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Land at Home Farm Longstanton: Cambridge Water Company, Water main construction.

An archaeological watching brief

2005

Project No. 1323

December 2005

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By

Kate Bain

For further information please contact:
Alex Jones (Director)
Birmingham Archaeology
The University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham B15 2TT
Tel: 0121 414 5513
Fax: 0121 414 5516
E-Mail: bham-arch@bham.ac.uk
Web Address: http://www barch.bham.ac.uk/bufau

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SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Birmingham Archaeology in June 2005 at Longstanton, Cambridgeshire NGR TL 3915 6660. The work was commissioned by Bidwells Property Consultants on behalf of The Cambridge Water Company.

The development included the construction of a water main extension involving the stripping of topsoil for a pipeline and the excavation of a 0.5m wide pipe trench. Along the pipeline corridor the topsoil was stripped to the upper surface of a layer of alluvium and no archaeological features identified. The pipe trench, however, was excavated through the alluvium to the natural ground surface. Several features with archaeological potential were recorded at this level. Features close to the line of Over Road were primarily linear ditches of probable medieval date which may represent drainage features or boundaries. Other, subtle features were identified in the southwestern spur of the trench comprising three shallow linear gullies, two pits and a post hole. These undated features might be attributed to a different, possibly Iron Age phase of activity in the southern area of the pipe trench.

Land at Home Farm, Longstanton: Cambridge Water Company, water main construction

An archaeological watching brief

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the project

Birmingham Archaeology was commissioned by Bidwells Property Consultants on behalf of Cambridge Water Company to undertake a watching brief ahead of the excavation of pipe trench as part of a residential development at Longstanton in Cambridgeshire (hereinafter referred to as the site).

This report outlines the results of a the topsoil strip and subsequent excavation of the pipe trench carried out during June 2005, and has been prepared in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation*s (IFA 2001).

The work conformed to a Written Scheme of Investigation (Birmingham Archaeology 2003) which was approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to implementation (Appendix 1), in accordance with guidelines laid down in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16*, Archaeology and Planning* (DoE 1990).

All work was undertaken in accordance with the *Health and Safety at work Act* (HMSO 1974) and the *Management of Health and Safety regulations* (HMSO 1992).

1.2 Location and Geology

The site is located on the west side of the historic village of Longstanton in northern Cambridgeshire (centred on NGR TL 392 675, Fig. 1). The area under investigation comprises of a strip of land approximately 400m x 10m, situated to the west of the proposed bypass, linking to the new roundabout at Over Road (Fig. 2). The land is generally between 7-9m AOD and slopes upwards from south to north, rising about 0.5m over the site.

Longstanton is situated close to the edge of the fens to the north and easily cultivable upland areas to the south (Taylor 1998). The village is on a gravel ridge, although the site is mainly located on permeable calcareous soils acquired from the underlying Ampthill Clay, with some river terrace gravel deposits (Jones 1995). These gravel deposits are located mainly over the southern half of site and at the north end.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Previous archaeological work within the wider proposed development area (Fig. 1) included an archaeological desk-based assessment (Jones 1995) of the whole of the development area. Evidence of prehistoric and Roman settlement was concentrated on the river gravels outside the proposed development area and in the northeast part of the development area. In the medieval period, the village of Longstanton developed along High Street, and had three surrounding open fields. A small medieval hamlet was centred to the north of the site at Green

End. The central part of the proposed development area was found to contain possible evidence of medieval and post-medieval settlements. The assessment also located the presence of ridge and furrow, aligned northwest-southeast, within the south part of the site. The site (referred to as Field 19) was part of 'Dale Field', which was depicted on the enclosure map of 1816, and which formed part of the southwestern open field of the medieval village. The site was also included in an aerial photographic assessment (Cox and Deegan 1995), which indicated the presence of ridge and furrow within the site and identified a possible ring ditch of unknown date and origin in an adjacent field to the south.

Archaeological investigations to the north of the site (Mould 1997, Cuttler and Rátkai 1998 and Ellis and Rátkai 2001, Bain forthcoming), within the proposed development area, have revealed evidence of probable Iron Age settlement together with Late Saxon and medieval settlement. Further archaeological work within the northern part of the proposed development area comprised of geophysical survey and trial trenching (Cuttler 2000). Scatters of earlier prehistoric flint were noted, although these are not thought to represent any intensive settlement. Evidence of Mid to Late Iron Age activity was recorded, including one or more ditched enclosures. Late Saxon and medieval remains included ditches, defining fields or other boundaries and pits, some of which may have been used for industrial functions. Further geophysical survey (Stephens 2000), within the site, confirmed some of the results of the previous desk-based assessment and aerial photographic survey. This suggested the presence of northwest-southeast aligned ridge and furrow within the northern part of the site, and southwest-northeast orientated ridge and furrow within the southern part of the site. The survey also recorded several weak anomalies, which could be either of archaeological or of recent agricultural origin.

An evaluation was carried out over the area of the haul road in 2002 (Duncan 2002, Fig. 2). Ten trial trenches were excavated, within an area of approximately 1.5 ha, in the two arable fields along the line of the haul route and one trench at the southern extent of the bypass. Some of the trial trenches were located in order to investigate geophysical anomalies and others were speculative. In Trench 2 at the south of the site, close to Hattons Road, two parallel northeast-southwest aligned linear ditches were recorded. One of these ditches contained Late Iron Age pottery and both ditches were thought likely to be of this date. In Trench 4 a stratified sequence was recorded. A pit which was cut by a large possible boundary ditch or perhaps a large pit, at least 6m wide and almost 1m deep, dating to the Late Iron Age. This feature was subsequently cut by another pit.

In Trench 10, at the north part of the site, adjacent to Over Road, four pits and seven shallow linear ditches all on a similar east-west alignment were revealed. Several of these features contained pottery dating from the 13th to 15th centuries AD. The shallow depth of the linear features coupled with the poor quality of the pottery assemblage and its abraded nature, suggestive of a manuring scatter, may suggest that the linear features were agricultural in origin. However the largest and deepest of the pits may have been a storage or rubbish pit, indicative of occupation in the vicinity. The function of the smaller pits was unclear. Previous excavations carried out at Home Farm, Longstanton (Ellis and Rátkai 2001) had identified features of medieval date associated with house plots and occupation, located approximately 100m to the northeast of site. All of the significant archaeological features identified in the course of the evaluation were located in areas were the natural subsoil was sand and gravel.

3 METHODOLOGY

An archaeologist attended the site and monitored the removal of the topsoil along the easement to a width of 5-10m prior to the excavation of the pipe trench. Excavation of the

topsoil was carried out using a 360-degree mechanical excavator fitted with a 2m toothless ditching bucket, down to the level of an alluvial layer. This layer was only removed in the immediate area of the pipe trench. Where archaeological features were thought to be present, the strip was widened in order to provide a section for hand excavation and an assessment of their nature. Once each area had been stripped the deposits were selectively cleaned, recorded and planned digitally using a Total Station EDM.

Recording was by means of pre-printed pro-forma record cards for contexts and features, supplemented by plans (at 1:20 and 1:50), sections (at 1:10 and 1:20), as appropriate, and monochrome print and colour slide photography.

All stratified finds were collected by context and, where appropriate, individually recorded in 3 dimensions. Unstratified finds were only collected where they contributed to the project objectives or were of particular intrinsic interest. On-site conservation advice was to be provided by the appropriate specialist in the event of artefacts requiring conservation and 'lifting'. Finds of treasure were to be reported to the Coroner in accordance with the Treasure Act procedures. All finds were processed during and immediately following the fieldwork.

The full site archive includes all artefactual and/or ecofactual remains recovered from the site. The site archive will be prepared according to guidelines set down in Appendix 3 of the *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 1991), the *Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-term Storage* (UKIC, 1990) and *Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological collections* (Museum and Art Galleries Commission, 1992).

4 RESULTS

4.1 The topsoil strip

The topsoil was excavated by mechanical digger to the uppermost alluvial horizon. The topsoil generally consisted of a compact brown clay and silt, although in some areas, patches of grey silt clay were visible. Modern plough scaring was apparent in the top of the alluvial horizon over the majority of the area striped. The topsoil was generally between 0.3 and 0.8m deep although it became shallower towards the higher elevations of the strip and was generally deeper towards the field boundaries. The topsoil consisted of a compact brown humic silt with some stones throughout. No archaeological features were observed.

4.2 The pipe trench (Figs. 2 & 3)

The trench was approximately 400m long and was stripped to the upper surface of the natural geology. The natural, which varied between orange sand and gravel and compacted, grey, silty clay was uncovered at depths ranging between 7m and 6.8m above OD respectively.

Close to Over Road, a number of possible archaeological features were exposed, truncating the natural soil and overlain by the alluvial layer. Approximately 18m from north-western end of the pipe trench was a linear feature (**100**) measuring 2.0m in width and 0.34m in depth. With gently sloping sides and a concave base it was filled with light brown silty clay (**101**), which produced medieval pottery. A shallow ovoid pit (**102**) approximately 7.5m to the south of the ditch measured 0.7m in width and 0.3m in depth. Filled with dark brown silty clay (103) the feature produced no finds. Further linear features (**104**, **106**, **107**, **108** and **109**) were recorded within the pipe trench, only two of these (**106** and **109**) produced any artefacts. Both of these features were trucated by later linear features on a similar alignment.

Approximately 200m from the northern extent of the pipe trench a small open area measuring 2m x 3m was excavated. This revealed a group of small features (**110**, **111** & **112**) comprising a possible post hole and two shallow linear gullies, all of which were infilled with a distinctive dark grey silt clay with inclusions of charcoal.

The remaining features to the south of the open area comprised two shallow pits (**113** & **115**) which were roughly oval with shallow bowl shaped profiles. A narrow, steep sided linear feature (**114**), identified as a gully, and was aligned northwest to southeast, was again filled with a distinctive dark silt clay (**127**).

Numerous modern land drains were observed along the length of the pipe trench, together with a modern steep sided linear ditch (**107**), which was cut through the subsoil overlying the natural ground surface and truncating an earlier linear feature (**108**).

5 THE FINDS *BY STEPHANIE RATKAI*

101, Feature **100**
1 x rim sherd, 18g, Shelly Ware, probably Lyveden A, 12th-13th c
1 x cooking pot body sherd, 4g, Bourne A? 13th c
1 x body sherd, 2g, Smooth Sandy Ware, 13th-14th c

117, Feature **106**
1 x sheep tooth
2 x body sherds, 8g, Medieval Ely-type ware, 13th-14th c
1 x heavily abraded, jug rim, 13g, sandy oolitic ware, possibly Lyveden, 13th-14th c
1 x body sherd, 8g, Bourne B-type ware, (?later 13th)14th c
2 x body sherds, 3g, Sandy Micaceous ware late 12th-14th c

122, Feature **109**
1 x cooking pot rim sherd, 10g, Shelly Ware 12th-13th c

6 DISCUSSION

Several features of archaeological significance were identified within the pipe trench. Nine linear features, three probable pits and a single post hole were recorded. All features of archaeological interest were sealed below a layer of subsoil. Only three features produced any pottery which is of a probable medieval date. The features in the vicinity of Over Road were all roughly aligned northeast-southwest and are thought to be of medieval origin, possibly representing drainage or boundary definition. These features appear, therefore to represent further medieval activity to that recorded during a recent evaluation (Duncan 2002), and also appear to share a comparable alignment. Evidence of medieval occupation has been recorded in the evaluation along the line of the haul road, in the vicinity of Over Road, and further east at Home Farm (Ellis and Ratkai 2001).

The features encountered along the southwest end of the trench produced no datable artefacts, which may suggest they belong to a different period of activity to those recorded to the north. It is possible that they are of Iron Age origin, in view of further archaeological features of this date having been recorded to the southeast during the construction of the haul road (e.g. Duncan 2002).

While the amount that can be understood from each feature within the pipe trench is limited, the project has provided a useful window into the deposits below the alluvial horizon. In effect this has shown a section of the landscape with very little disturbance which has the potential for the preservation of archaeological features.

The value of such information in these circumstances really becomes of use when areas are subject to further development and these results can then be used to effectively target and focus future projects. For the purposes of this project the ceramic assemblage will be subject to further analysis and the results incorporated into the larger body of work at currently being undertaken at Longstanton.

7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The fieldwork was carried out by Kate Bain and Victoria Wilkinson. The report was written by Kate Bain. The project was managed by Richard Cuttler and the report edited by Richard Cuttler and John Halsted. Many thanks to Phil Doggett from Bidwells who commissioned the report on behalf of The Cambridge Water Company. Thanks are also due to Andy Thomas who monitored the site on behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council.

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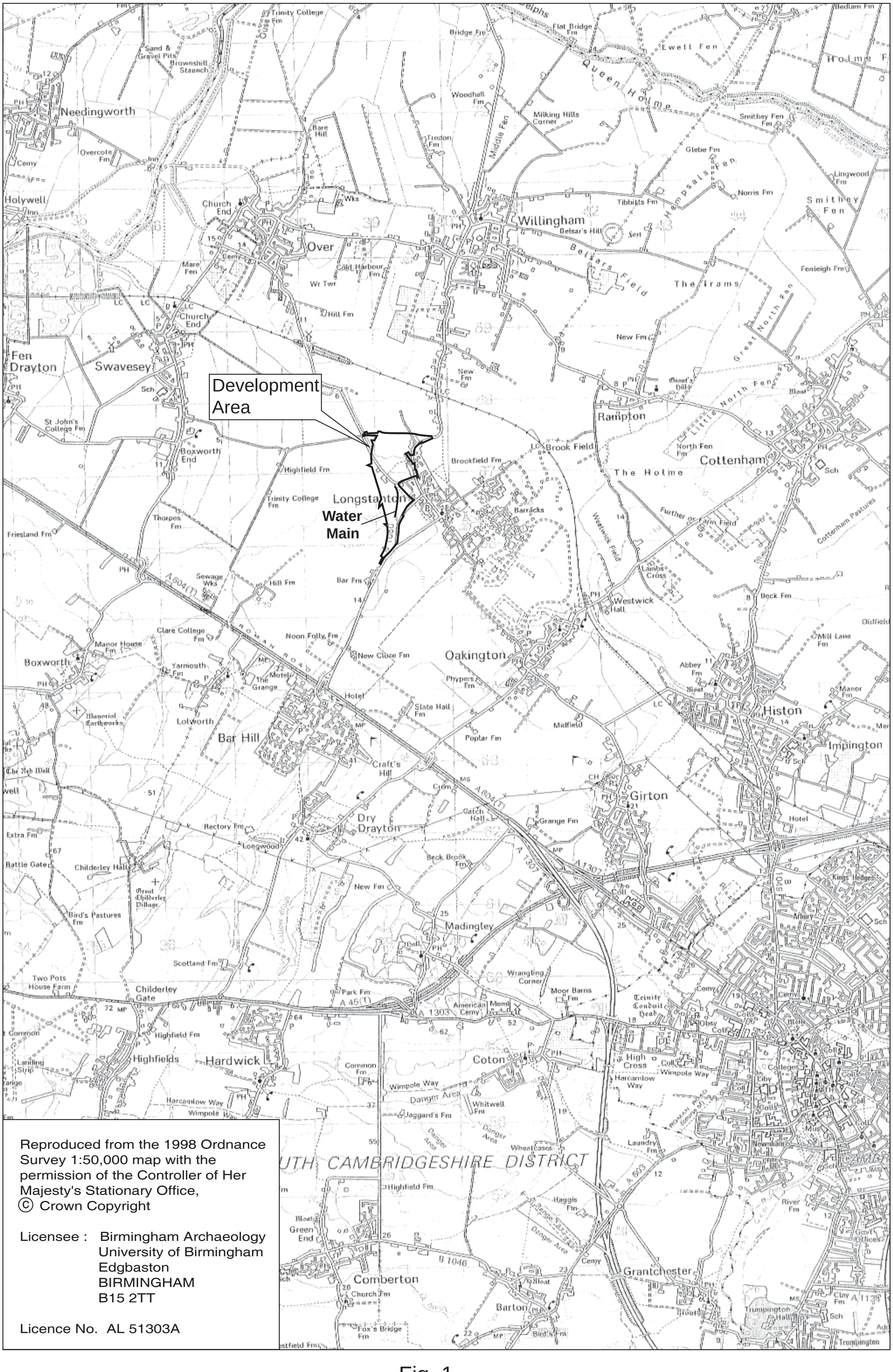
Development Area
Water Main
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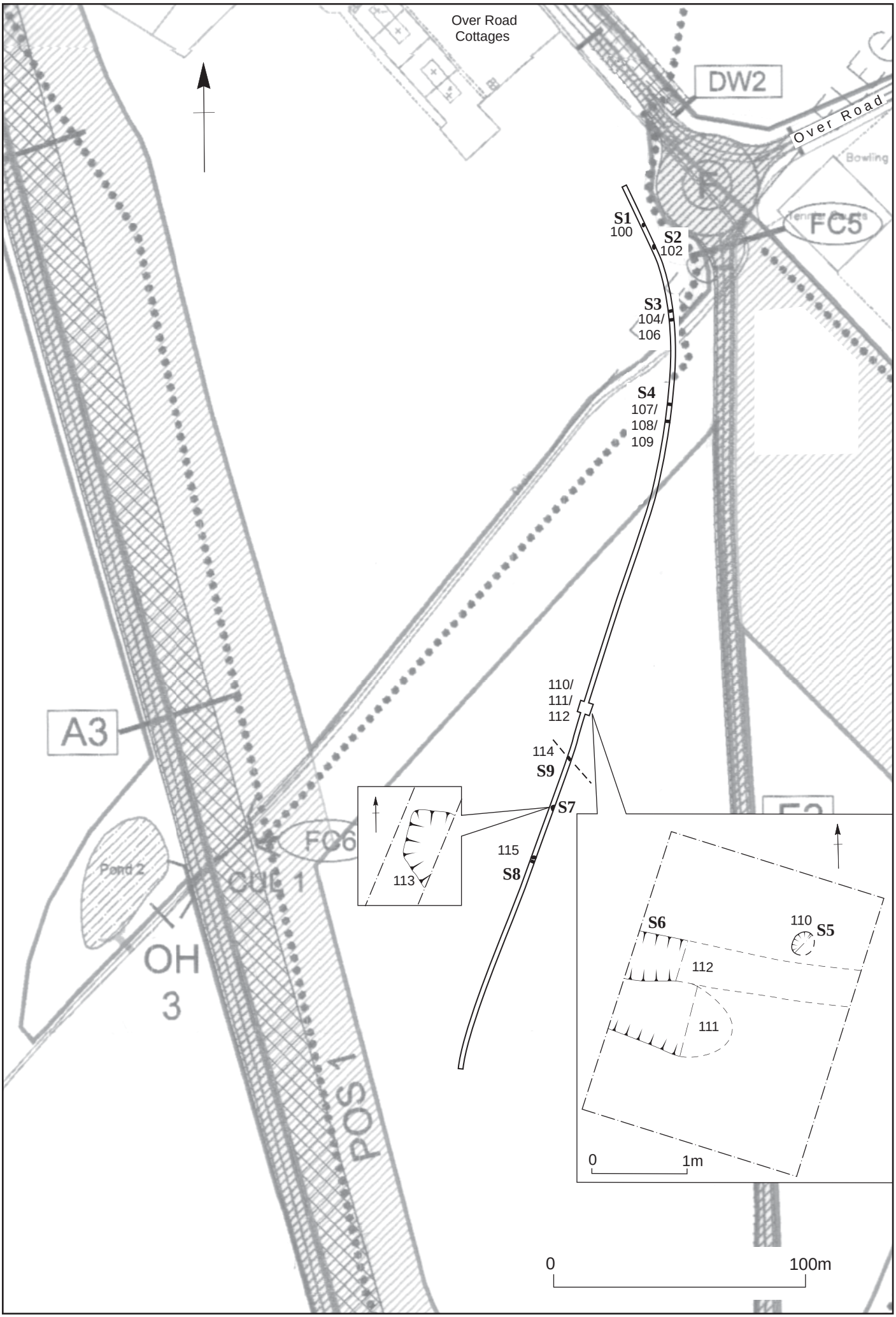
Fig. 1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DW2
Over Road
Bowling
FC5
S1
100
S2
102
S3
104/
106
S4
107/
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110/
111/
112
114
S9
S7
115
S8
113
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POS 1
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Fig 2

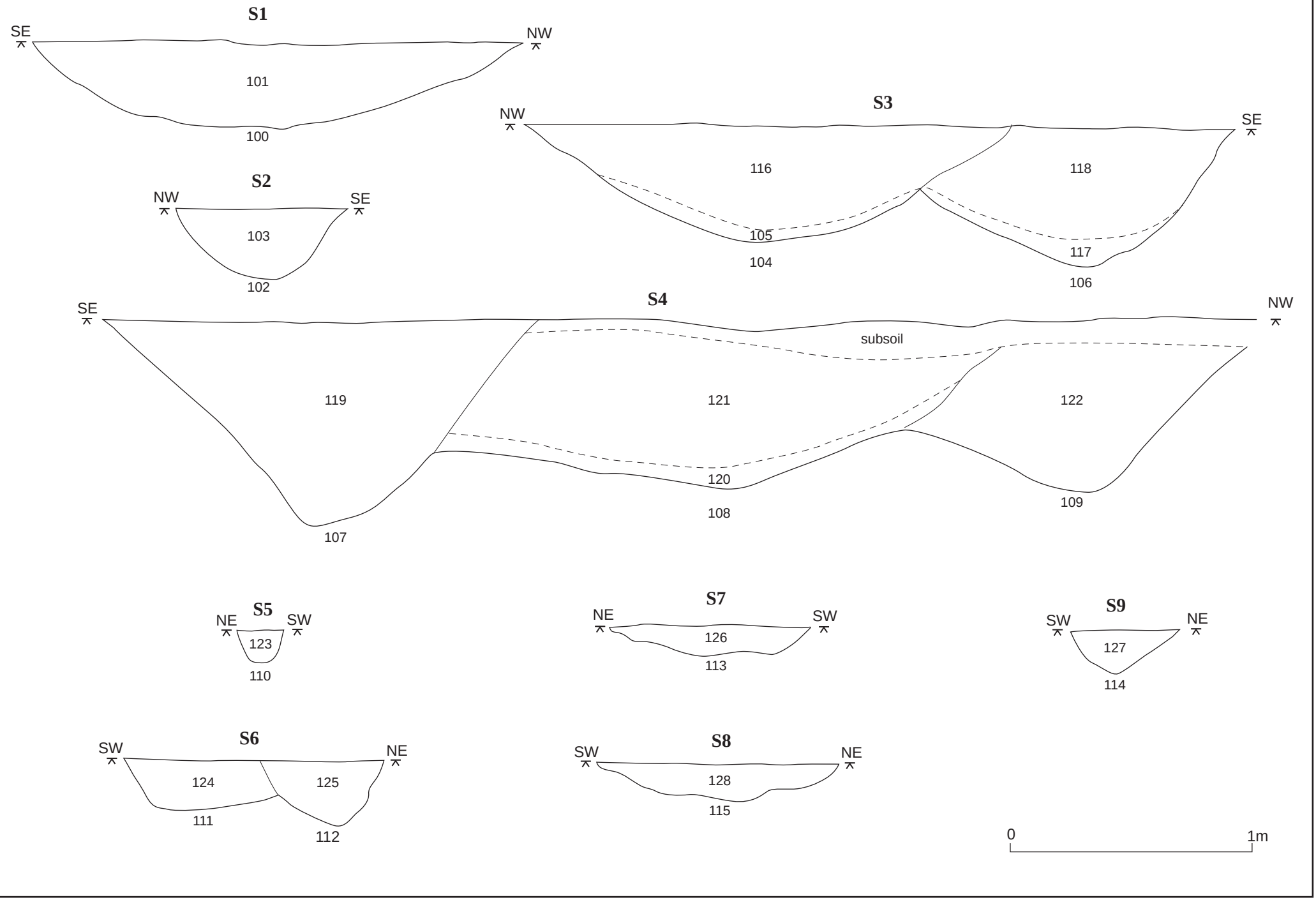
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Fig.3