

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

**Gorvin Farm, Woolsery,  
Bideford, Devon**

**Archaeological Evaluation**

**by Andy Weale**

**Site Code: GFW 13/226**

**(SS 2887 1961)**

# **Proposed Wind Turbine, Gorvin Farm, Woolsey, Bideford, Devon**

**An Archaeological Evaluation**

**Mosscliff Environmental Ltd**

by Andrew Weale  
Thames Valley Archaeological Services  
Ltd

Site Code GFW  
13/226

**February 2015**

## Summary

**Site name:** Gorvin Farm, Woolsery, Bideford, Devon

**Grid reference:** SS 2887 1961

**Site activity:** Evaluation

**Date and duration of project:** 4th to 6th February 2015

**Project manager:** Andrew Weale

**Site supervisor:** Andrew Weale

**Site code:** GFW 13/226

**Area of site:** c. 1.02ha

**Summary of results:** The evaluation confirmed the presence of features suggested by the geophysical survey but showed none of them to be of archaeological significance. The geophysical anomalies in the area of trench 1 were not found. In trenches 2 and 3 it appeared that the archaeological features matched up well with the geophysical survey but were of no great age. The large pit in trench 4 was undated but appeared to be a large quarry pit that was backfilled with a loose stone. Trench 5 only contained natural geology of clay with banded of stone crossing the trench from west to east and these appeared to correspond with slight west to east trends with the geophysical survey.

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, South West in Taunton and will be deposited at The Museum of Barnstable and North Devon in due course

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# **Proposed Wind Turbine, Govin Farm, Woolsery, Bideford, Devon An Archaeological Evaluation**

by Andrew Weale

**Report 13/226c**

## **Introduction**

Planning permission has been sought from Torridge District Council for the installation of two 11kW wind turbines and associated services at Gorvin Farm, Woolsery, near Bideford, Devon (SS 2887 1961) (Fig. 1) (ref: 1/0647/2014/FUL). The work was commissioned by Ms Lucy Boulton of Mosscliff Environmental Ltd, The Innovation Centre, University of Exeter Campus, Exeter, Devon, EX4 4RN.

As a consequence of the possibility of archaeological deposits existing on the site which may be damaged or destroyed by development, a geophysical survey was undertaken (Dawson 2014) to better inform the planning process and to permit a targeting strategy for subsequent trial trench evaluation. Ms Anna Dick, Archaeological Officer with Devon County Council Historic Environment Team subsequently asked for an archaeological evaluation by trial trench to be undertaken in support of the planning application and has prepared a brief for the works (ARCH/DM/TO.22258).

The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Weale and Nick Dawson between 4th–6th of February 2015 and the site code is KLV15-05. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services and will be deposited with The Museum of Barnstable and North Devon in due course with accession number NDDMS2015.1. The digital archive and report will be deposited with the ADS.

## **Location, topography and geology**

Gorvin Farm is c. 4.3 km west of the focus of the settlement of Woolfardisworthy or Woolsery in the Torridge district of North Devon and situated in the neck of the Hartland peninsula. Bideford is the nearest town. The proposed site for the two wind turbines is c.400m south-west of the farmyard (Fig. 2). A 145m long cable would link the western turbine to that nearer the farm, which would in turn be linked by a 390m cable to an outbuilding close to the centre of the central farm complex, crossing two fields (Fig. 2). Each turbine base would require the excavation of a 5.3m square trench to a depth of 1.05m.

The greater part of the proposal site (Fig. 1) is set on a west to east ridge with a maximum height of 182m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). Both fields are currently pasture bounded by mixed hedges over banks of stone

and earth with a worn earth and rubble track linking the gate between the fields to the farmyard to the north-east. There are open fields to the north, east and south of the site, the latter separated from it by the road between Summerwell Farm and Gorvin Cross, but the area to its west is dominated by a conifer plantation. The underlying solid geology comprises Crackington Formation carboniferous sedimentary sandstone (BGS 1980).

## **Archaeological background**

A desk-based assessment has highlighted the presence of a number of heritage assets in the region of the proposal site, several of which are Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Listed Buildings (Tabor 2013). In summary, the site lies within a rich Bronze Age monumental landscape with groups or alignments of often well-preserved round barrows on Welsford and Bursdon Moors, as well as in the Gorvin area itself. It has been suggested that there may originally have been significantly more which have been destroyed (Bayer 1996, 20-1). Circular enclosures on Welsford and Summerwell Moors are likely to be broadly contemporary (Dyer and Manning 2000, 3). The site itself is located in a field which contains a round barrow of presumed Bronze Age date, west of the proposed development. Further similar barrows are present within the adjacent fields to the north, east and south with still more in the wider area. It is considered possible that contemporary occupation sites, unrecorded levelled round barrows or other non-monumental funerary deposits may lie in within the vicinity. Aerial photography has highlighted the presence of crop or parch marks in the same field as the proposed turbines which may indicate the presence of buried archaeological features.

Field boundaries comprising earth and stone banks around Gorvin Farm, which itself is documented from medieval times with physical remains from post-medieval times, may have their origins prior to the 19th century when they were first mapped in detail.

A geophysical survey (Dawson 2014) of the locations of the proposed wind turbine bases and cable trench identified several magnetic anomalies, two of which may be archaeological in origin. One anomaly has the potential to represent a 'ring ditch' – the remains of a funerary barrow. The adjacent anomaly was interpreted as a possible pit. The remaining anomalies are likely to be agricultural in origin.

After the geophysical survey was carried and in consultation with Ms Lucy Boulton of Mosscliff Environmental Ltd, Anna Dick and Steve Reed, Archaeological Officers with Devon County Council Historic Environment Team, the area of the possible ring ditch was taken out of the area of the project so as to preserve it *in situ*. This part of the geophysical survey area is now outside the area of the planning application.

## **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. The general objectives of the project were to verify the results of the geophysical survey.

The specific research aims of this project were:

- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present;
- to determine if an prehistoric deposits are present;
- to determine if Medieval deposits are present; and
- to determine the impact of the development on the archaeological resource.

It was proposed to dig five trenches, each 20m long and 1.6m wide. The trenches were positioned to target the geophysical anomalies as discovered by the geophysical survey in the areas of the wind turbines, cable run and service track, but, as noted above, avoiding one anomaly thought potentially to represent a ploughed out round barrow ring ditch. A contingency of 20m of trench was included should this be required to clarify the nature of the initial findings.

The topsoil, and subsoil were removed by a 360° machine. A toothless ditching bucket was used to expose archaeologically sensitive levels, under constant archaeological supervision. Where archaeological or palaeoenvironmental remains were exposed, these were cleaned by hand investigated, recorded and sampled.

As a minimum, small discrete features were fully excavated. Larger discrete features were half sectioned (50% excavated), and long linear features excavated to sample 20% of their length. A programme of environmental sampling was to take place should sufficient well stratified subsoil deposits be located. Metal detectors were used to enhance the recovery of metal finds. This work was to be carried out in a manner which would not compromise the integrity of archaeological features or deposits which might warrant preservation *in situ*, or might better be excavated under conditions pertaining to full excavation.

## **Results**

Most trenches were excavated as intended (Fig. 2) after their positions were plotted by GPS, but Trench 1 was sub-divided into Trench 1a and Trench 1b as the track was in use as a store at the time of the evaluation and on closer examination appeared to be made up of local stone over 0.50m thick. The trenches varied from 11.03 to 20.68m long and between 0.32m and 0.48m deep. All trenches were 1.8m wide.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1. A complete list of features investigated forms Appendix 2.

#### Trench 1a

Trench 1a was aligned from south-east to north-west, 11.03m long and 0.44m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil which was 0.21m thick beneath which was a layer of subsoil up to 0.23m thick. Beneath the subsoil was a yellow brown clay with occasional stone fragments which appeared to be natural geology. No archaeological features or artefacts were present within trench 1a.

#### Trench 1b

Trench 1b was aligned from south-east to north-west, 11.25m long and 0.34m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil which was 0.25m thick beneath which was a thin layer of subsoil up to 0.09m thick. Beneath the subsoil was a yellow brown clay with occasional stone fragments which appeared to be natural geology. The natural geology was disturbed near the trackway by what appeared to be a root system. No archaeological features or artefacts were present within trench 1b.

#### Trench 2 Figs 3 and 5; Pls 1, 2 and 5

Trench 2 was aligned west–east and was 19.44m long and 0.36m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil which was 0.25m thick beneath which was a 0.11m of subsoil. Beneath the subsoil was a yellow brown clay with patches of brown clay and occasional stone fragments which was considered natural geology.

At 3m from the west end of the trench cutting into the natural geology was Ditch 1 which was linear in plan aligned roughly south to north, 0.45m wide and a maximum of 0.19m deep. Ditch 1 contained a mid red brown silty clay (52) with occasional stone fragments but no datable artefacts were recovered from it. Some 3.5m to the east of Ditch 1 was Ditch 3 that was also roughly aligned south to north 1.05m wide and 0.24m deep. Ditch 3 was filled with a mid red brown silty clay (55) with occasional stone fragments but no datable artefacts. Ditch 3 was cut by Service Trench 2 that was aligned SSW–NNE and contained two fills (53 and 54) as well as a modern plastic pipe at 0.85m below current grass level. Ditch 1 appears to correspond with an anomaly found during the geophysical survey as do both Ditch 3 and Service Trench 2 (Fig. 6). A further, fainter, anomaly was not detected in the trench.

#### Trench 3 Figs 3 and 5; Pls 3, 6 and 7

Trench 3 was aligned N - S and was 20.17m long and 0.32m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil 0.20m thick above 0.12m of subsoil. Beneath the subsoil was a yellow brown clay with patches of brown clay and occasional stone fragments which was considered natural geology.

At the south-east corner of the trench heading north-west for 3.5m was a modern service trench that appeared to contain a plastic pipe. This area of the trench was not machined down to natural to preserve the modern service. The service trench at its northern end cut Ditch 7 that was aligned west to east, was seen to be 0.50m wide and 0.14m deep but not fully excavated. Ditch 7 contained a mid red brown silty clay (59) with occasional stone fragments but no datable artefacts were recovered from it. Directly to the north of Ditch 7 was Ditch 6 which was also aligned west to east, 0.98m wide and 0.11m deep. Ditch 6 contained a mid blue grey clay (58) with occasional stone: again no datable artefacts were recovered.

A further 1.5m to the north of Ditch 6 was Ditch 5 which was also aligned west to east and was 1.30m wide and 0.13m deep. Ditch 5 was filled with a mid red brown silty clay (57) with occasional stone fragments but no datable artefacts were recovered from it. In the subsoil above Ditch 5 and covering it was a layer of modern blue plastic sacks. Some 6m to the north of ditch 5, pit 4 was circular in plan, 0.55m in diameter and 0.08m deep. Pit 4 contained a mid red brown silty clay (56) with occasional stone fragments and charcoal but no datable artefacts. Ditches 7 and 6 appear to correspond with an anomaly found during the geophysical survey though this is less clear for Ditch 5.

#### Trench 4 Figs 4 and 5; Pls 4 and 8

Trench 4 was aligned west - east and was 20.68m long and 0.38m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil which was 0.29m thick beneath which was a 0.09m of subsoil. Beneath the subsoil was a yellow brown clay with patches of brown clay and moderate stone fragments which was considered natural geology . Occupying most of the centre of the trench, and cut into the natural clay, was pit 9. This appeared to be roughly rectangular in plan but its full extent was not seen in the evaluation but appeared to be over 3.60m long and 5m wide. Pit 9 was filled with which appeared to be unconsolidated stone rubble and a mid brown red silty clay (61). A hand dug sondage was excavated within pit 9 at the south east corner to a depth of 0.84m below topsoil at which point it became unstable. A machine dug sondage was also excavated to the west, to a depth of 1.6m onto natural yellow clay and this was recorded from above as the fill proved to be unstable. Neither of the sondages produced any datable artefacts. Pit 9 appeared to correspond well with an anomaly found by the geophysical survey.



## Trench 5

Trench 2 was aligned south – north and was 20.07m long and 0.48m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil which was 0.35m thick beneath which was a 0.12m of subsoil. Beneath the subsoil was a yellow brown clay with patches of brown clay and bands of stone which was considered natural geology. No archaeological features or artefacts were present within trench 5 and the targeted geophysical anomaly was not identified.

## **Conclusion**

The evaluation confirmed the presence on site of features suggested by the geophysical survey and desk top assessment. The geophysical anomalies in the area of trench 1 were not found and may be part of the stone trackway which is currently being used as a store and a rutted trackway replacing it to the west. In trench 2 it appeared that the archaeological features matched up well with the geophysical survey (Dawson 2014), however one of the anomalies was caused by a modern service trench. The other two were shallow ditches that may represent the course of the track shown on Ordnance Survey maps from 1885 to 1954 and gone by 1986, but not shown on the tithe map of 1846 (Tabor 2013). Likewise the ditches in trench 3 appear to correspond with the geophysical anomalies as well as a field boundary shown on the OS maps from 1885 to 1954 and gone by 1986, but like the track, not shown on the tithe map of 1846 (Tabor 2013). They appear to carry on within the geophysical survey to the north of the western turbine base as a double linear feature. The presence of plastic agricultural sacks within the subsoil above ditch 5 may also suggest that these ditches were backfilled or levelled only recently. The large pit in trench 4 was undated and appeared to be a large quarry pit that was backfilled with a loose stone. Trench 5 only contained natural geology of clay with banded of stone crossing the trench from west to east and these appeared to correspond with slight west to east trends with the geophysical survey.

Based on these results, the proposed development does not appear liable to damage or destroy any significant archaeological features.

## **References**

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- BGS, 2001, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 281, Solid and Drift Provisional Edition, Keyworth
- Dawson, T, 2014, 'Proposed Wind Turbine Site, Gorvin Farm, Woolsery, Bideford, Devon, Geophysical Survey (Magnetic)', Thames Valley Archaeological Services unpubl rep, **13/226b**, Reading
- Dyer, M and Manning, P, 2000, 'Archaeological Assessment of Hartland Forest Golf Club and Marshall Farm, near Woolfardisworthy, North Devon', unpubl client report, Exeter
- Tabor, R, 2013, Proposed wind turbine site at Gorvin Farm, Woolsery, Bideford, Devon, Archaeological Desk-based Assessment, Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 13/226, Reading

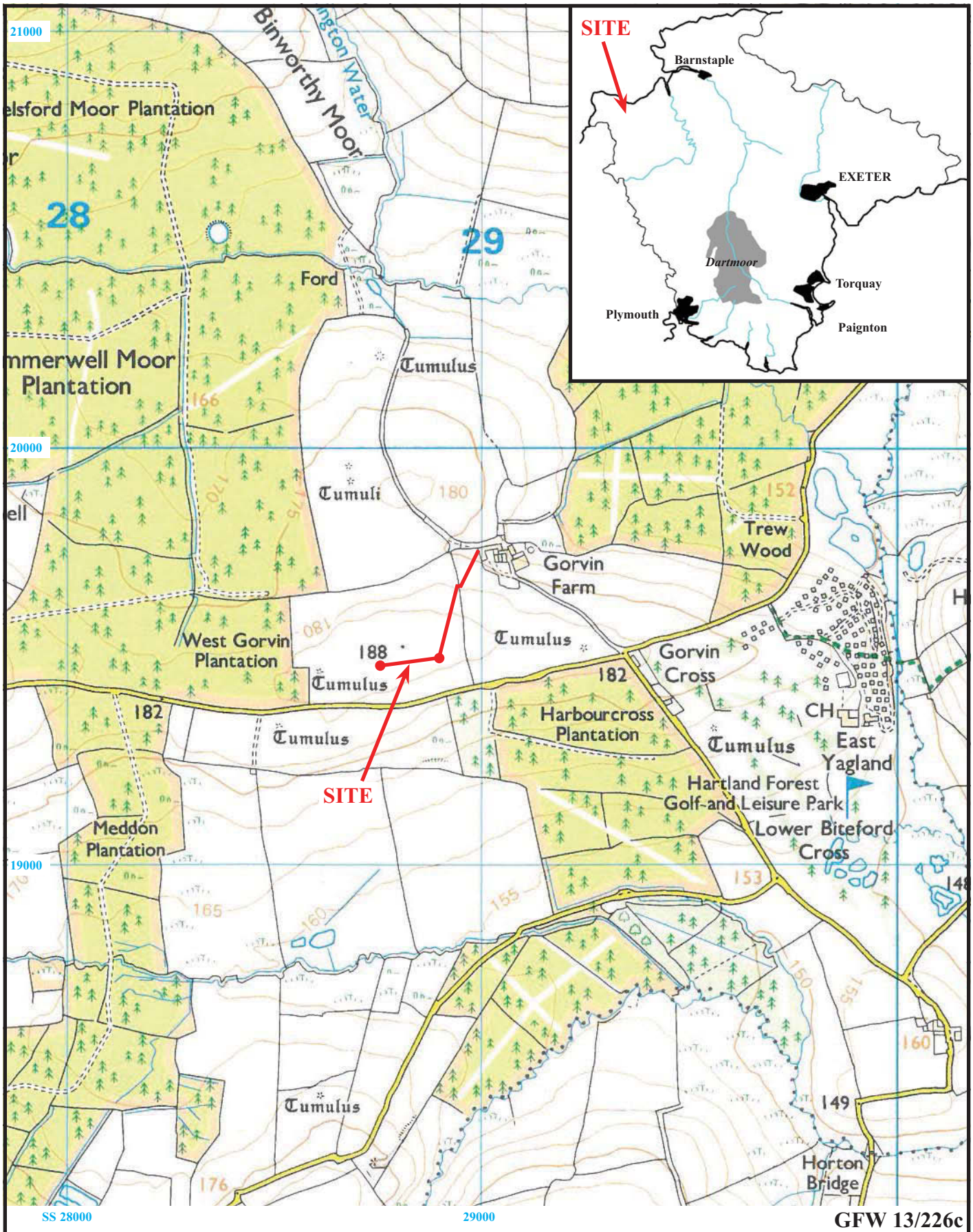
**APPENDIX 1: Trench details**

0m at South, West or South West end

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1a	11.25	1.80	0.34	Topsoil 0-0.25m subsoil 0.25-0.34m yellow brown clay natural geology 0.34m+
1b	11/03	1.80	0.43	Topsoil 0-0.21m subsoil 0.21-0.43m yellow brown clay natural geology 0.43m+
2	19.44	1.80	0.36	Topsoil 0-0.25m subsoil 0.25-0.36m yellow brown clay natural geology 0.36m+. Ditch 1, Ditch 3 <b>[Pls 1, 2, 5]</b>
3	20.12	1.80	0.32	Topsoil 0-0.20m subsoil 0.20-0.32m yellow brown clay natural geology 0.32m+ Pit 4, Ditches 5, 6 and 7 <b>[Pls 3, 6, 7]</b>
4	20.68	1.80	0.38	Topsoil 0-0.29m subsoil 0.29-0.38m yellow brown clay natural geology 0.34m+ Pit 9 <b>[Pls 4, 8]</b>
5	20.07	1.80	0.48	Topsoil 0-0.36m subsoil 0.36-0.48m yellow brown clay natural geology 0.48m+

**APPENDIX 2: Feature details**

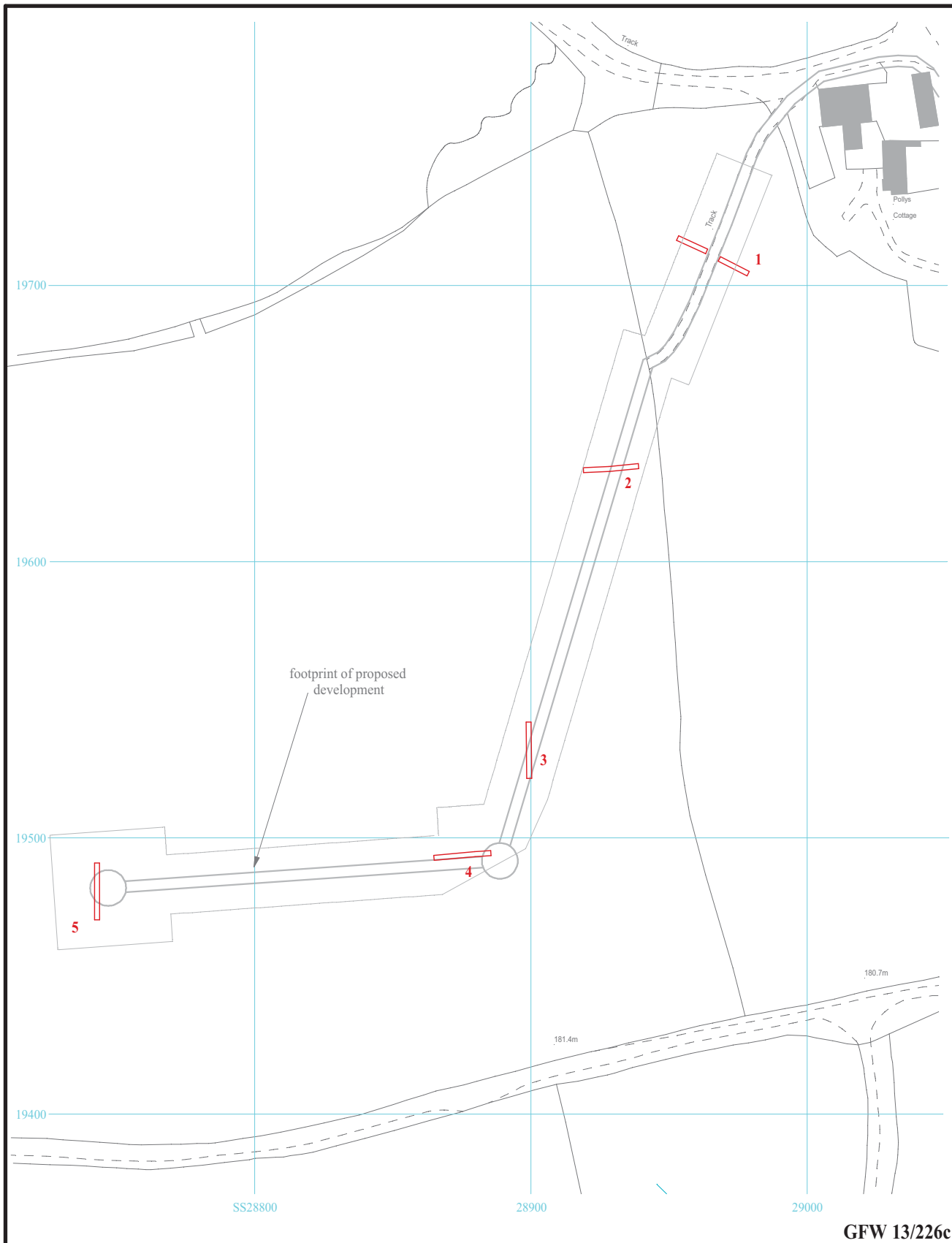
<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
2	1	52	Ditch	Victorian/ Modern	Mapping
2	3	55	Ditch	Victorian/ Modern	Mapping
3	4	56	Pit	Undated	None
3	5	57	Ditch	Modern	Mapping
3	6	58	Ditch	Victorian/ Modern	Mapping
3	7	59	Ditch	Victorian/ Modern	Mapping
4	9	61	Quarry Pit	Undated	None



**Proposed Wind Turbine Site, Gorvin Farm,  
Woolsery, Bideford, Devon, 2014  
Archaeological Evaluation**

Figure 1. Location of site at Gorvin Farm within Devon.

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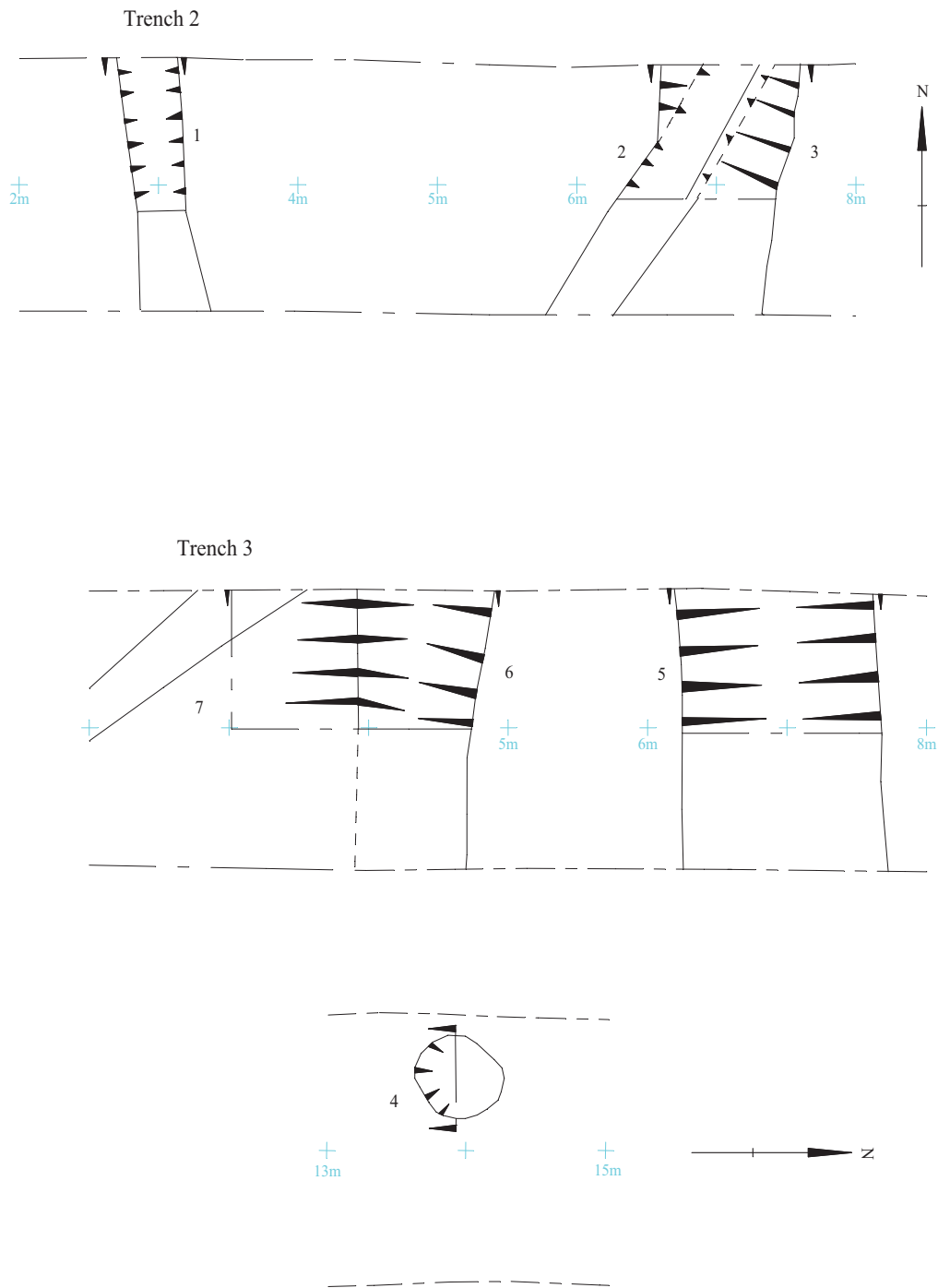


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Figure 2 Location of trenches.



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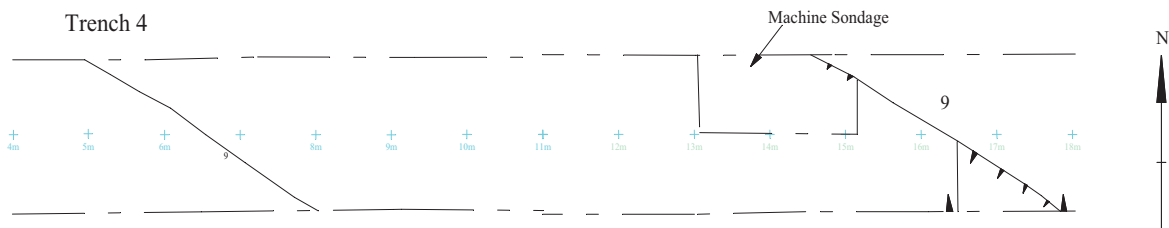
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**Proposed Wind Turbine, Gorvin Farm,  
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Figure 3. Plan of trenches.



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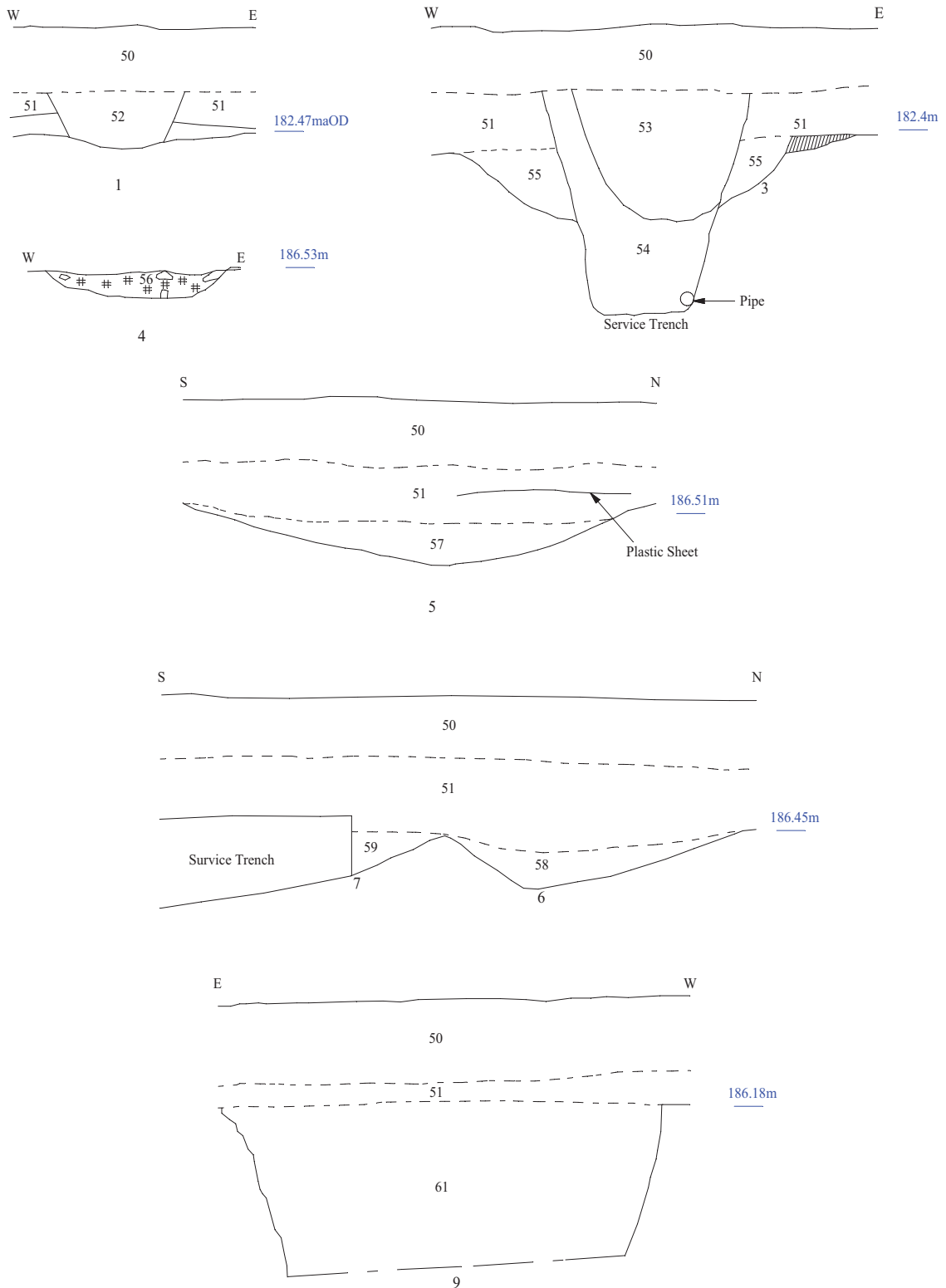
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Figure 4. Plan of Trench 4



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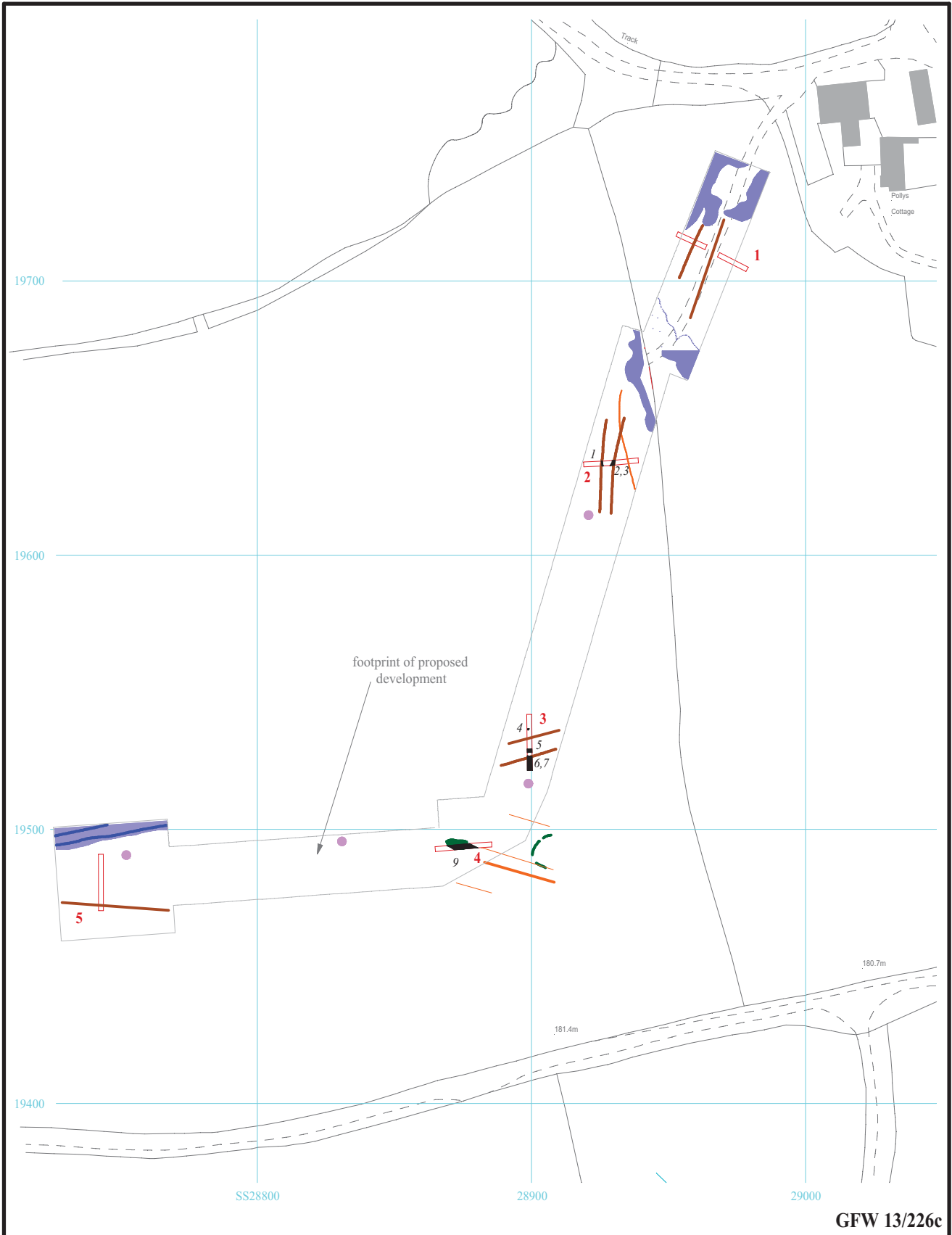
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Figure 5. Sections



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Figure 6. Location of trenches in relation to geophysical anomalies.



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



Plate 2. Trench 2, Ditch 1, looking north,  
Scales: 1m and 0.3m.



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



Plate 4. Trench 4, looking east,  
Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.

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**Proposed Wind Turbine, Gorvin Farm,  
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Plates 1 - 4.**

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Plate 5. Trench 2, Drain 2 and Ditch 3, looking north,  
Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 6. Trench 3, Pit 4, looking north,  
Scales: 0.5m and 0.1m.



Plate 7. Trench 3, Ditch 5, looking south,  
Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.



Plate 4. Trench 4, Quarry pit 9, looking east,  
Scales: horizontal 2m, vertical 1m.

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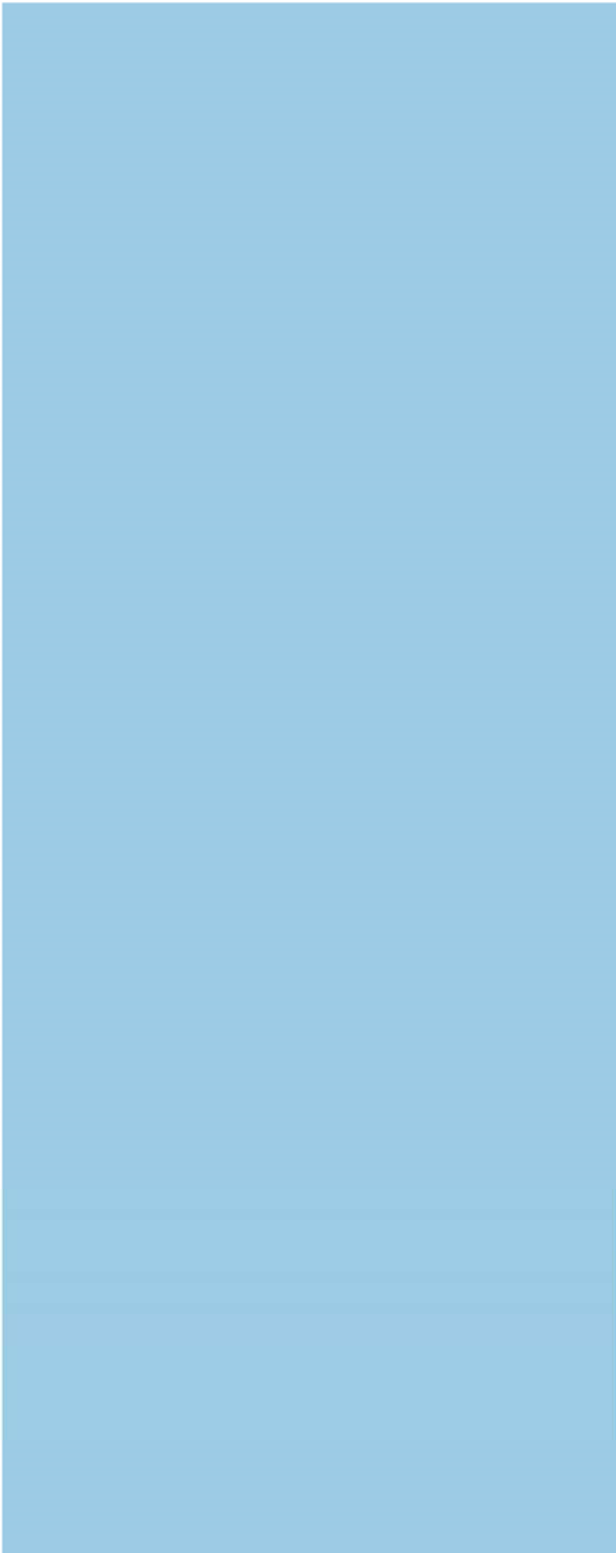
**Proposed Wind Turbine, Gorvin Farm,  
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Plates 5 - 8.**

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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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