

SEDFORD HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH PROJECT

**THE SITE OF SEDGFORD HALL'S
BOWLING GREEN: AN
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

CONDUCTED JULY 2000



**SHARP SITE CODE SH2000 BGE
NORFOLK S.M.R. NUMBER 1601 C2**

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Thanks are due to the excavation team - Sophie Cabot, Stuart Calow, Erica Darch, Daisy Eaton, Paul Gardner, Rik Hoggett, Marion McCabe, Naomi Payne and Peter Taylor - and also to Georgina Robotham for producing the Ceramic Report.

The Royal College of Surgeons of England for providing a copy of the map reproduced in Plate 3.

We are also grateful to Bill Armitage for his recollections of the bowling green's existence.

INTRODUCTION

In both an article published in *Norfolk Archaeology* in 1917¹ and in his 1920 volume *The Charm of a Village*², Holcombe Ingleby, then owner of Sedgeford Hall, told how during 1913 “on excavating for the purpose of a bowling green some ground within 150 yards of the house, I discovered that the workmen were turning up pieces of British [Iron Age] and Roman pottery”³. He went on to state that the British pottery was identified as dating from 300 B.C. and that the Roman pottery dated to the first and second centuries⁴, before hypothesising that the quantities recovered “may be presumed to have been thrown out at the back of the villa or settlement, and been dug into the garden”⁵.

Certainly Ingleby excavated a large quantity of pottery from a variety of sites throughout the village in 1913, a plate in *The Charm of a Village* shows tables covered in ceramic sherds, including entire pots (reproduced in Plate 2, below). Unfortunately the pottery appears not to survive: local folklore records that it was crushed and used in the resurfacing of the road between Sedgeford and Snettisham.

A site producing such quantities of pottery is potentially of great interest to SHARP, and it was decided that the site of the bowling green should be subjected to an archaeological evaluation as a part of the research to be conducted during the 2000 season. The aims of the exercise were threefold:

1. To relocate the site of the pottery producing bowling green site referred to by Ingleby.
2. To ascertain whether or not the pottery rich deposits excavated by Ingleby’s workmen survived and if so, to what extent.
3. To assess the potential of the site to become a new area excavation for the 2001 SHARP summer season.

As a result of the work reported here the site has been allocated Norfolk Sites and Monuments Record Number 1601 C2.

¹ Ingleby, H. 1917. ‘Roman and other remains recently discovered in Sedgeford’, *Norfolk Archaeology* 19, 117-121.

² Ingleby, H. 1920. *The Charm Of A Village*. London: Clement Ingleby.

³ Ingleby, 1920, 27.

⁴ Ingleby, 1920, 28.

⁵ Ingleby, 1920, 32.

IDENTIFYING THE BOWLING GREEN

Despite the dual publication of his 1913 exploits discussed above, the exact sites of Ingleby's discoveries were not systematically recorded or published. In relocating the site which produced the large quantities of pottery he described we therefore had to rely upon his reference to the digging of the bowling green and relocate it first. Luckily, this proved to be less difficult than had been feared, although as will be seen, the actual site and extent of Ingleby's excavations remained elusive.

Ingleby tells us his bowling green was installed in 1913⁶, although there is no bowling green currently in use in the grounds of Sedgeford Hall and there hasn't been for at least half a century. Enquiries conducted locally caused ex-farm manager and SHARP Treasurer Bill Armitage to recall he had seen the disused and overgrown site of the bowling green many years ago and was able to identify the site as lying somewhere in the coniferous plantation to the north west of Sedgeford Hall⁷. As can be seen in Figure 1, this coincides with Ingleby's description of the site as lying "within 150 yards of the house"⁸, and is also complemented by a hand drawn map from 1913 (Plate 3) which is annotated "Roman Pottery" in the same general vicinity. Although reported to have been drawn by Miss H. Ingleby, this map is not drawn to scale and is of no further use in the identification of the location of the pottery producing bowling green site.

Knowing the general area of the bowling green's location allows for a better understanding a vertical aerial photograph taken in 1946, which clearly shows an area of lighter coloured grass bordered by trees to the north west of Sedgeford Hall (Plate 4). Taken with the evidence discussed here, it is clear that this area must be the site of Ingleby's bowling green.

As was mentioned above, and can be seen on the front cover, the site of the bowling green is currently covered by a relatively young coniferous tree plantation. Fortunately these trees are young and have been planted in rows several metres apart, leaving earthworks and archaeology largely intact. In addition, the acidity of the coniferous needles has kept the vegetation between the trees to an absolute minimum and conducive to archaeological study.

⁶ Ingleby, 1920, 27.

⁷ Bill Armitage, personal communication, July 2000.

⁸ Ingleby, 1920, 27.

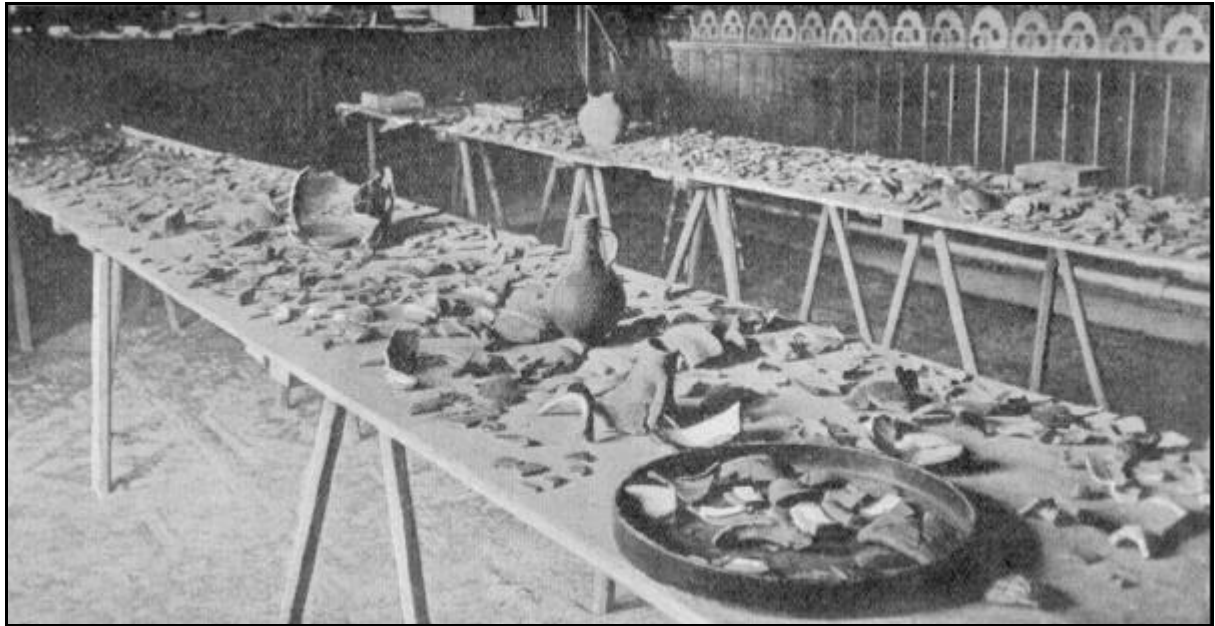


Plate 2. “Quantities of pottery dug up in Sedgeford”⁹. Although the photograph shows pottery dug up throughout Sedgeford in 1913, Ingleby suggests that a significant quantity of it came from the bowling green.

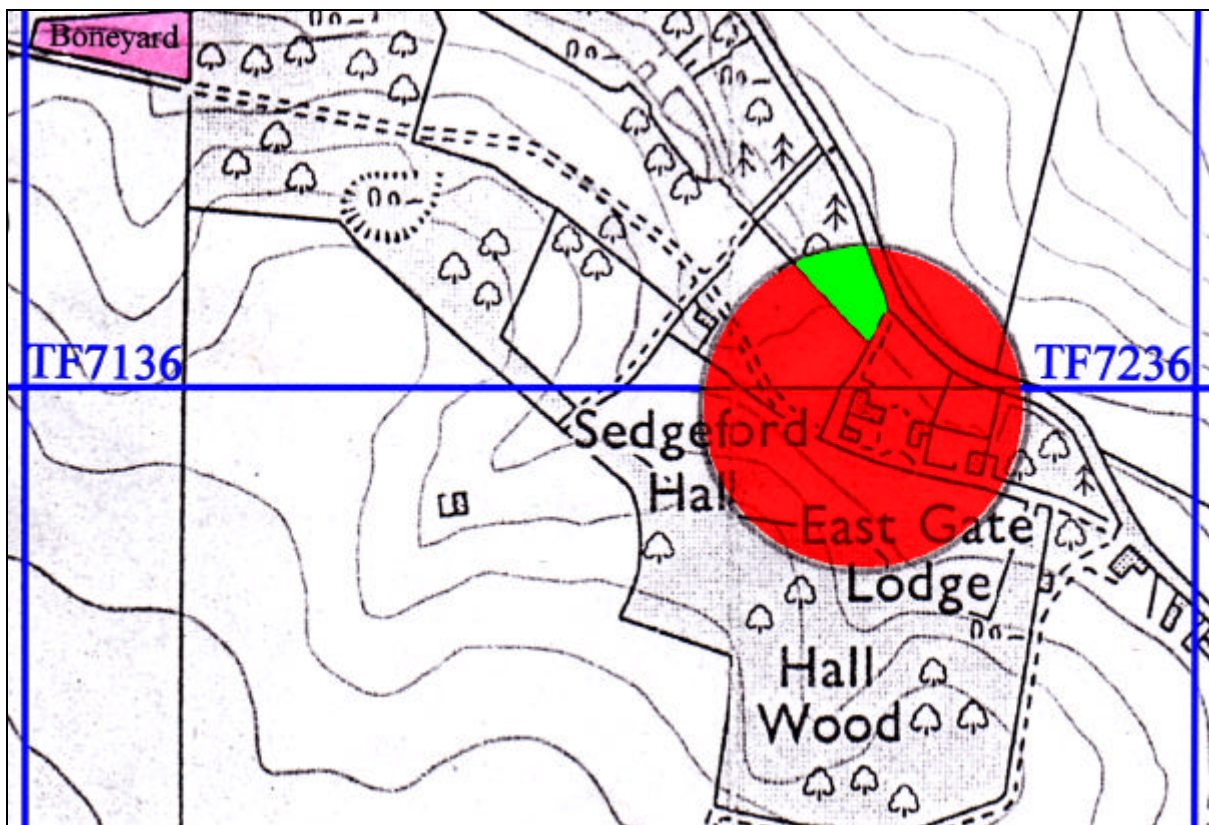


Figure 1. Enlarged detail of Ordnance Survey Explorer Sheet 23 at 1:6250 highlighting the area that can be described as “within 150 yards of the house [Sedgeford Hall]”¹⁰. The site of the bowling green is show in green and site of the Boneyard is highlighted in pink.

⁹ Ingleby, 1920, 34.

¹⁰ Ingleby, 1920, 27.

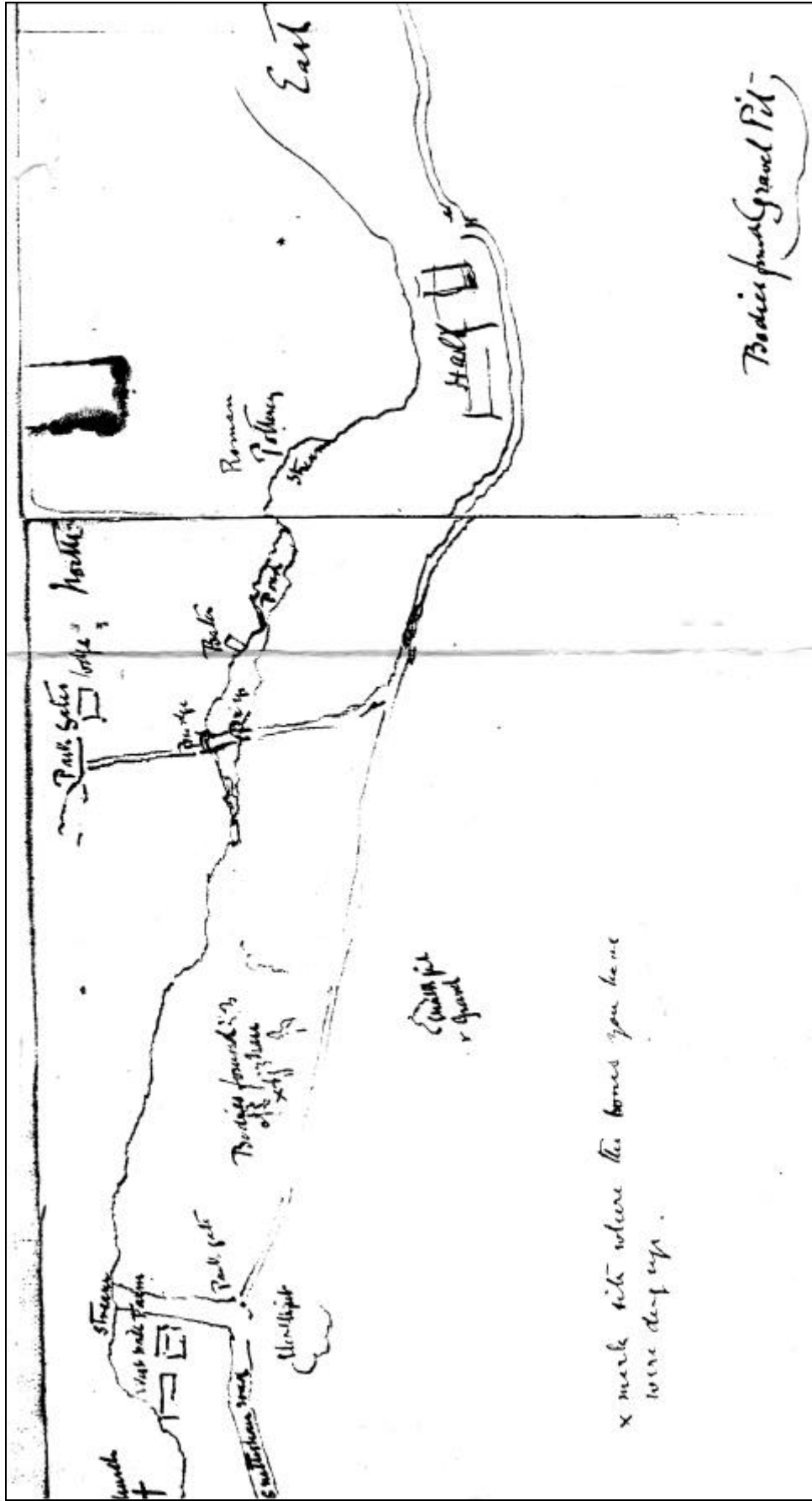


Plate 3. A map of Sedgeford drawn by Miss H. Ingleby showing the sites excavated in 1913, now held by the Royal College of Surgeons.



Plate 4. An enlarged detail of a 1946 Vertical Aerial Photograph¹¹ of Sedgeford Hall clearly showing the Bowling Green, note the contrast in shade between the lawns and Bowling Green and the surrounding grassland.

¹¹ National Monuments Record vertical aerial photograph 1069/UK/1606:27JUN46:F/36"REST'D.

Beneath the trees, the earthworks and platform of the rectangular bowling green are evident, with the long side of the rectangle running north west to south east. The bowling green platform is bounded by slight earthen banks to the north west and south east, a more defined bank to the north east and a drop towards the Heacham river to the south west. In order to record the contours of the site, three transects were placed across the area and their relative heights recorded at one metre intervals with a dumpy level using the Ordnance Survey datum located on the main road. As can be seen in Figure 2, Transect A-B (Figure 3) was sited off the bowling green and with the natural slope of the hillside. Transect C-D (Figure 4) was sited parallel to A-B and cut across the short length of the bowling green. Transect E-F (Figure 5) was placed at right angles to the other two transects and ran across the slope, encompassing the bowling green.

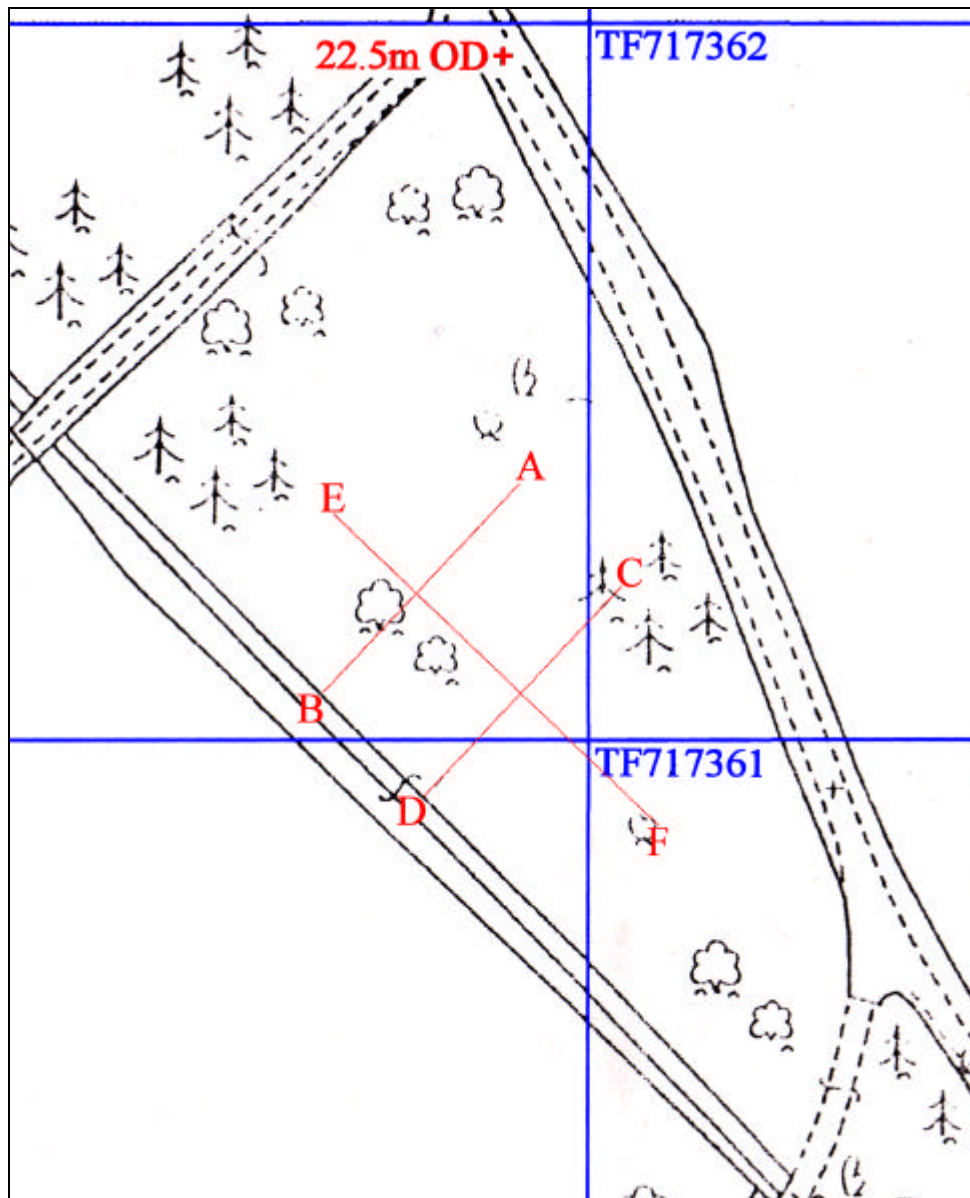


Figure 2. The locations of the survey transects laid across the Bowling Green. Scale 1:1000.



Figure 3. Profile of Transect A-B. Scale 1:200. Heights above OD.

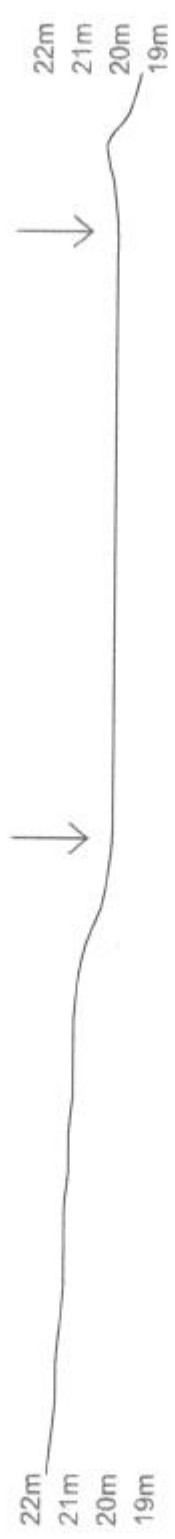


Figure 4. Profile of Transect C-D. Scale 1:200. Heights above OD.



Figure 5. Profile of Transect E-F. Scale 1:200. Heights above OD.

The profile in Figure 3 shows what can be considered as the natural slope of the area in which the bowling green is sited, gently dropping away to the edge of the River Heacham, whilst the profile in Figure 4 shows the same slope having been altered to create the platform for the bowling green. The sudden break in slope resulting from the excavating away of material is clearly evident, as is the levelled platform of the green itself (the extent of which is marked by the arrows in Figure 4). The profile shown in Figure 5, running across the line of the slope, demonstrates that the slope is largely uniform in the vicinity of the bowling green, however, it is possible to detect slight earthen banks bounding the level platform of the green (the extent of which is marked by the arrows in Figure 5).

Taking the combined evidence of the three profiles, it would appear that the lower extent of the slope has been built up to create the level platform of the bowling green, presumably using the material excavated from further up the slope. As can be seen, the levelled area of the bowling green platform was sixteen metres long and eight metres wide with raised earthen banks surrounding it.

Having established the exact location of the site of the bowling green and also having identified the probably areas that were excavated during its creation, the decision was taken to proceed with a limited series of archaeological interventions.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS

The site of Ingleby's bowling green located, four test pits and a trench were sited both on and off the bowling green in order to evaluate the nature and potential of the pottery rich deposits encountered during its construction in 1913. As can be see in Figure 6, the five by one metre trench was placed across the break in the slope identified in Figure 4 in an effort to ascertain the nature of the processes employed in the creation of the bowling green and sample the underlying deposits. Along the same axis a one metre square test pits were placed off the green to the north east and south west, with an addition pit placed along a perpendicular axis to the north west.

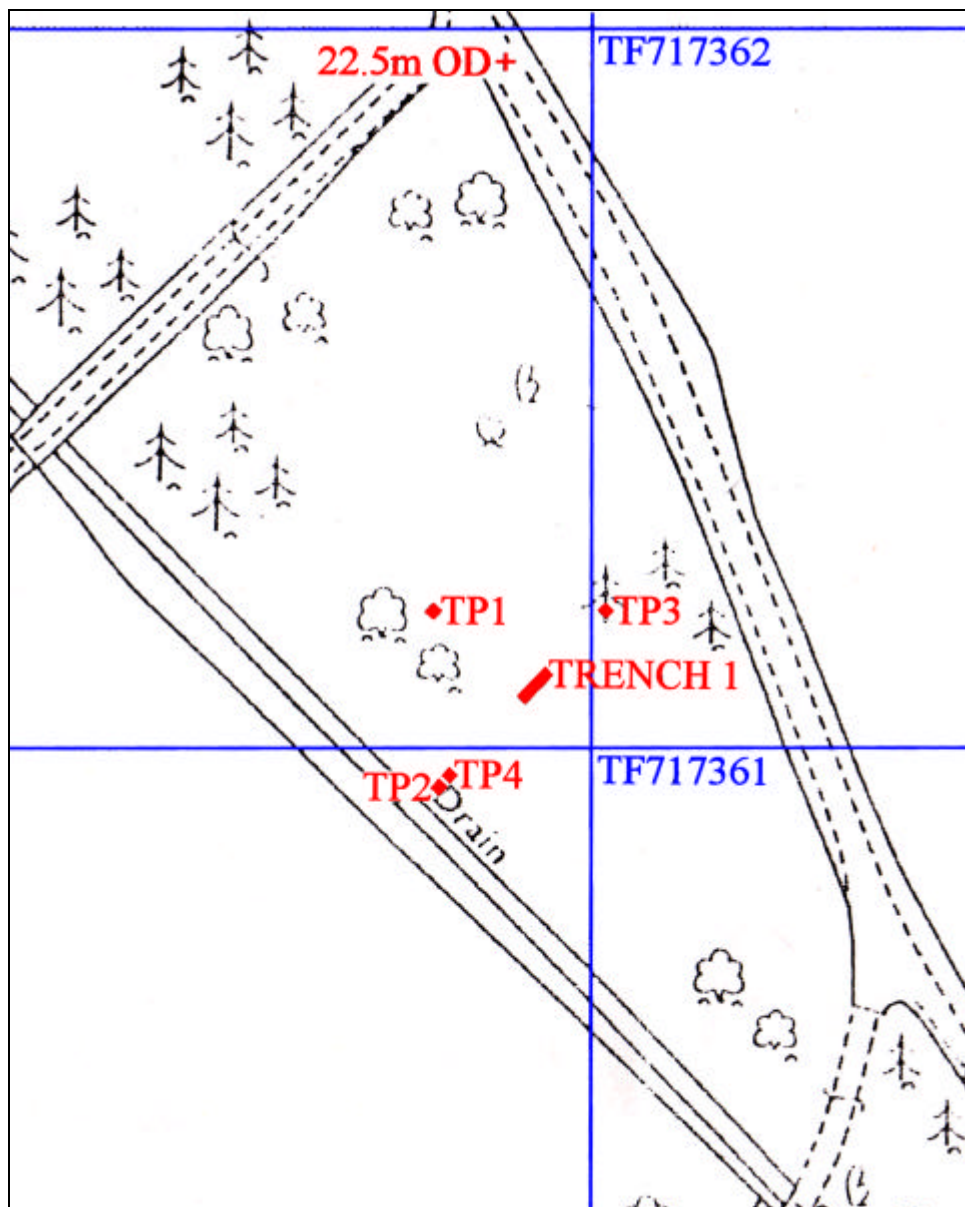


Figure 6. The locations of Trench 1 and Test Pits 1 to 4. Scale 1:1000.

TEST PIT ONE (TP1)

Placed off the platform of the bowling green to the north west, test pit one provided a detailed picture of the undisturbed natural deposits within area of the bowling green, whilst not producing any archaeology of note. The recently formed soil of Context 1 overlaid a natural deposit of lighter brown loamy soil containing chalky pebbles (Context 2). Beneath this was another natural deposit - a compact, yellow sandy soil (Context 3) - and this in turn overlaid a very fine, pale yellow sand (Context 4). This sequence would appear to represent the natural stratigraphy and can safely be described as not have having been disturbed during the creation of the bowling green platform in 1913.

TEST PIT ONE (TP1) TYPE ONE CONTEXT RECORDS

Context No.	Context Description
001	A dark, loose, humic topsoil. Frequent roots and a few stones. Few finds. <u>CERAMIC REPORT</u> 1 piece (6g) Iron Age Handmade Gritty Ware 1 piece (6g) Unidentified ?Roman Fineware

Context No.	Context Description
002	A more compact lighter brown loamy soil with chalk pebbles. No finds were recovered from this context.

Context No.	Context Description
003	A sandy yellow compact soil with some chalk pebbles and a few small flint pieces. No finds were recovered from this context.

Context No.	Context Description
004	A fine pale mustard yellow sand with a few very fine chalk and flint pieces. No finds were recovered from this context.

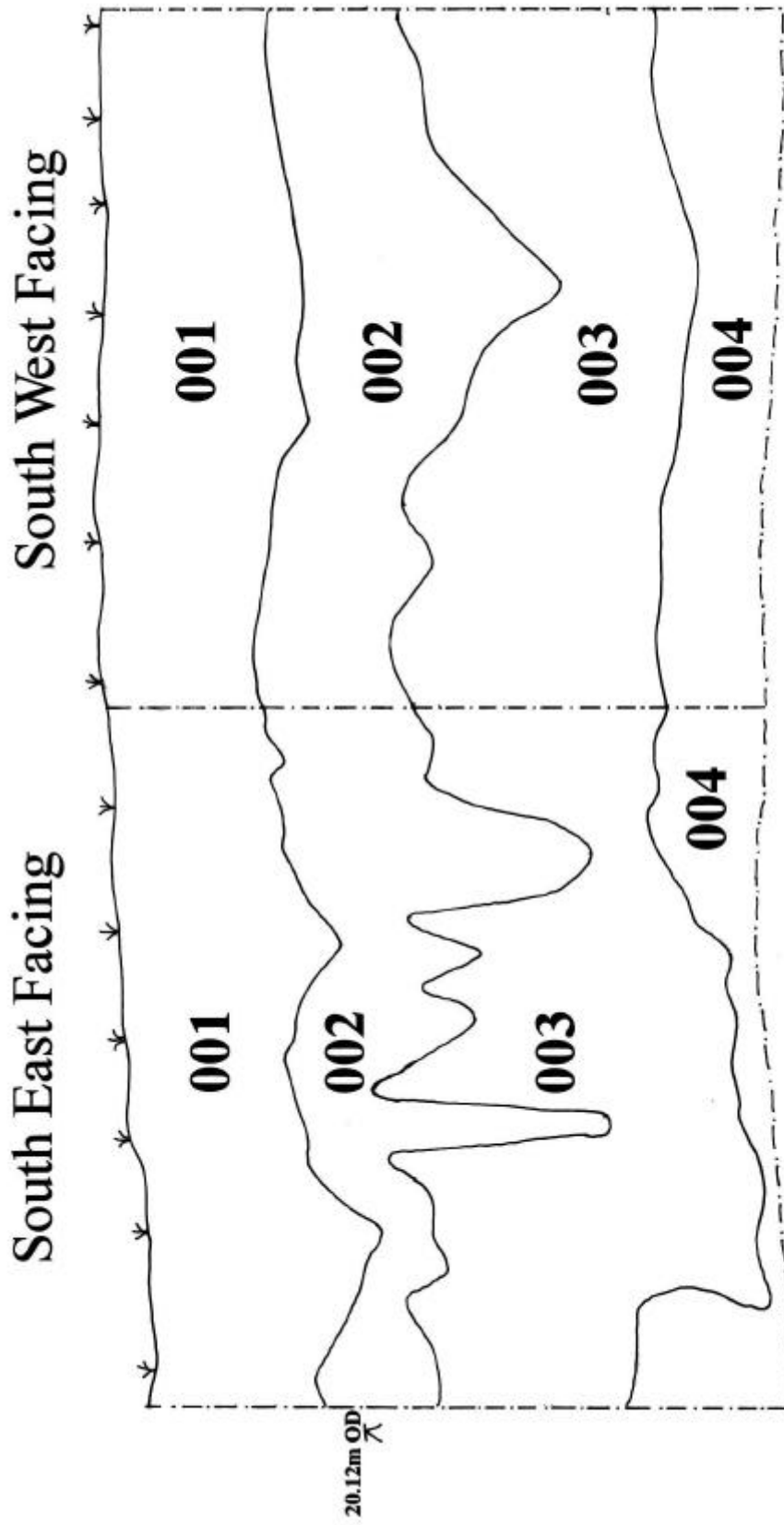


Figure 7. The recorded sections of Test Pit 1 at 1:10.

TEST PIT TWO (TP2)

Test Pit 2 was sited on the south western edge of the bowling green platform, however, just below the surface the edge of a sheet of modern chicken wire was encountered. Interpreted as being a vertically set rabbit fence the test pit was abandoned due to the likely disturbance caused by its installation. Test Pit 4 was opened in its stead two metres to the north east along the same axis.

TEST PIT THREE (TP3)

Test Pit 3 was placed upslope of the bowling green platform to the north east and again produced a stratigraphic sequence that can be best interpreted as being largely natural. The recent topsoil (Context 1) overlaid a thick layer of orangey brown loamy soil (Context 2) that can be equated with Context 2 in TP1 and Context 3 in Trench 1. Beneath this context the top of the familiar layer of sandy yellow gravel was encountered (Context 3), which can be equated with Context 3 in TP1 and Context 2 in Trench 1. It is possible that Context 2 represents redeposited material, although no interface is discernable due to the manipulation being within a single context. The fact that no finds were recovered until the spoil from Context 2 was sieved would suggest that the context had already been scrutinised by eye and all of the visible pieces encountered collected, presumably by Ingleby's workmen.

TEST PIT THREE (TP3) TYPE ONE CONTEXT RECORDS

Context No.	Context Description
001	A dark brown humic topsoil with many roots and leaf mold. Two pieces of tile and a mortar fragment were found through hand retrieval, and many small fragments of flint, glass and animal bone when the spoil was sieved. <u>CERAMIC REPORT</u> 1 piece (5g) Late Saxon Thetford Type Wares.

Context No.	Context Description
002	A lighter more orange brown loamy soil below the topsoil. Much more compacted than 001 with chalk pebbles and flint pieces. Finds included an oyster shell and animal bone found by hand retrieval, and small fragments of flint, glass and animal bone when the spoil was sieved.

Context No.	Context Description
003	A sandy yellow gravel with frequent chalk and flint pieces. Very compact. No finds were recovered from this context.

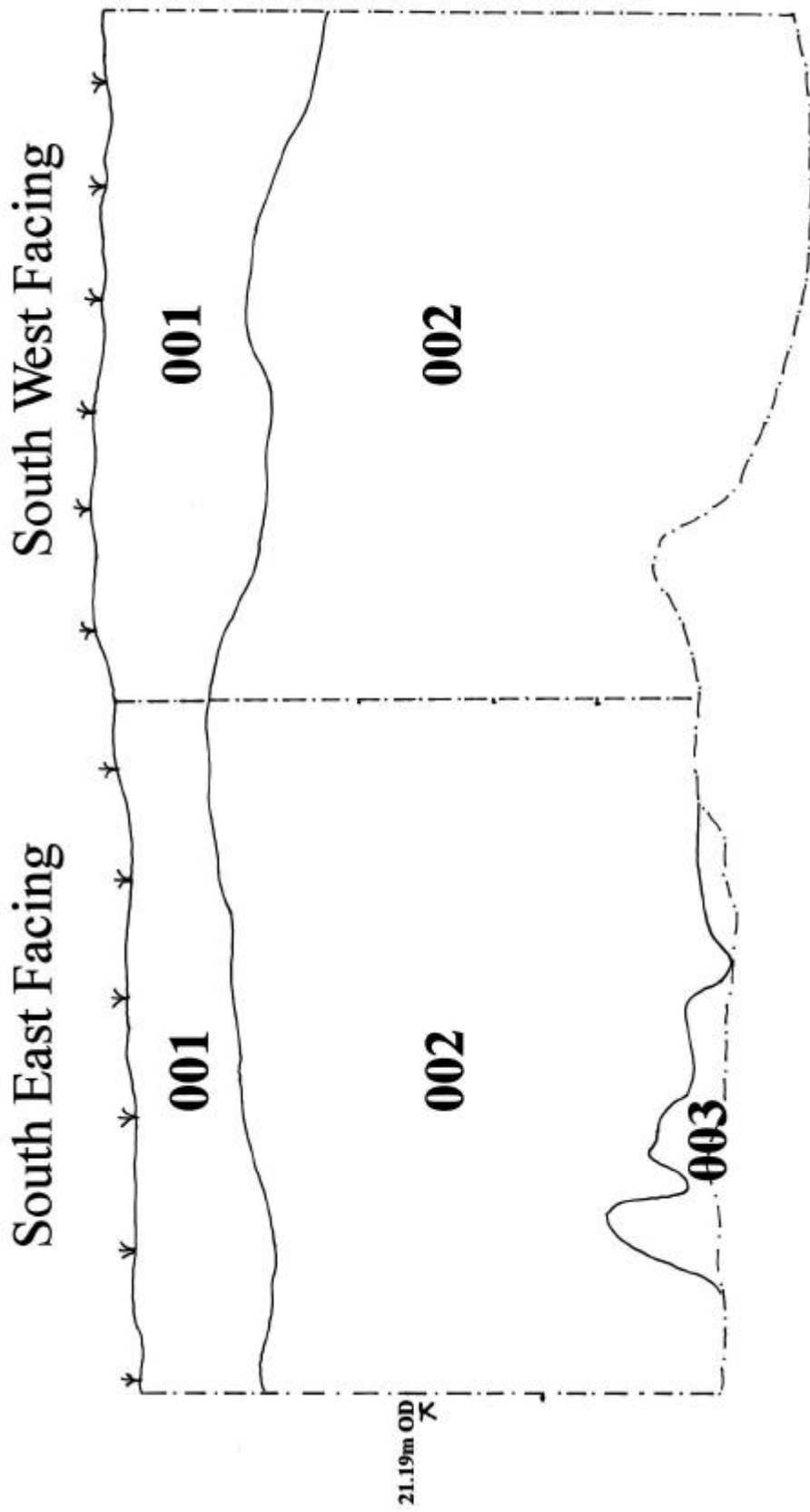


Figure 8. The recorded sections of Test Pit 3 at 1:10.

TEST PIT 4 (TP 4)

Test Pit 4 was opened after the closure of Test Pit 2 and was situated two metres to the north east of it. Again Context 1 consisted of the newly forming topsoil, overlaying Context 3, the stony hardcore of a path running parallel to the course of the river. It would also appear that Context 2 also results from the building up of this path, consisting as it does of many chalk and brick fragments.

Context 4 provides the key to understanding the construction of the bowling green. It has already been noted above that the bottom end of the slope of the hill had been raised to create the level platform of the bowling green itself, with the body of the material coming from cuttings further up the slope, and Context 4 is a result of this. Consisting entirely of the same material encountered in Context 2 in TP1 and Context 3 in Trench 1, Context 4 had clearly been heavily disturbed in its deposition, and its comparative depth and the fact that its upper surface remained perfectly level with the bowling green platform suggest deliberate levelling. In addition, as was the case with TP3 Context 2, it was not until the spoil from the context was sieved that any finds were recovered, suggesting that the material had already been scrutinized by excavators who had removed all of the pieces big enough to be visible to the naked eye.

The transition from Context 4 to 5 was impossible to delineate due to the gradual blending of one context into the other. It would appear that the fine yellow sand is the continuation of that encountered as Context 4 in TP1 and Context 4 in Trench 1.

TEST PIT FOUR (TP4) TYPE ONE CONTEXT RECORDS

Context No.	Context Description
001	A dark loose humic topsoil. No finds were recovered from this context.

Context No.	Context Description
002	A lighter brown sandy loam with a few chalk pebbles and flint pieces. Many roots, very friable. Finds included four brick fragments.

Context No.	Context Description
003	Equivalent to 001, but more stoney.

Context No.	Context Description
004	<p>Beneath 002 and similar to this layer, but more compact, with fewer inclusions and a more reddish colour. No finds were made during hand retrieval, but several were discovered when sieving the spoil.</p> <p>CERAMIC REPORT</p> <p>9 pieces (32g) Iron Age Handmade Sandy Ware 2 pieces (18g) Roman Nar Valley Oxidised Ware 1 piece (6g) Unsourced Roman Sand-Tempered Grey Surfaced Ware 1 piece (3g) Unsourced Roman Buff Ware 1 piece (2g) Unsourced Roman Sand-Tempered Black surfaced Ware 1 piece (1g) Unsourced Roman Colour-Coated ware 2 pieces (20g) Early Saxon Grass-Tempered Ware 1 piece (2g) Middle Saxon Ipswich Type Ware 5 pieces (35g) Late Saxon Thetford Type Ware 7 pieces (45g) Medieval Unglazed Grimston Type Ware 1 piece (2g) Late Glazed Red Earthen Ware 10 pieces (20g) Unidentified</p>

Context No.	Context Description
005	<p>Fine mid-yellow sand which appears gradually at a dept of about one metre. No finds were recovered from this context.</p>

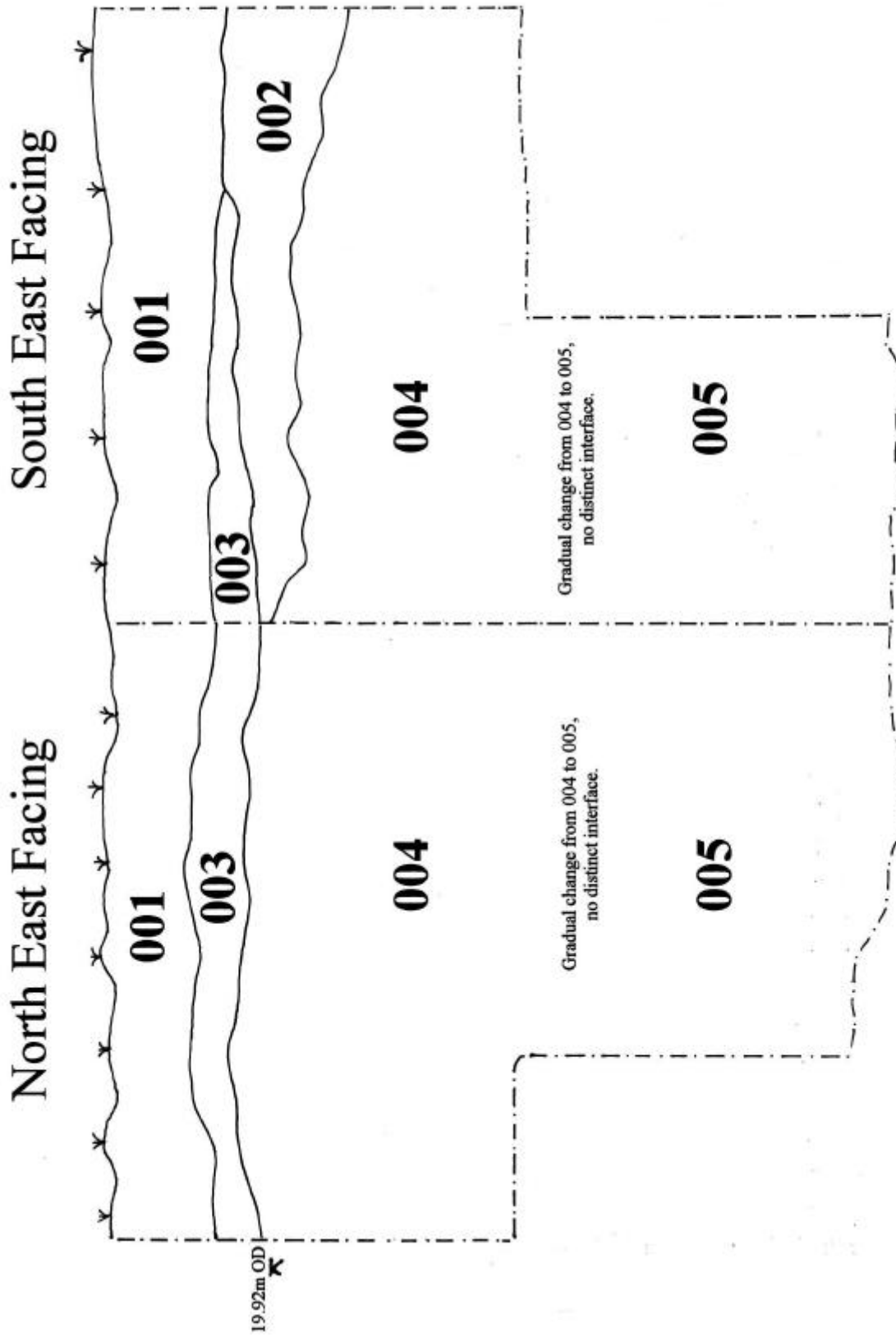


Figure 9. The recorded sections of Test Pit 4 at 1:10.

TRENCH ONE

Positioned across the break in slope identified by the survey transects and interpreted as representing the cut made into the hillside to create the level platform and provide material for levelling the lower extent of the slope. The excavation served to confirm this theory. Again Context 1 was the newly forming topsoil, however, the absence of a turf line above the level of the bowling green platform and the subsequent build up of soil a single context would suggest that any particularly well tended surface of the green was subsequently removed.

The presence of Context 3 at the north eastern end of the trench (equating with Context 2 in TP1, Context 2 in TP3 and Context 4 in TP 4) is particularly conclusive proof of the cutting away of the deposits demonstrated to be natural in TP1 in order to form a level platform for the bowling green. In this case, the slope has been cut away down to the top of the naturally gravely layer (Context 2), which would have provided a well draining, solid base for the bowling green itself, explaining the choice of location for the site.

TRENCH ONE TYPE ONE CONTEXT RECORDS

Context No.	Context Description
001	A loose, mid-dark brown topsoil with many small pieces of flint and chalk, rotting wood and tree roots. Few finds. Overlies contexts 002 and 003. CERAMIC REPORT 2 pieces (6g) Late Saxon Thetford Type Wares 1 piece (11g) Medieval Glazed Grimston Type Ware 1 piece (8g) Victoriana or Later Wares

Context No.	Context Description
002	A compacted layer of yellow sandy gravel containing many small chalk pebbles, some flint pieces and a few darker sandy patches associated with tree roots. The lack of finds suggests that this is a natural deposit. Underlies contexts 003 and 001 and overlies context 004.

Context No.	Context Description
003	A mid-brown sandy loam, containing small pieces of flint and chalk, more compacted than context 001. Underlies 001 and overlies 002. The lack of finds suggests that this is a natural deposit, although the distinct earthworks suggest that this context has been deliberately cut away to form a level platform of context 002.

Context No.	Context Description
004	A very uniform, fine, damp, yellow sand. Underlies 002 and appears to be natural.

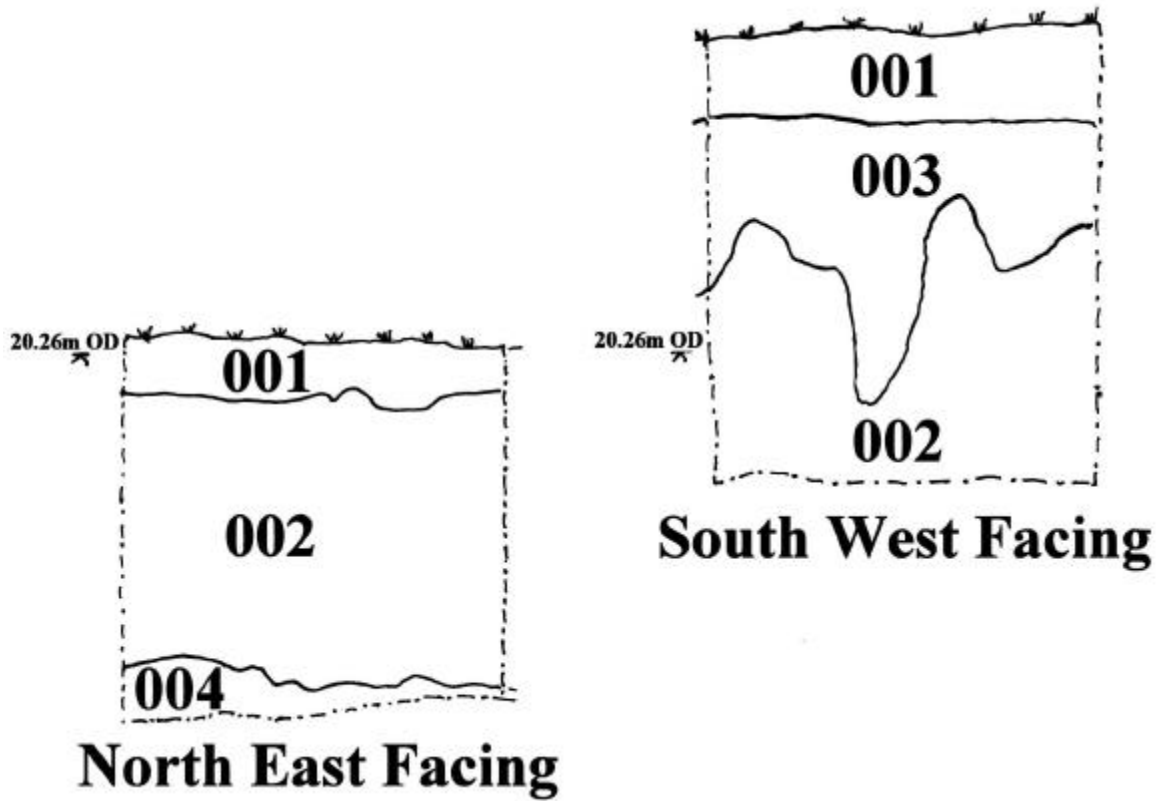


Figure 10. The two short sections of Trench 1 at 1:20, shown at their relative heights.

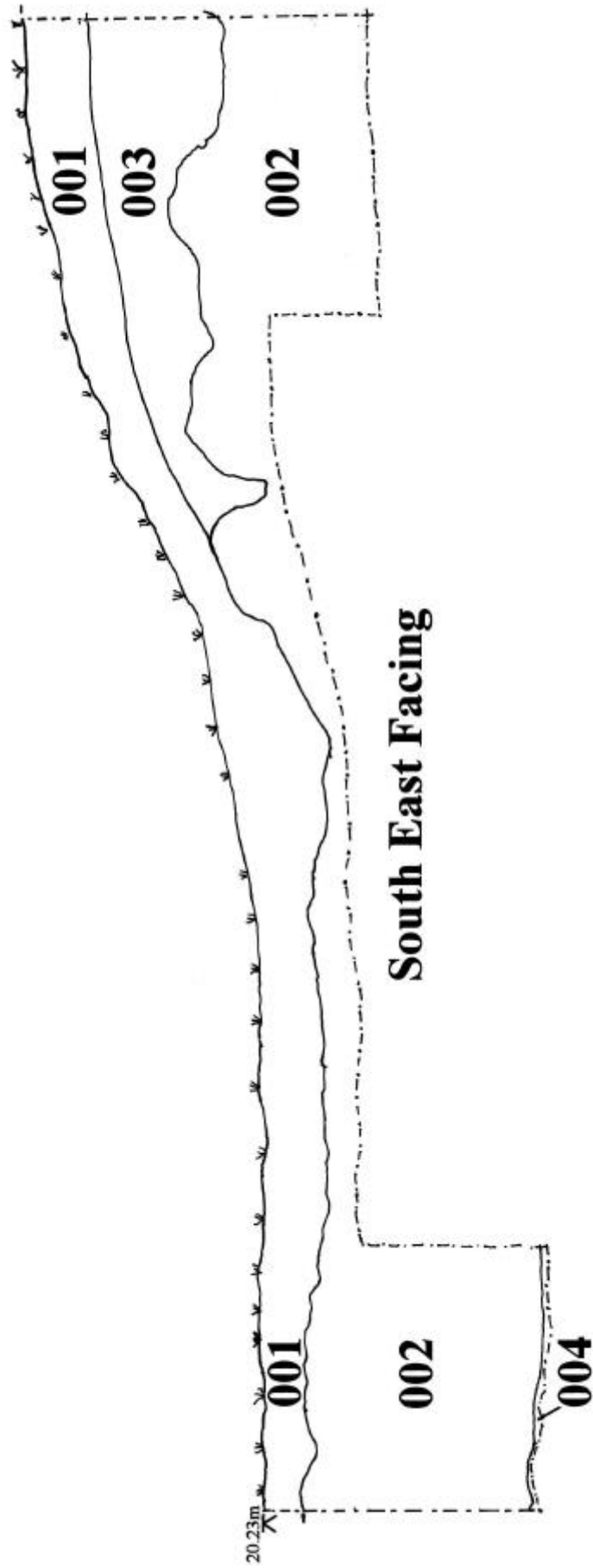


Figure 11. The recorded long section of Trench 1 at 1:20.

CONCLUSIONS

From the starting point of throw away references to the chance discovery of Iron Age and Roman pottery during the construction of a bowling green in 1913, 87 years later SHARP was able to relocate the site of the green itself and, despite the site now being wooded, gain significant insights into the methods employed in its construction, evaluating the quality of the surviving archaeological deposits in the process. That Ingleby's workmen discovered significant quantities of Iron Age and Roman pottery is beyond dispute, and the small fragments of pottery only discovered during sieving would suggest that they were thorough in their collection of visible pieces of pottery, but the nature of the deposits they found are open to question.

Despite relatively high and significant occurrences of Iron Age and Roman pottery from such small excavations, no evidence was discovered of any archaeological features before the natural gravel deposits were encountered. It would appear that Ingleby's original suggestion of a midden or manuring deposit from a nearby settlement may be the most valid interpretation. Certainly the size of the pottery fragments recovered would suggest secondary deposition, although obviously, the likelihood of the material having been excavated once already will skew the data.

Ultimately, the evidence of the cutting into the slope seen in Trench 1, combined with the redeposition of material seen in TP4, would suggest that Ingleby's workmen did not excavate to a considerable depth, instead merely landscaping the slope, and that the extent of their excavations was limited to the immediate area of the green. However, that they (and we) should have found such quantities of Iron Age and Roman pottery does suggest there is/are significant site(s) in the vicinity. The search continues.