

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Balcombe Nurseries, Basingstoke Road,
Swallowfield, Berkshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Maisie Foster

Site Code: BNS20/92

(SU 7187 6424)

**Balcombe Nurseries, Basingstoke Road,
Swallowfield, Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Woodridge Developments**

by Maisie Foster

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code BNS 20/92

August 2020

Summary

Site name: Balcombe Nurseries, Basingstoke Road, Swallowfield, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 7187 6424

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 11-12th August 2020

Project coordinator: Tim Dawson

Site supervisor: Maisie Foster

Site code: BNS 20/92

Area of site: c. 0.5ha

Summary of results: The evaluation was successfully carried out with all five trenches dug as intended with only a minor alteration to Trench 5, due to a manhole cover. No deposits, finds or features of archaeological interest were encountered. The site is therefore considered to have low archaeological potential.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service in due course.

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www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp.*

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 14.08.20 Steve Preston✓ 13.08.20

Balcombe Nurseries, Basingstoke Road, Swallowfield, Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Maisie Foster

Report 20/92

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Balcombe Nurseries, Basingstoke Road, Swallowfield, Berkshire (SU 7187 6424) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Evan Lindsell of Woodridge Developments, Balcombe Nursery, Basingstoke Road, Swallowfield, Berkshire, RG71PY.

Planning permission (173726) has been granted by Wokingham Borough Council for the construction of new housing on the site. The consent is subject to a condition (15) relating to archaeology requiring a programme of archaeological investigation. This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and Wokingham Council's policies on archaeology. As a consequence of the possibility of archaeological deposits on the site, a field evaluation by means of machine-dug trenching has been requested by Wokingham Borough Council as advised by Berkshire Archaeology, the results of which will determine if further phases of fieldwork are required in relation to this development.

The fieldwork was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Roland Smith, Archaeology Officer for Berkshire Archaeology, the archaeological adviser to the Borough. The fieldwork was undertaken by Maisie Foster, with assistance from Aidan Colyer on the 11th August 2020 and the site code is BNS 20/92.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited in an appropriate designated museum or repository in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the south western edge of Swallowfield, Berkshire (Fig. 1) on the western side of Basingstoke Road. This slightly irregular parcel of land is relatively flat at a height of *c.*62m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), and is bounded by hedge rows to the north, west and south with residential properties just beyond, and Basingstoke Road and open farmland to the east. The site was previously the location of Balcombe plant nursery, which has left the majority of the field as grassland, and the entrance to site gravelled. The underlying geology is London Clay Formation (BGS 2000). This geology was observed in all trenches.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location close to the confluence of the Rivers Loddon and Blackwater which is an area with a record for a local wealth of archaeological deposits. To the east an extensive cropmark complex of Iron Age and Roman date is visible from the air and has been partly excavated (Gates 1975; Lobb and Morris 1993). Several Iron Age sites have also been recorded in the general area with one to the north at Spencers Wood (ASE 2004a and b) and a second at Odiham Road, Riseley to the south (Taylor 2019). The Roman road from London to Silchester also passed to the south of the site.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological or palaeoenvironmental deposits within the area of development. The specific research aims of this project were:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present; and
- to determine if there are any deposits of Prehistoric date on the site

Five trenches were to be dug using a 360⁰-type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. Topsoil and any other overburden was to be removed to expose archaeologically sensitive levels. 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 would be excavated or sampled by hand to satisfy the aims outlined above, without compromising the integrity of any feature that might warrant preservation *in situ* or be better investigated under the conditions pertaining to full excavation. Spoil heaps were to be monitored for finds and scanned with a metal detector.

Results

Four of the five trenches were dug as intended, with a slight change in positioning required for Trench 5, due to a man hole cover situated at the trench's western end (Fig. 3). The trenches ranged from 21.3m to 19.90m in length and 0.4m to 0.6m in depth. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

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

Trench 1 was aligned SSE - NNW and was 20.50m long and 0.40m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.20m of topsoil overlying 0.20m of mid reddish brown sandy clay with modern ceramic building material (CBM) inclusions subsoil overlying natural geology. A modern ditch or pipe trench was observed between 8m and 10m from the SSE end of the trench, but no finds or features of archaeological interest were observed.

Trench 2 (Fig.3; Pl. 2)

Trench 2 was aligned W - E and was 21.30m long and 0.40m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.27m of topsoil overlying 0.13m of mid reddish brown sandy clay with CBM inclusions subsoil overlying natural geology. No finds or features of archaeological interest were observed.

Trench 3 (Fig.3; Pl. 3)

Trench 3 was aligned W - E and was 20m long and 0.44m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.25m of topsoil overlying 0.19m of mid reddish brown sandy clay with CBM inclusions subsoil overlying natural geology. No finds or features of archaeological interest were observed.

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

Trench 4 was aligned SW - NE and was 20.10m long and 0.60m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.29m of topsoil overlying 0.31m of mid reddish brown sandy clay with CBM inclusions subsoil overlying natural geology. No finds or features of archaeological interest were observed.

Trench 5 (Fig.3)

Trench 5 was aligned WSW - ENE and was 19.90m long and 0.46m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.27m of a brick made ground levelling deposit overlying 0.19m of mid reddish brown sandy clay with CBM inclusions overlying a natural geology heavily truncated by land drains and small rubber water pipes. No finds or features of archaeological interest were observed.

Finds

Modern ceramic building materials (brick/tile) and modern metal gardening tools were noted in the modern ditch in Trench 1, but were retained. Fragmentary CBM was noted in all trenches and not retained.

Conclusion

The evaluation successfully investigated the site with all trenches dug as intended with only a minor alteration to Trench 5. The only feature encountered was a modern ditch/pipe trench in trench 1, which along with containing modern ceramic building materials and modern metal gardening tools, also had a modern metal pipe running through the middle of it. No features of archaeological interest were observed, nor finds recovered, and on this basis, the site is considered to have low archaeological potential.

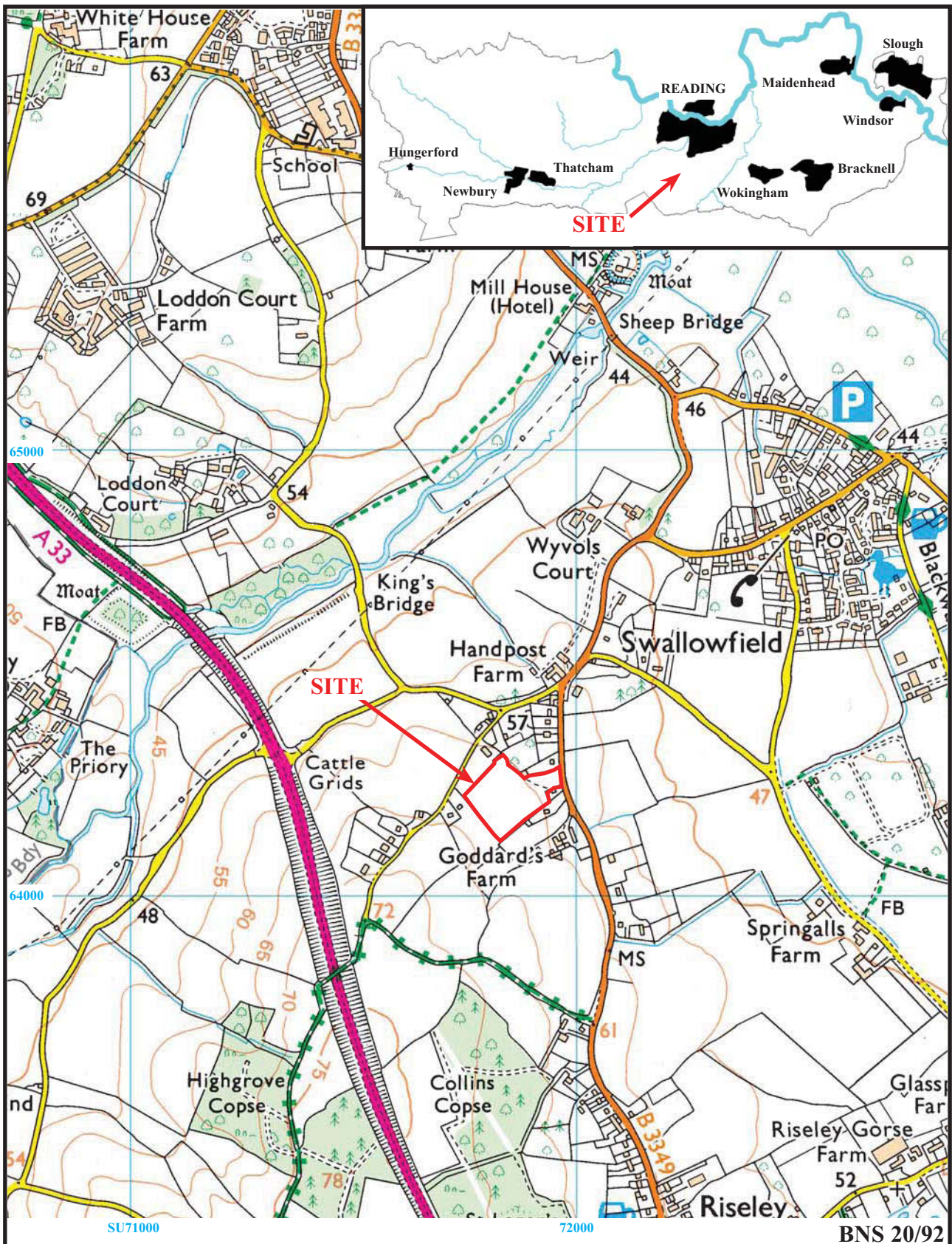
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APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at SSE, W, SW, WSW end

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	20.50	1.6	0.40	0-0.2m topsoil; 0.2-0.4m mid reddish brown silty clay with frequent CBM inclusions subsoil; 0.4m+London Clay natural geology. [Pl. 1]
2	21.30	1.6	0.40	0-0.27m topsoil; 0.27-0.4m mid reddish brown silty clay with frequent CBM inclusions subsoil; 0.4m+ London Clay natural geology. [Pl. 2]
3	20.00	1.6	0.44	0-0.25m topsoil; 0.25-0.44m mid reddish brown silty clay with frequent CBM inclusions subsoil; 0.44m+ London Clay natural geology. [Pl. 3]
4	20.10	1.6	0.60	0-0.29m topsoil; 0.29-0.6m mid reddish brown silty clay with frequent CBM inclusions subsoil; 0.6m+ London Clay natural geology. [Pl. 4]
5	19.90	1.6	0.46	0-0.27m brick made ground levelling deposit; 0.27-0.46m mid reddish brown silty clay with frequent CBM inclusions subsoil; 0.46m+ London Clay natural geology.

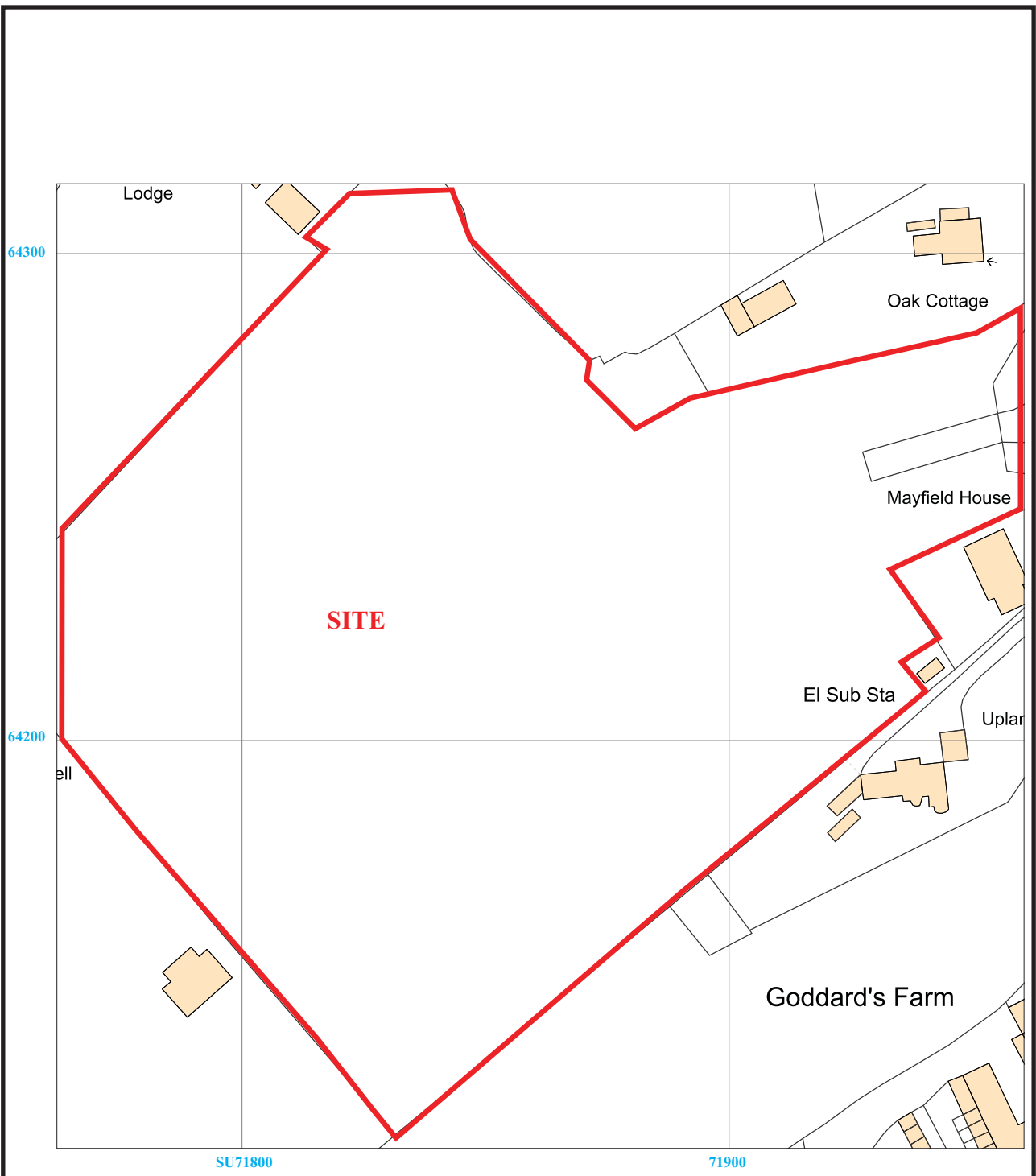


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Figure 1. Location of site within Swallowfield and Berkshire.

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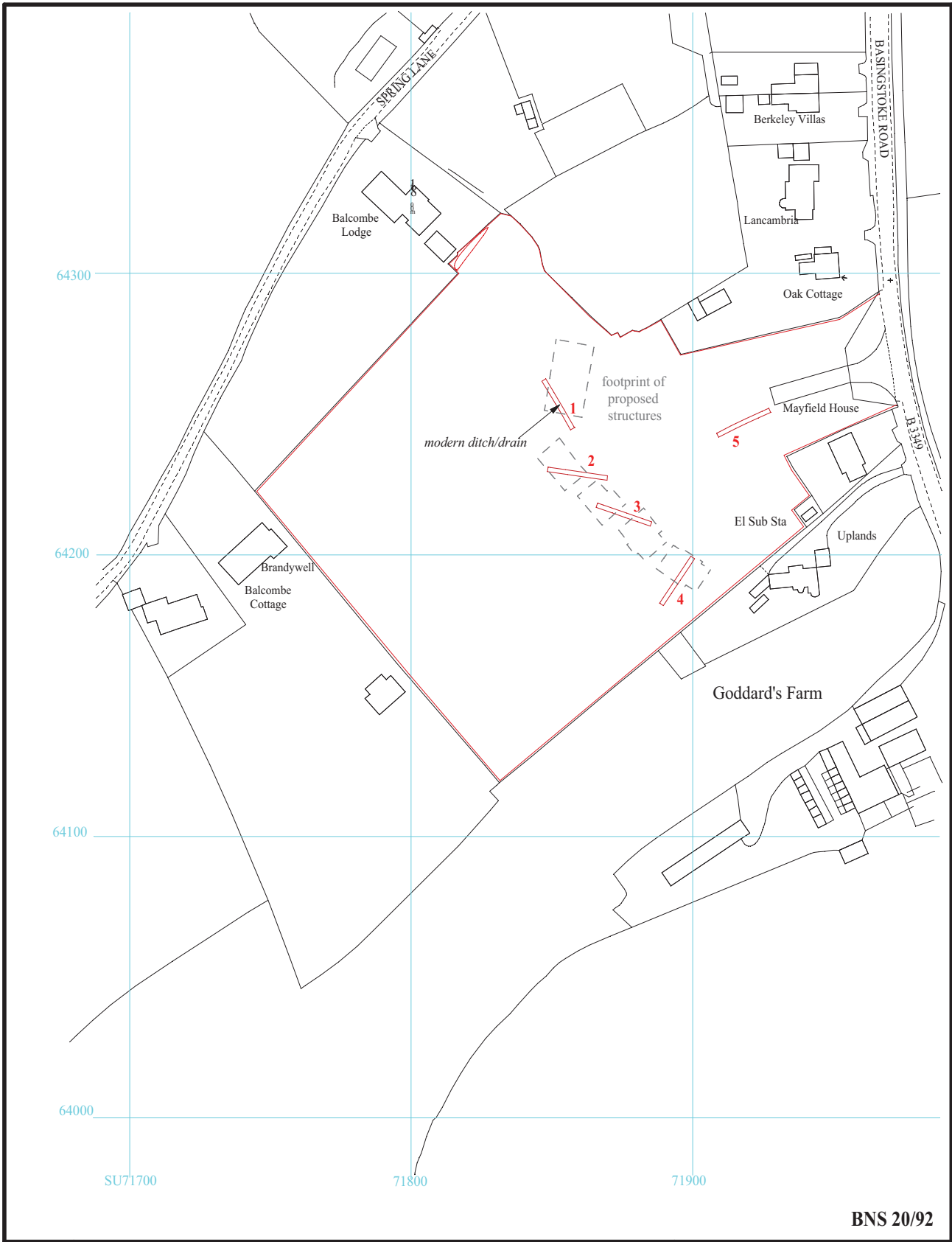


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Figure 2. Detailed location of site

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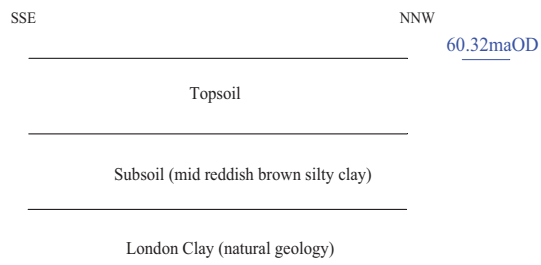


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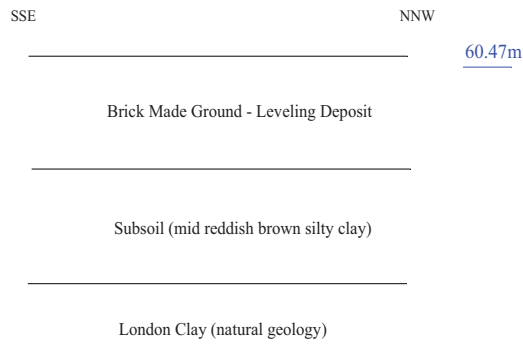
Figure 3. Location of trenches.



Trench 1



Trench 4



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Figure 3. Representative Sections



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



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

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Plates 1 and 2.**

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



Plate 4. Trench 4, looking NE, Scales: 2m and 1m.

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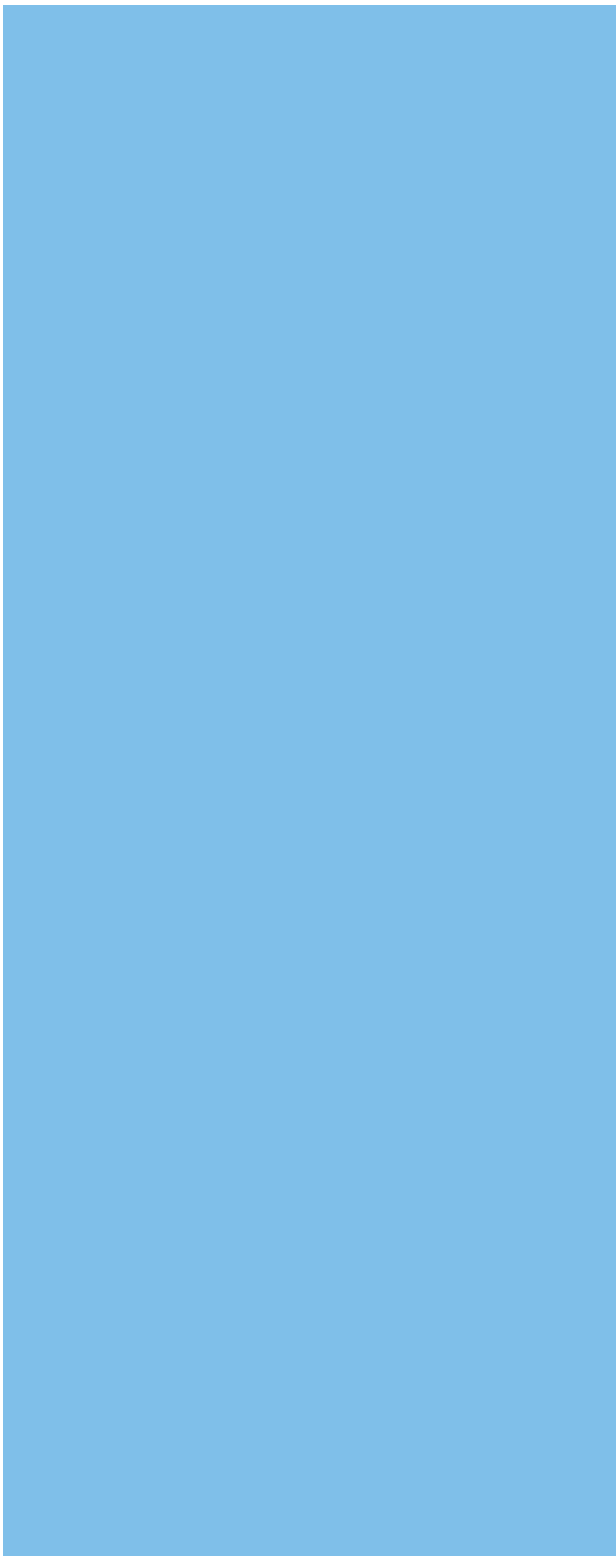
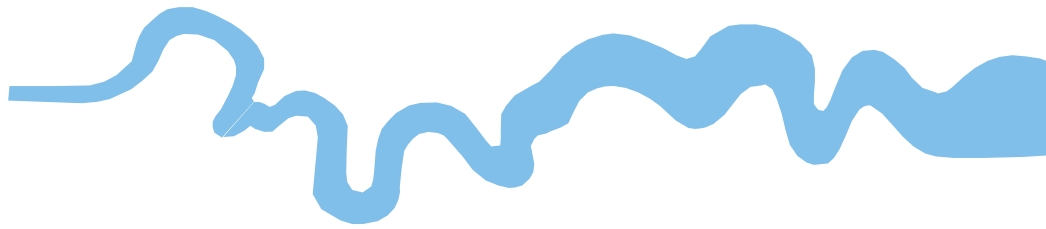
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Plates 3 and 4.**

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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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