THAMES VALLEY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

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SOUTH WEST

Land at West Camel Road, Queen Camel, Somerset

Archaeological Evaluation

by Andrew Weale

Site Code: WQW12/151

(ST 5929 2446)

Land at West Camel Road, Queen Camel, Somerset

An Archaeological Evaluation

for Hastoe Homes Ltd

by Andrew Weale

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code WQW 12/151

January 2013

Summary

Site name: Land at West Camel Road, Queen Camel, Somerset

Grid reference: ST 5929 2446

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 29th November to 3rd December 2012

Project manager: Andrew Weale

Site supervisor: Andrew Weale

Site code: WQW 12/151

Area of site: *c.* 0.69ha

Summary of results: The fieldwork has demonstrated that the site has archaeological potential with features of Roman date recorded for the northern portion of the site. It is possible to regard these features as an extension of the Roman villa complex recorded further to the north. Finds of Iron Age pottery and prehistoric struck flint point to some earlier periods of activity on the site also.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Somerset County Museum Service in due course, with accession code TTNCM 89/2012 and HER reference 31898.

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 05.01.13 Steve Preston✓ 04.01.13

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Land at West Camel Road, Queen Camel, Somerset
An Archaeological Evaluation

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Report 12/151b

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at West Camel Road at Queen Camel, Somerset (ST 5929 2446) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Peter Friend of Hastoe Homes, Fleur de Lis, Middleman Street, Poundbury, Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 3GX.

Planning permission is to be sought from South Somerset District Council to develop a plot of land of *c.* 0.69ha for housing. The results of a field evaluation have been requested to determine if the site has archaeological potential and if so produce information on which to base a scheme to mitigate the archaeological impact of the proposal.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012), and the District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Steven Membery, Senior Historic Environment Officer of Somerset County Council, archaeological adviser to the District. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Weale, Andrew Taylor, Susan Porter, Daniel Bray and Aiji Castle between 29th November and 3rd December 2012 and the site code is WQW12/151. The archive is presently held at TVAS South West, Taunton and will be deposited with Somerset County Museum Service with accession code TTNCM 89/2012 in due course. The HER reference is 31898.

Location, topography and geology

The site is a 0.69ha field located immediately to the west of the village of Queen Camel, *c.*9km north-east of Yeovil, Somerset (ST 5929 2446) (Fig. 1). The river Cam flows westwards *c.*500m to the north with the site lying near the crest of a hill on ground that gently rises up to the south. The site consists of a grassy paddock with a metal-clad barn at its southern end and has prominent 'ridge and furrow' aligned approximately south to north parallel to the field edges. It is bounded by hedgerows to the north, east, south and west with a ditch to the east. To the south is West Camel Road, to the west, houses and gardens, to the north, farmland and to the east, a playing field (Fig. 2). The underlying geology is described as Jurassic and Triassic Langport Member, Blue Lias

Formation and Charmouth Mudstone Formation (BGS 1973): a brown yellow clay was observed in the base of all trenches. The site is at a height of *c*.36m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

Camel Hill which bisects Queen Camel is an area known for both Iron Age and Roman sites. An Iron Age settlement lies to the south-west of Camel Hill Farm to the north of the A303. This road is also thought to be the course of the Roman road from Ilchester to Old Sarum. The field immediately to the north of the site was the subject of a geophysical survey (Payne 2008) after metal detectorists noted a concentration of Roman coins, fragments of building stone and mosaic *tesserae* at its southern end. The geophysical (magnetic and resistance) surveys mapped the outline of a large aisled hall building set within an extensive system of angular ditched enclosures. Subsequent exploratory excavation (Graham 2009) uncovered remains interpreted as indicative of a previously-unknown Roman villa site. Part of a well-preserved mosaic pavement lay *c*.0.20m below the ground surface within one of the rooms, along with a hypocaust, suggesting the presence of a large heated room at the east end of the building. To the south-west of the building a small, detached bath house was discovered.

To the north of the site on the eastern end of Camel Hill, Anglo-Saxon burials were discovered in a quarry. At the time of Domesday Book (AD 1086: Williams and Martin 2002) Queen Camel was held by the king and was assessed at 15 hides, with arable land for 15 ploughs. The area was farmed by 6 slaves, 28 villans and 10 bordars with 15 ploughs. There were also 2 mills, 100 acres of meadow, 100 acres of pasture, 100 acres of woodland and the manor was worth £23, all of which would make Queen Camel a very large and wealthy holding.

Geophysical survey over the site itself (Dawson 2012) revealed several anomalies that most probably represent an extension of the villa complex, allowing the evaluation to be partly targetted on these.

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 was to be carried out in a manner which would not compromise the integrity of archaeological features or deposits which might 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 archaeological deposits of any period are present;
to determine if geophysical anomalies are of archaeological origin;
to determine if any Iron Age deposits are present preceding the villa in the area;

to determine if any Roman deposits are present which represent further occupation remains of the nearby site;
to determine if any Iron Age or Roman deposits representing ancillary settlement features such as enclosures, field systems or cemeteries are present.;
to determine if there is any post (sub) Roman occupation in the area; and
to determine the impact of the development on the archaeological resource.

It was proposed to dig 6 trenches each 10m long and 1.6m wide. The trenching was to be located partly to examine any geophysical anomalies thought to be of archaeological origin, but otherwise was positioned as a 'stratified random' layout across the site. Topsoil, and any other overburden was to be removed by a JCB-type backhoe machine. A toothless ditching bucket was to be used to expose archaeologically sensitive levels, under constant archaeological supervision. A metal detector was to be used to enhance the recovery of metal finds. Stripped areas and a sample of spoilheaps were to be scanned for the retrieval of artefacts.

Where archaeological featuers were certainly or proably present, these were to be excavated or sampled by hand sufficiently to satisfy the aims of the project. Bulk soil samples were taken for environmental evidence and to enhance small finds recovery.

Results

Four of the trenches (1-4) were dug as intended, Trench 5 was moved to the north-west to better target a geophysical anomaly and Trench 6 was moved to the west to avoid an area of surface water. The trenches ranged from 10.5m to 15.0m in length and in depth 0.47m to 0.68m. All trenches were 1.6m wide.

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

Trench 1 (Figs 3 and 4; Pls 1, 3 and 4)

Trench 1 was aligned south-west to north-east, 12.6m long and 0.60m deep. Beneath the topsoil and cutting the subsoil and natural clay was a furrow (12) filled with topsoil. Towards the south-west end of the trench was ditch 9 that was aligned south-east to north-west. The ditch was 1.5m wide and over 0.60m deep, but not bottomed due to rapid water ingress. The ditch was filled with a mid brown/grey clayey silt (64) with occasional charcoal that contained one sherd of early Roman pottery, eleven fragments of animal bone, two fragments of stone and a single residual struck flint. Ditch 9 was on a similar alignment to a ditch picked up in the 2008 geophysical survey to the north and may be a continuation of it.

To the north-east of ditch 9 and cut by furrow 12 was wall foundation trench 5, that was also aligned south-east to north-west. Foundation trench 5 was 0.60m wide and was not bottomed. It was backfilled with dark

brown clayey silt (58) that contained no artefacts. Beneath deposit 58 was wall 57 which was up to 0.60m wide and formed of large irregular limestone blocks two courses high, with no evidence of mortar. To the north east of foundation trench 5 and practical covering it was a deposit of mid brown clayey silt (63) with large limestone blocks especially in the area of foundation cut 5. A sondage was excavated though deposit 63 where it was found to be 0.22m thick and contained six sherds of pottery of Iron Age and Roman date, and a fragment of fired clay. It is possible that the limestone blocks within deposit 63 had tumbled from wall 58.

Beneath deposit 63 was post hole 6 which was circular in plan, 0.25m in diameter and 0.10m deep and was cut into the natural clay. Post hole 6 contain deposit 59, a mid brown grey clayey silt that contained no artefacts.

Trench 2 (Figs 3 and 4; Pl. 5)

Trench 2 was aligned SSE east to NNW, 14.00m long and 0.68m deep. Beneath the subsoil towards the middle of the trench was ditch 3 which was aligned SSW to NNE, 2.0m wide and 0.34m deep. Ditch 3 was filled with a very dark brown grey clayey sand (55) with moderate large limestone blocks. Deposit 55 was 0.20m thick and contained eleven sherds of late Roman pottery, two fragments of bone, a piece of iron metalwork, two fragments of render or plaster and eight fragments of stone, mostly coarse shelly limestone, possibly used for roofing. Beneath 55 was light red brown sandy clay (54) up to 0.14m thick that contained two sherds of late Roman pottery, an oyster shell and a slab of stone. At the north end of the trench and extending under the end of the trench to the north was ditch 4. Ditch 4 was also aligned SSW to NNW, was 0.50m+ wide and unexcavated. Ditch 4 was filled with mid to dark brown grey silty clay (56) but contained no artefacts. Ditches 3 and 4 correspond with two of the ditches found by the geophysical survey.

Trench 3 (Fig. 3)

Trench 3 was aligned SSE east to NNW, 15.05m long and 0.60m deep. Beneath the subsoil was ditch 10 which was roughly linear in plan, 0.50m wide but not excavated due to flooding. Ditch 10 was filled with (62) mid grey brown silty clay that contained no surface artefacts. To the north of ditch 10 was posthole 11 which was circular in plan 0.20m in diameter and was unexcavated, again due to flooding. Its only visible fill of dark grey brown silty clay (65) contained no surface artefacts.

Trench 4 (Figs 3 and 4; Pl. 6)

Trench 4 was aligned SSE east to NNW, 11.20m long and 0.52m deep. Beneath the subsoil towards the southern end of the trench was gully 7. Gully 7 was aligned ESE to WNW, linear in plan, 0.80m wide and 0.15m deep. It was filled with light grey brown silty clay (60) that contained two sherds of Roman pottery. To the north of gully

7 was ditch 8 which was on the same alignment, 1.50m wide but unexcavated due to flooding. The top fill of ditch 8 was light brown grey silty clay (61) which contained no surface artefacts.

Trench 5 (Figs 3 and 4; Pl. 2)

Trench 5 was aligned SSE east to NNW, 10.50m long and 0.47m deep. Beneath the subsoil was ditch 2 which was aligned roughly west to east but returned though 90° to roughly south to north. Ditch 2 was 2.10m wide 0.50m+ deep, although it was not bottomed due to flooding. It was filled with mid grey brown silty clay (53) but contained only two fragments of fired clay. Ditch 2 cut Ditch 1 that was aligned SE-NW and was 1m wide and 0.38m deep. Ditch 1 was filled with light grey brown silty clay (52) that contained two sherds of Iron Age pottery.

Trench 6 (Fig. 2)

Trench 6 was aligned ESE east to WNW, 13.00m long and 0.55m deep. Trench 6 contained no archaeological features or artefacts.

Finds

Pottery by Jane Timby

The archaeological evaluation resulted in the recovery of a small assemblage of 24 sherds of pottery weighing 271g. The assemblage comprises material of possible later prehistoric and Roman date. Pottery was recovered from five defined cuts, a total of six contexts. In all cases the quantity of sherds per context was very low which has some ramifications on the reliability of the dating. For the purposes of the assessment the pottery was scanned to assess its likely chronology and quantified by sherd count and weight. The resulting data are summarized in Appendix 3. No detailed research has been carried out at this stage to seek local parallels for some of the less diagnostic material.

?Later prehistoric

Three sherds were tentatively identified as later prehistoric in date. Two came from ditch 1 and one from construction cut 5 was associated with probable Roman sherds. An undated rim sherd also came from cut 5.

The sherds from ditch 1 are from a handmade grog-tempered jar with a vertically scratch-marked exterior surface. No other pottery came from this feature. Grog-tempering although noted as present at Cadbury Castle did not appear to be very common or reflect any specific phase. In general terms grog-tempering was used in the Bronze Age and again in the later Iron Age as a form of temper.

A sherd of oxidized, handmade rock-tempered ware came from construction cut 5, broadly similar to later prehistoric material from Norton Fitzwarren hillfort. A simple everted rim, handmade jar also came from the same context. The fabric contains quartz sand, quartz sandstone and decaying limestone. The form could be pre- or post-Roman but the presence of Durotrigian black burnished ware from the same context might suggest a late Iron Age-early Roman date.

Roman

The remaining pottery is more clearly of Roman date but can be split into early Roman and late Roman. Beaded rim Durotrigian / black burnished ware (BB1) jars came from cuts 9 and 5, indicative of an early Roman date. Two small black sandy wares from gully 7 cannot be closely dated other than likely Roman. Ditch 3 produced a sherd of Oxfordshire colour-coated ware; a base and two body sherds from a Dorset BB1 dish or bowl; four further DOR BB1 sherds; four sherds from a New Forest colour-coated indented beaker (Fulford 1975, form 27) and a small ?grog-tempered fragment. These sherds indicate a likely 4th-century date for this feature.

Struck Flint by Steve Ford

A single residual struck flint was recovered from ditch 9 (64). It was a broken flake probably datable to the Neolithic or Bronze Age.

Animal Bone by Ceri Falys

A small assemblage of animal bone was recovered from two contexts within the evaluated area. A total of 13 fragments of bone were present for analysis, weighing 348g (Appendix 4). The overall preservation of the remains was fair, with small patches of cortical exfoliation. A moderate amount of fragmentation was also noted. A minimum of one unidentified large animal was present; no bones could be more closely identified. Non-descript fragments of cranium were present in ditch 3 (55), and mandible in ditch 9 (64). No further information could be retrieved from these animal remains.

Oyster Shell by Ceri Falys

A single piece of oyster shell was recovered from ditch 3 (54). It weighed 14g.

Fired clay

A single fragment of fired clay (20g) came from wall cut 5 (63) and two fragments (15g) came from ditch 2 (53).

Plaster

Two fragment of plaster or render (95g) came from ditch 3 (55).

Metalwork

A single fragment of iron came from ditch 3 (55). It was a piece of bent iron plate with parallel sides 30mm wide and 80mm long.

Quern?

A single very small fragment (10g) of grey vesicular stone, probably Mayen lava, came from ditch 1 (52). While the shape is not discenible, this material was commonly used for quernstones which were imported in large quantities through the Roman period (and beyond).

Other Stone

Ditch 3 (55) contained eight fragments of stone (400g), all limestone. Six fragments were a pink coarse shelly limestone with some flatish surfaces present which could indicate they had been used as roofing material. Ditch 3 (54) contained a single flat slab(375g) of grey mudstone. Ditch 9 (64) contained two fragments of stone, one a fragment of dark grey mudstone (45g) and the other a soft white calacareous limestone (110g).

Macrobotanical plant material and charcoal by Joanna Pine

Two soil samples of 20L each were take from ditches 3 and 6 to recover any charred plant remains or small artefacts. The samples were floated and sieved using a nest of sieves down to 0.25mm, and examined under a low-power binocular microscope at magnifications between x10 and x40.

Charred plant macrofossils were present in sample [1] from ditch 3 (55). This contained 10 grains of indeterminate cereal, some possibly being *Triticum spelta* (spelt wheat).

A small amount of charcoal was present in sample [2] from post hole 6 (59), however this material was of a size and structure that does not allow species identification.

Conclusion

The fieldwork has demonstrated that the site has archaeological potential. Five of the six trenches located in the northern portion of the site, contained archaeological features that appeared as linear features on the geophysical survey. These features were generally dated to the Roman period with both early and late Roman phases represented. One trench (1) contained a length of stone-built wall probably reflecting the presence of a masonry structure. It is possible to regard these features as an extension of the Roman villa complex recorded to the north. Only the southernmost trench contained no features.

References

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APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at west or south end

Trench	*Length (m)*	*Breadth (m)*	*Depth (m)*	*Comment*
1	12.6	1.6	0.60	0–0.30m topsoil; 0.30-0.60 subsoil; 0.60m+ brown yellow clay natural geology. Ditch 9, foundation trench 5, posthole 6 wall 57. **[Pls 1, 3 and 4]**
2	14.0	1.6	0.68	0–0.38m topsoil; 0.38-0.65 subsoil; 0.65m+ brown yellow clay natural geology. Ditches 3, 4 **[Pl. 5]**
3	15.1	1.6	0.60	0–0.30m topsoil; 0.30-0.60 subsoil; 0.60m+ brown yellow clay natural geology
4	11.2	1.6	0.52	0–0.30m topsoil; 0.30-0.58 subsoil; 0.58m+ brown yellow clay natural geology. Ditches 7, 10 Posthole 11 [**Pl. 6]**
5	10.5	1.6	0.47	0–0.25m topsoil; 0.25-0.45 subsoil; 0.45m+ brown yellow clay natural geology. Ditches 1,2 **[Pl. 2]**
6	13.0	1.6	0.55	0–0.30m topsoil,; 0.30-0.60 subsoil; 0.60m+ brown yellow clay natural geology

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

Trench	*Cut*	*Fill (s)*	*Type*	*Date*	*Dating evidence*
1		63	Demolition layer	-	-
1	5	57, 58	Wall	Roman	Pottery
1	6	59	Posthole	-	-
1	9	64	Ditch	Roman	Pottery
1	12	50	Furrow	Medieval	Landscape
2	3	54, 55	Ditch	Roman	Pottery
2	4	56	Ditch	-	-
3	10	62	Ditch	-	-
3	11	65	Posthole	-	None
4	7	60	Gully	Roman	Pottery
4	8	61	Ditch	-	-
5	1	52	Ditch	Iron Age?	Pottery
5	2	53	Ditch	-	Pottery

APPENDIX 3: Pottery catalogue

Cut	*Deposit*	*Lpreh*	*Roman*	*undated*	*Tot No*	*Tot Wt*
1	52	2	0	0	2	36
3	54	0	2	0	2	56
3	55	0	11	0	11	105
5	63	1	4	1	6	55
7	60	0	2	0	2	6
9	64	0	1	0	1	13
TOTAL		**3**	**20**	**1**	**24**	**271**

APPENDIX 4: Inventory of animal bone

Cut	*Deposit*	*No. frags*	*Wt (g)*	*Large*
3	55	2	32	2
9	64	11	316	11
Total		13	348	

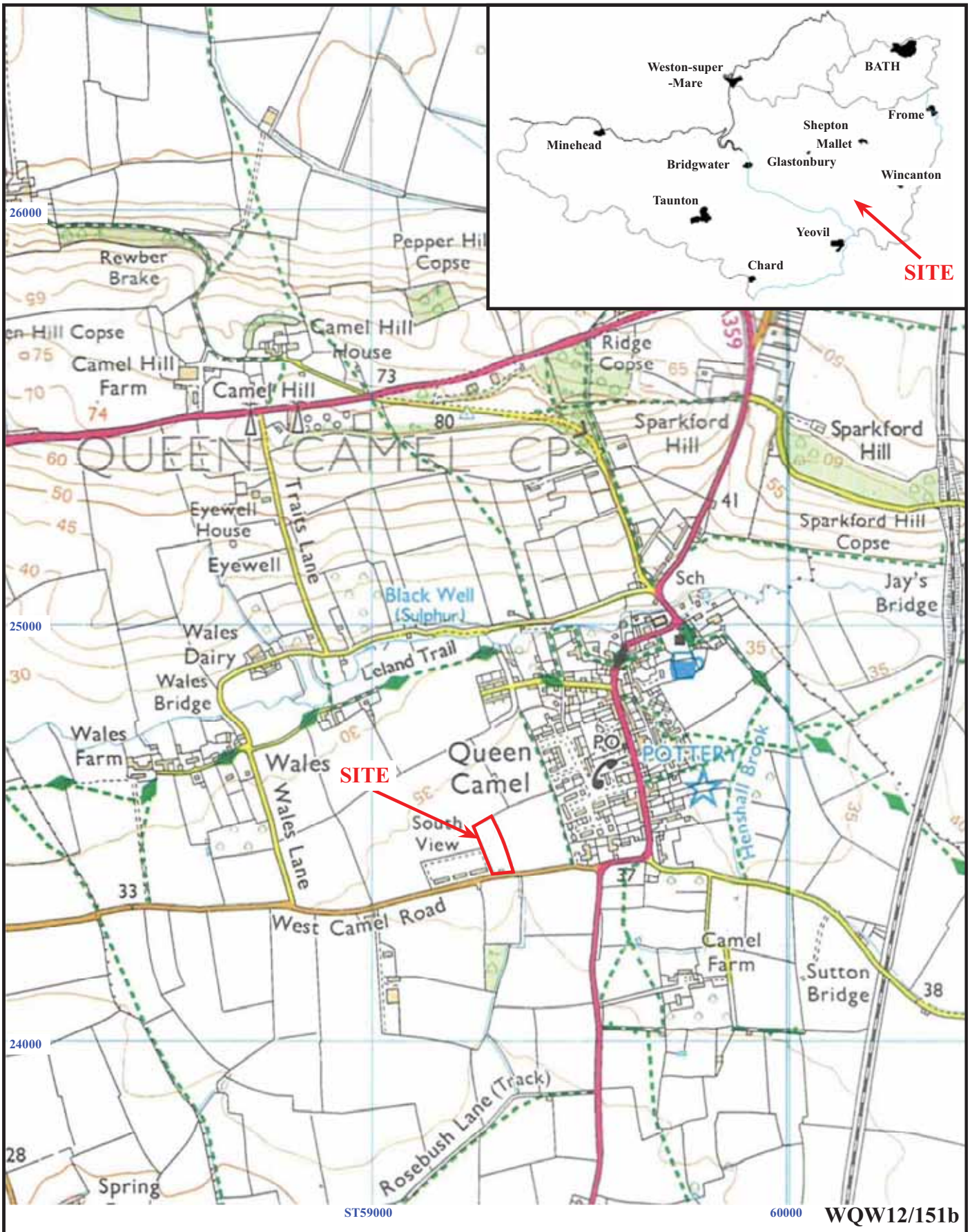

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Figure 1. Location of site within Queen Camel and Somerset.

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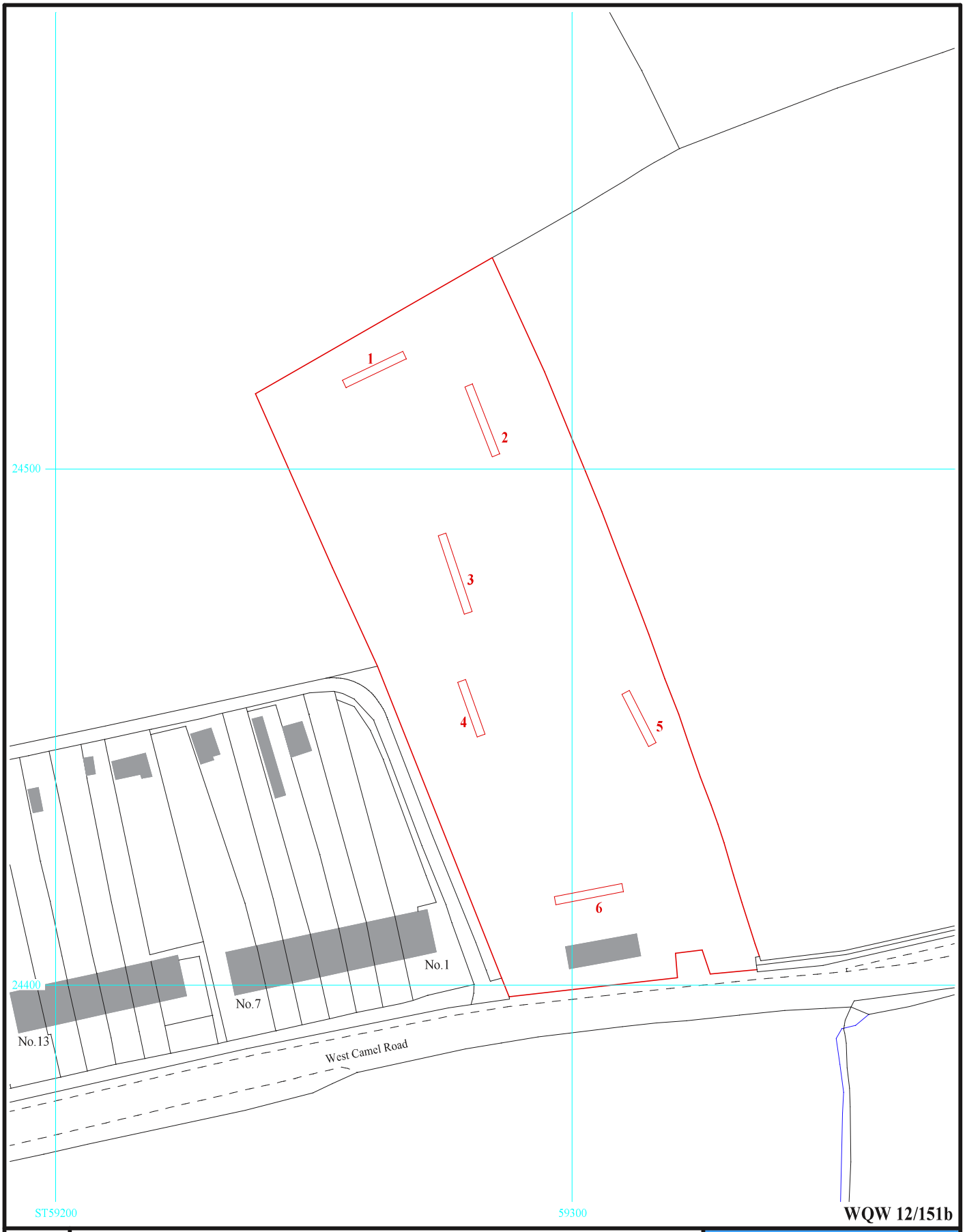

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Figure 2. Location of trenches.

0 50m

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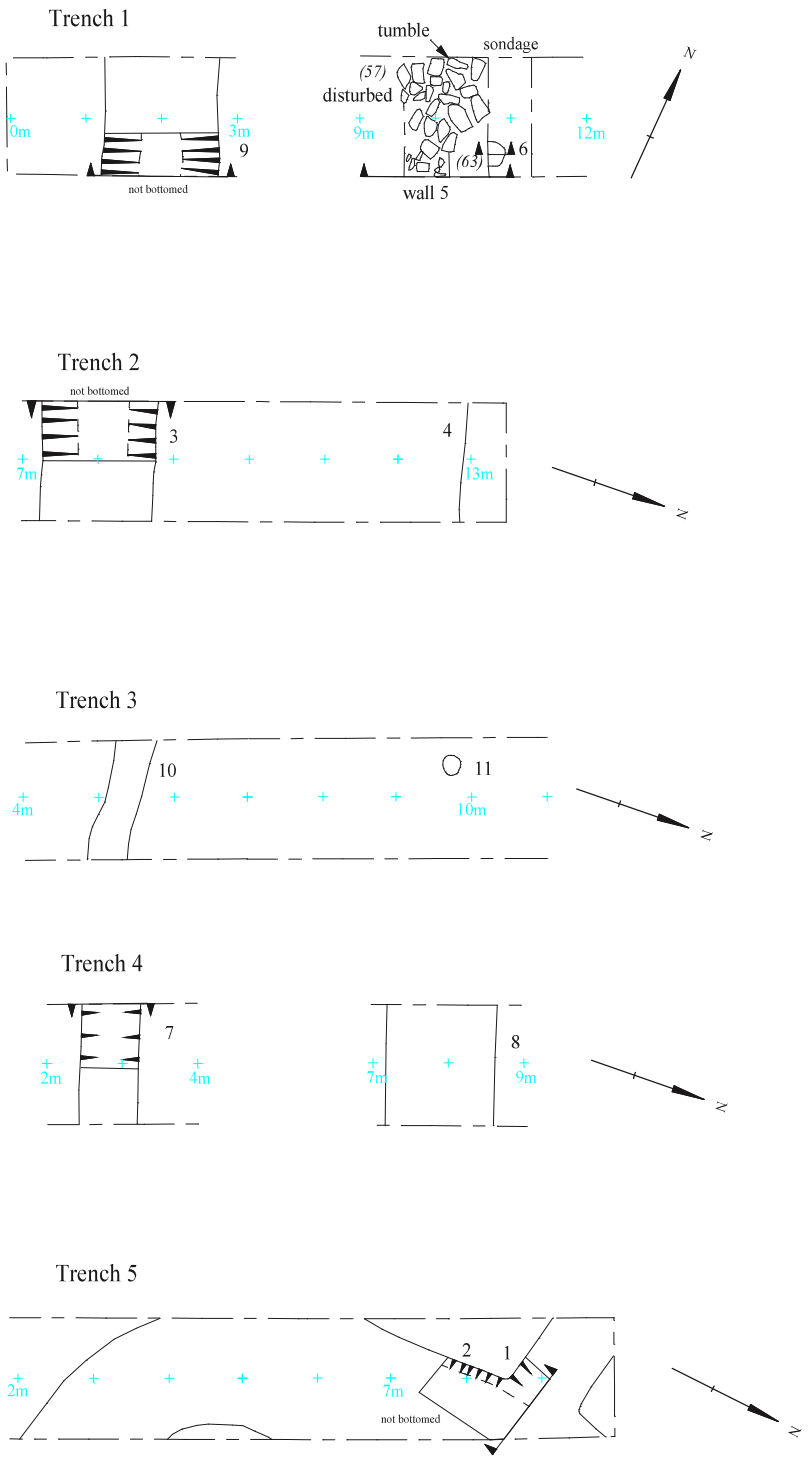

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Figure 3. Detail of trenches.

0 5m

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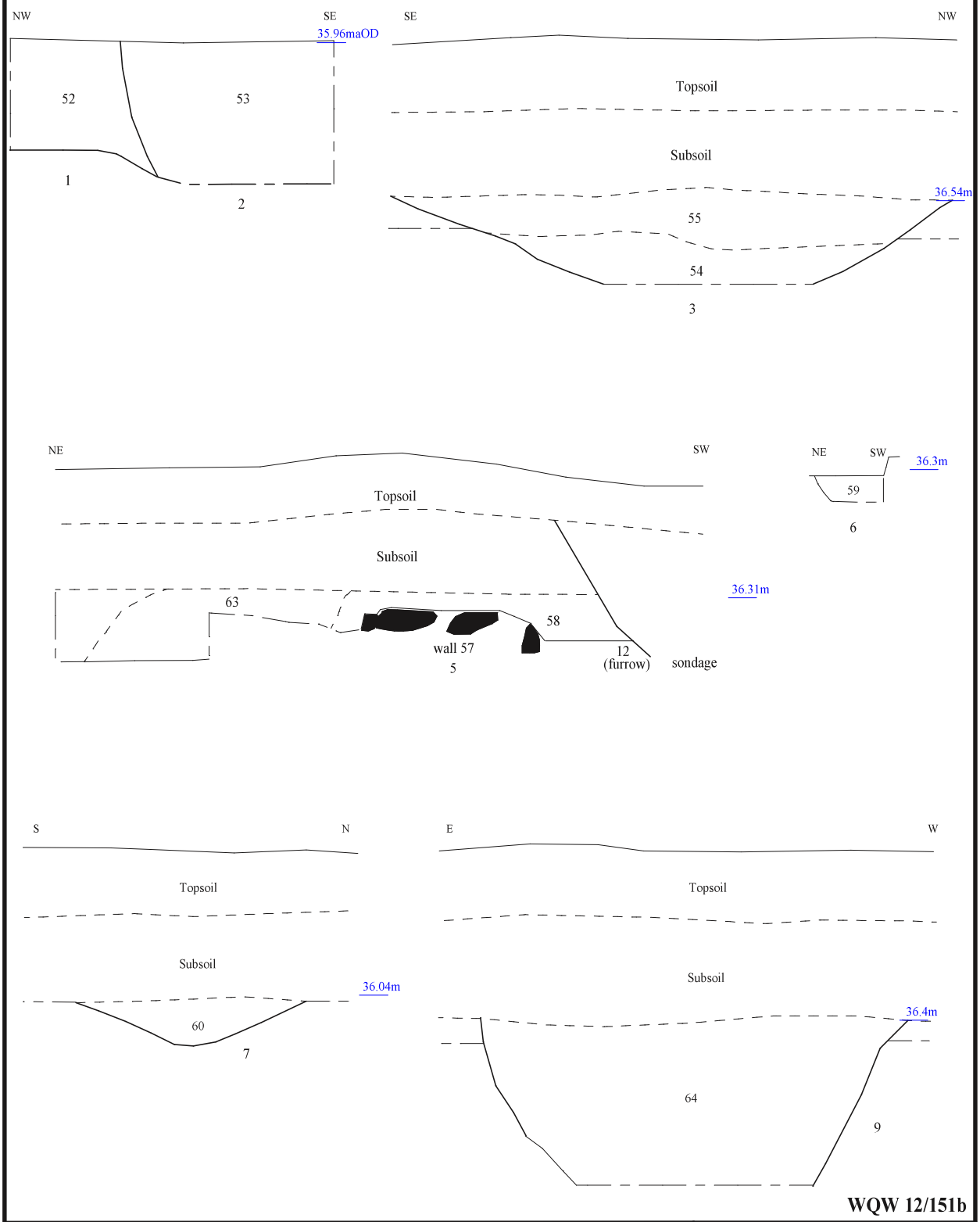

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Figure 4. Sections.

0 1m

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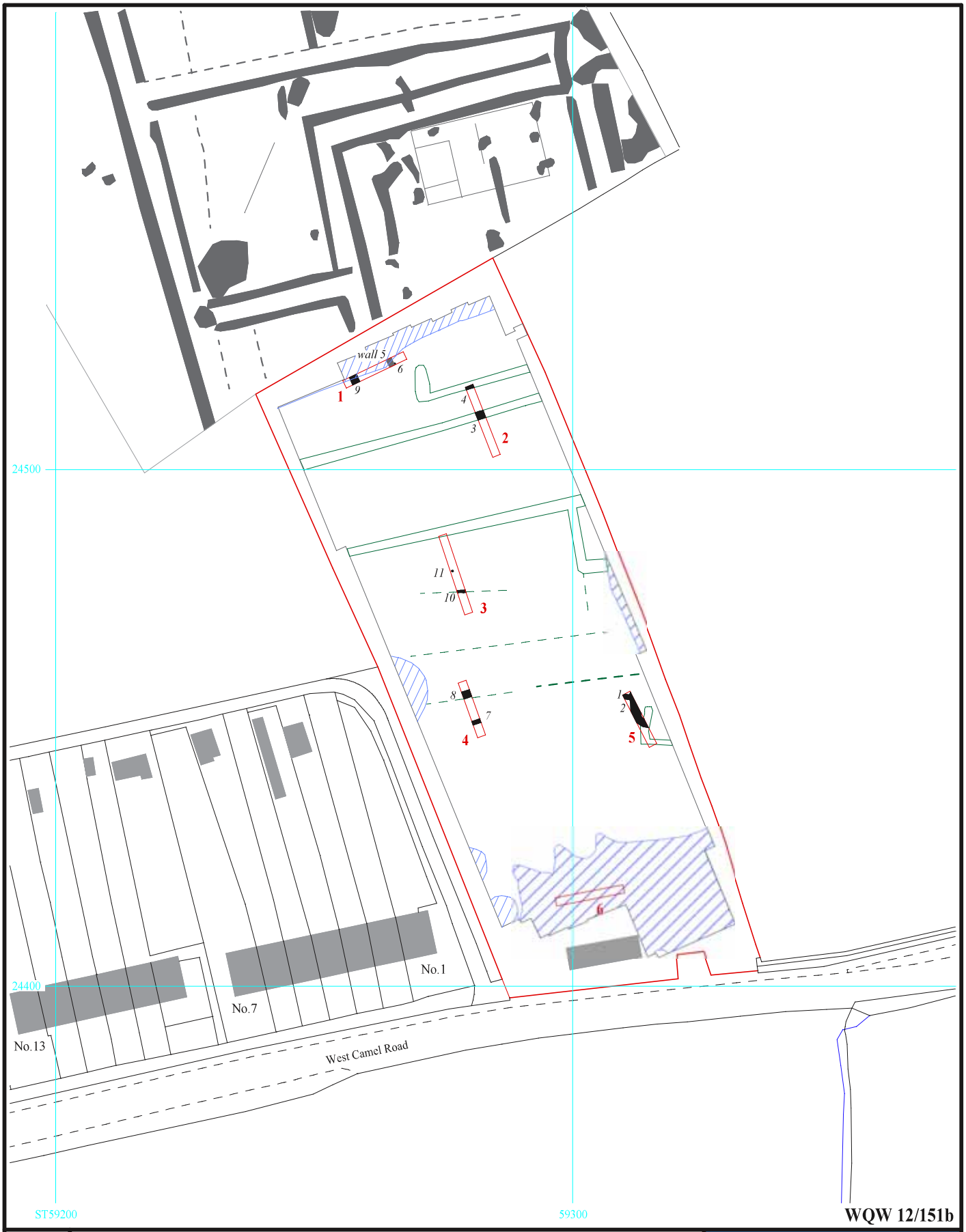

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Figure 5. Location of trenches and features, in relation to geophysics and villa complex.

0 50m

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

Plate 2. Trench 5, looking north west, Scales: 1m and 0.5m.

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Plates 1 and 2.

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Plate 3. Trench 1, wall 5, pit 6 (prior excavation), looking south, Scales: 1m and 0.3m.

Plate 4. Trench 1, ditch slot 9, looking north, Scales: 2m and 1m.

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Plates 3 and 4.

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Plate 5. Trench 2, ditch slot 3, looking south west, Scales: 1m and 0.3m.

Plate 6. Trench 4, ditch slot 7, looking west, Scales: 1m and 0.1m.

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Plates 5 and 6.

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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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