



**A programme of archaeological observation,
Investigation, recording and publication
at the 20MW energy battery storage facility,
Chelveston Renewable Energy Park
The Airfield, Chelveston, Northamptonshire
October 2018**

Accession Number: ENN109122
Site code: CHEBSF17

Authors: Chris Jones and Adam Reid

Illustration: Olly Dindol



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Project Manager: Ant Maull
Site Code: CHEBSF17
NGR: TL 01334 68672

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Report No: 18/145

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1	01/11/2018	C Finn	T Preece	A Maull	Draft for client review
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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS No: molanort1-332363	
Project name	A programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording at the 20MW energy battery storage facility, Chelveston Renewable Energy Park, The Airfield, Chelveston, Northamptonshire		
Short description	MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) was commissioned by CgMs Consulting to carry out an archaeological watching brief. No archaeological finds or features were identified.		
Project type	Watching Brief		
Site status	None		
Previous work	Yes – Watching Brief, Trenching		
Current Land use	Pasture		
Future work	Unknown		
Monument type/ period	None		
Significant finds (artefact type and period)	None		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Northamptonshire		
Site address (including postcode)	Chelveston Renewable Energy Park, The Airfield, Chelveston, Northamptonshire		
Study area (sq.m or ha)	c 0.34ha		
OS Easting & Northing	TL 01334 68672		
Height OD	c 90m aOD		
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	MOLA Northampton		
Project brief originator	Liz Mordue, Northamptonshire County Council		
Project Design originator	MOLA Northampton		
Director/Supervisor	Chris Jones (MOLA)		
Project Manager	Ant Maull (MOLA)		
Sponsor or funding body	CgMs Consulting		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	02/10/2018		
End Date	12/10/2018		
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)	
Physical	ENN109122 MOLA Northampton	None	
Paper		Watching brief forms, permatrace plans	
Digital		GPS plans, Word report	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (MOLA report)		
Title	A programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording at the 20MW energy battery storage facility, Chelveston Renewable Energy Park, The Airfield, Chelveston, Northamptonshire		
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**A programme of archaeological observation,
Investigation, recording and publication at
the 20MW energy battery storage facility
Chelveston Renewable Energy Park, The Airfield
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Abstract

MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) was commissioned by CgMs Heritage to carry out an archaeological watching brief at the 20MW energy battery storage facility Chelveston Renewable Energy Park, The Airfield Chelveston, Northamptonshire. No archaeological finds or features were identified.

1 INTRODUCTION

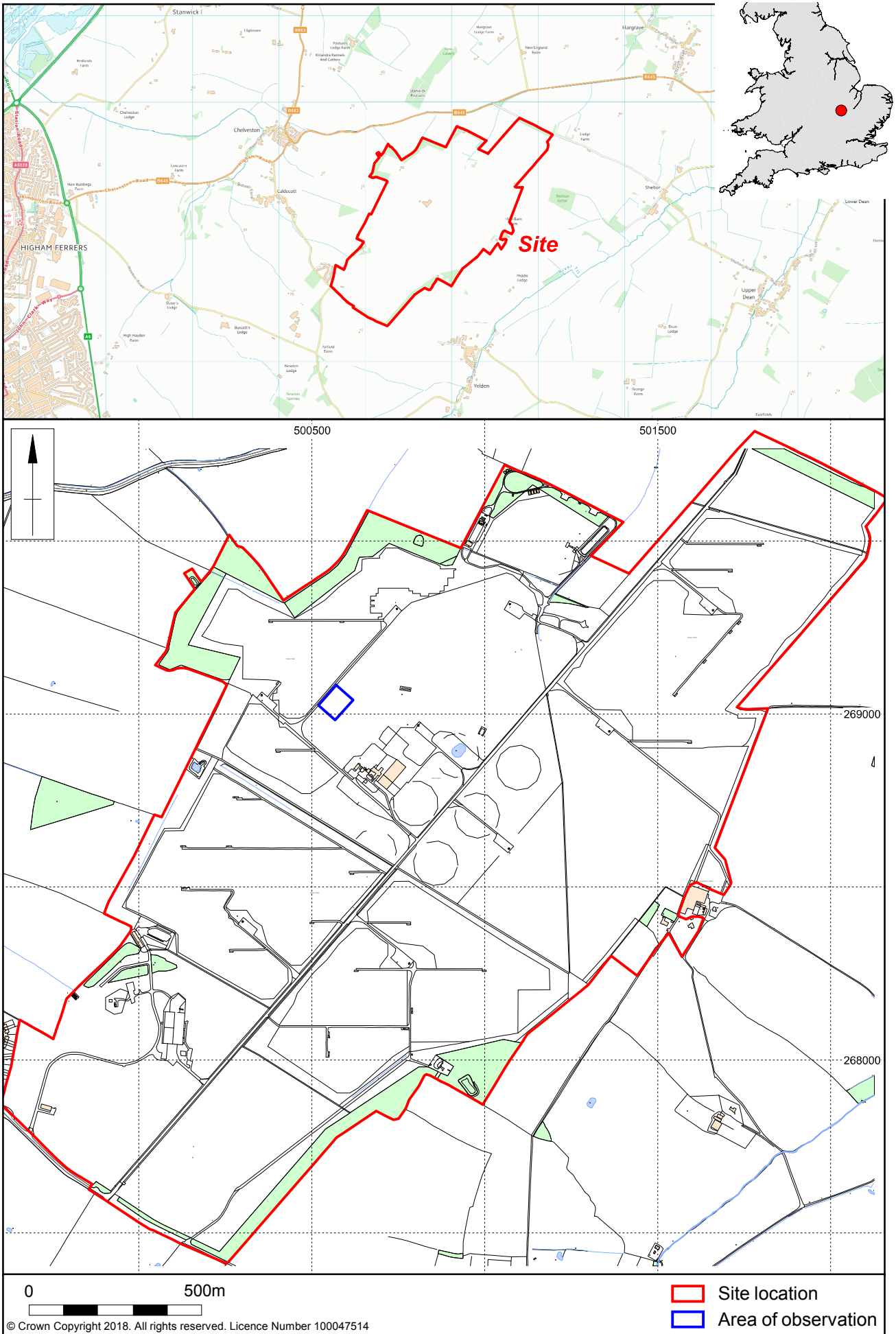
MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) had been commissioned by CgMs Heritage on behalf of their clients, Federal Estates Ltd, to undertake a programme of archaeological observation, investigation, recording, analysis and publication at the 20MW energy battery storage facility, Chelveston Renewable Energy Park, The Airfield, Chelveston, Northamptonshire (NGR TL 01334 68672, Fig 1). Federal Estates Ltd have been granted planning consent for the construction of a 20MW energy storage facility (East Northamptonshire Council planning application nos: 18/00089/CND and 18/00016/CND). The Assistant Archaeological Advisor at Northamptonshire County Council (AAA NCC) has required that a programme of archaeological works be undertaken to mitigate the impact of the development (Mordue 2017). The works followed the specification set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (MOLA 2017).

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location, topography and geology

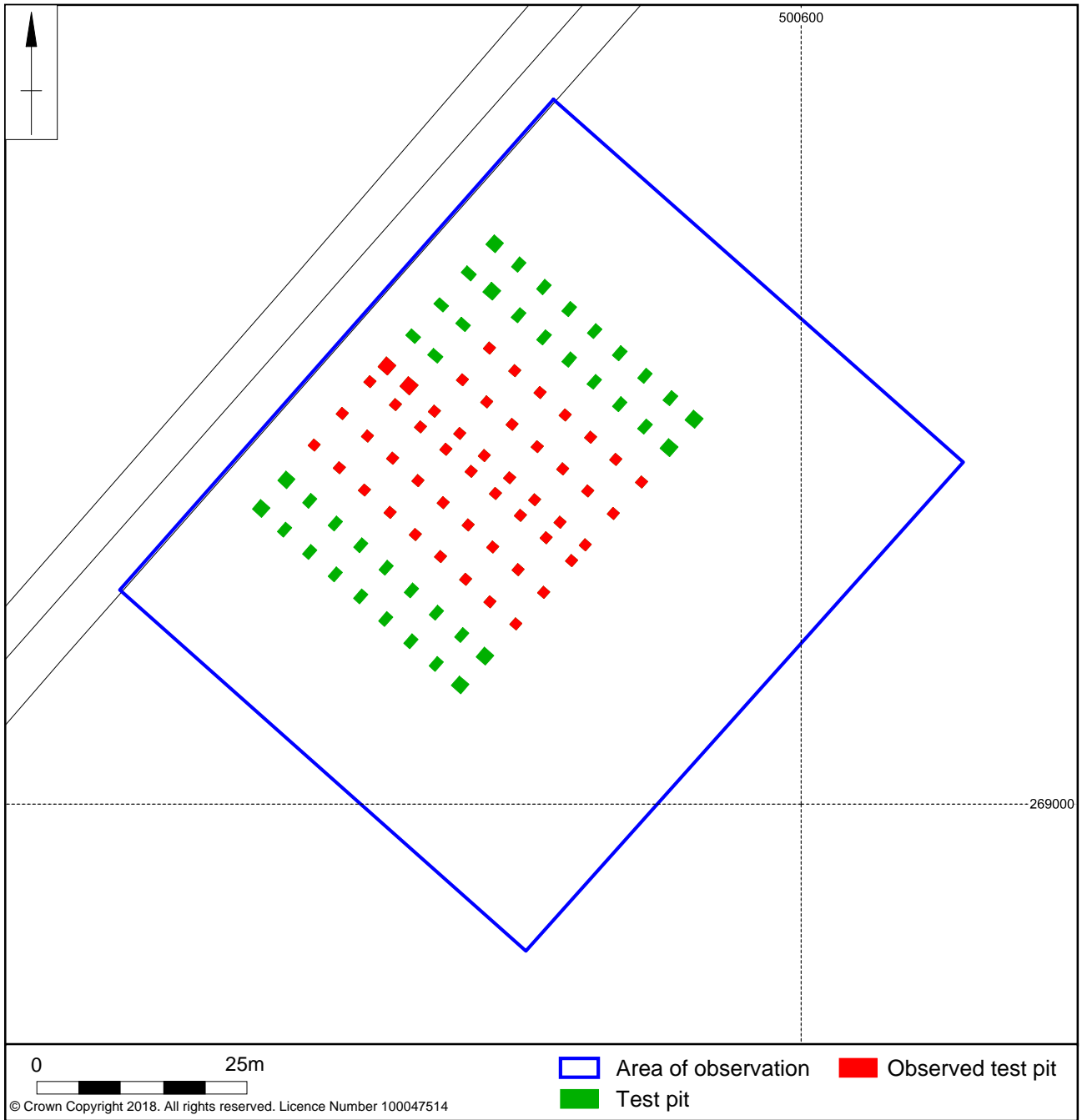
Chelveston village is located on the Northamptonshire/Bedfordshire border, c15km east of Wellingborough. The former RAF Chelveston airfield, now Chelveston Renewable Energy Park, lies to the south-east of the village. The area subject to development lies within the airfield boundary and encompasses a rectangular area of 0.34ha sited on relatively flat ground.

The underlying geology comprises Oxford Clay, overlain by Oadby Member diamicton (BGS 2018). Topographically the site sits on a slight clay ridge at approximately 90m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), with the ground level sloping down to the east and west. It is also situated within the watershed of two Rivers: the Nene, located north-west of the focus area, and the Great Ouse to the south-west.



Scale 1:15,000

Site location and area of observation Fig 1



Scale 1:750

Observed test pits Fig 2

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

The archaeological background has been examined through a Desk-Based Assessment, produced by CgMs Heritage (Dawson 2017). The results of this Desk-Based Assessment are summarised below, and include Historic Environment Record ID numbers from Northamptonshire (NHER) and Bedfordshire (BHER).

Bronze Age

Undated cropmarks have been recorded in Northamptonshire extending in an arc around the north-west perimeter of the former airfield; a similar pattern of cropmarks has been observed across the county boundary in Bedfordshire (BHER: 370, 570, 14005, 8313). The form of the cropmarks suggests that they are most likely Bronze Age to Iron Age in date and are indicative of a prehistoric settlement in the area. A ring ditch to the west of the airfield may be the remains of a barrow marking the location of a Bronze Age burial (NHER: 7291).

Iron Age

An Iron Age settlement has been identified to the north of the airfield and confirmed by excavation (NHER: 1799, 2145). Iron Age pottery and a fragment of quern were recovered during the removal of the runway in 1977. A trial trench evaluation in 2013, conducted by Northamptonshire Archaeology, recorded ditches and pits dated to the late Iron Age and into the early Roman period (Fig 2) (Clarke and Muldowney 2013). Whilst these remains were interpreted as part of a field system, some domestic pottery fragments suggest a settlement existed nearby. Modern disturbance related to the military airbase was present in all but three of the trenches, particularly in the area of the former runway where varying degrees of truncation were noted.

Roman

The evidence for Roman activity within the vicinity of the development area is better represented with a number of finds particularly in and around the nearby village of Yelden. A coin hoard is recorded from the village but with no further details and a ploughed out villa was excavated by the Rev. Baker in 1882 (BHER: 341). The aforementioned evaluation in 2013 also found ceramic material which demonstrated activity during this period adjacent to the airfield (Clarke and Muldowney 2013).

A series of trial trenching in 2014 covered part of the former airfield, to the south of the current site, and discovered Roman pits and ditches, but unfortunately all were heavily truncated by the military activity (*ibid*; Jones 2014; Hewitt and Finn 2014).

Medieval

The village of Chelveston is recorded in the Domesday Survey in 1086 as *Celuestone* and may have origins as early as the 9th century. The development area occupies land which would have made up part of the open field systems. Extant earthworks indicative of ridge and furrow cultivation can be seen in aerial photographs from the 1940s and evidence was recorded in the east of the airfield during a recent evaluation (Hewitt and Finn 2014). Significant medieval remains are not expected to exist within the development area.

Post-medieval

The post medieval enclosure of land around the Chelveston parish is visible on historic mapping from the early 19th century. The location of the proposed battery store overlies one of these field boundaries which were in use until the airfield was constructed.

Modern

The former Wroxton to Banbury ironstone railway line passes c220m south of the site.

Chelveston Airfield was built in 1940-1 and was decommissioned in 1947. The airfield comprised a standard RAF 'A' pattern airfield and its fully developed form is recorded in contemporary plans and aerial photographs.

In 1951 it was re-commissioned and adapted for use as a United States Air Force base; it remained as such until 1962. As part of the sites re-design a rectangular concrete apron, headquarters, crash tender shed and a different control centre were constructed, in addition to a new runway and taxiways (Smith 2006).

In 1977 the site was re-commissioned as a Radio Transmitter site. Eighteen aerial masts were erected on the site of the former airfield and remained in use until December 2003.

Previous archaeological works

Watching briefs have previously been undertaken during the levelling of former bomb bays and the construction of a new biomass plant (Dawson and Leigh 2013a), new wind turbines (Dawson and Leigh 2013b) and solar farm (Wolfram-Murray 2013) within the former airfield. No pre-modern archaeological remains were identified. A programme of Historic Building Recording has been undertaken on Nissen huts at the site (Upson-Smith 2012).

A series of trial trench evaluations were undertaken in 2014 on areas of the former airfield to the south of the current site in 2014 (Jones 2014; Hewitt and Finn 2014).

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY**3.1 Objectives**

The aims of the observation and recording works were to:

- mitigate the impact of the development through preservation by record;
- establish the date, nature and extent of activity or occupation in the development site;
- establish the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscapes;
- recover artefacts to assist in the development of type series within the region, and to;
- recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions as an intrinsic part of the investigation.

As the results of the observation works were negative, this project was not able to fulfil any research aims detailed in regional research agendas (Cooper 2006, Knight, Vyner and Allen 2012).

3.2 Methodology

All works was carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Code of Conduct (CIfA 2014a), and Standard and guidance for archaeological watching brief (CIfA 2014b), and conformed to the Historic England

procedural document Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) (HE 2015). Standard MOLA investigation and recording procedures were applied (MOLA 2014).

A programme of observation was carried out where the development required ground reduction. This was primarily within the footprint of the new Battery Storage Facility and comprised the excavation of 90 foundation pits for concrete bases, measuring 1m x 1m square and approximately 1m deep. Supervision was provided by an experienced archaeologist. Should significant archaeological deposits or structural remains have been encountered that require preservation in situ consultation would have been held with both the client and the NCCAAA in order to pursue an appropriate methodology. After 50 pits had been excavated and provided a negative result it was determined that archaeological supervision was no longer required.

Ground reduction of the foundation pits was carried out using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket. Excavation of the area commenced under the control of the archaeologist and ceased at the uppermost undisturbed substratum.

Should any archaeological deposits have been encountered they would have been investigated and sampled sufficiently to determine their date and character and then plotted on a general site plan measured at a scale of 1:50. The plan would have been located using Leica Viva Global Positioning System (GPS) survey equipment using SMARTNET real-time corrections, operating to a 3D tolerance of $\pm 0.05\text{m}$ to Ordnance Survey National Grid. Sections were to be drawn at 1:10 or 1:20 scale as appropriate. Archaeological deposits would have been recorded in stratigraphic sequence and their character and composition recorded on MOLA pro-forma record sheets (MOLA 2014). All levels were related to Ordnance Datum.

A photographic record was maintained comprising high resolution digital photography exceeding 12 megapixels.

No samples were taken for environmental analysis.

Post-medieval and modern waste material was observed within the excavated pits but not retained.

No human remains were encountered.

4 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

4.1 General stratigraphy

The stratigraphical sequence varied little across the study area. The natural substrate comprised firm light brown to grey clay with frequent flint fragments. This was overlain by a dark grey brown clayey silt subsoil deposit approximately 0.5m deep (Fig 3). The topsoil had been stripped from the area of the battery store footprint (shown in blue on Fig 2). Although removed prior to the arrival of an archaeologist, on-site inspection revealed a mixed horizon of demolition debris above clay natural. The depth of this upper horizon, notionally topsoil, which was removed, was approximately 0.30m. It revealed no archaeological deposits beyond the debris of the demolished airfield.

Despite the apparent absence of archaeological deposits visible in the stripped area (Fig 4) a core sample of some 50 test pits was closely observed and recorded out of a possible 90. No archaeology was visible in section (Fig 3).



General stratigraphic sequence Fig 3



View of pits undergoing excavation, looking south-east Fig 4

4.2 Results of archaeological observation

No archaeological finds or features were observed in any of the 50 excavated foundation pits. Some post-medieval/ modern debris was observed but was not retained. An inactive electricity cable was located in three of the pits (D6, D7 and D8).

5 DISCUSSION

No archaeological remains were encountered within the development area. This absence of archaeological remains corresponds with other investigations that have taken place in the neighbouring areas including at the biomass plant (Dawson and Leigh 2013a, Dawson and Leigh 2013b, Wolframm-Murray 2013). It appears that this part of site lay outside of the area of Iron Age and Roman period activity identified to the south (Clarke and Muldowney 2013).

The find of an inactive electrical cable is an indication of the modern disturbance that much of the site has been subjected to during its use as an airfield and later abandonment.

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1st November 2018



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