

**Land off Ermin Street  
Blunsdon  
Swindon**

**Archaeological Evaluation**



*for*  
**Fairhurst (UK) Ltd**


CA Project: 4363  
CA Report: 13402

June 2013

Land off Ermin Street  
Blunsdon  
Swindon

Archaeological Evaluation

CA Project: 4363  
CA Report: 13402

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date	26 June 2013
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date	26 June 2013
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signed	
date	26 June 2013
issue	01

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## SUMMARY

<b>Project Name:</b>	Land off Ermin Street
<b>Location:</b>	Blunsdon, Swindon
<b>NGR:</b>	SU 1445 9023
<b>Type:</b>	Evaluation
<b>Date:</b>	12-14 June 2013
<b>Planning Reference:</b>	S13/0364
<b>Location of Archive:</b>	To be deposited with Swindon Museum
<b>Accession Number:</b>	SWIMG/B2013.1
<b>Site Code:</b>	ESB13

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in June 2013 at Land off Ermin Street, Blunsdon, Swindon. Twelve trenches were excavated.

Three shallow north-east/south-west aligned ditches were excavated during the evaluation, one of which contained medieval pottery. A pit containing early Roman pottery and an undated pit were also excavated. The shallow features suggest that some truncation may have taken place across the site, possibly at the time of the construction of the A419 Blunsdon By-pass.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In June 2013 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological evaluation for Fairhurst (UK) Ltd. at land off Ermin Street, Blunsdon, Swindon (centred on NGR: SU 1445 9023 Fig. 1). The evaluation was undertaken to accompany a planning application (S13/0364) submitted to Swindon Borough Council (SBC) for the construction of 57 dwellings.

1.2 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a detailed *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) produced by CA (2013) and approved by Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger, County Archaeologist, Wiltshire Council (WC), archaeological advisor to SBC. The fieldwork also followed the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (IfA 2009), *Statement of Standards and Practices Appropriate for Archaeological Fieldwork in Wiltshire* (WCC 1995), the *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage 1991) and the *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE): Project Manager's Guide* (English Heritage 2006). It was monitored by Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger, including a site visit on 13 June 2013.

### **The site**

1.3 The proposed development area encloses an area of 2.4ha of pasture land, located south-west of the historic medieval core of Blunsdon Village. Residential housing fronting Ermin Street borders the site to the north-east, pasture land lies to the north-west while the southern and western boundaries are formed by the A419 dual-carriageway. The site lies at approximately 140m AOD near the top of Blunsdon Hill.

1.4 The underlying bedrock geology of the area is mapped as Stanford Formation Limestone of the Jurassic Period with no overlying superficial deposits (BGS 2013). Limestone brash was encountered in all of the trenches excavated.

### **Archaeological background**

1.5 A desk-based assessment of the site concluded that there was no evidence for archaeological remains from within the proposed development area, although finds and features were present in the vicinity of the site (FA 2013).



- 1.6 Three Mesolithic find spots have been recorded within 1km of the site; one 410m to the south at Groundwell Ridge, one 800m to the south at Abbey Meads and one 850m to the southwest at The Grange, where a Neolithic artefact has also been recorded. A further Neolithic findspot has been recorded 700m to the west of the site. Bronze Age activity in the area is represented by two find spots at Abbey Meads, approximately 350-400m to the south of the site and at The Grange, approximately 850m to the southwest. Two undated pits are known from near Upper Widhill Farm; both contained burnt flint flakes and are likely to be of Prehistoric origin (*ibid*).
- 1.7 An Iron Age enclosure was excavated 700m to the south of the site during evaluation work at Groundwell West and a further Iron Age ditch has been identified during excavations 250m to the southeast during construction of the A419 Blunsdon Bypass. Iron Age finds were also recovered from Groundwell Ridge, 900m to the south (*ibid*).
- 1.8 The nearest identified evidence of Roman activity is Ermin Street, a major road linking the *civitates* of Calleva (Silchester) and Corinium (Cirencester), which runs parallel to the site, less than 50m to the north-east. A rural sanctuary (Scheduled Monument 1018496) was uncovered during building works approximately 850m to the south-west of the site. Subsequent extensive geophysical analysis and excavation of the site has revealed a complex of buildings and earthworks, including hillside terracing, four courtyards, a bathhouse and a stone-lined cistern, possibly a nymphaeum (EH 2006). Two hoards, one of third century coins and the other of mid-4th-century silver plate were excavated at the site. A Roman trackway is also known from Abbey Meads, approximately 550m to the south of the site, along with a number of finds. Other evidence for Roman activity includes a ditch located only approximately 150m southeast of the site and finds spots 400m to the south and 80m south-west, and from The Grange (FA 2013).
- 1.9 There is evidence for Saxon activity in the form of human burials at Abbey Meads, approximately 450m to the southwest of the site, suggesting the presence of a settlement in the near vicinity. A Saxon findspot is also known from The Grange (*ibid*).



### **Archaeological objectives**

- 1.10 The objectives of the evaluation are to provide information about the archaeological resource within the site, including its presence/absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality, in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (IfA 2009). This information will enable SBC to identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset, consider the impact of the proposed development upon it, and to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the development proposal, in line with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012).

### **Methodology**

- 1.11 The fieldwork comprised the excavation of 12 trenches. Trench 1 was 25m long and 1.8m wide, all of the other trenches were 50m long and 1.8m, in the locations shown on the attached plan (Fig. 2). With the approval of Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger (WC) Trench 1 was shortened and the positions of Trenches 2 and 3 were moved to the east to avoid encroaching within a 30m exclusion area surrounding the location of a badger sett in the north-west of the site. Trenches 10 and 12 were moved slightly to the north to avoid a modern make-up layer excavated in Trench 3. Trenches were set out on OS National Grid (NGR) co-ordinates using Leica GPS and surveyed in accordance with CA Technical Manual 4 *Survey Manual* (2012).
- 1.12 All trenches were excavated by mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket. All machine excavation was undertaken under constant archaeological supervision to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon or the natural substrate, whichever was encountered first. Where archaeological deposits were encountered they were excavated by hand in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: *Fieldwork Recording Manual* (2007).
- 1.13 Deposits were assessed for their palaeoenvironmental potential in accordance with CA Technical Manual 2: *The Taking and Processing of Environmental and Other Samples from Archaeological Sites* (2003) and no deposits were identified that required sampling. All artefacts recovered were processed in accordance with Technical Manual 3 *Treatment of Finds Immediately after Excavation* (1995).
- 1.14 The archive and artefacts from the evaluation are currently held by CA at their offices in Kemble. Subject to the agreement of the legal landowner the artefacts will be deposited with Swindon Museum under accession number SWIMG/B2013.1,



along with the site archive. A summary of information from this project, set out within Appendix C, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

## **2. RESULTS (FIGS 2 & 3)**

2.1 This section provides an overview of the evaluation results; detailed summaries of the recorded contexts and finds are to be found in Appendices A and B respectively.

2.2 The natural geological substrate comprised limestone brash set within a yellow clay matrix. Three ditches, two pits and two postholes were cut into the limestone. At the south of the site the natural was overlain by made ground layers formed during landscaping for the A419 Blunsdon by-pass. A thin layer of subsoil, never more than 0.1m thick, was overlain by a 0.2m–0.35m thick layer of topsoil.

2.3 Trenches 1, 2, 5, 8, 9, 10 and 12 were devoid of any archaeological features.

### ***Trench 3***

2.4 Ditch 304 was identified as a continuation of ditch 404 and was unexcavated in this trench.

### ***Trench 4***

2.5 The limestone brash 402 was cut by a north-east/south-west aligned ditch and two postholes. Ditch 404 was 1.27m wide and was heavily truncated, only surviving to a depth of 0.1m. Its fill, 403, had the appearance of an infill formed by the natural accumulation of silty deposits and yielded two sherds of 11th to 13th-century pottery. Postholes 406 and 408 were both square in plan, 0.2m–0.4m in length and 0.2m in depth. The postholes contained no dating evidence, however both fills were similar in composition to made ground layer 302, indicating that they may pertain to modern construction and landscaping activity associated with the A419.

### ***Trench 6***

2.6 The limestone brash 602 was cut by a pit and two north-east/south-west aligned ditches. Pit 608 was sub-circular in plan and extended outside the trench to the south. The pit was 0.92m wide and only the base survived. A heavily abraded fragment of 1st-century AD pottery was recovered from the fill (607). Pit 608 was cut by ditch 606, which was 0.7m wide and 0.04m deep. Its fill, 605, was a deposit of





orange-brown silty clay. Ditch 603 was 0.3m wide and 0.04m deep. It also contained an orange-brown silty clay fill (604). No dating evidence was recovered from either ditch.

### **Trench 11**

- 2.7 Pit 1103 was sub-circular in plan 0.95m wide and 0.2m deep, extending outside the trench to the west. Its orange-brown silty clay fill, 1104, contained no dating evidence.

### **The finds**

- 2.8 Artefactual material consisting of pottery of Roman to post-medieval date was recorded from three deposits (appendix B).
- 2.9 A heavily abraded, sherd of Savernake-type ware was recorded from pit fill 607 (fill of 608). It is unfeathered and dateable to the production span for this type, across the mid 1st to the earlier 2nd century AD. The degree of abrasion is such that it suggests that the sherd may be re-deposited.
- 2.10 Pottery of medieval date was recorded as two lightly abraded sherds (10 g) from ditch fill 403 (fill of feature 404). Both occur in the same unglazed oolitic limestone fabric, a type common locally and dateable across the later 11th to 13th or early 14th centuries. One (rim) sherd is identifiable as coming from a jar with a simple, everted rim.
- 2.11 The single post-medieval dated sherd was recorded from Trench 1 subsoil deposit 101. It is a bodysherd in an internally-glazed earthenware, possibly originating from kilns at Ashton Keynes, Gloucestershire. It is broadly dateable across the later 16th to 18th centuries.

## **3. DISCUSSION**

- 3.1 The presence of very limited medieval activity on site, evidenced by the pottery recovered from ditch 404, confirms the conclusion of the *Archaeological Assessment* that the site was likely to have been part of an agricultural landscape on the fringes of nearby settlements at this time (FA 2013). Excavations during construction of the



A419 identified a system of Roman fields and enclosures on a north/south - east/west axis, but no medieval ditches (Brett and McSloy 2011). The undated ditches on a similar alignment to 404 could combine to form part of a medieval field system on a different axis to that of the earlier Roman one.

3.2 Pit 608, containing a single sherd of 1st-century AD pottery may indicate that the Roman activity in the area, identified in the excavations ahead of the construction of the A419, did extend into the evaluation area (*Ibid*). However the shallowness of the feature and the heavily abraded nature of the pottery make this suggestion tenuous without further evidence.

3.3 The topsoil layer observed on site was noticeably thin and homogenous in nature, despite the land having been in agricultural use at least since the 1837 Tithe Map (FA 2013). The subsoil layers recorded in some of the trenches are very thin and ill-defined and may be better understood as a diffuse horizon between the topsoil and the limestone brash. The thin topsoil and shallow features give the site the appearance of being landscaped, possibly at the time of the construction of the A419, and raises the possibility that archaeological remains on site have been lost due to this truncation.

#### 4. CA PROJECT TEAM

Fieldwork was undertaken by Christopher Leonard and Charlotte Haines assisted by Peter Busby, Hazel O'Neill and Alex Thomson. The report was written by Christopher Leonard. The finds report was written by Ed McSloy. The illustrations were prepared by Daniel Bashford. The archive has been compiled by Christopher Leonard, and prepared for deposition by James Johnson. The project was managed for CA by Richard Young.

#### 5. REFERENCES

BGS (British Geological Survey) 2013 *Geology of Britain Viewer* [http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geology\\_viewer\\_google/googleviewer.html](http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geology_viewer_google/googleviewer.html) Accessed 17 June 2013.



Brett, M. and McSloy, E. 2011 'Prehistoric pits and Roman enclosures on the A419 Blunsdon Bypass, Blunsdon St Andrew: excavations 2006–7' *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine* **104**, 95–114.

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2013 *Land off Ermin Street, Blunsdon, Swindon: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation*.

DCLG (Department of Communities and Local Government) 2012 *National Planning Policy Framework*.

EH (English Heritage) 2006 *Groundwell Ridge Roman Villa, Swindon, Wiltshire: Excavations 2003–2005*. Research Department Report Series **77**.

FA (Foundations Archaeology) 2013 *Land off Ermin Street, Blunsdon, Borough of Swindon, Wiltshire: Archaeological Assessment*. Report No. **875**.



## APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Trench No.	Context No.	Type	Fill of	Context interpretation	Description	L (m)	W (m)	Depth/thickness (m)	Spot-date
1	100	Layer		Topsoil	Dark brown clay-silt	25	1.8	0.24	
1	101	Layer		Subsoil	Mid greyish brown silty clay	25	1.8	0.12	
1	102	Layer		Natural	Limestone brash	25	1.8		
2	200	Layer		Topsoil	Dark brown clay-silt	50	1.8	0.15	
2	201	Layer		Subsoil	Mid yellowish brown silty clay	50	1.8	0.1	
2	202	Layer		Natural	Limestone brash	50	1.8		
3	300	Layer		Topsoil	Dark brown clay-silt	50	1.8	0.19	
3	301	Layer		Made ground	Mid yellowish brown clay with abundant small and medium limestone brash pieces-redeposited natural.	50	1.8	0.22	
3	302	Layer		Made ground	Dark brownish grey clay containing tarmac, CBM and charcoal	50	1.8	0.23	
3	303	Layer		Natural	Limestone brash	50	1.8		
3	304	Cut		Ditch	Continuation of ditch 404	>1.8	1.38	Unexc.	
3	305	Fill	304	Ditch fill	Same as 403	>1.8	1.38	Unexc.	
4	400	Layer		Topsoil	Dark brown clay-silt	50	1.8	0.35	
4	401	Void							
4	402	Layer		Natural	Limestone brash	50	1.8		
4	403	Fill	404	Ditch fill	Mid yellowish grey silty clay with occasional small stones	>1.8	1.27	0.1	C11-13
4	404	Cut		Ditch	NE/SW aligned. Linear in plan with gently sloping sides and a concave base. Heavily truncated	>1.8	1.27	0.1	
4	405	Fill	406	Posthole fill	Mid greyish brown silty clay with frequent gravel	0.23	0.2	0.21	
4	406	Cut		Posthole	Square in plan with vertical sides and a flat base	0.23	0.2	0.21	
4	407	Fill	408	Posthole fill	Dark greyish brown silty clay. Contained charcoal and burnt clay	0.39	0.36	0.07	
4	408	Cut		Posthole	Square in plan with vertical sides and a flat base	0.39	0.36	0.07	
5	500	Layer		Topsoil	Dark brown clay-silt	50	1.8	0.15	
5	501	Layer		Subsoil	Mid yellowish brown clay	50	1.8	0.1	
5	502	Layer		Natural	Limestone brash	50	1.8		
6	600	Layer		Topsoil	Dark brown clay-silt	50	1.8	0.2	
6	601	Layer		Subsoil	Mid yellowish brown clay	50	1.8	0.1	
6	602	Layer		Natural	Limestone brash	50	1.8		
6	603	Cut		Ditch	NE/SW aligned. Linear in plan with gently sloping sides and a concave base. Heavily truncated	>3	0.3	0.1	
6	604	Fill	603	Ditch fill	Light orange-brown silty clay with frequent small limestone pieces	>3	0.3	0.1	
6	605	Fill	606	Ditch fill	Light orange-brown silty clay with occasional small limestone pieces	>2	0.7	0.04	
6	606	Cut		Ditch	NE/SW aligned. Linear in plan with gently sloping sides and a flat base. Heavily truncated	>2	0.7	0.04	
6	607	Fill	608	Pit fill	Mid orange-brown silty clay with occasional small limestone pieces	1.01	0.92	0.09	MC1-C2

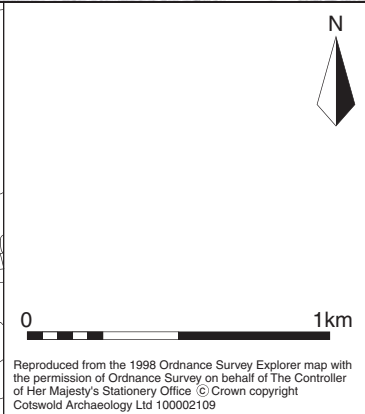
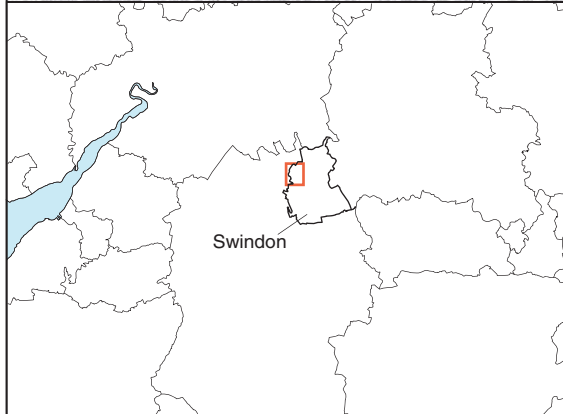
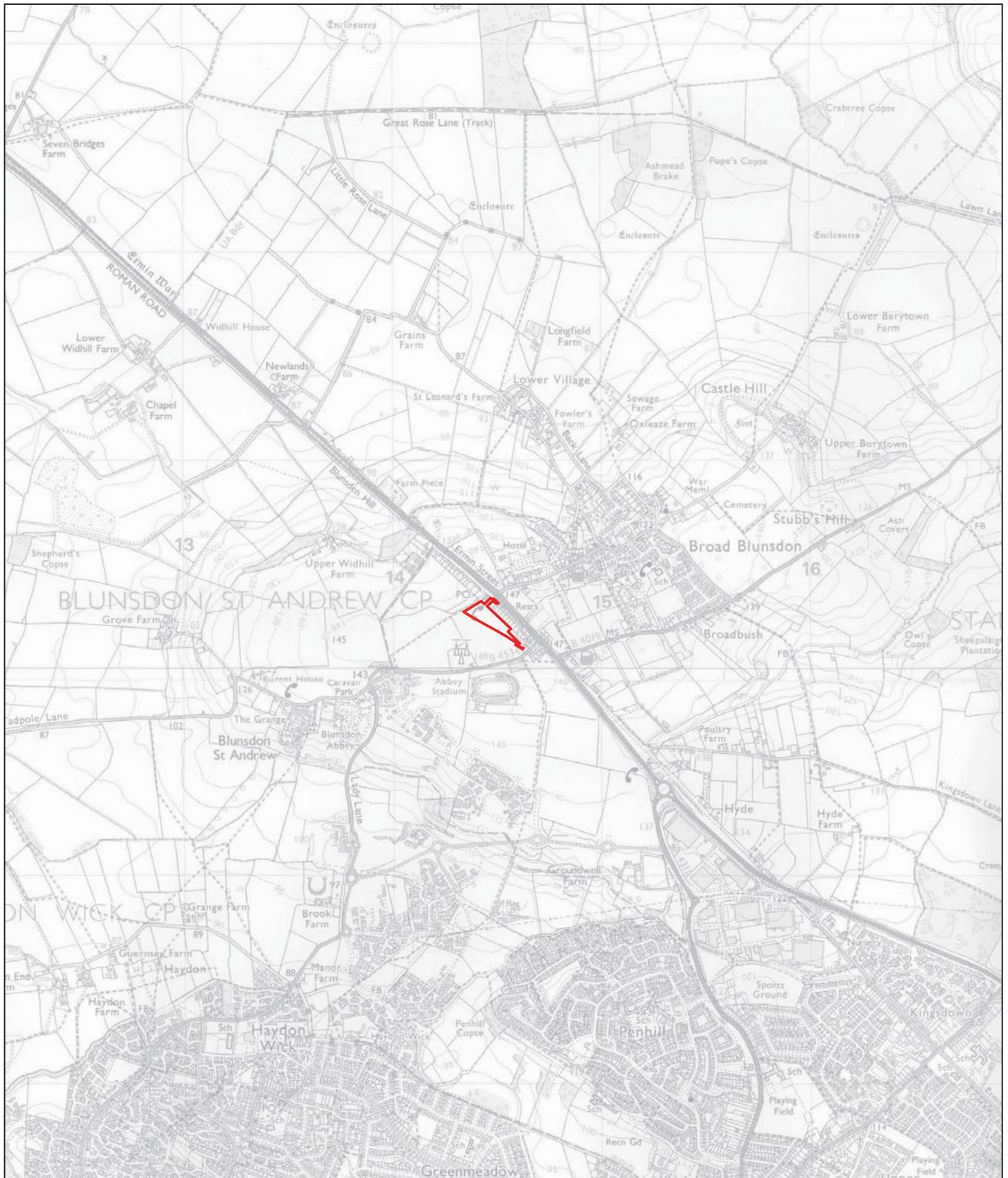
6	608	Cut		Pit	Sub-circular in plan with irregular sides and base. Heavily truncated	1.01	0.92	0.09	
7	700	Layer		Topsoil	Dark brown clay-silt	50	1.8	0.25	
7	701	Layer		Subsoil	Mid yellowish brown silty clay	50	1.8	0.1	
7	702	Layer		Natural	Limestone brash	50	1.8		
7	703	Layer		Made ground	Same as 302. Only present at SW end of trench	1	1.8	Unexc.	
8	800	Layer		Topsoil	Dark brown clay-silt	50	1.8	0.25	
8	801	Layer		Natural	Limestone brash	50	1.8		
9	900	Layer		Topsoil	Dark brown clay-silt	50	1.8	0.2	
9	901	Layer		Subsoil	Mid yellowish brown silty clay	50	1.8	0.1	
9	902	Layer		Natural	Limestone brash	50	1.8		
10	1000	Layer		Topsoil	Dark brown clay-silt	50	1.8	0.16	
10	1001	Layer		Subsoil	Mid yellowish brown silty clay	50	1.8	0.07	
10	1002	Layer		Natural	Limestone brash	50	1.8		
11	1100	Layer		Topsoil	Dark brown clay-silt	50	1.8	0.2	
11	1101	Layer		Made ground	Mid yellowish brown clay-silt. Present only at S end of trench	3	1.8	0.25	
11	1102	Layer		Natural	Limestone brash	50	1.8		
11	1103	Cut		Pit	Circular in plan with moderately steep sides and concave base. Extends outside trench to west	0.95	>0.4	0.2	
11	1104	Fill	1103	Pit fill	Mid yellowish brown silty clay with occasional limestone pieces	0.95	>0.4	0.2	
12	1200	Layer		Topsoil	Dark brown clay-silt	50	1.8	0.11	
12	1201	Layer		Natural	Limestone brash	50	1.8		


**APPENDIX B: THE FINDS**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Weight(g)</b>	<b>Spot-date</b>
101	Post-medieval pottery: glazed earthenware	1	7	-
403	Medieval pottery: oolitic limestone-tempered	2	10	C11-C13
607	Roman pottery: Savernake type grogged greyware	1	12	MC1-C2

## APPENDIX C: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project Name	Land off Ermin Street	
Short description (250 words maximum)	<p>An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in June 2013 at Land off Ermin Street, Blunsdon, Swindon. Twelve trenches were excavated.</p> <p>Three shallow north-east/south-west aligned ditches were excavated during the evaluation, one of which contained medieval pottery. A pit containing early Roman pottery and an undated pit were also excavated. The shallow features suggest that some truncation may have taken place across the site, possibly at the time of the construction of the A419 Blunsdon By-pass.</p>	
Project dates	12–14 June 2013	
Project type	Field Evaluation	
Previous work	Archaeological Assessment (Foundations Archaeology 2013)	
Future work	Unknown	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site Location	Blunsdon, Swindon	
Study area (M <sup>2</sup> /ha)	2.4ha	
Site co-ordinates (8 Fig Grid Reference)	SU 1445 9023	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Brief originator	Wiltshire Council	
Project Design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Richard Young	
Project Supervisor	Christopher Leonard	
MONUMENT TYPE		
None		
SIGNIFICANT FINDS		
None		
PROJECT ARCHIVES		
	Intended final location of archive	Content
Physical	Swindon Museum and Art Gallery/ SWIMG/B2013.1	Ceramics
Paper	Swindon Museum and Art Gallery/ SWIMG/B2013.1	Context sheets
Digital	Swindon Museum and Art Gallery/ SWIMG/B2013.1	Database, digital photos
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2013 <i>Land off Ermin Street, Blunsdon, Swindon: Archaeological Evaluation</i> . CA typescript report <b>13402</b>		




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**PROJECT TITLE**  
 Land off Ermin Street, Blunsdon, Swindon

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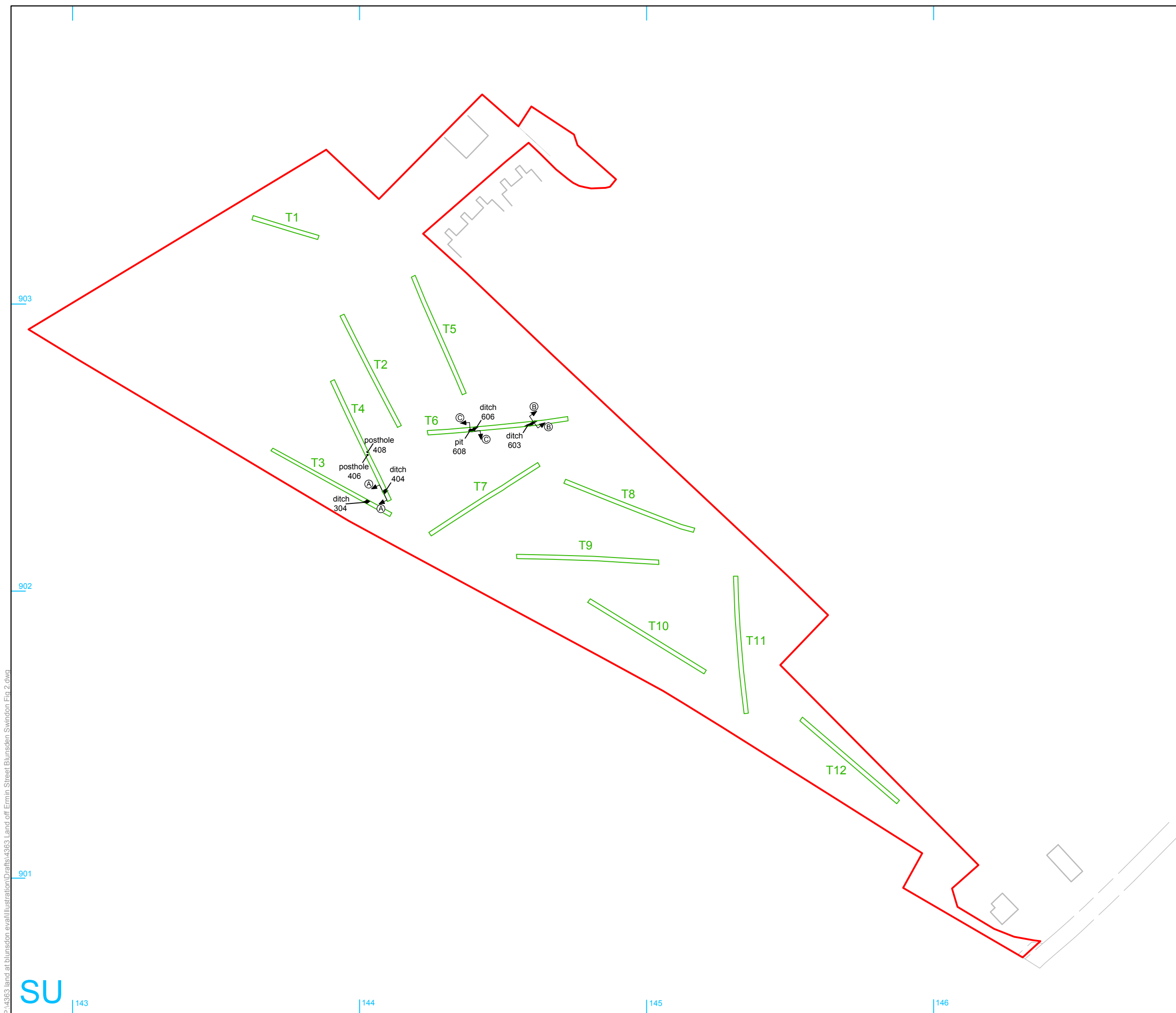
**FIGURE TITLE**  
 Site location plan

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PROJECT NO.	4363	DATE	25-06-2013	FIGURE NO.
DRAWN BY	DJB	REVISION	00	1
APPROVED BY	PJM	SCALE@A4	1:25,000	

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- ▬ site
- ▬ evaluation trench
- archaeological feature



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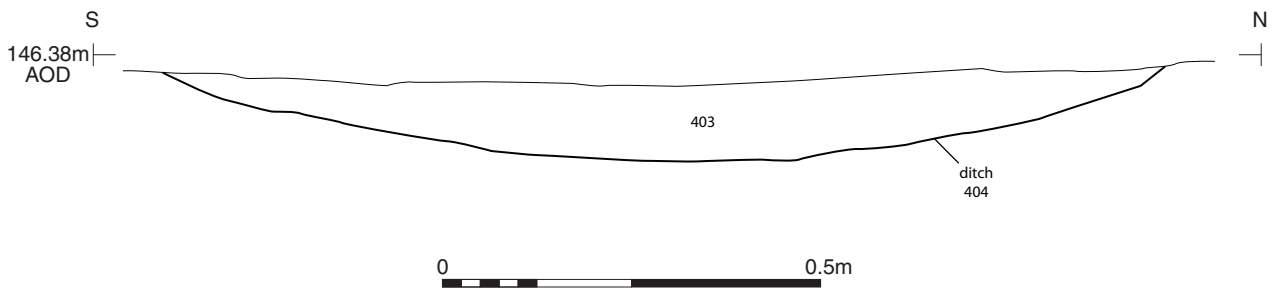
**PROJECT TITLE**  
 Land off Ermin Street, Blunsden, Swin

**FIGURE TITLE**  
 Trench location plan, showing archaeological features

PROJECT NO.	4363	DATE	25-06-2012	FIGURE	
DRAWN BY	DJB	REVISION	00		
APPROVED BY	PJM	SCALE@A3	1:1250		<b>2</b>

P:\4363 land at blunsden eval\illustration\Drawings\4363 Land off Ermin Street Blunsden Swindon Fig 2.dwg

Section AA



North-west facing section of ditch 404 (scale 1m)



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PROJECT TITLE

Land off Ermin Street, Blunson, Swindon

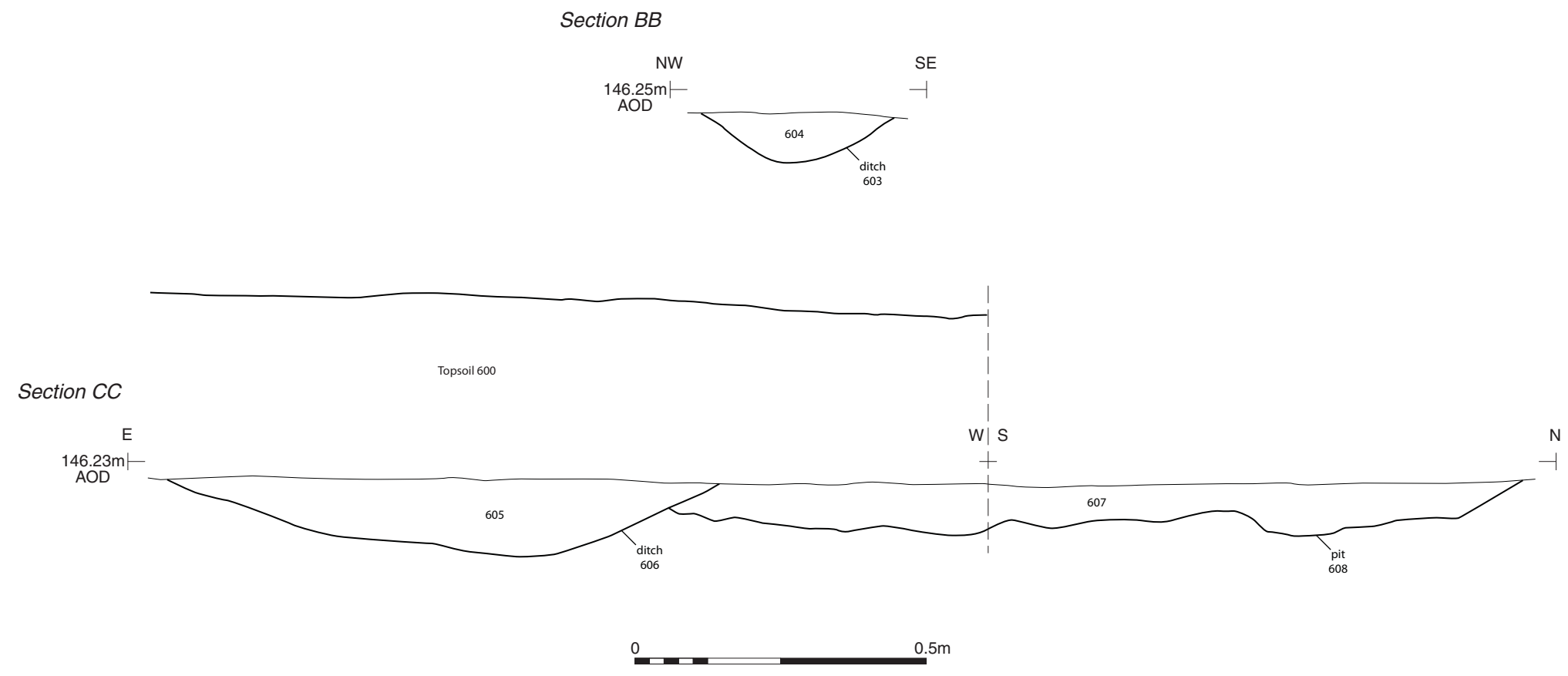
FIGURE TITLE

Section and photograph

PROJECT NO. 4363 DATE 25-06-2013  
DRAWN BY DJB REVISION 00  
APPROVED BY PJM SCALE@A4 1:10

FIGURE NO.

3



North facing section of ditch 606 and pit 608 (scale 1m)

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PROJECT TITLE  
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FIGURE TITLE  
**Sections and photographs**

PROJECT NO. 4363	DATE 25-06-2013	FIGURE NO.
DRAWN BY DJB	REVISION 00	<b>4</b>
APPROVED BY PJM	SCALE@A3 1:10	