

Spicey Farm Brunton Wiltshire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



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Illustrated by: Julia Collins

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Spicey Farm, Brunton, Wiltshire

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Summary

In early May 2011 Oxford Archaeology carried out a watching brief at Spicey Farm, Brunton, Wiltshire. The work took place during site stripping and the excavation of foundation pits in preparation for the construction of new farm buildings. The watching brief revealed a single ditch aligned approximately east-west, and possibly contemporary with farm buildings recorded at the site in 1880. No dating evidence was recovered from either this feature or the site in general.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 In early May 2011, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Spicey Farm, Brunton, Wiltshire, commissioned by ATSS Ltd. The work comprised the monitoring of the reduction of ground level by approximately 0.3 m across an area of 0.68 ha, and the excavation of 14 foundation pits associated with construction of a new barn. The work was in accordance with a planning condition set by Wiltshire County Council (E/11/0105/AGD). OA produced a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the work in accordance with Institute for Archaeologists guidance for undertaking watching briefs (IFA 2008), setting out how it would meet the requirements put in place by David Vaughan, Assistant County Archaeologist for Wiltshire.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 Spicey Farm is situated 0.6 km north of the village of Brunton, Wiltshire (Fig. 1). The area of proposed development sits at an approximate height of 160 m above Ordnance Datum and is currently in use as pasture, lying immediately north of the existing farm buildings on the site.
- 1.2.2 The geology of the area is Holywell Nodular Chalk Formation and New Pit Chalk Formation (Undifferentiated) (British Geological Survey Sheet 283).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI (OA 2011) and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 The Wiltshire Historic Environment Record (HER) details two areas of archaeological interest 150 m to the west of the proposed development. An area of sub-rectangular earthworks and ditches were plotted from aerial photographs by the Royal Commission on Historic Monuments of England in 1993. In 1972 several fragments of Romano-British pottery were recovered from the same area including mortaria bases and a small fragment of high-status Samian ware (HER ref: WU25NW616). The HER also records an undated ditch, visible on aerial photographs, that runs from the south towards and through the development area.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the proposed development area.



- 2.1.2 To record the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains affected by the proposed works.
- 2.1.3 To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features within the site and to take samples where appropriate.
- 2.1.4 To make available the results of the investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The watching brief was undertaken by OA over three days during groundworks carried out by a contractor employed by ATSS Ltd, who used a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket. The groundworks comprised the reduction of ground level by approximately 0.3 m across an area c 684 m² and the excavation of 14 foundation pits of 1.2 m² resulting in an additional reduction of c 0.8 m at these locations.
- 2.2.2 All archaeological features and deposits were allocated unique context numbers and recorded in accordance with procedures set out in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (OA, 1992), the Institute for Archaeologists guidance for undertaking watching briefs (IFA 2008) and the WSI (OA, 2011).
- 2.2.3 A plan at a scale of 1:200 was produced showing the extent of the stripped area and the locations of foundation pits and sections recorded. Sections at a scale of 1:10 were produced of the strata at the edge of the stripped area and of the archaeological feature revealed by excavation. Individual plans at 1:20 were produced of foundation pits containing archaeology.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The site was reduced to c 0.3 m below current ground level. In places in the south of site this revealed undisturbed natural chalk (3) whilst in the north of site up to c 0.4 m of an overlying mid grey-brown clay-silt topsoil (2) remained.
- 3.1.2 The natural chalk (3) was cut by a single east-west aligned ditch, (5, 7 and 9), seen running c 39 m across site (Fig. 2, Plan 3). It was c 1.2 - 1.4 m wide and c 0.5 m deep and had a moderately concave base and steep sides of approximately 50 – 60°, which were also slightly concave. Due to variations in ground level, ditch 5 was partially removed during machining in one area in the west of site. The full profile of the ditch was recorded in section at this location (Fig. 2, Section 2).
- 3.1.3 Partial sections of the ditch (7 and 9) were recorded in foundation pits 2 and 3 respectively (Fig. 2, Sections 3 and 4).
- 3.1.4 At all locations where it was recorded the ditch contained a single fill, numbered 6, 8, and 10, in ditches 5, 7 and 9 respectively. These deposits all consisted of a mid brown-grey clayey silt fill with 8-15% chalk inclusions and 2-5% flint of various sizes.
- 3.1.5 The ditch was sealed by topsoil 2, a mid grey-brown slightly clayey silt containing small quantity of chalk and flint pebbles. This was in places overlain by chalk rubble deposits (1 and 4), laid recently to facilitate access to site.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 No finds were noted at any point during the watching brief.



3.3 Environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were noted at any point during the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The groundworks revealed a sequence of chalk bedrock overlain by topsoil.
- 4.1.2 A single ditch 1.2 – 1.4 m wide and up to 0.5 m deep cut the chalk and was observed to run c.39 m approximately east-west across the southern part of the stripped area. It was also seen in section in foundation pits 2 and 3 and the western baulk of site. It contained no finds although its fills appear to have formed through the gradual erosion of material from the surrounding area. This ditch ran parallel with the existing farm buildings situated to the south and thus also parallel to the road south of these. It is possible that this ditch formed part of the boundary seen enclosing the Spicey Farm buildings on the 1880 OS map of Wiltshire. On this map the buildings are marked as 'New Buildings' and a dashed boundary line is marked running along their North and Eastern sides.
- 4.1.3 No evidence was observed within the area of excavation for the undated ditch noted in the HER (see section 1.3.2, above) and reported to run in the direction of site from a point to the south of site. It is possible that the north south ditch adjoins, or turns to become, the ditch observed in the excavation at a point outside the excavation's limits, but this is speculative.



APPENDIX A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Depth	Width	Length	Comments	Finds	Date
1	Layer	-	-	-	Chalk Make-up	-	-
2	Layer	-	-	-	Topsoil	-	-
3	Layer	-	-	-	Natural – Chalk	-	-
4	Layer	0.52m	-	-	Modern demolition	-	-
5	Cut	0.49m	1.4m	-	Ditch cut	-	-
6	Fill	0.49m	1.4m	-	Fill of ditch 5	-	-
7	Cut	0.4m	1.4m	>2.8m	Ditch cut	-	-
8	Fill	0.4m	1.4m	>2.8m	Fill of ditch 7	-	-
9	Cut	0.46m	1.23m	>3.3m	Ditch cut	-	-
10	Fill	0.46m	1.23m	>3.3m	Fill of ditch 9	-	-



APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Bibliographic Sources

IFA, 2008, Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs

OAU, 1992, Field Manual (ed. D. Wilkinson)

OAU, 2011, Spicey Farm, Brunton, Wiltshire; Written Scheme of Investigation for a Watching Brief

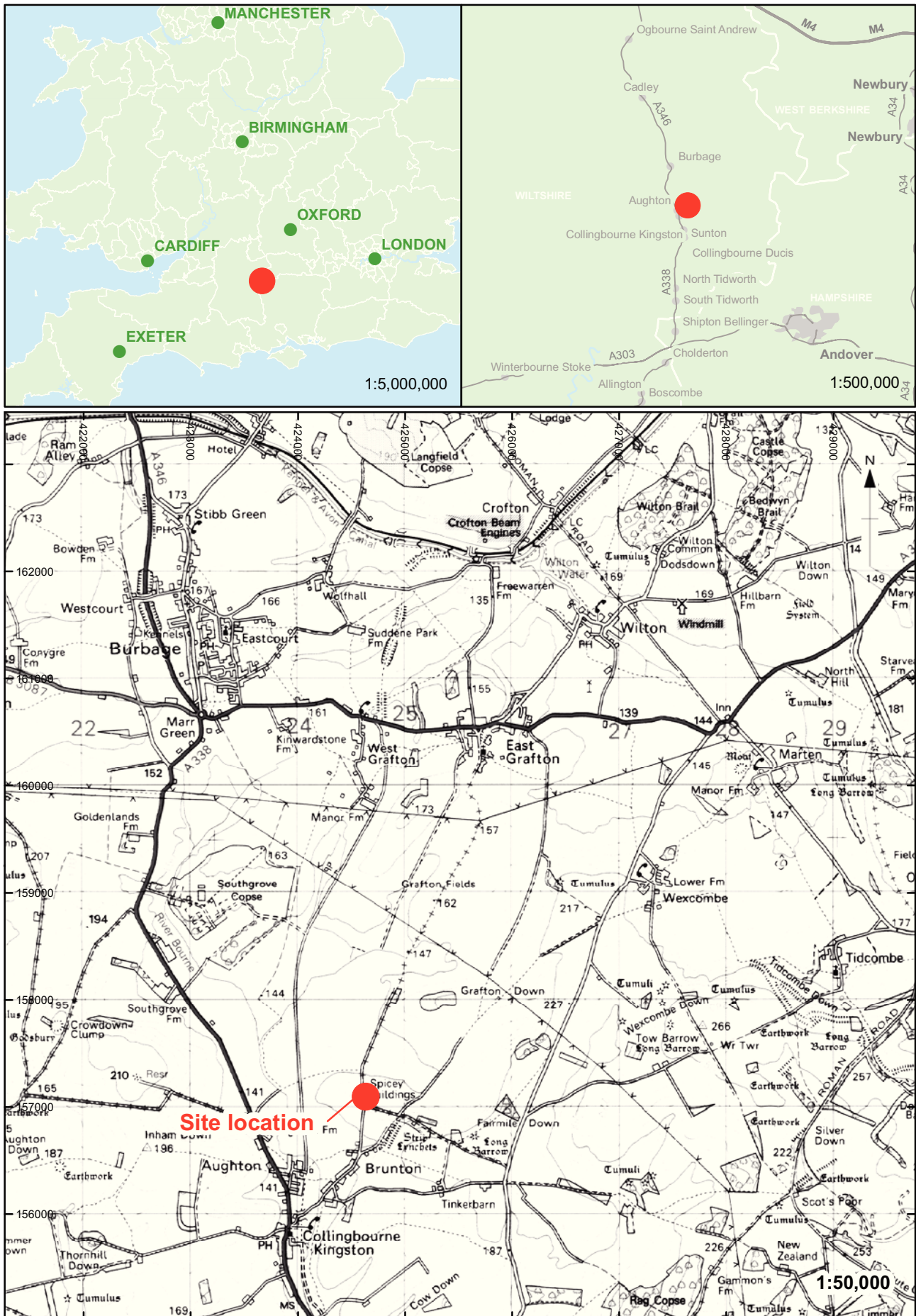
Cartographic Sources

British Geological Survey 1981, Sheet 283, Andover, Drift, 1:50,000 series



APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Spicey Farm, Brunton, Wiltshire
Site code:	COKSPF11
Grid reference:	Centred at NGR SU 24637 57092
Type of watching brief:	Machine topsoil stripping and excavation of foundation pits.
Date and duration of project:	Three site visits between 5 th and 11 th May 2011
Area of site:	684 m ²
Summary of results:	The watching brief revealed a single, undated, ditch running east-west across site. No finds were recovered during the course of excavation.
Location of archive:	Awaiting consent for deposition in The Wiltshire Heritage Museum.



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Figure 1: Site location

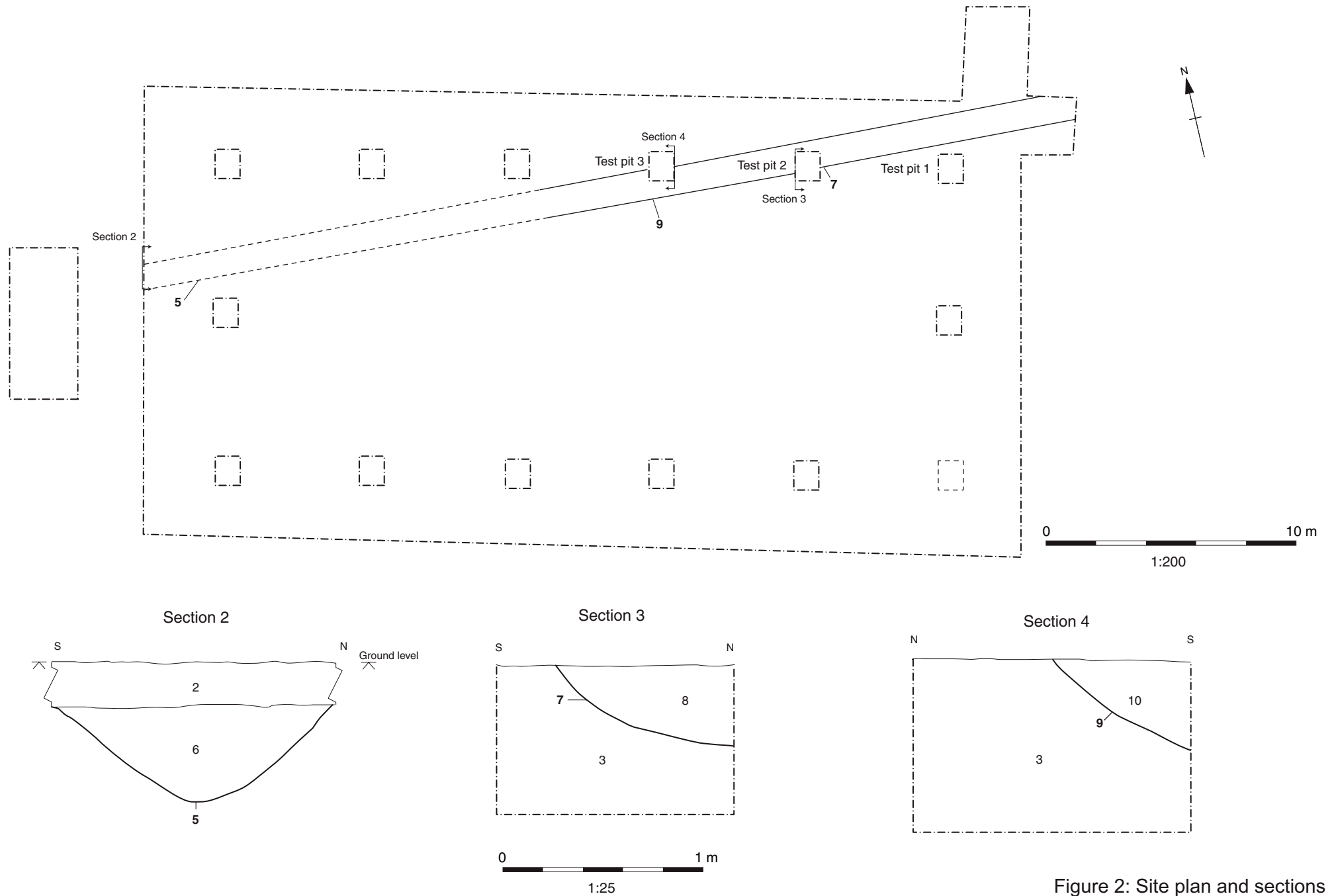




Plate 1: General view of site following machine stripping. View to east.



Plate 2: East facing section of ditch 7



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