# Blandford Camp Blandford Forum Dorset



Archaeological Watching Brief and Evaluation Report



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# Blandford Camp Blandford Forum Dorset

# NGR ST 9219 0927

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AND WATCHING BRIEF

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### **SUMMARY**

Between May and November 2007 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was required to commission a geophysical survey and undertook a watching brief and six trench field evaluation at Blandford Camp Blandford Forum on behalf of the Defence Estates, Environmental Support Team (Historic Environment) (DE) of the Ministry of Defence (MOD).

The watching brief and evaluation revealed well defined chalk cut linear features, ditches and a tunnel that had been excavated and rapidly backfilled. Artefacts recovered included barbed wire and a single .303 cartridge case. The features are thought be shallow ditches or practice trenches constructed during either the period 1914-18, or 1939-45.

### 1 Introduction

# 1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) as part of the Defence Estates (DE) Term Commission was required to provide a geophysical survey and undertake archaeological evaluation of the development area, situated at the northern edge of Blandford Camp, Blandford Forum (Fig. 1). Due to a failure in communication the construction contractor commenced ground-works in the area of the new access road and satellite hard-standings prior to the archaeological geophysical survey and subsequent archaeological evaluation of this area. Fortunately a full geophysical survey had been commissioned by Interserve to locate services within the development area).
- 1.1.2 To mitigate the effects of the ground-works OA reacted to the situation and undertook a Watching Brief on the remaining ground-works in this area during May and June 2007.
- 1.1.3 During September the area of tree-planting to the north-west of the development area was subjected to a geophysical survey. The results of the survey were used to target archaeological evaluation trenches on geophysical anomalies.
- 1.1.4 The archaeological evaluation was undertaken during November 2007. The evaluation consisted of 5 trenches (1-5) 30 m x 1.6 m and 1 trench (6) 35 m x 1.6 m. The trenches were targeted at geophysical anomalies and areas without geophysical responses to test the result of the survey.

## 1.2 Geology and topography

1.1.5 The site is situated on lower cretaceous chalk downland and lies at c 120 m above

Ordnance Datum (aOD). At the time of the evaluation the site was under rough pasture with the surrounding edges as cut grass.

# 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.1.6 The proposed development is situated on the northern edge of Blandford Camp close to a number of significant Prehistoric monuments. These include;
  - The Telegraph Clump Long Barrow (SAM 33580)
  - Bowl barrows aligned on the Long Barrow
  - At least one other bowl barrow to the south-west across Swainson Road
  - A Romano-British settlement some 500 m to the east of Telegraph Clump (SAM 33579)
- 1.1.7 The site of Blandford Camp has been a military camp since World War One (WW1), when troops were stationed and trained there. Following WW1 the camp was decommissioned by the military. During World War Two (WW2) the camp was again used by the military as a training and transit camp. Since WW2 the camp has remained in military use although it now covers a smaller area.

### 2 WATCHING BRIEF METHODOLOGY

# 2.1 Scope of fieldwork

1.1.8 The watching brief consisted of an intermittent presence on-site between the 25th May and 19th June 2007.

# 2.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

# Stripped Area (Fig. 3 and 4)

- 1.1.9 Prior to an archaeological presence the whole area of the satellite hard-standing and access road had been stripped of topsoil and where present subsoil. Where appropriate features were observed in plan they were sample-sectioned and recorded.
- 1.1.10 The majority of the access road had then been reduced a further 0.4 metres to formation level and stoned. Only at the eastern end of the access road could the natural chalk be observed.
- 1.1.11 In this area a north-south linear (26) 1.3 m wide x 0.43 m deep with a moderately steep side contained a single chalk rubble fill (25) which was overlain by subsoil (2). This ditch was possibly re-cut as 22, 0.8 m wide x 0.55 m deep. This similarly orientated ditch contained a similar fill to ditch 26, which was recorded on site as 25, and a secondary dirty chalk rubble fill (21) again overlain by subsoil (2). Within 21 an angled stake-hole (24) c 0.13 m in diameter contained a single dark-brown loam fill (23).

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- 1.1.12 The relationship between ditches 22 and 26 is unclear due to truncation by the later cut (20). On reflection it is possible that ditches 22 and 26 are the same ditch, which would account for the similarity of fills within the features.
- 1.1.13 The relationship between 26 and 22 is ambiguous as a later north-south cut (20) 0.55 m wide and 0.55 m deep truncated both 26 and 22. Ditch 20, which cut the subsoil (2), had a near-vertical western edge and an irregular eastern edge, where fill 25 may have collapsed during excavation. Ditch 20 had flat a base and contained a chalk rubble fill (19) and a secondary dark brown loam fill (18)
- 1.1.14 Within the development area a series of parallel plough scars were observed, indicating that this area had been ploughed at some indeterminate time.
- 1.1.15 To the west of the area of plough-scarring three shallow features 4, 6 and 8, were observed. Cut 4, 0.4 m diameter x 0.07 m deep, contained a single reddish-brown clayey silt (5); feature 6, 0.4 m diameter x 0.08 m deep, contained a single greyishbrown clayey silt fill (7); and feature 8, 0.37 m diameter x 0.17 m deep, contained a loose greyish -brown silty clay.
- 1.1.16 There was no obvious pattern to these post-holes, although stripping of top/subsoil and natural, prior to archaeological attendance, may have removed similar features.
- 1.1.17 In the western area of the satellite hard-standing a void close to the access road was observed, during excavation to formation level. Due to concerns about site safety this void was excavated to determine its extent. This provided an opportunity to observe this feature fully in section.
- 1.1.18 This chalk cut feature (28) was 2 m high x 0.8 m wide. The cut had a flat base, vertical sides and a convex roof. Contained within 28 was a single loose white chalk fill (27), which contained decayed wood and a twentieth-century bottle, which was not retained.
- 1.1.19 At the request of the civil engineer this void was excavated to determine its form and extent. The feature was excavated by machine to ensure that no voids remained below the satellite hard-standing and was observed to extend northwards before turning north-north-west where it extended beyond the limits of the development area.
- 1.1.20 Following the discovery of practice trenches, associated with WW1 or WW2, during the subsequent evaluation, it is thought that cut 28 is a tunnel (sap), or dug-out entrance excavated in association with these trenches. The curve/bend in the tunnel is probably deliberate, designed to prevent extended sight-lines.

### Areas of Mass Excavation (Fig. 3 and 4)

- 1.1.21 Mass excavation to formation level had commenced in other areas of site. This resulted in features being visible in the edge of the development area. These were drawn and recorded where appropriate and an estimation of their orientation made.
- 1.1.22 At the southern edge of the site, a shallow concave cut (10), 0.95 m wide x 0.55 m

deep, cut both the natural chalk (3) and overlying subsoil (2). This shallow ditch of unknown function contained a loose dark-brown loam (12), which was overlain by a brownish-white silty chalk (11). Fill 11 was sealed by the greyish-brown chalk loam topsoil (1).

- 1.1.23 To the east of site, observed in section, a near vertical-sided cut (13) had a slightly irregular base which had the appearance of a step. This ditch, 0.5 m wide x 0.6 m deep, was seen to cut the subsoil (2) and contained a single brownish-white silty chalk fill, which was overlain by topsoil (1).
- 1.1.24 Observed in the same baulk as 13, a similarly orientated cut (15) was 0.93 m wide x 0.35 m deep. This linear contained a brownish-white silty chalk primary fill (17), which was overlain by a dark-brown clayey silt (16). Secondary fill 16 was overlain by subsoil 2 which was overlain by topsoil.

### 2.3 Finds

1.1.25 No finds were recovered during the watching brief, apart from the bottle which was not retained.

### 2.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

1.1.26 No deposits uncovered during the watching brief were thought to warrant environmental sampling, and no samples were taken.

### 3 EVALUATION AIMS

- 1.1.27 To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the proposal area, particularly regarding the high potential for locating prehistoric and Romano-British archaeology
- 1.1.28 To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present. To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features.
- 1.1.29 To make available the results of this investigation.

### 4 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

# 4.1 Scope of fieldwork

1.1.30 The evaluation consisted of six trenches. Five of these measured 30 m x 1.6 m with the remaining trench measuring 35 m x 1.6 m.

# 4.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

1.1.31 Trenches were mechanically excavated using a JCB fitted with a toothless bucket under constant archaeological supervision. Topsoil and subsoil were stored separately and backfilled with the topsoil at the top. This was compacted with the JCB but, as

was formally agreed, no specialist reinstatement was undertaken.

1.1.32 Where appropriate the trenches were cleaned by hand and the revealed features sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds and environmental samples. All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:50 and, where excavated, sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (Wilkinson 1992).

### 4.3 Finds

1.1.33 Finds recovered during the course of the excavation were bagged by context. Finds of special interest were given a unique small find number.

### 4.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

1.1.34 No deposits uncovered during the evaluation were thought to warrant environmental sampling, and no samples were taken.

### 5 RESULTS: GENERAL

# 5.1 Soils and ground conditions

1.1.35 The site is located on the upper slopes of lower cretaceous chalk downland. This is overlain by a dark brown sandy clay topsoil with an average thickness of 0.35 m. At the time of the evaluation the site was under rough pasture with the surrounding edges as cut grass.

# 5.2 Distribution of archaeological deposits (Fig. 5)

1.1.36 Archaeological features were found within five of the six evaluation trenches, trench 5 being the only trench without features. The main features consisted of military training trenches. The un-weathered "clean" condition of the sides of these trenches suggests that they were backfilled very soon after excavation. The lack of silting deposits within the trenches also indicates that they had been open for a very short period of time. Within evaluation trench 3 there is evidence of a possible fire-step.

### 6 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

# 6.1 **Description of deposits**

1.1.37 Trenches 1-4 and 6 all contained archaeological features. Trench 5 was the only trench that contained no features.

### Trench 1 (Fig. 6)

1.1.38 Trench 1 measured 30 m x 1.6 m and was orientated NW-SE. Natural geology comprised chalk bedrock (101), which was overlain by a dark brown sandy clay (100) with an average thickness of 0.36 m. The trench sloped down towards the NW.

- 1.1.39 A single feature (102) was observed in trench 1. This ditch was 1 m wide x 0.25 m deep. The sole fill of this ditch contained modern finds of possibly 20th-century date.
- 1.1.40 It is probable that this ditch is associated with Blandford Camp's history as a military base.

# Trench 2 (Fig. 7)

- 1.1.41 Trench 2 measured 30 m x 1.6 m and was orientated NE-SW. Natural geology comprised of chalk bedrock (201), which was overlain by a dark brown sandy clay topsoil (200) with an average thickness of 0.38 m. The trench sloped down slightly towards the SW.
- 1.1.42 The only archaeological feature within trench 2 was a possible post-hole (202), 0.5 m x 0.5 m and 0.1 m deep, which contained a single mid-brown sandy clay fill (203) which was undated.
- 1.1.43 The square shape and regular profile of 202, along with features found in other trenches, suggests that it is a relatively modern feature. The only other feature within this trench was a modern pipe trench containing a round segmented ceramic pipe.

# Trench 3 (Fig. 8)

- 1.1.44 Trench 3 measured 30 m x 1.6 m and was orientated NW-SE. The natural chalk (301), was overlain by a dark brown sandy clay topsoil (300) with an average thickness of 0.35 m. The trench sloped down, very slightly, towards the NW.
- 1.1.45 Trench 3 contained two features. A north-south orientated cut (302) had near-vertical sides and a flat base. The cut was 1.1 m wide x 1 m deep and extended beyond the limits of the evaluation trench. This feature contained a firm near white chalk primary fill (304), 0.3 m thick, which was overlain by (303), a dark brown sandy clay 0.7 m deep.
- 1.1.46 A second similar cut (305) was orientated north-east to south-west and may have turned westwards at its south-west end. This feature was 1.4 m wide with a maximum depth of 0.85 m. At the south-eastern side of this trench a 0.35 m high step in the base of the cut was observed.
- 1.1.47 Both of these cuts are thought to be to be military training trenches. The step in the south-eastern side of trench (305) is possibly evidence of a fire-step.
- 1.1.48 No dating material was recovered from either of these features. Both features are almost identical, in terms of both form and fill types to features in trench 6 where 19th/20th-century finds were recovered.

# Trench 4 (Fig. 9)

1.1.49 Trench 4 measured 30 m x 1.6 m and was orientated NW-SE, the natural chalk (401) was overlain by a dark brown sandy clay (400) with an average thickness of 0.34 m. The trench sloped down, very slightly, towards the NW.

Archaeolog

- 1.1.50 A north-south orientated linear (402) was 0.98 m deep x 1.05 m wide and extended beyond the trench limits. This cut had near-vertical sides which abruptly changed to flat base. The primary fill of 402 was a dark brown sandy clay (404) which was up to 0.72 m thick. A secondary dirty white chalk fill (403) overlay 404
- 1.1.51 To the east of 402 a feature was observed extending into the trench. This feature (405) was 2 m wide and over 1 m long, extending beyond the trench edge. This feature was in excess of 0.9 m deep and was not excavated to its base. In plan the cut had straight edges with right-angled corners and near-vertical sides. The primary fill of 405 was (407) a dirty-white chalk, in excess of 0.6 m thick. Overlying this was 406, a dark brown sandy clay 0.3 m thick.
- 1.1.52 The lack of silting deposits suggests that they were backfilled soon after excavation.

# Trench 6 (Fig. 10)

- 1.1.53 Trench 6 measured 35 m x 1.6 m and was orientated NW-SE. Natural consisted of chalk (601), which was overlain by a dark brown sandy clay topsoil (600) c 0.34 m thick. The trench sloped down slightly towards the SW.
- 1.1.54 Towards the eastern end of trench 6 a north-south orientated linear (606) extended beyond the trench limits. This cut was up to 3 m wide x 0.94 m deep. The primary fill, an off-white chalk 0.4 m thick, was overlain by a dark brown sandy clay (608), which was 0.4 m thick and overlain by 607, an off-white chalk. The cut 606 had a near-vertical eastern edge which abruptly became a flat base. The western extent of the base gradually became an irregular moderately steep.
- 1.1.55 The western edge of 606 was truncated by a shallow rectangular cut (610), 1.1 m x c1 m and 0.3 m deep, which contained a single mid-grey sandy chalk fill (611).
- 1.1.56 To the west of 606 a north-west to south-east linear (602) was 1.57 m wide x 1.16 m deep and extended beyond the limits of the trench. This cut had a near-vertical northeast edge, a flat base and an approximately 50 degree south-west edge. The cut contained an off-white chalk fill (605) 0.35 m thick, overlain by (604) a dark brown sandy clay fill (304) 0.3 m thick. Fill 304 was overlain by (603) an off-white chalk 0.5 m thick.

### 6.2 **Finds**

- 1.1.57 The evaluation yielded little in the way of finds. Artefacts being were recovered from features in trenches 1 and 6. The few finds that were recovered all appear to post date the nineteenth century.
- 1.1.58 Two iron nails and a piece of wood, were recovered from the fill (103) of the ditch in trench 1.
- 1.1.59 From Trench 6 finds were recovered from both of the sample excavations. Within the practice trench fill 603, a short length of copper wire and 3 small pieces of ferrous wire (possibly rusted barbed-wire) were uncovered. From the trench fill 609, a small

piece of similar ferrous wire and a .303 bullet case was recovered.

### 6.3 **Bullet case**

# By J. Mumford

- 1.1.60 Only one datable find was recovered during the evaluation, from context 609. This was in the form of a corroded .303 brass case in the backfill of a practice trench.
- 1.1.61 The case head stamp was R↑L C IV and showed that the case was manufactured by the Royal Laboratory, Woolwich Arsenal, Kent (R↑L) for a Mk 4 bullet (IV) with cordite propellant charge (C) before 1912.
- 1.1.62 The Mk 4 bullet was a 215 grain hollow point bullet introduced in 1897 which discontinued in service after 1903, when the Hague Convention banned soft and hollow point bullets. The Mk 6 and later 7 bullets replaced these and the remaining stocks of Mk 4 were then used for target practice.
- 1.1.63 The bullet pre-dates the First World War and was possibly the last of this type of ammunition being used by troops for training and target practice at Blandford Camp, during the period 1914-1919.

### 6.4 Palaeo-environmental remains

1.1.64 No deposits were observed during the evaluation that were thought to warrant environmental sampling.

# 7 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

# 7.1 **Overall interpretation**

- 1.1.65 Despite the close proximity of the development to a number of known Prehistoric and 20th-century activity was found within the watching brief, or evaluation, area.
- 1.1.66 The features observed during both the watching brief and subsequent evaluation are all thought to relate to the site's use as a military training camp between the periods 1914-1919 and 1939 to the present.
- 1.1.67 This appears to mainly relate to the construction of training trenches, probably of the period 1914-1919 The chalk cuts of these trenches show no evidence of weathering or degradation. This strongly suggests that they were backfilled with excavated material very soon after they were constructed. Unlike trenches at Scraesden Fort, Cornwall, these trenches would have served no defensive purpose and are more readily comparable to the trenches at Barry Buddon (OA 2006).
- 1.1.68 This is supported by the recovery of a single bullet case from practice trench 606. The case was produced between 1897-1903, after which this type of hollow point round was banned by the Hague Convention. The round would have then been retained as

- stock and used for target shooting.
- 1.1.69 In evaluation trench 3, practice trench 305 showed evidence of a possible fire-step cut into its eastern side. If it is a fire-step, to enable observation over the breastwork, it would be located on the wrong, uphill, side. This too suggests a training function for the feature.
- 1.1.70 Further evidence to support the military training function of these features can be found in the surrounding area of the camp where there are other practice trenches that still survive as recognisable earthworks.
- 1.1.71 Whilst the depth of the trenches at c 1 m would not be adequate to provide total cover to a person standing, the addition of the topsoil c 0.3 m and the excavated material as a breastwork would provide adequate cover.
- 1.1.72 The presence of "dirty" primary fills would support this as the front of any breast work would need to be faced with turfs to make it less visible the enemy. It could be suggested that during backfilling this dressed face would be most likely to be backfilled first.

# **APPENDICES**

# APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench	Ctxt No	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	No./wt	Date
Watching Brief								
	1	Layer		0.25	Topsoil/turf			
	2	Layer		0.1-0.4	Subsoil			
	3	Layer		NA	Natural chalk			
	4	Cut	0.4 x 0.3	0.07	Post-hole			
	5	Fill	0.4 x 0.3	0.07	Post-hole fill			
	6	Cut	0.4	0.08	Post-hole			
	7	Fill	0.4	0.08	Post-hole fill			
	8	Cut	0.37 x 0.4	0.17	Post-hole			
	9	Fill	0.37 x 0.4	0.17	Post-hole fill			
	10	Cut	0.95	0.55	Possible ditch			
	11	Fill	0.55	0.17	Ditch fill			
	12	Fill	0.95	0.55	Ditch fill			
	13	Cut	0.5	0.6	Ditch cut			
	14	Fill	0.5	0.6	Ditch fill			
	15	Cut	0.95	0.37	Ditch cut			
	16	Fill	0.95	0.08	Ditch fill			
	17	Fill	0.95	0.27	Ditch fill			
	18	Fill	0.55	0.45	Ditch fill			Mod?
	19	Fill	0.55	0.18	Ditch fill			Mod?
	20	Cut	0.55	0.55	Ditch cut			Mod?
	21	Fill	0.8	0.4	Ditch fill			
	22	Cut	0.8	0.4	Ditch cut same as 26			
	23	Fill	0.13	0.38	Stake-hole fill			Mod?
	24	Cut	0.13	0.38	Stake-hole cut			
	25	Fill	1.3	0.43	Ditch fill			
	26	Cut	1.3	0.43	Ditch cut same as 22			
	27	Fill	0.8		Tunnel fill, contained decaying wooden posts	Bottle not retained		Mod
	28	Cut	0.8	1.9	Tunnel/sap cut			Mod

11

Trench	Ctxt No	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	No./wt	Date
Trench 1								
	100	Layer		0.36	Modern Topsoil			
	101	Layer			Natural Chalk			
	102	Cut	1.05	0.26	Ditch			
	103	Fill		0.26	Fill of (102)	Fe Nail Wood fence-post	2 1	Mod Mod
Trench 2								
	200	Layer		0.38	Modern Topsoil			
	201	Layer			Natural Chalk			
	202	Cut	0.5	0.1	Posthole			
	203	Fill		0.1	Fill of (202)			
Trench 3								
	300	Layer		0.35	Modern Topsoil			
	301	Layer			Natural Chalk			
	302	Cut	1.1	1	Trench			
	303	Fill		0.7	Fill of (302)			
	304	Fill		0.3	Fill of (302)			
	305	Cut	1.4	0.85	Trench			
	306	Fill		0.5	Fill of (305)			
	307	Fill		0.35	Fill of (305)			
Trench 4								
	400	Layer		0.34	Modern Topsoil			
	401	Layer			Natural Chalk			
	402	Cut	1.05	0.98	Trench			
	403	Fill		0.5	Fill of (402)			
	404	Fill		0.72	Fill of (402)			
	405	Cut	0.8	0.7	Pit			
	406	Fill		0.3	Fill of (405)			
	407	Fill		0.6+	Fill of (405)			
Trench 5								
	500	Layer		0.3	Modern Topsoil			
	501	Layer			Natural Chalk			
Trench 6								
	600	Layer		0.34	Modern Topsoil			
	601	Layer			Natural Chalk			

Trench	Ctxt No	Туре	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	No./wt	Date
	602	Cut	1.57	1.16	Trench			
	603	Fill		0.5	Fill of (602)	Cu-alloy wire	1	Mod
						Barbed wire	3	Mod
	604	Fill		0.3	Fill of (602)			
	605	Fill		0.35	Fill of (602)			
	606	Cut	3	0.94	Trench			
	607	Fill		0.42	Fill of (606)			
	608	Fill		0.4	Fill of (606)			
	609	Fill		0.4	Fill of (606)	Barbed wire	1	Mod
						.303 bullet case	1	1914-1919
	610	Cut	1.1	0.3	Pit			
	611	Fill		0.3	Fill of (610)			

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### APPENDIX 6 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Blandford Camp. Site code: MODBLA 07 Grid reference: ST 9219 0927

**Type of evaluation:** Watching brief and 6 trenches, Five 30m x 1.6m and one 35m x

1.6mDate and duration of project: 12/11/2007- 16/11/2007

Summary of results: The watching brief observed modern ditches and a possible practice

tunnel/sap. The evaluation found evidence of late nineteenth/ early twentieth century activity. This directly related to the military use of the camp and predominantly consisted of training trenches associated with WW1 or WW2.**Location of archive:** The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Dorset County Museum in due course.



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Figure 1: Site location

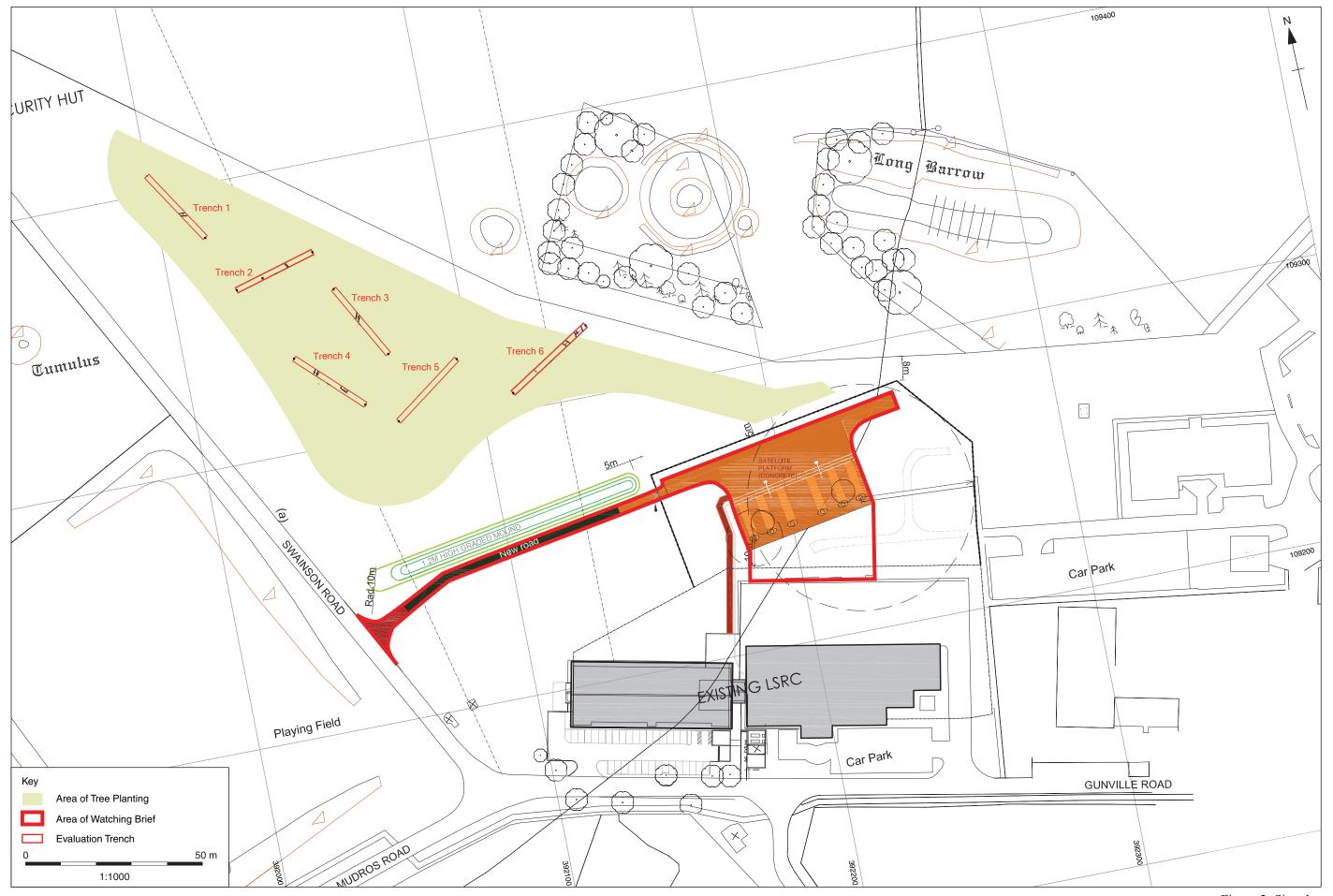
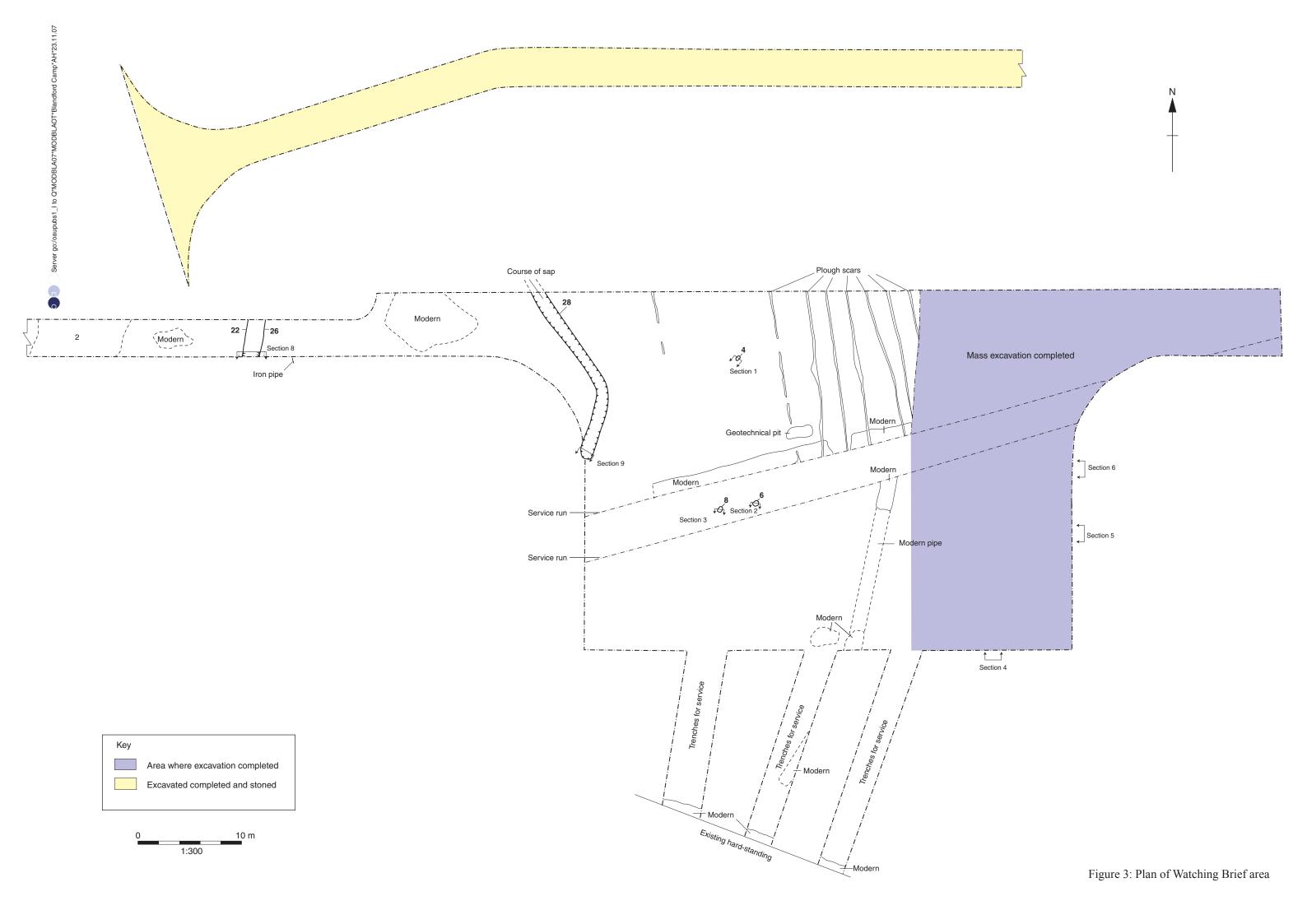


Figure 2: Site plan



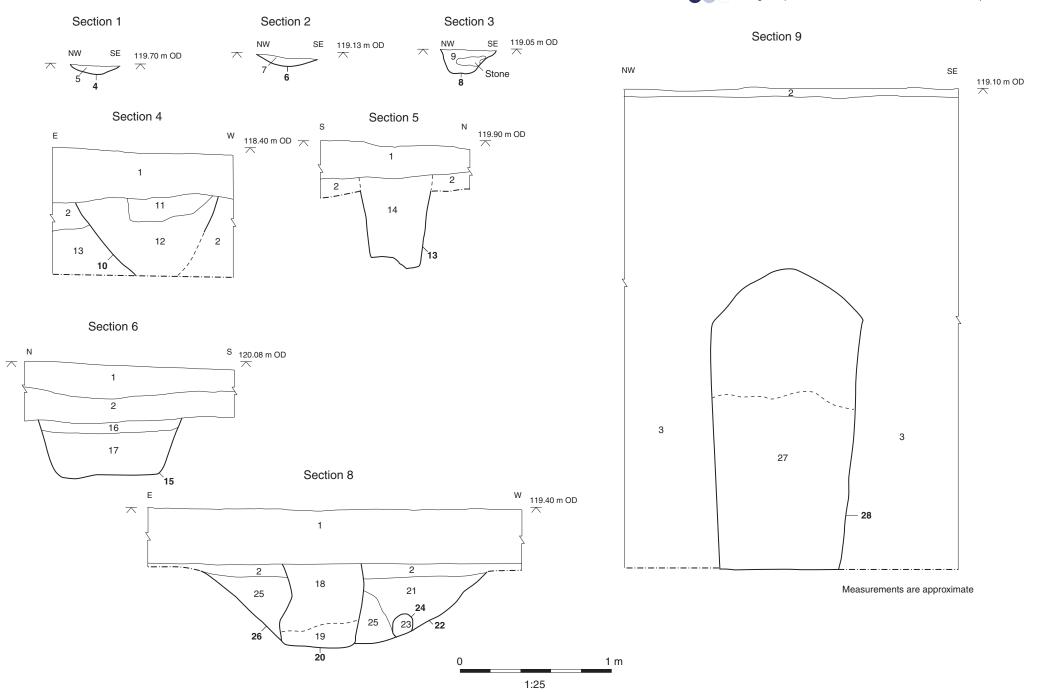
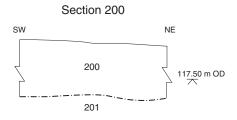


Figure 4: Watching Brief area sections

Figure 5: Trench plan



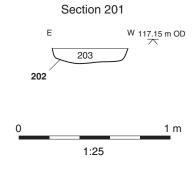


Figure 7: Trench 2, plan and sections

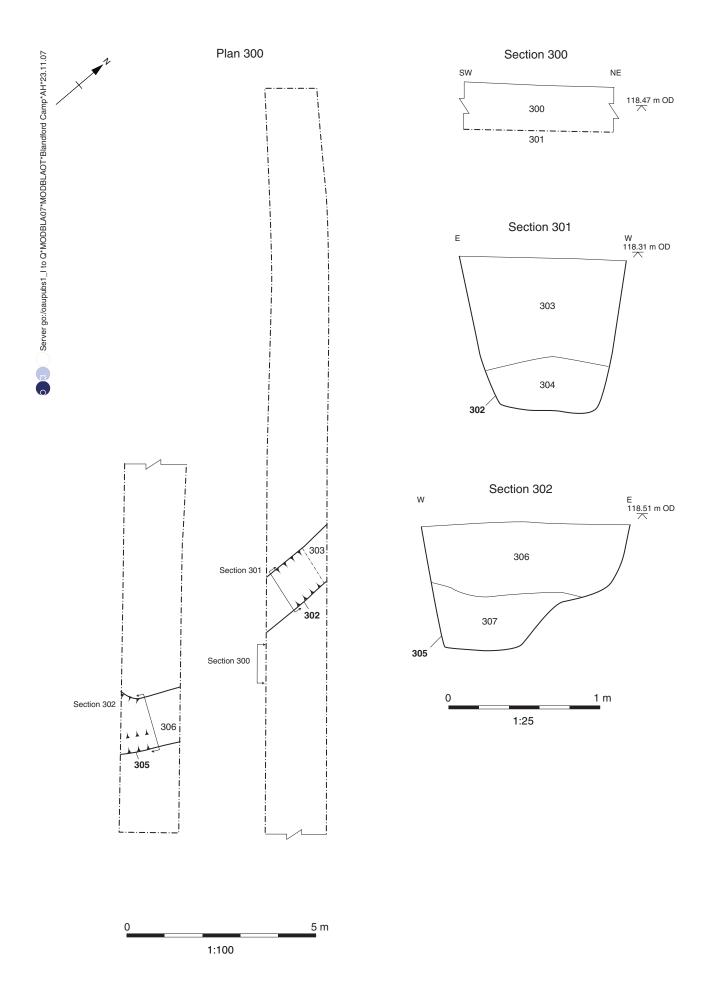


Figure 8: Trench 3, plan and sections

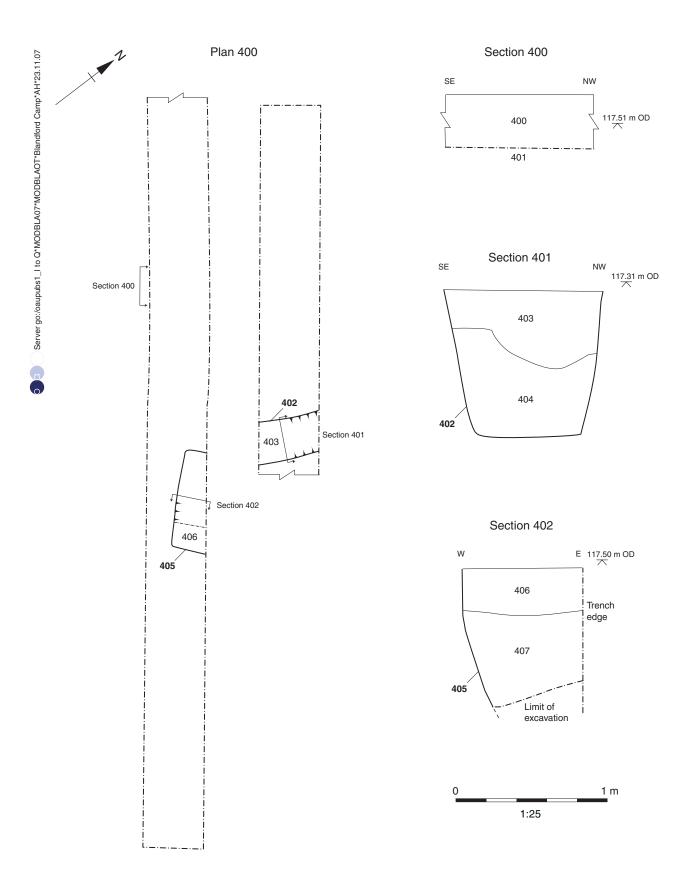




Figure 9: Trench 4, plan and sections

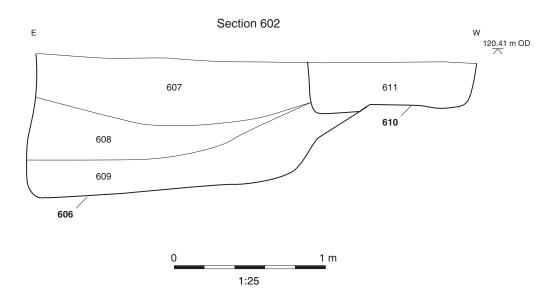


Figure 10: Trench 6, plan and sections