



Salisbury Plain Trench System, South of Baden Down Farm, Wiltshire

Archaeological Field Evaluation Report





Wessex Archaeology

Salisbury Plain Trench System South of Baden Down Farm Wiltshire

Archaeological Field Evaluation Report

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CONTENTS

	Summary	iii
	Acknowledgements	iv
1	INTRODUCTION	1
	1.1 Project Background	1
2	THE SITE	2
	2.1 Site location, description and topography	2
	2.2 Archaeological Background	2
3	AIMS	3
	3.1 Archaeological Field Evaluation	3
4	METHOD STATEMENT	3
	4.1 Introduction	3
	4.2 Fieldwork	3
	4.3 Recording	4
5	RESULTS	4
	5.1 Introduction	4
	5.2 The Natural Soil Sequence	4
	5.3 Archaeological Features	4
6	FINDS	6
	6.1 Introduction	6
7	DISCUSSION	7
8	ARCHIVE	7
	8.1 Preparation and Deposition	7
	8.2 Copyright	7
	8.3 Security Copy	8
9	REFERENCES	8

Figure 1	Site and trench location
Figure 2	Trench 2 showing plan and section through Ditch 206
Plate 1	South-east facing section through Ditch 206

Salisbury Plain Trench System South of Baden Down Farm Wiltshire

Archaeological Field Evaluation Report

Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Landmarc Support Services Ltd (LSS) through Defence Estates Environmental Support Team (DE EST) on behalf of Defence Training Estate (DTE) to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land to the South of Baden Down Farm, Wiltshire, centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 417110 152200.

Following conditions encountered in theatre in Afghanistan, the DTE has plans to upgrade training area facilities. Development proposals are for a series of trenches and tunnels, similar to complexes encountered in Afghanistan, to be cut on the east of Salisbury Plain with a site footprint of around 2ha. The archaeological evaluation was undertaken from the 12th to 15th October 2009 and comprised the excavation of eighteen trial trenches, comprising an approximate 5% sample of the Site as a whole.

The Site is located c.3km to the north east of Enford and is bounded to the east by Water Lane and to the south by a bridle path; Baden Down Farm lies c.100m to the north. The Site lies on a moderately steep north-facing slope at between c.130m and 140m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The underlying geology comprises Upper Chalk with occasional patches of clay with flints. The overlying deposits comprised varying depths of thin topsoil.

The Site lies in an important prehistoric landscape and the most significant sites identified in the vicinity of Baden Down Farm are the numerous Bronze Age monuments in the area, several of which are Scheduled. Also of significance is an undated linear feature that follows an approximately north-west to south-east course and is visible as a low earthwork immediately to the west of the Site. Crop-marks visible on aerial photographs suggest that this feature continues through the south-west of the Site and this was confirmed during the evaluation.

Despite the relatively high archaeological potential of the Site only a single feature of archaeological significance, a large ditch in the south-west of the site, was located during the evaluation. This was almost certainly a small part of the c. 2.2km long earthwork/cropmark recorded in Wiltshire Sites and Monuments Record. The excavated form of this ditch and its extents as recorded on the WSMR, appear to suggest that this is probably part of a later prehistoric land division. This is itself probably part of an extensive system of similar land divisions that survive within SPTA. Extensive excavations on similar features recovered evidence to suggest a Middle-Late Bronze Age date for the establishment of this system of land divisions, however, it also appears that they were also quite long lived, with parts of some boundaries still forming pieces of present Parish boundaries.

Salisbury Plain Trench System South of Baden Down Farm Wiltshire

Archaeological Field Evaluation Report

Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology is grateful to Landmarc Support Services Ltd for commissioning the project on behalf of Defence Training Estate. In particular the assistance of Steve Knight of Landmarc and Richard Osgood of Defence Estates is gratefully acknowledged.

The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Damian De Rosa. The fieldwork was directed by Vaughan Birbeck assisted by Ruth Panes, Dave Murdie, Mark Stewart and Olly Good. This report was compiled by Vaughan Birbeck with the assistance of Sue Nelson (finds). The illustrations were prepared by Liz James.

Salisbury Plain Trench System South of Baden Down Farm Wiltshire

Archaeological Field Evaluation

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Landmarc Support Services Ltd (LSS) through Defence Estates Environmental Support Team (DE EST) on behalf of Defence Training Estate (DTE) to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land to the South of Baden Down Farm, Wiltshire (hereafter 'the Site') centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 417110 152200.
- 1.1.2 Following conditions encountered in theatre in Afghanistan, the Defence Training Estate (DTE) has plans to upgrade training area facilities to support Operation Herrick. A recurring terrain feature faced by soldiers is the network of fire trenches associated with tunnels and/or centres of population. To this end DTE require a series of trenches and tunnels to be cut on the east of Salisbury Plain with a Site footprint of around 2ha, for which a planning application is to be submitted.
- 1.1.3 This area is located by Baden Down Farm and, as such, is close to a number of Bronze Age burial mounds and linear ditches, an Iron Age enclosure, and prehistoric field systems all recorded in the Wiltshire Sites and Monuments Record (WSMR). A number of these sites are Scheduled Monuments and, as such their settings must also be considered in the design of works. Further to the extant monuments, although the proposed area has been deliberately chosen as much of it does not lie in an area of known archaeological sensitivity, there is a relatively high potential for previously unknown deposits, particularly of prehistoric date, to be located in this area. To this end the Environmental Advisor (Archaeology) for Defence Estates recommended that a field evaluation of the area be undertaken prior to any development commencing.
- 1.1.4 An archaeological brief was prepared by DE EST (DE EST 2009) detailing the archaeological background to the Site and a Written Scheme of Investigation was prepared by Wessex Archaeology (Wessex Archaeology 2009) and approved by DE EST prior to the work commencing.

2 THE SITE

2.1 Site location, description and topography

- 2.1.1 The Site is located c.3km to the north east of Enford and Littlecott. It is bounded to the east by Water Lane and to the south by a bridle path. Baden Down Farm lies c.100m to the north. (**Figure 1**)
- 2.1.2 Baden Down Farm is in an area of good chalk grassland. The trench complex will be cut onto the crest of the Hill to the south and overlooking the farm. There is considerable public access around this region as well as 'dry' (non live-firing) military training.
- 2.1.3 The Site lies on a moderately steep north-facing slope at between c.130m and 140m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The Site is currently rough grassland.
- 2.1.4 The underlying geology is Upper Chalk with occasional patches of clay with flints (Geological Survey of Great Britain (England and Wales) 1:50,000 series, Sheet 282). The overlying deposits comprised varying depths of thin topsoil (c 0.20m – 0.40m in depth).

2.2 Archaeological Background

- 2.2.1 Salisbury Plain represents one of the best preserved archaeological landscapes in southern Britain. There are over 2,300 known archaeological monuments recorded on Salisbury Plain, of which over 550 are Scheduled (306 individual schedulings). Unusually for southern Britain many of the monuments survive as earthworks.
- 2.2.2 The Site lies in an important prehistoric landscape. The most significant sites identified in the vicinity of Baden Down Farm are the numerous Bronze Age monuments in the area, several of which are Scheduled:
- SM 31190 Two bowl barrows 350m south east of Baden Down Farm
 - SM 10045 Enclosure East of Baden Down Farm.
 - SM 10048 Trackway, ditch and bell barrow on Longstreet Down
 - SM 10046 Bowl Barrow on Longstreet Down
- 2.2.3 Also of significance is an undated linear feature (WSMR No. SU15SE 633, **Figure 1**) that follows an approximately north-west to south-east course and is visible as a low earthwork immediately to the west of the Site. Crop-marks visible on aerial photographs suggested that this feature continued through the south-west of the Site and this was confirmed during the evaluation.
- 2.2.4 Although the proposed area of the Trench and Tunnel System does not lie within any of the areas of archaeological sensitivity established by the County Archaeologist and the DE Historic Environment Team, the extent of ground works and archaeological importance of the region as a whole warrant careful archaeological consideration.

3 AIMS

3.1 Archaeological Field Evaluation

3.1.1 The aims of the archaeological field evaluation were to:

- clarify the presence/absence and extent of any buried archaeological remains within the Site that may be threatened by development.
- identify, within the constraints of the evaluation, the date, character, condition and depth of any surviving remains within the Site.
- assess the degree of existing impacts to sub-surface horizons and to document the extent of archaeological survival of buried deposits.

4 METHOD STATEMENT

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The following methodology was employed in order to meet the aims and objectives of the evaluation. All works were carried out in accordance with the relevant guidance given in the '*Standards for Archaeological Assessment and Field Evaluation in Wiltshire*' (Archaeology Service, Wiltshire County Council 1995) and in the Institute for Archaeologist's *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (revised 2008) excepting where they are superseded by statements made below.

4.2 Fieldwork

4.2.1 The evaluation comprised the excavation of eighteen 30m x 2m trial trenches within the c.2ha Site, equating to a 5% sample of the area.

4.2.2 All overburden (topsoil) was carefully removed by mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket, under constant archaeological supervision, to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon or natural geology, whichever is encountered first.

4.2.3 Each trench was cleaned by hand where appropriate and planned prior to any hand-excavation. All pre-modern stratified deposits were excavated by hand. A representative section, not less than 1m in length, of deposits through each trench from ground surface to the top of the natural geology was also recorded.

4.3 Recording

- 4.3.1 All recording was undertaken using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording sheets and recording system. Details of Wessex Archaeology's recording system are available on request.
- 4.3.2 A complete drawn record of excavated and archaeological features and deposits was compiled. This included both plans and sections, drawn to appropriate scales (1:20 for plans, 1:10 for sections). The Ordnance Datum (OD) height of all principal features and levels has calculated and plans/sections annotated with OD heights.
- 4.3.3 Trench locations and all recorded archaeological features revealed were surveyed using a GPS and tied in to the Ordnance Survey.
- 4.3.4 A full photographic record was maintained using both colour transparencies and black and white negatives (on 35mm film). Digital photography was used additionally for all photography of significant features, finds, deposits and general site working.

5 RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 Brief trench and context descriptions for the evaluation are presented in **Appendix 1**; more detailed descriptions are contained within the project archive. **Figure 1** shows the location of the trenches and the principal feature recorded.
- 5.1.2 Only a single archaeological feature, a substantial ditch (**206**), was encountered during the evaluation and very few finds were recovered from either the ditch fills or the topsoil, despite all spoil being scanned for finds during excavation and recording.

5.2 The Natural Soil Sequence

- 5.2.1 The weathered Upper Chalk natural substrata with occasional periglacial striations was revealed directly below between 0.20m and 0.40m of dark greyish brown silty clay loam topsoil in all 18 evaluation trenches. The topsoil was slightly thicker towards the base of the slope, especially in the northern end of trench 13, at the very base of the slope. The single feature of archaeological significance, the large ditch (**206**) located in Trench 2, and a modern cast iron water pipe recorded in Trenches 2 and 4 were both cut into the chalk substrata and their fills were sealed below the present topsoil.

5.3 Archaeological Features

- 5.3.1 An approximately east-west orientated "V" profile ditch (**206**) with steep, straight sides and a slightly concave base, 2.50m wide and 1.05m deep was located in Trench 2. The basal fill of this feature (**205**) comprised a 0.20m thick pale greyish brown fine silty clay with common large chalk inclusions and probably represents the initial weathering of the ditch sides and gradual silting. This was overlain by a 0.33m thick deposit of very light greyish brown

fine silty clay (**204**) with abundant small chalk inclusions and probably represents further gradual weathering and silting, possibly of a bank on the northern (downslope) side of the ditch. A single worked flint waste flake of probable Late Neolithic or Bronze Age date, and a single horse tooth were the only artefacts recovered from this deposit. Fill **204** was overlain by a similar 0.30m thick deposit (**203**) that was only distinguished from **204** by the slightly less abundant chalk inclusions and occasional large flint nodules. A small assemblage of finds, comprising 11 small pieces of undiagnostic animal bone and a single sheep tooth and four worked flint waste flakes, again of probable Late Neolithic or Bronze Age date, were recovered from this deposit. The uppermost fill (**202**) of ditch **206** comprised a 0.23m thick greyish brown silty clay deposit with very rare chalk inclusions; this deposit probably represents the final stabilisation on the large boundary ditch. Three worked flint waste flakes, once again of probable Late Neolithic or Bronze Age date, and a single piece of burnt flint were recovered from this deposit.

- 5.3.2 The WSMR records the extensive boundary ditch (WSMR SU15SE 633) either as a cropmark or an earthwork extending for approximately 1.7km to the west of the Site and 0.5km to the east and from its position it is clear that ditch **206** represents a small part of this boundary. Although none of the finds recovered from the various fills of the ditch are closely datable, this appears, based on the excavated form of the ditch in Trench 2 and its extents as recorded on the WSMR, to represent a later prehistoric land division, possibly of Late Bronze Age date, and part of an extensive system of similar land divisions that survive within SPTA (Bradley *et al.* 1994; Birbeck 2006).
- 5.3.3 The only other possible features noted during the evaluation comprised a small area of shallow, irregular striations in Trench 5 and a service trench containing a cast iron water pipe in Trenches 2 and 4. The striations recorded in Trench 5 are probably the result of periglacial weathering and erosion and the service trench is almost certainly of 20th century date.

6 FINDS

6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 The evaluation produced a very small quantity of finds, deriving from three contexts. The finds, comprising one piece of burnt flint, eight worked flint, waste flakes and 13 pieces of animal bone, were all recovered from the upper fills of ditch 206. **Table 1** gives the quantification of finds by material type and by context.

Table 1: All finds by context (number / weight in grammes)

Feature	Context	Worked Flint	Animal Bone	Burnt Flint
206	202	3/40		1/24
206	203	4/51	12/23	
206	204	1/19	1/50	
TOTAL		8/110	13/73	1/24

6.2 Worked Flint

- 6.2.1 The small assemblage of worked flint was composed entirely of wide, squat waste flakes, probably removed with a hard hammer. No diagnostic pieces were found and the assemblage can only be very broadly dated to the Late Neolithic or Bronze Age.

6.3 Burnt Flint

- 6.3.1 A single piece of burnt flint was recovered from the upper fill of ditch **206**. Burnt flint is intrinsically undatable, but is generally regarded as an indicator of prehistoric activity.

6.4 Animal Bone

- 6.4.1 A small assemblage of animal bone was recovered from the secondary fills of ditch **206**. The 12 pieces recovered from context **203** comprised a single fragment of sheep tooth and 11 small, undiagnostic fragments of sheep or pig sized bones. A single horse tooth was recovered from context **204**

7 DISCUSSION

- 7.1.1 Despite the relatively high archaeological potential of the Site, with Bronze Age barrows, undated trackways, enclosures and land divisions all in the immediate vicinity, only a single feature of archaeological significance, the large ditch (**206**) in Trench 2, was located during the evaluation. This was almost certainly a small part of the c.2.2km long earthwork/cropmark recorded in WSMR (SU15SE 633). No closely datable finds were recovered from the hand excavation of this ditch and the few pieces of worked flint and animal bone that were recovered could easily be residual within this context.
- 7.1.2 The excavated form of ditch **206** and its extents as recorded on the WSMR, appear to suggest that this is probably part of a later prehistoric land division. This is probably part of an extensive system of similar land divisions that survive within SPTA. Extensive excavations on similar features recovered evidence to suggest a Middle-Late Bronze Age date for the establishment of this system of land divisions, however, it also appears that they were also quite long lived, with parts of some boundaries still forming parts of present Parish boundaries (Birbeck 2003, 81). Although no closely datable finds were recovered from any of the fills of ditch 206, similar dearths of finds/dating evidence have been noted even in large-scale excavations such as that conducted at Breach Hill, some 16km to the west, where a total length of approximately 90m of similar features were excavated to produce only a single sherd of Late Bronze Age pottery from a sealed context.
- 7.1.3 Small, isolated features of prehistoric or later date may survive, as yet undetected, within the Site; however, as the evaluation trenching comprised approximately 5% of the area of the Site, this is perhaps unlikely. Further excavation of ditch **206**, which probably extends for c. 55m across the south-western side of the Site, may provide some evidence to support or disprove the assumptions of its date made in this report.

8 ARCHIVE

8.1 Preparation and Deposition

- 8.1.1 The complete project archive will be prepared in accordance with Wessex Archaeology's Guidelines for Archive Preparation and in accordance with *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage (UKIC 1990)*. On completion of the project, the archive will be deposited with the County Museum Service or similar repository to be agreed with the Local Authority's Archaeological Advisor
- 8.1.2 The project archive is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology in Salisbury under the Site code **72710**.

8.2 Copyright

- 8.2.1 The full copyright of the written/illustrative archive relating to the site will be retained by Wessex Archaeology Ltd under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved. The Museum, however, will be

granted an exclusive licence for the use of the archive for educational purposes, including academic research, providing that such use shall be non-profit making, and conforms to the Copyright and Related Rights regulations 2003.

8.3 Security Copy

- 8.3.1 In line with current best practice, on completion of the project a security copy of the paper records will be prepared, in the form of microfilm. The master jackets and one diazo copy of the microfilm will be submitted to the National Monuments Record Centre (Swindon); a second diazo copy will be deposited with the paper records at the Museum, and a third diazo copy will be retained by Wessex Archaeology.

9 REFERENCES

- Birbeck, V. 2006. *Excavations on the Old Ditch Linear Earthwork, Breach Hill, Tilshead*. Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine Vol 99, pp 79-103
- Bradley, R., Entwistle, R. and Raymond, F. 1994. *Prehistoric Land Divisions on Salisbury Plain: The Work of the Wessex Linear Ditches Project*. English Heritage Archaeological Report 2. London
- Defence Estates Environment Support Team, 2009. Salisbury Plain Trench System, South of Baden Down Farm. Brief for Field Evaluation. DTE SP.
- Wessex Archaeology 2009. Salisbury Plain Trench System, South of Baden Down Farm. Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation. Ref 72710.01

APPENDIX 1: Catalogue of Trench Descriptions

TRENCH - 1		NGR: 416925 152170
Dimensions – 30m x 2m		Ground Level –138.90m OD
Context No.	Description	Depth
101	Dark greyish brown silty clay loam topsoil with common chalk and sparse flint inclusions.	0-0.28m
102	Natural Upper Chalk substrata.	0.28m+

TRENCH – 2		NGR: 416953 152170
Dimensions – 30m x 2m		Ground Level –139.10m OD
Context No.	Description	Depth
201	Dark greyish brown silty clay loam topsoil with common chalk and sparse flint inclusions.	0-0.25m
202	Greyish brown silty clay upper fill of ditch 206. Small quantities of worked flint and burnt flint recovered.	0.25-0.48m
203	Light greyish brown fine silty clay with common chalk inclusions. Secondary fill of ditch 206. Small quantities of worked flint and animal bone recovered.	0.48-0.78m
204	Very light greyish brown fine silty clay with abundant chalk inclusions. Secondary fill of ditch 206. Small quantities of worked flint and animal bone recovered.	0.78-1.10m
205	Pale greyish brown fine silty clay with common large chalk inclusions. Primary fill of ditch 206.	1.10-1.30m.
206	Approximately east-west orientated “V” profile ditch with steep, straight sides and a slightly concave base, 2.50m wide and 1.05m deep. Filled with 202, 203, 204 and 205.	0.25-1.30m
207	Fill of modern service trench 208.	0.25m+
208	Modern service trench with cast iron water pipe	0.25m+
209	Natural Upper Chalk substrata.	0.25m+

TRENCH - 3		NGR:416985 152173
Dimensions – 30m x 2m		Ground Level –138.74m OD
Context No.	Description	Depth
301	Dark greyish brown silty clay loam topsoil with common chalk and sparse flint inclusions.	0-0.23m
302	Natural Upper Chalk substrata.	0.23m+

TRENCH - 4		NGR: 4127010 152205
Dimensions – 30m x 2m		Ground Level –134.31m OD
Context No.	Description	Depth
401	Dark greyish brown silty clay loam topsoil with common chalk and sparse flint inclusions.	0-0.25m
402	Natural Upper Chalk substrata.	0.25m+
403	Fill of modern service trench 404.	0.25m+
404	Modern service trench with cast iron water pipe	0.25m+

TRENCH - 5		NGR: 417016 152185
Dimensions – 30m x 2m		Ground Level –136.60m OD
Context No.	Description	Depth
501	Dark greyish brown silty clay loam topsoil with common chalk and sparse flint inclusions.	0-0.26m
502	Natural Upper Chalk substrata.	0.26m+

TRENCH - 6		NGR: 417060 152175
Dimensions – 30m x 2m		Ground Level –139.35m OD
Context No.	Description	Depth
601	Dark greyish brown silty clay loam topsoil with common chalk and sparse flint inclusions.	0-0.26m
602	Natural Upper Chalk substrata.	0.26m+

TRENCH - 7		NGR: 417045 152200
Dimensions – 30m x 2m		Ground Level –135.80m OD
Context No.	Description	Depth
701	Dark greyish brown silty clay loam topsoil with common chalk and sparse flint inclusions.	0-0.30m
702	Natural Upper Chalk substrata.	0.30m+

TRENCH - 8		NGR: 417075 152210
Dimensions – 30m x 2m		Ground Level –134.07m OD
Context No.	Description	Depth
801	Dark greyish brown silty clay loam topsoil with common chalk and sparse flint inclusions.	0-0.23m
802	Natural Upper Chalk substrata.	0.23m+

TRENCH – 9		NGR:417078 152180
Dimensions – 30m x 2m		Ground Level –140.22m OD
Context No.	Description	Depth
901	Dark greyish brown silty clay loam topsoil with common chalk and sparse flint inclusions.	0-0.27m
902	Natural Upper Chalk substrata.	0.27m+

TRENCH - 10		NGR: 147110 152170
Dimensions – 30m x 2m		Ground Level –140.50m OD
Context No.	Description	Depth
1001	Dark greyish brown silty clay loam topsoil with common chalk and sparse flint inclusions.	0-0.23m
1002	Natural Upper Chalk substrata.	0.23m+

TRENCH - 11		NGR: 147105 152210
Dimensions – 30m x 2m		Ground Level –137.30m OD
Context No.	Description	Depth
1101	Dark greyish brown silty clay loam topsoil with common chalk and sparse flint inclusions.	0-0.27m
1102	Natural Upper Chalk substrata.	0.27m+

TRENCH - 12		NGR: 417115 152234
Dimensions – 30m x 2m		Ground Level –130.75m OD
Context No.	Description	Depth
1201	Dark greyish brown silty clay loam topsoil with common chalk and sparse flint inclusions.	0-0.24m
1202	Natural Upper Chalk substrata.	0.24m+

TRENCH - 13		NGR: 417135 152240
Dimensions – 30m x 2m		Ground Level –130.10m OD
Context No.	Description	Depth
1301	Dark greyish brown silty clay loam topsoil with common chalk and sparse flint inclusions.	0-0.43m
1302	Natural Upper Chalk substrata.	0.43m+

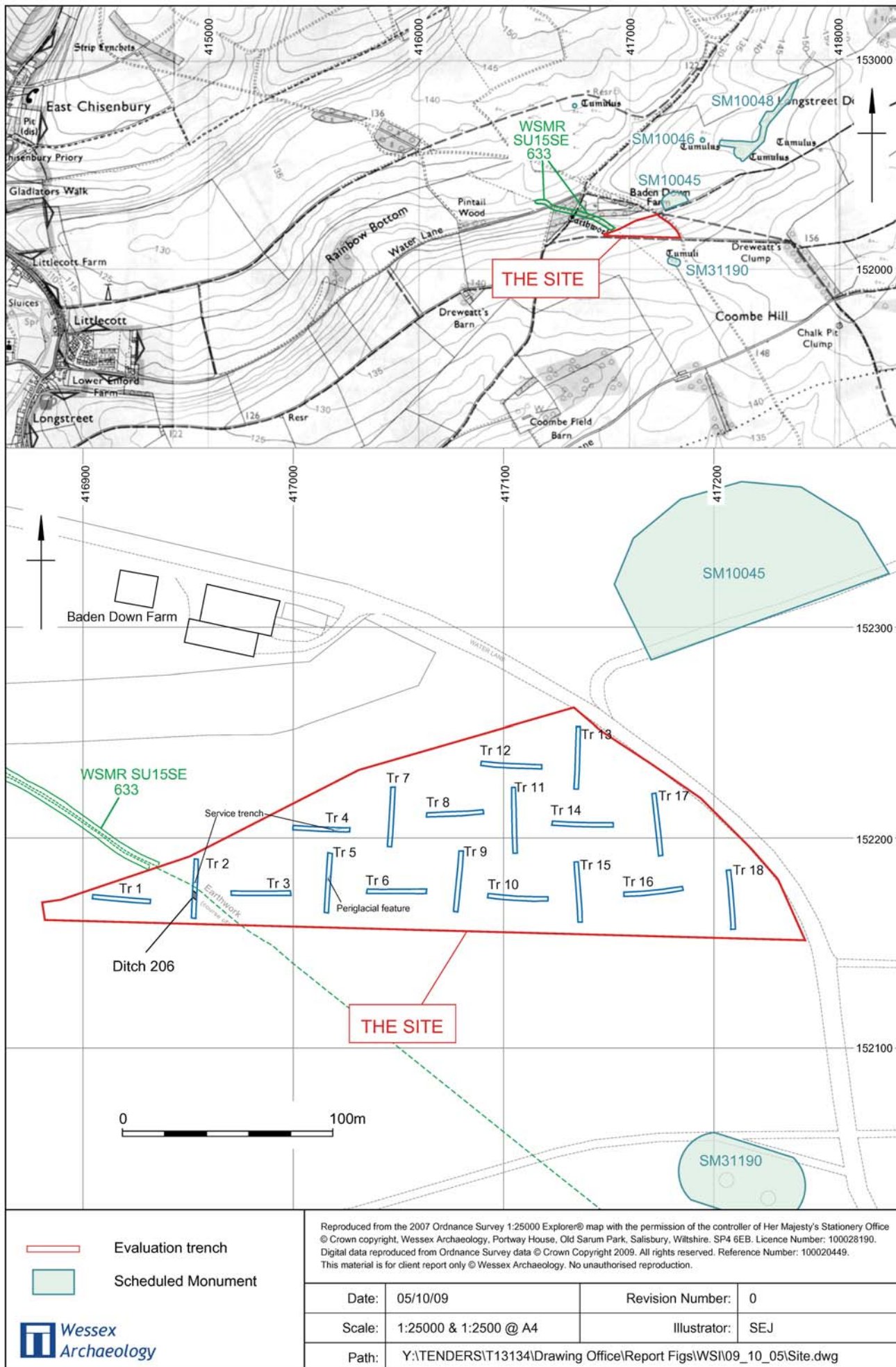
TRENCH - 14		NGR: 417150 152205
Dimensions – 30m x 2m		Ground Level –m OD
Context No.	Description	Depth
1401	Dark greyish brown silty clay loam topsoil with common chalk and sparse flint inclusions.	0-0.22m
1402	Natural Upper Chalk substrata.	0.22m+

TRENCH - 15		NGR: 417136 152165
Dimensions –30m x 2m		Ground Level –141.90m OD
Context No.	Description	Depth
1501	Dark greyish brown silty clay loam topsoil with common chalk and sparse flint inclusions.	0-0.25m
1502	Natural Upper Chalk substrata.	0.25m+

TRENCH - 16		NGR: 417175 152174
Dimensions –30m x 2m		Ground Level –141.73m OD
Context No.	Description	Depth
1601	Dark greyish brown silty clay loam topsoil with common chalk and sparse flint inclusions.	0-0.18m
1602	Natural Upper Chalk substrata.	0.18m+

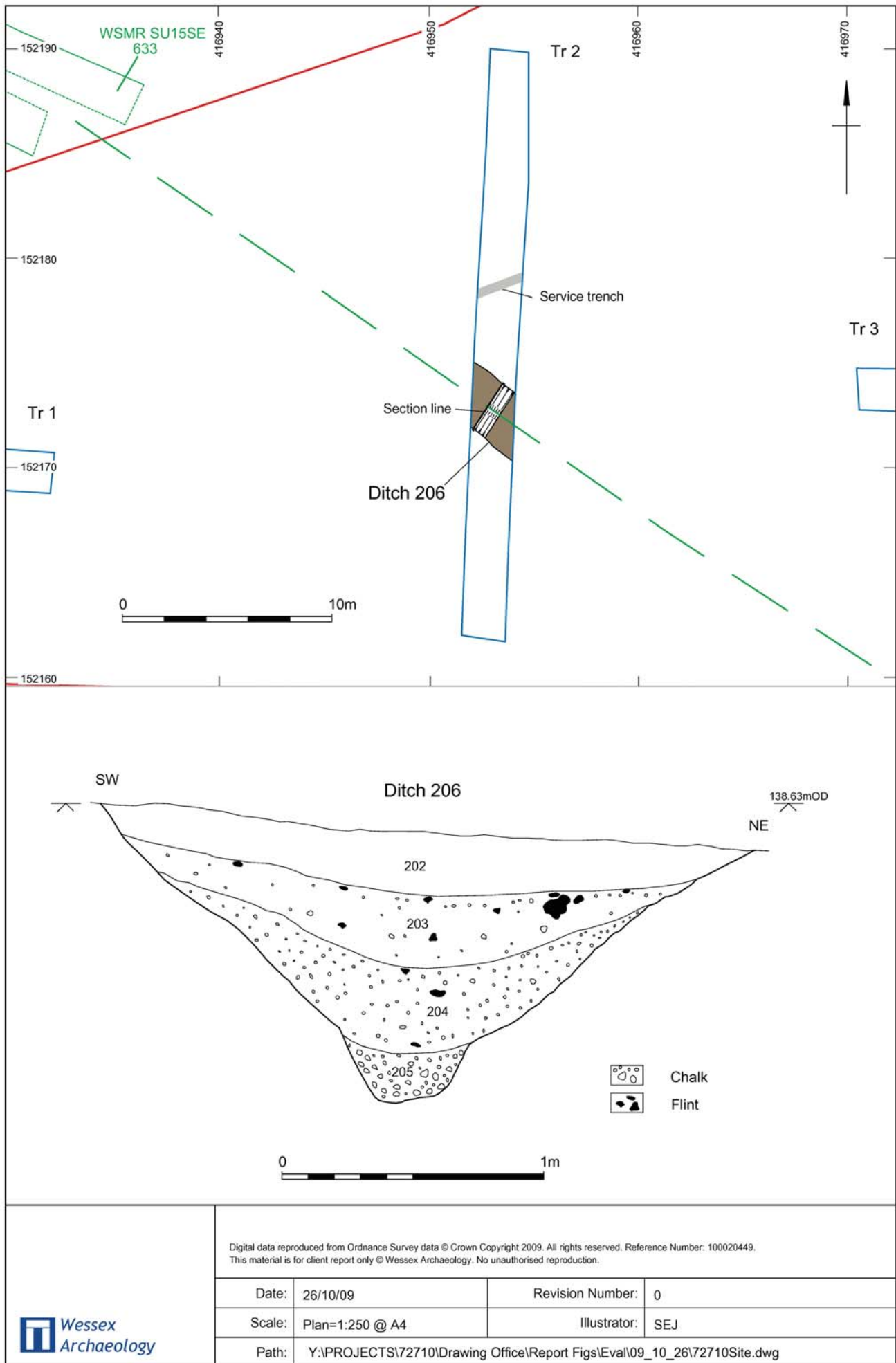
TRENCH - 17-		NGR: 417173 152210
Dimensions –30m x 2m		Ground Level –139.50m OD
Context No.	Description	Depth
1701	Dark greyish brown silty clay loam topsoil with common chalk and sparse flint inclusions.	0-0.27m
1702	Natural Upper Chalk substrata.	0.27m+

TRENCH - 18		NGR: 417208 152175
Dimensions –30m x 2m		Ground Level –144.10m OD
Context No.	Description	Depth
1801	Dark greyish brown silty clay loam topsoil with common chalk and sparse flint inclusions.	0-0.29m
1802	Natural Upper Chalk substrata.	0.29m+



Site and trench location

Figure 1



Trench 2 showing plan and section of Ditch 206

Figure 2



Plate 1: South-east facing section through Ditch 206

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