

# Yew Tree Cottage Northmoor Oxfordshire



## Archaeological Watching Brief Report



**Oxford Archaeology**

6th October 2003

**Client: Mr and Mrs Shelton**

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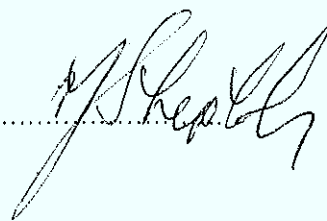
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**Yew Tree Cottage, Northmoor, Oxfordshire*****ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT*****CONTENTS**

Summary.....	1
1 Introduction .....	1
1.1 Location and scope of work .....	1
1.2 Geology and topography .....	1
1.3 Archaeological and historical background .....	1
2 Project Aims and Methodology.....	2
2.1 Aims .....	2
2.2 Methodology.....	2
3 Results .....	2
3.1 Description of deposits .....	2
3.2 Finds .....	3
3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains .....	3
4 Discussion And Conclusions.....	3
Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory .....	4
Appendix 2 Finds Assessments.....	4
Appendix 3 Bibliography and references.....	5
Appendix 4 Summary of Site Details.....	5

**LIST OF FIGURES**

- Fig. 1 Site location  
 Fig. 2 Route of Trench and location of sections and cropmarks  
 Fig. 3 Sections 1 - 6 and plan of features

Cover Plate: View along new trench from the south-west.

## SUMMARY

*In September 2003 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Yew Tree Cottage, Northmoor, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 4200 0250). The work was commissioned by Mr and Mrs G Shelton in advance of a new cable and water pipe trench across Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) 141. The watching brief revealed a number of features previously recorded as cropmarks, which were excavated during the opening of the new service trench and dated to early Roman period.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In September 2003 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Yew Tree Cottage, Northmoor, Oxfordshire (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr and Mrs G Shelton in respect of a new cable and water pipe trench across Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) 141.

1.1.2 Discussions have taken place between the Deputy County Archaeologist for Oxfordshire, Chris Welch, (English Heritage Advisor for the south-east), and OA regarding requirements for a formal programme of archaeological monitoring during groundworks likely to affect archaeological deposits.

1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the programme (OA 2003).

### 1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site is reasonably flat and is located to the north of the river Thames on first terrace gravel, which overlies natural clay. The site is a small trackway within a field and the ground level is at approximately 64 m

### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA 2003) and is reproduced below.

1.3.2 The site lies within the Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) Oxon 141(b), an extensive area of important cropmarks, likely to be principally of Iron Age and Roman date.

1.3.3 The Scheduled Ancient Monument, SAM 141(b), consists of an extensive area of crop marks identified through aerial photography. These cropmarks, discussed by Benson and Miles (1974, 48-49) and more recently replotted by RCHME, include trackways and rectilinear enclosures with probable domestic elements, with a very complex pattern of less regular features, perhaps at least in part of Iron Age date, a little to the west. Romano-British pottery recovered from the area suggests a broad Roman date for some of the features.

- 1.3.4 Roman pottery and a coin were found at SP 413028 (Oxfordshire SMR PRN 1165), c. 200 m to the NW of the present development. Iron Age and Roman settlement enclosures have been excavated at Watkins Farm, Northmoor, a little over 1 km to the northeast (Allen 1990).
- 1.3.5 The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook a watching brief at Moreton Lane, Northmoor, just to the south-east of the works, in 1995, during the construction of an agricultural building in a field located between Standlake Road and Moreton Lane. Possible prehistoric features and ditches of 2nd century and 3rd/4th century Roman date were identified and recorded during the course of this watching brief. A possible medieval phase was identified, together with several undated, but probably Roman, features (OAU 1995).

## 2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

### 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The trench was excavated along the south-west edge of an extant trackway with a mini excavator fitted with a 0.4 m wide bucket. The excavation of the trench was carried out under archaeological supervision (Fig. 2).
- 2.2.2 All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:100 and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. All excavated features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (OAU 1992).

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The service trench was excavated to a depth of 0.7 m to 0.8 m and cut into the natural of yellowish brown sandy gravel (3). This had been cut by two features: a steep sloping gully (4) with a concave base that measured 0.4 m x 0.54 m x 0.26 m and was filled by a mid brown silty clay loam (5) (Figs 3 and 4, section 1). Also excavated was a ditch (6) with a concave profile, which measured 0.4 m x 0.82 m x 0.2 m. It was filled by a dark reddish brown silty clay loam (7) (Fig. 4, section 2). These two fills (5 and 7) were overlain by a 0.4 m layer dark reddish brown silty clay (2) an old plough soil. This layer had been cut by a number of features. The first was a large boundary ditch (8) with steep sloping sides and concave base. It measured 0.4 m x 2.6 m x 0.5 m and was filled by a very dark grey brown silty clay (9), from which a sherd of pottery was recovered (Figs 3 and 4, section 3).

- 3.1.2 A narrow ditch (10) with 'v' shaped profile, which measured 0.4 m x 1 m x 0.6 m and was filled by a dark brown silty clay loam (11) (Fig. 4, section 4). Also recorded was another ditch (12) with very steep slope sides and concave base. It measured 0.4 m x 1.1 m x 0.7 m and was filled by dark brown silty clay (13), which contained fragments of bone and a sherd of early Roman pottery (Fig. 4, section 5). Another boundary ditch (16) was recorded near to the north-west end of the trench. It measured 0.4 m x 2.8 m x 0.5 m with steep sloping sides, but its base was below the depth of impact and it was filled by a dark brown silty clay loam (17) (Figs 3 and 4, section 6).
- 3.1.3 A large feature (14) possibly a pond with steep sloping sides, measured 0.4 m x 7.5 m x 0.6 m. Its base was below impact level and was filled by reddish brown silty clay loam (15) (Fig. 3). All these features were sealed below a 0.15 m - 0.3 m thick layer of dark grey brown silty clay loam (1) topsoil.

### 3.2 Finds

#### *Pottery*

- 3.2.1 A total of seven sherds all belonged to the Roman period. The most diagnostic piece was a white ware mortarium body sherd (context 2), which dated to the 2nd-4th centuries. This might be chronologically associated with a beaker rim sherd, also from context 2, which has a 3rd-4th century, date range.
- 3.2.2 The sherds from contexts 9 and 13 could not be dated closely within the Roman period, although tend to date to the early Roman period (1st/2nd century) within the region.

#### *Bone*

- 3.2.3 Thirteen fragments of bone were recovered from ditch fill (13) and formed the femur of a possible horse.

### 3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the watching brief.

## 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The service trench cut across a series of ditches and features, which were already recorded as cropmarks shown on Aerial photographs and thought to date from the late Iron Age to the Roman periods. The finds recovered during the watching brief dated a number of features to the early Roman period, with pottery from the 2nd to 4th century scattered within the old plough soil sealing the features.
- 4.1.2 This suggests that there were two main phases of activity on the site with a late Iron Age component, and then early Roman features, which were then sealed below a later Roman plough soil suggestive of settlement activity. It was also observed that some of the archaeological features were 0.2 m below the surface and therefore possibly at risk from surface activity.



## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i> Finds</i>
1	Layer	0.15 m -0.3 m			Topsoil	
2	Layer	0.4 m			Plough soil	Pottery
3	Natural				Natural gravel	
4	Cut	0.24 m	0.56 m	0.4 m	Gully	
5	Fill				Fill of Gully	
6	Cut	0.2 m	0.8 m	0.4 m	Ditch	
7	Fill				Fill of Ditch	
8	Cut	0.5 m	2.6 m	0.4 m	Ditch	
9	Fill				Fill of Ditch	Pottery
10	Cut	0.6 m	1 m	0.4 m	Ditch	
11	Fill				Fill of Ditch	
12	Cut	0.7 m	1.1 m	0.4 m	Ditch	
13	Fill				Fill of Ditch	Pottery and Bone
14	Cut	0.6 m	7.5 m	0.4 m	Pond	
15	Fill				Fill of Pond	
16	Cut	0.5 m	2.8 m	0.4 m	Ditch	
17	Fill				Fill of Ditch	

## APPENDIX 2 FINDS ASSESSMENTS

## NOYTC 03: Pottery by Edward Biddulph

Context	Sherds	Wt (g)	Comments	Date
2	5	189	Oxfordshire white ware mortarium (M22); ?indented beaker (R30 grey ware); medium-mouthed jar (R30 grey ware); land drain; CBM	2nd-4th century AD; modern
9	1	17	Medium-mouthed jar (R30 grey ware)	Roman
13	1	3	Black-surfaced ware (R50)	?1st/2nd century AD

A total of seven sherds, weighing 209 g, was recovered from the site. With the exception of a fragment of modern land drain and ceramic building material (context 2), all belonged to the Roman period. The most diagnostic piece was a white ware mortarium body sherd (context 2), which dated to the 2nd-4th centuries. This might be chronologically associated with a beaker rim sherd, also from context 2, which, if part of an indented beaker, should have a 3rd-4th century, date range. The pieces from contexts 9 and 13 could not be dated closely within the Roman period, although black-surfaced fabrics tend to date to the early Roman period within the region. Overall, the condition of the pottery was good. Rim sherds were well represented, and these tended to be large and unworn.

**APPENDIX 3 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES**

Benson D and Miles D, 1974 The upper Thames Valley: an archaeological survey of the river gravels, Oxford Archaeol Unit Survey, No. 2

Allen T G, 1990 An Iron Age and Romano-British enclosed settlement at Watkins Farm, Northmoor Oxon. TVL, Vol. 1

OA 1992 Fieldwork Manual (1st edition ed. D. Wilkinson)

OA 1995 Moreton Lane, Northmoor, Oxfordshire. Archaeological Watching Brief report.

OA 2003 Yew Tree Cottage-New Cable Trench, Northmoor, Oxfordshire Written Scheme of Investigation

**APPENDIX 4 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS**

**Site name:** Yew Tree Cottage, Northmoor, Oxfordshire

**Site code:** NOYTC 03

**Grid reference:** NGR SP 4200 0250

**Type of watching brief:** Excavation of new service trench.

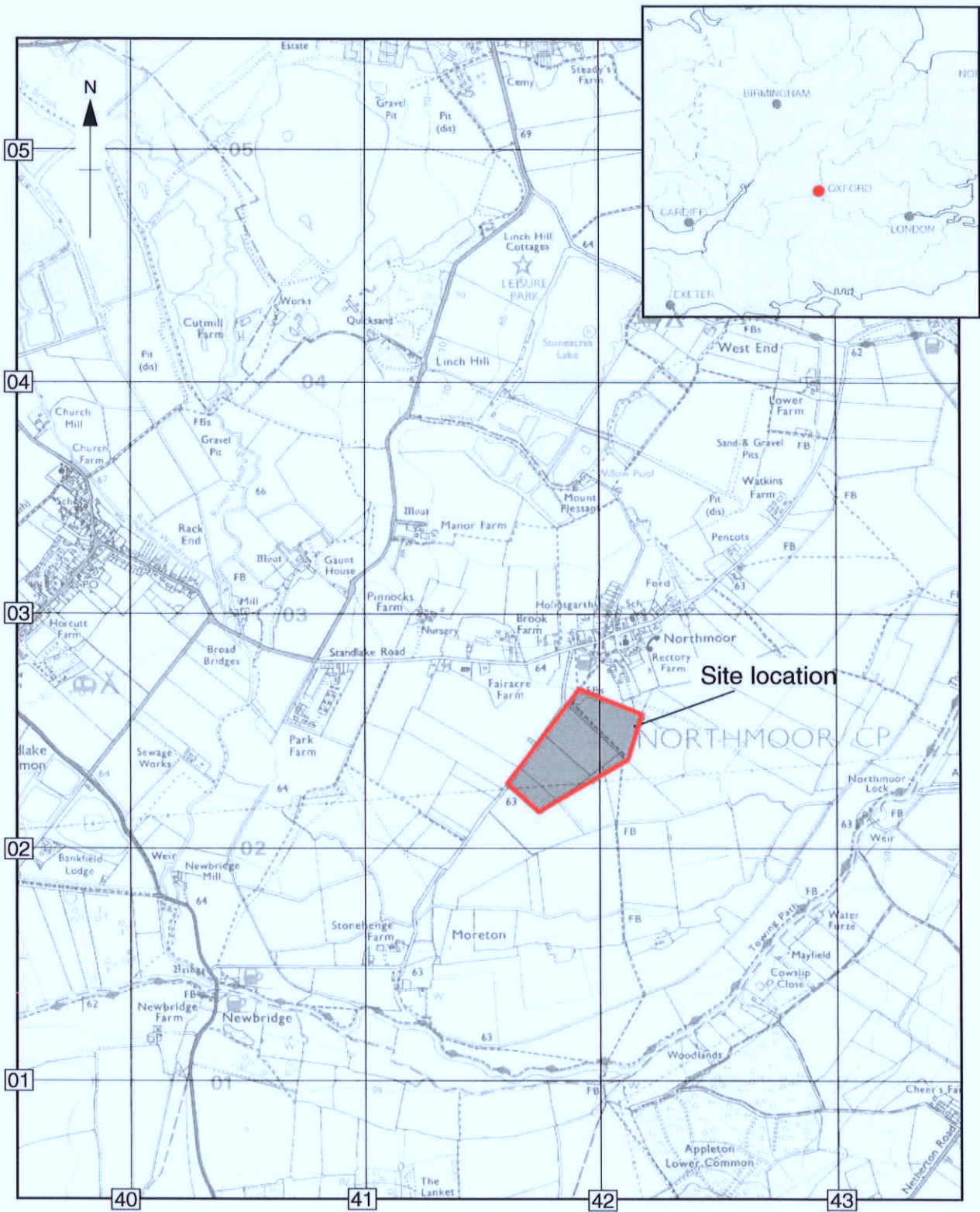
**Date and duration of project:** Two days from the 18/9/2003 to 19/9/2003.

**Area of site:** 250 m x 0.4 m

**Summary of results:** A number of features recorded as cropmarks dated from late Iron Age to early Roman period sealed below a late Roman plough soil.

**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, under the following accession number: OXCMS 2003.123





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Figure 1: Site location

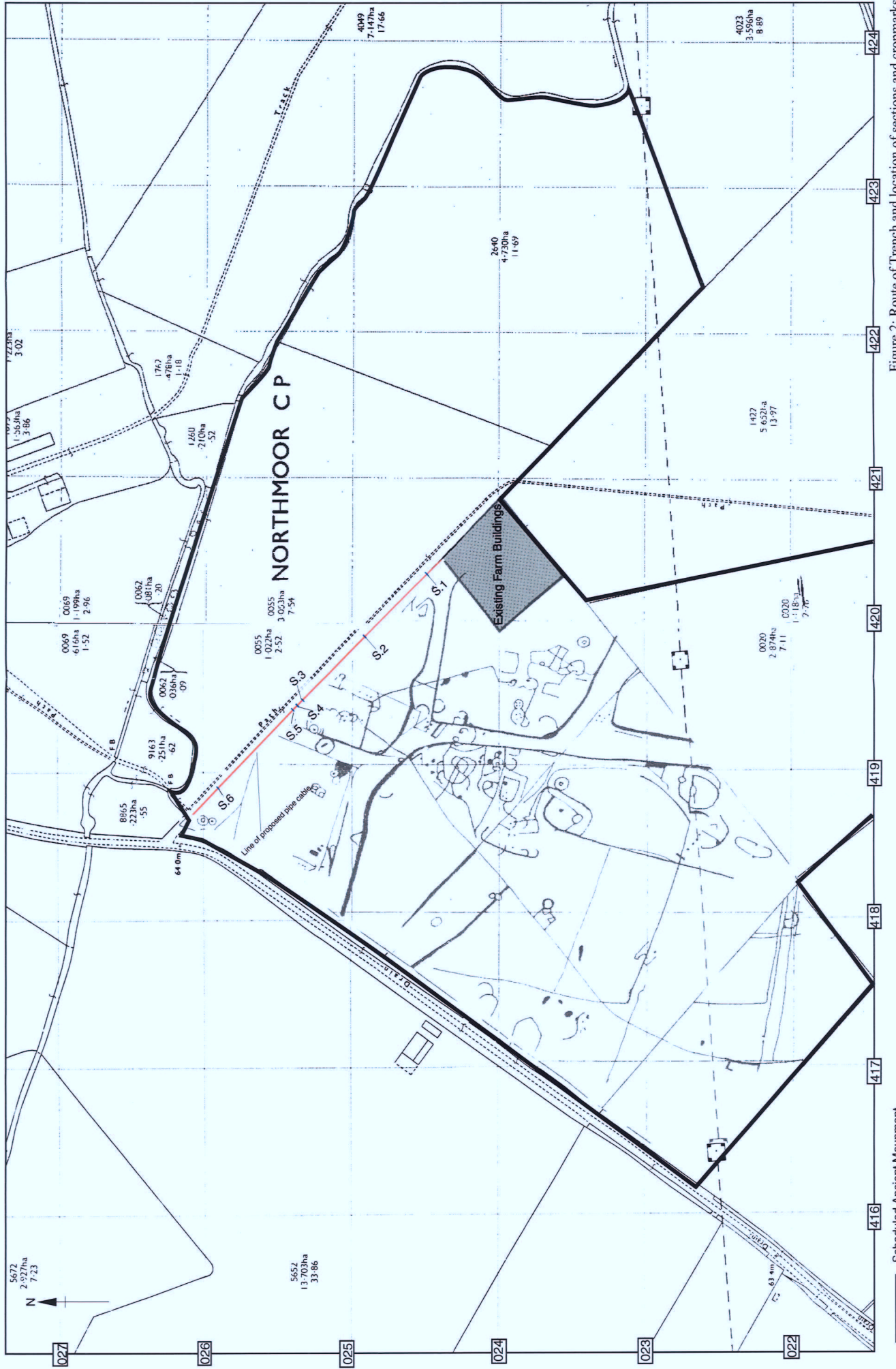


Figure 2: Route of Trench and location of sections and cropmarks

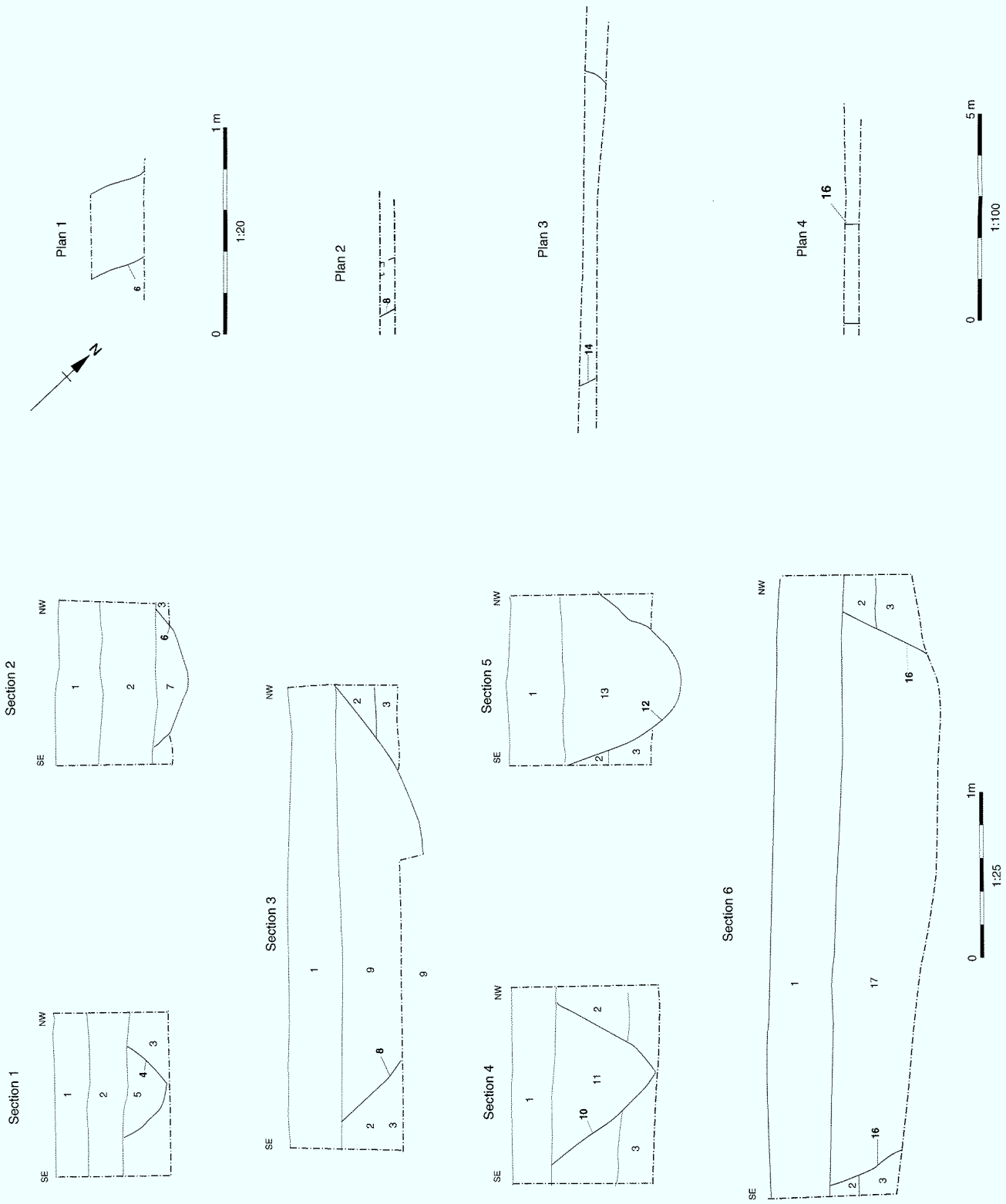


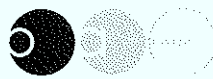
Figure 3: Sections 1-6 and plan of features



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