

**M40 JUNCTION 4  
HANDY CROSS  
IMPROVEMENTS  
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

*For*

**HYDER CONSULTING LTD**

*on behalf of*

**THE HIGHWAYS AGENCY**

CA REPORT: 03177

DECEMBER 2003

# M40 JUNCTION 4 HANDY CROSS IMPROVEMENTS BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

CA PROJECT: 1656  
CA REPORT: 03177

Author:	Tim Havard
Approved:	Neil Holbrook
Signed:	.....
Issue: 01	Date: 4 DECEMBER 2003

*This report is confidential to the client. Cotswold Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability to any third party to whom this report, or any part of it, is made known. Any such party relies upon this report entirely at their own risk. No part of this report may be reproduced by any means without permission.*

## CONTENTS

SUMMARY .....	2
1. INTRODUCTION .....	3
<i>The site</i> .....	3
<i>Archaeological background</i> .....	3
<i>Archaeological objectives</i> .....	4
<i>Methodology</i> .....	4
2. RESULTS .....	5
<i>Trench 1</i> .....	5
<i>Trench 2</i> .....	5
<i>Trench 4</i> .....	5
<i>The Finds</i> .....	6
<i>The Biological Evidence</i> .....	6
3. DISCUSSION.....	6
<i>Conclusions</i> .....	7
4. CA PROJECT TEAM .....	7
5. REFERENCES .....	7
APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS.....	8
APPENDIX 2: THE FINDS.....	10

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Fig. 1 Site location plan  
 Fig. 2 Trench location plan and geophysical survey results  
 Fig. 3 Trench 1 plan and section

## SUMMARY

**Site Name:** M40 Junction 4  
**Location:** Handy Cross, Buckinghamshire  
**NGR:** SU 8530 9100  
**Type:** Evaluation  
**Date:** 24-28 November 2003  
**Location of Archive:** Buckinghamshire County Museum  
**Site Code:** HCR 03

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in November 2003 at the request of Hyder Consulting Ltd (on behalf of The Highways Agency) at M40 Junction 4, Handy Cross, Buckinghamshire. In compliance with an approved written scheme of investigation, a total of 8 trenches was excavated across the development area.

An undated ditch and an area of post-medieval infill probably relating to a pond or quarrying activity were identified. No features were encountered or finds recovered which pre-dated the post-medieval period. The archaeological importance of these features is considered to be low

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In November 2003 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) was appointed by Hyder Consulting Ltd on behalf of The Highways Agency to carry out an archaeological evaluation at M40 Junction 4, Handy Cross, Buckinghamshire (centred on NGR: SU 8530 9100; Fig. 1). The evaluation was undertaken to accompany an Environmental Statement for improvements to junction 4 of the M40.

1.2 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a model brief for archaeological field evaluation (trial trenching) supplied by Buckinghamshire County Council Archaeology Service (BCCAS) the archaeological advisors to the Local Planning Authority (LPA). A detailed written scheme of investigation (WSI) produced by CA (2003) was approved by the LPA acting on the advice of David Radford (BCCAS). The fieldwork also followed the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1999) and the *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage 1991). It was monitored by David Radford, by means of a site visit, on 26th November 2003.

### ***The site***

1.3 The site comprises three areas of proposed land-take for the road improvements (Fig. 2). Area A lies within a large arable field adjacent to the M40 at a height of approximately 145m AOD. Area B comprises a narrow strip within two pasture fields and lies at a height of approximately 137m AOD. Area C lies within two pasture fields at a height of approximately 138m AOD (CA 2003a, 8-9).

1.4 The underlying geology of the area comprises deposits of clay-with-flints overlying Cretaceous deposits of Upper Chalk (BGS 1974, Sheet 255) which are exposed towards the eastern and western edges of the site (CA 2003a, 7).

### ***Archaeological background***

1.5 An archaeological desk-based assessment has been undertaken for land in and around the proposed M40 Junction 4 Handy Cross improvements (CA 2003a). This work followed an earlier Stage 1 assessment, and included further detailed desk-based assessment work, updated information from statutory and non-statutory

sources, and an archaeological walkover survey. The report also refers to the results of a geophysical survey conducted across the area of proposed land-take.

- 1.6 The results of the desk-based assessment indicated a low potential for the existence of currently unrecorded archaeological remains within the proposed development area. No archaeological features were recorded within the proposed areas of land-take, although a number of prehistoric, Roman and medieval finds are recorded from the surrounding area. Two potentially historic hedgerows are situated within the site, and the Grade 2 Listed buildings comprising Handy Cross farmhouse and outbuildings are situated approximately 150m to the south. The geophysical survey indicated a number of areas of possible archaeological potential within the land-take areas (Stratascan 2003).

### ***Archaeological objectives***

- 1.7 The objectives of the evaluation were to establish the character, quality, date, significance and extent of any archaeological remains or deposits surviving within the site. This information will assist The Highways Agency in making an informed judgement on the likely impact upon the archaeological resource by the proposed development.

### ***Methodology***

- 1.8 The fieldwork comprised the excavation of 8 trenches in the locations indicated on Fig. 2. All trenches were excavated by mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket. All machine excavation was undertaken under constant archaeological supervision to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon or the natural substrate, whichever was encountered first. Where archaeological deposits were encountered they were excavated by hand in accordance with the CA Technical Manual 1: *Excavation Recording Manual* (1996).
- 1.9 Deposits were assessed for their palaeoenvironmental potential and, where appropriate, sampled and processed in accordance with the CA Technical Manual 2: *The Taking of Samples for Palaeoenvironmental/Palaeoeconomic Analysis from Archaeological Sites* (1994). All artefacts recovered were processed in accordance with the CA Technical Manual 3: *Treatment of Finds Immediately After Excavation* (1995).

- 1.10 The archive and artefacts from the evaluation are currently held by CA at their offices in Kemble. Subject to the agreement of the legal landowner the site archive (including artefacts) will be deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museum.

## 2. RESULTS

- 2.1 This section provides an overview of the evaluation results; detailed summaries of the recorded contexts and finds are to be found in Appendices 1 and 2 respectively.

### ***Area A***

- 2.2 Four trenches were located within Area A, two of which (trenches 2 and 4) were targeted upon geophysical anomalies. A broadly similar stratigraphic sequence of natural clays overlain by modern ploughsoil was encountered within all trenches. Two tree throws were observed and recorded.

#### *Trench 1*

- 2.3 Ditch 105 lay at the north-west end of trench 1, and contained a single silty clay fill 106 from which no finds were recovered. This feature had been heavily disturbed by tree roots.

#### *Trench 4*

- 2.4 Probable pit/pond 404 lay at the north-western extent of trench 4. The full extent and profile of this feature was not established, but hand excavation showed it to be at least 1.45m in depth. It contained a single exposed fill, 405, from which a small quantity of building material and two sherds of post-medieval pottery were recovered.

### ***Area B***

- 2.5 Trenches 5, 6 and 7 were all targeted upon geophysical anomalies. A broadly similar stratigraphic sequence was encountered with the natural substrate immediately sealed by topsoil. However, the presence of subsoil was observed in trench 5. No archaeological features or deposits were identified.

### **Area C**

- 2.6 Within trench 8 the natural substrate was sealed by topsoil. No archaeological features or deposits were identified.

### **The Finds**

- 2.7 A small quantity of post-medieval pottery and building material was recovered from context 405. Despite visual scanning of evaluation spoil, no further finds were recovered.

### **The Biological Evidence**

- 2.8 All deposits were assessed for their palaeoenvironmental potential and no samples were taken.

## **3. DISCUSSION**

- 3.1 The absence of archaeological features pre-dating the post-medieval and/or modern period from the site is noteworthy and is further reflected in the lack of artefactual material recovered during visual scanning of the topsoil. Furthermore, as no features correlating with the geophysical anomalies were encountered during the trenching it may be suggested that these anomalies are of geological rather than archaeological origin.
- 3.2 Ditch 105 is interpreted as a former field boundary. Its location and alignment correlates closely with a hedgeline visible on a 1947 aerial photograph (NMR RAF/CPR/UK/1920) of the area.
- 3.3 Interpretation of feature 404 is by necessity restricted due to its limited exposure within the confines of the trench. However, it may be suggested that it is representative of a pond or quarry pit infilled in the post-medieval/early modern period. A number of broadly comparable features are visible within the immediate locality on the 1947 photograph (ibid).

## **Conclusions**

- 3.4 There is an absence of archaeological features pre-dating the post-medieval and/or modern period in the evaluation that is also reflected in the paucity of artefactual material recovered. The results correlate with the absence of recorded archaeological features within the site as identified by the desk-based assessment. The archaeological importance of the post-medieval/modern features is considered low

## **4. CA PROJECT TEAM**

Fieldwork was undertaken by Tim Havard, assisted by Jon Webster and Kelly Saunders. The report was written by Tim Havard. The illustrations were prepared by Peter Moore. The archive has been compiled by Tim Havard, and prepared for deposition by Ed McSloy. The project was managed for CA by Neil Holbrook and Cliff Bateman.

## **5. REFERENCES**

CA 2003a *M40 Junction 4: Handy Cross Improvements, Buckinghamshire*. CA Report No **03136**

CA 2003b *M40 Junction 4: Handy Cross Improvements, Buckinghamshire*: Written Scheme of Investigation.

Stratascan 2003 *A Report for Cotswold Archaeology on a Geophysical Survey carried out near the M40, Junction 4, Handy Cross*

**APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS**

**Trench 1** 20m in length, 1.5m in width Present ground level: 146.45m to 146.52m

101	Topsoil: mid brown grey silty clay with occasional irregular flint inclusions, measuring 0.4m in depth.
102	Natural: light brown orange clay with frequent flint inclusions.
103	Cut for tree bole: sub-circular in plan, irregular concave sides leading to an uneven base, measuring 1.12m in length, 1.08m in width and 0.23m in depth.
104	Single fill of 103: mid brown grey silty clay with occasional irregular flint inclusions and frequent root disturbance.
105	Cut for ditch: linear in plan, aligned NW-SE, shallow sides leading to a slightly concave base, measuring 1.26m in width, 0.21m in depth and at least 5.2m in length.
106	Single fill of 105: mid red brown silty clay with occasional irregular flint inclusions and frequent tree root disturbance.

**Trench 2** 50m in length, 1.5m in width Present ground level: 145.14m to 145.42m

201	Topsoil: mid to dark grey brown silty clay with occasional irregular flint inclusions, measuring 0.35m to 0.5m in depth.
202	Number void.
203	Natural: mid orange brown clay with frequent irregular flint inclusions.
204	Single fill of 205: mid grey brown clay silt with frequent root disturbance.
205	Cut for tree bole: sub-circular in plan, steep slightly concave sides leading to a concave base, measuring 1.15m in length, 0.9m in width and 0.27m in depth.

**Trench 3** 15m in length, 1.5m in width Present ground level: 144.67m to 145.06m

301	Topsoil: mid grey brown silty clay with occasional irregular flint inclusions, measuring 0.3m to 0.48m in depth.
302	Natural: mid brown orange clay with frequent irregular flint inclusions.

**Trench 4** 40m in length, 1.5m in width Present ground level: 144.30m to 144.70m

401	Topsoil: mid to dark grey brown silty clay with occasional irregular flint inclusions, measuring 0.4m to 0.47m in depth.
402	Number void.
403	Natural: mid orange brown clay with frequent irregular flint inclusions.
404	Cut for probable quarry pit: uncertain form in plan, probable steep sides, base not exposed, measuring at least 8.75m in length, at least 1.5m in width and at least 1.45m in depth..
405	Single fill of 404: mid brown silty clay with occasional irregular flint inclusions.

**Trench 5** 20m in length, 1.5m in width Present ground level: 136.87m to 138.38m

501	Topsoil: mid brown grey humic clay silt with 5% irregular flint fragments, measuring 0.2m to 0.23m in depth.
502	Subsoil: light to mid orange brown sandy clay with very occasional flint fragments, measuring 0.3m to 0.39m in depth.
503	Natural: mid orange brown clays mixed with flint gravels.

**Trench 6** 20m in length, 1.5m in width Present ground level: 136.30m to 137.04m

601	Topsoil: mid brown grey humic clay silt with 5% irregular flint fragments, measuring 0.3m to 0.33m in depth.
602	Natural: light brown orange clays with occasional flint patches.

**Trench 7** 10m in length, 1.5m in width Present ground level: 134.95m to 135.64m

701	Topsoil: mid brown grey humic clay silt with 10% irregular flint fragments, measuring 0.2m to 0.25m in depth.
702	Natural: light brown orange clays with occasional flint and chalk patches.

**Trench 8** 20m in length, 1.5m in width Present ground level: 138.66m to 139.13m

801	Topsoil: mid brown grey clay silt with occasional irregular flint fragments, measuring 0.17m to 0.28m in depth.
802	Natural: mid brown orange clays with frequent flint and chalk patches.

## APPENDIX 2: THE FINDS

By Sam Inder

A small quantity of pottery and building material dateable to the 18th – 19th centuries was recovered from context 405. The material is not deemed to be archaeologically significant and has been discarded.

### Finds Concordance

405      2 sherds of post-medieval pottery (67g); glazed Earthenware  
          6 fragments of CBM (192g)

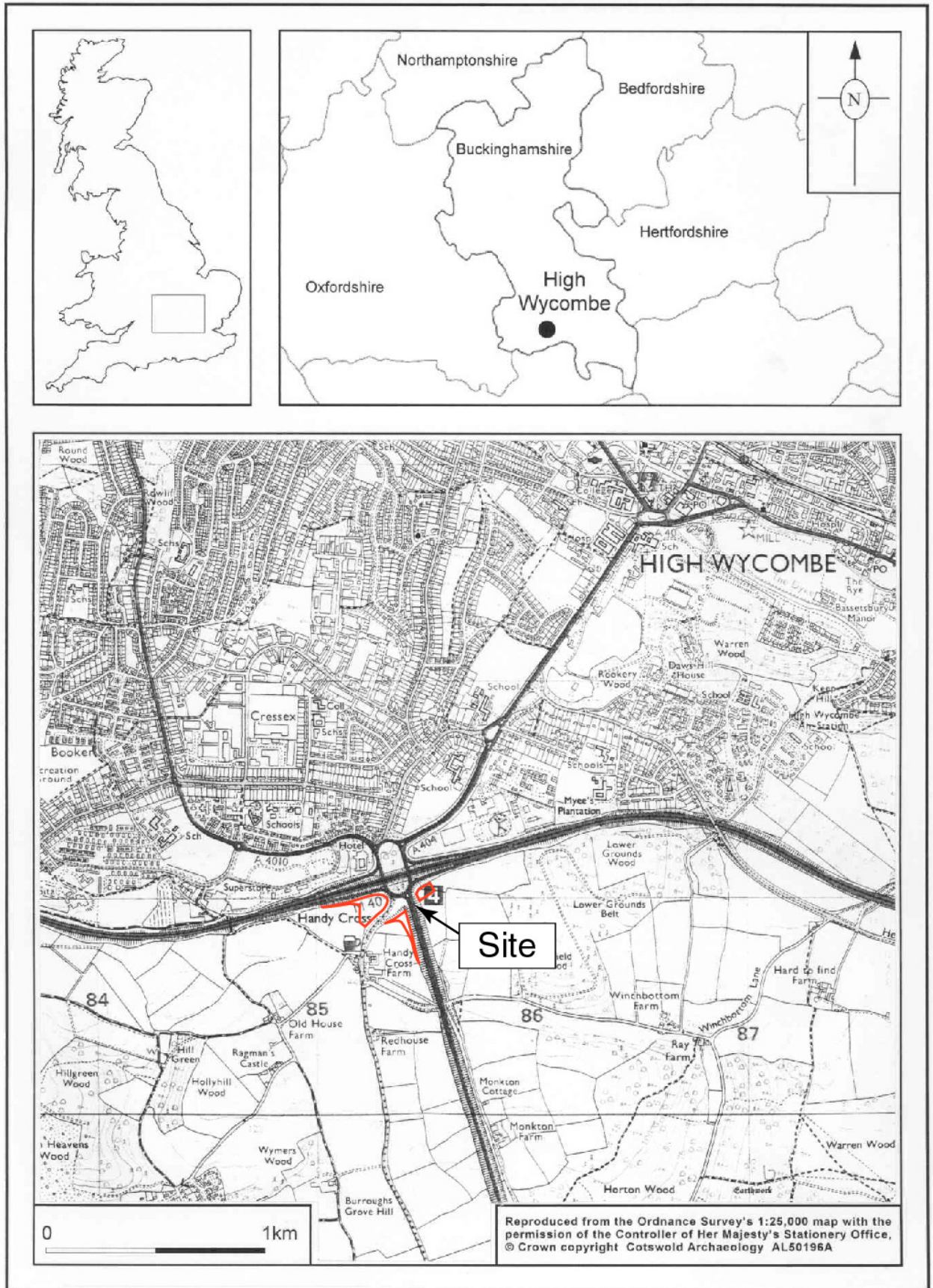


Fig. 1 Site location plan

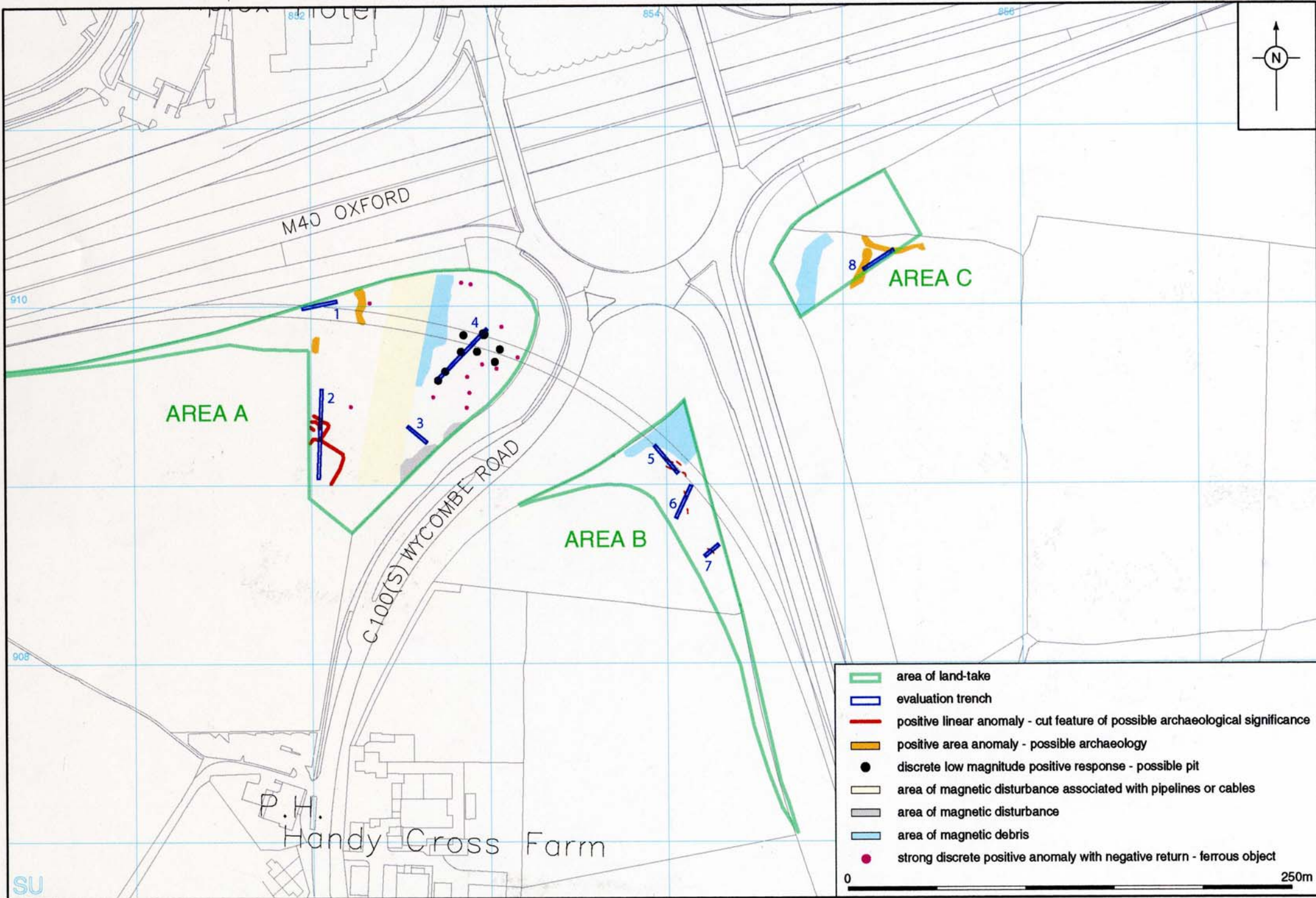


Fig. 2 Trench location plan and geophysical survey results (1:2000)

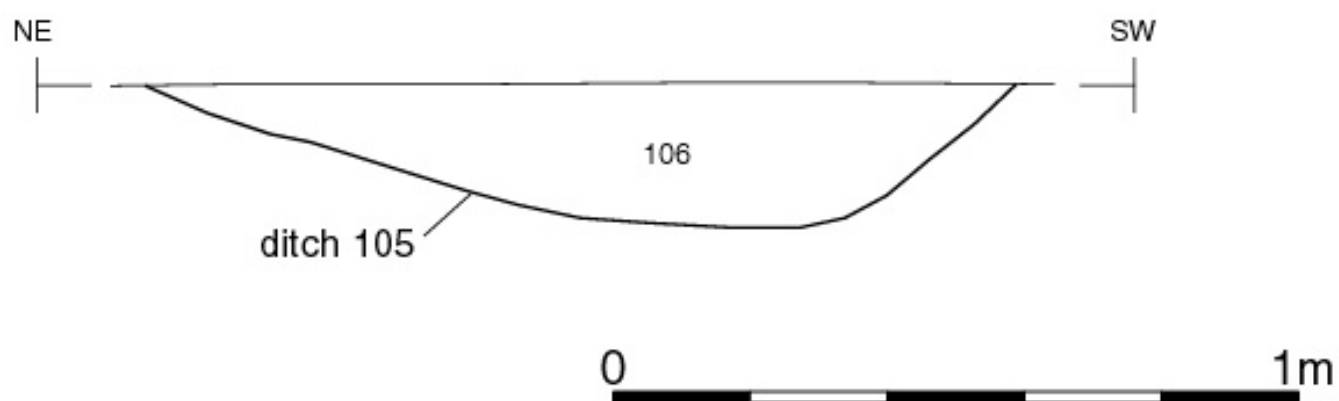
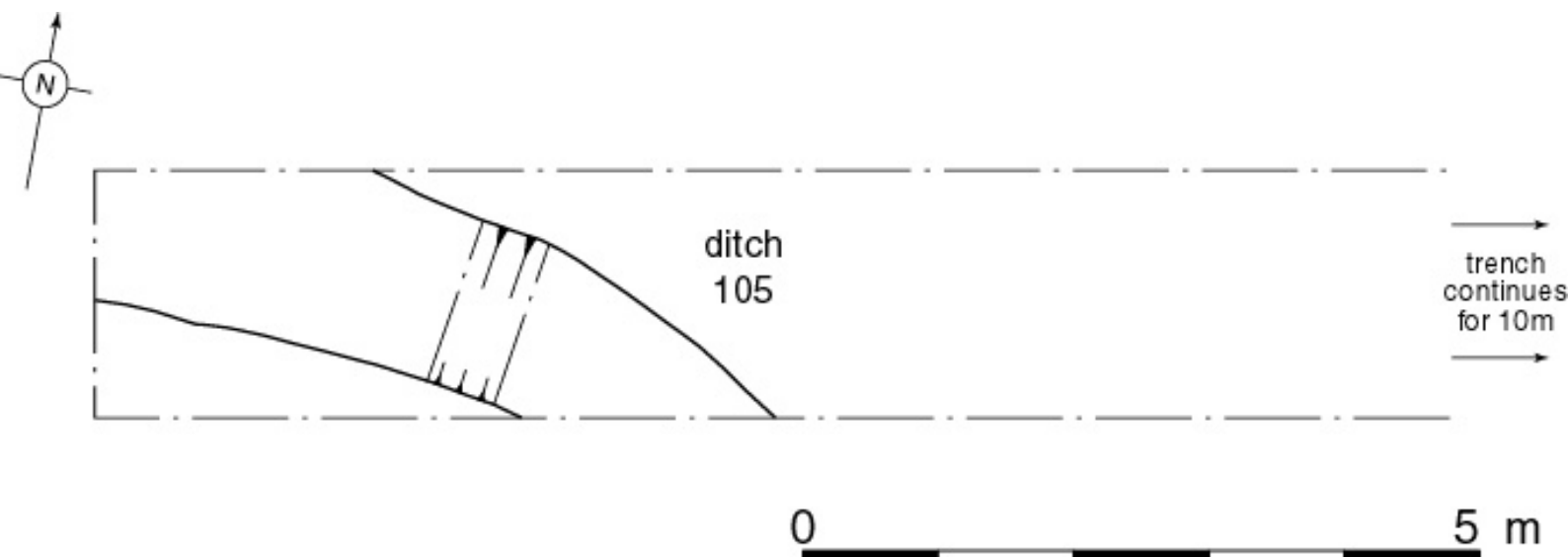


Fig. 3 Trench 1: plan (1:100) and section (1:20)