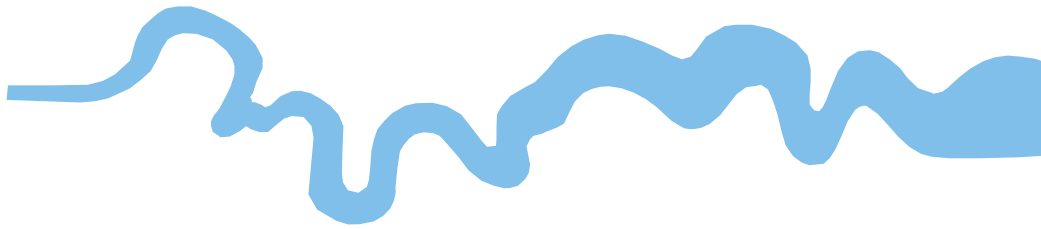


**T V A S**



**SOUTH WEST**

**Land at Manor Farm,  
Grittleton, Wiltshire**

**Archaeological Excavation**

**by Nicholas Dawson**

**Site Code: MFG17/203**

**(ST8867 9261)**

# **Land at Manor Farm, Grittleton, Wiltshire**

**Archaeological Excavation  
for Armour Heritage**

by Nicholas Dawson

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code MFG 17/203

**December 2018**

## Summary

**Site name:** Land at Manor Farm, Grittleton, Wiltshire

**Grid reference** ST88676 92606

**Site activity:** Excavation

**Date and duration of project:** 17th to 27th September 2018

**Project manager:** Agata Socha-Paszkievicz

**Site supervisor:** Nicholas Dawson

**Site code:** MFG 17/203

**Area of site:** c. 0.16ha

**Summary of results:** Excavations were carried out as planned with two Late Bronze Age ditches identified. A further five small linear features, four shallow cuts and twenty-seven pits were recorded but undated. These suggest low density agricultural activity with more intense occupation likely taking place outside the area investigated by these works.

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at TVAS South West, Taunton and will be deposited with Devizes Museum 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 ✓ 13.12.18 Steve Preston ✓ 13.12.18
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# Land at Manor Farm, Grittleton, Wiltshire An Archaeological Excavation

by Nicholas Dawson

**Report 17/203b**

## **Introduction and acknowledgments**

This report documents the results of an archaeological excavation carried out on land near Manor Farm, Grittleton, Wiltshire (ST 8509 7996) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Sue Farr of Armour Heritage Limited, Foghamshire Lane, Trudoxhill, Frome, Somerset, BA11 5DG.

Planning application (16/10204/FUL) has been granted by Wiltshire Council for the construction of a new farmstead on the site, comprising agricultural storage and livestock buildings, farmhouse and tourism accommodation. As a consequence of the possibility of archaeological deposits on the site which may be damaged or destroyed by the development, a field evaluation was requested in order to inform the planning process. This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012), and the Council's policies on archaeology. A geophysical survey suggested potential archaeological features and evaluation trenching confirmed the presence of a prehistoric ditch and several pits. as a result, excavation of these was required in order to fulfil a condition on the planning consent. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger, County Archaeologist at Wiltshire Council Archaeology Service.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Nicholas Dawson, Will Attard, Cosmo Bacon, Luciano Cicu, Daniel Neal, Kirsten Magnus and David Wallace from 17th to 27th September 2018 and the site code is MFG17/203. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services South West, Taunton and will be deposited at Wiltshire Museums Service in due course.

## **Location, topography and geology**

The site is located in Grittleton, 7km north-west of Chippenham and north of the M4 motorway (Fig. 1). The site itself lies at the west of the village on agricultural land currently under arable cultivation. The site is bounded to the south by an unnamed road and to the east and north by further arable land. Limekiln Cottage and its grounds form the western border of the site. The site is broadly level and lies at an elevation of *c.* 122m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The underlying geology is recorded as Forest Marble Formation - Mudstone (BGS 1990). In the

north of the site a red/brown silty clay was observed and in the south the geology encountered comprised mudstone.

## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the site was highlighted in a desk-based assessment (HPS 2016). The only prehistoric remains recorded by the Wiltshire Historic Environment Record (HER) within the area around the site comprise two findspots of Neolithic struck flints: a flint fabricator to the east of the village; and a number of worked flints recorded during a programme of systematic field walking *c.* 500m to the west of the site.

Evidence for Roman activity is more extensive in the vicinity of the site. An earthwork interpreted as a possible signal station has been located along a section of the Fosse Way Roman road 580m to the west of the site. The Roman road itself has been subject to a number of investigations, including the recording of the roadside ditches during a watching brief. A lead coffin containing an inhumation with a small number of Roman coins was recorded in 1852 in North Field. Although there are two *North Fields* in Grittleton, it is considered likely the discovery was located within the core of the village, approximately 260m to the north-east of Manor Farm, and 900m to the north-east of the site.

A geophysical survey was carried out on the site (LG 2017). A number of potentially archaeological features were identified including mapped and unmapped field boundaries, possible industrial activity, a linear feature running perpendicular to the nearby Roman road and isolated pits and short ditch sections, in addition to agricultural features (ridge and furrow, drainage features and plough scars) of more recent likely date. Following the geophysical survey twenty-two evaluation trenches were excavated covering the area of proposed development and to target geophysical anomalies. Two pits and one ditch were investigated, however only ten small pottery sherds of probable middle or late Iron Age date (or conceivably Saxon) were recovered, all from one ditch (Esteves 2017).

## **Objectives and Methodology**

The general objectives of the project were to:

- sample excavate and record all archaeological deposits and features within the areas threatened by the proposed development;
- produce relative and absolute dating and phasing 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
- produce information on the economy and local environment and compare and contrast this with

the results of other excavations or palaeoenvironmental studies in the region.

Specific research objectives of this project were to address the following questions:

When was the site first occupied?

When was the site abandoned?

What is the nature of any occupation of the site?

What is the nature and date of any landscape features encountered (eg fields, boundary features, large enclosures) and what is their spatial organisation?

What is the chronology and organisation details of the landscape features if found?

How did these landscape features relate to occupied areas?

What is palaeoenvironmental setting of the area?

Topsoil and overburden were removed by a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket to expose the uppermost surface of archaeological deposits whilst under constant archaeological supervision. Machines and dumpers were not allowed to track over the stripped areas. Hand excavation or sampling of features was to be according to an agreed sample fraction depending on the nature and significance of the features.

## **Results**

The follow-up fieldwork excavated a single area around the Middle or Late Iron Age ditch identified in Evaluation Trenches 6 and 7 (Fig. 2). The excavation comprised an area of 0.16ha following the route of the ditch as identified in the evaluation trenches and in the geophysical survey (Figs 2 and 3). A total of forty features (Fig 3) were identified, the majority of which were pits; seven ditches; three possible postholes; one shallow cut or spread and one pit or ditch feature partly outside of the limit of excavation.

Stratigraphically the earliest feature on the site was a very slight gully 1002, both shallow and narrow with a width of 0.31m and depth of 0.07m and little can be said about it as neither slot revealed any finds. It was cut by ditch 1001 which in turn was cut by 1000 so that it predates, both but no closer date can be given than 'prehistoric'.

Short ditch 1001 as revealed in the terminus slot 104 was 0.8m wide and 0.27m deep: it was only 8m or 9m long and terminated at both north-west (where it cut gully 1002 (Pl. 4)) and south-east, where it was cut by ditch 1000. The only dateable find was a single narrow flint flake that may possibly date it to a broad Mesolithic or Neolithic period but is more likely to be residual.

Ditch 103 a shallow east-west feature of 0.09m depth, with a width of 0.65m, was cut both by ditches 1000 and 100 (Pl. 3). It did not extend beyond either of these two ditches, but this is likely due to its shallow depth and

it may originally have been longer. The relationships between 103 and both cutting ditches were only visible on the surface and not demonstrable in section as 103 was so faint.

Cut 120, also cut by ditch 1000, was a feature of indeterminate form given that it partly lies outside of the excavation area: it may account for at least part of a geophysical anomaly extending much further north and west. With a depth of 0.22m the fill of dark grey silt clay only revealed one large stone with possible signs of burning (Pl. 8) but no dating evidence.

The most prominent feature identified was the ditch (1000) originally targeted by the excavation. Aligned on a north-west to south-east orientation, the ditch was first located by the geophysical survey and confirmed in two evaluation trenches with an excavated slot in each (1 and 9). During the excavation three further full-width slots 101 (Pl. 1), 128 and 132 (Pl. 2) along with relationship slots 106 and 121 were opened, revealing a ditch of between 1.2m and 1.4m wide and 0.5m deep. One fragment of pottery retrieved from cut 101 dates it only broadly between the late Bronze Age to middle Iron Age, while a middle-to-late Iron Age date had been tentatively assigned in the evaluation. Ditch 1000 cut three features: ditch 1001 (Pl. 4), a second smaller ditch 103 and a probable ditch terminus (or pit) 120 (Pl. 8) providing earlier dates for each of these features.

Small pit 127 cut the infilled ditch 1000. It was 0.3m in diameter and 0.08m deep, filled with a dark deposit (197) containing fragments of burnt animal bone (not identifiable).

Ditch cut 100 appeared to be a continuation of ditch 1000 in the geophysical survey results, but the excavation revealed this not to be the case, as it terminates just short while ditch 1000 in fact carries on north. It is unclear if ditch 100 then turns sharply to the west, or if the geophysical anomaly there is better seen as ditch 120's continuation. Ditch 100 was 1.04m wide with a depth of 0.24m (Pl. 3). Its fills differed greatly from the fills of the other features being much darker and more organic. From upper fill (152) two sherds of middle to late Bronze Age pottery and from the mid fill (153) three sherds of broadly prehistoric (late Bronze Age to early middle Iron Age) pottery were retrieved, giving the ditch a similar date to ditch 1000, but with a large margin for error. The majority of all animal bone from the excavation also originated from ditch 100.

The three remaining linear features consisted of: gullies 1002; 111 and 112. Gullies 111 and 112 both had an east-west orientation and parallel to each other, 4.8m apart, with similar shallow dimensions of no greater than 0.07m suggesting that these may be plough scars. Both are undated.

The largest proportion of features were in the form of oval pits, ranging from 2.2m to 0.79m in diameter and 1.9m to 0.4m in depth (Fig 4). These pits were located on both sides of ditch 1000 and spread fairly evenly throughout the excavated area with the exception of the south-east edge. Potentially this may be explained by a

change in the natural geology, from the clay found in the northern parts of the excavated area to a mud stone natural. In total twenty-seven pits were identified and due to their sterile nature and complete lack of finds, with agreement with Ms Pomeroy-Kellinger, of these twenty-seven only twelve were excavated. Of those excavated ten had two or more fills and eight of these had a minimum of three. The upper fill of all of the pits consisted of a pale grey brown silt clay with lower fills of darker grey brown silt clay. Four of the pits (102, 115, 122, 130) (Pls 5 and 6) appeared to be lined with a grey or blue grey clay. As well as similar fills the pits have similar 'V' shaped profiles (Fig 4) and none of the pits produced a single find.

Three small shallow cut features were identified: 114, 0.4m in diameter and 0.15m deep; 116, 0.32m in diameter and 0.05m deep; 117, 0.25m in diameter and 0.12m deep (Pl. 7). While pits 114 and 116 were in close proximity to one another 117 was on its own therefore if they are posthole or postpads it is unclear the form of the structure. All three revealed no finds. A fourth shallow but much larger spread was also identified 125 with a length of 2m, width of 0.9m and depth of 0.12m, again no finds were produced.

## **Finds**

### *Prehistoric pottery* by Richard Tabor

The prehistoric pottery assemblage comprised a total of 6 sherds weighing 23g which recovered from three deposits spread in two features. The weights, fabrics and vessel parts of the sherds were recorded. The sherds were allocated to fabric groups based on the material, size and sorting of the principal inclusions. Three fabrics were identified from three distinct vessels (Appendix 2). All included shelly limestone although one was distinctive for its corallian inclusions which are consistent with the local Forest Marble geology. The thickness of 11mm and slightly softer fabric of two refitting sherds in fabric L2 suggest that they are from a middle to late Bronze Age jar. The other sherds are from round-shouldered, thinner-walled vessels which in isolation would be treated as late Bronze Age to middle Iron Age. However the possibility cannot be excluded that they are from fine vessels contemporary with the vessel in L2. Some support for this alternative is provided by the smoothing of the sherds in L3.

#### Middle to Late Bronze Age: shelly limestone

**L2** (Medium) Moderately hard, dark grey to black, fabric with buff orange exterior and dark grey to black interior surfaces including moderately well-sorted abundant very fine (<0.5mm), common fine (<1mm) and sparse thin plate (<5mm) shelly limestone. Wall thickness: 11mm

#### Late Bronze Age to earlier middle Iron Age: shelly limestone

**L1** (Medium) Moderately hard, grey fabric with buff orange exterior and grey interior surfaces including moderately well-sorted abundant fine (<1mm) and sparse coarse (<3mm) shelly limestone. Wall thickness: 7mm.



**L3** (Medium) Moderately hard, grey fabric with grey surfaces including moderately well-sorted abundant very fine (<0.5mm), sparse fine (<1mm) and sparse coarse (<5mm) fossiliferous limestone comprising both shell and coral. Wall thickness: 7mm. Smoothed surface.

### *Struck Flint* by Steve Ford

A small collection of 7 struck flints were recovered from the excavations (Appendix 3). This total included 2 spalls (piece less than 20x20mm) and a core. The remainder were flakes but included two narrow flakes. The condition of the pieces is variable. They are mostly patinated bluish white and some have been burnt or are abraded. The collection as a whole is not closely datable and only a broad Neolithic/Bronze Age date can be suggested, though the narrow flakes are possibly of earlier Neolithic or Mesolithic date. Five grams of unworked burnt flint also came from ditch 1000, slot 128.

### *Animal bones* by Piotr Wrobel

An assemblage of 85 animal bones was recovered during excavation with a total weight of 839g (Appendix 4). The preservation of the bones is mostly poor, with some of them eroded and fragmented suggesting being open to the elements before being covered.

Sixteen fragments of bone and teeth were identified by species. Another twenty-seven fragments were in good enough condition to be allocated to one of two broad groups: medium and large mammals. The medium mammal group includes sheep, goat, pig and deer species and large mammals indicate cattle and horse.

The majority of the bone (59 fragments) came from the upper and middle fills of ditch terminus 100. The sample is not large enough for detailed analysis. Ten of identified remains belonged to cattle, one to horse and one to goat/sheep or deer. Another 22 unidentified fragments were from large mammal category which includes horse and cattle. Six bones were burnt and had grey black colour.

Sixteen fragments were recovered from cuts 101 and 132 in ditch 1000. In slot 101 one horse molar was found. From slot 132 one fragment of cattle tibia, one fragment of pig jaw, one fragment of goat/sheep and 13 fragments of unidentified bones were excavated.

In a small pit 127 cut into the top of ditch 1000, 9 small pieces of burnt bone were recovered. The state of bone material does not allow for further analyses.

Despite of small size of the assemblage some comments can be made. Cattle and horse bones dominated, with pig and small ruminant being less common. Teeth of the cattle and horses belong to adult animals. All identified bones belong to domesticated animals pointing to domestic animal husbandry on the site or nearby.

## Conclusions

Dating evidence from the site was modest with only six sherds of pottery being recovered from two features ditches 1000 and 100, giving a combined date of (probably) Late Bronze Age for the two linear features and similar or earlier dates for the features they cut. Though dating evidence is absent from the remaining features, due to their proximity it seems probable that the pits may relate to the ditches rather than being related to the Post-Medieval lime kiln to the west as that is serviced by a large mineral extraction pit still visible in woods to the west of site. However due to lack of any finds, dating evidence or evidence for their purpose this is not conclusive. The lack of evidence for structures and the minimal number of finds suggest potential agricultural activity rather than any form of occupation with perhaps settlement elsewhere.

## References

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- NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London
- LG, 2017, 'Manor Farm, Grittleton, Wiltshire – Gradiometer Survey Repor', Lefort Geophysics unpubl rep **17 - 0013.01**
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**APPENDIX 1: Feature details**

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Phase</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
	150		Topsoil		
	151		Subsoil		
100	152, 153, 154		Ditch Terminus	Mid Bronze Age to Early Mid Iron Age	Pottery
101	155	1000	Ditch	Late Bronze Age to Early Mid Iron Age	Pottery
102	156, 157, 158		Pit	Undated	
103	159		Ditch	Undated	
104	160	1001	Ditch Terminus	Undated	
105	161	1002	Ditch	Undated	
106	162	1000	Ditch	Late Bronze Age to Early Mid Iron Age	By association
107	163	1001	Ditch	Undated	
108	164	1002	Ditch	Undated	
110	165, 166, 167		Pit	Undated	
111	168		Ditch	Undated	
112	169		Ditch	Undated	
113	170, 171, 172, 173, 178		Pit	Undated	
114	174		Posthole/Pit	Undated	
115	175, 176, 177		Pit	Undated	
116	179		Posthole/Pit	Undated	
117	180		Posthole/Pit	Undated	
118	181, 182		Pit	Undated	
119	183		Pit	Undated	
120	185		Ditch/Pit?	Undated	
121	186	1000	Ditch	Late Bronze Age to Early Mid Iron Age	By association
122	187, 188, 189, 190, 191		Pit	Undated	
124	184		Pit	Undated	
125	196		Spread	Undated	
126	192, 193, 194, 195		Pit	Undated	
127	197		Pit	Undated	
128	198, 199	1000	Ditch	Late Bronze Age to Early Mid Iron Age	By association
129	250, 251		Pit	Undated	
130	252, 253, 254, 255		Pit	Undated	
131	256, 257		Pit	Undated	
132	258, 259, 260	1000	Ditch	Late Bronze Age to Early Mid Iron Age	By association
133	Unexcavated		Possible Pit	Undated	
134	Unexcavated		Possible Pit	Undated	
135	Unexcavated		Possible Pit	Undated	
136	Unexcavated		Possible Pit	Undated	
137	Unexcavated		Possible Pit	Undated	
138	Unexcavated		Possible Pit	Undated	
139	Unexcavated		Possible Pit	Undated	
140	Unexcavated		Possible Pit	Undated	
141	Unexcavated		Possible Pit	Undated	
142	Unexcavated		Possible Pit	Undated	
143	Unexcavated		Possible Pit	Undated	
144	Unexcavated		Possible Pit	Undated	
145	Unexcavated		Possible Pit	Undated	
146	Unexcavated		Possible Pit	Undated	
147	Unexcavated		Possible Pit	Undated	

**APPENDIX 2: Pottery catalogue by fabric by context**

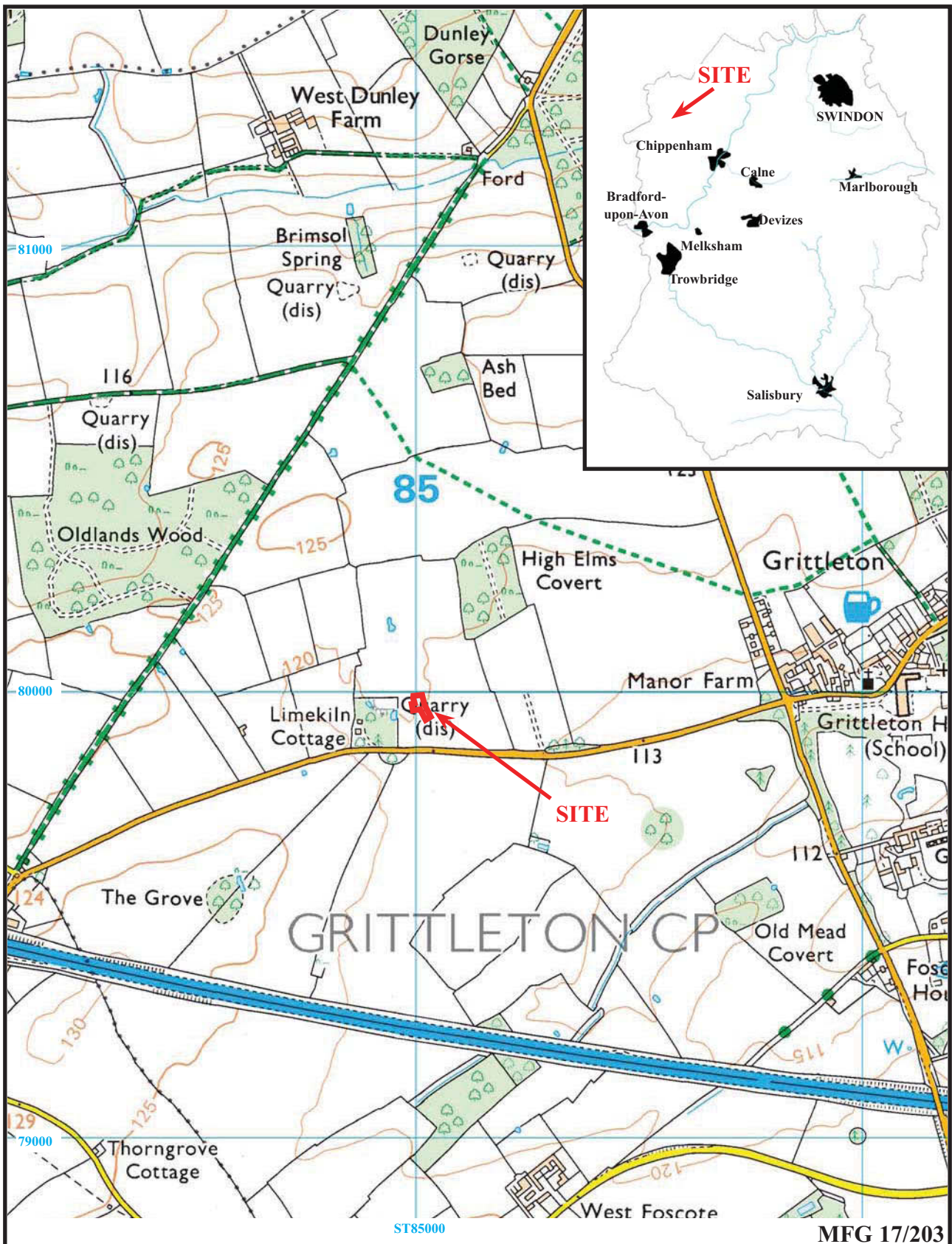
<b>Fabric</b>		<b>L2</b>		<b>L1</b>		<b>L3</b>	
<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>
100	152	2	12				
100	153					3	7
101	155			1	4		
Total		2	12.	1	4	3	7

**APPENDIX 3: Distribution of flints by intervention**

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill</i>	<i>Intact Flake</i>	<i>Intact narrow flake</i>	<i>Broken flake</i>	<i>Spall</i>	<i>Core</i>
U/S						1 (burnt)
U/S near 130					1	
101	155	1				
104	160		1			
106	162			1 (burnt)		
128	198		1			
132	258				1	

**APPENDIX 4: Catalogue of animal Bone (no. of fragments)**

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Total wt (g)</i>	<i>Horse</i>	<i>Cattle</i>	<i>Large mammal</i>	<i>Medium Mammal</i>	<i>Unid</i>
100	152	61	-	1 incisor	2	1 radius	-
100	100	641	-	4 ribs, 1 talus, 3 frags tibia, 1 molar	2 tarsals, 10 frags jaw with one molar, , 2 vertebrae, 15 unid	Jaw frag with 3 molars	15
101	155	24	1 molar	-	-	-	-
127	197	6	-	-	-	-	9
132	258	96	-	1 frag tibia	-	1 frag jaw	13
132	260	11	-	-	-	1 frag jaw (pig) with two teeth	-

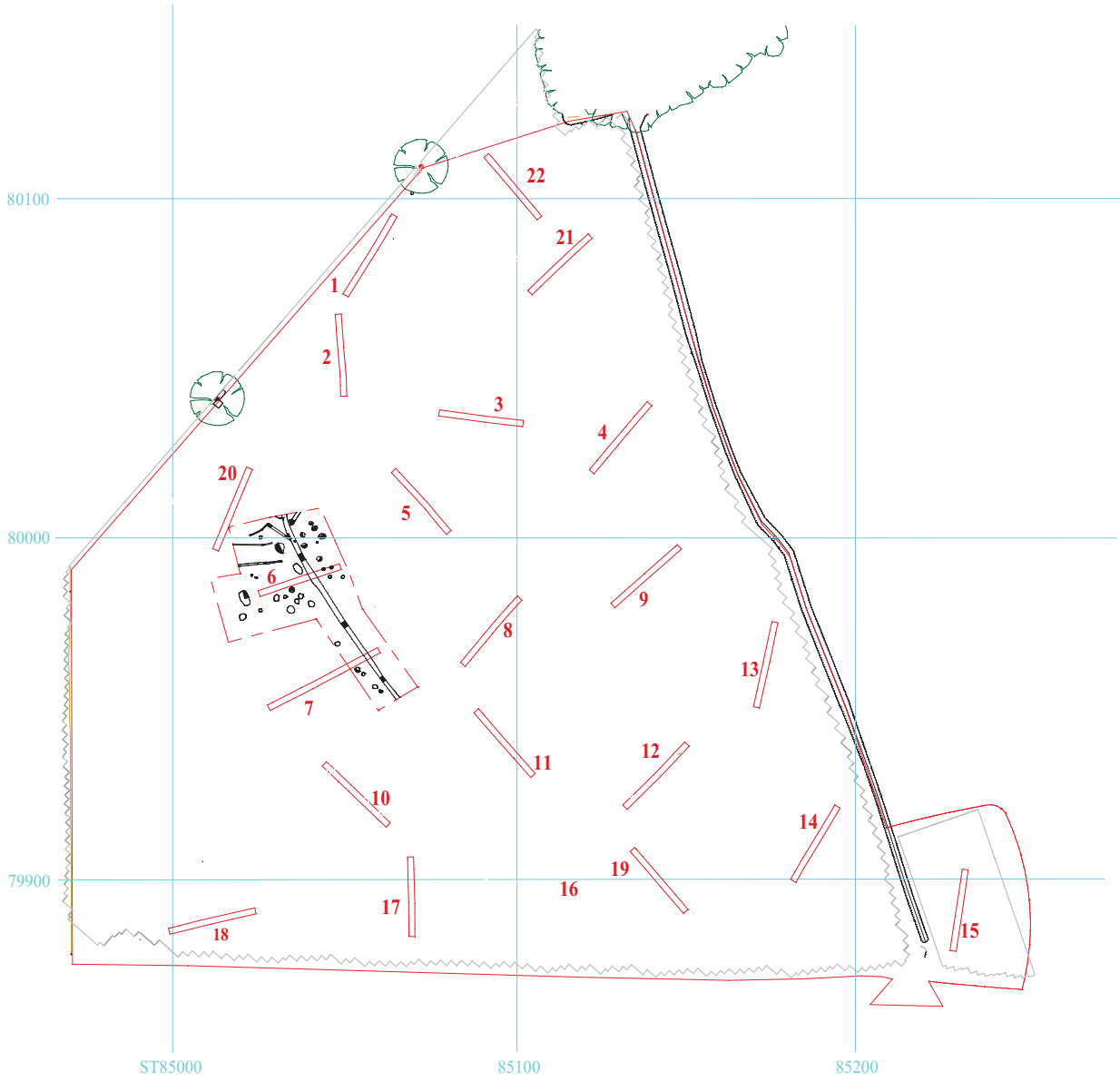


**Land at Manor Farm,  
Grittleton, Wiltshire, 2018  
Archaeological Excavation**

Figure 1. Location of site in relation to Grittleton and within Wiltshire.

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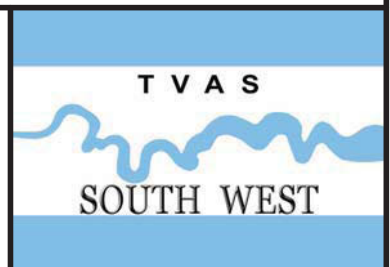




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**Land at Manor Farm,  
Grittleton, Wiltshire, 2018  
Archaeological Excavation**

Figure 2. Site plan.



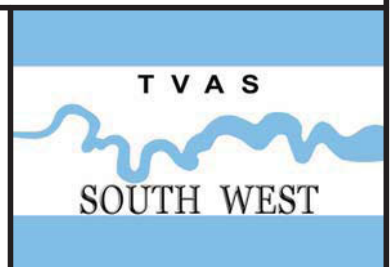


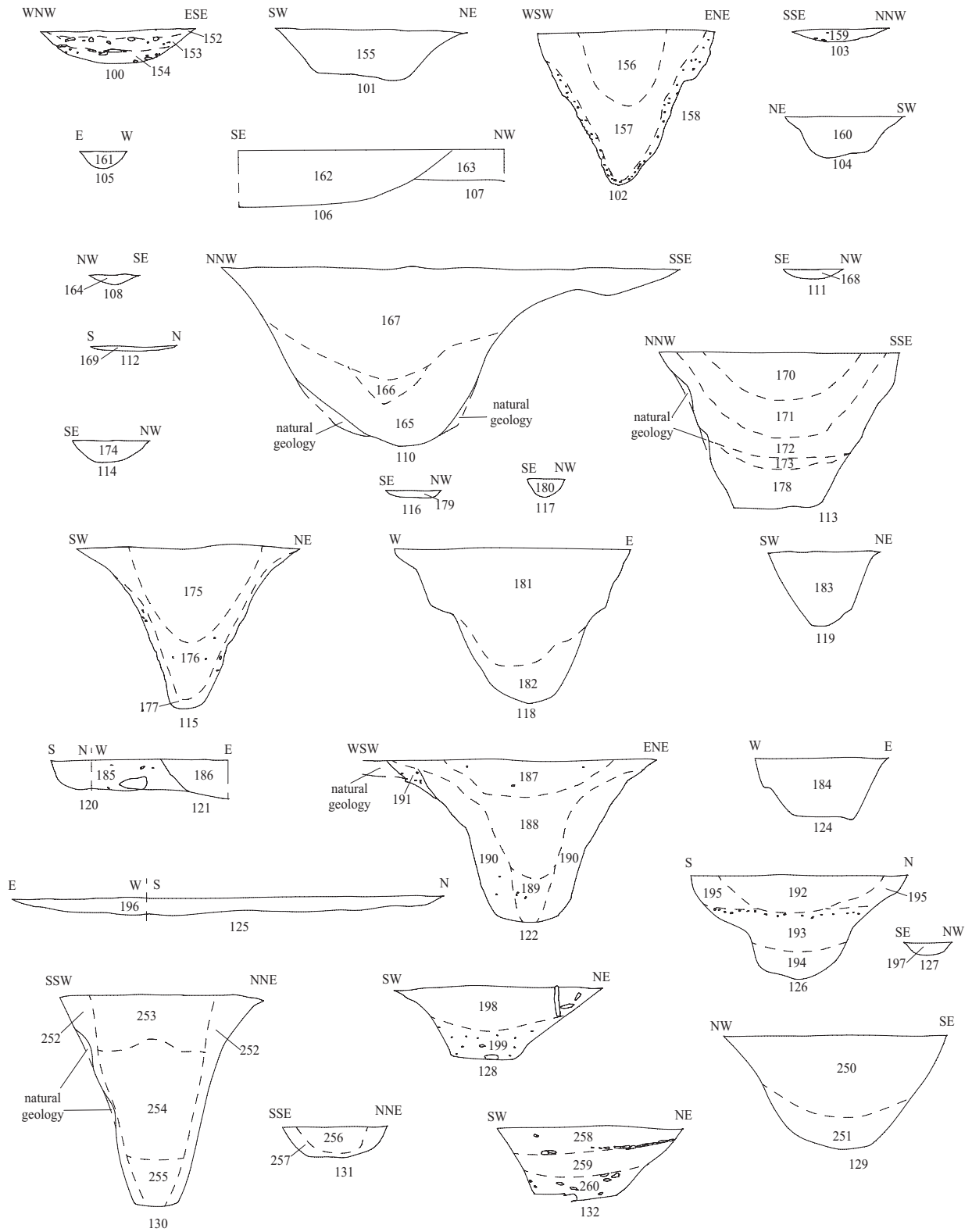


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**Land at Manor Farm,  
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Figure 3. Location of features related to geophysical anomalies.





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**Land at Manor Farm,  
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Figure 4. Representative sections.

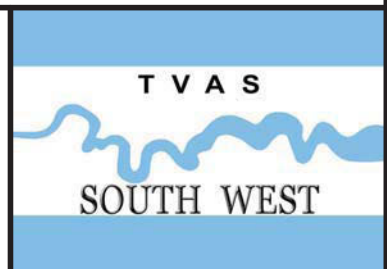




Plate 1. Ditch 101, looking NW, Scales: 1m and 0.3m.



Plate 2. Ditch 132, looking NW, Scales: 1m and 0.3m

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Land at Manor Farm,  
Grittleton, Wiltshire, 2018  
Archaeological Excavation  
Plates 1 and 2.

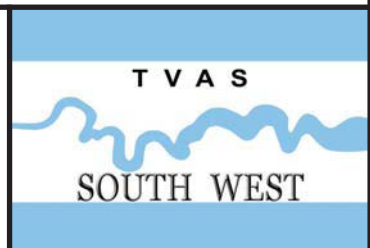




Plate 3. Ditch 100, looking NE, Scales: 1m and 0.1m.



Plate 4. Ditches 104 and 105, looking S, Scales: 1m, 0.3m, 0.2m and 0.1m.

MFG 17/203

Land at Manor Farm,  
Grittleton, Wiltshire, 2018  
Archaeological Excavation  
Plates 3 and 4.





Plate 5. Pit 113, looking NW, Scales: 1m and 1m.



Plate 6. Pit 122, looking NW, Scales: 1m and 1m.

MFG 17/203

Land at Manor Farm,  
Grittleton, Wiltshire, 2018  
Archaeological Excavation  
Plates 5 and 6.

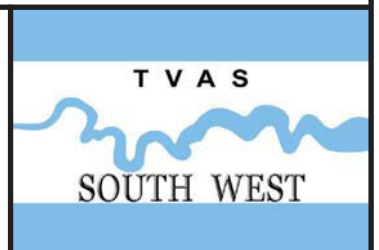




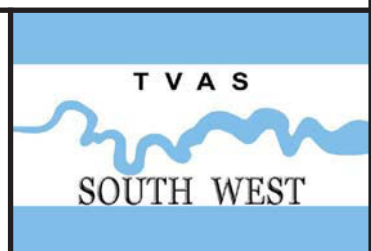
Plate 7. Shallow cut 117, looking W, Scales: 0.2m and 0.1m.



Plate 8. Cut 120 and Ditch 121 , looking N, Scales: 1m and 0.2m.

MFG 17/203

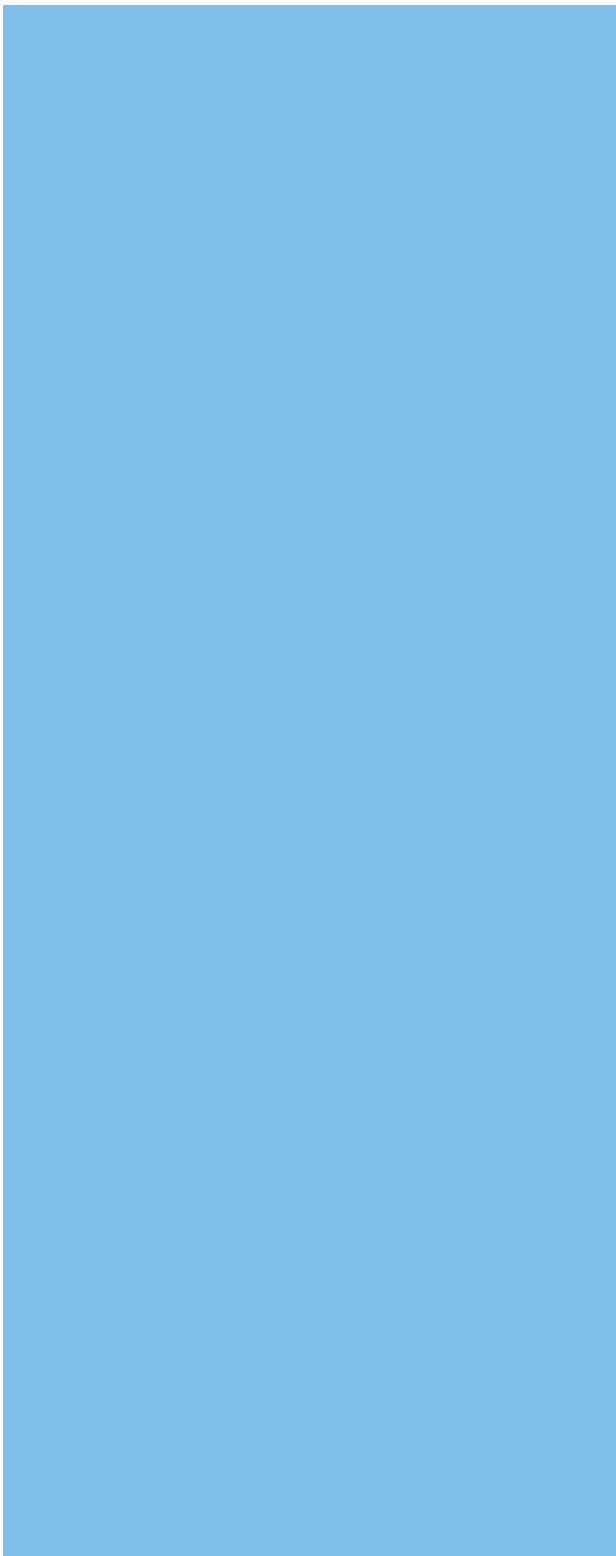
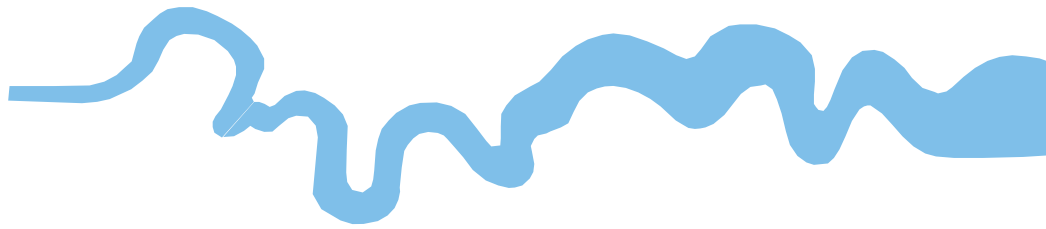
**Land at Manor Farm,  
Grittleton, Wiltshire, 2018  
Archaeological Excavation  
Plates 7 and 8.**



## 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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