Archaeological trial trench evaluation on Rees Land, Passenham Quarry Northamptonshire July - August 2015

Report No. 15/162

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Illustrator: Amir Bassir

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Site Code: ENN 108064
NGR: SP 760 391

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS	**OASIS molanort1-222816**	
Project title	Archaeological trial trench evaluation on Rees Land, Passenham Quarry, Northamptonshire, July 2015	
Short description	In July and August 2015 an archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by MOLA Northampton, for GRS Roadstone. The works identified an Iron Age pit and furrows of medieval to post-medieval ridge and furrow cultivation. The edge of a palaeochannel was also identified which correlated with an anomaly identified by the geophysical survey.	
Project type	Trial trench evaluation	
Previous work	Desk-based assessment; geophysical survey	
Current land use	Pasture	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type and period	Iron Age pit, medieval to post-medieval furrows.	
Significant finds	Iron Age pottery, worked flint	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address	Rees Land, Passenham Quarry	
Easting Northing	SP 760 391	
Area (sq m/ha)	*c* 50ha	
Height aOD	*c* 67-69m AOD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	MOLA Northampton	
Project brief originator	Northamptonshire County Council	
Project Design originator	Phoenix Consulting	
Director/Supervisor	Paul Clements	
Project Managers	Adam Yates (MOLA Northampton) and Andy Richmond (Phoenix Consulting)	
Sponsor or funding body	GRS Roadstone Ltd	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	06/07/2015	
End date	21/08/2015	
ARCHIVES	**Location (Accession no.)**	**Contents**
Physical	ENN108064	Pottery
Paper		Site records (1 archive box)
Digital		Client report PDF. Survey Data, Photographs
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Title	Archaeological trial trench evaluation on Rees Land, Passenham Quarry, Northamptonshire, July-August 2015	
Serial title & volume	MOLA Northampton Report 15/162	
Author(s)	Paul Clements	
Page numbers	10 pages of text and figures	
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Abstract

In July and August 2015 an archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by MOLA Northampton, for GRS Roadstone. The works identified an Iron Age pit, and furrows of medieval to post-medieval ridge and furrow cultivation. The edge of a palaeochannel was also identified which correlated with a linear anomaly identified by the geophysical survey.

1 INTRODUCTION

An archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out in July and August 2015 by MOLA Northampton on Rees land, Passenham Quarry, Northamptonshire (NGR: SP 760 391; Fig 1). The work was commissioned by GRS Roadstone and overseen on their behalf by Phoenix Consulting Archaeology Ltd. The work was undertaken as part of the planning application (15/00035/MINFUL) for the southern extension of the quarry. The works were carried out in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF; DCLG 2012).

The scope of works was outlined and detailed in the Written Scheme of Investigation (MOLA 2015).

The aims of the investigation were to:

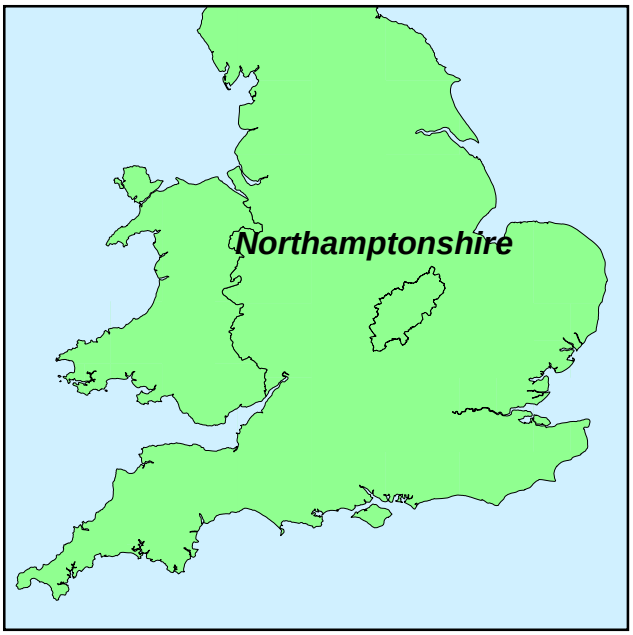
- Establish the date, nature and extent of the activity or occupation on the development site;
- Determine the integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present;
- Recover artefacts to assist in the development of type series within the region;
- Recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.

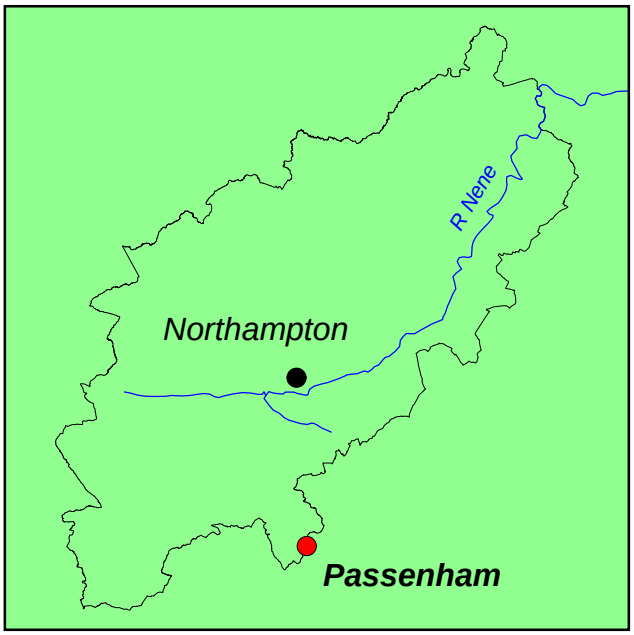
2 BACKGROUND

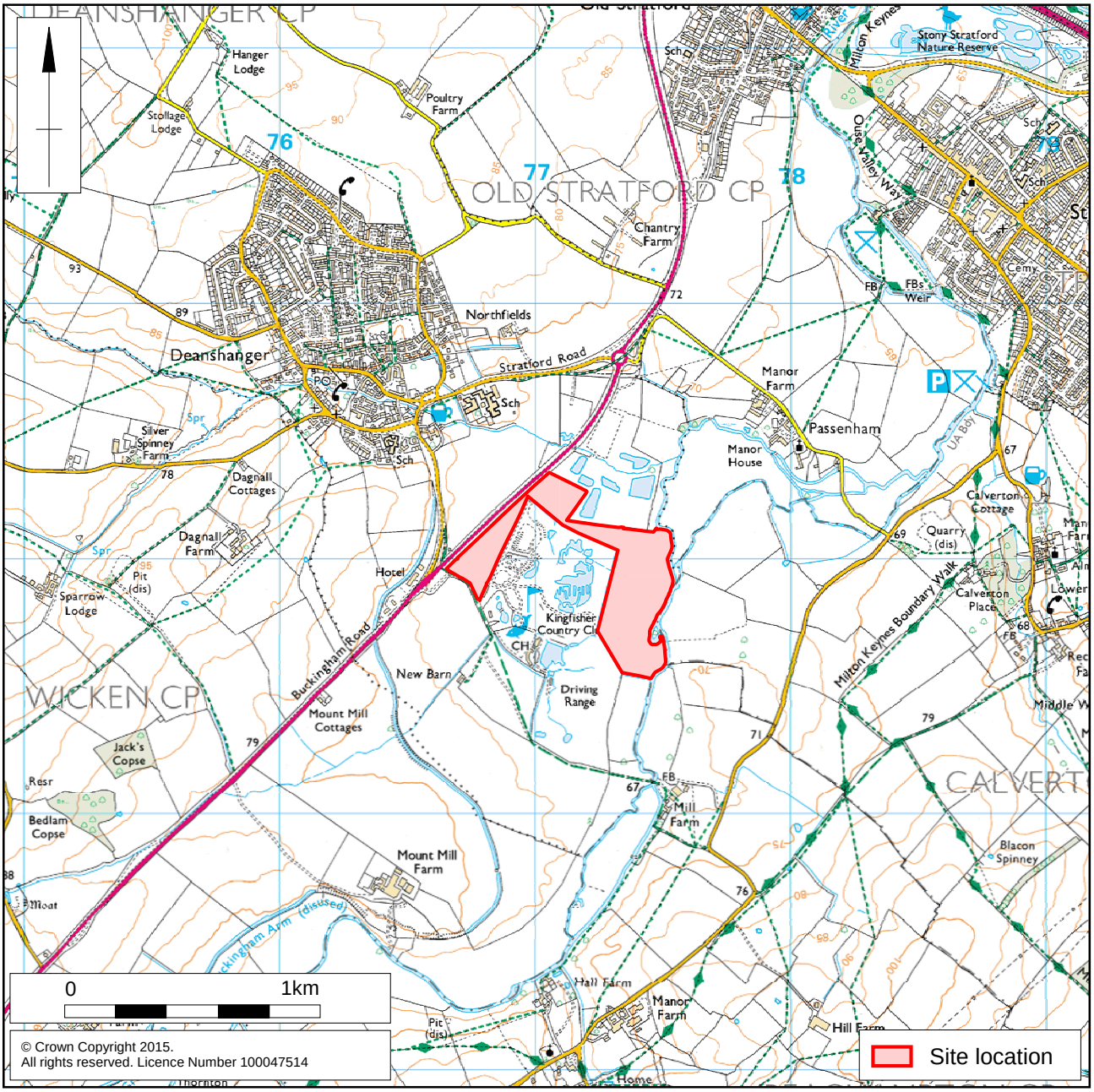
2.1 Location and geology

The site is located to the south-east of Deanshanger and south-west of Passenham village, on the western bank of the River Great Ouse. The land arches around the northern side of the Kingfisher Country Club to the south of the current quarry workings, with the A422 Buckingham Road forming the western extent.

The site is underlain by interbedded siltstone and mudstone of the Lias group formation. These are overlain by superficial deposits of clay, silt, sand, and gravel to the north and west and by alluvial clay, sand and gravels to the east (BGS 2015). Soils across the site are recorded as loamy and clay with impeded draining (Landis 2015).







Scale 1:25,000

Site location Fig 1

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

A Desk-based assessment was undertaken by Phoenix Consulting (Walsh and Richmond 2013). The results are summarised here.

Within the immediate vicinity of the development area are six entries in the Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record (HER) and records of metal detecting finds reported under the Portable Antiquities Scheme.

The site of a possible prehistoric settlement has been identified within the fields immediately south of the development area. As part of the National Mapping Programme a series of cropmarks were identified possibly representing prehistoric enclosures and ditches. Cropmarks of a ring ditch, also in the southern field, may indicate the location of a barrow.

Spot finds within the field to the south contain numerous metal detector finds. These include Roman copper coins, a Saxon copper brooch, medieval silver coins and rings. Further post-medieval finds include copper coins, a buckle and copper pins.

Previous archaeological excavations by Northamptonshire Archaeology have taken place within the current quarry to the east of the river in Milton Keynes (Morris 2006, Walker 2010 and 2011). These works have identified Bronze Age round barrows and pit alignment, Iron Age and Roman settlement and two stone-built Roman mausolea.

3 METHODOLOGY

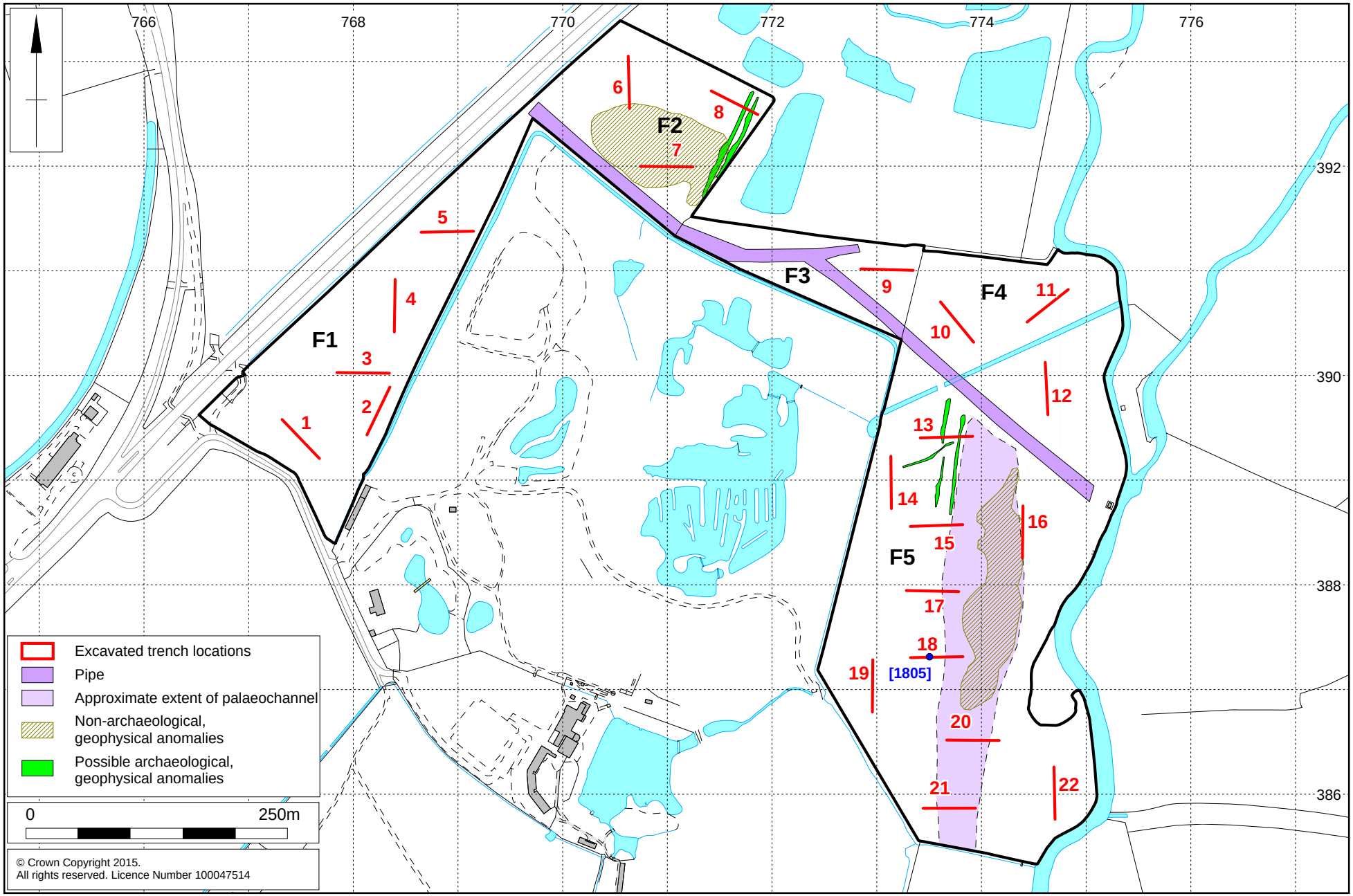
The trenching was undertaken in two phases due to crops in Fields 1 and 2. As a result the evaluation in Fields 3 and 4 was undertaken in July and in Fields 1 and 2 in August after harvesting of the crop.

Twenty-two trial trenches were excavated in accordance with a trench plan prepared by Phoenix Consulting Archaeology Ltd and approved by Lesley-Ann Mather (Planning Archaeologist for Northamptonshire). The trench plan was designed to test anomalies revealed by the geophysical survey as well as providing a general coverage of the proposed quarry extension area (Fig 2). Each trench was 50m long by 1.80m wide totalling an area of 1980 square metres. All trenches were positioned using a Leica Viva RTK GPS.

A 22 ton 360^{o} mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.80m wide toothless 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 1:100 and was related to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. Archaeological deposits were examined by hand excavation to determine their nature. Recording followed standard MOLA Northampton 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 and related to Ordnance Survey datum.

All works were conducted in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2014) and *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (CIfA 1994, revised 2014).

Scale 1:5000



Excavated trench locations Fig 2

4 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

4.1 General stratigraphy

The underlying geology was encountered between 0.25m and 0.50m below the modern ground surface. It comprised mixed mid orange-brown and yellow sand and gravels with areas of mid grey clay.

Mid grey-brown silty clay subsoil overlay the natural. It had an average depth of 0.30m. The topsoil was 0.20m thick and comprised dark grey-brown clay-loam containing infrequent small and medium-sized gravels.

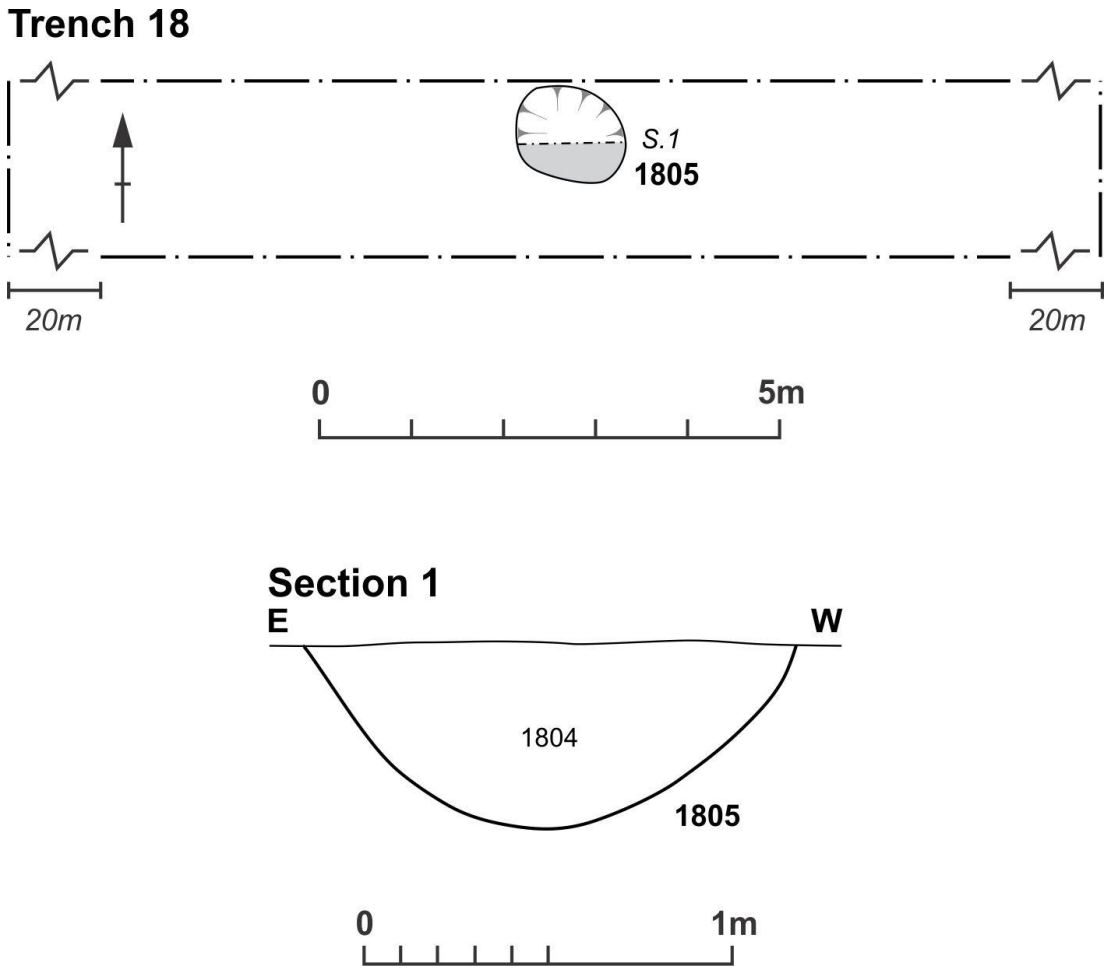
4.2 The trial trenches

The trench locations are shown in Figure 2 and an inventory of contexts is provided in the Appendix.

The geophysical anomalies targeted by Trenches 2 and 8 were identified as patches of clay within the gravel, and those targeted by Trench 13 were identified as the edge of a palaeochannel. Furrows of ridge and furrow cultivation were located in Trenches 19 and 14.

Trench 18

A pit [1805] was identified in the centre of Trench 18. It was sub-circular, 1.35m in diameter and 0.50m deep with a bowl-shaped profile (Fig 3). A sherd of middle to late Iron Age pottery was recovered from the fill, dark grey-brown silty clay.



Trench 18 plan and pit [1805] section Fig 3

Palaeochannel

Two parallel linear anomalies identified by the geophysical survey were identified as the western edge of a palaeochannel. This was identified in Trenches 13, 15, 17, 18 and 21.

At the eastern ends of Trenches 15, 18, and 20 machine dug sections were excavated to 1.30m through the silting material within the palaeochannel. The channel was wide, but shallow, and contained three silty clay deposits

Machine dug sections were excavated to a maximum depth of 1.20m through the silting material at the eastern ends of Trenches 15, 18 and 20 (Fig 4).

Machine section through palaeochannel, Trench 18, looking north Fig 4

5 THE FINDS

5.1 **The flints** by Andy Chapman

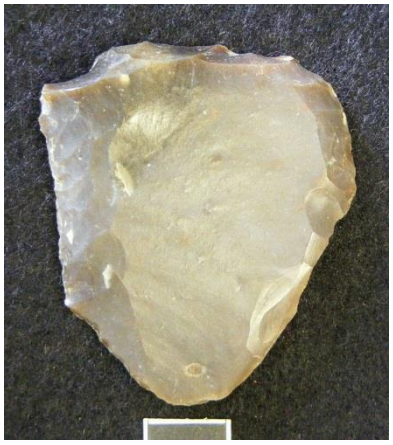
There are six worked flints, all of which have come from the top of the natural.

From Trench 8 (803, SF6) there is part of a small shattered core, 24mm long (broken) and 26mm diameter (broken). It is in dark grey-green opaque flint, with a small area of off-white cortex surviving adjacent to the single surviving platform, from which small blade-like flakes have been struck. It is typical of small cores derived the local gravels, and may date to the early Neolithic.

From Trenches 13 (1303, SF4) and 14 (1403, SF2), there are two flakes in brown and grey translucent flint, and one (SF4) has both miscellaneous retouch and edge damage. Also from Trench 14 (1403, SF3), there is a small blade, 32mm long (broken) by 26mm wide, with cortex along one edge and damage to the other edge. There is

also a large oval flake from Trench 13 (1303, SF5), 54mm long by 40mm wide, in light grey stony flint. There is random edge damage but no retouch.

The only tool is also from Trench 14 (1403, SF1). A large flake, in dark grey opaque, 47mm long by up to 41mm wide, had been finely pressure-flaked along both edges and most probably the end, to form a composite scraper/knife, with a cutting edge to left, indicating that it was used by a right-handed person (Fig 5). A slightly blue-grey patination had formed across the surfaces before the scraper end was crudely reworked, with the removal of larger more irregular flakes, to form a much squarer end scraper. This piece may have been early Neolithic in origin with later reworking.



End scraper and cutting edge, with crude reworking (SF1)
(Scale 10mm) Fig 5

Although this is a small group, there appears to be a dominance of blade-related material and a well-made scraper/knife composite tool that suggests a consistent date in the early Neolithic.

5.2 The prehistoric pottery by Andy Chapman

In Trench 18, from the fill (1804) of pit [1805], there is a single small pottery sherd, weighing 6g. The fabric is sandy, but does not contain visible mineral inclusions and has a dark grey core with a light grey inner surface and a brown outer surface. The surface has a number of roughly parallel grooves, indicating that this is scored ware of the middle/late Iron Age.

6 DISCUSSION

In general the trial trenching has confirmed the results of the geophysical survey. An isolated Iron Age pit was located centrally in Trench 18 within Field 4. No other features or residual topsoil or subsoil pottery finds were recovered and this likely indicates that limited prehistoric activity was occurring on the western side of the river in this area.

Other linear anomalies identified by the geophysical survey were identified as bands of clay within the gravels, Trenches 2 and 8. The anomaly targeted by Trench 13 was shown to be the western edge of a palaeochannel which was evident within Trenches 15, 17, 18, and 21.

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