



Archaeological work at land south of Towcester Road, Old Stratford Northamptonshire February 2015

Report No. 15/33

Author: Claire Finn

Illustrator: James Ladocha



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Towcester Road, Old Stratford,
Northamptonshire
February 2015**

Report No. 15/33

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OASIS REPORT FORM

| | | | |
|---------------------------|--|---|--|
| PROJECT DETAILS | | OASIS No: molanort1-204640 | |
| Project title | Archaeological work at land south of Towcester Road, Old Stratford, Northamptonshire February 2015 | | |
| Short description | MOLA Northampton carried out archaeological trial trench evaluation on land south of Towcester Road, Old Stratford. Possible evidence for former field systems has been found in the form of four parallel ditches. Evidence for Iron Age activity in the area was given by one probable boundary ditch, a posthole and a large curved ditch which may have been part of an enclosure. | | |
| Project type | Trial trench evaluation | | |
| Site status | none | | |
| Previous work | Heritage Statement (Bedford 2013), Strip, map and sample undertaken in north area of field for pipe infrastructure (Parry and Hylton 1997). | | |
| Current land use | Unused open field | | |
| Future work | unknown | | |
| Monument type/period | Iron Age | | |
| Significant finds | Hedgerows, ditches | | |
| PROJECT LOCATION | | | |
| County | Northamptonshire | | |
| Site address | Towcester Road, Old Stratford | | |
| Postcode | n/a | | |
| OS co-ordinates | SP 7753 4122 | | |
| Area | c6.2 ha | | |
| Height aOD | c80m aOD | | |
| PROJECT CREATORS | | | |
| Organisation | MOLA Northampton | | |
| Project brief originator | Liz Mordue, Northamptonshire County Council Planning | | |
| Project Design originator | Jim Brown, MOLA | | |
| Director/Supervisor | Adam Meadows, MOLA | | |
| Project Manager | Jim Brown | | |
| Sponsor or funding body | Persimmon Homes | | |
| PROJECT DATE | | | |
| Start date | 17 February 2015 | | |
| End date | 24 February 2015 | | |
| ARCHIVES | Location (Accession no.) | Content | |
| Physical | MOLA Northampton Archive Store Acc no. ENN107924 | Pottery | |
| Paper | | site records, background data, photographs, one section on permatrace | |
| Digital | | survey data, digital report, digital photographs | |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (MOLA report) | | |
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Archaeological work at land south of Towcester Road, Old Stratford, Northamptonshire February 2015

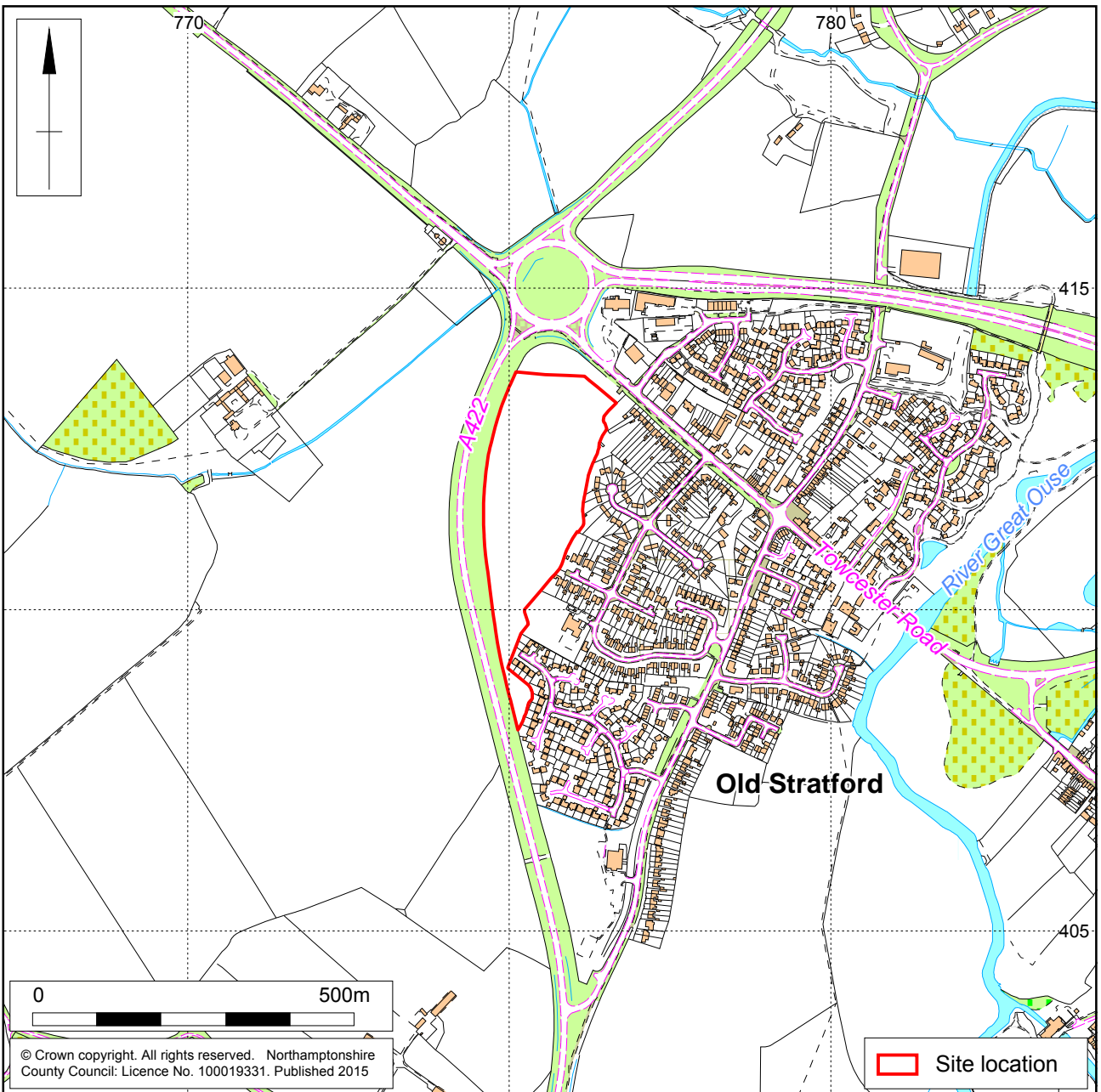
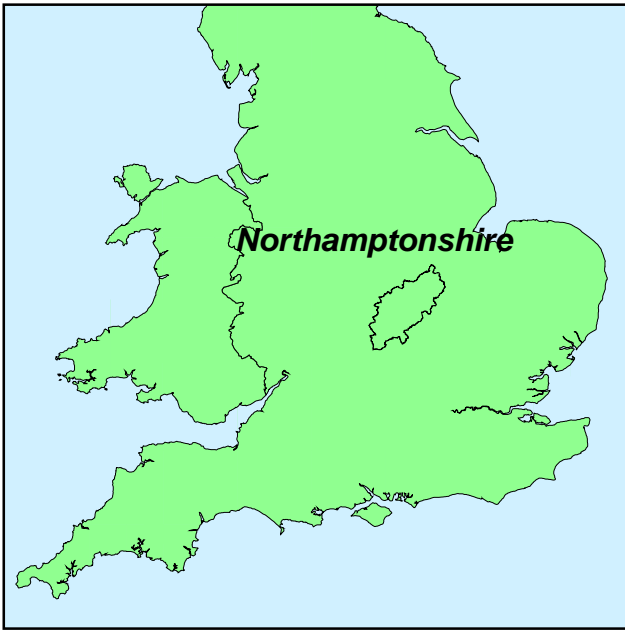
Abstract

MOLA Northampton carried out archaeological trial trench evaluation on land south of Towcester Road, Old Stratford. Possible evidence for former field systems has been found in the form of four parallel ditches. Evidence for Iron Age activity in the area was given by one probable boundary ditch, a posthole and a large curved ditch which may have been part of an enclosure.

1 INTRODUCTION

MOLA was commissioned by Persimmon Homes Midland to undertake archaeological field evaluation on the proposed development site on land south of Towcester Road, Old Stratford, Northamptonshire (NGR SP 7753 4122, Fig 1). The works were required by South Northamptonshire Council in response to a forthcoming planning application for residential development and associated infrastructure (S/2013/0560/MAO), in line with *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012). The aim of the evaluation was to ensure that any archaeological remains present within the Development Area were appropriately investigated and recorded prior to development, and to identify the necessity of any future archaeological mitigation. The archaeological investigation and recording was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by MOLA and approved by Northamptonshire County Council's Assistant Archaeological Advisor prior to work commencing (MOLA 2015). All works followed the guidelines suggested by the ClfA's *Code of Conduct* and *Standard and guidance: Archaeological Field Evaluation* (ClfA 2014a and b), and the *MOLA Northampton Fieldwork Manual* (MOLA 2014).

Initial planning phases called for a geophysical survey to be undertaken as part of the work. However, due to the overgrown nature of the site, and the use of part of the area by Anglian Water during infrastructure improvements, this phase of the work was not undertaken. A larger sample of the development area was taken during the field evaluation to compensate. Work was completed between 17th and 24th February and was monitored by the Assistant Archaeological Advisor for Northamptonshire County Council.



Scale 1:10,000

Site location Fig 1

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location, Topography and geology

The village of Old Stratford lies in the south of Northamptonshire, within the modern parish of Old Stratford. The proposed development site, which is situated on the west side of the village, is formed of one large unused open field, 6.2 ha in size. It is bounded by Towcester Road/London Road to the north, to the west by the A422 and to the east by housing. The site lies on a very gentle north-facing slope, rising from 82m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) in the north, to 84m aOD at the southern edge.

The bedrock geology is recorded as interbedded siltstone and mudstone of the Lias Group. The overlying superficial geology is recorded as Quaternary Oadby Member Diamicton (BGS 2015).

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

A Heritage Statement was prepared for the development area by CgMs Consulting (Bedford 2013), and the following summary is drawn from this report, as well as from a preliminary search of Northamptonshire's Historic Environment Record (HER), for an area of 1km from the proposed development site.

Two recorded heritage assets are known from the site itself. A watching brief undertaken during pipe works in the northern part of the site produced unstratified Saxon pottery (HER7632/0/1) and two prehistoric flints (HER1236/0/0) (Parry and Webster 1996) (ENN14916). The site has also been subject to other archaeological interventions. A series of cropmarks in the northern part of the proposed development site (HER1236/0/1), which might be prehistoric or Romano-British in date, were archaeologically investigated in 1998 when nine trenches were excavated in the same area as the previous watching brief. However, no finds or features of an archaeological nature were found during this investigation, which suggests the previous finds were residual (Bright 1998).

Other evaluations were undertaken near the centre of Old Stratford, approximately 450m to the east in 1997 (ENN17561, Parry and Hylton 1997) (ENN103841), in c500m east in 2000 (HER ENN100716, Prentice 2000), and c100m north-east in 2004 (Wilson 2004). No archaeological finds or features were encountered in any of these investigations.

Prehistoric

Further prehistoric evidence is known from within a 1km radius of the site. This includes two Neolithic flint flakes, and a Neolithic greenstone adze blade found at Furtho Pit c390m to the north-east of the site during archaeological observation of gravel extraction in 1978 (HER ENN7870, ENN7864, HER 1235). An Iron Age coin was also found approximately 950m to the southeast of the study site (HER1238/0/0). Other cropmarks which may be prehistoric in date are known from the vicinity, including trackways c600m to the north-west of the site (HER1234/0/1) and c600m to the south-west (HER1227/0/1), and possible settlement earthworks 1km to the south (ENN8029).

Roman

The site is bounded to the north-east by Towcester Road, a section of Watling Street which was an important Roman road (HER447/1). Evidence for settlement in the immediate vicinity of the site is not hugely abundant. It has been hypothesised that the cropmarks in the north of the development site (HER1236/0/1) are the remains of a

roadside settlement of Romano-British date (see Fig 2). A small number of finds have been made in the area, including a Roman coin, 160m to the west (HER1236/0/0).

A possible small scale settlement may also be located c700m to the west (HER7064/0/1). Evidence for this comes in the form of a pottery-filled pit found during archaeological monitoring (HER7064/0/1, ENN14916). Other areas of small scale scattered Roman activity are also recorded a few hundred metres to the north, west, and east of the site (HER2480, 2480/0/0, 8319/0/0, 1235/0/0, 1235/0/1, 1242/0/1, 1254/0/0). During the Furtho Pit gravel quarrying observations, large quantities of Romano-British pottery were found, along with several ditches (1235/0/1). No formal archaeological investigation was undertaken.

A more significant Roman site is known from further to the south, around 900m from the site, at the find location for the Stony Stratford Hoard (HER1238/1/1). A concentration of finds has been recovered from fieldwalking and metal detecting surveys in an approximately 700m scatter in this area, suggesting settlement activity.

During the construction of the A422 Deanshanger bypass approximately 1km to the south of the site, archaeological observation revealed evidence of another Roman settlement (Steadman 1993) (ENN12674, HER1170).

Saxon

An area of around 250m by 80m, at the north-west of the study site has been hypothesised from a concentration of finds to indicate Saxon and Medieval activity (HER7062). This area overlaps the proposed development area, and the previously mentioned Saxon pottery recovered during a watching brief observation of pipeline works may well related to this proposed site. A posthole containing a single sherd of medieval pottery was also observed at this time (HER7062/0/1) (Parry and Webster 1996). The village of Passenham, just over 1.5km to the south-east was the location of a significant Saxon settlement and burial ground at this time.

Medieval

The town of Old Stratford only grew to significant size in recent times, prior to which it was just a small hamlet (RCHME 1982, 108). A number of settlements from the medieval period can be found near to the development site; in the centre of historic Old Stratford, and around 950m to the north, where a deserted medieval hamlet is located (HER1233). The town centre also contained a number of other medieval features, including a medieval hermitage hospital, 400m to the east (HER1255/1 and 1255/2), a Grade II listed 14th century bridge (HER7/70, 447/1/18) and sites of possible medieval fishing activity (HER7303, 7307), all along the River Great Ouse and around 650m to the east of the site.

The HER notes ridge and furrow cultivation in the development area although no extant earthworks can now be seen. Possible post-medieval furrows have been identified in adjacent fields to the west through aerial photographs (5649/0/9), and further away to the north, east, and south of the study site. Bedford concludes that the area seems likely to have formed part of the peripheral agricultural landscape surrounding Old Stratford and the deserted hamlet to the north (Bedford 2013, 16).

Post-medieval and modern

Most of the major development in Old Stratford took place only after 1945. Eight Grade II listed buildings and the previously mentioned 14th-century bridge are to be found to the east of the site along London Road. Other activity in the area includes Knotwood Farm, c500m to the north-west (HER10024/1). The former Buckingham arm of the Grand

Union Canal (HER7807) ran approximately 250m to the east of the site on a north-south alignment, and a number of other related features can be found in the town, such as canal bridges (HER7807/1/3).

Industrial activities of quarrying and mining took place to the north-east of the town of Old Stratford, and the closest of these to the development site is c500m to the north-west (HER5595, 5595/0/1).

In 1725, the site is shown on maps as forming part of a coppice. This use continued until at least 1844, and by 1884 the area is open field, with a small enclosed area to the north and east (Ordnance Survey 1st edition). The southern area was also enclosed by 1900. The use of the site does not change significantly, except for the construction of a school in the southern part of the site in the second half of the 20th century.

3 OBJECTIVES

The aim of the archaeological evaluation was to understand the nature, function and character of the site in its cultural and environmental setting, specifically to:

- identify, investigate and record all archaeological deposits, exposed during the groundworks for the new development and any associated groundworks;
- determine and record the date, extent, character, state of preservation and depth of burial of any archaeological deposits;
- recover artefacts to assist in the development of type series within the region;
- recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions;
- create a permanent archive and record of the archaeological information collected during the course of the fieldwork and analysis.

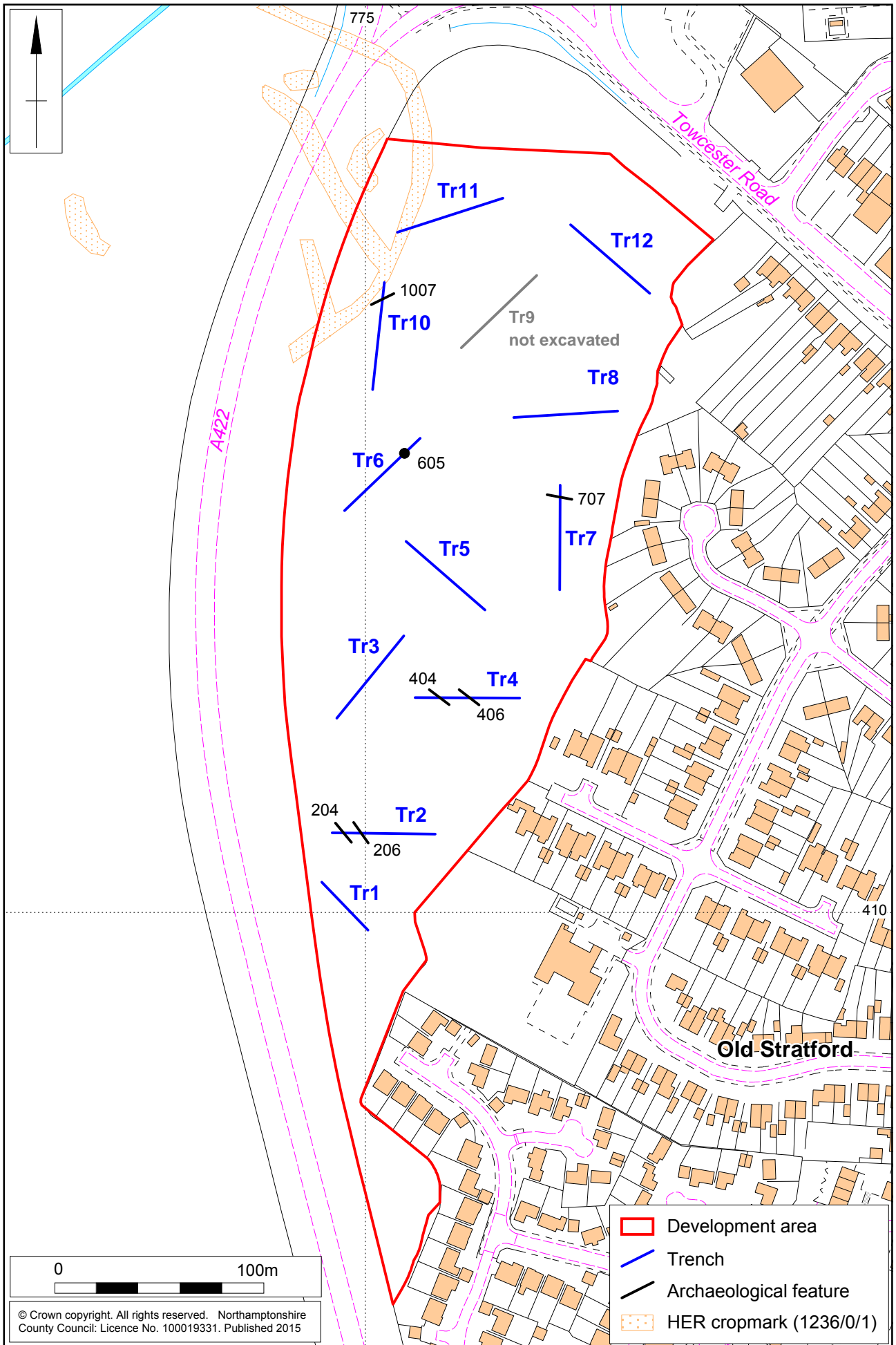
Specific research objectives have been drawn from national and regional research frameworks documents (EH 1991 and 1997; Knight, Vyner and Allen 2012), and are focussed on the following research areas:

Iron Age

- Settlement and landscape
- Field systems and major linear boundaries
- Ritual and structured deposition and religion
- The agricultural economy and landscape
- Finds, crafts, industry and exchange
- Social relations and society

Roman

- Rural settlement patterns and landscapes
- The agricultural economy
- Artefacts: production, distribution and social identity
- Ritual and religion



Scale 1:2,500

Excavated trenches Fig 2

4 METHODOLOGY

The evaluation conformed to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance: Archaeological Field Evaluation* (CIfA 2014b). All stages of the project were undertaken in accordance with English Heritage, *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE) (EH 2006), as well as specific guidelines for this project given by the WSI prepared by MOLA (MOLA 2015).

The area of the evaluation was to cover a 2% of the site area (4.5ha), excluding areas which had previously come under evaluation (Fig 2). Twelve trenches, 50m long by 1.8m wide, were planned to give a full sample of the site. However, the overgrown nature of the area resulted in the positioning of several trenches being slightly altered, two trenches, 1 and 12, were shortened to avoid foliage or pipework, and one trench, 9, was omitted entirely. Each trench was located using a Leica System 1200 GPS operating to an accuracy of +/-0.05m to Ordnance Survey National Grid and Datum. The trenches were excavated by machine using a flat toothless bucket down to the first archaeological remains, or where these were absent, to the upper interface of natural geological deposits. Revealed features were further defined by hand excavation.

All archaeological features were given a separate context number. Deposits were described on *pro-forma* trench sheets to include details of the context, its relationships, interpretation and a checklist of associated finds (MOLA 2014). The trench and spoil heap was scanned with a metal detector to ensure maximum finds retrieval. Subsequent to the evaluation, the trench was backfilled with up-cast, lightly compacted by the mechanical excavator.

Section drawings of the trenches, excavated features, and site plans were produced (Fig 3 and 4). Digital photographs also formed the principal photographic record for report purposes, and black and white negatives were taken for submission to the archive.

5 EVALUATION EVIDENCE

5.1 Overview

Of the twelve trenches planned in the WSI (MOLA 2015), only eleven were excavated due to obstructions (see Fig 2). From these eleven trenches, trenches 1, 3, 5, 8, 11 and 12 proved to contain no archaeological material.

The natural geology in these trenches was an orange- or yellow-brown clay, sometimes with a greenish colouring, and with flecks of flint, chalk and gravel (103, 303, 503, 803, 1103, 1203). The natural geology in trenches 1, 3, 5, and 11 was overlain by a subsoil of mid- yellow or grey-brown clay with small to medium chalk and flint flecks (102, 302, 502, 1102). In trenches 8 and 12, the subsoil was formed of a darker orange-brown silty clay with inclusions of chert (802, 1202). In all of these trenches the topsoil was a mid grey-brown silty clay or clay loam. Trenches containing archaeological features were those numbered 2, 4, 6, 7, and 10. These trenches were mainly clustered around the centre of the development area, and will be discussed in more detail below.

5.2 Trenches 2 and 4

Trenches 2 and 4 were aligned east-west and situated in the southern half of the field, and had a similar natural geological soil to the sterile trenches above (202), although Trench 4 also produced a natural red-brown sand at its western end. Both trenches had a subsoil of orange-brown clay, around 0.35m deep (207, 407), and a thick mid grey-brown silty clay topsoil of between 0.20 and 0.30m depth (201, 401).

Both trenches contained two almost parallel linear ditches, aligned approximately north-west to south-east. In both trenches, the western of the two ditches [0204] and [0404] appeared slightly curvilinear, turning towards a west-north-west alignment. The ditches had a shallow U-shaped profile with a concave base.

In Trench 4, the western ditch [404] was 0.56m wide, and 0.18m deep, and the eastern ditch [406] was 0.66m wide and c0.25m deep (Fig 3, Fig 7 S.6). Both contained a clean dark brown silty clay fill with a few small cherts.

In Trench 2, the western ditch [204] was 0.85m wide, broader than those in Trench 4, and had a flatter base, around 0.32m deep (Fig 4, Fig 7 S.3). The fill was clean soft yellow-brown silty clay, with rare chert inclusions, and a single piece of fired clay. The second ditch in Trench 2 was not excavated but it was a similar width (0.88m).

It can be seen from the site plan in Fig 2 that these two sets of parallel ditches do not connect as a single feature, as might be expected for a trackway of the type known elsewhere from the vicinity (see section 2.2 and HER1234/0/1 and 1227/0/1). Instead the two sets of features seem essentially to align parallel to each other, although they are too deep and steeply sided to be the remains of ridge and furrow cultivation. They may have been ditches cut to flank hedges within a former field system, although as no such field boundaries are visible on Ordnance Survey maps since 1884, these features must predate these maps.



Trench 4, ditch [406], looking south-east Fig 3



Trench 2, ditch [204], looking south-east Fig 4

5.3 Trench 6

Trench 6, in the mid-west of the area, was aligned north-east by south-west. It again had a natural of light greenish yellow-brown clay with flecks of flint and chalk (603), a subsoil of light orange-yellow clay, between 0.10-0.20m deep (602), and a mid grey-brown clay loam topsoil of between 0.20 and 0.35m depth (601). At the southern end of the trench was a circular posthole [605], 0.5m wide and around 0.35m deep (Fig 5). The cut had steep, almost vertical sides and a shallow concave base (Fig 7, S.2). The posthole contained a single fill of dark grey silty-clay (604), possibly with burnt material included. The hole was packed with large rocks of granular ironstone formation and cobbles.

5.4 Trench 7

Trench 7 was situated in the mid-east of the site, aligned north-south. The trench had the same natural as Trench 6, a 0.21 to 0.29m thick subsoil of mid grey-brown clay silt (702), and a topsoil of dark brown-grey clay sandy silt 0.20 to 0.28m thick (701). The trench contained one curving ditch, on a north-west south-east alignment and turning towards the north [707] (Fig 6). The ditch had a U-shaped profile with shallow sloping sides, and was c3.80m wide and 0.86m deep (Fig 8, S.4). The primary fill was a firm mid orange-brown silty clay mixed with charcoal (706). The secondary fill (705) was a mid grey-brown silty clay, also with charcoal, and containing large animal bones. The upper fill (704) was a friable dark brown-grey sandy silt, with frequent charcoal pieces. Iron Age pottery and large pieces of animal bone were recovered from this layer, including cow teeth, jaw and rib pieces, and small mammal bones.

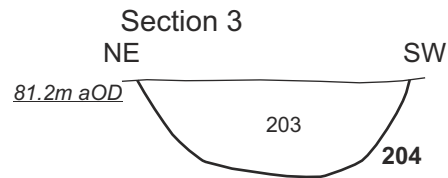
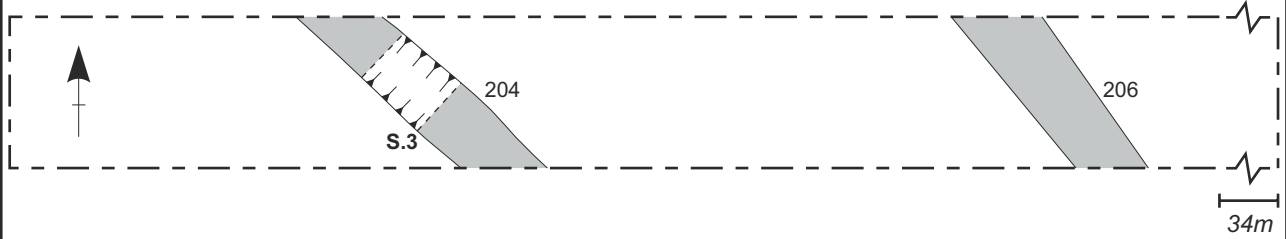


Trench 6, stone packed posthole [605], looking south Fig 5

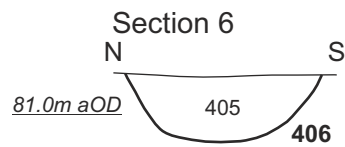
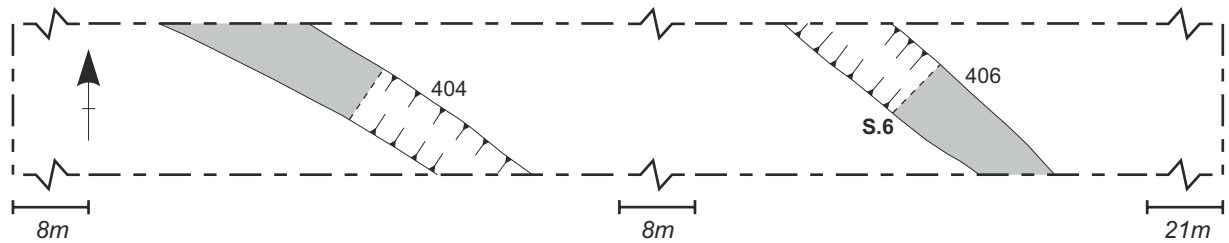


Trench 7, ditch [707], looking east Fig 6

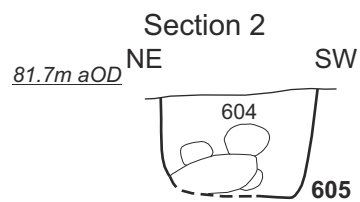
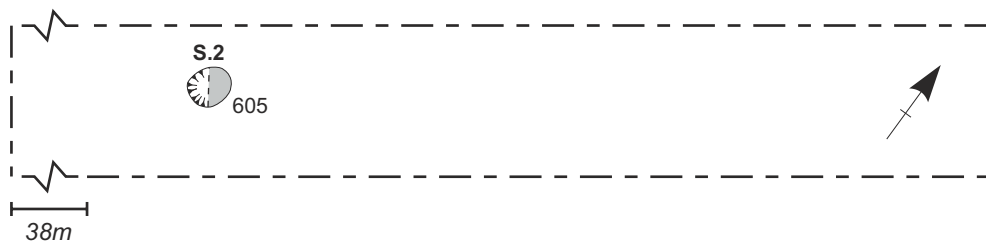
Trench 2



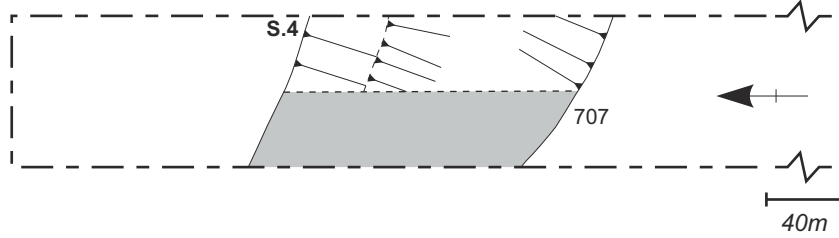
Trench 4



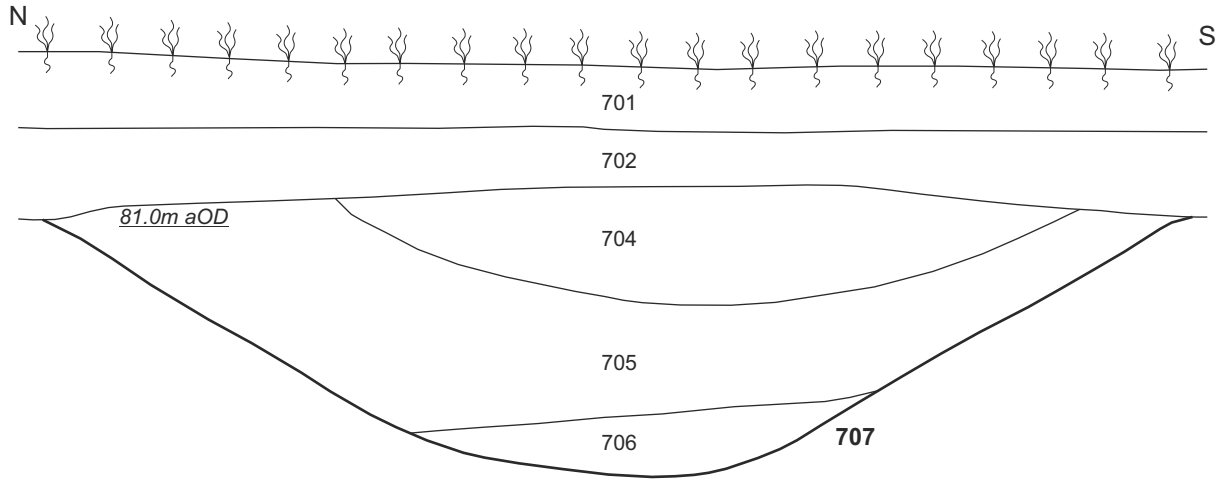
Trench 6



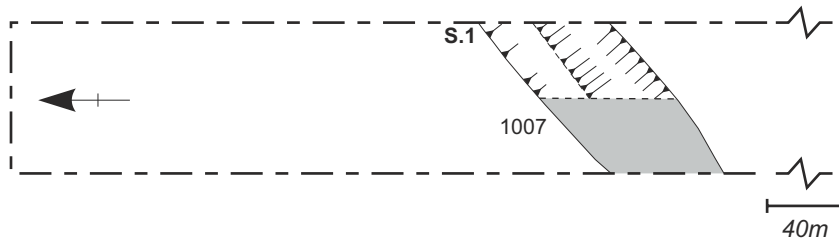
Trench 7



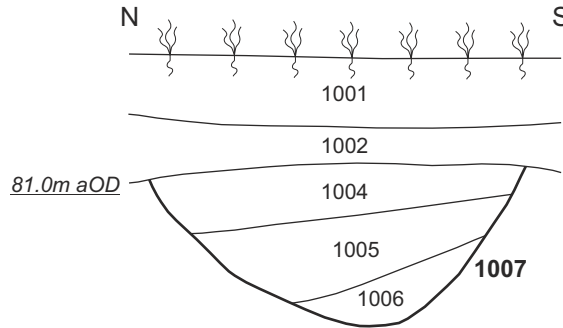
Section 4



Trench 10



Section 1



5.5 Trench 10

Trench 10 contained a natural of light yellow grey silty clay (1003), overlain by a subsoil of mid red-brown clay silt (1002), between 30mm and 100mm thick. The topsoil was dark brown-grey silty sandy clay, between 0.20 and 0.26m thick (1001).

A ditch [1007] was found in this trench, aligned north-east to south west. The ditch was cut with a V-shaped profile and was 1.23m wide and 0.52m deep (Fig 8, S.1). The ditch had several episodes of filling, all with firm silty clays and probably occupation debris. The primary fill (1006) was a dark blue-grey silty clay, around 0.22m thick. Secondary fill (1005) was a mid orange-brown silty clay 0.24m thick, containing Iron Age pottery, a piece of fired clay, and small fragments of animal bone. The upper fill (1004), a blue-grey silty clay, also contained one piece of animal bone, and pottery sherds dating to the early 1st century AD.



Trench 10, ditch [1007], looking east Fig 9

6 THE FINDS

6.1 The Iron Age pottery by Andy Chapman

A total of 30 sherds, weighing 330g, of late Iron Age pottery, dating to the 1st century BC and the early decades of the 1st century AD, was recovered from ditch 707 in trench 7 and ditch 1007 in trench 10.

Table 1: Quantification of Iron Age pottery

| Fill/cut | type | Coarse shell | | Fine Shell | | Totals | |
|---------------|-------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| | | Sherds | Weight (g) | Sherds | Weight (g) | Sherds | Weight (g) |
| 704/707 | ditch | 5 | 79 | 14 | 132 | 19 | 211 |
| 1004/1007 | ditch | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| 1005/1007 | ditch | 5 | 98 | 5 | 18 | 10 | 116 |
| Totals | | 10 | 177 | 20 | 153 | 30 | 330 |

The largest group is from the upper fill (704) of ditch [707]. It includes some sherds containing dense coarse shell from thick-walled vessels, including a flat-topped rim with bold fingertip impressions. However, the larger part of the group comprises thin-walled sherds containing sparse small shell, from smaller vessels all with smoothed surfaces and uniformly dark brown to dark grey surfaces. At least three vessels are represented: a flat-topped square rim; an abruptly everted rounded rim and a broad expanded rim, which is damaged but may be an example of large open bowl form, with a thickened T-shaped rim, perhaps used for dairying. The predominance of finer bowl forms suggests a date in the late Iron Age, 1st century BC.

From the secondary and upper fill of ditch [1007] there is group of very thick-walled sherds containing dense shell. There is a body sherd 12mm thick and part of a D-shaped lug/handle 31mm wide and 22mm thick. These sherds seem most likely to have come from a large storage jar typical of those in use in the early decades of the 1st century AD.

Fired clay

In addition, two features produced irregular lumps of fired clay. From the fill (203) of ditch [204] there is an irregular piece of fired clay, weighing 13g, pale orange throughout, with few mineral inclusions. From the fill (1005) of Iron Age ditch [1007], there is an irregular fragment of fired clay, pale orange throughout and containing rounded calcareous inclusions, unidentified red-brown mineral and rough grey mineral, possibly Charnwood forest granite.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL AND FAUNAL EVIDENCE

7.1 The Animal Bone by Adam Reid

Introduction

A total of 675g of animal bone was hand collected from four different contexts during the course of excavation. This material was assessed to determine the level of preservation, the taxa present and to inform on the potential for further work.

All material was washed prior to analysis. Identifiable bones were noted, and were examined for signs of butchery and the state of epiphyseal fusion. Identifications took place with the aid of the MOLA Northampton reference collection and Hillson (1992) and France (2009) were also consulted. Specimens that could not be positively identified were attributed, where possible, to categories including large mammal (cattle, horse), medium mammal (sheep/goat, pig, large dog), and small mammal (small dog, cat, rabbit). No microfaunal specimens were noted. The English Heritage Guidelines for Best Practice for Animal Bones and Archaeology (2014) were followed, where possible.

Identification and quantification

The moderately fragmented nature of the assemblage made identifications difficult and a presentation of the results can be seen below (Table 1). Positive identifications were made for 31 specimens; 25% of the total assemblage. Three fragments of bird bone of uncertain taxa were recovered from ditch fill (704).

Table 2: The taxa present

| Fill/cut type | Cattle <i>Bos</i> | Sheep/ goat <i>Ovicaprid</i> | Pig <i>Sus</i> | M Bird | Medium Mammal | Large Mammal | Indet . | Total |
|---------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------|------------------|-----------------|------------|-----------|
| 704/707 ditch | 3 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 37 | 8 | 2 | 62 |
| 705/707 ditch | 2 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 2 |
| 1004/ 1007 ditch | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | 1 |
| 1005/ 1007 ditch | - | - | - | - | 3 | - | - | 3 |
| Total | 5 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 41 | 8 | 2 | 68 |

Preservation and taphonomy

The state of preservation of the material was moderate to good, with moderate surface abrasion and a high degree of fragmentation. Several specimens were well very preserved, such as the cattle bones recovered from ditch fill (705). No clear evidence of butchery or carnivore gnawing was noted on any of the specimens.

Conclusions

The small nature of the assemblage makes it difficult to draw any firm conclusions, other than to say that the main domestic taxa were utilised at the site, and the material appears to derive from domestic waste, with no suggestions of industrial activity. The presence of well-preserved identifiable material from several of the excavated features indicates the possibility for future faunal analysis, should any further work take place.

7.2 Charred plant macrofossils and other remains by Val Fryer

Introduction and method statement

Samples for the evaluation of the content and preservation of the plant macrofossil assemblages were taken from ditch fills (704) and (1004) and from the fill of an undated post hole (604), and three were submitted for assessment.

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 in Table 1. Nomenclature within the table follows Stace (2010). All plant remains were charred. Modern roots, seeds, fungal sclerotia and arthropod remains were also recorded.

Results

Plant macrofossils are generally scarce, with most being present as single specimens within an assemblage. Cereal grains are present within all three samples, but with the exception of a single specimen of barley (*Hordeum* sp.), all are too poorly preserved for close identification. Occasional chaff elements, including an emmer wheat (*Triticum dicoccum*) glume base, are also recorded. Seeds of common segetal weeds are present within both of the ditch assemblages. Taxa noted include orache (*Atriplex* sp.), knotgrass (*Polygonum aviculare*) and dock (*Rumex* sp.). Comminuted and abraded charcoal/charred wood fragments are present throughout but other plant remains are scarce.

Other remains also occur infrequently but do include small fragments of bone, pellets of burnt or fired clay, splinters of burnt stone and minute pieces of coal. The latter are almost certainly intrusive and were probably introduced as a result of the post-depositional bioturbation of the deposits by roots and/or rodents.

Although specific sieving for molluscan remains was not undertaken, fragmentary and abraded shells of both terrestrial and freshwater obligate species are recorded. It is currently unclear whether these may be contemporary with the contexts from which the samples were taken, but the material within sample 1 is indicative of open grassland conditions with occasional areas of shade or accumulations of leaf litter. The shells from sample 3 are more difficult to interpret, but it is, perhaps, most likely that they were imported to the site attached to riverine plant materials which were used as thatch.

Conclusions and recommendations for further work

In summary, as the recovered assemblages are so small (<0.1 litres in volume) and sparse, it is suggested that the material within them is largely derived from scattered hearth or midden waste, all of which was accidentally incorporated within the feature fills. This may imply that some limited domestic/agricultural activity was occurring within the near vicinity.

Although the current assemblages are limited, they clearly illustrate that reasonably well-preserved plant remains are present within the archaeological horizon at Old Stratford. Therefore, if further interventions are planned, it is suggested that additional plant macrofossil samples of approximately 40 – 60 litres in volume are taken from all dated and well-sealed features which are recorded during excavation.

Table 3: Plant macrofossils and mollusc shells

| Sample No. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|--|---------|-----------|----------|
| Context No. | 704/707 | 1004/1007 | 604/605 |
| Feature No. | | | |
| Feature type | Ditch | Ditch | Posthole |
| Cereals | | | |
| <i>Hordeum</i> sp. (grain) | x | | |
| <i>Triticum</i> sp. (glume base frag.) (rachis internode) | | x | x |
| <i>T. dicoccum</i> Schubl (glume base) | | x | |
| Cereal indet. (grains) | x | xfg | x |
| Herbs | | | |
| <i>Atriplex</i> sp. | | x | |
| Caryophyllaceae indet. | xcf | | |
| <i>Polygonum aviculare</i> L. | | x | |
| Polygonaceae indet. | | xcf | |
| <i>Rumex</i> sp. | x | | |
| Other plant macrofossils | | | |
| Charcoal <2mm | xxxx | xx | xx |
| Charcoal >2mm | xxx | x | x |
| Charcoal >5mm | xx | | x |
| Charcoal >10mm | x | | |
| Charred root/stem | x | x | x |
| Indet. seeds | | x | |
| Indet. ?tuber frag. | | x | |
| Other remains | | | |
| Black porous 'cokey' material | x | x | |
| Bone | x | | x xb |
| Burnt/fired clay | | | x |
| Burnt stone | | x | x |
| Marine mollusc shell | x | | |
| Small coal frags. | | x | x |
| Small mammal/amphibian bone | x | | |
| Mollusc shells | | | |
| Woodland/shade loving species | | | |
| <i>Clausilia</i> sp. | x | | |
| <i>Discus rotundatus</i> | x | | |
| <i>Punctum pygmaeum</i> | x | | |
| Zonitidae indet. | x | | |
| Open country species | | | |
| <i>Pupilla muscorum</i> | x | | |
| <i>Vallonia</i> sp. | x | | |
| <i>V. excentrica</i> | xcf | | |
| <i>Vertigo pygmaea</i> | x | | |
| Catholic species | | | |
| <i>Cochlicopa</i> sp. | x | | |
| <i>Nesovitrea hammonis</i> | x | | |
| <i>Trichia hispida</i> group | x | | |
| Freshwater species | | | |
| <i>Planorbis</i> sp. | | | x |
| <i>Valvata cristata</i> | | | x |
| Sample volume (litres) | | | |
| Volume of flot (litres) | <0.1 | <0.1 | <0.1 |
| % flot sorted | 100% | 100% | 100% |

Key to Table

x = 1 – 10 specimens xx = 11 – 50 specimens xxx = 51 – 100 specimens xxxx = 100+ specimens
 fg = fragment cf = compare b = burnt

8 CONCLUSION

Five trenches from the Old Stratford Trial Trench evaluation produced archaeological evidence of activity on the site. Two sets of parallel linear ditches seen in Trenches 2 and 4 are thought to be remnants of a former field system with ditches flanking hedgerows, as they do not appear to connect as one long linear feature like a trackway.

Two large ditches with several fills were found in the northern half of the site in Trenches 10 and 7. In Trench 10, this ditch was quite steeply V-shaped, and contained several fills containing abraded Iron Age pottery and large pieces of animal bone. The function of this ditch is unknown; it may have been a boundary. Another very wide curving ditch was uncovered in Trench 10. Although only a small section of the ditch could be seen in the trench, it is possible that its curve may indicate a circular feature, such as an enclosure ditch. The upper fills of this ditch contained charcoal as well as pottery and bone, probably from domestic waste.

Only one further feature that may be structural was found. This was a posthole in Trench 6, packed with large stones, and a dark grey fill possibly mixed with wood ash. This posthole contained no datable material.

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Websites

BGS 2015 British Geological Survey <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geindex/home.html>

APPENDIX: CONTEXT INVENTORY

| Trench No | Length, width & alignment | NGR | Surface height (aOD) | Depth of natural |
|------------------|--------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | 35m x 1.8m, NW-SE | 477472 241014 | 79.52m | 0.45 – 0.56m |
| <i>Context</i> | <i>Context type</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Dimensions</i> | <i>Artefacts/Samples</i> |
| 101 | Topsoil | Mid grey-brown silty clay | 0.22 - 0.30m | - |
| 102 | Subsoil | Mid brown-orange clay, occasional small-medium chalk and flint inclusions | 0.20 – 0.34m | - |
| 103 | Natural | Light brown-orange clay, frequent large chalk and flint inclusions | - | - |

OLD STRATFORD, TOWCESTER ROAD

| Trench No | Length, width & alignment | NGR | Surface height (aOD) | Depth of natural |
|----------------|---------------------------|---|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 2 | 50m x 1.8m, E-W | 477484 241038 | 81.95m | 0.50m |
| <i>Context</i> | <i>Context type</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Dimensions</i> | <i>Artefacts/Samples</i> |
| 201 | Topsoil | Mid grey-brown silty clay | 0.22 - 0.30m deep | - |
| 202 | Natural | Grey brown-yellow clay, frequent medium chalk and flint inclusions | - | - |
| 203 | Fill of [204] | Yellow-brown silty clay, with chert inclusions | 0.85m wide, 0.32m deep | - |
| 204 | Cut | Shallow U-shaped cut, probable furrow | 0.85m wide, 0.32m deep | - |
| 205 | Fill of [206] | Yellow-brown silty clay, with chert inclusions | 0.88m wide | - |
| 206 | Cut | Shallow U-shaped cut, probable furrow | 0.88m wide | - |
| 207 | Subsoil | Mid brown-orange clay, occasional small-medium chalk and flint inclusions | 0.20 – 0.25m deep | - |



Trench 2 overview, looking east Fig 10

OLD STRATFORD, TOWCESTER ROAD

| Trench No | Length, width & alignment | NGR | Surface height (aOD) | Depth of natural |
|----------------|---------------------------|---|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 3 | 50m x 1.8m, NE-SW | 477518 241132 | 81.69m | 0.38 – 0.45m |
| <i>Context</i> | <i>Context type</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Dimensions</i> | <i>Artefacts/Samples</i> |
| 301 | Topsoil | Mid grey-brown clay loam | 0.20 - 0.30m deep | - |
| 302 | Subsoil | Mid yellowish grey-brown clay, occasional small-medium chalk and flint inclusions | 0.10 – 0.25m deep | - |
| 303 | Natural | Light greenish brown-yellow clay, occasional large chalk and flint inclusions | - | - |



Trench 3 overview, looking south-west Fig 11

| Trench No | Length, width & alignment | NGR | Surface height (aOD) | Depth of natural |
|----------------|---------------------------|---|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 4 | 50m x 1.8m, E-W | 477523 241102 | 80.50m | 0.50m |
| <i>Context</i> | <i>Context type</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Dimensions</i> | <i>Artefacts/Samples</i> |
| 401 | Topsoil | Mid grey-brown silty clay | 0.23 - 0.30m deep | - |
| 402 | Natural | Light brown-yellow clay, frequent medium chalk and flint inclusions, with red-brown sand at one end | - | - |
| 403 | Fill of [404] | Dark brown silty clay, with chert inclusions | 0.56m wide, 0.18m deep | - |
| 404 | Cut | Shallow U-shaped cut, probable furrow | 0.56m wide, 0.18m deep | - |
| 405 | Fill of [406] | Dark brown silty clay, with chert inclusions | 0.66m wide, 0.25m deep | - |
| 406 | Cut | Shallow U-shaped cut, probable furrow | 0.66m wide, 0.25m deep | - |
| 407 | Subsoil | Mid brown-orange clay, occasional small-medium chalk and flint inclusions | 0.20 – 0.25m deep | - |



Trench 4 overview, looking east Fig 12

OLD STRATFORD, TOWCESTER ROAD

| Trench No | Length, width & alignment | NGR | Surface height (aOD) | Depth of natural |
|----------------|---------------------------|---|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 5 | 50m x 1.8m, NW-SE | 477519 241177 | 81.71m | 0.25 – 0.40m |
| <i>Context</i> | <i>Context type</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Dimensions</i> | <i>Artefacts/Samples</i> |
| 501 | Topsoil | Mid grey-brown clay loam | 0.12 - 0.30m deep | - |
| 502 | Subsoil | Mid yellowish grey-brown clay, occasional small chalk and flint inclusions | 0.5 – 0.18m deep | - |
| 503 | Natural | Mid orange-brown clay, patches of high flint concentration, occasional small chalk and flint inclusions | - | - |



Trench 5 overview, looking north-west Fig 13

| Trench No | Length, width & alignment | NGR | Surface height (aOD) | Depth of natural |
|----------------|---------------------------|--|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 6 | 50m x 1.8m, NE-SW | 477526 241226 | 82.04m | 0.40 – 0.46m |
| <i>Context</i> | <i>Context type</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Dimensions</i> | <i>Artefacts/Samples</i> |
| 601 | Topsoil | Mid grey-brown clay loam | 0.20 - 0.35m deep | - |
| 602 | Subsoil | Light orange-yellow clay, occasional small-medium chalk and flint inclusions | 0.20 – 0.25m deep | - |
| 603 | Natural | Light greenish brown-yellow clay, occasional small-medium chalk and flint inclusions | - | - |
| 604 | Fill of [605] | Dark grey silty clay, possibly with ash inclusions, large stones, including granular ironstone formation and cobbles | 0.5m wide, 0.35m deep | Sample 3 10L |
| 605 | Cut of posthole | Steep near vertical sided cut, flat base, circular in plan | 0.5m wide, 0.35m deep | - |



Trench 6 overview, looking north-east Fig 14

| Trench No | Length, width & alignment | NGR | Surface height (aOD) | Depth of natural |
|------------------|--------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 7 | 50m x 1.8m, N-S | 477593 241204 | 80.86m | 0.41 – 0.57m |
| Context | Context type | Description | Dimensions | Artefacts/Samples |
| 701 | Topsoil | Dark brown-grey clay sandy silt | 0.20 - 0.28m deep | - |
| 702 | Subsoil | Mid yellow-brown clay silt | 0.21 – 0.29m deep | - |
| 703 | Natural | Light grey yellow silty clay, frequent small-medium chalk and flint inclusions | - | - |
| 704 | Fill of [707] | Friable dark brown-grey silty clay with occasional small stones, frequent charcoal | 0.20m thick | Pottery, bone Sample 1, 40L |
| 705 | Fill of [707] | Firm mid grey-brown silty clay with occasional small stones, frequent charcoal | 0.18 – 0.26m thick | Bone |
| 706 | Fill of [707] | Firm mid orange-brown silty clay with occasional charcoal | 0.11m thick | - |
| 707 | Cut of ditch | Curvilinear ditch, E-W aligned, moderate slope to sides, concave base | 3.80m wide, 0.86m deep | - |



Trench 7 overview, looking north Fig 15

| Trench No | Length, width & alignment | NGR | Surface height (aOD) | Depth of natural |
|----------------|---------------------------|--|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 8 | 50m x 1.8m, E-W | 477571 241236 | 81.42m | 0.30 – 0.45m |
| <i>Context</i> | <i>Context type</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Dimensions</i> | <i>Artefacts/Samples</i> |
| 801 | Topsoil | Grey-brown silty loam | 0.20 - 0.26m deep | - |
| 802 | Subsoil | Dark orange-brown silty clay, occasional chert inclusions | 0.8 – 0.19m deep | - |
| 803 | Natural | Mid orange clay, patches of sand and chert deposits, 20% gravel inclusions | - | - |



Trench 8 overview, looking east Fig 16

OLD STRATFORD, TOWCESTER ROAD

| Trench No | Length, width & alignment | NGR | Surface height (aOD) | Depth of natural |
|----------------|---------------------------|--|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 10 | 50m x 1.8m, N-S | 477509 241301 | 81.08m | 0.29 – 0.35m |
| <i>Context</i> | <i>Context type</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Dimensions</i> | <i>Artefacts/Samples</i> |
| 1001 | Topsoil | Dark brown-grey silty sandy clay | 0.20 - 0.28m deep | - |
| 1002 | Subsoil | Mid red-brown clay silt | 0.21 – 0.29m deep | - |
| 1003 | Natural | Light yellow-grey silty clay | - | - |
| 1004 | Fill of [1007] | Firm mid blue-grey silty clay | 0.14m thick | Pottery, bone Sample 2, 40L |
| 1005 | Fill of [1007] | Firm mid orange-brown silty clay | 0.24m thick | Pottery, fired clay, bone |
| 1006 | Fill of [1007] | Firm dark blue-grey silty clay | 0.22m thick | - |
| 1007 | Cut of ditch | Linear ditch, E-W aligned, V-shaped profile, moderate slope to sides | 1.23m wide, 0.52m deep | - |



Trench 10 overview, looking north Fig 17

| Trench No | Length, width & alignment | NGR | Surface height (aOD) | Depth of natural |
|----------------|---------------------------|---|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 11 | 50m x 1.8m, E-W | 477515 241341 | 80.20m | 0.50 – 0.53m |
| <i>Context</i> | <i>Context type</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Dimensions</i> | <i>Artefacts/Samples</i> |
| 1101 | Topsoil | Mid grey-brown clay loam | 0.30 - 0.35m deep | - |
| 1102 | Subsoil | Light green-yellow clay, infrequent chalk flecks, small pebbles | 0.17 – 0.20m deep | - |
| 1103 | Natural | Light greyish green-brown clay, occasional small-large flints | - | - |



Trench 11 overview, looking west Fig 18

| Trench No | Length, width & alignment | NGR | Surface height (aOD) | Depth of natural |
|------------------|--------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 12 | 40m x 1.8m, NW-SE | 477598 241328 | 80.76 | 0.22 – 0.38m |
| Context | Context type | Description | Dimensions | Artefacts/Samples |
| 1201 | Topsoil | Grey-brown loam, occasional chert inclusions, root disturbance | 0.19 - 0.26m deep | - |
| 1202 | Subsoil | Orange-brown silty clay, occasional chert inclusions | 0.3 – 0.12m deep | - |
| 1203 | Natural | Orange-brown clay, with bands of chert deposits, root disturbance and sandy lenses | - | - |



Trench 12 overview, looking north-west Fig 19



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