

Buscot Wick Farm Near Lechlade Oxfordshire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



November 2008

Client: Mr Kinch

Issue No:1

OA Job No: 4060

NGR: SU 219 979

**Buscot Wick Farm,
Near Lechlade, Oxfordshire**
NGR: SU 219 979

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

On October 23rd 2008, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Buscot Wick Farm, Buscot Wick, Near Lechlade-on-Thames, Oxfordshire (NGR: SU 219 979). The work was commissioned by Mr Kinch. in advance of the construction of new animal housing. The watching brief revealed 2 phases of ploughsoil overlying natural alluvial and gravel deposits. The varying depth of the ploughsoils suggest that the site was originally covered by deep ridge and furrow prior to levelling in the post-medieval period. No archaeological features were observed in the natural deposits exposed and no residual finds predating the post-medieval period were recovered.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 On October 23rd 2008 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Buscot Wick Farm, Buscot Wick, Nr. Lechlade-on-Thames, Oxfordshire (NGR: SU 219 979). The work was commissioned by Mr Kinch in respect of a planning application for the construction of new animal housing.

1.1.2 Because of the site's position on the River Thames gravel terrace, a condition was set by Hugh Coddington, of Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services requiring an archaeological watching brief during the period of ground works.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 Buscot Wick Farm is located on the western edge of the village of Buscot Wick, approximately 2 km south-east of Lechlade-on-Thames (Fig. 1). The development area is roughly level ground and was originally open pasture.

1.2.2 The site lies at approximately 72 m OD and is 0.25 hectares in area. The underlying geology is Alluvium over 1st Terrace River Gravel (British Geological Survey Sheet no. 252).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The site is located 600 m south-west of the current course of the River Thames within the flood plain formed by the 1st terrace river gravels. This position has long been associated with earlier settlements, particularly those dating to the Bronze Age, Iron Age and Romano-British periods.

1.3.2 Several Bronze Age sites dating the late 2nd and early 1st millennium have been excavated at Lechlade to the north-east and also at Horcott pit, Fairford to the west.

- 1.3.3 The Thames Valley is also rich in the remains of Iron Age date, including an early Iron age site at Butlers Field near Lechlade and a middle to late Iron Age site at Kempsford to the west.
- 1.3.4 The Upper Thames Valley was densely settled during the Romano-British period with one estimate indicating as many as one site per square kilometer (Miles *et al*, 2004). There have been excavations at Roughground Farm, Lechlade and at Kempsford Quarry.
- 1.3.5 An Anglo-Saxon cemetery was excavated at Butlers Field, on the north-eastern edge of Lechlade and an early Saxon settlement was discovered during excavations in Horcott Pit near Fairford.
- 1.3.6 Later medieval settlement in the Upper Thames Valley did not differ greatly in location from that of today, with many of the modern day towns and villages of the gravel terraces originating in this period.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development. In particular any remains relating to the Saxon or early medieval origin of the locale.
- 2.1.2 To preserve by record any archaeological remains that the works may remove or damage within the area being investigated.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The watching brief consisted of 1 site visit to monitor the progress and extent of the excavations and to record the stratigraphy exposed during the works.
- 2.2.2 The excavations consisted of a topsoil strip of approximately 0.1 m depth which removed the turf, but left the remainder of the topsoil *in-situ*, and the excavation of 29 foundation pad pits each measuring 1 m by 0.8 m and excavated to a depth of up to 1.1 m. The topsoil strip was conducted by a tracked excavator fitted with a 1.8 m wide grading bucket and the foundation pits were dug using a mechanical excavator fitted with a 0.8 m wide toothed bucket.
- 2.2.3 A plan of the excavations and any archaeological features was drawn at a scale of 1:100 (Fig. 2) and any sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All sections and any excavated features were photographed using digital photography, colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was also made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (OAU, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

Sections 1, 2, 3, 5 and 9

3.1.1 The stratigraphy within these sections was fundamentally the same with only the depth of deposits varying and not the sequence. They have been described together with the variation in depth noted.

3.1.2 The underlying terrace gravel (3) was encountered at a depth of between 0.5 m at the south-western corner (Section 1) of the site deepening to 0.7 m below ground level at the eastern edge of site (Section 9). This was overlaid by a layer of dark yellow-brown clay loam (2), of between 0.15 m and 0.28 m in depth. This was sealed a dark grey-brown clay sandy loam (1), the present day topsoil, of between 0.15 m and 0.3 m in depth.

Sections 6, 8, 10 and 13

3.1.3 As in the above sections the stratigraphy exposed was the same and will be described together.

3.1.4 An undisturbed layer of orange-brown silty clay sand (4) was encountered at a depth of between 0.6 m and 0.95 m below ground level at the north-east corner (Section 8) and east of the site (Section 10) respectively. This was overlaid by Layer 2 measuring between 0.22 m and 0.32 m in depth. Overlying this was the layer of topsoil, (1), measuring 0.35 m in depth.

Sections 11, 12 and 14

3.1.5 These three sections all occur along the western edge of the site and displayed similar stratigraphy.

3.1.6 Within Sections 12 and 14 the underlying terrace gravel 3 was encountered at a depth of 1 m and 1.2 m below the current ground level respectively. This was overlaid by a 0.28 m deep layer of yellow-brown silt clay (5). This layer was also encountered in the base of section 11 at a depth of 1 m below ground level.

3.1.7 Overlying this was a continuation of layer 2, 0.4 m deep, sealed by a continuation of the current topsoil, 1, between 0.3 m and 0.45 m in depth.

3.1.8 Within section 14 the topsoil was overlaid by a farm track (6), composed of crushed brick and concrete, 0.2 m deep.

Sections 7 and 10

3.1.9 These two sections were located in the north-eastern corner of the site. In both these pits Layer 2 was not bottomed and was sealed by Layer 1, measuring 0.4 m and 0.3 m deep respectively.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 Fragments of brick, tile and bottle glass of a probable 19th/20th-century date were observed within layer 1. Their deposition was a probable result of manuring practices. Their presence was recorded but they were not retained. No other dating evidence was recovered from any of the other contexts.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No samples suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The sections show that the terrace gravel was encountered at a depth of 0.5 m below ground along the western edge of the site increasing to 0.7 m below ground level along the eastern edge of the site sloping down to 1.2 m below ground level in the south-eastern corner of the site.
- 4.1.2 In the centre and eastern areas of the site layers of alluvium (4 and 5) were observed overlying the terrace gravel.
- 4.1.3 Layer 1 represents a post-medieval layer of ploughsoil, while layer 2 represents an earlier ploughsoil horizon, although no dating evidence was encountered. The increase in depth of these 2 layers from 0.5m deep along the western edge and centre of the site increasing to 0.9 m deep along the eastern edge of the site suggests that the depth of ploughing increased along the eastern edge of the development area probably indicating ridge and furrow working. The suggested orientation of the ridge and furrow is shown in Fig. 3.
- 4.1.4 The deposits observed show that the development area was part of a flood plain and was used for arable agricultural activities, as evidenced by the deep ridge and furrow observed within the sections, (still visible in the adjoining fields), and latterly as pasture. These can be dated to the post-medieval period.
- 4.1.5 No evidence for occupation or any other activities from earlier periods in the form of residual finds or as cut features within the exposed natural was observed.

APPENDICES**APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY**

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i> Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	Layer	0.12 m	-	Post-medieval ploughsoil	Brick, glass	C20th
2	Layer	0.15 m	-	Earlier ploughsoil horizon	-	-
3	Layer	0.35 m	-	Terrace gravel	-	-
4	Layer	> 0.5 m	-	Alluvium, probable flood deposits	-	-
5	Layer	0.14 m	-	Alluvium, probable flood deposits	-	-
6	Layer	0.07 m	c. 3m	Hardcore, modern farm track	-	C20th

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

IFA 2001, *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

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

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Buscot Wick Farm, Near Lechlade, Oxfordshire

Site code: BUSWFM 08

Grid reference: SU 219 979

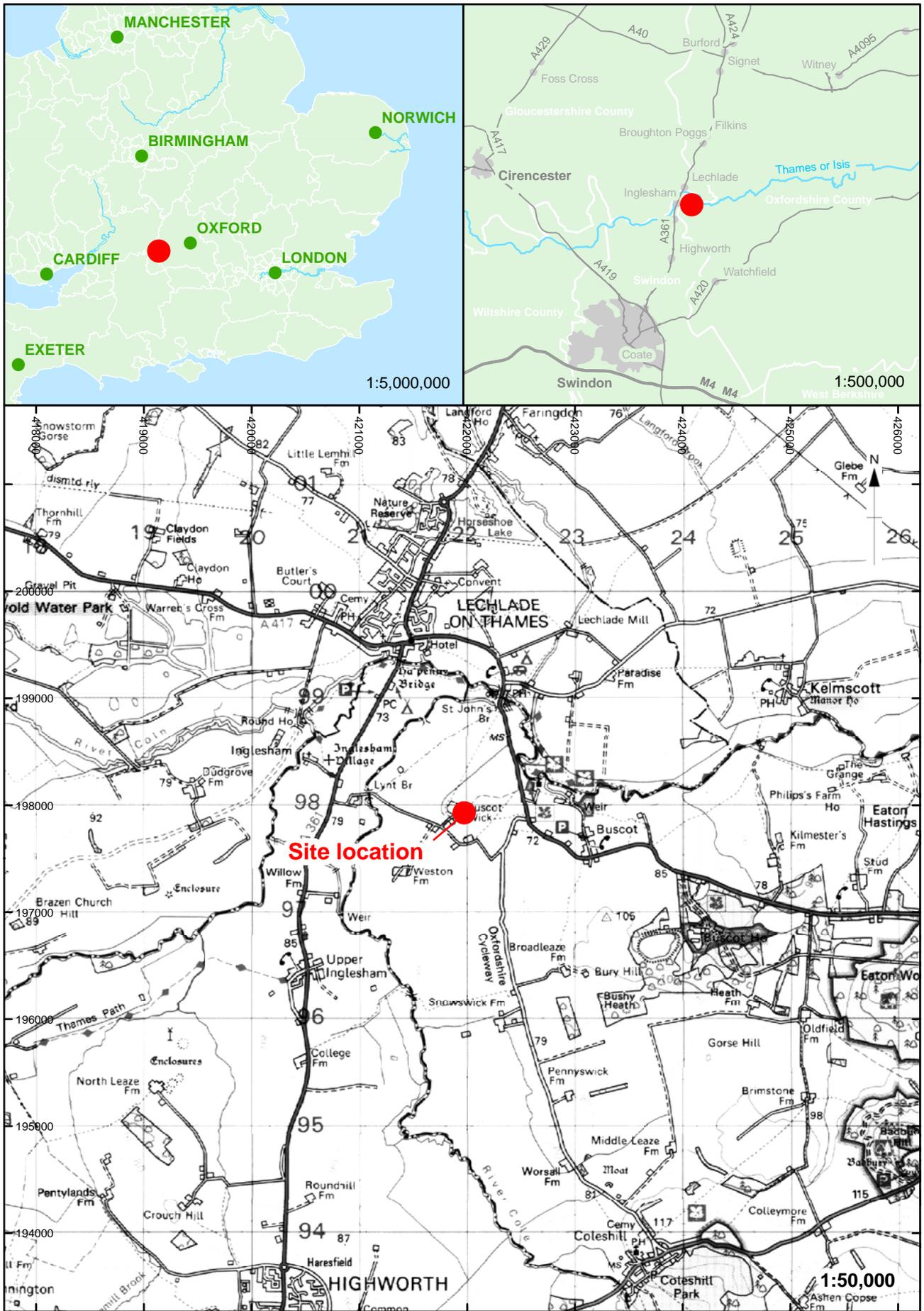
Type of watching brief: Excavation of foundation pits, ground reduction

Date and duration of project: 22nd October 2008, 1 day

Area of site: 0.13 hectare

Summary of results: 2 phases of ploughsoil overlying natural alluvial and gravel deposits. No evidence for activity pre-dating the post-medieval period was encountered.

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.



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Figure 1: Site location

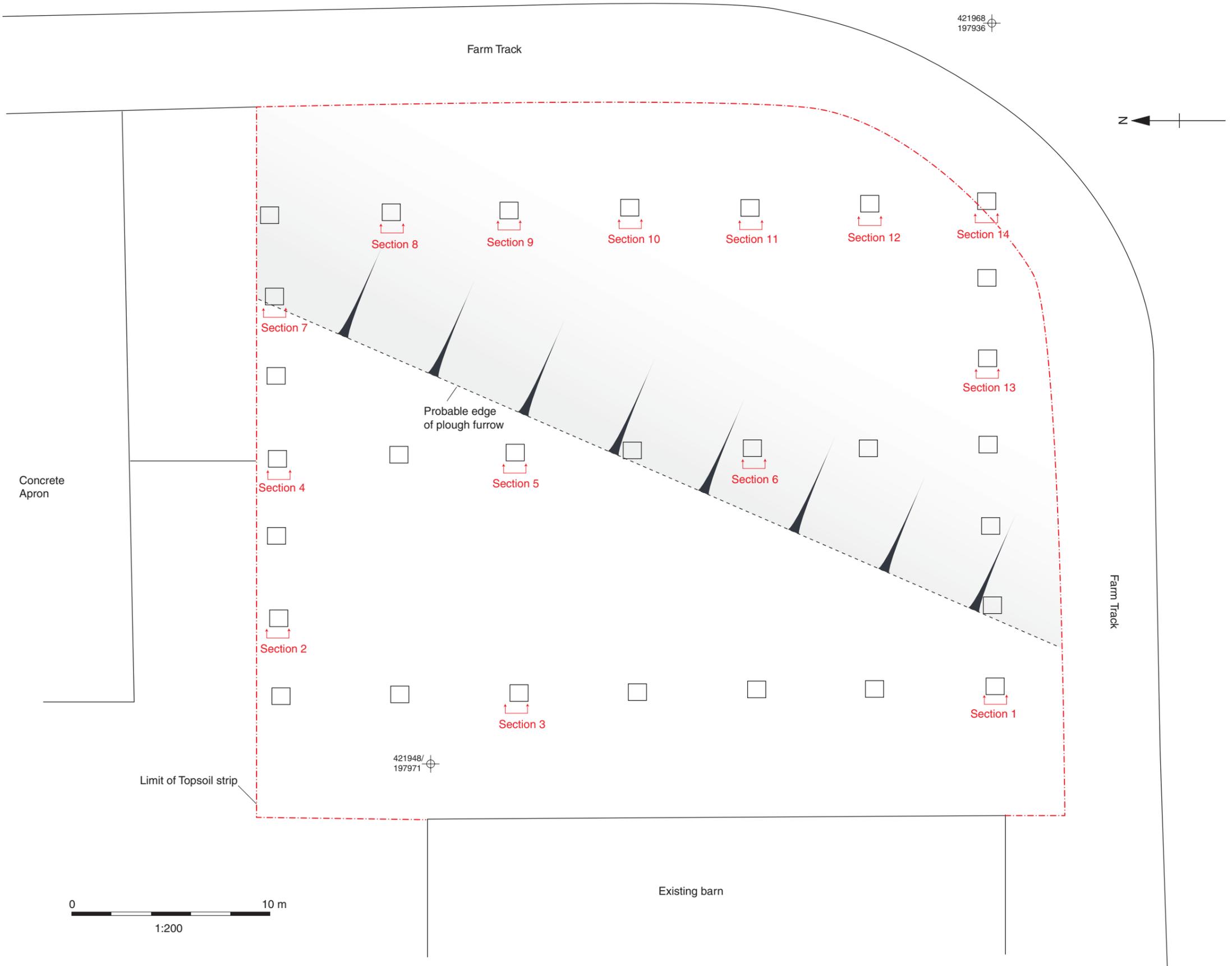


Figure 2: Site plan

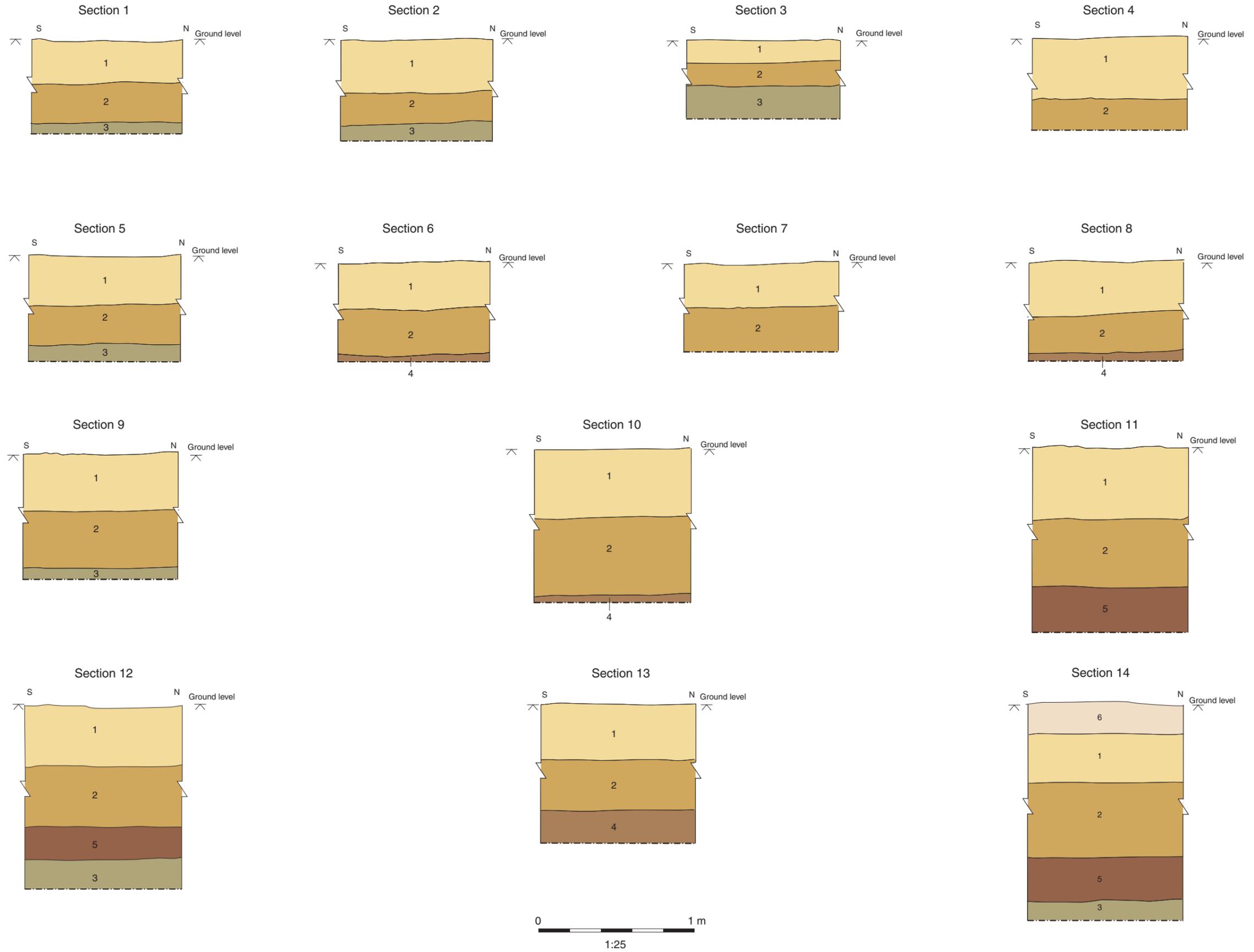


Figure 3: Sections



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