

**T H A M E S      V A L L E Y**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

**S E R V I C E S**

**Blackingrove Farm, Summer Ley, Barford St Michael,  
Banbury, Oxfordshire**

**Archaeological Recording Action**

**by Will Attard**

**Site Code: BFO21/111**

**(SP 4493 3284)**

**Blackingrove Farm, Summer Ley, Barford St Michael,  
Banbury, Oxfordshire**

**An Archaeological Recording Action**

**For Armour Heritage Limited**

by Will Attard

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code BFO21/111

**May 2021**

## Summary

**Site name:** Blackingrove Farm, Summer Ley, Barford St Michael, Banbury, Oxfordshire

**Grid reference:** SP 4493 3284

**Site activity:** Archaeological Recording Action

**Date and duration of project:** 30th April 2021

**Project coordinator:** Tim Dawson

**Site supervisor:** Will Attard

**Site code:** BFO 21/111

**Area of site:** 76 sq m

**Summary of results:** The footprint of a new swimming pool was stripped to the archaeologically relevant horizon. No archaeological finds, features or deposits were encountered.

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Service in due course.

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[www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp](http://www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp).*

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 01.06.21
	Steve Preston ✓ 28.05.21

# **Blackingrove Farm, Summer Ley, Barford St Michael, Banbury, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Recording Action**

by Will Attard

**Report 21/111**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological recording action undertaken at Blackingrove Farm, Summer Ley, Barford St Michael, Banbury, Oxfordshire, OX15 0RX (SP 4493 3284) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Sue Farr of Armour Heritage Ltd, Foghamshire Timber Yard, Foghamshire Lane, Frome, BA11 5DG.

Planning permission (17/01997/F) has been granted by Cherwell District Council for the construction of a new swimming pool to the east of the current dwelling at Blackingrove Farm. A subsequent application (21/01194/F) has been submitted to CDC and a decision is pending. The consented proposal was subject to two conditions (4 & 5) relating to archaeology which required that a programme of archaeological investigation be undertaken. This consisted of a 'strip, map and sample' investigation, undertaken during ground reduction for the swimming pool. The pending application will have a condition attached to secure the delivery of the report and archive.

This is in accordance with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2019) and the District Council's policies on archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI) (AH 2021) approved by Mr Richard Oram, Lead Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service, the archaeological adviser to the District. The fieldwork was undertaken by Will Attard on 30th April 2021 and the site code is BFO 21/111.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Service in due course.

## **Location, topography and geology**

The site is located approximately 1.5km east of the village of Barford St Michael, 2km north-west of the village of Deddington (Fig 1). The Farm is relatively isolated, with the nearest dwelling being Deddington Mill (a converted water mill; NHLE List Entry 1380337) some 600m to the east. To the north, west and south the ground drops away, and the River Swere runs East-West 200m to the north. Blackingrove Farm is immediately

to the east, with the site itself consisting of a small rectangular plot of land, formerly a vegetable patch and latterly a garden. The underlying geology of the site is recorded as being Chipping Norton Limestone Formation, with no superficial deposits recorded (BGS Geotitles; BGS 1968).

## **Archaeological background**

Blackingrove Farm consists of a group of buildings dating predominantly to the 19th century, with various modern modifications. On the outskirts of the village of Barford St Michael, the site lies within the former Wootton Hundred, whilst nearby Barford St John was in Bloxham Hundred, with the River Swere forming the boundary. The Church of St Michael lies 1.70km to the east, in Barford St Michael, and has probable Norman origins (Sherwood and Pevsner 1974) (listed Grade I; 1284140). A moated manor house (Grade II listed; 1046247) located close to the church dates to the 16th century. Barford St John also features a manor and chapel with Norman Elements, but the oldest stranding structure is the 13th century chancel (Sherwood and Pevsner 1974:445).

The univallate hillfort of Ilsbury Camp (SAM 1015167) is located 2km to the south west, consisting of a kidney-shaped earthwork (Sutton 1966) with Iron Age and early Roman pottery recovered from the overlying plough soil.

The Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) records a range of finds from the immediate environs of Blackingrove Farm itself, including pottery, metalwork, and a stone sarcophagus. A reference is made in an Ashmolean Museum archive from 1917 of findings made between 1853–63, interpreted as being indicative of a rich Roman site on the north slope of the farm, near the river (VCH 1939, 331-2). Slightly further afield, similar Roman finds were recovered south of the village of Barford St Michael on Iron Down, approximately 1km from the site (Case and Sturdy 1959). The concentration of evidence in the wider environs of the site is considered indicative of a Roman village (VCH 1939). A curvilinear cropmark (HER 27998) north of the site is interpreted as being a likely prehistoric enclosure ditch.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The aims of the project were to undertake a strip, map and sample (SMS) of the footprint of the proposed swimming pool - an area measuring 12m x 6m (Fig. 2).

The specific objectives of the project were to:

- clarify the presence/absence and extent of any buried archaeological remains within the excavation areas and to ensure their preservation by record to the highest possible standard;

- identify, within the constraints of the excavation areas the date or date range of the remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence;
- determine or confirm the approximate extent of any remains;
- determine the condition and state of any preservation of of the remains; determine the degree of complexity of the horizontal and/or vertical stratigraphy present;
- produce an assessment report on the results of the fieldwork;
- relate (where appropriate) the results in the local, regional and national archaeological context - and, in particular, its wider cultural landscape and past environmental conditions;
- prepare and deposit a site archive with the local museum.

The removal of overburden was undertaken with a small 360-type excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. Top and subsoil deposits were kept separate where possible, and spoil heaps were inspected for finds.

## **Results**

The area of the proposed swimming pool was stripped as intended (Fig. 3; Pl, 1) . A proportion of the trench could not be reduced to the top of the underlying natural geology due to the presence of an array of active plastic drainage pipes connected to a manhole cover located roughly in the centre of the trench. However, the digging of these service trenches had already removed any coincident archaeological deposits.

The south-east portion of the site consisted of imported topsoil (0-0.35m) brought in by the property owner in the summer of 2020, overlying a thin layer of clay-silt (0.35-0.40m), in turn overlying a series of make-up layers (53, 54, 55, 56) to level the land (0.40-0.80m) with natural geology present from this depth onwards. (Fig. 4; Pl. 2). The levelling layers featured sparse inclusions of modern brick, tile, concrete, slate and part of a plastic sack from deposit 55.

The south-west portion of the site consisted of the same imported topsoil overlying a thin layer of clay-silt, in turn overlying a large truncation (1) filled with a dump of modern construction rubble (57), including concrete, brick and plastic (Fig. 4). Cut 1 truncated the levelling deposits. Natural geology here was encountered at a depth of 0.90m.

## **Finds**

No archaeologically relevant material was present within the excavation area, nor observed during monitoring of spoil heaps.

## **Conclusion**

The excavation on the footprint of the new swimming pool was monitored as intended, exposing active drains, a series of modern levelling deposits and a large modern truncation. No archaeological finds, horizons, deposits or cut features were encountered.

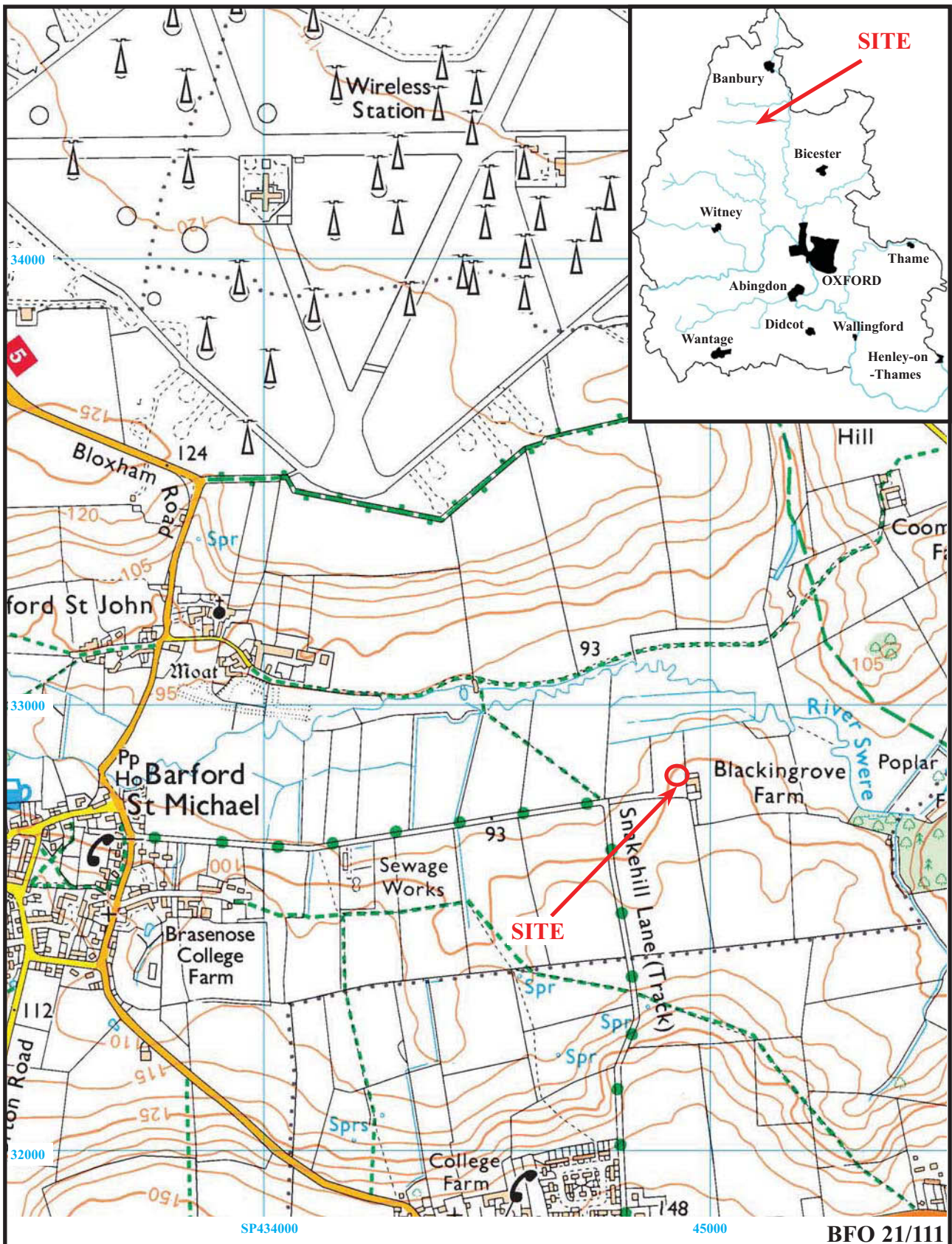
## **References**

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**APPENDIX 1: Feature and deposit catalogue**

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Dating</i>
-	50	Topsoil	Imported (2020)	Modern
-	51	Levelling deposit		Modern
-	52	Levelling deposit	Contained concrete	Modern
-	53	Levelling deposit	Contained mod. brick	Modern
-	54	Levelling deposit		Modern
-	55	Levelling deposit	Contained plastic sack	Modern
-	56	Levelling deposit		Modern
1	57	Modern Truncation	Contained brick, stone, plastic, concrete, glass, blue & white china	Modern





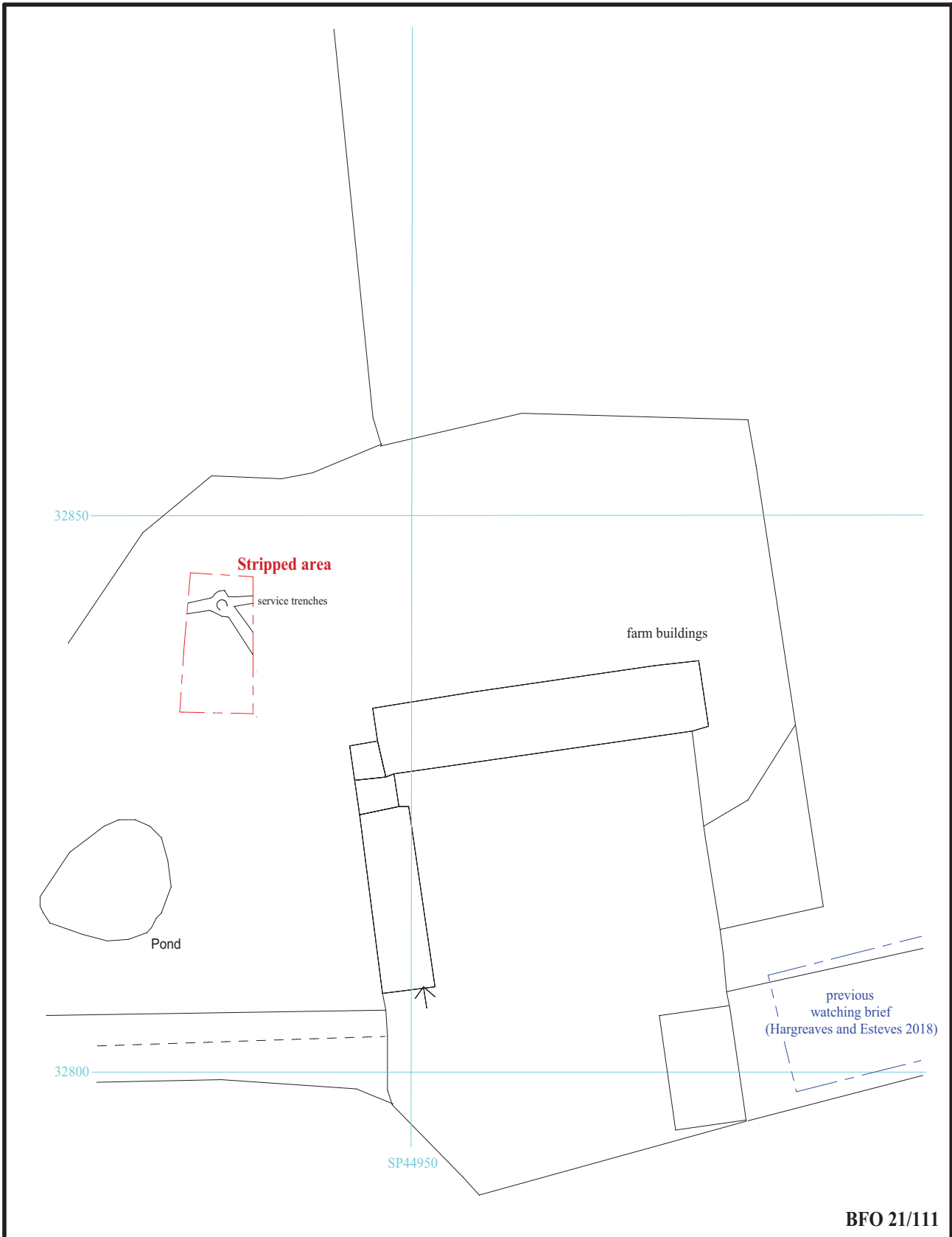
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Figure 1. Location of site in relation to Barford St Michael and within Oxfordshire.

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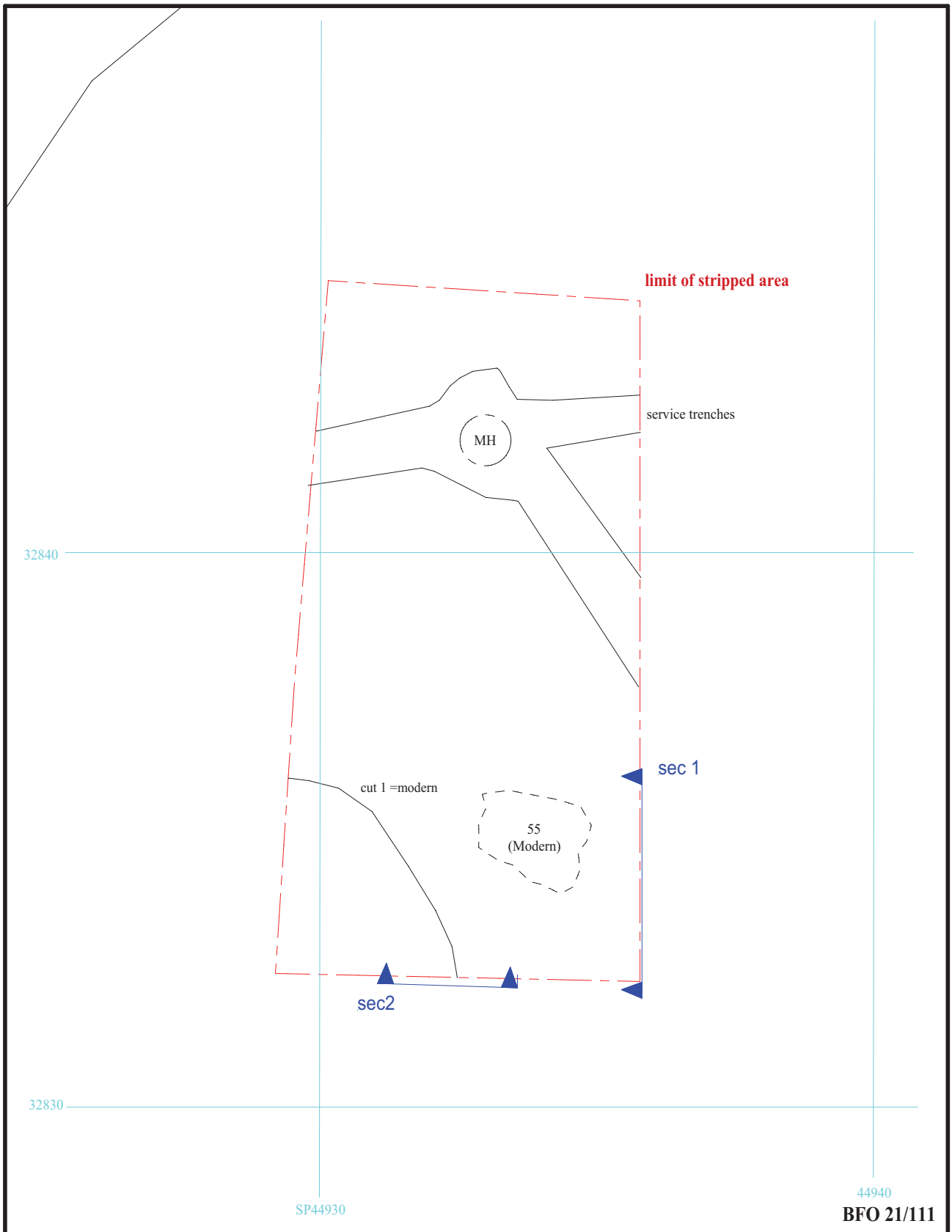
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Figure 2. Detailed location of observed area within site.



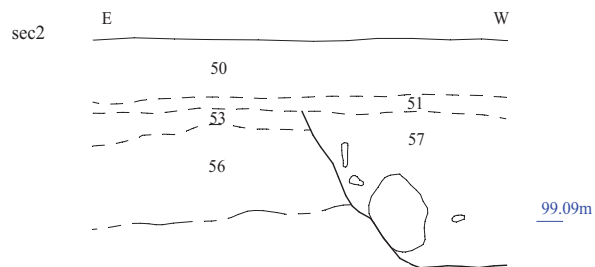
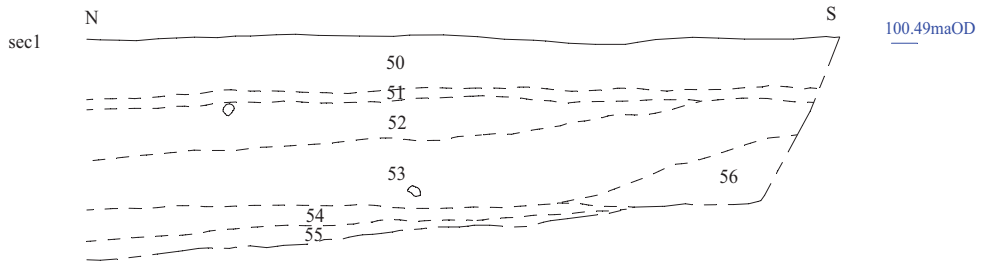
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Figure 3. Detail of observed area.





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Figure 4. Sections.



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Plate 1. Reduced area, looking North, Scales: 0.5m and 0.3m.



Plate 2. Section, looking East, Scales: 0.5m and 0.3m.

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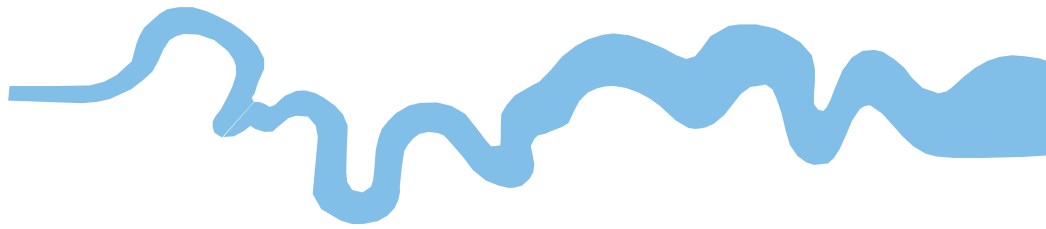
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Plates 1 and 2.**

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## TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43 AD 0 BC
Iron Age _____	750 BC
Bronze Age: Late _____	1300 BC
Bronze Age: Middle _____	1700 BC
Bronze Age: Early _____	2100 BC
Neolithic: Late .....	3300 BC
Neolithic: Early .....	4300 BC
Mesolithic: Late .....	6000 BC
Mesolithic: Early .....	10000 BC
Palaeolithic: Upper .....	30000 BC
Palaeolithic: Middle .....	70000 BC
Palaeolithic: Lower .....	2,000,000 BC





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