

**LAND AT OVERTON FARM,
MAISEMORE,
GLOUCESTERSHIRE.**

NGR: SO 8011 2247

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

July 2007
Report No. 551

Quality Assurance

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CONTENTS

Summary

Glossary of Archaeological Terms and Abbreviations

- 1 INTRODUCTION
- 2 PROJECT BACKGROUND
- 3 AIMS
- 4 METHODOLOGY
- 5 RESULTS
- 6 CONCLUSIONS
- 7 BIBLIOGRAPHY
- 8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FIGURE LIST

- Figure 1: Site Location
- Figure 2: Site Plan
- Figure 3: Trench Plans
- Figure 4: Sections

SUMMARY

In July 2007 Foundations Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological evaluation on land at Overton Farm, Maisemore, Gloucestershire (NGR: SO 8011 2247). The project was commissioned by Complete Utilities Ltd.

The evaluation required the excavation and recording of six trenches across the proposed development area.

The archaeological works revealed two pits, which possibly date to the Medieval period and an undated field boundary ditch.

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 AD1066 and AD1500.

MGS

Modern Ground Surface.

Natural

In archaeological terms this refers to the undisturbed natural geology of a site, in this case river terrace deposits overlying Lower Lias and Triassic Mudstones (British Geological Survey, 1977).

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.

Roman

The period traditionally dated AD 43 until AD 410.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of an archaeological evaluation undertaken by Foundations Archaeology during July 2007, on land at Overton Farm, Maisemore, Gloucestershire (NGR: SO 8011 2247). The project was commissioned by Complete Utilities Ltd.
- 1.2 The project was undertaken in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Foundations Archaeology (2007), based upon the standard brief issued by the Gloucestershire County Archaeological Service. The fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with IFA *Standards and Guidance on Archaeological Evaluation* (1994, revised 2001) and Archaeological Guidance Paper 4: *Archaeological Evaluation: (guidelines)* issued by English Heritage (London Region).
- 1.3 This report constitutes the results of the archaeological works. The code of conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists was adhered to throughout.

2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 2.1 It is proposed to develop land at Overton Farm, Maisemore, Gloucestershire (NGR: SO 8011 2247). The development comprises a new recycling processing area with a maintenance and office building, a storage area and parking areas, along with a new access road (Planning Reference 07/0028/TWMAGW). The proposed development area is bounded to the east by the A417 and to the north, west and south by agricultural land. The study area is located on land that rises up from the River Severn valley to the east.
- 2.2 The archaeological background to the site was assessed by Archaeology and Planning Solutions Ltd. (2007). The results of this assessment document are reproduced and summarised below.
- 2.3 The assessment has highlighted that there is very little evidence for prehistoric activity within the Overton Farm area although it notes that this may be due to the lack of planning-led and other archaeological investigations within a predominantly rural area. Potential prehistoric ring gullies and postholes have, however, been identified in an archaeological evaluation approximately 1 km to the north-west.
- 2.4 Several Romano-British artefacts have been recovered from fields approximately 150m to the south-east of the application site, adjacent to the A417. These artefacts, mostly found during metal detecting, consist of coins, eight of which were probably of 3rd-4th century AD date, two potsherds, part of a bronze brooch and a piece of stone tessera. Although limited, the evidence is indicative of Romano-British activity around Overton Farm. The presence of the tessera may also indicate that this activity could have been associated with a settlement of relatively high status. Irregular soil marks are visible on a 1970 aerial photograph, although none of these can be clearly classified as archaeological in origin. A bronze rim of a cauldron or plate of Romano-

British or Medieval date has also been found in the vicinity of Overton Farm. In addition a number of other Romano-British sites have been recorded on the SMR within the wider vicinity, including a road, a track and two findspots.

- 2.5 No sites or findspots of early Medieval date are recorded within a 1km radius of Overton Farm. However, around Overton Farm earthworks are recorded on the SMR as being visible on a 1966 aerial photograph. These predominantly consist of ridge and furrow, but there may also be a pond with buildings and another possible platform nearby. These may be elements of the southern part of the Medieval settlement of Overtown which is recorded in documents dated to 1287. The name means *upper farmstead* or *farmstead on the bank*. A number of other Medieval features are known from the wider vicinity, including a settlement 670m to the northwest, the possible site of the Medieval village of Morwent, approximately 1km to the northwest where a hollow way has been identified, and a track.
- 2.6 Early 19th century cartographic evidence shows the settlement of Overton or Upper Town lying immediately south of the application site, consisting of several buildings around trackways off the predecessor to the present day A417. The fields within the site were known as The Great Orchard and Merry Hill, a trackway connecting Overton with Moor End to the north-west is also illustrated. In addition a cider making millstone is recorded on the SMR from Overton Farm and a World War II pillbox survives approximately 350m to the east. An undated cropmark also lies approximately 870m to the south.
- 2.7 The study area therefore contained the potential for significant archaeological features and deposits, predominantly associated with the Roman and Medieval period. This did not prejudice the evaluation against the recovery of finds or features dating to other periods.
- 2.8 Development of the site was begun prior to the implementation of the archaeological evaluation. The development activity comprised an area of ground level reduction, to a depth of up to 4m below modern ground surface (Figure 2), the cutting of service trenches and the laying of tarmac surfaces. It is noted that this activity may have had a significant localised impact.

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. In turn this would allow reasonable 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.

4 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The WSI required the excavation of five 30m trenches and one 15m trench, which comprised a 5% sample of the study area. Due to on-site constraints it was necessary to slightly amend the location of Trench 4. The final trench locations are shown in Figure 2.
- 4.2 Non-significant overburden was removed, under constant archaeological supervision, to the top of the archaeological deposits or the underlying natural deposits, whichever were encountered first. This was achieved through the use of a 360° tracked mechanical excavator with a toothless grading bucket. Thereafter cleaning and excavation was conducted by hand. Spoil tips were 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 **Trench 1** (30m long, 1.8m wide) was aligned north-south and was excavated onto the natural substrate at an average depth of 0.44m (65.28m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural was sealed beneath a mixed soil, brick and rubble make-up layer (101), up to 0.46m thick, which contained frequent modern artefacts. No archaeological features were present within the trench.
- 5.2 **Trench 2** (30m long, 1.8m wide) was aligned northwest-southeast and was excavated onto the natural substrate at an average depth of 0.50m (65.06m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural was sealed beneath a mixed soil, brick and rubble make-up layer (201), up to 0.58m thick, which contained frequent modern artefacts. No archaeological features were present within the trench.
- 5.3 **Trench 3** (30m long, 1.8m wide) was aligned northwest-southeast and was excavated onto the natural substrate at an average depth of 0.67m (65.04m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural was overlaid, at the southeast end of the trench, by a mixed soil, brick and rubble make-up layer (303), up to 0.53m thick, which contained frequent modern artefacts. Layer (303) was sealed by a pink gravel bedding layer (302), up to 0.10m thick.

Context (302) was overlaid by a tarmac surface (301), up to 0.08m thick. A number of features and deposits were present within the trench.

- 5.4 Feature [306] was 13m long, up to 3.5m wide, 0.36m in depth and consisted of a northwest-southeast aligned curvilinear ditch with an uneven and irregular profile. Feature [306] cut the natural deposits, was sealed by layer (303) and was cut by a modern service trench. The feature extended beyond the north and southeast limits of excavation. Fill (307) comprised a dark brown compact clay, which contained frequent large roots and occasional modern artefacts including china-ware pottery sherds and brick fragments. Feature [306]/(307) was associated with feature [308] at the northeast and context (305) at the west.
- 5.5 Feature [308] was 1.2m long, approximately 2m wide, 0.38m in depth and consisted of a northeast-southwest aligned ditch with sloping sides. Feature [308] cut the natural deposits, was sealed by layer (303) and was cut by a modern service trench. The feature extended beyond the northeast limit of excavation. Fill (309) comprised a dark brown compact clay, which contained frequent large roots. Feature [308] occurred to the northeast of and formed a right angle with feature [306] and fills (307) and (309) were equivalent.
- 5.6 Context (305) was 7m long, 2.7m wide and consisted of a northwest-southeast aligned linear layer, which comprised compacted stone and brick rubble. Hand cleaning across layer (305) yielded frequent modern china-ware pottery sherds and occasional glass fragments. Context (305) occurred immediately to the west of fill (307) and was sealed by layer (303). Layer (305) shared a similar alignment to an extant hedgerow to the north of the evaluation trench.
- 5.7 Context (304) occurred immediately to the west of layer (305) and extended for a distance of at least 15m. Context (304) extended beyond the northwest limit of excavation. The majority of context (304) was removed by mechanical excavator in order to reveal underlying deposits. Context (304), up to 0.20m thick, comprised a compacted, crushed stone surface, which contained modern artefacts. Layer (304) overlaid natural deposits and was sealed by layer (303).
- 5.8 In light of the modern artefactual material associated with contexts (307), (305) and (304), and in agreement with the representative of Gloucestershire County Archaeological Service, no further investigation of the features and deposits within Trench 3 was undertaken.
- 5.9 **Trench 4** (15m long, 1.8m wide) was aligned northwest-southeast and was excavated onto the natural substrate at an average depth of 0.59m (64.64m OD) from the modern ground surface. Frequent northwest-southeast aligned linear plough scores were cut into the top of the natural deposits across the entire length of the trench. The natural was sealed beneath a mixed soil, brick and rubble make-up layer (403), up to 0.50m thick. Context (403) was overlaid by a pink gravel bedding layer (402), up to 0.10m thick. This was in turn overlaid by a tarmac layer (401), up to 0.12m thick. No archaeological features were present within the trench.

- 5.10 **Trench 5** (30m long, 1.8m wide) was aligned northeast-southwest and was excavated onto the natural substrate at an average depth of 0.53m (63.53m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural was sealed beneath a mixed soil, brick and rubble make-up layer (501), up to 0.67m thick. Two archaeological features were present in the trench.
- 5.11 Feature [502] was 2.20m long, 1.40m wide, 0.41m in depth and consisted of a sub-oval pit with sloping sides and a round base. Fill (503) comprised a tan clay silt, which contained frequent charcoal flecks. Context (503) yielded a single body-sherd of *Minety Ware* pottery (4 g.), which is datable to the 12th – 14th century AD. Pit [502] cut the natural deposits and was overlaid by layer (501).
- 5.12 Feature [504] was 1.5m long, 0.35m wide, 0.22m in depth and consisted of a cut feature, which partly occurred within the trench and extended beyond the northwest limit of excavation. Feature [504] was possibly a pit, similar to feature [502]. The feature had irregular, sloping sides. Fill (505) comprised a tan clay silt, which contained frequent charcoal flecks and was equivalent to fill (503). Context (505) contained a rim-sherd of *Malvern Chase* pottery (30 g.), which is datable to the 12th – 14th century AD. Feature [504] cut the natural deposits and was overlaid by fill (501).
- 5.13 **Trench 6** (30m long, 1.8m wide) was aligned east-west and was excavated onto the natural substrate at an average depth of 0.52m (62.13m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural was sealed beneath a grey brown clay silt subsoil (602), up to 0.27m thick. Subsoil (602) was sealed by topsoil (601), up to 0.35m thick, which comprised a brown clay silt. No archaeological features were present within the trench.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Trench 1 and the north-western half of Trench 2 were located within the area which had previously been significantly reduced. It is not clear if the negative results from these trenches are representative of the archaeological potential in this area or are due to the modern reduction works.
- 6.2 The lack of intact subsoils within Trenches 3, 4 and 5 indicates that the area around these trenches had previously been stripped. The presence of plough scores in Trench 4 and archaeological features in Trenches 3 and 5 suggests that this area had not been significantly reduced.
- 6.3 Curvilinear ditch [306] was in alignment with an extant hedgerow boundary. The feature turned towards the east at the southern end of the trench and probably represents the corner of a field or enclosure. Feature [306] and associated ditch [308] remain undated, however modern material recovered from fill (307) indicates that these ditch boundaries were in-filled relatively recently.

- 6.4 Context (305) is likely to represent hard-standing for a trackway/path along the south-western side of the ditch/hedgerow boundary. Context (304) probably formed a hard-standing area to the west of trackway (305). Deposits (304) and (305) were clearly of modern origin.
- 6.5 Pit [502] and feature [504] contained Medieval artefactual material and frequent charcoal flecks. These features represent limited evidence for settlement activity, possibly dating to the Medieval period.
- 6.6 The evaluation has indicated that, for the majority of the site, there is a low to medium potential for archaeological remains dating to the Medieval period. These remains are possibly related to the Medieval settlement of Overtown. There is negligible potential for archaeological remains to occur at the northwest of the site, in the area previously reduced by the modern development works.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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FIGURE 1: Site Location

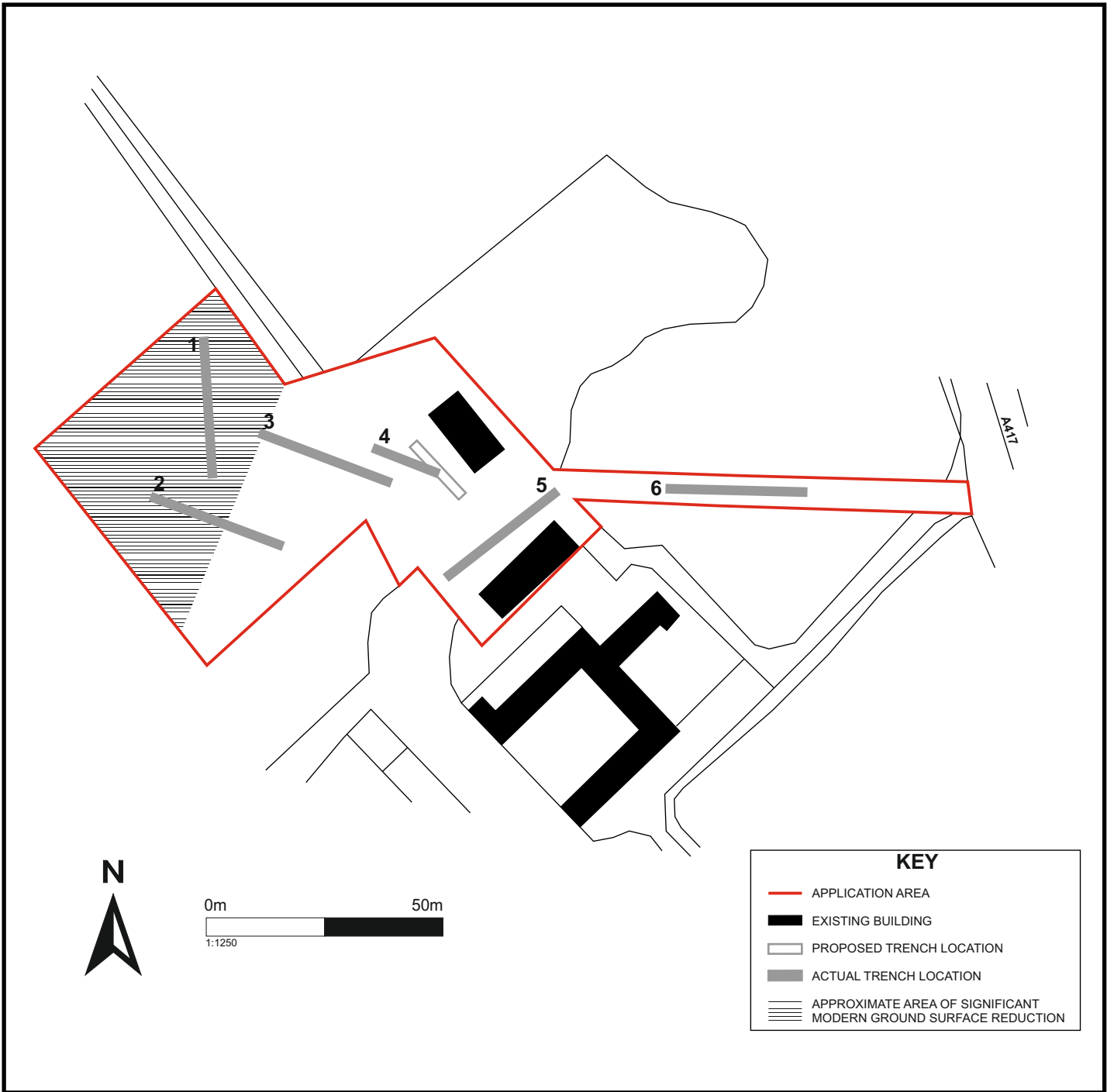
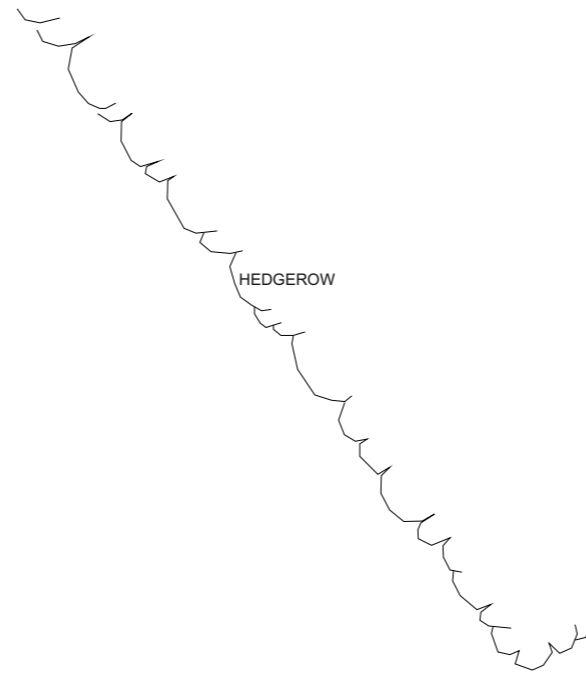
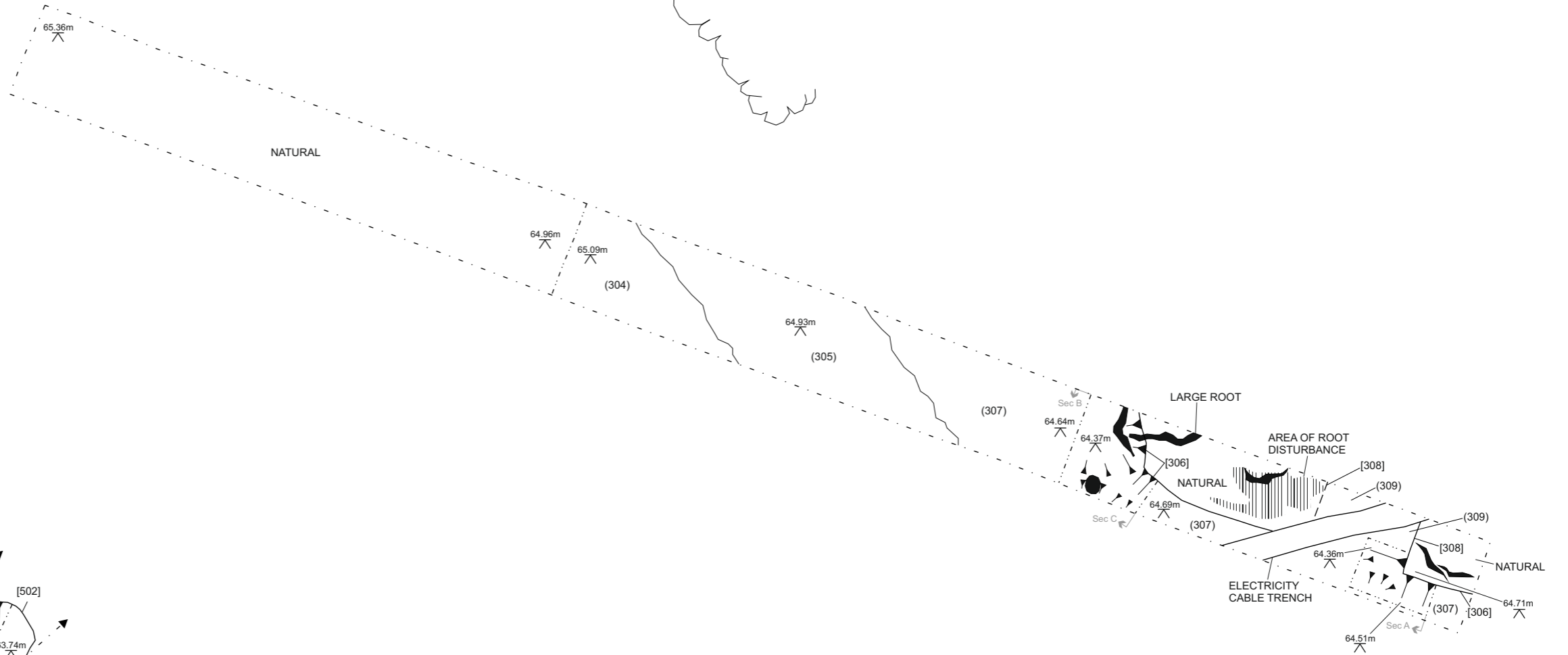


FIGURE 2: Site Plan

TRENCH 3 PLAN



HEDGEROW



TRENCH 5 PLAN

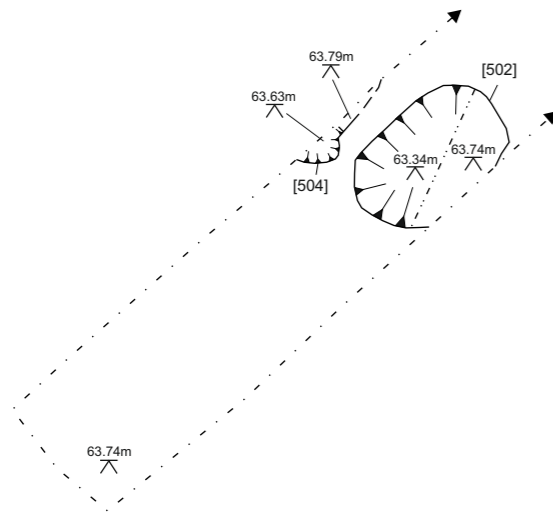
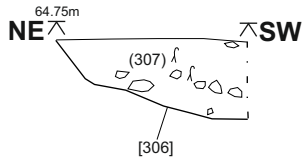
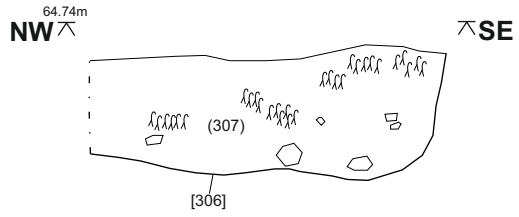


FIGURE 3: Trench Plans

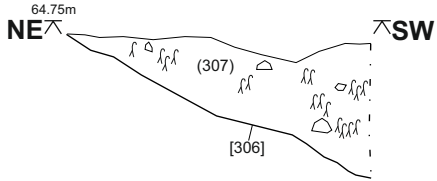
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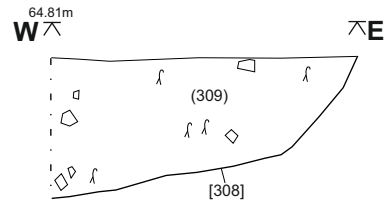
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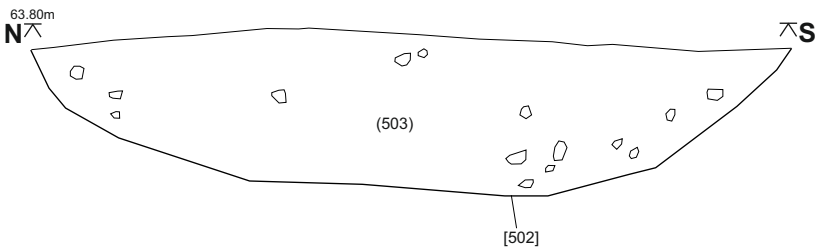
NORTHWEST FACING SECTION [306] Sec C



SOUTH FACING SECTION [308]



WEST FACING SECTION [502]



SOUTHEAST FACING SECTION [504]

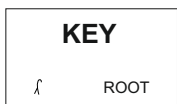
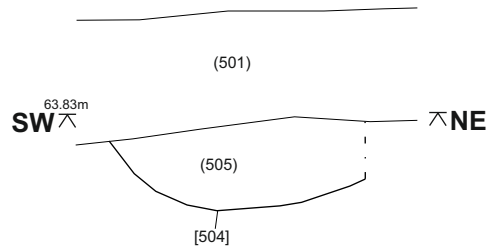


FIGURE 4: Sections