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QUANTIL LTD

LAND AT BEECH GROVE FARM, MAWDESLEY, LANCASHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL STRIP, MAP AND SAMPLE REPORT

January 2018

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QUANTIL LTD

LAND AT BEECH GROVE FARM, MAWDESLEY, LANCASHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL STRIP, MAP AND SAMPLE REPORT

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DESK BASED ASSESSMENTS
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION
GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY
TOPOGRAPHIC AND LANDSCAPE SURVEY
HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING
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Figure 2: Location of Strip, Map and Sample area

Figure 3: Strip, Map and Sample excavation area showing excavated features

Figure 4: Plan and Sections through postholes

SUMMARY

Wardell Armstrong was commissioned by P Wilson & Company LLP, on behalf of Quantil Ltd, to undertake an archaeological strip, map and sample excavation on land at Beech Grove Farm, Mawdesley, Lancashire L40 2QE (centred on NGR: SD 48039 15017). The strip, map and sample excavation was required as a condition of planning consent, and undertaken in accordance with an approved written scheme of investigation (WSI).

The archaeological strip, map and sample excavation took place over seven days from 27th November to 5th December 2017. Soil was removed under archaeological supervision from the area of a proposed new agricultural building and associated infrastructure.

A group of four undated postholes were the only potential archaeologically significant features observed. A large 20th century drain cut across the site, aligned east-west, with a tributary joining it from the 'storage' building to the south. To the north of the site two modern juvenile sheep burials were observed, which were damaged by ploughing.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Wardell Armstrong thanks Sophie Marshall of P Wilson and Company LLP for commissioning the project, and for all assistance throughout the work.

The archaeological strip, map and sample excavation was supervised by Jaime Megan Levell, who also wrote this report, with palaeoenvironmental assessment by Lynne Gardiner. Freddie Sisson processed and sorted the samples, whilst Rebecca Blakeney sorted the flots. The project was managed by Martin Railton, who also edited and illustrated the report.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Circumstances and Planning Background

1.1.1 Between 27th November and 5th December 2017 Wardell Armstrong (WA) undertook an archaeological strip, map and sample excavation of land at Beech Grove Farm, Mawdesley, Lancashire L40 2QE, (centred on NGR: SD 48039 15017; Figure 1). It was commissioned by P Wilson and Company LLP, on behalf of Quantil Ltd, who intend to construct a new agricultural building with associated infrastructure at the site (Planning Reference 17/000423/FULMAJ).

1.1.2 The proposed development was identified by Lancashire Archaeological Advisory Service (LAAS) as being within an area of archaeological potential, being on the southern edge of Mawdesley Moss, which was examined by the North West Wetland Survey (Middleton, Tooley and Innes 2014). An important Mesolithic lithic site was noted to be 300m to the southwest of the proposed development area at Blackmoor, and is recorded in the Lancashire Historic Environment Record (Ref. PRN 1952/2778). The survey indicated that Mesolithic activity extended along the eastern edge of Croston Moss west, which is believed to have been attractive for Mesolithic settlement.

1.1.3 As a result, a condition was attached stating that: *'No development shall take place until the applicant [...], has secured the implementation of a program of archaeological work. This must be carried out in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, which shall first have been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning authority'* (Planning Reference 17/000423/FULMAJ, Condition 7).

1.2 Project Documentation

1.2.1 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WA 2017a) was then produced in consultation with Lancashire Archaeological Advisory Service (LAAS) to provide a specific methodology for the investigation, and was approved by the archaeological planning advisor prior to the fieldwork taking place. This methodology conforms to government advice as set out in Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012).

1.2.2 This report outlines the work undertaken on site, the subsequent programme of post-fieldwork analysis, and the results of this scheme of archaeological work.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Standards and guidance

2.1.1 The archaeological strip, map and sample excavation was undertaken following the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation* (2014a), and in accordance with the Wardell Armstrong *Excavation Manual* (WA 2017b).

2.1.2 The fieldwork programme was followed by an assessment of the data as set out in the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (CIfA 2014a) and the *Standard and Guidance for the Collection, Documentation, Conservation and Research of Archaeological Materials* (CIfA 2014b).

2.2 The Archaeological Strip, Map and Sample Excavation

2.2.1 The archaeological strip, map and sample excavation comprised the excavation of a targeted area of land within the proposed development area of 3,490m². The general aims of these investigations were:

- to establish the presence/absence, nature, extent and state of preservation of archaeological remains and to record them;
- to carry out further excavation and recording work, if intact archaeological remains are uncovered during the project;
- to accurately tie the area investigated into the National Grid at an appropriate scale, with any archaeological deposits and features adequately levelled;
- to sample environmental deposits encountered as required, in line with Historic England guidelines;
- to produce a photographic record of all contexts using colour digital and monochrome formats as applicable, each photograph including a graduated metric scale;
- to recover artefactual material, especially that useful for dating purposes;
- to produce a site archive in accordance with English Heritage (MoRPHE) standards.

2.2.2 Deposits considered not to be significant were removed by a 360° tracked mechanical excavator with a toothless ditching bucket, under close archaeological supervision. Topsoil and subsoil bunds away from the stripped area for safety. The stripped area was subsequently cleaned by hand. All possible features were inspected and selected deposits were excavated by hand to retrieve artefactual material and environmental

samples. Once completed, all features were recorded according to the WA standard procedure as set out in the Excavation Manual (WA 2017b).

2.2.3 All finds encountered were retained on site and returned to the Carlisle office where they were identified, quantified and dated to period. A *terminus post quem* was then produced for each stratified context under the supervision of the WA Finds Officer, and the dates were used to help determine the broad date phases for the site. On completion of this project, the finds were cleaned and packaged according to standard guidelines (*Ibid*). Please note, the following categories of material will be discarded after a period of six months following the submission of this report, unless there is a specific request to retain them (and subject to the collection policy of the relevant depository):

- unstratified material;
- modern pottery;
- material that has been assessed as having no obvious grounds for retention.

2.2.4 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with the project specification, and the Archaeological Archives Forum recommendations (Brown 2011). The archive will be deposited with Lancashire County Council Museum Service, with copies of the report sent to the Lancashire Historic Environment Record (HER), where viewing will be made available upon request. The archive can be accessed under the unique project identifier WA17, LE14240, BGF-A.

2.2.5 Wardell Armstrong supports the Online AccesS to the Index of Archaeological InvestigationS (OASIS) project. This project aims to provide an on-line index and access to the extensive and expanding body of grey literature, created as a result of developer-funded archaeological work. Details of the results of this project, therefore, will be made available as a part of this national project. The OASIS reference for the project is: wardella2-303157.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Location and Geological Context

3.1.1 The site is situated on the east side of Mawdesley to the north of Black Moor Road. The village of Mawdesley is located approximately 13km to the northeast of Ormskirk, in the Borough of Chorley, Lancashire, to the west of the M6 Motorway, and east of the A59 (Figure 1). The proposed development area is located to the north and east of existing agricultural buildings at Beech Grove Farm, within a large arable field, which extends as far as the New Reed Brook to the north, bounded to the north by an area of woodland. The topography comprises a slight north facing slope, with the south side of the site occupying a slight ridge at a height of c.10 metres aOD (above Ordnance Datum), reducing to c.8m aOD to the north. The site is centred on NGR: SD 48039 15017.

3.3.2 The geology of the site comprises sandstone, known as Sherwood Sandstone Group. This sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 237 to 272 million years ago in the Triassic and Permian periods. The site occupied the northern edge of an area of overlying sand, known as Shirdley Hill Sand Formation, formed up to 2 million years ago in the Quaternary Period. To the north of the site this is replaced by superficial deposits of glacial Till (BGS 2017). The natural substrate observed during the current phase of works comprised loose light yellow grey silt sand with varying bands of light grey yellow silty clay which is consistent with the mapped geologies above.

3.2 Historical and Archaeological Background

3.2.1 The site occupies the southern edge of Mawdesley Moss, which was examined by the North West Wetland Survey and found to be of potential archaeological significance. The landscape was one of small sand islands, which were until recently under peat, and the area is likely to have been attractive to settlement from the Mesolithic period onwards (Middleton, Tooley and Innes 2014).

3.2.2 **Prehistoric:** the most important Mesolithic site identified in the area by the North West Wetland Survey was at Blackmoor, 300m to the southwest of the proposed development area (ibid, 147). This comprised one of the largest assemblages of microliths recovered from the area, suggesting the site had been repeatedly visited by Mesolithic groups over a long period, possibly engaged in hunting (PRN 1952/2778). The survey also established a wider pattern of Mesolithic activity along the eastern edge of Croston Moss west. The pattern of flint work recovered also indicated a

pattern of later Neolithic and Bronze Age activity in the area (ibid, 148 & 152). This evidence includes a Bronze Age barbed and tanged arrow head recovered from the field immediately to the east of the proposed development area (Historic England PastScape Monument Ref. 40302).

- 3.2.3 **Roman:** There is no evidence for Roman activity in the vicinity of the proposed development area. The closest Roman evidence to the site is the location of a Roman coin hoard found in 1884 at the Littlewood Tile and Brick Works, Croston, which was probably deposited c.265 AD (Historic England PastScape Monument Ref. 40222).
- 3.2.4 **Medieval:** the Manor of Mawdesley was anciently joined with Croston, there being little historical separation, and Mawdesley often referred to as a hamlet of Croston. The North West Wetland Survey recovered a small number of medieval finds including a number of fields of ridge and furrow along the eastern edge of Croston Moss, suggesting these systems may have once formed a continuous band of cultivation around the edge of the moss (Middleton, Tooley and Innes 2014, 148).
- 3.2.5 Mawdesley Hall became the seat of the Manor of Mawdesley from the 16th century onwards, situated at the north end of the village at the top of an outcrop of red sandstone rock. Originally built in the 17th century, the existing building was much altered towards the end of the 18th or beginning of the 19th century (Farrer & Brownbill 1911).
- 3.2.6 **Post-medieval and Modern:** The County Series Ordnance Survey map of 1847-48 depicts a number of farms located along Black Moor Road, including Black Moor Hall to the southeast of the proposed development area. In the 19th century there was a general reversion to pasture of areas previously cultivated as arable land (Middleton, Tooley and Innes 2014, 148). The proposed development area remained undeveloped agricultural land until the late 20th century, when an agricultural building was first constructed on the south side of the site.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The archaeological strip, map and sample investigation was undertaken from the 27th November to the 5th December 2017, with approximately 3,490m² of material excavated across a targeted area within the proposed development site (Figure 2).

4.2 Results

4.2.1 The following narrative describes the results of the archaeological investigation, providing a clear phasing of the recorded archaeology (see Appendix 1: Context Table).

4.2.2 Topsoil **(100)** comprising of a loose dark brown grey sandy clay was removed to a maximum depth of 0.4m. Towards the south and west of the proposed development area a deposit of compact mid-brown grey silty clay subsoil **(102)**, containing 20th century CBM, was removed up to a further 0.30m to reveal the natural substrate **(101)** (Plate 1) (Figure 3).

4.2.3 The natural substrate **(101)** comprised loose light yellow grey silt sand with varying bands of light grey yellow silty clay, consistent with mapped geology (see Section 3.3.3).

4.2.4 The only archaeologically significant deposits observed were located on the top of a sand ridge at a height 10m aOD towards the south of the site (Figure 3). On this ridge four sub-circular features measuring approx. 0.25m in diameter and between 0.12-0.2m deep were observed, and interpreted as postholes. Three of these features, **[103]** **[105]** and **[107]** may constitute a tentative alignment, orientated roughly north to south, with the other posthole **[109]**, located to the east. This could be interpreted as forming a corner of a structure (Plate 2) (Figure 4). The post holes were filled with identical mid brown grey sandy-silt and contained no dating evidence.

4.2.5 A large ditch was observed running east-west across the site, measuring approximately 1.5m deep and 6m wide, in the lowest part of the site. This was originally thought to be a paleochannel, but when investigated two large 20th century ceramic drains were observed at the base (Plate 3). A tributary was visible running from the 'storage' building in the south to the drain, orientated north-south

4.2.6 To the north two juvenile ovine burials were observed. Modern ceramic was identified during investigation and as a result they were not fully excavated. Both burials showed evidence of truncation through ploughing and poor preservation of bone.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 Four bulk environmental samples were taken during the archaeological works at Beech Grove Farm, Mawdesley.
- 5.1.2 This section presents the results of the assessment of the environmental samples and any ecofactual remains in accordance with Campbell et al. (2011) and English Heritage (2008).

5.2 Methodology

- 5.2.1 The bulk environmental samples (cf. Table 1 for sampled context descriptions) were processed at the Wardell Armstrong offices in Carlisle. The colour, lithology, weight and volume of each sample was recorded using standard Wardell Armstrong *pro forma* recording sheets (cf. Table 2). Each sample had their pH levels checked prior to processing. The samples were then processed using 500-micron retention and flotation meshes using the Siraf method of flotation (Williams 1973). Once dried, the residues from the retention mesh were sieved to 4mm and any artefacts and ecofacts would be removed from the larger fraction. The smaller fraction was scanned with a magnet for microslags such as hammerscales. This fraction was then examined for smaller artefacts, such as beads, then discarded.
- 5.2.2 The flot, plant macrofossils and charcoal were retained and scanned using a stereo microscope (up to x45 magnification). Any non-palaeobotanical finds were noted on the flot *pro forma*, see Table 3 for flot data.

5.3 Results

- 5.3.1 All samples were less than 10 litres in volume and none contained any artefactual or ecofactual material. All the flots were less than a gram.
- 5.3.2 Charred plant remains were only present in <4> (110) whereby two very small fragments of unidentifiable plant matter were observed.
- 5.3.3 Charcoal was present in all but <3> (107). The charcoals observed were very small comminuted fragments of which their size prevented identification.

5.4 Discussion

- 5.4.1 The paucity of the environmental remains prohibited any meaningful discussion.
- 5.4.2 The very small size of the charcoal and plant remains were indicative of aeolian

deposition.

5.5 Statement of potential and recommendations

- 5.5.1 Further work on this assemblage is not warranted and the remains may be discarded.
- 5.5.2 No material is suitable for radiocarbon determination.
- 5.5.3 If further archaeological work was to be undertaken in the vicinity then environmental sampling should still occur. The pH levels presented within these samples suggested that preservation of environmental material (if present) would be sufficient to make them visible.

Table 1: Sampled context descriptions

Sample number	Context number	Context description
1	104	fill of posthole [103]
2	106	fill of posthole [105]
3	108	fill of posthole [107]
4	110	fill of posthole [109]

Table 2: sample data

C	<>	TQ	pH	CP	TP	MP	PW	PV	CS	TS	Components (sorting)	A	SA	SR	R	SW	SV
104	1	1	6.62	very dark brown	loose	sand	6	6	pale grey	loose	stone>1cm 20%: stone<1cm 10%: sand 70%	-	yes	-	-	160	150
106	2	1	6.93	very dark brown	loose	sand	3	3	pale grey	loose	Stone>1cm 10%: stone<1cm 20%: sand 70%	-	yes	-	-	118	100
108	3	1	6.95	very dark brown	loose	sand	6	6	pale grey	loose	stone>1cm 10%: stone<1cm 10%: sand 80%	-	-	yes	-	24	20
110	4	1	7.3	very dark brown	loose	sandy silt	2	2	pale grey	loose	stone>1cm 20%: stone<1cm 20%: sand 60%	-	yes	-	-	253	100

Key: **C**= context, **<>**= sample number, **TQ**= number of tubs in sample, **CP**= colour of pre-processed sediment, **TP**= texture of pre-processed sediment, **MP**= matrix of pre-processed sediment, **PW** weight (kg) of pre-processed sediment, **PV**= volume (l) of pre-processed sediment, **CS**= colour of dried residue, **TS**= texture of dried residue, angularity of stone (**A**= angular, **SA**= sub-angular, **SR**= sub-rounded and **R**= rounded), **SW**= weight (g) of dried residue, **SV**= volume (ml) of dried residue.

Table 3: flot data

C	<>	<n	WF	VF	PR	AMS?	Ch	Components	EWC	FD?
104	1	1	0.24	1	-	no	<0.01	sand 80%: charcoal 20%	-	yes
106	2	1	0.19	1	-	no	<0.01	sand 95%: charcoal 5%	-	yes
108	3	1	0.03	1	-	no	-	sand 100%	-	yes
110	4	1	0.9	1	2	no	0.03	rootlets 40%: fine rootlets 10%: very fine rootlets 5%: sand 30%: charcoal 15%	-	yes

Key: **C**= context, **<>**= sample number, **<n**= flot number, **WF**= weight (g) of flot, **VF**= volume (ml) of flot, **PR**= quantity of plant remains, **AMS?**= any suitable material for radiocarbon dating?, **Ch**= weight (g) of charcoal, **EWC**= quantity of earthworm capsules, **FD?**= flot discarded?

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Interpretation

- 6.1.1 The archaeological strip, map and sample investigation at Beech Grove Farm revealed little evidence for archaeological activity. No lithics or prehistoric environmental features were identified during excavation.
- 6.1.2 An undated posthole cluster, possibly outlining a small structure, was the only potentially archaeologically significant feature observed. The postholes remain undated, and environmental samples collected provided no further information to their function or date.
- 6.1.3 A later phase of agricultural activity was represented by a large drain running across the site, aligned east to west, and two juvenile ovine burials to the north.

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<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/lancs/vol6/pp96-100> - Accessed 1 November 2017

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT TABLE

Context Number	Context Type	Description	Depth/Thickness	Interpretation
(100)	Topsoil	Loose, soft dark greyish brown clay sand.	0.30-0.35m	-
(101)	Natural Geology	Loose light yellow grey silty sand	-	Natural geology
(102)	Subsoil	Moderately compact mid brown grey silty clay	0.30-0.40m	Modern layer of subsoil containing CBM and charcoal, only existing to the west and south of the site
[103]	Cut	Cut of Posthole. Sub circular with vertical sides and a concave base, 0.24m in diameter	0.19m	Cut of Posthole within North South alignment on ridge.
(104)	Fill	Loose mid greyish brown silty sand in an irregular shape.	0.19m	Fill of Posthole [103]. No dating evidence observed
[105]	Cut	Cut of Posthole. Sub circular with vertical sides and a concave base, 0.25m in diameter	0.19m	Cut of Posthole within North South alignment on ridge.
(106)	Fill	Fill of posthole, moderately loose mid-brown grey sandy silt with occasional charcoal flecks	0.19m	Fill of Posthole [105]. No dating evidence observed
[107]	Cut	Cut of Posthole. Sub circular with vertical sides and a concave base, 0.25m in diameter	0.15m	Cut of Posthole within North South alignment on ridge.
(108)	Fill	Fill of posthole, moderately loose mid-brown grey sandy silt with occasional charcoal flecks	0.15m	Fill of Posthole [107]. No dating evidence observed
[109]	Cut	Cut of Posthole. Sub circular with vertical sides and a concave base, 0.25m in diameter	0.2m	Cut of Posthole located to the east of the North South alignment on ridge.
(110)	Fill	Fill of posthole, moderately loose mid-brown grey sandy silt with occasional charcoal flecks	0.2m	Fill of Posthole [109]. No dating evidence observed

APPENDIX 2: PLATES



Plate 1: Strip Map and Sample excavation area, looking south-west, 2x1m scale.

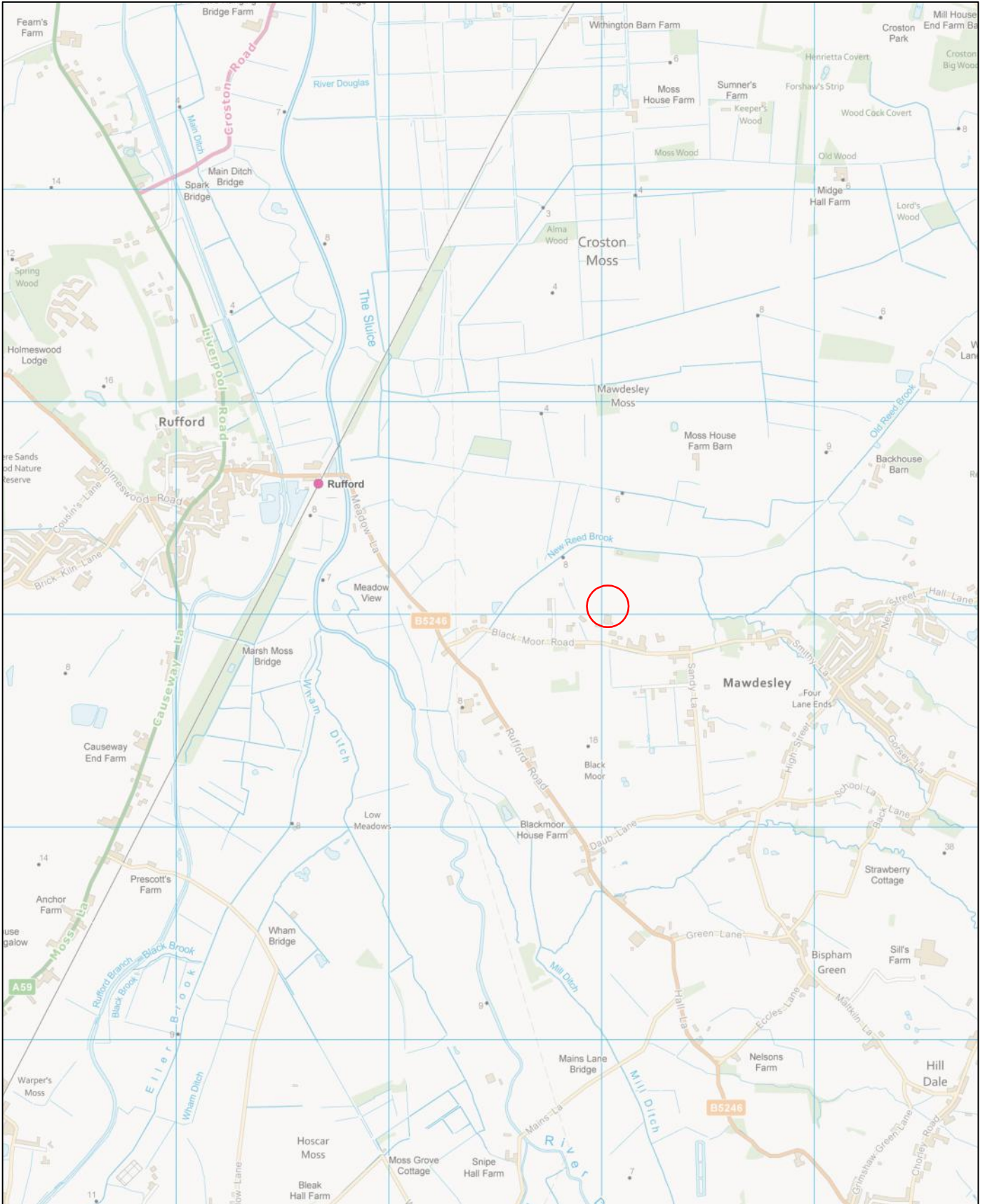


Plate 2: Half sectioned Postholes, looking north, 2x1m scale



Plate 3: Machine section through drain, looking east, no scale.

APPENDIX 3: FIGURES






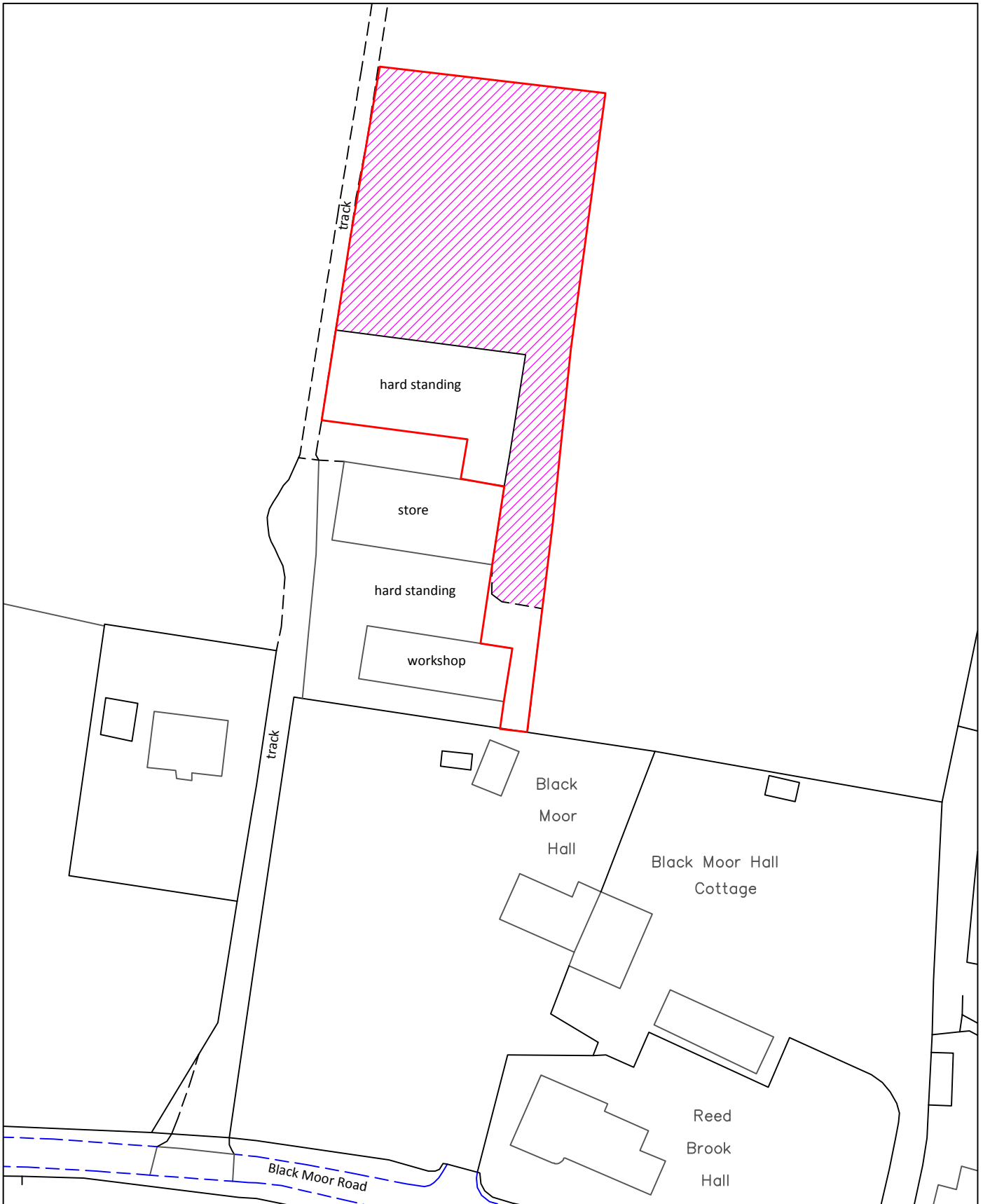
 <p>Wardell Armstrong 2017</p>	<p>PROJECT: Land at Beech Grove Farm, Mawdesley, Lancashire</p> <p>CLIENT: Quantil Ltd.</p> <p>SCALE: 1:25,000 at A4</p> <p>DRAWN BY: MDR</p> <p>CHECKED BY: MDR</p> <p>DATE: December 2017</p> <p>REPORT No: LE14240</p>	<p>KEY:</p> <p> site location</p>	 <p>Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number 100058076.</p>
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Figure 1: Site location.







 Wardell Armstrong 2017	PROJECT:	Land at Beech Grove Farm, Mawdesley, Lancashire	KEY:  outline of proposed development area  strip, map and sample excavation area	
	CLIENT:	Quantil Ltd.		
	SCALE:	1:1,000 at A4		
	DRAWN BY:	MDR		
	CHECKED BY:	MDR		
	DATE:	December 2017		
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Figure 2: Location of the strip, map and sample excavation area.







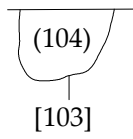
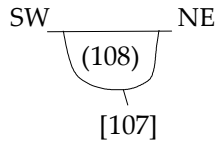
 <p>Wardell Armstrong 2017</p>	<p>PROJECT: Land at Beech Grove Farm, Mawdesley, Lancashire</p> <p>CLIENT: Quantil Ltd.</p> <p>SCALE: 1:1,000 at A4</p> <p>DRAWN BY: MDR</p> <p>CHECKED BY: MDR</p> <p>DATE: December 2017</p> <p>REPORT No: LE14240</p>	<p>KEY:</p> <p> outline of proposed development area</p> <p> outline of drainage ditches</p>	 <p>Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number 100058076.</p>
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Figure 3: Strip, map and sample excavation area showing excavated features.

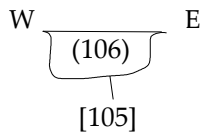
Section 1



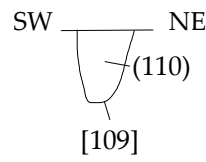
Section 3



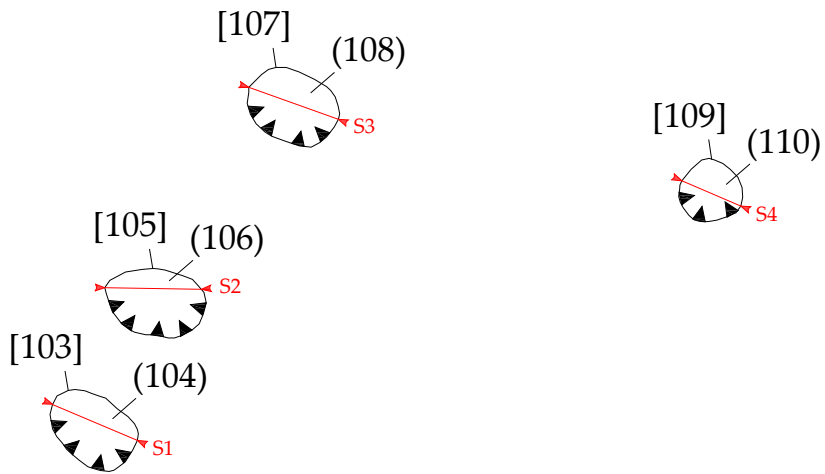
Section 2



Section 4



South-facing sections



Plan of post holes



Wardell Armstrong
2017

PROJECT: Land at Beech Grove Farm, Mawdesley, Lancashire
 CLIENT: Quantil Ltd.
 SCALE: 1:20 at A4
 DRAWN BY: MDR
 CHECKED BY: MDR
 DATE: December 2017
 REPORT No: LE14240

KEY:



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Figure 4: Plan and sections through post holes.

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