



Handley Park Abthorpe Northamptonshire

*Programme of Archaeological Observation, Investigation
Recording, Analysis & Publication*



for
Renesola UK Limited

CA Project: 660621
CA Report: 16151
Site Code: HPSF16

April 2016



Handley Park Abthorpe Northamptonshire

Programme of Archaeological Observation Investigation, Recording, Analysis & Publication

CA Project: 660621
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SUMMARY

Project Location: Handley Park, Abthorpe, Northamptonshire
NGR: SP 6707 4605
Type: Programme of Archaeological Observation, Investigation and Recording (watching brief)
Date: 20th January . 8th February 2016
Planning References: South Northamptonshire Council S/2014/1522/MAF & S/2015/2411/NMA
Location of Archive: Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre (when opened)
Site Code: HPSF16

In January and February 2016, Cotswold Archaeology carried out a programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording (watching brief) at Handley Park, Abthorpe, Northamptonshire. The archaeological investigation, which was commissioned by Renesola UK Ltd, was undertaken to fulfil a condition attached to a planning consent by South Northamptonshire Council for the construction of a solar farm.

Archaeological investigation of the excavations for the haul road, compound, cable trenches and the substation identified three ditches, two within the cable trenches and one on the haul road. No finds or other dateable material was recovered from any of the features, although one ditch aligned with a Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age ditch found during the previous archaeological evaluation, suggesting that it may date to this period. Given their proximity to the discrete area of Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age and Roman remains identified by the evaluation on the south-east facing slope of the site, it is probable that the other two ditches are similarly associated.



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In January and February 2016, Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out a programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording (watching brief) at Handley Park, Abthorpe, Northamptonshire (site centred on NGR: SP 6707 4605; Fig. 1). The archaeological investigation, which was commissioned by Renesola UK Ltd, was undertaken to fulfil a condition attached to a planning consent by South Northamptonshire Council (SNC) for the construction of a solar farm on the land (Planning ref: S/2014/1522/MAF & S/2015/2411/NMA).
- 1.2 Archaeological advice to SNC was provided by Liz Mordue, Northamptonshire County Council's Assistant Archaeological Advisor (NCCAAA). The requirement for the archaeological investigation was based on the results of a heritage statement (CA 2013), geophysical survey (GSB 2013) and trial trench evaluation (CA 2014), which identified the remains of Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age and Roman activity within the current site. A focus of Middle/Late Anglo-Saxon activity was also identified in the northern corner of the original application site, but this area was excluded from the revised scheme for the solar farm.
- 1.3 No site-specific *Brief* was issued for this project so the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) prepared by CA (2015) and approved by NCCAAA was guided in its preparation by the methodology previously approved for other sites in Northamptonshire.
- 1.4 The project was carried out in accordance with the WSI (CA 2015) and abided by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (CIfA 2014) and the Historic England (formerly English Heritage) procedural documents *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (EH 1991) and *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE): Project Manager's Guide* (HE 2015).



2. SITE BACKGROUND

Site location, topography and geology

- 2.1 The site, which covers an area of c. 24ha, is located approximately 2.0km to the east of the village of Abthorpe and 3.5km to the south-west of Towcester town centre (Fig. 1). It comprises an irregular block of arable farmland situated between Handley Barn in the west and the junction of the A43 and A413 in the east.
- 2.2 The proposed development site is located on the east-facing slope of a steep-sided valley, with the highest points in the north-western part of the site at c. 120m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), falling to c. 100m aOD in the south-eastern part of the site (Fig. 2). Higher ground within the site overlooks the wider landscape to the north-east, and the valley of Silverstone Brook to the east and south-east. The land to the west of the site rises to a hilltop of 145m aOD at Handley Barn, screening views in this direction.
- 2.3 There are a number of different underlying geological strata mapped within the site, comprising rocks of Jurassic age. On the higher ground in the northernmost part of the site is an outcrop of the Blisworth Limestone Formation, descending through a narrow belt of strata in the north-central area formed by the Rutland Formation Mudstone, Wellingborough Limestone Member, and Northampton Sand Formation (Sandstone, Limestone and Ironstone). The geology on the lower slopes of the valley comprises rocks of the Whitby Mudstone Formation. No superficial deposits are recorded within the site (BGS 2016).

Archaeological and historical background

- 2.4 The archaeological and historical background of the site has been presented in detail in the heritage statement prepared by CA (2013). In brief, this concluded that there are no records of known archaeological sites within the proposed development area in the Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record or national archives, although cropmarks of prehistoric, Roman and medieval activity have been recorded in the surrounding area and archaeological remains, predominately of Iron Age and Roman date, were investigated near Silverstone ahead of the construction of the A43 Silverstone Bypass in 2000-2001. The sites of deserted medieval villages have been recorded at Handley, c. 750m to the north of the site, and near Abthorpe and Silverstone.



- 2.5 The site has been the subject of a geophysical survey carried out by GSB (2013), which identified anomalies of archaeological interest in the northern and eastern parts of the original application area. These anomalies were targeted by an archaeological evaluation of the site in May 2014 (CA 2014), which revealed evidence for Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age activity, comprising a pit and a ditch from which a small assemblage of pottery was recovered, and the remains of a small Roman settlement, probably a farmstead and associated field system. The Roman features contained pottery, animal bone and fragments of Roman roof tile, the latter indicating that there may have been a building in the vicinity.
- 2.6 In addition, Middle/Late Saxon remains comprising a circular or oval enclosure were identified to the north of the current site, in an area subsequently excluded from the revised scheme for the solar farm. Pottery dateable to the 7th to 10th centuries, a fragment of an iron pin or bobbin and a metal fragment, possibly part of a bucket with mineralised wood fibres adhering to its surface, were recovered from the enclosure ditch. No evidence was encountered for features within the enclosure.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The objectives of the archaeological works, as stated in the WSI (CA 2015), were:
- to monitor groundworks, and to identify, investigate and record all significant buried archaeological deposits revealed on the site during the course of the development groundworks;
 - at the conclusion of the project, to produce an integrated archive for the project work and a report setting out the results of the project and the archaeological conclusions that can be drawn from the recorded data.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The fieldwork was carried out intermittently over a period of approximately two weeks and followed the methodology set out within the WSI (CA 2015). An archaeologist was present during all intrusive groundworks in the designated areas, which included the excavation of the haul road, compound, cable trenches and substation in the eastern and northern parts of the site (Fig. 2). When on site, they



also ensured that the no-dig zone was fenced off and there were no infringements into this area.

- 4.2 Where archaeological deposits were encountered written, graphic and photographic records were compiled in accordance with *Technical Manual 1: Fieldwork Recording Manual* (CA 2013). A photographic record of the project was maintained in high resolution digital images and included photographs of the general site, archaeological features and working shots. There were no finds and no deposits were encountered that were suitable for palaeoenvironmental analysis.
- 4.3 The archive from the project is currently held by CA at their offices in Milton Keynes; this will be deposited with the Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre when this facility becomes available. A summary of information from this project, as set out within Appendix B, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

5. FIELDWORK RESULTS

- 5.1 The archaeological investigation identified three ditches, one crossing the route of the haul road at the northern edge of the site and two in cable trenches within the area of the solar panels (Fig. 2). The ditches are undated but they are probably associated with prehistoric and Roman features identified by the evaluation carried out by CA in 2014. The excavations for the haul road measured c. 3.5m wide by 0.3m deep; the cable trenches (EC1, EC2 and EC3) measured 1m wide by 1.2m deep; and the foundation for the substation (SS1) was 9m long by 5m wide by 1.4m deep. The construction of the compound involved the removal of topsoil to a depth of c. 0.3m, revealing the surface of the subsoil over an area of c. 0.35ha. Details of the features and deposits encountered by the archaeological investigation are presented in Appendix A and are discussed below.

General stratigraphy

- 5.2 The geological substrate comprised firm mid brownish-yellow clay overlying mixed mid greyish-yellow and mid reddish-brown clay containing large patches of lime stone. It was revealed across the northern slope of the site at an average depth of 0.3m below present ground level (bpgl); on the lower southern slope it deepened to 0.5m bpgl. This difference in depth is due to the presence of a colluvial layer further



down the hill comprising soft mid yellowish-brown clay silt with occasional sub angular stone inclusions. At the southern end of the haul road the natural clays were not exposed owing to the shallowness of the trench. Both colluvium and the natural clays were sealed by approximately 0.31m of topsoil comprising friable mid brownish-grey clay silt.

Ditch 103

- 5.3 Ditch 103 extended along the route of the haul road at the northern edge of the site on a north-west to south-east alignment for approximately 50m. It measured 1.07m wide by 0.26m deep, had moderately steep sides and a concave base and the fill comprised firm mid purplish-grey silty clay (Figs 4 and 5).

Ditch 202

- 5.4 Ditch 202 crossed cable trench EC1 on a north-east to south-west alignment. It was not possible to fully excavate the ditch due to the confined space and depth of the trench. As seen it measured 1.36m wide and over 0.72m deep (Figs 3 and 5). It contained a fill of soft mid greyish-brown clay silt formed through secondary silting. The ditch appears to align with a Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age ditch investigated by the evaluation in 2014.

Ditch 303

- 5.5 Ditch 303 crossed cable trench EC2 on an east to west alignment. It measured 1.14m wide by 0.47m deep, had moderately steep sides and a concave base and was filled with soft, dark bluish-grey clay silt (Fig. 5).

6. DISCUSSION

- 6.1 Three ditches were revealed during the course of the archaeological investigation, one crossing the route of the haul road at the northern edge of the site and the other two passing through cable trenches in the eastern part, adjacent to the no-digg archaeology zone. The ditches are undated, but their proximity to a discrete area of Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age and Roman activity identified by the evaluation carried out in 2014 (CA 2014) suggests that they may be associated.

- 6.2 It is possible that ditch 202 may be a northwards continuation of ditch 1705, which was investigated by the evaluation and was found to contain sherds of Late Bronze



Age/Early Iron Age pottery. However, this ditch had been recut and there was no indication that ditch 202 had been similarly recut, although over a distance of c. 35m it is possible that the recut had terminated or branched off in a different direction.

7. CA PROJECT TEAM

- 7.1 The fieldwork was undertaken by Peter Boyer, Ralph Brown and Mark Woodley. The report was written by Ralph Brown, with illustrations prepared by Rosanna Price. The archive has been compiled by Emily Evans and prepared for deposition by Hazel O'Neill. The project was managed for CA by Simon Carlyle.

8. REFERENCES

BGS (British Geological Survey) 2016 *Geology of Britain Viewer* <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> Accessed 14 April 2016

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2013 *Mile Oak Farm, Towcester, Northamptonshire: Heritage Statement*, report **13620**

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2014 *Handley Park, near Abthorpe, Northamptonshire: An Archaeological Evaluation*, report **14228**

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2015 *Handley Park, Abthorpe, Northamptonshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for a Programme of Archaeological Observation, Investigation, Recording, Analysis & Publication*, unpublished document

GSB (GSB Prospection Ltd) 2013 *Geophysical Survey Report: Mile Oak Farm, Towcester, Northamptonshire*, report **G1374**



APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Context	Type	Fill of	Context Interpretation	Context Description	L (m)	W (m)	D/T (m)
Haul road							
100	Layer		Topsoil	Friable mid brown grey clay silt, rare small stone inclusions	>1000	>3.5	0.3
101	Layer		Colluvium	Soft mid yellow brown clay silt, occ. sub angular stone inclusions	>150		
102	Layer		Geology	Firm mid brown yellow clay, rare small stone inclusions	>1000	>3.5	
103	Cut		Ditch	NW-SE linear with sharp break of slope top and rounded break slope base, straight 40° sides and concave base	>0.5	1.07	0.26
104	Fill	103	Secondary Silting	Firm mid purple grey silty clay with rare small sub angular stone inclusions	>0.5	1.07	0.26
Cable trench EC1							
200	Layer		Topsoil	Friable mid grey brown clay silt, occ. sub angular stone inclusions	>320	>1	0.28
201	Layer		Geology	Mix of firm mid grey yellow and mid red brown clay with large patches of lime stone	>320	>1	
202	Cut		Ditch	NE-SW linear with sharp break of slope top, straight 60° sides base not seen	>1	1.36	>0.72
203	Fill	202	Secondary Silting	Soft mid grey brown clay silt with occ. small sub angular stones	>1	1.36	>0.72
Cable trench EC2							
300	Layer		Topsoil	Friable mid brown grey clay silt, rare small stone inclusions	>242	>1	0.32
301	Layer		Colluvium	Soft mid yellow brown clay silt, occ. sub angular stone inclusions	>242	>1	0.2
302	Layer		Geology	Mix of firm mid grey yellow and mid red brown clay with large patches of lime stone	>242	>1	
303	Cut		Ditch	E-W linear with sharp break slope top and rounded break slope base, straight 45° sides and concave base	>1	1.4	0.48
304	Fill	303	Secondary Silting	Soft dark blue grey clay silt with rare small sub angular stone inclusions and frequent iron stone flecks	>1	1.4	0.48
Cable trench EC3							
400	Layer		Topsoil	Friable mid grey brown clay silt, occ. sub angular stone inclusions	>195	>1	0.32
401	Layer		Geology	Mix of firm mid grey yellow and mid red brown clay with large patches of lime stone	>195	>1	
Substation SS1							
500	Layer		Topsoil	Friable mid brown grey clay silt, rare small stone inclusions	>9	>5	0.32
501	Layer		Subsoil	Soft mid yellow brown clay silt, occ. sub angular stone inclusions overlying a mix of firm mid grey yellow and mid red brown clay with large patches of lime stone	>9	>5	
Compound							

600	Layer		Topsoil	Friable mid brown grey clay silt, rare small stone inclusions	>100	>35	0.31
601	Layer		Subsoil	Soft mid yellow brown clay silt, occ. Sub angular stone inclusions overlying a mix of firm mid grey yellow and mid red brown clay with large patches of lime stone	>100	>35	

APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Handley Park, Abthorpe, Northamptonshire	
Short description	Archaeological investigation of the excavations for the haul road, compound, cable trenches and the substation identified three ditches, two within the cable trenches and one on the haul road. No finds or other dateable material was recovered from any of the features, although one ditch aligned with a Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age ditch found during the previous archaeological evaluation, suggesting that it may date to this period. Given their proximity to the discrete area of Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age and Roman remains identified by the evaluation on the south-east facing slope of the site, it is probable that the other two ditches are similarly associated.	
Project dates	20th January-8th February 2016	
Project type	Watching Brief	
Previous work	DBA (CA 2013); geophysical survey (GSB 2013); field evaluation (CA 2014)	
Future work	None	
Monument type	Ditches of probable Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age and Roman date	
Significant finds	None	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site location	Handley Park, Abthorpe, Northamptonshire	
Study area	24ha	
Site co-ordinates	SP 6707 4605	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology (CA)	
Project Brief originator	-	
Project Design (WSI) originator	CA	
Project Manager	Simon Carlyle (CA)	
Project Supervisor	Ralph Brown (CA)	
PROJECT ARCHIVE		
		Content
Physical	Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre (when opened)	None
Paper		Site records
Digital	Northamptonshire HER	Report, digital photos
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2016 CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2016 Handley Park, Abthorpe, Northamptonshire: Programme of Archaeological Observation, Investigation, Recording, Analysis & Publication. CA typescript report 16151		

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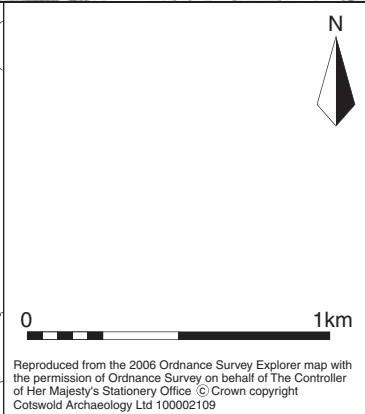
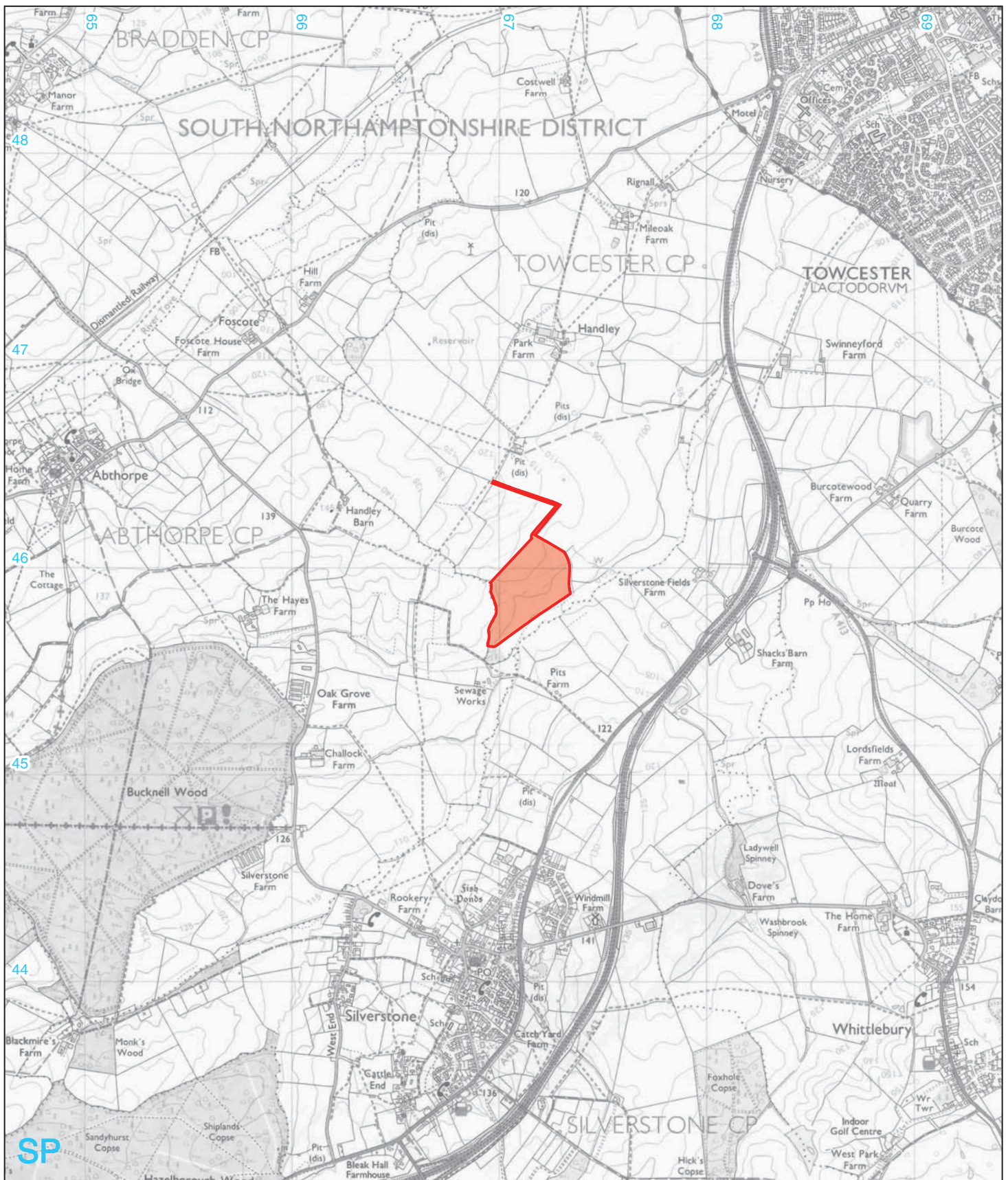
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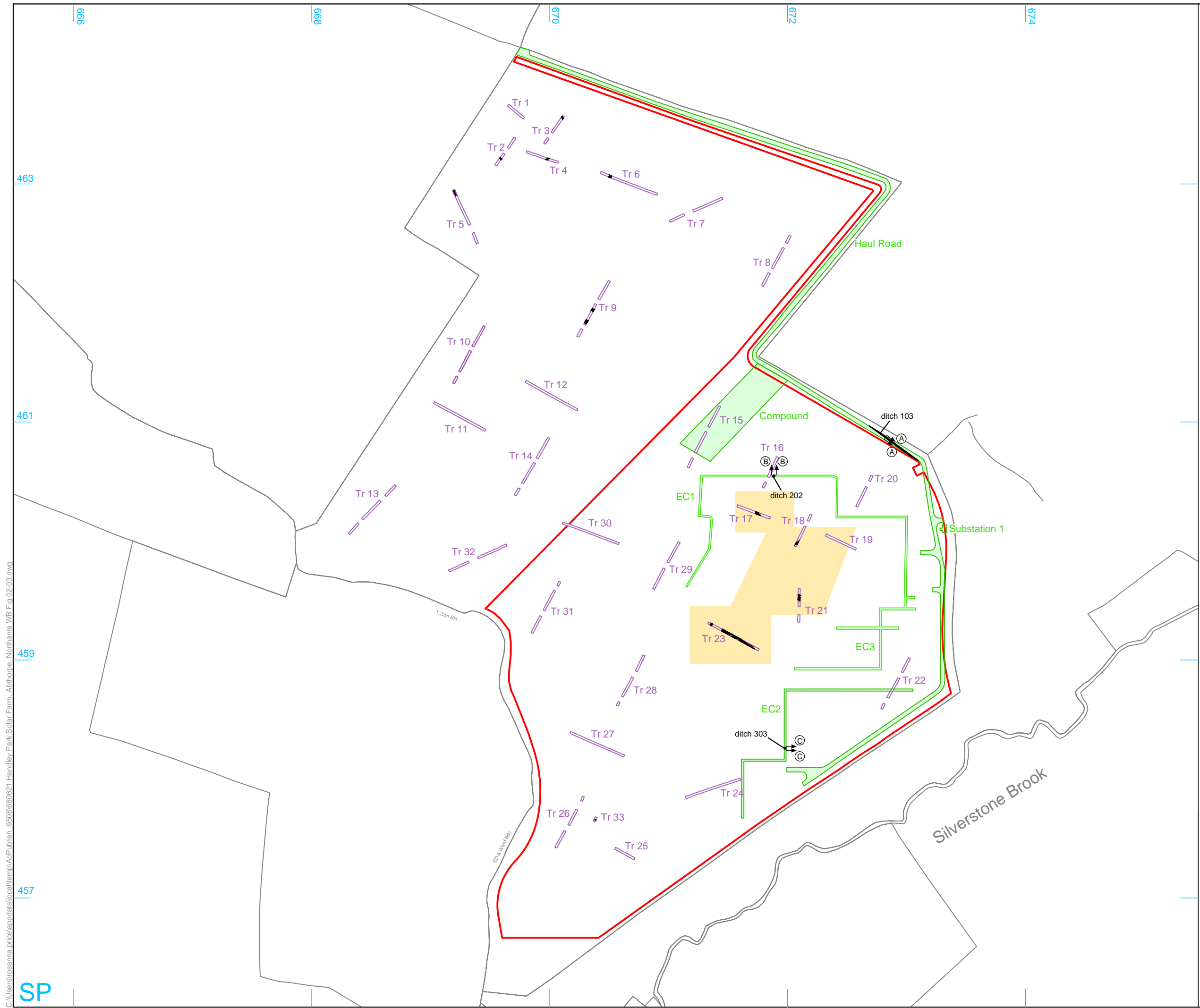

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PROJECT TITLE
 Handley Park, Abthorpe,
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FIGURE TITLE
 Site location plan

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- site
- area of observed groundworks
- 'no dig' zone
- evaluation trench (CA 2014)
- archaeological feature
- section location



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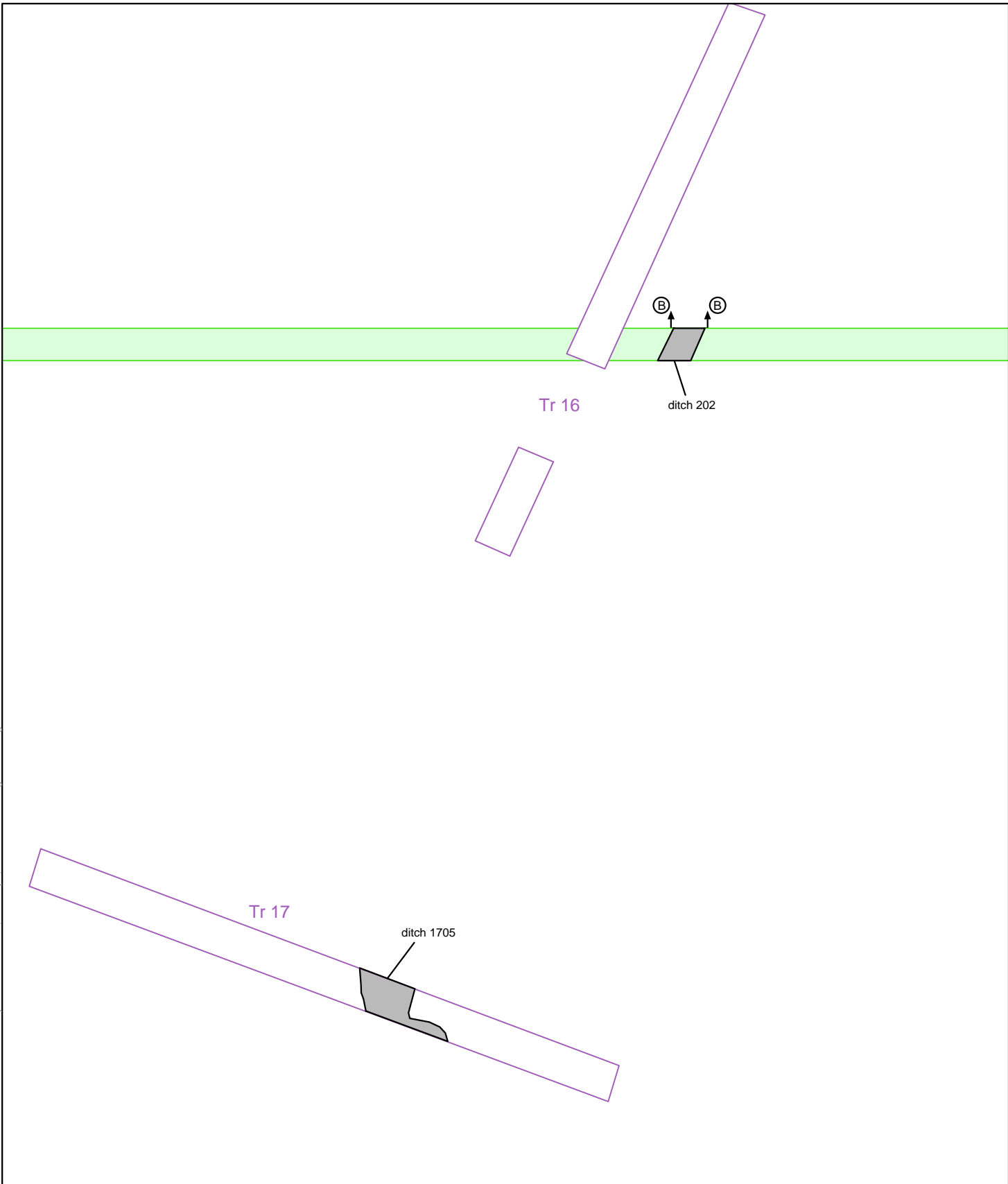
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



FIGURE TITLE
 Trench plan, showing archaeological
 features

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SP



-  area of observed groundworks
-  evaluation trench (CA 2014)
-  archaeological feature
-  section location



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PROJECT TITLE
**Handley Park, Abthorpe,
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FIGURE TITLE
**Trench plan, showing ditch 202 in
 relation to ditch 1705**



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4

4 Ditch 103 crossing the route of the haul road looking north east (1m scale)



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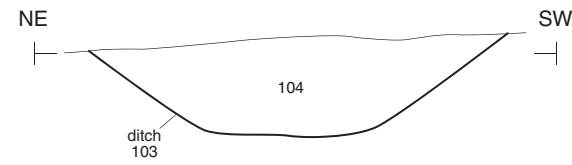
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FIGURE TITLE

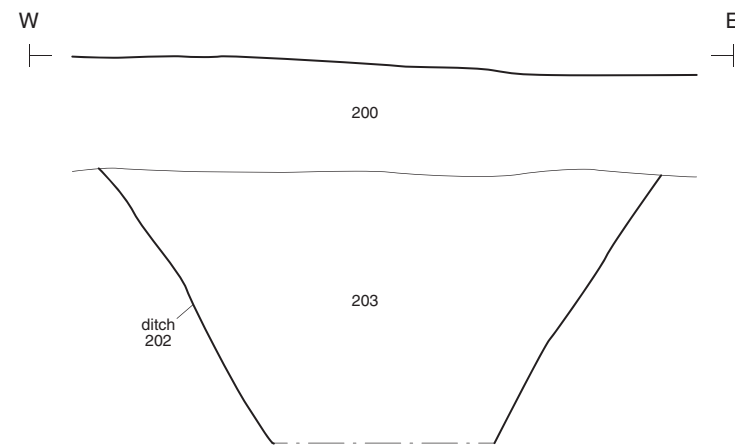
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Section AA

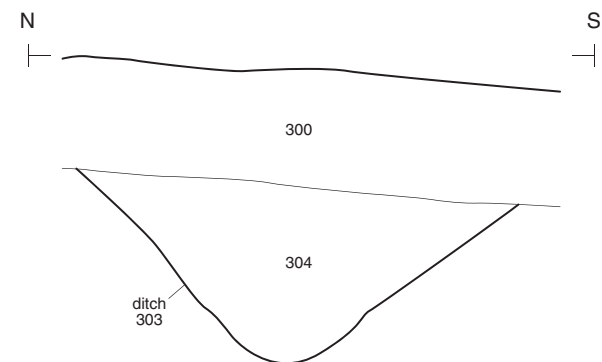


Section BB

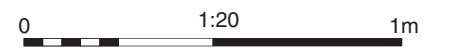


Ditch 202, looking north (scale 1m)

Section CC



Ditch 303, looking east (scale 1m)




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FIGURE TITLE
 Sections and photographs