LAND AT VARITY HOUSE,

VICARAGE FARM ROAD,

FENGATE,

PETERBOROUGH,

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

NGR REF: TL 21417 99517

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

(HER 54085)

(OASIS ID: independ1-290159)

JULY 2017

PREPARED BY CHRISTER CARLSSON

CONTENTS

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was conducted by Independent Archaeology Consultants on land at Varity House, Vicarage Farm Road, Fengate,, Peterborough. Two evaluation trenches were opened up adjacent to the existing building. While the first trench contained no archaeological remains, the second trench contained a kiln and a posthole. The kiln could unfortunately not be more closely dated during this stage of fieldworks, and the association with the posthole remains unclear due to the limited area covered by the two trenches.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The site was located on land at Varity House, Vicarage Farm Road, Fengate, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire (NGR: TL 21417 99517) (Figure 1-3). Two evaluation trenches were opened up within the proposed development area. The project was carried out in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation* issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2014), as well as discussions with Rebecca Casa Hatton, Archaeological Officer at Peterborough City Council. The project was based on a WSI, which complies with the principles of the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework 2012).

1.2 Independent Archaeology Consultants is an archaeological consultancy company based in Peterborough, Cambridgeshire. The company subscribes to the *Code of Conduct, the Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation* (CIfA 2014), *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (EAA Occasional Paper 14) and *Research and Archaeology Revisited: a revised framework for the East of England* (EAA Occ. Paper No 24, 2011). All relevant CIfA Codes of Practice were adhered to throughout the course of the project.

2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

2.1 A Planning Application for this site was handed over to the Peterborough City Council, but was later withdrawn by the client. The proposed development comprised the erection of a new building with 14 flats, and the creation of an associated car park. The site could be accessed from Vicarage Farm Road.

2.2 The development enclosed an area of some 0.225ha at an average height of 5.5m AOD. The solid geology consisted of Kellaways Clay (mudstone) overlain by sand and gravel deposits of the First River Terrace, and alluvial deposits of clay, silt, sand and gravel (British Geological Survey).

2.3 The site was located within an area of archaeological potential, as defined by the Peterborough City Council HER. The original Planning Application for this site was withdrawn by the client and a voluntary archaeological evaluation of the area was ordered by the client prior to a new application was produced.

Figure 1. The location of Peterborough in England.

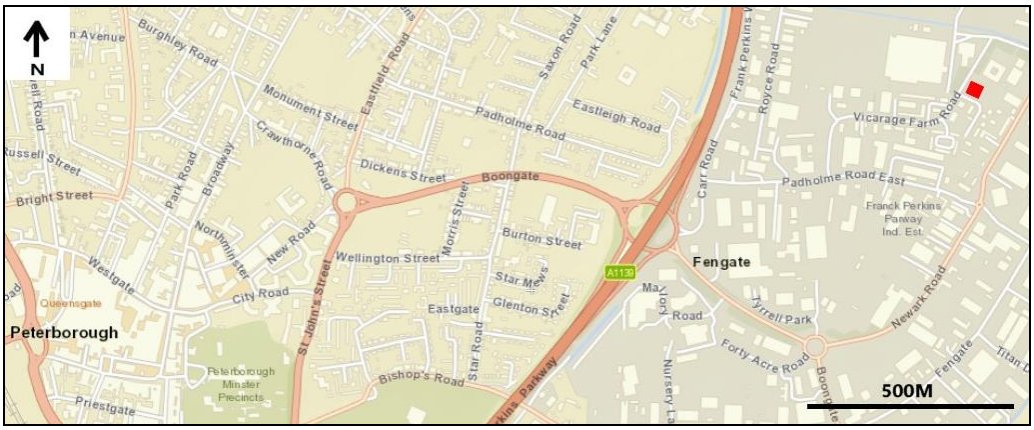

Figure 2. Site Location in Peterborough.

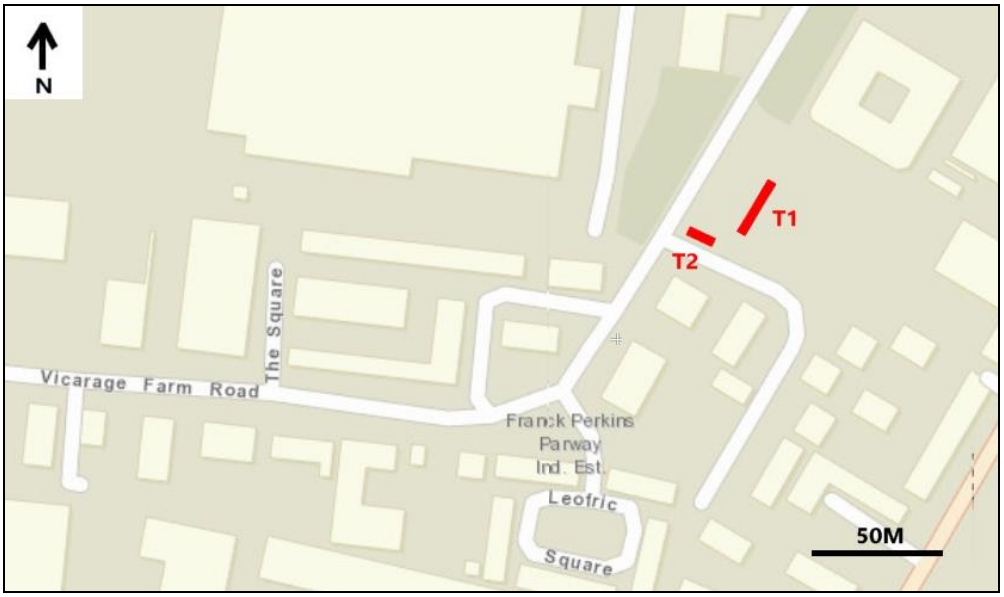

Figure 3. Site Outline and Trench Locations.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 The proposed development site was located in an area of archaeological interest associated with Prehistoric activity along the fen edge of the Flag Fen basin. Past and more recent archaeological investigations have uncovered evidence for Bronze Age domestic occupation and associated extensive field systems, as well as earlier Bronze Age evidence of ritual and funerary activity in the form of barrows and cemeteries. Iron Age settlements and funerary remains have also been recorded in close proximity to the subject site.

3.2 In particular, aerial photographs have shown series of enclosures and a driveway system likely to be associated with livestock management. An archaeological evaluation carried out in 2001 on land adjacent to the proposed development site has confirmed the continuation of the Prehistoric field systems into this area, also revealing a thin, fen edge, stratigraphic sequence of alluvial deposits which overlie the Prehistoric features.

3.3 The proposed development site appeared to contain remains of possible Bronze Age date. According to cartographic evidence, the site did not appear to have undergone any significant development. Therefore, existing remains were expected to survive in good conditions of preservation, having been further protected by a sequence of fen deposits.

3.4 Due to the high archaeological potential of the site, the PCCAS had recommended that an archaeological evaluation of the site was going to be carried out predetermination.

4 AIMS

4.1 The aims of the archaeological evaluation were achieved through pursuit of the following specific objectives:

- Provide a record of archaeological remains whose preservation *in situ* is threatened by the proposed work. If applicable, remains that can be preserved *in situ* will be recorded and prepared for re-burial. Therefore, steps will be taken to ensure construction and future maintenance do not threaten preserved remains

- Provide detailed information regarding the date, character, extent and degree of preservation of all excavated archaeological remains

- Define the sequence and character of activity at the site, as reflected by the excavated remains

- Interpret the archaeology of the site within its local, regional, and national, archaeological context

4.2 The evaluation also considered the general investigative themes outlined by: Medlycott, M. 2011 (ed.) *Research and Archaeology Revisited: a Revised Framework for the East of England*, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 24; *Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties* (Glazebrook 1997; Brown & Glazebrook 2000), *English Heritage Archaeology Division Research Agenda* (1997); *Discovering the Past, Shaping the Future: Research Strategy 2005-2010* (English Heritage 2005).

4.3 Specifically, the following investigative aims were accommodated in the programme of archaeological work:

*characterisation of the site in the broader landscape;
*characterisation of the activities identified on the site;
*characterisation of changes affecting land-use through time

5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 Trial Trenching

5.1.1 It was suggested that one 12m long machine cut trench, and one 22m long machine cut trench, both with a width of 2m, were going to be excavated under constant archaeological supervision using a flat bladed ditching bucket. Due to site constraints, however, both trenches were made slightly shorter. The shorter Trench 2 was eventually opened up over a distance of 10m while the longer Trench 1 was 20m long. The total length of trenching was therefore 30m, covering a total area of 60m² (Figure 3).

5.1.2 The location of the trenches targeted areas of proposed ground disturbance and provided representative sample coverage. The location of the trenches were slightly flexible, and took into consideration potential above- and below-ground constraints and/or hazards, such as trees, utility trenches, overhead cables and areas of modern disturbance.

5.1.3 The trenches were excavated to the upper interface of secure archaeological deposits or, where these were not present, to the upper interface of natural deposits. Thereafter, hand-excavation was required to sample any features exposed.

5.2 Metal Detecting

5.2.1 Thorough metal detector sweeps of exposed features and spoil heaps were carried out in advance of, and during, the excavation process.

5.3 Hand Excavation

5.3.1 All man-made features were investigated. Apparently natural features (such as tree throws and natural strips of clay in the natural) were sampled sufficiently

to establish their origin and to characterise any related human activity. Hand excavation and feature sampling were sufficient to establish the date and character, and to allow appropriate levels of recording.

5.3.2 Deposits and layers (including buried horizons of top- and subsoils) were sampled sufficiently to enable a confident interpretation of their character, date and relationships with other features. Thereafter, mechanical removal and visual scanning for artefacts was accepted. The evaluation provided a representative sample of the site's archaeology at no significant cost to the value or integrity of the archaeological remains therein.

6 RECORDING

6.1 A numbered single context-based recording system, written on suitable forms and indexed appropriately, was used for all elements of the archaeological recording programme.

6.2 Measured plans were produced that show all exposed features (including natural features, modern features, etc.) and excavated areas. Individual measured plans and sections in the scales 1:20 and 1:50 were produced for all excavated features and deposits. These were accurately tied into trench plans/trench location plans that in turn were accurately related to the Ordnance Survey grid and to suitably local features (boundaries, buildings, roads, etc.). All sections and plans were related accurately to Ordnance Datum.

6.3 A photographic record comprising monochrome and digital photos formed part of the excavation record. A selection of digital photos was also included in this report.

7 RESULTS

Trench 1

7.1 Trench 1 was 20m long, 2m wide and up to 1m deep. In an east-west direction across the trench there were three concrete tunnels with modern drainage pipes, causing the trench to be divided into three distinct parts (Figure 4).

7.2 The lowest level encountered in Trench 1 was the Natural deposits, which consisted of light yellow, soft sandy silt with occasional stones. Cut into the Natural deposits were two archaeological features; a kiln and a posthole.

7.3 The kiln [109] was located in the central parts of Trench 1, and had a north-south orientation. It was 3m long and up to 1m wide. It seemed to consist of two distinct parts; the actual kiln in the north and a possible stoke pit in the south. Even if the kiln could not be dated during this stage of fieldworks, as

absolutely no finds were recovered from the feature, the shape and size of this kiln clearly resembles Roman and/or Medieval industrial kilns (Figure 5-6).

7.4 Both the kiln and the stoke pit appear to have the same fill on top, but the feature was not fully excavated during this step of fieldworks. The fill (107) consisted of light brown sandy silt. An environmental sample from this fill indicates that very little charred plant remains are present in the fill of the stoke pit. The kiln itself has, on the other hand, been left untouched, but was covered with geo-textile until a decision has been made whether further archaeological investigations will be needed in the area.

7.5 Surrounding the kiln was the lower part of the supposed kiln wall (108). It was clear that high temperatures have caused particles of sand and gravel to melt together in a fairly solid, blackish texture. Even though the whole stoke pit was not excavated during this stage of fieldworks a smaller section was dug through its southern end.

7.6 This section clearly showed that the surviving parts of the stoke pit had been dug into the Natural deposits, and that it had a rounded bottom and rounded sides that were up to 0.19m deep. However, since the central parts of the stoke pit were not reached it is possible that the stoke pit is actually slightly deeper in the centre.

7.7 Located about 0.50m northwest of the kiln was the supposed posthole [106] (Figure 7). The posthole was almost 0.50m wide, 0.20m deep and had a vertical side in the south, a more sloping side in the north, and a rounded bottom. It is presently unclear whether there is a connection between the kiln and this posthole. The posthole may belong to a structure associated with the kiln, but in order to fully understand the relationship between the two features larger areas needs to be opened up.

7.8 The posthole had a fill (105) consisting of light brown, soft sandy silt with inclusions of poorly preserved wood in the centre of the fill (Figure 7). The fact that wood was preserved may be an indication that the posthole is actually younger than the kiln, but the Fenland is well known for preserving old wooden structures.

7.9 Covering both the kiln and the posthole was a 0.50m thick old ground horizon (104), which consisted of light brown, plastic sandy silt with frequent small stones. This ground horizon is obviously an older level of topsoil, which has been sealed by the later car park.

7.10 Covering the old ground horizon were the two modern fills (103) and (102). The 0.20m thick fill (103) consisted of yellow, softly packed gravel, while the 0.20m thick fill (102) consisted of grey, softly packed gravel. Both fills were associated with the construction of the car park and were covered by the 0.10m thick black, solid tarmac (101).

Figure 4. Trench 1. Overview. South west facing photo.

Figure 5. The kiln [109] in Trench 1 consisted of two distinct parts; a possible stoke pit in the south and the supposed kiln in the north. In the background can also be seen the posthole [106]. North east facing photo.

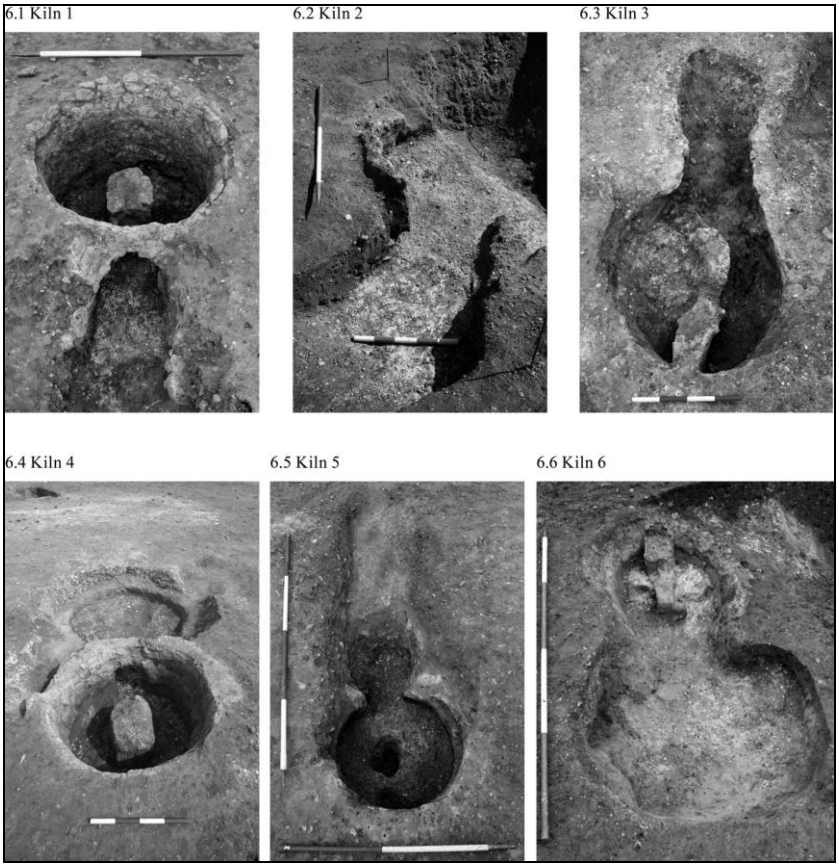

Figure 6. Photos from the article: Continental Potters? First-Century Roman Flagon Production at Duxford, Cambridgeshire. Cambridge University Press. Volume 47.

Figure 7. The posthole [106] was located ca 0.50m northeast of the supposed kiln. West facing photo.

Trench 2

7.11 Trench 2 was 10m long, 2m wide and up to 1m deep (Figure 8). The trench contained no archaeological features. The lowest level encountered was the Natural deposits, which consisted of light yellow, soft sandy silt with occasional stones.

7.12 Covering the Natural in Trench 2 was the 0.50m thick old ground horizon (204), which consisted of light brown, plastic sandy silt with frequent small stones.

7.13 The next level encountered in Trench 2 was the 0.20m thick modern fill (203), which consisted of yellow, softly packed gravel. This fill was in turn covered by the 0.20m thick fill (202) of grey, softly packed gravel. The uppermost fill in Trench 2 was the 0.10m thick, black, solid tarmac (101).

Figure 8. Trench 2. Overview. No archaeological features were being uncovered in the trench. North west facing photo.

8 ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLES (By Val Fryer)

Introduction and method statement

Excavations at Varity House, undertaken by Independent Archaeology Consultants, revealed the remains of a kiln and stoke pit. A small sample (circa 0.5 litres) of the stoke pit fill was taken and submitted for the retrieval and evaluation of the plant macrofossil assemblage.

The sample was processed by manual water flotation/washover and the flot was collected in a 300 micron mesh sieve. The dried flot was scanned under a binocular microscope at magnifications up to x 16 and all plant macrofossils noted are listed in the following section. Nomenclature follows Stace (2010) and Watson (1981). With the exception of a few conglomerations of partially mineral replaced roots, all plant remains were in a de-watered state and were moderately well- preserved.

Results

The assemblage is small (i.e. <0.1 litres in volume) and much of the material present appears to be moss fronds of possible Hypnobryales type (with squarrose leaf forms) or Bryales type (with imbricate leaf arrangements). Seeds are exceedingly scarce, but specimens of possible cinquefoil (*Potentilla* sp.) and crane's-bill (*Geranium* sp.) type are noted along with indeterminate root/stem fragments and pieces of leaf. Very occasional arthropod remains are also noted. Perhaps unusually for the context, charred material is entirely absent, although it is known that such structures were often kept scrupulously clean in an attempt to prevent accidental fires.

Fragments of the kiln wall are present within the non-floating residue of the sample. All comprise dense conglomerations of dark orange/brown grits, with occasional small stone inclusions. The material is surprisingly heavy and visually appears to have a high ferrous content. However, none of the remains are magnetic.

Conclusions and recommendations for further work

In summary, the current assemblage is surprisingly limited in composition, with most of the macrofossils appearing to be derived from plants which colonised the stoke pit after the structure fell out of regular use. Unfortunately, these give little or no indication about either the nature of the kiln or the fuel which may have been used to fire it. Therefore, if further interventions are planned, it is strongly recommended that, where possible, additional samples for the retrieval of the plant macrofossil assemblages are taken from the kiln itself and from any dumps of associated fuel debris. Analysis of such material may provide far more insight into the day to day use of the structure, with fuel debris being a particularly valuable means to assess the temperatures attainable during firing.

9 DISCUSSION

9.1 The archaeological evaluation on land at the Varity House, Vicarage Farm Road, Fengate, Peterborough indicated that archaeological features are present within the area. While the first trench was empty the second, and much longer, trench contained a posthole and the remains of a kiln of uncertain date.

9.2 The posthole contained poorly preserved wood, something which may indicate the posthole is fairly modern, but since the posthole and the kiln were both covered by thick silt deposits, and were showing up on a similar depth in the ground, they may very well be contemporary. The Fenland is famous for preserving old wooden structures due to the lack of oxygen in the ground.

9.3 The site at the Varity House is located only a mile away from the famous archaeological site at Flag Fen, with well preserved wooden remains from the Bronze Age. Wooden features have also been found during more recent archaeological excavations at Must Farm, carried out by the University of Cambridge.

9.4 The kiln at Varity House could not be dated more closely during this step of archaeological fieldworks, but it resembles Roman and/or Medieval industrial kilns. If this is indeed an old industrial kiln it will be of high archaeological significance, and should therefore be further investigated should it be threatened by the future development.

9.5 The proposed development site is indeed located in an area of archaeological interest associated with Prehistoric activity along the fen edge of the Flag Fen basin. Such a location would be ideal for industrial kilns during Prehistoric times and later.

9.6 Past and more recent archaeological investigations have uncovered evidence for Bronze Age domestic occupation and associated extensive field systems, as well as earlier Bronze Age evidence of ritual and funerary activity in the form of barrows and cemeteries. Iron Age and Roman settlements and funerary remains have also been recorded in close proximity to the subject site.

9.7 According to cartographic evidence, the site does not appear to have undergone any significant development in recent years. Therefore, existing remains were expected to survive in good conditions of preservation, having been further protected by a sequence of fen deposits.

9.8 Due to the high archaeological potential of the area it is recommended that further investigations are being carried out in the development area prior to the development, should it be threatened by the future development. The kiln, however, was found about 1m below the present ground level, and it was also located about 1m east of the future building. It is, therefore, situated just outside the footprints of the new structure, and the application of modern footing techniques may be a way of solving the problem.

10 ARCHIVE

The archive consists of the following:

Paper Record

The project brief	The project report
Written Scheme of Investigation	The primary site records
The photographic and drawn records	

The archive is currently maintained by Independent Archaeology Consultants. The archive will be transferred to:

The Archaeological Collections at Peterborough Museum.

11 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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OASIS ID: independ1-290159

Project details

Project name	Land at Varity House, Vicarage Farm Road, Fengate, Peterborough
Short description of the project	An archaeological evaluation on land at Varity House, Vicarage Farm Road, Fengate, Peterborough. Two trenches were opened up. While the first was empty, the second one proved to contain a posthole and a possible kiln o unknown date. Even if the kiln could not be more closely dated, its layout is similar to Roman industrial kilns.
Project dates	Start: 03-07-2017 End: 04-07-2017
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	VHP17 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	HER 54085 - HER event no.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Current Land use	Vacant Land 2 - Vacant land not previously developed
Monument type	SN Uncertain
Monument type	SN Uncertain
Significant Finds	N/A None
Significant Finds	N/A None
Methods & techniques	"Targeted Trenches"
Development type	Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)
Prompt	Voluntary/self-interest
Position in the planning process	Pre-application

Project location

Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE PETERBOROUGH MARHOLM The Varity House, Vicarage Farm Road, Fengate, Peterborough
Postcode	PE1 5GW
Study area	0.23 Hectares
Site coordinates	TL 21417 99517 52.579521510596 -0.20789595311 52 34 46 N 000 12 28 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 5m Max: 6m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Independent Archaeology Consultants

Project brief originator	Self (i.e. landowner, developer, etc.)
Project design originator	Independent Archaeology Consultants
Project director/manager	Christer Carlsson
Project supervisor	Christer Carlsson
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Project archives	
Physical Archive recipient	Peterborough Museum
Physical Contents	"Environmental"
Digital Archive recipient	Peterborough Museum
Digital Contents	"Environmental"
Paper Archive recipient	Peterborough Museum
Paper Contents	"Environmental"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Photograph","Plan","Report","Section"
Project bibliography 1	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Land at Varity House, Vicarage Farm Road, Fengate, Peterborough
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Carlsson, C
Date	2017
Issuer or publisher	Independent Archaeology Consultants
Place of issue or publication	Peterborough
Entered by	Christer Carlsson (contact@independentarchaeology.co.uk)
Entered on	13 July 2017

APPENDICES

CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Context nr	Depth (m)	Description	Younger than	Older than
		Trench 1 (20m x 2m)		
(101)	0.10	Black solid tarmac.	(102)	-
(102)	0.20	Grey, softly packed gravel. Modern fill under tarmac.	(103)	(101)
(103)	0.20	Yellow, softly packed gravel. Modern fill.	(104)	(102)
(104)	0.50	Light brown, plastic sandy silt, frequent small stones. Old ground horizon.	(105) (107)	(103)
(105)	0.20	Fill of posthole [106]. Light brown, soft sandy silt. Parts of wood preserved.	[106]	(104)
[106]	0.20	Cut of posthole [106]. Vertical sides and rounded bottom.	Natural	(105)
(107)	0.19	Fill of kiln [109]. Light brown, sandy silt.	(108)	(104)
(108)	0.19	Kiln wall. Blackish, solid with frequent inclusions of melted sand and gravel.	[109]	(107)
[109]	0.19	Cut of kiln. Rounded sides and rounded bottom.	Natural	(108)
Natural	-	Light yellow, soft sandy silt with occasional stones.	[106] [109]	-
		Trench 2 (10m x 2m)		
(201)	0.10	Black solid tarmac.	(202)	-
(202)	0.20	Grey, soft gravel. Modern fill under tarmac.	(203)	(201)
(203)	0.20	Yellow, soft gravel. Modern fill.	(204)	(202)
(204)	0.50	Light brown, plastic sandy silt with frequent of small stones. Old ground horizon.	Natural	(203)
Natural	-	Light yellow, soft sandy silt with occasional stones.	-	(204)