WESTWOOD BIOGAS PLANT HIGHAM PARK RUSHDEN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION

Project: WBG 1295

Document: 2007/94 Version 1.0

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20th September 2007

Produced for: BIOGEN (UK) Ltd

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Contents

List of	Figures3							
Struct	Structure of this Report4							
Key Terms								
Non-T	echnical Summary5							
1. IN	TRODUCTION6							
1.1	Planning Background6							
1.2	Site Location (Figure 1)6							
1.3	Topography and Geology6							
1.4	Archaeological Background (Figure 2)6							
1.5	Project Objectives6							
2. ME	THODOLOGY7							
3. RE	SULTS 8							
3.1	Overburden8							
3.2	Undated Field Systems							
3.3	Post-medieval ditch							
4. SY	NTHESIS 9							
4.1	Discussion9							
4.2	Impact of Development on Archaeological Remains9							
5. BIE	BLIOGRAPHY10							
6. AP	PENDIX 111							
6.1	Context Summary11							



List of Figures

Figure 1: Site location map

Figure 2: All features

Figure 3: Section through ditch [803]

Figure 4: Photograph of ditch [303]. Scale 25cm

All figures are bound at the back of this report.



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.

The project was commissioned by BIOGEN (UK) Ltd. It was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Myk Flitcroft of CgMs Ltd.

Fieldwork for this project was undertaken by David Ingham (Project Officer), Adam Lodoen (Archaeological Supervisor) and Elizabeth Davis (Assistant Archaeological Supervisor). This report has been prepared by David Ingham with contributions from Joan Lighting (CAD Technician) and Jackie Wells (Finds Officer). It was edited by Hester Cooper-Reade (Business Manager), who was responsible for the project's overall management.

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Version History

Version	Issue date	Reason for re-issue
1.0	20/09/07	n/a

Structure of this Report

Section 1 is an introduction to the project. The methodology and results of the fieldwork are presented in Sections 2 and 3. Section 4 comprises a synthesis of the results of the fieldwork. Section 5 is a bibliography.

Appendix 1 contains detailed descriptions of the archaeological deposits recorded on the site.

Key Terms

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

ALGAO Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers

Client BIOGEN (UK) Ltd

HER Historic Environment RecordIFA Institute of Field Archaeologists

LPAAA Local Planning Authority's Archaeological Advisor

Procedures Manual Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork, 2nd edn, 2001

Albion Archaeology



Non-Technical Summary

BIOGEN (UK) Ltd propose to construct a biogas plant, with associated access roads, on the site of Higham Park, Rushden, centred on (NGR) SP 9889 6323 (Fig. 1).

Further information on the archaeological potential of the site was requested by the Local Planning Authority in order to determine the planning application. The LPAAA specified the requirements for an archaeological field evaluation, the results of which are presented in this report. Albion Archaeology was commissioned by BIOGEN (UK) Ltd to carry out the evaluation.

The development area is located approximately 4.5km to the south-east of Rushden, Northants, close to the county boundary with Bedfordshire (Fig. 1). It covers an area of c. 25,600m² on roughly flat land, at a height of c. 97m OD. The underlying geological deposits comprise chalky Boulder Clay.

The proposed development lies within an area of crop-marks that have provisionally been dated to the prehistoric or Roman periods (Northamptonshire HER nos. 9603 and 3254). These are primarily concentrated to the north of the site, though crop-marks have also been identified within the development area itself. The southern limit of the development area follows the southern boundary of a medieval deer park (Bedfordshire HER 2000, Northants HER no 3253). West Wood, an area of ancient woodland, lies to the south of the development area.

The evaluation revealed the remains of an extensive field system within the development area. Although it remains undated, comparable field systems from the Roman period have been found at Waddesdon, Buckinghamshire (Keir, forthcoming) and near Caxton, Cambridgeshire (Abrams and Ingham, in prep.). A post-medieval ditch, the origin of one of the crop-marks, was also revealed. These features are considered to be of low archaeological significance.

Construction of the proposed biogas plant within the development area would have a negative impact on the archaeological remains identified by the evaluation. However, the presence of at least 0.55m of overburden across the site means that the remains would be preserved in situ wherever excavation is shallower than this.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Planning Background

The proposed development includes the construction of a biogas plant, with associated access roads, on the site of Higham Park, Rushden, centred on (NGR) SP 9889 6323 (Fig. 1).

Further information on the archaeological potential of the site was requested by the Local Planning Authority in order to determine the planning application. The LPAAA specified the requirements for an archaeological field evaluation, the results of which are presented in this report.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by BIOGEN (UK) Ltd to carry out the evaluation.

1.2 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development area is located approximately 4.5km to the south-east of Rushden, Northants, close to the county boundary with Bedfordshire (Fig. 1). It covers an area of c. 25,600m², and had recently been ploughed at the time of fieldwork.

1.3 Topography and Geology

The development area lies on roughly flat land at c. 97m OD. The underlying geological deposits comprise chalky Boulder Clay (Albion Archaeology 2007).

1.4 Archaeological Background (Figure 2)

The proposed development lies within an area of crop-marks that have provisionally been dated to the prehistoric or Roman periods (Northamptonshire HER nos. 9603 and 3254). These are primarily concentrated to the north of the site, though crop-marks have also been identified within the development area itself (Fig. 1).

The southern limit of the development area follows the southern boundary of a medieval deer park, which was enclosed with earthworks (Bedfordshire HER 2000, Northants HER no 3253). West Wood, an area of ancient woodland, lies to the south of the development area, while the remains of isolated WWII structures are known to the north and south-west.

1.5 Project Objectives

The principal objective of the evaluation was to determine whether archaeological remains were present within the development area, and, if so, their depth, extent, condition, nature and significance.

Particular attention was paid to determining the depths of modern agricultural disturbance. The evaluation also investigated the extent to which archaeological remains associated with the crop-marks survived, and whether buried remains associated with the medieval deer park boundary existed.



2. METHODOLOGY

• English Heritage

Trial trenching took place between 13th and 18th September 2007. Ten trenches were opened, covering a total area of c. 1000m^2 (Fig. 1). The trench plan was agreed by the LPAAA before the trenching began. Trenches 5, 8 and 9 had to be repositioned slightly further away from the edge of the field than was shown on the original trench plan, in order to enable access; Trench 1 had to be shortened for the same reason.

The trenches were opened by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket, under close archaeological supervision. Overburden was removed down to the top of the undisturbed geological deposits. The spoil heaps were scanned for artefacts.

The bases and sides of all trenches were cleaned by hand. Any potential archaeological features were noted, cleaned, excavated by hand and recorded using Albion Archaeology's *pro forma* sheets. Each trench was subsequently drawn and photographed as appropriate. All deposits were recorded using a unique number sequence, commencing at 100 for Trench 1, 200 for Trench 2 *etc*.

A full methodology is provided in the Project Design (Albion Archaeology 2007).

The project adhered throughout to the standards set out in the following documents:

IFA Code of Conduct
 Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field
 Evaluation
 Albion Archaeology Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork (2nd edn, 2001).

The Management of Archaeological Projects, 2nd edition

Permission was obtained from the LPAAA prior to the trenches' being backfilled.



3. RESULTS

The deposits and features of archaeological interest are summarised below. Their location and extent are shown on Figure 2. Detailed technical information on all archaeological features and deposits can be found in Appendix 1.

3.1 Overburden

The overburden was homogenous in character across the site. The topsoil comprised a c. 0.3m thick deposit, while the underlying subsoil was 0.15–0.35m in thickness. Some of the trenches contained an interface, up to 0.1m thick, between the subsoil and the undisturbed geological deposits. The total depth of overburden was a minimum of 0.55m across the whole site.

Each trench was machined down to the top of the undisturbed clay geological deposits, which comprised homogenous chalky Boulder Clay.

3.2 Undated Field Systems

The remains of an extensive field system were recorded in all ten trenches (Fig. 2). Most of the ditches that defined this field system were aligned approximately NW–SE, at *c*. 10m intervals, although a few ditches in Trenches 3, 6 and 7 were perpendicular to this alignment. The remains of the field system were sealed by the subsoil.

The ditches all had steep, mostly 'U'-shaped profiles. They were 0.2–0.95m wide, though most were near the middle of this range; their maximum surviving depth was 0.43m. Ditch [403] / [409] in Trench 4 had been almost completely truncated by ploughing; the larger intervals between some of the ditches may thus be explained by the total plough-truncation of intermediate ditches. The ditch in the north-western half of Trench 4 had a narrow causeway across it, while terminals were identified at the south-eastern ends of both this ditch and [303] in Trench 3, as well as at the south-western end of [604] in Trench 6.

A single sherd of shell-tempered, abraded, undiagnostic Roman or medieval pottery weighing 1g from ditch [803] was the only artefactual evidence recovered from the ditches. Their sterile, naturally derived infill was unsuitable for environmental sampling.

3.3 Post-medieval ditch

Ditch [505] / [608] / [1008], which had been dug through the subsoil, was up to 2.1m wide and 0.9m deep, with a 'V'-shaped profile. A contemporary ceramic land-drain had been lain along its base.



4. SYNTHESIS

4.1 Discussion

The evaluation revealed the remains of an extensive field system within the development area. Although it remains undated, comparable Roman field systems, with similarly steep-sided ditches and sterile fills, have been found at Waddesdon, Buckinghamshire (Keir, forthcoming) and near Caxton, Cambridgeshire (Abrams and Ingham, in prep.).

Although the dearth of artefactual evidence makes it clear that the field system was solely agricultural in use, with no indication of nearby settlement activity, it is unclear exactly what purpose the ditches served. Similarly arranged ditches on a nearby site at Wollaston, Northamptonshire (Brown and Meadows 2000) were interpreted as bedding trenches, associated with the practice of viticulture. The ditches at Higham Park, however, had lighter fills and less square-sectioned profiles than are usually associated with bedding trenches. It is perhaps more likely that they were designed as part of a land-drainage scheme.

Post-medieval ditch [505] / [608] / [1008] was the origin of the crop-mark identified near the south-western edge of the development area. No trace was found of the crop-mark on which Trench 3 was targeted. The evaluation also did not encounter any boundary remains associated with the medieval deer park, though this may be due to the necessity of leaving an access corridor along the south-western edge of the development area.

The field system is considered to be of low archaeological significance; however, its significance would be increased to moderate in the event of its being confirmed as Roman. The post-medieval ditch also has low archaeological significance.

4.2 Impact of Development on Archaeological Remains

Although modern ploughing has taken place within the development area, archaeological remains survive beneath the level of ploughing. Construction of the proposed biogas plant within the development area would therefore have a negative impact on the archaeological remains identified by the evaluation. However, the presence of at least 0.55m of overburden across the site means that the remains would be preserved *in situ* wherever excavation is shallower than this, with no negative impact.



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6. APPENDIX 1

6.1 Context Summary



Max Dimensions: Length: 37.80 m. Width: 2.10 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.55 m. Max: 0.6 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 98883: Northing: 63273)

OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 98906: Northing: 63303)

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
100	Topsoil	Friable dark brown silty clay 0.3m thick	V	
101	Subsoil	Firm mid orange brown silty clay 0.2m thick	✓	
102	Natural Interface	Firm light yellow grey silty clay 0.1m thick	✓	
103	Natural	Firm light yellow grey chalky clay		
104	Ditch	Linear NW-SE dimensions: max breadth 0.6m		
105	Fill	Firm mid brown silty clay		
106	Ditch	Linear NW-SE profile: near vertical base: concave dimensions: max breadtl 0.65m, max depth 0.35m	ı 🗸	
107	Fill	Firm mid brown silty clay	✓	
108	Ditch	Linear NW-SE dimensions: max breadth 0.65m		
109	Fill	Firm mid brown silty clay		
110	Ditch	Linear NW-SE profile: near vertical base: concave dimensions: max breadtl 0.4m, max depth 0.11m	v	
111	Fill	Firm mid brown silty clay	✓	



Max Dimensions: Length: 49.50 m. Width: 2.10 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.55 m. Max: 0.6 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 98867: Northing: 63264)

OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 98917: Northing: 63264)

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated: Find	ds Present:
200	Topsoil	Friable dark brown silty clay 0.3m thick	✓	
201	Subsoil	Firm mid orange brown silty clay 0.3m thick	✓	
202	Natural	Firm light yellow grey chalky clay		
203	Treethrow	Curving linear dimensions: min length 1.6m, max breadth 0.6m		
204	Lower fill	Firm mid brown red sandy clay		
205	Upper fill	Firm mid blue grey clay		
206	Ditch	Linear NW-SE profile: concave base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.7n max depth 0.22m	n,	
207	Fill	Firm mid yellow brown silty clay	✓	
208	Ditch	Linear NW-SE dimensions: max breadth 0.6m		
209	Fill	Firm mid yellow brown silty clay		
210	Ditch	Linear NW-SE dimensions: max breadth 0.7m		
211	Fill	Firm mid yellow brown silty clay		



Max Dimensions: Length: 49.80 m. Width: 2.10 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.55 m. Max: 0.55 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 98927: Northing: 63284)

OS Grid Ref.: SP (*Easting: 98955: Northing: 63243*)

Reason: Evaluate crop-mark within development area

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
300	Topsoil	Friable dark brown silty clay 0.35m thick	V	
301	Subsoil	Firm mid orange brown silty clay 0.25m thick	✓	
302	Natural	Firm light yellow grey chalky clay		
303	Ditch	Linear NW-SE profile: concave base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.6n max depth 0.2m	n, 🗸	
304	Fill	Firm mid grey brown silty clay	✓	
305	Ditch	Linear NE-SW profile: concave base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.95 max depth 0.43m	m,	
306	Fill	Firm mid grey brown silty clay	✓	
307	Ditch	Linear NE-SW dimensions: max breadth 0.35m		
308	Fill	Firm mid grey brown silty clay		
309	Ditch	Linear NE-SW dimensions: max breadth 0.35m		
310	Fill	Firm mid grey brown silty clay		



Max Dimensions: Length: 49.80 m. Width: 2.10 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.6 m. Max: 0.6 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 98884: Northing: 63249)

OS Grid Ref.: SP (*Easting: 98923: Northing: 63217*)

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
400	Topsoil	Friable dark brown silty clay 0.4m thick	✓	
401	Subsoil	Firm mid orange brown silty clay 0.2m thick	✓	
402	Natural	Firm light yellow grey chalky clay		
403	Ditch	Linear NW-SE profile: concave base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.6m max depth 0.31m	, ✓	
404	Fill	Firm mid grey brown silty clay	✓	
405	Ditch	Linear NW-SE profile: concave base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.35 max depth 0.12m	m, 🗸	
406	Fill	Firm mid grey brown silty clay	✓	
407	Ditch	Linear NW-SE base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.2m, max depth 0.05	m 🗸	
408	Fill	Firm mid grey brown silty clay	✓	
409	Ditch	Linear NW-SE dimensions: max breadth 0.35m		
410	Fill	Firm mid grey brown silty clay		
411	Ditch	Linear NW-SE dimensions: max breadth 0.4m		
412	Fill	Firm mid grey brown silty clay		
413	Ditch	Linear NW-SE dimensions: max breadth 0.15m		
414	Fill	Firm mid grey brown silty clay		



Max Dimensions: Length: 48.70 m. Width: 2.10 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.3 m. Max: 0.65 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 98880: Northing: 63227)

OS Grid Ref.: SP (*Easting: 98830: Northing: 63221*)

Reason: Evaluate crop-mark within development area

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
500	Topsoil	Friable dark brown silty clay 0.3m thick	✓	
501	Subsoil	Firm mid orange brown silty clay 0.35m thick	✓	
502	Natural	Firm light yellow grey chalky clay		
503	Ditch	Linear NW-SE profile: near vertical base: flat dimensions: max breadth 0.3m max depth 0.08m	m, 🗸	
504	Fill	Firm mid brown silty clay	✓	
505	Ditch	Linear NW-SE dimensions: max breadth 1.2m		
506	Fill	Firm dark orange brown silty clay		
507	Ditch	Linear NW-SE dimensions: max breadth 0.45m		
508	Fill	Firm mid brown silty clay		



Max Dimensions: Length: 48.70 m. Width: 2.10 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.3 m. Max: 0.6 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 98888: Northing: 63222)

OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 98883: Northing: 63173)

Reason: Evaluate crop-mark within development area

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
600	Topsoil	Friable dark brown silty clay 0.3m thick	✓	
601	Subsoil	Firm mid orange brown silty clay 0.2m thick	✓	
602	Natural Interface	Firm light yellow grey silty clay 0.1m thick	✓	
603	Natural	Firm light yellow grey chalky clay		
604	Ditch	Linear NE-SW dimensions: max breadth 0.6m		
605	Fill	Firm mid brown grey clay		
606	Ditch	Linear NE-SW profile: near vertical base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.45m, max depth 0.39m	✓	
607	Fill	Firm mid orange grey silty clay	✓	
608	Ditch	Linear NW-SE profile: 45 degrees base: concave dimensions: max breadth 2.1 max depth 0.9m Ceramic land drain in base	1m,	
609	Fill	Firm dark grey brown silty clay	✓	



Max Dimensions: Length: 49.40 m. Width: 2.10 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.6 m. Max: 0.65 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 98900: Northing: 63193)

OS Grid Ref.: SP (*Easting: 98950: Northing: 63188*)

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
700	Topsoil	Friable dark brown silty clay 0.35m thick	✓	
701	Subsoil	Firm mid orange brown silty clay 0.2m thick	✓	
702	Natural	Firm light yellow grey chalky clay		
703	Ditch	Linear NE-SW profile: near vertical base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.35m, max depth 0.21m	v	
704	Fill	Firm mid grey brown silty clay	✓	
705	Ditch	Linear NW-SE profile: near vertical base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.4m, max depth 0.25m	v	
706	Fill	Firm mid grey brown silty clay	✓	
707	Ditch	Linear NW-SE dimensions: max breadth 0.75m		
708	Fill	Firm mid grey brown silty clay		
709	Ditch	Linear NW-SE dimensions: max breadth 0.5m		
710	Fill	Firm mid grey brown silty clay		



Max Dimensions: Length: 48.40 m. Width: 2.10 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.6 m. Max: 0.7 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 98819: Northing: 63161)

OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 98852: Northing: 63199)

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
800	Topsoil	Friable dark brown silty clay 0.3m thick	V	
801	Subsoil	Firm mid orange brown silty clay 0.3m thick	✓	
802	Natural	Firm light yellow grey chalky clay		
803	Ditch	Linear NW-SE profile: near vertical base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.8m, max depth 0.37m	✓	
804	Fill	Firm mid orange grey silty clay	✓	✓
805	Ditch	Linear NW-SE dimensions: max breadth 0.65m		
806	Fill	Firm mid orange grey silty clay		



Max Dimensions: Length: 48.50 m. Width: 2.10 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.6 m. Max: 0.6 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 98889: Northing: 63164)

OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 98856: Northing: 63127)

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated: Find	s Present:
900	Topsoil	Friable dark brown silty clay 0.3m thick	✓	
901	Subsoil	Firm mid orange brown silty clay 0.15m thick	✓	
902	Natural Interface	Firm light yellow grey silty clay 0.15m thick	✓	
903	Natural	Firm light yellow grey chalky clay		
904	Ditch	Linear NW-SE dimensions: max breadth 0.6m		
905	Fill	Firm mid brown grey clay silt		
906	Ditch	Linear NW-SE profile: near vertical base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.8m, max depth 0.32m	h 🗸	
907	Fill	Firm mid brown grey silty clay	\checkmark	
908	Ditch	Linear NW-SE profile: near vertical base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.85m, max depth 0.36m	h 🗸	
909	Fill	Firm mid grey brown silty clay	✓	
910	Ditch	Linear NW-SE dimensions: max breadth 0.4m		
911	Fill	Firm mid brown grey silty clay		



Max Dimensions: Length: 49.20 m. Width: 2.10 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.3 m. Max: 0.6 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 98944: Northing: 63159)

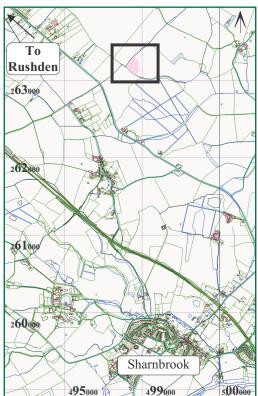
OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 98913: Northing: 63119)

Reason: Evaluate crop-mark within development area

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
1000	Topsoil	Friable dark brown silty clay 0.3m thick	✓	
1001	Subsoil	Firm mid orange brown silty clay 0.25m thick	✓	
1002	Natural Interface	Firm light yellow grey silty clay 0.1m thick	✓	
1003	Natural	Firm light yellow grey chalky clay		
1004	Ditch	Linear NW-SE profile: near vertical base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.7m, max depth 0.35m	✓	
1005	Fill	Firm mid orange grey silty clay	✓	
1006	Ditch	Linear NW-SE dimensions: max breadth 0.3m		
1007	Fill	Firm mid orange grey silty clay		
1008	Ditch	Linear NW-SE dimensions: max breadth 1.6m		
1009	Fill	Firm dark orange brown silty clay		







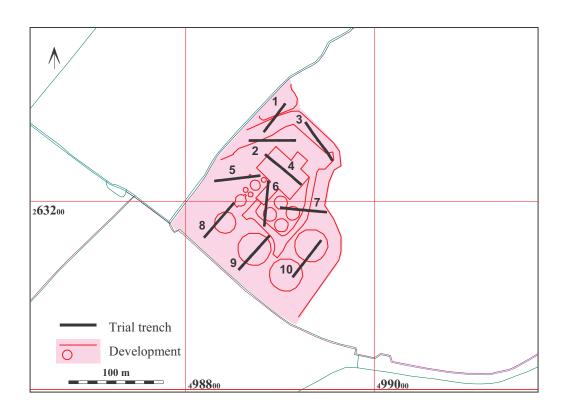


Figure 1: Site location plan

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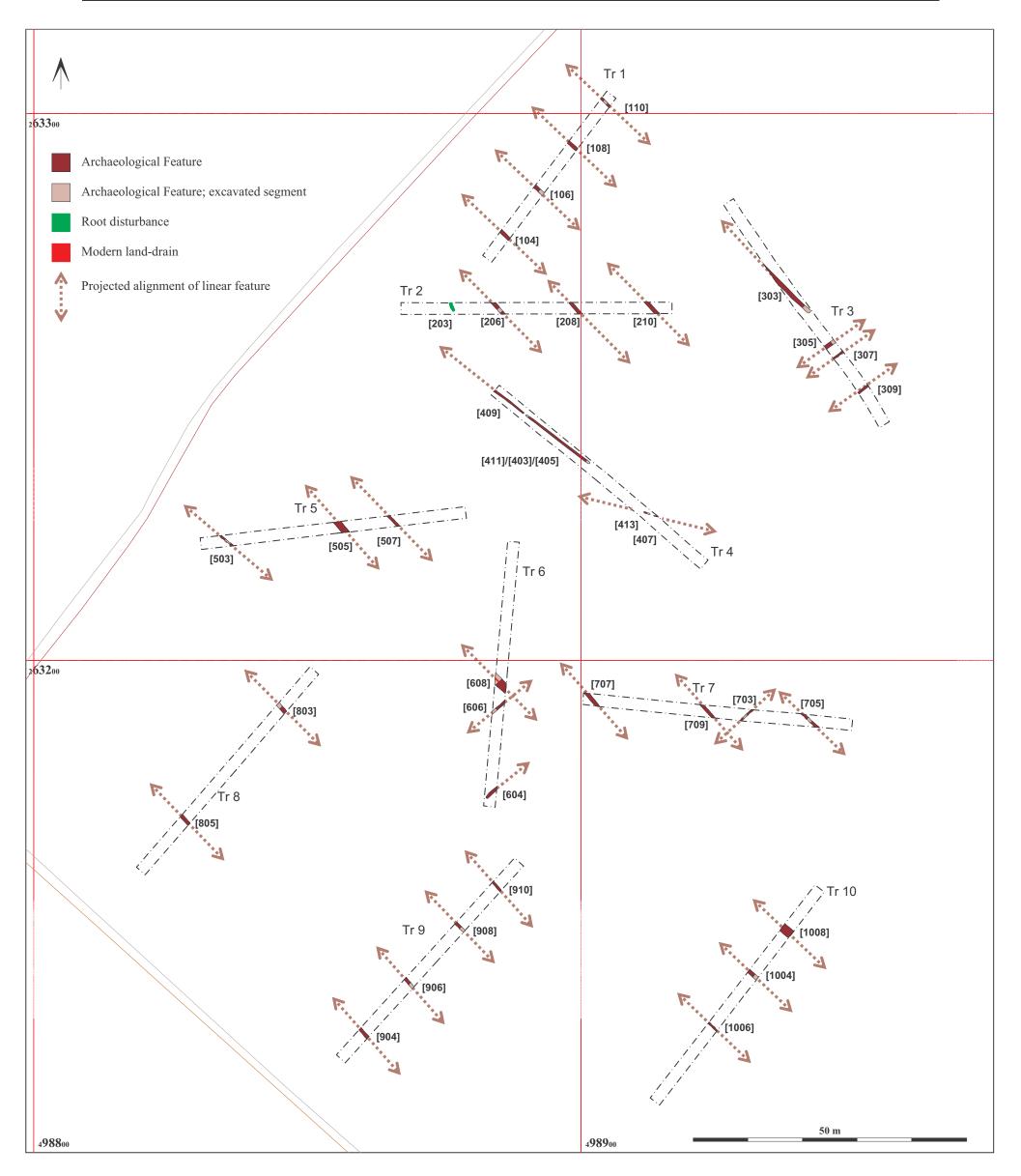


Figure 2 All features

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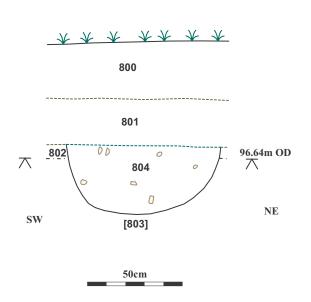


Figure 3: Section through ditch [803]

Figure 4: Photograph of ditch [303]. Scale 25cm