



Northamptonshire Archaeology

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT NEW MEADOW, MEOLE BRACE SHREWSBURY, SHROPSHIRE SEPTEMBER 2004

NGR SJ 4940 1010

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Planning application no.

September 2004

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NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY SEPTEMBER 2004

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
AT NEW MEADOW, MEOLE BRACE
SHREWSBURY, SHROPSHIRE
SEPTEMBER 2004

MEOLE BRACE, SHREWSBURY, SHROPSHIRE

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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS				
Project title	Archaeological Evaluation at New Meadow, Meole			
110ject title	Brace, Shrewsbury, Shropshire			
Short description	Eight evaluation trenches were targeted on a series of			
(250 words maximum)	features identified from aerial photographs and			
(230 Words Indeximality	geophysical survey. Remains of post-medieval field			
		entified together with several pits		
		own coal working in the area. A		
		eed evidence of possible Romano-		
	British activity.	r		
Project type	Trial trench evaluation			
Previous work	Desk Based Assessment (Entec 2002)			
(reference to organisation	Geophysical Survey (GSB 2000)			
or SMR numbers etc)	Aerial Photograph Assessment (Palmer 2002)			
Future work	Open Area Excavation			
Monument type	Possible Iron Age- Roman ditch, undated pits, post-			
and period	medieval field boundaries.			
Significant finds	None			
(artefact type and period)				
PROJECT LOCATION				
County	Shropshire			
Site address	Land adjacent to the B4380 at Meole Brace,			
(including postcode)	Shrewsbury (New Meadow)			
Easting)	349400			
Northing	310100			
Height OD	68m OD			
PROJECT CREATORS				
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology			
Project brief originator	Mike Watson, Shropshire County Council			
Project Design originator	Adam Yates, Northamptonshire Archaeology			
Director/Supervisor	Jim Brown, Northa	imptonshire Archaeology		
Project Manager	Danny McAree, Northamptonshire Archaeology			
Sponsor or funding body Jennings Estates Limited		imited		
PROJECT DATE				
Start date	September 2004			
End date	September 2004			
ARCHIVES	Location	Content		
Physical	SHYMS A/2004/029	Pottery, tile		
Paper	SHYMS A/2004/029	Site Context Record, Plans and		
		Sections, Photographic Record		
Digital	SHYMS A/2004/029	Mapinfo Trench Plots and Client		
		Report		
BIBLIOGRAPHY		n, published or forthcoming, or		
unpublished client report (NA report)				
Title				
Serial title and volume				
A .1 ()				
Author(s)				
Author(s) Page numbers Date				

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT NEW MEADOW, MEOLE BRACE SHREWSBURY, SHROPSHIRE SEPTEMBER 2004

Abstract

Northamptonshire Archaeology excavated eight trial trenches on land at New Meadow, south of the B4380 Oteley Road, Meole Brace, Shrewsbury, Shropshire. The work was conducted, on behalf of Andrew Josephs Ltd, as part of a broader archaeological assessment of the land that included geophysical survey, aerial photographic assessment and desk-based assessment. The principal known archaeological interest within the evaluation area is a double ditched sub-rectangular Romano-British enclosure identified from aerial photography and geophysical survey and partly excavated by Jenks in 1975.

The evaluation trenches were located around the enclosure area to test other potential features identified from the aerial photographic assessment and geophysical survey. The evaluation identified a possible Romano-British ditch associated with the enclosure, evidence of post-medieval boundary ditches and several undated small pits.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned in August 2004, by Andrew Josephs Ltd on behalf of Jennings Estates Limited, to conduct an archaeological trial trench evaluation on land to the south of the B4038 Oteley Road, Meole Brace, Shrewsbury, Shropshire (Fig 1: NGR SJ 4940 1010), the site of the proposed New Meadow Stadium for Shrewsbury Town F.C.

The project was conducted according to a project design compiled by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA 2004) to meet the requirements of a brief produced by Shropshire County Council (Watson 2004). All works were approved by the Shropshire County Archaeological Officer prior to excavation commencing. The work was monitored by Shropshire County Council in compliance with PPG16 and the archaeological policies of the authority.

The archive will be prepared to the guidelines of the Shrewsbury Museums Service and arrangements for depositing the archive at Shrewsbury Museum have been agreed (Accession No. SHYMS: A/2004/029).

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Archaeological background

An archaeological desk-based assessment of land at Meole Brace, Shrewsbury, was carried out by Entec Ltd as part of the proposed development of a new football stadium for Shrewsbury Town F.C. The desk-based assessment identified the potential for survival of sub-surface archaeological features relating to a possible prehistoric/Romano-British settlement and related field system within the development area (Entec 2002). The enclosure was partially excavated by W.E. Jenks in 1968-69 (SMR SA 00015). Excavations produced evidence for several phases of occupation from the Iron Age into the Romano-British period. Internal features including a round house gully, postholes, timber slots and a possible post-Roman hearth were all recorded.

Aerial photography (Entec 2002) and a geophysical survey (GSB 2000) detected and identified a series of features which relate to the double ditched enclosure and a series of possible field boundaries.

The historic field name map shows that the evaluation site was divided into a number of smaller fields, one in the location of the enclosure called 'Pit Leasow' and land to the south-east as 'Coal Pit Piece' (Entec 2002). The north of the site was called 'Piece up Sutton Lane'. Many of the linear features seen in the aerial photography and the geophysical survey relate to these boundaries which were present on 19th and 20th century maps.

Coal pits are marked on the Ordnance Survey maps of the area and are located in the retail park site to the west and in Coal Pit Piece to the east (SMR 00073). The north of the evaluation site may form part of the early coal working activity and is recorded on historic maps as 'Sutton Coal Pits' (SMR SA06777). The site of the 17th-18th century Sutton Forge lies slightly to the east under the line of the modern road (SMR SA 01590) and a row of 19th century cottages nearby are called Coal Pit Cottages (SMR SA00073).

2.2 Topography and geology

The development area is currently an undeveloped site that consists of open farmland used mainly for cereal cultivation. The site is bounded to the north by the B4380 Oteley Road and to the west by the railway line. To the east there is a field boundary and to the south, the line of the A5 Trunk Road.

The site slopes to the west and south into the valley of a small stream, the Money Brook, now cut by the line of the modern railway. The land is located at about 68m AOD rising to 72.78m AOD to form a knoll upon which the double ditched enclosure is located.

The geology is listed as river terrace sands and gravels, overlying Palaeozoic and Precambrian sedimentary formations (www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex.htm).

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The evaluation was carried out to provide additional information to assist the Shropshire County Archaeologist to consider the scope of mitigation that may be required in advance of the development of the site. The objectives of the evaluation were to examine the archaeological resource within the development area by:

- Determining and recording the presence, date, character, integrity, state of preservation and depth of burial of any archaeological deposits.
- Assessing the survival, quality, condition and relative significance of any archaeological features, deposits and structures.
- Understanding the archaeology of the development area in terms of the likely impact of the proposed development to inform the Historic Environment Officer sufficiently that a mitigation strategy can be produced.

Fieldwork was conducted in September 2004. Eight trenches were positioned within the development area with a total of 600sq m (Fig 2).

Excavation of all the trenches was carried out using a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The trenches were excavated, under archaeological supervision, until archaeological deposits or undisturbed natural horizons were exposed. Mechanical excavation was conducted in a manner to avoid damage to archaeological remains and to allow retention of artefacts exposed during machine watching.

Potential archaeological features were hand cleaned and partially excavated in order to clarify their nature. A site record was maintained using pro-forma Northamptonshire Archaeology record sheets supplemented by plans, sections and photographs on both colour and monochrome 35mm film. Levels were established in relation to Ordnance Datum and the trench positions recorded in relation to the national Ordnance Survey grid.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was 30m long, located on the north-east part of the field and aligned roughly west to east across anomalies identified in the geophysical survey (Fig 2). The natural was orange brown river terrace gravel (105) comprising sands, gravel and sub angular and sub rounded pebbles up to 30mm and occasional larger pebbles up to 600mm. It was mottled with bands of orange/brown sandy clay loam and sandstone bedrock. This was exposed along the whole trench at 67.25m OD in the west and at 67.62m OD at the eastern end of the trench.

At about 5m from the eastern end of the trench the natural gravel was cut by a pit [104], which was oval in shape 0.6m wide and 0.22m deep (Fig 3 and 4). The sides sloped at 40° to a narrow V-shaped base. It was filled with mid orange brown fine sandy loam (103) with occasional small sub rounded pebbles up to 10mm in size.

The pit was sealed below a subsoil of mid orange-brown sandy loam (102) averaging 0.10m deep containing moderate small mixed sub-angular and sub-rounded stones up to 30mm in size. The topsoil consisted dark grey/brown sandy loam (101) with a rich humus content that averaged 0.20m along the length of the trench. It contained occasional small sub-angular and sub-rounded stones up to 30mm in size.

4.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was 27m long, located immediately to the north of the enclosure and aligned roughly north east to south west (Fig 2). Natural river terrace gravel (205) banded with red/brown sandy clay loam was encountered across the trench at 67.18m OD in the north-east and at 67.26m OD in the south-west end of the trench.

A large pit [204] was visible in the north-eastern end of the trench, cutting the natural and underlying the sub-soil (202). This was 1.51m in diameter and over 0.55m deep (Fig 3 and 4). To the north, the side sloped at 45°, to the south there was a distinct break of slope with a 0.6m wide platform 0.15m deep dropping off at 45° to a narrow dished base 0.55m deep. The fill was a mixture of mid orange/brown sandy clay loam (203) with frequent sub-rounded stones up to 300mm in size and occasional larger sub-rounded pebbles up to 600mm. The fill contained frequent flecks and small fragments of coal and a single piece of post medieval roof tile.

The subsoil consisted of orange/brown sandy loam (202) that was 0.10m deep containing moderate small mixed sub-angular and sub-rounded stones up to 30mm in size, with occasional larger sub-rounded stones ranging between 30-150mm in size. The topsoil consisted dark grey/brown sandy clay loam (201) that was 0.20m deep with rich humus content and moderate small sub-angular and sub-rounded stones up to 30mm in size.

4.3 Trench 3

Trench 3 was 29m long, located in the north-west of the site and aligned roughly north-north-west to south-south-east (Fig 2). The natural river terrace gravel (307) was encountered at 67.92m OD in the north-north-west and at 67.98m OD in the south-south-eastern end of the trench.

A ditch [304] cut the natural sandy gravel (307) at 8.5m from the north end of the trench on an alignment from south-west to north-east (Fig 3 and 4). It measured 2.0m wide and 0.31m deep with a broad, irregular dished base and a shallow 30° sloping sides (Fig 3). It was filled with mid orange-brown sandy clay (303) with frequent small rounded gravel and pebbles up to 60mm in size.

At about 6m from the southern end of the trench, a narrow ditch [306] cut the gravel and crossed the trench from south-west to north-east. It was 0.9m wide and 0.15m deep with shallow 30° sides sloping to an irregular broad dished base. The ditch was filled with mid orange/brown sandy loam (305) containing frequent sub rounded coarse gravel and pebbles up to 60mm in size.

Both ditches [304] and [306] underlay a subsoil of orange/brown sandy loam (302) that averaged 0.11m deep and contained frequent small mixed sub-angular and sub-rounded stones up to 30mm in size, with occasional scattered larger sub-rounded pebbles ranging between 30-200mm in size. The topsoil consisted brown sandy loam (301) rich in humus content and with moderate small sub-angular and sub-rounded stones up to 30mm in size. It averaged 23-26mm in depth along the length of the trench.

4.4 Trench 4

Trench 4 was 47m long, aligned north-east to south-west across the western part of the evaluation area (Fig 2). The natural river terrace gravel (411) was mottled with bands and patches with orange/brown sandy clay. It was exposed across the trench sloping from 66.43m OD in the northeast to 67.06m OD in the south-eastern end of the trench.

A ditch [404] aligned north-east to south-west cut through the natural gravel at about 15m from the north end of the trench (Fig 3 and 4). This was 1.1m wide and 0.2m deep with very shallow sides sloping to a very broad, uneven, slightly dished base. It was filled with dark orange/brown sandy clay (403) containing frequent sub-rounded gravel and stones up to 40mm in size.

At about 5m further east and parallel to this feature was a ditch [406] cut into the natural gravel. This was 0.9m wide and 0.25m deep with shallow sloping sides to a broad uneven dished base, filled with orange/brown sandy loam (405) almost identical to (403).

At about 34m from the north-west end of the trench, another ditch [408] cut the natural gravel and crossed the trench from the north to the south. It was 0.8m wide and 0.2m deep with regular sides sloping at 40° to a broad concave base. This was filled with dark orange/brown sandy loam (407) containing moderate amounts of small sub-angular and sub-rounded stones up to 30mm in size.

At about 2m from the south-east end of the trench, a ditch [410] cut the natural gravel and crossed the trench aligned roughly north-east to south-west. This was 0.8m wide and 0.15m deep. The sides sloped gently to a broad uneven dished base. It was filled with mid orange/brown sandy loam (409) containing frequent sub-angular and sub-rounded gravel and stones up to 40mm in size.

All the cut features were sealed below a subsoil of orange/brown sandy clay (402) that was 0.10m deep containing frequent small mixed sub-angular and sub-rounded stones up to 15mm in size. The topsoil consisted dark grey/brown sandy loam (301) that was 0.23m deep, rich in humus content and containing moderate small sub-angular and sub-rounded stones up to 20mm in size.

4.5 Trench 5

Trench 5 was 42m long, aligned roughly north-west to south-east, and located in the south-western corner of the site (Fig 2). Natural river terrace gravel (507) was encountered across the trench rising from 67.88m OD in the north to 69.38m in the south eastern end of the trench.

At about 9m from the north western end of the trench a ditch [504] cut the natural gravel aligned roughly north to south across the trench (Fig 3 and 4). It was 0.95m wide and 0.27m deep, it had 50° sloping sides and an irregular, slightly dished base (Fig 3). The ditch was filled with dark orange/brown sandy clay loam (503) with moderate amounts of sub-angular and sub rounded gravel and stones up to 30mm in size. This appears to be the continuation of ditch [408] seen in Trench 4.

A second ditch [506] cut across the trench at about 20m from the north-west end. This was aligned roughly north-east to south-west. It was 0.82m wide and 0.20m deep, had 20° sloping sides and a broad dished base (Fig 3). It was filled with dark orange/brown sandy clay loam (505) containing frequent sub-angular and sub rounded gravel and stones up to 30mm in size.

The subsoil consisted of mid orange/brown sandy clay loam (502) that averaged 0.10m deep and contained frequent small mixed sub-angular and sub-rounded stones up to 30mm in size, with infrequent scattered large sub-rounded stones ranging between 30-300mm in size. The topsoil consisted dark brown sandy clay loam (501) that was 0.24m-0.30m deep with high humus content and moderate small sub-angular and sub-rounded stones up to 30mm in size.

4.6 Trench 6

Trench 6 was 40m long, aligned roughly north-west to south-east, and located to the south-west of the double ditched enclosure (Fig 2). Natural river terrace gravel (610) was encountered across the trench sloping from 71.82m OD in the north to 72.71m OD in the south eastern end of the trench.

At about 11m from the north western end of the trench a ditch [604] cut the natural gravel aligned roughly north to south across the trench (Fig 3 and 4). The ditch was 1.37m wide and 0.20m deep, it had shallow sloping sides and an irregular, slightly dished base (Fig 3). The fill was dark orange/brown sandy loam (603) with frequent sub-angular and sub rounded gravel and stones up to 50mm in size.

About 3m further south, a gully [606] cut across the trench aligned roughly north to south. It was 0.65m wide and 0.15m deep and had 30° sloping sides and a broad dished base (Fig 3). It was filled with orange/brown sandy loam (605) containing frequent sub-angular and sub rounded gravel and stones up to 50mm in size.

At about 27.5m from the north-west end of the trench, a gully [608] aligned north to south crossed the trench. It was 0.42m wide and only 0.16m deep. It had shallow sloping sides to a rounded base. It was filled with dark brown sandy loam (607) containing frequent sub-angular and sub rounded gravel and stones up to 60mm in size.

The subsoil consisted of mid orange/brown sandy clay loam (602) that averaged 0.8m-0.10m deep and contained frequent small mixed sub-angular and sub-rounded stones up to 30mm in size, with infrequent scattered large sub-rounded stones ranging between 30-300mm in size. The topsoil consisted dark brown sandy clay loam (601) that was 0.24m-0.3m deep with high humus content and moderate small sub-angular and sub-rounded stones up to 30mm in size.

4.7 Trench 7

Trench 7 was 23m long, aligned roughly east-north-east to west-south-west, and located to the south of the double ditched enclosure (Fig 2). Natural river terrace gravel (705) was exposed across the trench at 72.12m OD in the north sloping to 71.72m OD in the south eastern end of the trench.

At about 12m from the south western end of the trench a ditch [704] aligned roughly north to south cut the natural gravel (Fig 3 and 4). The feature was 1.20m wide and 0.25m deep, it had a shallow sloping side 25°to the west and a steeper 45°side to the east, these sloped to a broad irregular base slightly deeper to the east (Fig 3). It was filled with dark brown sandy loam (703) with frequent sub-angular and sub rounded gravel and stones up to 50mm in size. Three small fragments of very soft orange pottery were recovered from this fill. These were too abraded and fragmentary to allow authoritative dating, but are similar to Romano-British wares of the 3rd and 4th centuries AD.

The subsoil consisted of mid orange/brown sandy clay loam (702) that averaged 0.10m deep and contained frequent small mixed sub-angular and sub-rounded stones up to 30mm in size, with infrequent scattered large sub-rounded stones ranging between 30-300mm in size. The topsoil consisted dark brown sandy clay loam (701) that was 0.25m-0.30m deep with high humus content and moderate small sub-angular and sub-rounded stones up to 30mm in size.

4.8 Trench 8

Trench 8 was 12m long by 12m wide, aligned roughly north-west to south-east, and located to the west of the double ditched enclosure (Fig 2). Natural river terrace gravel and natural sandstone outcrop (806) was encountered across the trench rising from 69.66m OD at the north-west corner to 70.07m OD in the south eastern corner of the trench.

Aligned north to south across the centre of the trench was a ditch [804] that was 1.17m wide (Fig 3 and 4). It was filled with dark brown sandy loam (803) containing frequent sub-angular and sub rounded gravel and stones up to 50mm in size. It was not excavated as the fill contained fragments of 19th century glass, brick and metal. To the east the remainder of the trench contained a similar spread of 19th century material over an outcrop of sandstone rock and natural gravel.

The subsoil consisted of mid orange/brown sandy clay loam (802) that averaged 0.15m-0.20m deep and contained frequent mixed sub-angular and sub-rounded stones up to 300mm in size. The topsoil consisted dark brown sandy clay loam (801) that was 0.30m deep with high humus content and moderate small sub-angular and sub-rounded stones up to 30mm in size.

4.9 The Finds

The Ceramics by Tora Hylton

A total of five sherds of pottery came from the evaluation at the New Meadow site, Shrewsbury.

Three small sherds of un-glazed pottery were recovered from ditch fill (703) in Trench 7. One sherd is a reddish-orange ware from a fine wheel thrown vessel. The fabric is slightly micaceous with occasional coarser grains of sand. It is a non diagnostic, undecorated body sherd.

One sherd is a fragment of rim from of orange-buff ware. It is a fine, slightly micaceous fabric with occasional coarser grains of sand or iron ore. It is very abraded and is quite soft and powdery when handled.

The third sherd is a coarse reddish-orange fabric, slightly micaceous with frequent fine black sand inclusions. It is about 10mm thick and may be from a large container or part of a roof tile.

Two further sherds of pottery were recovered from unstratified topsoil during machine excavation. One sherd is quite thick creamy/pink ware with coarse sandy inclusions. It is a body sherd, very abraded but retaining some traces of red colour coating. The other is a small piece of body sherd from a wheel thrown vessel with quite thin walls. The fabric is fine, slightly micaceous, with occasional coarse gritty sand inclusions, it has a reddish-brown colour slip coating.

All have been heavily abraded losing much of the outer surfaces and leaving mainly the inner core. The condition of the sherds makes it impossible to give a firm date or provenance. Their general appearance as a group would be consistent with the range of Romano-British wares found locally between 2nd-4th centuries AD.

A single sherd of fired ceramic was recovered from the pit fill (203) in Trench 2. This is a redpurple fabric containing frequent grains of white and black gritty sand. It is 11mm thick with flat, uneven surfaces. It has clearly been over-fired almost to the consistency of 'stoneware'. It is a fragment of 18th-19th century roof tile.

The Flint

by Adrian Burrow MA

A single tool was recovered from the topsoil. This was a large blade of dark brown flint, measuring 75mm by 29mm. Both edges are fully retouched on the dorsal surface. The ventral surface edge has been worked in a cruder, more discontinuous way. It is notable that the curved distal end appears to be shaped to scrape irregularly shaped objects and that the extreme tip forms an acutely angled edge. The general morphology suggests it is a non-hafted composite tool serving the function of end scraper and a side scraper and/or knife.

Given the morphology of the tool and its proximity to known Neolithic and Bronze remains, it is likely that this flake tool dates from this period. Composite tools are characteristic of late Neolithic assemblages.

5 DISCUSSION

The geophysical survey and analysis of aerial photography had indicated a number of linear features within the development area (GSB 2000, Entec 2002). All the trenches had been located to trace and examine these anomalies. It is clear from the evaluation that there is little substantial archaeology in the development area other than the known double ditched enclosure.

Many of the excavated features appear to be the remnants of shallow ditches or gullies marking earlier property boundaries. These correlate with the linear anomalies identified on the geophysical survey, aerial photography or Historic Field Names plots of the area (Entec 2002, Fig 2).

The large north to south ditch identified in both Trench 4 and Trench 5 appears to be an early field boundary on a similar alignment to the ditch [704] in Trench 7 which contained probable Romano-British pottery.

The parallel ditch [804] observed in Trench 8 appears to be a post-medieval property division identified on the Historic Field Boundary Map. The fill of the ditch (803) and the spread of material to the east contained 19th century glass, brick and metal was located over the area of high magnetic response identified in the geophysical survey as an area of industrial activity.

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The pit [204] revealed in Trench 2 contained flecks of coal in the fill (203) and a fragment of 18th-19th century roof tile. It would appear to be related to the post-medieval coal working activity recorded in this location.

There is evidence of military activity on the site in the early 20th century including use as a rifle range, and documentary sources indicate coal working in the immediate vicinity. Undated features exposed in the evaluation may relate to these phases of activity.

The map analysis, SMR records and evaluation results all indicate that the site has historically been used primarily for agricultural purposes.

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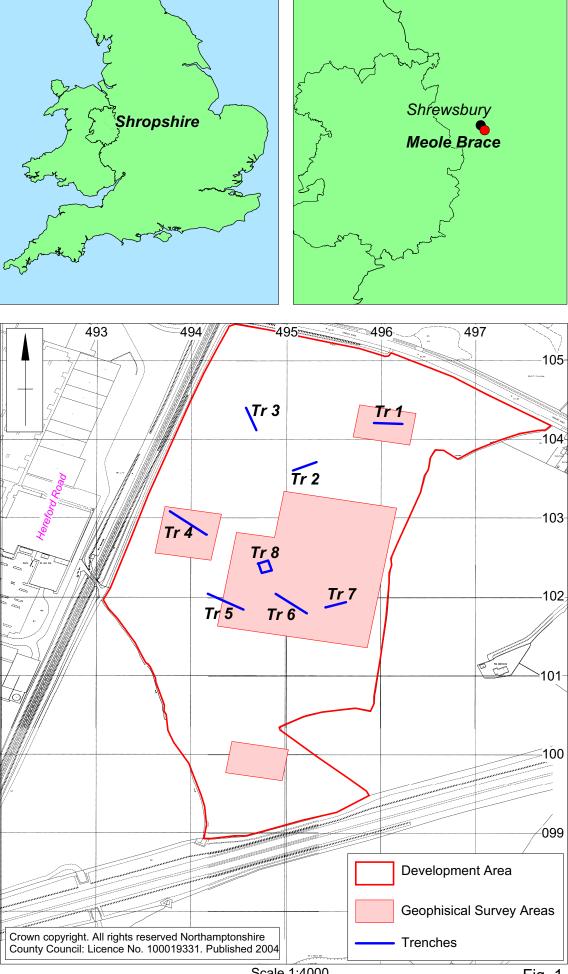
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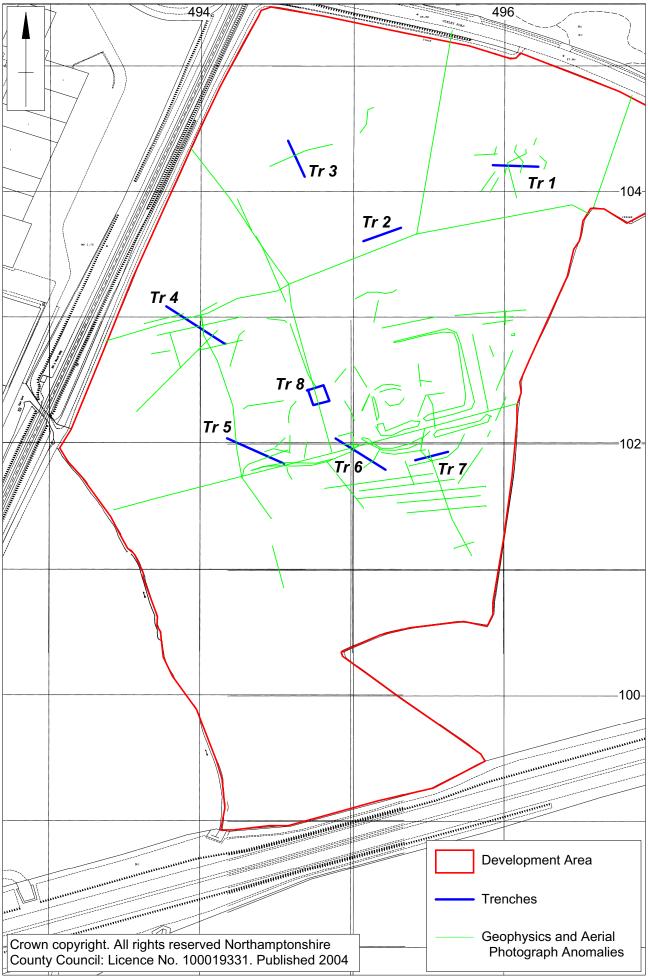
Northamptonshire Archaeology

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14 October 2004



Scale 1:4000 Fig. 1



Scale 1:2500 Fig. 2

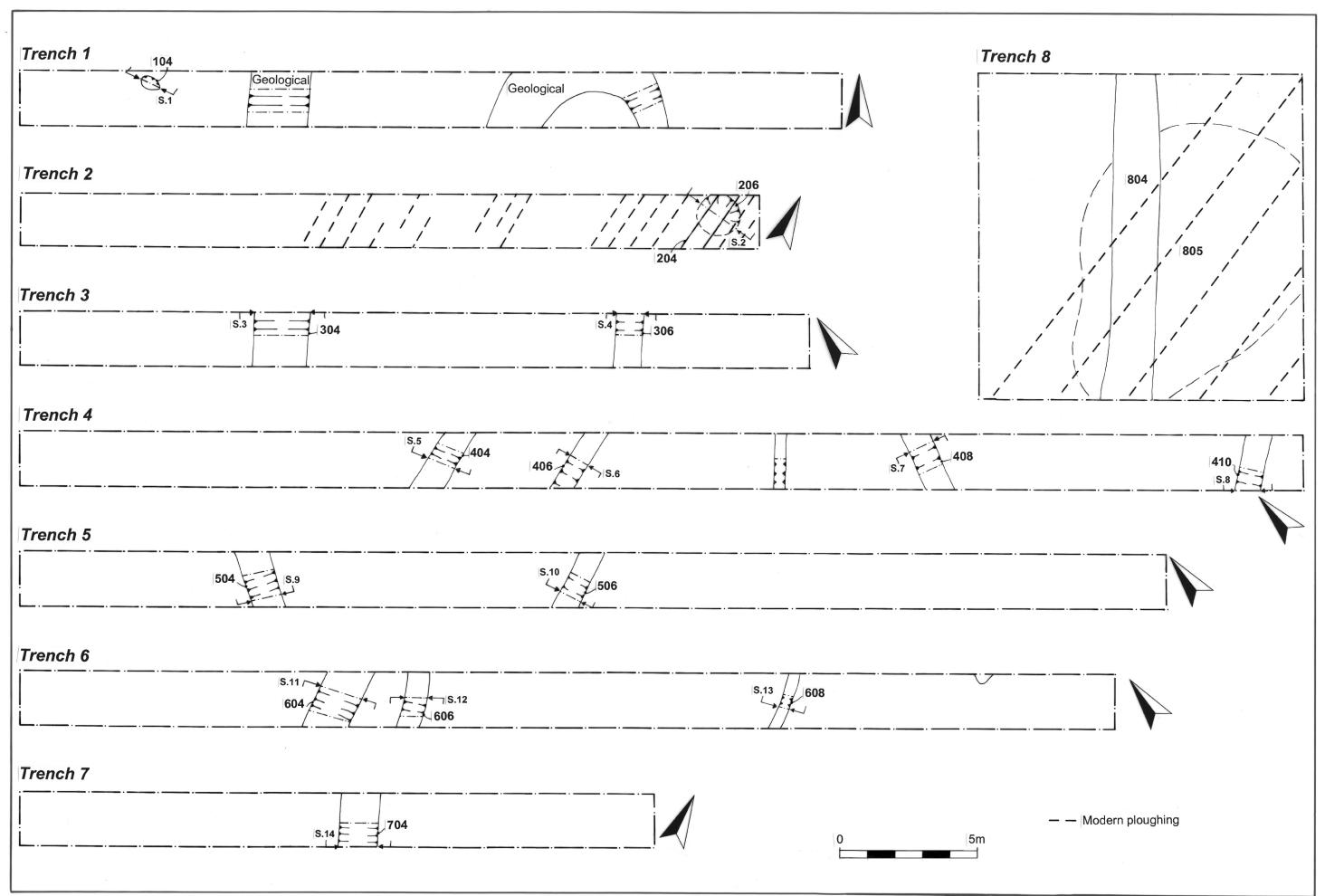


Fig. 3

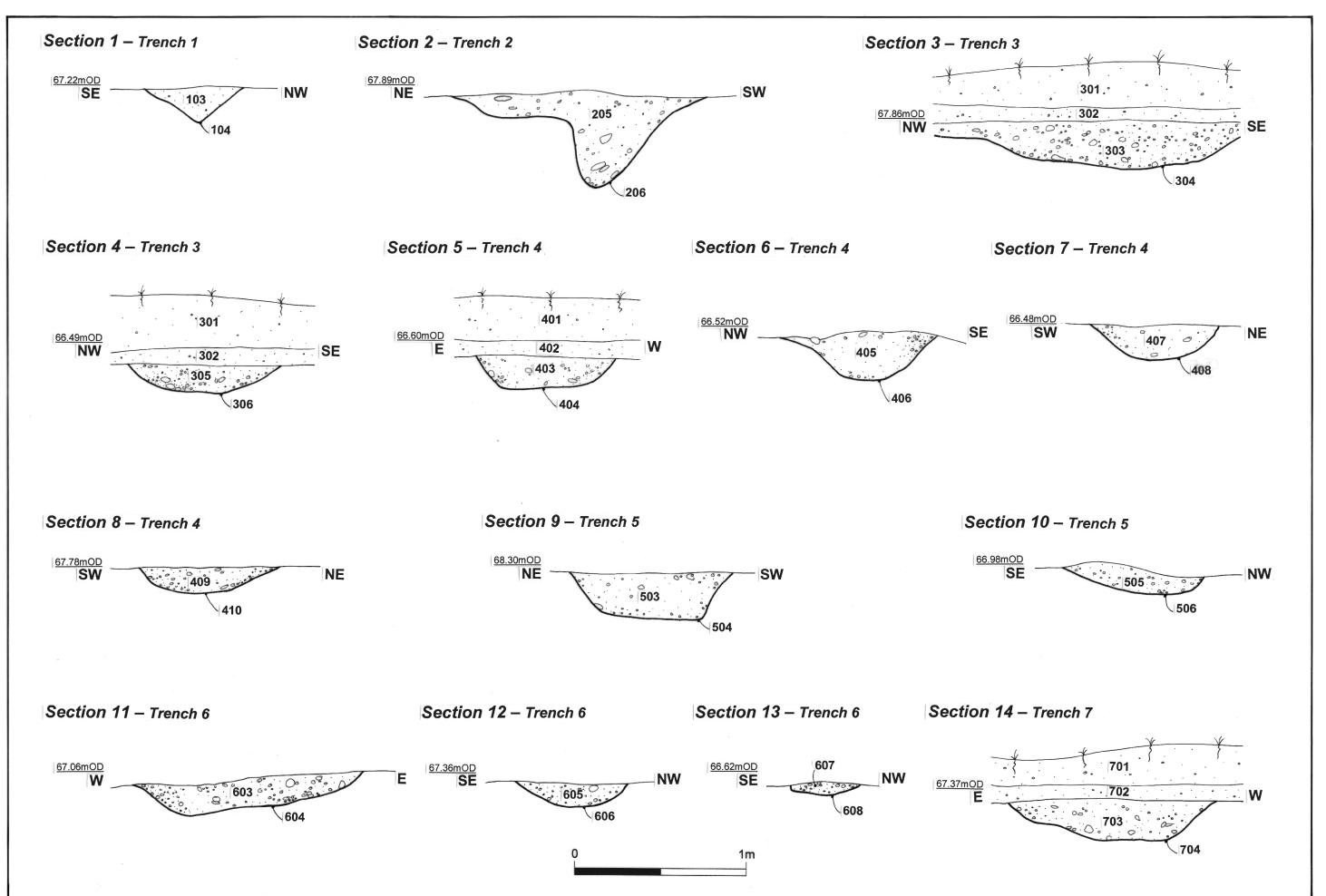


Fig. 4