

Greenfield Associates

Land adjacent to Plummers Brook, Lydney  
Gloucestershire

*ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT*

NGR ST 636018 to 648024

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

MAY 2000

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OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

May 2000

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***ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION***

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## SUMMARY

*The Oxford Archaeological Unit carried out a field evaluation at Lydney, Gloucestershire on behalf of Greenfield Associates. The evaluation revealed a sequence of alluvial deposits and an area of industrial waste used to fill marsh land adjacent to the railway. The bottom of the alluvial sequence was not detected as it lay beneath the level of the proposed impact; the deepest section observed was 2.2 m deep and this revealed a fairly homogenous alluvial accumulation. A watercourse located in the centre of the site (Trench 8) contained twigs and roots, and a possible stake fenceline was also uncovered. The stakes were not precisely dated, although they predated the 19th century. Medieval cultivation in the form of ridge-and-furrow was visible in the west of the proposed development area and an associated ploughsoil was present beneath the topsoil in trenches in this area. A small number of post-medieval pottery sherds were found within the ploughsoil and a redeposited Roman sherd in the industrial deposits to the north-east.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In April 2000 the Oxford Archaeological Unit carried out a field evaluation at Lydney, Gloucestershire (Fig. 1) on behalf of Greenfield Associates in respect of a planning application for industrial development and associated lakes. The Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was agreed by Gloucestershire County Council. The development site lies within six fields immediately south of the Gloucester to Newport railway and on either side of Plummers Brook. Five flood-compensation lakes were initially proposed (Fig. 2), although that to the north-east (Lake 5) was reduced and split into two smaller lakes, explaining the uneven distribution of trenches in this field.

1.1.2 The proposed development will entail the excavation of five lakes which will generally penetrate the ground to a depth of 0.5 m – 0.75 m. The deeper parts of the lakes will reach 2 m below the existing surface.

### 1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 This site lies on estuarine alluvial deposits of the River Severn at 8.2 m above Ordnance Datum (OD). The solid geology is Old Red Sandstone. The site is situated on level ground. The fields containing proposed Lakes 1, 2, 3 and 4 have been used for grazing and that to the north-east is currently set-a-side.

### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 A desktop study was carried out in 1996 by Avon Archaeological Unit (Prosser 1996) and its findings are summarised below.
- 1.3.2 There are no records of prehistoric or Roman activity within the area of the present town of Lydney, although an Iron Age promontory fort containing the well-known later Roman temple complex, lies in Lydney Park to the west.
- 1.3.3 The proposed development site lies outside the medieval settlement area of Lydney which dates from the 9th century AD. In the late Saxon period Lydney came into the possession of the monks of Glastonbury Abbey, who presumably utilised the rich deposits of iron ore in the area (Finberg 1975, 54). By the 13th century the area was under the jurisdiction of the Royal Forest of Dean which then passed to the Earls of Warwick until the 15th century. A survey drawn up in 1282 refers to considerable mining activity at the Earl of Warwick's mines in his wood at Lydney (*ibid.*, 83). In the medieval period ships were built at Lydney with oak from the Forest of Dean, and oak bark from the forest supplied tanneries in the town (*ibid.*, 98).
- 1.3.4 Lydney became an industrial area due to its natural resources (iron, coal and timber). The development of a harbour at Lydney to ship out the town's natural wealth occurred in the 17th century. Ironworks and tinplate works were constructed nearby. Industrial sites were concentrated to the north, around the railway and the harbour itself. A tramway was built from Lydney to Bishopswood in 1810, linking various collieries and ironworks in the region (Finberg 1975, 116). The line of the tramway, followed by the later railway, lay just to the east of the parish church (GLSMR 5701) and north of the proposed development site. The harbour was closed in 1977.

## 2 EVALUATION AIMS

- 2.1 To determine, as far as is reasonably possible, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains in the area where the proposed development would cause disturbance.
- 2.2 To establish the ecofactual/environmental potential of archaeological features.
- 2.3 To appraise the likely impact of the development proposals on any archaeology located.
- 2.4 To make available the results of the investigation.

### 3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Strategy

- 3.1.1 The field evaluation comprised the excavation of seventeen trenches, as indicated on Figure 2. This represented 2% of the area of the proposed development.
- 3.1.2 The trenches were excavated by mechanical excavator using a toothless grading bucket and were supplemented by hand investigation of the archaeological deposits. The trenches measured 30 m x 2 m. Due to the proximity of overhead cables and waterlogged marsh land Trench 9 was moved to the south-east.
- 3.1.3 In order to assess the impact of the proposed development (see above, Section 1.1.2), thirteen trenches were dug to a depth of 1 m, allowing a cushion of over 0.25 m between the groundworks and any archaeological deposits which may be present. Trenches 1, 3, 8 and 9 were located in the areas of deepest impact and these were excavated to a depth of 2.2 m. Some trenches had to be stepped out because of the depth of the deposits and instability of the sides.

#### 3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

- 3.2.1 Trenches were cleaned by hand and examined to determine the extent and nature of any archaeological features. These were recorded on proforma sheets and finds retrieved. All trenches were planned at a scale of 1:50 and sample sections drawn at a scale of 1:20. A photographic record was taken using colour slide and black-and-white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed. Wilkinson 1992).

#### 3.3 Finds

- 3.3.1 Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation and generally bagged by context. Finds of special interest were given a unique small find number.



## **4 RESULTS: GENERAL**

### **4.1 Soils and ground conditions**

4.1.1 The topsoil in the area was a silty clay which overlay alluvial clays. In the central area of the site (Lake 3) redeposited alluvium was found overlying industrial waste deposits.

4.1.2 Ground conditions were very wet at the time of the evaluation and trenches rapidly filled with water which had to be pumped out mechanically. Problems were encountered with trench sides which readily collapsed. Waterlogged material was well preserved.

### **4.2 Distribution of archaeological deposits**

4.2.1 Alluvial deposits were recorded in all the trenches within the areas of the proposed lakes. Palaeochannels were located in the centre of the site (Lakes 3 and 4) and what seemed to be part of a row of stakes was uncovered within one channel. To the west ridge-and-furrow was visible.

### **4.3 Presentation of results**

4.3.1 The deposits described in the text relate to trenches where archaeological features were present and include the most complete sequence of alluvial deposits. In the remaining trenches there was little variation and their contexts are summarised in Appendix 1. All deposits are described from the earliest to the latest.

## **5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS**

### **5.1 Trenches 1-7 (Lakes 1 and 2; Fig. 2)**

5.1.1 Trenches 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7 were excavated to between 1 m and 1.2 m deep. Trenches 1 and 3 were excavated to a depth of 2.2 m.

5.1.2 All trenches within the area of Lakes 1 and 2 revealed similar deposits. A grey silty-clay alluvial deposit containing 5% manganese was overlain by a red-brown silty clay alluvium. This was overlain by silty-clay topsoil. A single rim sherd of post-medieval pottery was recovered from this deposit.

5.1.3 Ridge-and-furrow was visible on the surface of all the trenches within the area of Lakes 1 and 2. A post-medieval sherd came from this ploughsoil in Trench 1.

## 5.2 Trench 9 (Lake 3)

- 5.2.1 Trench 9 (Fig. 2) was excavated to a depth of 2.2 m and was stepped out at the western end to gain access for recording purposes.
- 5.2.2 A blue-grey silty clay alluvium (97) was the earliest deposit exposed. This was overlain by a red-brown silty-clay alluvium (96) which was cut by a possible north-south aligned palaeochannel (98) 5 m from the western end of the trench. The channel was then filled with alluvial deposits. The primary fill was an organic grey-brown clay alluvium (95) containing 5% twigs and small branches which was overlain by a mixed blue with green-brown clay alluvium (94). Overlying this was a red-brown silty-clay alluvium (93) and a dark-grey silty clay (92) containing 1% charcoal and 1% twig fragments, which is thought to be a buried soil.
- 5.2.3 Layer 92 may have been buried at the time that slag-rich deposits were being used to make up ground within the area of Trenches 10 and 12 (see below), as it was overlain by a redeposited red-brown silty clay similar to deposits 101 and 121 in those trenches. Sealing deposits 92 and 96 was a brown silty-clay topsoil (90).

## 5.3 Trench 10 (Lake 3)

- 5.3.1 Trench 10 (Fig. 2) was excavated to a depth of 1 m and revealed similar deposits and features to Trench 12.
- 5.3.2 The earliest deposit was a red-brown silty clay alluvium (106) within which lay a pond or natural depression (107) in the northern 10 m of the trench. It was also cut by a NW-SE drainage ditch (105) 1 m north of the pond.
- 5.3.3 The primary fill of the pond or depression (107) was a grey silty clay (103) containing 5% slag and 1% brick which appeared to be of relatively recent date, probably 19th century. This deposit is believed to be make-up used to stabilise the soft ground, possibly for the railway or tramway immediately to the north. It was overlain by redeposited blue-grey clay (102).
- 5.3.4 Drainage ditch (105) was filled by a grey slag-rich silty clay (104), similar to deposit (103). Above was a layer of redeposited red-brown clay (101) which was overlain by a brown silty-clay topsoil (100).

## 5.4 Trench 12 (Lake 3)

- 5.4.1 Excavated to a depth of 1 m, Trench 12 revealed a similar sequence of deposits and features to that found in Trench 10 (Fig. 3).

- 5.4.2 The earliest deposit observed was a blue-grey clay alluvium (126). This was cut by the NW-SE edge of a possible pond (127) 8.8 m from the south-eastern end of the trench which appeared to be the same feature as that located in Trench 10. An east-west drainage ditch (125) lay 1.5 m east of this feature (Fig. 3).
- 5.4.3 The primary fill of pond 127 was a grey-yellow silty clay (123) which was overlain by a grey slag-rich silty clay (122), the same deposit as 103 in Trench 10. Layer 122 yielded a single redeposited sherd of Roman Oxford colour-coated ware of Young's type C75, dated AD 325 to 400 (Young 1977).
- 5.4.4 Drainage ditch 125 was filled by a red-brown silty clay (124) which also sealed the pond deposits. It was overlain by a brown silty-clay topsoil (120).

### 5.5 Trench 8 (Lake 4)

- 5.5.1 Trench 8 (Fig. 4) was excavated to a depth of 2.2 m, and because of its depth was stepped out at the eastern end in order to gain access for recording. Problems with the stability of the trench sides were particularly severe in this trench; those to the west collapsed soon after they were exposed.
- 5.5.2 The earliest deposit exposed was a blue clay alluvium (86). This was cut to the east by a NE-SW aligned palaeochannel (87) similar to that located in Trench 9 (98). It was filled by a blue-grey clay alluvium (83) which contained twigs and roots. A line of four vertical stakes (84) ran NW-SE 5 m from the western end of the trench (Fig. 4), their tops being 1.8 m below present ground.
- 5.5.3 The stake alignment could be part of a fenceline, or possibly a fish trap. Although no dating evidence was found, its depth suggests that it is not recent and it certainly predates the 19th-century slag-rich deposits (103 and 122) found in Trenches 10 and 12.
- 5.5.4 East of the palaeochannel, deposit 86 was overlain by a mixed red-brown and blue clay alluvium (85). This alluvium, and deposit 83, were then overlain by a blue-grey clay alluvium (82) which was sealed by a red-brown clay (81). A silty-clay topsoil (80) sealed these layers.

### 5.6 Trenches 11, 13 and 14 (Lake 4)

- 5.6.1 Trenches 11, 13 and 14 (Fig. 2) were excavated to a depth of 1 m and revealed similar deposits to those examined in Lakes 1 and 2. The deepest alluvial deposit was a grey silty-clay alluvium which was overlain by a red silty-clay alluvium. Above was a silty loam topsoil.

## 5.7 Trenches 15, 19 and 20 (Lake 5)

5.7.1 Trenches 15, 19 and 20 (Fig. 2) were excavated to a depth of 1 m and revealed similar deposits to those in seen Lakes 1 and 2. A grey silty-clay alluvium containing 5% manganese was overlain by a red-brown silty-clay alluvium. This was overlain by a silty loam topsoil. Two sherds of post-medieval pottery were recovered from the topsoil in Trench 20.

## 5.8 Finds

5.8.1 A small number of finds were recovered from the evaluation. These included three sherds of post-medieval pottery from the ploughsoil and a Roman pottery sherd from the industrial waste deposits. One wooden stake of the alignment in a watercourse was retrieved, and this was only worked to a point on one side.

## 5.9 Environmental data

5.9.1 No environmental samples were taken during the course of the evaluation. Some organic material was preserved within the palaeochannels located within Trenches 8 and 9, but as this appeared to comprise roots, twigs and sedge it was not sampled. These desposits were not dated.

## 5.10 Trench water levels

5.10.1 Measurements of water levels were taken at the request of the developer. They were measured during a period of heavy rain and should be taken, therefore, as only a rough guide. The depths given are from the present ground level to the level of the water within each trench.

Lake 1		Lake 2		Lake 3		Lake 4		Lake 5	
Trench	Depth	Trench	Depth	Trench	Depth	Trench	Depth	Trench	Depth
1	0.15m	3	0.35m	9	0.40m	8	0.15m	15	0.55m
2	0.10m	5	0.15m	10	0.20m	11	0.20m	19	0.35m
4	0.15m	6	0.40m	12	0.20m	13	0.20m	20	0.30m
7	0.40m					14	0.45m		

## 6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

### 6.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 6.1.1 It was felt that the sample size in this evaluation allowed the adequate characterisation of the deposits liable to be affected by the proposed development. This is reinforced by the similarity of the results to those of the evaluation in the adjacent Harbour Road (Parkinson 1998) where only alluvial deposits were found.
- 6.1.2 Although the weather was inclement during the evaluation and the water table was very high, it was felt that this did not seriously affect the interpretation of the features uncovered.
- 6.1.3 As none of the trenches reached the bottom of alluvial deposition, and there was little or no dating evidence from the layers exposed, it was difficult to assess the antiquity of the remains. However, all deposits are shallow when compared with sequences which have been observed elsewhere in this area (see below).

### 6.2 Overall Interpretation

#### *Summary of results*

- 6.2.1 The evaluation identified an accumulation of alluvial clays but the bottom of the alluvial sequence lies beneath the level of the proposed disturbance (in excess of 2.2 m). On the evidence of previous excavations in this area the sequence of alluvial deposits is likely to extend for some depth, in the case of the Gwent Levels up to c 10 m (Rippon 1994, 11). Identifying the original landscape and character of earlier relict channels is difficult, as any topographic variations are masked by alluvium (Needham and Macklin 1992, 10). Prehistoric remains are likely to lie beneath the bulk of alluvial deposition, and hence would be unaffected by the development proposals.
- 6.2.2 Two palaeochannels were identified in the centre of the site (Lakes 3 and 4; Fig. 2), and this area seems to have the greatest potential for the survival of remains. A possible stake fenceline was located crossing one of the channels. No dating evidence was retrieved for this feature, or the channel within which it lay, but it can be noted that they were not deeply buried (Fig. 4).
- 6.2.3 Roman remains identified previously in the Severn estuary tend to come from the upper levels of the alluvial sequence (Allen and Fulford 1986), though no

evidence of Roman layers were found within any of the trenches. One redeposited Roman sherd derived from the industrial waste deposits.

- 6.2.4 Ridge-and-furrow, which probably dates to the medieval period, was visible in the west of the site (Lakes 1 and 2). An associated cultivation soil was identified in the trenches in this area and a post-medieval pottery sherd was found within this deposit (Trench 1).
- 6.2.5 Industrial waste deposits were found within the area of Lake 3, filling a natural pond or depression. These presumably came from adjacent works and may be associated either with the building of the tramway in 1810 between Lydney and Bishopswood, or the later railway which followed the tramline. Several drainage ditches are probably contemporary, as they are filled similar material.

## APPENDIX 1: ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Ctx No</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i> Finds</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	10	Deposit	0.23	Ploughsoil	Pottery	1	16-18c
	11	Deposit	1.20	Alluvium			
	12	Deposit	0.80	Alluvium			
2	20	Deposit	0.20	Ploughsoil			
	21	Deposit	0.30	Alluvium			
	22	Deposit	0.50	Alluvium			
3	30	Deposit	0.25	Ploughsoil			
	31	Deposit	0.75	Alluvium			
	32	Deposit	1.20	Alluvium			
4	40	Deposit	0.22	Ploughsoil			
	41	Deposit	0.60	Alluvium			
	42	Deposit	0.20	Alluvium			
5	50	Deposit	0.20	Ploughsoil			
	51	Deposit	0.40	Alluvium			
	52	Deposit	0.40	Alluvium			
6	60	Deposit	0.20	Ploughsoil			
	61	Deposit	0.60	Alluvium			
	62	Deposit	0.20	Alluvium			
7	70	Deposit	0.20	Ploughsoil			
	71	Deposit	0.40	Alluvium			
	72	Deposit	0.40	Alluvium			
8	80	Deposit	0.20	Topsoil			
	81	Deposit	1.10	Alluvium			
	82	Deposit	0.90	Alluvium			
	83	Deposit	0.20	Alluvium			
	84	Deposit	1.00	Row of 4 stakes, 0.07 m in diam			
	85	Deposit	0.30	Alluvial fill of channel			
	86	Deposit	0.40	Alluvium			
	87	Cut		Palaeochannel (not bottomed)			

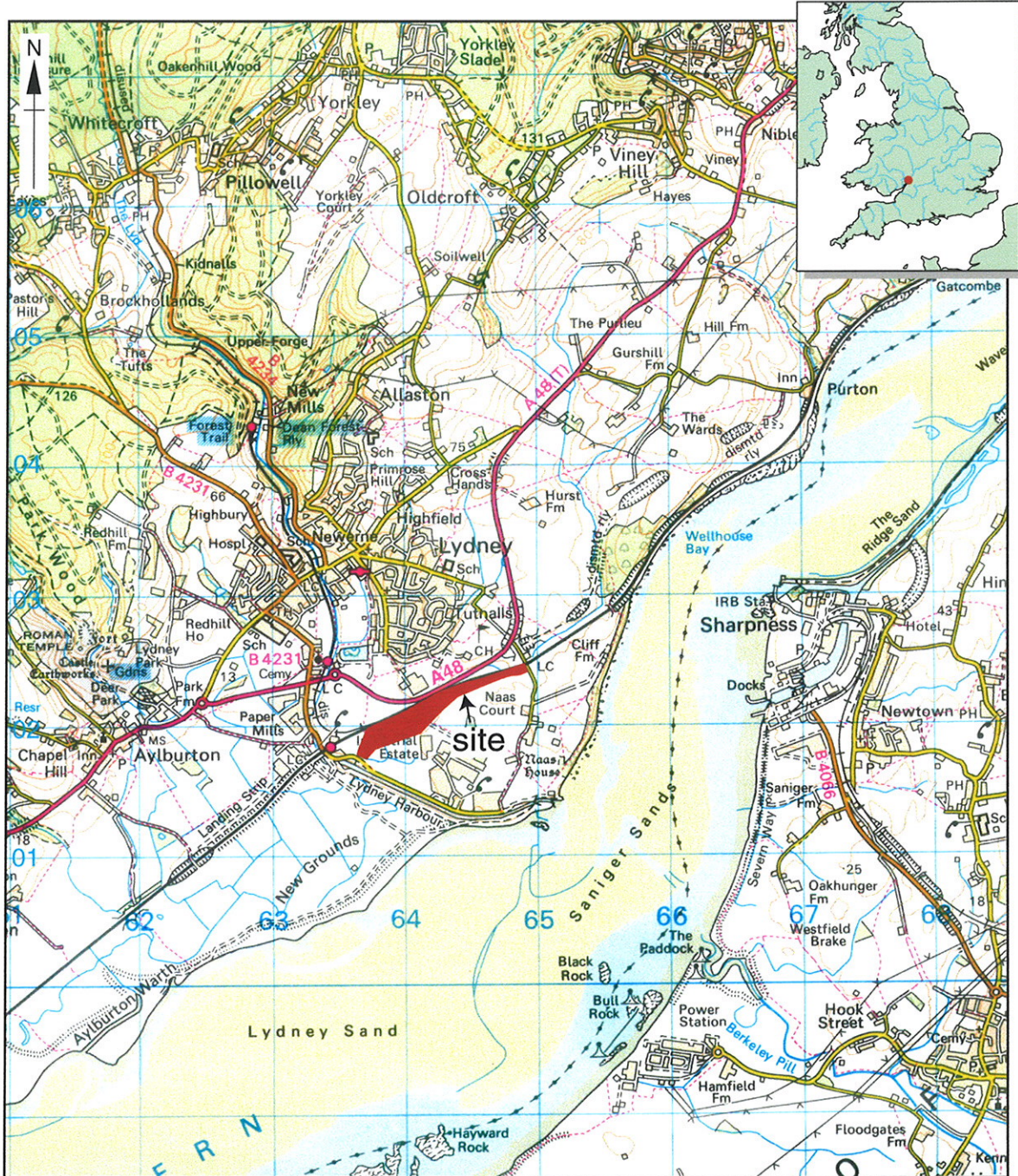
9	90	Deposit	0.26	Topsoil			
	91	Deposit	0.50	Alluvium (redeposited)			
	92	Deposit	0.15	Buried soil with charcoal and twigs			
	93	Deposit	0.40	Alluvial fill of channel			
	94	Deposit	0.40	Alluvial fill of channel			
	95	Deposit	0.65	Alluvial fill of channel with twigs and roots			
	96	Deposit	0.75	Alluvium			
	97	Deposit	0.80	Alluvium			
	98	Cut		Palaeochannel (bottom not seen)			
10	100	Deposit	0.50	Topsoil			
	101	Deposit	0.50	Redeposited clay			
	102	Deposit	0.20	Redeposited clay			
	103	Deposit	0.20	Fill of pond	Slag and brick		
	104	Slag and brick	0.20	Fill of drainage ditch	Slag		
	105	Cut	0.20	Drainage ditch			
	106	Deposit	0.20	Alluvium			
	107	Cut		Pond (not bottomed)			
11	110	Deposit	0.20	Topsoil			
	111	Deposit	0.60	Alluvium			
	112	Deposit	0.20	Alluvium			
12	120	Deposit	0.17	Topsoil			
	121	Deposit	1.00	Alluvium			
	122	Deposit	0.50	Fill of pond	Pottery; -- slag; brick	1	AD 325-400
	123	Deposit		Fill of pond (not excavated)			
	124	Deposit	0.40	Fill of ditch			
	125	Cut	0.40	Drainage ditch			
	126	Deposit	0.25	Alluvium			
	127	Cut		Pond (not bottomed)			
13	130	Deposit	0.30	Topsoil			
	131	Deposit	0.75	Alluvium			
	132	Deposit	0.10	Alluvium			
14	140	Deposit	0.20	Topsoil			
	141	Deposit	0.85	Alluvium			
	142	Deposit	0.20	Alluvium			
	143	Deposit	0.33	Alluvium			
	144	Deposit	0.05	Alluvium			



15	150	Deposit	0.18	Topsoil			
	151	Deposit	0.90	Alluvium			
	152	Deposit	0.10	Alluvium			
19	190	Deposit	0.23	Topsoil			
	191	Deposit	0.75	Alluvium			
	192	Deposit	0.10	Alluvium			
20	200	Deposit	0.25	Topsoil	Pottery	2	16-18c
	201	Deposit	0.70	Alluvium			
	202	Deposit	0.15	Alluvium			

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Figure 1: site location.

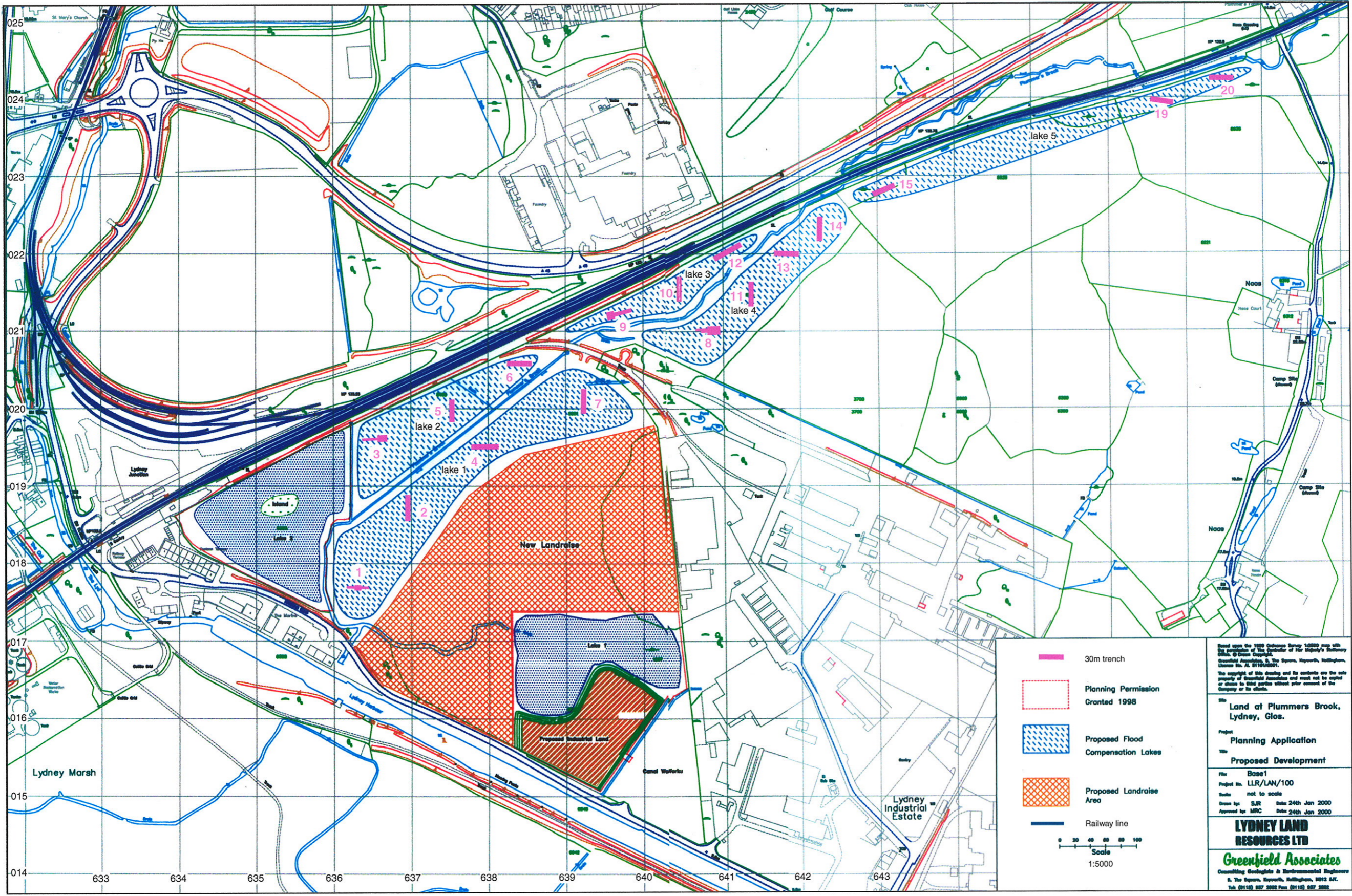


Figure 2: location of trenches.



LYPB 00

### Trench 12: Plan

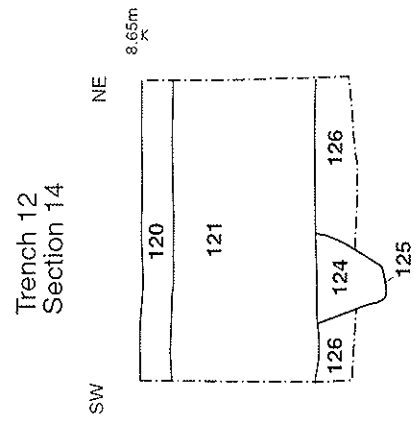
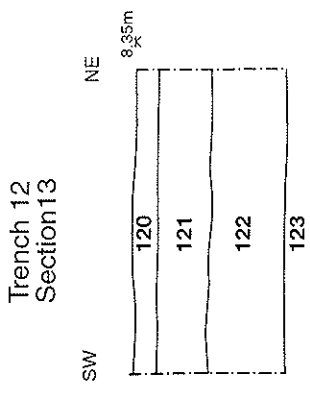
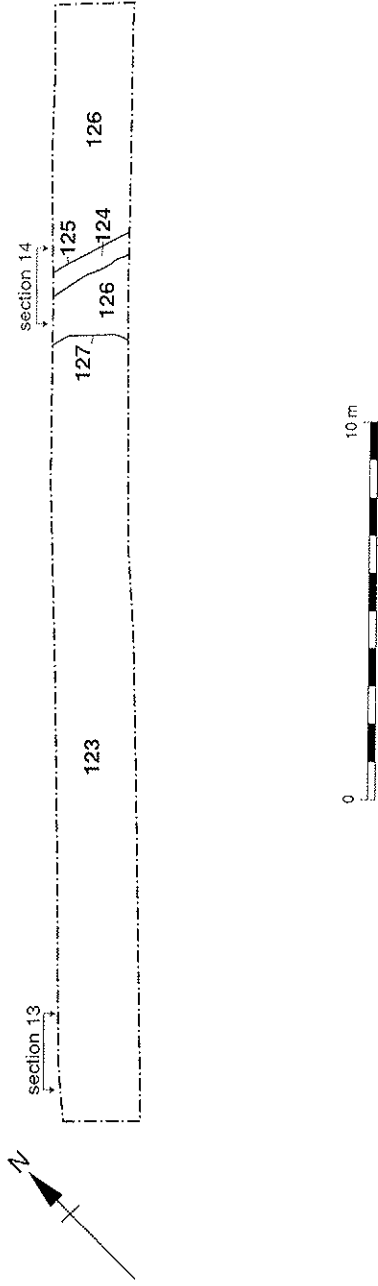
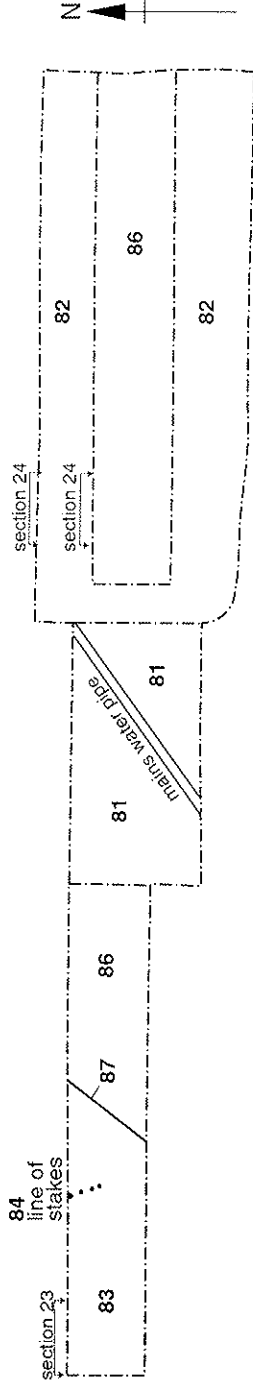
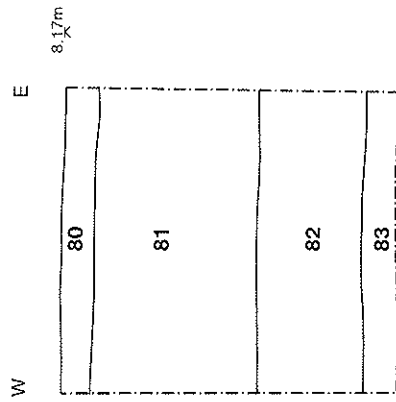


Figure 3: Trench 12, plan and sections.

### Trench 8: Plan



### Trench 8 Section 23



### Trench 8 Section 24

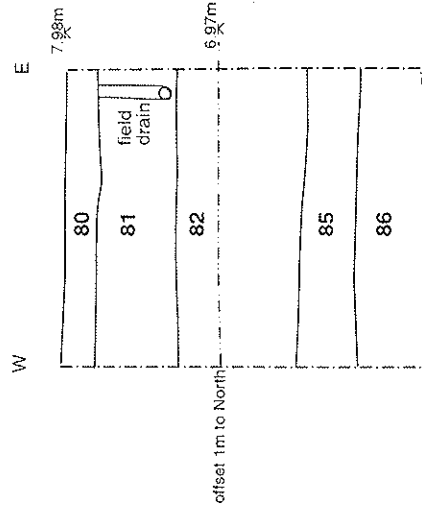


Figure 4: Trench 8, plan and sections.



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