THAMES VALLEY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

SERVICES

New Slurry Lagoon, Port Way, Black Barn Farm, North Stoke, Oxfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation

by Andrew Weale

Site Code: NSO10/09

(SU 6215 8652)

New Slurry Lagoon, Port Way, Black Barn Farm, North Stoke, Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Evaluation

For Reading Agricultural Consultants

by AndrewWeale

ThamesValleyArchaeologicalServices

Ltd

SiteCode: NSO10/09

February 2010

Summary

Site name: New Slurry Lagoon, Port Way, Black Barn Farm, North Stoke, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 6215 8652

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 15th February 2010

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Andrew Weale

Site code: NSO 10/09

Area of site: 0.9375ha

Summary of results: A ditch containing Roman pottery was located in approximately the same alignment and position as a linear observed by aerial photographs

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

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 22.02.10 Steve Preston✓ 22.02.10

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New Slurry Lagoon, Port Way, Black Barn Farm, North Stoke, Oxfordshire
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Report 10/09

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at the site of a proposed new slurry lagoon, at Port Way, Black Barn Farm, North Stoke, Oxfordshire (SU 6215 8652) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Alex Lawrence of Reading Agricultural Consultants, Gate House, Beechwood Court, Long Toll, Woodcote, Reading, RG8 0RR.

Planning consent is to be sought from South Oxfordshire District Council for the construction of a new slurry lagoon on the site. The results of a field evaluation have been requested to accompany the planning application.

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 Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council, archaeological advisers to South Oxfordshire District Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Weale and Tim Dawson on 15th February 2010 and the site code is NSO 10/09. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located next to the A4074 Port Way (Fig. 1), 3km to the south-east of Wallingford, 1km to the east of North Stoke village, and 6km to the north east of Goring, with the River Thames 1.5km to the west. The site is on a plateau at approximately 89m above Ordnance Datum, near the crest of a south facing slope of a dry valley running from the Chiltern Hills westwards to the Thames. The site is located within a arable field currently under a cereal crop, with the A4074 Port Way to the west, a track to the south and field boundaries between 300m and 100m to the north and east. The site lies on Upper Cretaceous Middle Chalk (BGS 1980) close to the boundary with Melbourn Rock and Lower Chalk. Hard white chalk was observed within the trenches

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its position within the archaeologically rich Thames Valley. To the north of the site is the Grim's Ditch, thought to be a major boundary in the late Iron Age and now the course of the Ridgeway path. In this portion of the valley a wealth of information has been gained from aerial photography (Benson and Miles 1974) and the more recent national mapping programme, excavation (Cromarty *et al.* 2006) and field survey. The area around North Stoke, including the environs of the site, has been subject to extensive field survey (fieldwalking). This has located dense clusters of prehistoric flint work on or close to the site, with extensive Iron Age and Roman occupation approximately 350m to the west and further sites including Saxon pottery within 2km of the site (Ford 1987, Ford and Hazell 1989). Trial trenching to the west of the site revealed a Middle Iron Age pit (Ford and Hazell 1989) and trial trenching centred on the Saxon pottery scatter revealed shallow pits and a probable posthole (Ford and Hazell 1990). Extending within the site itself are elements of a possible field system (Fig. 2) consisting of rectangular enclosures visible on air photographs.

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.

The specific research aims of this project are:

to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on the site;
to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present;
to determine the nature and character of any prehistoric, Roman or Saxon occupation on the site; and
to determine the date and nature of cropmarks already recorded for the site.

It was proposed to dig four trenches, each 20m long and 1.6m wide. The trenches were located to examine the footprint of the proposed new lagoon. One trench was targeted to examine the position of a linear cropmark that lies on the site (Fig. 2).

Topsoil and subsoil were removed by a 360º tracked machine using a toothless ditching bucket under direct archaeological supervision. Where archaeological features were certainly or probably present, the stripped areas were cleaned using appropriate hand tools. Sufficient of the archaeological features and deposits exposed were excavated or sampled by hand to satisfy the aims of the brief, without compromising the ability to preserve important remains *in situ*. A programme of environmental sampling was to take place should sufficient significant, well-stratified deposits be located.

Results

All trenches were dug as intended (Fig. 2), and they varied from 20.5m to 21.60m in length and between 0.25m to 0.36m in depth. After machine excavation all resulting spoil heaps were monitored for finds both by eye and by metal detector. All archaeological features were cleaned by hand and archaeological features exposed were excavated and also scanned by metal detector.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1 and the excavated contexts are summarized in Appendix 2.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was aligned west - east, 21.10m long, 1.6m wide and a maximum of 0.34m deep. The stratigraphy within Trench 1 comprised a dark brown to black humic loam topsoil up to a maximum of 0.29m thick, above weathered chalk up to 0.05m thick and hard white chalk natural bedrock. No archaeological features or deposits were encountered within Trench 1. Two pieces of unworked, burnt flint were recovered from the topsoil spoil heap.

Trench 2 (Fig. 3; Pls 1 and 2)

Trench 2 was aligned west - east 21.60m long and a maximum of 0.25m deep. It was located to examine a linear cropmark. The stratigraphy within Trench 2 comprised topsoil up to 0.23m thick, above 0.02m of weathered chalk overlying the hard white chalk. Beneath the topsoil, at 9m from the western end of the trench, was Ditch 1 which was aligned south to north, 1.42m wide, 0.53m deep with sides that sloped at approximately 45º, and a flat base. It had two fills: the upper was a friable greyish brown silty clay deposit (51). Deposit (51) contained burnt stone, animal bone from at least two cows and one goat/sheep and nine sherds of pottery dated to the middle to late Roman period. Beneath deposit (51) was firm brown/grey clayey silt with frequent chalk rubble (52). Deposit (52) did not contain any archaeological artefacts. A sherd of Roman pottery, a silver alloy coin dated to the later Roman period and an abraded fragment of brick/tile were recovered from the topsoil spoil heap.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was aligned from NW - SE, 20.50m long, and a maximum of 0.36m deep. The stratigraphy within Trench 3 was topsoil to maximum depth of 0.27m, over weathered chalk up to a maximum of 0.09m thick and hard white chalk natural bedrock. No archaeological depoits were observed and no archaeological artefacts were recovered from the topsoil spoil heap.

Trench 4

Trench 4 was aligned from SW–NE, 21.50m in length, 1.6m wide and a maximum of 0.30m deep. The stratigraphy within Trench 4 was topsoil to maximum depth of 0.25m, overlying chalk rubble up to a maximum of 0.05m thick and hard white chalk natural bedrock. Two pieces of unworked, burnt flint was recovered from the topsoil spoil heap.

Finds

Pottery and ceramic building material by Jane Timby

The evaluation resulted in the recovery of a small assemblage of just 10 sherds of pottery, weighing 205g, dating to the later Roman period. In addition six pieces of ceramic building material (CBM) weighing 469g were recovered. Pottery was recovered from two contexts. The assemblage comprises a mixture of larger well-preserved and smaller more fragmented pieces. For the purposes of the assessment the assemblage was scanned to assess its likely chronology and quantified by sherd count and weight for each recorded context. The finds are catalogued in Appendix 3.

Roman pottery

Ditch 1 produced nine sherds, six of which are Oxfordshire colour-coated wares dating to the later 3rd or 4th centuries, accompanied by one sherd of Dorset black burnished ware, a local grey ware and a local grog-tempered sherd. Topsoil from Trench 2 produced a single sherd from an Oxfordshire white-ware *mortarium*. These were made from the 2nd through to the 4th century but without a rim-sherd cannot be dated more closely.

Ceramic building material

Ditch 1 produced three large and two small fragments of roof tile. The larger pieces comprise two pieces of *tegulae* and one *imbrex*. Tr 2 (50) produced a further much abraded fragment of building material of indeterminate form.

Animal Bone by Danielle Milbank

A modest assemblage of animal bone was recovered during the evaluation, all from ditch 1(51) (Appendix 4). A total of 30 fragments were recovered, weighing 445g. The remains were fairly fragmented but generally fairly well preserved, though some fragments of bone appeared striated, and a few examples were weathered. There was occasional evidence of butchery cut marks. Overall, species identification was poor, due to the fragmentation. Excluding the very small pieces, each fragment was initially separated into one of two size

categories: ‘large mammal’ and ‘medium mammal’. Horse and cow are represented by the large size category, while sheep/goat, deer and pigs are represented in the medium size category. If possible, each fragment was subsequently given a more specific identification to species, and side of origin.

Three fragments were identified as large animal, and four were medium-sized animal elements. The remaining fragments were too small to be identified. Of the taxa which could be identified two fragments were cattle, represented by two right mandible fragments, and two fragments were identified as probable sheep/goat tibia-fibula pieces.

Based on the lack of duplicated elements, the minimum number of individuals present in the assemblage was found to be three: two cattle and one sheep/goat. The assemblage as a whole is modest and is suggestive of domestic consumption.

Coin by Henrietta Longden

A single coin was recovered from the evaluation within the topsoil of Trench 2. The coin is silver alloy, debased with copper. The diameter is 16mm. Both the obverse and the reverse are heavily worn and no identifiable design survives. The size and material of the coin suggest it may be a later Roman coin.

Burnt Flint by Andrew Weale

In total four pieces of burnt flint were recovered from the topsoil spoilheaps, 2 each from Trenches 1 and 4 weighing a total of 23g. This material has not been worked and could have been burnt by agricultural work (eg tree clearance) at any period.

Conclusion

The ditch in Trench 2 closely matches the position and orientation of the linear feature in the air photograph plot. On the aerial photograph, this forms the eastern edge of a roughly square enclosure (Fig. 2), and part of a group of enclosures to the north and west with possibly a trackway though the enclosures to the north. Approximately 300m to the west a moderate quantity (over 30 sherds per ha) of Roman pottery was observed during field walking (ST 105) (Ford and Hazell 1989), smaller quantities of Roman pottery (between 1-9 sherds per ha) were noted to the east of this high concentration into the area of the enclosures shown on the air photographs. The pottery recovered from the upper fill for the ditch dated broadly to the later Roman period from AD 240–400 and would suggest that the ditch was open within this period. The size of some of the pottery sherds together with the

quantity of animal bone, suggestive of domestic consumption together with fragments of roofing tile recovered from the upper fill of the ditch may be indicative of occupation nearby instead of a process like manuring.

There were no other archaeological features or deposits found elsewhere on the site. Few archaeological artefacts were recovered from the topsoil spoil heaps from any of the trenches, and apart from the coin and pottery sherd from Trench 2 it was confined to burnt flint. This may suggest that the archaeology is concentrated within the enclosures plotted from the air photographs although it cannot be ruled out that other archaeological features may survive elsewhere on site.

References

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APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at south or west end

Trench	*Length (m)*	*Breadth (m)*	*Depth (m)*	*Comment*
1	21.10	1.6	0.34	0–0.29m topsoil, 0.29-0.34m chalk rubble, 0.34m+ chalk natural geology.
2	21.60	1.6	0.25	0-0.23m topsoil, 0.23-0.25m chalk rubble. 0.25m+ chalk natural geology. Ditch 1, **[Pls 1 and 2]**
3	20.50	1.6	0.36	0-0.27m topsoil, 0.23-0.36m chalk rubble, 0.36m+ chalk natural geology.
4	21.50	1.6	0.30	0-0.25m topsoil, 0.25-0.30m chalk rubble, 0.30m+ chalk natural geology

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

Trench	*Cut*	*Fill (s)*	*Type*	*Date*	*Dating evidence*
2	1	51, 52	Ditch	Late Roman	Pottery

APPENDIX 3: Catalogue of Pottery and Ceramic Building Material

Ditch 1 (51)

1. Two Oxfordshire colour-coated bowls (4 sherds), Young 1977, type C45. AD 240-400.
2. Rimsherd, Oxfordshire colour-coated disk-mouthed flagon, Young (1977) variant C5/C8. AD240–400.
3. Small bodysherd sand and grog-tempered ware.
4. Small bodysherd of Dorset black burnished ware jar.
5. Small bodysherd of local grey sandy ware.
6. Five pieces of ceramic building material (462 g) including two *tegulae* and one *imbrex.*

Trench 2 topsoil (50)

7. One bodysherd of Oxfordshire white ware *mortarium*.
8. One abraded fragment of ceramic building material (7g).

APPENDIX 4: Catalogue of animal bone

Cut	Deposit	Number	Weight	Unidentified	Cow	Sheep/goat	Total
1	51	30	445	26	2	2	30
MNI			-	-	2	1	3

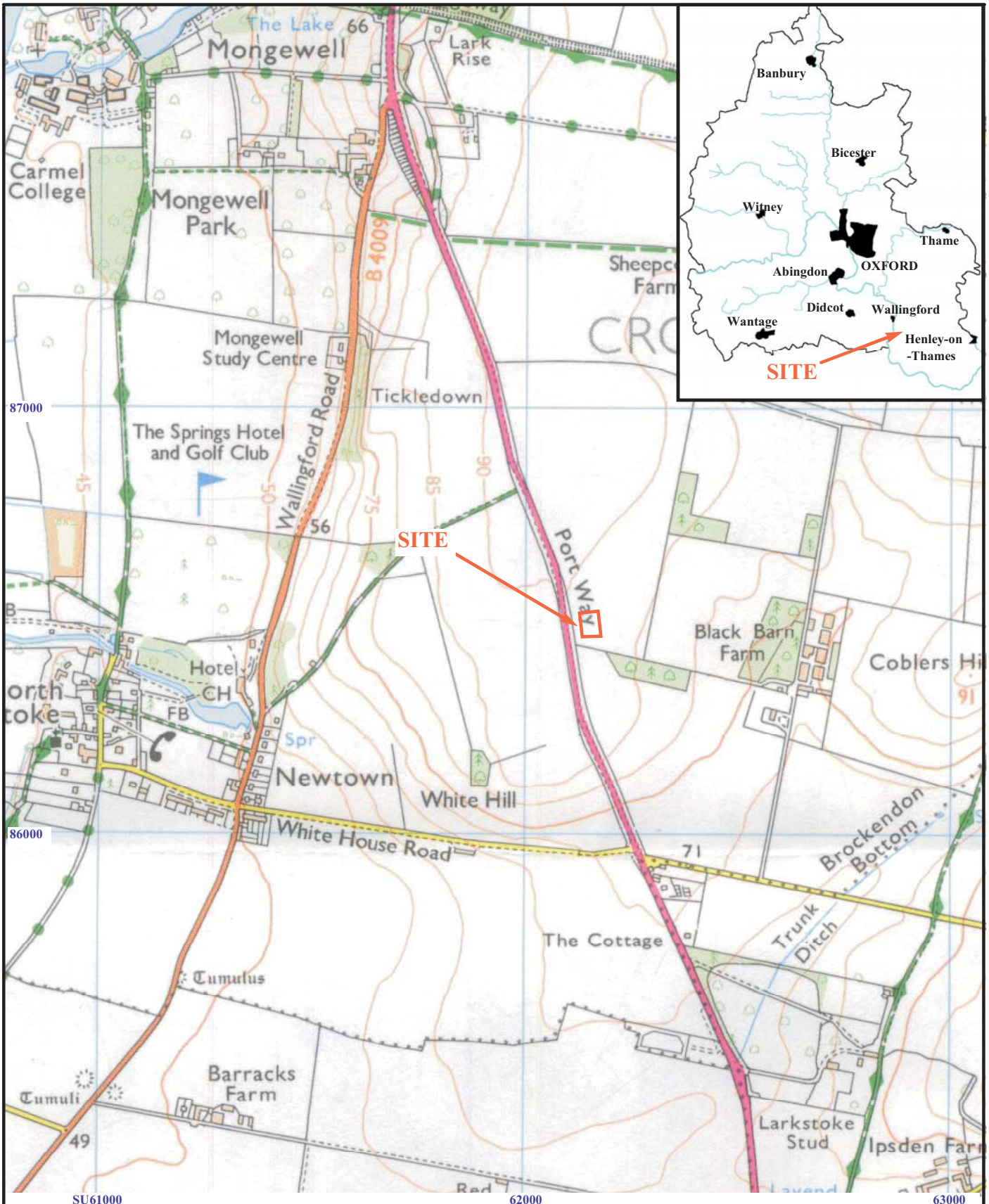

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Figure 1. Location of site in relation to North Stoke and within Oxfordshire.

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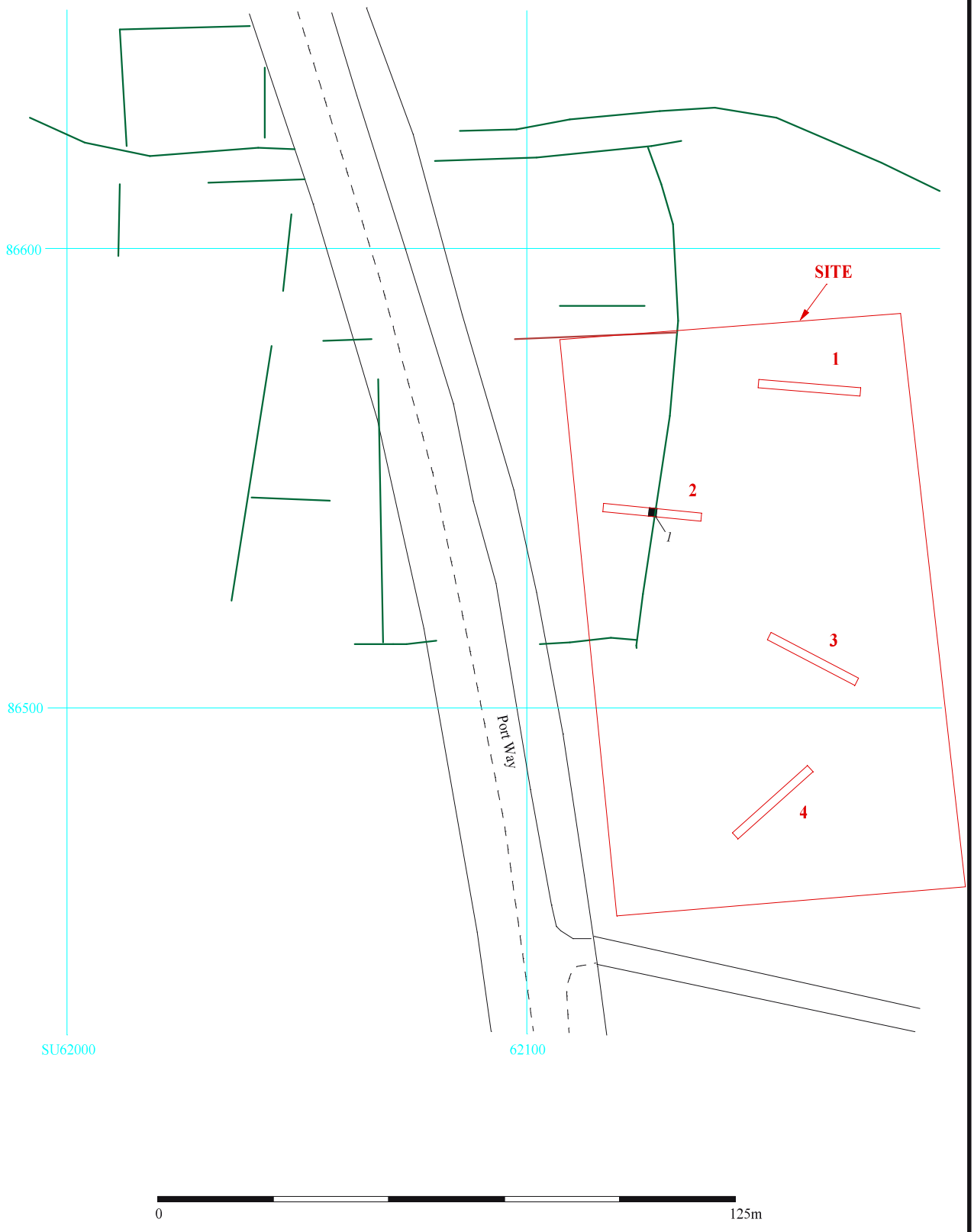

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Figure 2. Site, trenches (red) in relation to plotted cropmarks (green).

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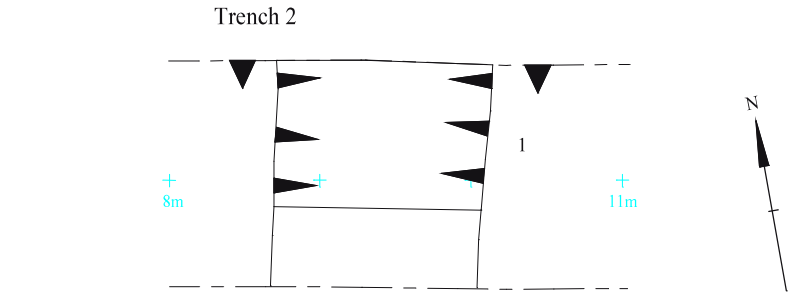

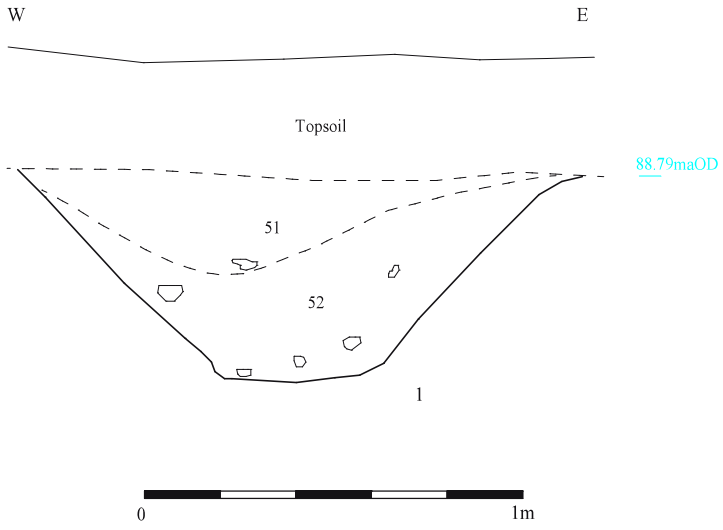

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Figure 3. Trench 2 feature and section.

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Plate 1. Trench 2, ditch 1, looking north, scales 1m and 0.5m

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

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Plates 1 and 2

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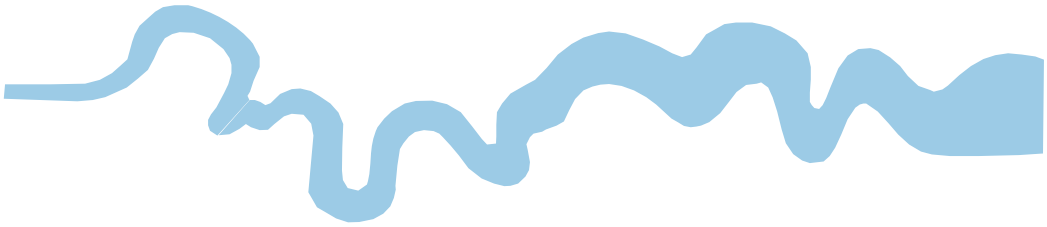
TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern	AD 1901
Victorian	AD 1837
Post Medieval	AD 1500
Medieval	AD 1066
Saxon	AD 410
Roman	AD 43
Iron Age	BC/AD 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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