

Woodside Farm, Pilning Street, Pilning, South Gloucestershire

Archaeological Evaluation

On Behalf Of:

Mr & Mrs Lanfear



By

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**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRENCH EVALUATION CARRIED OUT AT
WOODSIDE FARM, PILNING STREET, PILNING,
SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE, BS35 4HL
FEBRUARY 2010**

NGR ST 58162 85688

Summary

Absolute Archaeology was commissioned by David James and Partners LLP on behalf of Mr and Mrs Lanfear Woodside Farm, Pilning Street, Pilning, South Gloucestershire to carry out an archaeological evaluation on land belonging to the above. This was carried out in response to the condition of planning preceding the intended construction of an agricultural workers dwelling (Planning reference PT08/2236/F) in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation submitted by Absolute Archaeology and approved by South Gloucestershire Council, February 2010.

The trench evaluation resulted in no archaeological features being found. All five trenches revealed the same sequence of stratigraphy with basal deposits being made up of soils showing alluviation throughout. There was no stratigraphical evidence for the flood inundation of 1607, though rounded beach/river pebbles found on the spoil heap from the evaluation trenches suggest that the layer (flood deposit layer) so noticeable at nearby Gilslake Farm (Driscoll 2009) was subsequently ploughed out in the 17th/18th centuries during cultivation.

Acknowledgements

Absolute Archaeology would like to acknowledge the assistance of the following in the production of this report: The clients Mr & Mrs M Lanfear, Mr M Blaken of David James & Partners LLP and Mr David Evans, Historic Environment Record Officer South Gloucestershire Natural and Built Environment.

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Abbreviations

aOD

Above Ordnance Datum; used to express a given height above mean sea level.

SEA LEVEL

Heights are to the nearest metre above sea level at Newlyn.

The Site

The specific development area

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report sets out the results of the archaeological trench evaluation of land belonging to Woodside Farm, Pilning Street, Pilning, South Gloucestershire. The work was intended to assess the archaeological potential of the development area ahead of the proposed construction of an agricultural workers dwelling (planning reference PT08/2236/F). The evaluation was carried out by Absolute Archaeology on the 24th and 25th February 2010.

1.2 The work was commissioned by Mr M Blaken (David James and Partners LLP) on behalf of Mr & Mrs Lanfear.

1.3 **Geology, Topography and Hydrology**

1.3.1 The Henbury Levels form part of the Avon Levels, an area of low laying flat land, dominated by agricultural activity. The site is bounded from E to S by areas of high ground which drain into the Levels. The area has historically been at risk from inundation from the Severn Estuary, the modern day banks of which are located approximately 3.5 km west of the development site. A recent archaeological trench evaluation at Gislake Farm (2.5 km to the SSW of Woodside Farm) showed evidence of a flood deposit, potentially related to the inundation of 1607 (Driscoll, 2009). The layer (observed in all four trenches) comprised a 200 mm deep deposit of marine alluvial clay/sand and rounded beach pebbles, beneath extant ridge and furrow (Driscoll, 2009). This evidence coincides with borehole samples taken in Devon, Gloucestershire and the Gower peninsula and has been interpreted as a flood deposit (Bryant and Haslett, 2002; Bryant and Haslett, 2004).

1.3.2 The area was subject to intense drainage during the Roman period, which also saw the Levels protected from flooding by sea defences. Intensive draining continued throughout the Saxon period, probably reaching its height in the Medieval period, with land reclaimed to facilitate the increased agricultural activity on the Levels (WA, 2005).

- 1.3.3 The site is defined by tidal flat deposits (organic rich clay, river silts with intermittent peat horizons) known as the Wentlooge Sequence, comprising postglacial deposits up to 16m in depth in some areas (Gardiner *et al.*, 2002). This overlies Triassic Mercian Mudstone or Red Marl with marginal facies (Bristol Channel: Sheet 51° N- 04° W. British Geology Survey 1:250 000 Series: Solid Geology).
- 1.3.4 The site is approximately 6 m aOD.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL/HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Severn Levels are a nationally important zone for archaeology. The quality of the archaeology is complimented by the high level of preservation accorded by the waterlogged conditions.
- 2.2 The site lies within the Henbury Levels, part of the Avon-Sevenside Levels. The geology is overlain by sand/silt deposits of the Wentlooge Formation, a predominantly Holocene alluvial deposit. The Wentlooge formation is a recent geological deposit and may overlie human activity associated with the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic.
- 2.3 Evidence for more intensive use of the Levels from the Bronze Age is extant from sites, archaeological investigations and geotechnical information (Gardiner *et al.* 2002). However, no activity is known to have occurred within the study area.
- 2.4 Romano-British activity is known from within the study area in the form of an enclosure, identified in the vicinity of Laurel Farm, 500m SW of the site.
- 2.5 On the tithe map of 1840, three fields (numbered 1010, 1012 and 1013) just east of 'Walning' (now known as Walning Farm) are of particular interest. Each of the fields

is known as 'Blackworthy', probably denoting an enclosed settlement relating to the Romano-British period. The area is located less than 1km to the NW of the site.

- 2.6 There is a greater concentration of Medieval activity from within the study area than is evident from the preceding periods, highlighting the intensification of activity in the Levels during this phase. Settlements, farmsteads and ridge and furrow are all attested from within 1km of the site.
- 2.7 Situated within the parish of Olveston a number of settlements including Walning, Creditch, Awkley and Pilning (now known as Pear Tree and Poplar Farm), each have elements within their name suggesting middle/late Saxon origins (Gelling, 1978).
- 2.8 Post Medieval archaeology is present in the form of 17th -18th century building activity. These sites did not have any bearing on the investigation.

3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 Four evaluation trenches measuring 10m x 2m and one measuring 5m x 2m were machine excavated to a depth <1.2m. Trenches one, two and three were aligned WSW-ENE and trenches four and five were aligned SSE-NNW. All trenches were positioned to target the ridges on the extant ridge and furrow. Those targeted represented the 3rd, 4th and 5th ridges from easterly hedgerow. The layout of the trenches was altered slightly from the original plan submitted in our Written Scheme of Investigation, due to the necessity to avoid live services across the site.
- 3.2 All recording was carried out using Absolute Archaeology's recording system, which includes written, drawn and photographic records.
- 3.3 The archive has been prepared using the site code A Arc 25.

4 RESULTS

Results from the trench evaluation are listed below. Being in close proximity to each other, the results are stratigraphically homogenous throughout.

4.1 Trenches 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 were positioned strategically to cover the groundworks for the proposed development and surrounding fenced enclosure. The sequence of soil layers in each trench were removed by a mechanical excavator under constant archaeological supervision. Where necessary, trench sections and bases were cleaned by hand to clarify deposition. All of the trenches were situated in a region of permanent pasture and positioned along and across three extant linear features (ridge and furrow). Each trench is summarised below.

4.2 Trench 1

Trench 1 measured 5m x 2m in plan x <1.1m in depth and was aligned WSW-ENE bisecting an extant linear ridge (Ridge and Furrow). Turfline/topsoil (100) comprised <250mm of a very dark greyish brown (10YR 3/1) fibrous soft loamy clay. Layer (101) comprised <200mm of very dark greyish brown (10 YR 3/2) soft silty clay. Layer (102) comprised <180mm of a dark grey (7.5 YR 4/1) firm alluvial silty clay. Layer (103) comprised >380mm of a grey (7.5YR 5/1) soft slightly gley alluvial clay that was not bottomed.

4.3 Trench 2

Trench 2 measured 10m x 2m in plan x <1.2m in depth and was aligned WSW-ENE across two extant linear ridges (Ridge and Furrow). Turfline/topsoil (200) comprised <250mm of a very dark greyish brown (10YR 3/1) fibrous soft loamy clay. Layer (201) comprised <200mm of very dark greyish brown (10 YR 3/2) soft silty clay. Layer (202) comprised <180mm of a dark grey (7.5 YR 4/1) firm alluvial silty clay.

Layer (203) comprised >390mm of a grey (7.5YR 5/1) soft slightly gley alluvial clay that was not bottomed.

4.4 **Trench 3**

Trench 3 measured 10m x 2m in plan x <1.2m in depth and was aligned WSW-ENE across two extant linear ridges (Ridge and Furrow). Turfline/topsoil (300) comprised <250mm of a very dark greyish brown (10YR 3/1) fibrous soft loamy clay. Layer (301) comprised <200mm of very dark greyish brown (10 YR 3/2) soft silty clay. Layer (302) comprised <180mm of a dark grey (7.5 YR 4/1) firm alluvial silty clay. Layer (303) comprised >390mm of a grey (7.5YR 5/1) soft slightly gley alluvial clay that was not bottomed.

4.5 **Trench 4**

Trench 4 measured 10m x 2m in plan x <1.2m in depth and was aligned SSE-NNW along and central to one extant linear ridge (Ridge and Furrow). Turfline/topsoil (400) comprised <250mm of a very dark greyish brown (10YR 3/1) fibrous soft loamy clay. Layer (401) comprised <200mm of very dark greyish brown (10 YR 3/2) soft silty clay. Layer (402) comprised <180mm of a dark grey (7.5 YR 4/1) firm alluvial silty clay. Layer (403) comprised >390mm of a grey (7.5YR 5/1) soft slightly gley alluvial clay that was not bottomed.

4.6 **Trench 5**

Trench 5 measured 10m x 2m in plan x <1.2m in depth and was aligned SSE-NNW along and central to one extant linear ridge (Ridge and Furrow). Turfline/topsoil (500) comprised <250mm of a very dark greyish brown (10YR 3/1) fibrous soft loamy clay. Layer (501) comprised <200mm of very dark greyish brown (10 YR 3/2) soft silty clay. Layer (502) comprised <180mm of a dark grey (7.5 YR 4/1) firm alluvial silty clay. Layer (503) comprised >390mm of a grey (7.5YR 5/1) soft slightly gley alluvial clay that was not bottomed.

5 COMMENTS

- 5.1 The trench evaluation established that no archaeological features were present throughout the 45 m of trenching, though rolled beach/river pebbles retrieved from the trench spoil heaps suggest inundation probably from the proposed tsunami of 1607 (Bryant and Haslett 2002). Despite the fact that no layers suggesting inundation were visible in section in any of the trenches, the findings of rolled pebbles could signify a flooding sequence.

6 FINDS

- 6.1 Apart from modern 20th century glazed pottery within the turfline/topsoil layer, there were no finds of any archaeological significance.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 As discussed above, no archaeological features were identified as a result of the trench evaluation. The investigation focussed on the area designated for the construction of an agricultural workers dwelling and associated works (fencing and services) and confirmed the absence of archaeological activity in this area.

8 REFERENCES

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9. FIGURES

Figure 1: Location of Site (Not to Scale)

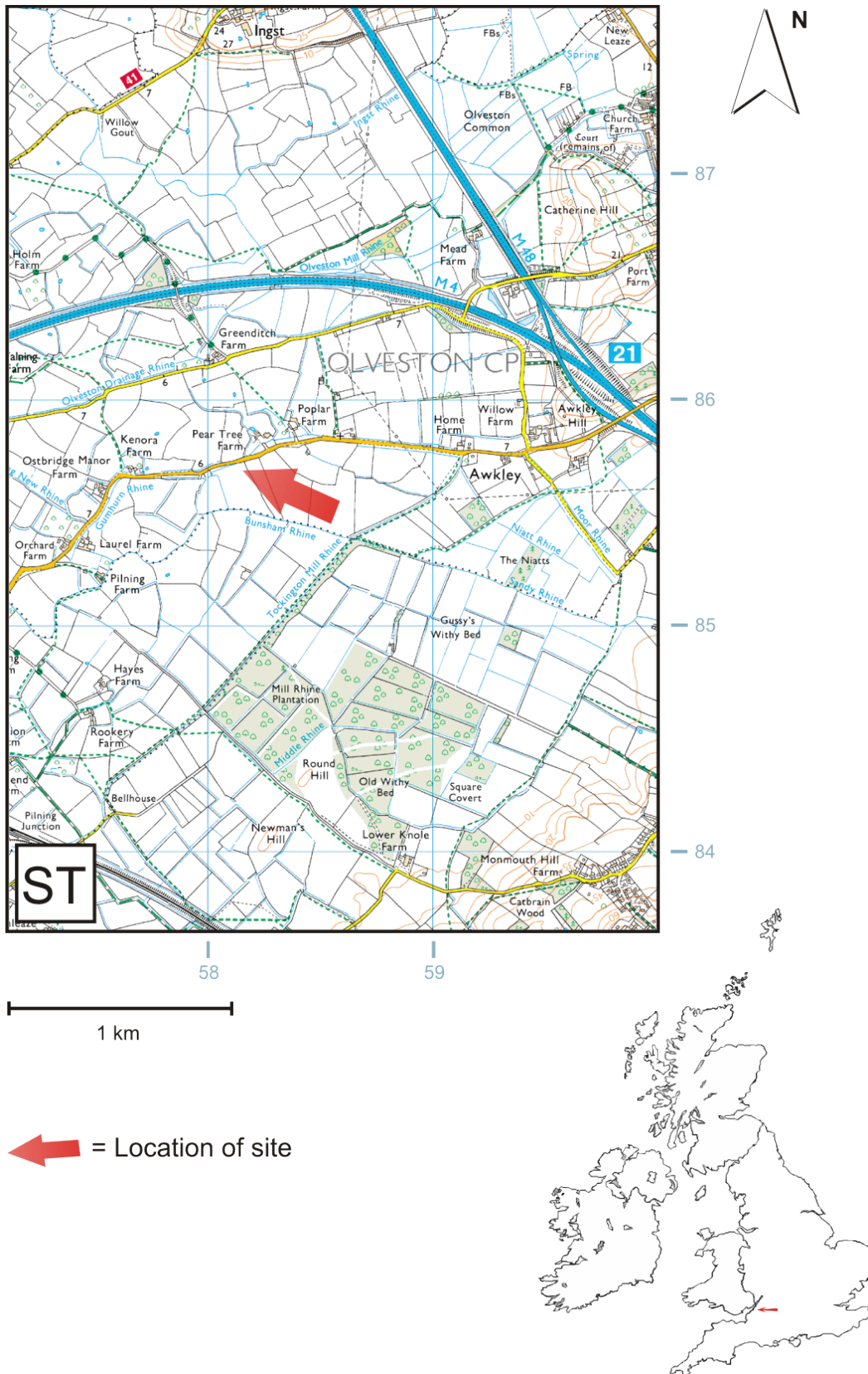
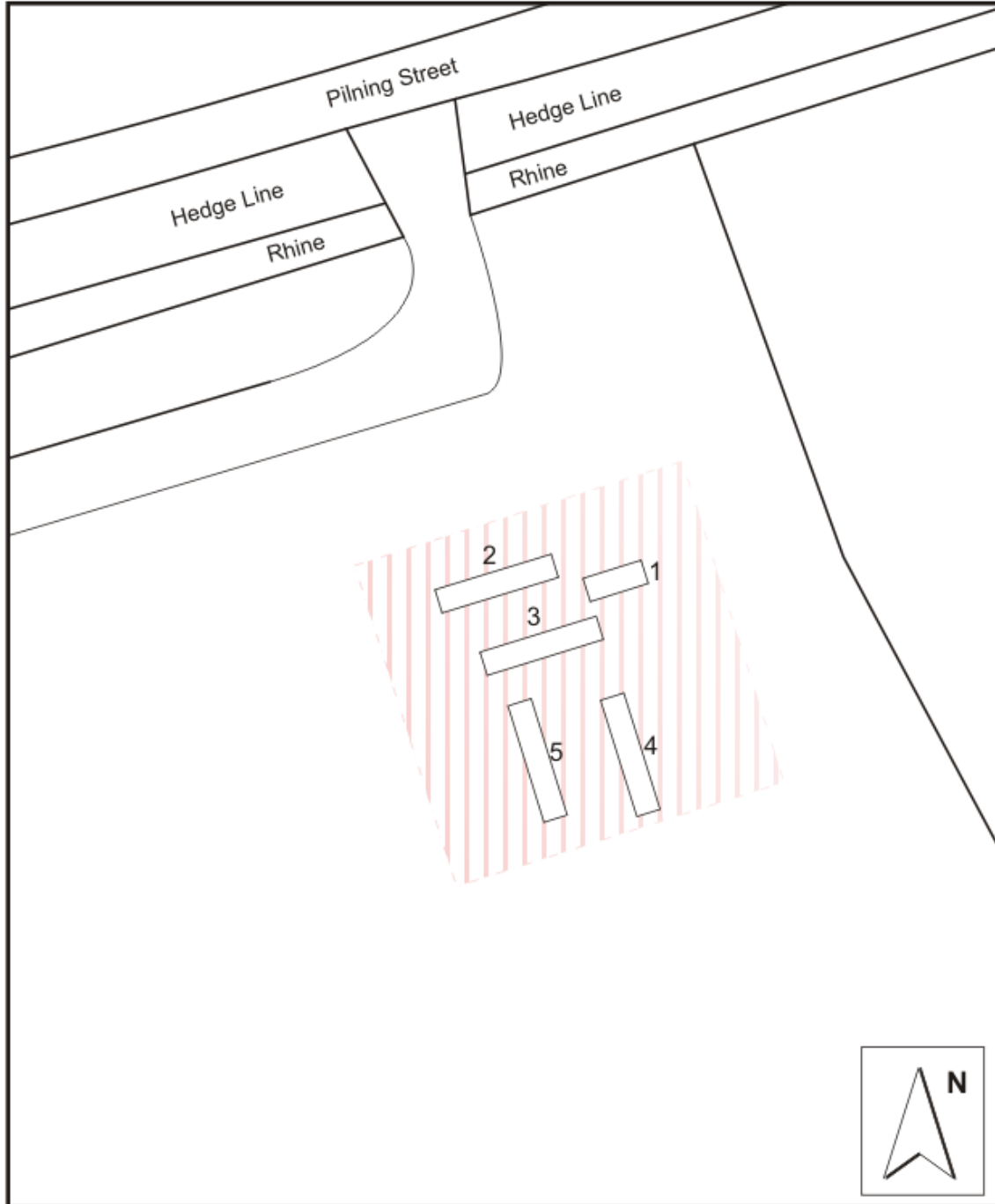


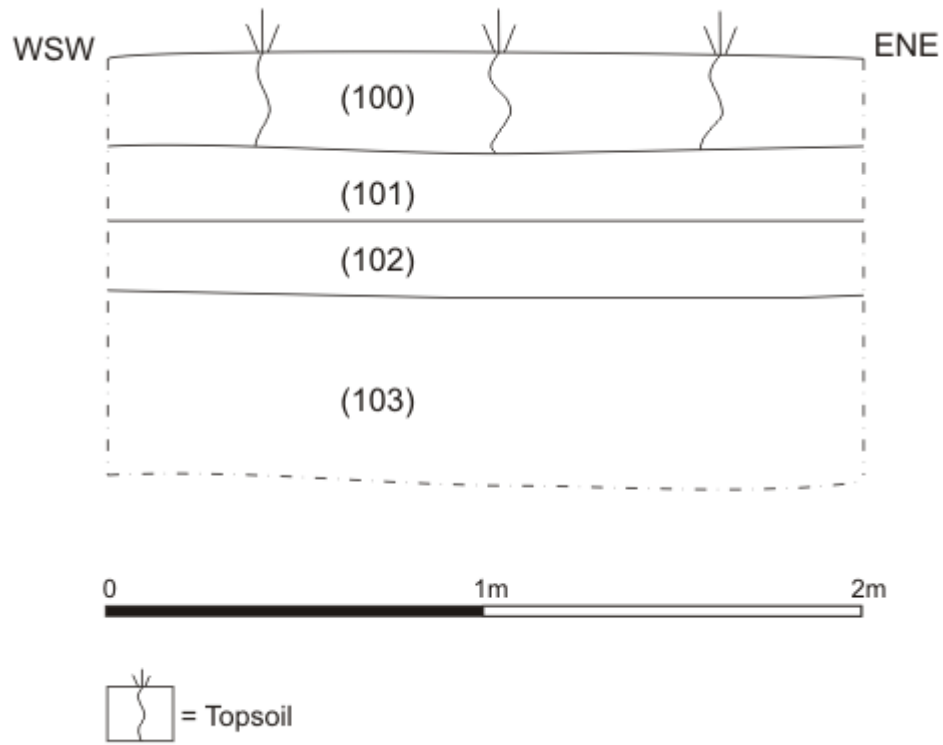
Figure 2: Location of Trenches
(Scale 1:500)



 = Development Area

0m 20m

**Figure 3: Representative Section Trench 1
(Scale 1:20)**



10: PHOTOGRAPHS



Fig 1: Trench One SSE Facing Section
(Scales 1 x 1m & 1 x 2m)



Fig 2: Trench Two ENE View
(Scales 2 x 1m & 1 x 2m)



Figure 3: Trench Two NNW Facing Section
(Scale 1 x 1m & 1 x 2m)