

# Archaeological Evaluation at Berkeley Close, South Cerney, Gloucestershire



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Worcestershire Archaeology  
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# **Archaeological evaluation at Berkeley Close, South Cerney, Gloucestershire**

Tim Cornah and Graham Arnold

With a contribution by Rob Hedge

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

## **Summary**

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken of land adjacent to Berkeley Close, South Cerney, Gloucestershire (NGR SU 04659 96532). It was undertaken for Richard Smalley of CgMs Consulting whose client, Gladman Developments Ltd, intend the residential development of the site for which a planning application is in preparation.

The site is one part of a large field on the western edge of South Cerney, a village on the border of Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. A desk-based assessment of the site identified a low potential for the survival of archaeological features within the site. A geophysical survey of the site identified an area of quarrying and the buried remains of ridge and furrow agriculture. Consultation with Gloucestershire County Council established the requirement for an archaeological evaluation of the site to support the planning application.

Five trenches of 50m length were excavated on the site, representing a sample of approximately 2%. A number of post medieval and modern features were recorded including ploughed out furrows, a former field boundary ditch and evidence of quarrying.

Two small sherds of highly abraded, possibly Roman pottery were recovered from a very shallow ditch which was also recorded in another trench 200m to the north-west. It is thought that this may represent the remains of an earlier period of activity, but one that has been very heavily truncated by the plough. The lack of other finds of this period from the site in general, stratified or unstratified would suggest that, had Roman features once existed on the site, they were agricultural in origin and distant from settlement activity. The sherds may equally have been present on the site through the process of manuring.

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# Report

## 1 Background

### 1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Berkeley Close, South Cerney, Gloucestershire (NGR SU 04659 96532). It was commissioned by Richard Smalley of CgMs Consulting whose client, Gladman Developments Ltd, intend the residential development of the site. A planning application will be submitted to Gloucestershire County Council.

Consultation between CgMs Consulting and Charles Parry of Gloucestershire County Council (The Curator) established the requirement for an archaeological evaluation of the site to support the planning application. A geophysical survey of the site was also undertaken which informed the evaluation strategy.

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the works was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology and approved by Gloucestershire County Council. The project conforms to the *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014a).

## 2 Aims

The aims and scope of the project were to undertake sufficient fieldwork to:

- determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits beyond reasonable doubt;
- identify their location, nature date and preservation;
- assess their significance;
- assess the likely impact of the proposed development.

## 3 Methods

### 3.1 Personnel

The project was led by Timothy Cornah (BA (hons.), MSc); who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2006 and has been practicing archaeology since 2003, assisted by Graham Arnold (BA (hons.), MSc). The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Rogers (BA (hons.); MSc). Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt (BSc (hons.); PG Cert; MCIfA). Robert Hedge (MA Cantab) contributed the finds report.

### 3.2 Documentary research

An archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) was undertaken by CgMs Consulting (CgMs 2016) on behalf of Gladman Developments Ltd. The DBA results are summarised below in section 4.1. Published and grey literature sources are listed in the bibliography.

### 3.3 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2016).

Fieldwork was undertaken between 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> October 2016.

Five trenches, amounting to just over 500m<sup>2</sup> in area, were excavated over the site area of 3.5ha, representing a sample of 2%. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed using a wheeled 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 Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

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### **3.4 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.

### **3.5 Artefact methodology, by Rob Hedge**

#### **3.5.1 Artefact recovery policy**

Recovery of artefacts was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012).

#### **3.5.2 Method of analysis**

All hand-retrieved finds were examined. 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 referenced as appropriate by fabric type and form, in the absence of an accessible and comprehensive local type series, according to the fabric reference series maintained by Worcestershire Archaeology (Hurst and Rees 1992 and [www.worcestershireceramics.org](http://www.worcestershireceramics.org)).

#### **3.5.3 Discard policy**

The following categories/types of material will be discarded after a period of 6 months following the submission of this report, unless there is a specific request to retain them (and subject to the collection policy of the relevant depository):

- where unstratified
- post-medieval material in general, and;
- generally where material has been specifically assessed by an appropriate specialist as having no obvious grounds for retention.

### **3.6 Statement of confidence in the methods and results**

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

## **4 The application site**

### **4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context**

An archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) was undertaken by CgMs Consulting (CgMs 2016) on behalf of Gladman Developments Ltd. The historical background to the site is reproduced in summary below:

The solid geology of the site comprises Mudstone of the Kellaways Clay Member. This is overlain by superficial sand and gravel deposits of the Northmoor Member (BGS 2016).

The HER and HEA record no evidence of Prehistoric activity within the study site itself although a number of non-designated Prehistoric assets are known in the wider study area.

A small excavation on South Cerney High Street identified twenty-one pieces of Mesolithic flint and eight sherds of Bronze Age pottery (HER 20675) 370m north of the study site. Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age settlement activity is recorded by the HER and HEA. approximately 1km west of the study site. A particular concentration of Prehistoric activity (HER 15477) comprising a late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age hengiform, a late Bronze Age unenclosed settlement, Bronze Age

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inhumations and late Iron Age linear ditches, is recorded by the HER at Shorncote Quarry, approximately 1.2km west of the study site. The HEA records several Prehistoric features including probable barrows (HEA 1073136, 1073135) and enclosures over 400m south of the study site. These features have since been removed by gravel extraction at the Cotswold Water Park.

There are no records of any Roman sites or finds within the study site in either the HER or the HEA. However, a number of records are recorded in the wider search area. The HER and HEA record a Roman-British burial (HER 2386, HEA 216633) approximately 480m south of the study site. The burial, comprising a skeleton in a lead coffin was discovered during the digging of a gravel pit in 1941. A Romano-British bronze fibula (HER 2377) is recorded by the HER approximately 675m north-west of the study site.

The earliest reference to South Cerney is in a document of AD909 which details the gift of Eatflaed's lands to King Aethelred upon her death. South Cerney is mentioned in the Domesday Book as 'Cernei' comprising lands in the Gersdones hundred held by Walter fitzRoger (Williams and Martin, 2003). The settlement may have taken its name from the River Churn upon which it is centred.

The presence of an Early Medieval carving above the south doorway of All Hallows Church (HER 2357; 744m north-east) may indicate that the church originated during this period.

Historical sources and archaeological investigations have shown that the landscape surrounding the study site was utilised during the Saxon-Early Medieval period. The majority of these records are located over 300m north of the study site within the settlement of South Cerney itself.

No evidence of Medieval activity is recorded by the HER or HEA on the study site itself, however a number of sites are recorded in the wider search area. The HER records a possible Medieval ditch (HER 26835) approximately 200m northwest of the study site. However, the majority of Medieval activity is related to the settlement of South Cerney itself.

Two Medieval rubbish pits (HER 22213) are recorded by the HER at Walnut Tree Farm House, approximately 270m north of the study site. Further evidence of Medieval settlement activity is recorded by the HER at Orchard House 300m north of the study site.

The scheduled Village Cross (NHL 10142828, HER 2360, HEA 216686) approximately 450m north-west of the study site may be of a late Medieval (15th century) date. The scheduled Medieval South Cerney Castle (NHL 1003422, HER 322, HEA 216679) is located approximately 900m north of the study site. The castle is believed to have been constructed by Milo fitzWalter and was later captured by King Stephen in AD 1139.

No evidence of Post-Medieval or Modern activity is recorded by the HER or HEA within the study site. The majority of Post-Medieval and Modern assets identified by the HER and HEA are related to buildings, such as houses, and are located within South Cerney itself. However a number of small finds, such as a wine flask (HER 19968), a coin (HER 20675) and a broken blade with handle fragment (HER 20673) are also recorded in the wider study area.

## **4.2 Current land-use**

The site consists of a single arable field, used to grow a cereal crop, which had been harvested prior to works commencing. The field is generally flat, however there is a slight raise in the northern central part. The study site has a height of approximately 90m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). A small river flows south approximately 155m west of the study site. The River Churn flows through South Cerney and is located approximately 500m north of the study site.

# **5 Results**

## **5.1 Structural analysis**

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Fig 2. Plans and sections of the features are shown in Fig 3 and 4. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

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### **5.1.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits**

The natural substrate consisted of compact limestone rich sand and gravel deposits and was recorded consistently in all trenches between 0.35 and 0.40m below ground level.

### **5.1.2 Phase 2: Roman deposits**

Two sherds of abraded Roman pottery were recovered from a section excavated across feature 404, a heavily truncated gully (0.08m deep) crossing Trench 4 oriented NW-SE (Plates 8 and 9). The sherds were heavily abraded and it is possible that they were residual in this context.

### **5.1.3 Phase 3: Post-medieval deposits**

A ditch interpreted as a former field boundary [108, 312] (Plate 2) was recorded on the site crossing Trench 1 and Trench 3 from east to west. It was flat bottomed, 1.40m wide and 0.22m deep. Post-medieval pottery was recovered from the fill of the ditch (107), the line of which is depicted on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition OS mapping of the site. It was also highlighted in the geophysical survey of the site.

Several ploughed out furrows were recorded crossing Trenches 1 and 2 on a NE-SW orientation as suggested by the results of the geophysical survey.

### **5.1.4 Phase 4: modern deposits**

The natural stratum and subsoil were overlain by a thick humic topsoil, which had been used for growing cereals. A number of plough scars were cut into the natural substrate.

In Trench 5 a mixed mid-orange grey clay containing brick, plastics and frequent limestone gravels was recorded for a length of 13m along the south-eastern end of trench

### **5.1.5 Undated deposits**

A shallow gully [106] crossed Trench 1 orientated NW – SE across Trench 1, on a similar alignment to ditch 404. This was 0.50m wide and 0.08m deep and filled with a moderately compact mid orangey brown clayey silt (105). This is likely to be the same feature as 104.

A quarry cut was apparent in the south-western end of Trench 3 [304] (Plate 6). This was up to 0.90m deep and had two mixed fills (303) and (315) of subsoil and redeposited natural substrate.

## **5.2 Artefact analysis, by Rob Hedge**

Fill (107) of hedgerow/field boundary [108] contained 2 sherds (54g) of 16th to 18th century glazed earthenware, highly abraded but comparable to the products of the nearby Ashton Keynes industry. Also recovered were two very small undiagnostic fragments of ceramic building material, weighing 4g.

Two small and highly abraded sherds of pottery, weighing 2g and of a moderately hard, reduced, sandy fabric were found within deposit (403). Although poor condition precluded precise identification, they are considered likely to be Roman.

The assemblage indicates a low density scatter of artefacts across the site, likely to reflect agricultural activity.

## **6 Synthesis**

The evaluation recorded a largely agricultural landscape which has been subject to some quarrying and the loss of a field boundary. Ditch 404 from which two sherds of abraded, possibly Roman, pottery were recovered and similar ditch 106 may represent the remains of an earlier period of activity, but one that has been very heavily truncated by the plough. It is probable that 106 and 404 are the same feature which had been truncated entirely in Trench 3 which lay between them.

The orientation of this feature bears no relation later agricultural activity including the former ridge and furrow, suggesting an earlier date. However, the lack of other finds of this period from the site

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in general, stratified or unstratified would suggest that, had Roman features once existed on the site, they were agricultural in origin and distant from settlement activity. The sherds may equally have been present on the site through the process of manuring.

## 7 Publication summary

Worcestershire Archaeology has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, Worcestershire Archaeology intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The publication will read:

*"An archaeological evaluation was undertaken of land adjacent to Berkeley Close, South Cerney, Gloucestershire (NGR SU 04659 96532). It was undertaken for Richard Smalley of CgMs Consulting whose client, Gladman Developments Ltd, intend the residential development of the site for which a planning application is in preparation.*

*The site is one part of a large field on the western edge of South Cerney, a village on the border of Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. A desk-based assessment of the site identified a low potential for the survival of archaeological features within the site. A geophysical survey of the site identified an area of quarrying and the buried remains of ridge and furrow agriculture. Consultation with Gloucestershire County Council established the requirement for an archaeological evaluation of the site to support the planning application.*

*Five trenches of 50m length were excavated on the site, representing a sample of approximately 2%. A number of post medieval and modern features were recorded including ploughed out furrows, a former field boundary ditch and evidence of quarrying.*

*Two small sherds of highly abraded, possibly Roman pottery were recovered from a very shallow ditch in the south-western part of the site. A continuation of this ditch was recorded in another trench 200m to the north-west. It is thought that this may represent the remains of an earlier period of activity, but one that has been very heavily truncated by the plough. The lack of other finds of this period from the site in general, stratified or unstratified would suggest that, had Roman features once existed on the site, they were agricultural in origin and distant from settlement activity. The sherds may equally have been present on the site through the process of manuring."*

## 8 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Richard Smalley, CgMs Consulting, and Charles Parry, Principal Archaeologist, Gloucestershire County Council.

## 9 Bibliography

AAF 2011 *Archaeological archives: a guide to the best practice in the creation, compilation, transfer and curation*, Archaeological Archives Forum, <http://www.archaeologyuk.org/archives/>

BGS 2016 *Geology of Britain Viewer*, <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>, British Geological Survey, accessed 13 October 2016

CgMs 2016 *Archaeological desk-based Assessment: Land off Berkeley Close, South Cerney, Gloucestershire* CgMs Ltd, unpublished document dated May 2016

ClfA 2014 *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation*, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, <http://www.archaeologists.net/codes/ifa>

ClfA 2014b *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials*, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, <http://www.archaeologists.net/codes/ifa>

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DCLG 2012 *National Planning Policy Framework*, Department for Communities and Local Government

SMA 1993 *Selection, retention and dispersal of archaeological collections*, Society for Museum Archaeology, <http://www.socmusarch.org.uk/publica.htm>

Stratascan 2016 *Geophysical Survey Report, South Cerney, Gloucestershire*, Stratascan Job ref J10297, dated September 2016

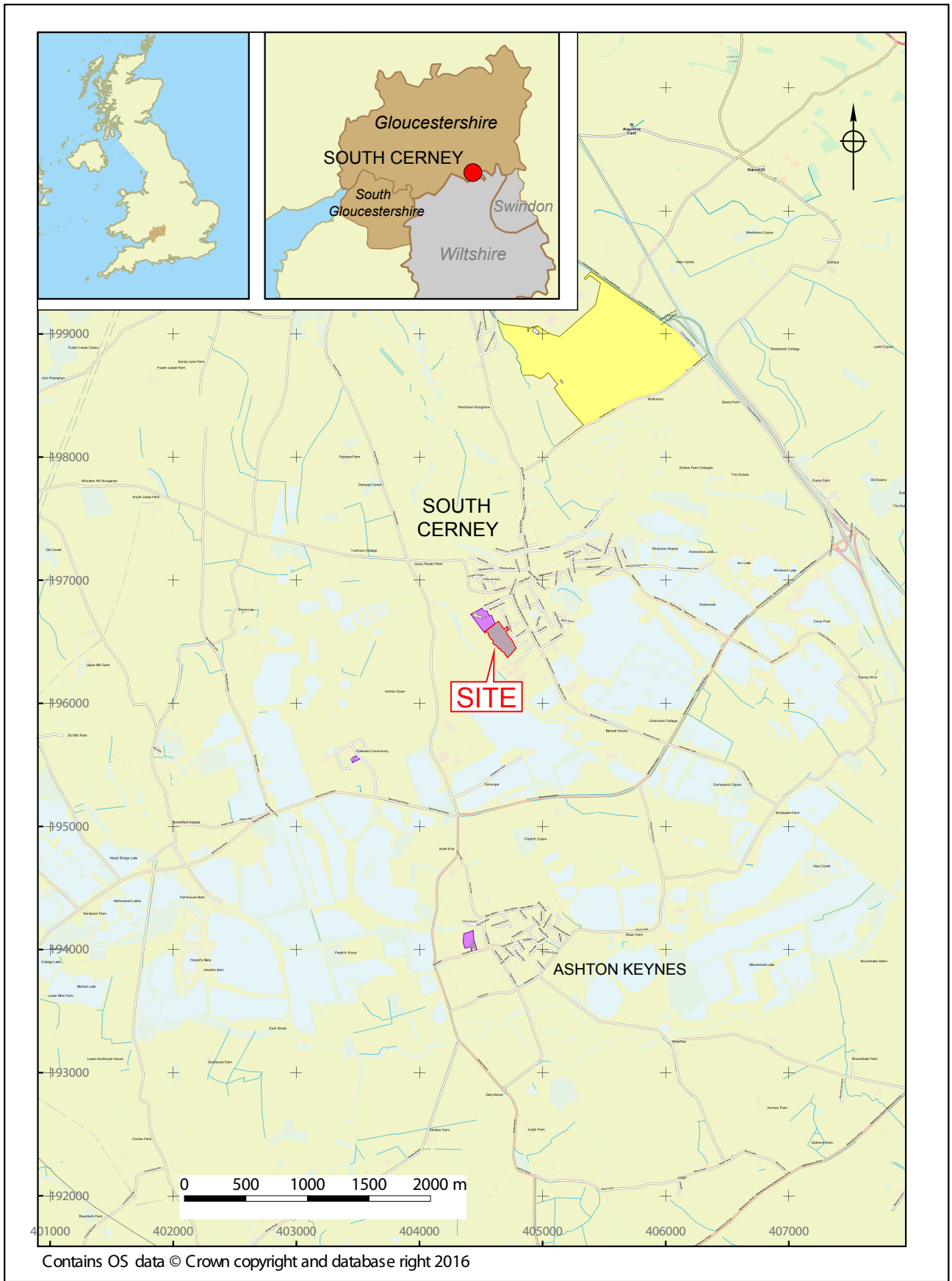
WA 2012 *Manual of service practice, recording manual*, Worcestershire Archaeology, Worcestershire County Council, report **1842**

WA 2016 *Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological evaluation at Land off Berkeley Close, South Cerney, Gloucestershire*, Worcestershire Archaeology, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished document dated 29 September 2016, **P4895**

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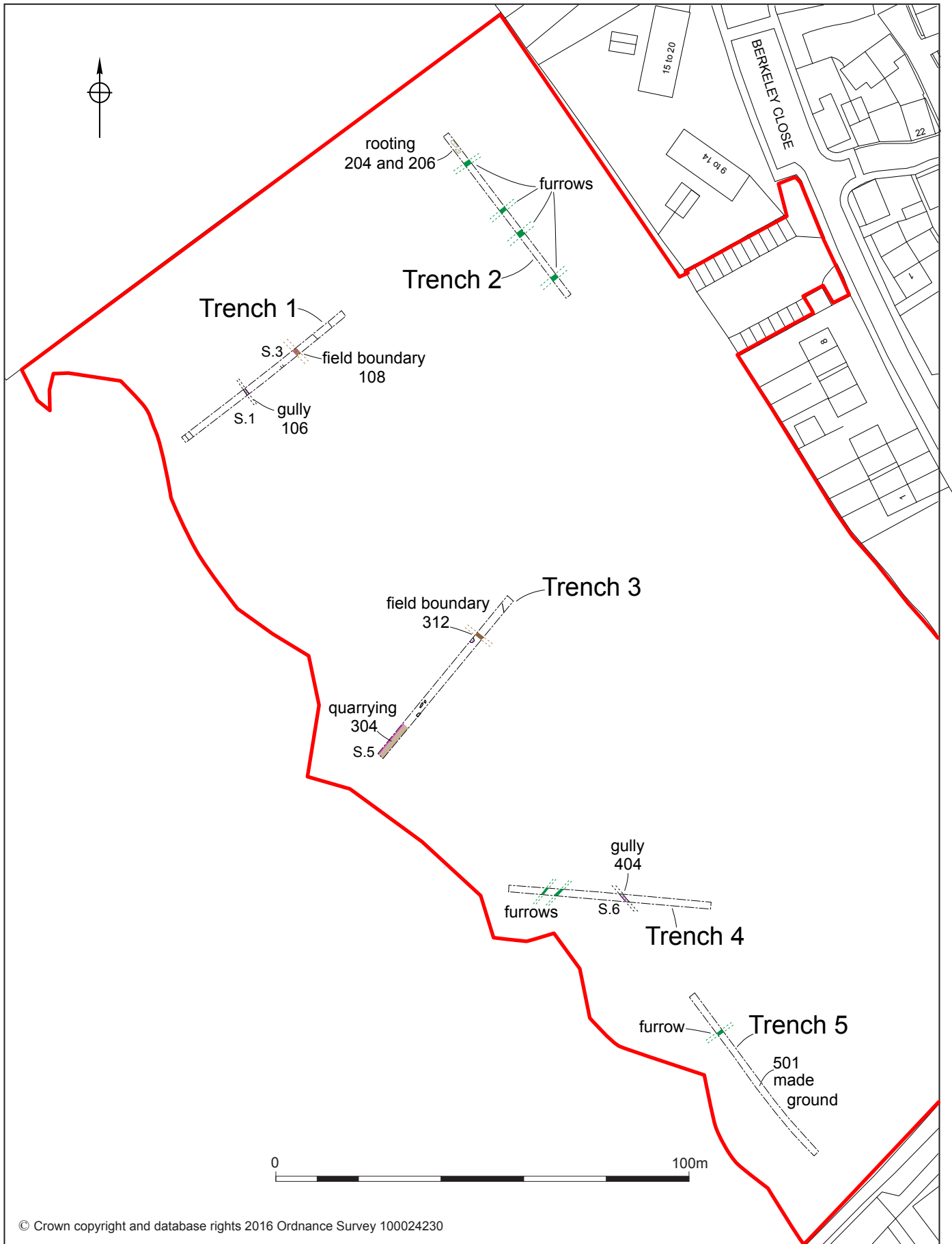
## Figures





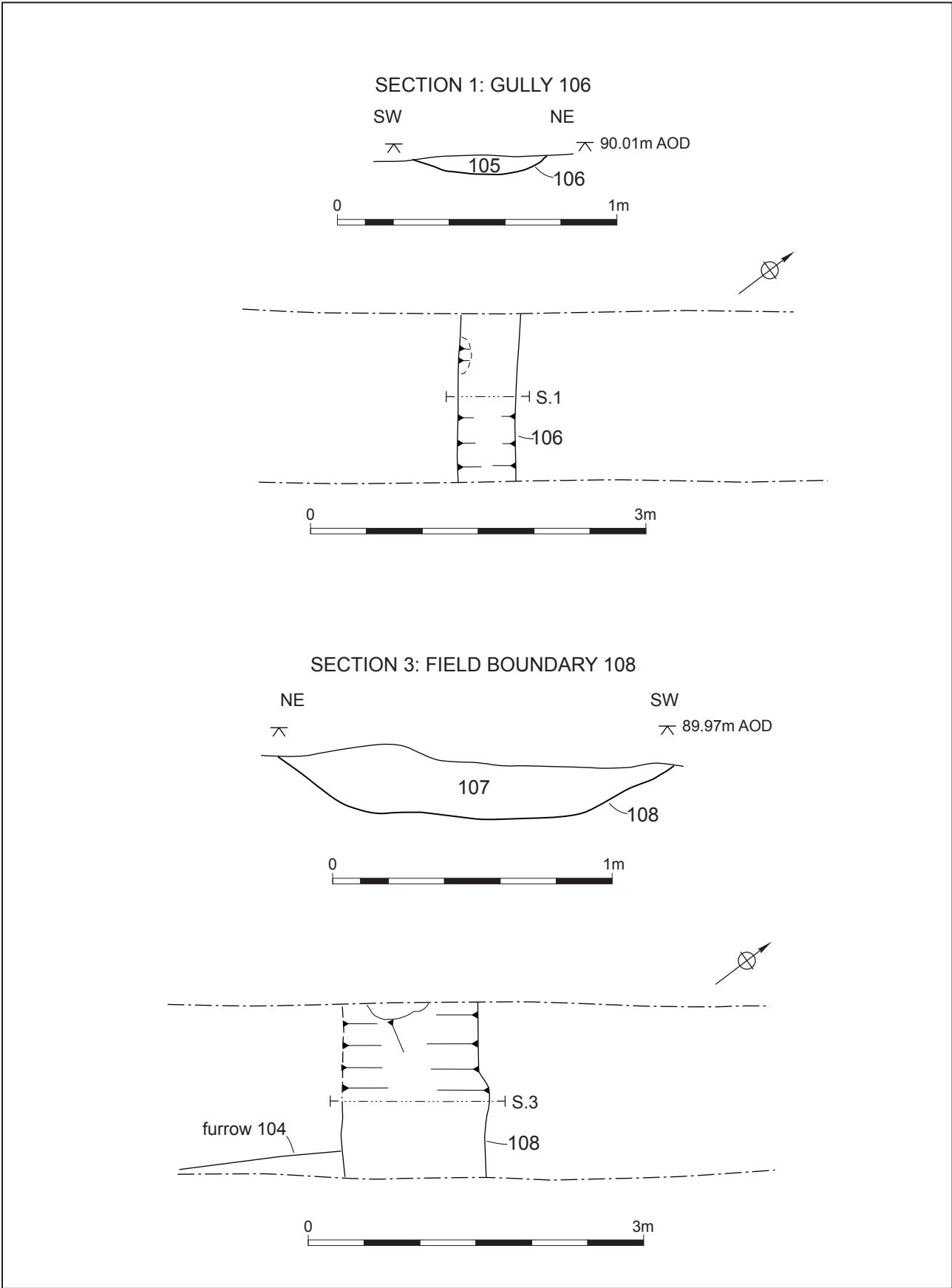
Location of the site

Figure 1



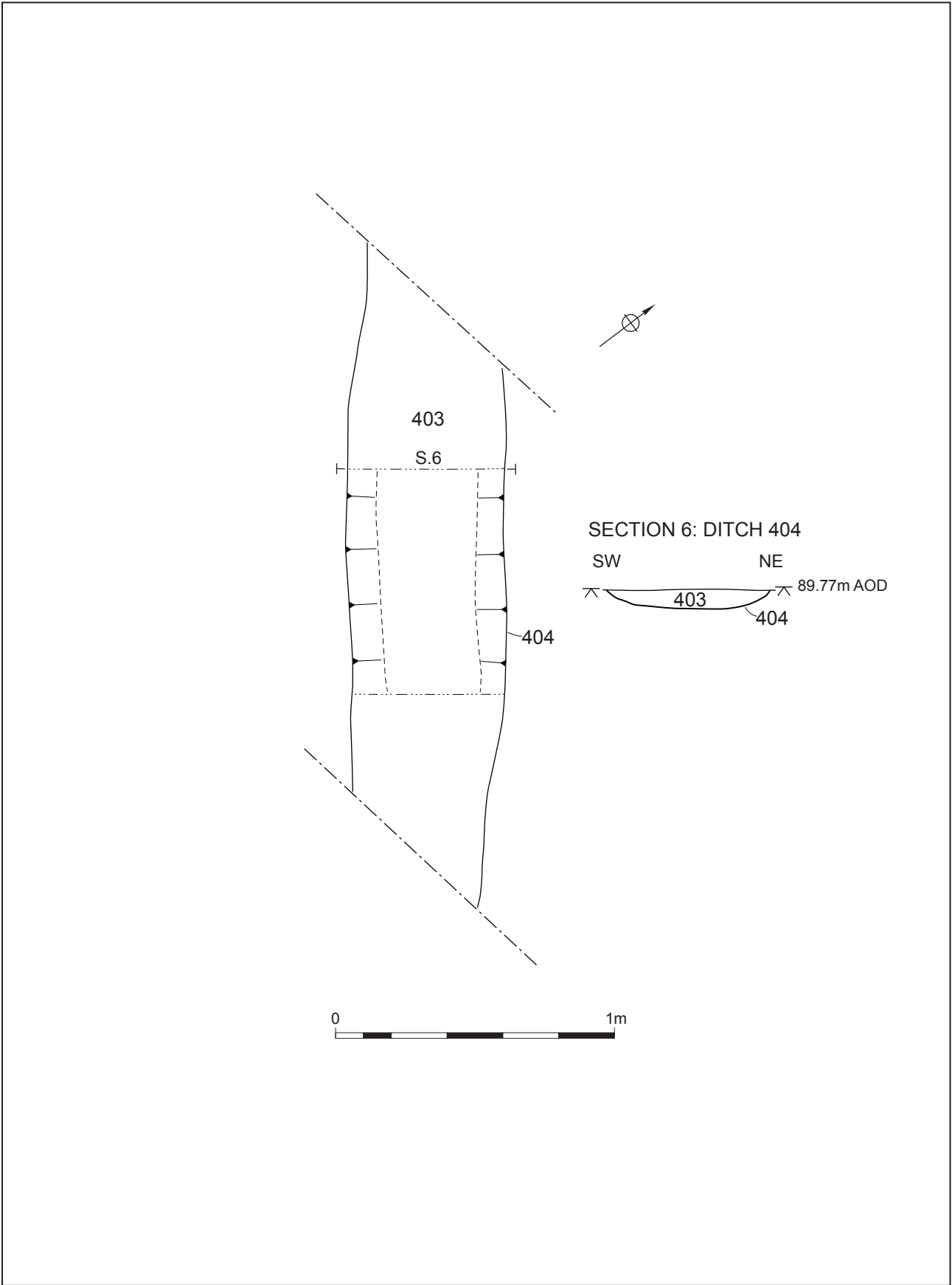
Trench location plan

Figure 2



Gully 106 and field boundary 108: plans and sections

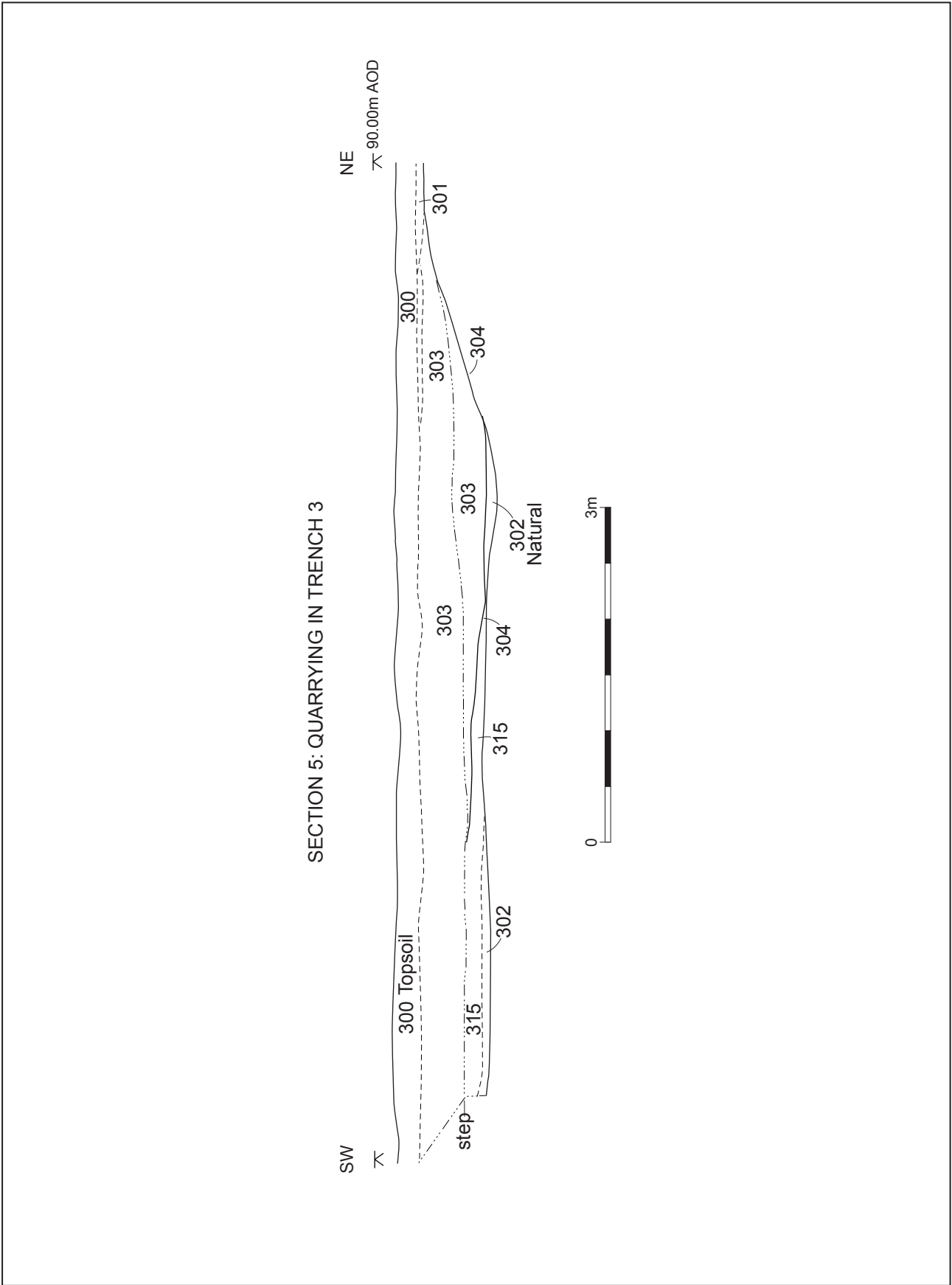
Figure 3



Ditch 404 plan and section

Figure 4





Section 5: quarrying in trench 3

Figure 5

## Plates



*Plate 1 Trench 1 looking southeast*



*Plate 2 Field boundary/hedgerow [108] looking south*





*Plate 3 Trench 2 after excavation looking southeast*



*Plate 4 Rooting patches in northwest end of trench 2 [204] and [206], after excavation*





*Plate 5 Trench 3 after excavation looking northwest*



*Plate 6 Quarrying activity [304] in the southwest corner of Trench 3 looking north*





*Plate 7 Trench 4 after excavation looking southeast*

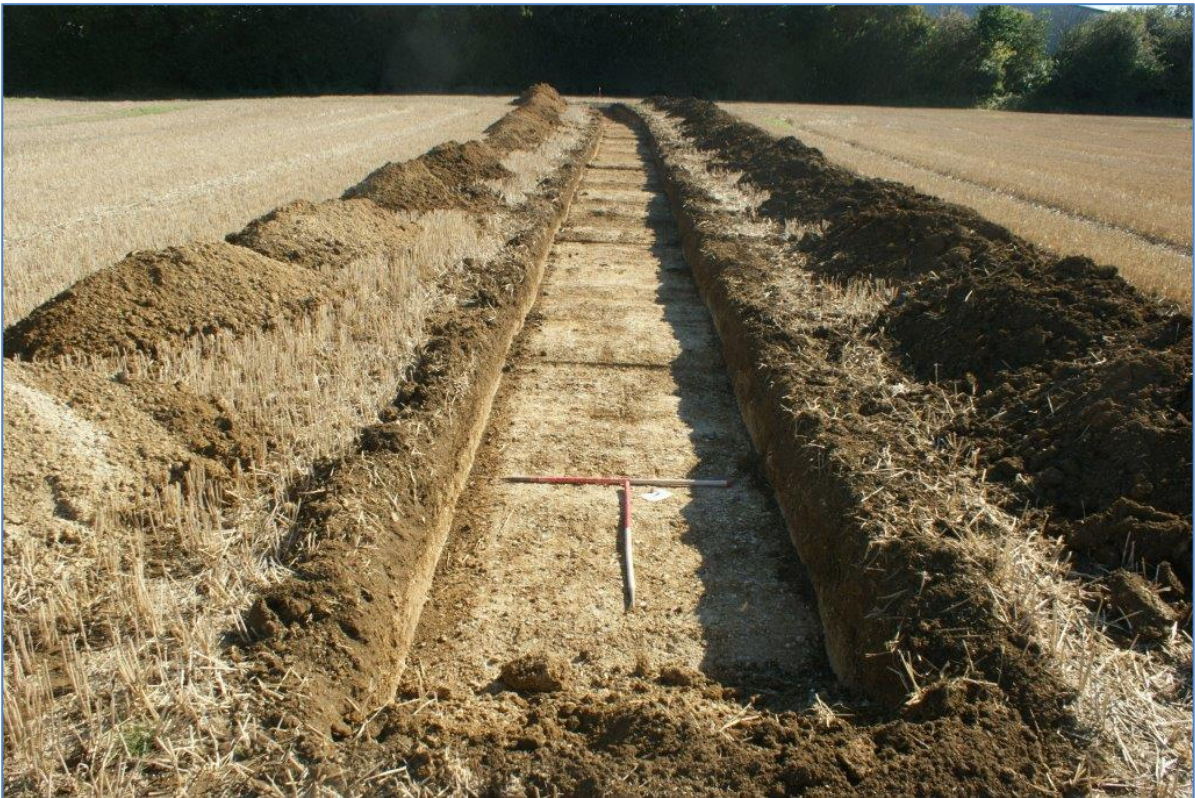


*Plate 8 Gully 404 prior to excavation looking northeast*





*Plate 9 Gully [404] southeast facing section*



*Plate 10 Trench 5 looking southeast*

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## Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

### Trench 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: 50.00m Width: 1.60m Depth: 0.45m

Orientation: NE - SW

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Topsoil	Friable dark brownish grey clayey silt with moderate inclusions of small sub angular yellow limestone pebbles from ploughing.	0.00 – 0.25m
101	Subsoil	Firm mid orangey brown silty clay	0.20 – 0.35m
102	Natural	Limestone rich sands and gravels with compact white and yellow gravels in the northeast and fine soft yellow sands and gravels in the southwest, showing natural variation.	0.35m +
103	Fill of furrow	Firm mid greyish brown silty clay. Same as subsoil	0.40-0.45m
104	Furrow	Northeast – southwest orientated furrow, 0.05m deep, running parallel to southeast side of trench.	0.40 – 0.45m
105	Fill	Moderately compact mid orangey brown clayey silt. Undated.	0.40 – 0.48m
106	Gully	shallow gully orientated northwest – southeast across trench. 0.50m wide and 0.08m deep.	0.40 – 0.48m
107	Fill	Dark greyish brown silty clay with occasional , pebbles, pot and cbm. 0.22m deep.	0.45 – 0.67m
108	Field boundary / hedgerow	Field boundary ditch of old hedgerow, orientated northwest-southeast across field. Visible on geophysics plan. 1.40m wide and 0.22m deep.	0.45 – 0.67m



## Trench 2

Maximum dimensions: Length: 50.00m Width: 1.60m Depth: 0.45m

Orientation: NW - SE

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
200	Topsoil	Friable dark greyish brown clayey silt	0.0 - 0.25m
201	Subsoil	Moderately compact mid orangey brown silty clay with frequent limestone gravels	0.20 – 0,40m
202	Natural	Yellow and white limestone rich sands and gravels cut by four regular furrows, orientated northeast southwest, perpendicular to trench. Furrows are 0.05 – 0.08m deep.	0.40m +
203	Fill	Moderately compact dark greyish brown silty clay with frequent limestone gravels. 0.20m maximum depth.	-
204	Modern rooting	Elongated rooting with irregular base. Maximum dimensions 2.00m x 0.50m and 0.20m depth	-
205	Fill	Moderately compact dark greyish brown silty clay with frequent limestone gravels	-
206	Modern rooting	Irregular sub-oval feature measuring 0.60 x 0.80 and 0.12m deep. Rooting	-



### Trench 3

Maximum dimensions: Length: 50.00m Width: 1.60m Depth: 0.40m + 0.90m SW end

Orientation: NE - SW

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
300	Topsoil	Friable dark greyish brown clayey silt	0.00 – 0.25m
301	Subsoil	Moderately compact mid orangey brown silty clay with frequent limestone gravels	0.20 – 0.40m
302	Natural	Yellow and white limestone rich sands and gravels	0.40m +
303	Fill	Backfill of modern quarrying activity. Moderately compact dark orangey brown silty clay	0.20 – 0.90m
304	Quarry cut	0.70m deep and 10.00m with a sharp slope.	0.20- 0.90m
305	Fill	Mixed topsoil / subsoil material moderately compact mid orangey brown silty clay	-
306	Plough scar	Modern plough scarring of the natural ground	-
307	Fill	Mixed topsoil /subsoil material moderately compact mid orangey brown silty clay	
308	Plough scar	Modern plough scarring of the natural ground	
309	Fill of rooting	Subsoil material moderately compact mid orangey brown silty clay	
310	Rooting	Undulating sub-circular feature close to hedgerow.	
311	Fill	Dark greyish brown silty clay with occasional pebbles. Same as 107, unexcavated.	
312	Cut of field boundary / hedgerow	Linear 1.40m wide. Field boundary ditch of old hedgerow, orientated northwest-southeast across field. Visible on geophysics plan as OS maps. Same as [108]	-
313	Fill of furrow	Subsoil material, moderately compact mid	

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
		orangey brown silty clay.	
314	Furrow	Orientated northeast - Southwest in northeast end of trench. 0.05m deep.	
315	Quarry fill	Mid yellowish brown silty clay with frequent limestone gravel inclusions.	0.70 – 0.90m

#### Trench 4

Maximum dimensions: Length: 50.00m Width: 1.60m Depth: 0.35m

Orientation: E - W

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
400	Topsoil	Friable dark greyish brown clayey silt	0.00 - 0.18m
401	Subsoil	Mid orangey brown silty clay with frequent limestone gravels	0.18 – 0.30m
402	Natural	Yellow limestone rich sands and gravels. Cut by north-south aligned furrows and with frequent plough scarring.	0.30m +
403	Fill of ditch	Light brownish orange clayey silt with frequent gravels. 0.08m deep with rare abraded pot inclusions. Possibly Roman in date but heavily truncated by ploughing.	0.35 – 0.43m
404	Ditch	Shallow, northwest-southeast aligned ditch cut. 0.60m wide and 0.08m deep. Probable prehistoric ditch but heavily truncated by agricultural use of the site.	0.35 – 0.43m

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## Trench 5

Maximum dimensions: Length: 50.00m Width: 1.60m Depth: 0.58m

Orientation: NW - SE

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
500	Topsoil	Dark grey brown clayey silt	0 – 0.26m
501	Modern dump	Mixed mid orangey grey clay containing brick, plastics and frequent limestone gravels. Runs for 13m along SE end of trench	0.16-0.56m
502	Subsoil	Moderately compact mid orangey brown silty clay with frequent limestone gravels	0.26- 0.37m
503	Natural	Yellow limestone rich sands and gravels	0.37m +

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## **Appendix 2 Technical information**

### **The archive (site code:P4985)**

The archive consists of:

- 1 Field progress reports AS2
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 62 Digital photographs
- 1 Drawing number catalogues AS4
- 7 Scale drawings
- 5 Trench record sheets AS41
- 1 CD-Rom/DVDs
- 1 Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Corinium Museum  
Park Street  
Cirencester  
GL7 2BX

Tel: 01285 655611

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