



**PROPOSED CATTLE YARD, BEECHES BUILDINGS,  
GOULDS FARM, MILBORNE ST ANDREW, DORSET**

**Archaeological Evaluation**



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# **Proposed Cattle Yard, Beeches Buildings, Goulds Farm, Milborne St Andrews, Dorset Archaeological Evaluation, November 2002**

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# **Proposed Cattle Yard, Beeches Buildings, Goulds Farm, Milborne St Andrew, Dorset**

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### **SUMMARY**

*An archaeological evaluation was carried out on land at Beeches Buildings, Goulds Farm, Milborne St Andrew (SY813969), which lies within an area of medieval strip lynchets. A total of seven machine trenches were excavated, revealing that the area had suffered from severe erosion from ploughing. Two trenches contained archaeological features. In Trench 6 were the remains of a very shallow ditch, probably the truncated remnant of an old field boundary. In Trench 7 was a shallow irregular linear feature, which has been interpreted as an old hedge line. Neither feature has been dated, but both are thought to be post-medieval.*

*The archaeological potential of the site is considered to be low.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

This project was commissioned by Mr M. H. Miller, through his agent, Symonds and Sampson, as part of the planning application for the construction of a new cattle yard and other agricultural buildings at Beeches Buildings, Goulds Farm, Milborne St Andrew, Dorset (Application No. 2/2001/0684).

An archaeological evaluation was requested by North Dorset District Council, the Local Planning Authority, following advice from Steven Wallis, Senior Archaeologist, Dorset County Council. This is in line with Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (Archaeology and Planning).

An archaeological evaluation is a limited programme of intrusive fieldwork which determines the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts within a specified area or site. If such archaeological remains are present, field evaluation defines their character, extent, quality and preservation, and enables an assessment of their worth in a local, regional, national or international context, as appropriate.

The site is situated about \*\* m to the southeast of Milborne St Andrew, at Ordnance Survey NGR SY813969 (Figure 1). It lies in the bottom of a shallow coombe running NW–SE, at a height of about 65 m above Ordnance Datum. The site is on agricultural land and straddles the bridleway known as Snag Lane, which is defined by well-developed hedges on both sides. The area of the site to the southeast of Snag Lane contains two existing barns and a cattle shed (Figure 2), set on the edge of arable land. The area to the northwest of Snag Lane is in pasture.

The proposed development comprises the demolition or moving of the existing agricultural buildings and the erection of a number of new agricultural buildings.

The fieldwork was carried out between 11<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> November 2002 by Steven Tatler, Rod Brook, and Rebecca Montague.

Terrain Archaeology would like to acknowledge Mr Michael Miller, the landowner, Philip Pollard of Symonds and Sampson, and Steven Wallis, Senior Archaeologist, Dorset County Council, for their help and cooperation during this project.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The site lies in an area fairly rich in archaeological remains, but with little in the way of formal archaeological investigation.

The earliest known monuments in the area are a number of Early Bronze Age round barrows on Milborne Down, on a low NW–SE ridge to the south of the site. Two barrows lie approximately 300 m to the west and three approximately 300m to the southeast of the site (RCHME 1970: 182). All of these barrows have been severely affected by ploughing.

The largest monument in the area is Weatherby Castle, an Iron Age hill-fort, on the southern end of a chalk spur about 800 m to the southwest of the site (RCHME 1970: 179–181).

An undated rectilinear enclosure with an entrance on the southwest side lies about 500 m to the east of the site (RCHME 1970: 182). This is protected as a Scheduled Monument (Dorset M131). An extensive area of cropmarks has been recorded to the north and northwest of the site, indicating the presence of other enclosures, linear boundaries, and settlement (Dorset Sites and Monuments Record— Milborne St Andrew 52, 74, 75, 77).

There are slight traces of contour strip lynchets in the area of the site, which are probably the remains of the open fields of Milborne Stileham (RCHME 1970: 179).

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The objective of the archaeological works was to evaluate the archaeological potential of the site, that is, to appraise the nature, extent, level of preservation, and importance of any archaeological deposits.

The evaluation aimed to record all the *in situ* archaeological deposits and features revealed during the works in order to provide sufficient data to assess the archaeological significance of the site.

## METHODS

The archaeological works were carried out in compliance with the specification (T3065) prepared by Terrain Archaeology in September 2001, and in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (1994, rev. 1999).

The evaluation comprised intrusive investigation (a nominal 2% sample, by area) in the form of machine excavated trial trenches. Four trenches were excavated to the southeast of Snag Lane, three 30 m by 1.9 m and one 15 m by 1.9 m. Three trenches were excavated to the northwest, two 30 m by 1.9 m and one 28.6 m by 1.9 m.

The trenches were cleared of recent overburden by a tracked excavator fitted with a toothless grading bucket, down on to the top of any *in situ* archaeological deposits, or the natural subsoil, whichever was encountered first.

All archaeological deposits and features exposed during the works were cleaned by hand, then planned and recorded. Excavation of archaeological deposits and features was limited to resolving questions relating to their date, nature, extent and condition.

All deposits revealed, irrespective of their apparent archaeological significance, were recorded using components of the Terrain Archaeology recording system of complementary written, drawn and photographic records.

All trenches were back-filled with the excavated material and compacted using the machine.

The records have been compiled in a stable, cross-referenced and fully indexed archive in accordance with current UKIC guidelines and the requirements of the receiving museum, Dorset County Museum.

## RESULTS

### Trench 1

Trench 1 was dug along the northern side of the area to the east of Snag Lane (Figure 2). It was oriented roughly NW–SE and measured 30 m long, 1.9 m wide and was excavated to a depth of 0.3 m.

The ploughsoil comprised a layer of yellowish-brown silty clay loam (100) with occasional flint nodules (<200 mm across) and small chalk lumps. This was about 0.15 m thick at the northwestern end of the trench, becoming deeper towards the southeast, where it was about 0.30 m deep. This ploughsoil directly overlay the chalk bedrock (101). Several modern ploughmarks, oriented roughly N–S, were observed in the top of the chalk.

About 14.5 m from the northwestern end of the trench was an irregular feature (102), about 1.0 m by 0.9 m across and 0.12 m deep (Figure 2). It was filled with loose light greyish-brown silty clay (103). No finds were recovered from this feature. It is likely to have been caused by animal disturbance or by tree root action. It was not considered to be archaeologically significant.

### Trench 2

Trench 2 was dug along the eastern side of the proposed development area. It was oriented roughly NE–SW, across the base of the coombe (Figure 2). It measured 30 m long, 1.9 m wide, and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.35 m.

The ploughsoil was a 0.2 m thick layer of yellowish-brown silty clay loam (200) with occasional flint fragments (<100 mm across) and flint pebbles (<50 mm across). It overlay a layer of light reddish-brown silty clay (201) with abundant rounded flint pebbles (<50 mm across), flint fragments (<100 mm across) and ironstone (<100 mm across) up to 0.15 m thick. This colluvial deposit gradually became thinner towards the northeast and was not present in the northeastern quarter of the trench (Figure 2). A single flint flake was recovered from the colluvium.

The colluvium (201) lay directly on the natural chalk bedrock (202). This was heavily weathered and degraded in the northeast half of the trench, where probable periglacial striations were observed running generally E–W across the trench. To the southwest, where it had been protected by the colluvium, the chalk was much more solid with patches of large flint nodules.

No archaeological features were observed in this trench.

### Trench 3

Trench 3 was excavated on the lower northeast-facing slope of the coombe (Figure 2). It was oriented roughly NW–SE and measured 30 m long, 1.9 m wide and was excavated to a depth of 0.35 m.

The ploughsoil was a 0.25–0.35 m thick yellowish-brown silty clay loam (300) with frequent small chalk lumps, sparse pebbly flint gravel (<40 mm across), and flint nodules. It lay directly on top of slightly weathered chalk bedrock (301).

No archaeological features or deposits were observed in this trench.

## **Trench 4**

Trench 4 was excavated on the northeast-facing slope of the coombe, just to the south of the existing agricultural buildings (Figure 2). It measured 15 m long, 1.9 m wide and was dug to a maximum depth of 0.5 m.

The ploughsoil was a pale yellowish-brown fine silty clay loam (400) with moderate small chalk lumps and rare flint fragments (<100 mm). It was about 0.3 m thick at the southwest (uphill) end of the trench and increased in thickness to about 0.5 m at the northeastern end. It overlay weathered chalk bedrock (401) with occasional flint nodules (<150 mm across) and rare ironstone fragments.

No archaeological features or deposits were observed in this trench.

## **Trench 5**

This trench was excavated at the northern end of the proposed development area on the northwestern side of Snag Lane (Figure 2). It was oriented roughly NW–SE and measured 30 m long, 1.9 m wide and 0.2 m deep.

The topsoil was a 0.2 m thick yellowish-brown calcareous silty clay loam (500) with abundant chalk flecks and small lumps, and occasional flint fragments (<50 mm across). It overlay slightly weathered solid chalk bedrock (501). At least two different sets of ploughmarks could be seen cutting into the top of the chalk. At the northeast end of the trench, a series of ploughmarks oriented N–S and filled with pale grey silty clay were cut by marks running NW–SE filled with reddish-brown silty clay. No dating evidence was recovered from these ploughmarks. They are unlikely to be of any great antiquity.

No archaeological features or deposits were observed in this trench.

## **Trench 6**

Trench 6 was excavated in the southern part of the area to the northwest of Snag Lane, on the lower northeast-facing slope and bottom of the coombe (Figure 2). It was oriented roughly NE–SW and measured 30 m long, 1.9 m wide and 0.5 m deep.

The topsoil was a 0.35 m thick layer of brown silty clay loam (600) with occasional chalk flecks and small lumps. Beneath the topsoil was a layer of light orangey-brown clayey silt (601) with frequent chalk flecks and fragments, flint gravel pebbles (<80 mm across) and flint fragments and nodules. This layer was about 0.1 m thick and was traced along all but the southwestern end of the trench (Figure 2). This layer is probably a remnant of colluvium surviving in the base of the coombe. A single sherd of pottery of possible Saxon date was recovered from layer 601.

Near the southwestern end of the trench, a shallow linear feature (603), running N–S, was found cut into the colluvium 601 (Figure 3). It was 1.0 m wide with shallow sloping sides and rounded base only 0.05 m deep. It was filled with light greyish-brown clayey silt (604) with no inclusions or artefacts. The extreme shallowness and the very flat profile of this ditch suggest that it was very heavily truncated. It may be the last remnants of an earlier field boundary. No dating evidence was recovered.

The natural weathered chalk bedrock (602) with occasional irregular natural features was exposed beneath the colluvium 601.

## **Trench 7**

Trench 7 was situated along the lower northeastern-facing slopes of the coombe on the southern edge of the proposed development area (Figure 2). It was oriented roughly NW–SE and measured 28.6 m long, 1.9 m wide and 0.35 m deep.

The topsoil was a light greyish-brown silty clay loam (700) with occasional flint fragments (<30 mm across). It was about 0.25 m thick, becoming deeper towards the southeastern end of the trench, where it was 0.35 m thick.

Beneath the topsoil was very weathered and degraded chalk natural (701) with probable ploughmarks and periglacial striations running N–S and E–W across the trench.

Three features cut into the natural chalk were investigated. At the northwestern end of the trench were two irregular shaped features (702 and 704), between 0.9 m and 1.2 m across (Figure 4). Both of these features had very irregular bases and were about 0.3 m deep. They were filled with brown clayey silt (703, 705). Both of these features are probably tree throws. No dating evidence was obtained from either feature.

The third feature (707) was in the southeastern end of the trench (Figure 4). It was a large shallow linear feature, oriented roughly east–west, with very irregular and undulating sides and base. It was filled with a fairly stone-free yellowish-brown clayey silt (708), which overlay a light yellowish brown clayey silt (706) with frequent chalk flecks. This feature is probably the remains of an old hedge line, most likely the remains of an earlier alignment of Snag Lane, or perhaps the trackway was once much wider. No dating evidence was recovered from this feature.

## Finds

Finds were recovered from Trenches 2, 3, 6, and 7. None of the finds were well-stratified, as all were recovered from either topsoil or colluvial layers (Table 1).

| Trench       | Context | Context description | Pottery  |          | Worked flint |            |
|--------------|---------|---------------------|----------|----------|--------------|------------|
|              |         |                     | No       | Wt (g)   | No           | Wt (g)     |
| 2            | 200     | ploughsoil          |          |          | 8            | 278        |
| 2            | 201     | colluvium           |          |          | 1            | 3          |
| 3            | 300     | ploughsoil          |          |          | 4            | 168        |
| 6            | 601     | colluvium           | 1        | 9        | 1            | 31         |
| 7            | 700     | ploughsoil          |          |          | 1            | 30         |
| <i>total</i> |         |                     | <i>1</i> | <i>9</i> | <i>15</i>    | <i>510</i> |

Table 1: All finds by context

## Pottery

A single sherd of pottery was recovered from the colluvium 601 in Trench 6. This abraded body sherd has a fabric with fairly abundant shell or chalk, moderate quartz and sparse ?ironstone temper. No positive identification has been made but it is unlikely to be prehistoric (pers. comm. Dr Ann Woodward). It is not a typical fabric for medieval pottery of this area, but may possibly be Saxon in date (pers. comm. Jo Draper).

## Worked flint

A total of 15 pieces of worked flint was recovered from the trenches (Table 1). The flint is heavily patinated chalk flint and the assemblage comprises mainly large thick flakes of Bronze Age character. A multiplatform flake core was found in context 300 and the only tool was a scraper from context 700.

## CONCLUSIONS

The area excavated forms about a 2% sample of the whole of the proposed development area, which is the normal sample size applied to evaluations of this sort. The evaluation trenches have sampled most of the area of the proposed development and have investigated the different

topographic elements of the site — both slopes and the bottom of the coombe. Therefore, the results of the evaluation can reasonably be taken as being representative of the whole of the proposed development site.

The proposed development area lies within a medieval strip field system and slight traces of strip lynchets earthworks can be seen on the slopes to the southeast. No earthwork traces can be seen on the site itself and no traces of this field system have been discovered during the evaluation.

The results of this evaluation have demonstrated that

Only two archaeological features were discovered, both in the southern end of the proposed development area on the northwestern side of Snag Lane (Trenches 6 and 7). Both relate to earlier boundaries and both are undated. However, it is likely that both post-date the medieval open field system.

In conclusion, the evaluation has not indicated the presence of any significant archaeological features. It has also demonstrated that the site has been severely affected by erosion through arable agriculture. The soil cover is extremely thin and all surviving features have been severely truncated. This means that the archaeological potential for the site is low.

## PROJECT ARCHIVE

The archive (Terrain Archaeology Project No. 5093) will be deposited with Dorset County Museum, which has agreed in principle to accept the archive, subject to fulfilment of the Museum's requirements of the preparation of archaeological archives. A copy of the microfilmed archive will be deposited with the National Monuments Record.

## REFERENCES

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| RCHME 1970 | Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England 1970 <i>An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the county of Dorset</i> 3, Central. |
|------------|--|



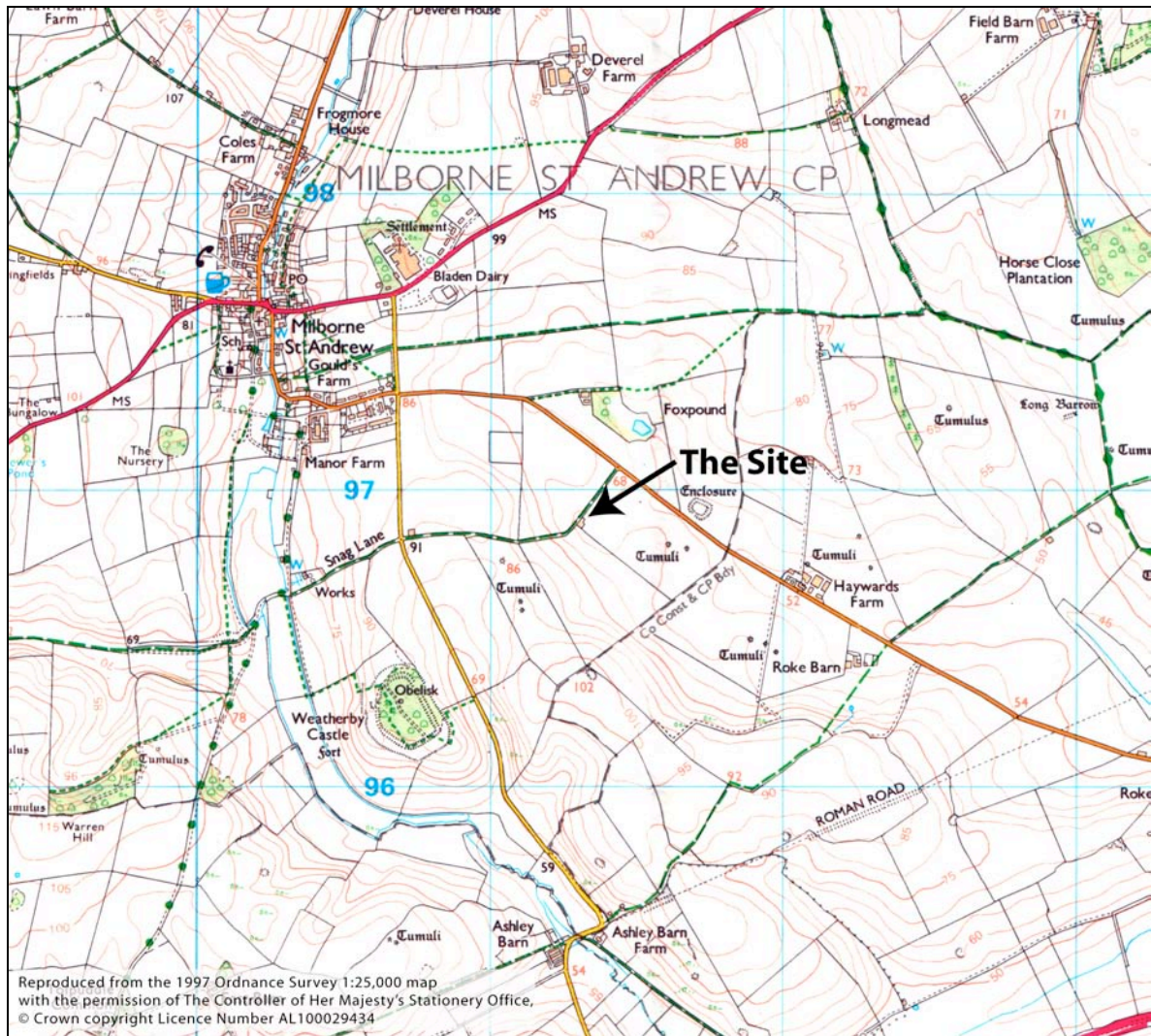


Figure 1: Location Map

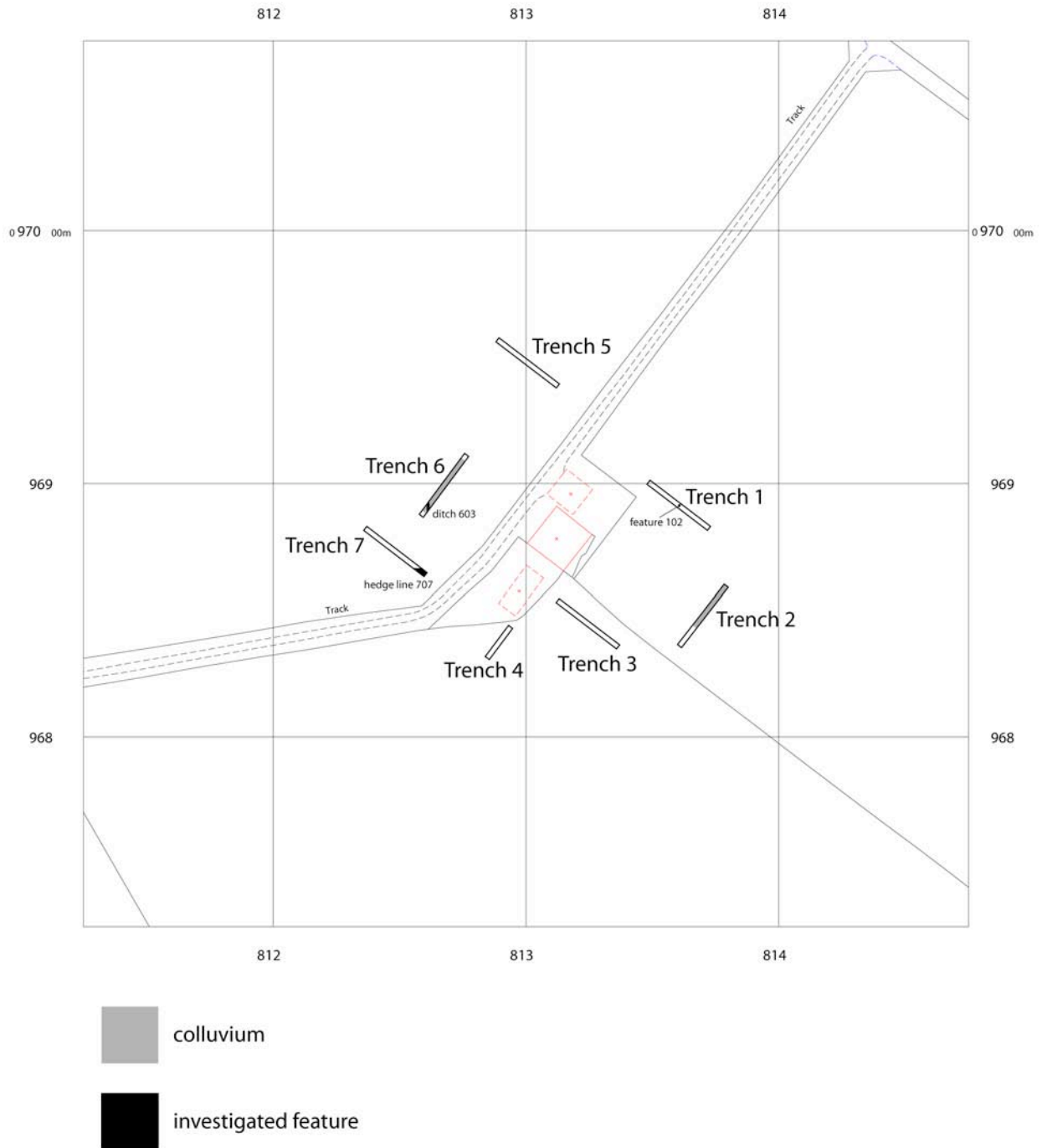


Figure 2: Trench location map

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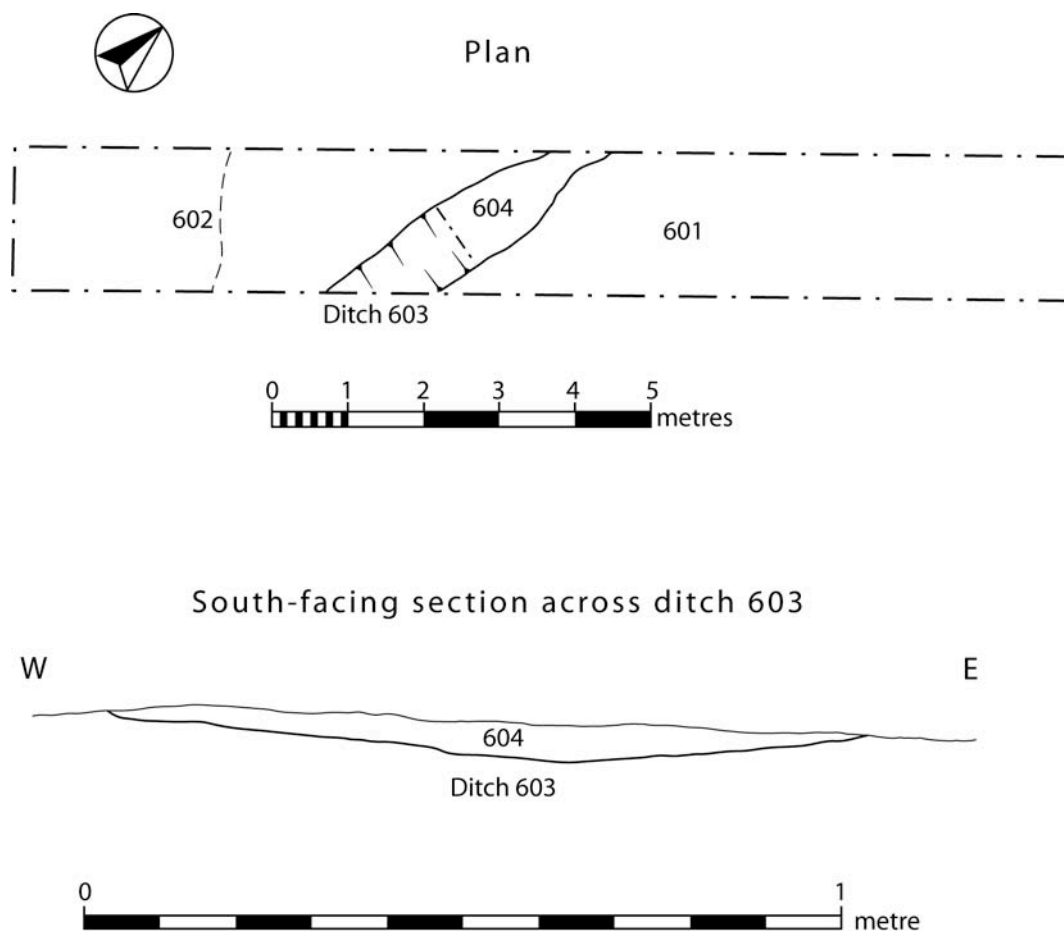
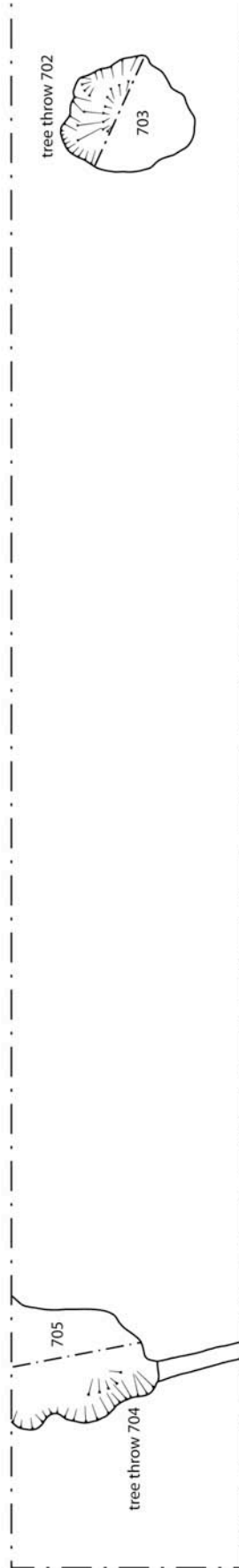
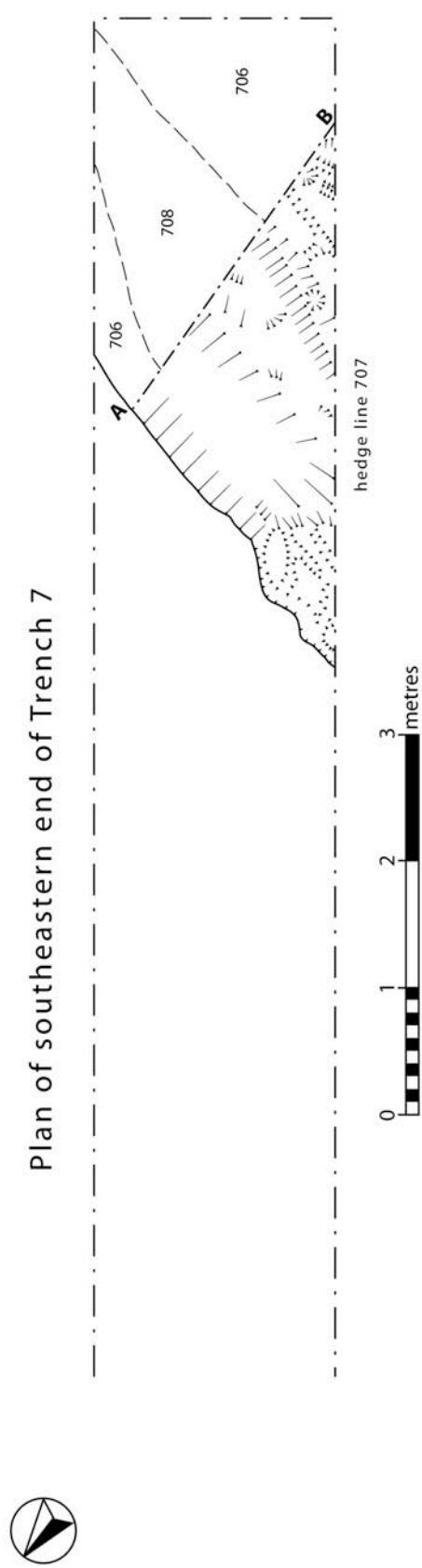


Figure 3: Plan of southwestern end of Trench 6 and section across ditch 603

### Plan of northwestern end of Trench 7



### Plan of southeastern end of Trench 7



### Section through hedge line 707

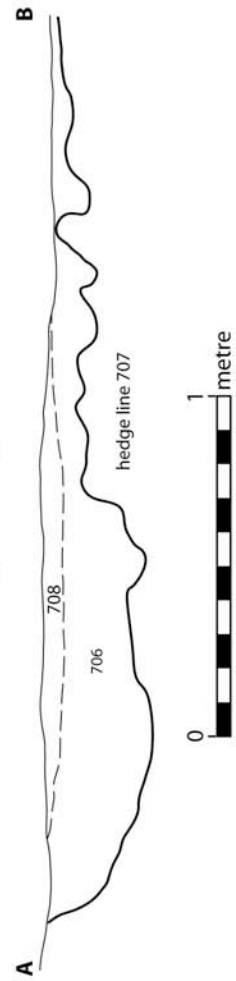


Figure 4: Plan of Trench 7 and section through hedge line 707





*Plate 1: General view of site to southeast of Snag Lane, viewed from east.*



*Plate 2: General view of Trenches 1-3 from south.*



*Plate 3: General view of Trenches 5-7*