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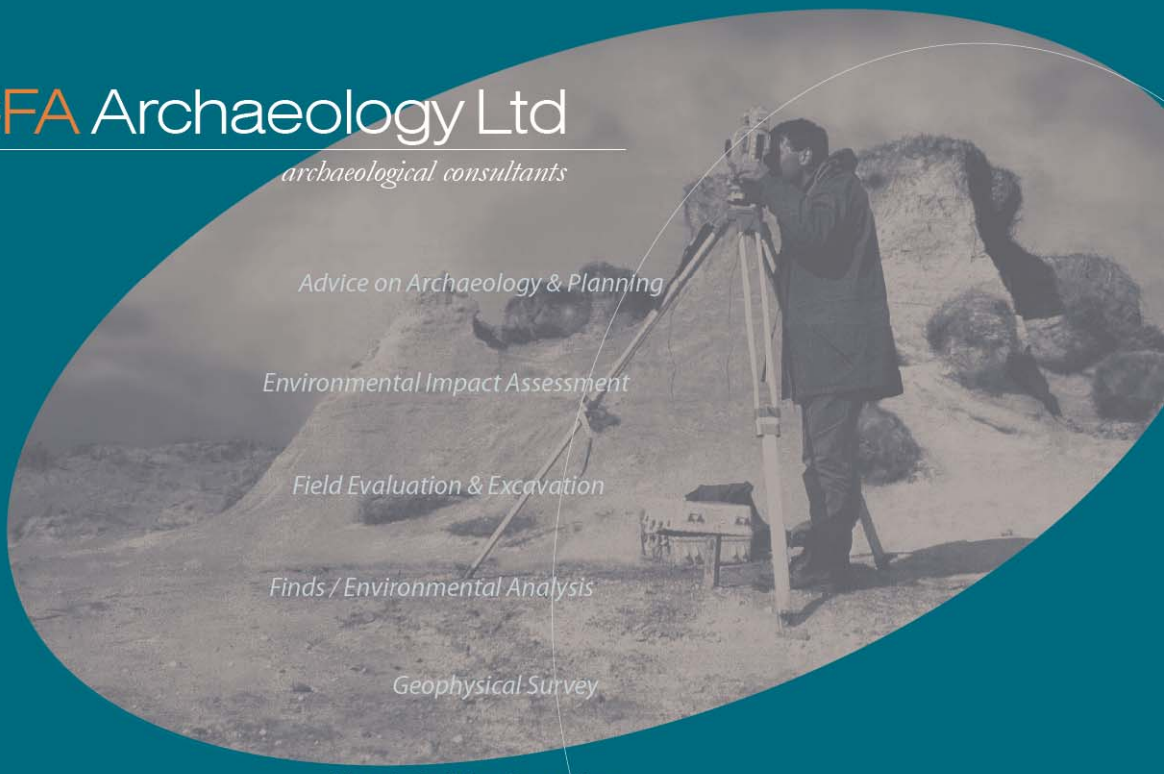
archaeological consultants



Advice on Archaeology & Planning

Environmental Impact Assessment

Field Evaluation & Excavation

Finds / Environmental Analysis

Geophysical Survey

Historic Building Recording

Site & Landscape Survey

Interpretation, Design & Display

Roundhill Sewage Treatment Works Roundhill Staffordshire

Archaeological Watching Brief

Report No. Y239/16

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Roundhill Sewage Treatment Works Roundhill Staffordshire

Archaeological Watching Brief

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Summary

An archaeological watching brief consisting of the monitored stripping of an easement and the excavation of a pipe trench for a new gas pipeline was undertaken by CFA Archaeology Ltd on land to the north of the Roundhill Sewage Treatment Works, Staffordshire during July 2016. Apart from four likely former field boundaries, no archaeological remains were recorded and apart from and finds dating to the 19th-20th centuries, no finds were recovered.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by CFA Archaeology Ltd (CFA) on land to the north of the Roundhill Sewage Treatment Works (NGR SO 8687 8454), Staffordshire, during July 2016. The work was commissioned by CNG Services in advance of the construction of a new gas pipeline on the site. The CFA code and number for the project is ROSW2/2273.

All work was carried out in accordance with a written scheme of investigation produced by CFA Archaeology Ltd (CFA 2016a).

1.1 Site Location and Description

The site is located on land to the north of the Roundhill Sewage Treatment Works off Gibbet Lane, approximately 1.5km west of Stourbridge and 1km southeast of Stourton, close to the border with Dudley in South Staffordshire. It is accessed from a private access road off the A458 Bridgnorth Road (Fig. 1).

The development site consisted of an 8m easement, 800m in length, from the north of the Roundhill Sewage Treatment Works to the A458 Bridgnorth Road. The site was bounded to the south by the existing sewage treatment plant, the east and west by open agricultural fields and to the north by the A458 Bridgnorth Road.

The underlying solid geology of the site is Wildmoor Sandstone Formation-Sandstone with no superficial deposits recorded (BGS 2016). The overlying soil is described as 'freely draining slightly acid sandy soils' (Landis 2016).

1.2 Archaeological and Historical Background

The following is taken from the brief (SCC 2015); sites referred to are related to the HER for the Staffordshire area.

There are no designated or undesignated heritage assets on the site recorded in the HER. However, a series of Romano-British finds and sites are present within the surrounding area including the Roman settlement and marching camp complex at Greensforge approximately 3.8km to the north of the site.

The corridor for the new pipeline route passes through the edge of a possible villa complex (PRN 01724) recorded from cropmark evidence, though this had not previously been confirmed by fieldwork. The Greensforge to Droitwich Roman road (PRN 01725) extends north-west to south-east approximately 950m to the east of the site and the HER records the

presence of a late prehistoric flint scatter at Stewponey approximately 800m to the north (SCC 2015).

1.3 Previous Archaeological Work

No previous archaeological work had been undertaken on the site prior to this investigation although archaeological trial trenching within the existing sewage treatment plant immediately to the south of the proposed pipeline corridor revealed no surviving archaeological features other than the remains of extensive plough furrows (CFA 2016b).

1.4 Project Aims and Objectives

In accordance with the written scheme of investigation (CFA 2016a), the aims of the archaeological watching brief were:

- to determine the form and function of any archaeological features encountered;
- determine the spatial arrangement of any archaeological features encountered;
- as far as practicable, recover dating evidence from the archaeological features, and;
- establish the sequence of any archaeological remains present on the site.

In particular the watching brief intended to determine the nature of the cropmark (Fig. 1) and whether it indicated the presence of a Roman villa complex and where possible determine the dates of inception, abandonment and duration of activity on the site.

Research objectives and analysis and reporting followed the West Midlands regional Research Framework (Watt 2011).

2. WORKING METHODS

2.1 Watching Brief

All groundworks including the stripping of the pipeline easement and the excavation of the pipe trench were monitored. The footprints of the new pipeline easement had been marked out prior to the arrival of the archaeologist. All machining was undertaken by a 360° excavator using a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. Topsoil and other overburden were removed by machine down to the top of natural subsoil or the first significant archaeological horizon, whichever was encountered first. Topsoil and subsoil were stored adjacent to the stripped easement area.

Linear features (ditches and gullies) were sample excavated at a minimum of 10% of their length and a minimum of 1m per section at regular intervals. Intersections were investigated to establish relationships between features. Pits and post holes were sampled at a minimum of 50%.

Archaeological remains were recorded by means of photographs, drawings and written records conforming to CIfA standards (2014b) and CFA's quality manuals. All features were planned and drawn in section appropriate scales. The trenches, section lines and drawing

points were surveyed using an industry standard Trimble GPS. The same equipment was used to establish levels above Ordnance Datum for the trenches and archaeological features.

All finds were treated in accordance with relevant guidance (CIFA 2014c). Modern finds were recorded on site but not retained unless they were from stratigraphically significant deposits or intrinsically significant, all other finds were to be retained for post-excavation assessment.

A summary of the results of archaeological works will be submitted for inclusion in OASIS. The OASIS reference is cfaarcha1-258182.

2.2 Standards and Guidance

CFA Archaeology Ltd is a registered organisation (RO) with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA). CFA Archaeology follows all relevant CIfA and Historic England standards and guidance (CIfA 2014a-c, EH 2008 and 2011).

2.3 Archiving

The project archive, comprising all CFA record sheets, finds, plans and reports, will be prepared to current guidelines (CIfA 2014b and 2014c) ensuring the proper transfer of ownership. The project report shall include an index to the site archive and all digitally generated data. The archive will be retained by CFA until being deposited at a suitable repository.

3. RESULTS

A full list and description of contexts comprises Appendix 1. The following results should be read in conjunction with figures 1-2.

Topsoil on the site consisted of a dark brown-black silty organic clay (100). Underlying the topsoil was a layer of mid-light brown silty sand (101). The southern part of the pipeline easement was through a field of wheat, the centre and northern part of the easement were within fields planted with potato crop.

The easement strip commenced from the southern end of the pipeline and continued northwards (Fig. 3.1) before terminating to the immediate south of the A458 Bridgnorth Road.

Two areas of tightly packed plough furrows on slight north-west to south-east orientations were evident within the strip once excavation had been completed. The entirety of the southern end of the easement contained numerous plough furrows and these continued up until the existing field boundary located to the south of Barratt's Coppice. The second area of plough furrows commenced to the north of Ditch 112 (see below) and continued to the north for approximately 60.00m (Fig. 3.2).

Four ditches on a slight north-west to south-east orientation (104, 108, 110 and 112) were identified along with on north-south aligned gully (106) within the pipeline easement. (Fig. 1).

Ditch 112 was the furthest north of these features and was located to the immediate south of the bend in the easement route (Figs. 2.1, 2.2 and 3.3). The ditch itself featured moderately sloping sides with a flat base measuring 1.36m in width by 0.36m in depth, and appeared representative of a former field boundary.

Approximately 115m to the south of Ditch 112 lay Ditch 104; a ditch with steep sloping sides and a U-shaped base measuring 1.90m in width and 0.60m in depth, and which had been cut by a shallow north-south orientated ditch, Ditch 106 (Figs. 2.3-2.6, 3.4 and 3.5). Ditch 106 measured only 0.08m in depth and was only distinguishable from the fill of Ditch 104 by virtue of a darker band of silty sand at the features base (105).

Fifty metres to the south of Ditch 104 lay two similarly aligned ditches; Ditch 108 (Figs. 2.7 and 2.8) and Ditch 110 (Figs. 2.9, 2.10 and 3.6), both of which were filled by a similar layer of ashy silty sand (107/109), perhaps representative of former burning in the local area. The ditches themselves measured 1.00-1.21m in width by 0.20-0.26m in depth and featured shallow sloping sides with concave profiles, and were 20m apart in plan.

4. DISCUSSION

Although there were a number of archaeological features identified during the watching brief and the strip of the pipeline easement as previously discussed in the earlier section, none of these features were located in any of the areas marked by cropmarks identified from aerial photography of the site taken in 1945.

It appears likely that the line and orientation of the features suggests that they represent former field boundaries for the area, although there is no record of these boundaries on the earliest Ordnance Survey (OS) maps of the area and they are not seen within the aerial photography of 1945.

However, the north-west to south-east orientation of the features does match with the alignment of other boundaries in the area, and in particular with fields located to the east of Barrett's Coppice, a small area of woodland that does not appear on the 1945 aerial photography and is therefore quite modern, and it may be that the ditches identified in this watching brief are the continuation of field boundaries from this location or similar fields that were made into larger farming land sometime before the earliest OS maps of 1852.

The ashy soils associated with ditches 108 and 110 seem to suggest localised burning, and are possibly the result of the removal of hedges and bushes within these former field boundaries being burnt out and the ashes raked over before larger farming land was established. The large Gibbet Wood to the west and south-west of the pipeline easement was also reduced in size sometime after 1945, and it may be that areas of this woodland were burnt in the land clearance and the ashes added to the surrounding fields.

The lack of any archaeological finds associated with the cropmarks seen in the aerial photography of 1945 is interesting, and it may be that the interpretation of the area as being a possible Roman villa site based on the cropmarks was erroneous. Indeed, the lack of any sort of ceramic or signs of other finds associated with domestic activity in the area suggests that

whatever caused the cropmarks is likely not related to archaeological activity and may have been caused by geological changes at the time of the aerial survey.

It is possible however, that as the watching brief on the pipeline easement only concerned the very eastern edge of these cropmarks, with the main body of the cropmarks and the location of the 'villa' itself lying outside the easement to the west, there is still potential for surviving archaeological features in this area.

5. CONCLUSION

The watching brief on the new gas pipeline on land to the north of Roundhill Sewage Treatment Works successfully addressed the aims of the project, and in particular assessed the potential of cropmarks identifying a potential Roman villa site in the area.

No evidence of any surviving archaeology, with the exception of a series of former field boundaries, was identified on the site, and the lack of finds usually associated with domestic activity such as ceramics and animal bone suggested the interpretation of the site as being that of a former villa seems likely to be incorrect, although the potential for surviving archaeology to the immediate west of the pipeline easement is still possible.

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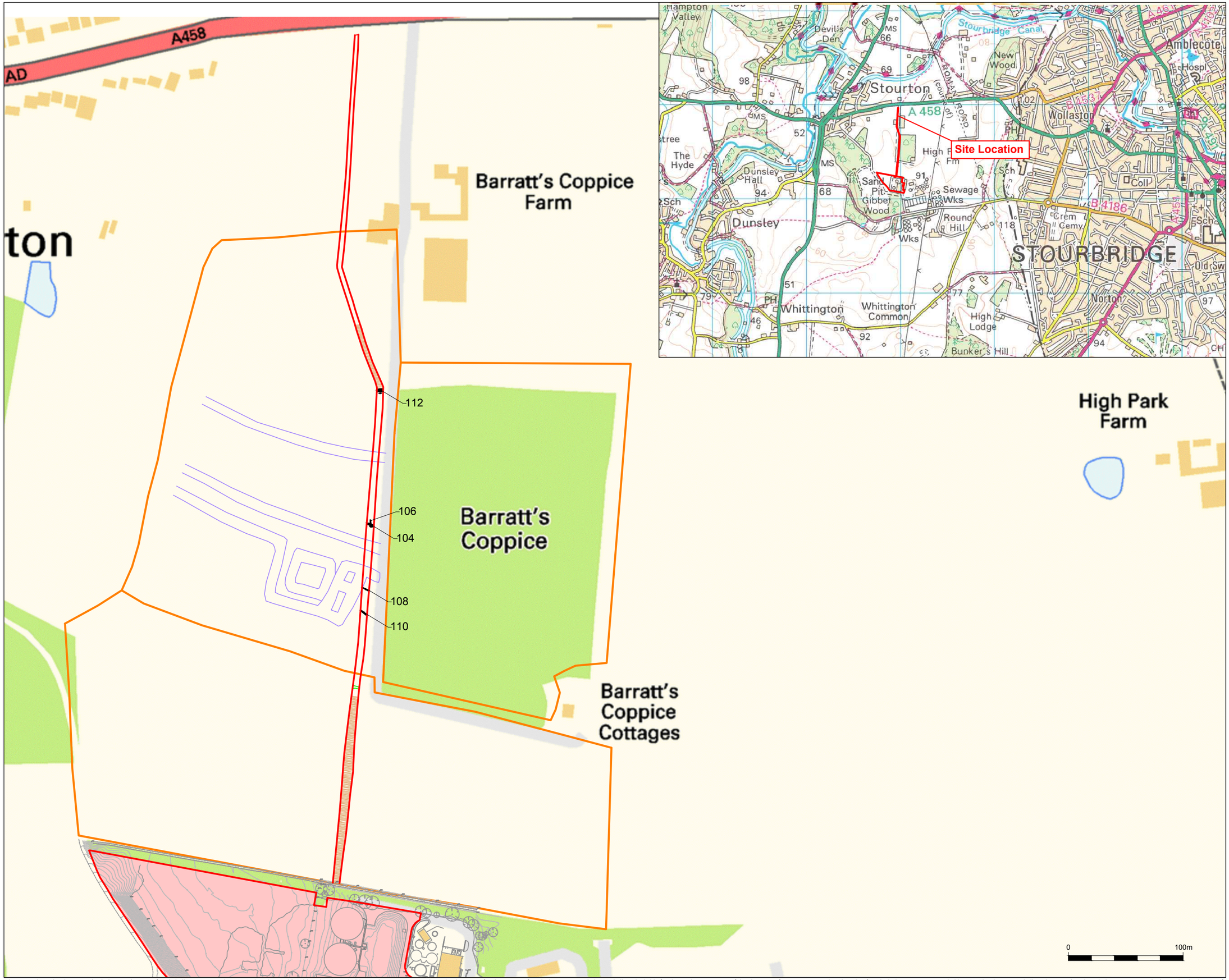
http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes (Accessed 20/07/2016)

Appendix 1: Context Summary

Context no.	Type	Fill of	Width (m)	Max Depth (m)	Description
100	Layer			0.20-0.30m	Dark brown-black silty organic clay topsoil for the site. Agricultural topsoil.
101	Layer			0.05-0.10	Layer of mid-light brown silty sandy subsoil. Negligible in places, interface between agricultural topsoil and natural sands.
102	Layer			N/A	Natural substrate for site area. Consisted of a mixture of orange-yellow sands with patches of stone in places.
103	Fill	104	1.90	0.60	Fill of Ditch 104. Consisted of mid-greyish brown silty sand with frequent small stone inclusions. No finds.
104	Cut		1.90	0.60	Cut for a ditch on an east-west orientation. Ditch featured steep sides with a u-shaped profile. Possible former field boundary, parallel with other similar features in the area. Cut by small gully 106.
105	Fill	106	0.50	0.08	Fill of a shallow gully 106. Consisted of light grey-brown silty sand with occasional small pebbles in places. No finds.
106	Cut		0.50	0.08	Cut for a shallow gully. Gully featured shallow sides with a flat base and was on a north-south orientation. Appeared to cut Ditch 104.
107	Fill		1.00	0.20	Fill of Ditch 108. Consisted of mottled grey-brown silty sand with occasional rounded pebble inclusions. No finds.
108	Cut		1.00	0.20	Cut for a ditch on a north-west to south-east orientation. Ditch featured shallow sloping sides with a concave profile. Fill suggestive of localised burning, perhaps indicative of a burnt out former field boundary.
109	Fill		1.21	0.26	Fill of Ditch 110. Consisted of dark grey-brown silty sand with occasional rounded pebbles in places. No finds.
110	Cut		1.21	0.26	Cut for a north-west to south-east orientated ditch. Ditch featured shallow sides with a concave profile. Probable former field boundary.
111	Fill		1.86	0.36	Fill of Ditch 112. Consisted of mid orange-brown silty sand with occasional rounded stone inclusions. No finds.
112	Cut		1.86	0.36	Cut for an east-west aligned ditch. Ditch featured moderately sloping sides with an even base. Representative of a likely former field boundary in this area of the site.

FIGURES 1-3



Key:

- Evaluation Area
- Watching Brief Area
- Field Boundaries
- Cropmarks from Aerial Photograph
- Archaeological Feature
- Ridge and Furrow
- Modern Feature

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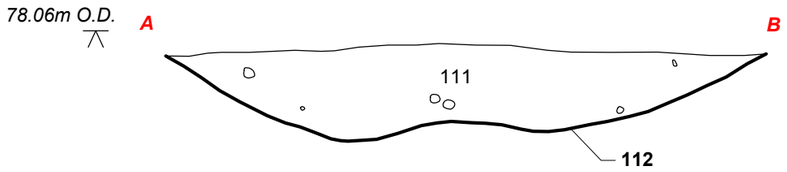

Fig. 2.1 - W-facing section of 112

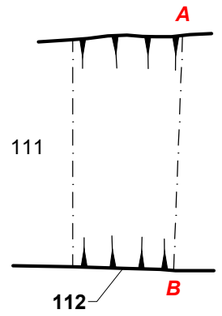

Fig. 2.2 - Plan of 112

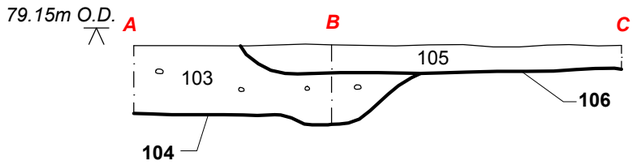

Fig. 2.3 - N- and E-facing sections of 104 and 106

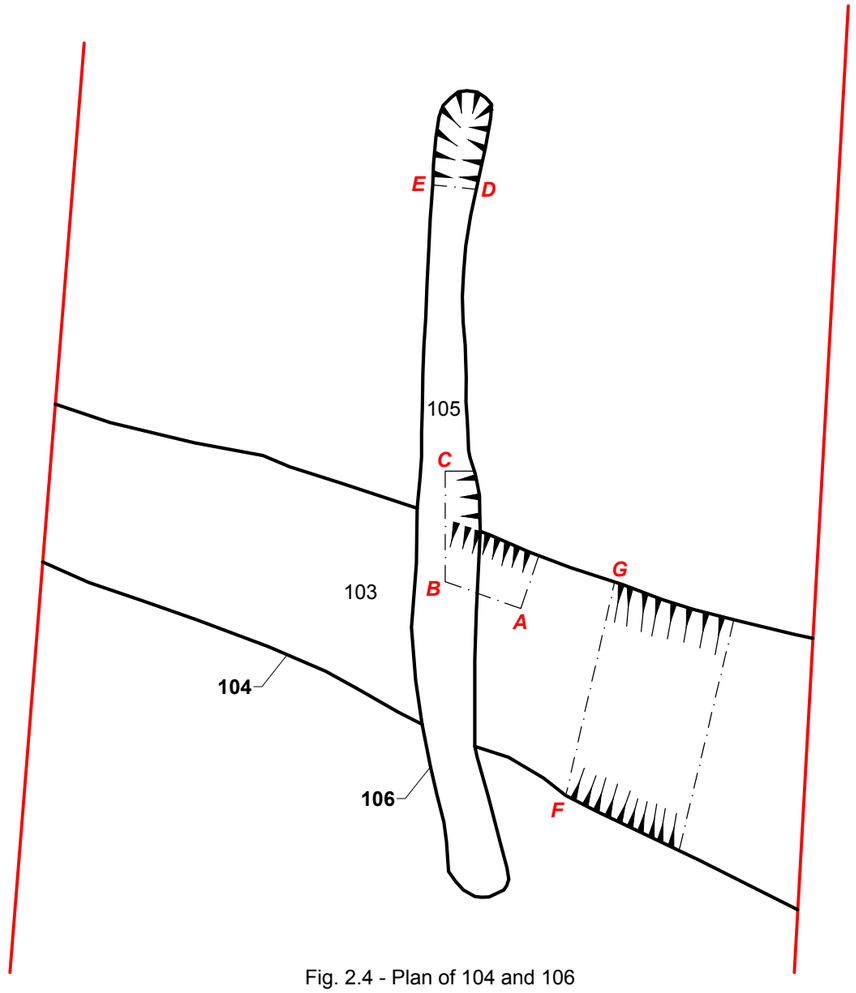

Fig. 2.4 - Plan of 104 and 106

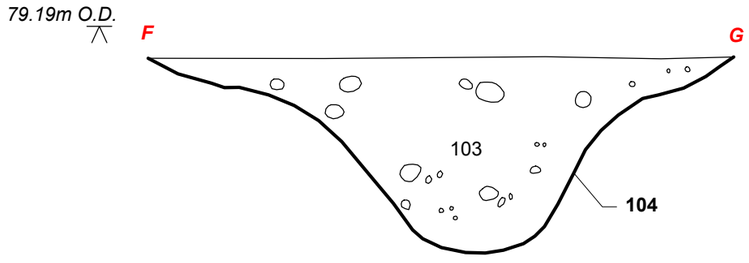

Fig. 2.5 - E-facing section of 104

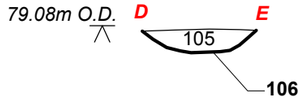

Fig. 2.6 - N-facing section of 106

0 1m

0 2m

Key:

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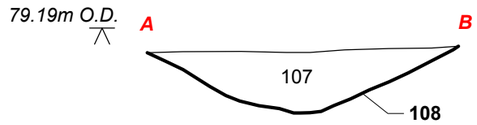

Fig. 2.7 - NW-facing section of 108

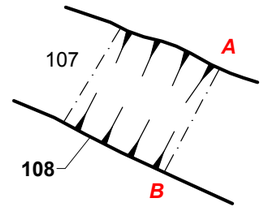

Fig. 2.8 - Plan of 108

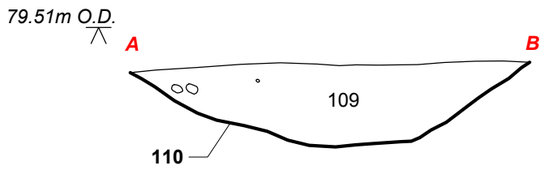

Fig 2.9 - NW-facing section of 110

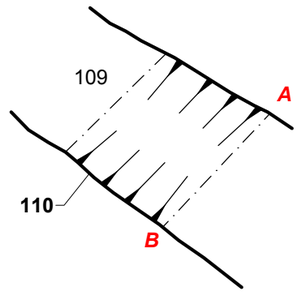

Fig. 2.10 - Plan of 110

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Fig. 3.1 - General shot of stripped easement area

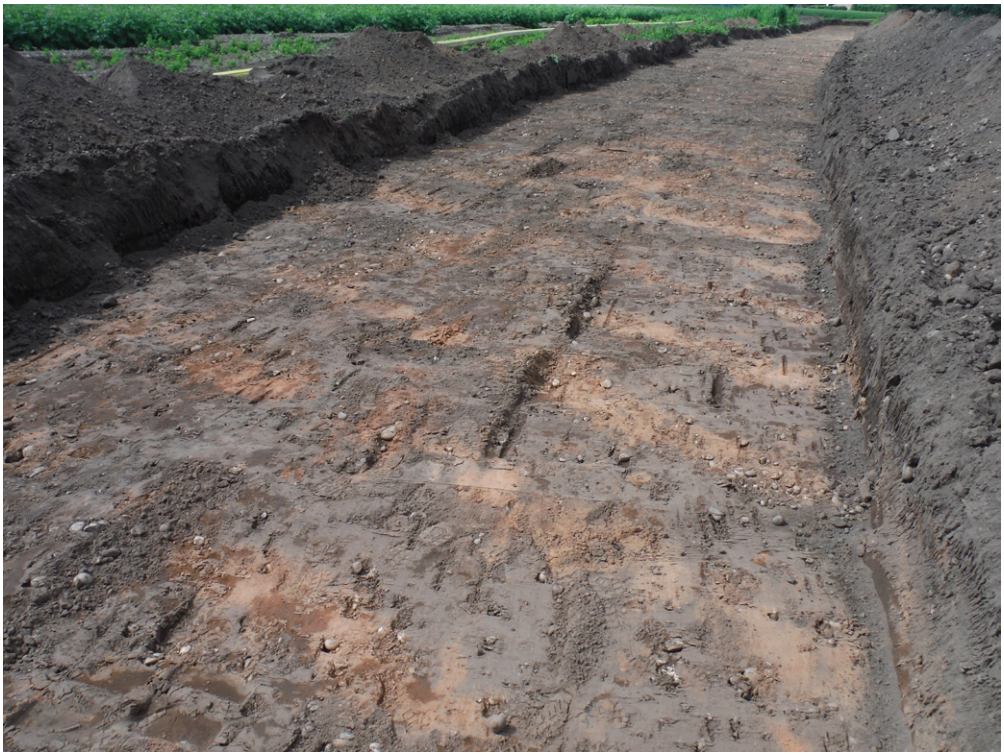

Fig. 3.2 - Shot of plough furrows towards centre of strip

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Fig. 3.3 - W facing section of ditch 112

Fig. 3.4 - E facing section of ditch 104

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Fig. 3.5 - E facing section of ditches 104 and 106

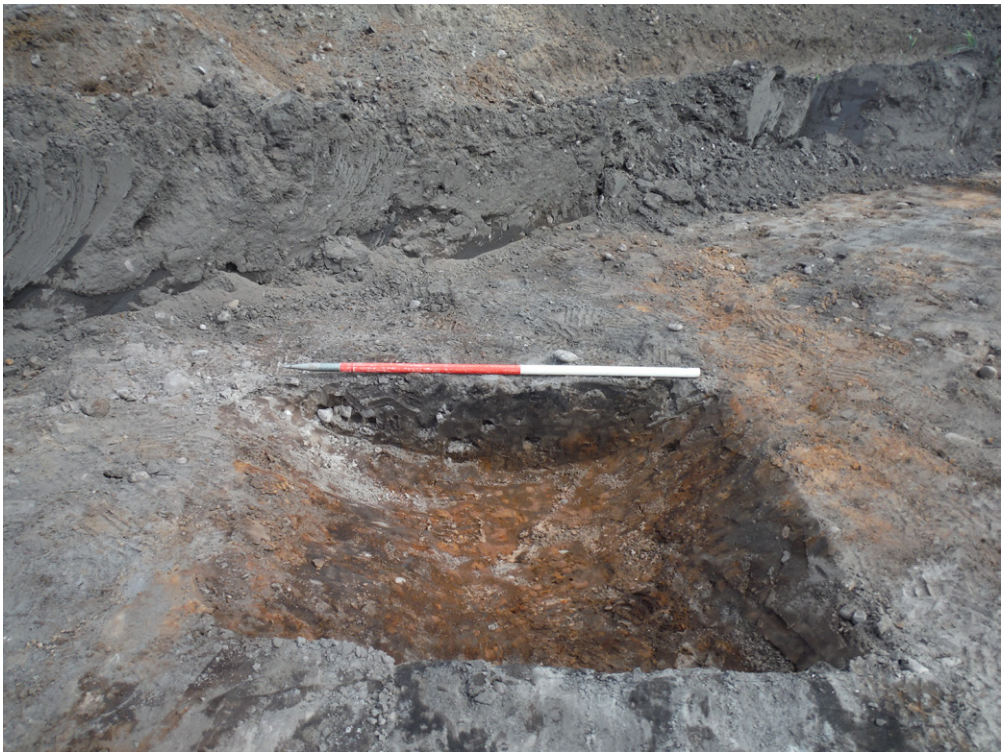

Fig. 3.6 - NW facing section of ditch 110

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