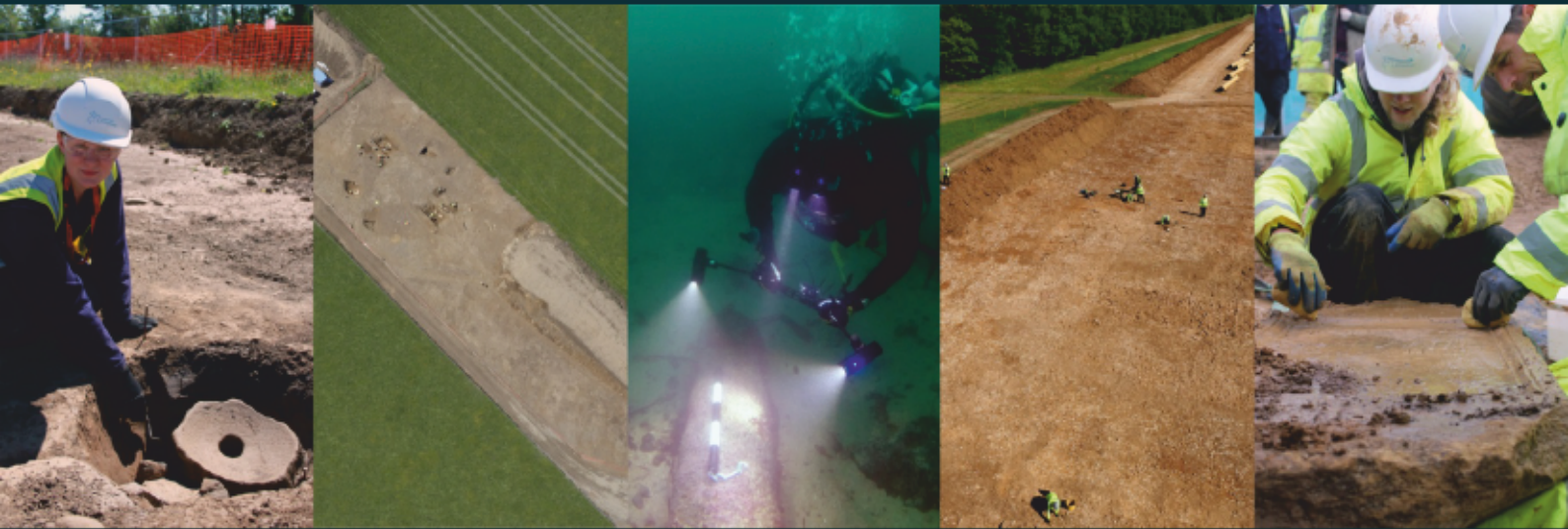




Brue Farm Highbridge Somerset

Archaeological Evaluation



for
Peter Brett Associates LLP

on behalf of
Homes England

CA Project: 880367
CA Report: 18569

December 2018



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Archaeological Evaluation

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A	15 December 2018	Jerry Austin	Derek Evans	Internal review	-	Duncan Coe

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CONTENTS

SUMMARY	2
1. INTRODUCTION.....	3
2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND.....	4
3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES.....	5
4. METHODOLOGY	6
5. RESULTS	6
6. DISCUSSION.....	7
7. CA PROJECT TEAM.....	7
8. REFERENCES.....	8
APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS	9
APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM.....	10

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Fig. 1 Site location plan (1:25,000)
- Fig. 2 Trench location plan (1:1250)
- Fig. 3 Photographs and section (1:20)



SUMMARY

Project Name:	Brue Farm
Location:	Highbridge, Somerset
NGR:	331845 146905
Type:	Evaluation
Date:	29–31 October 2018
Location of Archive:	To be deposited with the Somerset Museums Service
Site Code:	BRUE 18

In October 2018, Cotswold Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation of land at Brue Farm, Highbridge, Somerset. A total of 11 trenches was excavated within the site.

The evaluation recorded deep alluvial clay layers to a depth of at least 1.2m below the present ground level. The natural substrate was not exposed in any trench. The site is thought to have been underwater until the medieval period, and the evaluation results support this hypothesis.

A single possible ditch was recorded. This feature was cut into an alluvial layer and was sealed by a further alluvial layer. Its status as an anthropomorphic feature was uncertain; it was very shallow with a broad concave base and a sterile heavy clay fill, and may represent a former natural water channel.



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In October 2018, Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological evaluation of land at Brue Farm, Highbridge, Somerset (centred at NGR: 3318545 146905; Fig. 1).
- 1.2 The evaluation was undertaken for Peter Brett Associates LLP, who were acting on behalf of Homes England. This evaluation was undertaken only in that part of the wider development site which is currently under the ownership of Homes England.
- 1.3 The scope of the evaluation was defined in consultation with Steve Membery of the South West Heritage Trust (SWHT; the archaeological advisors to Sedgemoor District Council). The evaluation results will inform the need for and scope of any further archaeological works which may be required at the Homes England site.
- 1.4 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a detailed Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by CA (2018) and approved by Steve Membery. The evaluation was also in line with *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014), *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) PPN 3: Archaeological Excavation* (Historic England 2015) and *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE): Project Manager's Guide* (Historic England 2016).

The site

- 1.5 The evaluation site is located at the southern edge of Highbridge. It is bounded to the west by a self-storage yard; to the north-west by the A38; to the north by the River Brue; and to the east and south by agricultural land.
- 1.6 The site occupies an irregular parcel of land measuring c. 4.5ha. It currently comprises four fields of predominately pasture land, bordered and divided by hedgerows and/or ditches. The Brue Farm complex of agricultural buildings is situated towards the north-eastern corner of the site.
- 1.7 The site is within the Somerset levels and is thus relatively flat, at an elevation of c. 6.5m aOD (above Ordnance Datum).

- 1.8 The underlying bedrock geology of the site is mapped as Charmouth Formation mudstone, which formed during the Jurassic period. This is overlain by Tidal flat deposits of clay, silt and sand (BGS 2018).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The following text is summarised from a desk-based heritage assessment produced for the wider development site (CgMs 2011).

Palaeolithic–Bronze Age (pre 700 BC)

- 2.2 It is known that the site and its immediate environs were underwater prior to the Iron Age. No evidence for pre-Iron Age activity has been recorded within the environs of the site.

Iron Age (700 BC–AD 43)

- 2.3 It is likely that the evaluation site was still underwater during the Iron Age. The Iron Age settlement known as Alstone Lake has been recorded some 430m to the west of the site, on a natural rise in the ground.

Roman (AD 43–AD 410) and medieval (1066–1540)

- 2.4 There is some evidence that parts of the Highbridge area were occupied during the early Roman period, but this occupation had ceased by the end of the second century AD, with associated deposits being buried beneath 3m–4m of alluvium or estuarine clay. It is likely that Roman settlement in the area was focused on the raised ground around Burnham Road (some 750m north of the evaluation site). The evaluation site itself is likely to have been a deepwater inlet in the Roman period.

Early medieval (AD 410–1066)

- 2.5 There is no evidence for early medieval activity within the site or in the surrounding area. It is likely that the evaluation site was still underwater in the earlier part of this period, and in the latter part would have been marginal land at best.

Medieval (1066–1539)

- 2.6 The medieval period saw the silting up of some of the watercourses of the earlier periods. It is possible that the evaluation site was used for farming in this period. Medieval ridge and furrow has been recorded across the wider application site.

- 2.7 The River Brue was navigable by the 13th century and quays were built at Highbridge, to the north of the evaluation site. However, known medieval activity in the wider vicinity is largely limited to pottery scatters, many on the same higher areas as the Roman activity (see above).

Post-medieval (1540–1800) and modern (1800–present)

- 2.8 Day and Master's Map (1782) shows the site as undeveloped land. The Enclosure Map (1806), the Huntspill Tithe Map (1840) and 19th/20th century Ordnance Survey maps document the establishment of field boundaries within the site, some of which have been lost over time. The Brue Farm buildings were constructed between 1806 and 1840. The 1840 tithe apportionment describes the fields within the evaluation site as pasture and meadow, with an orchard being present in the western part of the site.
- 2.9 The original course of the River Brue lay to the north of its present line. The present course of the river as it runs along the northern side boundary is an artificial channel used to straighten the river. This channel was cut in the late 18th/early 19th century.
- 2.10 The Brue Farm building complex underwent extensive changes in the second half of the 20th century.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 As defined in the WSI, the objective of the evaluation was to provide further information about the likely archaeological resource within the site, including its presence/absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality. This information will enable Sedgemoor District Council to identify and assess the particular significance of any archaeological heritage assets within the site, consider the impact of the proposed development upon that significance, and, if appropriate, develop mitigation strategies to avoid or minimise conflict between heritage asset conservation and the proposed development, in line with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2018).



4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The evaluation fieldwork comprised the excavation of 11 trenches (Fig. 2), each measuring 30m in length and 1.8m in width. The trenches were located to give a representative sample of the site.
- 4.2 All trenches were excavated by a mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket. All machine excavation was undertaken under constant archaeological supervision. A sondage was excavated to a depth of 1.2m below present ground level (bpgl) at one end of each trench. The remainder of the trench lengths were then excavated to the top of the lowest alluvial clay layer recorded in each sondage. The exception was T2, which was excavated to a depth of 1.2m bpgl along its entire length.
- 4.3 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*.
- 4.4 Records were maintained in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 1: Fieldwork Recording Manual*.
- 4.5 Deposits were assessed for palaeoenvironmental potential in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 2: The Taking and Processing of Environmental and Other Samples from Archaeological Sites*.
- 4.6 CA will make arrangements with the Somerset Museums Service for the deposition of the project archive.
- 4.7 A summary of information from this project, as set out in Appendix B, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

5. RESULTS

- 5.1 This section provides an overview of the evaluation results. Detailed summaries of the recorded contexts can be found in Appendix A.
- 5.2 The natural geological substrate was not exposed in any of the trenches. Only T7 contained a possible archaeological feature.

Trenches 1–6, 8, 9 & 11

- 5.3 The earliest deposit observed in these trenches was a compact mid silver-grey alluvial clay. This was generally exposed at a depth of 0.46m–0.63m bpgl, although it was slightly deeper in T1 (0.8m bpgl). It was present to the limit of excavation (1.2m bpgl). This alluvial layer was sealed by 0.24m–0.46m of silty clay subsoil, which was covered in turn by the modern topsoil.

Trenches 7 & 10

- 5.4 These trenches exposed an earlier alluvial layer, comprising blue grey alluvial clay with some calciferous and sand inclusions. This layer was exposed at a depth of 0.9m–1.2m bpgl. It was sealed by 0.48m of the same silver-grey alluvial clay layer recorded in the other trenches, which was covered in turn by 0.21m–0.25m of silty clay subsoil. The trenches were sealed by the modern topsoil.
- 5.5 Possible ditch 704 (Fig. 3, Sec. AA) was observed cutting the lower alluvial deposit in T7. This feature was east/west aligned. It was 1.84m wide and 0.24m deep, with a single undated fill (705). Possible ditch 704 was sealed by the upper alluvial layer.

6. DISCUSSION

- 6.1 The evaluation recorded deep alluvial clay layers to a depth of at least 1.2m bpgl. The natural substrate was not exposed in any trench. This supports the hypothesis that the site was underwater until the medieval period (see *Archaeological background*, above).
- 6.2 A single possible ditch was exposed in T7 at a depth of 0.9m bpgl. This feature was cut into an alluvial layer and was sealed by a further alluvial layer. Its status as an anthropomorphic feature was uncertain; it was very shallow with a broad, concave base and a sterile heavy clay fill, and may represent a former natural water channel.

7. CA PROJECT TEAM

- 7.1 The evaluation fieldwork was undertaken by Jerry Austin, assisted by Tim Brown and Jake Godfrey. This report was written by Jerry Austin. The report illustrations were prepared by Tom Brown. The project archive has been compiled and prepared for deposition by Hazel O'Neill. The project was managed for CA by Derek Evans.

8. REFERENCES

BGS (British Geological Survey) 2018 *Geology of Britain Viewer* <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html> Accessed 22 October 2018

CgMs 2011 *Land at Brue Farm, near Highbridge, Somerset: Archaeological Desk Based Assessment*

Cotswold Archaeology 2018 *Brue Farm, Highbridge, Somerset: Written Scheme of Investigations for an Archaeological Evaluation*

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2018 *National Planning Policy Framework*

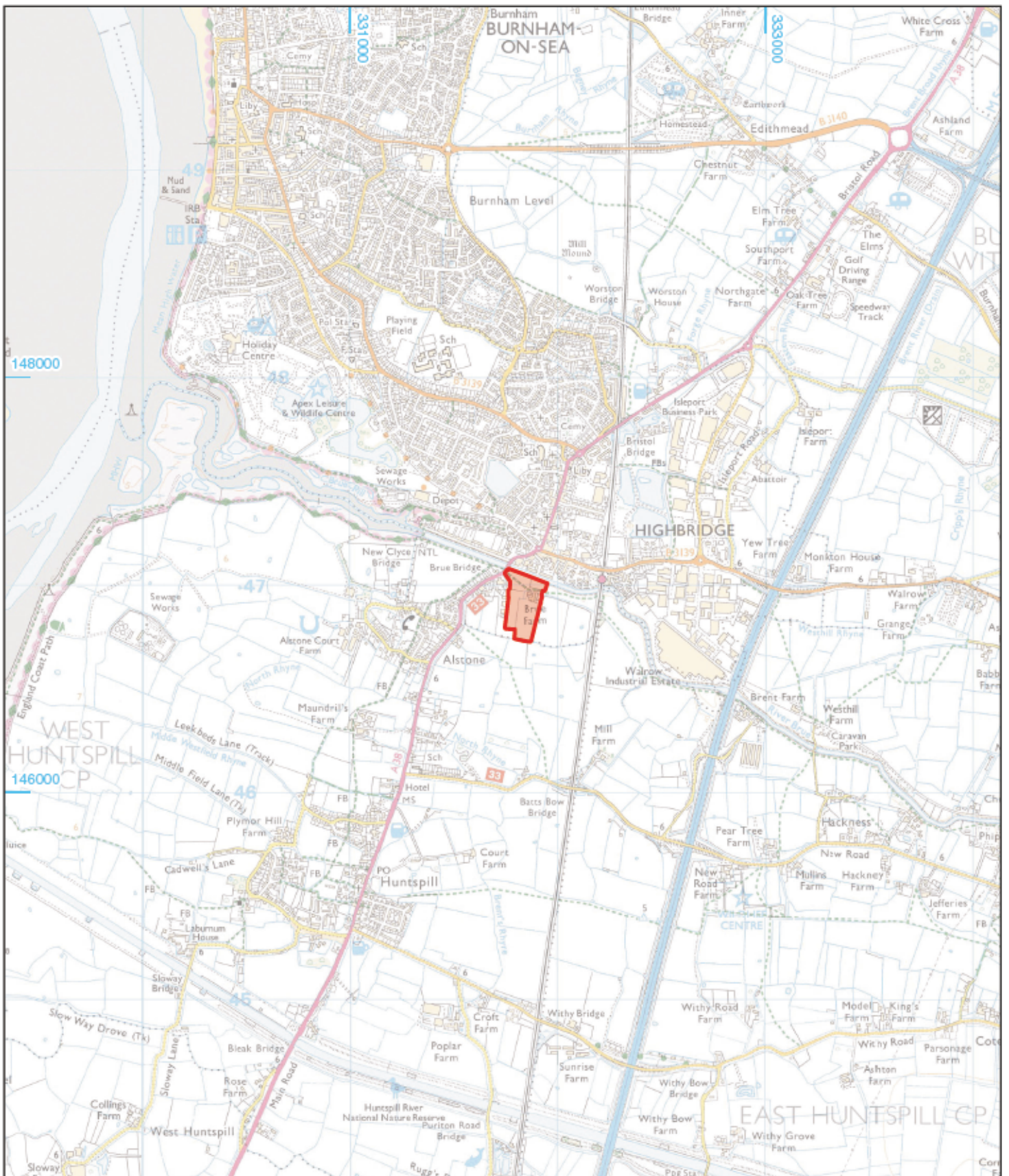


APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Trench	Context	Type	Context interpretation	Description	Width (m)	Depth/thickness (m)
1	100	layer	topsoil	Dark greyish brown silty clay, occasional stones		0.34
1	101	layer	subsoil	Yellow brown silty clay		0.46
1	102	layer	alluvium	Compact silver grey alluvial clay		
2	200	layer	topsoil	Dark greyish brown silty clay, occasional stones		0.25
2	201	layer	subsoil	Yellow brown silty clay		0.24
2	202	layer	alluvium	Compact silver grey alluvial clay		
3	300	layer	topsoil	Dark greyish brown silty clay, occasional stones		0.22
3	301	layer	subsoil	Yellow brown silty clay		0.25
3	302	layer	alluvium	Compact reddish brown and grey alluvial clay with sand inclusions		
4	400	layer	topsoil	Dark greyish brown silty clay, occasional stones		0.25
4	401	layer	subsoil	Yellow brown silty clay		0.25
4	402	layer	alluvium	Compact silver grey alluvial clay		
5	500	layer	topsoil	Dark greyish brown silty clay, occasional stones		0.3
5	501	layer	subsoil	Yellow brown silty clay		0.23
5	502	layer	alluvium	Compact silver grey alluvial clay		
6	600	layer	topsoil	Dark greyish brown silty clay, occasional stones		0.26
6	601	layer	subsoil	Yellow brown silty clay		0.25
6	602	layer	alluvium	Compact silver grey alluvial clay		
7	700	layer	topsoil	Dark greyish brown silty clay, occasional stones		0.2
7	701	layer	subsoil	Yellow brown silty clay		0.21
7	702	layer	alluvium	Compact silver grey alluvial clay		0.48
7	703	layer	alluvium	Compact blue grey alluvium		0.25
7	704	cut	possible ditch	W/E aligned, concave sides and base	1.84	0.24
7	705	fill	single fill of 704	Compact bluish brown clay		0.24
8	800	layer	topsoil	Dark greyish brown silty clay, occasional stones		0.24
8	801	layer	subsoil	Yellow brown silty clay		0.23
8	802	layer	alluvium	Compact silver grey alluvial clay		
9	900	layer	topsoil	Dark greyish brown silty clay, occasional stones		0.23
9	901	layer	subsoil	Yellow brown silty clay		0.23
9	902	layer	alluvium	Compact silver grey alluvial clay		
10	1000	layer	topsoil	Dark greyish brown silty clay, occasional stones		0.24
10	1001	layer	subsoil	Yellow brown silty clay		0.22
10	1002	layer	alluvium	Compact silver grey alluvial clay		0.7
10	1003	layer	alluvium	Compact blue grey alluvial clay with calciferous and sand inclusions		
11	1100	layer	topsoil	Dark greyish brown silty clay, occasional stones		0.23
11	1101	layer	subsoil	Yellow brown silty clay		0.25
11	1102	layer	alluvium	Compact silver grey alluvial clay		

APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Brue Farm, Highbridge, Somerset	
Short description	<p>In October 2018, Cotswold Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation of land at Brue Farm, Highbridge, Somerset. A total of 11 trenches was excavated within the site.</p> <p>The evaluation recorded deep alluvial clay layers to a depth of at least 1.2m below the present ground level. The natural substrate was not exposed in any trench. The site is thought to have been underwater until the medieval period, and the evaluation results support this hypothesis.</p> <p>A single possible ditch was recorded. This feature was cut into an alluvial layer and was sealed by a further alluvial layer. Its status as an anthropomorphic feature was uncertain; it was very shallow with a broad concave base and a sterile heavy clay fill, and may represent a former natural water channel.</p>	
Project dates	29–31 October 2018	
Project type	Evaluation	
Previous work	Desk based Assessment	
Future work	Unknown	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site location	Brue Farm, Highbridge, Somerset	
Study area (m ² /ha)	c. 4.5ha	
Site co-ordinates	331845 146905	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project brief originator	N/A	
Project design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Derek Evans	
Project Supervisor	Jerry Austin	
MONUMENT TYPE	None	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS	None	
PROJECT ARCHIVES		
	Intended final location of archive	Content
Physical	N/A	N/A
Paper	Somerset Museums Service	Trench forms, permatrace drawing
Digital	Somerset Museums Service	Digital survey, digital photos
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Cotswold Archaeology 2018 <i>Brue Farm, Highbridge, Somerset: Archaeological Evaluation</i> CA typescript report 18569		



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PROJECT TITLE
 Brue Farm, Highbridge, North Somerset

FIGURE TITLE
 Site location plan

DRAWN BY TB PROJECT NO. 880367
 CHECKED BY DJB DATE 09.11.18
 APPROVED BY DE SCALE@A4 1:25,000

FIGURE NO.

1



- site boundary
- evaluation trench
- cut feature (excavated/unexcavated)
- sondage
- section location



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PROJECT TITLE
 Brue Farm, Highbridge, North Somerset

FIGURE TITLE
 Trench location plan

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CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	09.11.18		
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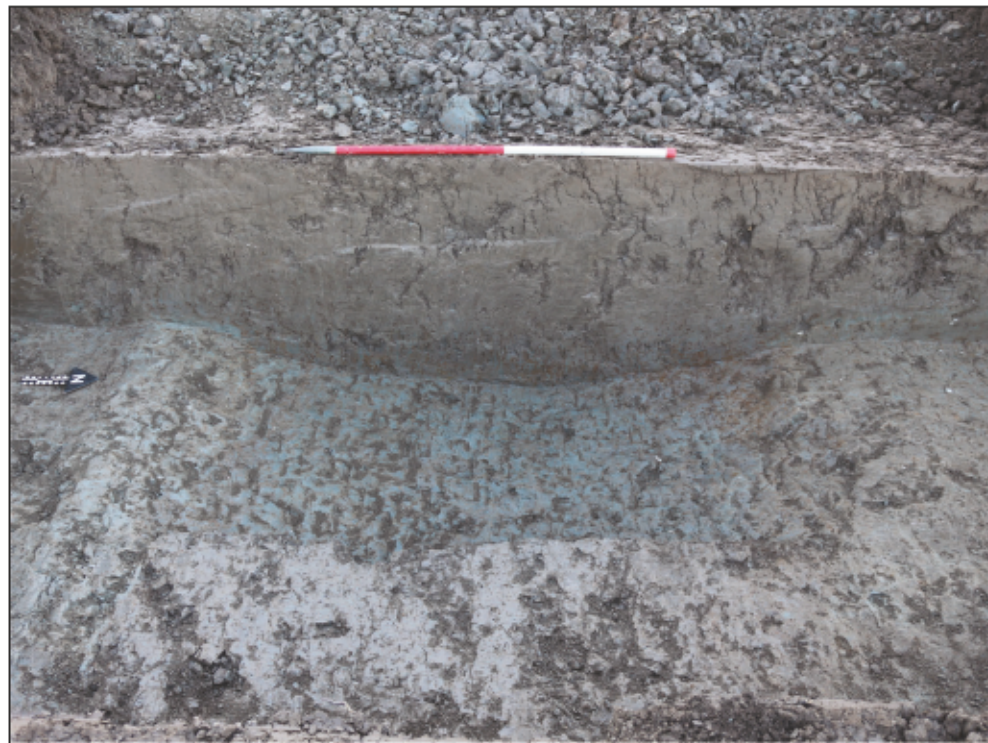
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Trench 1, looking north-west (1m scales)

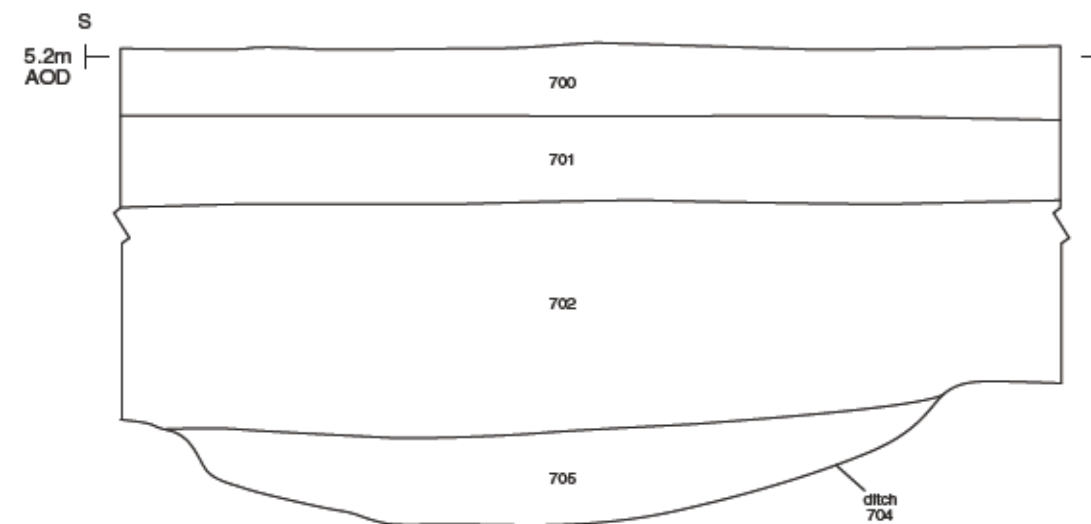


Trench 9, looking north (1m scales)



Ditch 704, looking west (1m scale)

Section AA



0 1:20 1m


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PROJECT TITLE
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FIGURE TITLE
 Photographs and section

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