

Network Rail

Trent Valley

West Coast Mainline Upgrade

Staffordshire: Tamworth to Lichfield

Sites 38-40 UB95, Huddlesford Pocket



Archaeological Evaluation Report



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**Network Rail, Trent Valley
West Coast Mainline Upgrade
Staffordshire: Tamworth to Lichfield
Sites 38-40, UB95, Huddlesford Pocket**

NGR: SK 152 095

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

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SUMMARY

In April 2006, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation as part of the West Coast Mainline upgrade in Staffordshire between Tamworth and Lichfield, on behalf of Network Rail. A number of areas of this rail improvement have been designated to be of archaeological interest and this report concerns the Huddlesford Pocket site areas A38-40, UB95.

The evaluation revealed a single linear feature likely to be related to recent land drainage. Other features encountered are likely to be the result of geological processes or bio-turbation.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In April 2006, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation on land adjacent to the West Coast Mainline railway, in three fields to the south of Huddlesford bridge in the parish of Whittingdon near Lichfield, Staffordshire (Fig 1). The evaluation site was 1.5 ha and located at NGR SK 152 095 (centred).
- 1.1.2 The evaluation was carried out on behalf of Network Rail ahead of works for upgrading of the rail line between Tamworth and Lichfield (known as Network Rail 'Order 2').
- 1.1.3 Discussions between Steve Dean, Archaeological Officer for Staffordshire County Council and OA, led to an agreement that in areas where there was the potential for damage to possible archaeological remains, due to temporary or permanent land-take disturbance, archaeological fieldwork would be carried out.
- 1.1.4 An outline project proposal detailing how OA would implement the evaluation and watching briefs was agreed between all parties (OA 2004 - and see 1.3 below).

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 BGS sheet 154 indicates that the site is located on Triassic Keuper sandstones, at c 64.8 m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The alluvium indicated on BGS sheet 154 to the east of the site was not detected in any of the trenches.
- 1.2.2 The area evaluated is on flat ground previously used for agricultural purposes.

1.3 Previous work and project background

- 1.3.1 In 2002, an initial phase of field-walking was carried out by OA for *Railtrack* along the northern side of the railway line between (approximately) Whittington and the Sewage works to the north-west of Tamworth.

- 1.3.2 The report for this work has not been issued, as the project did not continue once *Railtrack* as a company had ceased to exist. The results of the work, however, revealed post-medieval material throughout the study area in the vicinity of a former track-way. It was thought, nonetheless, that there would have been greater potential for archaeological finds along the walked route, owing to the number of crop marks within the vicinity of the track-way and in adjacent fields.
- 1.3.3 In 2002, when Network Rail Order 2 went to Public Inquiry, Staffordshire County Council requested that further and more detailed archaeological work should be undertaken on known crop-marks along the route and within fields with ancient field names depicted on Parish Tithe maps.
- 1.3.4 The Council also requested that an all-encompassing archaeological project design be produced to cover the construction works proposed under Order 2. This work (*West Coast Mainline Upgrade - Trent Valley. Outline Proposal for Phase 1 Works. OA 2004*) was undertaken by OA and included provision for both evaluation trenches and watching briefs.
- 1.3.5 As part of the mitigation works OA monitored the construction of the haul road adjacent to the West Coast Mainline (OA 2005b) and the results of this watching brief and previous field-walking were used to determine a programme of work to mitigate the effects of the upgrading of the railway upon any potential archaeology.

1.4 **Archaeological and Historical Background**

- 1.4.1 The following background information is reproduced from the Heritage Impact Assessment produced by OA for Railtrack but never issued due to the collapse of the latter. The "study corridor" refers to a corridor 500 m either side of the railway line which was the subject of the Impact Assessment.

General

- 1.4.2 Between 1960 and 1976 JK St Joseph and later J Pickering carried out regular aerial reconnaissance of the central section of the study corridor, following the discovery of a large number of cropmarks on the Gravel Terrace within the Tame Valley. As a result of this research a number of archaeological 'rescue' excavations were carried out in the early 1970s in the Fisherwick area in response to gravel extraction, which threatened to destroy a number of cropmark sites within this area of seemingly high archaeological potential. The majority of these excavations were located c. 2 km to the north-east of the study corridor. One excavation was undertaken within the study corridor c. 300 m north-east of the line of the railway. The results of these excavations were published in a British Archaeological Reports volume in 1979 entitled *Fisherwick: The Reconstruction of an Iron Age Landscape* (Smith *et al.*, 1979).
- 1.4.3 In 1980, Christopher Smith published a summary of his doctoral thesis for the University of Nottingham on the historical development of the parishes of Alrewas.

Fisherwick and Whittington, in *Transactions of the Southern Staffordshire Archaeological Society* Vol **XIX**. Smith's study area forms a broad north-south strip which encompasses the central section of the WCML study corridor between eastings SK 16 (Whittington) and SK 19 (River Tame). The study involved detailed examination of documentary and cartographic sources, air photographs, and also involved several fieldwalking surveys. The survey revealed concentrations of material from the prehistoric to post-medieval period at various locations within his study area. Smith attempted to reconstruct the landscape of his study area at four periods in time: the 1st millennium, AD200, c. AD1300 and the mid 18th century.

Prehistoric

- 1.4.4 Excavations on the Gravel Terrace at Fisherwick, c. 2 km to the north-east of the study corridor, prior to gravel extraction in 1968 and 1973-4, have revealed further evidence of prehistoric activity in the form of a possible Neolithic settlement and extensive Iron Age activity. The latter includes Iron Age settlements believed to have been agricultural in nature - small farmsteads surrounded by extensive field systems. It has been suggested (Smith 1977 quoted in Hodder 1982, 19) that the Tame Gravel Terrace was divided by a series of permanent ditched boundaries during the first millennium BC, as the result of population increase. Excavations at Fisherwick revealed that pre-medieval population levels within the Valley are likely to have been considerably greater than was previously supposed (Smith 1979, 103).

Roman

- 1.4.5 Excavations in 1968 prior to gravel extraction at Fisherwick, c. 2 km to the north-east of the study corridor, revealed a Romano-British farmstead consisting of four circular huts, pens and palisaded enclosures, adjacent to a drove-way. The farm, dated to the early 2nd century AD to the 3rd century AD, was believed to have specialised in stock-rearing. In addition, traces of Roman activity have been found within the historic core of Tamworth and it is possible that there may have been an earlier settlement here prior to the early medieval *burh* (Staffs SMR).

Medieval

- 1.4.6 There were a number of known medieval settlements within the study area, some of which later became deserted and which have left no trace. The settlements include Lichfield, Streethay, Whittington (all extant) and *Fisherwick* (deserted), located just outside the study corridor, and *Tamhorn*, *Horton*, *Fulfen* and *Morughale* (all deserted), located within the study corridor. These settlements would have provided a focus for the community within the parish. In addition, there were probably a number of smaller secondary settlements in the form of isolated farmsteads located away from the villages. The identification of these is less straightforward and is primarily based on buildings shown on the earliest maps consulted and place-name evidence.

- 1.4.7 Fisherwick, although not mentioned in Domesday Book, is recorded as a manor in 1167 (VCH xiv, 239). The settlement no longer exists but is believed to lie outside the study corridor, c. 1.5 km to the north-east of the railway (Hurst 1967, 45 and VCH Staffs xiv, 239).
- 1.4.8 Tamhorn and Horton are both mentioned in Domesday and formed a township by the late 13th century, with Horton apparently more important (VCH Staffs xiv, 239). The township of Tamhorn and Horton is listed in a Subsidy Roll of 1327 when 12 people were assessed for subsidy. Smith (1980, 7) identified the possible location of the DMVs of Tamhorn and Horton through concentrations of medieval pottery and building material found during fieldwalking in the early 1970s. The spread of artefacts was too dense to be simply residual material within a manure scatter used to assist cultivation. It should however be noted that the VCH (XIV 1990, 240) suggests that the site of Horton village may also lie close to, or on, the present site of the small cluster of houses at Hademore, immediately to the south of the railway.

Fisherwick Park

- 1.4.9 The Railway line between Fisherwick Brook and Hademore cuts the southern edge of a formal post-medieval park called Fisherwick Park. The park is not listed in English Heritage's Register of Parks and Gardens. The park was created to provide a setting around a 'very proper brick house' (possibly located on or near the site of the medieval manor) built by John Skeffington in the late 16th century (VCH Staffs xiv, 243-4).
- 1.4.10 The park was enclosed by a park pale (boundary) intended to keep deer and rabbits out of the park grounds. The park was planted with a large number of trees and by the 1680s the trees had 'grown to a magnitude (in number) almost beyond belief' (*ibid.*, 244). Two avenues led through the park to Fisherwick Hall (c. 1.5 km to the north-east of the railway) aligned on the Whittington and Tamhorn churches. The park increased in size in the later 18th century, evidently to the north-east (VCH Staffs xiv, 244), absorbing enclosed farmland adjacent (Smith 1980, 5). In 1747 the park covered an area of 450 acres; in 1760 this had grown to 571 acres. A map of the park dated 1760 shows a fence around the perimeter of the park and the broad avenue leading to Fisherwick Park from an entrance by Hademore Lodge. The map shows little detail, other than a depiction of land within the park boundary and the enclosed fields to the east.
- 1.4.11 Between c. 1766-79 Fisherwick Hall was demolished and rebuilt for Lord Donegall. This involved landscaping of the park by Lancelot (Capability) Brown, following an Act of 1766 stopping up all public roads through the park. The two avenues were removed and replaced with two new drives, which led to south to the lodge at Hademore, and east to Stubby Leas (outside the study area). Brown planted 10,000 trees and created a boundary plantation enclosing a ride along the south and east sides of the park (VCH Staffs xiv, 244). A plan of the Estate of Lord Spencer Chichester dated to the late 18th century shows boundary plantations along the

southern edge of the park at Hademore as well as a building marked 'Hedimore Lodge' at the southern entrance to the park. Also shown is the developing estate hamlet of 'Hedimore' immediately to the south, consisting of Hademore Farm, Holly Cottage and another cottage (now demolished). It had been intended to build a brick wall around the whole park, but only about a mile of it was completed, on the south-east side. This wall was evidently still standing in 1990 (*ibid.*, 244). Shortly after 1808 Fisherwick Hall was demolished. A large number of trees were felled and the park divided into fields. The OS 1" map (1834) shows the former park, with a clear boundary in the form of a line of screening trees along the southern edge. This is the earliest map which enables the southern line of the park to be placed in relation to the modern OS mapping with any accuracy. A Plan of the Township of Fisherwick (1842) and the OS 1st edition 6" map (1883-8) both show Hademore Lodge as still extant, the latter showing the lodge to have lain some 50 m north-east of the railway.

1.4.12 When the Trent Valley Railway was built in 1846-7, it cut across the extreme southern corner of the former Fisherwick Park, just to the south of the gate lodge. It is unclear whether the southern edge of the park as shown in 1834 represented the extent of the original 16th century park however. It is therefore possible that remains of the original park pale, in the form of a bank, ditch or fence (the latter is suggested by a map of 1760) may survive in the form of an earthwork, or that remains of a ditch may be preserved as a buried feature beneath and close to the railway. Whilst the site of the Fisherwick Hall is now occupied by a container company, and its grounds now lie under a former explosives depot and a field of crops, a pair of Grade II Listed gate piers dating to the early 19th century still survive at a point some 50 m north of the railway, flanking the former formal drive, which remains in use from this point northward. The course of the driveway southward from the gates has been abandoned following the construction of a later connecting road, although its alignment is still traceable as a double hedge line. This crosses the railway at a disused level-crossing to the west of Fogg Cottages, before passing behind Holly Cottage to emerge onto the public road behind a cast-iron telephone kiosk.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

2.1.1 The aims of the evaluation were:

- To determine the location, extent, date, character and state of preservation of any archaeological remains surviving on the site
- To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features
- To make available the results of the investigation on completion of the fieldwork
- To define relevant research priorities if additional archaeological investigation was deemed necessary

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork

- 3.1.1 In agreement with Staffordshire County Council 5 evaluation trenches, of the 6 proposed, were excavated. The location of the excavated trenches was altered from the proposed layout due to on-site obstructions and service runs. Trench 2 could not be excavated as it lay within the Nuttalls site compound (Fig. 2).
- 3.1.2 With the exception of Trench 6 the evaluation trenches each measured 30 m x 1.6 m. Trench 6 was reduced to 25 m x 1.6 m due to area constrictions caused by topsoil storage bunds and site access roads.
- 3.1.3 The overburden was removed under close archaeological supervision by a JCB mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The trenches were mechanically excavated to the top of natural geology, or the top of the first significant archaeological feature/deposit, whichever was observed first. The topsoil and subsoil layers were stored separately and checked for any finds of archaeological significance.
- 3.1.4 Where appropriate trenches were cleaned by hand and the revealed features were sampled to determine their extent, nature and to retrieve finds and environmental samples. All archaeological features were planned and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. All features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures outlined in the *OA Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992). The stratigraphy of the trench was recorded even where no archaeological features were encountered.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 No finds were recovered by hand during the course of the evaluation.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental evidence

- 3.3.1 No deposits of environmental significance were revealed, and no samples were taken.

4 RESULTS: GENERAL

4.1 Soils and ground conditions

- 4.1.1 The site is located on a mixed sandy silt with occasional sandy gravel outcrops. The overburden consisted of silty loam topsoil and silty subsoil. Trenches 4, 5 and 6 were subject to topsoil stripping prior to excavation and recent made ground relating to ground consolidation was encountered within Trenches 5 and 6.
- 4.1.2 Obstructions on site led to the relocation of trenches from the surveyed positions. Trench 3 was moved to avoid an access route and potential underground services.

Trenches 4, 5 and 6 were relocated due to the presence of temporary topsoil storage bunds and the presence of underground services.

4.2 Distribution of archaeological deposits

- 4.2.1 Several possible archaeological features were encountered within Trenches 4, 5 and 6. Linear feature 403 and possible pit 504 are more likely to be derived from natural geological processes or bio-turbation. Gully 603 is the only clearly archaeological feature located within the south-east of the area.

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Description of deposits

Trench 1

- 5.1.1 Trench 1 (Fig 2) contained no archaeology. The natural geology was a red brown sandy silt (102) observed at c 64.62 m aOD, 0.4 m below the present ground surface. Grey silty patches within this geology probably represented naturally filled hollows or areas of bio-turbation.

Trench 2

- 5.1.2 Trench 2 (Fig 2) could not be excavated as it lay within the area of the Nuttalls site compound.

Trench 3

- 5.1.3 Trench 3 (Fig.2) contained no archaeological features. The natural geology was a mid orange sandy silt (304) observed at 64.40 m aOD, 0.57 m below the current ground surface. A layer of recently deposited made ground (301) was encountered over the silty loam topsoil (302).

Trench 4

- 5.1.4 Trench 4 (Fig 2 and 3) contained a possible ditch (403). The natural geology was yellow sand with red brown silty mottling encountered at a depth of 63.15 m aOD, 0.20 m below the present ground level.
- 5.1.5 A NE-SW orientated feature (403) was 0.7 m wide and 0.5 m deep and contained a single silty sand fill (404). This feature may represent a ditch cut, but is more likely to be the product of bio-turbation or a natural geological process. No finds were recovered from this feature.

Trench 5

- 5.1.6 Trench 5 (Fig.2 and 4) contained a possible pit (504). The natural geology was an orange grey sandy silt observed at 62.93 m aOD, 0.58 m below the present ground surface. Two layers of hardcore (501) and (502) for the consolidation of a site access road were encountered over the sandy silt subsoil (503).

- 5.1.7 A possible pit (504) 1.65 m in diameter was 0.1 m deep contained a single silty fill (505). This shallow feature may represent a truncated pit, but it is more likely represent bio-turbation. No finds were recovered from this feature.

Trench 6

- 5.1.8 Trench 6 (Fig.2 and 4) contained a single gully (603). The natural geology was a friable yellow silty sand with occasional lenses of sandy gravel. This was observed at 62.87 m aOD, 0.17 m below the present ground surface.
- 5.1.9 A NE-SW Gully (603) 0.12 m deep and 0.26 contained a single reddish brown silty fill (602). No finds were recovered from this feature.

5.2 Finds

- 5.2.1 No finds were recovered during this evaluation.

6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

- 6.1.1 The NE-SW aligned Gully 603 in Trench 6 was the only archaeological feature encountered during this evaluation. This shallow linear contained no dating evidence. By character is likely to be a fairly recent water management feature. The other features recorded were a possible ditch (403) in Trench 4, and a possible pit (504) within Trench 5. The edges and base of these features were diffuse and irregular suggesting they were the product of either bio-turbation or natural geological processes.
- 6.1.2 The paucity of archaeological remains does not allow for further discussion of the past land use for the area evaluated.
- 6.1.3 Temporary soil bunds, below ground services and site access routes led to the obstruction of the originally surveyed trench locations. These issues were addressed by the relocation of the trenches to appropriate areas. The position of the Nuttalls site compound precluded the excavation of Trench 2.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench	Ctxt No	Type	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Comment	Finds	No./ wt	Date
001								
	100	Topsoil	na	0.28	Mid brown sandy silt	na	na	na
	101	Subsoil	na	0.2	Red brown sandy silt	na	na	na
	102	Natural	na	na	Red brown sandy silt	na	na	Na
003								
	301	layer	na	0.26	Hardcore overburden	na	na	na
	302	Topsoil	na	0.15	Dark grey sandy loam	na	na	na
	303	Subsoil	na	0.21	Mid grey mottled sandy loam	na	na	na
	304	Natural	na	na	Mid orange silty sand	na	na	na
004								
	401	Subsoil	na	0.2	Yellow brown silty sand	na	na	na
	402	Natural	na	na	Yellow sand with red brown mottling	na	na	na
	403	Cut	1.6	0.5	Possible ditch	na	na	na
	404	Fill	1.6	0.5	Light grey with orange mottling sandy silt	na	na	na
005								
	501	Layer	na	0.22	Hardcore overburden	na	na	na
	502	Layer	na	0.18	Hardcore overburden	na	na	
	503	Subsoil	na	0.18	Orange brown sandy silt	na	na	na
	504	Cut	1.6	0.1	Possible pit	na	na	
	505	Fill	1.6	0.1	Mid grey sandy silt	none	none	
	506	Natural	na	na	Orange grey sandy silt	na	na	na
006								
	601	Subsoil	na	0.12	Yellow brown sandy silt	na	na	na
	602	Fill	0.26	0.12	Mid red brown sandy silt	none	na	na
	603	Cut	0.26	0.12	Gully	na	na	na
	604	Natural	na	na	Yellow sandy silt with sandy gravel lenses	na	na	na

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

- OA 1992 OA Fieldwork Manual (ed. D Wilkinson. 1992)
- OA 2000 West Coast Mainline-Historical Impact Assessment -not issued. OA Internal report only.
- OA 2003 West Coast Mainline-Field-walking Report-not issued. OA Internal report only.
- OA 2004 West Coast Mainline Upgrade - Trent Valley. Outline Proposal for Phase 1 Works,
- OA 2005 Written Scheme of Investigation
- OA 2005a Network Rail, Trent Valley. West Coast Mainline Upgrade. Staffordshire: Tamworth to Lichfield. Sites 22,24 and 25 Evaluation Report
- OA 2005b Network Rail, Trent Valley. West Coast Mainline Upgrade. Staffordshire: Tamworth to Lichfield. Haul Roads Watching Brief Report
- OA 2006a Network Rail, Trent Valley. West Coast Mainline Upgrade. Staffordshire: Tamworth to Lichfield. Site A15 Shaw Lane : Archaeological Evaluation Report
- OA 2006b Network Rail, Trent Valley. West Coast Mainline Upgrade. Staffordshire: Tamworth to Lichfield. Site 33 Burton Road Compound : Archaeological Evaluation Report
- OA 2006c Network Rail, Trent Valley. West Coast Mainline Upgrade. Staffordshire: Tamworth to Lichfield. Sites 28, 29, 30 and 31: Archaeological Evaluation Report

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Network Rail, Trent Valley, West Coast Mainline Upgrade, Staffordshire: Tamworth to Lichfield Site A38, 39, 40 UB95, Huddlesford Pocket.

Site code: WCMA 38 05

Grid reference: SK 152 095

Type of evaluation: Trial Trenching

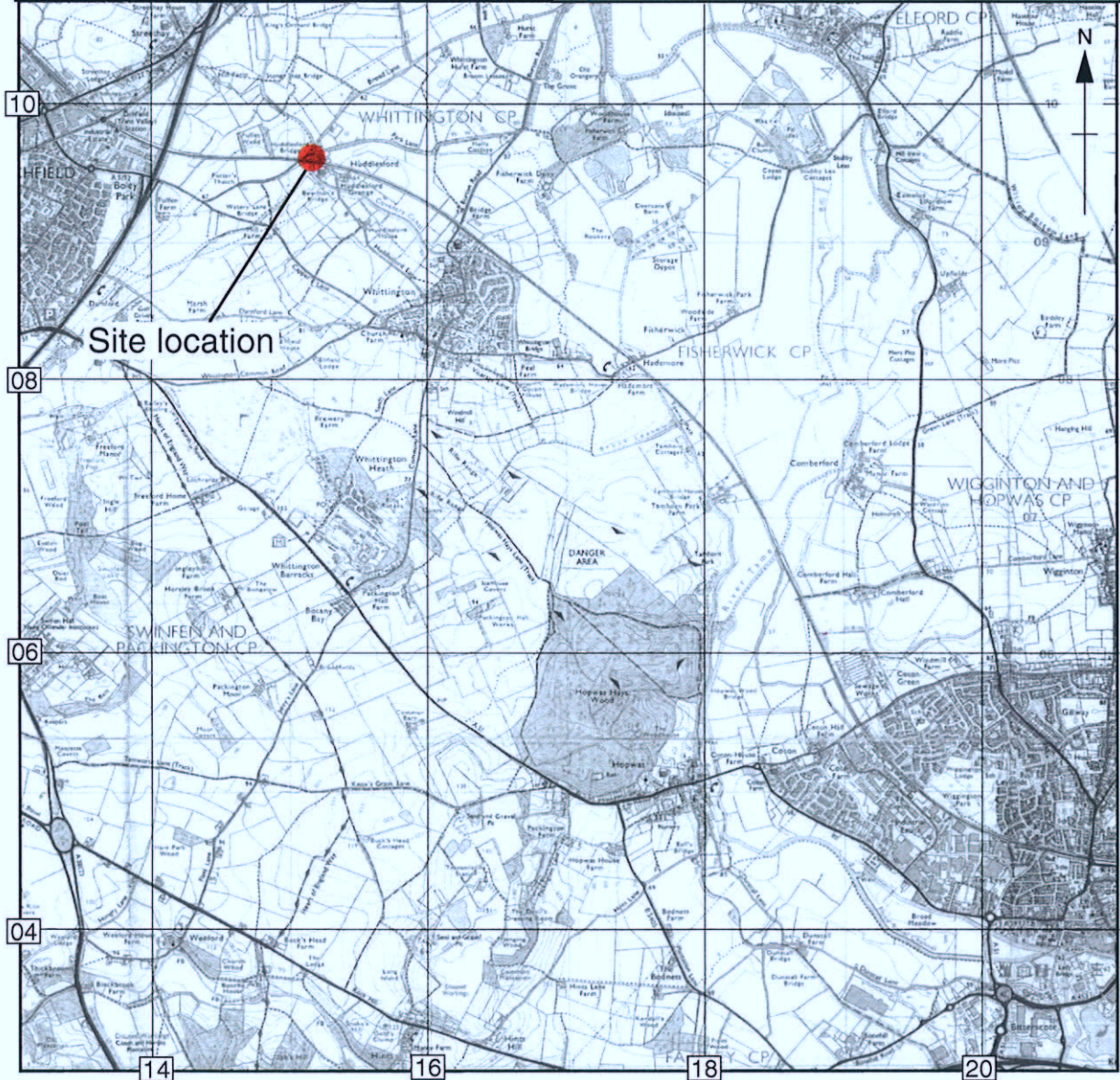
Date and duration of project: April 2006, completed within five days

Area of site: 1.5 hectares

Summary of results: The evaluation yielded a single shallow gully suggesting recent land drainage and features likely to be the product of bio-turbation or geological activity.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Staffordshire County Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: **2005.LH.12**

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Figure 1: Site location

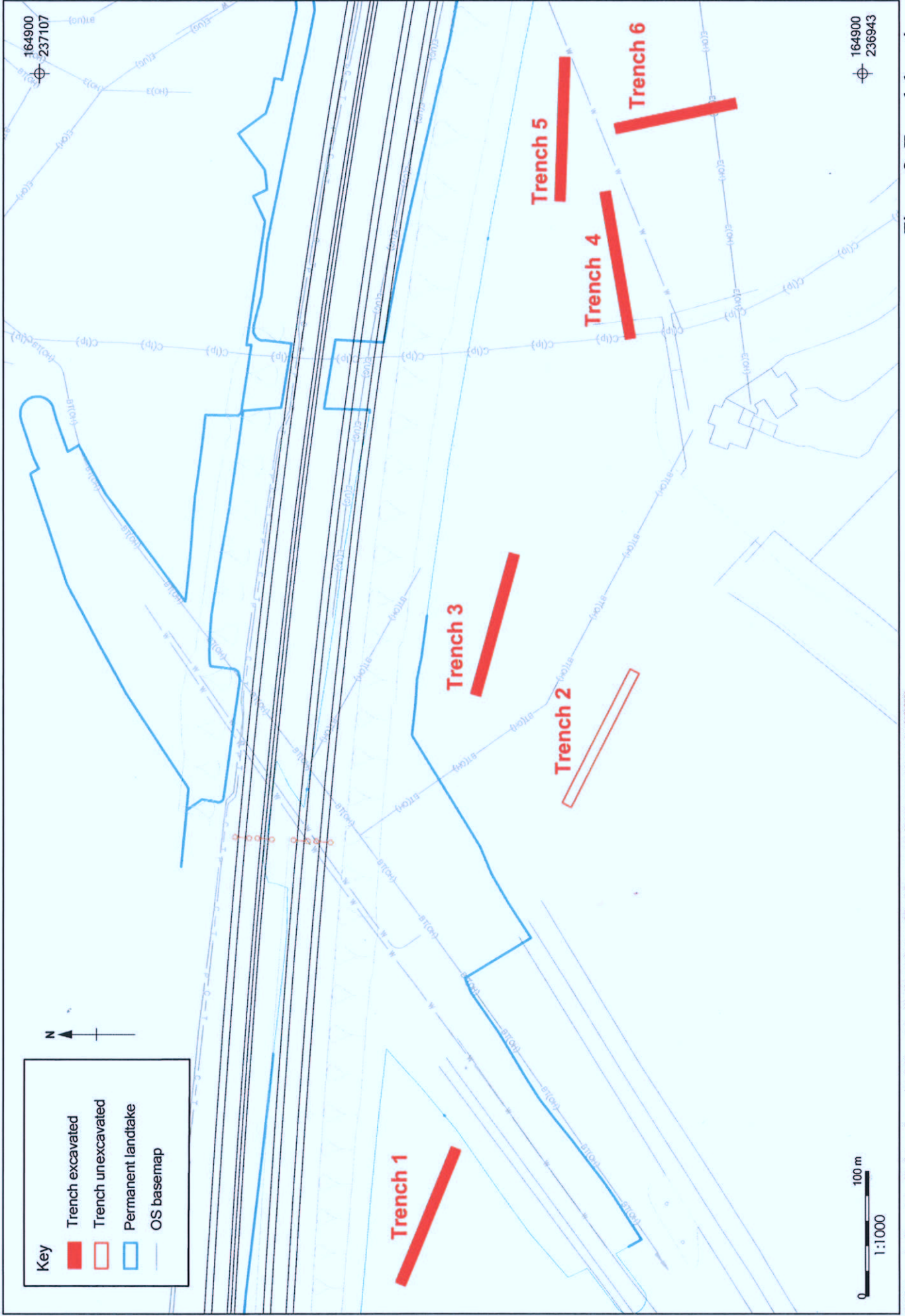


Figure 2: Trench locations

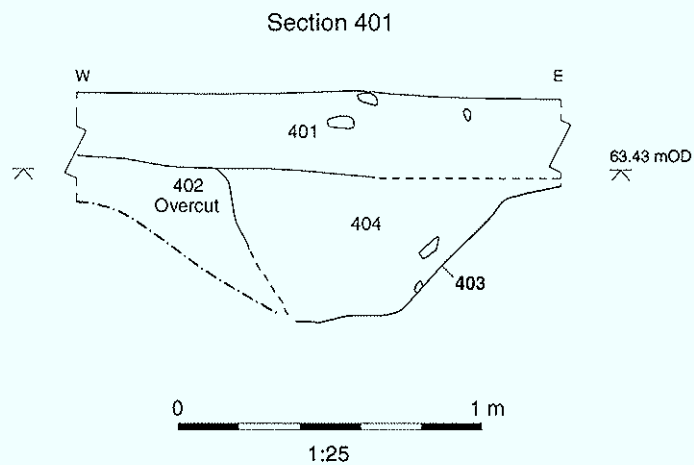
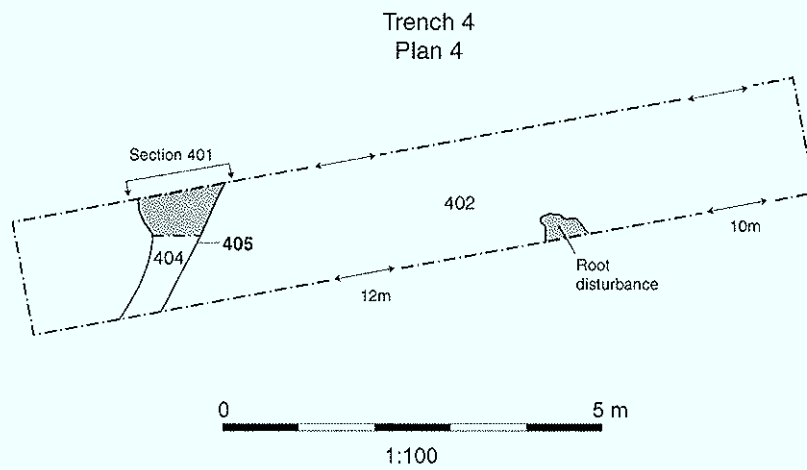
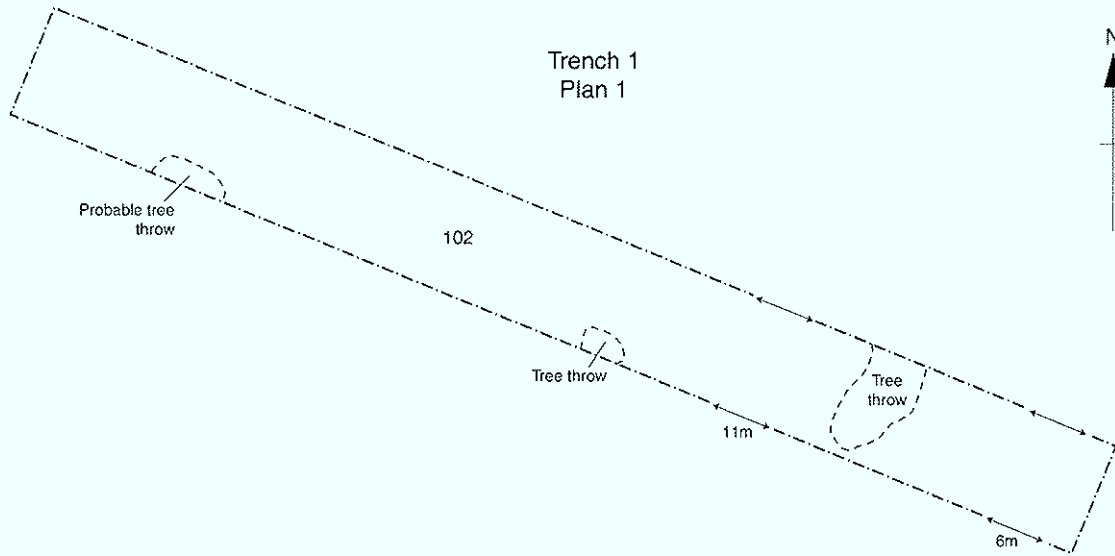
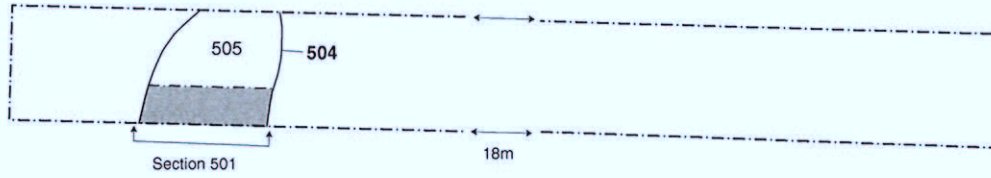


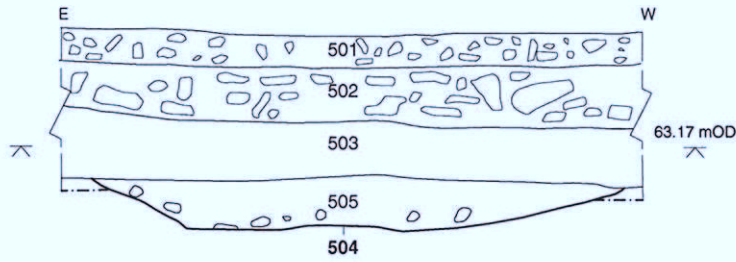
Figure 3: Trenches 1 and 4; plans and selected section



Trench 5
Plan 501



Section 501



Section 601

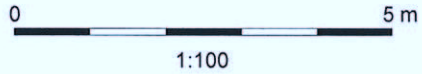
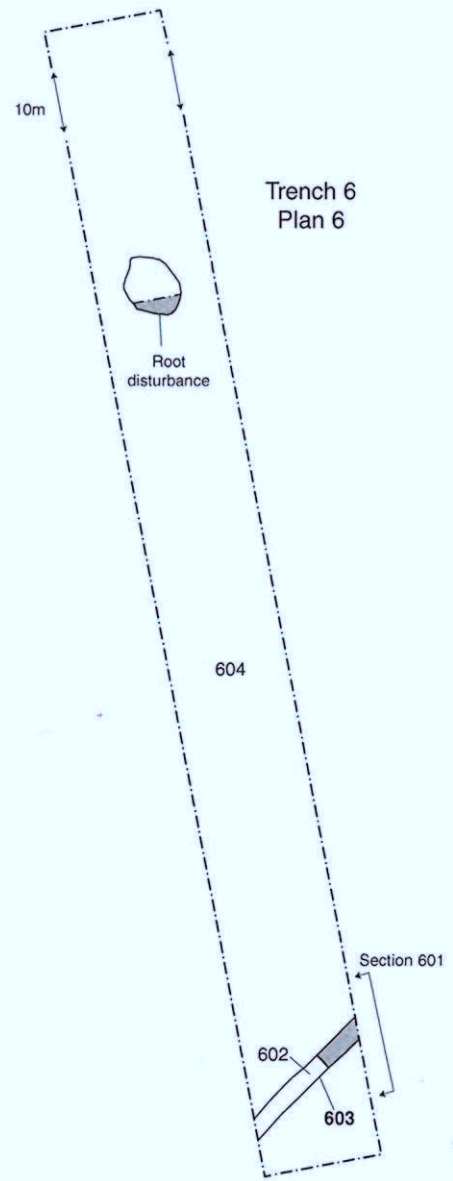
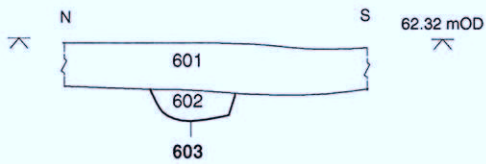


Figure 4: Trenches 5 and 6; plans and selected section



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