



Land adjacent to Steart Village, Steart Point, Somerset, TA5 2PX

Interim Report no. 2

Prepared for:
May Gurney Ltd
Trowse
Norwich
Norfolk
NR14 8SZ

On behalf of:
Environment Agency

Prepared by:
Wessex Archaeology
Portway House
Old Sarum Park
Salisbury
Wiltshire
SP4 6EB



www.wessexarch.co.uk

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Contents

1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	SCOPE OF WORKS	1
2.1	Introduction.....	1
2.2	Evaluation Results.....	2
3	AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	3
4	METHODOLOGIES	3
4.1	Introduction.....	3
4.2	Excavation.....	3
4.3	Monitoring.....	4
5	POST-FIELDWORK.....	4
6	BIBLIOGRAPHY	4

Figure 1: Site and proposed excavation Area 501

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology (the **Contractor**) has been commissioned by May Gurney Ltd (the **Client**) to carry out an archaeological evaluation of land proposed for a habitat creation scheme at Steart Point peninsula, near Bridgwater, Somerset (the **Site** - centred on OS NGR 327000 145000; **Figure 1**).
- 1.1.2 The archaeological works are being carried out as part of a package of measures in order to mitigate anticipated off-site impacts associated with construction work at Bristol Port, and specifically loss of floodplain/ wildlife habitat. At Steart Point, the works will comprise construction of an artificial floodplain creek system, extending over a footprint measuring approximately 24.5ha, and associated balancing ponds totalling an additional 25.5ha.

2 SCOPE OF WORKS

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 This Interim Report has been prepared by the Contractor, and sets out the proposed archaeological works. The scope of works under consideration currently comprises further examination of archaeological remains mapped during geophysical survey and observed in evaluation Trench 63 (WA Plot 21), and located within the central portion of the creek system (**Figure 1**).
- 2.1.2 This area was targeted for geophysical survey, following the recovery of Romano-British pottery during the previous fieldwalking survey (WA 2011), the geophysical results appearing to indicate an enclosure and possibly associated field system (WA 2012a). Although not tested during evaluation, the geophysical survey results included an area of enhanced magnetic response to the immediate north of the probable enclosure.
- 2.1.3 In relation to the relict palaeochannel plot generated from LiDAR data, the enclosure is located to the west of a palaeochannel approximately 20m wide. Although this was not detected as a single anomaly during the geophysical survey, it must be born in mind that such a palaeochannel is likely to be both very deep and buried at some depth, likely beyond the normal penetration for geophysical survey. However, a series of linear anomalies designated as of possible archaeological origin in the eastern portion of the survey area appear to coincide with the opposing banks of this palaeochannel.
- 2.1.4 The proposed investigation area (hereafter **Area 501**) extends over approximately 0.22ha, to the north of an existing watercourse (from which a minimum 5m buffer must be maintained on ecological grounds).

2.2 Evaluation Results

Trench 63

- 2.2.1 Trench 63, realigned slightly to maintain the agreed minimum distance of 5m from the adjacent watercourse (forming the boundary between Plot 21 and Plot 20 to the south), revealed three separate ditches; parallel Ditches 6303 and 6309 aligned approximately south-west to north-east, and Ditch 6308 at approximate right angles to these two. These archaeological features correlate very closely with geophysical anomalies previously identified, and collectively appear to represent a sub-rectangular enclosure (long axis aligned south-west to north-east), with associated ditches (field system?) extending to both the north and east. However, as noted below, stratigraphic relationships indicate Ditch 6308 is either be a later (medieval?) addition, or possibly an earlier ditch that has been re-cut at a later date.
- 2.2.2 Ditch 6303 is considered the southernmost side of the enclosure, though it must be noted that the length exposed within evaluation Trench 63 actually represents the continuation of the enclosure ditch side to the east beyond the enclosure footprint. It comprised a ditch with slightly convex sides and a broad flat base that was cut from the surface of alluvium 6302 (approximately 0.35m below the modern ground surface) that in section was observed as approximately 2m wide and 0.85m deep, though somewhat truncated during the evaluation process. The ditch contained a sequence of four fills (6304, 6305, 6306 and 6307) with apparent slumping (primary fill 6304) suggesting the associated raised bank would have been to the south (i.e. outside the enclosure).
- 2.2.3 Ditch 6309, the northernmost side of the enclosure, comprised a similarly profiled ditch again cut from the surface of alluvium 6302 that in section was observed as approximately 1.8m wide and 0.55m deep, though again somewhat truncated during the evaluation process. The ditch contained a sequence of five fills (6319, 6318, 6317, 6316 and 6315); tip lines suggesting the associated up-cast bank would have been to the north of the ditch.
- 2.2.4 Ditch 6308, the possible east side of the enclosure (though extending to the north beyond the enclosure footprint according to the geophysical anomaly) comprised a substantial fairly sharp 'V'-shaped profile ditch, approximately 4m wide and at least 1.1m deep, though it was not possible to observe the base of the ditch due to Health & Safety (and water table) constraints. The dissimilarity between the size and profile of this ditch and Ditches 6303 and 6309 is notable, and this ditch, at least in its most recent form, was cut from the surface of alluvium 6301, and therefore stratigraphically later than the other two ditches. It contained at least five fills (6314, 6313, 6312, 6311 and 6310), of which 6312 was of a peaty organic-rich nature observed in other post-medieval ditches elsewhere on Steart Peninsula, and considered characteristic of the final accumulation (possibly due to repeated hedgerow trimming) prior to field boundaries being deliberately in-filled in the post-medieval/ modern period – though no dateable artefacts were recovered from this ditch.

Artefacts

- 2.2.5 Pottery from contexts 6306, 6315, 6317 and 6318 are all Late Roman (i.e. late 3rd – 4th century AD), and therefore broadly comparable to similar material found during earlier stages of work at Steart Point. The assemblage includes Black Burnished ware from Wareham/Poole Harbour and both types of greyware commonly found in Somerset: south-western 'gritty' greywares A (perhaps made near Norton Fitzwarren) and B (source uncertain) both of mid/late 2nd – 4th century AD date. Also recovered is the standard Late Romano-British range of vessel forms – everted rim jars, shallow plain-rimmed dishes and dropped flanged bowls/dishes.

Discussion

- 2.2.6 The quantity and range of artefacts recovered from the Romano-British ditches is considered indicative of feature forming or at least in close proximity to a settlement area. On the basis of artefacts recovered and feature morphology, the evidence from just the evaluation trench indicates that whilst Ditches 6303 and 6309 belong to the Romano-British period, Ditch 6308 is a much later (medieval/post-medieval?) construction.
- 2.2.7 However, it is clear from the preceding geophysical survey that beyond the evaluation footprint all three ditches possess a sufficient degree of spatial patterning to suggest they are all in some way intrinsically associated. Romano-British Ditch 6309 appears to terminate at and form an intersection with later Ditch 6308, and later Ditch 6308 appears to terminate at and form an intersection with Romano-British Ditch 6303. It is for this reason that it is suggested that later Ditch 6308 may represent a recut of an earlier shallower Romano-British ditch.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1.1 The aim of the project is to examine the archaeological resource within the area of investigation, within a framework of defined research objectives, to seek a better understanding of and compile a lasting record of that resource, to analyse and interpret the results, and disseminate them. All works will be undertaken in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists' (IfA) *Standard and Guidance for archaeological excavation*, the IfA *Code of Conduct*, and other current and relevant best practice and standards and guidance.
- 3.1.2 To achieve the project aim as outlined, the following generic objectives are defined:
- *To determine the general nature of the remains present.*
 - *To examine, record and interpret archaeological deposits, features and structures;*
 - *As appropriate, retrieve artefacts, ecofacts and other remains within the investigation area;*
 - *To study the records made and objects gathered during fieldwork; and*
 - *To publish the results of that study in detail.*

4 METHODOLOGIES

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 Setting-out, mechanical excavation and reinstatement, recording, artefact and sample recovery and examination of human remains will all proceed in accordance with the established methodologies as covered in the original Trial Trench Evaluation *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI; WA 2012b).

4.2 Excavation

- 4.2.1 All archaeological remains discovered will be hand-cleaned where necessary, and then photographed and planned using both GPS survey equipment and hand-drawn plans. A representative section for the investigation area will also be photographed and drawn, demonstrating the typical stratigraphic sequence and depth, and highlighting significant atypical variations to this sequence.
- 4.2.2 A sufficient sample will be excavated from archaeological features (e.g. ditches, pits, post-holes etc.) to fulfil the aims and objectives of the works. Excavation of cut features will

therefore include examination of feature intersections to establish relative chronologies, feature terminals to ascertain presence/absence of terminal features and/or deposits, and where feasible at least one 'clean' section away from potential sources of contamination to obtain secure dating evidence and environmental samples. This will aim to achieve a minimum 10% by length excavation of 'linear' features (i.e. ditches, gullies, beam slots etc.).

4.2.3 Discrete features (pits, post-holes etc.) will in general be 50% excavated. Where considerable numbers of closely-spaced morphologically-similar discrete features are encountered, it may be considered appropriate, in consultation with the Curator, to excavate a representative sample of such features rather than all present.

4.2.4 Although unlikely, if areas of extensive archaeological stratification are encountered, these will not be machine-excavated without first ascertaining their precise nature, date and composition. Such investigative work may include hand-dug discrete test-pits through the deposit(s), hand-augering or excavation of archaeological features cutting into such deposits. This investigative work will inform any decisions on subsequent additional detailed excavation, to be agreed with the Client and Curator prior to instigation.

4.3 Monitoring

4.3.1 The Client and Curator, and/or their appointed representatives, will have unrestricted access to the site, site records or any other information as required.

5 POST-FIELDWORK

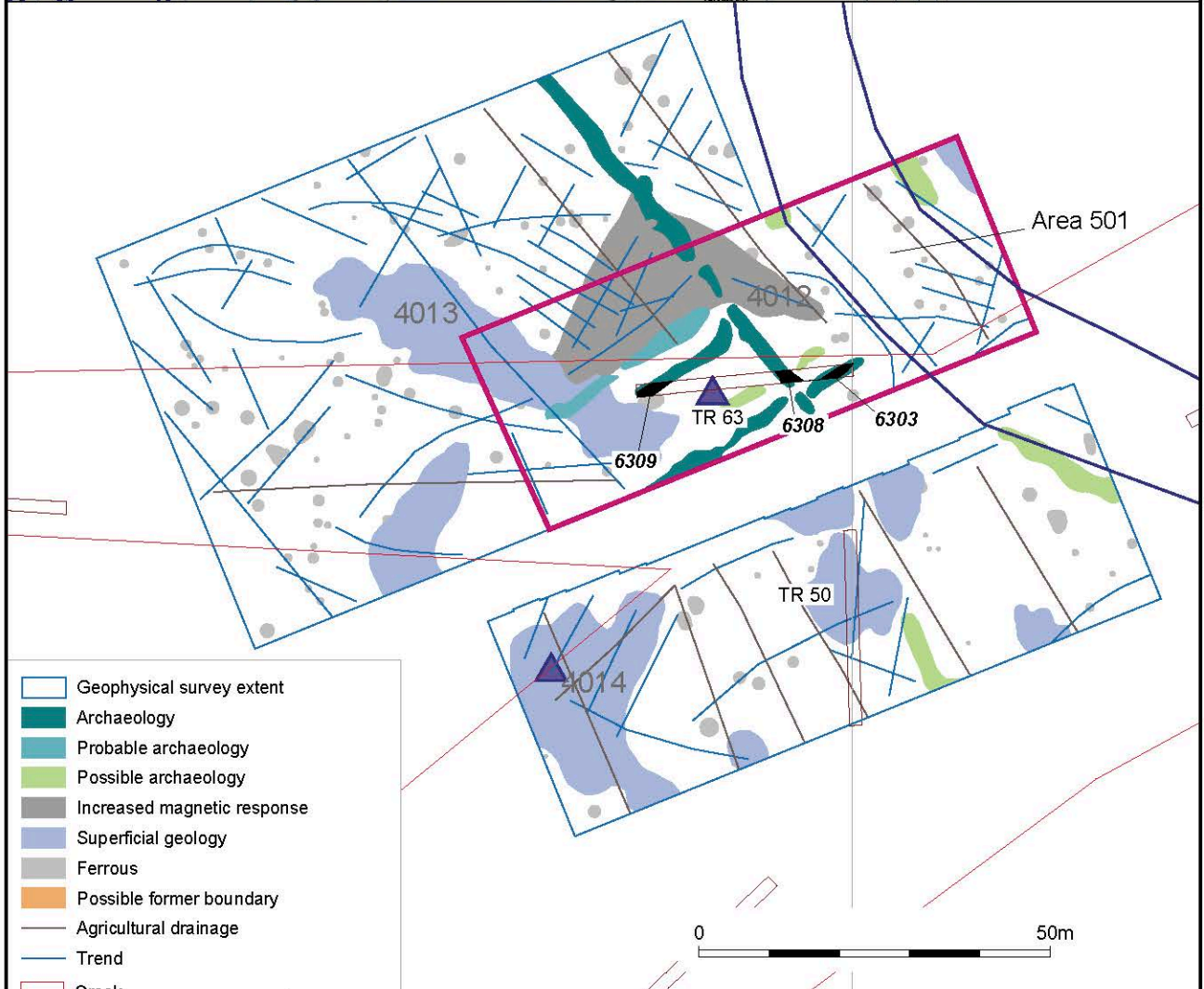
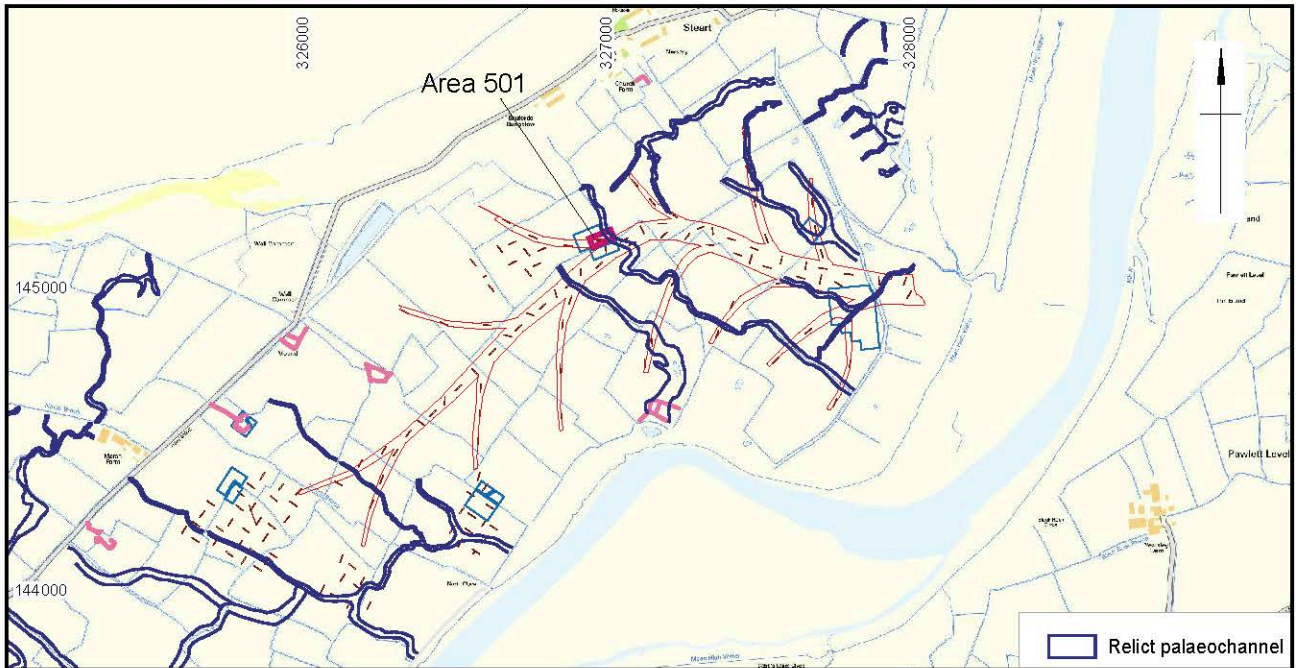
5.1.1 All finds and environmental samples will be processed according to procedures set out in the original evaluation WSI (WA 2012b). A report on the results of this investigation will be incorporated into the overall assessment reporting for the trial trench evaluation.

6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Wessex Archaeology [WA], 2011, *Land adjacent to Steart Village, Steart Point, Somerset: Fieldwalking Survey & Evaluation Report*, unpublished client report no. 77221.03

-- , 2012a, *Land adjacent to Steart Village, Steart Point, Somerset: Detailed Gradiometer Survey Report*, unpublished client report 77221.04

-- , 2012b, *Land adjacent to Steart Village, Steart Point, Somerset, TA5 2PX: Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological trial trench evaluation*, unpublished client report no. 77221.05



- Geophysical survey extent
- Archaeology
- Probable archaeology
- Possible archaeology
- Increased magnetic response
- Superficial geology
- Ferrous
- Possible former boundary
- Agricultural drainage
- Trend
- Creek
- Proposed excavation area
- Evaluation trench
- Archaeological feature
- ▲ Romano-British find spot

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Site and proposed excavation Area 501

Figure 1