

Cross Ridge Dyke
Buxbury Hill
Fovant
Wiltshire



Archaeological
Evaluation Report



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Cross Ridge Dyke, Buxbury Hill, Fovant, Wiltshire

NGR: ST 984 266

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

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Front cover: Standing portion of Cross Ridge Dyke, west of evaluation.

SUMMARY

On the 26th of January 2009, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation on land adjacent to the Scheduled Monument (SM no.830) known as “Cross Ridge Dyke” (NGR: ST 984 266) on behalf of of Scottish and Southern Energy Power Distribution (SSEPD). The evaluation revealed the continuation of the ditch and the probable eroded bases of its associated banks in an area previously thought to be undisturbed. No dating evidence for its possible construction or backfilling was recovered.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 On the 26th January 2009 OA carried out a field evaluation across a Scheduled Monument (SM 830) known as “Cross Ridge Dyke” on Buxbury Hill near the village of Fovant, Wiltshire (NGR: ST 984 266) on behalf of Scottish and Southern Energy Power Distribution (SSEPD). This is in respect of the proposed burial of a new High Voltage Underground cable between Hommington and Teffont, Wiltshire.

1.1.2 Discussions between SSEPD and Wiltshire County Council had resulted in a scheme to excavate and record a single trench across a hiatus in the monument, outside the scheduled boundary, and to carry out watching brief during open cut trenching to the immediate north and south of the trench. SSEPD commissioned Oxford Archaeology to undertake the archaeological requirements as per discussions with Helena Cave-Penney at Wiltshire County Council, and English Heritage where appropriate.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 Buxbury Hill is located approximately 13 km west of the city of Salisbury (Fig. 1). Cross Ridge Dyke is situated on open pasture on the edge of a bluff over 90 m high overlying the village of Fovant. The Dyke runs roughly east-west at right angles to the edge of the bluff, which slopes gently down towards the edge of the escarpment before steadily increasing in pitch. The underlying geology is Upper Chalk (Geological Survey of Great Britain, sheet no 298).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 Cross Ridge Dyke is part of a Scheduled Monument (SM 830) which is comprised of approximately 160 m of segmented double bank and ditch forming a rough semicircle enclosing the neck of the promontory between Sutton Down and Swallowcliffe Down. A long barrow is located 270 m to the south-west and a tumulus 350 m to the north-east of the proposed excavation. Previous works by P.S. Fowler have recovered fragments of both Romano-British and Iron Age pottery in the ditch silts elsewhere on the monument. It has been suggested that due to its double banks enclosing a single ditch it represents a territorial boundary rather than being part of a hillfort's defences.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

- 2.1.1 To establish the presence or absence, extent, nature and date of any archaeological remains within the proposed development area.
- 2.1.2 Where remains are of sufficient importance, to liaise with the planning archaeologist to formulate a strategy designed to determine the best method for mitigation.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the investigation.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork

- 3.1.1 The evaluation consisted of one trench measuring 20 m long by 1.5 m wide (Fig. 2) located 8 m east of the visible end of the ditch and banks forming Cross Ridge Dyke. After excavating the evaluation trench, additional trenching measuring 15 m long and 0.6 m wide was excavated down to natural at each end of the trench along the route of the proposed cable trench to establish the extent of any potential archaeology prior to cable burial.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

- 3.2.1 The overburden was removed under close archaeological supervision using a nine tonne mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.5 m-wide toothless ditching bucket. The trench was then cleaned by hand. A slot was excavated across the revealed feature in order to determine its extent and nature, and to retrieve dating evidence. A section of the feature and sample sections of the trench edges were drawn at a scale of 1:20. A plan of the trench after excavation was drawn at a scale of 1:50. All the features and sections were photographed using digital photography, colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OA Fieldwork Manual* (OAU, 1992).

3.3 Finds

- 3.3.1 The base of the trench, all the excavated material and the sections were closely examined in order to recover dating evidence. No finds were recovered during the course of the excavation.

3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

- 3.4.1 The depth and instability of the section sides made collection of samples from the ditch impractical and unsafe, while the machine excavated material was considered to be too contaminated to be usable.

3.5 Presentation of results

3.5.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below, starting with the stratigraphic account followed by an overall discussion and interpretation.

4 RESULTS: GENERAL

4.1 Soils and ground conditions

4.1.1 The site was located on a slight eastern slope, with no evidence of intrusion by modern features such as services or ploughing. The boundaries of the layers and the edges of the cut feature were well defined. Soil conditions were moist with no ground water encountered.

4.2 Distribution of archaeological deposits

4.2.1 With the exception of the ditch the stratigraphy was constant throughout the length of the trench with no concentrations of archaeological deposits or features encountered.

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Description of deposits

5.1.1 The underlying natural, chalk and flint (16) was encountered at a depth of between 0.4 m and 0.55 m below the current ground level. Overlying this at the southern end of the evaluation trench was a 7.5 m wide band of dark yellow-brown clay silt containing numerous small to medium angular chalk fragments (15) (Fig. 3, Section 10). This deposit ran the full width of the trench and measured 0.2 m deep at its centre, tapering off to the north and south.

5.1.2 At the northern end of the evaluation trench a similar band of material (17), 8.5 m wide was observed running east-west across the full width of the trench.

5.1.3 Cutting the northern edge of 15 and the southern edge of 17 was a 3.8 m wide by 1.5 m deep east-west running ditch (14). This had very steeply sloping sides down to a level base. The base of this feature was filled with a 0.55 m deep deposit of pale yellow-brown clay silt containing a large quantity of small to medium sub-angular blocky chalk (13). Overlying this was a 0.12 m deep layer of yellow-brown clay silt with chalk flecking (12). Filling the remainder of the ditch was a very clean deposit of light yellow-brown clay silt (11), measuring up to 0.9 m in depth.

5.1.4 Sealing fill 11, layers 15 and 17 and the natural chalk elsewhere was a thin (0.04 m deep) layer of dark brown clay silt containing chalk flecking and small sub-angular fragments of chalk (18).

5.1.5 Overlying layer 18 and running the length of the trench was a layer of dark brown clay silty loam (10) measuring 0.25 m in depth.

6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 Reliability of field investigation

6.1.1 The trench was centred on a projected continuation of the alignment of the feature known as “Cross Ridge Dyke”. Closer examination of the ground after the machine had flattened the vegetation showed that a slight depression probably marking the route of the ditch could be traced between the visible terminus of the ditch and banks and the feature exposed in the trench, giving a high confidence that the ditch excavated is a continuation of the ditch visible west of the evaluation trench.

6.2 Overall interpretation

6.2.1 The evaluation showed that the ditch associated with the Scheduled Monument continues through the area selected for the cable trench. The primary fill 13 in the base of the ditch is probable erosion material, potentially from banks either side of the ditch similar to those observed to the west of the trench. Similarly fill 12 is also a silting deposit, probably consisting of a mixture of topsoil and frost shattered chalk deposited when the ditch was still open.

6.2.2 Fill 11 is an anomaly. Its composition is alien to the immediately surrounding geology suggesting that the material was probably imported. The absence of visible tip lines and inclusions would also suggest that the material was deposited within a relatively short space of time, preventing material from being washed in during its deposition.

6.2.3 Layers 15 and 17 appear to be the possible bases of banks similar to those observed to the west. Their composition (fragmented chalk with some silt infill) would be identical to the material excavated from the ditch. While the banks to the west appear to have survived to a height of over 0.6 m these spreads (15 and 17) have a maximum height of 0.25 m. There is a possibility that this discrepancy in heights may be due to slumping of the banked deposits, although it is considered more likely that this is due to deliberate levelling of the banks.

6.2.4 Measurement of the visible banks and ditch to the west, gave a width of the south bank of 6.6 m, and that of the north bank 7.7 m wide, with the ditch separating the two measuring 3.9 m wide. The features observed within the section of the evaluation trench gave a width of layer 15 as 7.5 m wide, that of layer 17, north of the ditch, as 8.5 m wide and the ditch as 3.8 m wide. This closely corresponds with the measurements of the visible monument suggesting that the ditch and banks extended into the area of the evaluation trench.

6.2.5 Calculation of the material excavated from the ditch compared with the spread of layers 15 and 17 and the material washed into the ditch (fill 13) accounts for over 80% of the spoil. Allowing for material washed down the slope this suggests that the profile of the ditch and banks was originally similar to that visible to the west. Fill 11

may have been deliberately brought in, and the banks further flattened out, possibly to provide easy access over the ditch.

- 6.2.6 Layer 18 is the probable result of weathering of the underlying chalk and washed down topsoil, while layer 10 is an accumulated layer of plant debris and humus forming the present day topsoil.
- 6.2.7 The possibility that the ditch may have been infilled in recent times to facilitate vehicular access cannot be overlooked and a study of aerial photographs may provide a date for this, or possibly show that this section of the ditch was already backfilled prior to current intensive agricultural use of the downs to the south.

APPENDICES**APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY**

| <i>Cxt</i> | <i>Type</i> | <i>Depth</i> | <i>Width</i> | <i>Comment</i> | <i> Finds</i> | <i>Date</i> |
|------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|--|---------------|-------------|
| 10 | Layer | 0.25 m | - | Present day topsoil and turf | - | - |
| 11 | Fill | 0.9 m | 3.6 m | Upper fill of Ditch 14, probable deliberate backfill | - | - |
| 12 | Fill | 0.12 m | 1.75 m | Silting deposit. Composed of weathered material | - | - |
| 13 | Fill | 0.55 m | 1.5 m | Slumping deposit. Composed of material from banks running in | - | - |
| 14 | Cut | 1.6 m | 3.8 m | Ditch cut, continuation of ditch visible to west | - | - |
| 15 | Layer | 0.25 m | 7.5 m | Slump of probable bank material south of ditch 14 | - | - |
| 16 | Layer | 0.25 m | 8.5 m | Slump of probable bank material north of ditch 14 | - | - |
| 17 | Layer | > 1.6 m | - | Natural chalk | - | - |
| 18 | Layer | 0.04 m | - | Bioturbation layer | - | - |

APPENDIX 2 REFERENCES

IFA, 2001 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations*

Fowler, P S *Wiltshire Archaeology Magazine Volume. 60*

OA, 2009 *Archaeological Investigation During Power line Burial Buxbury Hill, Wiltshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation and Watching Brief*

OAU, 1992 *Field Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson)

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Cross Ridge Dyke, Buxbury Hill, Fovant, Wiltshire

Site code: FOVHOT 09

Grid reference: NGR: ST 984 266

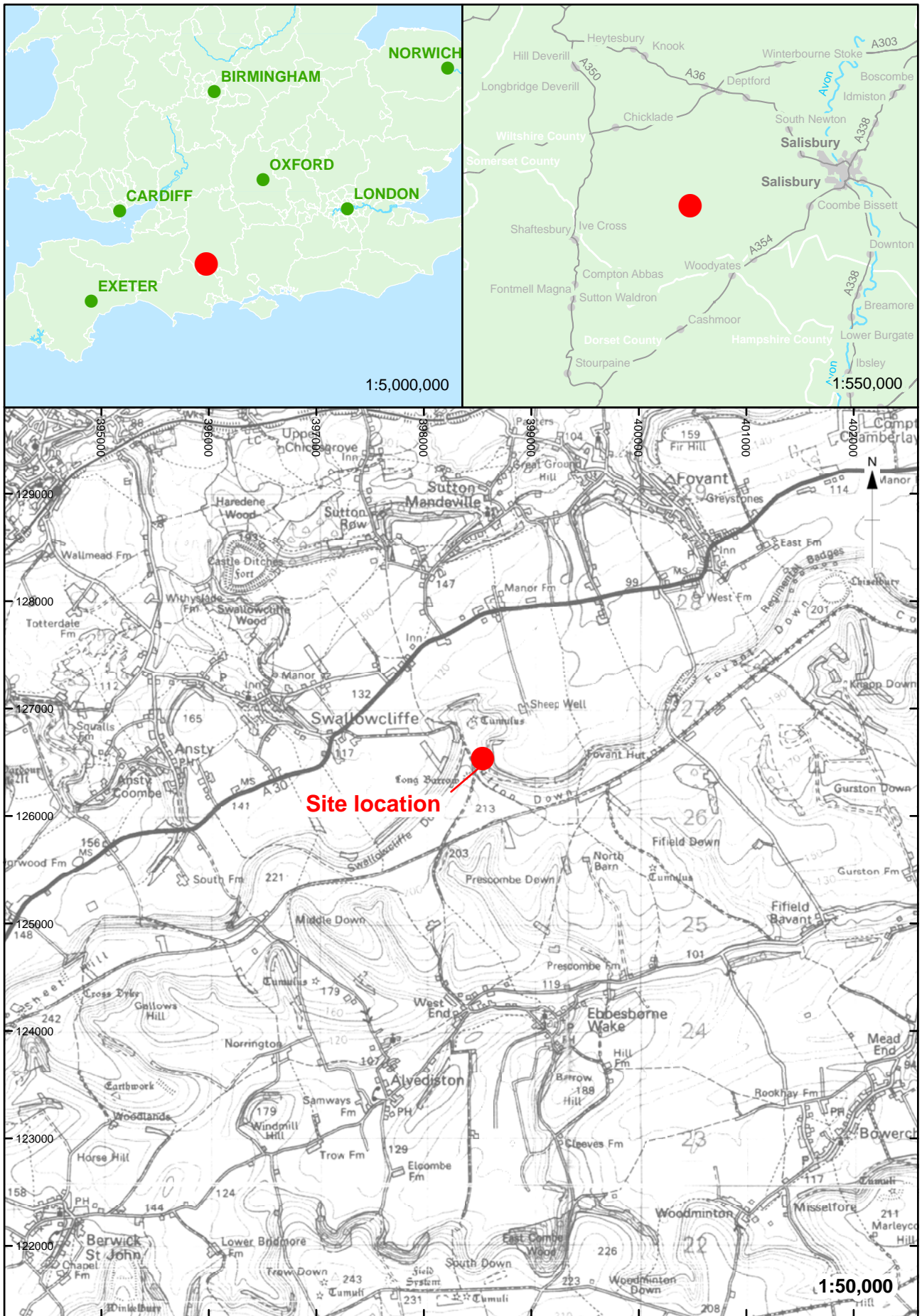
Type of evaluation: One machine dug trench

Date and duration of project: 1 day, 26th January 2009

Area of site: 0.2 hectares

Summary of results: Continuation of a known segmented double bank and ditch monument.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum Service in due course.



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Figure 1: Site location

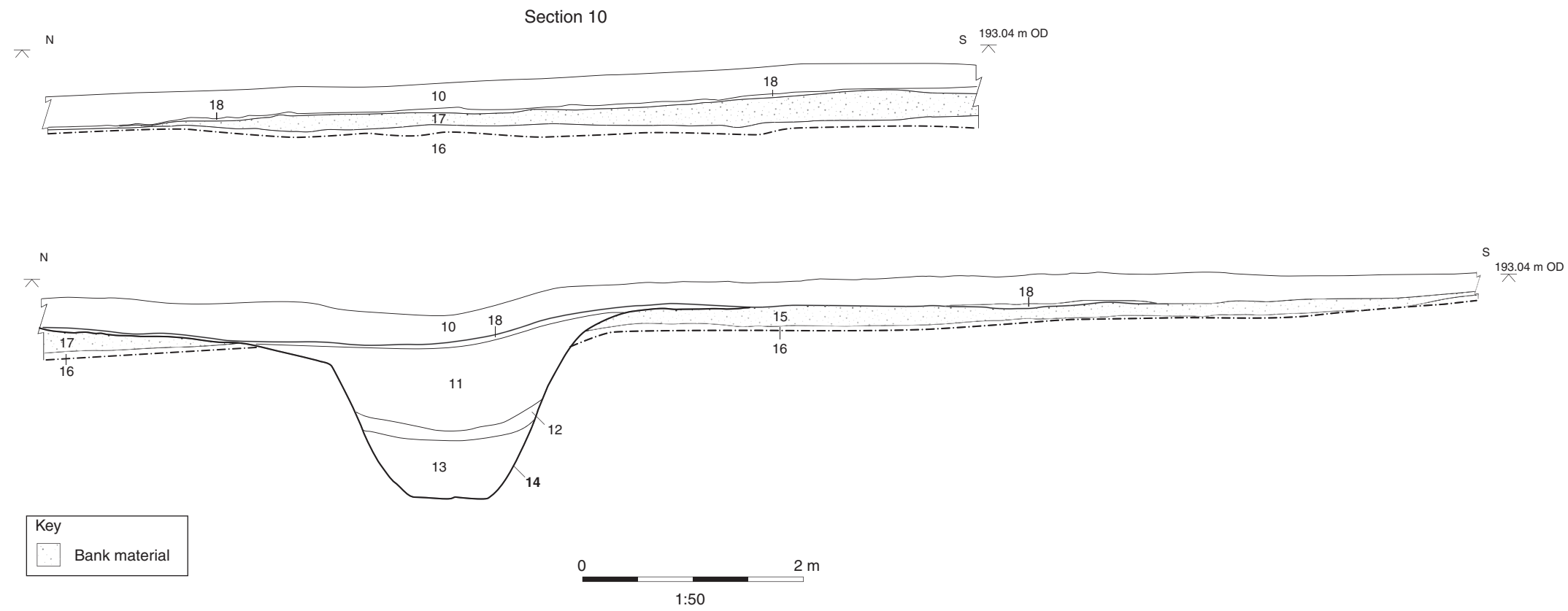
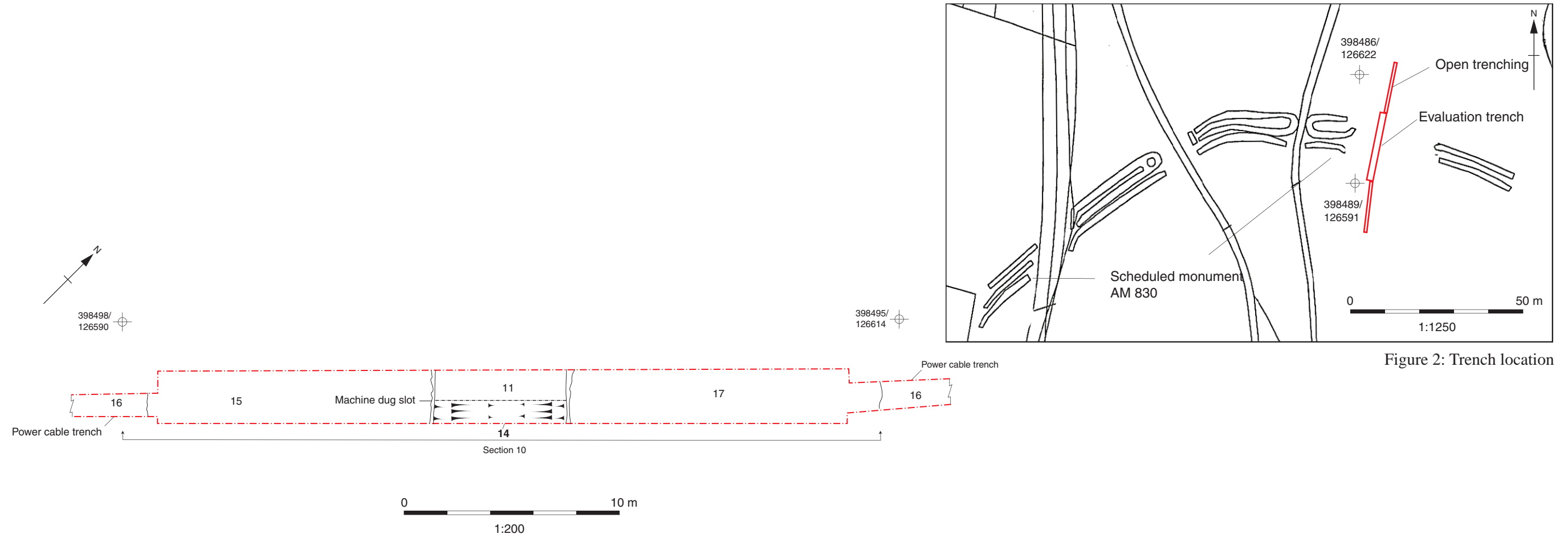


Figure 3: Trench plan and section



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