

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Copyhold Farm Quarry, Crabtree Lane,
Curridge, West Berkshire**

Archaeological Recording Action

**by Kyle Beaverstock, Pierre-Damien Manisse
and Steve Ford**

Site Code: CHF17/162

(SU 4952 7281)

Copyhold Farm Quarry, Crabtree Lane, Curridge, West Berkshire

An Archaeological Recording Action

For Raymond Brown Minerals and Recycling Ltd

by Kyle Beaverstock, Pierre-Damien Manisse

and Steve Ford

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code CHF 17/162

February 2019

Summary

Site name: Copyhold Farm Quarry, Crabtree Lane, Curridge, West Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 4952 7281

Site activity: Excavation

Date and duration of project: 6th September 2017 - 12th February 2019

Project coordinator: Danielle Milbank

Site supervisors: Pierre-Damien Manisse, Anne Huvig, Andy Taylor, Luis Esteves, Kyle Beaverstock

Site code: CHF 17/162

Area of site: 3.7ha

Summary of results: The investigation at Copyhold Farm Quarry has revealed a modest number of features and artefacts of archaeological interest. These mostly comprised large pits some linear features and a fenceline. Few of the features were well dated but the pits are likely to be of Iron Age date. A small collection of Mesolithic flintwork was also recovered along with a few sherds of Bronze Age pottery and a single sherd of medieval pottery.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at West Berkshire Museum in due course.

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 28.02.19 Steve Preston ✓ 28.02.19

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Report 17/162

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological excavation carried out at Copyhold Farm Quarry, Crabtree Lane, Curridge, West Berkshire (SU 4952 7281) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Robert Westell, of Raymond Brown Minerals and Recycling Ltd, A1 Omega Park, Electron Way, Chandlers Ford, Hampshire SO53 4SE.

Planning permission (17/00424/MINMAJ) has been granted by West Berkshire Council to extract sand from the site. A condition (15) was attached to the consent, requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological work, prior to any extraction or work that could damage potential archaeological deposits.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and West Berkshire's policies on archaeology (Policy 7 of the replacement Minerals Local Plan for Berkshire 1991-2006). The field investigation was carried out to a written scheme of investigation approved by Ms Sarah Orr, Acting Archaeological Officer/ Historic Environment Record Officer at West Berkshire Council.

The fieldwork was variously supervised by Andy Taylor, Kyle Beaverstock, Anne Huvig and Pierre-Damien Manisse, with the assistance of Jon Tierney and Daniel Neal, between September 2017 and February 2019. The site code is CHF 17/162. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at West Berkshire Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located to the north of Newbury between Hermitage and Curridge (Fig. 1). It lies south-west of Dennison Barracks, and north of Copyhold Farm itself. It lies at a height of c. 108m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) in the north and west, rising gently to 114m aOD to the south-east. The underlying geology belongs to the Lambeth group, a mixture of clay, sand and silt (BGS 2006).

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been documented in a heritage impact assessment (JMHS 2016). In summary, previous phases of fieldwork to the west have revealed a modest volume of archaeological deposits of Bronze Age date, along with an isolated Roman corn-drier and a small number of other Roman features (BAS 2014). Further archaeological deposits of Iron Age date lay close to the site boundaries and may extend into the site itself. No archaeological deposits or artefacts had previously been recorded for the site itself. Several sites or chance finds indicative of Bronze Age and Iron Age activity are recorded in the general area of the site.

The archaeology of the southern parts of the Berkshire Downs corresponding with gravel and sand geologies overlying the chalk is much less well known than the valley of the Kennet to the south and chalkland to the north (Lobb and Rose 1996; Richards 1978; Dils and Yates 2012). However, excavations in advance of the M4/A34 improvements to the north-west (Mudd 2007), revealing late Bronze Age occupation, large area evaluations as at Oarborough Hill, revealing Mesolithic and Iron Age occupation (Ford 1992; Torrance 1992); the presence of extensive Bronze Age flint scatters at Donnington (Ford 1991) and the presence of Iron Age hillforts (Dils and Yates 2013), all suggest that it reflects a lack of opportunity for survey, than a genuine absence.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the recording action was to excavate and record all archaeological deposits and features within the areas threatened by extraction.

General objectives include producing relative phasing and absolute dating for the recorded features, ensuring their character can be defined and compared to local or regional known sites. More specifically, of particular interest will be to produce information regarding the nature and date of landscape features (field boundaries, enclosures) and their organisation, how they relate to occupied areas and what is the chronology of occupation, and what is the palaeoenvironmental setting of the area?

Topsoil and any other overburden layer were to be mechanically removed by a machine fitted with a toothless bucket to expose the uppermost archaeological level, under constant archaeological supervision. All archaeological features were to be planned and sectioned as a minimum with full excavation of some types of discrete features such as cremation burials. A minimum of 10% of each linear feature was to be excavated for those dating to Medieval or earlier times.

Results

The fieldwork took place in three phases in autumn 2017, summer 2018 and January 2019. An area of 3/7 ha within the overall site of around 5.5ha was stripped (Fig. 2; Pls 1 and 2). The geology observed, (54), was a fine light yellow to mid orange sand with rare clayey sand patches, matching the expected description of the Lambeth group. It contained scarce natural flints and rare chalk flecks. Most of the time a 0.40m thick topsoil (50) directly overlaid it. It was a soft dark grey-brown sandy silt with occasional stones, poorly sorted. More occasionally a transitional orange brown silty sand was observed between those two layers, also with chalk flecks. The excavated features are summarized in Appendix 1.

Mesolithic

The Mesolithic period is represented by a small collection of flint work consisting of distinctive narrow flakes (blades) with blade cores and other flakes. Most material was recovered from topsoil or residual contexts and is well dispersed across the site.

Iron Age

The main features on the site were a cluster and dispersed spread of deep pits. The pits have the appearance of those expected for the Iron Age, though dating evidence was rare. However, when pottery was recovered, it was usually of Iron Age date and there are reasonable grounds for considering all as of similar date. The pits are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Iron Age (?) pits

Cut	fill	Diameter or Length x Breadth (m)	Depth (m)	Profile	Comment
13	66-8	1.8	1.55	Deep bowl-shaped	21 sherds Iron Age pot;; flint blade
14	69-71	2.88	3.3	Very deep, near vertical	2 sherds Bronze Age pot flint core and two flakes
15	73	0.9x0.48	0.56	Deep bowl-shaped	
16	74-5	1.1x0.61	0.83	Deep bowl-shaped	
17	76	0.23x0.38	0.18	Bowl-shaped	
18	77-8	1.97x0.77	0.69	Steep sided, flat based	
19	79-81	1.8	1.1	Bowl-shaped?	
20	89-92	2.56	1.65	Steep sided, flat based	
21	82-3	c. 3m	0.75	Bowl-shaped	2 blade cores and flint flake; Cut by 22 and 23
24	95-97	1.85	0.76	Bowl-shaped	
25	87-8	1.21x0.8	1.23	Steep sided, flat based?	
26	84	1.5	0.46	Bowl-shaped	Cut by 21

Post-medieval features

Pit 1 was circular with moderate to steep slopes and a concave profile. It was 1.20m in diameter and 0.42m deep. A single brown glazed post-medieval red ware sherd was recovered from fill (52) which was a mid brownish grey fine sand with very rare gravels.

Ditches and Gully 42-44

Two ditches, (42, 43), were recorded at the north and south ends of the site respectively. Ditch 42 was examined by two slots (4 and 5/6). It was orientated W–E and extended beyond the margins of the site in both directions. It was 2.04-2.26m wide and 0.57-0.72m deep. It had a bowl-shaped profile and contained a single fill (56, 58). It seems to have been recut at one location (6). Slot 4 and recut 6 each produced single sherds of brown glazed post-medieval red ware. Recut 6 also produced a fine Mesolithic blade.

Ditch 43 also extended beyond the limit of excavation and was aligned almost E–W. It was examined by six slots (7 to 12), but produced no dating evidence. It was 0.94-1.10m across and no more than 0.24m deep. This shallow feature had gentle slopes and a slightly rounded base. It was filled by a light yellowish grey sand (fills 60 to 65).

Ditches 42 and 43 match field boundary ditches seen on the Curridge Enclosure map of 1817. Ditch 42 was also still present on the Ordnance Survey map of 1899, but ditch 43 had been straightened and had disappeared by the time of the Tithe map of 1840.

Gully 44 was aligned SSW–NNE and was examined by six slots (27 to 32) (Pls 11–12). It terminated in the middle of the site. It produced no dating evidence but was markedly straight and is thought to relate to the post-medieval landscape despite not being present on any Ordnance Survey maps. It was typically 0.55-0.8m across and up to 0.32m deep. This shallow feature had gentle slopes and a slightly rounded base. It was filled by brown sand (fills 98-9, 160-3).

Undated features

Fence line 39

A short length of fence line was recorded aligned NNE-SSW. It was composed of at least six circular post holes (33 to 38), regularly spaced, every 1.60-1.70m. They had steep to near vertical sides and a flattish base. They were filled by a soft mid grey sand:

Table 2: Post holes belonging to fence 39

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill</i>	<i>Dimensions (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>
33	154	0.24 x 0.22	0.13
34	155	0.26 x 0.23	0.10
35	156	0.11 x 0.10	0.10
36	157	0.17 x 0.23	0.11
37	158	0.13 x 0.14	0.06
38	159	0.16 x 0.21	0.08

Hollows

A few metres north of fence 39 was a large, deep hollow, 41. It measured at least 4.9x4.5m with irregular sides. It had steep to near-vertical sides. It was examined by a sondage 0.93m x 1.50m but was not bottomed after

having reached 1.25m depth. No artefacts were found within the fill which was a soft dark grey sand with very rare non-struck flint inclusions. It is not now considered to be of archaeological interest and is possibly the top of a solution hollow forming in the chalk below.

An irregular oval shallow patch (2), 1.76m x 1.40m across with a depth of 0.09m, was filled with a medium compacted mid brown and dark reddish brown sand (53) with rare flints. Another oval shallow pit (3) with a similar size (1.48 x 1.86m), probably turned out to be also the result of natural causes (Pl. 3). It was filled by (55), a mid brown sand with common chalk flecks and rare gravels. No finds came from these features.

Cow burial

A small ill-defined depression (40), 2m x 1m across contained the remnants of a cow skeleton, though the remains were probably lying on the edge of a pre-existing hollow rather than having been put in a grave. The skeleton had been truncated by the machine and only a few leg bones remained in articulation. The matrix around the bones was a very dark grey yellow sand, with rare flint and chalk inclusions.

Finds

Pottery by Alice Lyons and Cristina Mateos

The prehistoric pottery assemblage comprised a total of 27 sherds. There were no rims or decorated sherds. As a consequence dating of the assemblage is determined by the fabric and can only be general.

Two sherds, weighing 16g, of hand-made, flint-tempered fabric were found in the same pit (14) but in different deposits (69 and 70). They belong to different vessels. Only a generic date of Bronze Age can be suggested due to their small size and lack of diagnostic traits.

A total of 21 sherds (plus fragments) weighing 44g, of extremely fragmentary, hand-made low-fired coarse ware pottery from a single jar/bowl was found in pit 13 (68). The reduced (black) fabric is tempered with grog and organic material typical of late Iron age production. Some of the sherds have a red pigmentation on their external surfaces, but as this is also found on the broken surfaces of the pottery it must be the result of a post-breakage (possibly post-depositional) event.

One Medieval rim (23g) was recovered from the topsoil. This is a sand, flint and limestone tempered local ware identified as Newbury Group B (Mephram 1997).

Three Post-medieval sherds were also recovered. The first piece (16g) comes from pit 1. It is a hard orange fabric and the inside face is covered with brownish glaze. The other two sherds (41g) came from the same ditch

(42). One of these was a small orange sherd recovered from slot 4, (56) and the other was an orange fabric rim sherd covered with brownish glaze on the inside face, in slot 6 (58).

Table 3: Pottery catalogue

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Sample no</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>Pottery Date</i>
	50		Topsoil		1	23	Medieval
1	52		Pit		1	16	Post-Medieval
4	56	42	Ditch		1	4	Post-Medieval
6	58	42	Ditch		1	37	Post-Medieval
13	68		Pit		13	35	Iron Age
13	68		Pit	4	7	7	Iron Age
14	69		Pit		2	10	Bronze Age
14	70		Pit		1	12	Bronze Age

Flints by Steve Ford

A small collection comprising just 20 struck flints was recovered during the fieldwork. From pit 21 (82) these comprised two blade cores and a flake. From pit 14 (71) was recovered a core and two flakes and from Post-medieval ditch slot 6 (52) a fine narrow flake (blade).

The two blade cores which were both worked from two platforms are very distinctive and are clearly of Mesolithic date. The other core was for broad flakes and was only slightly used, and may have been abandoned early in its use as being too cherty with too many frost cracks. The 12 narrow flakes are fine examples of Mesolithic blade manufacture with one blade 87mm long but only 18mm wide. Most of the blades had some form of edge damage, but none clearly a result of use. The five flakes are not closely datable and could be of Mesolithic through to Bronze Age in date.

The blade cores and some flakes could have been procured direct from a nearby chalk source with one retaining a patch of moderately thick and unweathered cortex. The third core appears to be derived from material available in the sands/gravels present on the site itself.

Most of the flintwork is patinated light bluish grey but curiously the blade from post-medieval ditch 6 is unpatinated. Patination is sometimes used as an indication of relative age but here unambiguously Mesolithic material is present in both patinated and unpatinated states. That an unpatinated example was recovered from a post-medieval context whereas the patinated material mostly came from subsoil contexts might indicate that the patination process is a product of fairly modern agricultural activity.

Table 4: Struck flint catalogue

<i>Cut</i>	<i>fill</i>	<i>Type</i>
-	50	10 Narrow flakes; 2 flakes
6	52	Narrow flake
13	68	Narrow flake
14	69	Flake
14	71 s9	Core; flake
21	82 s10	2 blade cores; flake

Metalwork by Aidan Colyer

Two iron objects were recovered from the excavation. Both of these objects are heavily corroded.

A possible nail fragment recovered from Pit 1 (52) is 22mm long. A nail shaft from Ditch slot 4 (56) is 74mm long although there is no head present. The shaft appears to have been square but obscured by heavy corrosion.

Charred Plant Remains by Joanna Pine

Some 17 bulk soil samples ranging from 16-40L were taken from 11 features on the site (Appendix 1) to recover charred plant remains and small artefacts. The samples were floated and sieved using a 0.25mm mesh. Just nine of the samples contained charred remains, all charcoal. No seeds were recovered. Only two pits produced more than traces of charcoal.

Conclusion

The fieldwork has revealed a modest density of deposits of archaeological interest along with a number of field boundaries of post-medieval date. The main deposits revealed are a series of pits mostly clustered towards the northern end of the site. Most of the pits were substantial and would be typical of the Iron Age. Some of them had dimensions and shapes which could be regarded as storage pits. They were, however, not only poorly dated but contained few artefacts of any description. There was no indication that they were used for below ground grain storage, nor that they were backfilled with rubbish derived from nearby occupation areas. Their function and how they relate to any contemporary occupation sites in the area is somewhat enigmatic.

The collection of Mesolithic flintwork is notable. The collection was not large nor stratified, and lacked a microlithic component to allow more chronological precision. A single Mesolithic blade had been found to the west during previous phases of fieldwork (BAS 2014, 3). The collection was dominated by fine long blades, and does not appear to represent a typical debitage-producing knapping cluster. Admittedly most of the flintwork was recovered from topsoil contexts during overburden stripping, and thus a significant proportion could have been removed during this process with only large and distinctive items being retrieved. Then again subsoil 'traps' such as natural hollows, or pits and ditches of later date, did not contain much residual flintwork, so perhaps the Mesolithic activity could reflect activity other than the production of flintwork.

The Mesolithic occupation of West Berkshire is one of marked contrast. The Mesolithic archaeological record of the Kennet Valley is one of international reputation with the presence of numerous large dense sites (eg Wymer and Dimbleby 1959; From 2012). The well-surveyed chalkland of the Berkshire Downs, by contrast

contains virtually no Mesolithic material (Gaffney and Tingle 1989); Bowden *et al.* 1993, mf M3;F2); Dils and Yates 2012, fig. 13). However, between these two zones are areas with sandy geological outcrops, which are often favoured for Mesolithic settlement (Mellars and Rienhardt 1978; Jones 2013). Locally survey work at Oareborough Hill to the north (Ford 1992; Torrance 1992) has revealed extensive Mesolithic occupation and Copyhold Farm adds a small contribution to this knowledge of the Mesolithic settlement pattern.

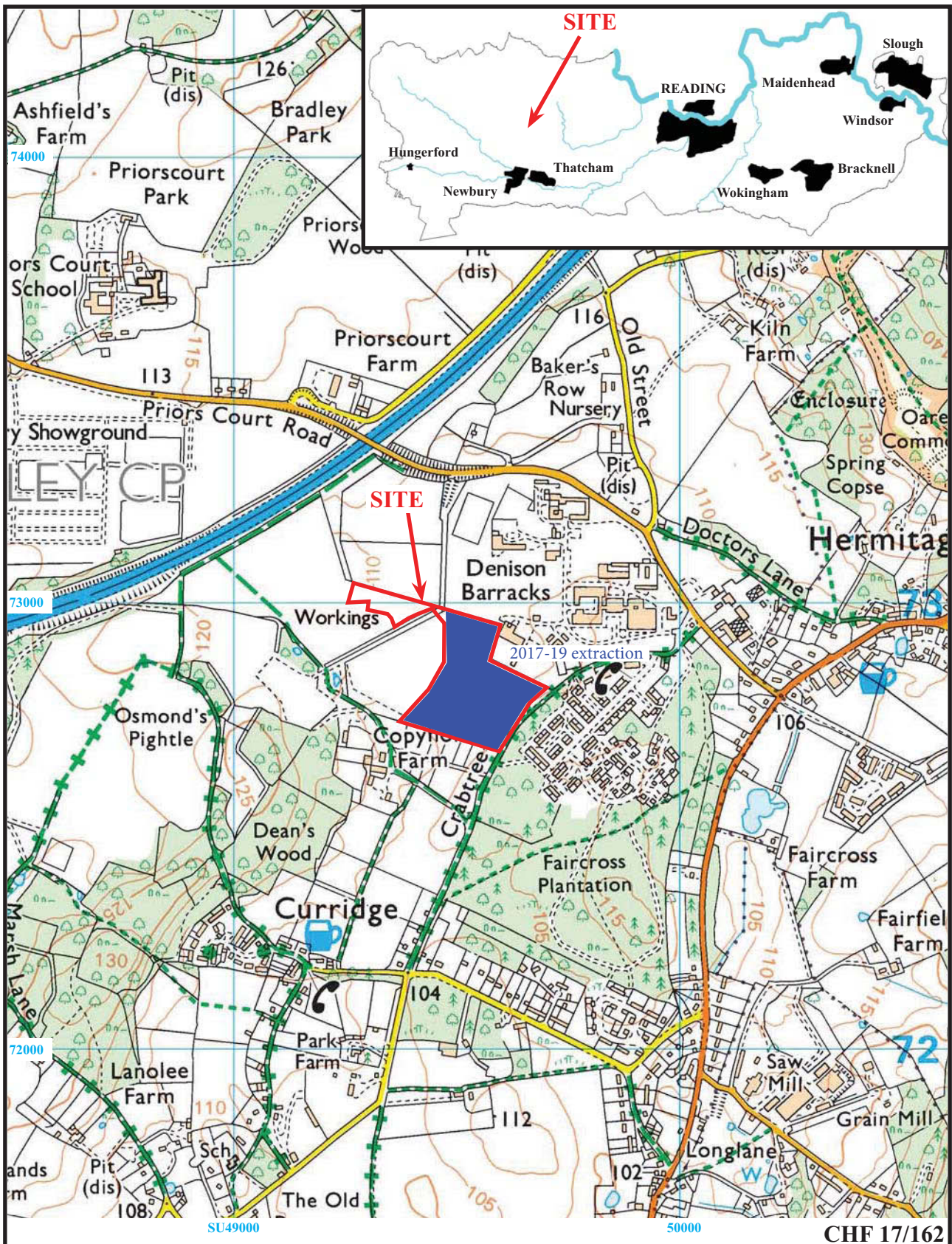
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APPENDIX 1: Feature list

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>Pl.</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Samples</i>	<i>Charcoal</i>	<i>Seeds</i>	<i>Comment</i>
	50			Topsoil					
	51			Subsoil					
1	52			Pit	Post-medieval				Pottery, nail
2	53			<i>Natural</i>					
3	55		3	<i>Natural</i>					
4	56	42	9	Ditch	Post-Medieval				Pottery, nail, Enclosure map
5	57	42		Ditch	Post-Medieval				Enclosure map
6	58-9	42		Ditch	Post-Medieval				Pottery, Enclosure map
7	60	43		Ditch	Post-Medieval				Enclosure map
8	61	43		Ditch	Post-Medieval	1	-	-	Enclosure map
9	62	43		Ditch	Post-Medieval	2	-	-	Enclosure map
10	63	43		Ditch	Post-Medieval				Enclosure map
11	64	43		Ditch	Post-Medieval	3	X	-	Enclosure map
12	65	43		Ditch	Post-Medieval				Enclosure map
13	66-8			Pit	Iron Age	4	X	-	pottery
14	69-71		4	Pit	Iron Age	5,9	-	-	Bronze Age pottery
15	73			Pit	Iron Age?	6	-	-	form
16	74-5			Pit	Iron Age?				form
17	76			Pit	Iron Age?	7	X	-	form
18	77-8		5	Pit	Iron Age?				form
19	79-81		6	Pit	Iron Age?	8	X	-	form
20	89-92		7	Pit	Iron Age?	13	X	-	form
21	82-3		8	Pit	Iron Age?	10,11	XX	-	form
22	85-6		8	Post hole		12			
23	93-4			Post hole					
24	95-97			Pit		14	XXX	-	
25	87-8		10	Pit					
26	84			Pit					
27	98	44		Gully	Post-Medieval?	15	X	-	form
28	99	44		Gully	Post-Medieval?	16	X	-	form
29	150	44		Gully	Post-Medieval?				form
30	151	44	11	Gully	Post-Medieval?				form
31	152	44	12	Gully	Post-Medieval?	17	-	-	form
32	153	44		Gully	Post-Medieval?				form
33	154	39		Post hole					
34	155	39		Post hole					
35	156	39		Post hole					
36	157	39		Post hole					
37	158	39		Post hole					
38	159	39		Post hole					
40	160			<i>cow burial</i>	<i>Modern</i>				
41	161			<i>hollow</i>	<i>Natural</i>				

X: present; XX some; XXX abundant



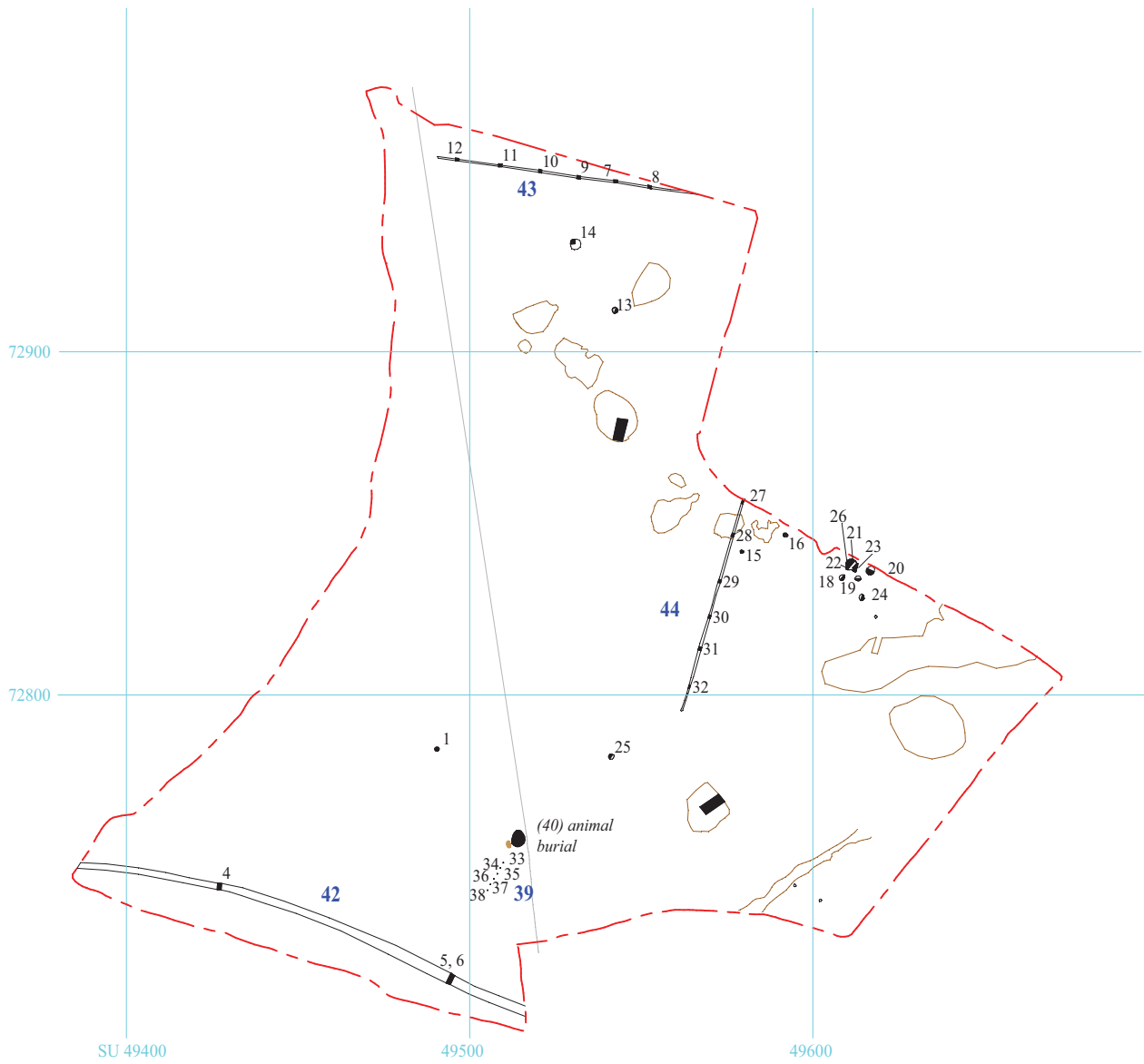
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Figure 1. Location of site within Hermitage and Berkshire.

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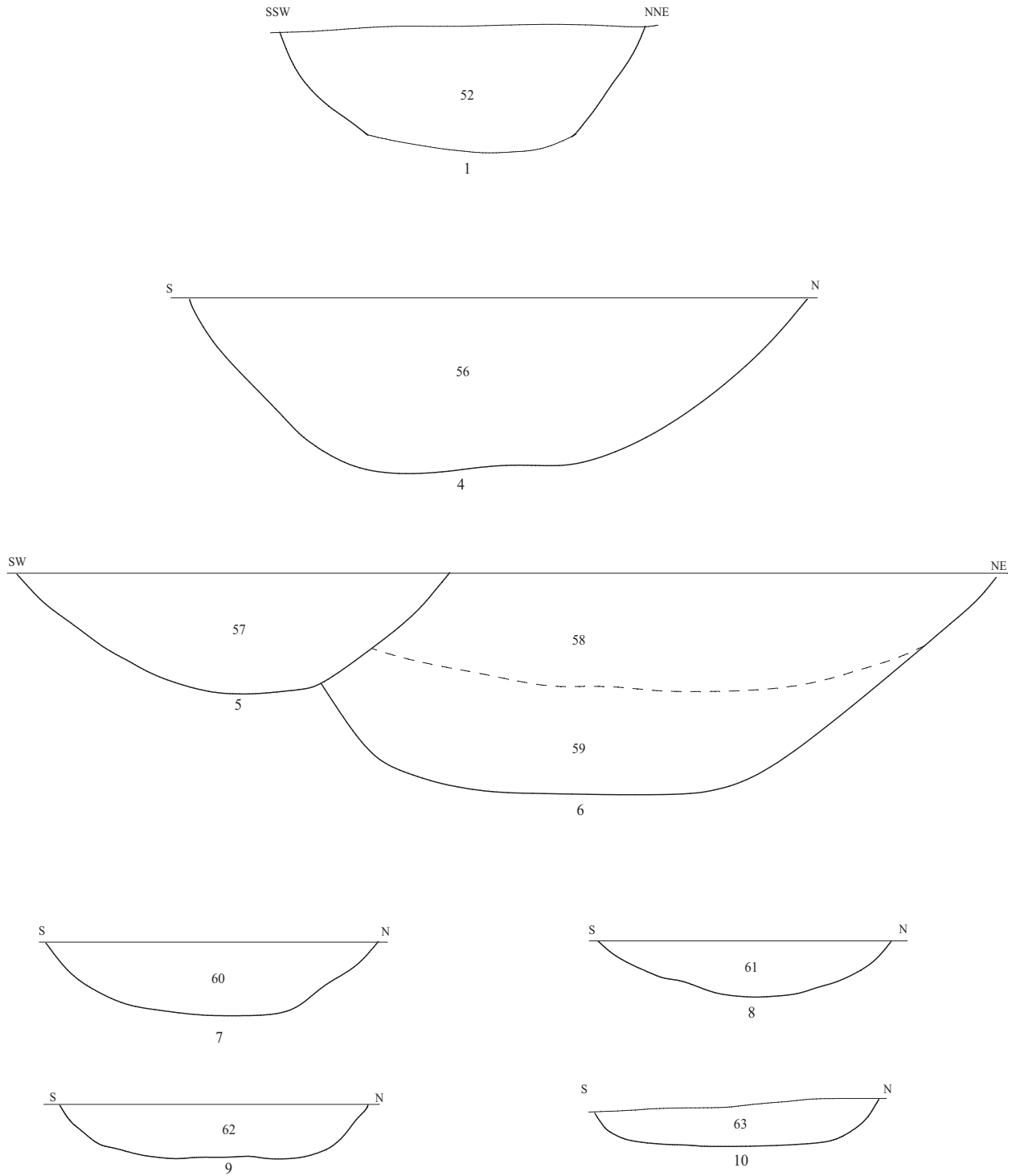
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Figure 2. Detailed plan.



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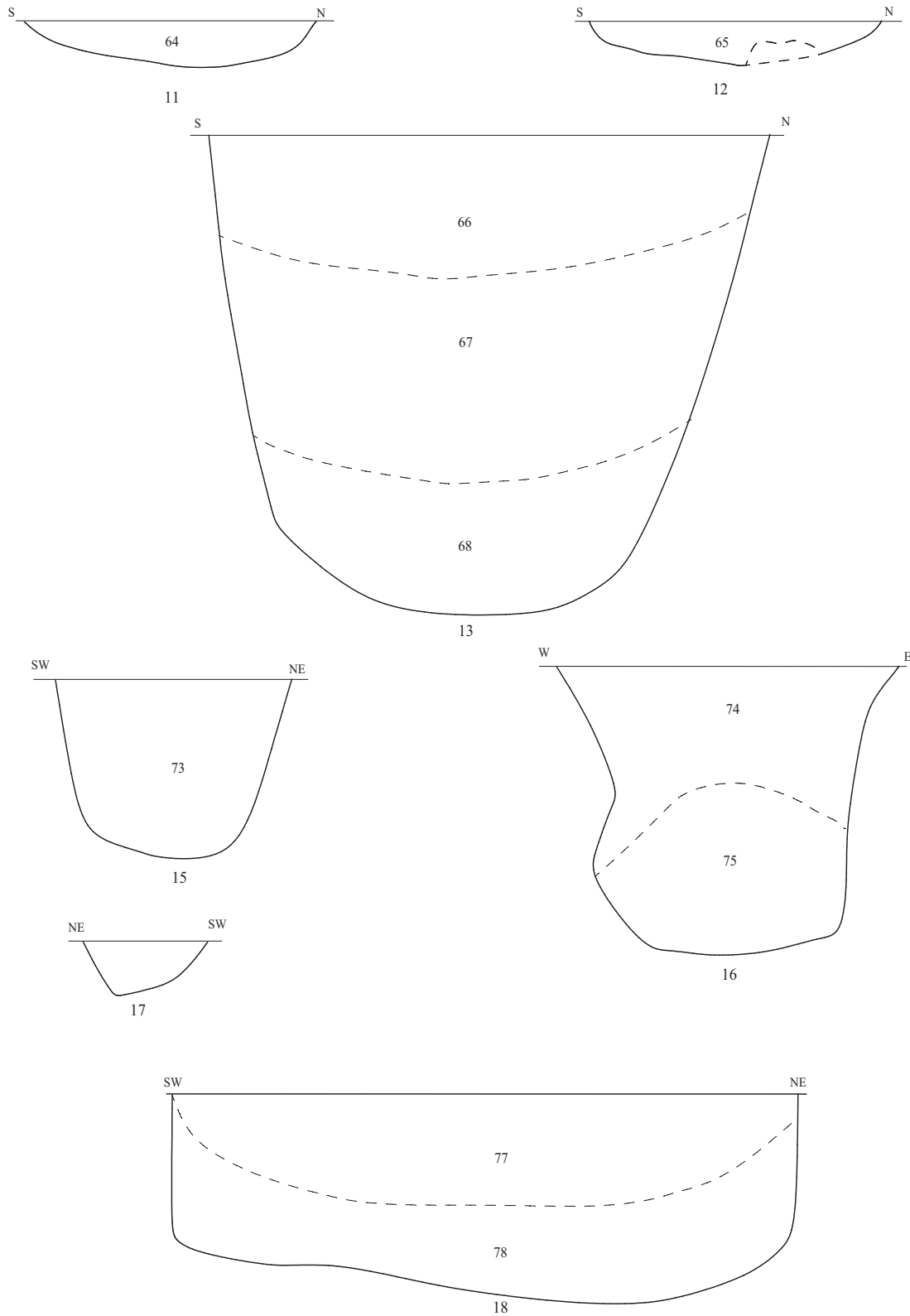
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Figure 3. Sections



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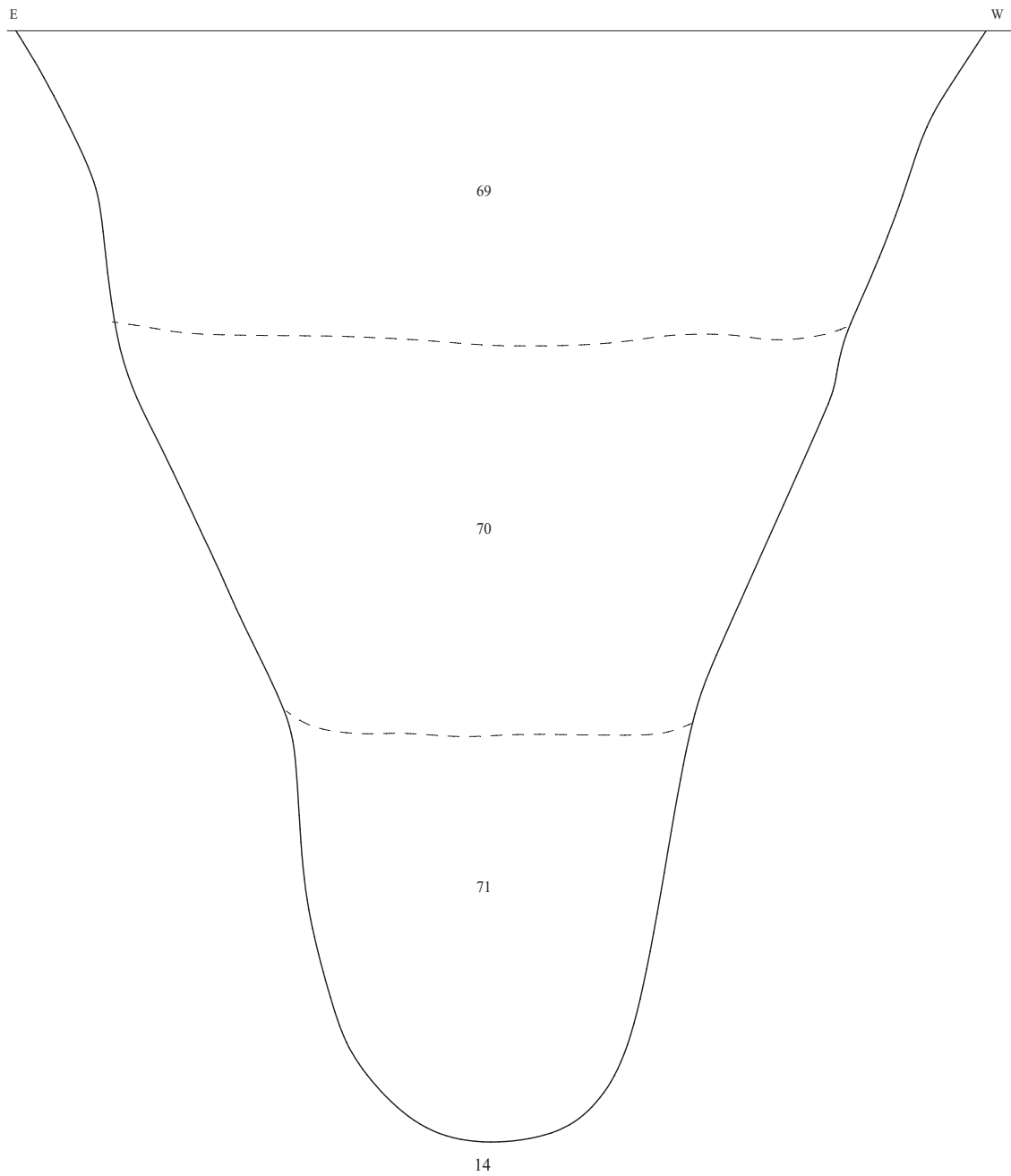
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Figure 4.. Sections



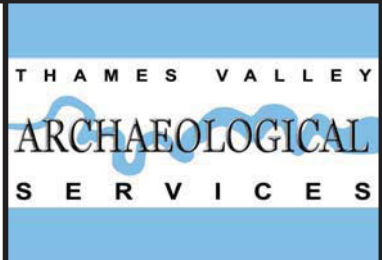
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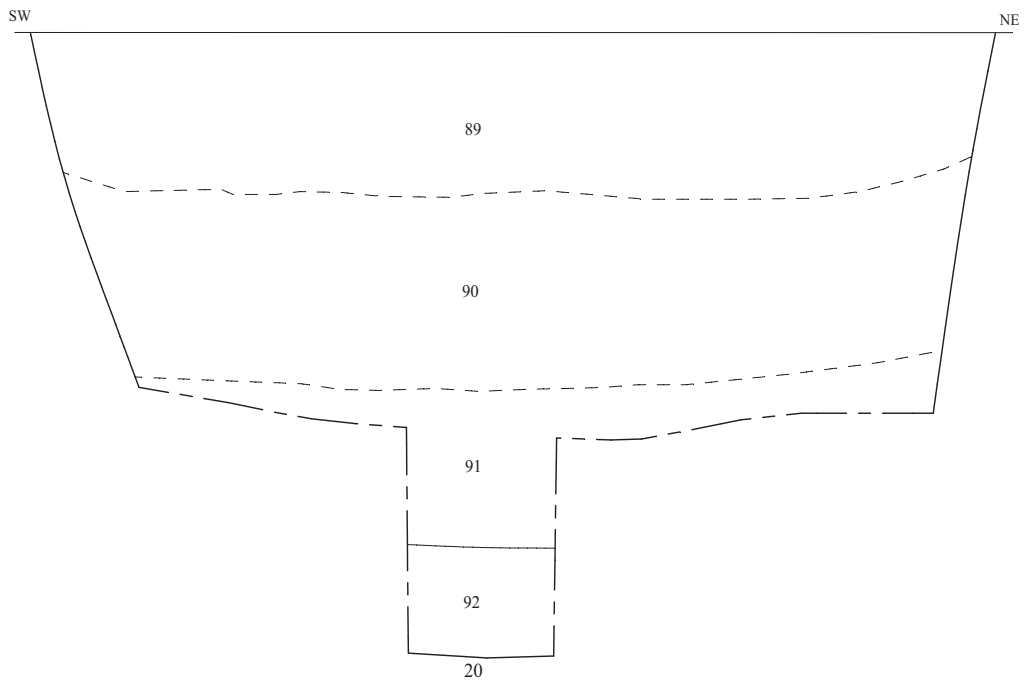
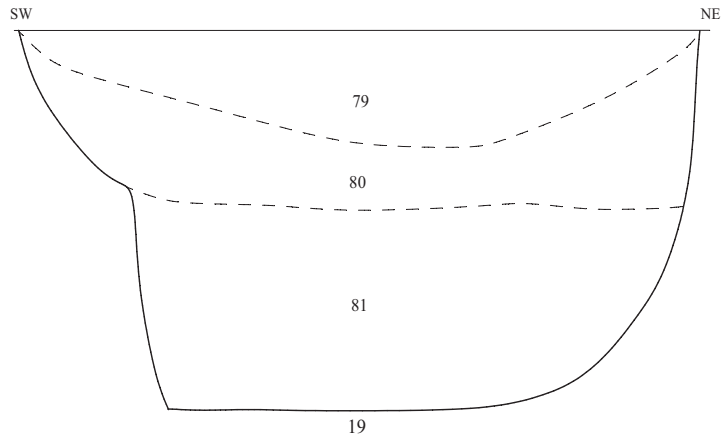


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Figure 5. Section pit 14





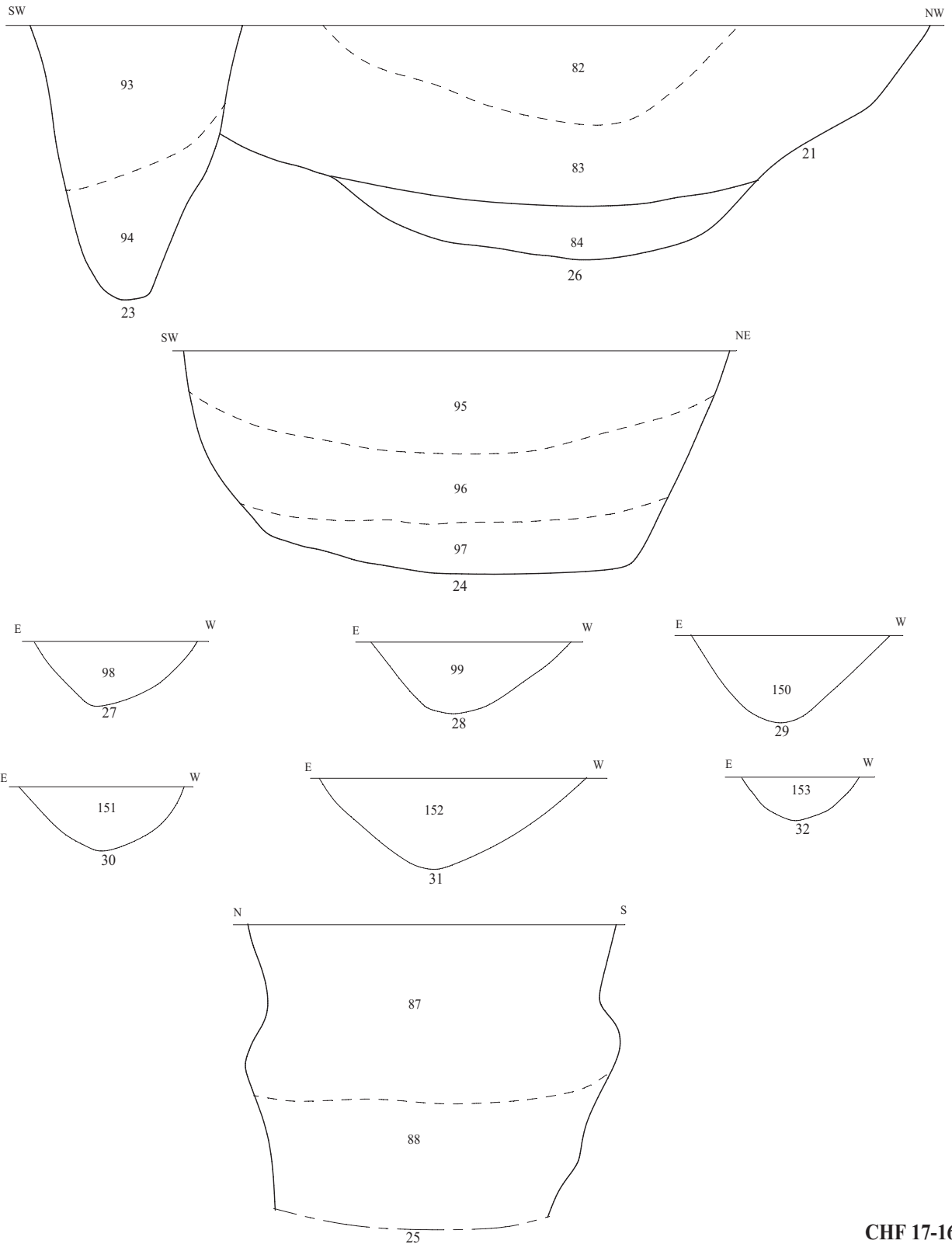
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Figure 6. Sections pits 19-20



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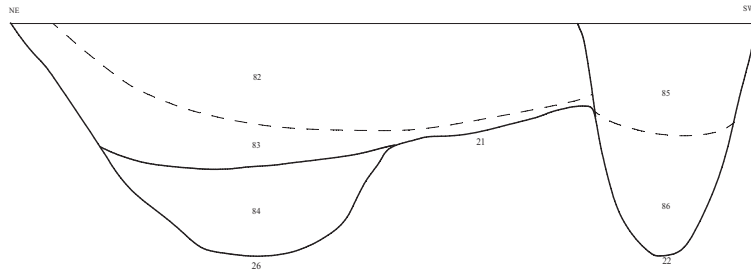
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Figure 7. Sections [pit 21, 23-31]



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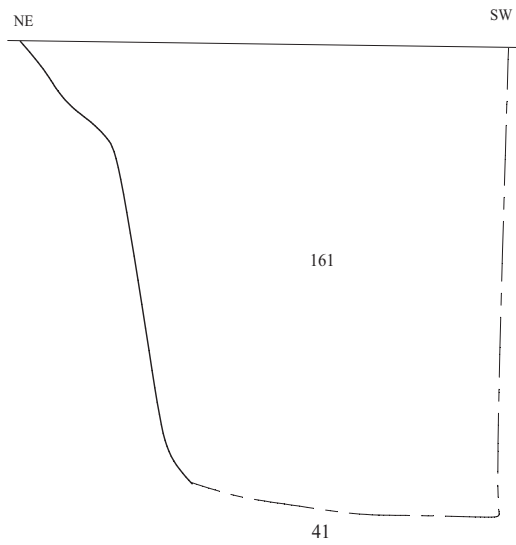
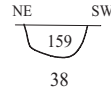
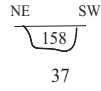
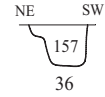
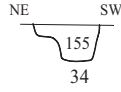
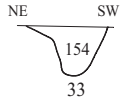
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**Copyhold Farm Quarry, Crabtree Lane,
Curridge, West Berkshire, 2019
Archaeological Excavation**

Figure 8. Sections, Pits 21,22,26



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Archaeological Excavation**

Figure 9. Sections, postholes and pit 33-38,41

0  1m

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Plate 1: General view of site after stripping



Plate 2: General view of site after stripping



Plate 3: Pit 3 looking west, Scales: 0.1m and 1m



Plate 4: Pit 14 looking south, Scales: 1m and 2m



Plate 5: Pit 18 looking north west, Scales: 0.5m and 2m



Plate 6: Pit 19 looking north, Scales: 0.5m and 2m

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Archaeological Recording Action
Plates 1-6.

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Plate 7: Pit 20 looking north, Scales: 1m and 2m



Plate 8: Pits 21-2 looking south east,
Scales: 0.5m, 1m and 2m



Plate 9: Pit 4 looking north west, Scales: 0.5m and 1m



Plate 10: Pit 25 looking south east, Scales: 0.5m and 1m



Plate 11: Gully 30 looking south, Scales: 0.5m and 0.3m



Plate 12: Gully 31 looking south, Scales: 0.5m and 1m

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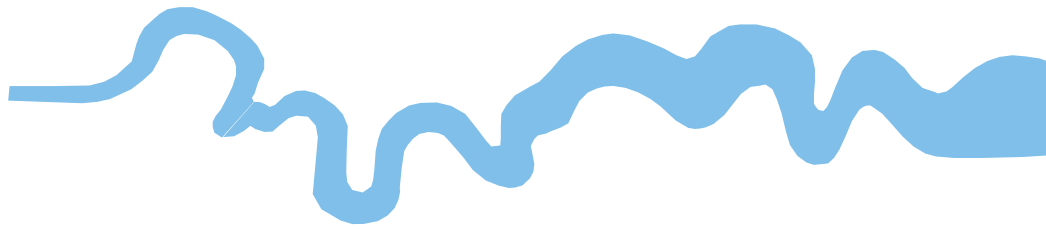
Land at Copyhold Farm, Crabtree Lane,
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Archaeological Recording Action
Plates 7-12.

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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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