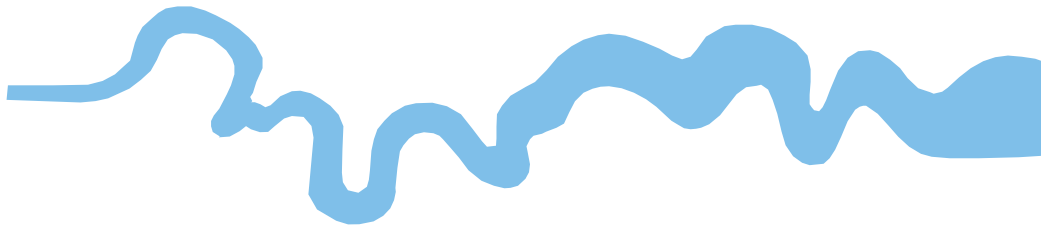


T V A S



SOUTH WEST

**Land at Mells Road, Vobster Cross,
Mells, Somerset**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Nicholas Dawson

Site Code: VCM17/106

(ST 7109 5109)

Land at Mells Road, Vobster Cross, Mells, Somerset

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for CPM Group**

by Nicholas Dawson

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code VCM 17/106

November 2017

Summary

Site name: Land at Mells Road, Vobster Cross, Mells, Somerset

Grid reference: ST 7109 5109

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 24th – 27th October 2017

Project manager: Agata Socha-Paszkiwicz

Site supervisor: Agata Socha-Paszkiwicz

Site code: VCM 17/106

Area of site: 2.9 ha

Summary of results: The evaluation has revealed a small number of archaeological features, comprising three pits and a posthole of probable late Bronze Age or early Iron Age date. A detritus deposit related to either The Newbury Railway or the Frome branch of the Dorset and Somerset Canal dating to the Victorian period was also observed.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at TVAS South West, Taunton and will be deposited with Somerset Heritage Services in due course with accession number TTNCM76/2017.

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www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp.*

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 09.11.17 Steve Preston ✓ 09.11.17

Land at Mells Road, Vobster Cross, Mells, Somerset An Archaeological Evaluation

by Nicholas Dawson

Report 17/106b

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Mells Road, Vobster Cross, Mells, Somerset (ST 7109 5109) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Daniel Bray of ECUS Limited, Unit 1, Woodland Business Village, Coronation Road, Basingstoke, RG21 4JX on behalf of CPM Group, Mells Road, Mells, nr Frome, Somerset, BA11 3PD.

Planning permission (2017/0163/FUL) has been granted by Mendip District Council for the erection of a new production building with concrete batching plant as an expansion of the Mells CPM Works. The consent is subject to a condition (14) which requires the implementation of programme of archaeological investigation prior to development. 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 decision had been informed by a prior geophysical survey which revealed little of archaeological potential (Dawson 2017). The survey comprised the first stage of investigation at the site, with this report documenting invasive investigation by trial trenching. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Steven Membery, Senior Historic Environment Officer for the Somerset. The fieldwork was undertaken by Agata Socha-Paszkiwicz and Nicholas Dawson on the 24th to 27th August 2017 and the site code is VCM17/106. The archive is presently held at TVAS Southwest, Taunton and will be deposited with the Somerset Heritage Service in due course with accession number TTNCM76/2017.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located 2.5km to the north-west of the village of Mells with the larger towns of Radstock 4.2km to the north-west and Frome 7.3km to the south-east. Current land use is as part of a larger arable field, with the CPM precast concrete manufacturing plant to the north and east and further arable land on all other sides. Hatchet Hill Lane runs down the western edge of the field (Fig. 2). The land has a gradual slope down from the south-west to the east at a height of approximately 134m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is mapped as an

Inferior Oolite group - Limestone, sedimentary bedrock with no recorded superficial deposits (BGS 2000). Limestone was encountered in all of the trenches.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a desk-based assessment (Bray 2017). In summary, the assessment indicated that the site lies within an area of known archaeological sites of Iron Age, Roman and medieval dates, although there is nothing recorded for the site itself. The eastern end of the site was crossed by the line of the Frome branch of the Dorset and Somerset Canal in the late 18th century. This was backfilled in the 1950s. Almost parallel to this but just outside the site's eastern boundary are the remains of the Newbury Railway, which was opened in 1857 to connect the Frome to Radstock line with Newbury Colliery. The results of the geophysical survey revealed little of archaeological potential and the anomalies identified are most likely associated with agricultural activity (Dawson 2017).

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.

Specific aims of the project are:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site; and
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present.

Fifteen trenches were proposed to be dug, each measuring 25m long and 1.60m wide. These were to be dug using a JCB-type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. All spoilheaps were to be monitored for finds.

Where archaeological features were certainly or probably present, the stripped areas were to be cleaned using appropriate hand tools and sufficient of the archaeological features and deposits exposed were to be excavated or sampled by hand to satisfy the aims outlined above, without compromising the integrity of any features or deposits which warrant might preservation *in situ*, or might better be excavated under conditions pertaining to full excavation.

Results

All fifteen of the evaluation trenches were opened as planned (Fig. 2). Trench lengths ranged from 24m to 29m and depths ranged from 0.2m to 0.6m. All were 1.6m wide. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths,

depths and description of stratigraphy and geology is given in Appendix 1. Trenches 1-3, 5-7, 9-13 and 15 contained neither features nor artefacts. Trenches 4, 8 and 14 all revealed archaeological features, which are summarized with dating evidence in Appendix 2.

Trench 1 (Figs 2 and 3; Pl. 1)

Trench 1 was aligned S–N and was 28m long and 0.2m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.2m of topsoil overlying natural geology. No finds were recovered.

Trench 2 (Figs 2 and 3)

This trench was aligned NW–SE and was 26.6m long and 0.27m deep. Its stratigraphy consisted of 0.27m of topsoil overlying natural geology. This trench was positioned to investigate a linear anomaly identified in the geophysical survey, running NE–SW, parallel to the field’s north-western boundary (Fig. 3). The cause of the linear readings was identified to be a change in the natural geology. No archaeological features or finds were identified.

Trench 3 (Figs 2 and 3; Pl 2)

Aligned W–E, Trench 3 was 25.2m long and 0.28m in depth. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.2m of topsoil overlying natural geology with nothing of archaeological interest uncovered.

Trench 4 (Figs 2, 3, 4 and 5; Pls 3, 7, 8 and 9)

Trench 4 was aligned S–N and was 25.6m long and 0.36m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.3m of topsoil overlying natural geology. From the topsoil (50) spoil heap, a single flint flake of Neolithic or Bronze Age date was recovered. Two pits and one posthole were also identified. The first pit (1) located 6.2m from the trench’s southern end was 0.64m in diameter and 0.33m in depth. Its mid brown silt clay fill (52) produced three sherds of pottery, likely mid to late Bronze Age in date. The second pit (2) at 8.6m from the south end was similar in diameter, at 0.64m with a depth of 0.31m with a mid brown silt clay fill (53) which contained no finds even though a bulk soil sample was processed. The posthole (3) situated 24.2m from the trench’s southern end was 0.33m in diameter and 0.19 in depth. The fill was a mid brown silt clay (54) in which no dating evidence was found.

Trench 5 (Figs 2 and 3)

Trench 5 was aligned WNW – ESE at 24m long and 0.3m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.25m of topsoil overlying natural geology. A modern furrow crossing the trench NNE to SSW matched plough marks identified in the geophysical survey.

Trench 6 (Figs 2 and 3)

This trench with a length 24.7m and a depth of 0.35 was situated on a SE – NW alignment. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.22m of topsoil overlying natural geology. No features were present nor finds recovered.

Trench 7 (Figs 2 and 3)

Trench 7 was aligned S – N and was 25.1m long and 0.35m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.2m of topsoil overlying natural geology. No finds were recovered and one potential feature was investigated but appears to be a natural solution hole caused by acid erosion of the limestone.

Trench 8 (Figs 2, 3, 4 and 5; Pls 4 and 10)

Aligned W–E, Trench 8 had a length of 25m and depth of 0.43m. Its stratigraphy consisted of 0.21m of topsoil overlying natural geology. As with trench 4 a single flint (a core) dating to Neolithic or Bronze Age was found in the spoil (topsoil). A single pit (5) of 0.5m diameter and 0.22m in depth was uncovered, 5m from the south-east end of the trench. From its dark brown silt clay fill (56) three sherds of pottery were produced, probably later Bronze Age. One badly preserved fragment of unidentifiable bone was also recovered. A cluster of three natural solution holes was also investigated.

Trench 9 (Figs 2 and 3)

Trench 9 was aligned SW–NE and was 26.6m long and 0.3m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.25m of topsoil overlying natural geology. No finds or archaeological deposits were present.

Trench 10 (Figs 2 and 3)

Trench 10 was aligned W–E and was 24.4m long and 0.6m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.28m of topsoil overlying natural geology. One potential feature was investigated and concluded to be a natural solution hole in the limestone.

Trench 11 (Figs 2 and 3; Pl. 5)

This trench was aligned SE - NW at 25.2m long and 0.46m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.3m of topsoil overlying natural geology. No archaeological features were found.

Trench 12 (Figs 2 and 3)

Trench 12 was aligned W - E and was 25.5m long and 0.6m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.27m of topsoil covering 0.33m of subsoil, overlying natural geology. No archaeological find or features were found.

Trench 13 (Figs 2 and 3)

Aligned S – N, trench 13 was 27.3m long and 0.58m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.24m of topsoil overlaying 0.34m of subsoil and the natural geology below this. No finds were recovered.

Trench 14 (Figs 2 and 3; Pl. 6)

Trench 14 was aligned SE - NW and was 27.9m long and 0.49m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.2m of topsoil overlying 0.29m of subsoil overlying natural geology. For 5.5m from the trench's SE end the surface was covered with a black layer of detritus including brick, coal and other rubble (57) likely related to the canal or railway along the east edge of the field, making it Victorian or modern in date. At 12.9m running north-south is a trench for a modern water pipe backfilled with sand.

Trench 15 (Figs 2 and 3)

Trench 15 was aligned SW - NE and was 29m long and 0.55m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.23m of topsoil, 0.32m of subsoil overlying natural geology. No archaeological features or finds were found.

Finds

Prehistoric Pottery by Richard Tabor

The later prehistoric pottery assemblage comprised a total of six sherds weighing 41g from two features (Appendix 3). There were no rim, base or shoulder sherds. There were two fabrics, one including shelly limestone, the other sandy with ironstone inclusions.

L1 (coarse) Moderately hard grey fabric with buff orange to grey surfaces including abundant poorly-sorted fine(<1mm) to sparse coarse (<8mm) sub-angular shelly limestone, sparsely as fossil shell plate.

S1 (medium) Poorly-fired grey brown fabric with buff orange exterior including sparse to moderate fine (<1mm) and rare coarse (<3) sub-angular reddish brown iron oxides.

Crushed fossil shell reflects the Mendip Hill's carboniferous geology, although similar fabrics feature in Early Neolithic, Late Bronze Age and Iron Age pottery over much of Somerset, the largest assemblages coming from the south and west of the county. At Brean Down, on the western extreme of the Mendips, limestone occurred in earlier Bronze Age pottery but peaked in the Middle Bronze Age (Williams and Woodward 1990, Tab. 7). However, the thickness of the limestone sherds of 6mm to 8mm is thinner than is typical of Middle Bronze Age coarse pottery. It should be noted also that during the Late Bronze Age calcite was often added to limestone mixtures and that it is lacking here. At Dibble's Farm, Christon, south-east of Weston-Super-Mare, fossil shell fabrics were given an extremely broad date range of 1st millennium BC but a date after 800BC seems most likely in this instance (Morris 1989, 29-41; tab 3).

The sandy fabric may be fired clay, rather than pottery. Similar material has been noted by the author in later Bronze Age cylindrical loomweights from Sigwells on different geology in south-east Somerset.

Struck Flint by Steve Ford

A small collection of two struck flints were recovered during the fieldwork. A small flake was recovered from the topsoil of trench 4 and a small fragment from a core from the topsoil in trench 8. The flints are not closely datable, but are likely to be of Neolithic or Bronze Age date.

Conclusion

The evaluation has successfully investigated the site as intended. All but trenches 4, 8 and 14 were void of archaeological features and finds. Of the three pits and one posthole, two of the pits, [1] and [5] were datable to the mid to late Bronze Age. The detritus deposit located at the south east end of trench 14 is dated to the Victorian period and is likely related to either the Newbury Railway or the Frome branch of the Dorset and Somerset Canal both ran along the eastern edge of the site.

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APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at West or South end

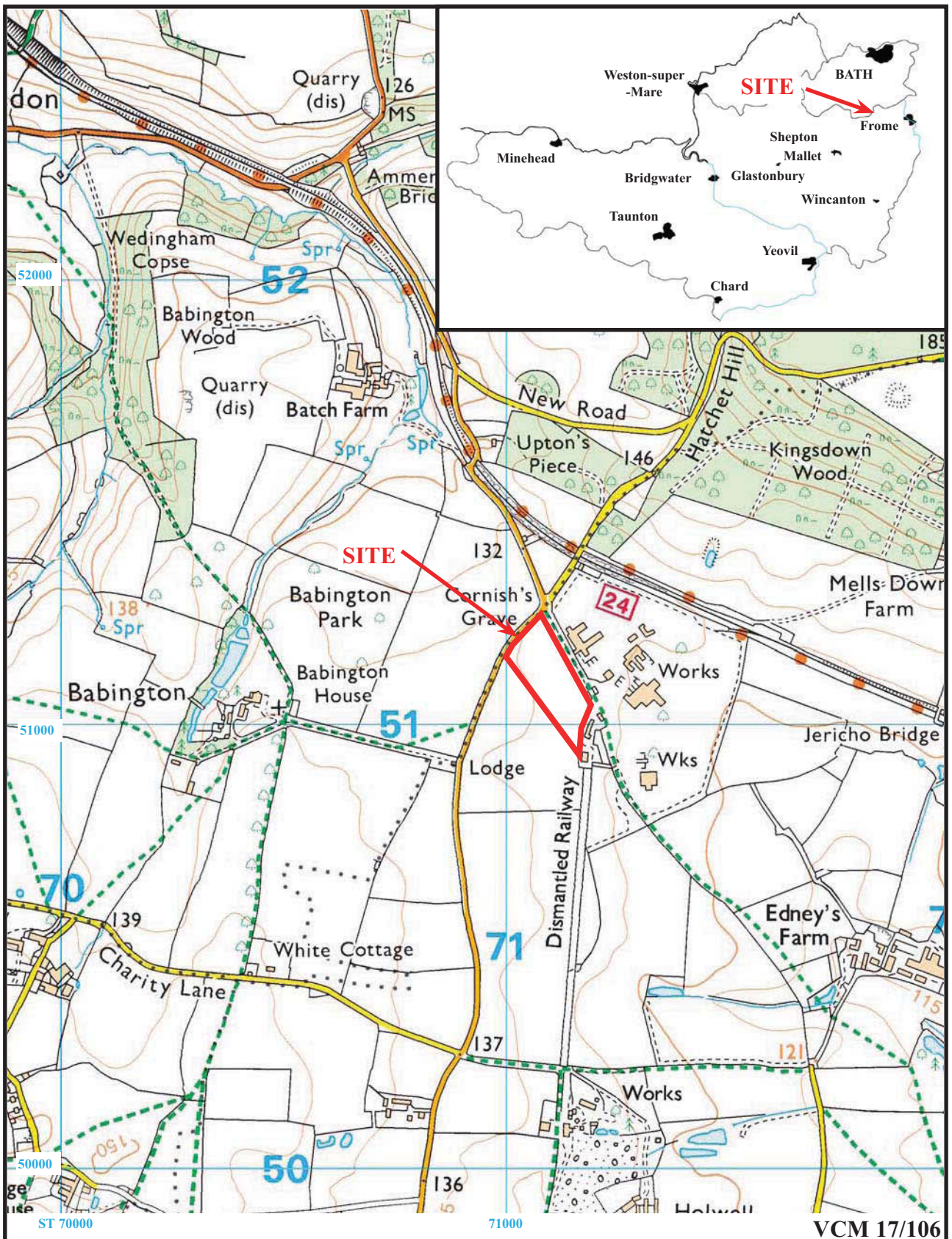
<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	28	1.6	0.2	0–0.2m grey brown clay silt topsoil, yellow brown white limestone natural geology. [Pl. 1]
2	26.6	1.6	0.27	0–0.27m grey brown clay silt topsoil, yellow brown white limestone natural geology.
3	25.2	1.6	0.28	0–0.20m grey brown clay silt topsoil, yellow brown white limestone natural geology. [Pl. 2]
4	25.6	1.6	0.36	0–0.30m grey brown clay silt topsoil, yellow brown white limestone natural geology. Two prehistoric small pits (1, 2), one posthole (3). [Pls 3, 7, 8 and 9]
5	24	1.6	0.3	0-0.25m grey brown clay silt topsoil, yellow brown white limestone natural geology. Modern furrow.
6	24.7	1.6	0.35	0-0.22m grey brown clay silt topsoil, yellow brown white limestone natural geology.
7	25.1	1.6	0.35	0-0.2m grey brown clay silt topsoil, yellow brown white limestone natural geology. Natural solution hollow.
8	25	1.6	0.43	0-0.21m grey brown clay silt topsoil, yellow brown white limestone natural geology. One small prehistoric pit (5). Natural solution hollow . [Pls 4 and 10]
9	26.6	1.6	0.3	0-0.25m grey brown clay silt topsoil, yellow brown white limestone natural geology.
10	24.4	1.6	0.6	0-0.28m grey brown clay silt topsoil, yellow brown white limestone natural geology. Natural solution hollow.
11	25.2	1.6	0.46	0-0.3m grey brown clay silt topsoil, 0.3-0.46m orange brown clay silt subsoil, yellow brown white limestone natural geology. [Pl. 5]
12	25.5	1.6	0.6	0-0.27m grey brown clay silt topsoil, 0.27-0.6m orange brown clay silt subsoil, yellow brown white limestone natural geology.
13	27.3	1.6	0.58	0-0.24m grey brown clay silt topsoil, 0.24-0.58m orange brown clay silt subsoil, yellow brown white limestone natural geology.
14	27.9	1.6	0.49	0-0.2m grey brown clay silt topsoil, 0.2-0.49m orange brown clay silt subsoil, yellow brown white limestone natural geology. Modern water utilities pipe. Victorian rubble detritus deposit related to the canal or railway. [Pl. 6]
15	29	1.6	0.55	0-0.23m grey brown clay silt topsoil, 0.23-0.55m orange brown clay silt subsoil, yellow brown white limestone natural geology.

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
4	1	52	Pit	Late Bronze Age/ Early Iron Age	Pottery
4	2	53	Pit	Undated	
4	3	54	Posthole	Undated	
8	5	56	Pit	Late Bronze Age/ Early Iron Age	Pottery
14		57	Deposit	Victorian	

APPENDIX 3: Catalogue of prehistoric pottery

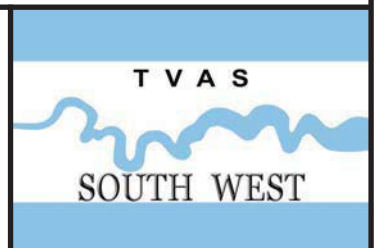
	<i>Fabric</i>		L1		S1	
<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>dep</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>
4	1	52	3	33		
8	3	54	1	2	2	6
	Totals		4	35	2	6

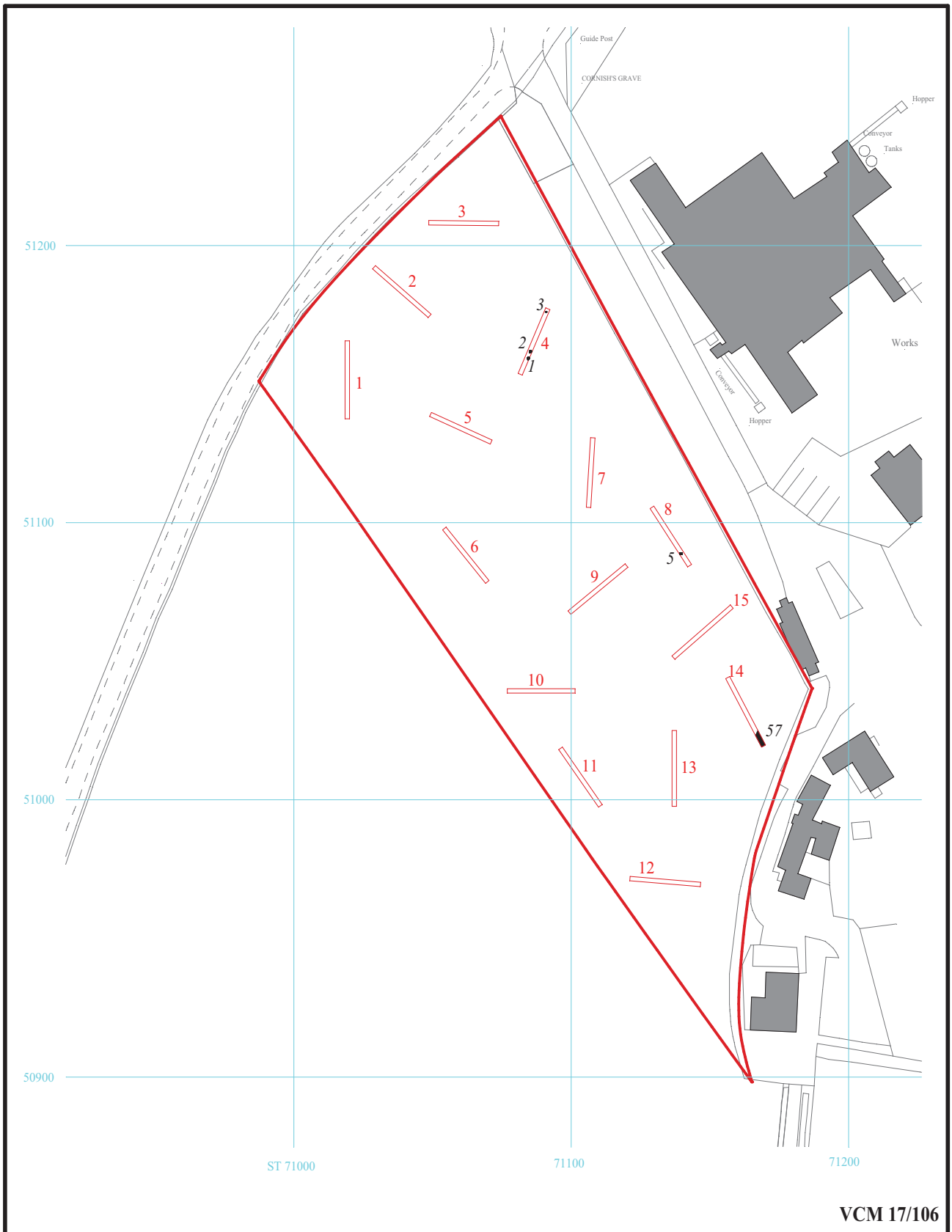


**Land at Mells Road, Vobster Cross
Mells, Somerset, 2017
Archaeological Evaluation**

Figure 1. Location of site in Mells and within Somerset.

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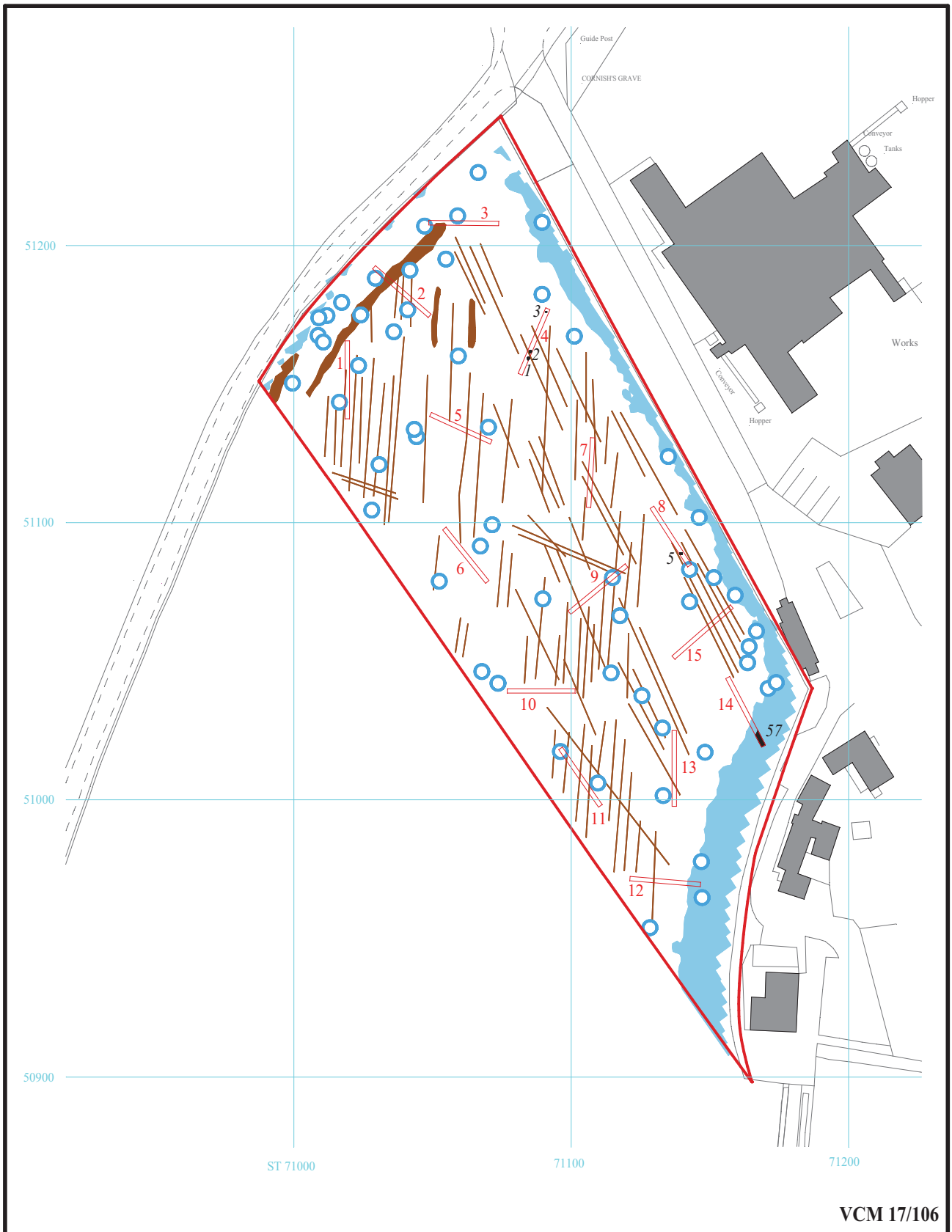


**Land at Mells Road, Vobster Cross,
Mells, Somerset, 2017
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Figure 2. Location of trenches and features.



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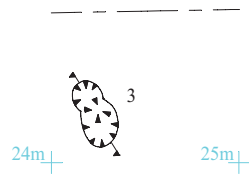
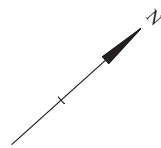
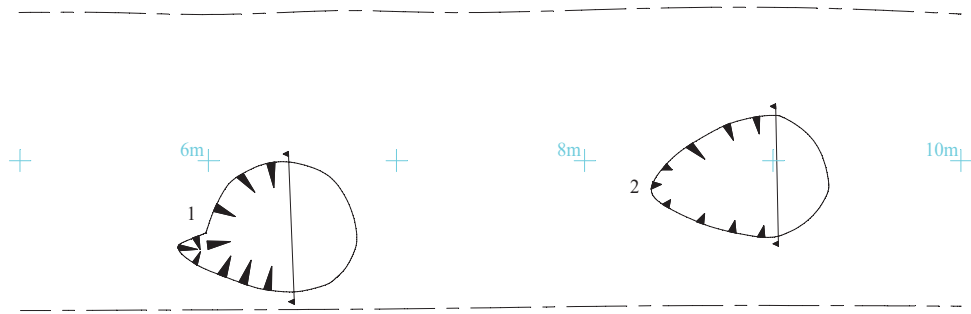


**Land at Mells Road, Vobster Cross,
Mells, Somerset, 2017
Archaeological Evaluation**

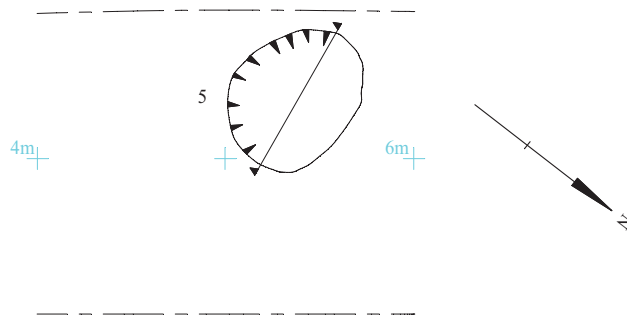
Figure 3. Location of trenches and features overlying geophysical survey results.



Trench 4



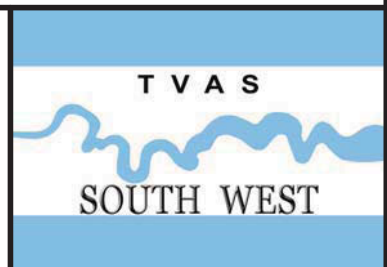
Trench 8



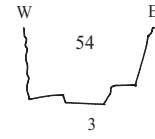
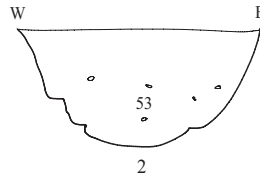
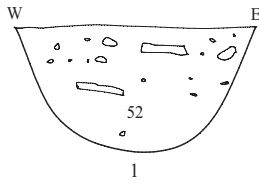
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Archaeological Evaluation**

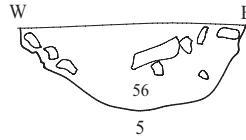
Figure 4. Detail of trenches.



Trench 4



Trench 8



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**Land at Mells Road, Vobster Cross,
Mells, Somerset, 2017
Archaeological Evaluation**

Figure 5. Sections.





Plate 1. Trench 1, looking northwest, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 2. Trench 3, looking east, Scales: Xm and Xm.

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**Land at Mells Road, Vobster Cross,
Mells, Somerset, 2017
Archaeological Evaluation
Plates 1 and 2.**





Plate 3. Trench 4, looking northeast, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 4. Trench 8, looking north, Scales: 2m and 1m.

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**Land at Mells Road, Vobster Cross,
Mells, Somerset, 2017
Archaeological Evaluation
Plates 3 and 4.**





Plate 5. Trench 11, looking northwest, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 6. Trench 14, deposit 57 looking northwest, Scales: 2m and 1m.

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**Land at Mells Road, Vobster Cross,
Mells, Somerset, 2017
Archaeological Evaluation
Plates 5 and 6.**

T V A S

SOUTH WEST



Plate 7. Trench 4, Pit 1, looking northeast, Scales: 0.3m and 0.2m.



Plate 8. Trench 4, Pit 2, looking northeast, Scales: 0.3m and 0.2m.

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Land at Mells Road, Vobster Cross,
Mells, Somerset, 2017
Archaeological Evaluation
Plates 7 and 8.





Plate 3. Trench 4, Posthole 3, looking north, Scales: 0.3m and 0.1m.



Plate 4. Trench 8, Pit 5, looking north, Scales: 0.3m and 0.2m.

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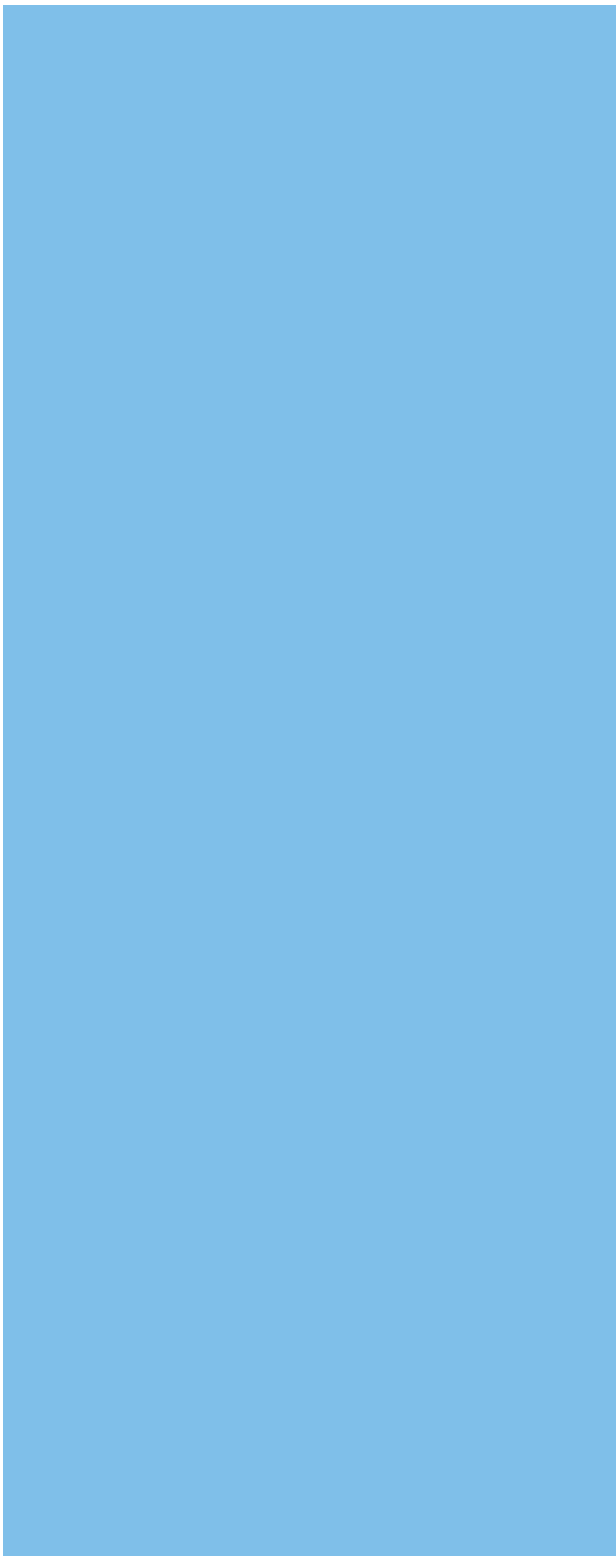
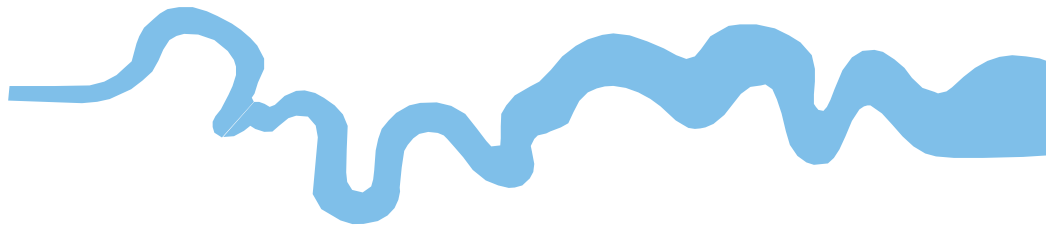
Land at Mells Road, Vobster Cross,
Mells, Somerset, 2017
Archaeological Evaluation
Plates 3 and 4.



TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43 AD 0 BC
Iron Age _____	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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