

T H A M E S V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**St. Mary's Church, Bentley,
Hampshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Joanna Pine and Steve Crabb

Site Code: MCB06/41

(SU 7840 4471)

St Mary's Church, Bentley, Hampshire

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for St Mary's Parochial Church Council**

by Joanna Pine and Steve Crabb
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code MCB06/41

March 2012

Summary

Site name: St Mary's Church, Bentley, Hampshire

Grid reference: SU 7840 4471

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 14th–16th March 2012

Project manager: Jo Pine

Site supervisor: Jo Pine

Site code: MCB 06/41

Summary of results: Several human burials were found in the two trenches excavated. Some were clearly of post-medieval date but there is a possibility of medieval burials also being present. A small collection of medieval pottery was also recovered.

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

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www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp.*

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St Mary's Church, Bentley, Hampshire Archaeological Evaluation

by Joanna Pine and Steve Crabb

Report 06/41

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at a parcel of land on the north side of St Mary's Church, Bentley, Hampshire (SU 784 447) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr. Tony May on behalf of St Mary's Parochial Church Council

Planning permission is to be sought from East Hampshire District Council for the construction of a new church room extension to St Mary's Church. A brief has been provided by the Diocesan Archaeological Adviser to determine the archaeological potential of the site and one component of the work is proposed; field evaluation by means of machine trenching. It is anticipated that any planning consent gained will include a condition requiring archaeological investigation as detailed in *Planning for the Historic Environment* (PPS5 2010). dependent on the results of the evaluation trenching, a further phase of fieldwork may be required if significant archaeological deposits are revealed. This is to take place according to a written scheme of investigation approved by the District Council as advised by the Hampshire County archaeological officer.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Dr Hannah Fluck of Hampshire County Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Steven Crabb and Jo Pine between the 14th and 16th March 2012 and the site code is MCB 06/41. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Hampshire Museum Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on a small plot of land to the north of the church (Fig. 2). It is currently part of the graveyard and is covered in grass. The site is located at an elevation of c.118m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) and the underlying geology is Upper Greensand (BGS 1981). This was seen in the trenches as a light reddish brown malm stone.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in the Hampshire Historic Environment Record. The village church is usually a focal point within the historic core of a settlement and usually has late Saxon or

Medieval origins. St Mary's Church is at least of 12th century date though settlement at Bentley is documented from the 10th century. The church now lies some distance from the village centre and may reflect a settlement shift over time. However, the church might be a part of a dispersed settlement within the Alice Holt Forest and may always have been peripheral to the centre of the settlement. There is a possibility that the groundworks will uncover archaeological deposits relating either to early phases of the village settlement or earlier phases of church construction.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development. This work will be carried out in a manner which will not compromise the integrity of archaeological features or deposits which warrant preservation in-situ, or might better be excavated under conditions pertaining to full excavation.

The specific research aims of this project are:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on the site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present;
- to determine if archaeological deposits and finds representing medieval occupation on the site are present;
- to determine the presence/absence of human burial on the site; and
- to provide information in order to draw up an appropriate mitigation strategy if required.

It was proposed to dig two trenches, 2.5m long and 1.4-1.6m in width, specifically positioned to target the footprint of the proposed new building (Fig. 3). These were, however, moved slightly from their original positions due to the presence of grave headstones. Topsoil, and any other overburden was hand excavated by the archaeologists and the features were excavated to a point only to show that they were grave cuts and/or contained articulated remains.

Results

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1. A list of features investigated forms Appendix 2.

Trench 1 (Figs 4 and 5 and Pl. 1)

This was aligned east-west, was 2.50m in length, 1.4m wide and 0.90m deep. The stratigraphy was shown to be a turfline (50) which was 0.10m deep and overlay a dark grey brown silt deposit (51) which was 0.25m deep. This

contained brick and tile (not retained). When this was removed it revealed two grave cuts (1 and 6) and another possible grave cut (5).

Grave cut 1 was partially exposed on a east-west alignment at the western end of the trench and truncated layer 56. This cut was exposed for 0.90m on an E-W axis, was 0.45m wide, with straight sides, and contained a mid grey brown silt grave backfill (60). Below this deposit was part of the base of a wooden coffin and two articulated leg bones, which were only partially exposed to prove they were part of an articulated burial. Coffin nails surrounded these limbs and two shroud pins were recovered from above them.

The grave (1) had been truncated on its southern side by a cut (5); this was 0.43m deep, and contained a mid brown grey silty clay (61). It is possible that this too is a grave cut.

Layer 56 was a mid grey brown silt located on the northern side of the trench, 0.05m deep. It contained two pottery sherds of late medieval or early post-medieval date and six fragments of roof tile. It overlay a mid grey brown silty clay layer (57) which contained a sherd of medieval pottery, a post-medieval clay pipe stem (not retained) and three fragments of roof tile.

At the eastern end of the trench, another grave cut (6) on an east-west alignment was recorded, which truncated deposit (57). This cut was exposed for 0.50m on the E-W axis, was 0.50m wide with vertical sides and contained a mid grey brown silt infill (67). It was not bottomed but its characteristics and the stratigraphy suggested it would contain another human burial.

Deposit 57 was shown to overlie a mid brown grey silt (62) with frequent greensand stone fragments. This was up to 0.22m thick and sealed a mid brown grey clayey silt (63) which overlay the natural malm stone geology.

Trench 2 (Figs 3 and 4 and Plate 1)

This was aligned NNW-SSE, was 2.20m in length at ground level, 1.4m wide and 0.78m deep. It was repositioned slightly to the south due to the presence of a grave headstone. The stratigraphy was shown to be a turfline (50) which was 0.10m deep which overlay a dark grey brown silt deposit (52) which was 0.12m deep. This contained modern china and brick/tile (not retained). This overlay a layer of greenstone rubble (malm stone) in a silt matrix (53). This sealed another layer, a mid brown grey clayey silt (54) which contained seven sherds of medieval pottery of 13th- to 14th-century date, a fragment of window glass and twenty fragments of roof tile (including peg tile fragments). This was up to 0.33m thick and overlay another deposit of greenstone rubble (malm stone) in a silt matrix (55) which sloped slightly to the south and east. This deposit contained two further

sherds of medieval pottery and a fragment of roof tile, When this was hand excavated and removed it revealed three grave cuts (2, 3 and 4) truncating the natural geology at 0.78m below the present ground surface

Stratigraphically the latest grave was cut 4 which was partially exposed at the southern end of the trench and was only excavated sufficient to show that it contained human remains and was indeed a grave cut. Within this cut were revealed the articulated remains of a human (skull, ribs, pelvis and arm bones were visible) all within a grey silt matrix (64).

At the northern end of the trench, sealed by layer 55 was grave cut 2. This again was partially excavated to show it contained human remains. It was exposed for 1.0m E-W, was 0.60m wide, 0.30 m deep. Beneath a dark brown grey silt grave fill (65) an articulated femur and fibula were uncovered (68).

Both grave cuts 2 and 4 truncated another possible grave (3) in the south-western corner of the trench. This was shown to contain a dark brown grey silt (66) and only a small element of the cut was examined but it was earlier than cuts 2 and 4.

Finds

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 16 sherds with a total weight of 163g. It was all medieval, apart from a single modern sherd, and indicates that there may have been activity at the site throughout the medieval period, and certainly from the 12th – 15th centuries. The following ware types were noted:

FIC: Flint and Chalk-tempered Ware, 13th – 14th century. 7 sherds, 85g.

FIS: Flint and Sand-tempered Ware, 11th – 12th century. 4 sherds, 49g.

BSW: Bentley-type Sandy Ware, 13th – 14th century (Barton and Brears 1976). 1 sherd, 5g.

FIG: Glazed flint-tempered ware, ?13th – 14th century. 1 sherd, 5g.

LMT: Late Medieval Transitional Redware, ?15th – 16th. 2 sherds, 17g.

19th C: Miscellaneous 19th and 20th century wares. 1 sherd, 2g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Appendix 3. The entire assemblage comprised unglazed bodysherds from jars, other than the sherds of FIG and LMT, all of which are likely to be from jugs. The sherds are in good condition and largely unabraded, with some quite large, indicating they are deposited near where they were used.

The sherd of FIG has no obvious parallels, although it is likely from a similar source to FIC or FIS. It is from a jug with horizontal cordons, with an orange outer surface, over which is a thick but patchy white slip, and splashes of a clear glaze. The LMT sherds were from the same vessel, and appear to be the same fabric as LMT Redware II from Alton (Blinkhorn and Brown 2007).

Brick and tile by Jo Pine

Fifty-three tile fragments weighing c.4kg were recovered during the fieldwork. The tile fabric was very hard and well-fired. The colour varied from pale grey orange to a dark red, with several examples of a black or grey (reduced) core. The majority are likely to represent pieces of plain peg tile, and two fragments with a peg hole were recovered from deposit 54. Tiles of this type were produced from the 12th century onwards, however they were generally limited to high-status buildings before becoming widespread by the 15th century.

Glass by Jo Pine

A small fragment of highly patinated window glass was recovered from deposit 54.

Conclusion

Five, possibly six human graves were discovered within the two small trenches, all appear to be Christian as they are orientated west-east. Accurate dating of these graves is difficult but the grave furniture in grave 1 and its stratigraphy (cutting a layer containing clay tobacco pipe) and the similar stratigraphy of grave 6 suggest a post-medieval date. The discovery of medieval pottery in deposits (54 and 55) sealing graves (2–4) could mean a medieval date for these skeletons, which fits with the founding date of the current church. The evaluation indicates the site has high archaeological potential with the likelihood of a high density of burials within the area of the foundations of the proposed new building.

References

- Barton, K J and Brears, P C D, 1976, 'A medieval pottery kiln at Bentley, Hampshire', *Proc Hampshire Field Club Archaeol Soc* **32**, 71-5
- BGS, 1981, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 284, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Blinkhorn, P and Brown, D, 2007, 'Pottery' in K Taylor and S Hammond, 'The Excavation of Medieval Pits and Analysis of a 13th -15th Century Ceramic Assemblage from 18-20 High Street, Alton, Hampshire', *Proc Hampshire Field Club Archaeol Soc* **62**, 115-33.
- PPS5, 2010, *Planning for the Historic Environment*, Dept Communities and Local Government Planning Policy Statement 5, London (TSO)
- Williams, A and Martin, G H, 2002, *Domesday Book, a complete translation*, London

APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at south-east and south-west end

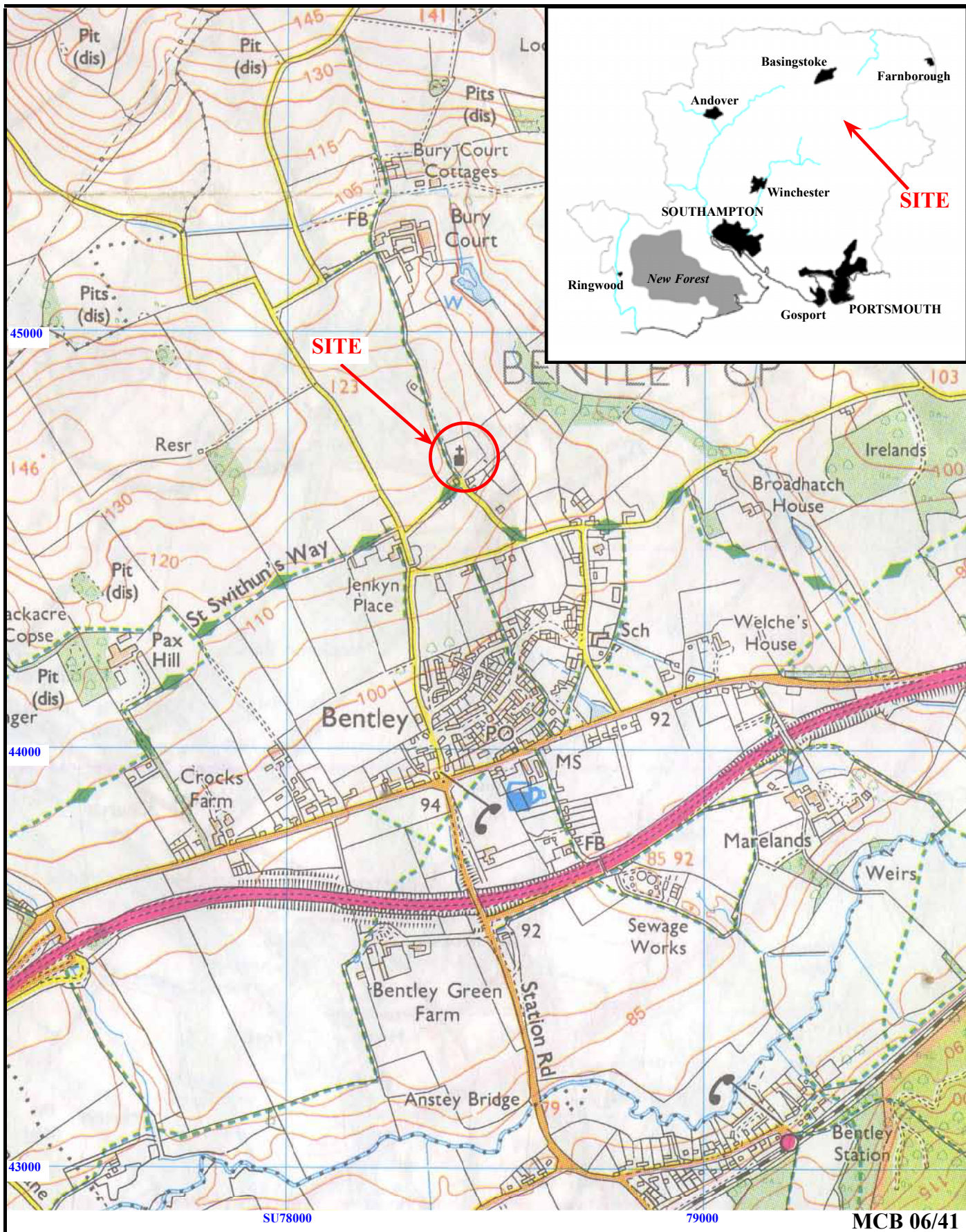
<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	2.5	1.4	0.90	0–0.10m turf (50); 0.10-0.35m dark grey brown silt (51); 0.35-0.40 mid grey brown silt (56); 0.40-0.90m mid grey brown silty clay layer (57); 0.90m+ malm stone Geology. Grave cuts 1 and 6 cut 5. [Pls 1 and 3]
2	2.2	1.4	0.78 (NW) 0.90 (SE)	0–0.10m turfline (50), 0.10-0.22 m dark grey brown silt (52); 0.22-0.35 greenstone rubble (malm stone) in a silt matrix (53); 0.30-0.50-0.70m mid grey brown silt layer (54), 0.70-0.78 greenstone rubble (malm stone) in a silt matrix (55); 0.78 + malm stone Geology. Grave cuts 2, 3 and 4 5. [Pls 2 and 4]

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

Trench	Cut	Fill	Type	Date	Dating Evidence
1/2		50	Topsoil	Modern	
1		51	Layer	19 th century +	Stratigraphy
2		52	Layer	19 th century +	Pottery
2		53	Layer	Post-medieval	Stratigraphy
2		54	Layer	Medieval	Pottery
2		55	Layer	Medieval	Pottery
1		56	Layer	Post-medieval	Pottery
1		57	Layer	Post-medieval?	Claypipe/Stratigraphy
2	4	58	Skeleton	Medieval	Stratigraphy
1	1	59	Skeleton	Post-medieval	Stratigraphy
1	1	60	Grave cut	Post-medieval	Stratigraphy
1	5	61	Cut	Post-medieval	Stratigraphy
1		62	Layer	Medieval	Stratigraphy
1		63	Layer	Medieval	Stratigraphy
2	4	64	Grave cut	Medieval	Stratigraphy
2	2	65	Grave cut	Medieval	Stratigraphy
2	3	66	Grave cut	Medieval	Stratigraphy
1	6	67	Grave cut	Post-medieval	Stratigraphy
2	2	68	Skeleton	Medieval	Stratigraphy

APPENDIX 3: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

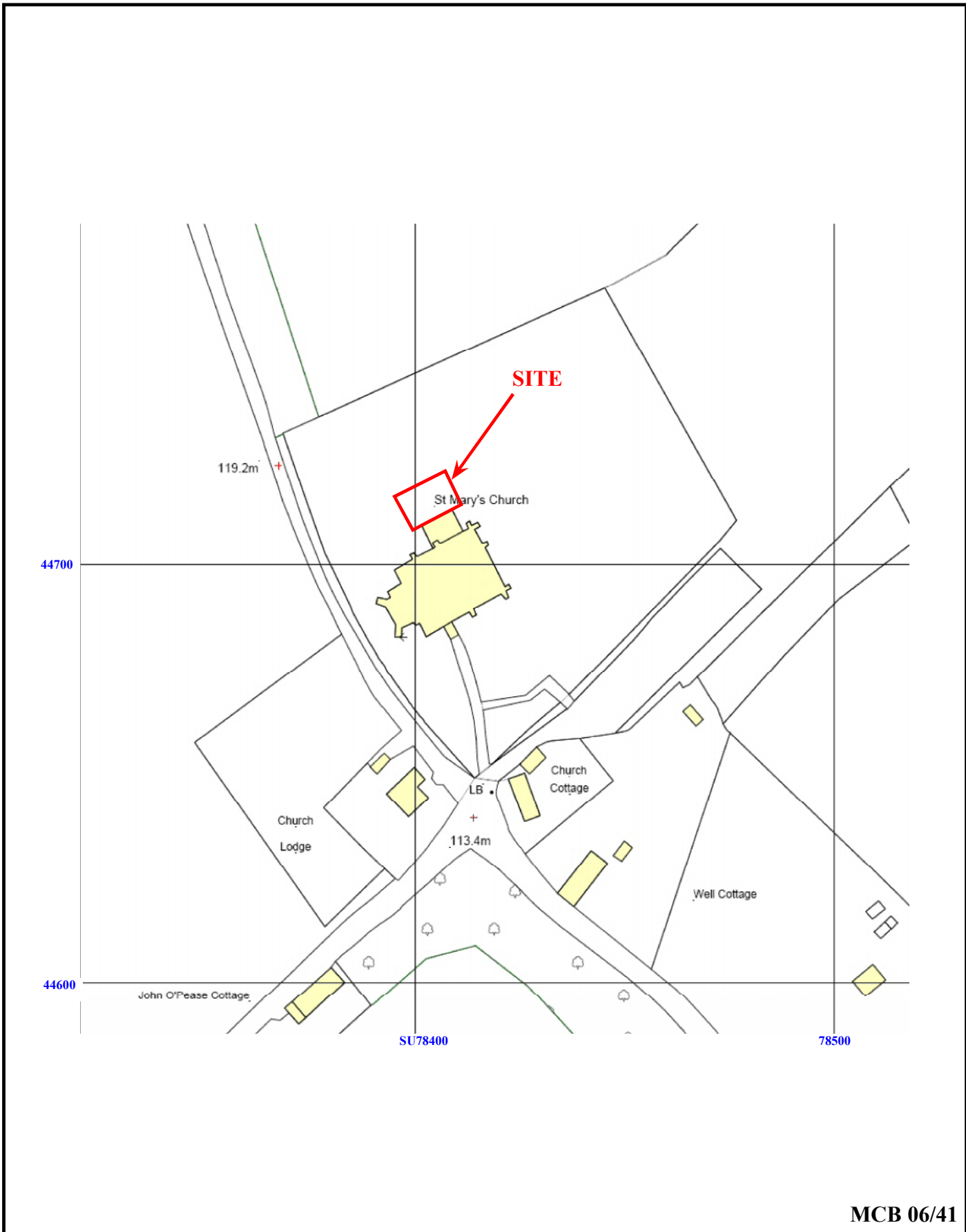
<i>Tr</i>	<i>Layer</i>	<i>FIC</i>		<i>FIS</i>		<i>BSW</i>		<i>FIG</i>		<i>LMT</i>		<i>19th C</i>	
		<i>No</i>	<i>Wt</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt</i>
1	51	2	34	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1	56	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	17	-	-
1	57	1	27	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	52	-	-	1	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
2	54	4	24	2	12	1	5	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	55	-	-	1	7	-	-	1	5	-	-	-	-
		7	85	4	49	1	5	1	5	2	17	1	2



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Figure 1. Location of site in relation to Bentley and Hampshire.

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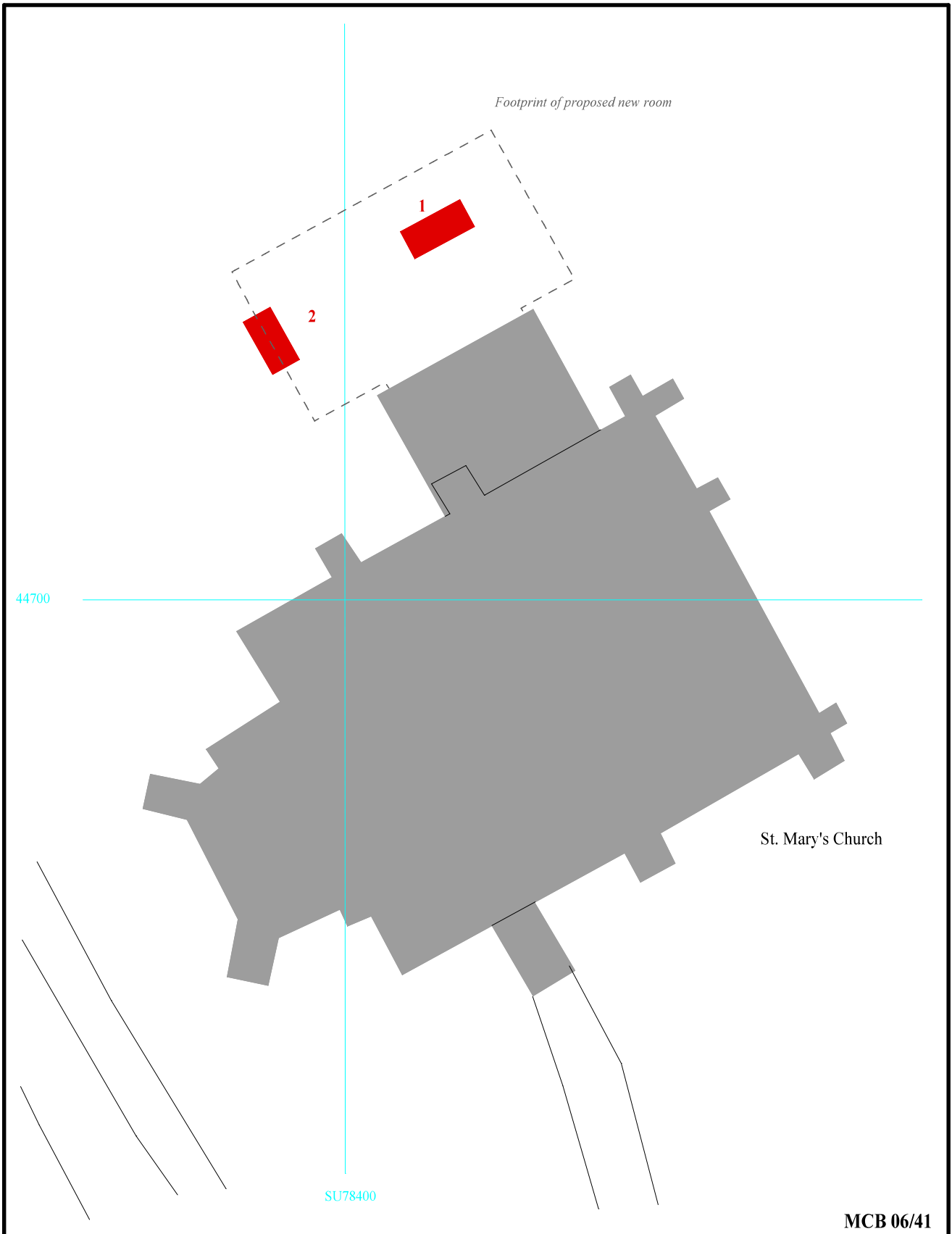


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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Church Lane.

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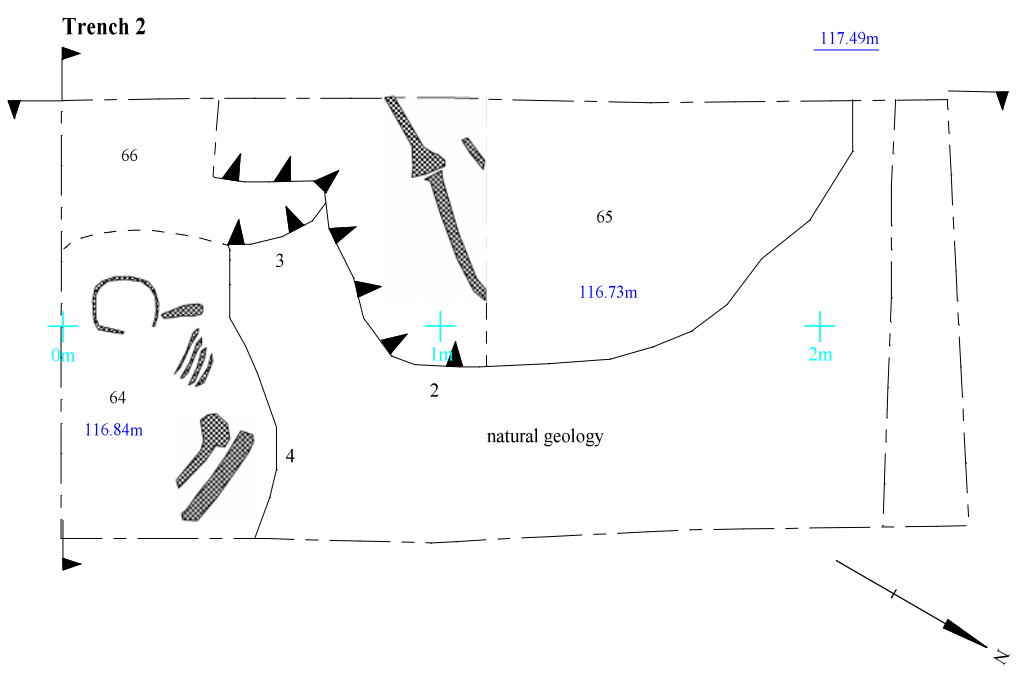
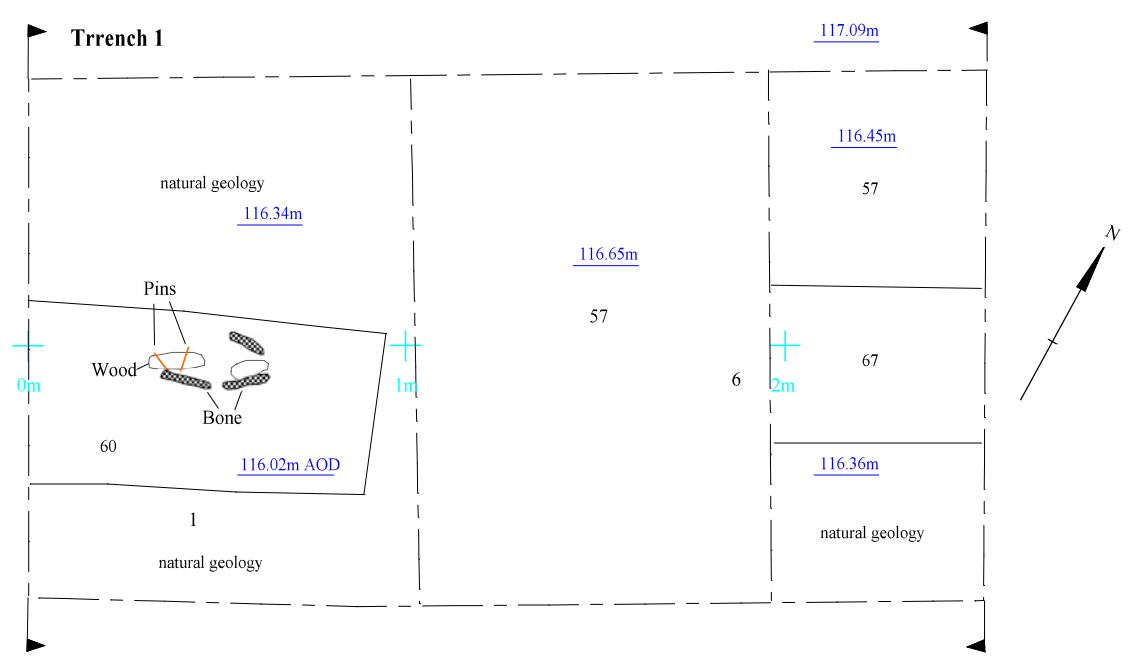


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Figure 3. Location of trenches.



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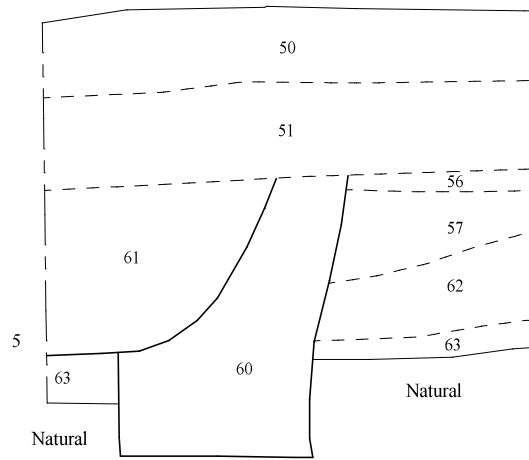
Figure 4. Plan of trenches 1 and 2



SSE

NNW

[117.20mAoD](#)

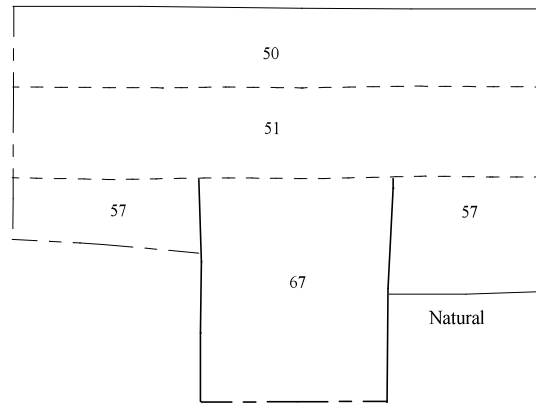


1

NNW

SSE

[117.09m](#)



6

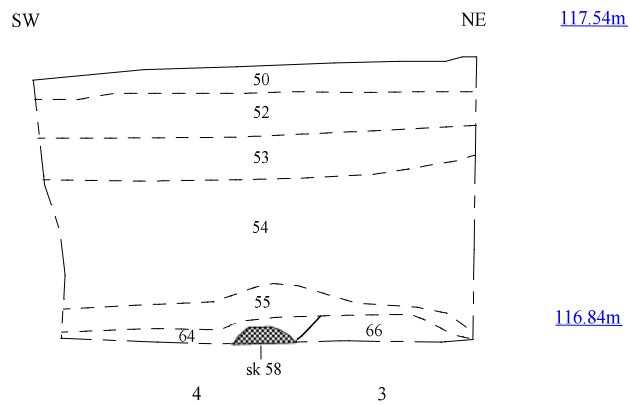
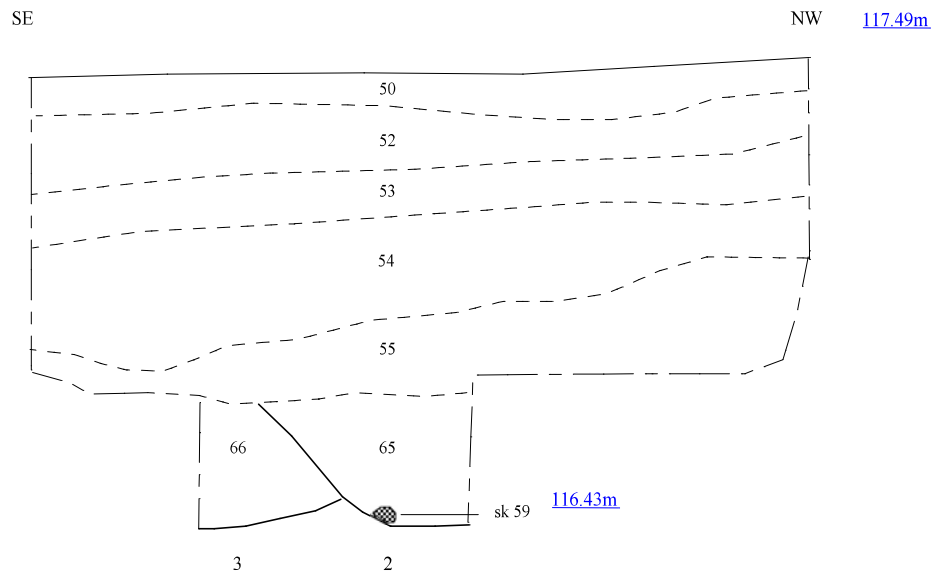
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Figure 5. Sections, Trench 1



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Figure 6. Sections, Trench 2



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Plate 1. Trench 1, looking east north east. Scales: 1m and 0.5m.



Plate 2. Trench 2, looking south south east, Scales: 1m and 0.5m.

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Plates 1 and 2.

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Plate 3. Trench 1, grave cut 1, looking west. Scales: 0.5m.



Plate 4. Trench 2, grave cuts 2, 3 and 4, looking north north west, Scales: 1m and 0.5m.

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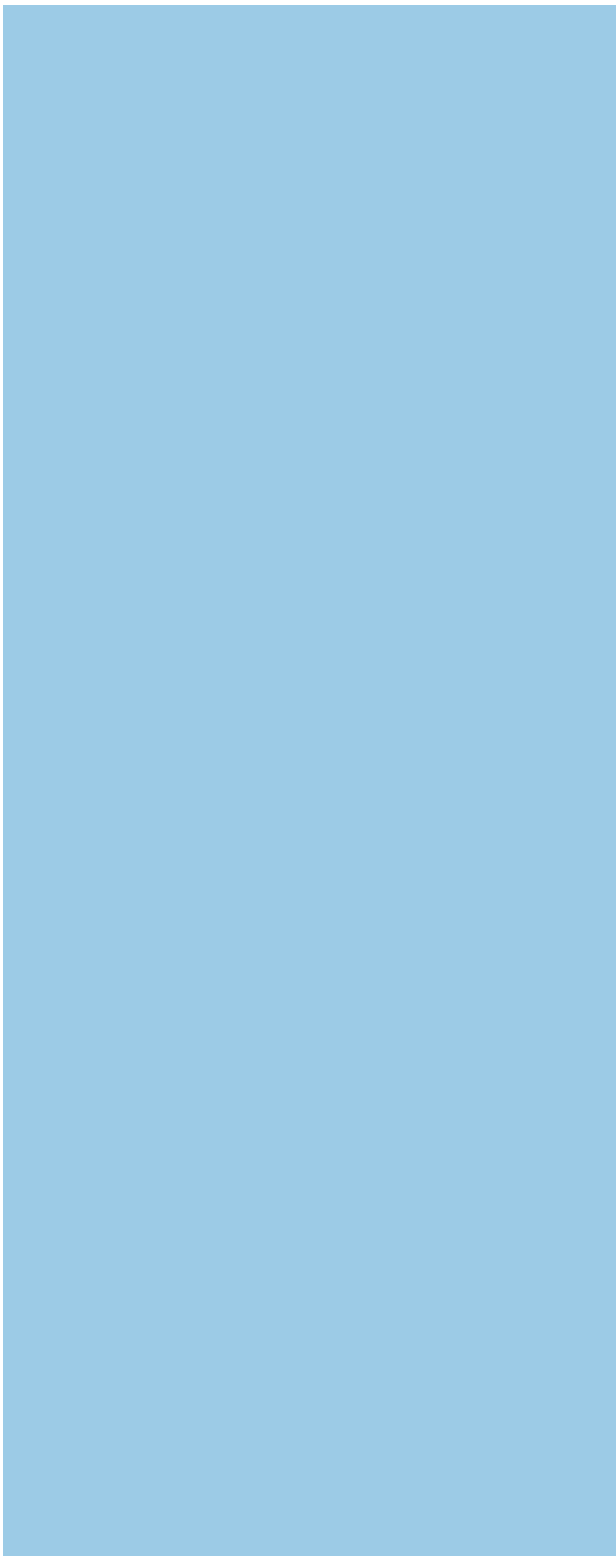
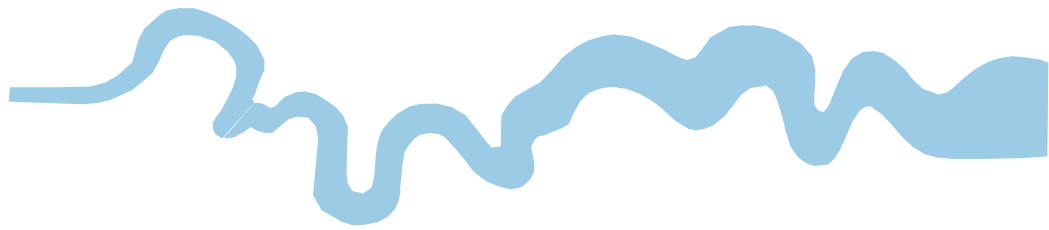
Plates 3 and 4.

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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
Iron Age _____	BC/AD 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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