

Merston Solar Farm (Phase 1) Land at Merston West Sussex

Archaeological Watching Brief



for
Solar Century

CA Project: 770302
CA Report: 16002

January 2016



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SUMMARY

Project Name: Land at Merston, West Sussex
Location: Merston, West Sussex
NGR: SU 9014 0156
Type: Watching Brief
Date: 10 Nov-2 Dec 2015
Planning Reference: 14/02814/FUL
Location of Archive: The Novium (Chichester District Museum)
Site Code: MER 15

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology during groundworks associated with development of a solar farm at Merston Solar Farm, Land at Merston, West Sussex

No features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed during groundworks, and no artefactual material pre-dating the modern period was recovered.



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In November and December 2015 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological watching brief for Solar Century at Merston Solar Farm, Land at Merston, West Sussex (centred on NGR: SU 9014 0156; Fig. 1). The watching brief was undertaken to fulfil condition 12 attached to planning approval (Planning ref: 14/02814/FUL) for the development of a solar farm at the site. The current watching brief was undertaken during construction of the Phase 1 solar farm within the southern part of the site area only (Fig 2 and Drg No.: 001-100 Rev: D). The northern Phase 2 solar farm site (Drg No.: 001-100 Rev: C) which is part of the same planning approval will be subject to separate monitoring and recording in due course during the course of the construction of the Phase 2 solar farm in this part of the site.
- 1.2 The watching brief was carried out in accordance with a *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) produced by CA (2015) and submitted to Chichester District Council the local planning authority. The fieldwork also followed *Standard and guidance: Archaeological Watching Brief* (ClfA 2014).

The site

- 1.3 The proposed entire Phase 1 and Phase 2 development site is 25ha in size, with the area within the fence 21ha, and is located to the north-west of Bognor Regis and North Bersted, and to the south-east of Merston. The site comprises agricultural land, and currently contains two fields. These two fields are separated by a lane, which falls within the site area. This watching brief is focused on the southern (Phase 1) area only of c.10ha. The northern Phase 2 area is to be subject to a separate action and will be subject to separate archaeological monitoring and recording in due course.
- 1.4 The proposed solar site is situated at around 5m AOD, and is relatively flat though with slight undulations within the south-western field, running perpendicular to the lane separating the fields. Hedgerows run along the majority of the site boundaries, and are present in varied states. The hedgerow running along the south-western site boundary has numerous gaps, and the north-western and northern site boundaries are in general not demarcated by hedgerows.

- 1.5 The surrounding land within the study area is generally flat, and characterised by a mix of arable land, with numerous large scale nursery buildings in the area, and associated expanses of polythene tunnels covering the fields to the north and east of the site providing an environment for cultivation. Small scattered settlements also lie within the surrounding landscape, with larger scale settlement areas such as Bognor Regis and North Bersted to the south-east.
- 1.6 The solid geology of the proposed development site comprises Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation, Seaford Chalk Formation, Newhaven Chalk Formation and Culver Chalk Formation bedrocks. The site is also covered by superficial undifferentiated River Terrace Deposits of sand, silt and clay (BGS Online Viewer, consulted February 2014).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A full Desk Based Assessment was produced by Cotswold Archaeology (2014) which contains a detailed description of the historic environment. Below is a summary of its findings.
- 2.2 The proposed development site, containing river terrace deposits and lying within an area known to contain evidence of raised beaches, holds potential for Palaeolithic remains. There is some evidence for Neolithic domestic activity within the study area, but features relating to this activity have not been observed by archaeological evaluations to extend toward the site. On the basis of evidence from the surrounding area it is unlikely that the site formed a focus for Bronze Age settlement activity and probably lay within the agricultural landscape during this period. The proximity of Bronze Age burial remains to the site suggests some potential for comparable remains to be present within the site. Iron Age remains from within the study area indicate that the site lay within an agricultural landscape during this period.
- 2.3 During the Romano-British period the site is likely to have lain within an agricultural landscape, with small scattered farmsteads within the vicinity. Peripheral evidence relating to the settlement area at Newlands Nursery may extend to within the western part of the site. The site also has potential for agricultural remains, and burials identified within the area may also suggest some potential for comparable remains of this type within the site.

2.4 From the medieval period onward the site is likely to have been characterised by agricultural activities. Remains of a modern hovel and barn may survive within the western part of the site, shown on the Tithe map. Any such remains would be of limited heritage value. The hedgerows lining the north-eastern and south-western site boundaries have statutory protection under the 1997 Hedgerow Regulations. No other known heritage assets lie within the site.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 The objectives of the archaeological works 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 followed the methodology set out within the WSI (CA 2015). An archaeologist was present during intrusive groundworks for the excavation of cable trenches and sub stations. Access roads and the site compound were constructed on the existing ground surface with no below ground excavation being undertaken. Non-archaeologically significant deposits were removed by the contractors under archaeological supervision. Where mechanical excavators were used, these were equipped with a toothless bucket. (Fig. 2).

4.2 Where archaeological deposits were encountered written, graphic and photographic records were compiled in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: *Fieldwork Recording Manual*.

4.3 The archive and artefacts from the evaluation are currently held by CA at their offices in Andover. Subject to the agreement of the legal landowner the archive will

be deposited with The Novium (Chichester District Museum). A summary of information from this project, set out within Appendix B, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

5. RESULTS (FIGS 2-4)

- 5.1 The natural geological substrate consisting of mid yellow clay was revealed at an average depth of 0.3m below present ground level. This was directly overlain by a layer of topsoil averaging 0.3m in thickness. No subsoil was present.
- 5.2 No archaeological features or deposits were found to be present during the groundworks and, despite visual scanning of spoil, no artefactual material pre-dating the modern period was observed.

6. DISCUSSION

- 6.1 Despite the archaeological potential of the application area (see archaeological background above) the (Phase 1) watching brief identified no archaeological remains within the area of observed groundworks. The absence of archaeological deposits may indicate that structural remains associated with prehistoric, Iron Age and Romano-British, and medieval agricultural settlements known to occur in its environs either do not extend as far as or were not exposed by the development. This may be due to the dispersed agricultural character of the area.

7. CA PROJECT TEAM

Fieldwork was undertaken by Ray Kennedy and Jeremy Clutterbuck assisted. The report was written by Ray Kennedy. The illustrations were prepared by Leo Heatley. The archive has been compiled by Ray Kennedy, and prepared for deposition by Hazel O'Neill. The project was managed for CA by Damian De Rosa

8. REFERENCES

BGS (British Geological Survey) 2015 *Geology of Britain Viewer* <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> Accessed 5th January 2015

Cotswold Archaeology 2014 'Land at Merston, West Sussex: Heritage Desk Based Assessment' Unpublished Client Report

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2015 *Land at Merston, West Sussex: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*



APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Trench No.	Context No.	Type	Fill of	Context interpretation	Description	L (m)	W (m)	Depth /thickness (m)
1	101	Layer		Topsoil	Mid grey moderately compact clay with freq. gravel inclusions	N/A	1.9	0-0.30
1	102	Layer		Natural	Mid yellow clay	N/A	1.9	0.30+
2	201	Layer		Topsoil	Mid grey moderately compact clay with freq. gravel inclusions	N/A	1.9	0-0.30
2	202	Layer		Natural	Mid yellow clay	N/A	1.9	0.30+
3	301	Layer		Topsoil	Mid grey moderately compact clay with freq. gravel inclusions	N/A	0.60	0-0.30
3	302	Layer		Natural	Mid yellow clay	N/A	0.60	0.30+
4	401	Layer		Topsoil	Mid grey moderately compact clay with freq. gravel inclusions	N/A	0.60	0-0.30
4	402	Layer		Natural	Mid yellow clay	N/A	0.60	0.30+

APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project Name	Merston Solar Farm, Land at Merston, West Sussex	
Short description	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology during groundworks associated with development of a solar farm at Land at Merston, West Sussex No features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed during groundworks, and no artefactual material pre-dating the modern period was recovered	
Project dates	November and December 2015	
Project type	Watching Brief	
Previous work	Desk Based Assessment	
Future work	None	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site Location	Merston Solar Farm, Chichester, West Sussex, PO20 1LL	
Study area (M ² /ha)	25ha	
Site co-ordinates	SU 9014 0156	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Brief originator		
Project Design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Damian De Rosa	
Project Supervisor	Ray Kennedy	
MONUMENT TYPE	None	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS	None	
PROJECT ARCHIVES		
	Intended final location of archive (museum/Accession no.)	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical		None
Paper	The Novium (Chichester District Museum).	Trench sheets, Photo Index
Digital	The Novium (Chichester District Museum).	Digital photos
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Add reference this report only, for example: CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2016 <i>Land at Merston, West Sussex: Archaeological Watching Brief</i> . CA typescript report 16002 . Project No. 770302		

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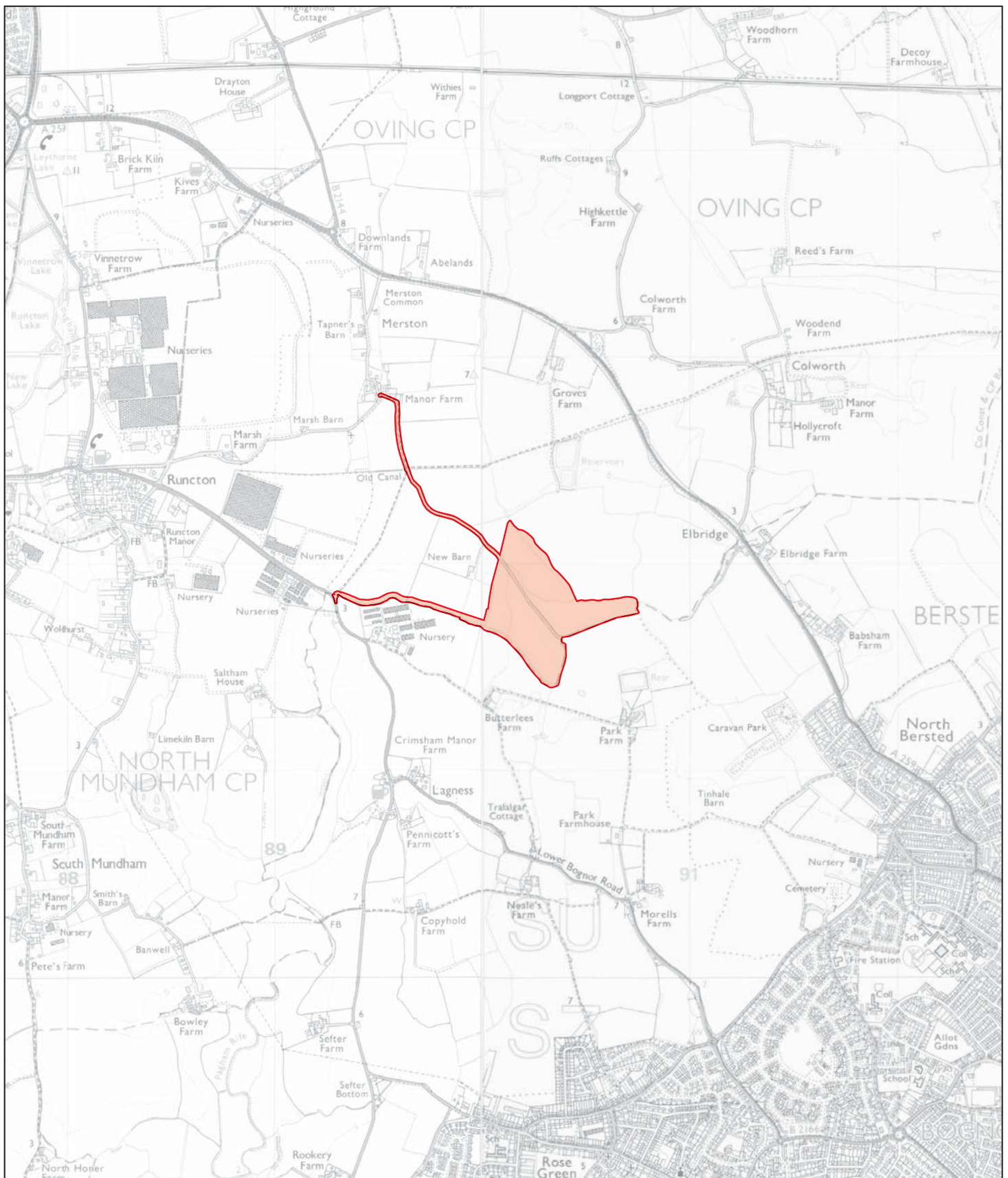
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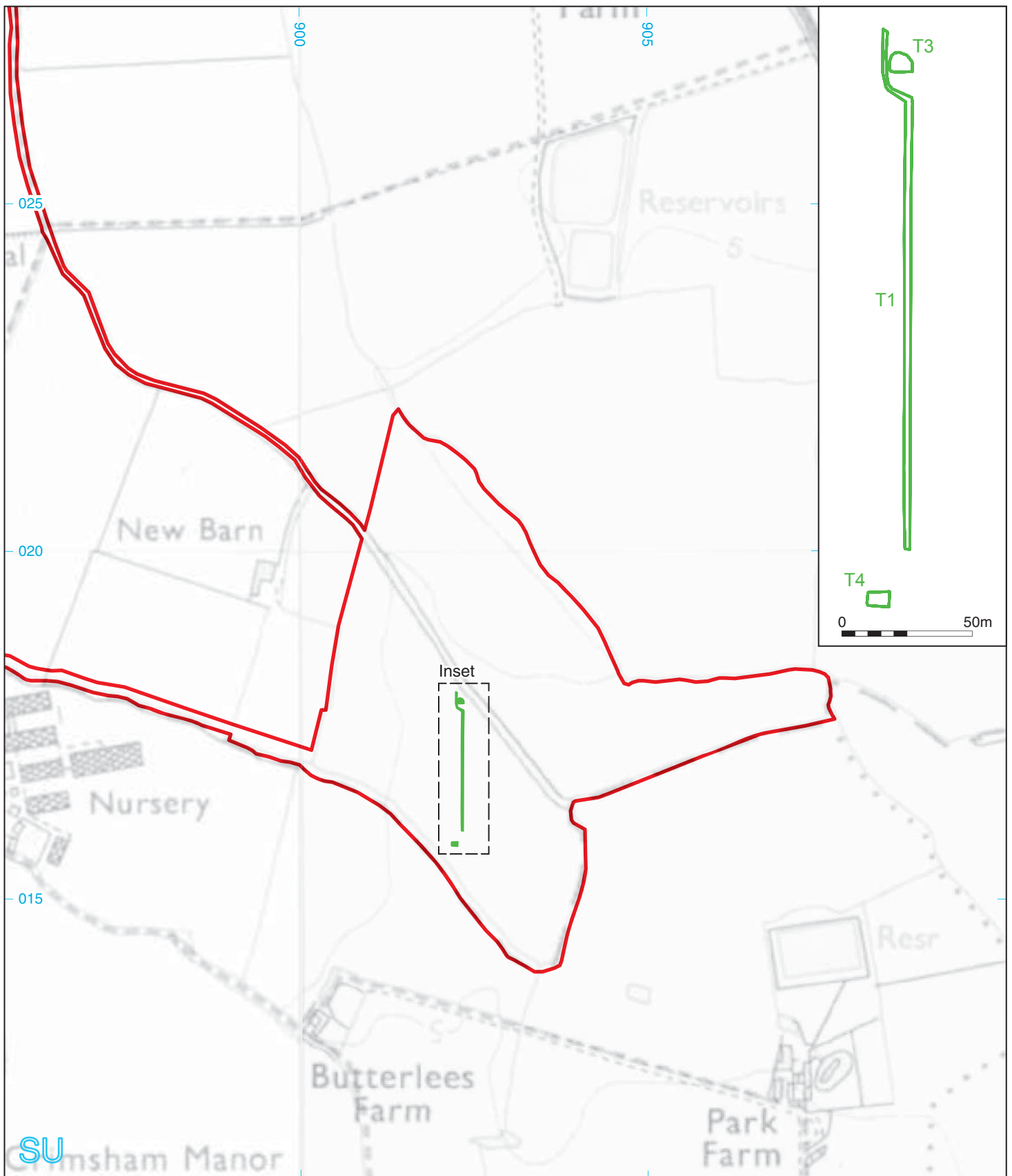
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PROJECT TITLE
 Land at Merston, West Sussex

FIGURE TITLE
 Site location plan

DRAWN BY LJB	PROJECT NO. 770302	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY DJB	DATE 08/01/16	
APPROVED BY DDR	SCALE@A4 1:25,000	1



- site boundary
- observed groundworks



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PROJECT TITLE

Land at Merston, West Sussex

FIGURE TITLE

Site showing location of observed groundworks

DRAWN BY L J H	PROJECT NO. 770302	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY D J B	DATE 08/01/16	2
APPROVED BY D D R	SCALE@A4 1:7500 & 1:2000	

0 250m



3

3 Trench 3, representative section (0.5m scale)



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PROJECT TITLE

Land at Merston, West Sussex

FIGURE TITLE

Photograph

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FIGURE NO.

3



Opening up Trench 2



Post-excavation view of Trench 2



Post-excavation view of Trench 2



Post-excavation view of Trench 2



Drainage channels to drainage ditch