Glyn Derw High School
Cardiff, Glamorgan

Archaeological Watching Brief

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wessexarchaeology

Glyn Derw High School
Cardiff, Glamorgan

Archaeological Watching Brief

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Glyn Derw High School
Cardiff, Glamorgan

Archaeological Watching Brief

Contents

Figures

Plates

Glyn Derw High School
Cardiff, Glamorgan

Archaeological Watching Brief

Summary

Wessex Archaeology (WA) was commissioned by Atkins (hereafter the Client) to carry out a watching brief on the excavation of six geotechnical trial pits and four bore holes at Glyn Derw High School, Cardiff, hereafter referred to as 'The Site'. No archaeological finds or features were encountered, the soils recorded being natural geology, over which was made ground and disturbed subsoils and landscaped topsoil. The watching brief fieldwork took place between 9th and 12th January 2017.

Glyn Derw High School
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Archaeological Watching Brief

Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned by Atkins. The fieldwork was undertaken by Kerry Birnie. The report was written by Tracey Smith, with illustrations by Nancy Dixon. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Matt Williams.

Glyn Derw High School
Cardiff, Glamorgan

Archaeological Watching Brief

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology (WA) has been commissioned by Atkins (hereafter the Client) to carry out a watching brief on the excavation of six geotechnical trial pits and four bore holes at Glyn Derw High School, Cardiff.

1.1.2 A Written Scheme of Investigation (Wessex Archaeology 2016) had previously been approved by Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT) advising Cardiff City Council (WA 2016).

1.2 The Site

1.2.1 The Site is located in the district of Caerau on the west side of Cardiff; it is bounded to the west by Penally Road, to the north and east by a playing field and to the south by the A4232. The NGR is ST14465,75805. It is located on level ground, at approximately 15m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), at the eastern edge of the suburb of Caerau. The River Ely is 800m to the east. The land drops steeply to the south on the south side of the A4232.

1.2.2 The bedrock is sedimentary Triassic sedimentary Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone. There are no recorded superficial deposits (BGS 2016).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The Iron Age fort from which the district takes its name lies 1km to the south-west. The fort is the third largest in Glamorgan and one of the best-preserved in South Wales. Within the fort are the remains of a medieval defensive ringwork and the ruins of the church of St Mary, which was the parish church of the medieval settlement of Caerau.

2.1.2 The site is 300m south-west of the Trelai Roman villa. The villa was discovered in 1894 and excavated in 1922 by Sir Mortimer-Wheeler (Cardiff Parks 2016). He concluded that the original structure was built in the mid-2nd century and gradually expanded until falling out of use at the beginning of the 4th century. It appeared to have been constructed on a small island formed by a branching stream (Cardiff Parks 2016).

2.1.3 The Site is most likely to have been under pasture until construction of the extensive, adjacent housing estate and Glyn Derw school in the post-war years.

2.2 Aims and objectives

2.2.1 With due regard to the CIfA *Standard and guidance: archaeological watching brief* (CIfA 2014b), the principle aim is to record the archaeological resource during development within a specified area using appropriate methods and practices, and in compliance with the *Code of conduct* and other relevant by-laws of CIfA.

2.2.2 In furtherance of the project aim, the following objectives were defined:

- *To allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works; including*
- *To ensure their preservation by record to the highest possible standard;*
- *To confirm the approximate date or date range of the remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence;*
- *To determine or confirm the approximate extent of any remains;*
- *To determine the condition and state of preservation of the remains; and*
- *To determine the degree of complexity of the horizontal and/or vertical stratigraphy present.*
- *to provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard; and*
- *To prepare a report on the results of the watching brief.*

2.3 Fieldwork methodology

2.3.1 A detailed description of the watching brief methodology is set out in the WSI (WA 2016).

2.3.2 The fieldwork consisted of the monitoring by an experienced archaeologist of the initial hand excavation of four geotechnical boreholes to 1.20m depth, below which a machine was used to sample the natural deposits. Six trial trenches were also monitored; the mechanical excavation being undertaken using a toothless ditching bucket to the top of natural deposits.

2.3.3 A full photographic record was maintained using a digital camera, and the trench locations were plotted using a GPS and related to the Ordnance Survey Datum.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

3.1 Geotechnical trial pits

3.1.1 Trench 1 was originally located to the north-west of the school building, however due to the presence of a gas pipe in the upper layers, this was relocated 0.80m to the west before being fully excavated to natural (**Figure 1**).

3.1.2 In trench 1a natural reddish-brown degraded mudstone (104a) was encountered at 0.99m below ground level (bgl). Overlaying this was a mid-reddish-brown silty-clay subsoil with frequent mudstone fragments and ironstone staining (103a) at 0.55m bgl.

Above the subsoil was a layer of made ground (102a), which was present in both trench 1 and trench 1a, being a mid-brown sandy gravel with very occasional angular stone inclusions, 0.35m below surface level. Topsoil (101a) was the uppermost deposit in both trenches; a mid-reddish-brown silty clay with frequent rooting and occasional small sub-angular stones and modern brick fragments (**Plate 1**).

3.1.3 Trench 2 was located south of trench 1a and west of the school buildings, and contained a similar sequence of deposits. Undisturbed natural (203) was located at 0.46m bgl and was identical to that in trench 1a. Overlaying this was a disturbed subsoil / made ground (202) consisting of pinkish-brown silty-clay loam with occasional rooting and modern glass fragments, extending to a minimum depth of 0.06m below ground surface. Tarmac fragments were also found within layer (202) at the southern end of the trench, confirming previous disturbance had occurred. A dark brown topsoil comprising silty-loam with rooting (201) overlay this deposit.

3.1.4 Trench 3 was located in the centre of the Site between two school buildings. The trench was repositioned from its intended location after a French drain was uncovered. Subsequently, trench 3a was also opened just to the south of the intended trench 3 location. Undisturbed natural was encountered at 0.54m bgl and consisted of a light-brown sandy clay with frequent angular pebbles and manganese flecking (303, 303a). Overlaying this was a layer of reddish-brown sandy-clay with modern brick inclusions and large fragments of gypsum block (302) extending to a depth of 0.31m from the top of the trench. Deposit 302 represents disturbed subsoil, where modern dumping has occurred on the surface and been pressed into the soils by later activity. Topsoil (301, 301a) was a mid-brown silty-clay loam heavily contaminated by modern building rubble and rooting.

3.1.5 Trench 4 was located south of trench 3. Natural deposits were exposed at 1.10m below ground surface; a mid-reddish-brown clay with large mudstone inclusions and sub-rounded limestone fragments with very occasional coal fragments (403). Overlaying this was a layer of made ground (402), up to 0.30m below the surface of the trench and consisting of a pink sandy-silt with frequent inclusions of large sub-rounded boulders and small angular stones. Topsoil (401) consisted of a mid-grey-brown silty-loam with rooting and occasional small angular stones

3.1.6 Trenches 5 and 6 were located in the eastern rugby pitch, T5 being at the northern edge and T6 being at the southern. The deposits were identical in both trenches, with natural (503, 603) being located 0.64 to 0.79m below the ground surface. This was a mid-reddish-brown silty-clay described as being glacial till, containing frequent mudstone inclusions. Overlaying the natural was a light brownish-orange sandy-clay loam subsoil (502, 602), located between 0.10 and 0.28m below the surface and containing frequent mudstone inclusions and iron staining. Topsoil (501, 601) was a light orange-brown sandy-clay loam with frequent rooting and very occasional small stones.

3.2 Boreholes

3.2.1 Four boreholes were located throughout the Site (**figure 1**) and were recorded to the top of natural geology within the hand dug upper sections. No archaeology was revealed; the only deposits found being similar to those recorded in detail in the test trenches, with natural, disturbed subsoils, made ground and topsoil.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1.1 The monitoring of test pits and initial hand-dug depths of boreholes has revealed that in the area of the current school buildings there has been extensive disturbance to upper soil layers, evidently during construction of the school. In comparison, the rugby pitch area appeared relatively undisturbed.

4.1.2 No evidence relating to the Heol Trelai villa or Romano-British activity was revealed within the test-pitting investigations.

5 STORAGE AND CURATION

5.1 Museum

5.1.1 The Site archive will be prepared for long-term storage in accordance with current guidelines (*e.g.* Walker 1990; MGC 1994 *etc*.). It is proposed in principle that, subject to the wishes of the landowner, the entire archive will be donated to and deposited with the designated receiving museum, yet to be confirmed. The Curator of Archaeology has been contacted in advance of the fieldwork for an accession number/Site code and to obtain information regarding the appropriate archive preparation standards.

5.2 Preparation of Archive

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

5.2.2 All archive elements will be marked with the unique Wessex Archaeology Site code 114150, the Museum accession code and a full index will be prepared. The archive comprises the following:

- One document case of paper records & A4 graphics
- 45 jpeg digital photographic images

5.2.3 Until final deposition with the museum the archive will be stored at the offices of WA West in Bristol.

5.2.4 A copy of the archive index (as a minimum) will be forwarded to the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW).

5.3 Copyright

5.3.1 The full copyright of the written/illustrative archive relating to the site will be retained by WA Ltd under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act* 1988 with all rights reserved. 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 shall be non-profitmaking, and conforms to the *Copyright and Related Rights Regulations* 2003.

5.4 Security Copy

5.4.1 In line with current best practice (*e.g.* 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.

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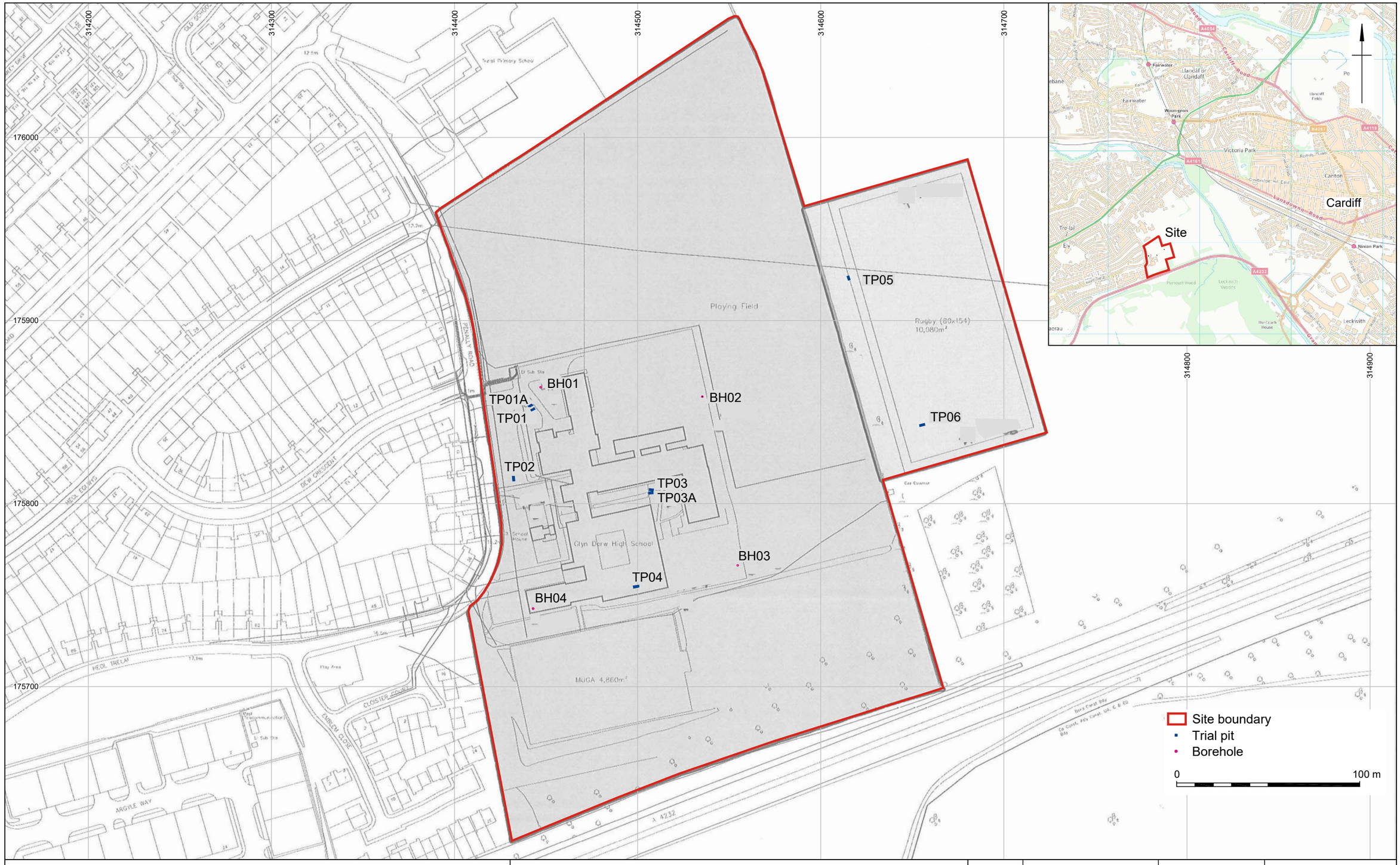
7 APPENDICES

7.1 Appendix 1: Context list

Context	Category	Description	Depth (bgl)
101	Layer	Topsoil: Mid-reddish-brown silty-clay, frequent rooting, occasional small mudstone fragments, modern brick and carbonised wood flecks	0.00-0.20m
102	Layer	Disturbed subsoil: Mid-reddish-brown silty-clay occasional small stones and fragments of modern brick	0.20-0.86m
101a	Layer	Topsoil: Mid-reddish-brown silty-clay, frequent rooting, occasional small mudstone fragments, modern brick and carbonised wood flecks	0.00-0.35m
102a	Layer	Made ground: Mid brown sandy fine gravel with rare small angular stones	0.35-0.55m
103a	Layer	Subsoil: Mid-reddish-brown silty-clay occasional small stones and iron staining	0.55-0.99m
104a	Natural	Reddish-brown soft degraded mudstone	0.99m +
201	Layer	Topsoil: Dark brown silty-loam, frequent rooting	0.00-0.06m
202	Layer	Disturbed subsoil: Mid-pinkish-brown silty-clay-loam, occasional rooting, small stones and fragments of modern glass, tarmac pieces at southern end.	0.06-0.46m
203	Natural	Mid-yellow-brown sandy-silt with frequent iron staining	0.46-0.74 +
301	Layer	Topsoil: Mid-brown silty-clay-loam with frequent medium sized angular stones, modern brick fragments, glass and wood fragments, rooting.	0.00-0.31m
302	Layer	Disturbed subsoil: Mid-reddish-brown sandy-clay with occasional small stones, modern brick and gypsum block fragments	0.31-0.54m
303	Natural	Light brown sandy-clay with frequent manganese flecks and angular pebbles	0.54 +
301a	Layer	Topsoil: Mid-brown silty-clay-loam with frequent medium sized angular stones, modern brick fragments, glass and wood fragments, rooting.	0.00-0.36m
302a	Layer	Disturbed subsoil: Mid-reddish-brown sandy-clay with occasional small stones, modern brick and gypsum block fragments	0.36-0.54m
303a	Natural	Light brown sandy-clay with frequent manganese flecks and angular pebbles	0.54m +
401	Layer	Topsoil: Mid grey-brown silty-loam with rooting and small angular stones	0.00-0.30m
402	Layer	Made ground: Mid pink sandy-silt with large subrounded boulders and frequent small angular stones	0.30-1.10m

403	Natural	Mid red-brown lay with large mudstone inclusions and sub-rounded limestone fragments, possibly glacial till	1.10 +
501	Layer	Topsoil: mid reddish-brown silty-loam with frequent rooting and occasional small sub-rounded stones	0.00-0.10m
502	Layer	Subsoil: Mid orange-brown sandy-clay with frequent rooting and medium sized angular mudstone. Occasional iron staining	0.10-0.79m
503	Natural	Mid reddish-brown silty-clay, frequent angular mudstone inclusions, Glacial till.	0.79-0.85m+
601	Layer	Topsoil: mid reddish-brown silty-loam with frequent rooting and occasional small sub-rounded stones	0.00-0.28m
602	Layer	Subsoil: Mid orange-brown sandy-clay with frequent rooting and medium sized angular mudstone. Occasional iron staining	0.28-0.64m
603	Natural	Mid reddish-brown silty-clay, frequent angular mudstone inclusions, Glacial till.	0.64-0.76m+



Coordinate system:
OSGB36 (OSTN15/OSGM15)

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Site location and trial pit locations

Figure 1

Plate 1: South-facing section of trench 1a, 1m scale

Plate 2: East-facing section of trench 4, 1m scale

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Plate 3: West-facing section of trench 6, 1m scale

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