure 3. Location of trenches.

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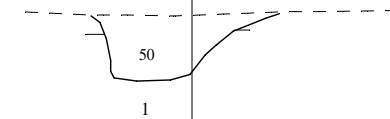
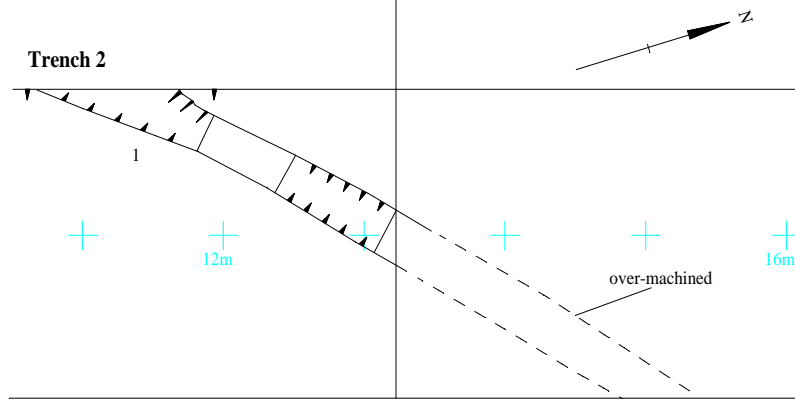


Figure 4. Plan and section of feature 1 in trench 2.

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Plate 1. Trench 2, possible feature 1 looking north, horizontal scale 1m, vertical scale 0.5m.



Plate 2. Trench 3 looking south west, horizontal scale 2m, vertical scale 0.5m.



Plate 3. Trench 6 looking south, scales: 2m and 0.5m.



Plate 4. Trench 8 looking south, scales: 2m and 0.5m.