An Archaeological Evaluation at Highfields Farm, Findern, South Derbyshire (SK 318 325)

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Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Highfields Farm, Findern, South Derbyshire (SK 318 325) by ULAS in May 2007. The work was commissioned by Miller Homes, David Wilson Homes (North Midlands), and Taylor Woodrow Developments. The work was carried out in advance of the proposed construction of up to 1200 residential units, a new primary school, community facilities and local centre, associated infrastructure and landscaping including the provision for a new country park.

In total 10 trial trenches were excavated which revealed that the north-east of the site contained modern features, probably associated with the recent housing estate located to the north and west. Probable medieval furrows were encountered throughout the southern half of the site. Trenching in the south-east of the site not only revealed furrows but also evidence of a rural Romano-British settlement dating from the mid to late second and third centuries comprising numerous gullies, a probable enclosure ditch and a possible pit.

The site archive will be held at Derby City Museum under the accession number DBYMU:2007-122.

1. Introduction

In accordance with Planning Policy Guidelines 16 (PPG 16, Archaeology and Planning, para 30), this document presents the results of an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching at Highfields Farm, Findern, South Derbyshire (SK 318 325) (Figs. 1 and 2).

The evaluation addresses the requirements for archaeological investigation requested by the Development Control Archaeologist for South Derbyshire District Council in his capacity as archaeological advisor to South Derbyshire District Council and follows the approved Design Specification for archaeological evaluation by trial trenching (ULAS Report No. 07/169).

The proposed works involve the construction of up to 1200 residential units, a new primary school, community facilities and local centre, associated infrastructure and landscaping including the provision for a new country park.

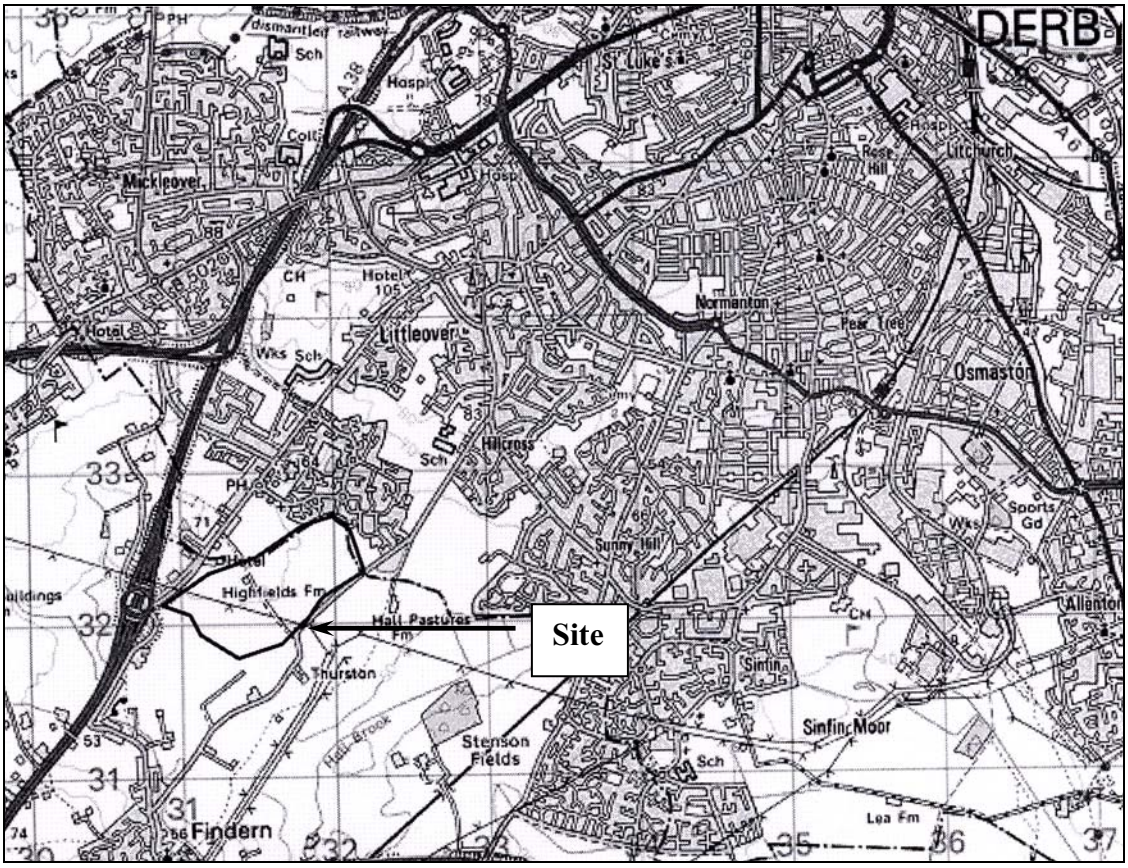

Figure 1: Site Location. Scale: 1: 50 000

2. Geological and Topographical Background

The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain, Sheet 141 (Loughborough) indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of Middle Triassic Cotgrave Sandstone with Holocene Lacustrine deposits in the north-east of the site. The site lies at a height of *c*.53m O.D. The site consists of several, mostly rectangular fields, bounded by hedges and fences. The ground is mostly flat.

3. Archaeological Background

A desk-based assessment has been prepared by ULAS (Hunt 2006) which provided tentative evidence for possible prehistoric and Roman activity along with evidence for medieval agriculture the form of ridge and furrow. The Roman road of Ryknield Street passes through the northern part of the site on a NE-SW alignment (SMR 18929-MNR4600). This follows the line of Burton Road and Rykneld Road and originally connected Wall to Little Chester Fort. After this, it continues to Chesterfield.

Earthworks associated with the road are still visible in places and a section west of the former Crest Hotel is scheduled (SMR32050). The Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit excavations to the north of the development area show it on a slightly different alignment to that previously supposed, bringing it marginally closer to the proposed development site.

A fieldwalking survey (Hurford 2006) produced no strong concentrations of artefacts though it did provide some evidence of possible prehistoric and Roman activity along with medieval agricultural manuring.

A geophysical survey (Heard 2007) combined a magnetic susceptibility scan of 43ha with a subsequent detailed magnetrometry survey of seven areas totalling *c*.4.3ha. Six of the seven areas provided results dominated by past agricultural activity. However, in one of the areas (Area 1) possible evidence for buried archaeological features was identified. This included positive linear and isolated anomalies representing cut features across the centre, south and east of the area. These include one feature that could represent part of a rectangular enclosure and another with two parallel ditches running south-west to north-east.

4. Objectives

The main objectives of the archaeological work were:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
- To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

Within the stated project objectives, the principal aim of the evaluation was to establish the nature, extent, date, depth, significance and state of preservation of archaeological deposits on the site in order to determine the potential impact upon them from the proposed development.

All work follows the *Institute of Field Archaeologist's Code of Conduct* and adheres to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological evaluations.*

5. Methodology

In total ten trenches were excavated. It was originally intended that each would measure 30m by 1.6m. However, trenching in Area 1 established that the geophysical anomalies were modern and so in consultation with Development Control Archaeologist for South Derbyshire District Council, it was decided to shorten Trench 10 to 15m. This allowed for further work to be undertaken on the Roman features encountered Area 2 including the expansion of Trench 07 to 54m in length.

During the evaluation the topsoil and subsoil was removed in spits by machine with a toothless ditching bucket under full supervision, until archaeological deposits or undisturbed substrata were encountered.

The archaeological deposits were hand cleaned by trowel. Samples of the archaeological deposits located were hand excavated and planned, addressing the aims and objectives of the evaluation. Measured drawings of all archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:50 and tied into an overall site plan of 1:500. The location of the trenches was surveyed using an EDM and all plans were tied into the National Grid.

All excavated sections were recorded and drawn at a scale of 1:20 and were levelled and tied into the Ordnance Survey datum. Spot heights were taken as appropriate.

6. Results

Trench 01
Length: 30m
Width: 1.6m
Depth: 0.30m (min) – 0.57m (max)
Orientation: NE-SW

Trench 01 was positioned to investigate whether the Roman road survives within the development area.

Between 0.18m and 0.30m of firm greyish-brown silty-clay topsoil was removed revealing a layer of firm mid reddish-brown silty-clay subsoil. Beneath it, at a depth of between 0.30m and 0.57m natural substratum consisting of red clay with patches of blue silt was encountered.

No archaeological deposits were located.

Trench 02
Length: 30m
Width: 1.6m
Depth: 0.40m (min) – 0.48m (max)
Orientation: E-W

Trench 02 was positioned to investigate whether the Roman road survives within the development area.

Between 0.22m and 0.30m of firm greyish-brown silty-clay topsoil was removed revealing a layer of firm light reddish-brown silty-clay subsoil. Beneath it, at a depth of between 0.40m and 0.48m was the natural substratum consisting of red clay with patches of blue silt.

Two furrows were encountered which were aligned in the same north-east to south-west direction as those on the geophysical survey to the south and south-east.

Trench 03 (Area 6)
Length: 30m
Width: 1.6m
Depth: 0.28m (min) – 0.67m (max)

Orientation: NE-SW

Trench 03 was positioned to investigate a number of linear geophysical anomalies believed to be agricultural in origin.

Between 0.22m and 0.35m of firm dark greyish-brown silty-clay topsoil was removed revealing a layer of firm yellowish-red silty-clay subsoil. Beneath it, at a depth of between 0.40m and 0.48m, was the natural substratum consisting of red clay with patches of blue silt.

Three north-west to south-east aligned furrows were present within the trench.

Trench 04 (Area 5)
Length: 30m
Width: 1.6m
Depth: 0.32m (min) – 0.42m (max)
Orientation: NE-SW

Trench 04 was positioned to investigate a number of linear geophysical anomalies believed to be agricultural in origin.

Between 0.17m and 0.28m of firm dark greyish-brown silty-clay topsoil was removed revealing a layer of firm mid reddish-brown silty-clay subsoil. Beneath it, at a depth of between 0.32m and 0.42m was the natural substratum consisting of red clay with patches of blue silt.

Three north-west to south-east aligned furrows were present within the trench.

Trench 05 (Area 4)
Length: 30m
Width: 1.6m
Depth: 0.32m (min) – 0.50m (max)
Orientation: NW-SE

Trench 05 was positioned to investigate a number of linear geophysical anomalies believed to be agricultural in origin.

Between 0.20m and 0.29m of firm dark greyish-brown silty-clay topsoil was removed revealing a layer of light brown silty-clay subsoil. Beneath it, at a depth of between 0.32m and 0.50m was the natural substratum consisting of red clay.

Two north-east to south-west aligned furrows were present within the trench.

Trench 06 (Area 3)
Length: 30m
Width: 1.6m
Depth: 0.25m (min) – 0.40m (max)
Orientation: NW-SE

Trench 06 was positioned to investigate a number of linear geophysical anomalies believed to be agricultural in origin.

Between 0.23m and 0.27m of firm mid to dark greyish-brown silty-clay topsoil was removed revealing the natural substratum consisting of red clay with patches of blue silt.

Five north-east to south-west aligned furrows were present within the trench.

Trench 07 (Area 2)
Length: 54m
Width: 1.6m
Depth: 0.31m (min) – 0.75m (max)
Orientation: NW-SE

Trench 07 was positioned to investigate a number of linear geophysical anomalies believed to be agricultural in origin.

Between 0.20m and 0.32m of firm dark greyish-brown silty-clay topsoil was removed revealing a layer of yellowish-brown silty-clay subsoil. Beneath it, at a depth of between 0.30m and 0.42m, was the natural substratum consisting of red clay.

In the centre of the trench, two north-east to south-west gullies [007], and [009], and one north-west to south-east aligned gully [013] were encountered. Gully [013] was up to 0.44m in width and 0.18m in depth. Its fill, (014) consisted of silty clay that was greyish-brown in colour, with orange mottling towards the base, that contained a shelly ware jar sherd and other pottery sherds dating to the second to third centuries AD. It had been truncated by a furrow of probable medieval date and by gully [007], the mid greyish-brown silty clay fill of which, (008) also contained second to third century pottery. The relationship between [013] and the mid grey clay deposit (019) was not established. To the south-east of (019) was gully [009] which produced Black Burnished ware, which is unlikely to date before the second century, from its dark greyish-brown silty clay fill (010). To the north-west were two east to west aligned gullies, [005] and [015]. Gully [005] was 0.90m in width and 0.32m in depth and contained greyish-brown with yellowish-brown mottled silty clay fill (006) which contained mid to late second century pottery. Gully [015] was 0.90m in width and 0.64m in depth. Its fill, (016) consisted of grey with orange mottling silty clay and contained 'pre-Derbyshire ware' pottery dating to the mid to late second century. Between these two gullies was a very shallow subcircular pit or gully butt end, [003]. It was 1.25m in width and up to 0.07m in depth and contained mid brown silty-clay fill, (004). Immediately north-west of gully [015] was a large north-west to south-east orientated ditch, [001] that was up to 5.52m in width and 0.40m in depth. Its brownish-grey silty-clay fill, (002) contained pottery dating from the second to the third centuries. Its size suggests that it is a very truncated settlement enclosure ditch. To the north-west was gully [017]. As with [009] and [007] it was orientated north-west to south-east. It was 0.80m in width and 0.32m in depth and contained dark grey clay fill (018) that produced late first century to mid to late second century pottery.

Furrows, aligned north-east to south-west were present throughout the length of the trench.

Trench 08 (Area 1)
Length: 30m
Width: 1.6m
Depth: 0.34m (min) – 1.09m (max)
Orientation: NE-SW

Trench 08 was positioned to investigate a geophysical anomaly that represented part of a possible rectangular enclosure and areas of possible ground disturbance.

Between 0.20m and 0.30m of firm very dark brown silty clay topsoil was removed revealing a layer of firm yellowish brown clay subsoil in the north-west half of the trench. Beneath it, at a depth of between 0.22m in the south-west and 0.48m in the north-east was blue clay of possible alluvial origin.

The geophysical anomalies were found to be a field drains *c.* 0.40m below current ground level.

Trench 09
Length: 30m
Width: 1.6m
Depth: 0.41m (min) – 1.07m (max)
Orientation: NW-SE

Trench 09 was positioned to investigate two parallel geophysical anomalies of possible archaeological origin.

Between 0.20m and 0.23m of firm very dark greyish-brown silty-clay topsoil was removed revealing a layer of firm light brown silty-clay subsoil. Beneath it, at a depth of between 0.34m and 0.41m was possibly alluvial sandy clay.

The geophysical anomalies were found to be a modern hardcore path directly below the turf. In the north western half of the trench a large linear, cut [050] was encountered at a depth of 0.45m below current ground level. Excavation was terminated at 0.90m as its vertical sides, width and depth resembled a modern gas or sewer pipe trench.

Trench 10
Length: 15m
Width: 1.6m
Depth: 0.75m (min) – 1m (max)
Orientation: NE-SW

Trench 10 was positioned to investigate a north-west to south-east aligned geophysical anomalies of possible archaeological origin and a number of discrete positive anomalies of uncertain origin.

Between 0.20m and 0.24m of firm very dark greyish-brown silty-clay topsoil was removed revealing a layer of firm mid brown silty-clay subsoil. Beneath these layers, between 0.20m and 0.34m was bluish and brown clay, possibly alluvial in origin.

The geophysical anomaly was not located though the likely modern linear feature encountered in Trench 09 was found in the south western half of the trench.

7. Discussion

Roman

The evaluation has demonstrated the presence of archaeological deposits concentrated in the south-east of the development area comprising a number of gullies, a single possible pit and a wide ditch which is likely to be a much truncated settlement enclosure ditch. The pottery evidence suggests activity during the mid to late second and third centuries AD. The dominance of local coarse wares, a scarcity of regional imports and the absence of fine wares and continental imports suggests occupation within a rural farmstead type site.

Medieval

Medieval farming is attested by the presence of north-west to south-east aligned furrows in the west of the site, extending as far as Ryknield Street, and north-east to south-west aligned ones in the west.

Modern

The only area with any evidence of modern activity was in the north-east of the proposed development site where field drains, a hardcore footpath and modern service trenches, probably associated with the housing estate to the north and west, were encountered.

8 Archive

The site archive consists 1 drawing record sheet, 6 drawings, 2 photo record sheets, 10 trench recording sheets, 21 context sheets, 2 sheets of black white photographs with 2 negative sheets and digital duplicates on CD, 1 EDM surveys on CD, 3 hand written levels index sheets, and 1 sample index sheet. The archive is listed under the Accession number DBYMU:2007-122 and will be deposited with Derby City Museum.

9. Acknowledgements

Fieldwork was undertaken by the author with the assistance of Leon Hunt. Richard Buckley managed the project.

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Appendix 1 Romano-British Pottery from an Evaluation at Highlands Farm, Findern, Derby, Accession No: DBYMU: 2007-122

Elizabeth Johnson

Assemblage Size and Condition

A stratified assemblage of 94 sherds of Roman period pottery weighing 1.614kg was retrieved from excavations carried out as part of an archaeological evaluation. The material is well preserved with an average sherd weight of 17.2g.

Methodology

The material was classified using the Derby Fabric Series (Leary 2001), a summary of which is given below in table 1. The material was quantified by sherd count and weight. The complete dataset was recorded and analysed within an Excel workbook, which comprises the archive record. Vessel forms were also assigned where diagnostic sherds allowed, using published typologies (Holbrook and Bidwell 1991; Tyres 1996).

Fabric Code:	Fabric Type:
BB1	Black Burnished ware
BSA3	Black sandy wares
CTA1	Oxidised shelly ware
DBY	Derbyshire ware
GRA	Fine grey ware

Fabric Code:	Fabric Type:
GRB1	Grey wares
MH	Mancetter-Hartshill Mortaria
OAB1	Oxidised sandy wares
OAC1	"Pre-Derbyshire" ware

Table 1: Summary of Derby fabric series (Leary 2001: 96-101).

Summary of Major Pottery Fabrics within the Assemblage

Table 2 below details a summary of the major pottery fabrics within the assemblage as a whole. Locally made coarse wares comprise 94.7% of the assemblage with Derbyshire ware, probably from the Hazelwood-Holbrook kilns, dominant at 74.5% (Brassington 1971, 1980; Sparey-Green 2002: 152-154). Derbyshire ware dates from the middle of the second century onwards and becomes the dominant coarse ware in Derby and the county. The identifiable forms present here are all jars including rounded rims as well as the lid seated/cupped forms that become prevalent from the third century onwards (Tyres 1996: 190-191; Leary 2001: 120; Sparey-Green 2002: 152-154). Two sherds of "pre-Derbyshire" ware associated with the Derby Racecourse kilns and dating to the mid-late second century were recovered from contexts (2) and (16) (Brassington 1980: 33; Leary 2001: 118). Grey, oxidised and black sandy wares dating from the second century onwards complete the range of local coarse wares. The kilns at Little Chester and Derby Racecourse are possible sources as these sites produced a range of grey, black sandy and oxidised wares during the second century (Brassington 1971, 1980; Sparey-Green 2002: 152-154).

Two sherds of Black Burnished ware were recovered from contexts (10) and furrow (12). These are not likely to date before the later second century in Derbyshire (Holbrook & Bidwell 1991: 92-96; Leary 2001: 116). Only one shelly ware jar was

present in context (14). Shelly wares are not thought to be produced in Derby and Northamptonshire has been suggested as a possible source (Birss 1985: 90; R. Leary *pers. comm.*). A mortarium from Mancetter-Hartshill was found in context (2). Unfortunately the sherd was undiagnostic and could only be dated to the mid-second century onwards. A further sherd of mortarium was found in the unstratified material. This was also most likely from Mancetter-Hartshill and dates between the mid-second and early third centuries.

Fabric	No of Sherds	% Sherds	Weight (g)	Average Sherd Weight (g)
BB1	2	2.1%	14	7.0
BSA3	2	2.1%	17	8.5
CTA1	2	2.1%	287	143.5
DBY	70	74.5%	1054	15.1
GRA	3	3.2%	24	8.0
GRB1	9	9.6%	133	14.8
MH	1	1.1%	13	13.0
OAB1	3	3.2%	53	17.7
OAC1	2	2.1%	19	9.5
Total	**94**	**100.0%**	**1614**	**17.2**

Table 2: Major fabric groups present within the assemblage as a whole.

Conclusion

The majority of the material suggests activity during the mid-late second and third centuries. Local coarse wares, in particular Derbyshire ware, are dominant. There are few regional imports such as Black Burnished ware and mortaria and no fine wares or continental imports at all, suggesting occupation within a rural farmstead type site.

Pottery Catalogue

Cont	Fabric	Form	Sherds	Weight (g)	Dating	Comments
2	DBY	Jar	4	38	mid/late2ndC+	
2	DBY	Jar	1	2	mid/late2ndC+	
2	DBY	Jar	1	9	mid/late2ndC+	
2	OAC1	Jar	1	11	mid2ndC	"pre-Derbyshire ware"
2	GRA	Jar	2	16	2ndC+	
2	DBY	Jar	1	27	late2ndC-3rdC	cupped rim
2	DBY	Jar	1	32	late2nd-3rdC	cupped rim, lid seat
2	DBY	Jar	1	39	mid/late2ndC+	
2	DBY	Jar	1	24	late2nd-3rdC	cupped rim
2	DBY	Jar	1	15	mid/late2ndC+	
2	DBY	Jar	3	57	late2nd-3rdC	cupped rim
2	OAB1	Jar	2	47	2ndC+	
2	DBY	Jar	7	187	mid/late2ndC+	
2	GRB1	Jar	7	114	2ndC+	
2	DBY	Jar	1	12	mid/late2ndC+	
2	DBY	Jar	3	10	mid/late2ndC+	
2	DBY	Jar	3	30	late2nd-3rdC	cupped rim
2	DBY	Jar	2	17	mid/late2ndC+	abraded
2	OAB1	Jar	1	6	2ndC+	abraded

Cont	Fabric	Form	Sherds	Weight (g)	Dating	Comments
2	MH	Mortarium	1	13	mid2ndC+	abraded
6	DBY	Jar	11	370	mid/late2ndC+	
6	DBY	Jar	2	24	mid/late2ndC+	
6	DBY	Jar	1	19	mid/late2ndC+	
8	DBY	Jar	1	3	late2ndC-3rdC	small rim
8	DBY	Jar	1	5	mid/late2ndC+	
8	DBY	Jar	1	5	mid/late2ndC+	
8	GRB1	Misc	1	4	2ndC+	
10	DBY	Jar	1	34	late2ndC-3rdC	cupped rim
10	DBY	Misc	1	1	mid/late2ndC+	
10	DBY	Jar	1	4	mid/late2ndC+	
10	GRA	Misc	1	8	2ndC+	
10	BB1	Misc	1	3	mid2ndC+	
12	DBY	Misc	1	3	mid/late2ndC+	abraded
12	BB1	Misc	1	11	mid2ndC+	
14	DBY	Misc	2	5	mid/late2ndC+	
14	DBY	Misc	1	6	mid/late2ndC+	abraded
14	CTA1	Jar	2	287	2ndC+	large roll neck jar
16	GRB1	Jar	1	15	2ndC+	
16	DBY	Jar	1	15	mid/late2ndC+	
16	OAC1	Jar	1	8	mid2ndC	"pre-Derbyshire ware"
16	DBY	Jar	1	8	mid/late2ndC+	
16	DBY	Misc	1	4	mid/late2ndC+	abraded
16	DBY	Misc	1	3	mid/late2ndC+	abraded
16	DBY	Misc	1	3	mid/late2ndC+	
16	DBY	Misc	1	7	mid/late2ndC+	hole drilled through
16	DBY	Jar	8	33	mid/late2ndC+	
18	DBY	Misc	2	3	mid/late2ndC+	
18	BSA3	Misc	2	17	late1stC+	abraded

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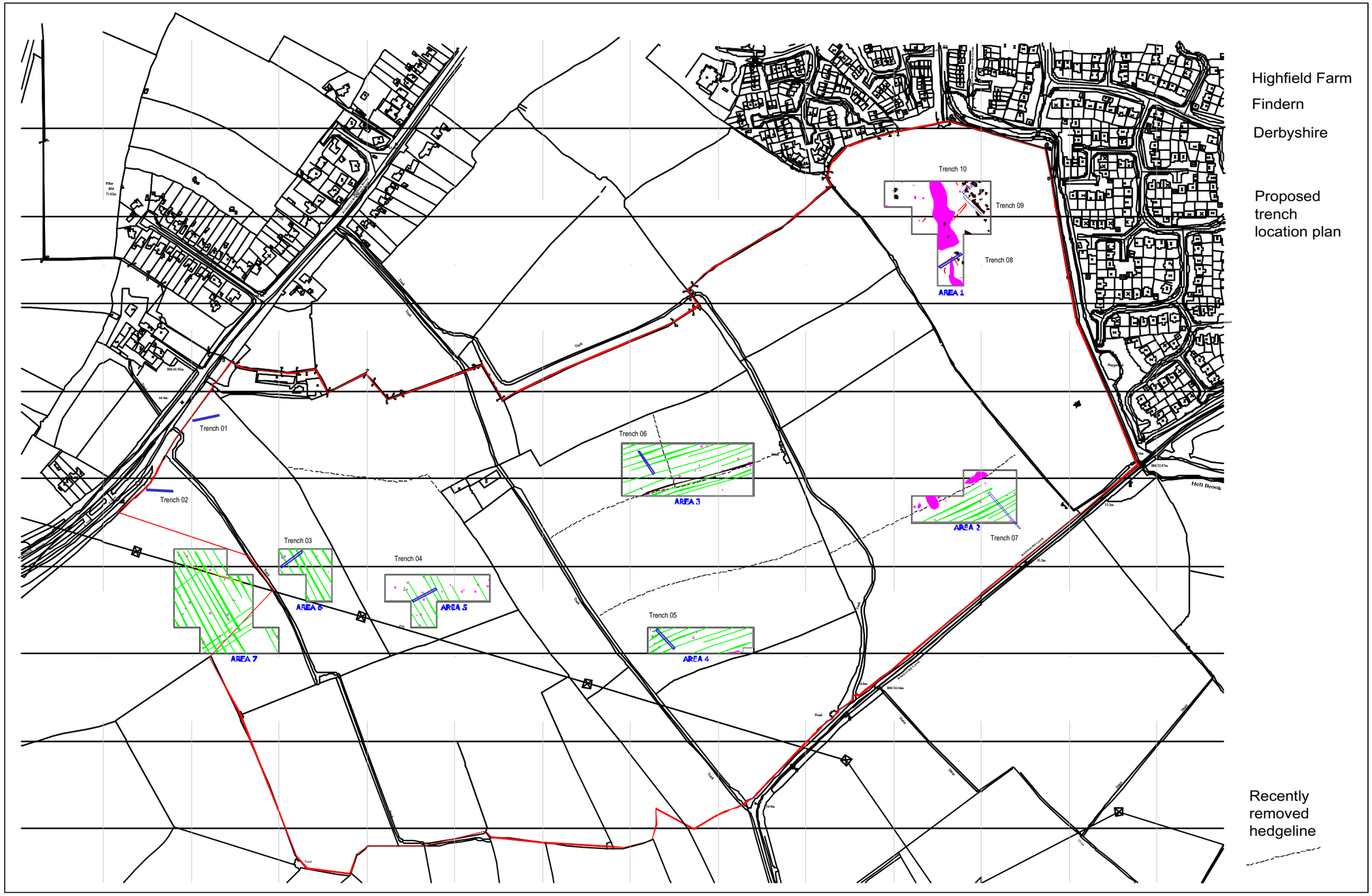

Figure 2. Location of trenches and geophysical anomalies.

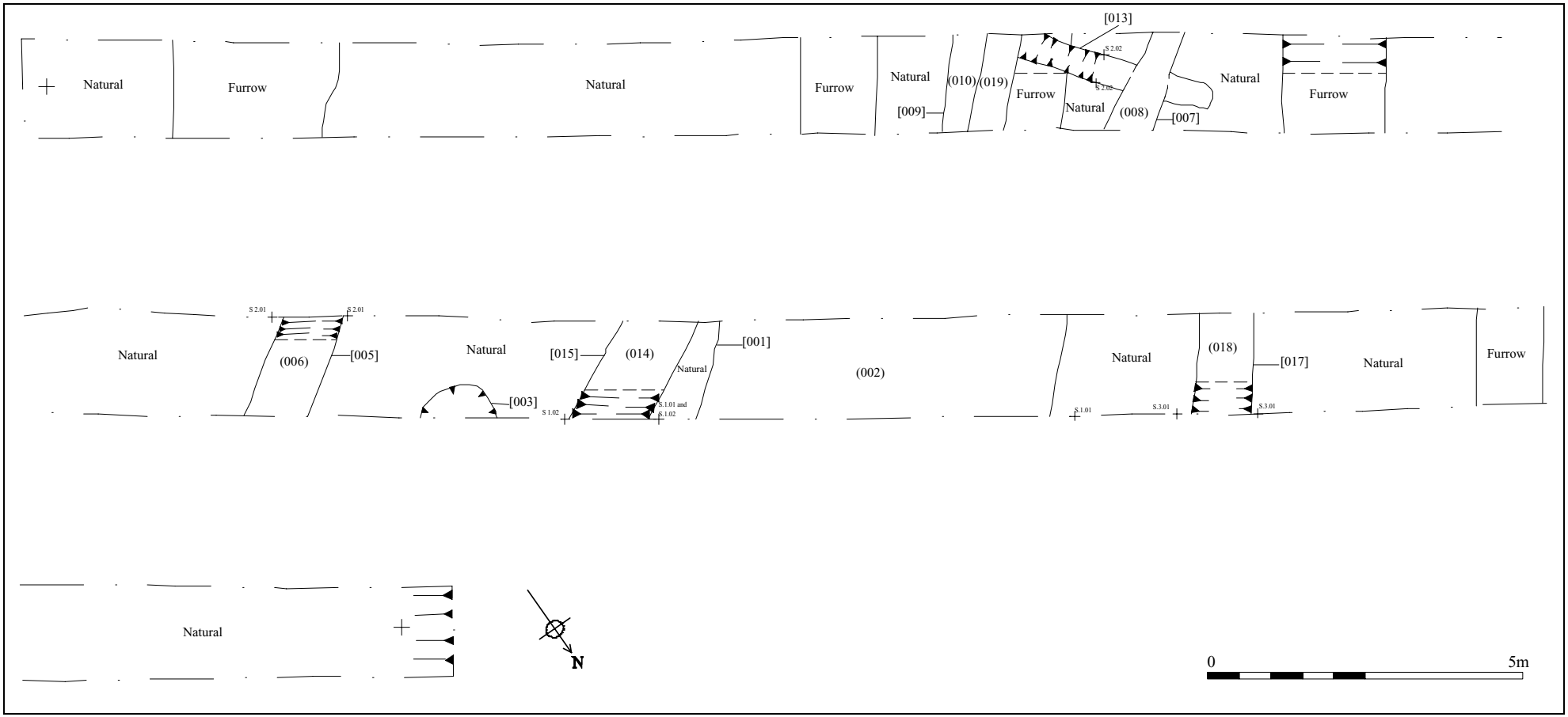

Figure 3. Post excavation plan of Trench 07.

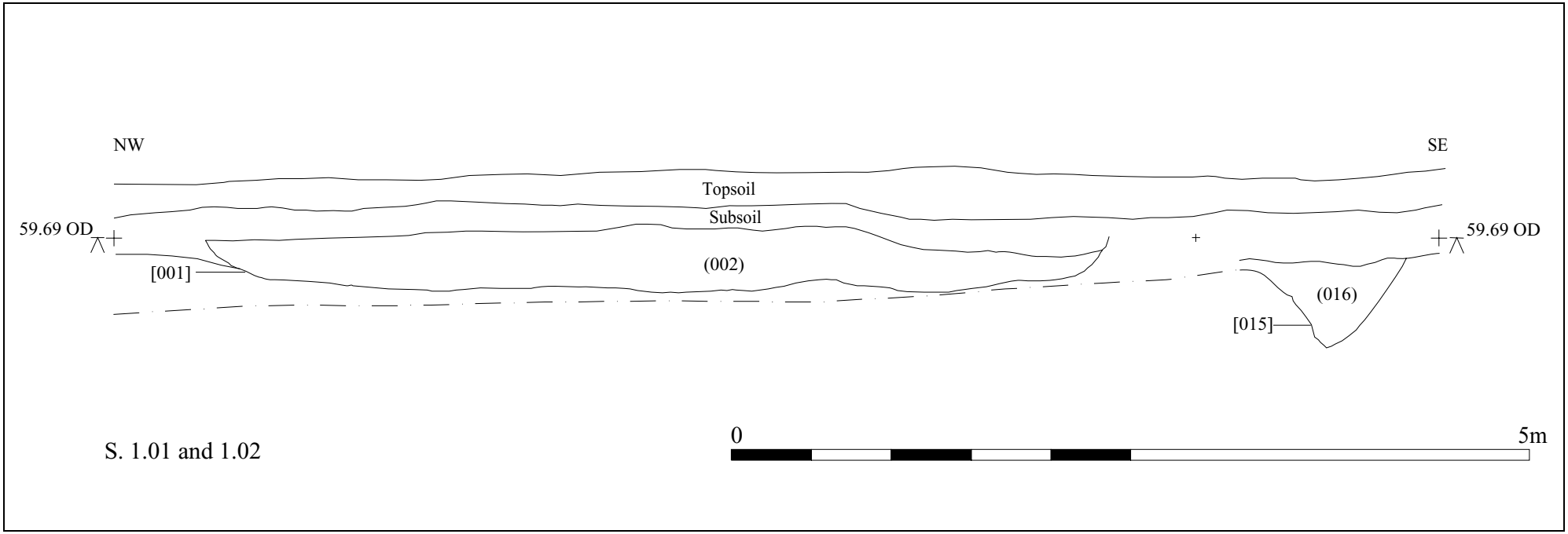

Figure. 4. Sections 1.01 and 1.02.

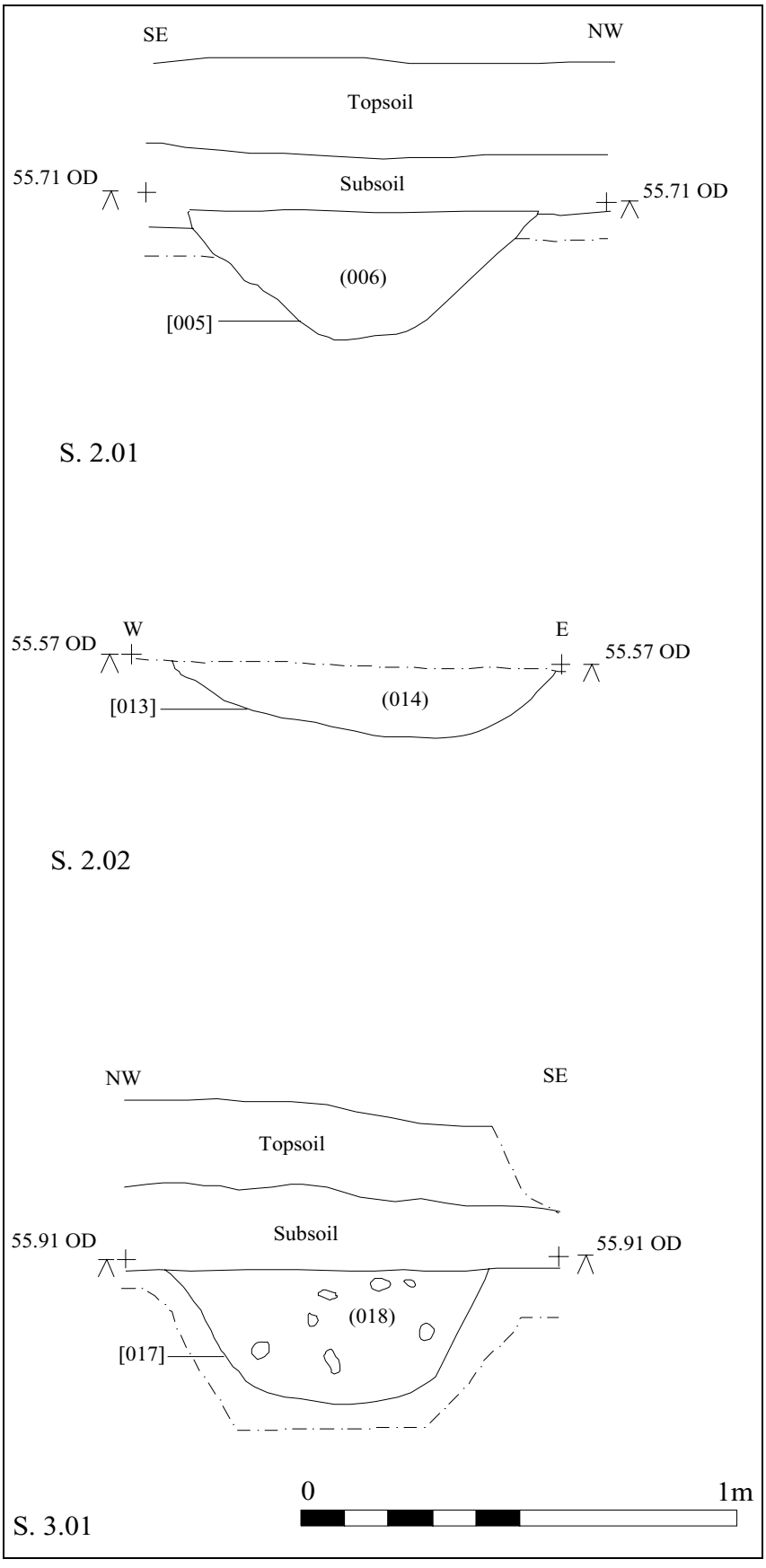

Figure 5. Sections 2.01, 2.02 and 3.01.

Plate I. Trench 07. Feature [001] southwest facing section.

Plate II. Trench 07. Feature [013] after excavation.

Plate III. Trench 07. Feature [017] southwest facing section.

Plate IV. Trench 07. Feature [015] under excavation.