

T H A M E S      V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Middle Wichel food store site, Wichelstowe,  
Swindon, Wiltshire**

**Archaeological Recording Action**

**by Andrew Weale**

**Site Code: WIC13/128**

**(SU 1348 8287)**

# **Middle Wichel Food Store Site, Wichelstowe, Swindon, Wiltshire**

**An Archaeological Recording Action  
for Peter Brett Associates**

by Andrew Weale

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code WIC 13/128

**November 2013**

## Summary

**Site name:** Middle Wichel food store site, Wichelstowe, Swindon, Wiltshire

**Grid reference:** SU 1348 8287

**Site activity:** Recording Action

**Date and duration of project:** 1<sup>st</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> July ‘013

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Andrew Weale

**Site code:** WIC 13/128

**Area of site:** 1.9 ha

**Summary of results:** Topsoil only was removed from the main part of the site prior to the laying of hardcore. No archaeological deposits were revealed.

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

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[www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp](http://www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp).*

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 19.11.13
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# Middle Wichel Food Store Site, Wichelstowe, Swindon, Wiltshire An Archaeological Recording Action

by Andrew Weale

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## Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological recording action carried out on the site of a proposed food store at Middle Wichel, Wichelstowe, Swindon, Wiltshire (SU 1348 8287) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Daniel Hayes of Peter Brett Associates LLP, Caversham Bridge House, Waterman Place, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 8DN.

Planning permission (ref S/RES/12/0682/SAC and S/02/2000MITW) has been gained from Swindon Borough Council for the erection of a foodstore and associated works. The consent is subject to a condition (36) relating to archaeology. The site lies on the southern margins of Swindon north of the M4 to the west of West Leaze Farm and occupies an area of c. 1.9 ha. As a consequence of the possibility of archaeological deposits on site which may be damaged or destroyed, fieldwork has been requested as detailed in the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012, para 128) and the Borough Councils policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger, County Archaeologist for Wiltshire County Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Weale and Andrew Mundin from 1st to 26th July 2013 and the site code is WIC 13/128. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services and will be deposited with Wiltshire Heritage Museum in due course.

## Location, topography and geology

The site is located at to the south of the old centre of Swindon (Fig. 1), with the Wilts and Berks Canal to the west of the site, The River Ray to the north and the M4 to the south, a former railway lay to the north of the site however this has been replaced with a road. The site is generally flat at a height of c. 100m aOD but with a slight slope up to the north. Prior to development the site was large grass covered field (Pls 1 and 2) with a larger embankment at the northern boundary appearing to revet Foxham Way and the bridge over the canal. The site is bounded to the east by Mill Lane, the north by Foxham Way, the west by the Wilts and Berks Canal and the south by pasture. The underlying geology is mapped as Jurassic Ampthill Clay Formation and Kimmeridge Clay Formation (Mudstones) (BGS 1992). The site was only stripped to subsoil, no solid or drift geology was observed

## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the proposal site has been summarized in a brief for the project prepared by Wilshire Council Archaeological Service. In summary, immediately to the east and confirmed by trial trenching is the site of the deserted Medieval village of West Leaze, which is a Scheduled Monument (national ref 1016361). The village does not appear to have Saxon origins and is not mentioned in Domesday Book of 1086AD (Williams and Martin 2002) Just to the east of the site, watching brief and recording action carried out during construction of the distributor road revealed deposits predominantly of later Roman date (Hood 2009). These features comprised a large number of shallow pits, possibly dug for clay and several gullies. A small volume of prehistoric pottery and flintwork, early Saxon and medieval pottery was also recovered.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The general objectives of the project were to:

Excavate and record all archaeological deposits and features within the areas threatened by the proposed development.

Produce relative and absolute dating and phasing for deposits and features recorded on the site.

Establish the character of these deposits in attempt to define functional areas on the site such as industrial, domestic, etc.

Produce information on the economy and local environment and compare and contrast this with the results of other excavations in the region.

Topsoil, and any other overburden was to be removed by a 360<sup>0</sup> tracked machine under constant archaeological supervision. A toothless ditching bucket was to be used to expose archaeologically sensitive levels, or formation depth whichever was higher.

## **Results**

### *The main site*

It had been anticipated that overburden removal prior to construction of the new foodstore and carparking would have exposed or even truncated the archaeologically relevant horizon. However, a revised design required the removal of only the humic component of the overburden (ie topsoil) prior to the placement of over 1m depth of crushed concrete across the site to build up the levels. Construction of the foundations for the new foodstore

were to take place after this ground raising with few elements penetrating the archaeologically relevant levels (top of natural geology).

Some 0.2m of topsoil was removed to expose the subsoil which was not removed at all across the site (Pl. 1). As a consequence the archaeologically relevant horizon was not exposed. A small collection of late post-medieval pottery and other finds were observed in the topsoil but were retained on site.

During the topsoil stripping two parallel ditches were observed running from Mill Lane north west across the site (Fig. 3). The uppermost fill of these ditches were full of modern concrete, brick, metal and plastic including food wrappers and appeared to follow the course of a field boundary which could be seen on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map of 1886 and was still shown on the map of 1988.

The northern portion of the site contained a large area of existing crushed concrete which appears to be the remains of a contractor's compound (Pl. 2). A further metalled road headed from the compound westwards towards the canal.

### *The haul road*

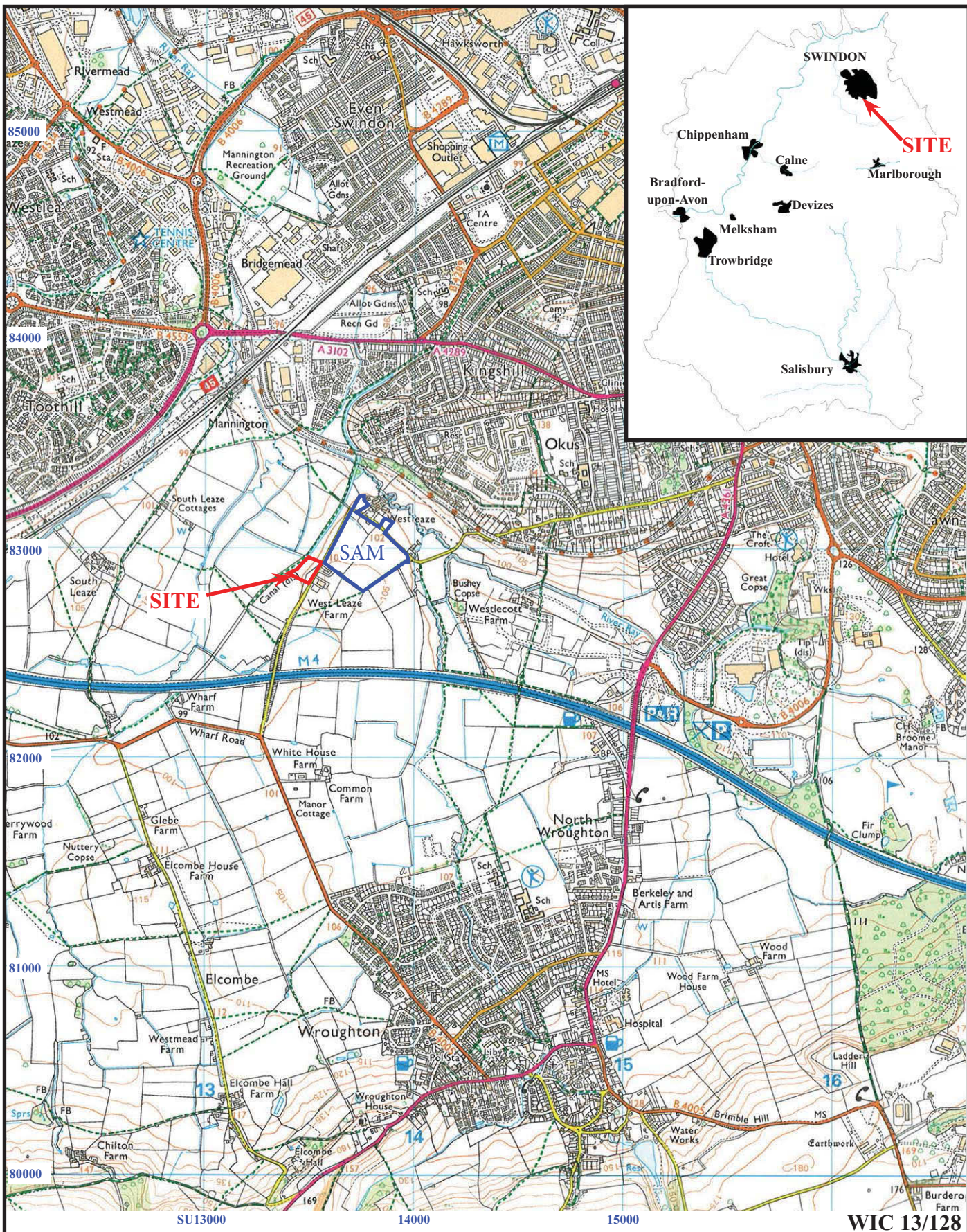
A haul road on the south side of the site was also monitored (Pl. 3). It was c. 1.1m wide and was stripped of 0.2m topsoil and 0.1m of subsoil (Pl. 4) though the natural geology was still not exposed. No artefacts nor archaeological deposits were exposed.

## **Conclusion**

The construction design of the new building did not require removal of much overburden and involved substantial ground raising before foundations were dug and as a consequence the archaeologically relevant levels were not neither exposed nor impacted by the new foundations. No deposits of archaeological interest were observed nor artefacts recovered.

## **References**

- BGS, 1992, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 252, Solid and Drift Provisional Edition, Keyworth  
Hood, A, 2009, Land at Mill Lane, Swindon, Wiltshire, Archaeological excavation and associated watching briefs (phase 3), post-excavation assessment, Foundations Archaeology report 646, Swindon  
English Heritage 2005, *Research Agenda*, English Heritage, London  
NPPF 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Department of Communities and Local Government, London (TSO)  
Williams, A and Martin, G H, 2002, *Domesday Book, a complete translation*, London

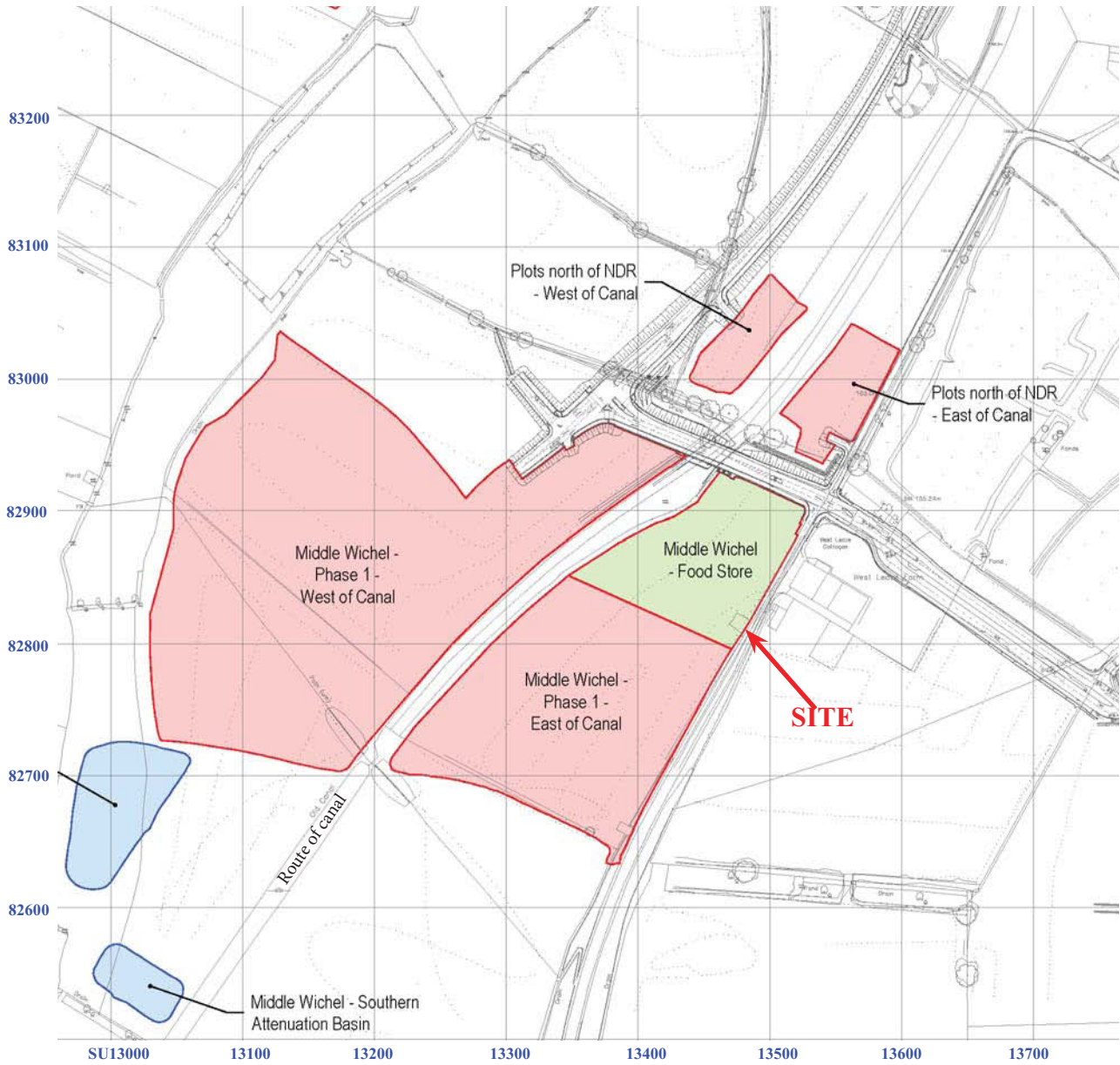


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Figure 1. Location of site in relation to south Swindon and within Wiltshire.

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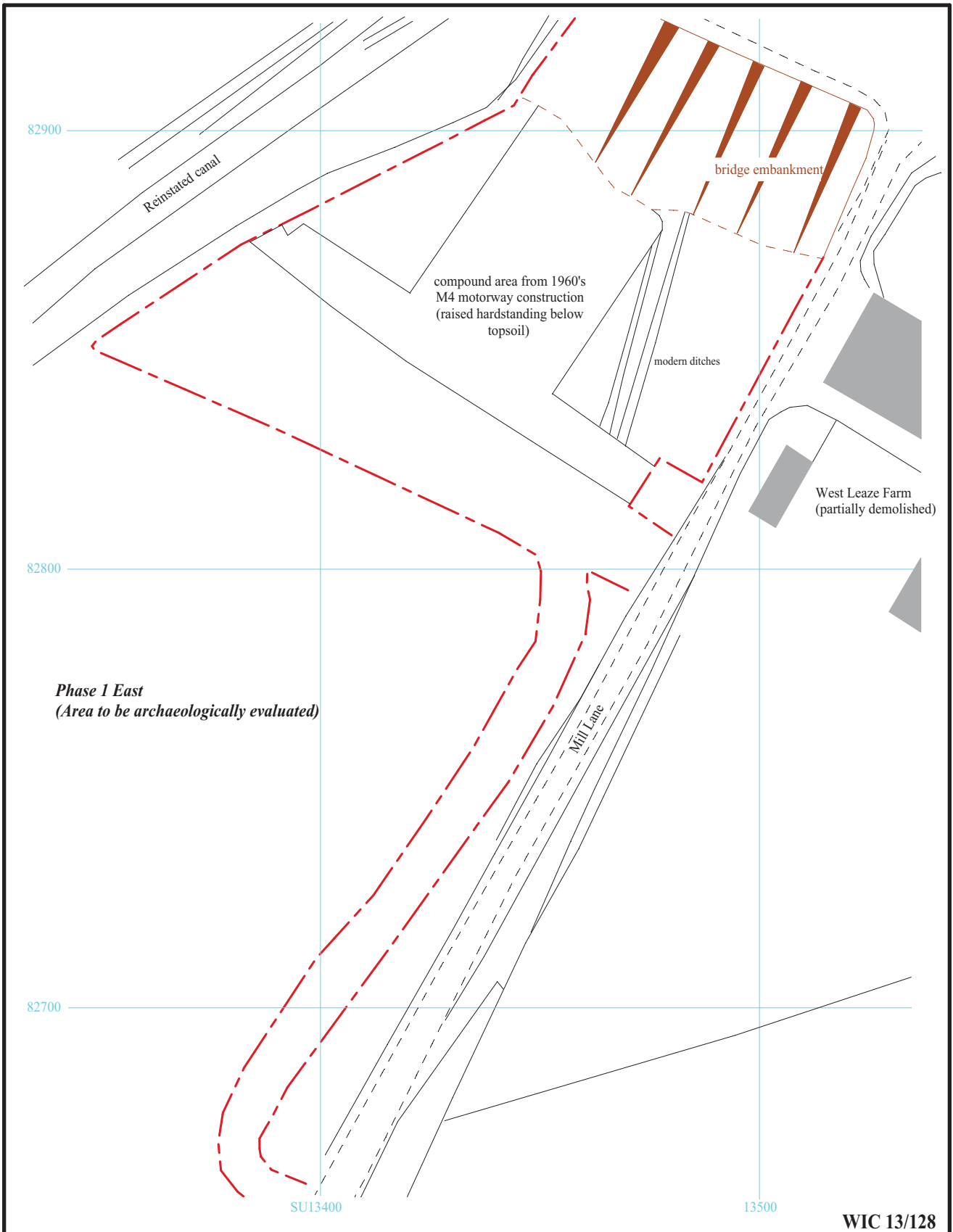
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

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Figure 3. Location of observed area.



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Plate 1. Site strip in progress, looking north.



Plate 2. Edge of old compound area, looking west.

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Plates 1 - 2.

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Plate 3. Haul road, looking south, Scale: 2m.



Plate 4. Haul road, section, looking west, Scales 2m and 0.3m.

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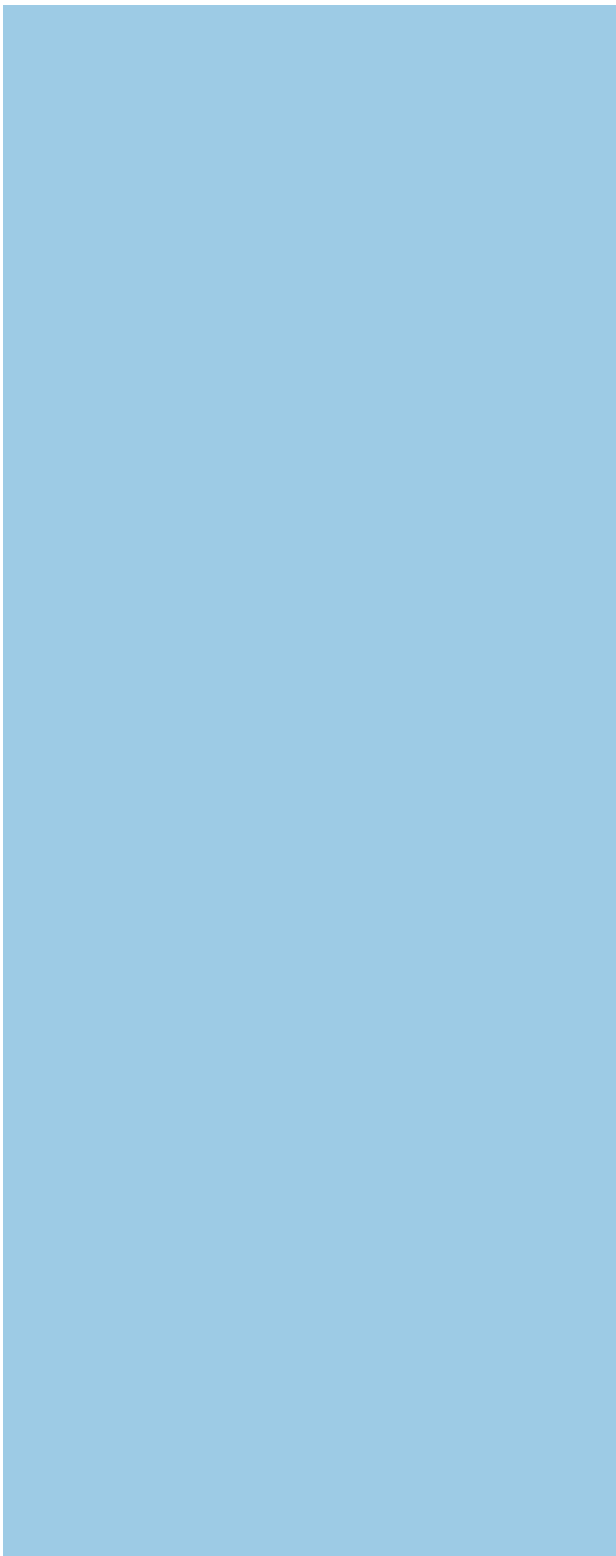
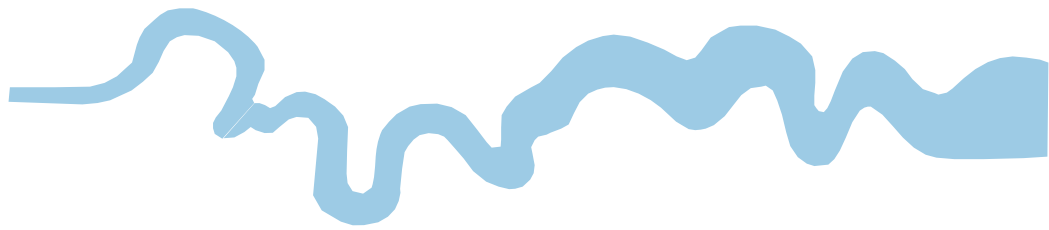
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Plates 3 - 4.

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## TIME CHART

	<b>Calendar Years</b>
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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