



Truro Eastern District Centre Field 4, Cornwall Archaeological Watching Brief



Report No

2015R063

Report Name

Truro Eastern District Centre Field 4
Watching Brief

Report Author

S R Taylor

Event Type

Watching Brief

Client Organisation

Capital Projects
Cornwall Council

Client Contact

Rob Orchard

Monuments (MonUID)

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Fieldwork dates (From)

September
2015

(To)

September
2015

(Created By)

SRT

(Create Date)

9/10/2015

Location (postal address; or general location and parish)

Truro Eastern District Centre
Newquay Road, Truro

(Town - for urban sites)

(Postcode)

TR1 1RH

(Easting) X co-ord

183690

(Northing) Y co-ord

45850



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Cover Post medieval field boundaries [4210] (left) and [4204] (right), facing east

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1 Project background

Cornwall Archaeological Unit (CAU), Cornwall Council was commissioned by Mr Tim Wood, on behalf of Capital Projects, Cornwall Council, to undertake a watching brief during additional site works for the development of land for a park and ride scheme, retail outlets, housing, a household waste recycling centre, and associated structures and infrastructure at Newquay Road and Union Hill, Truro (Planning Application Number: 11/04599). The majority of the site, covering approximately 23.5ha centred on SW 841 459, has already been investigated and recorded by CAU through excavation (Taylor 2013) and watching briefs (Taylor 2015). This document reports on the final area to be stripped of topsoil, an area of 0.35 Ha, on land immediately to the east of the Newquay Road (Fig 1). This part of the development lies in the parish of Truro.

The Historic Environment Planning Advice Officer (HEPAO), Cornwall Council was consulted over the requirements for the archaeological recording on the site as a whole, and he prepared a brief asking for total excavation of three areas and a continuous watching brief in the fourth. These areas were dealt with in 2012 and the results from this phase of the project are contained in a separate archive report (Taylor 2013). A further intermittent watching brief was specified to be carried out on the remaining areas where groundworks took place. A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was produced by CAU to cover this phase of the project and this was accepted by the HEPAO. The majority of this part of the project has already been reported on (Taylor 2015). This archive report covers the intermittent watching brief phase of the project carried out in September 2015 during groundworks on the final area to be stripped of topsoil.

Previous work on the site, identified and potential sites, aims and objectives, and methodology have all been outlined in previous reports (Taylor 2013; 2015).

The site has been reported on with reference to field numbers (Fields 1-6) used in the 2012 excavations (Taylor 2013). The work reported on in this document was confined to the western edge of Field 4.

The fieldwork was undertaken in September 2015 by Anna Lawson-Jones.

2 Fieldwork

2.1 Previous work

The investigated field lies at the western end of the development, adjoining Tregurra Lane and the A39 Newquay Road. A geophysical survey (GSB 2009) had identified elements of the field systems and the trackways. An evaluation (Cotswold Archaeology 2010) had identified elements of the field systems and three pits. Of these two displayed evidence of *in situ* burning, whilst the other was interpreted as a tree throw. A large area was stripped as part of the 2012 excavations (Taylor 2013) and this revealed a number of features interpreted as tree throws, a large number of pits, many of which were hearths, elements of an Iron Age field system, and also of a medieval field system, and a network of roads/trackways.

The watching brief in 2014 within Field 4 did not identify all the features which were expected. This was largely due to the method of stripping that was employed by the contractor during the initial phase of the project. A bladed bulldozer was used to strip the soil over a large part of the western corner of the field on the site of the works compound, immediately to the east of the area reported on here. This meant that many archaeological features, even those identified by the geophysical survey, did not survive and therefore the record for this part of the site is not as complete as it could have been. The watching brief did, however, reveal elements of underlying field systems, a long stretch of metalled road, and a number of pits, postholes, hearths, and an oven.

Dated deposits and features were largely confined to the Middle Iron Age (a context, now thought to be disturbed, in one of the trackways), Late Iron Age/Roman periods (elements of an underlying field system), the Roman/early medieval periods (a hearth pit), medieval (field system), and post-medieval (the roads).

2.2 Results

An area of 0.35 Ha was stripped by a machine fitted with a flat grading bucket under archaeological supervision. Recorded features were located using a GPS unit and newly identified features were hand-dug and recorded in section. The area had been used as a topsoil dump and the natural substrate, once stripped, was observed to be heavily wheel-rutted making the identification of features, if there, difficult.

A full list of the contexts recorded is given in Appendix 1 and should be referred to where more detail is required. A brief summary of these is given below. The features are shown on Figure 2.

2.2.1 Topography

This part of the field is fairly level, sloping down slightly to the south. Outside of the stripped area the field steepens to the east, forming the head of the 'dry' valley that becomes the Tregurra Stream to the east. The field straddles two Devonian sedimentary rock formations according to the BGS geological map (Sheet EW352), the Porttowan series to the north and the Portscatho series to the south.

2.2.2 Natural stratigraphy

The investigations in this field failed to reach solid bedrock and the earliest material encountered was geliflucted head deposits of periglacial origin, (4020).

2.2.3 Archaeological features

Hearth pit

[4316]

This field contained a single pit, interpreted as a hearth, containing strong evidence for *in situ* burning. Pit [4316] was shallow (0.08m), probably heavily plough truncated, 1.1m by 0.9m, and contained a single oxidised fill. No dating evidence was recovered from the feature.

Burnt pits

[4313] [4318] [4323]

Three pits containing burnt fills but no evidence for *in situ* burning were identified. Pit [4313] contained two fills, the primary fill being very-charcoal-rich. The other two pits contained single fills. All of the pits were shallow, the deepest being 0.12m, and of similar size (0.6m-0.8m across). No dating evidence was recovered from these features.

Field system (medieval)

[4018] [4320]

Field ditch [4018] spanned the full width (northeast-southwest) of Field 4 and had previously been identified as a feature of medieval date (Taylor 2013). No further recording was undertaken on it other than to plot its extent.

Field ditch [4320] was visible as a geophysical anomaly (GSB 2009) running north-south in the western corner of the field. The feature had been evaluated by a trench (Cotswold Archaeology 2010, T28) but this had failed to identify it. During the watching brief only a short section of ditch [4320], was definitively identified, although a linear shadow was plotted across much of the area. The feature was shallow (0.18m) and narrow (0.4m) and probably represents the truncated remains of a shallow medieval field ditch.

Field system (post-medieval)

[4204] [4210]

Two parallel ditches were identified crossing the northern edge of the stripped area from northeast to southwest. These had already been recorded elsewhere (Taylor 2015) and only their extents were plotted during this phase of works. They represent the remains of a post-medieval Cornish hedge, one that is not featured on the historic OS mapping or the 1842 St Clement Tithe Map.

Road RD1 (post medieval)

(4308) [4310] (4322)

The 2012 excavations (Taylor 2013) investigated two intersecting geophysical anomalies (GSB 2009; 2010), one of which ran from F6, arced through the western side of F4 and into F5, then reappeared on the southern side of the A39. The other ran from the Newquay Road to join with the first, perpendicular to it, halfway across F4. The geophysical anomaly of the longer feature changed from a negative 'ditch' feature to a negative-positive-negative feature redolent of a double-ditched Cornish hedge at around the intersection of the two features. The 2012 excavations revealed that the anomalies represented a well-constructed road, with deep drainage ditches either side of a metalled surface. To the northwest of the intersection the road was a sunken feature, but still with drainage ditches. At the intersection itself drainage ditches associated with the section running from the Newquay Road cut through the sunken road but could not be traced southwestwards for more than around 5m from the intersection. This section of road was not sunken but no metalled surface was identified and may have been truncated here. The feature is referred to as RD1 henceforth.

The area stripped during this phase of works exposed the section of the road that continued towards the Newquay Road. The survival of the road was as patchy as the geophysical survey had suggested, and the running of heavy machinery over this area had not improved the situation with regards to its identification and survival. A sondage was machine-cut through a section of the road. This identified a southern flanking ditch, [4310], containing two fills. This had been sealed by two layers of compacted road surfacing, (4322) and (4308). The latter was the latest surface and consisted of compacted quartz-rich gravel. This was similar, if not identical, to road surfacing recorded during the 2014 watching brief in Fields 4 and 5. A sample from (4308) was taken with a view to petrological identification of the stone.

The sondage cut was not long enough to expose the full width of the track but it is clear from the geophysical survey (GSB 2010) that there is another ditch to the north.

Interpretation

The sealing of the ditch by metalled surfaces confirms that there were a number of phases to this road. RD1 appears to be an early attempt at a Macadamised road, perhaps built on the route of an earlier track. The road to Penair is rumoured to be one of the first built in this way by the Truro Turnpike Trust (Bert Biscoe pers comm), perhaps in the late 18th century or early 19th. The stretch across F4 and F5 would have been rendered obsolete by the construction of the Truro to Tresillian turnpike road in 1826 and no track is shown on the 1842 St Clement Tithe Map.

3 Conclusions

The nature and scale of the features encountered during this phase of works was consistent with the results from previous phases of archaeological recording. In contrast with the eastern end of the site, which was an area rich in Neolithic and Early Bronze features, the western end of the site appears to contain little that predates the field system of Iron Age/Romano-British date, which was perhaps associated with the nearby Polwhele Castle. In the medieval period the fields were reorganised on a

different alignment from the earlier field pattern. The western, higher, ground, of Field 4 may have been unenclosed downland, crossed by a network of holloways. One of these tracks was subsequently improved to form a road to Lower Penair Farm. This was rendered obsolete by the construction of the Truro to Tresillian turnpike in 1826 and had entirely disappeared from historical mapping by 1842.

4 References

4.1 Primary sources

Ordnance Survey, c1809, Surveyors' Drawings

Ordnance Survey, c1880. 25 Inch Map First Edition (licensed digital copy at CAU)

Ordnance Survey, c1907. 25 Inch Map Second Edition (licensed digital copy at CAU)

Ordnance Survey, 2007. Mastermap Digital Mapping

Tithe Map and Apportionment, 1842. Parish of St Clement (licensed digital copy at CRO)

Toll Map 1828

4.2 Publications

Cotswold Archaeology, 2010. *Truro Eastern Park and Ride, Truro, Cornwall: Archaeological Evaluation* CA typescript report 10212

GSB, 2009. *Truro Eastern Park and Ride Geophysical survey*, GSB report 2009/22, Bradford

GSB 2010. *Truro Eastern Park & Ride Scheme, Cornwall, Stage 2 – 2010*, GSB report 2010/14, Bradford

Taylor, S R, 2013a. *Truro Eastern District Centre, Cornwall. Archaeological Mitigation Archive Report*. Unpublished report no. 2013R048, Historic Environment Projects, Cornwall Council

Taylor, S R, 2015. *Truro Eastern District Centre, Cornwall. Archaeological Watching Brief Archive Report*. Unpublished report no. 2015R014, Cornwall Archaeological Unit, Cornwall Council

5 Project archive

The CAU project number is **146525**

The project's documentary, digital, photographic and drawn archive is maintained by Cornwall Archaeological Unit, Cornwall Council, Fal Building, County Hall, Treyew Road, Truro, TR1 3AY.

English Heritage/ADS OASIS online reference: [cornwall2-226200](https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/ads/oasis/cornwall2-226200)

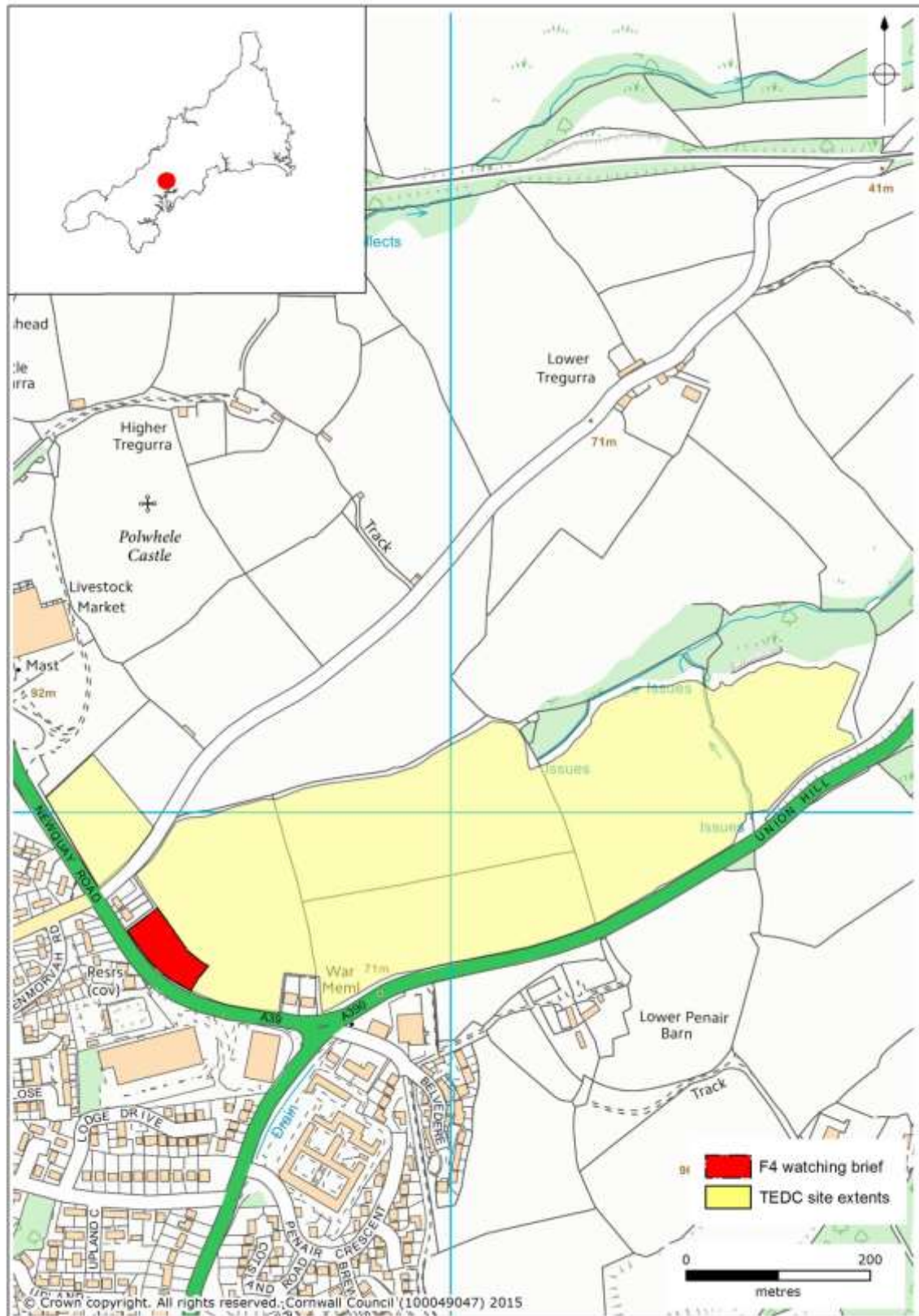


Fig 1 Location map

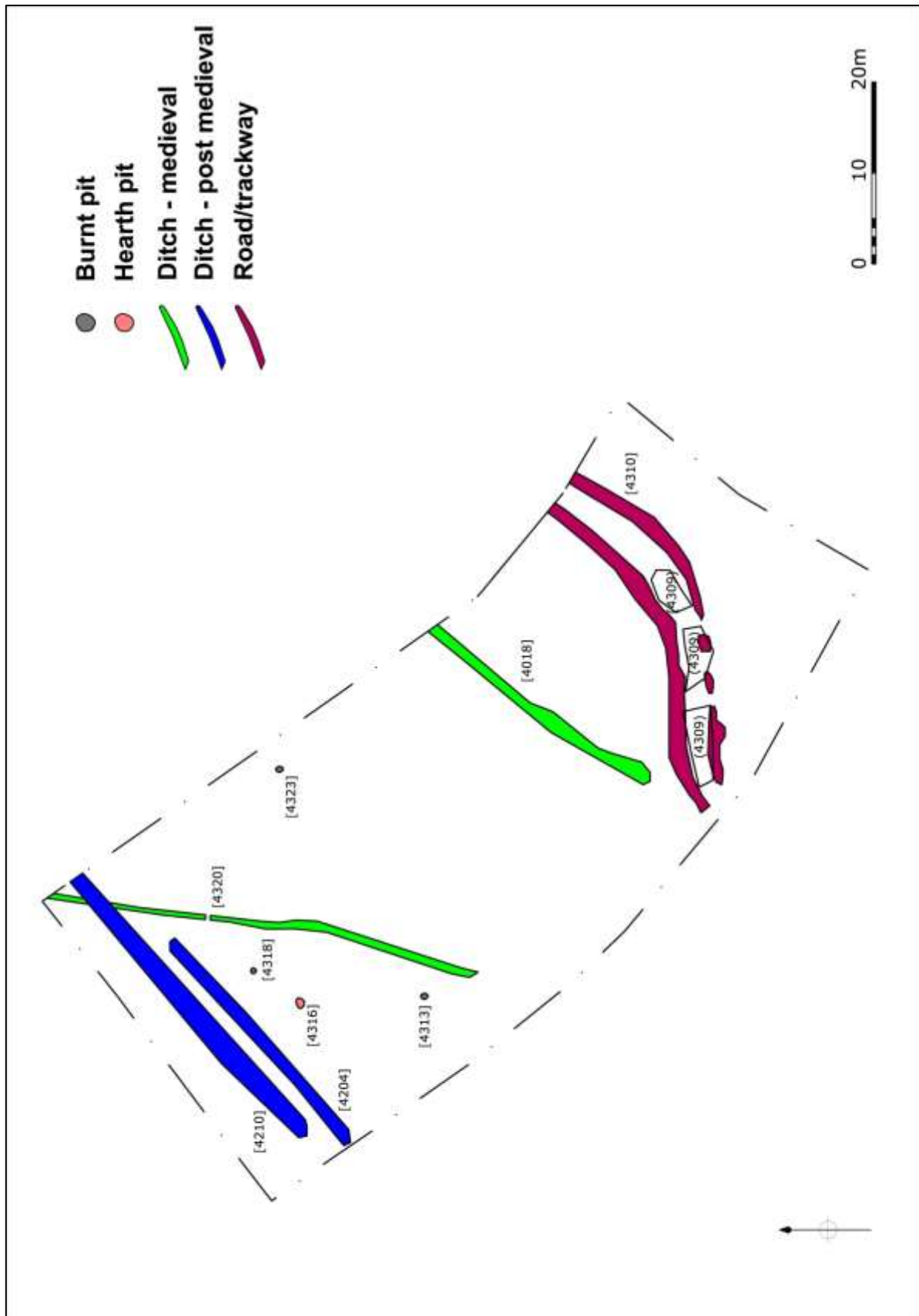


Fig 2 Site plan showing features found in Field 4

Appendix 1: List of contexts

Con-text no.	Cut No.	Cut/Deposit	Feature Type	Description	Plan No.	Section No.
4308	*	D	Layer (road)	A layer of gravel track surfacing on the section of RD1 that runs west to the Newquay Road. A pale brownish grey friable quartz gravel 0.13m thick and up to 2m wide. Overlies (4322) and lies below (4001).		1355
4309	4310	D	Fill	Primary fill of road ditch [4310]. A light reddish brown compact silty clay 0.17m thick. It appears to have filled from the southern edge.		1355
4310	4310	C	Ditch (road)	Cut of ditch, lying under the northern side of the section of RD1 that runs west towards the Newquay Road, 0.5m wide and 0.25m deep with steep sides and a vertical base. Filled by, in order of deposition, (4309) and (4311). Fills appear to have slumped in from the southern edge.		1355
4311	4310	D	Fill	Upper fill of ditch [4310]. A mid reddish brown compact silty clay 0.2m thick. The fill appears to extend south beyond the edge of the ditch, forming a basal layer to RD1 on this section.		1355
4312	4313	D	Fill	Upper fill of burnt pit [4313]. A mid reddish brown compact silty clay 0.04m-0.07m thick with occasional very small stones and mottled charcoal.		1356
4313	4313	C	Pit (burnt)	Cut of small, sub-circular pit 0.8m in diameter and 0.1m deep with concave sides and base. Contained two fills, in order of deposition, (4314) and (4312).	1359	1356

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Con-text no.	Cut No.	Cut/Deposit	Feature Type	Description	Plan No.	Section No.
4314	4313	D	Fill	Primary fill of burnt pit [4313]. A dark blackish grey friable silty clay 0.04m-0.06m thick containing occasional small burnt shillet and abundant charcoal.		1356
4315	4316	D	Fill	Fill of hearth pit [4316]. A light brownish red friable silty clay 0.08m thick. Burnt soil or natural clay at the base of truncated hearth pit.		1357
4316	4316	C	Pit (hearth)	Cut of sub-oval hearth pit 1.1m by 0.9m and 0.08m deep with concave sides and base. Contained a single oxidised fill, (4315). Cut into fractured shillet.	1360	1357
4317	4318	D	Fill	Fill of burnt pit [4318]. A mid greyish brown compact silty clay 0.12m thick containing occasional small stones and moderate quantities of charcoal.		1358
4318	4318	C	Pit (burnt)	Cut of circular pit 0.7m in diameter and 0.12m deep, steep-sided to the south, more gradual to the north. Contained a single fill (4317).	1361	1358
4319	4320	D	Fill	Fill of ditch [4320]. A mid reddish brown compact silty clay 0.14m-0.18m deep.		1363
4320	4320	C	Ditch (field)	Cut of field ditch 0.4m wide and 0.18m deep with steep edge to the west, shallower to east. Contained a single fill (4319). Coincides with a geophysical anomaly that runs for 50m, probably representing a truncated shallow field ditch.	1362	1363
4321	4323	D	Fill	Burnt fill of unexcavated pit [4323]. A dark reddish black sticky silty clay 0.1m thick containing abundant charcoal.		

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Con- text no.	Cut No.	Cut/ Dep- osit	Feature Type	Description	Plan No.	Sect- ion No.
4322	*	D	Layer (road)	A compact layer beneath gravel surface (4308). A mid greyish brown compact silty clay with occasional stone. Seals the fills of ditch [4310].		1355
4323	4323	C	Pit (burnt)	Cut of oval burnt pit, 0.8m by 0.6m and 0.1m deep, containing a single fill (4321). Not excavated.		