

T H A M E S V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Land at Ashchurch Road, Ashchurch, Tewkesbury,
Gloucestershire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by James McNicoll-Norbury

Site Code: ATG14/138

(SO 9270 3310)

Land at Ashchurch Road, Ashchurch, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Pye Homes Group**

by James McNicoll-Norbury
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code ATG 14/138

September 2014

Summary

Site name: Land at Ashchurch Road, Ashchurch, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire

Grid reference: SO 9270 3310

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 26th–28th August 2014

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: James McNicoll-Norbury

Site code: ATG 14/138

Area of site: 1.5ha

Summary of results: A single pit of Saxon date was found, along with pottery of Roman and post-medieval date from elsewhere on the site. Evidence of modern truncations were found across the site which are likely to be responsible for some of the geophysical anomalies previously noted. Much of the site was also covered by medieval ridge and furrow.

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

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www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp.*

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 15.09.14
	Steve Preston✓ 15.09.14

Land at Ashchurch Road, Ashchurch, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire An Archaeological Evaluation

by James McNicoll-Norbury

Report 14/138b

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at land off Ashchurch Road, Ashchurch, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire (SO 9270 3310) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Stuart Wright, of Pye Homes Group, Langford Locks, Kidlington, Oxfordshire OX5 1HZ.

An application (14/00343/OUT) to construct new housing on a c. 1.5ha parcel of land located to the east of the railway line and south of Ashchurch Road has been made to Tewkesbury Borough Council. As a consequence of the possibility of archaeological deposits on the site which may be damaged or destroyed by development, field observation has been proposed in order to inform the planning process.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012), and the Borough Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Charles Parry, Archaeologist at Gloucestershire County Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by James McNicoll-Norbury and Sophie Frampton between 26th–28th August 2014 and the site code is ATG14/138. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Corinium Museum, Cirencester in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the western edge of Ashchurch, a small hamlet on the A36 some 3km east of Tewkesbury in northern Gloucestershire (Fig. 1). The site itself consists of an irregular 1.51ha plot of land, the majority of which consists of a grass paddock. The southern boundary of the site is unmarked, crossing a hedgerow and continuing into the field to the south while on all other sides the boundary is formed by hedgerows (Fig. 2). The land slopes downhill from 21.4m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) at the northern end of the site to the 16.5m contour line at the southern end. The field continues to slope downhill to a height of 15.1m aOD at Tirlle Brook to the south. Immediately to the west of the site is the main north-south railway line, to the north is housing and the A36 and to the east a school playing field. The underlying geology is recorded as Lower Lias clay with alluvium immediately down-slope of the site (BGS 1988).

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site derives from its proximity to a range of sites and finds recorded in the county Historic Environment Record. The site lies to the south of the historic core of Ashchurch with the parish church of St Nicholas having 12th century elements in its fabric. The village is not mentioned in Domesday Book (Williams and Martin 2002). The medieval hamlet of Natton lies to the south and a settlement at Pannington somewhere to the south-east is documented in Domesday Book and thus has late Saxon origins.

Of more significance, however, was the discovery of a multi-period site just to the north-west during reconstruction works for a new road bridge across the railway. Watching brief, trial trenching and excavation have recorded mainly a Roman settlement along with a small cemetery but with Iron Age features also present, and a post-medieval building. Pottery finds also indicate earlier prehistoric and Saxon activity in the vicinity. It is possible that the main road has Roman origins.

More recently geophysical surveying of the site (Castle and Dawson 2014) revealed the possible presence of ridge and furrow (Pl. 1) and anomalies that may be ditches on the site.

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.

The specific research aims of this project are:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present; and
- to confirm the archaeological nature of any geophysical anomalies present.

It was proposed that 18 trenches each 20m in length and 1.6m wide were to be excavated, some targeting geophysical anomalies, using a JCB type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket monitored by a suitably qualified archaeologist at all times. Should archaeological deposits be identified these were to be cleaned and further excavated by hand.

Results

Seventeen trenches were dug as intended and measured between 20m and 22m in length and between 0.45-0.65m in depth (Fig. 2). They were all 1.6m wide. One proposed trench (17) could not be dug due to being located

in a hedgerow and trench 18 was renumbered accordingly. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Roman pottery was recovered from the subsoil of trenches 6 and 7 on the eastern side of the site and a single feature was identified in Trench 3.

Trench 1 (Fig 2)

Trench 1 was aligned SE-NW and was 21.6m long and 0.54m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.27m of topsoil and 0.17m subsoil overlying natural clay geology. No archaeological deposits were identified.

Trench 2 (Fig 2)

Trench 2 was aligned nearly north–south and was 20.4m long and 0.45m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.18m of topsoil and 0.22m subsoil overlying natural clay geology. The SW end of the trench was observed to have been truncated by a modern disturbance. No archaeological deposits were identified.

Trench 3 (Figs 2 and 3, Pls 2 and 4)

Trench 3 was aligned SW-NE and was 20.2m long and 0.55m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.22m of topsoil and 0.28m subsoil overlying natural gravels and sand geology. A pit (1) was identified at the western end of the trench which measured at least 3.75m wide and was 0.29m deep and filled with a dark grey silt (52) (Pl. 4) from which sherds of Roman and Saxon pottery and fragments of animal bone were recovered as well as a single sherd of post-medieval pottery from the pit's surface which is likely to be from a remnant of subsoil. A soil sample revealed further smaller fragments of Saxon pottery and animal bone.

Trench 4 (Fig 2)

Trench 4 was aligned nearly east–west and was 20.6m long and 0.54m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.23m of topsoil and 0.26m subsoil overlying natural clays geology. No archaeological deposits were identified.

Trench 5 (Fig 2)

Trench 5 was aligned nearly east–west and was 20.1m long and 0.54m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.23m of topsoil and 0.29m subsoil overlying natural clays geology. No archaeological deposits were identified.

Trench 6 (Fig 2)

Trench 6 was aligned ESE-WNW and was 20.1m long and 0.62m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.23m of topsoil and 0.29m subsoil overlying natural clays geology. No archaeological deposits were identified but sherds of Roman pottery were recovered from the subsoil.

Trench 7 (Fig 2)

Trench 7 was aligned SW-NE and was 20.3m long and 0.53m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.21m of topsoil and 0.21m subsoil from which sherds of Roman pottery were recovered overlying natural clays geology. No archaeological deposits were identified.

Trench 8 (Fig 2)

Trench 8 was aligned ESE-WNW and was 20.2m long and 0.51m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.20m of topsoil and 0.22m subsoil overlying natural clays geology. No archaeological deposits were identified.

Trench 9 (Fig 2)

Trench 9 was aligned S-N and was 20.0m long and 0.69m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.28m of topsoil and 0.37m subsoil overlying natural clays and gravels geology. A modern drain was observed aligned SW-NE. No archaeological deposits were identified.

Trench 10 (Fig 2)

Trench 10 was aligned close to south-north and was 20.0m long and 0.69m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.29m of topsoil and 0.30m subsoil overlying natural clays and gravels geology. A modern drain was observed aligned SW-NE. No archaeological deposits were identified.

Trench 11 (Fig 2)

Trench 11 was aligned SW-NE and was 20.2m long and 0.65m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.29m of topsoil and 0.30m subsoil overlying natural clays and gravels geology. A modern drain was observed aligned SW-NE. No archaeological deposits were identified.

Trench 12 (Fig 2, Pl. 3)

Trench 12 was aligned SW-NE and was 22.0m long and 0.57m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.28m of topsoil and 0.21m subsoil overlying natural clays and gravels geology. A modern drain was observed aligned SW-NE. No archaeological deposits were identified.

Trench 13 (Fig 2)

Trench 13 was aligned WSW-ENE and was 20.3m long and 0.68m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.35m of topsoil and 0.29m subsoil overlying natural clays and gravels geology. No archaeological deposits were identified.

Trench 14 (Fig 2)

Trench 14 was aligned SW-NE and was 20.5m long and 0.56m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.31m of topsoil and 0.20m subsoil overlying natural clays geology. No archaeological deposits were identified.

Trench 15 (Fig 2)

Trench 15 was aligned S-N and was 20.4m long and 0.52m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.20m of topsoil and 0.28m subsoil overlying natural clays geology. No archaeological deposits were identified.

Trench 16 (Fig 2)

Trench 16 was aligned SW-NE and was 20.4m long and 0.61m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.25m of topsoil and 0.31m subsoil overlying natural clays geology. A drain pipe was observed running E-W towards a nearby manhole cover. No archaeological deposits were identified.

Trench 17 (Fig 2)

Trench 17 was aligned SW-NE and was 18.0m long and 0.60m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.23m of topsoil and 0.33m subsoil overlying natural geology. No archaeological deposits were identified.

Finds

Pottery by Jane Timby

The archaeological work resulted in the recovery of 16 sherds of pottery weighing 138g dating to the Roman, Saxon and post-medieval periods. Sherds were recovered from the subsoil of trenches 6 and 7 and from pit 1 (fill 52).

The subsoil produced two sherds of Severn Valley ware, one sherd a rim from a tankard; a bodysherd of Malvernian ware and a local black sandy ware copying a black burnished ware, all probably of Roman date. The fill of feature 1 produced a further sherd of Severn Valley ware, ten small fragments of handmade Saxon ware representing two sherds and one sherd of glazed red earthenware of post-medieval date.

Catalogue

Subsoil

1. Rim and bodysherd oxidized Severn Valley ware. The rim is from a tankard. Wt. 24g. Date: 2nd–4th century AD.
2. Bodysherd in black sandy ware. Wt. 8g. Date: Roman.
3. Bodysherd in Malvernian ware. Wt. 7g. Date: probably Roman.

Feature 1 (fill 52)

4. Basesherd in glazed red earthenware (Herefordshire Border ware). Wt. 31g. Date: post-medieval.
5. Bodysherd, oxidized Severn Valley ware. Wt. 47g. Date: Roman (2nd-4th century).
6. Bodysherd handmade fine micaceous ware with organic temper. Wt. 4g. Date: Saxon.
7. Nine fragments probably from a single sherd in a handmade, black sandy ware with dense organic temper. Wt. 17g (includes three crumbs from sample 1). Date: Saxon.

Animal Bone by Ceri Falys

A small assemblage of animal bone was recovered, all from Pit 1 (fill 52). A total of 39 fragments of bone were present for analysis, weighing 324g. The surface preservation of the remains was generally good, although a moderate degree of element fragmentation was present.

A minimum of two animals were present within the assemblage: one cow and one sheep/goat. The cow was identified through the presence of the distal thirds of both a right radius and a left radius, in addition to a small fragment of maxilla with damaged *in situ* tooth, and two midshaft rib portions. A sheep/goat sized individual was represented by a loose tooth, a vertebral spinous process, two midshaft rib fragments and a right distal

phalanx. No evidence of butchery practices were noted, and no further information could be retrieved from this small assemblage of animal bone.

Charred plant remains by Joanna Pine

A sample was taken from pit 1 (50) in trench 5 and a 20L sub-sample wet sieved using a 0.25mm mesh. This revealed a few tiny crumbs of Saxon pottery. The flots were rapidly scanned and fragments of charcoal and a few cereal grains were observed.

Conclusion

The evaluation has revealed that archaeologically relevant levels have survived on the site and an archaeological deposit in the form of a single pit on the western edge of the site was identified. Roman and post-medieval pottery was also recovered from the site. The pit is potentially dated to the Saxon period despite a fragment of post-medieval pottery recovered from its surface. The pit was not revealed by the geophysical survey (Fig. 4). Other geophysical anomalies shown passing through Trenches 10 and 11 were revealed to be a modern drain and it was also seen in Trenches 9 and 12. The anomaly in trench 2 was revealed to be a modern disturbance. Nothing in Trench 5 corresponded with the anomaly there.

References

- BGS, 1988, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50,000, Sheet 216, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Castle, A and Dawson T, 2014, 'Land at Ashchurch Road, Ashchurch, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, A Geophysical Survey (Magnetic)', Thames Valley Archaeological Services report **14/138**, Reading
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- Williams, A and Martin, G H, 2002, *Domesday Book, a complete translation*, London

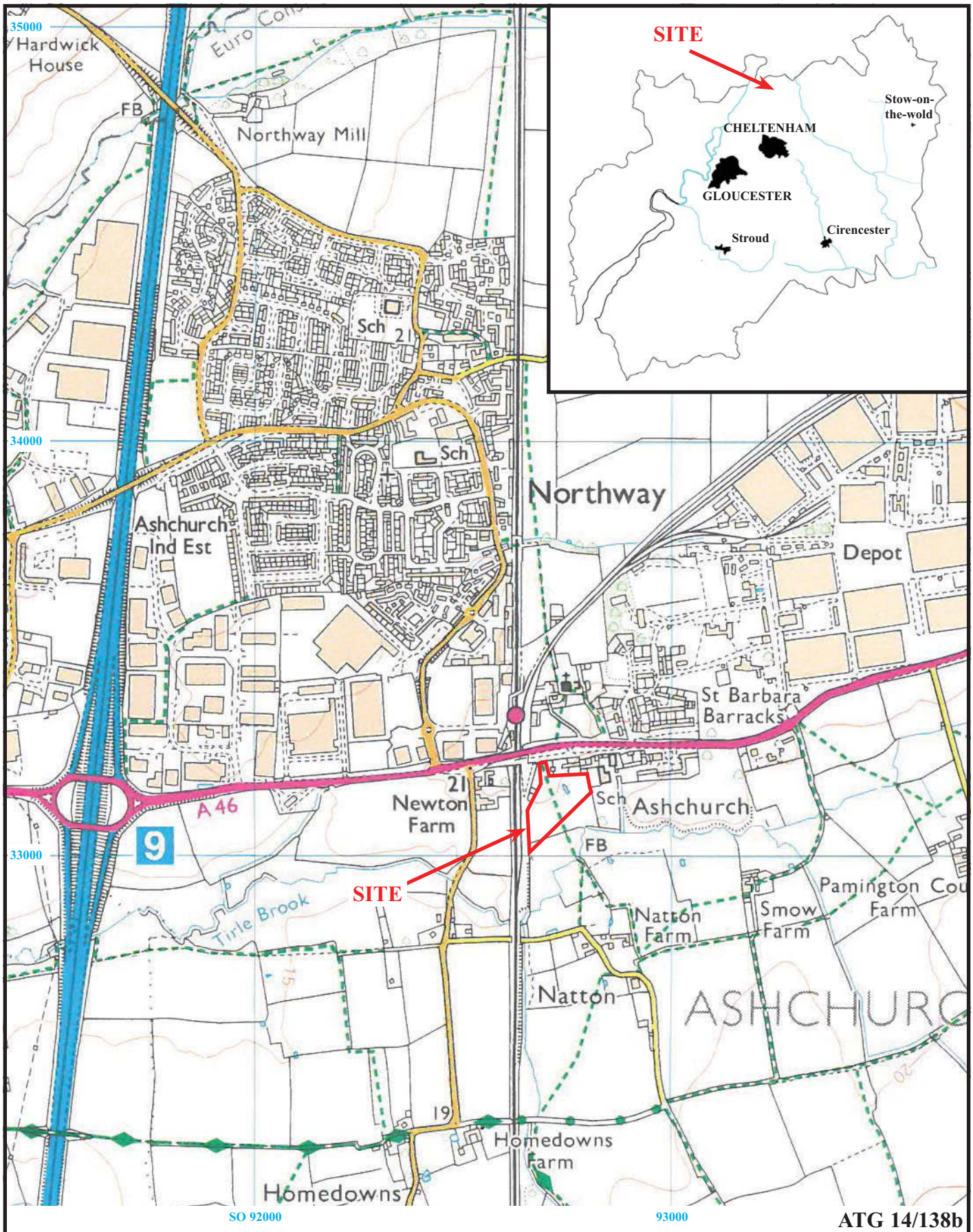
APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at S, W, SW, or SE end

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	21.6	1.6	0.54	0–0.27m dark brown loamy topsoil;; 0.27-0.44m grey brown silty clay subsoil; 0.44m+ natural geology comprised of clays.
2	20.4	1.6	0.45	0–0.18m dark brown loamy topsoil;; 0.18-0.40m grey brown silty clay subsoil; 0.40m+ natural geology comprised of clays.
3	20.2	1.6	0.55	0–0.22m dark brown loamy topsoil;; 0.22-0.50m grey brown silty clay subsoil; 0.50m+ natural geology comprised of sandy clays and gravels. Pit 1, [Pls. 2, 4]
4	20.6	1.6	0.54	0–0.23m dark brown loamy topsoil;; 0.23-0.49m grey brown silty clay subsoil; 0.49m+ natural geology comprised of clays.
5	20.1	1.6	0.54	0–0.23m dark brown loamy topsoil;; 0.23-0.52m grey brown silty clay subsoil; 0.52m+ natural geology comprised of clays.
6	20.1	1.6	0.62	0–0.23m dark brown loamy topsoil;; 0.23-0.52m grey brown silty clay subsoil; 0.52m+ natural geology comprised of clays.
7	20.3	1.6	0.53	0–0.21m dark brown loamy topsoil;; 0.21-0.42m grey brown silty clay subsoil; 0.42m+ natural geology comprised of clays.
8	20.2	1.6	0.51	0–0.20m dark brown loamy topsoil;; 0.20-0.42m grey brown silty clay subsoil; 0.42m+ natural geology comprised of clays.
9	20.0	1.6	0.69	0–0.28m dark brown loamy topsoil;; 0.28-0.65m grey brown silty clay subsoil; 0.65m+ natural geology comprised of clays and gravels.
10	20.0	1.6	0.69	0–0.29m dark brown loamy topsoil;; 0.29-0.59m grey brown silty clay subsoil; 0.59m+ natural geology comprised of clays and gravels.
11	20.2	1.6	0.65	0–0.29m dark brown loamy topsoil;; 0.29-0.59m grey brown silty clay subsoil; 0.59m+ natural geology comprised of clays and gravels.
12	22.0	1.6	0.57	0–0.28m dark brown loamy topsoil;; 0.28-0.49m grey brown silty clay subsoil; 0.49m+ natural geology comprised of clays and gravels. [Pl. 3]
13	20.3	1.6	0.68	0–0.35m dark brown loamy topsoil;; 0.35-0.64m grey brown silty clay subsoil; 0.64m+ natural geology comprised of clays and gravels.
14	20.5	1.6	0.56	0–0.31m dark brown loamy topsoil;; 0.31-0.51m grey brown silty clay subsoil; 0.51m+ natural geology comprised of clays.
15	20.4	1.6	0.52	0–0.20m dark brown loamy topsoil;; 0.20-0.48m grey brown silty clay subsoil; 0.48m+ natural geology comprised of clays.
16	20.4	1.6	0.61	0–0.25m dark brown loamy topsoil;; 0.25-0.56m grey brown silty clay subsoil; 0.56m+ natural geology comprised of clays.
17	18.0	1.6	0.60	0–0.23m dark brown loamy topsoil;; 0.23-0.56m grey brown silty clay subsoil; 0.56m+ natural geology comprised of clays.

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

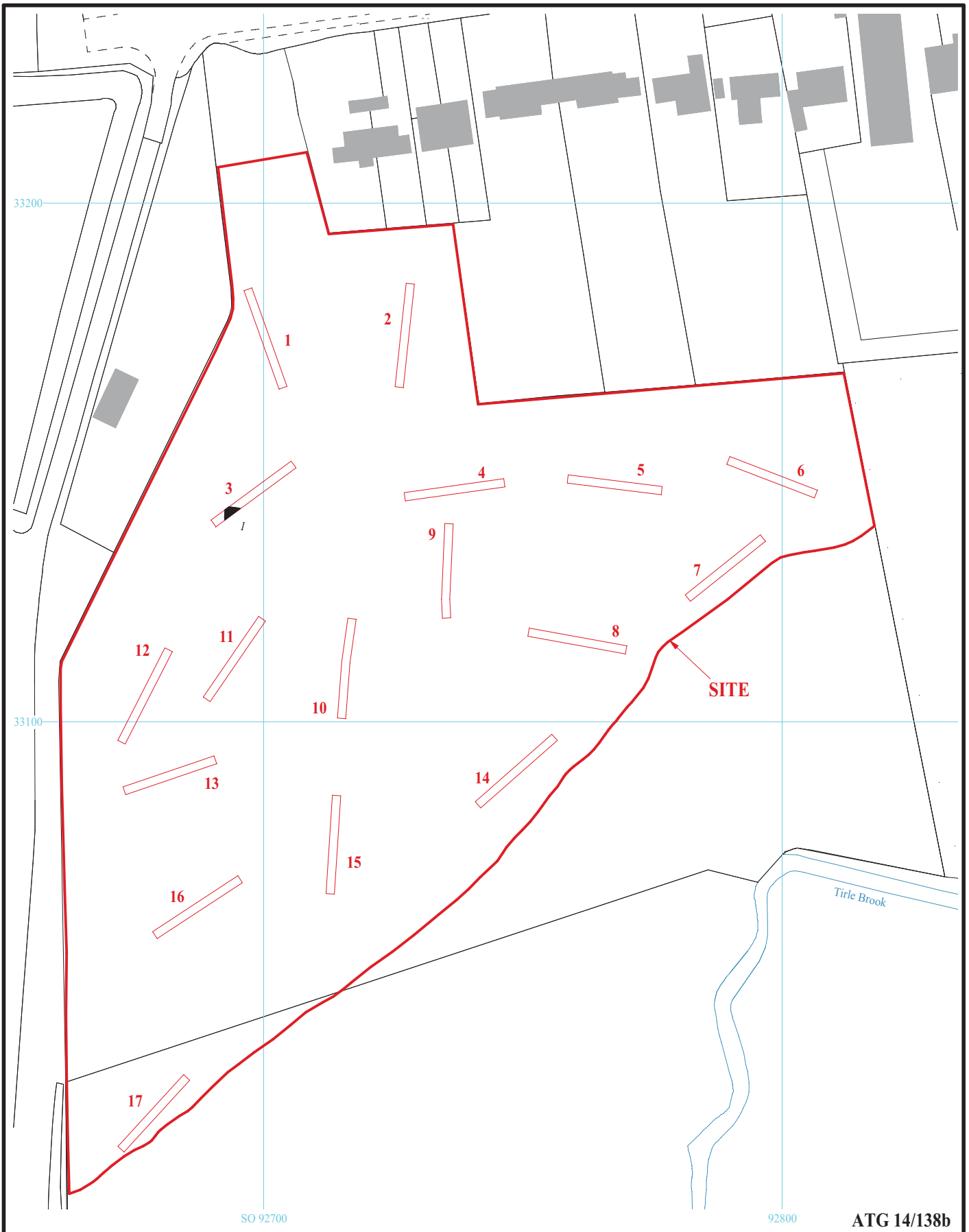
<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
3	1	52	Pit	Saxon	pottery



**Land at Ashchurch Road, Ashchurch,
Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, 2014
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Figure 1. Location of site within Ashchurch and Gloucestershire.

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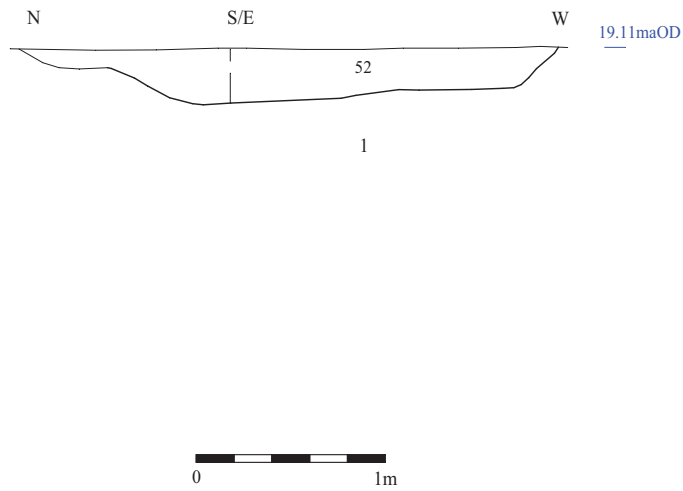
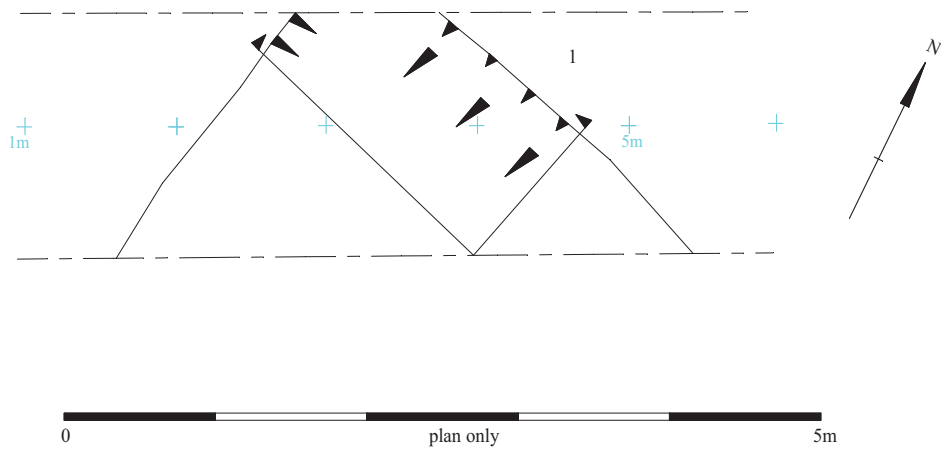
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Figure 2. Location of trenches and feature.



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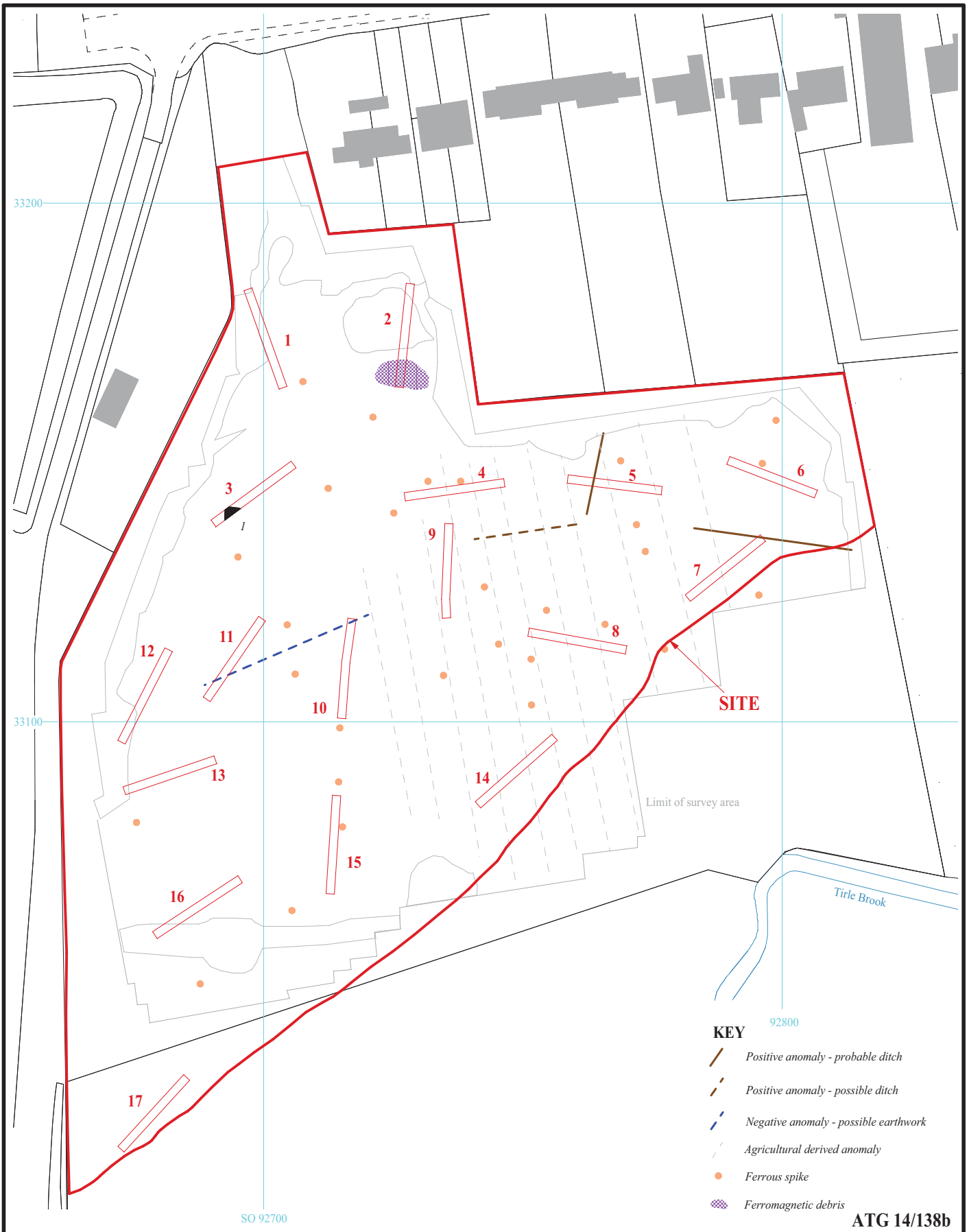


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Figure 3. Detail of pit 1 in Trench 3.

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Figure 4. Location of trenches relative to geophysical anomalies.





Plate 1. View over ridge and furrow, looking north west.



Plate 2. Trench 3, looking north east, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.

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**Land at Ashchurch Road, Ashchurch, Tewkesbury,
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Plates 1 - 2.**

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Plate 3. Trench 12, looking north west, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.



Plate 4. Trench 3, feature 1 looking south, Scales: 2m and 0.5m.

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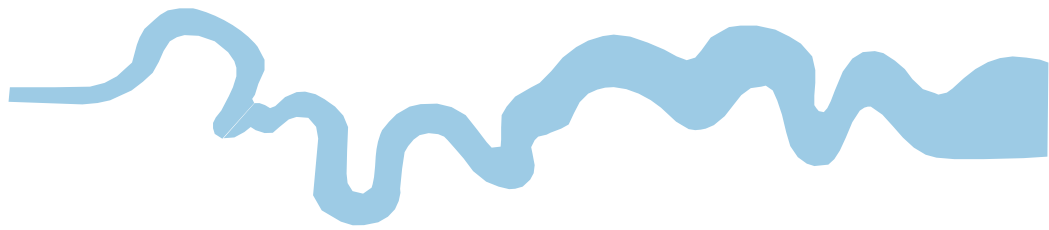
**Land at Ashchurch Road, Ashchurch, Tewkesbury,
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Plates 3- 4.**

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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





**Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd,
47-49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading,
Berkshire, RG1 5NR**

**Tel: 0118 9260552
Fax: 0118 9260553
Email: tvas@tvas.co.uk
Web: www.tvas.co.uk**