

**Tattenhoe Phase 2B Site 33,  
Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation  
for Bryant Homes**

by Kate Taylor

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code TMK01/24

**April 2001**

## Summary

**Site name:** Tattenhoe phase 2B site 33, Milton Keynes

**Grid reference:** SP 82950 33750

**Site activity:** Evaluation

**Site supervisor:** Kate Taylor

**Date and duration of project:** 15th – 19th March 2001

**Site code:** TMK01/24

**Area of site:** 0.73 ha

**Summary of results:** Six trenches dug. Ditch recorded in two trenches. Trench through large depression revealed possible pond or quarry with post-medieval deposits in base.

**Monuments identified:** Ditch; quarry pit or pond

**Location of archive:** The archive is currently held by Thames Valley Archaeological Services, 47–49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5NR. It is anticipated that the archive will be deposited with Buckinghamshire Museum Service in due course (Accn. No. AYBCM: 2001.23).

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Report checked by:	Steve Ford 03/04/01 Melanie Hall-Torrance 03/04/01
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# **Tattenhoe Phase 2B Site 33, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire An Archaeological Evaluation**

by Kate Taylor

**Report 01/24**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Tattenhoe Phase 2B Site 33, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire (SP 82950 33750) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr David Hollingshead of Bryant Homes, Cranmore House, Cranmore Boulevard, Shirley, Solihull, West Midlands, B90 4SD.

The site is within the control of English Partnerships, who have planning authority under Section 7 (1) of the New Towns Act 1981 and Town and Country Planning (New Towns) Special Development (Amended) Order 1985. Any permissions granted should have regard to the provisions of the Department of the Environment's Policy and Planning Guidance Note, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990). Planning permission has been granted by English Partnerships for the development of the land, the proposal being for the construction of 19 houses and nine apartments. This is subject to a condition which requires the implementation of a programme of archaeological work.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Brian Giggins, Archaeological Officer for Milton Keynes Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Kate Taylor, Graham Hull and Sian Anthony on the 15th and the 19th March 2001. The site code is TMK01/24.

## **Location, topography and geology**

The site is located to the south-west of Milton Keynes, on the eastern side of the V1 road, at the western extreme of a large zone of development in the region of the deserted medieval village of Tattenhoe (Figs 1 and 2). It lies on the south-east face of a hill and slopes down from 115m to 111m above Ordnance Datum. According to the British Geological Survey (BGS 1992) the underlying geology is glacial till above Oxford Clay, which was not contradicted by the observation of gravelly clay in the trenches, becoming more gravelly in the bases of the deeper features.

## **Archaeological background**

The site is located to the south of the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Tattenhoe, a moated site of unknown function. The moat and adjacent church are associated with the deserted medieval village to the immediate east of this evaluation (Fig. 2), part of which was excavated in 1990 (Ivens *et al.* 1995). The village was visible in aerial photographs as a number of earthworks which, upon excavation, were seen to represent a series of hollow trackways and crofts with houses, cobbled surfaces and associated features. The village is believed to have been occupied between the 13th and early 16th centuries, after which time it became part of a park and garden for a manorial residence, the location of which is unknown. Although only three areas were fully excavated, several evaluation trenches were located across the earthworks, including one that ran into the eastern end of a depression, the western end of which lies just within the boundary of the site under investigation here (Fig. 2). Unfortunately, no mention is made of this in the published report and it is not known what information was retrieved about this feature.

In addition to the medieval village, the area is known to have produced late Roman pottery and metalwork. The focus for this Roman activity is thought to be slightly uphill, to the north of Site 33 (Gordon Heritage pers. comm.).

## **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 were to determine whether deposits relating to the adjacent medieval village complex were present and to determine the date and function of the pond/quarry.

Initially, five trenches were excavated, under constant archaeological supervision, by a JCB-type machine with a toothless ditching bucket (Fig. 2). One of these was positioned to examine the pond feature and the others were distributed randomly across the remainder of the site, avoiding any obviously recent disturbance. An additional trench was then excavated to the south of Trench 5 in order to investigate a linear feature seen to continue in that direction. The trenches were all 1.55m wide and ranged in length from 9.4m to 26.6m. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1. All certain and possible archaeological deposits were hand cleaned and all spoil heaps were monitored for finds.

In addition, the ground surface of the site was scanned for finds as it had been severely disturbed in several places by the construction of the road and associated services, and by what appeared to be backfilled geotechnical test pits.

## **Results (Figs 3 and 4)**

All the trenches revealed c. 0.25m turf/topsoil overlying gravelly clay natural deposits. A list of archaeological features is given in Appendix 2.

### Trench 1

This trench was positioned to examine the possible pond feature (3) recorded by the survey of the adjacent medieval site. It was excavated at the extreme south-western end of the depression to avoid a drainage ditch, which could be seen to cut through the middle of the feature, and also to avoid the central, deeper area, which contained standing water. The hill slopes steeply at this point and this aspect of the terrain appears to have been utilised to enhance the western and southern edges of the feature which, although it was 12m wide at this point, was actually only 0.30m deep (max.), cut into the natural clayey gravel. The feature contained two deposits, which were excavated by machine: the upper (52) was a mid-dark grey-brown clayey loam, fairly similar to the topsoil above, which contained a number of bricks and large tile fragments (not retained), 19th/20th century glass (not retained), and a piece of 18th-century pottery; the lower fill (53) was a pale yellowish-grey sandy silt, which also produced a number of bricks and large pieces of tile, of which three were examined (see below). These are difficult to date but are believed to comprise a 14th-century floor tile, a 17th-century floor tile and a 16th/17th-century brick; they do not appear to have a common origin. Given this mix of artefacts, it is difficult to determine a date for the original excavation of the feature. A lack of thick silting deposits might suggest that it is not of any great antiquity, although this may be due to the positioning of the slot at the edge of the feature, or possibly to regular cleaning of the silt. The 16th/17th-century building material provides a date for the construction/alteration of buildings but, as their presence in the hollow presumably represents dumping of demolition rubble, the actual date of deposition is probably considerably later.

### Trenches 2–4

No archaeologically significant deposits were recorded in these trenches, although a large post-medieval feature was excavated by machine at the north-western end of Trench 3 and a patch of rooty post-medieval disturbance was observed at the south-eastern end of the same trench, from the surface of which four sherds of late medieval and one sherd of late Roman pottery were recovered.

### Trench 5 (Plate 1)

A linear feature (1), crossing the trench on a roughly N–S alignment, was fully excavated. It was 0.91m wide and 0.57m deep, with a v-shaped profile, and was filled with a clean greyish-brown silty clay (50). A single sherd of late medieval pottery, two fragments of plain medieval tile, and a late medieval nail were recovered during excavation. A slot was also excavated across a possible feature at the eastern end of the trench, which proved to be shallow, irregular and post-medieval in date.

### Trench 6 (Plate 2)

This trench was positioned to determine whether the ditch recorded in Trench 5 continued to the south. A ditch (2), on a similar alignment, was partly excavated. The ditch was 0.98m wide, 0.62m deep and had a similar v-shaped profile. The fill (51) was very similar to that of ditch 1 (50) and contained a sherd of 18th-century pottery, four fragments of medieval tile, and three pieces of ironwork (a medieval nail, a punch, and a fragment of knife blade). This area was heavily disturbed by tree roots and observations during excavation suggest that the 18th-century pottery could be intrusive, making the feature difficult to date.

## **Finds**

### *Pottery by Varian Denham-Reeves*

#### Trench 1, feature 3 (52), 1 sherd (32g)

One base sherd of post-medieval coarseware with internal glaze, from bowl. Probably 18th century, could be late 17th century.

#### Trench 3, 0–2m trench base, 2 sherds (24g)

One indeterminate late medieval greyware in East Midlands Reduced Ware tradition, 1350–1600, possibly from Great Brickhill kilns. One base sherd from small flat-based jug or bottle with patches of external clear/olive glaze. Probably from late Brill/Boarstall kilns (note new late kiln now discovered at nearby village of Ludgershall (Blinkhorn and Saunders, forthcoming), probably 14th/15th century.

#### Trench 3, 2–4m trench base, 3 sherds (10g)

Two Late Medieval Reduced Ware, 1350–1600. Indeterminate body sherds, no closer date possible, probably from Brickhill kilns. One rim sherd, ironstone tempered greyware small jar. Late Roman.

#### Trench 5, ditch 1 (50), 1 sherd (<1g)

One indeterminate greyware fragment, more likely to be Late Medieval Reduced Ware than Roman.

Trench 5, 22–25m base of trench, 2 sherds (22g)

One post-medieval coarseware with traces of external dark olive glaze, possibly from pancheon, probably 17th century. Local, possibly Potterspurty/Paulspury kilns. One early post-medieval slipped coarseware, internal iron glaze and slip-trailed decoration, probably from pancheon or dish, 17th to early 18th century. Could be from Staffordshire but equally likely to be local, possibly Potterspurty.

Trench 6, ditch 2 (51), 1 sherd (<1g)

One post-medieval marbled slipware, likely to be from Staffordshire, 1680–1750 date range but likely to be 18th century.

Top of backfilled geotechnical test pit 10m west of Trench 3, 1 sherd (2g)

One medieval Potterspurty Ware, unglazed body sherd from jar or unglazed portion of jug. Characteristic sandwich core. Potterspurty Ware has a broad date range of 1250–1600 but this sherd is unlikely to pre-date 1350 and is typical of the later 14th–15th century.

*Brick, tile and stone by Varian Denham-Reeves*

A small assemblage consisting of one piece of brick, nine fragments of tile and a single piece of burnt stone were collected from these few trenches. No form diagnostic fragments of tile were recovered and the dating of the tile remains tentative, without close fabric comparisons with very local material. In this area nib tiles post-date c. 1700, whilst peg tiles are medieval – unfortunately neither characteristic was present in this small sample and the dates provided are based on comparative pottery fabrics.

Trench 1, Pond 3 (53), 3 pieces (1.992kg)

One corner fragment of sand and oolitic tempered plain unglazed medieval floor tile. Due to temper likely to be of local east midland production. Extremely worn, no traces of glaze. Possibly 14th century on the basis that plain tiles tend to be made in the same fabrics as pottery and no oolitic tempered pottery is produced in this area after c. 1500. No mortar but trace of keying. One end fragment of late medieval or post-medieval tile (80mm+ x 100mm x 35mm). Plain and unglazed, no keying but traces of mortar. This tile shares dimensions with those from the bakehouse floor, Bradwell Abbey, Milton Keynes, c. 17th century but could be earlier. It is unlikely to be contemporary with or of the same origin as the other tile from this context. One worn brick end with traces of mortar, 80mm+ x 1000mm x 500mm. Probably early post-medieval on incomplete dimensions, ?16th/17th century.

Trench 5, Ditch 1 (50), 2 fragments (6g)

Two fragments of plain roof tile of indeterminate form with sand, quartz, pebble and sparse oolitic temper. Unlikely to post-date 1500 in construction but potentially in long use.

Trench 6, Ditch 2 (51), 3 fragments (73g)

Three fragments of plain unglazed medieval roof tile with quartz, sand and pebble temper and sparse ooliths. Unlikely to post-date 1500.

Trench 6, Ditch 2 (51) top, 1 fragment (12g)

One fragment medieval roof tile. Plain, unglazed, of indeterminate form, in sand, pebble and oolitic fabric. Unlikely to post-date 1500.

Top of backfilled geotechnical test pit 10m west of Trench 3, 1 fragment (184g)

One fragment unglazed medieval ridge tile in sand, quartz, pebble and oolitic tempered fabric. Of east midlands manufacture. Unlikely to post-date 1500.

*Metalwork* by Nicola Powell

Four pieces of metalwork were recovered during the evaluation. All are made of iron and are in poor condition. None were x-rayed for this report. Identifications and possible dates were made following comparisons with other medieval assemblages (Platt and Coleman-Smith, 1975).

Trench 5, Ditch 1 (50) top

Nail. Rectangular in section with a round, slightly domed head. Length 71mm. Possibly 14th to 16th century

Trench 6, Ditch 2 (51) top

Nail or wedge. A narrow rectangle in section, with a flatter chisel-edge at the tip. Appears almost complete with an irregularly shaped round, slightly domed head. Length 87mm. Medieval

Trench 6, Ditch 2 (51)

?Punch type tool. Circular section. Tip blunt and end cut off or flattened. Length 60mm.

Knife blade fragment. Incomplete at both ends. Slightly curved with a triangular section. Length 42mm.

*Burnt stone*

A small fragment of burnt gravel (4g) was recovered from Trench 6, ditch 2 (51).

## Conclusion

This small programme of evaluation trenching has not located any substantial archaeological remains. Although a single sherd of late Roman pottery was recovered, no Roman features were identified, confirming suggestions that the possible settlement, thought to be nearby, does not extend into this area. Neither were major medieval deposits encountered. Although one ditch (1/2) may be medieval, with an intrusive sherd of 18th-century pottery, it probably represents an outlying boundary rather than an extension of the village to the west. A similar conclusion was reached following the evaluation on the village earthworks, where trenches to the west of the church and moated site did not show any substantial continuation of the village in that direction. The number of unstratified late medieval pottery and tile sherds is not unexpected given the proximity of the village.

The investigation into the large depression (3) was not conclusive. Its size is suggestive of a pond but comparison with features investigated in the village hint that it may be a quarry. Although it was not possible to prove their antiquity, the pond complexes around the moated site were thought to be medieval fish ponds later used as landscape garden features (Ivens *et al.* 1995, 7–9). They were deep and steep sided, and one may have been revetted. In comparison, features interpreted as quarries, particularly the post-medieval examples (Ivens *et al.* 48–51), were shallow scoops, although some were over a metre deep. They followed the thin band of gravel between layers of clay and feature 3 revealed a more gravelly geology at its base. Whether pond or quarry, there is no evidence that feature 3 was excavated earlier than the 17th century, and may be considerably later.

## References

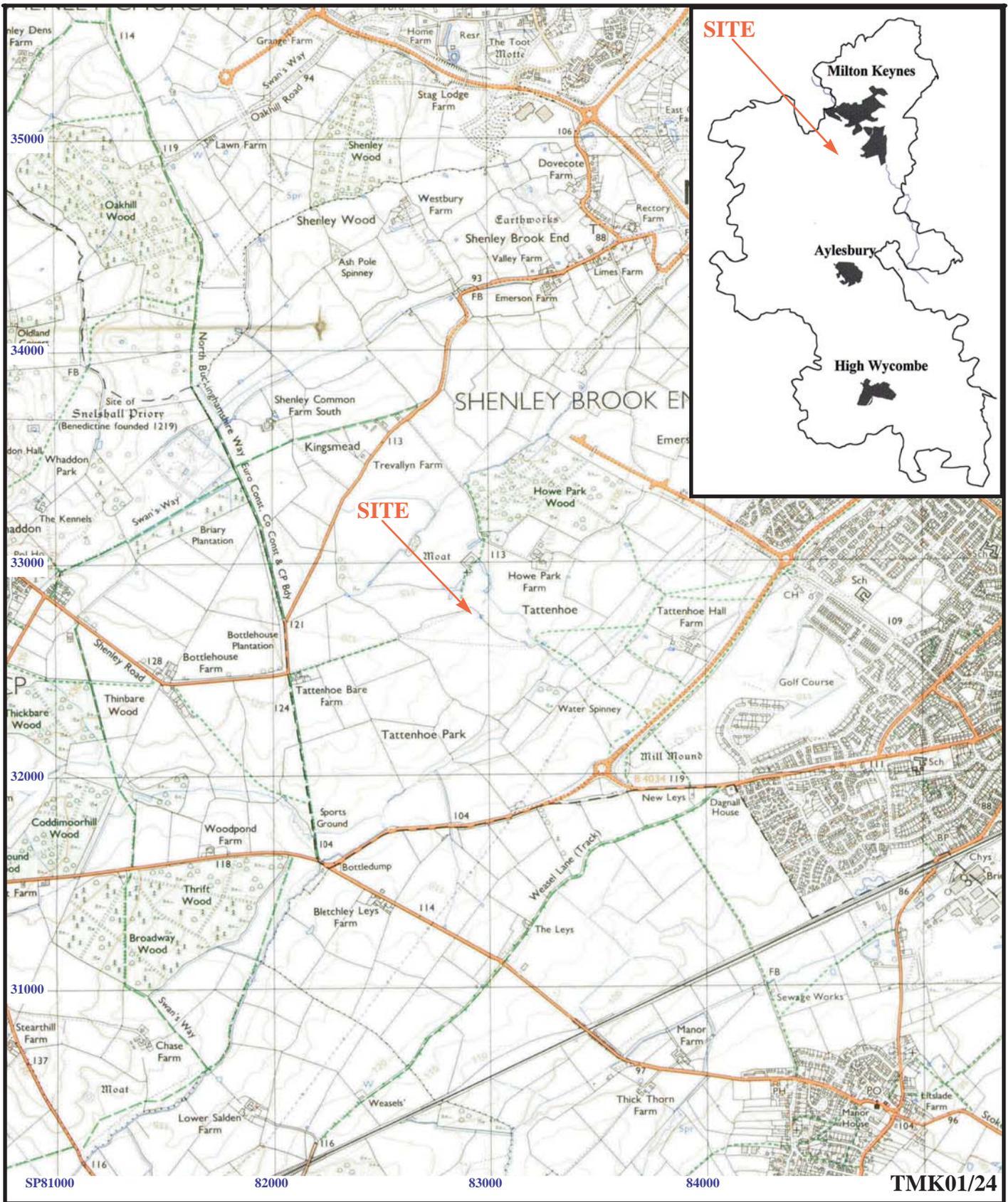
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- Platt, C and Coleman-Smith, R, 1975, *Excavations in Medieval Southampton 1953–1969, Volume 2: The Finds*, Leicester University Press
- PPG 16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Department of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance Note 16, HMSO

**APPENDIX 1: Trench details**

<i>Trench No.</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	23.6	1.55	0.25–0.30	0.25m topsoil onto natural clayey gravel. Quarry or pond slot 3.
2	25.6	1.55	0.25	0.25m topsoil onto natural gravelly clay.
3	24.1	1.55	0.30–0.90, test pit 1.20	0.25m topsoil onto natural gravelly clay. Large post-Medieval feature machined out at north-west end.
4	25.2	1.55	0.20	0.25m topsoil onto natural gravelly clay.
5	26.6	1.55	0.35	0.25m topsoil onto natural gravelly clay. Ditch slot 1.
6	9.4	1.55	0.30	0.25m topsoil onto natural gravelly clay. Ditch slot 2.

**APPENDIX 2:** Catalogue of archaeological features and deposits

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fills</i>	<i>Trench</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	50	5	Ditch slot	?Late medieval
2	51	6	Ditch slot	?18th century or medieval
3	52, 53	1	Quarry/pond slot	?17th century or later



Tattenhoe, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, 2001

Figure 1. Location of site within Buckinghamshire.

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# Tattenhoe, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, 2001

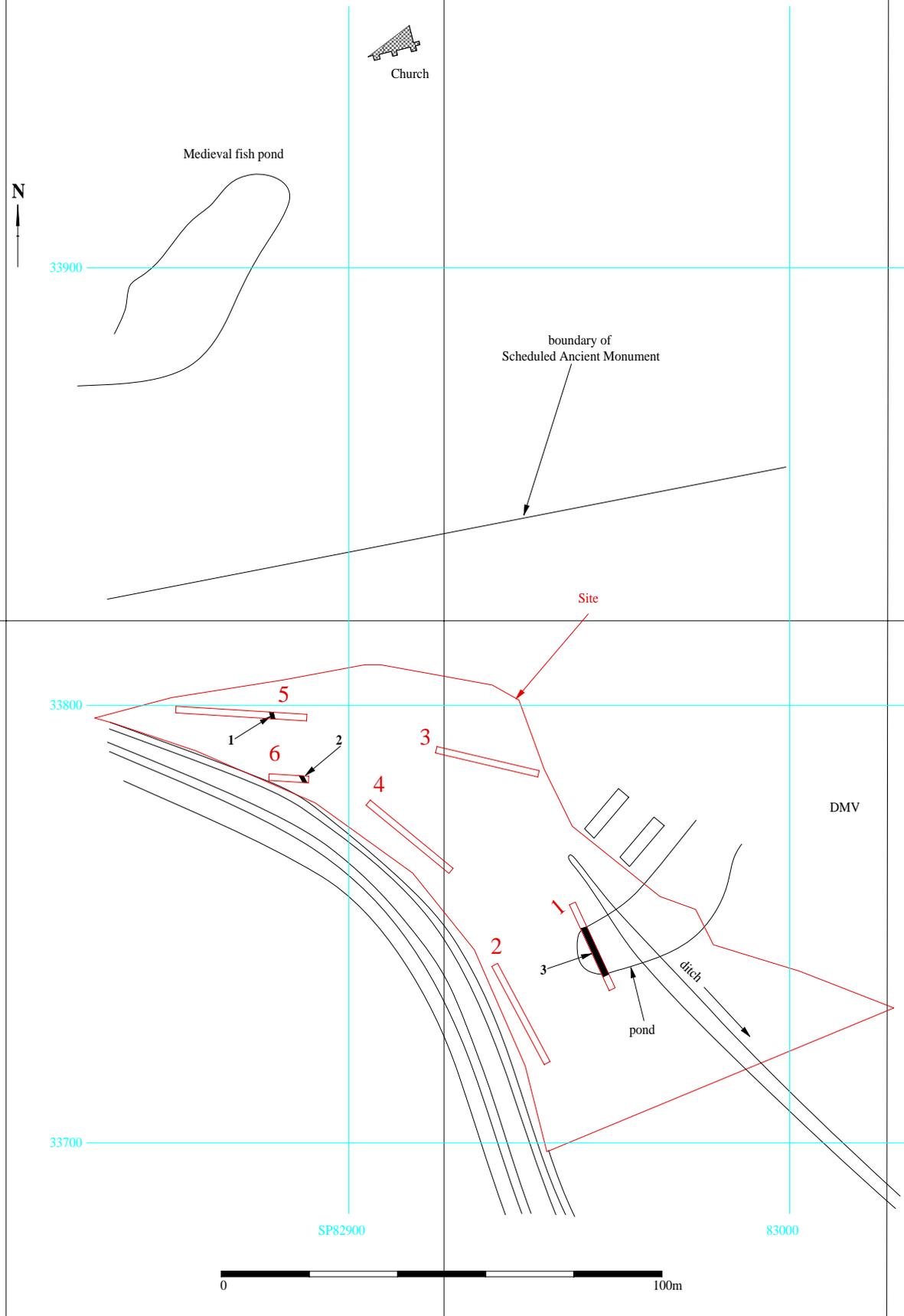


Figure 2. location of trenches showing all archaeological features.

### Tattenhoe, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, 2001

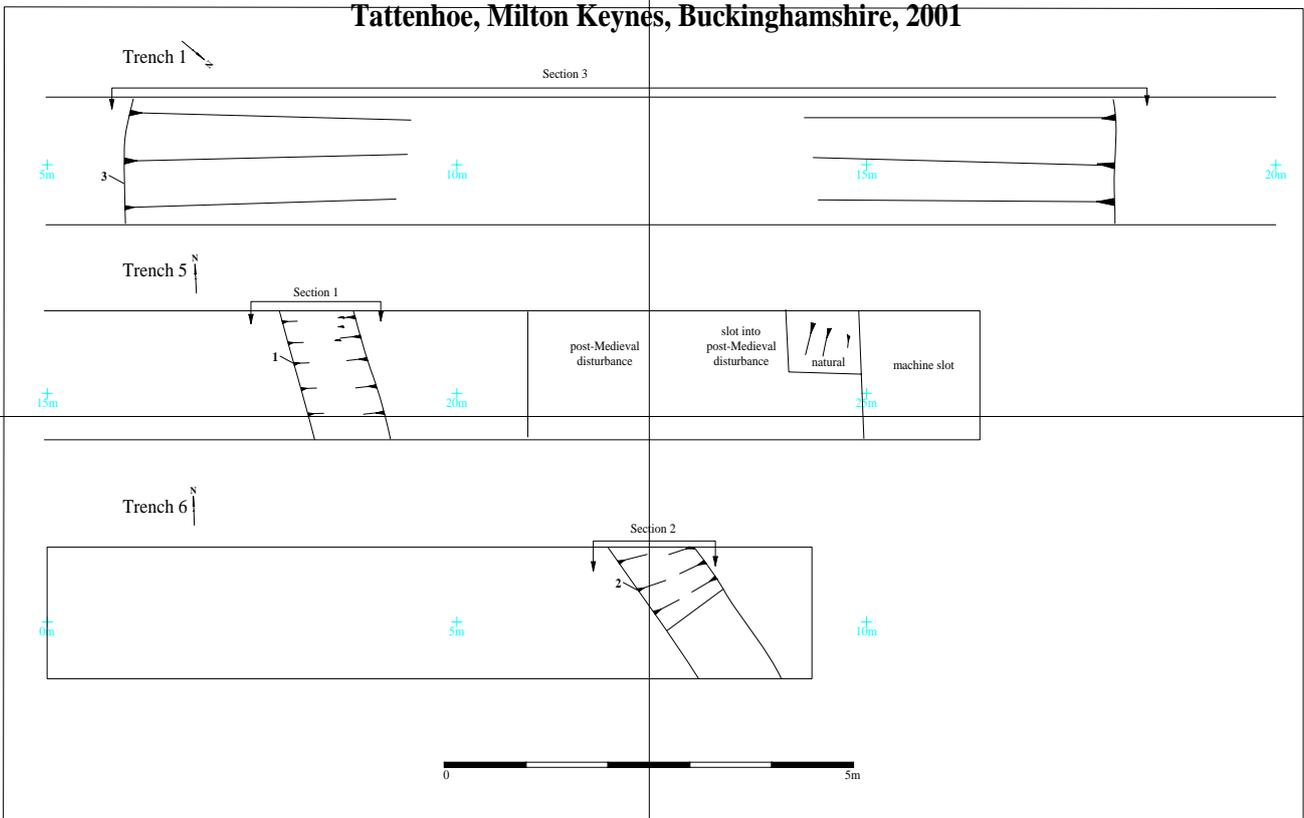


Figure 3. Plans of trenches 1, 5 and 6 showing all archaeological features.

TMK01/24

**Tattenhoe, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, 2001**

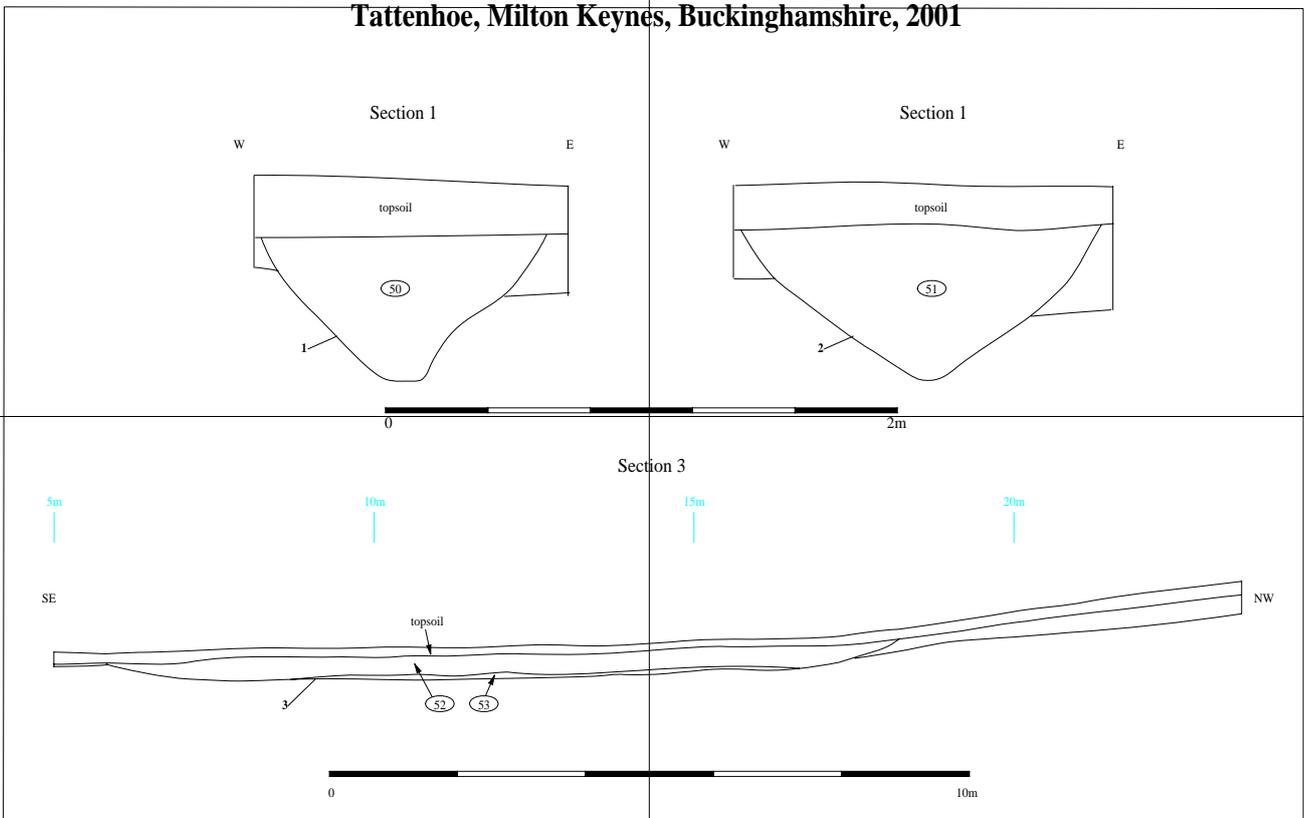


Figure 4. Sections..

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Plate 1. Trench 5 looking north west, showing ditch 1 scales: 1m and 2m.



Plate 2. Trench 6 looking north west, showing ditch 2, scales: 0.50m and 1m.