

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION
AT MILL MEADOW,
NAFFORD, ECKINGTON,
WORCESTERSHIRE

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Archaeological evaluation at Mill Meadow, Nafford, Eckington, Worcestershire

Simon Sworn

With contributions by Laura Griffin and Elizabeth Pearson

Part 1 Project summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Mill Meadow, Nafford, Eckington, Worcestershire (NGR: SO 9384 4171). It was undertaken on behalf of John Lambe Associates, acting for their client The Minton Group, who propose the siting of up to 20 Lodges with associated access, hard-standing, services and landscaping for which a planning application will be submitted. The project aimed to determine if any significant archaeological site was present and if so to indicate its nature, date and location.

The development area lies adjacent to an extensive complex of cropmarks, previously identified in the fields directly to the south and east, of probable Bronze Age to Roman date.

Three trenches were excavated over the site, which comprises a plateau, steep slope and floodplain along the southern bank of the River Avon. In addition an earthwork survey was undertaken, although this did not identify any previously unrecorded earthworks or structures, nor the continuation of a holloway identified to the south-west.

Evidence gathered indicates that the present topography has altered considerably over the past two thousand years, with extensive erosion from the higher slopes and deposition within the floodplain.

Two of the three trenches did not reveal archaeological features, although a very small quantity of residual prehistoric, Roman and post-medieval/modern material was recovered from the soils. On the lower reaches of the site, on the level floodplain, sequences of alluvial deposits were noted. Within Trench 2 these deposits contained a small quantity of Early Bronze Age to Roman pottery, indicating their formation during these periods, probably eroded down slope from the attested activity to the south.

Within the third trench, in the south-east corner of the site, three of north-south aligned linear features were observed. These three ditches appeared to be of a similar date; their fills were comparable and their orientation was identical. They followed the angle of slope of the underlying natural and were sealed by the alluvium and colluvium, which has levelled out the modern ground surface to a large degree. This, allied with the complete absence of artefactual remains, indicates that they are of an early date, probably prehistoric. They appear to be a continuation of the cropmark activity identified to the south. Their function is unclear, although they may represent field or enclosure boundaries, drainage ditches or define a trackway leading from the activity on the plateau, down to the bank of the River Avon. Two further east-west ditches may form the northern boundary of the cropmark enclosure adjacent to the south.

Part 2 Detailed report

1. Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Mill Meadow, Nafford, Eckington, Worcestershire (NGR: SO 9384 4171, Fig 1), on behalf of John Lambe Associates, acting for their client The Minton Group. The client intends the siting of up to 20 Lodges with associated access, hard-standing, services and landscaping.

The previous owners of Mill Meadow submitted a planning application to Wychavon District Council (reference W/06/0406), which was subsequently withdrawn. As a result of this Planning Application, Wychavon District Council consulted the Historic Environment Planning Advisor (Mike Glyde) who advised that "...the site may contain archaeological remains - and that I would therefore recommend that an archaeological evaluation be undertaken." (ref Consultation response Mike Glyde, 23rd March 2006; WSM 01265). Mill Meadow was subsequently acquired by its new owners, The Minton Group, in August 2006 and this Archaeological Evaluation commissioned by them.

1.2 Project parameters

The project conforms to the *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IFA 1999).

The project also conforms to a brief prepared by Worcestershire County Council (HEAS 2006a) and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (HEAS 2006b).

1.3 Aims

The aims of the evaluation were to locate any archaeological deposits and determine, if present, their extent, state of preservation, date, type, vulnerability and documentation. The purpose of this was to establish their significance, since this would make it possible to recommend appropriate treatment that may then be integrated with the proposed development programme.

More specifically the following aims have been identified.

- To determine the possible continuation within the site of archaeological remains identified as cropmarks in the adjacent plot to the south and east.
- To determine the extent, date and state of preservation of the holloway previously identified in the adjacent plot to the south-west and within the western part of the site, and any associated features on the adjacent promontory.
- To determine if the former medieval village of Nafford, extant to the east, extended into the present site.

2. **Methods**

2.1 **Documentary search**

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the Historic Environment Record (HER). In addition to the sources listed in the bibliography, the following were also consulted:

Cartographic sources

- 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1885

Aerial photographs

- Mike Glyde 2006 (Plate 15).

2.2 **Fieldwork methodology**

2.2.1 **Fieldwork strategy**

A detailed specification has been prepared by the Service (HEAS 2006b).

Fieldwork was undertaken between 12th and 18th September 2006. The site reference number and site code is WSM 35772.

Three trenches, amounting to just over 263m² in area, were excavated over the site, an area of 3.136ha, representing a sample of 0.84%. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2.

The trenches were located to assess the archaeological potential across the varied site topography:

- Trench 1 was located along the top, and down the northern slope of a promontory overlooking the River Avon, to the western edge of the evaluation area. This trench was to establish the potential of any focus of activity on the promontory.
- Trench 2, located towards the centre of the evaluation area was sited to provide a topographical transect from the high ground to the south, down onto the floodplain to south and also to establish the potential of any archaeological activity on the floodplain itself.
- Trench 3, located in the far south-east corner of the field was designed to establish the possible continuation of crop marks, of Bronze Age to Roman date, noted to the south and east, into the development area.

Deposits considered not to be significant, such as the overlying topsoil and subsoil, were removed using a wheeled JCB excavator, employing a toothless bucket and under archaeological supervision. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were excavated to retrieve artefactual material and environmental samples, as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Service practice (CAS 1995). On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

In addition to the trenches an earthwork survey was carried out. This comprised a site walkover to identify any visible earthwork and/or structures, or any other topographical variations that were not already noted on the client's 1:500 survey.

2.2.2 **Structural analysis**

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was effected through a combination of structural, artefactual and ecofactual evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

2.3 **Artefact methodology, by Laura Griffin**

2.3.1 **Artefact recovery policy**

The artefact recovery policy conformed to standard Service practice (CAS 1995, appendix 4).

2.3.2 **Method of analysis**

All hand retrieved finds were examined and a primary record was made on a Microsoft Access 2000 database. They were identified, quantified and dated to period. A *terminus post quem* date was produced for each stratified context. The date was used for determining the broad date of phases defined for the site. All information was recorded on pro forma sheets.

The pottery and ceramic building material was examined under x20 magnification and recorded by fabric type and form according to the fabric reference series maintained by the service (Hurst and Rees 1992; Hurst 1992).

Artefacts from environmental samples were examined and those worthy of comment are discussed below and included in the Table 1 quantification

2.4 **Environmental archaeology methodology, by Liz Pearson**

2.4.1 **Sampling policy**

The environmental sampling strategy conformed to standard Service practice (CAS 1995, appendix. One sample of 40 litres was taken from context (203), an alluvial deposit of probable Roman date.

2.4.2 **Method of analysis**

For analysis of waterlogged organic remains, a sub-sample of 1 litre was processed by the wash-over technique as follows. The sub-sample was broken up in a bowl of water to separate the light organic remains from the mineral fraction and heavier residue. The water, with the light organic fraction was decanted onto a 300mm sieve and the residue washed through a 1mm sieve. The remainder of the bulk sample was retained for further analysis.

The remainder of the sample was processed by flotation followed by wet-sieving using a Siraf tank. The flot was collected on a 300µm sieve and the residue retained on a 1mm mesh. This allows for the recovery of items such as small animal bones, molluscs and seeds, and in this case, particularly Bronze Age pottery and flint fragments.

The residues were fully sorted by eye and the abundance of each category of environmental remains estimated. The flots were scanned using a low power EMT stereo light microscope and plant remains identified using modern reference collections maintained by the Service, and seed identification manual (Beijerinck 1947). Nomenclature for the plant remains follows the Flora of the British Isles, 3rd edition (Stace 2001).

A magnet was also used to test for the presence of hammerscale.

2.5 **The methods in retrospect**

The results of the evaluation provided an understanding of the below ground deposits, variations in the topography and the continuation of features identified as crop marks to the south-east of the development area, allowing a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

3. **Topographical and archaeological context**

The site lies on the southern bank of the lower reaches of the River Avon, c 1.5km to the east of Eckington village and due west of the hamlet of Nafford. The topography of the site consists of steeply sloping ground running down to the level floodplain. The site is bounded to the north by the banks of the River Avon, to the east and west by mature hedgerows and to the south by the single-track road between Eckington and Great Comberton. To the south of the road the land is level agricultural land before rising steeply to form the northern slopes of Bredon Hill.

Along the River Avon the predominant soils belong to the Fladbury 1 Soil Association (813b). These comprise stoneless clayey soils, in places calcareous, variably affected by groundwater, on flat land with a risk of flooding. The parent material is river alluvium. To the south of the river, along the higher ground, the predominant soils belong to the Evesham 2 Soil Association (411b). These comprise slowly permeable clayey soils, some slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged non-calcareous clayey and fine loamy or fine silty over clayey soils. The parent material is Jurassic and Cretaceous clay (Mackney *et al* 1983; Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983).

Directly to the south-east of the development area two large rectilinear and two small circular enclosures (WSM 01265) have been identified from aerial photographs. Although there has been no archaeological investigation of these features their form suggests a late prehistoric date.

Roughly 250m to the east of the site a large circular feature, consisting of two circular ditches and internal features has also been identified from aerial photographs (WSM 04061/2). This feature, interpreted as a ring fort, sits on the very edge of the escarpment leading down to the river. Evidence from other sites around the country indicates that these features were located close to major river crossings, and date from the Bronze Age. Since the time of construction at least half of this feature on the riverside seems to have been eroded away.

Bredon Hill 2km to the south-east has also been the focus of early settlement activity and a number of substantial earthworks in the form of hillfort defences are still visible at Conderton Hill and Bredon Hill.

In 2000 an archaeological watching brief was undertaken at the Gwen Finch Nature Reserve, Birlingham on the northern bank of the River Avon, directly opposite the present evaluation site (WSM 27827 and WSM 26411). The project identified evidence for human occupation within the Avon river valley from the prehistoric period onwards. Some evidence for the later prehistoric environment resulted from pollen analysis of deeply buried organic alluvial deposits. A radiocarbon date from the lower part of this horizon placed it in the late Mesolithic/early Neolithic period. Comparison of the pollen assemblage with other sites suggests the River Avon valley was under a livestock farming regime with limited arable cultivation in the later prehistoric period, tentatively dated to the early Bronze Age c 1800 BC (Bretherton *et al* 2000).

A recent excavation in Eckington established evidence of Roman occupation forming a co-axial field system and recovered a quantity of artefacts mainly from the 1st and 2nd centuries

AD (Vartuca 2003). The concentration of Roman artefacts recovered from the area suggested extensive occupation and settlement.

Also a number of isolated artefacts from the Roman period have also been found within the vicinity (WSM 33840/1).

Medieval and post-medieval earthworks have been identified in surrounding fields, comprising traces of ridge and furrow and trackways (WSM 10527, 10530, 10531 and 10541). One holloway in particular appears to run into the development area from a field to the south-west (WSM 10504).

4. Results

4.1 Structural analysis

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Figures 4 to 8 and on Plates 2 to 14. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

4.1.1 Phase 1 Natural deposits

In Trench 1 the natural deposits consisted of grey/brown clays (102) at the higher end of the trench, overlying orange/brown gravels and sand (103), which were visible in the lower half of the north-west extension. The gravels became steep halfway down, then levelled out towards the north-west end of the trench (Plates 2-4; Fig 7).

In Trench 2, at the higher, southern end, the natural deposits consisted of grey/brown clays (206), overlying orange/brown gravels and sand (205). The gravels dropped steeply away to the north, and from the centre of the trench northwards were overlain by the blue/brown/grey alluvial river deposits (containing Bronze Age and Roman material; 202, 203; Plate 5). The underlying gravels were much steeper than the present topsoil topography, indicating substantial natural re-profiling of the slope.

At the northern end of Trench 2, the alluvial clays also overlies a well-compacted, laminated and sterile clay (204). The natural gravels were observed at 15.10mAOD (2.35m below the present surface), sloping to the north, towards the river (Plates 5- 7: Fig 8).

Within Trench 3 the underlying natural consisted of brown silty clays with frequent limestone fragments (310). The trench was relatively level (Plate 8).

4.1.2 Phase 2 Prehistoric deposits

Although no deposits could be absolutely determined to be of prehistoric date, a number of features in Trench 3 could be conjectured as of probable pre-Roman date on stratigraphic grounds.

Three linear features were observed within Trench 3. Sealed by alluvial material, each was aligned north to south, following the line of the slope down towards the River Avon. One lay to the west (303), separated by two intercut ditches 1m to the east (305 and 307). They contained comparable fills, with occasional charcoal flecks but without finds.

The alluvium in Trench 2 was noted to contain a small quantity of Bronze Age – Iron Age pottery, although in association with Roman material (202 and 203).

4.1.3 **Phase 3 Roman deposits**

The alluvial deposit (203) in the northern, lower end of Trench 2 could be tentatively allocated a *terminus post quem* of the early Roman period (based on the recovery of a single sherd of Severn Valley ware pottery). Both this, and the overlying alluvial deposit (202) contained frequent organic material plus pottery dating to the Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman periods. The majority of these deposits were not removed for safety reasons, the trench here being 1.20m deep. Sondages were excavated through this alluvial clay in the centre of the trench and at the northern extent of the trench to establish the depth of these deposits (Plate 7: Fig 8).

4.1.4 **Phase 4 Medieval deposits**

A single medieval roof tile was recovered from the soils within Trench 1, although no features, deposits or structures were identified of this date.

4.1.5 **Phase 5 Post-medieval/modern deposits**

The soils in Trenches 1 and 3 were of roughly uniform depth, while that in Trench 2 was substantially deeper within the floodplain to the north, and shallower on the higher ground to the south. Towards the lower lying, northern ends of Trenches 1 and 2 the topsoil appeared to have a higher percentage of modern material, such as brick/tile/clinker and shells.

In the centre of Trench 3 a narrow, shallow gully ditch ran in east-west orientation across the slope (309), petering out toward the west. The fill contained occasional fragments of coal.

4.1.6 **Phase 6 Undated deposits**

A single undated feature was observed within Trench 3.

At the upper end of the trench on the break of slope on the top of the escarpment, a shallow 'V' shaped gully was observed running in an east/west direction (312; Plate 14; Fig 6: section 6). This was clearly seen cutting through the natural limestone gravel and clay deposits and sealed by the subsoil. It may be related to the adjacent three ditches observed on a perpendicular alignment to the north.

4.2 **Artefact analysis, by Laura Griffin**

The artefactual assemblage recovered is summarised in Appendix 2: Tables 1-3.

The artefactual assemblage recovered from the site consisted of 73 finds totalling 1143g. The assemblage came from three stratified contexts and the ground surface and was highly mixed with material dating from the early Bronze Age through to the modern period (see Table 1). Level of preservation was variable, but in general material from stratified contexts displayed fairly high levels of abrasion.

Pottery formed the largest artefact group accounting for 41% of the assemblage. Sherds of all periods were identified and grouped by fabric, see Table 2. Diagnostic sherds could be dated by use of parallel forms, whilst undiagnostic pieces were dateable to their general period or production span on the basis of fabric type.

All ceramic building material from the site was unstratified and formed a small group consisting of three fragments of highly abraded Roman tile (context 200), seven pieces of flat roof tile dating from the medieval period onwards (context 100) and five small fragments of post-medieval/modern brick (context 100). In addition, two pieces of vitrified ceramic were also retrieved (context 100).

All metalwork came from Trenches 1 and 2 and was unstratified. Iron objects consisted of three nails (contexts 100 and 200) and two flat, highly corroded unidentifiable pieces (context 100). The remaining metal find was a well-preserved 'Jew's Harp' musical instrument, which was made of bronze and came from the surface at the lower end of Trench 2.

Remaining finds consisted of two pieces of flint, (context 100), three pieces of coal (context 308), two mussel shells (context 200), six pieces of animal bone (context 202 and 203) which included two horse teeth (context 202), one piece of iron slag (context 100), five burnt stones (context 203) and two fragments of clay pipe stem (context 200 and 300).

4.2.1 Discussion of the artefacts

The discussion below is a summary of the finds and associated location or contexts by period. Where possible, terminus post quem dates have been allocated based on the evidence recorded and the importance of individual finds commented upon as necessary.

Prehistoric

Undated material of this period consisted of a single worked flint core and a small fragment of a burnt flint flake (context 100). The burnt fragment was so heavily battered that it could not be identified as a worked lithic with any certainty. The other fragment consisted of a single platform flint flake/blade prismatic core of Neolithic/Bronze Age date. It is light brown in colour, has a slight patination and abrasion, and appears to be exhausted (pers comm Alvaro Mora-Ottomano).

Early Bronze Age

A single, residual sherd of pottery from context 203 was thought to date to the early Bronze Age period. The sherd could be identified as being of quartz sand fabric (fabric 5.13) and was very small and highly abraded with one surviving orange surface and a brown core. The only previously identified sherds of this fabric were found at Huntsmans Quarry, Kemerton.

Late Bronze Age - Early Iron Age

Material of this date was residual within contexts 202 and 203 and consisted of 11 highly abraded sherds of pottery. Two fabrics were identified which generally date to the late Bronze Age period but are also highly likely to run into the early Iron Age, particularly in this area (pers comm Robin Jackson).

The single sherd from context 202 most resembled fossil shell and grog-tempered ware (fabric 4.7). The source of this type of pottery is unknown but based on the distribution of excavated sherds, it is thought to be in the south of the county.

Ten sherds of the same fabric were retrieved from context 203 and identified as being of shell-tempered ware with moderate inclusions (fabric 4.9.2). All sherds appeared to be from a single vessel and were relatively small and highly abraded. Despite this abrasion, the two largest sherds could still be joined and therefore do not appear to have been subject to much post-depositional disturbance. As in the case of the above fabric, vessels of shell-tempered ware are thought to have been produced in South Worcestershire.

Iron Age

A small, abraded sherd of late Iron Age pottery was identified within the assemblage from context 203. The sherd was of sandy ware (fabric 5.1) and could be dated between the 5th century BC and mid 1st century AD. Once more, this fabric is thought to be locally produced in South Worcestershire.

In addition, the burnt stones that came from this context are also likely to be of Iron Age or early Roman date. Heat-shattered stones of this period are generally thought to have been used as pot-boilers.

Roman

Material of Roman date consisted of three small, undiagnostic sherds of pottery and three fragments of tile. One context (203) could be allocated a terminus post quem of 1st century AD on the basis of a single sherd of organically tempered reduced Severn Valley ware (fabric 12). This sherd was extremely distinctive being of a very fine grey fabric with abundant burnt organic inclusions and voids which could be seen in the break.

Remaining sherds were of oxidised Severn Valley ware (fabric 12; contexts 100 and 300), both of which were highly abraded, small fragments from the topsoil.

The tile of this date came from context 200 and as in the case of the pottery, was highly abraded. No distinctive or diagnostic features were identifiable, although one piece had a sanded lower surface.

Medieval

Material of medieval date consisted of a small sherd of oxidised glazed Malvernian ware (fabric 69; context 300) and a small piece of glazed roof tile, both of which could be dated between the 13th and 16th centuries.

Post-medieval

The post-medieval pottery assemblage consisted of seven sherds and ranged in date from the late 17th-18th centuries. All were of fabric types and forms commonly identified within assemblages from Worcestershire.

Four sherds of black glazed post-medieval red sandy wares were identified within the group (fabric 78; contexts 100 and 200). These vessels were the most commonly used domestic wares of the 17th and 18th centuries in this area and one sherd could be identified as coming from a large basin or pancheon (context 200). In addition, a similarly glazed sherd in post-medieval buff ware (fabric 91) was also retrieved from context 100.

Two sherds of stoneware were also identified within the group. Both came from context 100 and were of 18th century date. The first was a small handle of Staffordshire stoneware (fabric 81.7). The other sherd was more unusual, being of a very fine grey fabric and decorated with a thick, brownish green lead glaze. The sherd could not be further identified as there were no parallels for this particular fabric within the County type series and therefore it was given a the general stoneware fabric classification of fabric number 81.

Ceramic building material of this period all came from context 100 and amounted to two large pieces of flat roof tile, one of which was nibbed and four highly abraded fragments of undiagnostic tile. In addition, five fragments of brick were identified from the same context but it was not possible to determine whether these were of late post-medieval or modern date.

Two fragments of clay pipe stem were also retrieved from contexts 200 and 300.

Modern

Six sherds of modern stone china (fabric 85), dating between the late 18th and 20th centuries, were retrieved from context 100. All were from tablewares and highly abraded fragments.

Undated material

All remaining material within the assemblage was not diagnostic enough to date to a specific period and in the absence of stratified contexts, it is not possible to allocate any closer date ranges.

4.3 **Environmental analysis, by Liz Pearson**

The environmental evidence recovered is summarised in Appendix 3: Tables 4 and 5.

Although the sample is an alluvial clay, organic content was low, consisting of only occasional unidentifiable fragments of beetle (Coleoptera) wing case and charcoal fragments from the 1 litre wash-over sample. As a result of further processing of the remainder of the bulk sample (40 litres) by flotation using a Siraf tank, abundant elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*) seeds were recovered in association with, occasional unidentified fragments of large mammal bone (red deer, cow or horse size), a small mammal tooth and three molluscs (Two *Trichia hispida* and one *Hellicella itala*) the latter being characteristic of dry grassland.

5. **Synthesis**

5.1 **Prehistoric**

The small quantity of struck flints and Bronze Age-Iron Age pottery found within the topsoil and alluvium to the west and middle of the site, is indicative of prehistoric activity within the vicinity, although probably not within this side of the site itself. Further it shows that the alluvial deposits were being laid down in the prehistoric period. However, the extensive level of erosion from the elevated ground to the south, down to the floodplain to the north, would have caused the removal of almost all trace of all but the most substantial features of earlier date from the promontory. The substantial depth of alluvium noted toward the middle of the site indicates that the topography was substantially steeper in the prehistoric period, but was levelling out particularly through to the Roman period.

The three ditches recorded within the south-east corner of the site follow the angle of slope of the underlying natural rather than the more level direction of the present topsoil surface. Although they do not align exactly with the cropmark enclosure to the south, they may be related, such as forming part of an associated enclosure, drainage or boundaries for a trackway leading from the activity on the level ground down to the southern bank of the River Avon. The undated east-west 'V' shaped ditch adjacent may be related, along with the shallow east-west ditch further up the slope (although this latter may be post-medieval), either of which could potentially form the northern side of the cropmark enclosure to the south.

5.2 **Roman**

No features were determined to be of Roman date. However the alluvium recorded in the northern half of Trench 2, contained occasional Roman (and later) material and is conjectured to have been laid down in this period.

The presence of the large mammal bone and small charcoal fragments from the alluvium from Trench 3 suggests some human activity in the vicinity, although little can be interpreted from this low level of debris. The abundant elderberry seeds are likely to derive from shrubby vegetation on overgrown, neglected ground. However, as these seeds are very robust, and are often the only seeds to survive, it is likely that the survival or organic remains is biased towards robust seeds, and is only partially reflective of the surrounding vegetation.

A number of residual pottery sherds and roof tile fragments were recovered from later deposits. The presence of these artefacts indicates general background activity in the wider area and is not unexpected.

5.3 **Medieval**

No features were identified of medieval date, and only a very small amount of material was recovered from the topsoil, broadly dating from the 13th – 16th centuries.

This indicates that the former medieval village of Nafford did not extend westwards into the evaluation area. The two medieval potsherds were probably deposited accidentally during manuring. There was no indication for the continuation of the holloway identified in the field to the south-east, extending into the development area (WSM 10504).

5.4 **Post-medieval/modern**

The presence of finds from this period was not unexpected, given that the surrounding area was been subject to activity in the form of quarrying in the 19th century. A large depression noted to the north of Trench 1 is conjectured to be one such quarry pit. Occasional pottery and building material was recovered from the soils, although there was no evidence for structures *in situ*.

In Trench 3 the shallow east-west ditch did not contain any datable material, although the presence of coal suggests that this is not early. The use of coal is known in the Roman period (pers comm Robin Jackson), although the lack of any other Roman material suggests that this ditch is of a later date, probably post-medieval or modern. This is corroborated as the ditch appeared to follow the present topography rather than the steeper, earlier, underlying natural slope.

5.5 **Undated**

The small 'V' shaped ditch in the southern extension of Trench 3 contained no datable material. Its profile suggests a possible Roman date, though the absence of any Roman material makes this uncertain. Located on the break of slope on the upper edge of the escarpment would have made this prone to considerable erosion; it therefore may have been a more substantial feature when first created. It is perpendicular to the three prehistoric ditches adjacent down the slope, but cannot at this stage be determined to be related.

6. **Significance**

6.1 **Archaeological**

In considering significance, the Secretary of State's criteria for the scheduling of ancient monuments (DoE 1990, annex 4), have been used as a guide.

These nationally accepted criteria are used to assess the importance of an ancient monument and considering whether scheduling is appropriate. Though scheduling is not being considered in this case they form an appropriate and consistent framework for the assessment of any archaeological site. The criteria should not, however, be regarded as definitive; rather they are indicators which contribute to a wider judgement based on the individual circumstances of a case.

Survival

A number of features noted during the evaluation appear to survive considerably well, despite the extensive natural erosion along the slopes above the floodplain of the River Avon.

Natural erosion and deposition down slope, especially well defined in Trench 2, may explain why there is a lack of archaeology on the top of the escarpment yet there are residual artefacts and deeply buried archaeology in the lower areas of the site. This erosion may partly explain why there were no features or any significant artefacts recovered from Trench 1.

Natural deposits/prehistoric

Substantial depths of alluvium have been identified on the lower reaches of the site on the floodplain. These deposits contain organic and artefactual material which have a high potential for palaeoenvironmental remains, as well as dating evidence, providing a full time scale for the alluvial deposition. These deposits are deeply buried, between 0.90m – 2.40m+ below the current ground surface (18.05m-15.10m AOD).

The probable prehistoric features observed to the south-east corner of the site, located only 0.50m below the present surface represent a probable continuation of the cropmark activity observed in the fields to the south of the site.

The main significance of the artefactual assemblage is in the presence of the Bronze Age and Iron Age pottery. Despite being residual and fairly abraded, the occurrence of these sherds may serve as an indication of the date of the cropmarks adjacent, or other as yet unidentified activity in the close vicinity. In addition, the fact that at least two sherds join indicates that the material hasn't moved far from its original place of deposition.

Roman deposits

Although no obvious Roman features were observed, the low level presence of Roman material within the soils and alluvium is indicative of activity from this period within the vicinity.

Modern deposits

Removal of the modern buried deposits will not result in the loss of significantly important archaeology.

Vulnerability

The escarpment is under continuing threat of natural erosion, including the features noted in the south-west corner of the site. Evidence of these natural erosion factors at work along the escarpment is clearly indicated by the fact that at least half of the nearby Bronze Age ring ditch to the east (WSM 04061-2) has disappeared down the slope since its construction. This erosion is also the reason for the presence of Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman pottery in the alluvial clays on the floodplain. If these deposits are indeed of prehistoric date then they contain the potential for further understanding of human occupation and land use on the edges of the River Avon and its immediate environs, associated with the defined cropmark complexes adjacent.

As the future development of the site is still in the provisional stage and detailed plans have yet to be produced, the impact any works will have on the archaeological remains within or sealed by the alluvial deposits, can only be generally assessed. However the archaeological remains and deposits less than 0.50m below the present surface in the south-east corner in particular would be vulnerable to any foundations, service trenches and landscaping.

7. **Recommendations**

Due to the existence of potentially significant archaeological remains identified within the south-eastern corner of the site which may be associated with adjacent cropmarks, and the potential for the survival of prehistoric and waterlogged deposits below the alluvium on the floodplain, it is recommended that further investigation be undertaken of the former features if this area of the site is to be developed, and a watching brief be implemented of all deep groundworks generally across the site.

8. **Publication summary**

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on behalf of John Lambe Associates at Mill Meadow, Nafford, Eckington, Worcestershire (NGR ref SO 9384 4171; HER ref WSM 35772). Three trenches were excavated on the site, a steeply graded meadow on the southern bank of the River Avon. The site lies close to an extensive complex of cropmarks of probable Bronze Age to Roman date. In addition an earthwork survey was undertaken, although this did not identify any previously unrecorded earthworks or structures, nor the continuation of a holloway identified to the south-west.

Evidence gathered indicates that the present topography has altered considerably over the past two thousand years, with extensive erosion from the higher slopes and deposition within the floodplain.

Two of the three trenches did not reveal archaeological features, although a very small quantity of residual prehistoric, Roman and post-medieval/modern material was recovered from the soils. On the lower reaches of the site, on the level floodplain, sequences of alluvial deposits were noted. Within Trench 2 these deposits contained a small quantity of Early Bronze Age to Roman pottery, indicating their formation during these periods, probably eroded down slope from the attested activity to the south.

Within the third trench, in the south-east corner of the site, three of north-south aligned linear features were observed. These three ditches appeared to be of a similar date; their fills were comparable and their orientation was identical. They followed the angle of slope of the underlying natural and were sealed by the alluvium and colluvium, which has levelled out the modern ground surface to a large degree. This, allied with the complete absence of artefactual remains, indicates that they are of an early date, probably prehistoric. They appear to be a continuation of the cropmark activity identified to the south. Their function is unclear, although they may represent field or enclosure boundaries, drainage ditches or define a trackway leading from the activity on the plateau, down to the bank of the River Avon. Two further east-west ditches may form the northern boundary of the cropmark enclosure adjacent to the south.

9. The archive

The archive consists of:

3	Trench records AS41
3	Fieldwork progress records AS2
1	Photographic records AS3
127	Digital photographs
1	Sample records AS17
19	Scale drawings
1	Box of finds

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum
Hartlebury Castle
Hartlebury
Near Kidderminster
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ
Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416

10. Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Jonathan Lambe (John Lambe Associates) and Mike Glyde (Worcestershire County Council Historic Environment Planning Advisor).

11. Personnel

The fieldwork and report preparation was led by Simon Sworn. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Vaughan. Fieldwork was undertaken by Simon Sworn and Alvaro Mora-Ottomano, finds analysis by Laura Griffin, environmental analysis by Elizabeth Pearson and illustration by Carolyn Hunt.

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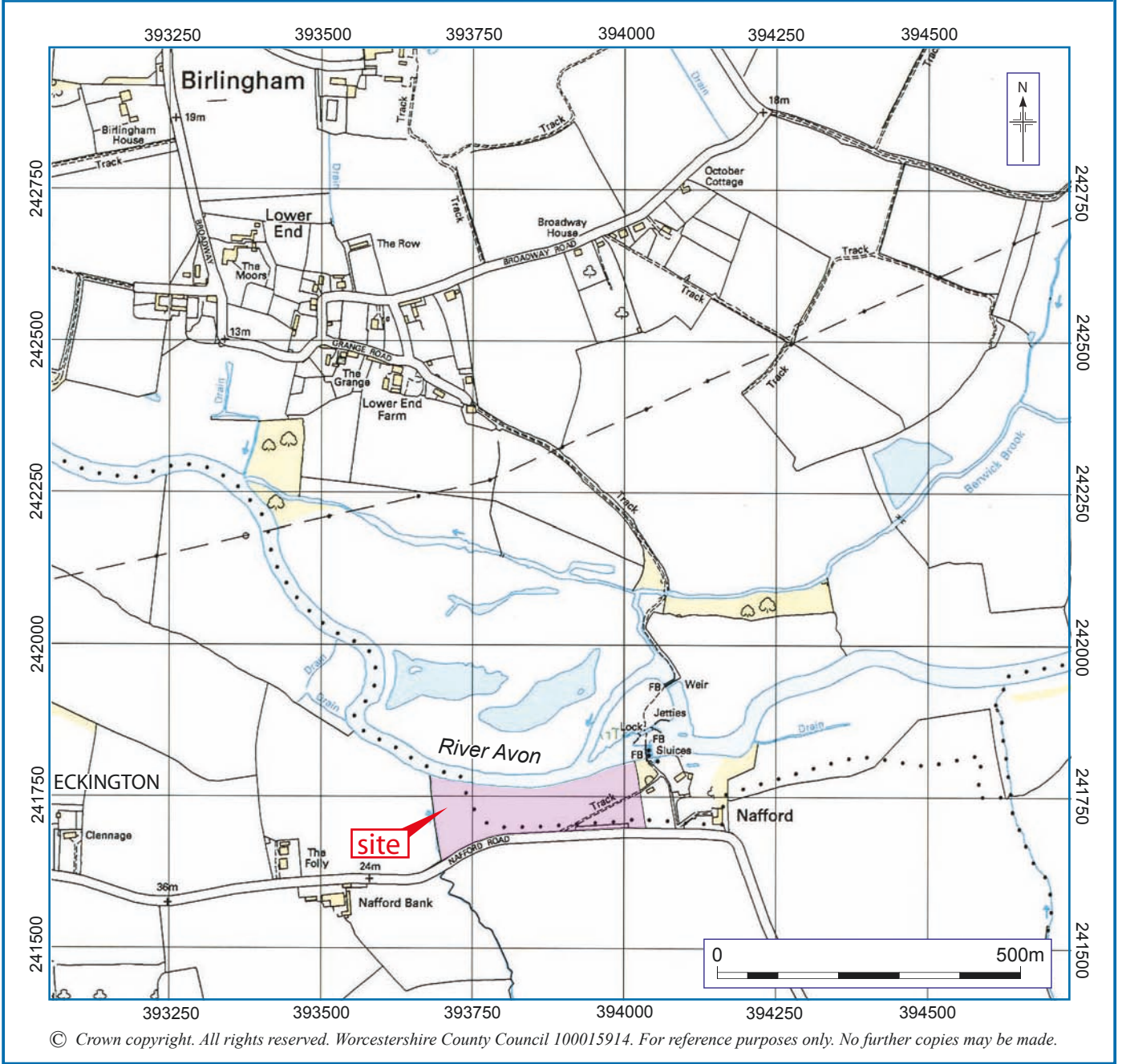
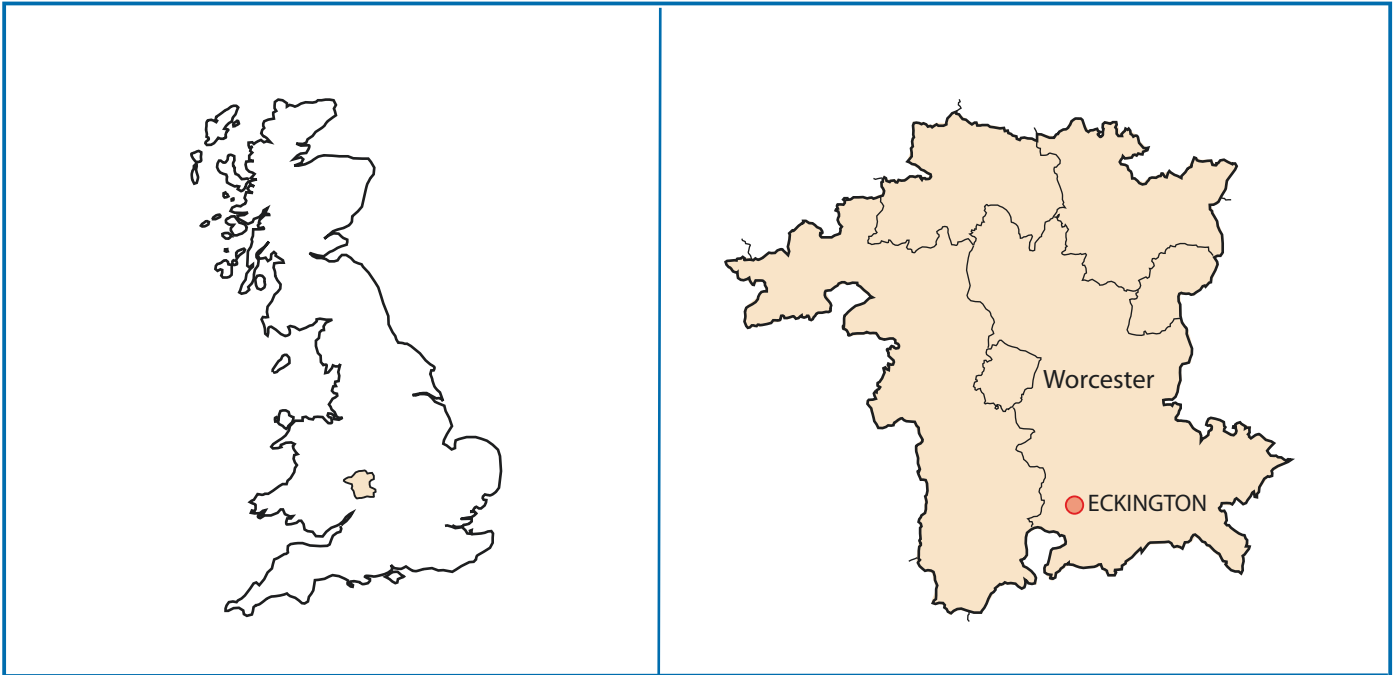
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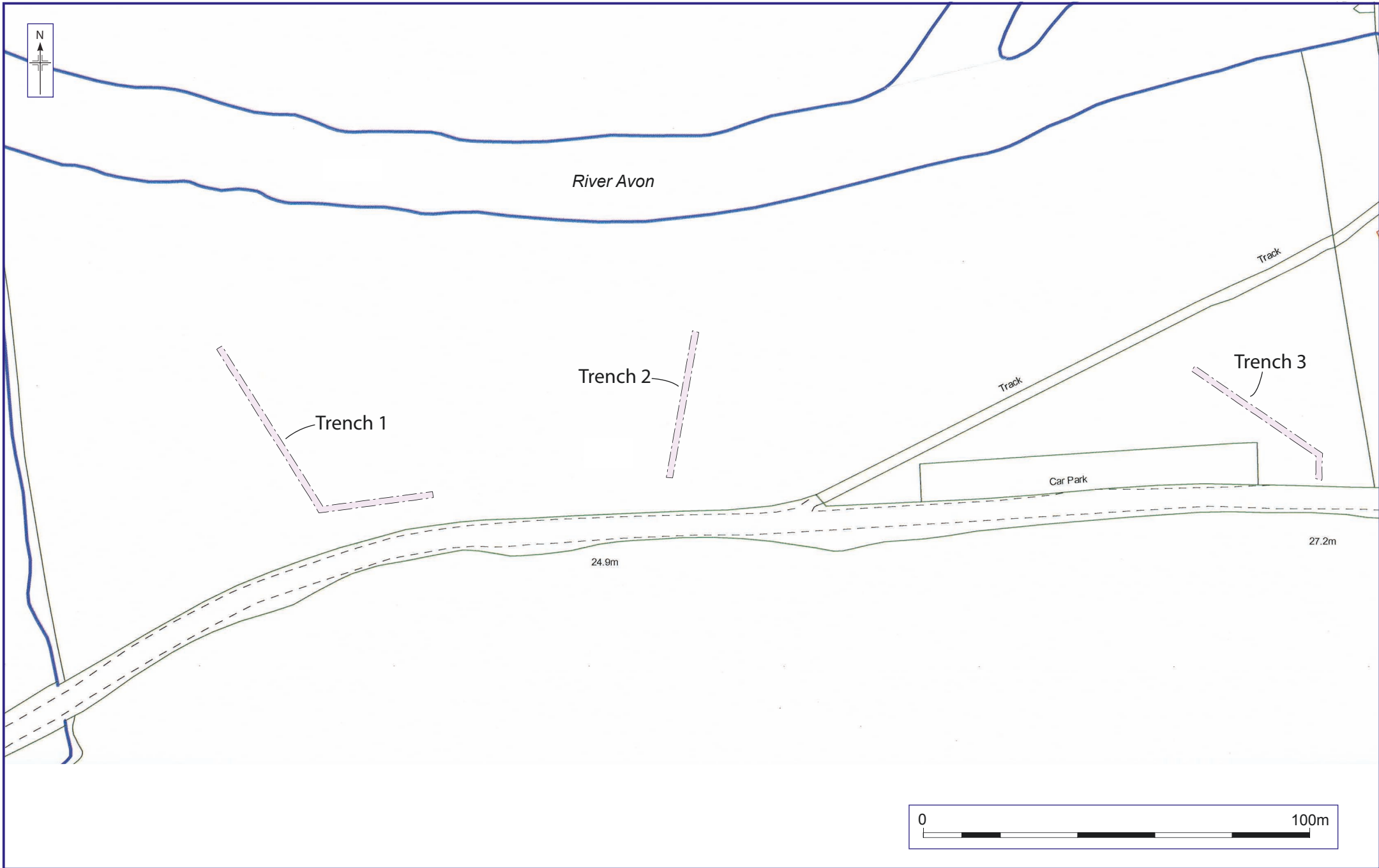
Figures



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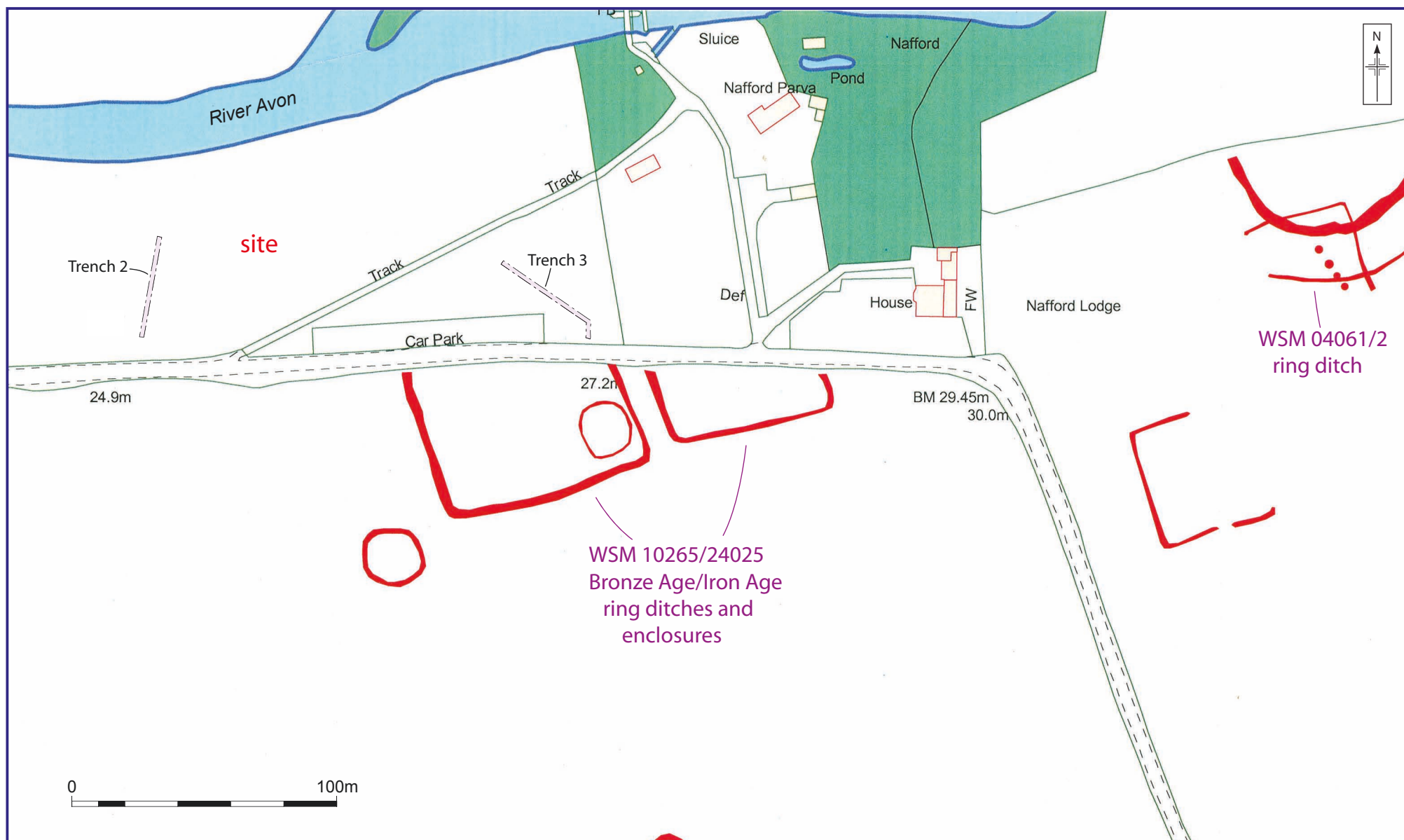
Location of the site.

Figure 1



Trench location plan

Figure 2

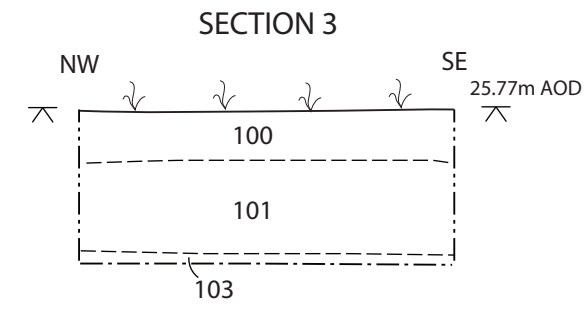
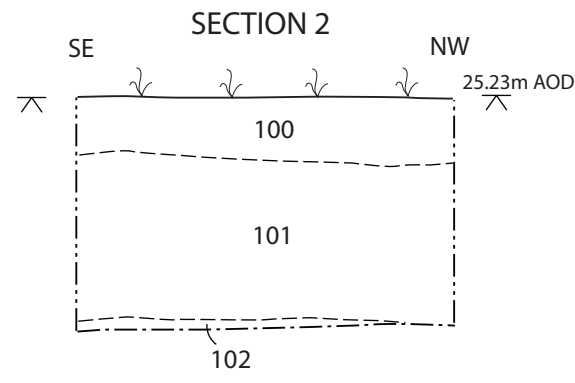
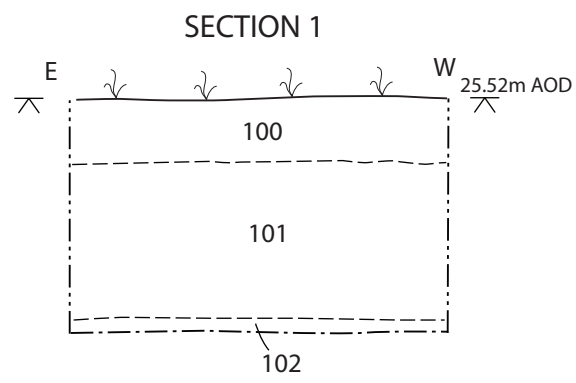


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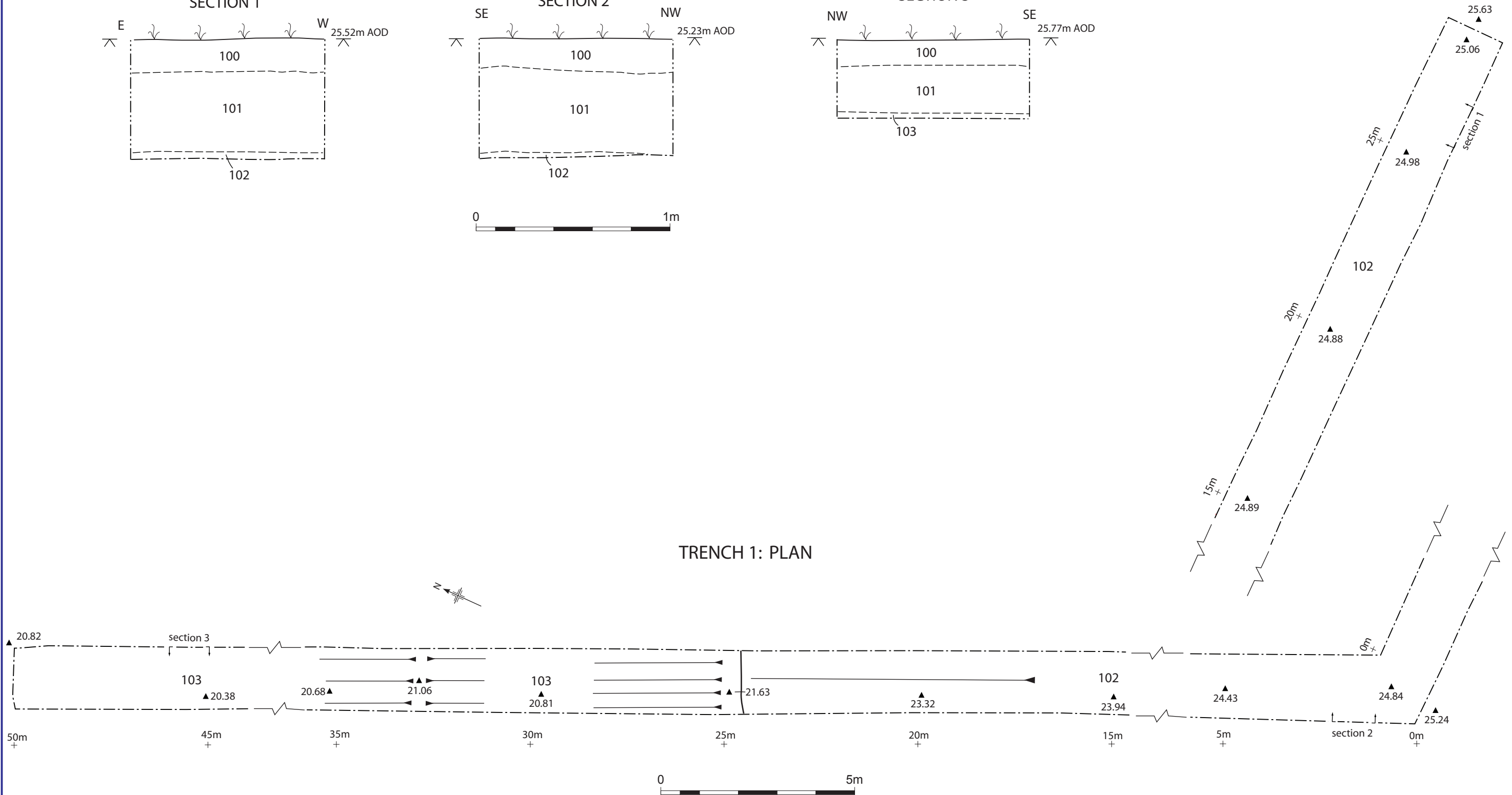
Detail of prehistoric features to south of evaluation site

Figure 3

TRENCH 1: SECTIONS

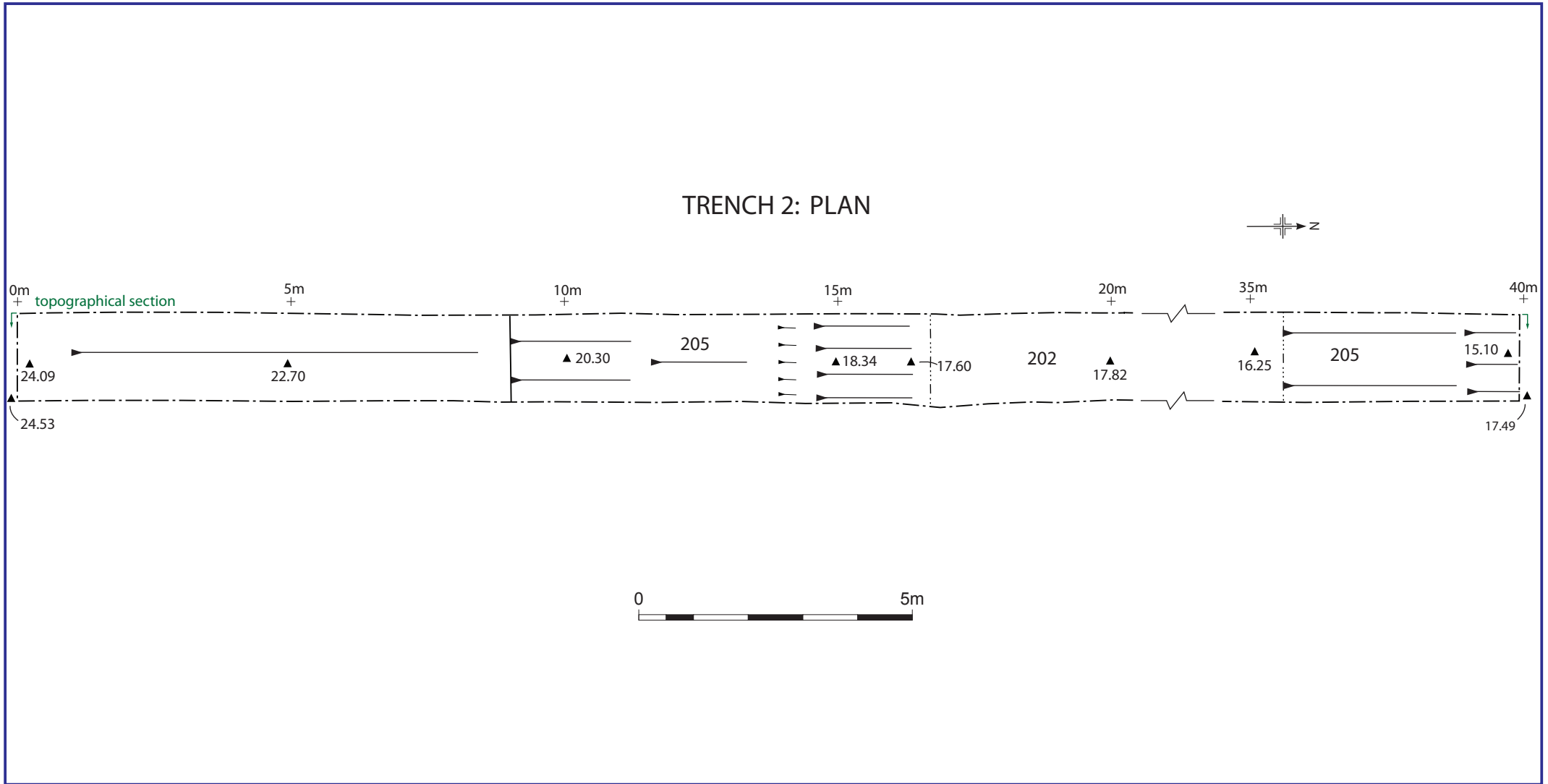


TRENCH 1: PLAN



Trench 1: plan and sections

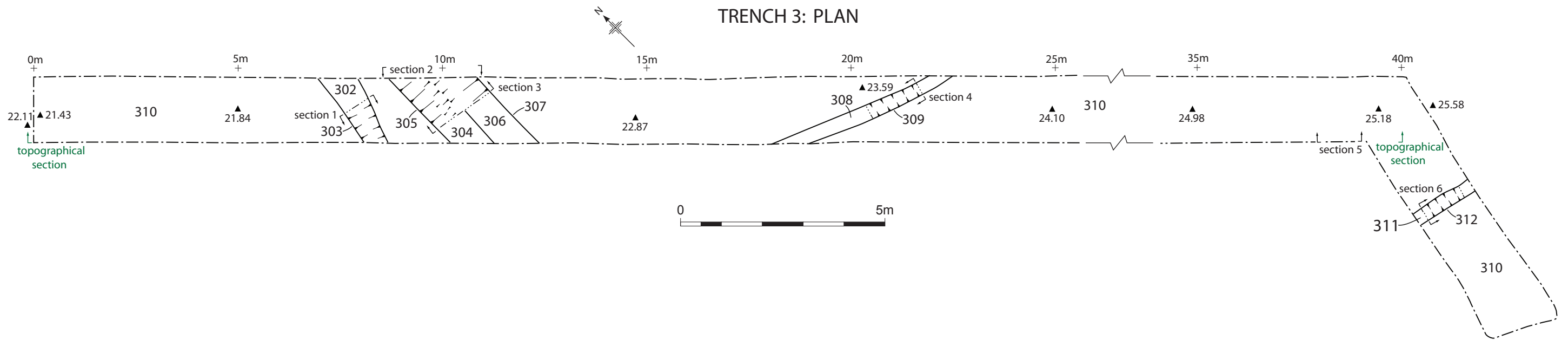
Figure 4



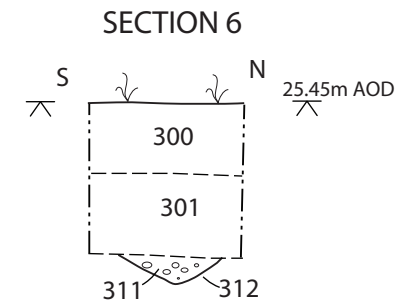
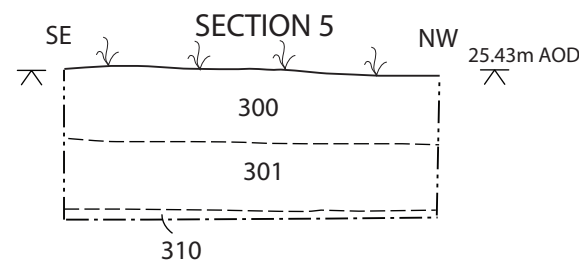
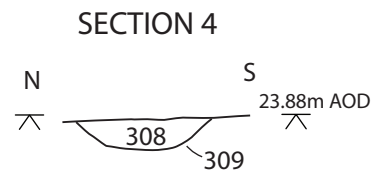
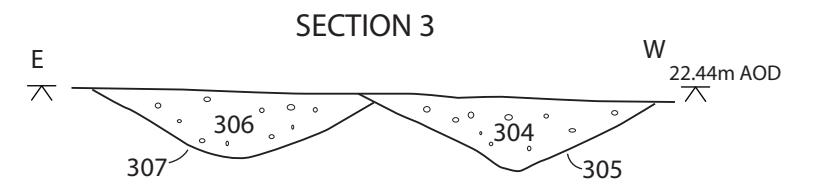
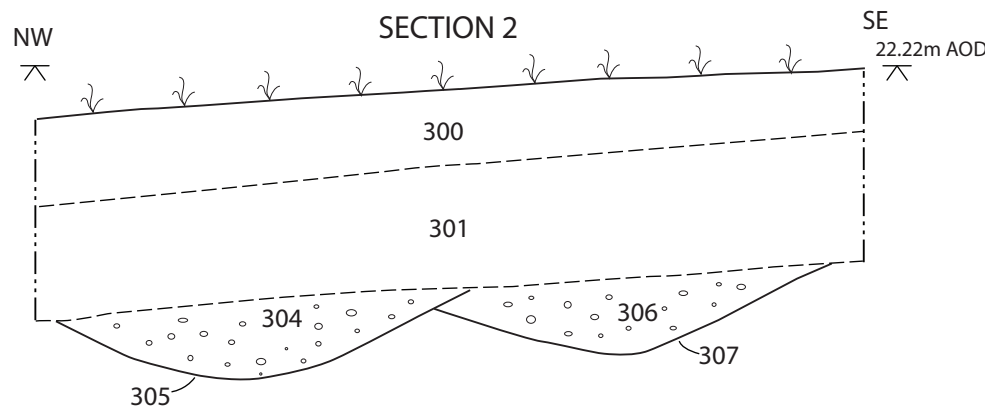
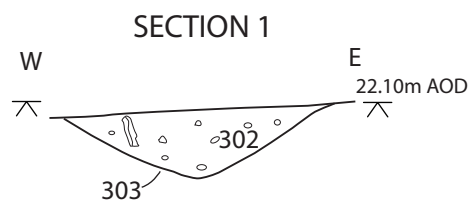
Trench 2: plan

Figure 5

TRENCH 3: PLAN



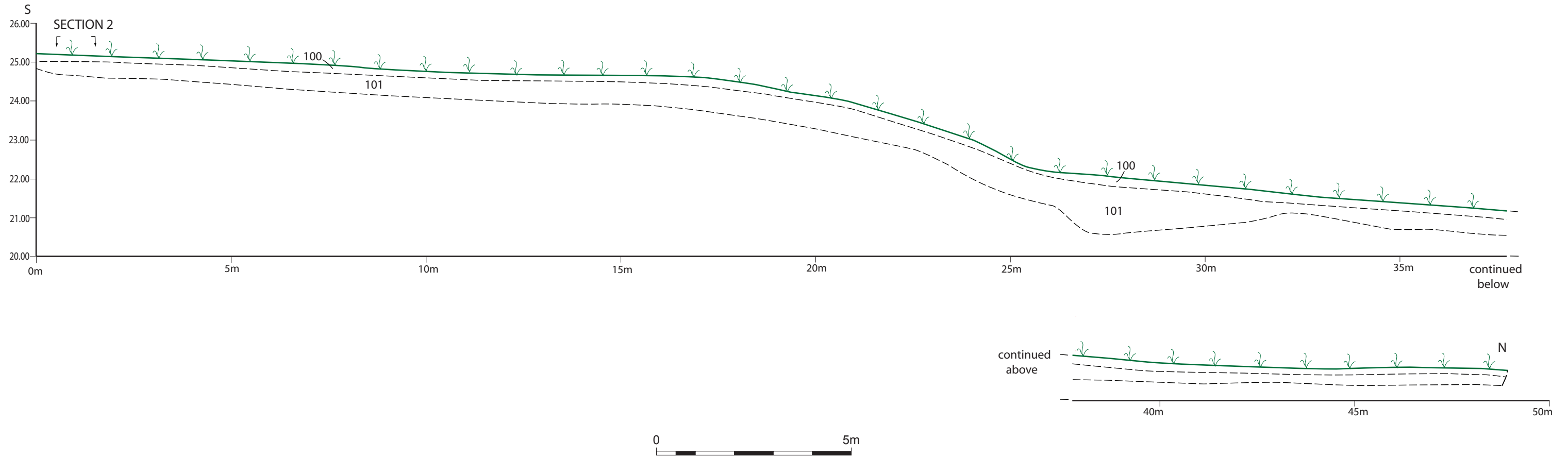
TRENCH 3: SECTIONS



Trench 3: plan and sections

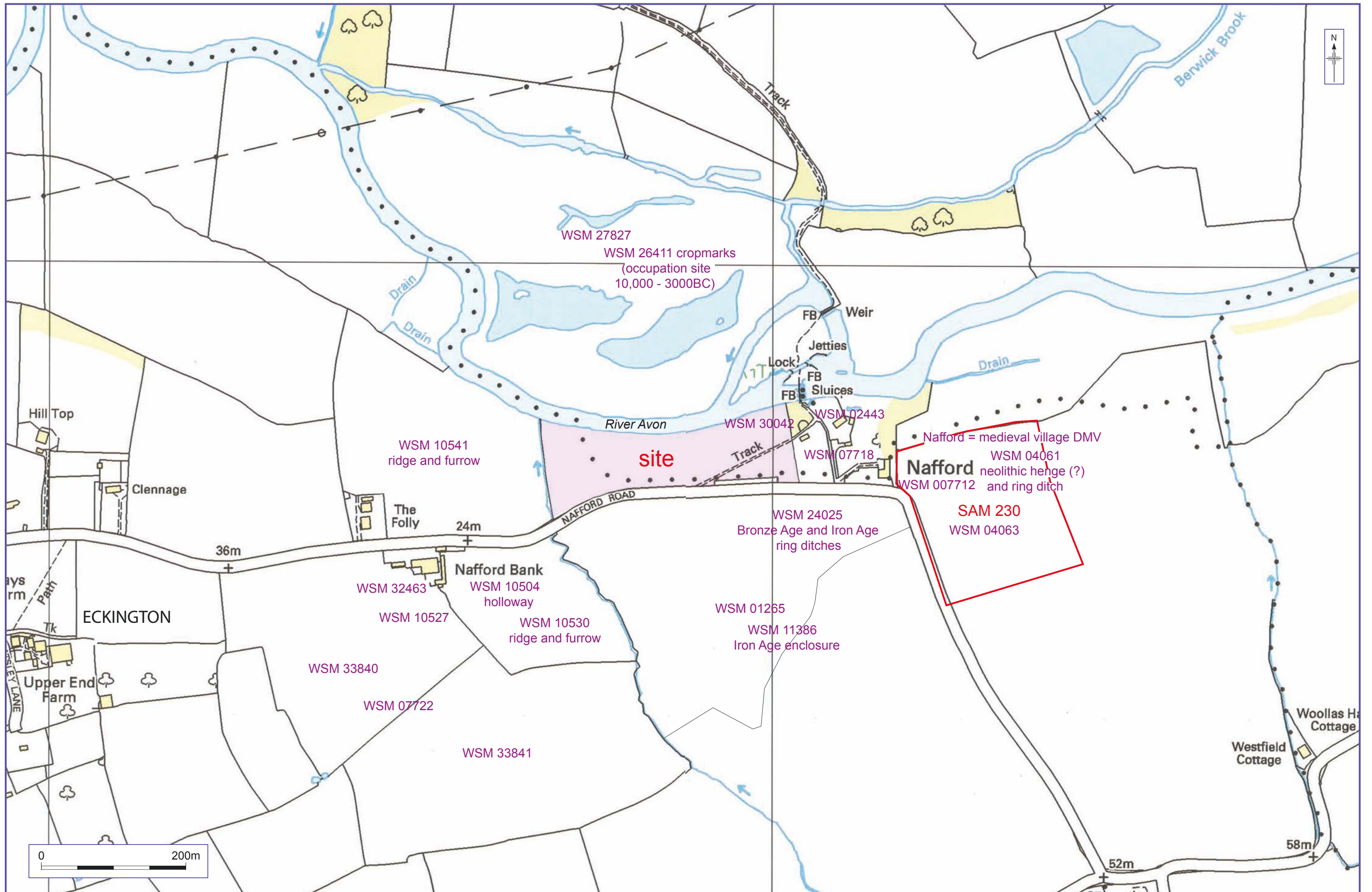
Figure 6

TRENCH 1: TOPOGRAPHICAL SECTION



Trench 1: topographical sections

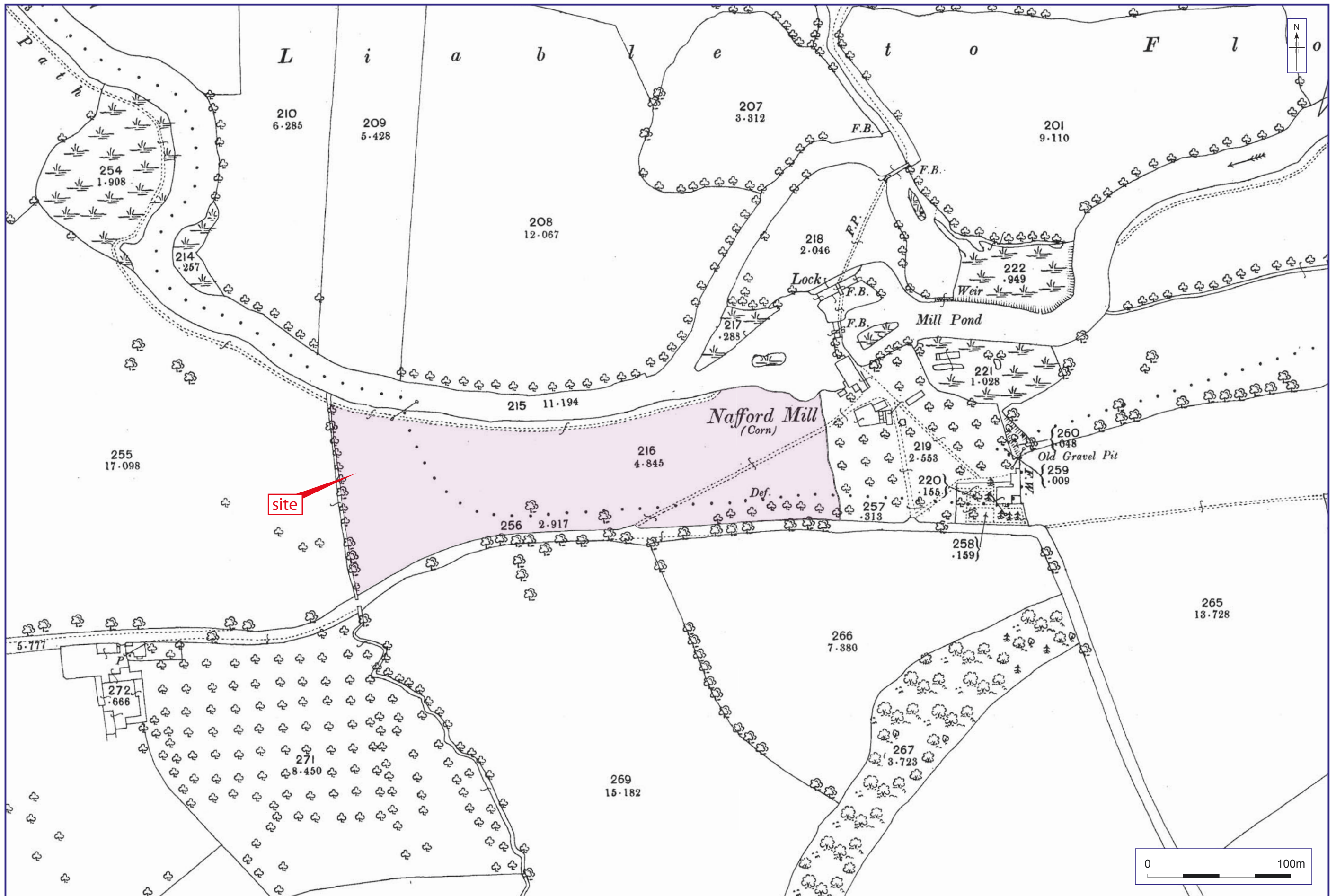
Figure 7



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Sites in the vicinity of Mill Meadow

Figure 9



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Extract from 1st Edition Ordnance Survey (1885)

Figure 10

Plates



Plate 1: General view of the site from Nafford Lock, trench 1 behind trees in centre, Trench 2 next to machine and Trench 3 behind trees to far left. (Facing south-west)



Plate 2: Trench 1, general view of east/west trench on promontory. (Facing east)



Plate 3: Trench 1, general view of south-east/north-west trench running down slope of promontory. (Facing south-east)



Plate 4: Trench 1, steep slope of natural gravels to north-west of promontory. (Facing south)



Plate 5: Trench 2, general view of trench, with River Avon in background. (Facing north)



Plate 6: Trench 2, alluvial deposits 202 and 203. (Facing west)



Plate 7: Trench 2, alluvial deposits to northern end of trench. (Facing west)



Plate 8: Trench 3, general view of trench. (Facing north-west)



Plate 9: Trench 3, ditch 303, section 1, scale at 0.50m. (Facing south)



Plate 10: Trench 3, ditches 305 (left) and 307 (right), section 2, scale at 1m. (Facing north)



Plate 11: Trench 2, ditches 305 (right) and 307 (left), section 2, scale at 1m. (Facing south)



Plate 12: Trench 2, general view of ditches 303, 305 and 307, scale at 1m. (Facing south)



Plate 13: Trench 2, ditch/gully 309, section 4, scale at 0.30m. (Facing east)



Plate 14: Trench 2, ditch/gully 312, section 6, scale at 0.3m. (Facing west)



Plate 15: Crop marks directly to the east of the evaluation site; the double ditched circular feature is the heavily eroded Bronze Age ring fort. (Facing north) (M. Glyde 2006)

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: 79m Width: 1.60m Depth: 0.35-1.50m

Orientation: East/west and south-east/north-west

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (top and bottom of deposits)
100	Topsoil	Loose mid-dark brown clayey loam, turf, frequent heavy root action. Occasional small sub-angular gravels and charcoal flecks. Contains frequent post-medieval material on the higher east – west section of the trench.	0-0.25m
101	Subsoil	Very compact/firm light brown sandy silt. Occasional root disturbance, charcoal and small sub-rounded pebbles.	0.15-1.50m
102	Natural clay	Very firm mixed grey/blue and light brown silty clays, occasional small sub-angular gravels. Located on the higher levels of the promontory.	0.40m+
103	Natural river terrace gravels	Loose reddish brown and yellow sands and sub-rounded gravels, occasional small patches of blue/grey alluvial clays, slopes steeply down to the north.	0.50m+

Trench 1 consisted of a 30m spur running east to west, then turning to the north-west and running down slope for another 49m.

The east/west section of the trench was located on level ground on the top of a promontory overlooking the River Avon. The north-west extension of the trench ran down the slope from the western end of the east/west trench. The trench dropped from 25.45m AOD to 20.75m AOD (present ground surface), 24.85m AOD to 20.35m AOD (level of underlying natural deposit).

Trench 2

Maximum dimensions: Length: 40m Width: 1.60m Depth: 2.40m (max)

Orientation: North/south

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (top and bottom of deposits)
200	Topsoil	Loose mid-dark brown clayey loam, turf, frequent heavy root action. Occasional small sub-angular gravels and charcoal flecks. Contains frequent modern building rubble in the lower, northern end of the trench.	0-0.50m
201	Subsoil	Very compact/firm light brown sandy silt. Occasional root disturbance, charcoal and small sub-rounded pebbles.	0.20 – 1.30m
202	Alluvium	Firm light bluish brown sandy clay, frequent small sub-rounded gravels and charcoal flecks, occasional patches of orange sand and organic material.	0.60 – 1.65m
203	Alluvium	Firm mid bluish grey clay, frequent charcoal flecks, occasional burnt stones and organic material.	0.95 – 2.10m
204	Alluvium	Hard compact laminated dark blue clay, no inclusions.	2.10m+
205	Natural river terrace gravels	Loose reddish brown and yellow sands and sub-rounded gravels, occasional small patches of blue/grey alluvial clays, slopes steeply down to the north.	0.70m+

Located in the central part of the site, the trench extended from the higher end of the escarpment and down slope in a northerly direction for 40m onto the River Avon flood plain. The top of the trench at 24.55m AOD and the lower end at 17.45m AOD (present ground surface), a drop of 7.10m from end to end.

Trench 3

Maximum dimensions: Length: 46m Width: 1.6m Depth: 0.65m

Orientation: South-east/north-west

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (top and bottom of deposits)
300	Topsoil	Loose mid-dark brown clayey loam, turf, frequent heavy root action. Occasional small sub-angular gravels and charcoal flecks.	0 – 0.22m
301	Subsoil	Very compact/firm light brown sandy silt. Occasional root disturbance, charcoal and small sub-rounded pebbles.	0.20 – 0.58m
302	Ditch/gully fill	Loose mid brown sandy silt, frequent small sub-angular gravels, occasional charcoal flecks.	0.52 – 0.70m
303	Ditch/gully	North/south aligned linear, moderated concave sides and base, filled by 302. roughly 0.7m wide and 0.18m deep.	0.52 – 0.70m
304	Ditch/gully fill	Loose mid brown sandy silt, frequent small sub-angular gravels, occasional charcoal flecks.	0.52 – 0.73m
305	Ditch cut	North/south aligned linear, gentle concave sides and base, filled by 304, truncates 306. 0.8m wide and 0.20m deep.	0.52 – 0.73m
306	Ditch fill	Loose mid-dark brown sandy silt, small sub-angular gravels and charcoal flecks.	0.54 – 0.74m
307	Ditch cut	North/south aligned linear, gentle concave sides and base, filled by 306, truncated 305. Roughly 0.8m wide and 0.20m deep	0.54 – 0.74m
308	Ditch/gully fill	Friable mid-dark brown sandy silt, occasional gravels and charcoal.	0.35 – 0.43m
309	Ditch/gully cut	East/west aligned linear, moderate/steep sides and flat, regular base, filled by 308, 0.35m wide and 0.09m deep.	0.35 – 0.43m
310	Natural	Friable mid brown /orange sandy silt, frequent limestone gravels, occasional patches of blue/grey clay.	0.37m+
311	Ditch/gully fill	Firm mid-dark brown sandy silt, occasional charcoal flecks and small sub-angular gravels.	0.40 – 0.47m
312	Ditch/gully cut	East/west aligned linear, steep sides, 'V' shaped base, filled by 311, 0.13m wide and 0.07m deep.	0.40 – 0.47m

The trench, located on the higher slope in the south-east corner of the site, ran north-west/south-east for 40m, with a small 6m extension on the south-east end. The trench was located close to a number of crop marks noted on the level ground in the fields to the south-east.

Appendix 2 Artefactual tables

Material	Total	Weight (g)
Early Bronze Age pottery	1	2
Late Bronze Age/ Iron Age pottery	11	21
Iron Age pottery	1	1
Roman pottery	3	6
Medieval pottery	1	4
Post-medieval pottery	7	68
Modern pottery	6	39
Brick	5	57
Roman tile	3	65
Flat roof tile	7	162
Vitrified ceramic	1	9
Burnt stone	5	310
Slag	1	46
Coal	3	20
Iron	5	88
Bronze object	1	112
Flint	2	15
Shell	2	11
Clay pipe stem	2	2
Animal bone	6	105

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

Fabric no.	Fabric name	Total	Weight (g)
12	Severn Valley ware	2	1
12.3	Reduced organically tempered Severn Valley ware	1	5
4.7	Fossil shell and grog	1	9
4.9.2	Shell tempered ware with moderate inclusions	10	12
5.1	Sand	1	1
5.13	Quartz	1	2
69	Oxidized glazed Malvernian ware	1	4
78	Post-medieval red wares	4	57
81	Stoneware	1	4
81.7	Staffordshire stoneware	1	6
85	Modern stone china	6	39
91	Post-medieval buff wares	1	1

Table 2: Quantification of the pottery by fabric

Context	Material	Total	Weight (g)	Date range	Period
100	Brick fragments	5	57		PMD/MOD
100	Vitrified ceramic	1	9		
100	Burnt flint	1	1		
100	Flint core	1	14		PRH
100	Iron nails	2	63		PMD/MOD
100	Iron object	2	21		PMD/MOD
100	Modern pottery	1	5	L18 th -19 th C	MOD
100	Modern pottery	5	34	L18 th -20 th C	MOD
100	Post-medieval pottery	1	4		PMD
100	Post-medieval pottery	4	29	18 th C	PMD
100	Post-medieval pottery	1	1	Mid17 th -18 th C	PMD
100	Roman pottery	1	0		RBR
100	Slag	1	46		
100	Tile fragments	4	19		PMD

100	Flat roof tile	2	130		PMD
100	Flat roof tile	1	13	E 13 th -16 th C	MED
200	Bronze object	1	112		MED-MOD
200	Post-medieval pottery	1	34	18 th C	PMD
200	Shell	2	11		
200	Roman tile	3	65	1 st -4 th C	RBR
200	Iron nail	1	4		
200	Clay pipe stem	1	1		PMD
202	Late Bronze Age/early Iron Age pottery	1	9		LBA-EIA
203	Early Bronze Age pottery	1	2		EBA
203	Iron Age pottery	1	1		IA
203	Late Bronze Age/early Iron Age pottery	10	12		LBA-EIA
203	Roman pottery	1	5	1 st C	ERBR
203	Burnt stone	5	310		
300	Clay pipe stem	1	1		PMD
300	Medieval pottery	1	4		MED
300	Roman pottery	1	1	Mid 1 st -4 th C	RBR
308	Coal	3	20		

Table 3: Summary of the assemblage

Appendix 3 Environmental tables

Context	Sample	large mammal	small mammal	mollusc	insect	waterlog plant	hammerscale
203	1	occ	occ	occ	occ	abt	

Table 4: Summary of environmental remains

Occ = occasional; abt = abundant

Latin name	Family	Common name	Habitat	203
Waterlogged plant remains				
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Caprifoliaceae	elderberry	BC	+++

Table 5: Plant remains

Key:

Habitat	Quantity
A= cultivated ground	+ = 1 - 10
B= disturbed ground	++ = 11- 50
C= woodlands, hedgerows, scrub etc	+++ = 51 -100
D = grasslands, meadows and heathland	++++ = 101+
E = aquatic/wet habitats	
F = cultivar	