

Calvert Pit Buckinghamshire



Evaluation and Strip, Map and Sample Excavation Report

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Calvert Pit, Buckinghamshire

Archaeological Evaluation and Strip, Map and Sample Excavation Report

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Summary

Oxford Archaeology was commissioned by FCC Environment to complete a programme of archaeological investigation at Greatmoor, Calvert, Buckinghamshire. The fieldwork was undertaken prior to an extension of a former clay extraction quarry, for which planning permission was granted in 2012 (Ref: 11/20000/AWD), to provide material for engineered backfilling and landscaping work. The fieldwork comprised two elements: a strip, map and sample excavation (Area B) and a trial trench evaluation (Area C). The fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) approved under condition 16 of the aforementioned planning consent.

The strip, map and sample excavation of Area B was completed in August 2016 uncovering an area of approximately 1ha. This revealed an arrangement of shallow linear ditches with one part appearing to define a small enclosure. However, despite extensive excavation of the ditch fills, no artefactual evidence was encountered to suggest an ancient origin for these features or a more conclusive enclosure arrangement. In contrast, only occasional modern artefacts were recovered suggesting a 19th-20th century origin with these ditches mostly appearing to converge upon the existing deeper drainage ditch aligned N-S across the site. Therefore, it is likely that these reflect historical land drainage rather than more ancient, settlement-related activities.

No archaeological features or deposits of significance were encountered within the evaluation of Area C.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 Calvert pit, a former clay extraction site and landfill facility, is located to the south of Calvert and Calvert Green villages within the Calvert Green parish, 10km south of Buckingham and 15km north-west of Aylesbury in the Aylesbury Vale District of Buckinghamshire (Fig. 1).
- 1.1.2 An extension (Area B) to the west of an extant pit is required to provide clay material to engineer the backfill and landscaping of the former clay extraction quarry. This extension, referred to as the 'Pit 6 extension', is consented under planning permission 11/20000/AWD granted by Buckinghamshire County Council in 2012. To the south, Area C is part of a proposed pond habitat creation area that has not previously been the subject of evaluation. Area B is centred on SP 6952 2279 within the parish of Calvert Green and Area C is centred on SP 6975 2245 within the parish of Grendon Underwood.
- 1.1.3 The scope of the archaeological investigation was outlined within a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by SLR Consulting Ltd and approved, in accordance with condition 16 of the planning permission, by Eliza Alqassa, Planning Archaeologist for Buckinghamshire County Council (SLR 2012). Oxford Archaeology (OA) confirmed with Eliza prior to the start of the fieldwork that it would operate within the requirements of the approved WSI.
- 1.1.4 The archaeological scope of work comprised the investigation of the two areas: Area B, a strip, map and sample excavation covering approximately 1 hectare; and Area C, an evaluation of approximately 0.7 hectares (Fig. 2).
- 1.1.5 The fieldwork was completed between 1st August and 7th September 2016.

1.2 Topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The two investigation areas lie within a gently undulating landscape. The area to the north has been significantly altered in the 20th century by the clay extraction and landfill operations. Area B was a relatively flat overgrown pasture field at the time of the investigation with a surface elevation of approximately 75m aOD. A drainage ditch was aligned N-S across the centre of the excavation area. Area C was set on a slope with a ditch providing both a parish and field boundary along its northern limit. The land slopes up to the south from this boundary from approximately 73-75m aOD. The evaluation area was within a large grass pasture field.
- 1.2.2 The solid geology comprises Stewartby and Peterborough Member mudstones of the Oxford Clay Formation.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The following summary background is largely reproduced from the WSI (SLR 2012).
- 1.3.2 Prior to this investigation there was no recorded evidence for prehistoric activity within the limits of the site. Within the surrounding landscape find scatters are dispersed, although excavated evidence for Iron Age activity is present around the A41 at Newhouse Farm. Here palaeoenvironmental studies have indicated a farmed open landscape and a former river channel produced Iron Age artefacts.



- 1.3.3 The site lies to the north of Akeman Street, a principal Roman road. Contemporary settlement has been demonstrated through excavation at Grendon Underwood and at Quainton, 2-3km from the site. Surface artefact scatters more widely in the landscape indicate the presence of a population at this time.
- 1.3.4 There is very limited evidence for local early medieval activity. By the medieval period a network of roads, manors, moated homesteads, hamlets and villages emerges surrounding Akeman Street. There is no evidence for medieval activity at the site which is likely to have been situated within a marginal area away from principal areas of settlement at this time. There is evidence for medieval farming in the local landscape, preserved as ridge and furrow earthworks around Finemerehill House and Grendon Wood.
- 1.3.5 The post-medieval development of the site and surrounding area consisted of settlement and enclosure of lands within the parish of Grendon Underwood between the 16th and 18th centuries. Small, early post-medieval farms are situated in the vicinity, most significantly at Lower Greatmoor Farm to the south-east. In the 20th century the site was passed by the Grendon-Ashenden railway which now forms the access road to the Energy from Waste facility (EfW) from the A41 before joining the existing rail access to the landfill area.
- 1.3.6 Historic maps for the area show this as agricultural land with internal field boundaries removed to create larger single units within Area C. Area B retains the field boundaries indicated on 19th century mapping.
- 1.3.7 Previous trial trench evaluation of Area B demonstrated the presence of a relatively thin topsoil directly over natural clay (APS 2011). Traces of shallow ditches or gullies which did not reflect the historic field pattern were recorded. The only artefacts encountered were glass and pottery of 19th century date from an upper fill of a ditch. However, these were interpreted as being intrusive and possibly being incorporated into the ditches via large cracks in the soil profile that are present during prolonged dry periods.

2 EVALUATION AND EXCAVATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The primary aim of the investigation was to enable the excavation, recording, assessment, analysis and reporting of all features of archaeological significance.
- 2.1.2 For the Area B strip, map and sample excavation the site-specific objectives were:
- to identify and map the locations of all archaeological features within the stripped area,
 - to characterise and confirm the date of the archaeological remains revealed through hand excavation,
 - to review and update the objectives of the excavation once a date origin of the features had been established,
 - to make a detailed record of the features identified and excavated,
 - to recover dating evidence and, where appropriate, palaeoenvironmental samples,
 - to assess and analyse the site records and prepare a detailed report presenting the results of the investigations, and
 - to submit an ordered archive to the relevant local repository.
- 2.1.3 For the Area C evaluation the specific objectives were:
- to establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains,
 - to hand excavate and make a detailed record of any archaeological features or deposits encountered,
 - to recover artefacts and, where necessary, palaeoenvironmental samples from deposits of potential significance,
 - to provide preliminary results of the investigation during the fieldwork to the planning archaeologist to inform mitigation requirements,
 - to assess the site records and prepare an evaluation report presenting the results of the investigations, and
 - to submit an ordered archive to the relevant local repository.

2.2 Methodology

Area B strip, map and sample excavation

- 2.2.1 All machine excavation of the overburden soil horizons was completed under the direct supervision of an experienced archaeologist. Excavation was carried out using a 13 ton tracked mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket (Plate 1). The overburden was removed using a dumper and stored adjacent to the excavation area. In the absence of any archaeological layers, the topsoil strip and excavation proceeded to the top of the natural geology to reveal cut features. There were no plant traffic movements over the stripped areas.
- 2.2.2 Following machine clearance archaeological features were clearly identifiable and further hand cleaning was not necessary to comprehend the layout. A detailed survey

was then carried out using GPS and total station to record their location and arrangement (Plate 2). Selected features were hand excavated in detail and recorded in line with OA standard procedures and methods. In addition, and following the completion of detailed hand excavation, bulk excavation by hand was undertaken along the line of the ditch features to increase the recovery of artefacts for dating evidence.

- 2.2.3 The Planning Archaeologist was informed of the ongoing results throughout the course of the excavation. A site progress and monitoring meeting was held 18th August between the OA Senior Project Manager and site Project Officer and the Planning Archaeologist. Additional updates were provided by email to the Planning Archaeologist.

Area C trial trenching

- 2.2.4 Six trenches measuring 20m x 1.8m were machine excavated within Area C. Two of these were arranged to investigate former field boundaries indicated on the 1st edition OS map.
- 2.2.5 Prior to excavation the trench locations were surveyed using GPS equipment and marked out. Machine excavation of the overburden was undertaken using a wheeled JCB sitemaster fitted with a toothless ditching bucket and operated under the direct archaeological supervision of OA's Project Officer. In the absence of any archaeological features or horizons of significance, machine excavation proceeded to the top of the natural clay geology.
- 2.2.6 Following machine excavation, each trench was investigated with selected hand cleaning and excavation undertaken followed by appropriate levels recording of the remains.
- 2.2.7 A summary of the results was emailed to the Planning Archaeologist accompanied by digital images of each trench following completion of the evaluation.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Area B

- 3.1.1 A clay-rich topsoil that was generally 0.2-0.25m thick was present across the extent of the strip, map and sample area. This directly overlay the clay geology without any indication of a subsoil or buried ploughsoil horizon being present. Removal of the topsoil revealed a series of linear ditches. These were generally arranged on NE-SW and NW-SE alignments (1063-1068) with a single ditch (1062) being E-W orientated (Fig. 3). No notable discrete features (pits or postholes) were present. The surface horizon of the clay geology also displayed localised areas of plough scars evident as evenly spaced linear soil-filled striations. An existing drainage ditch aligned N-S and following a slightly sinuous course was present through the central spine of the site. The excavation did not extend up to the very edge of this feature to avoid water draining into the site in the event of heavy rain. However, field observations indicate that this would have appeared to fit broadly within the dimensions of the excavated ditches had the topsoil been removed around this ditch.
- 3.1.2 The ditches varied little in form across their extent. These had shallow V-shaped or flat-bottomed profiles ranging between 0.1-0.25m in depth, although they were typically less than 0.20m deep (Fig. 4). They ranged in width from 0.2-1.2m and each was filled with a similar single clayey fill with few natural inclusions and no evidence of charred remains (Plates 3 and 4).
- 3.1.3 The plan and spacing of the ditches suggests that these were part of a largely contemporary arrangement with only a single ditch (1066) having an earlier stratigraphic relationship with another ditch (1065). It is possible that the existing drainage ditch may also have been related to the other ditch arrangements with ditches 1064-1066 either terminating or turning into the ditch towards their junction.
- 3.1.4 The only arrangement of ditches with clear form or direct association with each other was 1062, 1063 and 1069. Ditch 1062 was aligned E-W before turning towards the SE along its eastern extent. At the point where this changed alignment, ditches 1063 and 1069 formed a small enclosure-like arrangement on the southern side of ditch 1062. A corresponding western side of the enclosure was not identified within the excavation area and this may have either been formed or truncated by the existing drainage ditch. If so, this would provide the enclosure with dimensions of 30m N-S by approximately 15m E-W. There was an 8m wide opening within the eastern side of the enclosure.
- 3.1.5 The only other notable feature was the presence of ceramic land drains within ditch 1065 at the point where this was aligned towards the existing drainage ditch. The drains were of the ribbed or fluted style and several were recorded laid end to end as an *in situ* drain. Initially it was thought that these were part of a drain cut into the ditch fill. However, a continuation of this drain alignment was absent beyond the point where the ditch turned to the NE and no clear indication of a cut into the ditch fill was seen.
- 3.1.6 Artefacts were scarce from all excavated features. Of the hand-excavated ditch sections, only three individual contexts produced artefacts. These comprised fragments of land drain, pantile, bottle glass and an iron bolt nut all of which indicated a 19th-20th century origin. Due to the scarcity of artefacts, modern date range and the preceding evaluation interpretation that modern artefacts could be intrusive, large quantities of ditch fill were hand excavated rapidly for finds recovery. In all, approximately 200m of ditch were excavated following this method. Ditch 1064 produced a small assemblage of 18th-19th century pottery (6 sherds, 16g) along with two fragments of land drain, a

nail and two small fragments of window glass. This assemblage remains consistent with a 19th century origin. Fragments of land drain were also recovered from ditches 1063 and 1067.

3.2 Area C

- 3.2.1 Six evaluation trenches were excavated within Area C, each measuring 20m x 1.8m (Fig. 5). Context inventories for each trench are present in Appendix A. No archaeological features were present within the excavated trenches.
- 3.2.2 A humic clayey topsoil and turf was present in each trench to a maximum depth of 0.33m. With the exception of Trench 1, this directly overlay the clay geology. Within Trench 1, and only across the northern lower contours of the trench, a subsoil (101) was present between the clay geology and topsoil (Plate 5). This deposit produced a small assemblage (8 sherds, 98g) of exclusively 19th century pottery. The origin of this soil was not clearly evident, although it may have had a colluvial origin or reflect other activities at this location only. Similar artefacts or deposits were absent from the other trenches and topsoil horizon.
- 3.2.3 The anticipated historic field boundaries as depicted on the 1st edition OS map were not encountered within Trenches 4 and 5. A slight soil mark or stain was noted approximately corresponding to the main historic field boundary in Trench 5 although this was not a ditch. This appeared as a diffuse and faint change in the clay geology as it graded into the topsoil horizon. It is possible that this reflects a track at the field margin and boundary.

3.3 Finds summary

- 3.3.1 A small assemblage of 19th century pottery was recovered from ditch 1064 and Trench 1.
- 3.3.2 Fragments of 19th or 20th century ceramic land drain were recovered from ditches 1063, 1064, 1067 and 1044.
- 3.3.3 Two small fragments of 19th or 20th century glass were recovered from ditches 1062 and 1064.
- 3.3.4 Modern iron objects were recovered from ditches 1044 and 1064.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Area B

- 4.1.1 The primary aim of the strip, map and sample excavation was to better understand the form, function and date origin of the ditches previously identified during the evaluation phase. Within the current investigation, although sparse, the consistent recovery of 19th century artefacts and the total absence of any material of earlier origin both from the excavated features and topsoil does strongly support that these date from that period. To confirm this, a substantial part of the ditch arrangement was fully excavated with the sole aim of recovering artefacts. In all, over 200m of ditch was rapidly hand excavated. Based on the artefact evidence and the volume of excavated ditch fill, it is reasonable to conclude that these features are entirely of 19th century or later origin.
- 4.1.2 With regard to the interpretation of the ditch arrangement and their function, the presence of field drain fragments and the existing N-S aligned drainage ditch possibly indicates that these form part of a former drainage system. Indeed, ditches 1064-1066 and 1068 are aligned towards and terminate at the existing ditch. Comparison of the levels across the site also shows that all of the ditches are either on flat ground with barely a few centimetres variation or that these slope and drain very slightly into the existing ditch. This is true even of the ditches (1062 and 1067) that are apparently continuous across the line of the existing ditch. Most convincing is the presence of a series of *in situ* ceramic land drains within ditch 1065 towards the junction of this ditch with the existing drainage ditch. *In situ* lengths of land drain were absent from all other ditches although fragments of drain pipe were present. Similar fragments were also noted within the topsoil during the topsoil stripping. It appears likely that a drainage system once existed in this field that was only inserted into the topsoil and not the underlying clay geology. This would only have been functional for a pasture field which, given the poor drainage and heavy soil, is the most likely historical main use of this field. Once the field had been ploughed as evidenced by the plough scars, the land drains became fragmented within the topsoil and incorporated into the upper levels of the former ditches. This sequence suggests that the ditches and drains were part of a contemporary or near contemporary drainage system.
- 4.1.3 The absence of earlier, more diverse cultural material supports the view that the ditches are not related to activities or settlement that might otherwise provide ample opportunity for artefacts to become incorporated into the feature fills.

4.2 Area C

- 4.2.1 No archaeological features were present within the evaluation trenches in Area C.
- 4.2.2 A soil deposit recorded in Trench 1 does demonstrate some activity taking here in the 19th century possibly other than might be expected by the range of activities associated with arable or pasture agriculture. However, this could be something as simple as redeposited material from the clearance of nearby boundary and drainage ditches.



APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description No archaeology. Topsoil and a colluvial subsoil overlying clay geology.					Orientation	N-S
					Avg. depth (m)	0.4
					Width (m)	1.8
					Length (m)	20
Contexts						
Context no	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
100	Layer	-	0.20	Topsoil and turf	-	-
101	Layer	-	0.20	Subsoil	Pottery Land drain Clay pipe	19th century
102	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 2						
General description No archaeology. Topsoil overlying clay geology.					Orientation	E-W
					Avg. depth (m)	0.33
					Width (m)	1.8
					Length (m)	20
Contexts						
Context no	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
200	Layer	-	0.33	Topsoil and turf	-	-
201	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 3						
General description No archaeology. Topsoil overlying clay geology.					Orientation	N-S
					Avg. depth (m)	0.33
					Width (m)	1.8
					Length (m)	20
Contexts						
Context no	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
300	Layer	-	0.33	Topsoil and turf	-	-
301	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-



Trench 4						
General description					Orientation	E-W
No archaeology. Topsoil overlying clay geology.					Avg. depth (m)	0.3
					Width (m)	1.8
					Length (m)	20
Contexts						
Context no	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
400	Layer	-	0.30	Topsoil and turf	-	-
401	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 5						
General description					Orientation	N-S
No archaeology. Topsoil overlying clay geology. Slight soil mark or stain across southern end of the trench indicating possible field boundary or track.					Avg. depth (m)	0.28
					Width (m)	1.8
					Length (m)	20
Contexts						
Context no	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
500	Layer	-	0.28	Topsoil and turf	-	-
501	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 6						
General description					Orientation	E-W
No archaeology. Topsoil overlying clay geology.					Avg. depth (m)	0.3
					Width (m)	1.8
					Length (m)	20
Contexts						
Context no	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
600	Layer	-	0.30	Topsoil and turf	-	-
601	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

APPENDIX B. FINDS REPORTS

B.1 Pottery

By John Cotter

Context	Description	Date
101 (Trench 1)	8 sherds including transfer printed ware (TPW), Yellow ware (YELL), Nottinghamshire stone ware (NOTS) mixing bowl, bone china (BONE) saucer, Wedgwood black basalt ware (BBAS) with moulded decoration. 98g	1820-1880
1083	6 small sherds including Cream ware (CREADEV), post medieval red ware (PMR) jar/bowl rim, 2 scraps Brill slip ware (BRS�). 16g	1760-1830 18th-early 19th century

B.2 Ceramic building material

By John Cotter

Context	Description	Date
101 (Trench 1)	1 fresh fragment corrugated land drain, machine made, 68g	19th-20th century
1000	6 fragments land drain, 75g	19th-20th century
1045	2 fragments land drain, 15g	19th-20th century
1055	1 pantile fragment, 61g	19th-20th century
1083	2 very worn scraps land drain, 5g	19th-20th century
1084	1 scrap very worn land drain, 4g	19th-20th century
1085	17 fragments land drain, 179g	19th-20th century

B.3 Clay tobacco pipe

By John Cotter

Context	Description	Date
101 (Trench 1)	1 stem fragment, 3g	17th-19th century



B.4 Glass

By John Cotter

Context	Description	Date
1057	1 sherd clear modern bottle glass, 5g	19th-20th century
1083	2 thin sherds (refits) pale greenish flat ?window glass, 3g	19th-20th century

B.5 Iron

By Leigh Allen

Context	Description	Date
1045	1 large nut	19th-20th century
1083	1 nail fragment	Not closely dateable



APPENDIX C. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

APS 2011, Archaeological Evaluation of Land at Calvert in Charndon and Greatmoor in Grendon Underwood, Buckinghamshire (CLGM 11) Unpublished client report. Archaeological Project Services report number 114/11

SLR 2012, Greatmoor EFW, Calvert, Buckinghamshire, Archaeological Mitigation Works: Written Scheme of Investigation. Unpublished client document

APPENDIX D. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Calvert Pit
Site code:	CAP16
Grid reference:	Area B centred on SP 6952 2279 Area C centred on SP 6975 2245
Type:	Area B Strip, Map and Sample Excavation Area C Evaluation
Date and duration:	Area B 1st August to 2nd September 2016 Area C 6th and 7th September 2016
Area of site:	Area B, excavated area 0.95ha Area C, evaluation boundary 0.68ha

Summary of results:

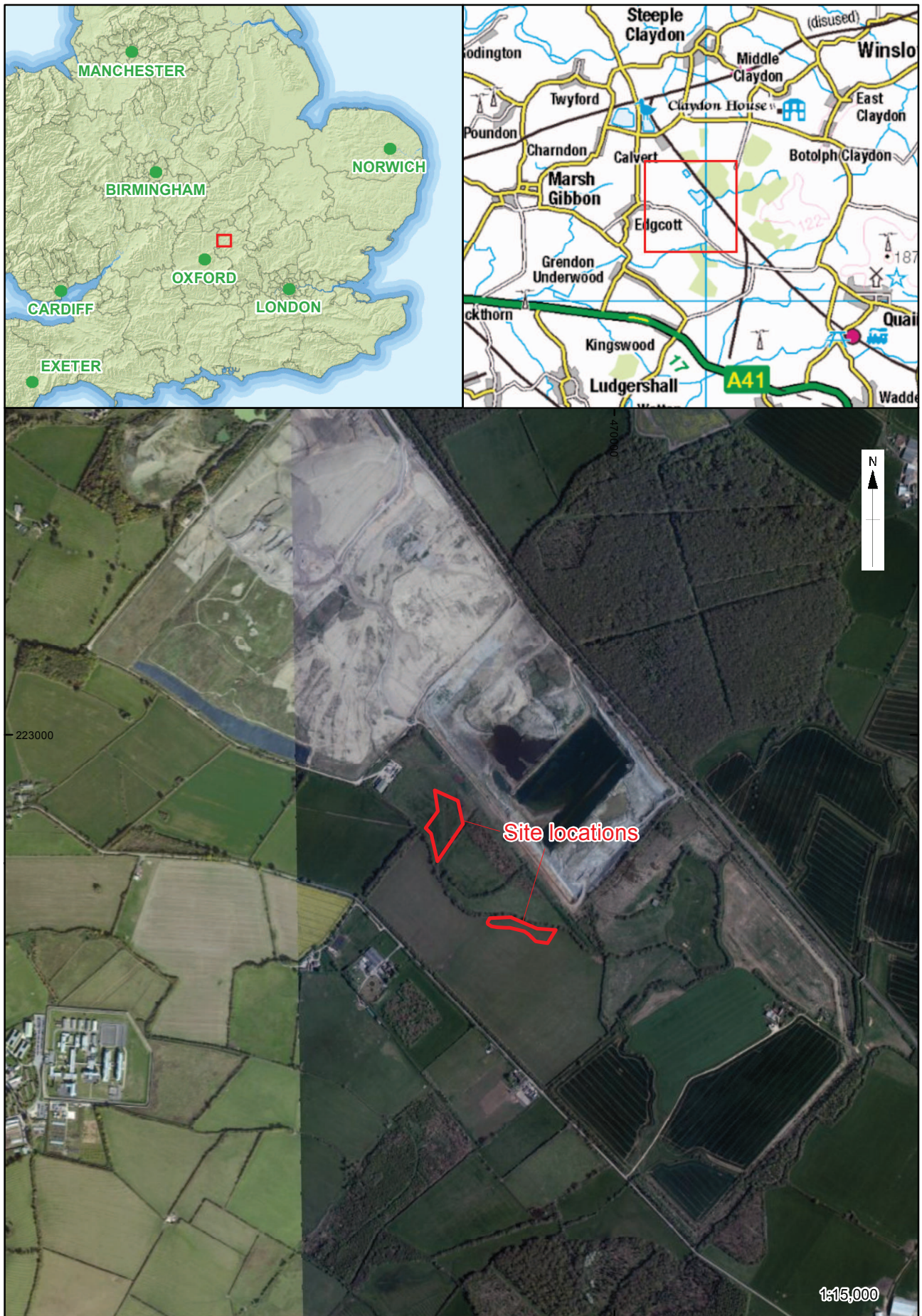
Oxford Archaeology was commissioned by FCC Environment to complete a programme of archaeological investigation at Greatmoor, Calvert, Buckinghamshire. The fieldwork was undertaken prior to an extension of a former clay extraction quarry, for which planning permission was granted in 2012 (Ref: 11/20000/AWD), to provide material for engineered backfilling and landscaping work. The fieldwork comprised two elements: a strip, map and sample excavation (Area B) and a trial trench evaluation (Area C). The fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) approved under condition 16 of the aforementioned planning consent.

The strip, map and sample excavation of Area B was completed in August 2016 uncovering an area of approximately 1ha. This revealed an arrangement of shallow linear ditches with one part appearing to define a small enclosure. However, despite extensive excavation of the ditch fills, no artefactual evidence was encountered to suggest an ancient origin for these features or a more conclusive enclosure arrangement. In contrast, only occasional modern artefacts were recovered suggesting a 19th-20th century origin with these ditches mostly appearing to converge upon the existing deeper drainage ditch aligned N-S across the site. Therefore, it is likely that these reflect historical land drainage rather than more ancient, settlement-related activities.

No archaeological features or deposits of significance were encountered within the evaluation of Area C.

Location of archive:

The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museum in due course under the accession number AYBCM:2016.102.



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 Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA,

Figure 1: Site location

X:\eCAPEX_Calvert_Pit_Bucks\010Geomatics\02 CAD\CAPEX Calvert Pit 2016-09-14.dwg (Fig.2)*CAP16*CAPEX*Calvert Pit_Bucks*'steve.lawrence' 19 Oct 2016

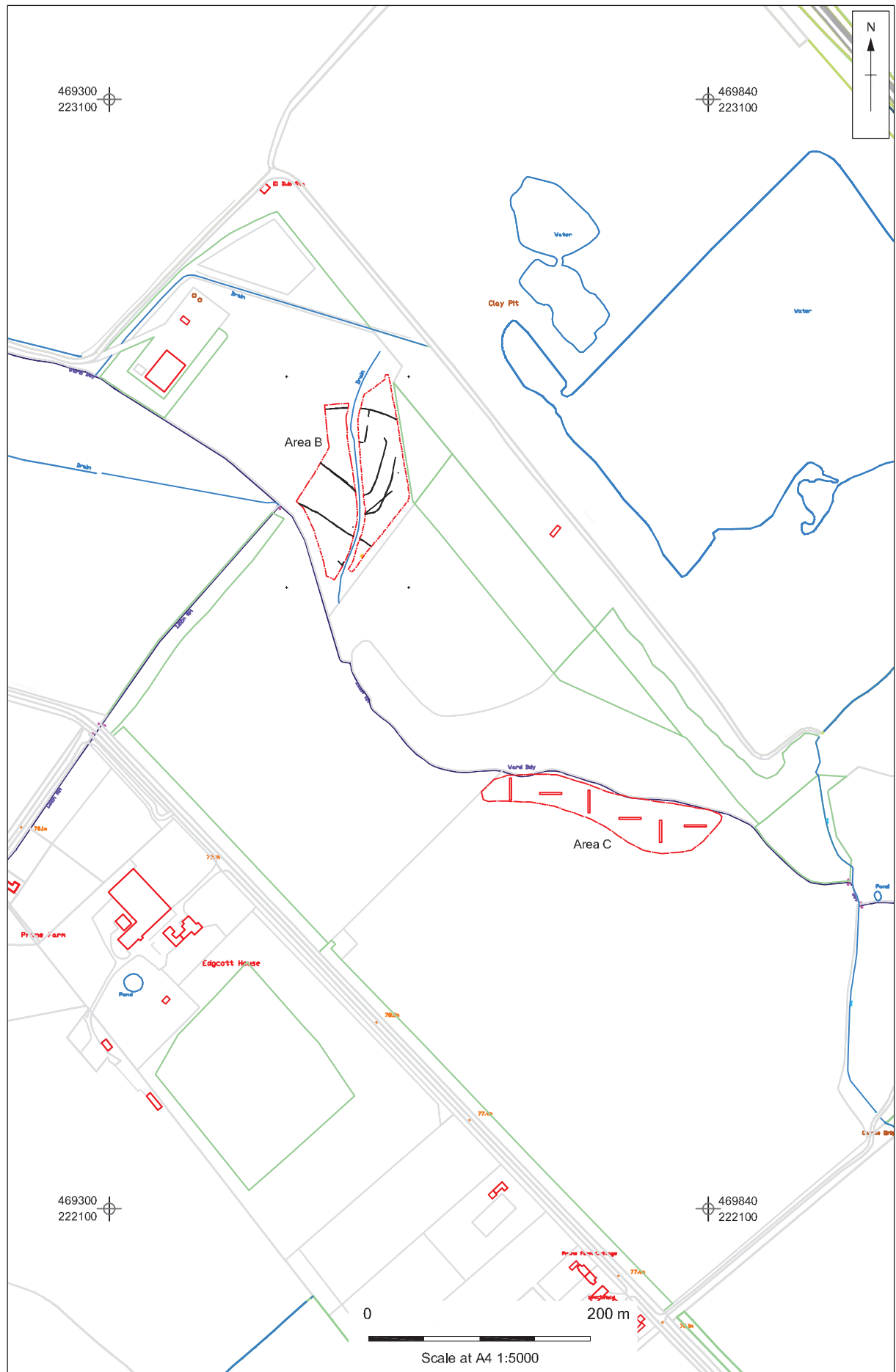


Figure 2: Location of Areas B and C

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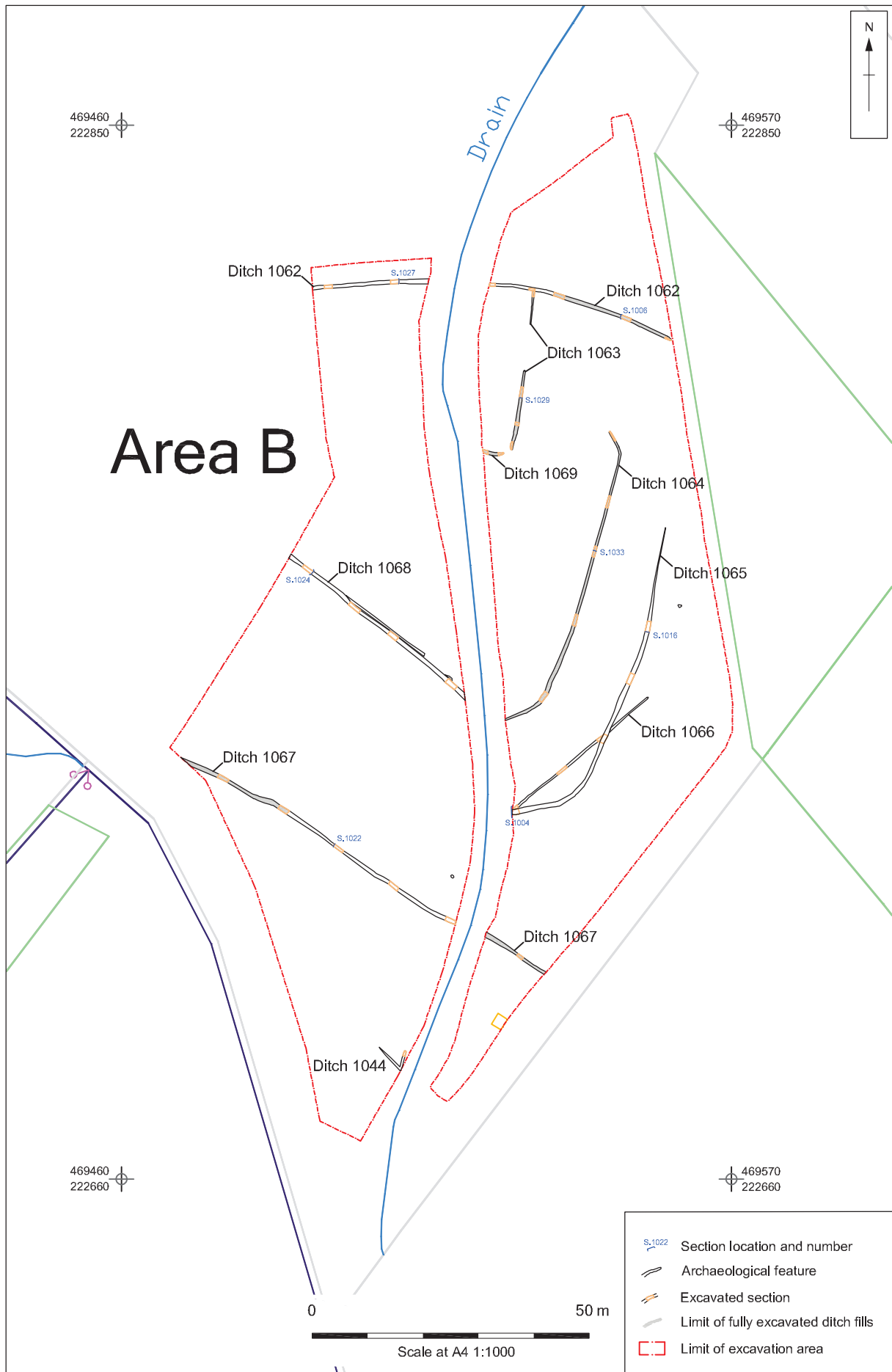


Figure 3: Area B: strip, map and sample excavation plan

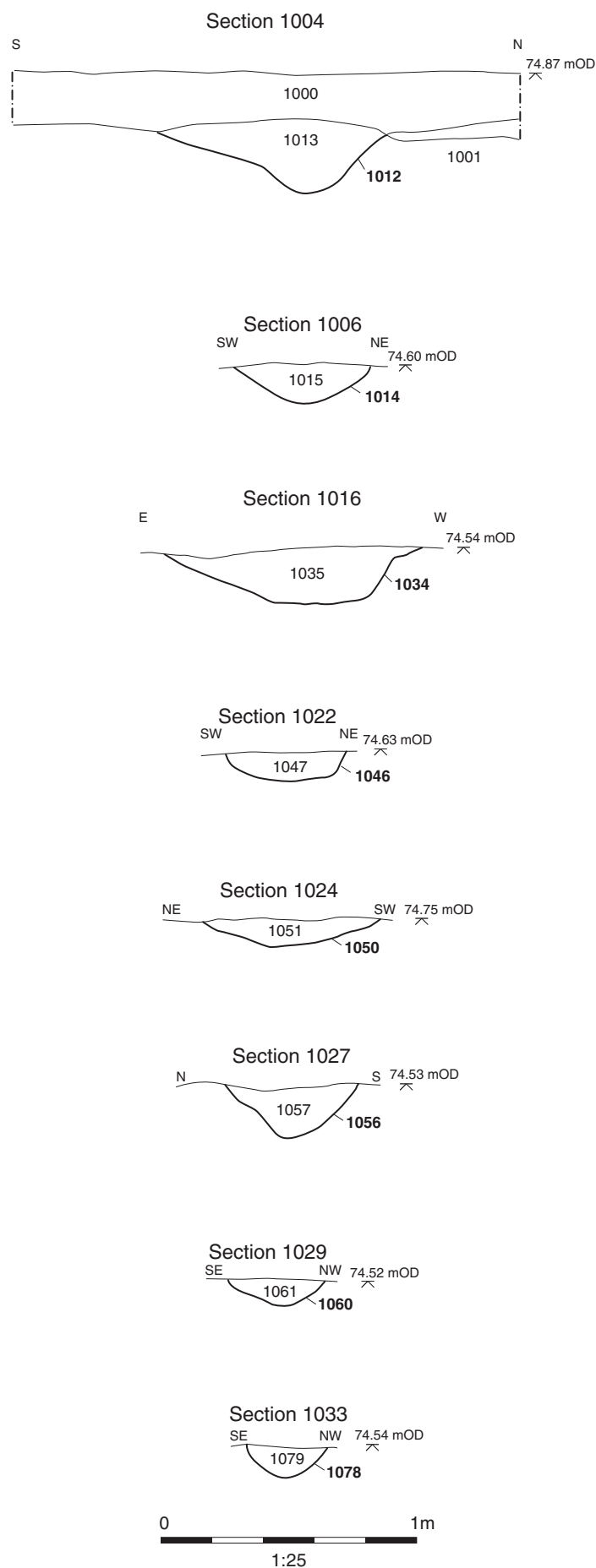


Figure 4: Area B: sample sections of excavated features

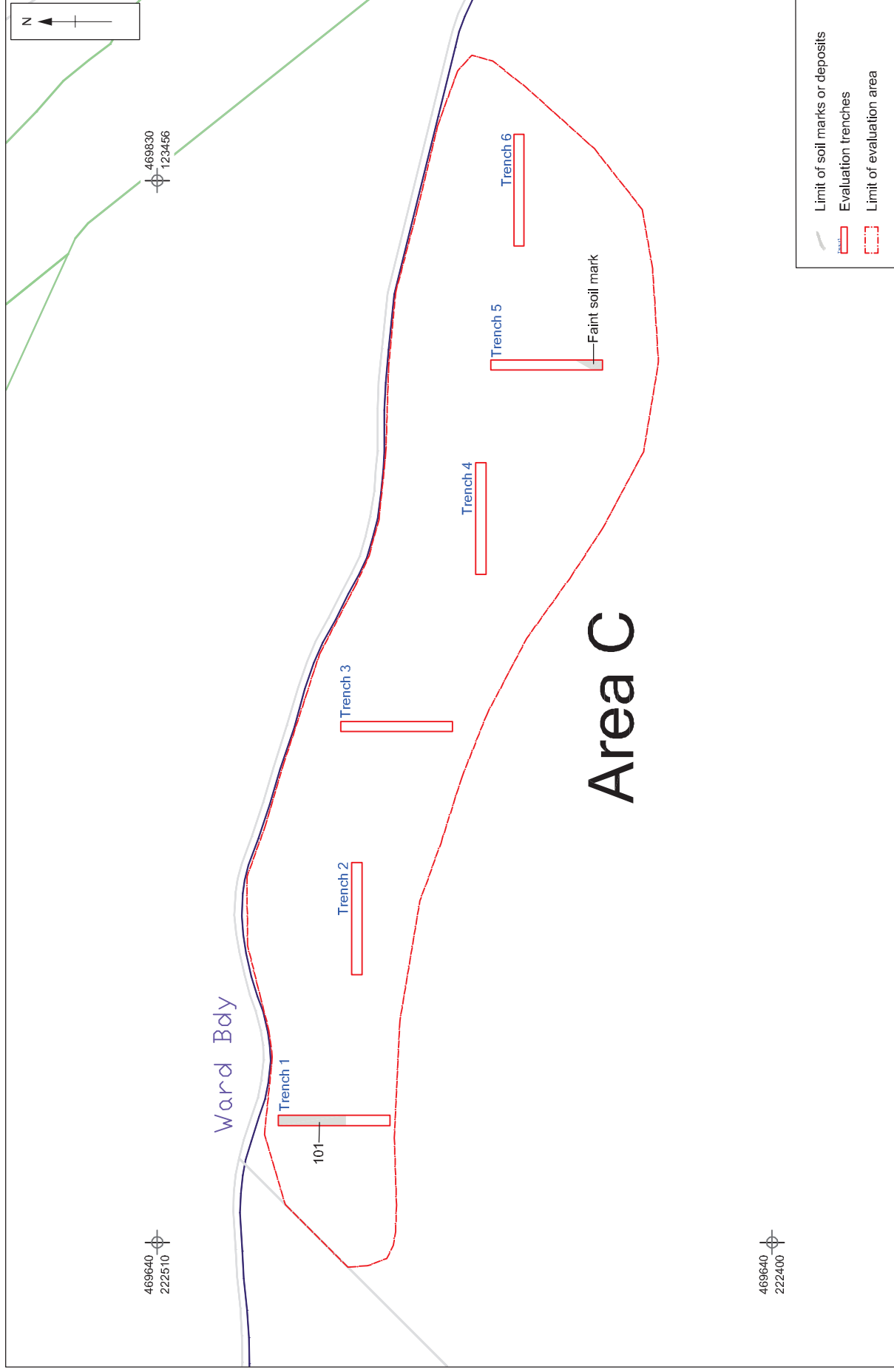


Figure 5: Area C: evaluation trenches



Plate 1: Area B: view north during machine excavation



Plate 2: Area B: surveying of archaeological features



Plate 3: Area B: excavated ditch 1076, ditch group 1065



Plate 4: Area B: excavated ditch 1074, ditch group 1062



Plate 5: Area C: Trench 1 soil sequence



Plate 6: Area C: Trench 5 view south



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