THAMES VALLEY

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Phase A1, Sutton Wick Quarry, Oday Hill, Abingdon, Oxfordshire

An archaeological Recording Action

By Andy Taylor

SWQ16/62

(SU4876 9481)

Phase A1, Sutton Wick Quarry, Oday Hill, Abingdon, Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Excavation Report

for Tuckwells

by Andy Taylor

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code SWQ 16/62

Summary

Site name: Sutton Wick Quarry, Oday Hill, Abingdon, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 4880 9494

Site activity: Excavation

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Andy Taylor

Site code: SWQ 16/62

Area of site: *c*. 2 hectares

Summary of results: The excavation revealed two phases of Late Iron Age activity beneath alluvium. This mostly consisted of linear features forming a series of fields with associated paddocks. Nine pits were also observed. Finds were very sparse but the limited pottery assemblage suggests most features date from the 1st century BC to 1st century AD. A few struck flints hint at Neolithic to Bronze Age activity, and one shallow pit is possibly from this period.

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 10.01.18 Steve Preston✓05.01.18

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Phase A1, Sutton Wick Quarry, Oday Hill, Abingdon, Oxfordshire
An Archaeological Excavation

by Andy Taylor
with contributions from Steve Ford, Malcolm Lyne and Lizzi Lewins

Report 16/62b

Introduction

An archaeological excavation was carried out by Thames Valley Archaeological Services on land at Sutton Wick Quarry, Oday Hill, Abingdon, Oxfordshire (SU 4876 9481) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Stuart Lodge of Tuckwells Ltd, Thrupp |Lane, Radey, Oxfordshire OX14 3NG.

Planning permission (MW0139/16) has been gained from Oxfordshire County Council to extract sand, gravel and clay from a parcel of land (*c.*8ha) at Sutton Wick Quarry, Abingdon, Oxfordshire. The consent is subject to two conditions (19 and 20) relating to archaeology, which require archaeological monitoring and recording during the initial stages of the extraction process. This is in accordance with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and the County Council's policies. The stripping of the site, using a 360° type machine fitted with a toothless grading bucket, took place between 2nd May and 14th June 2017 with the excavation work taking place between 22nd May and 14th June 2017. The archive is currently held by Thames Valley Archaeological Services, 47-49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading, RG1 5NR and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Service in due course.

The work was carried out according to a written scheme of investigation approved by Mr Hugh Coddington, Archaeology Team Leader with Oxfordshire County Council.

Topography and geology

The site comprises a roughly rectangular plot of scrubland located on the southern margins of Abingdon (Figs 1 and 2). It lies to the east of Stonehill Lane and to the north of Bassett Lane, both of which lie to the north of Sutton Wick in Oxfordshire. The geology is mapped as a mixture of alluvium and first terrace gravel (BGS 1971), which was observed across the site. The site lies at approximately 50m above Ordnance Datum in the valley of the River Thames, below the confluence of the Ock, although the natural hydrology of the area has been artificially altered by mineral extraction and some canalization.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential for the site has been highlighted in a brief prepared by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service (Coddington 2016). In summary, the site lies within the archaeologically rich Thames Valley with a wide range of sites and finds recorded from surrounding areas, especially those recorded as cropmarks visible from the air (Benson and Miles 1974; Booth *et al.* 2007; Lambrick and Robinson 2009; Dils and Yates 2013). Various early prehistoric monuments have been recorded in the general area with a modest number of earlier Neolithic monuments such as long barrows, a *cursus* and a causewayed enclosure, and more numerous Bronze Age round barrows. Extensive Iron Age and Roman settlements are recorded along with their adjacent land allotment. Fewer Saxon sites are recorded but a palace complex has been recorded to the south-east at Sutton Courtenay (Hamerow *et al.* 2007).

The site contains a number of linear cropmarks visible on aerial photographs, which were evaluated in 2000 (JMHS 2000). This evaluation was hampered by excessive flooding but revealed a trackway possibly of Roman date along with a possible human cremation burial, several pits and a number of burnt tree throw holes. The site contained a higher 'island' of gravel surrounded by alluvium.

Aims and Objectives

The General Objectives of the project were to:

> excavate and record all archaeological deposits and features within the area threatened by the proposed development;
> produce relative and absolute dating for deposits and features recorded on the site;
> 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 Objectives for the excavation were to attempt to address the following questions:

> When was the site first occupied?
> What is the layout and organisation of the site?
> What activities were taking place on the site?
> What is the nature of any landscape features encountered (eg fields, boundary features, large enclosures) and what is there spatial organisation?
> What is the palaeoenvironmental setting of the area?

The area to be excavated was measured *c.*2 hectares in area, as shown on Figure 1. Topsoil and other overburden were removed under continuous archaeological supervision by a 360° type machine fitted with a toothless grading bucket (Pls 1 and 2). Approximately 0.25m of topsoil overlay 0.2m of clayey subsoil which overlay brown alluvium above the gravel. There was more alluvium to the southwest. All archaeological features were to

be planned and sectioned as a minimum objective, to agreed sampling fractions depending on the nature of the feature.

The Excavation

The excavation revealed a modest amount of archaeological deposits. These consisted of linear features most likely representing at least two phases of field system and nine pits. Although few finds were recovered he majority of the deposits dated from the Late Iron Age/Early Roman period.

Phase 1: Neolithic/Bronze Age

Nine flint flakes were recovered during the excavation, dating from between the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods. Most of these were recovered from deposits from later periods and as such can only be regarded as residual material: a possible exception being pit 18 which contained five flint flakes and three spalls, and nothing that need be later. These finds probably point to generalised use of the wider landscape in the vicinity of the excavation area. rather than an occupation site.

Phase 2: Late Iron Age 1

The majority of linear features (1000-1009) on the site come from this phase and form a series of field systems and paddocks with segmented boundaries and entranceways. Although gully 1009 did appear to cut 1008 it seems likely that they are contemporary. However, none of these produced any datable material.

Ditch 1000 was a short stretch at the northern end of the site that continued outside the excavation area but terminated to the south after 20m. Along with a pronounced kink in part of 1001 opposite the terminus (37) of 1000, it is likely forming an entrance into another field or enclosure. Ditch 1000 had two slots excavated (37 and 38) measuring 1.30m wide and 0.49m deep. Ditch 1001 was truncated to the west but had four slots (29, 34, 35, 36) dug into it measuring between 0.85m and 1.07m wide and between 0.31m and 0.50m deep.

Ditch 1002 was heavily truncated by works to the west and north but was likely a boundary edge of one of the larger paddocks to the west. To the east it was associated with 1003, 1004 and 1005 all of which led off it to the east and formed subdivisions of a much larger field. Ditch 1002 was investigated in four slots (2, 4, 8, 10) measuring between 0.83m and 1m wide and between 0.22m and 0.30m deep.

Gullies 1003, 1006 and 1009 seem to be forming a much larger field or enclosure, which are further sub-divided with 1004, 1005 and 1008 making smaller paddocks. Gully 1003 was a small stretch of linear

terminating at both ends. It had three slots (11, 12, 13) dug into it measuring between 0.55m and 0.88m wide and between 0.23m and 0.28m deep. Gully 1006 had five slots (25, 27, 28, 30, 31) excavated across it measuring between 0.67m and 1.10m wide and between 0.24m and 0.42m deep. A single flint flake was recovered from slot 31 which must be regarded as residual material. Gully 1009 had seven slots (1, 46, 47, 49, 102, 105, 107) dug across it measuring between 0.52m and 0.92m wide and between 0.23m and 0.38m deep (Pl. 3). Terminus 46 contained a single sherd of pottery.

Gullies 1004, 1005 and the northern end of 1008 form a smaller paddock along the edge of 1002. Gully 1004 terminated at both ends and had three slots (9, 14, 16) dug into it. These measured between 0.61m and 0.80m wide and between 0.08m and 0.33m deep. Gully 1005 was another small stretch of gully that terminated at both ends. It was investigated in three slots (5, 6, 7) measuring between 0.54m and 0.77m wide and between 0.24m and 0.34m deep. Gully 1008 had four slots (17, 20, 22, 106) excavated across it measuring between 0.75m and 0.90m wide and between 0.22m and 0.34m deep.

Phase 3: Late Iron Age 2

Ditches 1007, 1010 and 1011 are all likely to be contemporary and form the basis of a second phase of Late Iron Age activity which developed and remodelled the field system. Ditch 1007 had seven slots (21, 23, 24, 26, 32, 33, 101) dug across it measuring between 0.57m and 1.33m wide (Pls 4 and 5). It produced nine sherds of pottery (half the site's total assemblage) and 11 pieces of animal bone. Ditch 1011 was a continuation of 1007 and had three slots (104, 108, 112) dug across it measuring between 0.43m and 0.69m wide and between 0.08m and 0.14m deep. Slot 112 contained a flint flake which is considered residual. Ditch 1010 was roughly parallel to ditch 1007 and as such is likely to be of a contemporary date. Ditch 1010 had seven slots (41, 42, 43, 44, 48, 109, 111) dug into it measuring between 0.52m and 1.43m wide, between 0.27m and 0.36m deep and produced two sherds of Late Iron Age pottery (slot 42).

Nine pits were also excavated, which cannot be assigned to either of the phases, except that it is possible that pit 18 was Neolithic or Bronze Age, and pit 100 post-dated ditch 1009.

Discrete Features

Cut	*Fill(s)*	*Width (m)*	*Depth (m)*	*Finds*
15	72	0.90	0.14	Pottery (1 sherd)
18	75	1.25	0.15	Flint (5 flakes, 3 spalls)
19	76	1.65	0.15	-
39	194	0.72	0.13	- (Pl. 6)
40	195	0.85	0.14	-
45	252	0.66	0.19	Pottery (5 sherds, one pot)
100	260	0.70	0.37	-
103	264	0.90	0.05	-

110	280, 281	0.88	0.20	-

Finds

Pottery by Malcolm Lyne

The site yielded just 18 sherds (293g) of pottery from eight contexts. This pottery ranges in date from the Late Iron Age into the early years after the Roman Conquest. All of the pottery assemblages were quantified by numbers of sherds and their weights per fabric. These fabrics were classified using a x8 magnification lens with built-in metric graticule in order to identify the natures, forms, sizes and frequencies of added filler inclusions and those naturally present in the potting clay. Two numbered fabric series were drawn up, with the prefixes LIA and R for Late Iron Age and Roman respectively. None of the pottery assemblages are large enough for further quantification by Estimated Vessel Equivalents (EVEs) based on rim sherds (Orton 1975)

Fabrics

Late Iron Age

LIA1. Silty handmade black fabric with some very-fine quartz sand, occasional shell inclusions and a little crushed angular white grog. Equivalent of fabric 2 at Ashville Trading Estate, Abingdon (De Roche 1978)).
LIA2. Grog-tempered 'Belgic' ware
LIA3. Carbon-soaked black fabric with profuse glauconite filler.

Roman

R1. Coarse pale grey to off-white grog-tempered tempered fabric fired black externally with texture of nougat (Young 1977 Fabric 2, p.202)
R2. Rough grey wheel-turned grey fabric with profuse <0.30 mm. multi-coloured quartz-sand filler
R3. Wheel-turned silty grey fabric fired smooth pink externally with occasional <0.50 mm. quartz-sand grains.
R4. South Gaulish La Graufesenque Samian.

The Assemblages

Assemblage 1. From Cuts 21, 24, 26 and 33 across Gully 1007.

The nine sherds (107g) of pottery from these various sections comprise one in silty black fabric LIA1 (*c.* 300BC–AD50), three in 'Belgic' grog-tempered fabric LIA2 (*c*. 25BC–AD50), one in fabric R1 (*c*. AD43–100), two in greyware fabric R2 (AD50–200) and one each in pink-surfaced wheel-turned fabric R3 and from a South Gaulish Samian Dr.18 platter (*c*. AD43–90). These indicate that the gully was dug during the Late Iron Age and remained in use up until *c*. AD100.

The other sherds indicate that the rest of the features on the site are also Late Iron Age in date.

Struck Flint by Steve Ford

A small collection of just ten struck flints were recovered from the excavations. The flints were variously iron stained, patinated or relatively unaltered. They comprised seven flakes and 3 spalls (pieces less than 20x20mm). Shallow pit 18 (75) contained five flakes one of which was burnt and another patinated and three spalls again one being burnt and another patinated. It seems likely that this feature is of prehistoric (Neolithic/Bronze Age) date. Single flakes came from gullies 31 (151) and 112 (283). The flints are not closely datable, but are likely to be of Neolithic or Bronze Age date.

Animal Bone by Lizzi Lewins

A small assemblage of animal bone (24 fragments) weighing a total of 65g was recovered from three features. The bone was highly fragmented and eroded, hindering identification. The only identifiable fragment was a small piece of jaw from a large mammal (cattle or horse) from ditch slot 21 (78). The small fragments recovered from pit 18 (75) had been burnt. No further analysis was possible.

Environmental Samples by Roz McKenna

Bulk soil samples were taken from 29 contexts for the recovery of environmental remains and to enhance small finds recovery. The samples were processed using standard water flotation methods and the flots (the material from each sample that floats) were sieved to 0.25mm and air dried, then examined under a low-power binocular microscope at magnifications up to x40. Charred plant macrofossils were not present in any of the samples and just two contained charcoal fragments. A random selection of ideally 100 fragments of charcoal of varying sizes was made, which were then identified. Where samples did not contain 100 identifiable fragments, all fragments were studied and recorded. Identification was made using the guides of Schweingruber (1978) and Hather (2000) (Appendix 5).

The preservation of the charcoal fragments was fair. The total range of taxa comprises willow/poplar (*Salix/Populus*). The deposits from which the samples derive, probably represent the intentional deposition or accumulation of domestic waste associated with fires. Willow/Poplar wood is anatomically less dense than for example, oak and ash, and burn quickly at relatively high temperatures. This property makes them good to use as kindling, as the high temperatures produced would encourage the oak to ignite and start to burn. They indicate the presence of carr fen woodland, as willow and poplar are trees that thrive in waterlogged and damp soils, particularly in areas close to streams or with a high water table, as here. Kindling (as opposed to fuel wood) was most likely obtained from the area close to the site.

Conclusion

The excavation has revealed a modest amount of archaeological features, some of which had been identified in the earlier evaluation. Although few finds were obtained the dating of the pottery recovered was consistent and it is likely that these date to the Late Iron Age period. The full extent of the field system(s) was not determined as the linear features extended in all directions outside of the stripped area. The deposits mostly comprised linear features forming either field systems or enclosures with further internal sub-divisions into smaller paddocks. The small volume of pottery recovered, is enough to date the ditches, but the paucity of other finds and discrete features suggests that this area was not an occupation focus, but more likely, an area for the handling of stock. Much of the site had clearly experienced episodic flooding and alluvial deposits were visible across the site especially for the southern portion, including the infill of the linear features. The increasingly wet nature of the site was also supported by the environmental data that showed the environs was populated by tree species associated with wet or waterlogged areas. This may suggest that this was a seasonally used site and not suitable for all year round habitation. As there was no evidence for organised activity before construction of these fields, they may represent a relatively short-lived expansion of settled land exploited for stock management in the decades either side of the Roman conquest. It is conceivable that this corresponds to the period when the '*oppidum'* at Abingdon was being constructed (Allen 1991; 1993) but the dating evidence is too patchy for any certainty. The field may go out of use relatively quickly due to a change in fashion, change in needs or the unsuitability of this land due to increased waterlogging and flooding.

Acknowledgements

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APPENDIX 1: Catalogue of Excavated Features

Group	*Cut*	*Deposit*	*Type*	*Dating*
		50	Topsoil	
		51	Subsoil	
		52	Alluvium	
		53	Alluvium	
1009	1	54, 55	Gully	
1002	2	56	Gully	
1005?	3	57	Gully	
1002	4	58	Gully	
1005	5	59	Gully	
1005	6	60	Gully	
1005	7	61–3	Gully	
1002	8	64	Gully	
1004	9	65	Gully terminus	
1002	10	66	Gully	
1003	11	67, 68	Gully	
1003	12	69	Gully terminus	
1003	13	70	Gully terminus	
1004	14	71	Gully	
	15	72	Burnt pit	
1004	16	73	Gully terminus	
1008	17	74	Gully terminus	
	18	75	Shallow pit	
	19	76	Shallow pit	
1008	20	77	Gully	
1007	21	78	Gully	
1008	22	79	Gully	
1007	23	80	Gully	
1007	24	81	Gully	
1006	25	82	Gully terminus	
1007	26	83	Gully	
1006	27	84–7	Gully	
1006	28	88–91	Gully	
1001	29	92–3	Gully	
1006	30	94–7	Gully	
1006	31	98–9, 150–3	Gully	
1007	32	154–8	Gully	
1007	33	159–65	Gully	
1001	34	166–72	Gully	
1001	35	173–7	Gully	
1001	36	178–84	Gully	
1000	37	185–8	Ditch	
1000	38	189–93	Ditch	
	39	194	Shallow pit	
	40	195	Gully	
1010	41	196–7	Ditch	
1010	42	198–9	Ditch	
1010	43	250	Ditch	
1010	44	251	Ditch	
	45	252	Pit	
1009	46	253–4	Ditch	
1009	47	255–6	Ditch	
1010	48	257–8	Ditch	
1009	49	259	Ditch	
	100	260	Pit	
1007	101	261	Gully terminus	
1009	102	262–3	Ditch	
	103	264	Pit	
1011	104	265–6	Gully	
1009	105	267–71	Ditch	
1008	106	272–3	Gully	
1009	107	274–7	Ditch	
1011	108	278	Gully	
1010	109	279	Ditch	
	110	280–1	Pit	
1010	111	282	Ditch	
1011	112	283	Gully	

APPENDIX 2*:* Catalogue of Pottery

Cut	*Deposit*	*Fabric*	*Form*	*Date-range*	*No of sherds*	*Wt in gm*	*Comments*
15	72	LIA2	Jar base	25BC–AD50	1	42	Fresh.
21	78	LIA2	Chips	25BC–AD50	3	7	Fresh.
24	81	LIA1 R3	Jar basal closed form	300BC–AD50 AD50–300	1 1	49 6	Fresh fresh
26	83	R1 R2	Jar jar	AD43–100 AD50–200	1 2	32 11	Fresh
33	165	R4	Dr 18	AD43–90	1	2	
42	198	LIA1	Open form	AD1–50	2	122	
45	252	LIA1	Lumps	300BC–AD50	5	13	One pot
46	254	LIA3		100BC–AD50	1	9	Abraded.

APPENDIX 3: Catalogue of Animal Bone

Cut	*Deposit*	*Group*	*Type*	*No Frags*	*Wt (g)*
21	78	1007	Gully	8	46
24	81	1007	Gully	3	11

APPENDIX 4: Catalogue of Struck Flint

Cut	*Deposit*	*Group*	*Type*	*Sample*	*No*	*Intact Flake*	*Broken flake*	*Spall*
18	75		Pit		8	1	4 (1 burnt, 1 patinated)	3 (1 burnt, 1 patinated)
31	151	1006	Gully		1		1	
112	283	1012	Gully	29	1		1	

APPENDIX 5: Charcoal

	Sample	9	26
	Feature	15	103
	Context	72	264
	Feature Type	Burnt Pit	Pit
	No. frags	50+	150+
	Max. size (mm)	14	26
Salix / Populus	Willow / Poplar	19	64
	Indeterminate	31	36

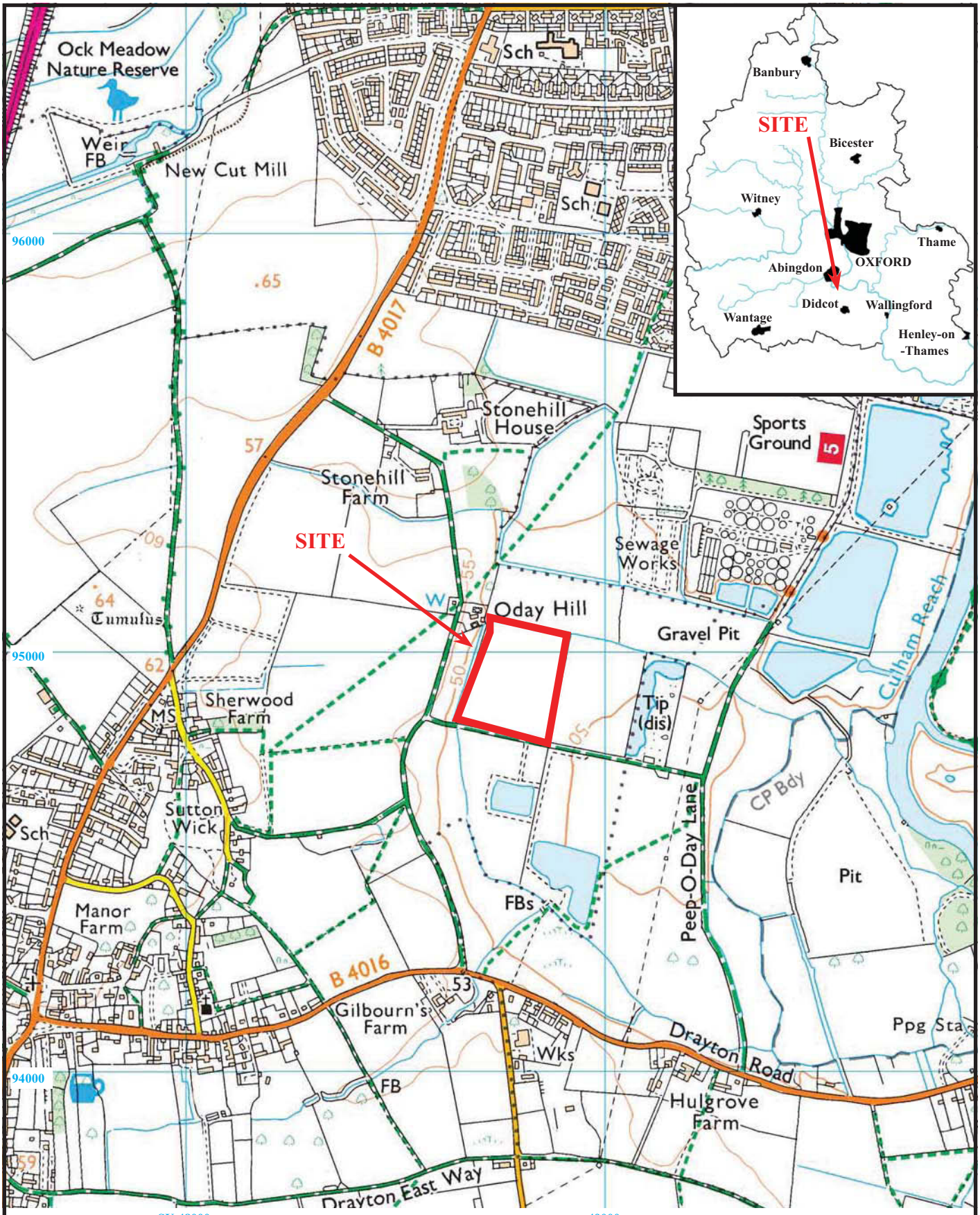

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Figure 1. Location of site within Sutton Wick and Oxfordshire

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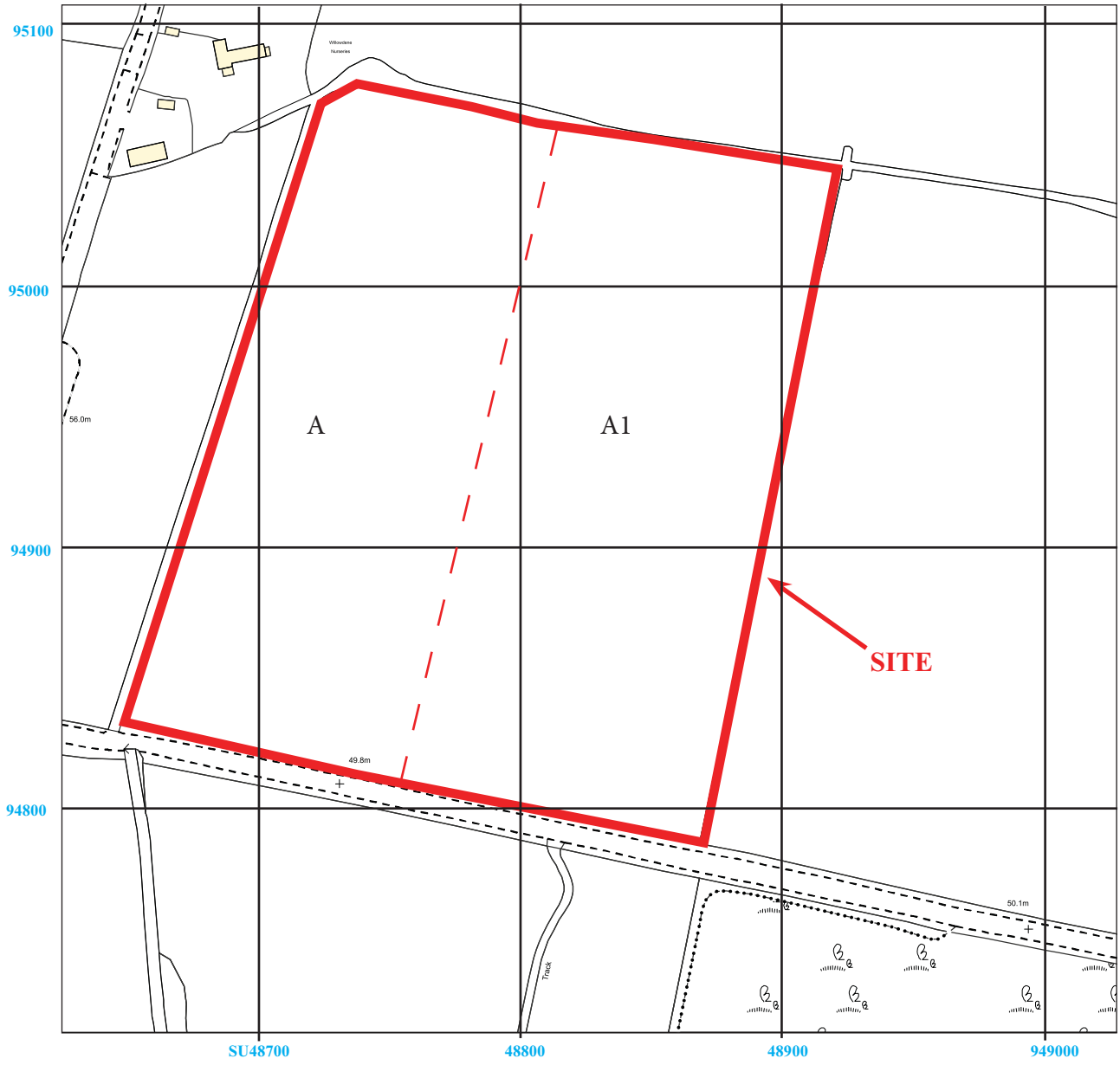

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Bassett Road.

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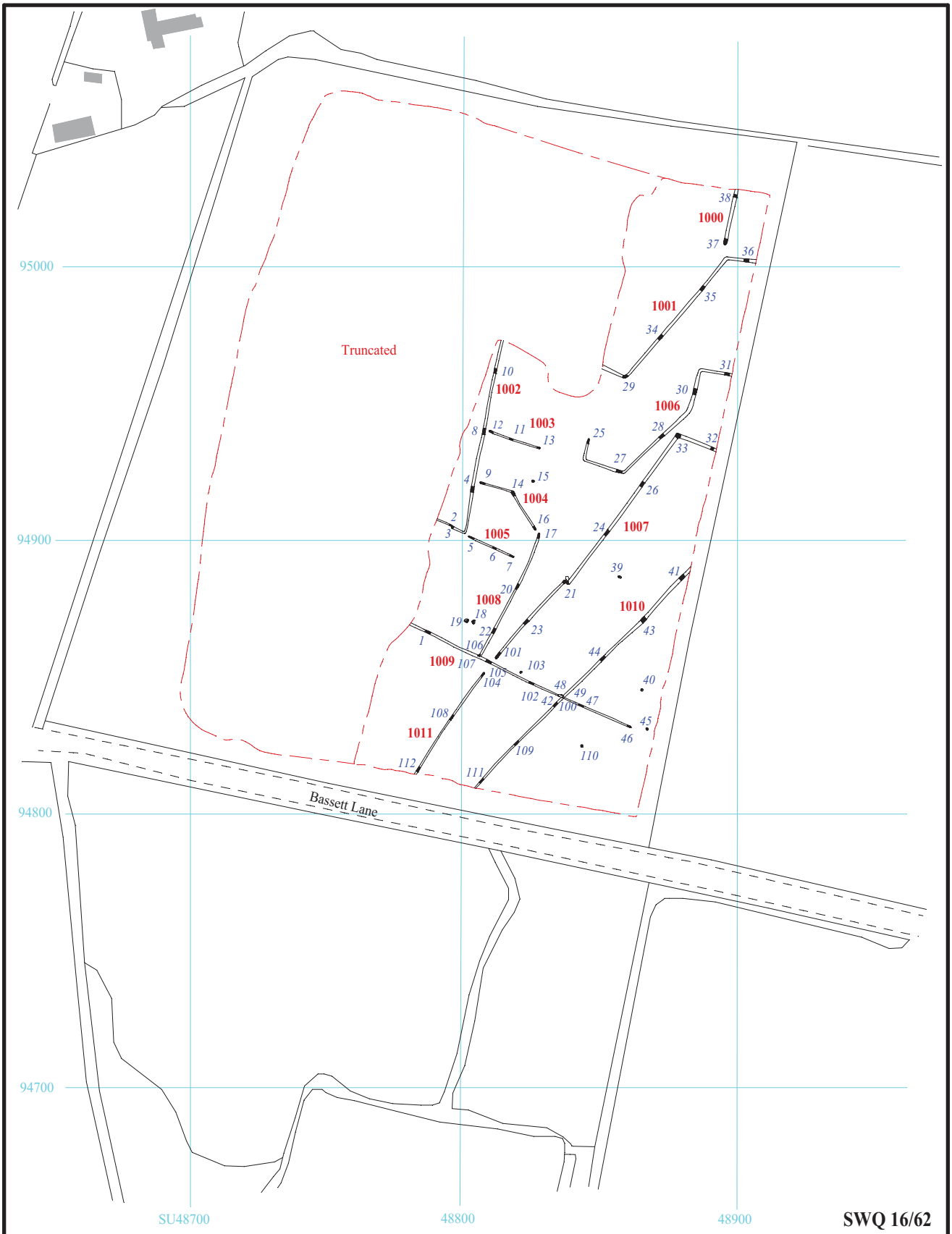

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Figure 3. Areas 1 and 2.

0 100m

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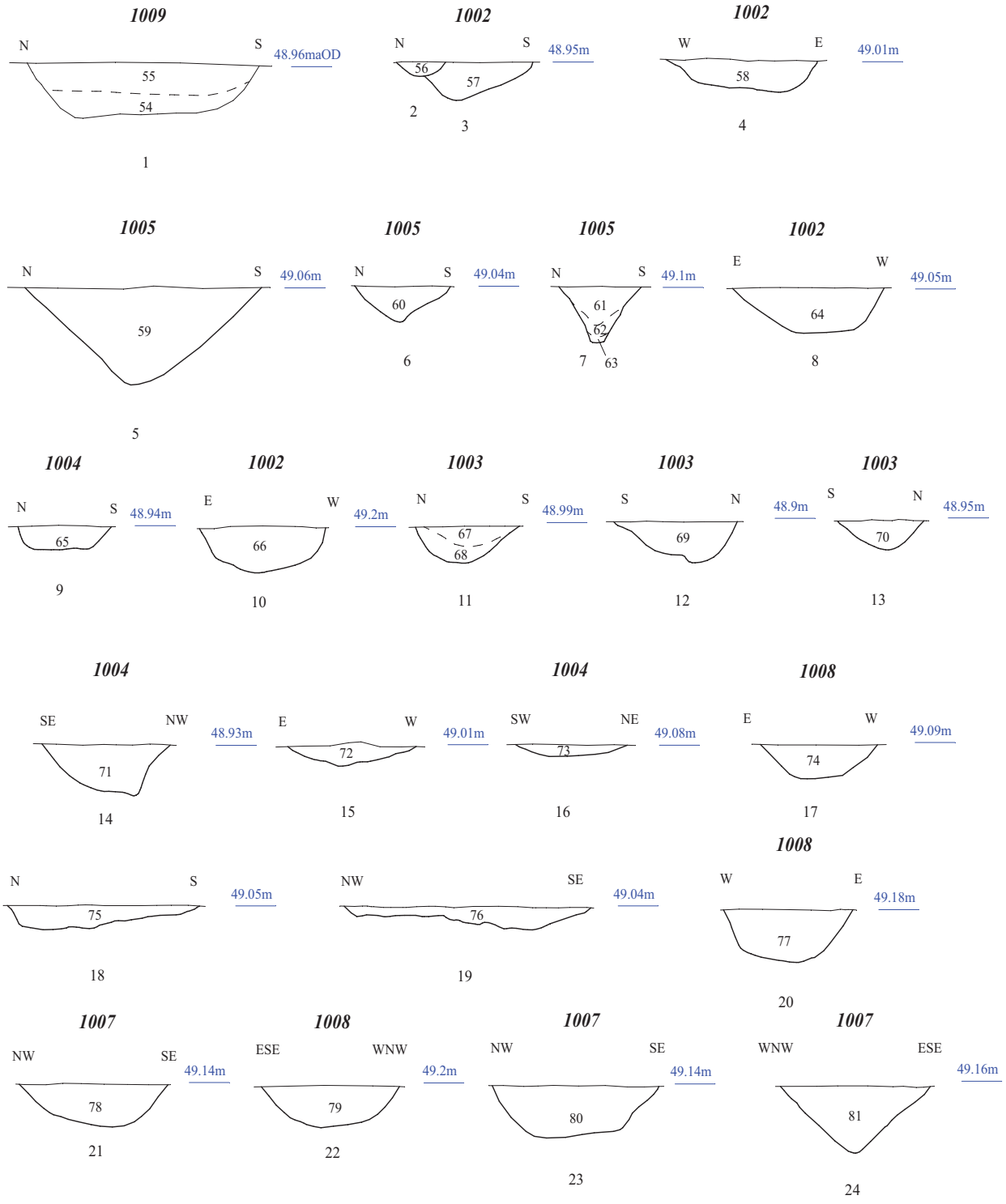

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Figure 4. Sections.

0 1m

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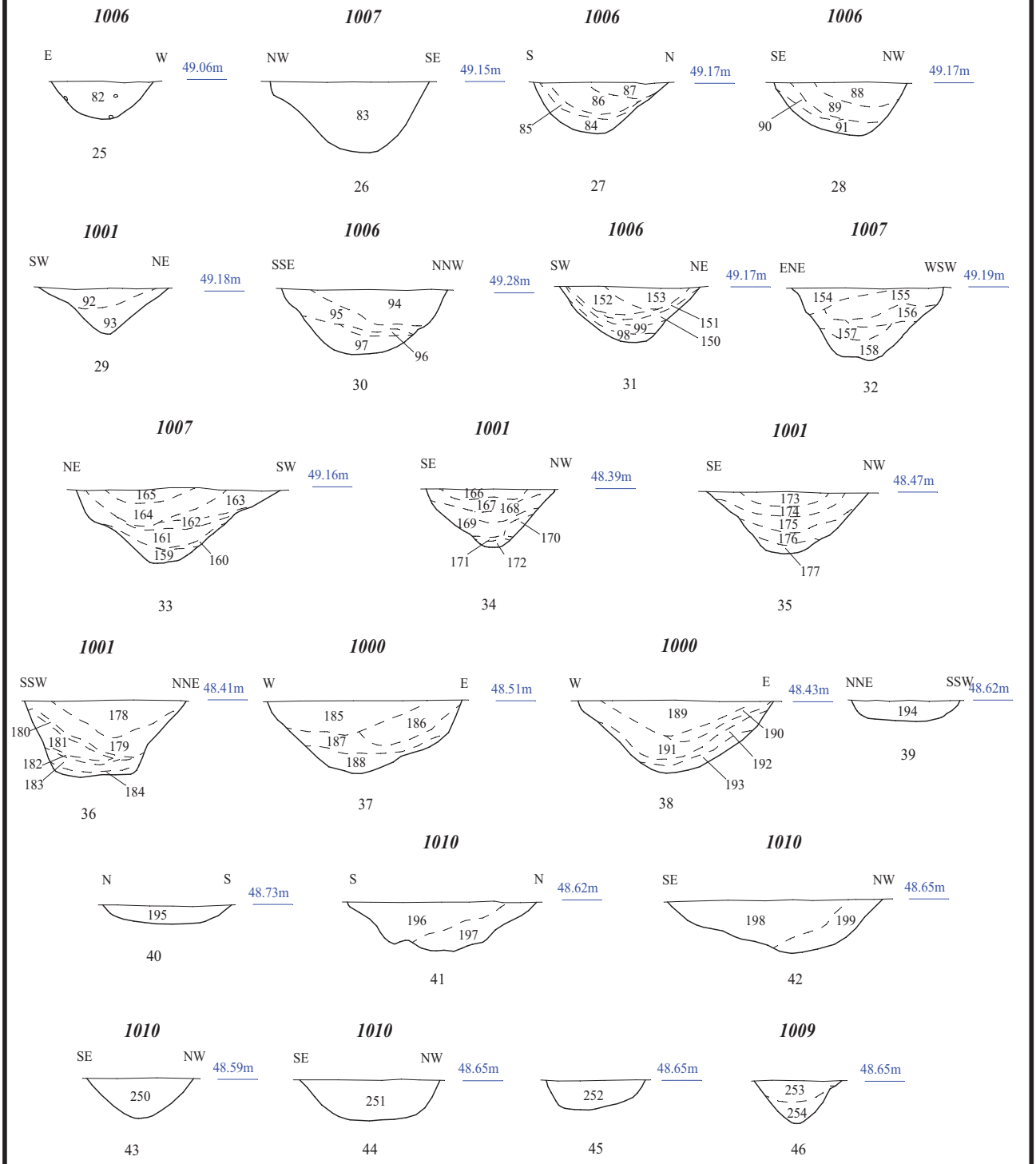

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Figure 5. Sections.

0 1m

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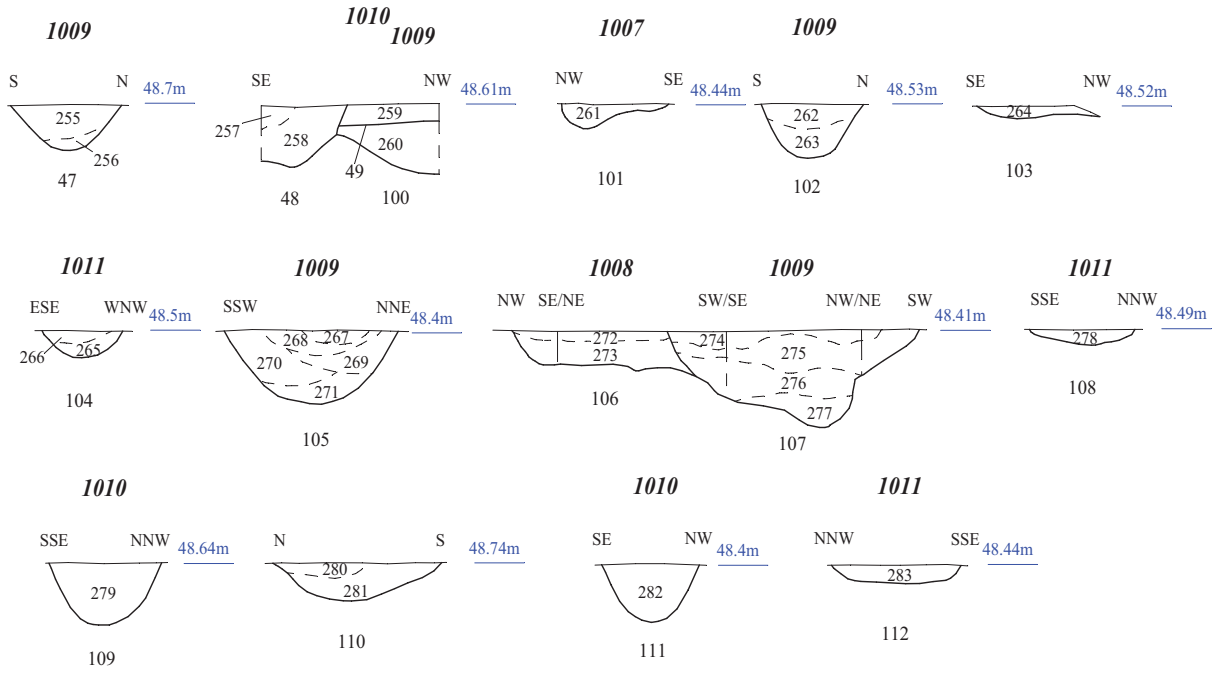

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Figure 6. Sections.

0 1m

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Figure 7. Distributrion of pottery and flints

0 100m

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Plate 1. General view of site

Plate 2. Genera; view of site showing areas of burnt tree root holes

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Plates 1 - 2.

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Plate 3. LIA ditch 1009, slot terminus 46, looking west, Scales: horizotal 0.5m, vertical 0.3m.

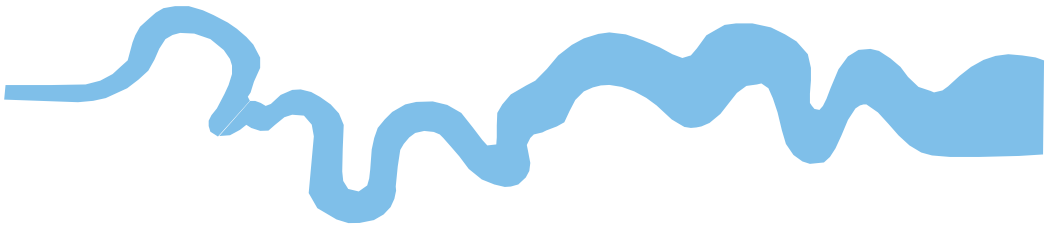
Plate 4. LIA-ER Ditch 1007, slot 24, looking north east, Scales: horizontal 0.5m, vertical 0.3m.

Plate 5. LIA-RB ditch 1007, overview from slot 21, looking north, Scales: horizotal 1m, vertical 0.1m.

Plate 6. Pit 39, looking south east, Scales: horizontal 0.5m, vertical 0.1m.

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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