

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 Moons Hill Quarry,  
Stoke St Michael, Somerset**

**Archaeological Evaluation**

**by Andrew Weale**

**Site Code: MHQ12/56**

**(ST 6567 4534)**

# **Land at Moon's Hill Quarry, Stoke St Michael, Somerset**

**An Archaeological Evaluation  
For John Wainwright and Company Ltd**

by Andrew Weale

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code MHQ 12/56

**September 2015**

## Summary

**Site name:** Land at Moons Hill Quarry, Stoke St Michael, Somerset

**Grid reference:** ST 6567 4534

**Site activity:** Evaluation

**Date and duration of project:** 6th August 2015

**Project manager:** Andrew Weale

**Site supervisor:** Andrew Weale

**Site code:** MHQ 12/56

**Area of site:** c. .2ha

**Summary of results:** Two trenches were dug to determine if the projected line of a Roman road were present within the site. However, no traces of the road were found and no other deposits or artefacts of archaeological interest were observed.

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, South West in Taunton and will be deposited with the Somerset Heritage Service in due course

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 11.09.15 Steve Preston ✓ 11.09.15
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# Land at Moon's Hill Quarry, Stoke St Michael, Somerset An Archaeological Evaluation

by Andrew Weale

**Report 12/56c**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out with a field to the south of Moons Hill Quarry, Long Cross Bottom, Stoke St Michael, Somerset (ST 65672 45336) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Abby Bryant of Baseline Heritage, 26b Keyford, Frome, Somerset, BA11 1JS on behalf of John Wainwright and Company Limited, Moons Hill Quarry, Mendip Road, Stoke St Michael, Bath, Somerset, BA3 5JU.

Planning permission is to be sought for the development of a new landscaped storage area for indigenous quarry wastes to the south of the present quarry workings. As a consequence of the possibility of the presence of archaeological deposits, which may be damaged or destroyed by development, fieldwork has been requested as detailed in the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and Somerset County Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a written scheme of investigation approved by Mr. Steve Membery, Senior Historic Environment Officer of Somerset County Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Weale, Agata Solha-Paszkiewicz and Mariusz Paszkiewicz on 6th August 2015 and the site code is MHQ 12/56. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services and will be deposited with Somerset Heritage Service in due course.

## **Location, topography and geology**

The site is located in a single field to the south of the village of Stoke St Michael, in eastern Somerset between the towns of Shepton Mallet and Frome (Fig. 1). It lies immediately north of the Old Frome Road, parts of whose course is thought to follow a Roman road. The site is occupied by a mixture of grass, shrub and marsh and lies at a height of c. 240m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is primarily Portishead Formation sandstone with andesite and tuff agglomerates to the north but with a silty clay observed in the trenches (BGS 2000)

## **Archaeological background**

The site was part of a wider area that has been the subject of a desk top assessment (Dawson 2014a) and a geophysical survey (Dawson 2014b). The specific interest in the site for this report is the presence of a Roman road (Margary's route 45b (Margary 1955, 74, 93)) the projected course of which forms the southern boundary of the site. It is thought that this road was locally important in the exploitation of the Mendip lead ores, connecting the mines at Charterhouse to Old Sarum. Webster 2007, 154–5; 289).

The geophysical survey (Dawson 2014b) included the site evaluated here but no anomalies interpretable as a road were identified.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The aims of the evaluation were to determine the presence/ absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological or palaeoenvironmental deposits within the area of development. This work was to be carried out in a manner which will not compromise the integrity of archaeological features or deposits which warrant preservation in-situ, or might better be excavated under conditions pertaining to full excavation.

The specific research aims of this project are were:

to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present; and

to determine if any deposits representing the projected line of the Roman road are present.

Two trenches, each 25m long, were proposed to be excavated across the site, targeting the apparent course of the Roman road.

The topsoil, and subsoil were to be removed by a 360° tracked machine. A toothless ditching bucket was to be used to expose archaeologically sensitive levels, under constant archaeological supervision. Where archaeological or palaeoenvironmental remains were exposed, these were to be cleaned by hand investigated, recorded and sampled to an agreed sample fraction. A programme of environmental sampling was to take place should sufficient well stratified subsoil deposits be located. Metal detectors were to be used to enhance the recovery of metal finds.

## **Results**

Both trenches were dug but Trench 1 was moved to the north and the west of its intended location due to the presence of a series of large water pipes and concrete man holes. Trench 2 was moved to the west of its intended

location due to the presence of a series of trees and scrub (Fig. 3). Both trenches were placed to examining the apparent course of the Roman road.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

#### Trench 1 (Fig. 2; Pl 1)

Trench 1 was aligned SSW–NNE, was 24.4m long and 0.55m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil 0.30m thick beneath which was a layer of subsoil which varied between 0.10 and 0.15m thick. Beneath the subsoil in the southern 10m was a clean natural yellowish red silty clay becoming more reddened to the north. Both types of natural geology were slightly disturbed by root action. The southern natural geology was machined into by a further 0.10m to confirm that the the correct interpretation of the geological sequence had taken place with no change observed at that depth. At the northern end of the trench was the edge of the stream course which formed the northern limit of the site and which contained peaty material. Within this material appears to be a modern terracotta land drain for which no cut could be observed. The topsoil only contained modern agricultural metal together with concrete and Tarmac, none of which were retained. No archaeological features or artefacts were present within Trench 1.

#### Trench 2 (Fig 2; Pl. 2)

Trench 2 was aligned SSW–NNE and was 26.0m long and 0.40m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil 0.20m thick beneath which was a layer of subsoil which was 0.10 thick. Beneath the subsoil in the southern 12m was a natural geology of yellowish red silty clay. To the north the natural geology was a light red silty clay. Both types of geology were slightly disturbed by root action, more heavily than in Trench 1. A number of modern field drains were the only features cut into the natural geology. Only modern metalwork and plastic were recovered from the topsoil and not retained. No archaeological features or artefacts were present within Trench 2.

### **Conclusion**

No evidence of the Roman road was observed within either trench of the evaluation with no evidence for flanking roadside ditches, metalling nor wheel ruts. Unless traffic or construction had left no below-ground remains it is assumed that the Roman road followed a different path. A suggested alternative route is presented on Figure 3.

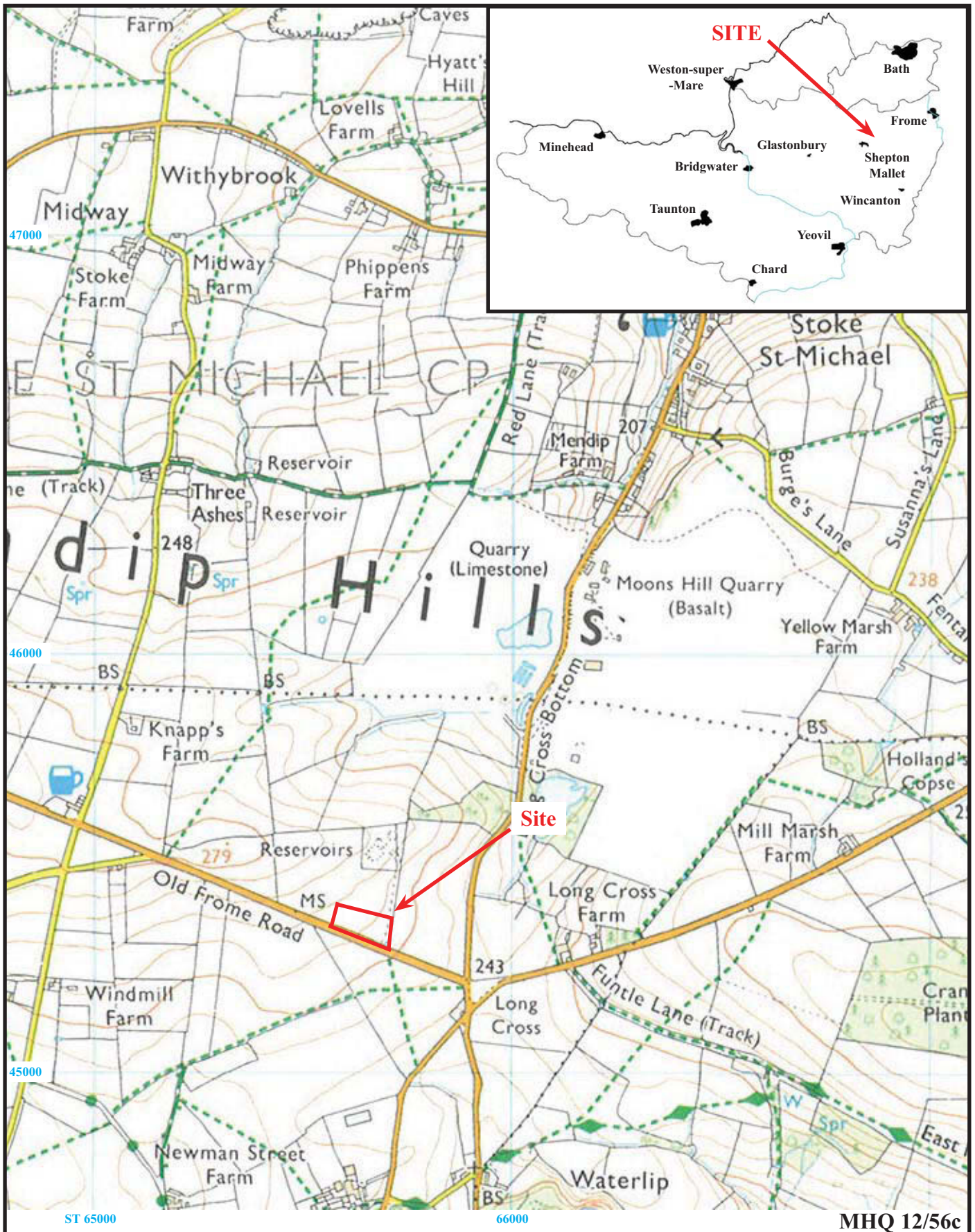
## References

- BGS, 2000, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 281, Solid and Drift Provisional Edition, Keyworth
- Dawson, T, 2014a, 'Land at Moons Hill Quarry, Stoke St Michael, Somerset: An archaeological desk-based assessment', Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 12/56a, Reading
- Dawson, T, 2014b, 'Land at Moons Hill Quarry, Stoke St Michael, Somerset, Geophysical Survey (Magnetic) Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 12/56b, Reading
- Margary, I D, 1955, *Roman Roads in Britain: Vol. 1. South of the Foss Way-Bristol Channel*, London
- NPPF 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Government, London
- Webster, C (ed), 2007, *The Archaeology of South West England: South West Archaeological Research Framework*, Somerset County Council, Taunton

**APPENDIX 1: Trench details**

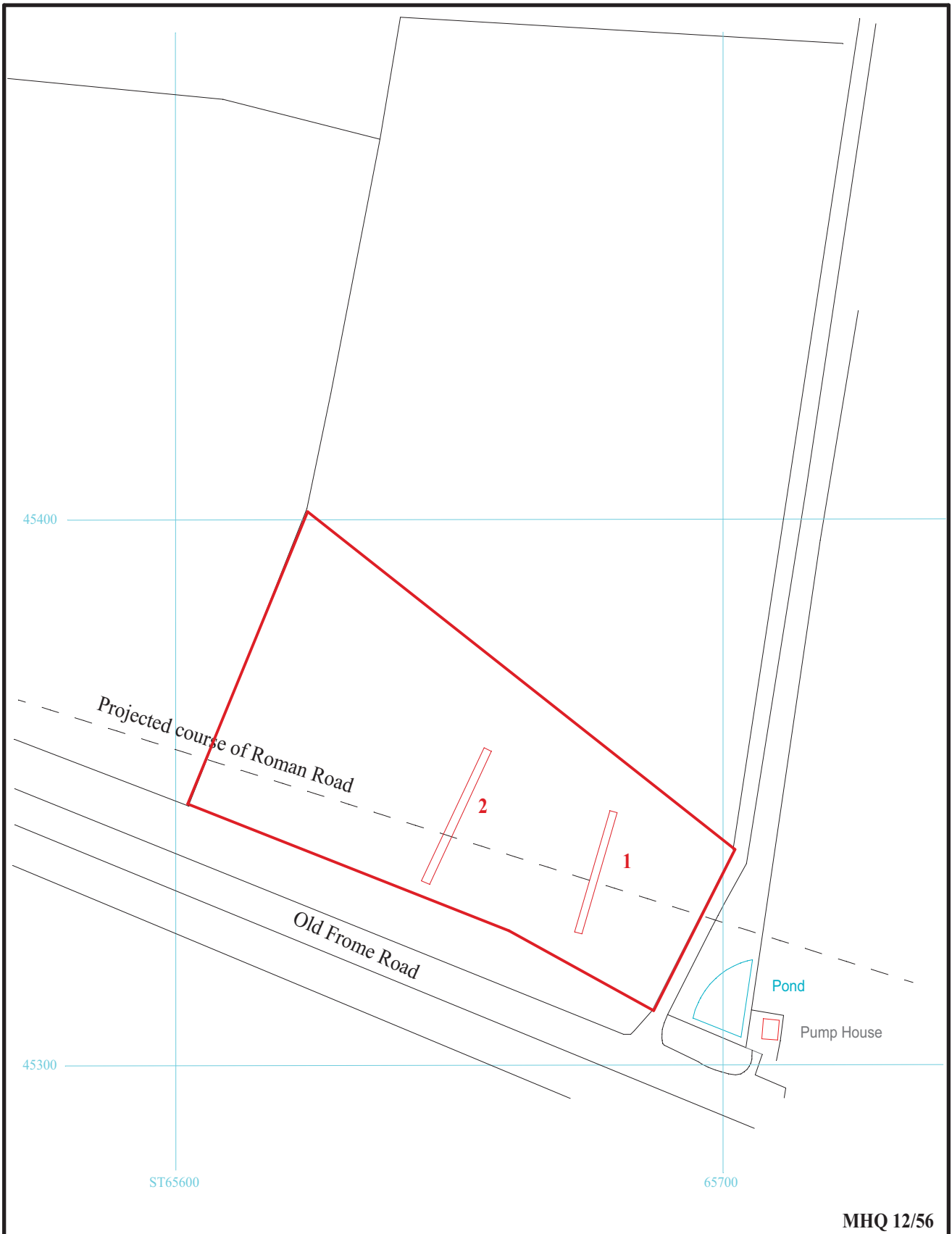
<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	24.40	1.40	0.55	Topsoil 0-0.30m; Subsoil 0.30- 0.45m; Silty clay natural geology 0.45m+. <b>[Pl. 1]</b>
2	26.00	1.40	0.40	Topsoil 0-0.20, Subsoil 0.20- 0.30; Silty clay natural geology0.40m+ Modern land drains <b>[Pl. 2]</b>





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Figure 1. Location of site within Doultling and Somerset.

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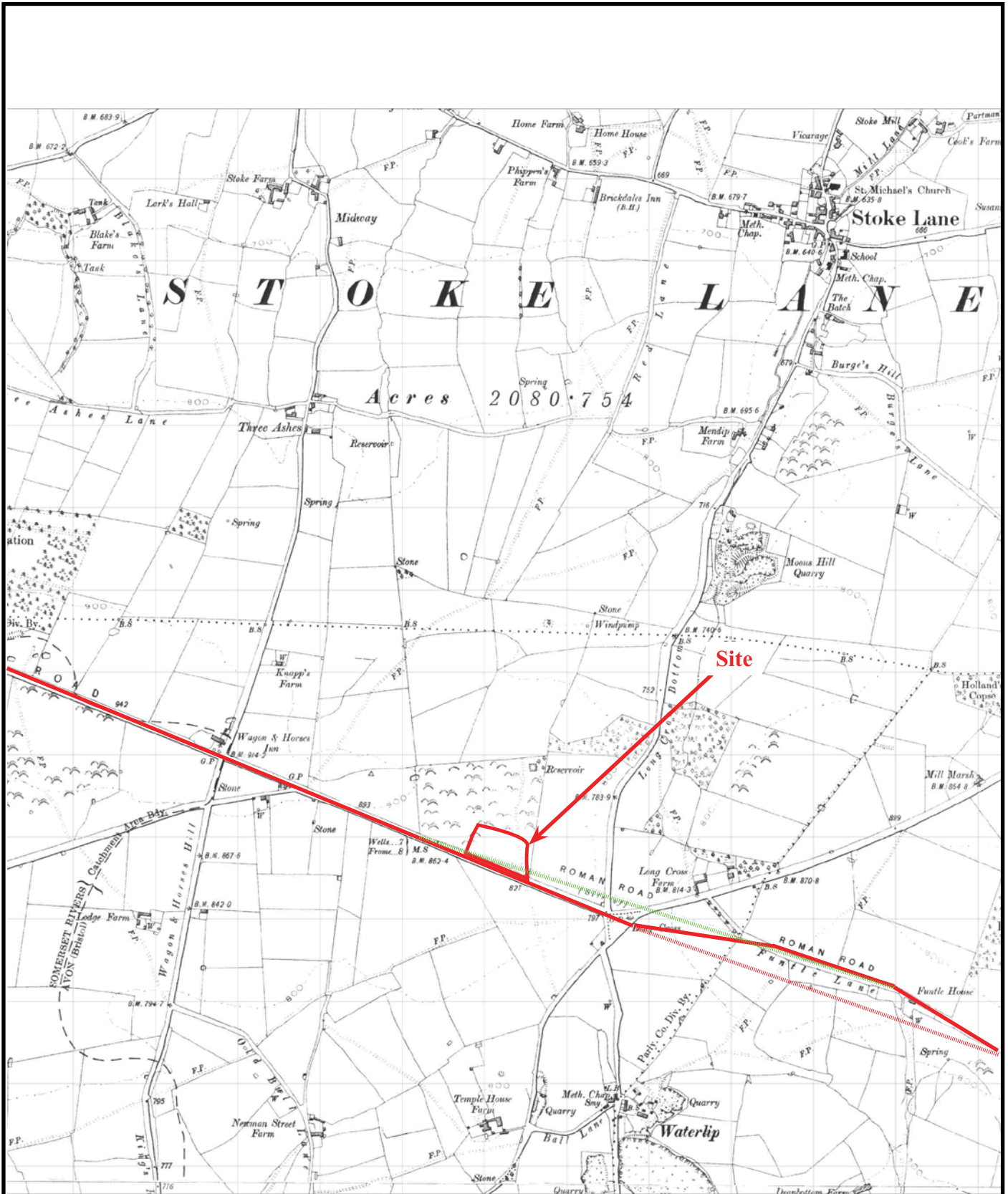
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Figure 2. Location of evaluation trenches.



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Figure 3. Roman road projection from Ordnance Survey, 1904, and two possible re-interpretations. Not to scale





Plate 1. Trench 1 looking north east, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 2. Trench 2 looking north east, Scales: 2m and 1m.

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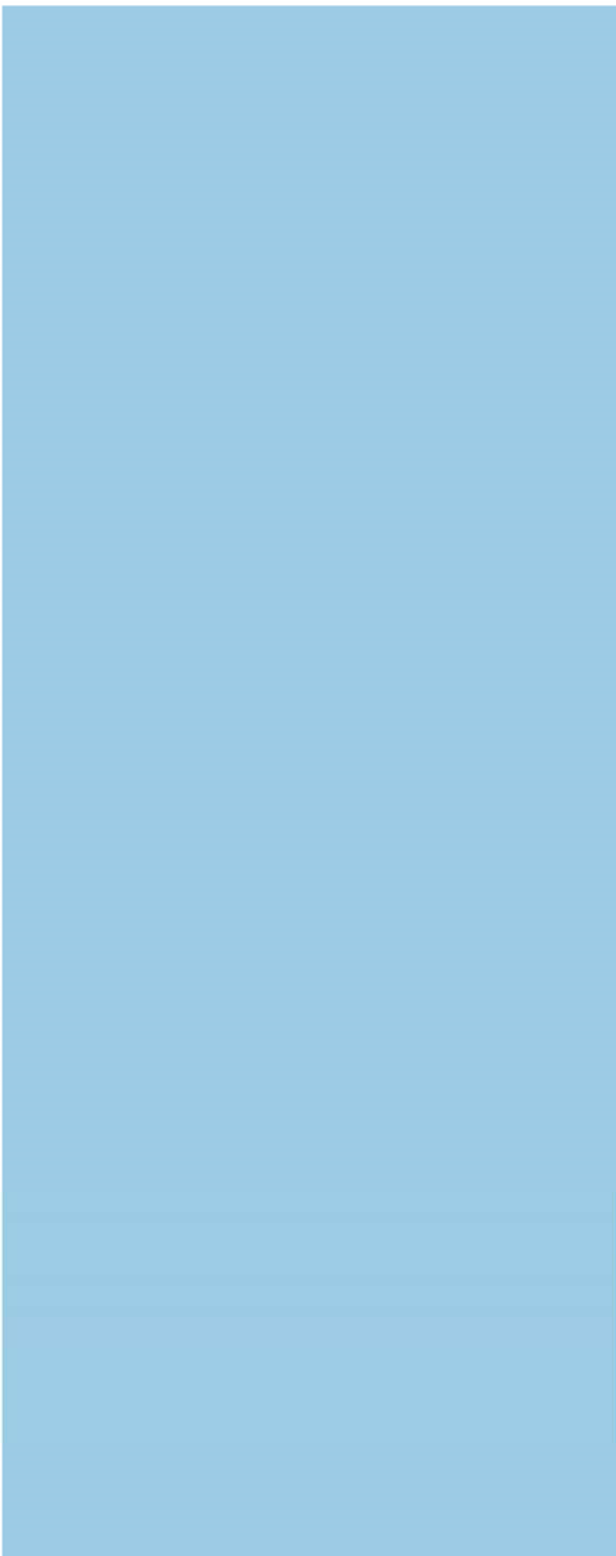
Plates 1 and 2

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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





**TVAS (South West),  
Unit 21 Apple Business Centre,  
Frobisher Way, Taunton,  
Somerset, TA2 6BB**

**Tel: 01823 288 284  
Fax: 01823 272 462  
Email: [southwest@tvas.co.uk](mailto:southwest@tvas.co.uk)  
Web: [www.tvas.co.uk](http://www.tvas.co.uk)**