



Eversley Quarry, Fleet Hill Farm, Finchampstead, Berkshire

Archaeological Assessment Report





**EVERSLEY QUARRY, FLEET HILL FARM
FINCHAMPSTEAD, BERKSHIRE**

Archaeological Assessment Report

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Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Adrian Havercroft of The Guildhouse Consultancy acting on behalf of CEMEX UK Materials Ltd, to carry out a programme of archaeological work in advance of mineral extraction at Eversley Quarry, Fleet Hill Farm, Finchampstead, Berkshire (NGR 478508 162237).

This report presents an assessment of the results of two phases of Strip, Map and Sample undertaken by Wessex Archaeology from April 2010 to June 2011.

Previous phases of evaluation and excavation on the Site, carried out by Cotswold Archaeology in 2008 and 2009, recorded a low density of archaeological remains - broadly assigned to the medieval period but also including a discrete complex of late prehistoric features.

The 2010 and 2011 works included the excavation of a total of 10.62 hectares, specifically related to site Phase 1B and Phase 2. The excavations described here recorded a system of post-medieval/modern field drainage ditches, overlying a series of shallow circular, charcoal-filled pit-like features, mostly tree-throw holes, considered to be associated with the felling and removal of trees. Radiocarbon dates from charred plant remains from one of these pit-like features indicate an 11th – 12th century AD date. The results are interpreted as an earlier medieval phase of land clearance and improvement, probably for arable agriculture and possibly relating to a period of assarting. The suggestion that these features were associated with possible metalworking activity is rejected.

This document presents the results of the 2010-11 archaeological work. No further post-excavation analysis is deemed necessary, although it is recommended that a short summary of the results is published in the county journal.

Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology is thankful to CEMEX UK Materials Ltd, through their consultant Adrian Havercroft of The Guildhouse Consultancy, for commissioning the work. We would also like to thank Fiona MacDonald, principal archaeologist for West Berkshire who monitored all stages of the fieldwork on behalf of Wokingham Borough Council. Wessex Archaeology also acknowledges the help and advice of the staff of the Eversley Quarry for their assistance during the course of the fieldwork.

Jörn Schuster kindly made available the results of the Cotswold Archaeology work at the site and also discussed various aspects of the site, in particular the evidence for iron working.

The fieldwork was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Paul McCulloch and Andy Manning, and the post-excavation assessment was overseen by Alistair Barclay. The fieldwork was supervised by Vasilis Tsamis (Project Supervisor), assisted by Darryl Freer, Paul Cooke, Damien Campbell-Bell, Michael Fleming, Tom Wells, Mark Stewart, Julia Sulikowska, Mark Bagwell, and Sam Fairhead.

This report was written and compiled by Sian Reynolds and edited by Alistair Barclay and Gareth Chaffey, with contributions from Matt Leivers (worked flint) and Lorraine Mephram (other finds). Assessment of the environmental remains was overseen by Sarah Wyles. The charcoal was reported on by Catherine Barnett, and the possible ironworking evidence was reviewed by Phil Andrews who also contributed to the report discussion. The illustrations were prepared by Linda Coleman and Liz James.

**EVERSLEY QUARRY, FLEET HILL FARM
FINCHAMPSTEAD, BERKSHIRE****Archaeological Assessment Report****1 INTRODUCTION****1.1 Project background**

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by CEMEX UK Materials Ltd to carry out a programme of archaeological work in connection with mineral extraction works located at Eversley Quarry, Fleet Hill Farm, Finchampstead, Berkshire (NGR 478508 162237), hereafter referred to as 'the Site' (**Figure 1**).

1.1.2 Planning permission was granted subject to the implementation of a programme of archaeological work involving archaeological evaluation (Cotswold Archaeology 2008), a phase of Strip, Map and Sample and watching briefs (Cotswold Archaeology 2010), and a final phase of fieldwork undertaken by Wessex Archaeology in 2010 and 2011 (see **1.2 Scope of the document** below).

1.1.3 For the 2010 and 2011 works a method statement was prepared by Wessex Archaeology detailing the strategy for the strip and record exercise (Wessex Archaeology 2010a), in line with 'Fleet Hill Farm, Finchampstead' – Written Scheme of Investigation (Archaeology)' (The Guildhouse Consultancy 2009).

1.2 Scope of the document

1.2.1 This report presents an assessment of the results of the entire programme of archaeological watching briefs and strip and record exercise undertaken by Wessex Archaeology from April 2010 to June 2011. It is proposed that the wider dissemination of the project results will be through a separate summary note published in an appropriate archaeological journal.

1.3 Location, topography and geology

1.3.1 The Site is located immediately to the north of the Blackwater River and occupies land to the east of the B3016 Eversley Cross to Finchampstead Road, in the Borough of Wokingham, Surrey. The Blackwater River forms the southern boundary of the Site and is a tributary of the River Thames. The Site covers an area of c.48 hectares and lies at c.50m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

1.3.2 The Site was previously under pasture, and was divided into 12 fields separated by hedgerows, fences and ditches. The Site overlies fluvial gravels and silts within the floodplain of the Blackwater (British Geological Survey, Sheet 268: Reading). Pleistocene alluvial silts, seams of sand and gravel and peat have also been recorded within the Site.

1.4 Archaeological background

- 1.4.1 The archaeological background to the Site is set out in the Project Design (Wessex Archaeology 2010a) and will not be repeated here. It includes information obtained from the Sites and Monuments Record of Hampshire and Berkshire, the English Heritage National Monuments Record, previous fieldwork near to the Site including fieldwalking and watching brief investigations, and archaeological evaluation within the Site itself.
- 1.4.2 The Site lies in an area in which archaeological remains (sites or findspots) of all major periods have been recorded. Archaeological evaluation and mitigation works related to the current extraction works have identified slight evidence of Mesolithic activity, evidence for Iron Age ironworking, and landscape features of post-medieval date, along with undated features and palaeo-environmental evidence

1.5 Previous investigations

- 1.5.1 In 2008, the Site was subject to an archaeological evaluation (Cotswold Archaeology 2008), which comprised 104 evenly distributed 50m long trenches. This work identified a small number of archaeological features widely distributed across the application area, with the exception of the western areas which were largely devoid of remains. The majority of the features were grouped in the central part of the Site and, although largely undated, were thought to date to the Mesolithic and later prehistoric and/or Roman periods. Large parts of the Site were found to be dominated by palaeochannels representing former water courses of the River Blackwater and its tributaries. The modern river runs west to east along the southern edge of the Site.
- 1.5.2 Assessment of the evaluation results led to a phase of 'High Level Monitoring', the continuous observation of overburden removal by watching brief, and formal excavation areas (Cotswold Archaeology 2010). The majority of the archaeological features exposed within this phase of works were located in the northern part of the site, furthest from the River Blackwater, and to the north-east of the fieldwork areas discussed in this report. Features generally comprised a scatter of undated circular pits ranging from 0.90m to 1.90m in diameter and from 0.10m to 0.30m in depth. The majority contained at least one charcoal-rich fill and some demonstrated evidence of *in situ* burning. Also recorded was a circular gully interpreted as a possible industrial shelter due to its proximity to features containing ironworking slag.
- 1.5.3 A radiocarbon determination from one of the circular pits (in evaluation trench 103) gave a date range of 1040-1210 cal AD at 95% confidence interval. A second radiocarbon determination from posthole **45008** in evaluation trench 45, which was later subsumed within the Site under discussion in this report, produced a date range of 800-560 cal BC at 95% confidence interval, giving a Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age date.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction and general objectives

- 2.1.1 The methodology for all mitigation works on the main defined areas of archaeological potential is set out in detail in the Project Design (Wessex Archaeology 2010a).
- 2.1.2 The aim was to ensure the adequate identification, investigation and recording of important archaeological remains. Following the fieldwork a programme of post-excavation analysis was undertaken commensurate with the quality of the data recovered.
- 2.1.3 All excavation and post-excavation procedures were conducted in compliance with the standards outlined in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance For Archaeological Excavation* (as amended 1999). The assessment work follows guidance by English Heritage (2006).
- 2.1.4 All work was carried out in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1992, and all other relevant Health and Safety legislation, regulations and codes of practice in force at the time.

2.2 Fieldwork methodology

- 2.2.1 The fieldwork was carried out in two seasons- in the late spring and early summers of 2010 and 2011 respectively. The 2010 season saw sectors 1B.1, 1B.2, 2.2, and north of the conveyor belt sectors 2.1, 2.3, 2.5 and 2.7 investigated (**Figure 2**). In 2011, all sectors south of the conveyor belt were exposed, namely 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6 and 2.7.
- 2.2.2 A total of 10.62 hectares were investigated during the 2010 and 2011 phases.
- 2.2.3 Overburden (i.e. topsoil and subsoil) was removed undertaken under constant archaeological supervision using a 360° tracked mechanical excavator using a toothless grading bucket. In the 2010 season this overburden was immediately removed and stored off site, but in 2011 the methodology altered with the topsoil and subsoil temporarily stored in bunds within the exposed area and cleared following the recording of the exposed archaeology.
- 2.2.4 The Site was further cleaned by hand, where appropriate, to enable an accurate site plan to be produced. Investigation of the archaeological features and deposits was undertaken as specified in the Project Design (Wessex Archaeology 2010a) sufficient to satisfy the principal aims of the excavation.
- 2.2.5 All archaeological deposits were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's standard *pro forma* recording system. Measured plans of the archaeological features and section drawings were prepared at scales of 1:10 or 1:20 as appropriate. A detailed photographic record consists of both monochrome negative and colour transparencies in 35mm format, in addition to digital images.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The majority of the archaeological features within the stripped area were identified as ditches and large shallow pit-like features, mostly tree-throw holes, commonly filled with charcoal-rich deposits. The remaining features comprised a small number of gullies, numerous tree-throw holes, two small discrete features tentatively identified as postholes, and short lengths of geological features which may represent palaeochannel sequences at the southern limit of the Site, close to the course of the modern River Blackwater. Due to the lack of dateable material recovered during the fieldwork, these features will be described thematically in this section rather than chronologically.

3.2 Linear features

3.2.1 A small number of ditches were recorded on the Site, forming a rather disparate system of land division with little discernible pattern (**Figure 3**).

3.2.2 Ditch **10276** ran for 71 m west-northwest east-southeast along the southern edge of the stripped area, broadly parallel and adjacent to the current course of the River Blackwell. It measured 2.50m - 2.80m wide and 0.34m - 0.44m deep, with a shallow concave profile. Filled with a mixed, mid-greyish brown silty clay sand, this ditch had an unclear relationship with smaller linear feature **10277**, which ran parallel to the former at a distance of 2.5m for c. 25 m from the western baulk. Ditch **10277** had a moderate concave profile 0.75m wide and 0.25m deep.

3.2.3 On a similar west-northwest east-southeast alignment was a complex of intercutting ditches to the south of the conveyor belt in sectors 2.5 and 2.7. These comprise feature groups **10278** and **10279**, both of which ran parallel for c. 150m before the southernmost, **10278**, turned and ran south-east for 40m before continuing beyond the edge of Site.

3.2.4 At the point where the ditches converge in plan, an intervention demonstrated several phases of recutting and re-establishment with a gradual from south to north shift, with the earliest ditches turning to the south-east, and the later ditches continuing in a straight line to the east-northeast. The large ditches all had moderate concave profiles with a total width of over 3m and a maximum depth of 0.74m.

3.2.5 The linear features remain undated due to a lack of artefactual evidence. A worked flint blade dated typologically to the Mesolithic was recovered from **10276**, but is certainly residual and merely indicative of a background prehistoric presence. It is more likely that the linear features represent post-medieval land divisions, probably associated with agricultural practices (**Figure 3**).

3.2.6 A number of relatively narrow linear features were recorded across the site and are interpreted as components of a post-medieval/modern field drainage system (see **Figure 3**), and are not further discussed.

3.3 Discrete features

- 3.3.1 The majority of the excavated features recorded on the Site were relatively large, shallow, sub-circular/oval pit-like features of a similar form to those identified during the previous phases of evaluation and excavation undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology (2008, 2010).
- 3.3.2 Approximately 150 of these pit-like features were digitally surveyed, of which a total of 40 were excavated, in line with the agreed Method Statement which required a minimum of one out of every four to be recorded (Wessex Archaeology 2010b) (**Figure 3**).
- 3.3.3 The features were between 0.49 m - 0.11 m in width (average of 1.40 m), 0.49 m - 2.50 m in length (average of 1.55 m), and 0.05 m - 0.47 m in depth (average of 0.17 m). The majority had a single charcoal-rich fill, or two fills of thin, primary deposits beneath a thicker charcoal-rich fill. Only the more significant features (ie containing artefacts and/or notable environmental remains) are numbered on **Figure 3**.
- 3.3.4 Feature **10013**, located in the north-eastern portion of Site was sub-circular in plan with concave-stepped sides and a number of charcoal rich fills. The feature was roughly 1.60 m in diameter and 0.47 m in depth, with five recorded fills (**Figure 4**). Radiocarbon dates (SUERC-36687/8) on charred material recovered from the upper fill, **10018**, gave an 11th-12th century AD date range (see **Section 6** below).
- 3.3.5 Feature **10065**, located in the north-western sector, was identified as a tree-throw hole with *in situ* burning of the tree stump. The feature was roughly 2.00 m in diameter and 0.22 m deep. A charcoal rich fill **10066** was sampled for environmental processing (see **Section 5** below).
- 3.3.6 A small number of these features contained worked flint, broadly dated typologically to the Mesolithic and, therefore, assumed to be residual. No further dating evidence was recovered.
- 3.3.7 The distribution of these features (**Figure 3**) demonstrated no spatial pattern, other than to be scattered across most of the Site, and when viewed alongside the Cotswold Archaeology results, their distribution can be seen to be relatively even across the stripped areas. It is likely, therefore, that the features actually represent natural features or tree-throw holes associated with land clearance or improvement attributable to an uncertain period.

3.4 Other features

- 3.4.1 A small number of undated narrow gullies and discrete features classified as possible postholes were also recorded, but form no coherent pattern and are difficult to interpret.
- 3.4.2 Previous investigations had recorded in some detail the course and character of numerous palaeochannels which dominated parts of the Site adjacent to the modern course of the River Blackwater. The 2010/2011 fieldwork possibly recorded one of these features, from which was recovered two pieces of undiagnostic struck flint.

4 ARTEFACTS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 A very small assemblage of finds was recovered during the fieldwork, mainly of a lithic nature, comprising worked and burnt flint. The assemblage is quantified by context in **Table 1**.

Table 1: All finds by context (number / weight in grams)

Feature	Context	Burnt Flint	CBM	Worked Flint	Pottery
-	10001			1/4	
10013	10014			1/8	
10054	10055	3/23			
10065	10066	1/15		1/4	
10068	10069	8/31			
10085	10087	1/60			
10089	10090				2/31
10091	10092	1/12			
10121	10122			1/6	
10124	10129	2/32		1/8	
10142	10143	1/2			
10147	10150			1/3	
10167	10168			1/61	
10170	10171			1/18	
10176	10178			9/19	
10197	10194		2/140		1/20
10201	10200			1/7	
10206	10207	4/7			
10210	10211			2/33	
10274	10275		3/90		1/24
Palaeochannel	Palaeochannel			2/101	
-	unstrat.			1/12	
TOTAL		21/182	5/230	23/284	4/75

CBM = ceramic building material

4.2 Worked flint

4.2.1 Twenty-three pieces of worked flint were recovered, as shown in **Table 2**. Although small, the assemblage is of interest as it contains a significant proportion of blades in good condition, indicating Mesolithic activity in the immediate vicinity.

4.2.2 The assemblage falls into two categories: the blades and blade fragments, mostly from opposed-platform cores, which are Mesolithic; and the flakes and core. The core is a discoidal example of Late Neolithic date; the flakes include examples struck from multi-directional cores which are probably belong to the same period. From the possible palaeochannel came one small flake that was possibly retouched to form a hollow scraper of uncertain date.

- 4.2.3 The prime value of the lithic assemblage is that it provides evidence of a prehistoric component to the activity at the Site, although it does not warrant further analysis beyond what is recorded here.

Table 2: Breakdown of worked flint assemblage

Context	Flake Cores	Blades	Broken Blades	Flakes	Broken Flakes	Debitage	Total
10001			1				1
10014		1					1
10066				1			1
10122		1					1
10129						1	1
10150		1					1
10168	1						1
10171				1			1
10178		3		4	2		9
10200				1			1
10211				2			2
Palaeochannel				2			2
unstrat				1			1
TOTAL	1	6	1	12	2	1	23

4.3 Burnt flint

- 4.3.1 Burnt, unworked flint was recovered in roughly equal quantities. This material type is intrinsically undatable, although frequently used as an indicator of prehistoric activity it can be found on sites of later date. In this instance a prehistoric date range is likely, given the presence of worked flint, although on the whole the two types did not occur in the same contexts.

4.4 Pottery and CBM

- 4.4.1 Other finds comprised four sherds of pottery, all post-medieval (coarse redwares, glazed earthenware and refined whiteware), and five fragments of post-medieval ceramic building material (CBM).

4.5 'Ironworking' residue

- 4.5.1 Sample residues (2 mm, 1 mm and 0.5 mm) from two features (**10013** and **10065**) (**Figure 3**) were examined under a microscope and using a magnet for the presence of any material that might derive from or indicate the presence of ironworking within or in the vicinity of the Site investigated in 2010/2011. Radiocarbon dating of material from pit **10013** has shown it to be earlier medieval (see below), of mid 11th – late 12th/early 13th century date, whilst tree-throw hole **10065** is undated. No hammerscale was identified, but both samples produced abundant small pieces of magnetic (but non-metallic) material that may have become magnetic through heating. This material is not slag and may be fragments of bog iron ore, which has been recorded elsewhere on the site (Cotswold Archaeology 2010). There is no evidence from the form or distribution of features in which this magnetic

material was found that they were associated with either ore roasting or the preparation of charcoal for ironworking.

4.6 Finds potential

4.6.1 With the exception of the 'ironworking' residue no further analysis is recommended, although a summary of the results should be published. The 'ironworking' residue could be scanned by a specialist in prehistoric metalworking just to confirm the negative conclusions reached above.

5 ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

5.1 Introduction and objectives

5.1.1 A total of four bulk samples were taken from charcoal-rich deposits in pits **10013**, **10068** and **10077** and tree-throw hole **10065**, to try to ascertain the nature and function of these features and any specific activities taking place.

5.1.2 The samples were processed by standard flotation methods; the flot retained on a 0.5 mm mesh, residues fractionated into 5.6 mm, 2 mm, 1 mm and 0.5mm fractions and dried. The coarse fractions (>5.6 mm) were sorted, weighed and discarded. The flots were scanned under a x10 – x40 stereobinocular microscope and the preservation and nature of the charred plant and wood charcoal remains recorded in **Table 3**. The flots were generally large with small amounts of rooty material.

5.1.3 No charred plant remains other than a hazelnut (*Corylus avellana*) shell fragment and a bud were observed within these samples. Large quantities of wood charcoal fragments were retrieved from these features, in particular from pit **10013**. The wood charcoal was mainly mature wood fragments, with some pieces being iron-coated, particularly those recovered from tree-throw hole **10065**. This iron-coating is thought to have a natural origin related to the geology of the Site, rather than a result of any human activity.

5.1.4 Overall the environmental remains have only limited potential and, therefore, no further analysis is recommended. However, a summary of the results should be published.

Table 3: Assessment of the Charred Plant Remains and Wood Charcoal

Feature Type	Feature	Context	Sample	Vol (L)	Flot size	Roots %	Grain	Chaff	Charred Other	Notes for Table	Charcl > 4/2mm	Other
Medieval												
Pit	10013	10018	1	20	875 0	1	-	-	C	<i>Corylus avellana</i> shell frag	2030/ 2750ml	-
Undated												
Tree-throw hole	10065	10066	2	7	500	5	-	-	C	bud	175/ 150 ml	-
Pit	10068	10069	3	0.5	200	15	-	-	-	-	50/ 70 ml	-
Pit	10077	10078	4	1	2	5	-	-	-	-	200/ 150 ml	-

Key: C = <5

6 RADIOCARBON DATING

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 Two samples on short-lived charcoal/charred plant remains were submitted from pit **10013** to date the feature. Both samples were submitted to the Scottish Environmental Research Centre (SUERC), East Kilbride, Glasgow, Scotland.

6.2 Results and calibration

6.2.1 The samples were pretreated as described by Stenhouse and Baxter (1983), graphitised using methods described by Vandeputte *et al.* (1996), and dated by AMS as described by Xu *et al.* (2004) and Freeman *et al.* (2007).

6.2.2 The radiocarbon results (**Table 4**) are quoted in accordance with the international standard known as the Trondheim convention (Stuiver and Kra 1986). They are conventional radiocarbon ages (Stuiver and Polach 1977) and have been calculated using the calibration curve of Reimer *et al.* (2009) and the computer program OxCal (v4.1) (Bronk Ramsey 1995; 1998; 2001; 2009). The calibrated date ranges cited in the text are those for 95% confidence. They are quoted in the form recommended by Mook (1986), with the end points rounded outwards to 10 years for errors >25 years. The ranges in **Table 4** have been calculated according to the maximum intercept method (Stuiver and Reimer 1986).

6.2.3 The two results (SUERC-36687-8: see **Table 4**) are statistically consistent, are therefore of the same age and indicate a likely 11th to 12th century AD date for the deposit in pit **10013**.

Table 4: Radiocarbon details

Lab Ref	Context	Sample	Result uncal BP	$\delta^{13}\text{C}$	95% confidence Cal AD
SUERC-36687	10018	1A Charred Quercus sapwood	935±30	-27.5	1020-1170
SUERC-36688	10018	1B Charred hazelnut shell	880±30	-24.9	1040-1230

7 DISCUSSION

7.1.1 Previous phases of evaluation and excavation at the Site, carried out by Cotswold Archaeology (2008, 2010), recorded a low density of archaeological remains to the north of the modern course of the River Blackwater. As with the Wessex Archaeology excavations under discussion in this report, these earlier investigations suffered from a lack of artefactual material which has led to poor phasing across the Site.

7.1.2 Although a small quantity of Mesolithic and Neolithic worked flint was recovered from the topsoil and as residual finds in later features, no features of either date could be identified. The lithic assemblage is, therefore,

indicative of early prehistoric activity in the area of the River Blackwater, but can add little information concerning the nature and function of the excavated features.

- 7.1.3 No later prehistoric features or finds were identified in 2010 and 2011 and so the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age radiocarbon date (8th – mid 6th century BC) obtained from a posthole recorded in the north-east part of the Site during the Cotswold Archaeology evaluation (2010) stands in isolation and its significance remains uncertain.
- 7.1.4 An extensive system of land division on a broad east-northeast west-southwest alignment was recorded on the Site, represented by a relatively small number of wide, shallow ditches and associated gullies. It was apparent during excavation that many of these features were components of the still partly extant post-medieval/modern field drainage system in the low lying lands of the Blackwater floodplain. A similar layout of linear features was recorded during the Cotswold Archaeology excavations in 2009, and interpreted as of a similar, recent date.
- 7.1.5 The majority of the features recorded on the Site in 2010 and 2011 were relatively large, shallow, sub-circular/oval, pit-type features containing at least one charcoal-rich fill. A plot of their distribution across site (**Figure 3**) demonstrates no concentrations or spatial patterns, and matches the spread of similar features recorded during earlier fieldwork.
- 7.1.6 A number of these pit-like features demonstrate some evidence of *in situ* burning, but in no instance was the natural geology severely heat affected. Ore roasting hearths might be an interpretation, given the evidence for later prehistoric iron working (specifically smelting) recorded in the earlier excavations (Cotswold Archaeology 2010). However, none of the features resemble (in terms of its shape and fills) the remains that might be expected to have been left by the roasting of iron ore. Furthermore, the features do not demonstrate any obvious connection with the manufacture of charcoal (required for iron working), and analysis of the charcoal shows it to comprise almost exclusively mature oak, rather than oak roundwood as would be expected if this had been a charcoal production site.
- 7.1.7 The shape in plan and profile, together with their relatively shallow depth, suggest a natural origin for these pit-like features, and they are morphologically similar to those which lack the charcoal-rich fills and are classified as tree-throw holes. Indeed, the charcoal-rich fills of the 'pits' were frequently poorly sorted, with higher concentrations of charcoal on one side, characteristic of soil formation from a fallen tree (whether naturally or anthropogenically felled) in the hollow and the root ball.
- 7.1.8 If these pit-like features are tree-throw holes, rather than deliberately excavated pits, then their consistent, charcoal-rich character is likely to have been the result of some human involvement. Radiocarbon dating indicates (from two examples; see also Cotswold Archaeology 2010) that this phase of activity took place shortly after the Norman Conquest, and it is possible that the tree-throw holes/'pits' represent one of several phases of assarting or land clearance adjacent to the river, possibly for grazing or arable

cultivation. That all the wood charcoal identified was oak might indicate that managed or formerly managed oak woodland was being cleared.

- 7.1.9 The felling of trees to create open land, and the subsequent grubbing out and burning of their stump and roots, could have resulted in these charcoal-rich features, and help explain the lack of finds. The ploughing in of the ashy deposits, which is likely to have included other burnt vegetation, would have helped to improve the soil prior to agriculture through the addition of potash, though this may not have been fully appreciated in the 11th – 12th century.

8 RESOURCES AND PUBLICATION

- 8.1.1 There is no potential for further analyses of the finds and environmental remains (see above), although it is recommended that the overall results of the assessment are published as a short note, in particular the evidence for 11th–12th century tree-clearance and small-scale land improvement.
- 8.1.2 A single page publication note based on the *Discussion* section of this report (see above) would be prepared for the *Berkshire Archaeological Journal* either as a stand alone report or as part of a combined report with the results from adjacent fieldwork undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology. The latter has been discussed and agreed in principle with the Consultant and Cotswold Archaeology.

9 STORAGE AND CURATION

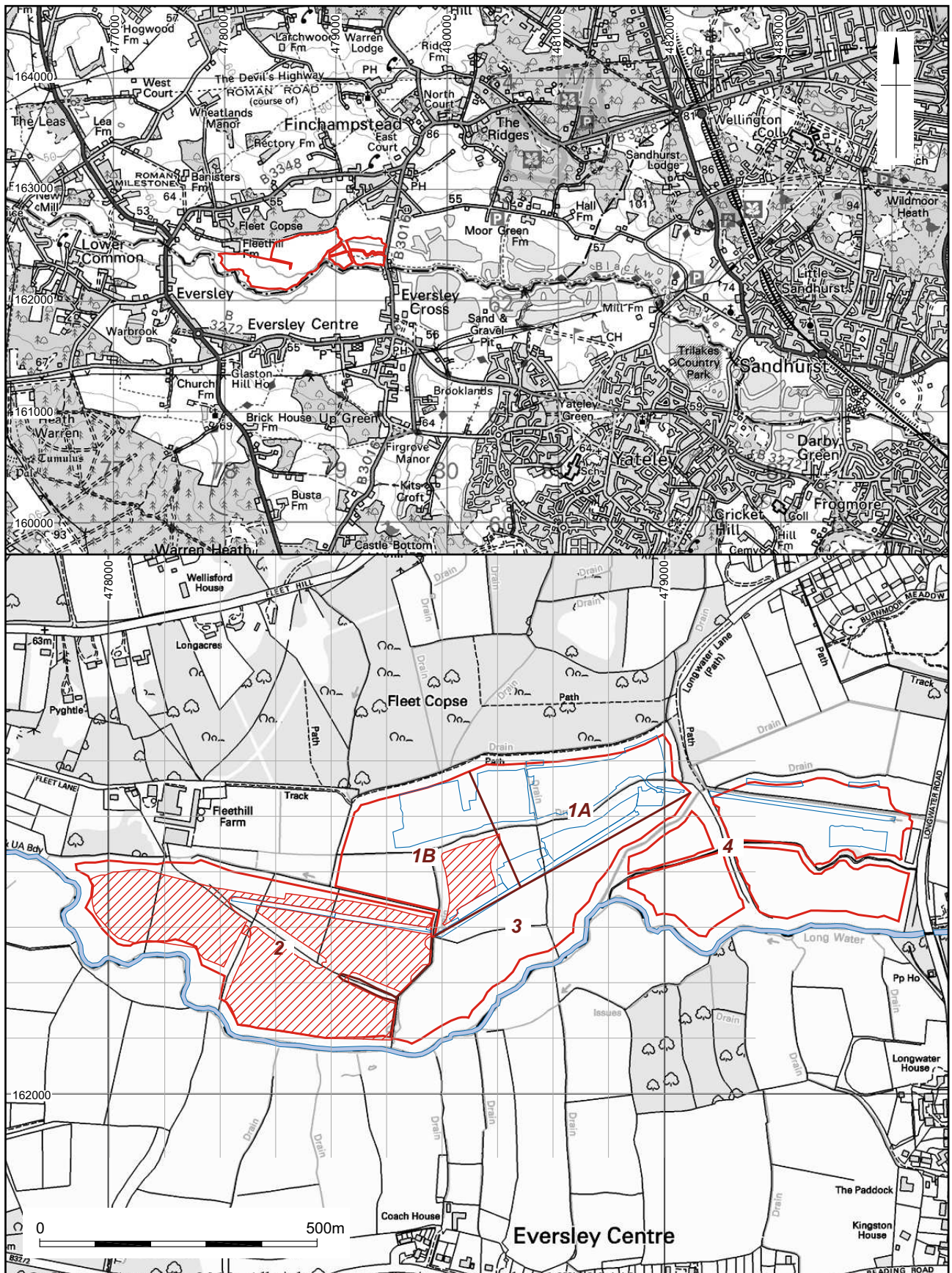
9.1 Archive

- 9.1.1 The project records have been compiled to form an indexed and internally cross-referenced archive that is presently stored at the Old Sarum offices of Wessex Archaeology under the fieldwork code 74220.
- 9.1.2 It is proposed that subject to the wishes of the landowner, the entire project archive – comprising artefacts, paper records, graphics and photographs – will be deposited at Reading Museum and Art Gallery.

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- The Site
- Excavation area
- Site phase
- Previous excavation area (Cotswold Archaeology)

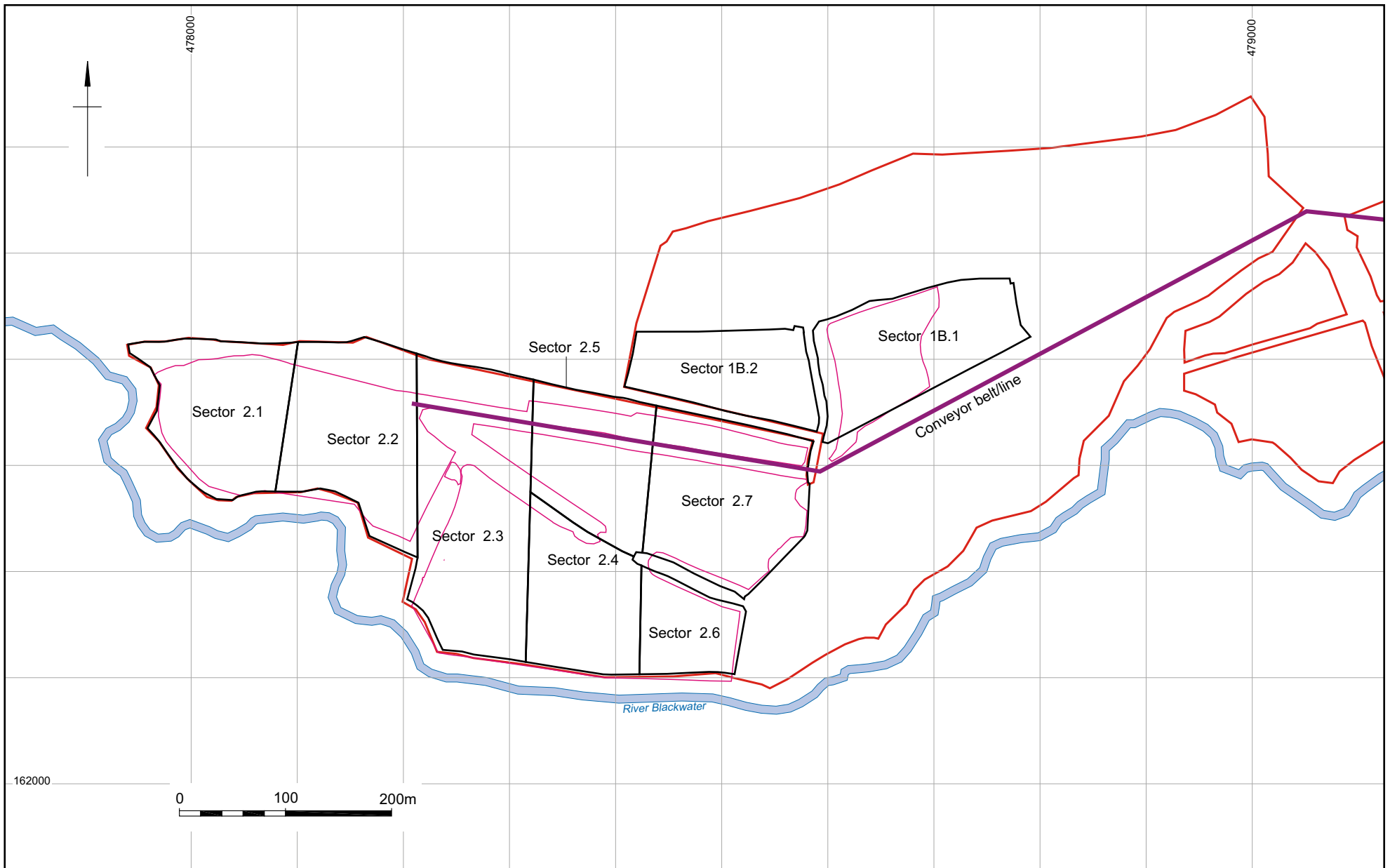



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Site location plan

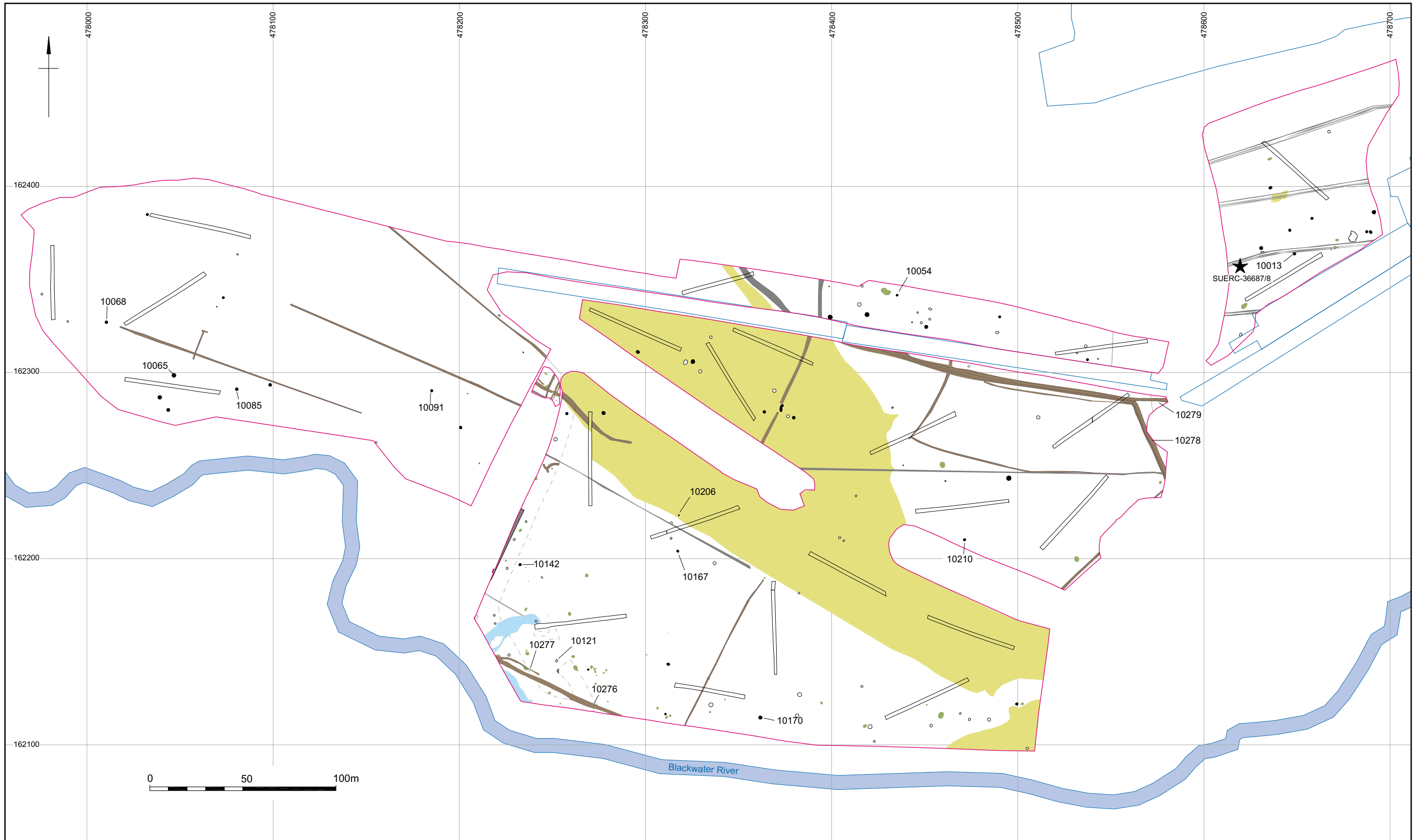
Figure 1



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Site plan showing phase sectors

Figure 2



- ▭ The Site
- ▭ Excavation area
- Evaluation trench
- Cotswold Archaeology excavation area
- Post medieval/modern feature
- Modern disturbance
- Excavated pits/ tree-throw holes
- Unexcavated pits/ tree-throw holes
- ★ Carbon 14 sample
- Geological feature
- Tree-throw hole
- Palaeochannel

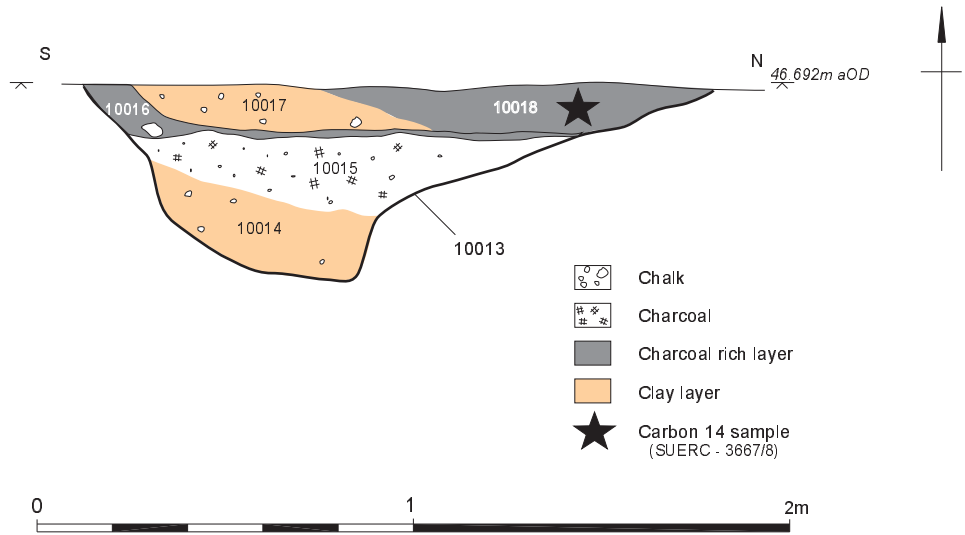
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Site plan showing Wessex Archaeology excavation areas and previous Cotswold Archaeology investigations

Figure 3



Plan supplied by Client.
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East facing section of feature 10013

Figure 4



Plate 1: North facing section of pit 10070



Plate 2: North-east facing section of ditches 10144 and 10147

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