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**JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES**

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION**

**AT**

**LEAZE FARM, KELMSCOTT ROAD,**

**LECHLADE**

**SU 2290 9883**

*On behalf of*

*E & D G Stevens*

**NOVEMBER 2001**

**REPORT FOR**

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Lechlade  
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## **Summary**

*The evaluation and subsequent small scale excavation found features containing material of the Mesolithic or early Neolithic period while a find of a late Neolithic/early Bronze Age beaker sherd was found in a later feature. Ditches, postholes and pits were dated to the early Iron Age and Roman periods.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Location (Fig. 1)**

The site of proposed development lies at approximately 72.5m above Ordnance Datum and is located on land at Leaze Farm, Lechlade to the south of the Kelmscott road (NGR SU 2290 9883). Situated on the north bank of the river Thames, the site is on river terrace gravel.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

Prior to determination of a planning application submitted to Cotswold District Council for the construction of a milking parlour and slurry store an archaeological evaluation of the proposal site was carried out in May 2001. As a result of significant finds in the area of the proposed milking parlour an excavation of the footprint of that building and the slurry store was carried out in June 2001. The construction of the access road was carried out in a manner so as not to affect any remains.

Gloucestershire County Council Environmental (GCC) advised the local planning authority that the evaluation and subsequent excavation should be undertaken. John Moore Heritage Services (JMHS) in accordance with *Written Schemes of Investigation* agreed with GCC carried out the work.

The development was for a new milking parlour orientated east/west with a long axis of 36 m and a width of c. 6-19 m. The slurry store some 34m to the west was c.10 m square.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

Various cropmarks are known in the vicinity of the site from aerial photographs. To the south-west is a west-north-west/east-south-east trackway with, to the north, a north-north-east/south-south-west trackway running from it. The former passes c. 120 m to the south of the development site while the latter is c. 100 m to the east of the slurry store. To the west of the cropmark trackways are further linear features and two possible small ring ditches. About 50 m to the north-east of the proposal site is a small area of further cropmarks. This comprises a linear east/west feature, several north-west/south-east linear features and a later right-angled double ditched feature, which could be a trackway or corner of an enclosure.

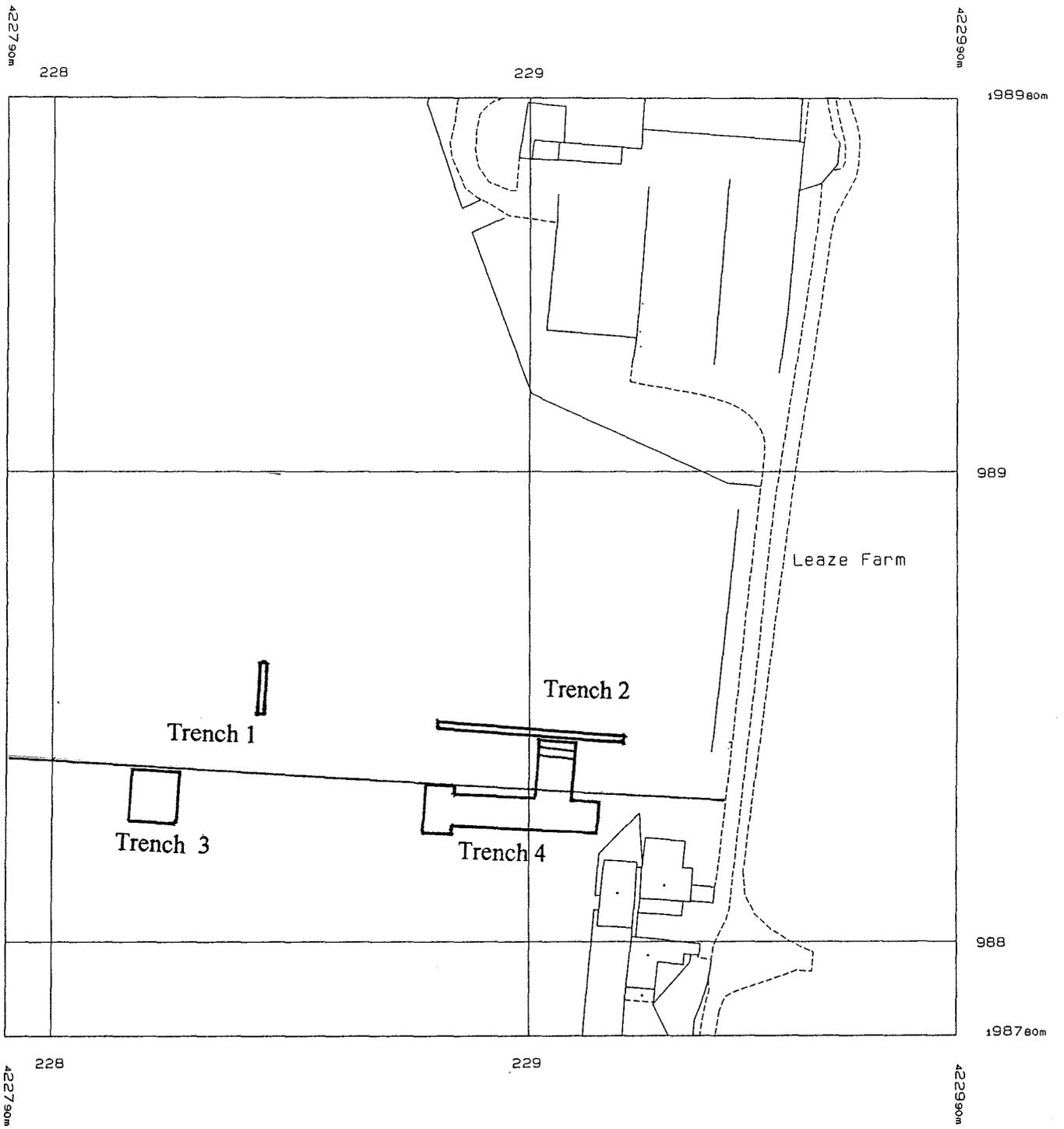


Figure 1. Site Location

## 2 STRATEGY

### 2.1 Research Design

In response to *Briefs* issued by GCC, schemes of investigation were designed by JMHS and agreed with GCC and the applicant. The work was carried out by JMHS and involved the excavation of one trench 40 m in length (Trench 2) and a further one 10 m long (Trench 1) for the evaluation, and the excavation of the footprints of the milking parlour and slurry store. Excavation was taken down to the top of river terrace deposits. In addition, the stripping of the upper 100mm of the modern ploughsoil for the access road was monitored.

Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in the *Written Scheme of Investigation*. The work was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994).

### 2.2 Methodology

The footprint of the milking parlour was totally excavated. It measured 36 m x 6.5-19 m (Trench 4). The northernmost extent of the area was immediately adjacent to evaluation Trench 2 (Fig. 1). The position of the milking parlour was moved southwards following the evaluation. A north-south orientated trench (Trench 1) was excavated within the original proposed footprint of the slurry store (Fig.1). This measured 10.6 m x 1.55 m. Again the position of the slurry store was moved southwards and the footprint (12 m x 10 m) was stripped down to the top of the gravel (Trench 3). Excavation of all trenches was carried out using a JCB fitted with a 5 foot wide toothless bucket. Investigation of features exposed was undertaken by hand excavation.

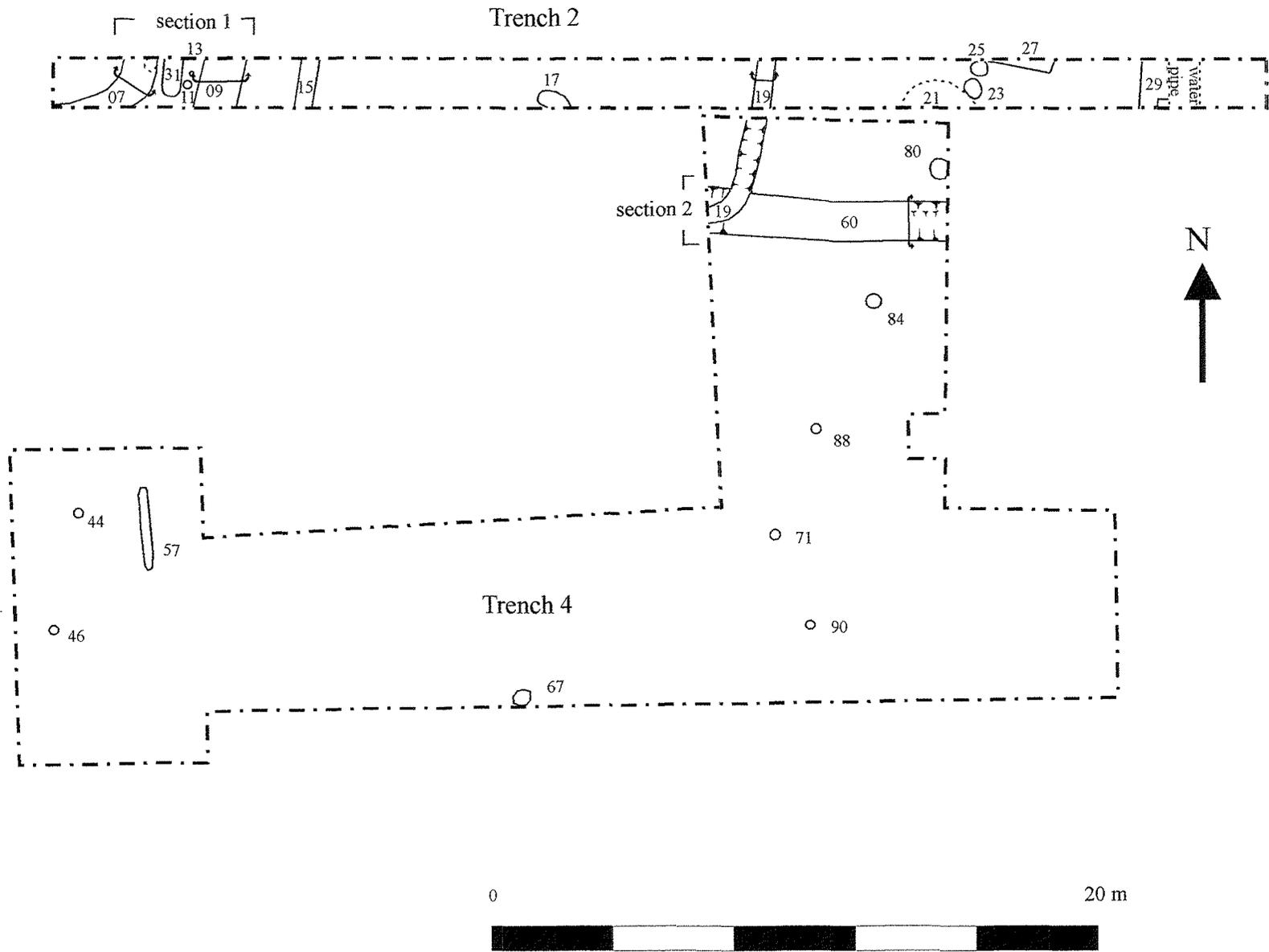
Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and sections drawings compiled where appropriate. A photographic record was produced.

## 3 RESULTS (Fig. 2 and 3)

River terrace gravel was exposed in all areas. This was a pale yellow/off white silty gravel (context 02 - Trench 1, 05 - Trench 2, 101 - Trench 3, 42 - Trench 4). The surface in places was marked with root and animal holes. At the east end of Trench 2 was a large area of pale yellow silt, presumably representing periglacial activity.

Overlying the gravel in Trenches 2 and 4 was a deposit of pale to mid brown loam with 1-2% small gravel (04, 41), some 100-150 mm thick over the whole trench. This was interpreted as an old ploughsoil. The equivalent of this was absent in Trenches 1 and 3. Overlying the river terrace gravels in Trenches 1 and 3 and the old ploughsoil in Trenches 2 and 4 was the present 250-280 mm thick ploughsoil (01, 100, 03 and 41

Figure 2. Trench 2



respectively, and 102 in the area of the access road) comprised of a mid brown loam with 1% fine gravel.

Sealed by the old ploughsoil (04, 41) and cut into the gravel were a number of features within Trenches 2 and 4 (Fig. 2). No features were present in Trenches 1 and 3.

At the west end of Trench 2 was a curving ditch/gully (07). This was 1.7m wide and only 170 mm deep. The outer (south and east) side was slightly irregular averaging a 20-30° slope while the inner side was at 45°. The base was flat. The primary fill was a compact mid yellow brown silty loam with 5-30% gravel (32). This was only found on the inner (north and west) side and may represent erosion of the upcast back into the feature. The secondary fill was a similar material but with only the occasional small piece of gravel (06). This ditch/gully appears more likely to be turning through a right angle rather than being part of a circular feature with an internal diameter of c. 4 m. A noticeable circular depression in the base of the ditch/gully by the north trench baulk in the east part of the feature may be a later feature that was not distinguishable by fills. This extended under the north trench baulk and was 430 mm wide east/west and c. 50 mm deep.

Near the centre of Trench 2 was a pit filled with similar material to 06 (16). The pit (17) appeared oval (part extends under the south side of the trench) 1.25 m north-west/south-east by c. 700 mm (estimate). It had a flat base and sides of c. 45°.

Two ditches/gullies (15 and 19) were similar in appearance and were orientated south-south-east/north-north-east 14.5 m apart. Feature 19 (also excavated as 65, 73, and 78 in Trench 4) was irregular, 350-600 mm wide and 130-240 mm deep, 'V'-shaped with a slightly rounded base. The feature was filled with a pale-mid brown loam containing 5% small gravel (18, 64, 72, 77). Ditch/gully 15 was not excavated but was 600 mm wide and filled with a pale yellow sandy loam with 30% gravel (14). The feeling was that the feature was not very deep with the high gravel content reflecting the basal filling. The south end of ditch/gully 19 curved round to the west to cut the earlier ditch 60.

Ditch 60, which was securely dated to the Roman period, appears to form the southern limit to the main activity on the site. The east/west ditch was 1.35 m wide and 320 mm deep. The 'V'-shaped feature had 45° sides, with a slightly eroded top north side, and a slightly rounded base. The primary fill (59, 75) was a pale yellow brown sandy silt with 30-40% small and medium gravel up to 180 mm thick. The secondary fill (58, 74) was a pale brown silt with 10-20% small gravel up to 150 mm thick.

About 4 m to the west of ditch/gully 15 was what is interpreted as a butt end of a ditch/gully (31). This feature extended 1.1 m into Trench 2 from the north side and appeared to be on a slightly different alignment to 15 and 19. It was 700 mm wide and 80 mm deep with a flat base and shallow sides of 20-30°. The backfill of the feature was a compact pale orange brown loam with 5% small gravel (30). Between

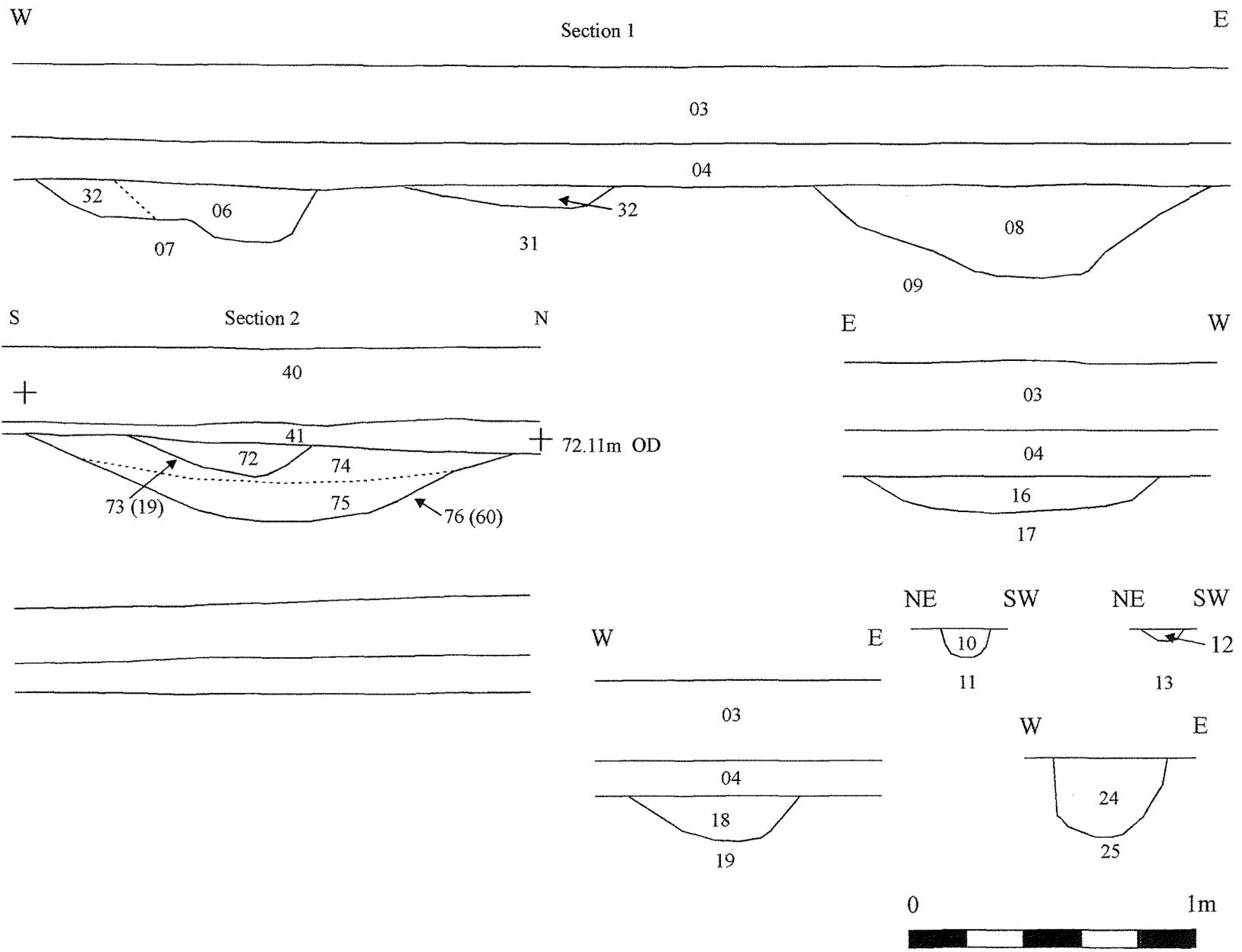


Figure 3. Sections of selected features 6

gully/ditches 15 and 31 was a further ditch (09). This was more substantial than the other north/south ditches and again was parallel to 15 and 19. The top width was 1.45m while the base width was 500 mm. The depth was 350 mm. The base was flat with a 45° west side. The top 200 mm of the east side was at 30°, while the bottom part was at 50°. The size and form is similar to the east/west ditch (60). The backfill of the ditch was a pale yellow brown silty loam with 5-10% gravel (08).

At the east end of Trench 2 a water pipe prevented the full understanding of the feature(s) present. The old ploughsoil (04) was not excavated over the position of the pipe. Feature 29 had a straight west side parallel to 19, 15 and 9. The southern 400 mm of the east side was parallel to the west side before it turned through 90°. The feature did not appear on the east side of the water pipe. 29 was filled with mid brown loam with some lenses of bright yellow silt (derived from the large silt patch it was cut into) with 10-15% gravel. Due to the lack of understanding of the nature of the feature(s) it was not excavated.

Towards the east end of Trench 2 was a 100 mm deep depression (21) in the top of the natural gravel that was not found in Trench 4. It had a flat base, sides of 5-15° and was only partly excavated. It was filled with mid-dark brown loam with 30% small gravel (20). It extended under the south baulk of the trench and was 2.5m long east west. To the north-east of the depression, the edge of a feature (27) was visible on the north side of Trench 2. This was not excavated but was filled with mid brown loam with 5-10% gravel (26).

The surface of the gravel was peppered with small features that were all excavated. Some of these were interpreted as postholes or small pits while others were defined as probable postholes. Others were the results of animal or root action. Lying between ditch 09 and gully/ditch 31 was a posthole 11 and a possible posthole 13. 11 was sub-circular 170-200 mm in diameter and 120 mm deep with near vertical sides and a rounded base. It was filled with mid yellow brown silty loam with 10% small gravel (10). The possible posthole (13) was sub-circular 100-130 mm in diameter and only 50 mm deep. The two features were 500 mm apart, centre-to-centre.

To the north of the depression 21 were two postholes or small pits. The posthole/pit 23 was not excavated but was sub-circular 600 mm wide north-west/south-east and 450mm south-west/north-east and filled with a mid brown loam with 20-30% gravel (22). 25 was probably a posthole with near vertical sides and slightly rounded base. It was half sectioned as it partly continued under the north side of the trench. It was c. 400 mm in diameter and 280 mm deep. The fill was a mid brown loam with 2% gravel. To the south of the depression in Trench 4 were further postholes lying on a line with postholes 25 and 23. Posthole 80 was partly under the east baulk. It had a diameter of 320 mm and a depth of 290 mm and was filled with mid yellow brown silt with 15% small gravel.

Just south of the ditches posthole 84 was oval with a diameter of 380-420mm and a depth of 180 mm. It was 5m south-west of posthole 80 while a further 4.6m south-west was a possible posthole (88) disturbed by animal burrowing. Further south

probable posthole 71 again was oval in shape with dimensions of 260-300 mm and a depth of 140 mm. 12 m south of the east/west ditch (60) and c. 2m east of the posthole alignment was a small posthole (90) with a diameter of 220-240 mm and a depth of 120 mm. This contained a small piece of fired clay (89). Approximately 9 m to the west of the last was a further posthole (67); oval 240-350 mm in diameter with a depth of 80mm. At the west end of Trench 4 were two probable postholes. 44 was 180-200 mm in diameter and 150 mm deep while 46 was 200-240 mm in diameter and 100 mm deep.

One further possible feature was a linear cut (57) orientated north-north-west/south-south-east. This was 300 mm wide with sides at 45° and a flat base. Both ends were rounded and the feature was only 40 mm deep. It is possible that it is the remains of a gully that has been ploughed out. Its surviving length was c. 2.5 m and it was filled with pale brown silt containing 40% small and medium gravel.

#### 4 FINDS

##### Prehistoric and Roman pottery by Paul Booth and Alistair Barclay

A total of 38 sherds (405 g) of pottery was recovered. Two sherds of Roman date (2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> C) were found in the lower ploughsoil layer (04) and four Roman greyware sherds and two sherds of Nene valley ware were recovered from the modern ploughsoil (40, 100, 102). Iron Age sherds in handmade fabrics tempered with either shell or sand were recovered from contexts 22 (fill of pit/posthole 23), 24 (fill of posthole 25), and 28 (fill of feature 29). Context 26 (fill of feature 27) contained a mixed group of sherds that included a late Neolithic/early Bronze Age Beaker sherd in a typical grog-tempered fabric, an impressed decorated sherd that could be either earlier prehistoric (?middle Neolithic Peterborough Ware) or early Iron Age, another small sherd in the same calcareous fabric and a Roman sherd, while context 30 (fill of butt-ended ditch 31) contained a single Roman sherd. A single sherd of 1-2<sup>nd</sup> C date came from context 08 (fill of ditch 09). An amorphous piece of fired clay was recovered from posthole fill 89.

Fill 77 of ditch 78 contained two small (6 g in total) and abraded sherds that are from a decorated angular bowl of early Iron Age date. Given the condition of these sherds and that this feature cut a known Roman ditch it can be considered as redeposited. The largest assemblage (14 sherds, 226 g) is of mid-late 1st century AD date and was recovered from two fills (58-9) of ditch 60. Most of this pottery belongs to a single jar.

In general all of the pottery was in an abraded condition indicating a high degree of redeposition, except perhaps for the sherds of jar from ditch 60. Most of the prehistoric material was relatively small in size (1-5g) compared with the Roman sherds. Beaker material is known from the Lechlade area, although Peterborough Ware is rare. The Iron Age sherds are in either sandy or calcareous fabrics and could

well be of early date. Again similar fabrics have been found in early Iron Age assemblages close to Lechlade.

### Flints by Hugo Lamdin-Whymark

Three flints were recovered from the investigation; a flake and two blades from contexts 16 (fill of pit 17), 06 (fill of gully 07) and 102 (ploughsoil). The flake is in fresh condition, whilst the blades exhibit slight post depositional edge damage, possibly modern damage. The flints are all corticated white, and in addition the surface of the blade from 06 is lightly iron-stained. The blades exhibit a punctiform butt and platform edge abrasion; indicating that the blades may belong to a blade based industry of Mesolithic or early Neolithic date. Although difficult to judge from a single flint, a Mesolithic date is perhaps most probable. The flake is not diagnostic; therefore it is not possible to attempt dating.

## **5 DISCUSSION**

Several periods of occupation/activity are represented by the finds. The ditch/gully 07 and pit 17 had very similar fills, quite different in appearance from the other features. The material appeared more gleyed and while an early prehistoric date of the Mesolithic or early Neolithic would seem right for these two features, the turn of gully 07 does mirror that of ditch/gully 19 which is Roman in date.

The late Neolithic/early Bronze Age Beaker sherd in the later feature 27 represents other Neolithic activity. This feature also contained an Iron Age sherd and a Roman sherd and therefore must be of this latest date unless the Roman sherd is intrusive (all the sherds recovered from this feature came from the upper fill during cleaning). The possible middle Neolithic Peterborough Ware sherd is probably of early Iron Age date given the other sherds of this date recovered from the site.

Three features solely had Iron Age material, in the case of posthole 25 one sherd, while a further sherd came from the cleaning of posthole/pit 23 and two sherds from the cleaning of the surface of 29. Two further sherds of early Iron Age date were recovered from a ditch that cuts a Roman ditch.

The large ditch 09 appears to be 1-2<sup>nd</sup> century in date while the butt end of ditch 31 is again dated to the Roman period.

The east/west ditch (60) is dated to the mid-late 1<sup>st</sup> century. The similarity of ditches/gullies 14 and 19 and their parallel alignment suggests that they are of the same period and are later than ditch 60. The similarity of ditches 09 and 60 and the erosion on the east side of 09 and north side of 60 suggest that they may be part of an enclosure with an external bank that has protected the outer edge from erosion.

Activity appears to occur on this site in the Mesolithic/early Neolithic carrying on into the mid and late Neolithic/early Bronze Age. While no features are dated to these later periods, and the features containing the earlier material may be later in origin,

the pottery suggests occupation (not necessarily long-lived) in the near vicinity. The centre of this activity may be to the west where linear features and two small ring ditches are known from aerial photography.

It appears that there is both early Iron Age and Roman occupation of this site with features dated to these periods. The postholes and small pit/postholes suggest buildings and other structures in the Iron Age while the Roman ditches suggest occupation in the earlier Roman period. The later Roman sherds in the ploughsoil may result from manuring of fields following a slight shift in settlement focus. Alternatively the Roman occupation may continue with the same focus and ditches/gullies 14 and 19 may represent features of this later date.

The majority of the features appear to be defined by the east/west ditches 60 and 19. These lie virtually on the edge of the 1947 flood level, while Trenches 1 and 3, which were devoid of features, lie within this flood level.

The apparent posthole alignment (25, 23, 80, 84, 88, 71) is very wide spaced for a fence line of Iron Age or Roman date.

It would seem possible that the trackways to the west and south are Roman in date and may relate to field systems on the slightly higher ground and/or movement of animals to floodplain grazing. The trackways are on the same alignment as the Iron Age possible ditch 29 and the Roman ditches. It is of interest that the cropmark features to the north-north-east are on a different alignment.

## **6 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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