THAMES VALLEY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

SERVICES

SOUTH WEST

School site B, West Camel Road, Queen Camel, Somerset

Archaeological Evaluation

by Andrew Weale

Site Code: BQC12/153

(ST 5945 2438)

School Site B, West Camel Road, Queen Camel, Somerset

An Archaeological Evaluation

for Somerset County Council

by Andrew Weale

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code BQC12/153

January 2013

Summary

Site name: School Site B, West Camel Road, Queen Camel, Somerset

Grid reference: ST 5945 2438

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 30th November to 3rd December 2012

Project manager: Andrew Weale

Site supervisor: Andrew Weale

Site code: BQC 12/153

Area of site: *c.* 1.47ha

Summary of results: Only two linear features of possible archaeological origin were recorded on the site, neither of which were well dated but one may be of late post-medieval date. Various of the geophysical anomalies examined were of either agricultural (furrows), modern or geological origin. The site is considered to have low archaeological potential.

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

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School site B, West Camel Road, Queen Camel, Somerset
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Report 12/153b

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at School Site B, West Camel Road at Queen Camel, Somerset (ST 5945 2438) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Peter Friend of Hastoe Homes, Fleur de Lis, Middleman Street, Poundbury, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 3GX on behalf of Somerset County Council.

Planning permission is to be sought from Somerset County Council to redevelop the land of *c*. 1.4ha for the site of a new primary school. The results of a field evaluation have been requested to determine if the site has archaeological potential and if so produce information to mitigate the impact of the proposed development.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's Planning Policy Statement, *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012), and the County 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. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Weale, Andrew Taylor, Susan Porter, Daniel Bray and Aiji Castle between 30th November and 3rd December 2012 and the site code is BQS12/153. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services South West, Taunton and will be deposited at Somerset County Museum with accession code TTNCM 89/2012 in due course; and the HER reference is 31898.

Location, topography and geology

The site is an area of 1.47ha within the northern end of a field located immediately to the southwest of the village of Queen Camel, *c*.9km north east of Yeovil, Somerset. The river Cam flows westwards *c*.600m to the north with the site lying near the crest of the hill on ground that gently rises up from the south. The site consists of a well-grazed pasture with an overhead power line running north-south across the site's eastern end. It is bounded ultimately by hedgerows on the northern and western sides and a wire fence to the east although the northern and western boundaries were enclosed by an electric fence inside the hedgerows. To the north is West Camel Road, to the east the A359, and to the south and west further pasture. The underlying geology is mapped

as Langport Member, Blue Lias Formation and Charmouth Mudstone Formation (BGS 1973). Brown-yellow clay was observed in all the 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 site is to the west of a series of earthworks including least one house platform, and possibly a second, both adjoining a hollow-way, which are the remains of a deserted village. To the north of the site across the road are the remains of a Roman villa complex that 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. Subsequent exploratory excavation (Graham 2009) uncovered part of a well-preserved mosaic pavement *c*.0.20m below the ground surface within one of the rooms along with a hypocaust. To the south -west of the building a small, detached bath house was discovered. The geophysical (magnetic and resistance) surveys mapped the outline of a large aisled hall building set within an extensive system of angular ditched enclosures. Further geophysical survey (Buczek and Dawson 2012a) and evaluation (Weale 2013) have shown that the villa complex extends further south. Further 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 plough teams. 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.

The site itself was subject to a geophysical survey (Buczek and Dawson 2012b) that showed three positive anomalies of possible archaeological origin. Several other anomalies traversing the site are, however, considered to be of agricultural or geological origin with additional anomalies due to electrical/ferrous interference.

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 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 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 medieval occupation in the area; and
to determine the impact of the development on the archaeological resource.

It was proposed to dig 8 trenches each 20m long and 1.6m wide (*c*. 2% of site area). The trenching was to be located, in part, to examine geophysical anomalies thought to be of archaeological origin, but otherwise positioned as a 'stratified random' layout across the site. A contingency of 20m of trench was included should this be required to clarify the nature of the initial findings. Topsoil and any other overburden were 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 scanned for the retrieval of artefacts.

Where archaeological features were certainly or probably 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, the other four (5-8) had to be moved after consultation with Mr Membery of Somerset County Council, due to the presence of high voltage overhead cables, but were located as close as possible to their intended positions (Fig. 2). The trenches ranged from 19.6m to 22.6m in length and in depth from 0.35m to 0.52m. 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 summary of features investigated forms Appendix 2.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was aligned W–E and was 20.30m long and 0.35m deep and targeted a linear geophysical anomaly. The stratigraphy comprised 0.20m of topsoil, above 0.15m of yellow brown subsoil, above brown yellow clay

natural geology. No archaeological features or artefacts were recovered. The anomaly shown in the geophysical survey was a ceramic pipe-lined land drain.

Trench 2 (Fig. 2; Pl. 1)

Trench 2 was aligned approximately W–E, was 20.10m long and 0.52m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.25m of topsoil, above 0.27m of subsoil, above brown yellow clay natural geology. A positive anomaly shown in the geophysical survey and interpreted as probably geological was shown to be a change in geology, with patches of gravel.

Trench 3 (Figs3 and 4; Pl. 3)

Trench 3 was aligned SSW–NNE, was 20.90m long and 0.52m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.28m of topsoil, above 0.2m of subsoil, above brown yellow clay natural geology. Beneath the subsoil at 17m from the south end of the trench was furrow 1 which was linear in plan, aligned roughly west to east, 1.10m wide, 0.17m deep and filled with a dark grey brown silty clay (52) that contained no artefacts. Furrow 1 cut the top of ditch 3 that was also linear in plan aligned west to east and filled with a mid grey brown silty clay (54) that contained a single fragment of clinker. A land drain (2) cut the southern portion of both furrow 1 and ditch 3 (Fig. 4). These features all lay on the line of a geophysical anomaly. Two further anomalies shown in the geophysical survey were furrows similar to 1, further south in the trench.

Trench 4

Trench 4 was aligned SE–NW, 19.60m long and 0.51m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.25m of topsoil, above 0.20m of subsoil, above brown yellow clay natural geology. No archaeological features or artefacts were recovered. An anomaly shown in the geophysical survey was a modern feature, back-filled with plastic, stone and concrete rubble.

Trench 5 (Figs 3 and 4; Pls 2 and 4)

Trench 5 was aligned W–E, 20.10m long and 0.40m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.25m of topsoil, above 0.15m of subsoil, above brown yellow clay natural geology. Beneath the subsoil was ditch 4 which was aligned roughly along the trench, west to east but curved to the south at either end, however the edges of the ditch were irregular. Ditch 4 was over 18.6m long, 1.6m wide and 0.40m+ deep, although it was not bottomed due to flooding. Ditch 4 was filled with light grey yellow silty clay (55) that contained no artefacts. It approximately correlates with a linear geophysics anomaly.

Trench 6

Trench 6 was aligned S–N, 20.4m long and 0.50m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.25m of topsoil, above 0.25m of subsoil, above brown yellow clay natural geology. No archaeological features or artefacts were recovered. The three anomalies shown in the geophysical survey were furrows similar to those in Trench 3.

Trench 7

Trench 7 was aligned S–N, 20.1m long and 0.52m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.25m of topsoil, above 0.25m of subsoil, above brown yellow clay natural geology. No archaeological features or artefacts were recovered. The two anomalies shown in the geophysical survey were the same furroes as those in Trench 3 and 6. Trench 7 was original intended to investigate an anomaly to the west of the trench location but this proved to be impossible as it lay directly under a high voltage overhead cable.

Trench 8

Trench 8 was aligned SE–NW, was 19.8m long and 0.51m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.26m of topsoil, above 0.24m of subsoil, above brown yellow clay natural geology. No archaeological features or artefacts were recovered.

Finds

No artefacts of archaeological interest were recovered. A fragment of clinker was recovered from ditch 3 (54).

Conclusion

Two features of possible archaeological origin were recorded on the site. Both consisted of two ditches, neither of which contained datable artefacts. A small fragment of clinker from ditch 3 would usually be consistent with late post-medieval date following the use of steam ploughing. However, this interpretation cannot be accepted uncritically in this region as coal has been found on Roman sites in Somerset, Gloucestershire and western Wiltshire (Webster 2007) and as there is a large Roman site close by to the north this can not be ignored as a potential source of the clinker. However, a late post-medieval date for the feature remains the more likely. The uneven and curving nature of ditch 4 makes its interpretation and chronology uncertain.

The vast majority of the anomalies highlighted by the geophysical survey were the remains of medieval plough furrows with others of modern or geological origin. The site is considered to have low archaeological potential.

References

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APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at west or south end

Trench	*Length (m)*	*Breadth (m)*	*Depth (m)*	*Comment*
1	20.3	1.6	0.35	0–0.20m topsoil, 0.20-0.35 subsoil, 0.35m+ brown yellow clay natural geology.
2	20.1	1.6	0.52	0–0.25m topsoil, 0.25-0.52 subsoil, 0.52m+ brown yellow clay with patches of yellow brown gravel and clay natural geology. **[Pl. 1]**
3	20.9	1.6	0.52	0–0.28m topsoil, 0.28-0.48 subsoil, 0.48m+ brown yellow clay natural geology. Ditch 3 Furrow 1 **[Pl 3]**
4	19.6	1.6	0.51	0–0.25m topsoil, 0.28-0.45 subsoil, 0.45m+ brown yellow clay natural geology.
5	20.1	1.6	0.40	0–0.25m topsoil, 0.25-0.40 subsoil, 0.40m+ brown yellow clay natural geology. Ditch 4, **[Pls 2 and 4]**
6	20.4	1.6	0.50	0–0.25m topsoil, 0.25-0.50 subsoil, 0.50m+ brown yellow clay natural geology
7	20.1	1.6	0.52	0–0.25m topsoil, 0.25-0.50 subsoil, 0.50m+ brown yellow clay natural geology
8	19.8	1.6	0.51	0–0.26m topsoil, 0.26-0.50 subsoil, 0.50m+ brown yellow clay natural geology

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

Trench	*Cut*	*Fill (s)*	*Type*	*Date*	*Dating evidence*
3	1	52	Furrow	Medieval	landscape
3	2	53	Land Drain	Modern	Clay pipe
3	3	54	Ditch	Post-medieval?	clinker
5	4	55	Ditch	Unknown	None

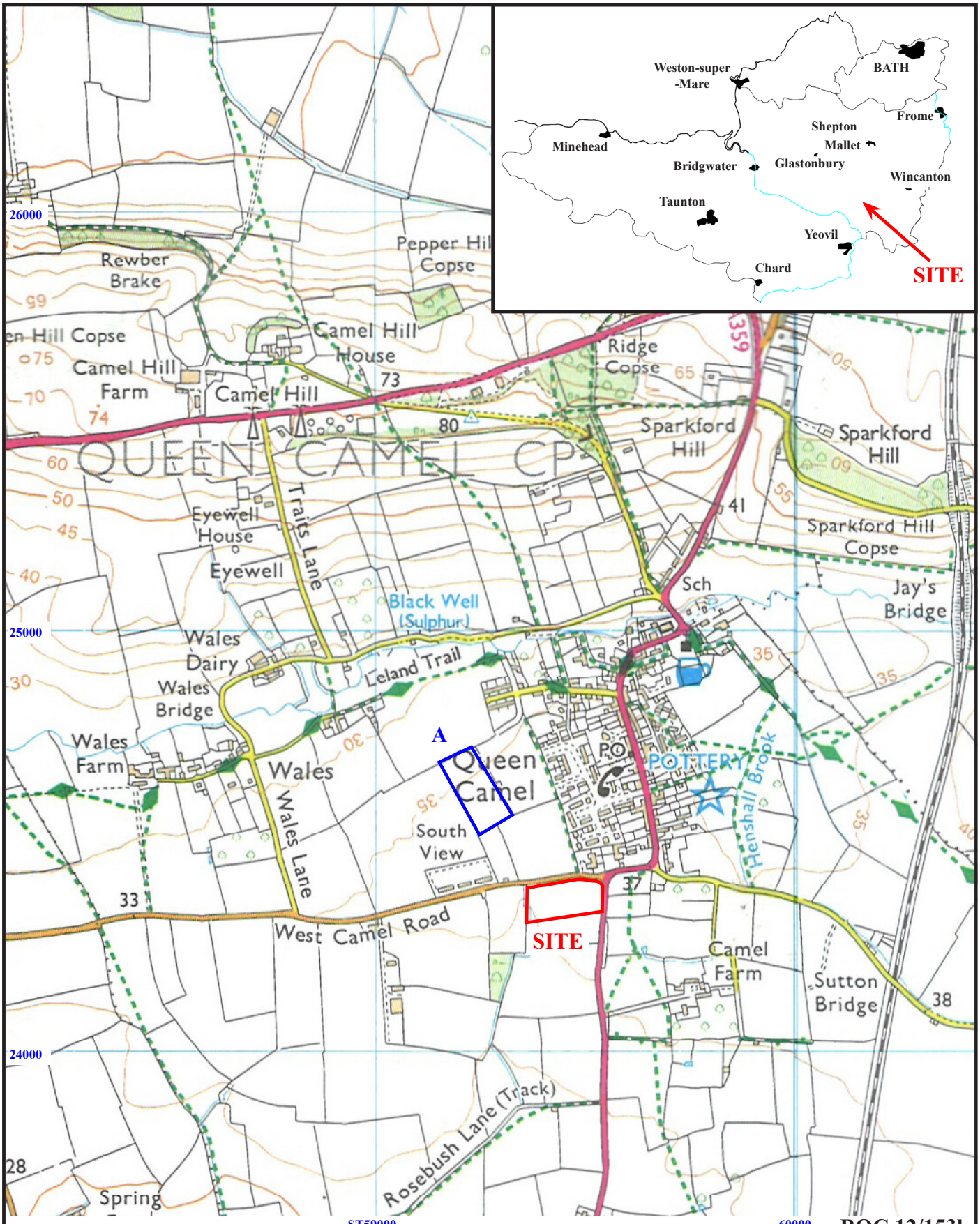

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Figure 1. Location of site within Queen Camel and Somerset.

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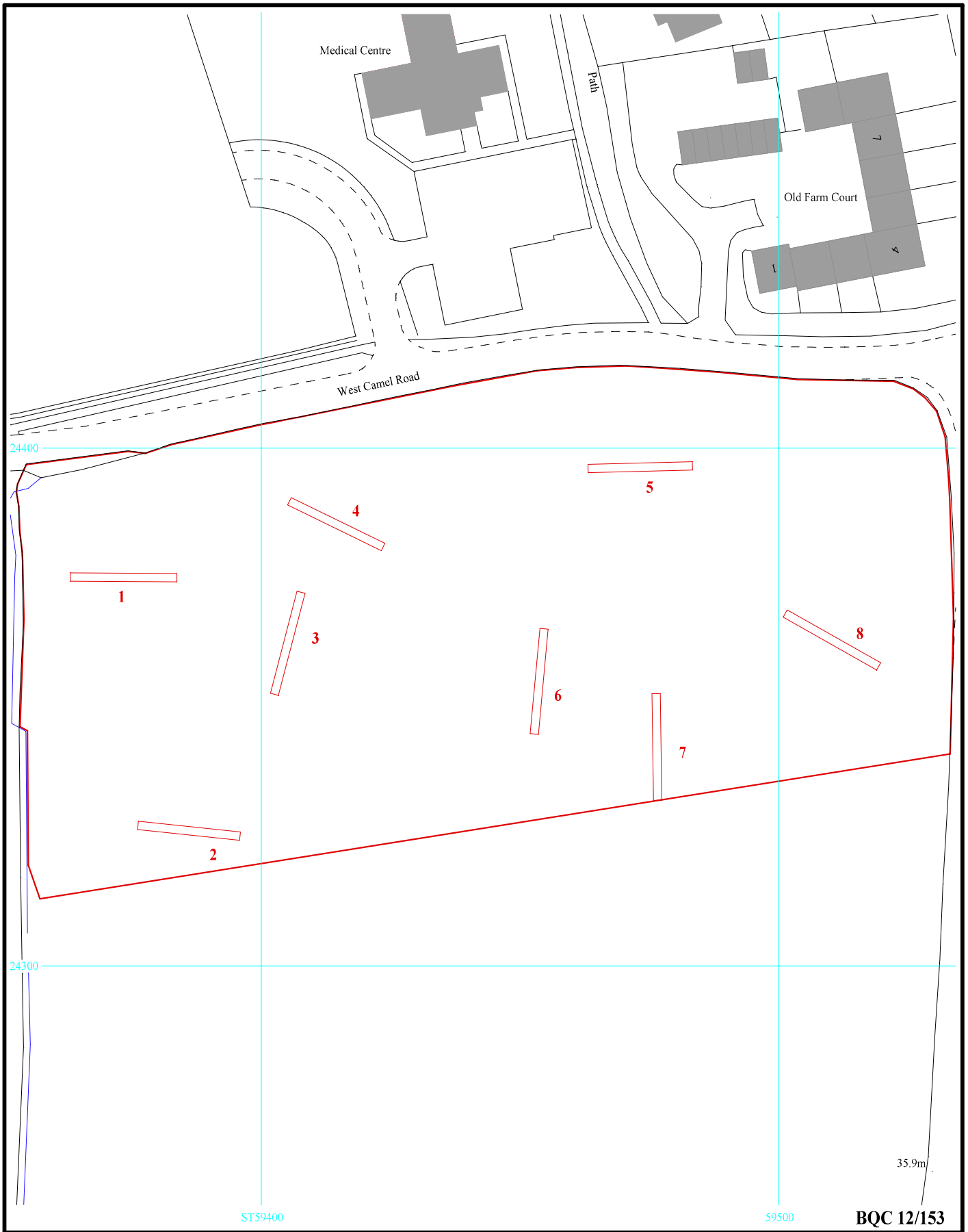

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Figure 2. Location of trenches.

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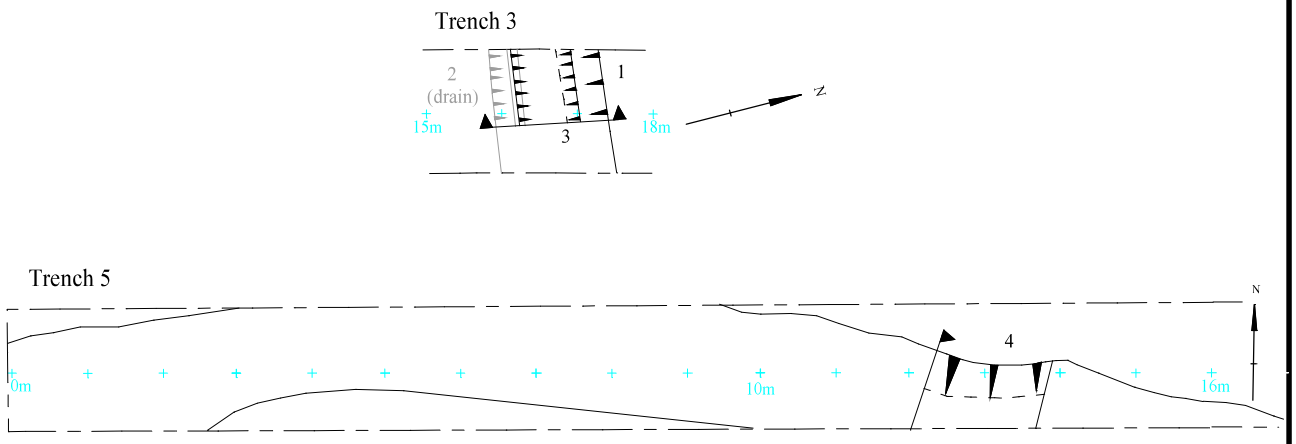

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Figure 3. Detail of trenches.

0 5m

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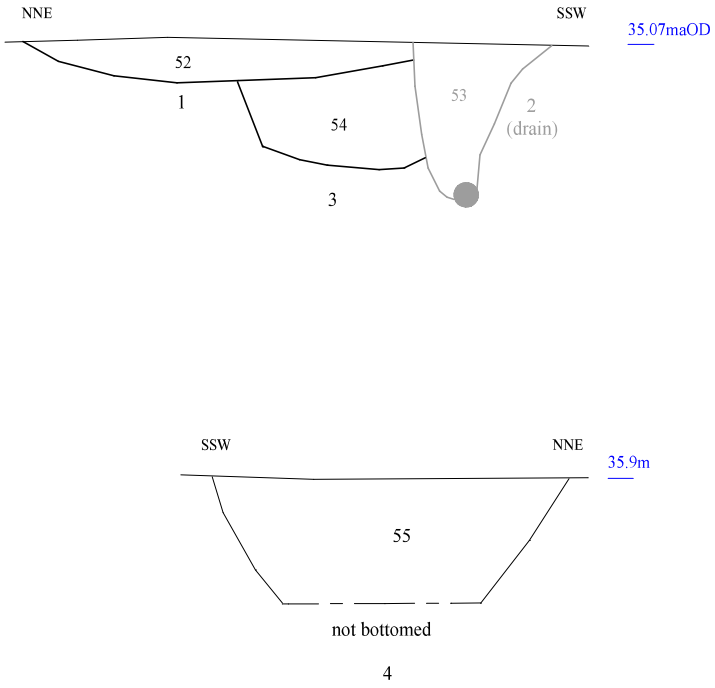

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Figure 4. Sections.

0 1m

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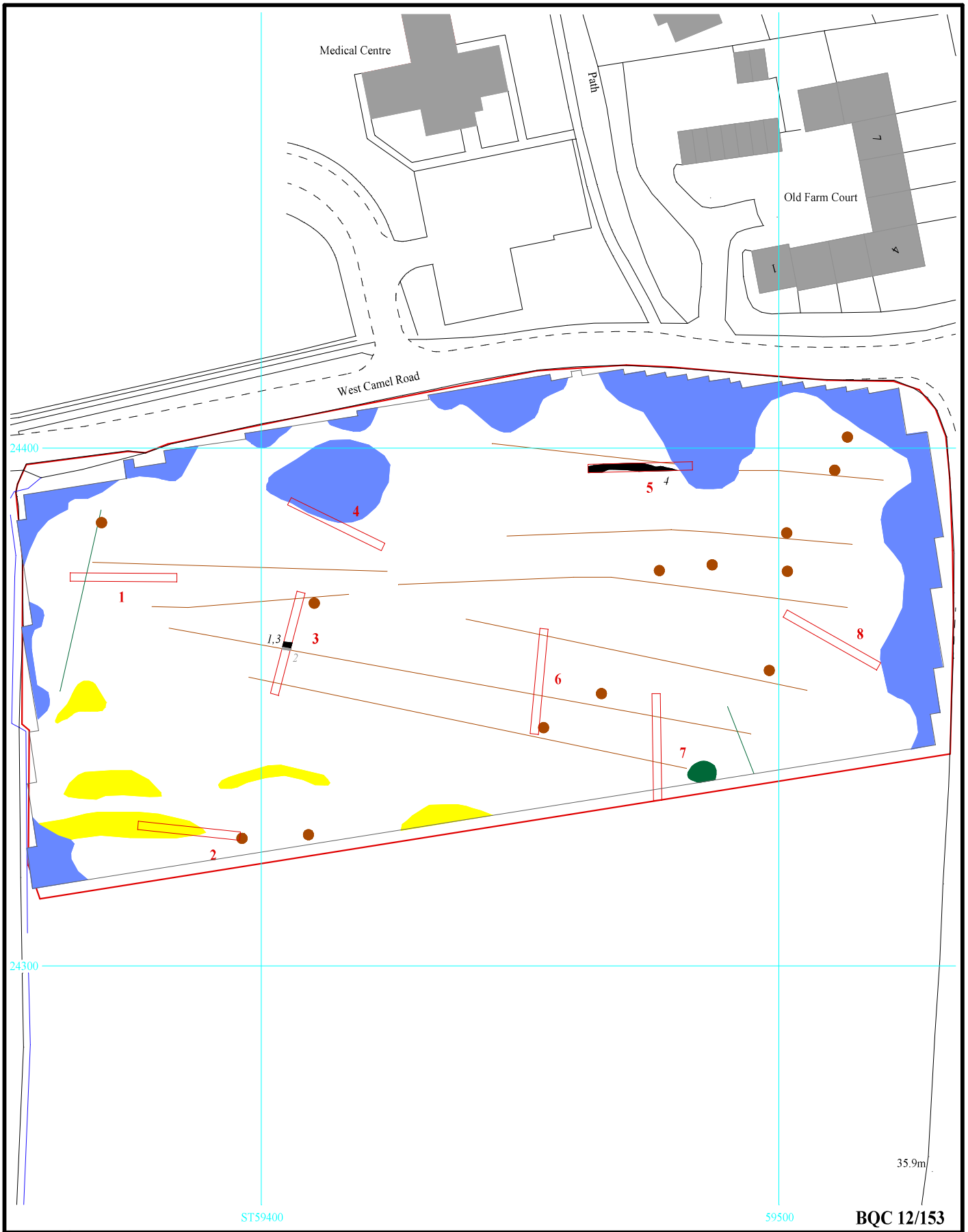

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Figure 5. Location of trenches and features, in relation to geophysical anomalies.

0 50m

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

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

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Plates 1 and 2

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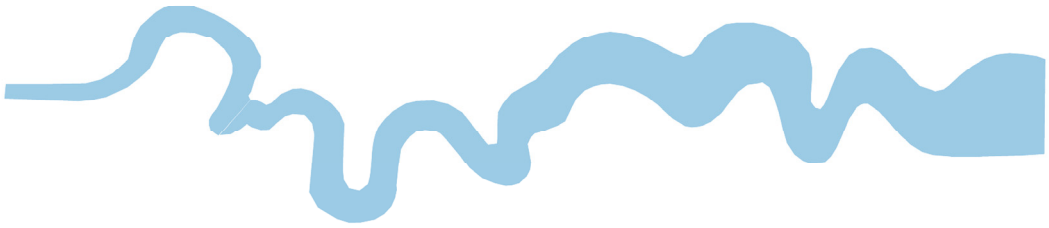
Plate 3. Features 1-3 in Trench 3, looking east. Scales: horizontal 2m; vertical 0.5m and 0.1m

Plate 4. Ditch 4 in Trench 5, looking north-west. Scales: horizontal, 1m, vertical 0.5m

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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