



**Archaeological evaluation on land at the
Northern Extension, Monksmoor Farm
Daventry
Northamptonshire
March 2014**

Report No. 14/90

Jim Burke and Carol Simmonds

Illustrator: James Ladocha



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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS No: molanort1 177975	
Project name	Archaeological evaluation on and at the Northern Extension, Monksmoor Farm, Daventry, Northamptonshire		
Short description	MOLA was commissioned by AECOM to conduct a trial trench evaluation on the northern part of land set aside for proposed residential development at Monksmoor Farm, Daventry. Work undertaken between 2005 and 2006 had identified a Iron Age settlement comprising roundhouses. The current phase of work included trenches which targeted two areas of archaeological interest to the north and east of the Iron Age settlement. The features comprised a rectangular enclosure, within which were a ring ditch and a pit, of probable Iron Age date. Fragmentary remains of ditches and postholes suggest outfield boundaries associated with occupation. There was also extensive evidence of medieval ridge and furrow and later deep ploughing across the site and evidence of post-medieval and modern field boundaries, drains and modern dumping associated with the now demolished Monksmoor Farm. There was also a possible palaeochannel adjacent to the eastern boundary of the site.		
Project type	Trial trench evaluation		
Site status	None		
Previous work	Desk-based assessment (Rouse and Hunn 2005), Geophysical survey (Hancock 2005a), Fieldwalking (Hancock 2005b and 2006a) and evaluation (Hancock 2006b and c) Geophysical survey and evaluation (Walker and Walford 2012)		
Current Land use	Arable		
Future work	Unknown		
Monument period	Iron Age/Roman		
Significant finds	Pottery IA and Roman		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Northamptonshire		
Site address	Monksmoor Farm, Daventry		
Study area	51ha		
OS Easting & Northing	SP 579 644		
Height OD	123m aOD		
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology		
Project brief originator	Archaeological Advisor, Northamptonshire County Council		
Project Design originator	AECOM		
Director/Supervisor	Jim Burke,		
Project Manager	Mark Holmes		
Sponsor	AECOM		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	March 2014		
End date	March 2014		
ARCHIVES	Location	Content	
Physical	MOLA (Northampton)	Pottery, tile, clay tobacco pipe, flint	
Paper	MFD14	Record sheets, drawings	
Digital		Digital mapping, photos	
BIBLIOGRAPHY			
Title	Archaeological evaluation on land at the Northern Extension, Monksmoor Farm, Daventry, Northamptonshire		
Serial title & volume	14/90		
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Archaeological evaluation on land at the Northern Extension, Monksmoor Farm, Daventry Northamptonshire March 2014

ABSTRACT

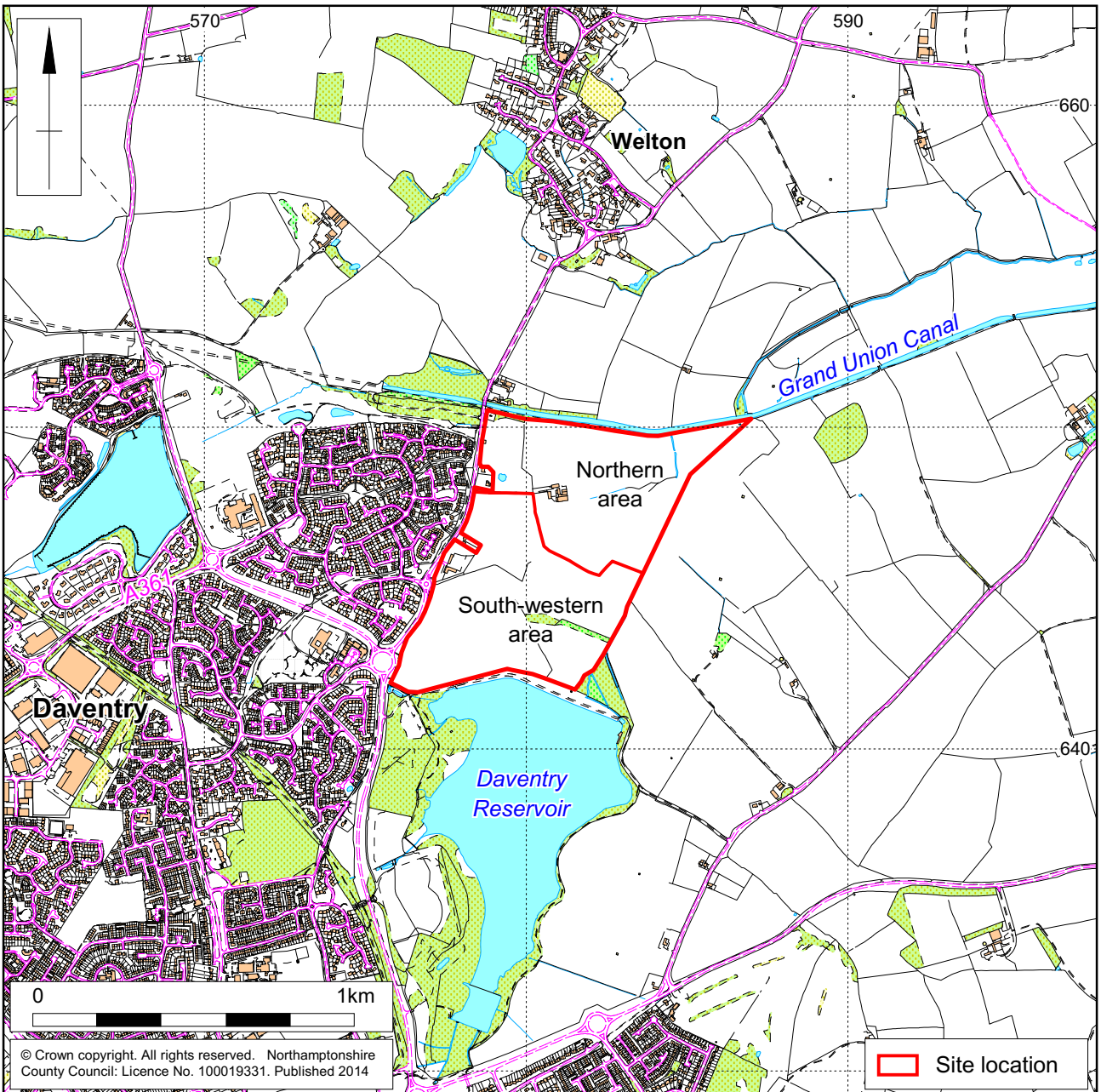
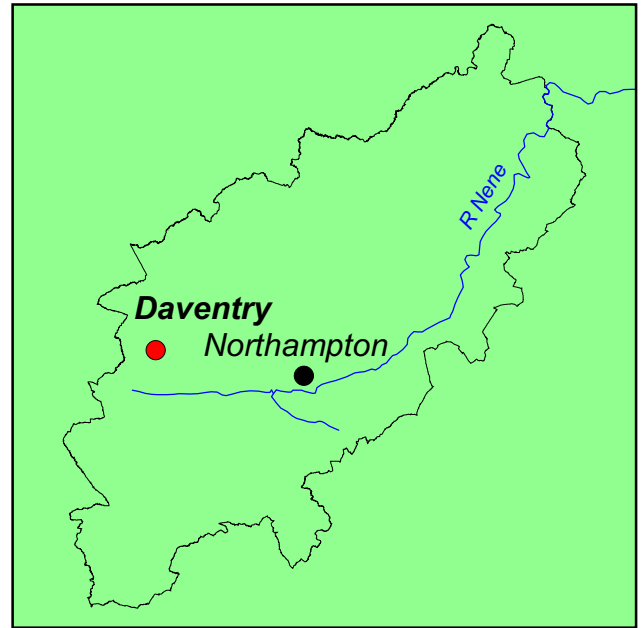
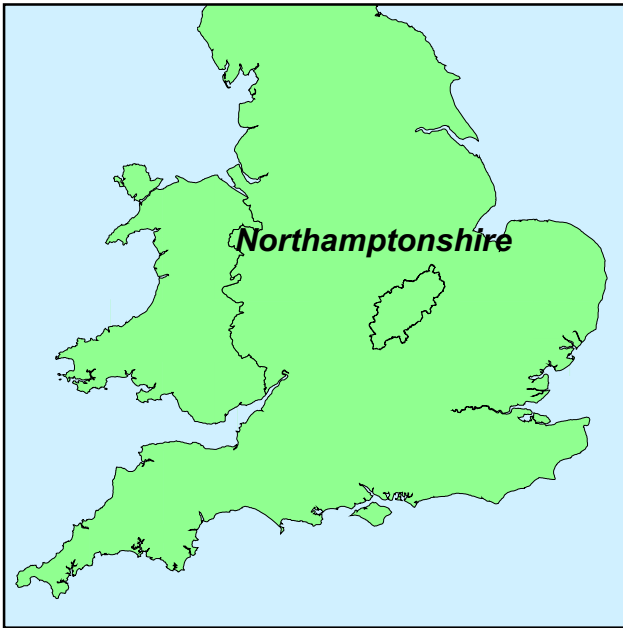
MOLA was commissioned by AECOM to conduct a trial trench evaluation on the northern part of land set aside for proposed residential development at Monksmoor Farm, Daventry. Work undertaken between 2005 and 2006 had identified an Iron Age settlement comprising roundhouses. The current phase of work included trenches which targeted two areas of archaeological interest to the north and east of the Iron Age settlement. The features comprised a rectangular enclosure, within which were a ring ditch and a pit, of probable Iron Age date. Fragmentary remains of ditches and postholes suggest outfield boundaries associated with occupation. A small pottery assemblage suggests a late Iron age/early Roman date (early-mid 1st century AD.) There was also extensive evidence of medieval ridge and furrow and later deep ploughing across the site and evidence of post-medieval and modern field boundaries, drains and modern dumping associated with the now demolished Monksmoor Farm. There was also a possible palaeo channel adjacent to the eastern boundary of the site.

1 INTRODUCTION

MOLA was commissioned by AECOM to carry out trial trenching on the northern part of a proposed development site at Monksmoor Farm, Daventry (NGR SP 579 644; Fig 1). Outline planning consent (07/0161/OUTWND) was granted for a sustainable urban extension to the town of Daventry. The proposed development area, covering 51ha, comprises two portions, the *South-western area* (28ha) and the *Northern area* (23ha). In September 2012, a detailed magnetometer survey was undertaken of the entire development area and recorded extensive remains of enclosures and possible ring ditches (Walker and Walford 2012).

The *South-western area* was evaluated in 2012 and a total of thirty-seven trial trenches were excavated (Walker and Walford 2012). Mitigation works on an area of land with archaeological potential were carried out between June and August 2013 and between March and April 2014. The *South-western area* is currently under development.

The *Northern area* was the subject of this tranche of evaluation and its results will be used to formulate further mitigation strategies. The works were undertaken in compliance with a brief produced by the County Archaeological Advisor at Northamptonshire County Council (NCC 2012a and b). The work has been undertaken in accordance with *the National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012).



Scale 1:20,000

Site location Fig 1

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Topography and geology

The site is located on the north-eastern edge of Daventry, to the north of Daventry Country Park and Daventry Reservoir. Its western boundary is formed by Welton Road and beyond was the northern part of the modern development of Daventry. The northern boundary is defined by the Grand Union Canal and to the east is open farmland. The site lies at an average height of 123m above Ordnance Datum. It is largely flat but slopes down gradually to a stream at the eastern boundary.

At the time of the trial trenching the site was a block of arable farmland, covering c23ha with the site of Monksmoor Farm in the centre (Fig 1). The farm buildings have been demolished and only the concrete bases now remain (Fig 2).



General view of site and area of previous farm buildings, looking north Fig 2

The soils are of the Wickham 2 Association, which consist of slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged fine loamy, over clayey, fine silty over clayey and clayey soils (SSEW 1983, 711f). There are small areas of slowly permeable calcareous soils on steeper slopes. The underlying geology consists of drift over Jurassic and Cretaceous clay or mudstone.

2.2 Archaeological background

Between 2005 and 2006 ASC produced a body of work which was undertaken as part of the proposed development of the north-eastern side of Daventry. It included an archaeological desk-based assessment (Rouse and Hunn 2005) and geophysical survey and fieldwalking (Hancock 2005a) (Hancock 2005b and Hancock 2006a). This was followed by two phases of targeted evaluation trenching (Hancock 2006a and b) which identified two discrete areas of possible archaeology. The first was located to the north of the farm buildings (Monkmoor Farm) and comprised two small enclosures and four ring ditches. The second area was situated in the south-western corner of the site and was not so easily defined. The evidence suggested that occupation of the area began in the Early Iron Age and continued into the Middle Iron Age (northern area). The activity in the south-western area comprised a series of Romano-British ditches dating from the 1st to 4th centuries AD.

Further detailed geophysical survey of the entire proposed development area was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology in 2012 (Walker and Walford 2012). This broadly confirmed the results of the earlier geophysical survey undertaken in 2005, defining more clearly the nature of the anomalies. Trenching undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology in 2012 (Walker and Walford 2012), confirmed the presence of features associated with the possible Romano-British site at the south-western corner of the site. Less pottery was recovered from this phase of the evaluation than previously and it appears to be of an earlier period, dating to the middle Iron Age to early Romano-British period. In June 2013, Northamptonshire Archaeology (now part of MOLA) started to excavate a large area of ground in the south-western area in advance of the development. This has identified a number of rectilinear enclosures, ring ditches (roundhouses) and pits.

The site lay in the open fields of the parish in the medieval period and the ongoing excavation in the South-western area identified the remnants of ridge and furrow. There were three fields and the site lay within Bean Field. The fields were enclosed by an Act of Parliament of 1802. The Grand Junction Canal, forming the northern boundary of the site, was constructed by William Jessop between 1793 and 1815. To the south of the site, Daventry Reservoir was built in 1804 to supplement to other nearby reservoirs.

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The principal aim of the archaeological evaluation was to quantify the quality, character, date, state of preservation, depth of burial and extent of the archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts and ecofacts within the area affected by the proposed development. This was to be achieved through trial trench evaluation.

Specific aims were to:

- Examine the potential of the site in its relation to its environment, economy, land use and development from the prehistoric to post-medieval periods;
- Examine evidence from the site for palaeo-environmental and/or economic development.

Trial trenches were positioned in accordance with the WSI (MOLA 2014) and in accordance with the trench plan agreed with the Northamptonshire County Council's Archaeological Advisor (Fig 3). A total of thirty trenches, between 25m - 60m in length and comprising a total of 1356 linear meters, were excavated.

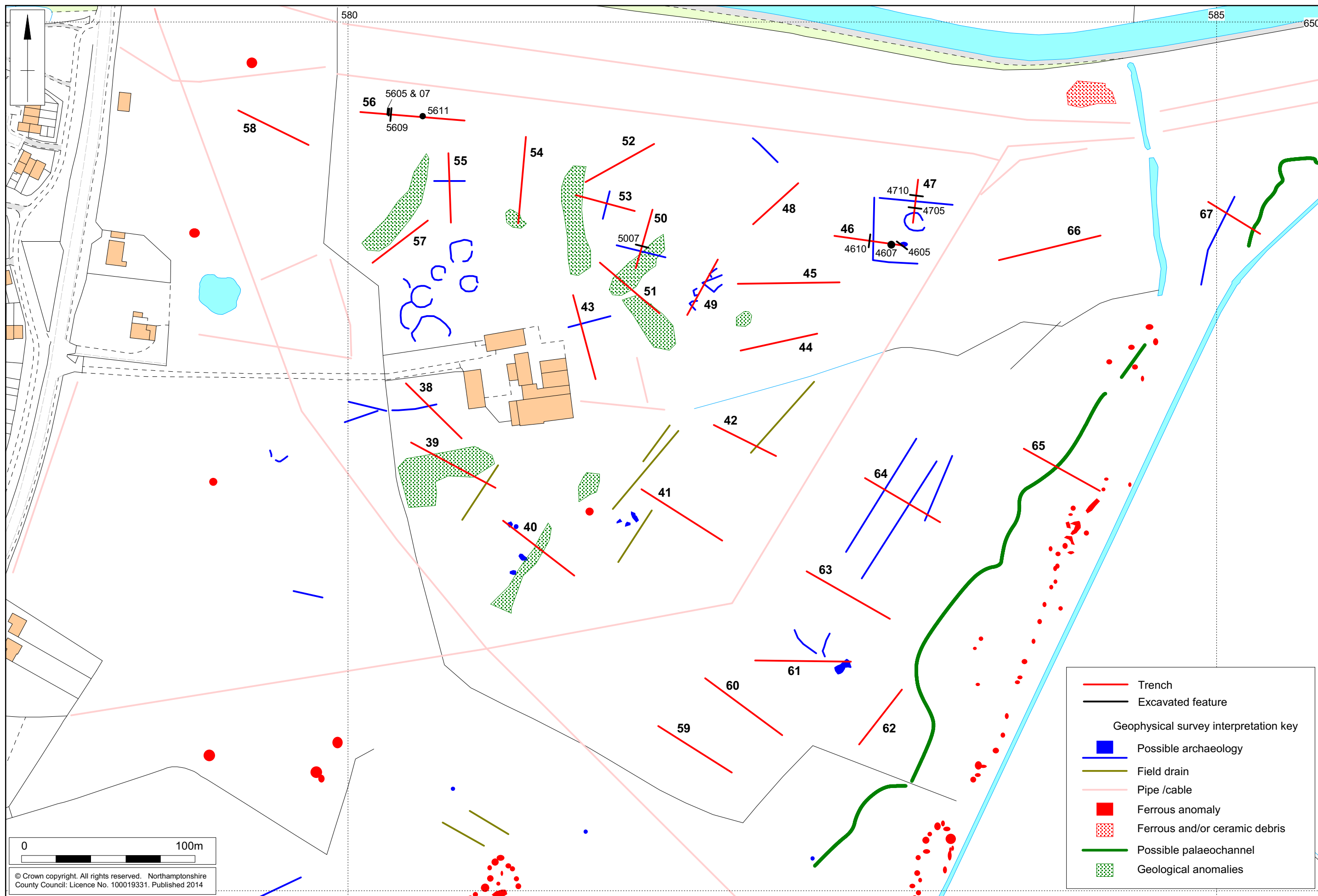
Trenches were positioned using Leica System 1200 Global Positioning System (GPS) survey equipment using SMARTNET real-time corrections, operating to a 3D tolerance of $\pm 0.05\text{m}$. The location of Trenches 42, 43, 46, 47 and 52 had to be altered slightly with regard to the agreed trench plan, in order to avoid a network of modern services across the site (Fig 3).

Trenches were excavated by machine using a toothless bucket to reveal archaeological remains or, where these were absent, undisturbed natural horizons. The topsoil was stacked separately from the subsoil. An archaeologist monitored all machine excavations.

Each trench was hand cleaned sufficiently to enhance the definition of features. Excavation did not compromise the integrity of the archaeological record. All archaeological deposits and artefacts encountered during the course of excavation were recorded following standard MOLA procedures (MOLA 2014). Trenches with archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:50, the trench sections and profiles through features were drawn at a scale of 1:10. Levels were related to the Ordnance Datum.

Photographs were taken as 35mm monochrome negatives and digital photos as a supplement for reporting purposes. A photographic record of vehicle movements and reinstatements was maintained. The excavated area and spoil heaps were scanned by metal detector. Artefacts were collected from archaeological deposits but unstratified bone and modern material was not retained.

The evaluation conformed to the Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IfA 2008). All stages of the project were undertaken in accordance with English Heritage, *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE) (EH 2006).



Scale 1:2000 (A3)

Trial trench locations with geophysical survey interpretation Fig 3

4 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

4.1 General comments

The natural substrate comprised brown-orange sandy clays, with bands of ironstone and areas of blue-grey clay sands and was generally consistent across the site. In Trenches 41 (Fig 4), 43, 56, 59, 60 and 66 the natural was overlain with a thin layer of subsoil comprising brown-orange sandy clays, no more than 0.05m thick. However, in Trenches 46, 47 and 60 the subsoil has been ploughed in with the natural and forming a mixed horizon. The topsoil comprised a mid brown-grey silty clay loam, between 0.25-0.35m thick.



General view of Trench 41, looking north-west Fig 4

Trenches 65 and 67 were positioned adjacent to the eastern boundary to identify the presence of a possible palaeochannel. In trench 67 there was a layer of blue clay (6703) 1.60m below ground level which was overlain with a thick layer of orange sandy clay with flint gravel (6702). The edges of this layer were not identified.

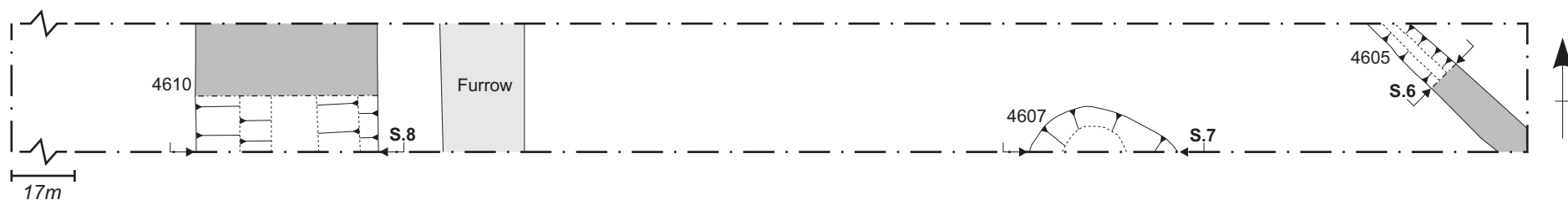
Archaeological features were found in the northern part of the site, within Trenches 46, 47, 50 and 56 (Figs 4, 5, 6 and 7) and comprised ditches defining the extent of enclosures as well as the remains of ring gullies and pits. Unless otherwise stated no artefacts were recovered from the features.

Fragmentary remains of medieval ridge and furrow were present within trenches 46 and 47. The furrows were aligned north-west to south-east, were spaced at 5m intervals and were on average 2m wide.

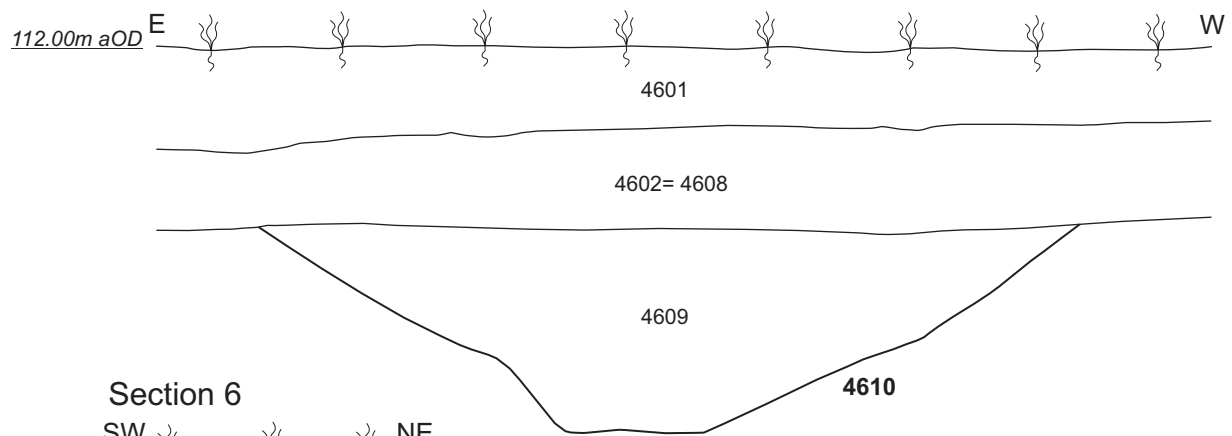
There were frequent limestone and ceramic land drains across the site, some of which had been inserted into shallow gullies. In Trenches 43, 49 and 51 there was a dump of modern material covering a drain which was visible from the site of the former farm buildings (Fig 3).

Scale 1:100 & 1:25

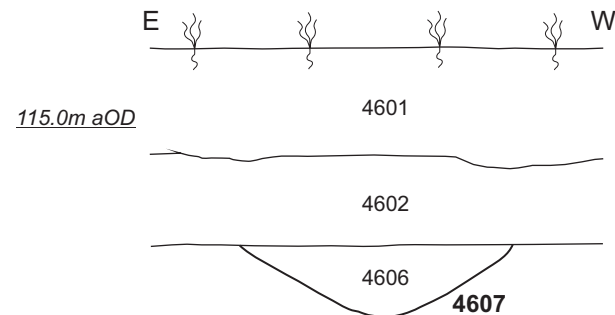
Trench 46



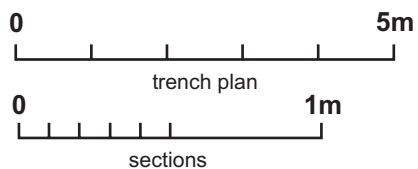
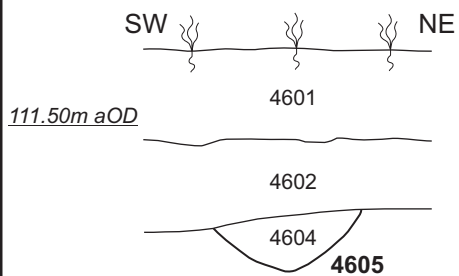
Section 8



Section 7



Section 6



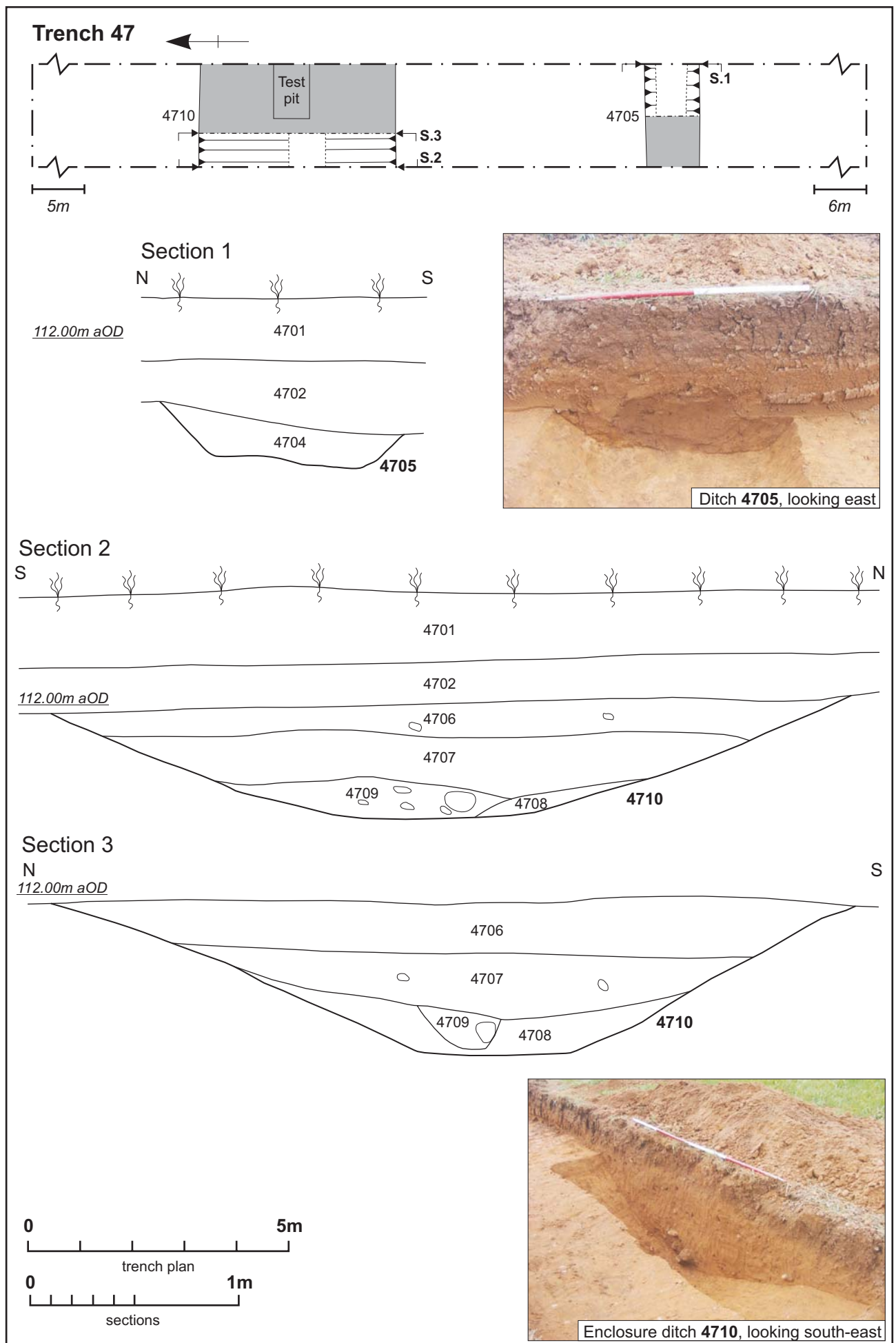
Ditch 4610, looking south



Pit 4607, looking south



Ditch 4605, looking north-west



Scale 1:100 & 1:25

Trench 47, plan and sections Fig 6

4.2 Trench 46 and 47

Trenches 46 and 47 (Figs 3, 5, 6 and 7) were positioned across the eastern part of a rectangular shaped enclosure to the north-east of Monksmoor Farm. In both trenches the ditch defining the enclosure was identified as well as possible internal features such as a ring ditch, pits and postholes.



General view of Trench 47, looking north Fig 7

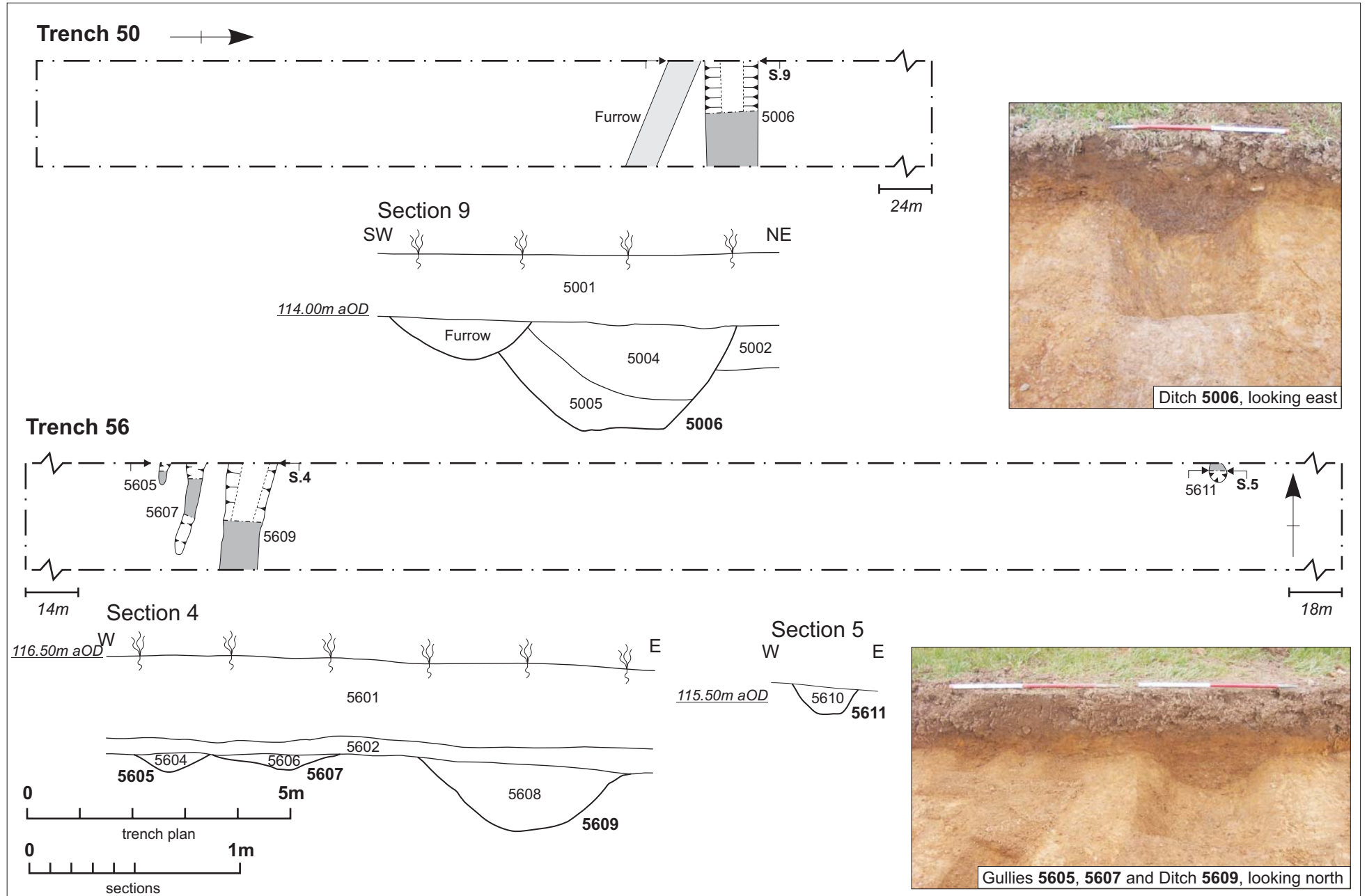
The enclosure ditch [4610] (Figs 3 and 5), aligned north to south, was 2.60m wide by 0.60m deep, with a primary fill (4609) of a silty sandy clay with frequent sub-rounded pebbles with occasional burnt stones.

The pit [4607] (Figs 3 and 5), 0.90m wide by 0.30m deep, contained a fill of silty sand I with organic root disturbance throughout, this defused the profile and plough scars were noted on the upper part of the fill, no dating was retrieved.

Remains of a gully/ditch [4605] aligned north-west to south-east, 0.30m wide by 0.19m deep, with irregular sides and base, and a silty sandy fill with organic root disturbance and plough scars.

In Trench 47, the enclosure ditch [4710] (Fig 6, Sections 2 and 3), aligned east to west, was 4.00m wide by 0.70m deep with gently curving sides and a flattish base. The primary fill (4708) was yellow-orange silty sand, this merged with a tipped layer (4709) containing frequent burnt stone, large fragments of charcoal and a fragment of a quern. This was sealed by fills (4707) and (4706), generally comprising yellow-brown silty sands. High quantities of charcoal were recovered from fill (4709).

Approximately 5m to the south of the enclosure ditch [4710] was ditch [4705] (Fig 6, Section 1), aligned east to west, 1.15m wide and 0.20m deep, with gently curving sides and a flattish base. The fill (4704) comprised yellow-orange silty sand, with occasional small gravels. The upper part of this fill was disturbed by deep ploughing. This ditch forms part of the northern arc of a ring ditch located in the northern part of the enclosure (Fig 3).



4.3 Trench 50

Trench 50 (Figs 3 and 8) contained a single ditch that had been identified on the geophysical survey. This ditch [5006] (Fig 8, Section 9) was aligned east to west, 0.84m wide and 0.40m deep with a 'U' shaped profile. The primary fill (5005) was mottled grey-orange sandy clay with occasional small gravel and tipped in from the south-western edge of the ditch. It was overlain by fill (5004) similar to (5005) but disturbed by a furrow on the south-western side and by later deep ploughing. Sherds of late Iron age- early Roman pottery were recovered from fill (5005).

4.4 Trench 56

The shallow remains of two gully terminals ([5605] and [5607]) aligned north to south, lay in the western part of the trench (Figs 3 and 8, Section 4. Both had asymmetrical, bowl-shaped profiles, with similar fills comprising dark orange-grey silty/sandy clays.

Approximately 0.50m to the east of gully [5607] was a ditch [5609] (Fig 8, Section 4), aligned north to south, 0.95m wide 0.30m deep with a bowl shaped profile. It had a fill of orange-grey silty sandy clay, occasional gravels and flint. Sherds of late Iron age- early Roman pottery was recovered from the bottom of this fill.

A posthole [5611] (Fig 8, Section 5 and Fig 9) was located in the eastern part of the trench. It was 0.33m in diameter and 0.14m deep, with a flat base rising to steep, concave sides. It had a dark orange-grey silty sand fill, with small quantities of charcoal and a poorly preserved specimen of either dock or sedge (Section 5.3 below).



Posthole [5611], looking north Fig 9

5 THE FINDS

5.1 The worked flint by Andy Chapman

Four pieces of worked flint were recovered.

From ditch [4710] in trench 47 and the subsoil (5608) in trench 56 there are large flakes, 35mm and 40mm long, both struck from prepared cores that appear to have previous removals of blade-like flakes, perhaps suggesting an early Neolithic date. The piece from trench 47 is in brown vitreous flint and the piece from trench 56 is in opaque light grey flint with a white cortex.

From trench 50 there is an unstratified, irregular cortical chunk, 63mm long, in dark grey-brown vitreous flint, with retouch along one edge.

From trench 43 there is a struck flint blade, 33mm long by 23mm wide, retouched on three sides to form a neat rectangle with a ridged back. This piece is a post-medieval gun flint. It is in an opaque grey flint.

5.2 The pottery by Andy Chapman

The fills of three ditches have produced a small quantity of pottery, 7 sherds weighing a total of 44g, of probable late Iron Age/early Roman date.

The fill (4609) of ditch [4610] produced four sherds weighing 23g. There are two sherds, grey with light brown surfaces, soft, containing voids probably from leached shell inclusions, which may be of Iron Age date. However, there are two sherds, light grey with orange surfaces, containing small pellets of orange grog, which are likely to date to the 1st century AD, either late Iron Age or perhaps even early Roman in date.

The fill (5005) of ditch [5006] produced a single sherd, weighing 6g, in a hard sandy fabric, also containing grog, grey with dark brown surfaces. This sherd is also likely to be late Iron Age or early Roman in date.

The fill (5608) of ditch [5609] produced a rim sherd, with a rounded everted rim above a convex neck and a angular shoulder, and a shapeless crumb, together weighing 15g, and in a hard sandy fabric, dark brown with grey-brown surfaces. This vessel too is likely to be of late Iron Age to early Roman date.

While the assemblage is very small, the material from all three deposits is consistent in fabric and form, and suggests the presence of deposits dating to the late Iron Age, specifically the early to middle decades of the 1st century AD.

5.3 The charred plant remains by Val Fryer

Introduction and method statement

Excavations at Daventry, undertaken by MOLA, recorded a number of dispersed features of possible Iron Age to Roman date. Samples for the evaluation of the content and preservation of the plant macrofossil assemblages were taken from a charcoal rich layer within ditch [4710] (sample 1) and from the fill of posthole [5611].

The samples were bulk floated by MOLA and the flots were collected in a 300 micron mesh sieve. The dried flots were scanned under a binocular microscope at magnifications up to x 16 and the plant macrofossils and other remains noted are listed below in Table 1. Nomenclature within the table follows Stace (1997). All plant remains were charred. Modern roots, seeds and arthropod remains were also recorded.

Results

Although charcoal/charred wood fragments are present within both assemblages, other plant remains are exceedingly scarce. This may in part be due to the heavy mineral concretions which are present on all of the recovered remains, which could possibly have precluded full retrieval during flotation. However, it should also be noted that the charcoal fragments from sample 1 ditch [4710] are either small and comminuted or large and abraded, with both suggesting that the remains were exposed to the elements for some considerable period prior to inclusion within the ditch fill. Both assemblages also include individual seeds, that from sample 1 being a specimen of sedge (*Carex* sp.), while that from sample 2 posthole [5611] is too poorly preserved for close identification. However, as the latter is triangular in section it is, perhaps, most likely to be of either a dock (*Rumex* sp.) or sedge type. Sample 1 also contains a single thorn, a fragment of charred root or stem and a small piece of black porous material, which is probably a residue of the combustion of organic remains at a very high temperature.

Conclusions and recommendations for further work

In summary, the current assemblages are very sparse, possibly because, at their point of origin, many of the remains were dispersed or destroyed by natural erosion prior to their inclusion within the feature fills. The few remains which are recorded are all but impossible to interpret as they are so limited. However, the density of charcoal within sample 1 does appear to indicate that there was some concentrated activity involving high temperatures of combustion occurring within the immediate vicinity of ditch [4710].

Although these assemblages are limited, the evaluation of only two samples from an investigation of this size cannot conclude how representative they may be of the site as a whole. Therefore, if further interventions are planned, it is suggested that additional plant macrofossil samples of 20 – 40 litres in volume are taken from all dated and well-sealed contexts recorded during excavation. The processing of any additional samples should allow for the fact that many of the macrofossils are heavily coated with mineral concretions, with especial attention being paid to the sorting of the non-floating residues, which may include a higher than normal proportion of plant materials.

Table 1: Charred plant macrofossils and other remains

Sample .	1	2
Context .	4709	5610
Feature	4710	5611
Feature type	Ditch	ph
Plant macrofossils		
Carex sp.	x	-
Rumex/Carex sp.	-	x
Charcoal <2mm	xxxx	xx
Charcoal >2mm	xxxx	x
Charcoal >5mm	xxxx	-
Charcoal >10mm	xxx	x
Charred root/stem	x	-
Indet.thorn	x	-
Other remains		
Black porous material	x	-
Sample volume (litres)	40	10
Volume of flot (litres)	0.3	<0.1
% flot sorted	100%	100%

Key to Table

x = 1 – 10 specimens xx = 11 – 50 specimens xxx = 51 – 100 specimens

xxxx = 100+ specimens

ph = post-hole

6 CONCLUSIONS

The principal foci for Iron Age and Roman settlement was located immediately north of Monksmoor Farm where a number of roundhouses were evaluated by ASC between 2005 and 2006 (Hancock 2006b and 2006c). The current trial trench evaluation has identified a series of features of comparable date, but specifically late Iron age to early Roman (early to mid 1st century AD) and may relate to subsidiary occupation or to livestock management. A small rectangular enclosure (trenches 46 and 47) defined by a broad ditch lies 220m to the east of the settlement. Within the enclosure was the remains of a ring ditch which may have been either a small stock pen or a round house and a pit. To the north (trench 56) and east (trench 50) of the roundhouses were remnants of ditches and a posthole which may represent the outfield boundaries.

The artefact assemblage from the investigated features was small perhaps indicating that the enclosure and other features were not the main area of occupation. It is possible that there was some form of agricultural processing taking place within the enclosure which involved the burning of grain or wood as high density of charcoal was present in the ditch fill.

The upper portion of the features as well as the soil horizons between natural substrate, subsoil and topsoil had been adversely affected by medieval furrows and by modern deep ploughing.

The geophysical survey (Walker and Walford 2012) recorded various other anomalies which, when investigated by the trial trenches, proved to be modern stone and ceramic drains, and features associated with the previous farm buildings.

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