



**Archaeological trial trench evaluation
on land north of Coopers Lane
Dunton Bassett, Leicestershire
May 2018**

Report No: 18/63

Authors: Paul Sharrock

Illustrator: Olly Dindol



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Manager: Liz Muldowney

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Authors: Paul Sharrock BA MA

Illustrator: Olly Dindol BSc

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MOLA
Kent House
30 Billing Road
Northampton
NN1 5DQ
01604 809 800
www.mola.org.uk
sparry@mola.org.uk

STAFF

Project Manager: Liz Muldowney MA

Text: Paul Sharrock BA MA

Fieldwork: Paul Sharrock
Anna Rojek BA,
Guilherme Sarmiento BA, MA

Illustrations: Olly Dindol BSc

Charred plant remains: Sander Aerts BA MA

Pottery: Adam Sutton BA MA

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		Oasis No. molanort1- 317384	
Project title	Archaeological trial trench evaluation on land north of Coopers Lane Dunton Bassett, Leicestershire, May 2018		
Short description	<i>MOLA was commissioned by CgMs Heritage on behalf of Richborough Estates Ltd to carry out archaeological trial trenching on land north of north of Coopers Lane, Dunton Bassett prior to proposed development on the site. Fifteen trenches were excavated across two fields revealing an extensive series of ridge and furrow. Within Field 1 furrows are present on both an east to west alignment and a north to south alignment. Within Field 2 furrows are only present on the east west alignment however distinct ridges are visible on the surface. Only two other features of an archaeological nature, a small undated ditch on a north to south alignment located within the middle of Trench 12 and an east to west ditch located along the northern edge of Trench 4.</i>		
Project type	Archaeological trial trench evaluation		
Previous work	Geophysical Survey (Pérez Arana) DBA (CgMs 2018b)		
Current land use	Pasture		
Future work	Unknown		
Monument type and period	Ridge and Furrow		
Significant finds	None		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Leicestershire		
Site address	Coopers Lane, Dunton Bassett, Leicestershire		
Easting and northing	NGR: SP 5497 9100		
Area (sq m/ha)	5ha		
Height aOD	c 115-120m aOD		
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	MOLA Northampton		
Project brief originator	Leicestershire County Council Principal Planning Archaeologist		
Project Design originator	MOLA Northampton		
Project Supervisor	Paul Sharrock (MOLA)		
Director/ Managers	Liz Muldowney (MOLA)		
Sponsor or funding body	CgMs Heritage, for Richborough Estates Ltd		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	30th April 2018		
End date	3rd May 2018		
ARCHIVES	Location	Contents	
Physical	XA492018	CBM	
Paper		Site records	
Digital		Survey data, report, photographs	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (MOLA report)		
Title	Archaeological trial trench evaluation on land north of Coopers Lane Dunton Bassett, Leicestershire, May 2018		
Serial title & volume	MOLA Northampton report 18/63		
Author(s)	Paul Sharrock		
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Archaeological trial trench evaluation on land north of Coopers Lane Dunton Bassett, Leicestershire May 2018

Abstract

MOLA was commissioned by CgMs Heritage on behalf of Richborough Estates Ltd to carry out archaeological trial trenching on land north of north of Coopers Lane, Dunton Bassett prior to proposed development on the site. Fifteen trenches were excavated across two fields revealing an extensive series of ridge and furrow. Within Field 1 furrows are present on both an east to west alignment and a north to south alignment. Within Field 2 furrows are only present on the east west alignment however distinct ridges were visible on the surface. Only two other features of an archaeological nature, a small undated ditch on a north to south alignment located within the middle of Trench 12 and an east to west ditch located along the northern edge of Trench 4.

1 INTRODUCTION

In May 2018, MOLA was commissioned by CgMs Heritage on behalf of Richborough Estates Ltd to conduct an archaeological evaluation on land north of Coopers Lane, Dunton Bassett (NGR SP 54975 91000) (Fig 1).

The Leicestershire County Council Principal Planning Archaeologist had advised that a programme of archaeological evaluation should be undertaken to determine the nature and extent of any archaeological remains within the Development Area. The requirements were outlined in a written scheme of investigation prepared by CgMs (2018).

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and geology

The proposed development site extends across two pasture fields, which lie to the north of Coopers Lane, Dunton Bassett. It comprises approximately 5 hectares of land centred at National Grid Reference SP 54975 91000 (Figure 1). The study site is an L-shaped plot bounded to the north, east and west by low mature hedgerows and open fields, with a modern farmstead also to the west. The eastern margin of the site runs along Lutterworth Road. South of the site, beyond a boundary of further hedgerow, is Coopers Lane and later 20th-century development along its south side.

The area of investigation lies between 115m and 120m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) sloping to the north from the southern boundary.

The solid geology of the site is mapped as Blue Lias interbedded mudstone and limestone, overlain by superficial mid-Pleistocene till deposits within the west of the site, with a narrow band of alluvial deposits within the east side of the site. (BSG 2018).

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the development site has been considered through geophysical survey (Pérez Arana 2018) and desk-based assessment (DBA; CgMs 2018b).

The geophysical survey comprised a fluxgate magnetometer survey which was successfully completed across the site. The results reflect modern activity and agricultural responses indicative of ploughing trends as well as ridge and furrow and a possible trackway. No features of significant archaeological interest were identified.

The desk-based assessment reviewed previously available archaeological information for the site and surrounding area, based on data obtained from the Historic Environment Record (HER) for Leicestershire and Rutland (in January 2018).

At the time of the DBA, there were no non-designated heritage assets recorded on the site; however cropmarks of ridge and furrow are visible on satellite imagery and were identified during the Geophysical Survey. Earthwork remains of ridge and furrow were observed in part of the site during a site visit undertaken for the DBA.

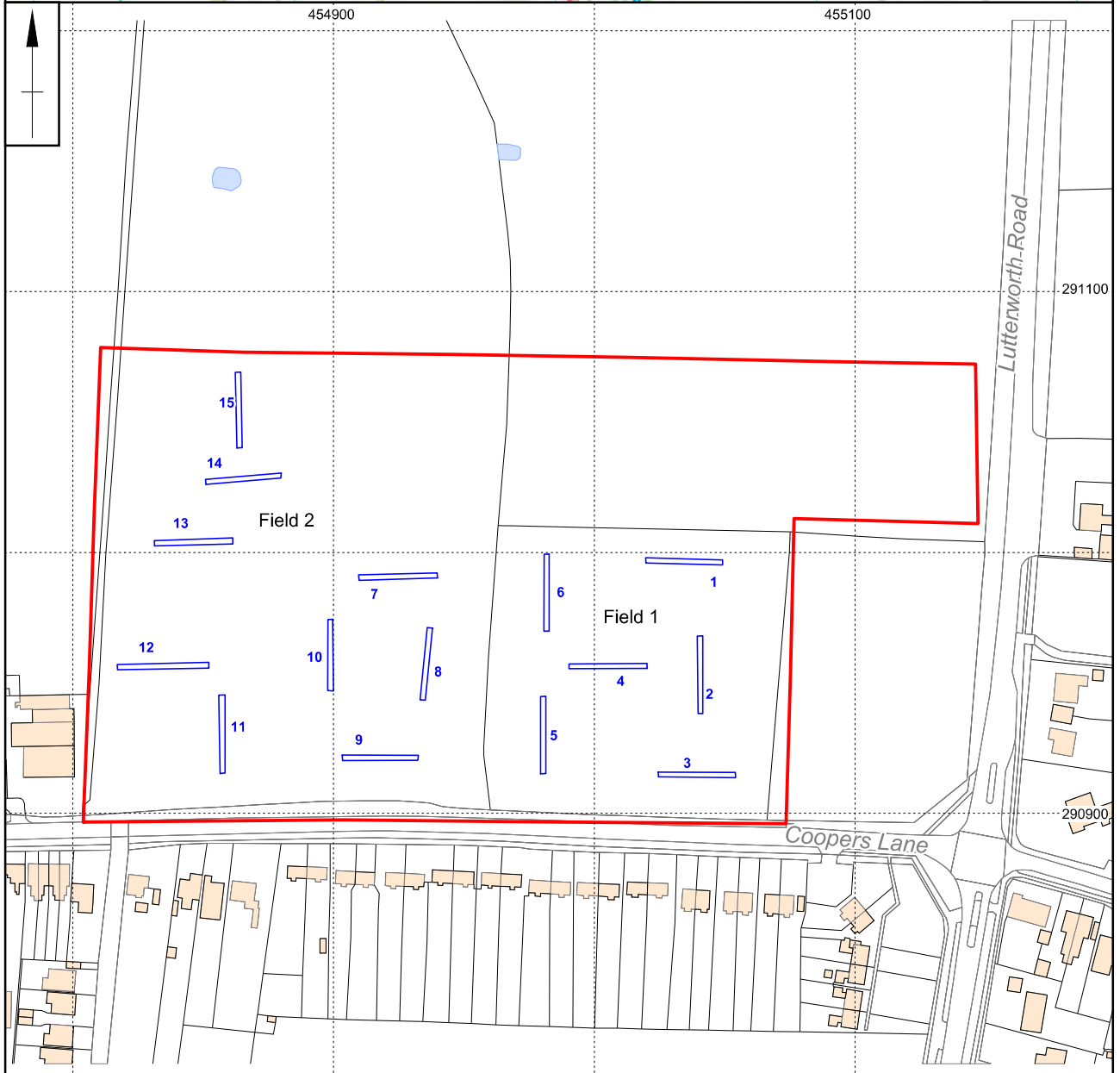
Within the surrounding area, there has been relatively extensive fieldwork undertaken. Evidence for Palaeolithic to Iron Age activity comprises an Upper Palaeolithic flint, Mesolithic flints, a possible Neolithic burnt mound and a possible Bronze Age ditch (HER 15800-15803) found during excavation c370m south-west of the site; a Late Iron Age enclosure and pits (MLE22723), c460m south-west and isolated findspots of a Mesolithic pebble hammer (MLE7022), c420m south of the site and Late Iron Age/Romano-British quern (MLE6575), c640m south-west of the site.

A former Roman Road is located adjacent to the site to the east (MLE1902) and small quantities of isolated findspots of Roman pottery are also recorded in the search area between 150m south and 900m of the site.

Dunton Bassett is recorded in the Domesday Book (1086) (Palmer 2018) and probably existed from the Late Saxon period. Late Saxon evidence from the search area comprises pottery found in association with earthworks and housing platforms (MLE9740), c370m south-west of the site.

A Scheduled Monument 'Moated site with fishpond at Dunton Bassett', which comprises a medieval moated manor house with associated fishponds and possible orchards surviving as building platforms and earthworks, is situated c350m south-west of the site (NHLE ID 1010915, HE 2018).

The site is located c150m south-west of the historic core of the medieval settlement of Dunton Bassett (MLE9738) at its closest point and was used throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods as open agricultural land.



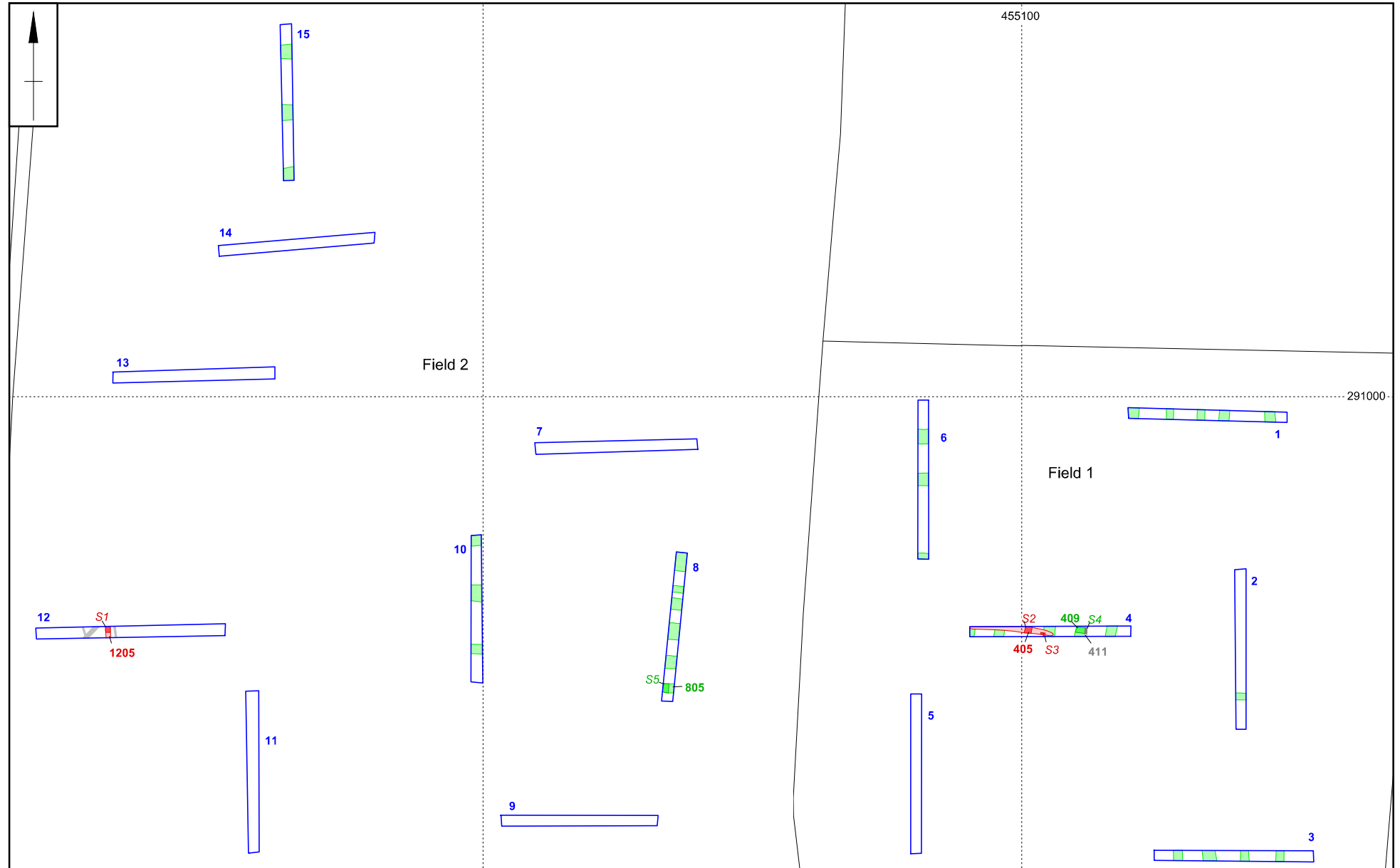
- ▭ Site location
- ▭ Excavated trench

OS OpenData contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2018

Scale 1:2500

Site location and excavated trenches Fig 1

Scale 1:1000 (A4)



Trench plan

Fig 2



3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The general aim of the project was to determine the presence or absence of archaeological remains and to provide information to enable further targeting of areas of the site for mitigation, if required.

The specific research aims of the project were:

- To determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significant and quality of any archaeological remains within the development site;
- To assess the artefactual and environmental potential of the archaeological deposits encountered;
- To assess the impact of previous land use on the site;
- To inform formulation of any further measures to mitigate impacts of the proposed development on surviving archaeological remains;
- To produce a site archive for deposition with an appropriate museum and to provide information for accession to the Leicestershire Historic Environment Record (HER).

The broad research framework for the East Midlands is set out by Cooper (2006), supplemented by Knight, Vyner and Allen (2012). The research aims set out in these documents were addressed by the project, as appropriate.

4 GENERAL METHODOLOGY

A 3% sample of the development area was subject to archaeological trial trench evaluation. This comprised 15 trenches, each 30m long and 1.8m wide (Fig 2). Trenches were positioned to provide a broad sample across the site, examining a cross section of the ridge and furrow and avoiding trenches directly over, and on the same alignment of the furrows.

The trenches were located using Leica Viva Survey Grade RTK GPS using SMARTNET real-time corrections, operating to a 3D tolerance of $\pm 0.05\text{m}$ to Ordnance Survey National Grid and Datum. Machine excavation was undertaken under the direction of a suitably experienced archaeologist to reveal archaeological remains or where these are absent, undisturbed natural horizons.

Following machine-excavation, the surface of the exposed archaeological horizon was cleaned in order to define the remains, with a selection of the extant archaeological features then sampled to attempt to determine character and date. Full excavation of features was not attempted at this stage of the investigation.

All archaeological deposits and excavated features were fully recorded following standard MOLA procedures (MOLA, 2014), with each distinct context given a unique number and described on *pro-forma* record sheets in terms of its composition, relationship to other contexts and interpretation. A full photographic record comprising digital images was also maintained.

Following completion of the site investigation, all trenches were mechanically backfilled with their original excavated material.

All works were carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2014a) and *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (CIfA 2014b); the Historic England procedural document, *Management of Field Projects in the Historic Environment* (HE 2015) and MOLA's in-house *Archaeological Fieldwork Manual* (MOLA 2014). All site recording procedures are detailed in MOLA's *Archaeological Field Manual* (MOLA 2014).

5 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

5.1 General stratigraphy

A full account of the stratigraphy by trench can be found in the Context Inventory (Appendix 1).

The stratigraphy remained generally consistent across all fields. The natural substrate comprised a mixture of yellow and orange sands and patches of red and grey clay. This substrate was encountered between 0.40m and 0.79m below the present ground surface. A subsoil of varying thickness was recorded in all trenches; it comprised friable mid brown sandy silt with occasional small stone inclusions throughout and was between 0.05m and 0.37m thick. A top/agricultural soil comprised mid-dark brown silty clay with occasional small stone inclusions throughout. It had significant root disturbance and was between 0.25m and 0.44m thick (Fig 3).



Trench 14, representative section, facing south Fig 3

5.2 The archaeological features

Very few archaeological features were uncovered across the site which was mostly dominated by furrows, land drains and in the case of Field 2 distinct ridges associated with the furrows along with two undated ditches.

Medieval to post-medieval ridge and furrow

Within Field 1 furrows were uncovered on two sets of alignments, east to west aligned, which were detected during the geophysical survey and north to south aligned which were not. These measured 1.06m wide and 0.12m deep and contained pottery dating to between late-17th to mid-18th centuries (Fig 4 and 9) suggesting infilling at this date..

Medieval ridge and furrow within Field 2 was clearly visible on the surface prior to excavation with the surface height difference between the top of the furrow and the top of the ridge being 0.40m and 0.84m from the base of the furrow to the top of the ridge. These were present on an east to west alignment, measured 1.55m wide and 0.33m deep (Fig 6, 7 and 9). Pottery was recovered from the furrow suggesting a similar date for the infilling of the furrows found within Field 1, between late-17th to mid-18th centuries.



Furrow [409], Trench 4, facing north Fig 4



Furrow [805], Trench 8, facing west Fig 5



Post-excitation shot of Trench 8 Fig 6

Ditches

Two ditches were identified on the site. The first, [405], was located on an east to west alignment within Trench 4 and measured 1.00m wide and 0.16m deep (Fig 7 and 9). No dating evidence was recovered however the ditch cut through several of the north to south aligned furrows within the trench suggesting it post-dates the medieval activity. The second ditch, [1204], was located on a north to south alignment within Trench 12 and measured 0.65m wide and 0.24m deep (Fig 8 and 9). No dating evidence was found.



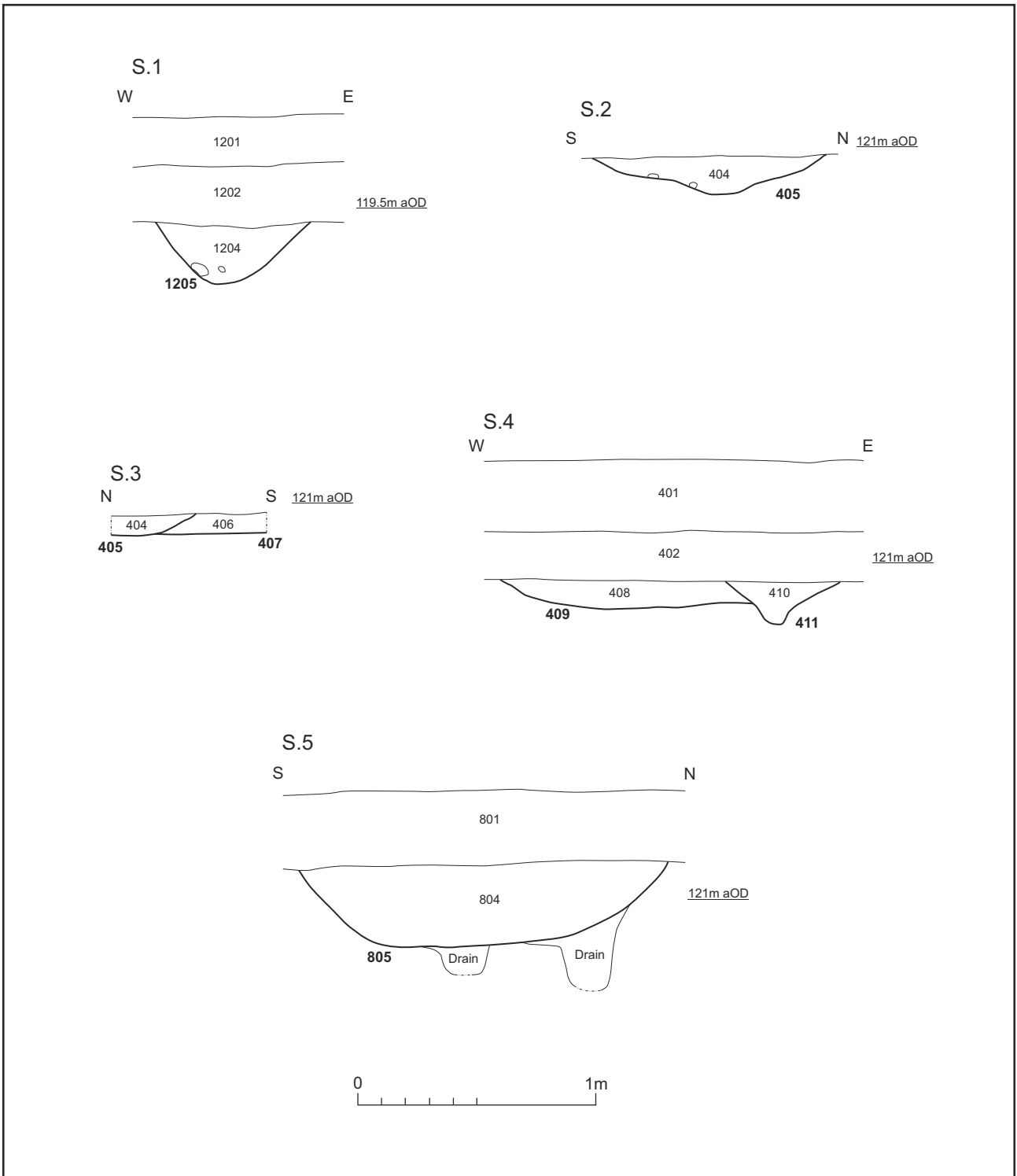
Ditch [405], facing east

Fig 7



Undated ditch [805], facing north

Fig 8



Scale 1:25

Excavated sections Fig 9

6 POTTERY REPORT by Adam Sutton

Three sherds of post-medieval pottery were recovered from two contexts. Two sherds (weighing 8g) came from context (406); the remaining sherd (weighing 25g) came from (804). Both sherds are in a similar pale (buff/cream/pink), highly variegated earthenware fabric, with few inclusions other than clay pellets visible in the break. One of the sherds from (406) preserves a small amount of yellowish glaze over a white slip; the sherd from (804) is very hard and has a dark brown glaze covering its interior surface. In the case of the sherds from (406) an origin in the Staffordshire potteries may be suggested (Staffordshire slipware): if this is so then it will date to between the late-17th to mid-18th centuries. A similar date may be suggested for the sherd from (406).

7 ENVIRONMENTAL REMAINS by Sander Aerts

The sample of 20 litres was analysed for environmental remains from context (404), fill of ditch [405]. The sample was processed at MOLA Northampton through manual wash over, using a siraf tank fitted with a 1 millimetre mesh and a 500 micron sieve to retrieve the flot. The flot and residue were dried and sorted by hand.

The flot comprises mainly of modern botanical remains, such as rootlets and seeds, which have not been further identified. Some small fragments of charcoal were observed, with a combined weight of less than 1 gram. The residue did not contain any artefacts or ecofacts.

No further work is required on this assemblage. It is suggested to not retain the flot for archiving, as it does not hold any archaeological research value.

8 CONCLUSION

Limited archaeological remains were encountered in the evaluated area, all dating from the medieval to post-medieval period. An extensive network of furrows covers most of the fields forming part of the remnant cultivation system. This is paired with distinct ridges within Field 2 and multiple phases of furrows on differing alignments within Field 1. Two ditches, both likely more recent in date were also present however no dating evidence was recovered. The large linear feature showing on the geophysical survey within Trench 12 was not identified during excavation with no features, variation in the natural or any concentrated material in the subsoil apparent.

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MOLA
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MOLA
Kent House
30 Billing Road
Northampton
NN1 5DQ
01604 809800
www.mola.org.uk
business@mola.org.uk