

# **Land off Strand Lane, Cookham Rise, Maidenhead, Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation**

**for CgMs Consulting**

by Steve Ford

Thames Valley Archaeological Services

Ltd

Site Code TSC09/24

**March 2009**

## Summary

**Site name:** Land off Strand Lane, Cookham Rise, Maidenhead, Berkshire

**Grid reference:** SU 8901 8432

**Site activity:** Archaeological Evaluation

**Date and duration of project:** 18th-19th March 2009

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Steve Ford

**Site code:** TSC 09/24

**Area of site:** c.0.4 ha

**Summary of results:** No deposits of archaeological interest were recorded and only a single struck flint was recovered from a spoilheap. On the basis of these results, the site has no archaeological potential.

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

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Preston✓ 24.03.09
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# Land off Strand Lane, Cookham Rise, Maidenhead, Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation

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Report 09/24

## Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out on a 0.4ha parcel of land adjacent to Strand Lane, Cookham Rise, Maidenhead, Berkshire (SU 8901 8432) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Paul Chadwick of CgMs Consulting, Morley House, 26 Holborn Viaduct, London, EC1A 2AT.

Planning consent has been gained (07/01688) from the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead for the construction of a new horse training facility. The consent was subject to a condition (4) relating to archaeology but the requirements of the condition were not implemented at the time of construction as required and enforcement action has been taken. The enforcement action required a phased programme of archaeological works, initially taking the form of a desk-based assessment followed by field evaluation.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the Borough Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Fiona Macdonald, Principal Archaeologist for Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the Royal Borough on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Steve Ford and Susan Colley on 17th March 2009 and the site code is TSC09/24. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Reading Museum, in due course.

## Location, topography and geology

The site is situated to the east of Cookham Rise on the north side of Strand Lane (now a track), at c.24m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is shown as alluvium on the geological map of the area (BGS 2005), but only gravel without any alluvium was observed during the evaluation.

## Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a desk-based assessment for the project (Chadwick 2009). In summary this potential stems from its location within the archaeologically rich Thames

Valley with a wealth of prehistoric and later archaeological finds recorded for the area (Ford 1987, Gates 1975). The historic core of Cookham which is thought to have middle Saxon origins and to have had a Minster church by the 8th century AD, lies to the north-east (Astill 1978) and recent fieldwork at Spencers, on The Pound to the north revealed Neolithic features along with Saxon deposits (Mundin 2008). The site though, lies at some distance from these other findspots and sites, and the specific archaeological potential stems from the presence of a later prehistoric enclosure complex at Priors Strand Castle Gravel Pit to the west and which might extend as far east as 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 deposits within the area of development.

Specific aims of the project are:

- 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 is any prehistoric occupation on the site.

Two trenches were to be dug using a JCB-type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. The trenches were positioned in an 'L shape' to lie along the west and north sides of the manege. Spoilheaps were to be monitored for finds.

## **Results**

The two trenches (Fig. 3) were both dug in their intended locations. A 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; Plate 1)

This trench measured 30.4m in length and was 0.8m deep, aligned west–east. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.25m of turf and topsoil overlying 0.35m of a mixture of soil and gravel with occasional brick fragments. It is thought that this comprises arisings from construction of the adjacent manege. Beneath the made ground was 0.15m of dark brown clayey sand which is considered to represent some or all of an old buried topsoil. Beneath this was a fine sandy gravel which was the natural geology. No cut features nor artefacts were observed.

### Trench 2 (Figs 3-4; Plate 2)

This trench measured 36.8m in length and was 0.7m deep, aligned north–south. The stratigraphy was very similar to Trench 1 and consisted of 0.25m of turf and topsoil overlying 0.45m of a mixture of soil and gravel with occasional brick fragments (made ground). Beneath this was 0.15m of dark brown clayey sand of the old buried topsoil. Beneath this was a fine sandy gravel which was the natural geology. No cut features were observed but a single struck flint was recovered from the spoilheaps.

## **Finds**

### *Struck flint*

A single struck flint was recovered from the spoilheap of trench 2. The flake was broken and patinated. It is not closely datable and only a broad Mesolithic to Bronze Age date can be suggested.

## **Conclusion**

The two trenches dug did not reveal any deposits cutting the natural geology on the site. Artefacts recovered from the spoilheaps comprised just a single prehistoric struck flint. Such a durable find can be regarded as virtually ubiquitous in the flint-rich geological setting of southern England and probably represents no more than casual loss or discard in a landscape setting.

The presence of gravel as the natural geology in a zone mapped as alluvium suggests the existence of gravel ‘islands’ amongst the generally low-lying setting of the site. Such areas, in the past, have been preferred for occupation, being less prone to flooding and are therefore generally of archaeological interest. However, it is clear from the evaluation that despite the presence of just such a possible gravel island, no archaeology is present here and that it can be concluded that the site has no archaeological potential.

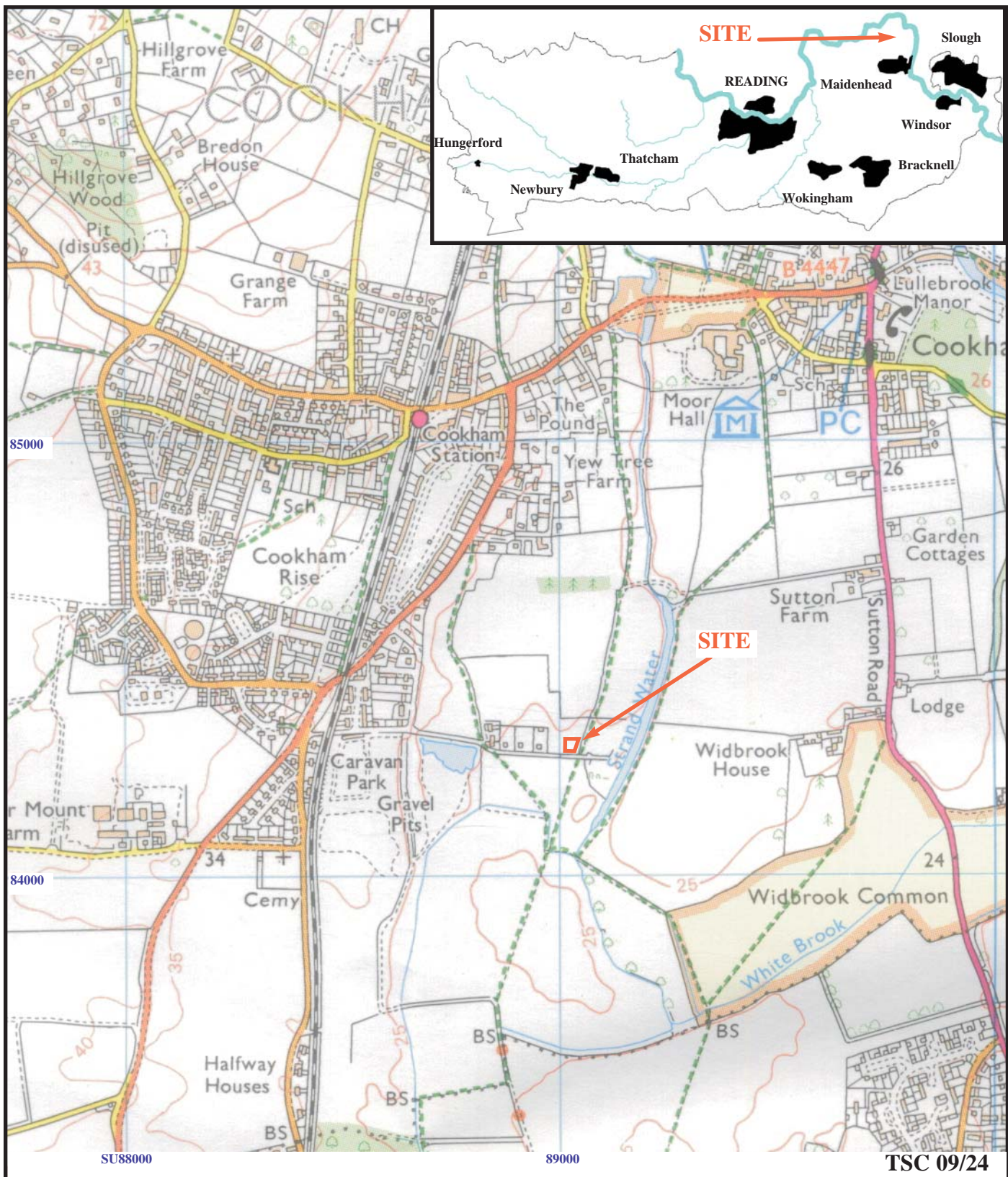
## **References**

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**APPENDIX 1: Trench details**

0m at S or W end

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	30.4	1.6	0.80	0-0.25m topsoil; 0.25-0.60m redeposited soil and gravel with rare brick fragments; 0.60-0.75m dark brown clayey sand (old, buried topsoil, partly truncated?); 0.75m+ fine sandy gravel natural geology. <b>[Plate 1]</b>
2	36.8	1.6	0.70	0-0.25m topsoil; 0.25-0.50m redeposited soil and gravel; 0.50-0.65m dark brown clayey sand (old, buried topsoil, partly truncated?); 0.65m+ fine sandy gravel natural geology. <b>[Plate 2]</b>

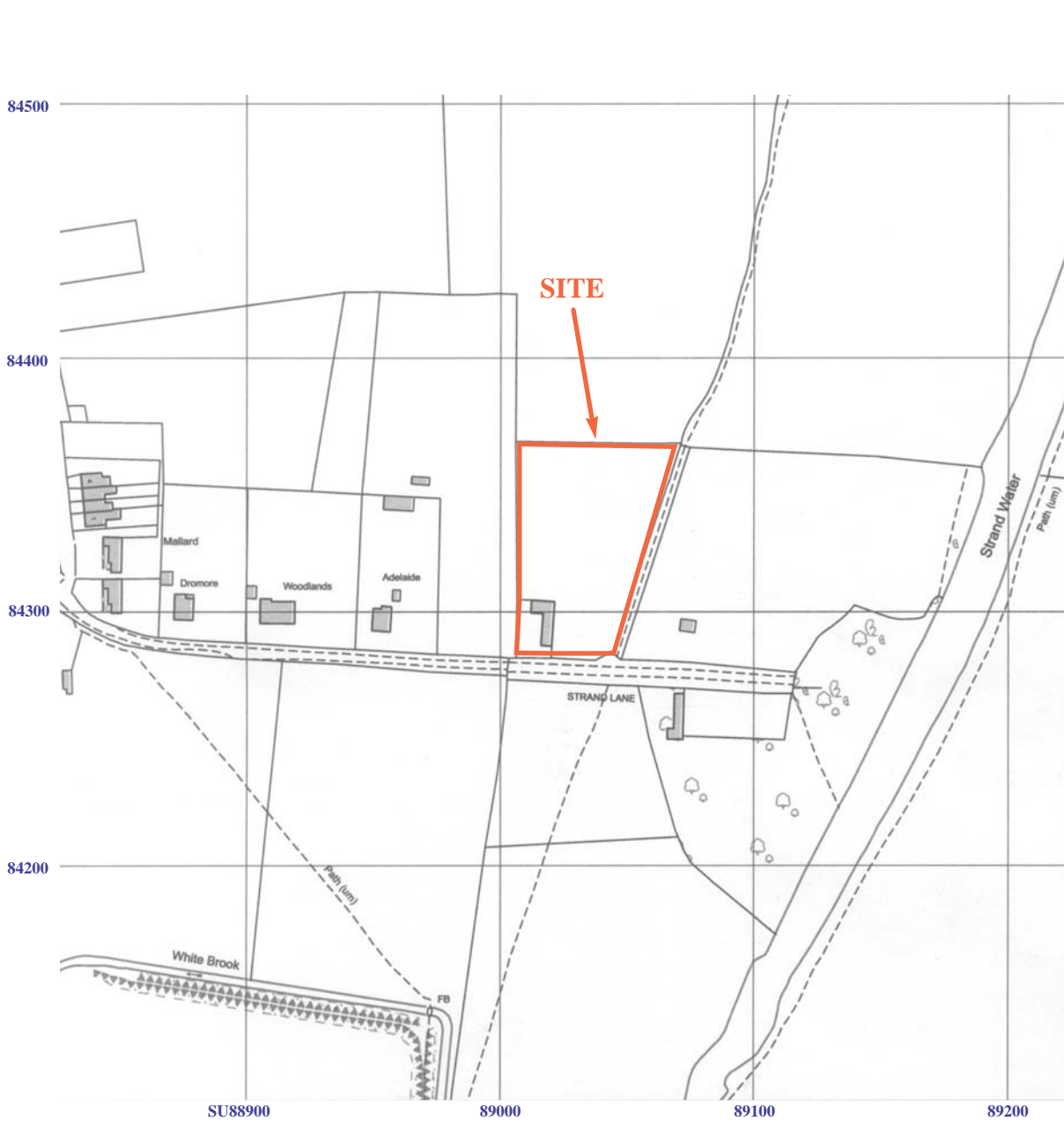


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Figure 1. Location of site within Cookham Rise and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Location of site off Strand Lane.

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# Land off Strand Lane, Cookham Rise, Berkshire, 2009

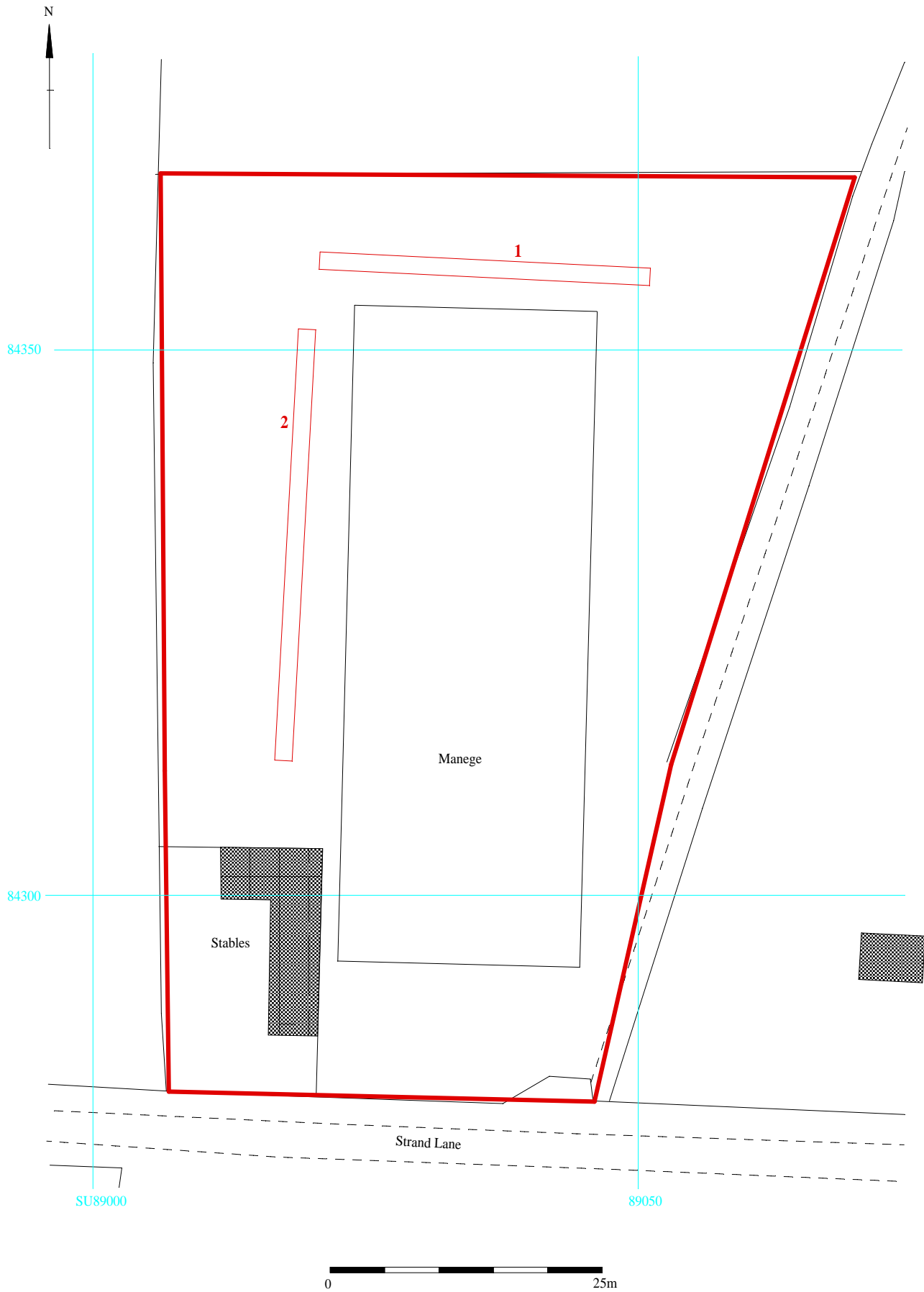


Figure 3. Location of trenches.

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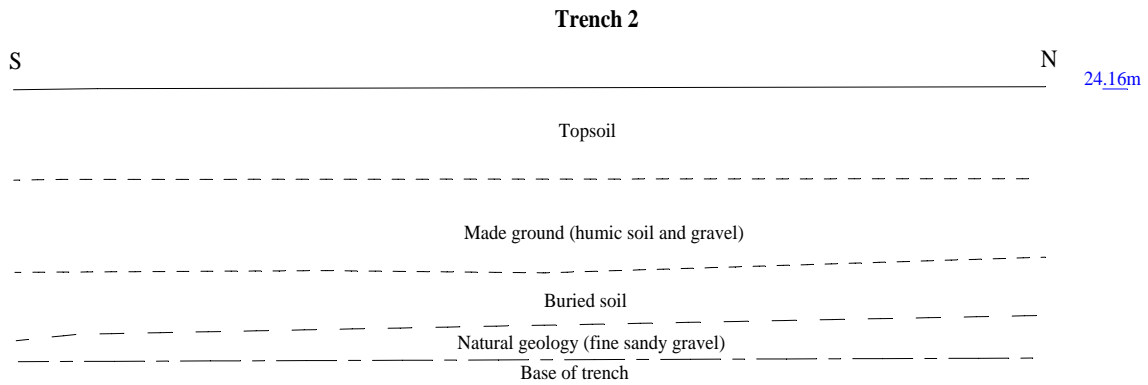
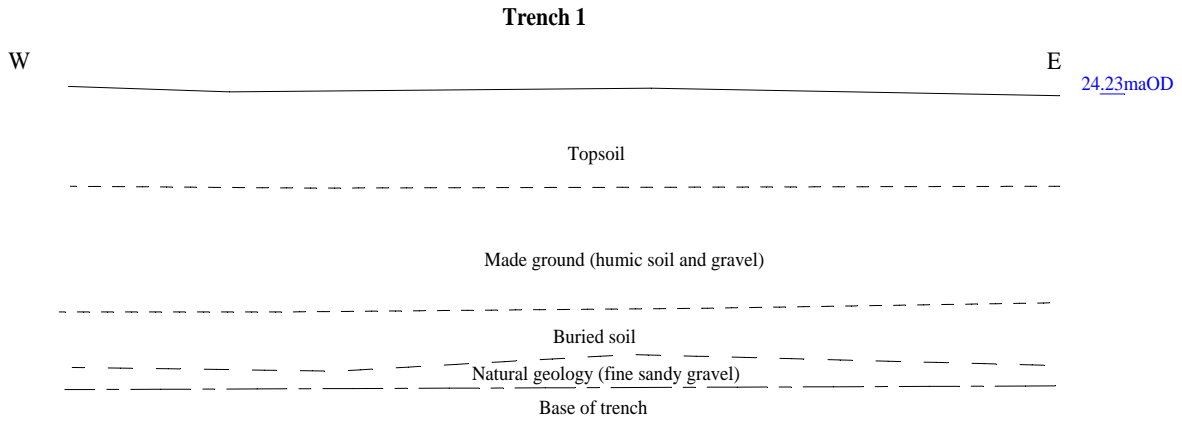


Figure 4. Sections.



Plate 1. Trench 1, looking east, scales: 0.5m, 1m and 2m.



Plate 2. Trench 2, looking south, scales: 0.5m, 1m and 2m.