

Bucklebury Flood Alleviation Scheme



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



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Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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Summary

In October and November 2010, Oxford Archaeology South undertook a watching brief during the construction of new flood defences at Bucklebury, West Berkshire, on behalf of the Environment Agency.

Evidence of medieval ridge and furrow around the village core was recorded, but no other significant archaeological features or deposits were revealed.

A fragment of Roman roof tile and a coin of 4th century date were recovered from topsoil at the west end of the scheme.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 During October and November, 2010, Oxford Archaeology South (OAS) undertook a watching brief, on behalf of the Environment Agency, during the construction of new flood defences at Bucklebury, West Berkshire.
- 1.1.2 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the works (Oxford Archaeology 2010) was produced and was approved by the West Berkshire Archaeological Officer.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site of the proposed works lies on and around the fringes of the village of Bucklebury (Figure 1).
- 1.2.2 The geology of the area is First and Second River Terrace Deposits underlain by the Upper Chalk Formation. Small areas of alluvium are present near the River Pang in the vicinity of Stanford Dingley. The Lambeth group overlain by London Clay is present above the Upper Chalk Formation on the higher ground to the north and south of the village (BGS 2000).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background to the site has been described in some detail in the Bucklebury Flood Alleviation Scheme Environmental Report (Environment Agency 2010), and is briefly summarised here.
- 1.3.2 The site of the proposed works falls within an area of high archaeological significance, on the fringes of a village of pre-Norman conquest date with an unusual arrangement of settlement, church and surrounding fields.
- 1.3.3 The village contains one Grade 1 listed building (St Mary's Church), The Old Vicarage (Grade 2*) and eleven Grade 2 listed buildings.
- 1.3.4 There is evidence of Roman occupation, with scatters of building material found in ploughsoil to the south-west of the village, possibly derived from a villa.
- 1.3.5 A Bronze Age sword was discovered in 2007.

1.4 Potential

- 1.4.1 Given the nature of the works (see 3.1 below) there was felt to be a high potential for the scheme to have an impact on archaeological deposits.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The aims of the watching brief, as set out in the WSI, were:
 - (i) To determine the presence or absence of any archaeological remains which may survive. Should remains be found to ensure their preservation by record to the highest possible standard.
 - (ii) To determine or confirm the approximate extent of any surviving remains



- (iii) To determine the date range of any surviving remains by artefactual or other means.
- (iv) To determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains.
- (v) To determine the degree of complexity of any surviving horizontal or vertical stratigraphy.
- (vi) To assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape.
- (vii) To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence, and the forms in which such evidence may survive.
- (viii) To determine the implications of any remains with reference to economy, status, utility and social activity.
- (ix) To determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of the artefactual evidence present.

3 PROJECT SPECIFIC EXCAVATION AND RECORDING METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The watching brief was targeted to cover the supervision of excavations in the following areas:

- Site compound – some topsoil strip required;
- Upstream embankments – topsoil strip and key trench excavations for root barriers;
- The in-channel control structure;
- Raising of the right bank – topsoil strip prior to raising;
- Bypass channel excavation;
- Upstream of the mill – topsoil strip;
- Downstream embankment – topsoil strip and key trench;
- Access track excavation.

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 The the area for the new channel and protective bund was fenced off and cleared of vegetation. The topsoil was removed from the line of the new channel and the protective bunds along its sides. The channel was excavated and profiled using a mechanical excavator and the material from the excavation was used to build the bunds. Stone-filled wire gabions were used as reinforcement were the channel joined the course of the River Pang.

3.2.2 A local historian and archaeologist scanned the exposed surfaces and excavated spoil with a metal detector during the course of the works. The metal detector survey was carried out with the approval of the client, landowner and county archaeological officer but did not form part of the works carried out by OAS. However, all metal finds recovered during the survey were rapidly recorded by OAS before being returned to the finder.



- 3.2.3 Following observation of the groundworks for the upstream embankments and the bypass channel, it was agreed with the County Archaeological Officer and the client that further watching brief was not required.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Description of deposits

- 4.1.1 The area of the works were recorded by field numbers from 1 to 5 (see Fig. 2), numbered from west to east.

Field 1

- 4.1.2 This field lies along the north side of Manston Road, west of the village playing field. The very dark grey brown silty sand loam plough soil, 0.30m thick, was removed to expose the subsoil, on which a bund was to be built. A fragment of Roman roof tile was recovered from the plough soil at the west end of the works. No archaeological features were present within the stripped area.

Field 2

- 4.1.3 This field forms the village playing field, lying between Manston Road and the river Pang. The topsoil, 0.10 to 0.20m thick, was removed onto the subsoil and natural river gravels, on which a bund was to be built. A number of metal finds were recovered from the topsoil, including a Roman coin of 4th century date. No archaeological features were present within the stripped area.
- 4.1.4 Earthworks of medieval ridge and furrow were observed within the adjacent field, running north to south.

Field 3

- 4.1.5 This field lies along the north side of the river Pang. The topsoil, a dark grey brown silty sand loam, 0.15m thick, overlay river alluvium and bands of natural gravel. No evidence of ridge and furrow or archaeological features was present. A number of metal finds were recovered from the topsoil.

Field 4

- 4.1.6 There is a small paddock between Field 3 and the Bucklebury to Brook Lane road. The topsoil, a dark grey brown silty sand loam, 0.15m thick, overlay a reddish brown silty clay subsoil. Adjacent to the road, an area of made ground was recorded (Fig. 2), associated with the construction of a stable block. The area was raised by approximately 1m and the made ground deposits overlay the former topsoil. No archaeological features were present within the stripped area.
- 4.1.7 Earthworks of medieval ridge and furrow was observed in the adjacent field, running north to south downslope to the river.

Field 5

- 4.1.8 This field lies north of the river Pang and east of the Bucklebury to Brook Lane road. The topsoil was a dark grey brown silty sand loam, 0.1m thick, overlying a light reddish brown silty sand subsoil, 0.2m thick. This in turn sealed alluvial deposits and natural gravels. Remnants of ridge and furrow were noted in the route of the bypass channel



and these were cut by two post-medieval quarry pits. The eastern-most pit was cut by a modern linear feature (see Fig. 3). No other archaeological features were present.

- 4.1.9 Earthworks of medieval ridge and furrow were noted in the southern half of the field, running north to south downslope to the river.

4.2 Finds

- 4.2.1 During the course of the watching brief, a number of metal finds were recovered by a local historian and archaeologist using a metal detector from the playing field (Field 2) and the field to the north of the river Pang on the west side of the road (Field 4). These are listed below (described by Leigh Allen) but do not form part of the site archive:

Description	Date
2 x pieces melted lead waste	undated
2 x pieces sheet lead waste	undated
1 x piece rolled lead sheet formed into a hollow cone. Possibly used as a weight.	undated
1 x plain flat circular button, tinned copper alloy. Wire loop missing	19th or early 20th century
Roman coin	Early to mid 4 th century
Rumbler bell	Post-medieval 16th-17th century
Possible farthing, illegible. Very worn	Possibly 18th century
William III farthing, very worn (1694-1702).	Late 17 th to early 18 th
George I halfpenny 1724	18th century
Copper alloy door knob, probably for furniture	19th century
Copper alloy stud or rivets, possibly from harness.	Post medieval
Cast decorative fitting, gilt, for furniture	19th century
1 x plain flat circular button, tinned copper alloy, broken, with wire loop.	19th or early 20th century
1 x plain flat circular button, tinned copper alloy, incomplete. Lacks wire loop	19th century
1 x hollow 2 piece button. Plain with wire loop	19th century
1 x possible button, poorly preserved	undated
Press stud, stamped 'MADE [IN] FRANCE'	Late 19th or early 20th century
1 x copper alloy object, spherical oval opening. Has a possible casting scar on the opposite side from the opening. Possibly part of a decorative button.	undated
Possible William III farthing, very worn	Late 17 th to early 18 th
1 x fragment of copper alloy buckle frame	undated
2 x small cast lead bullets possibly for a rifled pistol.	Late 19 th century
1 x percussion cap for pistol or rifle.	Mid 19 th century
1 x pistol ball	17th – 19th century
3 x pieces of lead waste or scrap	undated
3 x pieces of copper alloy waste or scrap	undated



Description	Date
1 x ring pull, aluminium	Modern
1 x aluminium sheet fragment, uncertain purpose.	Modern
1 x fragment of thin aluminium sheet.	Modern
1 x aluminium bottle cap, crushed.	Modern

4.2.2 In addition, a fragment of Roman roof tile was recovered from the plough soil in Field 1. This may have been washed downslope from the probable site of a Roman building on hilltop to the south of area of the watching brief.

4.3 Environmental remains

4.3.1 No deposits with the potential to contain palaeo-environmental remains were revealed and no samples were taken during the watching brief.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1.1 Earthworks of medieval ridge and furrow was observed in Fields 2, 4 and 5, adjacent to the scheme, relating to farming around the core of the village. Two post-medieval quarry pits and a modern liner feature were also recorded in field 5. No other significant archaeological deposits or features were revealed within the line of the new flood relief channel and bunds.

5.1.2 Evidence of Roman occupation in the area was recovered in the form of a fragment of Roman roof tile (from Field 1) and a coin of 4th century date (from Field 2). The presence of such material is unsurprising given the likely location of Roman-period occupation to the south-west.



6 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

British Geological Survey 2000, Geological Map Sheet 268

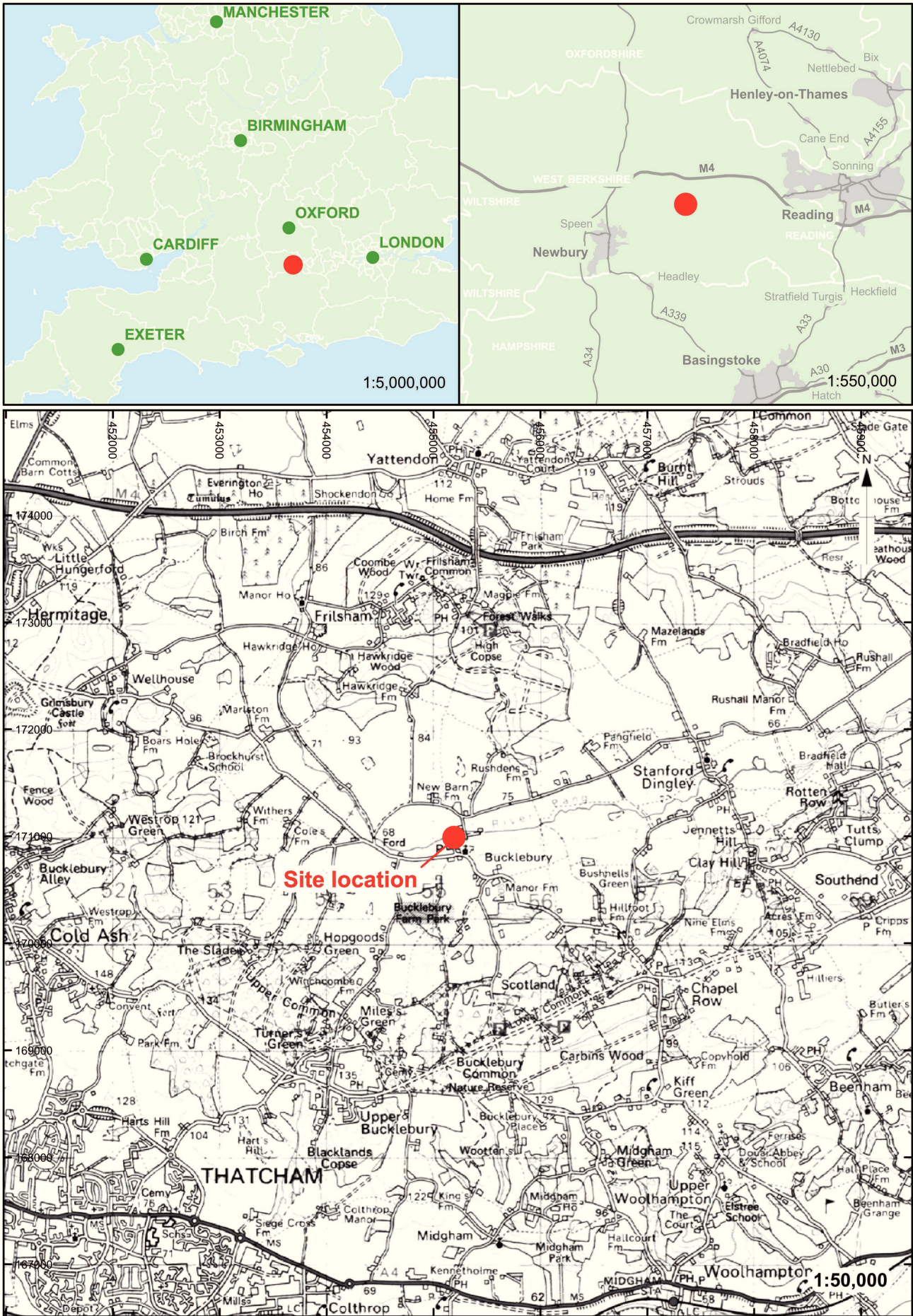
Environment Agency 2010, Bucklebury Flood Alleviation Scheme Environmental Report. Environment Agency.

Oxford Archaeology 2010, Bucklebury Flood Alleviation Scheme Watching Brief: Written Scheme of Investigation



APPENDIX A. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Bucklebury Flood Alleviation Scheme
Site code:	BUFLAS 10
Grid reference:	Centred at NGR SU 551 710
Date of project:	October – November 2010
Summary of results:	<p>Oxford Archaeology South undertook a watching brief during the construction of new flood defences at Bucklebury, West Berkshire, on behalf of the Environment Agency.</p> <p>The watching brief revealed no significant archaeological features or deposits, but evidence of medieval ridge and furrow around village core was recorded.</p> <p>A fragment of Roman roof tile and a coin of 4th century date were recovered from topsoil at the west end of the scheme.</p>
Location of archive:	<p>The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the West Berkshire Heritage Service in due course, under the following accession number: NEBYM: 2010.15</p>



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Figure 1: Site location

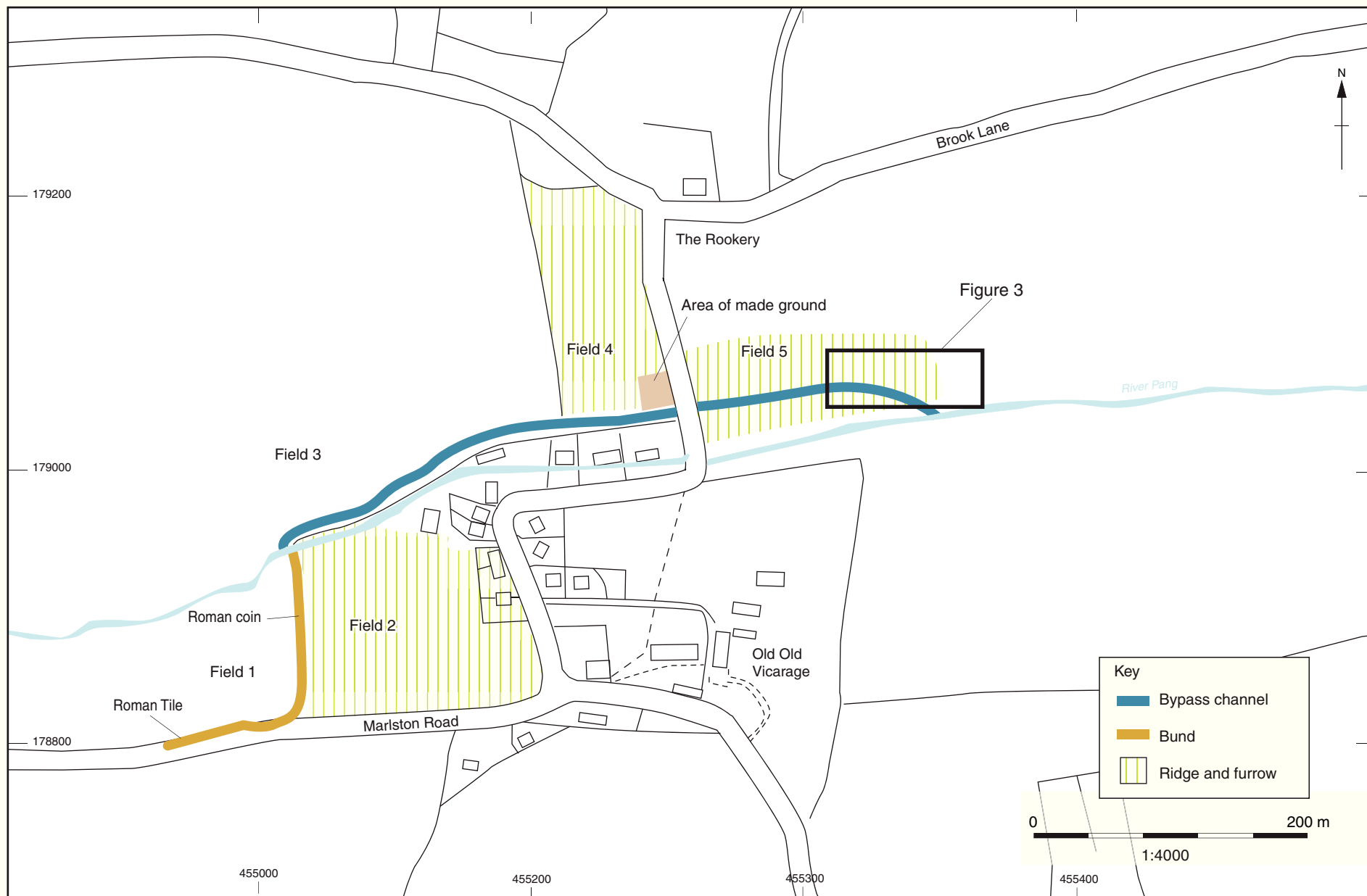


Figure 2: Site plan showing location of Roman artifacts and ridge and furrow

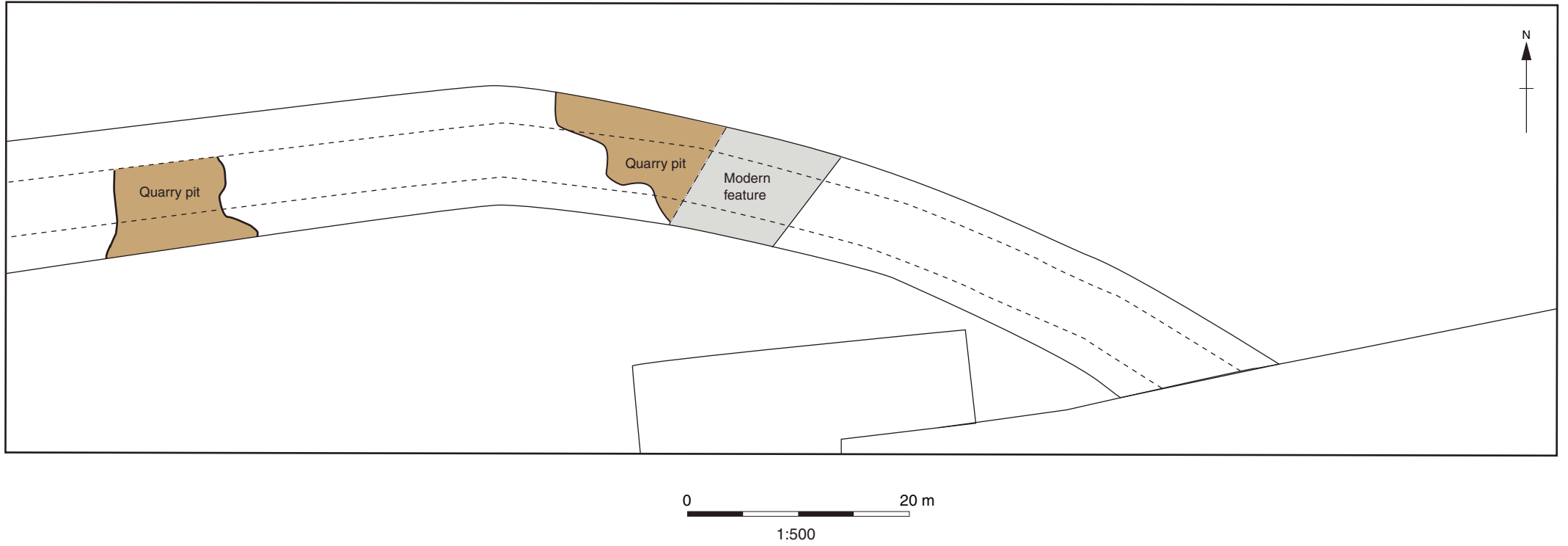


Figure 3: Detail of Quarry pits, (field 5)



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