Gill Mill, Ducklington, Archaeological Evaluation,
Area SE of Plant
Archaeological Field Evaluation III

Introduction

A field evaluation was carried out, by the Oxford Archaeological Unit, to the SE of the present Plant at Bletchingdon Pit on behalf of J Smith and Sons (Bletchingdon) Ltd. The area of Gill Mill has had many archaeological sites revealed previously. One ditch and several old stream courses were located in this evaluation. There were many tree throw pits with one of these containing early Neolithic pottery and a flint flake.

Evaluation strategy

The evaluation strategy was based on a 1.2% sample of the area (3.7 ha). Ten 30 m long and 1.55 m wide trenches were dug by a 360° mechanical excavator. The excavated soils were monitored for finds. The subsoil revealed by the excavator was cleaned in order to clarify the features, which were all planned. The features were excavated by hand in order to identify and date them. The excavated sections were drawn except in the case of tree throw pits.

Results

Soils

The soils were all clay alluvium. The modern ploughsoil is ploughed clay which overlies buff alluvium overlying grey alluvium which rests on the gravel and fills tree throw pits.

Archaeology

The ten trenches revealed a consistent sequence of layers. There were tree throw pits seen in all of the trenches. Trenches one to four revealed shallow deposits of either grey or buff alluvium between 0.44 and 0.66 m deep. Trench 5 was a similar depth at the NW end but at the SE end was a shallow palaeochannel which was cut by a more recent palaeochannel. A squared wooden stake was found next to this channel but as the later channel had been partially backfilled recently with gravel, the stake could have been pushed into the lower clay recently as a fence line next to the old stream course. Trenches 6, 7, 9 and 10 all showed a gently sloping profile towards the Windrush with up two layers of alluvium together up to 0.89 m deep. There was a small N-S palaeochannel in trench 9. Trench 8 showed an unalluviated gravel island with palaeochannels on either side. Red soil on top of the island could have been a remnant of the old topsoil. It had been partly disturbed by ploughing. The palaeochannel to the N of the island showed the same profile as that in trench 5 and had similarly been partially backfilled with gravel. The fill of the other palaeochannel to the S was overlaid by the red soil on the island.

The ditch in trench 3 was aligned ENE-WSW. The N side of the ditch was 35° and the S side steeper at 80°. It was filled with stiff grey clay similar to the lower layer of alluvium seen in other trenches. The ditch was overlain by the buff alluvium. It contained no finds or molluscan evidence.

Finds

One flint flake and two large (70+ mm) pieces of early Neolithic pottery were found together in a tree throw pit in trench 10. One of the pieces of pottery was a distinctive rim form. There was a deposit of fired clay in an adjacent tree throw pit. Another piece of fired clay was recovered from trench 3. There was a wooden stake found next to the palaeochannel in trench 5.

Environmental

Samples were taken from the palaeochannel in trench 5 and the older of the palaeochannels in trench 8. The wooden stake was assigned a sample number. These samples have not been retained.

Overall Interpretation

The sample showed the build up of alluvium over the gravel. the number of tree throw pits (30) sealed under the alluvium may indicate prehistoric land clearance. The clearance may be as early as the neolithic if the pottery and fired clay indicate contemporary events. The ditch was not dated but may be associated with the archaeology nearby as it was sealed beneath the alluvium and is therefore pre Roman or Roman.

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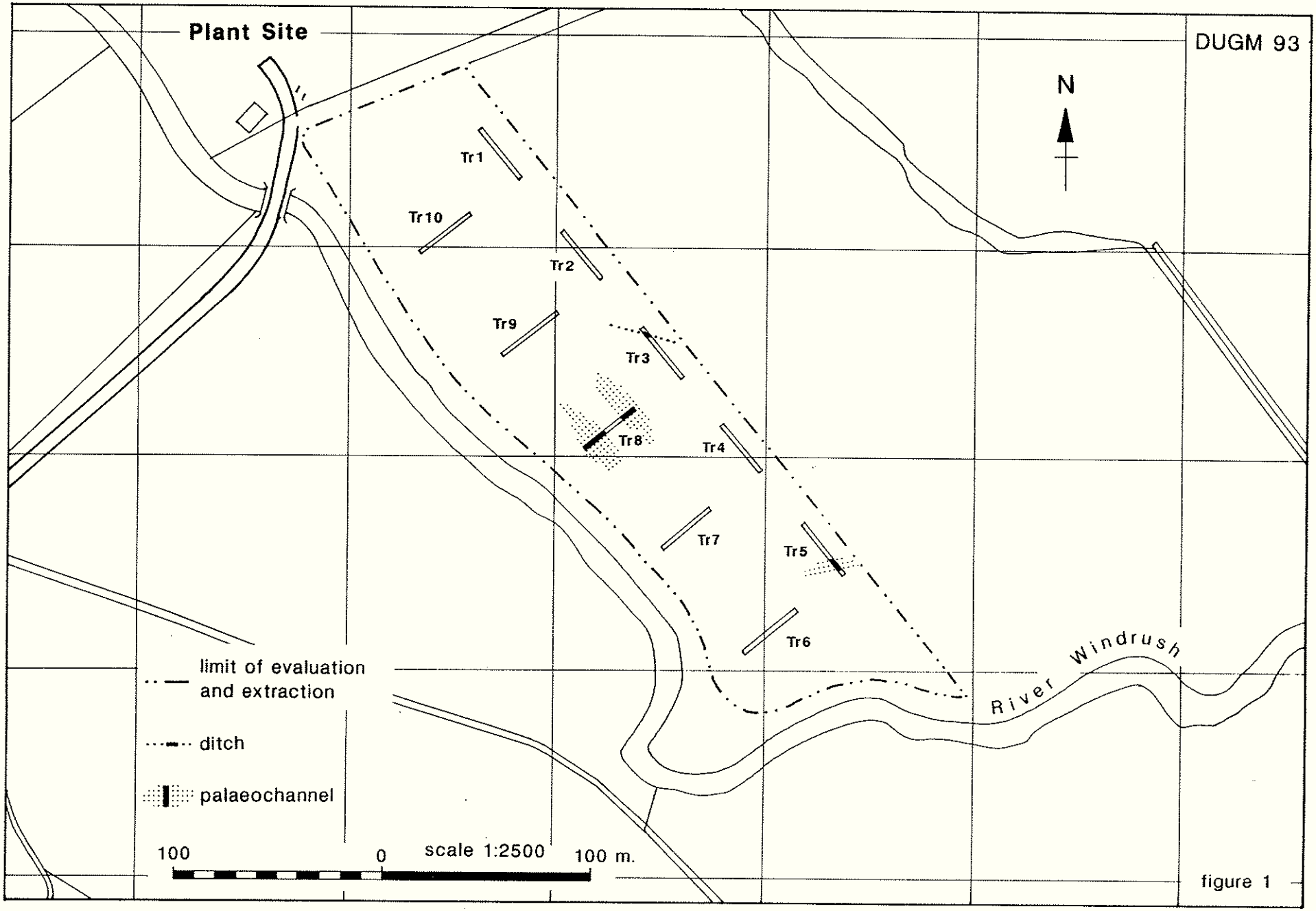
Plant Site
DUGM 93
N
Tr1
Tr10
Tr2
Tr9
Tr3
Tr8
Tr4
Tr7
Tr5
Tr6
River Windrush
limit of evaluation and extraction
ditch
palaeochannel
100
0
scale 1:2500
100 m.

figure 1