

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

S O U T H W E S T

**Land at Hartnoll Farm, Post Hill, Halberton,
Tiverton, Devon**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Richard Tabor and Andrew Weale

Site Code: HFT14/197

(SS 9956 1288)

Land at Hartnoll Farm, Post Hill, Halberton, Tiverton, Devon

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mr J Clapp

by Richard Tabor and Andrew Weale
Thames Valley Archaeological Services
(South West) Ltd

Site Code HFT 14/197

October 2014

Summary

Site name: Land at Hartnoll Farm, Post Hill, Halberton, Tiverton, Devon

Grid reference: SS 9956 1288

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 6th–10th October 2014

Project manager: Andrew Weale

Site supervisor: Richard Tabor

Site code: HFT 14/197

Area of site: c. 850 sq m

Summary of results: No archaeological features or deposits were encountered. The only artefacts observed and retained were a single worked flint and a modern pottery sherd.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services (South West), Taunton. A digital copy of this report will be submitted to the Devon Historic Environment Record and added to OASIS. There is no requirement for an archive to be prepared and deposited.

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 24.10.14 Steve Preston ✓ 23.10.14

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Report 14/197

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out on land at Hartnoll Farm, Post Hill, Halberton, Devon (NGR SS 99555 12881; Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Rob Armour-Chelu of Armour Heritage Limited on behalf of Mr J Clapp, Hartnoll Farm, Post Hill, Tiverton, Devon, EX16 4NG.

Planning permission (14/00801/FULL) was obtained from Mid Devon District Council for the construction of a new agricultural livestock building. In view of the discovery of flint tools in a neighbouring field and of two ring ditches (levelled round barrows) nearby by geophysical survey, the consent was subject to a condition relating to archaeology requiring a programme of archaeological work. Mr Stephen Reed (Historic Environment Service, Devon County Council) indicated that this was to take the form of archaeological monitoring and recording during groundworks.

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 (Armour-Chelu 2014) approved by Mr Reed. The fieldwork was undertaken by Richard Tabor between 6th–10th October 2014 and the site code is HFT 14/197.

The archive is held presently at Thames Valley Archaeological Services South West, Taunton. No accession reference number for the archive was required from The Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery which was contacted concerning the project. No deposits of archaeological interest were exposed and there was very little artefactual material. Guidelines issued by Devon County Council Historic Environment Team state that in these circumstances no archive needs to be prepared. The archaeological condition will be met on submission of a report to the Devon Historic Environment Record and its uploading onto OASIS.

Location, topography and geology

Halberton is a village located 4.5km east of Tiverton and 6km north-north-west of Cullompton, Devon (Fig. 1). The site lies c. 700m north-west of the village centre and occupies a north-west-facing slope below a ridge over which the Grand Western Canal passes. It is set immediately to the north-west of a track accessed from Crown Hill road at the eastern end of a field of c. 8ha (Fig. 2). The site falls from c. 89m above Ordnance Datum (aOD)

on its south-east side to c. 88m on the north-west side. According to geological mapping the ridge is capped by Permian sedimentary rock of Halberton Breccia Formation and the site lies close to its boundary with sandstone of Tidcombe Sand Member of the same period (BGS 2014). The soils are slightly acidic, free-draining loams with low fertility (NSRI 2014).

Archaeological background

The name Halberton was listed as *Halsbretone* or *Als Bretone* in Domesday Book of 1086 (Williams and Martin 1992, 1352) which may derive from the Old English (Anglo-Saxon) *haesel bearu tun* meaning ‘farmstead by a hazel wood’ (Mills 1998, 160). Hartnoll Farm, marked as Arknall on an Ordnance Survey drawing of 1802, is a farmstead with origins not later than the late 18th or early 19th centuries (Armour-Chelu 2014).

There have been several recent archaeological discoveries in the area around the site. A circular anomaly identified by geophysical survey c. 350m west-north-west of the site proved on excavation to be a ring ditch, from the lower fills of which two sherds of Neolithic pottery were recovered. A second similar feature was noted to the north-west of the first. Several pieces of worked flint were found during monitoring of pipeline groundworks at a similar distance to the north of the site.

The nearby section of the Grand Western Canal, which passes within 150m of the north-east of the site, first opened to traffic in 1814 after 50 years of Parliamentary Acts, surveying and abortive attempts to carry out the project.

Strip fields have been represented on the tithe (1838) and early Ordnance Survey maps and the areas to the north and east of the site have been classified according to the Devon Historic Landscape Characterization as ‘Barton Fields’ comprising relatively large, regular enclosures which were probably established between the 15th and 18th centuries.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to identify, excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the works. This involved monitoring of all groundworks. These comprised the removal of the upper topsoil using a toothless grading bucket fitted to a 360° tracked machine in preparation for the laying of a floor and the excavation of pits for stanchions.

Results

Overburden strip

The depth of excavation for the overburden stripping did not penetrate below the topsoil (50) which was at least 1.20m thick in places (Pl. 1). The depth of soil stripped varied from up to 0.30m on the higher south-east side of the area to 1.18m on the lower north-west side. The stripped area amounted to c. 850 sq m. Sparse traces of Tarmac occurred sporadically in the upper 0.25m of the topsoil but otherwise it comprised very clean, firm, red, slightly silty sand. No other horizons or deposits were identified.

Stanchion pits

The foundations for the new structure comprised 16 stanchions arranged in two parallel rows of 8 (Fig. 3; Pl. 2). Stanchion pits 1 to 8 were excavated with a c. 1.25m wide bucket, giving pits of c. 1.2m by 1.18m (Fig. 4, section 1 and Pl. 3) and those on the south side were excavated with a c. 0.60m wide bucket, giving pits of c. 0.63m by 2m (9 and 10) and 0.63m by 1.55m (11 – 16) (Fig. 4, section 2 and Pl. 4).

On the south-east side the depth of stanchion pits varied from 0.68m to 0.82m below the stripped surface and between 0.79m and 1.06m on the north-west side.

No deposits of archaeological interest were revealed.

Finds

The pottery by Richard Tabor

A single sherd of pottery (5g) was collected from the upper topsoil (50). The orange sandy fabric was well-fired with glazed white surfaces and blue transfer design dated from the 18th to 20th centuries.

The flint by Richard Tabor

A single struck flint showed coarse direct retouch on one side at an angle of 35 degrees. It is likely to be of Late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age date.

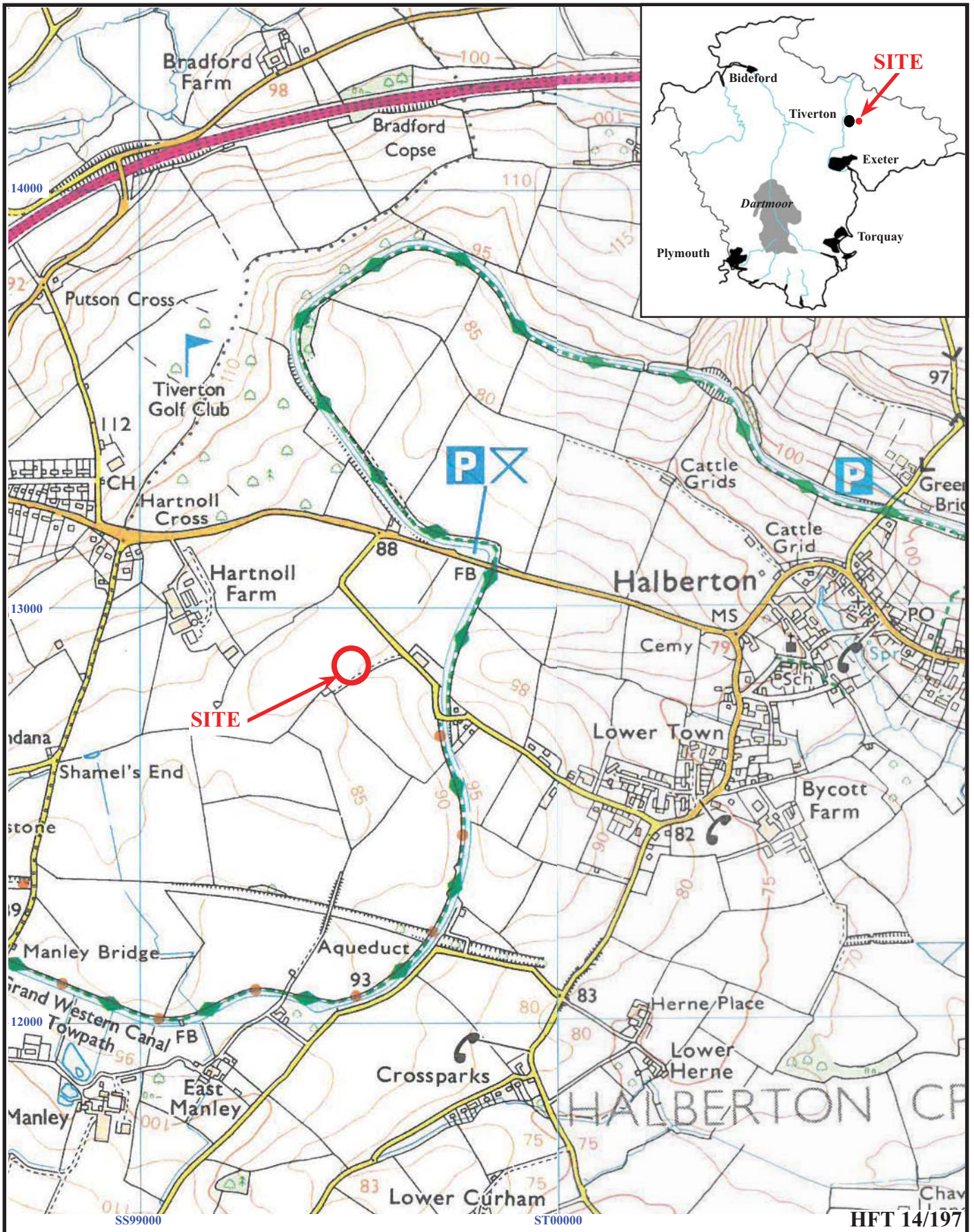
Conclusion

No archaeological features or deposits were found during groundworks and the two finds warrant no further analysis. It is sufficient to note that the worked flint may date to the Late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age, a time span during which there is known to have been activity to the north of the site.

These findings do not demonstrate that there is no archaeology on the site, but that whatever might be present would be concealed and protected by the thick topsoil covering it. The depth is exceptional given its situation very close to the top of a hill. The route of the now metalled track along its south-eastern boundary has been marked since at least the late 19th century (OS 1889) and assuming it has not been raised significantly since then much of the topsoil formation should predate the track. However, the land has been ploughed repeatedly in modern times and given its lightness the soil would be expected to move downslope. It seems likely that topsoil has been added from elsewhere. The excavations for the Grand Western Canal would have been of a scale to generate a large amount of topsoil and it is possible that such a project is the source.

References

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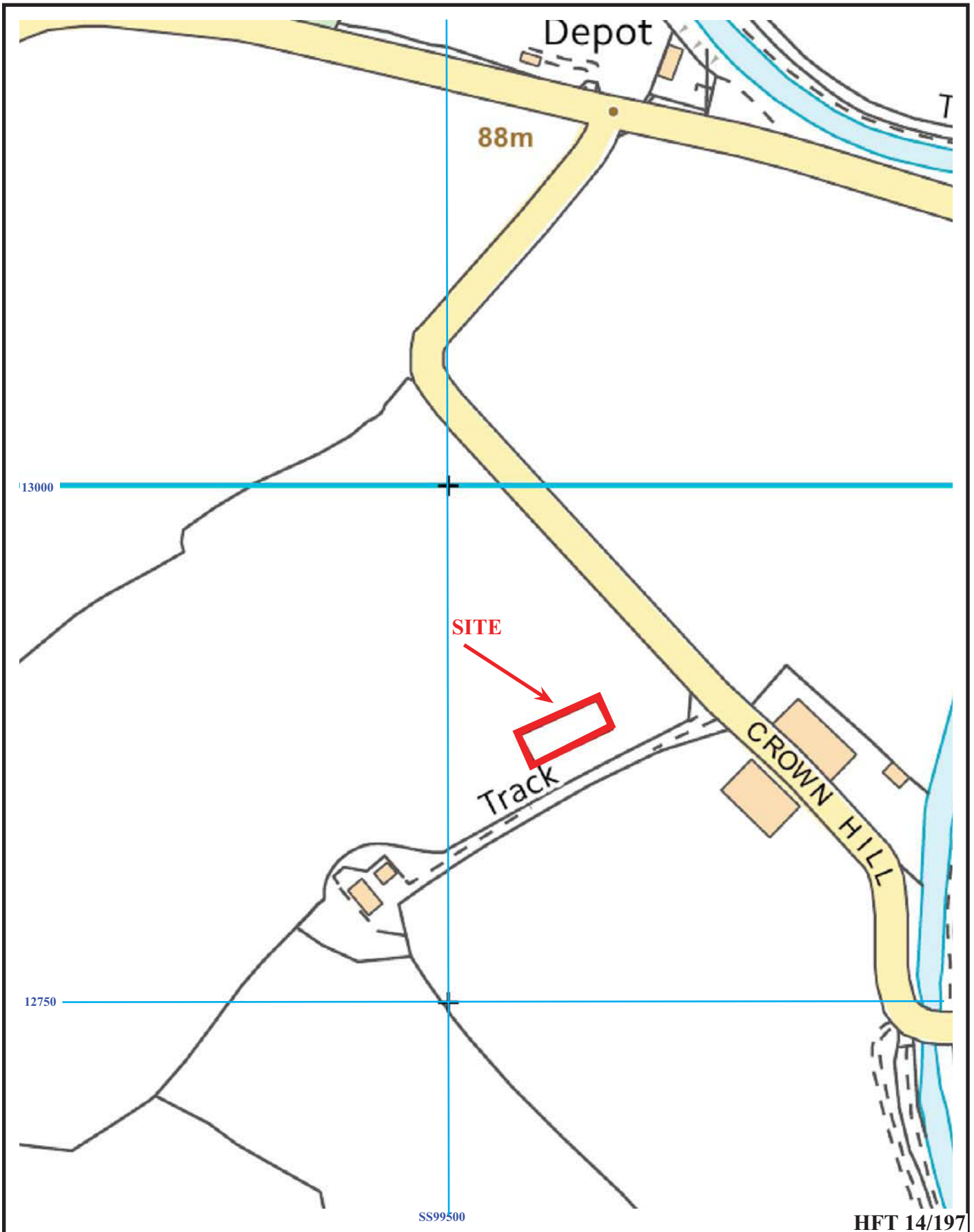


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Figure 1. Location of site in relation to Halberton and within Devon

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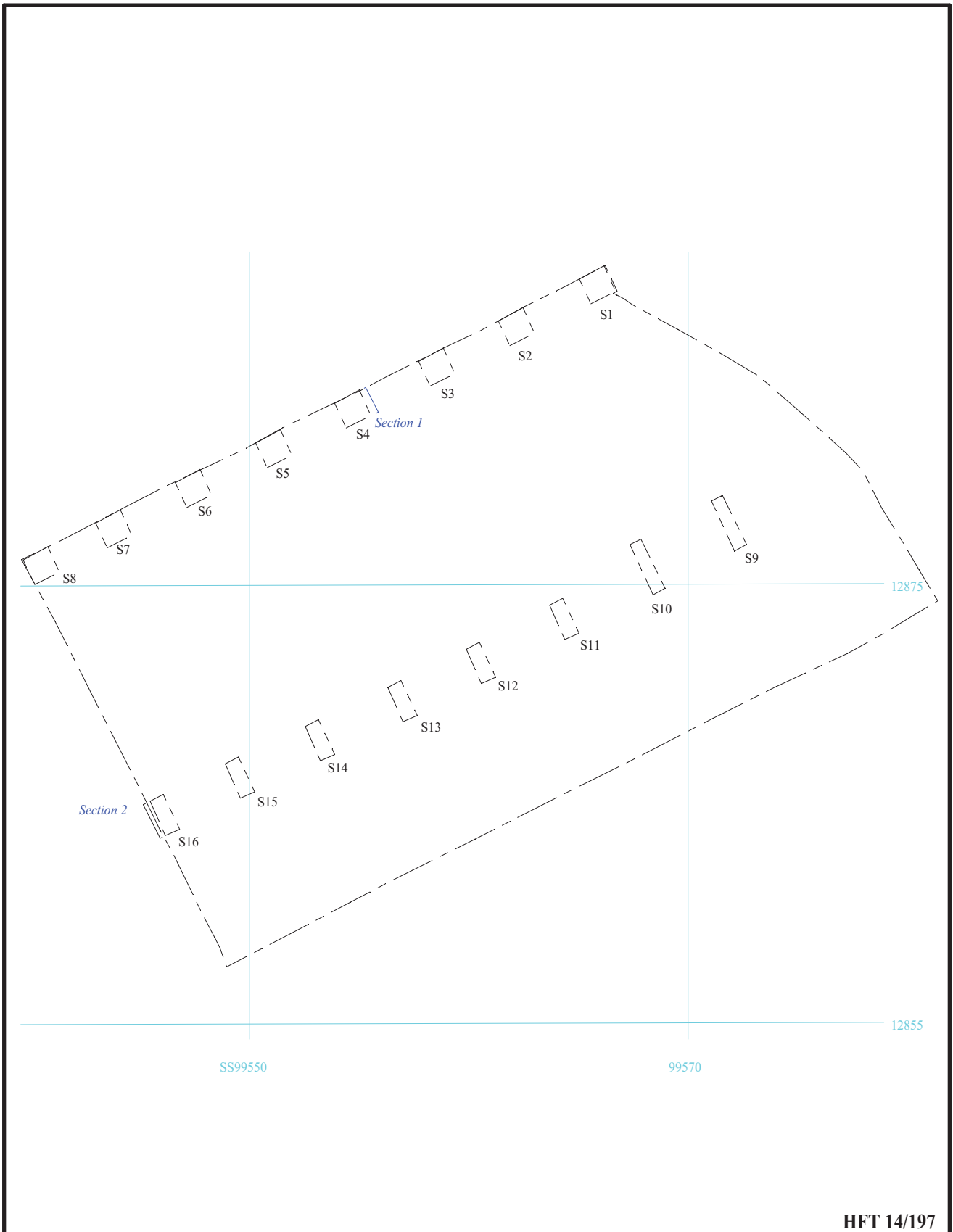
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site in relation to Crown Hill

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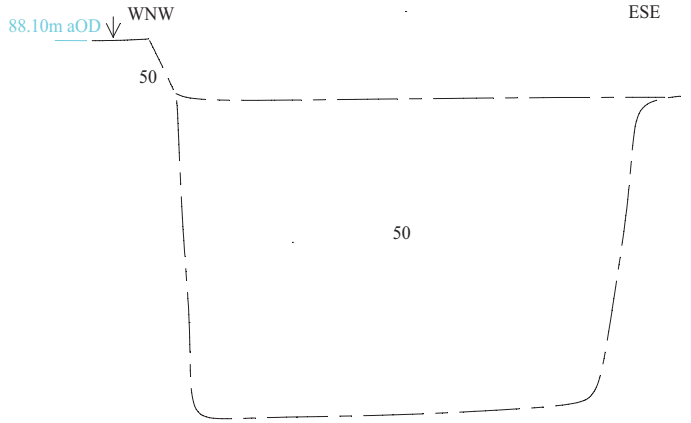
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Figure 3. Plan showing the extent of the stripped area and locations of stanchion pits

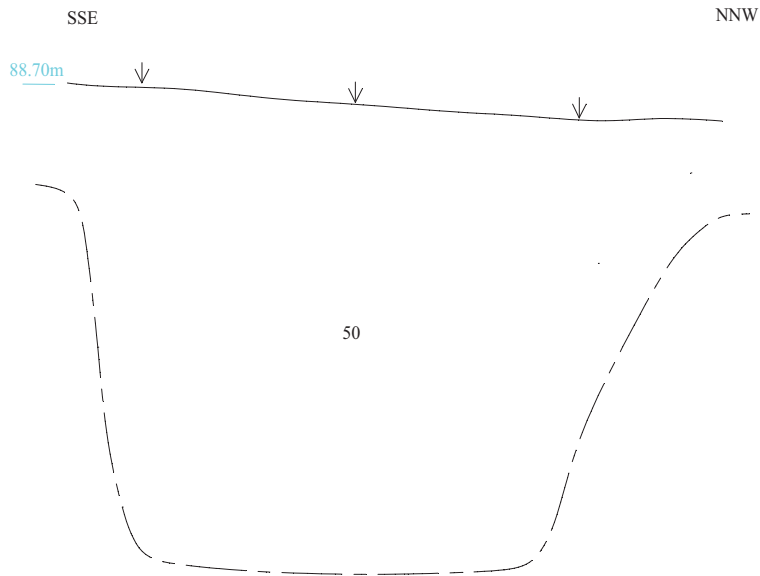


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Section 1: Stanchion pit 4



Section 2: Stanchion pit 16



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Figure 4. Sections 1 and 2



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Plate 1. Stripping of the upper topsoil, looking west



Plate 2. Excavation of the stanchion pits, looking south-west

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Plates 1 and 2.

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Plate 3. Stanchion pit 8, looking east-north-east (1m scale)



Plate 4. Stanchion pit 13, looking south-east (1m scale)

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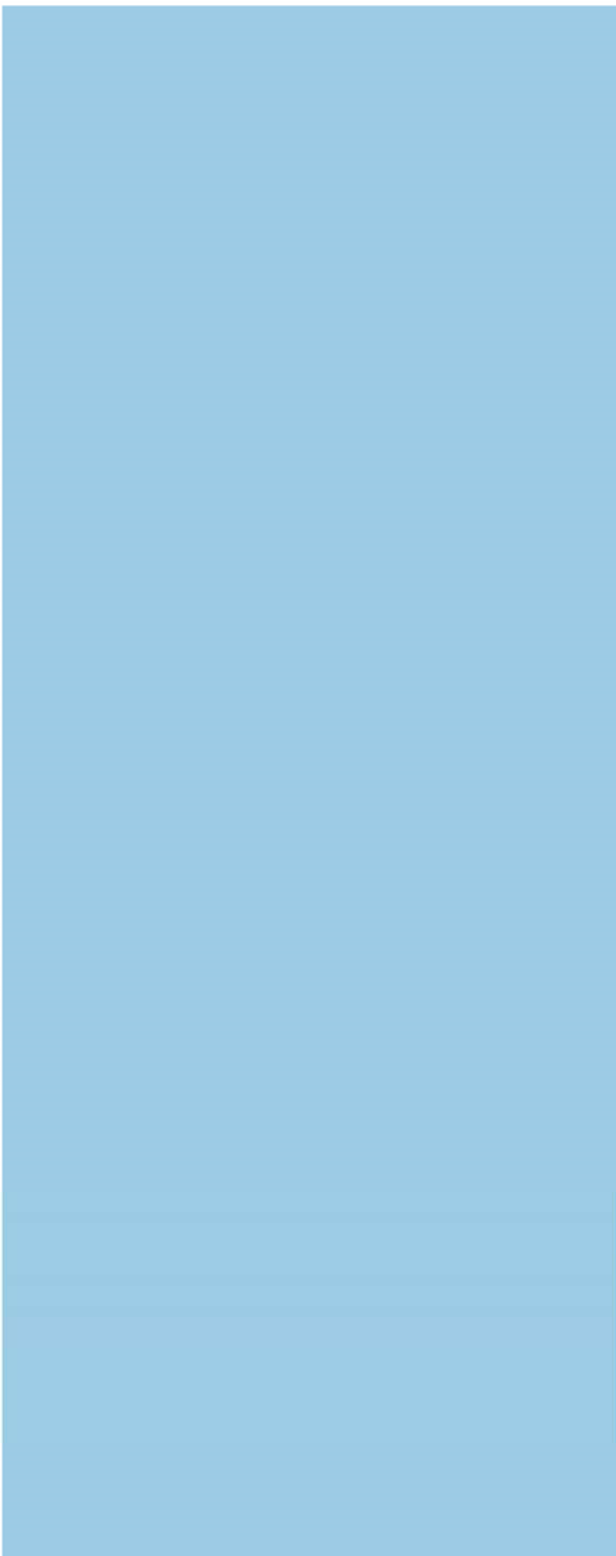
Plates 3 and 4.

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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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