

**Nursted Farm, Brickley Lane,
Devizes, Wiltshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Pippin Construction**

by James McNicoll-Norbury
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code NFD 09/74

August 2009

Summary

Site name: Nursteed Farm, Brickley Lane, Devizes, Wiltshire

Grid reference: SU 0220 6060

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 29th–30th July 2009

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: James McNicoll-Norbury

Site code: NFD 09/74

Area of site: 0.5ha

Summary of results: A modern animal burial was located. A single unstratified sherd of medieval pottery was recovered. No other archaeological finds or deposits were identified and the site is considered to have negligible archaeological potential.

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

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 05.08.09 Steve Preston ✓ 07.08.09
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Nursteed Farm, Brickley Lane, Devizes, Wiltshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by James McNicoll-Norbury

Report 09/74

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Nursteed Farm, Brickley Lane, Devizes, Wiltshire (SU 0220 6060) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Andrew Martin of Pippin Construction Ltd, Unit 2, Manor House Yard, Poulshot, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 1RY.

Planning consent (K/50494/F) granted by Kennet District Council to construct new housing following demolition of the existing derelict buildings at Nursteed Farm, Brickley Lane, Devizes, Wiltshire. The consent is subject to a condition (13) relating to archaeology which requires a watching brief to be carried out during groundworks. After discussion between client and the County Archaeological Service, it was requested that evaluation by trial trenching should take place prior to groundworks, based on the results of which, further investigation might be required.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and Wiltshire Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Helena Cave-Penney, Assistant County Archaeologist, Wiltshire Council Archaeology Service. The fieldwork was undertaken by James McNicoll-Norbury and Arkaduisz Gnas between 29th and 30th July 2009 and the site code is NFD 09/74. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Wiltshire Heritage Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located at Nursteed, a hamlet on the southern edge of Devizes close to Brickley Lane. Immediately to the north is woodland with more open land to the west and north-west with housing beyond. The site itself was previously occupied by the farm yard, barns and outbuildings (Fig. 2). The underlying geology is described as upper greensand (BGS 1959) which was observed in all the excavated trenches. The site lies at c. 116m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a brief for the project prepared by Ms Helena Cave-Penney of Wiltshire County Archaeology Service. In summary this stems from the position of the site close to areas where excavation has revealed Iron Age and Roman occupation (Ford 1999; Poore *et al.* 2002). The settlement of Nursteed, first recorded in AD1249, lies to the south of the proposal area. Evaluation trenches close to the proposal site revealed the presence of medieval stonework with Roman, Saxon and medieval finds in adjacent areas (Ford 1999). It was thought possible that the farm has medieval origins.

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. This work was to be carried out in a manner which would not compromise the integrity of archaeological features or deposits which might warrant preservation *in situ*, or might better be excavated under conditions pertaining to full excavation.

Specific research aims of the project were:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels had survived on site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period were present;
- to determine if any deposits of Roman Saxon or medieval deposits were present on the site which are precursors to the current farm complex; and
- to provide information in order to draw up appropriate mitigation strategy if required.

Four trenches were to be dug using a JCB-type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The trenches were to be 2m wide, two at 20m long, one trench 30m long and one trench 50m long. Stripped areas were to be hand cleaned if archaeological features were found to be present, and spoilheaps were to be monitored. Sufficient of the features identified were to be excavated by hand to fulfill the aims outlined above.

Results

The trenches were dug as intended and ranged between 20.0m to 50.0m in length and 0.32m to 0.78m in depth (Fig. 3). Trench 1 had to be re-positioned northwards as part of the intended area was inaccessible due to buried obstructions. The spoilheaps were monitored for finds and a metal detector was used but no finds, metallic or otherwise, were recovered.

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

Trench 1

Trench 1 was aligned north-south and was 30.12m long and 0.32m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.21m of made ground that consisted of brick and tile and loose gravel overlying greensand natural geology. No deposits of archaeological interest were observed.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was aligned SE–NW and was 20.6m long and had a maximum depth of 0.72m. At either end the stratigraphy comprised 0.21m of made ground overlying natural geology, as in Trench 1 (Fig. 5). In the central portion of the trench the stratigraphy changed to 0.21m of made ground, overlying 0.19m of white sands overlying dark brown clay subsoil which in turn overlay natural geology. No deposits of archaeological interest were observed.

Trench 3 (Pls 1 and 2)

Trench 3 was aligned SW–NE and was 50.3m long and 0.34m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.32m of made ground overlying greensand natural geology. The burial (1) of a sheep-sized animal was located 7.9m from the northern end of the trench (Figs 4 and 5), and the condition of the bone suggests it has not been in the ground for very long. A single tiny sherd of medieval pottery was recovered from the made ground in the vicinity of the burial. No other deposits of archaeological interest were observed.

Trench 4

Trench 4 was aligned SE–NW and was 21.2m long and 0.38m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.26m of made ground which included 0.12m of concrete at the north-west end of the trench overlying natural geology. No deposits of archaeological interest were observed.

Finds

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

A single sherd (weighing 3g) of medieval pottery occurred in made ground (50) in Trench 3. It is of a type formerly known as Newbury ‘A’ ware, now known as Kennet Valley Ware (Mephram 1997; L Mephram pers. comm.), and manufactured throughout the period (late 11th – 15th century), probably in the Savernake Forest. It is typical of the medieval period in the region, having a wide distribution throughout Berkshire, northern Hampshire, north-eastern Wiltshire and Oxfordshire.

Conclusion

The evaluation has revealed that the natural geology has not been excessively truncated by previous occupation on the site, though modern made ground directly overlay the natural geology. Modern services in two of the trenches and modern postholes were noted. However despite, this no deposits of certain archaeological interest were recorded in any of the trenches. The made ground in trench 3 contained a single tiny sherd of medieval pottery, but this is of no archaeological significance. An animal (sheep-sized) burial seems most likely to be of recent date. It is considered therefore that the site has little or no archaeological potential.

References

- BGS, 1959, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 282, Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Ford, S, 1999, 'Nursted Farm, Brickley Lane, Devizes, Wiltshire, an archaeological evaluation', Thames Valley Archaeological Services rep 99/34, Reading
- Mephram, L, 1997, 'Pottery' in A G Vince, S J Lobb, J C Richards and L Mephram, *Excavations in Newbury, Berkshire, 1979 – 1990* Wessex Archaeol Rep **13**, Salisbury, 45–67
- Poore, D, Thomason, D and Brossler, A, 2002, 'Iron Age settlement and Roman activity at Brickley Lane, Devizes, Wiltshire, 1999', *Wiltshire Archaeol Natur Hist Mag*, **95** 214–39
- PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO

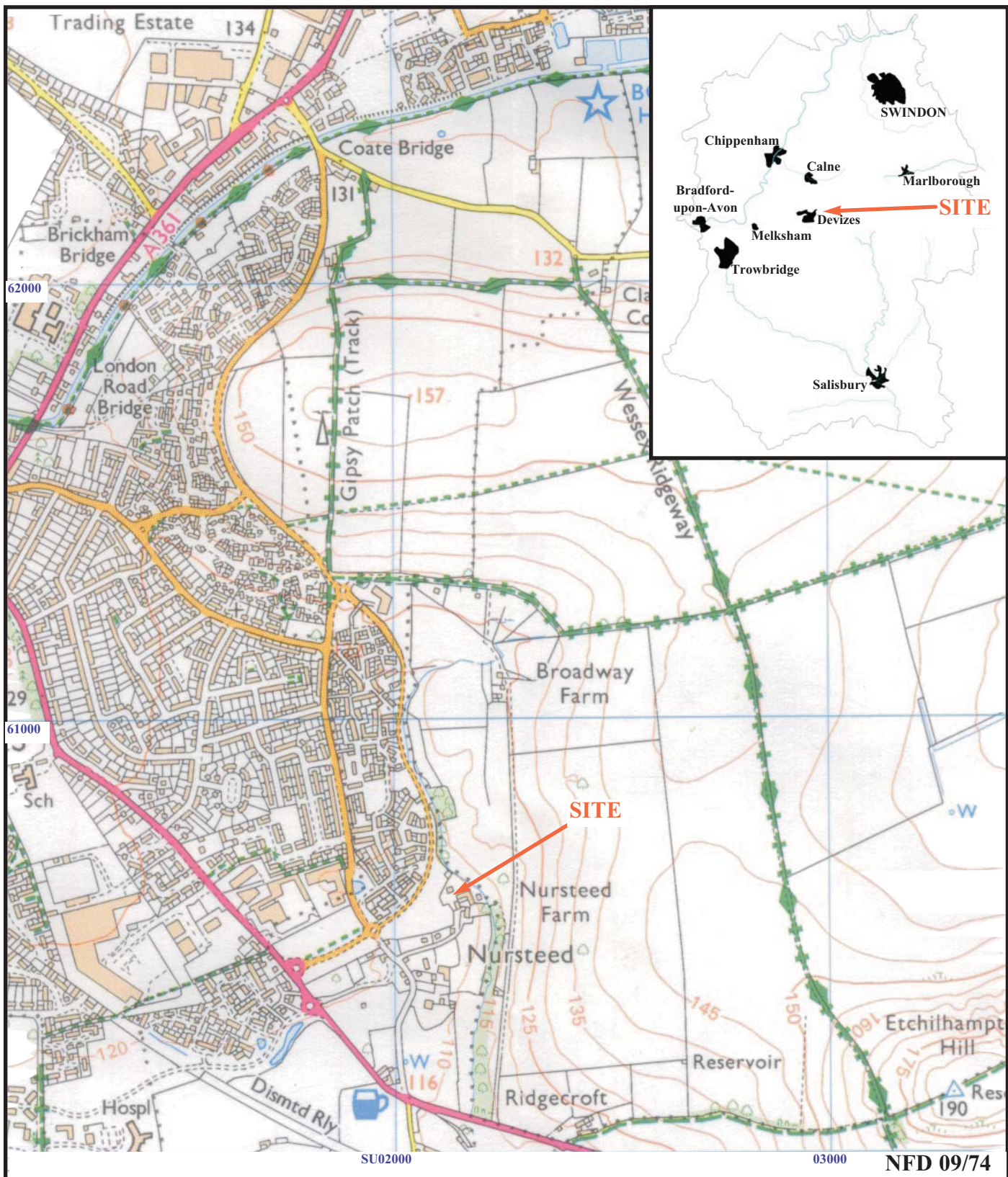
APPENDIX 1: Trench details

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	30.12	2.00	0.32	0–0.21m Made ground; 0.21m+ greensand (natural geology)
2	20.6	2.00	0.72	0–0.21m Made ground; 0.21–0.40m made ground (white sand) 0.40–0.59m dark brown clay (subsoil); 0.59m+ natural geology
3	50.3	2.00	0.34	0–0.19m Made ground; 0.19m+ natural geology. Animal burial 1. [Plates 1 and 2]
4	21.2	2.00	0.38	0–0.26m Made ground; 0.26m+ natural geology

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
3	1	52	Animal burial	Undated (modern?)	None



**Nursteed Farm, Brickley Lane,
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Archaeological Evaluation**

Figure 1. Location of site within Devizes and Wiltshire.

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 S E R V I C E S

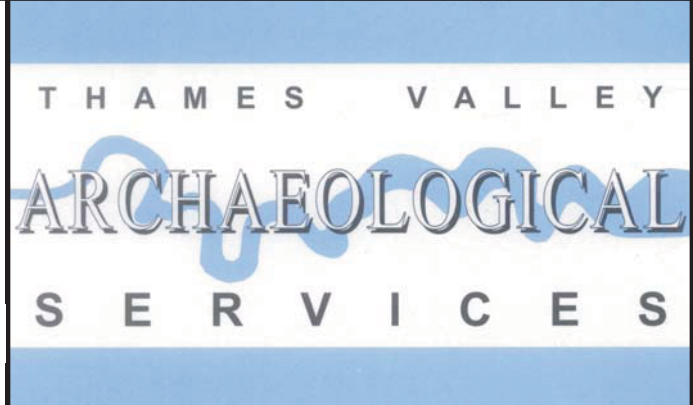


NFD 09/74

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Devizes, Wiltshire, 2009
Archaeological Evaluation**

Figure 2. Location of site off Brickley Lane.

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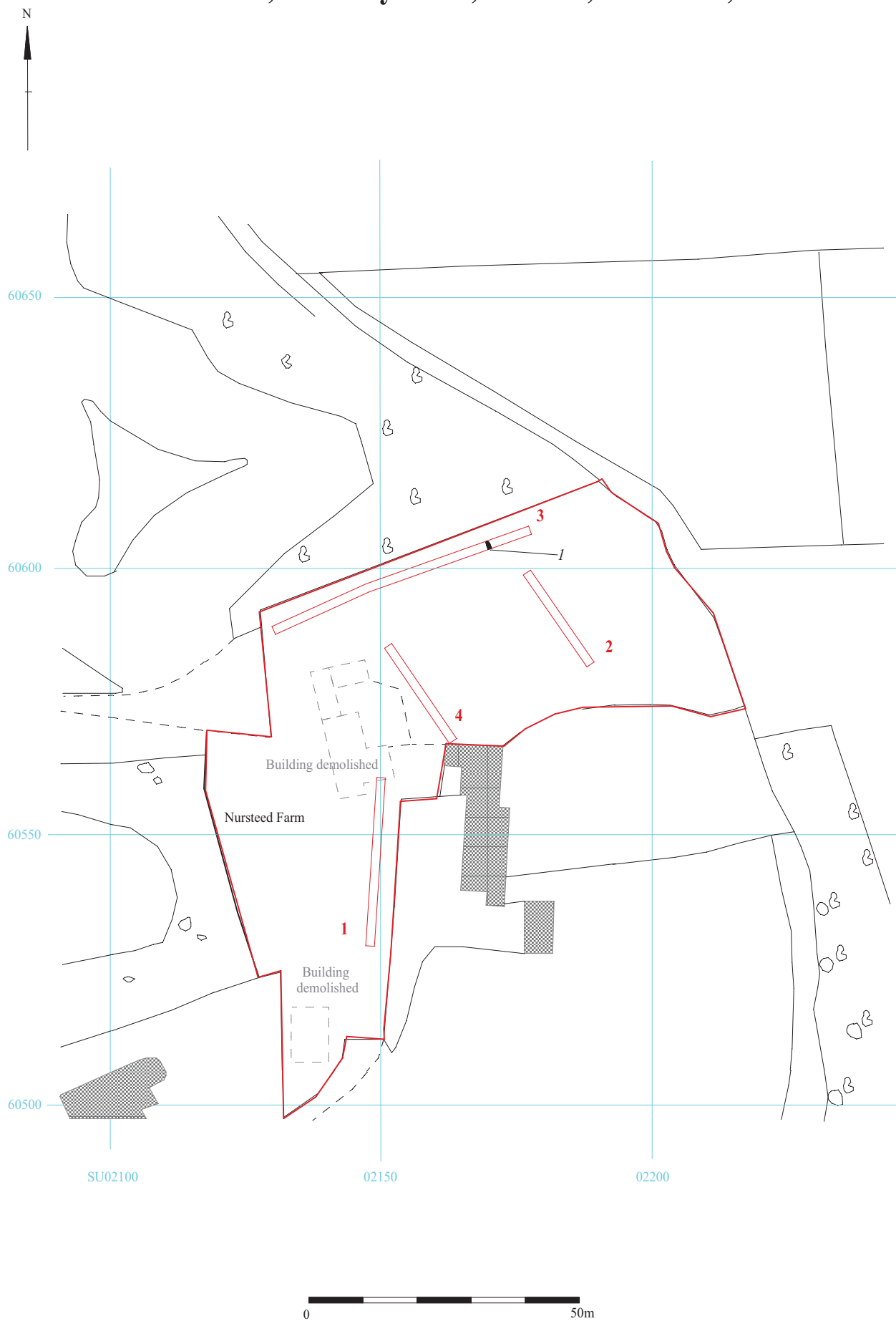


Figure 3. Location of Trenches

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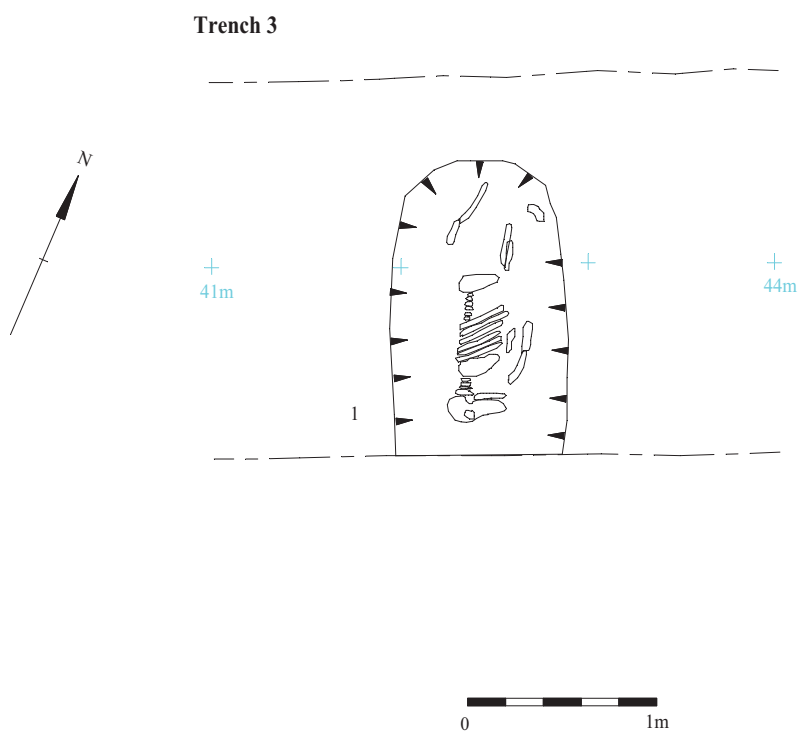


Figure 4. Trench plan with feature 1.

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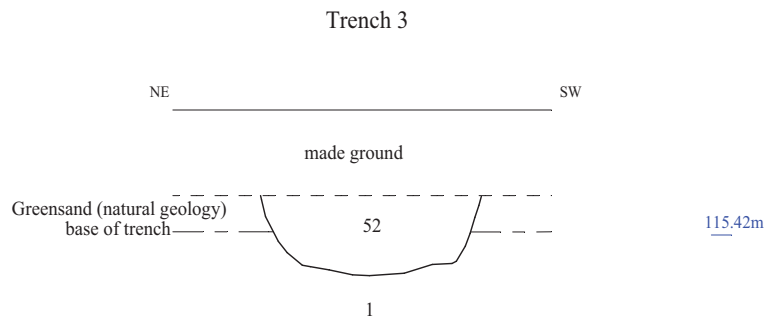
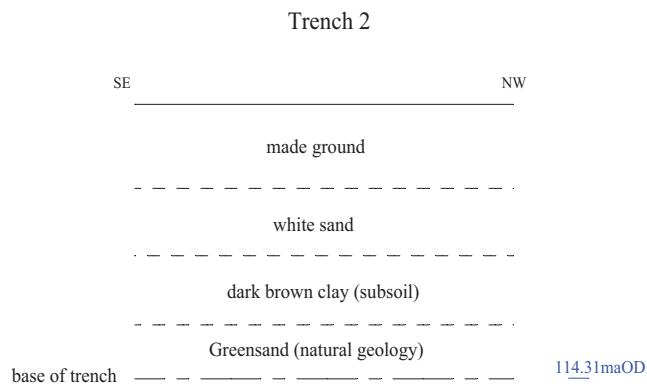


Figure 5. Sections.



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



Plate 2. Trench 3, sheep burial in cut 1, looking south, scales: 1m and 0.4m.