THAMES VALLEY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

SERVICES

Heatherwood Hospital, Ascot, Berkshire

Archaeological Evaluation phase 2

by Luis Esteves and Genni Elliott

Site Code: HHA16/141
(SU 9138 6867)

Heatherwood Hospital, Ascot, Berkshire

An Archaeological Evaluation phase 2

for Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust

by Luis Esteves and Genni Elliott

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code HHA 16/141

March 2017

Summary

Site name: Heatherwood Hospital, Ascot, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 9145 6870

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 13th - 15th March 2017

Project manager: Tim Dawson

Site supervisor: Luis Esteves

Site code: HHA 16/141

Area of site: *c.*0.25ha

Summary of results: The location of the former Soldier's Pillar barrow was investigated and the encircling ditch located. However, no trace of a mound had survived. No dating evidence was recovered. Other evaluation trenches revealed no archaeological deposits nor finds.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with an appropriate designated local repository or museum (to be decided by the local planning authority) in due course.

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 21.03.17
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Heatherwood Hospital, Ascot, Berkshire
An Archaeological Evaluation phase 2

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Report 16/141c

Introduction

This report documents the results of a second phase of archaeological field evaluation carried out at Heatherwood Hospital, Ascot, Berkshire (SU 9138 6867) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Sarah Isherwood of Vail Williams LLP, 550 Thames Valley Park, Reading on behalf of Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust.

Planning permission is to be sought from the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead to redevelop the hospital complex. Due to the possibility of the presence of archaeological deposits on site an archaeological evaluation was requested by Berkshire Archaeology.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012), and the Borough's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Roland Smith, Archaeology Officer with Berkshire Archaeology, the advisers to the Royal Borough on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Luis Esteves Rebecca Constable and Steve Ford between 13th and 15th of March 2017 and the site code is HHA 17/141. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with an appropriate designated local repository or museum (to be decided by the local planning authority) in due course.

Location, topography and geology

Heatherwood Hospital is located approximately 1.5km west of Ascot. The site is located on the south side of London Road (A329) within the main hospital complex (Fig. 1) and comprises an irregular shaped plot of land currently occupied by a garden/meadow and mature conifers of *c.*0.25ha. The site lies at a height of *c.*90 aOD. The underlying geology is mapped as River Terrace Deposits 8 (BGS 1981) and was observed on site as brown orange/ brown grey sand with gravel inclusions.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a desk-based assessment (Baljkas 2016). The site lies within an area of east Berkshire which has recorded only a modest range of archaeological finds and deposits. Nevertheless there is a persistent presence of prehistoric, Roman and Medieval find spots as recorded in the Berkshire Historic Environment Record and many upstanding Bronze Age burial mounds (round barrows) are located on the heathland area of east Berkshire (Ford 1987). In particular the main hospital complex includes an upstanding round barrow (a scheduled monument) that has been partially excavated (Bradley and Keith-Lucas 1975) and is possibly the last surviving one of a small cemetery of 3 or 4 barrows recorded by antiquarians. Fieldwork within the eastern side of the hospital complex located no archaeological deposits (Hammond 2004; Cass and Platt 2008). Fieldwork (evaluation) carried out as part of this development proposal in the southern part of the complex also revealed nothing of archaeological interest (Esteves 2017).

One of the other barrows (known as 'Soldiers Pillar') recorded by antiquarians for the site was mapped by the Ordnance Survey and survived as an earthwork to be photographed in the early 20th century prior to its levelling and inclusion within the then new hospital complex. Mapping places the site of this barrow partly beneath hospital buildings and partly in a garden area. It is this site which is the subject of this evaluation.

Objectives and methodology

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

The specific research aims of the project were:

To determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on the site.
To determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present.
To determine if any Bronze Age deposits representing survival of the round barrow are present.
To determine if any archaeologically significant deposits are present so as to inform the development of a mitigation strategy.

It was proposed to dig 5 trenches between 10-20m long and 1.6-2m wide to examine the proposal area. The trenching was to take place following tree removal (but not stump removal) with a 10m contingency should further excavation be required to clarify initial findings. The overburden was to be removed using a machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. Where archaeological features were encountered these were to be hand

cleaned, excavated and recorded including a photographic record. The excavation of the trenches was to be supervised by an archaeologist at all times and all spoil heaps were to be monitored for finds.

Results

All of the trenches were dug as intended and ranged in length from 10.6m - 17.6m, in depth from 0.27m - 0.48m and were 1.4-1.6m wide.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1. The excavated features, with dating evidence, are summarized in Appendix 2.

Trench 1 (Figs 3, 4, 5 and 6; Pls. 1-3)

Trench 1 was aligned south east - north west and was initially dug 9m long and 0.27m deep. This trench was intended to traverse the position of the barrow and any flanking ditch. Following consultation with Berkshire Archaeology, the trench was extended to 17.3m. The stratigraphy at the south-west consisted of 0.07m of rooty topsoil overlying 0.17m of rooty dark grey turf and brown silty sand subsoil overlying a light grey white sand with pebbles natural geology. The latter was partly removed in the trench to reveal a brown slightly gravelly sand with black patches which is considered to be the mineralized horizon from the leached deposits above reflecting a podsol profile (Limbrey 1975, 137ff; M. Keith-Lucas pers comm). The white sand petered out to the north-west before reaching the ditch and taken to indicate the presence of a berm, so that turf and brown silty sand subsoil directly overlay a brown and black mineralized horizon. A modern service and areas of concrete foundation lay within the trench.

A modern pit (1) was recorded at the south-east end of the trench which was 1m across and 0.27m deep and filled with a mid grey silty sand (52) which contained modern pottery, metal, ceramic building material and glass overlying light grey sand (53) overlying a dark grey black sand (54).

A ditch (2) was also recorded running NE–SW across the trench. It was only partially investigated to a depth of 0.05m to confirm its position.

The surface of the ground at the trench location rises almost imperceptibly to the south-east where the barrow mound is predicted to have stood. It is not clear if this rise is a by-product of root growth and tree planting or does reflect the former presence of the mound. It is considered that the latter is the more likely scenario and it was the presence of the mound that has led to the survival of the leached white sand in this location. The presence of the white sand here contrasts with the stratigraphic sequence of the other trenches (except in trench 5) where topsoil/subsoil directly overlays the mineral horizon. It is thought that this indicates a

degree of disturbance in these locations such as from soil stripping or rotovation perhaps when the area was landscaped after the hospital was built.

The anticipated undisturbed profile of the site in the predicted position of the barrow mound was that recorded in the nearby barrow excavation (Bradley and Keith-Lucas 1975). There, the lowest layer of clearly defined turves which had formed from a podsol soil profile overlay an intact buried podsol comprising a thin organic horizon above a leached white sand horizon above a brown/black mineralised horizon. In trench 1 however, the upper sequence of this profile was missing with rooty topsoil/subsoil directly overlying uniform leached white sand (Pls 1-3). It is considered that the whole of the mound make up for the barrow has been removed.

It is unclear if a marked v-shaped cut beneath the white sand (Pl. 3) is evidence for pre-barrow cultivation or a tree root.

Trench 2 (Fig. 3; Pl. 4)

Trench 2 was aligned south east – north west and was 11.5m long and 0.48m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.14m of topsoil, overlying 0.21m of subsoil, overlying 0.13m of subsoil with gravel inclusions, overlying natural geology of brown orange gravel with mottled light grey sand.

Trench 3 (Figs 3, 4, 5 and 6; Pls. 5-6)

Trench 3 was aligned north west – south east and was 17.6m long and 0.29m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.04m of topsoil, overlying 0.16m of subsoil, overlying natural geology of brown orange gravel with mottled light grey sand. Ditch 3 was aligned north east–south west across the trench and measured more than 2.10m wide by 0.84m deep, the southeast side of the ditch was rendered inaccessible by a modern pipe. The ditch had gently sloping sides, a rounded base and contained four fills (numbered 56–59). Context 56 was mottled light grey and brown sand, overlying a dark grey black sand (context 57), overlying a light brown silty sand (context 58) overlying a darker brown silty sand (context 59) only found in the base of the ditch. There were no finds.

Trench 4 (Fig. 4; Pl. 7)

Trench 4 was aligned north east –south west and was 12.0m long and 0.45m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.17m of topsoil, overlying 0.18m of subsoil, overlying 0.10m of subsoil with gravel inclusions, overlying natural geology of brown orange gravel with mottled light grey sand changing to light grey sand at the northeast end of the trench.

Trench 5 (Fig. 4; Pl. 8)

Trench 5 was aligned north east –south west and was 10.6m long and 0.40m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.13m of topsoil, overlying 0.11m of subsoil, overlying 0.36m of mid yellow brown sand, overlying natural geology of very light brown grey sand at the south east end of the trench and 0.10m of topsoil overlying 0.19m of dark grey brown silty sand subsoil overlying natural geology at the north west end of the trench.

Finds

No finds of archaeological significance were recovered.

Macrobotanical plant material and charcoal by Jo Pine

Two samples were processed from the site. The flots were wet sieved to 0.25mm and air dried. The flots were examined under a low-power binocular microscope at magnifications between x10 and x40. No charred plant macrofossils were present in samples. A small amount of charcoal was present from ditch 3 (59) and the top layer of ditch 2 (55). This material is of size and structure that has the potential for species identification.

Conclusion

The evaluation has successfully examined the location of the former Soldier's Pillar barrow on the site and has located a ditch thought to be that encircling the barrow. The ditch was described by Gough in Camden's Britannia (1789, 164) as 12ft wide by 2ft deep; the size of which would correspond to that found in trench 3. It is quite clear however, that the once substantial mound had been comprehensively levelled with no trace of mound nor the uppermost organic horizon of a buried soil. Nevertheless the natural geology beneath the mound may have survived disturbance better than in other areas nearby examined by trenching.

Apart from several modern services and other areas of disturbance, one pit was investigated and shown to be of modern date.

The other trenches across the site revealed no deposits nor artefacts of archaeological interest.

References

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APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at south and west ends

Trench	*Length (m)*	*Breadth (m)*	*Depth (m)*	*Comment*
1	17.26	1.6	0.27	SE end: 0–0.07m rooty topsoil, 0.07-0.24m rooty subsoil, 0.24m+ white sand with gravel and brown black sand (natural geology) NW end: 0–0.07m rooty topsoil, 0.07-0.24m rooty subsoil, 0.24m+ brown black sand (natural geology). Modern pit 1 and ditch 2. **[Pls 1-3]**
2	11.5	1.6	0.48	0–0.14m topsoil, 0.14-0.35m subsoil, 0.35-0.48m subsoil with gravel inclusions, 0.48m+ natural geology (brown/orange gravel with mottled light grey sand). **[Pl. 4]**
3	17.6	1.6	0.29	0–0.04m topsoil, 0.04-0.20m subsoil, 0.20m+ natural geology (brown/orange gravel with mottled light grey sand). Features: Ditch 3. **[Pls 5 and 6]**
4	12.0	1.6	0.45	0–0.17m topsoil, 0.17-0.35m subsoil, 0.35-0.45m subsoil with gravel inclusions, 0.45m+ natural geology (brown/orange gravel with mottled light grey sand, changing to light grey sand at the NE end of the trench). **[Pl. 7]**
5	10.6	1.6	0.40	SW end: 0-0.13m topsoil, 0.13m-0.24m subsoil, 0.24m-0.60m mid yellow brown sand, 0.60m+ natural geology (very light grey brown sand). NE end: 0-0.10m topsoil, 0.10-0.29m subsoil, 0.29m+ natural geology (very light brown grey sand). **[Pl. 8]**

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

Trench	*Cut*	*Fill (s)*	*Type*	*Date*	*Dating evidence*
1	1	52, 53, 54	Pit	Modern	Pottery
1	2	55	Ditch	Bronze Age	By association
3	3	56, 57, 58, 59	Ditch	Bronze Age	By association

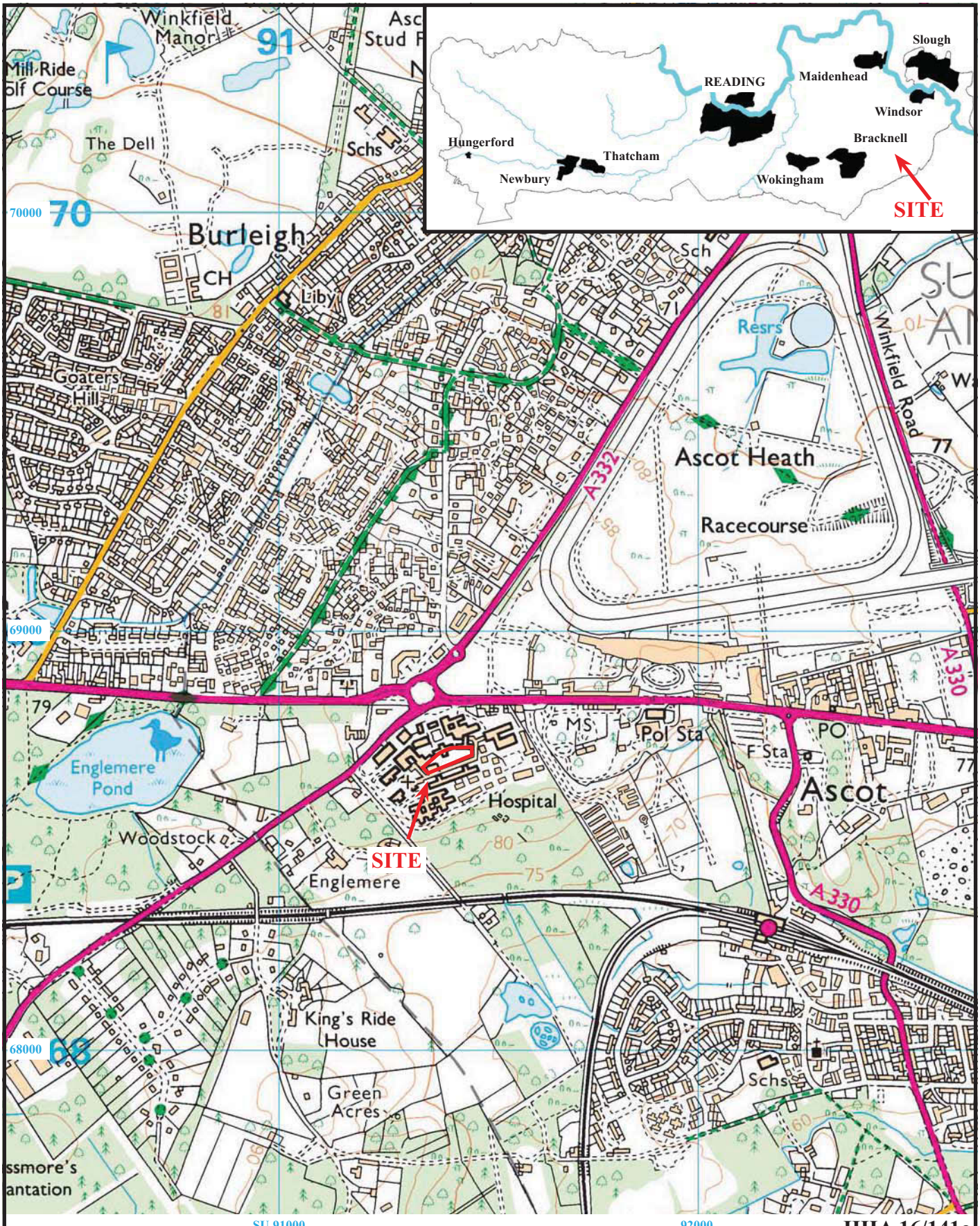

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Figure 1. Location of site within Ascot and Berkshire.

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Explorer digital mapping at 1:12500

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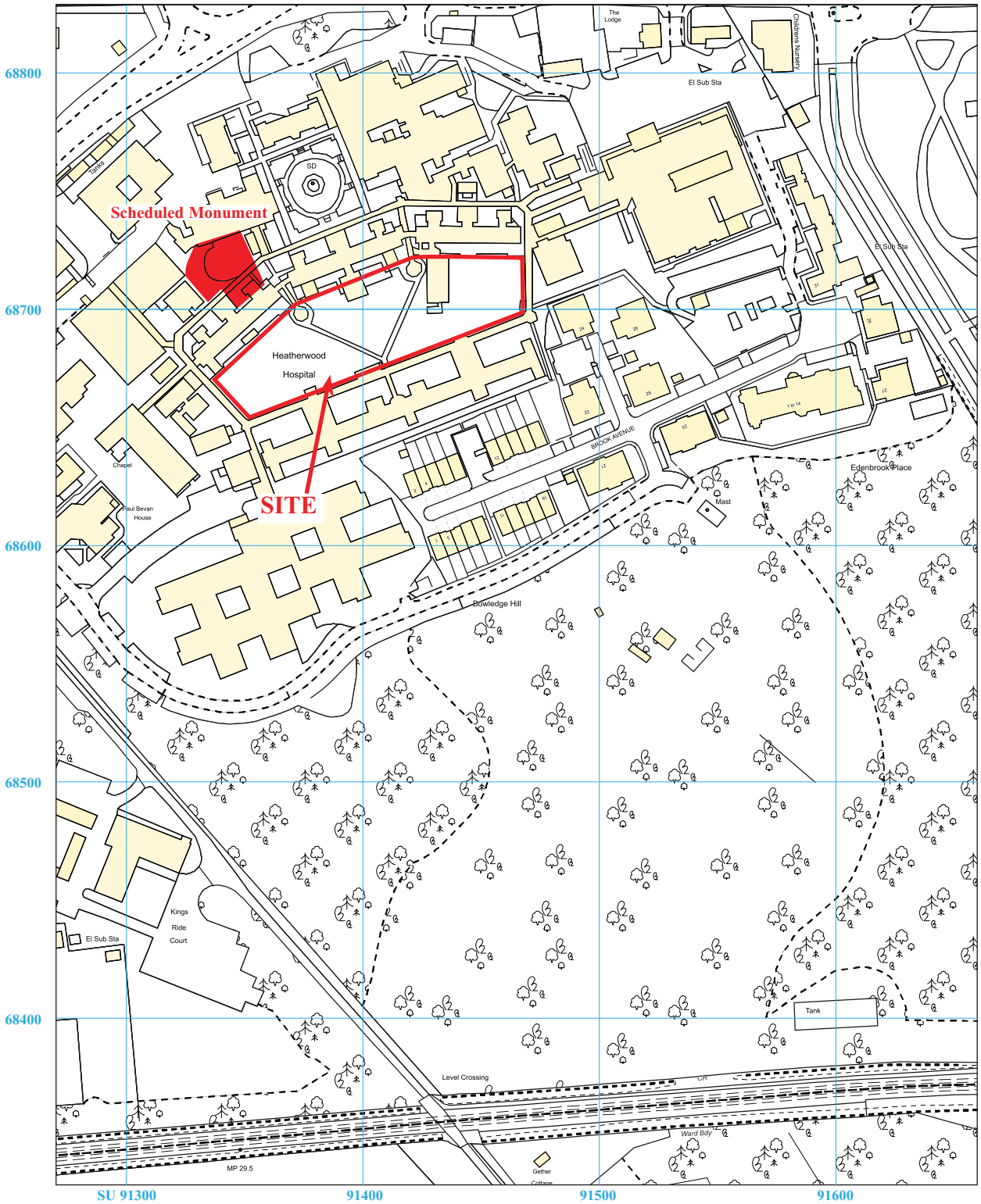

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site in Heatherwood Hospital.

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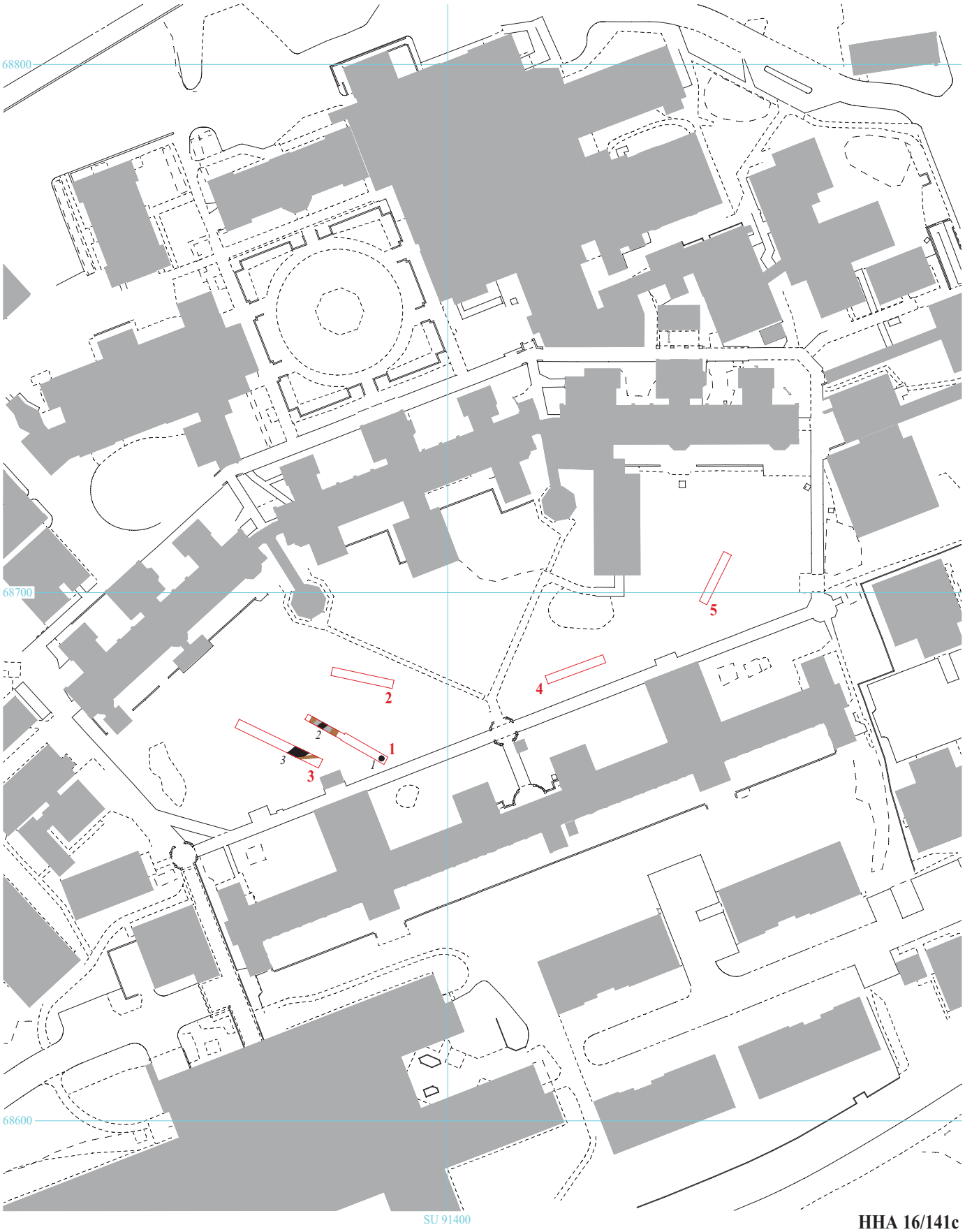

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Figure 3. Trench layout.

0 50m

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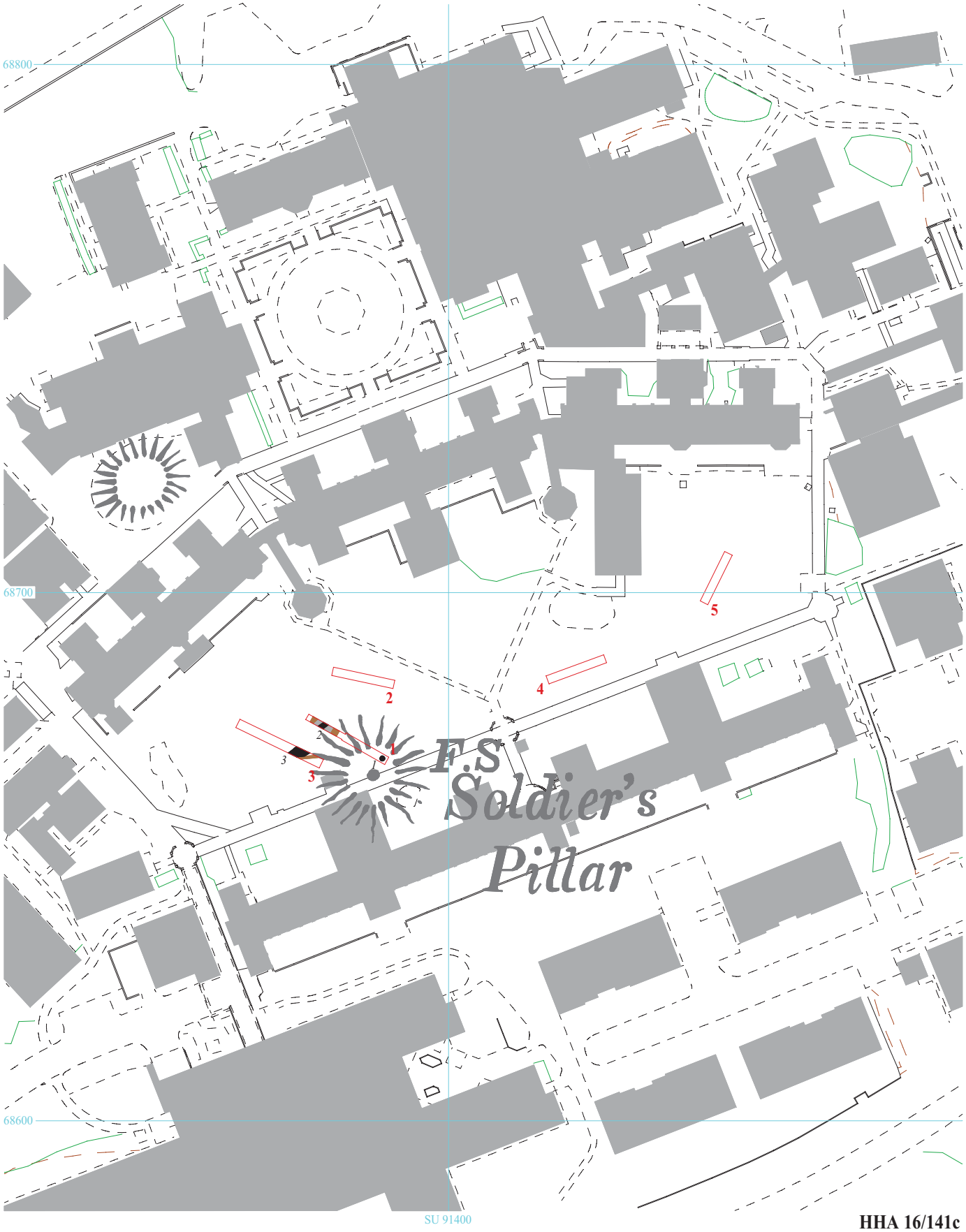

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Figure 4. Trench layout with barrow locations from Ordnance Survey revision of 1932 superimposed.

0 50m

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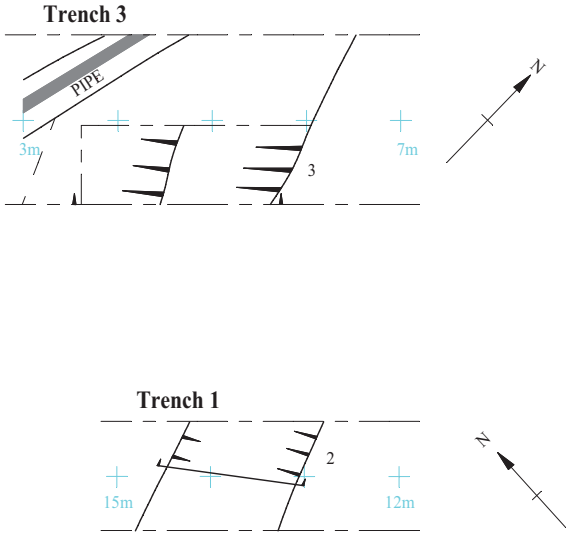

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Figure 5. Trench plans.

0 5m

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Trench 3

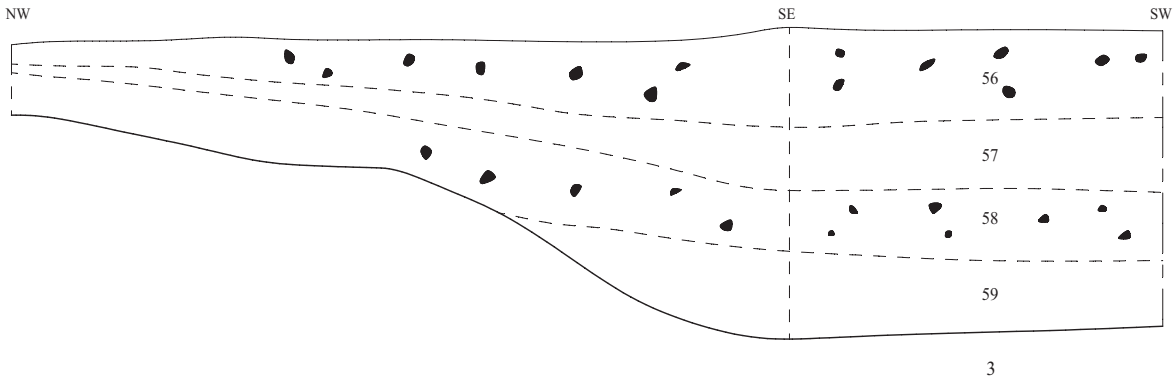

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Figure 6. Sections.

0 1m

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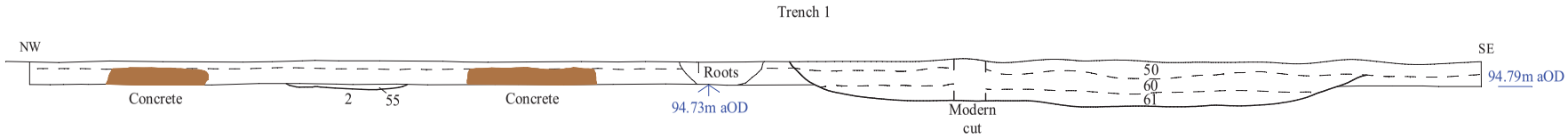

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Figure 7. Section.

0 2m

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

Plate 2. Trench 1 section, looking north-east, Scales: 2m and 0.3m.

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Plates 1 - 2.

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Plate 3. Trench 1, detailed section looking south

Plate 4 Trench 2, looking east, Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.3m.

Plate 5. Trench 3, looking north west, Scales 2m, 1m and 0.3m

Plate 6. Trench 3, ditch 3 looking south east, Scales: 1m and 0.5m.

Plate 7. Trench 4, looking east, Scales 2m, 1m and 0.3m

Plate 8. Trench 5, looking north east, Scales: 1m and 0.5m.

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Plates 7 - 8.

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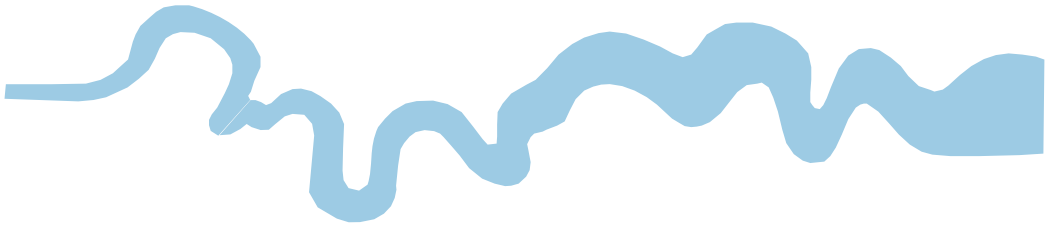
TIME CHART

	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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