



Land at

Hoden Lane

Cleeve Prior, Worcestershire

*Land at
Hoden Lane, Cleeve Prior, Worcs., WR11 8LH.*

Archaeological Evaluation

NGR: *SP 408808 248973*

Site code: *CP22*

HER ref: *(wsm78149)*

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Front cover; View of the site from the south

SUMMARY

Archaeological evaluation was carried out on land at Hoden Road, Cleeve Prior during April 2022 in connection with the development of the site comprising the construction of a new dwelling. The investigation revealed no evidence of an earlier settlement or human activity within the proposed development site and instead revealed a sequence of soil deposits characteristic of a prolonged open rural environment, this scenario is supported by the absence of residual finds, suggesting historically little human activity other than that associated with the agricultural use of the land. The negative results of the investigation showed that archaeological deposits are unlikely to be present within the application area and that the development will have no impact.

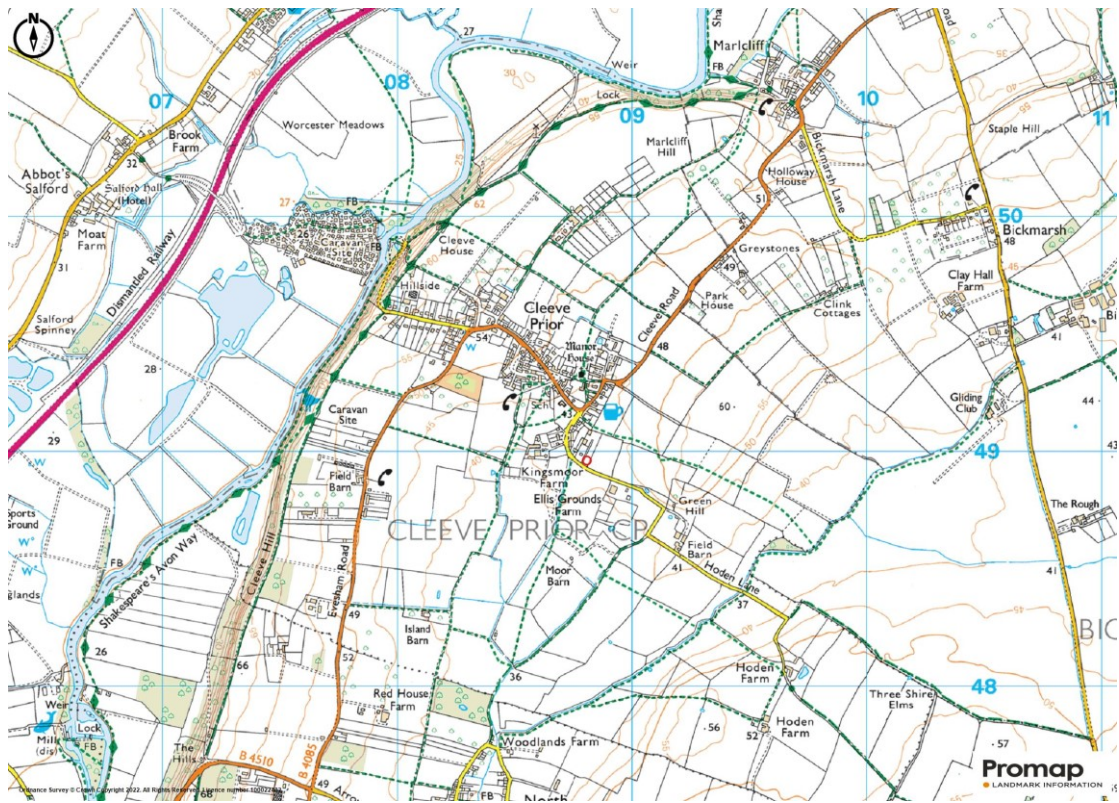


Fig. 1; Site location circled in red.

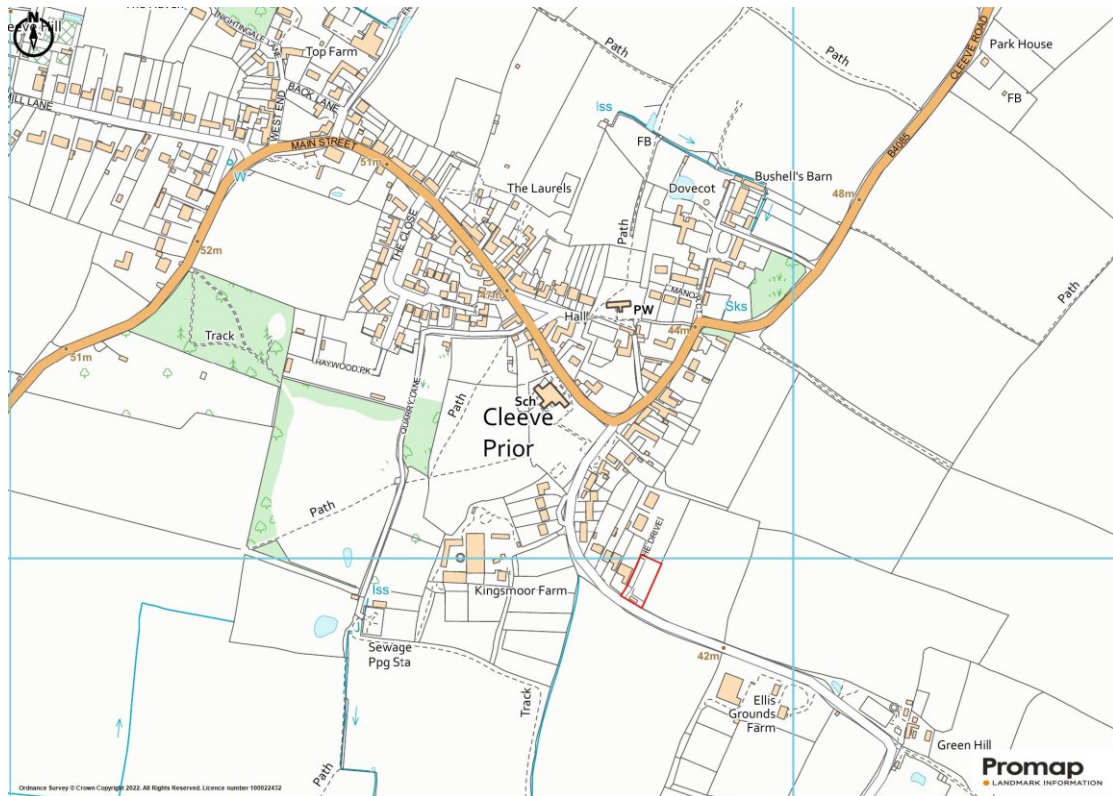


Fig. 2; Area of study outlined in red.

INTRODUCTION

Location and scope of works

This document details the results of an archaeological evaluation during the 11th and 12 April 2022 on land at Hoden Road, Cleeve Prior. A planning application (*Planning ref. 21/02185/OUT*) had been granted by Wychavon District Council for the development of the site comprising demolition of existing outbuilding and shed and erection of one self-build dwelling and all associated works. The proposal is conditional on the completion of an evaluation (trial trenching) the results of which would, if necessary, inform a mitigation strategy for further archaeological work on site prior to or during the commencement of development.

The proposed development area (PDA) is south of the conjectured medieval settlement of Cleeve prior ([wsm23323](#)). To the northwest of the PDA a significant amount of archaeology has been identified by metal detecting and reported through the Portable Antiquity Scheme ([wsm65856](#)). Finds range from the Iron Age through the Romano-British period to King John's reign and into the high medieval. Given the scale of the development, and the anticipated archaeological potential, the likely impact on the historic environment caused by this development was offset by the implementation of a conditional programme of archaeological works. This would comprise an initial programme of trial trenching to determine the presence or absence, extent, date, character, condition and significance of any remains and the likely impact of the development upon them. If archaeological remains were identified that would be damaged or destroyed by the development and they could not be preserved in-situ, then the evaluation would be followed by a defined programme of archaeological excavation and/or a watching brief to record the remains prior to their loss. A metal detecting survey was required on the spoil.

Geology and topography

Cleeve Prior is a village in the Vale of Evesham Worcestershire, England. It is situated five miles north-east of Evesham. The development sites comprise an area of approx. 1,750m² and is situated at approximately 42m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). The Geological Survey of Great Britain indicates that the underlying geology comprises Lower Lias, mainly clay and (BGS, 1974).

The area sits within a low-lying landscape based on Limestone and Mudstone bedrock geology in an area where land use is principally arable. The historic landscape character is one of planned private, parliamentary and piecemeal enclosure however there has been a high degree of change including modern field amalgamation and modern subdivision as the result of market gardening agriculture commonly practised in the area. There is limited tree cover. The settlement pattern is nucleated and there has been a moderate degree of modern expansion.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Clyve, C11; Clive Prioris, C13; Priors Cleve, C16.

The name *Cleeve*, attested in the Domesday Book of 1086 as *Clyve*, comes from the dative singular form of the Old English word *clif* ('cliff, bank, steep hill'), referring in this case to the rising ground above the River Avon on which the village is situated. The estate was the property of the Priors of Worcester from early times (recorded in their Latin records as *Clyve Prioris*) accounting for the *Prior* element of the name, distinguishing it from nearby Bishop's Cleeve.

An HER search was carried out on a 500m radius of the site and 14 Archaeological activities and 93 HER Monuments are recorded. There are 30 Historic England Listed and six unlisted, historic buildings. The earliest structures include a C12 church ([wsm02807](#)) and several C16 timber-framed buildings comprising dwellings, farm buildings, a dovecote ([wsm02806](#), [Wsm39081](#)) and a public house ([wsm12981](#)). Most building records are dated to the C17-C18 and include other dwellings and farm buildings, a school room ([wsm39069](#)), vicarage ([wsm33103](#)) and cider mill ([wsm39077](#)). A C19 Village-hall ([wsm33113](#)) and barn, and a C20 stable are also recorded. All the buildings, apart from a single field-barn ([wsm50880](#)), are in the Cleeve Prior village conservation area. The Historic Farmsteads of Worcestershire project records six farmsteads ([wsm60829](#), [wsm60830](#), [wsm60831](#), [wsm60832](#), [wsm60833](#), [wsm60970](#)) and two C16-C19 out-farms ([wsm50831](#), [wsm58532](#)).

There are monument records for the site of several demolished farm buildings ([wsm50881](#)). Records for lime kilns ([wsm07808](#)), a stone-lined culvert ([wsm02900](#)) and a possible boundary ditch ([wsm58280](#)) are also dated to the Post Medieval period. Later records include the site of a WW2 auxiliary fire service base ([wsm33105](#)).

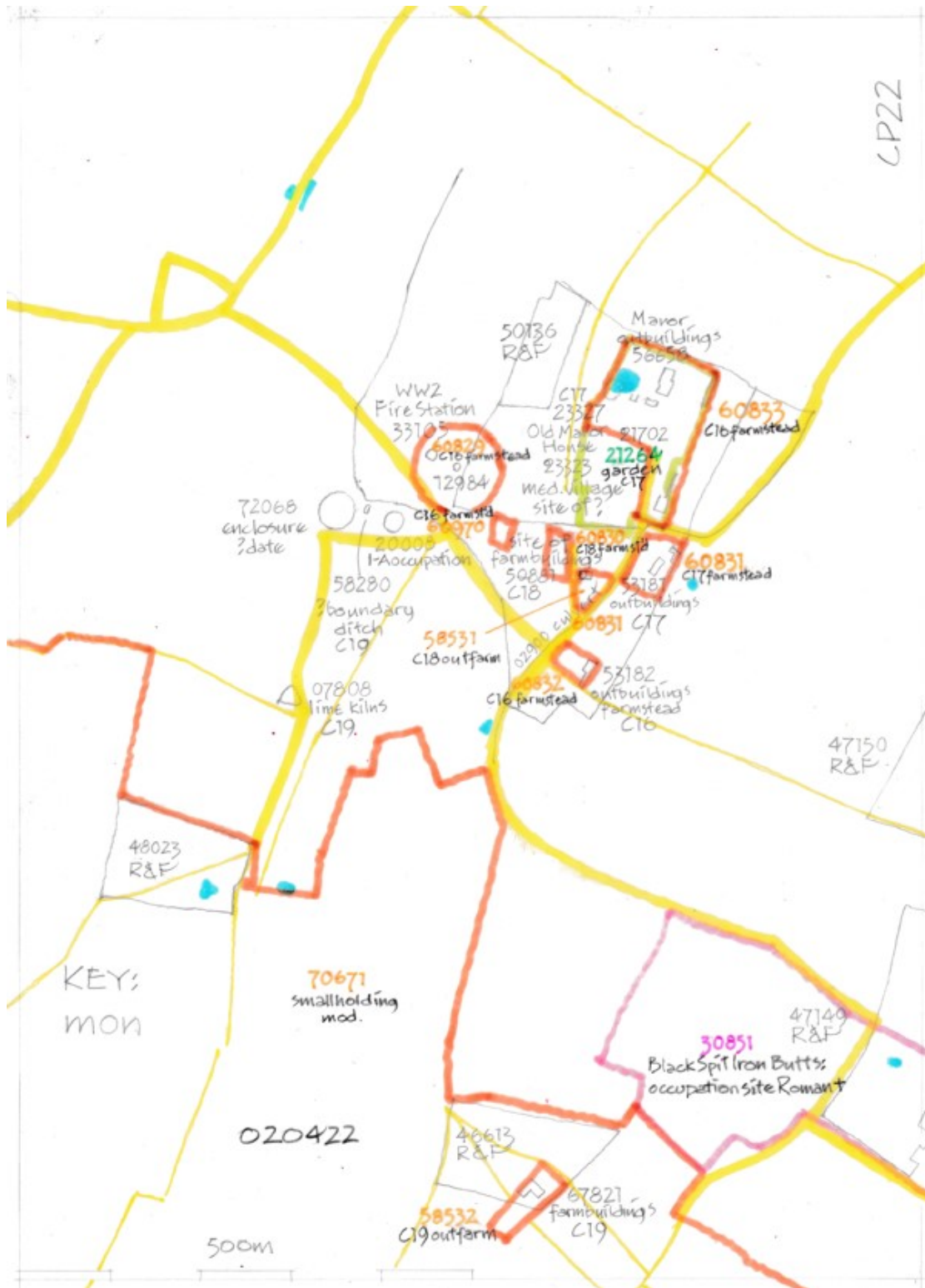


Fig. 3; monuments plan.

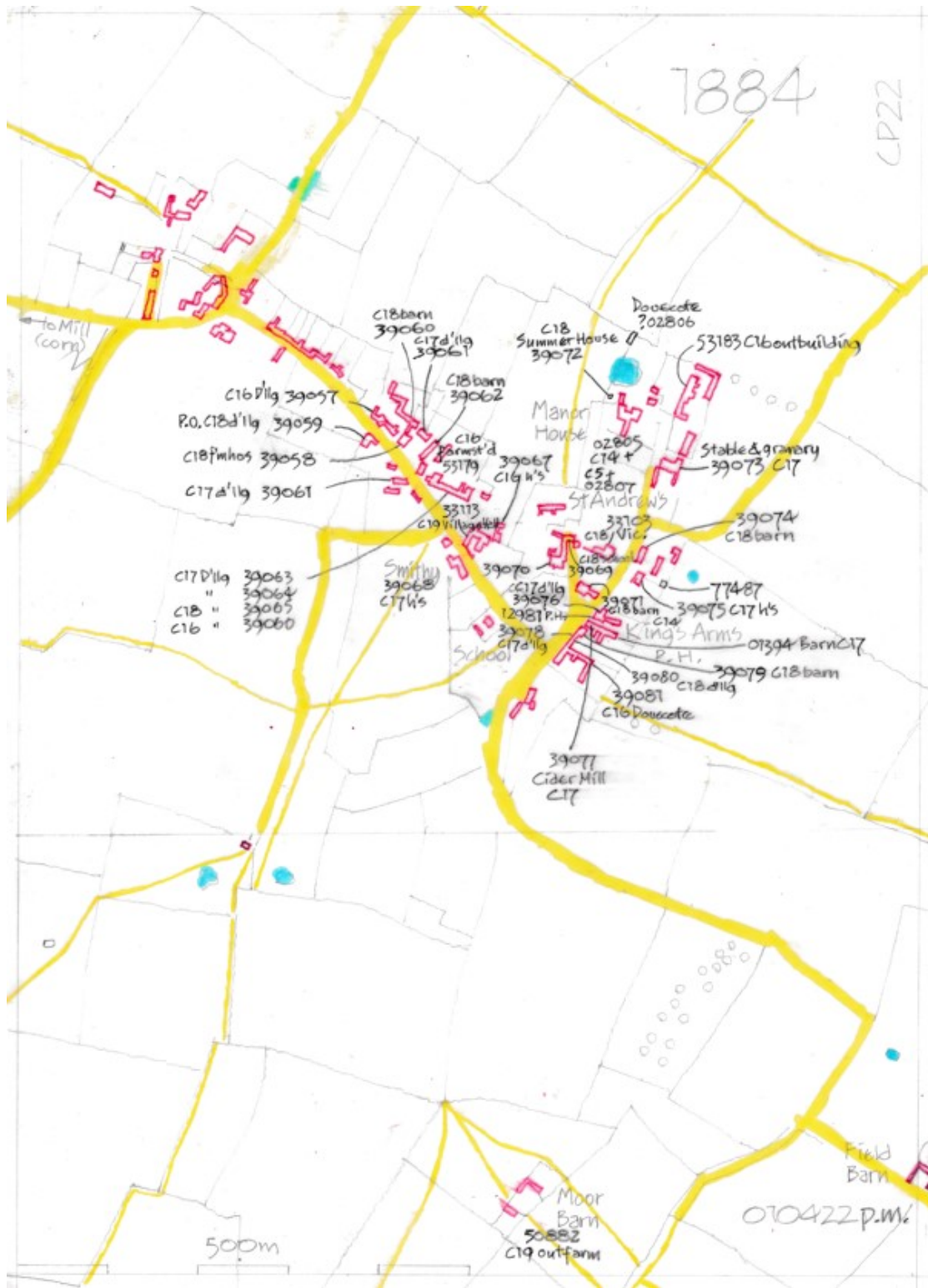


Fig. 4; Historic environment: buildings

For the Medieval period there are several records related to earthworks of Ridge and Furrow ([wsm50136](#), [wsm48023](#), [wsm46613](#), [wsm47149](#), [wsm47150](#)) as well as evidence for the conjectured site of the Medieval village of Cleeve Prior ([wsm23323](#)), its old manor house ([wsm23327](#)) and a grange belonging to Worcester Priory. A site of possible Iron Age occupation ([wsm20008](#)), and an undated enclosure ([wsm72068](#)), are also recorded.

22 Portable Antiquity Scheme find records are currently identified within the search area, including Roman coins, brooches and other personal objects dating to the Iron Age, Roman and Medieval periods. Archaeological investigations have also recovered several artefacts including Roman pottery and coins, Medieval pottery, brick and tile, and Post Medieval pottery and architectural material. There have been only four invasive activities recorded and the most recent in 2014 did not record any significant deposits. There is excellent potential in the wider landscape for further below-ground archaeology.

EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

Aims of the work

The objectives of the evaluation were to determine the date, character, quality, survival and extent of the archaeological deposits within the application area likely to be threatened by the proposed development in order that an informed decision on their importance in a local, regional and national context can be made. This information would clarify whether any remains should be considered for preservation *in situ* or form the basis of a mitigation strategy.

In general, the aims of the investigation will include:

- i) establishing the date, nature and extent of activity or occupation on the development site.
- ii) recovering artefacts to assist in the development of type series within the region.
- iii) recovering palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.

In particular, the aims of the investigation were to:

- iv) establish if the Roman settlement to the north extends to the area of the site to the south

Sample size and scope of fieldwork

The evaluation comprised two trenches. Trench 1 was 25m in length and trench 2 was 15m long. Both trenches were excavated to a width of 1.50m. A metal detecting survey was carried prior to the trenching and again over the spoil produced from the excavation.

Fieldwork methods and recording

The archaeological field work and post-excavation was carried out in accordance with standards and guidance for archaeological field evaluations produced by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA, 2020). All deposits were excavated removing the overburden under close archaeological supervision and investigated for archaeological features. Plans and sample sections of the trenches were made and recorded during excavation.

RESULTS: GENERAL

Soil and ground conditions

Conditions were generally dry during the excavation with the soil layers showing little moisture retention. Excavation was relatively smooth throughout the trench being made through alternate layers of topsoil and subsoil, leaving a clean and visible surface within the natural substrate, a soft clay overlying limestone bedrock where excavation in these areas (trench) was difficult.

Reliability of field investigation

There was little evidence of truncation of the underlying deposits apart from that associated with the insertion of a series of land drains across the area.

Distribution of archaeological deposits

No archaeological deposits were revealed during the investigation, instead the excavation revealed an overall stratigraphy across the site comprising of a natural geology consisting of clay overlain by a relict subsoil layer which was in turn sealed by modern topsoil.

Presentation of results

The results of the excavation (below) are described from the earliest to the latest deposits. Trenches were attributed context numbers with a numerical value equivalent to the number of the trench.

RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

Trenches 1 & 2

The stratigraphic sequence of deposits within each of the trenches across both areas was broadly similar consisting of alternate layers of varying soil deposits throughout the length of each trench. The surface of the natural substrate (contexts 101 & 203) comprised a soft light yellowish brown clay, in both trenches it was situated at a level height of about 41.20m AOD. In trench 2 this clay was overlying a limestone bedrock observed as three linear and roughly equally distanced lengths of natural stone aligned northeast-southwest. These were shown to comprise overlapping and fragmented layers of pitched stone. One of these bedrock outcrops was only partially exposed at the south end of the trench. Two similar areas of stone were exposed further along the trench, each between 0.50-80m wide.

Overlying the clay in both trenches was an undated relict subsoil deposit (102 & 202) consisting of a mid-yellowish-brown, silty-clay, 0.26m thick in trench 1 and up to 0.14m thick in trench 2. This subsoil layer was sealed by (101 & 201) another undated subsoil deposit, it was 0.16m thick and comprised a mid-greyish-brown, silty-clay. This was interpreted as an earlier, buried topsoil which was in turn overlain by a 0.20m thick layer of dark greyish-brown silt. This layer appears to have been re-deposited in more recent times.

FINDS

Pottery finds comprised a few modern potsherds recovered from the existing topsoil layer in trench 1, these were residual in nature and were discarded. A series of miscellaneous metal artefacts were also recovered during metal detecting of the spoil from the excavation (see plates 7-10).

A single artefact (object 1) of interest was a brooch-like object, seemingly bronze with silver or nickle plating. The object is circular, approx. 54 mm in diameter and 0.01mm wide. The front of the object is decorated in with motif design which appears to have been made by stamping the reverse of the object either by hand or using a machine press which seems more likely indicating a probable modern date for its creation. A small part of the edge of the object is bent over to the other side. Although the object appears to have functioned as a brooch, there is no pin and clasp on the rear or any evidence to indicate that one had broken off previously suggesting that it functioned as decorative fitting. All the objects were found within the topsoil layer (100) which is clearly re-deposited soil, probably from the adjacent development.

Environmental data

None of the deposits identified during excavation proved suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling.

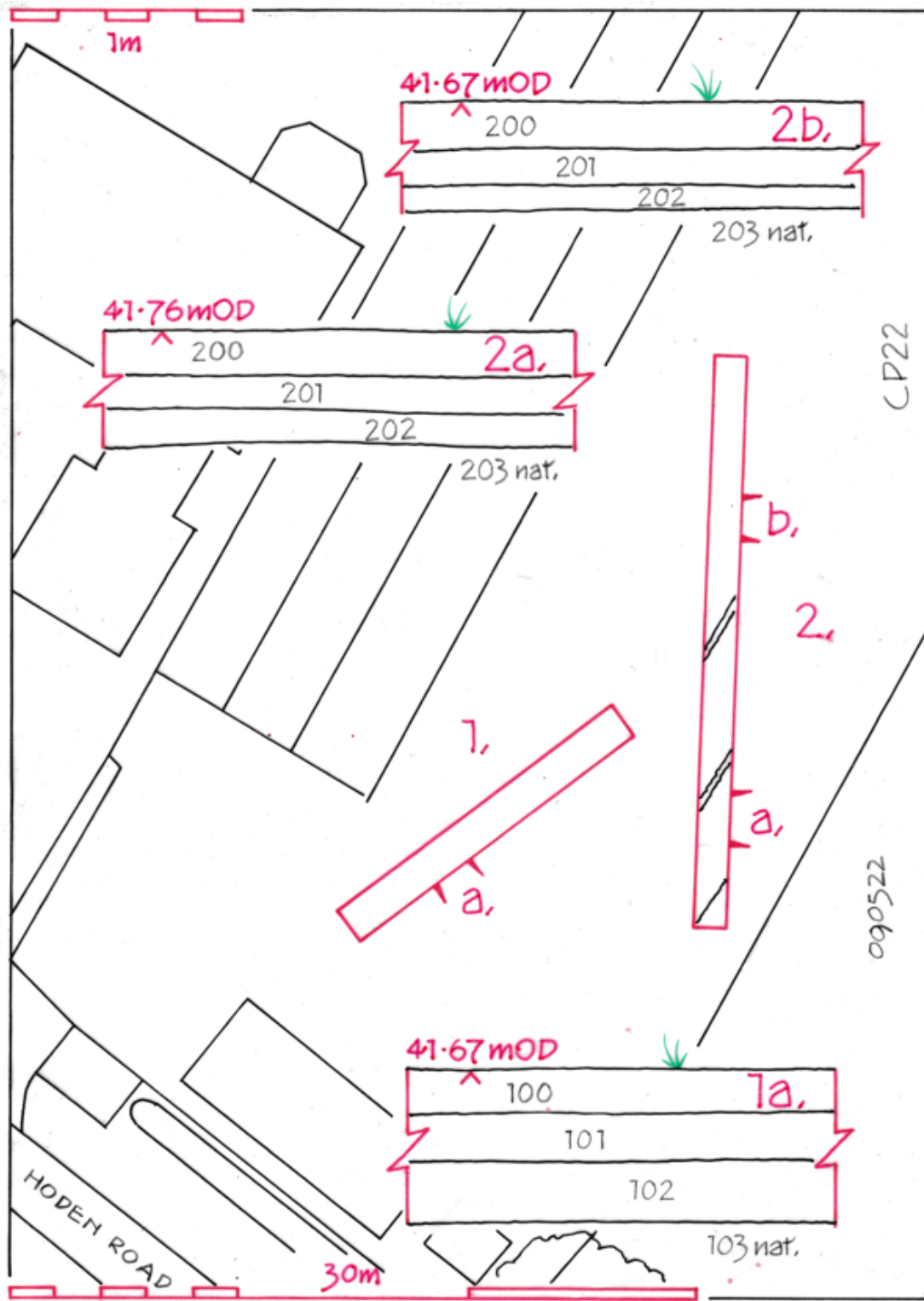


Fig.5; Trench plans and sections.

DISCUSSION

The HER shows us that the historic core of the medieval village lies to the northwest of the site, the surrounding outlying fields of ridge and furrow define the extent of this settlement. Immediately east of the village centre are crop marks which based on their morphology may represent the remains of a possible Iron Age occupation site. The site itself lies to the south of the medieval settlement in an area where there is traditional ridge and furrow although there was no evidence during the investigation to indicate that these earthworks formerly existed within the site. To the south of the application site is a possible Roman occupation area ([wsm30851](#)) although this is based on a field name rather than any physical evidence.

The results of the investigation revealed a stratigraphic sequence of deposits within each of the trenches that was broadly similar, consisting of alternate layers of varying soil deposits throughout the lengths of each trench. Underlying the natural clay substrate was a limestone bedrock observed as three narrow linear outcrops aligned northeast-southwest almost equidistantly within the southern end of the trench. Overlying this clay in both trenches was a relatively thin undated relict subsoil deposit (102 & 202) representing the earliest soil horizon. The buried topsoil (101 & 201) sealing this layer was itself overlain by thick layer of re-deposited soil (100 & 200) probably associated with the recent residential development along the western edge of the application site. Finds recovered from the spoil, particularly the brooch-like object, were collected from the redeposited soil layer above the buried topsoil and therefore not within a primary context.

The archaeological evidence suggests little human activity within the site and the lack of artefacts found from the layers beneath the redeposited soil supports the hypothesis that there has been little human activity within the site other than that historically associated with the agricultural use of the land.

Summary of results

The archaeological investigation revealed no evidence of earlier settlement or human activity within the proposed development site instead revealing a sequence of soil deposits characteristic of a prolonged open rural environment, this scenario is supported by the absence of residual finds, suggesting historically

little human activity other than that associated with the agricultural use of the land. The negative results suggest that the development will have no impact.

Significance

The investigation revealed no evidence of earlier occupation. Instead, the stratigraphic sequence of deposits across the application site suggests that the area was historically open, undeveloped land that formed part of the agricultural belt immediately to the southeast of Cleeve Prior. An absence of evidence to indicate former ridge and furrow suggests that cultivation did not extend into this area or that subsequent truncation was substantial.

Impact of development

The results of the investigation suggest that the construction of the new dwelling and associated services and driveway is unlikely to impact on archaeological deposits.

Archive Location

The digital archive arising from the work will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) via the online portal OASIS.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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PLATES



Plate 1: trench 1, view northeast.



Plate 2: section 1a.



Plate 3: trench 2, view north showing areas of exposed bedrock.



Plate 4. Area of exposed bedrock in the southeast corner of trench 2.



Plate 5. Two further areas of bedrock in the central area of trench 2



Plate 6: section 2a



Plate 7: Object 1 (front)



Plate 8: Object 1 (reverse)



Plate 9: Other miscellaneous metal finds (front)



Plate 10: Other miscellaneous metal finds (reverse)