

APPENDIX 10.4 STAGE I TRENCH EVALUATION

Melksham Link Canal

Results of Stage 1 Trench evaluation

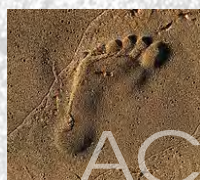
NGR 389952, 163819 to 389941, 161027

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On behalf of:
Wilts & Berks Canal Trust

Document No: ACW564/3/0

Date: July 2015



AC archaeology

MELKSHAM LINK CANAL: RESULTS OF STAGE 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRENCH EVALUATION

(NGR: 389952, 163819 to 389941, 161027)

SUMMARY

A first phase of archaeological evaluation, consisting of the excavation and recording of seven machine-excavated trenches, was undertaken by AC archaeology on the route of the proposed canal linking the River Avon at Melksham with the Kennet and Avon canal at Semington, Wiltshire (NGR: 389952, 163819 to 389941, 161027) in June 2015. The work was undertaken in support of a planning application for the construction of a new waterway and associated infrastructure. The evaluation followed an earlier geophysical survey, with the trenches being located by GPS to target a series of geophysical anomalies or areas of magnetic disturbance. Four of the trenches revealed evidence for archaeological activity, including probable post-holes and ditches. The earliest phase of this activity comprised part of a late Neolithic / early Bronze Age enclosure ditch revealed in Trenches 8 & 9, with further later activity, including a number of Romano-British deposits revealed in Trenches 4 & 5.

In addition, the report contains a photographic record of WWII structures in the vicinity of Boundary Farm, Berryfield that are part of former RAF Melksham.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** This document sets out the results of an archaeological trench evaluation on land on the route of the proposed canal linking the River Avon at Melksham with the Kennet and Avon canal at Semington (NGR: 389952, 163819 to 389941, 161027). It has been prepared by AC archaeology Ltd on behalf of Wilts and Berks Canal Trust. The canal route is shown on Fig. 1.
- 1.2** The application area will include c.47 hectares of land which is partly arable land and partly pasture. The trenches were situated on farmland, north of the village of Berryfield. The topography was generally flat or undulating and lies at around 39mOD. The underlying superficial geology comprises sand and gravel River Terrace deposits overlying Jurassic Mudstone of the Oxford Clay Formation.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The site has previously been the subject of an archaeological desk-based assessment and geophysical survey. Prior to the initiation of the Melksham Canal Link Project there had been no

comprehensive or systematic archaeological survey of the area. The desk-based assessment concluded:

There are no designated heritage assets within the proposed construction corridors but a total of 90 are identified within a 500m wide study area. A number of non-designated assets lie on the route. These include a series of findspots of prehistoric and Romano-British date on the banks of the River Avon at Melksham, extensive areas of former medieval cultivation remains in the form of ridge and furrow and modern features including the line of the Devizes Branch Railway and extant and former Second World War structures. An assessment of the available data indicates two areas of particular archaeological potential. The first, to the north of Berryfield, lies close to a complex of cropmarks plotted from air photographs that may include the remains of prehistoric burial mounds and/or settlement activity; these are partly masked by later ridge and furrow. The full extent of these features is unknown but may extend into the proposed application area. The second area comprises the River Avon where significant early prehistoric, Bronze Age and Romano-British finds have been recorded.

- 2.2** A subsequent geophysical survey has identified a series of sub-surface magnetic anomalies across the site, principally of linear and rectilinear form, as well as discrete features which may be indicative of settlement (Donaldson & Sabin 2015).

3. OBJECTIVES

- 3.1** This evaluation is the first phase of a programme of archaeological investigations agreed with the Assistant County Archaeologist and set out in an overarching framework agreement (Cox 2014). These trenches were undertaken in areas of pasture. A further phase of evaluation, in areas of arable cultivation, will be carried out following harvest in 2015.
- 3.2** The evaluation was undertaken to determine, as far as reasonably possible, the location, extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present on the site, as dictated by current best practice.

4. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

- 4.1** The investigation was undertaken in response to a request made by the Wiltshire Council Assistant County Archaeologist (WCACA), advisor to Wiltshire Council, and in accordance with a project design prepared by AC archaeology (Cottam 2015), which was approved prior to commencement by the Wiltshire Council Assistant County Archaeologist.
- 4.2** The investigations comprised the excavation of seven trenches (nos 3 – 9), totaling 145m in length, each 1.5m wide (Figs 2 & 3). The trenches were positioned on the ground using a Leica viva GPS and based on a geo-referenced plan of the geophysical survey results. All site levels relate to Ordnance Datum.

- 4.3** All soil removal was undertaken under the control and direction of the Site Archaeologist. Ploughsoil was removed by tracked mechanical excavator, using a wide toothless bucket, and stored alongside each trench, separated from any subsoil as necessary. Stripping by mechanical excavator ceased at the level at which archaeological deposits or natural subsoil was exposed.
- 4.4** All trenches were recorded using the full range of the standard AC archaeology *pro forma* recording system.
- 4.5** In addition, the report contains an index of photographs (Appendix 1) of WWII structures in the vicinity of Boundary Farm, Berryfield, that relate to the former RAF Melksham. These photographs were taken by the Wilts and Berks Canal Trust members at the request of the WCACA.
- 4.6** The archive has been prepared using the site code ACW564 and is currently stored at the offices of AC archaeology (Wiltshire).

5. RESULTS

Introduction

- 5.1** Four of the seven trenches excavated, revealed evidence for subsoil archaeological activity, with most of the features recorded corresponding to magnetic anomalies located by the geophysical survey. Additional features were also present, comprising a number of probable former post-holes, revealed in Trenches 4 and 5. A depth of subsoil which was alluvial in nature, was present in all of the trenches. This deposit appeared to overlay most of the archaeological activity encountered, although this could not be determined in all cases due to the similarity in nature of the alluvium to the soil composition of the features. Positive trenches containing 'cut' features are described in text below, with negative trenches summarised in Table 5.

Trench 4 (plan Fig.4a; sections Fig.4b-e. Plate 1)

- 5.2** This trench was aligned approximately north-south, and was situated on generally level ground. It was positioned to target two anomalies revealed on the geophysical survey. One of these anomalies proved to be a linear band of natural gravels. Three further features, not present on the geophysical survey, were also revealed. A maximum depth of 550mm was excavated through a former ploughsoil and a subsoil horizon, before four features were exposed. With the exception of feature F402, the remaining features were recorded cutting through natural River Terrace deposits. The recorded layer sequence is summarised in Table 1.

Feature F402

- 5.3** This feature was linear in plan on an east to west alignment. It was approximately 1m wide and was present within the trench for a length of 1.5m. It had a steep to moderate sloping profile and flattish base at a depth of 0.3m. It contained a single fill (401), composed of dark grey-brown sandy clay containing sparse small flint gravels and charcoal flecks. A single sherd of Romano-British pottery was recovered.

Table 1: Trench 4 general depositional sequence

Context	Depth b.g.s.	Description	Interpretation
400	0 – 300mm	Mid -dark brown silty clay loam.	Former ploughsoil.
409	300 – 550mm (max.)	Yellowish brown sandy clay containing sparse small flint gravels.	Subsoil – alluvium
410	550mm +	Sandy clay and gravels.	Natural – River Terrace deposits.

Feature F404

- 5.4** This feature was sub-circular in plan with a maximum diameter of 0.3m. It had a steep sloping profile and rounded base at a depth of 0.12m. It contained a single fill (403), composed of mid-dark brown sandy clay containing sparse small flint gravels. No dating evidence was recovered from this feature.

Feature F406

- 5.5** This feature was sub-oval in plan with a maximum diameter of 0.6m. It had a moderately sloping profile and slightly undulating base at a depth of 0.10m. It contained a single fill (405), composed of mid-dark brown sandy clay containing sparse small flint gravels and charcoal flecks. No dating evidence was recovered from this feature.

Feature F408

- 5.6** This feature was sub-circular in plan with a maximum diameter of 0.25m. It had a steep sloping profile and flat base at a depth of 0.10m. It contained a single fill (407), composed of dark brown sandy clay containing moderate charcoal flecks and sparse small flint gravels. A small quantity of pottery sherds of possible prehistoric date was recovered from this feature.

Trench 5 (plan Fig.4f; section Fig.4g. Plate 2)

- 5.7** This trench was aligned approximately east-west, and was positioned on generally level ground. It was positioned to target a single anomaly revealed on the geophysical survey. A further feature, not revealed on the geophysical survey was also revealed. A maximum depth of 550mm was excavated through a former ploughsoil and a subsoil horizon, before two features were exposed. It was unclear at what level these features were cut from. The recorded layer sequence is summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Trench 5 general depositional sequence

Context	Depth b.g.s.	Description	Interpretation
500	0 – 300mm	Mid -dark brown silty clay loam.	Former ploughsoil.
501	300 – 550mm (max.)	Yellowish brown sandy clay containing sparse small flint gravels.	Subsoil – alluvium
502	550mm +	Sandy clay and gravels.	Natural – River Terrace deposits.

Feature F504

- 5.8** This feature was circular in plan with a maximum diameter of 0.3m. It had a moderate to steep sloping profile and flat base at a depth of 0.1m. It contained a single fill (503), composed of grey-brown sandy clay containing sparse charcoal flecks and small flint gravels. No dating evidence was recovered from this feature.

Feature F507

- 5.9** This feature was linear in plan on a north to south alignment. It was approximately 1.4m wide and was present within the trench for a length of 2m. It had a steep sloping profile and flat base at a depth of 0.55m. . It contained two fills comprising an upper fill (505), composed of a gleyed, mid grey-brown silty clay, containing sparse small flint gravels and a basal fill (506), composed of a light yellowish brown sandy silt containing common small flint gravels and pea grits. A quantity of late Romano-British pottery sherds was recovered from the upper fill of this feature.

Trench 8 (plan Fig.4h; section Fig.4i. Plate 3)

- 5.10** This trench was aligned approximately east-west, and was positioned on slightly undulating ground. It was positioned to target two anomalies revealed on the geophysical survey, however only one of these was present in the trench. This comprised part of an enclosure ditch also present in Trench 9 (but not further excavated). A maximum depth of 600mm was excavated through a former ploughsoil and subsoil horizons before a single feature was exposed. This feature was both underlying and cutting subsoil alluvial deposits. Natural River Terrace gravels were encountered at 800mm, exposed in one edge of the archaeological feature encountered. The recorded layer sequence is summarised in Table 3.

Feature F805

- 5.11** This feature was linear in plan on an approximate northeast to southwest alignment. It was 3.3m wide and was present within the trench for a length of 1.5m. It had a steep sloping profile and undulating base with a depth of 0.8 to a maximum of 1m. It contained three fills comprising an upper fill (802), representing deliberate infilling/dumping, and composed of dark grey-brown silty clay containing abundant charcoal flecks and sparse small flint gravels. A secondary fill (803) was composed of dark yellowish brown sandy clay containing moderate to common small flint gravels and sparse charcoal flecks. Basal fill (804) was composed of yellowish brown sandy clay

containing occasional charcoal flecks and small flint gravels. A quantity of late Neolithic / early Bronze Age pottery and animal bone was recovered from this feature.

Table 3: Trench 8 general depositional sequence

Context	Depth b.g.s.	Description	Interpretation
800	0 – 300mm	Mid -dark brown silty clay loam.	Former ploughsoil.
801	300 –450mm (max.)	Dark yellowish brown sandy clay containing sparse small flint gravels.	Subsoil – alluvium
806	450 – 800mm (max.)	Dark yellowish brown sandy clay containing sparse small flint gravels.	Subsoil – alluvium
807	800mm +	Sandy clay and gravels.	Natural – River Terrace deposits (only exposed partway down one edge of feature cut).

Trench 9

- 5.12** This trench was aligned approximately north-south, and was positioned on slightly undulating ground. It was positioned to target a single anomaly revealed on the geophysical survey. This comprised part of an enclosure ditch also present in Trench 8, where it was investigated. It was agreed on site with the WCACA that this feature would not be excavated in Trench 9, but recorded in plan only. The recorded layer sequence is summarised in Table 4.

Table 4: Trench 9 general depositional sequence

Context	Depth b.g.s.	Description	Interpretation
900	0 – 300mm	Mid -dark brown silty clay loam.	Former ploughsoil.
901	300 –450mm (max.)	Dark yellowish brown sandy clay containing sparse small flint gravels.	Subsoil – alluvium
904	450mm +	Dark yellowish brown sandy clay containing sparse small flint gravels.	Subsoil – alluvium

Feature F903

- 5.13** This feature was linear in plan on an approximate northwest to southeast alignment. It was 3.1m wide and was present within the trench for a length of 1.5m. It comprised a dark brown silty clay containing occasional small flint gravels and charcoal flecks.

Negative trenches

- 5.14** The remaining three trenches were also positioned to target anomalies revealed on the geophysical survey, however these anomalies were either not present in the trenches, or were represented by variations in the natural subsoil.

Table 5: Summary of trenches with no subsoil archaeological features

Trench No	Depth below ground	Contexts	Description
3	0 - 250mm. 250 - 500mm. 500mm+	Topsoil - context 300 Subsoil – context 301 Natural - context 302	Approximately N-S aligned trench and situated on slightly undulating ground were traces of former ridge and furrow was present. Topsoil comprised a former ploughsoil composed of mid grey- brown sandy clay loam. Subsoil alluvium composed of dark yellowish brown sandy clay containing sparse small flint gravels. Natural varied and composed of yellowish brown sandy clay / grey clay with bands of gravels.
6	0 - 200mm 200 – 450mm 450mm+	Topsoil - context 600 Subsoil – context 601 Natural - context 602	NE-SW aligned trench and situated on generally level ground. Topsoil comprised a former ploughsoil composed of mid grey- brown sandy clay loam. Subsoil alluvium composed of dark yellowish brown sandy clay containing sparse small flint gravels. Natural composed of yellowish brown sandy clay.
7	0 - 250mm. 250 - 500mm. 500mm+	Topsoil - context 700 Subsoil – context 701 Natural - context 702	Approximately N-S aligned trench and situated on slightly undulating ground were traces of former ridge and furrow was present. Topsoil comprised a former ploughsoil composed of mid grey- brown sandy clay loam. Subsoil alluvium composed of dark yellowish brown sandy clay containing sparse small flint gravels. Natural composed of yellowish brown sandy clay with occasional gravels.

6. FINDS by Emma Firth

Methodology

- 6.1** All finds site have been retained, cleaned and marked where appropriate. Finds were then quantified according to material type within each context. The assemblage was then scanned by context to extract information regarding the range, nature and date of artefacts represented. This information is briefly discussed below. Table 5 quantifies finds by context and material type.

Prehistoric Pottery (Later Neolithic/ Early Bronze Age)

- 6.2** A total of 20 sherds (155g) of prehistoric pottery, probably of Later Neolithic/Early Bronze Age date, was recovered from Trench 4 (context 407) and Trench 8 (context 802 and 803). All the sherds are made from the same fabric, which has a soft, soapy feel. There are few inclusions, other than tiny voids, which are thought to be from leached calcareous inclusions. Most of the sherds have buff/brown exterior surfaces and the core and internal surfaces are reduced black. The sherds are all of a reasonable size (mean sherd weight of 8g) and show little surface or edge abrasion which suggests they are either in or near their primary depositional context. Most of the sherds are plain body sherds however; there are two rims sherds which are both decorated. The first (Plate 4) is from a small, upright bowl, with rusticated surface (rows of fingernail impressions in two parallel rows). This bowl has a flat rim, which is thickened along its internal edge and the decoration is very well executed. The second vessel is also a small bowl, with linear impression

below a flat topped rim. No comparable vessels have been found. Further examination of these sherds should confirm both dating and typology.

Romano-British Pottery

- 6.3** A total of 21 sherds (110g) of Romano-British pottery was recovered from Trenches 4 (context 401) and Trench 5 (context 505). The majority of the pottery was recovered from Trench 5 comprising 17 sherds (48g) of BB1 (black burnished ware) jar sherds, with wiped surfaces and obtuse lattice decoration. These sherds have a date range from c. AD 220 onwards. An oxidised, sandy rim from a flagon (with evidence of a light colour coat which has mainly abraded away) and a three small greyware sherds, were recovered from Trench 4 (context 401).

Animal Bone

- 6.4** A total of 61 fragments of animal bone was recovered from Trench 5 (contexts 503 and 505) and Trench 8 (contexts 802, 803 and 804). The animal bone from these trenches includes sheep, cattle and horse teeth and mandibles, amongst other fragments which were too small to identify. The majority of the animal bone was recovered from Trench 8, and this included the sheep and horse mandible. A small number of fragments were burnt and some bone has evidence of butchery.

Trench No.	Context No.	Bronze Age pottery		Romano-British Pottery		Animal Bone	
		no	wt (g)	no	wt (g)	no	wt (g)
Trench 4	401	-	-	4	62	-	-
	407	10	7			-	-
Trench 4 Total		10	7	4	62	-	-
Trench 5	503	-	-			1	1
	505	-	-	17	48	6	6
Trench 5 Total		-	-	17	48	7	7
Trench 8	802	8	141	-	-	31	328
	803	2	7	-	-	10	84
	804	-	-	-	-	13	269
	(blank)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Trench 8 Total		10	148	-	-	54	681
Total Material Type		20	155	21	110	61	688

Table 5: Quantification of finds by context and by material type.

7. COMMENT

- 7.1** The trench evaluation has identified two areas of archaeological interest both corresponding to areas of magnetic anomalies recorded by the geophysical survey. Trenches 4 and 5 revealed evidence for Romano-British activity, including two possible former boundary ditches, (F402 and F507), both containing pottery of 3rd / 4th century date. A number of undated post-hole features, forming no discernable pattern, may be associated with this phase of activity. The small quantity

and nature of artefacts recovered from these features would suggest some form of small scale rural settlement in this area of the proposed canal route. The earliest phase of activity was recorded in Trenches 8 and 9, both positioned further to the northwest of Trenches 4 and 5. This comprised part of a large enclosure ditch revealed on the geophysical survey. This feature produced a significant quantity of animal bone and several sherds of late Neolithic / early Bronze Age pottery, possibly suggesting a small enclosed settlement.

8. REFERENCES

Cottam, S., 2013 '*Melksham Link – a proposed canal linking the River Avon at Melksham with the Kennet & Avon Canal at Semington*'. *Historic Environment Assessment* Unpublished report by AC archaeology Ltd no. ACW564/1/1, October 2013.

Cottam, S., *Melksham Link Canal: Project design for archaeological evaluation* Unpublished report by AC archaeology Ltd no. ACW564/3/0, 2015.

Cox, P. W., 2014

Sabin, D., and Donaldson, K., Melksham Link; Wiltshire & berks Canal, Wiltshire – *Magnetometer survey report* February 2015.



Plate 1: Trench 4. View from the north. 1 x 2m scale



Plate 2: Trench 5. SE facing section ditch F507 – 2 x 1m scales



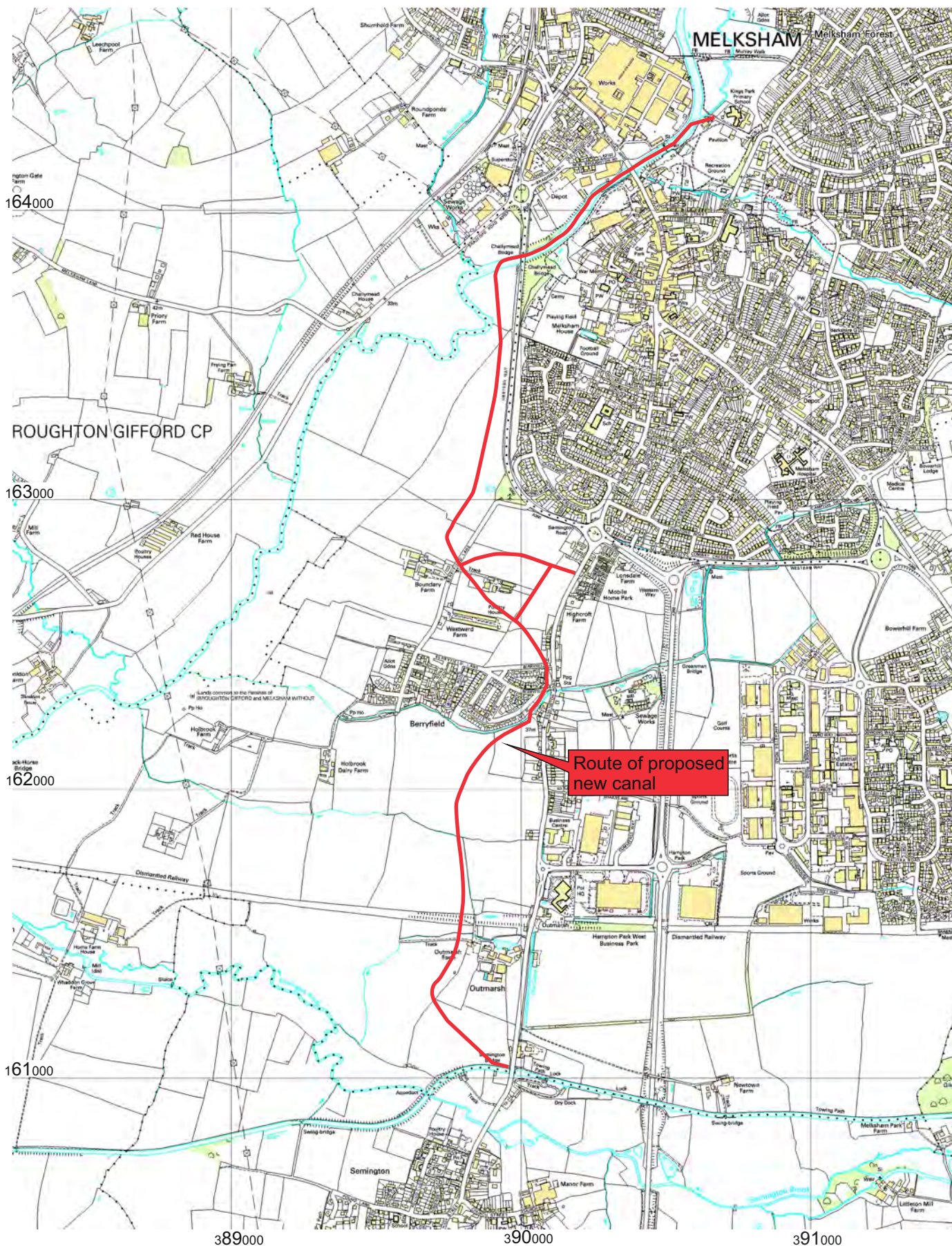
Plate 3: Trench 8. North facing section ditch F805 – 2m scale



Plate 4: Bronze Age bowl

Plate 5: Rim sherd with decoration, voids are clearly visible





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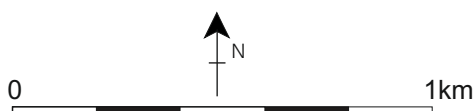


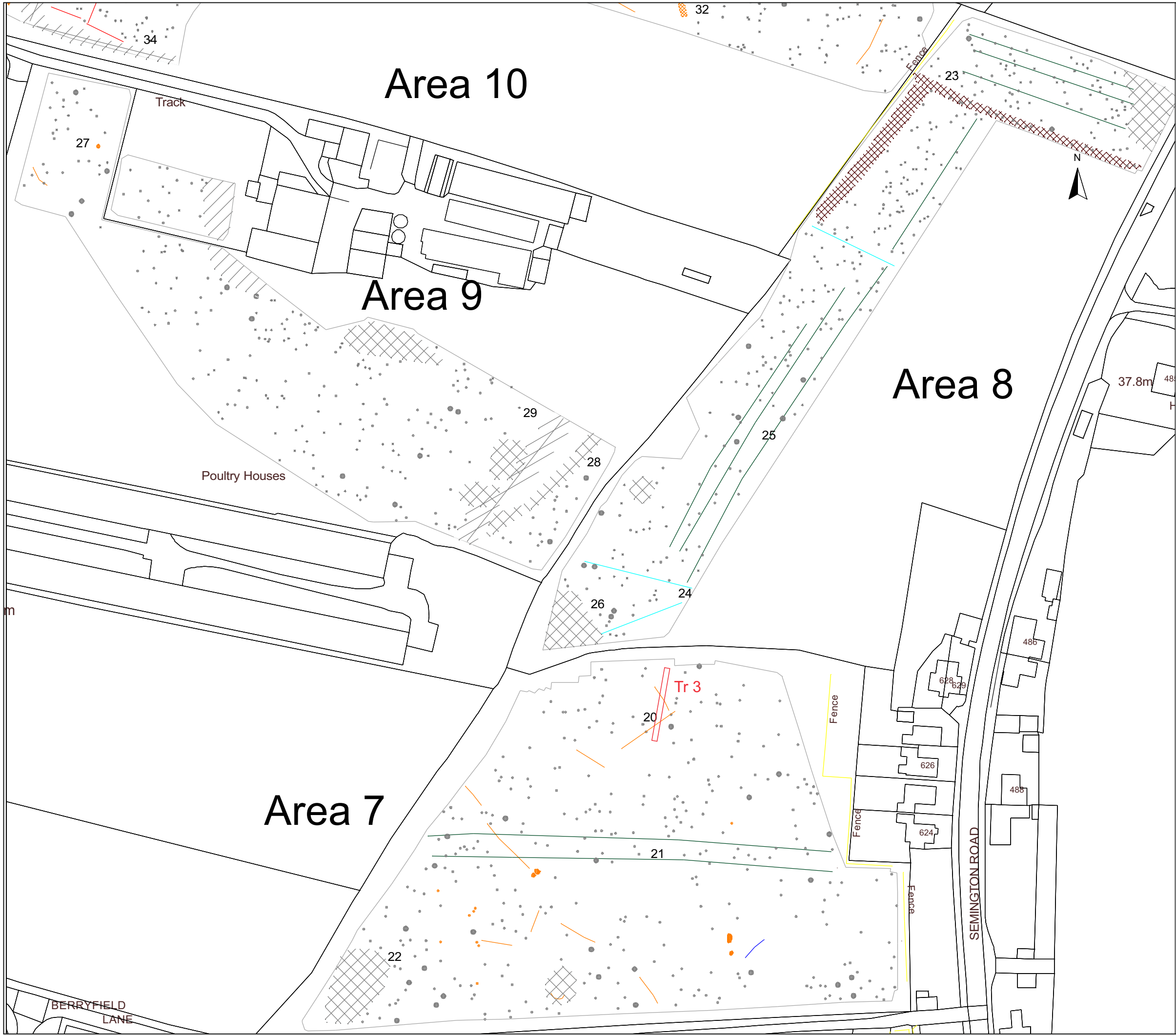
PROJECT

Melksham Link

TITLE

Fig. 1:
Location of proposed new canal

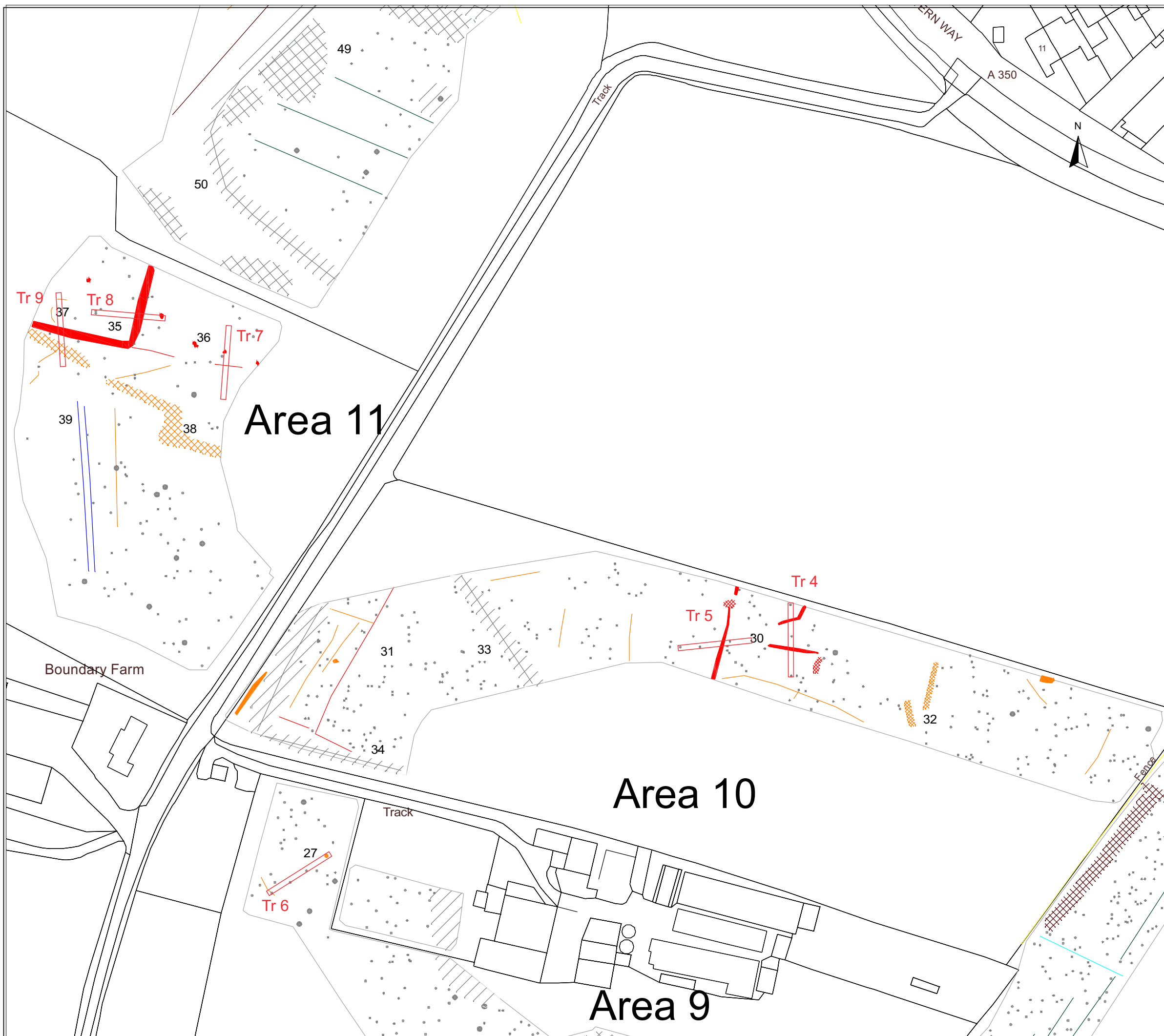




- Positive linear anomaly - possible ditch-like feature
- Linear anomaly - ridge and furrow
- Positive linear anomaly - possible land drain
- Positive linear anomaly with associated magnetic debris - former field boundary
- Negative linear anomaly - material of low magnetic susceptibility
- Discrete positive response - possible pit-like feature
- Magnetic debris - spread of magnetically thermoremnant/ferrous material
- Magnetic disturbance from ferrous material
- Strong multiple dipolar linear anomaly - pipeline / cable / service
- Strong dipolar anomaly - ferrous object



- Positive linear anomaly - possible ditch-like feature
- Linear anomaly - ridge and furrow
- Positive linear anomaly - possible land drain
- ▨ Positive linear anomaly with associated magnetic debris - former field boundary
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- Discrete positive response - possible pit-like feature
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- ▨ Magnetic disturbance from ferrous material
- Strong multiple dipolar linear anomaly - pipeline / cable / service
- Strong dipolar anomaly - ferrous object



PROJECT

Melksham Link

TITLE

Fig. 3: Location of Trenches 4 to 9

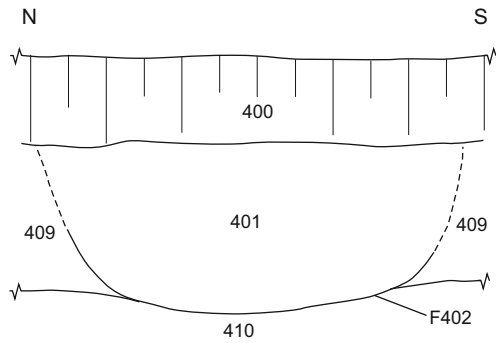


Trench 4

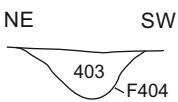
a) Plan



b) Section, F402



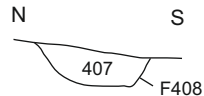
c) Section, F404



d) Section, F406



e) Section, F408



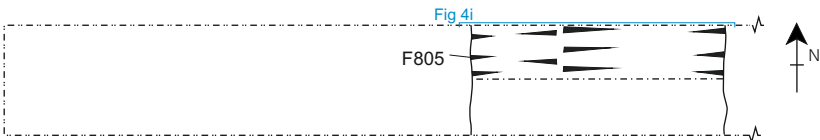
Trench 5

f) Plan

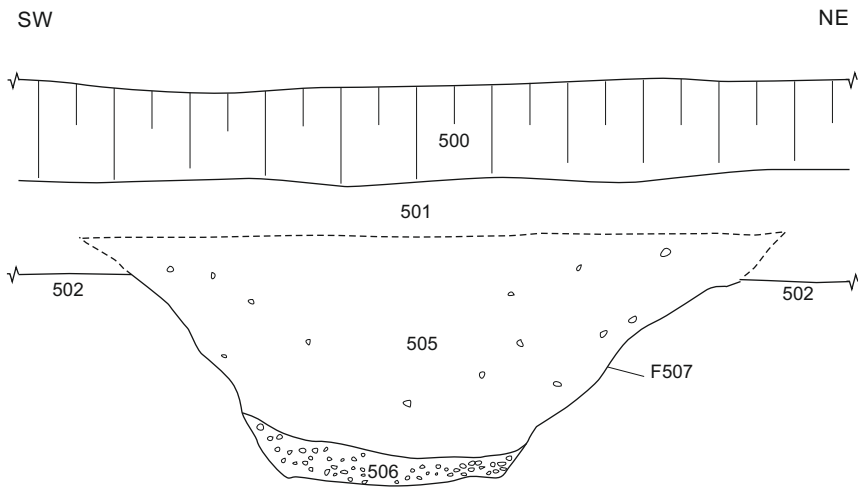


Trench 8

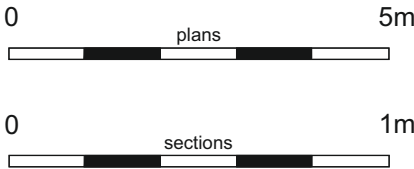
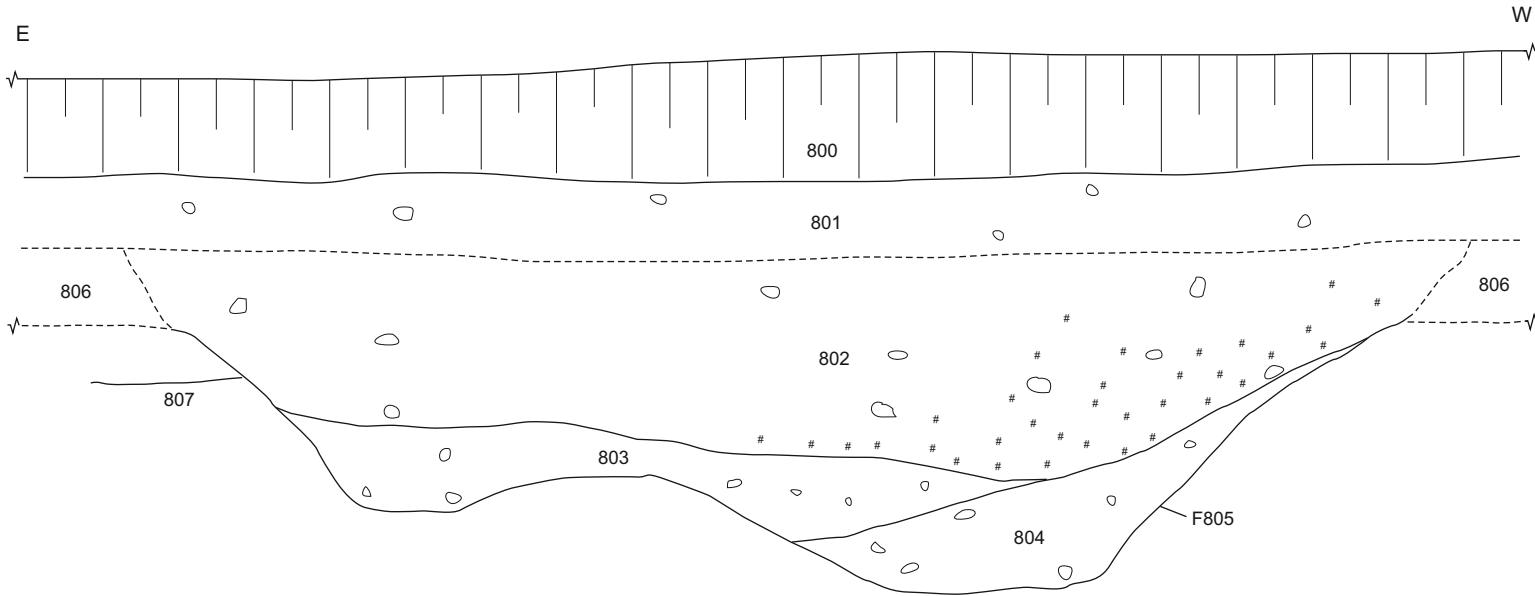
h) Plan



g) Section, F507



i) Section, F805



APPENDIX 1:

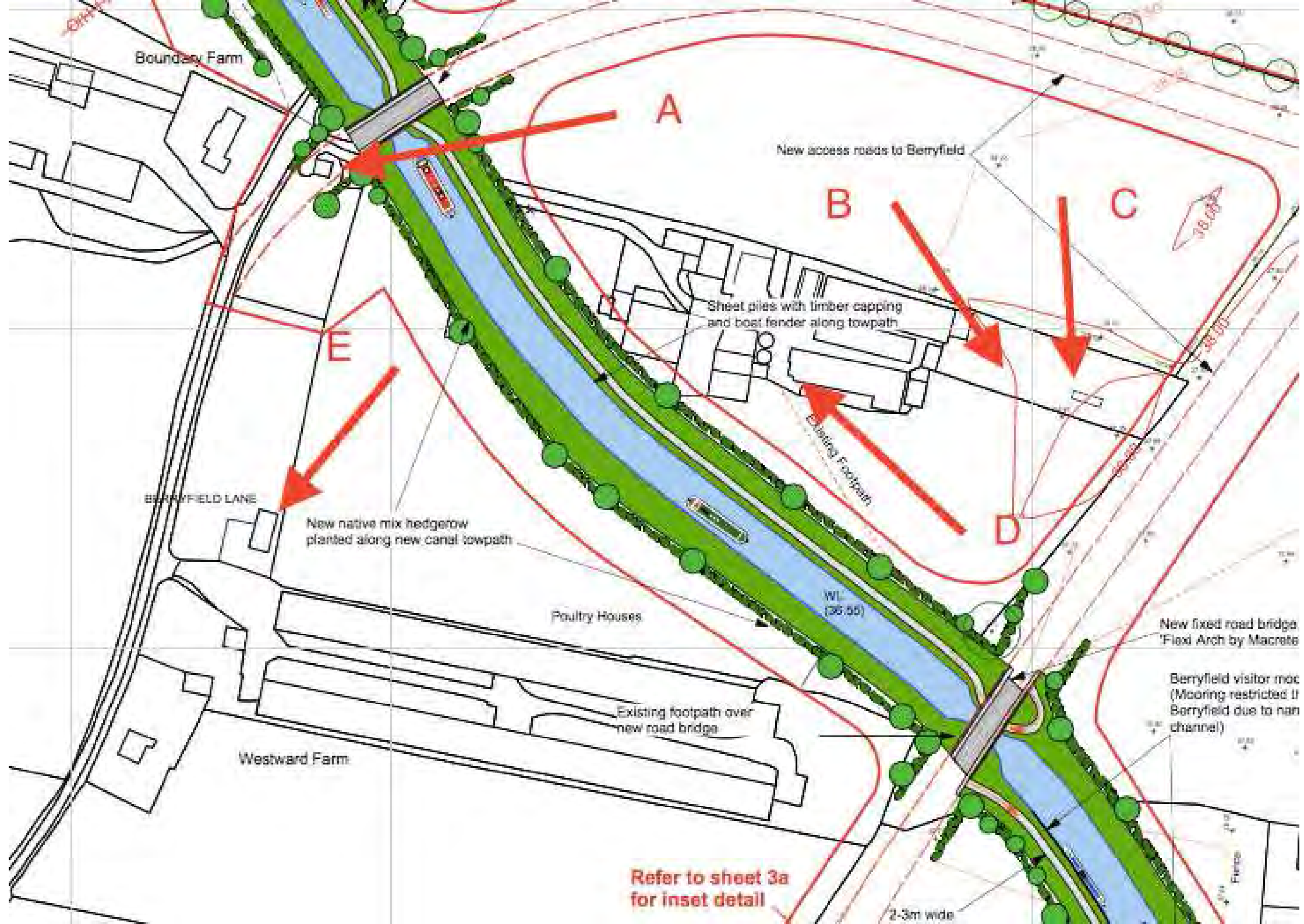
**WWII STRUCTURES AT FORMER RAF MELKSHAM NEAR BOUNDARY
FARM**

RAF Melksham

- RAF Melksham was a training establishment built in the early years of WWII and activities continued until the mid '60's.
- There was no airfield – training was carried out partly in hangers that still exist on the current Bowerhill Trading Estate.
- Married quarters accommodation for the permanent staff was built at nearby Berryfield and these houses formed the original village.
- Accommodation for trainees was in a “temporary” camp built on land to the north of the village and although most of these buildings no longer exist, two air raid shelters, a water tower and two other small brick built structures remain. A location map and photographs of these structures are included below.

An extract from The History of the County of Wiltshire: Volume 7. Originally published by Victoria County History, London, 1953 is included here:

The greater part of the western side of Bowerhill is now occupied by the R.A.F. No. 12 School of Technical Training. The fields on either side of Berryfields Lane were between 1939 and 1945 occupied by an R.A.F. camp: some brick built hutments in these fields are now used by Wiltshire Farmers, Ltd.





BldgA1



BldgA2



BldgB&C



BldgB1



BldgB2



BldgB3



BldgC1



BldgC2



BldgC3



BldgC4



BldgD1



BldgD2



BldgD3



BldgD4



BldgE1



BldgE2

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