

# Excavation of a New Water Pipe Trench within the Romano-Celtic Temple Scheduled Monument at Woodeaton Oxfordshire



## Archaeological Watching Brief Report



March 2010

**Client: John D. Wood & Co**

Issue No: 1

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within the Romano-Celtic Temple Scheduled Monument at  
Woodeaton, Oxfordshire**

***ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT***

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Front cover: Trench digger in operation



## SUMMARY

*On the 24th February 2010, Oxford Archaeology South undertook a watching brief within the boundary of the Romano-Celtic Temple Scheduled Monument to the north of the village of Woodeaton, Oxfordshire. Archaeological observation and recording was undertaken upon the excavation of a trench for a new water pipe to supply animal drinking troughs within the field. Ploughsoil and geological deposits were observed and no archaeological deposits were encountered or affected.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 On the 24th of February 2010, Oxford Archaeology South (OAS) undertook an archaeological watching brief within the boundary of the Romano-Celtic Temple Scheduled Monument (SM OX107) to the north of the village of Woodeaton, Oxfordshire (centred upon National Grid Reference SP 535 126). Scheduled Monument consent was granted by the Department for culture, media and sport (DCMS HSD9/2/14179) that stipulated the parameters for the excavation of the pipe trench. Subsequently Richard Oram of the Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service (OCAS) provided a Brief that detailed the requirements for a watching brief. OAS produced a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) in response to the Brief detailing how the works would be completed. This document was agreed with Richard Oram and Chris Welch (English Heritage Inspector of Ancient Monuments) prior to the fieldwork being undertaken.

1.1.2 The work was commissioned by John D. Wood & Co. to provide the appropriate support and to make an archaeological record of the pipe trench excavation during the course of the intrusive works.

### 1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 The site is located approximately 3 km to the north-east of Oxford, 500 m to the north of the village of Woodeaton and approximately 500 m to the south-west of the village of Noke (Fig. 1). The field through which the pipe trench is to run slopes gently down to the north-east before rising slightly to meet the B4027. The site is surrounded by relatively open farmland on the other three sides.

1.2.2 The field of the Scheduled Monument lies between 95 m and 100 m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is complex with the sloping topography exposing the sequence of strata of Kellaways Formation and Great Oolitic Group. From NE to SW, the route of the water pipe appears to principally cross the Forest Marble Formation, Kellaways Clay Member, Cornbrash and the White Limestone Formation (British Geological Survey sheet no. 237).

### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 The scheduled site (SM OX107) contains the remains of a first century Roman temple, reconstructed in the second century and enclosed by a rectangular temenos. A geophysical survey has confirmed the plan of the temple and located a circular building outside the temenos and a further, possibly rectangular building, was also identified to the south. Numerous Romano-British finds including votive objects have been recorded from the site. The site was the subject of a field walking survey, carried out at the request of the owners, which identified three phases of activity; early prehistoric, as indicated by a thin scatter of worked flints, later prehistoric, as indicated by late Bronze Age and early Iron Age pottery, and Roman by widely distributed pottery with detectable concentrations. The late prehistoric and Romano-British remains extend east beyond the boundary of the Scheduled Monument.
- 1.3.3 OAS (Formerly as Oxford Archaeological Unit) has previously excavated 13 trenches across the site which revealed dense early Iron Age occupation at the northern end of the assessment area which diminishes to the south/south-west. The features observed comprised postholes, pits and gullies which were relatively well preserved.
- 1.3.4 The Roman temple is set within a broader area of archaeological potential with a Roman Villa (SM 28136) located only 600 m to the north near Islip along with an accompanying field system as recorded on aerial photographs (PRN 11609). A discovery of Roman pottery and building material 350 m north of the temple also suggests that further buildings of this date in the immediate vicinity of the temple complex (PRN 11632).
- 1.3.5 Numerous occurrences of prehistoric lithics in the area have also been recorded (PRN 11631, 14354 and 14359) which include Mesolithic material.

## 2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To preserve by record any archaeological features or deposits that may be disturbed or destroyed during the course of the groundworks.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.



## 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The trench was excavated by a wheeled trenching machine cutting a 0.2 m wide vertical sided trench (see front cover image). The sides and base of the trench were closely examined for archaeological evidence and the spoil was examined for artefactual remains. Due to the narrow trench width, all recording and observation was undertaken from the top of the trench.
- 2.2.2 A plan showing the extent of the excavations and the location of the recorded sections was maintained at a scale of 1:1000 (Fig. 2). The sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. The pipe trench and sections were photographed using colour digital photography 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* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 No archaeological deposits were encountered along the route of the pipe trench. The current ploughsoil (1) was recorded as being between 0.2 m and 0.3 m thick and overlay the surface of varied geological deposits. These are described by the location of each recorded section (see Figs 2 and 2).

#### *Section 1*

- 3.1.2 The underlying natural geology, a red-brown silty sand clay (2) was encountered at a depth of 0.3 m below ground level. This was overlain by a layer of dark brown clayey ploughsoil containing numerous small sub-angular fragments of limestone (1).

#### *Section 2*

- 3.1.3 A layer of stiff yellow-brown clay (3) was observed at a depth of 0.2 m below ground level. This deposit sloped down to the north where it was overlain by the northern extent of layer 2. Ploughsoil layer 1 overlay deposits 2 and 3.

#### *Section 3*

- 3.1.4 Clay deposit (3) was encountered at a depth of 0.2 m below ground level. Ploughsoil layer 1 overlay deposit 3.

#### *Section 4*

- 3.1.5 A layer of sub angular limestone fragments contained within a grey-brown silt clay (4) was recorded overlain by the edge of layer 3. Ploughsoil layer (1) overlay both deposits.

### ***Section 5***

3.1.6 Layer 4 was overlaid by a deposit of dark red-brown silt clay containing small fragments of abraded limestone (5). The overlying ploughsoil layer was 0.2 m deep.

### **3.2 Finds**

3.2.1 Two fragments of abraded Romano-British pottery were recovered from the ploughsoil during the course of the watching brief. One fragment is of colour-coated Oxford ware dated to the 3rd century and the second a fragment of Oxford reduced ware dated from the 1st-3rd century.

## **4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

4.1.1 No evidence for activity either in the form of truncated features or finds clusters were observed during the course of the watching brief. The excavation of the trench was very clean with all the context boundaries being clearly defined both within the sides and base of the trench, suggesting that it was unlikely that such features would have remained unobserved if present.

4.1.2 The two fragments of Roman pottery that were recovered both derived from the ploughsoil and, as such, do not hold any particular significance. Finds scatters within the ploughsoil across the scheduled monument area are well known and widely distributed.

**APPENDICES****APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY**

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	Layer	0.2 m - 0.3 m	Modern ploughsoil	Plastic, pottery	C20th
2	Layer		Sandy clay	-	-
3	Layer		Clay	-	-
4	Layer		Silt/clay and Limestone	-	-
5	Layer		Silt/clay and Limestone	-	-

**APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES**

IFA, 2008 *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

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

OA 2010 *Water Pipe Trench Excavation, Woodeaton, near Islip, Oxfordshire: Written Statement of Investigation*

OAU 1991 *Temple Hill Woodeaton, Oxfordshire: Archaeological Assessment*

OCAS 2010 *Proposed Works at Romano-British Temple, North of Woodeaton, Islip: Design Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

**APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS**

**Site name:** Excavation of a New Water Pipe Trench within the Romano-Celtic Temple Scheduled Monument at Woodeaton, Oxfordshire

**Site code:** WOODLA 10

**Grid reference:** Centred at SP 5354 1263

**Type of watching brief:** Machine excavation of a water pipe trench

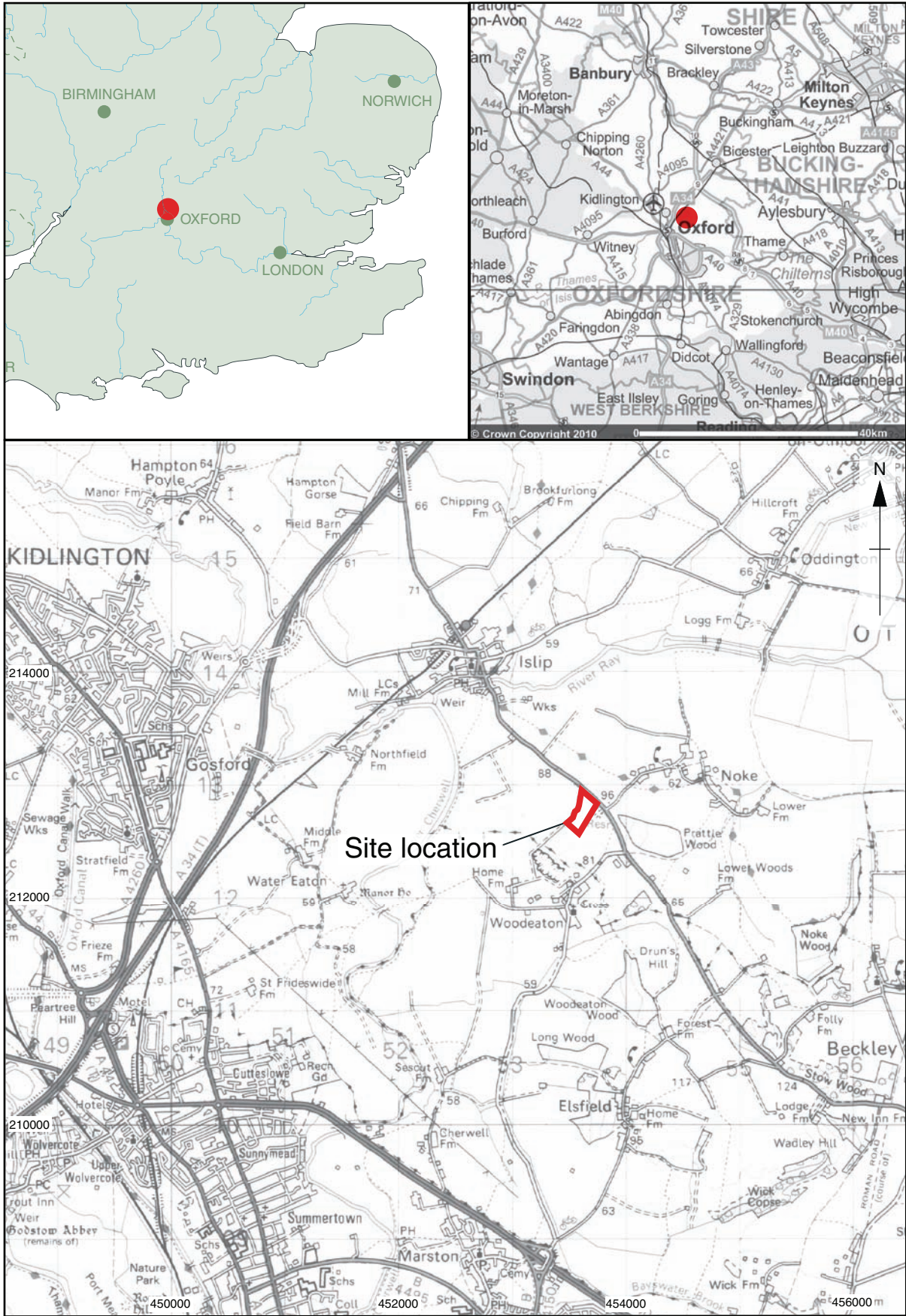
**Date and duration of project:** 24th February 2010 (1 day)

**Area of site:** 14 hectares (Scheduled monument area)

**Summary of results:** The watching brief revealed modern ploughsoil directly overlying natural deposits. No archaeological deposits were 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



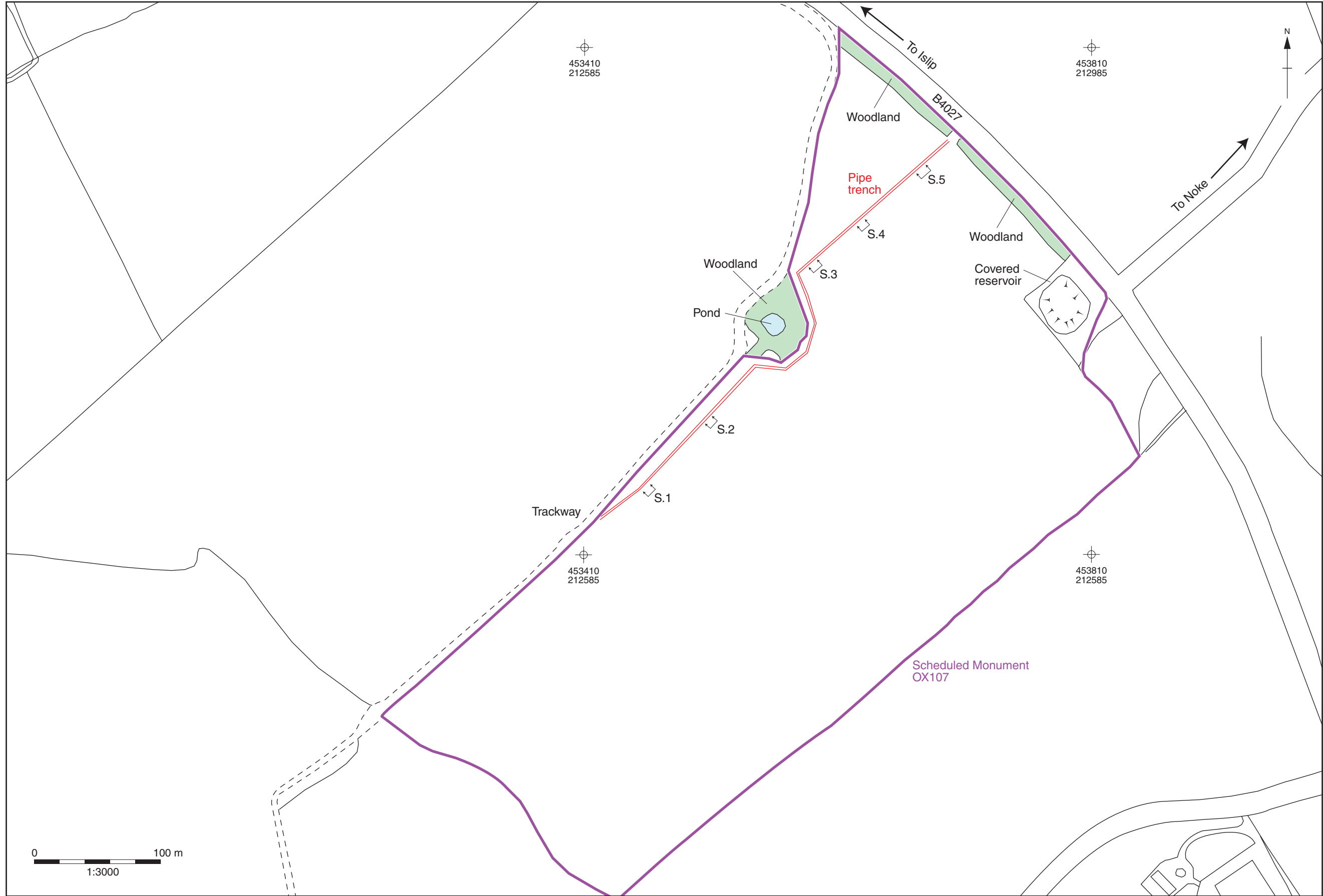


Figure 2: Site plan





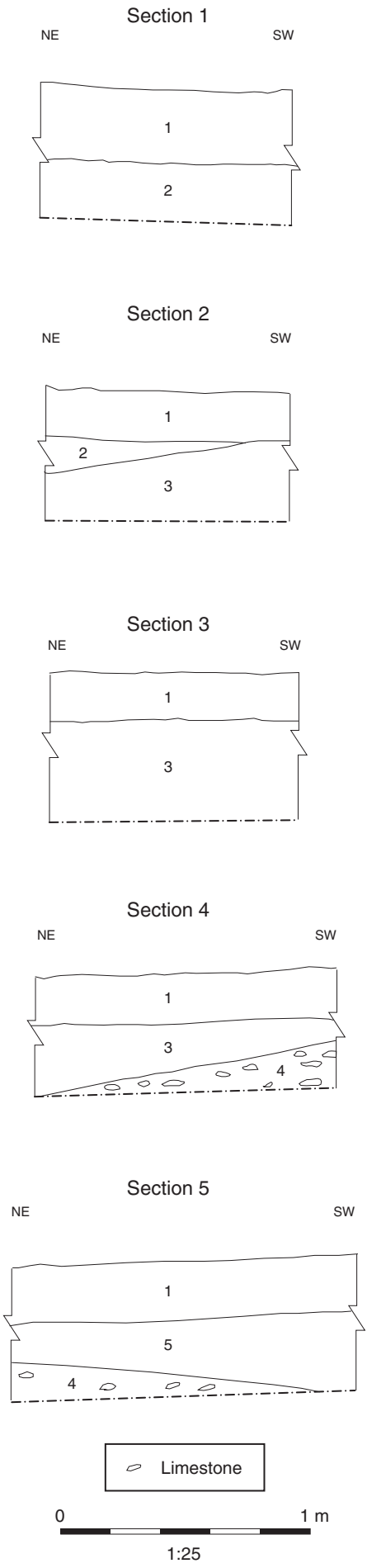


Figure 3: Sections





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