

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION

AT

LAND OFF BARNETT ROAD,

STEVENTON, OXFORDSHIRE

NGR SU 4659 9228

On behalf of

CgMs Consulting Ltd

SEPTEMBER 2014

REPORT FOR CgMs Consulting Ltd
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CONTENTS

	Page
<i>SUMMARY</i>	1
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Site Location	1
1.2 Planning Background	1
1.3 Archaeological Background	1
2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION	3
3 STRATEGY	3
3.1 Research Design	3
3.2 Methodology	3
4 RESULTS	3
4.1 Excavation Results	3
4.2 Reliability of Results and Techniques	4
5 FINDS	7
6 DISCUSSION	7
7 BIBLIOGRAPHY	7
FIGURES	
Figure 1 Site location	2
Figure 2 Plans and sections	5
Figure 3 Plans and sections	6

Summary

John Moore Heritage Services carried out a small archaeological excavation on this site between the 17th – 20th June 2014. An area approximately 21m x 7m was machine excavated to the geological/archaeological horizon. A series of ditches, post holes and lain stone masonry forming part of a stone constructed culvert, to part of a longer drainage feature, were recorded. All the features exposed remain undated, although their inter-cutting nature allows some tentative dating on the basis of their stratigraphic relationships.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development area is located to the north of Barnett Road in Steventon (NGR SU 4659 9228). It lies at approximately 60m OD and the site is currently arable. The geology is mudstone overlain by sand and gravel

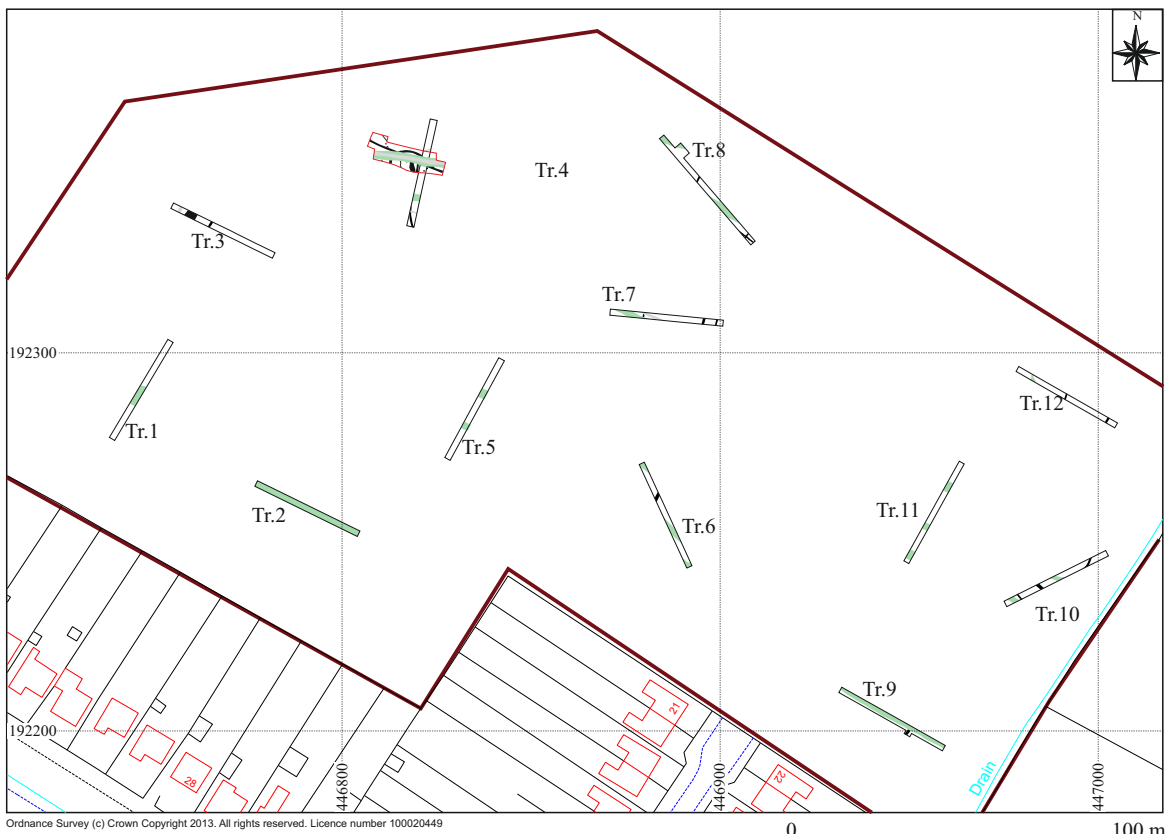
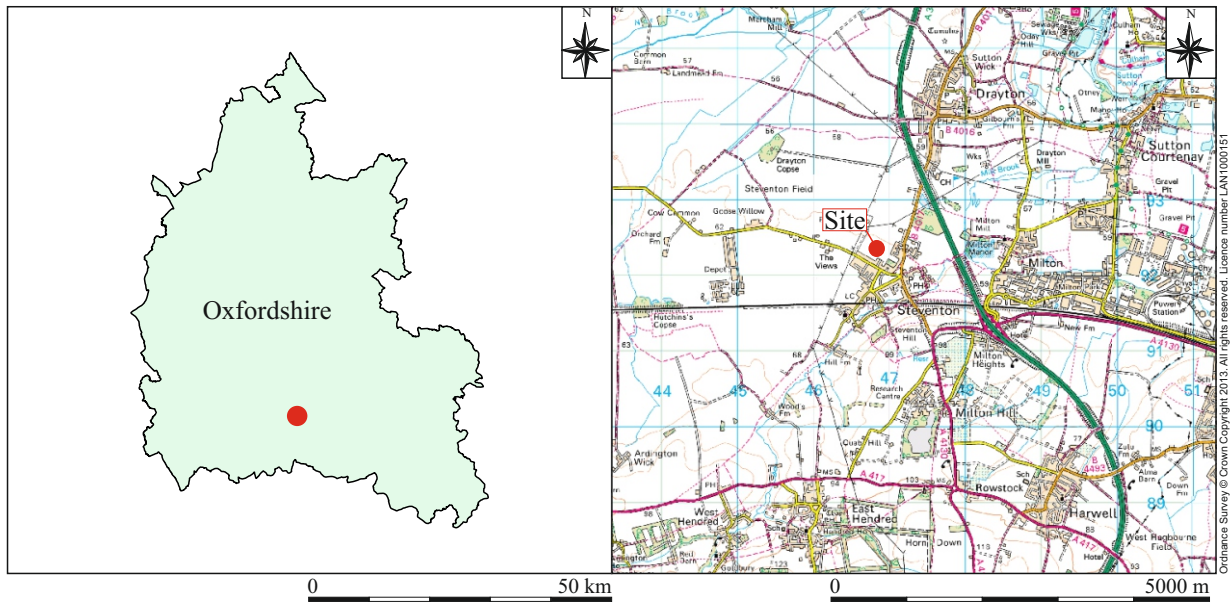
1.2 Planning Background

Outline planning permission has been granted for residential development of up to fifty dwellings off Barnett Road, Steventon (P13/V0094/O). An archaeological geophysical survey had not revealed any evidence of archaeological features but in order to verify the veracity of the survey, conditions were attached requiring further archaeological investigation. Condition 10 required that a written scheme of investigation (WSI) is agreed in advance and Condition 11 required that the archaeological investigation is undertaken in accordance with the WSI. A subsequent evaluation recorded an undated stone built culvert. In order to investigate this and understand its significance, further detailed excavation was required, a brief detailing scope and recording of which was issued by Oxfordshire Historic and Natural Environment Team (OHaNET) and a subsequent Written Scheme of Investigation in line with the requirements of the brief submitted and approved. This was in line with NPPF and Local Plan policies.

1.3 Archaeological Background

Archaeological investigation in the area has revealed an extensive prehistoric and Romano British landscape with areas of field systems and enclosures interspersed with settlements and farmsteads. A geophysical survey commissioned by the applicant did not reveal evidence of archaeological features within the application area. In order to verify the veracity of the survey, conditions were attached requiring further archaeological investigation. The proposal site appeared to lie in agricultural areas during the prehistoric and Romano British periods.

An archaeological evaluation was carried out by John Moore Heritage Services which identified evidence for undated, but possibly earlier agricultural enclosures or field systems underlying late medieval/early post-medieval cultivation. Trench 4 of this evaluation also revealed a linear stone feature, the further examination of which formed the focus of further site investigations.



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Key

- Site boundary
- Excavation trench
- Archaeological features
- Ridge & furrow
- Land drains
- Evaluation trenches

Figure 1: Site location

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation were as follows:

To make a record of any significant remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains.

In particular to record, date and assess the function of the stone culvert.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation approved by the Oxfordshire Historic and Natural Environment Team (OHaNET). The *Written Scheme of Investigation* outlined the methods by which the work would be carried out in order to achieve the aims of the OHaNET Archaeological Recording Action Design Brief. Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate and possible.

This excavation was in addition to the original evaluation specifically to determine the date and nature of the stone built structure discovered in trench 4 of the evaluation.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (2008).

3.2 Methodology

An area measuring approximately 21m x 7m was machine excavated in order to determine the full extent of the stone structure and to reveal any associated features.

4 RESULTS (Figure 2)

All features were assigned individual context numbers. These numbers covered both the feature cuts and the fills for pits and ditches which were excavated by hand. Context numbers in () show feature fills or deposits of material.

4.1 Excavation Results

The excavation revealed the full extent of the stone structure that had been found within Trench 4 of the evaluation and additional ditches and post holes.

The stone structure (126) had an overall length of 4m and measured 0.90m in width. It was cut through the fill of a medieval furrow (155) to a depth of 0.46m, creating a lined and capped culvert. A 19th century clay pipe land drain had been laid into the bottom of this culvert which had subsequently silted up (128). Although the stone

culvert only existed across a small length of the land drain, the drain itself ran for the entire length of the area, as shown in sections 4, 5 & 11 (Fig. 3).

Five linear features were also uncovered and investigated within this excavation area. In the north western corner there were the remains of a small NW-SE aligned gully 106, 0.20m wide x 0.10m deep, running for a length of 1.80m possibly terminating at its SE end below the bulk. It had a natural silting deposit of a greyish brown clay with rare flint fragment inclusions (Fig. 3, section 3).

There was a WSW-ENE aligned linear feature running across the excavation area for the excavation full length of around 20m. Four interventions were dug into this feature 110, 137, 150 & 158 (Fig. 3, sections 1, 12, 14 & 15). It was shown to have moderate to steep sloping sides with a roughly flat base and filled by a single fill in places and by two fills in other places. The lower fills were a dark greyish brown silty clay with rare charcoal flecking. The upper fills were a light grey silty clay.

Within the northern part of the excavation area a curvi-linear ditch 125 & 148 was identified (Fig. 3, sections 6 & 13). It had an overall length of approximately 5.50m. It measured 0.52m wide x 0.13m deep. It had moderate sloping sides with a concave base and was filled by a yellowish brown clay (124) & (149).

A small N-S aligned gully 130 & 140 was seen and investigated in the southern part of the excavation area (Fig. 3, sections 9 & 11). This was characterised by a 0.28m wide x 0.24m deep, steep sided profile. It was in-filled by a greenish grey clay (129, 141).

All of the above features had been cut by a furrow. Interventions were dug at 117, 142 & 154 (Fig 3, S.4, S. 11, S.13, S.14). The furrow ran across the entire investigation in a roughly E-W alignment for at least a length of 19m. It was 1.80m wide x 0.15m deep and characterised by a shallow concave base with very gentle sides.

This had subsequently been truncated by the cut for the field drain and stone culvert mentioned above; context numbers 115, 144, 156 (Fig 3, S.4, S. 11, S.13, S.14).

Five post holes were also investigated 104, 108, 123, 131 & 133 (Fig. 3, sections 1, 2, 7, 8 & 10). Post holes 123, 131 & 133 were all very shallow in profile and in-filled with very sterile clay fills (Fig. 3, sections 7, 8 & 10). These were all very discrete in their nature and may be nothing more than slight depressions in the natural geology. Post holes 104 & 108 were more substantial, both being cut into the natural geology to a depth of around 0.25-0.30m (Fig. 3, sections 1 & 2). However, not much can be inferred from these remains. They do not appear to relate to any building or construction.

4.2 Reliability of Results and Techniques

The conditions were slightly damp ground, but with sunshine and good light making the reliability of results good.

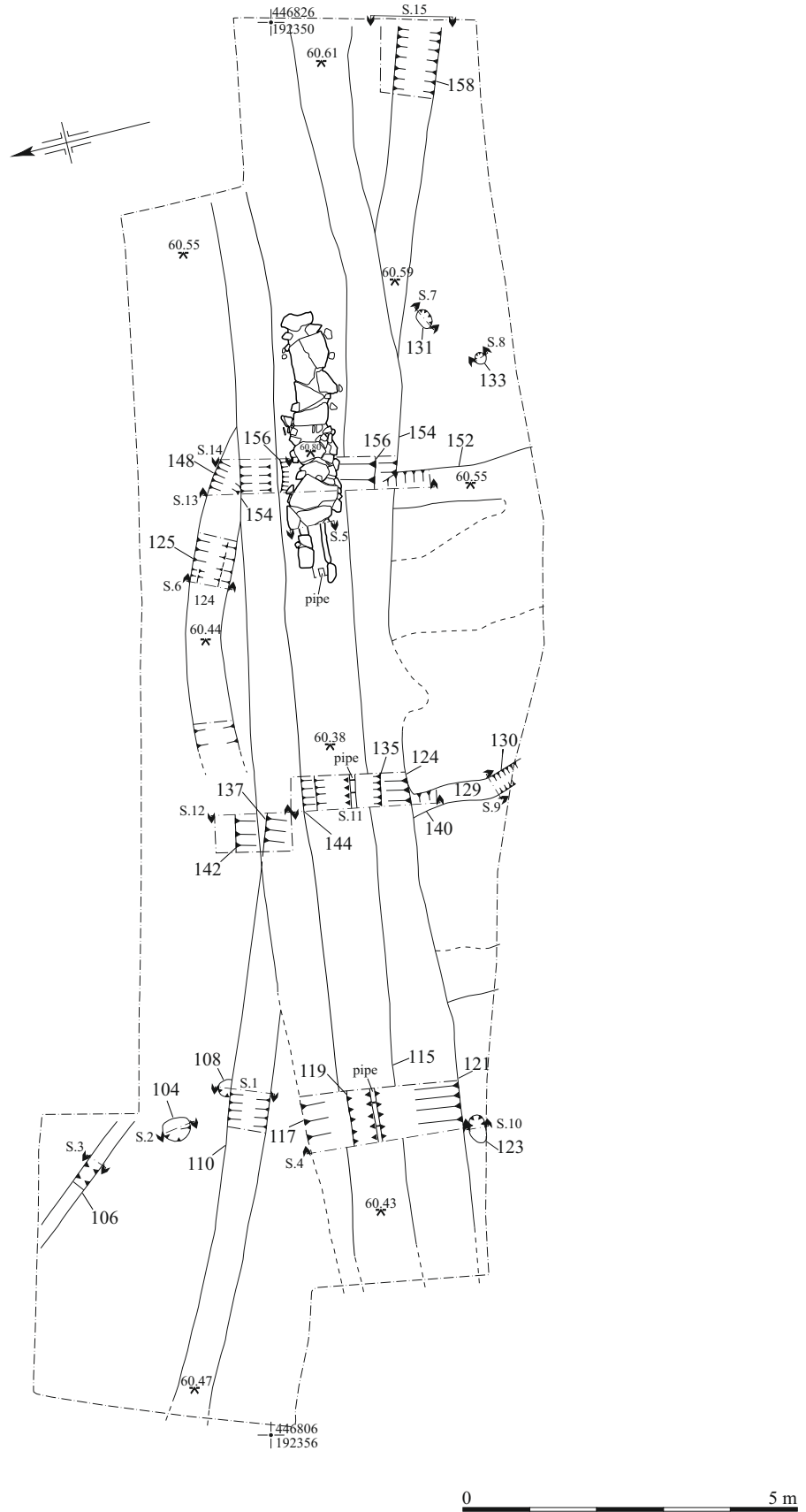


Figure 2: Plan of excavated area

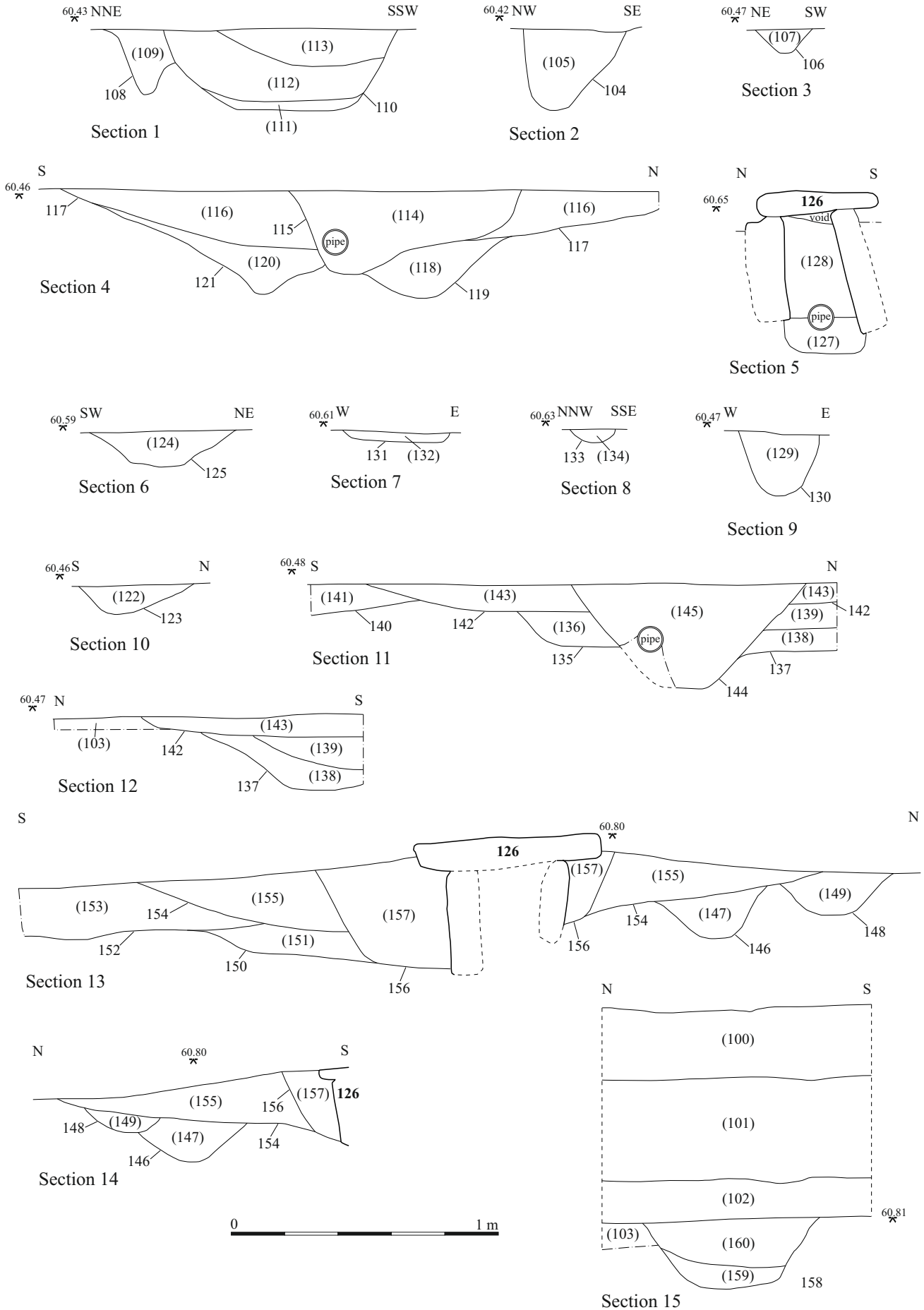


Figure 3: Sections

5 FINDS

There were no finds from the excavation

6 DISCUSSION

The purpose of the excavation area was to establish the nature and date of the stone structure previously recorded to be present by trenched evaluation. This was shown to be situated at the highest spot in the field and the underlying land drain was the closest to the land surface in the field. Excavation has determined that the stone construction forming the drainage culvert within the short length revealed to be constructed in this manner and exposed by the excavations appears to have simply been a method for protecting the land drain from modern ploughing techniques.

The investigation area also showed that the remains of an earlier field system of uncertain, but possibly prehistoric date, was present on the site. Although no dating evidence was established from the fills, the form of the linear features, along with the nature of the fills is consistent with prehistoric and Romano-British field systems in the area. They are unlikely to be more recent agricultural features given the different alignments and curvi-linear nature of one of them.

The post-holes are also undated and cannot be shown to form parts of any structure.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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