Land by Manchester Airport, Greater Manchester

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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wessexarchaeology

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County	Greater Manchester
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Planning reference	121270/00/2018
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Project management by	Andrew Norton
Document compiled by	Emma Carter
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Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by ECUS on behalf of Faithful+Gould to undertake the archaeological evaluation of a 4.75 ha parcel of land located in Woodhouse Park, Parade Road, Ringway, Manchester, Greater Manchester, M90 1AH, centred on NGR 382135, 385725.

A total of six trenches were excavated. Four of the trenches were blank, with the remaining two containing modern features. The modern features were found in trenches 5 and 6 and correspond to access routes and structures associated with a former nursery gardens first mapped in 1960. Concrete and machine-made red brick forming a partial floor or surface, were encountered in trench 6 and were likely associated with a 'moveable greenhouse' contained within a plant nursery shown on the 1976–1977 Ordnance Survey map. A modern ditch running north-east by south-west in trench 5 contained modern plastic waste. The ditch aligns with a former trackway mapped within the nursery gardens.

Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Faithful+Gould for commissioning the archaeological evaluation, in particular Simon Johnson of ECUS who acted on behalf of the client. Wessex Archaeology is also grateful for the advice of Norman Redhead, who monitored the project for Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service.

The fieldwork was directed by Emily Eastwood, with the assistance of Jon Whitmore. This report was written by Emma Carter and edited by Patrick Daniel. The project was managed by Andrew Norton on behalf of Wessex Archaeology.

Land by Manchester Airport

Archaeological Evaluation

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project and planning background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by ECUS, on behalf of Faithful+Gould, to undertake the archaeological evaluation of a 4.75 ha parcel of land located in Woodhouse Park, Parade Road, Ringway, Manchester, Greater Manchester, M90 1AH, centred on NGR 382135, 385725 (Fig. 1).

1.1.2 The proposed development consists of a Hut Group development for Airport City (ECUS 2018). A planning application (121270/00/2018) submitted to Manchester City Council was granted, with a recommendation for a post-determination evaluation (ECUS 2018).

1.1.3 All works were undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI) that detailed the aims, methodologies and standards to be employed in order to undertake the evaluation (ECUS 2018). GMAAS approved the WSI, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority (LPA), prior to fieldwork commencing.

1.1.4 The evaluation comprised the excavation of six trial trenches; it was undertaken 10–13/12/2018.

1.2 Scope of the report

1.2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a detailed description of the results of the evaluation, to interpret the results within a local, regional or wider archaeological context and assess whether the aims of the evaluation have been met.

1.2.2 The presented results will provide further information on the archaeological resource that may be impacted by the proposed development and facilitate an informed decision with regard to the requirement for, and methods of, any further archaeological mitigation.

1.3 Location, topography and geology

1.3.1 The site is situated to the north of the airfield at Manchester Airport and is bounded by Ringway Road West to the south, Enterprise Way to the east and north and existing hard standing car parking to the west. The site is broadly flat with woodland trees and scrub. Existing ground levels lie at 68 m above Ordnance Datum (OD).

1.3.2 The underlying geology is mapped as mudstone of the Bollin Mudstone Member with superficial till (diamicton) deposits (British Geological Survey online viewer).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 A desk-based assessment compiled by URS, forms the only previous investigation related to the broader area surrounding the site, it is summarised by ECUS in their WSI.

2.2 Previous investigations related to the proposed development

Desk-based assessment (URS 2012)

2.2.1 The site was considered within a broader archaeological desk-based assessment of the Airport City scheme (URS 2012). The following summarises the findings of the archaeological desk-based assessment taken from the WSI (ECUS 2018).

2.3 Archaeological and historical context

2.3.1 The earliest evidence for human activity within the environs of the site is the findspot of a Bronze Age spearhead, which was recovered from the Wythenshawe Estate, located to the north of the site. Excavations at Oversley Farm in 1997, in advance of the construction of the second runway at Manchester Airport, identified extensive Bronze Age settlement remains. These excavations were undertaken to the south of the site

2.3.2 There are no records of Iron Age, Romano-British, or early medieval activity within the vicinity of the site. The only record of medieval activity is the location of Etrop Green to the west of the site, which was a small isolated settlement with the medieval parish of Hale.

2.3.3 The site remained as part of the wider agricultural landscape during the post-medieval period, when it was probably associated with Moss House Farm. Moss House Farm was an isolated farmstead situated to the west of the site.

2.3.4 Manchester Airport was initially established in the late 1930s as Ringway Airport and used during the Second World War as an RAF base. During the 1950s the airport reverted to commercial use and expanded rapidly. More recently, additional expansions have included further terminal buildings, an additional runway and reorganisation of road and transport links.

2.3.5 The LPA archaeologist suggested that the evaluation may encounter remains related to the former presence of the military airfield.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 General aims

3.1.1 The general aims of the evaluation, as stated in the WSI (ECUS 2018) and in compliance with the CIfA's *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014a), were:

- to identify and record any archaeological deposits, structures or built fabric within the identified areas of interest;
- to determine the extent, condition, character significance and date of any encountered or exposed archaeological remains;
- to accurately record the location and stratigraphy of areas excavated during groundworks;
- to recover artefacts disturbed by the site works;
- to recover samples from the sealed waterlogged contexts for environmental processing;

- to prepare a comprehensive record and report of archaeological observations during the site work; and
- to identify mitigation strategies to ensure the recording, preservation or management of archaeological remains within the site.

3.1.2 The objectives of the project were:

- to preserve through record any archaeological remains impacted by the proposed works; and
- to contribute to the understanding of the pre-industrial landscape surrounding the site with particular focus on its role within the wider context of known prehistoric activity.

4 METHODS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 All works were undertaken in accordance with the detailed methods set out within the WSI (ECUS 2018) and in general compliance with the standards outlined in CIfA guidance (CIfA 2014a). The methods employed are summarised below.

4.2 Fieldwork methods

General

4.2.1 The presence of trees and boggy ground conditions within the proposed locations of several of the trenches meant that their excavated position differed from that proposed in the WSI. (Fig. 1). The trench locations were set out using a GPS for trenches 2, 4, 5 and 6, in the approximate positions as those proposed in the WSI, though trenches 1 and 3 had to be set out using the offset from a temporary bench mark.

4.2.2 Six trenches measuring between 15 x 2 m and 50 x 2 m were excavated in level spits using a 360º excavator equipped with a toothless bucket, under the constant supervision and instruction of the monitoring archaeologist. Machine excavation proceeded until either the archaeological horizon or the natural geology was exposed.

4.2.3 Where necessary, the base of the trench/surface of archaeological deposits were cleaned by hand. A sample of archaeological features and deposits identified was hand-excavated, sufficient to address the aims of the evaluation.

4.2.4 Spoil derived from both machine stripping and hand-excavated archaeological deposits was visually scanned for the purposes of finds retrieval. Modern materials were discarded and no finds of archaeological significance were retained.

4.2.5 Trenches completed to the satisfaction of the client and Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service (GMAAS) were backfilled using excavated materials in the order in which they were excavated, and left level on completion. No other reinstatement or surface treatment was undertaken.

Recording

4.2.6 All exposed archaeological deposits and features were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording system. A complete drawn record of excavated features and deposits was made including both plans and sections drawn to appropriate scales (generally 1:20 or 1:50 for plans and 1:10 for sections),and tied to the Ordnance Survey (OS) National Grid. The Ordnance Datum (OD: Newlyn) heights of all principal features were calculated, and levels added to plans and section drawings.

4.2.7 A Leica GNSS connected to Leica's SmartNet service surveyed the location of archaeological features in trenches 2, 4, 5 and 6. Trenches 1 and 3 were surveyed by calculating the offset from a temporary bench mark. All survey data is recorded in Ordnance Survey (OS) National Grid coordinates and heights above OD (Newlyn), as defined by OSGM15 and OSTN15, with a three-dimensional accuracy of at least 50 mm.

4.2.8 A full photographic record was made using digital cameras equipped with an image sensor of not less than 10 megapixels. Digital images have been subject to managed quality control and curation processes, which has embedded appropriate metadata within the image and will ensure long term accessibility of the image set.

4.3 Artefactual and environmental strategies

4.3.1 Strategies for the recovery, processing and assessment of artefacts and environmental samples were in line with those detailed in the WSI (ECUS 2018) and in accordance with: *Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (CIfA 2014b) and *Environmental Archaeology: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods, from Sampling and Recovery to Post-excavation* (English Heritage 2011). However, in the event, no artefacts or samples were collected.

4.4 Monitoring

4.4.1 GMAAS monitored the excavation on behalf of the LPA. Any variations to the WSI, if required to better address the project aims, were agreed in advance with both the client and the County Archaeologist.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Two of the six excavated trial trenches contained modern archaeological features and deposits. The remaining four trenches were archaeologically blank.

5.1.2 The uncovered features all appear modern and comprise concrete foundation rafts, a machine-extruded red brick surface and a ditch. The following section presents the results of the evaluation with archaeological features and deposits discussed by trench.

5.1.3 Detailed descriptions of individual contexts are provided in the trench summary tables (Appendix 1). Figures 3 and 4 show all archaeological features recorded within the trenches.

5.2 Soil sequence and natural deposits

Trenches 1–4

5.2.1 In trenches 1–4 dark greyish brown silty clay topsoil 0–0.25 m below ground level (bgl) was present; subsoil in trenches 1 and 2 consisted of mid-whiteish brown sand with 50% coarse gravel and concrete debris. In trenches 3 and 4 made ground deposits were a mix

of mid-greyish brown clay silt and mid-brownish red clay with modern rubble debris 0.25–0.45 m bgl. Trenches 3 and 4 also had a mid-greyish brown deposit with 1% sub-rounded pebbles. Throughout trenches 1–4 the natural substrate was found at 0.45 m bgl and consisted of a mixed mid-reddish-brown clay with mid-brownish-yellow sandy clay with heavy root disturbance, 0.5 m bgl.

Trenches 5 and 6

5.2.2 Trenches 5 and 6 were excavated into soil bunds of made ground. Topsoil consisted of mid-greyish brown silty clay 0-0.3 m bgl. Possible buried subsoil comprising a dark blackish brown clay was found at 0.66-0.95 and 1.4-1.8 m bgl in trench 5 and 6 beneath the soil bunds; the natural substrate presented as a mid-reddish yellow clay, and was found at found at 1.2 m and 2 m bgl.

5.3 Negative trenches

5.3.1 Trenches 1–4 did not contain any archaeological remains (Fig. 2; Pl. 1). Potential geological features were investigated, leading to the confirmation of their natural origin.

5.4 20th century

5.4.1 A north-east by south-west running ditch, 1.5 m wide with dark blackish brown silty clay fill, was found in the centre of trench 5 at 1.2 m bgl (Pl. 3). Due to the depth of the trench base, the feature was not excavated. The ditch was seen in section cutting through the buried soil 503; modern glass and plastic were present in the feature.

5.4.2 In the south of trench 6, a north-west by south-east concrete surface 606 was 1.1 m wide and extended northwards for 2.07 m from the southern trench wall. The concrete was reddish grey with coarse red brick inclusions. It was abutted on each side by grey pads of concrete screed 605 and 607 (Fig. 4 and 5, Pl. 4). In the north of trench 6, poured grey concrete 608 overlaid an earlier modern surface comprising machine-made red brick 609 on a stretcher bond with sandy lime mortar (Pl. 5). The concrete extended 4.5 m and spanned the width of the trench. The brick surface beneath concrete 608 measured at least 1.3 x 2.1 m.

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Summary and discussion

6.1.1 No significant archaeological remains were identified during the evaluation trenching. The modern features encountered in trenches 5 and 6 correspond to trackways and access paths associated with the nursery gardens shown on the 1976–1977 Ordnance Survey (OS) map (Fig. 2).

6.1.2 In trench 5 in the north of the site, modern ditch 506 corresponds to a boundary ditch shown on the 1976–1977 OS map running parallel to a north-east by south-west running track (Fig. 3).

6.1.3 To the south-east of trench 5, the modern concrete and machine-made red brick surfaces 608 and 609 in trench 6 correspond to a path or road within the plant nursery (Fig. 4). The concrete to the south, 605–607, lay within an area used for a ‘moveable greenhouse’ captioned on the 1974 OS map and probably provided a solid surface for the same. The ‘moveable greenhouse’ caption is only on the 1974 OS map but the structure continues to be depicted in later editions.

6.1.4 Historic and OS mapping for the area do not depict any structures or development on the site prior to 1960 when the nursery gardens are depicted. The buried soils (505 and 603) likely form the former agricultural horizon prior to the site's development.

7 ARCHIVE STORAGE AND CURATION.

7.1 Museum

7.1.1 The archive resulting from the evaluation is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology in Stockport Museum Service. Stockport Museum Service has agreed in principle to accept the archive on completion of the project, under an accession code to be confirmed. Deposition of any finds with the museum will only be carried out with the full written agreement of the landowner to transfer title of all finds to the museum.

7.2 Preparation of the archive

7.2.1 The archive, which includes paper records, graphics, and digital data, will be prepared following the standard conditions for the acceptance of excavated archaeological material by Stockport Museum Service, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; CIfA 2014c; Brown 2011; ADS 2013).

7.2.2 All archive elements are marked with the site code, and a full index will be prepared. The physical archive currently comprises the following:

- 01 file/document case of paper records and A3/A4 graphics;

7.3 Selection policy

7.3.1 Wessex Archaeology follows national guidelines on selection and retention (SMA 1993; Brown 2011, section 4). In accordance with these, and any specific guidance prepared by the museum, a process of selection and retention will be followed so that only those artefacts or ecofacts that are considered to have potential for future study will be retained. The selection policy will be agreed with the museum, and is fully documented in the project archive.

7.4 Security copy

7.4.1 In line with current best practice (eg, Brown 2011), on completion of the project a security copy of the written records will be prepared, in the form of a digital PDF/A file. PDF/A is an ISO-standardised version of the Portable Document Format (PDF) designed for the digital preservation of electronic documents through omission of features ill-suited to long-term archiving.

7.5 OASIS

7.5.1 An OASIS online record (http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main) has been initiated, with key fields and a .pdf version of the final report submitted. Subject to any contractual requirements on confidentiality, copies of the OASIS record will be integrated into the relevant local and national records and published through the Archaeology Data Service ArchSearch catalogue.

8 COPYRIGHT

8.1 Archive and report copyright

8.1.1 The full copyright of the written/illustrative/digital archive relating to the project will be retained by Wessex Archaeology under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act* 1988 with all rights reserved. The client will be licenced to use each report for the purposes that it was produced in relation to the project as described in the specification. The museum, however, will be granted an exclusive licence for the use of the archive for educational purposes, including academic research, providing that such use conforms to the *Copyright and Related Rights Regulations* 2003. In some instances, certain regional museums may require absolute transfer of copyright, rather than a licence; this should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

8.1.2 Information relating to the project will be deposited with the Historic Environment Record (HER) where it can be freely copied without reference to Wessex Archaeology for the purposes of archaeological research or development control within the planning process.

8.2 Third party data copyright

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Trench summaries

Trench 1	***30 m x 1.5 m***			
Context	***Interpretation***	***Fill of***	***Description***	***Depth bgl (m)***
101	Topsoil		Mid-greyish brown silty clay	0-0.15
102	Made ground		Mid-whiteish brown sand with 50% gravel and pebbles with large SA concrete rubble poorly sorted	0.15-0.20
103	Subsoil		Mid- reddish-brown clay	0.20-0.50
104	Natural		Heavily disturbed by rooting. Light orange grey sandy clay.	0.5+

Trench 2 A/B	***A: 34.8 m x 2 m B: 13 m x 2 m***			
Context	***Interpretation***	***Fill of***	***Description***	***Depth bgl (m)***
201	Topsoil		Dark greyish brown silty clay with 25% roots	0-0.25
202	Layer		Light whiteish grey sandy clay. Visible in trench 2B section.	0.20-0.25
203	Natural		Light greyish yellow and mid-brownish yellow clay. Contains 5% cobbles *c* 100 mm – 200 mm in size. Trench 2B also contains light whiteish grey clay.	0.25+

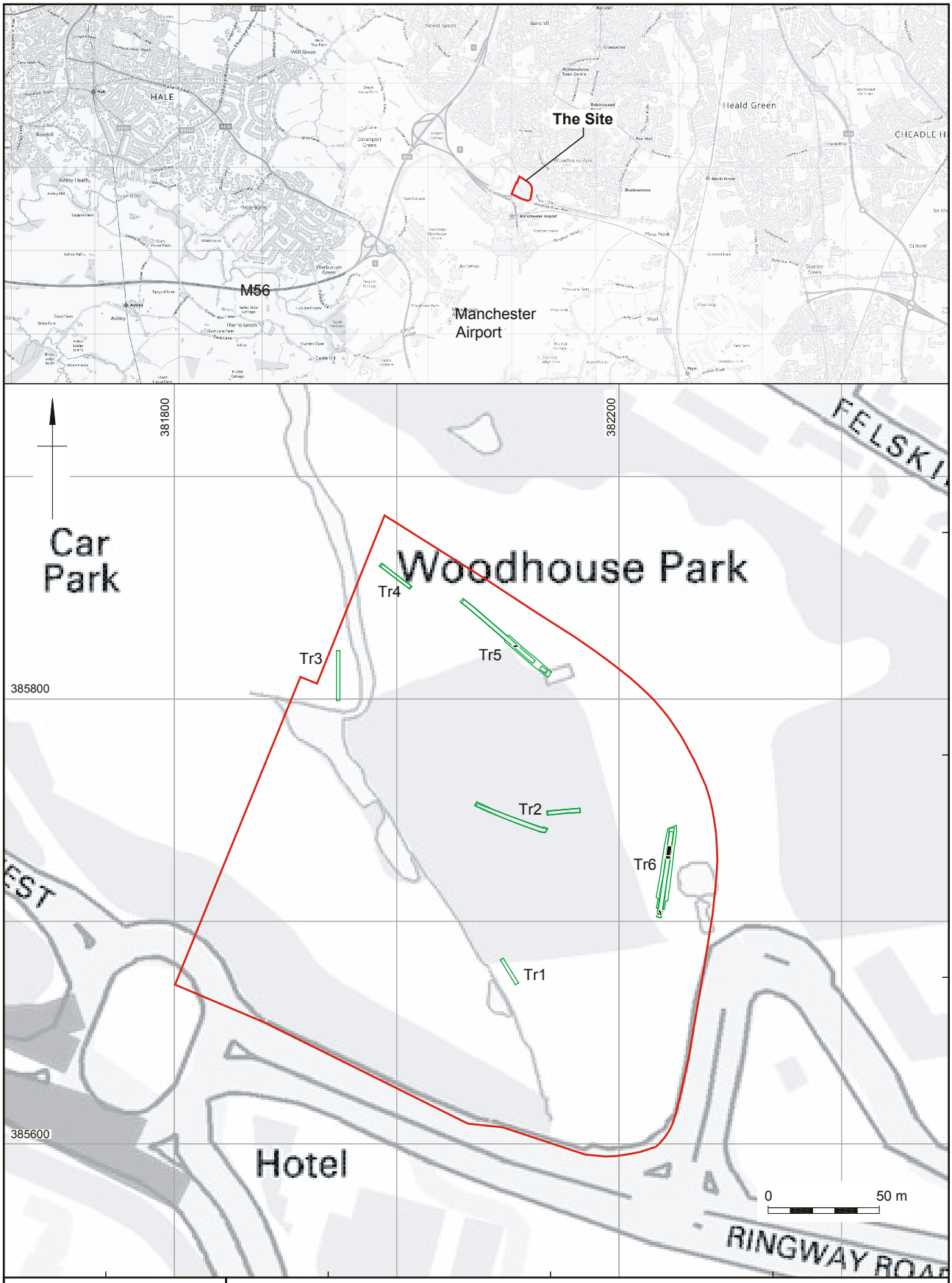
Trench 3	***22 m x 1.5 m***			
Context	***Interpretation***	***Fill of***	***Description***	***Depth bgl (m)***
301	Topsoil		Dark brown silt. Common rooting.	0-0.30
302	Subsoil		Mid-reddish brown silty clay	0.30-0.40
303	Layer		Mid-grey brown silty clay. Contains frequent medium size sub-rounded cobbles.	0.40-0.50
304	Natural		Mottles mid-brownish red clay and light greyish blue clay with mid-greyish brown sandy inclusions.	0.50+

Trench 4	***17 m x 1.5 m***			
Context	***Interpretation***	***Fill of***	***Description***	***Depth bgl (m)***
401	Topsoil		Mid-greyish brown silty clay.	0-0.08
402	Deposit		Mid-brownish red clay. Layer also visible in trench 5, same as context 502.	0.08-0.20
403	Deposit		Mid-greyish brown silty clay. Contains 1% sub-rounded pebbles 210 mm in size and 5% charcoal.	0.20-0.48
404	Natural		Mid-brownish red clay and light brownish yellow sandy clay mix. Contains 10% rounded cobbles.	0.48+

Trench 5	***50 m x 2 m***			
Context	***Interpretation***	***Fill of***	***Description***	***Depth bgl (m)***
501	Topsoil		Mid-greyish brown silty clay. Contains <25% inclusion of poorly sorted angular pebbles and gravel.	0-0.34
502	Subsoil		Mid reddish orange and blackish brown clay, with 5% gravel inclusions.	0.34-0.66
503	Layer		Dark greyish brown clay, with 5% charcoal inclusions.	0.66-0.95
504	Layer		Dark blackish brown clay with 50% roots. Appears in section under subsoil 502 south-east of modern ditch 506.	0.80-1.00
505	Layer		Mid-yellowish brown clay with 1% charcoal inclusions.	1.00-1.20
506	Cut		Cut of modern ditch. Feature unexcavated.	1.20+
507	Fill	506	Backfill of modern ditch 506. Dark blackish brown silty clay with 5% roots.	1.20+

508	Natural		North end of trench: Mid-orange red clay South end of trench: Light yellowish brown clay. Contains 10% charcoal and <25% gravel.	1.20+

Trench 6	***50 m x 4 m***			
Context	***Interpretation***	***Fill of***	***Description***	***Depth bgl (m)***
601	Topsoil		Mid-greyish brown with a red hue silty clay.	0-0.50
602	Subsoil		Mid-greyish brown silty clay	0.50-1.50
603	Layer		Dark blackish brown clay. Contains 5% gravel and 35% roots. Similar to context 505.	1.50-1.80
604	Layer		Mid-yellowish brown clay	1.80-2.00
605	Structure		Concrete: Light greyish white in southern part of trench 6. Same as 607.	1.00
606	Structure		Concrete: Light yellowish orange. Divides associated structures 605 and 607.	1.00
607	Structure		Concrete: Light greyish white. Same as 605.	1.00
608	Structure		Concrete: Light greyish white in the centre of trench 6. Similar material to structures 605 and 607.	1.00
609	Structure		Red brick surface adjacent to structure 608.	1.00
610	Natural		Light brownish yellow clay.	2.00



Coordinate system:
OSGB36 (OSTN15/OSGM15)

Evaluation area | Trench | Archaeological feature

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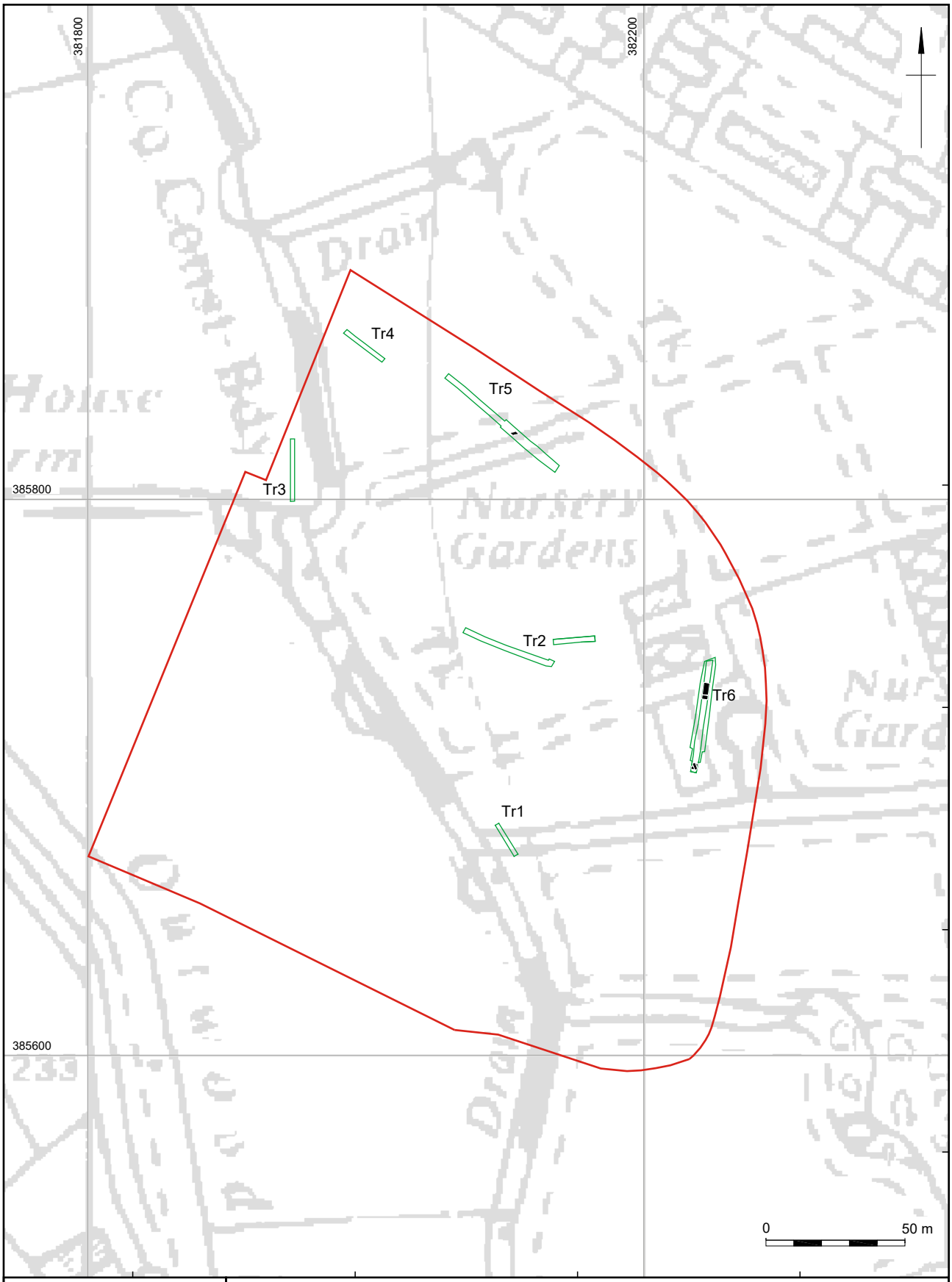
Site and trench location

Figure 1



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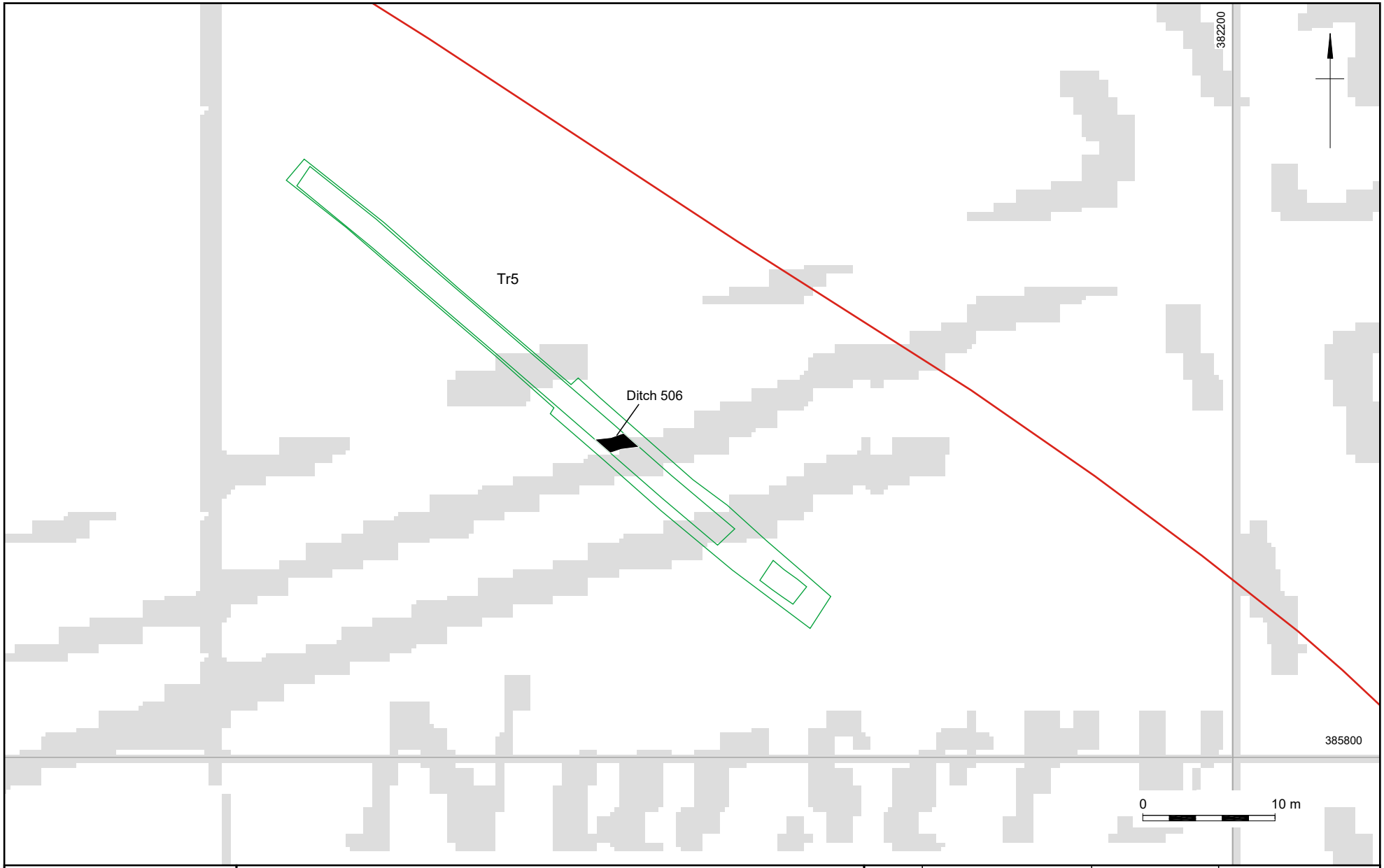
Trench locations overlaid on 1976-1977 OS Map

Figure 2



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Evaluation area
Trench
Archaeological feature

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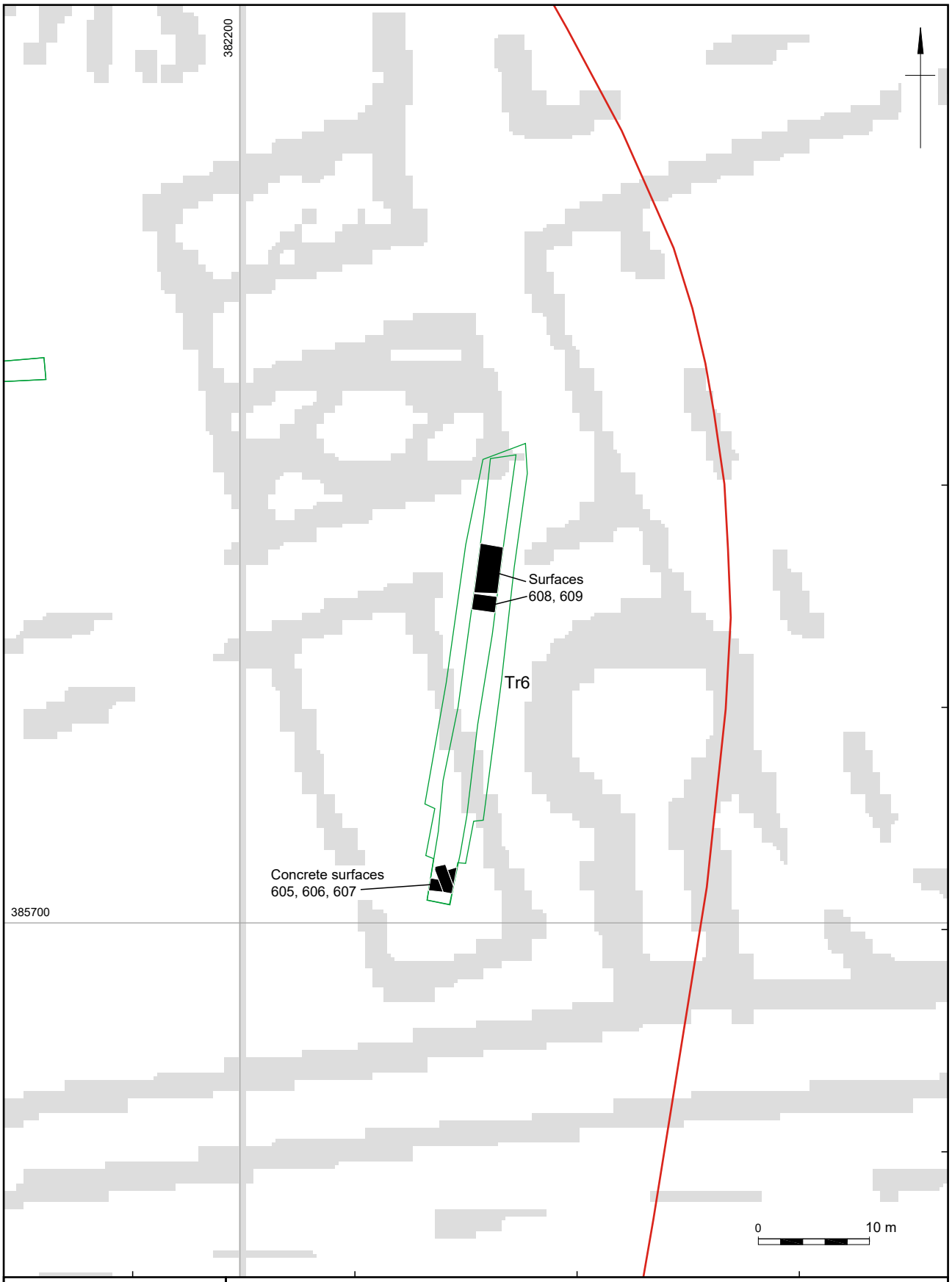
Trench 5 overlaid on 1976-1977 OS map

Figure 3



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Evaluation area | Trench | Archaeological feature

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Path:	S:\PROJECTS\214970\Graphics_Office\Rep figs\eval\2018_01_03		

Trench 6 overlaid on 1976-1977 OS map

Figure 4

Plate 1: Trench 3 from the north

Plate 2: South-west facing representative section of Trench 5

Plate 3: Trench 5 view from south-east

Plate 4: Trench 6, concrete surfaces 605–607

Plate 5: Trench 6, surfaces 608 and 609

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