

T H A M E S V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Land north of Church Lane, Spencers Wood,
Reading, Berkshire**

Archaeological Recording Action

by Andy Taylor

Site Code: CLSW17/142

(SU 7174 6821)

Land north of Church Lane, Spencers Wood, Reading, Berkshire

**An Archaeological Recording Action for
CgMs Consulting Limited**

by Andy Taylor

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code CLSW 17/142

Summary

Site name: Land north of Church Lane, Spencers Wood, Reading, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 7174 6821

Site activity: Recording Action

Date and duration of project: 11th-25th July 2017

Project Coordinator: Tim Dawson

Site supervisor: Andy Taylor

Site code: CLSW 17/142

Area of site: c. 2ha

Summary of results: Two ditches and five pits of medieval date along with a post-medieval ditch were identified.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with a local museum prepared to accept archive material.

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

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 27.11.17
	Steve Preston✓ 22.11.17

Land north of Church Lane, Spencers Wood, Reading, Berkshire

An Archaeological Recording Action

by Andy Taylor

with contributions by Paul Blinkhorn, Danielle Milbank and Jo Pine

Report 17/142

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological recording action carried out on land at north of Church Lane, Spencers Wood, Reading, Berkshire (SU 7174 6821). (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned Mr Steven Weaver, of CgMs Consulting, Burlington House, Lypiatt Road, Cheltenham, GL50 2SY.

Planning permission (162829) has been gained from Wokingham Council for the development of land at Spencers Wood. A condition (33) was attached to the consent that required that a programme of archaeological investigation be carried out. This was in accordance with the Department of Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012), and the Council's policies on archaeology. A field evaluation had indicated an area of archaeological potential containing features that would be under threat of destruction during the development and that therefore would warrant a programme of archaeological mitigation. It was determined that this should take the form of a recording action.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Kathelen Leary, Archaeology Officer with Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the Council on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by the author with assistance from Cosmo Bacon and Tom Stewart between 11th and 25th July 2017. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and it is anticipated that it will be deposited with a local museum willing to accept archive material in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on a relatively flat parcel of land on the southern margins of Reading. It consisted of overgrown scrubland and is bounded by Church Lane to the south, the gardens of properties on the Lane to the west and fields to the north and east. The underlying geology is mapped as London Clay (BGS 2000), which was observed across the stripped area and the site lies at a height of c.41m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted by a previous evaluation (CA 2017) that identified an area of potential around a single trench (12) which comprised a posthole, two pits and a ditch (as well as modern soakaway and gully) (Fig 2). An earlier phase of evaluation trenching to the north and south (Taylor 2012) did not identify any deposits in those areas. The site lies in an area of the valley margins of the Foudry Brook/River Kennet which contains a range of archaeological sites. Field survey (Ford 1997) and aerial photography (Gates 1975) had previously indicated the archaeological potential in the area with recently excavated sites having shown an emphasis on deposits of Iron Age and Roman dates, such as at Grazeley Road and MereOak Lane to the west (Ford *et al.* 2011; Milbank 2010) and Iron Age to the south (ASE 2004a, 2004b Taylor and Dawson 2017). Both Roman (Booth 2007 fig 3.5) and Bronze Age (Brossler *et al.* 2004; 2013; Moore and Jennings 1992) occupation to the north-west are also recorded.

Objectives and methodology

The general objectives of the excavation were:

- to record and, if necessary, excavate and record all archaeological deposits and features within the areas threatened by the proposed development;
- to produce relative and absolute dating and phasing for deposits recorded on the site;
- to establish the character of these deposits in attempt to define functional areas on the site such as industrial, domestic, etc.; and
- to produce information on the economy and local environment and compare and contrast this with the results of other excavations in the region.

Specific research objectives were to attempt to address the following questions:

- When was the site first utilised and when was it abandoned?
- What is the palaeoenvironmental setting of the area?

Topsoil and subsoil were removed by a JCB type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. All archaeological features were to be planned and sectioned as a minimum objective, with excavation by hand or sampling to an agreed sample fraction dependent on the type and significance of the feature.

Results

The area opened was roughly square and covered approximately 37m by 35m. The excavation revealed a fairly modest number of archaeological features (Figs 3 and 4). The majority of these were of medieval date consisting of two ditches and five pits along with a post-medieval ditch.

Ditches 100 and 101

Ditches 100 (Pl. 1) and 101 (Pl. 2) were two segments of a possible boundary feature with an entranceway, aligned approximately E-W. Ditch 100 had two slots (2 and 3) dug across it which revealed it was between 0.80m and 1.40m wide, between 0.20m and 0.26m deep. It produced eight sherds of medieval pottery and four pieces of tile. Ditch 101 had three slots (5, 7, 8) dug across it which revealed it was between 0.81m and 0.87m wide, between 0.22m and 0.26m deep. It produced three pieces of medieval pottery and a piece of burnt flint.

Ditch 102

This was a post-medieval feature aligned approximately E-W that crossed the width of the excavated area, curving to the north towards the eastern side, and is likely to be the same feature as identified in evaluation trench 13 to the east. Two slots (4 and 6) were dug across it which revealed it was between 1.08m and 1.84m wide, between 0.39m and 0.52m deep. It produced four pieces of post-medieval pottery, five pieces of tile and a piece of glass bottle. The slot excavated in the evaluation (1209) had contained a worked flint flake.

Pits

Five pits were observed in the stripped area. Pit 1 measured 0.60m across, 0.06m deep and produced 51 sherds of medieval pottery. Oval pit 9 (Pl. 3) measured 2.8m by 2m and was 0.92m deep. It contained three fills (64-66) with fills 64 and 65 producing 19 and 8 sherds of medieval pottery respectively. Pits 10-12 were an inter-cutting group with 10 cutting 11, which in turn cut 12 (Pl. 4). Pit 10 was 1.80m wide, 0.25m deep and produced three sherds of pottery and three pieces of tile. Pit 11 was 1.55m wide, 0.20m deep and produced 11 sherds of pottery and three pieces of tile. Pit 12 measured 1.95m wide, 0.25m deep and produced six sherds of pottery and six pieces of tile. Pits 1203, 1205 and 1207 in evaluation trench 12 (CA 2017) had combined finds of a single sherd of medieval pottery (1203), 5g of burnt flint (1205) and a small amount (51g) of iron slag (1207).

Finds

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 108 sherds with a total weight of 1143g. It consisted mainly of earlier medieval (late 11th–mid/late 13th century) material, with two sherds of post-medieval wares. The following fabric types were noted:

ASH: Ashampstead Ware, 12th–14th century (Mephram and Heaton, 1995). 23 sherds, 261g.

EST: English Stoneware, 1680+ (Mountford 1971). 1 sherd, 3g.

MET: Metropolitan-type Slipware, 17th–18th century (Davey and Walker 2009). 1 sherd, 19g.

NAB: Newbury 'A/B' Ware, late 11th–late 14th century (Mephram 1997, 51-2). 82 sherds, 857g

SUR: Surrey Whiteware, mid 13th–mid 15th century (Pearce and Vince 1988). 1 sherd, 3g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Appendix 2. The range of fabric types is typical of sites in the region, and the assemblage is generally in good condition, with a number of large sherds and well-represented vessels present. For example, all but one of the sherds of Newbury A/B ware from Gully 1 (52) are from a single vessel, a partially complete unglazed jar with an everted rim. It is heavily sooted on the outer surface, and is a typical product of the tradition. It is clearly a primary deposit, but was too fragmentary to reconstruct. Most of the rest of the medieval pottery from the site comprised fragments of unglazed jars, along with a very few fragments of bowls and jugs. The full profile of a shallow bowl in Newbury A/B occurred in pit 2 (53).

Glazed sherds were very scarce. Three sherds from a single Ashampstead ware jar with a few external glaze splashes occurred in pit (69). All the pottery from that context came from no more than three vessels, indicating that it is also likely to be a primary deposit. The only fragment of a glazed jug was a small sherd of Surrey whiteware from pit 11 (67). It was somewhat abraded, but had a green glaze and thick, narrow, iron-rich slip stripes. It seems most likely that it is a fragment of a Kingston-type Ware jug in the “highly decorated” style of the mid-late 13th century (Pearce and Vince 1988, 35-8).

Ceramic Building Material by Danielle Milbank

Brick and tile fragment were recovered from seven contexts encountered during the excavation. In total, 26 fragments weighing 1825g were present. The majority of these are tile fragments, and no complete bricks or tiles were recovered. These were examined under x10 magnification, categorized where possible according to Harley 1974, and are summarized in Appendix 3.

Tile fragments were recovered from the fill of ditch 100, slot 2 (53) which comprised a fairly hard, evenly fired slay fabric with sparse sandy inclusions and a buff red colour. The form is uneven and the thickness is 11mm. The form and fabric are suggestive of a medieval (14th- or 15th-century) date.

Ditch 4 (58) contained tile fragments in a medium hard, slightly coarse red clay fabric and a brick piece in a similar fabric, categorized as Harley type 4 with a broadly early post-medieval date based on the fabric and the thickness of at least 55mm (the upper surface is missing). The same ditch (1 which revealed it was between 02) slot 6 (61) contained a single tile fragment which is of a soft, fine clay fabric with a light pink red colour and a with sparse groggy inclusions. the form is fairly even and two peg holes are present. The piece has a likely early post-medieval date. From the surface of the ditch came brick and tile fragments in a hard, evenly fired orange red brick fabric with a thickness of 48mm and an uneven finish suggestive of a late 16th or 17th century date.

Two small and somewhat abraded fragments of tile were noted in pit 9 (64). They are in a slightly soft, iron-rich sandy fabric with rare fine flint fragments. Both pieces are 12mm thick. They are too small to be confidently dated. Three pieces of tile were recovered from pit 10 (67) which are medium hard fabric with a red colour and a grey core indicating reduced conditions during firing. The thickness (10mm) and form, with slight edge-thickening, suggest that they are of medieval date. Tile was also recovered from pit 11 (69) which is a hard clay fabric with moderate fine sandy inclusions and a pale red buff colour, with a reduced core on two of the fragments. The finish is slightly uneven, with edge thickening, rounded edges and a rough base, with a shallow fingertip impression on one fragment. The pieces are of medieval date, perhaps from the early part of the period based on the form and fabric. Pit 12 contained pieces of tile of a similar fabric with a broadly similar date.

Overall, the brick and tile recovered reflects the range of features of medieval and post-medieval date encountered on the site, and represent common forms of brick and of (peg) roof tile. Although these materials are widespread, the use of tiles on buildings was limited generally to building of high status in the first half of the period, before becoming more widespread by the 15th century.

Glass by Danielle Milbank

One fragment of glass was recovered from the infilling deposit of ditch 102, slot 4 (58). This comprises a small piece of the rim of a green coloured shaft and globe bottle. The v-shaped form of the string rim suggests a date in the late 17th century, around 1680-1700.

Macrobotanical plant material and charcoal by Jo Pine

Three bulk soil samples from the excavated features were processed using standard water flotation techniques. The flots were sieved to 0.25mm and air dried and the resultant flots examined under a low-power binocular microscope at a magnification of x10. No cereal or charred seeds were present.

Conclusion

The excavation revealed a modest number of archaeological deposits, consistent with what had been identified in the earlier evaluation. Ditches 100 and 101 may represent an E-W boundary feature, probably dating from the later part of the medieval period, since although the pottery allows an earlier date (12th or 13th century), the tile (tentatively) appears likely to be later, and all of the pottery would sit equally well in the 14th century. There was no evidence of N-S aligned returns were identified in the evaluation or excavation to suggest the presence of an enclosure. The presence of contemporary pits may indicate that the north was the interior side of the activity with the ditches acting as the

boundary. A moderate amount of pottery was recovered, enough to date the features but the presence of the pits may suggest that this may be on the fringe of an occupation area rather than an empty area possibly used for stock. Unfortunately no bone or plant material survived with which to attempt to address questions relating to the environment or economy of the site beyond the obvious point that nearly all of the pottery was sourced from local production centres and does not indicate widespread trading (or other) links, or any great wealth. However, the assemblage is too small to read much into this. No further evidence was forthcoming to add to the small amount of ironworking slag from the evaluation.

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APPENDIX 1: Catalogue of Excavated Features

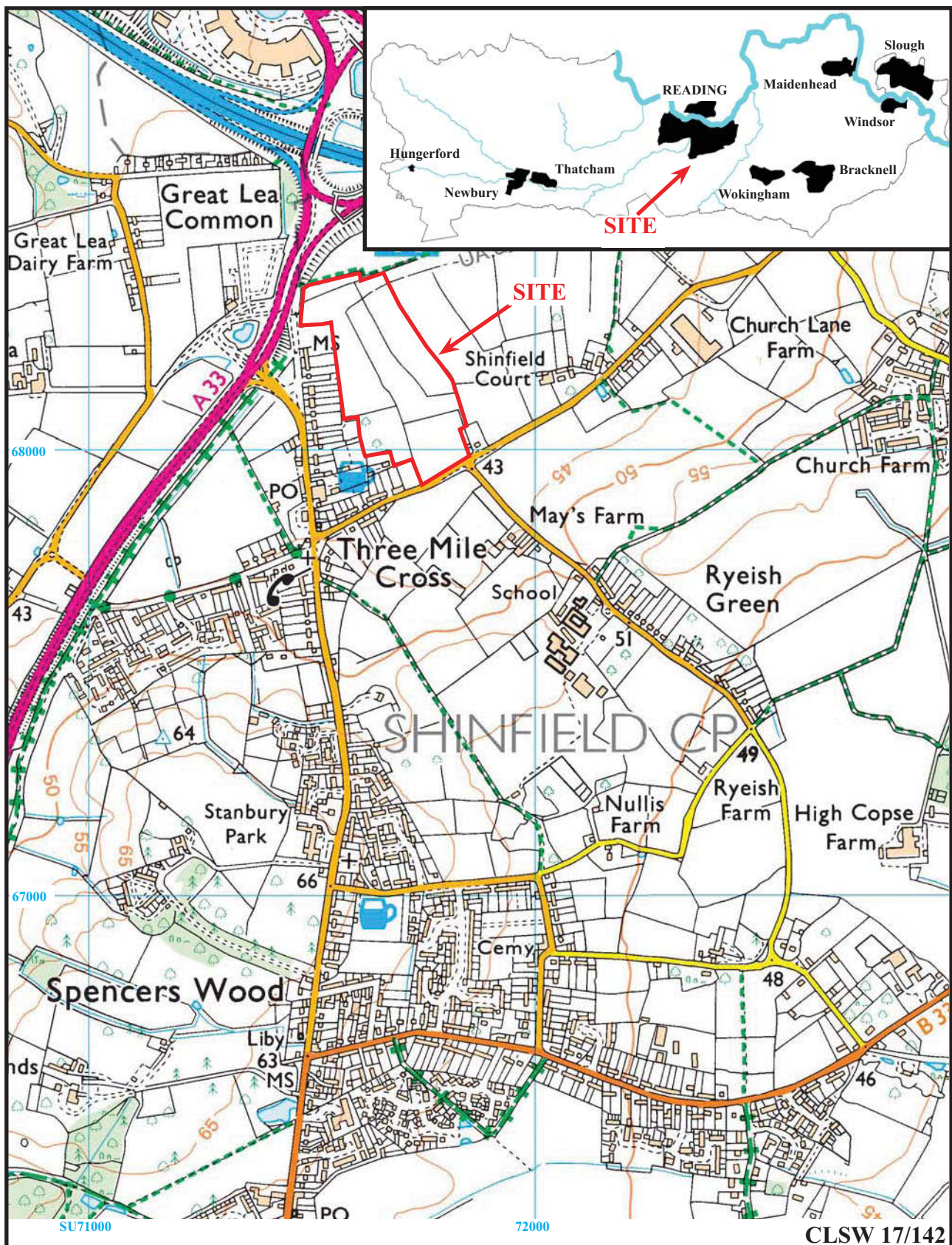
<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>Type</i>
	50		Topsoil
	51		Subsoil
1	52		Gully terminus/pit
2	53–55	100	Ditch
3	57	100	Ditch terminus
4	58–59	102	Ditch
5	60	101	Ditch terminus
6	61	102	Ditch
7	62	101	Ditch
8	63	101	Ditch
9	64–66		Pit
10	67–68		Pit
11	69–70		Pit
12	71–73		Pit

APPENDIX 2: Catalogue of Pottery by fabric by number of sherds and weight (in g).

			NAB		ASH		SUR		MET		EST		
<i>Group</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt</i>	<i>Date (tpq)</i>
	1	52	49	374	2	16	-	-	-	-	-	-	12th century
100	2	53	7	183	1	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	12th century
102	4	58	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	19	-	-	17th century
102	6	61	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	Late 17th century
101	7	62	1	23	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Late 11th century
	9	64	8	89	9	96	-	-	-	-	-	-	12th century
	9	65	5	32	1	18	-	-	-	-	-	-	12th century
	10	67	1	2	1	9	1	3	-	-	-	-	Mid 13th century
	11	69	5	62	9	107	-	-	-	-	-	-	12th century
	12	71	6	92	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Late 11th century
		Total	82	857	23	261	1	3	1	19	1	3	

APPENDIX 3. Catalogue of ceramic building material

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>
2	53	100	Ditch	4	77
4	58	102	Ditch	4	670
6	61	102	Gully	1	102
9	64		Pit	2	21
10	67		Pit	3	122
11	69		Pit	3	350
12	71		Pit	6	83
		102	Ditch	3	400
				26	1825



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**Land at Church Lane, Three Mile Cross,
Spencers Wood, Wokingham, Berkshire, 2017
Archaeological Recording Action**

Figure 1. Location of site in relation to Spencers Wood and
Berkshire.

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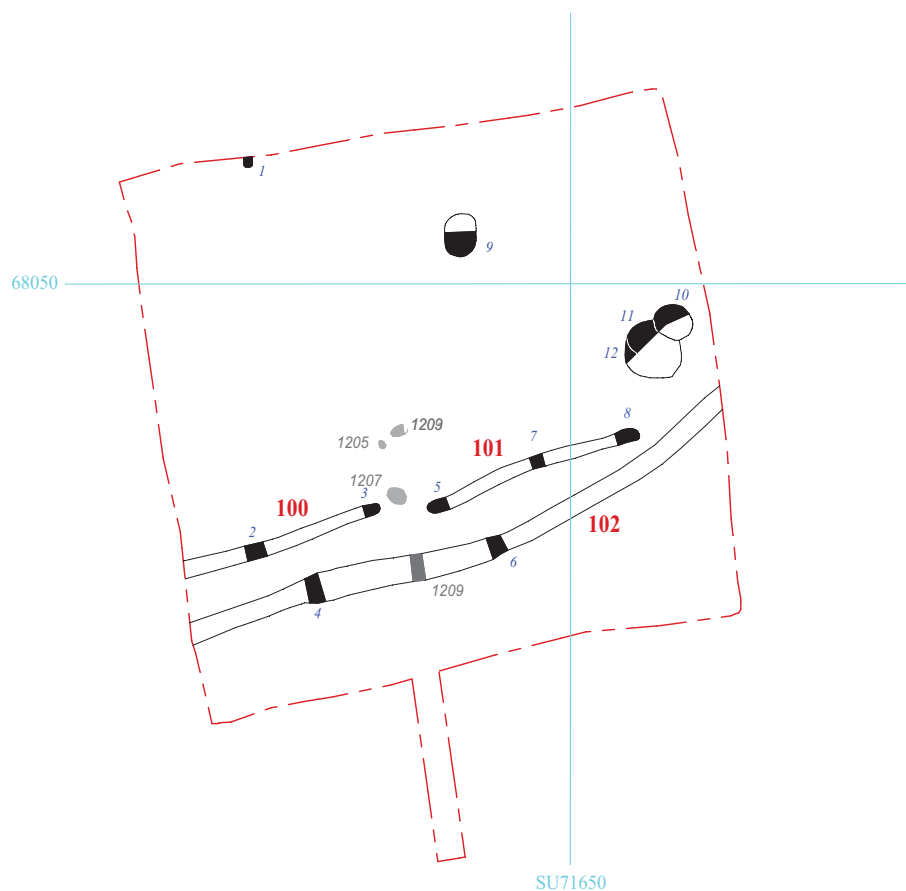


**Land at Church Lane, Three Mile Cross, Spencers Wood,
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Figure 2. Location of recording action area and evaluation trenches.



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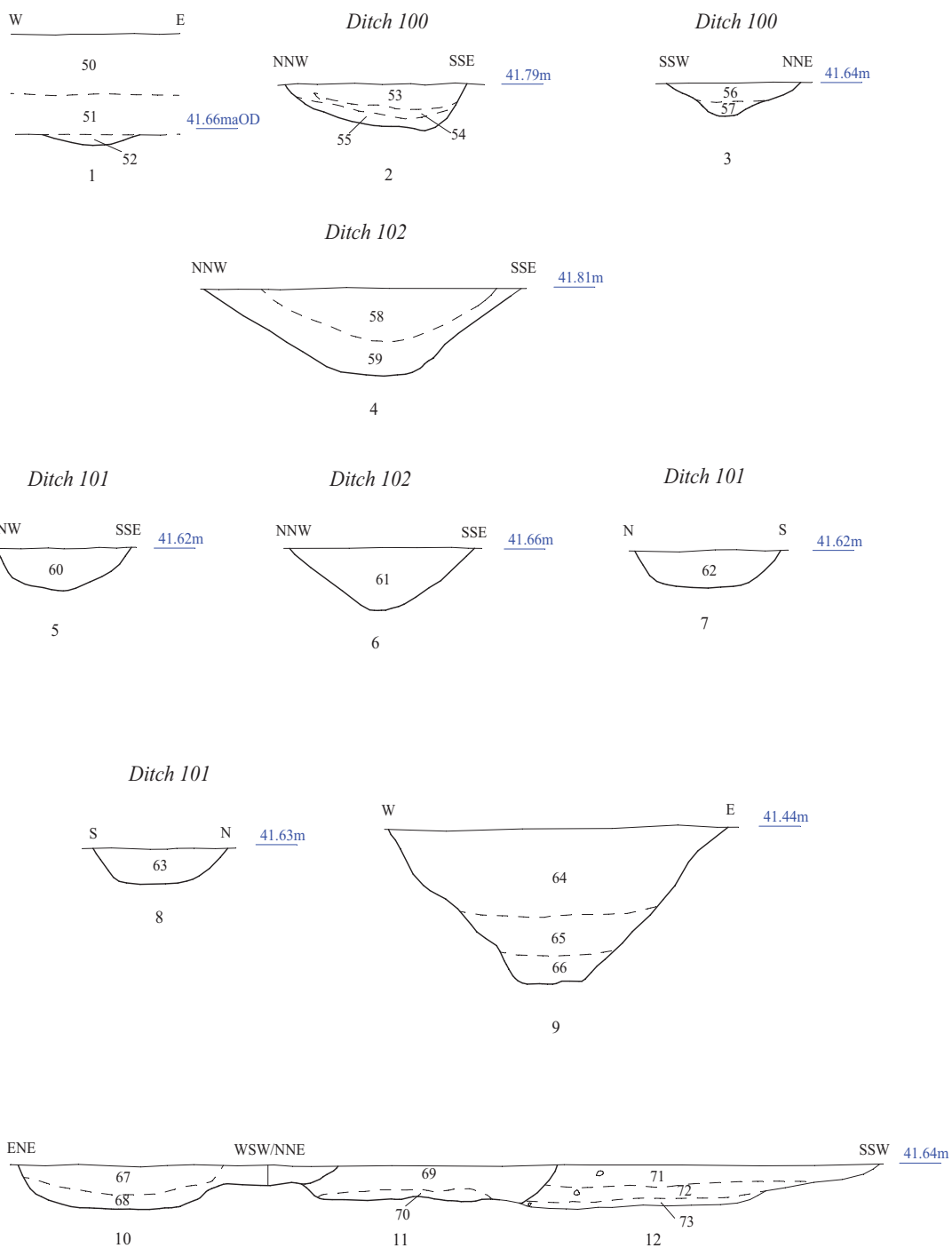
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**Land at Church Lane, Three Mile Cross, Spencers Wood,
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Figure 3. Detail of area.

0 25m

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Figure 4. Sections.

0 2.5m

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Plate 1. Ditch 100, slot 2, looking east, Scales: 1m and 0.3m.



Plate 2. Ditch 102, slot 4, looking east, Scales: 1m and 0.3m.

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Plates 1 and 2.**

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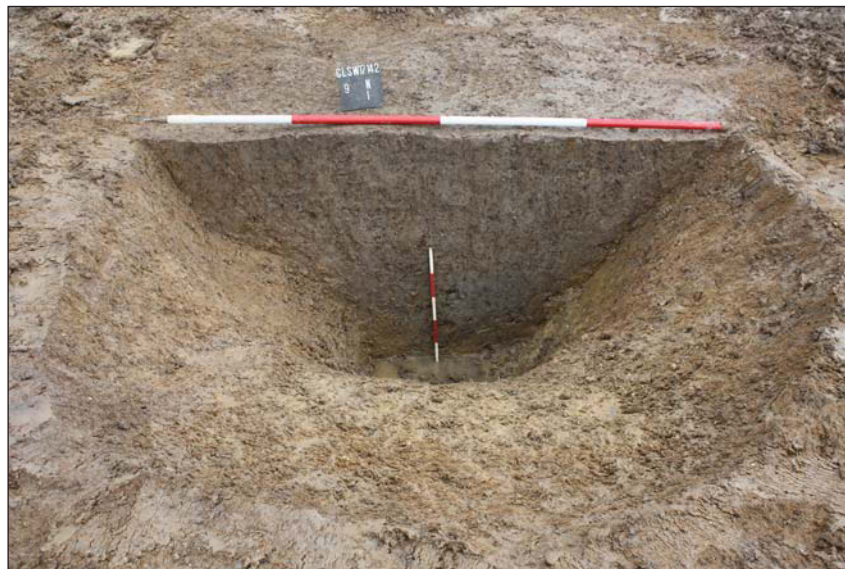


Plate 3. Pit 9, looking north, Scales: 2m and 0.5m.



Plate 4. Pits 10, 11 and 12, looking south east,
Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.3m and 0.1m.

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**Land at Church Lane, Three Mile Cross, Spencers Wood,
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Archaeological Recording Action
Plates 3 and 4.**

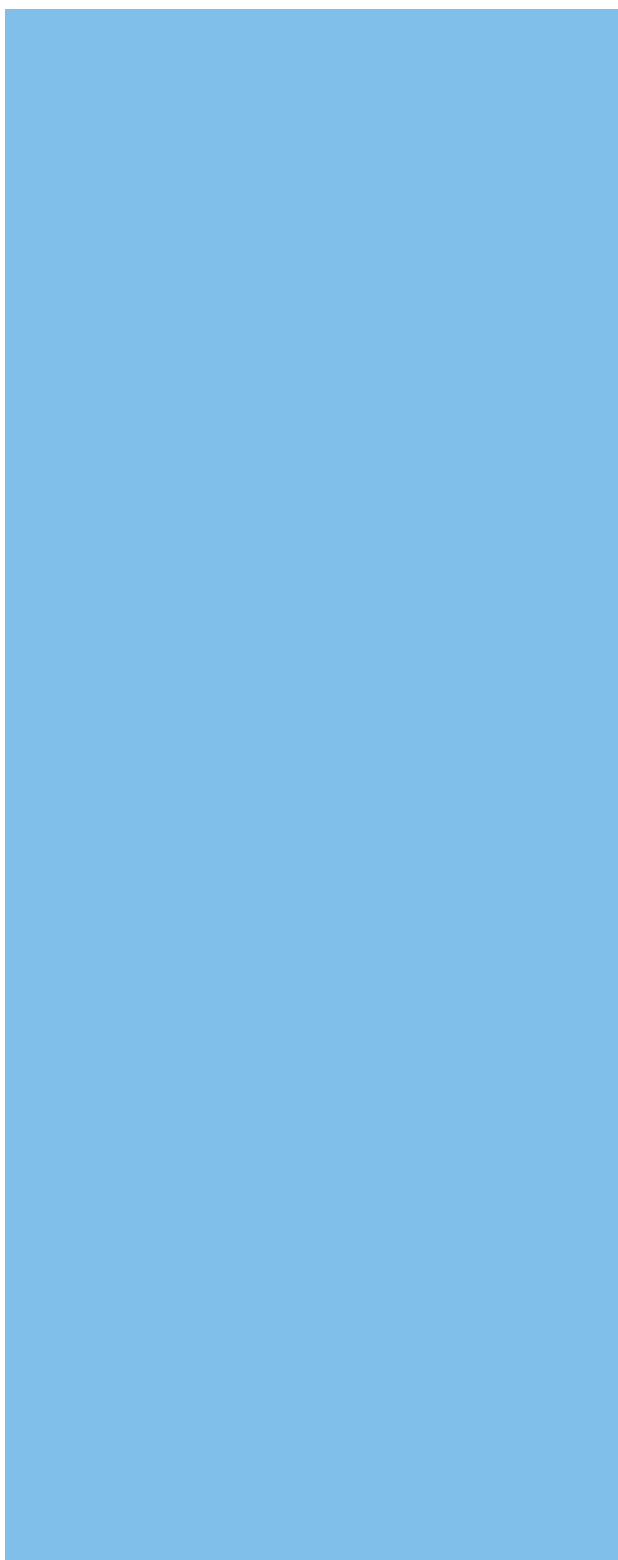
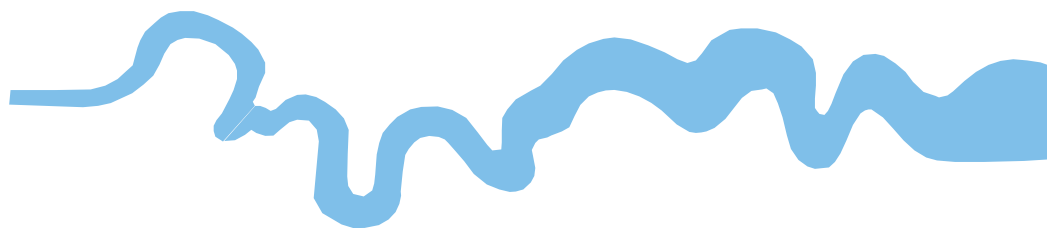
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TIME CHART

Calendar Years

Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43
	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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