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EVALUATION OF THE PROPOSED WYRE PIDDLE BYPASS

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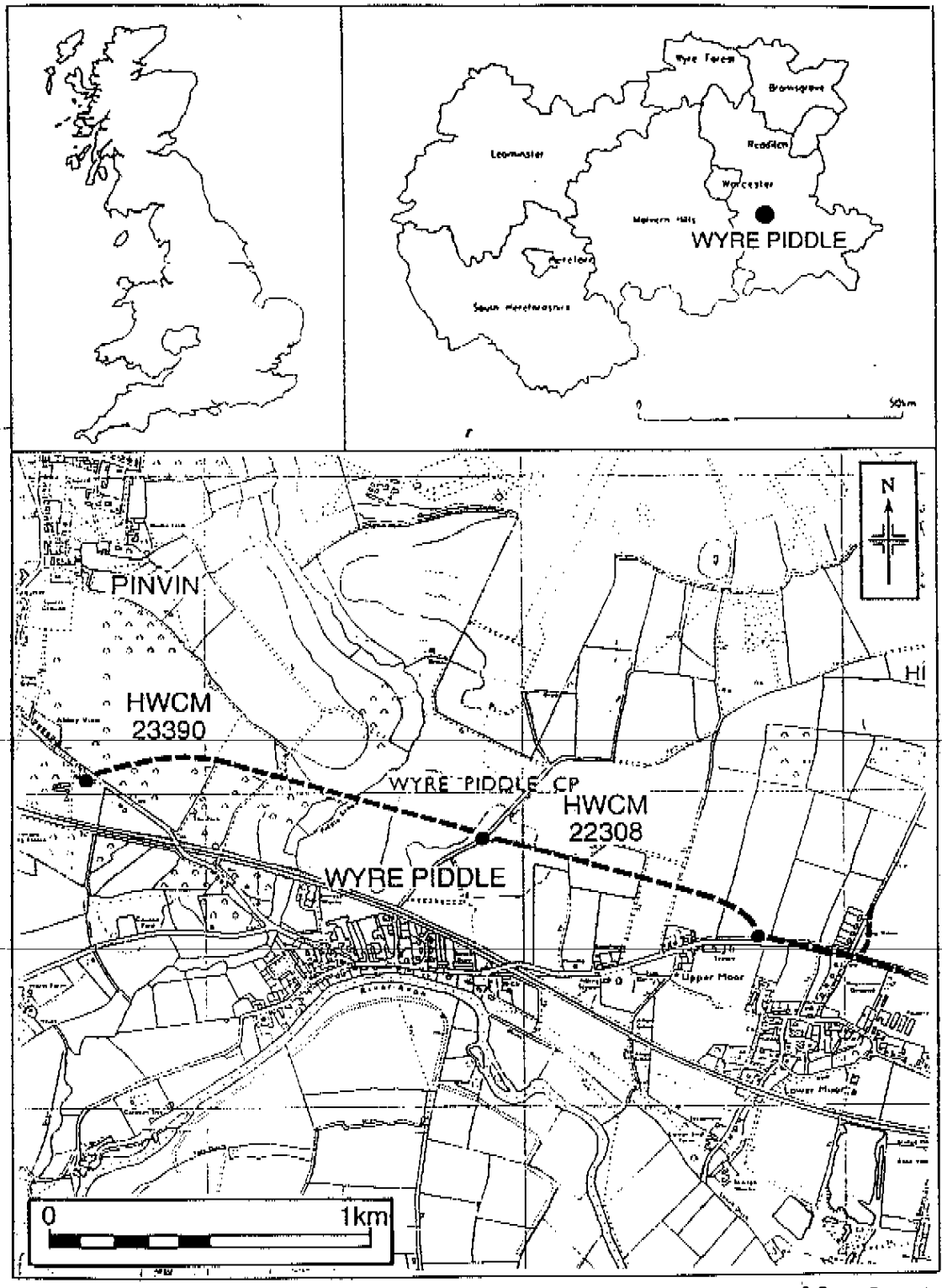

Figure 1: Location plan

Evaluation of the proposed Wyre Piddle Bypass

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Part 1 Project summary

1 Reasons for the project

An evaluation was undertaken on behalf of Hereford and Worcester County Council, and in association with Sir William Halcrow and Partners Ltd on two areas of the proposed Wyre Piddle bypass (Figs 1 and 2). The areas were defined by a fieldwalking survey which formed the first stage of this project. Trenching was undertaken in order to establish the nature and condition of any surviving material. This was followed by a third stage, which consisted of geophysical survey of areas of the route not examined by other means and an intensive survey of areas of activity identified during trenching.

2 Outline of results and significance

The two areas investigated by trenching at this stage had been identified as of higher archaeological potential during the fieldwalking stage of the evaluation. Both proved to contain significant deposits.

At the western end of the route the results of the fieldwalking survey were confirmed by the discovery of Roman features, probably representing a farmstead or minor settlement. The presence of Bronze Age features was not predicted by the fieldwalking (this is normal as the friable ceramics of this period do not usually survive in plough-soil). The deposits appear to represent a Bronze Age cemetery as the features included two cremations and a ditch of that period, small quantities of worked flint and burnt stone were also recovered from this area. A third, undated, cremation is also likely to be of Bronze Age date. The detailed geophysical survey plot was not particularly clear in this area, but similar densities of features to those in the western trenches may exist over much of this section of the road corridor. The features visible on the plot were magnetically weak and it is probable that smaller features such as cremations would not appear at all.

The central area was more extensively trenched, as fieldwalking was not possible directly on the route due to standing crops. The trenches were located as close as practible to the route where crop-cover prevented location within the road line itself. The geophysical survey has revealed that the area of intense activity extends to the north, south and west of the trenches and that the road line passes through an area of complex intercutting features of more than one period. The plotted anomalies appear to represent ring ditches of different sizes (possibly representing both funerary monuments and round-houses), large pits and rectilinear enclosures. A number of flint flakes and tools were recovered from this area, they include one possibly Neolithic item, a serrated blade, but it would appear that the earliest features are of Bronze Age date, though, typically for the prehistoric period many of the features are devoid of dating evidence. The presence of possible round barrow ditches indicated on the geophysical plot would seem to confirm the presence of significant Bronze Age activity.

The major phase of activity in the central area of the route is of Iron Age date. A very dense concentration of features was encountered within and immediately to the north of the road corridor. These features are principally ditches, some of which are sufficiently substantial to be interpreted as defensive. There are also indications of upcast banks, one of which probably survived as a visible earthwork until the post-medieval period. There are no traces of ridge and furrow in the area of earthworks and this may reflect the difficulty of ploughing across the uneven ground. The ditches appear to represent multiple enclosures of several phases. One circular ditch, possibly a round-house gully, and several postholes and pits were identified. Together with the artefactual evidence (burnt daub from buildings, domestic pottery, a stone weight and butchered animal bone) the structural evidence points towards a defended settlement, probably with associated agricultural enclosures.

An aerial photograph (located during this phase of evaluation) shows the presence of cropmarks towards the eastern end of the route, these are thought to represent boundary ditches, and possibly pits, overlain by medieval ridge and furrow. The geophysical survey confirms the probability that the linear cropmarks are boundaries of archaeological interest, but the putative pits may largely be of geological origin.

The scatter of Roman material identified by fieldwalking lay to the north of the route, its presence was confirmed in one trench off the road line, but no distinct concentrations of Roman activity were identified within the road corridor. The presence of two human burials of probable early Roman date and Roman pottery in recut Iron Age ditches suggests that the road corridor passes through the periphery of a substantial Roman site, the core of which lies to the north of the roadline. This site, on the basis of the surface finds, includes buildings in the Roman tradition (tiled roofs and tessellated floors). The Roman activity actually within the road corridor appears to be primarily agricultural, with the then upstanding earthworks of the Iron Age settlement being used as a graveyard.

The project has identified significant features in both of the areas investigated, in the case of the Bronze Age cemetery and Iron Age site these may be considered to be of national significance. The state of preservation was fair on the western-most area and very good in the central area, where a number of the features are sealed by a buried plough soil probably of Roman date.

3 Conclusions

The presence of significant deposits over the majority of the area investigated indicates that the gravel terraces and rising ground alongside the Avon have been subject to comparatively dense and continuous occupation since the prehistoric period. The density of sites is probably comparable to that in the Lower Avon Valley, but here the archaeology is less well known due to the different agricultural practices, eg horticulture, which can obscure potential cropmarks.

The discovery of a Bronze Age cemetery at the western end of the route is of considerable significance as such sites have rarely been excavated in the County, and only one isolated cremation of this date had been previously identified in the area. The presence of a cemetery, a flint tool from an adjacent

trench and charred cereal waste from one of the cremations, point towards the presence of a domestic site in the vicinity, however Bronze Age domestic sites are often very difficult to identify under evaluation conditions and as a result few are known in the County.

Further Bronze Age activity was identified in the central area of the route. Whilst a significant number of flints and a small quantity of Bronze Age pottery were recovered, few features were identified as being of this period. The evaluation indicates that a Bronze Age site, possibly domestic, lies in the immediate vicinity of the road line. The possible presence of a barrow cemetery adds to the importance of the central site. Although undoubtedly much truncated by later features such a site is of great significance in understanding the development of the prehistoric settlement pattern in the area.

Another significant discovery of this stage of fieldwork is the location of a substantial and, probably defended, Iron Age lowland settlement which may be the precursor to a Roman site lying immediately to the north. Such settlements are rare nationally and only one example of a multiple ditch and bank enclosure of this period has been (partially) excavated in the County (at Blackstone). Iron Age sites are known in this area from cropmark evidence but no direct parallels are known locally for multiple-ditched lowland enclosures.

The Roman site at the western end of the route is significant as part of a wider understanding of a number of similar sites in the Vale of Evesham. Of particular interest is the apparent division of landuse between the semi-industrial/domestic eastern area and the agricultural/domestic western area of this site. The relationship between this site and that in the central area of the route, on the opposite side of the Piddle Brook, may also be explored in the light of further work.

Part 2 Detailed report

4 Aims

The aims of the evaluation were to locate archaeological deposits and determine, if present, their extent, state of preservation, date, type, vulnerability, documentation, quality of setting and amenity value. The purpose of this was to establish their significance, since this would make it possible to recommend an appropriate treatment which may then be integrated with the proposed road scheme.

5 Archaeological background

The archaeological background is described in Cook and Ratkai (1995), and the reader is referred to that document. The first stage of evaluation consisted of fieldwalking of all available and suitable parts of the route. Where fieldwalking was not possible on the route itself adjacent fields were walked. The fieldwalking indicated the presence of Roman activity at the western (Pinvin) end of the route and Romap and prehistoric activity in the central area, to the north of Wyre Piddle filling station (Cook and Ratkai 1995).

More recently evaluation in advance of expansion of the Hill and Moor waste disposal site, which lies immediately to the north of the proposed roadline, demonstrated a low density scatter of Roman and medieval pottery attributable to agricultural activity. A single flint flake was also recovered during fieldwalking (Napthan and Ratkai 1996)

An aerial photograph (W A Baker, 1975 ref WAB 903/02) held by the National Monuments Record has also been located, this shows cropmarks in HWCM 22095 towards the eastern end of the route. The cropmarks were plotted by Mike Glyde using AERIAL software and interpreted as showing former boundary features, and possibly pits, which are overlain by ridge and furrow of probably medieval date (Fig 9).

6 Methods

6.1 Fieldwork

Twelve trenches totalling approximately 2000m^2 (see Fig 2) were initially excavated by 360° excavator in areas of archaeological potential identified by fieldwalking (Cook and Ratkai 1995). Selected deposits were then investigated. Trench 4 (in the central area) was expanded to examine the extent and nature of deposits. Recording followed standard practice (County Archaeological Service, 1995 *Manual of Service practice: fieldwork recording manual*, HWCC County Archaeological Service internal report, 399).

A Home Office Licence for removal of human remains (File BCR/96/5/6/5 licence No. ●●1●) was obtained to permit the excavation of the inhumations exposed in the evaluation trenches.

The areas of the route which had not been subjected to other archaeological prospection methods were scanned by Geophysical Surveys of Bradford using

a fluxgate gradiometer (Geoscan FM36) at 10-15m intervals. The scanning mode found the whole route to be magnetically quiet with the exception of two pit type responses to the east of George Lane and modern anomalies such as pipes (Geophysical Surveys of Bradford, technical report 97/06).

The scan did not detect the even the largest archaeological features (which had been identified in the trenches), however, these were detectable in the detailed gradiometer survey which was undertaken in areas which had been identified by trenching as of interest (Fig 2). The best conditions for the geophysical survey occurred in the central area, whilst few anomalies were detected in the western area.

6.2 Artefacts

6.2.1 Artefact recovery policy

All finds were retrieved by hand and in accordance with County Archaeological Service guidelines (CAS 1995). A significant assemblage of finds was recovered, primarily from well stratified archaeological deposits. All finds were retained (Tables 7, 8 and 9).

6.2.2 Method of analysis

The central area HWCM 22308
All artefacts were quantified by count and/or weight as appropriate. The prehistoric and Roman pottery was assigned to fabric groups using the County pottery fabric type series (Hurst and Rees 1992) and the unpublished pottery fabric type series from Beckford (Evans forthcoming). Information about the pottery and other artefacts is held on two databases. The artefacts are summarised on Tables 7 and 8.

The western area HWCM 23390
Analysis of finds involved identification to find type. All finds were quantified by count and weight (grammes). In addition, detailed fabric analysis was undertaken using the County fabric series (Hurst and Rees 1992). This allowed archaeological deposits to be dated and provided a *terminus post quem*. The artefacts are summarised in Table 9.

6.3 Environment

6.3.1 Sampling policy

The environmental sampling policy was as defined in the County Archaeological Service Recording System (1995, as amended). Large animal bone was hand-collected during excavation from both sites. Samples of 10 to 50 litres were taken from nine contexts of Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman date from both central and western areas (see Table 1), seven of which were selected for assessment. Human bone (in the form of inhumations and dispersed inhumed cremations) was also recovered from both sites. The former were hand-collected and the latter recovered by hand collection and bulk sampling.

Processing and analysis
Hand-collected animal bone was identified where possible by comparison with modern reference specimens housed at the County Archaeological Service and using identification manuals (Schmid 1972; Hillson 1992).

The samples were processed by flotation followed by wet-sieving using a Siraf tank. The flot was collected on a 500µm sieve and the residue retained on a 1mm mesh. This allows for the recovery of items such as small animal bones, molluscs and seeds.

The residues were fully sorted by eye and the abundance of each category of environmental remains estimated. The flots were sorted using a low-power EMT light microscope and remains identified using modern reference specimens housed at the County Archaeological Service. Results of the analysis are summarised in Tables 1 to 6.

7 Analysis

7.1 The central area - HWCM 22308

7.1.1 Trench 1

Lying to the north of the road corridor (Fig 2), this trench contained a notable scatter of Roman material. The degree of clustering of finds suggested that they might derive from ploughed out features. No distinguishable Roman features were identified, however traces of medieval ridge and furrow running north to south were faintly visible.

7.1.2 Trench 2

This was the most westerly of the trenches (Fig 2). No features were identified, and no finds recovered. The natural deposits were gravel towards the west end and the rest of the trench exposed a heavy grey clay with light mottles. The geophysical survey indicates a linear anomaly approaching this trench from the south but this was not identified within the trench. It is possible (on the basis of evidence in Trench 3), that the grey clay is geologically recent alluvium and masks earlier features.

7.1.3 Trench 3

Trench 3 (Figs 2 and 3) was located in a small area along a hedgerow where there was a gap in the crop of cabbages. The deposits exposed by machining to a depth of 0.8m (approx) were of a light grey alluvial clay, with occasional darker patches. A 9m length of the trench was hand excavated. Within this area three gullies, a shallow irregular feature and a ditch were examined. The features, which accounted for 60% of the surface area, contained no dateable artefacts, but were comparable with prehistoric features in Trench 4. The alignment of the linear features was north-east to south-west, a similar alignment to some stratigraphically early features in Trench 4. The base of the deeper features were cut into the underlying gravel. The alignment of the ditch appears to continue a possible ditch line indicated on the geophysical survey (Fig 8).

Trenches 1 and 3 produced only a few artefacts and these spanned a wide date range, although none was earlier than the Roman period, in marked contrast to the material from Trench 4. Roman pottery predominated but there were medieval and modern sherds from Trench 1, together with post-medieval brick and tile.

7.1.4 **Trench 4**

This trench lay to the south of the fieldwalked area, which produced a moderately large assemblage of Roman material. Stripping the modern ploughsoil revealed an Iron Age/Roman soil layer in which a small number of features were discernible. Natural gravel was exposed in only very small isolated patches. Hand cleaning and excavation of slots through the buried soil demonstrated that features accounted for some 70% of the surface area. The buried soil was machined off the eastern arm of the trench to expose the underlying features (Fig 4).

Prehistoric/undated and Bronze Age

The undated, but typologically and stratigraphically, prehistoric, fills 423 and 496 in cut 424/497 represent a substantial ditch, with its fills, running approximately east to west. This ditch was not fully exposed during the evaluation but appears to skirt the southern side of the expanded area of Trench 4. As the innermost of a series of substantial ditches around an enclosure this may represent an early stage in the development of this part of the site, it is re-cut to the south (ditch 494/495), and the original width could not be determined with certainty but did not exceed 4m. A "V" profile gully (contexts 425/426) which is aligned with the southern edge of cut 497 (a substantial ditch) may represent the same boundary, although smaller in profile. This latter length of boundary cuts a north to south ditch (437/438) which similarly has prehistoric characteristics but is devoid of firm dating evidence. This forms a small complex of stratigraphically early features which may be either late Bronze Age or Iron Age. A steep-sided slot (483/484), interpreted as either the end of a palisade slot or possibly a constructional feature was the only context to be artefactually dated to the Bronze Age. Other features contained residual worked flints and occasional sherds of Bronze Age date (see below).

There were two sherds with coarse large angular quartz grits from contexts 454 and 461 which were Late Bronze Age. Other small undiagnostic sherds from contexts 461, 466, 469 and 483 could have been Bronze Age but the sherds were so small that no accurate identification could be made. However on the strength of the two definite Bronze Age sherds and the flints it is evident that there was Bronze Age occupation on the site.

A small assemblage of flint was recovered from this trench with a total of 21 items being recorded. This material comprised mainly of waste products (a core, flakes and miscellaneous debitage) but also included three tools, two scrapers and one unclassified. The raw material was mixed with both good quality imported honey coloured and dark grey flint present as well as grey/brown gravel derived flint. The latter had a thin buff coloured cortex. This assemblage is too small for any detailed analysis, and included no clearly dateable or diagnostic items. However, the presence of tools and the relatively large size of the assemblage (for a region where flint finds are scarce) is clearly indicative of prehistoric occupation, which ceramic and depositional evidence suggests may be of Bronze Age date.

Iron Age

The majority of the features encountered in Trench 4 belonged to this phase. As only a narrow trench was cut across areas of complex intercutting features it is inappropriate to attempt to produce a stratigraphic interpretation of the development of the site. Selected features are however described here in the apparent chronological order.

A ditch (context 408) running parallel to ditch cuts 426 and 497 contained a small assemblage of domestic material of the ?early Iron Age. It was cut by a penannular gully (cuts 404, 434, 422, 440) and apparently sealed by the upcast from a substantial north to south ditch (Fig 4, cut 407). The evidence for this latter relationship is slim, but is based on the better preservation of the earlier (408) ditch along the 3m of its length which lie closest to cut 407.

Ditches 435/436 and 415/416 and a possible gully 417/418 are all cut by a wide but shallow ditch (419/420), and are therefore considered stratigraphically early. Contexts 476/477 and 478/479 are similarly early features within the Iron Age complex. The majority of the ditches, do not however, have readily identifiable relationships as they run broadly parallel - almost all north to south, to the east of the expanded area, and east to west, to the south of the expanded area.

Contexts 442 and 443 represent a very substantial ditch with a fill containing Iron Age pottery, bone and burnt daub (finds mislaid). The ditch was recut and finally refilled with context 441 which contained a single sherd of Roman date. This ditch runs broadly parallel with ditch 407, which has a similar depositional sequence and is of similar size, the possibility is that they may represent opposite boundaries of a single enclosure.

Cut 407 seems to have been the most substantial of the north to south ditches, approximately 4.5 metres wide and with a surviving depth of 1.3m it would have represented a significant barrier. It is the innermost of the ditches of one putative enclosure, and would appear to have had an internal bank (see below). Its earliest surviving fill (context 406) is of Iron Age date, however the upper part of the fill (context 402) is of early Roman date, and this later fill seals ditch 413/414 and ditch 405/408.

The position of the penannular gully suggests that it respects the two innermost ditches (cuts 407 and 424) of this enclosure. This gully (Fig 4) is a slightly irregular circle 10m in diameter, open to the north-west and a flattened V-shaped profile approximately 0.8m deep and 1.1m wide. Such features are generally interpreted as drainage ditches around circular huts, however this example is very unusual in having an entrance facing the prevailing wind. The preferred location for an entrance was generally the south-east, however the presence of a substantial bank associated with cut 407 would explain the altered arrangement here. The fills of the gully are typical of those found in round-house gullies in that a particularly charcoally deposit, containing domestic debris (burnt stone, animal bones and Iron Age pottery) was found in the gully terminal adjacent to the assumed entrance. The interior was not thoroughly investigated and only one posthole and one stake hole were recognised, which is insufficient to confirm the presence of a building.

A very shallow (0.17m deep) oval pit (contexts 411/412) lay close to the penannular gully, in the area between the gully and ditch 407. The pit had the appearance of having been heavily truncated, and may have been cut from a higher level than the contemporary features to the west. This indicates that the ground level was substantially higher along the edge of ditch 407. This may be interpreted as an indication of the former presence of an internal bank or rampart.

A further raised bank may be deduced from the unusually high ridge of natural sand and gravel between ditches 453 and 463 (Fig 5). In this case a 4m wide

area stands above the buried Roman ploughsoil to the north and south and a slight rise is still visible on the surface where modern ploughing has lifted over it. This ridge of undisturbed sand and gravel appears to have been protected from plough damage, and the most likely explanation is that it was covered by banks created using the upcast from the adjacent ditches.

The complex of inter-cutting boundary ditches (Figs 4 and 5), with intervening banks of natural gravel consist of six north to south ditches and two banks on the eastern side of the expanded area. Nine east to west ditches and four banks were identified to the south of the expanded area, this disparity suggests that more than one enclosure is present. A total of six north to south ditches lay to the west of the expanded area, however, three of these may be internal divisions as they are less substantial than the boundaries to the south and east. Such an interpretation should, however, be treated with caution as the areas excavated were very narrow, a greater or lesser number of ditches may have existed at any given moment, as it was not possible to determine whether ditches were contemporary or parallel recuts. The geophysical survey is not particularly helpful in this area, except to confirm the alignments of some of the larger features observed in the trenches and give further indications that the enclosure around the excavated round-house gully is rectilinear and multi-vallate.

Several prehistoric pottery fabrics were identified, the most common of which was hand-made Malvernian ware (fabric 3). Other fabrics recorded in the county type series and present at Wyre Piddle were palaeozoic limestone tempered ware (fabric 4.1), medium-coarse quartz sand (fabric 5.1, Beckford fabric 17), sand and ooliths (fabric 4.6, Beckford fabric 21 and fine shell and sand (fabric 4.4, Beckford fabric 18).

Some fabrics were not in the County type series but were parallelled in the, as yet unpublished, Beckford type series. Beckford and Kemerton, also unpublished (Napthan *et al* 1997), are the two nearest, large excavated, prehistoric sites to Wyre Piddle. Beckford fabrics present were fabric 15 (fine quartz and clay pellets), and fabric 30-31 (clay pellets and grog). However, the assigning of sherds to these fabric types was based solely on the written descriptions of the fabrics, as the Beckford type series is no longer available.

A perforated stone disc from context 419 may be interpreted as a weight, it is considered unlikely to be a spindle whorl as it is eccentrically perforated and heavier than might be expected for a spindlewhorl (Hal Dalwood pers comm).

Stone pot boilers in the form of burnt quartzitic pebbles, came from six contexts and were generally found in or near to the penannular ditch. Small quantities of fired clay or burnt daub were found. A large, burnt daub fragment, broken into two and weighing 1208g was found in ditch fill 468, where there seemed to be a concentration of daub. Holes left by the burnt out wattle were clearly visible.

There was a single worked bone fragment from 468. This was a long bone, most probably a cow metacarpal which had been cut into a point at one end for use as a gouge.

Roman

An unusually shallow (0.32m) rectangular grave aligned north to south (Fig 6) cut through the eastern edge of the penannular gully (cut 434) at the point

where the gully is closest to the large ditch (cut 407). The grave would appear to have been cut from a higher level than adjacent features (with the exception of cut 412 - see above), and this is further circumstantial evidence for the prior existence of an internal bank associated with ditch 407.

The grave (cut 432; fill 431) is large (2.85m x 1.05m) and neatly dug with vertical sides and a flat base. The presence of a plank-built coffin can be deduced from a plot of the 42 nails recorded during excavation (Fig 6). The nails were conventionally located along the sides and centre line of the lid, nails from below the body may indicate that two planks were joined to form the width of the base.

The skeleton from context 431 was that of a young adult (22-35 years) female with no obvious cause of death. She did however exhibit signs of a severe dental abscess and caries on one tooth. The abscess had penetrated the sinus and would have been very painfull. There were also traces of osteo-arthritis, at an early stage, on two of the lumbar vertebrae. The estimated height was 1.58m (5'2.5"). The full pathological report by R M Flinn is deposited in the archive.

The skeleton lay on her left shoulder and hip, with the left arm extended down to the pelvis. The right arm was folded across the stomach and the right leg across the left. This position left the eastern side of the coffin clear, possibly to accommodate organic grave goods which have not survived. A small amount of animal bone was recovered from the grave fill above the skeleton, this might represent a funerary meal deposited on the coffin lid. Also within the grave fill was a fragment of calcined bone which possibly represents a human cremation.

A second inhumation lay to the south of the expanded area, the grave was cut just into the surface of the natural gravel in the 2m space between two Iron Age ditches (cuts 445 and 452). The grave, aligned north to south, appears to have respected the two ditches (which had largely filled up by this period). The shallow depth of this grave may indicate that it was, as in the case of grave 431/432, cut through an upstanding bank of upcast from the adjacent ditches. The bank appears to have been ploughed out during the Roman period (context 451), and the upper half of the skeleton has been destroyed.

The remains of the mature adult male skeleton from context 449 exhibited no obvious pathology. The height was estimated to be 1.61m (5'3.5") and the age group 22-35 or above. The full pathological report by R M Flinn is deposited in the archive. The remains indicate that he was laid in a supine position, no coffin was identified and the grave-cut appears to have been narrow. The remains of hobnailed soles were found *in situ* on the feet. The soles were heavily nailed, with at least five rows of nails along the whole length of the foot. It was not possible to determine with certainty, but the position of the foot bones suggest boots rather than nailed sandals.

A ploughsoil, containing mainly Iron Age material, with a few Roman sherds had developed across the ditch complexes to the east and south of the expanded area, also to a lesser extent across the area within the penannular gully. This ploughsoil, (which appears to be of Roman origin), distinct from the modern plough horizon, seems to have survived only in those areas protected by adjacent former earthworks and in the dips where it represents the ploughed upper fills of Iron Age ditches.

No features, with the exception of the graves, appear to have originated in the Roman period, although several features (eg fills 402, 441, 447, 467, 468) had Roman material in their upper fills and these may be assumed to have survived as visible boundaries into the early Roman period.

A fragment of a copper alloy ?fibula was found in context 454. Other identifiable metal finds were iron nails from grave fill 431 and hob-nails, corroded into two masses from grave fill 449.

Post-Roman
Only one significant post-Roman feature was identified - cut 472 - which represented a shallow ditch or furrow, aligned north to south and containing a fragment of medieval tile. There was evidence of further medieval activity in the form of a sparse scatter of pottery in the ploughsoil and indications that the ploughing out of Iron Age earthworks had continued during this period.

Modern agricultural activity was represented by a number of land drains, the majority of which consist of recent plastic pipes.

The artefacts - general
Pottery formed the major artefact class, although a good collection of flints was also found (see above). By far the greatest quantity of pottery was of prehistoric date with Roman pottery forming a very small proportion. There was also a significant amount of sandy briquetage. Most of the pottery consisted of very small sherds which made fabric typing and form analysis difficult. In addition many of the prehistoric sherds had eroded surfaces, due to soil conditions. The pottery was derived from the fills of various features but there was none derived from occupation deposits, middens or yard surfaces.

There was a limited range of other artefact types, often too corroded or fragmentary for identification.

A small amount of charcoal was recovered from 439 (1g) and 496 (2g).

7.1.5 Trench 5

This trench lay to the north-east of Trench 4. The features identified were all associated with ridge and furrow aligned north to south. The finds from this trench were sparse and represent the general scatter of Roman and medieval material in this area. The underlying natural deposits were a heavy dark grey clay.

7.1.6 Trench 6

A sparse scatter of prehistoric and medieval artefacts was recovered from this trench. A low density of features was also encountered. The features were in general shallow, irregular and poorly defined, one ditch was identified, aligned north-west to south-east. All the features were undated and, (with the exception of a small pit (fill 601) which was medieval), could be tentatively ascribed to the prehistoric. A single flint tool, a serrated blade of possible Neolithic date, was recovered from the topsoil. The underlying geology was gravel with patches of clayey sand. An unusual semi-petrified formation at the southern end of the trench was investigated and demonstrated to be of geological, possibly glacial, origin.

7.1.7 **Trench 7**

This was the eastern-most trench and exposed a small number of shallow, ill-defined features, possibly of prehistoric origin. No artefacts were recovered. Ridge and furrow aligned north to south was noted, this was not typical of medieval systems and may be of recent origin as the area was formerly orchard.

7.2 **Environmental remains**

Hand-collected animal bone
A total of 3.71 kg of animal bone was hand-collected from 28 contexts from this site, of which 15 were selected for analysis (Table 4). The majority of the bone was recovered in a state of poor to moderate preservation, the degree to which the bone was fragmented being variable.

The assemblage was dominated by bones of common domesticated animals; horse, cow, and sheep or goat (Table 5). These were predominantly of sheep or goat and cattle, in association with occasional horse bones. The number of fragments identified is below the number required to make detailed interpretation of relative species importance. Although sheep or goat are the most numerous, this is partly the result of a high number of teeth fragments in one feature (context 403). The large number of fragments identified as large ungulate (horse, cow or red deer sized) mostly represent highly fragmented debris.

Bones of a medium sized bird (of which some bones were juvenile) were recovered from context 431. Although they appear not to be chicken (*Gallus gallus*), they may be of an edible species, and therefore represent food waste. One burnt bone fragment, although unidentifiable, is likely to be human. It was recovered from a ditch fill (context 433). As two human burials have been found on the site, it is possible that it may represent residual material from a cremation in the near vicinity.

A number of the common domesticate bones showed signs of butchery. These include one horse bone which may therefore indicate the use of horse for food. A variety of anatomical parts are represented (Table 6). However, as there is no particular predominance of any one part, it is not possible to interpret whether the remains are generally food or butchery waste.

Wet-sieved samples
Environmental remains were generally sparsely distributed across the site, with moderate concentrations in one sample (Table 2). These remains included large and small mammal bone, fish bone, mollusc and charred plant remains. The small quantity of seed remains which appear to have survived as a result of anaerobic conditions are likely to be relatively modern.

Charred plant remains were moderately abundant within a gully (cut 440). The charred remains from the fill (context 439) consist of a high proportion of cereal grains, and may represent mixed crop processing debris. Although emmer/spelt wheat was identified, the majority were unidentifiable.

7.2 The western area - HWCM 23390

7.2.1 Trench 1

The earliest evidence from this trench was in form of a residual flint tool in a Roman context. This was a broken piercer, such items are usually dated to either the Beaker or Bronze Age. The other deposits within this trench were primarily of Roman date, and consisted of a number of inter-cutting ditches and a possible gravelled surface. The ditch fills and surface included a significant quantity of slag. These features were clustered at the north half of the trench and represented occupation with a moderately high density of artefacts. The southern half of the trench was by contrast, devoid of features and with only a sparse scatter of Roman material. A substantial east to west ditch towards the south end contained recent material in its upper fill and was not further explored. It appeared to be part of the same feature as the ditch (context 201) investigated in Trench 2 (see below).

The natural geology in this trench was complex, consisting of pockets of gravel and clay. A further layer of silty clay sealed several of the features, and resembles hill wash, although the layer may in fact derive from stock-trampling. The geophysical survey appears to have been rather uninformative in this area as only the large modern ditch was clearly defined, several possible pits and three short lengths of ditch have been interpreted as archaeological. The features seen in the trench were not perceptible on the geophysical plot, possibly due to the complexity of the underlying geology.

The pottery and other finds (Trench 1)

Within Trench 1 the stratified pottery consisted of 519 sherds, weighing 4377g. The pottery was Roman with the exception of one unstratified sherd (14g). The Roman material was recovered primarily from the fills (102 and 109) of two near contemporary ditches (107/108 and 110). Ten fabric types were recognised (Table 9). The dominant fabric type was Severn Valley ware (fabric 12). This represented 76% by count and 74% by weight (grammes) of the stratified ceramics from Trench 1. All the pottery was badly abraded and leached. Severn Valley ware forms recognised, from fill 102, included storage jars (Webster 1976, fig.1, 5) and tankards (*ibid* fig.7, 43) of late 2nd to 3rd century date. Similar forms were identified from the fill (context 109) of a ditch (cut 110). These comprised a rim of a flanged bowl with internal lip (*ibid* 1976, fig.8, 48) and tankards (*ibid* 1976, fig.7, 44) and could be dated to the 2nd to 4th century. Other Severn Valley ware fabrics present were 12.1 and 12.2. Malvernian fabrics were represented by fabric 3 (handmade) and fabric 19 (wheel-thrown). A small amount of regionally imported ware, black burnished ware (fabric 22) and Oxfordshire red/brown colour-coat (fabric 29) was observed from context 102 (the fill of ditch 107/108) and is consistent with a date range of late 2nd/3rd century. A Samian rim sherd (Drag.30 fabric 43), from Central Gaul, in the form of a rouletted bowl (Fig 11.2), was retrieved from ditch fill (102) and a small body sherd from fill 109.

The Roman pottery comprised of typical domestic wares of late 2nd to 3rd century date. It may be significant that on this site Malvernian pottery was not found in contexts with Roman sherds, with the exception of context 414 (a ditch fill); this suggests that Malvernian vessels were no longer used on the site in the late 2nd century.

A single sherd of post-medieval buff ware (fabric 91) was recovered from the ploughsoil (100). This dated to the late 18th century.

A small quantity of other finds were recovered from Trench 1. Prehistoric material was represented by a probable broken piercer (context 109) and a small amount of burnt stone/pot boilers (context 102).

Roman artefacts were represented by two tile fragments, six corroded iron objects, slag and a small amount of coal. The animal bone from the site was poorly preserved.

7.2.2 **Trench 2**

Only one feature (context 201) was identified; a substantial boundary ditch with recent material in its upper fill. A large fragment of medieval tile came from lower in the fill and a medieval origin for this feature cannot be ruled out. The alignment and position of the ditch suggests that it is the same feature as seen in Trench 1.

Two finds were recovered from this trench. These comprised a ceramic roof tile retrieved from the fill (201) of a boundary ditch and a badly corroded twisted iron loop of modern origin, which was found attatched to the remains of a wooden post. The tile fragment was in Malvernian fabric 3 and is likely to be of medieval or early post-medieval date.

7.2.3 **Trench 3**

No features were identified in this trench.

7.2.4 **Trench 4**

The deposits in this trench represent both prehistoric and Roman activity (Fig 10). The earliest dateable features were a dispersed cremation in a substantial (1x0.9x0.35m deep) squarish pit (contexts 401/402) and an undated, probably prehistoric ditch (1.5m wide and 0.75m deep; context 419) running east to west. The most significant find however was a small (0.45m diameter) circular pit containing a large proportion of a shattered Bronze Age vessel (Fig 11.1) and a dispersed cremation. A third, dispersed, cremation was recovered from fill 417 and is probably contemporary with the other two cremations, which lay 22 metres apart and may indicate an extensive cemetery of this period.

The Roman activity in this trench appears to be less intensive than that in Trench 1, it is primarily represented by linear features which are typical of stock enclosures. However the presence of substantial quantities of burnt daub in a ditch (contexts 414/415) and a shallow gully terminal (409/410) also containing domestic refuse indicate that the remains are more likely to represent a dispersed settlement, with the houses scattered amongst stock enclosures. No slag was found in Trench 4, (in contrast with a liberal distribution in Trench 1) and this may further point towards this being the predominantly agricultural periphery of the settlement.

The pottery and other finds (Trench 4)
Within Trench 4 the stratified pottery comprised 94 sherds, weighing 1298g. Some six different fabric types were recognised. The pottery consisted of a large portion of Bronze Age vessel, a small number of Bronze Age sherds and a number of, generally small Roman sherds (Table 9).

Three features containing artefacts dating to the Bronze Age were found (fills 401, 411 and 417). Fill 411 contained the Bronze Age vessel mentioned above

and a small amount of calcined bone, suggesting it was the remains of a cremation burial. The fabric of the vessel, clay tempered with angular quartz grits up to 5mm, is not found within the County pottery fabric type series. The vessel is handmade, with external wiping marks and a finger pinched rim (Fig 11.1). The vessel form probably dates to the Late Bronze Age, on analogy with forms recovered from Kemerton (Napthan *et al* 1997). Also found in the cremation pit was a flint flake.

Pit fill 401 was another cremation burial although much less well preserved. Only a single, plain rim sherd tempered with angular quartz and clay pellets survived. This too appears to date to the later Bronze Age. There was, in addition, 12g of calcined bone.

Pit fill 417 appeared to contain the remains of third cremation burial in the form of numerous small fragments of calcined bone (50g). There were no other finds but it seems likely that it was of the same date as the other two burials.

From the surface of ditch fill 419 two joining, oxidised sherds (50g) in Malvernian fabric 3 were recovered, probably intrusive in this context. The sherds had surfaces damaged by the soil conditions and the fabric appeared quite coarse, perhaps because of this. The sherds are no more closely datable than Iron Age early Roman.

The Roman pottery assemblage was perhaps atypical in some respects, in that there was very little Malvernian ware. As would be expected the dominant fabric was Severn Valley ware. A south-western mortarium (Fabric 37.1) came from 407.

Other finds recovered included a large sample of small burnt daub fragments (964g) from a single ditch fill (414) which was found with a mix of Severn Valley ware sherds and sherds from a Malvernian ware tubby cooking pot.

7.2.5 Environmental evidence

Animal bone totalling 149g was hand-collected from this site, all but 3g consisted of teeth fragments. This is indicative of poor preservation conditions as teeth are the most durable form of skeletal material. An environmental sample from one of the cremations (context 401) was processed; the assemblage was dominated by seed remains, presumably from weeds growing within a cereal crop. These were generally small in size, for example, black medick (*Medicago* cf *lupilina*), sheep's sorrel (*Rumex acetosella* agg), rye grass (*Lolium perenne* type) and small vetch/vetchling/pea seeds (*Vicia/Lathyrus* sp). Of the cereal grains present, spelt wheat (*Triticum spelta*) and emmer/spelt wheat (*Triticum dicoccum/spelta*) were identified. A cereal coleoptile (embryo shoot) was the only chaff fragment noted. As the assemblage is small, only tentative statements can be made. However, on account of the predominance of weed seeds, it is likely to represent the waste fraction from sieving operations during crop processing, particularly the fine sieving fraction, because of the small size of the majority of weed seeds (Hillman 1981). The only large seed, wild radish (*Raphanus raphanistrum*) is often associated with spring-sown cereals (Silverside 1977). The environmental sample from the second cremation (context 411) was not processed.

Geophysical results

The detailed geophysical survey plot is not particularly clear in this area but indicates the possible presence of both pits and ditches. The geophysical anomalies probably represent a similar level of archaeological features as was observed in the adjacent trenches. The area around Trenches 1 and 4 has more anomalies and around Trench 2 there are less. The magnetic enhancement of the linear features in this area was very low and it is likely that features exist which were not detected by the gradiometer. The high responses given by some of the pit-like responses may reflect the presence of iron slag, which was identified in Trench 1. No meaningful interpretation of the nature of this area of the site is possible on the basis of the geophysical plot.

8 Discussion

The Bronze Age

The project has identified Bronze Age activity in both of the areas investigated; at the western end of the route (HWCM 23390) a Late Bronze Age cremation cemetery (and tentative domestic evidence), is a very significant discovery, as is the identification of ring-ditches (possibly barrows) and Bronze Age artefacts in the central area of the route. The presence of a cremation cemetery of this date is of considerable importance as such sites are very rare in the County. The only comparable site, a Bronze Age urnfield was discovered in a sand quarry in 1910 at Mathon (Herefordshire; HWCM 3759; Hamilton 1938). Locally a single cremation was found by chance at Ballast Hole gravel pit, Charlton (HWCM 2710). Also in the locality, a Bronze Age burial of unknown form is recorded from Norton Lenchwick (HWCM 15459) and three Beaker burials from Lower Moor (HWCM 3255) are evidence for earlier Bronze Age funerary sites in the vicinity. A single cremation and collared-urn sherds, apparently without an associated barrow, was identified during salvage excavation at Holt (HWCM 4531; Hunt 1971) The only other Bronze Age cremation in the County not directly associated with a barrow was at Huntsmans Quarry Kemerton (Napthan *et al* 1997). The County is comparatively rich in Bronze Age round barrows and barrow cemeteries (which are thought to represent an earlier Bronze Age tradition and higher status burials), but almost devoid of excavated examples of simple cremations or cremations with associated urns, though these are likely to represent the normal funerary practice at this period. The disparity in numbers doubtless reflects the difficulties of identifying simple interred and interred dispersed cremations compared with identifying standing or cropmark barrows.

Charred remains associated with one of the burials appear to represent sieving waste from crop processing activities (some of which may derive from a spring-sown crop). It is difficult to determine whether these remains were part of the tinder used for the cremation, or whether they were merely part of the background debris from activities carried out on the site. The presence of a broken flint piercer of Beaker or Bronze Age date (in Trench 1), is a further indication of domestic/industrial activities of this date on the western site (HWCM 23390).

Similar evidence for Bronze Age activity has been recovered from the central area (HWCM 22308). The presence of significant numbers of Bronze Age artefacts in the vicinity of Trenches 4 and 6 (HWCM 22308), and the presence of prehistoric features is sufficient to indicate that a significant level of Bronze

Age activity occurred in the vicinity. The density of material is no less here than in evaluation trenches at Huntsmans Quarry, Kemerton which proved, on later excavation, to pass through dense areas of Bronze Age domestic activity (Napthan *et al* 1997). Such sites are particularly difficult to identify using traditional evaluation methods due to the paucity of artefacts, non-survival of ceramics in the ploughsoil and the typically indistinct fills of cut features. The geophysical survey has indicated the possible presence of ring-ditches which may represent Bronze Age barrows (Fig 8). The presence of apparently residual cremated bone within an Iron Age context may be a further indication that this represents a second Bronze Age cemetery within the road corridor.

Iron Age

The extent of the evaluation trenches was insufficient to determine the precise form of the Iron Age defended enclosure revealed in the central area (HWCM 22308), however two distinct alignments (at approximately 90° angles) suggest rectilinear enclosures. This is supported by the evidence of the geophysical survey. Those ditches which do not share the principal east to west\north to south alignment seem to share a more north-west to south-easterly alignment which is possibly the earlier phase. The site is unusual in having evidence of the former existence of standing earthworks, which are a slight but discernible element of the modern topography. The presence of standing earthworks has enhanced preservation of features in the vicinity since a layer derived from the levelling of the earthworks has covered the adjacent ditches and protected them from modern plough damage.

Few internal features of the enclosure were revealed in the evaluation trench. The penannular ditch was unusual for a round-house gully in that the entrance apparently faced towards the north-west and therefore the prevailing wind. The internal features were also atypical in that no substantial postholes were identified. The suggestion must be raised therefore that this is an enclosure and not evidence for a building. The atypical entrance may possibly be explained by the proximity of a major ditch and bank immediately to the east, which would preclude an entrance in the usual position. This and the general density of features indicates that space was at a premium within the settlement - further evidence that it was constrained by defensive boundaries.

A fragment of cremated bone found within the penannular gully (fill 433) may indicate that inhumed cremations are also present in the immediate vicinity. As mentioned above the geophysical survey has indicated the possible presence of ring-ditches, indicative of round barrows, in this area and the cremated bone may therefore derive from a Bronze Age cremation.

Multiple-ditched enclosures are a distinctively Iron Age form of settlement, and are typically found on lowland sites. Multiple ditches and banks were a particularly effective defence against chariot borne assault. It has been suggested that the "monumentalizing" of the homestead with ditches and earthworks may have represented another stage in the general process that linked the control of the land to status and used the settlement as an outward and visible sign of this. It may even be that the complexity of earthworks directly reflected social status (Cunliffe 1995). Direct parallels for the Wyre Piddle site are rare in the region. A double ditched promontory enclosure with evidence of palisades and an internal bank was extensively excavated at Brant Farm Blackstone (HWCM 236) and demonstrated to be of the 3rd/4th centuries BC with occupation continuing until the 1st century AD. Unfortunately this site, which is the nearest excavated parallel (in the County)

to the Wyre Piddle site has not been published. Two irregular Iron Age enclosures were partially excavated at Aston Mill Farm, Kemerton (HWCM 10286) and produced evidence of double and triple ditches along parts of the boundary of otherwise single ditch enclosures (Dinn and Evans 1990). Enclosures of the Early and Middle Iron Age were excavated at Beckford (HWCM 10268; HWCM 10269; Dinn *pers comm*). A later Iron Age enclosure which continued into the Roman period was investigated during salvage recording in advance of gravel extraction at Astley (Walker 1958), similar continuity was observed during very limited salvage recording at Broadway where a double ditch and bank were associated with Iron Age ceramics (Smith 1946). An Iron Age enclosure ditch, apparently defensive, has recently been identified during evaluation of a ridge-top site at Hampton Lovett (HWCM 23317), this site appears to have continued into the early Roman period after levelling of the defences (Napthan, Pearson and Ratkai 1997).

For closer parallels to the apparent form of the Wyre Piddle enclosure it is necessary to look further afield. At Collfryn, Wales, in the upper Severn Valley a quadruple ditched enclosure approximately 150m in diameter enclosed a settlement of three or four round-houses (Bewley 1994). At Orsett, Essex, a single round-house with ancillary buildings was identified in a rectangular ditched enclosure consisting of three ditches with an adjoining annex protected by a further three ditches, covering a total area of 90x100m (Carter forthcoming). This latter example is closest in scale to the present site. The geophysical survey has indicated that the multi-vallate enclosure is approximately 45m across, however, the complexity of features in this area makes definition of any particular element difficult. The different alignment of several of the linear anomalies indicates that the probable field systems are not all contemporary with the multiple-ditched enclosure. The linear features identified as cropmarks on the field to the east of the Iron Age enclosure appear to be of early date, as they underlay ridge and furrow. A tentative interpretation is that these also represent part of a field system of Iron Age or Roman date.

Since there were only a few Roman sherds from the site and very few from Trench 4 there may only have been limited Roman activity in this area, probably no later than the early 2nd century. There was a slightly larger quantity of Roman pottery from the east of the site, in the area of the penannular ditch than from the west. At Gussage All Saints (Wainwright 1979), the Durotrigian settlement (1st century BC-1st century AD) little material cultural change occurred, with no appreciable difference in the coarsewares, the only evidence of Roman occupation being the presence of Samian sherds and brooches. It is therefore difficult to gauge whether, at Wyre Piddle, the enclosure was in use during the Roman period or whether the Roman pottery has been carried from another (unexcavated) area, possibly to the north, which was the focus of Roman occupation.

Few spatial patterns were visible in the pottery distribution apart from two. Firstly the briquetage occurred in two distinct and discrete areas, in or close to the penannular ditch, to the east of the site (111g) and in ditch fill 441, to the west (86g). A similar localised distribution of briquetage was noted at Danebury (Poole 1984). There was not a large quantity of briquetage only 74 sherds totalling less than a 1kg in weight. It was not possible to say how many briquetage vessels were represented but it need not have been many. At Winnall Down, for example, the majority of the sherds came from just two vessels, from two different phases (Morris 1985).

Secondly, the highest concentrations of pottery were not always found with the highest concentration of animal bone. This only occurs in one context, penannular ditch fill 403. Therefore the distribution of briquetage and the comparative distribution of animal bone and pottery suggest a certain degree of zoning in the disposal of rubbish and waste and in site use, though differential bone preservation is not unlikely.

Roman

In the central area, the two grave fills 439 and 451 (HWCM 22308) contained a small quantity of finds, mainly disturbed and redeposited material. The male skeleton from grave fill 451 (Fig 5), was found to have the corroded remains of a pair of hob-nailed boots. The female skeleton was found with a number of nails which probably came from a wooden coffin (Fig 6). The hob-nailed shoes indicate that this burial was Roman. The female burial is more difficult to date. The penannular ditch, through which the grave is cut, contains two Severn Valley ware sherds in its fill. If these are contemporary with the infilling of the ditch and not intrusive then the burial must be Roman. A wooden coffin is also more likely in this period. The lack of evidence of prolonged or intensive Roman occupation in this area would be in keeping with the focus of activity being outside the area excavated. The use of such "peripheral" land would be the reasonable place for burials in the Roman period. At Winnall Down (Fasham 1985), a concentration of nails and human bone fragments, interpreted as a coffin burial, were found in the ditch of enclosure A and belonged to the Romano-British period. At Gussage All Saints, the Durotrigian settlement contained several burials, only one of which resembled the two from Wyre Piddle. This was an adult male coffin burial set in a square cut grave. The male had also been wearing hob nailed boots. This burial was of 3rd century Roman date. The balance of evidence suggests therefore that both burials from Wyre Piddle are Roman.

The presence of early Roman burials within the earthworks of the Iron Age settlement is of considerable interest as it may represent a continuity of activity in the area, and possibly a tradition of burial in a family plot, which survived the move of the farmstead/settlement further to the north. Footwear burials have elsewhere also been demonstrated to be part of a distinctive burial rite, which may also be a family tradition (Crummy *et al*, 1993). The non-survival of organic materials in most site conditions does distort our interpretation of such practices - shoes without hobnails or other inorganic fittings are unlikely to be identified in normal soils due to total decay. Roman inhumations are rarely found associated with rural sites in the County (and this reflects a national shortfall in the number of rural cemeteries), although this is doubtless in part due to archaeological factors such as poor bone preservation and a concentration on the cores of farmsteads and settlements without investigation of the hinterland, it may also reflect an original funerary preference for cremation. The Monument Protection Programme has indicated that there is a "very serious lack of evidence" for rural funerary practices at this period.

The survival of elements of the Iron Age boundaries as visible elements of an earl Roman field system is significant as it may have influenced the development of the Roman agricultural system in the area. Thus it is of importance in the understanding of both the Roman farmstead/settlement north of the proposed roadline and the Iron Age settlement itself.

Animal bone was recovered only from this site, consisting of butchery waste from the common domesticate animals (including horse) in a number of features. A small quantity of charred cereal crop debris was also present.

The Roman settlement or farmstead in the western area appears to lie mainly to the north of the roadline, however significant deposits have been identified within the road corridor, and these are important in understanding the site as a whole with its attendant field system. The presence of iron-slag in part of the site is typical of Roman sites in the region and may indicate minor industrial activity. The absence of slag from Trench 4 suggests that this area of the site had a different function or was occupied at a different phase in the development of the site.

The post Roman activity
No significant post Roman deposits were encountered, this confirms the indications of the fieldwalking which suggests that the route was primarily agricultural land from the medieval period onwards.

Miscellaneous
The presence of human remains has legal implications beyond their archaeological significance and this must be considered in the future programme of works.

The fieldwalking survey which formed the initial stage of this evaluation was limited to approximately 25% of the route due to problems of access and crop cover. The geophysical scan of the route was intended to identify any sites which lay between the fieldwalked areas. The limitations of the geophysical survey must be considered before drawing the conclusion that any of the scanned areas are archaeologically sterile; the scanning mode was not sufficiently sensitive to pick up the weak magnetic responses that represented the complex of large features around the Iron Age enclosure in the central area. The detailed gradiometer survey also failed to identify some of the features excavated in the trenches. These problems are partly due to geological conditions and partly due to uneven (ploughed) ground surfaces. However, the detailed geophysical survey has identified the extent of the principal areas of Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman activity within the corridor and indicated wider areas in which archaeological deposits may be encountered. The results of the survey of the western area were rather disappointing in that few additional features were identified in this area.

9 Significance

In considering significance, the Secretary of State's criteria for the scheduling of ancient monuments (DoE 1990, annex 4), have been used as a guide.

These nationally accepted criteria are used for assessing the importance of an ancient monument and considering whether scheduling is appropriate. Though scheduling is not being considered in this case they form an appropriate framework for the assessment of any archaeological site. The criteria should not, however, be regarded as definitive; rather they are indicators which contribute to a wider judgment based on the individual circumstances of a case.

Period

Prehistoric sites are of particular archaeological significance as they form the only primary source for our understanding of the early stages in the development of agriculture and society. The prehistoric evidence identified during this evaluation points to a Bronze Age cremation cemetery adjacent to a possible Beaker or Bronze Age occupation site and another Bronze Age site, possibly domestic, overlain by an Iron Age defended enclosure. Such sites are all rare nationally and have rarely been excavated in the County. The presence of two Roman sites is also of interest as it shows a continuity of human settlement in the area. The Roman skeleton accompanied by nailed footwear, but dated to the 1st century, appears to be unusually early for this form of burial. Footwear burials are described by the Monument Protection Programme as usually 2nd century or later.

Rarity

Only one Bronze Age cremation cemetery has previously been identified in the County, whereas barrow cemeteries of this period are relatively common. Three sites in the County have produced isolated Bronze Age cremations which may represent the survival of deeper inhumed cremations in ploughed out cemeteries. Bronze Age settlement sites are equally rare in the County, only one (Kemerton; HWCM 21698) having been investigated in detail (Napthan *et al* 1997).

A number of Iron Age enclosures of simple irregular form are known from cropmarks but only one multiple ditched rectilinear enclosure has previously been excavated in the County (that being a promontory enclosure is likely to have had a different function to the present site). The site, on the present interpretation of the plan does not closely resemble any of the enclosure or settlement type-sites under Monument Protection Programme criteria, it cannot therefore be scored following those criteria. A site of possibly similar form has been excavated at Orsett Cock, Essex (Carter forthcoming). Such sites are rare nationally.

Small Roman rural cemeteries are also rare nationally and the lack of evidence for such sites has been noted by the Monuments Protection Programme.

Group value

The presence, during the Bronze Age and Roman period, of seperate but contemporary sites gives them a high group value. This is enhanced by the probable presence of both funerary and domestic sites for both periods. A continuity of activity in the area is represented by the group of sites which present a progression from low level neolithic through the Bronze Age and Iron Age to the Roman period. Each of the sites so far identified represents one or more of the components of transition and is therefore of high group value.

Survival/Condition

The western end of the route exhibited a degree of plough truncation, but the majority of features seem to have survived, postholes and gullies are shallow but traceable. The tenacious dense clayey soil provides a poor environment for ceramics and erosion of surfaces had frequently occurred. Little bone was found and it was in poor condition.

Conditions in the central area were by contrast much better. The presence of alluvium and a buried ploughsoil across most of Trenches 3 and 4 had

protected underlying deposits from recent plough damage. Despite ploughing, and possibly deliberate levelling, the presence of earthworks is still detectable from the surface topography. Bone and ceramics survived well in the soil conditions, though much of the early ceramic material identifiable in the field was so poorly fired that it was not recoverable, a problem often encountered on prehistoric sites in the County.

Fragility/vulnerability

The deposits in both of the areas of higher archaeological activity (Fig 12) are not deeply buried (approximately 0.25m to 0.6m deep) and (in the case of the central area) include slight but discernible earthworks. They are as a result very vulnerable to any disturbance which penetrates below the present plough horizon. Buried artefacts, ecofacts and human remains may also be severely damaged by the effects of compression and vibration if the site is buried by a layer of compacted material such as is typically used for road embankments.

Potential

The research potential for sites covering the period of transition between the Iron Age and Romanised cultures is extensive. The site lies on the fringes of Roman cultural expansion - to the north and west of the Lower Avon Valley there are few fully Romanised sites, whilst to the south and east lies an area of villa estates and small towns (Hingley 1989; Fig 68). This marginal area is poorly understood with the majority of sites known only from chance finds and patchy cropmark evidence.

The site has demonstrated that large and intensely occupied sites may, in unfavourable conditions, not be detected by either fieldwalking, cropmarks or geophysical scanning. Detailed study of such sites raises a potential research opportunity for refining archaeological prospection techniques.

10 Conclusions

The deposits in both of the areas selected for further evaluation have proved to be of regional and national significance. The sites are both well preserved but and may be very vulnerable to damage or destruction by the road scheme. The western site is principally important because of the Bronze Age cremations; such features are difficult to identify, especially when unaccompanied by ceramics, in any but controlled excavation conditions. The central site is of particular importance as it is a regionally rare site-type and has an exception level of preservation for a lowland Iron Age site in that it retains vestigual standing earthworks. Such earthworks would be very vulnerable to any form of heavy vehicular activity on the site and the softer fills of the ditches prone to distortion and compression by conventional road building techniques.

Both sites are of high archaeological potential with important assemblages of both artefactual and environmental evidence. Although only occasional concentrations of environmental remains were encountered, their presence is of significance as these remains are often poorly represented on sites of Bronze Age and Iron Age date. They demonstrate the potential to contribute towards a bank of environmental data, which for these periods is small, both in the County of Hereford and Worcester and nationally.

The route may be divided into areas of higher, lesser and low archaeological activity (Fig 12). The areas in which it has not been possible to fully evaluate

the archaeological potential (due to unsuitability for fieldwalking and geophysical scanning) are indicated on Figure 12 as being of unknown archaeological interest.

11 Academic summary

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service intend to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The Client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

An evaluation was undertaken on behalf of Hereford and Worcester County Council and Sir William Halcrow and Partners Ltd on two areas of the proposed Wyre Piddle bypass, the areas having been identified by a fieldwalking survey which formed the first stage of this project. Trenching was undertaken in order to establish the nature and condition of any surviving material. This was followed by a third stage, which consisted of geophysical survey of areas of the route not examined by other means.

At the western end of the route the results of the fieldwalking survey were confirmed by discovery of Roman features, probably representing a farmstead or minor settlement. The presence of late Bronze Age features was not predicted by the fieldwalking. The deposits represent a Bronze Age cemetery as the features included three cremations, two accompanied by urns, and a ditch probably of that period. Small quantities of worked flint, including a broken piercer of Beaker or Bronze Age date, and burnt stone were also recovered from this area. Further Bronze Age activity in the central a number of flint flakes, a core and two scrapers were recovered from the central area of the route. They were mostly residual in Iron Age features, but it would appear that the earliest features are of Bronze Age date.

The major phase of activity in the central area of the route is of Iron Age date. A very dense concentration of features was encountered within and immediately to the north of the road corridor. These features are principally ditches, many of which are sufficiently substantial to be interpreted as defensive. There are also indications of upcast banks, one of which may have survived as a visible earthwork until the post-medieval period. The ditches appear to represent multiple enclosures of several phases. One circular ditch, possibly a round-house gully, and several postholes and pits were identified. Together with the artefactual evidence) the structural evidence points towards a defended settlement, probably with associated agricultural enclosures.

The scatter of Roman material identified by field-walking lay to the north of the route, its presence was confirmed in one trench off the roadline, but no distinct concentrations of Roman activity were identified within the road corridor. The presence of two human burials of probable early Roman date and Roman pottery in recut Iron Age ditches suggests that the road corridor passes through the periphery of a substantial Roman site, which on the basis of the surface finds includes buildings in the Roman tradition (tiled roofs and tesselated floors). The Roman activity actually within the road corridor appears to be primarily agricultural, with the then upstanding earthworks of the Iron Age settlement being used as a graveyard.

The geophysical survey confirmed the nature of the enclosures in the central area of the route and indicates that the spread of features is greater towards the west than originally anticipated on the evidence of the trenches. In the western area the geophysical survey was less successful but still has helped to define the spread and nature of the larger features. The project has demonstrated that a combination of non-intrusive techniques may be used to target areas of interest but that the only definitive method of determining the presence or absence and nature of archaeological deposits remains excavation.

12 The archive

The archive consists of:

138 Context records AS1
10 Fieldwork progress records AS2
209 Colour transparencies
2 Black and white photographic films
18 Scale drawings
8 Boxes of finds

The project archive will be placed at:

Hereford and Worcester County Museum
Hartlebury Castle
Hartlebury
Near Kidderminster
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ

Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416

13 Acknowledgements

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The pathological report was kindly prepared by R M Flynn Msc, MB, ChB, MBCS, FBIS of the Department of Ancient History and Archaeology, University of Birmingham.

14 Personnel

Dave Wichbold, Nigel Topping, Paul Godbehere and Robin Jackson and Simon Woodiwiss assisted with the fieldwork. Environmental sampling, processing and analysis was undertaken by Liz Pearson. The artefacts from

HWCM 23390 were assessed by Annette Hancock, the artefacts from HWCM 22308 were assessed by Stephanie Ratkai who also prepared the finds report. The flint was commented on by Robin Jackson. The illustrations were prepared for this report by Carolyn Hunt and Steve Rigby. Simon Woodiwiss and Robin Jackson edited the report. The project was designed and co-ordinated by Robin Jackson and Mike Napthan. The fieldwork was led by Mike Napthan.

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16 Abbreviations and glossary

HWCM - Numbers prefixed with "HWCM" are the primary reference numbers used by the Hereford and Worcester County Sites and Monuments Record.

HWCC - Hereford and Worcester County Council.

HWCRO - Hereford and Worcester County Records Office.

CMHTS - Central Marches Historic Towns Survey

Sitecode	Context	Type	Period	Sample size (l)	Volume sieved (l)	Residue sorted (ml)	Residue remaining (ml)	Flot sorted (ml)	Flot remaining (ml)	Comments
22308	403	ditch	Iron Age	10	10	1200	0	20	0	
22308	406	ditch	Iron Age	20	20	1600	0			
22308	413	ditch	Iron Age?	10	10	600	0	10	0	
22308	439	gully	Iron Age?	30	30	3500	0	50	0	
22308	461	ditch	Iron Age	10	10	500	0	30	0	flot - scanned only
22308	473	linear feature	Iron Age?	10	10	1300	0	10	0	flot - scanned only
23390	401	burial	Roman	50	20	2800	0	350	300	
23390	411	burial	Roman	10	0	0	0	0	0	
23390	417	ditch	Iron Age?	10	0	0	0	0	0	

Table 1: List of environmental samples

HWCM	Context	Type	large mammal	small mammal	fish	mollusc	charred plant	waterlog plant	Comment
22308	403	ditch	occ	occ	occ		occ		
22308	406	ditch	occ						
22308	413	ditch	occ				occ		
22308	439	gully	mod	occ			mod	occ	
22308	461	ditch	occ			abt			
22308	473	linear feature				occ-mod			
23390	401	burial	abt				mod		human cremation

Key:
occ = occasional
mod = moderate
abt = abundant

Table 2: Summary of environmental remains from selected samples

Botanical name	common name	habitat	401	403	413	439
Charred plant remains						
Triticum dicoccum/spelta grain	emmer/spelt wheat	F	2			1
T dicoccum/spelta glume		F				2
Triticum spelta grain	spelt wheat	F	2			
T spelta glume		F		1		
Triticum sp grain	wheat	F	4			1
Hordeum vulgare grain	barley	F				2
cf *Secale cereale*	rye	AF				1
Cereal sp indet grain	cereal	F				45
coleoptile			1			
Lolium perenne type	rye-grass	ABF		2		
Lolium/Festuca sp	fescue/rye-grass	ABF	1			
Bromus sp	brome grass	AF				1
Avena sp	oat	AF				
Gramineae sp indet grain	grasses	AF	2	1		5
Raphanus raphanistrum pod	All	2				
Chenopodiaceae sp indet	goosefoot etc	ABCD				1
Vicia/Lathyrus sp	vetch/vetchling/pea	ABCD	8			
Medicago cf *lupulina*	black medick	AD	20			
Leguminosae sp indet	legume	ABCD				4
Rumex acetosella agg	sheep's sorrel	A	5			
Galium aparine	cleavers	AB				1
Scirpus/Schoenoplectus sp	club-rush	AE				2
unidentified			+			

Site key:
HWCM 23308 = 403, 413 and 439
HWCM 23390 = 401

Habitat key
A = cultivated ground
B = disturbed ground
C = woodlands, hedgerows and scrub etc
D = grasslands, meadows, acid heathland
E = aquatic/wet habitats: ditches, streambanks etc
F = cultivar

Abundance key
+ = 1-10
++ = 11-50
+++ = 51-100
++++ = 100

Table 3: The plant remains

context	period	weight (g)	preserv	fragmentn
100	Rom	24	good	4
402	E Rom	20	mod	1
403	IA	403	mod	4
404	IA	320	mod	2
405	IA	44	good	1
406	IA	484	mod	2
410	IA?	4	poor	5
411	IA	2	mod	5
413	IA	420	good	3
421	IA	34	good	2
429	IA?	2	mod	4
431	prehis	148	mod	2
433	IA?	146	poor	3
435	IA	34	mod	3
439	IA	64	mod	3
441	prehis	236	mod	4
444	prehis	42	poor	4
446	IA	8	mod	4
447	Rom	6	mod	5
451	preh/Rom	12	poor	5
453	prehis	118	poor	1
454	preh/Rom	16	mod	3
457	IA?	6	good	5
462	IA	242	mod	3
463	IA	4	poor	5
468	preh/Rom	546	mod	2
476	IA	8	mod	5
487	IA	312	good	1
Total		3705		

Key:

preserv = preservation (condition)

fragmentn = fragmentation

prehis = prehistoric

Rom = Roman

E Rom = Early Roman

IA = Iron Age

***Table 4**: Central area (HWCM 23308), list of hand-collected animal bone*

Sum of frags	species									
context	hor	cow	shp/gt	l ungul	s ungul	ungul	human?	bird	indet	Grand Total
402	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
403	0	5	18	5	16	35	0	0	0	79
404	0	2	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	8
405	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
406	0	2	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	9
413	0	4	0	36	0	0	0	0	0	40
421	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
431	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	5	3	2
433	0	3	1	2	0	10	1	0	0	6
435	0	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	5
439	0	0	9	2	2	0	0	0	0	3
441	0	6	0	8	0	0	0	0	5	9
453	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
462	1	2	4	23	1	0	0	0	0	31
487	1	1	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	7
Grand Total	5	27	38	98	19	45	0	5	8	246

Key:

hor = horse
shp/gt = sheep or goat
l ungul = large ungulate (horse/cow/red deer size)
s ungul = small ungulate (sheep/goat/pig/roe or fallow deer size)
indet = unidentified

Table 5: Central area (HWCM 23308), hand-collected animal bone: species distribution

Sum of frags	part								
context	head	vertebr	u limb	foot	l limb	limb	metapod	indet	Grand Total
402	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
403	19	2	1	3	1	12	1	40	79
404	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	4	8
405	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
406	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	6	9
413	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	36	40
421	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
431	0	1	1	0	1	0	4	5	12
433	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	13	17
435	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	5
439	8	3	1	0	0	0	0	1	13
441	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	19
453	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
462	0	2	1	4	2	5	1	16	31
487	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	5	7
Grand Total	43	11	8	10	5	17	12	140	246

Key:

Head = skull, jaw and teeth

vertebr = vertebrae (vertebrae and ribs)

u limb = upper limb (scapula, humerus, pelvis, femur)

l limb = lower limb (radius, ulna; tibia, fibula)

metapod = metapodials

foot = (calcaneus, astragalus, phalanges etc)

Table 6: Central area (HWCM 23308), hand-collected animal bone: anatomical part distribution

Context	Prehistoric pottery	Roman pottery	Medieval pottery	post-med pottery	modern pottery	fired clay	Flint	Iron	cu alloy	Animal bone	Human skeleton	Burnt stone	Tile	Brick	Misc
100	26		1							4			3	3	2
101		7	2		1								3		
300		1													
400		2	1				3		1						
401		1	1	2									1		
402	79	24					3		1	2					
403	65						2			89		1			
404	19									8					
404?	2									2					
405	17									2					
406	12					1				9					
408	1						2								
410	20						2			3					
411	2									2					
413	8									43		1			
415?	5											7			
417	1						1								
419						1									
421	5									2					
423							2								
425							1			1					
429	2						1			2					
431	6					1	4	30		27	1	2			
433	2	2								18					
435	9					2				5					
439	38					1		1?		18		3			2
441	37	1					1			24		1			
444	3									25					
446	1									1			3		
447	5	1								3					
449											1				
451	2							2		4			1	1	
453	frags									2					
454	2	1					1		1	1					
455	2														
457	11									1					
459	8														
461	4									40					
463	3									5					
466	3	7		1						2			1		1
467		1				1	1								
468	1	4				11				24					2
469	13														
471													1		
473	1						1								
476	1									10					
483	16						1			5					
485										2					
487	15									4					
490	1														
491	frags									2					
496						4				1					2
500		4	2												
600			2				1								
601			2												
Total	448	56	11	3	1	22	27	32	3	393	2	15	13	4	9

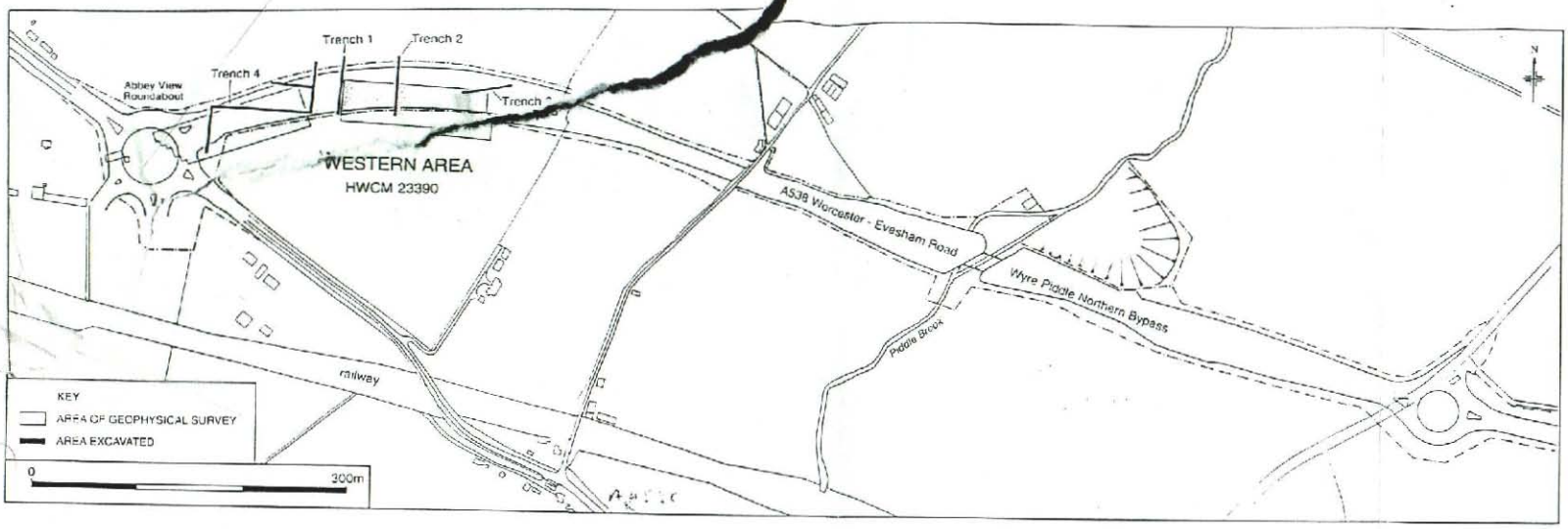
Table 7: Central area (HWCM 22308) artefacts and ecofacts

Fabric	Bronze Age	Malvernian 3	4.1	4.4	4.6	5.1	B15	B30-31	Miscellaneous prehistoric	Briquelage	Severn Valley	BB1	Shell gritted	Medieval	Post medieval	Total
Context																
400											2			1		3
401											1			1	2	4
402		7	3	8		5		40	16		24					103
403		51	2							12						65
404		19														19
?404		1								1						2
405		8					2			7						17
406		9	1	2												12
408		1														1
410		19	1													20
411										2						2
413		5	1		1		1									8
415		5														5
417		1														1
421										5						5
429			2													2
431		1	2				1			2						6
433		1							fragments	1	2					4
435		7								2						9
439		18								20						38
441		21								16	1					38
444		2							1							3
446										1						1
447		2		1					2		1					6
451		2														2
453									fragments							frags
454	1									1	1					3
455										2						2
457		11														11
459		1	7													8
461	1								3							4
463		3														3
466									2		7				1	10
467											1					1
468										1	2	1	1			5
469		6							6	1						13
473		1														1
476			1													1
483		1				3			12							16
487		15														15
490		1														1
491									fragments							frags
Total	2	219	20	11	1	8	4	40	42	74	42	1	1	2	3	470

Table 8: Pottery fabric types (quantification by sherd count) Trench 4, Central area (HWCM 22308)

							Trench 1						Trench 2										Trench 4													
Context	100		101		102		103		105		109		201		400		401		403		405		407		409		411		414		416		417		419		420		Total	
	Count	Wt (g)	Count	Wt (g)	Count	Wt (g)	Count	Wt (g)	Count	Wt (g)	Count	Wt (g)	Count	Wt (g)	Count	Wt (g)	Count	Wt (g)	Count	Wt (g)	Count	Wt (g)	Count	Wt (g)	Count	Wt (g)	Count	Wt (g)	Count	Wt (g)	Count	Wt (g)	Count	Wt (g)	Count	Wt (g)	Count	Wt (g)	Count	Wt (g)
Findtype																																						
Pottery																																						
Prehistoric																	1	18									37	952							2	50			40	1020
Roman			17	202	347	2660	17	138	5	385	833	1240			12	154			6	10	4	20	1	14	3	36	24	88	13	98	2	2					2	10	585	4710
Post-medieval	1	14																																			1	14
Tile			1	28	1	2							2	138																							4	168
Stone					4	256																					1	36									5	292
Daub																													964									964
Iron											6	220	1	118																							7	338
Slag			2	118					4	104																											6	222
Bone									1		1	2					1	12	4	2					16	132	5	20							52				26	220
Flint											1	1															1	2									2	3
Coal												16																										16
Other			1		1	14																															1	14

Table 9: Summary of finds; Western area (HWCM 23390)



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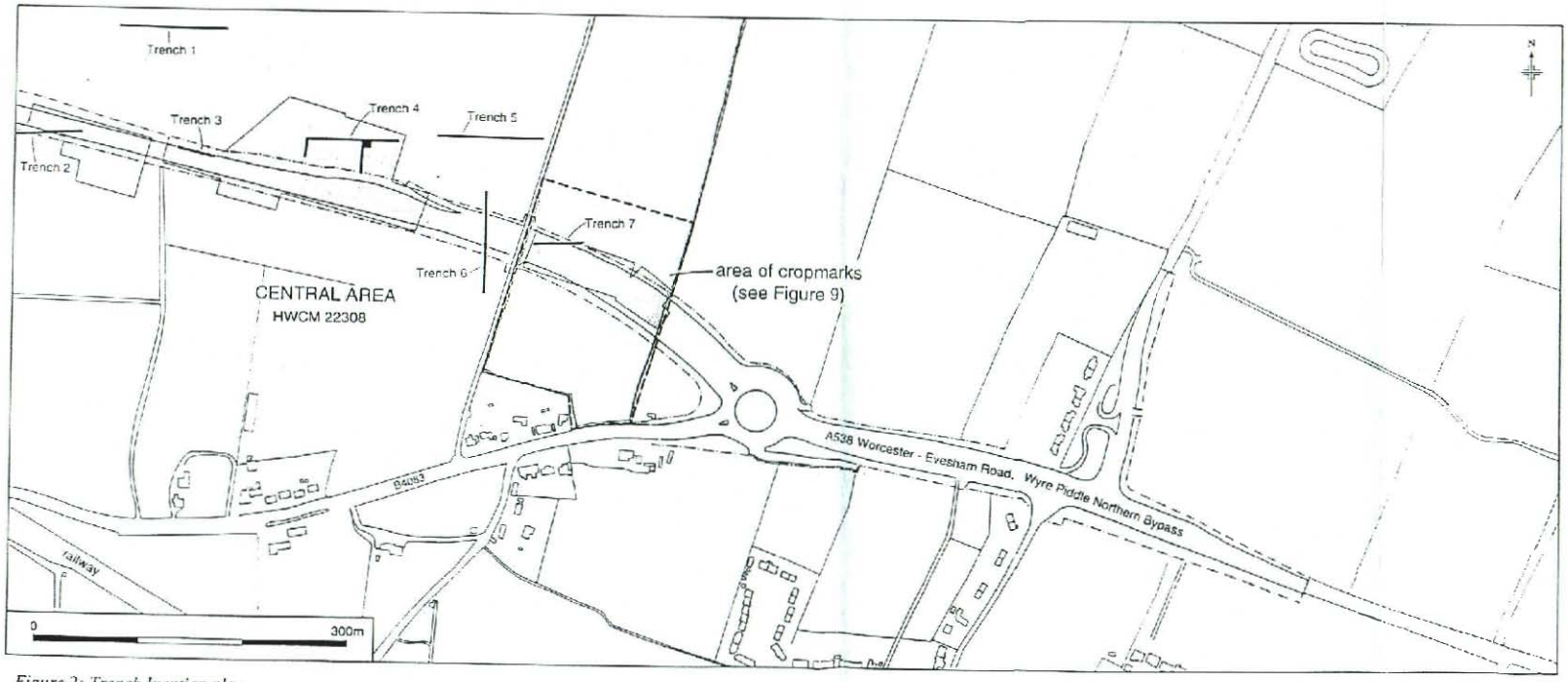


Figure 2: Trench location plan

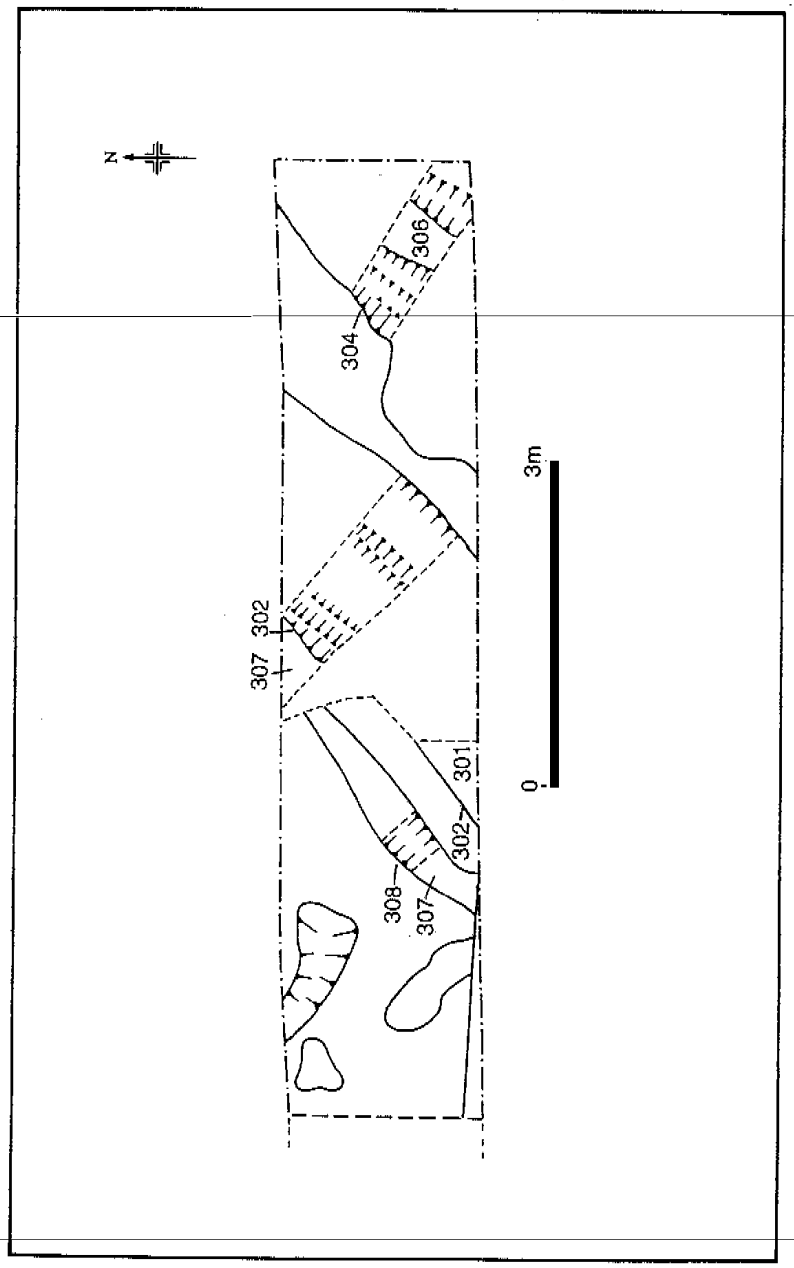


Figure 3: Trench 3 plan, central area (HWCM 22308)

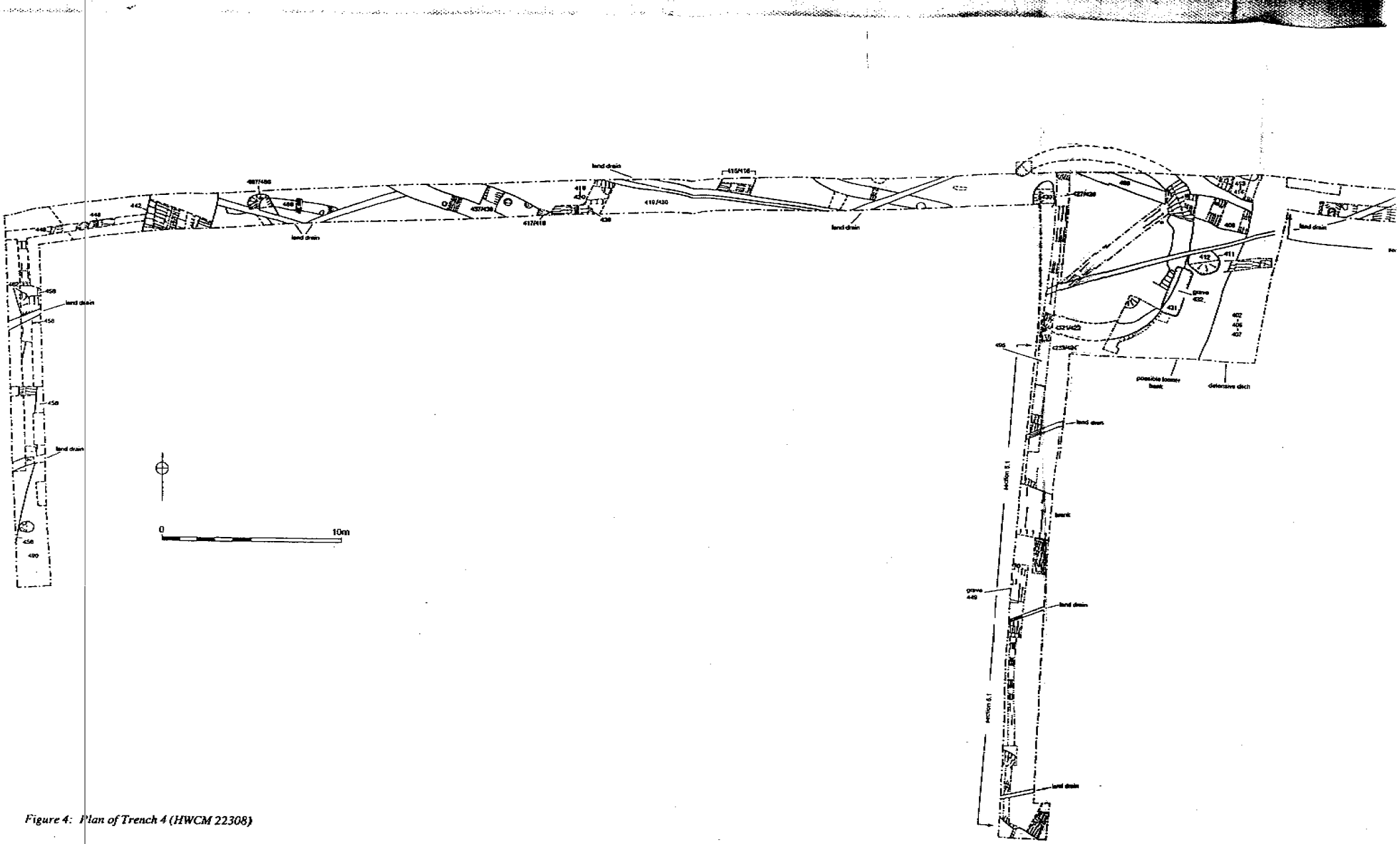
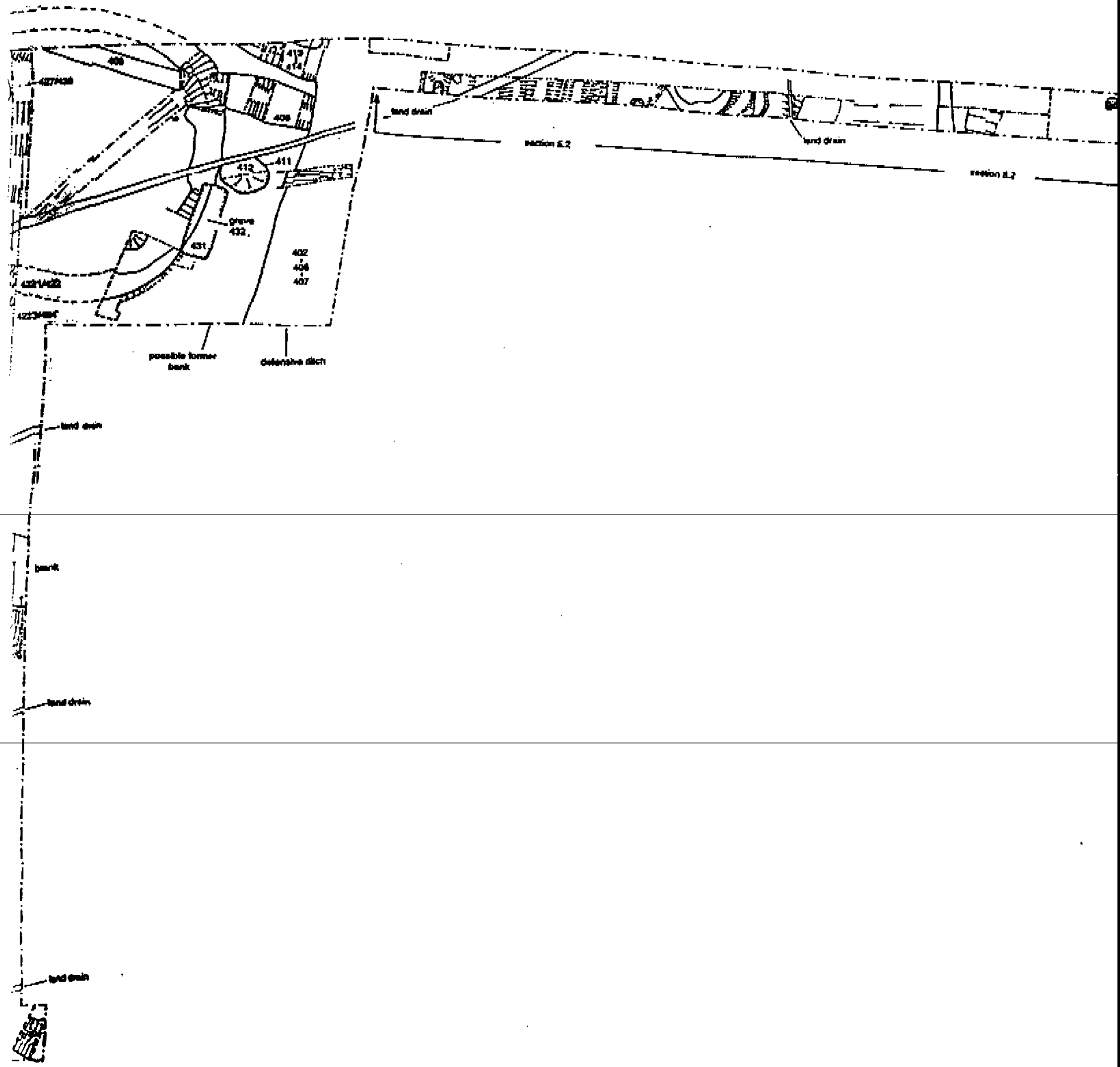


Figure 4: Plan of Trench 4 (HWCM 22308)



land drain
section 8.2
section 8.2
land drain
411
412
grave
432
431
402
406
407
possible former
bank
defensive ditch
land drain
bank
land drain
land drain

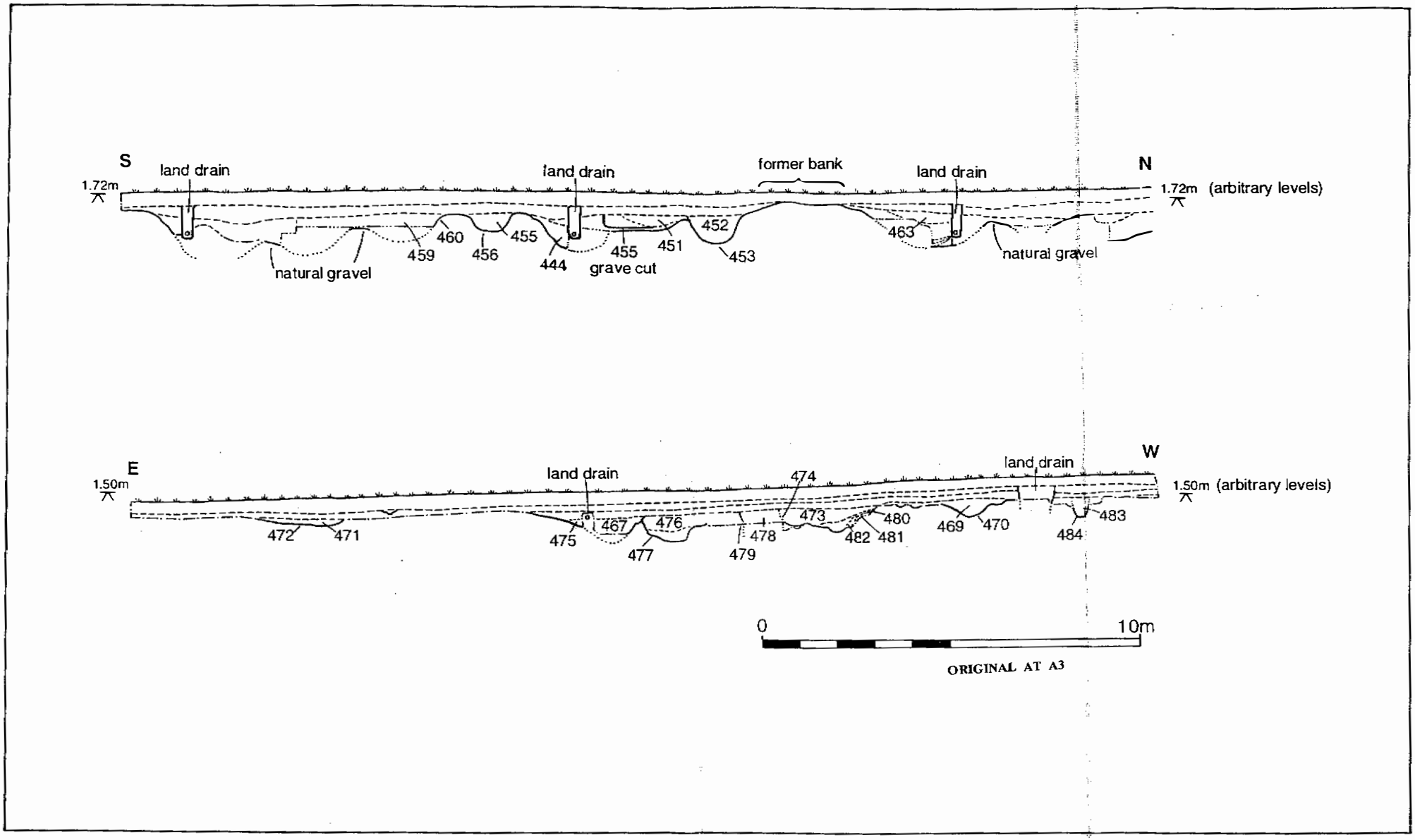


Figure 5: Trench 4 sections, central area (HWCM 22308)

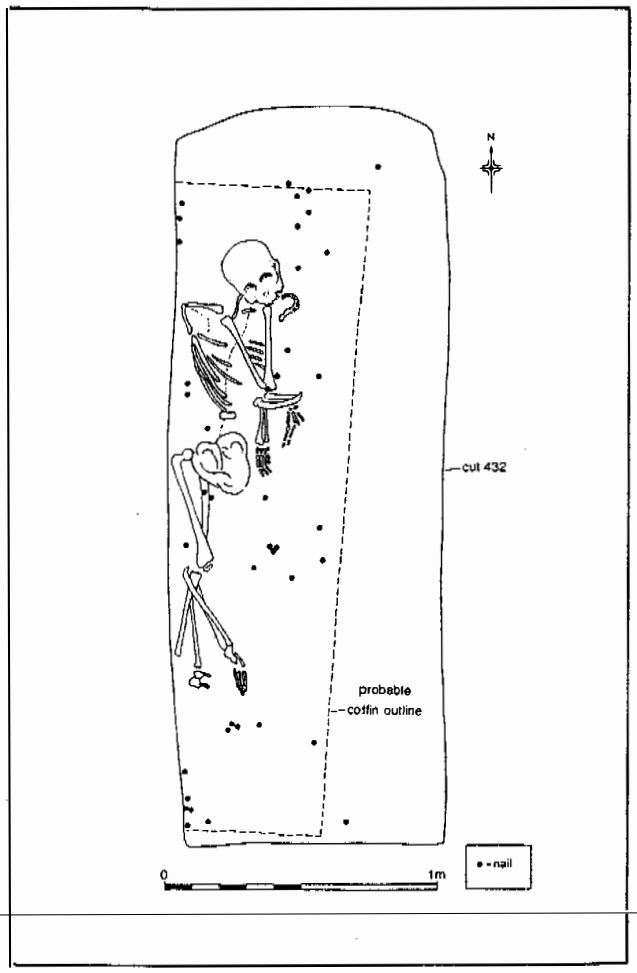


Figure 6: Grave 431, central area (HWCM 22308)

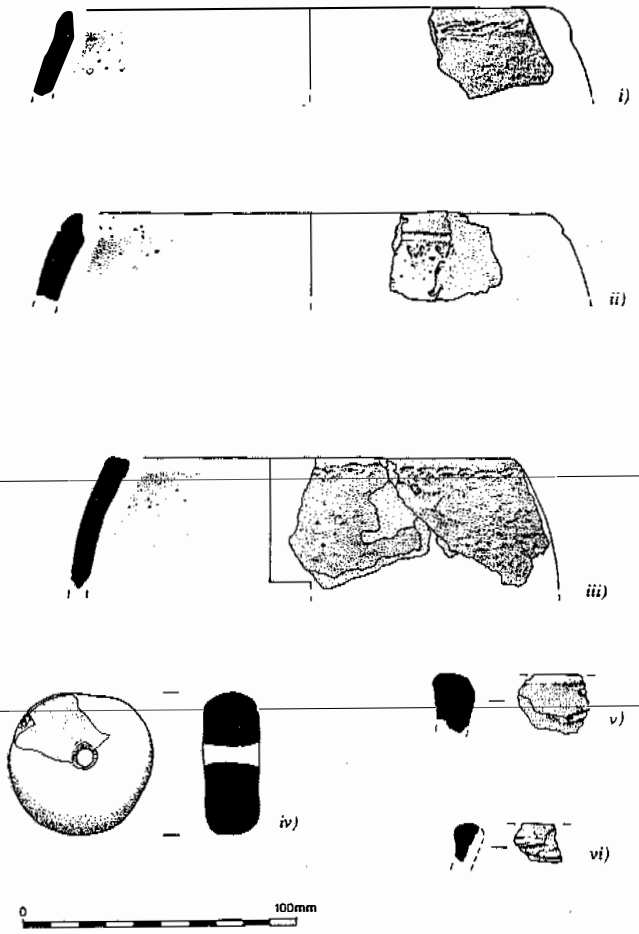


Figure 7: Selected artefacts, central area (HWCM 22308)

i) Iron Age pot (context 404)
ii) Iron Age pot (context 405)
iii) Iron Age pot (context 413) Croft Ambrey/Bredon Hill type
iv) Perforated stone weight (surface of 419)
v) Rim sherd (context 405)
vi) Rim sherd (context 403)

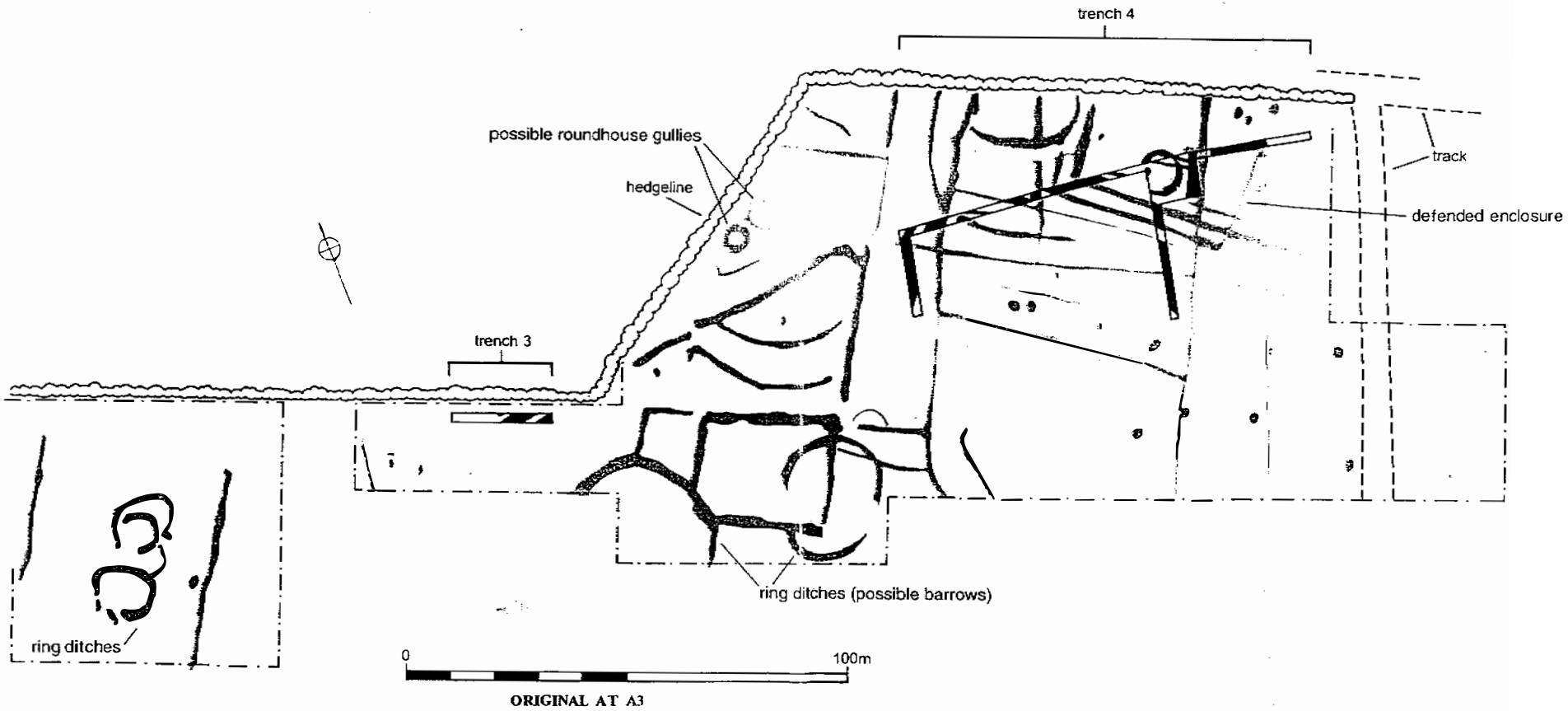


Figure 8: Interpretative plot of major anomalies and excavated features (HWCM 22308) based on geophysical survey, (not all geophysical anomalies are shown)

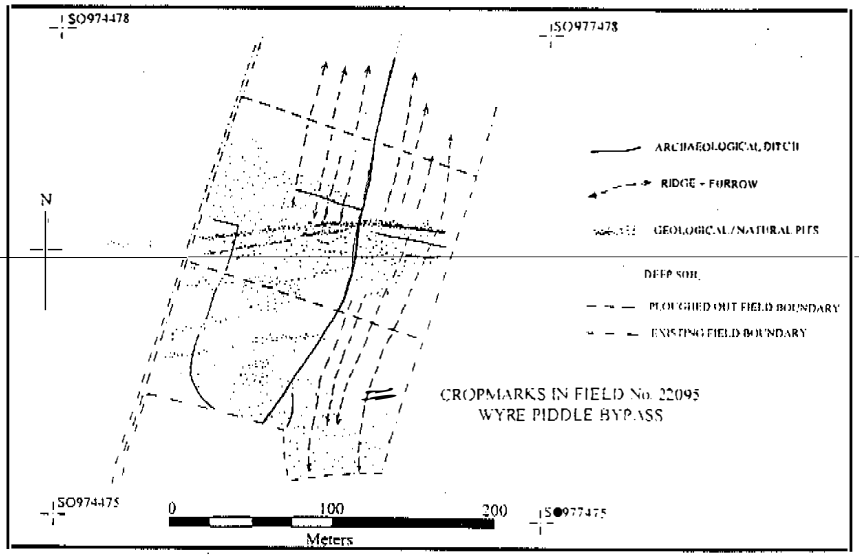


Figure 9: Interpretative plot of cropmarks to the east of track, central area (HWCM 22308)

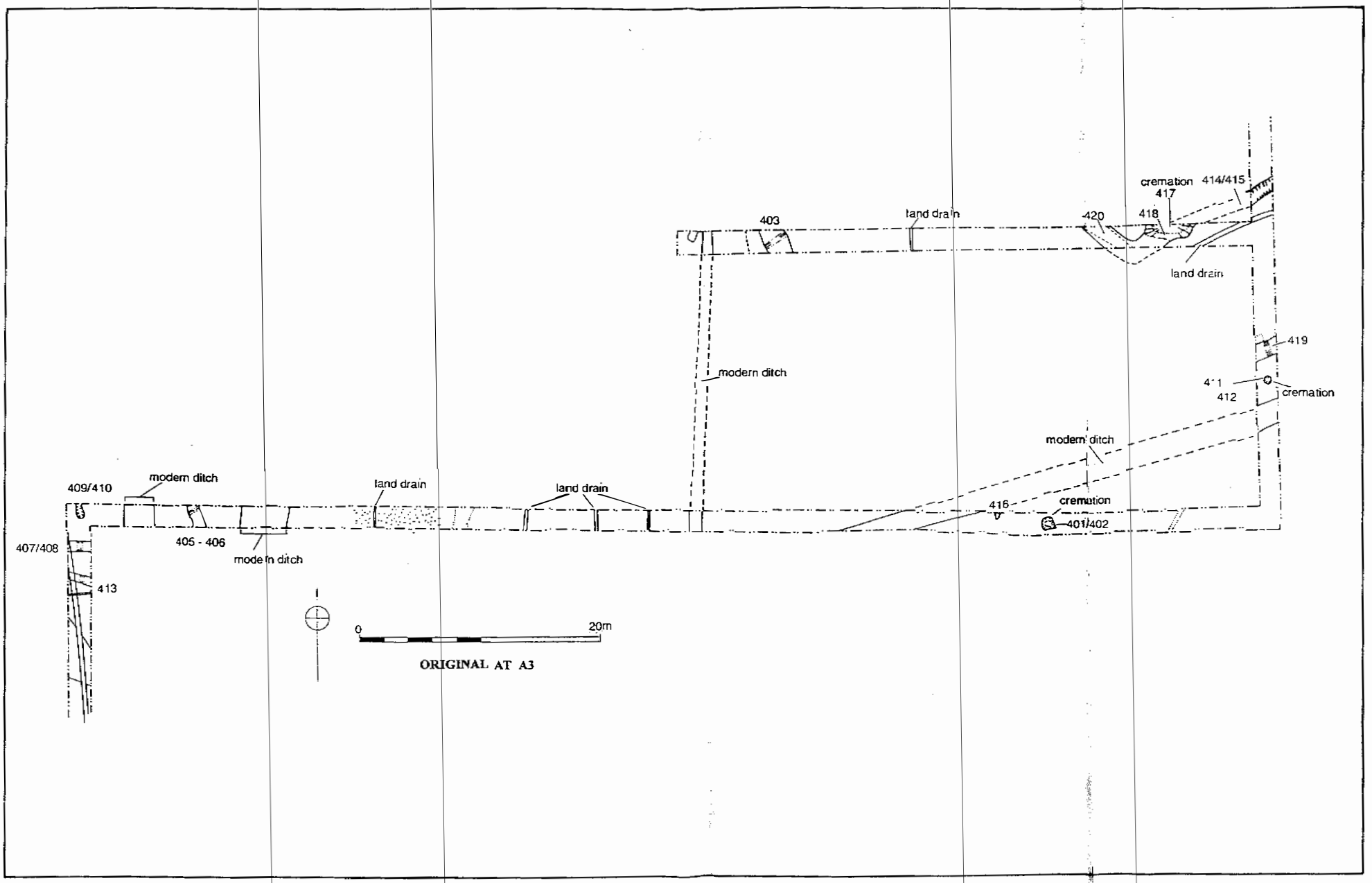


Figure 10: Trench 4 plan, western area (HWCM 23390)

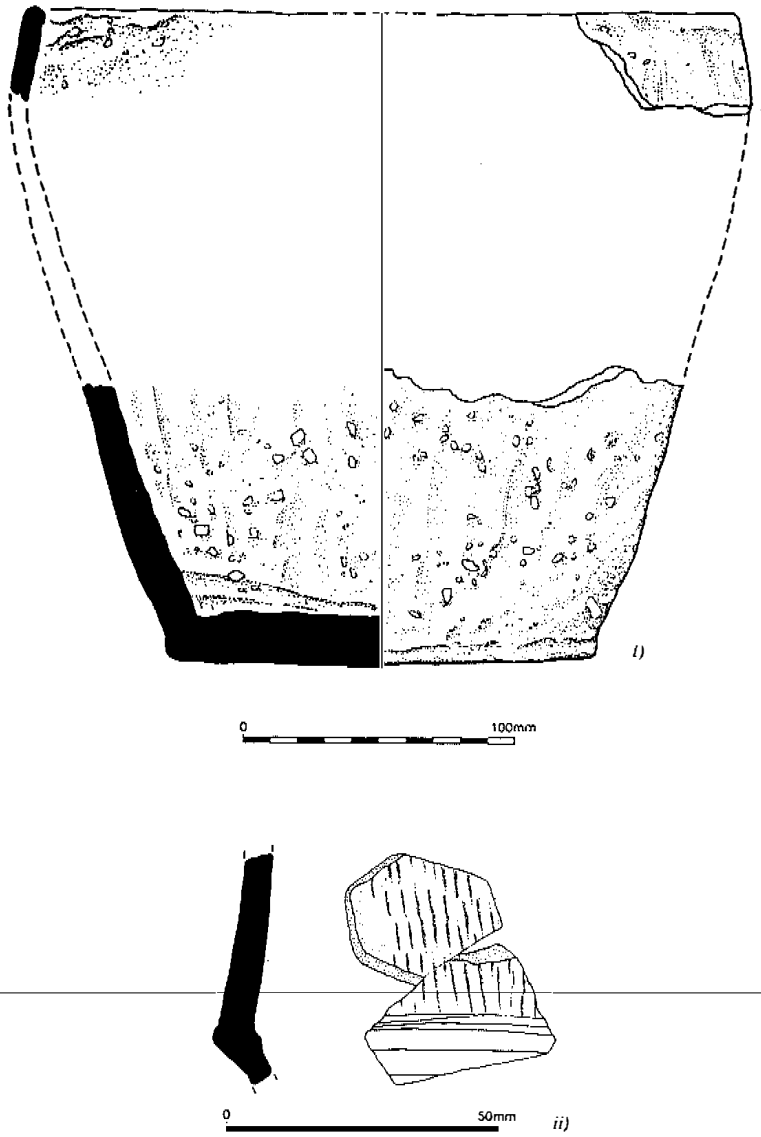
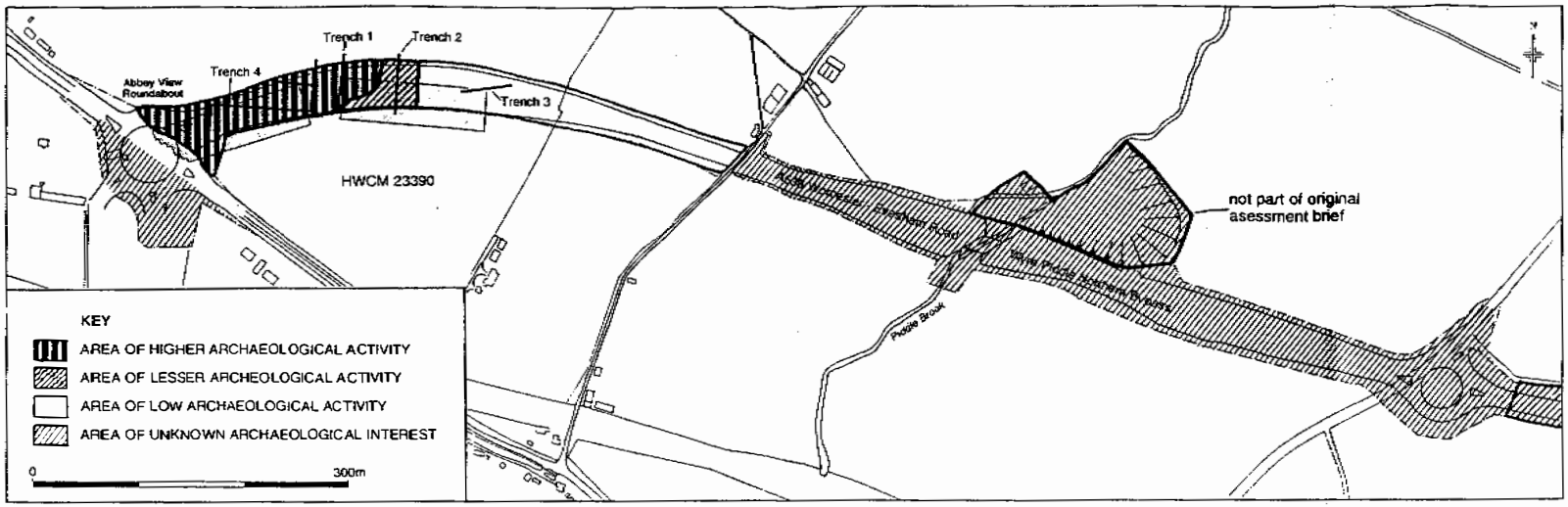


Figure 11: Selected artefacts, western area (HWCM 22390)

i) Bronze Age cremation urn (context 411)
ii) Rouletted Terra sigilata sherd (Drag. 30) Central Gaul (Fabric 43: context 102)



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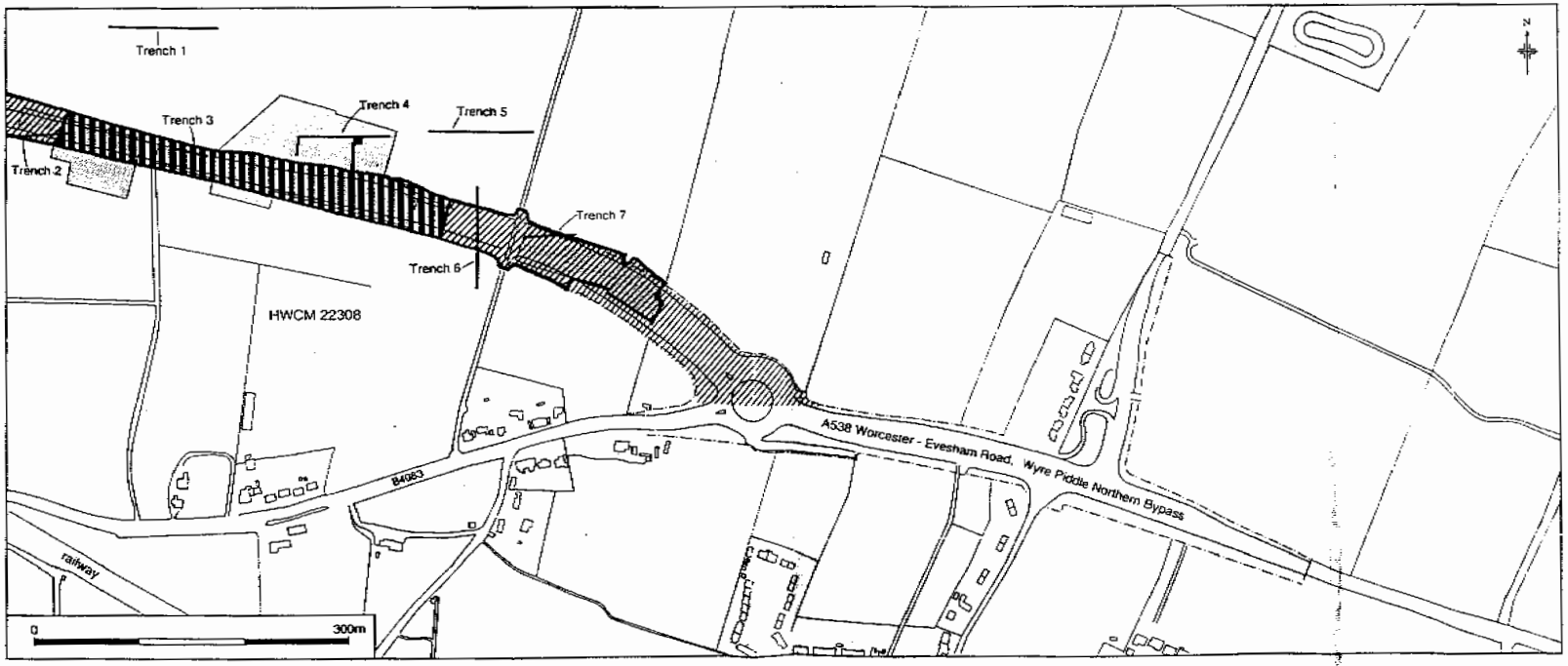

Figure 12: Areas of archaeological interest