

7.1 Assessment of soil pH and Phosphates

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Introduction

- 7.1.1 A series of soil samples were routinely taken by Wessex Archaeology from grave fills in an attempt to consider ways of assessing degree of bone survival (e.g. pH), and the position of bodies within graves (e.g. phosphates), if ever present at all in graves where no bone survived.

Methodology

- 7.1.2 The small samples for pH and soil phosphate were generally taken in groups of four per grave, comprising a single spot sample from the upper grave fill, and one each from the perceived head, abdomen and feet region at the base of the grave. This comprised approximately 130 samples (i.e. c. 33 graves). Three measurements were made on a selection of 6 pilot samples using a pEP pH meter. Small sub-samples were mixed in water and measured using the digital meter.

Quantity and Provenance

- 7.1.3 Soil pH was tested on six samples, as follows (**Table 45**):

Table 45: Quantification of pH results

Sample	Phase	Feature	Context	pH
W52	EIA/ MIA	grave W64	W1306	6.3
W182	Saxon	grave W109	W1845	6.4
W214	Saxon	grave W127	W3087	6.4
W215	Saxon	grave W127	W3087	6.3
W216	Saxon	grave W127	W3087	6.4
W33	Saxon	grave W27	W1322	6.5

Potential for other work

- 7.1.4 Soil pH was sub-alkali and typical of the natural brown earth soils of the area. No significant variation was seen either between graves or within each grave. As a result, the potential for further work seems negligible.
- 7.1.5 No phosphate analysis was undertaken. Rapid assessment of phosphate (available phosphate) would also include that derived from the manuring regime. Whilst total phosphate might indicate increased levels at both occupation and burial areas, the analytical potential is low (Canti pers comm; Macphail pers. comm., Crowther pers. comm.). In order to define a body within a grave, a grid at about 0.05m density, descending a minimum of three 0.05m spit levels would need to be taken. No further work is deemed useful on this suite of samples.