



**CHICKSGROVE QUARRY, UPPER CHICKSGROVE,
TISBURY, WILTSHIRE**

Archaeological Investigation and Recording



Report No. 53275/3/1

June 2008

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TISBURY, WILTSHIRE**
Archaeological Investigation and Recording
March - April 2008

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SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Terrain Archaeology in March and April 2008 during topsoil stripping for an extension to Chicks Grove Quarry, Upper Chicks Grove, Tisbury, Wiltshire. An area of approximately one hectare was stripped to the south of the existing quarry. The remains of a possible hedge line were revealed in the northeast part of the area. A single probable quarry pit containing a small quantity of Roman pottery was also found along the line of this possible hedge line.

INTRODUCTION

Terrain Archaeology was commissioned by Chicks Grove Quarry Ltd through their agents Land and Mineral Management Ltd to undertake a programme of archaeological investigation and recording during the topsoil strip of an extension to Chicks Grove Quarry, Upper Chicks Grove, Tisbury, Wiltshire.

The archaeological works were undertaken to fulfil Condition 22 of the planning permission (S/04/1407) which states that “No development shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (involving a ‘strip, map and sample’ exercise) which must be submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the Minerals Planning Authority.”

The site is situated on the north-facing slopes of the Nadder Valley immediately above the existing Chicks Grove Quarry at a height of between 100 m and 110 m above Ordnance Datum, centred on NGR ST961294 (Figure 1). The quarry is on an outcrop of Inferior Oolite of Upper Jurassic age. The area stripped of topsoil covered almost 1 hectare and forms the northeastern quadrant of the application area (Figure 2). The remainder of the application area will be topsoil stripped at some future date, probably in several years time once the present area has been quarried.

The fieldwork was carried out between 25th March and 2nd April 2008 by Rebecca Montague and Steven Tatler.

Terrain Archaeology would like to acknowledge the help and cooperation of the following during this project: Sally Collins and Bill (Chicks Grove Quarry), Nick Dunn (Land and Mineral Management Ltd) and Helena Cave Penny (Wiltshire County Archaeology Service).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The following has been taken from information kindly supplied by the Wiltshire County Council Sites and Monuments Record and the locations of the sites discussed are shown on Figure 1.

Between 1976 and 1978 a project investigating the archaeology of the Vale of Wardour included the fieldwalking of a number of fields in the Upper Chicks Grove area, including the field in which

the present site is located (Gingell and Harding 1983). A collection of Neolithic worked flint and chert, including cores, flakes and scrapers was recovered from this field (SMR No. ST92NE110). The adjacent field to the east was also fieldwalked and produced flint and chert flakes, a knife and two scrapers (SMR No. ST92NE112). Further collections of worked flint and chert were recovered from fields to the north of Upper Chicksgrove, approximately 460 m to the north of the site (SMR Nos. ST92NE111 and ST92NE114).

At the top of the slope, approximately one kilometre to the south of the site is the multivallate Iron Age hillfort of 'Castle Ditches' (SMR No. ST92NE200), with further earthworks to the northwest (SMR No. ST92NE600).

The village of Upper Chicksgrove is probably medieval in origin and there are still some medieval settlement earthworks surviving (SMR No. ST92NE454). Some medieval pottery was recovered from the field in which the present site is located during fieldwalking in 1976-78 (Gingell and Harding 1983, 16, No. 30) (SMR No. ST92NE452).

Several quarries in the Chicksgrove area have medieval origins, including Chicksgrove Quarry (SMR No. ST92NE462), Quarry Hill (SMR No. ST92NE461) and Dumpling Down (SMR No. ST92NE460).

About 750 m to the southwest of the site are the remains of a post-medieval settlement (SMR No. ST92NE526).

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The objective of the archaeological observations was to establish and make available information about the archaeological resource existing on the site.

The archaeological works aimed to observe and record all the *in situ* archaeological deposits and features revealed during the groundworks to an appropriate professional standard.

METHODS

The work was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by AC archaeology (Doc. No. 4602/2/0) and in compliance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct and Standard and guidance for archaeological watching briefs* (1994, as revised).

The topsoil stripping of the site was conducted under archaeological supervision, and undertaken by a large tracked machine with a wide toothless grading bucket. The site was stripped from the south end working north with the topsoil dumped on stripped areas once they had been observed and cleared by the archaeologist.

All features and deposits exposed during the works were recorded using components of the Terrain Archaeology recording system of complementary written, drawn and photographic records.

The records have been compiled in a stable, cross-referenced and fully indexed archive in accordance with current UKIC guidelines.

RESULTS

Natural Deposits

The natural deposits exposed during the topsoil strip varied considerably across the site. In the southern half, the strip exposed pale yellowish-brown silty clay mixed with large slabs of

limestone bedrock (Plates 1-2). Occasional patches of pale grey clayey silt were observed running NW–SE in bands across this part of the site. In the northern half of the site the natural consisted of yellowish-brown clay mixed with small pieces of limestone slat (Plate 3).

Between these two deposits was a band of fairly stone free silty clay, up to 10 m wide, running NW–SE across the site. In the western half of the site a marked dip in the slope of the ground could be detected along the line of this band of silty clay.

Possible former hedge line

In the middle of the site, running along the southern edge of the band of natural silty clay, was an irregular linear spread of reddish-brown stone-free clay (Plate 4). Upon investigation, the clay appeared to be filling a series of interconnected oval. These depressions do not appear to have been deliberately constructed. They may represent the remnants of a former hedge line. This hedge would be of some antiquity as the hedge is not shown on the 1887 25-inch Ordnance Survey map.

Possible Archaeological Features

At the east end of the former possible hedge line, a large oval pit (101), aligned roughly E–W, was discovered (Figure 2; Plate 5). It was investigated by excavating two opposing quadrants (Figure 3). This feature comprised a deeper sub-circular pit with moderately sloping sides and a rounded base to the east and a shallower ‘tail’ to the west with a small circular depression or cut (105) at the eastern end (Figure; Plate 6). Overall, the feature measured 4.0 m by 2.8 m across and was up to 0.95 m deep. The lower part of the deeper pit was filled with very compact dark yellowish-brown silty clay (103), up to 0.4 m thick. This contained frequent large pieces of limestone slat, some lying against the sides of the feature, but there did not appear to be any structure to the stonework (Figures 3-4; Plates 6-7). A small quantity of worked flint and chert was recovered from this context. The upper part of the feature was filled with a much more stone-free yellowish-brown silty clay (102), up to 0.55 m thick, which produced a small quantity of worked flint and chert, Roman pottery and an iron nail (Plates 8-9). The small circular feature (105) at the west end had shallow irregular sides and an irregular base measuring 1.8 m across and up to 0.2 m deep. It was filled with compact yellowish-brown silty clay (104) very similar to layer 102, which meant that it was not possible to clarify the relationship between features 101 and 105.

The function and date of pit 101 is unclear. Its size and shape, together with the fact that it contained almost no cultural material, suggests that it may have been a small quarry pit. The Roman pottery in the upper fill indicates that it probably dates to the Roman period. The shallow irregular character of feature 105 suggests that it may be natural in origin and possibly was part of the tree/ hedge line to the west.

Finds

A small quantity of finds was recovered from this watching brief, all from the excavation of feature 101 (Table 1). No finds were recovered from the topsoil strip.

Context	Iron No.	Roman Pottery		Worked flint and chert	
		No.	Wt. (g)	No.	Wt. (g)
102	1	3	65	3	48
103				4	68

Table 1: Finds assemblage

Iron

The bent shank of an iron nail was recovered from context 102.

Roman Pottery

Three sherds of Roman coarseware pottery were recovered from context 102, the upper fill of feature 101. Only one featured sherd was present, a straight-sided dish with a simple rim ('dog-dish') in a sandy fabric. The remaining pottery consisted of two undiagnostic body sherds, one in a similar sandy fabric to the 'dog-dish' and the other a very abraded sherd with a fine oxidised sandy fabric.

Worked Flint and Chert

Five pieces of worked flint and two pieces of worked chert were recovered from the fill of Feature 101. These comprised two flakes and one broken flint flakes from context 103, together with one piece of miscellaneous chert debitage. Context 102 produced two flint flakes and a small chert blade core. None of the flint was diagnostic, but the core is probably early Neolithic. The flakes are all squat thick flakes, perhaps of later Neolithic or Bronze Age date.

CONCLUSIONS

The watching brief revealed nothing except in the northeast corner of the stripped area, indicating that the area was not the focus of significant archaeological activity. Perhaps this is not surprising, given that the site lies on the north-facing slopes of the valley.

The remains of the possible relict hedge line in the northeast corner of the site are unlikely to be of recent date as the line is not shown on the late 19th century and later maps. The possible quarry pit of probable Roman date near one end of the hedge line could suggest it was in existence during the Roman period.

The small quantity of worked flint and chert recovered from the watching brief fits well with the previous fieldwalking finds recovered from this field (Gingell and Harding 1983). No features or deposits of medieval date were discovered, to help place the previous medieval surface finds recovered during the 1976-78 fieldwalking survey into a larger context. It is possible that the medieval pottery was the result of manuring or that the area of medieval activity lies outside of the area of the present site. The lack of finds recovered from the topsoil during the watching brief was partly a result of the size of the plant used and the way in which the field was stripped and the spoil was stored.

PROJECT ARCHIVE

The archive (Terrain Archaeology Project No. 53275) is intended be deposited with the Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum, subject to fulfilment of the Museum's requirements of the preparation of archaeological archives.

REFERENCES

- Gingell, C. and Harding, P. 1983 'A Fieldwalking Survey in the Vale of Wardour' *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine* 77, 11-25.

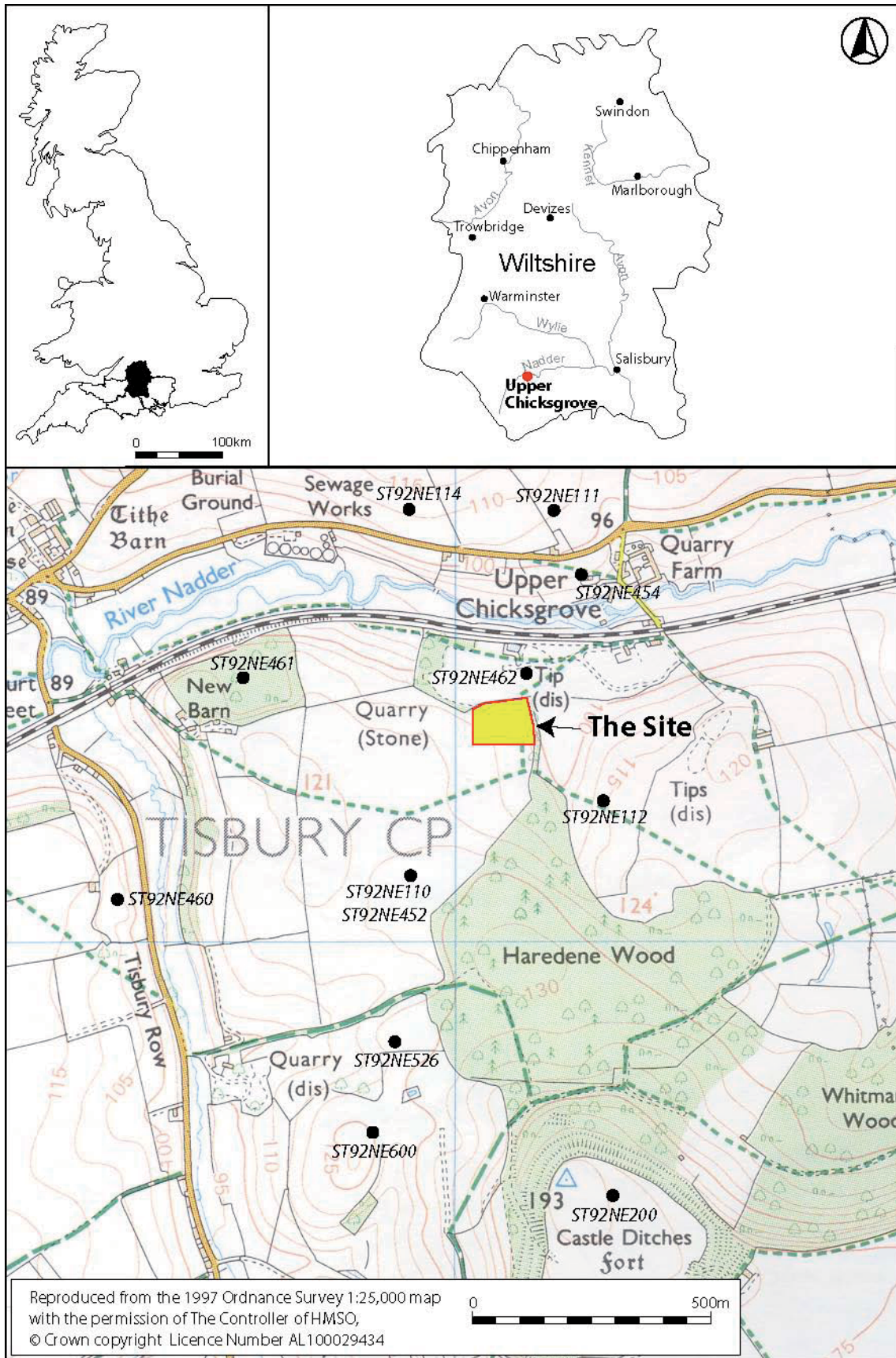


Figure 1: Site location map (with locations of sites recorded in the Wiltshire SMR).

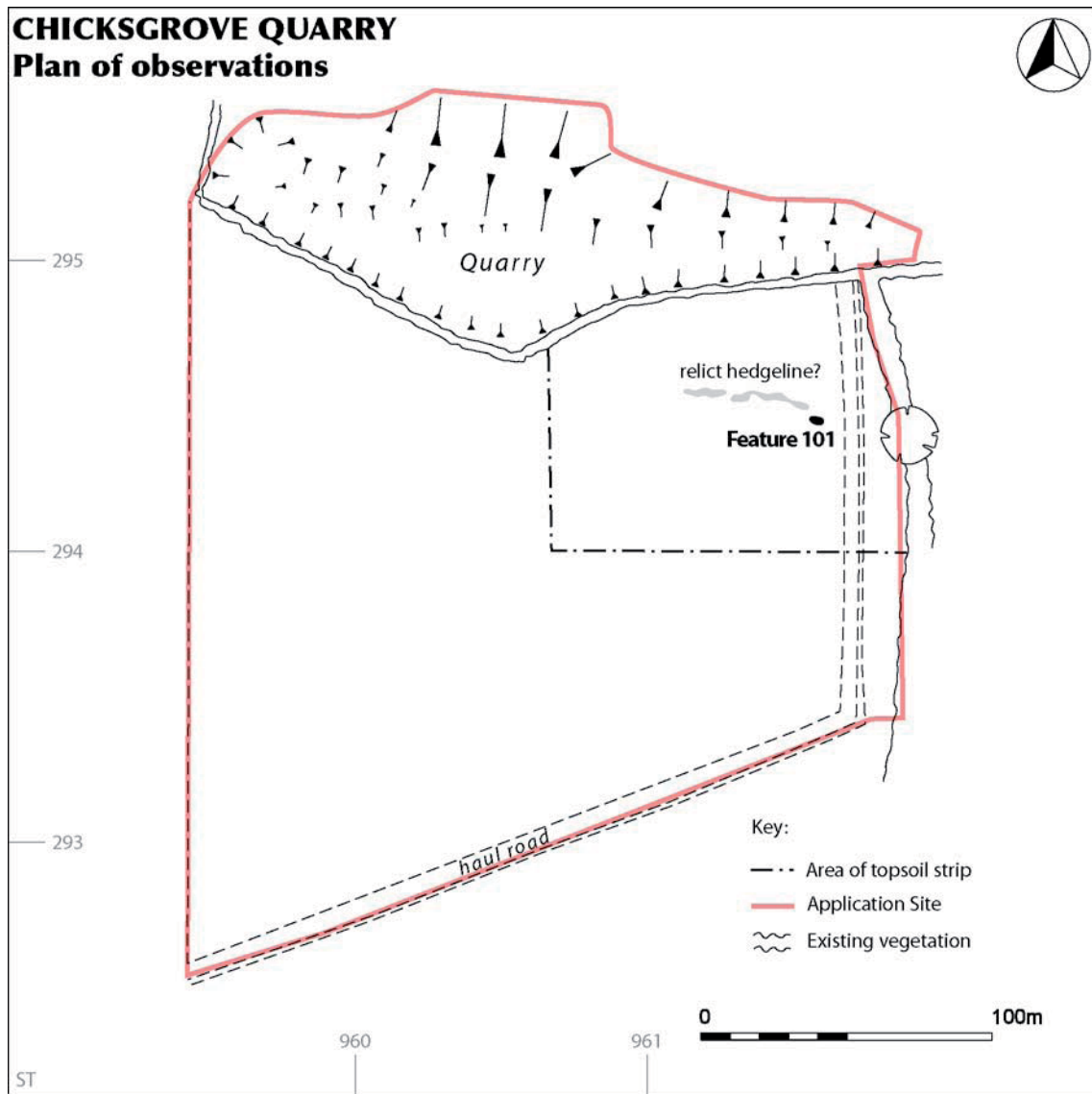


Figure 2: Plan of observations

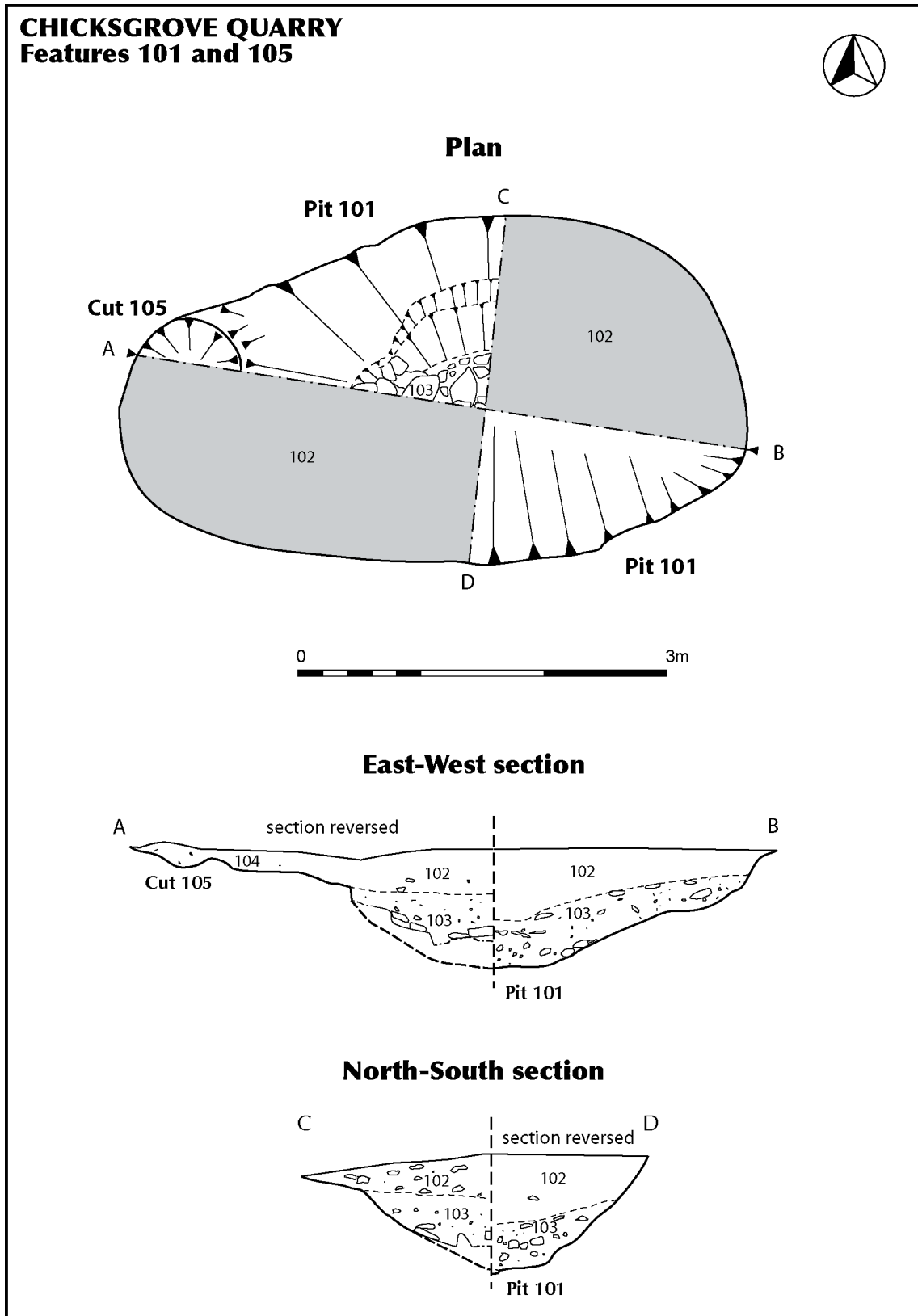


Figure 3: Plan and sections of features 101 and 105



Plate 1: View of the south end of the site from the east.



Plate 2: View of the south end of the site from the west.



Plate 3: View of the north end of the site from the west.



Plate 4 View of possible relict hedge line to the west of Features 101 and 105.



Plate 5: View of Features 101 and 105 before excavation.



Plate 6: North-facing section of Features 101 and 105.

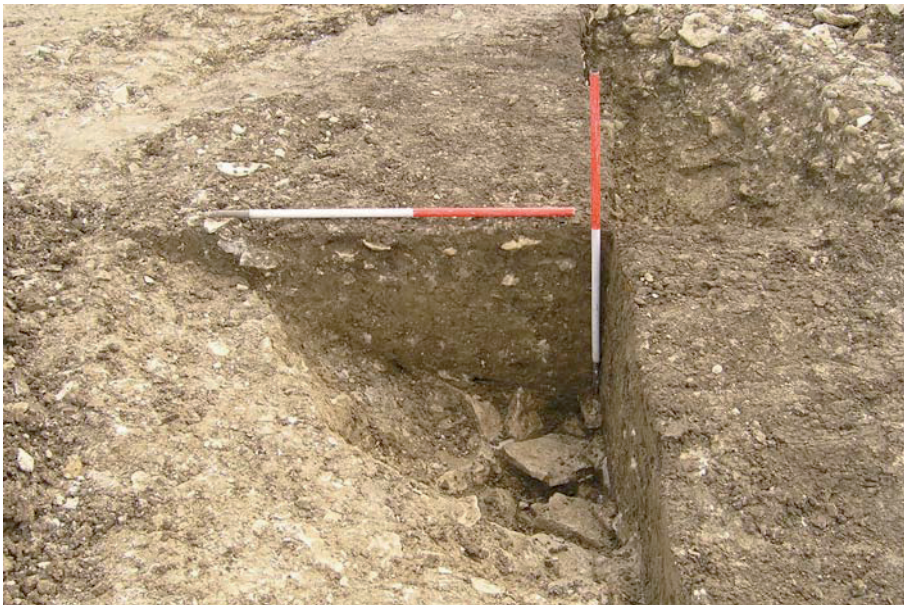


Plate 7: West-facing section of Feature 101.



Plate 8: South-facing section of Feature 101.



Plate 9: East-facing section of Feature 101.