# Archaeology Wales

# Land at High Point Farm
# Neen Sollars, Shropshire

Archaeological Field Evaluation

By

William Leonard Rigby BA (Hons) MA

Report No. 1508

Archaeology Wales Limited,
The Reading Room, Town Hall, Great Oak Street,
Llanidloes, Powys SY18 6BN
Tel: +44 (0) 1686 440371
E-mail: admin@arch-wales.co.uk

Archaeology Wales

# High Point Farm, Neen Sollars Shropshire

Archaeological Field Evaluation

Prepared For: Armour Heritage

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| Edited by: | Mark Houliston |
| Signed: |  |
| Position: | MD |
| Date: | 13/10/16 |

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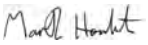
| Signed: |  |
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**September 2016**

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Llanidloes, Powys SY18 6BN
Tel: +44 (0) 1686 440371
E-mail: admin@arch-wales.co.uk

# Contents

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## Summary

*Archaeology Wales Ltd carried out a trenched field evaluation in September 2016 on behalf of Armour Heritage to examine the archaeological potential of a site intended for a solar farm at High Point Farm near Neen Sollars, Shropshire (Planning consent 14/04463/FUL, granted on appeal APP/L3245/W/15/3019429). The site comprises two agricultural fields currently under pasture and is centred on NGR 366397 270949.*

*Finds from the surrounding area suggest that there was possibly prehistoric activity in the area, but no monuments or features have been identified. The earliest recorded reference of Neen Sollars is from the 1086 Doomsday Survey. The Church of All Saints in Neen Sollars dates to the 13th Century, yet the majority of the buildings in the surrounded area of a post-medieval date.*

*Four trenches were excavated, targeting anomalies identified by a previous geophysical survey of the Site (Lefort Geophysics 2016), three in the eastern field and one in the western field. The evaluation identified a feature of possible archaeological significance located at a depth of 0.9m in the north-western corner of the eastern field (Trench 3). This feature, which was examined in two hand-excavated sondages, comprised a high density spread of burnt material and heat effected stones, a composition that is characteristic of the remains of a prehistoric burnt mound. No other deposits or finds of potential archaeological significance were found.*

# 1. Introduction

In September 2016, Archaeology Wales Ltd was commissioned by Armour Heritage to carry out an archaeological field evaluation on land at High Point Farm, Neen Sollars, Shropshire, NGR 366397 270949 (AW Project Number 2464; fig. 1). The aim was to provide information regarding the archaeological potential of the land ahead of a proposed solar farm development (Planning consent 14/04463/FUL, granted on appeal APP/L3245/W/15/3019429).

Previous archaeological investigations of the site undertaken in relation to the same development comprise a Desk Based Assessment (Armour Heritage 2015) and a Geophysical Survey (Lefort Geophysics 2016). Based on the results of these investigations, a Written Scheme of Investigation was prepared by Armour Heritage, primarily to target potential features identified by the geophysics. This was submitted to, and subsequently approved by, Dr Andy Wigley of Shropshire County Council Historic Environment Team (SCC-HET). The subsequent trenched evaluation was carried out by William Rigby and James Weaver (AW) in September 2016 under the overall management of Mark Houliston MCIfA (AW).

# 2. Site Description

## 2.1 Location, Topography, Geology

The Site comprises an area of land of approximately 9.9ha, situated some 1.2km south of the small village of Neen Sollars and 11.6km west of Bewdley, Shropshire. It comprises an area of undulating farmland, sub-divided into two irregularly shaped fields. The fields are bounded by substantial mature hedgerows, with the southern boundary containing a number of mature trees.

The geology of the site is characterized by St Maughans Formation - Argillaceous Rocks and [subequal/subordinate] Sandstone, Interbedded. Sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 398 to 416 million years ago in the Devonian Period. The subsoils are slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage (BGS 2016; Soilscapes 2016).

# 3. Archaeological Background

## 3. 1 Historical Background

There is evidence for prehistoric activity in the local area, but no sites or monuments of prehistoric date are recorded in the HER. The majority of evidence for prehistoric activity is suggested by the HER notes, which catalogue a number of unnumbered find spots in the area, comprising a range of materials and types from fragments of Neolithic tools, such as a polished axe head and a knife blade, to records of Iron Age metalwork.

Throughout the intervening time period there is little evidence of large scale activity in the local area until the early medieval period. With the exception of two small pieces of Romano-British pottery in the HER report, which were recovered from the study area, but no location is given.

The earliest recorded reference to Neen Sollars occurs in the 1086 Domesday survey, where it is recorded as Neen (Williams & Martin; 1992). The settlement is recorded as within Conditre Hundred, part of the lands of Osbern fitz Richard. The settlement was clearly very small with land for five ploughs (this measurement referring to a plough team with its eight oxen and the plough itself. The measure of a carucate was originally the amount of land which such a team could plough in one day). One mill is also recorded, producing wheat.

The place-name Neen Sollars is derived the former name of the River Rea with an appended personal name derived from Roger de Solariis who held the area from 1195 (Ekwall; 1960).

With the exception of the medieval Church of All Saints at Neen Sollars, which dates to the late 13th century and a small number of medieval churches in the wider study area, the HERs record little physical evidence for medieval activity.

It is very likely that, throughout much the medieval period, the Site would have formed part of the agricultural hinterland of Neen Sollars. The often steeply sloping quality of the fields could have made it impractical for ox-team ploughing and, during this period, the Site may have comprised pasture rather than arable land.

A large number of buildings within Neen Sollars and the surrounding rural farmland are of post-medieval date, and a number of these are listed. The majority of the buildings, both listed and undesignated, represent farmhouses with associated barns and other agricultural buildings and domestic properties of 17th or 18th century date. This range of building types is

indicative of the rather limited growth and development within communities which lie in the Site's immediate and wider environs (Armour Heritage 2015).

# 4. Aims and Objectives

## 4.1 Field Evaluation

The field evaluation was undertaken to:

- Establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the area of proposed development with specific reference to features highlighted in the previously undertaken geophysical survey.
- Determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present.
- Establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological features and deposits.
- Produce a record of the features.

# 5. Methodology

## 5.1 Field Evaluation

The methodology proposed the excavation of four linear trenches, three measuring 25m x 2m and one measuring 40m x 2m (Fig. 1). Trenches were positioned to investigate anomalies identified in the geophysical survey (Lefort Geophysics 2016).

The on-site work was undertaken by Peter Spencer (AW), James Weaver (AW) and William Rigby (AW). The overall management of the project was undertaken by Mark Houliston MCIfA (AW). All areas were photographed using high resolution (20mp+) digital photography.

All on-site illustrations were undertaken on drafting film using recognised conventions and scales (1:10, 1:20, 1:50) as appropriate.

An OASIS record for the project has been created – Ref no. archaeol26-265379

All works were undertaken in accordance with the CIfA's Standards and Guidance: for an archaeological evaluation (2014) and current Health and Safety legislation.

# 6. Evaluation

## 6.1 Evaluation Results

The four trenches were positioned over specific features highlighted in the previously undertaken geophysical survey.

Following a CAT scan for live services the linear trenches were opened by a JCB 3CX mechanical excavator using a toothless bucket under close archaeological supervision.

Trench 1.

Trench 1 (Fig 1, Plates 1-2) measured 25x2m and was aligned on a north-east to south-west axis. The trench comprised four distinct layers which stretched the full extent of the trench. The topsoil layer (1001) was composed of loose silt and organic material 0.14m to 0.16m in depth. This tertiary layer overlaid earlier subsoil layers (1002), (1003) and (1004). The first subsoil layer (1002) was a build-up of red clay silts, which was loose in compaction and measured between 0.26m to 0.16m in depth. The context (1003) predominantly consisted of a moderately compacted medium red clay (90%), but had occasional lenses of grey clay (10%) which varied in size from 0.04mm to 0.1mm in length and 0.1m to 0.3m in depth. The full thickness of (1003) was between 0.32m to 0.14m in depth. The base layer of trench 1, encountered at 1.2m of depth was (1004). This layer was comprised entirely of a solid dark brownish red clay which measured between 0.8m to 0.24m in depth. No finds or features were found in this location.

Trench 2

Trench 2 (Fig 1, Plates 2-4) measured 25x2m aligned on a north-west to south-east axis. The trench was similar in geology to Trench 1 but comprised three layers which spanned the full extent of the trench. The first being (2001), which was a loose topsoil layer that measured between 0.13m to 0.17m in depth and composed of silts and organic material. The earlier layer (2002) was a subsoil that consisted of a mixture of silts and red clay, loose in compaction, which varied in depth from 0.28m to 0.17m. The base layer of trench 2 (2003) was encountered at 1.2m depth. This layer, similarly to (1004), was entirely composed of a solid dark brownish red clay which measured between 0.8m and 0.27m in depth. No finds or features were found in this location.

Trench 3

Trench 3 (Figs 1-4, Plates 5-10) measured 40x2 aligned to a north to south axis. The initial layer of trench 3 was topsoil (3001) and consisted of silts and organic material that measured between 0.17 to 0.13m in depth. This layer overlaid (3002), which was a loose subsoil context that comprised red clay silts that varied in depth between 0.28 to 0.17m. Context (3003) was beneath (3002) and was made up of solid medium to dark red clay (95%) and charcoal/organic material (5%). The context extended the full length of the trench and overlaid (3004) and (3005).

To describe these earlier contexts in order, (3004) was at the base of Trench 3 encountered at a depth of 1.2m. The context was found on the northern extreme of the trench, measuring 7.9m in length and varying in depth between 0.26 to 0.18m. This layer was composed of solid medium yellowish grey clay (70%) and yellowish brown (30%) with the addition of charcoal flecks focused mainly towards the base of this context.

The second context to be overlaid by (3003) was (3005). This context was distinctly different from all other contexts in Trench 3 as it was composed of dark brownish black charcoal and silt (55%), heat damaged stones (45%) that varied in size from 0.07 x 0.07 x 0.03m to 0.01 x

0.01 x 0.01m and solid charcoal (5%). The extent of (3005) was uncovered to 10m but is likely to have extended further to 14.4m (See Figs 3 & 4). The depth of (3005) varied between 0.4m to 0.01m. Context (3005) was on top of a further layer, (3006), that was similar in composition to (3004) though distinct enough to be recorded as a separate context due to it consisting of yellow sandy clay silts (90%), grey clay silts (10%) and being free from charcoal flecks. Context (3006) was uncovered by two sondages to investigate the depth and extent of (3005) and to ascertain earlier deposits therefore the full extent of (3006) is unclear.

The sondages were positioned to ascertain the depth and extent of feature (3005). The heat affected deposit was discovered during mechanical excavation of Trench 3. Small areas of dark soil and charcoal material (3005) were initially exposed. The dark soil and charcoal material was further exposed, removing the overlying (3003), to ascertain the full extent of (3005). The burnt material (3005) appeared to end and a 1x1.5m sondage was positioned against the western section of Trench 3, which identified the depth of (3005) was between 0.01m to 0.1m and the start of (3005) occurred 10m from the southern end of Trench 3. A second sondage was excavated through (3003) approximately 5m to the north of sondage 1. This established the depth of burnt material (3005) to be 0.4m. Given the undulating topography of the trench base, the northern extent of (3005) is likely to be located 4.4m from the northern edge of the second sondage. Thus giving feature (3005) a total approximate width of 14.4m

Trench 4

Trench 4 (Fig 1, Plates 11-12) measured 25x2m aligned on a north-west to south-east axis. The trench comprised four distinct contexts. The tertiary layer was a topsoil (4001) which comprised silts and organic material varying in size from 0.13m to 0.17m. The earlier subsoil layer (4002) was composed of red clay silts 0.28m to 0.17m. Context (4003) differed from all the other contexts in Trench 4, having lenses of grey clay (10%) and brown silts (10%) running through it, although predominantly composed of dark red clay (80%). The depth of this context was 0.72m to 0.62m for the full extent of the Trench and was moderate to solid in compaction. These lenses were around 1m in length and naturalised with the slope of the hill, therefore were probably layers which built up when (4003) was created. The base layer of Trench 4, (4004), was encountered at 1.2m in-depth. Context (4004) was between 0.02m to 0.1m in-depth and free from lenses. This layer comprised medium reddish brown clay (90%) and light whitish grey clay (10%), which extended for 10m from the north-west extreme, being exposed due to the angle of the slope. A feature was investigated at the base of Trench 4, but was found to be of non-anthropogenic origin.

# 7. Finds & Samples

## 7.1 Finds Summary

No finds were recovered during the archaeological survey.

## 7.2 Samples Summary

A total of three samples of context (3005) from the heat affected feature were recovered. These comprise two separate charcoal samples suitable for radiocarbon dating and a single bulk environmental sample totalling ten litres.

## 8. Discussion and Conclusions

Only in Trench 3 were any deposits of archaeological significance identified. Variations were investigated at the base of Trench 4 to assess their significance as possible archaeological features, however none were found to be of anthropogenic origin. The deposit (3005) comprised dark silts and heat affected stones found in Trench 3 may represent part of a burnt mound feature.

The following paragraphs are taken from Historic England's (2011) introductory publication on burnt mound monuments:

> The classic burnt mound comprises a kidney-shaped mound of burnt stones lying near to a watercourse. The burnt stone mound will frequently be masked by turf, although at times they can be found eroding from a stream bank with the burnt stones exposed. The mound often lies slumped over or next to a pit or trough which has been made water-tight… A hearth for heating stones is often found close to the trough. The accumulated mound of burnt stones will comprise heat-shattered burnt stones, fractured into irregular shapes, interspersed with deposits of charcoal-rich soils from the hearths. Occasionally, as in the West Midlands… stake-built structures have been discovered near the hearth or pit, possibly representing wind-breaks or some form of temporary shelter.
>
> There is some variation in the shapes of burnt mounds, and in the West Midlands, for instance, they are most commonly oval in form. The distribution of burnt mounds in England continues to increase as new discoveries are made. Currently such mounds can be found from Northumberland and Cumbria in the north, to Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Birmingham in the West Midlands and Leicestershire in the East Midlands (Historic England, 2011).

Burnt mounds are traditionally dated to the Bronze Age although early medieval examples are known in Ireland. British examples typically have a wide date range 2300BC and 850BC, whilst dated West Midland examples such as Sharmer Farm, Sandwell Park. Merritts Brook, Bournville Cob Lane and Yachting Pool, Woodlands Park, Mosely Bog and Moseley, Highbury Park dated to around 1000BC, (Hodder *cited in* Buckley, 1990).

Other burnt mounds are known from the county of Shropshire such as those at Eyton, Tiberton Grange, Bromley Hall, Baschurch, Smithy Moor, Kenwick Wood Farm and Kynnersley though only two within the county have been subject to modern archaeological excavation – those at Rodway in Telford (Williams, 1998) and Oswald's Park in Oswestry (Smith, 2007). Both of the excavated sites were subject to radiocarbon dating with the Rodway site dating from 1312 BC - 1168 cal BC (Williams, 1998) and the Oswald's Park site dating from 1940 BC - 1772 cal BC (Smith, 2007).

The scale of (3005) from the geophysical survey suggests a length of between 10m and 15m and a width of between 8m to 10m.

## 9. Recommendations

It is recommended that further work at this stage be limited to subjecting the samples taken from (3005) to radiocarbon analysis in order to ascertain a date for the heat affected feature.

## 10. Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Peter Spencer (AW), James Weaver (AW), and William Rigby (AW) for undertaking the on-site evaluation, Chris Smith MCIfA (AW) for invaluable advice and Mark Houliston MCIfA (AW) for managing the project.

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## Addendum

Radiocarbon Dating Results

# Addendum

## Radiocarbon Dating Results

In response to the proposal in Section 9 of the report that samples from context (3005) be submitted for radiocarbon dating, a sample was sent to Queens University, Belfast. The date returned by the sample was 1188 BC -1014 cal BC (Lab correspondence and radiocarbon date certificate are contained within this addendum).

The date of context (3005), a possible burnt mound feature, is confirmed as belonging to the mid to late Bronze Age. The date of the feature is not too dissimilar from the Rodway example (Williams, 1998) though is approximately 700-800 years younger than the Oswald's Park site (Smith, 2007). Rodway, Oswald's Park and the Neen Sollars site are the only dated burnt mounds located within Shropshire.

| UBANo | Sample ID | Material Type | $^{14}C$ Age | ± | F14C | ± |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UBA-33109 | 2 (3005) | Charcoal | 2902 | 42 | 0.6968 | 0.0036 |

Irma Bernardus
Archaeology Wales Ltd.
The Reading Room
Town Hall
Llanidloes, Powys SY18 6BN
UK
VAT No. 103612563
Customer No. 2310805


$^{14}$CHRONO Centre
Queens University Belfast
42 Fitzwilliam Street
Belfast BT9 6AX
Northern Ireland

# Radiocarbon Date Certificate

| | |
|---|---|
| Laboratory Identification: | UBA-33109 |
| Date of Measurement: | 2016-11-07 |
| Site: | Neen Sollars, Schropshire |
| Sample ID: | 2 (3005) |
| Material Dated: | charcoal |
| Pretreatment: | AAA |
| Submitted by: | Irma Bernardus |

| | |
|---|---|
| Conventional $^{14}$C Age: | 2902±42 BP |
| Fraction corrected | using AMS $\delta^{13}$C |

## Information about radiocarbon calibration

RADIOCARBON CALIBRATION PROGRAM*
CALIB REV7.0.0

*To be used in conjunction with:
Stuiver, M., and Reimer, P.J., 1993, Radiocarbon, 35, 215-230.
Annotated results (text) - -
Export file - c14res.csv

2 (3005)
UBA-33109
Radiocarbon Age BP 2902 +/- 42
Calibration data set: intcal13.14c # Reimer et al. 2013

| % area enclosed | cal AD age ranges | relative area under probability distribution |
|---|---|---|
| 68.3 (1 sigma) | cal BC 1188- 1182 | 0.034 |
| | 1157- 1146 | 0.070 |
| | 1128- 1014 | 0.895 |
| 95.4 (2 sigma) | cal BC 1218- 975 | 0.992 |
| | 953- 945 | 0.008 |

References for calibration datasets:
Reimer PJ, Bard E, Bayliss A, Beck JW, Blackwell PG, Bronk Ramsey C, Buck CE Cheng H, Edwards RL, Friedrich M, Grootes PM, Guilderson TP, Haflidason H, Hajdas I, HattÃ© C, Heaton TJ, Hogg AG, Hughen KA, Kaiser KF, Kromer B, Manning SW, Niu M, Reimer RW, Richards DA, Scott EM, Southon JR, Turney CSM, van der Plicht J.
IntCal13 and MARINE13 radiocarbon age calibration curves 0-50000 years calBP
Radiocarbon 55(4). DOI: 10.2458/azu_js_rc.55.16947

Comments:
* This standard deviation (error) includes a lab error multiplier.
** 1 sigma = square root of (sample std. dev.^2 + curve std. dev.^2)
** 2 sigma = 2 x square root of (sample std. dev.^2 + curve std. dev.^2)
where ^2 = quantity squared.
[ ] = calibrated range impinges on end of calibration data set
0* represents a "negative" age BP
1955* or 1960* denote influence of nuclear testing C-14

NOTE: Cal ages and ranges are rounded to the nearest year which may be too precise in many instances. Users are advised to round results to the nearest 10 yr for samples with standard deviation in the radiocarbon age greater than 50 yr.

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## APPENDIX I:

Figures

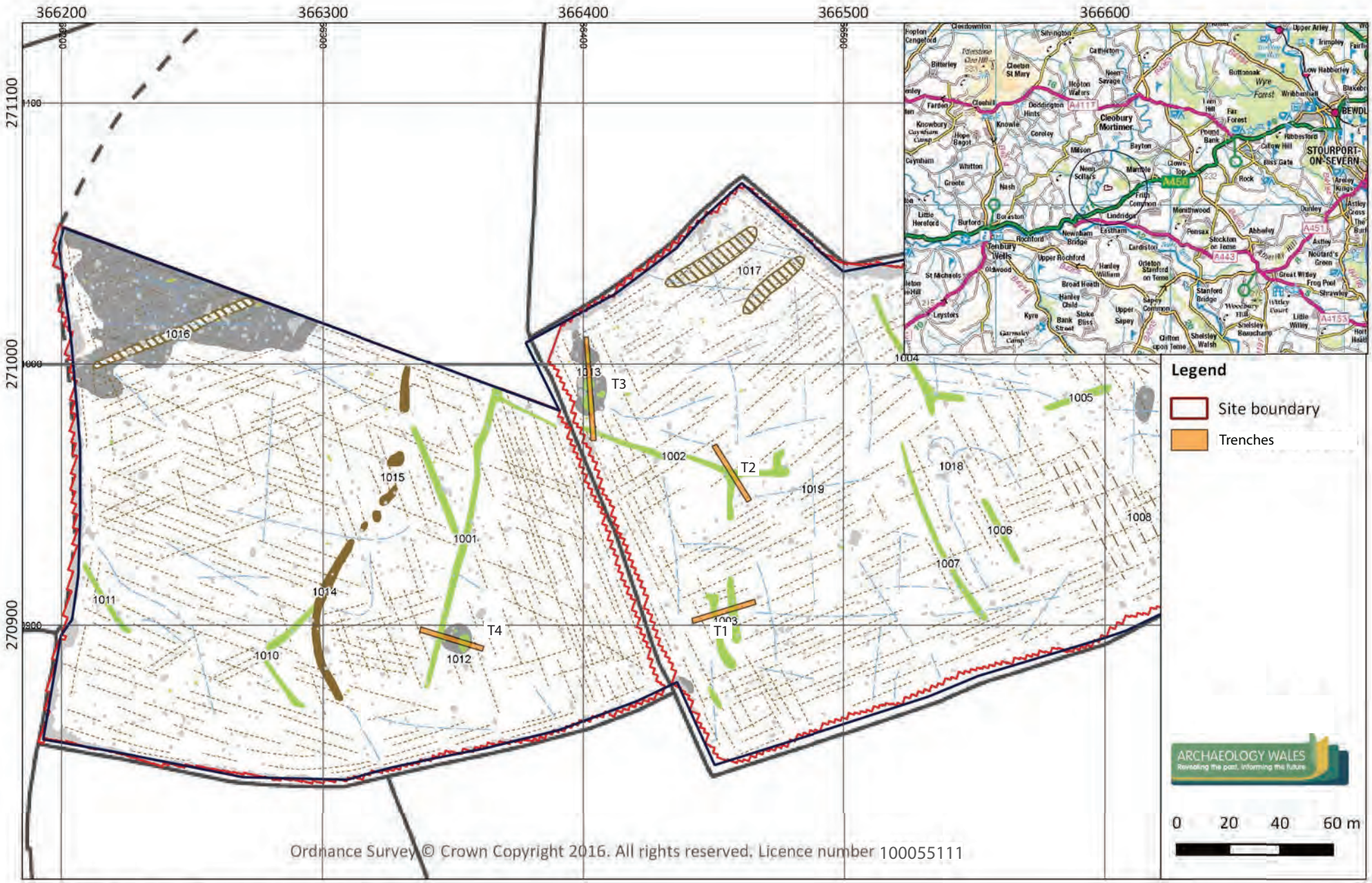
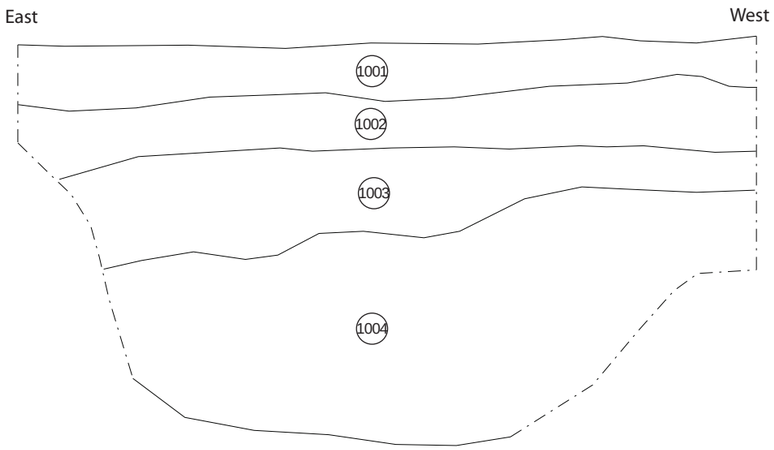
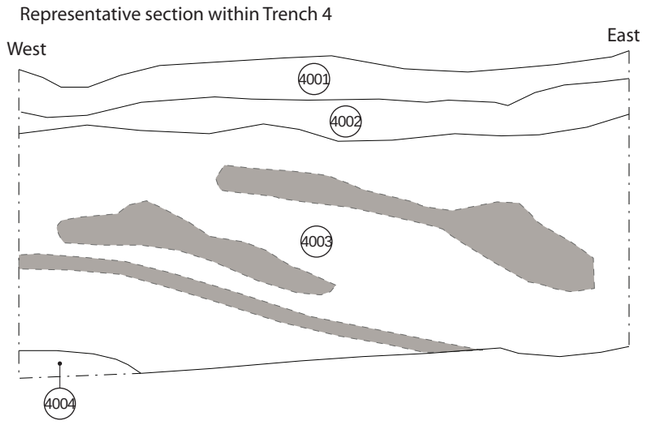



Figure 1: Map showing general location of site and detailed trench locations overlaid on geophysical traced interpretation (after Armour Heritage 2016)

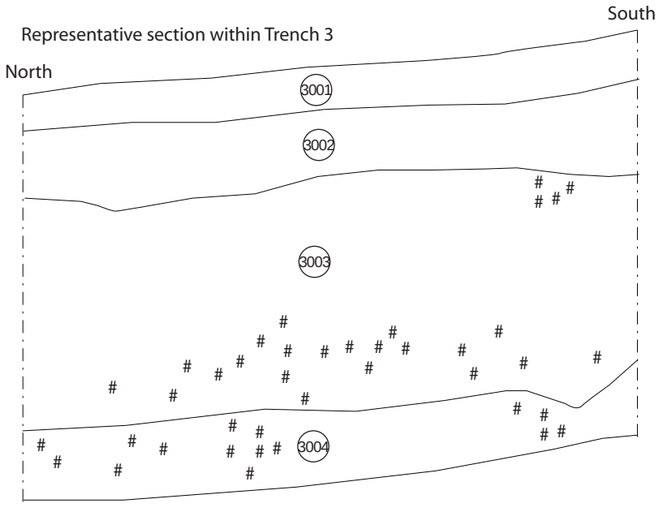
Representative section within Trench 1



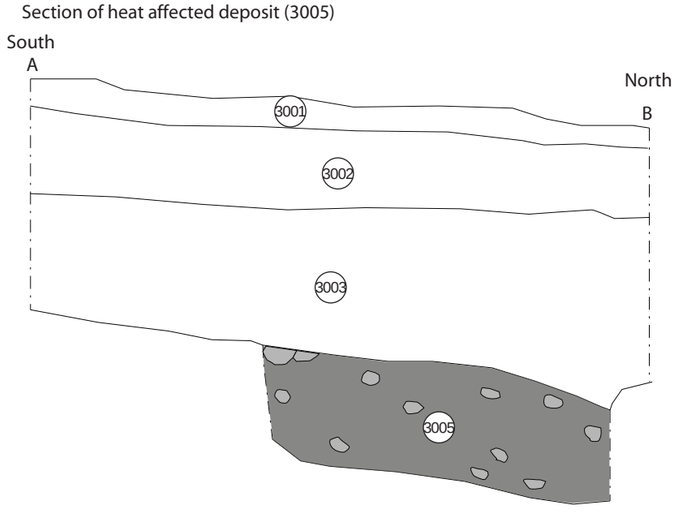

Representative section within Trench 4



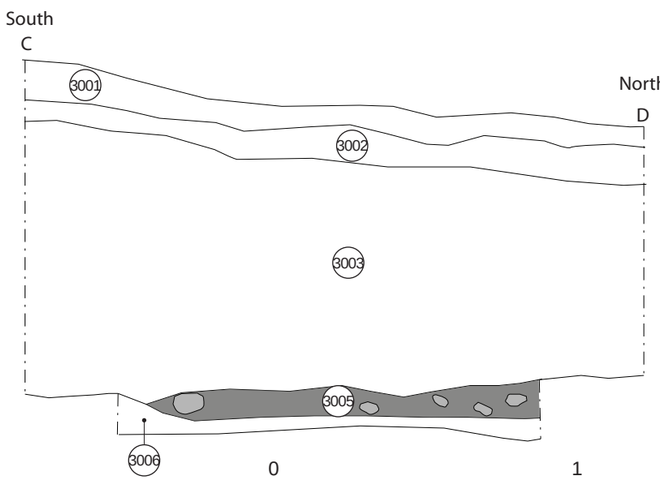

Representative section within Trench 3




Section of heat affected deposit (3005)

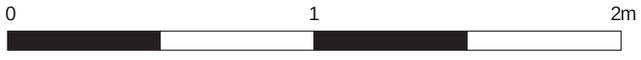



Section of heat affected deposit (3005)




Key

- Lenses of dark brown silts and grey clay
- Burnt organic deposit
- Heat affected stones
- ## Charcoal flecks

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| **Figure 2** | |

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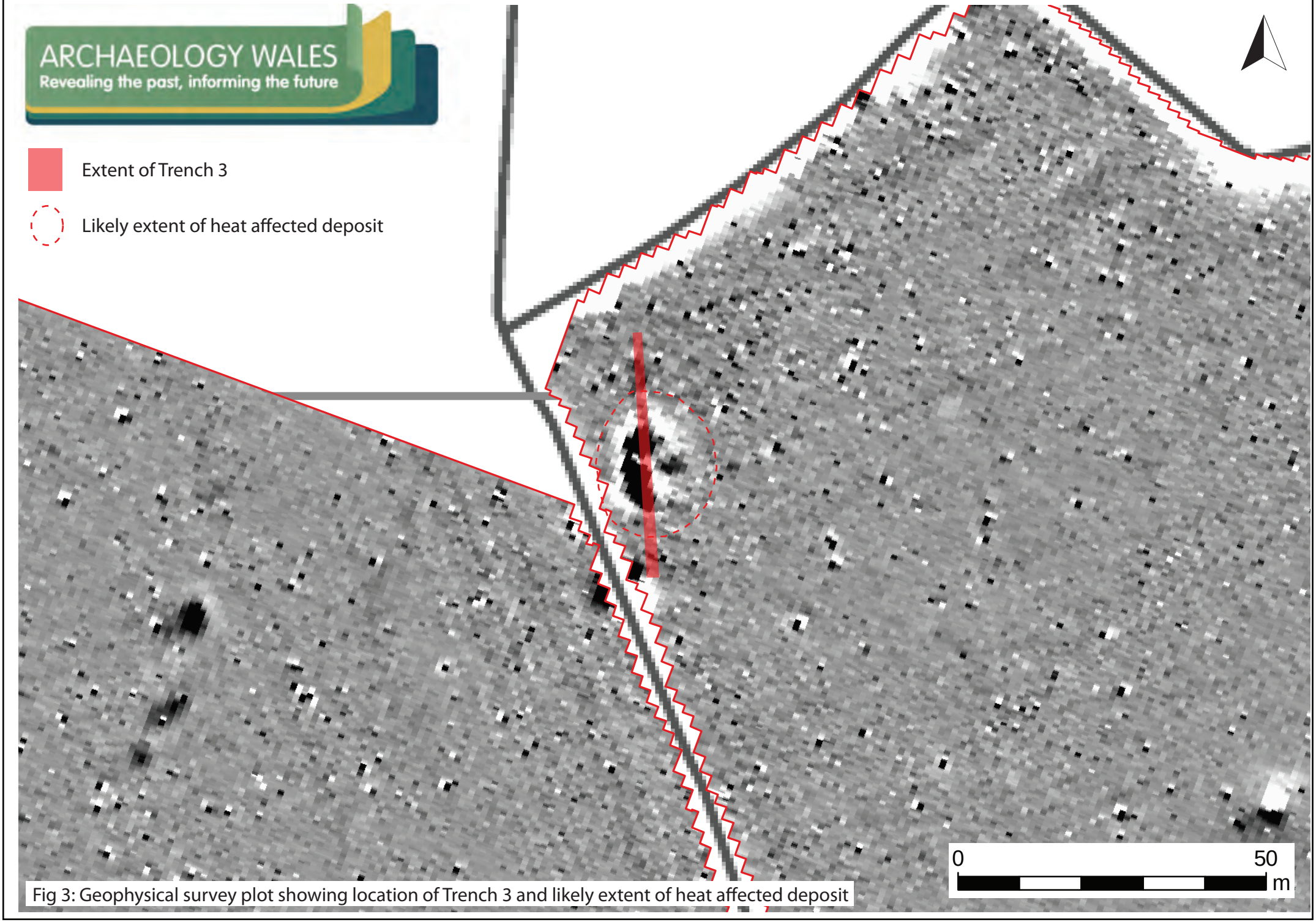


Fig 3: Geophysical survey plot showing location of Trench 3 and likely extent of heat affected deposit

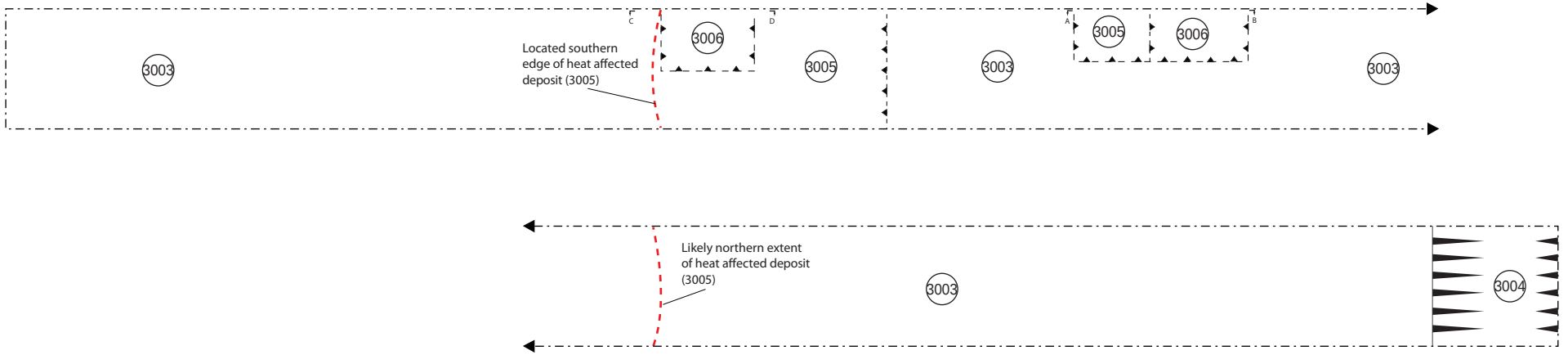


Fig 4: Plan showing location of heat affected deposit (3005) within trench 3

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## APPENDIX II:

Plates

Plate 1: View along Trench 1, looking south east
Scale 1x1m

Plate 2: Sample section of Trench 1, looking south west. Scale 1x1m

Plate 3: View along Trench 2, looking south east
Scale 1x1m

Plate 4: Trench 2 sample section, looking south west. Scale 1x1m

Plate 5, View of Trench 3, looking North 1x1m scale

Plate 6, Sample section of Trench 3, looking East

Plate 7, Plan of (3005) 1x0.3m scale

Plate 8, East facing section of (3005) 1x0.3m scale

Plate 9, South facing section of (3005), 1x0.3m scale

Plate 10, East facing section of (3005), 1x0.3mscale

Plate 11, View of Trench 4, looking South-East

Plate 12, Sample section of Trench 4, looking South-West 1x0.3m scale

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# APPENDIX III:
Context Catalogue

**Land at High Point Farm, Neen Sollars, Shropshire**

**Archaeology Wales Field Evaluation Context Catalogue**

| Trench No. | Context No. | Description |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1001 | Mid to dark brown loose silt and organic material |
| 1 | 1002 | Loosely compacted red clay silts |
| 1 | 1003 | Moderately compacted red clay/occasional grey lenses |
| 1 | 1004 | Heavily compacted dark brown/red clay |
| | | |
| 2 | 2001 | Mid to dark brown loose silt and organic material |
| 2 | 2002 | Loosely compacted mixed silts and red clay |
| 2 | 2003 | Heavily compacted dark brown/red clay |
| | | |
| 3 | 3001 | Mid to dark brown loose silt and organic material |
| 3 | 3002 | Loosely compacted mixed silts and red clay |
| 3 | 3003 | Medium/dark red clay and charcoal/organic material |
| 3 | 3004 | Medium yellow/grey & yellow/brown clay w/charcoal flecks |
| 3 | 3005 | Dark brown/black charcoal & silt w/ heat damaged stones |
| 3 | 3006 | Yellow sandy clay silts & grey clay silts |
| | | |
| 4 | 4001 | Mid to dark brown loose silt and organic material |
| 4 | 4002 | Loosely compacted mixed silts and red clay |
| 4 | 4003 | Dark red clay w/lenses of grey clay & and brown silts |
| 4 | 4004 | Medium reddish brown clay & light whitish grey clay |

# *Archaeology Wales*

## APPENDIX IV:

Armour Heritage WSI

AH
Heritage Planning

ARMOUR HERITAGE

# High Point Farm
# Neen Sollars
# Shropshire

# Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Field Evaluation

August 2016

AH Project Ref. AH396
Planning Ref: 14/04463/FUL
Appeal Ref: APP/L3245/W/15/3019429

REGISTERED CIfA ORGANISATION

AH
Heritage Planning

# High Point Farm
# Neen Sollars
# Shropshire

## Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Field Evaluation

AH Project Ref: AH396
Planning Ref: 14/04463/FUL
Appeal Ref: APP/L3245/W/15/3019429

| | |
|---|---|
| Prepared by | Sue Farr |
| Date | August 2016 |
| Issue no. | 01 |
| Checked | Rob Armour Chelu 22/08/2016 |



Greystone Cottage
Trudoxhill
Frome
Somerset BA11 5DP

T: 01373 836448
E: sue.farr@armourheritage.co.uk
W: www.armourheritage.co.uk

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## Figures

**PROJECT SUMMARY**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Project Name:** | High Point Farm |
| **Location:** | Neen Sollars, Shropshire |
| **NGR:** | 366397, 270949 (centre) |
| **Type:** | Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation |

Armour Heritage Ltd has been commissioned to complete a written scheme of investigation (WSI) with regard to a proposed archaeological field evaluation on land at High Point Farm, Neen Sollars, Shropshire, hereafter referred to as 'the Site'. The Site comprises two agricultural fields and is centred on NGR 366397, 270949.

Planning consent (14/04463/FUL) has been granted on appeal (APP/L3245/W/15/3019429) for the construction of a solar park on condition that a programme of archaeological work is undertaken.

This WSI has been produced in response to the requirement for intrusive archaeological works by Shropshire Council to further assess the archaeological potential of the Site. The requirement is for four archaeological trial trenches (3no. 25m x 2m and 1no 40m x 2m) to be excavated.

Archaeological fieldwork will be carried out by AH's nominated fieldwork sub-contractor, Archaeology Wales ('the Sub-contractor').

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### *Outline*

1.1. Armour Heritage Ltd (AH, 'the Consultant') has been commissioned to complete a written scheme of investigation (WSI) with regard to a proposed archaeological field evaluation on land at High Point Farm, Neen Sollars, Shropshire, hereafter referred to as 'the Site' (Fig. 1). The Site comprises two agricultural fields and is centred on NGR 366397, 270949.

1.2. Planning consent (14/04463/FUL) has been granted on appeal (APP/L3245/W/15/3019429) for the construction of a solar park comprising the installation of (circa) 14,200 ground mounted solar panels, inverter cabin, electricity sub-station, switchroom, communications building, pole mounted CCTV system, 2.4m high security fencing, associated access gates and gravelled roads on condition (condition 10) that a programme of archaeological work is undertaken.

1.3. The condition states:

> *No development shall take place until a programme of archaeological work has been implemented in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The programme shall be carried out as approved. Where significant archaeological remains are identified by the investigation the approved programme shall provide for non-intrusive construction methods to be employed within areas to be approved in writing by the local planning authority prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted.*

1.4. The application included the submission of an Archaeological Desk Based Assessment (Armour Heritage 2014) and subsequent geophysical survey (Lefort Geophysics 2016). The Archaeological Adviser has advised an archaeological evaluation is undertaken to investigate anomalies identified during the geophysical survey.

1.5. This WSI has been produced in response to the requirement for intrusive archaeological works by Shropshire Council to further assess the archaeological potential of the Site. The requirement is for four trenches (3no. 25m x 2m and 1no 40m x 2m) to be excavated as shown in Fig. 1.

1.6. Archaeological fieldwork will be carried out by AH's nominated fieldwork sub-contractor, Archaeology Wales ('the Sub-contractor').

1.7. The archaeological evaluation will be undertaken following the methodologies and standards set out in the written scheme of investigation (WSI, this document), submitted to and approved by the Archaeological Advisor in advance of commencement of any works on the Site.

### *Site location and landscape context*

1.8. The Site comprises an area of land of approximately 9.9ha, situated some 1.2km south of the small village of Neen Sollars and 11.6km west of Bewdley, Shropshire. It comprises an area of undulating farmland, sub-divided into two irregularly shaped fields (Fig. 1). The fields are bounded by substantial mature hedgerows, with the southern boundary containing a number of mature trees.

1.9. At its highest elevation along its southern boundary, the Site lies at an elevation of 101m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), dropping to a low point of 88m aOD at its northernmost extent.

1.10. The Site's broader environs comprise a similar rolling landscape, typical of the southern extents of Shropshire. The landscape comprises small and moderately sized settlements and individual farmsteads, set within a patchwork of fields alongside small areas of woodland and wooded streams. Settlements and farms are linked by a network of minor and larger roads such as the A456 which passes approximately 1km to the south of the Site.

1.11. The underlying geology of the Site is described by the British Geological Survey (BGS) as Raglan Mudstone Formation, an interbedded mixed siltstone and mudstone formed approximately 416 to 419 million years BP. No superficial geological deposits are recorded.

***Scope of WSI***

1.12. This document sets out the strategy and methodology by which the Sub-contractor will implement the archaeological field evaluation. In format and content it conforms with current best practice and to the guidance outlined in *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE, English Heritage 2006), and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014).

1.13. This WSI will be submitted to the Archaeological Advisor at Shropshire Council (SC), archaeological advisor to the local planning authority (LPA), for approval in advance of commencement of any works on the Site.

***Project aims***

*General*

1.14. The aims of the archaeological fieldwork are to:

- ground truth the results of the recently completed geophysical survey;
- clarify the presence/absence and extent of any buried archaeological remains within the Site that may be impacted by development;
- identify, within the constraints of the evaluation, the date, character, condition and depth of any surviving remains within the Site;
- assess the degree of existing impacts to sub-surface horizons and to document the extent of archaeological survival of buried deposits; and to
- produce a report which will present the results of the evaluation in sufficient detail to allow an informed decision to be made concerning the Site's archaeological potential.

## 2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

***Introduction***

2.1. An Archaeological Desk Based Assessment (Armour Heritage 2014) assessed the known archaeological and historical background within a 1km study area centred on the Site. This document, along with the results of a geophysical survey (Lefort Geophysics 2016), formed the first two parts of a staged evaluation of the Site's archaeological potential. The results of both reports are summarised below.

***Previous archaeological work at the Site***

*Geophysical survey*

2.2. A gradiometer survey (*ibid.*) completed across the Site identified a small number of anomalies which may represent features of potential archaeological interest.

2.3. The most significant features detected were ditches defining the layout of a former field system that are possibly associated with clusters of pits and areas of ridge and furrow. There does not appear to be any associated settlement evidence.

2.4. Anomalies 1001 to 1007 appear to demarcate a former field system and are aligned approximately parallel to the break of slope in the fields. Anomalies 1012 and 1013 represent clusters of pit-like anomalies. The latter is located close to the edge of a field boundary and given the strong magnetic values (in excess of +25nT) may have served to dispose of magnetically enhanced waste.

2.5. More recent agricultural features were detected including a former field boundary, a former track and numerous ploughing trends. The remaining features detected are a number of linear and curvilinear trends of uncertain origin.

***Archaeological background***

*Designated sites*

2.6. No Scheduled Monuments are recorded within the 1.5km study area. Twenty-five Listed Buildings are recorded, 13 of which are situated within the Neen Sollars Conservation Area.

*Prehistoric (pre-AD43) to Romano-British (AD43-AD410)*

2.7. Whilst no sites or monuments of prehistoric date are recorded by the Historic Environment Records, a number of unnumbered findspots have been noted in the area, including fragments of Neolithic tools, such as a polished axe head and a knife blade, and fragments of Iron Age metalwork.

2.8. Whilst these finds certainly represent evidence for prehistoric activity, the Archaeological Desk Based Assessment (Armour Heritage 2014) concluded that the lack of sites or upstanding monuments in the landscape reflected a lower potential for finds or features of prehistoric date to exist within the Site itself.

2.9. One undated cropmark at Windmill Farm may represent prehistoric activity, although equally could represent activity of any later period.

2.10. The HERs record no sites or major finds of Romano-British date within the 1.5km study area, although the WHER report does indicate *two pieces of Roman pottery* having been recovered from the study area. No location is given.

*Early medieval (AD410-1066) to late medieval (1066-1529)*

2.11. The earliest recorded reference to Neen Sollars occurs in the 1086 Domesday survey, where it is recorded as *Neen* (Williams & Martin 1992). The place-name Neen Sollars is derived from the former name of the River Rea with an appended personal name derived from Roger de Solariis who held the area from 1195 (Ekwall 1960).

2.12. The National Heritage List for England records a medieval moated site at Sodington Hall, some 2.63km east of the Site. This Scheduled Monument comprises the buried and earthwork remains of the moated site, which is located 700m to the southwest of St. John's Church, Mamble, and is situated in a commanding position with the ground falling sharply to the north and west. Sodington was held along with Doverdale (near Droitwich) by William de Sodington by 1303, and around 1316 passed solely to the Blounts who were the heirs of William.

2.13. With the exception of the medieval Church of All Saints at Neen Sollars, which dates to the late 13th century, and a small number of medieval churches in the wider study area, the HERs record little physical evidence for medieval activity.

2.14. A hollow way of possible medieval date, Shakenhurst Lane, appears in 19th century maps, extending from the east of Neen Sollars to the Shakenhurst Brook some 890m to the northeast.

2.15. The fields which comprise the Site and its environs are described by the Shropshire Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) study as Large Irregular Fields, formed by the amalgamation of smaller, presumably medieval fields.

*Post-medieval (1540-1800) and modern (1801-present)*

2.16. The majority of the HER records represent the sites of buildings, some now demolished and for the sites of former infrastructure, including a canal that was never fully completed and a dismantled railway that is known to have reused some of the land from the canal.

2.17. A large number of buildings within Neen Sollars and the surrounding rural farmland are of post-medieval date, and a number of these are Listed. The majority of the buildings, both Listed and undesignated, represent farmhouses with associated barns and other agricultural buildings and domestic properties of 17th or 18th century date. This range of building types is indicative of the rather limited growth and development within communities which lie in the Site's immediate and wider environs.

2.18. The parish of Mamble is situated in Worcestershire and lies on the Wyre Forest Coalfield; the parish has seen mining from at least the 17th century. The largest complex of mines is located close to the village centre, along the Marlbrook valley.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### *Introduction*

3.1. The initial methodology proposes the excavation of four trenches, three measuring 25m x 2m and one measuring 40m x 2m (Fig. 1). Trenches have been positioned to investigate anomalies identified in the geophysical survey (Lefort Geophysics 2016) as detailed in 2.4 above.

3.2. The following methodology is proposed in order to meet the aims and objectives of the evaluation. All works will be conducted in compliance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (CIfA 2014), excepting where they are superseded by statements made below.

3.3. Armour Heritage will take responsibility for consultation and/or document approval with SC and any other key stakeholders.

***Method Statement***

3.4. A total of 4no. machine excavated trial trenches, dimensions as set out above, are proposed, as indicated on Fig. 1. The trenches will be laid out using GPS in general accordance with the pattern given in Fig. 1. Minor adjustments to the layout may be required to take account of any on-site constraints such as power lines or trees. The trench locations will be tied in to the Ordnance Survey. Any amendments to the trench design due to site constraints will be agreed with the Archaeological Adviser at SC via the Consultant.

3.5. All trial trenching will be undertaken by a JCB or 11 tonne (or greater) 360$^{o}$ tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless grading bucket under the supervision and control of a qualified site archaeologist to the depth of formation, the surface of *in situ* subsoil/weathered natural or archaeological deposits, whichever is highest in the stratigraphic sequence. **Topsoil and subsoil deposits will be kept separate during trench excavation, and stored on opposite sides of each trench** (to avoid extensive reseeding)**.** Should archaeological deposits be exposed, machine excavation will cease in that area to allow the site archaeologist to investigate the exposed deposit.

3.6. Where appropriate, the base of each trench and the upper surface of any archaeological remains surviving within them will be hand cleaned and surveyed to produce a plan of the arrangement of archaeological features within the trenches across the Site.

3.7. All archaeological features will be sufficiently sampled to characterise and date them unless otherwise agreed. Discrete features will be half sectioned, and slots excavated through linear features will be a minimum of 1m in width. Should significant remains be exposed during the trenching, excavation of deposits and/or features will be more circumspect, limited to addressing the primary aims of this stage of the fieldwork, to ensure an appropriate mitigation strategy is agreed. All spoil will be examined for the recovery of artefacts.

3.8. Trenches completed to the satisfaction of the Consultant, the Client and the Archaeological Adviser at SC, will be backfilled using the excavated material in the approximate stratigraphic sequence in which they were excavated. They will be left level on completion. No other reinstatement or surface treatment will be undertaken.

3.9. Any variation of the above methodologies will be undertaken in agreement with the Archaeological Adviser at SC.

***Depth of Excavation***

3.10. The general depth of the trenches is not expected to exceed 1.2m or a safe working depth, whichever is deemed to be less, to comply with Health and Safety regulations. However, should excavation beyond this depth, or less if deemed unsafe, trench sides will be stepped or battered as appropriate

***Monitoring of Development***

3.11. The Consultant and the Sub-contractor will be afforded reasonable access to all areas of the Site in order that all archaeological features and deposits identified during excavations and groundwork, not covered by the above measures, can be investigated and recorded appropriately.

3.12. Site monitoring by the Archaeological Adviser at SC will be arranged in advance and due notice given to all parties.

## 4. RECORDING

4.1. All exposed archaeological deposits will be recorded using the Sub-contractor's established *pro-forma* recording system and will follow standard fieldwork procedures. A further, more general record of the work, comprising a description and discussion of the archaeology is to be maintained as appropriate. Context sheets will be primarily filled in by the archaeologist excavating the feature or deposit, and include details of the context, its relationships, interpretation and a checklist of associated finds.

4.2. Where appropriate, significant artefacts will be 3D recorded and detailed plans made of any deposits regarded as 'special' or deliberately placed.

4.3. A digital photographic record will be maintained and follow guidelines issued by Historic England (HE 2015). The photographic record will illustrate both the detail and the general context of the principal features, finds excavated, and the Site as a whole.

4.4. A complete drawn record of archaeological features and deposits will be compiled. This will include both plans and sections, drawn to appropriate scales (in general, 1:20 for plans, 1:10 for sections), and with reference to a site grid tied to the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

4.5. The Ordnance Datum (OD) height of all principal features and levels will be calculated and plans/sections will be annotated with OD heights. All plans and sections will be drawn on polyester based drafting film and clearly labelled.

4.6. The Sub-contractor will ensure that the complete site archive including finds and environmental samples is kept in a secure place throughout the period of excavation and post-excavation works.

## 5. FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLING

***Finds***

5.1. Appropriate strategies for the recovery of artefacts and environmental samples will be devised and implemented by the Sub-contractor's finds and environmental team, and if/where appropriate the Scientific Advisor to Historic England.

5.2. Finds will be treated in accordance with the relevant guidance given in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (CIfA 2014), unless they are superseded by statements made below.

5.3. All artefacts will be retained from excavated contexts, except features or deposits undoubtedly of modern date. In these circumstances sufficient artefacts will only be retained to identify the date and function of the feature or deposit.

5.4. All artefacts from the fieldwork will, as a minimum, be washed, marked, counted, weighed and identified. Any stratified ironwork will be x-rayed and stored in a stable condition along with other fragile and delicate material. Suitable material, primarily the pottery, worked flint and non-ferrous metalwork, will be scanned to assess the date range of the relevant assemblages.

5.5. All artefacts recovered during the evaluation on the Site are the property of the landowner until agreement for their deposition with the appropriate museum has been formally agreed. They are to be suitably bagged and boxed in accordance with the United Kingdom Institute

for Conservation, Conservation Guidelines no. 2 and, on completion of the archaeological post-excavation programme, will be deposited with the relevant museum as set out below.

***Environmental Sampling***

5.6. Bulk environmental soil samples for plant macro fossils, small animal bones and other small artefacts will be taken from appropriate sealed and dateable archaeological contexts as outlined by Historic England (Campbell *et al* 2011).

5.7. Bulk environmental soil samples will be processed by flotation and scanned to assess the environmental potential of deposits, but will not be fully analysed. The residues and sieved fractions will be recorded and retained with the project archive. A statement on the environmental potential of excavated deposits will be included in the report.

***Human remains***

5.8. In the event of discovery of any human remains, it is proposed that these will be left *in situ*, covered and protected until the Consultant, Client, County Coroner and Archaeological Adviser at SC have been informed. Should excavation/removal of remains be necessary, they will be fully recorded, excavated and removed from the site subject to compliance with the relevant Ministry of Justice Licence which will be obtained by the Sub-contractor, in advance of any disturbance.

5.9. Should human remains require excavation, all excavation and post-excavation will be in accordance with the standards set out in CIfA Technical Paper 13 *Excavation and post-excavation treatment of cremated and inhumed remains*. Appropriate specialist guidance/site visits will be undertaken by an appropriately qualified osteologist. The final deposition of human remains will be dependent on the requirements of the Ministry of Justice.

***Treasure***

5.10. Finds recovered on-site, which fall under the statutory definition of *Treasure*, as defined by the *Treasure Act 1996* (Revised 2002) will be reported immediately to the relevant Coroner's Office, the landowner and the Archaeological Adviser at SC. A Treasure Receipt (obtainable from either the Finds Liaison Officer or the DCMS website) must be completed and a report submitted to the Coroner's Office and the FLO within 14 days of understanding the find is *Treasure*. Failure to report within 14 days is a criminal offence. The *Treasure Receipt and Report* must include the date and circumstances of the discovery, the identity of the finder (in this case the Sub-contractor,) and, as accurately as possible, the location of the find.

***Site Health and Safety considerations***

5.11. Health and Safety considerations will be of paramount importance in conducting all fieldwork. Safe working practices will override archaeological considerations at all times.

5.12. All work will be carried out in accordance with the *Health and Safety at Work etc. Act* 1974 and the *Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1992*, and all other relevant Health and Safety legislation, regulations and codes of practice in force at the time.

5.13. The Sub-contractor will supply a copy of their Health and Safety Policy and a Risk Assessment to the Client before the commencement of any fieldwork. The Risk Assessment will have been read and understood by all staff attending the Site before any groundwork commences.

## 6. POST-EXCAVATION

***Report***

6.1. Within two to four weeks of completion of the archaeological fieldwork, a report setting out the results will be produced and forwarded to the client for approval. Once agreed, the report will be sent to the Archaeological Adviser at SC for approval.

6.2. Upon receipt of SC approval, a digital copy will be supplied to the client for distribution to relevant parties. A further copy will be submitted to the Shropshire Historic Environment Record for inclusion in their county records database.

6.3. Emphasis in the report will be given to placing the results into the context of the archaeology of the local area.

6.4. As a minimum, the report will include:

- a summary of the project background;
- description and illustration of the Site and its location;
- a methodology of the works undertaken;
- a description of the project's results;
- an interpretation of the results in the appropriate context;
- a summary of the contents of the project archive and its location (including summary catalogues of finds and samples);
- a site location plan at an appropriate scale on an Ordnance Survey, or equivalent, base map;
- a plan showing the location of the trial trenches;
- detailed plans of areas in which archaeological features are recognised along with adequate Ordnance Datum (OD) spot height information. These will be at an appropriate scale to allow the nature of the features exposed to be shown and understood. Plans will show the Site, the trial trenches and features/deposits in relation to north;
- section drawings of deposits and features, with OD heights, at scales appropriate to the stratigraphic detail will be shown and will show the orientation of the drawing in relation to north/south/east/west. Archaeologically sterile areas may not be illustrated unless they can provide information on the development of the site stratigraphy or show palaeoenvironmental deposits that have influenced the site stratigraphy;
- photographs showing the general site layout and exposed significant features and deposits that are referred to in the text;
- a consideration of the evidence within its wider context;
- a summary table and descriptive text showing the features, classes and numbers of artefacts recovered and soil profiles with interpretation;
- specialist assessment or analysis reports where undertaken.

6.5. A draft copy of the report will be submitted to the Archaeological Adviser at SC for comment prior to its formal submission to the Local Planning Authority.

6.6. The Sub-contractor will complete an online OASIS (Online AccesS to the Index of archaeological investigationS) form in respect of the archaeological work. This will include a digital version of the report. The report will also include the OASIS ID number.

***Archive preparation and deposition***

*General*

6.7. The complete Site archive, which will include paper records, photographic records, graphics, artefacts, ecofacts and digital data, will be prepared following the standard conditions for the acceptance of excavated archaeological material by the Shropshire Museums Service, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; IfA 2009; Brown 2011; ADS 2013).

6.8. All archive elements will be marked with the Site/accession code, and a full index will be prepared.

6.9. The Site archive will be prepared for long-term storage in accordance with Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long term storage (Walker 1990) and Standards in the museum care of archaeological collections (Museums and Galleries Commission 1994).

6.10. Provision has been made for the cost of long term storage in the post-fieldwork costs.

*Discard policy*

6.11. It is proposed that guidelines set out in *Selection, Retention and Dispersal* (Society of Museum Archaeologists 1993), which allows for the discard of selected artefact and ecofact categories which are not considered to warrant any future analysis. Any discard of artefacts will be fully documented in the project archive.

6.12. The discard of environmental remains and samples will follow nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1993; 1995; English Heritage 2002).

## 7. QUALITY ASSURANCE ARRANGEMENTS

***Quality and Code of Practice***

7.1. Both the Consultant and the Sub-contractor are archaeological organisations registered with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, and both endorse the *Code of Practice* and the *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology* of CIfA.

***Project Management arrangements, specialists and specialist sub-contractors***

7.2. All core staff will be employed in line with The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Codes of Practice and be members of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists or be appropriately qualified.

7.3. The fieldwork will be directed and supervised by Kate Pit, Project Manager, ACIfA, and supervised by Chris Smith, MCIfA, who will attend the Site at all times for the duration of the archaeological fieldwork. Overall responsibility for the conduct and management of the project will be held by Sue Farr BA, MCIfA, of Armour Heritage (the Consultant).

7.4. All finds will be examined by specialists drawn from the following pool of the Sub-contractor's employees and external specialists:

| Type | Name |
|---|---|
| Flint | Amelia Pannett |
| Animal bone | Jen Kitch |
| CBM, heat affected clay, Daub etc. | Rachael Hall |
| Clay pipe | Hilary Major |
| Glass | Andy Richmond |
| Cremated and non-cremated human bone | Malin Holst |
| Metalwork | Kevin Leahy |
| Neo/BA pottery | Dr Alex Gibson |
| IA/Roman pottery | Jane Timby |
| Post Roman pottery | Mr Stephen Clarke |
| Charcoal (wood ID) | John Carrot |
| Waterlogged wood | Nigel Nayling |
| Molluscs and pollen | Dr James Rackham |
| Charred and waterlogged plant remains | Wendy Carruthers |
| Palaeoenvironmental sampling and analysis | Dr Martin Bates |

***Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988***

7.5. The Sub-contractor shall retain full copyright of any written report or other associated material under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988* with all rights reserved. AH, on behalf of the Sub-contractor, hereby provides an exclusive licence to the Client for the use of the report by the Client in all matters directly relating to the project as described in the written scheme of investigation. Any document produced to meet planning requirements may be copied for planning purposes by the LPA.

7.6. This document, the subsequent report and the completed site archive may contain material that is under separate copyright (*e.g*. Ordnance Survey, British Geological Survey, Crown Copyright), or the intellectual property of third parties, for which Archaeology Wales/Armour Heritage are able to provide for limited reproduction under the terms of our own copyright licences, but for which copyright itself is non-transferable. All parties remain bound by the conditions of the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988* with regard to multiple copying and electronic dissemination of this document and subsequent report.

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# *Archaeology Wales*

## APPENDIX V:

Archive Cover Sheet

# ARCHIVE COVER SHEET

**High Point Farm, Neen Sollars, Shropshire**

| | |
|---|---|
| Site Name: | Neen Sollars |
| Site Code: | NSS/16/EV |
| Other Ref No: | - |
| NGR: | SJ 366397 270949 |
| Site Type: | Greenfield |
| Project Type: | Field Evaluation |
| Project Manager: | Mark Houliston |
| Project Dates: | September 2016 |
| Categories Present: | Undated |
| Location of Original Archive: | AW |
| Location of duplicate Archives: | OASIS (Ref no. archaeol26-265379) |
| Number of Finds Boxes: | - |
| Location of Finds: | - |
| Museum Reference: | - |
| Copyright: | AW |
| Restrictions to access: | None |

# Archaeology Wales

**Archaeology Wales Limited**
The Reading Room, Town Hall, Llanidloes, SY18 6BN
**Tel: +44 (0) 1686 440371**

Email: admin@arch-wales.co.uk
Company Directors: Mark Houiston MCIfA & Jill Houliston
Company Registered No. 7440770 (England & Wales)
Registered Office: Morgan Griffiths LLP, Cross Chambers
9 High Street, Newtown, Powys, SY16 2NY