Land West of Long Buckby Northamptonshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

oxfordarchaeology south

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Client: Western Power Distribution

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Archaeological Watching Brief

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Land West of Long Buckby, Northamptonshire,

33kV Cable Burial

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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Summary

Oxford Archaeology, was commissioned by Western Power Distribution to undertake archaeological recording and reporting upon the excavation of a new trench to accommodate electricity cables within fields that lie between Murcott and Long Buckby, Northamptonshire (SP 62140 67890 to SP 62154 68124). The fieldwork was completed in September 2014.

Within the southern field six modern and historic field drains were recorded providing drainage to the low lying ground. Of these, one was a stone-constructed drain which, along with a ceramic drain, were cut into the base of an infilled ditch-like feature. Both the former ditch and drains were overlain by a clay and rubble deposit levelling the ground surface. No artefacts were present in association with the ditch and stone drain. A further deposit of redeposited clay and rubble was also recorded levelling a previous shallow hollow north of the stone drain and ditch. Artefacts recovered from the topsoil and this levelling deposit all dated from the 19th and 20th centuries.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project details and background

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA), was commissioned by Western Power Distribution (WPD) to undertake archaeological recording and reporting upon the excavation of a cable trench within fields that lie between Murcott and Long Buckby (centred on SP 62158 67964) as part of a larger scheme of works being undertaken between Guilsborough and Daventry, Northamptonshire.

1.1.2 The cable installation was undertaken under permitted development permissions. WPD discussed the project with Liz Mordue, Assistant Archaeological Advisor at Northamptonshire County Council (NCC), who subsequently issued a brief (25th April 2014) outlining the requirement for archaeological works to be undertaken along the cable trench route at Murcott/Long Buckby. A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing how OA would fulfil this requirement on behalf of WPD was agreed with Liz Mordue prior to the start of the fieldwork. This report details the results form the excavation and recording of the cable trench.

1.1.3 All work was undertaken in accordance with local and national planning policies (NPPF Policy HE 12.3).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 The route of the cable trench within the fields between Murcott and Long Buckby is located on open pasture farmland running from the B5385 at approximately SP 62140 67890 and to the north following the tree-lined water course field boundary to the east. This part of the underground cable route terminated at approximately SP 62192 68341 where the line rejoined overhead cables. However, the archaeological recording and monitoring was limited to the southern part of this alignment only. Recording of the trench was limited to the route south of approximately SP 62154 68124.

1.2.2 The land is relatively flat at approximately 108m aOD and the underlying drift geology is recorded on the British Geological Survey web site as alluvium (Clay, Silt, Sand And Gravel) lying over inter bedded Siltstone And Mudstone of the Dyrham Formation (BGS website Geology of Britain Viewer, http://www.bgs.ac.uk /discoveringGeology/ geology OfBritain/ viewer.html). The Dyrham Formation includes the deposit formerly identified as Middle Lias Silts and Clays at this location.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The following brief background is repeated from the Brief issued by NCC.

1.3.2 The site lies on the north eastern edge of the former medieval settlement of Murcott. The water course to the east of the cable trench is recorded as a mill leat. The field crossed by the cable route also contains cropmark remains of possible drainage ditches which may relate to the leat.

1.3.3 The following information is derived from *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the County of Northamptonshire, Volume 3: Archaeological sites in North-West Northamptonshire* (English Heritage 1981).

1.3.4 The pattern of medieval settlements and estates within the settlement of Murcott, now largely depopulated, and its lands are now divided between the parishes of Long Buckby and Watford and this was already the case by the early 18th century but the original boundaries of Murcott can still be traced on maps of 1765 and 1778 (National Record Office).

1.3.5 The development of the village of Long Buckby itself is of interest; various features such as the settlement remains and the situation of the castle, together with some place-name evidence and the morphology of the existing village, as well as other clues, suggest a complex history. The village is extremely attenuated in shape as its name implies, but the name *Long* Buckby is apparently not recorded until the 16th century and the surviving architecture suggests that the eastern extension of the village is perhaps a relatively recent growth towards the separate medieval settlement of Cotton End. If this is so, then the village can be seen to have been fairly compact in the past, arranged around a neat rectangular market place now encroached upon. However, the castle is oddly situated in relation to this market place, and indeed to the centre of the village. It seems to be more closely related to another road system, and even to another settlement which may have been located to the west in the area now known as Salem. If the original Buckby in fact lay in that area the castle would have overlooked it and controlled the approach from the east.

1.3.6 The present village can thus be seen as a later, perhaps planned addition to this earlier settlement to the west, set up in about 1280 by Henry de Lacy, Earl of Lincoln and Salisbury, when he was granted a weekly market and two annual fairs at Buckby. The major monument of the parish is Long Buckby Castle, a ring motte with at least one bailey, and perhaps originally two.

1.3.7 The form and layout of Medieval to post-medieval field systems numerous field systems have been recorded through aerial photography, cartographic plotting and exist as earthworks. Part of the common fields of Murcott was apparently enclosed at the same time as most of Watford, by an Act of Parliament of 1771 (NRO, Map of New Enclosures in Watford and Murcott). This enclosure seems to have included land in the N.W. of Murcott, but a larger area than that now included in Watford parish. The area to the S., around Greenhill Farm, appears to have been enclosed before that date. In the N. of the land of Murcott, in the area now in Watford, some of the ridge-and-furrow has been destroyed, but in that part now in Long Buckby almost every furlong is visible either on the ground or on air photographs. It is arranged throughout in end-on and interlocked furlongs (RAF VAP CPE/UK/1994, 1363–7, 2356–63, 4262–70, 4361–5; 543/RAF/2337, 0373–7).

2 Project Aims and Methodology

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The aims of the archaeological investigation were to undertake the excavation and recording to accepted standards and in accordance with guidelines, to map any archaeological remains, inform the relevant parties and enact any strategy resulting from on-site reviews and discussions with those concerned and to:

(i) establish the presence/absence, extent, date, nature, function, and phasing of the archaeological remains present within the line of the cable trench and to preserve these by detailed archaeological records,

(ii) characterise the overall nature of any archaeological remains encountered and to understand the process of their formation,

(iii) identify priorities within any areas of exposed archaeological remains that may warrant more detailed investigation,

(iv) establish the relative archaeological value of any remains encountered and implementing an appropriate archaeological recording response to these through agreement with the Assistant Archaeological Advisor,

(v) determine the geo-archaeological potential of any archaeological deposits encountered,

(vi) recover evidence for the ecofactual and environmental potential of any archaeological deposits and features where this is considered appropriate to investigate, and

(vii) make available the results of the investigation through appropriate publication and archiving.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The fieldwork comprised the machine excavation of a single linear trench to accommodate the new electricity cables. The trench was excavated to a width of 0.6m and a depth of 1.2m. The monitored section of the trench ran from the B5385 between Long Buckby and Murcott and to a point approximately 250m to the north (see Figs 1 and 2).

2.2.2 The archaeological excavation and recording took place in two fields; Field 1 to the south and Field 2 to the north. These were distinguished by the existing field boundaries.

2.2.3 The topsoil and underlying deposits were stripped using an 8 tonne 360° mechanical excavator, fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under the constant supervision of an archaeologist.

2.2.4 The route of the trench and any features/deposits exposed were measured and drawn to scale onto a baseline OS map; along with drawn representative scale sections recorded at regular intervals.

3 Results

3.1 General soils and ground conditions

3.1.1 The underlying geology comprised dark grey silt clay overlain by a yellowish brown clay, consistent with the clays encountered within the Siltstone And Mudstone deposits of the Dyrham Formation (formerly the Middle Lias Silts and Clays). The fieldwork was completed in dry clear conditions with little ground water present in the trench base.

3.1.2 The underlying solid geology was overlain in part by a brown silt clay alluvial deposit within Field 1 although this was difficult to distinguish from the weathered upper levels of the Dryham Formation. Within Field 1 the uppermost deposit comprised topsoil and turf within a grazed paddock (Plate 1). Field 2 was arable with a ploughsoil present although the recorded part of the cable trench fell within a small area of grass set aside within the corner of the field (Plate 5).

3.2 Field 1

3.2.1 Six drains of different age origin and construction style were recorded in Field 1. The most recent of these were three drains constructed using plastic pipes and rounded pebble backfills. There were also two ceramic field drains and a single stone-constructed drain (103). The stone drain was aligned E-W and located approximately 100m from the northern end of the field and had one of the ceramic drains aligned alongside this (Fig. 3). The stone drain was 0.38m wide and 0.2m tall set 0.72m below the current ground level. No artefacts were present in association with this drain. The clay surrounding the drain was slightly more grey than elsewhere possibly indicating the presence of a large ditch-like feature approximately 3m wide at the surface level although this was difficult to distinguish in the narrow cable trench (Plates 2 and 3).

3.2.2 Sealing the stone drain and grey clay was a layer (105), visible below the topsoil. This comprised mid greyish yellow clay and frequent stone rubble. This was 0.2m thick at its deepest point and had a shallow profile that was confined to the extent of the grey clay surrounding the ceramic and stone drains. This deposit and the drains were recorded between 99.7-102.35m from the northern end of the field.

3.2.3 Within the northern end of the field a layer of redeposited clay (102) was recorded directly over the natural clay infilling a shallow hollow (Plate 4). This contained brick fragments and 19th century pottery and was sealed by the topsoil. The layer was recorded between 41-74m from the northern end of the field.

3.3 Field 2

3.3.1 An approximate 65m long part of the cable trench was observed and recorded in Field 2 (Plate 5). The trench revealed dark grey silt clay at the base overlain by greyish brown silt clay representing the weathered surface of the solid geology (Plate 6). Topsoil and turf completed the sequence. No archaeological features or artefacts were encountered within this field.

3.4 Finds summary

3.4.1 A small assemblage of finds was recovered from the excavation. Topsoil deposit 100 produced an iron bucket handle, iron plough fragments, post-medieval bricks, glass, clay pipe and several sherds of post-medieval pottery.

3.4.2 Deposit 102 similarly produced several several brick fragments and sherds of 19th century pottery.

4 Discussion and Conclusions

4.1 Interpretation of results

4.1.1 The excavation identified one stone drain, two ceramic drains and three modern plastic pipe and pebble field drains; all within Field 1. Of these the stone drain and accompanying ceramic drain may reflect the presence of an earlier archaeological feature. Both drains were aligned E-W directly towards the existing water course and they are in close proximity being only 0.3m apart. These were positioned at the same depth and surrounded by a grey clay deposit only slightly distinguishable from the surrounding clay geology. The grey clay deposit was approximately 3m wide at surface level and appeared to slope down towards the drains. These were at 1.2m deep from the current ground level with the grey clay extending down in excess of these suggesting a ditch-like profile and extent. However, this deposit had a diffuse contact with the clay geology and could not be easily defined or investigated within the narrow cable trench. The presence of an overlying clay and rubble layer (105) matched the surface extent of the grey clay and had a profile in section that suggests this levelled the remaining hollow of a ditch-like feature following the insertion of the drain(s) into this. The presence of the drains within the base of the grey clay further reinforces the notion that this was a ditch-like feature as once this was partially infilled and existed as an earthwork it is likely to have held water during wet periods. Such examples of former landscape features being repeated in subsequent land drainage arrangements is often seen with field drains placed in the base of former furrows derived from ridge and furrow cultivation. It would appear that the stone drain represents a similar sequence here. Unfortunately ,no artefacts were present within any of these deposits so it is not possible to date the sequence.

4.1.2 None of the other field drains were associated with earlier deposits although an additional clay and rubble layer (102) was recorded in Field 1 to the immediate north of the stone drain and possible earlier ditch. Layer 102 infilled a shallow hollow up to 0.35m deep over a larger area and contained several 19th century artefacts. Based upon this limited investigation it is very difficult to interpret what this lower lying area may represent or indeed if the clay and rubble was intended as anything other than just as a means to raise the ground and improve the general field drainage.

4.1.3 In summary, it is clear that the narrow width of the cable trench made the identification and investigation of large features difficult. However, the fields appeared to be largely devoid of significant archaeological remains with a single possible boundary or drainage ditch present with a later stone lined drain inserted into the partly infilled feature. The absence of 19th century artefacts in association with this whilst present elsewhere across the site may suggest that these features predate that period.

Appendix A. Area Descriptions and Context Inventory

Field 1						
General description					**Orientation**	NE-SW
Field 1 – South Field:- The field is relatively flat, with slight undulations. The field is bounded to the south by a stone wall, to the east and west by post and rail fencing with associated vegetation and on the northern side by a plain post and rail fence. The field was under use as pasture for horses at the time of the fieldwork. Three field drains (plastic pipes and gravel backfill) were encountered along with two ceramic drains and one stone-constructed drain. The stone drain and a ceramic drain placed parallel to this may have been inserted into an earlier ditch-like feature.					**Avg. depth (m)**	1.2
					Width (m)	0.6
					Length (m)	160
Contexts						
Context no.	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Comment**	**Finds**	**Date**
100	Layer		0.35	Topsoil and turf	pot, CBM, clay pipe, metal, glass	Post-medieval to modern
101	Layer			Natural clay geology	-	-
102	Layer	33	0.35	Possible levelling layer comprising a firm-stiff, mid greyish yellow silty clay with occasional brick fragment inclusions	CBM, pottery	
103	Fill	0.38	0.72	Stone drain and fill within 104. Drain fill mid grey clay with stone slabs forming the drain structure (max. stone size 0.37 x 0.2 x 0.04m)	-	-
104	Cut	0.38	0.72	Field drain cut. E-W aligned linear with steep profile, filled by 103	-	-
105	Layer	2.65	0.2	Levelling layer over a probable ditch fill (not numbered). Firm mid orangey yellow silty clay with frequent small stone rubble	-	-

Field 2						
General description					**Orientation**	NE-SW
Field 2 – North Field:- The field gently sloped down from NW-SE and the area of the trench was in the lower lying flat area. The field is bounded to the south by a plain post and rail fence, and to the east by a watercourse. No archaeological features or deposits were present.					**Avg. depth (m)**	1.2
					Width (m)	0.6
					Length (m)	>60
Contexts						
Context no.	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Comment**	**Finds**	**Date**
200	Layer		0.31	Topsoil and turf	-	-
201	Layer			Natural clay geology	-	-
202	Layer			Natural clay geology (dark grey)	-	-

APPENDIX B. FINDS REPORTS

B.1 Pottery and ceramic building material (CBM)

By John Cotter

Context 100: Spot date c 1835-1900

B.1.1 A total of 8 sherds of pottery were recovered from context 100. These include a large sherd of a cream-coloured stoneware preserve jar with a clear Bristol-type glaze inside and outside (dates after c 1835). Other 19th-century wares are a sherd of brown salt-glazed stoneware storage jar/flagon, cream-coloured stoneware conical 'measure', yellow ware mixing bowl and a red terracotta flowerpot rim. Small sherds of earlier wares comprise Creamware (c 1760-1830), a handle from a cup in Staffordshire white salt-glazed stoneware (c 1720-1780) and a small sherd of Midlands blackware. A fragment of clay pipe stem dating from the late 18th/19th century was also collected along with two large fragments of dense unfrogged red brick of probable mid/late 19th century manufacture.

Context 102: Spot date c 1850-1900

B.1.2 A total of 4 sherds of pottery were recovered from context 102. The assemblage comprises 3 thick sherds of white vitreous sanitary ware that are probably from a single water closet or washbasin and a single sherd from a jar in Midlands blackware. A single complete dense unfrogged red brick (as in ctx 100) was also recovered.

B.2 Iron objects

4.1.4 A total of 4 iron objects were recovered from context 100. These comprise two large fragments of plough prongs or guides, a small indeterminate fragment and a complete handle from a bucket with the mounts attached. All items are likely to be of Late 19th or 20th- century origin.

Appendix C. Bibliography and References

English Heritage 1981 *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the County of Northamptonshire, Volume 3: Archaeological sites in North-West Northamptonshire* (1981), pp. 128-135. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk

Oxford Archaeology 2014 Land West of Long Buckby, Northamptonshire, 33kV Cable Burial, Written Scheme of Investigation

Appendix D. Summary of Site Details

Site name: Land West of Long Buckby, Northamptonshire

Site code: LOBUWD 14

Grid reference: SP 62140 67890 to SP 62154 68124

Type: Archaeological excavation and recording (watching brief)

Date and duration: 8th - 12th September 2014

Area of site: Total site area = 140m^2

Summary of results:

Oxford Archaeology, was commissioned by Western Power Distribution to undertake archaeological recording and reporting upon the excavation of a new trench to accommodate electricity cables within fields that lie between Murcott and Long Buckby, Northamptonshire (SP 62140 67890 to SP 62154 68124). The fieldwork was completed in September 2014.

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Location of archive:

The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES. The written records will be made available at http://library.thehumanjourney.net/ until alternative arrangements are made by the relevant responsible curatorial body.

C:\Documents and Settings\markus.dylewski\Desktop\Figure1_Master_with_Grids.mxd*markus.dylewski*15/07/2014

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Figure 1: Site location

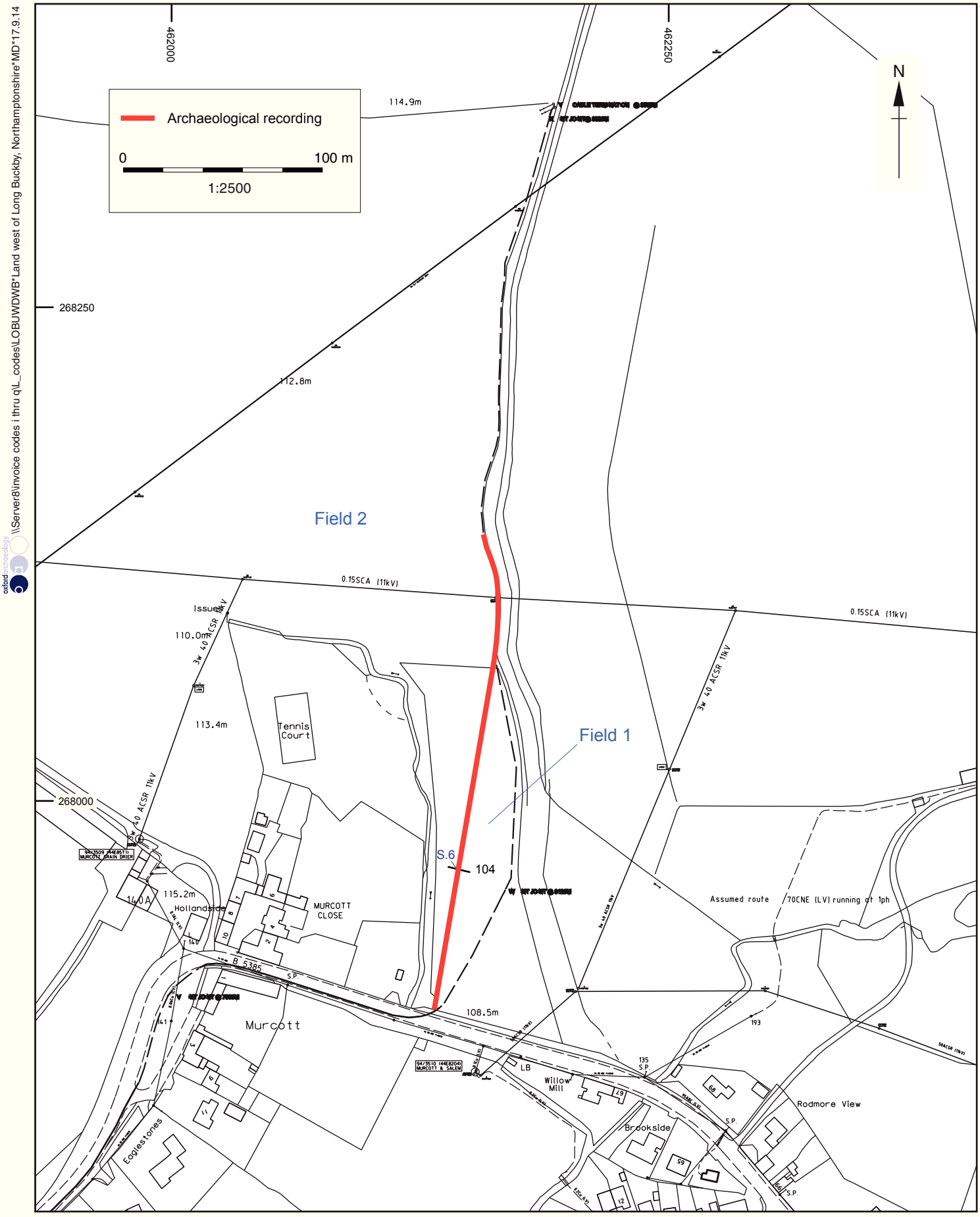

Figure 2: Trench location map

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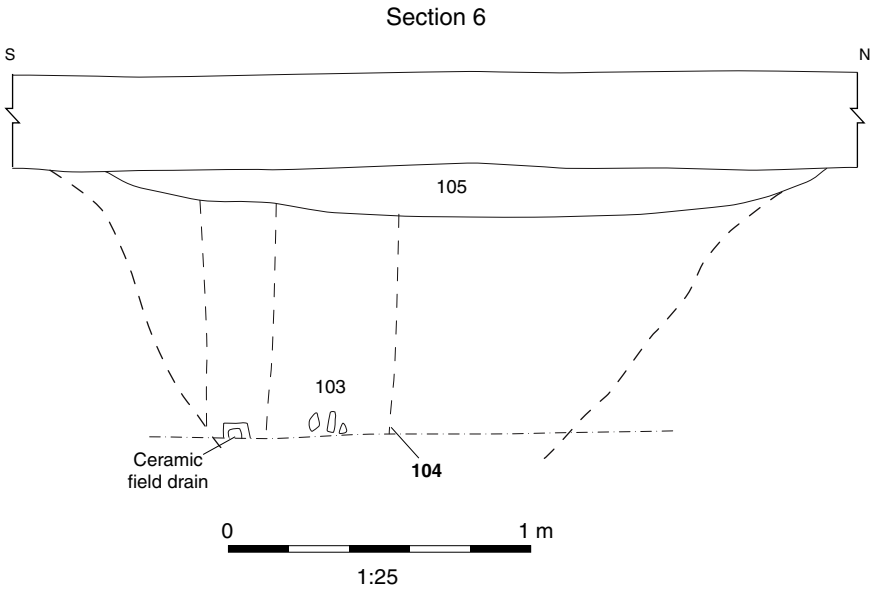

Figure 3: Section 6

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Plate 1: Field 1, general view, looking south

Plate 2: Field 1, section 6, looking north

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Plate 3: Field 1, stone drain 103

Plate 4: Field 1, section view of deposit 102, looking east

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Plate 5: Field 2, general view, looking north

Plate 6: Field 2, section view, looking south-west

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