

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Green Lane, Chesterton,
Bicester, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Andrew Muddin

Site Code: GCB10/22

(SP 5590 2110)

**Green Lane, Chesterton, Bicester,
Oxfordshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Carter Jonas LLP**

by Andrew Mordin
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code GCB 10/22

March 2009

Summary

Site name: Green Lane, Chesterton, Bicester, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SP 5590 2110

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 9th– 12th March 2010

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Andrew Munding, James Lewis

Site code: GCB 10/22

Area of site: 3.25 ha

Summary of results: The evaluation revealed very few features certainly of man-made origin, the best of which was a stone-lined drain. None of these features were dated and no pre-modern artefacts were recovered as stray finds from the trench spoilheaps. The site is considered to have no archaeological potential.

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

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 18.03.2010 Steve Preston✓ 18.03.2010

Green Lane, Chesterton, Bicester, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Andrew Muddin

Report 10/22

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at land to the south of Green Lane, Chesterton, Oxfordshire (SP 5590 2110) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Mike Robinson, of Carter Jonas LLP, Anchor House, 269 Banbury Road, Summertown, Oxford, OX2 7LL.

Planning consent is to be sought from Cherwell District Council for the construction of new housing on the site. This report will accompany the planning application in order to inform the planning process in respect of the archaeological implications of development.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service, archaeological advisers to the District Council. The fieldwork was supervised by Andrew Muddin and James Lewis, with assistance from Sue Colley and Matt Gittins between 9th and 12th March 2010. The site code is GCB 10/22. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museums Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the western edge of the village of Chesterton, near Bicester in Oxfordshire (Fig. 1). Green Lane leads out of the village leading west. Currently the site is an open field, with housing to the north, playing fields to the east and more agricultural land to the south and west.. The proposed development would only affect the northern half of this field. The underlying geology is noted as Cornbrash Formation (limestone) with a change to Kellaways Clay Formation to the south edge of the land parcel (BGS 2002). The existing ground level is about 75m above Ordnance Datum, with a gentle break in slope towards the south.

Archaeological background

The site's archaeological background was summarized as part of the project design brief (Oram 2010). In summary, the site is located within the immediate proximity the course of a Roman road. It is thought that Green Lane itself follows Akeman Street, from near the Roman town of Alchester, just to the south of Bicester, to Cirencester (*Corinivm*). A stretch of this road was examined in 1937 at Chesterton Lane just north of Alchester (Margary 1955, 144) when it was substantial and well-preserved, and the line westwards as far as Kirtlington was also described by Margary as a distinct *agger*. The Roman town at Alchester is situated c.1km east of this site. Extra-mural settlement and a cemetery have been found between Akeman Street to the north and the town itself. This area also has identified Middle Iron Age settlement and enclosures, with the identification of a double-ditched fortification underneath the western part of the established town. Other structures of domestic and agricultural nature have also been identified (Oram 2010).

Closer to the site, a Roman coin hoard was recorded to the south west of the site. Further to the west of the site, archaeological features have also been identified by aerial photography. These are thought to be of Roman date, with a trackway and probable buildings located by the side of the Roman Road. The place name Chesterton itself suggests Saxon settlement (*tun*) by a Roman fort (Old English *cester/ceaster* from Latin *castra*).

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.

Specifically, the aims of this project were:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels survived on the site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any date were present; and
- to determine the nature of any Roman roadside occupation is present on the site.

In total, it was proposed that twenty-six trenches were to be dug giving a sample of the available ground within the proposal area. Twenty-seven trenches were eventually excavated, all between 24.1m and 30m long. The work was to be carried out in such a way that would not compromise the integrity of archaeological features which might better be examined under the conditions of full excavation or which might warrant preservation *in situ*.

Results

Twenty-seven trenches were excavated, all 2m in width. All trenching was between 0.25–0.45m deep. All were excavated with a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless grading bucket under continuous archaeological supervision. Where archaeological features were present, all features were hand defined, using hand tools and sufficient of the deposit examined to satisfy the aims of the project. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1. A list of excavated features forms Appendix 2.

Trench 1

This trench was the longest trench excavated, due to its proximity parallel to the possible Roman road course. It was 30m in length and was 0.3m deep. The topsoil was generally the same across all the trenches, which was brown clayey silt, agricultural loam. No subsoil was identified below the topsoil, covering coarse natural Cornbrash limestone deposits. No surfaces or features were identified.

Trench 2, 3, 4 and 5

This group of trenches shared Trench 1's stratigraphy, in particular, the lack of subsoil. These trenches contained no archaeological features or finds.

Trench 6 (Figs 4 and 7)

This trench was 26.5m long and 0.42m deep. Below the topsoil, a layer of subsoil at its thickest was 0.14m thick. One feature was identified, approximately 7.6m from the southern end of this trench. Posthole sized feature (16) was 0.31m in diameter, and was 0.05m deep. No finds were recovered from its fill (68) and it is considered to be of natural origin.

Trench 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15

This group of trenches contained no archaeological features or finds. All were between 0.3 and 0.38m deep. Most of these trenches contained very little subsoil (none in the case of Trench 11) and were onto coarse Cornbrash deposits.

Trench 16 (Pl.1; Figs 4 and 7)

This trench contained two pit-like features. The full length of this trench was 24.8m long and 0.42m deep. One pit was towards the eastern end of the trench, and seems to have exposed about three-quarters of its full extent.

This slightly, oval-shaped pit (4) was 1.98m wide in section, but only 2.2m of its full length was exposed. It was noted to be at its deepest 0.28m. This was filled with grey-orange sandy clay (56). Sample 3 was taken from this deposit but produced no finds. This feature is considered to be of doubtful archaeological origin.

The other pit-like feature (5), noted 6m from the western end of this trench, was half exposed on the northern side of the trench. Its diameter was 1.71m and it was 0.24m deep. It was filled with orangey-grey clayey silt (57). This feature also is considered to be of doubtful archaeological origin.

Trench 17 (Pl.4; Figs 4 and 7)

Trench 17 was 24.8m long and 0.39m deep. This trench contained two features; a stone-filled drain (17) c.2m from the north-western end, and a charcoal rich pit (11). The stone-filled drain, on a SW-NE alignment, was seen in three other trenches (see Trench 25 and 27). At this point, this section of the ditch was not investigated (see cut 1 and 2 for descriptions).

Pit 11 was irregularly shaped, elongated to the south-east and was 0.5m wide. It contained a dense quantity of charcoal and a thin len of burnt clay on its eastern side. Its main fill (63) was dark brown sandy clay. It was 0.12m deep. It produced one piece of animal bone. Sample 5 was taken from this fill but no further finds were recovered.

Trench 18 (Figs 4 and 7)

This trench was 25.1m in length and 0.4m deep. Two features were noted; a pit (9) at the north-western end and a shallow gully-like terminus (10). The pit was circular and was filled with reddish brown sandy clay (61). Only three-quarters of the pit was exposed on the northern edge of the trench. It was 1.5m in diameter and 0.18m deep. This pit produced no finds and is probably of natural origin.

The gully terminus (10) was filled with grey brown sandy clay (62), which also contained no finds. Just over 1m of its length was exposed perpendicular to the trench angle and slightly curved. This was 0.07m deep. This feature is also of probable natural origin.

Trench 19 (Pl.3; Figs 5 and 7)

This trench was 25.3m long and 0.41m deep. Two features were noted in this trench, a small, circular pit-like hollow (8) and the terminal end of a linear feature (3). The pit-like feature was 0.5m in diameter but only 0.1m deep and contained a single fill of red brown clayey sand (60). It is of natural origin though a sample from this fill recovered a few charred weed seeds. The linear feature aligned roughly north - south, measured 0.98m wide and was 0.26m deep and was one of only a few features to contain finds. This fill was orange brown clay silt

(55). It contained two very small pieces of ill-fired clay, which could possibly be degraded prehistoric pottery. This feature terminated to the south within the trench, and most of its exposed end was excavated. Despite the presence of a few small finds, the feature has a fill similar to other natural deposits on the site and is most likely geological.

Trench 20 (Figs 5 and 7)

Trench 20 contained two potential features which were investigated (6 and 7). The trench was 25m long and excavated to a depth of 0.38m deep.

Linear feature (6) was aligned east to west, and was very shallow (0.07m deep). It was 0.4m wide and was filled with brown silty clay, with occasional limestone pieces (58). It contained no finds is probably of natural origin. Possible feature (7) was 1.6m wide with irregular sides and was less than 0.1m deep. It was simply a brown silty clay subsoil (59) infilling a natural hollow.

Trench 21 (Figs 5 and 7)

This trench, in the north-eastern corner of the site, was 25.4m long and 0.34m deep. Very little patchy subsoil covered the natural geology at the eastern end of the trench. Two pit-like features (18 and 19), both half exposed on the south side of the trench were both filled with a grey/brown sandy clay (72 and 73 respectively). Feature 18 was 0.8m in diameter and Feature 19 was 0.7m in diameter. Both were 0.2m deep. They produced no artefacts and are considered to be of natural origin.

Trench 22, 23 and 24

This group of trenches contained no archaeological features or finds.

Trench 25 (Figs 5 and 7)

This trench was 25.1m long and excavated to a depth of 0.38m deep. The subsoil in this trench was 0.1m deep. Only one feature was noted within this trench, a continuation to the NE of the stone drain noted in Trenches 17 and 27. Slot 2 was excavated, uncovering the limestone slabs forming the collapsed drain (70) and its backfill (54). This backfill was brown grey sandy clay and was 0.2m deep and was 0.7m wide. No finds were recovered.

Trench 26 (Pl.2; Figs 6 and 7)

This trench was 24.1m long and was 0.35m deep. This trench contained four possible features which were investigated.

Pit-like feature (12) was fully exposed with the trench. It was 1.5m wide but only 0.2m deep with a fill of brown/grey sandy clay (64). No finds were recovered from its fill and although soil sample 6 produced a few charred plant remains, the feature is considered to be of natural origin.

Pit-like feature (14), with a fill of brown/grey sandy clay (66) was 0.88m in diameter and was 0.22m deep. This again contained no finds and is possibly of natural origin.

Linear feature (13) was on a roughly north-south alignment. This contained no finds and was filled with a single fill (65), reddish brown sandy clay. It is considered that it is also of natural origin.

Feature 15 was 1.7m across but only 0.12m deep. No finds were recovered from its grey brown sandy clay fill (67) and its probably just subsoil infilling a natural hollow in the limestone.

Trench 27 (Figs 6 and 7)

This extra trench, was dug to intersect the projected continuation of the drain identified in Trenches 17 and 25. The feature was identified where expected and a slot (1) was excavated. This was filled with a stone drain (53) and its backfill, a yellow-orangey brown clayey silt (52).

Finds

Pottery or fired clay

Two small pieces of ill-fired clay (<1g), or just possibly degraded prehistoric pottery, were recovered from feature 3 in Trench 19. There is no confidence that these remains can give a date for this feature.

Bone by Ceri Falys

A very small quantity of bone was recovered from two contexts. A total of five pieces of non-descript bone were present for analysis, weighing 4g. The overall preservation of the remains was poor, with fragment size not exceeding 26mm in length. Four fragments of bone were recovered from context 61, and a single piece from context 63 (Appendix 4). The small fragment size prevented any identification of these poorly preserved remains.

Environmental samples by Joanna Pine

In total, seven samples of between 5 and 15 litres had been subjected to standard water flotation techniques and the 'flots' from the samples were analysed and the nature of any charred plant material present was recorded. The flot was examined under a low-power hand lens at x10 magnification.

Most of the charcoal fragments, when present, were very small (less than 2mm) and brittle, and the material tended to crumble or break in uneven patterns making identification impossible. Charred plant macrofossils were generally well preserved. A small number of molluscs were also noted, although the samples were not collected specifically for molluscan analysis. As none of the samples came from securely dated contexts, no more detailed work was undertaken.

Conclusion

Despite the investigation of nineteen subsoil anomalies very few are considered to be of archaeological origin. None of the five features more likely to be of archaeological interest are dated. Three of these features all belong to the same stone lined cut and are probably a drain of some kind. Examination of the trench spoilheaps also failed to reveal any artefacts of archaeological interest. Nothing resembling Roman roadside settlement was discovered. On the basis of the trenching exercise, the site appears to have no archaeological potential.

References

- BGS, 2002, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50 000, Sheet 219, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO
Margary, I D, 1955, *Roman Roads in Britain*, London
Oram, R, 2010, 'Land at Green Lane, Chesterton, Design Brief for Archaeological Field Evaluation',
Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service, Oxford

APPENDIX 1: Trench details

Trench	Length (m)	Breadth (m)	Depth (m)	Comment
1	30	2	0.3	0-0.3m topsoil (50); 0.3m+ natural coarse Cornbrash Formation geology. No subsoil.
2	28.25	2	0.3	0-0.27m topsoil; 0.25m+ natural geology.
3	28.5	2	0.3	0-0.25m topsoil; 0.25m+ natural geology.
4	27.5	2	0.3	0-0.25m topsoil; 0.25m+ natural geology.
5	25	2	0.25	0-0.24m topsoil; 0.24m+ natural geology.
6	26.5	2	0.42	0-0.26m topsoil; 0.26-0.42m orange-yellow clayey silt with limestone pieces (51); 0.42m+ natural geology, less coarse with more orangey silty clay.
7	26	2	0.3	0-0.21 topsoil; 0.21-0.28m subsoil; 0.28m+ natural geology.
8	24.8	2	0.35	0-0.3m topsoil; 0.3-0.35m patchy subsoil; 0.35m+ natural geology.
9	25.3	2	0.38	0-0.32m topsoil; 0.32-0.38m subsoil; 0.38m+ natural geology.
10	24.7	2	0.38	0-0.32m topsoil; 0.32-0.35m subsoil; 0.35m+ natural geology.
11	24.5	2	0.3	0-0.3m topsoil; 0.3m+ natural geology.
12	25	2	0.33	0-0.28m topsoil; 0.28-0.33m patchy subsoil; 0.33m natural geology.
13	25.3	2	0.39	0-0.31m topsoil; 0.31-0.39m subsoil; 0.39m+ natural geology.
14	24.6	2	0.42	0-0.27m topsoil; 0.27-0.4m subsoil; 0.4m+ natural geology.
15	26.2	2	0.44	0-0.32m topsoil; 0.32-0.44m subsoil; 0.44m+ natural geology.
16	24.8	2	0.42	0-0.3m topsoil; 0.3-0.42m subsoil; 0.42m natural geology. [PI. 1]
17	24.8	2	0.39	0-0.26m topsoil; 0.26-0.39m subsoil; 0.39m+ natural geology. Pit 11 [PI. 4] and unexcavated ditch 17 (same as 1 and 2)
18	25.1	2	0.4	0-0.24m topsoil; 0.24-0.4m subsoil; 0.4m+ natural geology.
19	25.3	2	0.41	0-0.26m topsoil; 0.26-0.39m subsoil; 0.39m+ natural geology. Gully 3? [PI. 3]
20	25	2	0.38	0-0.26m topsoil; 0.26-0.38m subsoil; 0.38m+ natural geology. Gully 6 and shallow.
21	25.4	2	0.34	0-0.26m topsoil; 0.26-0.34m patchy subsoil; 0.34m+ natural geology.
22	25	2	0.38	0-0.35m topsoil; 0.35-0.38m patchy subsoil; 0.38m+ natural geology.
23	24.7	2	0.4	0-0.31m topsoil; 0.31-0.4m subsoil; 0.4m+ natural geology.
24	24.7	2	0.38	0-0.29m topsoil; 0.29-0.38m subsoil; 0.38m+ natural geology.
25	25.1	2	0.38	0-0.28m topsoil; 0.28-0.38m subsoil; 0.38m+ natural geology. Ditch 2 (same as 1 and 17).
26	24.1	2	0.35	0-0.26m topsoil; 0.26-0.35m subsoil; 0.35m+ natural geology. [PI. 2]
27	24.7	2	0.4	0-0.28m topsoil; 0.28-0.4m subsoil; 0.4m+ natural geology. Ditch 1 (same as 2 and 17).

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

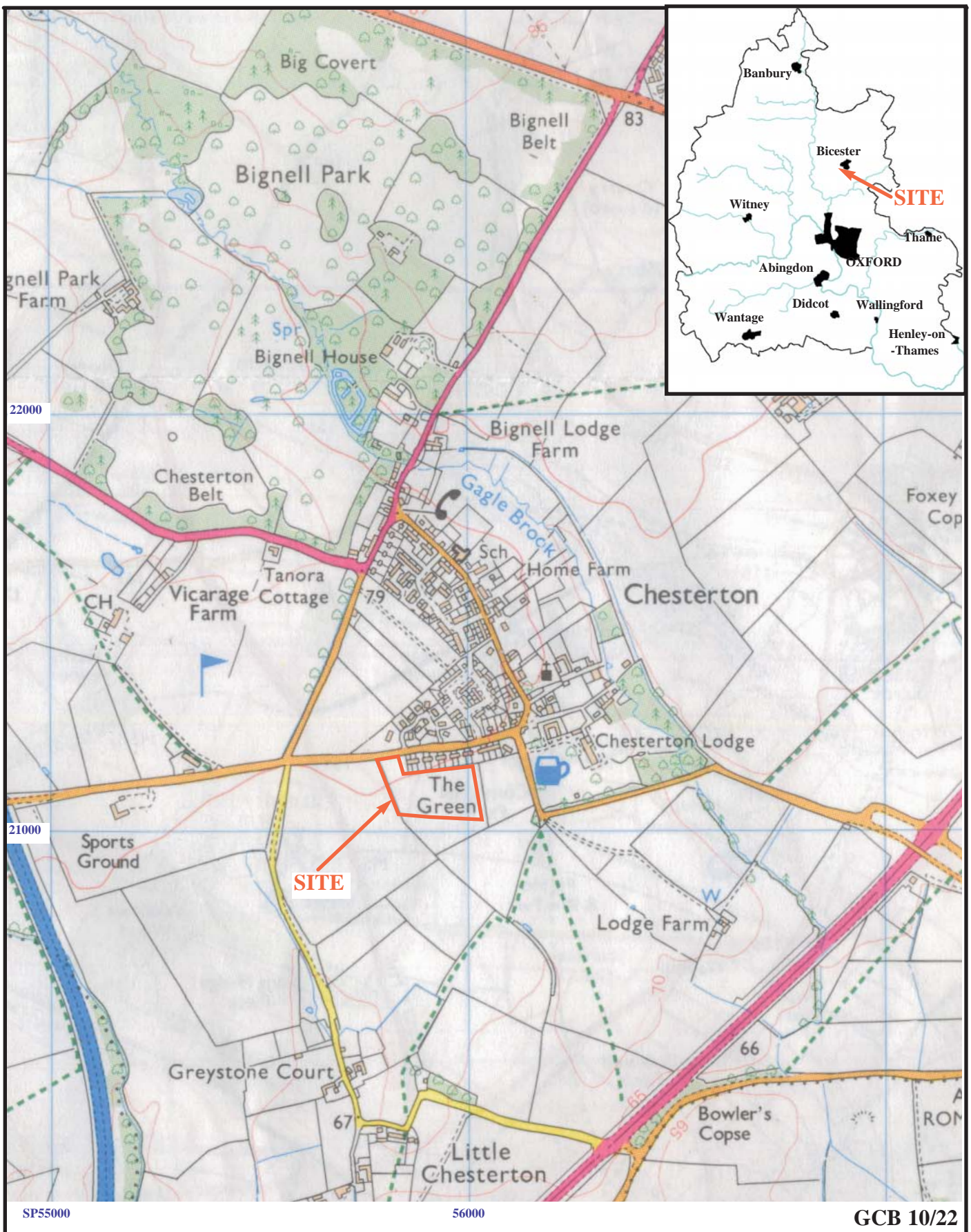
<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
27	1	52	Ditch/drain same as 2 and 17	Undated	-
25	2	53,54	Ditch/drain same as 1 and 17	Undated	-
19	3	55	Gully terminus?	Undated	Fired clay?
17	11	63	Charcoal-rich pit	Undated	-
17	17	69	Ditch/drain same as 1 and 2	Undated	-

APPENDIX 3: Environmental remains

<i>Sample</i>	<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Depsoit</i>	<i>Litres sieved</i>	<i>Findings</i>
1	19	8	60	10	Carbonized weed seeds/ snail shells
2	19	3	55	15	Carbonized weed seeds/ snail shells
3	16	4	56	10	Carbonized weed seeds/ snail shells
4	18	9	61	10	Carbonized weed seeds/ <2mm charcoal/mollusc/animal bone fragments
5	17	11	63	10	Charcoal/snail shells
6	26	12	64	10	Carbonized weed seeds/ snail shells
7	21	19	73	5	Carbonized weed seeds/ snail shells

APPENDIX 4: Animal Bone

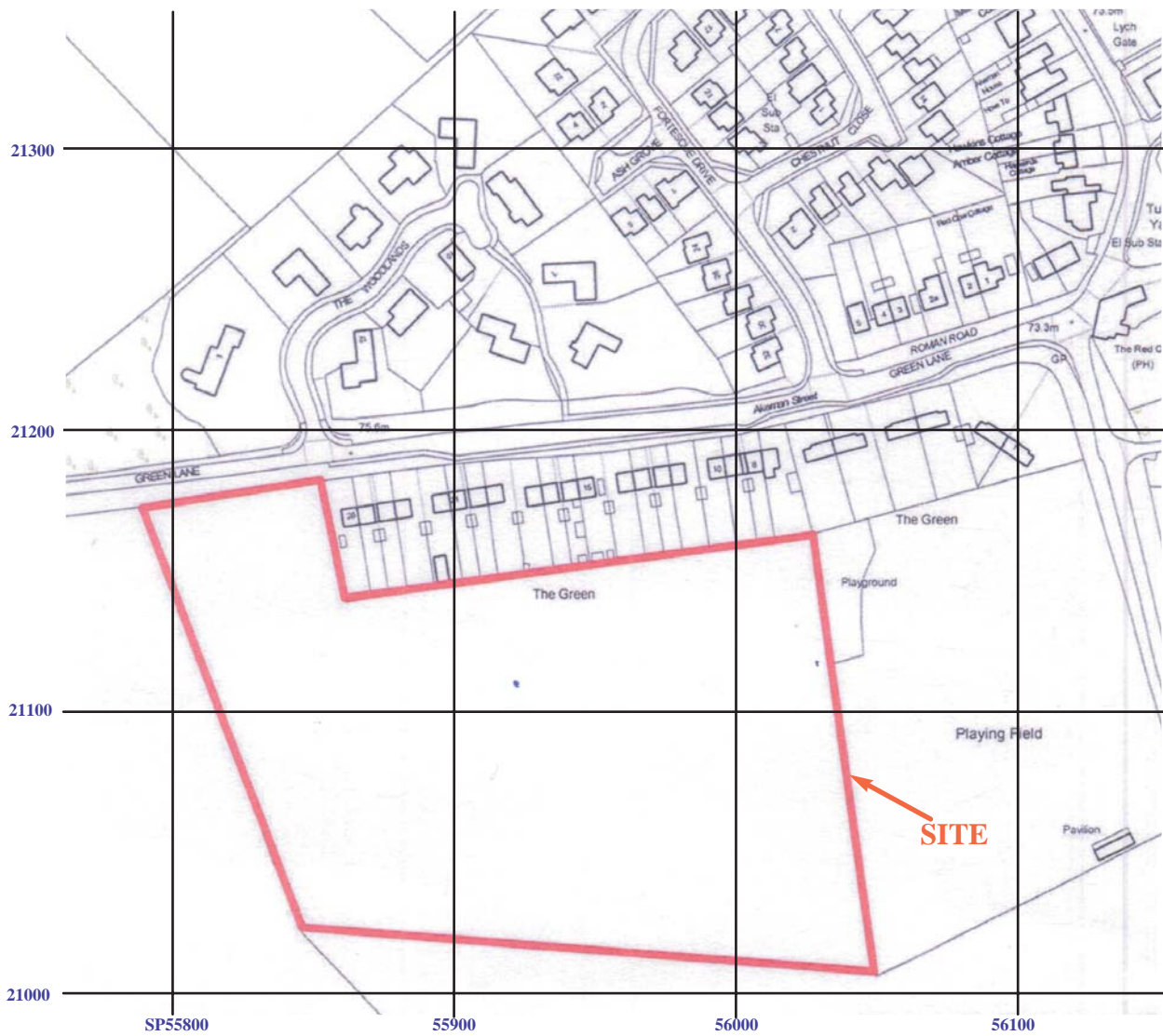
<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>No. frags</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>Animal</i>
18	9	61	2	<2g	Unclassified
17	11	63	1	<2g	Unclassified



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Figure 1. Location of site within Chesterton and Oxfordshire.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Green Lane.

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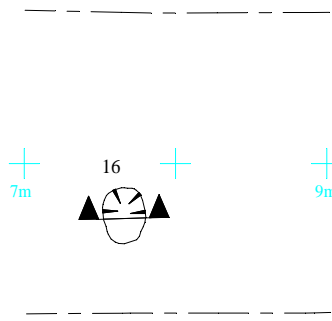
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Figure 3. Location of trenches.

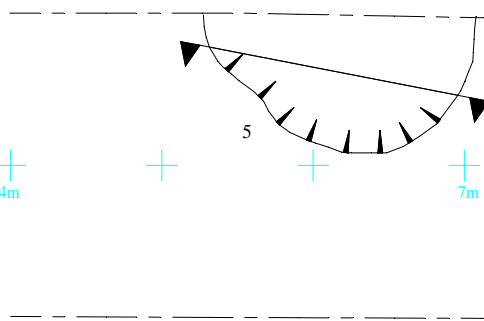


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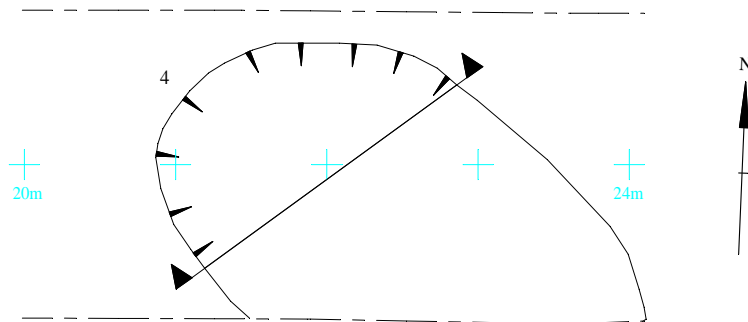
Trench 6



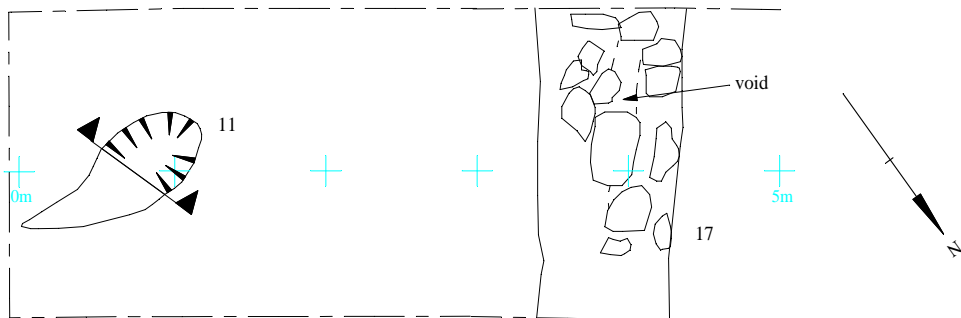
Trench 16



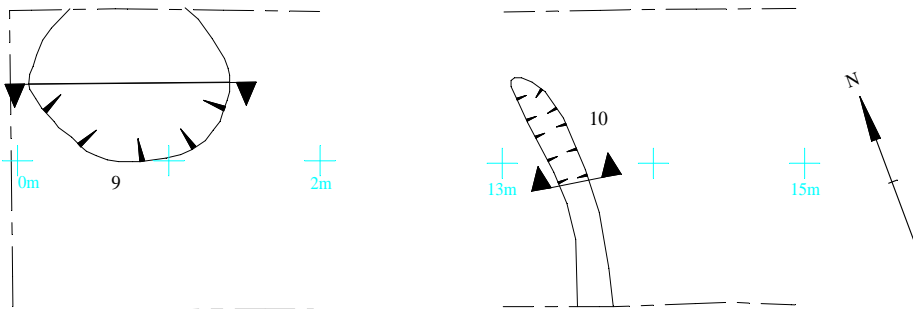
Trench 16 continued



Trench 17



Trench 18



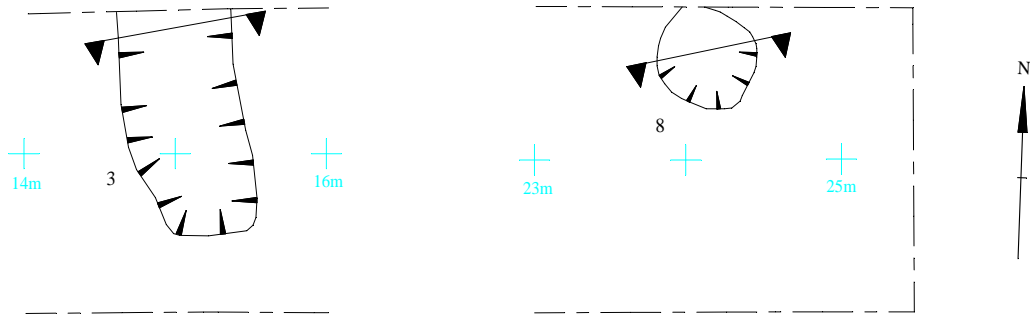
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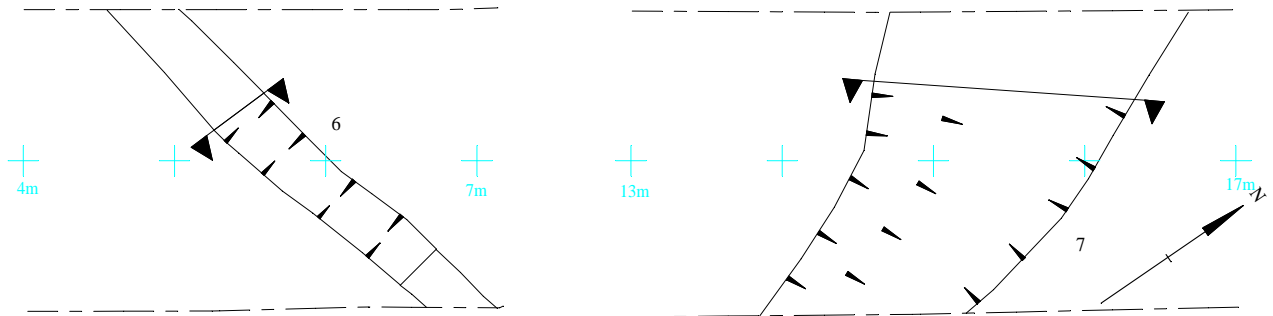
Figure 4. Detail of trenches.



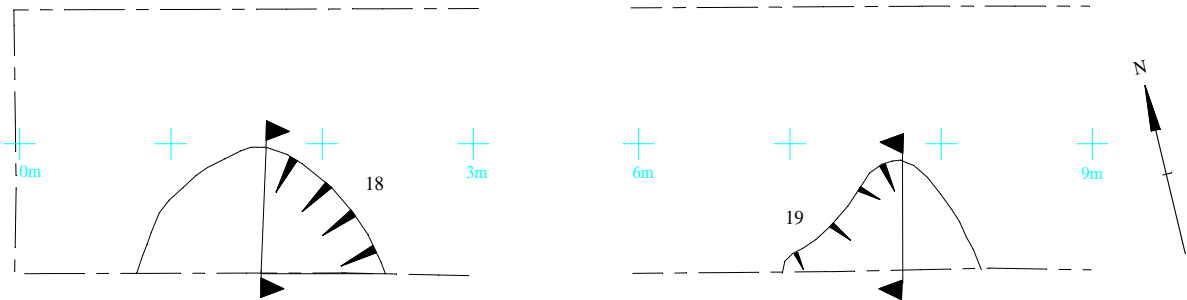
Trench 19



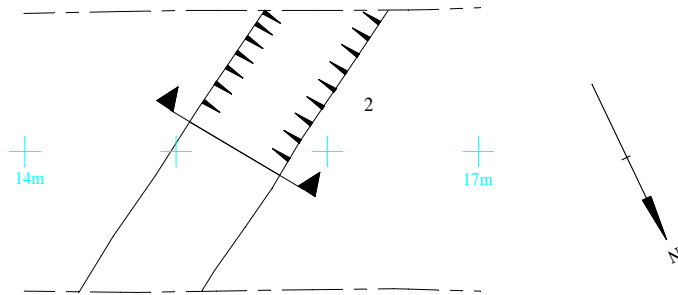
Trench 20



Trench 21



Trench 25



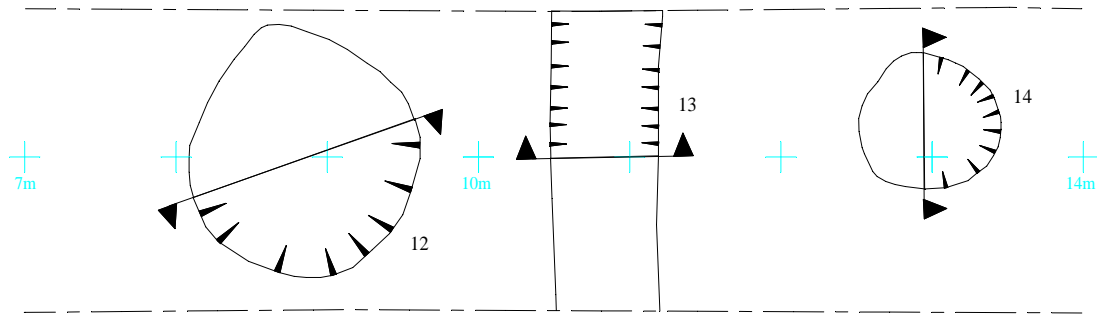
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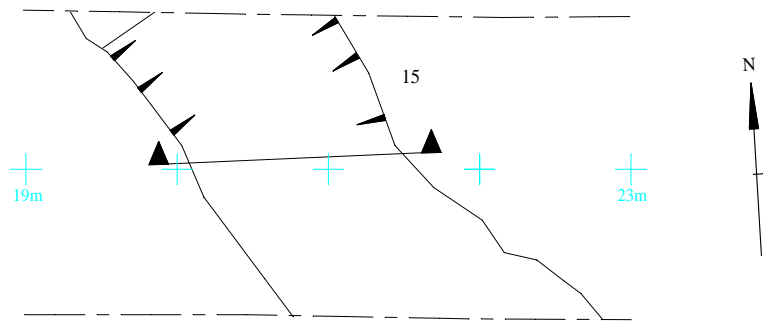
Figure 5. Detail of trenches.



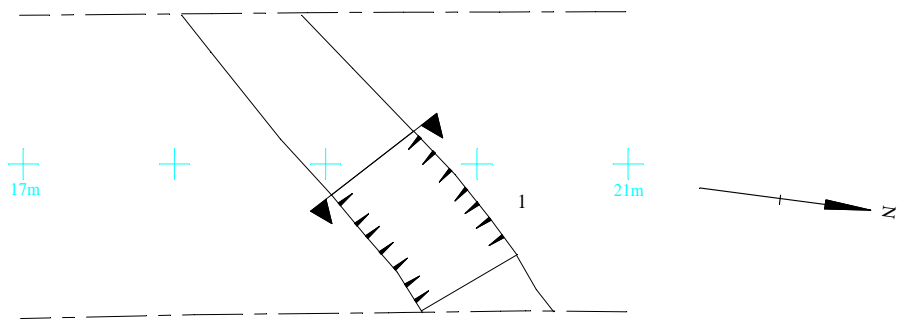
Trench 26



Trench 26 (continued)



Trench 27

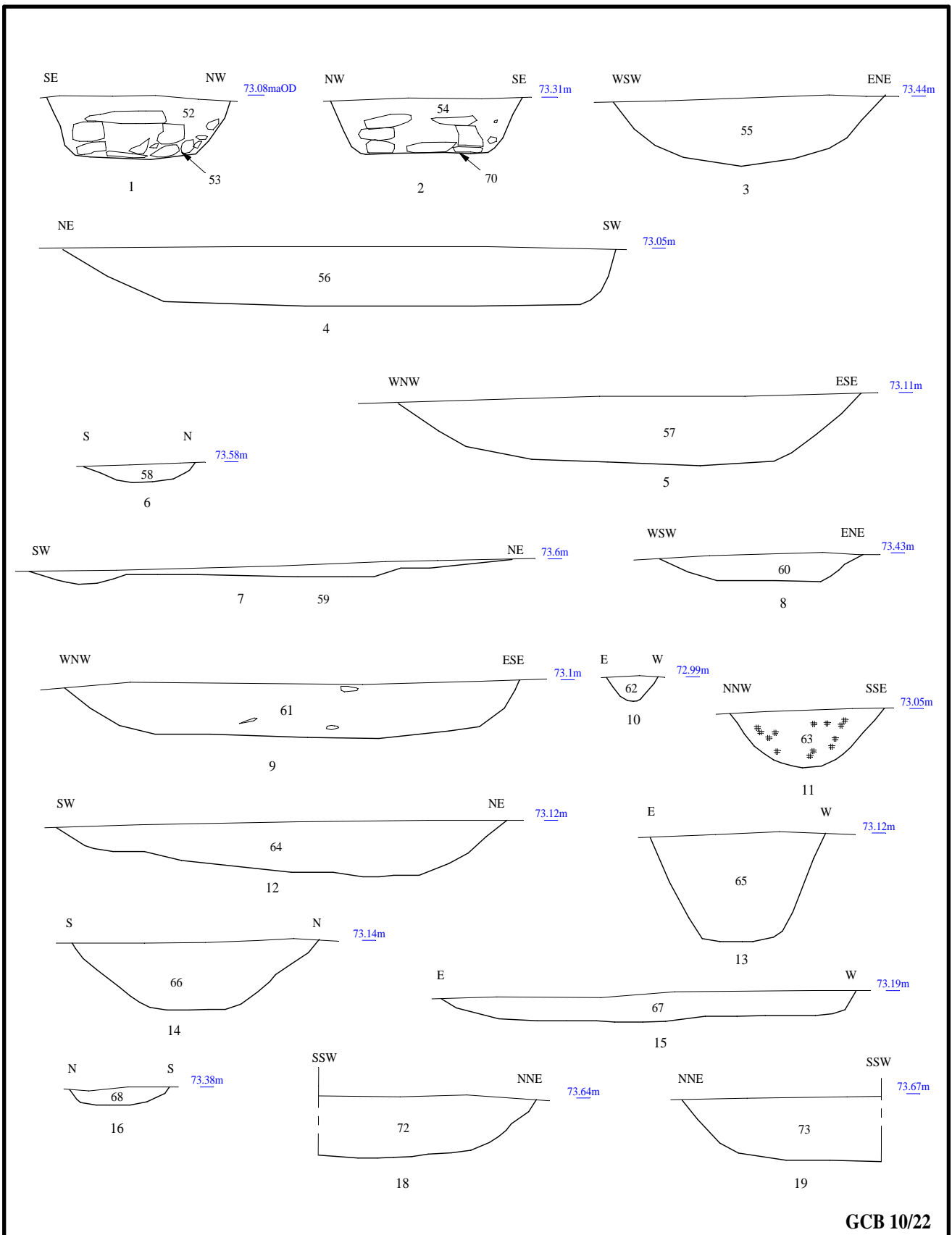


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Figure 6. Detail of trenches.





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Figure 7. Sections.



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Plate 1. Trench 16, looking east, scales: horizontal, 2m and 1m; vertical, 0.5m.



Plate 2. Trench 26, looking west, scales: horizontal, 2m and 1m; vertical 0.5m

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Plates 1 and 2

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Plate 3. Trench 19, Gully? 3, looking north, scales: horizontal 0.5m and vertical 0.3m



Plate 4. Trench 17, pit [11], looking north east, scales: horizontal 0.5m and vertical 0.3m

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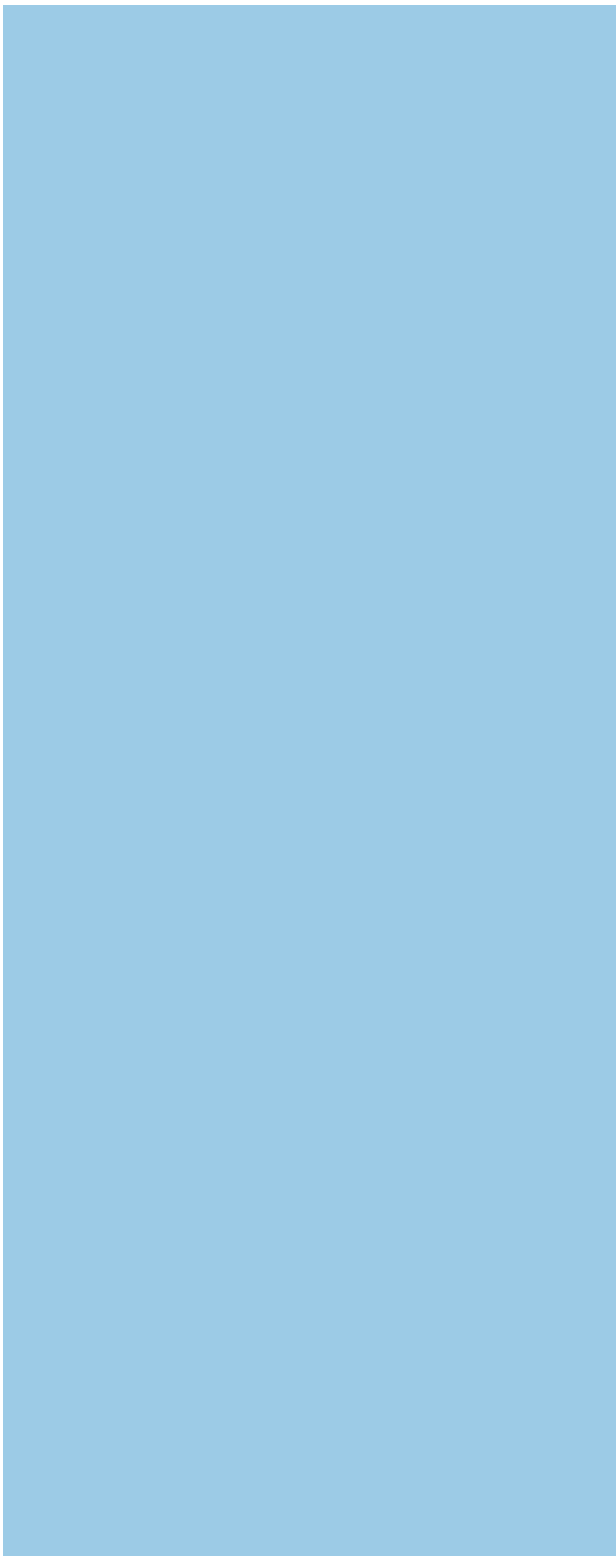
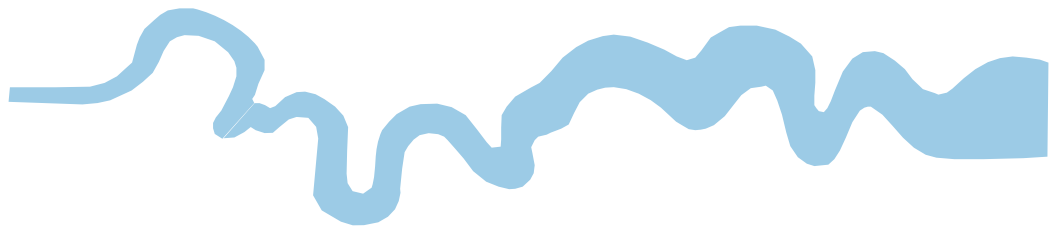
Plates 3 and 4

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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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