THAMES VALLEY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

SERVICES

Peewit Farm, Drayton Road, Sutton Courtenay, Oxfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation

by Susan Porter

Site Code: PFS13/39

(SU 4899 9404)

Peewit Farm, Drayton Road, Sutton Courtenay, Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Evaluation

for Mr Stuart Wilson

by Susan Porter

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code PFS 13/39

March 2013

Summary

Site name: Peewit Farm, Drayton Road, Sutton Courtenay, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 48949 94054

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 1st - 5th March 2013

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Susan Porter

Site code: PFS 13/39

Area of site: 0.34ha

Summary of results: The evaluation has confirmed the archaeological potential of the majority of the site with the discovery of archaeological deposits of Early Saxon date probably representing an occupation site. A single prehistoric struck flint was also recovered.

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

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 11.03.13
	Steve Preston✓ 12.03.13

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Peewit Farm, Drayton Road, Sutton Courtenay, Oxfordshire
An Archaeological Evaluation

by Susan Porter

Report 13/39

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Peewit Farm, Drayton Road, Sutton Courtenay, Oxfordshire, SU 48949 94054 (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Steve Volley of Cotswold Planning Consultants on behalf of Mr Stuart Wilson of Peewit Farm, Drayton Road, Sutton Courtenay, Oxfordshire.

Planning permission (P12/V1614/) is to be sought from Vale of White Horse District Council for the construction of nine new homes with access and parking on land adjacent to Peewit Farm. The results of a field evaluation have been requested to determine the archaeological potential, and, if necessary, produce information on which to base a scheme to mitigate the archaeological impact of the proposed development.

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 Hugh Coddington, Principal Archaeologist, Oxford County Council Archaeological Services, and based on a brief provided by him (Coddington 2012). The fieldwork was undertaken by Susan Porter and Aiden Colyer on 1st March 2013 and the site code is PFS 13/39. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museums Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the southern side of Drayton Road (B4016) to the north-west of the village of Sutton Courtenay, south of Abingdon (Fig. 1). The site comprises a relatively flat currently disused parcel of land associated with Peewit Farm. The underlying geology is recorded as 2nd terrace gravel deposits (BGS 1971) and this was observed in the trenches as fine gravel.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site area has been highlighted in a brief prepared by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (Coddington 2012). In summary, archaeological works undertaken between 1921 and 1927 revealed Neolithic, Bronze Age and Roman settlement with further extensive Saxon settlement to the south-west of the site (Leeds 1923). Recent fieldwork in the village has revealed further Saxon occupation, with a rare type of Saxon Pottery (Ipswich ware) for this region (Mundin and McNicoll-Norbury 2009). Extensive cropmarks visible from the air have been recorded in nearby areas (Benson and Miles 1974).

Objectives and methodology

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

The specific research aims of this project were:

to determine if archaeological deposits of any period were present;

to determine if any prehistoric occupation or landscape features were present on the site; and

to determine if there were any later prehistoric, Roman, Saxon or medieval deposits present on the site.

It was proposed to dig three trenches, one at 30m, one at 20m and one at 10m long and all 1.6m wide, targeting the footprints of the two proposed terraces of houses and the proposed single plot. A contingency of 10m of trench was included should it be required to clarify the results of the initial findings.

Topsoil and overburden was removed using a JCB type machine equipped with a ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. Where archaeological deposits or features were encountered these were to be cleaned and excavated using hand tools.

Results

All three trenches were dug as intended. They ranged in length from 9.90m to 30.20m and in depth from 0.44m to 1.36m. Spoil heaps were checked for finds using a metal detector. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trench 1 (Figs 3–5; Pl. 1)

Trench 1 was aligned SE-NW and was 30.4m long and between 0.44 and 1.20m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.20m of topsoil above 0.20m of light brown grey gravelly sand subsoil overlying mid yellow fine sandy gravel natural geology. The north-western end of the trench from 19m to 30.4m was truncated by a backfilled quarry haul road, from which a *c*.1970s drinks can and Pepsi-Cola glass bottle (pre 1953) were recovered, these items were not retained.

Six features were observed within the trench (Figs 4 and 5). Pit 1 (Pl. 3) was 0.70m in diameter and 0.45m deep and filled with two deposits, the uppermost of which (52) comprised firm light brown grey sandy clay with moderate small gravel inclusions, containing two sherds of Saxon pottery along with a fragment of copper alloy. The lower fill (53) comprised loose light yellow brown gravel and sand and was most likely a slumped natural deposit which contained no finds.

Pit 2 was 0.60m in diameter and 0.21m deep and filled with friable mid red brown sandy clay (54) with infrequent small stone inclusions. No finds were recovered. There is a small possibility that this is a natural feature. A curving gully (3) was excavated in a 0.55m long slot. It was 0.25m wide and 0.13m deep filled with two deposits the uppermost of which (55) comprised friable mid grey brown sandy clay with moderate small gravel inclusions; the lower fill (56) was loose light yellow brown sand and gravel and is likely to be a slumped natural deposit. No finds were recovered. Gully 3 was cut by posthole 4, which was 0.12m in diameter and 0.10m in depth, filled with (57) friable mid/ dark brown grey sandy clay containing two sherds of Saxon pottery.

Posthole 5 was 0.40m in diameter and 0.13m in depth. A post pipe (59) was clearly visible in section with loose mid orange brown gravel and sand packing material (58).

Ditch 6 (Pl. 4) was oriented roughly north – south. It was 0.80m wide and 0.15m in depth and contained a single soft mid red brown sandy clay deposit (60). No finds were recovered.

Trench 2 (Figs 3–5; Pl. 2)

Trench 2 was aligned SE - NW and was 22.80m long and 0.72m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.30m of topsoil above 0.33m of subsoil gravel natural geology. Two postholes (Figs 4 and 5) were observed (7 and 8) measuring 0.35m and 0.30m in diameter and 0.18m and 0.37m in depth respectively. Post pipes (62 and 64) were clearly visible in the sections with loose mid orange brown sand and gravel packing material (61) and (63) to either side of the post pipe. No finds were recovered from either feature.

Trench 3 (Fig 3)

Trench 3 was aligned SE - NW and was 9.9m long and 1.36m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.20m topsoil overlying 1.14m of made ground, above gravel natural geology. The made ground formed the backfilled quarry haul road also observed at the north western end of trench 1. A complete white china cup with a legible stamp E II R 1954 GRIMWADES on the base was recovered from the made ground.

Finds

Pottery by Malcolm Lyne

Two Early Saxon sherds each came from the fills of pit 1 and posthole 4 (contexts 52 and 57 respectively) and were all in handmade carbon-soaked black fabric ES1 with sand filler. They can be dated to the period *c*. AD450–650 and, in the case of three sherds, have both the external and internal polish characteristic of many Early Saxon cooking-pots.

Fabric

ES1. Black handmade fabric with profuse ill-sorted silt-sized<1.00 mm quartz sand (most <0.10 mm.). Occasional <1.00 mm. shell and <2.00 mm. limestone fragments.

Copper alloy by Susan Porter

A length of copper alloy rod weighing 5g was recovered from pit 1(52) It was 55mm long with a square section 3mm across which had been twisted into a loose spiral.

Animal bone by Danielle Milbank

A small assemblage of 5 fragments, weighing 32g, of disarticulated animal bone was recovered from a single context (pit 1, fill 52). The preservation of the remains was moderate, with fairly high fragmentation and some surface erosion. The generally small fragment size limited the amount of identifiable bone. Overall, the assemblage consisted of medium or large-sized animal bone fragments, with one rib fragment and two probable long bone fragments. A single tooth was identified as a cattle tooth (Hillson 1992).

Evidence of butchery was not present on any of the fragments. No other information could be retrieved from the fragmented remains, and the animal bone is likely to represent domestic consumption.

Struck flint by Steve Ford

A single struck flint was recovered from Saxon pit 1 (52). It was a spall (piece less than 20 x 20mm) and had been heavily burnt.

Conclusion

Evaluation of the site revealed two components of archaeological potential. To the north-west the site had been truncated by construction of a former quarry haul road and this relatively narrow zone has no archaeological potential. However, to the south and east, a series of certain and probable cut features are of archaeological interest. One of these deposits is of early Saxon (or possibly later) date with other early Saxon pottery recovered from a second, partly disturbed feature. No artefacts of other periods, apart from modern material in the topsoil and made ground were recorded on the site. This suggests the strong possibility that all of the cut features are of Saxon date with the paucity of artefactual material typical of sites of this period. It is considered that the site has archaeological potential for the presence of occupation deposits of early Saxon date with the exception of the north-western margins which have been truncated.

References

Benson, D and Miles, D, 1974, *The Upper Thames Valley: an archaeological survey of the river gravels,* Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit Survey **2**, Oxford.

BGS, 1971, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50,000, Sheet 253, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth

Coddington, H, 2012, 'Peewit Farm, Drayton Road, Sutton Courtenay, Project Design for Archaeological Evaluation', Oxford County Archaeological Services, Oxford

Hillson, S, 1992, *Mammal Bones and Teeth,* Institute of Archaeology, London

Leeds, E, T, 1923, 'A Saxon village near Sutton Courtenay, Berkshire' *Archaeologia* **71**, 147–92

Mundin, A, and McNicoll-Norbury, J, 2009, '2 Abingdon Road, Sutton Courtenay; an archaeological watching brief', Thames Valley Archaeological Services report **09/43**, Reading

NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London

APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at south east end

Trench	*Length (m)*	*Breadth (m)*	*Depth (m)*	*Comment*
1	30.20	1.60	0.44 – 1.20	0–0.20m topsoil; 0.20–0.40m light brown grey sandy gravel subsoil; 0.40m+ yellow sandy gravel natural geology. Truncated by old backfilled haul road to quarry from 19–30.20m. Pits 1, 2] gully 3, postholes 4, 5 and ditch 6. **[Pls 1, 3 and 4]**
2	22.80	1.60	0.72	0–0.30m topsoil; 0.30–0.63m subsoil; 0.63m+ yellow sandy gravel natural geology. Postholes 7 and 8 **[Pl. 2]**
3	9.90	1.60	1.36	0–0.20m topsoil; 0.20–1.34m backfilled quarry haul road, mixed made ground, gravel, Tarmac brick/tile; 1.34m+ yellow sandy gravel natural geology.

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

Trench	*Cut*	*Fill (s)*	*Type*	*Date*	*Dating evidence*
1	1	52, 53	Pit	Early Saxon	pottery
1	2	54	Pit	Undated	
1	3	55, 56	Gully	Undated	
1	4	57	Posthole	Early Saxon	pottery
1	5	58, 59	Posthole	Undated	
1	6	60	Ditch	Undated	
2	7	61, 62	Posthole	Undated	
2	8	63, 64	Posthole	Undated	

APPENDIX 3: Pottery Catalogue

Cut	*Deposit*	*Fabric*	*Form*	*Date range*	*No of sherds*	*Wt (g)*	*Comments*
1	52	ES1	Jars	c.450-650	2	33	Fresh and abraded
4	57	ES1	Jars	c.450-650	2	8	Fresh.

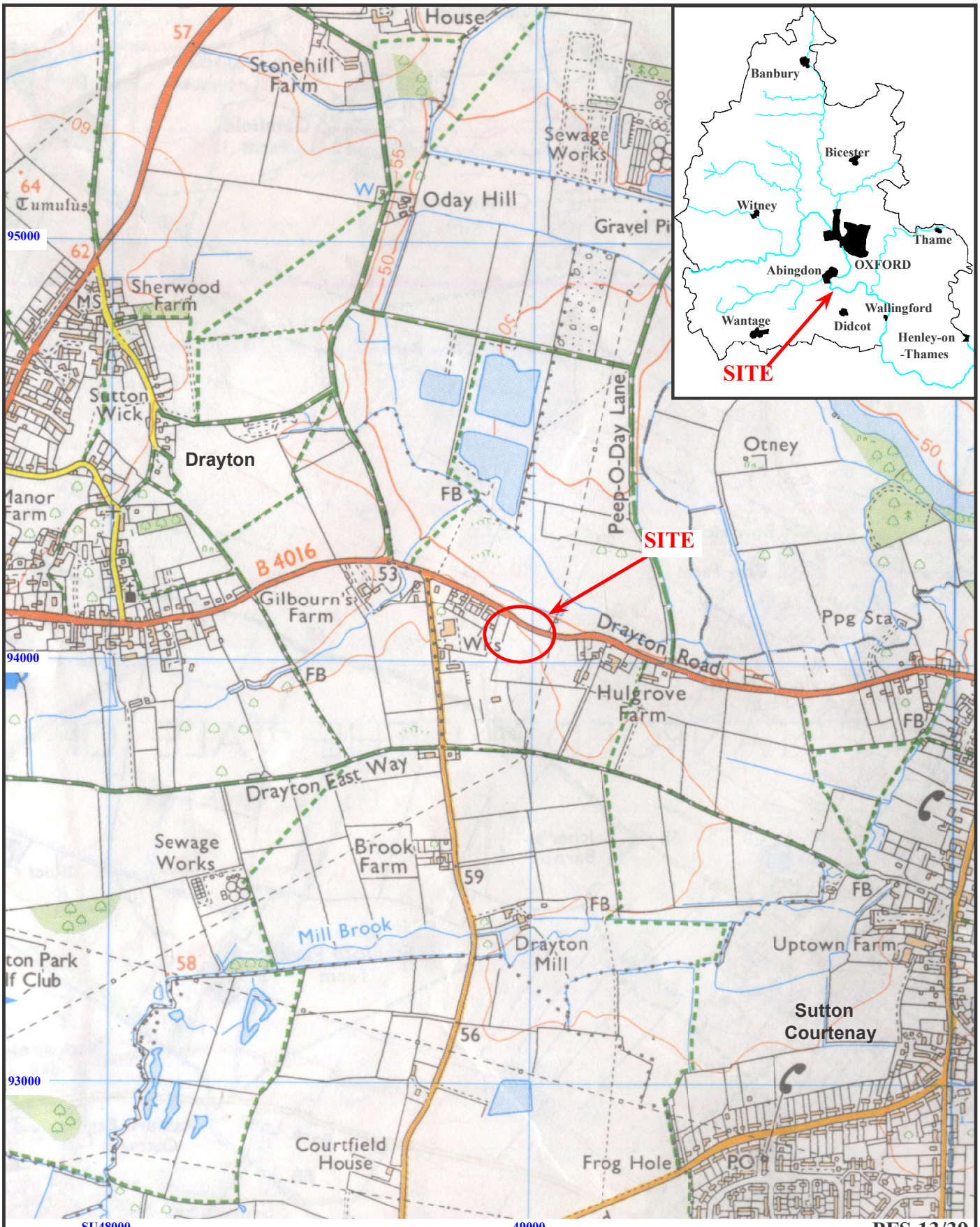

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Figure 1. Location of site in relation to Sutton Courtenay and within Oxfordshire.

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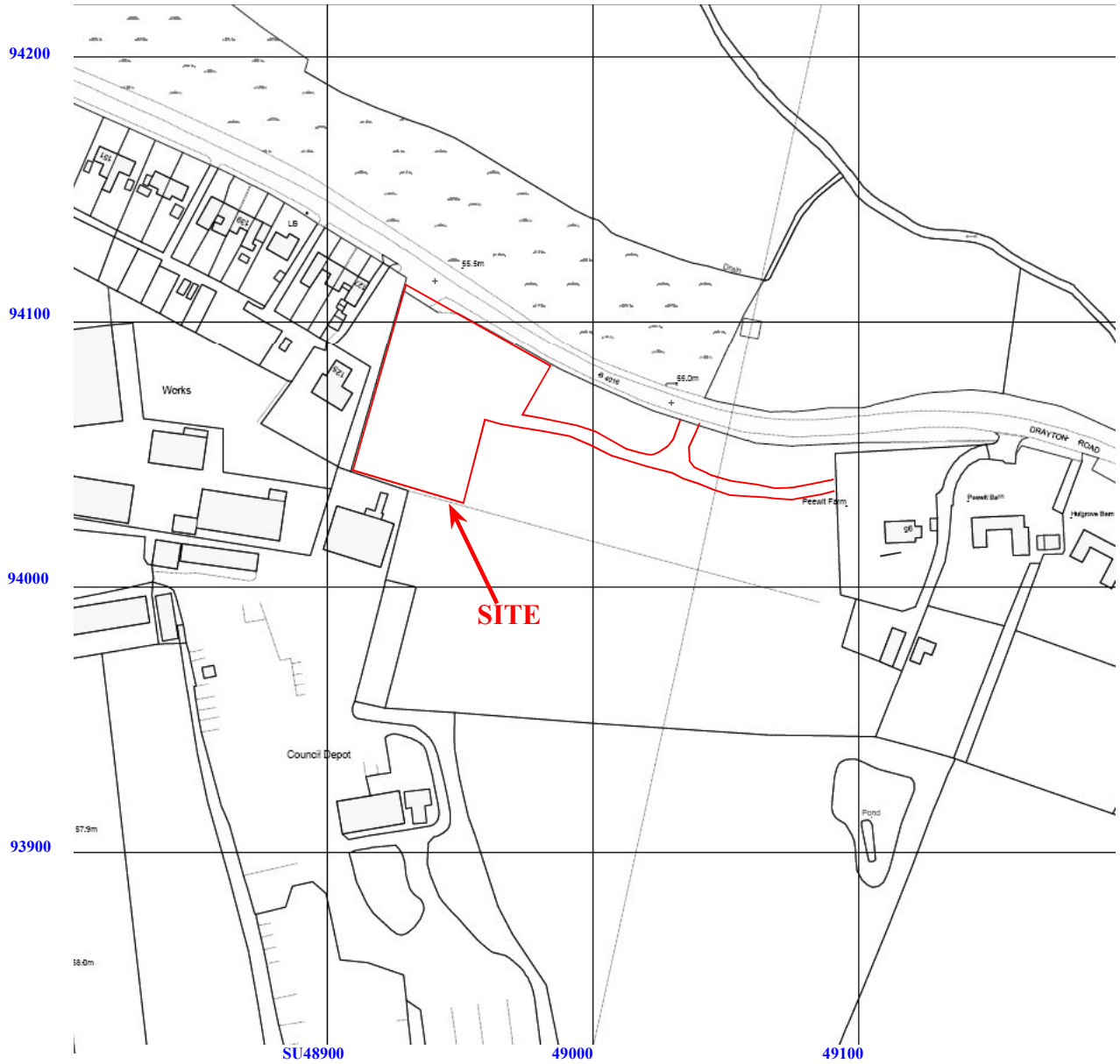

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Drayton Road.

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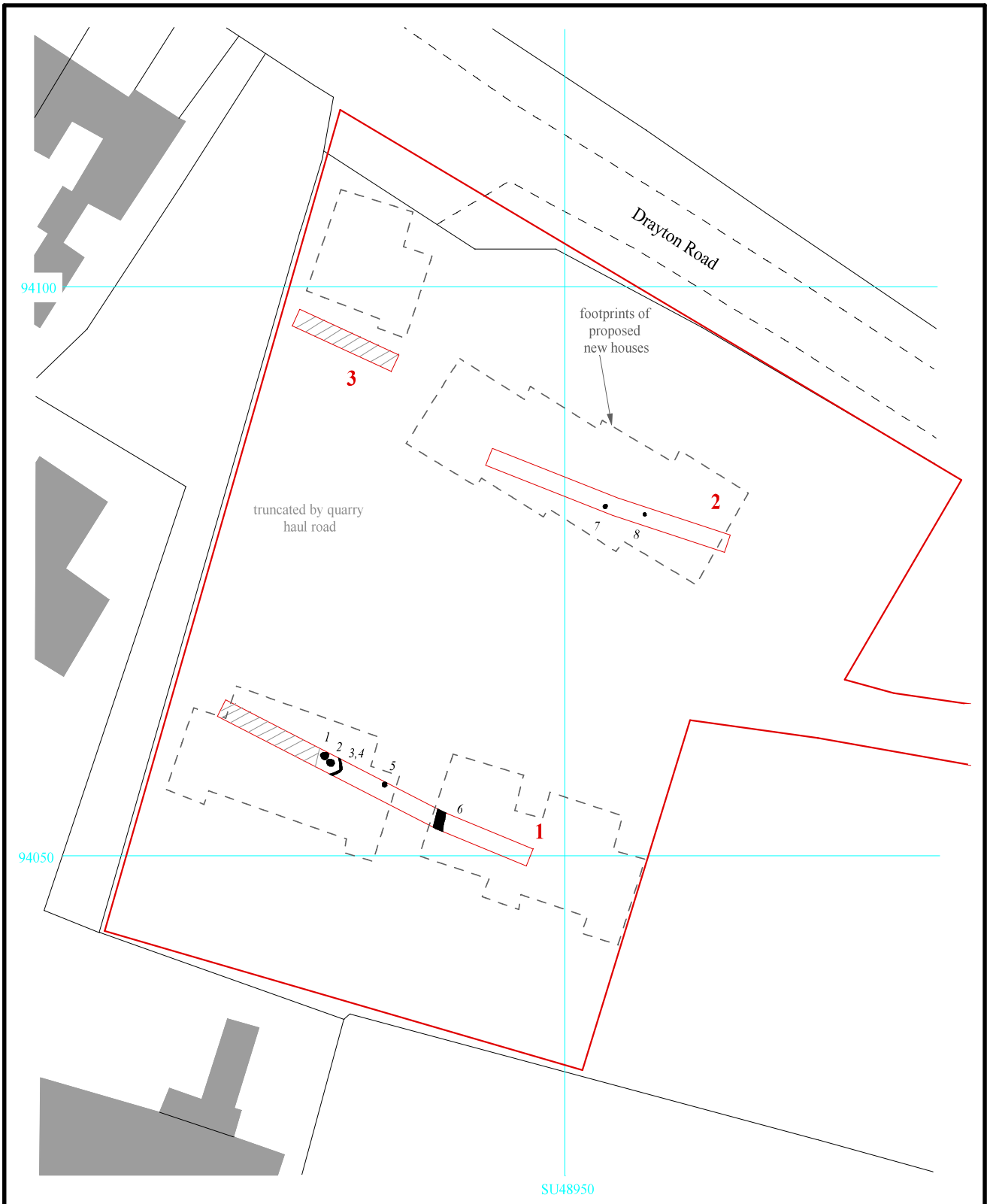

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Figure 3. Location of trenches.

0 25m

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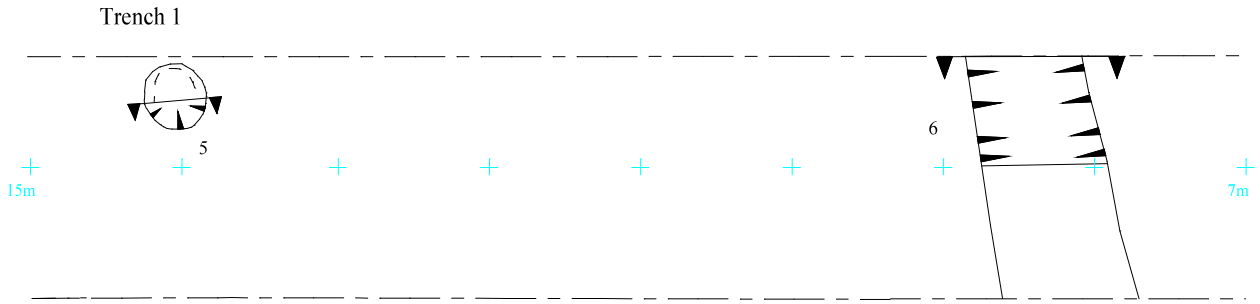

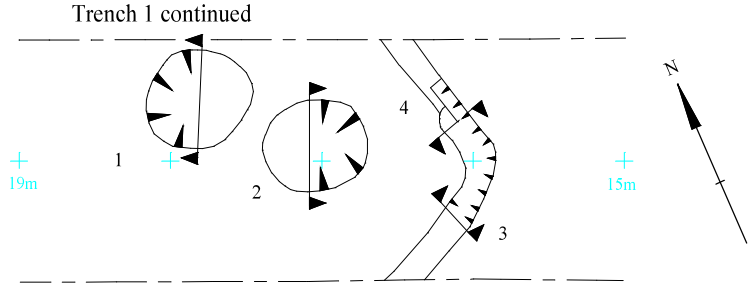

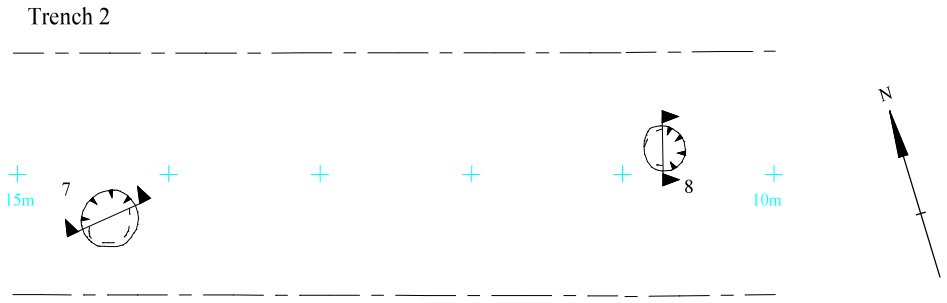

4 ench 1

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Figure 4. Detail of trenches.

0 5m

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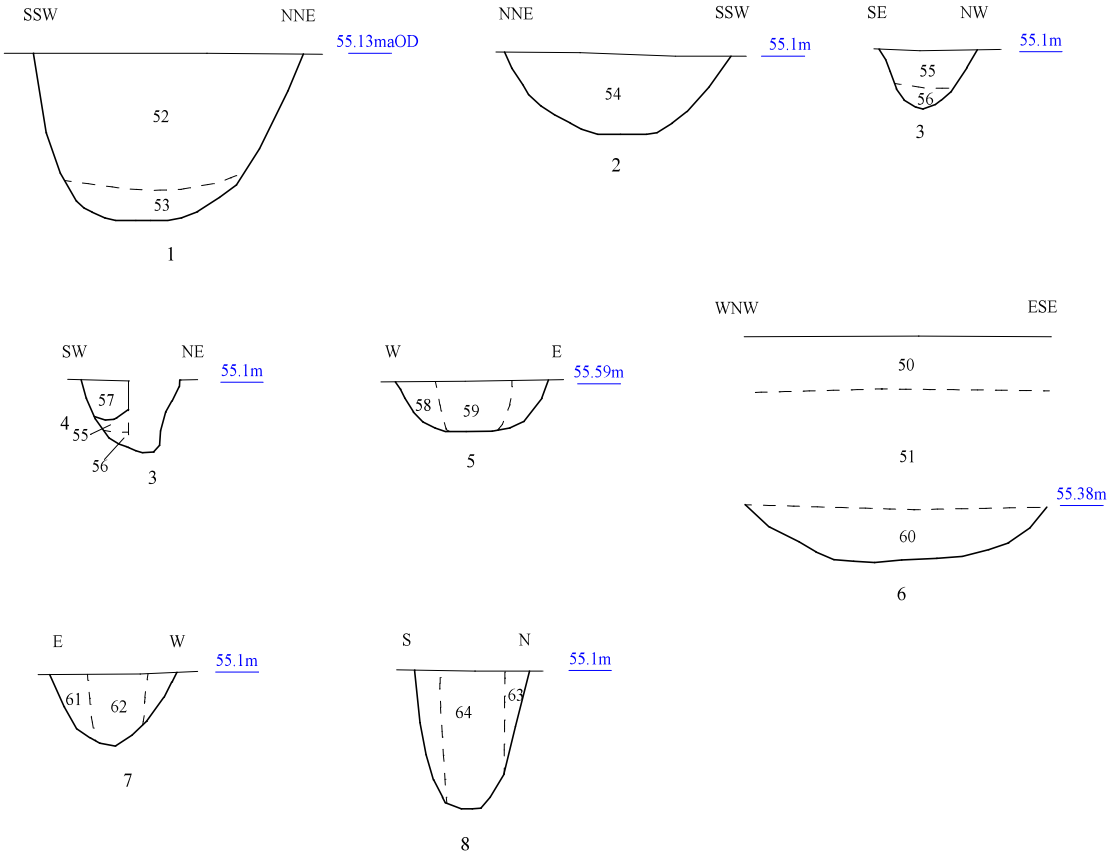

55.1m OD

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Figure 5. Sections.

0 1m

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

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

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Plates 1 and 2.

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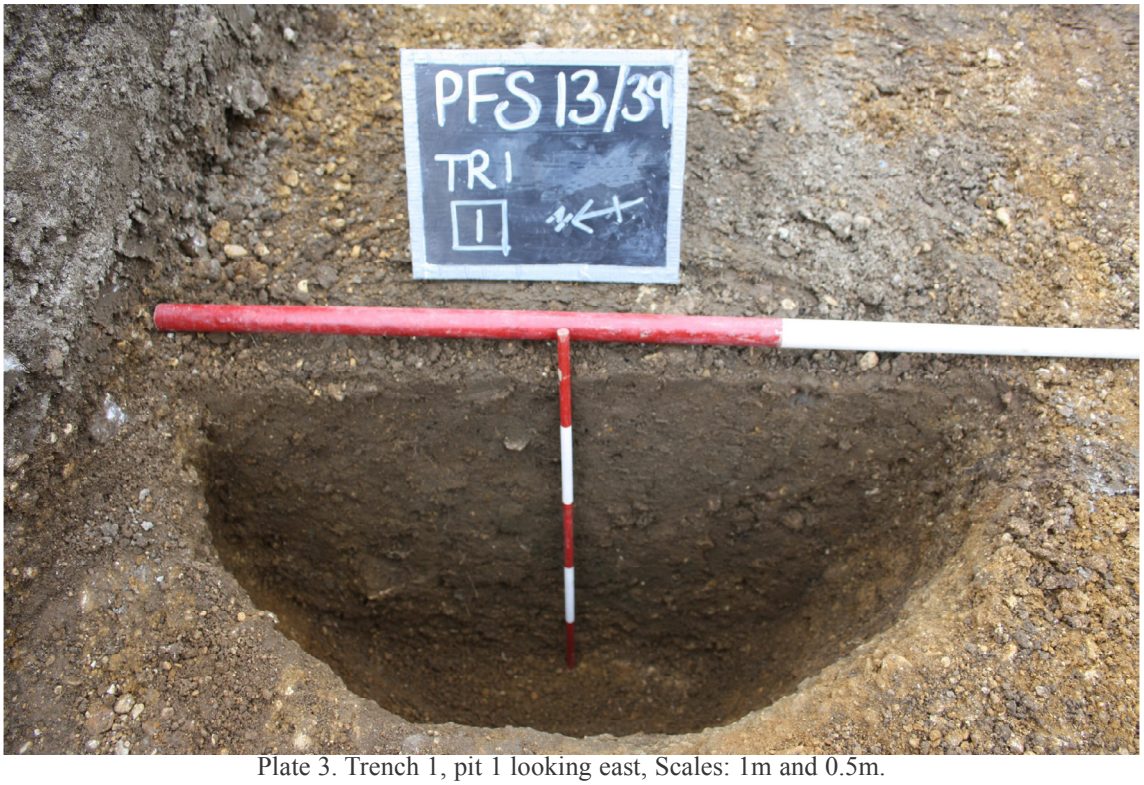

Plate 3. Trench 1, pit 1 looking east, Scales: 1m and 0.5m.

Plate 4. Trench 1, ditch 6, looking north, Scales: 1m and 0.5m.

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Plates 3 and 4.

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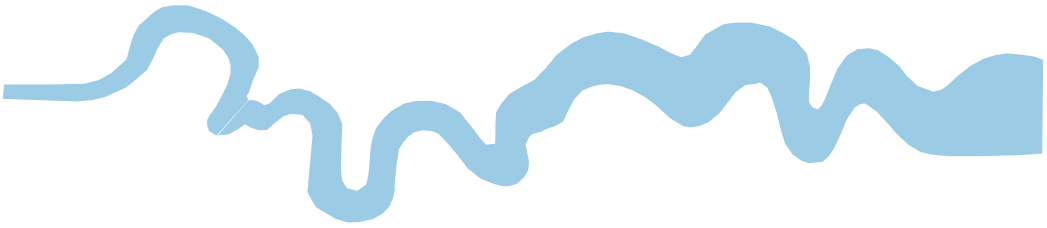
TIME CHART

	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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