

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

MODEL FARM, DITCHLEY PARK

ENSTONE (SPELSBURY PARISH),

CHIPPING NORTON, OXFORDSHIRE

NGR SP 38182 20825

On behalf of

M D Hamilton Farms

FEBRUARY 2015

REPORT FOR	M D Hamilton Farms Model Farm Ditchley Park Enstone Chipping Norton Oxfordshire OX7 4EZ
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FIELD WORK	8 th April, 7 th -8 th May 2014
REPORT ISSUED	17 th February 2015
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JMHS Project No:	3035
Site Code	SPMF 14
Archive Location	The archive is currently held at JMHS and will be deposited in due course with the Oxfordshire Museums Services under accession number OXCMS: 2014.11.

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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out at Model Farm on the Ditchley Park Estate located in Spelsbury parish, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 38182 20825). This was in advance of the installation of a wood chip storage facility.

The site of Model Farm lies close to the scheduled ancient monument of an Iron Age date known as the Grim's Ditch. An enclosure in the Model Farm area was associated with the Grim's Ditch, but its veracity has been considered suspect. A linear bank at right angles to the Grim's Ditch has been noted in the Little Park between the Model farm and Ditchley House. The area was later that of a Model farm associated with the Agricultural Revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries.

Two previous evaluations have taken place at Model Farm, the first in 1998 identified the remains of a stone wall (presumably associated with the earlier stone buildings of the farm), while the latter in 2002 was negative.

This watching brief identified a number of undated features of pits, ditches and gullies that were cut into the natural. The lack of dating evidence means that there is no proper context but it does point to activity adjacent to the Grim's Dyke, which could be associated with the earlier enclosure that the existence of this has been speculated upon.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development site is located at Model Farm on the Ditchley Park Estate, now located in the parish of Spelsbury, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 38182 20825). The parish boundary previously ran through the centre of Ditchley Park along the Grim's Ditch. Model Farm lies to the south of the Grim's Ditch and, therefore, lay in Spelsbury historically. The area to the north of the Grim's Ditch lay in Enstone parish historically. Historically in the 11th century Spelsbury and Enstone were located in the Hundred of Shipton. This Hundred was later called Chadlington. The site was located in the historic County of Warwickshire in the 11th century and was moved to Oxfordshire at a later date.

The site lies on a plateau between 157 and 160m Ordnance Datum. The plateau lies on a northeast projecting spur.

The underlying geology is part of the Great Oolite Group that is a mixture of limestone and argillaceous rocks (mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html). This was a rock group formed 165 to 168million years ago.

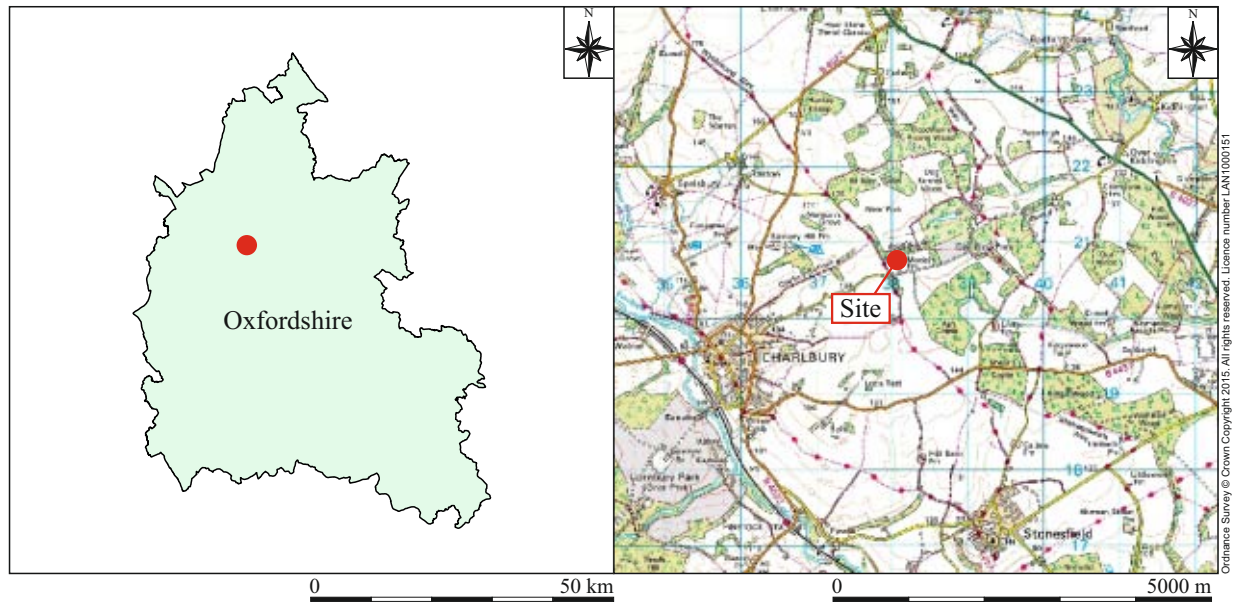
1.2 Planning Background

West Oxfordshire Council granted planning permission for the erection of a storage building at Model Farm (ref. 13/0014/P/FP). Due to the archaeological and historical importance of the surrounding area and its location to Grim's Ditch a condition was attached to the permission requiring a watching brief to be maintained during the course of building operations or construction works on the site. This was in line with NPPF (the planning policy current at the time) and other Local Planning policies.

1.3 Archaeological Background

Archaeologically material has been found in the Ditchley Park area indicating long-term settlement from the prehistoric. Prehistoric material and sites have been located in the vicinity of Ditchley Park. A full account was given of this in Yeates (2013). To the southeast of Ditchley House the remains of a possible trackway and field system have been noted (NMR SP32SE28: SP 3860 2040).

In the late Iron Age a large earthwork was built in the Ditchley Park area, which was later known as the Grim's Ditch. The ditch has been described on a number of occasions, being noted in 1676 and 1782. An early reference in antiquarian accounts is to a Grim's Dyke, where it was interpreted as Roman and associated with the devil (Jordan 1857, 49, 52-3). In 1907 a classification and description of the ditch was made (VCH 1939, 336). This identified a ditch A and a ditch B. The former was located in the parishes of Glympton, Kiddington, Enstone and Spelsbury and ended on the east bank of the Evenlode. The work was apparently traced and was considered to survive in only a fragmentary form. The ditch was described as being 38ft wide and 4ft deep, and the bank 2ft 9in high. Crawford (1930) plotted the line of the ditch, and created an article that has seen much conjecture. In this he placed an enclosure of a square form in the vicinity of Model Farm.



Key Site boundary Monitored area Archaeological features

Figure 1: Site location

In 1937 a series of sections were placed across the Ditch at the following places Berring's Wood, Out Wood, Woodley and to the east northeast of Model Farm. The earthen bank was described as averaging 20ft wide and 6ft high, with an accompanying V-shaped ditch of 20ft wide and 6ft deep (Harden 1937, 74-92). The finds included pre-Conquest Iron Age sherds from below the bank and post-Conquest (Roman) potsherds from the ditch fill. The construction date was placed in the 1st century AD and it was interpreted as part of a territorial boundary. In 1988 a further section was cut through the ditch (Copeland 1988, 277-292). The general phasing of the bank was augmented in this report. The ditch is known to cut through a banjo enclosure (NMR SP32SE25: SP 3745 2050), features that are normally dated to and associated with the middle Iron Age. Banjo enclosures would seem to be related to domestic animal husbandry. The bank was in early interpretations identified as a tribal boundary or an oppida, but no dense settlement has been located in its banks. Thomas (Copeland 1988, 277-92) was the first to suggest that the feature operated like that of a medieval park pale. Related to this is the suggestion that the bank represents the wall of a nemeton or sacred grove (Yeates 2006, i.23-27). Nemeton are religious structures described by Roman authors such as Strabo, who state that the ancients built their greatest banks around woodland areas creating cities of trees. These sacred areas would have operated as hunting reserves for folk-groups or the elites of folk-groups. The nemetons were often named after the territorial presiding deity, while a number of cult sites have been found on the bounds of these nemetons in the Dobunni area that are associated with the cult of a hunter god could *Cunomaglos*. In later traditions *Cunomaglos* would seem to have been associated with *Grim* (an alternative name for Woden) as hunters of the souls of the dead before taking on the form of Hob or the Devil.

A rectangular earthwork was claimed to be located at Model Farm to the south of the earthwork (NMR SP32SE10: SP 384 207). The feature was initially identified by Crawford, but subsequent investigations have failed to find the feature. It should be noted that there are the remains of a bank in the neighbouring field Little Park that runs transversely across the field (SP 3880 2095). The bank runs transversely across a spur (cross ridge dyke). The park road and fence line could mark the boundary of an enclosure set fully across the spur.

Pottery was reported (by one of the estate hands) as being recovered from the Ditchley estate in the vicinity of Laurel Wood (SP 3825 2180).

There are a number of Roman sites that have been recognised in the vicinity of Ditchley Park to the south of Model Farm, of which the earliest recognised by antiquarians was that of a villa site (NMR SP32SE9: SP 3993 2008). In 1871 the remains of a tessellated pavement (NMR SP32SE8: SP 3972 2041) was found in a field adjacent to the villa. Aerial photographs show an irregular shaped enclosure (NMR SP42SW70: SP 402 204) to the east of Ditchley Roman Villa. The description describes a southeast facing entrance or façade. The final Roman place in the vicinity of Ditchley Roman Villa is a site called Barrow Place where there are the remains of a 50m square enclosure on a defensive position (NMR SP31NE2: SP 3910 1962). There is a possibility that Ditchley Villa and its satellite sites may be the location of a shrine berserk (a villa complex with a number of related satellite shrines).

There are the remains of a number of undated sites in the area, some of which may be of a Roman date, though they may be later. A telecom trench through Little Park (SP

3875 2100) is reputed to have produced a piece of stone believed to have been part of a drum from a cylindrical column (estate workers comments, not seen). If this is indeed the case then it should be noted that the column could come from a Classical, Romanesque or Neo-Classical structure.

The *Hwicce* were a folk-group who's See was established at Worcester and who are known to have occupied the later counties of Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and parts of Warwickshire. The name Wychwood is indicative of the tribal territory once extending into West Oxfordshire (Yeates 2009). The manor of Spelsbury was granted to bishop *Heahberht* of Worcester by *Berhtwulf*, king of Mercia, as early as AD 840 (Gelling 1979, no.264). At this time the estate was known as *Huicceewudu*, and the 10 hide estate is identified later in 1086 when the bishop of Worcester's holdings are accounted as the manor of Spelsbury. The earliest recording of the name Spelsbury is *Speoles byrig* in the early 11th century (Gelling 1954, 379). The name has an etymology by Gelling of **Spēol's burh*. However, it is possible that the name actually refers to a fortification which was a place of talking. The name refers to a fortification that surrounded the village.

A medieval parish boundary previously ran through Ditchley Park along the Grim's Ditch with part of the land to the south being in Spelsbury and that in the north in the parish of Enstone.

The manor of Spelsbury was held by the Bishop of Worcestershire (Morris 1978, EW1). Urso held the manor from the Bishop. The manor covered 10 hides and contained 2 slaves, 25 villagers and 12 smallholders. A mill is also identified as being part of the estate. The manor of Spelsbury was probably held by the Church of Worcester for some time.

The earliest recorded forms of the name Ditchley occur in 1208 when the name is recorded as *Dicheleye* (Gelling 1954, 379). The etymology is **dic lē(a)h**, the clearing by the ditch, the dyke being that of *Grim*. The component *Grim* is considered to be that of a spectre, but is one of the names of *Woden*, used in his role of the chaser of souls to take them to the otherworld, see above.

There is known to have been freehold land at Ditchley in 1359 (Corbett 2006, 147-9). In 1450 the site was first called a manor and was held by Thomas Bernard, from 1439-61 the site was held by the Earls of Warwick. Archaeological observations of trenching for a BT cable noted the remains of a walled structure to the northeast of the Stables that may be the old manor site (Yeates 2013).

A medieval village is recorded at Ditchley from the 14th to the 17th century (NMR SP32SE14: SP 390 211). The village has been tentatively placed in the formal gardens, but no evidence as yet supports this suggestion. This was probably located between the Stables and Old Bothy in Enstone parish (Yeates 2013).

The remains of a chapel are known to have been located at Ditchley; it was in existence in 1695 when there is reference to a baptism being held at the chapel (Jordan 1857, 55). Observations of an archaeological nature during the laying of heating ducts noted the remains of a stone structure to the north of the Grim's Ditch that was almost certainly the remains of the medieval chapel (Yeates 2013).

Historically it is apparent that the estate that exists now once formed part of two manors and parishes, Enstone and Spelsbury. The estate began to coalesce as a unified entity under the guidance of Sir Henry Lee who leased Coldron Mill in 1571 (Corbett 2006, 131-42). This was added to by the purchase of Lee's Rest (a name derived from the Lee family). In 1583 he purchased Ditchley Manor from Thomas Gybbons, and in 1590 from John and Margaret Buby he procured a pigeon house with 6 acres of land and in that year 30 acres called Coale Closes in Taston from Francis Priddie (Corbett 2006, 158-9). Lee bought the manor of Spelsbury in the name of his brother in 1599. In 1601 further purchases were made in Spelsbury including the acquisition of a watermill.

Historically some information is known about the earlier development of the manor building. A date of 1592 was noted on the leaden spout of the old house (Corbett 2006, 147-9). In 1664 the structure was described as an ancient timber house with a pretty bowling green.

The Lees continued to occupied the estate from 1583 to 1652 and where succeeded by the Earls of Rochester 1652-63 (Corbett 2006, 160-80). In the late 17th century the title Earl of Lichfield was given or acquired by the lords of Ditchley (Corbett 2006, 204-228). The title Earl of Lichfield was given to Edward Lee (1663-1716) in 1674, when he had the title Baron Spelsbury, Viscount Quarendon and Earl of Lichfield. At this time the main residence was at Quarendon in Buckinghamshire. He was succeeded by his 3rd but only surviving son George Henry Lee (1690-1742), the 2nd Earl of Lichfield in 1716. The 3rd Earl of Lichfield was George Henry Lee (1718-72), and the 4th Earl of Lichfield (1706-76).

The Dillons occupied the estate from 1776 (Corbett 2006, 204-228), who took the name Dillon-Lee. The location of the village or hamlet at this time was not precisely known but further reports from an estate worker are that when a pond was inserted in the northwest area of the Walled Garden (SP 3912 2162) walls, hearths and floors of a building were seen.

The present house at Ditchley Park was designed by James Gibbs in 1722 for George Lee the 2nd Earl of Litchfield (NMR SP32SE23: SP 39040 21171). At this time it is believed that the parkland was also established by James Gibbs (NMR SP32SE36: SP 3911 2127). There is known to have been further landscaping in the garden in 1760 or 1777 (the latter date would coincide with the succession of Charles Dillon-Lee). The Pleasure Gardens were created 1805-10 by John Claudis Loudon and in 1930 Geoffrey Jellicoe created the formal gardens.

A number of other buildings are located around the estate that are considered to be heritage assets of various importance. They are listed in Yeates (2013). The Model Farm is a product of the later 18th to 19th century traditions when agricultural practices throughout the British Isles were being revolutionised. The Ordnance Survey map of 1881 shows the farmhouse, cottages, bull-shed, and stone sheds and yards. The buildings are shown in a curve of the Grim's Ditch and this bow or detour probably means that there were earlier features on the site that the Iron Age bank avoided. The second edition Ordnance Survey map of 1899 shows a similar arrangement, with the loss of one building at the west end. There are further few alterations on the 1922 map of the Ordnance Survey Third Series. It is only from the 1955 map that there is an expansion of the number of sheds. The map of 1976 shows that some of the stone

sheds have been demolished and replaced and that there are new sheds being added. Two previous watching briefs have been carried out around the farm complex due to the sensitive nature of the proximity to the Grim's Ditch. The first of these in 1998 observed the remains of a stone wall (Pollinger 1998), while the second in 2002 (Hindmarch 2002) observed negative results.

2 STRATEGY

2.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work in a manner agreed with Oxfordshire Historical and Natural Environment Team (OHaNET) the archaeological advisors to West Oxfordshire District Council.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (1994).

2.2 Methodology

An archaeologist was on site to observe ground works in Ditchley Park during construction.

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. A photographic record was also produced.

3 RESULTS

The natural bedrock (3) was a highly compact yellow marl with limestone nodules.

3.1 Phase 1: Undated (Figures 2 & 3)

Cut into the top of this bedrock were a number of small discrete features that were only observed in section and never in a full plan. No artefacts were noted as coming from these features. Cut 5 was a possible linear feature that was 0.8m across and 0.24m deep with moderately gentle sides and a rounded base (Fig. 3, Plan 2, S. 5). Fill (4) was a compact brown red silt clay. Cut 7 was a possible linear 0.9m across and 0.32m deep with a gentle to moderate sloping sides with a rounded base orientated east to west. Fill (6) was a compact brown red silt clay. Cut 10 was a sub-oval feature 1.5m across and 0.4m deep with moderately steep sides and a concave base (Fig. 3, Plan 1, S.1). Fill (11) was a firm mid red brown silt clay. Cut 12 was a feature 0.8m across and 0.45m deep with steep sides and a concave base. Its fill (13) was a firm mid red brown silt clay. Cut 14 was 0.55m across and 0.22m deep with steep sides and a concave base; fill (15) was a firm mid-red brown silt clay. Cut 16 (TP 6, Fig. 4) was probably oval or circular and 1m across and 0.26m deep with gentle sides and a rounded base. Fill (17) was a compact dark red brown silt clay with limestone inclusions. Cut 18 was a pit of an unknown shape over 2m x 2m and 0.56m deep with moderately steep sides and a flat base (TP 9, Fig. 4); fill (19) was a compact dark red brown with silt clay with limestone inclusions. This was probably part of a quarry

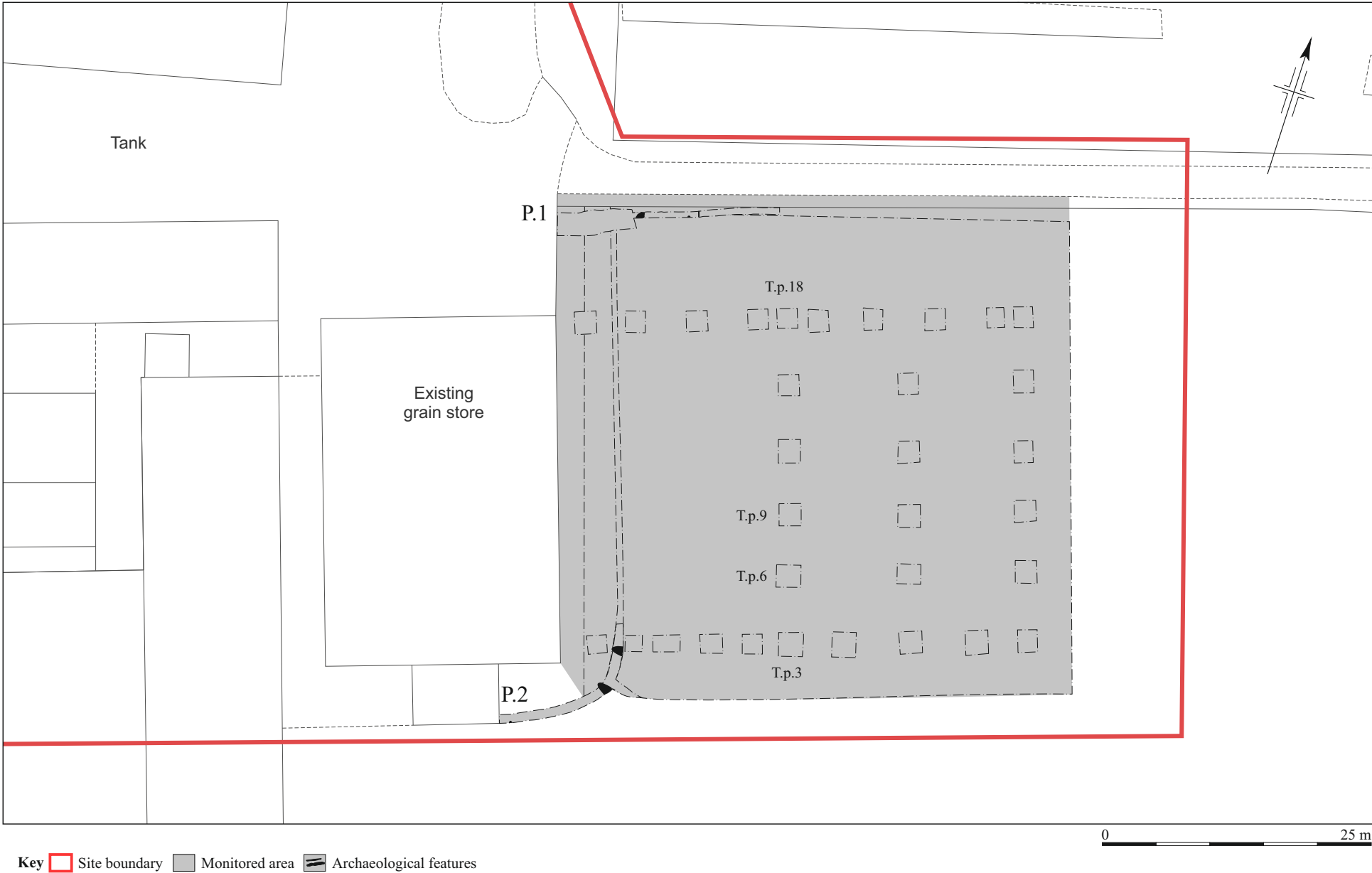


Figure 2. Plans and test pit area

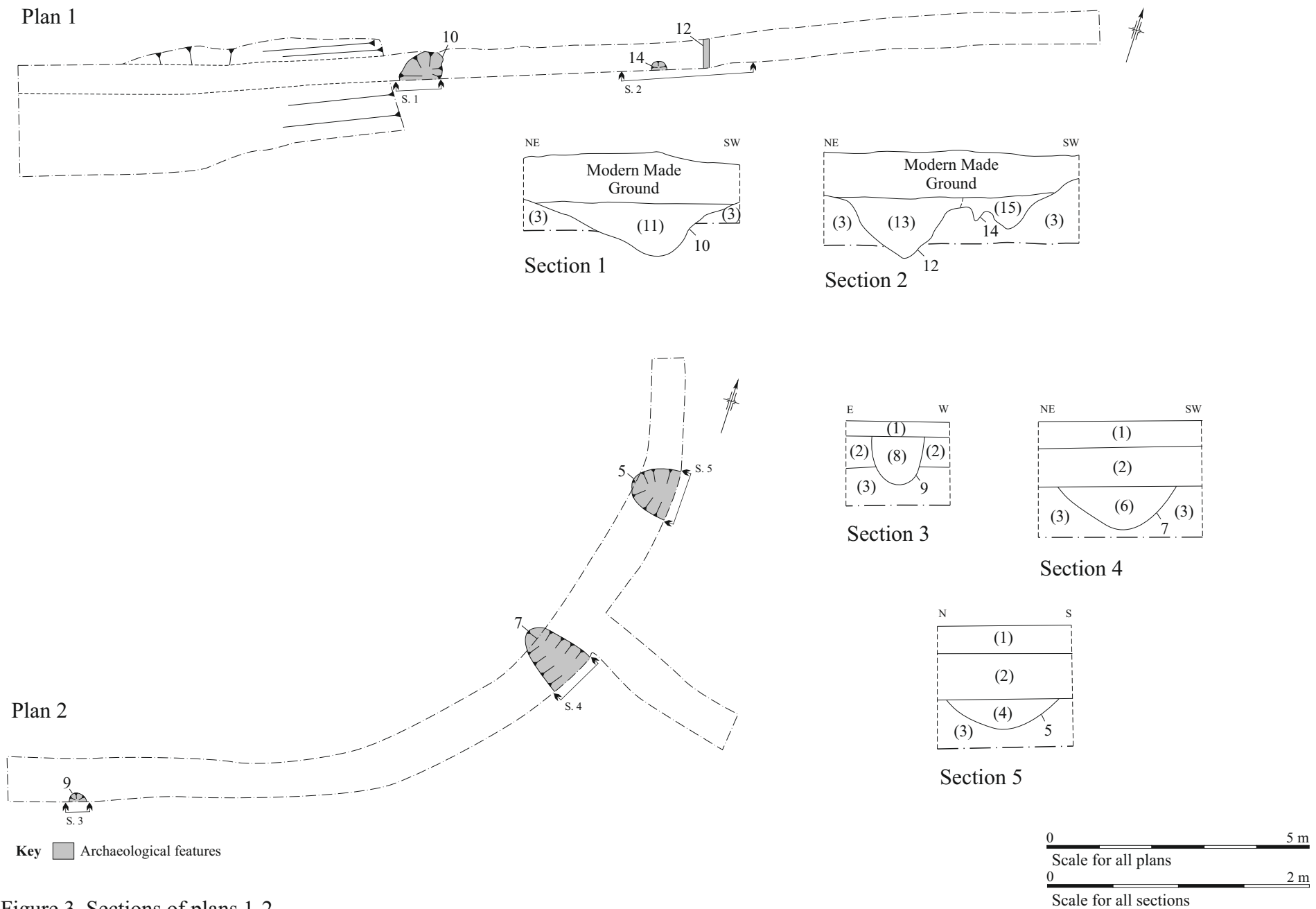


Figure 3. Sections of plans 1-2

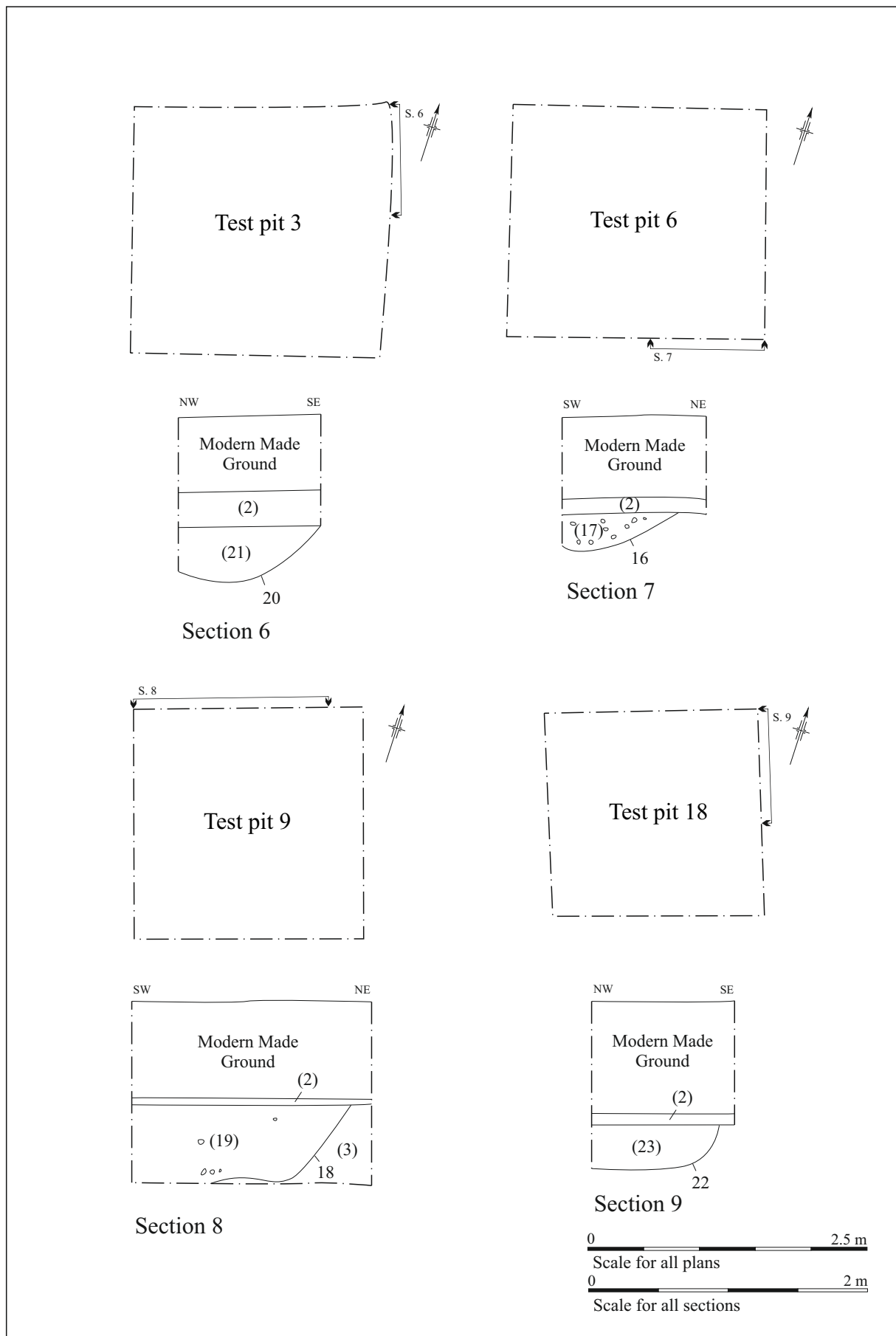


Figure 4: Sections of test pit area

feature. Cut 20 (TP 3, Fig. 4) was circular in shape with a 1.2m diameter and 0.4m deep with moderately sloping sides and a rounded base. Fill (21) was a compact dark red brown silt clay with a few stone inclusions. Cut 22 (TP 18, Fig. 4) was a circular or oval feature measuring 1m across and 0.32m deep with steep sides and a flat base; fill (23) was a compact dark brown red silt clay with few inclusions. These features were all covered by the subsoil.

3.2 Phase 2: Recent (modern)

Subsoil (2) was a moderately compact red brown silt clay 0.35m deep. This deposit was cut by one feature that was undoubtedly the remains of a modern fence line. Cut 9 was a circular feature 0.36m down and 0.37m across with steep sides and a rounded base (Plan 2, Fig. 3). Its fill (8) was a moderately compact brown red silt clay.

Topsoil (1) was a moderately compact brown grey silt clay up to 0.2m deep. This sealed the modern feature.

4 FINDS

Though features were observed as being cut into the natural no dating evidence was recovered from the site to provide a proper context for the features.

5 DISCUSSION

The remains of Iron Age, Roman and medieval features at Ditchley Park have been confirmed by excavations and textual sources. These features survive in fragmentary forms as they were swept away with the creation of a post-medieval and Imperial park. The Model Farm was a development of the Agricultural Revolution that changed specific practices associated with farming. However, the observations of this report are perhaps not concerned with this phase of activity noted in the immediate vicinity.

To the north of the development site the line of the Grim's Ditch is noted. Crawford in an early assessment of the site suggested that this was the location of a square enclosure. This enclosure has not been confirmed by later investigations although Yeates (2013) noted that there was a linear feature running transversely across the ridge on which Model Farm stands in the Little Park. This investigation does not clarify the existence of this enclosure but does produce indications of a series of undated features that form either pits, ditches, or gullies that lay to the east of the original Model Farm site. Thus earlier undated features imply activity on the ridge which could feasibly be identified with the claimed enclosures.

6 ARCHIVE

Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

Paper record

The project brief

Written scheme of investigation

The project report

The primary site record

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to the County Museums' Store under accession number OXCMS: 2014.11.

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