REW FARM MELKSHAM WILTSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

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archaeology

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Quality Assurance

This report covers works as outlined in the brief for the above-named project as issued by the relevant authority, and as outlined in the agreed programme of works. Any deviation to the programme of works has been agreed by all parties. The works have been carried out according to the guidelines set out in the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) Standards, Policy Statements and Codes of Conduct. The report has been prepared in keeping with the guidance set out by Wardell Armstrong Archaeology on the preparation of reports.

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SUMMARY

At the request of Wardell Armstrong LLP, Wardell Armstrong Archaeology were commissioned by Green Switch Solutions Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation of land at Rew Farm, Melksham, Wiltshire centred on Ordnance Survey grid reference ST 9377 6173, in support of a planning application for the construction of a solar farm at the site.

A geophysical survey of the site at Rew Farm was conducted by Wardell Armstrong Archaeology in June 2014 and a series of curvilinear and linear magnetic anomalies were detected, which may have represented soil-filled enclosure ditches. As a result a trial trench evaluation of the site was requested by Wiltshire County Council, in order to provide further information regarding the archaeological potential of the site.

This was undertaken over five days between the 11th and 19th of August 2014 and comprised the excavation of fifteen 30 metre long trenches across the four fields affected by the potential development. These were positioned to investigate both geophysical anomalies and blank areas in the geophysical survey. Three trenches contained significant archaeological features and deposits.

Trench 3 contained two roughly north-south linear features, an east-west ditch and another feature difficult to interpret within the confines of the 1.5 metre wide trench. All the features contained quantities of early Roman pottery. Trench 4 contained linear features which may be related to those recorded in Trench 3. They also contained early Roman pottery and were aligned north-south and east-west. To the east of these linears was a spread of material that also contained pottery as well as animal bone and charcoal fragments. At the west south-west end of Trench 5 a cremation burial was encountered.

Roman pottery was recovered from nine contexts and dates largely to the Flavian and Trajan periods (AD 69-96 and AD 98-117 respectively). Southern Gaulish samian ware of pre-Flavian date was recovered from several deposits which is unusual on rural domestic Roman sites. The pottery suggests that the site was in use during the early to mid Roman period; the absence of 3rd to 4th century pottery indicates that the site was abandoned after the mid 2nd century.

No archaeological features or deposits were noted in the other trenches excavated.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Wardell Armstrong Archaeology thanks Green Switch Solutions Ltd, for commissioning the project, and for all assistance throughout the work. Wardell Armstrong Archaeology also thanks Clare King and Rachel Foster from Wiltshire Archaeology Service for their assistance throughout the project.

The archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Leah Harding, Ed Johnson, Helen Phillips and Ben Moore. The report was written by Ben Moore and the figures were produced by Adrian Bailey. The environmental analysis was undertaken by Don O'Meara and the finds report was written by Megan Stoakley with contributions from Jane Timby and David Jackson. The project was managed by Martin Railton, Senior Project Manager for WAA, who also edited the report.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1 In August 2014, Wardell Armstrong Archaeology were invited by Green Switch Solutions to undertake an archaeological evaluation of land at Rew Farm, Melksham, Wiltshire (Figure 1), prior to a planning application for the construction of a solar farm on the site. A geophysical survey undertaken by Wardell Armstrong Archaeology highlighted areas of archaeological potential that would be impacted upon by the proposed works and as a result, Rachel Foster of Wiltshire Archaeology Service requested an archaeological evaluation prior to the development taking place. This is in line with government advice as set out in Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012).
- 1.1.2 The archaeological evaluation was undertaken following approved standards and guidance (IfA 2013), and was consistent with the specification provided by Wardell Armstrong Archaeology (Railton 2014b).
- 1.1.3 This report outlines the evaluation undertaken on-site, the subsequent programme of post-fieldwork analysis, and the results of this scheme of archaeological works.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 PROJECT DESIGN

2.1.1 A project design for an archaeological evaluation was submitted by Wardell Armstrong Archaeology. Following acceptance of the Wardell Armstrong Archaeology written scheme of investigation by Rachel Foster, Assistant Archaeologist at Wiltshire County Council, Wardell Armstrong Archaeology was commissioned by the client to undertake the work. The project design was adhered to in full, and the work was consistent with the relevant standards and procedures of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA), and generally accepted best practice.

2.2 THE FIELD EVALUATION

- 2.2.1 The evaluation consisted of the excavation of fifteen trenches totalling 450 metres in length across the proposed development area (Figure 2). The purpose of the evaluation was to establish the nature and extent of below ground archaeological remains within the vicinity, the evaluation trenches being positioned to investigate both geophysical anomalies and blank areas in the geophysical survey.
- 2.2.2 In summary, the main objectives of the field evaluation were:
 - to establish the presence/absence, nature, extent and state of preservation of archaeological remains and to record these where they were observed;
 - to establish the character of those features in terms of cuts, soil matrices and interfaces:
 - to recover artefactual material, especially that useful for dating purposes;
 - to recover palaeoenvironmental material where it survives in order to understand site and landscape formation processes.
- 2.2.3 Topsoil and subsoil were removed by mechanical excavator under close archaeological supervision. The trial trenches were subsequently cleaned by hand and all features were investigated and recording according to the Wardell Armstrong Archaeology standard procedure as set out in the Excavation Manual (Giecco 2012).
- 2.2.4 All finds encountered were retained and were cleaned and packaged according to standard guidelines (English Heritage 2006). Artefactual remains were analysed by Megan Stoakley, Wardell Armstrong Archaeology Finds and Archives Specialist.
- 2.2.5 All environmental samples were collected according to standard guidelines (English Heritage 2002). Environmental samples were processed and analysed by Don O'Meara, Wardell Armstrong Archaeology Environmental Officer.

- 2.2.6 The fifteen evaluation trenches were backfilled following the excavation and recording.
- 2.2.7 The fieldwork programme was followed by an assessment of the data as set out in 3.4 3.6 of the IfA's *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (November 2013).

2.3 THE ARCHIVE

- 2.3.1 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with the specification, and according to the Archaeological Archives Forum recommendations (Brown 2011). The archive will be deposited within Chippenham Heritage Centre, with copies of the report sent to Rachel Foster of Wiltshire Archaeology Service available upon request. The archive can be accessed under the unique project identifier WAA14, RFM-A, CP10802.
- 2.3.2 Wardell Armstrong Archaeology and Wiltshire Archaeology Service support the Online AccesS to the Index of Archaeological InvestigationS (OASIS) project. This project aims to provide an on-line index and access to the extensive and expanding body of grey literature, created as a result of developer-funded archaeological work. As a result, details of the results of this project will be made available by Wardell Armstrong Archaeology, as a part of this national project. The archive has the unique OASIS identifier wardella2-190026.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 LOCATION AND GEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

- 3.1.1 The survey area lies within the four arable fields to the north of Seend and southwest of Melksham, Wiltshire (Figure 1). The site is centred on Ordnance Survey grid reference ST 9377 6173 and measures approximately 8.6ha in total. Seend is a village and civil parish approximately 5 km southeast of the market town of Melksham, Wiltshire. Seend village occupies a hilltop more than 90m above sea level. The hill is bordered to the west and south by Semington Brook, a tributary of the River Avon, and to the east by Summerham Brook, which is a tributary of Semington Brook. The site is bound to the south by the Kennet & Avon Canal, to the north by a dismantled railway, to the west by a minor road, and to the east Rusty Lane. Pile Farm and stables lie immediately to the west of the site.
- 3.1.2 The underlying geology at the site comprises mudstone, known as the Oxford Clay Formation. This sedimentary bedrock was formed approximately 156 to 165 million years ago in the Jurassic Period (BGS 2001). Superficial deposits comprise clay, silt, sand and gravel.

3.2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- 3.2.1 *Introduction:* A Cultural Heritage Statement of the site has been produced by Green Switch Solutions Ltd (2014), a summary of which is provided below. This historical background is compiled mostly from Wiltshire Historic Environment Record (HER), although the HER references are not recorded in this statement.
- 3.2.2 **Prehistoric:** there have been a number of finds of prehistoric material in the vicinity including a number of Bronze Age flint tools from southwest of Pile Farm, located 170m to the west of the proposed development area (Green Switch Solutions Ltd 2014, 28).
- 3.2.3 A number of cropmarks have been identified on aerial photographs between Seend and The Kennet & Avon Canal, located 210m to the southeast of the proposed development area. It is possible that these relate to an Iron Age or Romano-British settlement site. These are overlain by medieval ridge and furrow cultivation (Green Switch Solutions Ltd 2014, 29). Undated earthworks are also recorded north of Mitchells Farm, 405m northeast of the site.
- 3.2.4 **Roman:** there are no known Roman sites recorded in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development area. However, a number of Romano-British coins have been found in the area, including two from the Garden of Beech House, 830m to the southeast of the site, and from Seend Cleeve, 700m to the southeast. Romano-British pottery sherds dating to the 2nd century were also recovered from southwest of Pile Farm during a watching brief in 2000 (Green Switch Solutions Ltd 2014, 29).

- 3.2.5 **Medieval:** the village of Seend, located 725m to the south of the site, is believed to have medieval origins. The Church of the Holy Cross is a Grade I listed building, which dates to *c*.1450.
- 3.2.6 A number of farmsteads in the vicinity are also believed to have medieval origins. In particular, a medieval settlement has been identified on air photographs west of Pile Farm, located 80m west of the proposed development area. The site is associated with William De La Pyle and its existence was confirmed during a watching brief in 2000 (Green Switch Solutions Ltd 2014, 28). A large ditch was revealed which contained pottery dating to later 12th and 13th centuries.
- 3.2.7 A possible medieval moated site has been identified on aerial photographs west of Park Farm, located 960m southwest of the site. Another feature has been identified 770m southeast of the site west of Egypt Farm, which may be the medieval farmstead of Row(e)croft, which was recorded in AD 1377 (ibid.). Further features believed to be associated with a medieval settlement are recorded 960m northwest of the site, west of Redstocks Farm.
- 3.2.8 Medieval ridge and furrow earthworks have also been identified 210m southeast of the site, and it is likely that the proposed development area was also agricultural land during this period.
- 3.2.9 **Post-medieval & Modern:** The Manor House in Seend is a Grade II* building and dates to *c*.1701. The building has seen many changes since its original construction, being rebuilt in 1767 and a frontage added in 1812. Mitchells Farm, situated 280m northeast of the site, is believed to have been established in this period, and the land is associated with Edward Mitchell in AD 1642.
- 3.2.10 Andrews' and Dury's Map of Wiltshire (dated 1810) shows Pile Farm and the proposed development area, situated north of Seend and the Kennet & Avon Canal, but like earlier historic maps, does not provide any detail regarding the site. The section of the canal here was opened in 1798-1799 and was built to join the Kennet and Avon navigations.
- 3.2.11 The 1899 Ordnance Survey map shows the proposed development area comprised five fields, the northwest corner of the site having previously been subdivided.
- 3.2.12 Three WWII pill boxes are recorded in the vicinity and sockets for rails are recorded on the bridge over the Kennet and Avon Canal. The rails, if attached, would have been used to obstruct the progress of tanks or armoured vehicles (*ibid.*).

3.3 PREVIOUS WORK

3.3.1 A geomagnetic survey was undertaken by Wardell Armstrong Archaeology in advance of this phase of archaeological mitigation (Railton 2014a). A number of agricultural features were detected by the surveys, including former field boundaries, and evidence for ridge and furrow cultivation on the south side of the site. More significant were a series of curvilinear and linear magnetic anomalies, which possibly represented soil-filled enclosure ditches. It was considered possible that these were of archaeological significance given the presence of Iron Age or Romano-British settlement activity in the wider area (Railton 2014a).

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 The archaeological evaluation was undertaken over six days between the 11th and 19th of August 2014 and comprised the excavation of fifteen 30 metre long trenches, totalling 450 metres, across the proposed development area (Figure 2). The trenches were excavated through top and subsoils onto natural clay, sand and gravel geology.
- 4.1.2 The top and subsoil in all fifteen trenches were excavated by a tracked mechanical excavator with a toothless ditching bucket. The trenches were then cleaned by hand and any archaeological features excavated and recorded.

4.2 RESULTS

- 4.2.1 **Trench 1:** Trench 1 was situated in the northwest corner of the proposed development area and was located to investigate linear anomalies highlighted in the geophysical survey (Figure 2). The trench was aligned northeast to southwest.
- 4.2.3 The trench was excavated down to the top of yellowish brown natural clay through 0.20 metres of top and subsoil. No archaeological features were noted.



Plate 1: Trench 1 facing north-east

- 4.2.4 Trench 2: Trench 2 was situated 48 metres south of Trench 1 and was placed to investigate curvilinear anomalies highlighted during the geophysical survey (Figure 2). The trench was aligned east-west.
- 4.2.5 The trench was dug through top and subsoil onto firm yellow clay natural with areas of gravel. A sondage was excavated five metres from the eastern end of the trench to confirm that the natural geology had been reached. No archaeological features were noted.
- 4.2.6 It is likely that the geophysical anomalies observed were due to variations in the natural geology.



Plate 2: Trench 2, facing east

- 4.2.7 **Trench 3:** Trench 3, 70 metres east of Trench 1, was positioned to investigate a series of east-west and northwest to southeast linear geophysical anomalies (Figures 2 & 3). Trench 3 was aligned north-south.
- 4.2.8 The trench was excavated by machine through around 0.2 metres of top and subsoil down to the top of yellow clay natural to the north and south ends of the trench and to the top of archaeological deposits in the centre.



Plate 3: Trench 3, pre-excavation, facing north. Gully [305] in foreground



Plate 4: Gully [305], facing north, terminating at top of photograph

- 4.2.9 A narrow gully [**305**] ran from the south end of the trench before terminating after 4.55 metres (Figures 2 & 3). It was 0.45 metres wide and 0.11 metres deep and filled by firm mid grey clay (**306**) with occasional stones and rare early Roman pottery sherds (mid 1st to early 2nd century) throughout. No plant remains were recovered from the soil sample <2> (**306**), though a fragment of calcinated sheep proximal phalange was recovered from the heavy residue. The narrow and shallow profile suggests that it had been truncated by later agricultural activity. Certainly, none of the deposits that survive further north in the trench exist here.
- 4.2.10 Six metres from the southern end of the trench an area of dark brown and grey material was revealed below the mid greyish brown subsoil (301). This spread across the width of the trench and ended seven metres further north. Upon investigation this resolved itself into a north-south aligned v-shaped ditch [303] cutting through natural clay (302) on its southern side and a dark brown deposit (308) to the north (Figures 2 & 3). A soil sample taken from deposit (308), <3> and produced low numbers of indeterminate cereal grains, although no bone or pottery fragments were recovered (the only sample to produce neither bone nor pottery).
- 4.2.11 The ditch [303] was 0.75 metres wide and 0.27 metres deep where excavated and contained a single homogenous dark grey silty clay fill (304) containing a substantial quantity of early Roman pottery (mid 1st to early 2nd century date) that was concentrated towards the base (Figure 3). Infrequent heavily charred cereal grains and fragments of animal bone were recovered from the soil sample <1> (304) taken from this fill. The homogenous nature of the fill suggests rapid backfilling or a single major episode of silting.



Plate 5: West facing section of ditch [303]

4.2.12 A series of slots were excavated across the material to the north of ditch [303] in order to understand the chronology and formation processes involved (Figure 3). This proved inconclusive across such a narrow area but a series of irregularly shaped features [307], [309], [311] and [313] containing very similar fills were recorded. In section, [307] could be seen to cut (310), the fill of [309]. However, it could be the case that fills (308), (310) and (312) are all within one irregular shallow feature that may possibly be a tree throw or palaeo-channel. Soil sample <4> from deposit (310) produced low numbers of indeterminate cereal grains and a charred vetch seed, while sample <5> (312) produced a single charred cereal grain and a fragment of calcinated bone.



Plate 6: South facing section of [307] and [309]

- 4.2.13 Deposits (308) and (310) comprised friable dark grey silty clay and could only be differentiated by the higher concentration of pottery sherds in (308) (Figure 3). Deposit (313) contained mottled clay patches throughout and has been interpreted as the remnants of buried soil, datable to the Romano-British period. Deposits (308) and (310) may be dumps of material but further excavation would be needed to confirm this. Patches of natural clay could be observed across the area and the irregular edges or cuts to these features suggest heavy bioturbation and root action in antiquity.
- 4.2.14 Analysis of pottery recovered from deposits (308) [307], (310) [309] and (312) [313] has revealed that the features are of early Roman date (pre-Flavian (pre-AD 69)). Pottery recovered from the fill (304) of ditch [303], located to the south, is of Flavian to Trajanic date (mid 1st to early 2nd century). This would indicate a broadly contemporary date range for the use of features [307], [309], [313] and [303], although ditch [303] may have been used for a longer time-period. An excavation of a wider area would certainly add further insight to dating evidence and stratigraphic relationships.

- 4.2.15 The geophysical anomalies targeted in the trench broadly cover the central area where archaeological features and deposits were concentrated and the results could therefore be useful in locating further investigations if these are considered appropriate.
- 4.2.16 **Trench 4:** Trench 4 was located directly south of Trench 3 and was aligned north-northeast to south-southwest (Figures 2 & 4). As with Trench 3, it was located to investigate a series of east-west aligned geophysical anomalies.
- 4.2.17 Below the top and subsoil a spread of mid greyish brown silty clay material (408) containing numerous sherds of early Roman pottery (1st to 2nd century) was encountered, beginning ten metres from the northern end of the trench and continuing across the rest of the excavated area (Figure 4, Section 8). Though some fragment of bone were recovered from soil sample <8> (409) no material of archaeobotancial interest was recovered. Patches of yellow compacted clay (410) capped areas of this material, perhaps an attempt to level or consolidate the ground. No dating evidence was recovered from the patches of clay capping around which the greyish yellow silty clay subsoil (401) seems to have built up.



Plate 7: Trench 4, facing north. Relict soils / midden material in foreground



Plate 8: North north-west facing section of ditch [406]



Plate 9: Gully [403] facing south

4.2.18 A slot excavated through deposit (408) measured around 0.10 metres deep, above which was located another more compacted yellowish brown layer (409) that also contained occasional sherds of early Roman pottery (Figure 4, Section 8). These have been tentatively interpreted as relict top and subsoils but it is possible that further excavation revealing the true extent of the deposits would show them to be part of a midden or rubbish dump dating to the Romano-British period.

- 4.2.19 The slot excavated down to the natural clay through layers (408) and (409) also revealed a substantial east-west ditch [406] running across the trench 14 metres from its northern end (Figure 4, Section 8). This was not seen in plan at a higher level and seemed to be sealed by layer (408) and also a dark brown deposit (405) situated to the north of the ditch but spreading half way across its width. This is possibly the remains of a bank associated with the ditch that had spread across the top of the ditch after it had gone out of use or possibly a later dump of waste material. It was not possible to establish the relationship between (408) and (405) in the section excavated.
- 4.2.20 Ditch [406] was 1.6 metres wide and 0.55 metres deep where excavated and contained one reddish brown silty clay fill (407) containing early Roman pottery and fragments of animal bone (Figure 4, Section 8). A soil sample from (407), <6>, produced a single charred cereal grain and a small quantity of animal bone, some of which was calcinated. The animal bone collected by the excavation team included a fragment of horse proximal phalange, a fragment of cattle proximal phalange, the midshaft of a sheep metatarsal and a fragment of cattle occipital bone. The cattle phalange and two other unidentified fragments showed evidence of canid gnawing, which supports the interpretation that this was a dump of domestic waste near a settlement. The sides of the ditch were steep and broke sharply to a flat base. Pottery of mid 1st to early 2nd century date was recovered from deposit (407), thus securely dating ditch [406]. The amount of pottery and bone suggest that it makes up part of a domestic / habitation site rather than being an agricultural boundary.
- 4.2.21 No other features were noted cutting into the layers below the top and subsoils or were observed in the slot excavated down to the natural clay. However, to the north of the spreads of midden material or relict soils a narrow north-south ushaped gully [403] was recorded cutting into the natural, running 1.8 metres from the south south-west side of the trench before terminating (Figure 4, Section 7). It was 0.2 metres wide, 0.15 metres deep and filled by firm grey clay (404). It was similar in profile, depth and orientation to gully [305] (Figure 3, Section 2). Analysis of the pottery recovered from the fill of ditch [305] suggests a use date of mid 1st to early 2nd century, while analysis of the pottery recovered from ditch [403] suggests an earlier use date (pre-Flavian, before AD 69) due to the recovery of Southern Gaulish samian ware. A soil sample taken from this feature, <9> (404), produced a single charred barley grain, as well as a relatively large quantity of mammal bone (c.30 grams). This included a fragment of pig tooth, other enamel fragments and quantities of bone fragments.
- 4.2.22 Although the geophysical anomalies recorded did not align with any of the cut features in Trench 4, they were perhaps the result of the areas of clay and other deposits at higher levels.
- 4.2.13 *Trench 5*: Trench 5 was located 32 metres from the northern edge of the proposed development area, 45 metres east of Trench 3 (Figures 2 & 5). It was located to investigate anomalies highlighted during the geophysical survey. It was aligned east-northeast to west-southwest.

- 4.2.14 The trench was excavated through top and subsoil onto firm yellow sandy clay natural. A sondage was excavated at the south-southwest end of the trench to ensure the natural geology had been reached. In doing so, the edge of a cremation burial was exposed in the north-northwest trench edge (Figure 5). The cut was not visible in plan or section but an un-urned deposit of charcoal and calcined bone (504) was recorded 0.41m below the present ground surface. It is possible that the cut and upper fills of this feature have been disturbed by later agricultural activity.
- 4.2.15 The majority of this deposit remains unexcavated as it lies outside the trench and is therefore likely to remain substantially intact. No dating evidence was recovered from the cremation and it is therefore impossible to know whether it is contemporary with the features relating to occupation in Trenches 3 and 4.
- 4.2.16 A low, elongated mound was recorded directly west of Trench 5 in close proximity to the cremation burial measuring 18 metres north-south by seven metres eastwest. It is possible that the cremation is related to this feature which could be a ploughed out barrow or long barrow. Further excavation would be needed to confirm this.
- 4.2.17 The geophysical anomaly targeted by the trench was proved to be a clay filled land drain running northwest to southeast across the area.



Plate 10: Trench 5, facing east north-east



Plate 11: Cremation (504) facing north north-west

- 4.2.18 *Trench 6:* Trench 6 was located 74 metres south-east of Trench 5 and was positioned to investigate a curvilinear geophysical anomaly running across the area (Figure 2). It was aligned northeast to southwest.
- 4.2.19 The trench was excavated through top and subsoil to the top of yellowish brown clay natural geology. One northwest to southeast aligned land drain backfilled with grey clay ran across the trench and can be seen on the geophysics results. A plastic water pipe crossed the south-western end of the trench. A sondage was excavated to test the natural geology.
- 4.2.20 No archaeological deposits or features were noted.



Plate 12: Trench 6, facing north-east

- 4.2.21 *Trench 7:* Trench 7 was situated 40 metres north-east of Trench 6 and was located to sample an apparently blank area in the geophysical survey results (Figure 2). It was aligned east-northeast to west-southwest.
- 4.2.22 The trench was dug through 0.22 metres of top and subsoil onto yellowish brown sandy clay natural geology. It proved to be devoid of any archaeological features or deposits.



Plate 13: Trench 7, facing west south-west



Plate 14: Trench 8 facing south

- 4.2.22 **Trench 8:** Trench 8 was located 50 metres south-east of Trench 6 and was located to intersect geophysical anomalies recorded in the area (Figure 2).
- 4.2.23 The trench was excavated through 0.18 metres of top and subsoil onto red sand natural geology. No archaeological features were noted. A fragment of clay pipe and an iron nail were retrieved from the subsoil but were not retained.
- 4.2.24 *Trench 9:* Trench 9 was positioned to investigate a possible former field boundary highlighted during the geophysical survey (Figure 2). It was aligned east-west around 60 metres to the west of Trench 8.
- 4.2.25 The trench was excavated through 0.22 metres of top and subsoil onto reddish grey clay natural geology. A sondage was excavated at the eastern end of the trench to test whether natural geology had been reached. No archaeological deposits or features were noted.



Plate 15: Trench 9, facing east

- 4.2.26 *Trench 10*: Trench 10 was positioned to investigate two parallel northeast to southwest linear geophysical anomalies (Figure 2). It was located 50 metres south of Trench 8 and was aligned east-west.
- 4.2.27 The trench was excavated through 0.19 metres of top and subsoil on to yellow sandy clay natural with patches of red sand and gravels. No archaeological features were noted but the geophysical anomalies were proved to be a series of clay filled land drains.



Plate 16: Trench 10, facing east. Land drains can be seen beyond photo scales



Plate 17: Trench 11, facing east north-east, sondage in foreground

- 4.2.28 **Trench 11:** Trench 11 was positioned to investigate possible ridge and furrow in this area of the proposed development and was located in the south-eastern corner of the site (Figure 2). It was aligned east-northeast to west-southwest.
- 4.2.29 The trench was excavated through 0.1 metres of topsoil and up to 0.2 metres of greyish yellow subsoil onto yellowish brown clay natural. A sondage was excavated at the west-southwest end of the trench to ensure natural geology had been reached. The ridges and furrows visible in aerial photographs were proved to be variations in the depth of subsoil but no changes were noted in plan within the trench itself. A section was drawn to record these variations.
- 4.2.30 *Trench 12*: Trench 12 was positioned to investigate two parallel linear geophysical anomalies running northeast to southwest across the area 75 metres west of Trench 11 (Figure 2).
- 4.2.31 The trench was excavated through 0.24 metres of top and subsoil onto orange sandy clay natural. The geophysical anomalies proved to be variations in the natural and no archaeological features were noted.



Plate 18: Trench 12 facing west

- 4.2.32 *Trench 13:* Trench 13 was located to investigate possible ridge and furrow in the far south of the proposed development area and was aligned east-northeast to west-southwest (Figure 2).
- 4.2.33 The trench was excavated through 0.25 metres of top and subsoil onto orange sandy clay natural geology with yellow clay patches. The ridge and furrow could be seen as variations in the depth of subsoil in the trench sections. No archaeological features were noted.



Plate 19: Trench 13, facing east-northeast, natural band of clay in foreground



Plate 20: Trench 14, facing south-east

- 4.2.34 *Trench 14:* Trench 14 was located to investigate possible soil filled features highlighted during the geophysical survey in the southwest corner of the proposed development area (Figure 2). It was aligned northwest to southeast.
- 4.2.35 The trench was excavated through 0.25 metres of top and subsoil onto yellowish brown sandy clay. No archaeological features were noted but heavy iron panning across the entire trench may have resulted in the anomalies recorded.
- 4.2.36 *Trench 15:* Trench 15 was located 26 metres west of Trench 14 and was located to investigate further geophysical anomalies in the southwest part of the proposed development area (Figure 2). It was aligned northeast to southwest.
- 4.2.37 No archaeological features were noted.



Plate 21: Trench 15, facing north-east

5 FINDS

5.1 FINDS ASSESSMENT

- 5.1.1 A total of 431 artefacts, weighing 3768g, were recovered from eight contexts during an archaeological evaluation at Rew Farm, Melksham, Wiltshire.
- 5.1.2 All finds were dealt with according to the recommendations made by Watkinson & Neal (1998) and to the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) Standard & Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials (2008b). All artefacts have been boxed according to material type and conforming to the deposition guidelines recommended by Chippenham Heritage Museum.
- 5.1.3 The material archive has been assessed for its local, regional and national potential and further work has been recommended on the potential for the material archive to contribute to the relevant research frameworks.
- 5.1.5 The finds report was compiled by Megan Stoakley with contributions from Jane Timby and David Jackson.

5.1.4	Quantification	of finds by	context is	visible in	Table 1.
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Contex	t Material	Qty	Wgt (g)	Sample #	Date
304	Pottery	55	414		RB
304	Pottery	14	13	1	RB
306	Flint	1	5		
306	Pottery	13	54		RB
308	Flint	1	9		
308	Iron	1	4	2	RB
308	Pottery	8	106		RB
308	Pottery	5	4	2	RB
310	Pottery	4	57		RB
310	Pottery	10	20	4	RB
312	Pottery	5	69		RB
312	Pottery	15	26	5	RB
404	Pottery	8	49	9	RB
407	Flint	1	5		
407	Pottery	48	331		RB
407	Pottery	10	9	6	RB
408	CBM	1	12		RB
408	Pottery	43	603		RB
408	Pottery	12	10	7	RB
409	СВМ	1	72		RB
409	Iron	1	3	8	RB

	409	Pottery	142	1794		RB
	409	Pottery	32	99	8	RB
Total			431	3768		

Table 1: Quantification of finds by material and context

5.2 ROMAN POTTERY (DR JANE TIMBY)

- 5.2.1 The excavation at Rew Farm, Melksham resulted in the recovery of 422 sherds of pottery weighing c 3.55 kg dating to the early Roman period. In addition there are three small fragments of ceramic building material (CBM) and two pieces of fired clay.
- 5.2.2 The assemblage was sorted into fabrics based on the colour, texture and nature of the inclusions present in the clay. Known named or traded Roman wares were coded using the National Roman fabric reference system (Tomber and Dore 1998). Other wares, generally of local origin, were coded more generically according to colour and main characteristics.
- 5.2.3 The sorted assemblage was quantified by sherd count and weight for each recorded context. Freshly broken sherds were counted as single pieces. Rims were additionally coded to general form. A summary of the main ware types for each context can be found summarised in Table 2 along with a provisional date for that context.
- 5.2.4 In general terms the assemblage was in poor condition with well-fragmented sherds. The overall average sherd weight was just 8.4 g. This is low for Roman pottery which tends to be more robust and better fired. On the other hand there a small number of examples of multiple sherds from single vessels.
- 5.2.5 Surface preservation was also poor and finishes such as slips or burnishing have been almost completely lost.
- 5.2.6 Pottery was recovered from nine contexts with the quantities ranging from five sherds up to a maximum of 172 sherds from context (409).
- 5.2.7 In the following report the general composition of the assemblage is described by chronological period followed by an overall assessment of the potential of the material.
- 5.2.8 *Roman.* The assemblage is dominated by locally made wares from the Wiltshire region accompanied by a small number of continental and regional imports.
- 5.2.9 Continental imports are represented by 13 small fragments of samian with examples both from La Graufesenque, South Gaul ((Tomber and Dore 1998, LGF SA) and Lezoux in Central Gaul (Tomber and Dore 1998, LEZ SA). In most cases there is little survival of the surface slip on the sherds which are very worn and fragmentary.
- 5.2.10 The South Gaulish vessels include examples of a platter Dragendorff (Drag.) type 15/17 and a decorated bowl Drag. 37 suggesting a pre or early Flavian date. The

- Central Gaulish vessels include examples of a flanged bowl (Drag. 38), a cup (Drag. 33) and a platter (Drag. 31) more typical of the Antonine period.
- 5.2.11 A single fine white ware from (407) may be an import but the sherd is less than 1g in weight.
- 5.2.12 The only recognisable regional traded wares are four sherds of Dorset black burnished ware (Tomber and Dore 1998, DOR BB1), all from context (409) and would have originated from a jar.
- 5.2.13 The remaining assemblage is composed of local wares of which a fine sandy black burnished wheel-made fabric (WILBB in Table 2) dominates, accounting for 37% of the assemblage. This ware is well known in the region and is present from the Neronian to mid-2nd century levels in Cirencester (Rigby 1982, fabric 5). This ware was used to make jars, bowls, beakers and lids often with a burnished finish and occasionally decorated with burnished lines.
- 5.2.14 Savernake wares (Tomber and Dore 1998, 191, SAV GT), account for a further 23% by sherd count. These are confined to jar forms with beaded or simple everted rims. Traditionally the ware is dated to the early Roman period but a case has been argued for a pre-Roman origin to the ware (Timby 2001) on the basis of its marked occurrence at pre-Roman sites such as Bagendon.
- 5.2.15 The remaining wares are largely Wiltshire grey sand and grog-tempered wares (WILGRSA) which probably date from the immediate pre-Flavian period onwards and wheel-made grey wares (WIL RE) more likely to belong to an industry starting in North Wiltshire around the Flavian period and continuing into the 2nd century (Anderson 1979). There are in addition some oxidised North Wiltshire wares and South-west oxidised ware (Tomber and Dore 1998, SOW OX).
- 5.2.16 Jars dominate the coarse-wares with a single flanged hemispherical bowl. The finewares present a mixture of table-wares with a cup, bowls and dishes.
- 5.2.17 *Chronology & Status.* Although this is a moderately small assemblage, the pottery suggests quite a well-defined phase of use dating from the mid-later 1st century through to the mid-2nd century.
- 5.2.18 A distinction has been made on Table 2 between potential earlier pre-Flavian groups where WIL RE is absent and those more likely to date to the Flavian-Trajanic period although in some cases the groups are quite small. The latest assemblage is that from (409) which clearly goes into the Antonine (mid-2nd century) on the basis of the Central Gaulish samian ware and Black-burnished ware (DOR BB1).
- 5.2.19 Although the character of the assemblage, with predominately local wares and a limited vessel repertoire, suggests a rural domestic site perhaps dating from the mid-later 1st into the early-mid 2nd century, the presence of the samian is slightly enigmatic. This accounts for 3% by count of the recovered assemblage which is moderately high for most rural sites in Wiltshire which generally achieve around 1-2% or less. Higher figures would be expected at the larger settlements or military sites. The presence of a few earlier Southern Gaulish sherds is also slightly unusual.

- 5.2.20 *Ceramic building material and fired clay.* Two small fragments of fired clay are present from context (409). The pieces are too small to attribute to any form or function.
- 5.2.21 Similarly three degraded small fragments of CBM from cxts (404) and (409) weighing just 23 g cannot be identified to form and are dated as Roman from their association with the pottery.
- 5.2.22 **Summary & Potential.** The assemblage recovered appears to document occupation at or near the site from the mid-late 1st century into the early 2nd century AD. An absence of later material suggests that the site was abandoned at this time.
- 5.2.23 The poor state of preservation of the material limits the amount of further work that can be carried out although it is a useful addition to the extensive archaeological history of the area. No further work is recommended at this time although if additional work is undertaken at the site this material should be taken into consideration.

Cxt	<e></e>	SAM	BB1	SAV GT	WILG RSA	WIL RE	WIL BB	Other	Tot No	Tot Wt	Date *	СВМ	FC
304		0	0	8	1	4	28	16	57	411	Flav-Traj		
304	1	0	0	0	1	0	8	3	12	11	Flav-Traj		
306		0	0	1	1	0	9	2	13	54	Flav-Traj		
308		0	0	2	4	3	2	2	13	101	pre- Flavian		
310		0	0	4	0	0	0	0	4	51	pre- Flavian		
310	4	0	0	1	0	0	9	0	10	19.5	pre- Flavian		
312		0	0	2	0	0	3	0	5	66	pre- Flavian		
312	5	1	0	0	3	0	6	5	15	25.25	pre- Flavian		
404	9	1	0	0	1	2	3	0	7	37	pre- Flavian	1	
407		0	0	3	1	2	40	2	48	319	Flav-Traj		
407	6	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	10	8	C1-C2		
408	7	0	0	0	0	0	12	0	12	9	C1-C2		
408		0	0	27	0	17	0	0	44	583	C1-C2		
409		9	4	47	0	30	22	30	142	1758	mid C2+	2	1
409	8	2	0	3	0	11	5	9	30	96.5	C2		1
TOTAL		13	4	98	12	69	157	69	422	3549.25		3	2

Table 2: Quantification of Roman Ceramic Fabrics by Context

Key: Flavian = AD 69-96 & Trajan = AD 98-117, <E> = environmental sample number

5.3 CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIAL

- 5.3.1 Two fragments of ceramic building material, weighing 84g, were recovered from deposits (408) and (409) (Table 1). The artefacts are in fairly good condition, displaying slight evidence of abrasion.
- 5.3.2 The fabric comprises a mid-red orange, dense clay matrix with well-sorted, frequent sand inclusions. Flecks of mica and iron panning are present in the fabric as well as poorly sorted, sparse flint inclusions.
- 5.3.3 The fragment recovered from deposit (**408**) comprises a miscellaneous fragment of likely early Roman date (1st to late 2nd century AD).
- 5.3.4 The fragment recovered from deposit (409) comprises a possible imbrex fragment of early Roman date.
- 5.3.5 No further analysis is necessary on the ceramic building material.

5.4 FLINT (DAVID JACKSON)

5.4.1 Three flint artefacts were recovered from three deposits (Table 1) but were not retained as they were found to be unworked.

5.5 IRON

- 5.5.1 Two iron fragments, weighing 7g, were recovered from two deposits (Table 1). The artefacts are in poor condition and display a large amount of rust corrosion.
- 5.5.2 The artefacts are of Roman date. The iron fragment recovered from (409) comprises the head and shaft of a nail while the fragment recovered from (408) comprises the shaft of a nail.
- 5.5.3 No further analysis is required on the iron artefacts.

5.6 STATEMENT OF POTENTIAL

5.6.1 The small finds assemblage recovered from Rew Farm, Melksham provides evidence of early Roman domestic activity on the site and in its environs. The assemblage is of high archaeological significance, as there are no known Roman archaeological remains recorded in the immediate vicinity of the development site.

6 ENVIRONMENTAL ARCHAEOLOGY

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 During the course of the evaluation attention was paid to the potential environmental archaeology remains within the area under investigations. In particular this involved an assessment of the archaeobotancial and archaeozoological material which may be present on the site. Soil samples were taken in order to extract preserved archaeobotancial material, as well as smaller bones. Animal bone was hand collected during the excavations of archaeological features. This report presents an assessment of the recovered material, as well as assessing the potential for further work on this site.

6.2 ARCHAEOBOTANCIAL ANALYSIS

- 6.2.1 During the course of the evaluation nine soil samples were collected by the excavation team. This consisted of c. 170 litres of sediment from nine separate contexts. These consisted of two ditch fills, two gully fills and five layers, which were interpreted as possible buried soils. The results of the analysis are summarised in Table 3.
- The samples were taken in order to understand the levels of preservation which might be encountered during future excavation at the site (English Heritage 2011). The methodology employed required that the whole earth samples be broken down and split into their various different components: the flot/washover, the retent/residue, the clay-silt and the sand-silt. The sample was soaked in water, then manually flotted and sieved through a 'Siraf' style flotation tank. In this case the residue and the flot are retained while the sand-silt-clay components are filtered out. The sample was flotted into a 250-micron geological sieve, while the heavy residue was retained within a 1mm plastic mesh. The heavy residue was then air-dried and sorted by eye for any material that may aid our understanding of the deposit; in particular artefactual and ecofactual material. During the course of the project the heavy residue was examined, material of archaeological interest was collected, and the remaining heavy residue (stones of various lithologies) was discarded. The material which was recovered included charred plant remains, mammal bones, pottery, and charcoal. The residue samples were also scanned with a hand magnet to retrieve forms of magnetic material. This was done to retrieve residues of metallurgical activity, in particular hammer scale, spheroid hammer scale. Processing procedures and nomenclature follows the conventions set out by the Archaeological Datasheets of the Historical Metallurgical Society (Bayley et al. 2008).
- 6.2.3 The washover flot was dried slowly and scanned at x60 magnification for charred and uncharred botanical remains. Identification of these was undertaken by comparison with modern reference material held in the Environmental Laboratory at Wardell-Armstrong Archaeology and by reference to relevant literature

- (Cappers et al. 2010) and (Jacomet 2006). Plant taxonomic nomenclature follows Stace (2010).
- 6.2.4 The results of the analysis of individual contexts have been integrated with the main discussion of each context, while the results are also summarised in Table 3.
- 6.2.5 Archaeobotanical material is only recovered by charring, as is to be expected in shallow soils with a well drained nature. In addition it can be seen that the remains of charred cereal grains were commonly found at this site, being recovered in seven of the nine samples, though are only present in low numbers.
- 6.2.6 Magnetic material was only present as naturally occurring magnetic minerals, rather than anthropogenic hammer scale or other metalworking residues.
- 6.2.7 The pottery recovered has been added to the assemblage sent for analysis, while the bone recovered is discussed in the archaeozoological section below.

6.3 Archaeozoology Introduction

- 6.3.1 During the course of the archaeological evaluation animal bones were collected by the excavation team from three contexts in Trench Four: (407), (408) and (409). All bones were collected by hand.
- 6.3.2 Identifications were undertaken using reference material held by the analyst as well as standard texts (Schmitt 1972). References to bone orientation follow Hillson (1996). Morphometric measurements were not taken from any of the bones as no complete specimens were recovered.
- 6.3.3 The purpose of this study is to:
 - Provide an assessment of the assemblage to recommend further work or analysis
 - To assess the presence of butchery evidence on all bones, and the ability of the assemblage to produce information pertinent to our understanding of the role of animals in the economic and social life of the settlement in the past.
 - To assess the taphonomic history of the bone from the creation of the death assemblage to their examination for this report as a means of understanding how secure the underlying deposits are, and how well preserved the bone is should future work be undertaken on the site.
- 6.3.4 The results of the individual samples are discussed within the discussion of the contexts from which they were taken (Section 4, above), as it was not felt a site synthesis would be helpful at this time considering the small size of the assemblage and the limited nature of the excavation.
- 6.3.5 In general the preservation can be seen as quite variable, with much of the bone showing erosion to the surface which may be caused by the root action. The horse phalange in context (407), as well as other bones from this context, showed generally moderate-good preservation of the bone structure. It was also noted from this context that canid gnawing had taken place, suggesting these bones were deposited as surface deposits rather than buried in rubbish pits.

Sample	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Context	304	306	308	310	312	407	408	409	404
Cut	303	305	309	311	313	406			403
Feature	Ditch	Gully	Layer	Layer	Layer	Ditch	Layer	Layer	Gully
Volume processed (litres)	20	10	10	10	20	20	20	40	20
Volume of flot (ml)	>10	>10	>10	>10	>10	>10	>10	>10	>10
Residue contents (relative abundance)	_								
Pottery	1	1			1	1	1	1	1
Bone fragments	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	
Stones/gravel	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Flot matrix (relative abundance)		T	1	T	T				
Charcoal	1;2	1;1	1;2	1;2	1;2	1;2	1;	1;1	
Modern plant material (leaf/stem fragments)						3;2	3;	3;3	
Modern woody/herbaceous roots	3;2	3;3	3;2	3;2	3;2				
Charred plant remains (total counts)									
Hordeum species (Barley) grain									1;
Indeterminate cereal	;2		;5	2;2	;1	1;		;2	
Other plant remains (relative abundance)			T	T			T	T	
Betula species (Birch)	C;C	C;	В;В		В;				
Cardus/Cirsium species	A;								
Carex (Sedges) (trigonus type)		A*;							
Chenopodioideae (goosefoots) cf. Atriplex sp.?									A;
Vicia species				;A*					
Unidentified sp.					1*;				

Table 3: Archaeobotancial Analysis

6.4 CONCLUSIONS FROM THE ENVIRONMENTAL ARCHAEOLOGY

- 6.4.1 In general the conclusions from the archaeobotancial analysis point to the presence of a low density of seeds present generally across the site. This may be seen as typical of the archaeological seed bank present around a Roman settlement. The mode of preservation of archaeobotanical material is in this case limited to charred plant remains
- 6.4.2 The results of the archaeozoological assessment points to variable preservation across the site. The presence of canid gnawing on some of the bones may suggest this was present as surface rubbish, exposed to scavenging activities of wild or domestic animals around the settlement. No evidence of butchery was noted, which may in part be to the heavy root etching on some of the bones, and the abraded surfaces of others. Due to the small size of the assemblage little more can be said of the economic or social role of the animal populations in this areas during the Romano-British period, however, the variable preservation and the presence of localised moderate-good preservation should be borne in mind should further work be undertaken in this region.

7 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1.1 Fifteen 30 metre long trenches were excavated across the four fields affected by the potential development. These were positioned to investigate both geophysical anomalies and blank areas in the geophysical survey. Three trenches contained significant archaeological features and deposits.
- 7.1.2 Trench 3 contained an east-west aligned ditch, a north-south aligned gully and other features more difficult to interpret within the confines of the 1.6 metre wide trench. They were possibly dumps of material or bioturbated relict soils. All the features contained significant quantities of early Roman pottery. The date range of the pottery largely spans the Flavian and Trajan periods (AD 69 117) and the features likely formed part of an occupation site rather than agricultural boundaries.
- 7.1.3 Trench 4 contained linear features which may be related to and contemporary with those recorded in Trench 3. They also contained early Roman pottery and were aligned north-south and east-west. To the east of these linears was a spread of material, possibly relict soil or midden material that contained early Roman pottery and also animal bone and charcoal fragments. It is likely that this deposit is contemporary with the cut features recorded within the trench.
- 7.1.4 At the west-southwest end of Trench 5 a cremation burial was encountered. The cut was not visible in plan or section but an un-urned deposit of charcoal and calcined bone was recorded 0.41 metres below the present ground surface. The majority of this deposit remains unexcavated as it lies outside the trench and is therefore likely to remain substantially intact.
- 7.1.5 No dating evidence was recovered from the cremation and it is therefore impossible to know whether it is contemporary with the features relating to occupation in Trenches 3 and 4.
- 7.1.6 Analysis of the pottery revealed a date range of early to mid Roman (1st to 2nd century AD). Early Roman Samian pottery, notably Southern Gaulish ware, was recovered from several deposits which is unusual on rural domestic Roman sites. The pottery suggests that the site was in use during the early to mid Roman period; the absence of 3rd to 4th century pottery indicates that the site was abandoned after the mid 2nd century.
- 7.1.7 The finds assemblage recovered from the evaluation provides evidence of early Roman domestic activity on the site and in its environs. The assemblage is of high archaeological significance, as there are no known Roman settlements recorded in the immediate vicinity of the development site.
- 7.1.8 The site on land at Rew Farm comprises a rural 1st century settlement that appears to have been abandoned by the late 2nd century.

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APPENDIX 1: FIGURES

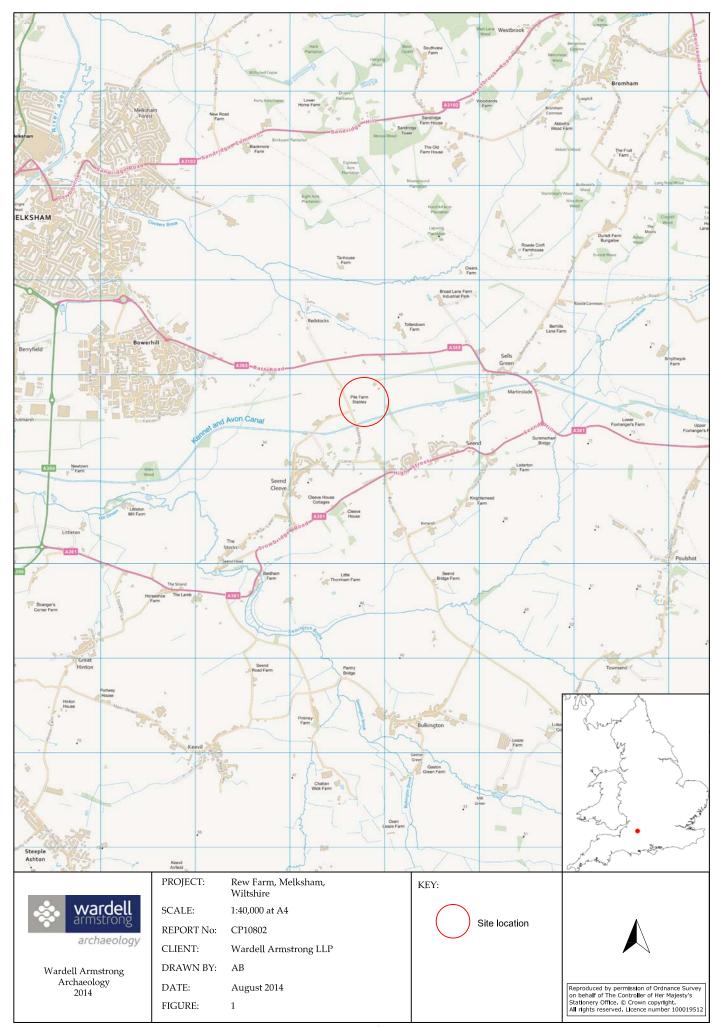


Figure 1: Site location.

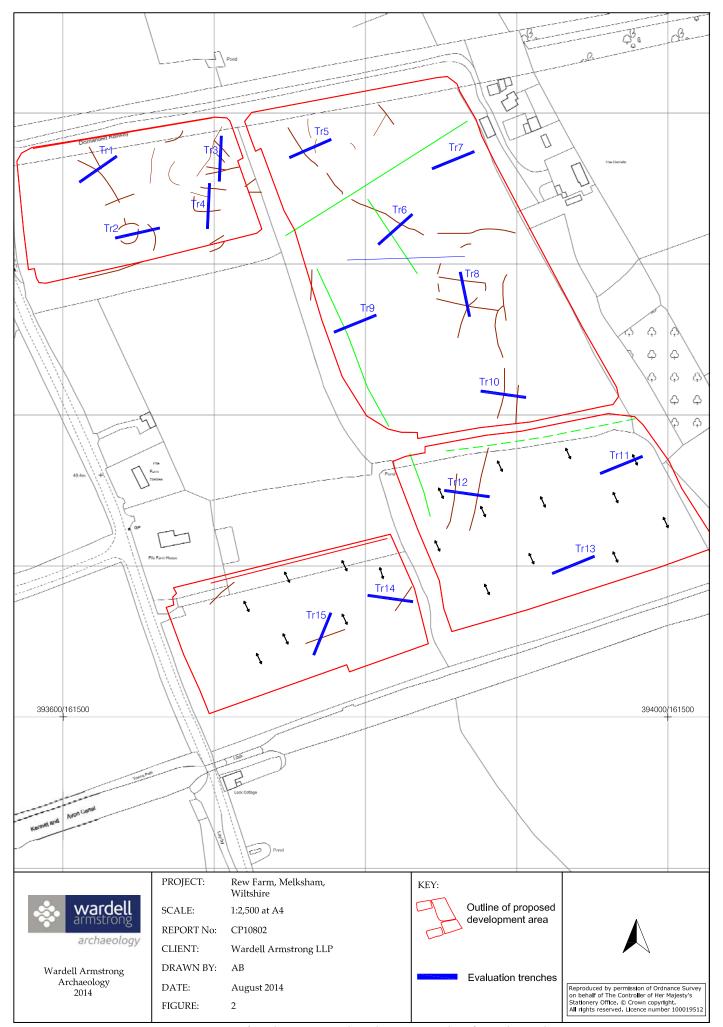


Figure 2: Location of evaluation trenches showing results of geophysical survey.

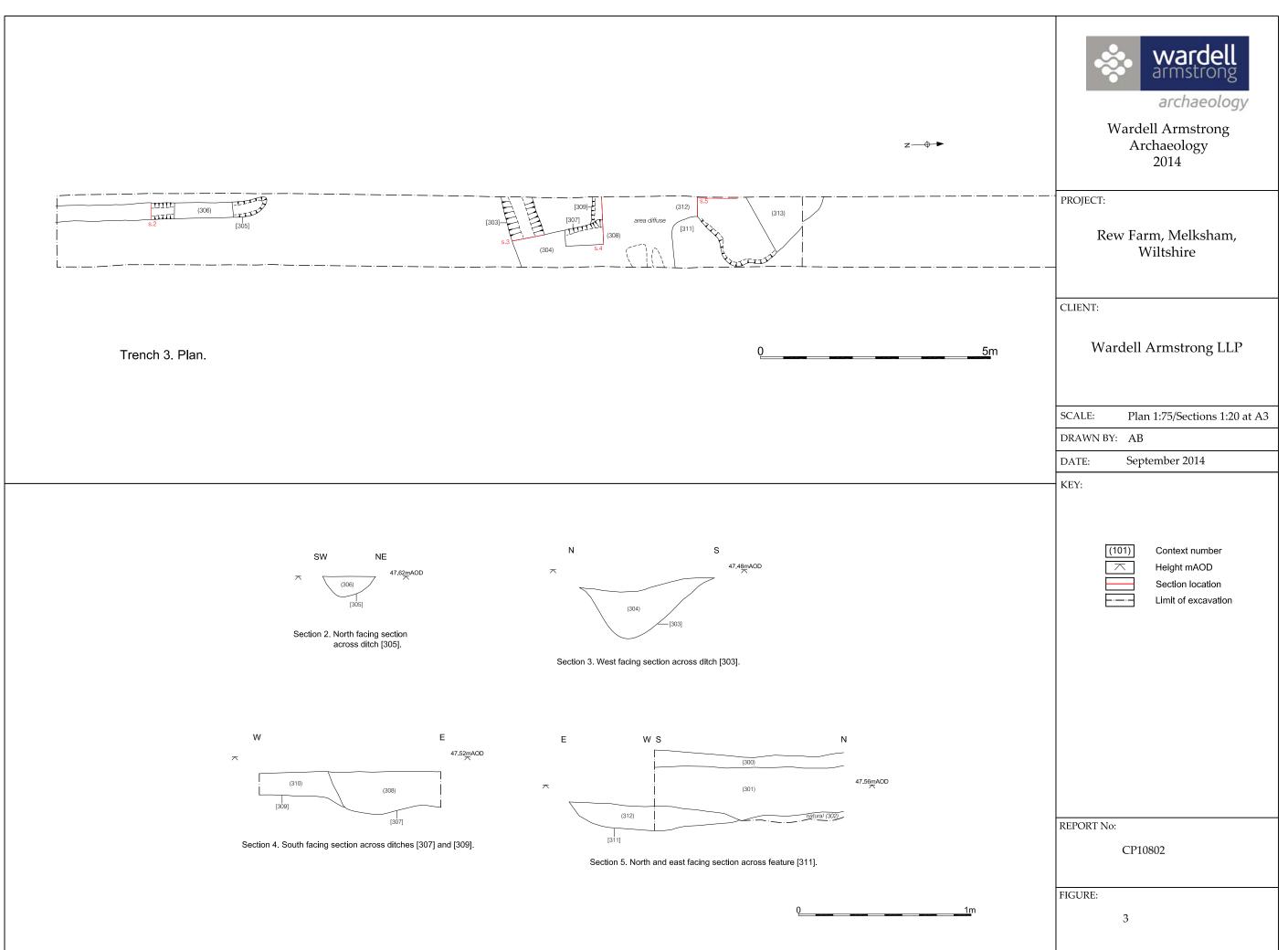


Figure 3: Trench 3; plan and sections.

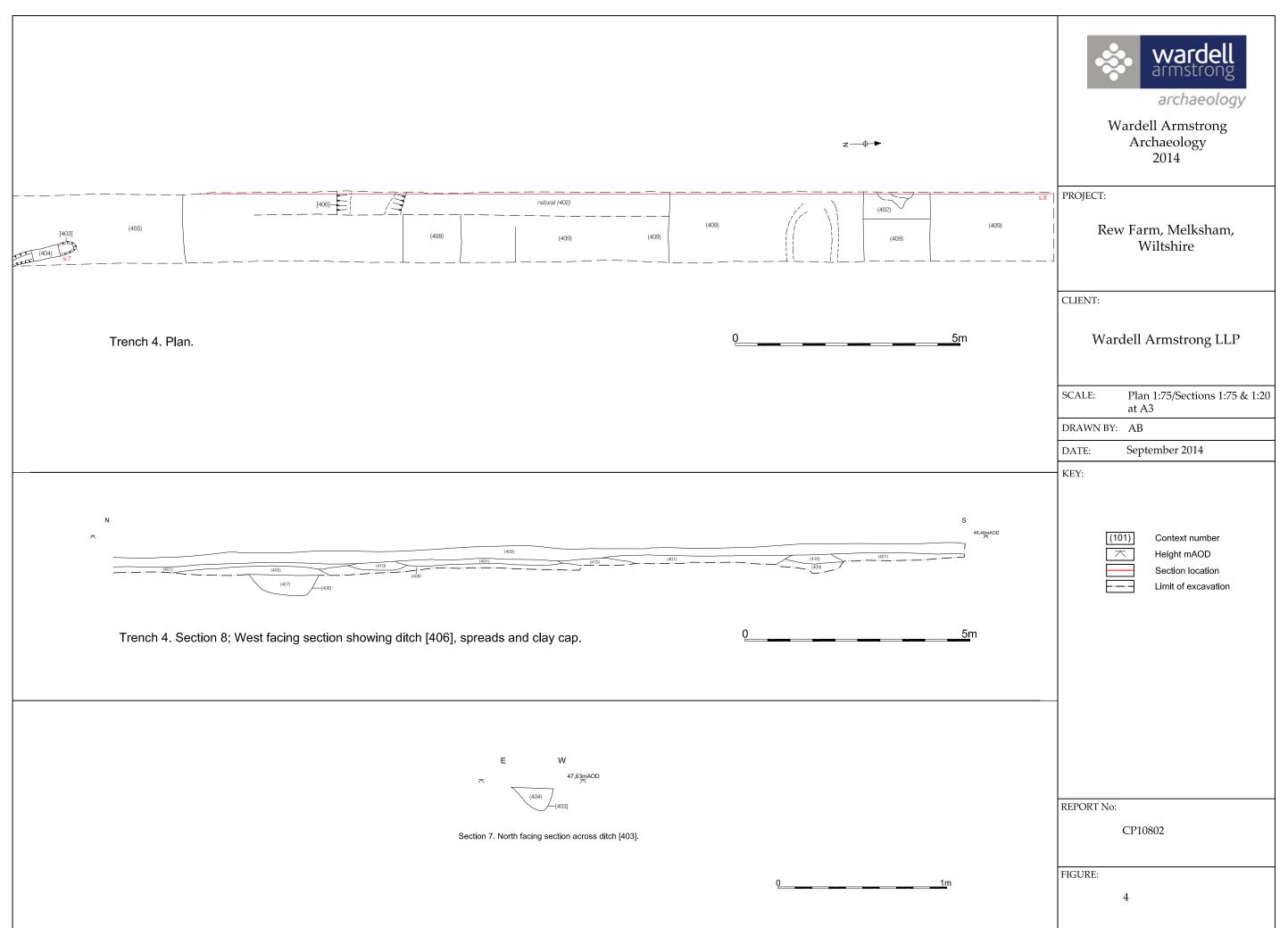


Figure 4: Trench 4; plan and sections.

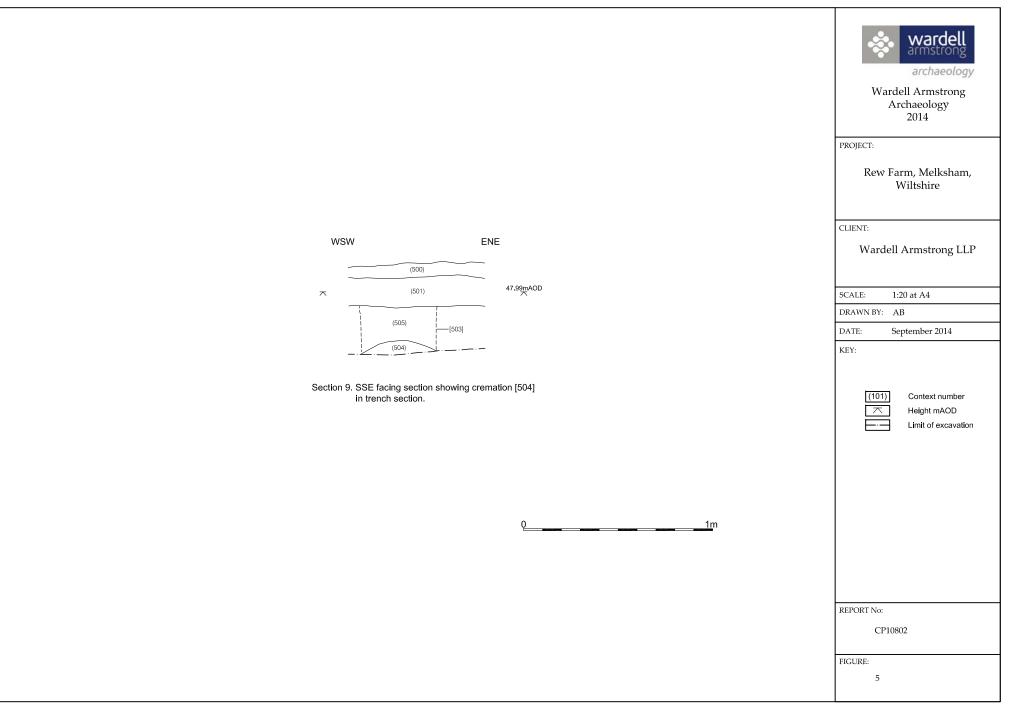


Figure 5: Trench 5; section showing cremation [504].