

# **Manor Farm, Wilcot, Pewsey, Wiltshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation  
for Mr W. Madiment**

by Helen Moore

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code MFP02/78

**September 2002**

## Summary

**Site name:** Manor Farm, Wilcot, Pewsey

**Grid reference:** SU 133 614 and SU 1410 6095

**Site activity:** Evaluation

**Date and duration of project:** 27th August – 2nd September 2002

**Project manager:** Helen Moore

**Site supervisor:** Helen Moore

**Site code:** MFP 02/78

**Area of site:** *c.* 0.5ha and *c.* 0.8ha

**Summary of results:** Nine trenches were excavated, two in the immediate vicinity of Manor Farm, and seven in the fields on the north-west side of the village. Only Trench 2 in the area of the farm produced any feature of possible archaeological interest but this was shown to be of modern date. Trench 5 produced one sherd of prehistoric pottery, five sherds of Roman pottery and two fragments of probable Roman tile, none from archaeological features.

**Monuments identified:** None

**Location and reference of archive:** The site archive is presently held by Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd, 47-49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5NR. The archive will be deposited with Devizes Museum in due course.

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# Manor Farm, Wilcot, Pewsey, Wiltshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Helen Moore

Report 02/78

## Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Manor Farm in Wilcot near Pewsey, Wiltshire (SU 133 614 and SU 1410 6095) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr M J Baker of Acorn Builders Pewsey Ltd, Briercliffe, Manningford Bruce, Pewsey, Wiltshire SN9 6JL.

Planning applications have been submitted to Kennet District Council for the construction of a new dairy unit sited on arable land, to the north-west of the farm buildings and Wilcot village, and the demolition of the existing unit and its replacement by housing at the farm itself, at the south end of the village.

In accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the County policies on archaeology, an archaeological evaluation was requested. This was to determine if any archaeological deposits were present, in order to formulate plans to mitigate the effects of development on any archaeology in either of the proposed areas of development.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Sue Farr, Archaeological Officer for Wiltshire County Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Helen Moore, Euan Affleck and Sian Anthony between 27th August and 2nd September 2002 and the site code is MFP02/78. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Devizes Museum in due course.

## Location, topography and geology

The site is located within the vale of Pewsey, to the north-west of Pewsey, and to the east of Devizes (Fig. 1). The Kennet and Avon Canal runs through the village of Wilcot and the river Avon lies to the south. Manor Farm itself lies on level ground at approximately 127m above Ordnance Datum. As you turn westwards into the fields to the location of the proposed new dairy the ground rises to approximately 144m AOD and undulates quite considerably. A ring of hills rises to the north. The underlying geology is recorded as Upper Greensand in the area of Manor Farm, comprising sand and sandstone, and in the area of the proposed new dairy it becomes Lower Chalk, comprising grey marly chalk (BGS 1959). The geology actually observed in the trenches was Greensand in the area of the farm, but in the fields the geology was more mixed with trenches showing a mixture of dark Greensand and dirty white chalk, or just chalk.

## **Archaeological background**

The proposed areas of development lie within the Vale of Pewsey, an area well known for its wealth of archaeological sites of all periods. Prehistoric sites are common, with the important Neolithic causewayed enclosure of Knap Hill to the north-west (Connah 1965), Adam's Grave Neolithic long barrow and numerous Bronze Age round barrows in the surrounding area. A neolithic polished flint axe (SU16SW105) and Bronze Age spearhead have been recovered from the near vicinity.

Iron Age lynchets lie to the west of the site, and fieldwork undertaken in 2001 recovered Iron Age pottery (SU16SW211), and Roman pottery (SU16SW323) also to the west of the development area. Immediately to the north, aerial photographs have revealed a crop mark interpreted as a building with two pits or postholes within it and a larger pit slightly further to the north.

To the east a Roman building known as Stanchester Roman villa (SU16SW37) has been partially excavated in 1931 and 1969. The excavations revealed a chalk wall with a pillar of square tiles indicating a possible hypocaust, flue tiles, stone roof tiles and pottery sherds and coins dating to the 2nd–4th centuries AD. In July 2000, a hoard of 1,196 Roman coins and a fragment of a Roman ring was found in a field in Wilcot, close to the Stanchester Roman villa (Robinson 2001). This is now in Devizes museum and the latest coins in the hoard have been dated to AD406, making this the latest dated Roman coin group from Wiltshire.

The probable 5th-century linear earthwork known as Wansdyke lies to the north of the area.

The village of Wilcot itself was first recorded in AD940 as *Wilcotum*. The Sites and Monuments Record mentions the existence of a vineyard in AD1086 and the parish church has Norman origins, and retains early medieval features. Aerial photographs have revealed earthworks to the south of the village.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development. In particular in the area of the proposed new dairy, it was important to establish whether any Iron Age or Roman remains were present, and in the area of the proposed new housing to determine if any Saxon or medieval deposits exist, reflecting the early development of the village.

An archaeological brief for each proposal prepared by Ms Sue Farr, Archaeological Officer for Wiltshire County Council requested a total of nine trenches each 20m long and 1.6m wide. Seven of the trenches were to be on arable land in the area of the proposed new dairy with one in the vicinity of a slurry lagoon, and two in the

farm where the proposed new housing was to be built (Fig. 2). The trenches in the arable field were positioned over the approximate areas of each of the proposed dairy buildings and new housing. All of the trenches were excavated with a JCB using a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. Spoil was monitored for finds and possible features in Trench 2 were hand cleaned. In the area of the proposed slurry lagoon, three small trenches were dug (7a, 7b, 7c) to prove that any archaeological remains were likely to have been truncated away by an old chalk pit which had created a deep depression in this area.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1. Representative sections are shown in Figure 4.

## **Results**

### **Trench 1**

Trench 1 was located in the area of the High Street frontage of the proposed housing development. A 20m long trench was proposed perpendicular to the road, but in the event the trench was split into two (1a and 1b) due to the fact that only a 12m length of concrete had been broken out in the original location. Trench 1b was located immediately to the west of Trench 1a and also perpendicular to the road frontage.

Trench 1a was aligned north-south and was 12m long and 1.6m wide. It was machined to depths of 0.20m-0.50m. A concrete road 0.07m thickness had been removed and directly below this the natural Greensand was revealed, a pale grey-green sand with frequent angular and subangular sandstones. Topsoil had been truncated away in this area presumably during the construction of the concrete road to the farm buildings, and it is likely that any shallow archaeological features present would also have been removed. No archaeological features were observed.

Trench 1b was 8.80m long and 1.6m wide aligned north-south, and was dug in an area of brambles and scrub. Topsoil 0.10m deep was removed onto the top of the natural Greensand and no archaeological features were observed, only natural rootholes. The trench was machined to depths of 0.22m and 0.35m.

### **Trench 2** (Fig. 3 and Plate 1)

Trench 2 was located within the area of the current dairy buildings to the north-west of Trenches 1a and b. It was aligned east-west and was 20m long and 1.60m wide. Red brick rubble and a loose mid brown sandy silt 0.50m deep, which had been the farmyard surface, lay above a grey-brown silty sand subsoil of 0.28m thickness. This lay immediately above the natural Greensand, approximately 0.70m from ground level. A number of small

amorphous features containing modern brick and tile fragments and bits of plastic truncating the natural were investigated and are probably natural features infilled in recent times.

A curvilinear feature (01) was observed aligned north-south across the width of the trench truncating the natural Greensand. It was 0.82m deep and 1.25m wide with very steep sides and a flat base. The edges of the feature were scorched orange-red (52) and a thick layer of charcoal (51) had formed on the base and up the side. Redeposited natural Greensand (50) filled the feature and contained fragments of cremated cattle bone. One piece of plastic and a abraded brick fragment were also recovered but not retained. It is likely to be a modern pit dug to dispose of a cattle carcass which was burnt within the pit causing the natural to become so scorched. No other archaeological features were observed.

### Trench 3

Trench 3 was located over the cubicles and feed area of the proposed new dairy and was aligned east-west. It was 21.70m long and 1.60m wide. Topsoil 0.20m depth was removed onto natural Greensand. No archaeological features were observed. The trench was machined to depths of 0.27m-0.76m to confirm that there were no archaeological features present.

### Trench 4

Trench 4 was located on the western area of the silage clamps of the proposed new dairy, and was aligned east west. It was 19.5m long and 1.60m wide and was 0.30m deep. Topsoil 0.10m deep lay immediately above a clean off-white chalk natural subsoil. No archaeological features were observed, only a natural tree bole.

### Trench 5

Trench 5 was located in the central area of the silage clamps of the proposed new dairy and was aligned north west - south east. It was 21.10m long and 1.60m wide. Topsoil of 0.08m-0.29m depth was machined off and lay directly above a dark grey-green natural Greensand with occasional chalk patches. The trench was machined to depths of 0.30m- 0.56m to be sure there were no archaeological features present; none were observed. However, six sherds of pottery and two pieces of ceramic building material were recovered from the base of the trench but they were not within any discernible archaeological features. Presumably they will have worked their way into the natural subsoil over time due to ploughing or erosion presumably as a by-product of manuring practice.

### Trench 6 (Plate 2)

Trench 6 was located in the area of the feed store of the proposed new dairy, aligned east–west. It was 21.10m long and 1.60m wide. Topsoil 0.28m deep was machined onto a natural dark Greensand with dark brown patches. On investigation, these seemed to be natural features due to their irregularity. No finds were observed.

### Trench 7

Trench 7 was located in the area of the proposed slurry lagoon, but the area had previously been used as a chalk pit and formed a deep depression which had been covered in trees. This meant that any archaeological features would be likely to have been removed during the digging of the chalk. Consequently an L-shaped trench on the very edge of the chalk pit was machined to look for any intact archaeology (Trench 7a) and was then extended into the pit to be certain that nothing survived (Trench 7b). A short trench (Trench 7c) was machined in the bottom of the pit to prove the presumed truncation.

Trench 7a was 5.20m long and 0.20m deep, with topsoil 0.20m deep lying above grey-white chalk. No archaeological features were observed.

Trench 7b was 7.80m long, aligned east–west and at its deepest was 0.90m. Chalk was viewed at 0.20m below topsoil and then the trench steeply sloped following the gradient of the pit. It was filled with redeposited Greensand bands and dark grey-brown decomposing organic material. No archaeological features were observed.

Trench 7c was aligned north–south and was 4.90m long. A thin band of topsoil 0.24m deep lay immediately above white chalk. No archaeological features were observed, only root disturbance.

### Trench 8

Trench 8 was located in the collecting yard of the proposed new dairy and was aligned roughly north–south. It was 19.80m long and 1.60m wide. Topsoil 0.24m deep was machined down to natural Greensand which was over dug at the southern end of the trench to prove the lack of archaeological features. The trench was 0.29m–0.65m deep. No archaeological features were observed.

### Trench 9

Trench 9 was located in the area of the proposed new housing to the west of the proposed new dairy. It was aligned north–south and was 20.40m long and 1.60m wide. Topsoil 0.26m deep was machined directly onto a dirty chalk natural. It was 0.30m–0.33m deep. No archaeological features were observed.

## **Finds**

### *The Pottery by Jane Timby*

A small collection of six sherds of pottery and two fragments of ceramic building material were collected during the archaeological work. All of the pottery and ceramic building material came from the Greensand natural subsoil in Trench 5. All the sherds were unfeatured bodysherds and appear to comprise one small prehistoric piece and five early Roman wares.

### *Prehistoric*

A single small sherd (3g) with a calcined flint tempering was present in the group. The nature of the tempering would indicate that it is prehistoric in date but it is not possible from a single isolated sherd to determine whether it is Iron Age, Bronze Age or earlier.

### *Roman*

The remaining five sherds were all from handmade closed forms. Four of the sherds have grog tempering characteristic of the Savernake industry. The fifth sherd is simply an oxidised sandy ware which is presumably contemporary with the group. The slightly varied nature of the individual pastes might argue that these sherds belong to the earlier phase of the industry and should be seen as early Roman.

The two fragments of ceramic building material appear to be from Roman roofing tile.

### *Other finds*

Burnt cattle bone and modern brick were identified in the feature (01) excavated in Trench 2, but due to their modern date were not retained.

## **Conclusion**

Despite the profusion of archaeological sites within the area and immediate vicinity of the proposed development sites, the evaluation produced very little in the way of archaeological evidence. No archaeological features were observed and all of the features investigated proved to be natural or modern. The feature excavated in Trench 2 within the area of the farm proved to be a modern pit dug to burn a cattle carcass. Trench 1 showed modern truncation of topsoil presumably resulting in the loss of any archaeological features in this area. The only finds retained from Trench 5 gave early Roman and prehistoric dates but they were not from archaeological features,



and were found in the natural Greensand having worked their way into the subsoil through ploughing and the passage of time.

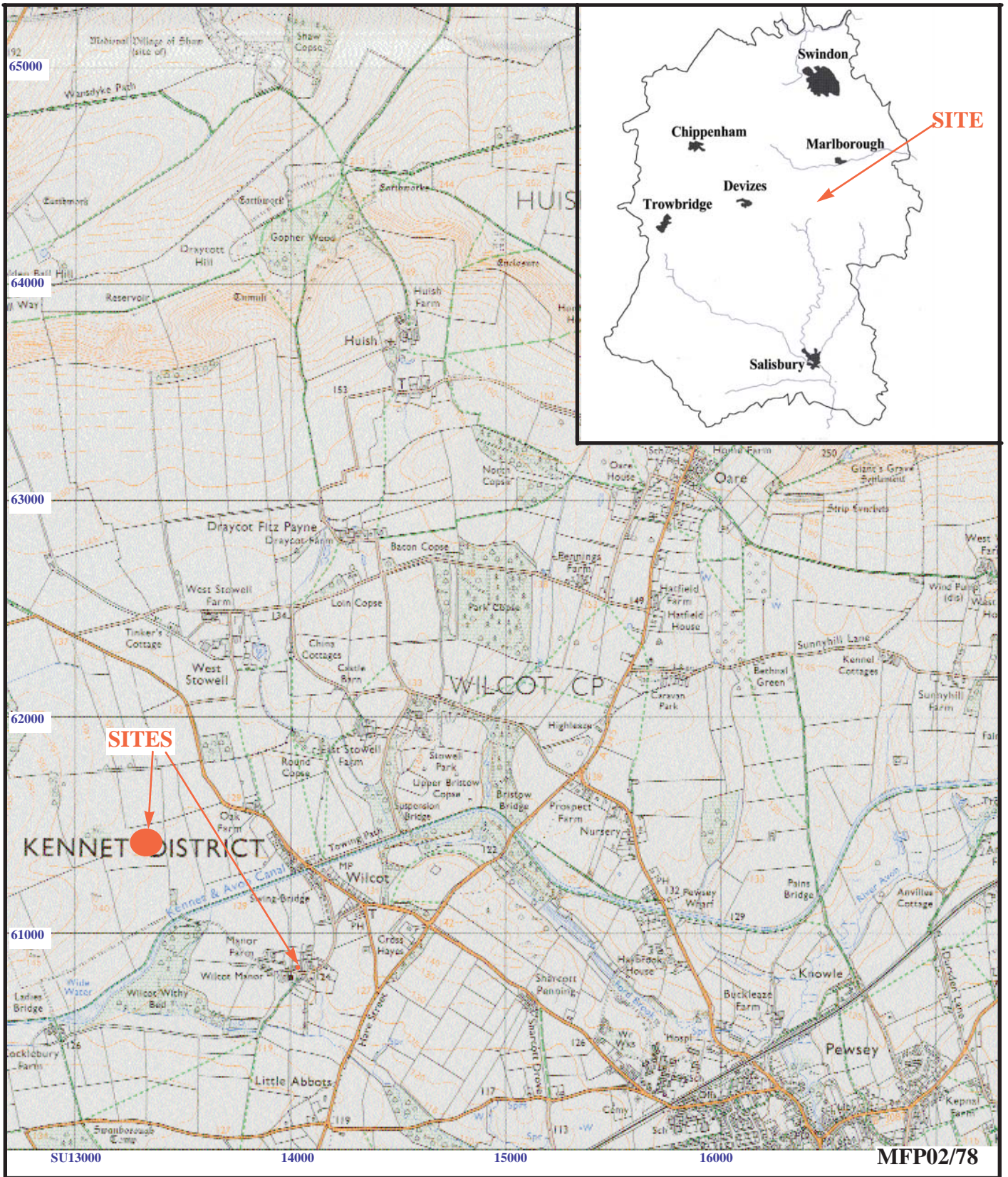
The presence of these finds indicates human occupation close by which is known from earlier fieldwork, but it seems that there was no occupation immediately in the area of the proposed developments.

### **References**

- BGS, 1959, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50,000, Sheet 282, Drift Edition, Keyworth  
Connah, G, 1965, 'Excavations at Knap Hill, Alton Priors, 1961', *Wiltshire Archaeol Natur Hist Mag*, **60**, 1–23  
PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO  
Robinson, P, 2001, 'Appeal Notice: Stanchester Hoard', *Wiltshire Archaeol Natur Hist Soc Newsl*

**APPENDIX 1: Trench details**

<i>Trench No.</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1a	12m	1.6m	0.20m-0.50m	Topsoil truncated away, no archaeology observed
1b	8.80m	1.6m	0.22m-0.35m	Topsoil truncated away, no archaeology observed
2	20m	1.6m	0.80m-1.00m	A modern pit dug to burn a cattle carcass was excavated. No other archaeological features were observed.
3	21.70m	1.6m	0.27m-0.76m	Greensand natural, no archaeological features.
4	19.50m	1.6m	0.30m	Off-white chalk natural, no archaeological features.
5	21.10m	1.6m	0.30m-0.56m	Dark grey-green Greensand with occasional chalk patches, no archaeological features
6	21.10m	1.6m	0.33m	Dark Greensand natural no archaeological features observed.
7a	5.20m	1.6m	0.20m	Dirty grey-white chalk natural, no archaeological features observed.
7b	7.80m	1.6m	0.18m-0.90m	Trench dug into a chalk pit, filled with decomposing organic material, no archaeological features observed.
7c	4.90m	1.6m	0.24m	Dirty chalk natural, no archaeological features observed.
8	19.80m	1.6m	0.29m-0.65m	Greensand natural, no archaeological features observed.
9	20.40m	1.6m	0.30m-0.33m	Dirty chalk natural, no archaeological features observed.



**Manor Farm, Wilcot, near Pewsey, Wiltshire, 2002**

Figure 1. Location of sites within Wilcot and Wiltshire.



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# Manor Farm, Wilcot, Pewsey, Wiltshire, 2002



Figure 2 Map showing the location of the trenches

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# Manor Farm, Wilcot, Pewsey, Wiltshire, 2002

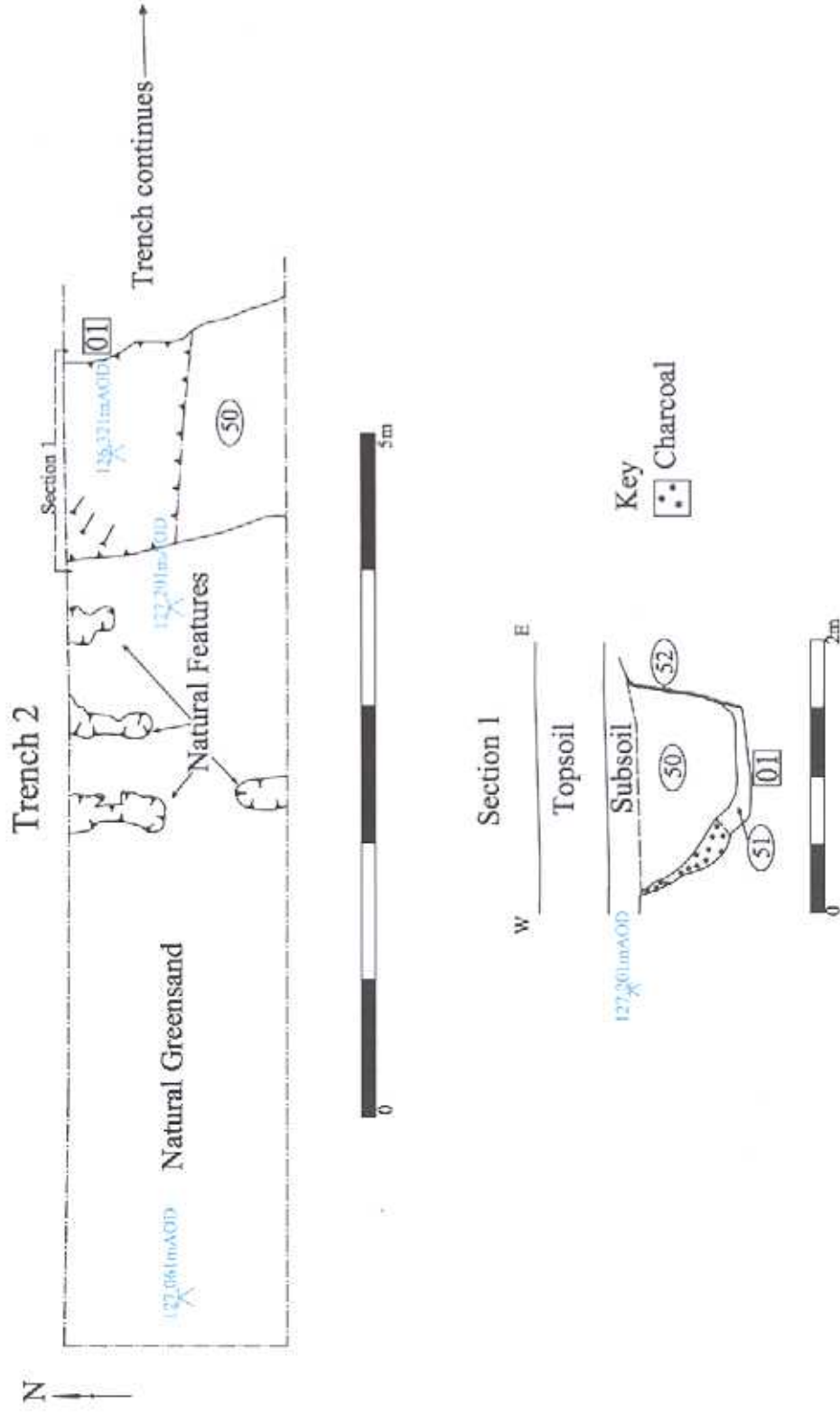


Figure 3 Plan and section of trench 2 showing the burnt pit 01

# Manor Farm, Wilcot, Pewsey, Wiltshire, 2002

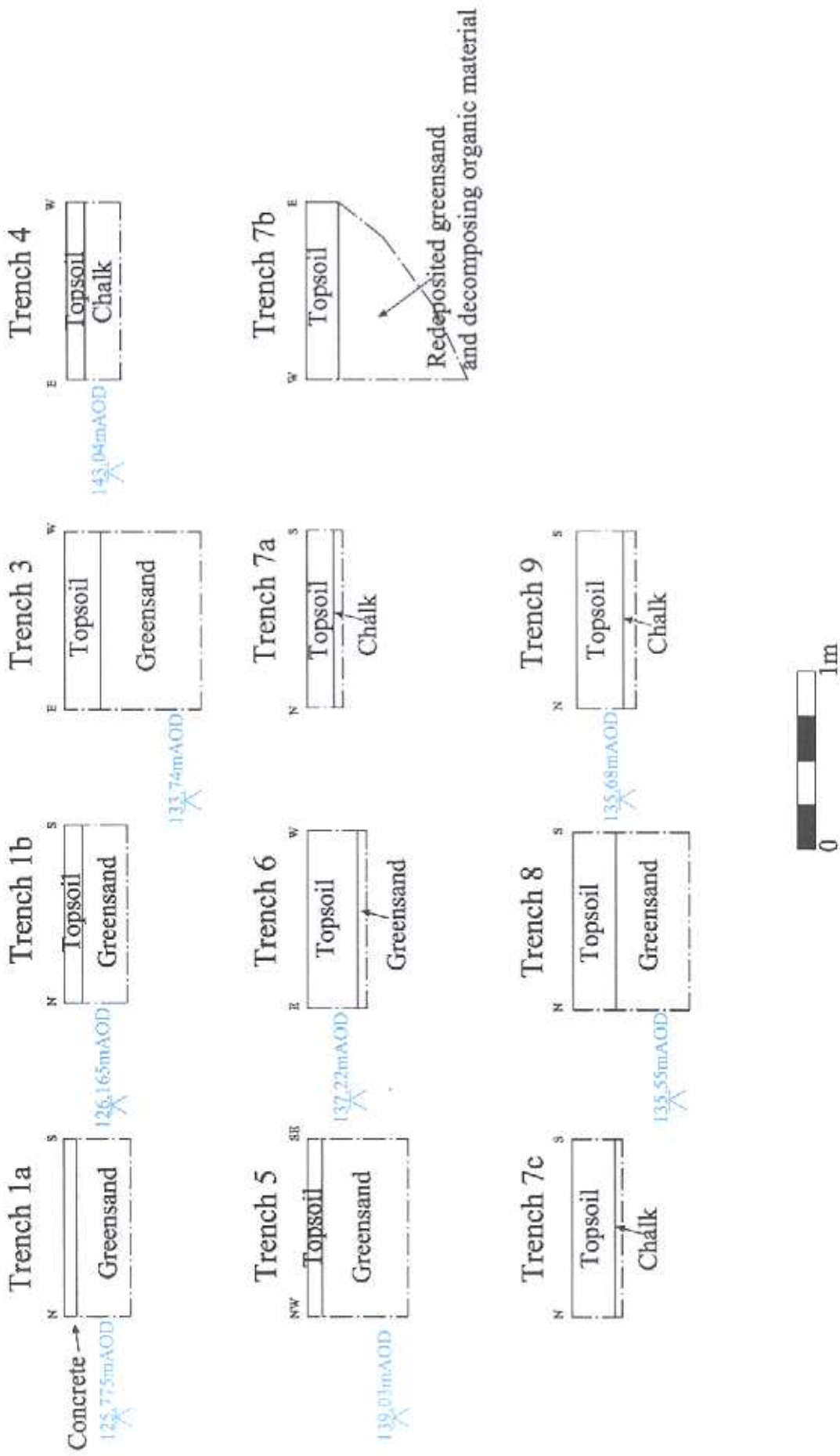


Figure 4 Representative sections of the trenches





**Plate 1: Trench 2 looking north. Scales 1m and 0.5m.**



**Plate 2: Trench 6 looking east. Scales 2m and 1m.**