

Archaeological evaluation on land at Field Road, Ramsey
Cambridgeshire
September 2014

Report No 14/198

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Illustrator: James Ladocha





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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS	OASIS molanort1-192	727		
Project title	Archaeological evalua Cambridgeshire, Septe	tion on land at Field Road, Ramsey, mber 2014		
Short description	An archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by MOLA in September 2014 on land at Field Road, Ramsey, Cambridgeshire, on behalf of CgMs Consulting. The works identified a cluster of intercutting pits dating to the early to middle Iron Age and two possible isolated pits. Remnant furrows from the medieval ridge and furrow cultivation system were present throughout the development area. A small assemblage of pottery was recovered.			
Project type	Trial trench evaluation			
Previous work	Desk-based assessme	nt and Geophysical survey		
Current land use	Arable			
Future work	Unknown			
Monument type & period	Iron Age			
Significant finds	Pottery			
PROJECT LOCATION				
County	Cambridgeshire			
Site address	Field Road, Ramsey			
Easting Northing	TL 2795 8518			
Area (ha)	3.9ha			
Height aOD	10-15m aOD			
PROJECT CREATORS				
Organisation	MOLA Northampton			
Project brief originator	Cambridgeshire Count	v Council		
Project Design originator	MOLA Northampton	, countries		
Director/Supervisor	Jason Clarke			
Project Manager	Liz Muldowney (MOLA) Paul Clark (CgMs)		
Sponsor or funding body	CgMs Consulting) r ddi Glair (Ggirio)		
PROJECT DATE	ogivio companing			
Start date	1/09/2014			
End date	5/09/2014			
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Contents		
Physical	(4000031011110.)	Pottery		
Paper	_	Site records (1 archive box)		
Digital	Client report PDF. Survey Data, Photographs			
BIBLIOGRAPHY	1	1 . Hotographo		
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Archaeological evaluation on land at Field Road, Ramsey, Cambridgeshire September 2014

Abstract

An archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by MOLA in September 2014 on land at Field Road, Ramsey, Cambridgeshire, on behalf of CgMs Consulting. The works identified a cluster of intercutting pits dating to the early to middle Iron Age and two possible isolated pits. Remnant furrows from the medieval ridge and furrow cultivation system were present throughout the development area. A small assemblage of pottery was recovered.

1 INTRODUCTION

In September 2014, an archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by MOLA on land at Field Road, Ramsey (NGR TL 2795 8518). The work was commissioned by CgMs Consulting, and was undertaken to inform planning consent for development of the area.

The scope of works was outlined and detailed in the Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by MOLA (MOLA 2014). The objectives of the evaluation were to determine the presence of any archaeological features or deposits within the application area and to date and characterise their extent, depth of burial and state of preservation.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and geology

The site is located on the western side of Ramsey, it is bounded to the north and east by residential development and to west and south by agricultural land. The 5.2ha development area, currently in use as farmland, is generally flat at a height of between 10m and 15m above Ordnance Datum.

The bedrock geology is recorded as Oxford Clay Formation - Mudstone, superficial deposits are recorded as Oadaby Member - Diamicton till (http://www.bgs.ac.uk accessed 25/07/14).

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

A desk-based assessment for the development area was compiled by CgMs Consulting (Clark 2013) and the results are summarised below by period.

Prehistoric

Two stone axes, one dating to the Palaeolithic and one from the Neolithic (02877 and 01899) were recorded in the town. A Bronze Age palstave (02810) was found somewhere in the vicinity of the town but its exact location is unknown.

Iron Age and Romano-British

No features of Iron Age date were recorded within the search area.

There are limited references to isolated scatters of small quantities of Romano-British pottery from the Ramsey area. There was also an antiquarian reference to a Roman pavement and coins at Ramsey from the early 18th century, however, its exact location was not recorded.

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Anglo-Saxon and medieval

The Benedictine Abbey of Ramsey (SAM 1006838), 900m to the east of the development area, was founded in 969 AD. It replaced an earlier Hermitage on the same site. Settlement associated with the abbey developed to its west and the core of the present town is in the same location.

A small moated motte (SAM 1004643) known as Booth's Hill and located on the south side of the Ramsey Abbey enclosure was thought to have been constructed in the 12th century by Geoffrey de Mandeville.

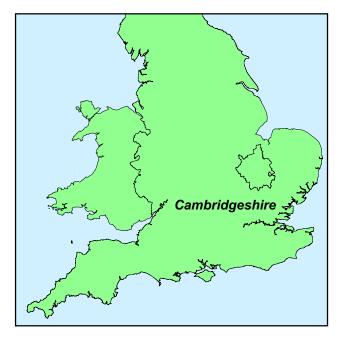
A possible 16th-century moated manor, Biggin House, was located 450m to the southwest of the development area, but is recorded in the Historic Environment Record as having been levelled and all traces removed.

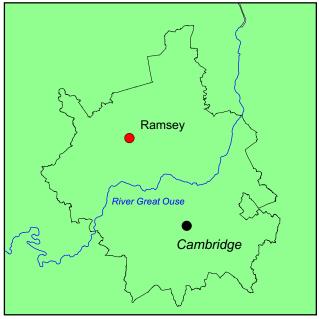
Post-medieval and modern

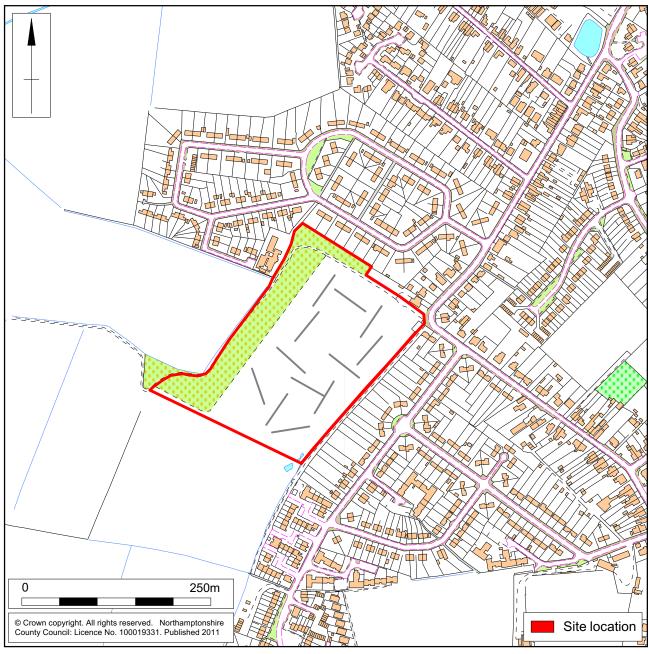
The earliest available mapping for the area shows the development area as a single field in the mid-19th century. The boundaries of the field remained static to the present day, the pond in the south-east corner of the site was first represented on the Ordnance Survey map from 1888.

Previous work

An archaeological geophysical survey was carried out on the development area in February 2014 by MOLA (Fisher 2014). This identified a small number of anomalies interpreted as a ditch and four pits.







Scale 1:5000 Site location Fig 1

3 METHODOLOGY

A programme of evaluation was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by MOLA (Muldowney 2014) in response to a request by the Cambridgeshire County Council.

The trenches were 50m long (Trench 5 was 54m long) and 1.8m wide, totalling 1088sqm. Trenches were positioned using Leica Viva Global Positioning System (GPS) survey equipment using SMARTNET real-time corrections, operating to a 3D tolerance of \pm 0.05m.

A 360° tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.80m-wide ditching bucket was used to remove overburden to archaeological levels or the natural substrate, whichever was encountered first. The trenches were cleaned sufficiently to enable the identification and definition of archaeological features. A hand-drawn plan of all archaeological features was made at scale 1:50 and was related to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. Archaeological deposits were examined by hand excavation to determine their nature. Recording followed standard MOLA procedures as described in the *Fieldwork Manual* (MOLA 2014). Deposits were described on *pro-forma* sheets to include measured and descriptive details of the context, its relationships, interpretation and a checklist of associated finds. Context sheets were cross-referenced to scale plans, section drawings and photographs. Photography was with 35mm black and white film and digital images. Sections were drawn at scale 1:10 or 1:20, as appropriate and related to Ordnance Survey datum. Spoil heaps and features were scanned with a metal detector to maximise the recovery of metal objects.

All works were conducted in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists' Code of Conduct (IfA 2014) and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (IfA 2008).

4 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

4.1 General stratigraphy

The underlying geology of glacial tills lay 0.30-0.60m below the modern ground surface, which was mid yellow-brown clay with occasional angular to sub-angular pebbles and flint fragments. In trenches 3-5 and 8-10 there was an overlying layer of colluvium (mid orange-brown sandy clay). The subsoil was light grey-brown sandy clay and the topsoil was mid greyish-brown sandy clay, both soils contained occasional chalk fragments and flint pebbles.

Archaeological features were cut into the natural geology.

4.2 The trial trenches

The trench locations are shown in Figure 2 and an inventory of contexts is provided in Appendix 1. Archaeological remains were encountered at the junction of Trenches 4 and 5 only, Trench 5 was extended to allow the features to be investigated. Remnants of the medieval to post-medieval ridge and furrow cultivation system were recorded in all trenches except for Trenches 3 and 6.



1:2000 (A4) Excavated trenches Fig 2

Trenches 4 and 5

Trench 4 was 50m long and aligned north-east to south-west and Trench 5 was 54m long and aligned north-west to south-east. The trenches formed a T-shape and were positioned to target a geophysical anomaly interpreted as a possible pit (Fig 2). A cluster of intercutting pits were located in the middle of Trench 4 and the south-eastern end of Trench 5, two further possible pits were identified in Trench 4 to the north of the cluster. Furrows from the medieval ridge and furrow cultivation system were also present.

Pit cluster

A minimum of five intercutting pits were identified in the cluster at the junction of the two trenches [406, 410, 412, 420 and 426]. Pits [420] and [426] were almost entirely removed by later pits. Too little remained of either to determine their original form or profile. (Fig 4, Section 1).

Pit [406] was sub-rectangular, 0.90m wide and 0.60m deep with steep concave sides and a flat base. The lower fill (405) was a light grey-brown sandy clay which contained no finds. The upper fill (404), also undated, was much darker in hue and contained a higher charcoal content. This pit truncated the west side of pit [420] (Fig 4, Section 1).

Sub-circular pit [410], 1.10m in diameter and 0.80m deep, truncated the southern side of pit [420] and the northern side of pit [426] (Fig 4, Section 1). It was filled with light orange-brown sandy clay (409) overlain with a lens of mid grey-black silty clay which contained a moderate amount of charcoal inclusions and six sherds of early to middle Iron Age pottery (408), overlain with light grey-brown silty clay containing no finds (407). Upper fill (424) was darker in hue than the lower fills and similar to fill (404) in pit [406] (Fig 3).

A sub-circular pit [412], 0.88m in diameter and 0.40m deep, was late in the sequence, truncating pit [410] (Fig 4, Section 1). The lower fill (411) was primary in-washed material that had slipped down the southern edge of the pit, this was overlain with mid grey-brown sandy clay (413) containing 51 sherds of early to middle Iron Age pottery.



Pit cluster, looking east

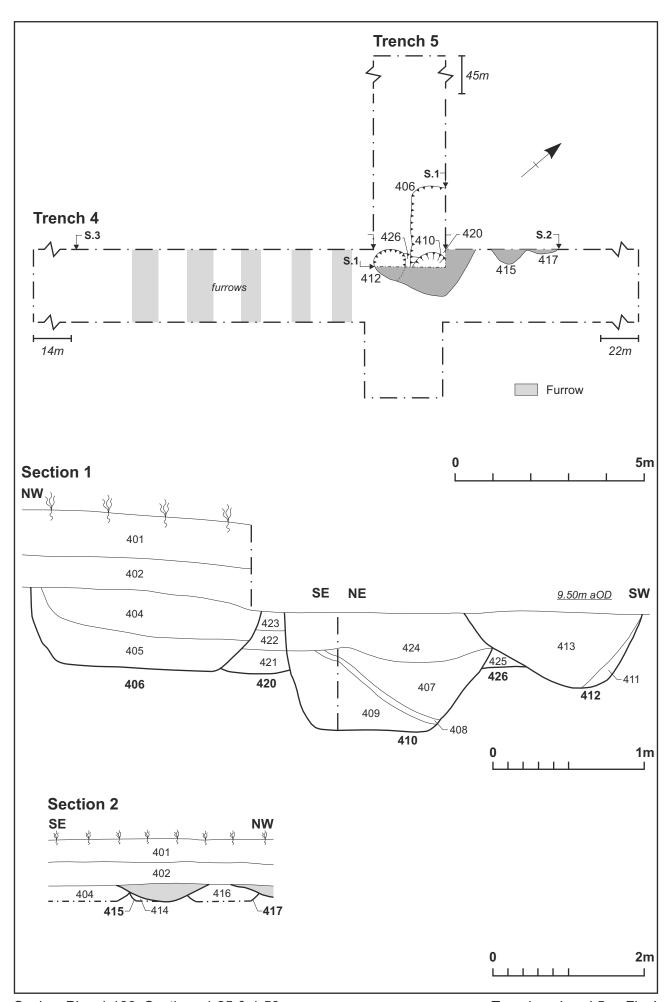
Fig 3

Pits 415 417

Two possible pits [415] and [417] were identified to the north of the pit cluster, partially obscured by the baulk they remained unexcavated (Fig 4, Section 2).

4.4 Medieval cultivation system

The remains of medieval ridge and furrow cultivation system, aligned east to west, running with the slope, had been detected by the geophysical survey and the remnants of the furrows were present in all trenches except Trenches 3 and 6. (Fig 4)



Scales: Plan 1:100, Sections 1:25 & 1:50

Trenches 4 and 5 Fig 4

5 THE FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

5.1 Iron Age pottery by Andy Chapman

A total of 57 sherds, weighing 522g, of hand-built Iron Age pottery was recovered from the fills of two pits (Table 1). The average sherd weight is 9g and the groups typically included multiple sherds from a small number of vessels, not all joining, indicating that they were primary deposits.

Table 1: Quantification of Iron Age pottery

Fabric	Sandy	grog	shelly	Total	Total
Fill/cut	sherds	sherds	sherds	sherds	Weight (g)
408/410	1	1	4	6	94
413/412	20	31	0	51	258
Totals	21	32	4	57	522
Percentages	37	56	7	100	

Fabrics

Sandy: Containing fine rounded quartz grains: 21 sherds (37%).

Grog: Same as the sandy fabric but also containing small pellets of grog, c.1mm

diameter: 32 sherds (56%)

Shelly: Soft fabric contains voids, probably from leached shelly inclusions: 4 sherds

(7%).

The assemblage

The fill (408) of pit [410] produced thick-walled plain bodysherds, 8-10mm thick, containing voids, probably from leached shell, as well as individual sherds of sandy and grog-tempered wares. These had grey cores and grey or brown interiors and orange-brown to cream external surfaces.

The fill (413) of pit [412] produced sherds in sandy and sandy with grog-tempered fabrics from two or more vessels. There were thin-walled sherds in a hard sandy fabric, dark grey throughout with a smoothed surface, including part of a flat base and the lower walls. There were also sherds in a thicker fabric, 9mm thick, containing grog, with a grey core and inner surface and an orange-brown outer surface.

It also contains sherds containing grog, but from a number of vessels. These include a rounded closed bowl, c.150mm in diameter, with an upright, slightly inturned and tapered, rounded rim, with a grey core and brown, smoothed surfaces (Fig 5).



Rim of small bowl with simple rounded rim (Scale 20mm) Fig 5

There are parts of the flat base, the body, neck and rim from a sharply carinated bowl, with a concave neck and an everted, rounded rim, c.150mm diameter, with a grey core and red-brown surfaces, blackened through use (Fig 6). There is also part of the flat base of a similar vessel, and three body sherds with a grey core and inner surface and an orange outer surface have irregular scored linear decoration.



Rim, body and base of carinated bowl (Scale 20mm) Fig 6

Chronology

Carinated bowls, as in the example from pit [412], are indicative of an early Iron Age date, while scored decoration, coming from the same pit, could be associated with scored ware of the east Midlands in the middle Iron Age. These apparent contradictions are difficult to resolve, but the vessel forms and the dominance of vessels with oxidised, orange to brown surfaces, suggests that this is an early group,

and a date at the transition from early to middle Iron Age is suggested, the 5th to 4th centuries BC.

5.2 Medieval pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

A single sherd of pottery weighing 35g was recovered from a furrow in Trench 4. It is a fragment of a bowl rim in Ely Ware, the generic name for the quartz sand and calcareous tempered pottery mainly manufactured in Ely in Cambridgeshire, but also with a second possible source in the Hunts and Fenland (Spoerry 2008). The products of the tradition are generally dated to the mid-12th – 15th century (ibid). The sherd is a little abraded, but has traces of a green glaze left on the outer surface. The rim profile is similar to those of Spoerry's 'Type I', and is thus of 15th century date (ibid. 51).

5.3 Charred plant materials by Val Fryer

Introduction

One sample was recovered from fill (413) in pit [412]. It was bulk floated by MOLA Northampton and the flot was collected in a 300 micron mesh sieve. The dried flot was scanned under a binocular microscope at magnifications up to x 16 and the plant macrofossils and other remains noted are listed below in Table 2. Nomenclature within the table follows Stace (1997). All plant remains were charred.

Results

Although moderately large (0.4 litres in volume), the assemblage is extremely limited in composition, being almost entirely composed of charcoal/charred wood fragments. However, single seeds of brome (*Bromus* sp.) and fat hen (*Chenopodium album*) are recorded. The charcoal is mostly comminuted, although many larger, angular fragments are present, possibly indicating that the material was deposited within the pit very soon after combustion. Other remains are also scarce, but small pieces of pottery are recorded along with a low density of minute fragments of calcined bone.

Conclusions and recommendations for further work

In summary, the condition of the material within the recovered assemblage may indicate that the remains are largely derived from a single episode of combustion. As the assemblage is so limited in composition, it is unclear why combustion occurred, although the presence of small bone fragments and pot sherds may suggest that the material is partly or wholly derived from hearth or midden waste.

As the assemblage is not quantifiably viable (ie contains <100specimens), no further analysis is recommended. Identification of the charcoal may provide some information regarding the utilisation of local resources, but it is considered most likely that any data will be restricted and of very limited significance.

Table 2. Charred plant macrofossils and other remains

Sample No.	1		
Fill.	413		
Feature	412		
Bromus sp.	Х		
Chenopodium album L.	Χ		
Charcoal <2mm	XXXX		
Charcoal >2mm	XXXX		
Charcoal >5mm	XXXX		
Charcoal >10mm	XXX		
Black tarry material	Χ		
Bone	xb		
Burnt/fired clay	Χ		
Pottery	Χ		
Sample volume (litres) 40 litres			
Volume of flot (litres) 0.4			
% flot sorted	25%		

Key to Table:

x = 1 - 10 specimens xxx = 51 - 100 specimens xxxx = 100+ specimens b = burnt/calcined

6 DISCUSSION

The archaeological trial evaluation confirmed the presence of localised early to middle lron Age activity within the development area. The linear anomaly identified in the geophysical survey and targeted in Trench 1 was not present and may have been within the subsoil or the trace of a footpath. Other anomalies identified as possible pits were either geology or root disturbance. The ridge and furrow from the medieval cultivation system identified in the geophysical survey was confirmed in the evaluation trenches.

Early to middle Iron Age

Iron Age activity on the site dated from 5th to 4th centuries BC with the presence of a cluster of inter-cutting pits as well as two possible isolated pits located on the base of an east facing slope. Environmental evidence suggests the material deposited within the pits was derived from either midden or hearth waste, suggesting settlement within the vicinity of the development area.

The features recorded within the evaluation are the first evidence for an Iron Age presence within Ramsey.

Medieval cultivation system

Remnant, truncated furrows from the medieval ridge and furrow cultivation system were present throughout the development area, aligned east to west. A sherd of Spoerry's 'Type I' pottery recovered from one of the furrows dates to the 15th century, indicating a date for when the cultivation system was in use.

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MOLA October 2014

APPENDIX: CONTEXT SUMMARY

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
1	50Mx1.8M NW-SE	TL 278 851	12.96maOD	12.45maOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
101	Topsoil	Firm, Mid grey-brown, silty clay. 2% mixed stones poorly sorted.	0.29m	-
102	Subsoil	Firm, light grey-orange, silty clay. 1% sub angular stones poorly sorted.	0.05m	-
103	Natural	Light orange-brown silt and gravel. 1% large nodules of flint and chalk.	-	-

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
2	50mx1.8m NE-SW	TL 279 851	11.42maOD	10.98maOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
201	Topsoil	Firm-friable, mid grey brown, silty clay. 2% sub angular stones, poorly sorted	0.29m	-
202	Natural	Light orange-brown, sandy silty clay with green patches. 5% med-large flint and chalk nodules, poorly sorted.	-	-

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
3	50mx1.8m NE-SW	TL 279 850	9.89maOD	9.23maOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
301	Topsoil	Firm, mid grey-brown, silty clay. 1% med mixed stones, poorly sorted	0.29m	-
302	culluvium	Soft-firm, light orange- brown, sandy silty clay.1% med-large flint nodules, poorly sorted	0.39m	-
303	Natural	Firm, light orange brown, sandy silty clay. 2% small-large mixed stones and flint nodules.	-	-

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
4	50mx1.8m NE-SW	TL 279 851	9.79maOD	9.04maOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
401	Topsoil	Mid grey-brown, sandy clay	0.30m	-
402	culluvium	Mid orange-brown sandy clay	0.30m	-
403	Natural	Light orange-brown with yellow patches and gravels and clays	-	-
404	Fill of [406]	Mid brown-grey silty clay.10% charcoal flecks.	0.30m	
405	Fill of [406]	Firm, light orange-brown with light grey brown patches	0.30m	-
406	Cut of pit	Playing card shape, steep sided with concave base	0.60m	-
407	Fill of [410]	Mixed orange-brown and light grey brown, sandy silty clay. 2% charcoal.	0.38m	-
408	Fill of [410]	Mid brown-grey, silty clay.10% charcoal flecks	0.08m	Iron Age pottery
409	Fill of [409]	Light orang- brown, silty sandy clay. 1%	0.25m	-
410	Cut of pit	Sub circular, U shape with concave base.	0.71m	-

411	Fill of [412]	Light orange-brown silty sandy clay.1% charcoal flecks	0.30m	-
412	Cut of pit	Sub circular 'U' shape with concave base.	0.67m	-
413	Fill of [412]	Firm, mid brown-grey, silty clay.1% charcoal	0.37m	Iron Age pottery Sample 1
414	Fill of [415]	Firm, mid brown-grey, silty sandy clay. 5% charcoal flecks	0.12m	-
415	Cut of pit	Sub circular, not excavated	0.12m	-
416	Fill of [417]	Soft-firm, light grey- brown, silty sandy clay. 1% mixed stones & 2- 5% charcoal flecks	0.20m	-
417	Cut of pit	Sub-circular, not excavated.	0.12m	-
418	Fill of [419]	Firm, mid brownish- grey, sandy silty clay.2% med-large stones & 20% charcoal flecks.	0.50m	-
419	Cut of root disturbance	Irregular 'V' shaped with uneven base.	0.50m	-
420	Pit	Almost entirely truncated by later recuts only part of the base survives	>0.30m wide 0.44m deep	
421	Fill of pit [420]	Mid yellow-brown silty clay	0.18m deep	
422	Fill of pit [420]	Light grey-brown silty clay	0.12m deep	
423	Fill of pit [420]	Mid grey-brown silty clay	0.14m deep	
424	Fill of pit [410]	Upper pit fill mid grey- brown silty clay with moderate charcoal flecks	0.31m deep	
425	Fill of pit [426]	Mid grey-brown silty clay	0.10m deep	
426	Pit	Almost truncated to its concave base	0.10m deep	

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
5	54mx1.8m NW-SE	TL 279 851	11.62maOD	11.12maOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Sample s
501	Topsoil	Mid grey-brown sandy clay	0.30m	-
502	colluvium	Mid orange-brown sandy clay	0.24m	-
503	Natural	Mid-light orange brown, sandy clay with yellow patches of gravels	-	-

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
6	50mx1.8m NW-SE	TL 279 851	12.44maOD	12.00maOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
601	Topsoil	Mid grey-brown, sandy clay	0.30m	-
602	Natural	Mid grey-brown clay	-	-

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
7	50mx1.8m NW-SE	TL 279 851	12.06maOD	11.56maOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
701	Topsoil	Mid grey-brown sandy clay		-
702	Subsoil	Mid brown-grey sandy clay		-
703	Natural	Dark brown clay		

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
8	50mx1.8m NW-SE	TL 279 851	6.81maOD	6.41maOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
801	Topsoil	Mid brown-grey sandy clay	0.30m	-
802	Colluvium	Mid orange-brown, sandy clay	0.35m	-
803	Natural	Light yellow-brown clay with moderate stones	-	-

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
9	50mx1.8m NE-SW	TL 280 851	6.33maOD	5.93maOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
901	Topsoil	Mid grey-brown sandy clay	0.30m	-
902	Subsoil	Mid orange-brown sandy clay	0.20m	-
903	Natural	Light orange brown clay	-	-

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
10	50mx1.8m	TL 280 852	6.86maOD	6.46maOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
1001	Topsoil	Mid grey-brown sandy clay	0.30m	-
1002	Subsoil	Mid grey-orange sandy clay	0.10m	-
1003	Natural	Mid orange-brown clay	-	-

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
11	50mx1.8m NW-SE	TL 279 852	7.69maOD	7.29maOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
1101	Topsoil	Mid grey-brown sandy clay	0.30m	-
1102	Subsoil	Mid orange-brown sandy clay	0.10m	-
1103	Natural	Dark grey-brown clay	-	-

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
12	50mx1.8m NE-SW	TL 279 852	11.50maOD	11.10maOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
1201	Topsoil	Firm Mid greyish brown, silty clay.2% mixed stones , poorly sorted	0.28m	-
1202	Subsoil	Firm, light brownish- grey, silty clay.1%mixed stones poorly sorted	0.12m	-
1203	Natural	Firm, light greyish brown, silty clay. 2% med-large stones poorly sorted.	-	-





