THAMES VALLEY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

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SOUTH WEST

Land at Ruins Lane, Chideock, Dorset

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Richard Tabor and Andrew Weale

Site Code: RLC15/49

(SY 4242 9284)

Land at Ruins Lane, Chideock, Dorset

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mr Melvyn Hale

by Richard Tabor and Andrew Weale

Thames Valley Archaeological Services

(South West) Ltd

Site Code RLC 15/49

August 2015

Summary

Site name: Land at Ruins Lane, Chideock, Dorset

Grid reference: SY 4242 9284

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 12th – 16th March 2015

Project manager: Andrew Weale

Site supervisor: Richard Tabor

Site code: RLC 15/49

Area of site: *c.* 300 sq m

Summary of results: No archaeological features or deposits earlier than 18th century were encountered. The only artefacts observed were fragments of probably 18th to 19th century pottery and other detritus which was not retained.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services (South West), Taunton and will be deposited with the Dorset County Museum Service in due course.

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 01.09.15 Steve Preston✓ 01.09.15

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Report 15/49

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Ruins Lane, Chideock, Dorset DT9 6JH (NGR SY 4242 9284; Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Melvyn Hale of Chimneys, Main Street, Chideock, Dorset, DT9 6JH.

Planning permission (1/D/13/001681) was obtained from West Dorset District Council for the construction of a new dwelling and alterations to a wall. In view of prehistoric and medieval remains found in and around the village, the consent was subject to a condition requiring a programme of archaeological work. Mr Steve Wallis (Senior Archaeologist, Dorset County Council) indicated that this was to take the form of a watching brief 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) approved by the District Council as advised by Steve Wallis. The fieldwork was undertaken by Richard Tabor between 12th–16th March 2015. The site code is RLC 15/49.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services South West, Taunton, and will be deposited with the Dorset County Museum Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

Chideock is a village located 4km west of Bridport and 6km east of Charmouth, Dorset on either side of the A35 road which links the two towns (Fig. 1). It straddles the lower slopes of the valley of the River Winford which flows into the English Channel 1km to the south at Seatown. The site lay on the western side of the southern end of Ruins Lane and comprised two gravel parking areas separated by a strip of garden between the northern boundary of The Old Cottage and the southern wall of Lilac Cottage (Fig. 2). The new housing plot covers a rectangular area of c. 300 sq m (Pl. 2). A slatted wooden fence defined the southern and western boundaries of the site, whilst the northern and eastern boundaries were formed respectively by the southern wall of The Old Cottage and by a garden hedge (Pl. 4). The hedge and fencing on the western side were removed during groundworks. At ground level the plot falls from *c*. 26.70m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) at the northern

end to c. 25.50m aOD at the southern end. The underlying geology comprises Eype clay Member Jurassic interbedded sedimentary siltstone and limestone of the Mercia Mudstone Group (BGS 2015). The natural geology observed during groundworks was slightly bluish grey silty clay.

Archaeological background

The name Chideock derives from the Celtic *ced* meaning 'wood' (Mills 1998, 81). As *Cidihoc* it was recorded in Domesday Book in 1086 when it was held the king as part of an estate which included also Burton Bradstock, Bere Regis, Colber, Shipton Gorge and Bradpole. The hideage was not know at the time but it was recorded that the land had been held by king Edward prior to the conquest (Williams and Martin 2002, 199). The site lies within the historic core of Chideock with Ruins Lane providing the link from Main Street on the A35 road to the site of Chideock Castle. It is not clear when the first licence to crenellate was granted, but licences were issued during the reign of Edward III in the late 14th century (EH 2015). Earthworks surviving 250m to the north of the site are the focus for the associated Scheduled Monument (SM 450215). Works in advance of a proposed upgrade to the A35 in the 1990's revealed medieval remains to the north and east of the castle (MRM partnership 1991, 1992a, 1992b). Chideock paid the price for being a centre of Roman catholicism and hence Royalism during the English Civil War in the mid 17th century. The castle was demolished and thereafter was a useful source of stone for houses built subsequently.

The nearest buildings fronting onto Main Street, Ivy Cottage, Chimneys and Lilac Cottage are all grade II listed buildings. Chimneys was formerly a large gentry house from the 16th century. Ivy cottage was built in the second half of the 18th century and Lilac cottage was built around 1800.

No structures are marked on Ordnance Survey maps of the present building plot from 1889 to 1961.

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 during the reduction of the ground level and examination of the excavated foundation and service trenches. The area observed during ground reduction and the excavation of foundation trenches amounted to c. 252 sq m.

The ground reduction was carried out with a 2m wide toothless grading bucket and, where necessary, a 1m wide toothed bucket. The depth of reduction varied by c. 1.10m over 26m falling from north to south (Pl. 1), giving a level surface from which the footings for a revetment along the west side and the foundations for the

house could be excavated respectively by a further 0.10m and 0.90m (Pl. 2). The foundation trenches were excavated with a 0.60m wide toothless grading bucket. The buckets were fitted to a 360^0 tracked machine.

Written, drawn and photographic records were made of the identified archaeological cuts and deposits. The nature of the operation was described and illustrated with photographs.

Results

At the north end of the plot the gravel surface of a parking area had been laid over geosynthetic fabric which covered a dark grey to black soil of modern formation. To the south of the gravel the topsoil (50) lay over gravelly yellow sandy clay make up (52) on much of the east side (Fig. 4, section 1; Pl. 1). Towards the middle and north of the west side the topsoil interfaced directly with a colluvial deposit (51) (Fig. 4, section 2). A 0.15m thick deposit of yellow gravel and clay (57) filled a levelling cut into the colluvium at the southern end (Fig. 4, section 1). The topsoil varied in depth from 0.12m to 0.20m. The colluvium (51) varied in thickness from c 0.52m at the southern end of the site to 0.88m deep at the northern end. It comprised friable buff yellow sandy clay with patches of sparse small to medium yellow sandstones. A substantial 0.70m long, 0.15m thick, sandstone (Fig. 4, section 1; pl. 1) lay horizontally at the interface of (51) with an older colluvial deposit (55). The lower deposit was made up of firm mottled orange and pale grey sandy clay with dark brown manganese flecking of varying density. The thickness varied from 0.20m at the southern end to 0.48m at the northern end. It covered natural of firm, slightly bluish pale grey silty clay (56).

At the southern end of the site a large, multi-lobed pit 1, filled with dark brown humic loam (53) lay directly under garden gravel, under a modern fence, and cut make-up layer (57). It was not excavated as its stratigraphic position demonstrated that it was modern (Pl. 2). Finds collected from the exposed fill included pottery dating to the late 18th or early 19th centuries.

Pit 1 cut, and make-up layer 57 sealed, the single fill (54) of a 0.86m wide, 0.22m deep linear ditch [2]. The ditch was cut by similar modern pitting at the northern end of the site. It was filled with friable, grey brown sandy silt with sparse inclusions of clinker (<0.20mm) and rare to sparse stones and pebbles (54) (Fig. 4, section 3; Pl. 3). The ditch cut make-up deposit 52. The latest pottery from the ditch comprised two sizable sherds from the mid to late 18th century. The latest pottery from the make-up deposit may have been up to a century earlier. The most recent feature on the site was a land drain filled with large flint cobbles cutting the fill of one of the modern pits which appeared to service the area at the northern end of the site covered with gravel (Fig. 3; Pl. 4).

Finds

The pottery by Peter Fairclough

A total of 15 sherds of pottery were recovered from 3 contexts : 52, 1 (53), and 2 (54). They were classified using the Museum of London Medieval and post-medieval pottery fabric codes (MOLA 2015). All the sherds appeared to be post-medieval in origin. The sherds were all freshly broken and showed no evidence of abrasion which would indicate that they were deposited within the deposits soon after being broken. All the pottery appears to be contained within a date range of 1570 to 1830 however the inclusion of creamware with underglazed transfer-printed decoration (willow pattern) and the creamware with polychrome-painted decoration within pit 1 (53) would suggest the later end of the date range for that deposit.

The following fabric types were noted:

STMO: Staffordshire-type mottled brown-glazed ware, 1650 – 1800. 7 sherds, 129g.
TGW: English tin-glazed ware, 1570-1846 (MOLA 2015). 3 sherds, 45g.
REFR: refined red earthenware, 1740-1800 (MOLA 2015). 2 sherds, 15g.
CREA PNTD: creamware with polychrome-painted decoration, 1760-1800. 1 sherd, 13g.
CREA UTR: creamware with underglaze transfer-printed decoration, 1790-1830. 2 sherds, 10g.

All the fabrics are common in the region. The occurrence of sherds by number, weight and fabric type per context is shown in Appendix 2.

Ceramic Building Material by Andrew Weale

A total of four fragments of ceramic building material were recovered from three contexts. All four fragments appeared to be brick although none of them were in themselves diagnostic. The occurrence of ceramic building material by number and weight of fragments per context is shown in appendix 3.

Iron object by Andrew Weale

A single piece of iron plate weighing 254g was recovered from ditch 1 (54).

Slag by Andrew Weale

A single piece of slag weighing 27g was recovered from ditch 1 (54).

Animal bone by Andrew Weale

A single fragment of animal bone weighing 252g was recovered from ditch 1 (54).

Shell by Andrew Weale

Two oyster shells weighing a total of 27g were recovered from ditch 1 (54).

Conclusion

The site bears the characteristic traces of a back garden pre-dating the era of local waste collection. The pottery and other finds within the black soils filling various depressions point to late 18th or earlier 19th century deposition but the stratigraphic sequence suggests that they do not predate at least the early 20th century. The finds indicate that the filling of ditch 2 took place during the mid to late 18th century or later. Broadly dated pottery would allow formation of the earlier make-up deposit (52) during the later 17th or 18th century. The thick colluvial deposit (51) below the make-up and cut by the ditch was probably formed by the downslope movement of soil eroded by ploughing. This suggests that its formation predates the construction of The Old Cottage immediately upslope from the site. It cannot be dated directly but the large sandstone at the base of (51) may be a relic from either the construction or the demolition of the castle, hence it may have formed during the Medieval or Post-medieval periods. The presence of manganese and the relatively consolidated state of the underlying hillwash (55) suggests much earlier formation of that deposit.

References

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APPENDIX 1: Context summary

Cut	*Deposits/Fills*	*Type*	*Date*	*Dating evidence*
	50	Turf/topsoil	Modern	Stratigraphy
	51	Hillwash	Post-medieval?	Stratigraphy
	52	Make-up	Post-medieval/modern	Stratigraphy, finds
	55	Hillwash	Geological	Stratigraphy
	56	Natural	Geological	
	57	Make-up	Modern	Stratigraphy
1	53	Pit	Modern	Stratigraphy, finds
2	54	Ditch cut	Post-medieval/modern	Stratigraphy, finds

APPENDIX 2: The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type

Fabric	*STMO*		*TGW*		*REFR*		*CREA UTR*		*CREA PNTD*	
Context	*No.*	*Wt (g)*	*No.*	*Wt (g)*	*No.*	*Wt (g)*	*No.*	*Wt (g)*	*No.*	*Wt (g)*
52	*5*	*68*	*1*	*2*						
53	*1*	*2*	*2*	*43*			*2*	*10*	*1*	*13*
54	*1*	*59*			*2*	*15*				
Total	*7*	*129*	*3*	*45*	*2*	*15*	*2*	*10*	*1*	*13*

APPENDIX 3: The ceramic building material occurrence by number and weight of fragments per context (all brick)

Context	*Frag No.*	*Wt (g)*
52	1	16
53	1	2
54	2	22
Total	4	40

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Figure 1. Location of site in relation to Chideock and within Somerset

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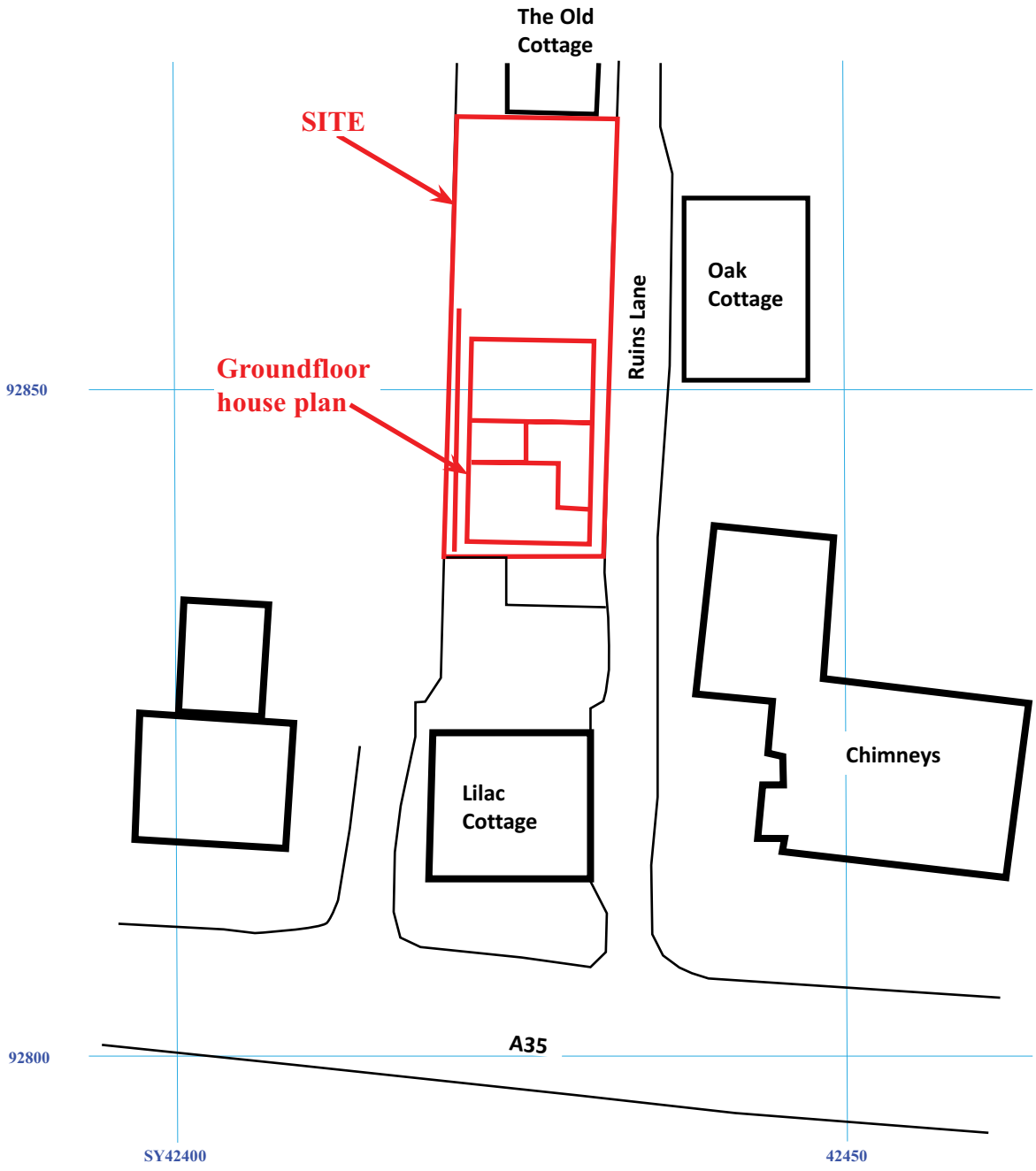

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site in relation to Ruins Lane

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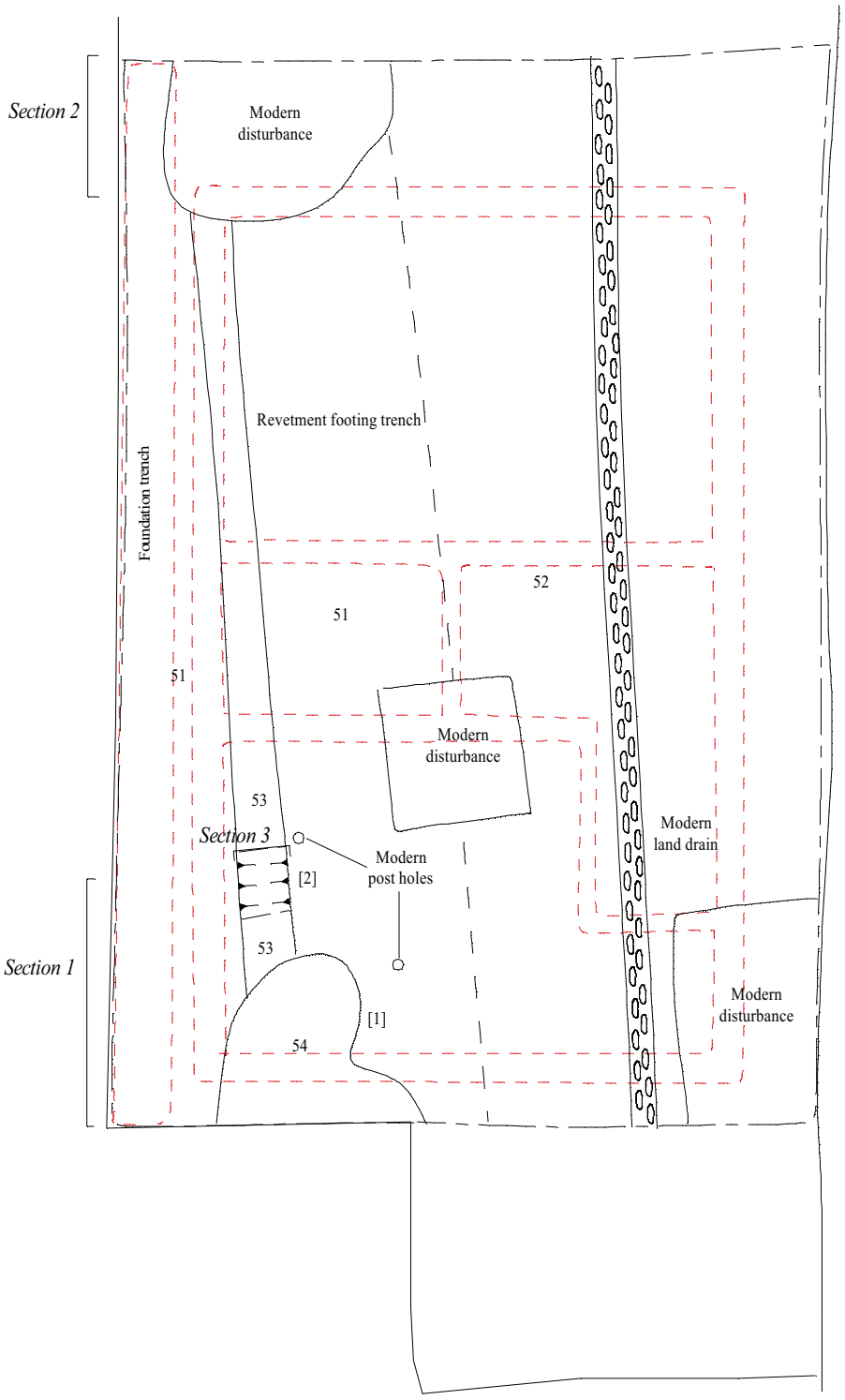

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Figure 3. Plan showing modern features exposed during ground reduction and section locations

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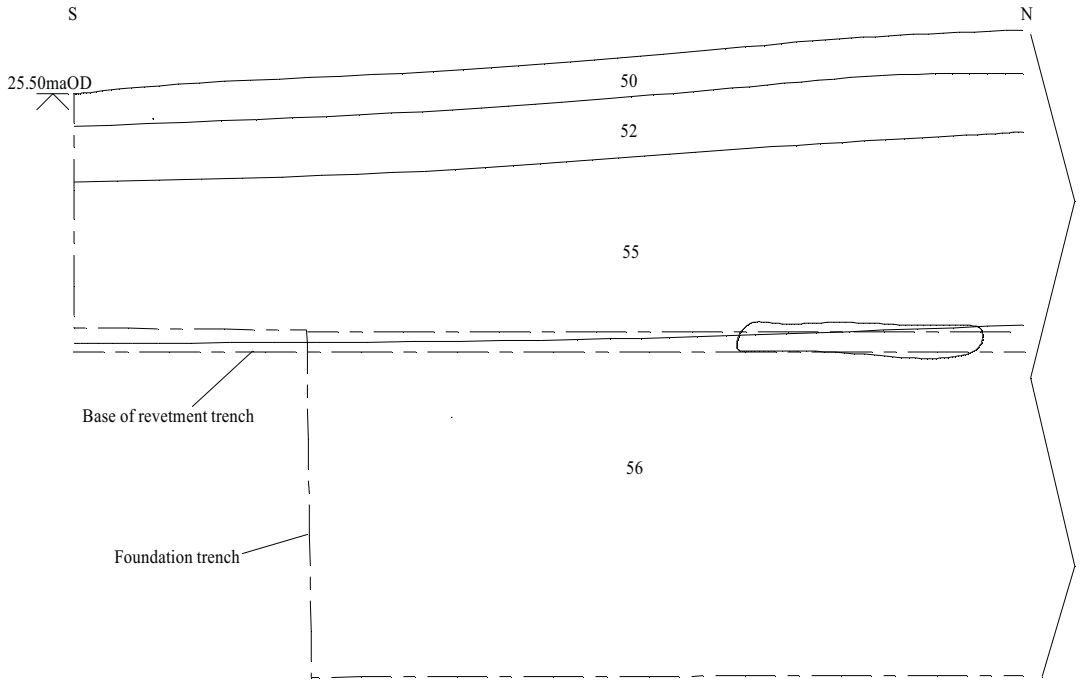
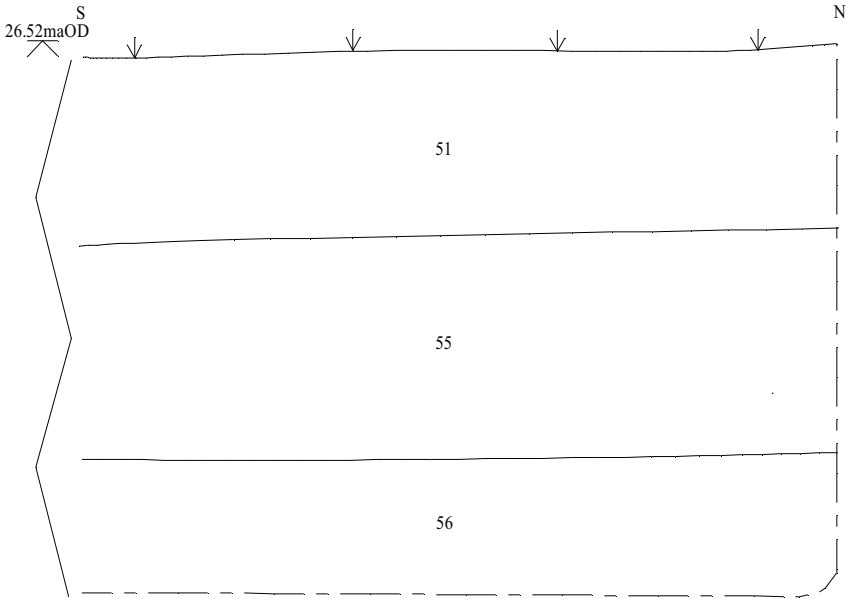
Section 1: West side of reduced area and foundation trench, south end



Section 2: West side of reduced area and revetment trench, north end



Section 3: Ditch [2], south-facing section

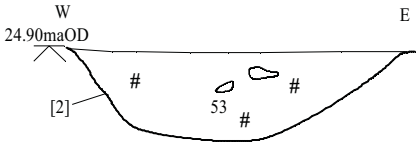


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Figure 4. Sections 1 - 3

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Plate 1. The west of the site after grading, looking north-west (2m scale)

Plate 2. The site after excavation of the foundation trenches, looking south (2m scale)

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Plates 1 and 2.

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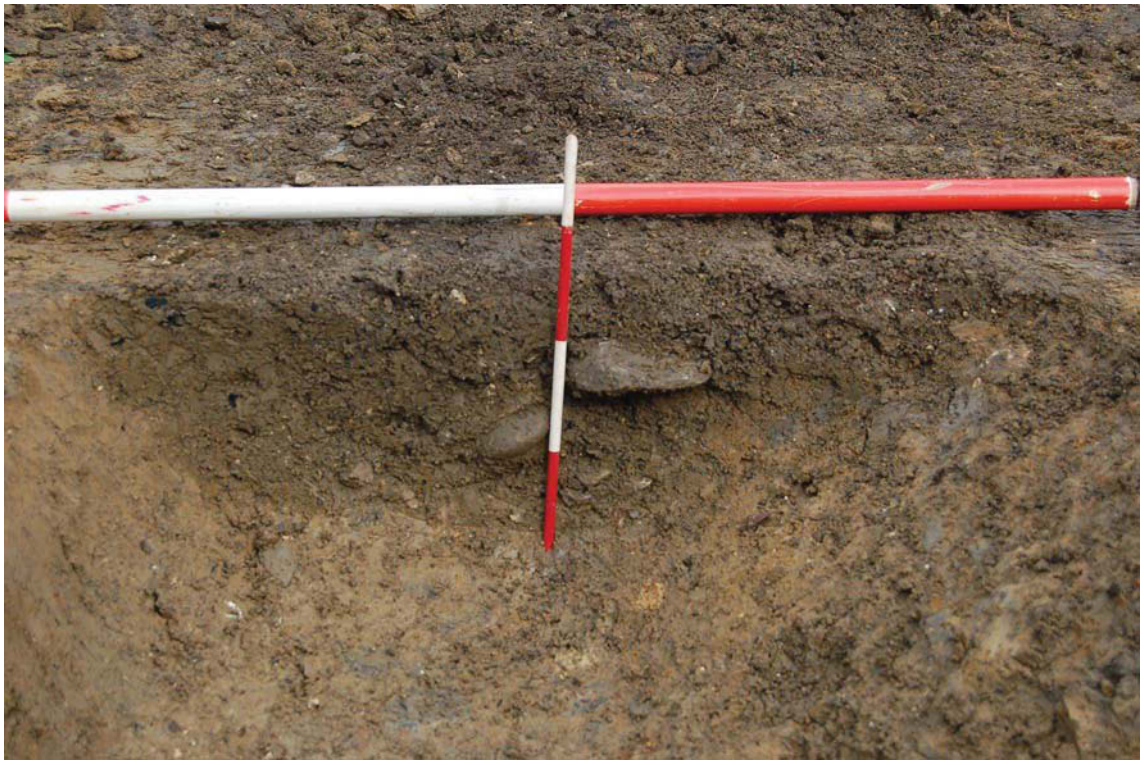

Plate 3. Section of ditch [2], looking north (1m and 0.5m scales)

Plate 4. Modern disturbance and land drain at the north end of the site, looking north-west (no scale)

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Plates 3 and 4.

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