

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Grove Airfield, Wantage,
Oxfordshire**

**Archaeological Evaluation
Road Corridor and Sports Pavilion**

by Jamie Lewis

Site Code: GAW06/71B

(SU3950 8940)

Grove Airfield, Wantage Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Evaluation

Road Corridor and Sports Pavilion

for Persimmon Special Projects Western

by James Lewis

Thames Valley Archaeological Services

Ltd

Site Code GAW06/71

October 2010

Summary

Site name: Grove Airfield, Wantage, Oxfordshire- Road Corridor and Sports Pavilion

Grid reference: SU3950 8940

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 6th–7th October 2010

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: James Lewis

Site code: GAW 06/71

Area of site: overall site 200 ha, this investigation c. 2ha

Summary of results: A ditch and a pit containing probable Middle Bronze Age pottery were revealed in one trench located on the proposed site of the sports pavilion. The other trenches contained nothing of archaeological interest with only 19th and 20th century deposits revealed on the site of Barwell Farm.

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

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

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 13.10.10
	Steve Preston✓ 13.10.10

Grove Airfield, Wantage, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Evaluation- Road Corridor and Sports Pavilion

by James Lewis

Report 06/71b

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Grove Airfield, Wantage, Oxfordshire (SU3950 8940) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mrs Nicky Brock, of Kemp and Kemp Property Services, Elms Court, Botley, Oxford, OX2 9LP on behalf of Persimmon Special Projects Western, A&W Building, The Docks, Portishead, Bristol, BS20 7DF.

Planning permission is to be sought from the Vale of the White Horse District Council for the construction of new housing on the site. The archaeological potential was originally highlighted in a brief provided by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service (Coddington 2006) drawing on a desk-based assessment (Johnson and Collcutt 2004). Due to the potential damage to archaeological deposits a field evaluation was undertaken (Taylor 2006). A subsequent modification to the development proposal with an additional road, pavilion and car park, and additional information on the history of Barwell Farm, required an update of the brief (Coddington 2010) and necessitated additional evaluation to determine the archaeological impact of these new components (Fig. 2).

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's Planning Policy Statement, *Planning for the Historic Environment* (PPS5 2010), and the District's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Hugh Coddington, of Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service, advisors to the district on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by James Lewis and Steve Crabb on the 6th and 7th of October 2010 and the site code is GAW06/71. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Oxfordshire County Museum Service in due course.

A desk-based assessment identified the potential of the site (Johnson and Collcutt 2004). The site is located in an area with a wide range of sites and finds present especially of Roman date. The Roman road from Alchester to Malborough (Cunetio) is situated to the east and several Roman sites have been examined during recent development of Grove. During World War II the site was used as an airfield, which has since been decommissioned and has reverted back to agricultural use. The remains of some former airfield facilities are present and some disturbance from construction and removal of the runways and other facilities has taken place.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located to the west of Grove, which itself is situated to the north-west of Wantage, Oxfordshire (Fig. 1). On the western boundary of the site is Grove Technology Park with a railway line to the north and residential housing around the remainder of the site. The total area of the proposed development covers an area of 200ha. The underlying geology is Gault Clay (BGS 1971) which was observed in the trenches. The site rises from a height of 79.9m above Ordnance Datum in the east to 83m in the west.

Archaeological background

The site is located in area which contains a wide range of sites. To the south is the town of Wantage which is famed as the birth place of Alfred the Great and recent work there has revealed Bronze Age and late Saxon deposits (Lewis 2010). On the site itself the previous evaluation revealed archaeological deposits dated to the Iron Age and Roman periods in three trenches (12, 14 and 15), located to the south west of this proposal site (Fig. 2)(Taylor 2006). Barwell Farm can be dated to at least 1547 (Coddington 2010) and appears on the Wantage tithe map of 1843-44 and is still present on the 1st edition OS map of 1883. Within the surrounding environs located just beyond Grove to the northeast is the deserted medieval village of Tulwick. At Denchworth situated to the north west is a medieval moat and the site of the Roman villa is also to be found just to the west of East Challow.

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 were:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant layers have survived on the site;
- to determine if archaeologically relevant deposits of any period are present;
- to determine if the Iron Age and Roman archaeological deposits to the south west continue as far as the proposed new pavilion area and road corridor; and
- to determine if late medieval or early post-medieval deposits associated with earlier phases of Barwell Farm are present

Eight trenches were proposed to be dug 30m long and 1.6m wide using a JCB-type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket and under constant archaeological supervision. All spoilheaps were to be monitored for finds.

Results

Seven trenches (numbered 22 to 28 to continuing the numbering sequence from the previous evaluation) were excavated between 29.6m and 39.5m in length and between 0.22m and 0.6m in depth. One trench could not be dug as intended as it lay within an in-use road lay-by and could not be re-positioned nearby. Several of the remaining trenches were extended to conserve the sample size. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Pavilion Site and Car Park

Trench 22 (Figs 3 and 4; Pls 1 and 2)

Trench 22, was aligned north east - south west and measured 34.3m long and 0.5m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.3m of topsoil, which overlay 0.1m of subsoil and below this was the natural clay.

Two features, a ditch (7) and an oval pit (8) were identified. The ditch was aligned almost east - west and measured 1.67m wide and 0.6m deep. It contained two fills; the main, upper fill was grey silty clay (58) with occasional flint and chalk inclusions. A single sherd of Bronze Age pottery and 2 fragments of animal bone was recovered from this context. This overlay a firm, grey clay (59) which contained frequent flint and chalk inclusions but no pottery. Oval pit 8 measured 1.2m in length, 0.6m wide and 0.12m deep. It contained a single fill, grey silty clay (60) in which was found a single sherd of Bronze Age pottery.

Trench 28

Trench 28 was aligned north - south and it measured 29.6m in length and 0.4m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil 0.15m thick over 0.15m depth of subsoil and below this was the natural clay. No archaeological deposits were identified in this trench.

New Road Corridor

Trench 23

Trench 23 was aligned north west - south east and it measured 34m in length and 0.35m deep. The stratigraphy consisted 0.1m of topsoil over the natural clay. No archaeological deposits were identified in this trench. The

absence of subsoil suggests this area had previously been levelled possibly during the construction of the modern electrical sub-station which was located approximately 30m west of the trench.

Trench 24

Trench 24 was aligned north west - south east and it measured 34.5m in length and between 0.22m to 0.50m deep. The stratigraphy consisted 0.1m thick of topsoil over 0.2m thick of subsoil and below this was the natural clay. No archaeological deposits were identified in this trench.

Former Barwell Farm Area

Trench 25

Trench 25 was aligned north - south and it measured 31m in length and 0.5m deep. The stratigraphy consisted 0.3m deep topsoil over a 0.15m thickness of subsoil which contained frequent brick, tile and concrete. Below this was the natural clay. A modern red brick wall and a number of modern truncations were noted but no archaeological deposits were identified in this trench.

Trench 26

Trench 26 was aligned north east - south west and it measured 38.5m in length and 0.6m deep. The stratigraphy consisted 0.23m of topsoil over 0.25m of subsoil and below this was redeposited chalk, presumably imported to form a yard surface. The trench contained a number of modern features including a modern red bricked wall, a square red-bricked structure and a Tarmac road. No archaeological deposits were identified in this trench.

Trench 27

Trench 27 was aligned north west - south east and it measured 39.5m in length and 0.5m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of a 0.25m thickness of topsoil over 0.2m thick of subsoil above a layer of redeposited chalk. Two modern truncations were also observed which contained modern red brick, tile, metal and camp coffee and whisky glass bottles (retained on site). No archaeological deposits were identified in this trench.

Finds

The Prehistoric Pottery by Frances Raymond

Two plain wall fragments in fresh to lightly abraded condition came from a ditch and a small oval pit (7 and 8). In the absence of any evidence for vessel style the phasing of these sherds is uncertain.

The fragment from ditch 7 (weighing 8g) is in a low fired, friable medium grade ware tempered with common amounts of crushed burnt flint (up to 4mm). Fabrics of this type in the Wantage area are most likely to be of middle or late Bronze Age date, but a Neolithic origin is also conceivable.

The sherd from pit 8 (4g) is in a relatively hard ware tempered with very common quantities of fine crushed burnt flint (up to 2mm). It is most reminiscent of the types of fabrics used for middle Bronze Age globular urns and for some of the vessels produced during the late Bronze Age.

Animal Bone

Two unidentified fragments (16g) of animal bone were recovered from ditch 7.

Conclusion

The evaluation identified a small amount of archaeological deposits located within Trench 22 in the area of the proposed pavilion and car park. Unlike the previous evaluation which found evidence for Iron Age and Roman activity close to this location, these features contained pottery probably dating to the Middle Bronze Age. In the location of the proposed road corridor no archaeological deposits were found and this area had the appearance of having been previously disturbed by modern activity. For the site of Barwell Farm, only artefacts and deposits of 19th and 20th century date were observed.

References

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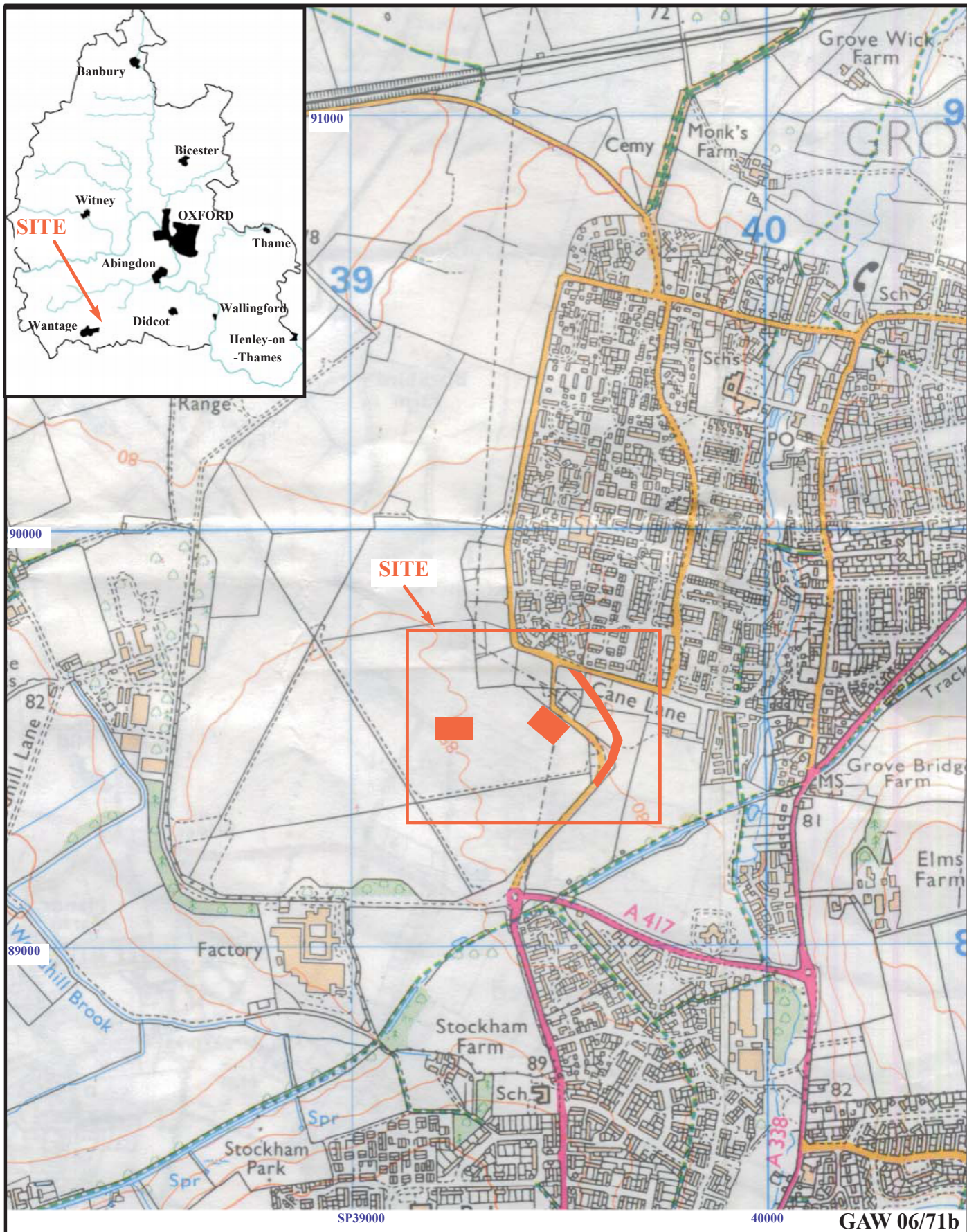
APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at the S or W end
(trenches 1-21 form the previous evaluation)

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
22	34.3	1.6	0.50	0.00m–0.30m topsoil; 0.30m–0.40m subsoil; 0.40m+ clay natural geology. Ditch 7 and Pit 8. [Pis 1 and 2]
23	34.0	1.6	0.35	0.00m–0.30m topsoil; 0.30m+ clay natural geology.
24	34.5	1.6	0.50	0.00m–0.10m topsoil; 0.10m–0.30m subsoil; 0.30m+ clay natural geology.
25	31.0	1.6	0.60	0.00m–0.30m topsoil; 0.30m–0.45m subsoil; 0.45m+ clay natural geology.
26	38.5	1.6	0.60	0.00m–0.25m topsoil; 0.25m–0.50m subsoil; 0.5m-0.55m chalk yard surface; 0.55m+ clay natural geology.
27	39.5	1.6	0.50	0.00m–0.25m topsoil; 0.25m–0.4m subsoil; 0.4m-0.5m chalk yard surface; 0.5m+ clay natural geology.
28	29.6	1.6	0.40	0.00m–0.15m topsoil; 0.15m–0.30m subsoil; 0.30m+ clay 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>
2	7	58, 59	Ditch	Middle Bronze Age	Pottery
2	8	60	Pit	Middle Bronze Age	Pottery

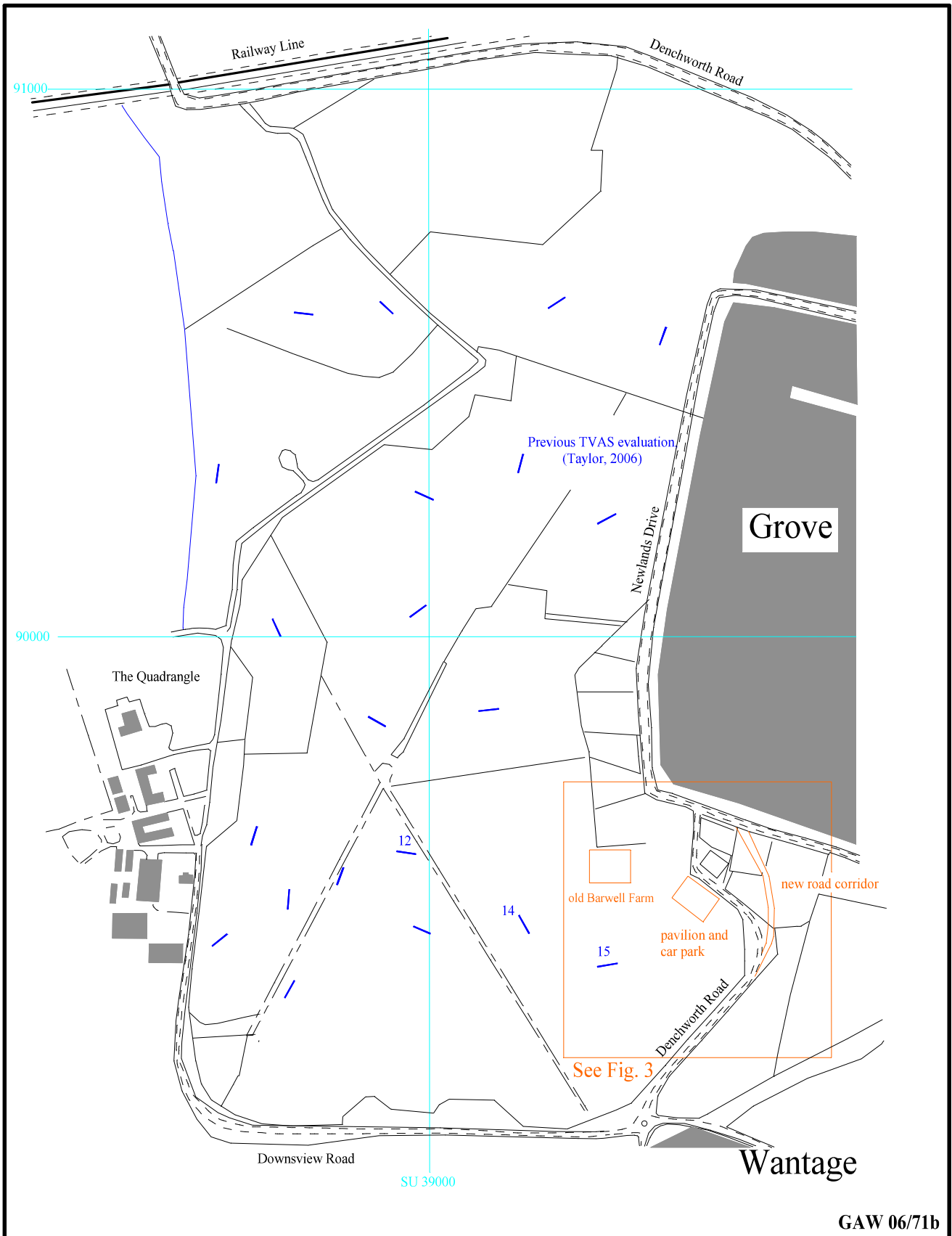


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Figure 1. Location of site within Grove and Oxfordshire.

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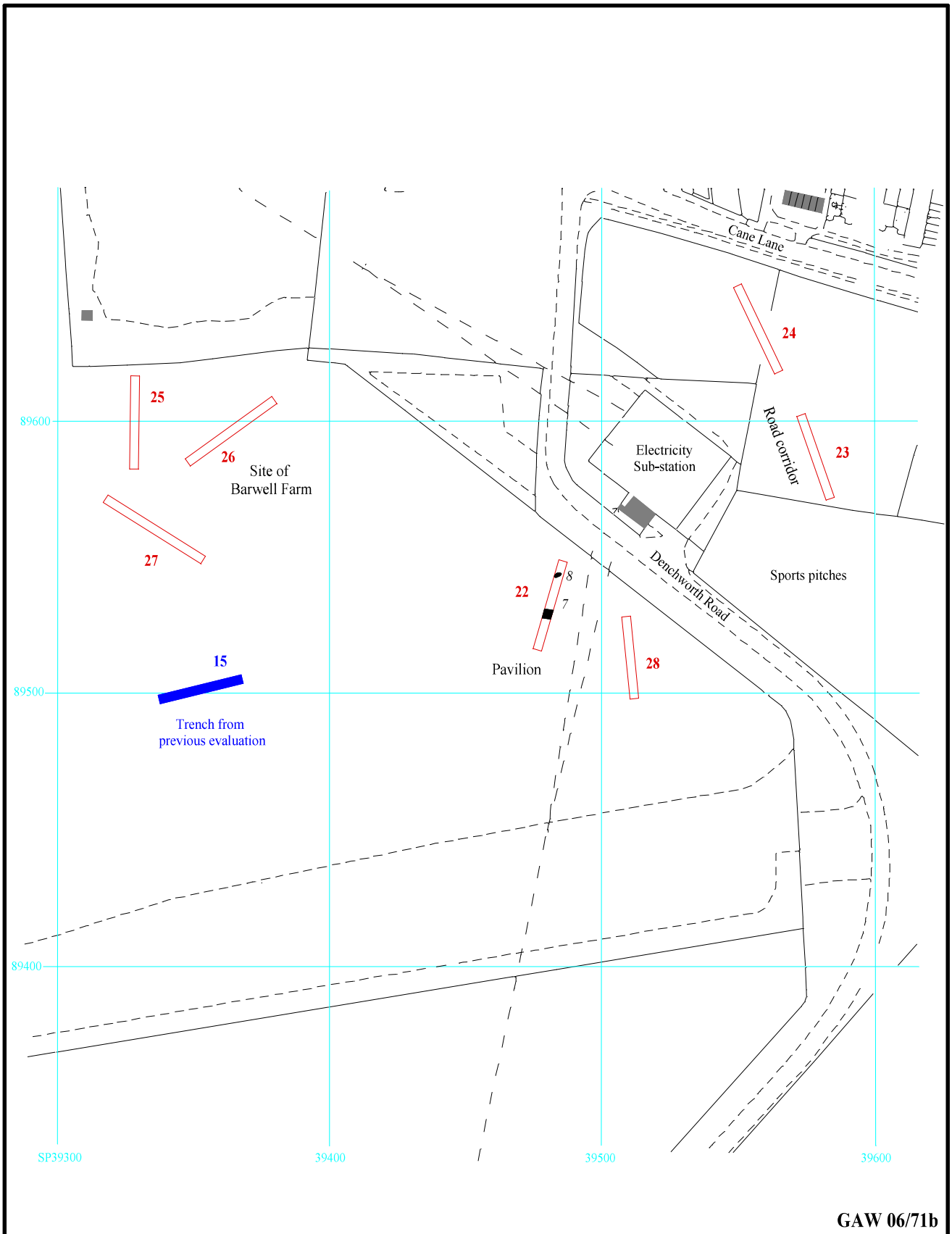


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Figure 2. Location of current evaluation areas relative to the previous evaluation and the site in general.





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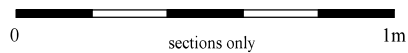
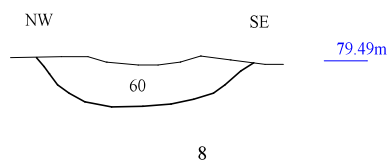
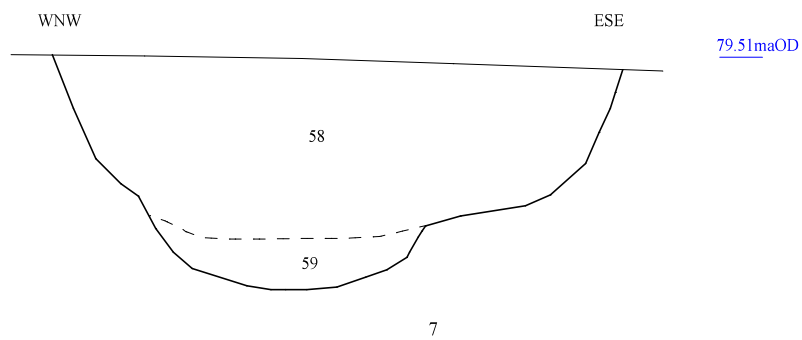
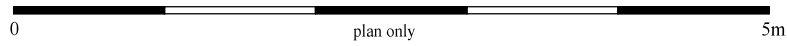
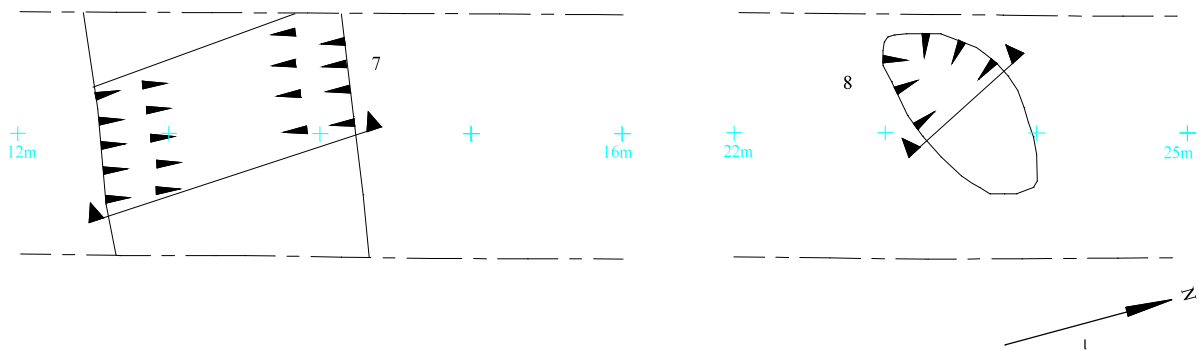
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Figure 3. Location of trenches.



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Trench 22



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Figure 4. Detail plan and sections from Trench 22.



Plate 1. Trench 28, looking north-east. Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 2. Trench 28, pit 8, south-west facing section.
Scales: 0.5m and 0.1m.

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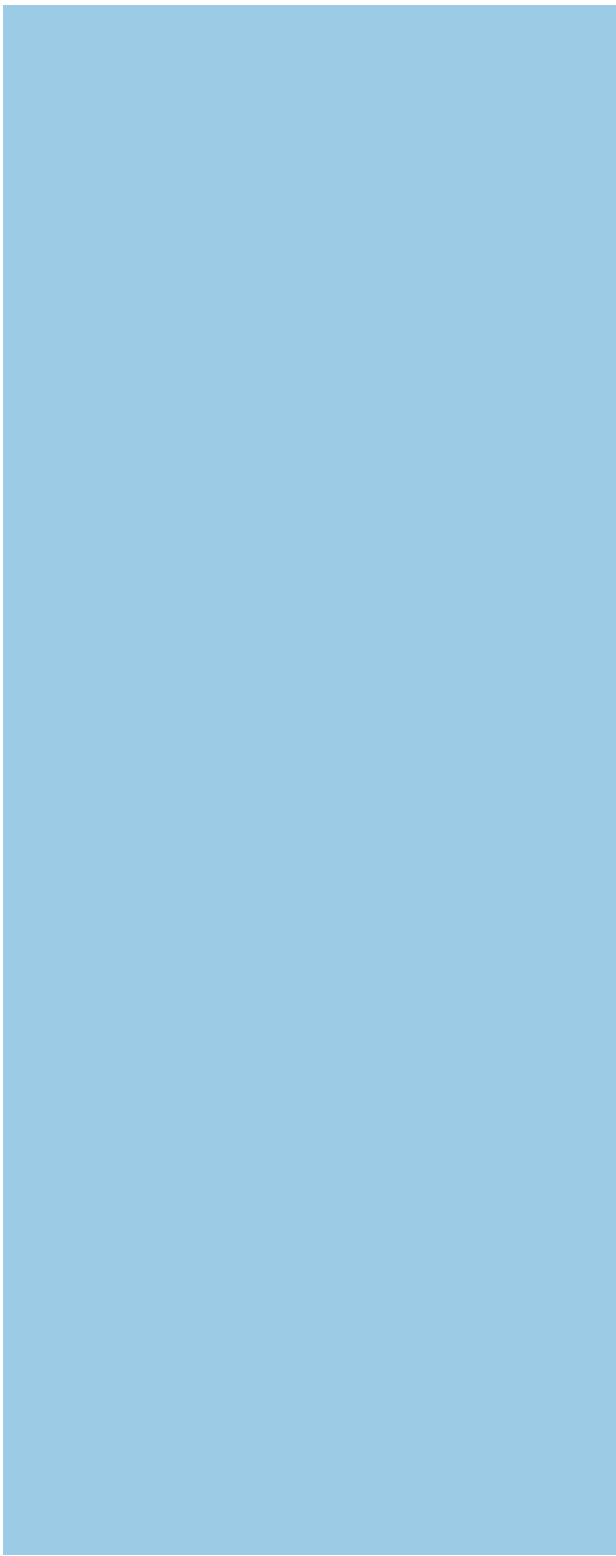
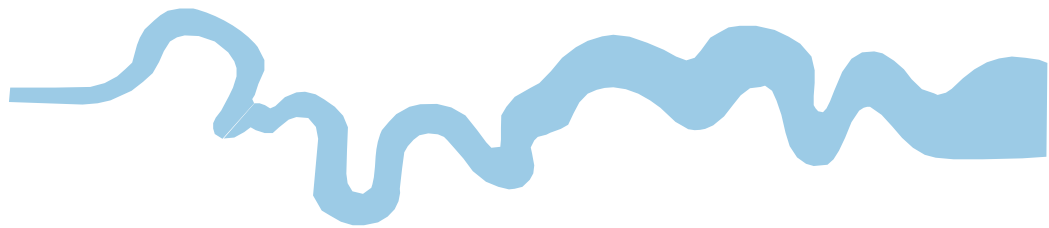
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Plates 1 and 2.

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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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