



**Archaeological trial trench evaluation on land at
Reading Road, Harwell, Oxfordshire**

August 2014

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Illustrations: Amir Bassir



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OASIS REPORT FORM

Project details		OASIS No: molanort1-186992	
Project title	Archaeological trial trench evaluation on land at Reading Road, Harwell, Oxfordshire August 2014		
Short description	MOLA Northampton undertook a trial trench evaluation on land at Reading Road Harwell, Oxfordshire. The evaluation confirmed the results of the geophysical survey, identifying two areas of modern disturbance in Trenches 5 and 6. An undated ditch with a pit cutting its terminal was observed in Trench 7. No other archaeological features were observed and no artefacts were observed or recovered during the evaluation.		
Project type	Evaluation		
Previous work	Geophysical Survey (Walford 2014)		
Future work	Unknown		
Current land use	Pasture		
Monument type and period	None		
Project location			
County	Oxfordshire		
Site address	Reading Road, Harwell		
NGR	SU 4887 8870		
Area	1.6ha		
Height	100m aOD		
Project creators			
Organisation	MOLA Northampton		
Project brief originator	Hugh Coddington Archaeology Team Leader, Oxfordshire County Council		
Project design originator	MOLA Northampton		
Director/Supervisor	Tim Upson-Smith		
Project Manager	Antony Maull		
Sponsor or funding body	Manor Oak Homes		
Project date			
Start date	August 2014		
End date	August 2014		
Archives	Location	Content	
Physical	OXCMS:2014.181 Oxfordshire		
Paper		Site records	
Digital			
Bibliography			
Title	Archaeological trial trench evaluation on land at Reading Road, Harwell, Oxfordshire August 2014		
Serial title & volume	MOLA Report 14/159		
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Front cover: Site looking north to Didcott power station

Fig 1: Site location

Fig 2: Trench location plan

Fig 3: Trench 7, plan, section and photograph

Archaeological trial trench evaluation on land at Reading Road, Harwell, Oxfordshire August 2014

Abstract

MOLA Northampton undertook a trial trench evaluation on land at Reading Road, Harwell, Oxfordshire. The evaluation confirmed the results of the geophysical survey, identifying two areas of modern disturbance in Trenches 5 and 6. An undated ditch with a pit cutting its terminal was observed in Trench 7. No other archaeological features were observed and no artefacts were observed or recovered during the evaluation.

1 INTRODUCTION

MOLA Northampton was commissioned by Manor Oak Homes to carry out an archaeological trial trench evaluation on land to the south of Reading Road, Harwell, Oxfordshire (NGR SU 48878870, Fig 1) in advance of proposed development. The works are being undertaken in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG 2012).

The proposed development area comprises approximately 1.6ha of pasture land, located on the southern edge of Harwell, immediately south of the A417 Reading Road. Harwell stands at around 100m aOD on a broad shelf of land between the Berkshire Downs to the south and the Thames Valley to the north. The geology is mapped as the West Melbury Formation (Lower Chalk) with a superficial mantle of head (BGS 2014).

2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

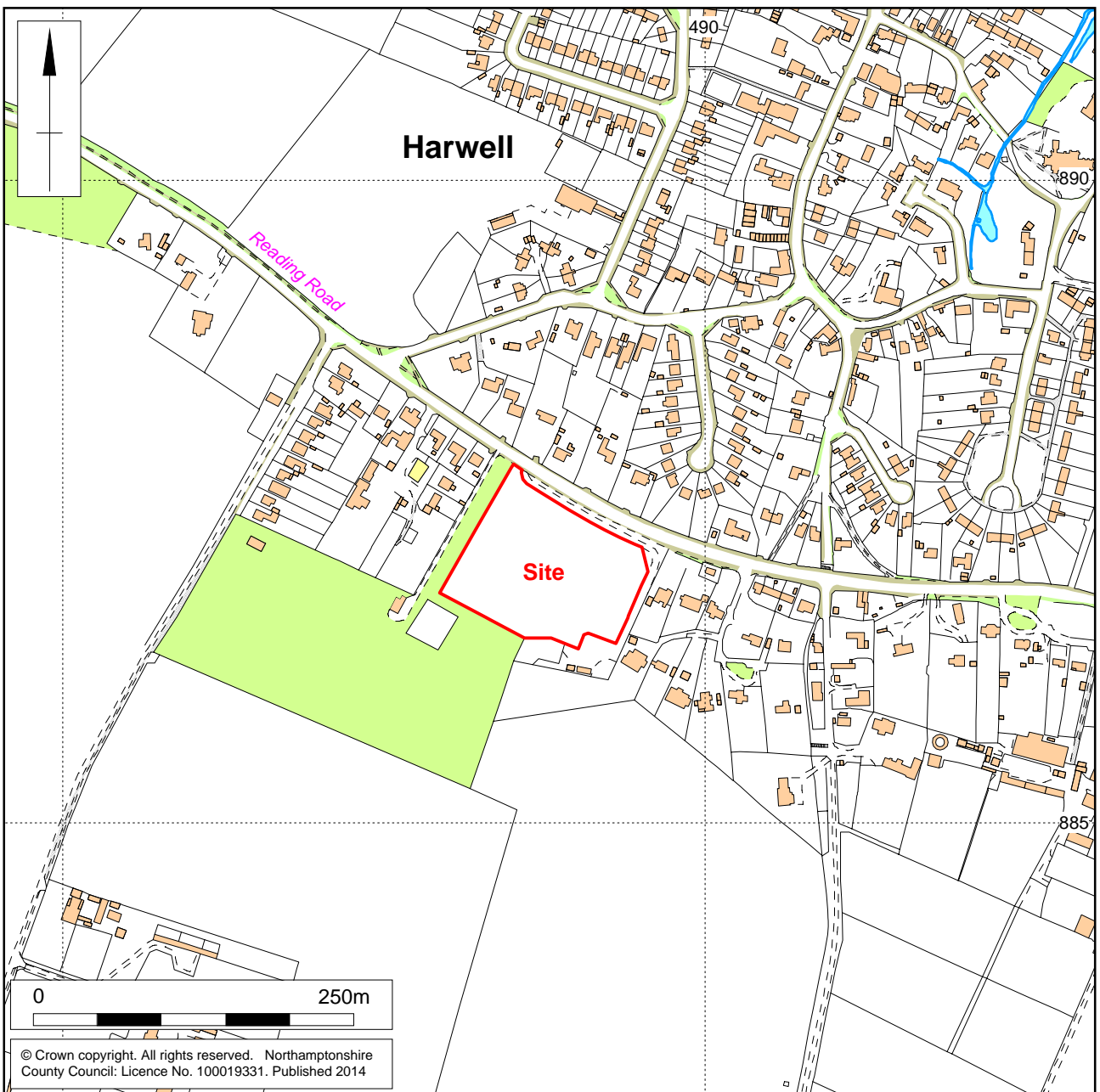
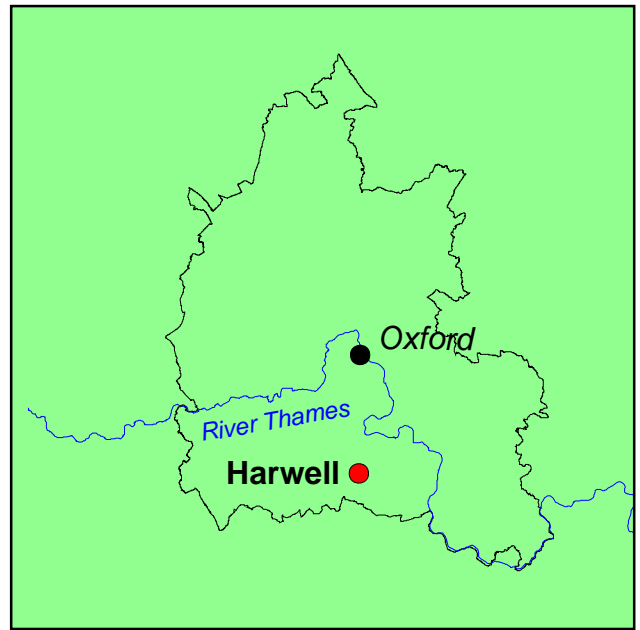
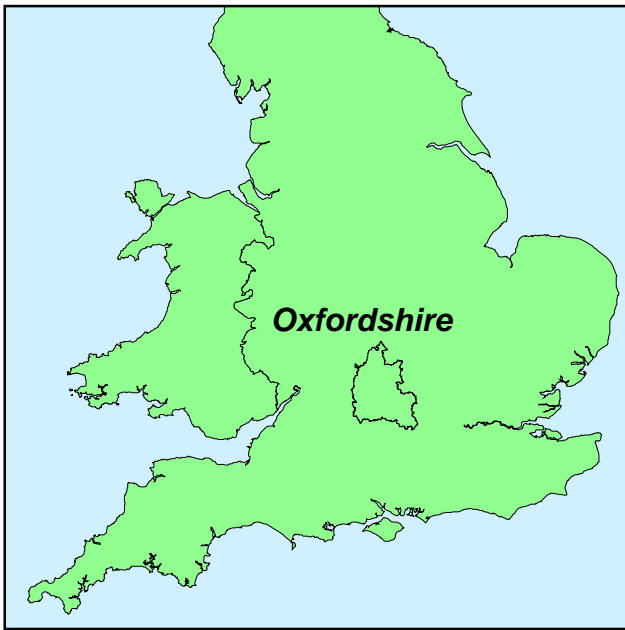
The survey area lies slightly outside the historic core of Harwell, and appears as undeveloped arable land on both the Harwell enclosure map of 1802 and the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1883.

It does not contain any known archaeological remains, but it lies little more than 100m north-west of a site where seven early Anglo-Saxon burials were discovered during the 1950s and 60s (PRN7582).

More recently, a further, apparently isolated early Anglo-Saxon burial was discovered 400m to the north-west of the proposed development area (PRN27489). It is possible that this burial forms part of a larger cemetery.

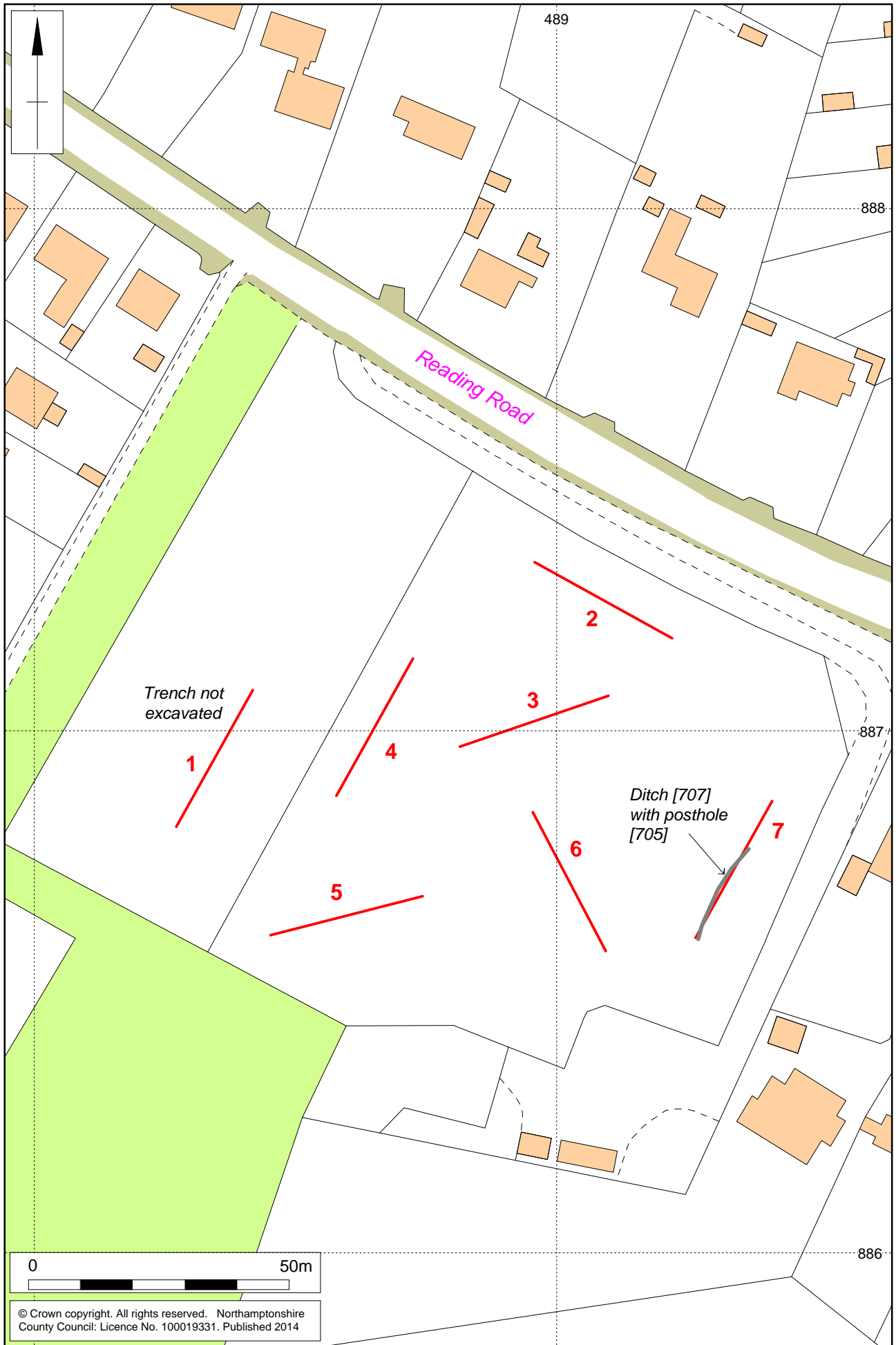
To the immediate south, cropmarks relating to later prehistoric field systems may extend into the proposed development area.

A geophysical survey of the proposed development area has been carried out by MOLA (Walford 2014). This did not reveal any significant anomalies.



Scale 1:5000

Site Location Fig 1



Scale 1:1000

The excavated trenches Fig 2

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3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The main aims of the evaluation were to determine if any archaeological remains were present within the application area and to test the anomalies recorded by the geophysical survey.

The specific objectives of the project were to provide further information on the following:

- The location, extent, nature, and date of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present within the proposed development site;
- The integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present at the proposed development site.

Work was carried out in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (IfA 2008).

It was proposed that the evaluation would comprise the excavation of seven (7) 30m long trial trenches, each measuring 1.5m wide, amounting to an approximate 2% sample of the development area (Fig 2). Due to site constraints only six trenches were opened.

The trenches were positioned using a Leica Viva 1200 Global Positioning System (GPS) survey equipment using SMARTNET real-time corrections, operating to a 3D tolerance of $\pm 0.05\text{m}$. The topsoil, subsoil and non-structural post-medieval and later deposits were removed by a mechanical excavator, fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, to reveal significant archaeological remains or, where these were absent, the natural substrate. The topsoil was stacked separately from the subsoil and other deposits. This work was carried out under archaeological supervision. On completion the trenches were backfilled, with the topsoil replaced uppermost and lightly compacted.

Archaeological features were sampled by hand excavation. The character, composition and general depositional sequence of the site stratification was recorded on pro-forma sheets, with a unique context number being allocated to each distinct deposit and feature. All recording followed the guidelines detailed in the MOLA Northampton *Fieldwork Manual* (2014).

All records were compiled during fieldwork into a comprehensive and fully cross-referenced site archive. All records and materials will be compiled in a structured archive in accordance with the guidelines of Appendix 3 in the English Heritage procedural document, *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (1991).

The archive will be deposited with the County Museums Service (Oxfordshire Museums), Accession Number OXCMS:2014.181.

4 EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

The evaluation comprised the proposed excavation of seven 30m long trial trenches. Trench 1, in the western field, was not excavated due to the presence of a horse. It was agreed with Hugh Coddington, Archaeology Team Leader, Oxfordshire County Council, during the site meeting on the 5th August 2014, that the excavation of this trench would not be required at a later date when the horse could be moved.

Six trenches were opened in the eastern part of the site, of these, Trenches 2 to 6 exposed undisturbed natural, chalk brash c0.3m below the present ground surface, which was overlain by c0.2m of mid grey silty chalk subsoil, which in turn was overlain by c0.1m of medium to dark grey chalky loam topsoil. Modern intrusion, as noted in the geophysical survey (Walford 2014), was observed in Trenches 5 and 6.

A curvilinear ditch [707] was observed cutting the natural chalk brash in Trench 7 (Figs 2 and 3). The ditch was aligned north-east to south-west, and was recorded for a length of 18m, with a terminal to the north. The ditch [707] was between 0.7m and 1.0m wide by c0.2m deep, the fill of the ditch (706) comprised a firm mid grey-brown chalky clay with chalk flecks.

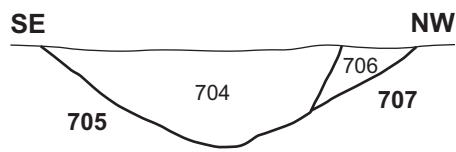
A pit [705] cut the ditch terminal. It was oval in plan, 1.5m long by 1m wide by 0.25m deep and was filled with a dark grey-black firm chalky clay loam.

No finds were recovered from the excavated section of the pit/ditch at the terminal.

Trench 7



Section 1



5 SUMMARY

The evaluation confirmed the results of the geophysical survey, identifying the two areas of modern disturbance in Trenches 5 and 6. An undated ditch with a pit cutting its terminal end was observed in Trench 7. No other archaeological features were observed and no artefacts were observed or recovered during the evaluation.

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MOLA

14 August 2014

APPENDIX; CONTEXT DATA

Trench	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
1	30m x 1.5m, NE-SW	SU 4887 8870		
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
		UNEXCAVATED		

Trench	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
2	30m x 1.5m, NW-SE	SU 4887 8870		0.3m
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
201	layer	Topsoil, firm medium grey loamy chalk	0.1m	-
202	layer	Subsoil, firm light grey loamy chalk	0.2m	-
203	layer	Natural grey very compact chalky clay		-

Trench	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
3	30m x 1.5m, NE-SW	SU 4887 8870		0.3m
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
301	layer	Topsoil, firm medium grey loamy chalk	0.1m	-
302	layer	Subsoil, firm light grey loamy chalk	0.2m	-
303	layer	Natural Chalk brash		-

HARWELL, READING ROAD

Trench	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
4	30m x 1.5m, NE-SW	SU 4887 8870		0.3m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
401	layer	Topsoil, firm medium grey loamy chalk	0.1m	-
402	layer	Subsoil, firm light grey loamy chalk	0.2m	-
403	layer	Natural Chalk brash		-

Trench	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
5	30m x 1.5m, NE-SW	SU 4887 8870		0.3m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
501	layer	Topsoil, firm medium grey loamy chalk	0.1m	-
502	layer	Subsoil, firm light grey loamy chalk	0.2m	-
503	layer	Natural Chalk brash		-

Trench	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
6	30m x 1.5m, NW-SE	SU 4887 8870		0.3m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
601	layer	Topsoil, firm medium grey loamy chalk	0.1m	-
602	layer	Subsoil, firm light grey loamy chalk	0.2m	-
603	layer	Natural Chalk brash		-

HARWELL, READING ROAD

Trench	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
7	30m x 1.5m, NE-SW	SU 4887 8870		0.3m
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
701	layer	Topsoil, firm medium grey loamy chalk	0.1m	-
702	layer	Subsoil, firm light grey loamy chalk	0.2m	-
703	layer	Natural Chalk brash		-
704	Pit fill	dark grey black firm chalky clay loam		
705	Pit	Oval pit	1.5m long by 1m wide by 0.25m deep	
706	Ditch fill	firm mid grey brown chalky clay with chalk flecks		
707	Ditch	Linear	0.7- 1m wide by 0.2m deep	



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