The Dower House Pond, Bletchingley, Surrey

An Archaeological Evaluation

for Mr Mark Rookley

by Danielle Milbank

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code DHP08/29

March 2008

Summary

Site name: The Dower House Pond, Bletchingley, Surrey

Grid reference: TQ 3230 5037

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 10th and 11th March 2008

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Danielle Milbank

Site code: DHP 08/29

Area of site: *c*. 0.2 ha

Summary of results: No archaeological features or deposits were encountered. A single sherd of medieval (or possibly Roman) pottery was found. Deep colluvial deposits infilling a dry valley were present for the main location of the proposed pond.

Monuments identified: None

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

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 14.03.08
	Steve Preston✓ 18.03.08

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd, 47–49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading RG1 5NR

Tel. (0118) 926 0552; Fax (0118) 926 0553; email tvas@tvas.co.uk; website : www.tvas.co.uk

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Report 08/29

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out on land adjacent to The Dower House, Bletchingley, Surrey (TQ 3230 5037) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Andy McConnachie of The Aquarium & Pond Design Company, 5 Thrift Close, Springfield, Stalbridge, Dorset DT10 2LE, on behalf of Mr Mark Rookley of The Dower House, Bletchingley, Surrey, RH1 4LD.

Planning permission (App. no. TA2008/10) has been sought from Tandridge District Council for the creation of a pond (*c*. 0.17ha) and ancillary landscaping features. This would involve considerable ground disturbance for parts of the site which would damage or destroy any archaeological deposits that might be present on the site, and therefore Mr Gary Jackson, Archaeological Officer of Surrey County Council, advising the District Council, advised that a programme of archaeological work (in the form of a field evaluation) should be carried out prior to any intrusive groundworks. This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Gary Jackson, Archaeological Officer of Surrey County Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Danielle Milbank and Tim Dawson on the 10th and 11th March 2008 and the site code is DHP 08/29. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at East Surrey Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is within a field located on the south side of a steep hill on the southern margins of the village of Bletchingley, which lies *c*.4km east of Redhill in Surrey. The site lies at the southern end of the field (Figs 2 and 3). Topographically it is partly located with a dry valley with relatively level land to the south-west with the emphasis of the valley draining to the east and with a gentle slope down from the north and north-west. As such the proposal requires the greatest truncation of deposits in the west but decreasing towards the east where the spoil will be used to create a dam. The area lies at approximately 121m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is Hythe Beds, which is a part of the Lower Greensand (BGS 1978).

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its general proximity to a Scheduled Ancient Monument, the surviving remains of an 11th-century earthwork motte and bailey castle, which lies 150m to the north-west. It was founded by Richard FitzGilbert, and a stone castle was added by the De Clare family in the 12th century. Archaeological excavation has provided information about its short-lived existence, as it was dismantled in the mid 13th century (SCAU 2003). Further to the north of the proposal area are a number of sites of prehistoric, Roman and medieval dates. Some of the deposits and features recorded are of rare later Mesolithic date (Cotton 2004; Anon 2005; Hammond 2007). Building recording has taken place on Castle Hill Farm just to the south of the site. It is also possible that the latter is on or close to a medieval settlement (Holton and Murray 2006).

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. The specific research aims of the project are:

to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on the site,

to determine of archaeological deposits of any period are present,

to determine if deposits of medieval date have survived on the site, and if so, their relationship to the castle,

to determine if deposits of Mesolithic date, including flint scatters and cut features are present.

Four trenches were to be excavated, each measuring 15m long and 1.6m wide. They were to be positioned to target the footprint of the proposed pond and ancillary landscaping works, providing a *c*. 5% sample of the site. They were to be dug under constant archaeological supervision, by a JCB-type machine fitted with the toothless ditching bucket, and all spoilheaps were monitored for finds. Trenches were to be cleaned using hand tools where necessary.

Results

Five trenches were eventually dug, ranging in length from 14.8m to 17.8m (Figs 3 and 4). From a consideration of the specific circumstances of the site, namely the presence of a dry valley occupied by very deep colluvial deposits, the emphasis of the trenching was altered in favour of the level ground to the south which was closer to Castle Hill Farm where the likelihood of encountering medieval occupation deposits was greatest. The extra

trench was located there. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trench 1 (Plate 1)
This trench was 15.5m long and between 0.6m (NE) and 0.74m (SW) deep. The stratigraphy (Fig. 4) comprised topsoil above a mottled brown/green clayey sand subsoil above mottled green/grey sandstone. No archaeological finds nor deposits were revealed.

Trench 2 (Plate 2)
This trench was 14.8m long and between 0.62m (W) and 0.80m (E) deep. The stratigraphy (Fig. 4) comprised topsoil above a mottled brown/green clayey sand subsoil above mottled green/grey slightly clayey sand. No archaeological finds nor deposits were revealed.

Trench 3 (Plate 3)
This trench was 15.0m long and 0.65m deep, orientated east–west. The stratigraphy comprised topsoil above a mottled brown/green clayey sand subsoil above mottled green/grey slightly clayey sand. No archaeological finds nor deposits were revealed.

Trench 4 (Plate 4)
This trench was 15.6m long and between 0.64m (NE) and 0.83m (SW) deep. The stratigraphy comprised topsoil above a mottled brown/green clayey sand subsoil above mottled green/grey slightly clayey sand. No archaeological finds nor deposits were revealed.

Trench 5
This trench was 17.8m long and between 1.05m (NW) and 1.9m (SE) deep. It was located along the floor of the dry valley. The stratigraphy comprised topsoil above a mottled brown/green clayey sand subsoil which markedly increased in thickness to the south-east. The upper levels of the subsoil deposits contained fragments of brick and slate whereas the lower levels contained occasional charcoal flecks along with a single small fragment of medieval or possibly Roman pottery. Two land drains composed of broken brick were noted at 2m and 15m along the trench at a depth of *c*. 0.7m. At the northern end, the subsoil overlay a clean light green/grey slightly clayey sand but to the east it overlay a clean green/grey sand mottled with brown clayey sand. It was not entirely clear whether the latter deposit was the solid natural geology (in an unweathered form) or was a periglacial deposit (head). No archaeological deposits were revealed.

Finds

Pottery

A single tiny sherd (<1g) of pottery was recovered from the lower subsoil deposits of trench 5. The sherd was black throughout and was thin-walled 6mm thick and tempered with sparse poorly sorted sand. It is likely to be of medieval or possibly Roman date.

Conclusion

The evaluation has not revealed any deposits of archaeological interest. A single small sherd of pottery of uncertain (medieval or possibly Roman) date from a subsoil context was the only object of any archaeological interest. The majority of the pond area coincides with the location of a small dry valley which would have been an area prone to flooding and as such is most unlikely to have been chosen as site for occupation. The site therefore is considered to have no archaeological potential.

References

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Cotton, J, 2004, 'Surrey's early past a survey of recent work', in J Cotton, G Crocker and A Graham (eds), *Aspects of archaeology and history in Surrey; towards a research framework for the county*, Surrey Archaeol Soc, Guildford, 19–38

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Holton, A and Murray, J, 2006, 'Castle Hill Farm, Bletchingley, Surrey, Interpretative Historic Building Survey', Archaeology South East, project 2431, Ditchling

PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, DoE Planning Policy Guidance note 16 (HMSO)

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APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at south or west end

Trench	Length (m)	Breadth (m)	Depth (m)	Comment
1	15.5	1.6	0.74SW 0.6NE	0-0.32m topsoil; 0.32-0.60m mottled brown clayey sand (subsoil); 0.6m+ green grey sandstone (natural geology) **[Plate 1]**
2	14.8	1.6	0.62W 0.8E	0-0.32m topsoil; 0.32-0.58m mottled brown clayey sand (subsoil); 0.58m+ green grey slightly clayey sand (natural geology) **[Plate 2]**
3	15.0	1.6	0.65	0-0.32m topsoil; 0.32-0.58m mottled brown clayey sand (subsoil); 0.58m+ green grey sandstone (natural geology) **[Plate 3]**
4	15.6	1.6	0.83SW 0.64NE	0-0.29m topsoil; 0.29-0.68m mottled brown clayey sand (subsoil); 0.68m+ green grey sandstone (natural geology) **[Plate 4]**
5	17.8	1.6	1.05NW 1.90SE	NW: 0-0.29m topsoil; 0.29-1.0m mottled brown clayey sand (subsoil); 1.0m+ greensand (natural geology) SE: 0-0.29m topsoil; 0.29-1.85m mottled brown clayey sand (subsoil); 1.85m+ mottled clayey sand (natural geology?) Land drains at 2m and 15m

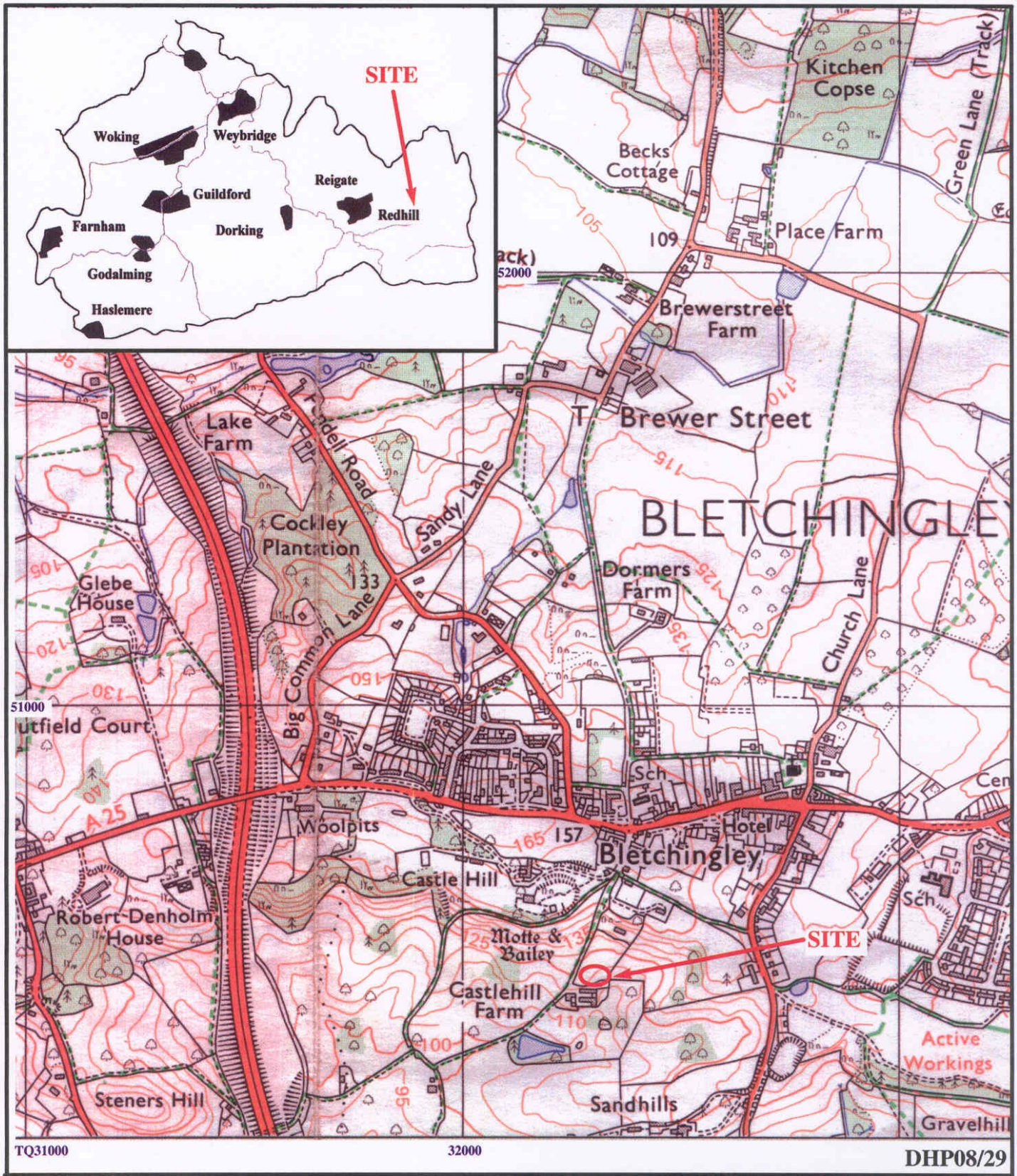

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Figure 1. Location of site within Bletchingley and Surrey.

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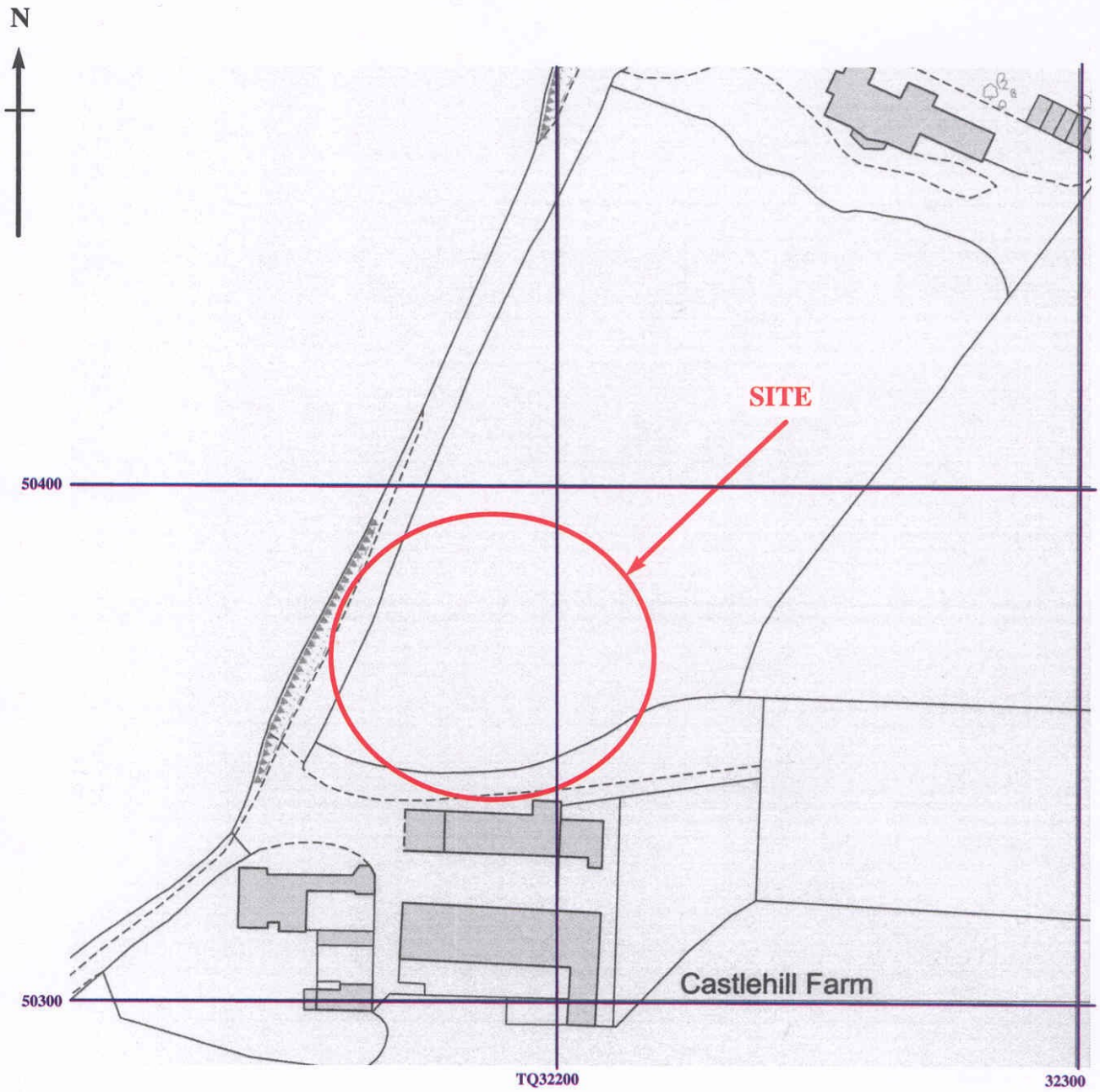

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

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Figure 3. Location of trenches

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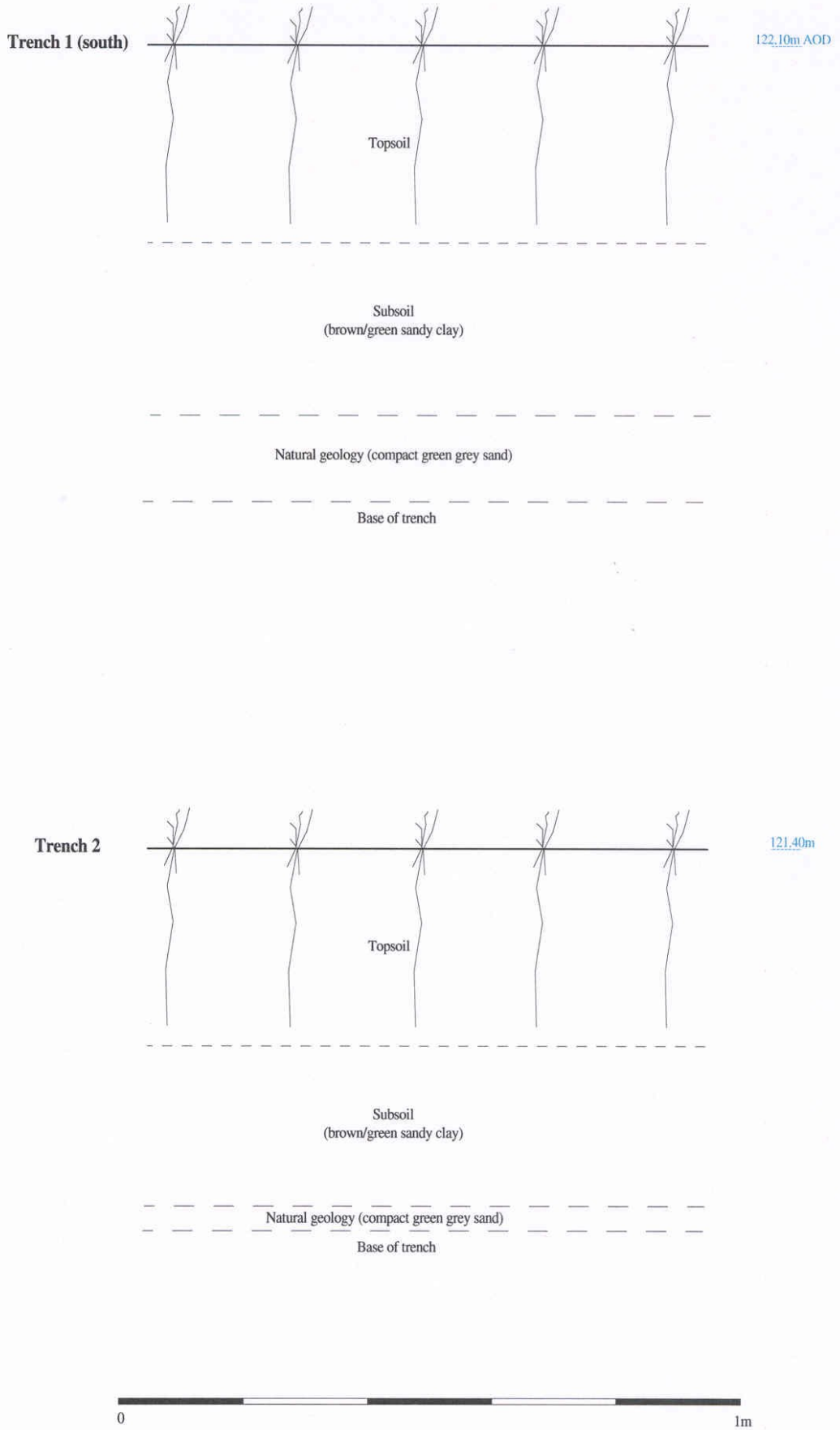

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Figure 4. Representative sections

Plate 1. Trench 1 looking north, scales: 1m and 2m.

Plate 2. Trench 2 looking east, scales: 1m and 2m.

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Plate 3. Trench 3 looking east, scales: 1m and 2m.

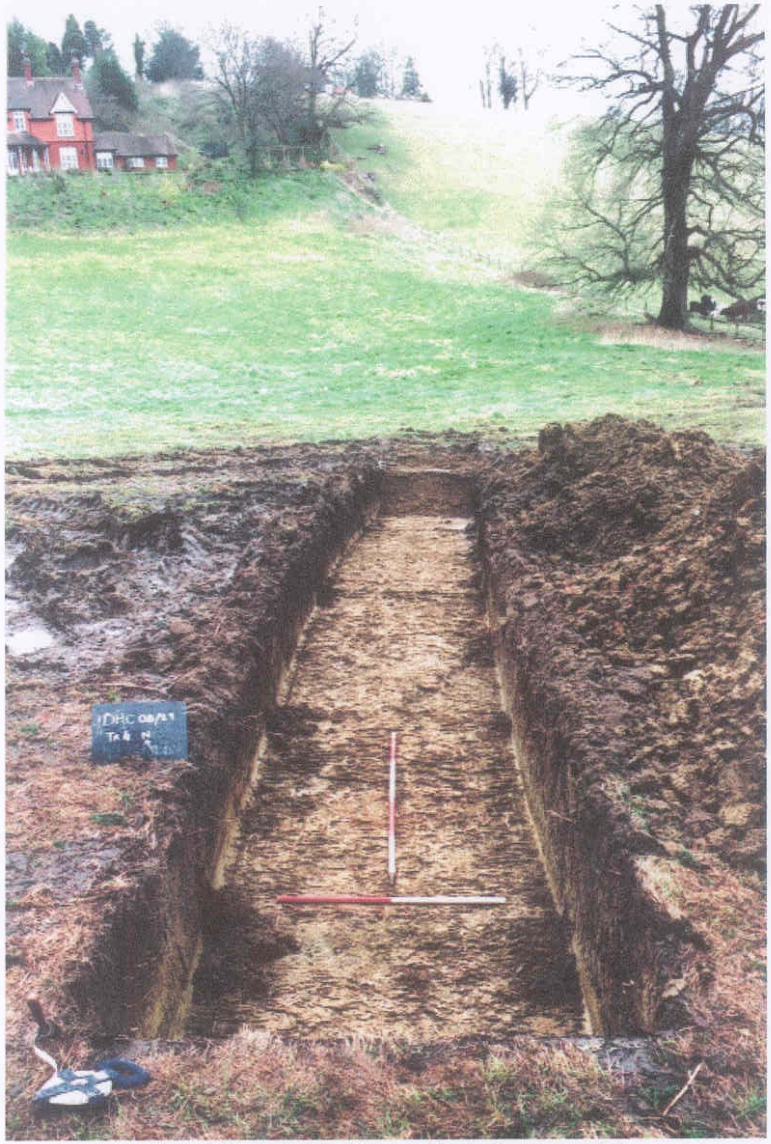

Plate 4. Trench 4 looking north, scales: 1m and 2m.

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