Report No: 2010R014

Gerrans Allotment, Cornwall

Archaeological Watching Brief

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CORNWALL COUNCIL

Historic Environment Projects

Gerrans Allotment, Cornwall

Archaeological Watching Brief

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Acknowledgements

This study was commissioned by ROK plc and carried out by Historic Environment Projects, Cornwall Council.

Within the Historic Environment, the Project Manager was Andy Jones. Fieldwork was carried out by Anna Lawson-Jones and Francis Shepherd.

The views and recommendations expressed in this report are those of Historic Environment Projects and are presented in good faith on the basis of professional judgement and on information currently available.

Freedom of Information Act

As Cornwall Council is a public authority it is subject to the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, which came into effect from 1st January 2005.

Historic Environment, Cornwall Council is a Registered Organisation with the Institute for Archaeologists

Cover illustration

Cover Illustration *Gerrans Allotment Site* photo taken by Anna Lawson-Jones January 2010

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Abbreviations

HE Historic Environment, Cornwall Council

OS Ordnance Survey

1 Summary

Archaeological investigations of the Old Allotments Site on Gerrans Hill, Gerrans undertaken during the construction of housing revealed the existence of prehistoric ditches surviving within a small hollow measuring approximately 9m by 8m. These ditches, [1003] [1005] [1008] [1012] and [1014] were found to contain pottery dating to the Iron Age period. The ditches lay within a proposed garden area and would initially have been affected by a proposed soak away. However, the soak away was relocated and the archaeological features were preserved *in situ* (see below).

The ditches were recorded where they left the hollow and a detailed plan and section drawings were made. Environmental samples photographs and artefactual evidence were collected, catalogued and stored, and this report has been created outlining the findings.

It is recommended that a short note is on the watching brief is produced for *Cornish Archaeology*.

2 Introduction

2.1 Project background

In June 2009 Historic Environment Projects carried out an archaeological assessment of a 1.53 hectare site on the eastern side of Gerrans (Fig .2) for the Devon and Cornwall Housing Association. The assessment (Lawson-Jones 2009) was required by the planning authority as part of a planning application for the construction of 30 new affordable homes at Gerrans, Portscatho (87491 35295) (Fig. 1), within an area which had since the latter part of the nineteenth century been used as allotments (Fig. 3). The assessment identified a small number of potential archaeological sites within the development area, which included possible post-medieval structures and historic boundaries of medieval origin (Fig. 4).

Following the assessment, Historic Environment Projects were requested by Mr Sean Hall of ROK to provide a project design and estimate for a programme of archaeological recording. This recording was a requirement of planning condition (PA10/0433/09/M). This stated that: *'No development shall take place within the site until the client has secured and implemented a programme of archaeological recording in accordance with a written scheme of investigation'*.

Daniel Ratcliffe (Historic Environment Planning Advice Officer, Cornwall Council) produced a brief for archaeological recording (4/8/09) and Andy Jones (Senior Archaeologist, Historic Environment Projects, Cornwall Council) produced a written scheme of investigation (17/8/09) that specified the aims, objectives and methodology employed. HE Projects were commissioned by ROK to undertake the project in January 2010.

2.2 Aims

The purpose of the archaeological recording was:

- To record archaeological features, layers and finds affected by the works.
- To establish the extent, condition, significance and character of the archaeological resource.
- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains.
- To identify any artefacts relating to the occupation of the site.
- To undertake the dissemination and publication of the results.

- To ensure the long-term conservation of the project archive in appropriate conditions.

In particular the key objective was:

- To investigate and recover evidence in the form of artefacts, structures and deposits associated with the medieval and earlier settlement activity in order to enhance our knowledge of the extent, form and potential of the site.
- To record any of the historic boundaries affected by the development.

3 Methods

3.1.1 Fieldwork

The ground-works were carried out under archaeological supervision using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket. The soil/overburden was excavated cleanly down through the subsoil to a level at which archaeological features or layers were expected to be revealed (i.e., to the top of archaeology or to the level of the natural). The area was then inspected by an archaeologist and all archaeological features and layers exposed in the stripped area were carefully excavated by hand and archaeologically recorded following the procedures and guidelines recommended in the written scheme of investigation (Jones 2009).

A written record was kept of all the work carried out on site, including general observations, and a record of all relevant finds and features. Recording was carried out using hand-tapes with sketched plans and location points being measured by line and offset. General location, working shots and features were recorded using a digital colour camera.

All observed archaeological features were cleaned by hand. Linear features were recorded wherever clear sections were revealed on the extents of the survey area. When these sections were not clearly available exploratory 0.5m slots were placed across the respective feature. Relevant plan and section drawings were made at a scale of 1:10 and 1:20 respectively.

3.1.2 Post-fieldwork

Artefacts were bagged and labelled with a unique context number. These artefacts were processed and assessed by Carl Thorpe - Finds Officer for HE Projects his findings are summarised in Appendix 2. A total of 21 artefacts were recovered during this phase of the project. These were predominantly pottery although two flints were also recorded (see appendix 2 below).

Environmental samples were taken from sealed contexts and retained for processing. These samples have been wet sieved, dried and stored. The residues were checked for finds and magnetic particles and then discarded. The floated macrofossils and other organic materials have been dried, catalogued and retained. All drawings were scanned, digitised and stored. The paper records have been collated and digitised where necessary and all photographs have been archived.

4 Archaeological results

The development did not impact upon many archaeological features. The eastern area of the site was largely covered by a significant deposit of subsoil (1002) and any existing archaeological deposits are unaffected by the development program. Two of the areas within the initial proposal were taken out of the development and so are not within the scope of this investigation. Daniel Ratcliffe (Historic Environment Planning Advice Officer, Cornwall Council) was made aware of this by the developer.

The western area of the site was largely decomposed slate (shillet) rich natural clay and was archaeologically blank apart from two field ditches associated with boundary B2.

On the northern edge of the site, almost adjacent to boundary B1 were found the remains of remnant Iron Age ditches [1003] [1005] [1008] [1012] [1014]. (Figs. 6 and 7) Small sections of these had been preserved in what appeared to be a natural hollow measuring approximately 9m by 8m.

The ditches themselves were located within the proposed site of a garden and the only impact on them was to be the location of a soak away. A decision was made by the developer in consultation with Daniel Ratcliffe and members of the HE Projects team to relocate the soak away outside of the hollow.

As a result of this relocation investigation and recording of the site was kept to a minimum. A recorded section was placed across the significant features and a detailed plan was made by the archaeologist.

The following features were associated with the Iron Age ditch complex:

A linear ditch [1003] (0.8m wide by 0.65m deep) entered the south western edge of hollow [1009] appeared to cross the area exiting at its north eastern edge. The ditch contained (1010) a loose brown silty clay and (1004) a firm, dark reddish brown, silty clay. Two body sherds of well made Iron Age pot were found within this fill suggesting an Iron Age date for the ditch [1003] (Appendix 2).

Feature [1005] appeared to be a large ditch running north-south across the hollow. When sectioned it was discovered to be smaller than it appeared on the surface and to comprise two ditches. The first of these ditches [1005], (1.1m wide by 0.2m deep), contained (1010) (see above), and (1006) a dark reddish brown, loose, silty clay. The majority of finds came from (1006) suggesting that this ditch [1005] was also associated with Iron Age activity (Appendix 2).

This second ditch [1012], (0.9m wide by 0.16m deep), revealed in section 1 ran parallel to [1005] and contained (1013) which was almost identical with (1006).

Feature [1007] was a relatively narrow linear ditch (0.55 wide by 0.1m depth) running east to west across the hollow. It contained (1008) mid reddish brown, compact, silty clay.

Feature [1014] was a shallow ditch (0.4m wide by 0.05m deep) running north east-south west. It appeared to converge on or cut narrow linear ditch [1007]. It contained (1015) dark reddish brown, compact, silty clay.

The density of features within this small natural hollow suggests the likelihood that these features formed part of an extensive network of ditches which were probably linked with an open settlement that is likely to be located nearby. The depth of subsoil down-slope may have masked related features. By contrast, the relatively high levels of cultivation activity on the reasonably shallow upslope areas may have removed buried archaeological deposits and would explain why they only survive within this natural hollow.

Following the recording process the site was covered with a layer of geotextile and subsequently by a layer of shillet rich subsoil. Once development is complete it will be covered by a depth of topsoil.

In addition to the buried archaeological remains associated with the Iron Age ditches, three breached field boundaries were also recorded (Figs. 4 and 7).

Boundary B2 ran north to south across the western end of the site. It had a central core of material (1.4m wide by 0.7m high) and extensive root material from fairly mature trees.

Slumped material was visible on both the eastern and western sides of the core; this was likely a result of tree growth. This boundary was completely removed as part of the development.

Boundary B3 ran east to west and forms the southern boundary of the site and was also largely removed by the development. Very little of the boundary remained as it had largely become large shrubs and mature trees. A small bank (0.35m high by 0.65m wide) was visible in places.

Boundary B5 ran east to west and bisected the site. The core of the hedge survived well and measured 0.9m high by 1.3m wide. The southern side of the hedge was composed of modern material including concrete blocks and plastic piled 0.7m high.

5 Discussion

To conclude, the archaeological monitoring during the soil stripping in the development area at Gerrans, revealed a complex of Iron Age ditches, which are likely to be associated with an adjacent settlement. Indeed it is possible that an associated structure of Iron Age date may have been located in the unexcavated portion of the ditch complex. Given the absence of any enclosures in the near vicinity, it seems likely that there is an unenclosed Iron Age settlement nearby, and was perhaps comparable with recently excavated sites at Camelford and Richard Lander School site in Truro (Gossip forthcoming; Taylor 2010). Although only partially excavated these results are significant because they demonstrate the presence of Iron Age fields and probable settlement activity in an area where it was previously unknown.

The archaeological remains at Gerrans have been preserved *in situ*; however, a small but significant assemblage of Iron Age pottery was recovered from the site.

6 Recommendations

This report has covered the initial results from the watching brief. At the conclusion of this stage of this project the following tasks will have been achieved:

- An archive report outlining the results of the excavation has been produced.
- All photographs have been indexed and catalogued.
- All correspondence has been filed and stored within the archive boxes.
- All finds have been cleaned, catalogued, and stored in acid free boxes.

Following the completion of the fieldwork and archiving, the requirements for post excavation work will be reviewed. This may include the following tasks:

- The Iron Age ceramic assemblage will be examined to see if any residue is present. Any surviving residue will be submitted for radiocarbon dating.
- Production of a short note for publication in *Cornish Archaeology*. This will include a radiocarbon date from one of the Iron Age ditches. The text will be concise and will be confined to a short description of the Iron Age ditches.

7 References

7.1 Primary sources

Ordnance Survey, *c*1880. *25 Inch Map* First Edition (licensed digital copy at HE)

Ordnance Survey, *c*1907. *25 Inch Map* Second Edition (licensed digital copy at HE)

Ordnance Survey, 2007. *Mastermap Digital Mapping*

7.2 Publications

Gossip, J, forthcoming. Life outside the round - Bronze Age and Iron Age settlement at Higher Besore and Truro College, Threemilestone, Truro, *Cornish Archaeolo*

Jones, A M. (2009) *Project Design and Estimate for Archaeological recording at Gerrans allotments, Gerrans Rev00*, Historic Environment projects, Cornwall Council

Lawson-Jones, A. (2009) *Gerrans Allotment Site, Cornwall Archaeological Assessment*, Historic Environment projects, Cornwall Council

Taylor, S R, 2010. *Sir James Smith's Community School, Camelford, Cornwall, Phase 1 Synthetic Pitch and Northern Fields, archaeological mitigation, archive report*, HES, Truro

8 Project archive

The HE project number is **2010005**

The project's documentary, photographic and drawn archive is housed at the offices of Historic Environment, Cornwall Council, Kennall Building, Old County Hall, Station Road, Truro, TR1 3AY. The contents of this archive are as listed below:

1. A project file containing site records and notes, project correspondence and administration.
2. Field plans and copies of historic maps stored in an A2-size plastic envelope (GRE 708).
3. Electronic drawings stored in the directory *R:\Historic Environment (CAD)\CAD Archive\Sites G\Gerrans Affordable Housing (2010005)*
4. Digital photographs stored in the directory *R:\Historic Environment (Images)\SITES.E-H\Gerrans Affordable Housing (2010005)*
5. English Heritage/ADS OASIS online reference: cornwall2-75685

This report text is held in digital form as: *G:\Historic Environment (Documents)\HE Projects\Sites\Sites G\Gerrans Allotment Gardens Mitigation 2010005/Gerrans Allotment Cornwall Archaeological Watching brief*

Artefacts and environmental material retrieved during the project are to be stored at the Royal Cornwall Museum, River Street, Truro. The site code is GAH10

9 Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1: Contexts

Context No	Type	Description	Plan No	Section No	Date	Initial
1001	Layer	Topsoil	6		27/01/10	FS
1002	Layer	Subsoil	6		27/01/10	FS
1003	Cut	Ditch (0.8m wide x 0.65m deep) entering south western edge of hollow [1009] appears to traverse area exiting its north eastern edge	6	2	27/01/10	FS
1004	Deposit	Fill of ditch [1003], (0.75m wide x 0.3m deep) dark reddish brown, firm, silty clay. Contained shillet fragments increasingly towards base.	6	2	27/01/10	FS
1005	Cut	Ditch (1.1m wide x 0.2m deep) running north / south across surveyed area.	6	1	27/01/10	FS
1006	Deposit	Fill of ditch [1005], dark reddish brown, loose, silty clay with some shillet fragments at the base. (1.1m wide x 0.2m deep) The same as (1013).	6	1	27/01/10	FS
1007	Cut	Narrow ditch (0.55 wide x 0.1m depth) running east / west across surveyed area	6	3,4	27/01/10	FS
1008	Deposit	Fill of narrow ditch [1007] mid reddish brown, compact, silty clay with a high shillet content - 55% (0.55 wide x 0.1m depth)	6	3,4	27/01/10	FS
1009	Cut	Cut of hollow in which all features are found appears to be natural (9m long x 8m wide x estimated 1m deep)	6		27/01/10	FS
1010	Deposit	Loose brown silty clay, the upper layer of hollow [1009], seals most of the features.	6	1,2,4,5	27/01/10	FS
1011	Layer	Shillet rich natural throughout the higher area to the west of the site	6		27/01/10	FS
1012	Cut	Cut of a second ditch (0.9m wide x 0.16m deep) revealed in section 1 running parallel to [1005]	6	1	29/01/10	FS
1013	Deposit	Fill of Ditch [1012] dark reddish brown, loose, silty clay with some shillet fragments at the base, (0.9m wide x 0.16m deep). The same as (1006)	6	1	29/01/10	FS
1014	Cut	Shallow linear running north east / south west. (0.4m wide x 0.05m deep)	6	5	29/01/10	FS
1015	Deposit	Fill of shallow linear [1014], dark reddish brown, compact, silty clay, with a high shillet content 40% (0.4m wide x 0.05m deep)	6	5	29/01/10	FS
1016	Deposit / Build	Collection of stone within (1010) no depth, single course only, contained within (1010)	6		29/01/10	FS

9.2 Appendix 2: Artefacts

Context No	Description	Period
1006	Rim sherd, granitic fabric	Iron Age/Romano British
1006	Body sherd, gabbroic fabric	Iron Age/Romano British
1006	Two conjoining basal angle, gabbroic fabric	Iron Age/Romano British
1006	Rim sherd, possibly from a lid, gabbroic fabric	Iron Age
1006	Body sherd with internal residue, gabbroic fabric	Iron Age/Romano British
1006	Three body sherds, gabbroic fabric	Iron Age/Romano British
1006	Base sherd with internal residue, gabbroic fabric	Iron Age/Romano British
1004	Two body sherds, well made gabbroic fabric	Iron Age
Un-stratified	Four sherds of medieval pottery	13th - 14th century
Un-stratified	Three body sherds post medieval glazed red earthenware	18th - 19th century
Un-stratified	Two pieces of flint	Indeterminate

Fig 1 Location map Ordnance Survey digital mapping showing the site and its environs (2007)

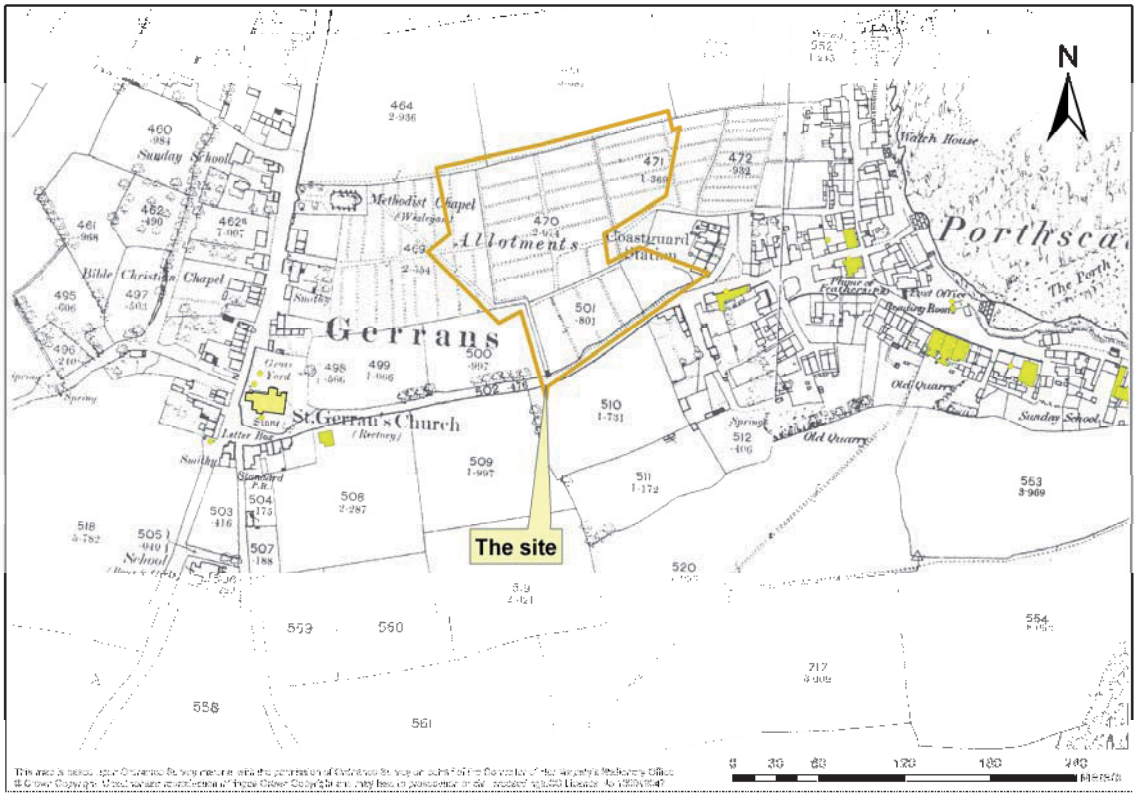

Fig 2 First Edition of the Ordnance Survey 25 Inch Map, c 1880 (After Lawson Jones 2009)

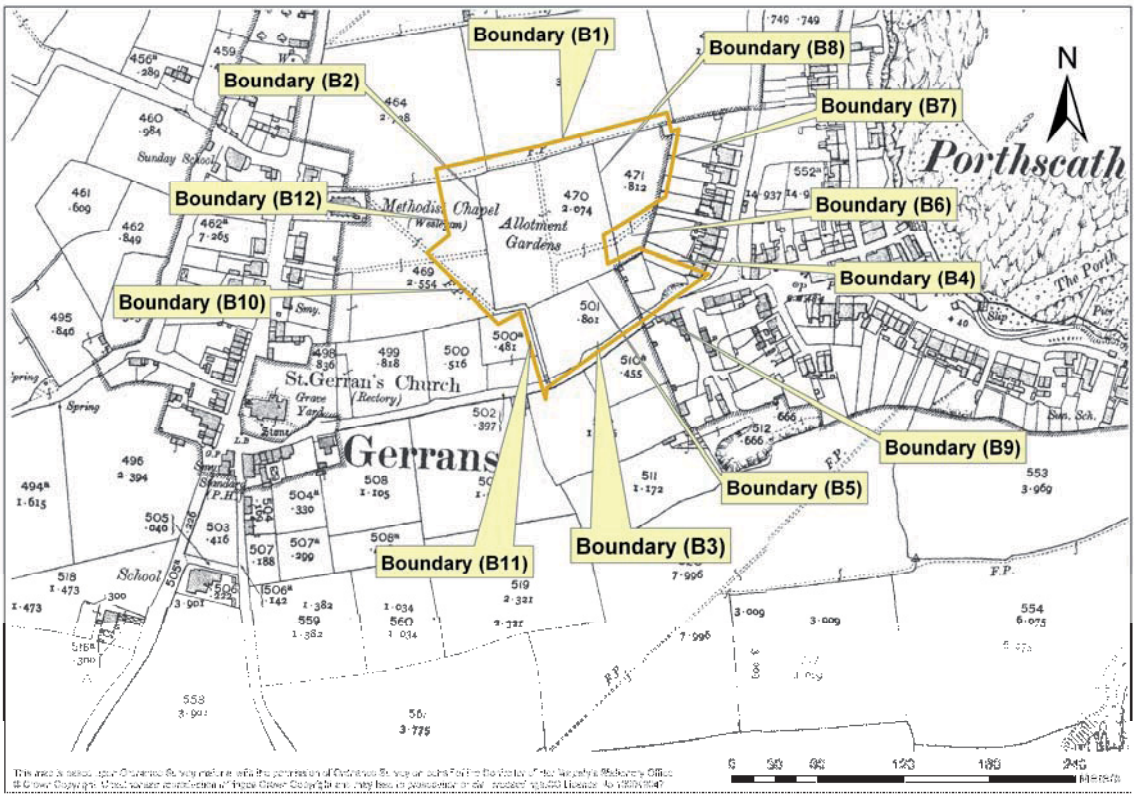

Fig 3 Second Edition of the Ordnance Survey 25 Inch Map, c 1907 showing boundaries (After Lawson Jones 2009)

Fig 4 Aerial Photograph showing the allotment site before development. (Cornwall Council License 2007. Geosence 2005).

Fig 5 Location map showing assessment sites 1-8 (After Lawson Jones 2009)

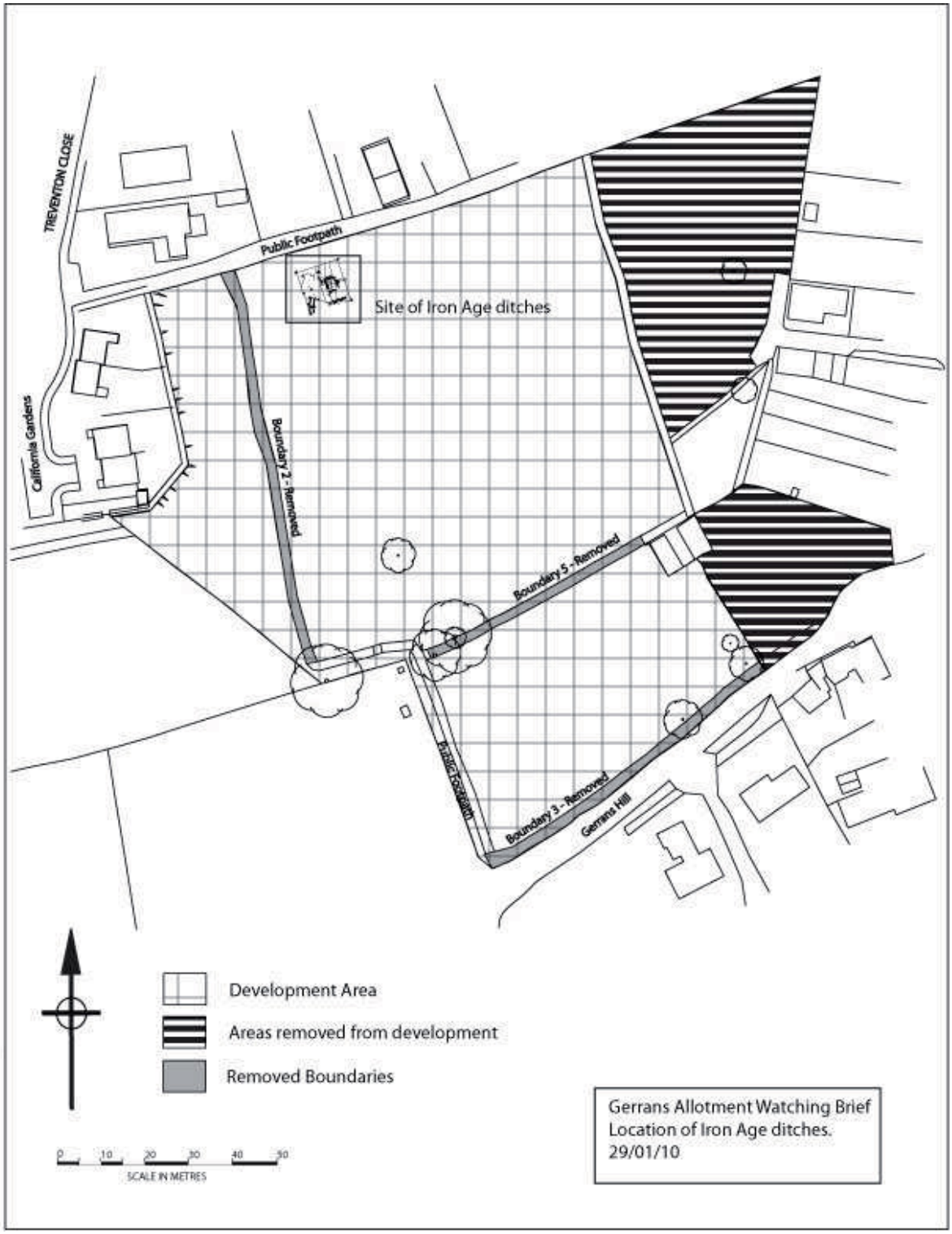

Fig 6 Location of Iron Age ditches

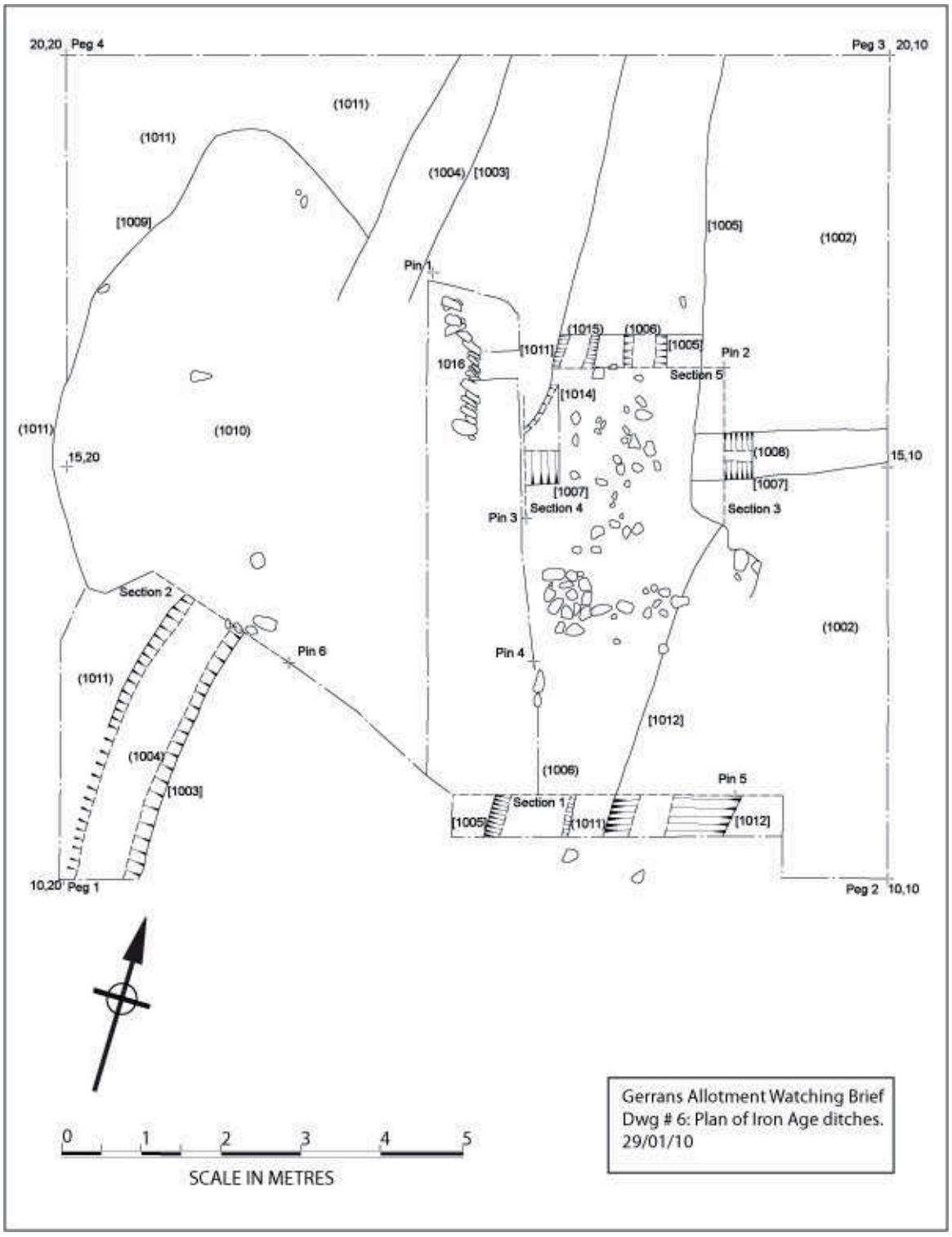

Fig 7 Plan of Iron Age ditches