

Archaeological Test Pits at Devil's Dyke, Ditches Farm Burwell, Cambridgeshire



Archaeological Evaluation Report



December 2015

Client: Cambridge County Council

OA East Report No: 1879

OASIS No: oxfordar 3-234103

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Archaeological Test Pits at Devil's Dyke, Ditches Farm, Burwell, Cambridgeshire

Archaeological Evaluation

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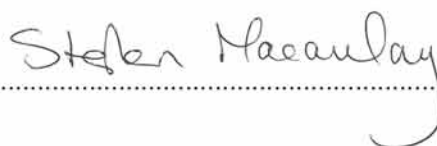
Illustrator: Charlotte Walton BA MPhil

Report Date: December 2015

Report Number: 1879
Site Name: Devil's Dyke, Ditch Farm, Burwell, Cambridgeshire.
HER Event No: 4561
Date of Works: December 2015
Client Name: Cambridge County Council
Client Ref: 17859
Planning Ref: n/a
Grid Ref: TL59029 63908
Site Code: BURDDF15
Finance Code: BURDDF15
Receiving Body: CCC Stores
Accession No:

Prepared by: Michael Webster
Position: Supervisor
Date: 9/12/15

Checked by: Stephen Macaulay
Position: Senior Project Manager
Date: 15/12/15
Signed:



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Summary

An archaeological investigation was carried out at Devils Ditch (or Dyke), Cambridgeshire on December 1st and 2nd 2015. A total of five hand excavated 1m square test pits were opened into the upper most fills of the ditch, three to a depth of 1m. This work was undertaken to determine if the ditch infill contained sufficient amounts of re-deposited chalk to be used to repair erosion scars on the dyke bank. Unfortunately there was no evidence of suitable chalk material. The materials exposed within the test pits were all modern in date, presumably derived from 20th century infilling as a result of local agriculture.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 An archaeological evaluation was conducted at Devil's Ditch (or Dyke), near to Ditch Farm, Burwell, Cambridgeshire. (Figure 1) (TL59029/63908)
- 1.1.2 This archaeological Test Pit evaluation was undertaken in accordance with an Archaeological Brief issued by Quinton Carroll of Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) supplemented by a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), prepared by Ted Levermore and Dr Rob Wiseman of Oxford Archaeology East (OA East).
- 1.1.3 Devils Ditch is a scheduled monument (List entry no. 10032262/CB5) and thus protected under the Ancient Monument and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, Section 2 and therefore Scheduled Monument Consent was obtained from Historic England (ref S00112268 19.10.15 to allow groundworks to be carried out.
- 1.1.4 Devils Ditch is also a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and permission was also granted from Natural England (Monica O Donnell).
- 1.1.5 The work was part of the Cambridgeshire Monuments Management Project in accordance with the principles identified in Historic England's guidance documents 'Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment' specifically the MoRPHE Project Manager's Guide (2006) and PPN3 (Project Planning Note 3): Archaeological Excavation. The results will enable decisions to be made by CCC, with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found and the restoration of the monument.
- 1.1.6 The site archive is currently held by OA East and will be deposited with the appropriate county stores in due course.

1.2 Geology and topography

The information below is taken from the WSI (Levermore T and Wiseman R 2015)

- 1.2.1 The geology of the site comprises chalk of the Zig-Zag Formation (British Geological Survey 1980). The soils are typical brown calcareous soils of the Swaffham Prior association (511e, SSEW 1983).
- 1.2.2 The site lies on Gallows Hill, at 30m OD. To the east lies gently undulating chalklands towards Newmarket. To the north and west, the land slopes down to the former fen-edge, at Burwell, Reach, and Swaffham Prior.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The section of the Devil's Ditch identified for repair is within an area of archaeological interest. Gallow's Hill, to the northwest of Ditch Farm, is of particular interest, with archaeology from prehistory through to medieval era present there.

Mesolithic and Neolithic

- 1.3.2 To the south-east of Ditch Farm, a possible Mesolithic flint scatter (CHER 11538) has been identified. To the north-west, on Gallow's Hill, several thousand flint items have been recorded (CHER 11537) with many dating to the Neolithic.

Bronze Age

- 1.3.3 In the surrounding area, large ring ditches dating to the Bronze Age have been identified, many of them ploughed out.
- 1.3.4 'The Beacons' are described as a group of mounds, one of which contained a Bronze Age burial (CHER 07456). Although excavated in 1846, their location is now unclear.
- 1.3.5 North-east of the repair site is a 60ft diameter ditch with its mound still remaining (CHER 06489). Other Bronze Age features can be seen to the north (CHER 06456). One ring ditch lies immediately southwest of the Devil's Ditch (CHER 06723). Ring ditches can also be seen to the east (CHER 09251) and to the southwest towards Sterling Farm (CHER 06454) where there are also many other large prehistoric ring ditches (CHER 06690, 10135) and cropmark complexes (CHER 06430). The area also contains similar but currently undated features (CHER 06724, 11183, MCB 19341) which nevertheless point to the prehistoric use of this landscape.
- 1.3.6 Two undated trackways have been identified running north-south, (between Burwell and Dunnington) and east-west (between Swaffham Prior and Exning) (CHER 09250). The latter may interact with the Saxon Devils Dyke (CHER 07801) along the stretch that passes Ditch Farm.

Iron Age and Roman

- 1.3.7 On Gallows Hill there is a palisaded enclosure containing a small single celled structure, thought to be a mausoleum (CHER 11054). This has been dated to the Late Iron Age. It remained in use through the Roman period to the second century AD, when a Romano-British temple complex was built on the site. This complex was reorganised by the 3rd century. A trackway links the site to the Roman villa at Reach (CHER 11054).

Saxon

- 1.3.8 The Devil's Dyke runs 12 kilometres from Reach at the edge of the Fens southeast to Wooditton. It is the most northern of the four major dykes in Eastern England ascribed to the Early Saxon period. The Devils Dyke consists of a single ditch on the southwestern side, with an earthen bank on the north. The ditch is up to seven metres wide at the base and up to 19 metres at the surface, with the sides sloping at up to 60 degrees. The top of the bank is 4.5 to 5.3 metres above ground surface, and 20-23 metres wide.
- 1.3.9 The significance of the name 'Devil's Dyke' is uncertain, but it is shared with a number of other linear ditch and bank earthworks in southern England. It has been suggested that the name has a common origin with the various earthworks termed Grim's Dyke as well as Wansdyke – *Grimr* being a name for the Saxon god *Wodan*, who was later associated with the Devil in early Christianity.

- 1.3.10 The temple complex on Gallow's Hill was used as an Early Anglo-Saxon cemetery (CHER 11054B). Eight inhumations have been identified. Artefactual evidence suggest it was in use during the 5th to 6th centuries. To the south-west, where the Devil's Dyke (or Ditch) has been destroyed by the construction of the A14, to the south of Ditch Farm, an inhumation was excavated from the ditch itself, associated potsherds date this burial to AD 1000-1200.

Medieval

- 1.3.11 There are many medieval furlong boundaries within the surrounding landscape. Some remain only as cropmarks (CHER 10283). Other are still in use as modern field boundaries: the lynchet earthworks on Gallow's Hill are one example (CHER 09769).

Recent Archaeological Investigations

- 1.3.12 In October 1991 an archaeological excavation was carried out in the ditch of Devils Ditch (Malim et al 1997), on the east flank of Gallows Hill, near Ditch Farm (TL 5845 6438) some c500m northwest of the current work. The base of the ditch (flat) was only 0.75m below the ground surface, with the ditch being a total of 4m deep, most open in this location. The base of the ditch in this location is some c2m below the location of the test pitting, however no comparative OD levels are available.

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 The Project was managed by Stephen Macaulay, site work directed by Michael Webster who also excavated the Test Pits with the assistance Emily Abelhart and Richard Higham., site survey carried out by Gareth Rees, all from OA East. Thanks also to Mr Martin Rix of Ditch Farm who allowed site access across his land. Quinton Carroll of Cambridgeshire County Council who is manager of the overall project, Sarah Poppy and Dave Kenny of Historic England and Monica O Donnell or Natural England who monitored the site work.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The objective of this Test Pit evaluation was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence of any redeposited chalk deposits within the ditch backfill that could be utilised to restore the eroded bank. (Plate 6)

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The Brief required that five test pits were hand excavated into the upper fills of the ditch. (Plate 7) Each test pit measured 1m square and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1m.
- 2.2.2 The site survey was carried out by Gareth Rees using Leica GS08 Smartnet DGPS
- 2.2.3 Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. No metal-detected or hand-collected finds were found, other than those which were obviously modern.
- 2.2.4 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA East's *pro-forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and high resolution digital photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.
- 2.2.5 The conditions were dry, sunny and very windy.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 The test pits were positioned to sample the ditch fill materials (Figure 2 and 3), the results of each test pits are given below in numerical order, supported by test pit detail descriptions in Appendix A.

3.2 Test Pit 1 (Plate 1)

- 3.2.1 This test pit was positioned towards the northwestern limits of the backfilled ditch along the base of the southwestern side of the Devils Dyke. Test Pit 1 was excavated to a depth of 1m, it revealed no archaeological remains and no chalk deposits suitable for restoration of the bank.

3.3 Test Pit 2 (Plate 2)

- 3.3.1 This Test Pit was located approximately 13m to the south of Test Pit 1. Test Pit 2 was excavated to a depth of 1m, revealed no archaeological remains or any chalk deposits suitable for the bank restoration.

3.4 Test Pit 3 (Plate 3)

- 3.4.1 This Test Pit was located just over 13m south of Test Pit 2. Test Pit 3 was excavated to a depth of 1m, revealed no archaeological remains or any chalk deposits suitable for the bank restoration.

3.5 Test Pit 4 (Plate 4)

- 3.5.1 This Test Pit was located nearly 19.5m southeast of Test Pit 1. Test Pit 4 was excavated to a depth of only 0.45m, the test pit revealed no archaeological remains or chalk deposits suitable for bank restoration.

3.6 Test Pit 5 (Plate 5)

- 3.6.1 This Test Pit was located towards the southeast limits of the ditch fill, at just over 15m southeast of Test Pit 4. Test Pit 5 was excavated to a depth of only 0.50m, the test pit revealed no archaeological remains or chalk suitable for bank restoration.

3.7 Finds Summary

- 3.7.1 All finds were of modern date and reburied within the backfilled test pits.

3.8 Environmental Summary

- 3.8.1 There were no suitable deposits and no environmental samples were taken.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Chalk Suitable for restoration work

- 4.1.1 The five test pits, dug to sample the upper ditch backfill contained little evidence of chalk material. What chalk deposits were found were not suitable for the required restoration work.

4.2 Significance

- 4.2.1 No archaeological deposits were found, the test pits were backfilled after recording (Plate 8).

4.3 Recommendations

- 4.3.1 Recommendations for any future work based upon this report will be made by the County Archaeology Office.

APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Test Pit 1							
General description Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of a modern top soil/turf and subsoil overlying modern ditch backfill layers.					Orientation		SW-NE
					Avg. depth (m)		1
					Width (m)		1
					Length (m)		1
Contexts							
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date	
1	Layer	-	0.18	Topsoil/Turf	-	-	
2	Layer	-	0.22	Subsoil	-	-	
12	Layer		0.10	Buried Topsoil			
13	Layer		0.38	Buried subsoil			
14	Layer		0.17	Ditch backfill		Modern	
15	Layer	-	-	Ditch backfill not bottomed	-	Modern	
Test Pit 2							
General description Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of a modern topsoil/turf and subsoil overlying modern ditch backfill layers.					Orientation		NW-SE
					Avg. depth (m)		1
					Width (m)		1
					Length (m)		1
Contexts							
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date	
1	Layer		0.16	Topsoil/Turf			
2	Layer		0.20	Subsoil			
7	Layer		0.06	Buried Topsoil			
8	Layer		0.20	Buried subsoil			
9	Layer			Ditch backfill not bottomed		Modern	
Test Pit 3							
General description Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of a modern topsoil/turf and subsoil overlying modern ditch backfill layers.					Orientation		SE-NW
					Avg. depth (m)		1
					Width (m)		1
					Length (m)		1
Contexts							
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date	
1	Layer		0.15	Topsoil/Turf			
2	Layer		0.15	Subsoil			
16	Layer		0.18	Ditch Backfill		Modern	

3	Layer		0.12	Ditch Backfill		Modern
4	Layer		0.30	Ditch Backfill		Modern
5	Layer			Ditch Backfill not bottomed		Modern

Test Pit 4						
General description					Orientation	SW-NE
Trench void of archaeology. Consists of a modern topsoil/turf and subsoil overlying modern ditch backfill layers					Avg. depth (m)	0.45
					Width (m)	1
					Length (m)	1
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
1	Layer		0.15	Topsoil/Turf		
2	Layer		0.12	Subsoil		
6	Layer			Ditch Backfill not bottomed		Modern
10				Same as 6		

Test Pit 5						
General description					Orientation	SE-NW
Trench void of archaeology. Consists of a modern topsoil/turf and subsoil overlying modern ditch backfill.					Avg. depth (m)	0.5
					Width (m)	1
					Length (m)	1
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
1	Layer		0.23	Topsoil/Turf		
2	Layer		0.21	Subsoil		
11	Layer			Ditch Backfill not bottomed		Modern

APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Levermore, T & Wiseman, R 2015 Written Scheme of Investigation. Archaeological Evaluation. Devil's Dyke, Ditches Farm, Burwell, Cambridgeshire. OA East Written Scheme of Investigation Unpublished.
- Malim, T et al 1997 New Evidence on the Cambridgeshire Dykes and Worsted Street Roman Road. PCAS Vol LXXXV (1996).

APPENDIX C. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

Project Details

OASIS Number	oxfordar 3-234103		
Project Name	Devil's Dyke, Ditches Farm, Burwell, Cambridgeshire.		
Project Dates (fieldwork)	Start	01-12-2015	Finish 02-12-2015
Previous Work (by OA East)	Yes	Future Work Yes	

Project Reference Codes

Site Code	BURDDF 15	Planning App. No.	N/A
HER No.	ECB 4561	Related HER/OASIS No.	

Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt	Scheduled Monument Consent
Development Type	Other

Please select all techniques used:

<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - interpretation	<input type="checkbox"/> Grab-Sampling	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - new	<input type="checkbox"/> Gravity-Core	<input type="checkbox"/> Sample Trenches
<input type="checkbox"/> Annotated Sketch	<input type="checkbox"/> Laser Scanning	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey/Recording Of Fabric/Structure
<input type="checkbox"/> Augering	<input type="checkbox"/> Measured Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Targeted Trenches
<input type="checkbox"/> Dendrochronological Survey	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Metal Detectors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Test Pits
<input type="checkbox"/> Documentary Search	<input type="checkbox"/> Phosphate Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Topographic Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Sampling	<input type="checkbox"/> Photogrammetric Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Vibro-core
<input type="checkbox"/> Fieldwalking	<input type="checkbox"/> Photographic Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Visual Inspection (Initial Site Visit)
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysical Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Rectified Photography	

Monument Types/Significant Finds & Their Periods

List feature types using the [NMR Monument Type Thesaurus](#) and significant finds using the [MDA Object type Thesaurus](#) together with their respective periods. If no features/finds were found, please state "none".

Monument	Period	Object	Period
Earthwork	Early Medieval 410 to 1066		Select period...
	Select period...		Select period...
	Select period...		Select period...

Project Location

County	Cambridge	Site Address (including postcode if possible)
District	East Cambridgeshire	Devil's Dyke Ditches Farm Burwell
Parish	Burwell	
HER	CCC HET	
Study Area	0.25ha	National Grid Reference TL59029/63908

Project Originators

Organisation	OA EAST
Project Brief Originator	Kasia Gdaniec
Project Design Originator	Ted Levermore and Dr Rob Wiseman
Project Manager	Stephen Macaulay
Supervisor	Michael Webster

Project Archives

Physical Archive	Digital Archive	Paper Archive
CCC Store	OA East.	CCC Store...
ECB 4561	ECB 4561...	ECB 4561 ...

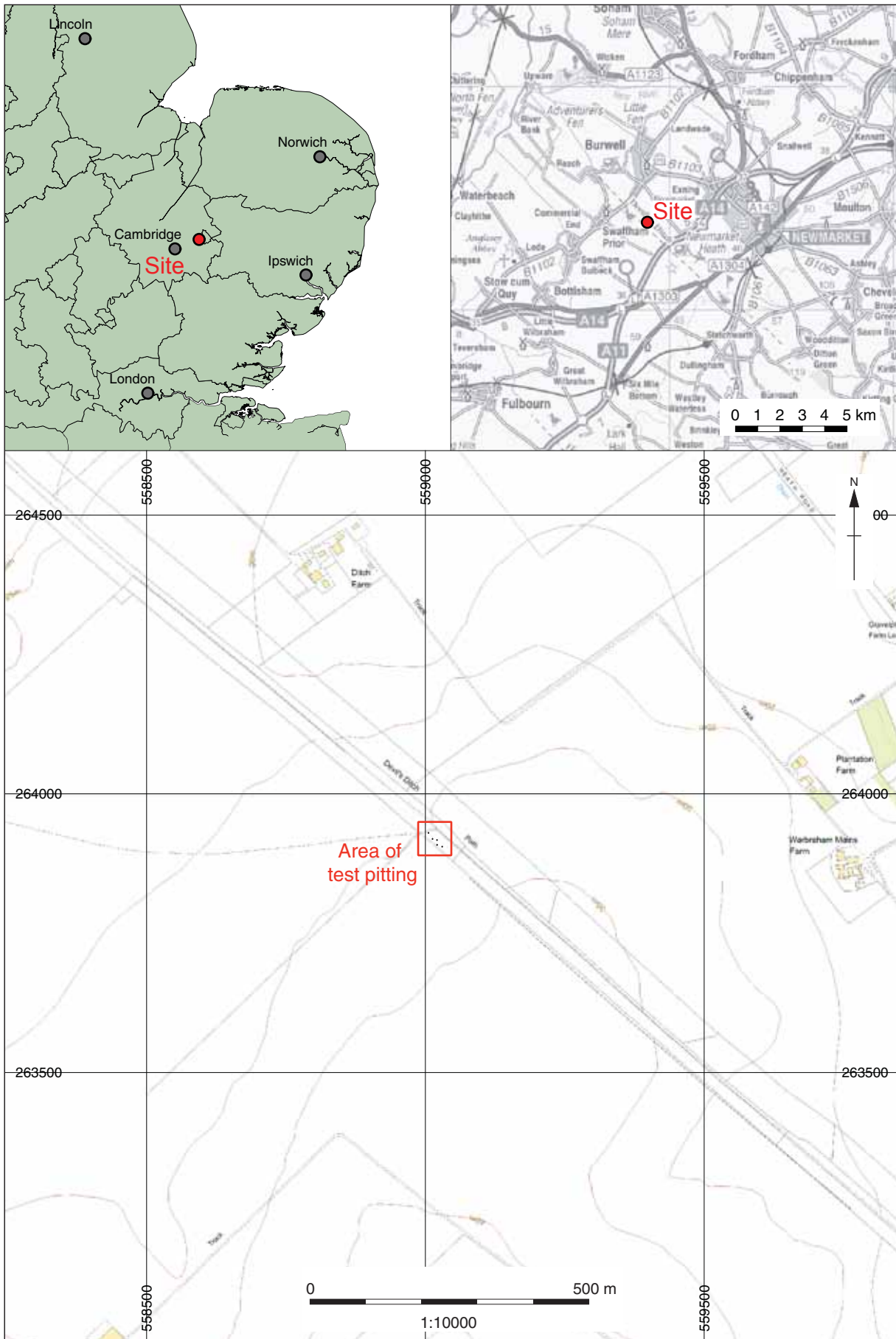
Archive Contents/Media

	Physical Contents	Digital Contents	Paper Contents
Animal Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ceramics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Glass	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leather	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Metal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stratigraphic		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Survey		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Textiles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wood	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Bone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Stone/Lithic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Digital Media	Paper Media
<input type="checkbox"/> Database	<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photos
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GIS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Context Sheet
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysics	<input type="checkbox"/> Correspondence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Images	<input type="checkbox"/> Diary
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Illustrations	<input type="checkbox"/> Drawing
<input type="checkbox"/> Moving Image	<input type="checkbox"/> Manuscript
<input type="checkbox"/> Spreadsheets	<input type="checkbox"/> Map
<input type="checkbox"/> Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Matrices
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Text	<input type="checkbox"/> Microfilm
<input type="checkbox"/> Virtual Reality	<input type="checkbox"/> Misc.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Research/Notes
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Photos
	<input type="checkbox"/> Plans
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Report
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sections
	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey

Notes:

The finds from site were very modern and not kept, they were discarded in the backfill of the test pits.



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Figure 1: Site location showing test pits (black)

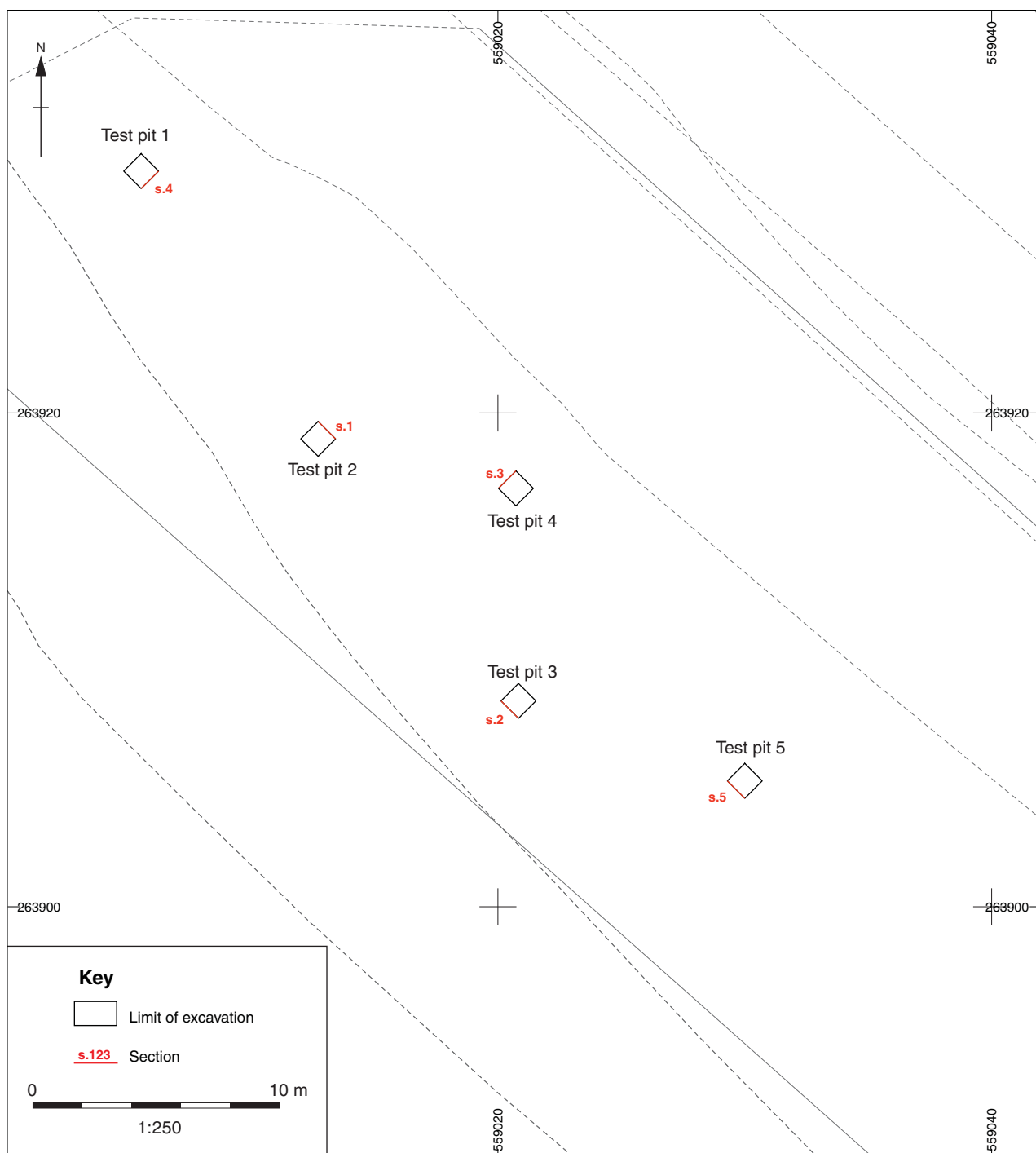


Figure 2: Test pit location plan

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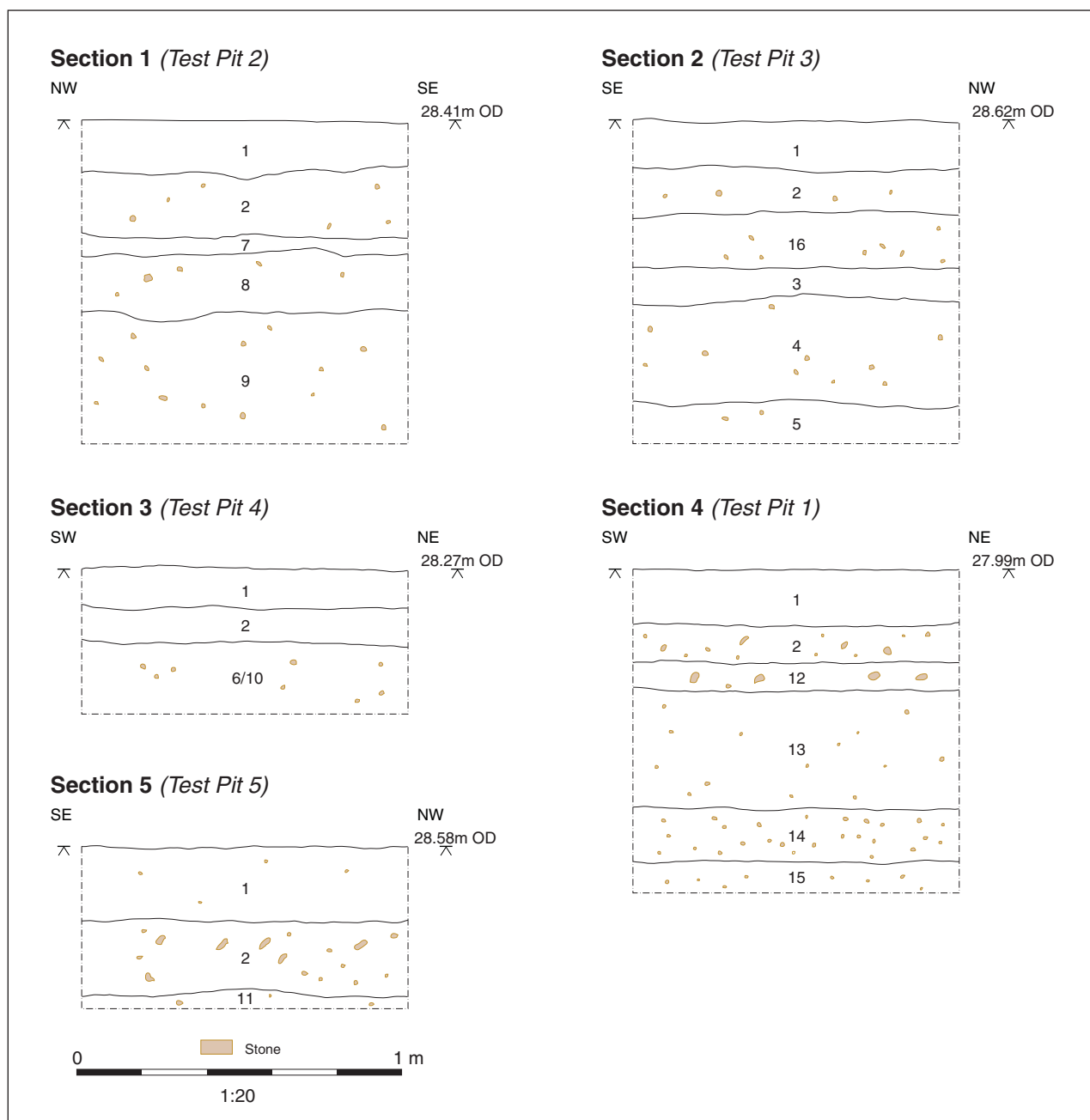


Figure 3: Selected sections



Plate 1: Detail of section in Test Pit 1, looking north-west



Plate 2: Detail of section in Test Pit 2, looking north-east



Plate 3: Detail of section in Test Pit 3, looking south-west



Plate 4: Detail of section in Test Pit 4, looking north-west



Plate 5: Detail of section in Test Pit 5, looking south-west



Plate 6: Example of erosion to the bank, looking north-east



Plate 7: Excavation of Test Pits into top of ditch, looking west



Plate 8: Backfilled Test Pits, looking south



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