

Battlebridge Lane, Merstham, Surrey

An Archaeological Evaluation for HBG Properties

by S Weaver and M John Saunders
Thames Valley Archaeological
Services

Site Code BLM98/65

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Report 98/65-2

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out on land at the corner of Battlebridge Lane and Wells Place, Merstham, near Redhill, Surrey (Fig 1) (centred on NGR TQ 2872 5244). The evaluation was commissioned by Mr Lou Bretherton of HBG Properties, Merit House, Edgware Road, Colindale, London, NW9 5AF, and it comprised the second stage of a process to determine the presence/absence, extent, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains which may be affected by redevelopment of the area.

The development proposals are for the construction of approximately 3,036 square metres of light industrial/warehouse accommodation. A planning application (RE 98/0120) has been submitted to Reigate and Banstead Borough Council and permission has been granted subject to a condition which requires the implementation of a programme of archaeological work comprising an initial desktop study, the findings of which required a second stage of investigation in the form of trial trenching. This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Policy and Planning Guidance Note *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG 16 1990) and the Reigate and Banstead Borough Council's policies on archaeology. The site area (0.66 hectares) also exceeds the threshold for action identified in the Surrey Structure Plan (0.4 hectares). The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Dinah Saich, Archaeological Officer for Surrey County Council. The fieldwork was supervised by Steven Weaver assisted by Simon Loaring, between the 8th and 16th of December 1998, and the site code is BLM98/65.

The Desktop Study

The site lies in an Area of High Archaeological Potential defined around the probable location of barrows mentioned in an Anglo-Saxon charter. The archaeological potential was confirmed by the desktop study (Lowe 1998) with cartographic evidence indicating that the site was arable land until the mid to late 19th century, and the possibility existed for the presence of surviving archaeological deposits within the development area. The County Sites and Monuments Record was found to refer to a number of archaeological finds within the locality

and Iron Age pottery recovered during a nearby evaluation suggested that settlement activity from this period may exist in the vicinity. A charter reference dating from AD 947 mentions 'beorgas' or barrows lying a little to the east and, immediately south, is the supposed location of a 9th century battle (Battlebridge). Medieval activity in the surrounding area is also attested for in the Sites and Monuments Record.

Location, Topography and Geology

The site lies to the north of Redhill and west of South Merstham (Fig 1) and is located on the corner of Battlebridge Lane and Wells Place (Fig 2), next to an industrial estate. It covers an area of approximately 0.66 hectares and lies at a height of 90 m above Ordnance Datum. Geological maps (BGS 1978) indicate that the site lies on Brickearth which in turn overlies Folkestone Beds. A sandy clay and greensand was encountered in the evaluation trenches.

Archaeological Background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in the desktop study (Lowe 1998) and, although the Sites and Monuments Record for Surrey lists no entries for the site itself, 28 entries are listed within a 1 km radius of the site. These cover the Prehistoric, Roman, Saxon, Medieval and post-Medieval periods. A large collection of flint flakes and implements are recorded for a field near Redhill railway station and a polished flint axe was recorded to the north-west of the site. Iron Age activity is indicated by a Potin coin dated c 100 BC to the north of the site and by several sherds of pottery from the grounds of nearby Battlebridge House. Roman activity is attested for only by stray finds, including a gold ring, a pottery bowl, a coin, and a few others. During the first half of the 5th century Saxon settlement began to develop in the north of the county (Poulton 1987, 213) and the late 6th century saw the spread of settlement throughout the region (ibid). Saxon evidence is supplied by a charter of AD 947 which mentions the existence of barrows and also provides information relating to land use on the Merstham–Gatton boundary, which includes the development area.

A little to the north, in Merstham itself, a number of finds from the Medieval period are recorded. These include a 12th century pot, a 13th/14th century copper plaque and an 11th century buckle with zoomorphic design. Field systems of this period are also present north-west of Battlebridge Lane and the site of the moated manor house of Albury lies to the north-east. Not far from the site of the latter is the 13th century church of St.

Katherine's. Post-Medieval activity is recorded in the way of stray finds and the remains of a boundary wall dating to the early 19th century.

Objectives and Methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development. This was to be achieved by the digging of eight trenches each 20 m long and 1.6 m wide and located as shown in Figure 2. These would be dug under constant archaeological supervision, using a JCB-type mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. Where certain or possible archaeological deposits or features were present, the stripped areas would be hand-cleaned and sufficient of these excavated to satisfy the terms of the brief without compromising their archaeological integrity. A contingency for a further 20 m of trenching would be included should clarification of the significance of any deposits found be needed. All spoilheaps were to be monitored for artefacts.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1 and a list of features in Appendix 2.

Results

A total of eight trenches, each 1.8 m wide and with a total length of 168.50 m, were eventually dug (Fig 2). Three of these (5, 7 and 8) were found to contain archaeological features of late Iron Age and Roman date, as well as Trench 4 which produced only undated features (Fig 3). Possible features in the other trenches were also hand-cleaned and examined but these were found to be modern services, test pits, field drains or of geological origin.

Trench 4

Trench 4 was 23 m long and 0.70 m deep and contained two postholes (5 and 6) and two pits (8 and 9) (Figs 4 and 5). A further pit or scoop (7), only 0.04 m deep, contained no finds and is thought to be the result of modern disturbance. Posthole 5 was 0.14 m deep and 0.24 m in diameter while posthole 6 was also 0.14 m deep but 0.34 m in diameter. Neither contained finds. Pit 8 measured 0.59 m by 0.37 m and was 0.40 m deep and pit 9 was 1.08 m by 0.59 m and 0.36 m deep. No finds were recovered from either and all the features in Trench 4 remain undated.

Trench 5 (Plate 1)

Trench 5 was 23.7 m long and 0.65 m deep and contained two features, pit 2 and ditch 3 (Figs 4 and 6). The pit was ovoid in shape and measured 1.28 m by 0.61 m and was 0.19 deep. This cut the ditch (3) which was aligned approximately north-south. The ditch was 0.19 m deep and 1.24 m wide and crossed the trench for a distance of 1.80 m. It was also cut on its northern side by a modern land drain. Both of these features contained pottery of Late Iron Age/Roman date together with a single struck flint from the single fill of the ditch.

Trench 7 (Plate 2)

Trench 7 was 22.30 m long and 0.59 m deep and contained two features (Figs 4 and 5). Ditch 4 was fairly substantial and could possibly be an enclosure boundary ditch. It was 0.73 m deep with steep sides to a flattish base and was 2.00 m wide. Its single fill (57) contained pottery of Late Iron Age date. During excavation of the ditch it was found to cut a possible pit (10) whose dimensions could not be accurately obtained. This feature was also cut by a modern land drain. No finds were recovered from its fill.

Trench 8

Trench 8 contained a single pit (1) (Figs 4 and 6) which was circular in plan, 0.47 m deep and 1.31 m in diameter. Only part of the pit lay within the trench with the remainder obscured by the northern bank. A single flint flake came from the middle fill (52) together with a small quantity of animal bone. Pottery of late Iron Age date, a small quantity of cream coloured daub weighing 44 gms and two pieces of burnt flint weighing a total of 42 gms were recovered from the upper of its three fills (51).

The Finds

Pottery by Malcolm Lyne

A total of 48 sherds and fragments of pottery were submitted for spot-dating. These weighed 291 gms in total and are catalogued in Table 1:

Table 1: Catalogue of pottery - LIA = Late Iron Age

Trench 3

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Fill</i>	<i>Description</i>
base	NW end	1 greyware jar Hardham kilns Porborough Sussex, 1st-3rd century, probably 2nd-early 3rd century

Trench 5

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Fill</i>	<i>Description</i>
2	54	4 LIA or pre-Flavian (43-70) closed form Belgic, sandy fabric
		1 fragment, Prehistoric calcined flint tempered
		1 rim, Alice Holt early 3rd century. Bowl, incipient beaded and flanged
		1 fragment coarse grog tempered storage jar, late 1st-early 3rd century
		1 large jar sherd, LIA-pre-Flavian (Hardham)

3	55	3 LIA grog tempered Belgic
		1 Alice Holt greyware-post Conquest
		2 closed form greyware-Alice Holt? early Roman
		1 not dissimilar to two sherds above

Trench 7

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Fill</i>	<i>Description</i>
4	57	2 LIA including a rim, grog tempered
		1 LIA sand tempered
		1 handmade orange sherd ?terra rubra
		20 fresh sherds from same jar, coarse white grog tempered. Likely LIA or possibly pre-Flavian
		1 grog tempered Belgic fabric of LIA date
base	9 m	3 LIA grog tempered Belgic
base	10	1 LIA grog tempered Belgic
base	11.5 m	1 sandy black fabric, probably LIA

Trench 8

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Fill</i>	<i>Description</i>
1	51	2 LIA Belgic sherd from a pedestal jar

Animal bone

Only a small number of animal bones were recovered from the evaluation and these have been quantified in

Table 2:

Table 2: Catalogue of animal bone

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Feature</i>	<i>Fill</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Weight (gms)</i>
8	1	51	7 (frags)	<1
8	1	52	1	154

Struck flint by Steve Ford

A small collection of ten struck flints were recovered from the evaluation including one piece of dubious archaeological origin. The latter has the appearance of a flake from a hammerstone but is more likely to be a product of modern activity. The pieces come from a variety of flint sources with both local chert and better quality chalk flint represented. One of the pieces is slightly abraded and patinated and may have been deposited on the site in recent times. None of the pieces are chronologically distinctive, although one flake from fill 52 of pit 1 in Trench 8, subjectively, may be of Mesolithic date. The struck flint is catalogued in Table 3:

Table 3: Catalogue of struck flint

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Feature</i>	<i>Fill</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Weight (gms)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
3	base	NW end	1	2	Broken flake
5	spoil	0-5 m	1	34	Scraper

5	2	54	1	<1	Spall
5	3	55	1	8	Intact flake
6	base	5-10 m	1	12	Intact flake
7	base	0-5 m	1	4	Broken flake
7	spoil	5-10 m	1	24	Broken flake, fresh, with heavily abraded edge, modern import?
8	base	0-5 m	1	2	Intact flake
8	base	0-5 m	1	10	Broken flake, abraded and patinated
8	1	52	1	4	Intact flake

Conclusion

Although no features or deposits from the Saxon period were encountered, the evaluation has been successful in confirming the archaeological potential of the site as highlighted by the findings of the desktop study. A low level of earlier prehistoric activity was in evidence from the presence of residual and unstratified struck flints, but of more significance was the presence of a number of archaeological features, four of which could be dated by the pottery which they contained. Two of these, a pit (1) in Trench 8 and a ditch (4) in Trench 7, were of late Iron Age date, while a pit (2) and a ditch (3), both in Trench 5 could be assigned to the late Iron Age/Roman period. Ditch 4 may represent part of a curvilinear boundary ditch although ditch 3 is much less substantial. Given the relatively low density of features it is possible that they represent a small rural settlement, with continuity of occupation from the late Iron Age through to the Roman period.

Acknowledgements

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References

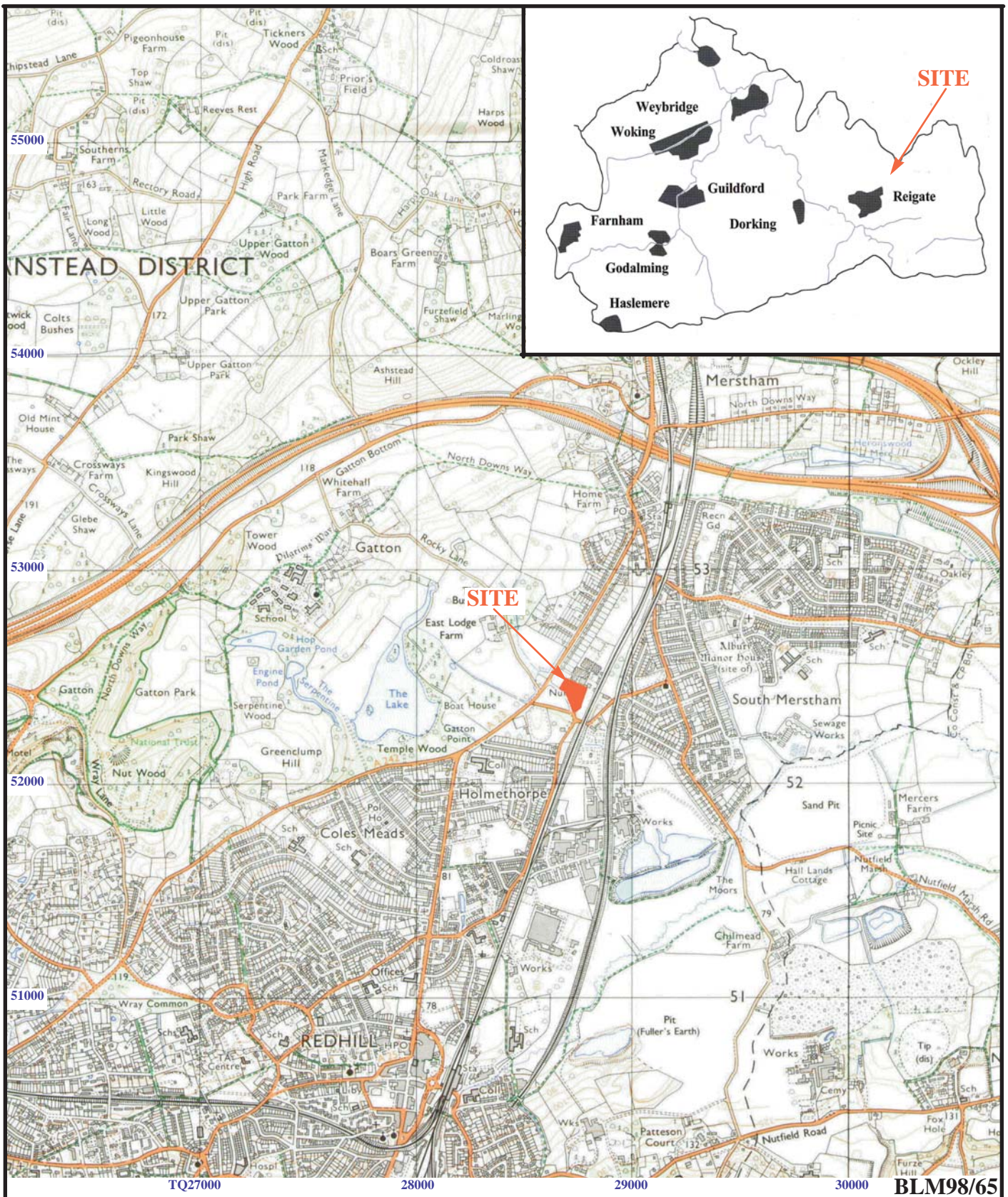
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Appendix 1: Trench Details

<i>Trench No.</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	20.10	1.8	0.70	0.40 m topsoil over 0.20 m subsoil onto orange silty clay natural. Modern disturbance by services and test pit.
2	19.00	1.8	1.36(W) 1.03(E)	0.36 m topsoil over 0.66 m made ground over 0.28 m redeposited natural with brick and tile onto silty clay natural. Modern disturbance throughout.
3	20.40	1.8	0.52	0.22 m topsoil over 0.17 m made ground over 0.12 m subsoil onto mixed orangey ironstone with grey silt. Silty patches and land drains present.
4	23.00	1.8	0.70	0.30 m topsoil over 0.21 m made ground over 0.18 m subsoil onto orangey ironstone with grey silty clay from 16 m to 23 m and onto greensand from 0 m to 16 m. Test pit at SW end 1.00 m deep. Features 5 - 9.
5	23.70	1.8	0.65	0.10 m topsoil over 0.20 m made ground over 0.20 m subsoil onto mixed greensand and orange grey silty sand. Modern disturbance and land drains. Features 2 and 3.
6	21.20	1.8	0.52	0.12 m topsoil over 0.22 m made ground over 0.12 m subsoil onto greensand. Modern services and disturbance at E end, root disturbance at W end.
7	22.30	1.8	0.59	0.20 m topsoil/disturbed ground over 0.33 m made ground over 0.03 m subsoil onto ironstone/orangey silty clay and greensand. Test pit dug at E end 0.77 m deep. Features 4 and 10.
8	18.80	1.8	0.70	0.10 m topsoil over 0.53 m made ground over 0.07 m subsoil onto greensand.

Appendix 2: List of features and fills (LIA = Late Iron Age)

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill(s)/Deposits</i>	<i>Trench</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Diam. (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	51, 52, 53	8	Pit	-	-	1.31	0.47	LIA
2	54	5	Pit	1.28	0.61	-	0.19	LIA/Roman
3	55	5	Ditch	-	1.24	-	0.19	LIA/Roman
4	57	7	Ditch	-	2.00	-	0.73	LIA
5	58	4	Posthole	-	-	0.24	0.14	-
6	59	4	Posthole	-	-	0.34	0.14	-
7	60	4	Pit	-	-	0.31	0.04	-
8	61	4	Pit	0.59	0.37	-	0.40	-
9	62	4	Pit	1.08	0.59	-	0.36	-
10	not numbered	7	Pit?	-	-	c 0.80	c 0.30	-
	50	8	Loose mid green/brown sand subsoil, cut by services					
	51	8	Loose dark brown/greenish grey sand, upper fill of pit 1					
	52	8	Loose dark brown/green sand, middle fill of pit 1					
	53	8	Loose mid green sand, primary fill of pit 1					
	54	5	Loose dark grey/green sand, fill of pit 2					
	55	5	Loose mid green/brown sand, fill of ditch 3					
	56	5	Loose mid green/brown sand subsoil, modern disturbance					
	57	7	Soft brown/olive green silty sand, fill of ditch 4					
	58	4	Medium hard green/brown silt, fill of posthole 5					
	59	4	Medium hard green/brown silt, fill of posthole 6					
	60	4	Soft brown silt, fill of pit 7					
	61	4	Medium soft brown/green silty sand, fill of pit 8					
	62	4	Soft brown silty sand, fill of pit 9					
	63	4	Loose mid brown/green sand subsoil					
	64	7	Soft light to mid brown sand subsoil					



**Battlebridge Lane, Merstham, Redhill,
Surrey, 1998**

Figure 1. Location of site within Merstham and Surrey.

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Figure 2. Site plan showing location of trenches.

Battlebridge Lane, Merstham, Redhill, Surrey, 1998

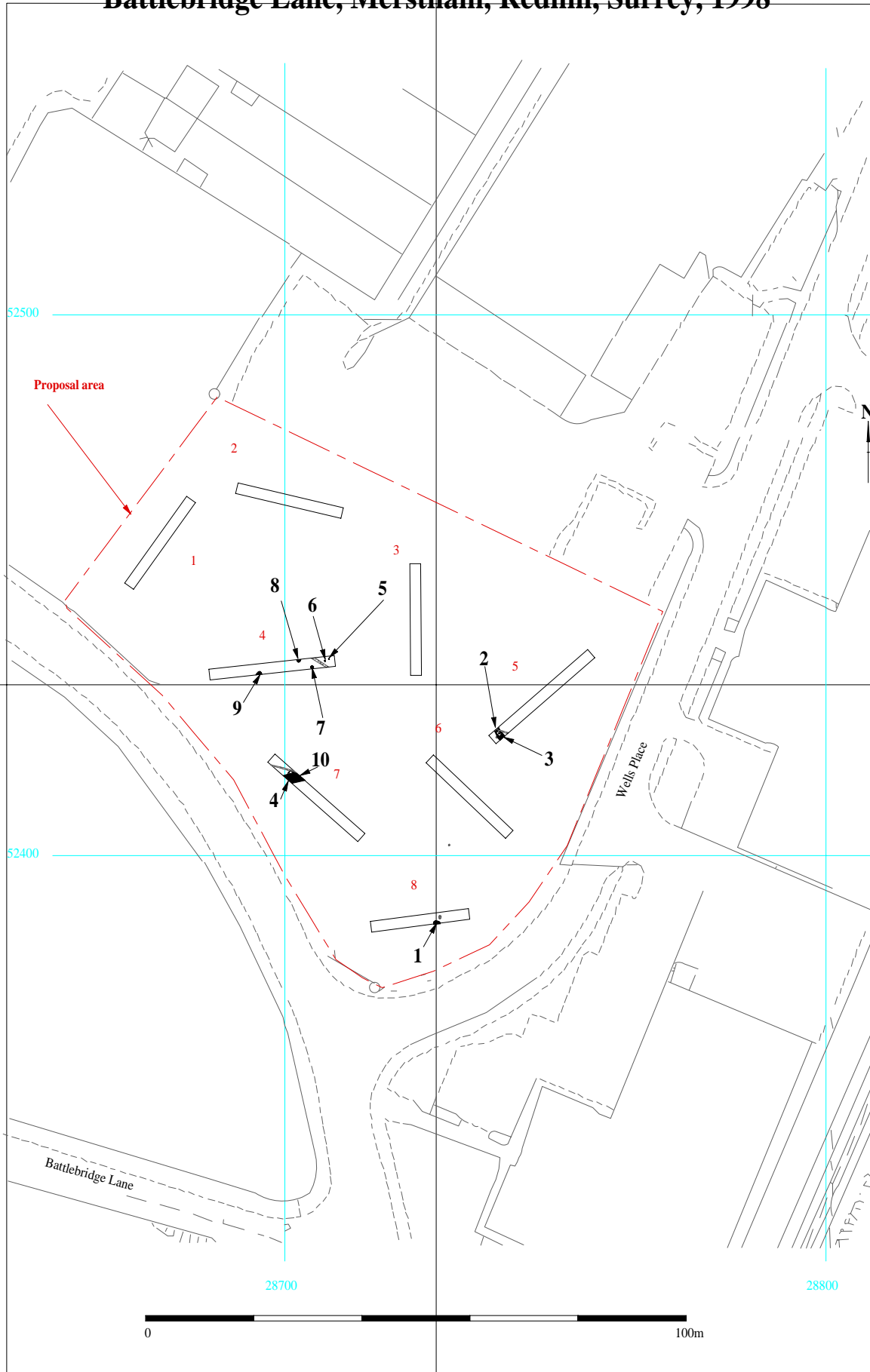
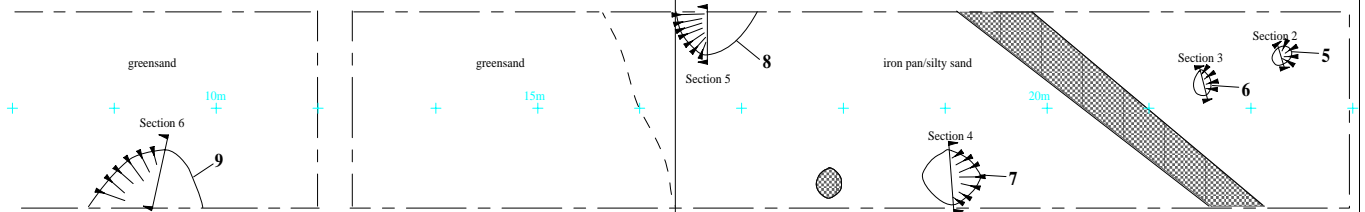


Figure 3. Trench plan showing all archaeological features.

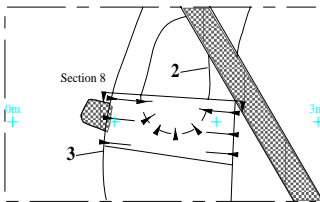
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Battlebridge Lane, Mertsam, Redhill, Surrey, 1998

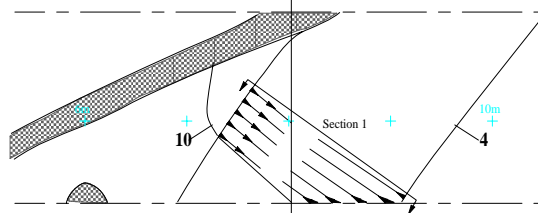
Trench 4



Trench 5



Trench 7



Trench 8

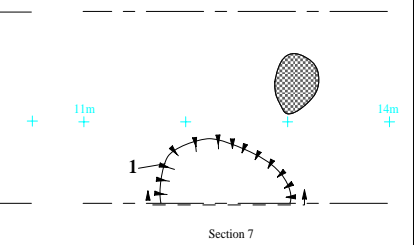


Figure 4. Trench plans showing all archaeological features.

Battlebridge Lane, Mertsam, Redhill, Surrey, 1998

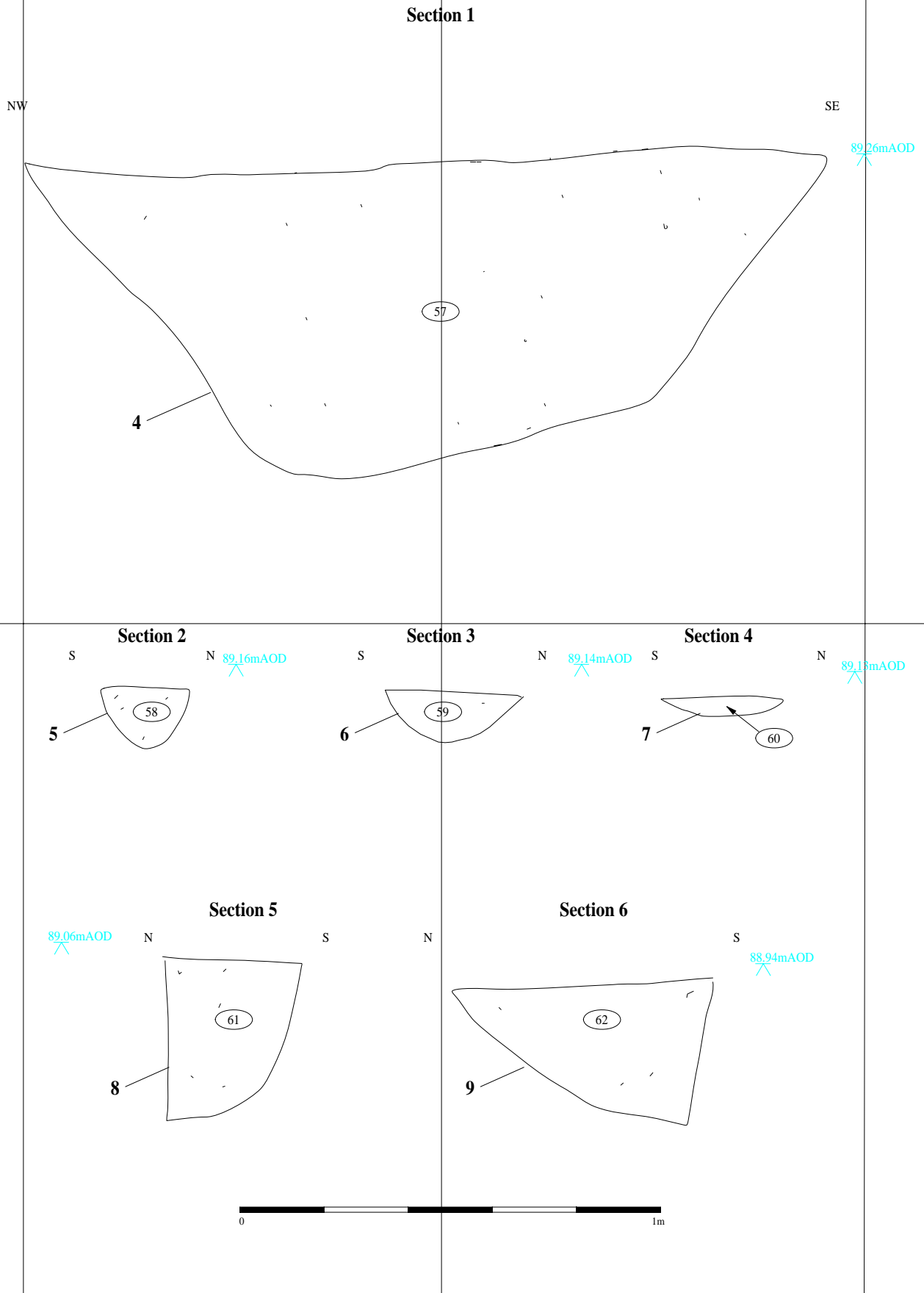


Figure 5. Sections 1, 2, 3 4, 5 and 6.

Battlebridge Lane, Mertsam, Redhill, Surrey, 1998

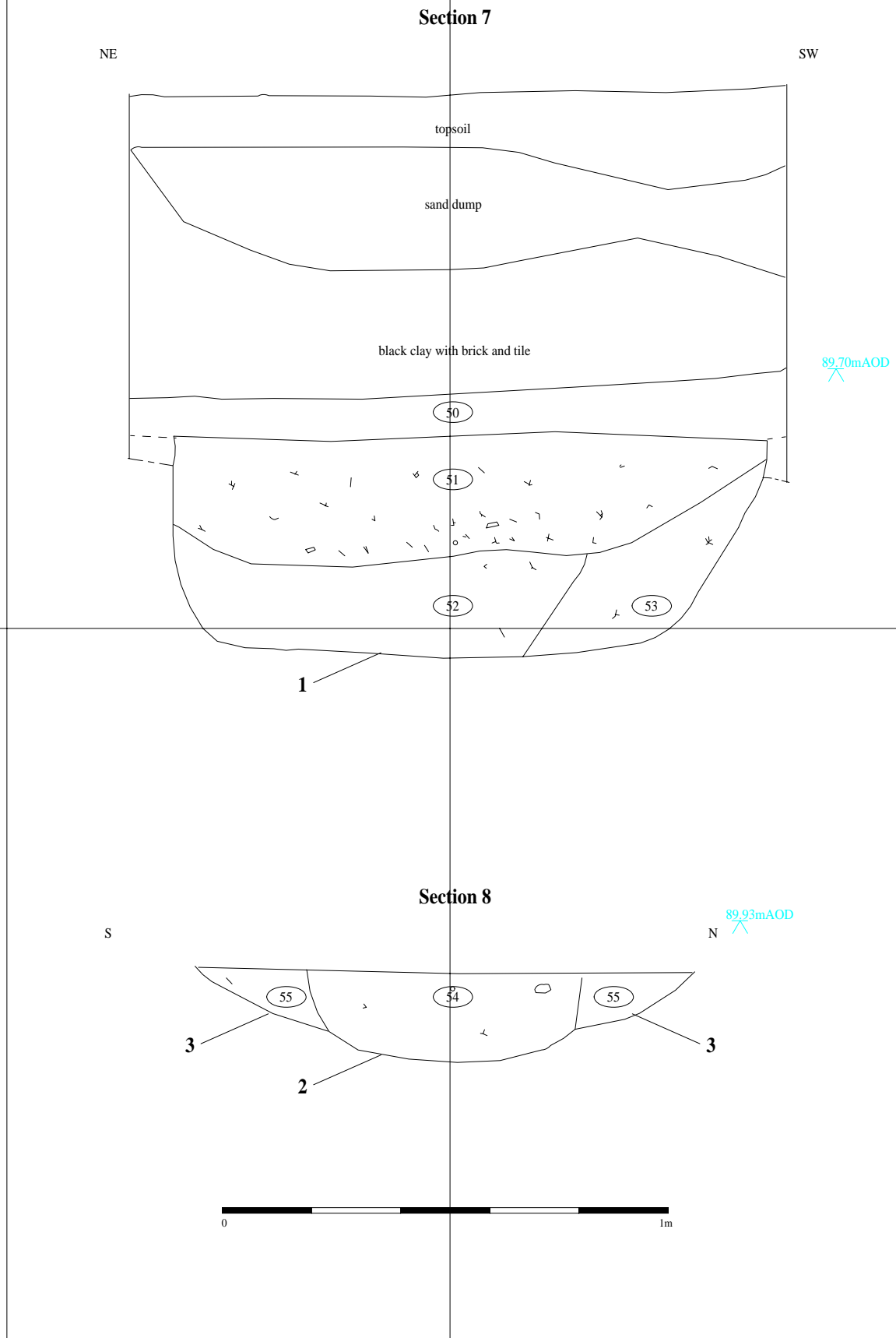


Figure 6. Sections 7 and 8.



Plate 1. Trench 5 looking north-west showing pit 2 and ditch 3, scales 0.10m and 1m.



Plate 2. Trench 7 looking east showing ditch 4, scales: 1m.

