

**BLACK DITCH WIND PARK  
WEST HUNTSPELL  
SOMERSET**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

*For*

**ECOTRICITY**

CA PROJECT: 3293  
CA REPORT: 10239

DECEMBER 2010

BLACK DITCH WIND PARK  
WEST HUNTSPILL  
SOMERSET

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

CA PROJECT: 3293  
CA REPORT: 10239

prepared by	Sian Reynish, Project Supervisor
date	17 December 2010
checked by	Simon Cox, Head of Fieldwork
date	22 December 2010
approved by	Mark Collard, Head of Fieldwork
signed	
date	23 December 2010
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## SUMMARY

**Project Name:** Black Ditch Wind Park  
**Location:** West Huntspill, Somerset  
**NGR:** ST 3100 4425  
**Type:** Evaluation  
**Date:** 13-16 December 2010  
**Planning Reference:** PP01300268  
**Location of Archive:** To be deposited with the Somerset Heritage Centre  
**Accession Number:** TTNCM: 173/2010;  
**HER Number:** PRN 30286  
**Site Code:** BPP 10

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in December 2010 on land south of the River Huntspill, West Huntspill, Somerset. Eight trenches were excavated.

The evaluation identified a single ditch containing brick, modern pottery, clay pipe and an iron nail.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In December 2010 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological evaluation for Ecotricity on land south of the River Huntspill, West Huntspill, Somerset (centred on NGR: ST 3100 4425; Fig. 1). The evaluation was undertaken to accompany an application (ref: 52/10/00018) for development of a wind farm comprising four wind turbines, with associated crane hardstandings, access tracks, temporary construction compound and an on-site substation.
- 1.2 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a detailed Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by CA (2010) and guided in its composition by discussions with Mr Steven Membery, Somerset County Council Development Control Archaeologist (SCC DCA). The fieldwork also followed the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (IfA 2008), the Somerset County Council Heritage Service *Archaeological Handbook* (SCC 2008), the *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (English Heritage 1991) and the *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE): Project Manager's Guide* (EH 2006). It was monitored by Naomi Payne, SCC archaeologist, including a site visit on 14 December 2010.

### ***The site***

- 1.3 The site is bounded to the north by the canalised Huntspill River, to the east by Puriton Road and further agricultural land, to the south by agricultural land on Pawlett Level and to the west by the A38 (Fig. 2). The site lies at average heights of around 6m AOD, and slightly higher areas of land lie at Huntspill to the north of the site and at Pawlett to the south-west of the site.
- 1.4 The proposed development area encloses approximately 59ha, and comprises over twenty pastoral fields enclosed by hedgerows.
- 1.5 The underlying drift geology is mapped as marine and estuarine alluvium, which was encountered within all the evaluation trenches. The solid geology of the area is mapped as Blue Lias of the Jurassic era (BGS 1980). Most of the parish of Huntspill lies on alluvium over marine clay at the seaward end of the Brue valley. The modern

settlements of Pawlett, Stretcholt, West Huntspill and Alstone are all situated on low 'islands' of either Lias limestone or Burtle Sands (Ecotricity 2010).

### ***Archaeological background***

- 1.6 Chapter 6 of the Environmental Statement contains a Cultural Heritage Assessment of the site, to which further reference should be made for the detailed archaeological background (Ecotricity 2010). The results of the assessment are, however, summarised below.
- 1.7 Palaeoenvironmental evidence suggests the local area lay close to sea level from at least the Mesolithic period onwards, with small prominent 'islands' of harder Lias geology, acting as foci of human activity. These former areas of higher ground are no longer apparent due to subsequent alluvial deposition caused by marine inundation. Former areas of higher ground have been identified by geotechnical works and archaeological excavation in the wider vicinity of the site, including a ridge of hard geology that runs approximately south-west to north-east, roughly defined by the route of the Main Road (A38) to the west of the site.
- 1.8 A second area of former higher ground was identified below alluvial deposits during archaeological investigations at the Walpole landfill site. Evidence for human occupation/exploitation on the 'island', including cut features, has been dated from the Neolithic to the Romano-British period. Further survey at the landfill site, approximately 200m south of the site, also identified prehistoric activity. Evaluation trenching recorded a sequence of former prehistoric ground surfaces approximately 1.5-3.5m below current ground level. Associated finds included pebbles of non-local origin, small amounts of worked flint, animal bone and prehistoric pottery from the surface of the island.
- 1.9 In the Roman period the study area remained within a wider landscape frequently flooded by marine incursions. In the Early Roman period there was a concerted effort to improve this wetland landscape, with the establishment of sea-walls and drainage systems, and large areas of the Levels were reclaimed. The area of the Levels in which the site is situated lay outside the areas of known large-scale Roman reclamation, and is likely have to largely remained an inter-tidal environment of salt marsh.

- 1.10 A former Roman land surface with evidence of Roman salt making was identified during archaeological evaluation to the south-west of the site. It is likely that this area formed a localised focus of Roman settlement and industrial exploitation for salt manufacture. Fieldwalking undertaken in 2000 nearby recorded Roman pottery which dated from the 2nd to 4th century AD, and two trenches excavated for an evaluation recorded a large amount of Lias building stone, Roman pottery and daub. This settlement would have been situated on the natural outcrop of hard geology broadly aligned on the current main road (A38).
- 1.11 Roman 'salterns' (areas used for evaporating sea-water for salt) have been found throughout the wider area, including at Walpole and along the Huntspill River. The area south of the River Brue was a particular focus of Roman salt production, and it is estimated that between 500-1000 salterns existed in the area (Rippon 2008, 91). A further possible Roman settlement is recorded approximately 140m north-west of the site, on the north bank of the Huntspill Cut. The settlement was situated at approximately 5m OD, and dated to the 2nd to 4th century, initially identified from Roman finds on the banks of the River Huntspill. A large amount of Lias stone was recovered which may represent building material. Excavation nearby identified a stone wall and occupation layer containing pottery, animal bone and charcoal, approximately 0.4-0.6m below current ground level. The deposits possibly represent a settlement site, again located on the ridge of hard geology.
- 1.12 The Somerset Levels were subject to a period of extensive, post-Roman, marine inundation followed by piecemeal reclamation in the early medieval period (Rippon 2000, 89). The Roman settlement and salt-production sites described above are generally sealed by further deposits of alluvium deposited during this post-Roman period. A prominent, former watercourse, the River Siger, is recorded in the immediate vicinity of the site and would have featured prominently in early medieval attempts to improve drainage. It appears likely that land within the western area of the site, close to the ridge of slightly higher geology defined by the A38, was subject to the earliest drainage and enclosure, in the medieval period. The fields in this part of the site were almost certainly enclosed prior to the 17th century, and probably earlier. They include an area of ridge and furrow earthworks recorded on the Somerset HER, although these no longer appear to survive above ground. This ridge and furrow suggests that this part of the site formed part of a medieval open-field system (which was divided into communal strips), subsequently enclosed formally.

- 1.13 Irregular lanes near to West Huntspill possibly indicate the nearest medieval settlement at this time, and the earliest surviving buildings in West Huntspill itself date to the late 15th century. Elsewhere, medieval settlement appears to have been rather sporadic away from the ridge of hard Lias geology, and was dependent on the development of local drainage networks. The eastern area of the site probably remained un-reclaimed salt-marsh at this time.
- 1.14 A probable medieval settlement was identified during a watching brief 300m north of the site. Extensive spreads of occupation material, mostly dating to the 13th and 14th centuries, was recorded. Few features were identified, but a probable medieval pit was recorded. A further possible medieval deserted farm site is recorded 350m north of the site, in the hinterland of West Huntspill. The complex includes two rectangular enclosures and a trackway joining the former farm site to the main road between Pawlett and Alstone.
- 1.15 Medieval pottery has been recorded from rynes (drainage ditches) approximately 140m and 350m north of the site, and from the line of the A38 immediately west of the site.
- 1.16 Traces of the open field system, comprising strips of ridge and furrow, survived within Huntspill parish until enclosure in 1803. There were also large areas of common grassland, mostly in the east and centre of the parish, which was enclosed during post-medieval and modern enclosure/reclamation subsequent to the smaller-scale medieval enclosure. There was significant settlement expansion and enclosure of former common from the 18th century, and at least 15 hamlets emerge, mostly in the eastern part of the parish around the edges of common. The farmhouses recorded along the main road through West Huntspill and inland towards East Huntspill, are the earliest and were built on the boundaries of common land before enclosure in 1783.
- 1.17 The widespread enclosure and drainage of the Levels in the post-medieval period is indicated by pottery finds across the wider area. Pottery dating to the 17th and 18th-centuries has been recorded to the south of the site, 500m south-west of the site from rynes (drainage ditches) approximately 140m and 350m north of the site, and from the line of the A38 immediately west of the site. Post-war aerial photography

recorded features representing ridge and furrow throughout the site (SHER 27796), as well as drainage channels and modern plough marks.

### **Archaeological objectives**

- 1.18 The objectives of the evaluation were to establish the character, quality, date and extent of any archaeological remains or deposits surviving within the site. This information will assist Sedgemoor District Council in making an informed judgement on the significance of the archaeological resource, and the likely impact upon it of the proposed development.

### **Methodology**

- 1.19 The fieldwork comprised the excavation of eight trenches in the locations shown on the attached plan (Fig. 2). All trenches were 30m long and 1.6m wide. Following discussions on site with Naomi Payne, deeper 3m long by 3m wide sondages were excavated to a depth of 2m at the ends of trenches 2, 4, 6 and 8, to investigate the potential for deeply buried archaeological deposits sealed by alluvium in the locations of the four wind turbines. Trenches were set out on OS National Grid (NGR) co-ordinates using a Leica 1200 series SmartRover GPS and surveyed in accordance with CA Technical Manual 4 *Survey Manual* (2009).
- 1.20 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).
- 1.21 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* (2010).
- 1.22 The archive and artefacts from the evaluation are currently held by CA at their offices in Kemble. Due to the modern date of the artefacts, they will not be retained.

Subject to the agreement of the legal landowner the site archive will be deposited with the Somerset Heritage Centre under accession number TTNCM: 173/2010; Somerset HER PRN 30286. 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. Details of the relative heights of the principal deposits expressed as metres Above Ordnance Datum (m AOD) appear in Appendix A.
- 2.2 Trenches 1–4 and 6–8 were devoid of any archaeological deposits or features. A similar stratigraphic sequence was identified in these trenches, consisting of light grey/brown alluvial layers at around 0.3m below present ground level (bpgl), overlain by topsoil. The deeper depositional sequence, recorded in the sondages within trenches 2, 4, 6 and 8, consisted of alluvial layers of varying thickness and colour. These deposits are described in Appendix A and illustrated on Figure 3.

### ***Trench 5 (Fig. 2)***

- 2.3 A broad, shallow, south-west/north-east aligned ditch, 504, cut alluvium 501, and contained a single fill, 503, from which, fragments of brick, modern pottery, clay pipe and an iron nail were recovered. This was overlain by 0.25m of topsoil. The ditch may represent the former continuation of an extant south-west/north-east aligned field boundary to the south. However, no such feature is visible on historic mapping.

### ***The Finds***

- 2.4 A small quantity of modern artefacts was retrieved from deposit 503, fill of ditch 504, consisting of modern pottery, identified as Mocha ware and refined whiteware, four fragments of ceramic building material, part of a brick, one iron nail and a stem from a clay pipe. The artefacts suggest a date in the late 18th to 19th centuries for the infilling of the ditch. Due to the modern date of the artefacts, they will not be retained.

### 3. DISCUSSION

- 3.1 A single ditch containing modern brick, pottery, clay pipe and an iron nail was identified during the evaluation. No evidence of features or deposits associated with the variety of archaeological sites set out in *archaeological background* (above) was identified during the evaluation. The potential for deeply buried archaeological features, sealed by alluvium, was investigated with deeper sondages at the ends of trenches 2, 4, 6 and 8. Although this limited exercise revealed no archaeological features in the locations investigated, it cannot be ruled out that alluvial deposits elsewhere seal archaeological deposits.

### 4. CA PROJECT TEAM

Fieldwork was undertaken by Sian Reynish, assisted by Luke Brannlund and Donal Lucey. The report was written by Sian Reynish. The illustrations were prepared by Jon Bennett. The archive has been compiled by Sian Reynish, and prepared for deposition by James Johnson. The project was managed for CA by Simon Cox.

### 5. REFERENCES

BGS (British Geological Survey) 1980 *Geological Survey of Great Britain (England and Wales), Solid and Drift*. Sheet 279: Weston-super-Mare.

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2010 *Black Ditch Wind Park, Puriton, Somerset: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation*

Ecotricity 2010 *Black Ditch Wind Park Environmental Statement*

Rippon, S. 2000 'Clayland colonisation: recent work on Romano-British and medieval reclamation in the Somerset Levels', in C. J. Webster (ed) *Somerset Archaeology: papers to mark 150 years of the Somerset Archaeology and Natural History Society*, 85-92.

**APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS**

## Trench 1

Present ground level: 5.43m AOD (west end), 5.44m AOD (east end)

No.	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Spot-date
100	Layer	Topsoil			0.3	
101	Layer	Natural alluvium: mid – light brownish grey clay				
102	Layer	Natural alluvium: band of a mid greyish brown clay containing rounded pebbles				

## Trench 2

Present ground level: 5.12m AOD (west end), 5.12m AOD (east end)

No.	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Spot-date
200	Layer	Topsoil			0.3	
201	Layer	Natural alluvium: mid – light brownish grey clay			1.2	
202	Layer	Natural alluvium: mid greyish/orangey brown clay			0.36	
203	Layer	Natural alluvium: mid – dark bluey grey clay				

## Trench 3

Present ground level: 5.19m AOD (north end), 5.28m AOD (south end)

No.	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Spot-date
300	Layer	Topsoil			0.26	
301	Layer	Natural alluvium: light yellowish/greyish brown clay			0.14	
302	Layer	Natural alluvium: mid – light brownish grey clay				

## Trench 4

Present ground level: 5.21m AOD (west end), 5.10m AOD (east end)

No.	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Spot-date
400	Layer	Topsoil			0.28	
401	Layer	Natural alluvium: light yellowish/greyish brown clay			0.15	
402	Layer	Natural alluvium: mid – light brownish grey clay			0.83	
403	Layer	Natural alluvium: mid – dark bluey grey clay			0.26	
404	Layer	Natural alluvium: mid greyish/orangey brown clay			0.4	
405	Layer	Natural alluvium: mid – light brownish grey clay				

## Trench 5

Present ground level: 5.16m AOD (west end), 5.13m AOD (east end)

No.	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Spot-date
500	Layer	Topsoil			0.25	
501	Layer	Natural alluvium: light yellowish/greyish brown clay			0.15	
502	Layer	Natural alluvium: mid – light brownish grey clay				
503	Fill	Fill of 504	>1.74	3.43	0.42	
504	Cut	Cut of ditch	>1.74	3.43	0.42	

## Trench 6

Present ground level: 5.14m AOD (north end), 5.13m AOD (south end)

No.	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Spot-date
600	Layer	Topsoil			0.3	
601	Layer	Natural alluvium: light yellowish/greyish brown clay			0.1	
602	Layer	Natural alluvium: mid – light brownish grey clay			0.78	
603	Layer	Natural alluvium: mid greyish/orangey brown clay			0.32	
604	Layer	Natural alluvium: mid – dark bluey grey clay			0.16	
605	Layer	Natural alluvium: mid – light brownish grey clay				

## Trench 7

Present ground level: 4.952m AOD (west end), 4.82m AOD (east end)

No.	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Spot-date
700	Layer	Topsoil			0.3	
701	Layer	Natural alluvium: light yellowish/greyish brown clay			0.14	
702	Layer	Natural alluvium: mid – light brownish grey clay				

## Trench 8

Present ground level: 5.18m AOD (west end), 4.91m AOD (east end)

No.	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Spot-date
800	Layer	Topsoil			0.25	
801	Layer	Natural alluvium: light yellowish/greyish brown clay			0.11	
802	Layer	Natural alluvium: mid – light brownish grey clay			1.4	
803	Layer	Natural alluvium: mid – dark bluey grey clay				

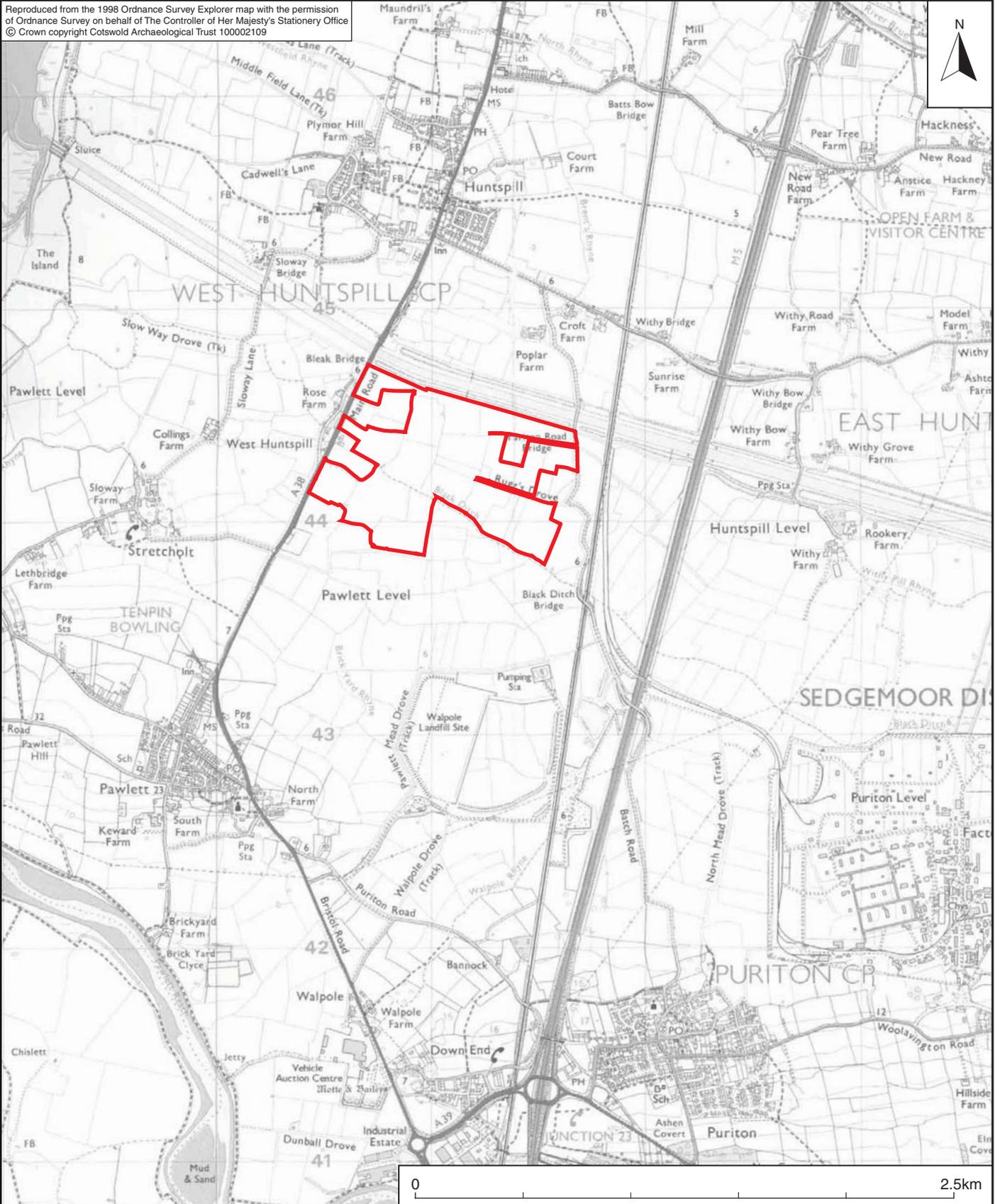
**APPENDIX B: THE FINDS**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Ct.</b>	<b>Wt.</b>	<b>Date</b>
503	Iron nail	1	6	LC18-C19
	Ceramic building material: brick	4	696	
	Clay pipe: stem	1	2	
	Modern pottery: refined whiteware, Mocha ware	3	4	

## APPENDIX C: OASIS REPORT FORM

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project Name	Black Ditch Wind Park, West Huntspill, Somerset	
Short description (250 words maximum)	An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in December 2010 on land south of the River Huntspill, West Huntspill, Somerset. Eight trenches were excavated.  The evaluation identified a ditch containing brick, modern pottery, clay pipe and an iron nail.	
Project dates	13 – 16 December 2010	
Project type	Evaluation	
Previous work	None	
Future work	Unknown	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
Site Location	West Huntspill, Somerset	
Study area (M <sup>2</sup> /ha)	59ha	
Site co-ordinates	ST 3100 4425	
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Brief originator	None	
Project Design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Simon Cox	
Project Supervisor	Sian Reynish	
<b>MONUMENT TYPE</b>	None	
<b>SIGNIFICANT FINDS</b>	None	
<b>PROJECT ARCHIVES</b>		
	Intended final location of archive	Content
Physical	modern artefacts, not retained	Brick, modern pottery, clay pipe and an iron nail.
Paper	Somerset Heritage Centre Accession number TTNCM: 173/2010; Somerset HER PRN 30286	Trench sheets, context sheets, drawings
Digital	Somerset Heritage Centre Accession number TTNCM: 173/2010; Somerset HER PRN 30286	Digital photos, digital plan
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>		
CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2010 <i>Black Ditch Wind Park, West Huntspill, Somerset: Archaeological Evaluation</i> . CA Report no. <b>10239</b>		

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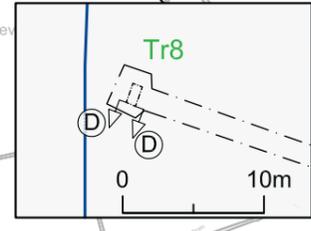
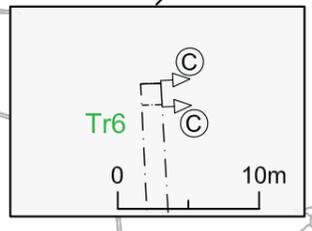
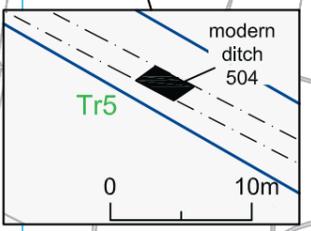
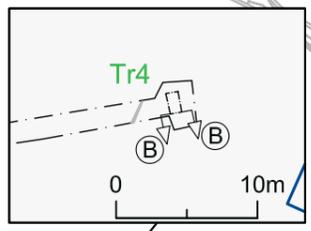
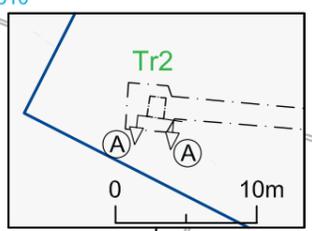
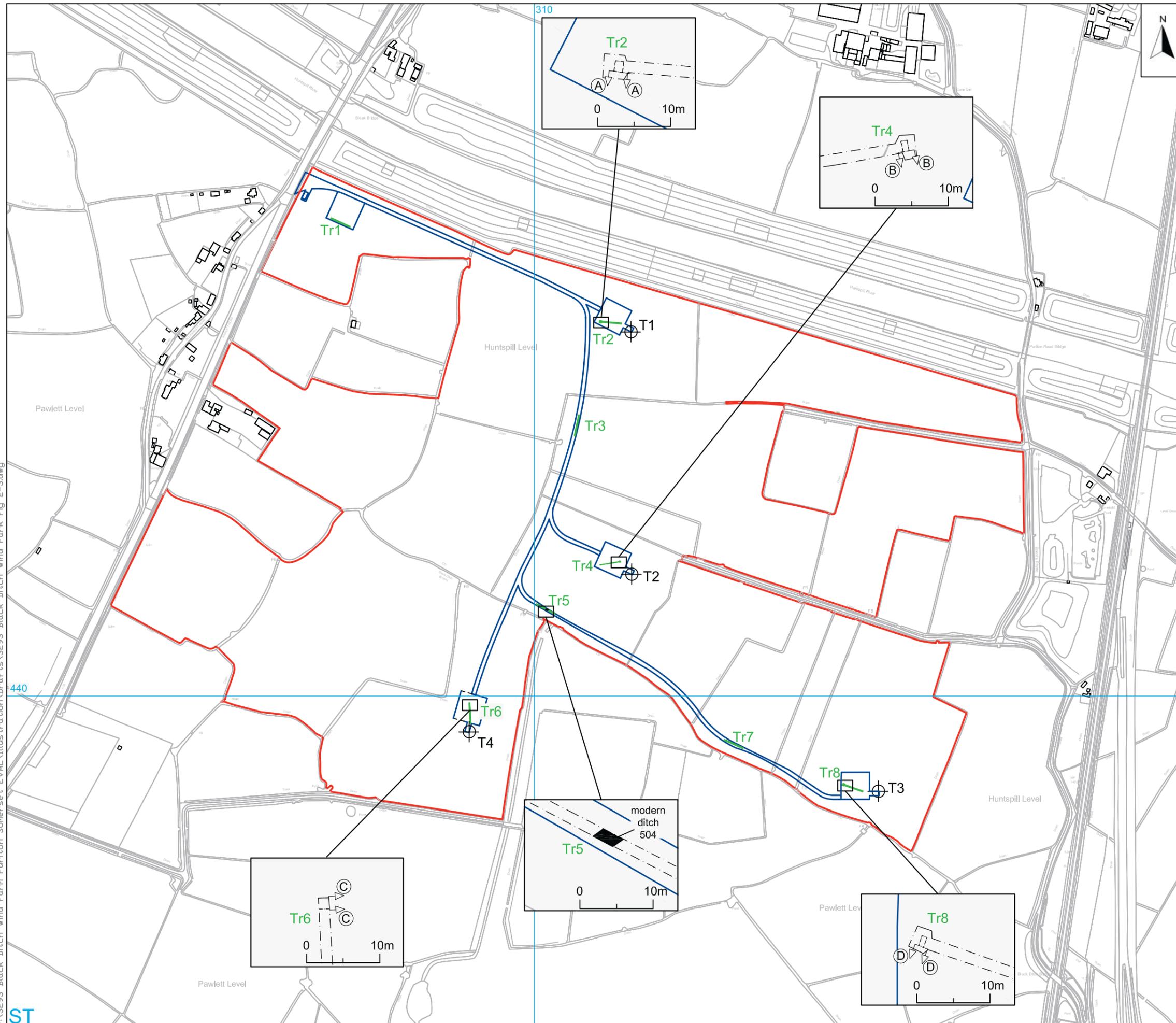


**COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGY**

PROJECT TITLE  
**Black Ditch Wind Park,  
 West Huntspill, Somerset**

FIGURE TITLE  
**Site location plan**

DRAWN BY	SCALE	PROJECT NO.	FIGURE NO.
JB	1:25,000@A4	3293	<b>1</b>



- site
- area of proposed development
- evaluation trench
- turbine location
- T1 turbine number



**COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGY**

PROJECT TITLE  
**Black Ditch Wind Farm,  
 West Huntspill, Somerset**

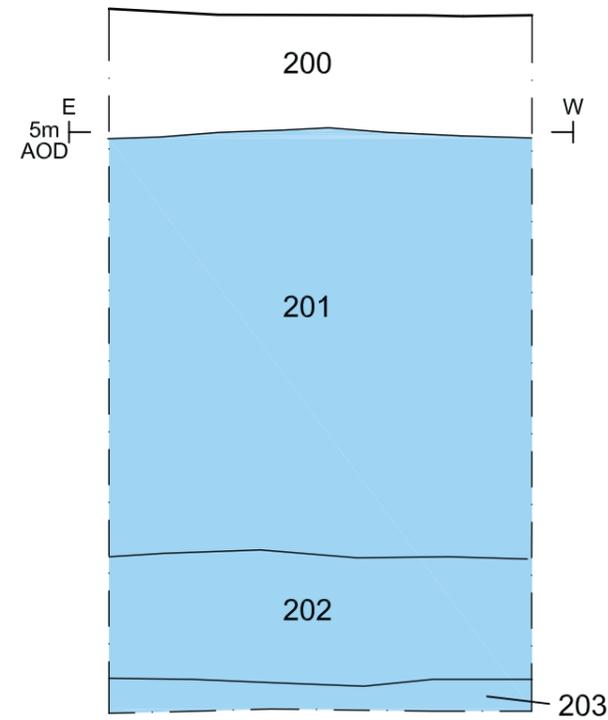
FIGURE TITLE  
**Trench location plan showing archaeological  
 feature**

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JB	as shown	3293	<b>2</b>

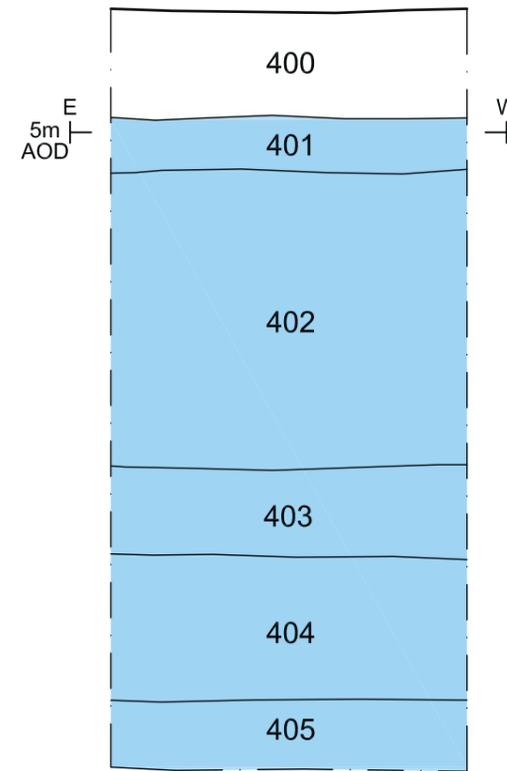
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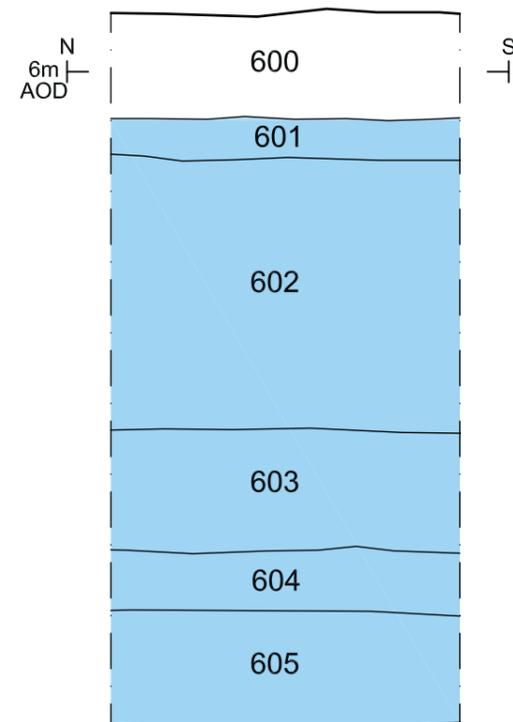
Trench 2, Section AA



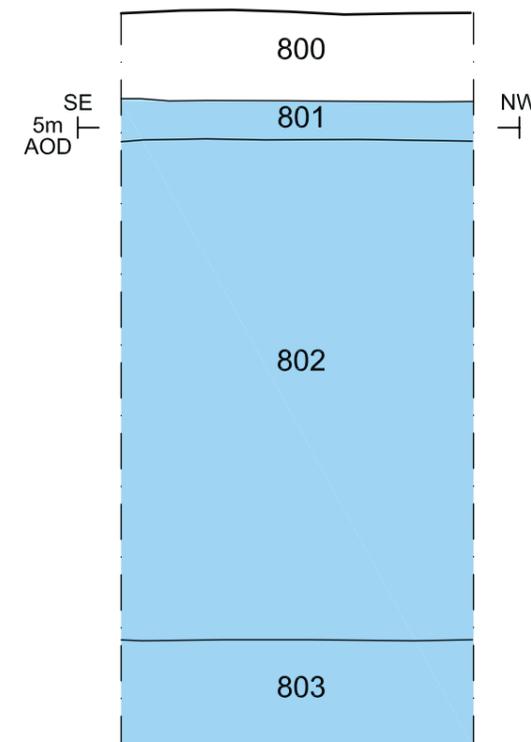
Trench 4, Section BB



Trench 6, Section CC



Trench 8, Section DD



alluvium



PROJECT TITLE  
Black Ditch Wind Farm,  
West Huntspill, Somerset

FIGURE TITLE  
**Trench 2, 4, 6 and 8; sections**

DRAWN BY	SCALE	PROJECT NO.	FIGURE NO.
JB	1:20 @A3	3293	<b>3</b>