Land at Upper Eddington, Hungerford, West Berkshire

An Archaeological Evaluation

for Southern Management Ltd

by Andrew Weale

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code ELH 08/112

January 2009

Summary

Site name: Land at Upper Eddington, Hungerford, West Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 3407 6935

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 7th–9th January 2009

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Andrew Weale

Site code: ELH 08/112

Area of site: *c.* 1.0 ha

Summary of results: The evaluation revealed two small undated pits, an undated gully, an undated ditch possibly relating to use of the site as former allotments. A large sarsen stone was recorded which may have been used as a boundary marker. Most of the site comprised river terrace but with alluvium and a possible earlier course of the river Kennet observed. A small number of struck flints were recovered, two of which are possibly of late Upper Palaeolithic date.

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

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Report 08/112

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out on Land at Upper Eddington, Hungerford, West Berkshire (SU 3407 6935) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Richard Nevill of Southern Management Ltd, Ship House, 35 Battersea Square, London SW11 3RA.

Planning consent is to be sought from West Berkshire Council for the construction of new residential accommodation on a parcel of land at Upper Eddington, Hungerford, West Berkshire. In order to inform the planning process with regard to potential archaeological impact of the proposed development, a field evaluation has been requested to accompany the application.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Duncan Coe, Archaeological Officer with West Berkshire Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Weale, Henrietta Longdon, Arkadiusz Gnas and Matt Gittins between 7th and 9th January 2009 and the site code is ELH 08/112. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and it is anticipated that it will be deposited at West Berkshire Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located to the east of the village of Eddington, which lies on the north bank of the River Kennet, opposite Hungerford, at the crossing of the A4 over the river. The Lambourn Downs rise to the north of the village (Fig 1.) The site is bounded to the north-west by a house and garden, to the north-east by back gardens to housing and a footpath, to the south-east by the footpath and access road, and to the south-west by a watermill complex (Eddington Mill) and the River Kennet (Fig. 2). The River Kennet is joined by the River Dun to the south-east. The land slopes down steeply from 100m above Ordnance Datum along the east edge of the site to below 95m AOD along the Kennet. The underlying geology is mapped as River and Valley Gravel with Alluvium lying along the edge of the River Kennet. Sandy gravel was observed within all trenches, with alluvium in some. The site is currently scrub land and wildlife zones but was formerly allotments.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site comes from its location within the archaeologically rich Kennet Valley, together with its proximity to the village itself. Excavations to the south of the site, on the opposite side of the Kennet, revealed a complex of finds and deposits of various periods ranging from the Upper Palaeolithic through to the Post-medieval period (Ford 2002). Most of the occupation was located on the terrace edge, similar in topographic location to the proposed site, but with some prehistoric use of gravel 'islands' on the floodplain also. Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic occupation was represented by lithic artefacts, the Bronze Age by a small ceremonial monument (pit circle) and an occupation site. A Saxon sunken-featured building and one or two medieval farms represented later activity. The floodplain was also used for water meadows in post-medieval times. Further Mesolithic material is recorded to the north-west of the site and a Middle Bronze Age looped bronze spearhead was also recovered from the mill pond in the early 20th century.

The site lies on the margins of the village which is of late Saxon origins and is documented in Domesday Book (Williams and Martin 2002, 139). The site lies adjacent to a Grade II listed post-medieval watermill (now converted to a house). It is unclear if the mill has earlier origins (Kenneth-Major 1963, 41) although a mill is mentioned in the Domesday Book entry.

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.

Specific aims of the project were:

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

to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present;

to determine if any deposits are present relating to use of the area in prehistoric, especially Mesolithic times;

to determine if any deposits are present relating to use of the area in medieval and early post-medieval times especially with reference to use of the site as a mill.

It was proposed to excavate 20 trenches, each 10m long and 1.6m wide, using a 360° tracked machine fitted with a toothless bucket, under constant archaeological supervision. The use of relatively short trenches rather than fewer, longer trenches, was intended to enhance discovery of smaller discrete sites, such as those of earlier prehistoric date. A contingency was allowed for additional trenching if required to clarify initial findings.

Where archaeological features were certainly or probably present, the stripped areas were to be cleaned using appropriate hand tools. Sufficient of the archaeological features and deposits exposed would be excavated or sampled by hand to satisfy the aims of the brief, without compromising the integrity of archaeological features or deposits which might warrant preservation *in situ*, or might better be excavated under conditions pertaining to full excavation. Spoilheaps were also searched for finds.

Results

A total of 20 trenches were excavated, ranging in length from 9.5m to 10.4m, and between 0.52m and 1.25m deep. Trenches 1–13 were excavated in their intended locations (Fig. 3). Trenches 14–20 were repositioned, in consultation with the monitor, due to the presence of overhead power cables on site and the encroachment of the footpath southwards on to the site, and to maintain good spatial coverage of the site. A machine-dug sondage was excavated in Trench 14 to investigate the depth of the alluvial deposits, after consultation with the monitor. All spoilheaps and the base of each trench were monitored for artefacts.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1. Most of the trenches contained nothing of archaeological interest, but the depth of subsoil deposits varied. The trenches are therefore described below, grouped by generalized stratigraphy. Except where otherwise stated, no archaeological artefacts or deposits were encountered, and no finds recovered.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was 10.20m long and 0.9m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.30m of topsoil (a dark grey to black sandy silt with moderate gravel) above 0.46m of subsoil (brown clayey silt with frequent rounded gravel). Beneath the subsoil was pit 2, a semi-circular feature in plan which extended under the northern edge of the trench. It was 0.66m in diameter with steeply sloping sides and a flat base, filled with loose dark brown silty clay with occasional small rounded gravel (53). No artefacts were recovered from Pit 2, which was cut into brownish red sandy gravel natural. A fragment of clay pipe stem and a struck flint were recovered from the spoil heap.

Trenches 2, 3 (Plate 1) and 12

These trenches were between 1.01m and 1.15m deep and consisted of topsoil overlying subsoil overlying gravel natural geology with lenses of reddish brown sandy silt. A fragment of clay pipe stem was recovered from the spoil heap from Trench 2.

Trenches 4 and 7

These trenches were typically 0.52m deep and the stratigraphy consisted of topsoil overlying subsoil overlying gravel natural geology with lenses of reddish brown sandy silt. The natural gravel geology within Trench 7 was cut by two modern postholes. Within the subsoil of both trenches 4 and 7 modern brick, concrete and metal finds were observed but not collected.

Trenches 5, 6, 9 (Plate 2), 10, 19

These trenches were between 0.65m and 0.87m deep and the stratigraphy consisted of topsoil overlying subsoil overlying gravel natural geology with lense of reddish brown sandy silt. No artefacts were recovered from trenches 5, 6 and 9.

Trench 8

Trench 1 was 9.4m long and 0.71m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.22m of topsoil above 0.43m of subsoil which sealed pit 1, a semi-circular feature in plan which extended under the southern edge of the trench. It was 0.80m in diameter with a steeply sloping sides and a flat base, and was filled with firm mid brown clayey silt with moderate to frequent small rounded gravel (52). No artefacts were recovered. Pit 1 was cut into mid brownish red sandy gravel natural geology, with lenses of sandy silt.

Trench 11

Trench 11 was 10.1m long and 0.62m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil overlying subsoil overlying gravel natural geology with lenses of reddish brown sandy silt. Cut into the natural at the north-eastern end was an irregular feature (4) which was interpreted as a tree bole. It was filled with a loose mid to dark brown silty clay with occasional flint gravel (57) which contained no artefacts.

Trench 13

Trench 13 was 10.4m long and 0.54m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil overlying subsoil overlying gravel natural geology with lenses of reddish brown sandy silt. Cut into the natural at the north-eastern end was gully 5. Upon excavation it appeared to be two lengths of gully intersecting at 90º but no relationship was apparent. The sides of gully 5 were shallowly sloping with a flat base. It was filled with a loose mid reddish brown silty clay with occasional silty clay (55).

Trench 14

Trench 14 was 10.2m long. The north-eastern two thirds of Trench 14 were similar to Trench 13: 0.50m deep and the stratigraphy consisting of topsoil overlying subsoil overlying gravel natural geology with lenses of reddish brown sandy silt. At 6m from the south-western end, the natural gravels were replaced by a firm plastic reddish brown silty clay with very occasional small rounded flint gravel and occasional manganese staining. A machine dug sondage was excavated though the clay to a depth of 1.8m. Natural gravel was seen below the clay and it is likely that this clay represents an alluvial deposit within a possible earlier course of the River Kennet. No artefacts or organic content were visible from the spoil from the machine dug sondage.

Trenches 15 and 17

These trenches were 10.1m and 10.9m long and 0.88m and 0.87m deep respectively. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.33m of topsoil overlying 0.17m of subsoil over a layer, 0.22m thick, of a firm plastic dark reddish brown silty clay, with approximately 10% sand and occasional small rounded flint gravel (58). Beneath layer 58 was a layer 0.10m–0.22m thick of a firm plastic brownish red silty clay with moderate small rounded gravel (59) overlying gravel natural geology with lenses of light reddish brown sandy silt.

Trench 16 (Plate 3)

Trench 16 was 9.5m long was 1.25m deep and the stratigraphy consisted of 0.27m of topsoil (50) overlying 0.44m of subsoil (51). Beneath (51) was 0.33m of firm plastic brownish red silty clay with moderate small rounded gravel (58). Beneath layer 58, layer 56 was 0.18m thick of a firm mid reddish brown silty clay with occasional small fragments of flint and occasional organic material. This layer was removed in *c*. 50mm spits. Three struck flints were recovered from layer 56. Beneath layer 56 was a similar reddish brown silty clay alluvial layer to that observed in Trench 14. This layer was augered to a depth of 1.75m below topsoil, where hard gravel was encountered. Three struck flints were recovered from layer 56.

Trench 18

Trench 18 was 10.4m long was 0.8m deep and the stratigraphy consisted of 0.28m of topsoil overlying 0.32m of subsoil overlying 0.11m of layer 58 over 0.09m of layer 59 (both as above) overlying gravel natural geology with lenses of reddish brown sandy silt. From the subsoil in this trench was a large block of worked stone which appeared to be sarsen. The stone was 0.57m long, 0.43m wide at the base and 0.16m thick, tapering from the base of 0.43m to 0.26m wide at the top. The profile was wedge-shaped and appeared to have been shaped, but no tool marks were visible. Most of the surfaces showed an almost polished finish, although this could be from

immersion in running water (Plate 4). The last side was rough and may have been broken in the past. One side showed two shallow round depressions. It is possible that this stone may have been a boundary maker. The stone was retained on site but drawn and photographed.

Trench 20

Trench 20 was 10.2m long and 1.02m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.32m of topsoil overlying 0.48m of subsoil overlying 0.22m of layer 58 (as above) over gravel natural geology with lenses of reddish brown sandy silt.

Finds

Struck Flint by Steve Ford

Four struck flints were recovered during the evaluation. One broad flake was recovered from the topsoil in Trench 2, and shows edge abrasion typical of a plough soil context. It is not closely datable but is likely to be of Neolithic or Bronze Age date.

The other three pieces were recovered from an alluvial layer 56 in Trench 16. They are in good condition being neither abraded or patinated. One piece is a poorly made flake with crushed striking platform and double bulb of percussion. The other two pieces are large blades, the intact one 86mm long and the other (broken) one at least 63mm long. The broken piece has evidence of cresting. These two pieces are possibly part of the late Upper Palaeolithic 'long blade' tradition (Barton 1989).

Clay pipe by Andrew Weale

Two pieces of clay pipe were recovered from the subsoil spoil heaps of trenches 1 and 2. The fragment from trench 1 was an undecorated section of stem weighing 2g. The fragment from trench 2 was a section of stem from behind the step to the bowl and was decorated in a rustic foliage pattern which would suggest a late 19th century date (Ayto 1994).

Conclusion

The evaluation identified a small number of deposits cutting the natural geology in four trenches. These comprised two small pits, a gully and a shallow ditch. No datable artefacts were recovered from any of these features and their fills, whilst not indicative of recent activity, were nevertheless not sufficiently compact to

indicate great age. It is possible therefore that these features relate to previous use of the site for allotments. A large sarsen stone recovered from the subsoil was possibly a boundary marker.

An area of deep alluvium was observed within the evaluation area on the southern margins of the site (Trenches 14–18). This area of alluvium presumably represents a previous course of the River Kennet which lies immediately to the south of the site.

A small number of prehistoric struck flints were recovered from the evaluation. Three of these are noteworthy in having been recovered from an alluvial deposit in Trench 16. Two of the pieces are possibly of late Upper Palaeolithic date. The middle reaches of the Kennet Valley between Hungerford and Thatcham are renowned for the presence of Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic sites and finds (Froom 1971; Barton and Froom 1986) and a small collection of Upper Palaeolithic material was recovered from the excavations on the opposite bank of the river (Ford 2002). The significance of the finding here of just two possible Upper Palaeolithic flints is difficult to determine as they may represent no more than casual loss in the landscape.

It seems unlikely that the proposed development would have any impact on archaeological deposits over the vast majority of the site.

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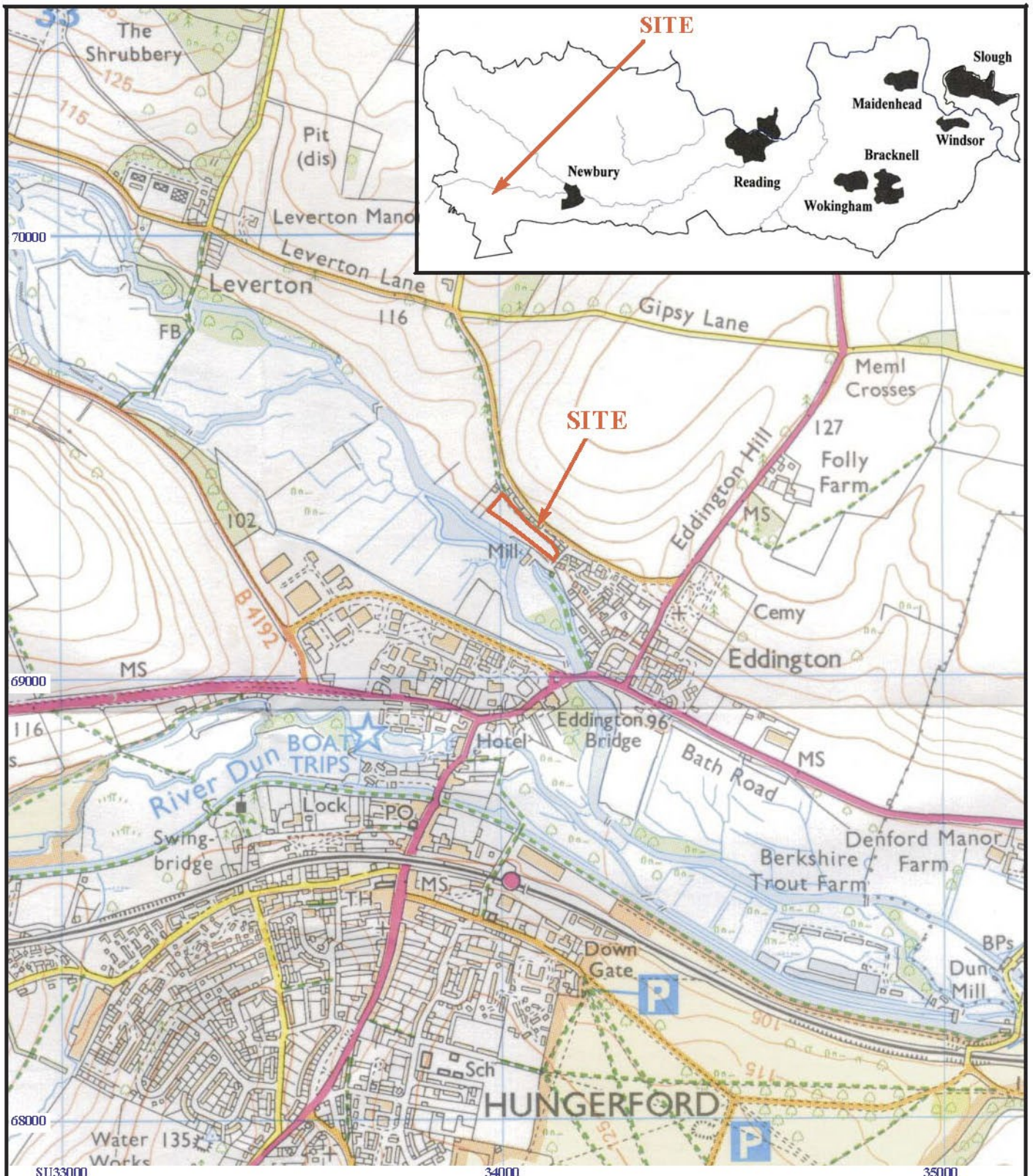
APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at south or west end

Trench	Length (m)	Breadth (m)	Depth (m)	Comment
1	10.20	1.60	0.90	0–0.30m topsoil; 0.30–0.76m subsoil; 0.76m+ sandy gravel natural geology. Pit 2.
2	10.30	1.60	1.06	0–0.40m topsoil; 0.40–1.06m subsoil; sandy gravel natural geology.
3	10.0	1.60	1.15	0–0.38m topsoil; 0.38–1.13m subsoil; 1.13m+ sandy gravel natural geology. **[Pl. 1]**
4	9.20	1.60	0.53	0–0.30m topsoil; 0.30–53m subsoil; sandy gravel natural geology.
5	9.90	1.60	0.85	0–0.45m topsoil 0.45–0.80m subsoil; sandy gravel natural geology.
6	9.90	1.60	0.80	0–0.38m topsoil; 0.38–0.75m subsoil; 0.75m+sandy gravel natural geology.
7	9.50	1.60	0.52	0–0.30m topsoil; 0.30–0.48m subsoil; 0.48m+ sandy gravel natural geology.
8	9.90	1.60	0.71	0–0.22m topsoil; 0.22–0.65m subsoil; 0.65m+ sandy gravel natural geology.. Pit 1
9	9.60	1.60	0.87	0–0.29m topsoil; 0.29–0.79m subsoil; 0.79m+ sandy gravel natural geology. Ditch 3 **[Pl. 2]**
10	10.00	1.60	0.65	0–0.31m topsoil; 0.31–0.62m subsoil; 0.62m+ sandy gravel natural geology.
11	10.10	1.60	0.62	0–0.33m topsoil; 0.33–0.58m subsoil; 0.58m+ sandy gravel natural geology. Tree bole 4
12	10.40	1.60	1.01	0–0.37m topsoil; 0.37–1.00m subsoil; sandy gravel natural geology.
13	10.40	1.60	0.54	0–0.24m topsoil; 0.24–0.54m subsoil; sandy gravel natural geology. Gully 5
14	10.20	1.60	0.93–1.80	0–0.22m topsoil; 0.22–0.50m subsoil; 0.50–1.80m alluvial clay; former course of river; sandy gravel natural geology.
15	10.10	1.60	0.88	0–0.33m topsoil; 0.33–0.50m subsoil; 0.50–0.78m dark reddish brown silty clay (58); 0.78–0.88m brownish red silty clay layer 59; sandy gravel natural geology.
16	9.50	1.60	1.25	0–0.27m topsoil; 0.27–0.71m subsoil; 0.71–1.04m layer 58; 1.04–1.25m reddish brown silty clay layer 56; 1.25–2.00 alluvial clay by auger; gravel natural geology. **[Pl. 3]**
17	10.90	1.60	0.87	0–0.33m topsoil; 0.33–0.43m subsoil; 0.43–0.60m layer 58; 0.60–0.87m layer 59; sandy gravel natural geology.
18	10.40	1.60	0.80	0–0.28m topsoil; 0.28–0.60m subsoil; 0.60–0.71m layer 58; sandy gravel with silty clay natural geology.
19	9.90	1.60	0.60	0–0.30m topsoil; 0.30–0.60m subsoil; sandy gravel with silty clay natural geology.
20	10.20	1.60	1.02	0–0.32m topsoil; 0.32–0.60m subsoil; 0.60–0.80m layer 58; 0.80m+ sandy gravel natural geology.

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

Trench	Cut	Fill (s)	Type	Date	Dating evidence
1	2	53	Pit	unknown	none
8	1	52	Pit	unknown	none
9	3	54	Ditch	unknown	none
11	4	57	Tree bole	unknown	none
13	5	55	Gully	unknown	none
16		56	layer	?prehistoric	flint



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Land at Upper Eddington, Hungerford, West Berkshire, 2009 Archaeological Evaluation

Figure 1. Location of site within Hungerford and Berkshire.

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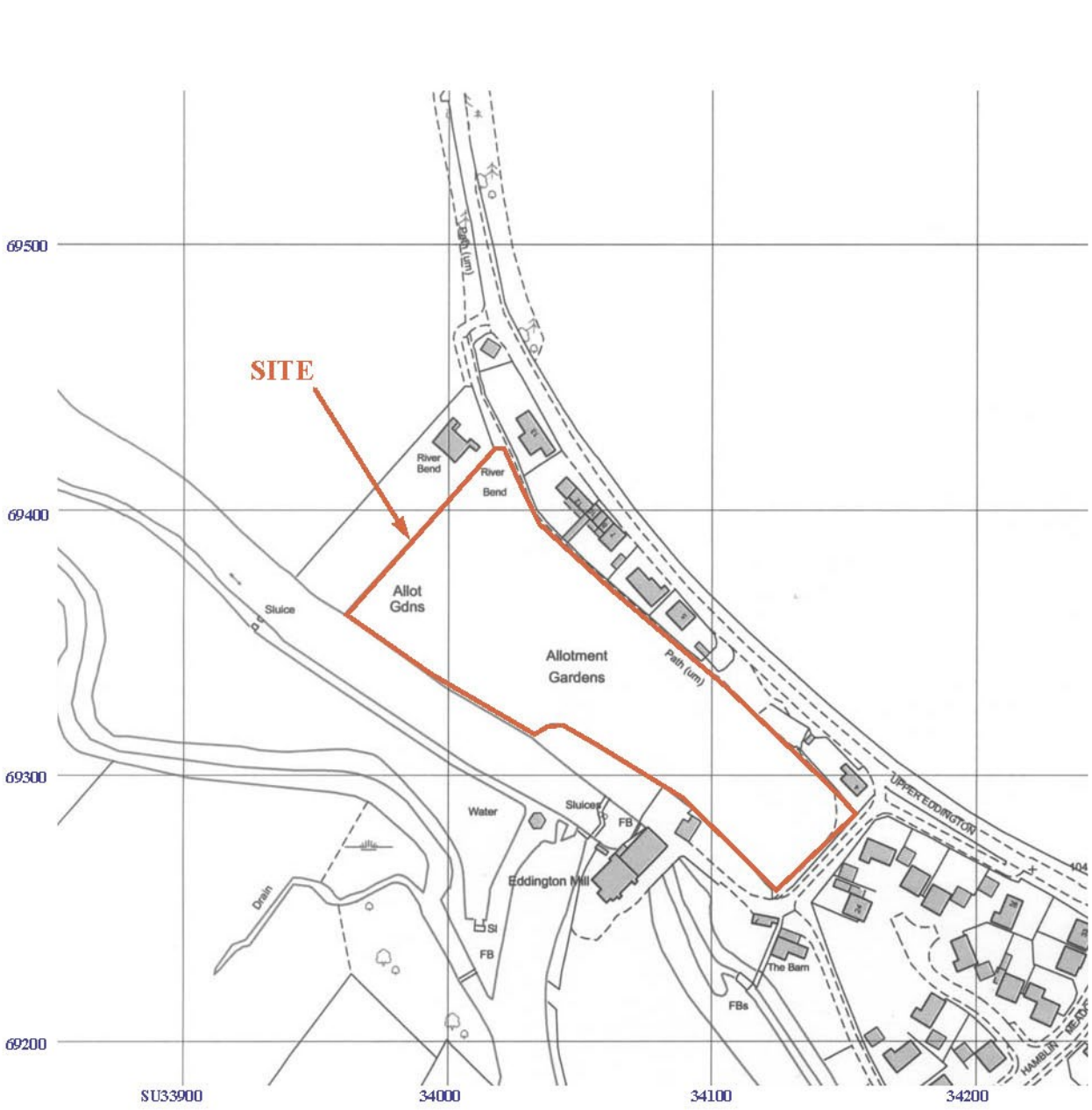

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Land at Upper Eddington, Hungerford, West Berkshire, 2009 Archaeological Evaluation

Figure 2. Detailed location of site at Upper Eddington.

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Land at Upper Eddington, Hungerford, West Berkshire, 2009

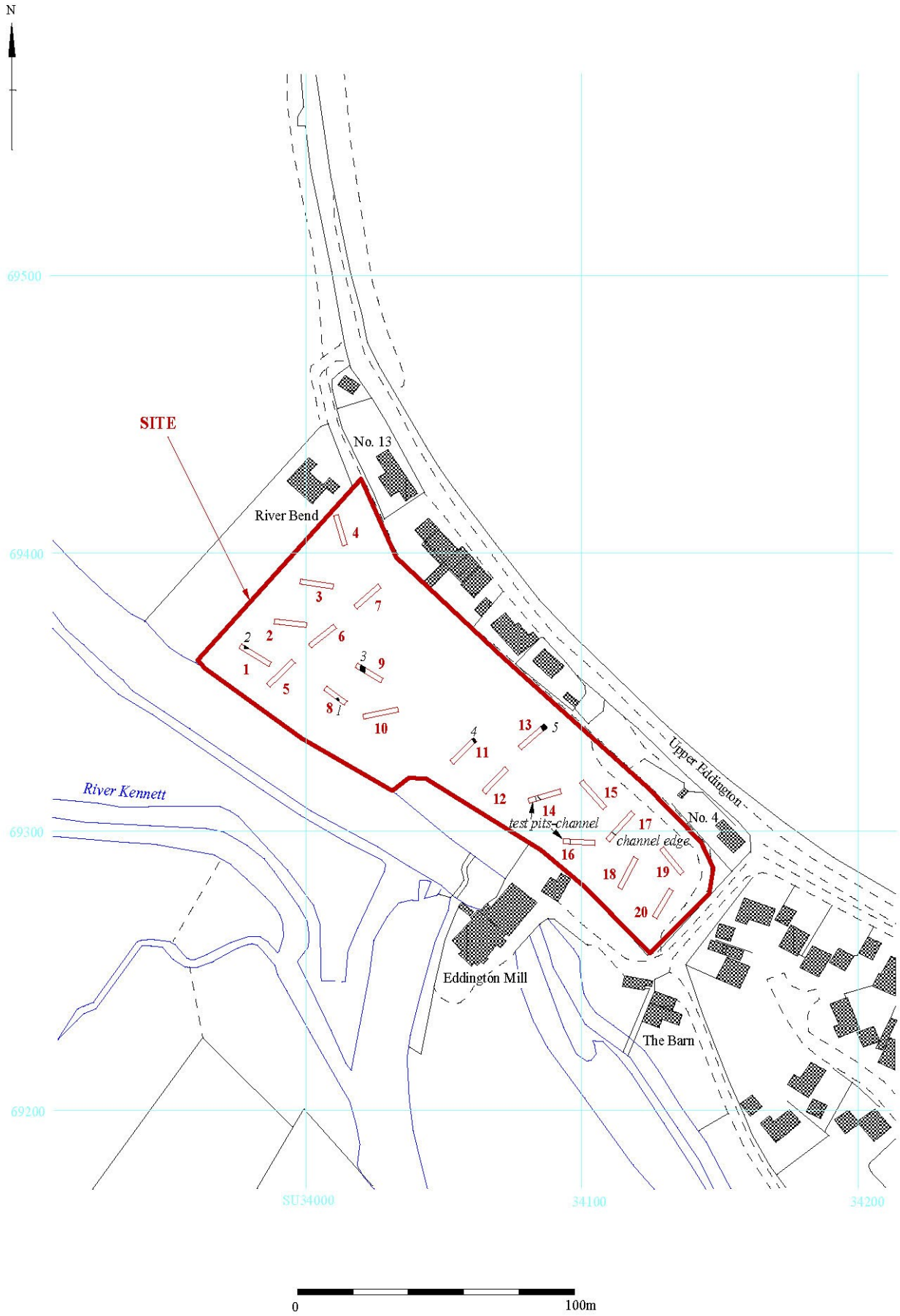

Figure 3. Location of trenching.

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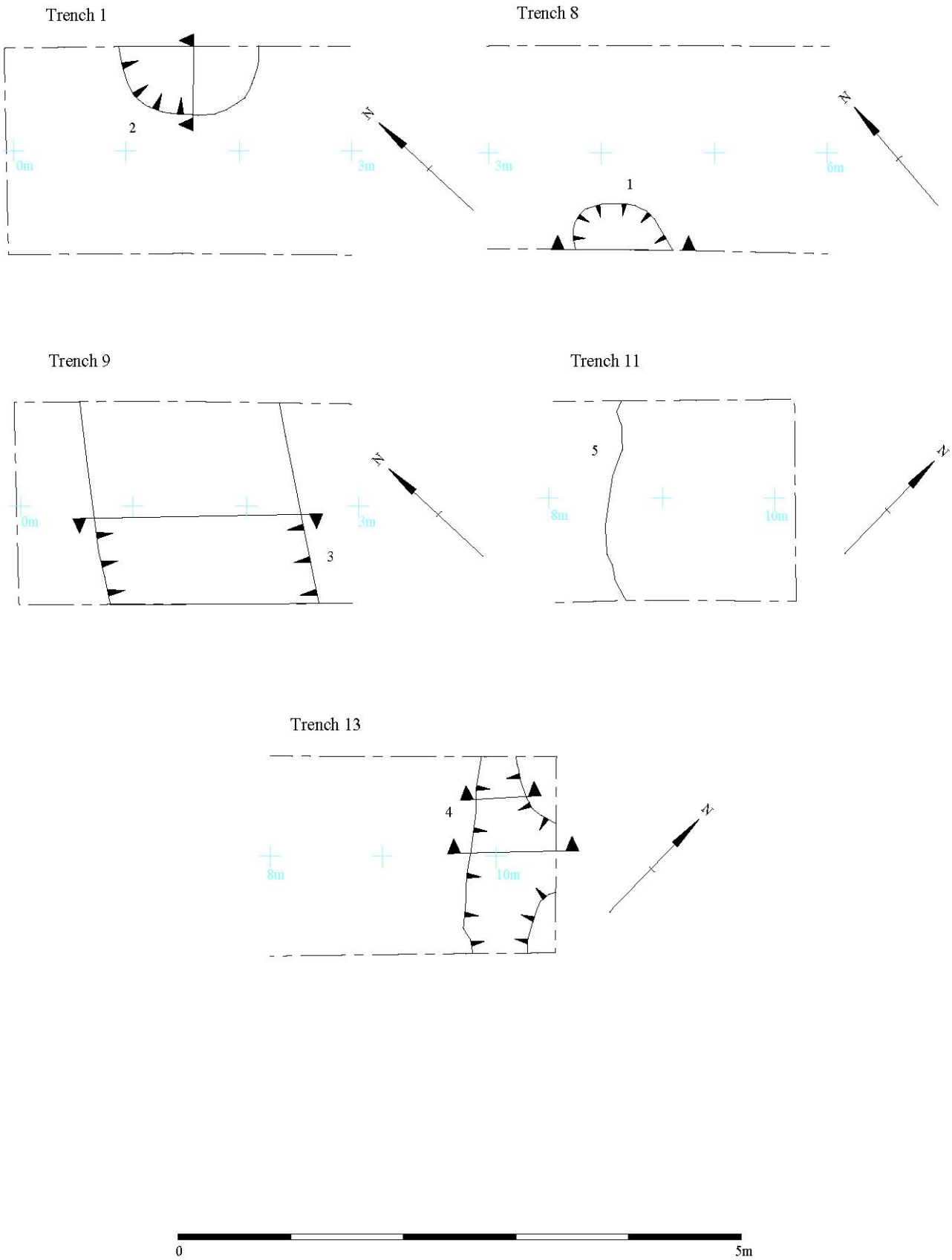

Figure 4. Detail of trenches.

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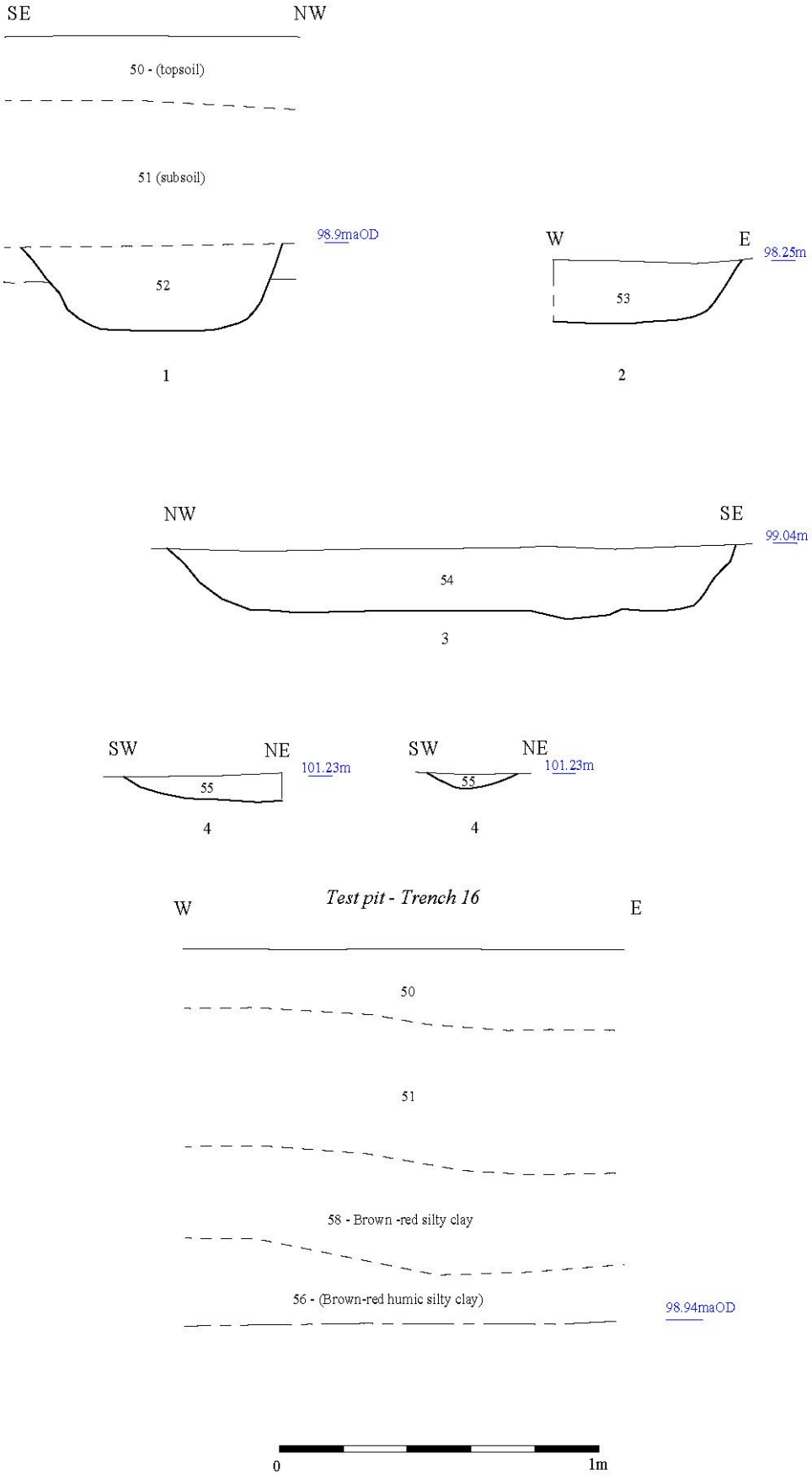

Figure 5. Sections.

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

Plate 2. Trench 9, looking south east, scales; 1m and 2m.

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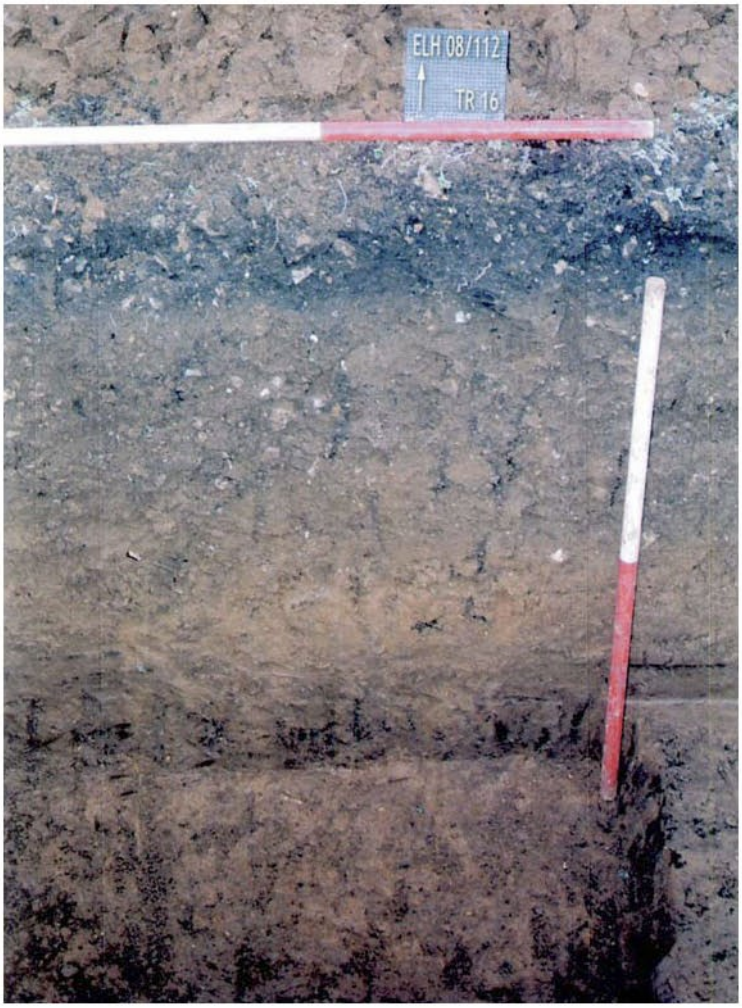

Plate 3. Trench 16, channel section, looking north, scales; 1m.

Plate 4. Trench 18, faced stoneblock, scales 0.5m