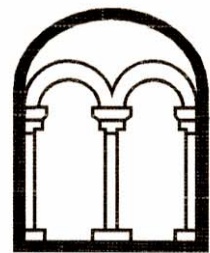


**BLACKBURN HALL FARM
WHITWICK GREEN ROAD
THURLEIGH
BEDFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION
INVESTIGATION, RECORDING, ANALYSIS
AND PUBLICATION**

Albion
archaeology



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Produced for:
Mr Julian Measures
Blackburn Hall Farm



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Preface

Every effort has been made in the preparation of this document to provide as complete a summary as possible within the terms of the method statement. All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. Albion Archaeology cannot accept responsibility for errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by a third party, or for any loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in this document.

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Albion Archaeology was commissioned to carry out the archaeological works by Julian Measures. The project was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Geoff Saunders, the Bedford Borough Council's Archaeological Officer.

Fieldwork was carried out by Wesley Keir (Archaeological Project Officer) and Richard Gregson (Archaeological Supervisor) who also prepared this report with contributions from Joan Lightning (CAD Technician) and Jackie Wells (Finds Officer).

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Key Terms

Throughout this project design the following terms or abbreviations are used:

BBC	Bedford Borough Council
BBC AO	Bedford Borough Council's Archaeological Officer
HER	Central Bedfordshire Council's Historic Environment Record
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
LPA	Local Planning Authority
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



Non-Technical Summary

Planning consent (13/00137/FUL) has been granted for a new grain storage building at Blackburn Hall Farm, Whitwick Green Road, Thurleigh.

As the site lies in an area of archaeological interest, adjacent to a scheduled moated site, a condition was placed on the planning permission requiring the implementation of a scheme of archaeological investigation during the groundworks.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned to carry out the archaeological works in accordance with the methodologies described in a Written Scheme of Investigation (Albion Archaeology 2013), produced in response to a brief prepared by the Bedford Borough Council's Archaeological Officer (BBC 2013)

The only archaeological features revealed during the groundworks were two small, E-W aligned ditches. Although no artefacts were recovered from either ditch and their location matches no known historical boundaries, they were both sealed beneath the subsoil. Since subsoil is often the result of medieval or post-medieval ploughing, it is likely that these ditches are post-medieval or earlier in date.

The alignment of the ditches follows the natural, gently sloping lie of the land, suggesting that they are most likely to have functioned as field drainage ditches; they are notably parallel with a much larger, extant drainage dyke located c. 150m to the south. If, as seems likely, they are of medieval or post-medieval date and therefore contemporaneous with the manor at Blackburn Hall, their recording has made a small contribution to our knowledge of the local agrarian landscape during these periods. As such, they are of some relevance to identified, general research themes concerning medieval and post-medieval landscape development (Wade 2000, 24-26; Oake 2007, 14; Medlycott 2011



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Project Background*

Planning consent (13/00137/FUL) has been granted for a new grain storage building at Blackburn Hall Farm, Whitwick Green Road, Thurleigh.

As the site lies in an area of archaeological interest, adjacent to a scheduled moated site, a condition was placed on the planning consent by the Local Planning Authority, following advice received from Bedford Borough Council's Archaeological Officer (BBC AO). This is in accordance with national planning guidelines in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework – Section 12: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment, which was published on 27 March 2012 and replaces the previous Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment.

The condition required a programme of archaeological observation and investigation on any groundworks associated with the construction of the new grain storage building.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned to carry out the archaeological works in accordance with the methodologies described in a Written Scheme of Investigation (Albion Archaeology 2013), produced in response to a brief prepared by the Bedford Borough Council's Archaeological Officer (BBC 2013).

1.2 *Site Location and Description*

Blackburn Hall Farm is located *c.* 900m to the west of the village of Thurleigh; it is centred on NGR 504121 258587. The site lies at *c.* 83m OD on Boulder Clay of the Oadby Member of the Wolston Formation¹.

The farm is located within and around a scheduled medieval moated site (NHLE no. 1012361). The new grain storage building will be located *c.* 70m north-west of the moated site, beyond the limit of the scheduled area (Figure 1). It will lie immediately to the south-west of an existing open pole barn used to store farm machinery within a field that slopes down gently towards the east.

1.3 *Archaeological and Historical Background*

Blackburn Hall Farm includes a grade II listed 16th–17th-century farmhouse (NHLE 1321622, HER310) and the scheduled earthworks (NHLE 1012361, HER 309) associated with a medieval moat, fish ponds and quarries. On the 1805 Enclosure map it is labelled as Black Bull Hall and the moat is depicted as a U-shaped body of water associated with a number of buildings.

The farmhouse lies on the site of a medieval manor. It is a 16th- and 17th-century building of T-shaped construction and may incorporate part of the earlier house situated within the medieval moat.

¹ contains British Geological Survey materials © NERC 2013 (<http://bgs.ac.uk/opengeoscience/home.html>)



The moat itself is almost circular, measuring *c.* 80m by 75m. A pair of fishponds is located 10m to the south-east of the moat. They are *c.* 32m long and 12m wide on either side of a small banked island. To the north-east of the moat are two water-filled hollows, 30m by 12m, which are believed to be former quarries, dug to obtain building material for the house.

Although the development area is located beyond the scheduled area, an earthwork survey undertaken in the early 20th century (HER 309 and 310) indicates that associated features may have previously extended into it.

Excavations undertaken within the moated site itself in advance of the construction of a swimming pool in 1990 identified four phases of activity from the late medieval to early post-medieval period. These included the foundations of buildings considered to be ancillary to the hall which would have occupied the moat.

Two undated slag patches, one fairly dense, were located during fieldwalking to the south of the farm (HER 2727). Similar remains have been found to the west (HER 10171) in a field called "Burnt Ground". Some 250m to the south-east of the farm, cropmarks indicate the presence of an agglomeration of irregular enclosures, in an area where early Iron Age pottery has been found during fieldwalking (HER 2752).

1.4 Project Objectives

The groundworks associated with the new grain storage building had the potential to reveal archaeological remains associated with the scheduled medieval moated site.

The research framework for Bedfordshire states that, in general, few medieval rural settlements have been investigated in the county. The emphasis also lies on study of settlements of any period which are situated on the more heavy claylands, rather than the more intensively studied gravelly river valleys. While the focus also often lies on villages, other types of medieval settlement, for example moated sites, require further study (Oake 2007, 14).

For the post-medieval period the local research framework sketches a number of general research themes that concentrate on the investigation of the social, economic and intellectual meaning and context of any study undertaken (Oake 2007, 15).

The general objectives of the investigation were to determine:

- the nature of any archaeological remains present at the site;
- the integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits present at the site.

The specific objectives of the investigation were to determine:

- if there is any evidence for medieval occupation relating to the scheduled medieval moated site;
- if there is any evidence relating to the post-medieval use of the site.



2. METHODOLOGY

Archaeological observation of the groundworks was undertaken between the 3rd and 11th June 2013. All groundworks that had the potential to impact upon archaeological remains were archaeologically monitored. These comprised ground reduction over the whole of the footprint of the new grain store to a maximum depth of 0.67m and the excavation of twelve 1m-square trenches for concrete pads to support the superstructure.

The excavations were carried out using a mechanical excavator operated under close archaeological supervision. Deposits encountered were investigated and recorded in accordance with Albion's *Procedures Manual*. Spoil heaps were checked on a regular basis for the recovery of artefacts.

Throughout the project the standards and requirements set out in the following documents were adhered to:

• Albion Archaeology	<i>Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> (2 nd edn, 2001).
• Bedford Borough Council	<i>Preparing Archaeological Archives for Deposition in Registered Museums in Bedford</i> (2010)
• EAA	<i>Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England</i> (2003)
• English Heritage	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) Project Managers' Guide</i> (2006)
	<i>Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation, 2nd edition</i> (2011)
• IfA	<i>By-Laws and Code of Conduct</i>
	Standard and Guidance documents for: <i>an Archaeological Watching Brief</i> (updated 2008); <i>Excavation</i> (updated 2008); and <i>the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i> (updated 2008)

A detailed methodology is provided in the WSI (Albion Archaeology 2013).



3. RESULTS

3.1 *Introduction*

The groundworks associated with the construction of the new grain storage building were monitored for the presence of buried archaeological remains on three separate visits between 3rd and 11th June 2013. Initially, 12 trenches measuring at least 1m³ were excavated in order to hold the concrete pads for the steel girders that carry the weight of the building superstructure. Once the concrete pads were in place, the general ground level under the footprint of the new grain storage building was reduced in order to lay a level concrete floor. The amount of material removed was greatest at the upslope, western end.

The results of the archaeological work are summarised below. Detailed context descriptions are contained in Appendix 1.

3.2 *Overburden and Undisturbed Geological Deposits*

Overburden was similar across the site and consisted of a 0.35m-thick topsoil (1) comprising dark grey brown clay silt, overlying a 0.25m-thick subsoil (2) comprising mid orange brown silty clay.

The undisturbed geological deposit comprised light yellow grey chalky clay (3) and was encountered at depths of 0.45–0.55m below the ground surface.

3.3 *Undated Ditches*

Two parallel ditches, aligned E-W and situated 22m apart, were identified beneath the subsoil during the excavation of the concrete pads and the ground reduction for the new grain storage building. Both were similar in nature and proportions. The northern ditch [4, 12, 14 & 16] was up to 0.73m wide and 0.3m deep; the southern ditch [6, 8 & 10] was up to 0.7m wide and 0.12m deep. Both ditches contained a single fill of mid brown silty clay; neither produced any artefacts.



4. CONCLUSIONS

The only archaeological features revealed during the groundworks were two, small E-W aligned ditches. Although no artefacts were recovered from either ditch and their location matches no known historical boundaries, they were both sealed beneath the subsoil. Since subsoil is often the result of medieval or post-medieval ploughing, it is likely that these ditches are post-medieval or earlier in date.

The alignment of the ditches follows the natural, gently sloping lie of the land, suggesting that they are most likely to have functioned as field drainage ditches; they are notably parallel with a much larger, extant drainage dyke located *c.* 150m to the south. If, as seems likely, they are of medieval or post-medieval date and therefore contemporaneous with the manor at Blackburn Hall, their recording has made a small contribution to our knowledge of the local agrarian landscape during these periods. As such, they are of some relevance to identified, general research themes concerning medieval and post-medieval landscape development (Wade 2000, 24-26; Oake 2007, 14; Medlycott 2011, 79).



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6. APPENDIX 1: DETAILED CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS



Area: 1
Extent (ha): 0.1
OS Co-ordinates: TL0400558628
Description: Area of ground reduction for new grain storage building.

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
1	Topsoil	Firm dark grey brown clay silt occasional small stones. 0.35m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Subsoil	Firm mid orange brown silty clay occasional small stones. 0.25m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Natural	Firm light yellow grey chalky clay	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Ditch	Linear E-W sides: near vertical base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.65m, max depth 0.3m, min length 1.35m. Same ditch as [12], [14] & [16].	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Fill	Firm mid grey brown silty clay occasional small stones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Ditch	Linear E-W sides: concave base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.6m, max depth 0.12m, min length 1.m. Same ditch as [8] & [10].	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Fill	Firm mid brown silty clay occasional small stones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Ditch	Linear E-W sides: concave base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.7m, max depth 0.12m, min length 1.m. Same ditch as [6] & [10].	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Fill	Firm mid brown silty clay occasional small stones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Ditch	Linear E-W dimensions: max breadth 0.7m, min length 22.m. General number for ditch [6] & [8].	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	Fill	Firm mid brown silty clay occasional small stones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	Ditch	Linear E-W sides: steep base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.55m, max depth 0.18m, min length 1.5m. Same ditch as [4], [14] & [16].	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13	Fill	Firm mid brown silty clay occasional small stones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	Ditch	Linear E-W sides: steep base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.73m, max depth 0.3m, min length 1.m. Same ditch as [4], [12] & [16].	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15	Fill	Firm mid brown silty clay occasional small stones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16	Ditch	Linear E-W dimensions: max breadth 0.73m, min length 32.m. General number for ditch [4], [12] & [14].	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17	Fill	Firm mid brown silty clay occasional small stones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

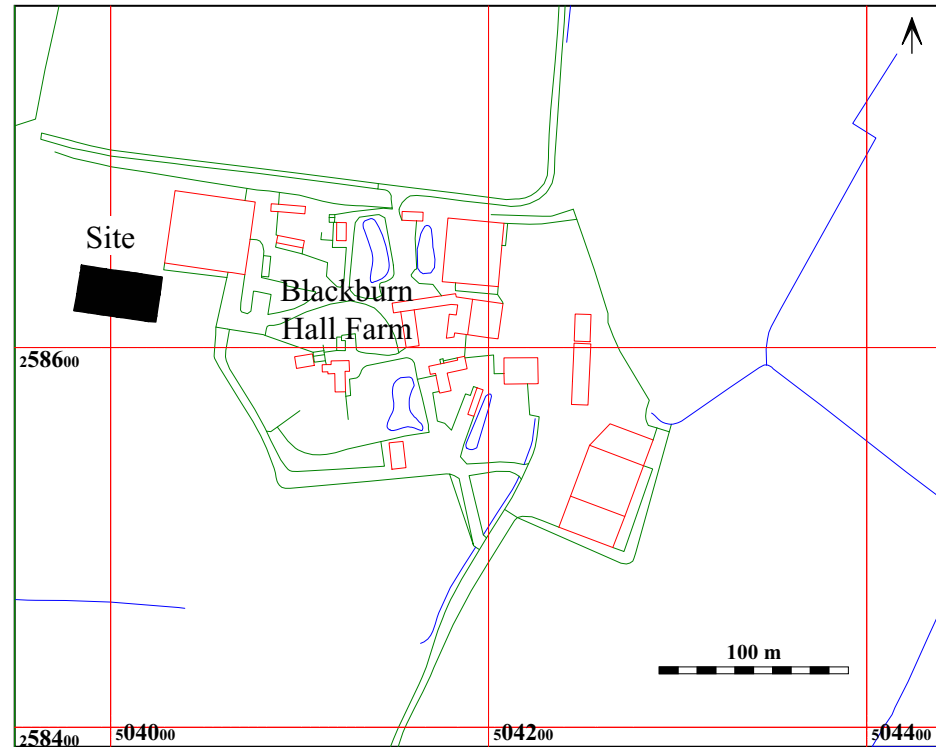
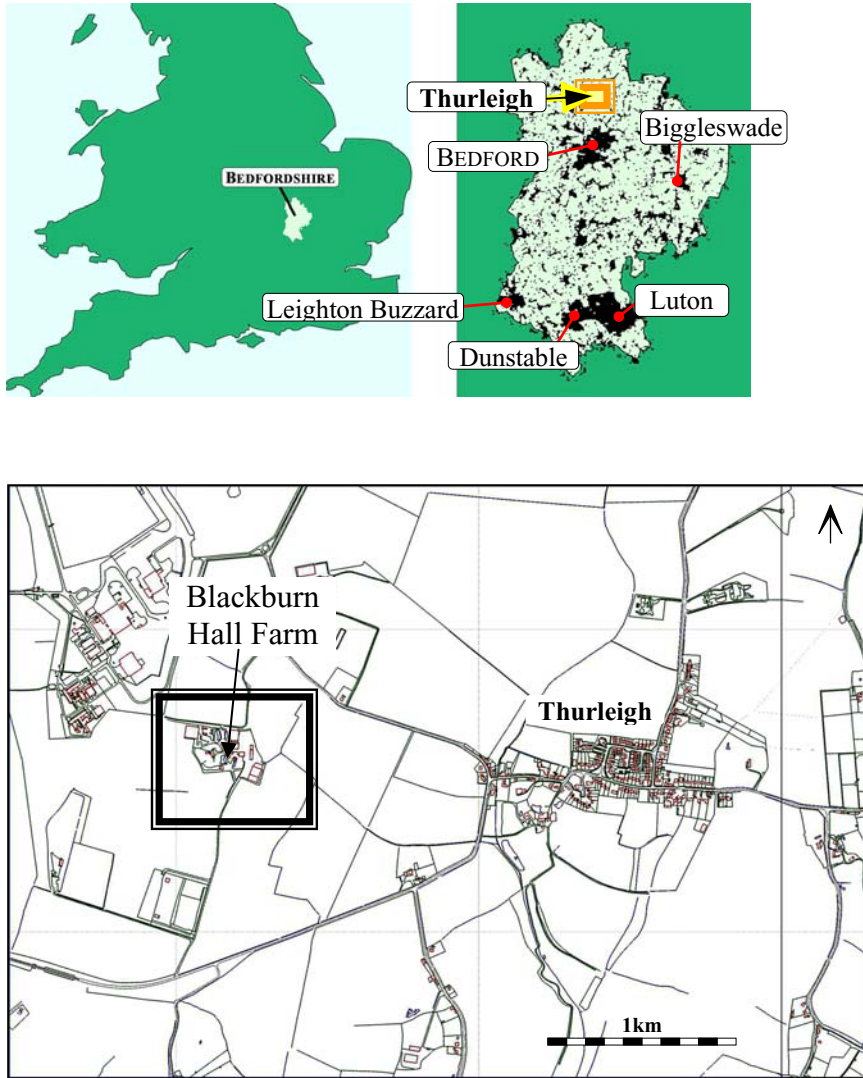
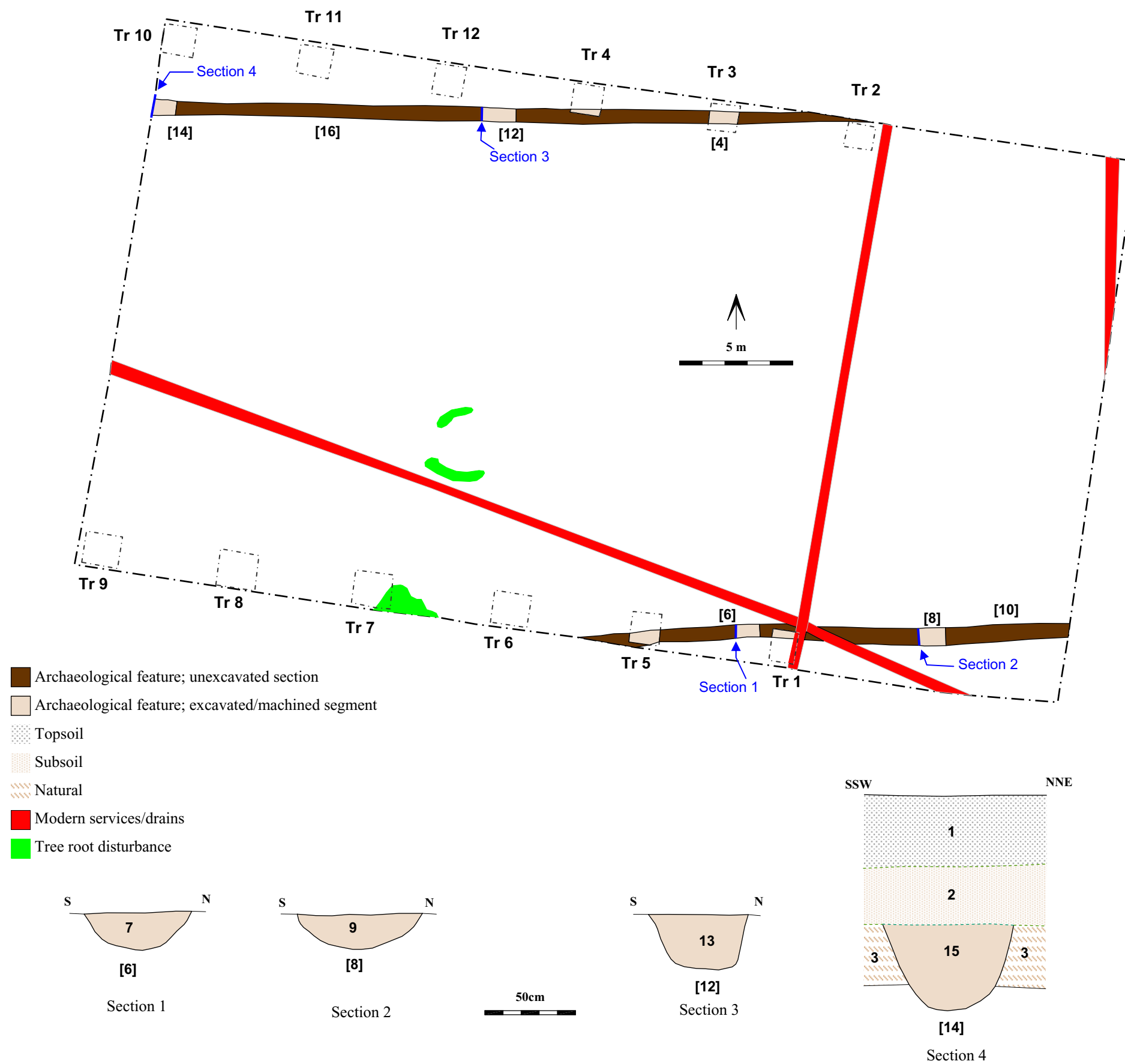


Figure 1: Site location

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Ditch [16] looking east. Scale 1m.



Ditch [10] looking east. Scale 1m.

Figure 2: All features

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