

T H A M E S      V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Pig Finishing Unit, Dogshead Lane,  
Wychnor, Alrewas, Staffordshire**

**Archaeological Recording Action**

**by Aiji Castle and Genni Elliott**

**Site Code: PUW13/63**

**(SK 1863 1662)**

**Pig Finishing Unit, Dogshead Lane, Wychnor,  
Alrewas, Staffordshire**

**An Archaeological Recording Action**

**for Mr R Mercer**

by Aiji Castle and Genni Elliott  
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code PUW13/63

**May 2013**

## Summary

**Site name:** Pig Finishing Unit, Dogshead Lane, Wychnor, Alrewas, Staffordshire

**Grid reference:** SK 1863 1662

**Site activity:** Recording Action

**Date and duration of project:** 4th–18th April 2013

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Aiji Castle

**Site code:** PUW 13/63

**Area of site:** *c.* 0.4ha

**Summary of results:** The natural was cut by a number of features of certain or possible archaeological interest along with others of natural origin. Only a ditch (20) contained artefactual dating evidence, suggesting a post-medieval to early modern date. A pit alignment, running north-east to south-west, visible from the air in the next field, was not identified within the confines of the site.

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at The Potteries Museum in due course, with accession code 2013.LH.26.

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 22.05.13
	Steve Preston ✓ 16.05.13

# **Pig Finishing Unit, Dogshead Lane, Wychnor, Alrewas, Staffordshire An Archaeological Recording Action**

by Aiji Castle and Genni Elliott

**Report 13/63**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological excavation carried out at Dogshead Lane, Wychnor, Alrewas, Staffordshire (NGR SK 1863 1662) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Alex Lawrence of Reading Agricultural Consultants, Gate House, Beechwood Court, Long Toll, Woodcote, Reading, RG8 0RR. on behalf of Mr. R Mercer, Blakenhall Park, Barton-under-Needwood, Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire.

Planning permission (P/2012/01445) has been gained from East Staffordshire District Council for the construction of a new Pig Finishing Unit on the site. The consent is subject to a condition (6) relating to archaeology due to the potential disturbance of below ground archaeological features during the period of ground works. 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 Stephen Dean, County Archaeologist for Staffordshire. The fieldwork was undertaken by Aiji Castle and Sam Pointer between 4th–18th April 2013 and the site code is PUW13/63. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at The Potteries Museum, Stoke-on-Trent in due course.

A desk-based assessment (Tann 2012) highlighted the archaeological potential of the site and its proximity to a pit alignment, running north-east to south-west, visible from the air, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, and was thought to have the potential to continue into the site. Discussions with English Heritage agreed that Scheduled Ancient Monument consent would not be required but stressed the potential for groundworks to encounter previously unrecorded archaeological remains (Dean 2012).

## **Location, topography and geology**

The site is a rectangular parcel of land with an access road to the north-east, currently used as farmland. It is located on the south side of Dogshead Lane, just off the A38 Ryknield Street (Roman road), to the north of Alrewas and south of Barton-under-Needwood (Figs 1 and 2). The land in the environs of the site rises generally from east to west from c. 52m above Ordnance Datum in the south-east to 56m aOD to the north western. The site itself lies at a height of c. 53m. The underlying geology is fluvio-glacial gravel (BGS 1982) which lay at a

depth of approximately 0.40m below the ground surface. This consisted of mixed patches of yellowish brown and brownish yellow sand and gravel.

## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological background for the site has been summarized in the desk-based assessment (Tann 2012). The site lies within the archaeologically rich Trent Valley with much archaeology recorded as cropmarks from the air and as recorded during mineral extraction. An area to the north of Wychnor is notable as a landscape of late Neolithic and Bronze Age ceremonial and burial monuments including, henge monuments, *cursus*, a unique 'starburst' enclosure, individual barrows (ring ditches) and barrow cemeteries. Subsequent periods are also well represented with settlement and landscape features such as field systems and distinctive boundary features such as pit alignments, usually considered of Iron Age date (though dating evidence is usually sparse). One such pit alignment visible from the air, in the field immediately to the south-east of the site, is a Scheduled Monument. For later periods, Rykniel Street Roman road lies to the south (the A38) and an extensive Saxon settlement with 65 buildings is recorded at Catholme to the north-east. Finally, a deserted medieval village lies nearby at Wychnor.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the archaeological recording action was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits prior to any impact by the groundworks. This involved examination of all areas of intrusive groundworks including ground reduction, geo-technical investigations, the excavation of foundations and service trenches, landscaping works and all other invasive work.

More specific aims were to identify record and understand any evidence for late prehistoric activity across the site and to relate this to surrounding cropmark features identified from aerial photography.

A trench 80.4m long by 50.3m wide was stripped of topsoil and subsoil down to the natural geology (Pls 1 and 2) using a 360°-machine fitted with a toothless bucket under constant archaeological supervision. Possible features of archaeological interest were exposed at the south-west end of the site (Fig. 3). All archaeological deposits were cleaned and excavated by hand. Ditches and gullies were excavated at regular intervals and all termini were excavated. All pits and postholes were half-sectioned and several tree throws were investigated to confirm this identification. Soil samples were taken from nine features for the recovery of environmental and dating evidence.

## **Results (Figs 3 and 4)**

### The main trench

The natural geology was cut by a number of possible pits, postholes, tree throws, a ditch and a gully. These were located only at the south western end of the trench.

### *Post-Medieval – Early Modern*

Ditch 20 (Pl. 4) was the only securely dated feature identified on the site. It extended NW–SE across the southern end of the trench and was revealed for at least 40m. It was approximately 2m wide but only 0.21m deep. Three slots were put across the ditch and (6,7,8) The ditch was characterized in all three slots by moderately sloping sides and a flat base with a fill of slightly stony, mid-brownish grey, sandy clay in slots 6 and 7 (56 and 57 respectively). A sherd of mass produced transfer printed white earthenware ('china') pottery and 19th- or 20th-century ceramic building material were found within slot 7. Two fills were present within slot 8, at the north-western end of the ditch. The primary fill (58) was similar to that found in slots 6 and 7, consisting of slightly stony, mid-brownish grey, silty sand. The secondary fill (59) was very slightly stony, mid-reddish grey, sandy clay with occasional charcoal inclusions.

### *Undated features*

Several features were recorded as being of archaeological interest though there is doubt that most of these they may be of natural/agricultural origin. Feature 1 was sub-circular in plan with a flat base and irregular, concave sides, and measured 0.6m in diameter by 0.08m deep. It was backfilled by loose, dark greyish brown, silty sand (51) containing a small amount of charcoal. Feature 2 was sub-circular in plan with a flat base and shallow, concave sides. It was 0.45m in diameter by 0.08m deep and was backfilled by loose, dark greyish brown, silty sand (52) containing charcoal. There were no finds in either feature.

Feature 10 was a possible tree throw or ditch terminus, aligned NW - SE and extending beyond the trench edge; only 2.75m was seen within the limit of excavation. The feature was 1.5m wide by 0.24m deep. The terminus was sub-rectangular in shape with concave sides and a flat base. It was backfilled by dark greyish black, silty sand (60) containing occasional gravel and fragments of charcoal. There were no finds.

Two small pits or postholes (3 and 4) were identified in the vicinity of features 1 and 2. Feature 3 (Pl. 3) was a sub-circular pit with concave sides and a slightly concave base, measuring 0.8m in diameter by 0.2m deep.

It was backfilled by (53) loose, dark greyish brown, silty sand containing a small amount of charcoal. Feature 4 was a sub-circular pit with sharp, concave sides and a flat base, 0.7m in diameter and 0.12m deep. It was filled by loose, dark brownish black, sandy clay (54) containing some rounded pebbles, but no finds.

Gully 16 was aligned approximately E–W of which 4.3m fell within the limit of excavation. The terminus was sub-rectangular in shape with steep sides and a flat base. The gully was 0.58m wide, widening to 1.2m at the trench edge, and 0.15m deep. It was backfilled by soft, slightly stony, dark greyish brown, silty sand (67) but again, no finds.

#### *Natural features*

Tree throws (5 and 11–15) were generally irregular in plan and were backfilled by dark black-grey, silty sand and gravel. Tree throws 14 and 15 contained burnt material suggesting that the stump has been burnt out.

#### Access Road

The access road to the site was also stripped of topsoil and overburden to expose the natural gravel (Fig. 2). It was c. 7m wide. No features were recorded nor artefacts recovered.

#### **Finds**

Only ditch fill 7 (57) produced finds, and these were unambiguously of the late 19th or 20th century.

#### *Charred plant remains*

Nine samples were taken from the probable and possible features on the site (2-4, 6, 9,10,12,13,16) to be sieved for the recovery of small artefacts and charred plant remains. Sub samples of 5-10L were floated and sieved using a 0.25 mm sieve for charred plant remains and 10mm for small artefacts. Samples from features 2,3,6,9, 12 and 16 produced comminuted fragments of charcoal usually in very small amounts. Samples from features 4, 10 and 13 produced either larger amounts of charcoal and/or bigger pieces up to 10mm across. In addition a small number of unidentified weed seeds were noted for features 4 and 10.

## **Conclusion**

The natural geology was cut by a number of features, several of which were clearly of natural origin (tree holes) with others possibly so. Other features were certainly or probably man-made though only one ditch (20) contained dating evidence, suggesting a late post-medieval to modern date.

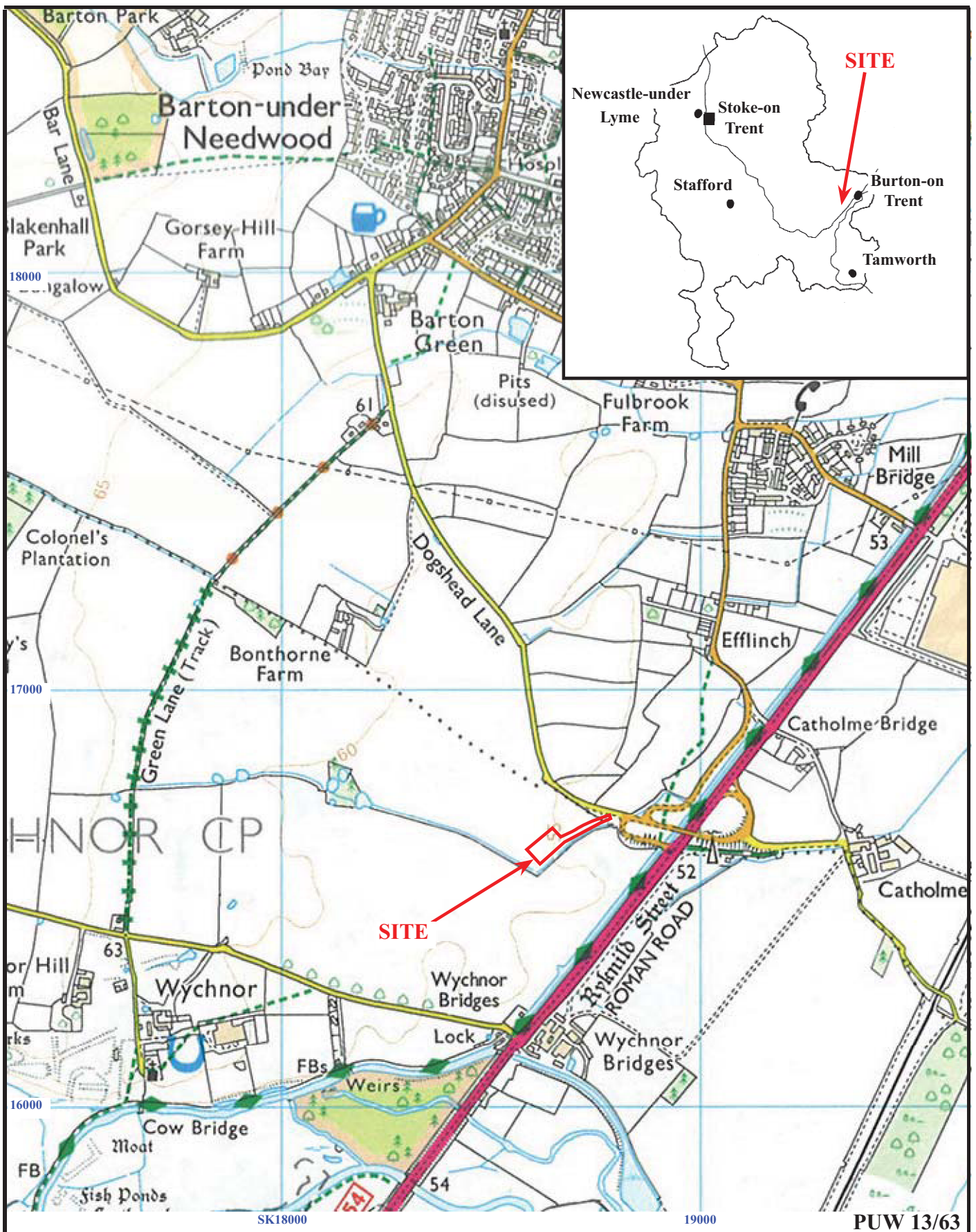
## **References**

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- Dean, S, 2012, 'Specification for an archaeological Strip, Map and Record Exercise, Wychnor Pig Finishing',  
Unit Staffordshire County Council, Stafford
- NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London
- Tann, G, 2012, 'Proposed pig finishing unit, south of Dogshead Lane, Wychnor, Staffordshire, an archaeological assessment', Geoff Tann Archaeological Researcher, report C1, Lincoln



**APPENDIX 1: Feature details**

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
1	51		Pit/tree throw	-	
2	52		Posthole/tree throw	-	
3	53		Pit/posthole	-	
4	54		Pit/posthole	-	
5	55		Tree throw	-	
6	56	20	Ditch	-	
7	57	20	Ditch	post-medieval to modern	china, brick/tile
8	58, 59	20	Ditch	-	
10	60		Ditch terminus/tree throw	-	
11	61		Tree throw	-	
12	62		Tree throw	-	
13	63, 64		Tree throw	-	
14	65		Tree throw	-	
15	66		Tree throw	-	
16	67		Gully terminus	-	



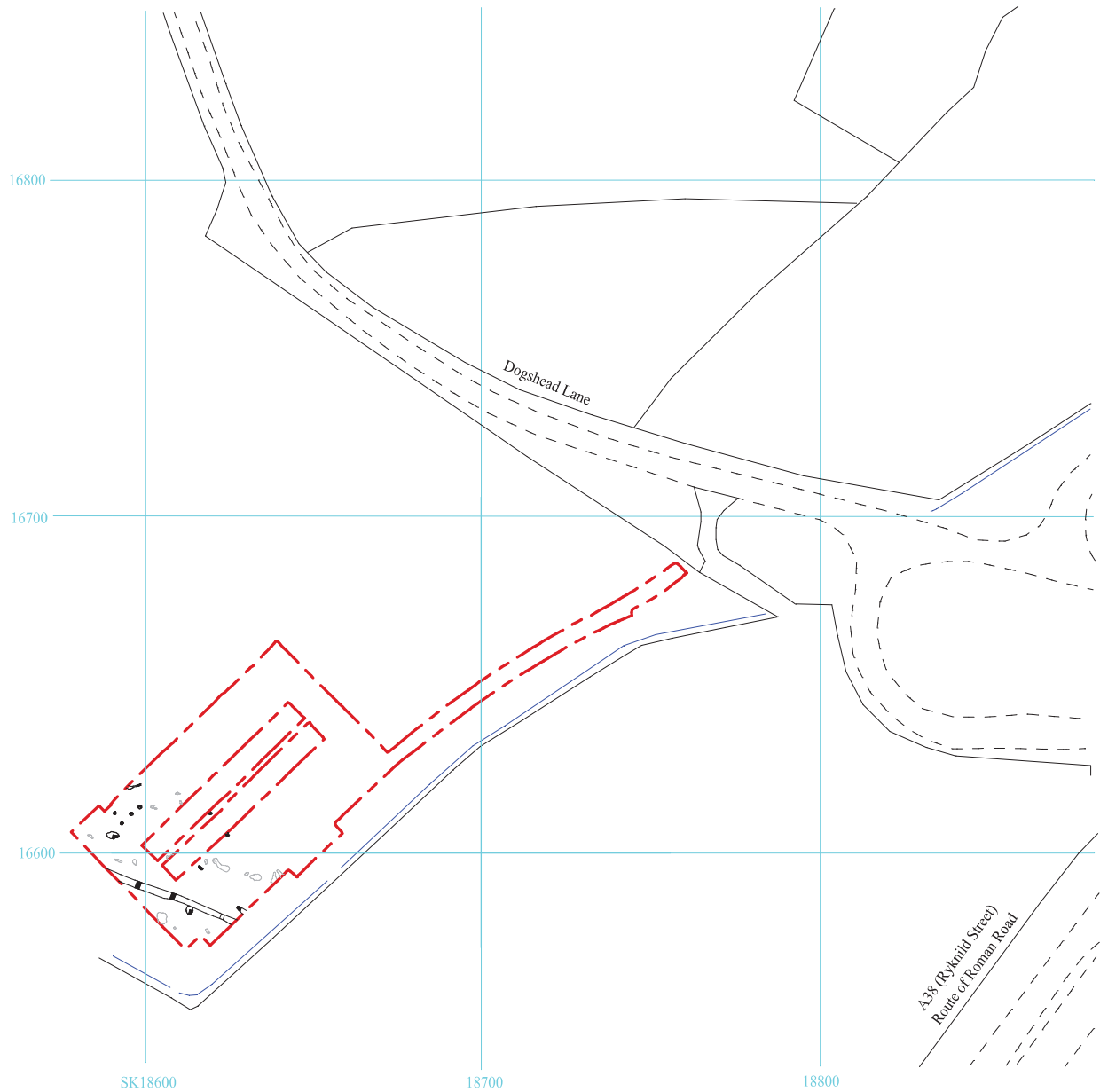
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Figure 1. Location of site in relation to Wychnor and within Staffordshire.

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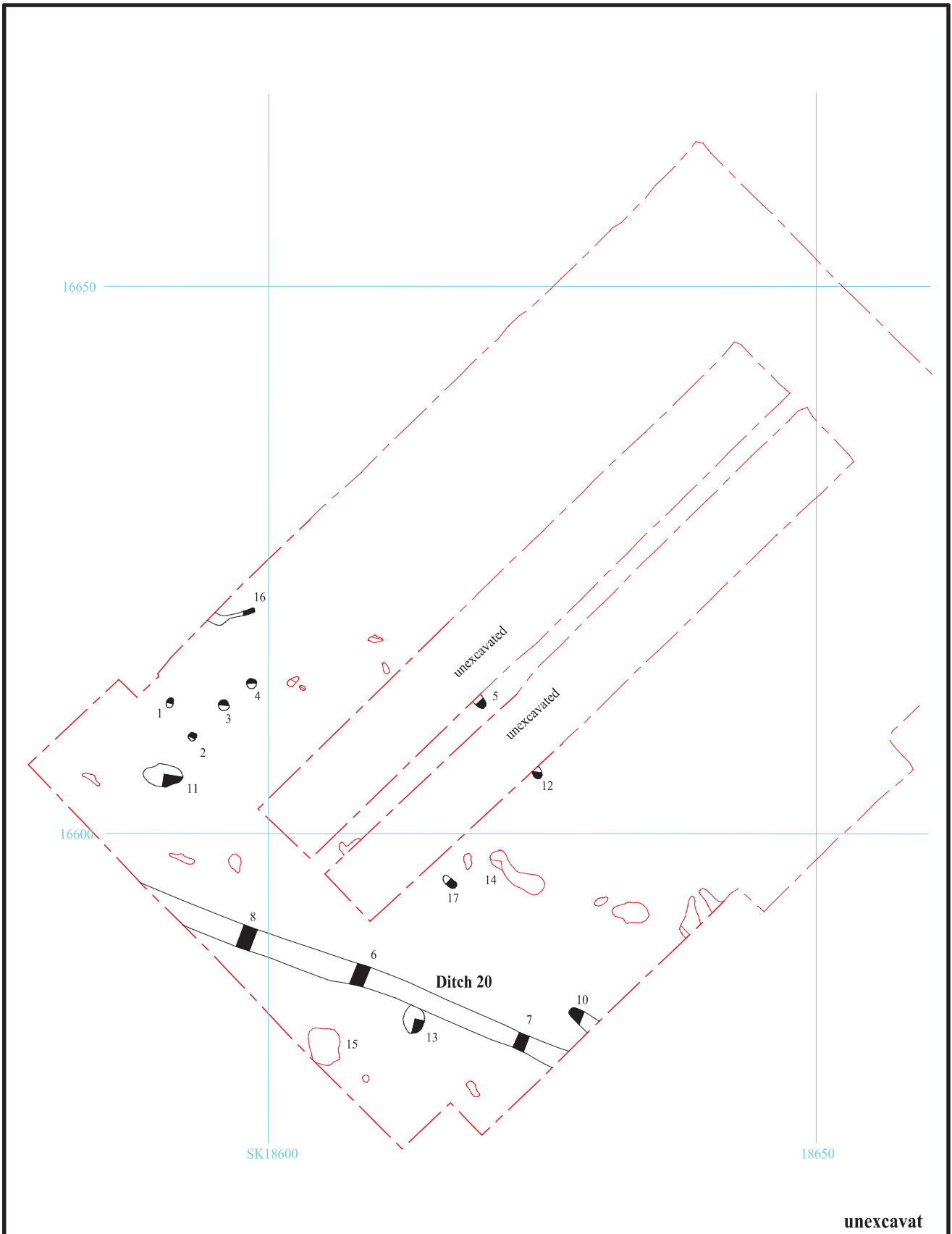
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Figure 2. Location of area.



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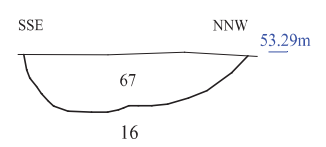
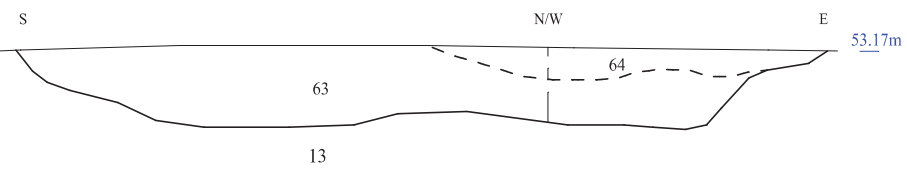
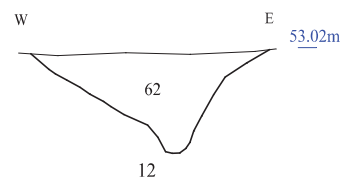
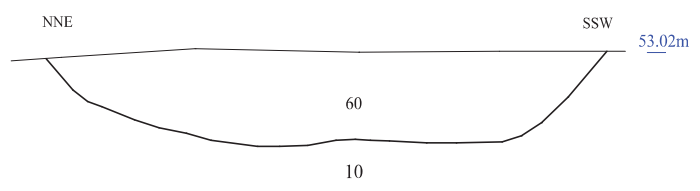
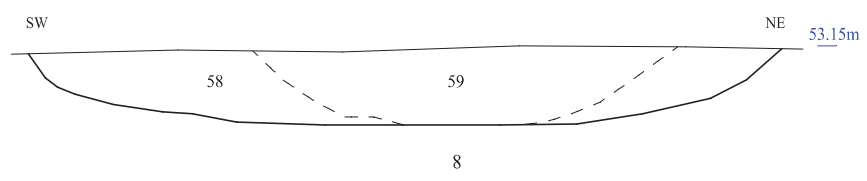
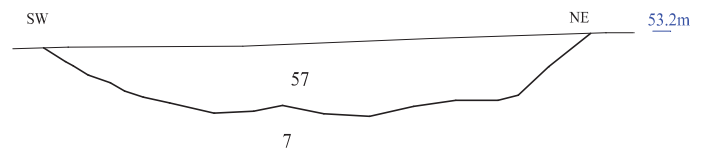
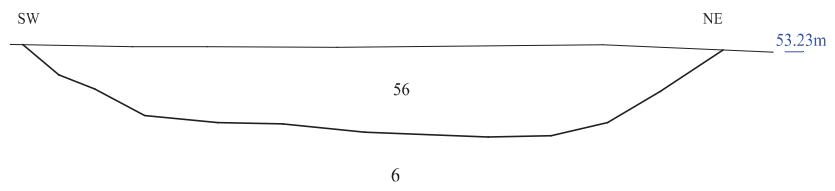
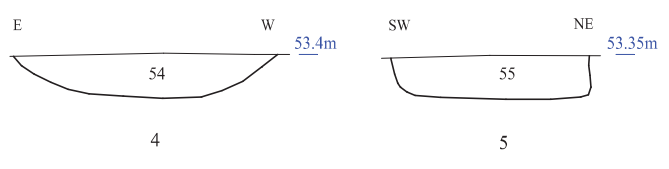
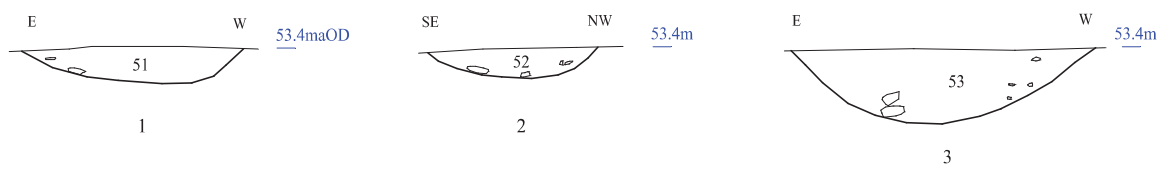
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Figure 3. Detail of area.



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Figure 4. Sections.





Plate 1. Stripped area, looking north west.



Plate 2. Stripped area, looking north.

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Plates 1 and 2.

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Plate 3. Pit 3, looking south, Scales: 0.5m and 0.1m.



Plate 4. Linear 20, looking towards slot 6 and 7, looking south-east.

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Plates 3 and 4.

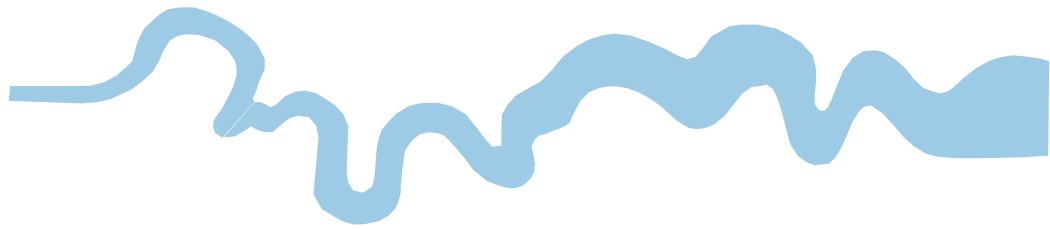
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## TIME CHART

	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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