



ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES
WYAS

**Hillcrest Mount
Castleford
West Yorkshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

Report no. 2338

April 2012

Client: A.J. Roberts Construction Ltd.



Hillcrest Mount, Castleford

West Yorkshire

Archaeological Watching Brief

Summary

An archaeological watching brief, undertaken during the excavation of foundations for one of three new dwellings at Hillcrest Mount, Castleford, has revealed the remains of four pits, three of which may be part of a previously unknown east/west pit alignment of probable prehistoric date. The fourth pit was offset to the south and was seen to contain an inhumation. The location of these features close to the known ritual landscape surrounding Ferrybridge Henge strongly suggest that they are a continuation of this landscape to the west.



ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES
WYAS

Report Information

Client: A.J. Roberts Construction Ltd.
Address: Unit 1 Tuscany Court, Express Way, Normanton WF6 2AE
Report Type: Archaeological Watching Brief
Location: Castleford
County: West Yorkshire
Grid Reference: SE 4610 2487
Period(s) of activity represented: Prehistoric
Report Number: 2338
Project Number: 3049
Site Code: HIL 07
Planning Application No.: 06/01277/FUL
Museum Accession No.:
Date of fieldwork: February 2007
Date of report: April 2012
Project Management: Alistair Webb BA MIfA
Fieldwork supervisor: Marina Rose BSc
Report: Marina Rose with additions by Louise Martin BSc
Illustrations: Jon Prudhoe
Specialists: Malin Holst (Human Remains)
Jane Richardson (Animal Bone)
John Carrot (Environmental and Snail Shells)

Produced by: Archaeological Services WYAS, PO Box 30,
Nepshaw Lane South, Morley, Leeds LS27 0UG
Telephone: 0113 383 7500
Email: admin@aswyas.com

Authorisation for
distribution: -----

ISOQAR ISO 9001:2008
Certificate No. 125QM8003
© Archaeological Services WYAS

Contents

Report information	ii
Contents.....	iii
List of Figures	iv
List of Plates.....	iv
List of Tables	iv
1 Introduction.....	1
Site location and topography	1
Soils, geology and land-use	1
2 Archaeological and Historical Background.....	1
3 Aims and objectives	2
4 Methodology	2
5 Results	3
6 Environmental Record	4
Human remains	4
Animal bones	5
Environmental and mollusc remains.....	5
7 Discussion and Conclusions	6

Figures

Plates

Appendices

Appendix 1: Specification for an archaeological watching brief

Appendix 2: Inventory of primary archive

Appendix 3: Concordance of contexts

Appendix 4: Environmental data

Bibliography

List of Figures

- 1 Site location (1:50000)
- 2 Site location showing extent of archaeological monitoring (1:2000)
- 3 Plan of Plot 3 foundations showing excavated features (1:50)
- 4 Sections (1:25)

List of Plates

- 1 Section of pit 111, looking south-west
- 2 Deepest section of Pit 103, looking south-east
- 3 Pit 116, looking west
- 4 Section of Pit 121, looking north-east

List of Tables

- 1 Catalogue of human remains

1 Introduction

Archaeological Services WYAS (ASWYAS) was commissioned by A.J. Roberts Construction Ltd. to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the construction of three new dwellings on Hillcrest Mount, Castleford (Planning Application No. 06/01277/FUL) (Figs. 1 and 2). Unfortunately, the groundworks for Plot 1 and Plot 2 of the development were completed without the presence of an archaeologist. Following the excavation of these plots West Yorkshire Archaeology Service, Advisory Services (WYAAS) advised the agents for the site that no further groundworks should be undertaken without the presence of an archaeologist. A specification for an archaeological watching brief was prepared by WYASAS and the remaining area, Plot 3 was subject to archaeological monitoring in compliance with this document (see Appendix 1). The monitoring was carried out between February 19th and February 23rd 2007.

Site location and topography

The development area lies on the south-eastern side of Castleford (centred at SE 4610 2487) and occupies the location of a former bungalow, Pippins, on the southern side of Hillcrest Mount (see Fig. 2). The site is bounded to the north and west by Hillcrest Mount and to the south and east by other residential properties.

The site is situated on top of a ridge which lies at 41m above Ordnance Datum and falls away to the south and east.

Soils, geology and land-use

The soils of the area are classified in the Aberford soil association being described as shallow, locally brashy, well-drained calcareous fine loamy soils over mudstone, shallow on steeper slopes (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983). The underlying bedrock geology comprises Dolomitic Limestone of the Cadeby Formation (British Geological Survey 1998).

The site lies within an established housing estate and comprises of the redevelopment of a pre-existing house plot.

2 Archaeological and Historical Background

The development site lies within an area of known cropmarks which are visible on aerial photographs. The cropmarks show a probable late Iron Age or Romano-British ditched enclosure, with associated field boundaries and a possible double-ditched trackway to the south of the site (see Fig. 2). In addition, archaeological features have been identified within the boundaries of other nearby properties. Monitoring of construction work at Nos. 12 and 14 Hillcrest Avenue, approximately 100m to the south-west of the site, revealed the remains of numerous archaeological features including ditches and pits. A watching brief on land to the south-west of the site and to the immediate west Nos. 12 and 14 Hillcrest Avenue, also

revealed evidence of prehistoric or Roman activity in the form of pits and pottery (Dean 2003).

Extensive archaeological investigations were undertaken between 2001 and 2002 to the south-west of the site, as part of the A1(M) Ferrybridge to Hook Moor road scheme. These investigations were undertaken in the vicinity of Ferrybridge Henge, situated some 1.2km to the south-west of the site. Features investigated included barrows, timber circles and hengiform monuments which form part of a wider ritual landscapes contained within a 500m radius of the henge (Wheelhouse 2005). A north-west/south-east pit alignment (comprising some 164 pits of which 141 were investigated during 2001-2) has been interpreted as forming a demarcation around the ritual zone of the henge (Richardson 2005a). Twelve inhumations were recovered from the pit alignment ranging in date from the late Iron Age to the medieval period, with crouched, flexed and extended skeletons being noted. To the south and west of the pit alignment and 'ritual zone', ditches forming Iron Age and Roman land divisions and settlement enclosures were identified (Richardson 2005b and Martin 2005).

The development site was also placed a similar distance (*c.* 1.2km to the south-west) from the Iron Age chariot burial exposed during the A1 Darrington to Dishforth DBFO road scheme works undertaken by Oxford Archaeology North during 2003 and 2006 (Brown et al 2006). A continuation of the ritual landscape, field systems and enclosures observed during 2001-2 were also observed during these investigations.

3 Aims and Objectives

The aim of the watching brief was to identify and record the presence, extent, condition character and date of any archaeological features and deposits which were disturbed or revealed by the development and mitigate their destruction by preservation by record.

4 Methodology

The watching brief was undertaken in accordance with the Specification (Appendix 1), recognised professional standards and ASWYAS methodologies (ASWYAS 2005).

An archaeologist was present during the excavation of the foundations and services for Plot 3 of the development. The resultant surfaces and sections were inspected for the presence of archaeological remains, with further cleaning and excavation of archaeological features by hand.

The entirety of all features exposed within the plan of the foundation trenches were excavated to their full depth. Sections of all features that were exposed within the trench edges were also fully recorded.

All features were subject to a full written drawn and photographic record with sections produced at scales of 1:10 or 1:20 where appropriate and plans produced at a scale of 1:20. All plans and sections included spot heights reduced to two decimal places relative to Ordnance Datum. Photographic records consisted of black and white negative, colour positive 35mm film and additional digital images. An inventory of the primary archive is presented in Appendix 2.

A soil sampling strategy was employed where by 10 litres of the primary fills were collected and all samples were subsequently processed by ASWYAS (see Section 6).

The location of the monitored excavations and the position of all archaeological features were surveyed using a series 5500 Trimble total station theodolite and fixed in relation to nearby permanent structures and the National Grid.

The archive is currently held by ASWYAS at their headquarters in Morley. It is anticipated that the archive will be transferred to Wakefield Museum for long-term storage.

5 Results

Four pits were identified, three of which were on an apparent east/west alignment (103, 111 and 116). The fourth pit (121) lay just to the south of this projected alignment and interestingly contained the remains of an inhumation.

Pit 111 (Plate 1)

Pit 111 was the westernmost feature, located to the north-western corner of Plot 3. The exposed portion of this pit measured 0.7m in length, 2.64m in width and 1.64m in depth. The exposed section of this feature showed a U-shaped profile with near vertical sides that contained four fills (108, 109, 110, and 117; Fig. 4, S.5). The primary fill (110) comprised a sterile creamy white powered sand and represents weathering of the natural limestone. This deposit yielded a small assemblage of animal bone. The remaining fills ranged from light to mid-red brown to sandy clays, which contained frequent limestone deposits. The pit fills had been heavily disturbed by roots, and a modern drain (107) truncated the upper fill.

Pit 103/119 (Plate 2)

Within the central area of the site, three segments of a large ovate pit (103/105/119) were exposed. The postulated dimensions of this feature are 3.46m in length by 2.53m in width and it was up to 1.5m in depth (Fig. 4, S.4). It contained a single mid-red brown clay silt fill (102) from which fragments of cremated bone were recovered.

Pit 116 (Plate 3)

Pit 116 was the final feature in the projected pit alignment and was situated towards the south-eastern corner of the house plot. Only a small segment of Pit 116 was exposed measuring 0.9m in length by 0.65m in width. The excavated section showed a steep sided

feature measuring 0.83m in depth that contained four fills (112, 113, 114 and 115; Fig. 4, S. 7). The primary fill (115) consisted of a light brown sandy silt with abundant limestone fragments and was probably derived from erosion of the natural shortly after the pit was cut. The remaining fills varied from mixed light yellowish and light brown and orange brown sandy silts, that also contained abundant limestone fragments, to a light orangey brown sandy silt which contained limestone inclusions. The position of fill 113 above 114 is possible evidence for a recut within the feature, however as so little of this feature was exposed this cannot be stated with any certainty.

Pit 121 (Plate 4)

Only a very small portion of Pit 121 was exposed within the south-eastern corner of the house plot. It measured 1.2m in width by 0.82m in depth and contained a single mid-red brown silty clay fill (120; Fig. 4, S.11) from which fragments of human bone were retrieved. Analysis of the remains identified them as part of the lower leg of an adult, probably part of a complete inhumation. As the remainder of the pit was not impacted by the development, the presumed articulated burial was left *in situ*.

6 Environmental Record

Human remains by Malin Holst

Pit 121 contained human remains, which may originate from a crouched inhumation burial. A number of burials, some of which were found in crouched positions have previously been excavated in the vicinity of the site, at Ferrybridge Henge (Holst 2005).

All the bone fragments from Context (120) were unburnt and derived from a right leg (Table 1). They represented the shaft of the femur, the proximal quarter of the tibia and the shaft of the fibula. The bone was in poor condition, with severe surface erosion and moderate fragmentation.

It was not possible to determine sex, though the relatively robust characteristics of the bones may suggest that the bones belonged to a male. Ageing of the remains was based on the skeletal fusion, which suggested that the individual was at least eighteen years old. There was a bone excavation at the femur, indicative of muscular trauma to the *gluteus maximus* muscle that extends, and laterally rotates, the hip joint and extends the trunk. No other pathological manifestations were noted.

Table 1 Catalogue of human remains

Context	Preservation	Condition	Element	Bone	Age	Sex	Other
120	Poor	Inhumed	Leg	Right femur, tibia and fibula	Adult	-	-

Considering that the bones represented the majority of a right leg, it is likely that they derive from an articulated burial of an adult male. This could not be fully excavated due to the space constraints in the foundation trench. The presence of human remains in this area may suggest an extension of the ritual landscape previously excavated at Ferrybridge Henge.

Animal bones by Jane Richardson

Pit 111 (primary fill 109) contained eighteen bones from cattle or cattle-sized animals. Their condition is fragile and the surfaces are heavily eroded. No further work is recommended.

Pit 103 (fill 102) contained twenty fragments of cremated bone. Only small fragments survived and the possibility remains that these may be human.

Environmental and mollusc remains by John Carrott

Introduction

A total of six bulk environmental samples were collected during the watching brief and a list of samples is presented in Appendix 4. All the samples were subject to a system of flotation in an Ankara-style floatation tank (French 1971) using a 1mm mesh and a 300 micron sieve. The flots (washovers) were dried before examination and the retent (heavy) fraction was sorted for artefacts and further environmental material.

Six washovers from pre-processed bulk sediment samples ('GBA'/'BS' sensu Dobney *et al.* 1992), were then submitted for an analysis of their bio-archaeological potential.

Method

The washovers were scanned and the remains were identified to species (main sources Cameron 2003, Cameron and Redfern 1976, Ellis 1969, Kerney 1999, Kerney and Cameron 1979) where possible. Brief notes were made on other components of the washovers.

The snail assemblages were recorded semi-quantitatively on a four-point scale: f – few (up to 3 individuals/fragments); s – some (4 to 20); m – many (21-50); v – very many (more than 50).

Results

The washovers consisted in large part of modern rootlets but each also gave a few land snail remains and some gave moderate to large assemblages. The shells were, on the whole, fairly well preserved, though some were fragmented and unidentifiable shell fragments were always present. Definite species level identifications were sometimes prevented by small amounts of encrusted sediment obscuring diagnostic features (e.g. in the mouth of the shell). Details of the snail assemblages are presented in Appendix 4: Table 1 in context number order.

Discussion

Tiny to quite large assemblages of rather well preserved terrestrial snails were recorded from the six samples (representing six separate contexts but three of these were probably equivalent, i.e. deposits 102=104=108, single fills of pit 103=105=119) from the four probably prehistoric pits. Other ancient biological remains were restricted to a few small fragments of unidentified charcoal from deposits 115, 118 (possibly cinder in this case) and 120, with a few ?charred seeds of orache/goosefoot (*Atriplex*/*Chenopodium* – common arable weeds) also noted in deposit 118. All of the deposits gave remains indicative of recent intrusions, in the form of rootlet/root fragments and there were also some records of modern seeds and the burrowing land snail *Cecilioides acicula* from deposit 118.

Other than the very few remains recovered from deposit 109 (primary fill of pit 111), which were too few for interpretation, the general characters of the assemblages were very similar and indicated two distinct terrestrial habitats – moist, sheltered conditions probably within leaf litter under deciduous woodland/hedgerow (favoured by, for example, *Discus rotundatus*, *Clausilia bidentata*, *Acanthinula aculeata*) and a dry, open environment likely to be short-turfed, calcareous grassland (*Vallonia* species). If these were wholly ‘natural’ accumulations then it would be reasonable to suggest that both of these habitats existed in the immediate vicinity of the pits but some of the remains may have arrived as a result of human activity, such as the disposal of waste into the pits.

The fact that the character of the assemblage from the fill of the inhumation cut was very similar to those from the putative alignment pits tends to imply that the remains do reflect local habitats, however, as this fill is likely to reflect the deliberate and rapid infilling of a purposely created (or perhaps modified and re-used) cut and not contain material from general waste/rubbish disposal. It may therefore be that the assemblages seen were essentially ‘natural’ and hence that the remains recorded suggest both sheltered and open habitats locally (perhaps at the margin of a cleared area) and that the numbers seen from deposits 102, 104 and 118 (probably all equivalent) indicate that pit 103(=105=119) remained open for some time. The smaller assemblage from deposit 115, primary fill of pit 116, was similar in size to that from the fill of the inhumation cut (121) and perhaps more likely to reflect that this was a fairly short-lived feature.

7 Discussion and Conclusions

Whilst the archaeological investigations at Hillcrest Mount were limited, they revealed four large pits, three of which were on an apparent east/west alignment with the fourth slightly offset to the south. The size and shape of the pits appeared to be inconsistent, similar to the examples excavated within the pit alignment exposed during the investigations at Ferrybridge in 2001-2. It is interesting to note that Pit 121 contained an inhumation and whilst twelve of the pits at Ferrybridge contained inhumations, these were all part of the pit alignment, rather

than offset as in the case of pit 121. Analysis of the snail assemblage indicates that these pits may have occupied the margins of a cleared open area and two of the pits within the alignment appear to have been open for some time (103/111). The easternmost pit (116) and the offset pit (121) both contained smaller assemblages of snails and whilst indicating a similar environment to the other pits, suggest that they were backfilled relatively rapidly.

These pits are situated to the north-west of a probable trackway, associated enclosure and field system, identified as cropmarks. The three east/west aligned pits, however, appear to be on a different alignment than the features contained within this cropmark landscape and as such, seem to be part of a previously unidentified pit alignment. It is unclear if the offset burial pit to the south was associated with this pit alignment.

The investigations at Hillcrest Mount, whilst limited, have provided valuable evidence of a previously unidentified pit alignment and further aid an understanding of this extensive and important archaeological landscape.

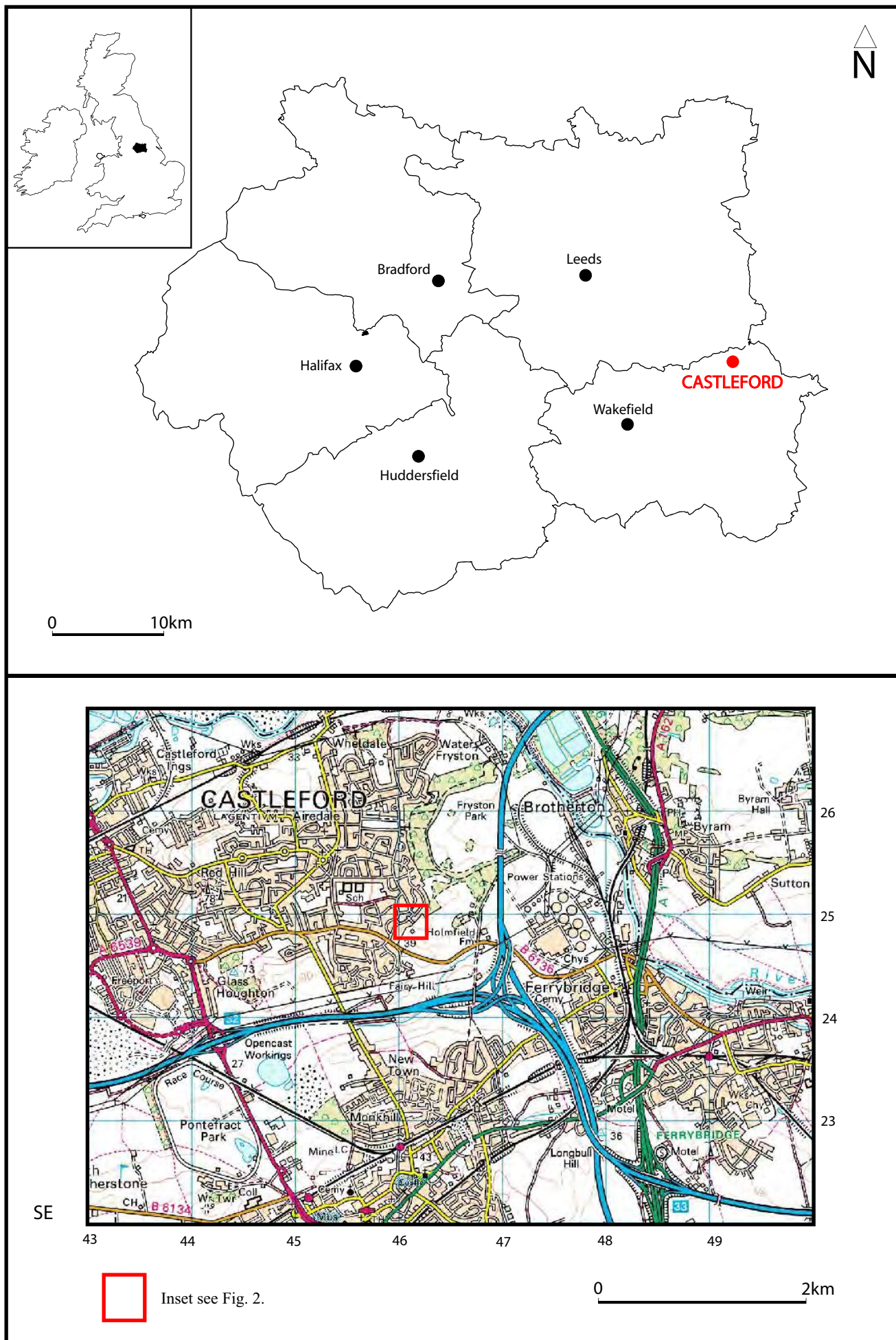


Fig. 1. Site location

Reproduced with the permission of the controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright. Archaeological Services WYAS: licence LA076406, 2012.

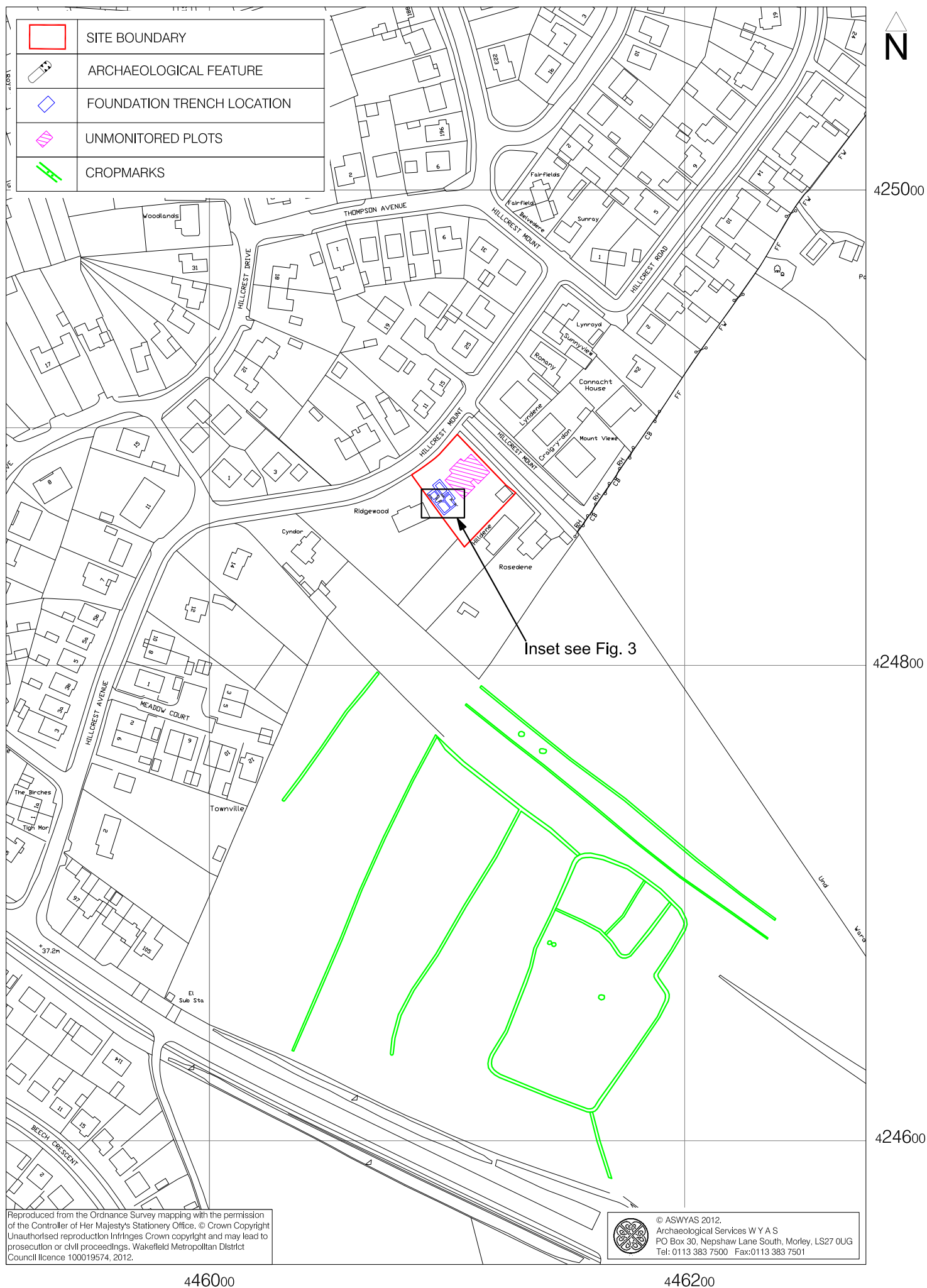






Fig 2. Site location showing extent of archaeological monitoring (1:2000 @ A4)

	SITE BOUNDARY
	ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURE
	FOUNDATION TRENCH LOCATION
	LEVEL ABOVE OD

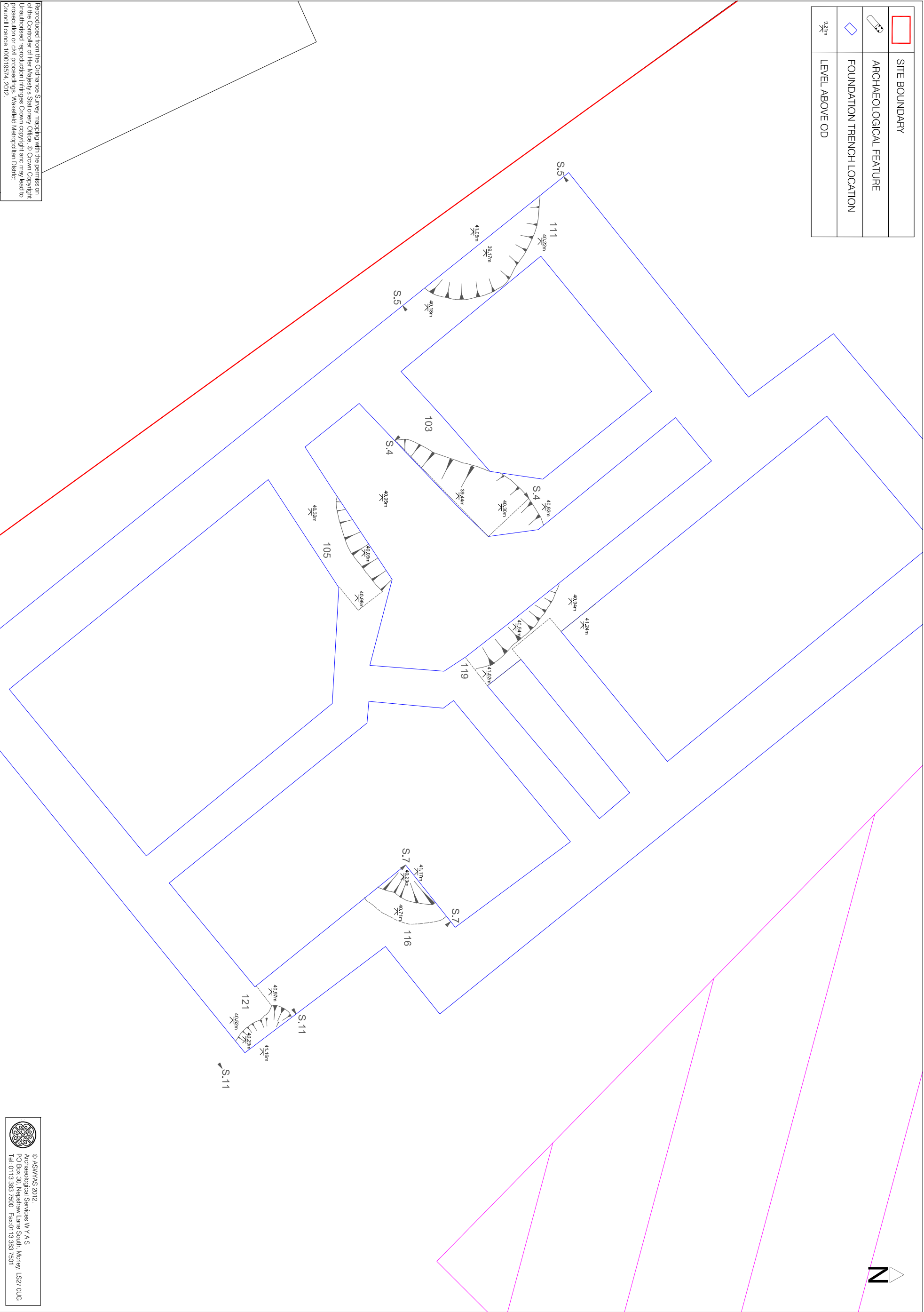


Fig 3. Plan of Plot 3 foundations showing excavated features (1:50 @ A3)

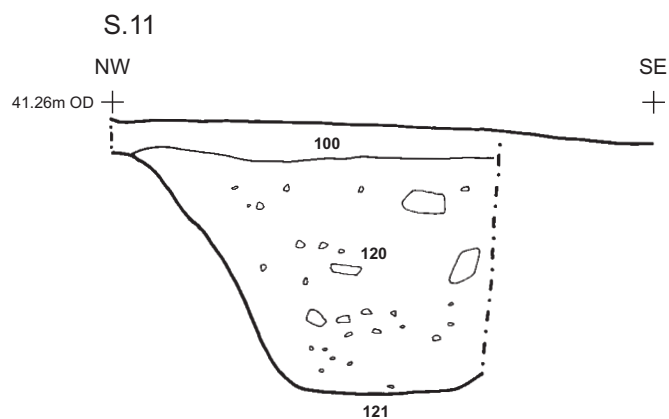
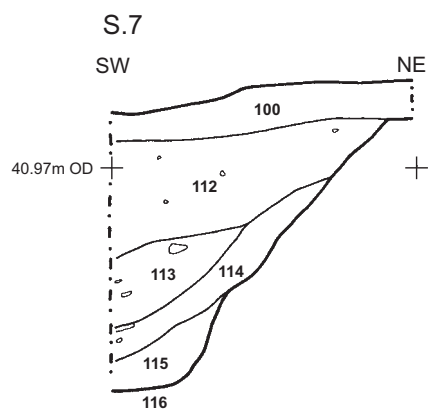
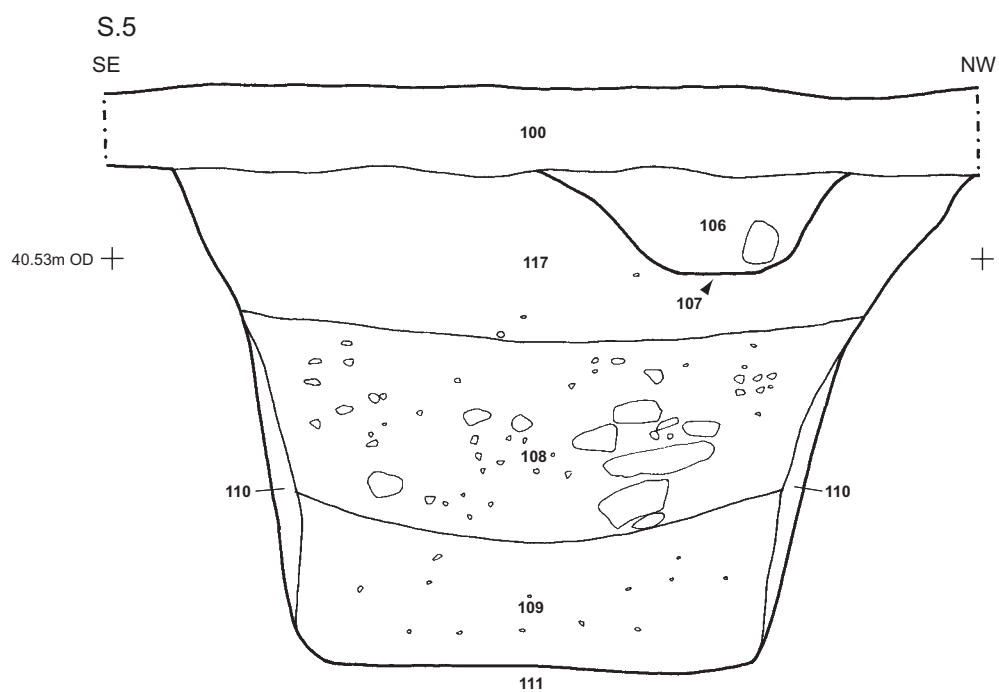
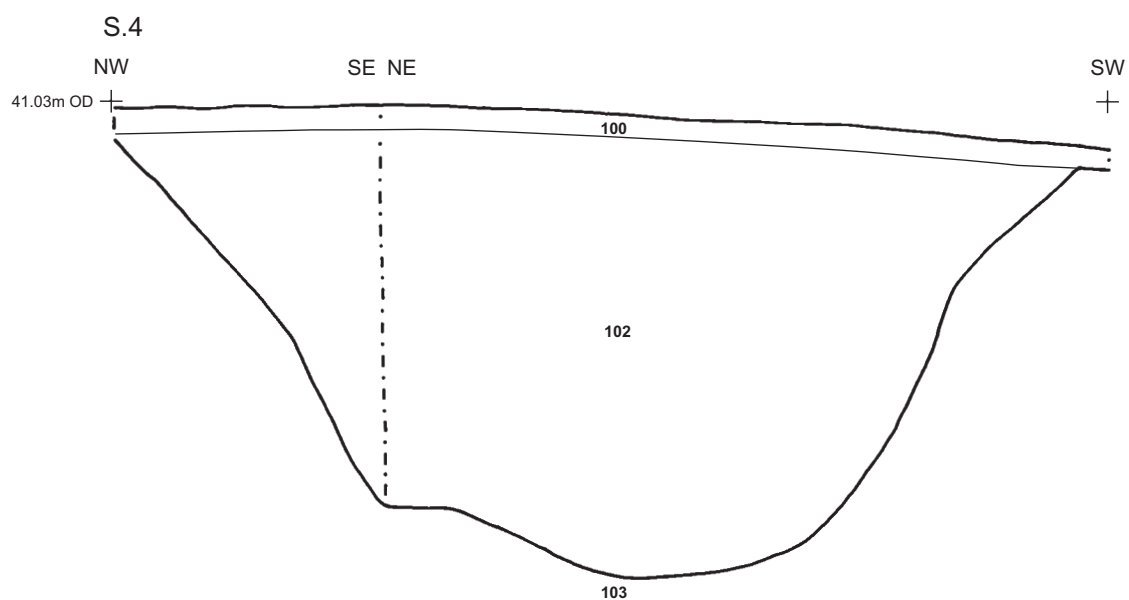


Fig. 4. Sections (1:25 @A4)

0 1m



Plate 1. Section of Pit 111, looking south-west



Plate 2. Deepest section of Pit 103, looking south-east



Plate 3. Pit 116, looking west



Plate 4. Section of Pit 121, looking north-east

Appendix 1: Specification for an Archaeological Watching Brief

Appendix 2: Inventory of primary archive

File No	Description	Quantity
1	Context register	1
1	Context cards (100-121)	22
1	Drawing register	1
1	Drawing sheet number record	1
1	Sample register	1
1	Finds and samples record	1
1	Digital photograph record sheet (Download 0112 and 0143)	2
1	Photograph record sheet (Film nos 7889 and 7890)	1
1	Black and white contact sheet (Film no.7890)	1
1	Black and white negative (Film no. 7890)	1
1	Colour transparencies (Film no. 7889)	1
1	Levels sheet	5
1	Station location plan	1
1	Trench record sheet	1
1	Daily site recording sheet	1
1	Permatrace sheets (1-6)	6

Appendix 3: Concordance of contexts

Context	Group	Description	Artefacts and environmental samples
100		Topsoil	
101		Subsoil	
102		Single fill of 103	Sample 1 GBA, animal bone
103		Cut of pit	
104		Single fill of 105, same as 102	Sample 2 GBA
105		Cut of pit, same as 103	
106		Fill of 107	
107		Cut of modern drain	
108		Stony fill of 111	
109		Primary fill of 111	Sample 3 GBA, animal bone
110		Slumping in 111	
111		Cut of pit	
112		Upper fill of 116	
113		Tertiary fill of 116	
114		Secondary fill of 116	
115		Primary fill of 116	Sample 4 GBA
116		Cut of pit	
117		Upper fill of 111	
118		Single fill of 119, same as 102	Sample 5 GBA
119		Cut of pit, same as 103	
120		Single fill of 121	Sample 6 GBA, Fragments of articulated right leg
121		Cut of inhumation	

Appendix 4: Environmental data

Table 1. Land snails recovered in the washovers (flots) from the sediment samples. Key: CN = context number; S = sample number; Description = Context description; f = few (1 to 3 individuals); s = some (4 to 20); m = many (21 to 50); v = very many (more than 50); figures give minimum numbers of individuals. Nomenclature and taxonomic order follows Kerney (1999).

CN	S	Description	<i>Carychium minimum</i> (Müller) and/or <i>C. tridentatum</i> (Risso)	<i>Cochlicopa ?lubrica</i> (Müller)	<i>Cochlicopa ?lubricella</i> (Porro)	? <i>Columella</i> sp.	<i>Vertigo</i> sp.	<i>Lauria cylindracea</i> (da Costa)	Pupillidae sp. indet.	<i>Vallonia ?costata</i> (Müller)	<i>Vallonia ?excentrica</i> Sterki	<i>Acanthinula aculeata</i> (Müller)	<i>Punctum pygmaeum</i> (Draparnaud)	<i>Discus rotundatus</i> (Müller)	<i>Vitrea crystallina</i> (Müller)/ <i>V. contracta</i> (Westerlund)	<i>Aegopinella ?nitidula</i> (Draparnaud)	<i>Cecilioides acicula</i> (Müller)	<i>Clausilia bidentata</i> (Ström)	<i>Trichia ?hispidula</i> (L.)	<i>Cepaea ?nemoralis</i> (L.)	Other notes
102	1	single fill of pit 103	v	-	m	-	-	s	-	s	v	m	-	v	m	s	-	-	s	-	some modern rootlet
104	2	single fill of pit 105, same as 102	m	-	s	f	-	s	-	-	m	f	-	m	s	f	-	1	-	-	some modern rootlet
109	3	primary fill of pit 111	f	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	almost all modern rootlet
115	4	primary fill of pit 116	s	-	-	s	-	-	-	-	s	-	f	f	f	f	-	-	f	-	mostly root/rootlet; a few unidentified charcoal fragments (to 3 mm)
118	5	single fill of pit 119, same as 102	m	f	f	-	-	-	s	-	s	-	-	s	f	-	s	f	f	-	mostly modern rootlet and a few seeds; occasional ?charcoal/cinder (to 3 mm); a few ?charred orache/goosefoot (<i>Atriplex</i> / <i>Chenopodium</i>) seeds
120	6	single fill of inhumation cut 121	s	-	s	f	-	f	-	-	s	-	-	f	s	-	-	-	s	1	mostly modern rootlet; traces of fine unidentified charcoal (to 2 mm)

Bibliography

- ASWYAS, 2005, 'West Yorkshire Archaeology Service site recording manual' ASWYAS, unpubl.
- British Geological Survey, 1998, Wakefield, England and Wales Sheet 78 solid and Drift. 1:50,000
- Brown, F, Howard-Davis, C, Brennand, M, Boyle, A, Evans, T, O'Connor, S, Spence, a, Heawood, R, Lupton, A. 2007, '*The Archaeology of the A1 (M) Darrington to Dishforth DBFO Road Scheme*'
- Cameron, R. (2003). *Keys for the identification of Land snails in the British Isles*. Field Studies Council Occasional Publication 79. Shrewsbury: FSC Publications.
- Cameron, R. A. D. and Redfern, M. (1976). *British Land Snails. Synopses of the British Fauna* (New Series) 6. London: Academic Press.
- Dean, G., 2003, Hillcrest Mount, Castleford, West Yorkshire. Archaeological Watching Brief. ASWYAS Rep. No. 1101 unpubl.
- Dobney, K., Hall, A. R., Kenward, H. K. and Milles, A. (1992). A working classification of sample types for environmental archaeology. *Circaea, the Journal of the Association for Environmental Archaeology* 9 (for 1991), 24-6.
- Ellis, A. E. (1969). *British Snails: A guide to the non-marine gastropoda of Great Britain and Ireland – Pleistocene to recent*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- French, D. H., 1971, An Experiment in Water Sieving. *Anatolian Studies* 21 59-64
- Holst, M. 2005. 'The human remains', in Roberts, I., (ed) *Ferrybridge Henge. The Ritual Landscape*: 167-175
- Kerney, M. (1999). *Atlas of the land and freshwater molluscs of Britain and Ireland*. Colchester: Harley Books.
- Kerney, M. P. and Cameron, R. A. D. (1979). *A field guide to the land snails of Britain and North-West Europe*. Glasgow: Collins.
- Martin, L, 2005, 'The Iron-Age and Roman Enclosures' in Roberts, I (ed), *Ferrybridge Henge. The Ritual Landscape*: 89-125
- Richardson, J, 2005a 'The Pit Alignment' in Roberts, I (ed), *Ferrybridge Henge. The Ritual Landscape*: 72-89
- Richardson, J, 2005 'The Iron Age and Romano-British Field System' in Roberts, I (ed), *Ferrybridge Henge. The Ritual Landscape*: 72-89
- Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983, Soils of Northern England, Sheet1. 1:250,000
- Wheelhouse P, 2005 'The Ritual Monuments in Roberts, I (ed), *Ferrybridge Henge. The Ritual Landscape*: 72-89