94 Abingdon Road
Standlake
Oxfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

oxfordarchaeology

November 2006

Client: Mr Pavier

Issue N^{O}: 1
OA Job N^{O}: 3270
Planning Ref N^{O}: 05/0613/P/FP
NGR: SP 3892 0297

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Client Ref No:

Document Title: 94 Abingdon Road, Standlake, Oxfordshire

Document Type: Evaluation

Issue Number: 1

National Grid Reference: SP 3892 0297
Planning Reference: 05/0613/P/FP

OA Job Number: 3270
Site Code: STAN06
Invoice Code: STANEV
Receiving Museum: Oxfordshire County Museums Service
Museum Accession No: OXCMS:2006.77

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Document File Location	\\Server1\Smallworks\PROJECTS\Oxfordshire OX\West Oxfordshire WO\6043 94 Abingdon Road, Standlake EV	
Graphics File Location	servergo/RtoZ/STANEV/94 Abingdon Road/AH/	
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94 Abingdon Road, Standlake
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NGR: SP 3892 0297

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF PLATES

SUMMARY

In June and August 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation in the rear garden of 94 Abingdon Road, Standlake, Oxfordshire (SP 3892 0297), on behalf of Mr Pavier. The evaluation revealed part of a late Iron Age ring ditch, measuring 2.45 m in width and with a depth of 0.65 m. Pits and post-holes associated with the ring ditch were also uncovered during the evaluation as well as a post-medieval ditch.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 In April 2005 planning permission was sought from West Oxfordshire District Council to create a wildlife pond to the rear of 94 Abingdon Road, Standlake (05/0613/P/FP). Due to the presence nearby of a nationally important monument (SAM 140), an archaeological field evaluation in line with PPG16 and Policy BE17 was requested in a brief (OCC, 2006) by Hugh Coddington the Deputy County Archaeological Officer for Oxford County Council, prior to the determination of the planning application. Oxford Archaeology (OA), prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) showing how it would meet these requirements (OA, 2006). OA undertook the evaluation on the 19th and 20th of June, as well as on the 8th - 10th of August 2006.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 The development area is located to the rear of 94 Abingdon Road (A415), at Standlake, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 3892 0297), and lies at approximately 65 m OD (Fig. 1).

1.2.2 The site is located towards the south-western end of the back garden of 94 Abingdon Road, and measures approximately 50 square metres. The underlying geology is First Terrace Gravels.

1.3 Archaeological background

1.3.1 The development site lies adjacent to a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 140). This is an extensive crop mark site containing enclosures, ring ditches, hut circles and trackways. The cropmarks would seem, due to their character, to date to the Bronze and Iron Ages, but since no fieldwork has to date been undertaken there is no positive evidence to support this. Aerial photographic evidence suggests that the archaeological features extend beyond the Scheduled Area, and that later overburden effectively masks them south of the Abingdon Road. Elsewhere along the Abingdon Road there is evidence of medieval settlement along the road frontage with various domestic and light industrial activities being undertaken to the rear.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

2.1.1 To establish the presence or absence, extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of archaeological remains within the proposal area.

2.1.2 To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features.

2.1.3 To signal, before the destruction of the material in question, the discovery of a significant archaeological find, for which the resources allocated are not sufficient to support a treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard.

2.1.4 To make available the results of the investigation and to place the results of the evaluation in a wider local and regional context.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork

3.1.1 The evaluation consisted of the removal of topsoil and subsoil down to the archaeological horizon over the area of the proposed pond, approximately 50 square metres (Fig. 2, Pl. 1).

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

3.2.1 The overburden was removed under close archaeological supervision by a tracked excavator fitted with a 1.7 m wide toothless grading bucket. Excavation by machine proceeded in spits down to either undisturbed natural deposits or to the highest significant archaeological horizon, whichever was encountered first.

3.2.2 The site was cleaned by hand and the revealed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds and environmental samples. The site was planned at a scale of 1:50 and the sections of the archaeological features were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

3.3 Finds

3.3.1 Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation and bagged by context.

3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

3.4.1 Samples for palaeo-environmental investigation were taken from the majority of deposits encountered during the course of the evaluation.

3.5 Presentation of results

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

4 RESULTS: GENERAL

4.1 Soils and ground conditions

4.1.1 The development area came down onto natural gravel deposits. The soil divisions were clearly defined with little or no mixing between the contexts. The weather conditions were fair.

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Description of deposits

5.1.1 The underlying natural, a mottled white/beige and light brown sandy gravel (102), was encountered at a depth of 0.48 m below ground level. Running approximately north-south along the eastern edge of the site was a linear ditch (109), which was cut into the natural. The width and depth of the ditch varied along its length with an average of 2.5 m by 0.3 m (Fig. 3, S.100). The ditch had fairly steep sloping sides, with an uneven base, and probably represents a boundary ditch. It was filled with a light-mid brown stony silt (105), a silting deposit. Post-medieval pottery and animal bone were recovered from this fill.

5.1.2 Towards the north-eastern corner of the site a liner ditch (110) was uncovered aligned north-west / south-east, and cutting the natural (102). The ditch was 0.85 m wide and had a depth of 0.25 m (Fig. 3, S.101; Pl. 2). It had fairly steep sloping sides with an even base and was filled with mid brown clayey loam (111), caused by natural slumping. One piece of late Iron Age pottery was recovered from fill 111, along with some fragments of fired clay.

5.1.3 A circular post-hole (119), measuring approximately 0.8 m by 0.7 m with a depth of 0.5 m was cut by the eastern edge of ditch 118 (Fig. 3, S.102; Pl. 3). The post-hole had very steep sloping sides with a concave base and was filled by a light grey clayey silt (117). No finds were recovered from this fill.

5.1.4 A roughly rectangular pit (125) aligned north-east / south-west was cut by the southern terminus of ditch 118. The pit was approximately 2 m long by 1.22 m wide and had a depth of 0.44 m (Fig. 3, S.104; Pl. 5). The sides of the pit had a gradual slope, and the base was fairly flat. The pit was filled with a 0.12 m thick layer of mid brownish grey silty clay (124), which was in turn overlain by a 0.32 m thick layer of mid greyish brown clayey silt (123). The function of the pit is unknown. Fragments of fired clay and late Iron Age pottery were recovered from fill 124. No finds were recovered from fill 123.

5.1.5 Ditch 118 was a curvilinear ditch with a terminus towards the southern end of the site. The ditch was 2.45 m wide with a depth of 0.65 m, and had steep sloping sides

with a flat base (Fig. 3, S.102/3; Pls. 3 & 4). The basal fill of ditch 118 was a fairly loose light grey/beige silty gravel (120) with a maximum thickness of 0.03 m and a maximum width of 1.3 m. The thinness of this layer and the similarity with the natural suggests that this layer was formed by initial slumping when the ditch was first dug. Layer 120 was overlain by a 0.18 m thick layer of light grey clayey silt (116) with a maximum width of 1.3 m, which was also probably the result of natural slumping. A small 0.14 m thick by 0.3 m wide layer of light reddish brown sand (121) which is likely to be re-deposited natural, overlaid layer 120 at the eastern edge of the ditch.

5.1.6 Overlaying layers 116 and 121 was a 0.3 m thick layer of dark greyish black clayey silt (113) with a maximum width of 1.5 m. The presence of a large amount of pottery and animal bone within this fill suggest that this was part of a deliberate backfilling of the ditch. Layer 113 was overlain by a 0.34 m thick by 0.4 m wide layer of mid brown sandy silt (114), and a 0.3 m thick by 0.68 m wide layer of mid brown sandy silt (115). These layers were located along the eastern and western edges respectively and the absence of any finds within them suggest that they were formed by natural slumping over time. Overlying layers 114 and 115 was a 0.38 m thick by 1.42 m wide layer of greyish brown clayey silt (112), and the presence of a large amount of pottery fragments indicate that this was also part of a deliberate backfilling of the ditch.

5.1.7 The northern terminus (133) of ditch 118 was located approximately 0.8 m to the south of the southern terminus (Fig. 4). It had a width of 1.85 m and a depth of 0.5 m with steeply sloping sides. Only a small section was excavated due to its proximity to the edge of the site (Fig. 3, S.104; Pl. 6). It was filled with a dark brownish grey clayey silt (132) very similar to layer 112 located within ditch 118. One piece of Late Iron Age pottery was recovered from fill 132.

5.1.8 The relationship between ditch 110 and ditch 118 was unclear since they met at the northern edge of the site (Fig. 4), and it was impossible to determine which ditch cut the other.

5.1.9 All these features were sealed by a 0.2 m thick layer of light brown silty gravel (101) the subsoil, which was in turn overlain by a 0.28 m thick layer of dark brown loam (100) the current topsoil and turf.

5.1.10 Post-hole 134 was located at the north-eastern end of pit 125. The relationship between the post-hole and the pit is unknown since the post-hole was only seen after excavation. The post-hole measured approximately 0.45 m by 0.42 m with a depth of 0.24 m (Fig. 3, S.105). It had near vertical sides with an uneven base and was filled with a mid brown sandy silt (135). No finds were recovered from within this feature.

5.1.11 Feature 131 was cut by ditches 118 and 133 to the north and south respectively. Due to this heavy truncation it was only partially visible after the machining out of these ditches (Fig. 4, Pl. 6). The feature appeared to be rectangular in shape, measuring approximately 1.5 m by 0.3 m, with a depth of 0.4 m, and was filled with a mid

greyish brown clayey silt (130). The exact shape and function of this feature is unknown. No finds were recovered from fill 130.

5.2 Finds

General

5.2.1 Features 118, 125 and 133 (See Pottery Report within section 5, Finds) all contained fragments of Iron Age pottery, the majority of which seem to have come from jars, and was likely to be made locally.

5.2.2 A large number of fired clay fragments were recovered from within features 109, 110, 118, 125 and 133 (See Fired Clay Report within section 5, Finds). Although undiagnostic, these probably came from a non-industrial oven.

5.2.3 Post-medieval metalwork was recovered from within the fills of ditch 109 (See Metalwork Report within section 5, Finds), indicating that it is not associated with any of the other features uncovered. A lead ferrule was also recovered from within the top fill of ditch 118.

5.2.4 Fragments of animal bone were found within features 118 and 125 (See Animal Bone Report within section 5, Finds). They consisted of a normal mix of pig, sheep/goat, cattle and horse bone.

The Pottery

By Edward Biddulph (OA)

5.2.5 A total of 125 sherds of pottery was recovered from the site (Appendix 2, Table 1). The material was rapidly scanned to identify diagnostic forms and fabrics in order to date context-groups. The groups were quantified by weight and sherd count. Fabrics were assigned codes from Oxford Archaeology's standard recording system for later prehistoric and Roman pottery (Booth nd).

5.2.6 Apart from a single (and unstratified) fragment of a post-medieval ware, all the pottery belonged to the late Iron Age. The majority of it appeared to be grog-tempered (E80), though calcareous fabrics (E40/50) - shell or limestone - also made a reasonable contribution. Sand-tempered pottery (E20/E30) was present in smaller quantity. Forms could not be identified with much certainty, since rim sherds tended to be broken at the neck. However, jars (including a necked jar in context 108 and a storage jar in context 111) seemed to be predominant, and were accompanied by beakers and bowls.

5.2.7 The assemblage is typical of late Iron Age ceramic traditions in the area. An assemblage, for instance, from Old Shifford Farm, Standlake was similarly composed of jars and bowls in grog, calcareous and sand-tempered fabrics (Timby 1995). That assemblage was dated to the late 1st century BC or first half of the 1st century AD, and our material can be given the same date range. It is possible that the dating

extended beyond the Roman conquest into the later 1st century AD (the sand-tempered necked jar in particular could well be post-conquest), but the absence of exclusively Roman-period wares helps to confine the material to before that time. The pottery was probably of local origin, though some of the grog-tempered wares may have arrived from north Wiltshire as Savernake ware. With an average sherd weight of 11 g, the assemblage is reasonably well-preserved, suggesting that the focus of the late Iron Age settlement was close by.

The Fired Clay

By Cynthia Poole (OA)

5.2.8 A total of 62 fragments of fired clay weighing 300 g was recovered from the evaluation (Appendix 2, Table 2). Approximately a third (by weight) of this was recovered from sieved samples. The assemblage has been visually scanned, quantified and a summary record (Appendix 2, Table 3). Fabrics have not been examined in detail, however it has been noted that a pure clay or fine sandy clay, both without coarse grits, has been utilised in the case of most fragments.

5.2.9 The fragments are undiagnostic and this is reflected in the low mean fragment weight of 5 g. The smaller fragments were amorphous or retained only a single flat surface, and are categorised as unidentified and utilised respectively. These represent less than 10% by weight of the assemblage.

5.2.10 The remaining pieces though non-diagnostic are likely to derive from ovens or similar structures. The shaped pieces were distinguished by a smooth surface with evidence of finger grooves and depressions from moulding and smoothing the clay surface. These could derive from oven walls or oven plate. The degree of firing does not indicate high temperature or industrial activity but is likely to derive from lower temperature activities associated with cooking or baking or drying of grain.

5.2.11 The general character of the material is compatible with prehistoric, more particularly Iron Age, or Roman fired clay, but it cannot be dated with any certainty.

The Metalwork

By Ian Scott (OA)

5.2.12 This comprises one complete nail (Manning Type 1; context 104)) one fragment of mineralised nail stem, or more probably a piece of iron pan (context 105), and a rolled fragment of lead sheet (context 112). The latter is rolled in such a way as to form a crudely made ferrule.

The Animal Bone

By Lena Strid (OA)

5.2.13 A total of 34 animal bones were recovered from this site (Appendix 2, Table 4 & 5). Most bones were in a good condition, with 85.3% being grade 1 and 8.8% being grade 2 (Lyman 1994:355). Traces of burning and animal gnawing were absent.

5.2.14 The assemblage consists of domestic species. The predominance of cattle, sheep/goat and pig can be considered normal, regardless of time period.

5.2.15 Age estimation could be carried out on three bones. The sheep/goat metacarpal was unfused, indicating that the animal died when younger than 20-24 months of age. The horse scapula was fused, indicating an age-at-death of more than 10-12 months (Habermehl 1975). Dental wear analysis suggested that the sheep/goat mandible derived from an animal of 2-4 years of age (Vretemark 1997) (Appendix 2, Table 6).

5.2.16 Butchering marks were found on a sheep/goat mandible, suggesting removal of the cheek meat.

6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 Reliability of field investigation

6.1.1 The entire development area was taken down to the archaeological horizon, and all features were sampled.

6.1.2 The conditions in the field were fine and dry. There was no intrusion by modern features such as services and land drains.

6.2 Overall interpretation

6.2.1 Post-hole 119 and feature 131 are undated, although they were both cut by the Late Iron Age ditch 118. It is possible that post-hole 119 relates to a feature located within ditch 118, since it was found near the base of the ditch, although no other post-holes were uncovered.

6.2.2 Late Iron Age pottery was also recovered from within the fill of pit 125, along with fragments of fired clay and a small amount of undiagnositc animal bone. The fact that this pit is cut by ditch 118 but also contains pottery of the same date suggest that they are fairly contemporary, and that they are part of the same settlement.

6.2.3 Ditches 118 and 133, although only partially uncovered, appear to be part of the same ring ditch. Pottery recovered from these ditches was typical of late Iron Age ceramic traditions in the area, and can be dated to the late 1st century BC or first half of the 1st century AD. The pottery was probably of local origin and was reasonably well-preserved, suggesting that the focus of the late Iron Age settlement was close by.

6.2.4 The fired clay fragments found within ditches 110, 118 and 133 are likely to derive from ovens or similar structures. The degree of firing does not indicate high temperature or industrial activity but is likely to derive from lower temperature activities associated with cooking or baking or drying of grain. The fired clay could not be dated with any certainty but the general character of the material is compatible with prehistoric, more particularly Iron Age, or Roman fired clay.

6.2.5 Only a small amount of animal bone was recovered from within ditches 118 and 133, and out of the diagnostic fragments recovered there was a normal mix of pig, sheep/goat, cattle and horse for most time periods. Butchering marks were found on a sheep/goat mandible, suggesting removal of the cheek meat.

6.2.6 The presence of an extensive crop mark site containing enclosures, ring ditches, hut circles and trackways (SAM 140) directly to the south of the site, suggest that these features are part of the same site. It also lends support to the suggestion that ditches 118 and 113 are part of the same ring ditch, since similar features can be seen throughout the SAM site.

6.2.7 The north-south aligned ditch observed running along the western edge of the site was dated to the post-medieval period, and most likely relates to a field boundary and is not associated with any of the other features uncovered.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context No	*Type*	*Length (m)*	*Width (m)*	*Thick. (m)*	*Comment*	*Finds*	*Date*
100	Dep.			0.28	Topsoil		
101	Dep.			0.20	Subsoil		
102	Nat.				Natural gravel		
103	Cut				Same as 109		
104	Fill		3.20	0.25	Stony silt (same as 105)	Pot, Bone, Fe	Post. Med.
105	Fill		1.30	0.20	Stony silt (same as 104)	Pot, Bone, Fe	Post. Med.
106	Cut				Same as 133		
107	Fill				Same as 132	Pot	
108	Fill				Not recorded	Pot, Bone	
109	Cut		up to 3.20	0.45	Linear Ditch		Post. Med?
110	Cut		0.85	0.25	Ditch		
111	Fill		0.85	0.25	Clayey loam	Pot	
112	Fill		1.42	0.38	Clayey silt	Pot	
113	Fill		1.50	0.30	Clayey silt	Pot, Bone	
114	Fill		0.40	0.34	Sandy silt		
115	Fill		0.68	0.30	Sandy silt		
116	Fill		1.30	0.18	Clayey silt	Bone	
117	Fill	0.80	0.70	0.50	Clayey silt		
118	Cut		2.45	0.65	Ring enclosure ditch		
119	Cut	0.80	0.70	0.50	Circular post-hole		
120	Fill		1.30	0.03	Silty gravel		
121	Fill		0.30	0.14	Sand		
122	Void				Void		
123	Fill	2.00	1.22	0.32	Clayey silt	Pot	
124	Fill	2.00	0.70	0.12	Silty clay	Pot	
125	Cut	2.00	1.22	0.44	Rectangular pit		

126	Void				Void		
127	Void				Void		
128	Fill				Same as 112		
129	Cut				Same as 118		
130	Fill	1.50	0.30	0.40	Clayey silt		
131	Cut	1.50	0.30	0.40	Poss. rectangular pit		
132	Fill		1.85	0.50	Clayey silt	Pot	
133	Cut		1.85	0.50	Ring enclosure ditch		
134	Cut		0.42	0.24	Post-hole		
135	Fill		0.42	0.24	Sandy silt		

APPENDIX 2 FINDS TABLES

Table 1: Pottery assemblage

Context	Count	Weight (g)	Comments	Date
0	1	16	Earthenware	Post-med
104	1	3	Fabric E40/50	LIA
105	2	19	Fabric E80	LIA
107	15	90	Fabrics E80, E30, E40/50	LIA
108	9	147	High-shouldered necked jar (E30/R30), jar or beaker x 2 (E30/R30), fabric E40/50	LIA
111	1	12	Fabric E80	LIA
112	62	794	Storage jar (E80), jar or bowl (E40/50), bowl (E30)	LIA
113	23	262	Jar (E80), jar x 2 (E40/50), bowl (E30)	LIA
124	3	12	Jar or beaker (E80)	LIA
125	5	17	Fabrics E20, E80, E40/50	LIA
128	2	14	Beaker (E80), fabric E50	LIA
132	1	11	Fabric E80	LIA
TOTAL	125	1397		

Table 2: Fired clay assemblage

Type	Nos.	Wt (g)	Comments	Size
Oven?	37	278	Irregular moulded surfaces with finger grooves and finger tip depressions.	10-25 mm th
Utilised	3	8	Single flat or slightly convex surface.	<15 mm
Unidentified	22	14	Amorphous	<15 mm
Total	62	300		

Table 3: Fired Clay Assemblage

Cntxt	Sample	Nos	Wt (g)	AFW	Fabric	Condition	Form	Description	Comments	Th (mm)	Date	Impressions	Colour	Abrasion	Ctxt Interpretation	Cut	Group
105	<101>	15	70	4.67	A	Fired	Oven?	Moulded surfaces with wide finger grooves and depressions from moulding.		10-25		None	Reddish brown with cream/pale grey streaks; occasional dark gre core.	Low			
108	~	12	42	3.50	A	Fired	Oven?	Same characteristics & same material as (105) - smooth surfaces with evidence of moulding in form of finger depressions & grooves.		12+		None	Mottled cream - brown with black core	Low			
112	~	8	150	18.75	A	Fired	Oven?	Flat smooth surfaces. One piece with angular wedge shaped edge.	General character suggestive of oven plate.	25-30		None	Red, yellowish red; grey core in some pieces.	Low			
113	<104>	2	16	8.00		Fired	Oven?	Surfaces				None		Low			
113	<104>	16	6	0.38	gritty	Fired	Unid	Amorphous				None		High			
116	<108>	2	4	2.00		Fired	Unid	Amorphous				None		High			
124	<107>	4	4	1.00		Fired	Unid	Amorphous				None		High			
111	<102>	2	6	3.00		Fired	Util	Smooth slightly convex surface		10+		None		Med			
112	<103>	1	2	2.00		Fired	Util	Flat smooth surface		10+		None		Med			
		62	300	4.84													

Table 4: Bone assemblage

	Cattle	Sheep/ goat	Pig	Horse	Large mammal	Indeterminate
Skull					2	
Mandible		1	1			
Loose teeth	3	1	1			1
Scapula				1		
Metacarpal		1				
Indeterminate					1	32
TOTAL	3	3	2	1	3	23
Weight (g)	37	52	10	57	8	33

Table 5: Bone assemblage

Context	Species	Weight
104	Sheep/goat	2
	Indeterminate	0
105	Pig	10
107	Sheep/goat	36
112	Large mammal	3
113	Cattle	37
	Sheep/goat	14
	Horse	57
	Large mammal	2
	Indeterminate	29
125	Large mammal	3
128	Indeterminate	4

Table 6: Tooth wear stages of sheep/goat mandible

	P4	M1	M2	M3	MWS
Sheep /goat	g	g	g	e	34

APPENDIX 3 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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APPENDIX 4 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Client name: Mr Pavier
Site name: 94 Abingdon Road, Standlake, Oxfordshire
Site code: STAN06
Grid reference: SP 3892 0297
Type of evaluation: small area excavation
Date and duration of project: 19th - 20th June, and 8th - 10th August 2006, five days
Area of site: 50 square metres
Summary of results: Late Iron Age ring enclosure and associated Iron Age features; a post-medieval boundary ditch.
Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course under the accession number OXCMS:2006.77

servergo/RtoZ/STANEV/94 Abingdon Road/AH/17.08.06

Figure 1: Site location

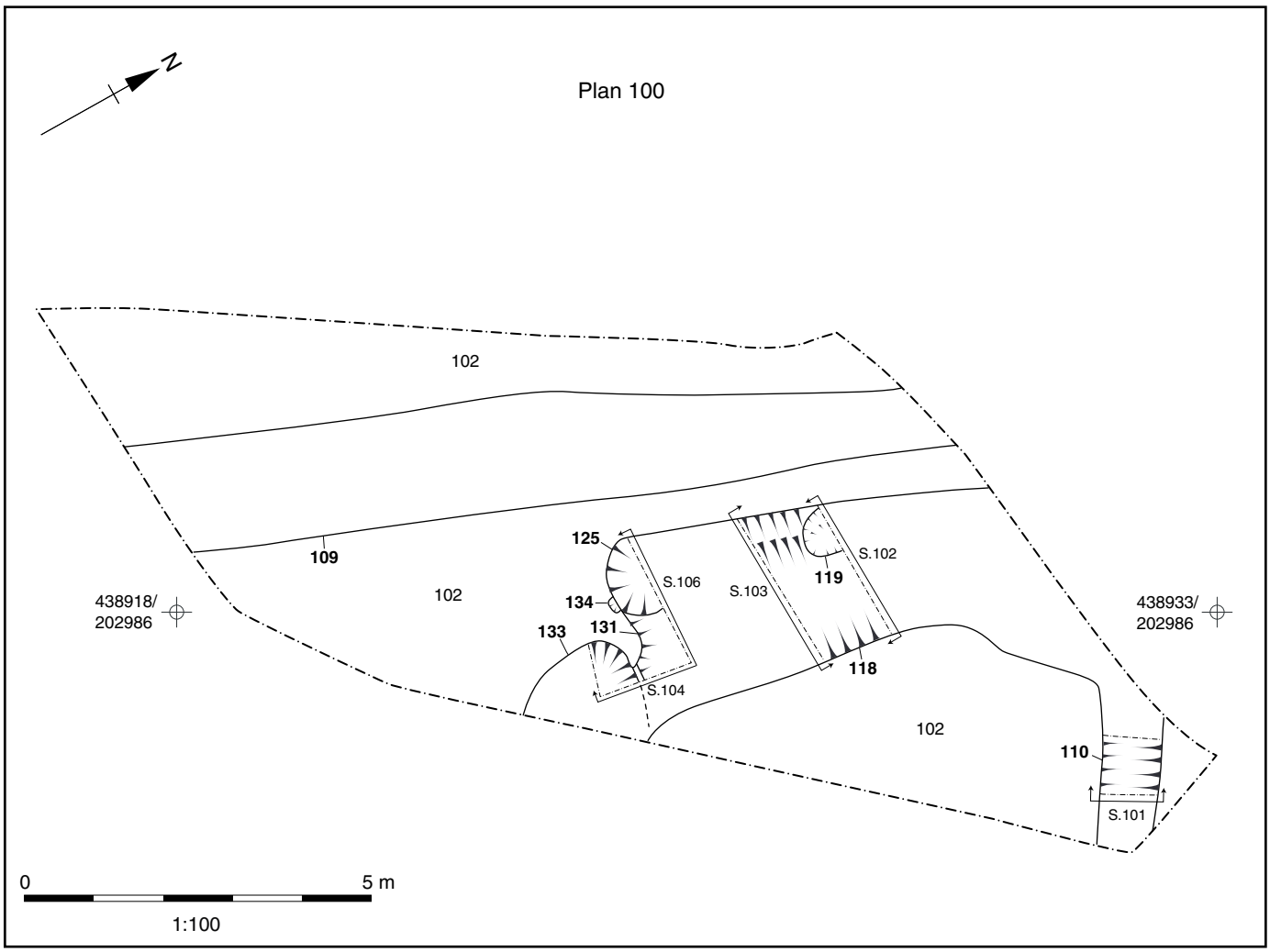

Figure 2 : Site plan

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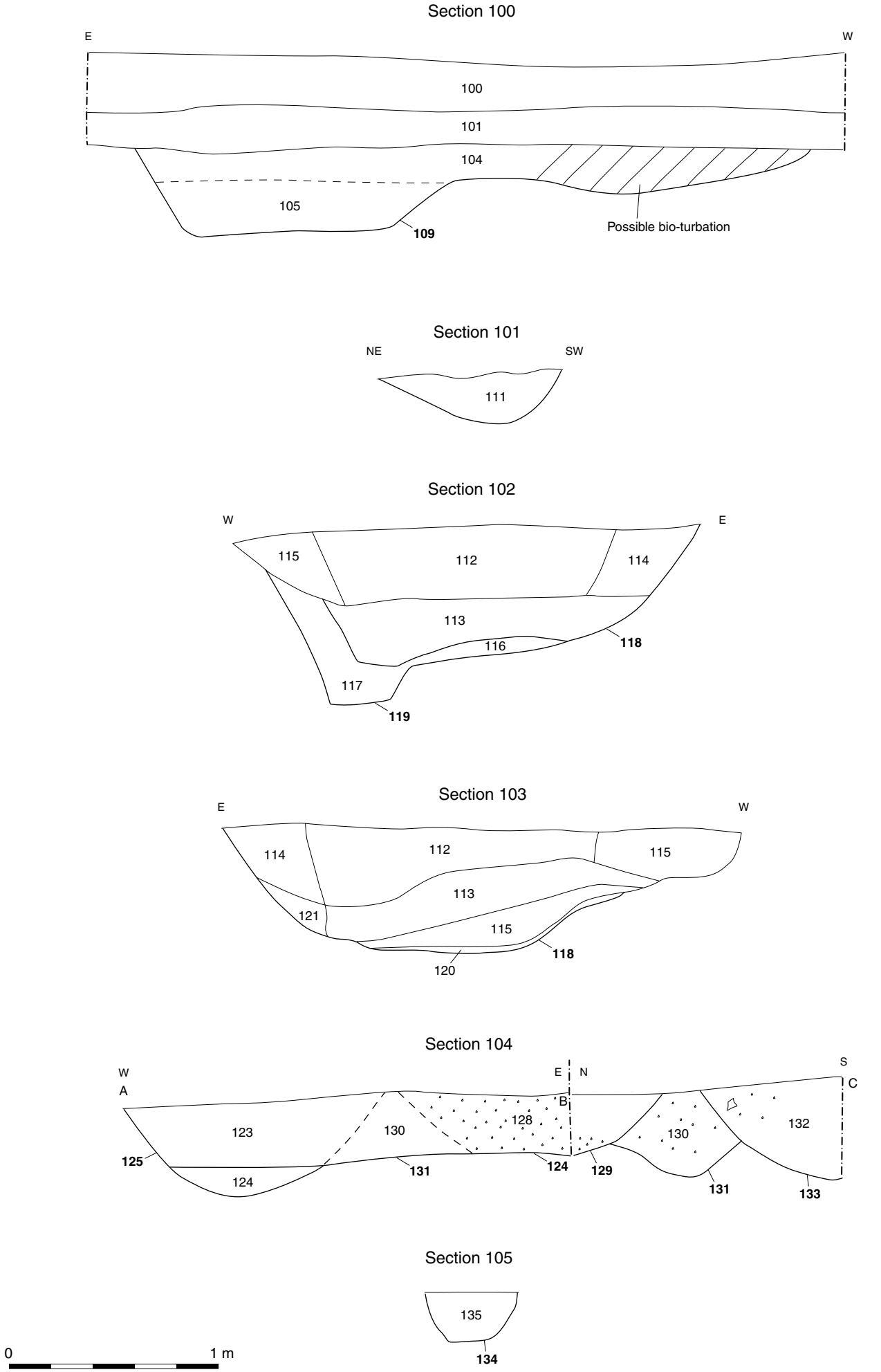

Figure 3 : Sections 100-105

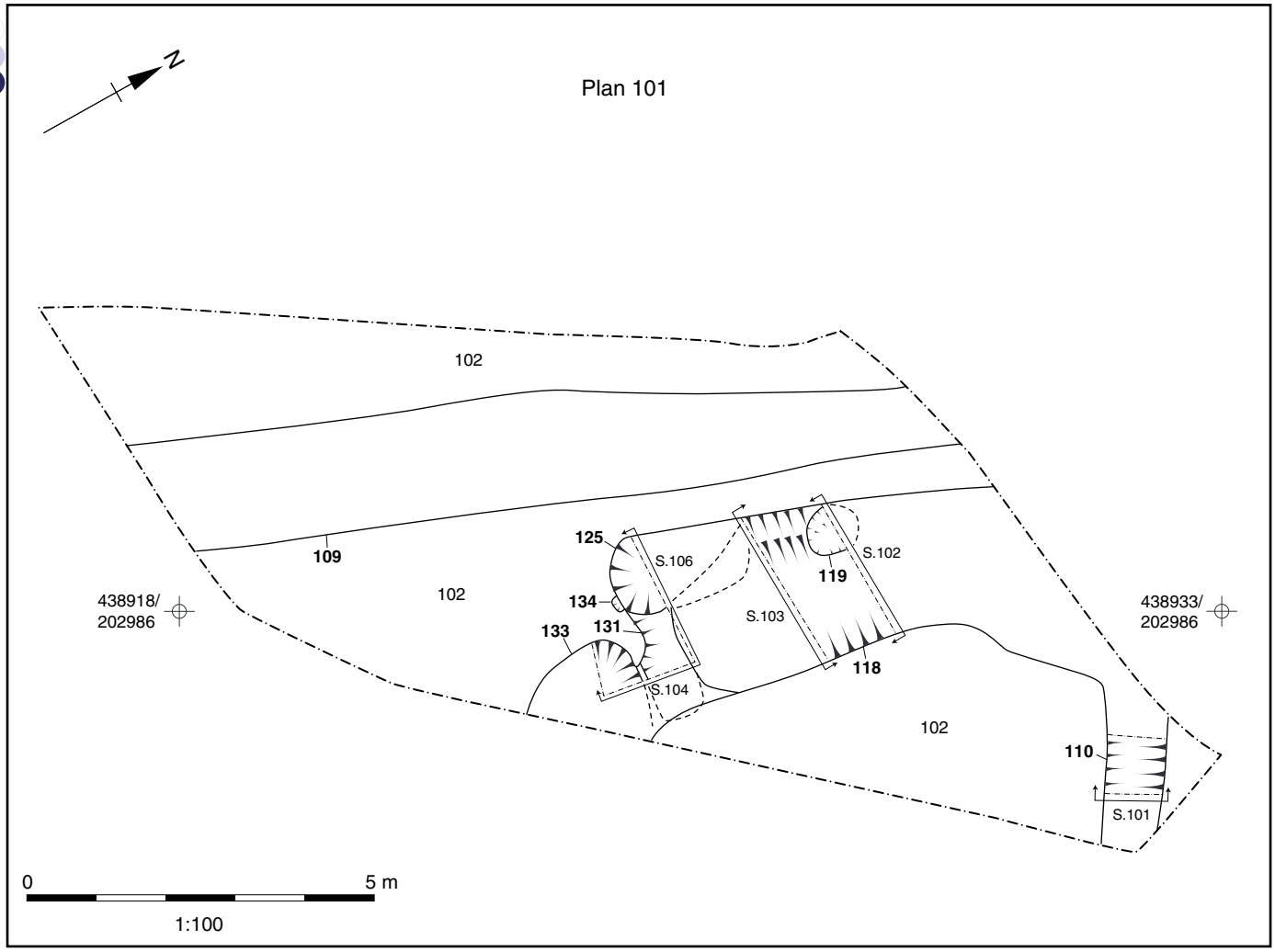

Figure 4 : Plan of features after excavation

Plate 1: Site looking north-east

Plate 2: Ditch 110

Plate 3: Ditch 118 showing posthole 119

Plate 4: Ditch 118

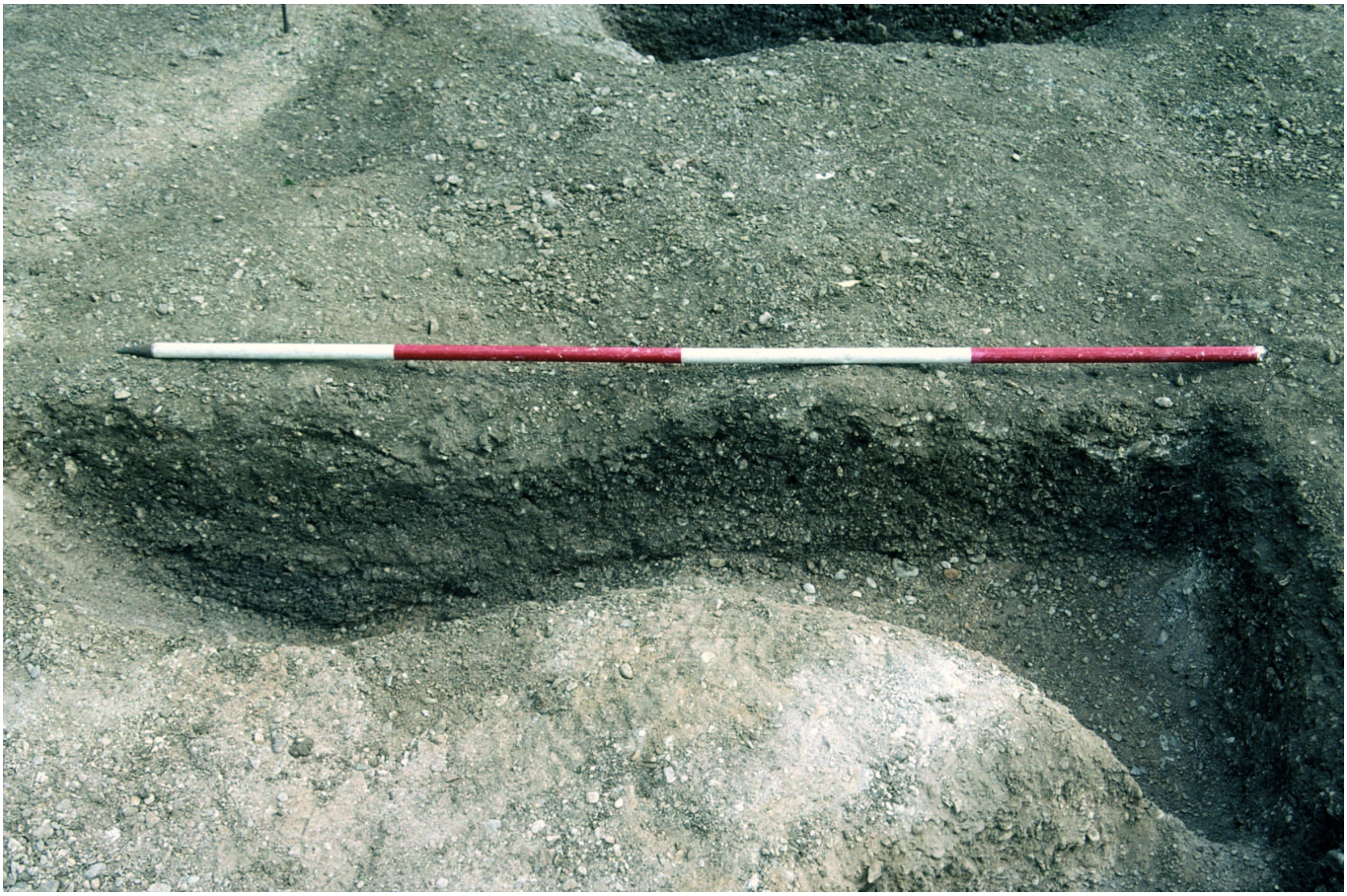

Plate 5: Pit 125 and ditch 118

Plate 6: Feature 131 and ditch 133