

T H A M E S V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Grove Airfield, Wantage,
Oxfordshire**

An Archaeological Evaluation

by Andy Taylor

Site Code: GAW06/71

(SU 3800 9000)

Grove Airfield, Wantage, Oxfordshire

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Persimmon Special Projects Western**

by Andy Taylor
Thames Valley Archaeological Services
Ltd

Site Code GAW 06/71

October 2006

Summary

Site name: Grove Airfield, Wantage, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 3800 9000

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 11th–19th October 2006

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Andy Taylor

Site code: GAW 06/71

Area of site: c.130 hectares

Summary of results: Four ditches, a ditch terminus/pit and a gully of Iron Age and Roman date were identified

Monuments identified: Iron Age and Roman ditches and gullies.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museum Service in due course.

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 02.11.06
	Steve Preston✓ 02.11.06

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Report 06/71

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Grove Airfield, Wantage, Oxfordshire (SU 3800 9000) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Nicky Green, Senior Planner with Kemp and Kemp Property Services, Elms Court, Botley, Oxford, OX2 9LP on behalf of Persimmon Special Projects Western, A & W Building, The Docks, Portishead, Bristol, BS20 7DF.

Planning permission is to be sought from the Vale of White Horse District Council for the construction of new housing on the site with associated access and services. The site is allocated within the District's local plan for residential development. A brief provided by Mr Hugh Coddington (Coddington 2006) has highlighted the archaeological potential of the site. As a consequence of the possibility of archaeological deposits being present on the site, which may be damaged by groundworks, a field observation was requested in the form of an archaeological field evaluation. This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the District's policies on archaeology.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Hugh Coddington, Deputy County Archaeological Officer with Oxford County Council, advisers to the District on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andy Taylor and James Haygreen between the 11th and 19th October 2006 and the site code is GAW 06/71. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Oxfordshire County Museum Service in due course.

A desk-based assessment (Johnson and Collcutt 2004) identified the potential of the site. In summary the site lies within an area with a wide range of sites and finds present especially of Roman date. The Roman road from Alchester to Marlborough (*Cunetio*) lies to the east and several Roman sites have been examined during recent development of Grove itself. No deposits are recorded for the site specifically. The site was used as a World War II airfield, which has been decommissioned and reverted back to agricultural use. The remains of some former airfield facilities are present and some disturbance from construction and removal of the runways and other facilities has taken place.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the west side of Grove, which itself lies to the north-west of Wantage, Oxfordshire (Fig. 1). On the western boundary of the site lies the Grove Technology Park with a railway line to the north and residential housing around the remainder of the site. The proposed development site covers an area of c.130 hectares within an overall 200ha site, currently comprising both ploughed and unploughed agricultural land. The underlying geology comprises Gault clay (BGS 1971) which was observed across the site. The site rises from a height of 75m AOD in the north to 85m AOD in the south.

Archaeological background

The site itself does not have any archaeological deposits recorded, although several Roman sites are known within the area. The Roman road from Alchester to Marlborough (*Cunetio*) lies to the east with several Roman sites identified during recent development within Grove. Features dating from the Bronze Age to medieval periods have also been identified to the north of the site.

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.

Specific aims of the project were:

To determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on the site;

To determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present.

A total of 21 trenches were opened measuring between 28.20m and 32.50m (Fig. 3). These were excavated as near as possible to their intended positions, although the presence of an active badger sett and the presence of Great Crested newts resulted in Trench 2 being moved slightly, in consultation with the monitor and ecological consultant. The trenches were dug using a JCB- type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket and under constant archaeological supervision. All spoilheaps were monitored for finds.

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

Results

Trench 1 (Plate 1)

This trench was 30.8m long and 0.4m deep and consisted of topsoil directly overlying gault natural. No archaeological deposits were revealed.

Trench 2

This trench was 30.0m long and 0.38m deep and consisted of topsoil directly overlying gault natural. No archaeological deposits were revealed.

Trench 3

This trench was 30.9m long and 0.35m deep and consisted of topsoil overlying gault natural. No archaeological deposits were revealed.

Trench 4

This trench was 30.7m long and 0.39m deep and consisted of topsoil overlying gault natural. No archaeological deposits were revealed.

Trench 5

This trench was 30.0m long and 0.52m deep and consisted of topsoil overlying subsoil overlying gault natural. No archaeological deposits were revealed.

Trench 6

Trench 6 was 30.9m long and 0.36m deep and consisted of topsoil overlying gault natural. No archaeological deposits were revealed.

Trench 7

This trench was 32.5m long and 0.35m deep and consisted of topsoil overlying gault natural. No archaeological deposits were revealed.

Trench 8

Trench 8 was 30.0m long and 0.52m deep and consisted of topsoil overlying subsoil overlying gault natural. No archaeological deposits were revealed.

Trench 9

Trench 9 was 30.5m long and 0.395m deep and consisted of topsoil overlying gault natural. No archaeological deposits were revealed.

Trench 10

This trench was 29.3m long and 0.88m deep and consisted of topsoil overlying subsoil overlying gault natural. No archaeological deposits were revealed.

Trench 11

Trench 11 was 30.2m long and 0.27m deep and consisted of topsoil directly overlying gault natural. No archaeological deposits were revealed.

Trench 12 (Plate 2, Figures 4 and 5)

This trench was 30.2m long and 0.21m deep and consisted of topsoil overlying gault natural. Two parallel ditches were observed in this trench both aligned approximately NW–SE, some 2.6m apart. Slot 1 measured 1.00m in length, 1.13m wide and 0.21m deep. Its mid grey silty clay fill (52) contained 2 sherds of Iron Age pottery and seven pieces of animal bone. Slot 2 measured 1.00m in length, 0.87m wide and 0.24m deep. Its mid grey silty clay fill (53) contained eight pieces of animal bone.

Trench 13

This trench was 31.0m long and 0.35m deep and consisted of topsoil overlying gault natural. No archaeological deposits were revealed.

Trench 14 (Figures 4 and 5)

This trench was 30.8m long and 0.53m deep and consisted of topsoil overlying gault natural. A gully and a ditch were identified in this trench. The gully was located between 9.10m and 11.30m and was aligned approximately north–south. A slot (3) was dug through it measuring 0.99m in length, 0.59m wide and 0.19m deep. Its mid grey silty clay fill (54) contained three sherds of Iron Age pottery and one piece of animal bone. The ditch was aligned approximately east–west and was located between 2.40m and 4.90m. A slot (4) was dug into it measuring 0.77m in length, 1.70m wide and 0.17m deep. It was found to contain five sherds of Iron Age pottery and two pieces of animal bone.

Trench 15 (Figures 4 and 5)

This trench was 29.7m long and 0.79m deep and consisted of topsoil overlying subsoil overlying gault natural. It was found to contain a ditch and a feature that is either a pit or ditch terminus. The ditch was located at the eastern end of the trench. A slot (5) was dug into it revealing a gradual slope with a further break of slope near the centre of the feature. Its mid grey silty clay fill (56) contained a single Iron sherd and a single Roman sherd of pottery and two pieces of animal bone. The pit/ditch terminus (6) was located between 6.80m and 8.20m. A slot was dug across it revealing a mid grey silty clay fill (57) which contained nine sherds of second century Roman pottery and an iron nail.

Trench 16

This trench was 28.2m long and 0.52m deep and consisted of topsoil overlying gault natural. No archaeological deposits were revealed.

Trench 17

Trench 17 was 29.4m long and 0.40m deep and consisted of topsoil overlying gault natural. No archaeological deposits were revealed.

Trench 18

This trench was 30.7m long and 0.35m deep and consisted of topsoil overlying gault natural. No archaeological deposits were revealed.

Trench 19

This trench was 30.5m long and 0.42m deep and consisted of topsoil overlying gault natural. No archaeological deposits were revealed.

Trench 20

Trench 20 was 30.5m long and 0.35m deep and consisted of topsoil overlying gault natural. No archaeological deposits were revealed.

Trench 21

Trench 21 was 30.6m long and 0.58m deep and consisted of topsoil overlying subsoil overlying gault natural. No archaeological deposits were revealed.

Finds

Pottery by Jane Timby

The archaeological work at Grove Airfield, Wantage resulted in the recovery of a small assemblage of 23 sherds of pottery (255 g) dating to the Iron Age and Roman periods.

Pottery was recovered from trenches 12, 14 and 15, a total of five separate features. The sherds were relatively well preserved although fragmented. For the purposes of this assessment the pottery was scanned to assess its likely date and quantified by sherd number and weight. The resulting data are summarized in Appendix 3.

Iron Age

Pottery of likely Iron Age date was recovered from trenches 12 and 14; a total of 11 sherds. There were no featured sherds present to refine the dating but the fabrics are likely to be of middle or later Iron Age date. Two fabrics are present, a calcined flint-tempered ware and a glauconitic -black sandy ware, both used to make handmade vessels. Five sherds of the latter from ditch 4 (55) are probably from the same vessel.

Roman

Roman pottery was recovered from trench 15, a total of 10 sherds. Nine sherds came from pit 6 and one from ditch 5 alongside a prehistoric sherd. The sherds from pit 6 comprised local grey wares, an Oxfordshire sand and grog tempered storage jar rim and a sherd of Central Gaulish samian. Collectively these suggest a 2nd century date for the filling of this pit.

The assemblage is quite typical for the region but too small to make any further inferences.

Animal Bone by Ceri Falys

A total of 24 pieces of animal bone were recovered from five separate contexts, weighing 255g (Appendix 4). Overall, the remains were poorly preserved, generally highly fragmented, demonstrated root activity and cortical exfoliation. Identified skeletal elements indicated that the represented species were sheep/goat, based on tooth fragments present; pig, based on an identified rib; and a cow, based on a distal radius-ulna fragment.

Metalwork by Andy Taylor

A single iron nail was recovered from pit/ditch terminal 6 weighing 12g.

Conclusion

The evaluation identified a small number of archaeological deposits concentrated in the south-eastern area of the site in trenches 12, 14 and 15. The evidence from these trenches points to an Iron Age and Roman site in this area. However, the presence of further archaeological deposits cannot be ruled out due to the small sample fraction and the resulting large areas between trenches that have not been investigated. Although some modern disturbance was evident towards the north of the site, around trenches 1 and 2, it seems most likely that further archaeological deposits will be present around trenches 12, 14 and 15. The unabraded nature of the retrieved finds can also indicate that this is an area of undisturbed archaeological deposits.

References

- BGS, 1971, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 253, Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Coddington, H, 2006, 'Former Grove Airfield, Grove, Oxfordshire. Design Brief for Archaeological Field Evaluation', Oxford
- Johnson, A and Colcutt, S, 2004, 'Former Grove Airfield, Oxfordshire, a desk-based archaeological assessment', Oxford Archaeological Associates, Oxford
- PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO

APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at S or W end

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	30.80	1.60	0.40	0.00m-0.33m topsoil; 0.33m-0.40m+ gault natural geology. [Plate 1]
2	30.00	1.60	0.38	0.00m-0.32m topsoil; 0.32m-0.38m+ gault natural geology.
3	30.90	1.60	0.35	0.00m-0.28m topsoil; 0.28m-0.35m+ gault natural geology.
4	30.70	1.60	0.39	0.00m-0.29m topsoil; 0.29m-0.39m+ gault natural geology.
5	30.00	1.60	0.52	0.00m-0.31m topsoil; 0.31m-0.49m subsoil; 0.49m-0.52m+ gault natural geology.
6	30.90	1.60	0.36	0.00m-0.30m topsoil; 0.30m-0.36m+ gault natural geology.
7	32.50	1.60	0.35	0.00m-0.31m topsoil; 0.31m-0.35m+ gault natural geology.
8	29.30	1.60	0.69	0.00m-0.21m topsoil; 0.21m-0.66m subsoil; 0.66m-0.69m+ gault natural geology.
9	30.50	1.60	0.39	0.00m-0.37m topsoil; 0.37m-0.39m+ gault natural geology.
10	29.30	1.60	0.88	0.00m-0.32m topsoil; 0.32m-0.83m subsoil; 0.83m-0.88m+ gault natural geology.
11	30.20	1.60	0.27	0.00m-0.27m topsoil; 0.27m+ gault natural geology.
12	30.20	1.60	0.21	0.00m-0.21m topsoil; 0.21m+ gault natural geology. Ditches 1 and 2 [Plate 2]
13	31.00	1.60	0.35	0.00m-0.27m topsoil; 0.27m-0.35m + gault natural geology.
14	30.80	1.60	0.53	0.00m-0.47m topsoil; 0.47m-0.53m+ gault natural geology. Gully 3, Ditch 4
15	29.70	1.60	0.79	0.00m-0.64m topsoil; 0.64m-0.75m subsoil; 0.75m-0.79m+ Gault natural geology. Ditch 5, Pit/Ditch terminal 6
16	28.20	1.60	0.52	0.00m-0.49m topsoil; 0.49m-0.52m+ gault natural geology.
17	29.40	1.60	0.40	0.00m-0.35m topsoil; 0.35m-0.40m gault natural geology.
18	30.70	1.60	0.35	0.00m-0.28m topsoil; 0.28m-0.35m gault natural geology.
19	30.50	1.60	0.42	0.00m-0.36m topsoil; 0.36m-0.42m+ gault natural geology.
20	30.50	1.60	0.35	0.00m-0.29m topsoil; 0.29m-0.35m+ gault natural geology.
21	30.60	1.60	0.58	0.00m-0.44m topsoil; 0.44m-0.58m subsoil; 0.58m+ gault natural geology.

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

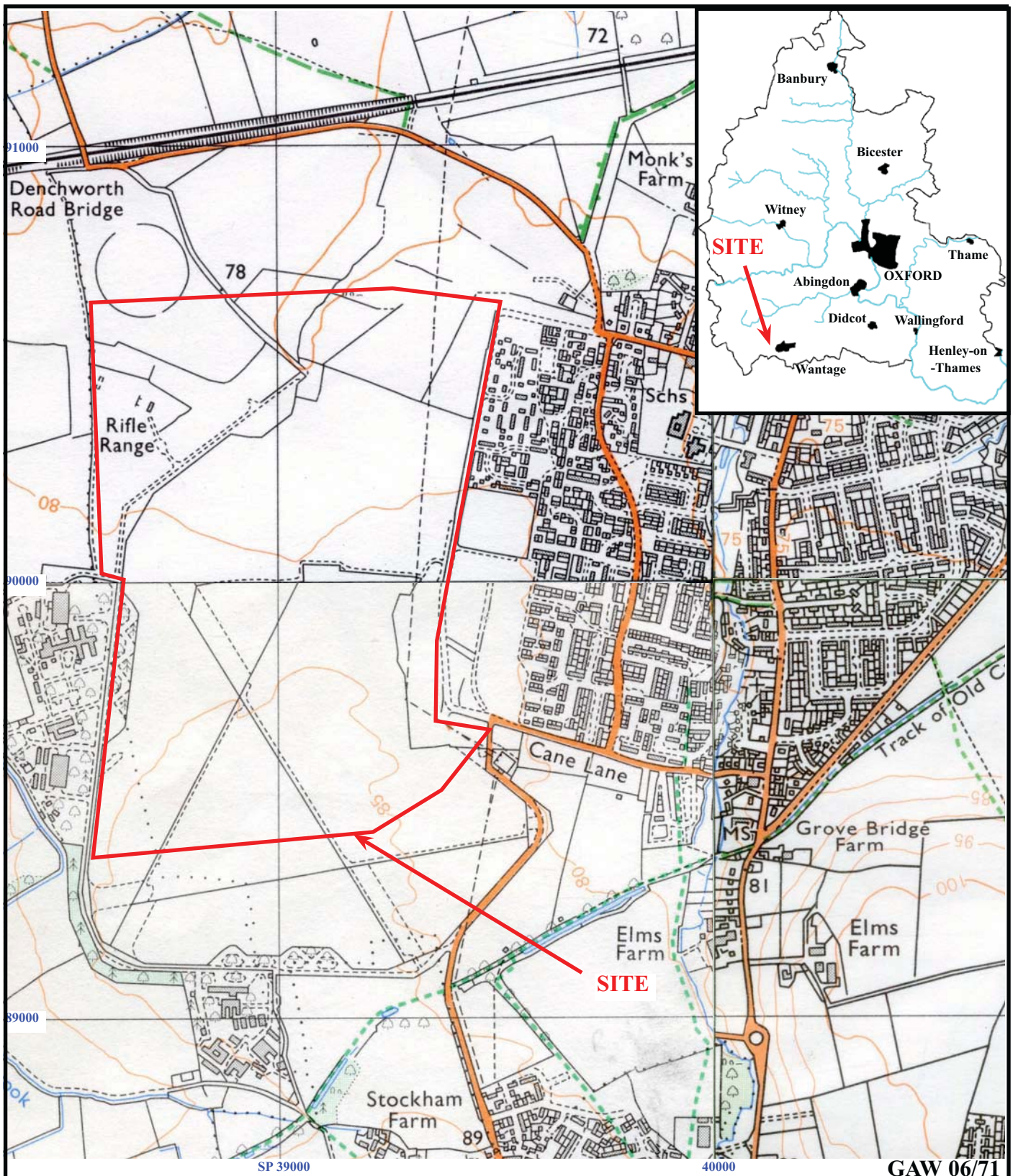
<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
12	1	52	Ditch	Iron Age	Pottery
12	2	53	Ditch	Unknown	None
14	3	54	Gully	Iron Age	Pottery
14	4	55	Ditch	Iron Age	Pottery
15	5	56	Ditch	Iron Age	Pottery
15	6	57	Pit/Ditch Terminus	Roman	Pottery

Appendix 3: Catalogue of pottery

<i>Tr</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Cont</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>Date</i>
12	1	52	dense flint-tempered	1	18	Iron Age
12	1	52	fired clay/pot	2	1	not dated
14	3	54	hand made black glauconitic sandy	4	18	Iron Age
14	4	55	hand made black glauconitic sandy	5	52	Iron Age
15	5	56	flint-tempered	1	10	Iron Age
15	5	56	grey sandy ware	1	9	Roman
15	6	57	grey sandy ware	5	90	2nd century AD
15	6	57	Central Gaulish samian	1	10	2nd century AD
15	6	57	fine grey ware	2	17	2nd century AD
15	6	57	grog-tempered sandy storage jar	1	30	2nd century AD
TOTAL				23	255	

Appendix 4- Catalogue of animal bone

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Feature</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>Sheep/goat</i>	<i>Cattle</i>	<i>Pig</i>	<i>Unidentified</i>	<i>Weight (g)</i>	<i>Total</i>
12	1	52	4 (teeth)	-	1	6	48	11
12	2	53	-	-	-	8	69	8
14	3	54	-	-	-	1	1	1
14	4	55	-	1	-	1	124	2
15	5	56	-	1	-	1	13	2
Total			4	2	1	17	255g	24

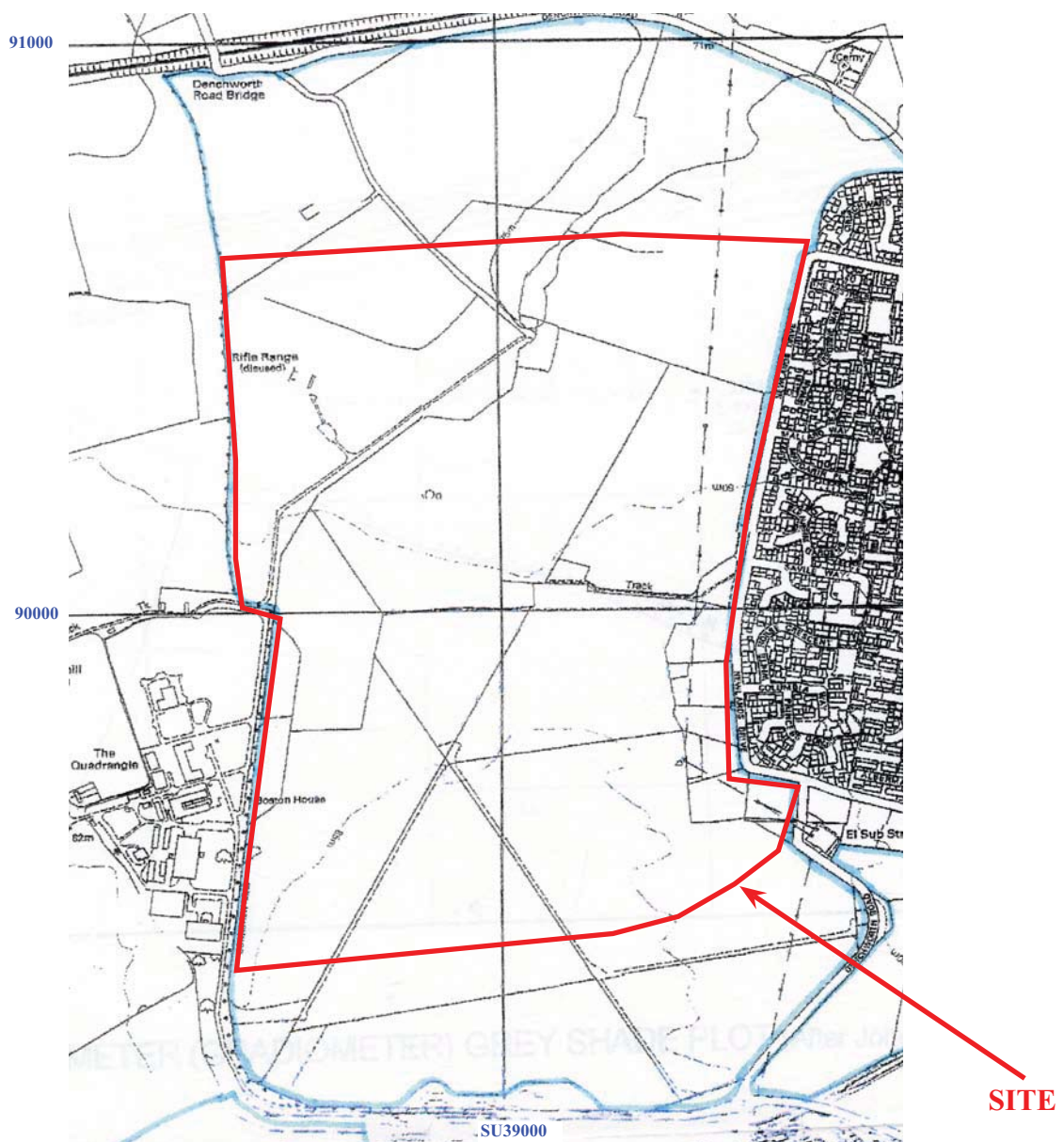


**Grove Airfield, Wantage, Oxfordshire, 2006
Archaeological Evaluation**

Figure 1. Location of site within Grove and Oxfordshire.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site within Grove.

Scale: 1:12500

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Grove Airfield, Wantage, Oxfordshire, 2006

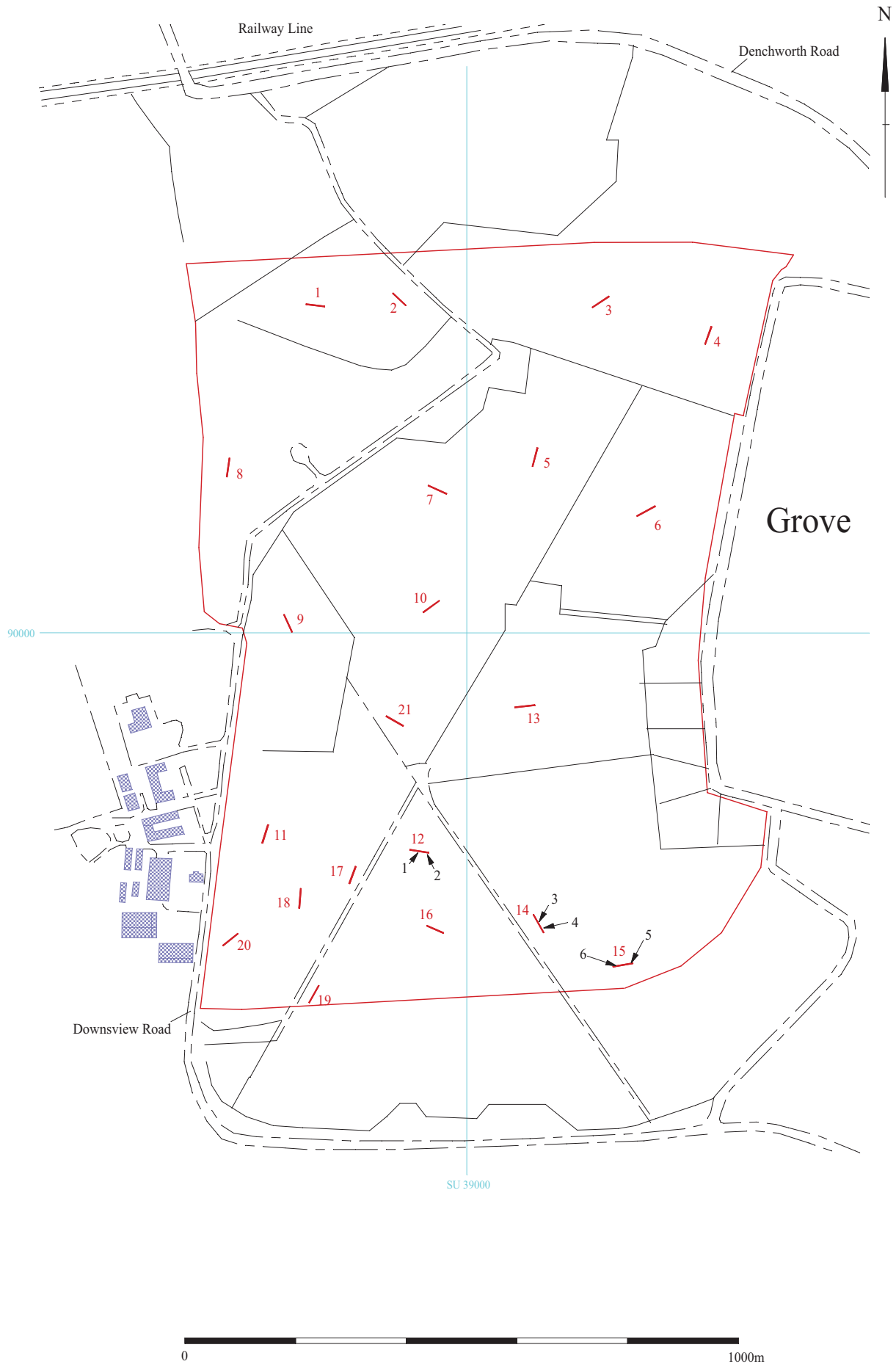


Figure 3: Trench Locations

Grove Airfield, Wantage, Oxfordshire, 2006

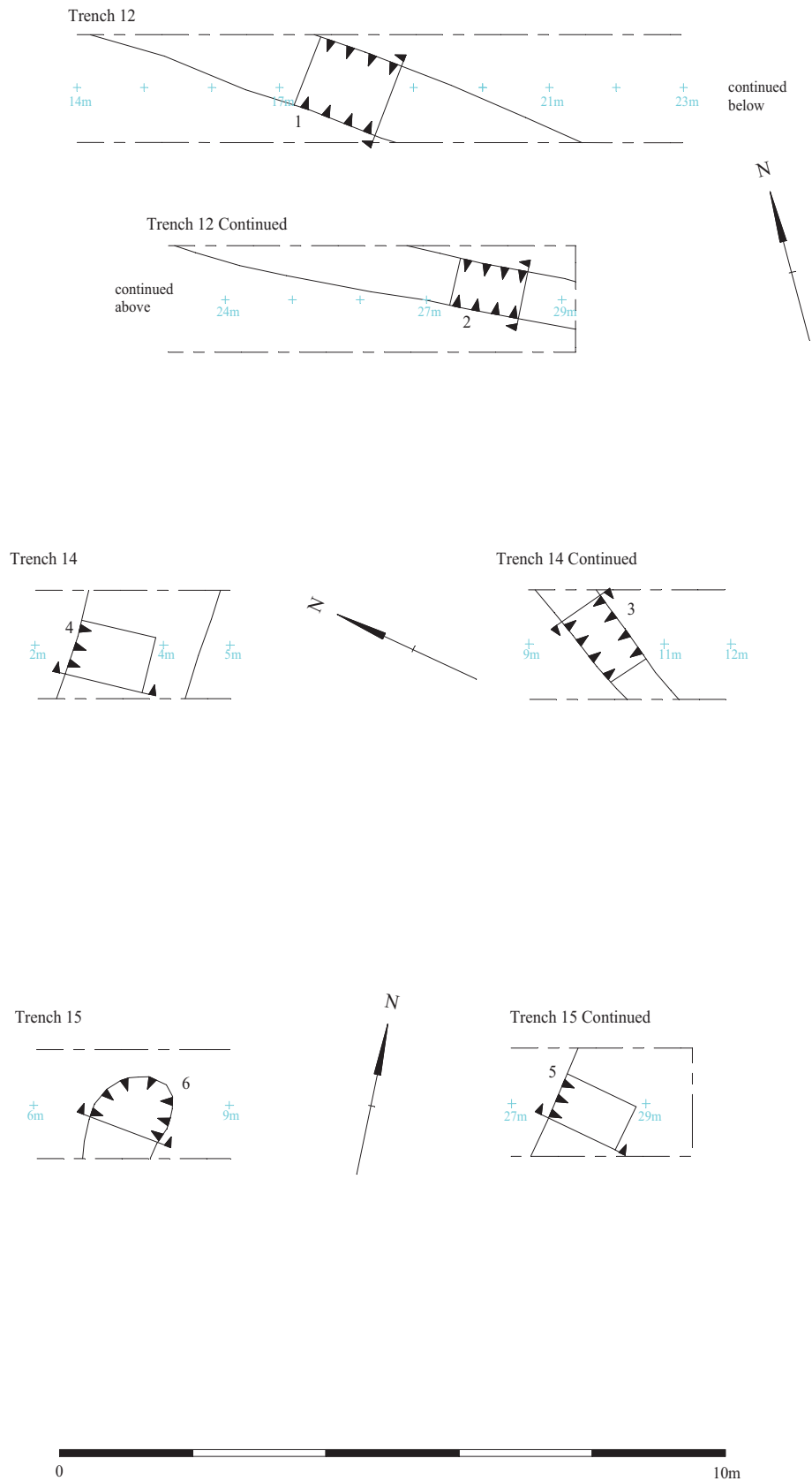


Figure 4: Trench Plans

Grove Airfield, Wantage, Oxfordshire, 2006

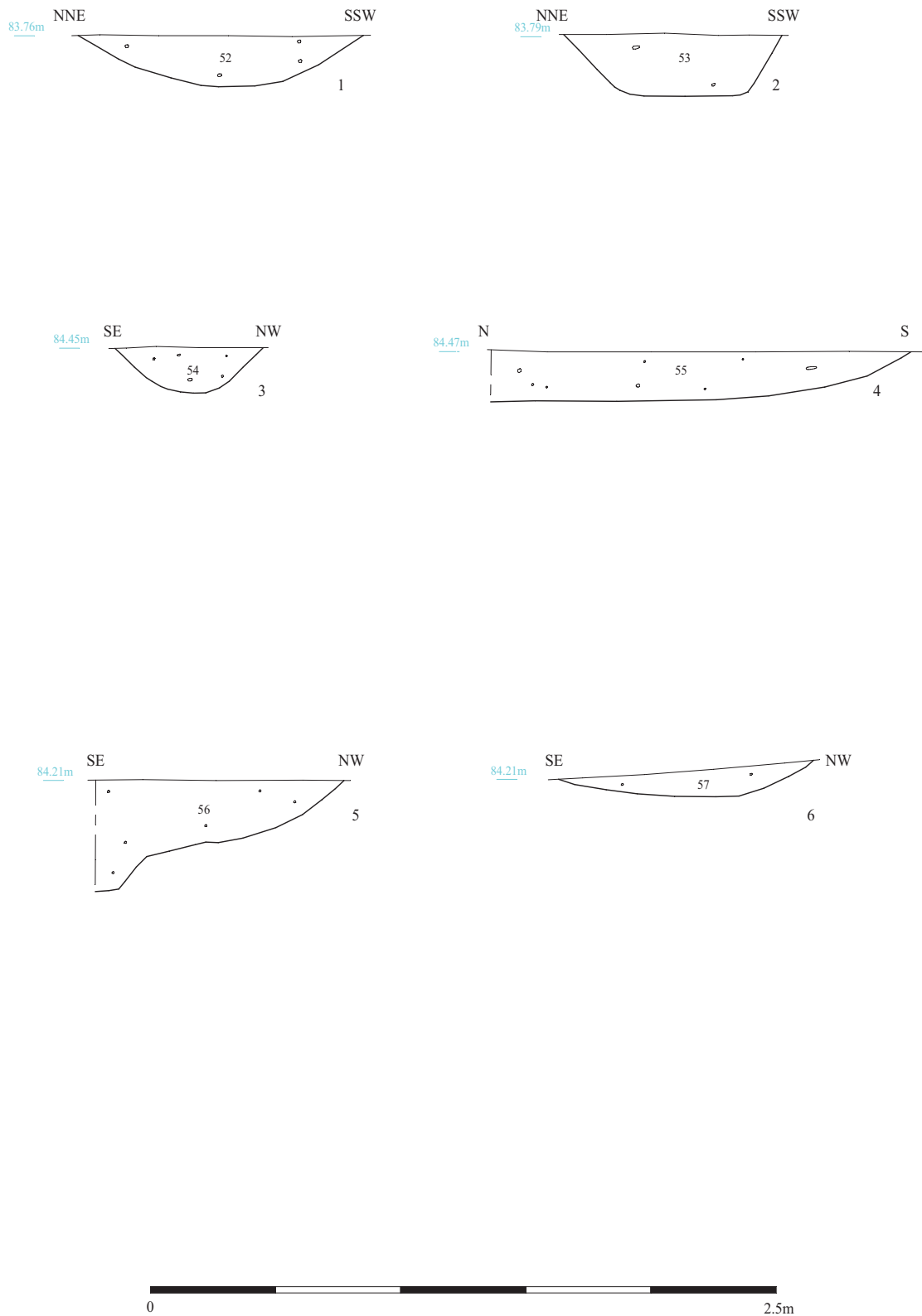


Figure 5: Sections



Plate 1. Trench 1, Looking north west, Scales 2m, 1m.

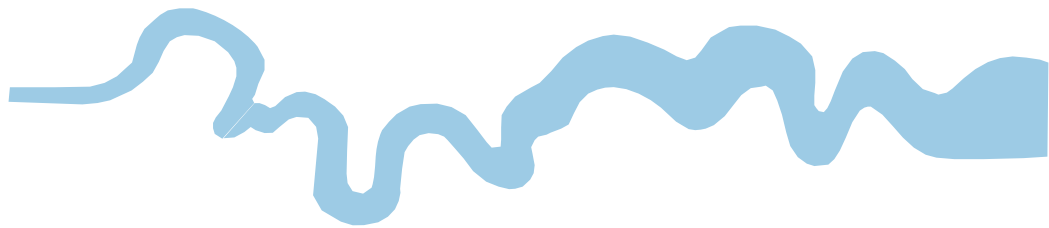


Plate 2. Trench 12, Ditch 1, Looking east, Scales 1m, 0.1m.

TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43
Iron Age _____	BC/AD 750 BC
Bronze Age: Late -----	1300 BC
Bronze Age: Middle -----	1700 BC
Bronze Age: Early -----	2100 BC
Neolithic: Late	3300 BC
Neolithic: Early	4300 BC
Mesolithic: Late	6000 BC
Mesolithic: Early	10000 BC
Palaeolithic: Upper	30000 BC
Palaeolithic: Middle	70000 BC
Palaeolithic: Lower	2,000,000 BC





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