

# Northamptonshire Archaeology



Archaeological Evaluation on land at  
Priors Hall, Zone 3, Corby  
Northamptonshire  
December 2010 to February 2011



## Northamptonshire Archaeology

2 Bolton House  
Wootton Hall Park  
Northampton NN4 8BE  
t. 01604 700493 f. 01604 702822  
e. [sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk)  
w. [www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk](http://www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk)



Northamptonshire  
County Council

Christopher Jones

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**STAFF**

Project Manager: Mark Holmes MA

Text: Christopher Jones

Fieldwork: Christopher Jones, Dan Riley FdSc  
Elizabeth Harris BSc, Peter Townend MA  
Adrian Adams, Paul Clements BA

Geophysical survey manager Adrian Butler MA BSc AlfA

Geophysical fieldwork Ian Fisher BSc, Paul Clements  
Jonathan Elston BA, Robin Foard  
Peter Haynes, David Haynes  
Lazslo Lichtenstein MA, Heather Smith MA  
Pete Townend MA, John Walford MSc

Worked flint Yvonne Wolfram-Murray BSc PhD

Prehistoric pottery Andy Chapman BSc MIfA FSA

Roman pottery: Rob Perrin BA MIfA FSA

Other finds Tora Hylton

Wall plaster Ian Meadows BA

Ceramic building materials Pat Chapman BA CMS AlfA

Metalworking debris Andy Chapman

Faunal and environmental evidence Karen Deighton MSc

Human remains Andy Chapman

Illustrations Amir Bassir BSc

James Ladocha BA

Richard Watts

**QUALITY CONTROL**

	Print name	Signed	Date
Checked by	Adam Yates		
Verified by	Mark Holmes		
Approved by	Andy Chapman		

**OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project title	Archaeological Evaluation on land at Priors Hall Zone 3, Corby, Northamptonshire	
Short description	Between December 2010 to February 2011, an archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology on land at Priors Hall Zone 3, Corby, Northamptonshire. The works were undertaken for Wardell Armstrong LLP on behalf of Bela Partnership Ltd. The evaluation was carried out in response to the submission of a planning application for the development of the land. This followed on from a previous stage of geophysical survey. A second stage of geophysical survey was carried out as part of the current works. Ninety-four trenches were excavated across the proposed development area, which was bisected by a deer fence. Fifty-one trenches lay to the north of the deer fence and forty-three to the south. The northern trenches contained no archaeological features, only furrows from medieval ridge and furrow cultivation and modern plough scars. To the south of the deer fence there were two areas of archaeological interest: prehistoric remains comprising an enclosure and a Bronze Age barrow with a cremation deposit accompanied by a jet bead lie at the west of the development area. In the centre of the development area, there is a complex of Roman stone buildings and enclosures. The evidence points to the presence of at least one high status building, a villa, which may contain intact floors. Quantities of painted wall plaster and other building materials were recovered. The other stone buildings, probably contemporary and associated with the villa, lie nearby. Metalworking debris indicates that iron smelting was being carried out in the vicinity.	
Project type	Trial trench evaluation	
Site Status		
Previous work	Geophysical Survey	
Current land use	Arable	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type and period	Roman buildings, Bronze Age ring ditch, cremation	
Significant finds	Roman wall plaster	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address	Land at Priors Hall, Corby	
Post code	-	
OS co-ordinates	SP 9280 9020	
Area (sq m/ha)	380ha	
Height aOD		
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)	
Project brief originator	Northamptonshire County Council	
Project Design originator	NA	
Director/Supervisor	Christopher Jones	
Project Manager	Mark Holmes (NA), Helen Martin-Bacon (Wardell Armstrong)	
Sponsor or funding body	Bela Partnership Ltd	
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>		
Start date	10/12/2010	
End date	03/02/2011	
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Location (Accession no.)</b>	<b>Contents</b>
Physical	NA store	Pottery, Bone, Wall plaster
Paper		Site records (1 small archive box)
Digital		Client report PDF, digital photographs
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)	
Title	Archaeological Evaluation on land at Priors Hall Zone 3, Corby, Northamptonshire	
Serial title & volume	NA 11/46	
Author(s)	Christopher Jones	

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION ON  
LAND AT PRIORS HALL ZONE 3  
CORBY, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE  
DECEMBER 2010 TO FEBRUARY 2011**

**Abstract**

*Between December 2010 to February 2011, an archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology on land at Priors Hall Zone 3, Corby, Northamptonshire. The works were undertaken for Wardell Armstrong LLP on behalf of Bela Partnership Ltd. The evaluation was carried out in response to the submission of a planning application for the development of the land. This followed on from a previous stage of geophysical survey. A second stage of geophysical survey was carried out as part of the current works. Ninety-four trenches were excavated across the proposed development area, which was bisected by a deer fence. Fifty-one trenches lay to the north of the deer fence and forty-three to the south. The northern trenches contained no archaeological features, only furrows from medieval ridge and furrow cultivation and modern plough scars. To the south there were two areas of archaeological interest; prehistoric remains comprising an enclosure and a Bronze Age round barrow, at the west of the development area. In the centre of the development area, there is a complex of Roman stone buildings and enclosures. The evidence points to the presence of at least one high status building, a villa, which may contain intact floors. Quantities of painted wall plaster and other building materials were recovered. The other stone buildings, probably contemporary and associated with the villa, lie nearby. Metalworking debris indicates that iron smelting was being carried out in the vicinity.*

**1 INTRODUCTION**

Between December 2010 and February 2011, an archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) on land at Priors Hall, Corby, Northamptonshire (NGR: SP 9280 9020; Fig 1). The works were designed by Wardell Armstrong LLP and commissioned by Bela Partnership Ltd and were undertaken to inform a planning application for the proposed development of the land.

A total of ninety four trenches were excavated across the development area. The trial trenching evaluation was designed to test the results from earlier, non-intrusive stages of work.

The works followed the requirements of a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Wardell Armstrong LLP (Martin-Bacon 2010) and approved by the County Archaeological Advisor to Northampton County Council (NCC).

**2 BACKGROUND**

**2.1 Location, topography and geology**

Priors Hall is located to the north of the village of Weldon, Corby Northamptonshire and is centred on NGR SP 9280 9020. The main boundaries are formed by the A43 in the south, Gretton Road to the west, a large area of quarried land in the east and

south with Kirby Lane to the north. Zone 3 forms the northern sector of the whole development area, which also includes Zones 1 and 2. Zone 3 is delineated on its southern boundary by the administrative boundary between Corby Borough and East Northamptonshire.

The local geology of the site is characterised by boulder clay and by mixed gravels, limestone and Estuarine clays.

The underlying natural bedrock comprises a sequence of Rutland Formation. Upper and Lower Lincolnshire Limestone and Grantham Formation mudstone are exposed as the ground slopes down towards the Willow Brook at the south of the area. The northern part of Zone 3 is overlain by Glacial Till whilst the area to the south of the Willow Brook comprises made ground from former quarrying (BGS 2009).

## **2.2 Historical and archaeological background**

The proposed development area has been subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment which included a full assessment of the archaeological and cultural heritage assets of the area. It was established that Zone 2 comprised previously quarried land but Zones 1 and 3 and the mineral extraction area contained potential archaeological remains.

A geophysical survey of the proposed development area, including Zone 3, was undertaken in 2004 which identified archaeological features within Zone 3 and in the mineral extraction area (GSB Prospection 2004). Subsequent trial trenching and a recording action within the mineral extraction area of Zone 1 revealed a late Iron Age industrial landscape which included a series of well preserved iron smelting furnaces. Additional phases of work within Zone 1 identified further Iron Age industrial activity, a Romano-British cemetery associated with the nearby Weldon Roman villa and early-middle Anglo-Saxon pits.

A supplementary geophysical survey was undertaken within the Zone 3 area immediately prior to the current trial trenching evaluation (see Section 4 below).

A deserted medieval village lies immediately north of Kirby Lane, adjacent to the Elizabethan country house of Kirby Hall and the historic parkland of Deene Park lies immediately to the east of the Zone 3 area.

## **3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Objectives**

The aims of the archaeological evaluation were specified in the WSI. The general aims were:

- To determine the location, extent, date, character, condition and significance of any archaeological remains present within Zone 3
- To inform upon the potential impacts of the proposed development on those remains with the intent that the results of the evaluation will allow the formulation of a strategy to provide further archaeological recording to mitigate the impact of the development on the identified archaeological remains.

Site specific aims were:

- To determine the integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits present through targeted trial trenching.
- To determine the date and level of significance of these features and any associated remains revealed
- To obtain a level of information sufficient to allow the formulation of a mitigation strategy and allow determination of the planning application

Specific research objectives were based on the research frameworks set out in Cooper (ed) (2006). Within the limits of the trial trench evaluation methodology these encompassed the identification and characterisation of prehistoric and later industrial activity, particularly Iron Age to early medieval iron smelting and medieval stone quarrying; settlement activity on the clay lands; and identification and characterisation of post-medieval estate features.

## 3.2 Methodology

### Geophysical survey

All fieldwork methods complied with the guidelines issued by English Heritage and by the Institute for Archaeologists (EH 2008; Gaffney, Gater and Ovendon 2002).

#### ***Magnetometer survey***

Magnetic gradiometer survey was undertaken to supplement an existing magnetometer survey over the remainder of the 71ha site (zone 3) following a Method Statement issued by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA 2010). Fieldwork was carried out in advance of archaeological trial trenching between 4 January and 4 February 2011.

The survey was conducted with Bartington Grad 601-2, twin sensor array, vertical component fluxgate gradiometers (Bartington and Chapman 2003). These are standard instruments for archaeological survey and can resolve magnetic variations as slight as 0.1 nanoTesla (nT).

Each survey area was set out around the pre-existing survey blocks utilising a survey grade Leica System 1200 dGPS. Grids were then manually divided into 30m grid squares by means of a tape measure and optical square and locations recorded by GPS.

The gradiometers were carried at a brisk but steady pace through each grid square, collecting data along 1m spaced traverse lines. Measurements were automatically triggered every 0.25m along the traverses, giving a total of 3600 measurements per grid.

The survey data was processed using Geoplot 3.00u software. Striping, caused by slight mismatches in sensor balance, was removed using the 'Zero Mean Traverse' function and destaggering of the data was performed as necessary.

The processed data is presented in this report in the form of grey-tone plots, at scales appropriate to the dataset (+/- 4nT black/white). The magnetometer grey-tone plots have been scaled, rotated and resampled (georectified) for display with interpretative overlays against the Ordnance Survey base mapping (Fig 2 – 6).

**Earth resistance survey**

Resistance survey was carried out subsequent to trial trenching, in the vicinity of trial trenches that had revealed evidence of stone buildings, with the aim of mapping their extent. The survey utilised Geoscan Research RM15 resistance meter with 0.5m 'twin-probe' mobile array. Data was recorded to a maximum instrument sensitivity of 0.1 $\Omega$  (ohms) at 1.0m x 1.0m intervals within 20m x 20m grids.

Survey data was processed using Geoplot. Slight data mismatches caused by moisture variations over several days and outlying data values were removed. The resultant dataset was then subject to a High Pass filter which remove the background data and emphasises detail. This is presented as grey-tone plots (-7 / +17 $\Omega$ ) georectified against the base mapping (Fig 7 and 8).

**Trial trench evaluation**

The works were conducted in accordance with the procedural documents *The Management of Archaeological Projects* issued by English Heritage (1991) *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment*, (2006) *The MoRPHE Project Manager's Guide* and the IfA's *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2008) and *Code of Conduct* (2010).

Ninety-four trenches were machined-excavated using a toothless ditching bucket. They were all 50m long by 1.8m wide save for two, Trenches 72 and 73, which had to be shorted to 19m and 24m respectively to avoid the standing deer fence.

Fifty five of the trenches were located in the northern area and thirty-nine at the south. The trenches were set out using Leica System 1200 Survey-grade GPS and positioned in accordance with an agreed trench location plan. Some minor changes were required in the field in order to avoid the deer fence and overhead cables. All trenches were tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid and Datum. The work was monitored by the County Archaeological Advisor to Northamptonshire County Council.

The topsoil, subsoil and non-structural post-medieval and later deposits were removed to reveal archaeological remains or where absent to the top of the natural geology. The topsoil was stacked separately from the subsoil and other deposits. The trenches were cleaned sufficiently to enable the identification of any features.

All deposits encountered during the course of the excavation were given a separate context number and fully recorded. Recording followed standard Northamptonshire Archaeology procedures. Deposits were described on pro-forma context sheets to include details of the context, its relationships, interpretation and a checklist of associated finds. Descriptions of individual features are detailed in the context inventory (Appendix 1).

The trenches were planned at a scale of 1:50. Sections of the sequence of deposits in each trench were drawn at a scale of 1:10 and related to Ordnance Datum. Archaeological artefacts were recovered from the surface and excavated deposits. Deposits suitable for environmental assessment were encountered and sampled. The excavated area and spoil heaps were scanned visually and with a metal detector to ensure maximum finds retrieval.

Where human remains were encountered, these were excavated and lifted. The human remains were removed under licence from the Ministry of Justice.



A full photographic record comprising both 35mm black and white negatives and colour transparencies was maintained, supplemented with digital images. On completion of archaeological recording the trenches were backfilled. There was no requirement for specialist re-instatement.

The field data was compiled into a site archive with appropriate cross-referencing.

## **4 GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY by Adrian Butler**

### **4.1 The Magnetometry survey**

The survey results are based upon the detection of the following major types of magnetic anomaly (Fig 2). Linear positive magnetic anomalies generally reflect infilled ditch features and discrete positive anomalies, pits. Discrete and intensely magnetised anomalies may indicate the action of heat and therefore past industrial processes. Dipolar anomalies (i.e intense paired positive/negative anomalies) mostly indicate pieces of ferrous or bricky material close to the surface. Alternate positive and negative weak magnetic banding through fields indicates the presence of a medieval ridge and furrow cultivation system. Low positive magnetic area anomalies are considered likely to represent underlying geological variations.

#### ***Field 1*** (Fig 3)

A series of interrupted ditches were detected in the centre of Field 1, describing an arc approximately south-east to north-west for c 85m. Up to six pits were located on the eastern side of the ditches. Two further possible pits were identified within the arc of ditches. At the northern terminal of the arc a further ditch was found to align north-east to south-west. To the west, two further slightly curving ditches were revealed, orientated north-west to south-east. A pair of intensely magnetised anomalies, 3m-5m in diameter were detected between the ditches. These anomalies were of a strength that may indicate the action of heat and therefore past industrial processes.

In the east of Field 1, a U-shaped positive anomaly described the south of a possible ditched enclosure, detected between two hedges. Large pits were detected to the south and north-west of this feature. Directly to the north a second putative industrial feature was identified.

A band of dipolar (intense paired positive/negative anomalies) anomalies was detected parallel with the western boundary of Field 1, reflecting a known trackway in that position. North-west to south-east aligned ridge and furrow was identified in Field 1.

#### ***Field 2*** (Fig 3)

Two parallel ditches were detected orientated north-north-west to south-south-east in the south of the surveyed area. To the west of these, two possible industrial anomalies, c 2m and 6m in diameter, were identified. A large, ferrous anomaly was located towards the centre of Field 2. As with Field 1 ridge and furrow, aligned north-west to south-east, can be identified. A band of geological features emanated from Field 10 to the south of Field 2 and continued through to the south-west corner of the field. Numerous ferrous responses were identified in the west of the field, indicating a degree of iron debris dumping. As with Field 1 a track passes along the western boundary of the area.

**Field 3** (Fig 3)

Two possible ditches were identified on differing alignments in the south-east of this field. Neither exceeded 10m in length. A longer ditch (minimum 45m) was recorded on a roughly north-east to south-west orientation in the west of the field. A band of geological responses continued through the east of Field 3, south-west from Field 2, but apparently did not reach the western side. A large ferrous feature was located in the east of the field and there were concentrations of iron-based debris throughout the field.

**Field 4** (Fig 4)

Five ditches, aligned north-west to south-east, were located in the north-eastern corner of Field 4. Four of these ditches appear to reflect two parallel but interrupted features. Another, slightly curved, ditch was identified in the south-west. A possible industrial feature was detected near to the eastern boundary of the field. Ridge and furrow was evident on a north-west to south-east alignment.

The most striking aspect of Field 4 was the quantity of ferrous debris detected across the area. Although mostly small in size, there were two large ferrous anomalies in the south-west of the field. These are likely to represent sizable subsurface deposits of iron-based material, possibly within a burnt area.

**Field 5** (Fig 4)

Two ditches were identified in this area. One in the north, on a north-east to south-west alignment, was roughly parallel to another 30m north in Field 3. The other, on a north-west to south-west alignment was in the southern half of the field. A geological feature extended into the area from the west.

**Field 6** (Fig 4)

Two ditches aligned east-west were detected in the south-east of Field 6. Three possible pits were identified centrally within the field. An interrupted ditch to the north-west aligned north-east to south-west, and a further pair of ditches lay in the south-west corner of Field 6. The west of Field 6 contained three large ferrous features of the same type as detected in Field 4. To the west of those, a ferrous pipeline was aligned north-south from the south-west corner of the field. Ridge and furrow continued north-west to south-east as in Field 4 to the north.

**Field 7** (Fig 4)

No readily apparent archaeological features were recorded. A high concentration of ferrous material was noted in the eastern two-thirds of the area and three further large ferrous features. The pipeline located in Field 6 was detected aligned south to north for 75m and then turning sharply to the north-east and out of the area.

**Field 8** (Figs 5 & 6)

This field is notable in that it contained a range of different anomaly types. Parallel land drains were identified in the western side of Field 8 as well as a large ferrous anomaly of the type encountered in Field 1 (possible car wreck). An interrupted ditch and a ditch at right angles lay in the south-west of the Field. Several disparate pits were identified in the west of the Field.

A substantial linear feature was aligned north-north-east to south-south-west. For most of its length this feature is composed of a single, or two, parallel, ditches up to 12m apart. Areas of possible industrial debris were identified intermittently between the ditches and at the southern end, where the magnetic response widened to a larger amorphous area. Given the predominance of iron working in the area, it is possible that these deposits are composed of magnetic iron slag. A single east-west ditch was located west of these features.

A group of pits and industrial features were detected in the south-east of the field, coinciding with an apparent change in the geology. Variations in the substrate are visible throughout Field 8. East-west geological anomalies divide the field into three on the eastern side and the background response of the southern third is markedly different from the rest of the field. Further pits and industrial features were detected in this area. Ridge and furrow is on a north-west to south-east alignment.

**Field 9** (Fig 5)

Two ditches aligned east to west were identified in the south-west of Field 9. Considerable amounts of ferrous debris were also detected.

**Field 10** (Fig 3)

Considering that remains of a stone structure were recovered in the south of Field 10, by excavation and earth resistance survey (see below), little of archaeological interest was recorded in the magnetic survey. The geological banding identified in the Field 2 was found to continue north-west to south-east through the survey area.

## **4.2 The Earth Resistance survey**

Ridge and furrow, aligned north-west to south-east, was identified in each of the seven survey blocks (Figs 7 & 8). Survey surrounding the trenches in Field 10, where the possible villa had been located, detected a probable L-shaped building, measuring 32m by 58m, on a roughly north to south alignment. Anomalies indicating possible floors were identified in rooms to the north-east and north-west, and further putative walls extended eastwards.

Survey across the field boundary into Field 1 located a possible trackway aligned north-south to the east of which a further small 10m x 12m sub-rectangular structure was detected. A possible wall aligned north-south was located between trenches in the centre of Field 1 and indications of a sub-rectangular building, 20m x 30m, in the east of the field. A ditch aligned north-west to south-east was detected in the south-east corner of Field 1, possibly leading to three more ditches lying east of the field boundary.

## **5 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE**

### **5.1 Summary**

A total of ninety-four trenches were positioned in accordance with the location plan approved by Wardell-Armstrong LLP and the County Archaeological Advisor for Northamptonshire. The trenches were positioned in order to examine features identified from geophysical surveys as well as testing 'blank' areas (Fig 9). To simplify the description of the trenched area it has been divided into northern and southern halves, which on the ground were divided by a large deer fence running east west across the proposed development area.

The trial trenching generally confirmed the presence of features identified by the geophysical surveys. However, further features not previously identified by the surveys were also found.

A prehistoric round barrow and associated enclosure was located in Trenches 57-59 and 72 in Field 6. Trenches 50 and 51 in Field 10 contained Roman building

remains extending beyond the trench boundaries. To the east in Trenches 37-49 further Roman buildings and enclosures were present in Field 9. To the west of the Roman buildings industrial waste was found in trenches 52 and 53 in Field 11. Trenches 1– 30 in Fields 8-9 and Trenches 61– 94 in Fields 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7 contained no archaeological features.

Overall, the concentration of features occurs down slope, at the south of the evaluation area suggesting that this was the primary focus for activity.

## 5.2 Northern area

Fifty-five trenches (1-27, 60-71, 74-76 and 80-92) were excavated on the northern side of the proposed development area in Fields 1, 2, 3, 4, 7 and 8 (Fig 9). The general stratigraphical sequence was similar in all trenches with no archaeological features present. The natural in all the trenches was mixed boulder clay and estuarine clays. Overlying the natural boulder clay was subsoil, up to 0.25m thick, comprising mid brown sandy clay. The topsoil was grey-brown humic loam, up to 0.30m thick. Few inclusions were noted in either the subsoil or the topsoil. In most trenches there were furrows of a medieval field system and modern plough scars were cut into the natural in most trenches. A section of these features was tested to confirm their origin.

### ***Undated linear feature***

The substantial linear anomaly in Field 8, aligned north-east to south-west, identified in the geophysical survey, was seen only in Trenches 19 and 20 in Field 8. This occurred as layers of limestone, gravel and slag (Fig 10). There were no flanking ditches and no dating evidence found. Seven other trenches positioned to target this anomaly contained no archaeological features.

## 5.3 Prehistoric round barrow and enclosure

Thirty-nine trenches (28-59, 72, 73, 77-78 and 93, 94) were excavated at the south side of the proposed development area in Fields 1, 5, 6, 9 and 10 (Fig 9). The general stratigraphical sequence was similar in all trenches with mixed limestone and boulder clay natural. Two areas of archaeological interest were revealed, a round barrow and enclosure in Field 6, and the remains of a Roman villa with an associated complex of Roman buildings and enclosures in Fields 1, 10 and 11.

### ***Prehistoric round barrow***

The ring ditch was identified in Field 6 with the circuit and interior sampled in Trenches 57 and 59. Trench 57 exposed its eastern and western sides and Trench 59 exposed the northern side (Fig 11). The ring ditch has a projected outer diameter of approximately 40m.

A section through its northern ditch [5904] showed the ditch to be 4.7m wide by 2.0m deep, with a U-shaped profile and a complex sequence of fills (5905) (5906) (5907) (5908) (5909) (5910) and (5911). The fills were of light brown to grey-brown clay with sandstone inclusions; the final fill (5911) produced one sherd of pottery, possibly of early Bronze Age or late Iron Age date.

The eastern [5711] and western [5715] ditches were narrower, at 2.90m wide and 1.19 deep with a U-shaped profile and a complex sequence of silting fills similar to

the fills seen in [5904] (Fig 12 and 13). One of the early fills of the eastern ditch (5708) may represent slumping from an internal mound (Fig 12, Section 25). This deposit extends beyond the edge of the ditch and into the interior of the ring ditch, perhaps representing a small remnant of *in situ* mound material. A fill (5716) of the ditch on the western side produced one sherd of prehistoric pottery (Fig 13).

Trench 57 contained a cremation burial located within the circuit of the ring ditch (Fig 12; Fig 13, Section 23). The cremation was in a shallow pit [5704], 0.35m in diameter by 0.18m deep, with a fill of dark brown silt clay (5703). Cremated bone comprised predominantly long bones and skull (see Section 8), and a little charcoal was also present. Within the bone deposit there was a jet bead dating to the Bronze Age.

### ***The enclosure***

A ditch seen in Trenches 58, 59 and 72 formed two sides to an enclosure identified in the geophysical survey (Fig 11). Ditch [5808] in trench 58 was 1.65 wide by 0.90m deep, aligned north-east to south-west with fills (5804) (5805) (5806) and (5807). The fills were of light grey to brown with limestone inclusions. Ditch [5808] continued into Trench 72 [7204] which was not excavated. Ditch [5918] in Trench 59 was 3.26m wide by 1.52m deep, aligned north-west to south-east, forming the west side of the enclosure with a sequence of silting fills (5912) (5913) (5914) (5915) (5916) and (5917). The fills were of mid brown sandy clay with limestone inclusions. Pottery, broadly Iron Age in character, was retrieved from fills (5806) and (5914), and the remains of an antler from (5805).

One pit [3413] in Trench 34 had a fill (3412) of yellow silty clay with limestone inclusions and contained Iron Age pottery.

## **5.4 Roman settlement**

An area of Roman activity was identified in Fields 1, 10 and 11, with evidence of major occupation in Trenches 38 to 53 (Fig 14). Trenches 38, 39, 41, 45 to 49 and 51 to 53 had a series of Roman linear ditches forming enclosures and track ways associated with buildings revealed in Trenches 40, 44 and 50. Dating evidence, in the form of pottery was recovered in all the ditches and across the buildings.

### ***Field 1***

Trenches 38 to 49 were excavated to the south of the deer fence and positioned to examine features identified by geophysical survey. The evaluation confirmed the presence of a Roman trackway, enclosure ditches and buildings. All the features contained Roman pottery. Trenches 42, 43 and 49 contained no archaeological features.

### ***Trackway***

A possible trackway was only visible as a double ditch aligned east-west, passing through Trenches 40, 41 and 45 with no sign of a road surface seen between the ditches. In Trench 41 it occurred as a double-ditched feature, defined by parallel ditches [4106] and [4108] aligned east-west, 10m apart (Fig 14). These were of similar size, 1.40m wide by 0.67m deep, the fills of which comprised mid-dark brown silty clays with charcoal and limestone fragments. To the west ditch [4505] seen in Trench 45 and to the east ditch [4009] may be continuations of this feature.

### ***Southern ditches***

To the south of the trackway in the eastern part of Field 1 and in the western part of the Field, a number of ditches and other cut features that may define a series of enclosures were present.

Trench 38 contained three ditches [3806], [3809] and [3810] similar in size and aligned north north-west to south south-east (Fig 14). Ditch [3806] was 1.60m wide by 0.42m deep, filled with mid brown silty clay (3805). Ditches [3809] and [3810] were of similar width, but were not excavated. Also present within this trench were two pits, [3804] and [3808]; both pits were shallow with narrow steep sides and flat bases with single fills of mid-dark brown silty clay.

Trench 39 contained two intercutting ditches. The earlier of these [3904] was aligned north north-east to south south-west and was 1.26m wide and 0.26m deep, filled with sandy clay loams. This was cut by ditch [3907] aligned east north-east to west south-west which was unexcavated. Ditches [4109] and [4509] in Trenches 41 and 45 may be a westward continuation of this. Ditch [4509] was 2.05m wide with irregular rock-cut sides at least 1.30m deep, filled with (4506) (4507) and (4508), which produced 1st-2nd Roman pottery (Fig 15). The north side of this ditch was cut by gully [4511] north-east to south-west. This was 0.52m wide by 0.16m deep, filled with friable dark grey-brown silty clay (4510). Ditch [4514] was aligned east-west and U-shaped to a depth of 0.43m. It was cut into ditch [4505] which was aligned east-west with a friable-loose, dark grey, clay silt (4504) and charcoal and small stone inclusions.

#### *Western ditches*

Trenches 46, 47 and 48 in the western part of Field 1 contained a series of closely-spaced roughly parallel features on an approximate north-south or north north-west to south south-east alignment.

In Trench 46 ditch [4605] continued northwards in Trench 47 as ditch [4715] and then into Trench 48 as ditch [4811]. Ditch [4715] was 1.99m wide and at least 1.11m deep although it was not bottomed, with steeply sloping sides, filled with orange-grey clays containing limestone and charcoal (Fig 16, Section 30). Late 1st-early 2nd century pottery was recovered from the fills.

Also present in Trench 46 was an unexcavated shallow gully [4606] that continued northwards into Trench 47, where it formed the westernmost of three closely-spaced parallel gullies [4717], [4718] and [4719]. These were approximately 0.5m wide and spaced 5m apart. Only [4717] was excavated, and this proved to be V-shaped in profile, 0.28m deep, filled with friable dark grey-brown silty clay (Fig 16, Section 38).

Immediately to the west of the gullies in Trench 47 was pit [4704]. This was roughly circular 1m wide, with steep sides and a flat base 0.68m deep. The fill was firm dark grey silty clay containing frequent charcoal (4705), and tile of mid 2nd-mid 3rd century date. Also present in Trench 47 was ditch [4720] which was unexcavated.

Two further ditches were present in Trench 48, [4805] and [4810]. Ditch [4805] was 1.23m wide and 0.38m deep, with sloping sides and a flat base, filled with mid-light brown silty clay loams. Ditch [4810] was 2.1m wide and 0.74m deep, with irregular sloping sides and a concave base (Fig 17 section 34). It was filled with a sequence of grey brown silty clay loams containing tile, charcoal and heat-affected stones (4807-9). Late 1st to early 2nd century pottery was recovered from the fills.

#### *Structural remains*

Structural remains comprising walls and demolition/collapse deposits were encountered in Trenches 40, 44 and 46.

In the southern end of Trench 40 there were two limestone walls (Figs 18 and 19). L-shaped wall (4006) was 0.8m wide. The facing courses were constructed from



roughly shaped clay-bonded limestone blocks with a rubble infill. Up to three courses of wall (4006) survived (Fig 19, Section 51) and it appeared to be constructed on a foundation of small unshaped limestone blocks and tile (4004) (Fig 19, Section 52). To the north and parallel to one of the arms of wall (4006) was wall (4007) aligned east-west, again 0.8m wide and constructed from roughly shaped clay-bonded limestone facing blocks with a rubble infill. Only one course of this feature survived (Fig 19, Section 54). The similarity of alignments and construction techniques for these walls strongly argues that they belong to the same phase of construction and are quite likely to form part of the same building. Overlying the walls was a depth of demolition/collapse deposit, up to 0.2m deep (4004) and (4005), which produced 4th century pottery. Tile from this building derived from roofs (*imbrex* and *tegula*), and tile included an early 2nd century cut-away *tegula* from (4007).

At the southern end of Trench 44 were four walls (Fig 20). All were in poor condition and although generally roughly east-west, were all on slightly varying alignments. Only limited hand excavation took place in this area so the sequence of deposits and construction is not well understood. Wall (4411) was 0.8m wide and 0.1m high and appeared to arc in plan, and was constructed from mortar-bonded roughly-shaped limestone blocks with a rubble core (Fig 21, Section 53). Wall (4412) was aligned west-north-west to east-south-east and was 1m wide. The construction was of small roughly shaped mortar-bonded limestone blocks. Wall (4413) was aligned west-south-west to east-north-east and constructed from roughly-shaped limestone blocks with a clay-lime mortar bond. Wall (4414) lay with and along the southern edge of ditch [4421] which produced pottery of 2nd-3rd century date, and may have formed a revetment (Fig 21, Section 44). It was constructed from roughly-shaped unmortared limestone blocks.

Between and overlying the walls were a series of collapse / demolition deposits comprising subsoil mixed in with building material and painted wall plaster, (4402-9) which produced pottery dating from 1st-4<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. Tile from Trench 44 included floor, roof (*imbrex* and *tegula*) and flue tile, a fragment of window glass of 1st-2nd century date was also recovered. These deposits were subject to limited excavation by hand-cut sondage and were at least 0.3m in depth (Fig 21, Section 45) and are likely to mask further remains. A coin of late 3rd century date (SF1) was recovered from subsoil (4410).

At the west end of Trench 46 was a demolition layer (4604) 1.20m wide by 0.12m deep with light brown mixed silt clay and mortar with small limestone inclusions.

Trench 43 only contained a shallow modern ditch.

## **Field 10**

### *Structural remains*

At the east end of Trench 50 were three well-preserved walls (5004), (5008) and (5009) (Fig 22). Wall (5004) was aligned roughly north-south and was 0.75m wide. It was constructed from roughly-shaped mortar-bonded limestone blocks c 0.30m and survived to a height of four courses 0.40m. It was built on a foundation of irregular limestone fragments set in a clay bond that was up to 0.5m deep, set within a construction trench [5007] filled with compact light brown silty clay (5006).

Wall (5008) was 0.74m wide and to the south of and parallel to wall (5004). It was abutted by east-west wall (5009). Neither (5008) or (5009) were investigated after their exposure, but both appeared to be similar in size and construction to (5004).

To the east of wall (5004) was a spread of loose black ashy silt (5005), containing building rubble which produced 4th century pottery. Between and overlying the walls was an extensive spread of subsoil mixed with the remnants of buildings, which produced considerable quantities of well preserved painted wall plaster in addition to other building materials such as floor and roof tile (5003).

These walls correspond with anomalies identified by earth resistance survey and form part of an extensive building or range of buildings. Their quality of construction and the quality of the other building materials and painted wall plaster point to a high status building such as a villa. The wall plaster derived from this context was in excellent condition, with large pieces showing little sign of recent damage. The decoration was of one coherent scheme and is likely to derive from a single room.

#### *Other features*

Trench 51 contained one ditch [5115] and a gully [5118]. Ditch [5115], aligned north-south was 2.76m wide by 1.20m deep, with sloping sides. The complex sequence of fills comprised dark brown- to grey clay loams, which contained considerable amounts of charcoal, tile, wall plaster and building rubble. Pottery dating from late 1st to 3rd centuries was recovered from the fills. Gully [5118] was aligned north-west to south-east, this was 0.44m wide and 0.07m deep, filled with (5117) a friable, mid grey-brown silt, with sub-angular limestone inclusion.

Overlying ditch [5115] was an spread of demolition/collapse material (5104) containing building rubble up to 0.21 deep. This extended either side of [5115].

At the west end of the trench was a demolition layer (5119) with dark brown silt clay mixed with limestone inclusions and brick/tile debris.

Coins of mid-late 4th century date (SF2 and SF3) were recovered from the subsoil (5102) and topsoil (5101).

#### **Field 11**

Two trenches were dug in Field 11. Trenches 52 and 53 were placed across a ferrous anomaly detected by the geophysical survey.

At the west end of Trench 52 was a hollow or wide shallow ditch [5205]. This was 9.5m in width with a shallow sloping profile at least 0.85m deep. The fill (5204) dated to the late 4th century and comprised a midden deposit containing a large amount of Roman pottery, animal bone, shell, nails and glass (Fig 24). This continued into Trench 53, where a spread of midden material (5303-5) was 13m in width and, as in Trench 52, may have been filling a hollow or ditch, although this was not determined during the limited hand investigation (Fig 25).

## 6 THE FINDS

### 6.1 Worked Flint by Yvonne Wolframm-Murray

In total six pieces of worked flint were recovered possibly as *in situ* and residual from Bronze Age and Roman contexts. The flint comprised five flakes and one bladelet, summarised in Table 1.

The condition of the assemblage is good with flints showing post-depositional edge damage ranging from the occasional to frequent nicks on the edges. Patination is present on the bladelet consisting of a white discolouration of the surface.

The raw material is a vitreous flint, light to mid coloured greys and browns, with one granular 'chert'-like flint. The quality of the raw material is variable ranging from good to poor. The cortex present on the dorsal surface of the pieces ranges from a light to mid brown colour and generally had a smooth, rolled and weathered surface. The raw material was likely to have comprised locally sourced flint.

The flints recovered consist of waste flakes and blades. The assemblage comprised five flake and one broken bladelet. Flakes typically have unprepared or cortical striking platforms that are relatively long, broad and flat. This indicates the utilisation of small pebbles of varying quality.

The worked flints are not directly dateable but their technological characteristics suggest a broadly Neolithic to Bronze Age date with a Late Mesolithic/Early Neolithic bladelet. The worked flint recovered from Trenches 57-59 are associated with Bronze Age pottery recovered from a ring ditch and enclosure and is possibly of the same age. The utilisation of small pebbles and the poor quality material from derived sources is not unusual for Bronze Age worked flint.

Table 1: Summary of worked flint

	Context	Flake/Blade	Material	Cortex	Patination	Comments
4416		Flake	vitreous mid brown	light brown	-	cortical striking platform
5707		Flake	vitreous mid grey	light grey	-	Post-depositional edge damage
5805		Flake	vitreous light grey- brown	light brown	-	cortical striking platform; slight edge damage
5912		Flake	vitreous mid grey- brown	light brown	-	small utilisation scars on one lateral edge
5705		Flake	granular 'chert' like flint	light brown	-	overshot termination
5912		Blade	vitreous light grey		medium	soft-hammer struck, bladelet; early Neolithic

## 6.2 Prehistoric pottery by Andy Chapman

There are small groups of hand-built pottery of prehistoric date from Trenches 57, 58 and 59; with a total of 14 small body sherds, weighing 51g, from only four vessels.

The lack of diagnostic characteristics makes providing a date difficult. One sherd, from the final fill (5911) of a round barrow ring ditch in Trench 59, contains grog, which in Northamptonshire is most common in either the early Bronze Age or late Iron Age periods. The presence in Trenches 58 and 59 of two vessels in fabrics containing dense shell with dark cores and oxidised surfaces, one of which is quite thick-walled, would be consistent with a broad Iron Age date. No date, beyond broadly prehistoric, can be provided for the small sherds from Trench 57.

## 6.3 Roman pottery by Rob Perrin

The features in the 25 evaluation trenches from which pottery was recovered comprise pits, ditches, gullies, various demolition layers, interface layers between subsoil and natural, and furrows. The assemblage consists of 960 sherds with a combined weight of almost 24 kilos, giving an average sherd weight of 25 gms. Rim and base fragments gave combined EVEs of 22.5 and almost 19.5, respectively. The pottery was recorded using simple fabric classifications and form codes. The fabrics are based on principal inclusion or firing technique, together with the identification of some known regional ware types (e.g. Lower Nene Valley wares) and some imported wares, for example samian ware. No attempt was made to identify joins, other than where certain features of fabric, colour, decoration etc. made this obvious.

### *Fabrics*

*Table 2: The pottery assemblage by principal fabric type*

<b>Fabric</b>	<b>no</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Weight (g)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>rim</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>base</b>	<b>%</b>
Misc								
grogged	170	17.71	4951	20.70	177	7.84	152	7.85
Shell	89	9.27	2479	10.36	296	13.11	159	8.21
Misc grey	425	44.27	9944	41.57	944	41.81	987	50.96
Misc								
oxidised	130	13.54	3463	14.48	331	14.66	264	13.63
LVNCC	105	10.94	2594	10.84	395	17.49	363	18.74
<b>Total Site</b>	<b>960</b>		<b>23919</b>		<b>2258</b>		<b>1937</b>	

Table 2 shows that the main fabrics in the assemblage are grogged, including hard cream grogged ware and a less hard pink grogged ware, shell-gritted ware, various grey and oxidised wares and Lower Nene Valley colour coated ware (LVNCC). Other fabrics represented in the assemblage are Black burnished ware (BB1), Oxfordshire colour coated and white wares, London ware (one vessel), South and Central Gaulish samian ware, North France white ware, a fabric with a combination of grog and shell inclusions and possibly Lower Nene Valley grey and cream wares (LVNGW, LVNCW), Black burnished ware (BB2) a possible Gauloise 4 amphora (Peacock and Williams 1986, Class 27; Tomber and Dore 1998, 93-4) and a 'carrot' amphora (Peacock and Williams 1986, Class 12; Tomber and Dore 1998, 106).

The grey wares are by far the most abundant and comprise a range of fabrics with varying visual characteristics, but these are likely, in the main, to reflect varying firing conditions and may not therefore be especially meaningful in terms of date or source. A large number of kiln sites which produced grey wares are known within a 20 kilometre radius of Corby, in modern day Northamptonshire, Cambridgeshire and Leicestershire, such as Kettering, Wakerley, Weekley, Geddington, Gretton and Mears Ashby; pottery may also have been produced at Corby itself (Swan 1984,

144-6). Some of the grey ware appears similar in fabric to East Midlands burnished ware (Todd 1968). It is likely that a large proportion of the oxidised wares were also produced locally. The oxidised wares include mortaria made in the Lower Nene Valley, Mancetter-Hartshill, the Oxford region and an import from Northern France (Noyon; Tomber and Dore 1998, 75-6).

### **Forms**

The vessel forms represented comprise various types of jars, bowls and dishes, together with a few lids, flagons, mortaria, beakers and a 'Castor Box'. Approximately 160 separate vessels were noted, of which jars of various types comprise over half, with bowls and dishes accounting for around another third.

Lid seated jars occur in both hard-cream and pink-grogged fabrics, grey ware, and oxidised ware. Jars with curved rims occur in hard cream grogged ware, oxidised ware, shell gritted ware, the grog and shell gritted ware, LNVCC and grey ware. Jars with narrow mouths occur in grey ware and shell gritted ware. Other jar forms represented include hard cream grogged ware storage jars, jars with everted rims in grey ware and jars with triangular and undercut rims in shell gritted ware. One shell gritted ware jar has a rim similar to the Dales ware form of lid seating and the BB1 sherds include a cooking pot.

All the definite bowls in grey ware have flanged rims; one vessel is curved sided. The grey ware dishes are all plain rimmed apart from one with a bead rim and one with an internal cordon possibly imitating a gallo-belgic form. This vessel has internal burnished decoration, comprising groups of three lines radiating from the centre of the base, similar to that found on vessels from Duston (Woods 1972, fig 2(a) 2 and fig. 2(b), 3). Grey ware vessels which might be bowls or dishes have beaded, flat topped, flanged and triangular rims. One of the two lids in the assemblage is in grey ware and there is also a small globular grey ware vessel which might be from a triple vase. Some grey ware bodysherds have decoration comprising incised combing, rouletting, burnished lattice and barbotine circles and dots.

The oxidised ware apart from mortaria comprises amphora, flagons, a lid, a flanged bowl and a vessel which is possibly an imitation of a samian ware Dr. 30. The flagons are mainly from ring necked types but only one appears to have the later prominent top ring or bead. The mortaria include bead and flange and wall-sided types, one of which has red painted decoration. The BB1 vessels, other than the cooking pot, are dishes with plain rims, one of which had a handle, and the possible BB2 vessel is a triangular rimmed dish. There is also a shell gritted ware flanged bowl and the London ware vessel has a stamped lozenge decoration. The other vessels in LNVCC are plain rimmed dishes, wide-mouthed jars or bowls, a castor box, imitation Dr 37s and 38s and an indented beaker. The Central Gaulish samian ware comprises a form Dr. 33 and the South Gaulish samian ware forms Curle 11, Dr. 18, 27 and 37.

### **The trenches**

Many of the trenches contain only a few features with a small number of sherds. Table 3 gives the total sherd count, weight and rim and base eve in the trenches with larger amounts of pottery.

Table 3: Total sherd count, weight, rim and base equivalents

Trench	no	%	Weight (g)	%	rim	base	rim	base
Trench 38	16	1.67	214	0.89	9	0.40	33	1.70
Trench 39	13	1.35	324	1.35	53	2.35	30	1.55
Trench 41	36	3.75	670	2.80	199	8.81	44	2.27
Trench 44	141	14.69	2470	10.33	338	14.97	202	10.43
Trench 45	86	8.96	1164	4.87	116	5.14	37	1.91
Trench 47	65	6.77	962	4.02	184	8.15	59	3.05
Trench 48	57	5.94	736	3.08	97	4.30	58	2.99
Trench 50	12	1.25	502	2.10	38	1.68	-	-
Trench 51	62	6.56	1240	5.22	49	2.17	119	6.14
Trench 52	332	34.58	11684	48.85	981	43.45	1245	64.27
Trench 53	16	1.67	812	3.39	125	5.54	100	5.16
Villa area	492	51.25	8376	35.02	1083	47.96	582	30.05

It is perhaps not surprising that many of these trenches were among those located within an area occupied by a villa complex (37-51; 37, 42 and 49 contain no features). The exceptions are the assemblage from a ditch in Trench 52 and the Trench 53 group is from a spread of burnt material in the west end of the trench. Only seven of the features from these trenches are considered worthy of more detailed discussion.

### Dating

The earliest pottery from the site is from Pit 3413 and comprises sherds in a coarse, friable fabric, decorated with narrow horizontal bands of diagonal cuts, which may be early to mid Iron Age or earlier in date. A flint gritted sherd from a medieval furrow in Trench 22 (2203) is also likely to be Iron Age in date. Some of the shell gritted ware from ditches in Trenches 38 (3805), 39 (3906), 47 (4714), 48 (4804), 58 (5806) and 59 (5914) may belong to, or have been produced in, the later Iron Age and the fabric with a combination of grog and shell inclusions is likely to be of 1st century date.

The 'carrot' amphora is a 1st century type. The South Gaulish samian ware and the North France mortarium date to the later 1st to early 2nd century (Flavian-Trajanic period) and the Central Gaulish ware vessel is of Antonine date. The hard cream grogged and pink grogged wares occur on most sites in the area with occupation spanning the later 1st to 2nd centuries. Grey wares were produced and used throughout the Roman period. The possible gallo-belgic imitation dish (4709) is of 1st century date and the vessels with incised combing, lattice and barbotine decoration belong to the 2nd century; other 2nd century pottery includes the London ware vessel, some of the flagons and mortaria, the possible Gauloise 4 amphora, the lids and, probably, some of the shell-gritted ware. The possible LNVGW sherds could date to the 2nd or 3rd century.

The assemblage includes types of grey ware jars and bowls common in the later Roman period (cf Todd, 1968, fig. 1, types 1, 5, 6 and 8 and fig 2, types 12-13). Much of the LNVCC is also from types which are common in the 4th century, although the indented beaker and castor box could be 3rd century. The BB1 plain rimmed dishes could be 3rd or 4th century in date, though the example with a handle is most likely to be 4th century; the possible BB2 vessel probably dates to the 3rd century. The shell gritted ware jars with triangular rims and the flanged mortaria could be 3rd or 4th century, but the jars with undercut rims and a flanged bowl in shell gritted ware and the wall sided mortaria are more likely to date to the 4th century.



The various demolition and overlying layers in the area of the villa (4005, 4402, 4404, 4405, 4407, 4408, 4604, 5005) contain sherds in most of the main fabrics. The latest dated pottery in these layers are flanged bowls in shell gritted ware (4405) and grey ware similar to BB1 (4408), a reeded rim mortarium (4404) and a LNVCC flange fragment (4408). These vessels are probably all 4th century in date.

Overall, there appears to have been activity on the site, particularly the villa area, from the Iron Age to the later 4th century, but there is a noticeable lack of 2nd to 3rd century pottery, especially samian ware, which suggests limited occupation over this period.

### ***Assemblage characteristics***

Very little pottery was recovered from the trenches outside of the villa area, other than 52 and 53, suggesting only limited activity. Trenches 57 and 59, however, do contain the ring ditches. Much of the pottery was probably locally produced, but there are also many examples of regionally produced wares. The amount of pottery from continental sources is small, comprising South and Central Gaulish samian, a North France mortarium and Gaulish and 'carrot' amphorae. The presence of the latter is interesting as these are relatively rare; it is thought that these may have been used to transport dates. Overall, the range of local, regional and imported pottery and the ratio of jars to bowls, dishes and beakers indicate activities ranging from utilitarian to higher status, as might be expected on a villa complex.

Joining sherds were noted in 4506 and 4507 in ditch 4509. Sherds in ditch 4715 (contexts 4709 and 4710) and 4421 (4420) may be from the same vessel, but none of the sherds join. Trench 44 is adjacent to Trench 47.

### ***The selected assemblages***

#### *Layer 4402 / 4403*

Table 4 shows the percentages of the principal fabrics by count, weight and rim and base eve in Layer 4402=4403.

*Table 4: Pottery from 4402 / 4403*

<b>Fabric</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Weight (g)</b>	<b>R eve</b>	<b>B eve</b>
Hard cream grog	1	76	15	-
Pink grog	3	50	-	-
Grog	1	24	-	-
Shell	1	20	-	-
Grey	18	252	80	14
Oxidised	4	52	-	100
Lnvcc	3	94	20	13
Lncw	3	182	-	40
Bb2?	2	18	6	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>758</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>167</b>

The hard cream grogged ware includes a jar with a neck cordon while the recognisable grey ware vessels comprise jars with curved and everted rims, together with a flanged bowl; the latter has only a slight bead above the flange. The possible BB2 vessel is a dish with a triangular rim. The LNVCC includes a flanged bowl or imitation Dr 38 and a possible beaker sherd. The oxidised base is probably from a flagon and the LNCW is from a mortarium. The pottery ranges in date from the later 1st to 4th century.

*Ditch 4421*

Table 5 shows the percentages of the principal fabrics by count, weight and rim and base eve in Ditch 4421.

*Table 5: Pottery from ditch 4421*

<b>Fabric</b>	<b>no</b>	<b>Weight (g)</b>	<b>R eve</b>	<b>B eve</b>
Hard cream grog	4	70	-	-
Pink Grog	1	10	-	-
Grog	1	12	-	-
Shell	1	22	12	-
Grey	3	396	39	10
Oxidised	3	20	7	-
CGS	1	22	22	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>552</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>10</b>

Ditch 4421 has primary and top fills, here combined. The hard cream grogged ware includes a lid seated jar with a neck cordon while the shell gritted ware is from a narrow mouthed jar. A flanged bowl and a dish with a bead rim occur in grey ware, together with a body sherd with a barbotine circle. The oxidised ware includes a lid and the Central Gaulish samian ware is from a Dr. 33 cup of Antonine date. The date range for ditch 4421 appears to be 2nd to 3rd century.

*Ditch 4509*

Table 6 shows the percentages of the principal fabrics by count, weight and rim and base eve in Ditch 4509.

*Table 6: Pottery from ditch 4509*

<b>Fabric</b>	<b>no</b>	<b>Weight (g)</b>	<b>R eve</b>	<b>B eve</b>
Grog	3	48	-	-
Grog with shell	16	166	24	-
Shell	8	163	-	-
Grey	14	130	-	-
Oxidised	4	42	6	-
BB1	1	14	-	-
SGS	9	88	34	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>652</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>12</b>

Ditch 4509 has primary and top fills, here combined. Apart from the samian ware, the only recognisable forms are jars with curved rims in the oxidised and grog with shell fabrics. The samian ware is all of South Gaulish origin and comprises forms Dr. 18 and 37. The grey ware includes body sherds with incised combing. The date range for ditch 4509 is late 1st to 2nd century.

*Ditch 4715*

Table 7 shows the percentages of the principal fabrics by count, weight and rim and base eve in Ditch 4715.

*Table 7: Pottery from ditch 4715*

<b>Fabric</b>	<b>no</b>	<b>Weight (g)</b>	<b>R eve</b>	<b>B eve</b>
Pink grog	4	102	15	19
Grog	3	274	8	-
Shell	3	42	-	-
Grey	24	312	64	40

Oxidised	14	150	83	-
BB1	1	6	-	-
London	1	8	-	-
SGS	1	2	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>896</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>59</b>

Ditch 4715 has primary, middle and top fills, here combined. Lid seated jars occur in pink grog and grey wares and other recognisable grey ware forms are jars with an everted rim, one with a line of barbotine dots on the shoulder, and a possible imitation gallo-belgic dish with internal burnished decoration. The forms in oxidised ware comprise a jar with a curved rim, two ring necked flagons and a possible imitation of a samian ware Dr. 30. A South Gaulish samian ware sherd is from a form Dr. 37 and the assemblage also includes a fragment of a London ware vessel with a stamped lozenge decoration. The date range for ditch 4715 is late 1st to 2nd century.

#### *Ditch 4810*

Table 8 shows the percentages of the principal fabrics by count, weight and rim and base eve in Ditch 4810.

*Table 8: Pottery from ditch 4810*

<b>Fabric</b>	<b>no</b>	<b>Weight (g)</b>	<b>R eve</b>	<b>B eve</b>
Hard cream grog	2	172	-	-
Pink grog	1	34	-	-
Grog	2	22	-	-
Grey	23	338	80	-
Oxidised	3	14	-	-
BB1	2	18	5	-
LNVCC	2	8	-	-
SGS	1	2	7	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>608</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>-</b>

Ditch 4810 has three fills, here combined. Two jars occur in grey ware, one a narrow mouthed type with a frilled rim and the other with an everted rim and burnished external lattice decoration. The fills also contain a South Gaulish samian ware Dr. 27 cup and a cooking pot/jar in a grey fabric resembling BB1. A small oxidised sherd may be from a Gauloise 4 amphora. The date range for ditch 4810 is late 1st to 2nd century.

#### *Ditch 5115*

Table 9 shows the percentages of the principal fabrics by count, weight and rim and base eve in Ditch 5115.

*Table 9: Pottery from ditch 5115*

<b>Fabric</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Weight (g)</b>	<b>R eve</b>	<b>B eve</b>
Hard cream grog	3	96	-	-
Pink grog	4	70	-	-
Grog	3	252	-	-
Shell	4	412	-	100
Grey	31	288	39	19
Oxidised	14	102	-	-
LNVCC	3	24	-	-
SGS	1	4	10	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>1248</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>119</b>

Ditch 5115 has secondary, middle and top fills, here combined. The grey ware forms comprise three jars, two with curved rims, and a dish or bowl with a bead rim. The

South Gaulish samian ware is from a Curle 11 and the top fill contains a sherd from an indented LNVCC beaker. The date range for ditch 5115 is late 1st to 3rd century.

#### *Ditch 5205*

Table 10 shows the percentages of the principal fabrics by count, weight and rim and base eve in Ditch 5205.

*Table 10: Pottery from ditch 5205*

<b>Fabric</b>	<b>no</b>	<b>Weight (g)</b>	<b>R eve</b>	<b>B eve</b>
Hard cream grog	2	276	-	100
Shell	34	1235	215	43
Grey	180	6414	419	716
Oxidised	17	1065	6	-
LVCC	84	1906	278	280
LVWC	6	240	14	20
BB1	3	142	31	-
Mancetter-Hartshill	5	254	18	32
Oxfordshire white	1	152	-	54
<b>Total</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>11684</b>	<b>981</b>	<b>1245</b>

The deposit in Ditch 5205 is by far the largest in any of the evaluation trenches, accounting for 35% of the total assemblage by count, 49% by weight and 44% and 64% of the rim and base eves, respectively.

Around a half of the recognisable forms are jars with various rim types, including vessels with undercut rims in shell gritted ware. The rest are mainly bowls and dishes, in roughly equal amounts, together with sherds from three mortaria which were produced in the Lower Nene Valley, the Oxford region and Mancetter-Hartshill. The two from the Lower Nene Valley and Mancetter-Hartshill are wall sided types, with that from the latter source having red painted decoration. Three plain rimmed dishes in BB1 include a handled type and there are other plain rimmed dishes in LVCC and grey ware. Some of those in grey ware are reminiscent of BB1 in fabric. A number of the bowls in LVCC are imitations of samian ware forms Dr. 38 and 37; one of the latter has external painted intersecting arc decoration. Some of the grey ware vessels are in a dark grey ware, occurring in forms reminiscent of East Midlands burnished ware (Todd 1968). The hard grogged ware comprises a complete thick jar base.

The pottery from ditch 5205 appears fairly consistent in terms of date and it is tempting to think that this deposit represents a discard from the adjacent villa, probably sometime in the latter part of the 4th century.

#### **6.4 Other Roman finds** by Tora Hylton

##### ***Copper alloy***

Nine objects manufactured from copper alloy were recovered. The assemblage includes a nail, a stud, a convex disc and two tapered shanks, one from a pin and the others from a spoon. In addition, there is a cast plate fragment with semi-circular cut outs, as yet unidentified.

##### ***Iron***

There are 22 objects manufactured from iron. With the exception of two knives, the assemblage is dominated by nails. The knives are quite distinct types, Mannings Types 24 (1985 and 13 (Fig 26). Both are forms which would have been in use during the Iron Age period, with Type 24 continuing into the early Roman period and

Type 13 continued in use to later in the Roman period. In total, there are 20 nails of types which may have been used to secure light structural fittings.

### **Bone/horn**

There are two pieces of worked bone, a shank from a pin and a worn handle/fitting (Fig 27), and one piece of worked horn, a sawn transverse section displaying signs of wear.

### **Glass**

There are five fragments of green/colourless glass, measuring up to 40 x 25mm in size. One small fragment from Trench 40 (4003) may be an undiagnostic base sherd from a vessel, but the remainder all appear to be fragments of window glass. Two types of window glass are represented, differentiated by the manufacturing process. A single fragment recovered from Trench 44 (4404), has a matt surface and a glossy surface, a feature observed on 1st and 2nd century window glass which has been cast, while four sherds from Trench 52 have glossy surfaces, indicating that it was blown.

### **Coins** by Ian Meadows

SF1 (4410): A barbarous radiate, 14mm diameter. The obverse bears a bearded radiate bust facing right. On the reverse a standing figure advancing left is represented by the legs and lower torso, to its left are some illiterate marks representing lettering. As an issue it is likely to date to 275AD onwards.

SF2 (5101): A 17mm diameter bronze of Gratian. The obverse legend is indistinct, the reverse bears a standing figure of the emperor leaning on a shield and holding a labarum. The incomplete legend read ]VI SAECVLI indicating it is a product of Arles, a point confirmed by the partial mint mark [TCO]. This issue was produced between 367-75.

SF4 (5102): A CONSTANTINOPOLIS issue, 15mm diameter, with a Lugdunum, the mint mark PLG. This coin dates to between 330-37.

## **6.5 Wall plaster** by Ian Meadows

### **Introduction**

A total of 4.485m<sup>2</sup> of painted plaster, with a total weight of 27.879kg, were recovered from Trenches 47 and 50. Trench 47 produced only 47 of the pieces, from fill (4707), and they were generally small and abraded totalling only 0.186m<sup>2</sup> and 0.354kg. The surface treatments were often missing or weathered and accorded with the material being dumped in a context where they were exposed to weathering and mechanical attrition. By contrast, the material from Trench 50 comprised 237 fragments with a surface area of 4.299m<sup>2</sup> almost all of which were fresh and brightly coloured with little or no sign of any surface deterioration. It was felt likely this material was derived from a single room because there was a degree of unity of colour and design (Fig 28).

### **Composition**

The plaster comprised two or three distinct layers reflecting the stages of its building up. The initial layer or two layers were both about 20mm thick, the initial application contained some of the coarser elements such as occasional fragments of crushed brick grog, whilst the second application appears to have contained more organic material as suggested by grass/straw impressions and a larger number of vesicles within its body where the organic element has decayed. Onto this 40mm thick layer

of plasters a surface of about 10mm of finer plaster was applied and its outer surface smoothed and perhaps given a final thin skim of about 1mm thickness of extra fine plaster onto which the paint was applied.

The rear surfaces of the pieces of plaster were examined to identify the character of the wall to which they had been attached. There were no traces of wattles or stones observed but most of the fragments preserved a flat pressed appearance with occasional traces of organic impressions of stalks, perhaps of straw. In addition a number of the pieces preserved straight 'steps' in their backs. This combination of evidence might suggest that the plasterwork was applied to a mud brick wall with the steps being an artefact of the courses not being perfectly true. The unevenness of the courses might be produced because the bricks were not standard sizes, those for example from Newgate Street in London were 420-460mm long, 100-160mm wide and on average 70-80mm thick; but there was a huge variation in thickness between 60-110mm (Perring 1991 77). Many mud brick walls are known from Roman Britain including several which have borne wall plaster, for example Milk Street, London (Roskams 1978).

### **Decoration**

The colour range represented on the plaster comprised a rich red ochre ground with seven other colours applied, maroon, yellow, white, grey, blue, green and dark brown (Fig 28). Where some colours were applied over others the final layer has in places come away, in particular a number of elements painted onto the red ochre ground appear to have become detached. A few pieces of plaster bear the red ground colour onto which green spatters of paint had been applied perhaps to imitate a marble effect.

Amongst the fragments is a large piece from a maroon embrasure, the two faces are not perpendicular, suggesting the opening had a flared form, perhaps more likely in a window than a door. This piece was painted in the red ground colour.

Amongst the decorated fragments the motifs represented did not contain any certain figurative or architectural elements although geometric designs and foliage could clearly be recognised. Although a large amount of plaster was recovered it was largely during the machining process and securely stratified plaster was left *in situ* meaning there are few good joins between pieces. The difficulty of creating a coherent mosaic of the design means it has only been possible to identify suites of motifs that went together and in most instances it is unclear whether or not they were to be seen horizontally or vertically. Each of these stylistic groups, some of which comprise only a single piece, will be described.

A yellow line (6mm wide) from one side of which sprout three yellow leaves between which two green leaves are present. The leaf groups are spaced at about every 35mm. At 70mm below the yellow line there is a line of white beads comprising alternating two round beads (5mm) and one elongated bead (32mm). This bead motif overlaps the edge of a blue band 40mm wide. Below the blue are band areas, possibly triangular of blue and orange between which are areas of red ground covered with irregular 14mm diameter white spots of varying intensity. These spots are similar to the representation of grapes on wall paintings from Pompeii (Jashemski 1979, 222). A non-joining piece showing a pendant joined by a yellow line which formed a right angle may have hung down at the end of this suite of decoration.

A number of pieces were either unpainted or had the junction between the red ground colour and the unpainted area. Generally this junction was marked by a second application of the red ground creating a darker line along the edge.



A small number of pieces bear what appears to be pointed green leaves. The green paint being applied onto the red ground colour was highlighted by a stroke of reddish brown around its edges. There are a series of parallel lines over a wide zone of the red ground.

The reconstructed sequence is a yellow line 20mm from a white line which in turn was 20mm from a second yellow line. Each of these lines is 2-3mm wide. At 27mm from the second yellow line lies a grey line with regularly spaced (c5mm apart) grey discs, on the side nearest the yellow line, 25mm from this line lies a second grey line this time with overturned wave type motifs. A further 45mm of plain red ground could then be observed before the break. This decoration could be either vertical or horizontal, it is not clear.

The above decorative motif of parallel lines may have defined a rectangular area of panelling, as a highly decorative area lies adjacent to a white line 18mm beyond which lies a possible yellow line. The surviving fragments join to form a 220x170mm area within which there is a blue coloured teardrop up to 75mm wide and 80mm long which lies at 45° to axis of the white line. Between the teardrop and the white line, on one side lies a bright yellow possible flower. Either side of the tip of the teardrop there is a green possible leaf motif beyond which point there is part of a white spiral. The complexity of this piece of decoration might denote it was part of a corner of a panel.

A number of pieces bear abstract swirls of maroon painted over the red ground, perhaps to suggest stalks of vegetation or climbers.

A feathery (?) foliage shown as light brown elements with a dark brown to highlight one edge on the red ground.

Blue green foliage on the red ground. Unfortunately the paint of these 50mm long and 22mm wide leaves seemed to not adhere well to the red ground.

There are three pieces where it is unclear how they fitted within the rest of the decoration and because of that they might be part of a central decoration within a panel. One piece contains what may have been a geometric base in yellow and green paint, the second contains a blue green area beside the red ground over which a series of wavy flowing lines had been painted, suggestive of hair or seaweed, and the third comprised a series of 10mm square cells containing white spots, on one side of the cells there is a triangular white pediment surmounted by a white spot suggestive of a piece of architecture. The identification of these pieces is problematic but they were the only ones of their type within the entire assemblage.

### **Conclusion**

The assemblage of pieces of painted plaster from a single trench (50) was notable on a number of counts, the pieces were not weathered or abraded and the average piece weighed 116g. The pieces were also very much a type suggesting the material was derived from a single room scheme rather than redeposited from several. Whilst originally thought to perhaps be ceiling plaster because of the absence of evidence for the wall to which the plaster was fixed it is perhaps more likely the plaster was applied to a wall of large mud bricks. Such bricks have been recovered from sites in London and Cirencester and irregularities in the construction of such a wall could create steps such as those identified on the rear of several pieces of the plaster. The freshness of the pieces and absence of evidence of attrition might suggest the wall collapsed and has not been subjected to any cultivation.

## 6.6 Ceramic building material by Pat Chapman

This assemblage of tile comprises 237 sherds, weighing 26.3kg. Within it are 70 recognisable roof tile sherds, 29.5%. There are larger sherds, c 130x100mm, but the majority are smaller. Some sherds have suffered from frost damage, with surfaces lost through lamination, and there is some abrasion.

The fabric for the majority of the tiles are variations of hard fine sandy orange to reddish-orange clay, occasionally with a brown surface, sometimes with a broad medium grey core. There are generally fine calcareous, ironstone and grog inclusions. A distinctive fabric for a number of tiles is a hard slightly coarse sandy dark red clay, occasionally including lumps of white clay. The remaining fabrics comprise coarse sandy orange, fine slightly soft silty orange, and a coarse pinkish-brown clay with chunks of grog and calcareous inclusions, mainly for the few possible floor/brick tiles.

The 31 *tegula* roof tiles are typically 15-25mm thick with flanges varying between short and squat or tall and thin, all with flat tops. Two examples of lower cutaways consist of one through the bottom of the flange from fill (4005), a Warry type A provisionally dated to 120 AD and one coming diagonally through the top, a Warry type C, from fill (4707), datable to 160-260 AD (Warry 2007). The one example of the flange cut off along the top has a series of knife marks where it had been hacked off. Two sherds have the typical finger swirl across the top surface.

There are 39 curved *imbrex* tiles, 12-15mm thick, some having a narrow apex where it has survived. One sherd, 22mm thick, may be from a ridge tile. A few sherds from both types of roof tile have a black wash on the upper surface, one small body fragment has a possible maroon wash, a feature of roof tiles from the east midlands.

Six of the seven box-flue tiles are small, and have the usual narrow or broad comb designs, however, a large tile from fill (5112) has been slashed with broad diagonals between 12mm and 35m apart.

Of the remaining tile sherds there are only three examples of floor/brick tiles, one small sherd from fill (4707) is 55mm thick and must have come from either a brick or a large floor tile. Only two paw prints were found, one from a medium-sized dog.

Half of the tiles came from Trenches 44 and 47. Seventy-seven sherds came from Trench 44, with a further 39 sherds, from Trench 47. However, none were found in Trench 50 with the painted plaster. The minimal presence of box-flue tiles and floor tiles would suggest that a bath house is a bit further away from this building complex.

Table 11: Quantification of Roman tile

Context/feature	No	Weight (g)	Comment
1802	1	62	-
2904	1	503	Tegula
3204	1	65	Flue
3304	1	54	Tegula
3306	7	1546	Tegula
3402	7	289	-
3411	2	57	-
3504	1	20	-

Context/feature	No	Weight (g)	Comment
3506	4	831	Tegula, imbrex
3803	1	19	-
3805	1	4	-
3807	5	99	-
3906	9	838	Tegula, 7 imbrex
Tr 39	6	279	Flue, imbrex
4004	4	658	Tegula, imbrex
4005	16	1272	4 tegula, imbrex
4104	2	206	-
4107	9	1350	Floor
Trench 44			
4402	6	458	2 tegula, 2 imbrex
4403	15	1648	2 tegula, 6 imbrex, pawprint
4404	11	570	Tegula, 2 imbrex, floor
4405	6	1446	4 tegula, 2 imbrex
4406	1	49	Imbrex
4407	4	312	2 imbrex, floor
4408	7	667	Tegula, imbrex
4409	4	144	Tegula
4410	16	1610	3 tegula, imbrex, flue
4418	4	507	Tegula
4420	3	657	Tegula, imbrex
4505	10	500	-
4506	2	419	Imbrex
4604	7	455	Imbrex – ridge
4707	31	3422	3 tegula, imbrex, pawprint, swirl, floor
4708	3	889	-
4709	5	499	2 imbrex
4804	1	60	-
4806	1	90	-
4807	3	1272	2 tegula- 1 swirl, imbrex
4808	10	473	Imbrex, flue
5112	3	700	3 flue
5119	5	750	3 imbrex
5204	1	18	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>26,287</b>	

### **Fired clay**

There is only a scatter of 24 fired clay fragments weighing 669g. They are typically irregular or subrounded, small except for two large lumps. One small square fragment from Trench 44 and three more from trench 50 may be rough *tesserae* cut from tiles for a tessellated pavement, but there are only four of them. A fragment from fill (4420) is 35mm thick, black and vitrified on one side, and may be associated with the slag.

### **Stone**

Two flat pieces of limestone, 11mm thick, come from fill (4808), one has been burnt.

### **Post-medieval tile**

There are seven sherds from fills (5303) and (5304). Three are pantiles, 13mm thick, made from hard red-brown clay dated from the late 17th century onwards. The other four are 15mm thick with a paler fabric and blackened upper surface, and are probably roof tile.

## 6.7 **Metalworking debris** by Andy Chapman

A total of 10.58kg of metalworking debris was recovered. A majority of this comprises tap slag from iron smelting furnaces, while quantities of furnace slag were also recovered.

The furnace slag often has quite fluid surfaces, and also often has curved under-surfaces with fired clay furnace lining adhering to it. There are frequent wood impressions in the slag left by pieces of the charcoal fuel, sometimes several tens of millimetres wide and long. There are also less frequent, but still occasionally quite large, charcoal impressions within the tap slag as well. The tap slag has the characteristic lava-flow appearance and is quite frothy, containing large gas bubbles.

A single context usually contained either furnace slag or tap slag, although there was a mixed deposit in Trench 48. There were small quantities of furnace slag from Trenches 29, 33, 38, 45 and 48, and a larger quantity from Trench 39. Tap slag was recovered in small quantities from Trenches 40, 41, 45 and 47 and in larger quantities from Trenches 44 and 48, although Trench 48 also produced some furnace slag.

The quantities recovered from the evaluation leave no doubt that iron smelting was being carried out on an industrial scale at no great distance from where the debris was recovered.

## 7 **FAUNAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE**

### 7.1 **The animal bone** by Karen Deighton

A total of 5.9kg of animal bone was collected by hand from a range of contexts during the course of excavation.

This material was assessed to determine the level of preservation, the taxa present and the potential value of further work and to inform on future collection strategies. The contribution to the understanding of the economy, status and function of the site was also considered.

#### ***Method***

The animal bone was scanned and identifiable elements were noted (following Halstead 1985 after Watson 1979). Preservation and modification (after Binford 1981) were also noted. Any available biometrical data (after von den Driesch 1976) was noted as was any available ageing and sexing data. Sources of ageing data included long bones where the state of epiphyseal fusion was evident (after Silver 1969) and cheek-tooth rows and loose 3<sup>rd</sup> molars where tooth eruption and wear (after Payne 1973 for Ovicaprids, Bull and Payne 1982 for Sus and Halstead 1985 after Payne 1973 for Bos) could be recorded. Sources of sexing data included the size and morphology of pig canines and the morphology of cattle pelvises.

#### ***Preservation***

Fragmentation, mostly the result of old breaks, varied from moderate to heavy with context as did abrasion. Abrasion and fragmentation were particularly heavy for the Bronze Age contexts where identifiable bone elements were limited to teeth (a particularly durable element), antler and a humerus shaft fragment. Nine bone fragments (8.6% of the bone identified) showed evidence of canid gnawing which could attest to the presence of dogs/foxes at the site. Furthermore this relatively low level of gnawing could suggest that bone was fairly rapidly buried after disposal. Four

examples of butchery including evidence for chopping were noted. Burning was observed on bones from two contexts. The absence of any further burning suggests that it was not a preferred method of disposal.

### ***The taxa present***

*Table 12: Taxa by context (Bronze Age)*

<b>Context</b>	<b>Cattle</b>	<b>Deer</b>	<b>Total</b>
5805	-	1	<b>1</b>
5908	1	-	<b>1</b>
5910	1	-	<b>1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>

Contexts 5716 and 5915 contained indeterminate bone fragments only

*Table 13: Taxa by context (Roman period)*

<b>Context</b>	<b>Cattle</b>	<b>Sheep/ goat</b>	<b>Pig</b>	<b>Horse</b>	<b>Deer</b>	<b>Dog</b>	<b>Domestic fowl</b>	<b>S.ung</b>	<b>L.ung</b>	<b>Total</b>
3409	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
3805	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
3807	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
3906	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
4104	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
4107	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
4402	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
4403	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
4405	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
4406	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
4408	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	3
4410	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
4417	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
4418	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
4506	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	3
4507	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	4
4509	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
4604	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
4707	-	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	3
4708	2	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
4710	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
4714	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	5
4716	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	4
4804	3	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	1	6
4806	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
4807	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
5005	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
5112	4	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	7
5119	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
5204	6	8	1	-	1	-	-	2	5	23
5304	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>104</b>

Contexts 4420 and 4709 contained indeterminate bone fragments only

**Ageing data and metrical data***Table 14: Ageing data by taxa*

<b>Taxon/data type</b>	<b>Epiphyseal fusion</b>	<b>Tooth eruption and wear</b>	<b>Measurements</b>	<b>sexing</b>
Cattle	7	6	11	1
Sheep/goat	3	4	7	
Pig	1	1		1
Horse	2		1	
Deer	1		5	

**Discussion**

Little can be said of the assemblage from the Bronze Age contexts due to extremely poor preservation. However, the two taxa identified (cattle and deer) are not unusual for the period.

The assemblage from the Roman contexts consists of a range of common domesticates plus (red) deer. Cattle appear to be the dominant species. The taxa are those expected for the Roman period and the dominance of cattle is not unexpected. The presence of deer bone as opposed to antler could suggest a high status for the site, however only two fragments are present. The mixed nature of the material involved (in terms of both taxa and anatomical elements present) suggests the genesis of the assemblage to be kitchen or butchery waste.

**Potential**

Overall approximately 80-90% of the assemblage could be identified to taxon, however ageing and metrical data are sparse due to the nature of fragmentation.

For material from the Bronze Age features assessment suggests that although the potential of further work would be severely limited by poor preservation, it would still be relevant because of the scarcity of bone from Bronze Age contexts in the region (Monckton 2001) Therefore bone should be collected from suitable contexts should further excavation take place.

For bone from the Roman site the reasonable preservation encountered indicates that material in similar condition may be available from unexcavated areas of the site. It is therefore recommended that bone be collected from suitable contexts should further excavation take place. Further analysis of this material would give some indication of the animal husbandry and dietary preferences associated with the site. This would then allow comparisons to be made with contemporary sites in the region such as Stanion (Deighton 2008 and in progress).

**Conclusion**

Assessment has revealed a small assemblage of largely common domesticates from the Bronze Age and Roman periods and suggests further work would be viable.

**7.2 The charred plant remains** by Karen Deighton

A total of 14 samples were collected by hand from a range of contexts during the course of excavation. This material was processed and assessed to determine the presence, preservation and nature of any ecofacts, their potential to aid in the understanding of the site and to inform on further sampling strategies.

**Method**

The samples were processed using a modified siraf tank fitted with a 250micron mesh and flot sieve. The resulting flots and residues were dried. The flots were then sorted with the aid of a stereoscopic microscope (10x magnification) and residues were scanned. Any charred plant remains were identified with the aid of the author's small reference collection, Cappers *et al* 2006 and Jacomet 1996 and the SCRI website.

**Preservation**

Preservation was solely by charring. Fragmentation was low, and surface abrasion was moderate.

**The taxa present**

Table 15: Ecofacts by sample and context

Sample	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Cut/fill	1905	1910	3504	5703	5303	5304	5710
Feature	layer	layer	ditch	cremation	deposit	deposit	ditch
Date	R	R	R	BA	R	R	BA
Volume	10	20	20	10	40	40	40
Charcoal	10	50	1,000	1,000	50	1000	10
Spelt	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>T.spelta</i>							
Wheat	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Triticum sp							
Hulled barley	-	1	3	-	-	-	-
<i>H.vulgare</i>							
Naked barley	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
<i>H.vulgare</i> var. nudum							
Barley chaff	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
Hordeum sp							
Wheat/barley	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Triticum/Hordeum							
Cereal	-	-	5	-	-	-	-
<b>Total cereal</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Pulse	-	-	8	-	-	-	-
Leguminosae							
Fat hen	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Chenopodium album</i>							
Bindweed	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Bilderdykia</i>							
<i>convolvulus</i>							
Sheep sorrel	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
<i>Rumex acetocella</i>							
Wild turnip family	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Brassica sp							
<b>Total wild</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Key: BA=Bronze Age, R=Roman

Table 15: Ecofacts by sample and context (continued)

Sample	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Cut/fill	5711 /5707	5904/ 5907	5715/ 5717	5204	4714	4108/ 4107	4810/ 4107
Feature		ditch		midden	ditch	ditch	ditch
Date	BA	BA	BA	R	R	R	R
Volume	40	40	20	40	40	40	40
Charcoal	20	100	100	200	500	50	200
Spelt	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
<i>T.spelta</i>							
Wheat	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Triticum sp							
Hulled barley	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
<i>H.vulgare</i>							
Naked barley	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>H.vulgare</i> var. nudum							
Barley chaff	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hordeum sp							
Wheat/barley	-	-	-	-	3	-	17
Triticum/Hordeum							
Cereal	-	-	-	12	-	-	-
<b>Total cereal</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>20</b>
Pulse	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Leguminosae							
Fat hen	-	-	-	-	-	7	4
<i>Chenopodium album</i>							
Bindweed	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
<i>Bilderdykia convolvulus</i>							
Sheep sorrel	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Rumex acetocella</i>							
Wild turnip family	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
Brassica sp							
<b>Total wild</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>24</b>

### Discussion

The five samples from Bronze Age contexts produced charcoal only. Several were from ditch contexts possibly indicating the origin of the charcoal to be waste disposal. For samples 1,2,3,5,11,12,13 and 14 the low numbers and mixed nature of ecofacts could suggest background. That is material washed or blown into features from activities taking place elsewhere. Sample 6 contained a large amount of charcoal only, apparently the result of fuel burning.

The cereal taxa present are all common for the Roman period. Only three wild/weed taxa were identified to species, all are common crop weeds. Fat hen and bindweed are annuals and sheep sorrel is a perennial, unfortunately numbers are too low for any statements to be made on the nature of crop regimes.

### Potential

Several of the Bronze Age contexts produced charcoal large enough for further identification, which could aid in the understanding of woodland exploitation at this time. The level of preservation of charcoal in the present samples suggests similar conditions would be found in any subsequent samples. Consequently due to the paucity of environmental information for the Bronze Age in the region (Monckton 2001) it is suggested that all suitable Bronze Age contexts are sampled during the course of any subsequent excavation.

The reasonable preservation of cereal and wild seeds in Roman features suggests similar preservation would be encountered in unexcavated areas which could possibly contain charred material relating directly to site activities. This would provide information on site function (i.e. producer or consumer site), on crop regimes, on the



arable economy of the site and its status. Furthermore it may help to delineate any possible specialised activity areas (threshing floors, food preparation areas). Therefore, should any further excavation take place, it is recommended that samples be taken from suitable phaseable/dateable contexts.

### **Conclusion**

Assessment has shown the presence of a range of charred plant remains and suggests there would be potential for further work.

## **8 CREMATION BURIAL** by Andy Chapman

A small pit [5704], 0.35m diameter by 0.18m deep, contained a deposit of cremated bone scattered within the lower half of the fill (5703).

A total of 405g of cremated bone (5703) was recovered. The bone is in good condition, with numerous fragments measuring 20-50mm; 180g (44.5%) are larger than 10mm.

The bone is uniformly white in colour, with very occasional fragments having a light grey surface or entirely grey. This indicates that the pyre reached a temperature in excess of 600<sup>0</sup>C, but with limited parts of the body protected from the full heat.

The bone has not been attributed to skeletal elements in detail, but it is noted that the material comprises predominantly long bones and skull. While tooth fragments are present in numbers, small bone elements are scarce; a couple of phalanges have been noted but no distal phalanges. In addition, there are no identified fragments of vertebrae. The indication is that this is a selected bone deposit, focussed on recovering the skull and major long bones.

Without full osteological analysis only limited comments can be made about the individual represented. The skull is thin and the sutures are unfused, suggesting that they were sub-adult, and a range between older child and younger adolescent is tentatively suggested, perhaps between 9 and 16 years.

A small quantity of wood charcoal, 2g, was also recovered from the deposit.

Within the bone deposit there was a biconical, lathe-turned jet bead. It is 7mm long with a maximum diameter of 10mm, and is 7mm in diameter at either end. The perforation is 5mm in diameter. The surface of the bead is decorated with multiple closely-spaced fine grooves (Fig 29). It is possible that these grooves had once contained some material of a contrasting colour for a more decorative effect.

Biconical beads in jet or shale are not uncommon in association with burials of the early Bronze Age, and there are several examples in jet/shale, amber, stone and bone from Wessex in the collection of Devizes Museum (Annable and Simpson 1964, Catalogue numbers: 196, 250-252, 310, 338, 390-1 & 498), including an example with gold wire set within a series of grooves (Catalogue number 196).

## 9 DISCUSSION

The trial trenching evaluation targeted areas of significant potential, as highlighted by the previous geophysical surveys, and was successful in characterising known archaeological features and identifying new, previously unrecognised features.

In the northern part of the evaluation area, the trenching confirmed that apart from remains possibly associated with a road, no archaeological features were present. The area of magnetic disturbance identified by the previous geophysical survey in Field 8, showing a possible road, was only partially confirmed by the trenching, with evidence of the road recorded in only two trenches that intersected its course. It is possible that later ploughing has destroyed any evidence elsewhere, as the topsoil is shallow across the field.

All the trenches in the northern part of the excavation had boulder clay natural. The clay in addition to its agricultural potential would have provided daub and other material for the manufacture of bricks and tiles. It would also support dense woodland which would provide timber for construction and fuel.

In the southern part of the evaluation, the trenching confirmed the earlier geophysical revealing two main areas of archaeological interest.

### ***Prehistoric***

A ring ditch in the south-western part of the site represents the remains of a Bronze Age round barrow. The mound has been largely ploughed flat, although it is possible some material from it may remain at the base of the current soil profile and slumped into the ditches. A single cremation burial was present associated with a jet bead, and it is likely that further burials will be present.

To the north of the barrow was an enclosure of probable Iron Age date. The function of this feature is uncertain as there appeared to be no occupation associated with it. Its proximity to the Bronze Age funerary monument may imply a special or ritual origin for this feature.

### ***Roman***

The other area of archaeological interest was an area of Roman occupation in the centre of the southern part of the evaluation, centred on a villa of some size, wealth and status.

Activity in this area appears to have begun in the late 1st or early 2nd centuries A.D with the laying out of a trackway and a series of enclosures. Within these enclosures were buildings, probably constructed between the later 1st and later 3rd centuries A.D. Only limited investigation of these structures took place, and any conclusions at this stage are very tentative.

The building in Trench 40 appears to have been quite plain in comparison to the other structures on site, undecorated with a tile roof and floor, and may have fulfilled a more utilitarian function. The building in Trench 44 was more elaborate and its constructional sequence appeared more complex. The recovery of flue tile in addition to floor and roof tile may indicate the presence of a heating system (hypocaust), and wall plaster and window glass are indicative of a structure of some importance, perhaps a bath house.

Little can be said of the villa itself, as only one trench revealed any details of its construction. As with the other buildings on site, only limited investigation took place, so a date for the establishment of the villa is uncertain. It is, however, clear from the

resistivity survey that it comprises an extensive building or range of buildings with a complex internal layout, occupying an area of at least 58m north-south and 32m east-west. Areas of high resistivity within the building may represent surviving floors or areas of under-floor heating (hypocaust). At least one room was well decorated with complex designs. Artefacts from the excavations are also consistent with high status occupation, although surprisingly little coinage was recovered. As with many villas, it is likely to have undergone several episodes of construction, modification and expansion during its life span, also indicated by the abutting walls seen in trench 50. The villa building itself may also mask earlier episodes of occupation.

The large quantities of slag and furnace debris recovered from east of the villa indicate that metalworking was taking place on an industrial scale in the near vicinity of the site. There was little evidence for agriculture; much of the bone seemed to derive from butchery or kitchen waste. The limited cereal remains included mostly grain with very few examples of wheat seed, and so may represent imported material rather than on-site processing. However, quantities were very low and such conclusions are very tentative.

The apparent low levels of pottery deposition from the later 2nd and 3rd centuries is curious, as this may be when activity on site was at its peak. It is possible that the site suffered a significant decline in the 3rd century, although it should be borne in mind that excavation of the building remains was mostly limited to abandonment deposits.

The buildings on site appear to have been abandoned and collapsed, or were demolished in the 4th century. Although extensive areas of rubble overlay the buildings, the depth of these does not seem sufficient to account for all the material that would have been present, and it is likely that much of it was robbed either at the time or in the succeeding centuries. Having said that, what does remain does not appear to have been disturbed, and even delicate remains such as painted wall plaster have survived well. It is also in the 4th century that the extensive midden deposits seen in trenches 52 and 53 to the west of the villa date, and these may represent the removal of waste from the building remains.

Stone walls, at least some of which have pitched-stone foundations and one or more courses of flat-laid stone above this were found in three trenches. Quantities of ceramic roof tile and some box-flue tile, the latter indicating the presence of hypocaust systems to provide heated rooms, were also recovered. A quantity of painted wall plaster indicates that this was a building of high status, and the survival of this material undisturbed since it was first deposited indicates that floor levels may still survive in parts of the building. A geophysical resistivity survey indicates a central building range aligned north-south some 58m long, with a projecting wing to the south that is 32m long. The geophysical survey has also indicated that some of the rooms are likely to contain intact solid floors.

Looking at the wider landscape shows the Nene Valley has a concentration of Roman occupation, with the villas at Great Weldon and Stanion being in close proximity to Priors Hall with associated Roman roads from Medbourne to Titchmarsh to the west and Ashton to Tichmarsh to the east. The excavation (Smith *et al* 1988-9) at Weldon only c2 km to the south, revealed a multiphase villa of high status which was constructed and occupied between the 1st and 5th centuries. Stanion, some 5km to the south, was occupied between the 1st and 3rd centuries, and comprised a stone built house with outbuildings, yards and some industrial features such as malting ovens. Further afield large scale excavations such as Gorehambury have revealed a similar pattern of activity to that seen at Priors Hall, with a substantial high status villa building set in an immediate environment of paddocks and enclosures,

which themselves contained outbuildings including a bath house. This arrangement appears to closely parallel the arrangement at Priors Hall.

As no boundaries for the size of the villa estate at Priors Hall were discovered in the evaluation (due to earlier quarrying) only a tentative pairing relationship with Weldon and Stanion villa can be made. It is possible that the three villas could be one large estate with Weldon at the centre, or are they different phases of occupation, with the position of the main focus possibly moving due to flooding, usable materials or expansion of the living accommodation. Without a more detailed examination of the villa estate and all the villas in the surrounding area no definite conclusions can be made.

Unfortunately the evaluation at Priors Hall does not give a complete picture of the status and phases of the villa, but the evidence so far points to a high status villa with associated buildings and enclosures and iron smelting.

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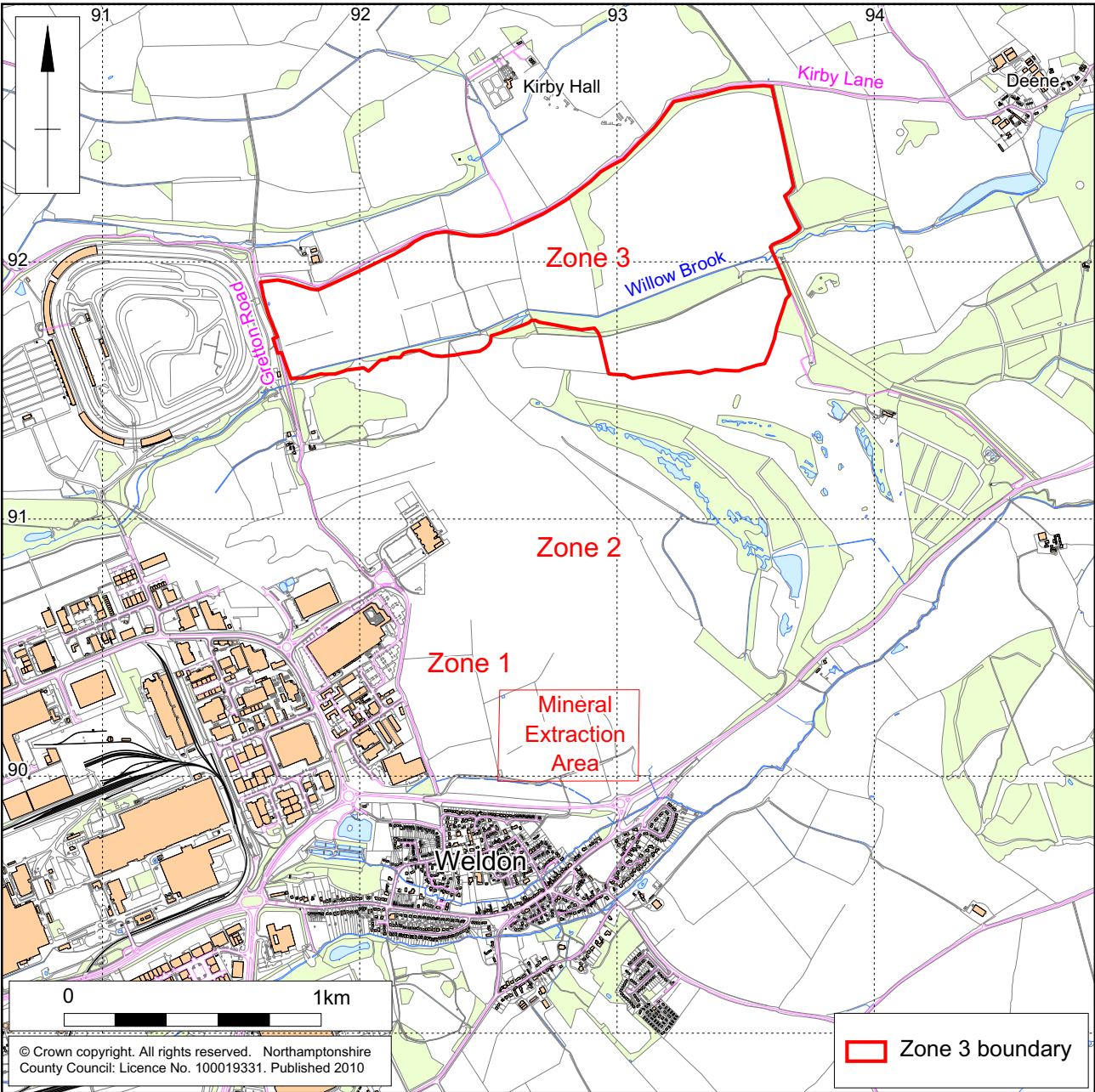
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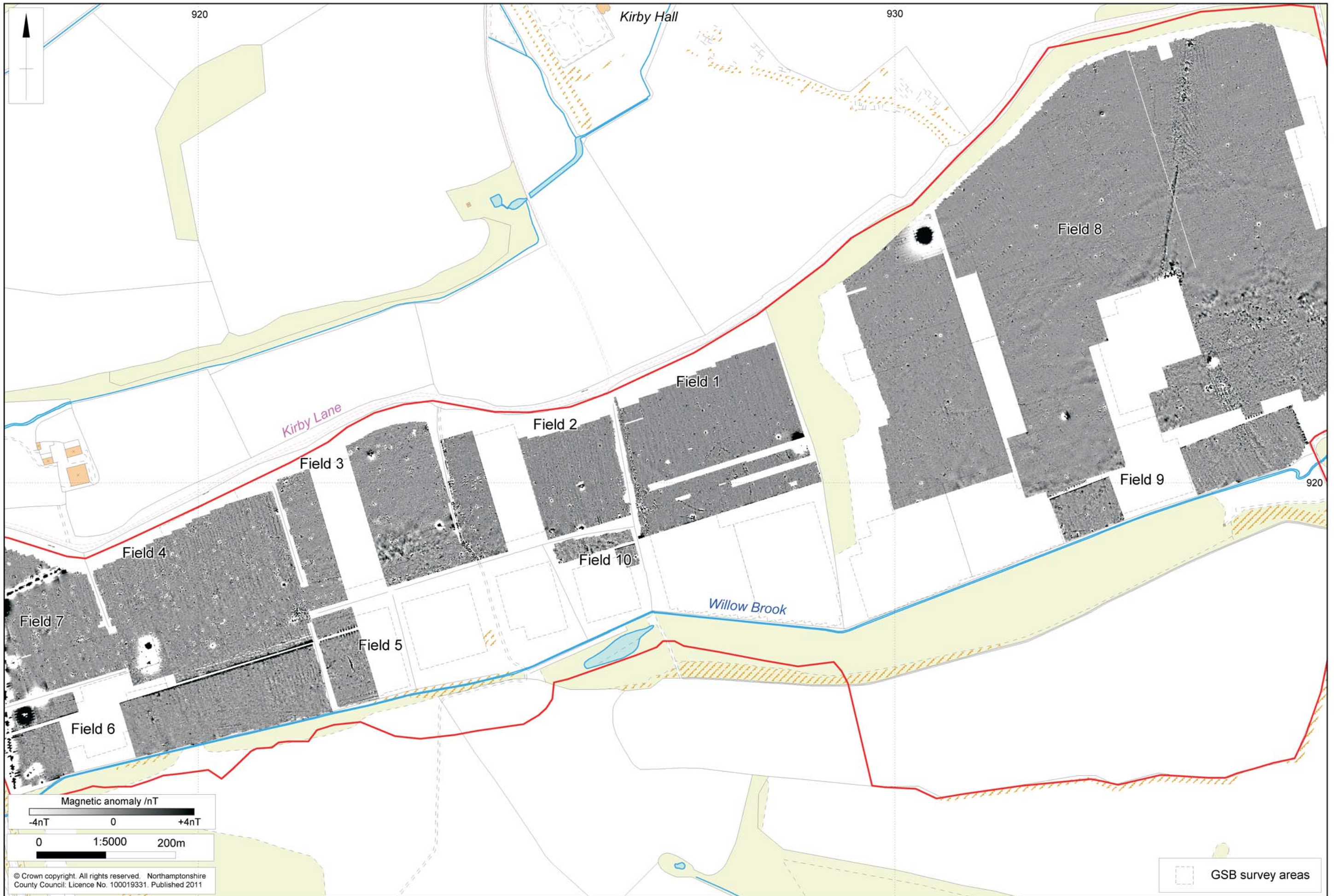
Scri.asis.com - Scottish crop research institute-arable seed identification system.



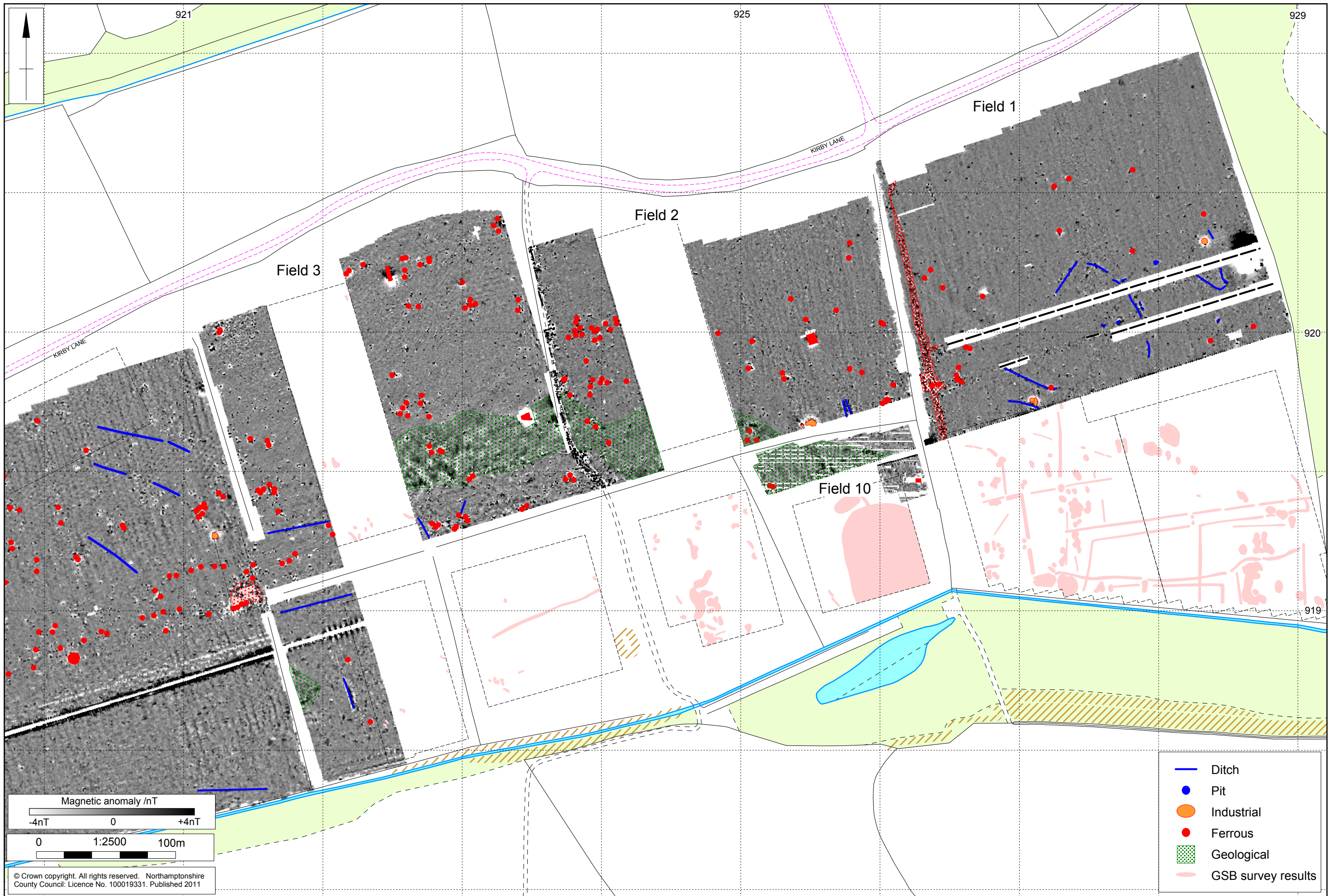
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Site location Fig 1









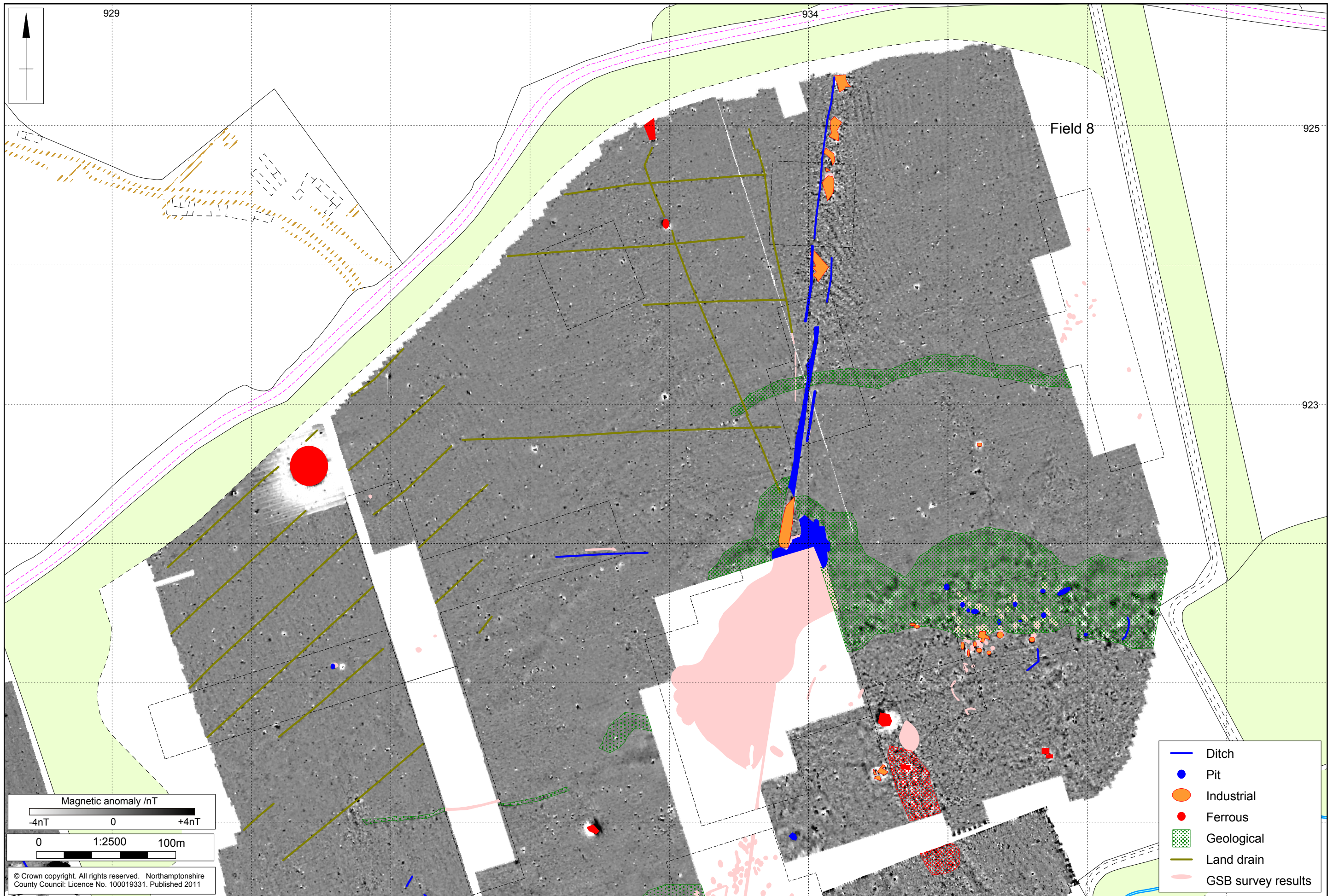












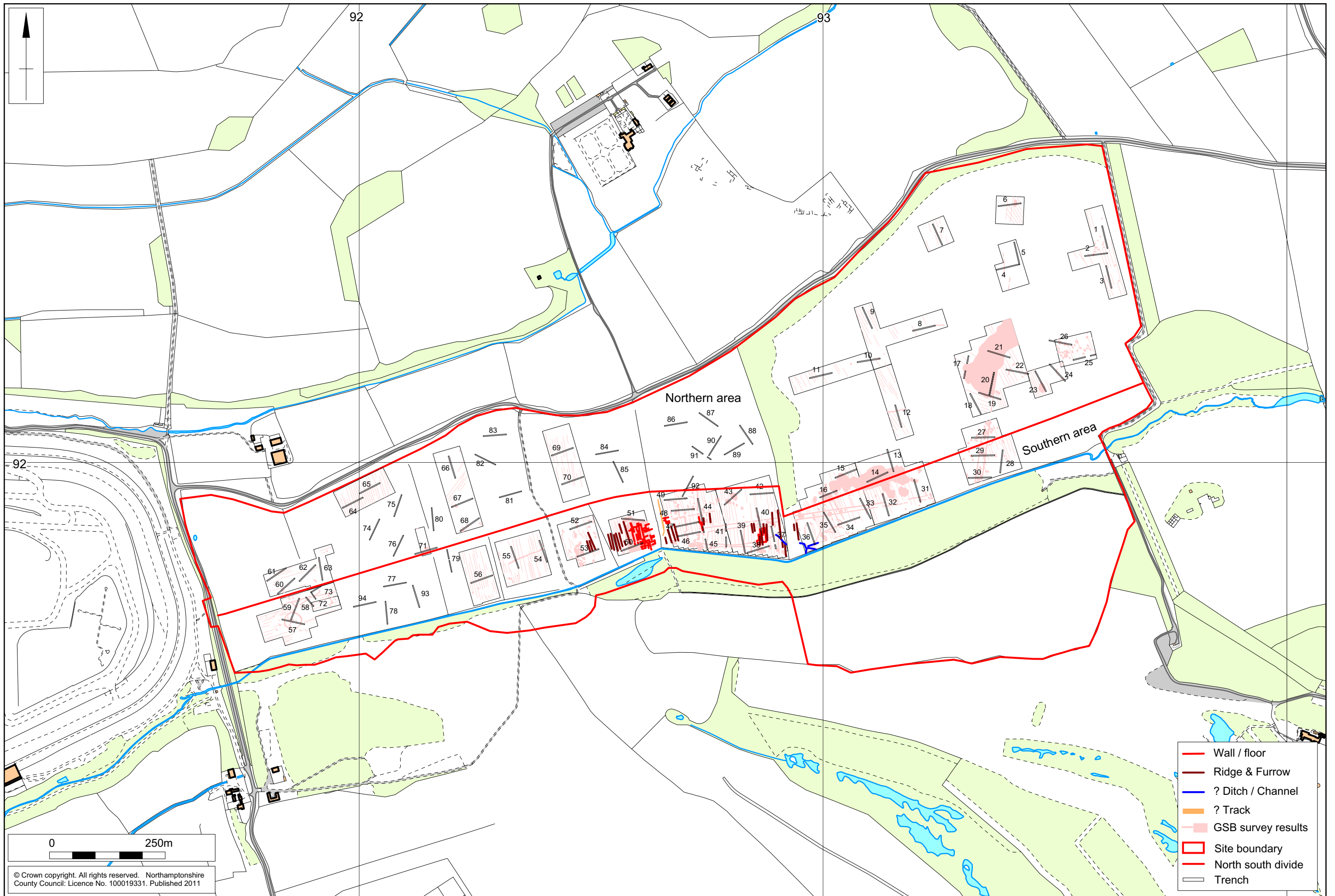






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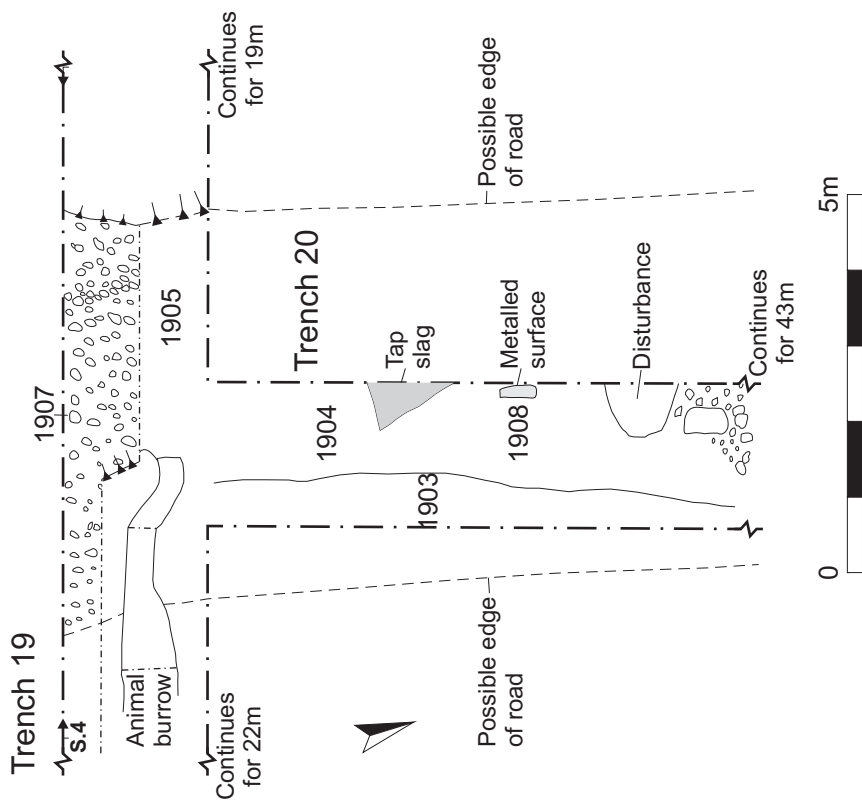
Filtered Earth Resistance Interpretation: Field 10 & surroundings Fig 8







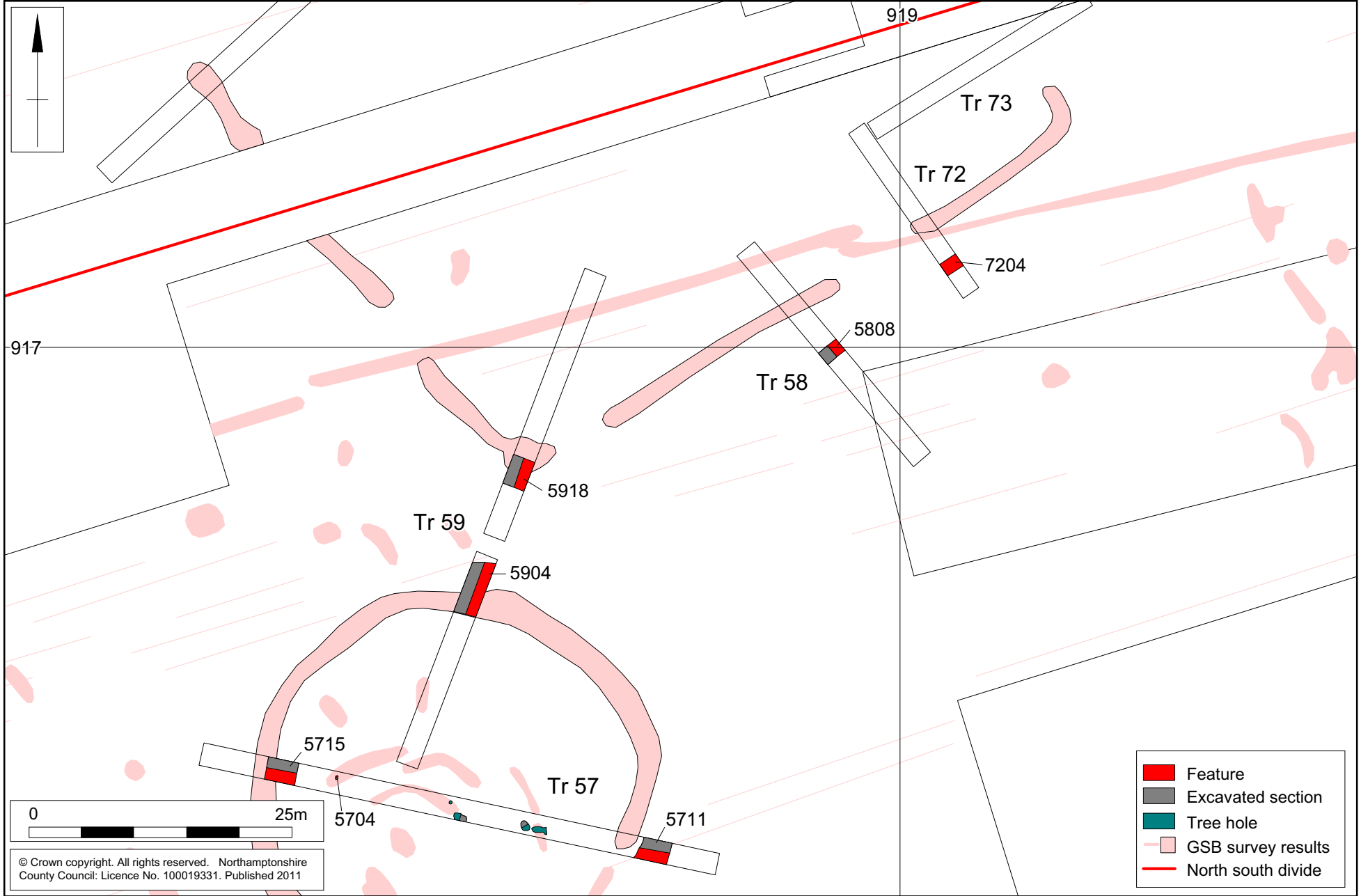
Trench 19, looking east



1:500

Trenches 57 to 59, & 72 & 73 showing probable round barrow

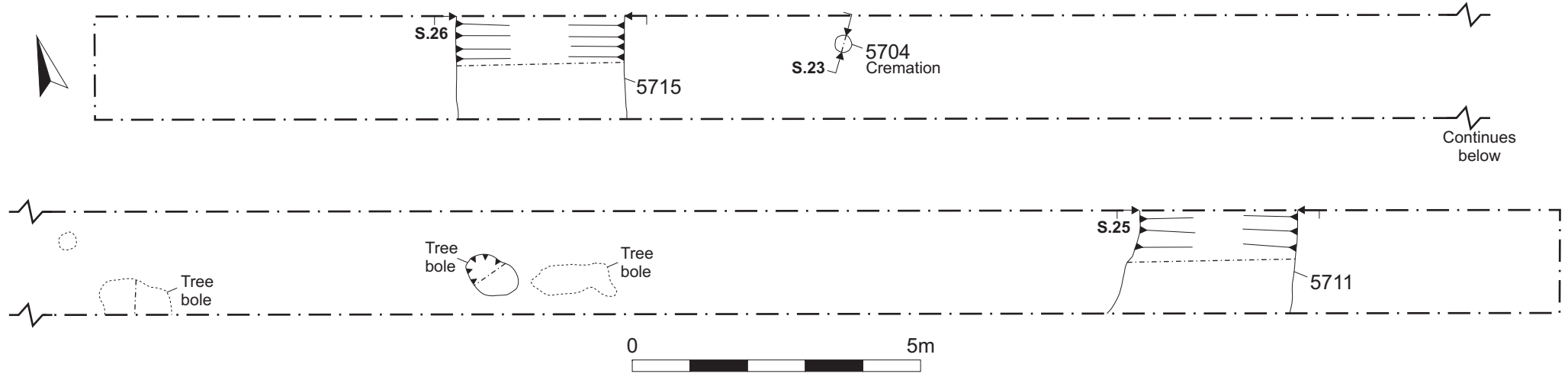
Fig 11



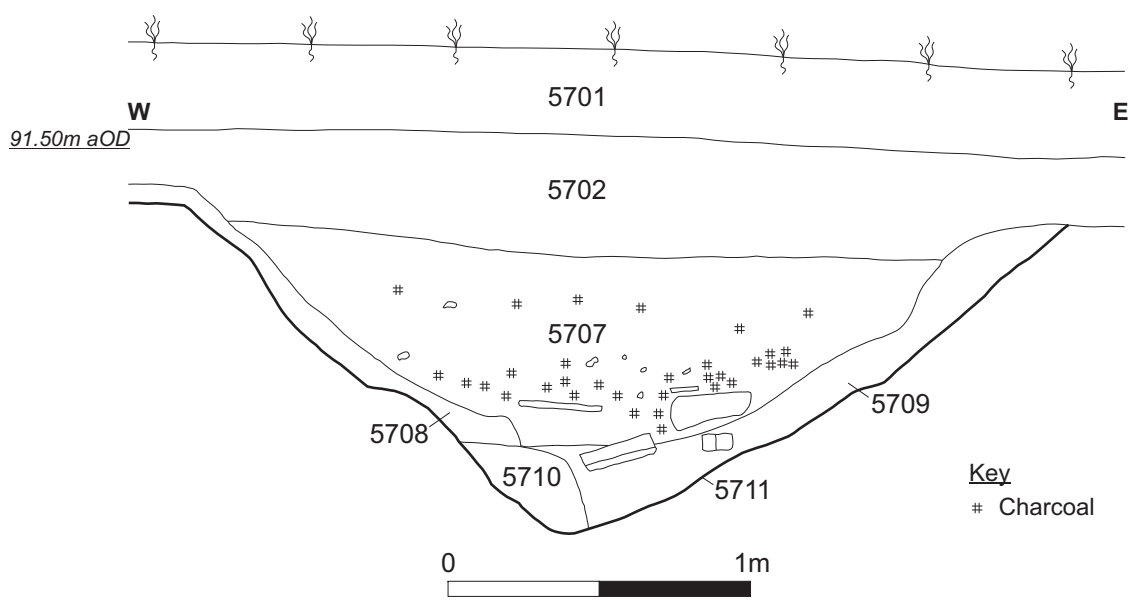
- Feature
- Excavated section
- Tree hole
- GSB survey results
- North south divide

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### Trench 57



### Section 25

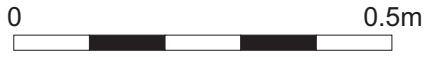
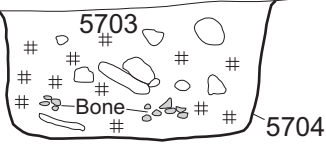


Section 23

SE

NW

92.20m aOD



Section 26



W

5701

E

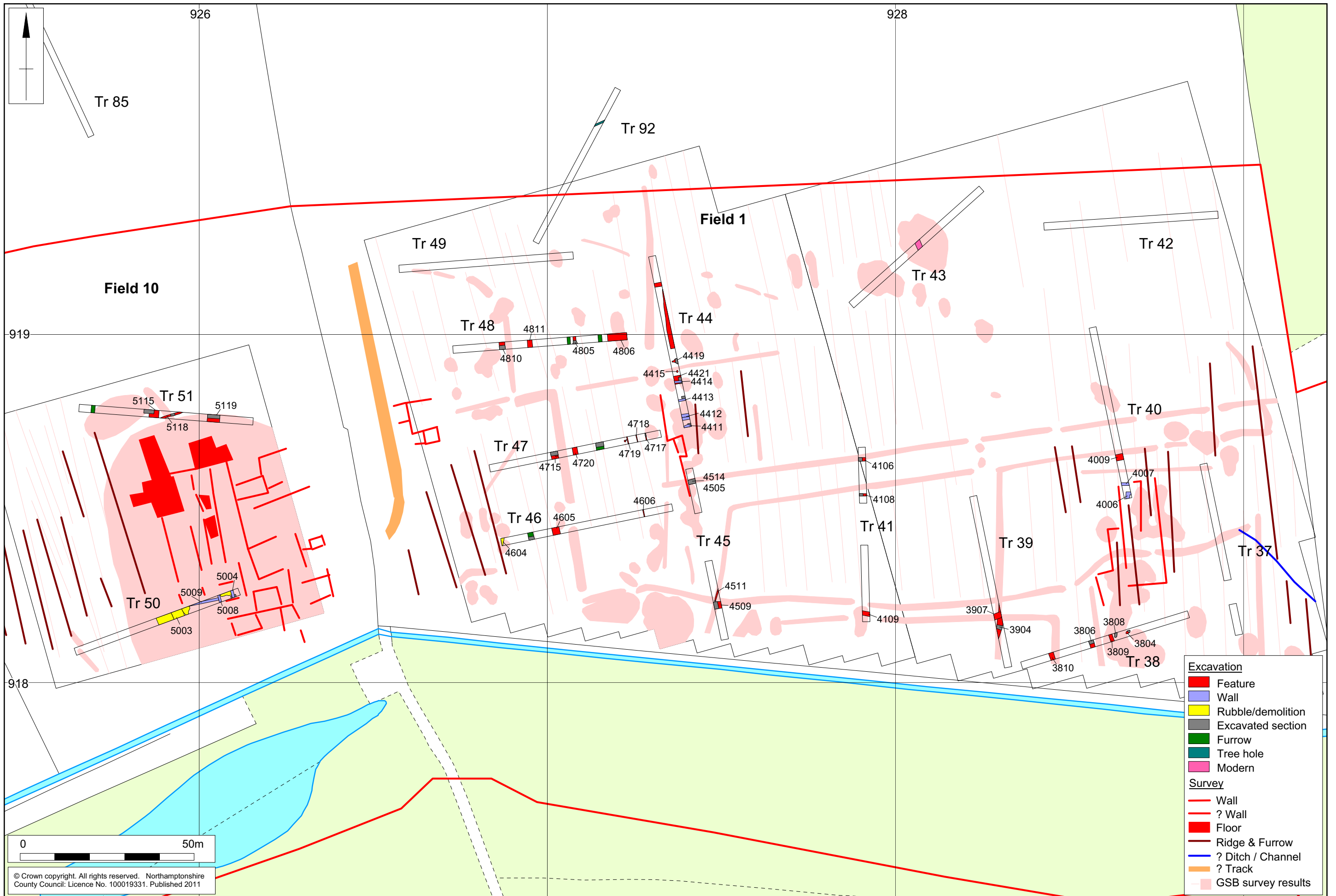
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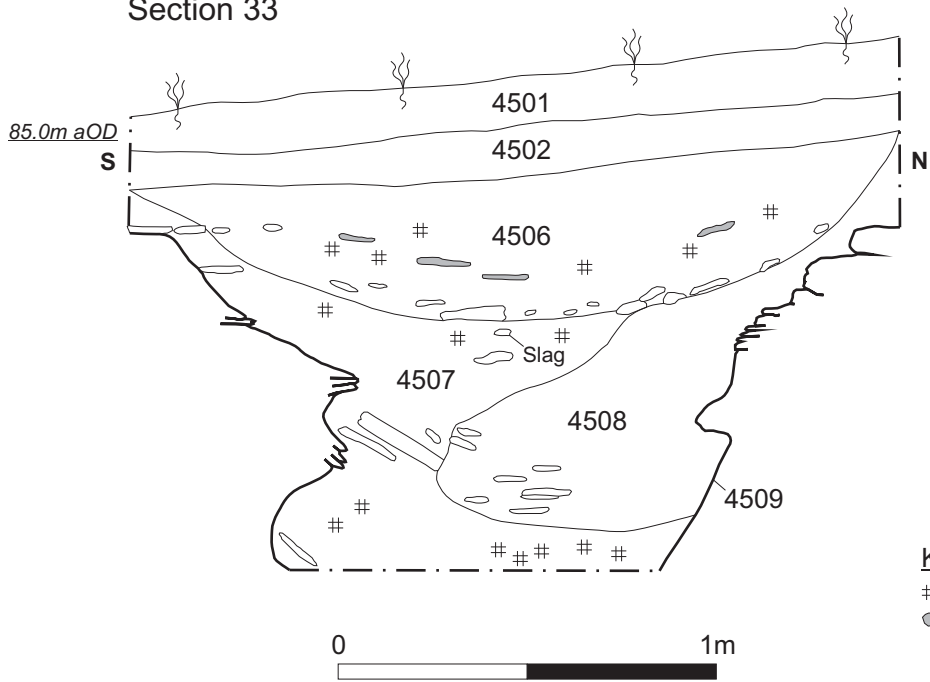
Key  
# Charcoal



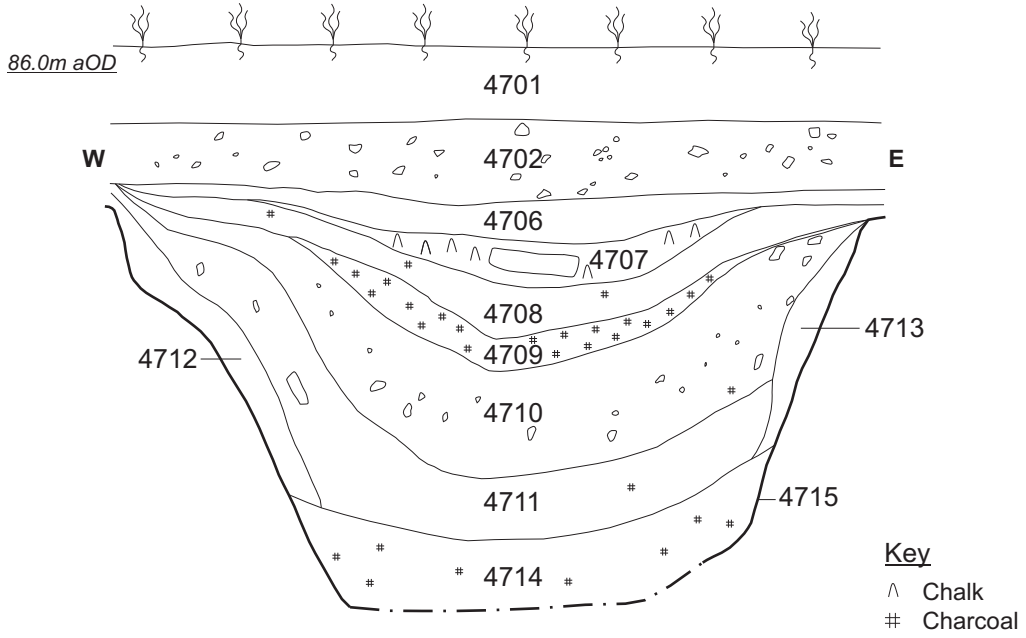




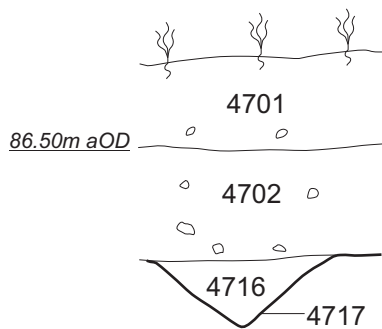
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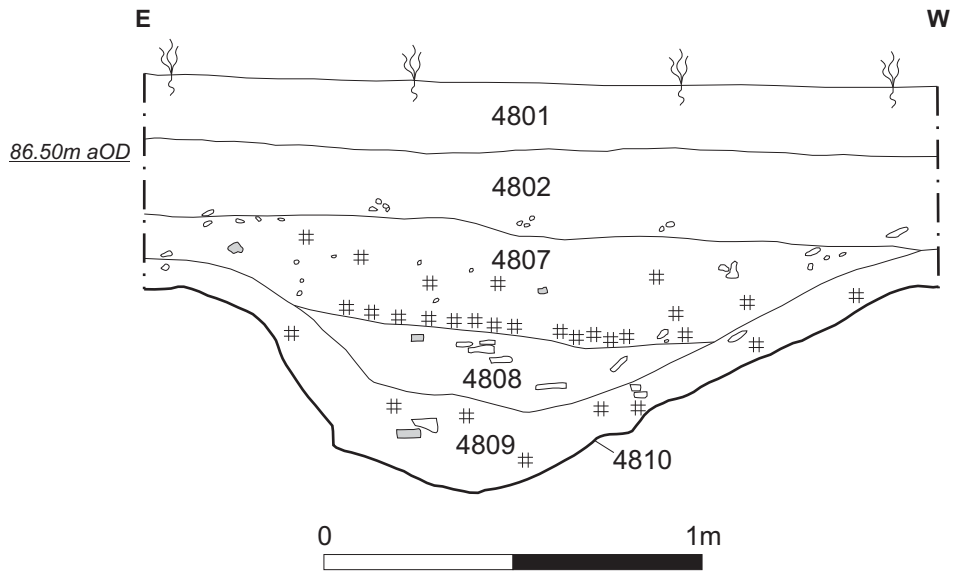
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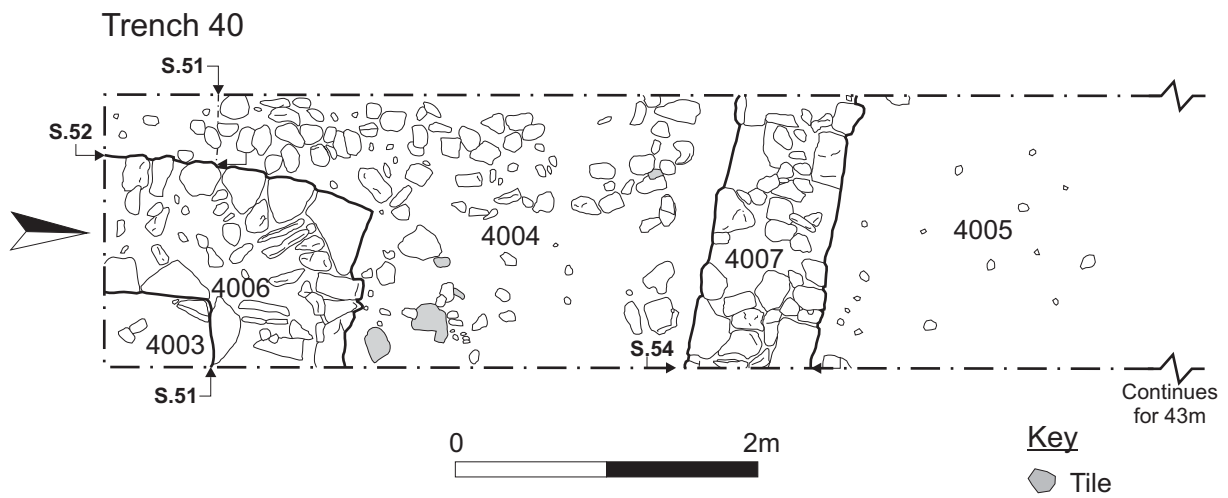
Section 38



Section 34

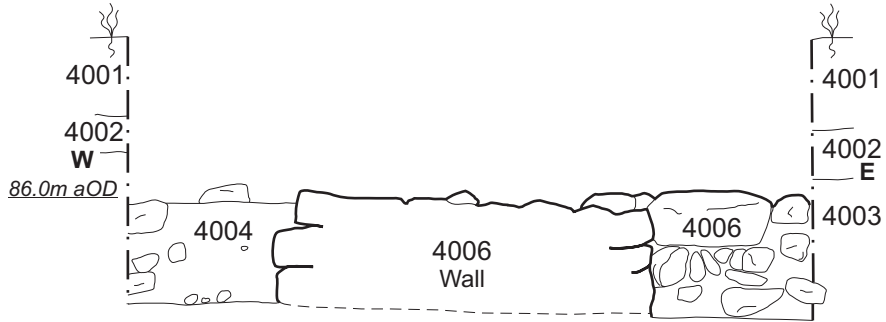




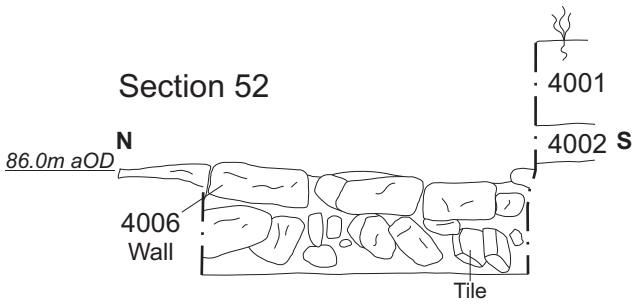


Trench 40, looking North

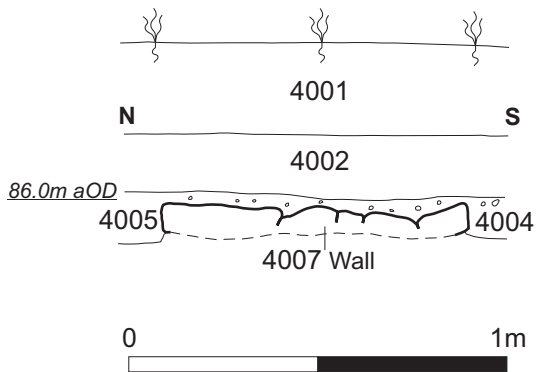
Section 51



Section 52

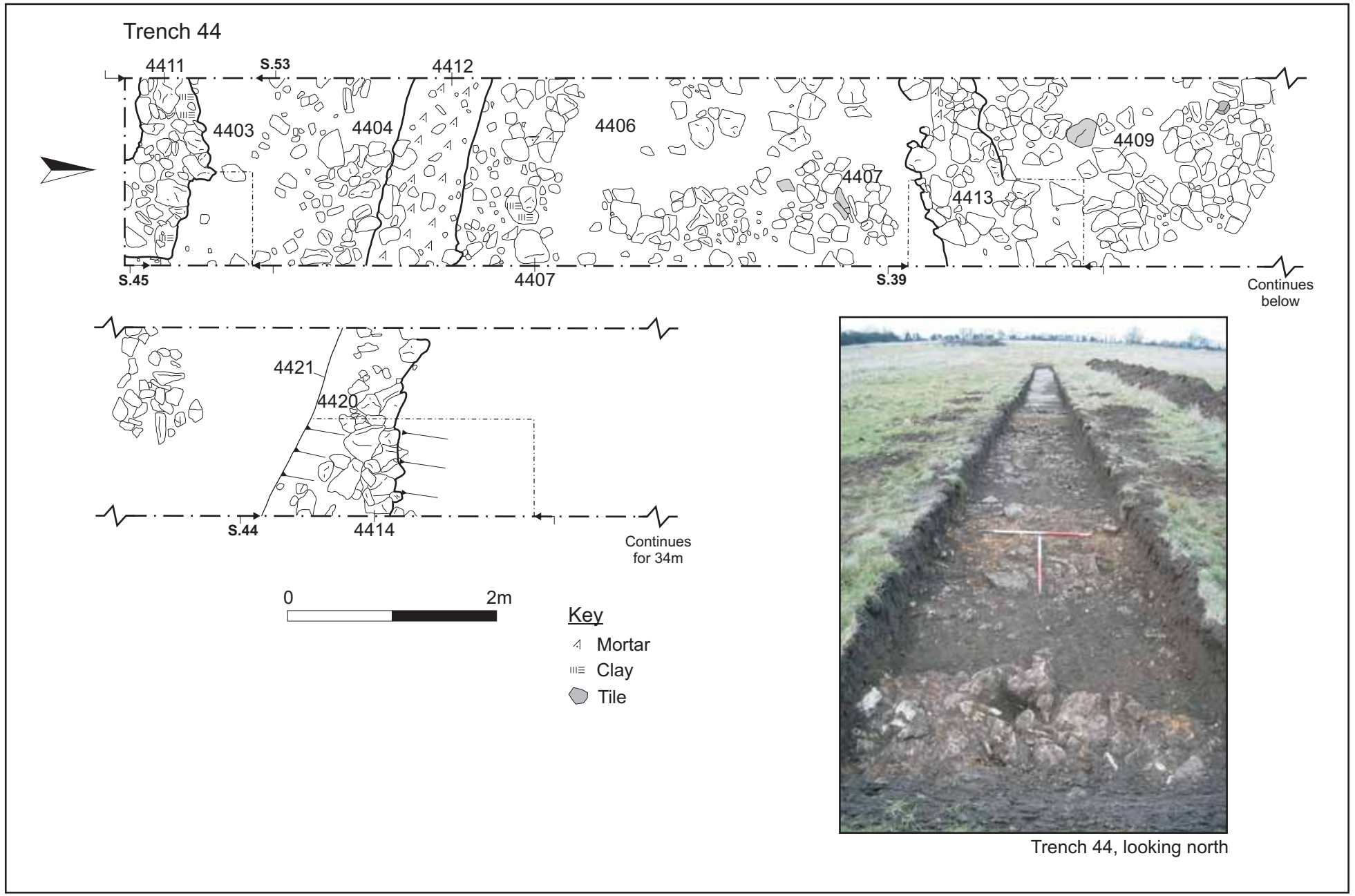


Section 54

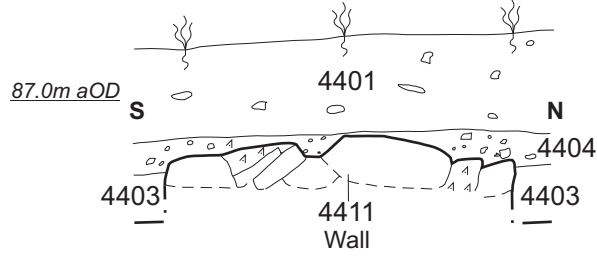


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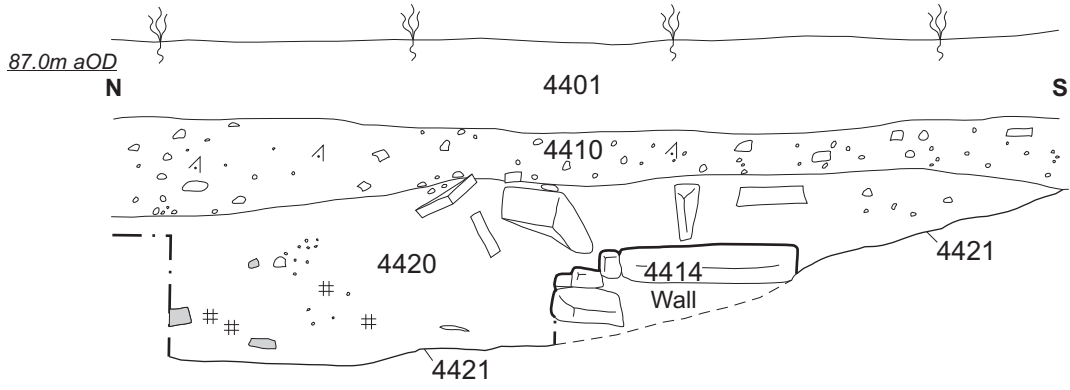
The walls 4411, 4412 & 4413 in Trench 44 Fig 20



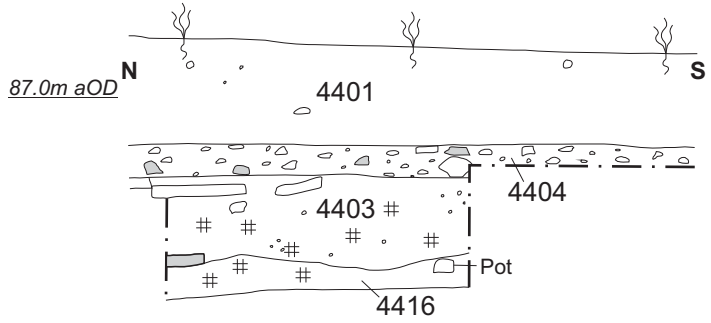
Section 53



Section 44



Section 45



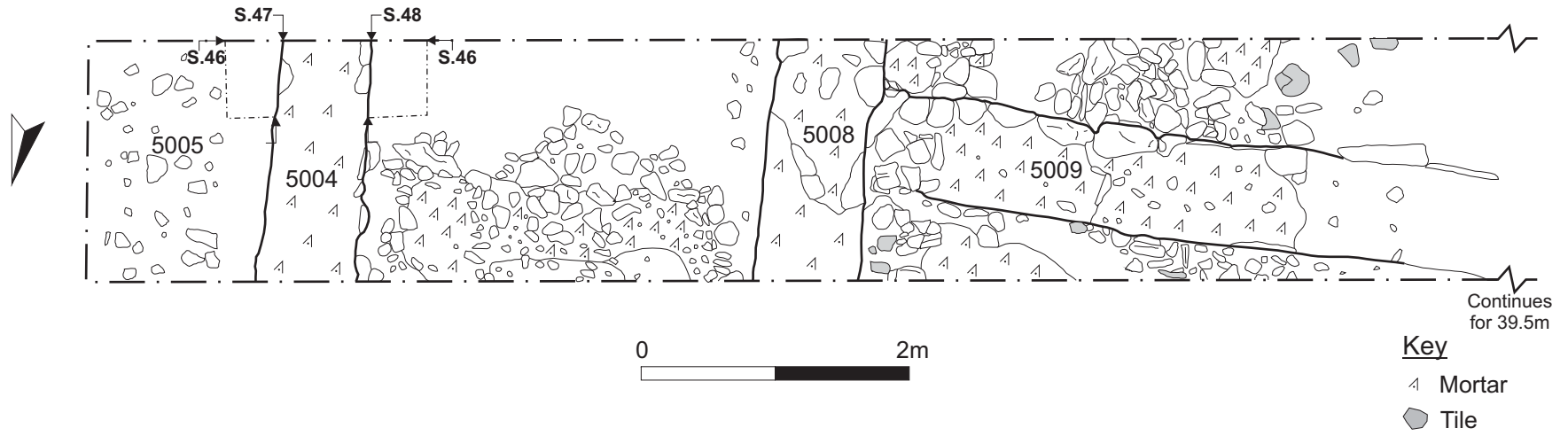
- Key**
- △ Mortar
  - # Charcoal
  - Tile





Scale 1:50

### Trench 50



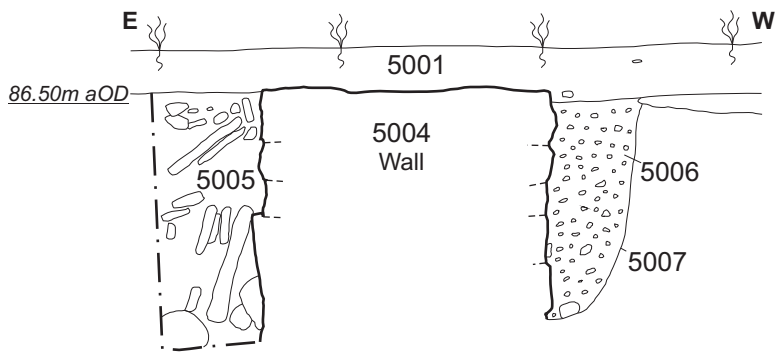
Wall 5004



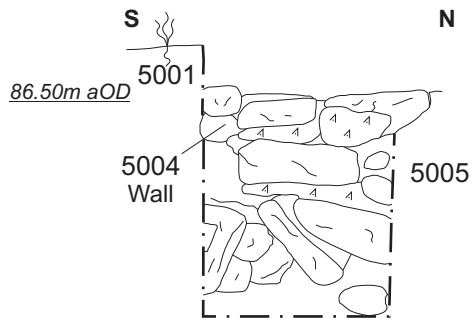
Wall 5004, Section 48

Walls in Trench 50 Fig 22

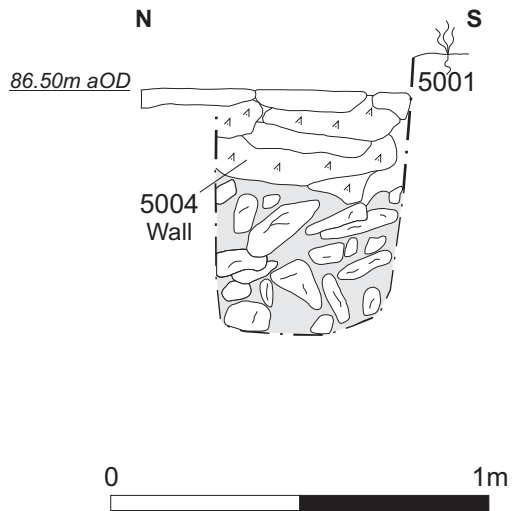
Section 46



Section 47



Section 48



Key  
 ▲ Mortar  
 ○ Clay



Scale 1:20

### Section 41

88.0m aOD

SW

5201

5204

5205

Continues below



88.0m aOD

NE

5201

5202

5204

5205

Continued from above



Key

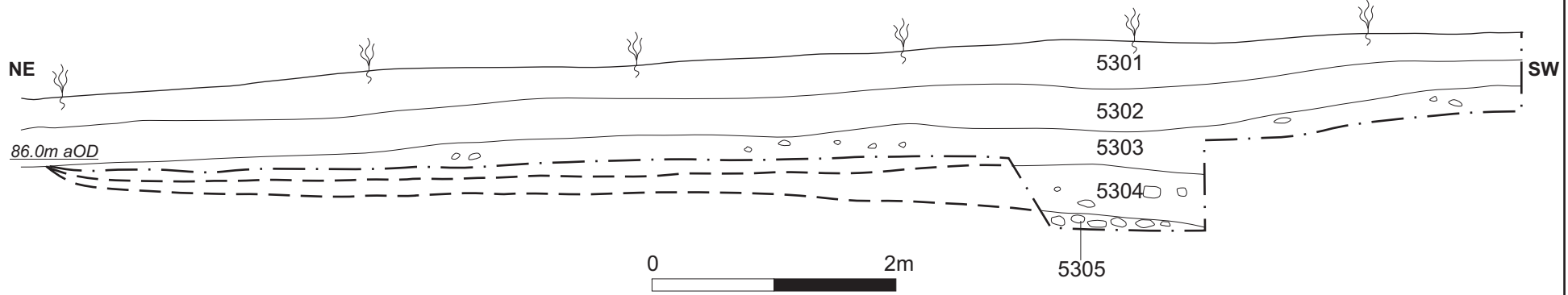
# Charcoal



Trench 52, ditch 5205 Fig 24

Scale 1:50

Section 32



Trench 53, layer 5304 Fig 25





Knife (Type 24.4709) (scale 100mm)



Knife (Type 13.5204) (scale 100mm)

Roman knives from contexts 4709 & 5204 Fig 26





Bone handle/fitting from context 4809 (scale 50mm)

Fig 27



A selection of the painted wall plaster from context 5003 (scale 100mm)

Fig 28



Jet bead from cremation burial [5704] (7mm diameter) Fig 29



Northamptonshire County Council

# Northamptonshire Archaeology

## Northamptonshire Archaeology

2 Bolton House  
Wootton Hall Park  
Northampton NN4 8BE

t. 01604 700493 f. 01604 702822

e. [sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk)

w. [www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk](http://www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk)



Northamptonshire  
County Council