

Lord Mayor's Drive, Burnham Beeches, Buckinghamshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report



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May 2020



Client Name: Chilterns Conservation Board
Document Title: Lord Mayor's Drive, Burnham Beeches, Buckinghamshire
Document Type: Evaluation Report
Issue/Version Number: 1
Grid Reference: centered on SU 9523 8498
Planning Reference: N/A
Site Code: BBLMD19
Receiving Museum: Buckinghamshire County Museum
Museum Accession No: TBC

Lord Mayor’s Drive, Burnham Beeches, Buckinghamshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Summary

In September 2019, the Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB), in collaboration with City of London, undertook a community-led archaeological evaluation at Lord Mayor's Drive, Burnham Beeches, Buckinghamshire (centered on SU 9523 8498) as part of the Beacons of the Past project.

The investigation consisted of a single trench, targeted on a section of linear earthwork that runs NE-SW from the Victory Cross car park to the intersection with a univallate hillfort enclosure to the south-west (a scheduled ancient monument (SM 251732)). The works were located outside the scheduled area and approximately 600m from the actual intersection of the features.

The evaluation revealed a possible buried soil horizon overlying the top of the geological sequence. The buried soil and the natural geology appeared to have been cut by a NE-SW aligned ditch running parallel to the north-west of the extant remnant of the earthwork. The bank itself appeared to be primarily composed of re-deposited sand and gravel, the majority of which almost certainly originated from the up-cast generated during the excavation of the ditch. The fills of the ditch were very similar in composition, suggesting that they are likely to have derived from the erosion and/or slighting of the earthwork.

A single flint core was recovered during the excavation of the bank deposits, although this could not be definitively attributed to a specific context and cannot therefore be considered as reliable dating evidence. No other artefactual material was recovered during the excavation of the undisturbed bank deposits or ditch fills.

1 Introduction

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In September 2019, the Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB) undertook a community-led archaeological evaluation at Lord Mayor's Drive, Burnham Beeches, Buckinghamshire (centered on SU 9523 8498) as part of the Beacons of the Past project.
- 1.1.2 The Beacons of the Past project is a National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) supported project hosted by the CCB, which is researching the prehistoric landscapes of the Chiltern Hills and their environs.
- 1.1.3 A written scheme of investigation (WSI) was prepared on behalf of the Corporation of London (CoL), which conformed to the principles identified in Historic England's guidance documents *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)*, specifically the *MoRPHE Project Manager's Guide (2015)* and *Project Planning Note 3: Archaeological Excavation* (CCB 2019). The WSI also formed part of an application for consent from Natural England, as the site exists within a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- 1.1.4 Volunteers were invited to take part in the evaluation, which was targeted on a section of linear earthwork that runs NE-SW from the Victory Cross car park to the intersection with a univallate hillfort enclosure at Seven Ways Plain to the south-west (a scheduled ancient monument (SM 251732)). The works were located outside the scheduled area and approximately 600m from the actual intersection of the features.
- 1.1.5 The excavation was undertaken in an attempt to ascertain the character, date, state of preservation, and extent of any archaeological remains within this part of Burnham Beeches, and with specific relevance for the prehistoric setting of the Seven Ways Plain hillfort.

1.2 Geology and Topography

- 1.2.1 The site (SU 9523 8498) is located on the southern fringe of Buckinghamshire, west of Farnham Common and inside the 374.6ha SSSI at Burnham Beeches, c6km northwest of Slough (Fig. 1).
- 1.2.2 The solid Geology of the site comprises clays, silts and sands of the Reading Formation (part of the Lambeth Group), which formed in the Palaeogene period 55 to 56 million years ago. In the location of the evaluation trench, the superficial deposits comprise the top of the Winter Hill Gravel Terrace, which formed in the Quaternary period (Anglian Stage) and were deposited about 450,000 to 500,000 years ago in a fast-flowing braided river system carrying glacial meltwaters (CoL, after 2010).

1.3 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 1.3.1 The following section is - in part - reproduced from the WSI prepared on behalf of the Corporation of London (CCB, 2019), and full references can be found in that document.

Prehistoric Period

- 1.3.2 Numerous Palaeolithic tools were recovered from gravel pits immediately south of Burnham Beeches, and it is possible that there was some occupation or at least human activity on the site during the Palaeolithic period.
- 1.3.3 A number of early prehistoric finds have been recorded in and around Burnham Beeches, including Palaeolithic flint handaxes recovered from Cage's Wood (HER 4789) and Swilly Pond (HER 4681). A hand axe together with numerous other lithic artefacts located approximately 300m to the northeast (HER 4682-6) and a Mesolithic flint blade was recovered from Kiln Wood (HER 1239).
- 1.3.4 Occupation in the later prehistoric period is evidenced in the hillfort known as the Seven Ways Plain Camp (SM 251732). The purpose of the recent works was to attempt to determine the date and character of an unscheduled linear earthwork - which was suggested by Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd (ACS Ltd) in their walkover survey as potentially Iron Age in date (ACS Ltd, 2010). The walkover survey suggested that this may have pre-dated the hillfort, but the results of the subsequent LiDAR survey indicate that the earthwork is later (Edward Pevelar pers. comm.). Unfortunately, the intersection of the two features has been heavily truncated by 20th-century quarrying.

Roman Period

- 1.3.5 There is no Romano-British evidence at Burnham Beeches, yet with a series of settlements nearly equidistant from the centre of the site, (White Place Farm, 3.5km west; All Souls Farm, 5km south-east; Hedgerley 4km north-east) it would be unsurprising if the focus for activity and settlement at this period underlies the Medieval Moated settlement 1km to the north of the hillfort (see below), or indeed, the space was intentionally left unoccupied and served a role as a resource for wood and charcoal. There is considerable evidence for iron production in the vicinity (e.g., All Souls Farm).

Medieval to post-Medieval Period

- 1.3.6 Little is known of Saxon Burnham, but it is likely to have been of some significance as it gave its name to the Hundred, a Saxon administrative unit. The association between East Burnham and the monastery at Staines has led to the theory that Burnham may have been an early religious centre. However, archaeological evidence of Saxon occupation is still lacking.
- 1.3.7 The history of the legal ownership of the lands now making up Burnham Beeches is complex and not always clear. It has been carefully researched elsewhere and a synopsis of the history of the estates and individuals most closely associated with the site has been produced by ACS Ltd (ACS Ltd, 2010). The history of the remaining manors is detailed in the Victoria County History (VCH online).

- 1.3.8 At the time of the Domesday Survey Burnham consisted of 18 hides of land, which had been held by Elmar, a thegn of King Edward. It was granted to Walter Fitz Otho who held the estate under the overlordship of the king. In 1204 the manor was divided; the main manor was that later known as Huntercombe Manor, and the other was Burnham Manor. Burnham Manor was acquired by Richard, Earl of Cornwall in 1236, who bestowed it on Burnham Abbey, the female monastic house he founded in 1266 as a convent for nuns; the gifts included the manors of Burnham and part of Cippenham, as well as the abbey itself. Other privileges included a view of frankpledge, a Thursday market and an annual fair, and all the rights, responsibilities and privileges of a newly created manor. Land mentioned in the foundation charter were named as Moorfurlong, Broken furlong, and all the meadow of Dillepool which belonged to Cippenham Manor at the time of Richard's grant. He also bought wood from John de Everenegge, which was called La Street and a portion of his wood of Hertleigh divided by the ditch from the wood of la Strete, 'even to the wood of John de la Penne'. After Richard's death, Cippenham Manor was inherited by his son, Edmund Earl of Cornwall, and the appurtenances of Cippenham manor of 1300 record the existence of two parks - a park next to the manor house and 'another park called Hertelye'. Notably the scheduled 13th-century moated enclosure of Hartley Court - also referred to as Harlequin's Moat or Hardicanute's Moat on some cartographic sources (Miller and Miller, 1976 and Hunter and Hunter, undated) - lies 1km to the north of the hillfort, and just over 900m from the location of the recent trench. The nomenclature of this monument is discussed in greater detail in Section 6.
- 1.3.9 Parks were prominent and common features of the medieval landscape. There were three parks in Burnham and others in the vicinity. The purpose of such parks was to provide their owners the opportunity to hunt and as a source of fresh meat throughout the year. Typically, the most prominent feature of the park was the pale, consisting of a broad high earth bank, topped by a fence of cleft oak stakes made more formidable by a deep inside ditch. The construction of the pale was clearly a major operation which required a great deal of labour. Much time and effort were also expended on maintaining the pale; this duty may have been carried out by the lord's tenants (Cantor and Hatherly, 1979).
- 1.3.10 After the Dissolution of Burnham Abbey in 1539 the manor was retained by the Crown until 1631 when Sir Marmeduke Darrell acquired it and it was subsumed into Huntercombe Manor (VCH online).
- 1.3.11 The numerous manors of the parish of Burnham appear to have been amalgamated under the Eyre family by the mid-18th century. In the late-18th century the manor passed to Captain Sayer who left it to John Popple in 1810. By 1831 the manor had been acquired by Lord and Lady Grenville of Dropmore Manor.
- 1.3.12 Burnham Beeches was during this period still largely the waste or communal land of the manor. It provided wood pasture for timber crops, livestock grazing and pannage for the householders' pigs. The ponds also provided a place to wash the sheep. The villagers were not allowed to harvest timber for fuel but were allowed collect the fallen branches and cut the turf. Any livestock they had grazing on the common were to be marked in the pound before being let loose on the common. Unmarked animals were

held in the cattle pound and released for a fee. The pound, which still stands on Crown Lane is a Scheduled Monument (SM 1046383) dating from the 18th century.

- 1.3.13 The wood pasture and coppice could well have encouraged other industries associated with such woodland management, such as wood conversion, where timbers are cut to provide planks, beams or boards; woodturning to produce assorted items including table and chair legs, which was a major industry in 19th century Buckinghamshire. Robust evidence for these activities taking place at Burnham Beeches is currently lacking. New LiDAR data may shed light on this by identifying charcoal platforms and saw pits. Brick making is also known to have taken place here from the old maps. Not only was clay locally available for brick and tile making, but gravel and chalk were also quarried in and around Burnham Beeches.

Modern

- 1.3.14 In 1878 the Corporation of London (Open Spaces) Act allowed the Corporation to acquire the freehold of common or unenclosed land within 25 miles of the City boundary. The following year part of the Dropmore Estate was put up for auction, including land which is now part of Burnham Beeches. As much of it was enclosed at this time, the Corporation of London was not able to buy it and Sir Henry Peek purchased the land as an interim measure. The unenclosed land was sold to the Corporation in 1880 for some £6000.
- 1.3.15 The history of Burnham Beeches during the war has been comprehensively researched elsewhere (<http://www.burnham-advertiser.co.uk/news/burnham/1667/FEATURE--Burnham-Beeches-in-the.html>).
- 1.3.16 In 1951 Burnham Beeches became a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and in 1993 a National Nature Reserve. In 2005 it became a Special Area for Conservation as beech woodlands on acid soils are becoming increasingly rare in Europe.
- 1.3.17 The great storm of 1987 saw the loss of approximately 50 trees during the gales. A concentration of apparent discrete features visible on the LiDAR imaging to the west of Hartley Court Moat may reflect the damage caused by the storm.

2 Evaluation Aims and Methodology

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The investigation was targeted on a linear earthwork that runs NE-SW from the Victory Cross carpark to the intersection with the hillfort enclosure. The works were located outside the scheduled area and away from the actual intersection of the features.
- 2.1.2 The excavation intended to establish the character, date, state of preservation, and extent of any archaeological remains within this part of Burnham Beeches, and with specific relevance for the prehistoric setting of the Seven Ways Plain hillfort. The scheme of works was designed to do the following:
- Provide sufficient coverage and exposure to enable excavation to establish the approximate form, date and purpose of any archaeological deposits, together with extent, localised depth and quality of preservation.
 - Provide sufficient coverage and exposure to evaluate the likely impact of past land uses, and the possible presence of masking deposits.
 - Provide sufficient coverage and exposure to provide information to construct an appropriate archaeological conservation strategy, whilst also informing future works, interpretation, and management of the site.
 - Set results in the local, regional, and national archaeological context.

2.2 Scope of Works and Methodology

- 2.2.1 A maximum of two trenches were proposed at the site totalling a maximum of 64m² of investigated area.
- 2.2.2 These comprised a main trench (Trench A), initially measuring 4m x 8m, but subsequently extended to 4m x 10m. The possibility of a second 2m x 8m long trench (Trench B) being opened to the immediate northeast was also proposed as a contingency, should time or manpower permit (CCB, 2019, Fig.4).
- 2.2.3 Trench A was positioned to target the location of a potentially Late Bronze Age/Iron Age bank and ditch, previously recorded on a walk-over survey (ACS, 2010), and again following the results of a 2019 LiDAR survey (<https://chilternsbeacons.org/wp/>).
- 2.2.4 The trench was located as shown on Figure 2. Trench B was not opened given the time constraints and the probability that the proximity of Trench A to the suggested location of the contingency trench meant that the latter would be unlikely to yield any further meaningful results.
- 2.2.5 Trench A was excavated entirely by hand to the top of the upper interface of archaeological features or deposits, and then to the top of the geological sequence.
- 2.2.6 Overburden, subsoil, and archaeological deposits were kept separate during excavation, to allow for sequential backfilling of the excavation.

2.2.7 The archaeological excavation was conducted in accordance with current best archaeological practice and the appropriate national and regional standards and guidelines.

2.2.8 All work was conducted in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists':

- Code of Conduct
- Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs
- Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations
- Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation

3 Results

Introduction

- 3.1.1 The following section summarises the stratigraphic sequence in Trench A from the earliest deposit to the most recent.
- 3.1.2 Detailed context descriptions are presented in the context inventory (Appendix A), and within the descriptive text below where they are integral to the interpretation of the deposit in question.
- 3.1.3 Finds reports are presented in Section 4; a report on the environmental analysis is presented in Section 5 and a discussion and interpretation of the results can be found in Section 6.

Trench A (Figs 3 and 4)

- 3.1.4 Trench A was aligned NW-SE and initially measured 4m x 8m but was subsequently extended by 2m at its south-eastern end. It was located over an extant element of the earthwork and the projected line of an associated ditch to the north-west of the bank
- 3.1.5 The trench revealed a possible buried soil horizon (10 and 22) which directly overlay the top of the geological sequence (the Winter Hill Gravel terrace). The buried soil horizon and the geological deposits were cut by a NE-SW aligned ditch (12) approximately 0.9m deep and up to 3m wide. The sides of the ditch sloped at $c45^{\circ}$ to a break of slope $c0.6m$ from the top of the feature, and then at $c55^{\circ}$ to a concave base.
- 3.1.6 The main body of the associated bank consisted of re-deposited sand and gravel (3, 11 and 23), almost certainly representing up-cast from the original excavation of the ditch. However, the base of the bank was composed of a greyish white sand and gravel (18) which did not correspond to any of the geological deposits through which the ditch was cut. Additionally, this deposit directly overlay the top of the geological sequence, perhaps suggesting that the 'buried soil' (10 and 22) observed to the NW and SE of the earthwork and associated ditch had been removed in the location of the bank prior to its construction (Figure 4; Cut 24 and Plate 3).
- 3.1.7 The primary fill of the ditch was a $c0.04m$ thick layer of dark grey-brown sand with only $c5\%$ gravel inclusions. The main fills (15 and 19) were predominantly composed of very compact, re-deposited sand and gravel, with an interface between the two layers which sloped from north-west to south-east.
- 3.1.8 To the south-east of the earthwork, the buried soil (22) and the tail of the bank (11) were overlain by a layer of re-deposited sand and gravel (20), not dissimilar in colour and composition to the main fill of the ditch (15). To the north-west of the ditch, a deposit of similar composition to deposit 20 (27) also overlay the buried soil (10).
- 3.1.9 Deposit 20 was directly overlain by a 0.05m thick layer of very compacted dark grey sandy silt which was interpreted as a possible surface (13).
- 3.1.10 Overlying the south-eastern tail of the bank, and the later "surface" (13) was a

c0.06m thick layer of mid-dark greyish-brown clayey silt (numbered 4 and 8) which probably represented an accumulation of material, possibly originating from the decomposition of leaf-mould. This was similar in composition to the deposit (9) overlying the ditch fills (15 and 19) to the north-west of the earthwork which may have had a similar origin but was significantly thicker at c0.22m, perhaps as it was filling a hollow created by the post-depositional settlement of the underlying ditch fills.

- 3.1.11 Deposit 4 and the underlying 'bank' deposits (3 and 20) were truncated by a shallow cut (25) to the south-east of the bank, although this was only present along the north-eastern edge of the trench. The discrete feature was 0.6m in diameter by approximately 0.2m deep and was predominantly filled by a fairly homogeneous clayey-sand (26), although the upper fill (7) was a compacted, mid brownish grey clay. The function and date of this feature were uncertain.
- 3.1.12 At the top of the sequence was a layer of leaf mould (1) which was present across the entire trench, with the exception of the very top of the bank itself, which was largely covered by a thin layer of mossy 'turf'.

4 Finds

4.1 Flint

By Rebecca Devaney

- 4.1.1 A single flint core was recovered as an unstratified find during the excavation of a linear feature at Burnham Beeches. The core exhibits numerous parallel bladelet removals taken from a thermal platform. The base and reverse of the core remain cortical. Incipient cones of percussion, caused by mis-hits or by using the core as a percussor, are present on the striking platform. The platform edge is abraded which suggests an alternate use after the removals were taken. The core is fairly large, weighing 134g, and still had the potential for further use. The cortex is reminiscent of flint procured from primary sources on the chalk, and is characterised by a thick, off-white cortex. The site is located just a few kilometres from chalk bedrock and so the raw material was likely to be locally sourced. The core remains in a relatively good condition, with no surface alteration (cortication) and only slight post-depositional damage.
- 4.1.2 The presence of parallel bladelet removals suggests a Mesolithic or Earlier Neolithic date for the core, and as such it is not associated with the Iron Age hillfort. The relatively good condition of the core indicates that there hasn't been a significant amount of post-depositional movement or exposure to weathering elements. However, the unstratified nature of the core limits its usefulness as a dating aid for associated features. The significance of the core lies in its demonstration of human activity in the area potentially as early as the Mesolithic or Earlier Neolithic.

4.2 Clay Tobacco Pipe

Identification by John Cotter

- 4.2.1 A single clay pipe bowl and partial stem was recovered during the excavation of the ditch fills. This was recovered from a disturbed deposit (Deposit 16 – Fig. 4, Section 1) immediately adjacent to one of the larger roots, and as such is almost certainly intrusive.
- 4.2.2 The pipe is likely to correspond with Type AO5 as identified by Atkinson and Oswald in London Clay Tobacco Pipes (Atkinson and Oswald, 1969 p8) which dates from 1610/20 to 1640 (John Cotter, pers. comm.).

5 Environmental Reports

5.1 Environmental Samples

By Sharon Cook

Introduction

- 5.1.1 Three samples were taken during investigations at Lord Mayor's Drive, Burnham Beeches, Buckinghamshire through an undated linear earthwork and associated ditch.

Method

- 5.1.2 The samples were processed by water flotation using a modified Siraf style machine. The flots were collected on a 250µm mesh and the heavy residue sieved to 500µm; both were dried in a heated room, after which the residues were sorted by eye for artefacts. The dried flots were scanned using a binocular microscope at approximately x 10 magnification.
- 5.1.3 In addition, a 1 litre subsample was taken for sample <3> (9) and processed using the wash over technique, for the retrieval of potential waterlogged plant remains (WPR). The flot and residue for this sample was collected on a 250µm mesh and kept wet to facilitate preservation. The flot was also scanned using a binocular microscope at x 10 magnification.

Results

- 5.1.4 Sample 1 (19) which was taken from the fill of ditch cut 12 comprised a strong brown (7.5YR 4/6) sand with frequent gravel. No finds were present within the residue and the flot was a moderately sized 75ml.
- 5.1.5 The flot is largely composed of roots which appear to be modern and intrusive, together with occasional leaf and bark fragments. Rare insect fragments are also unlikely to be of ancient origin as occasional fragments include delicate body parts such as antenna. Fungal fruiting bodies are well represented with in excess of one thousand noted within the flot. No charred plant remains are present and there are no uncharred seeds.
- 5.1.6 Sample 2 (21) which originated from the base of the same ditch cut, comprised a dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/4) sand also with frequent gravel. No finds were present in the residues and the flot was only 10ml in volume.
- 5.1.7 As with sample 1 the flot is rich in modern roots, together with occasional leaf and bark fragments. Insect fragments are present but in smaller quantities and less well preserved than in sample 1. Fungal fruiting bodies are also abundant. Rare fragments of charcoal are present but are very small with none measuring more than 2mm in greatest dimension and are therefore unsuitable for further work. No other charred plant remains are present and there are no uncharred seeds.
- 5.1.8 Sample 3 (9) which was taken from band of material sealing ditch 12, comprised a dark grey brown (2.5Y 4/2) sand with c.5% gravel. This sample showed evidence during

processing of uncharred plant material and so a 1L subsample was processed to check for the presence of waterlogged material.

- 5.1.9 The subsample produced a flot of 15ml which was scanned alongside the large, dried, bulk sample flot. A 100ml subsample of the dried flot was also scanned.
- 5.1.10 Both the dry and the wet flots contain modern roots, leaf fragments and bark together with a small number of insect remains including, occasional complete specimens. Fungal fruiting bodies are abundant and large in size. The contents of the flots are very similar to those observed within samples 1 and 2; no ancient waterlogged remains are present. As with the previous samples no finds were present within the residues

Discussion

- 5.1.11 The three samples are almost identical in terms of the composition of the flot and it is likely that most or all of the material present is of relatively modern origin. Sample 3 (9) contains the richest quantity of plant remains and appears to be a layer of rotting plant material (leaves, roots etc.). As this layer overlies both sample 1 (19) and 2 (21) and the soil is relatively loose and free draining it is likely that it has been carried to the lower levels through a combination of root action and the movement of water and other natural processes through the deposits.
- 5.1.12 Sample 2 which is the basal layer of the ditch contains a few small charcoal fragments, however these are too small to be further analysed. The small size and quantity may indicate that these originate as windblown material, certainly there is no evidence that they are present as a result of a deliberate deposition.

6 Discussion and Interpretation

6.1 Reliability of Field Investigation

- 6.1.1 The evidence from the DBA and subsequent LiDAR survey suggests that the earthwork under investigation extends for at least 1.5km - from Seven Ways Plain hillfort to the village of Egypt - changing alignment to the north-west of the Victory Cross car park (Fig 6). As only 4m of the feature was excavated within Trench A, any interpretation is necessarily tentative, and the problematic nature of the definitive dating and interpretation of the earthwork is further exacerbated by the paucity of securely stratified artefactual material. Additionally, the artefactual and environmental evidence which was recovered is potentially unreliable given the profusion of roots from standing trees that were present within the trench (Plate 4 and 5.1.11 above). The root disturbance also made the interpretation of the relationships between certain deposits problematic.
- 6.1.2 The following section presents a discussion of the results in relation to the objectives outlined above (2.1.2). Section 6.2 discusses the site-specific interpretation of the stratigraphic sequence encountered, whilst Section 6.3 suggests possible interpretations of the bank and ditch feature in a wider context.

6.2 Discussion

Before the earthwork

- 6.2.1 The route of the earthwork predominantly traverses the higher ground of the Winter Hill gravel terrace, with the Seven Ways Plain hillfort situated on a lower-lying spur of the Black Park gravels at the south-western extent of the traceable bank (CoL, after 2010).
- 6.2.2 The deposit(s) interpreted as buried soil which was encountered within the trench (10 and 22) was predominantly composed of fairly compacted, reddish-brown sand and gravel, and was initially thought to be the top of the geological sequence. Excavation of this deposit proved it to be a maximum of 0.18m thick, with a relatively sharp interface with the underlying sterile sand and gravel of the Winter Hill terrace. Although it did differ from the underlying natural geology, the gravel rich composition of the deposit(s) may suggest that it represents the disturbed or weathered upper element of the gravel terrace, rather than a buried topsoil.

Marking out?

- 6.2.3 Although definitive interpretation of the 'buried soil' deposit is somewhat problematic, it appeared to represent a consistent layer of material at the top of the sequence pre-dating the bank and ditch, as it was present to the south-east (22) and north-west (10) and was clearly truncated by the north-western edge of Ditch 12. Additionally, the primary bank deposit (18) directly overlay the natural geology in the location of the earthwork - but also overlay Deposit 10 along the south-eastern extent of the bank. This would imply that the 'buried soil' had been removed prior to the deposition of the bank deposits (Cut 24).

6.2.4 It seems unlikely that Deposit 18 derived from up-cast generated during excavation of the ditch, as no similarly composed deposit was truncated by the feature. It is possible that the deposit represented a deliberate deposition of imported material intended to mark out the line of the feature prior to its construction. At 0.25m thick, the depth of the deposit would suggest that if Deposit 18 does not originate from the excavation of the ditch, then a considerable amount of material would have had to be imported for this purpose, particularly if it is consistent along the length of the earthwork.

6.2.5 The reason for this is uncertain, although a similar construction technique was suggested for the Late-Saxon *burh* ramparts at Oxford:

*“The earliest deposit found was a clean yellow gravel, which overlay the old ground surface [and] it appear[ed] as a low narrow mound” (Dodd, 2003 p143)
“[this] deposit.....could have been laid as a marker, [and] a clean spill of gravel at the bottom of the rampart, interpreted by the excavator as a possible marking out line, was also noted in the excavations at New College” (ibid. p149)*

6.2.6 Clearly, any comparison between the ramparts at Oxford and the earthwork investigated at Burnham Beeches is purely conjectural – particularly as the function and date of the latter is not proven. Future investigation along the length of the earthwork may further enhance our understanding of the origin and function of this deposit.

6.2.7 It should be noted that, when weathered, the Winter Hill Gravels become bleached and are not dissimilar in colour to Deposit 18 – this was observed within the existing quarry c750m to the north-east of the site. However, the weathered gravels typically comprise larger pebbles of flint, quartz, quartzites and occasional greensand cherts from which the sandy element has been eroded (CoL, after 2010). This contrasts markedly with the predominantly sandy composition of Deposit 18, in addition to the fact that Deposit 18 was only present at the base of the bank. Consequently, it seems unlikely that the deposit at the base of the bank represents a geological variation, and it is more likely to be a deliberate deposition forming a component part of the bank itself.

The Bank and Ditch

6.2.8 The deposit forming the main body of the extant bank (3) was primarily composed of re-deposited sand and gravel, which almost certainly originated from up-cast generated during the excavation of the accompanying ditch.

6.2.9 The earliest fill of the ditch (21) was a very thin layer of silty gravel, which probably represents primary silting in the base of the feature. The main fills of the ditch were very similar in composition to Deposit 3 (15 and 19), and are likely to have originated from the earthwork, probably as a result of the bank material eroding back into the ditch, as there was no indication that the bank had been deliberately slighted.

6.2.10 There was some evidence that the interface between the two main fills of the ditch sloped from north-west to south-east, although both fills were very similar in composition and as such this was by no means certain. If this does represent a genuine ‘tip-line’, it would indicate that the earlier material (19) has been deposited from the

north-west of the ditch, perhaps suggesting the presence of a second bank on the opposing side of the ditch to the extant earthwork. Two sections of the earthwork to the north-east of Trench A were noted in the DBA as displaying evidence for twin banks flanking the ditch:

“.....between Henry Peakes Drive and the Nile (Sections 05 and 19). These two sections are different in that they have a bank on both sides of the ditch”
(ACS Ltd, 2010 p18)

- 6.2.11 The interpretation of the deposits (20 and 27) which overlay the ‘buried soil’ horizon discussed above (6.2.2) may also provide further evidence for the possibility of a second bank to the north-west of the ditch. The deposit (20) overlying the ‘buried soil’ (22) to the south-east of the extant earthwork was interpreted on-site as having a similar origin to ditch fill 15 (ie – material eroded from the top of the extant bank to the south-east of the ditch). The deposit (27) overlying the possible buried soil (10) to the north-west of the ditch was very similar in composition to Deposit 20 and consequently a similar origin cannot be discounted. It is therefore possible that this either represents the remnant of a north-western bank, or an ‘overspill’ of material eroded from the bank to the south-east following the in-filling of the ditch.

After the earthwork

- 6.2.12 There was very little stratigraphy overlying the deposits associated with the bank and ditch. One exception to this was Deposit 13 to the south-east of the bank. This was compacted to the extent that almost none of the roots from the surrounding trees had penetrated the top of the layer, and consequently it was interpreted as a possible surface. It is possible that this represented a pathway pre-dating the existing path to which runs to the north of Lord Mayors Drive. Anecdotal evidence indicated that the current route of this path was only established following the construction of the Beeches Café and other visitor facilities at Victory Cross (Chris Morris pers. comm.) However, the extent of Deposit 13 was not established within the confines of the trench, so this interpretation is speculative.
- 6.2.13 With the exception of Deposits 4(8) and 9, there was very little evidence for any accumulation of soil post-dating the bank and ditch. Additionally, the ditch fills themselves appeared to be almost exclusively composed of re-deposited material originating from the bank.
- 6.2.14 The reason for this is uncertain, although de-watering by the numerous tree roots may have affected the structure of any accumulated material deriving from leaf litter, which decreases its volume and leaves it vulnerable to decomposition and wind erosion (<https://www.soils.org.uk/home>).

6.3 Interpretation

Prehistoric

- 6.3.1 Although the relationship between Seven Ways Plain Camp and the unscheduled earthwork is uncertain, the form of the bank and ditch revealed in Trench A, and the juxtaposition of the two monuments, may suggest that the latter is characteristically

similar to other linear earthwork boundaries associated with hillforts, which elsewhere have been interpreted as Bronze Age, or more typically, Iron Age in date.

- 6.3.2 During the Late Bronze Age there seems to have been a major reorientation of the subsistence economy, with a decline in the importance of crop growing and a rise in the importance of animal husbandry (Cunliffe, 1971). This may have led to a greater centralisation of power and an increase in the availability of larger workforces, with a subsequent pressure on land brought about by increasing population levels. This appears to have coincided with the appearance of extensive systems of linear earthworks, often running for many kilometres (Cunliffe, 1971).
- 6.3.3 However, studies of aerial photographs appear to suggest that the origin of these earthworks is a great deal more complex, as some were dug either prior to or as a part of the original laying out of 'celtic field systems' in the Bronze Age (c1800BC), while others were dug (or redug) after the emergence of hillforts after c600BC (Crawford, 1954 in Cunliffe, 2004). This implies that the adoption of linear ditches as boundaries spanned a period of more than a thousand years from c1800 to c400 BC. However, it would appear that the main phase, when hundreds of kilometres of linear ditches were laid out for the first time, appears to have been a comparatively short-lived episode commencing in c600BC after huge tracts of arable fields had already been in use for some time (Cunliffe, 2004).
- 6.3.4 The function of these earthworks is generally held to be for the control of stock, although some may also have been constructed as (or perhaps became) territorial boundaries, potentially representing the partitioning of areas of land which may have been under common ownership of a family or a lineage group, possibly belonging to a larger social unit perhaps equivalent to a clan (Cunliffe, 2004). These are generally sinuous linear configurations of bank and ditch *"running for many kilometres across the countryside with every suggestion that their creation was a compromise boundary between landowners on either side."* (Darvill, 1987 p127).
- 6.3.5 Where these linear earthworks have been excavated, they are invariably difficult to date. They often contain little artefactual material, and in many cases are likely to have been repeatedly cleaned out or refashioned so that evidence for their origins has potentially been removed. Superficially, their form is not often diagnostic, so prehistoric examples can be confused with medieval or later features. For this reason, amongst others, associations with other monuments are extremely important (<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/iha-prehistoric-linear-boundary-earthworks/heag219-prehistoric-linear-boundary-earthworks/>).
- 6.3.6 Whilst the proximity of the Seven Ways Plain hillfort and the earthwork investigated in Trench A displays some similarities with the prehistoric linear boundaries discussed above, the interpretation of the feature in light of the paucity of dateable artefacts is further complicated by the subsequent historical evolution of the area now known as Burnham Beeches.

Medieval

- 6.3.7 As discussed above (1.3.8), Burnham Manor was acquired by Richard, Earl of Cornwall in 1236, who then granted it to Burnham Abbey following its foundation in 1266. The appurtenances of Cippenham Manor from 1299 record the existence of two parks, one at Cippenham and a second described as '*a...park called Herleteye*' (Miller and Miller, 1976 p537). The location and extent of this park remain unclear, although it seems highly likely that Hartley Court moated site to the north-west of Trench A is associated with it (Fig. 6). The name Hartley is likely to indicate a "*wood or clearing usually frequented by stags*" (Mills, 1991 p160), and as such it is probable that the park mentioned was a deer park – although the appurtenances also note that the park at that time was "*without deer*" (Hunter and Hunter, undated).
- 6.3.8 There are numerous examples of deer parks in Buckinghamshire (Cantor and Hatherly, 1979), the creation of a number of which can be almost certainly attributed to Richard, Earl of Cornwall. These include Marlow, Cippenham (now in Berkshire), and Watlington Hill approximately 20 miles to the west of Hartley Court, which lies within the Chilterns AONB. It is also worth noting that in 1632 the freehold of Watlington Park was purchased by William Stonor, of nearby Stonor Park, the construction of which was also likely to have begun in the latter part of the 13th century. This would suggest that the creation of a deer park in the vicinity of Burnham in the 13th century would not have been unusual.
- 6.3.9 The introduction to the list entry for a scheduled monument at Rampisham Park in Dorset describes deer parks as follows:
- "Deer parks were areas of land, usually enclosed, set aside and equipped for the management and hunting of deer and other animals. They were generally located in open countryside on marginal land or adjacent to a manor house, castle or palace. They varied in size between 3ha and 1600ha and usually comprised a combination of woodland and grassland which provided a mixture of cover and grazing for deer. Parks could contain a number of features, including hunting lodges (often moated), a park-keeper's house, rabbit warrens, fishponds and enclosures for game, and were usually surrounded by a park pale, a massive fenced or hedged bank often with an internal ditch. Although a small number of parks may have been established in the Anglo-Saxon period, it was the Norman aristocracy's taste for hunting that led to the majority being constructed. The peak period for the laying-out of parks, between AD 1200 and 1350, coincided with a time of considerable prosperity amongst the nobility. From the 15th century onwards few parks were constructed and by the end of the 17th century the deer park in its original form had largely disappeared."*
- (<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1020184>)
- 6.3.10 It is possible that Hartley Court moated site represents a hunting lodge within the park. Indeed, examples of similar features have been noted elsewhere, as at Brampton Bryan in Herefordshire:

“In the approximate centre of the medieval park, on a natural spur, there is also [a] structure platform.....that may represent a medieval lodge”

(Bashford, 2019)

- 6.3.11 There are a number of other features in the vicinity of Hartley Court which might indicate the proximity of the park mentioned in 1300. To the west of Hartley Court, and corresponding approximately with the western boundary of the SSSI, Park Lane runs on a roughly north-south alignment, with Abbey Park Farm situated at its northern end (although the latter does not appear on some of the earlier cartographic sources). It is also worth noting that Park Lane is accompanied by a bank on its western side, although the date of this feature is uncertain. Park Lane, together with Green Lane to the south formed the boundary between the parishes of Burnham and a detached part of Dorney (Miller and Miller, 1976), and it has been noted elsewhere that the marginal location of many deer parks meant that it was not uncommon for the limits of these parks to coincide with manorial or parish boundaries (Cantor and Hatherly, 1979 p72).
- 6.3.12 Consequently, it is possible that the bank and ditch feature encountered in Trench A may have formed part of the south-eastern section of the deer park pale, with Park Lane perhaps representing the western limit of the imparked area. However, an alternative interpretation is that rather than forming the boundary of the park, the earthwork may represent part of an internal feature within it.

Deer Coursing

- 6.3.13 Deer coursing involved the chasing of deer along a track or course using dogs (usually greyhounds). The object of the chase was not necessarily to catch or kill the deer but to race the dogs, and it was very much a spectator sport, with viewers positioned along the course to view the chase (Taylor, 2004).
- 6.3.14 The subject has been surprisingly little studied and even deer parks themselves have been researched more for their functional aspects and their landscape settings rather than for their social and recreational importance (*ibid*, 2004).
- 6.3.15 Where deer courses have been identified (eg Bashford, 2019; Taylor, 2004) the form of the course is not dissimilar to the parallel earthworks identified in the DBA as a possible trackway (ACS Ltd, 2010). In addition, the fact that the two linear features seen at Burnham Beeches do not run entirely parallel does draw some comparison with the feature identified at Brampton Bryan:

“Along the course were various marker posts, marking distance at which points wagers could be made on which dog would be first to that point – this may account for the pinch points in the course at Brampton Bryan. The course was normally wider at the winning post to allow a better view for spectators.”

(Bashford, 2019)

- 6.3.16 Additionally, the topography which the features at Burnham Beeches traverse is similar to that which is crossed by the deer course identified at Ravensdale Park in Derbyshire (Taylor, 2004, p42, Fig. 5 and p39 Fig. 3), in that the ground between the two parallel linear features slopes significantly. At Burnham Beeches, the earthwork investigated

by Trench A is on higher ground and the feature to the north-west follows the course of the Nile Stream. Although some 900m from the putative deer course, it is possible that Hartley Court may have functioned as both a hunting lodge and a viewing platform, particularly given the sloping ground between the two earthworks and the intriguing fact that Tower Wood lies immediately to the south of moated site.

- 6.3.17 The place name and documentary evidence, together with the similarities with other known parks associated with Richard, Earl of Cornwall, does suggest that a deer park at Hartley was created for Burnham Abbey. However, deer coursing was primarily popular from the mid-16th to the 18th century, and whilst it is possible that the park survived beyond the dissolution of the Abbey in 1539, the latest known documentary sources for a park associated with Hartley Court date from the late-13th century. This corresponds with the general slow decline of the hunting park following the Black Death and subsequent plagues from the mid-14th century onwards (Cantor and Hatherly, 1979 p79). Consequently, as the longevity of the putative deer park is questionable, the interpretation of the feature in Trench A as forming part of a deer course is far from certain.
- 6.3.18 However, it is possible that this just reflects the fact that by the fifteenth century, hunting had changed from a largely participatory sport to a spectator one (Morris, 2015 p101), and there are examples of deer courses within redundant deer parks surviving into the 16th century. One such is shown on a map of 1531 of the park at Rothwell Haigh, West Yorkshire, where:

“Documentary evidence indicates that the park had been abandoned for hunting probably by the 1360s and certainly by the mid-fifteenth century. Its enclosure in the early sixteenth century led to riots by dispossessed commoners and the map was one of the results. It shows a long narrow strip of land, apparently hedged, and with a tall building called a lodge at one end, and it is possible that this feature is a medieval deer course”

(Taylor, 2004)

Conclusions

- 6.3.19 The length of the feature and the nature of the bank and ditch profile, together with the composition of the ditch fills suggesting that the bank has been subject to significant erosion, would indicate that the feature was originally fairly substantial, and that its construction would have been a considerable undertaking. However, given the lack of securely stratified dating evidence recovered during the evaluation, establishing a definitive interpretation of the extant earthwork and associated ditch is problematic.

Acknowledgements

- 6.3.20 Thanks to Chris Morris and all the Corporation of London staff at Burnham Beeches for their patience and enthusiasm during the works, and to the Corporation of London staff and Buckinghamshire County Council Environment Team who volunteered to help out with the excavation. Thanks also to Katie Ayres, Jean Bluck, Clive Bowman, Amanda Bucknill, Lee Charlton, Robert Cohen, Rebecca Curtis, Kate Davis, Michelle Edwards,

Craig Edwards, Jill Eyers, Karen Hammond, Maurice Hammond, Sheila Harley, Linda Hayes, Sue Hedges, Jill Hender, Graham Hill, Lesley Hoskins, Suzanne Hyde, Gordon Jeffreys, Michael Johnston, Martin Labram, Dottie Lazell, Anthea Lovatt, Joanne Maeder, Sheila McLaskey, Ray Morgan, Rhian Morgan, Dave Morris, Jo Morris, William Mosse, John Nicholls, Jayne O'Connell, Rosie O'Toole, Hannah O'Toole, Glynis Pellatt, Paula Prince, Anthony Proto, Kathryn Proto Papadakis, Alexandria Rakowska, Vivien Readman, Lois Rock, Madalyn Roker, Janet Rothwell, Nigel Rothwell, Amy Rushton, Mark Rushton, Kimberley Seaward, Alexandra Shaw, Caroline Shephard, Lucy Smith, Rebecca Smith, Paula Smith, Roland Tiller, Derek Turner, Janet Vale, Jenny Vince, Will Whitlock, Genevieve Wilson, Andy Woodward and Paul Wright, who all volunteered their time to make the excavation possible. Finally, thanks to Kate Watkins who kept an artistic record of the work..

APPENDIX A CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Interpretation	Description
1	Deposit	Leaf litter	Mid, reddish-brown leaf litter
2	Deposit	Soil accumulation/leaf litter	Mid-dark, greyish brown clayey silt
3	Deposit	Bank deposit	Re-deposited sand and gravel
4	Deposit	Soil accumulation; same as (9) and (8)??	Mid-dark, greyish brown clayey silt
5	Cut	Tree throw	
6	Fill	Fill of tree throw [5]	Humic, dark grey loam with concentrations of orangey brown clay silt
7	Fill?	Clay spread; Fill of [25]?	Compacted, mid brownish grey clay
8	Deposit	Soil accumulation; same as (4) and (9)??	Mid-dark greyish brown clayey silt
9	Deposit	Soil accumulation; same as (4) and (8)??	Dark grey brown silty sand with c.5% gravel
10	Deposit	Possible buried soil; same as (22)?	Mid, reddish-brown sandy gravel
11	Deposit	??Bank deposit	Mid, greyish-brown sandy silt with occasional gravel fragments
12	Cut	Ditch cut; Filled by (15), (19) and (21)	
13	Deposit/surface	Possible surface	Very compacted dark grey sandy silt
14	VOID	VOID	VOID
15	Fill	Fill of Ditch [12]	Loose, but compact concentrations, pinkish grey sand and gravel
16	Deposit	Root disturbance	Loose, creamy white sand and gravel
17	Finds Reference	Glass fragment retrieved from interface between (3) and (1)	Not retained

Context	Type	Interpretation	Description
18	Deposit	??Marking out deposit	Pale, greyish-white, predominantly sand with c10-15% small, sub-rounded gravel pebbles
19	Fill	Fill of Ditch [12]	Compact, mid, reddish-brown, sandy gravel
20	Deposit	Material eroded from bank to SE of earthwork?; same as 27?	Mid-light grey sandy gravel
21	Fill	Primary fill of Ditch [12]	Dark, yellowish brown clayey sand with frequent gravel
22	Deposit	Possible buried soil; same as (10)?	Mid, reddish-brown sandy gravel
23	Deposit	?Trample / Bank deposit	Mid-dark-grey, silty gravel
24	Cut	Removal of buried soil prior to construction of bank? Same as [12]??	
25	Cut	Discrete cut (?) of indeterminate function; Filled by (26) and (7)	
26	Fill	Fill of [25]	Mid-greyish brown clayey sand
27	Deposit	Material eroded from bank to NW of earthwork?; same as 20?	Mid-light grey sandy gravel

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APPENDIX C SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Lord Mayor's Drive, Burnham Beeches, Buckinghamshire
Site code:	BBLMD19
Grid reference:	TQ 16400 86180
Type:	Evaluation
Date and duration:	9 th – 21 st September 2019, 2 weeks

Summary of results: In September 2019, the Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB) in collaboration with City of London, undertook a community-led archaeological evaluation at Lord Mayor's Drive, Burnham Beeches, Buckinghamshire (centered on SU 9523 8498) as part of the Beacons of the Past project.

The investigation consisted of a single trench, targeted on a section of linear earthwork that runs NE-SW from the Victory Cross car park to the intersection with a univallate hillfort enclosure to the south-west (a scheduled ancient monument (SM 251732)). The works were located outside the scheduled area and approximately 600m from the actual intersection of the features.

The evaluation revealed a possible buried soil horizon overlying the top of the geological sequence. The buried soil horizon and the natural geology appeared to have been cut by a NE-SW aligned ditch running parallel to the north-west of the extant remnant of the earthwork. The bank itself appeared to be primarily composed of re-deposited sand and gravel, originating from the up-cast generated during the excavation of the ditch. The fills of the ditch were very similar in composition, suggesting that they are likely to have derived from the erosion and/or slighting of the earthwork.

A possible Mesolithic, or early Neolithic flint core was recovered during the excavation of the bank deposits, although this could not be definitively attributed to a specific context and cannot therefore be considered as reliable dating evidence. No other artefactual material was recovered during the excavation of the undisturbed bank deposits or ditch fills.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held by Robin Bashford, 5 Park Terrace, East Challow, Oxfordshire. OX12 9SN, and will be deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museum in due course, under the following accession number: **TBC**

Pastel drawing of Ditch 12 by Kate Watkins



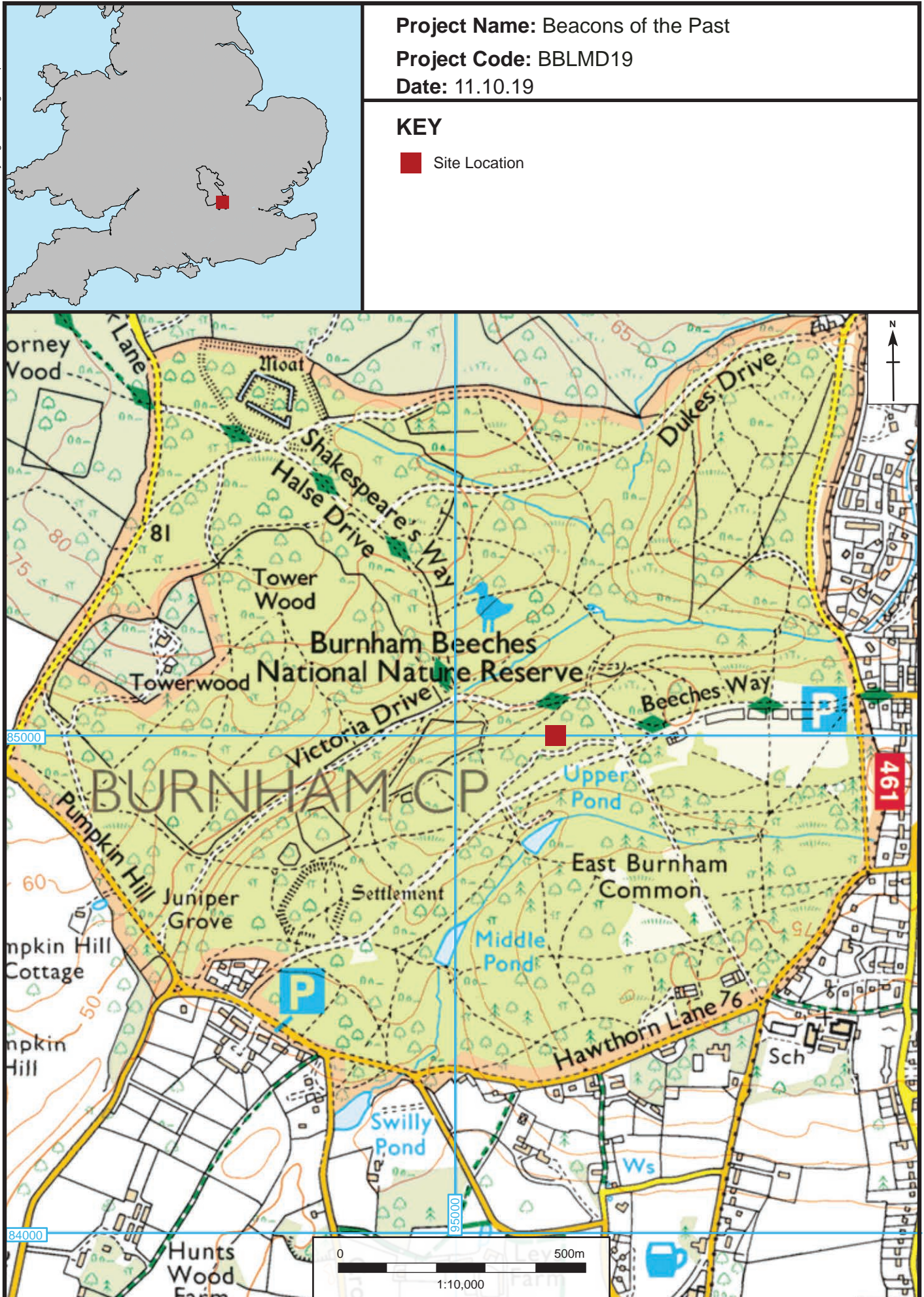


Figure 1: Site Location

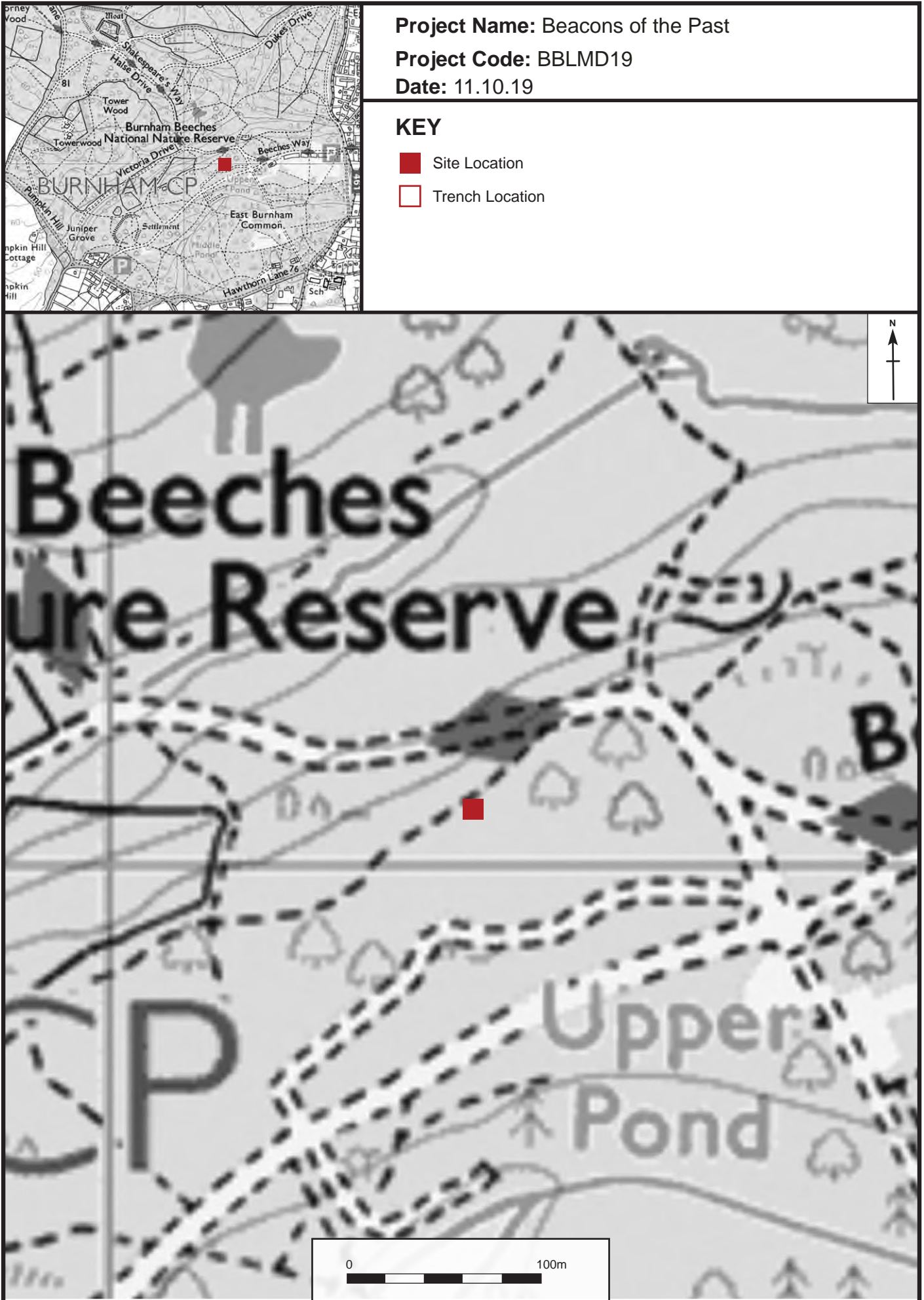
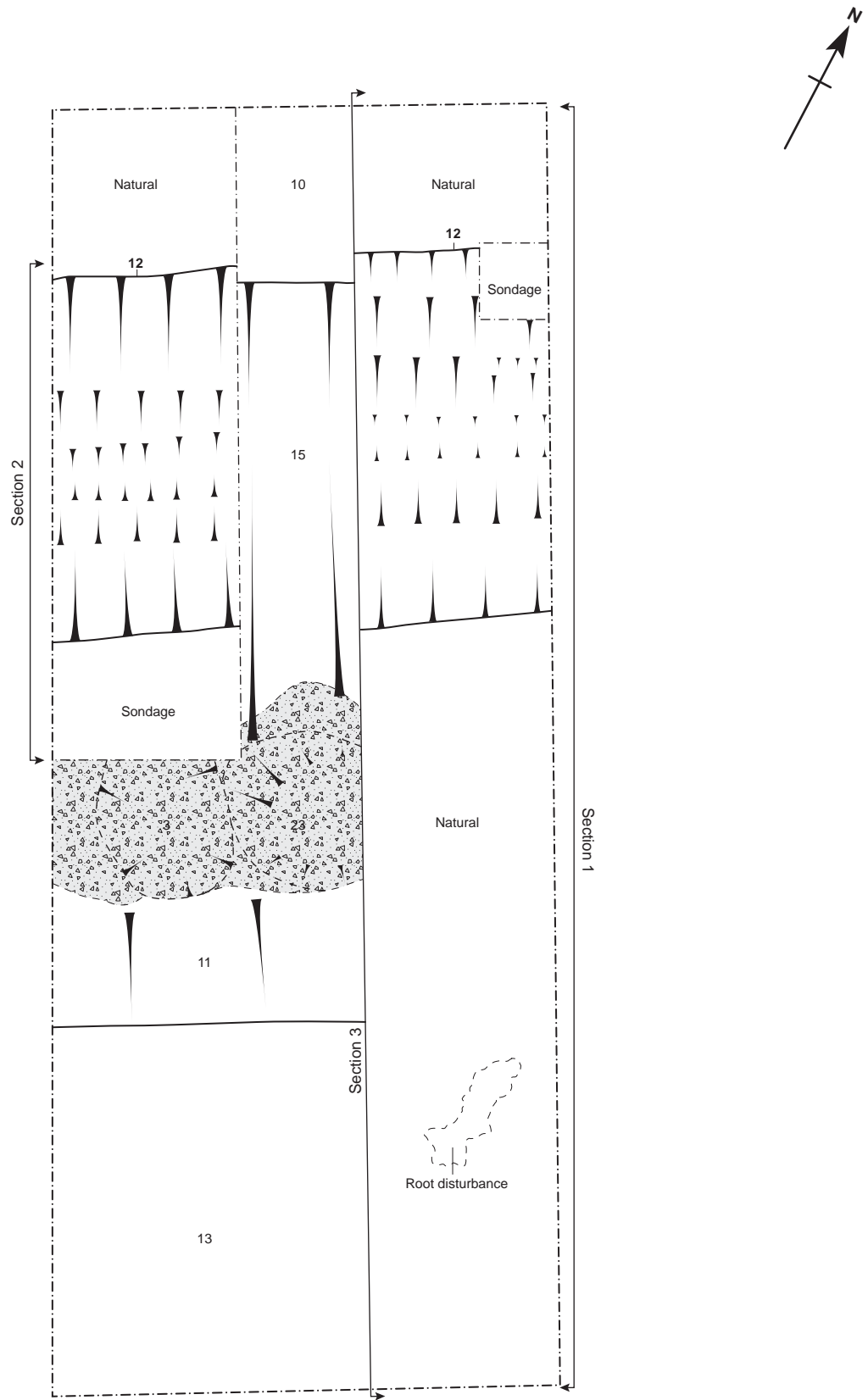
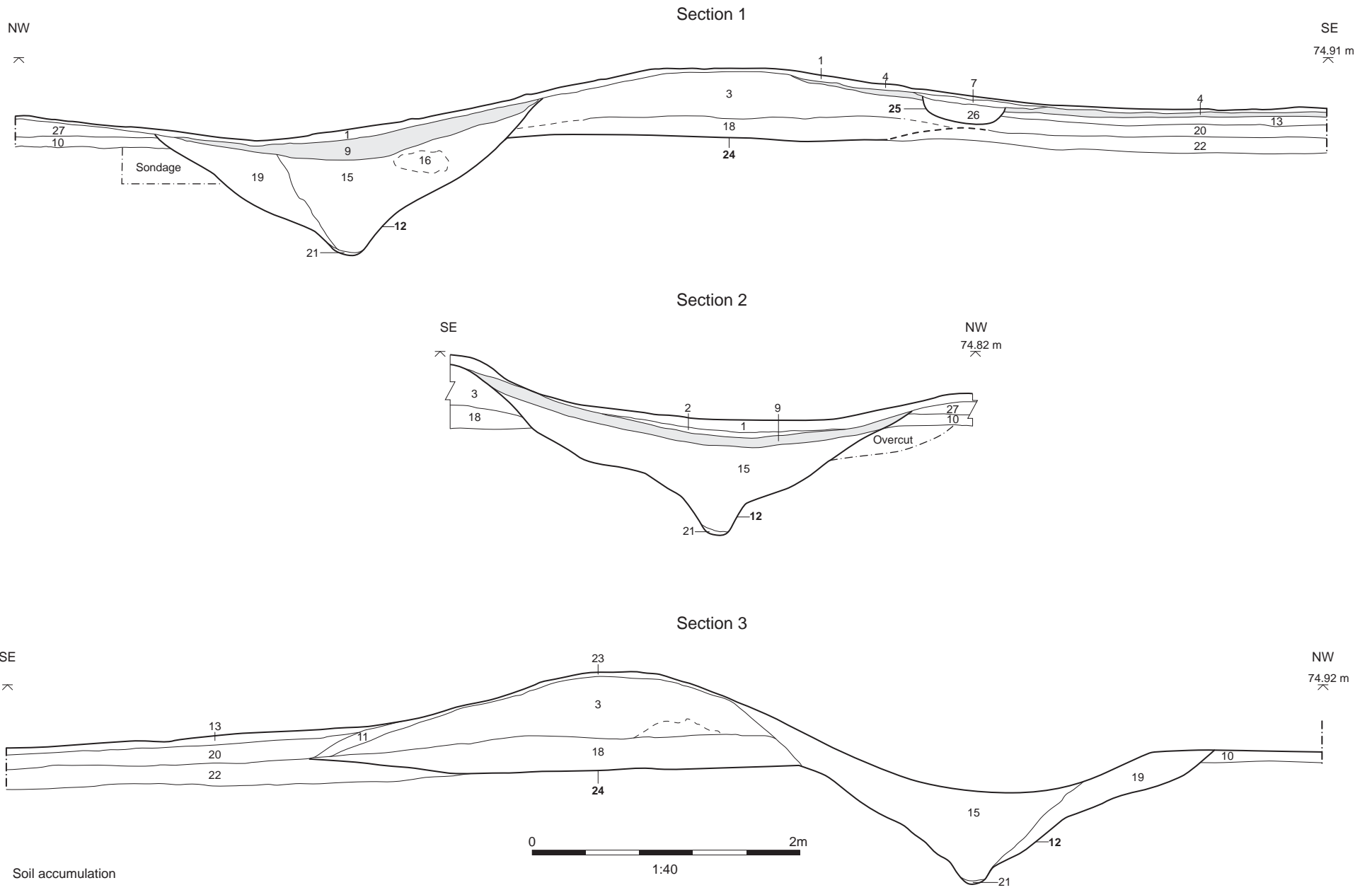


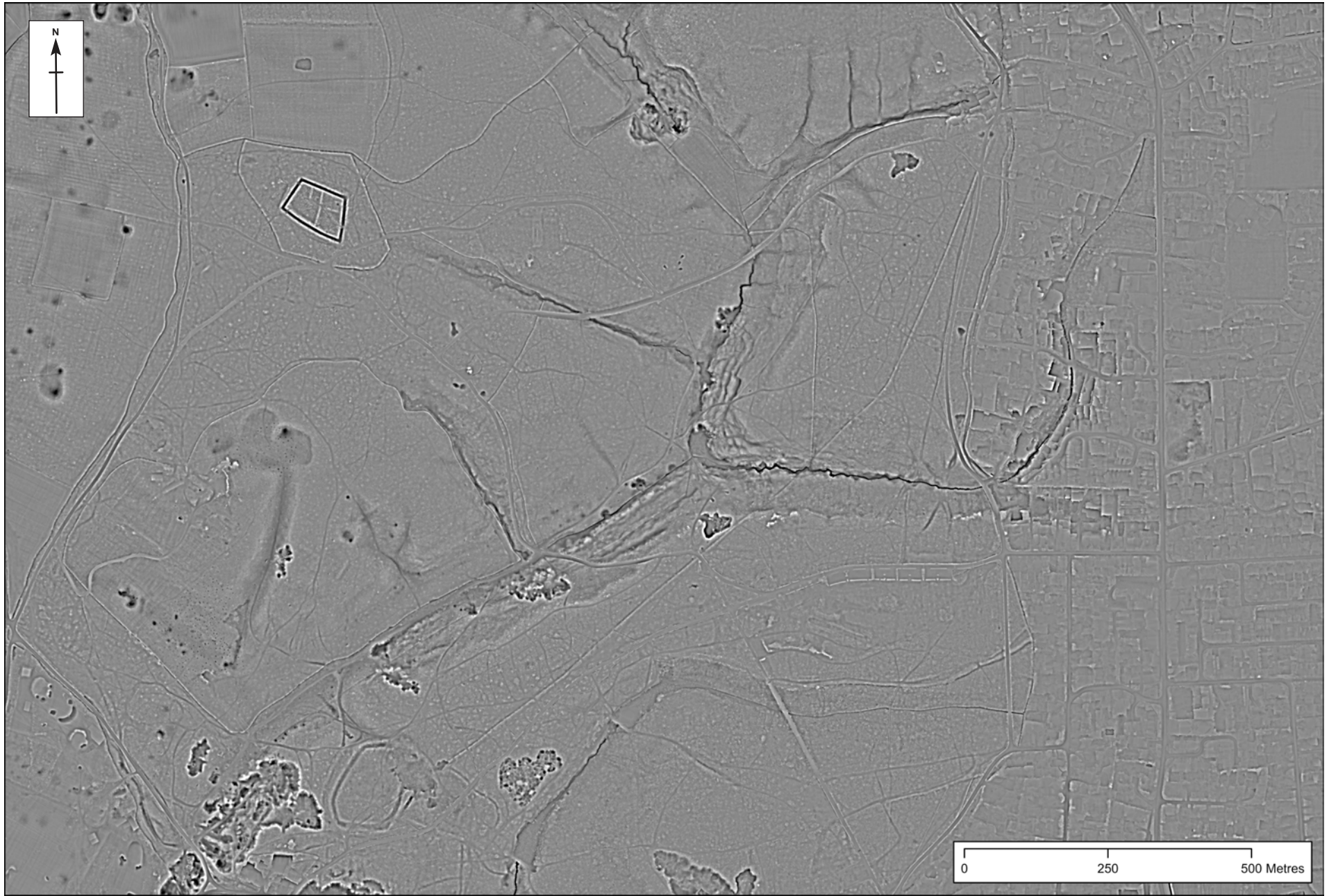
Figure 2: Trench Location



Re-deposited gravel forming main body of bank







Project Name: Beacons of the Past
Project Code: BBLMD19

Figure 5: Local Relief Model visualisation of LiDAR derived Digital Terrain Model
(image copyright CCB)



Project Name: Beacons of the Past

Project Code: BBLMD19

Figure 6: Local Relief Model visualisation of LiDAR derived Digital Terrain Model showing features described in the text (image copyright CCB)



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Plate 1: Trench A. Pre-excavation with leaf mould removed. Looking SW





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Plate 3: Part of Section 2 showing south-western extent of Deposit 18. Looking NE



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Plate 4: Trench A post-excitation. Looking NW