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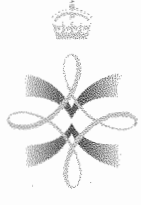
An Archaeological Excavation at Stoke Lane, Wychbold, Worcestershire.

Post-Excavation Assessment and Research Design

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit

Institute of Field
Archaeologists



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An Archaeological Excavation at Stoke Lane, Wychbold, Worcestershire

Post-excavation assessment and research design

NGR SO 92150 65600

Site Code: WSM29599

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Contents

1.0 Summary 1

2.0 Introduction 1

3.0 Site Location 1

4.0 Archaeological Background 1

5.0 Aims 2

6.0 Method 3

7.0 Excavation Results 3

8.0 The Finds 5
8.1 The Iron Age Pottery by Annette Hancocks 6
8.2 The Roman Pottery by C. Jane Evans 6
8.3 The Integrated Pottery Assemblages 8
8.4 The Plant Remains by Marina Ciaraldi 8
8.5 Other Finds by Annette Hancocks 10

9.0 Factual Data 11

10.0 Achievement of Project Aims 11

11.0 Updated Research Design 12

12.0 Proposed Publication Synopsis 13

13.0 Proposed Post-Excavation Task List 13

14.0 Acknowledgements 13

15.0 References 14

Tables

Table 1: Finds Quantification 5

Table 2: Quantification of Roman Pottery 7

Table 3: Assessed Plant Remains Samples 9

Table 4: Site Records Archive 11

List of Figures (at end of report)

Fig. 1: Location plan

Fig. 2: Location of excavation and evaluation trenches

Fig. 3: Site plan

Plates

Plate 1: Enclosure ditch EN 1 under excavation, looking south

Plate 2: Enclosure ditch EN 1, F36; north-facing section, showing possible causeway deposit

Plate 3: Ring gullies RG 2 and RG 3 under excavation, looking south-east

Plate 4: Ring gullies RG 2 and RG 3 after excavation, looking south-east

Plate 5: Enclosure ditch EN 1, ring ditch RD 1 and ring gullies RG 1-3 under excavation, looking south-east (photo courtesy of Mike Glyde)

An Archaeological Excavation at Stoke Lane, Wychbold, Worcestershire

Post-Excavation Assessment and Research Design

1.0 Summary

An archaeological excavation was carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit at Stoke Lane, Wychbold, Worcestershire (NGR SO 92150 65600) in advance of a residential housing development, during June and July 2000. A ditched enclosure of Iron Age date, containing at least three intercutting ring gullies and part of a possible fourth ring gully, was excavated. Also within the enclosure were a linear ditch, pits and postholes. A linear ditch and an associated rectilinear enclosure to the south were dated to the Romano-British period. An undated shallow ring ditch was also revealed.

2.0 Introduction

The following report provides a preliminary statement on the results of an archaeological excavation undertaken prior to residential development of land off Stoke Lane, Wychbold, Worcestershire. The work was undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) in June and July 2000. The work was commissioned by the archaeological consultants Gifford and Partners Ltd on behalf of Bloor Homes. The project conformed to a method statement for archaeological excavation (BUFAU 2000) based on a project brief prepared by the Planning Advisory Section, Worcestershire Archaeological Service (WAS 2000).

3.0 Site Location

The site is centred on NGR SO 92150 65600 (Fig. 1) in uncultivated parkland adjacent to the site of the former Wychbold Hall, 54m above Ordnance Datum. It is situated immediately to the southeast of the A38, a former Roman road, and east of the M5 (Fig. 2). The area scheduled for development covers some 4.8 hectares. The underlying solid geology is Triassic Mudstones (keuper marl) with fifth terrace gravels close by to the east (Jordan 1999).

4.0 Archaeological Background

The site is registered on the County Sites and Monuments record as a site of archaeological interest (reference WSM 17807). An archaeological evaluation, comprising geophysical survey and trial excavation, was carried out on the site in 1999 (Vyce 1999). The geophysical survey, carried out by Alistair Bartlett, comprised a magnetic susceptibility survey and magnetometer scan of the whole of the 4.8-hectare

development area, followed by a detailed magnetometer survey in seven blocks covering a total of 1.5 hectares. The results of the geophysical survey were inconclusive, and subsequent trial excavation showed that most of the anomalies related to post-medieval and modern features. The depth and size of most of the earlier archaeological features and the nature of the underlying geology, revealed by subsequent trial excavation and area excavation, were not conducive to detection by magnetometry.

The trial excavations, carried out by Archaeological Excavations Ltd, comprised 15 machine-excavated trial trenches (Vyce 1999, Fig. 2). These revealed what appeared to be elements of a system of ditches, possibly field or enclosure boundaries, across part of the site. Towards the centre of the site, features interpreted as postholes, parts of ring gullies, possible hearths and gravel trackways were uncovered. These features are typical of settlements of Iron Age or Romano-British date. Dating evidence for the site was sparse, although the finds evidence suggested that the site was primarily of Iron Age date, with some continuity into the Roman period. Of particular significance was the presence of sherds of a vessel which was potentially of Early Prehistoric or Anglo-Saxon date and a sherd of briquetage (Droitwich salt container, of Iron Age date). The possible Anglo-Saxon sherd was of particular importance, given documentary evidence for a Saxon palace in the Wychbold area.

The Worcestershire Sites and Monuments Record records the presence of a double-ditched enclosure, identified by aerial photography, 1km to the south of the site. This may be of prehistoric or Roman date. The A38 to the northwest of the site follows the line of a Roman road. The Roman small town of *Salinae* lies approximately 3 km to the southwest. Salt production was carried out here during the Iron Age and Romano-British periods (Woodiwiss 1992).

5.0 Aims

The primary objective of the archaeological excavation was to record the character and function of the archaeological features identified in the evaluation and, where possible, to ascribe them to a chronological sequence.

Specific aims were:
(1) To characterise and date the settlement remains.
(2) To explore the possibility of both earlier prehistoric and Saxon occupation on the site.
(3) To attempt to recover charred plant remains and animal bone which would help to interpret the economic function of the site.
(4) To obtain a better understanding of the sedimentological and depositional processes occurring on the site.
(5) To examine the place of the site in the landscape and in the archaeological development of Worcestershire.

6.0 Method

The information provided by the results of evaluation trial trenching, was used to decide on the precise location of the area for excavation. The layout of this area was selected to encompass the most likely representative sample of archaeological remains, while not encroaching on trees and hedges to be preserved within the development. The area for excavation was agreed following consultation with the Planning Advisory Section, WAS.

An area of 1 hectare (Fig. 2) was stripped of topsoil (1010) and subsoil (1011) using two 360-degree mechanical excavators fitted with toothless buckets, under the close supervision of an archaeologist. All features revealed by the machine stripping were planned using a total station theodolite in conjuction with a data-logger and 'penmap' software. This allowed the rapid production of a site plan. A review meeting was then held with the Planning Advisory Section, WAS and the consultants to determine an appropriate excavation and sampling strategy for the manual excavation and recording of the site.

One hundred percent of all structural features, 100% of all probable industrial features, 50% of pits and 10% of all linear ditches were excavated by hand. Recording was by means of pro-forma record cards for contexts and features, supplemented by plans (scales 1:20 and 1:50) and sections (1:10 and 1:20) and monochrome print and colour slide photography. Appropriate samples were taken for environmental analysis and scientific dating. The stripped area was scanned with a metal detector.

7.0 Excavation Results (Fig. 3)

The natural subsoil consisted of a red-brown silty clay and blue-grey clay with irregular patches of sand and gravel (1012). The patches of sand and gravel appear to have been deposited through periglacial freezing and thawing prior to the current interglacial. These contexts are overlain in places by further deposits of natural sands and gravels, which may have been redeposited by surface streams (1017, 1034 and 1048). A shallow curvilinear natural depression or palaeochannel (F106), visible as a slight hollow in the unexcavated part of the field, crossed the south part of the site. This contained silty sand and gravel (1014) which was cut by archaeological features. Sealing 1014 was a clayey silty sand (1013), probably of colluvial origin.

The natural subsoil and palaeochannel fill was extensively disturbed by irregular features containing silty or humic fills recorded and interpreted as postholes, parts of ring gullies, and possible hearths during the evaluation (Vyse 1999). The majority of these features were investigated and found to be of natural origin, caused by tree and vegetation roots or by periglacial action.

In the northwest part of the site, extending beyond the edge of excavations, was a recti-linear ditch, 2.40-4.24m wide and 0.52-1.56m deep forming part of an enclosure (EN 1). It had a 'V'- shaped profile on the east side, becoming more rounded on the south side.

The lower fills of the ditch contained sherds of Iron Age pottery and the upper fills contained sherds of Roman pottery. A dump of rounded stones completely filled the ditch at a point approximately half way along the eastern side of the ditch. A linear ditch (E4005, Trench 4) identified during the evaluation and containing sherds of Iron Age pottery may form the east side of EN1.

Within enclosure EN 1 were three intercutting penannular ring gullies all with east-facing entrances and all filled with grey-brown silty clay containing sherds of Iron Age pottery. The earliest of these (RG 1) was 11m in diameter, 0.20-0.55m wide and 0.03-0.30m deep. Cutting RG 1 to the north was a larger circular ring gully (RG 2), extending beyond the edge of excavations, with an out-turned north terminal. RG 2 was 13.7m in diameter, 0.32-0.56m wide and 0.05-0.17m deep.

Cutting RG 2 was a sub-circular ring gully (RG 3) with a slightly in-turned south terminal. RG 3 was 10.4 x 10.0m, with a gully 0.34-0.60m wide and 0.10-0.17m deep. To the north of RG 3 was a short concentric curvilinear gully (CG 1), 0.50-0.64m wide and 0.20-0.27m deep, which contained sherds of Iron Age pottery. CG 1 appeared to cut RG 3, although the exact relationship was slightly ambiguous. Cutting RG 3 was a sub-circular, vertical-sided, flat-bottomed pit (F73), 1.50m in diameter and 1.13m deep, containing five fills. One of the lower fills contained sherds of Iron Age pottery, slag and animal bone and the final fill contained sherds of Iron Age pottery and a sherd of Roman pottery.

Within the entrances to RG 2 and RG 3 were two shallow pits or postholes (F83 and F84). Ring gully RG 3 was cut by a circular, steep-sided, flat-bottomed pit (F73), containing sherds of Iron Age and Romano-British pottery. Just outside RG3 to the north was a shallow sub-circular pit (F93).

North of the ring gullies was a linear 'V'-shaped ditch (F52), 1.10m wide and 0.68m deep, extending beyond the edge of excavations, aligned northwest-southeast. The upper fill contained sherds of Iron Age pottery and the lower fill contained fragments of shell. To the northeast of F52 was a curvilinear gully (CG2), 0.27-0.34m wide and 0.10-0.15m deep. Close to CG 2 and F52 were five shallow sub-circular and oval pits, 0.28-0.49m wide and 0.06-0.12m deep.

East of RG 1 was a group of three features; a posthole (F53), a shallow scoop (F54), and an oval pit (F111). A possible semi-circular feature, to the east of these features, was seen on an aerial photograph (Plate 5), taken towards the end of the excavations. This feature may be part of another ring gully or could be of geological or pedological origin.

Immediately outside Enclosure EN 1 was a circular ring ditch (RD 1), 8m in diameter, 1.0m wide and 0.20-0.26m deep, with steep sides and a flat base. No finds were recovered from the fill of this feature.

Both within and outside EN 1 was a group of twenty irregular shallow pits or scoops containing dark humic fills (F44, F47-51, F75, F85-F88, F102-F105, F107-F109, F113

and F114). Three of these (F75, F87 and F88) contained tiny fragments of charred bone and another (F114) contained lumps of charcoal. The other features contained decayed remains of woody tree roots. The majority of these undated irregular features may be caused by tree or vegetation disturbance, possibly associated with Medieval and Post-Medieval ridge and furrow cultivation or parkland use, although an archaeological origin cannot be ruled out.

At the southeast corner of EN 1, on a similar alignment, was a linear ditch (LD 2) with a gap or entrance at one point, extending beyond the eastern limit of excavations. LD 2 was 0.73-1.10m wide and 0.25-0.40m deep. Part of LD 2 formed the west side of a sub-rectangular ditched enclosure (EN 2), up to 32m wide at its widest point, with a discontinuous northern ditch. The eastern side of the enclosure ditch presumably lay beyond the edge of excavation. The enclosure ditch was 0.40-0.75m wide and 0.17-0.40m deep and contained sherds of Romano-British pottery. A linear ditch (LD 1) ran parallel with the west side of EN 2, and was 0.40-0.74m wide and 0.21-0.23m deep.

Later Medieval or Post-Medieval features were present in the form of linear furrows, aligned northwest-sotheast, relating to Medieval and Post-Medieval ridge and furrow open field cultivation and also a former field boundary ditch (F1). Further probable Post-Medieval features were identified during the evaluation, including a brick-lined well.

8.0 The Finds

Table 1: *Summary of all finds*

Find type	**Quantity**
Pottery	
Prehistoric	247
Roman	73
Post-medieval	19
Total	**343**
Fired clay/daub	145
Animal bone	10g
Ceramic tile	13
Ceramic brick	5
Slag	211g
Flint	1
Other stone	1

8.1 The Iron Age Pottery by Annette Hancocks

Factual summary

Both the evaluation and excavation archive were considered for the purposes of this report. The Iron Age pottery assemblage consisted of 247 sherds of Late Iron Age material, weighing 868g. The material was rapidly scanned for large diagnostic and dateable sherds and a *terminus post quem* was assigned for each context. The overall size of the assemblage is small, but compares favourably with similar local sites. Quantification of this material appears in Table 1. The range and variety of fabrics recognised are typical of the Worcestershire region, with later Iron Age fabrics such as Malvernian tempered ware being present. All of the Iron Age ceramics are considered to be associated with primary fills. No residual or intrusive Iron Age material was recognised. Preservation of the prehistoric pottery was generally good, with abrasion noticeable on certain sherds from E1405. All the material was retrieved by hand, with a single sherd recovered from a bulk soil sample. No preservation bias was recognised.

Statement of potential

The *terminus post quem* was used to determine the broad date of the phases defined in the stratigraphic sequence and recorded on the assemblage summary record sheet with other associated finds (Table 1). The pottery fabrics are referenced to a fabric type series maintained by Worcestershire Archaeological Service (Hurst and Rees 1992, 200-9). The small Iron Age assemblage derived from the ring gully and ditch fills concentrated around Ring Gullies 1-3 and Enclosure 1. A total of eight diagnostic rims and two base angles was recognised within the assemblage. The majority of these forms comprised classic Malvernian tempered tubby cooking pot. Decoration was restricted to overall burnishing and wiping, with a single example of linear horizontal tooling and fingertip impressions on an upper rim surface. A single exception was the ovoid/globular vessel recovered from E1404. The surfaces of this vessel were poorly abraded, with the fabric comprising common, fine to moderate, quartz and sparse, common, organic voids. The single sherd of Droitwich briquetage, referred to by Hurst (1999), was not present in the ceramic assemblage received for analysis. The range and variety of forms and fabrics observed were good but limited. This material has the potential to further refine the origins of the settlement and to determine the extent of trade and exchange by detailed analysis of the forms and fabrics. The former has implications for the on-going chronological development of the site from the Late Iron Age to the early Roman period. At both a local and regional level further detailed analysis will complement the existing corpus of Late Iron Age pottery from the area.

8.2 The Roman Pottery by C. Jane Evans

Factual summary

Assessment of the Roman pottery was based on a scan of all material from the excavation and evaluation. A total of only 73 sherds, weighing 599g, was identified as Roman. A

very limited range of fabrics was represented, the majority being in Severn Valley ware, and few diagnostic form sherds were included. All the pottery was fragmentary and abraded; the overall average sherd weight was only 8g but even this was biased by the presence of heavy amphorae sherds. The character of the assemblage makes accurate dating impossible. However, the little dating evidence that there was indicated a possible date range from the first to the second or early-third century. This evidence was provided by two very abraded sherds of South Gaulish samian, sherds of characteristically-early organic-tempered Severn Valley ware, and a couple of typically-second-to-third-century forms in Severn Valley ware (Webster 1976, fig. 4.22, 23). More than half of the assemblage came from Enclosure 1, although even here only one context produced more than 10 sherds (F111, C1162). There was very little overlap in the distribution of Iron Age and Roman pottery on the site, and only a handful of sherds came from features that produced Iron Age pottery.

Table 2: Quantification *of Roman pottery by Feature/Context*

	Feature	Context	Sherd count	% by count	Weight (g.)	% by weight
Enclosure 1	F33 F63 F66 F111	1049 1084 1090 1096 1162	2 8 5 1 22		7 75 141 2 114	
Sub-Total			*38*	*52*	*339*	*57*
Enclosure 2	F3 F18 F30	1018 1033 1044	1 2 1		27 14 2	
Sub-Total			*4*	*5.5*	*43*	*7*
Topsoil Subsoil Palaeochannel Stray find		1010 1011 1013 1058	1 5 5 1		17 78 22 9	
Sub-Total			*12*	*16.5*	*126*	*21*
Total excavation			***54***	***74***	***508***	***85***
Evaluation	E3005 E3007 E9004		4 2 13		19 16 56	
Total evaluation			*19*	*26*	*91*	*15*
Total			73		599	

Statement of potential

Analysis of this small assemblage is worthwhile alongside the Iron Age pottery, and will add to the broader database of finds from rural assemblages in the County. However, the Roman assemblage is too small and fragmentary to have significance in itself. The few forms can easily be compared to examples published elsewhere (Webster 1976; Rees 1992), and the fabrics are all types included in the County fabric series (Hurst and Rees 1992).

8.3 Recommended Approach to the Integrated Pottery Assemblages

Neither the prehistoric nor the Roman pottery assemblage can be said to be of major regional importance individually. However, they are significant for the contribution they will make to the regional database, and thus to broader synthetic studies into patterns of pottery supply and use at a regional or perhaps even national level. The Guidelines for the study of later prehistoric pottery stress that 'prehistoric ceramic studies should be conceived as part of a wider whole' and that the methodology should ensure that appropriate pottery data can be integrated with information from other sources (Prehistoric Ceramics Research Group 1997, 6). They particularly stress that greater attention should be given to the quantification of information (ibid.) so as to allow wide comparison. To achieve this, the prehistoric pottery from Wychbold will need to be recorded to the minimum standards defined by the Prehistoric Ceramics Research Group (ibid. 19), recording fabric, form, number and weight of sherds, surface treatment and decoration. Time resources have been allowed for recording the pottery, compiling a fabric and form type series, liaison with Derek Hurst re. the Worcestershire type fabric series, data entry and analysis, report compilation and editing (see Task List in Section 12 below). The small assemblage of Roman pottery is significant as part of the overall site assemblage, providing data relevant to questions regarding the late Iron Age to Roman transition and perhaps also levels of 'Romanisation' on rural sites. This assemblage will also need to be recorded in a way compatible with data from other sites. Other associated tasks (such as compiling a fabric series, data entry and analysis etc.) are absorbed within the time allocated for the prehistoric pottery. Additional time is allocated in the post-excavation task list for consultation with Dr Ann Woodward (prehistoric pottery) and Derek Hurst (Worcestershire fabric series).

8.4 The Plant Remains by Marina Ciaraldi

Archaeological excavations at Stoke Lane uncovered a number of archaeological features. Soil samples were taken from several of these features after consultation with the writer and according to BUFAU guidelines (On-site Guide to Environmental Sampling and Processing, BUFAU, Procedure N.2.).

The geological and pedological characteristics of the site sometimes made it difficult to distinguish natural and human-made deposits. The aim of the sampling, therefore, was not only to recover any surviving environmental evidence associated with the Iron Age/ Romano-British settlement, but also to establish whether some of the deposits were of human or natural origin.

The results of the on-site soil analysis by Terra Nova showed that seasonal waterlogging and intense activities of worms and roots had greatly affected the survival of organic remains and soil microstratigraphy. On the basis of these conclusions, it was decided not to take samples for pollen analysis, as the interpretation of any surviving pollen assemblage would have been controversial. The predictions of the soil analysis were also confirmed by the poor preservation of all other organic remains.

Method

The soil samples were processed at the Environmental Processing Room, BUFAU. Large samples were floated with a York flotation machine. The flots (light fraction) were recovered on a 0.5 sieve and the residue (heavy fraction) on a 1mm mesh. Smaller samples were either wet-sieved on a 0.5mm mesh or, in some cases, were scanned directly under a stereomicroscope. The residue was sorted by eye, while the flots were scanned under a low-power stereomicroscope. The percentage of the flots examined is reported in Table 3.

Results

Table 3: *assessed samples*

No	Feature/ Context		Vol (l.)	Type of context	Date range	vol.flot (ml.) / % scanned	Notes
43	F114 / 1165	Np	-	Scoop	-		Charcoal (large pieces)
9	F44 / 1062	Ws	1	Scoop	-	80 / 25%	Charcoal (xx)
10	F33 / 1066	Ws	5	Ditch	IA		--
11	F47 / 1069	Np	-	Pit	-		Humic dark patch – no charcoal
12	F48 / 1070	Np	-	Pit	-		Humic dark patch – 1 small fragment of bone
13	F49 / 1071	Np	-	Pit	-		Humic dark patch
14	F50 / 1072	Np	-	Pit	-		Humic dark patch
15	F51 / 1073	Np	-	Pit	-		Humic dark patch
16	F57 / 1078	Fl	10	Ring gully	IA	60 / 100%	*Triticum* gr (1), *emmer? glume* bs (1) and fork (1), *Poaceae* (1). Charcoal (xx)
20	F64 / 1089	Fl	8	Ditch	IA	30 / 100%	Cereals gr. (1) and chaff (1), tuber
25	F75 / 1106	Ws	1	Pit	-		Charcoal (some large pieces). Burnt bones
28	F78 / 1114	Fl	10	Ring gully	IA	30 / 100%	Emmer glume bs. (1) *Poaceae* (1)
31/ 32/ 33	F73 / 1100	Np	-	Pit	IA-		Charcoal
2	F3/1018	Fl	10	Ditch	RB	60?100%	A few cereal grains poorly preserved
34	F85 / 1124	Fl	10	Pit	-	200 / 50%	gall? Fruit? (1). Large pieces of charcoal (xxx)
35	F86 / 1133	Fl	10	Pit	-	300 / 30%	Charcoal abundant but very small pieces
40	F86 / 1136	Np	-	Pit	-		Fragments of burnt bones
41	F73 / 1147	Fl	16	Pit	IA	30 / 100%	Grains: wheat (1); chaff: emmer and emmer/spelt glume bs. (5+4), culm nodes and bases (5); weeds: brome grass (2) vetch/tare (4) *Cyperaceae* (2). A single large piece of charcoal; few fragments of animal teeth; slags (Iron Age "Greys" type)

Abbreviations used in the table: np = not processed; ws= wet sieved; fl= floated; bs = basis, *x* = 1-10g, *xx* = 11-20g, *xxx* = 21-30g

The group of small samples examined (sample numbers 11, 12, 13, 14, 14 and 15), despite looking at first glance to be charcoal-rich, were revealed to have a total absence of charcoal and contained only decomposed fragments of wood. Together with the presence of fragments of decomposed wood, the shapes of these fragments are consistent with the idea that they could be root marks, probably left relatively recently by a tree.

Some of the samples, particularly F44/1062, F57/1078 and F85/1124, contained abundant charcoal but no seeds, or only a few. The fragments of charcoal, even when rather large, as in the case of sample F85/1124, were poorly preserved and very flaky. A deposit of hydrated oxides of iron and manganese was visible on their surface, a clear indication that they had been subject to waterlogging for some time.

Sample F73/1147 was the fill of a large pit cutting ring gulley RG 3. The deposit was very clayey, with very visible patches of charred material. The flot contained some charred seeds, though not in large quantity. The sample also contained fragments of slags, possibly Iron Age "Greys". The high magnetic susceptibility reading associated with this pit is consistent with the presence of charred debris, although this was not particularly abundant.

The contemporary presence of the slags and charred crop waste, particularly that of culm nodes and internodes, suggests that crop processing by-products could have been used as fuel for smelting. Evidence for crop waste used as fuel or as tinder in association with iron smelting has recently been noticed at St. Martins Gate, Worcester (Ciaraldi forthcoming).

Statement of Potential

Given the small size of the sample, and the fact that the plant remains recovered from the sample are not well preserved, it is recommended that no further analysis of sample F73/1147 should be carried out. On the basis of the overall poor preservation of the biological remains, no other samples need to be processed.

8.5 Other Finds by Annette Hancocks

Flint
A single flint flake was recovered from 1092 (F68) RG2. No other dateable finds were recovered from this context and no further work is recommended on this piece.

Animal bone
A few fragments of animal tooth (10g) were recovered during the excavation. Animal bone did not survive well in the soil conditions. No further work is recommended.

Slag
The slag was rapidly scanned and weighed. 211g of slag were recovered from two contexts-1114 (F78) in Ring Gully 3 and a pit 1147 (F73). No diagnostic pieces were recognised amongst the group, although 2g of Iron Age grey metalworking residue were recovered from the bulk sample taken from context 1147. It is recommended that no further work be undertaken on this material.

Fired clay
Some 145 fragments were rapidly scanned for diagnostics such as clay lining for pits, kiln furniture, wattle impressions, loomweight fragments and finger moulding. No diagnostic pieces were observed. No further work is recommended.

Ceramic brick and tile
Some 18 fragments of Post-Medieval brick and tile were recovered from the site and associated with pottery of the same date. In some instances, the material was clearly associated with Post-Medieval activity recognised during the evaluation stage of this project. It is recommended that no further work be undertaken on this material.

Storage and curation
Two boxes of finds were recovered in total. The archive should be deposited with Hartlebury Museum.

9.0 Factual Data

Table 4: *Site Records Archive*

Record type	Evaluation	Excavation
Context records	136	159
Feature records	70	117
Sample records	-	43
Assem. Summaries	13	37
Site drawings	50	58
Colour photos	117	157
B & W photos	132	180

10.0 Achievement of Project Aims

The opportunity will here be taken to briefly assess the outcome of the project's original aims and objectives, as laid out above in Section 5.0. On the broad front, the excavation was able to clarify the spatial layout of the site in a way that was not altogether apparent from the evaluation. A principal potential focus of activity identified by evaluation was shown to be a complex of natural features and that the main focus of archaeological features in fact lay away from this area. The characterisation and dating of this settlement activity was achieved by excavation sampling and the recovery of a small ceramic assemblage of Iron Age-Romano-British date. Earlier prehistoric and later Saxon activity

was not encountered on the site, though a single struck flint was recovered. While charred plant remains and animal bones were recovered during the excavation through a full sampling programme, this material has subsequently been demonstrated by post-excavation assessment to have no potential for further study. The site can nevertheless be set in a wider environmental context by the soil study conducted at evaluation stage and by subsequent field observations during excavation.

11.0 Updated Research Design

There is little evidence for earlier prehistoric occupation of the site. The shallow annular ring ditch RD 1 was not associated with any artefacts. Annular circular ring ditches are often the remnants of Bronze Age round barrows. A survey of the ring ditches of the upper Severn valley (Watson 1991) shows that most tend to be 15-20m in diameter. Excavated examples at Holt (Hunt 1986), 10 km to the west of Wychbold, are 17-25m in diameter. RD 1 is 8m in diameter, so is unlikely to be a Bronze Age round barrow on the grounds of its small size. It is possible that RD 1 could be of Iron Age date, although it is much wider and the ditch has a different profile than the ring gullies within the enclosure EN 1. If it is of Iron Age date it may have a different function to the pennanular gullies within the enclosure. RD 1 may also be of medieval or post-medieval date and its function remains unclear.

Provisional dating of the pottery suggests the main ditched enclosure at Stoke Lane dates from the Late Iron Age and may have been in use until the early Romano-British period. Most of the features dated to the Iron Age are within this enclosure, including three intercutting ring gullies, sub-circular pits, postholes and a linear ditch. The ring gullies are probably the eavesdrip gullies of successive roundhouses. There appears to be continuity into the Romano-British period, with a possible field enclosure to the south, probably also being of a Romano-British date and on a similar alignment to the Iron Age enclosure. Pottery of Romano-British date recovered from the upper fills of the Iron Age enclosure ditch may indicate it was still in use at this time.

There is no evidence of any Anglo-Saxon activity on the site. Remains of ridge and furrow indicate the site was cultivated in the Medieval and early Post-Medieval period. The site appears to have been parkland in the later Post-Medieval period, belonging to Wychbold Hall, and features of this period were revealed during the evaluation.

The excavations at Stoke Lane have provided an opportunity to investigate part of an Iron Age enclosed settlement and associated, possibly Romano-British, field enclosure. Relatively little published work has been carried out on Iron Age sites of this type in Worcestershire, and there is good potential for the study of the data collected to increase our knowledge of Iron Age settlement in the county. The poor preservation of charred plant remains and animal bones means the potential for study of the economic function of the site is poor.

12.0 Proposed Publication Synopsis

A publication of a summary in the Transactions of the Worcestershire Archaeological Society is proposed.

Structure of final report:

The excavation of an Iron Age site at Stoke Lane, Wychbold, Worcestershire.
By Laurence Jones
With contributions by Marina Ciaraldi and C. Jane Evans.

Summary. 200 words.

Acknowledgements. 100 words.

Introduction – the site and its landscape setting, background to the excavation. 500 words. 1 figure.

The Results – an illustrated account outlining main features and site characteristics. 2500 words. 4 figures. 10 photos.

Specialist Reports

Pottery by C. Jane Evans. 3500 words. 2 figures. 2 tables.
Charred Plant Remains (text as in px assessment report re-edited) by Marina Ciaraldi. 500 words. 1 table.

Discussion 2000 words. 1 figure.

References

13.0 Proposed Post-Excavation Task List

Overall Project management 2 days (IF)

Preparation of first draft report (Task 1) 7 days (LJ)

Co-ordination of specialists (Task 2) 1 day (CJE)

Preparation of IA and RB pottery reports (Task 3) 15.5 days (CJE)
(inmcluding liaison with AW (1 day) and DH

Library research and text integration (Task 4) 3 days (LJ)

Preparation of site drawings (Task 5) 4 days (ND)

Preparation of finds drawings (Task 6) 2 days (ND)
Editing of first draft report (Task 7) 1 day (IF)

Amendments to first draft (Task 8) 1 day (LJ)

Proof reading and publication (Task 9) 1 day (IF)

Arrangements for final deposition of archive and finds (Task 10) 1 day (KM)

L J Laurence Jones: C J E Jane Evans: AW Ann Woodward
N D Nigel Dodds: I F Iain Ferris: K M Karen Muldoon; DH Derek Hurst.

14.0 Acknowledgements

The excavation was directed by Laurence Jones and carried out with the assistance of Richard Cherrington, Mary Duncan, Stephen Graham, Heather Hopkins, Roy Krakowicz, Philip Mann, Helen Martin, Derek Moscrop, Charlotte Neilson, Edward Newton, Andrew Newton, Howell Roberts, Andrew Rudge, Sarah Watt and Alex Whomsley.

The illustrations were prepared by Nigel Dodds and the project was managed by Iain Ferris who also edited the report. The project was monitored by Anthony Martin and Lucy Rowley-Williams for Gifford and Partners and Mike Glyde and Malcom Atkin for Worcetershire County Council. Thanks are due to Mike Glyde who provided the aerial photograph.

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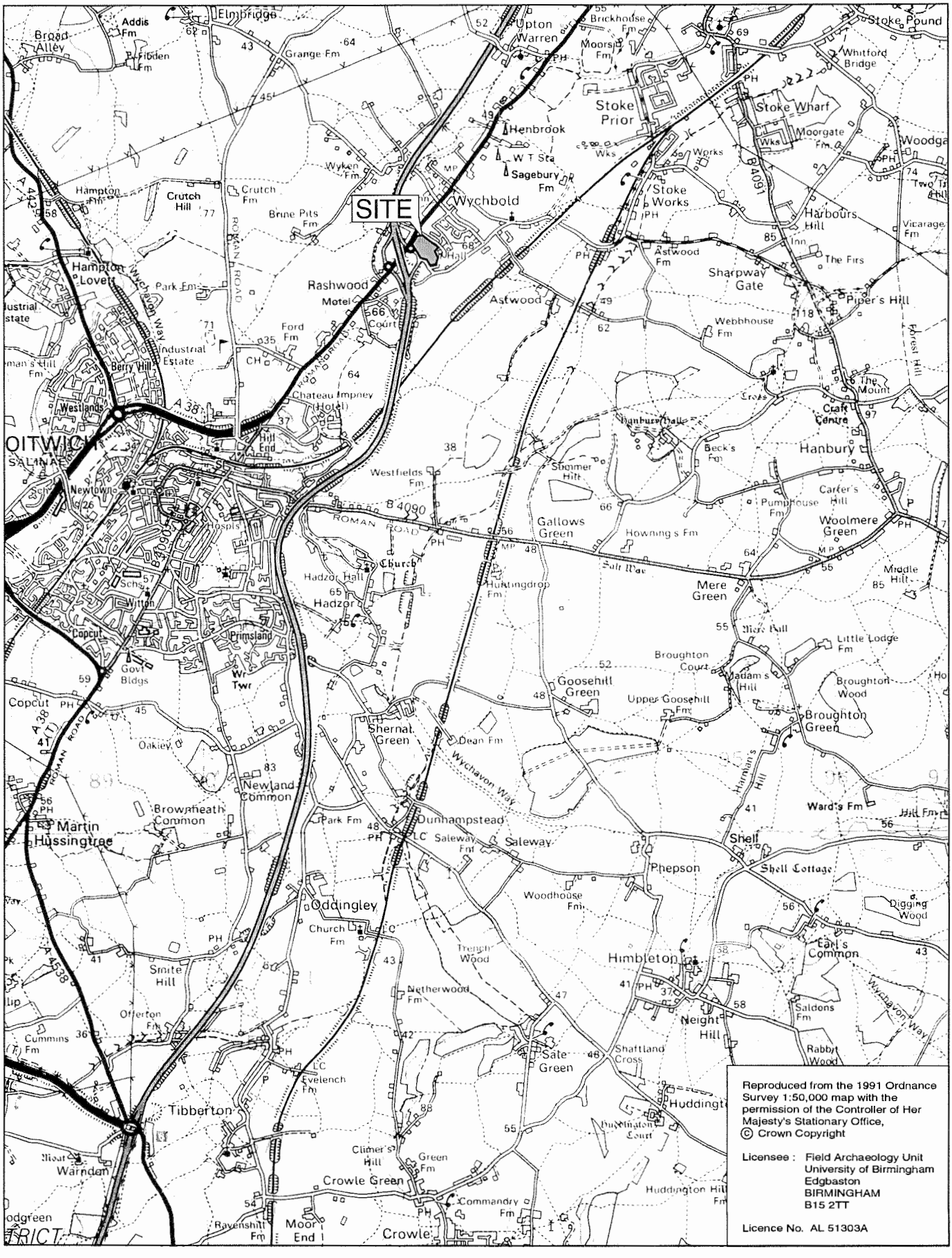

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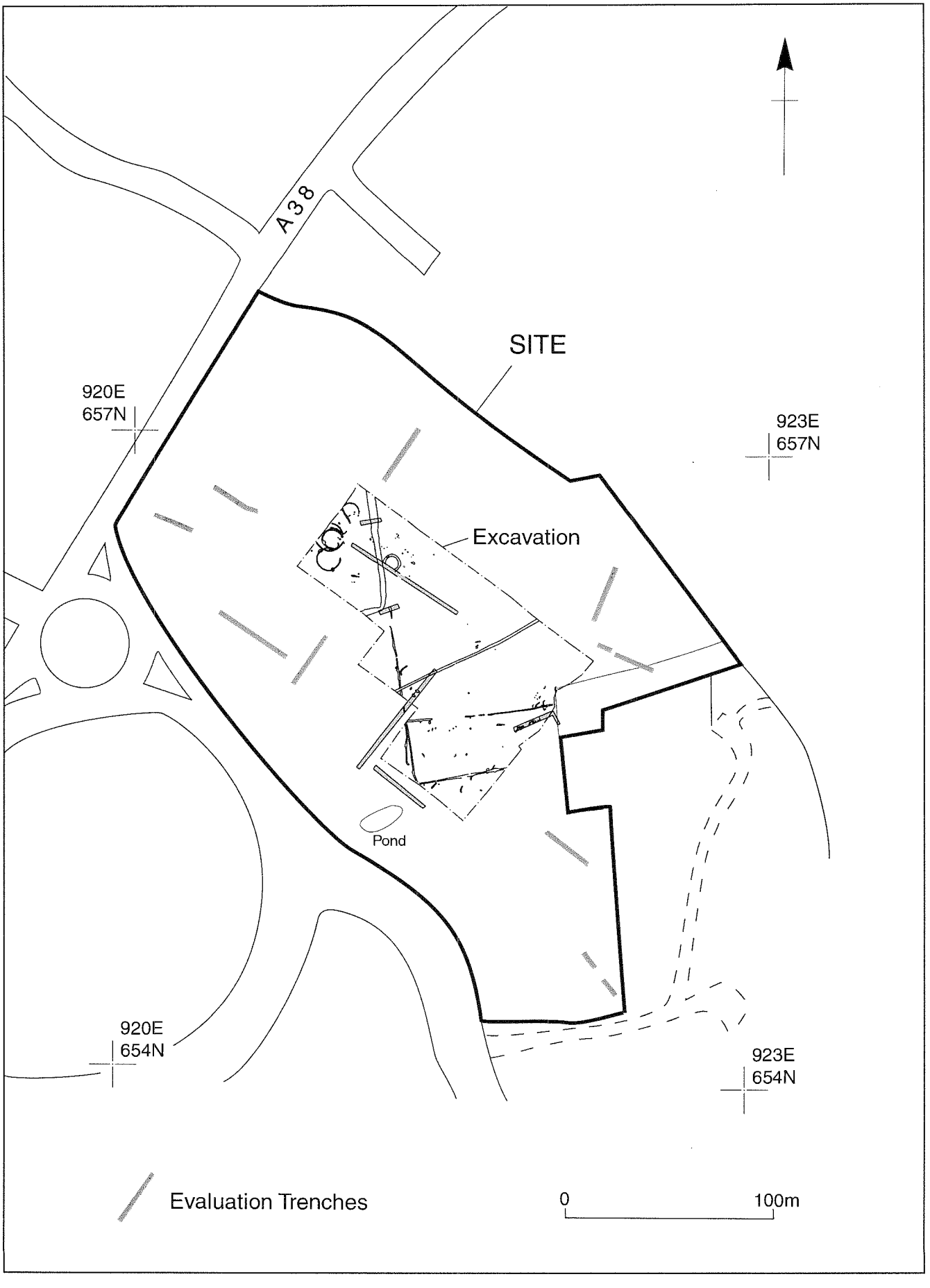
Fig.1


A38
SITE
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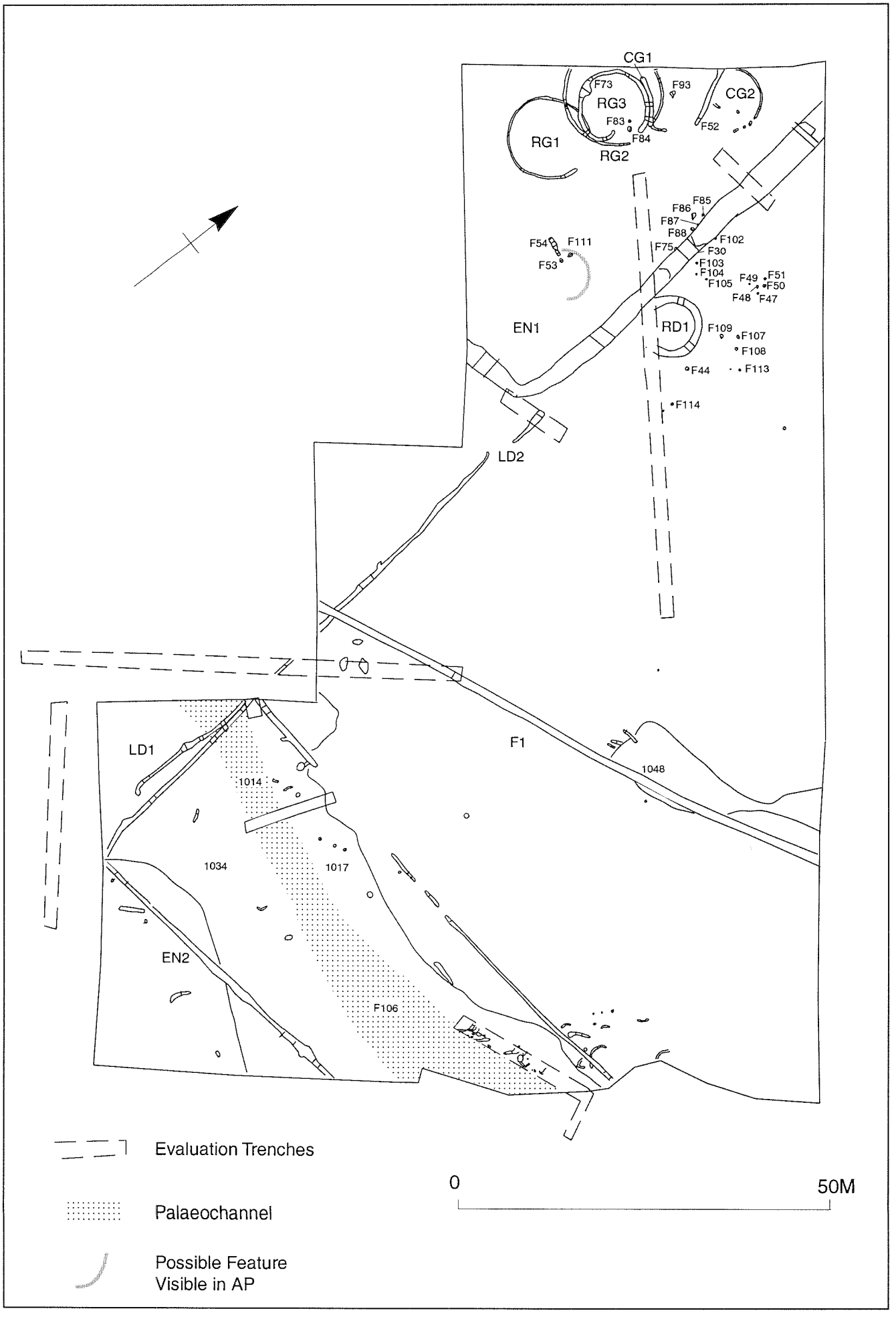
923E
657N
Excavation
Pond
920E
654N
923E
654N
Evaluation Trenches
0
100m

Fig.2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F30
F103
F104
F105
F49
F51
F50
F48
F47
EN1
RD1
F109
F107
F108
F44
F113
F114
LD2
LD1
F1
1048
1014
1034
1017
EN2
F106
Evaluation Trenches
Palaeochannel
Possible Feature
Visible in AP
0
50M

Fig.3

Plate 1

Plate 2

Plate 3

Plate 4

Plate 5