

Archaeological Monitoring on land at Aylesham Village Expansion, Hill Crescent, Aylesham, Dover, Kent

Site Code AYL/SMS/21



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1. Summary

From 12th to 17th April 2021 SWAT Archaeology carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording on land at Hill Crescent, Aylesham, Dover in Kent. The works were commissioned by the developer and carried out during the excavation of ground works associated with the new development.

The Archaeological investigation was conducted in accordance with an Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation prepared for Dover District Council Planning by SWAT Archaeology.

2.0 Introduction

The proposed development area (PDA) is situated on land to the north of Hill Crescent, Aylesham in Kent. The Aylesham Village Expansion project takes in parts of the existing village of Aylesham and also includes extensive areas of new development to the north of the present village. The works in question are located to the south-west of Aylesham Primary School and adjacent to Phase 2A (Phase 4) Parcel 2 on a stripped open space named Crescent Hill Park (2A.4 (4.3) Figure 1.

The NGR to the centre of the ring ditches are NGR 622947 152166 & 622942 152159 (Figures 2, 3. Plates 1, 3, 5).

2.1 Planning Background

The site has planning permission (DOV/07/01081) for residential development and all associated works and there is potential for archaeology to survive on site. As part of the approved details a Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Mitigation (AMEC 2013) has been agreed.

2.2 The following Condition (92) requiring a programme of archaeological monitoring was attached to the planning consent:

No development shall take place until a report on a detailed archaeological investigation, which shall include full details of archaeological field evaluation works together with the identification of any safeguarding measures to ensure preservation in situ of important archaeological remains and/or further investigation and recording has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The agreed safeguarding measures and archaeological mitigation works shall be carried out prior to the commencement of development within that phase or part phase of the development, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Reason: To ensure features of archaeological importance and interest are properly examined and recorded.

3.0 Schedule of Visits

An SWAT Archaeology team attended the site and mapped and photographed the stripped areas from 12th-17th April 2021.

4.0 Aims and Objectives

4.1. The specific aims of the archaeological work were to:

The primary objective of the archaeological investigation is to determine whether any significant archaeological remains survive on site. Assessment of the results should provide guidance on what mitigation measures would be appropriate. Such measures may, for example, include further detailed archaeological excavation prior to development and/or an archaeological watching brief during construction work or preservation in situ (SWAT WSI 6.1).

4.2. Proposed Groundworks.

The proposed ground works comprise the stripping of the topsoil and reinstatement for planting of a mown grass meadow, wildflower meadow and shrubs of Sorbus and Betula (Figure 2).

4.3. In addition once the area has been surveyed for archaeological remains the reinstatement of the area of archaeological remains with a membrane and topped by sieved topsoil under archaeological supervision (Plates 4, 5).

4.4. A full programme of proposed works by the contractor were made available to SWAT Archaeology before the on-site monitoring took place.

4.5. Confidence Rating

No factors hindered the recognition of archaeological and deposits during the monitoring and recording exercise.

5.0 Archaeological and Geological Background

5.1 The geology of the site according to the British Geological Survey is Bedrock Geology of Margate Chalk Member-Chalk and the Superficial Deposits as Clay-with-Flints Formation, Clay, Silt and Sand. On-going archaeological investigations at the site have demonstrated that the white chalk is capped by varying superficial/head deposits including areas of undifferentiated silt, clay and gravels.

Ground levels are about 85m AOD at the east of the site and about 87m AOD at the western area of the site.

5.2 The Kent County Council Historic Environment Record (KCCHER) has provided details of any previous investigations and discoveries. The potential of this area has been gauged in relation to the proximity of known archaeological remains and is defined in the Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments (AMEC 2013). Subsequent archaeological works at the site include Geophysical Survey (Wessex Archaeology Area 6). Geotechnical Test-Pits (Pre-Construct Archaeology) and Strip, Map and Sample Excavations (SWAT Archaeology). The various studies have shown that the village of Aylesham lies within a rich archaeological landscape demonstrated by past finds and extensive areas of cropmarks surround the village. The ongoing investigations by SWAT Archaeology has shown that the excavation at Aylesham comprised of an extensive, previously unknown archaeological landscape.

5.3 The geophysical survey (Wessex Archaeology) and subsequent excavation revealed a prehistoric landscape that originated in the late Neolithic. The appearance of a large rectangular-shaped monumental structure, with an inner bank sat on the highest point of the development site and overlooked the Stour valley from the edge of the North Downs. Having been backfilled, the monument was re-used in the Mid Bronze Age at a time when an extensive Drove Way appeared. It was during this phase that the site experienced a wider use of the landscape, as pits, linear features and cremation burials were scattered across it.

5.4 The centre of the landscape was however, dominated by a series of Roman enclosures, some of which had a Late Iron Age foundation and scattered amongst the northern half of the network of enclosures were four kilns that produced pottery from either side of the Roman invasion in AD 43. The enclosures were altered and expanded during the late Iron Age and Roman periods and mortuary enclosures were added to house richly furnished cremations.

5.5 Activity on site during the Roman period also included a mix of industry and animal husbandry. In addition to the manufacture of pottery, Roman Aylesham was also witnessed

small scale iron smelting and the milling of flour, suggested by the presence of six millstones. The large percentage of horse bone and the presence of two horse skeletons would indicate that horse rearing/stockading was also part of the site's economic dynamics. The presence of military equipment on site suggests that the Roman Army may have played a significant role with the site's economy.

5.6 Activity during the later Roman period, though present is unclear, as is the implied Anglo-Saxon presence. Further study of the results of the watching brief (DANA-WB-14) and the excavation of Phase Three may improve our understanding of this transitional period at Aylesham.

5.7 The Medieval phase on site was only present toward the extreme west of the development in the form of two parallel and shallow linear features.

5.8 During the Post-Medieval period however, the development site experienced small scale quarrying. A total of five quarries, probably for flint, were present and they were scattered across the landscape.

5.9 The excavation implies that activity on the site ceased until the village of Aylesham was built in the 1920s and became part of the defensive line, based on the railway line between Canterbury and Dover during the early years of World War Two. The development site overlooked this defensive position and to deter enemy gliders from landing behind these defenses, a series of inter-connecting ditches were dug across the site. After the war, the site was returned to arable farming.

6.0 Methodology

6.1. The Archaeological Investigations were conducted in accordance with the Archaeological Specification compiled by SWAT Archaeology 'Specification for an Archaeological Investigation at Aylesham Village Expansion, Hill Crescent, Aylesham, Dover, Kent'

6.2 The works comprised the close inspection and recording of the area stripped without archaeological supervision, including the inspection of subsoil and natural deposits for archaeological features and finds. All fieldwork was conducted in accordance with the methodology set out in the WSI (SWAT Archaeology 2021) and carried out in compliance with the standards outlined in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Standards Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief (CIfA 2017).

6.3. All areas of excavation were subsequently closely examined with the intention of recording exposed archaeological features which included two ring ditches and in between the exposed remains of a barrel jar of Middle to Late Bronze Age date of about 1550 BC to 1150 BC.

6.4. All site work and reinstatement (Plates 1-7) were carried out under the constant supervision of an experienced archaeologist (Dr Paul Wilkinson MCIfA).

6.5 Recording

6.5.1 A complete drawn record comprising both plans and sections, drawn to appropriate scales (1:20 for plans, 1:10 for sections) was undertaken. Where appropriate, the plans and sections were annotated with coordinates and aOD heights and form part of the site archive.

6.5.2 Photographs were to be taken as appropriate providing a record of excavated features and deposits but no features or archaeological deposits were revealed. The record also includes images of the Site overall. The photographic record comprises digital photography. A photographic register of all photographs taken is contained within the project archive.

6.5.3 A single context recording system was used to record the deposits. A full list is presented in Table 2 below. Layers and fills are identified in this report thus (100), whilst the cut of any features is shown [100]. Context numbers were assigned to all deposits for recording purposes.

6.5.4 The stratigraphic sequence recorded during the archaeological works remained relatively consistent across all areas of the site, comprising areas of topsoil mixed with hardcore in places overlaying the natural geology of chalk.

6.5.5 The Site Archive, which will include; paper records, photographic records, graphics and digital data has been prepared following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; ClfA 2017). All archive elements will be marked with the site/accession code, and a full index will be prepared. The physical archive comprises 1 file/document case of paper records & A4 graphics and CD for photo archive.

7.0 Results

7.1 Two ring ditches had been exposed by the initial strip and an in-between pot truncated by the same phase of works. Both ring ditches had a diameter of 5.30m and the ring ditch measured about 71cm (Figures 2, 3). Both ring ditches were not sectioned or excavated but recorded (Plates 4, 5).

7.2 The truncated pot measured 24cm in width and 29cm in depth with no internal fill and eleven sherds of flint tempered pottery were retrieved (Plate2).

7.3 They comprised one large rim sherd, two conjoining sherds from a medium sized fragment of base and the rest being small and medium sized body sherds. Only one body sherd is decorated, this a small fragment with a single (remaining) horizontal row of deep fingertip impressions on the exterior. The large rim is decorated similarly on the exterior, with two spaced horizontal rows of deep fingertip impressions, one immediately below the rim, the other a short distance below. The rim itself has an uneven flat top with a slight overhang on the exterior and is plain. This large sherd shows a gently convex vertical profile.

7.4 All of the sherds likely derive from a single barrel jar of Middle to Mid to Late Bronze Age date, 1550 to 1150 BC. They are fairly fresh and probably context-contemporary. Vessels of similar form and decoration are well known and they are relatively commonly found and reported on in East Kent (Paul Hart Pottery Report dated 28.05.2021).

8.0 Discussion

The development site is in an area of high archaeological potential and archaeology was revealed on this area of the development site during the topsoil strip by contractors and the archaeology recognised by the Barratt's management team.

8.1 A follow-on site meeting with SWAT Archaeology and Ben Found KCC Heritage agreed a way forward of preservation in situ of the two exposed ring ditches, excavation of the damaged pot and an archaeological survey of the exposed area and recording of any additional archaeological features of which there were none.

8.2. Reinstatement of the ring ditch area was to be with an initial layer of membrane topped by sifted topsoil and a report issued which identifies the location of the two ring ditches so that they can be preserved in situ in perpetuity (Plates 6, 7).

9.0 Conclusion

The Archaeological Investigation has fulfilled the primary aims and objectives of the SWAT Archaeological Specification.

10.0 Acknowledgments

SWAT Archaeology would like to thank the landowner/developer for commissioning the project. Fieldwork was undertaken and report written by Dr Paul Wilkinson MCIfA.

11.0 REFERENCES

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2014, updated 1st October 2020. *Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives.*

SMA 1993. *Selection, Retention and Dispersal of Archaeological Collections*, Society of Museum Archaeologists.

SWAT Archaeology. *Specification for an archaeological Investigation at Aylesham Village Expansion, Hill Crescent, Aylesham, Dover, Kent*

Appendix 1 HER Summary Form

Site Name: Development of land at Hill Crescent, Aylesham, Dover, Kent

SWAT Site Code: AYL/SMS/21

Site Address: As above

Summary:

Swale and Thames Survey Company (SWAT) carried out Archaeological Monitoring on the development site above. The site has planning permission for development whereby the Senior KCC Archaeological Officer requested that Archaeological Investigation of a stripped area be undertaken and recording of two ring ditches prior to preservation in situ.

The Archaeological Monitoring consisted of site attendance and supervision which encountered no additional buried archaeological features or artefacts.

District/Unitary: Dover District Council

Period(s):

NGR (centre of site to eight figures) 622947 152166

Type of Archaeological work: Archaeological Watching Brief

Date of recording: April 2021

Unit undertaking recording: Swale and Thames Survey Company (SWAT. Archaeology)

Geology: Bedrock geology is Chalk

Title and author of accompanying report: Wilkinson P. (2021) Archaeological Investigation at Aylesham Village Expansion, Hill Crescent, Aylesham, Dover, Kent

Summary of fieldwork results (begin with earliest period first, add NGRs where appropriate)

See above

Location of archive/finds: SWAT. Archaeology. Graveney Rd, Faversham, Kent. ME13 8UP

Plates



Plate 1. View of the site (looking north)



Plate 2. View of pot as found



Plate 3. View of site (looking NNE)



Plate 4. View of the two ring ditches



Plate 5. View of the NE ring ditch



Plate 6. View of membrane cover (looking west)



Plate 7. View of topsoil and chalk cover (looking west)

Figure 1

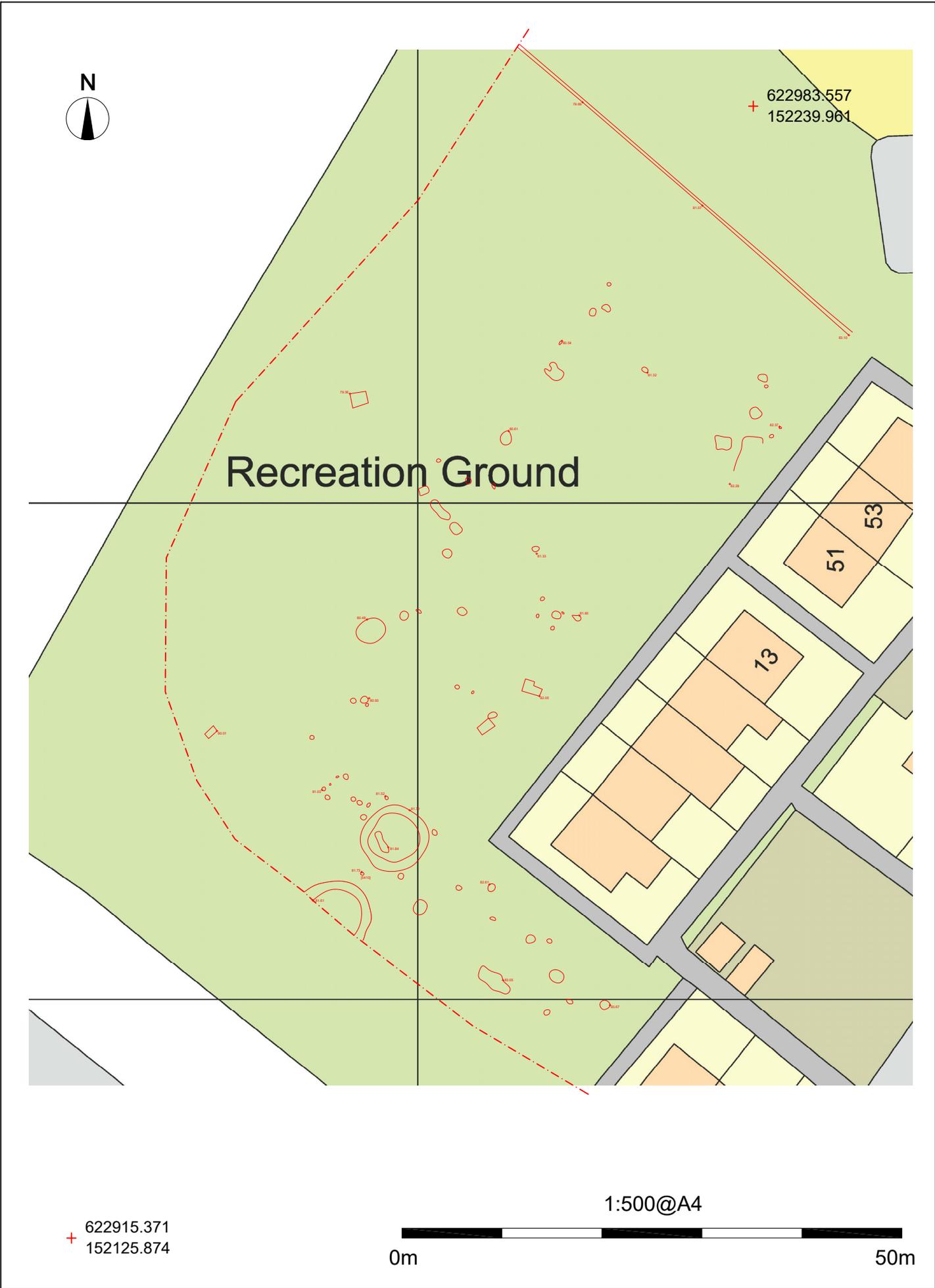


Figure 2. Proposed planting

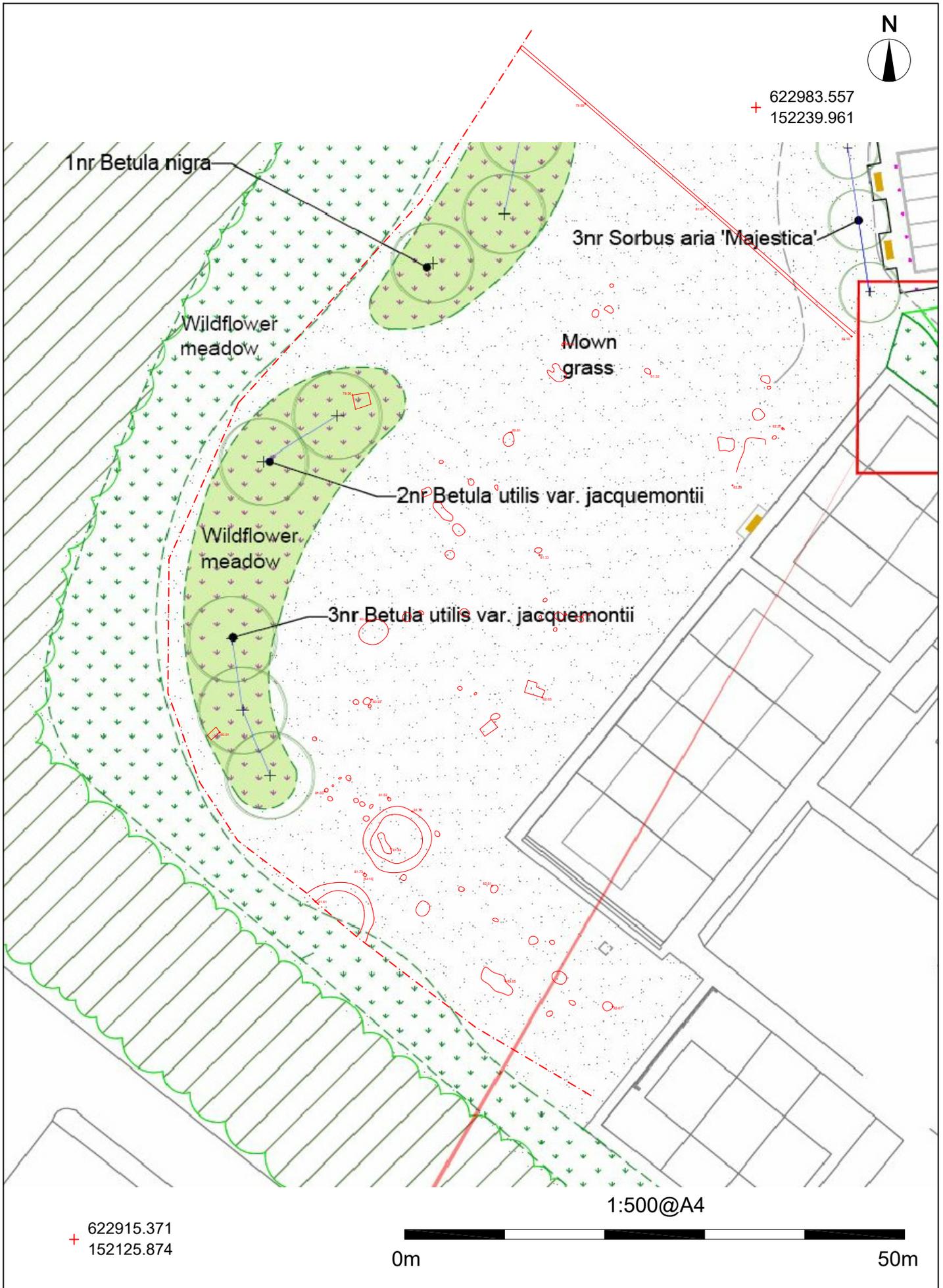


Figure3.
Detail of two ring ditches and
prehistoric pot [5410]

