

**Moathouse Cottage, White's Hill,
Sulhamstead, West Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Mr and Mrs R D Turner**

by Simon Cass

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code MCS 07/16

February 2007

Summary

Site name: Moathouse Cottage, White's Hill, Sulhamstead, Berkshire, RG7 4EN

Grid reference: SU 6420 6780

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 1st–2nd February 2007

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Simon Cass

Site code: MCS 07/16

Summary of results: Post-Medieval made ground/rubble dump deposits.

Monuments identified: None.

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

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 15.02.07

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Report 07/16

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Moathouse Cottage, White's Hill, Sulhamstead, Berkshire, RG7 4EN (SU 6420 6780) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr George Florey, 50 Addison Gardens, Kensington, London, W14 0DP on behalf of Mr and Mrs R D Turner.

Planning permission and Listed Building consent are to be sought from West Berkshire Council to erect a two-storey extension to the rear of this property, which is a Listed Building, and an application is to be made to the Secretary of State for Scheduled Monument consent. The property stands within a Scheduled Monument but is on unscheduled land itself. The proposed new extension would impinge upon the Scheduled area. As a consequence of the possibility of archaeological deposits on the site which may be damaged or destroyed by groundworks and to assess the potential impact upon a Scheduled Ancient Monument, a field observation has been requested in the form of an evaluation. The evaluation was to take place within the area excluded from the Scheduling.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), *Planning and the Historic Environment* (PPG15), the *Scheduled Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act* (1979), and the Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Duncan Coe, Archaeological Officer with West Berkshire Council in accordance with a brief issued by him. The fieldwork was undertaken by Simon Cass and Andrew Lawler on the 1st and 2nd February 2007 and the site code is MCS 07/16. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at West Berkshire Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located in the southern part of the parish of Sulhamstead overlooking the Kennet Valley (Fig. 1). It lies on ground which slopes to the north near to the crest of Whites Hill, at a height of approximately 90m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is shown as Plateau Gravel but close to the boundary with London Clay (BGS 1946). A stony yellow-brown clay was observed in both trenches.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a brief for the project provided by Mr Duncan Coe of West Berkshire Council. In summary this potential stems from its location within a medieval moated manor with associated fishponds (Plate 3). The site is a scheduled monument (SAM 12027); although the area of the house, adjacent concreted areas and ground underneath them have all been excluded from the scheduled area. The current building is itself listed Grade II and is believed to have been constructed about AD1620. The cottage is known to have been extended in the 1970s and the dining room was underpinned in the 1990s.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine if any archaeologically relevant levels have survived within the area in question with regard to modern or earlier disturbance, the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any such archaeological deposits particularly any relating to the use of the moat during the medieval period, its date of construction and the social status of the users. In addition, the evaluation was to attempt to determine if there was any evidence of immediately pre-medieval occupation on the site, and to attempt to understand the relationship between the listed building and the scheduled moated site.

It was intended to excavate two trenches, one measuring 1m by 2m and the other 1m by 1m, by hand. The two trenches were sited to investigate the area most likely to be affected by the proposed extension but to lie outside the scheduled area.

Results

The two trenches were dug by hand as close as possible to their intended position. Trench 2 was reduced in size due to access restrictions. A list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trench 1 (Plate 1)

This trench was 1.0m wide by 1.5m long and orientated north-west/south-east. The final depth of the trench was 0.9m. The stratigraphy comprised 0.3m of blackish brown silt with various brick and tile inclusions. This sealed a made ground deposit of 0.1m depth, a mid yellow/brown silty clay which contained brick and tile fragments, glass and white transfer-printed earthenware pottery. Below this was a layer (0.1m) of demolition debris, mostly a mortar/cement deposit with brick and tile fragments, flints and stones. This was truncated by a V-shaped cut,

apparently extending out from the house, and filled with similar mortar/cement and brick and tile fragments as the demolition layer. Underlying the demolition layer was a mid yellowish/brown silty clay deposit 0.40m deep which contained white earthenware pottery, glass, iron nails and a bucket handle together with brick and tile fragments, flints and stones. This deposit is probably the level of the 19th /20th century land surface. This deposit overlay the natural geology, a mid orange/yellowish brown clay with occasional stone inclusions. Root disturbance was apparent throughout the trench, at every level, and animal burrowing action was evident in the base of the trench. It is worth noting that during excavation, all of the layers sloped down slightly to the north-east, reflecting the topography of area on the lip of the backfilled moat

Trench 2 (Plate 2)

This trench was 0.45m wide by 0.6m long, orientated north-east/south-west. It was 0.5m deep and encountered the same natural geology at the base of the trench as in Trench 1. The stratigraphy in this trench consisted of 0.05m of concrete (the existing path around the house) above 0.15m of topsoil/garden soil. Below this was 0.15m of demolition/construction debris akin to that in Trench 1. Under this layer was 0.05m of blackish brown silt, possibly a buried soil, with brick and tile fragments in it. Below this layer was 0.1m of a pale grey, possibly ash, layer again with brick and tile fragments. This lay directly above the natural orange/yellowish brown clay and stones.

Finds

The finds from both trenches comprised mainly 19th/20th century material, mass produced white earthenware pottery, bottle glass, machined metalwork, and brick and tile. These objects were retained on-site.

Conclusion

This evaluation uncovered only relatively recent deposits with no evidence of medieval activity in the areas excavated, although the lower deposits in Trench 2 remain undated. This is somewhat surprising given the site's location within a medieval moated manor complex, but it should be recalled that the trenches were not located over the moat itself. None of the deposits encountered can be related to either the medieval site or the 17th century building. The 19th/20th century deposits in the trenches are probably explained by alterations to Moathouse Cottage occurring at this time, with the overburden and detritus from these works being dumped on

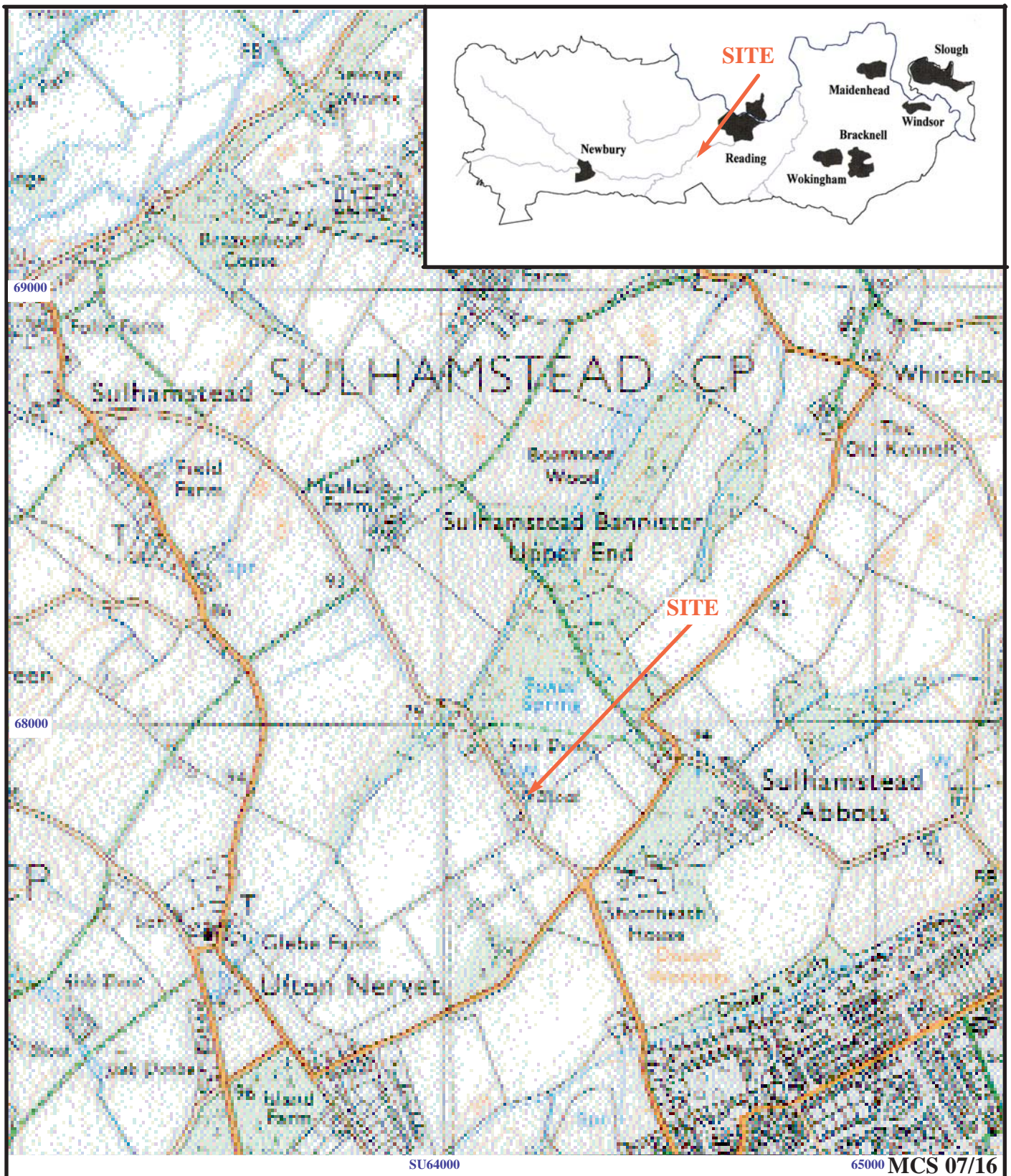
the site and spilling into the partially filled moat. This may also explain the slight sloping of the deposits in the direction of the moat.

References

BGS, 1946, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 268, Drift Edition, Keyworth
PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO

APPENDIX 1: Trench details

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	1.5	1.0	0.9	0-0.3m topsoil/garden soil; 0.3-0.4m yellow/brown silty clay; 0.4-0.5m demolition/construction debris; 0.5-0.9m yellow/brown silty clay; 0.9m+ natural geology (orange/yellowish brown clay and stones). [Plates 1 and 3]
2	0.6	0.45	0.5	0-0.05m concrete path; 0.05-0.2m topsoil/garden soil; 0.2-0.35m demolition/construction debris; 0.35-0.4m black silt (buried topsoil?); 0.4-0.5m pale grey, (ash) layer; 0.5m+ natural geology (orange/yellowish brown clay and stones). [Plate 2]

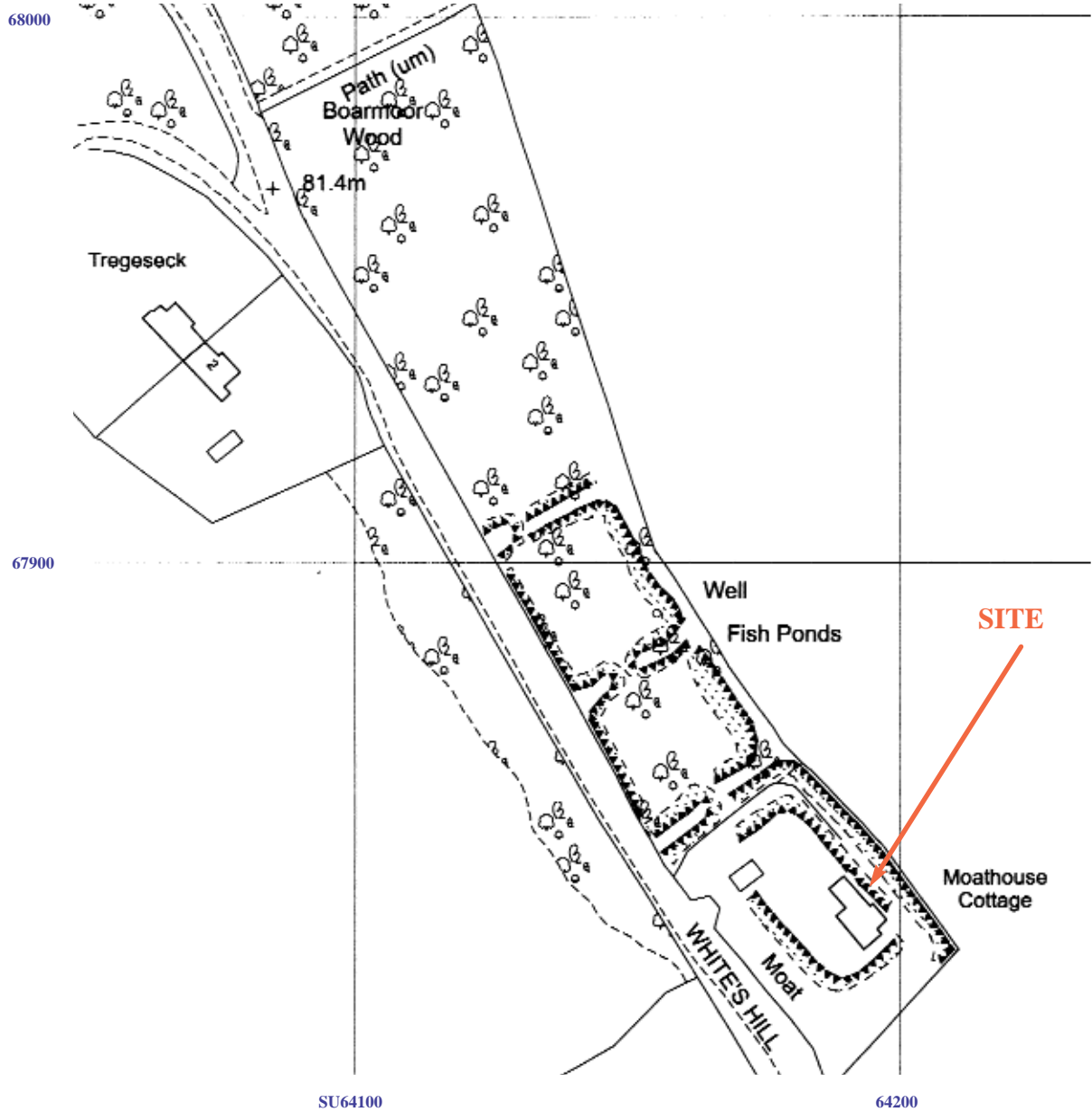


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Figure 1. Location of site within Sulhamstead and Berkshire.

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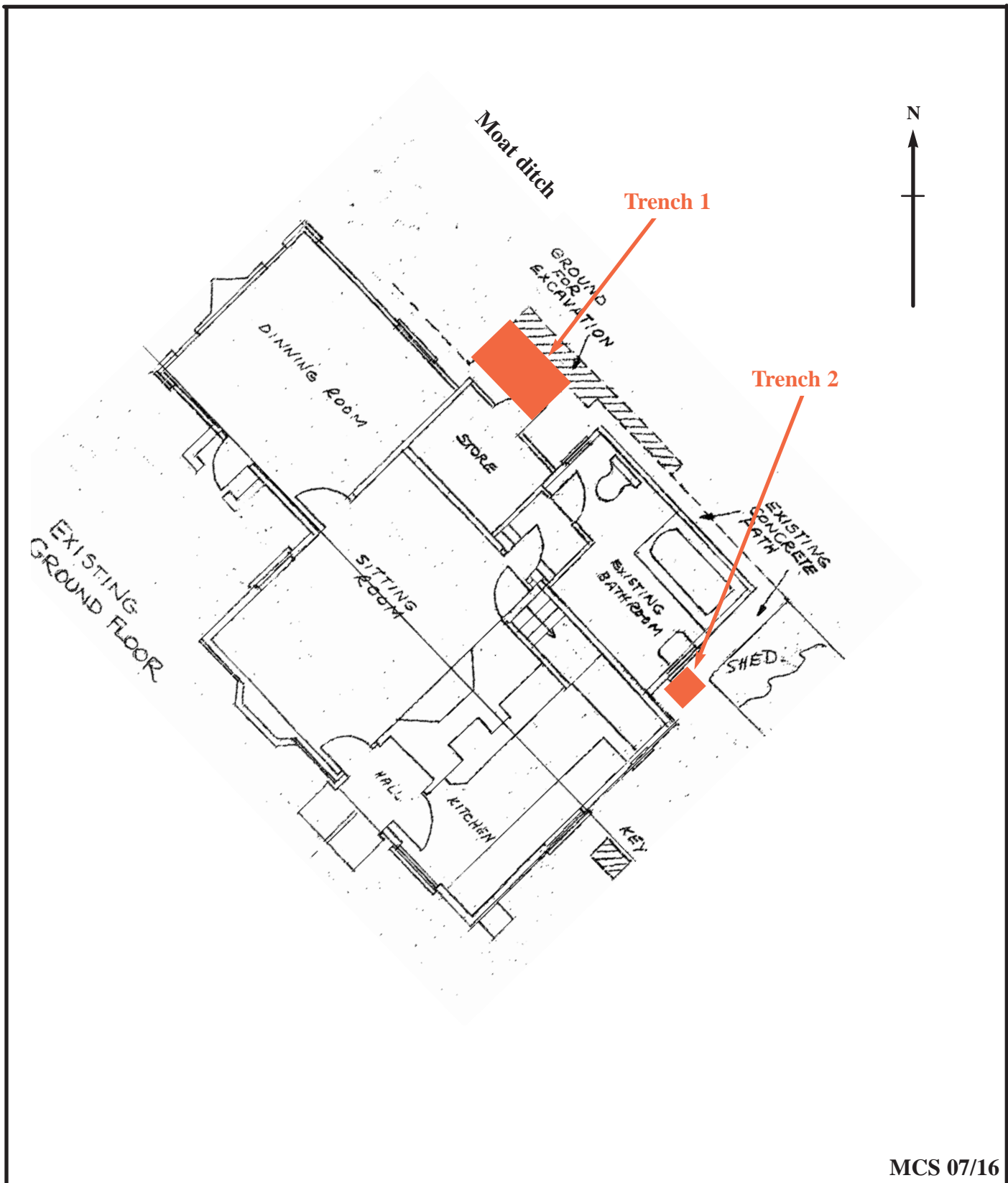
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site on White's Hill.

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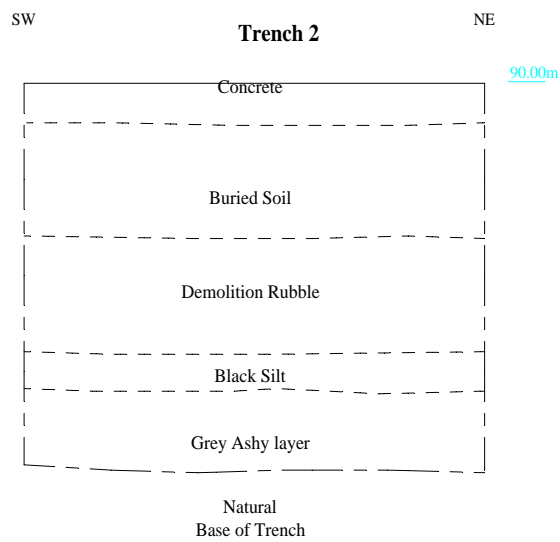
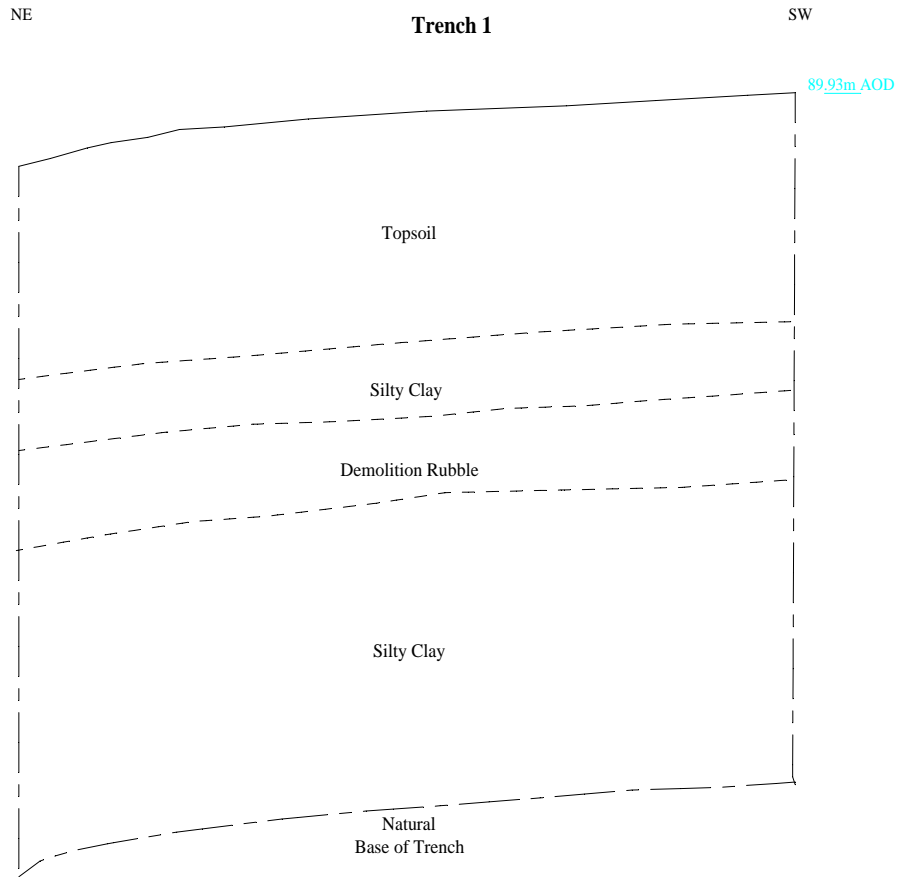
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Figure 3. Location of trenches within site.

Scale 1:100

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0 1m

Figure 4. Representative sections



Plate 1. Trench 1 looking south west, horizontal scale 0.5m, vertical scale 1m.



Plate 2. Trench 2 looking north east, horizontal scale 0.5m, vertical scale 0.4m



Plate 3. Trench 1 and setting of site looking north east.