

Archaeological Field Evaluation

On Behalf of
Westway Construction

Concerning
Land Adjacent to Lane End House
Shinfield
Reading
RG2 9BB

January 2025

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1 Non-Technical Summary

This report details the results of a programme of Archaeological Field Evaluation undertaken on the 7th of January 2025 in connection with the erection of six dwellings with associated landscaping and access on Land Adjacent to Lane End House, Shinfield Road, Shinfield, Reading RG2 9BB (NGR: SU 73029 68702 – approx. centre) henceforth known as the Site. The works were carried out on behalf of Westway Construction in response to condition 3 of the Planning Decision (Planning Ref.: 222304).

The Site comprised an irregular triangular-shaped plot of land accessed from an adjoining single access lane to the E, off Brookers Hill, via Shinfield Road and Hollow Lane (A327). The Site was located within the northern edge of Shinfield parish, Reading, in the county of Berkshire. It was situated c.4km from the centre of Reading and c.125m S of the M4 motorway.

A total of four evaluation trenches, representing c.4.8% of the development area, were set out across the Site to provide a comprehensive assessment of its archaeological and palaeoenvironmental potential.

Of the four trenches excavated, none contained archaeological features of interest, therefore these works have no potential in addressing any regional or national research aims.

2 Introduction

Border Archaeology (BA) were instructed by Westway Construction to carry out a programme of Archaeological Field Evaluation (AFE) on Land Adjacent to Lane End House, Shinfield Road, Shinfield, Reading RG2 9BB (NGR: SU 73029 68702 – approx. centre Planning Ref.: 222304; *fig.1*) in connection with the erection of six dwellings with associated landscaping and access.

The AFE was carried out on the 7th of January 2025 and this report details the results of the programme of archaeological works; it is for submission to Linden Ellicott, Archaeology Officer for Wokingham Borough Council.

3 Site Description

The Site comprised an irregular triangular-shaped plot of land accessed from an adjoining single access lane to the E, off Brookers Hill, via Shinfield Road and Hollow Lane (A327). The Site was located within the northern edge of Shinfield parish in Reading in the county of Berkshire. It was situated c.4km from the centre of Reading and c.125m S of the M4 motorway.

The Site lay at a height of between 66m (W) and 67m (E) above Ordnance Datum (aOD) and encompassed an area of c.3326 sqm, demarked by hedgerows and a mixture of young and mature trees on the NE, N, W and S sides.

Residential dwellings fronting onto Shinfield Road bounded the Site to the E, NE and N, while those fronting on to Brookers Hill formed the southern boundary; undeveloped fields lay to the W, separating the Site from the M4. The River Loddon runs over c.1.5km to the SE of the Site.

The Site did not lie within a Conservation Area or an Area of High Archaeological Potential; however, it was located within a landscape rich in archaeological remains, with over 100 features recorded in the Berkshire Archaeology Historic Environment Record (HER) within a 1km radius of the Site; these include early prehistoric flint tools, late prehistoric/Romano-British settlement features, medieval moated sites and Tudor structures. The Berkshire Historic Landscape Characterisation identifies the Site as belonging to farmland (HRM3530).

3.1 Soils & Geology

The British Geological Survey (BGS) identifies the underlying geology of the Site as comprising clay, silt and sand of the London Clay Formation, a sedimentary bedrock that formed approximately 47.8 to 56 million years ago during the Palaeogene period. No superficial deposits are recorded for the Site or within 100m thereof, with the nearest recorded c.130m to the NW in the vicinity of Lane End Farm House on Shinfield Road (BGS 2024).

While no historic borehole data is recorded for the Site itself, a 1992 trial pit (TP155) located approximately 70m to the N, on the S side of the M4 (BGS Reference: SU76NW106), recorded made ground to a depth of 0.5m below ground level (bgl) (63.98m AOD), overlying a deposit described as a 'firm to stiff fissured brown mottled grey very

silty clay', weathered London Clay, to a depth of 1.30m bgl, which became friable and extremely fissured with pockets of orange brown silty sand at c.1.50m bgl, with further fissuring recorded within the weathered London Clay, described as above, continuing to the depth of the pit at 4m bgl (60.48m AOD) (BGS 2024).

4 Historical & Archaeological Background

4.1 Prehistoric & Romano-British

The earliest activity recorded within the designated study area was identified during an archaeological evaluation on land to the N of Cutbush Lane, c.590m to the E of Site (HER No.: ERM1820; NGR: SU 7364 6876). This comprised a possible Bronze Age cremation burial that was left unexcavated and was thought to represent an isolated find spot (HER Nos.: MRM17680). This evaluation also revealed evidence for Iron Age and Romano-British features (HER No.: MRM17681), with subsequent excavation works revealing a small number of pits and ditches (HER No.: ERM2269; MRM18488); these produced sherds of Middle Iron Age pottery, along with worked flint, ironworking residues, clay loom weights, and animal bone. Early Romano-British material and medieval pottery sherds were also recovered (Cotswold Archaeology 2015; Cotswold Archaeology 2016).

In addition, numerous finds dating to the prehistoric or Romano-British period have been recovered from the designated study area. These include: worked flint (HER Nos.: MRM16483, MRM18497 & MWK15237); and pottery sherds (HER No.: MRM18565, MRM16484 & MWK8584).

4.2 Medieval

Shinfield village (HER No.: MWK1108) is believed to have Anglo-Saxon origins, with its place-name meaning 'Open land of *Sciene's people' in Old English (The University of Nottingham 2024), although popular local etymology suggests that the name is a derivative of "Shining Fields", a reference to the land in the E of the parish, which slopes down towards the flood plain of the River Loddon and floods regularly, giving it a shiny appearance (Shinfield Parish Council 2024). The earliest documentary evidence indicates that the land was held by one Sexi of Clatford prior to the Norman conquest; however, it was subsequently granted to William Fitzosborn who, in 1069, initiated the building of the Grade I listed St Mary's Church (List Entry No.: 1118131; NGR: SU 72973 68198), which is located c.480m to the S of the Site and is the oldest building surviving within the parish today.

The moated manor house of Shinfield (HER No.: MWK2616; NGR: SU 73250 69200) was originally located c.510m to the NE of the Site. The moat (HER No.: MWK2615) was partly infilled in 1702, and the manor was subsequently demolished in 1804 when Ducketts Farm was built. An archaeological evaluation in 1989 on the land immediately to the W of the moated site recorded a pebble horizon that was probably associated with its post-medieval phase, and this was situated beneath dumps of building material that likely originated from the demolition of the original manor house (HER Nos.: EWK11 & EWK89; Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) 1989). An archaeological watching brief undertaken nearby in September 2007 confirmed that the moat still survived under nearly 1m of made ground (HER Nos.: ERM947).

Medieval earthworks located to the W of Shinfield Manor possibly represent the remains of a settlement or hamlet associated with the original property. Numerous stray finds have been recovered from this area and a geophysical survey carried out in 1994 identified a possible N-S aligned building and a possible walled garden (HER Nos.: EWK11, EWK12 & ERM947; MWK2613; Geophysical Surveys of Bradford 1994).

Numerous pits, post-holes, ditches, gullies and possible quarry pits provide evidence for industrial activity just over 400m to the S of the Site; these features produced eleven sherds of pottery, along with fragments of burnt clay, two fired clay objects, two fragments of slag, twelve fragments of ceramic floor tile and loom weights (HER Nos.: ERM931; MRM16352; NGR: SU 73104 68282; Foundations Archaeology 2005).

Finally, numerous pottery sherds dating to the medieval period have also been recovered from the designated study area (HER Nos.: MRM16216, MRM16482 & 06275.00.000 - MWK15403 - MWK6821), while the Grade II listed Church Farmhouse, located c.500m to the SSW of Site, has its origins in the 15th century (List Entry No.: 1118132; NGR: SU 72935 68179).

4.3 Post-medieval & Modern

Post-medieval assets recorded within the designated study area include Church Lane (HER No.: MWK15640; NGR: SU 72733 68361), which is marked on a 1678 map of the church and surrounding area (Foundations Archaeology 2004); an archaeological evaluation carried out along here in the late 1990s identified two late 18th/early 19th century boundary ditches, which were thought to be associated with the original manor house to the W, and several pits (HER Nos.: ERM794; MWK7434; OAU 1997; Foundations Archaeology 2004).

Approximately 410m to the SSE of Site, an archaeological evaluation and excavation on the former National Institute for Research in Dairying (NIRD) site revealed 17th century stone wall footings constructed of unworked flint, along with 19th century garden features; these are believed to relate to The Rectory building, which is clearly shown in this location on the Tithe Map of 1841 (HER Nos.: ERM931; MRM16353 & MRM16363; NGR: SU 73104 68282; Foundations Archaeology 2005).

Grade II listed buildings dating to this period within the vicinity of the Site include:

- the 16th century Lane End Farmhouse, situated c.120m to the ENE (List Entry No.: 1136186; NGR: SU 73157 68786);
- the late 17th century granary situated in the garden of Church Farmhouse, located c.500m to the SSW of Site (List Entry No.: 1136103; NGR: SU 72947 68175); and
- the mid-19th century Milton Sandford Restaurant, located c.420m to the SSW (HER No.: MWK15629; List Entry No.: 1312966; NGR: SU 72843 68293).

4.4 Undated

Several assets of unknown date are also recorded within the designated study area on the Berkshire HER, including:

- a possible gully and a possible ditch, which were revealed during an archaeological evaluation at Lane End House, c.30m to the ESE of the Site (HER Nos.: ERM2107; MRM18281; NGR: SU 7308 6868; Archaeology South-East 2015);
- pits and linear drainage/boundary features found during an archaeological evaluation at The Manor, c.260m to the SSW of the Site (HER Nos.: ERM1175; MRM16481; NGR: SU 7291 6843; Oxford Archaeology 2010);
- a ditch and two post-holes identified during another archaeological evaluation at The Manor, c.280m to the S of Site (HER Nos.: ERM2138; MRM18294; NGR: SU 7301 6840; Oxford Archaeology 2018);
- nineteen small pits/post-holes revealed at the former NIRD Site, just over 400m to the SSE of the Site (HER Nos.: ERM931; MRM16366; NGR: SU 73104 68282; Foundations Archaeology 2005);
- post-holes, gullies and ditches identified during the archaeological evaluation carried out at Shinfield Glebe, c.560m to the SW of the Site (HER Nos.: ERM1057; MRM16344; NGR: SU 72601 68289; TVAS 2009);
- a number of possible anomalies of archaeological interest identified during a gradiometer survey along the line of the proposed Shinfield Bypass (HER No.: ERM916; NGR: SU 73073 68316; Northamptonshire Archaeology 2008); and
- sherds of pottery (HER Nos.: MWK15409).

4.4.1 Cartographic Evidence

The earliest available map of the area is Christopher Saxton's 1574 map of Berkshire, Oxfordshire, and Buckinghamshire, which depicts Shinfield (written as *Shinfelde*) to the S of Reading (*Redinge*), with the River Loddon flowing in an NNE-SSW direction to the E. Unfortunately, this map is not detailed enough to locate the Site itself and no discernible features are visible.

A clearer depiction of the area is given on a map titled 'Reading 19', dating to 1809. This shows the Site as part of a large NE-SW orientated tract of land comprising at least eight fields of varying shapes and sizes. These are surrounded by a network of roads, including the present-day Whitley Wood Lane (B3270), Old Shinfield Road, Shinfield Road and what appears to be Brookers Hill, although the alignment for this is slightly off. A number of dwellings border the tract of land in the general location of the Black Boy Roundabout to the NE, The Shinfield Arms to the E, and the area opposite Shinfield Cricket Club to the S; the settlement of Shinfield Green is also depicted to the NE, with Whitley Wood Common to the NW. The Site itself appears to border two of the fields within this tract of land, with the boundary between the two running in a c.NW-SE direction across the centre of the Site.

By the time of the Shinfield Parish Tithe map, approximately 30 years later, the fields within the large tract of land had been further sub-divided into 14 plots and none of the former field boundaries appear to have been kept. The

Site is now depicted as comprising part of Plot 85, a tract of arable land known as Lee Croft that was roughly triangular in plan, mirroring the shape of the present-day Site but on a larger scale; it was under the ownership of one Alexander Cobham, with two transcripts listing the occupiers as an Ann Pither and a G.D. Lucas. It was bounded by what would become Brookers Hill to the S and Shinfield Road to the E, with a track called 'Blind Lane' arcing around the perimeter of the Site to the W and N. The number of properties bordering the large tract of land appears to have stayed the same.

The 1st Edition 25-inch Ordnance Survey (OS) map of 1873 shows the former Plot 85 much as it was in the Shinfield Parish Tithe map, although 'Blind Lane' no longer seems to exist and a small body of water is depicted along the eastern field boundary. The main difference seems to be the removal of most of the field boundaries in the surrounding fields, with nine of these now forming one large area of what appears to be park land associated with the farm to the NE. This has also been expanded over the preceding years and is now labelled 'The Grove', with the former structures and two of the cottages/dwellings seemingly having been demolished to make way for larger buildings surrounded by landscaped and formal gardens. Brookers Hill and the Black Boy Public House are also labelled for the first time.

The only changes on the 2nd Edition 25-inch OS map of 1899 is the reintroduction of several field boundaries in the possible park land area, which created five separate parcels of land; however, the OS Edition of 1911 depicts the later removal of two of these to create three. There was also extensive development within the former Plot 85 by this time. This is now labelled as Lane End House and at least nine other structures, presumably outbuildings, are depicted, three of which seems to be located within the Site itself; these structures are all connected by a series of trackways and paths.

The OS Revision of 1936 appears to show the Site much as it exists today, although one of the aforementioned structures is still depicted towards the NE corner at this time. While Lane End House is still present, parts of the land to its N and SW now appears to contain separate properties and further development is shown all along Brookers Hill. One of the field boundaries in the parkland area has again been partially removed, creating two parcels of land, and Shinfield Road is labelled for the first time. In the wider vicinity, there has been extensive development, especially around Whitley Wood and Shinfield Green.

While little change is shown to the Site or its immediate environs on the 1:10,560 map of 1961 beyond 'The Grove' now being called 'Shinfield Grove', there has been significant expansion and development in the surrounding landscape by this time.

5 Aims & Objectives

The evaluation sought to:

- ascertain the extent, depth below ground surface, depth of deposit, character, date, significance and condition of any archaeological remains on Site;
-

- establish the extent to which previous development and/or other processes had affected archaeological deposits at the Site;
- establish the likely impact on archaeological deposits of the proposed development; and
- inform a further programme of mitigation, should such be required.

Additionally, the work aimed to address specific areas of interest as set out in the *Solent-Thames Research Framework for the Historic Environment: Resource Assessments and Research Agendas* (STRF; Hey & Hind 2014), with the results being integrated into the wider historic and archaeological context of the landscape.

6 Methodology

All archaeological Site works were undertaken in accordance with BA's *Archaeological Field Recording Manual* (2023) and *General Standards for Historic Environment Projects* (Berkshire Archaeology 2021), together with accepted professional standards, including *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide* (Lee 2015), *Standard for archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2023a), *Universal guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2023b), and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2020). BA abided by the requirements of the *ClfA Code of conduct* (2022) throughout the project.

6.1 Site Specific

As outlined in the WSI (BA 2024), a total of four evaluation trenches – two measuring c.1.8m × 30m (TR001 and TR002) and two measuring c.1.8 x 15m (TR003 and TR004) – were excavated, this equating to 4.8% of the development area. The trenches were laid out to provide a comprehensive assessment of its archaeological and palaeoenvironmental potential (*fig. 2*). They also took into account the spatial constraints of the Site, particularly in relation to the group of existing trees in the SW corner and three Scots Pines set c.8m-10m within the internal area, along the W boundary c.40m N from the SW corner (Nova Development Ltd 2021).

Trenches were opened by machine using a wide-bladed toothless ditching bucket operating under archaeological supervision. Undifferentiated topsoil and made ground was removed in level spits by the machine down to the first significant archaeological or geological horizon. Topsoil and made ground were kept separate during excavation to allow for the sequential backfilling of trenches.

6.2 Recording

The following reference numbers were assigned to this fieldwork project:

- Site code: LEH 24
- OASIS ID: boderar1-529269.

Full written, graphic, and photographic records were made in accordance with BA's *Archaeological Field Recording Manual* (2023), as outlined in the WSI (BA 2024).

The progress of the works was recorded and assessed using the Company's ISO 9001 procedures.

6.3 Palaeoenvironmental/Palaeoeconomic Sampling

No archaeological deposits suitable for Palaeoenvironmental sampling were encountered during the course of the AFE.

6.4 Recovery, Processing & Curation of Artefactual Data

No artefactual material was recovered during the course of the AFE.

7 Results

See Appendix 1 for full context descriptions.

Of the four trenches excavated, no finds, features or deposits of archaeological interest were encountered (*plates 1-4*), with each trench containing a similar sequence of deposits (*fig. 3*), namely a 0.45m thick (avg.) dark brown silty clay topsoil, overlying a light-yellow brown clay natural; this was encountered at a depth of between c.0.4m and 0.7m bgl, with the shallowest trench (Trench 001) being located towards the center of Site, and the deepest (Trench 002) being located towards the NE corner.

Within Trench 002 a layer of made ground was also observed overlying the topsoil; this comprised a c.0.6m thick (max.) dark brown silty clay, which contained frequent amounts of CBM, rubble and modern waste material.

While no features or deposits of archaeological interest were identified, two modern service cables and a disused mains water pipe were noted within Trench 002, while small areas of root disturbance were identified within Trenches 002 and 004.

8 Discussion & Conclusion

The programme of AFE carried out at Land Adjacent to Lane End House, Shinfield, Reading, RG2 9BB revealed no archaeological features of interest, with historic mapping suggesting that the Site was largely agricultural land since at least the late post-medieval period. The made ground identified within Trench 002 may also be related to the demolition of the structure that formerly occupied the Site in this location.

Due to the non-archaeological nature of this Site, these works have no potential in addressing any regional or national research aims, especially those detailed in the *STRF* (Hey & Hind 2014).

9 Acknowledgements

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Fieldwork was led by Chris Hodgson BSc MSc PCIfA and Ruben Aaron Cencerrero Alonso BSc MA PCIfA, Site Supervisors. Surveying was undertaken by Stuart Forsythe BSc (Hons.) ACIfA, Manager: Surveying/UAV Drone Operator.

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The project was managed by Amy Bunce, with George Children MA MCIfA, Director: Quality and Compliance providing technical and editorial guidance.

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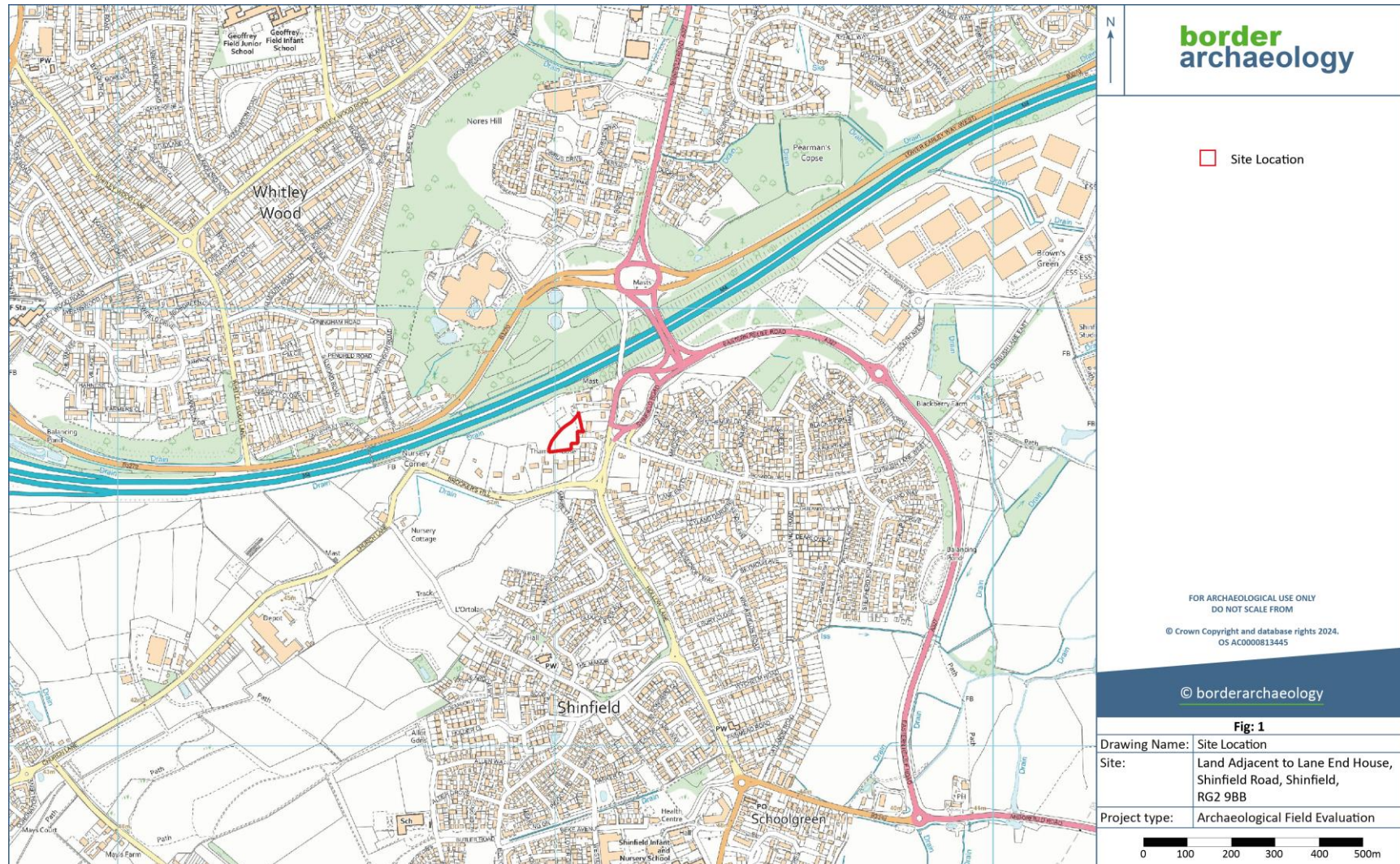
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12 Figures & Plates





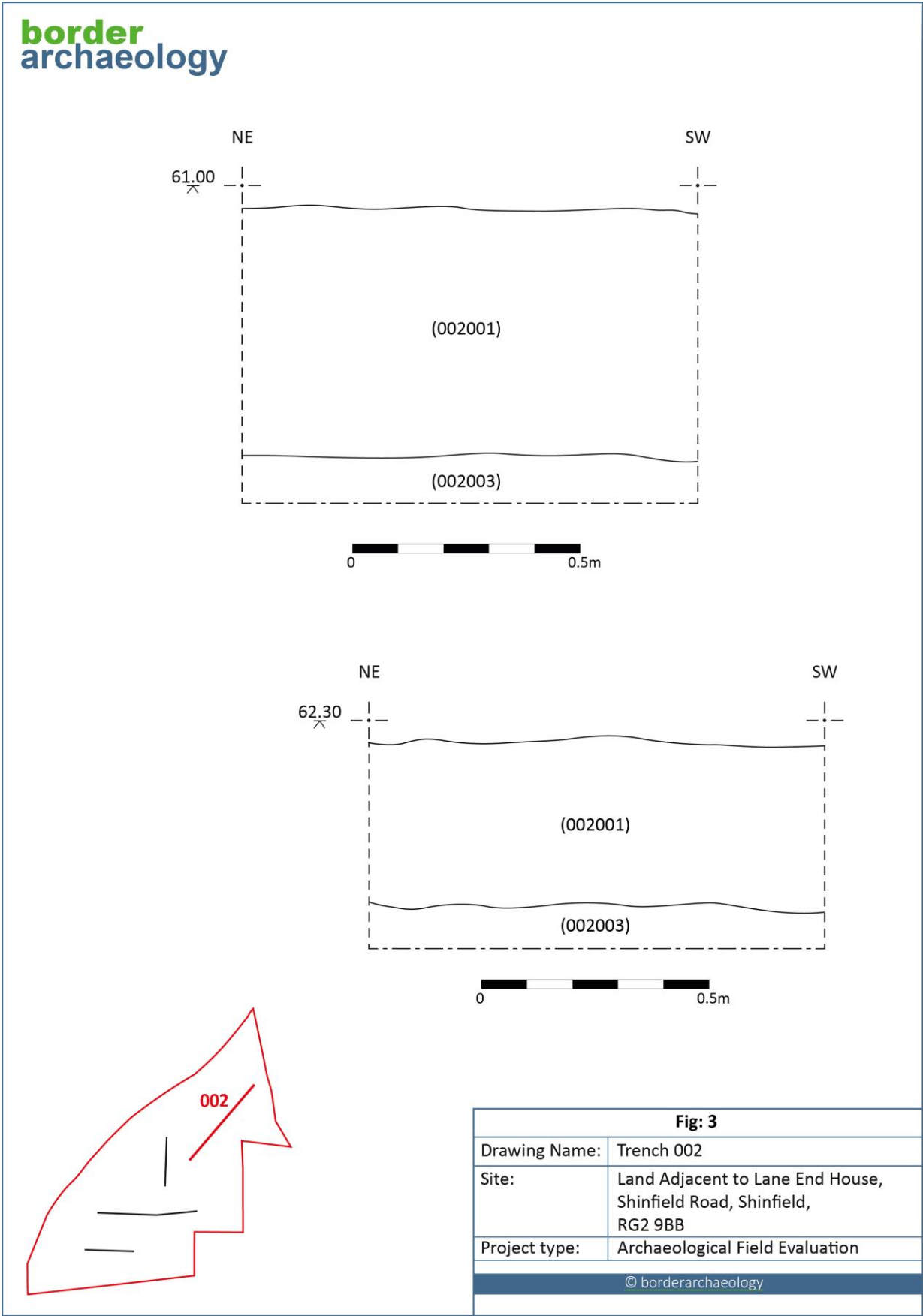




Plate 1: Trench 001, looking E (2 × 1m scale)



Plate 2: Trench 2, looking SW (2 × 1m scale)



Plate 3: Trench 3 looking



Plate 4: Trench 004, looking S (2 x 1m scale)

13 Appendix 1: Context Tabulation

Trench No.	Context	Type	Filled by	Fill of	Description	Interpretation	Finds nr=not retained	Samples	Provisional date
001	(001001)	Deposit	-	-	Friable dark brown silty clay; occasional small-sized rounded stones & roots; c.0.3m (max) thick; overlies (001002).	Topsoil	-	-	Modern
	(001002)	Deposit	-	-	Firmly compacted light-yellow brown clay; occasional small-sized rounded stones & occasional roots; underlies (001001).	Natural substratum	-	-	Geological
002	(002001)	Deposit	-	-	Firmly compacted dark brown silty clay; frequent modern waste materials; occasional medium-sized rounded stones; 0.6m (max) thick; overlies(002001).	Made ground	CBM (nr)	-	Modern
	(002002)	Deposit	-	-	Friable dark brown silty clay; occasional small-sized rounded stones & roots; c.0.4m (max) thick; overlies (002002); underlies (002001).	Topsoil	-	-	Modern
	(002003)	Deposit	-	-	Firmly compacted light-yellow brown clay; occasional small-sized rounded stones & occasional roots; underlies (002001).	Natural substratum	-	-	Geological
003	(003001)	Deposit	-	-	Friable dark brown silty clay; occasional small-sized rounded stones & roots; c.0.4m (max) thick; overlies (001002).	Topsoil	-	-	Modern
	(003002)	Deposit	-	-	Firmly compacted light-yellow brown clay; occasional small-sized rounded stones & occasional roots; underlies (001001).	Natural substratum	-	-	Geological
004	(004001)	Deposit	-	-	Friable dark brown silty clay; occasional small-sized rounded stones & roots; c.0.5m (max) thick; overlies (001002).	Topsoil	-	-	Modern
	(004002)	Deposit	-	-	Firmly compacted light-yellow brown clay; occasional small-sized rounded stones & occasional roots; underlies (001001).	Natural substratum	-	-	Geological



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