

**LAND AT BLEADON HILL,
WESTON-SUPER-MARE,
NORTH SOMERSET.**

NGR: ST 334 577 (centred)

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

January 2016
Report No. 1104



ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTANCY, MANAGEMENT & FIELD SERVICES

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Quality Assurance

This Document has been compiled and authorised in accordance with
AMS's Quality Procedures (BS EN ISO 9001: 2008)

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SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of an archaeological evaluation undertaken by Foundations Archaeology in July 2015 on land at Bleadon Hill, Weston-Super-Mare, North Somerset (NGR: ST 334 577 - centred). The project was commissioned by Neil Emery of Clifton Emery Design.

The project comprised the excavation and recording of eight trenches across a proposed development area. A further trench measuring 7 metres was excavated to the southeast of Trench 7, in order to test whether feature [707] continued to the south.

Possible archaeological features were only present in Trenches 5 and 7. Of these, only feature [707] can be securely dated to the early Bronze Age as the Iron Age material present in possible former hedgerow [503] was almost certainly residual in context.

The results of the geophysical survey (Substrata, 2014) roughly correlated with the identified archaeological features, with further positive results most likely due to the variation in the natural deposits across the study area.

The results of these works suggest the likelihood of further dispersed and isolated archaeological deposits within the study area, which are most likely to be Prehistoric in date.

GLOSSARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Archaeology

For the purpose of this project, archaeology is taken to mean the study of past human societies through their material remains from prehistoric times to the modern era. No rigid upper date limit has been set, but AD 1900 is used as a general cut-off point.

CBM

Ceramic Building Material.

Medieval

The period between AD 1066 and AD 1500.

Natural

In archaeological terms this refers to the undisturbed natural geology of a site.

NGR

National Grid Reference from the Ordnance Survey Grid.

OD

Ordnance datum; used to express a given height above sea-level. (AOD Above Ordnance Datum).

OS

Ordnance Survey.

Post-medieval

The period between AD 1500 and AD 1900.

Prehistoric

The period prior to the Roman invasion of AD 43, traditionally sub divided into; *Palaeolithic* – c. 500,000 BC to c. 12,000 BC; *Mesolithic* – c. 12,000 BC to c. 4,500 BC; *Neolithic* – c. 4,500 BC to c. 2,000 BC; *Bronze Age* – c. 2,000 BC to c. 800 BC; *Iron Age* – c. 800 BC to AD 43.

Roman

The period traditionally dated AD 43 until AD 410.

Saxon

The period between AD 410 and AD 1066.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of an archaeological evaluation undertaken by Foundations Archaeology in July 2015 on land at Bleadon Hill, Weston-Super-Mare, North Somerset (NGR: ST 334 577 - centred). The project was commissioned by Neil Emery of Clifton Emery Design.
- 1.2 The project was conducted in accordance with the approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), prepared by Foundations Archaeology (2015) and CifA *Standards and Guidance on Archaeological Evaluation* (2014).
- 1.3 The code of conduct of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists was adhered to throughout.

2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Planning permission is being sought for a residential development of 79 houses, with associated infrastructure.
- 2.2 The development area is located across two agricultural fields which at the time of the works were under pasture. The site itself is approximately 750m to the north-west of Bleadon and borders the southern edge of Bleadon Hill. The site lies between 70m to 80m AOD and is located on a limestone ridge overlooking the Levels, with the underlying geology of *Pembroke Limestone Group* (BGS – on line viewer).
- 2.3 A Desk-Based Assessment was produced by Oakford Archaeology in November 2014 and should be read in conjunction with this report. The results of which are summarised below.
- 2.4 There is no evidence of early Prehistoric settlement activity in the area, however, a number of flint scatters have been recorded within the proposed development and the immediate vicinity and there is a late Neolithic/early Bronze Age Barrow cemetery located to the northeast.
- 2.5 Later Prehistoric occupation, including funerary activity appeared to be concentrated at the western end of Bleadon Hill and the village of Bleadon itself. Also later Prehistoric and/or Romano-British earthworks and cropmarks have been identified to the north, east and south of the site.
- 2.6 A geophysical survey of the proposed area (Substrata, 2014) identified further evidence of an extensive Prehistoric field system.
- 2.7 The study area therefore contained potential for archaeological features and deposits, predominantly associated with the Prehistoric and Romano-British periods. This did not prejudice the works against the recovery of finds or features associated with other periods.

- 2.8 In accordance with NPPF (2012), the Planning Archaeologist advised that a programme of pre-determination archaeological evaluation was required in order to allow the archaeological impact of the new development to be fully assessed.

3 AIMS

- 3.1 The aims of the archaeological evaluation were to gather high quality data from the direct observation of archaeological deposits in order to provide sufficient information to establish the nature, extent, preservation and potential of any surviving archaeological remains. This would allow informed planning decisions to be taken regarding the archaeological provision for the areas affected by the proposed development.
- 3.2 These aims were achieved through pursuit of the following specific objectives:
- i) To define and identify the nature of archaeological deposits on site, and date these where possible;
 - ii) To attempt to characterise the nature of the archaeological sequence and recover as much information as possible about the spatial patterning of features present on the site;
 - iii) To recover a well dated stratigraphic sequence and recover coherent artefact, ecofact and environmental samples;
 - iv) To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence and the forms in which such evidence may be present;
 - v) To establish the relationship of any remains to the surrounding contemporary landscape.

4 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 A total of eight evaluation trenches were excavated within the proposed development area, as shown in Figure 2. The trenches were located in order to provide a good sample across the site, although Trench 3 was located in a 'blank' area from the geophysical survey in order to test the results of that survey. At the request of the County Archaeologist a further 7 metres of trenching was also excavated to the south east of Trench 7, in order to test if feature [707] continued to the south.
- 4.2 Non-significant overburden was removed, under constant archaeological supervision, to the top of the archaeological deposits or the underlying natural deposits, whichever was encountered first. This was achieved through the use of a 360° mechanical excavator, equipped with a toothless grading bucket. Spoil tips were visually scanned for finds.

- 4.3 All excavation and recording work was undertaken in accordance with the WSI and the Foundations Archaeology Technical Manual 3: Excavation Manual.

5 RESULTS

- 5.1 A full description of all contexts identified during the course of the project is presented in Appendix 1, along with a report on the recovered pottery in Appendix 2 and an assessment of charred plant macrofossils and wood charcoal in Appendix 3.
- 5.2 The natural substrates, which comprised of limestone bedrock and red brown clays occurred at an average depth of 0.30m (between 63.51m to 77.96m OD) below the Modern ground surface. This was often visible as distinct bands within the trenches, which may have produced readings similar to possible archaeological features during the geophysical survey. Preservation conditions across the majority of the trenches was good, with the presence of intact subsoils in all trenches, with the exception of the eastern end of Trench 2. Possible colluvial deposits were present in Trench 1, a possible former subsoil was present in Trench 7 and periglacial deposits were present in Trench 6.
- 5.3 A total of two probable features were present within the trenches.
- 5.4 **Trench 1** No archaeological finds or features were present within this trench. However, a probable colluvial layer (103) was present at the northern end of the trench. Due to the presence of charcoal within this deposit, a sample was retained for environmental processing but, once processed, the sample did not contain adequate material for analysis. The possible archaeological features revealed by the geophysical survey were most likely the result of natural banding throughout the trench. However, the area of possible colluvium was indicated by the geophysical survey.
- 5.5 **Trench 2** No archaeological finds or features were present within this trench. The possible archaeological feature revealed by the geophysical survey was most likely the result of natural banding at the northern end of the trench.
- 5.6 **Trench 3** No archaeological finds or features were present within this trench.
- 5.7 **Trench 4** No archaeological finds or features were present within this trench. The possible archaeological features revealed by the geophysical survey were most likely the result of natural banding throughout the trench.
- 5.8 **Trench 5** A possible east - west orientated linear feature [503] was present in the northern half of the trench. The feature was shallow and uneven in plan and possibly represented a former hedgerow. Present within the feature were of two sherds of Iron Age, although these were abraded and probably residual in context.

- 5.9 **Trench 6** No archaeological finds or features were present within this trench. The possible archaeological features revealed by the geophysical survey matched the locations of localised deposit (603), which was identified on site as periglacial material.
- 5.10 **Trench 7** A wide, shallow linear [707], orientated northwest-southeast was present within this trench. The fills (703/704/705) contained 44 sherds of early Bronze Age pottery, with a concentration of 40 sherds within the central fill (703), which all appeared to come from a single Collared Urn vessel. It is likely that fills (703), (704) and (705) constitute a single deposit, however, due to the concentration of pottery and charcoal in the centre of the feature this was designated a separate context.
- 5.10.1 Samples were taken from fill (703) for environmental analysis; the results of which are contained in Appendix 3. The material within the sample appeared to be in its original context and contained a high density of wood charcoal fragments, but only a small quantity of poorly preserved charred cereal grains.
- 5.10.2 Feature [707] roughly matches the location of a possible feature identified during the geophysical survey.
- 5.11 **Trench 8** No archaeological finds or features were present within this trench. The possible archaeological feature revealed by the geophysical survey was most likely the result of natural banding at the northern end of the trench. There was no evidence for the continuation of [707] within this trench.
- 5.12 **Trench 9** This trench was excavated at the request of the County Archaeologist, in order to test whether feature [707] continued to the south of Trench 7. No evidence for a continuation of the feature was noted, which accords with the results of the geophysical survey, which indicated that the feature terminated to the northwest of Trench 9.

6 DISCUSSION

- 6.1 Possible archaeological features were only present in Trenches 5 and 7. Of these, only feature [707] can be securely dated to the early Bronze Age, as the material present in possible former hedgerow [503] was probably residual in context.
- 6.2 The results of the geophysical survey (Substrata, 2014) roughly correlated with the identified archaeological features, with further positive results most likely due to the variation in the natural deposits across the study area.
- 6.3 The results of these works suggest the likelihood of further dispersed and isolated archaeological deposits within the study area, which are most likely to be Prehistoric in date.
- 6.4 The archive is currently held at the offices of Foundations Archaeology, but will be deposited within 12 months with the appropriate museum. A short note

will be submitted for publication in the relevant local archaeological journal and an OASIS form will also be submitted to ADS.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foundations Archaeology would like to thank Vince Russett of North Somerset Council and Neil Emery and Lory Cordall of Clifton Emery Design for their help during the course of the project.

Land at Bleadon Hill, Weston-Super-Mare: Archaeological Evaluation

APPENDIX 1: Stratigraphic Data

CXT	L(m)	W(m)	D(m)	DESCRIPTION	CUTS/LATER THAN	CUT BY/EARLIER THAN
				TRENCH 1: 50m by 1.6m. Natural = limestone bedrock with bands of red clay at average 64.87m OD.		
101	na	na	0.11 to 0.18	Topsoil: dark red brown silty clay, with occasional small limestone inclusions and occasional charcoal flecks.	102	na
102	na	na	0.09-0.13	Subsoil: mid orange red brown silty clay, with frequent limestone inclusions.	103, natural	101
103	na	na	Upto 0.44	Colluvium: mid orange red silty clay with rare limestone inclusions and occasional charcoal flecks. Only present at north end of trench for approximately 8 metres.	natural	102
				No archaeological finds or features were present within this trench.		
				TRENCH 2: 50m by 1.60m. Natural = limestone bedrock with occasional patches of red brown clay at average 63.51m OD.		
201	na	na	0.18	Topsoil: dark grey brown silty clay, with occasional small limestone inclusions and rare charcoal flecks.	202	na
202	na	na	0.11	Subsoil: mid red brown silty clay, with frequent limestone inclusions.	natural	201
				No archaeological finds or features were present within this trench.		
				TRENCH 3: 50m by 1.60m. Natural = limestone bedrock with occasional patches of orange red brown clay at average 65.26m OD.		
301	na	na	0.14	Topsoil: dark red brown silty clay, with occasional small limestone inclusions and occasional charcoal flecks.	302	na
302	na	na	0.09	Subsoil: mid red brown silty clay, with frequent limestone inclusions.	natural	301
				No archaeological finds or features were present within this trench.		
				TRENCH 4: 50m by 1.60m. Natural = bands of limestone bedrock and red brown clay at average 68.37m OD.		
401	na	na	0.13	Topsoil: dark red brown silty clay, with occasional small limestone inclusions and occasional charcoal flecks.	402	na
402	na	na	0.15	Subsoil: mid red brown silty clay, with frequent limestone inclusions.	natural	401
				No archaeological finds or features were present within this trench.		

Land at Bleadon Hill, Weston-Super-Mare: Archaeological Evaluation

CXT	L(m)	W(m)	D(m)	DESCRIPTION	CUTS/LATER THAN	CUT BY/EARLIER THAN
				TRENCH 5: 50m by 1.60m. Natural = bands of limestone bedrock and red brown clay at average 71.61m OD.		
501	na	na	0.18	Topsoil: dark grey brown silty clay, with frequent small limestone inclusions and rare charcoal flecks.	502	na
502	na	na	0.10	Subsoil: mid grey brown silty clay, with frequent limestone inclusions and rare charcoal.	natural	501
[503]	1.6+	2.65	Up to 0.08	Shallow, uneven possible linear cut, orientated east-west.	natural	504
504	1.6+	2.65	Up to 0.08	Fill of possible cut [503]. A reddish brown silty clay, with frequent small and medium limestone inclusions and very rare charcoal. Contained two abraded sherds of Iron Age pottery. Former hedgerow?	[503]	502
				TRENCH 6: 50m by 1.60m. Natural = bands of limestone bedrock and red brown clay at average 73.78m OD.		
601	na	na	0.17-0.20	Topsoil: dark grey brown silty clay, with frequent small limestone inclusions and rare charcoal flecks.	602, 603, natural	na
602	na	na	Up to 0.12	Subsoil: mid grey brown silty clay, with frequent limestone inclusions and rare charcoal. Only present at west end of trench for approximately 8 metres.	603, natural	601
603	6+	1.6+	Up to 0.1	Localised deposit present at west and eastern ends of the trench (for approximately 6 metres and 1 metre respectively). A reddish brown clay silt with very frequent limestone inclusions, but no charcoal or other artefactual evidence present. Possibly periglacial.	natural	601, 602
				No archaeological finds or features were present within this trench.		
				TRENCH 7: 50m by 1.60m. Natural = bands of limestone bedrock and red brown clay at average 71.61m OD.		
701	na	na	0.14	Topsoil: dark grey red brown silty clay, with frequent small limestone inclusions and rare charcoal flecks.	702	na
702	na	na	0.25	Subsoil: mid red brown silty clay, with frequent limestone inclusions and rare charcoal.	706	701
703	1.6+	1.5	0.1	Fill of [707]. Dark greenish brown silty clay, with frequent limestone inclusions and charcoal flecks. Contained 40 sherds of pottery, which appeared to be from a single Collared Urn of early Bronze Age date. Most likely equivalent to (704) and (705).	[707]	706
704	1.6+	2.3	Up to 0.14	Fill of [707]. Dark greenish brown silty clay, with frequent limestone inclusions and charcoal flecks. Contained 3 sherds of pottery from a Collared Urn, with one possibly a Beaker vessel of early Bronze Age date. Most likely equivalent to (703) and (705).	[707]	706
705	1.6+	1.9	Up to 0.14	Fill of [707]. Dark greenish brown silty clay, with frequent limestone inclusions and charcoal flecks. Contained a single sherd of pottery, which appeared to be from a Collared Urn of early Bronze Age date. Most likely equivalent to (703) and (704).	[707]	706

Land at Bleadon Hill, Weston-Super-Mare: Archaeological Evaluation

CXT	L(m)	W(m)	D(m)	DESCRIPTION	CUTS/LATER THAN	CUT BY/EARLIER THAN
706	na	na	Up to 0.18	Deposit/buried subsoil?: mid grey brown silty clay, with occasional limestone inclusions and rare charcoal. Similar in appearance to (702), however noticeably less stony.	703/704/705, natural	702
[707]	1.6+	5.7	Up to 0.14	Wide, shallow uneven possible cut orientated northwest-southeast. Contained 703, 704 and 705.	natural	703/704/705
				TRENCH 8: 50m by 1.60m. Natural = bands of limestone bedrock and red brown clay at average 77.96m OD.		
801	na	na	0.19	Topsoil: dark grey brown silty clay, with frequent small limestone inclusions and rare charcoal flecks.	802	na
802	na	na	0.13	Subsoil: mid grey brown silty clay, with frequent limestone inclusions and rare charcoal.	natural	801
				No archaeological finds or features were present within this trench.		
				TRENCH 9: 7m by 1.60m. Natural = limestone bedrock at average 74.11m OD.		
901	na	na	0.19	Topsoil: dark red brown silty clay, with frequent small limestone inclusions. No obvious charcoal present.	902	na
902	na	na	0.16	Subsoil: mid red brown silty clay, with frequent limestone inclusions. No obvious charcoal present.	natural	901
				No archaeological finds or features were present within this trench.		

APPENDIX 2: Pottery Assessment

By Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 46 sherds with a total weight of 191g. It was all prehistoric.

All the sherds are in a soft, slightly friable fabric with few visible inclusions, (although the presence of small voids suggest leached-out shell), other than one sherd (weight = 8g) in a sandy fabric with sub-angular quartz up to 1mm. It has a burnished outer surface, and is probably of Iron Age date, and occurred in context 504 alongside another highly abraded rimsherd (weight = 5g) in a soft shelly fabric, and likely to be of a similar date.

The bulk of the assemblage comprises 40 sherds weighing 168g from context 703. They appear to all be from the same vessel, a Collared Urn with extensive comb-point decoration. Fragments of the rim and edge of the collar are present, and suggest that most of the sherds are from that area of the pot. Some re-fits were possible, but the group is somewhat fragmented, and the sherds small. It is typical of the early Bronze Age in the region, and probably dates to the first few centuries of the second millennium BC (Pollard and Healy 2008, 77).

The rest of the assemblage consists of small and somewhat abraded sherds in similar fabrics to the Collared Urn, and likely of a similar date. A single sherd (1g) with worn possible comb-point decoration occurred in context 705, with three sherds (9g) occurring in 704. Of these, one small sherd (2g) had comb-point decoration, and may originally be from another Collared Urn, or possibly a Beaker.

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Pollard, J, and Healy, F, (eds) 2008 Neolithic and Early Bronze Age in CJ Webster (ed.) *The Archaeology of South West England South West Archaeological Research Framework Resource Assessment and Research Agenda* Somerset County Council 75-102

APPENDIX 3: Assessment of charred plant macrofossils and wood charcoal from BHW15.

The soil samples were assessed by Ellen Simmons. The table referred to is **Table 1**.

Introduction

One soil sample was processed for the recovery of charred plant remains and wood charcoal and assessed in order to determine the concentration, diversity, state of preservation and suitability for use in radiocarbon dating, of any archaeobotanical material present. A further aim of this assessment was to evaluate the potential of any charred plant remains or wood charcoal present to provide evidence for the function of the contexts, the economy of the site or for the nature of the local environment.

Recovery, processing and laboratory methods

The flotation sample was processed for the recovery of charred plant remains and wood charcoal by GeoFlo Southwest Geophysical and Flotation Services using a water separation machine. Floating material was collected in a 250µm mesh, and the remaining heavy residue retained in a 1mm mesh. The flot and heavy residue was air dried.

The sample was assessed in accordance with English Heritage guidelines for environmental archaeology assessments (Jones, 2011). A preliminary assessment of the sample was made by scanning using a stereo-binocular microscope (x10 - x65) and recording the abundance of the main classes of material present. Where less than five items of cereal grain or wild / weed plant seeds were present these were quantified in full. Identification of plant material was carried out by comparison with material in the author's own reference collection and various reference works (e.g. Cappers *et al*, 2006). Cereal identifications and nomenclature follow Jacomet (2006). Other plant nomenclature follows Stace (2010). The composition of the sample is recorded below in table 1.

Preservation

A low proportion of intrusive roots were present in the sample which, along with a high density of wood charcoal fragments, indicates that charred material present in the sample is unlikely to be intrusive.

A small quantity of charred cereal grains were present and these were generally quite poorly preserved exhibiting puffing and distortion and identifiable by gross morphology only.

The wood charcoal fragments were generally well preserved with minimal evidence for vitrification or mineralisation.

Charred plant remains

Two indeterminate barley grains (*Hordeum* sp.), two seeds of curled / clustered dock (*Rumex crispus* / *conglomeratus*) and one seed of goosefoot (*Chenopodium* sp.) were present in the sample.

Wood charcoal

Over one hundred wood charcoal fragments greater than 4mm in size and over five hundred wood charcoal fragments greater than 2mm in size were present in the sample. Both ring porous and diffuse porous taxa were represented. Further identification of the taxa present in the wood charcoal assemblage would require the use of high power microscopy.

Discussion and recommendations for further work.

The sporadic charred cereal grains present in the sample are likely to have been charred as a result of crop processing or food preparation and most likely represent domestic waste that became incorporated into the fill of the sampled feature. The charred wild or weed plant seeds are also likely to represent weeds that were harvested along with the crops and discarded following crop processing but may also represent other sources of plant material such as charred roofing or flooring material or kindling.

The wood charcoal assemblage includes both diffuse and ring porous taxa, indicating that the use of a variety of taxa types as fuel is represented rather than just a single fuel source. A sufficient quantity of wood charcoal fragments was present to provide a representative sample of woody taxa utilised as fuel. Identification of at least one hundred wood charcoal fragments greater than 2mm in size would therefore be expected to provide information concerning the local environment and the utilisation of that environment for fuel.

No obvious round wood charcoal, which could be utilised for radiocarbon dating, was noted during preliminary scanning. It is possible that wood charcoal fragments with strong ring curvatures, indicative of smaller branches or twigs, may be recovered during more detailed wood charcoal analysis. The charred cereal grains present in the sample are unlikely to be of a sufficient size to provide enough carbon for radiocarbon dating.

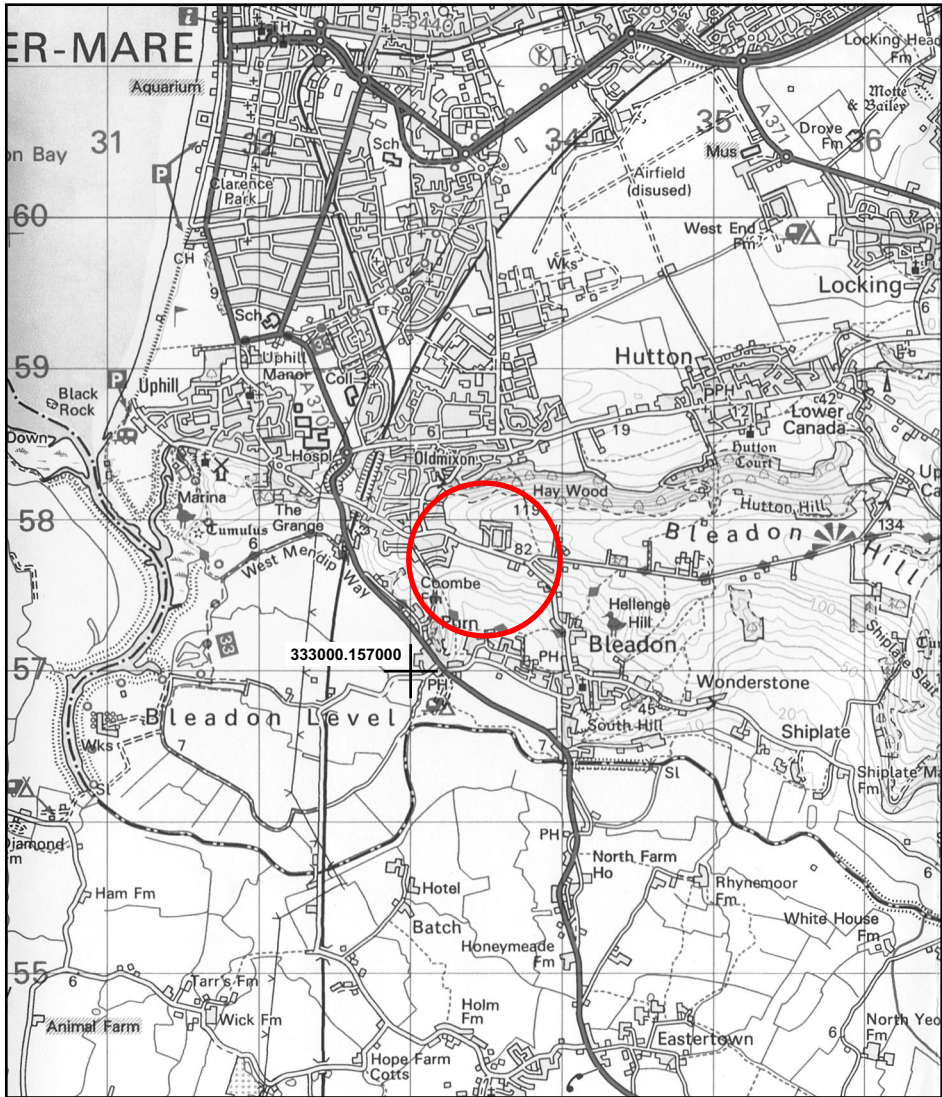
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Table 1 – Archaeobotanical sample scanning table

Archaeobotanical Sample Scanning Table	
SITE: BHW15	
CONTEXT NUMBER	703
FLOTATION SAMPLE NUMBER	1
FLOT VOLUME (ml)	130
Charred plant material (*key - = < 5 items, + = > 5 items, ++ = > 10 items, +++ = > 30 items, ++++ = > 50 items, +++++ = > 100 items.)	
CROP MATERIAL*	
Barley grain indet. (<i>Hordeum</i> sp.)	2
WILD / WEED SEEDS*	
Goosefoot (<i>Chenopodium</i> sp.)	1
Curled / clustered dock (<i>Rumex crispus</i> / <i>conglomeratus</i>)	1
NON SEED PLANT MATERIAL*	
> 4mm wood charcoal fragments	101
> 2mm wood charcoal fragments	>500
Charcoal (DP = predominantly diffuse porous. RP = predominantly ring porous)	DP & RP
Intrusive plant material / non-plant material (- = < 5 items, + = > 5 items, ++ = > 10 items, +++ = > 30 items, ++++ = > 50 items, +++++ = > 100 items.)	
% Intrusive roots	20
Sample summary information	
Sample suitable for further analysis of charred plant material	×
Sample suitable for further analysis of wood charcoal	✓
Charred material suitable for C14 dating	×
Retain flot	✓



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Site Code: BHW15

Accession Code:

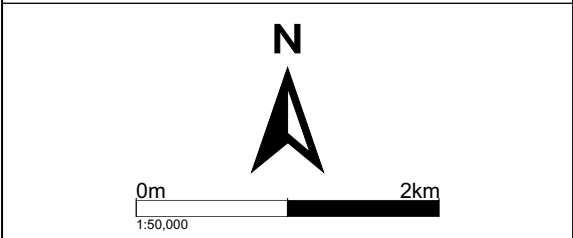


FIGURE 1: Site Location



Fig. 11 Plan showing summary results of geophysics and field systems identified from the 2006-8 LIDAR survey (© English Heritage).

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Site Code: BHW15
Accession Code:

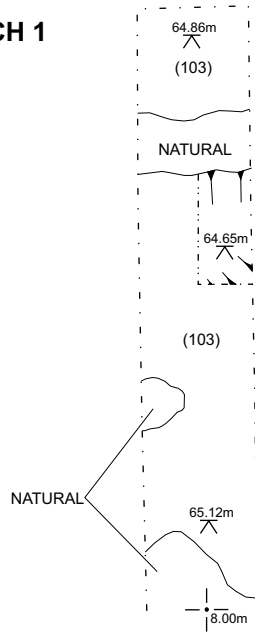
N

Colluvium Deposits
 Archaeology

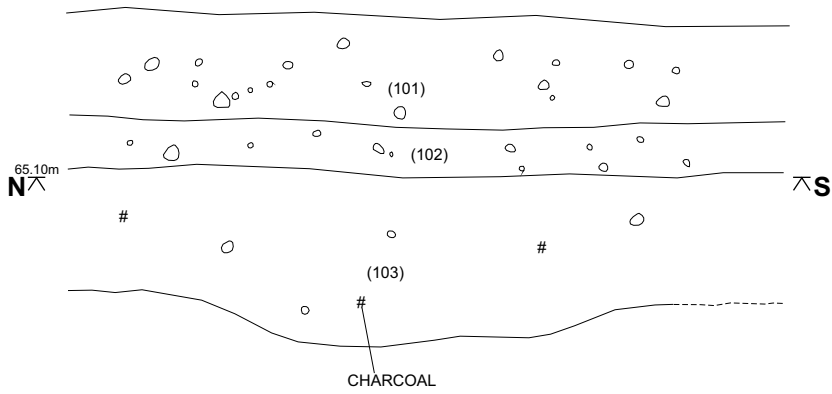
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FIGURE 2: Trench Plan Showing Archaeological Features

TRENCH 1



WEST FACING SECTION THROUGH DEPOSIT (103)



Site Code: BHW15
Accession Code:

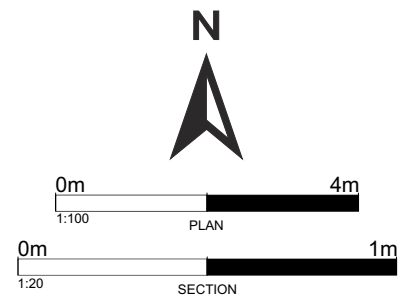
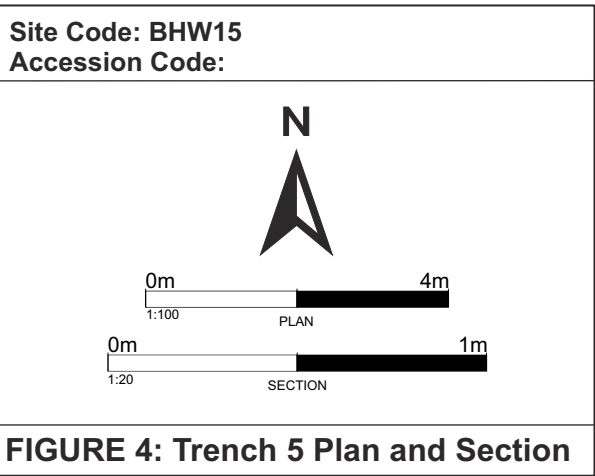
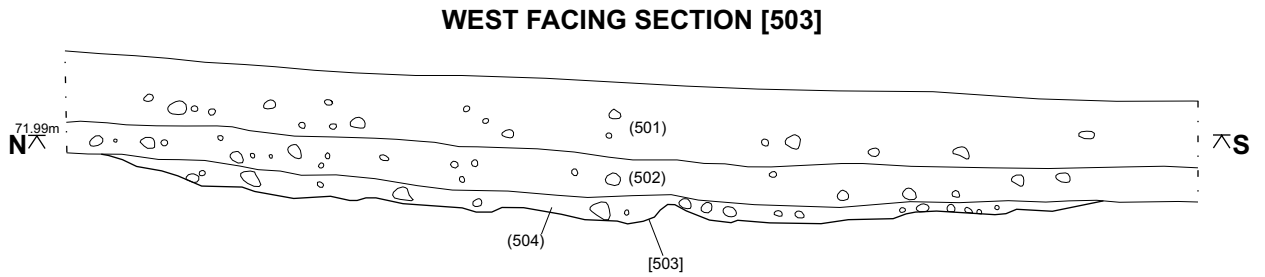
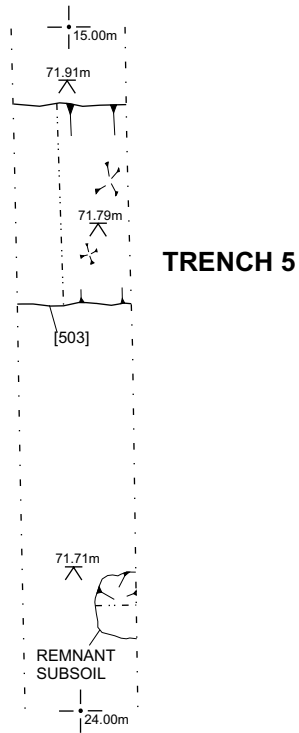
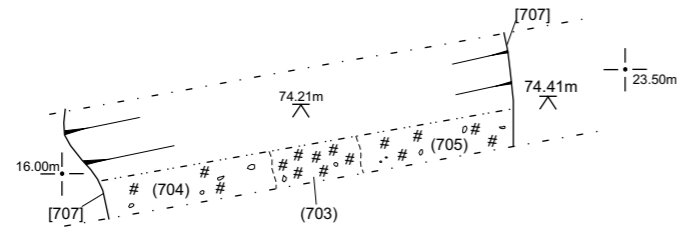


FIGURE 3: Trench 1 Plan and Section



TRENCH 7



SOUTHEAST FACING SECTION [707]

