

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES
DURHAM UNIVERSITY

on behalf of
Lightsource Renewable Energy Ltd

Park Wall Solar Park
Bridgwater
Somerset

archaeological evaluation and
palaeoenvironmental survey

report 2960
August 2012



Contents

1.	Summary	1
2.	Project background	2
3.	Landuse, topography and geology	2
4.	Historical and archaeological background	3
5.	The evaluation trenches	3
6.	The palaeoenvironmental survey	5
7.	The finds	6
8.	The palaeoenvironmental evidence	7
9.	The archaeological resource	8
10.	Impact assessment	8
11.	Recommendations	8
12.	Sources	9
Appendix 1: Data tables		10
Appendix 2: Stratigraphic matrices		12

Figures

Figure 1:	Site location
Figure 2:	Location of trenches and test pits
Figure 3:	Trench plans and sections
Figure 4:	Channel [F8], facing west
Figure 5:	Pit [F31], facing southwest
Figure 6:	Pit [F33] against the side of Trench 5, facing northwest
Figure 7:	Palaeoenvironmental test pit TP23 under excavation

1. Summary

The project

- 1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation and palaeoenvironmental survey conducted in advance of a proposed development at Park Wall Solar Park, Folletts Farm, Bridgwater, Somerset. The works comprised the excavation of six trial trenches and 23 palaeoenvironmental test pits.
- 1.2 The works were commissioned by Lightsource Renewable Energy Ltd and conducted by Archaeological Services Durham University.

Results

- 1.3 Two rubbish pits of Romano-British date were excavated in Trench 5, on the northeast side of the site. Agricultural and drainage features were exposed in the majority of the remaining trenches. Two thin bands of silty peat were recorded across the site by the palaeoenvironmental survey.

Recommendations

- 1.4 No archaeological resource was identified which requires preservation *in situ*.

2. Project background

Location (Figure 1)

- 2.1 The site is located at Folletts Farm, Bridgwater, Somerset (NGR centre: ST 32127 36072). It covers an area of approximately 17.8 hectares on the low-lying floodplain of the River Parrett. To the west the site is bounded by the M5, and to the north by the former turnpike road to Langport Bridge. To the east and south is agricultural land, clay pits and an electricity grid transformer station.

Development proposal

- 2.2 It is proposed to develop the land as part of a solar farm.

Objective

- 2.3 The objective of the scheme of works was to assess the nature, extent, depth, and potential significance of any archaeological or palaeoenvironmental resource on the site.

Specification

- 2.4 The works have been undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation provided by Archaeological Services Durham University (reference DS11.193) and approved by the planning authority.

Dates

- 2.5 Fieldwork was undertaken between the 9th and the 13th of July 2012. This report was prepared for the 2nd of August 2012.

Personnel

- 2.6 Fieldwork was conducted by Jonny Dye, Nathan Thomas and Mark Randerson (Supervisor). This report was prepared by Mark Randerson, with illustrations by David Graham. Specialist reporting was conducted by Carrie Drew (animal bone and palaeoenvironmental material) and Jennifer Jones (conservation and finds). The Project Manager was Daniel Still.

Archive/OASIS

- 2.7 The site code is **PWS12**, for **Park Wall Solar Park 2012**. The archive is currently held by Archaeological Services Durham University and will be transferred to the appropriate local repository in due course. Archaeological Services Durham University is registered with the Online Access to the Index of archaeological investigations project (**OASIS**). The OASIS ID number for this project is **archaeol3-131471**.

3. Landuse, topography and geology

- 3.1 At the time of this assessment, the proposed development area comprised five arable fields, all with the crop recently cut.
- 3.2 The proposed development area was predominantly level with a mean elevation of approximately 7m OD.

- 3.3 The underlying solid geology of the area comprises Flandrian alluvium on the floodplain of the River Parrett with Pleistocene sands and gravel to the east at Chedzoy and an area of peat between Chedzoy and Westonzoyland.

4. Historical and archaeological background

Previous archaeological works

- 4.1 The site has already been the subject of a desk-based assessment, which sets out the historical development and archaeological potential of the area (Archaeological Services 2010). A brief summary of the results is given here.

The prehistoric period (up to AD 70)

- 4.2 A Neolithic cursus has been identified through cropmarks to the south of Westfield Farm, Chedzoy, and extensive cropmarks are known to the east of the study site. Although there is no direct evidence for prehistoric activity on the site, the wetlands of the area would have been exploited throughout the prehistoric period.

The Roman period (AD 70 to 5th century)

- 4.3 Evidence of a Roman settlement has been found to the northeast of the site, near to Old Dunwear House.

The medieval period (5th century to 1540)

- 4.4 Dunwear village, immediately south of the site, is known to have existed from at least the 12th century. The study area is unlikely to have been used for settlement, but may have been used for agriculture by the village. A linear cropmark, east of the site, is believed to be the remains of a medieval drainage ditch or canal.

The post-medieval period (1541 to 1899)

- 4.5 It is not known when the site was drained and converted to arable land, although ancient boundaries were re-defined across the area in the 17th to 19th centuries. A turnpike road linking Bridgwater and Langport Bridge was established in 1730, crossing part of the north boundary of the site. Cartographic sources show the study site as agricultural land, divided into twelve fields in 1840.

The modern period (1900 to present)

- 4.6 Clay pits were excavated to the east of the site in the early 20th century. Construction of the M5 motorway separated the land from Bridgwater in the 1970s, and the fields were amalgamated into the present layout at this time.

5. The evaluation trenches

Introduction

- 5.1 Six evaluation trenches were excavated across the four central fields of the site (Figure 2). All trenches measured 40m x 2m.

Trench 1 (Figure 3)

- 5.2 This trench was located at the south end of the site, and was orientated east-west. Natural subsoil [3], a light yellowish-brown soft silty clay, was exposed at a depth of 0.55m. At the west end of the trench, this was cut through by an irregular, sub-circular cut [F4: 2m x 0.95m, 0.11m deep] with shallow, uneven sides. This contained

a fill of reddish brown soft silty clay [5]. Immediately to the east, a sinuous, curvilinear channel [F6: 11.5m x 0.7m, 0.31m deep] with moderate to steeply sloping uneven sides extended along the length of the trench, ending in shallow, pointed terminals to the east and west. This feature was filled by a deposit of bluish grey silty clay [7] which contained frequent snail shells. At the east end of the trench, a further channel [F8: 20.5m x 0.7m, 0.28m deep] was exposed. This was again irregular in plan, slightly curvilinear, with steeply sloping sides and an uneven, flat base (Figure 4) and filled with a soft grey silty clay [9]. None of these features appeared to be man-made, and it seems probable that they were created by natural water action, where groundwater had formed pools and channels. It is possible that [F8], with its slightly more regular form, represents the heavily-eroded remains of a drainage ditch, but no finds or dating evidence were recovered. All these features were sealed by a layer of light yellow-brown clayey silt subsoil [2: 0.2m thick], which underlay a dark brown clayey silt topsoil [1: 0.35m thick].

Trench 2

- 5.3 This trench lay at the south end of the site, to the north of Trench 1, and was orientated northwest-southeast. Natural subsoil [19], again a light yellowish-brown soft silty clay, was exposed at a depth of 0.6m. This was overlain by a deposit of mid yellowish brown clayey silt subsoil [18: 0.35m thick] which was sealed by a horizon of dark brown clayey silt topsoil [17: 0.3m thick]. No features were exposed, and no finds recovered.

Trench 3 (Figure 3)

- 5.4 Trench 3 was also located at the south end of the site, north of Trenches 1 and 2, and was orientated roughly east – west. Natural subsoil [12] was exposed at a depth of 0.6m across the whole of the trench. Toward the centre, a very shallow linear gully was exposed [F13: 2m x 0.4m, 0.08m deep]. This had gently sloping sides and a smooth, rounded base, and contained a fill of moderately compact reddish brown silty clay [14]. This gully was most probably the base of a heavily-truncated plough furrow. To the east, the course of a linear field drain cut through this furrow. This cut [F15: 7m x 0.25m, 0.5m deep] had steeply-sloping, near-vertical sides and contained a narrow ceramic drainpipe. No other features were exposed. The trench was again sealed by a yellow-brown silty clay subsoil [11: 0.3m thick], overlain by a dark brown clayey silt topsoil [10: 0.3m thick].

Trench 4 (Figure 3)

- 5.5 This trench was orientated northeast-southwest. It was located in the centre of the site, roughly parallel with the northwestern boundary. A mottled yellow grey silty clay natural subsoil [22] was exposed at a depth of 0.55m. This was cut by a field drain [F26], similar in form to [F15] and also containing a ceramic pipe. This was overlain by a horizon of moderately compact yellow-brown silty clay subsoil [21: 0.25m thick] which extended across the whole trench. Near the centre of the trench, a wide, linear ditch [F23: 2m x 3.2m, 0.8m deep], orientated northeast-southwest, cut through this subsoil layer. The ditch had moderately sloping sides and a smooth, rounded base. It contained a primary fill [24: 0.5m thick] of heavily compact red-brown crushed brick and concrete hardcore, obviously deposited as a deliberate backfill. This was overlain by a deposit of friable dark grey medium angular gravel and tarmac fragments [25: 0.3m thick], again evidently used to deliberately backfill the feature. Ditch [F23] followed an identical alignment to a field boundary shown on the 1840 plan of the site, and clearly represents the remains of this former

division, backfilled during the construction of the motorway. The trench was sealed by a layer of grey-brown clayey silt topsoil [20: 0.3m thick].

Trench 5 (Figure 3)

- 5.6 Trench 5 was positioned in the northern part of the site, orientated northeast-southwest. Natural subsoil [30] was revealed at 0.5m below ground level. Towards the north end of the trench, two small rubbish pits were exposed. The southernmost of these, [F31; 0.9m x 0.6m, 0.08m deep] was sub-oval in plan, orientated northwest-southeast, with gently sloping sides and a smooth, rounded base (Figure 5). It was filled with a deposit of soft greyish brown clayey silt [32], containing occasional flecks of charcoal and fragments of bone and Romano-British pottery. Pit [F33: 0.9m x 0.35m, 0.31m deep] lay to the north, extending out from the northwest limit of excavation (Figure 6). It was sub-circular in plan, with moderately sloping sides and a rounded, even base. A primary fill of soft greyish brown silty clay [34: 0.15m thick] was exposed, again with inclusions of frequent charcoal flecks and fragments of bone and Romano-British pottery. This was overlain by a fill of soft bluish grey silty clay [35: 0.25m thick], possibly a slump fill which accumulated in the feature after the main backfill had compacted. No other features were observed in association with these pits. The trench was sealed by a layer of subsoil [29: 0.2m thick], overlain by a horizon of topsoil [29: 0.3m thick].

Trench 6 (Figure 3)

- 5.7 This trench was located near to the northeast corner of the site, orientated roughly north-south. Natural subsoil was exposed across the whole of the trench at a depth of 0.55m. Two near-parallel shallow linear cuts, presumably the remains of plough furrows, crossed the length of the trench, again aligned roughly north-south. Both cuts [39] and [41] varied between 0.1 and 0.15m deep, with gently sloping sides and rounded, smooth bases, and were filled with deposits of grey silty clay [40, 42]. These features were covered by a layer of yellow-brown clayey silt subsoil [37: 0.3m thick], which underlay a grey-brown clayey silt topsoil [36: 0.25m thick].

6. The palaeoenvironmental survey

Introduction

- 6.1 23 palaeoenvironmental test pits were excavated (Figure 2), extending across the site in a rough line orientated southwest – northeast. The soft, waterlogged nature of the ground proved very difficult to excavate, with frequent slips and collapses in the sides of the pits. Each test pit was on average 2m by 3.5m in plan, extending to a depth of up to 4.3m (Figure 7).
- 6.2 Beneath the topsoil and subsoil horizons already described, natural subsoil varied little across the site. To the south, a layer of moderately compact dark bluish grey finely laminated clayey silt and silty sand was exposed at the base of pits TP1 to TP11, occurring at a depth of between 2.3 and 2.8m below ground level. In the centre of the site, this changed to a moderately compact greyish blue silty clay, rising up to a depth of 1.7m. At the north, this base layer became laminated in TP19 to TP23, varying between thick bands of greyish brown stiff silty clay and the greyish blue silty clay encountered to the south, and rising to a depth of 1.3m. To the south, these base deposits were overlain by a layer of light grey-brown finely laminated silty clay and fine sandy silt, with a friable grey silty clay encountered to the north.

This underlay the horizon of light yellowish-brown soft silty clay observed in the trial trenches.

- 6.3 Two very thin bands of organic silt were encountered during the survey. Both were less than 0.1m thick, and rose as they extended north, mirroring the rise in the natural layers described above. The deepest layer was initially exposed in TP12, where the layer was observed in the greyish blue silty clay base deposit between 3 and 3.1m below ground level. This band became thinner as it rose northward, becoming less than 0.05m thick, and it was not seen north of TP21 where it was recorded at a depth of 2m. A second organic silt layer was also exposed, initially encountered between 2.6 and 2.65m deep in TP17 on the north side of the site. This layer was intermittent, and was sometimes only recorded as a layer of black flecking rather than a solid deposit. It rose less sharply than the more extensive peat band, and was observed in TP23, next to the north boundary of site, at a depth of 2.45m. No developed peat sequences or other significant palaeoenvironmental deposits were exposed.

7. The finds

Pottery assessment

Results

- 7.1 Ten sherds (95g weight) were recovered from three contexts (Table 1.2). Seven of these are Roman, including a very abraded samian body sherd from context [34], with all traces of slip lost. This sherd is likely to have been produced before the mid-third century AD. The remaining Roman material is in SE Dorset Black Burnished 1 fabric, and includes part of the base and a complete joining wall sherd (context [34]) from an undecorated, plain-rimmed dish with a smoothed or wiped surface. The same context also had a body sherd from a different vessel with traces of lattice decoration. SE Dorset Black Burnished 1 fabric was produced in a wide variety of forms and finishes from around the mid-second to the fourth century AD. The minimum number of Roman vessels present is five.
- 7.2 The topsoil deposits produced three 19th-century sherds of glazed white earthenware. Only one of these survives to full thickness, and this has traces of a blue/purple transfer printed design.

Recommendation

- 7.3 No further work is recommended.

Animal bone assessment

Results

- 7.4 Fifty-seven animal bone fragments (38 unidentifiable) came from two contexts. Of the remainder, context [32] produced one right cattle scapula and one sheep/goat left third molar (from mandible) in wear. Context [34] had one large mammal-sized maxilla bone fragment, one unerupted large mammal-sized tooth enamel fragment (probably cattle), and five erupted cattle teeth, all from the upper jaw.

Recommendation

- 7.5 No further work is recommended.

8. The palaeoenvironmental evidence

8.1 Methods

A palaeoenvironmental assessment was carried out on five bulk samples, taken from a channel fill [context 7], a thin organic layer from TP12, a potential plough furrow [context 40] and two pit fills of possible Roman origin [contexts 32 and 34]. The samples were manually floated and sieved through a 500 μ m mesh. The residues were examined for shells, fruit stones, nutshells, charcoal, small bones, pottery, glass and industrial residues, and were scanned using a magnet for ferrous fragments. The flots were examined at up to x60 magnification using a Leica MZ6 stereomicroscope for waterlogged and charred botanical remains. Identification of these was undertaken by comparison with modern reference material held in the Environmental Laboratory at Archaeological Services Durham University. Plant nomenclature follows Stace (1997). Habitat classifications follow Preston *et al.* (2002).

- 8.2 Charcoal fragments >4mm were identified. The transverse, radial and tangential sections were examined at up to x600 magnification using a Leica DMLM microscope. Identifications were assisted by the descriptions of Hather (2000) and Schweingruber (1990), and modern reference material held in the Environmental Laboratory at Archaeological Services Durham University.

Results

- 8.3 Fragments of snail shell were recorded in the flots or residues of all of the contexts and fragments of daub were recovered from pit fills [32] and [34]. Two fragments of pot were present in context [34]. Small quantities of charcoal including hazel and alder were identified in both contexts [32] and [34], although fragments were mostly not large enough for radiocarbon dating. Small fragments of unburnt and burnt bone were recovered from context [34], along with charred plant macrofossil remains comprising two sedge family nutlets. Material potentially suitable for radiocarbon dating was present in contexts [32] and [34] although the material from context [32] may have an insufficient weight of carbon. The results are presented in Table 1.3.
- 8.4 The sample from TP12 comprised an organic-rich silt layer. Uncharred vegetative material was abundant in the flots, which also contained an assemblage of waterlogged seeds. These were predominantly of waterside and aquatic plants, including crowfoots, horned pondweed and sedges. A few ruderal species were also present. The other features did not show evidence of waterlogged preservation, and the few uncharred plant remains (including modern roots and straw/chaff) are likely to be intrusive material.

Discussion

- 8.5 The assessment can provide little information about the features due to the limited nature of the palaeoenvironmental remains. The absence of finds, charcoal or charred plant remains in channel fill [7] may indicate that this is a natural feature. The presence of charcoal, bone, daub, pottery and a few charred plant macrofossils in context [34] suggest that this pit fill comprised the remains of domestic waste.
- 8.6 The preservation of waterlogged remains in the organic silt from TP12 indicates that the layer was deposited under anaerobic conditions. The remains largely derive from plants whose habitat preference is for wet and/or damp conditions. The crowfoots and horned pondweed suggest the former presence of a body of standing or slow-

flowing shallow water (Preston *et al.* 2002). The sedges may reflect damp, vegetated conditions around the edges of this area of water. The poor condition of the remains and highly decomposed condition of the vegetative material, suggest that the deposit may have been subject to periods of drying out.

Recommendations

- 8.7 No further work is recommended for the samples due to the limited nature of the palaeoenvironmental remains. The organic silt from TP12 has little potential to provide significant information about the vegetation history of the site due to the relatively small size of the assemblage of waterlogged remains and the shallow thickness of the deposit (0.10m).
- 8.8 If additional works are undertaken on the site, the results from this assessment should be added to any further environmental data produced.

9. The archaeological resource

- 9.1 Archaeological activity appears to have been light on the site, with no archaeological deposits recorded in Trench 3, and only agricultural and drainage features exposed in the majority of the remaining trenches. Plough furrows, the remains of medieval or post-medieval ploughing, were observed in Trenches 3 and 6, cutting the natural subsoil, and the remains of a recently-backfilled boundary ditch were recorded in Trench 4. A few sherds of modern pottery, presumably deposited through manuring, were recovered from the topsoil.
- 9.2 A small assemblage of pot sherds and animal bone was recovered from two rubbish pits in Trench 5. The presence of a samian body sherd suggests that these pits were dug between the mid-second and mid-third centuries AD. No other Romano-British material was recovered from the site, and no other features observed, indicating that these pits represent fairly localized, discrete activity, most probably related to the Roman settlement known to exist to the northeast of the site.

10. Impact assessment

- 10.1 It is believed that the proposed development will have a light impact the across the site, with little disturbance to the underlying soils. However, if any other archaeological features exist connected to the rubbish pits exposed by Trench 5, then these may be affected by groundworks in the northern area.

11. Recommendations

- 11.1 No archaeological resource was identified which requires preservation *in situ*.

12. Sources

- Archaeological Services 2010 273-281 *Land at Folletts Farm, Bridgwater, Somerset: archaeological desk-based assessment*. Unpublished report 2524, Archaeological Services Durham University
- Hather, J G, 2000 *The identification of the Northern European Woods: a guide for archaeologists and conservators*. London
- Preston, C D, Pearman, D A, & Dines, T D, 2002 *New Atlas of the British and Irish Flora*. Oxford
- Schweingruber, F H, 1990 *Microscopic wood anatomy*. Birmensdorf
- Stace, C, 1997 *New Flora of the British Isles*. Cambridge

Appendix 1: Data tables

Table 1.1: Context data

The * symbols in the columns at the right indicate the presence of finds of the following types: P pottery, B bone

No	Area	Description	P	B
1	Tr. 1	Topsoil		
2	Tr. 1	Subsoil		
3	Tr. 1	Natural subsoil		
F4	Tr. 1	Cut of curvilinear feature		
5	Tr. 1	Fill of above		
F6	Tr. 1	Cut of curvilinear feature		
7	Tr. 1	Fill of above		
F8	Tr. 1	Cut of curvilinear feature		
9	Tr. 1	Fill of above		
10	Tr. 3	Topsoil		
11	Tr. 3	Subsoil		
12	Tr. 3	Natural subsoil		
F13	Tr. 3	Shallow gully/plough scar		
14	Tr. 3	Fill of above		
F15	Tr. 3	Cut of field drain		
16	Tr. 3	Fill of above		
17	Tr. 2	Topsoil		
18	Tr. 2	Subsoil		
19	Tr. 2	Natural subsoil		
20	Tr. 4	Topsoil		
21	Tr. 4	Subsoil		
22	Tr. 4	Natural subsoil		
F23	Tr. 4	Cut of ditch		
24	Tr. 4	Fill of [F23]		
25	Tr. 4	Fill of [F23]		
F26	Tr. 4	Cut of field drain		
27	Tr. 4	Fill of above		
28	Tr. 5	Topsoil		
29	Tr. 5	Subsoil		
30	Tr. 5	Natural subsoil		
F31	Tr. 5	Pit cut		
32	Tr. 5	Fill of above	*	
F33	Tr. 5	Pit cut		
34	Tr. 5	Fill of [F33]	*	*
35	Tr. 5	Fill of [F33]		
36	Tr. 6	Topsoil		
37	Tr. 6	Subsoil		
38	Tr. 6	Natural subsoil		
F39	Tr. 6	Probable plough furrow		
40	Tr. 6	Fill of above		
F41	Tr. 6	Probable plough furrow		
42	Tr. 6	Fill of above		

Table 1.2: Fabric type by context

Context	Samian	SE Dorset BB1	19 th century
20			3
32		1	
34	1	5	
Total	1	6	3

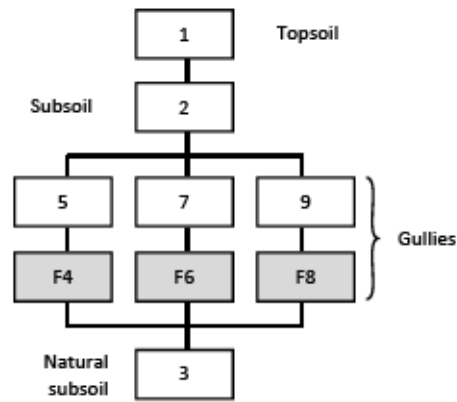
Table 1.3: Data from palaeoenvironmental assessment

Context	7	12	32	34	40
Sample	1	3	4	5	6
Feature	channel	layer	pit	pit	furrow
<i>Material available for radiocarbon dating</i>	-	-	(✓)	✓	-
<i>Volume processed (l)</i>	6.5	8	6	8	9
<i>Volume of flot (ml)</i>	85	740	25	50	115
<i>Residue contents</i>					
Bone (burnt)	-	-	-	(+)	-
Bone (calcined)	-	-	-	(+)	-
Bone (unburnt)	-	-	+	++	-
Charcoal	-	-	+	++	-
Daub	-	-	(+)	+++	-
Pot (number of fragments)	-	-	-	2	-
Shell (freshwater / terrestrial)	+++	-	-	-	(+)
Uncharred vegetative material	-	+++	-	-	-
<i>Flot matrix</i>					
Earthworm egg case	+	-	-	-	-
Charcoal	-	-	+	++	-
Clinker / cinder	-	-	-	-	-
Coal / coal shale	-	-	-	-	-
Insect / beetle	+	+	-	-	-
Monocot stems (uncharred)	+	-	-	-	+
Roots (modern)	++	-	++	++	+++
Shell (freshwater / terrestrial)	++++	+	(+)	++	++
Uncharred seeds	++	++	-	+	++
Uncharred vegetative material	-	++++	+	+	-
<i>Charred remains (total counts)</i>					
(w) Cyperaceae undifferentiated (Sedge family)	nutlet	-	-	2	-
<i>Waterlogged remains (abundance)</i>					
(q) <i>Ranunculus</i> subgenus <i>Batrachium</i> (Crowfoots)	achene	-	4	-	-
(q) <i>Zannichellia palustris</i> (Horned Pondweed)	fruit	-	3	-	-
(w) <i>Carex</i> sp (Sedges)	trigonous nutlet	-	1	-	-
(w) Cyperaceae undifferentiated (Sedge family)	nutlet	-	2	-	-
(x) Asteraceae undifferentiated (Daisy family)	achene	-	2	-	-
(x) <i>Chenopodium</i> sp (Goosefoots)	seed	-	3	-	-

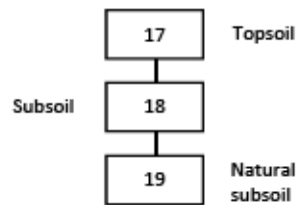
[q-aquatic; w-wet/damp ground; x-wide niche. (+): trace; +: rare; ++: occasional; +++: common; ++++: abundant
Waterlogged remains are scored from 1-5 where 1: 1-2; 2: 3-10; 3: 11-40; 4: 41-200; 5: >200
(✓) there may be insufficient weight of carbon available for radiocarbon dating]

Appendix 2: Stratigraphic matrices

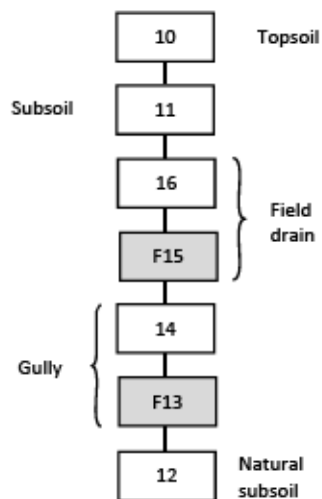
Trench 1



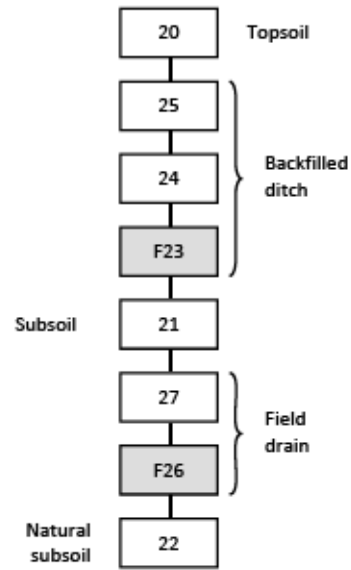
Trench 2



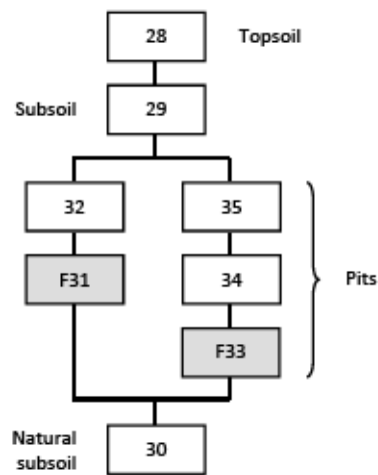
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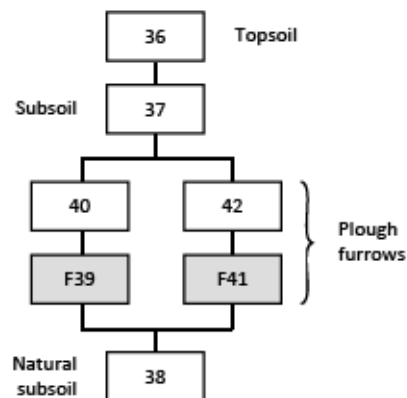
Trench 4

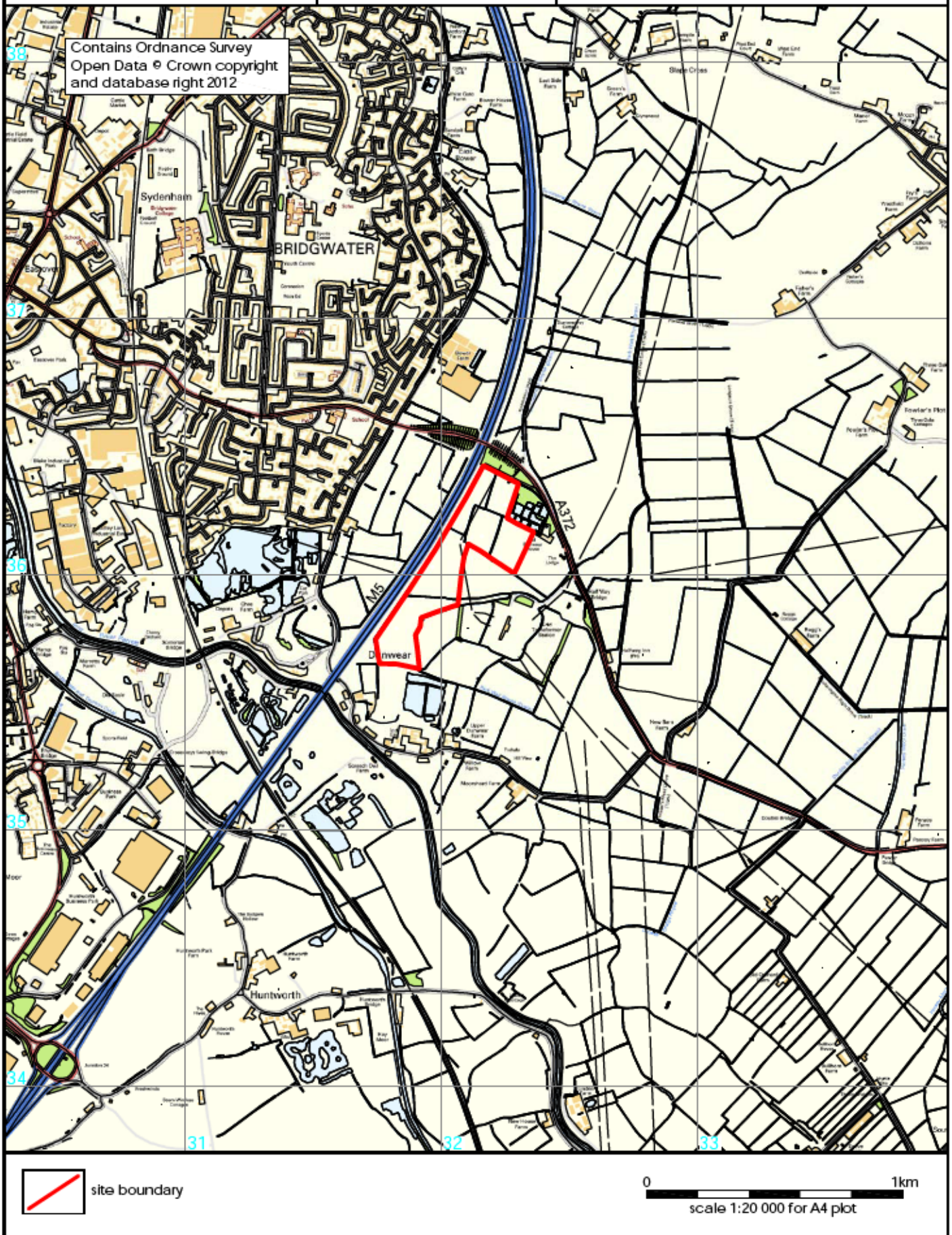


Trench 5

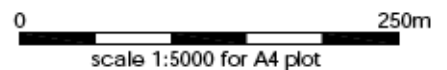
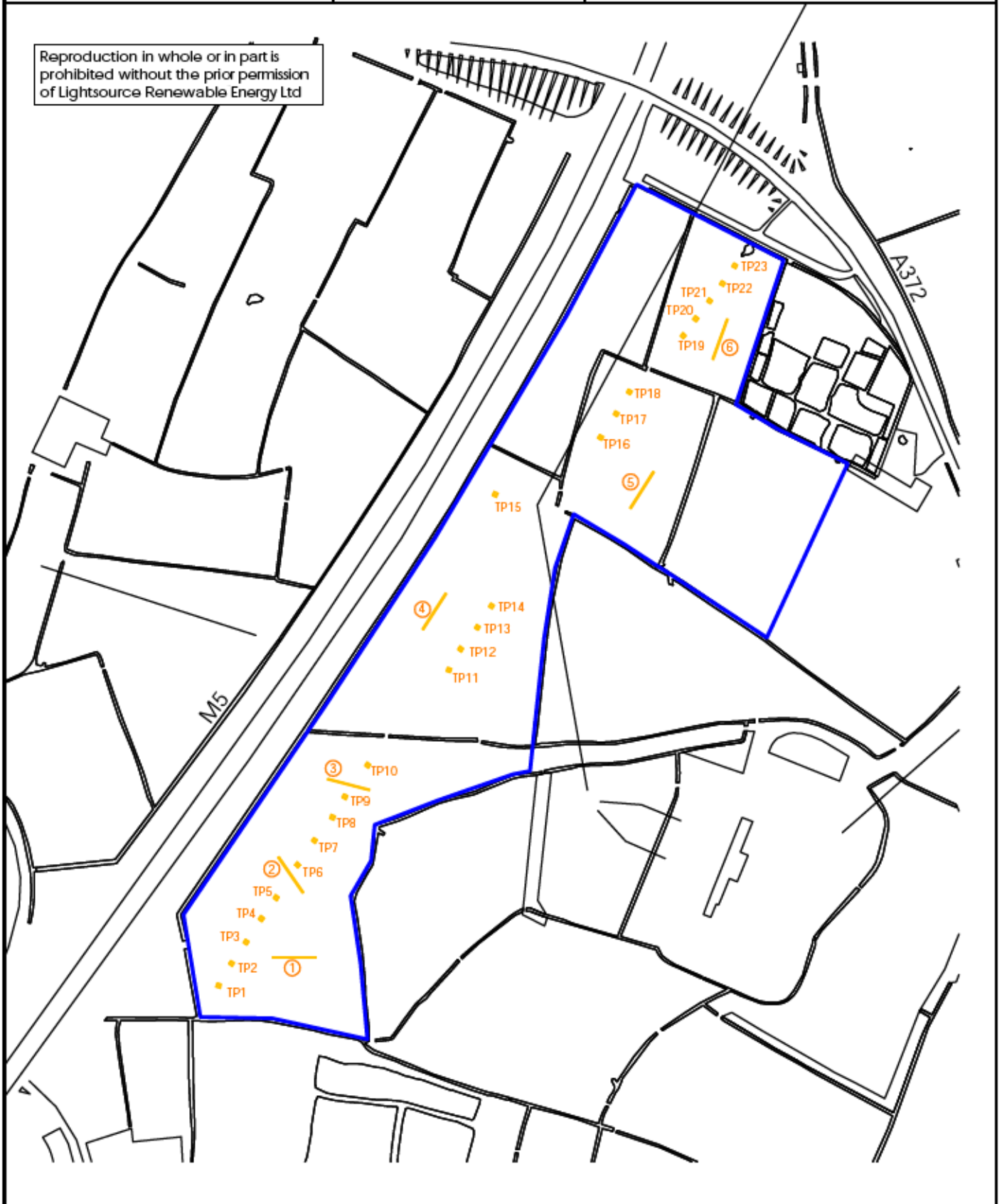


Trench 6





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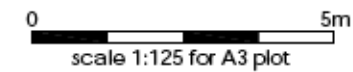
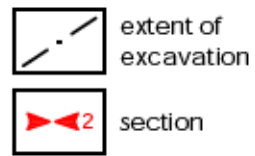


Figure 3: Trench plans and sections

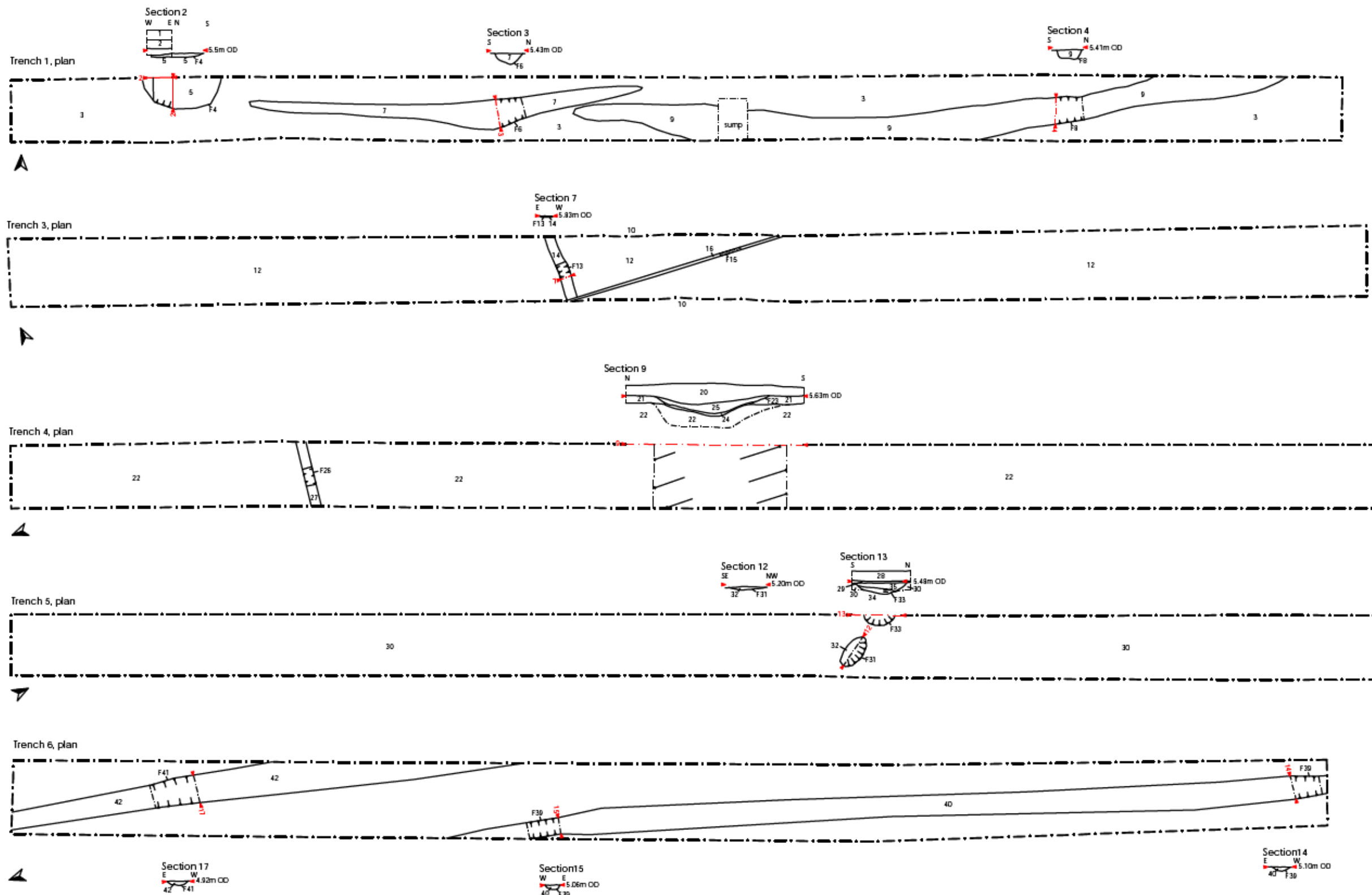




Figure 4: Channel [F8], facing west



Figure 5: Pit [F31], facing southwest



Figure 6: Pit [F33] against the side of Trench 5, facing northwest



Figure 7: Palaeoenvironmental test pit TP23 under excavation