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S O U T H W E S T

**Land at Knobsbury Lane, Writhlington,  
Radstock, Somerset**

**Archaeological Evaluation**

**by Andrew Weale**

**Site Code: SKLW15/05**

**(ST 7020 5432)**

# **Land at Knobsbury Lane, Writhlington, Radstock, Somerset**

**An Archaeological Evaluation  
for CgMs Consulting**

by Andrew Weale

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code KLV15/05

**February 2015**

## Summary

**Site name:** Land at Knobsbury Lane, Writhlington, Radstock, Somerset

**Grid reference:** ST 7020 5432

**Site activity:** Evaluation

**Date and duration of project:** 26th to 28th January 2015

**Project manager:** Andrew Weale

**Site supervisor:** Andrew Weale

**Site code:** KLV15/05

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

**Summary of results** Several linear features of Iron Age and possibly Roman date were recorded on the site, some of which corresponded with geophysical anomalies.

**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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[www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp](http://www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp).*

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 18.02.15 Steve Preston✓ 17.02.15
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# Land at Knobsbury Lane, Writhlington, Radstock, Somerset An Archaeological Evaluation

by Andrew Weale

Report 15/05

## Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out on Land at Knobsbury Lane, Writhlington, Radstock, Somerset (ST 7020 5432) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by CgMs Consulting, Newark Beacon, Beacon Hill Office Park, Cafferata Way, Newark, Nottinghamshire, NG24 2TN.

Outline planning permission has been granted (13/01709/OUT) by Bath and North East Somerset Council for residential development comprising up to 53 dwellings, together with access, and public open space adjacent to Knobsbury Lane. The consent is subject to three conditions (9-11) relating to archaeology, requiring a programme of archaeological investigation prior to the development, to take the form, initially, of a field evaluation, based on the results of which further work might be required as appropriate.

This report relates to the initial evaluation required by condition 9. The site occupies the northern half of a triangular field; the south-eastern half of which does not form part of the proposed development. 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 Bath and North East Somerset Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Richard Sermon, Senior Archaeological Officer for Bath and North East Somerset Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Weale and Nick Dawson between the 26th and 28th of January 2015 and the site code is KLV15/05. 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 lies 1km east of the town of Radstock and c.2.5km south of Peasedown St John with the Wellow Brook c. 1km to the north (Fig. 1). The western and northern boundaries are abutted by Knobsbury Lane and Frome Road (A362) respectively. The site is c. 2ha in size and lies at around 135m aOD and slopes gently from north down to the south. The site is currently under arable production, with the underlying geology shown as Jurassic Inferior Oolite Group (limestone) (BGS 2001).

## Archaeological background

Although the area surrounding Writhlington has a high potential for archaeological remains and monuments, Writhlington itself has little recorded archaeology. The A37 through Radstock follows the course of the Fosse Way, a major Roman road and Roman pottery has been found nearby.

The name Writhlington contains Old English elements, but its actual origin is unclear: it is not discussed in standard reference works (Hill 1914; Cameron, 1996; Mills 1998; Watts 2004). By analogy, it probably represents a personal name + connective particle + *tun* (estate/farm belonging to ?*Writel*). It is mentioned in Domesday Book (AD 1086) as *Writelinctone* (Williams and Martin 2002, 275) when it was held by Beorthweard and assessed at 6 hides. It had enough arable land for five plough-teams, 12 acres of meadow, 12 of scrub and 24 of pasture, and a population of 11 villagers (heads of households). The estate was valued at 100 shillings before the Conquest and £4 in 1086. Given the tiny size of the ancient parish (772 acres), it is probable the eponymous ?*Writel* was an earlier landholder.

Coal was extracted from the area from the second half of the 18th century and a number of collieries were opened in the 19th century. The ancient parish of Writhlington was split in the earlier part of the 20th century between Radstock and Kilmersdon; the proposed development site lies on the southern edge of the part formerly in Radstock.

A desk-based cartographic assessment (Morris and Brampton 2012) was carried out for the site. In summary, the archaeological potential of the site is fairly low. However, the lack of archaeological fieldwork in this area limits how conclusive that assessment can be. The field boundaries have changed only slightly from the post-medieval period. The existing hedgerows, themselves not necessarily very old, may nonetheless mark the location of medieval field divisions.

A geophysical survey (magnetic survey) was also undertaken within the site (Richardson 2014) which identified anomalies of probable and possible archaeological origin (cf Fig. 6). A linear ditch with an associated sub-circular ditch feature has been suggested to be of prehistoric origin. A former field boundary present on the 1839 Writhlington tithe map was also identified. A number of other anomalies could equally be of archaeological, geological or modern agricultural origin. The remaining anomalies are of modern or natural origin.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The aims of the evaluation will be 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;
- to assess the artefactual and environmental potential of the archaeological deposits encountered;
- to provide further information on the archaeological potential of the site to enable the archaeological implications of the proposed development to be assessed;
- to assess the impact of previous land use on the site; and
- to inform formulation of a strategy to avoid or mitigate impacts of the proposed development on surviving archaeological remains

A total of 8 trenches, each 25m long and 2.0m wide, were proposed to be excavated across the site, partly targeting geophysical anomalies and partly randomly sampling 'blank' areas.

The topsoil, and subsoil were removed by a 180° back hoe (JCB) 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 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 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**

All trenches were excavated as intended but the presence of buried services caused several adjustments to their positions (Fig. 3). When no features were present at all in Trench 7 a further trench (9) was excavated at right angles to Trench 7 to try to locate the features shown on the geophysical survey. This was done after consultation with the council archaeological officer and project consultant..

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 1 (Figs 4 and 5; Pls 1 and 5)

Trench 1 was aligned NW–SE and was 24.2m long and 0.35m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil 0.29m thick beneath which was a thin layer of subsoil up to 0.07m thick. Beneath the subsoil was a crushed limestone natural geology with occasional clay patches. Cut into the natural geology, 21m from the north-west end of the trench, was ditch 1. It was linear in plan, aligned roughly north–south, 0.70m wide and 0.30m deep. It contained a single fill (52), a red brown silty clay with occasional limestone fragments with four sherds of Iron Age pottery, 2 fragments of animal bone and a single fragment of aerated black clinker. Ditch 1 appears to correspond to a linear geophysical anomaly.

#### Trench 2

Trench 2 was aligned WNW–ESE and was 23.70m long and 0.34m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil which was 0.28m thick above 0.05m of subsoil. Beneath the subsoil was a crushed limestone natural geology with occasional clay patches. No archaeological features or artefacts were recorded. The linear geophysical anomaly was not observed.

#### Trench 3 (Figs 4 and 5; Pls 3 and 6)

Trench 3 was aligned N–S and was 23.40m long and 0.33m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil which was 0.27m thick beneath which was 0.05m of subsoil. Beneath the subsoil was a crushed limestone natural geology with occasional clay patches, and cut into the natural was Ditch 2. This was linear in plan aligned west to east, 0.95m wide and 0.18m deep. It contained a single fill (53), a red brown silty clay with occasional limestone fragments with a single sherd of Iron Age or Roman pottery. Ditch 2 did not show as a geophysical anomaly.

#### Trench 4

Trench 4 was aligned SW–NE and was 26.76m long and 0.33m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil which was 0.28m thick beneath which was a 0.09m of subsoil. Beneath the subsoil was a crushed limestone natural geology with occasional clay patches. No archaeological features or artefacts were recorded.

#### Trench 5

Trench 5 was aligned NW–SE and was 27.84m long and 0.48m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil which was 0.35m thick beneath which was a 0.08m of subsoil. Beneath the subsoil was a crushed limestone natural geology with occasional clay patches. No archaeological features or artefacts were present within trench 5.

#### Trench 6 (Figs 4 and 5; Pls 3, 7 and 8)

Trench 2 was aligned WNW–ESE and was 26.0m long and 0.60m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil which a maximum of was 0.32m thick above a maximum of 0.28m of subsoil. Beneath the subsoil was a crushed limestone natural geology with occasional clay patches. Cut into the natural geology were Ditches 3, 4 and 5. Ditch 3 was aligned roughly NNE to SSE 0.50m wide and 0.16m deep and was filled with a red brown silty clay (54) with occasional limestone fragments. Fill 54 contained a single sherd of Iron Age pottery, five fragments of animal bone and a single fragment of fine pink baked clay. Parallel with ditch 3 was ditch 4 which was 0.50m wide and 0.19m deep. Ditch 4 was filled with red brown silty clay (55) with occasional limestone fragments. Fill 55 did not contain any artefacts nor was there an observable relationship between ditches 3 and 4. To the east of ditches 3 and 4 was ditch 5 that was sinuous in plan roughly 3.40m long, 0.40m wide and 0.08m deep. Ditch 5 contained (56) a light red brown silty clay with occasional limestone fragments but contained no artefacts. Ditches 3 and 4 were roughly aligned on a geophysical anomaly but no anomaly corresponded with ditch 5.

#### Trench 7

Trench 7 was aligned SW–NE and was 25.78m long and 0.37m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil which was a maximum of 0.29m thick beneath which was a maximum of 0.08m of subsoil. Beneath the subsoil was a crushed limestone natural with occasional clay patches. No archaeological features or artefacts were recorded. The geophysical anomalies shown in the geophysical survey were not observed within this trench.

#### Trench 8

Trench 8 was aligned W–E and was 24.62m long, and a maximum of 0.31m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil which was a maximum of 0.24m thick beneath which was a maximum of 0.07m of subsoil. Beneath the subsoil was a crushed limestone natural geology with occasional clay patches. No archaeological features or artefacts were recorded.

#### Trench 9 (Pl. 4)

Trench 9 was excavated at right angles to trench 7 to try to locate a feature shown on the geophysical survey. It was aligned SE to NW and was 13.16m long, and a maximum of 0.40m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil which was a maximum of 0.28m thick beneath which was a maximum of 0.12m of subsoil. Beneath the subsoil was a crushed limestone natural geology with occasional clay patches. No archaeological features or artefacts were present within trench 9. The geophysical anomalies shown in the geophysical survey were not observed.



## **Finds**

### *Pottery* by Richard Tabor

A total assemblage of six sherds weighing 29g was distributed over three contexts. There were no sherds with diagnostic morphological traits, however the fabrics and finishes were sufficient to allow periodization of some sherds with a high level of confidence. They were divided into four fabric types:

- O1** Moderately hard, moderately well fired, grey/black fabric with similarly coloured interior and buff red to black exterior surfaces. Abundant inclusions of ooliths (<1.5mm) and subangular and subrounded fragments of limestone (<3mm).
- S1** Moderately hard, moderately well fired, grey to black fabric with buff red to black interior and buff pinkish red exterior surfaces. Moderate fragments of plate (<4mm) and moderate to abundant inclusions of crushed shell (<1.5mm) and subangular and subrounded fragments of limestone (<3mm).
- S2** Friable, moderately well fired, fabric. Buff pink throughout. Moderate inclusions of poorly sorted plate shell (<3mm), sparse subrounded fragments of limestone (<2mm) and rare brown iron oxides (<1mm).
- Q** Hard, well-fired, grey fabric with pink margins and dark grey surfaces. Includes moderate well-sorted fine clear quartz (<1mm).

A group of four sherds, one in oolitic fabric O1 and three in shelly fabric S1, all date to the Middle or later Iron Age and are likely to derive from fossiliferous Jurassic limestone. Sherds with abundant ooliths have been treated as earlier Iron Age at South Cadbury (Williams and Woodward 2000, 259) but also occur in a later Iron Age bowl type BC3 (Woodward 2000, 340) and by a later decorated 'saucepan' type PB1.1 (Tabor in prep). A similar fabric has been recorded towards the western end of the Mendip Hills at Dibble's Farm but it did not occur in diagnostic sherds on a site which spanned the Iron Age (Morris 1989, 30).

Jurassic fossil plate shell is typical of the Late Bronze Age as well as the Iron Age in Somerset but the inclusions in sherds from the present site are smaller than those characterising the earlier period; the crushed shell is particularly prevalent during the Middle Iron Age at South Cadbury (Woodward 2000; Tabor in prep). Similar fabrics have formed relatively small parts of other Iron Age assemblages near or on the Mendips (Morris 1989, 30; Woodward 2008, 43).

The single quartzitic sherd might equally date to the Late Iron Age or the Roman period.

### *Other baked clay* by Richard Tabor

A single fragment of fine pink baked clay weighing 1g and including moderate well sorted very fine clear quartz was collected from (54). It was not possible to determine anything further of its character. A single fragment of baked clay was recovered from sampling. This fragment weighs less than 1g and has no inclusions. It was collected from sample <2> context (56). It was not possible to determine anything further of its character.

### *Animal Bone* by Richard Tabor

A total of fifteen bone fragments weighing 49g were distributed over three contexts. Of two pieces from (52) sufficient remained of one to identify that it was from a lower limb of a sheep/goat. The fragment was slightly weathered in contrast to the unabraded condition of a smaller, unidentifiable fragment. All of the eight fragments from (54) show some signs of weathering. One piece was from an upper limb bone of large mammal. A small sheep/goat premolar tooth was probably from a young adult. Three of the pieces from this context were recovered during the sampling process. The two remaining fragments were recovered from sampling of context (56). These fragments are abraded and not of significant size to be identified further.

### *Residue of burning* by Richard Tabor

A single fragment of very aerated black clinker, weighing 1g, was recovered from ditch 1(52). Two further fragments of the same type, weighing 2g, were recovered from the sampling of ditch 3(54).

### *Coal* by Aidan Colyer

A single small fragment of coal weighing less than 1g was recovered during sampling of ditch 3(54). This fragment is too small to allow further identification.

### *Sieved samples* by Joanna Pine

Two samples were taken. sample <1> was taken from ditch 3( 54) and sSample <2> was taken from ditch 5(56). The samples were floated and sieved through a 0.25mm mesh. No charcoal or burnt seed remains were recovered.

## **Conclusion**

Archaeological features have been shown to exist on the site, mostly in the form of ditches. The pottery recovered from these ditches appears to be exclusively Iron Age or Iron Age and possibly Roman. The geophysical anomalies shown in the geophysical survey could be shown to be present as archaeological features cut into the underlying natural formations in trenches 1 and 6, however those features that were shown in the geophysical survey in the area covered by trenches 2, 7 and 9 were not present as features cut into the natural

geology. In the case of the circular feature near trench 7, the initial trench location appears to have been slightly misplaced due to concerns over buried services, but an additional trench (9) also failed to locate it. This trench was intensively examined to try and locate the circular feature, apart from occasional occurrence of burnt limestone within the subsoil no cut feature was located. Additionally features were observed within trenches 3 and 6 that did not appear on the geophysical survey.

The ditch in Trench 1 contained the highest quantity of pottery on the site, but still only 4 sherds. It may be considered to belong to the Iron Age. The single piece of clinker in this feature may be intrusive (post-medieval/modern) but there is also documentary evidence (Page 1906; BGS 2013) of the use of local coal in the Roman period nearby in Bath. The single sherd of Iron Age or Roman pottery in Ditch 2 in Trench 3 was very abraded and cannot be used to date this feature reliably. Ditch 3 in trench 6 can also be placed in the Iron Age from the pottery and it is likely that ditch 4 is roughly contemporary with ditch 3 as there was no observable relationship between the two and the fills of both were identical.

## References

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**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>
1	24.20	1.60	0.35	Topsoil 0-0.29, Subsoil 0.29- 0.35. Natural crushed limestone with clay 0.35m+. Ditch 1 <b>[Pls 1 and 5]</b>
2	23.70	1.60	0.34	Topsoil 0-0.28, Subsoil 0.28- 0.33. Natural crushed limestone with clay 0.33m+
3	23.40	1.60	0.33	Topsoil 0-0.27, Subsoil 0.27- 0.32. Natural crushed limestone with clay 0.32m+. Ditch 2 <b>[Pls 2 and 6]</b>
4	26.76	1.60	0.33	Topsoil 0-0.28, Subsoil 0.28- 0.37. Natural crushed limestone with clay 0.37m+
5	27.84	1.60	0.48	Topsoil 0-0.35, Subsoil 0.35- 0.08. Natural crushed limestone with clay 0.43m+
6	26.00	1.60	0.60	Topsoil 0-0.32, Subsoil 0.32- 0.60. Natural crushed limestone with clay 0.60m+. Ditch 3, Ditch 4 Ditch 5 <b>[Pls 3, 7 and 8]</b>
7	25.78	1.60	0.37	Topsoil 0-0.29, Subsoil 0.29- 0.37. Natural crushed limestone with clay 0.37m+
8	24.62	1.60	0.31	Topsoil 0-0.24, Subsoil 0.24- 0.31. Natural crushed limestone with clay 0.31m+
9	13.16	1.60	0.40	Topsoil 0-0.28, Subsoil 0.28- 0.40. Natural crushed limestone with clay 0.40m+ <b>[Pl. 4]</b>

**APPENDIX 2: Feature details**

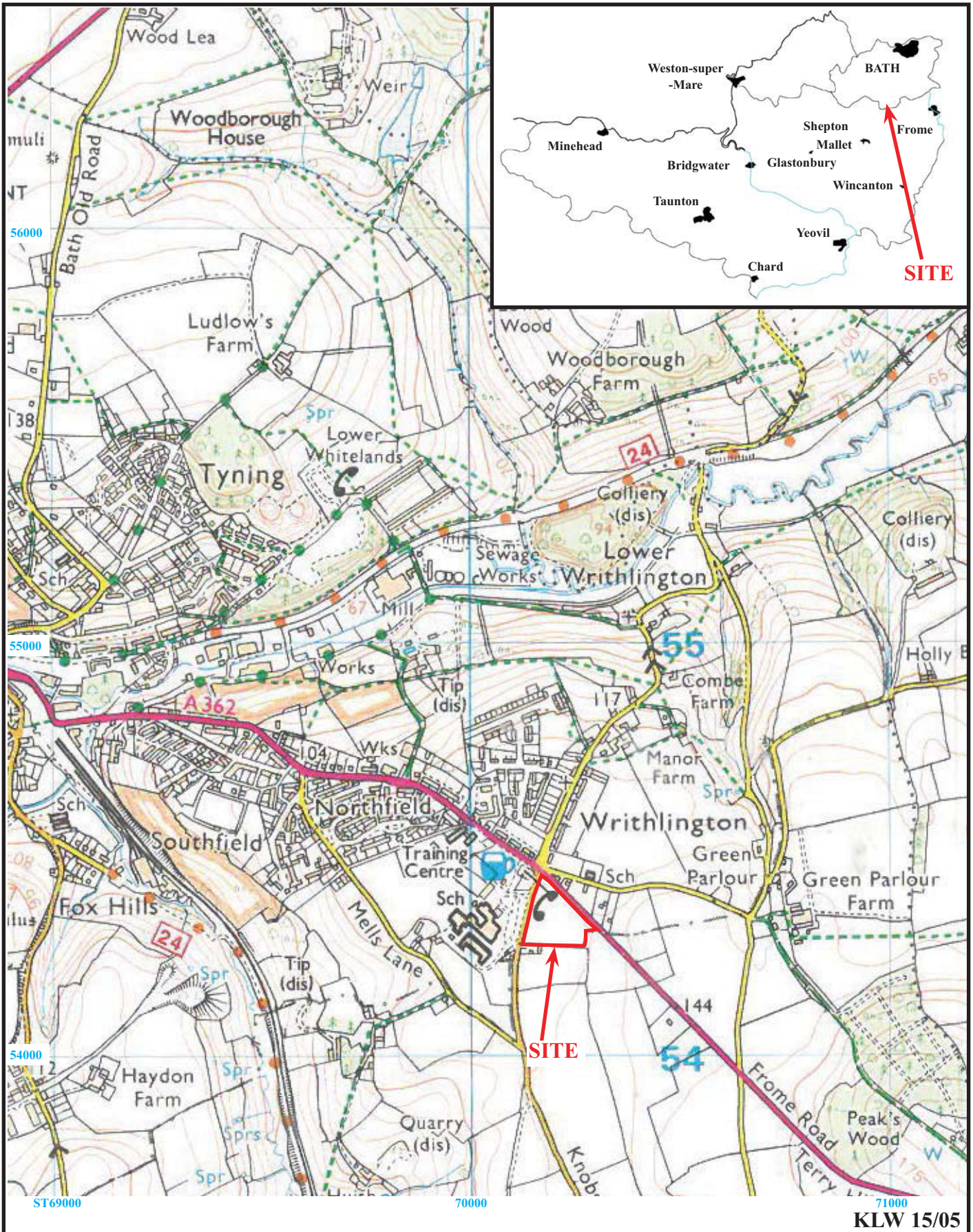
<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
1	1	52	Ditch	Iron Age	Pottery
3	2	53	Ditch	Iron Age or Roman	Pottery
6	3	54	Ditch	Iron Age	Pottery
6	4	55	Ditch	Iron Age	Stratigraphy
6	5	56	Ditch	Undated	None

**APPENDIX 3: Pottery occurrence by number of sherds and weight (in g) per context by fabric**

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Cont</i>	<i>O1</i>	<i>S1</i>	<i>S2</i>	<i>Q</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>
1	1	52	1	3			25
3	2	53				1	1
6	3	54			1		3

**APPENDIX 4: Bone occurrence by number and weight (in g)**

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>
1	1	52	2	4
6	3	54	5	38



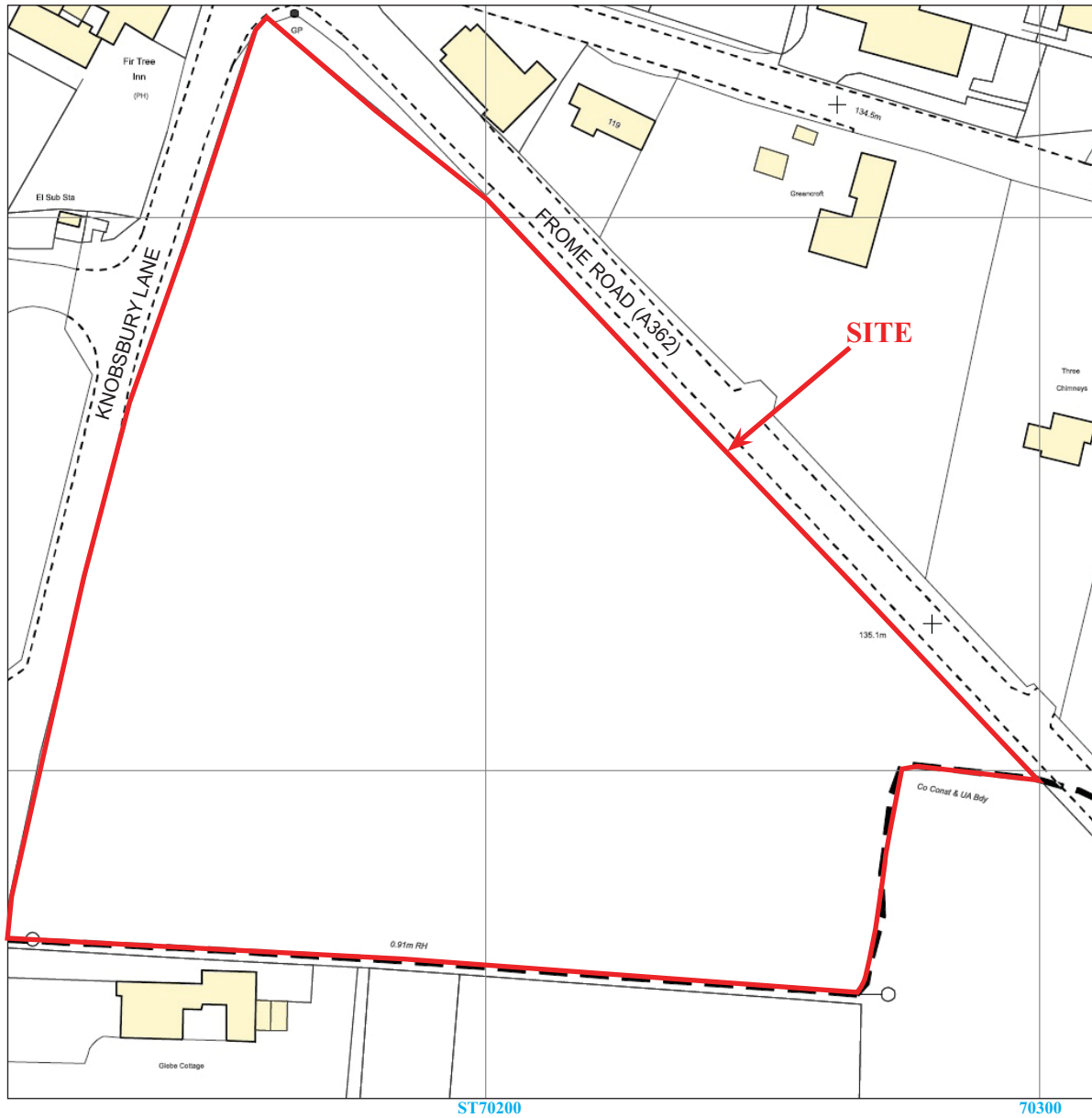
**Land at Knobsbury Lane, Writhlington, Radstock,  
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Figure 1. Location of site within Writhlington, Radstock and  
Bath and North East Somerset.

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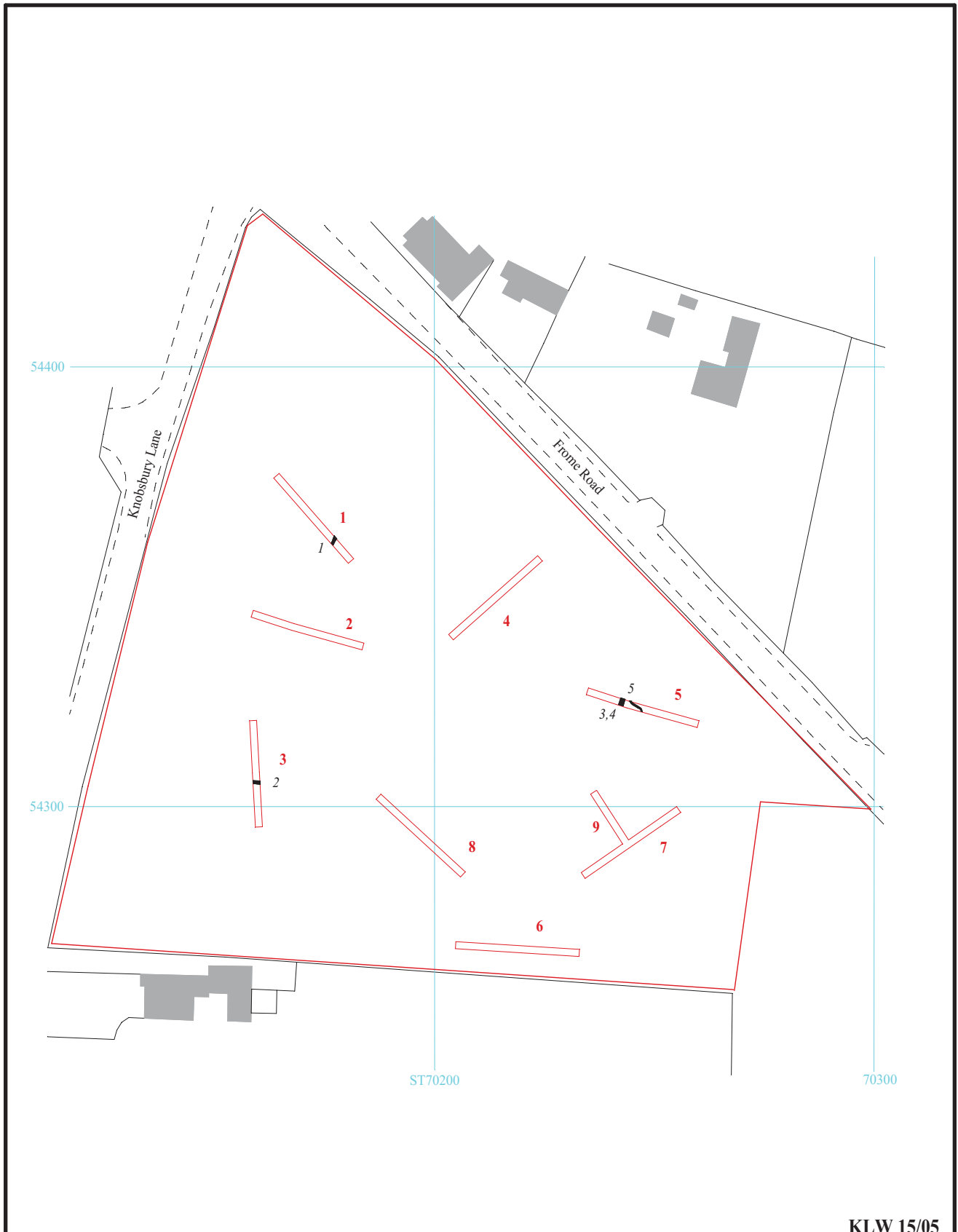


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Figure 2. Detailed location of site at Knobsbury Lane.

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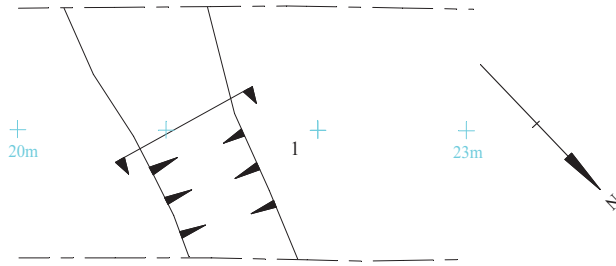
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Figure 3. Location of trenches and features examined.

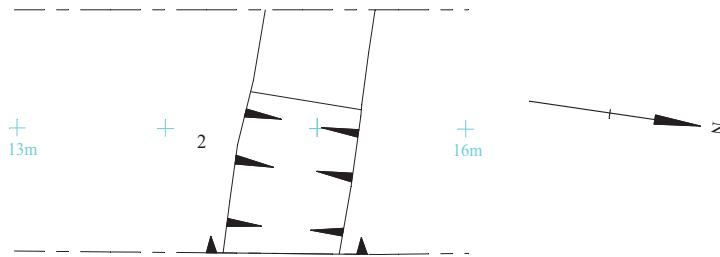


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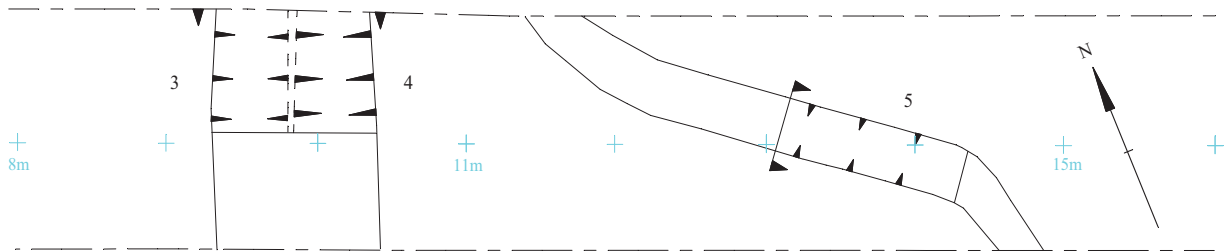
Trench 1



Trench 3



Trench 5

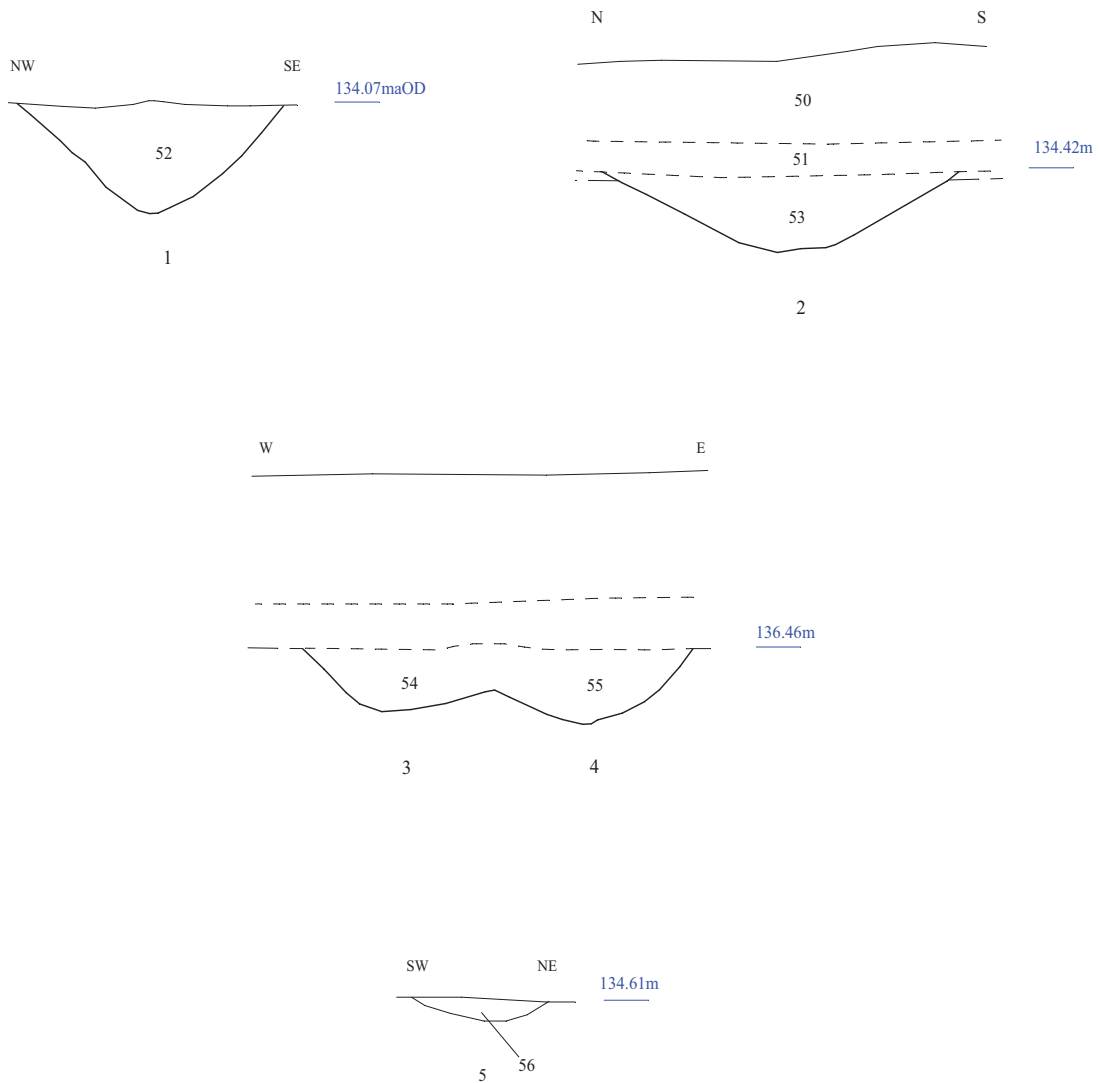


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Figure 4. Detail of trenches.





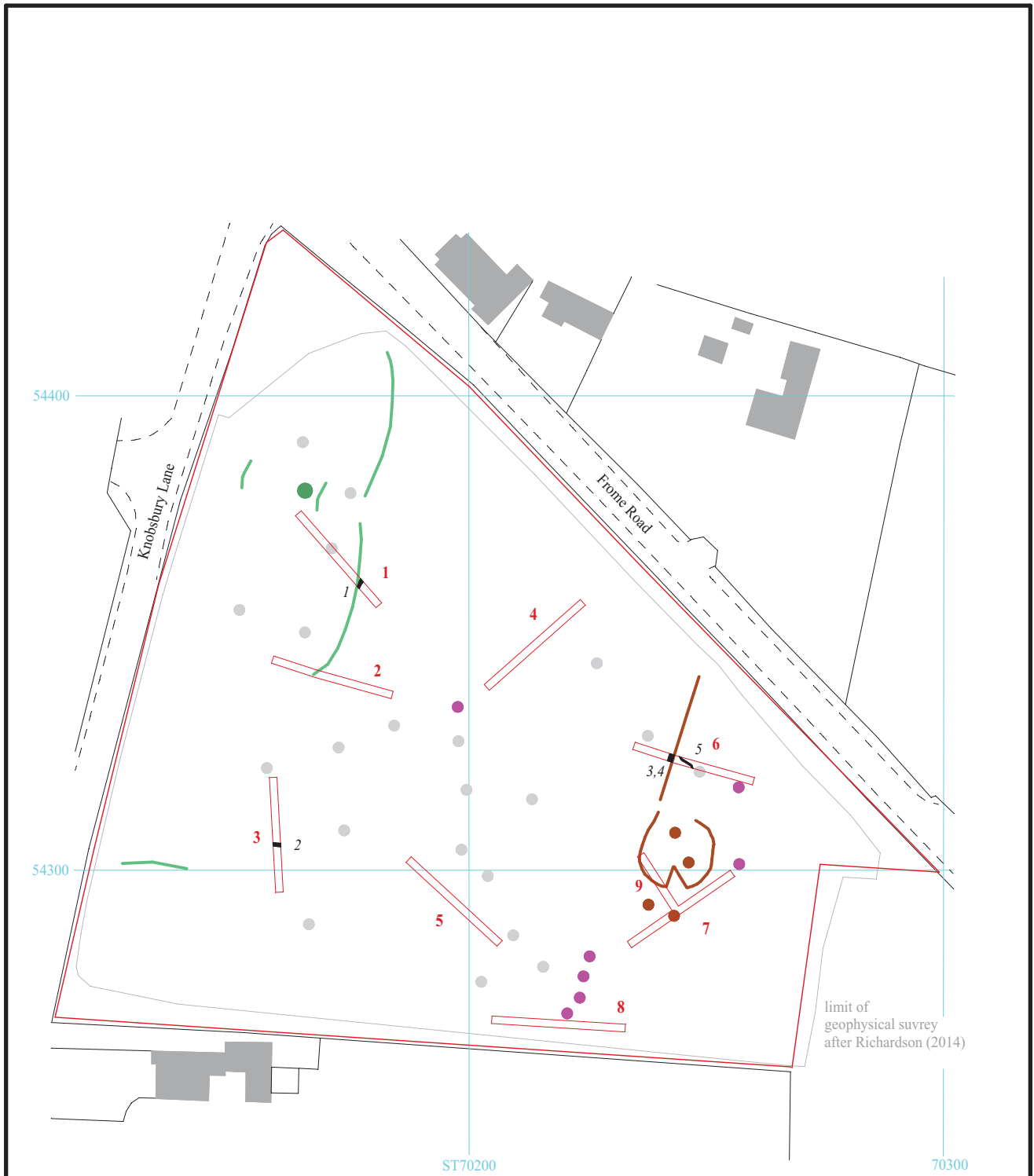
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Figure 5. Sections



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



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Plate 1. Trench 1, looking north west, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.3m.



Plate 2. Trench 3, looking north, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.3m.

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Plates 1 - 2.

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Plate 3. Trench 5, looking east, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.3m.



Plate 4. Trench 9, looking north west, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.3m.

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Plates 3 - 4.

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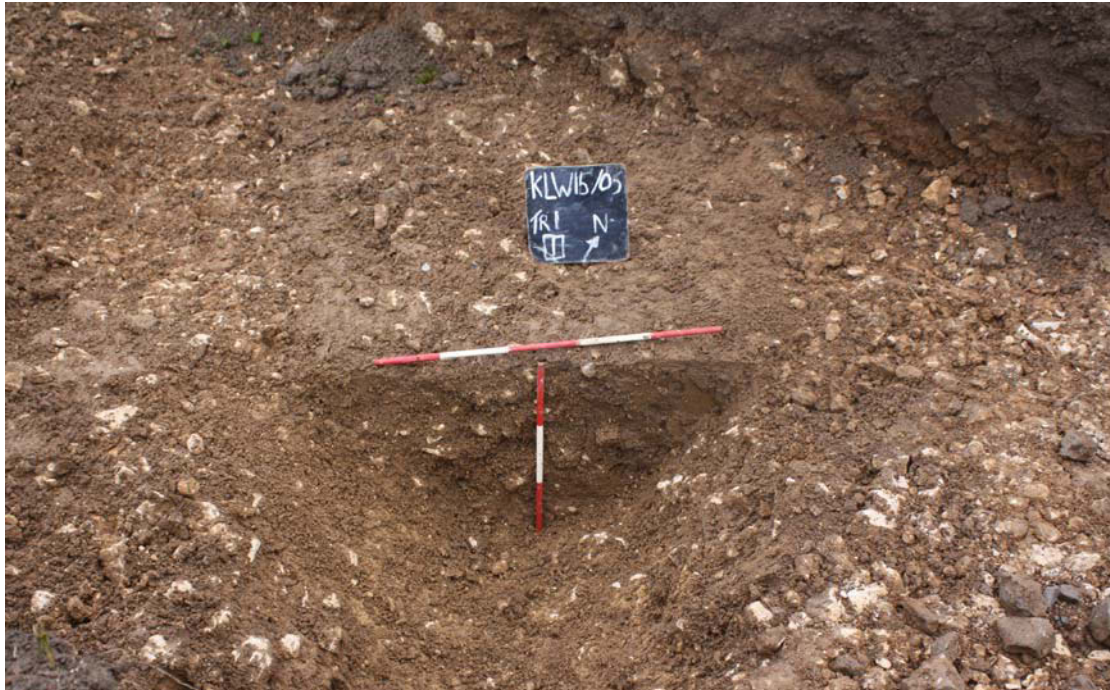


Plate 5. Trench 1, cut 1, looking north west, Scales: horizontal 0.5m and 0.3m.



Plate 6. Trench 3, cut 2, looking north, Scales: 1m and 0.5m.

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Plates 5 - 6.

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Plate 7. Trench 5, cut 3 and 4, looking north, Scales: horizontal 1m, vertical 0.5m and 0.3m.



Plate 8. Trench 5, cut 5, looking north west, Scales: 0.5m and 0.1m.

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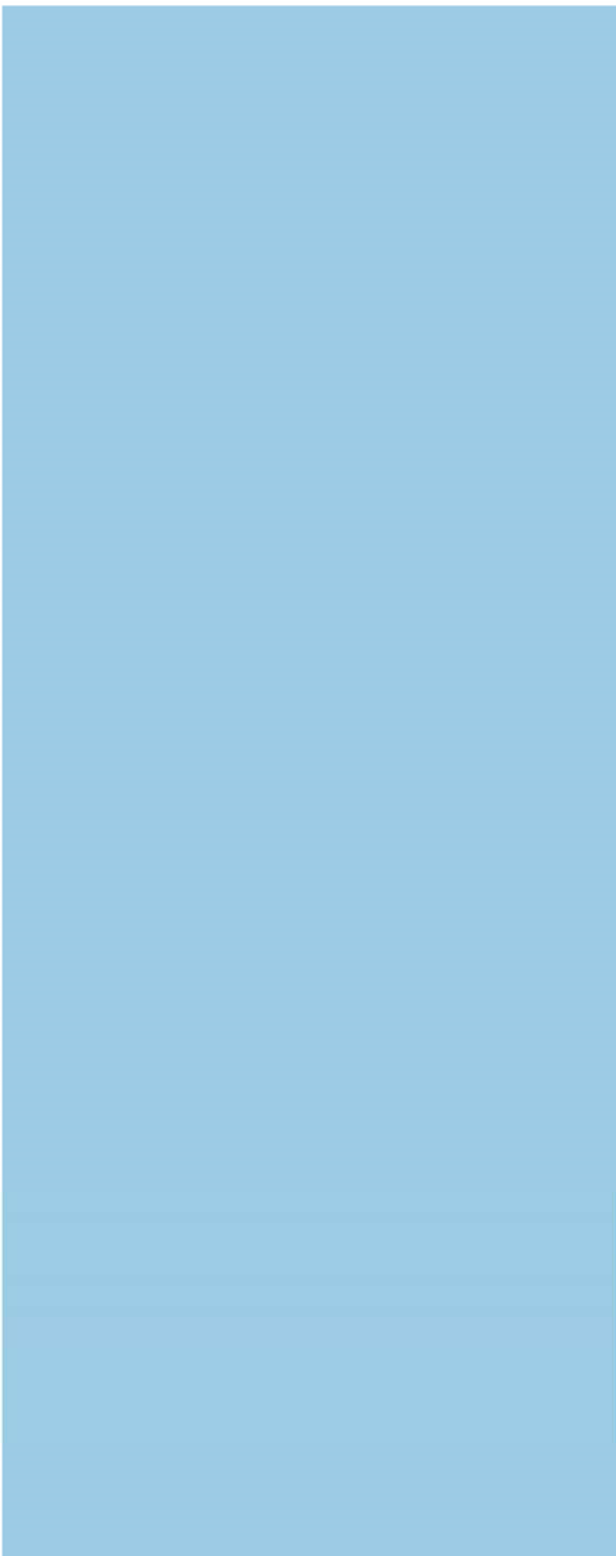
Plates 7 - 8.

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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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