

T V A S



SOUTH WEST

**Bancombe Road, Somerton,
Somerset**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Agata Socha-Paszkiewicz

Site Code: BSS19/83

(ST 4774 2892)

Bancombe Road, Somerton, Somerset

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Armour Heritage Ltd**

by Agata Socha-Paszkiwicz
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code BSS 19/83ev

May 2019

Summary

Site name: Bancombe Road, Somerton, Somerset

Grid reference: ST 4774 2892

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 30th May 2019

Project manager: Agata Socha-Paszkiwicz

Site supervisor: Agata Socha-Paszkiwicz

Site code: BSS 19/83ev

Area of site: c. 1.63ha

Summary of results: The evaluation revealed only a recent field boundary and stone-lined land drains of modern date. The site is considered to have negligible archaeological potential.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at TVAS South West, Taunton and will be deposited with the local Somerset Heritage Centre with accession number TTNCM 40/2019 in due course.

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 20.06.19 Steve Preston ✓ 20.06.19

Bancombe Road, Somerton, Somerset An Archaeological Evaluation

by Agata Socha-Paszkievicz

Report 19/83

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Bancombe Road, Somerton, Somerset (ST 4774 2892) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Sue Farr of Armour Heritage Limited, Foghamshire Timber Yard, Foghamshire Lane, Trudoxhill, Frome, Somerset, BA11 5DG on behalf of the client.

Planning permission (18/03493/OUT) has been gained from South Somerset District Council for the construction of six dwellings and new access road. The consent is subject to a condition (5) requiring that a programme of archaeological work is undertaken. This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2019), and the District Council's policies on archaeology. The Senior Historic Environment Officer at Somerset County Council, advising the District, has indicated that the site lies within an area of high archaeological potential and advised that a geophysical survey followed by trial trench evaluation would be required.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Agata Socha- Paszkiewicz and Mariusz Paszkiewicz on 30th May 2019 and the site code is BSS 19/83. The archive is presently held at TVAS Southwest, Taunton and will be deposited with the local Somerset Heritage Centre with accession number TTNCM 40/2019 in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located at the north-western edge of Somerton (Fig.1). It consists of two former plots of agricultural land which have been joined to form a single field of rough pasture and covers an area of *c.* 1.63ha. It is bounded to the south by Bancombe Road with recent residential development beyond, to the west by Somerton Business Park, to the north by an industrial yard and by an existing field boundary to the east (Fig. 2). The site slopes gently down towards south-east and lies at an elevation of between 45m and 50m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The underlying geology is mapped as Langport Member, Blue Lias Formation and Charmouth Mudstone Formation (undifferentiated). No superficial geological deposits are recorded (BGS 2017).

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a written scheme of investigation for the project (Armour Heritage 2019). In summary the earliest data recorded within a 1 km study area refers to two prehistoric ring ditches initially identified as a cropmark and confirmed in trial excavation in 1949. A leaf-shaped arrowhead was recovered from one of the ring ditches. The site lies in the hinterland of the Roman town of Ilchester, an area of the county considered to have been densely occupied in Roman period. Three sites and two findspots of Roman date are recorded in the vicinity. A Roman villa is recorded at Bancombe Hill, c. 700m to the north-west of the site. The villa was excavated in 1968, uncovering building foundations along with Roman pottery and roof tiles. To the north of the site, off Bradley Hill Lane, cropmarks relating to two sides of a rectangular enclosure, a hut circle and other linear features were recorded along with the reports of Roman pottery surface finds.

The earliest reference to the town is in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which records that in 733 the King of Wessex, Æthelheard lost control of Somerton to Æthelbald, King of Mercia. Somerton was the site of the 949 meeting of the *witan*. The name of Somerton may come from the Old English for "sea-lake enclosure", "summer town" or "summer farmstead" (Bush 1994, 184–5). In Domesday Book (AD 1086) Somerton is the first manor in the record for Somerset and was a huge manor held by the King, as it had been held by King Edward before the conquest (Williams and Martin 2002, 230). There was land for 50 ploughs, and 108 tenants (heads of households) with four slaves. There are ruins of a Saxon royal residence at St. Cleers, c. 450m to the south of the site. Evaluation in the area in 1992 recorded a stone wall and floor, ditches, pits and postholes associated with 10th to 13th century pottery.

A geophysical survey completed across the present site (Lefort 2019) identified a few linear and discrete anomalies of possible archaeological interest. A number of other features, including numerous agricultural features and at least two modern services were also detected.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development.

Specific aims of the project are:

- to clarify the presence/absence and extent of any buried archaeological remains within the site that may be impacted by development;
- to identify, within the constraints of the evaluation, the date, character, condition and depth of any surviving remains within the site;

to assess the degree of existing impacts to sub-surface horizons and to document the extent of archaeological survival of buried deposits; and
to produce a report which will present the results of the evaluation in sufficient detail to allow an informed decision to be made concerning the site's archaeological potential.

Eight trenches were proposed to be excavated mechanically under constant archaeological supervision to expose the top of the archaeologically relevant horizon or the natural geology. Where archaeological features were certainly or probably present, the stripped areas were to be cleaned using appropriate hand tools and sufficient of the archaeological features and deposits exposed were to be excavated or sampled by hand to satisfy the aims outlined above, without compromising the integrity of any features or deposits which might warrant preservation *in situ*, or might better be excavated under conditions pertaining full excavation.

Results

The location of all of the planned trenches, with the exception of Trench 6, had to be altered to avoid numerous obstacles such as large spoil heaps, building material being stored, services and areas where topsoil and subsoil had already removed. The alterations were made with agreement of Mr Steven Membery, Senior Historic Environment Officer at Somerset County Council. The trenches ranged in length from 21m to 29m and from 0.10m to 0.40m in depth (Fig 2). All were 1.8m wide. A list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and description of stratigraphy and geology is given in Appendix 1. All investigated features are summarized in Appendix 2.

Trench 1 (Figs 3 and 4; Pl. 4)

Trench 1 was aligned NW – SE and was 24.60m long and 0.25 m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.20m of light brown topsoil (50) and 0.10m light reddish brown subsoil (51) above mottled yellow/cream/brown clay with frequent blue lias stone - natural geology. At 7m from the NW end of the trench was land drain 1 (Pl 4). It was orientated SW – NE, 0.60m wide and minimum of 0.65m deep. It was filled with brown grey silty clay (52) above the deposit of loose blue lias stone in grey brown silty clay matrix. Three sherds of cream ware plate of clearly 20th century date were recovered from the lower fill of the drain (not retained).

Trench 2 (Fig. 2, Pl 1)

Trench 2 was aligned SW – NE and was 27m long and 0.10m deep. The topsoil and subsoil were removed prior to the evaluation and *c.* 0.10m of yellow/cream/brown clay with frequent blue lias stone - natural geology was removed mechanically to reveal any potentially archaeological features which may have survived. Two lengths

of stone-lined drain were revealed, one at *c.* 2m from the SW end of trench was parallel and one at *c.* 11m was perpendicular to land drain 1 investigated in Trench 1. The land drains were left unexcavated.

Trench 3 (Figs 2 and 3; Pl 2)

The trench was aligned NW – SE. It was 28m long and up to 0.40m deep at the NW end of the trench. Same as in Trench 2, in the first 19 m from the SE end of the trench the topsoil and subsoil had been removed prior the evaluation and *c.* 0.10m of yellow/cream/brown clay with frequent blue lias stone - natural geology was removed mechanically. Beyond 19m, the NW part of the trench stratigraphy consisted of 0.20m of light brown topsoil (50) and 0.20m light reddish brown subsoil (51) above mottled yellow/cream/brown clay with frequent blue lias stone - natural geology. Approximately 17m from the SE end of the trench was a field boundary (Pl 2) which corresponded well with the linear anomaly detected by geophysical survey. Infrequent fragments of modern brick, plastic and scrap metal of clearly modern date were observed within the fill of the field boundary ditch which was left unexcavated and the finds were not retained.

Trench 4 (Fig 2)

The trench was aligned SW – NE. It was 21m long and up to 0.40m deep at the NE end of the trench. As in Trenches 2 and 3, in the first 6m from the SW end of the trench the topsoil and subsoil had been removed prior the evaluation and *c.* 0.10m of yellow/cream/brown clay with frequent blue lias stone - natural geology was removed mechanically. Beyond 6m, in the NE part of the trench, the stratigraphy consisted of 0.20m of light brown topsoil (50) and 0.20m light reddish brown subsoil (51) above mottled yellow/cream/brown clay with frequent blue lias stone - natural geology. No archaeological features or finds were identified.

Trench 5 (Fig. 2)

Trench 5 was aligned SE – NW and was 29m long and 0.35 m deep. Undisturbed stratigraphy consisted of 0.20m of topsoil (50) above 0.20-0.25m of subsoil (51) above mottled yellow/cream/brown clay with frequent blue lias stone - natural geology. The topsoil and subsoil were similar as recorded in Trenches 1 to 4. No archaeological features or finds were identified.

Trench 6 (Fig. 2, Pl 3)

Trench 6 was aligned SE – NW and was 25.5m long and 0.45 m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.20m of topsoil (50) above 0.25m subsoil (51) above mottled yellow/cream/brown clay with frequent blue lias stone - natural geology. The topsoil and subsoil were similar to that recorded in Trenches 1 to 5. Trench 6 was planned

to target a linear anomaly detected by geophysical survey which upon investigation appeared to be of natural origin (PI 3) No archaeological features or finds were identified.

Trench 7 (Fig. 2)

Trench 7 was aligned SE – NW and was 25m long and 0.25 m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.15m of topsoil (50) above 0.10m subsoil (51) above mottled yellow/cream/brown clay with occasional blue lias stone - natural geology. The topsoil and subsoil were similar to that recorded in Trenches 1 to 6. No archaeological features or finds were identified.

Trench 8 (Fig. 2)

Trench 8 was aligned SE – NW and was 26.20m long and 0.36 m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.20m of topsoil (50) above 0.15m of subsoil (51) above mottled yellow/cream/brown clay with occasional blue lias stone - natural geology. Topsoil and subsoil were similar as recorded in Trenches 1 to 6. No archaeological features or finds were identified.

Conclusion

Despite the alteration made to the location of the trenches and the obstruction encountered on site, the evaluation has successfully investigated the site. Trenches 1 and 2 excavated in the south-east part of the site revealed only three land drains clearly of 20th century date. The field boundary, detected by geophysical survey and uncovered in Trench 3 was dated by modern debris and recorded on the 1977-1984 Ordnance Survey. On the basis of these results, the site is considered to have no archaeological potential.

References

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- Bush, R, 1994, *Somerset: The complete guide*. Wimbourne: Dovecote Press, 184–185.
- Farr, S, 2019, Bancombe Road, Somerton, Somerset: Written Scheme of Investigation: Archaeological Field Evaluation', Armour Heritage Ltd WSI AH864, Frome
- Lefort Geophysics 2019. Land off Bancombe Road, Somerton, Somerset. Gradiometer Survey Report Ref: 19-0011.01
- NPPF 2019 *National Planning Policy Framework* (revised), Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, London
- Williams, A and Martin, G H, 2002, *Domesday Book, a complete translation*, London

APPENDIX 1: Trench details

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	24.60	1.80	0.25	0-0.20 Topsoil; 0.20 - 0.25 Subsoil; 0.25 + mottled yellow/cream/brown clay with frequent white lias stone (Natural Geology). Modern land drain [PI. 4]
2	27.00	1.80	0.10	0-0.10+ white lias stone with pockets of yellow/cream clay (Natural Geology) [PI. 1]
3	28.00	1.80	0.10-0.40	SE: 0-0.10+ white lias stone with pockets of yellow/cream clay (Natural Geology); NW: 0-0.20 Topsoil; 0.20-0.35 Subsoil; 0.35 + mottled yellow/cream/brown clay with frequent white lias stone (Natural Geology). Modern field Boundary. [PI. 2]
4	21.00	1.80	0.10-0.40	SW: 0-0.10+ white lias stone with pockets of yellow/cream clay (Natural Geology); NW: 0-0.20 Topsoil; 0.20-0.35 Subsoil; 0.35 + mottled yellow/cream/brown clay with frequent white lias stone (Natural Geology).
5	29.00	1.80	0.35	0-0.20 Topsoil; 0.20 - 0.30 Subsoil; 0.30 + mottled yellow/cream/brown clay with frequent white lias stone (Natural Geology).
6	25.50	1.80	0.45	0-0.20 Topsoil; 0.20 - 0.35 Subsoil; 0.35 + mottled yellow/cream/brown clay with occasional white lias stone (Natural Geology).
7	25.00	1.80	0.25	0-0.15 Topsoil; 0.15 - 0.20 Subsoil; 0.20 + mottled yellow/cream/brown clay with occasional white lias stone (Natural Geology).
8	26.20	1.80	0.36	0-0.20 Topsoil; 0.20 - 0.30 Subsoil; 0.30 + mottled yellow/cream/brown clay with frequent white lias stone (Natural Geology). [PI. 4]

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
1	1	52, 53	Land drain	Modern	Pottery



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



Plate 2. Trench 3, looking NW, Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.3m.

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**Bancombe Road, Somerton,
Somerset 2019
Archaeological Evaluation
Plates 1 and 2.**





Plate 3. Trench 6, looking NW, Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.3m.

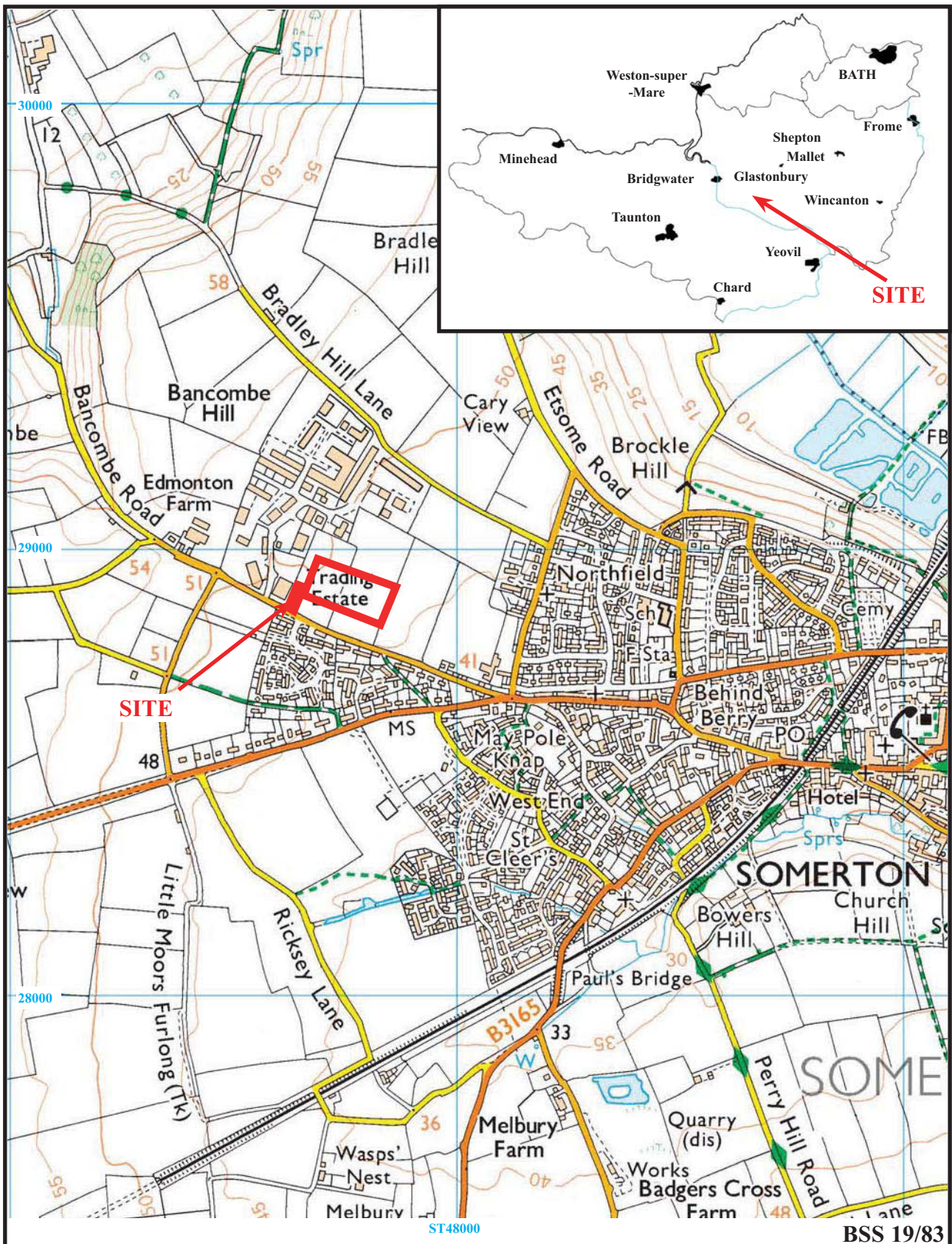


Plate 4. Land drain 1 , looking NE, Scales: 1m and 0.3m.

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Bancombe Road, Somerton
Somerset, 2019
Archaeological Evaluation
Plates 3 and 4.



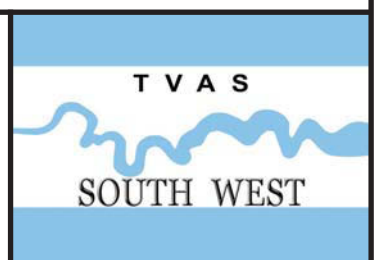


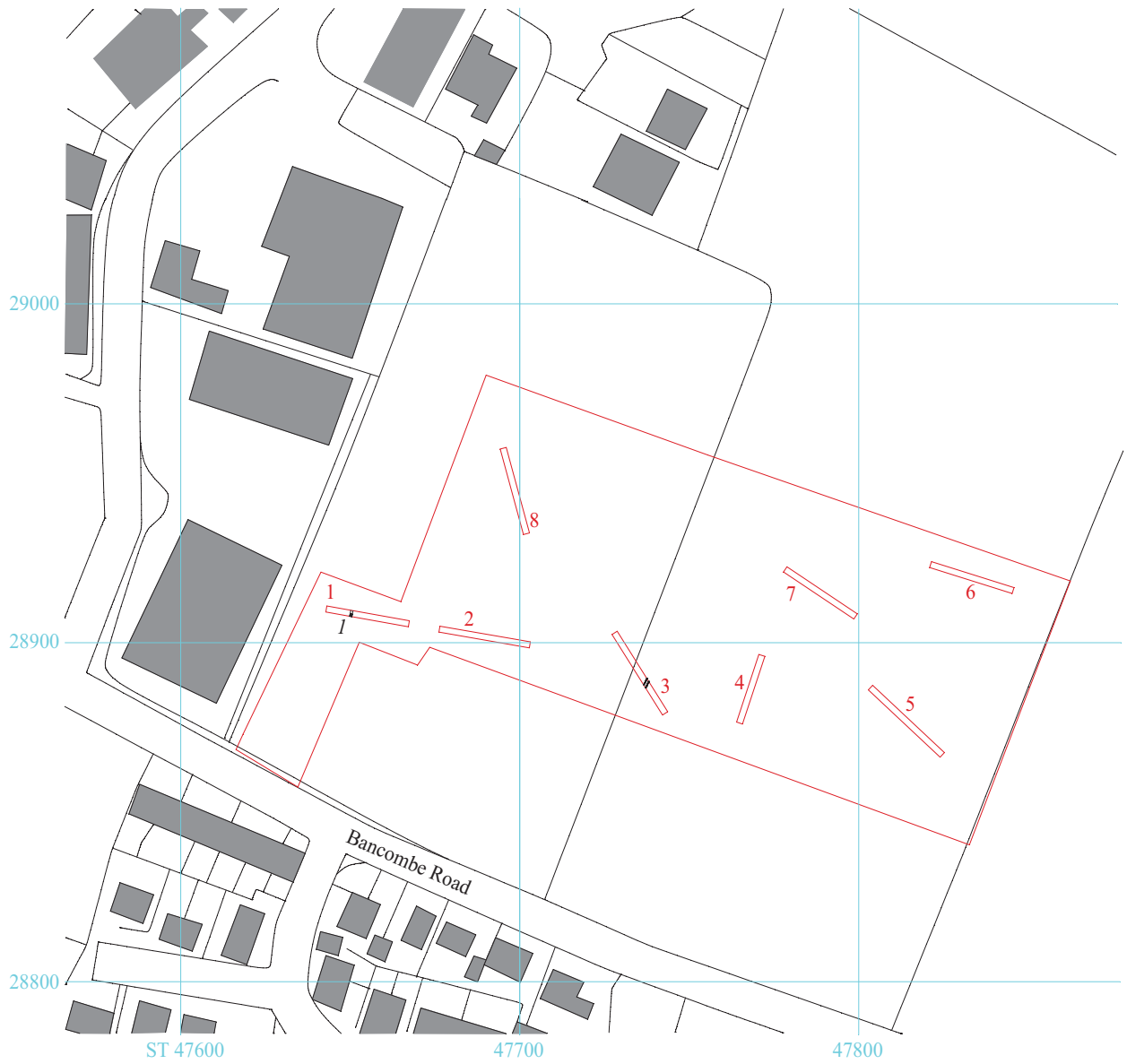
**Land at Bancombe Road, Somerton,
Somerset, 2019**

Archaeological Evaluation

Figure 1. Location of site within Somerton and Somerset.

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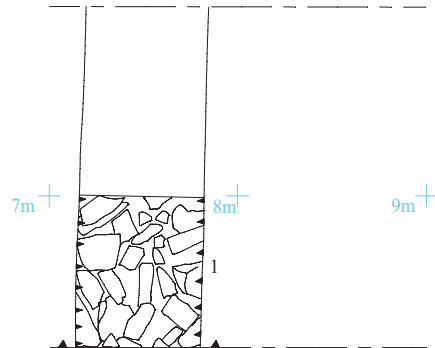
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**Land at Bancombe Road, Somerton,
Somerset, 2019
Archaeological Excavation**

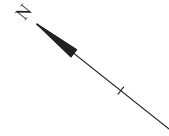
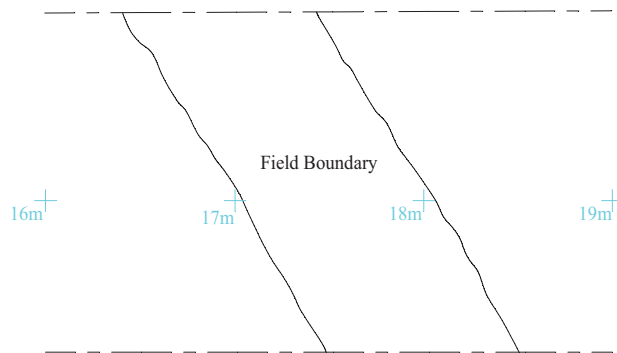
Figure 2. Site plan.



Trench 1



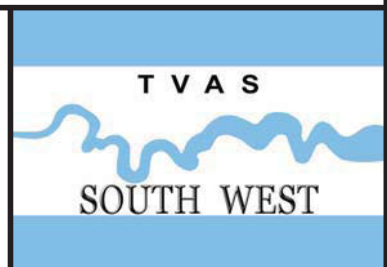
Trench 3



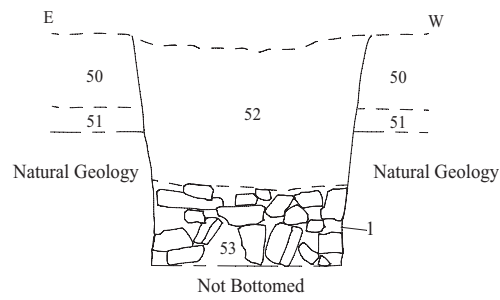
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**Land at Bancombe Road, Somerton,
Somerset, 2019
Archaeological Excavation**

Figure 3. Trench Details.



Trench 1



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**Land at Bancombe Road, Somerton,
Somerset, 2019
Archaeological Excavation**

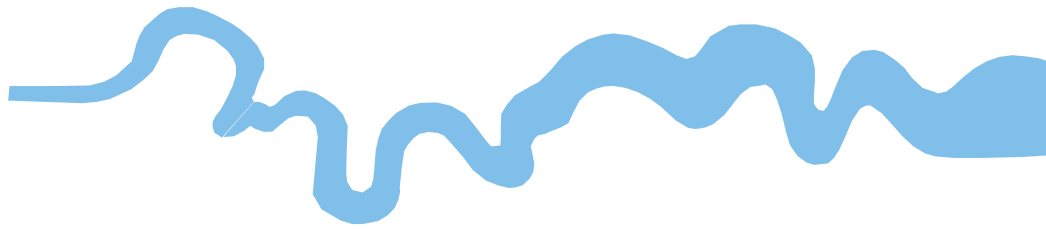
Figure 4. Section.



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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