

Ramsey Millfields Flood Alleviation Scheme



Archaeological Evaluation Report



December 2012

Client: Anglian Water Services Ltd.

OA East Report No: 1430

OASIS No: oxfordar3-139105

NGR: TL 2897 8552

Ramsey Millfields Flood Alleviation Scheme

Archaeological Evaluation

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Report Date: December 2012

Report Number: 1430
Site Name: Ramsey Millfields Flood Alleviation Scheme
HER Event No: ECB3790
Date of Works: 10th-11th December 2012
Client Name: Anglian Water Services Ltd
Client Ref: *
Planning Ref: *
Grid Ref: TL 2897 8552
Site Code: RASMIF12
Finance Code: RASMIF12
Receiving Body: CCC Stores, Landbeach

Accession No:

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Position: Project Officer
Date: December 2012

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Position: Senior Project Manager
Date: December 2012
Signed: 

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Table of Contents

Summary.....	5
1 Introduction.....	7
1.1 Location and scope of work.....	7
1.2 Geology and topography.....	7
1.3 Archaeological and historical background.....	7
1.4 Acknowledgements.....	8
2 Aims and Methodology.....	9
2.1 Aims.....	9
2.2 Methodology.....	9
3 Results.....	10
3.1 Introduction	10
3.2 Trench 1.....	10
3.3 Trench 2.....	10
3.4 Finds Summary.....	10
4 Discussion and Conclusions.....	11
4.2 Ditches.....	11
4.3 Pits.....	11
4.4 Conclusions.....	11
4.5 Recommendations.....	11
Appendix A. Trench Descriptions and Context Inventory.....	12
Appendix B. Bibliography	13
Appendix C. OASIS Report Form	14

List of Figures

- Fig. 1 Site location map
Fig. 2 Trench plan

List of Plate

- Plate 1 Trench 2, looking south-west
Plate 2 Marling pits **13** and **15**, looking north-west

Summary

On the 10th and 11th December 2012, Oxford Archaeology East carried out an archaeological evaluation on a recreation ground off Mill Lane, Ramsey (528957, 285517). This was ahead of works for flood alleviation with an associated compound.

The evaluation revealed a number of pits, identified as probable marling pits, and two very shallow ditches (on two separate alignments). The majority of the features were devoid of datable finds, although post-medieval blue and white porcelain was recovered from two intercutting pits.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 An archaeological evaluation was conducted on a recreation ground adjacent to Mill Lane in Ramsey (Fig.1).
- 1.1.2 These archaeological works were undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Andy Thomas of Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC), supplemented by a Specification prepared by OA East.
- 1.1.3 The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, in accordance with the guidelines set out in *National Planning Policy Framework* (Department for Communities and Local Government March 2012). The results will enable decisions to be made by CCC, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority, with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.
- 1.1.4 The site archive is currently held by OA East and will be deposited with the appropriate county stores in due course.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is located at the point where three different superficial geologies meet. The overall bedrock geology is made of Oxford Clay Formation Mudstone, this is overlain by peat to the north and west, March Gravels Member coming in from the east and Alluvium from the south (BGS 2012).
- 1.2.2 The site lies on the north-east periphery of the town of Ramsey on the edge of the fen island, and it sat at around 3m OD.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

Prehistoric

- 1.3.1 Prehistoric activity in Ramsey appears to have been sparse. However, occasional find spots have been recorded. Around 400m immediately south of site, a Palaeolithic hand axe was found on Victoria Road (CHER 2877) and a Neolithic polished greenstone ace was recovered to the north-west of Ramsey (CHER 1899).
- 1.3.2 In the wider area, a cluster of Bronze Age barrows (CHER 03738) have been recorded to the north-east of site, just south of Ramsey Forty Foot.

Roman

- 1.3.3 The town of Ramsey lies some 11km east of Ermine Street, yet comparatively little Roman material has been found here. A Samian bowl was recovered about 700m south-west of site, from the corner of High Street and School Lane (CHER 1550) and the antiquarian William Stukeley unearthed a possible tessellated pavement and several Roman coins in 1724 (CHER 2888) from an unlocated spot, suggesting the presence of a possible villa or building of status.

Medieval

- 1.3.4 Ramsey Abbey was founded as a regular Benedictine monastery in AD 969 by Ailwin (foster brother to King Edgar), and by AD 975 a wooden church was recorded and dedicated. The Abbey was one of the earliest and most important religious houses

founded in Huntingdonshire and was largely prosperous and successful until the dissolution. The Abbey was the largest land-owner in the period, owning the Manor of Ramsey itself, as well as numerous manors, estate and churches in the surrounding parishes, other parts of Huntingdonshire and other counties. The Abbey continued to flourish throughout the 11th century surviving both the Danish invasion and the Norman Conquest.

1.3.5 It appears that importance of Ramsey was fairly limited (apart from being the seat of an Abbey) until the end of the 12th century when it had grown to a sufficient size to warrant the grant of a weekly market and annual fair.

1.3.6 It was in the 12th century that the monastery was seized and fortified by the Essex Baron Geoffrey de Mendeville, in the period known as the 'Anarchy'. His son abandoned the abbey shortly after Geoffrey's death in 1144.

Post-medieval

1.3.7 The Abbey continued to flourish until its dissolution in 1539, when all its land, titles and buildings were bought by the Cromwell family who saw it to its destruction. Much of the Abbey stone is known to have been used to build several Cambridge Colleges (including Kings and Trinity) as well as the gate house at Hinchingsbrooke House.

Previous archaeological works

1.3.8 Ramsey has been subject to a number of small-scale evaluations. Approximately 340m south-west of site, an evaluation at Ramsey Garden Centre, Great Whyte revealed a single early post-medieval ditch (ECB 749). A further evaluation at 30 Great Whyte, 370m west of site, uncovered a medieval ditch running parallel with the road (ECB 963).

1.3.9 An evaluation at Newtown Green, approximately 350m west of site revealed a single medieval pit (ECB 312). Another evaluation at 48 Newtown Road, 420m west of site only found evidence of alluvial and peat deposition (ECB 1937).

1.3.10 Evaluation works at the Community Centre just off High Lode, 500m north-west of site did not reveal any archaeological features, only alluvial and peat deposits (ECB 3160).

1.3.11 The previous archaeological works within Ramsey reveal that there is little archaeology outside of the medieval Abbey precinct.

1.4 Acknowledgements

1.4.1 The author would like to extend thanks to Anglian Water Services Ltd for commissioning the work. Site work was undertaken by the author with the assistance of Nick Cox and Tam Webster. Machine excavation was carried out by Lattenbury Services.

1.4.2 The project was managed by James Drummond-Murray and monitored by Andy Thomas.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The objective of this evaluation was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The Brief required that 50m worth of trenching be subject to investigation.
- 2.2.2 Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a tracked mechanical excavator using a 2m wide toothless ditching bucket.
- 2.2.3 The site survey was carried out by the author with the assistance of Tam Webster using a Leica 705 Total Station.
- 2.2.4 Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds were retained for inspection, other than those which were obviously modern.
- 2.2.5 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA East's *pro-forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.
- 2.2.6 Site conditions were extremely cold but dry. Heras fencing was erected around the trenches to protect the public from any injury as the trenches were located in a public open space.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 During the evaluation works, only features dating to the post-medieval period were revealed (Fig.2). Across the site, natural geology (consisting of an orange silty clay) was encountered approximately 0.45m below modern ground level. The topsoil was a dark brown grey silty peat and contained no archaeological finds and a very low level of modern debris. There was no subsoil.
- 3.1.2 The archaeology is discussed below by trench. Unless otherwise mentioned, no finds were retrieved from the features. Full comprehensive listing of trench depths, descriptions and related context data can be found in Appendix A.

3.2 Trench 1

- 3.2.1 Situated in the middle of the trench was pit **3**. It was 1.3m long, 1.08m wide and 0.19m deep with gently sloping sides and a concave base. It was filled with a mid grey brown silty clay (2).
- 3.2.2 Running across Trench 1 and into Trench 2 on a north-east to south-west alignment was shallow ditch **5**. It was 0.45m wide and 0.06m deep with shallow sides and a concave base. The single fill (4) consisted of a mid brown silty clay.
- 3.2.3 Extending from the baulk was pit **7**. In plan, it was rounded at the northern end and sub-rectangular at the southern end. It was 1.38m wide and 0.12m deep. It had gently sloping sides and a flat base. Cut into the bottom of the pit were two possible small postholes 0.06m deep. The pit was filled with a dark brown silty clay (6).
- 3.2.4 At the northernmost end of Trench 1 was ditch **9**. It was 0.53m wide, 0.18m deep with a bowl shaped profile and aligned east-northeast to west-southwest. It was filled with a mid grey brown silty clay (8).

3.3 Trench 2

- 3.3.1 At the eastern end of Trench 2 was elongated pit **11**. It was sub-rectangular in plan, 0.72m wide and 0.34m deep with vertical sides and a flat base. The fill (10), was made up of a dark orange brown silty clay and contained pieces of coke and degraded wood.
- 3.3.2 Elongated pit **13** was very similar to pit **11**. It was sub-rectangular in plan, 0.9m wide and 0.31m deep with vertical sides and a flat base. It was filled by a dark yellow brown silty clay which contained three unabraded pieces of post-medieval blue and white porcelain as well as degraded wood.
- 3.3.3 This pit was cut into the edge of another sub-rectangular pit (**15**) (Plate 2). This pit was 0.88m wide and 0.42m deep with vertical sides and a flat base. Its single fill (14) was made up of a dark orange brown silty clay and contained post-medieval blue and white porcelain, fragments of brick and clay pipe. Elongated pit **13** also truncated the edge of a further sub-rectangular pit, similar to pit **15**, which was not excavated.

3.4 Finds Summary

- 3.4.1 Five unabraded sherds of late post-medieval pottery were recovered from two features, pits **13** and **15**.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 The archaeological evaluation revealed features throughout the two trenches. Although dating was only recovered from two features, it is likely that all the features are of a post-medieval date.

4.2 Ditches

4.2.1 Two small ditches on two separate alignments were revealed in Trench 1. Ditch 5 was orientated north-east to south-west. In the field to the immediate north of the site, the crop marks of a ditch running in a north-west to south-east direction can be seen. Thus it is possible that ditch 5 is associated with this, however it is extremely truncated where seen in Trench 1.

4.2.2 Ditch 9 was aligned east-northeast to west-southwest and runs parallel with the modern field boundary ditch to the immediate north. It is most likely that ditch 9 is an earlier boundary to this field.

4.3 Pits

4.3.1 A total of six pits were revealed within the two trenches. Due to their size, shape, position so close together and location in a relatively low lying, damp area, it is likely that these are marling pits.

4.4 Conclusions

4.4.1 The archaeology uncovered shows evidence for post-medieval activity. The site is located outside of the medieval Abbey precinct and the lack of any older features or finds, even in the topsoil, underlines the fact that this area has not been subject to activity in the past. It is situated on a low-lying flood plain, and thus unlikely to have been subject to settlement or agricultural activity.

4.5 Recommendations

4.5.1 Recommendations for any future work based upon this report will be made by the County Archaeology Office.

APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description					Orientation	NNW-SSE
Trench contained two ditches and two pits. No dating recovered for any feature. Natural made up of an orange silty clay.					Avg. depth (m)	0.45
					Width (m)	1.5
					Length (m)	28.4
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
1	Layer	-	0.45	Topsoil	-	-
2	Fill	-	0.19	Pit	-	-
3	Cut	1.08	0.19	Pit	-	-
4	Fill	-	0.06	Ditch	-	-
5	Cut	0.45	0.06	Ditch	-	-
6	Fill	-	0.12	Pit	-	-
7	Cut	1.38	0.12	Pit	-	-
8	Fill	-	0.18	Ditch	-	-
9	Cut	0.53	0.18	Ditch	-	-
Trench						
General description					Orientation	ESE-WNW
Trench contained four pits. Post-medieval porcelain recovered from two of the pits. Natural made up of an orange silty clay.					Avg. depth (m)	0.45
					Width (m)	1.5
					Length (m)	19.7
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
10	Fill	-	0.34	Pit	-	-
11	Cut	0.72	0.34	Pit	-	-
12	Fill	-	0.31	Pit	Ceramic	Post-medieval
13	Cut	0.9	0.31	Pit	-	-
14	Fill	-	0.42	Pit	Ceramic	Post-medieval
15	Cut	0.88	0.42	Pit	-	-

APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY

<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> (accessed 12/12/12)

- Drummond-Murray, J. 2012 *Specification for Archaeological Evaluation: Ramsey Millfields FAS*. Unpublished
- Thomas, A. 2012 *Brief for Archaeological Evaluation: Ramsey Millfields Flood Alleviation Scheme*. Unpublished

APPENDIX C. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

Project Details

OASIS Number	<input type="text" value="oxfordar3-139105"/>		
Project Name	Ramsey Millfields Flood Alleviation Scheme		
Project Dates (fieldwork) Start	<input type="text" value="10-12-2012"/>	Finish	<input type="text" value="11-12-2012"/>
Previous Work (by OA East)	<input type="text" value="No"/>	Future Work	<input type="text" value="No"/>

Project Reference Codes

Site Code	<input type="text" value="RASMIF12"/>	Planning App. No.	<input type="text"/>
HER No.	<input type="text" value="ECB3790"/>	Related HER/OASIS No.	<input type="text"/>

Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt	<input type="text" value="Select Prompt (this should be in your brief/spec)..."/>
Development Type	<input type="text" value="Pipelines/Cables"/>

Please select all techniques used:

<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - interpretation	<input type="checkbox"/> Grab-Sampling	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - new	<input type="checkbox"/> Gravity-Core	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sample Trenches
<input type="checkbox"/> Annotated Sketch	<input type="checkbox"/> Laser Scanning	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey/Recording Of Fabric/Structure
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<input type="checkbox"/> Documentary Search	<input type="checkbox"/> Phosphate Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Topographic Survey
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<input type="checkbox"/> Fieldwalking	<input type="checkbox"/> Photographic Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Visual Inspection (Initial Site Visit)
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysical Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Rectified Photography	

Monument Types/Significant Finds & Their Periods

List feature types using the [NMR Monument Type Thesaurus](#) and significant finds using the [MDA Object type Thesaurus](#) together with their respective periods. If no features/finds were found, please state "none".

Monument	Period	Object	Period
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Project Location

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Ramsey
P26 1EU"/>
Parish	<input type="text" value="Ramsey"/>	
HER	<input type="text" value="CCC"/>	
Study Area	<input type="text" value="50m by 60m"/>	National Grid Reference <input type="text" value="TL 2897 8552"/>

Project Originators

Organisation	OA EAST
Project Brief Originator	Andy Thomas
Project Design Originator	N/A
Project Manager	James Drummond-Murray
Supervisor	Louise Bush

Project Archives

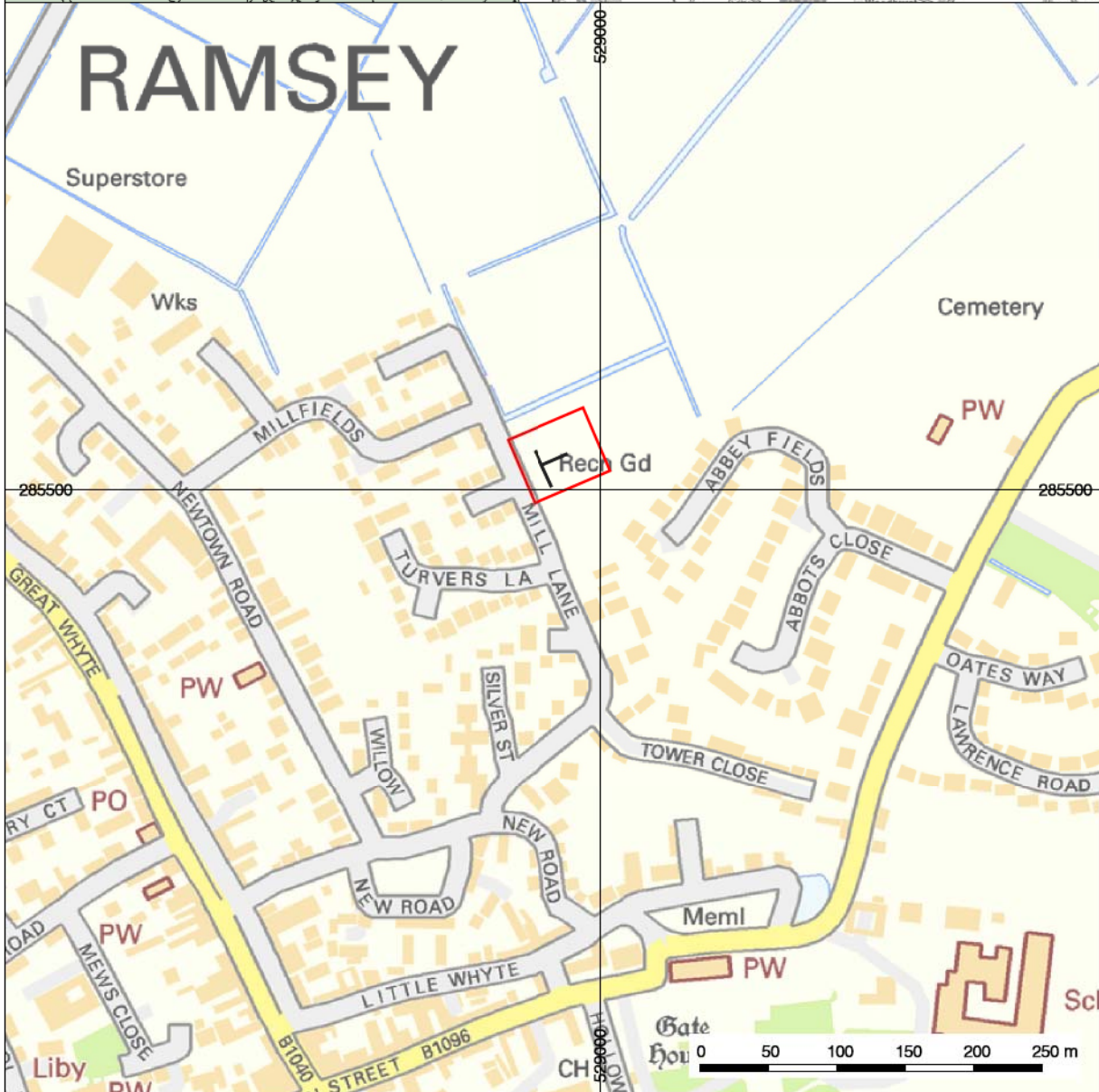
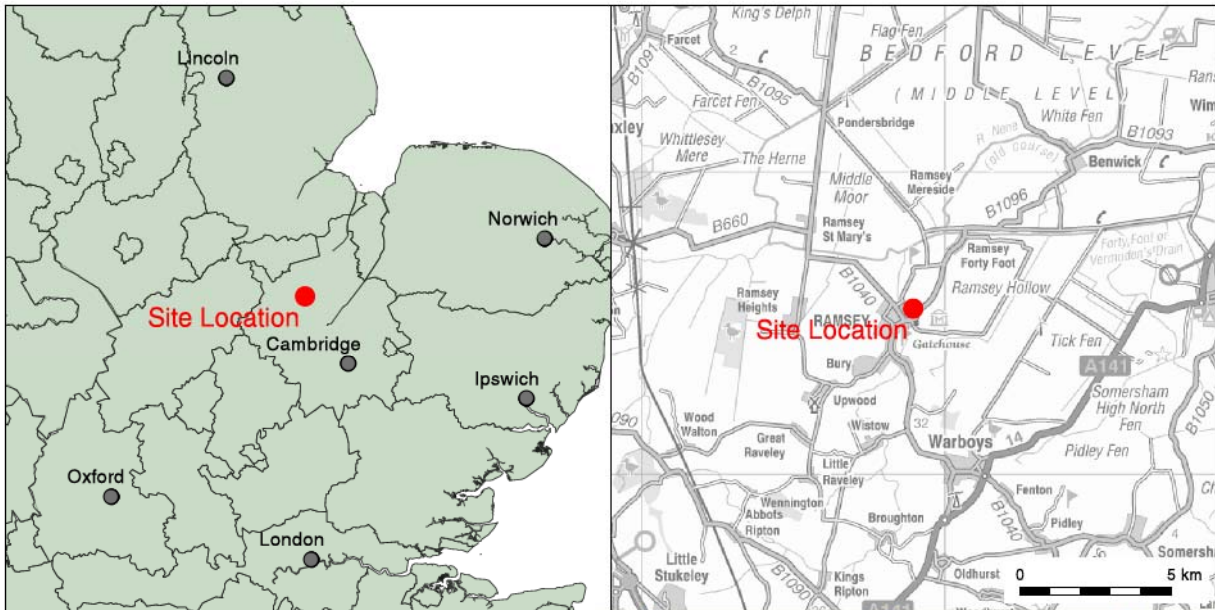
Physical Archive	Digital Archive	Paper Archive
CCC County Store	Bar Hill	CCC County Store
RASMIF12	RASMIF12	RASMIF12

Archive Contents/Media

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Glass	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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<input type="checkbox"/> Virtual Reality	<input type="checkbox"/> Misc.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Research/Notes
	<input type="checkbox"/> Photos
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Plans
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Report
	<input type="checkbox"/> Sections
	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey

Notes:



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Figure 1: Site location

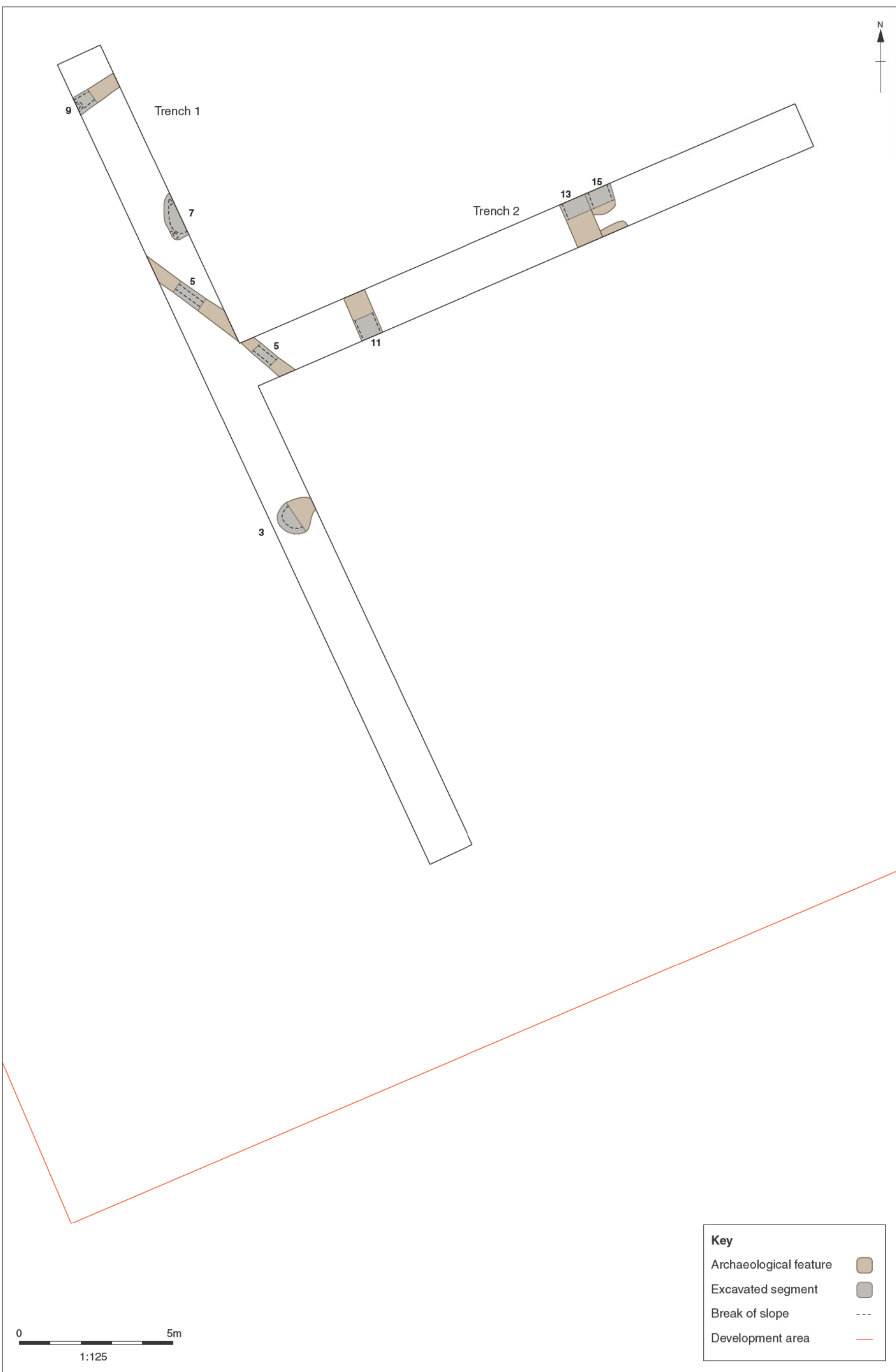


Figure 2: Trench plan



Plate 1: Trench 2, looking south-west



Plate 2: Marling pits 13 and 15, looking north-west



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