

**Roundhill House, Cope Hall Lane,
Enborne, Newbury, West Berkshire, 2006**

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For The Baer Property Trust

by Simon Cass

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code RHE 06/149

January 2007

Summary

Site name: Roundhill House, Cope Hall Lane, Enborne, Newbury, West Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 45065 65306

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 14th – 18th December 2006

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Sean Wallis

Site code: RHE 06/149

Area of site: c.90 sq m

Summary of results: No finds or deposits of archaeological relevance were observed during this watching brief.

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✓ 19.01.07
	Steve Preston✓ 18.01.07

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Report 06/149

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Roundhill House, Cope Hall Lane, Enborne, West Berkshire (SU 45065 65306) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr John Brown of John Brown and Company, 11 Silverglades, Yateley, Hampshire, GU46 6DN on behalf of the Baer Property Trust.

Planning consent (App no 06/01785) was obtained from West Berkshire Council for construction of a new extension to Roundhill House. This consent was subject to a condition relating to archaeology requiring an archaeological watching brief during intrusive 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 Duncan Coe, Archaeological Officer for West Berkshire Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Sean Wallis and Jo Pine between the 14th and 18th of December, 2006 and the site code is RHE 06/149.

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 to the south-west of Newbury within Enborne parish (Fig. 1). The buildings of Roundhill House lie just to the north-west of the top of the hill of the same name, at an approximate height of 121m AOD on the east side of Cope Hall Lane (Fig. 2). The underlying geology is mapped as London Clay though it is close to the boundary of the Bagshot Beds (BGS 1947) and sand and gravel was observed in the trenches.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location overlooking the town of Newbury and within a general zone of archaeological activity in the prehistoric (Neolithic/Bronze Age) and Roman periods. A short way to the south-east a Bronze Age round barrow cemetery is recorded (Lobb and Rose, 1996). In addition to

this general potential, there also exists the specific potential of remains relating directly to a specific historical event.

On 20th September 1643, during the English Civil War, a battle was fought here between an army led by King Charles and a larger parliamentary army led by the Earl of Essex. The Royalist army had managed to outmaneuver the Parliamentarians during a march on London and had reached Newbury just before them. However, they neglected to occupy the hills between the two armies so it was the Parliamentary army who were able to seize them and take a commanding position for the battle. Round Hill was chosen as the site for the parliamentary cannon and formed a strong defensive position, manned by the London Trained Bands. The Royalists were unable to dislodge the Parliamentarians from this position despite taking Wash Common and advancing as far as Skinner's Green Lane. An artillery duel occurred between the cannon on Round Hill and some Royalist pieces sited on the plateau of Wash Common, on the southern flank of the Royalist army. This action suggests the possibility that remains of defensive earthworks or stray finds such as musket and cannon balls could be present within the area of the proposal site (Smurthwaite 1984, 150–1). Despite this potential, recent work in the area has failed to find evidence of either this battle or any other archaeological activity (Challis and Pine 2006, Coles and Ford 2002). The site lies within the Registered Battlefield area.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the new construction work. In general this was to include examining areas of topsoil stripping, landscaping, ground reduction and the digging of trenches for foundations and services. A specific objective of this project was to recover, via metal detecting, artefacts relating to the civil war battlefield.

Results

Overburden stripping was observed across the whole area of the new extension which removed the Tarmac layer (Fig. 3). Once this was done, the revealed ground was scanned with a metal detector to increase the chance of recovering metal finds and two items were duly recovered. This was followed by the excavation of the foundation trenches prior to concrete pouring. The foundation trenches were opened to a depth of 1.0m and were all 0.7m wide. All the spoil was examined visually and again scanned by metal detector.

The general stratigraphy observed consisted of a thin layer of Tarmac and scalpins approximately 0.1m in depth above 0.3m of grayish/brown sandy clay considered to be a buried topsoil (Fig. 4). This in turn overlay 0.7m of natural sand and gravel to the base of the trenches.

Two soakaways were dug to the north east of the extension. Soakaway 1 was 2.8m deep, with 0.5m of topsoil/subsoil above the natural geology of gravel and sand with orange sand beneath. Soakaway 2 was much shallower (0.9m deep), revealing 0.25m of topsoil above 0.3m of brown sandy gravel becoming an orange gravelly sand below.

Finds

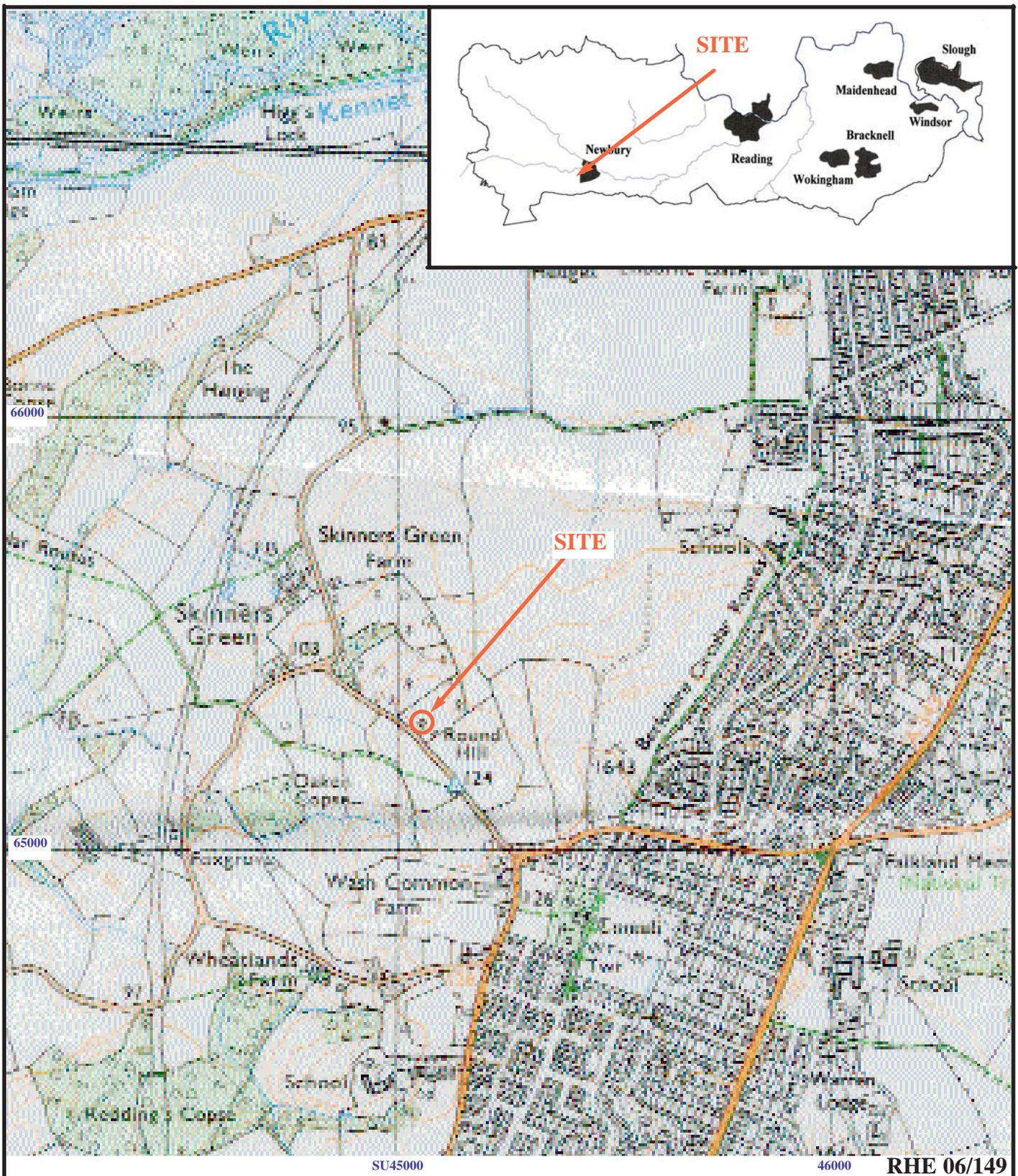
Two small copper alloy items were recovered from the spoilheaps, but upon examination were determined to be modern, comprising a machine-made modern ring and button.

Conclusion

In conclusion, no deposits or artefacts of archaeological interest were uncovered during this watching brief and specifically no finds or remains which might have related to the civil war battle.

References

- BGS, 1947, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 267, Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Coles, S and Ford, S, 2002, *Wash Common Water Tower, Newbury, West Berkshire*, Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading.
- Challis, C and Pine, J, 2006, *20 Battery End, Wash Common, Newbury, West Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief*, Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading.
- Lobb, S J and Rose, P G, 1996, *Archaeological Survey of the Lower Kennet Valley, Berkshire*, Wessex Archaeol Rep 9, Sailsbury.
- PPG 16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO
- Smurthwaite, D, 1984, *The complete guide to the Battlefields of Britain*, Harmondsworth



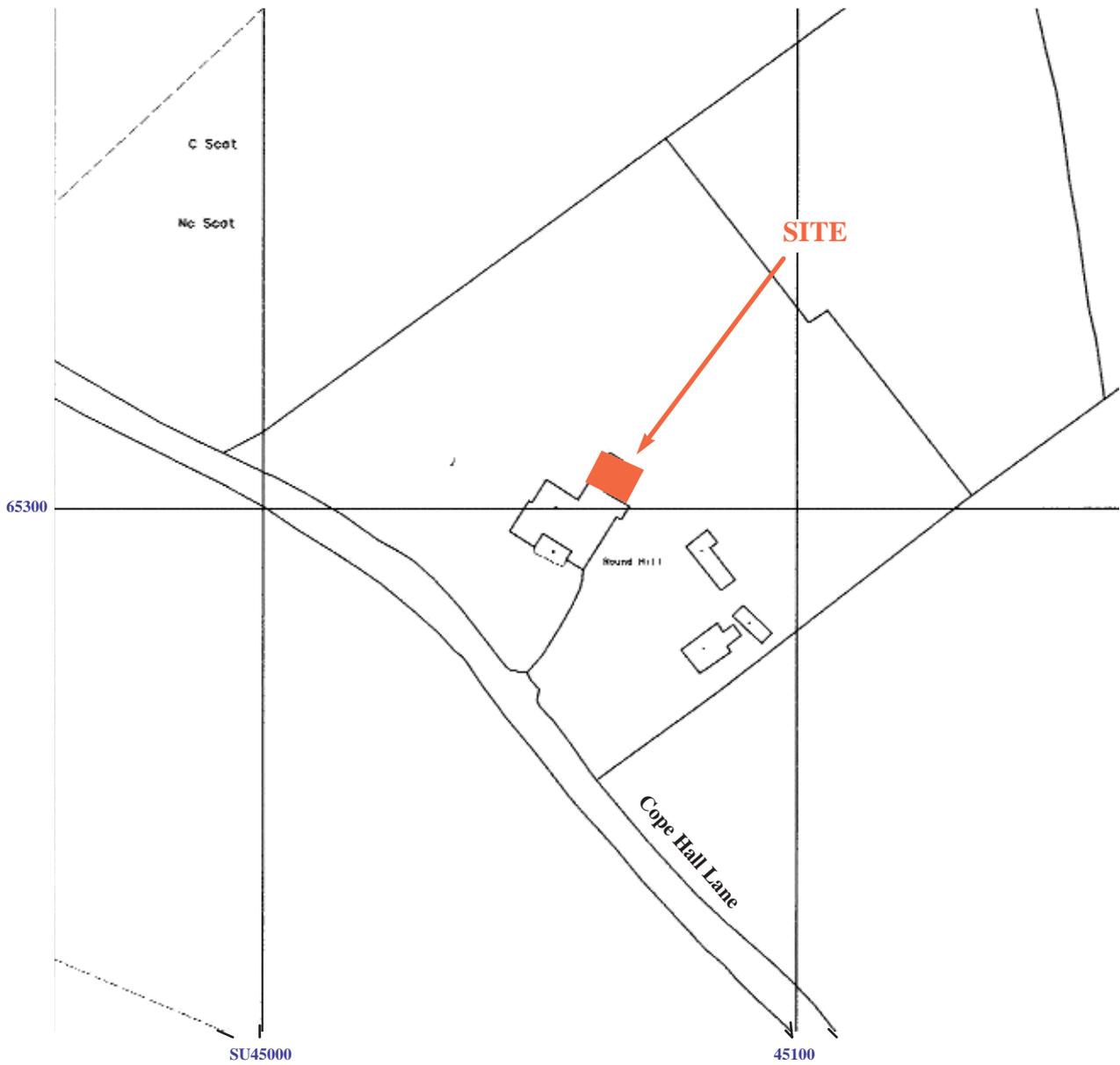
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An archaeological watching brief**

Figure 1. Location of site within Newbury and Berkshire.

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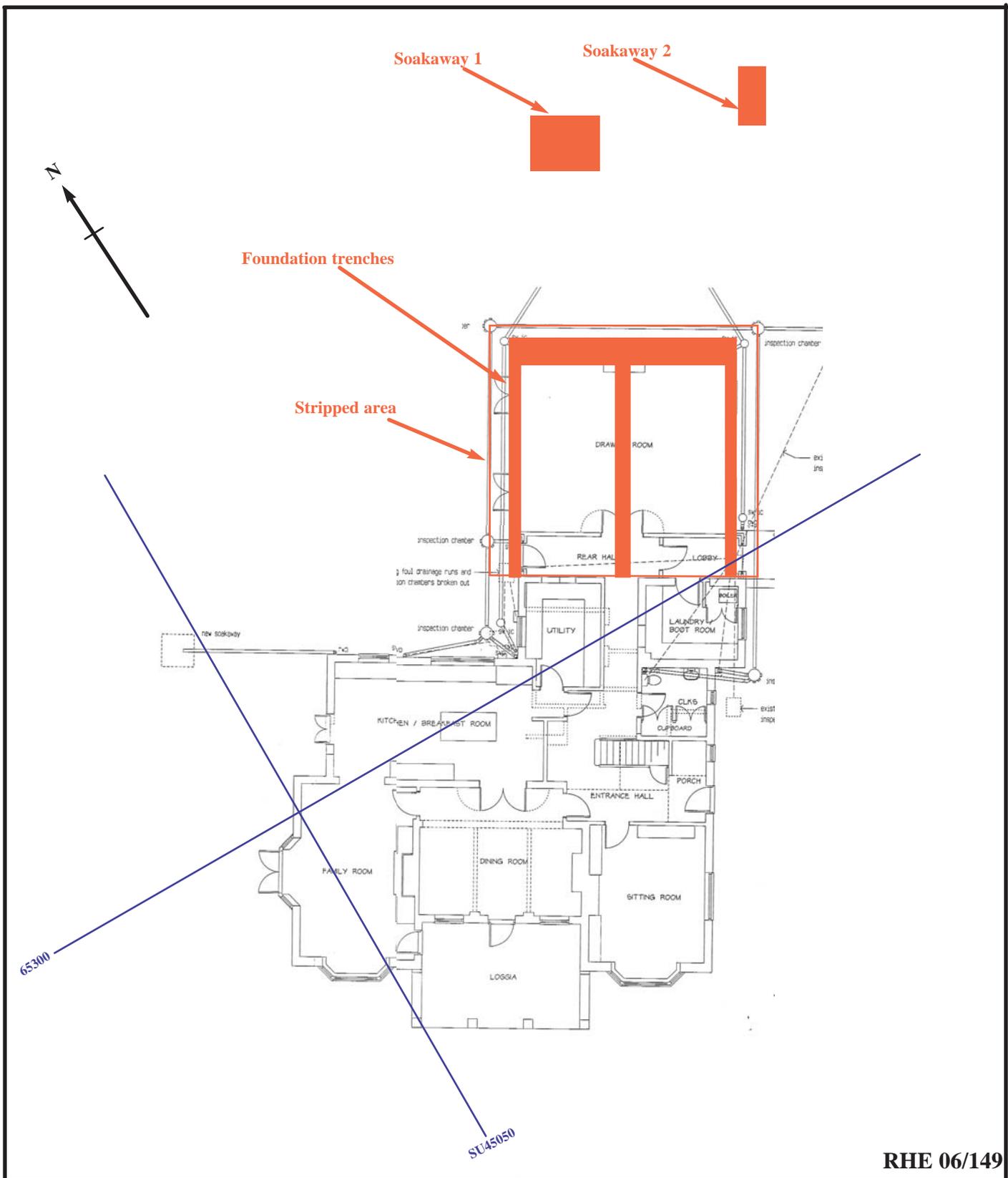
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site on Cope Hall Lane.

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RHE 06/149

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Figure 3. Observed intrusive groundworks within the site.

Scale 1:200

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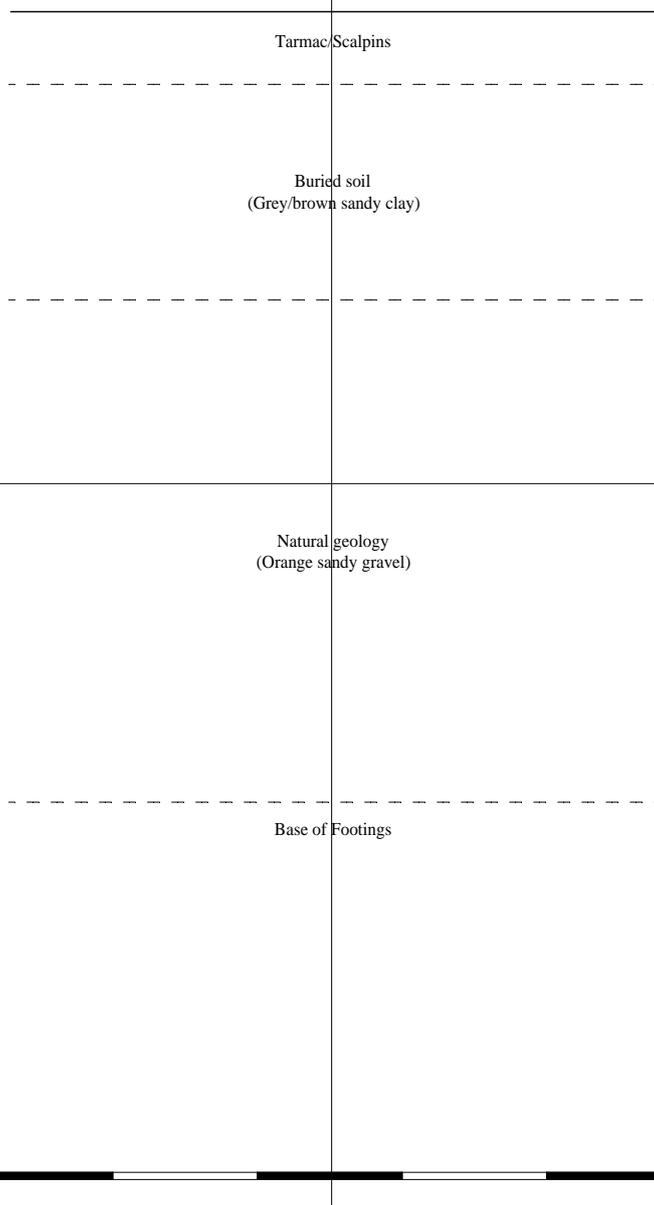


Figure 4. Representative section of foundation trench