

St Radigund's Abbey Farm,

Hougham, nr Dover, 2015

Evaluation report

Scheduled Ancient Monument No. 511688

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Evaluation trenching at St Radigund's Abbey Farm, May 2015

1. Summary

1.1 In May 2015, the Canterbury Archaeological Trust (CAT) was engaged to undertake evaluation trenching in the area of the redundant Tyler Barn at St Radigunds Abbey, ahead of its conversion into holiday lets (NGR 62752 14184, centred). The investigation involved the excavation of two long, machine-cut trenches (Trenches 1 and 2) following proposed new drain runs, together with the digging of three trial pits (Test Pits 1–3) at points where new stanchion pits for an extension to the Tyler Barn are to be placed.

1.2 The work in 2015 followed on from an earlier phase of evaluation work carried out immediately to the north in 2009. The present investigations revealed two features of archaeological interest – a broad shallow hollow of post-medieval date located to the south-west of the Tyler Barn (Trench 1; F. 4) and an area of post-medieval flint metalling to the east. This metalling had first been discovered in 2009, when a larger area was exposed.

1.3 A small assemblage of struck flints recovered from the ploughsoil in Trench 1 indicates prehistoric activity in the area and this is consistent with previous discoveries. Finds of later date were limited to a small amount of medieval and post-medieval ceramic building material.

2. Introduction

2.1 In connection with the conversion of a redundant agricultural building (the Tyler Barn; concrete, mid-twentieth century) into two holiday cottages at St Radigund's Abbey Farm, Bradsole, Hougham, near Dover, the Canterbury Archaeological Trust was engaged to undertake evaluation trenching in 2015 (Frontispiece). The work was commissioned by the owner, Mr Peter Moynan, at the request of the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission (now Historic England) and followed on from previous evaluation work conducted on the site by the Dover Archaeological Group (Parfitt 2009a).

2.2 The investigated site lies high on the North Downs, between Dover and Folkestone. The ground here forms part of a level plateau standing at an elevation of about 135 metres above OD (Fig. 1). The natural subsoil in this region is recorded as Clay-with-flints, resting on Upper Chalk. Special archaeological interest attaches to this entire area because it lies close to the ruins of the important twelfth-century Praemonstratensian abbey of St Radegund and within a network of associated boundary earthworks (Kent HER ref. TR 24 SW 1 & 45; Fig. 2). The complex is Scheduled as an Ancient Monument (Monument No. 511688).

2.3 The proposed new development work falls within the Scheduled area. The Tyler Barn is centred on NGR 62752 14184 and lies about 100 metres to the south of the main medieval monastic complex, close to a larger barn – the Stone or Great Barn – which itself is of medieval origin (Figs 2 & 3). In addition to falling within the Scheduled area, the Stone Barn is a Grade II Listed Building (ref. HG 70) of considerable historical interest. This building seems originally to have stood as a detached structure within the abbey complex but it is unlikely that its primary use was ever as a barn; it may have once been the abbey Guest House.

2.4 To provide information about the potential impact that the proposed new works might have on any buried archaeology, the Dover Archaeological Group was invited to undertake evaluation trenching across the area of development in 2009. This work confirmed other records indicating that the Stone Barn

had once extended rather further to the south-west than at present, the remains of standing walls here being demolished in 1957 (Parfitt 2009a).

2.5 A second phase of evaluation work was carried out by the Canterbury Archaeological Trust in May 2015. This new work was largely concerned with the potential impact of additional new drainage works necessary for the barn conversion.

2.6 The investigation involved the excavation of two long, machine-cut trenches (Trenches 1 and 2; Frontispiece, Plate I) following the proposed new drain runs, together with three trial pits (Test Pits 1–3; Plate III) located at points where new stanchion pits for an extension to the Tyler Barn are to be placed. The work was conducted by the writer and Paul Armour, on 1 and 5 May 2015, with some limited but useful results.

3. Historical and archaeological background

3.1 In *c.*1192 a group of Premonstratensian monks arrived at Bradsole direct from their mother house at Prémontré in northern France, to establish a new abbey (St John Hope 1882). The isolated spot chosen, high on the chalk downs 4.5km west of the medieval town and Cinque port of Dover, was typical for this particular religious order. Existing dew ponds probably provided the abbey with its main source of fresh water and quite possibly also served as fish ponds. Although the abbey grew into a place of some importance, it was never a large house.

3.2 The abbey was dissolved in 1538 when substantial amounts of the stonework were removed for use in Henry VIII's Kent coast defence works. Then, in 1590 the site was sold by the Crown and purchased by one Simon Edolph. The old Refectory in the South Range was converted into a farmhouse, a function which it still serves today. The great abbey church and the other ranges were abandoned and became ruinous, although the tower of the church was retained to form an impressive gateway to the new farmhouse. A large medieval building to the south of the main monastic complex, possibly originally the guest-house, was then converted into a barn (now known as the Stone or Great Barn). The proposed new barn conversion lies immediate to the south-west of the Stone Barn (Fig. 3; Plate III). The lands associated with the former abbey continue to be farmed today and substantial fragments of medieval masonry survive amongst more modern farm buildings.

3.3 Ploughing in 1956, some 240 north-west of the area investigated in 2015, turned up Roman samian vessels (still held at the Farm), probably representing a second-century cremation burial. Archaeological field walking and watching-briefs previously undertaken in the fields around the abbey site have established the presence across the area of significant surface scatters of prehistoric flintwork. The bulk of these flints seem to belong to the Neolithic–Bronze Age period, with smaller amounts of Mesolithic material and a few items which are Palaeolithic (see Parfitt 2009b for further comments).

4. Methodology

4.1 The agreed specification (April 2015) required the excavation of two long trenches (Trenches 1 & 2) on the line of proposed new drain runs and three test pits on the site of additional stanchion pits for a new extension to the existing Tyler Barn (Test Pits 1–3).

4.2 The trenches were dug under close archaeological control using a 3 tonne tracked digger with a 360 degree slew, equipped with a 1.20m wide toothless ditching bucket (Frontispiece). The machine work was carried out by a skilled operator under the supervision of Keith Parfitt, MCIfA.

4.3 The trenches were excavated in bright and sunny conditions, judged to have been good for the purpose of accurate archaeological observation of soil deposits and cut-features. Ground conditions were moist. Given the potential difficulty of identifying cut features in the clay subsoil on the site, the trenches were left open to weather for an additional four days, with no new information revealed. Details of the exposed stratification were recorded following the general conventions set out in Canterbury Archaeological Trust's *Site Recording Manual*.

4.4 The fieldwork generated a small archive, including fifteen recorded contexts, a trench location plan, seven sections, about seventy digital photographs and a small collection of finds, mostly prehistoric struck flints and peg-tile fragments. All the field records have been checked and indexed. They are currently held by CAT (Dover Office).

5. The excavated trenches and test pits

The evaluation involved the excavation of two long trenches (Trenches 1 and 2) following the proposed line of new drains, together with three trial pits cut through the concrete of the adjacent farmyard (Test Pits 1–3). These are described in detail below.

5.1 Trench 1 (Fig. 4, Fig. 5, Sections 2, 6 & 7; Plates I & II)

5.1.1 This was cut through arable land to the south-west of the Tyler Barn (Figs 2–4; Plate I). It was aligned roughly north-west by south-east and was excavated for a total distance of 35.60m. The trench was 1.20m wide and was generally taken to a depth of about 0.40m. About half way along its length it connected with Trench 2 and, at the south-east end, joined with a small area excavation opened up on the proposed site of a new septic tank (see below).

5.1.2 The exposed soil sequence was the same for almost the full length of the trench and only one feature of archaeological interest was revealed at the south-eastern end (F. 4, see below). In the base of the trench, natural orange-brown Clay-with-flints (Context 2) was revealed at a depth of between 0.30m and 0.40m below present ground level, sealed only by modern ploughsoil (Context 1).

5.1.3 Hollow, F. 4 (Fig. 5; Section 2; Plate II)

At the south-eastern end of the trench a broad, flint-filled hollow (Section 2, F. 4; Plate II) was discovered cut into the top of the natural clay. A hand-dug slot some 0.40m wide, cut across the feature showed that it was just 0.18m deep with long, shallowly sloping sides and a slightly dished base. The filling of this feature (Context 3) consisted of a brown clay loam containing very frequent large and medium sized flint nodules, a small quantity of tile fragments, mostly towards the base, and portions of two early post-medieval red bricks.

The finds suggest that this feature was filled sometime during the early post-medieval period. Most of the flints within the filling appeared to be natural nodules with no evidence of knapping or adhering mortar to suggest that they were derived from demolished walling. The exact origin and purpose of F. 4 remains unclear but it does appear to be a deliberately infilled, man-made feature rather than a natural hollow.

5.1.4 The natural clay (2) and the infilled hollow (F. 4) were sealed by a continuous layer of modern plough soil (Context 1), between 0.30 and 0.40m thick (Fig. 5, Sections 2, 6 & 7; Plate I). This consisted of a mid to dark brown clay loam containing moderate quantities of small and medium sub-angular flints, together with very occasional pieces of modern brick. Thirteen prehistoric struck flints and one small calcined flint, also probably prehistoric, were recovered from this layer (see below).

5.2 Septic tank area

At the south-east end of Trench 1 a larger area was cleared across the proposed site of a new septic tank (Fig. 4). Situated immediately to the south-east of hollow F. 4 (see above), the cleared area measured 3.60m (NE–SW) by 2.50m (NW–SE). Natural Clay-with-flints (Context 2) was revealed at a depth of about 0.35m across the base of the excavation, with no archaeological features present. Hollow F. 4 would thus appear to be an isolated feature.

5.3 Trench 2 (Fig. 4, Fig. 5, Section 3; Frontispiece)

5.3.1 This was cut to the south-east of the Tyler Barn and joined with Trench 1 at an angle. Trench 2 was aligned roughly north-east by south-west and was excavated for a total distance of 15 metres. It was 1.20m wide and was cut to a depth of between 0.30 and 0.60m. The deposits here were found to be rather more mixed and disturbed than in Trench 1, reflecting the fact that this trench lay mostly within the area of the old farmyard, where there had been much previous activity (Frontispiece).

5.3.2 At the south-western end of the trench the soil sequence was found to be the same as in the adjoining Trench 1, with about 0.30m of plough soil (Context 1) resting directly over the natural clay (Context 2). For most of the length of the trench, however, twentieth-century dumps of chalk and flint, concrete and brick rubble, up to 0.50m thick (Contexts 11 & 12) had been used to bring up the general level of the ground. Deposition of these layers had led to some disturbance and discolouration of the underlying soils (Contexts 12 & 15). Since the depth of the proposed drain in this area was quite shallow, the full depth of these upper deposits was not removed to expose the natural clay.

In the north-eastern half of the trench a disturbed layer of flints (Fig. 5, BS 3, Context 14) appeared to represent the continuation of the metalling located further to the north (see below, Context 9). Sealed by a thin layer of brown clay (Context 13) in this area, the flint surface appeared to have been disturbed during the course of laying down more recent layers of chalk and flint rubble. In places, it was very difficult to distinguish between the flint metalling proper and the later dumped flint rubble, Context 12. Since the drain run here will not reach the general level of the lower metalling, the area was not examined in great detail.

5.4 Test Pit 1 (Fig. 4, Fig. 6, Section 4; Plate III)

5.4.1 This was cut about 8.50m to the north-east of the east corner of Tyler Barn, at the site of a stanchion base for the new building (Fig. 4). The pit was part excavated by machine and measured between 1.40 and 1.60m across. It was taken to a maximum depth of 1.10m but virtually the entire sequence of deposits exposed comprised modern dumps of clay, chalk and recent building rubble (Fig. 6; Section 4). The site of the pit corresponds with the site of the south corner post of the now demolished twentieth-century Dutch Barn, which formerly occupied this area (Figs 3 & 4; Plate III). The deposits excavated in 2015 may thus be seen to represent the backfilling of the recent pit dug to remove a substantial concrete post relating to the Dutch Barn.

5.4.2 The face of the pit in the north and east corners showed traces of adjacent undisturbed deposits, including the natural clay (Fig. 6, Section 4, Context 2). Also visible was a layer of flints resting on the top of the natural clay (Context 9). This fairly certainly represents the disturbed remains of the flint metalling layer better exposed in Test Pit 2 (see below; Plate IV).

5.5 Test Pit 2 (Fig. 4, Fig. 6, Section 1; Plate IV)

5.5.1 This was cut about 6 metres to the north-west of Test Pit 1, at the site of another new stanchion base (Fig. 4; Plate III). The pit measured about one metre square and was excavated to a maximum depth of about 0.75m (Section 1). Modern yard concrete (Context 5) was removed by machine, with the underlying deposits hand-excavated down into the natural clay. The continuation of a flint metalled surface previously recorded in this general area (Parfitt 2009a) was exposed, photographed (Plate IV) and removed.

5.5.2 In the base of the pit, the surface of the natural Clay-with-flints (Context 2) was revealed at a depth of about 0.50m (Fig. 6, Section 1). This was excavated for some 0.20m in order to reach a clean, uncontaminated, orange-brown clay horizon. As was also seen in 2009, the upper 0.10m of the natural had been discoloured grey-green by the presence of the overlying flint metalling layer (Context 9, see below) and/or percolating farmyard effluent.

5.5.3 The top of the natural clay (2) was overlain by the rough flint metalling. This was about 0.20m thick and its surface lay at about 0.35m below modern ground level. In detail, it was composed of large and medium sized flint nodules set in dark grey-brown gritty clay (Context 9). Small fragments of peg-tile had also been incorporated into its make-up but there was no other dating evidence. As noted previously (Parfitt 2009a), none of the flints used showed any evidence for adhering mortar, suggesting that they had been collected from the surface of the adjacent fields, rather than being derived from demolished medieval walls. Although well defined, the surface of the metalling was quite uneven (Plate IV).

5.5.4 The metalling (9) was sealed by a thin layer of mottled grey-brown silty clay (Context 8) about 0.04m thick. No datable finds were recovered from this layer. Above it was another thin layer of clay between 0.04 and 0.08m thick (Context 7). In detail, this comprised a dark grey silty clay with occasional flint lumps but again, no datable finds were recovered. These deposits seem to represent detritus accumulated on the surface of the metalling rather than deliberate make-up layers.

5.5.5 Clay deposit 7 was sealed by a recent levelling layer consisting of mixed soil and rubble (Context 6). This was between 0.12 and 0.24m thick and supported the modern yard concrete (Context 5) which was about 0.12m in thickness.

5.5.6 The sequence of deposits revealed in Test Pit 2 is very similar to that previously recorded in DAG Trenches 1 and 2 cut a short distance to the south (Parfitt 2009a; Fig. 3). Associated dating evidence recovered then suggested that the metalling was most probably of late eighteenth- or nineteenth-century date. The peg-tile fragments recovered in 2015 could be broadly consistent with such a date.

5.6 Test Pit 3 (Fig. 4, Fig. 6, Section 5)

This was cut on the line of the north-east wall of the existing Tyler Barn, around 9 metres south-west of Test Pit 2 (Fig. 4). It was rectangular in shape and measured about 1.10m (NE–SW) by 1.40m (NW–SE). It was taken to a maximum depth of 0.75m and revealed nothing but recent chalk rubble flooring sealing modern disturbed soil with flint and some brick rubble (Fig. 6, Section 5). Apparently, this spot had been extensively disturbed during the original construction and use of the barn and by the insertion of a substantial pad of concrete, 0.30m thick, in the yard immediately outside. No significant archaeological deposits appeared to survive here.

6. Finds

6.1 The evaluation trenching produced a small assemblage of finds, including prehistoric flintwork and ceramic building material. The finds have been processed and catalogued according to standard Canterbury Archaeological Trust procedures and currently remain in the possession of CAT (Dover Office), pending deposition at an appropriate local repository.

6.2 *Prehistoric flintwork*

6.2.1 The ploughsoil in Trench 1 yielded a total of thirteen prehistoric struck flints (453g). These are all unpatinated flakes and only four show any evidence of working. With the exception of one small tertiary flake, all the flints are secondaries, bearing traces of the white chalky cortex typical of immediately available local downland flint. One small calcined flint ('pot-boiler'), again probably prehistoric, was also recovered from the ploughsoil.

6.2.2 Four struck flakes showed some evidence of working to produce crude tools. Two blade-like flakes have roughly worked notches on their sides, whilst two other flakes have coarse working along one edge to produce poor quality scrapers.

6.2.3 It seems probable that this small lithic assemblage relates to a single, relatively crude industry. There are no particularly diagnostic tools but the generally rough appearance of the material suggests that it may be broadly placed within the later Neolithic – Bronze Age period. The high downland across this part of east Kent is well known for regularly producing spreads of prehistoric flintwork, ranging in date from the Palaeolithic to the Neolithic and into the Bronze Age period. A significant quantity of such material was recovered during field walking in the area of the Abbey by the Dover Archaeological Group in the 1970s, and more recently in 2009, during the construction of a new agricultural building some 200 metres to the south-east of 2015 Trench 1 (Parfitt 2009b).

6.3 *Brick and tile*

6.3.1 Brick

Two broken maroon-red bricks were recovered from the filling of hollow F. 4, in Trench 1 (Context 3). One of these is largely complete and measures; L: 165mm (min.) x W: 104mm x Th: 45mm; it could be Tudor in date. The second piece is smaller and seems to be from a different style of brick. It measures; L: 130mm (min.) x W: 105mm (min.) x Th: 48mm; a seventeenth- or eighteenth-century date seems possible.

6.3.2 Tile

A total of seventeen pieces of tile was recovered during the evaluation works (498g). The great bulk of this was roofing material, mostly fragments of typical medieval and early post-medieval peg-tile. There were two sources for the tile; the filling of hollow F. 4 in Trench 1 (Context 3) and the make-up of the flint metalling in Test Pit 2 (Context 9).

The largest assemblage came from the filling of F. 4, which yielded twelve individual fragments (336g). Seven of these are small pieces of peg-tile; four more, slightly thicker pieces are perhaps from pan-tiles. The other piece is of a sandy fabric, about 17mm thick, with a dark grey core. Too thick for a roof tile, this perhaps represents a small fragment of unglazed floor tile.

The five pieces of tile (162g) from the make-up of the flint metalling in Test Pit 2 (Context 9) are all fragments of peg-tile. At least one of the fabrics represented appears to be more typical of the post-medieval rather than the medieval period.

In addition, occasional fragments of peg-tile were noted within the ploughsoil of Trench 1. These were not retained.

7. Conclusions

7.1 The evaluation trenches and test pits cut in the area of the Tyler Barn development during 2015 have provided another opportunity to archaeologically examine ground within the Scheduled area, south of the main medieval abbey complex, close to a large detached monastic building now known as the Stone or Great Barn. The investigations established that there were only limited archaeological remains present within the areas examined, with a certain amount of modern disturbance apparent.

7.2 Trenching in the arable field to the south-west of the Tyler Barn revealed natural clay directly under the ploughsoil, with just one feature of archaeological interest located (Trench 1). This feature took the form of a broad shallow hollow (F. 4), apparently man-made but seemingly of no great significance and probably post-Dissolution in date.

7.3 A small assemblage of prehistoric struck flints was recovered from the ploughsoil in Trench 1. These flints are clearly suggestive of prehistoric activity in the area and there is ample other locally collected lithic material to reinforce this view. The bulk of the flints found in this region appear to be of late Neolithic–Bronze Age date, with occasional Palaeolithic and Mesolithic implements also present (Parfitt 2009b).

7.4 In the farmyard area north-east of Trench 1 the ground was somewhat more disturbed, with much recent dumping of chalk and rubble. At the sites of Test Pits 1 and 3 the ground had been thoroughly disturbed in recent times to a depth of about one metre.

7.5 Post-medieval flint metalling is known to exist buried below the concrete yard between the Tyler Barn and the site of the Dutch Barn. Slightly damaged remains of this same layer were also revealed in the north-eastern end of Trench 2. In Test Pit 1 the metalling had been largely removed but it was better preserved in Test Pit 2 where it was hand-excavated for dating evidence (Plate IV).

8. Impact assessment

8.1 Although previous investigations in the area have identified sections of buried medieval walling further to the north (Parfitt 2009a), the present evaluation trenching has revealed no evidence to suggest the existence of any significant medieval structures, features or deposits in the area of the proposed new drainage works and building extension.

8.2 A spread of post-medieval flint metalling previously discovered buried at a depth of between 0.45 and 0.65m in the area of the new building extension (Parfitt 2009a, 9) should remain largely untouched. The exception to this will be at the site of Test Pit 2 where a stanchion base for the new structure is required. Accordingly, the metalling at this point has been archaeologically excavated (Plate IV) to reveal the underlying natural clay.

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Fig.1



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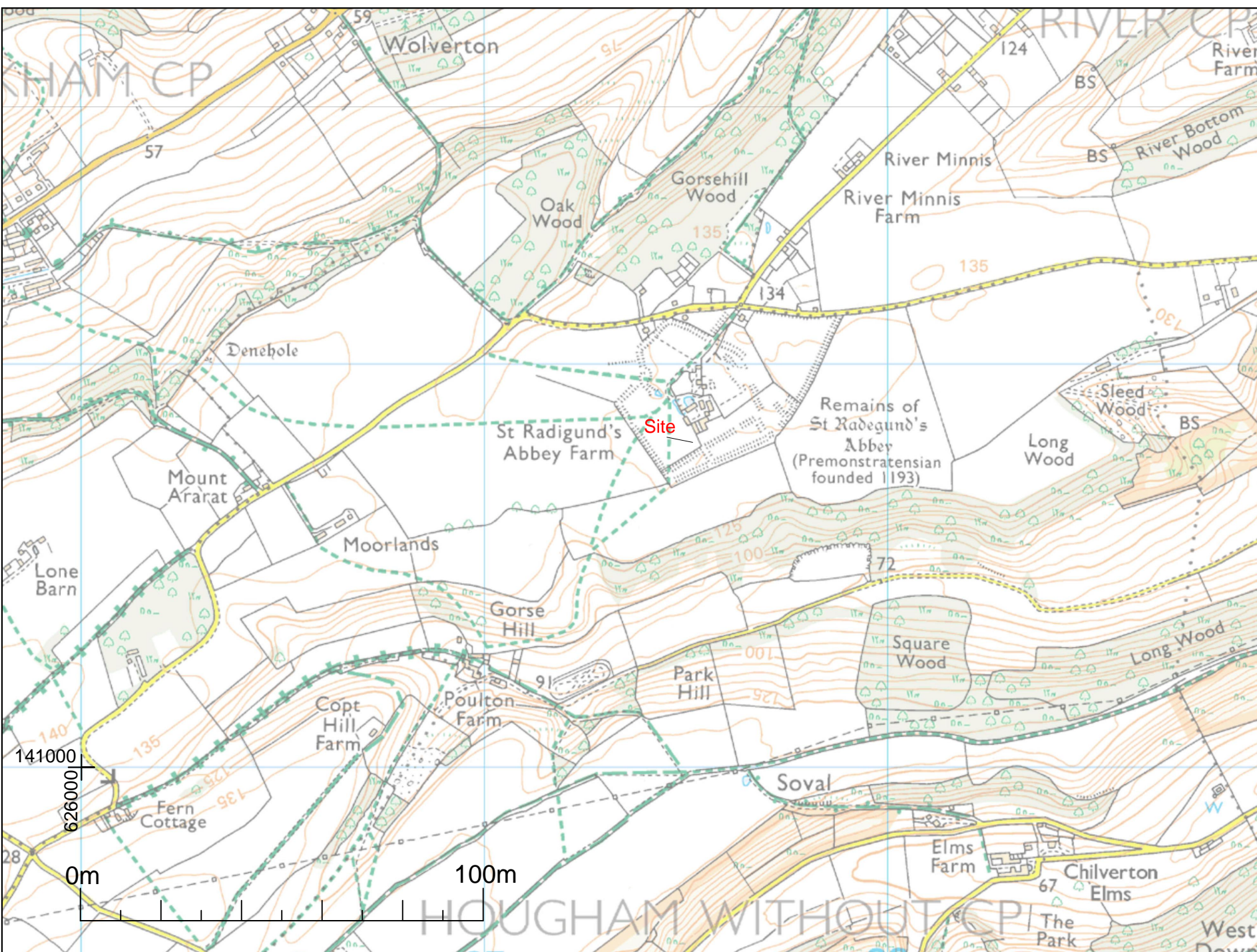
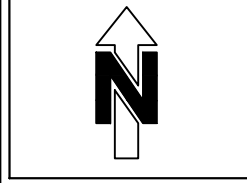
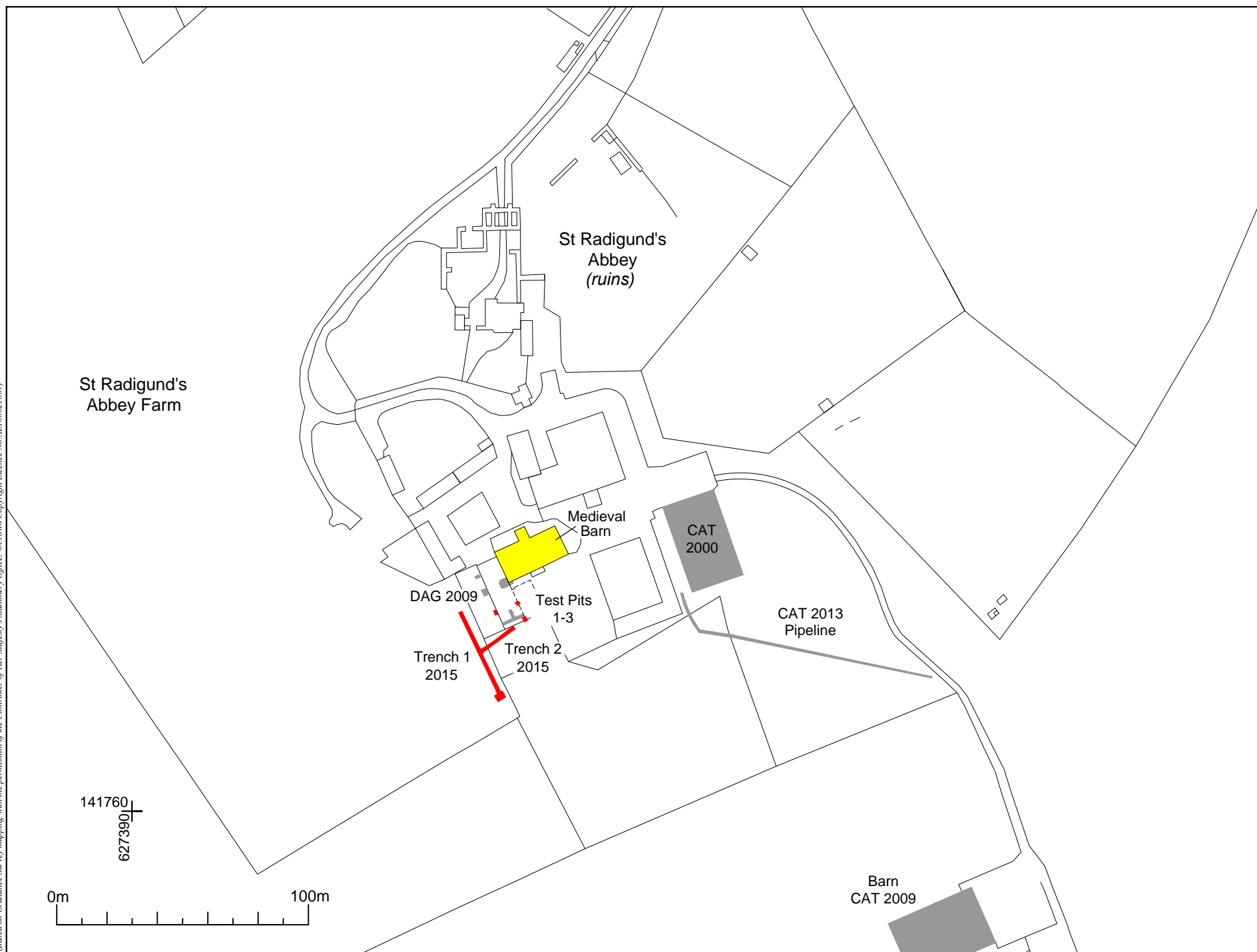


Fig. 1 General location map

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Fig.2







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Fig. 2 Location of 2015 trenches and test pits in relation to St Radigund's Abbey Farm and previous investigations by Canterbury Archaeological Trust and Dover Archaeological Group

Fig.3

-  Medieval Wall
-  Post-med Metalling
-  CAT 2015
-  DAG 2009



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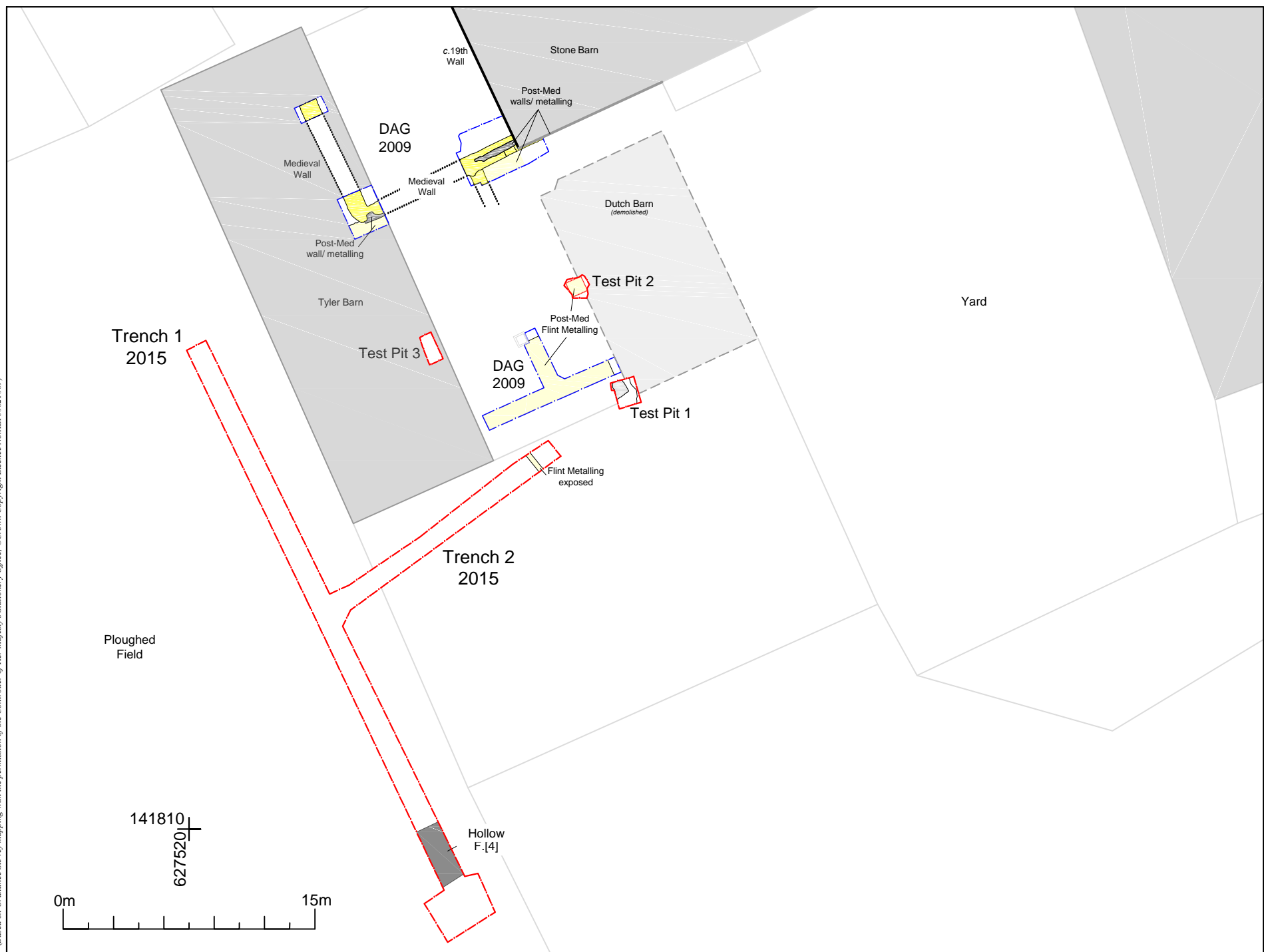




Fig. 3 Location of 2015 evaluation trenches and test pits in relation to the present farm buildings and trenching by Dover Archaeological Group in 2009

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Fig.4

 Buried Topsoil
 Rubble (brick and flint)



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PROJECT NAME
 St Radigunds Abbey

PROJECT CODE
 SRAD-EV-15

SITE ADDRESS
 St Radigunds Abbey
 Hougham
 Kent

DRAWN BY	SCALE(S)
P-SA	1:225 @ A4

DATE	LAST REVISION
07/05/15	07/05/15

REF/DRG NO.	CHECKED
L:/	KP

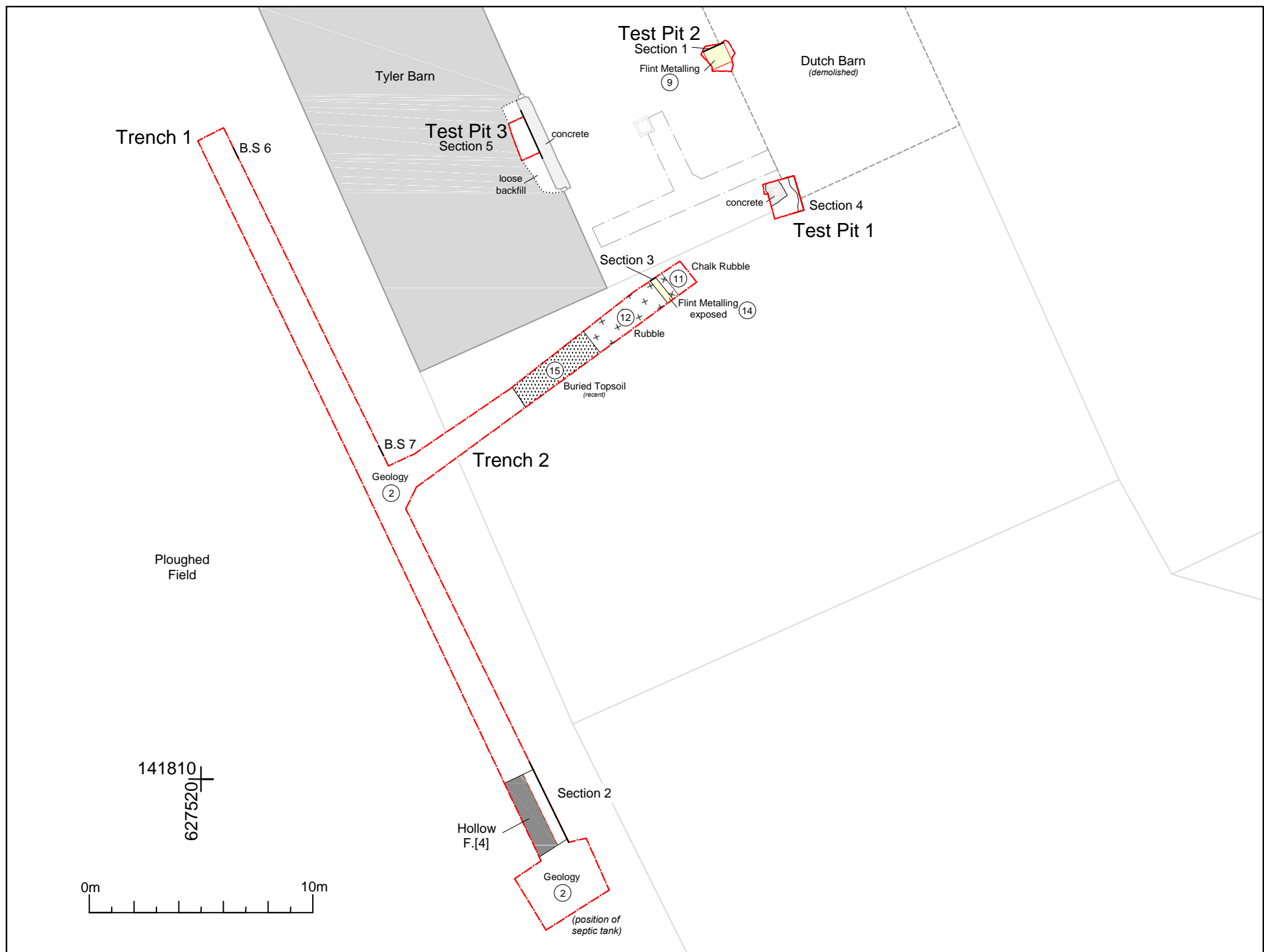
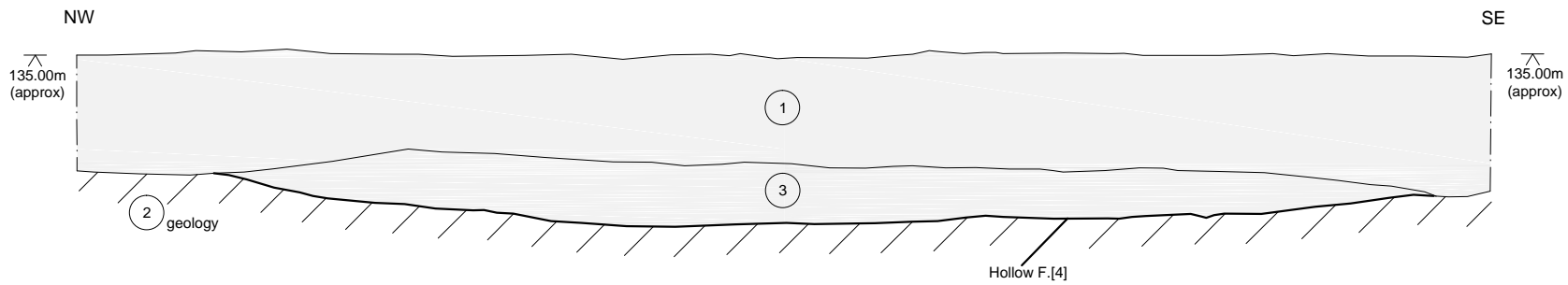


Fig. 4 Detailed plan of evaluation trenches and test pits cut in 2015

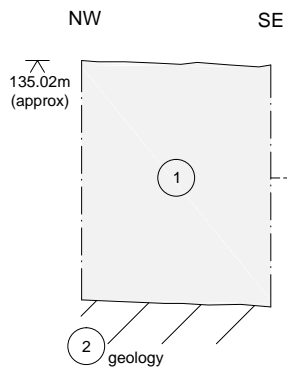
(Based on Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown Copyright Licence No. AL100021009)

Fig.5

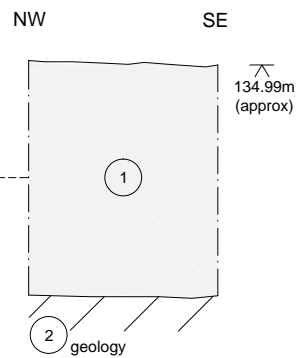
Trench 1 Section 2



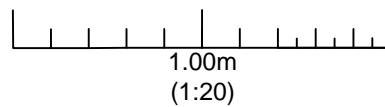
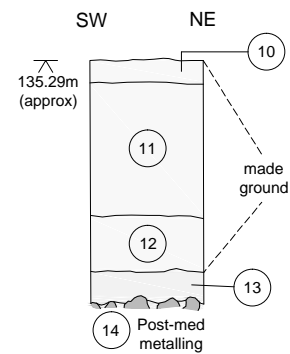
Trench 1 B.S 6



Trench 1 B.S 7



Trench 2 B.S 3



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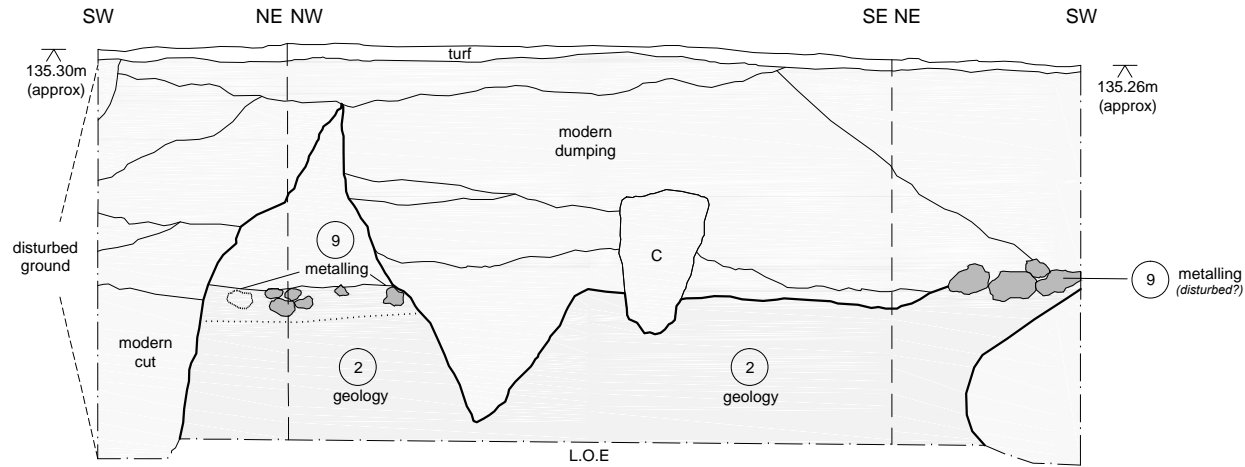
DATE 07/05/15	LAST REVISION 07/05/15
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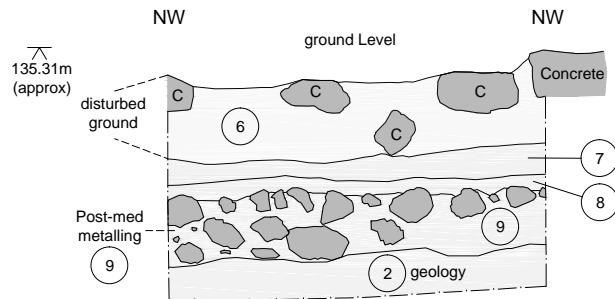
Fig. 5 Sections across features and deposits in Trenches 1 and 2 (Sections 2, 3, 6 & 7)

Fig.6

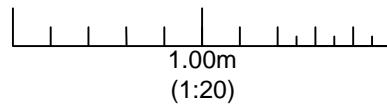
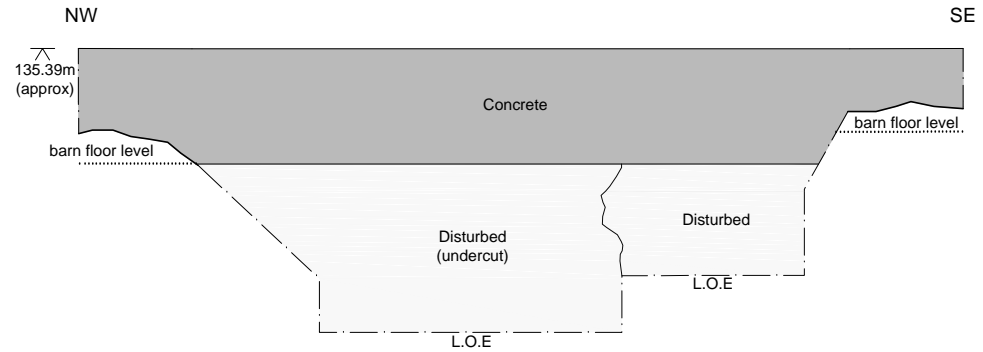
Test Pit 1 Section 4



Test Pit 2 Section 1



Test Pit 3 Section 5



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Fig. 6 Sections across Test Pits 1, 2 and 3 (Sections 1, 4 & 5)



Plate I General view of Trench 1, looking south-east. Scale, 1 metre



Plate II Hollow, F.4 revealed at the south-east end of Trench 1. Scale, 1 metre



Plate III Position of Test Pit 1 (foreground) and Test Pit 2 in relation to the Stone Barn, looking north



Plate IV Post-medieval metallurgy in Test Pit 2, looking north-east. Scale, 50cm