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**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION OF A PROPOSED
RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT ON LAND AT WAYSIDE FARM,
NURSTEED ROAD, DEVIZES, WILTSHIRE (SU 016 603)**

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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION OF A PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT ON LAND AT WAYSIDE FARM, NURSTEED ROAD, DEVIZES, WILTSHIRE (SU 016603)³

1. SUMMARY

An archaeological field evaluation of a proposed residential development on land adjacent to Wayside Farm Devizes (SU 016 603), was carried out by AC archaeology during December 1998. The site is located to the southeast of Devizes adjacent to Wayside Farm on the outskirts of the now expanded town and covers approximately 7.2 hectares.

Work initially comprised the machine-excavation of 15 no. x 30m trenches each 2.00m wide, followed by the excavation of a further 90m² of contingency trenching as a result of the presence in the western portion of the site of extensive evidence for Romano-British occupation. This comprised stone structures, possibly ovens, and cut features, largely concentrated in the northern portion of this zone, and evidence for a buried soil horizon containing significant quantities of Romano-British artefacts. The presence of extensive remains resulted in only limited hand-excavation, but quantities of artefacts were recovered including both locally-produced and traded pottery, metalwork, worked stone and animal bone. This evidence indicates that settlement activity is likely to date to the latter part of the Roman occupation and a date centred on AD 350 would not seem inappropriate. However, all finds were recovered from the upper levels of deposits and features, and it therefore cannot be presumed that earlier or more prolonged occupation is not also present on the site.

The evaluation results suggest limits to the main area of activity, with subsoil features and finds absent from the eastern parts of the area. It can be anticipated that Romano-British extends across c. 2.80 hectares of the western portion of the site, with more intensive settlement evidence likely to be in the northern part of this area, within a zone of c. 0.80 hectares.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 This report presents the results from an archaeological field evaluation of land at Wayside Farm, Nursteed Road, Devizes, Wiltshire (SU 016 603). The work was commissioned by Bryant Homes South West Ltd, prospective developers of the site, and carried out by AC archaeology during December 1998 resulting from a requirement by North Kennet Wiltshire District Council acting on the advice of the Archaeology Service Wiltshire County Council. The aim of the investigation was to identify the presence or absence of archaeological features or deposits on the site by the least destructive means and to determine their date, nature, function and degree of survival, thus allowing an informed planning decision to be made.

2.2 The site is located to the southeast of Devizes adjacent to Wayside Farm on the outskirts of the now expanded town (Fig. 1). The area of proposed development covers approximately 7.2 hectares which incorporates a large field in the northern zone and part of a second field to the south. The current land-use for both fields is pasture, the topography generally flat but sloping very gently to the south. There are surface traces of probable north to south aligned ridge and furrow within both fields. The site is bounded to the north by the Nursteed

industrial estate, to the east is the A342 Devizes to Andover road, to the south is open farmland and the western boundary to the development is formed by a prominent linear bank of a now dismantled railway. The site lies on Upper Greensand at around 120mOD.

2.3 There are no records of previous archaeological discoveries on the site, but a number of artefacts have been discovered close by. These include several finds of Romano-British material to the north and west of the site (including coins, pottery, box flue tile and several burials) and two Neolithic flint axes, also found to the north of the presently proposed development area.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 The evaluation was carried out to a brief provided by the Wiltshire County Archaeology Service and in accordance with *Standards for Archaeological Assessment and Field Evaluation in Wiltshire* (Archaeology Service, Wiltshire County Council, 1995).

3.2 The work initially comprised the machine-excavation of fifteen trenches, their positions agreed prior to commencement of site works with the Wiltshire County Archaeology Service. Each trench was 30m in length and generally had a constant width of 2.00m. A contingency of 90m² of trenching was set aside in order to clarify any areas of archaeological interest. This additional trenching was carried out due to the presence of extensive Romano-British deposits in the western portion of the site. The position of these new trenches was agreed after consultation with Wiltshire County Archaeology Service.

3.3 Topsoil and overburden considered to be of modern date was removed by mechanical excavator under constant archaeological supervision, onto the top of the natural subsoil or intact archaeological deposits. Clarity of features, where present, was generally good, although the poor weather conditions prevalent during site works necessitated full hand-cleaning of all trenches.

3.4 The site was recorded in accordance with AC *archaeology's* standard recording system. Trench plans were produced at 1:20 and 1:50, with sections of features and trenches drawn at 1:10 or 1:20 dependant on level of detail required. A colour transparency and monochrome photographic record was also taken. All site levels shown on Figs. 3, 4 and 5 relate to Ordnance Datum.

3.5 The archive has been prepared using the site code AC 513.

4. RESULTS

The location of all trenches is shown on Fig. 2 and relevant detailed plans and sections included as Figs. 3 and 4.

The nature and character of features and deposits on the site means it is possible to describe the results under the following sub-headings:

- i) negative trenches (although some contained modern field-drains);
- ii) trenches containing Romano-British cut features;

iii) trenches containing Romano-British buried soil horizon;

iv) trenches containing archaeological features of uncertain date.

4.1 Negative trenches

Trenches containing largely negative evidence for archaeological activity were principally concentrated in the eastern zone of the site. There were, however, field-drains present in some trenches, with pottery of late 18th- to early 19th-century date recovered from an excavated example in Trench 4. Despite detailed scanning of all spoilheaps adjacent to the negative trenches, there was a complete absence of other artefacts either of modern or earlier date.

Trench 1

This trench had plan dimensions of 30 x 2.00m and was orientated on an approximate E-W axis on level ground towards the W corner of the site. Machine-excavation removed 350mm of topsoil and 300mm of subsoil. These comprised a soft, dark brown silty sand (100) and a olive green / brown silty sand with coarse components of greensand fragments (101). Natural subsoil (102) comprised compact greensand with patches of brown sandy clay at a depth of 650mm below ground surface.

Trench 4

This trench had plan dimensions of 30 x 2.00m and was orientated on an approximate NE-SW axis on level ground towards the northern boundary of the site. Machine-excavation removed 500mm of topsoil and 500mm of subsoil. These comprised a soft, dark brown silty sand (400) and a greenish brown silty sand with coarse components of greensand fragments and unworked rolled flint (401). Natural subsoil (402) comprised a soft green / brown sand at a maximum depth of 1.00m below ground surface. Three land drains were identified at this level, one of which was investigated and contained a body sherd from an undiagnostic vessel with feathered slip decoration. This piece is probably late 18th - or early 19th-century date.

Trench 6

This trench had plan dimensions of 30 x 2.00m and was orientated on an approximate N-S axis on level ground towards the NE corner of the site. Machine-excavation removed 400mm of topsoil and 200mm of subsoil. These comprised a dark brown clayey sandy silt (600) and a dark green / brown clayey sand with coarse components of greensand fragments and unworked rolled flint (601). Natural subsoil (602) comprised compact mixed yellow-brown / olive green clay and sand at a depth of 600mm below ground surface.

Trench 8

This trench had plan dimensions of 30 x 2.00m and was orientated on an approximate NE-SW axis on level ground in the western portion of the site. Machine-excavation removed 350mm of topsoil and 250mm of subsoil. These comprised dark brown clayey sandy silt (800) and a dark green / brown silty sand with coarse components of greensand fragments (801). Natural subsoil (802) comprised compact slightly mixed olive-green sand and clay at a depth of 600mm below ground surface. Although this trench was located within close proximity to other trenches containing Romano-British cut features and/or the Romano-British buried soil horizon, archaeological features and artefacts were completely absent in this trench.

Trench 9

This trench had plan dimensions of 30 x 2.00m and was orientated on a approximate NE-SW axis on level ground positioned towards the centre of the site. Machine-excavation removed 350mm of topsoil and 300mm of subsoil. These comprised dark brown clayey sandy silt (900) and a greenish brown silty sand with coarse components of greensand fragments and rolled flint (901). Natural subsoil (902) comprised soft greensand at a depth of 650mm below ground surface. Two field-drains were present at this level, but remained unexcavated.

Trench 10

This trench had plan dimensions of 30 x 2.00m and was orientated on an approximate E-W axis on level ground towards the eastern field boundary. Machine-excavation removed 400mm of topsoil and 200mm of subsoil. These comprised a dark brown sandy clay silt (1000) and a greenish-brown silty clay and sand with coarse components of greensand fragments and rolled flint (1001). Natural subsoil (1002) comprised compact yellowish-brown to olive green sand and clay at a depth of 600mm below ground surface.

Trench 13

This trench had plan dimensions of 30 x 2.00m and was orientated on an approximate NW-SE axis on level ground towards the northern boundary of the southern field. Machine-excavation removed 500mm of topsoil and 250mm of subsoil. These comprised a dark brown sandy clay silt (1300) and a dark greenish-brown mixed silty sand and clay with coarse components of greensand fragments (1301). Natural subsoil (1302) comprised compact greenish-brown sand and clay at a depth of 750mm below ground surface.

Trench 14.

This trench had plan dimensions of 30 x 2.00m and was orientated on an approximate NE-SW axis on level ground adjacent to the southern boundary of the site. Machine-excavation removed 400mm of topsoil and 250mm of subsoil. These comprised a dark brown sandy clay silt (1400) and a dark greenish-brown mixed silty sand and clay with coarse components of greensand fragments (1401). Natural subsoil (1402) comprised quite compact green / brown sand and clay at a depth of 650mm below ground surface.

Trench 16

This was an additional trench located in the northern central portion of the site. It was positioned across a slightly raised linear bank aligned approximately N-S (Fig. 5). This trench had plan dimensions of 10 x 2.00m and was orientated approximately E-W. Machine-excavation removed 400mm of topsoil, comprising a dark brown sandy clay silt and a subsoil of 250mm thickness onto a natural subsoil composed of a green clayey sand. There were no sub-surface features present in the trench either separate from or associated with the linear raised bank.

4.2 Trenches containing Romano-British cut features

Archaeological activity of Romano-British date was largely concentrated in the north-western portion of the site, although limited activity was also present to the south in Trench 12. Detailed plans and sections, where applicable, are included as Fig. 3. The features present in the western zone are all indicative of settlement activity.

Trench 2

This trench had plan dimensions of 30 x 2.00m subsequently extended with a further area 6 x 2.40m at its E end. It was orientated on an approximate E-W axis on level but slightly raised ground towards the northern boundary of the site. Machine-excavation removed 350mm of topsoil and up to 200mm of subsoil. These comprised a soft, brown silty sand (200) and a light / pale brown silty sand (201), with rare coarse components. Layer (201) sealed all archaeological features in Trench 2 but appeared to be localised in its extent, not appearing in nearby Trenches 8, 17 and 18 to the south. Significant quantities of Romano-British pottery suggest a Romano-British date for its formation or deposition. A detailed plan and sections for this trench are included on Fig. 3 a-c.

Below layer (201) a surviving buried soil horizon was present throughout the trench. This comprised up to 300mm of compact blackish-brown sandy silt, slightly mottled in appearance with occasional small coarse components of greensand and charcoal flecks (202). A number of archaeological features appeared to be cut from this level. Feature 204 consisted of a linear / sub-oval stone construction measuring approximately 3.00m in length x 1.30m in width at its E end and 900mm in width at its W end. Its construction comprised principally unbonded sandstone pieces / blocks and occasional chalk pieces up to 300mm in size, most of which appeared burnt or scorched. The E end of this structure appeared to be *in situ*, unlike the W end which appeared disturbed or collapsed. As only minimal cleaning was carried out over F204, its function was not clear, but it could be considered to be a furnace

or oven. Within close proximity to F204 and similar in appearance, a smaller concentration of stone was present (F205). This comprised sandstone and chalk pieces up to 200mm in size most of which were also burnt and scorched. Both features contained associated later Romano-British pottery.

Further to the west a deposit of blackish-brown sandy-silt was present (206) covering an area of approximately 8.00m within the trench. A hand-dug slot [209] measuring 1.00m x 2.00m was excavated through it to a depth of 100mm onto a concentration of stone and animal bone (context 208). This possible feature (extent not fully exposed) comprised greensand and chalk pieces including one burnt, up to 250mm in size as well as four bovine lower jaw bones, possibly deliberately placed. Spread (206) could be considered as part of a midden as frequent waste debris was present partly exposed on its surface consisting principally of animal bone (not collected).

One possible further feature (F207) remained unexcavated and was present to the W of deposit (206). Although its edges were unclear, it appeared on an approximate N-S alignment with a width of approximately 1.70m and composed of a mid to dark brown sandy silt with rare small coarse components of greensand and charcoal flecks. This feature is a probable ditch.

One hand-excavated slot measuring 700mm in width was excavated across the far E end of Trench 2 to confirm the sequence of deposits (200) (201) (202) and natural subsoil (203), a compact dark greenish brown silty-sand. This sequence is reproduced as Fig. 3c.

Trench 3

This trench had plan dimensions of 30 x 2.00m and was orientated on an approximate NE-SW axis on level but slightly raised ground towards the northern boundary of the field. Machine-excavation removed on average 350mm of topsoil and up to 200mm of subsoil. These were composed of a soft, brown sandy silt (300) and a light / pale brown silty sand (301), with rare or no coarse components. Detailed plans and sections of this trench are included as Fig. 3 d-f. A single, modern field drain was also present and is shown on plan but is not described below.

Below layer (301) a buried soil horizon was present surviving at the NE end of the trench only. This comprised an average of 300mm of a dark mixed brown/grey/green silty clay with sparse coarse components of small gravels and charcoal flecks (314). Layer (314) appeared to be sealing a NW-SE aligned ditch (F304), partly removed during machining as a result of its similarity to overlying layer (314). Ditch F304 had a maximum width of 2.00m and comprised a dark greenish-grey silty sand with moderate coarse components of small gravels and charcoal flecks. This feature was not excavated, but single sherd of Romano-British pottery was retrieved from its surface. Other features were present immediately below subsoil layer (301) and are described below in sequence from NE to SW.

F306 and F313 were two parallel and intercutting linear features on an approximate N to S alignment. F306 was cut by F313 and had a visible width of c. 2.00m and depth of 350mm, the profile on its E edge being moderately sloping onto a flat base. This ditch contained two fills, the upper fill (305) composed of a compact dark grey clay containing sparse charcoal to a maximum depth of 170mm. The lower fill (311) was composed of a friable greyish-green sandy silt containing occasional small gravel with a maximum depth of 300mm. Quantities of Romano-British pottery were recovered from both fills. F313 was located on the W side of F306, and comprised a probable gully with dimensions of 500mm width and 250mm depth, the profile showing as steep-sloping rounded edges and a concave base. The fill (312) was composed of a mottled greenish-grey clayey silty sand containing rare charcoal flecks. Although no artefacts were recovered from this feature the nature and composition of the fill indicates a likely Romano-British date.

F307, a probable circular pit, was located immediately to the SW of F313, continuing under the NW trench edge. The feature was not excavated, but had a visible diameter of 600mm and was composed of a dark greenish brown sandy silt. No artefacts were recovered.

F308 was again unexcavated, but - based on the nature of its fill - its archaeological origin is less certain than other features within the trench. It is a possible ditch, irregular in width and slightly curving, the fill composed of a dark greenish-brown sandy silt containing rare charcoal flecks. No artefacts were recovered.

F310 remained unexcavated and comprised a probable circular, small clay-lined pit continuing beyond the SE trench edge. Its probable diameter was 450mm and was composed of a c. 20mm outer ring of

pale yellow clay and a central fill of dark reddish-brown silty clay containing occasional charcoal. No artefacts were recovered from the exposed surface.

F303 was circular and fully exposed in plan, comprising a probable pit with diameter of 800mm composed of a very dark grey/black friable clayey silt, containing very frequent charcoal and occasional fired clay fragments. The pit remained unexcavated, although a single piece of Romano-British pottery was recovered from the exposed surface and quantities of animal bone were also partly visible but not collected.

F309 was a probable NW to SE aligned ditch located towards the NE end of the trench. The feature remained unexcavated and its exposed width was 1.40m, composed of mid greyish-brown sandy silt containing rare charcoal flecks. Pottery of Romano-British date was recovered from the exposed surface of the ditch.

Trench 11

This trench had plan dimensions of 30 x 2.00m and was orientated on an approximate E-W axis on level ground positioned in the central western portion of the site. Machine-excavation removed 200mm of dark brown clayey sandy silt topsoil (1100) and 100mm of greenish-brown silty sand subsoil (1101) containing coarse components of greensand fragments and unworked but rolled flint. This layer was overlying the Romano-British buried subsoil horizon, in this case composed of a greyish-green silty sand with a thickness of 200mm. The layer was wholly removed by machine in order to determine whether a ditch (F1204) identified in Trench 12 continued its alignment and crossed through this trench. A ditch was identified (F1105, Fig. 3g), which may represent a continuation, but the approximate N-S alignment is slightly offset. F1105 had an exposed width of 1.80m and upper fill composed of dark greenish-brown, firm silty sand. Although this fill is different to the upper fill of the ditch identified in Trench 12, it is not uncommon for the composition of ditch fills to vary over distance. There were no artefacts recovered from the exposed surface of the ditch. It can be confirmed that F1105 was sealed by context 1102 and was cutting natural subsoil (1103).

Trench 12

This trench had plan dimensions of 30 x 2.00m and was orientated on an approximate NW-SE axis on level ground positioned in the western portion of the southern field. Machine-excavation removed 200mm of dark brown clayey sandy silt topsoil (1200) and 250mm of greenish-brown silty sand subsoil (1201) devoid of coarse components. This layer was directly overlying natural subsoil, and at this level a N-S aligned ditch (F1204) was present (Fig. 3h). This ditch had a surface width of 2.10m and excavated depth of 650mm. The profile showed as moderately sloping grading into a flat base. The ditch contained two fills; the upper fill (1202) composed of a dark greyish-brown, pliable clayey sand containing rare small sandstone fragments with a thickness of 200mm; and, the lower fill (1203), composed of a greenish-brown compact clayey sand, again containing rare small sandstone fragments. This fill had a thickness of 450mm. Both fills contained significant quantities of Romano-British artefacts, including pottery, iron nails and iron slag. This ditch possibly continued into Trench 11 as F1105 (see above). The isolated nature of the ditch in both trenches, suggests that it may represent a ditch - possibly part of a field system - away from the main settlement zone.

4.3 Trenches containing Romano-British buried soil horizon

Other trenches in the western portion of the site which although did not contain exposed surface evidence for cut features did, however, contain what has been interpreted as a buried soil horizon of Romano-British date. The function of this layer is unclear, but it may represent an occupational / post-occupational soil horizon. Within Trenches 2 and 3 (see above) a layer with similar characteristics can be shown to be both sealing and cut by archaeological features of Romano-British date. This layer contained significant quantities of artefacts in most trenches where present, their occurrence described individually by trench. The presence of this layer in all trenches is shown on Fig. 5.

Trenches 2 and 3

The presence and extent of this buried soil horizon in these trenches is described above in section 4.2 and shown on Fig. 3 a, b, c, d, f and Fig. 5. The relevant contexts are (202) for Trench 2 and (314) in Trench 3. Pottery and iron nails of Romano-British date were recovered from context 202, although no artefacts were identified within context 314.

Trench 7

This trench had plan dimensions of 30 x 2.00m and was orientated on an approximate N-S axis on level but slightly raised ground in the western portion of the site. Machine-excavation removed 400mm of dark greenish-brown sandy silt topsoil directly onto the Romano-British buried soil horizon (701). This layer was composed of a mixed very dark greenish-brown / greyish-brown soft sandy silt containing frequent charcoal flecks and fragment and pockets of fired clay / daub. This layer was partly removed by machine (although not bottomed) revealing a minimum thickness of 150mm. The layer was present for a distance of 17m in the northern half of the trench, with a natural subsoil (702), composed of an olive-green sand, in the remaining southern half. In this location there was no evidence for cut archaeological features. Context 701 contained large quantities of Romano-British pottery, many of which are conjoining sherds from the same vessel. A single piece of flue tile, with linear comb incisions, was also recovered.

Trench 11

The presence, extent and composition of the Romano-British buried soil horizon in this trench is described above in section 4.2 and shown on Fig. 5. The relevant context is (1102), which was sealing probable ditch F1105 and again contained large quantities of Romano-British pottery and also two pieces of worked flint. Layer 1102 was removed wholly by machine (average thickness of 200mm) in order to confirm its position overlying ditch F1105, which may represent a continuation of ditch F1204 in Trench 12 (see above).

Trenches 17 and 18

The extent of the Romano-British buried soil horizon in these trenches is shown on Fig. 5. Both these trenches were part of the contingency allowance following the finding of significant levels of archaeological activity. Their locations were determined in consultation with the County Archaeological Officer's representative. The two trenches formed a "T" arrangement in plan, with Trench 17 aligned approximately NE - SW and Trench 18 positioned to this trench at right angles. Trench 17 had plan dimensions of 22.50m x 2.00m and Trench 18 dimensions of 14.30 x 2.00m. Both trenches contained an identical layer sequence, comprising 400mm of dark greenish-brown sandy silt topsoil (1700 and 1800) directly onto the Romano-British buried soil horizon (1702 and 1802) composed of a mixed very dark greenish-brown / greyish-brown soft sandy silt containing occasional charcoal flecks and rare small red sandstone fragments. A small sondage was hand-excavated through this layer at its SW extent revealing a very gradual, flat profile and a maximum thickness at this end of 100mm, but obviously sloping to a greater thickness to the NE. Artefacts from this layer comprised significant quantities of Romano-British pottery, a corroded copper alloy coin (SF3) and quantities of animal bone. Natural subsoil, composed of an olive-green sand was present at the SW end of Trench 17 and the SE end of Trench 18.

4.4 Trenches containing archaeological features of uncertain date

Trench 5

This trench had plan dimensions of 30 x 2.00m and was orientated on an approximate NW-SE axis on level ground towards the northern boundary of the site. Machine-excavation removed 400mm of topsoil and 100mm of subsoil. These comprised a soft, dark brown silty sand (500) and a greenish-brown silty sand with coarse components of greensand fragments and unworked rolled flint (501). Natural subsoil (502) comprised a soft greenish-brown sand at a maximum depth of 500mm below ground surface. In the southern portion of the trench, a line of three postholes on a N-S alignment was identified. A detailed plan showing the position of the postholes and sections of all features are included as Fig. 4.

F503, F505 and F507 were all approximately circular in plan with diameters between 250 and 300mm and depths of 150 to 300mm. F507 had a rounded profile and concave base, whereas the remaining post holes were more angular with steep sides and a flat base. All fills were composed of dark greenish-brown, soft silty sands containing rare gravel and charcoal flecks. A single iron nail was recovered from context 508, fill of F507, which has a square profile and rectangular head. Although this find could conceivably be of Romano-British date, its lack of abrasion coupled with the fill composition of postholes, may indicate that these features are likely to date to more recent times.

5. THE FINDS

A quantification of all finds is included in Table 1 above. The site contained large quantities of artefacts, principally in trenches where Romano-British deposits and features were present.

Trench	Context	Type	Romano-British pottery		Post-medieval pottery		Worked stone		Animal bone		Tile		Fe objects		Special Finds/ Comments
			No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	
2	201	occupation layer	18	188	1	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	202	buried soil	7	172	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	42	2 x iron nails
	204	stone structure	16	210	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	24	2 x iron nails
	205	stone structure	16	174	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	206	occupation spread	7	128	0	0	1	40	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	207	unexcavated ditch	2	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	209	hand-dug slot through (206)	15	334	0	0	1	354	0	0	0	0	2	16	SF1 quern frag; 1 x iron nail; SF2 iron pin
3	303	unexcavated pit	1	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	304	unexcavated ditch	1	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	305	upper fill of ditch	15	110	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	309	unexcavated ditch	4	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	311	lower fill of ditch	6	32	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
4	405	field-drain	1	10	1	48	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
5	508	posthole	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	10	1 x iron nail
7	701	buried soil	18	744	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	180	1	36	1 x iron nail
11	1102	buried soil	12	288	0	0	2	114	0	0	0	0	0	0	
12	1202	upper fill of ditch	23	136	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	60	5 x iron nails
	1203	lower fill of ditch	10	136	0	0	1	14	0	0	1	376	2	102	1 x iron nail; 1 x iron slag
17	1702	buried soil	20	240	0	0	0	0	7	74	1	38	1	6	SF3 cu alloy coin, bone includes 1 x ?human
18	1802	buried soil	14	116	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	442	1	24	SF4 iron buckle
TOTALS			206	3106	2	60	5	522	7	74	5	1036	17	320	4 Special Finds

Table 1 : Finds Quantification by no. and wt. in grams

5.1 The Pottery

The pottery has been quantified (see Table 1) and scanned to assess its composition and diagnostic elements. No formal fabric analysis has been carried out, but for the purposes of assessment the material has been assigned to broadly-defined groups. Quantification within these groups has been done by means of sherd count; it is likely that similar proportions would have been obtained if sherd weight had been used, but in terms of the numbers of vessels present it is subjectively considered that the colour-coated wares (30% by sherd count) and the black-burnished fabrics (26% by sherd count) may be over-represented - both groups include comparatively large numbers of sherds from the same context which are evidently from the same vessel.

Other than one small, presumed intrusive glazed late- or post-medieval sherd (Trench 2 context 201) and a post-medieval feathered-slip sherd from a modern context (Trench 4 context 405) all of the pottery recovered was of Roman date. The assemblage contains a high proportion of fine traded wares and, where diagnostic or recognisable elements are present, would appear to be of AD 3rd / 4th-century or later date.

Seven broad fabric groups have been recognised:

1. Body sherds of mortaria, the majority in orange micaceous sandy fabrics, including at least one externally red colour-coated vessel from Trench 12 context 1203. There is also one white-ware mortarium sherd from Trench 18 context 1802. No precise forms can be reconstructed from the fragments recovered. The fabrics would be consistent with Oxford Ware products. This fabric group comprises 3% of the assemblage by sherd count.
2. Abraded red colour-coated sherds in a (usually) fine and micaceous sandy fabric, probably Oxford Ware. No reconstructable vessel profiles and few rims are present, but forms include thin-walled, round-bodied bowls: examples with plain rims from Trench 3 context 304, Trench 12 context 1203 and Trench 17 context 1702; an example with a footring base from Trench 2 context 209. From Trench 2 context 207 is a fragmentary sherd with an applied rose motif, recognisable as an Oxford Ware item dating to post-AD 350 (M. Corney *pers comm*). This fabric group comprises 30% of the assemblage by sherd count.
3. Other colour coated sherds, usually with a greyish colour coat (occasionally dark red) over buff-coloured non-micaceous fine sandy fabrics from contexts within Trenches 2, 3, 12 and 18. Where forms are evident, the vessels represented are invariably beakers of indeterminate type (no indented body sherds were noted). It is possible that these sherds are from more than one production centre (Oxford or New Forest kilns, or elsewhere). This fabric group comprises 7% of the assemblage by sherd count.
4. Probable Savernake greyware sherds, principally from Trench 2 with definite other examples being confined to single sherds from Trenches 3 and 12. However, it is likely that at least some of the sherds assigned to the miscellaneous orange or grey sandy ware categories (below) are also Savernake products. Few vessel forms can be determined, the majority of sherds being plain body or base angles. This fabric group comprises 8% of the assemblage by sherd count.
5. Dark grey or black medium sandy wares, presumed to be of comparatively local origin but often externally burnished in imitation of Dorset Black-Burnished Ware (BB1). Forms present include copies of BB1 types: a substantial portion of a drop-flange bowl (170mm diameter, 73mm height) of probable AD 3rd- or 4th-century date from Trench 7 context 701; a plain-rimmed bowl of probable AD late 2nd- or 3rd-century date from Trench 2 context 206. No decorated sherds are present. This fabric group comprises 26% of the assemblage by sherd count.

6. Miscellaneous greyware sherds in a variety of medium to coarse sandy fabrics. It is probable that the group includes unrecognised examples of Savernake Ware. Many of the sherds are fragmentary, but it is probable that jars are the major form represented. This fabric group comprises 9% of the assemblage by sherd count.
7. Miscellaneous medium, coarse and very coarse orange sandy wares. Although typically not micaceous and significantly more coarse than the orange colour coats, it is possible that further examples of abraded colour-coated wares are present, unrecognised within this group. This fabric group comprises 17% of the assemblage by sherd count.

5.2 The Metalwork

A total of 17 pieces of metalwork was recovered, of which 13 were iron nails. Some nails were badly corroded and it was therefore not possible to obtain dimensions. This is indicated where applicable. Other metal finds are described individually. In addition to the objects described below, an iron slag lump was recovered from Romano-British buried soil horizon context 1203 in Trench 12.

SF2 : iron pin in good condition, recovered from Romano-British context 209 in Trench 2
length 85mm
head diameter 8mm
eye diameter 3mm

SF3 : cu alloy coin, badly corroded, recovered from Romano-British buried soil horizon 1702 in Trench 17, obverse and reverse not identifiable
diameter 23mm
thickness 2mm

SF4 : iron buckle in poor condition, recovered from Romano-British buried soil horizon 1802 in Trench 18; too poorly corroded to obtain dimensions

Fe nails :

context 202 - 2 x iron nails
(i) too badly corroded to obtain dimensions
(ii) round-headed
length 63mm head dia. 12mm

context 204 - 2 x iron nails, both round-headed
(i) length 40mm head dia. 13mm
(ii) length 67mm head dia. 20mm

context 209 - 1 x iron round-headed nail
length 57mm head dia. 14mm

context 508 - 1 x iron square-headed nail
length 650mm head 10mm²

context 701 - 1 x iron round-headed nail
length 110mm head dia. 20mm

context 1202 - 6 x iron nails, all too poorly corroded to obtain dimensions

5.3 The Building Material

There were three pieces of ceramic tile recovered from Romano-British buried soil contexts. These comprise large fragments of linear-combed incised flue tile and a small fragment of tegula roof tile. Also present was a sandstone roof tile fragment from context 1203 in Trench 12

5.4 Worked Stone and Stone Objects

This material comprised four pieces of worked flint which are itemised in Table 1. All derive from a chalk source and comprise three broad flakes and a large broad end scraper on a primary flake. The material shows little cortex and is considered to be later prehistoric, present residually in Romano-British contexts. SF1, a fragment of saddle quern in granite was recovered from context 209 in Trench 2.

5.5 The Bone

Bone was present in many features, but its location within clearly defined features which remained unexcavated meant much of it was not collected. The most notable occurrence was in F208, a possible feature or spread of indeterminate function, which contained four closely-set bovine lower jaw bones, possibly deliberately placed. Bone which was recovered comprised many small and undiagnostic fragments from buried soil horizon 1702 in Trench 17, and a possible human ball-joint from the head of a femur from the same context.

6. THE EXTENT OF SETTLEMENT ACTIVITY

6.1 Section 4 of this report established that Romano-British activity on the site comprises two distinct elements: first, trenches containing Romano-British cut features; and, secondly, trenches containing a Romano-British buried soil horizon containing large quantities of essentially domestic artefacts. In some trenches evidence for both types of activity was also present. Fig. 5 illustrates this evidence in plan, and although no attempt has been made to delineate this area, it can be anticipated that Romano-British activity is present within a block of land covering c. 2.80 hectares within the western portion of the site, with more intensive settlement evidence within the northern portion of this area, within a zone of c. 0.80 hectares.

6.2 In Trenches 2 and 3, where intensive settlement features were present, it can be shown that the buried soil horizon was both sealed and cut by features of Romano-British date. The possibility remains that cut features may be present below the buried soil horizon in other trenches. This view may be supported by the presence of significant quantities of artefacts in most trenches where the buried soil horizon was observed.

6.3 Results from the evaluation do suggest some limits to the extent of the archaeological activity. In most trenches in the central and eastern portion of the site, and, in Trench 1 in the far west of the site, there was a complete absence of archaeological features and (perhaps more significantly) a general paucity of artefacts within the topsoil and subsoil horizons. This is in complete contrast to trenches where archaeological features and deposits were present, all of which contained comparatively large quantities of artefacts.

7. CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Prior to this evaluation, there has been only limited evidence for Romano-British activity identified within or close to Devizes. That evidence comes from random discoveries of artefacts, many of which are recorded immediately to the north and west of this site. The origins of the town of Devizes are considered to be in the early 12th century (Haslam 1976), although a small Roman settlement is thought to have once existed on the east side of the town, approximately 1km to the north-west of the present site at 'The Green'.

7.2 This evaluation has identified extensive evidence for Romano-British settlement activity principally concentrated towards the north-west part of the proposed development site. The presence of extensive remains resulted in only limited hand-excavation to determine the chronology and function of the site. The pottery evidence indicates that settlement activity is likely to date to the latter part of the Roman occupation and a date centred on AD 350 would not seem inappropriate. However, all finds were recovered from the upper levels of deposits and features, and it should not therefore be presumed that earlier occupation is not also present on the site.

7.3 The nature of some features present, including a probable stone oven and a second stone structure, and the range of artefact types recovered comprising a variety of pottery including traded fine wares, animal bone which includes four adjacent bovine lower jaw bones and a saddle quern fragment, would indicate that the site contains what is essentially a domestic component of perhaps a much larger structure or site, possibly a farmstead or farm complex, the majority of which is likely to be located outside the boundaries of the site, immediately to the north. However, the finding of fragments of ceramic flue and tegula tile and the quality of the pottery assemblage may suggest a building of higher status.

8. REFERENCES

Haslam, J., 1976, *Wiltshire Towns : The Archaeological Potential*

Wiltshire County Council, 1995, *Standards for Archaeological Assessment and Field Evaluation in Wiltshire*

Fig. 2: Trench Location

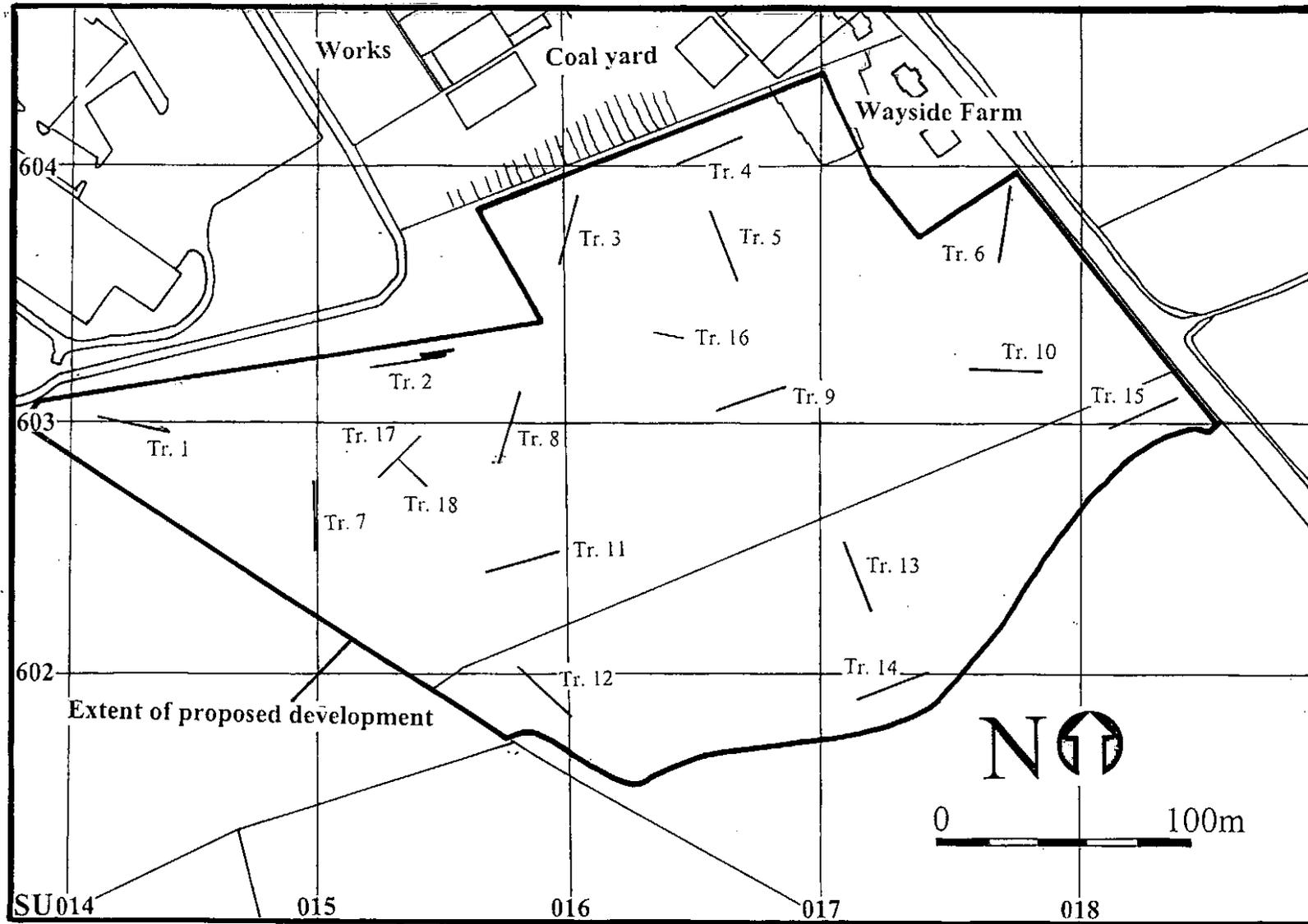
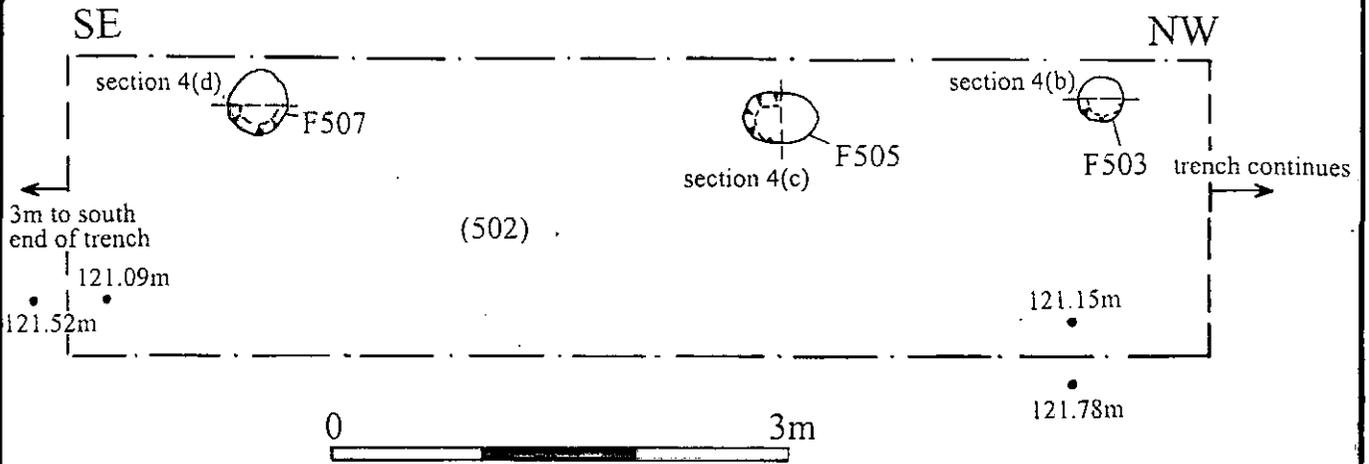
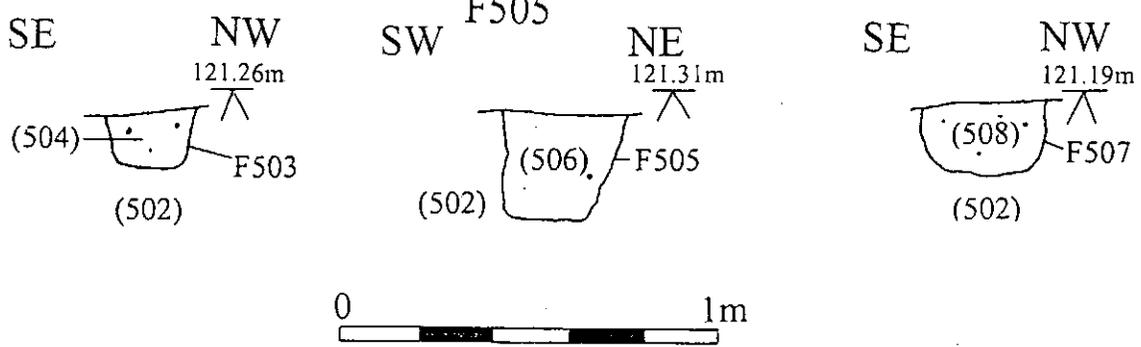


Fig.4 (a) to (d): Plan and sections, Trench 5 features

(a): Plan of features within Trench 5



(b): E facing section, F503 (c): S facing section, (d): E facing section, F507



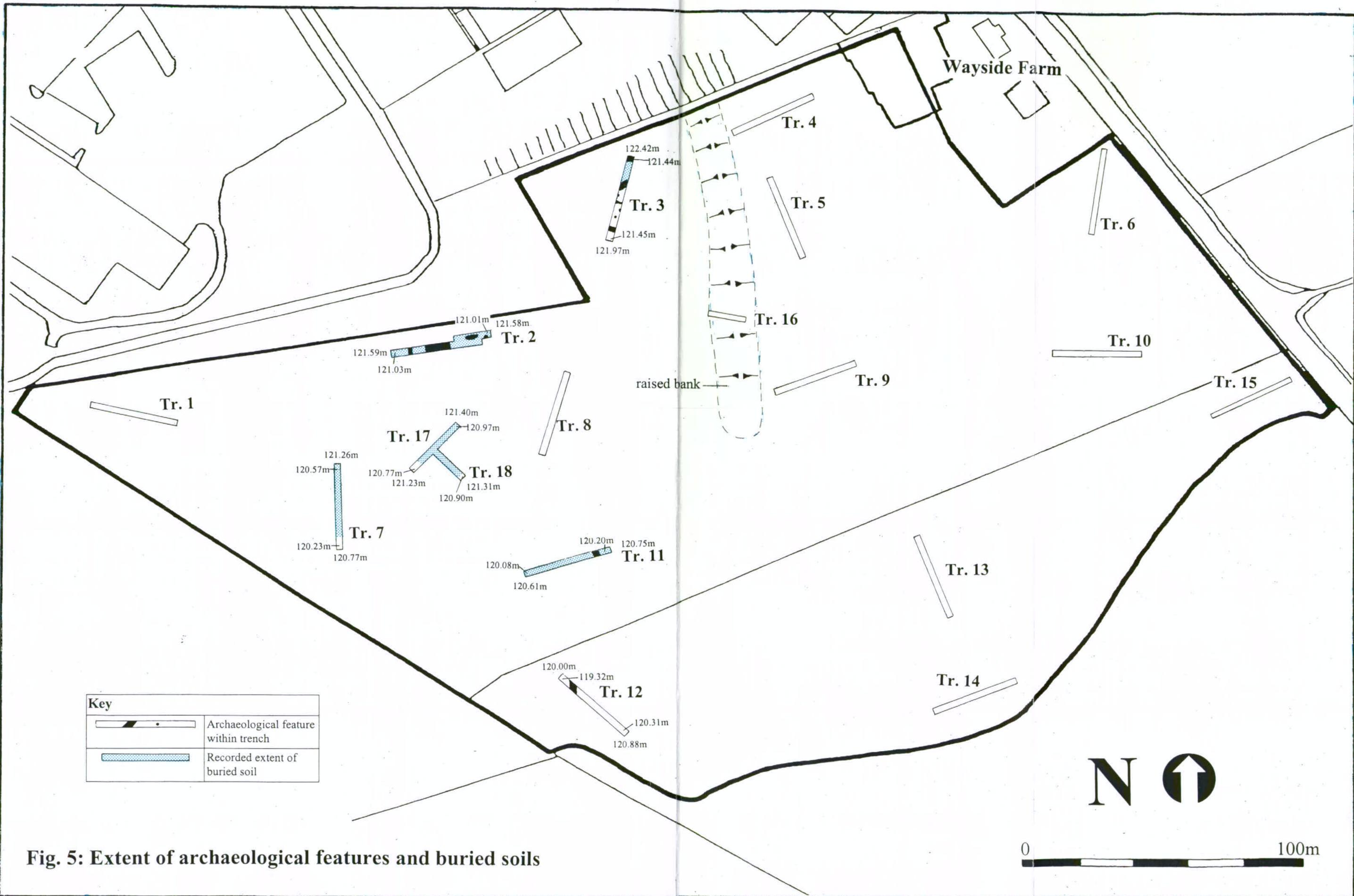


Fig. 5: Extent of archaeological features and buried soils