



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

**Interim Report no. 3**

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**Figure 1:** Site and proposed excavation Area 502

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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 observed in evaluation Trench 24 (WA Plot 11), located within the eastern portion of the creek system (**Figure 1**).
- 2.1.2 This area was targeted for geophysical survey (WA 2012a; Area B), following the recovery of medieval pottery during the fieldwalking survey (WA 2011b), and subsequent aerial photograph (AP) evidence (**Figure 1, inset**) provided by the Archaeology Service of Somerset County Council (R Brunning), suggesting the presence of a (moated?) enclosure.
- 2.1.3 It was also noted during evaluation that the southern end of the trench was located at the north-east end of a concentrated spread of stone fragments within the modern topsoil, aligned south-west to north-east over a distance of 70-80m and up to 15m wide. Although none of the stone appeared obviously dressed, some appeared to have been burnt/ heat-affected; this spread was noted on the appropriate site records, but none of the stone recovered.
- 2.1.4 It is also of note that the AP evidence, when combined with the relict palaeochannel plot generated from LiDAR data, indicates that the enclosure actually straddles one such relict palaeochannel. The geophysical survey results with regard to this palaeochannel were far from conclusive, though 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.
- 2.1.5 The proposed investigation area (hereafter **Area 502**) extends over approximately 0.16ha.

## 2.2 Evaluation Results

### *Introduction*

- 2.2.1 As noted above, geophysical survey Area B was located on the basis of both fieldwalking results and AP evidence, which combined to suggest the presence of a moated site (of probably medieval date) on the line of the first northern tributary of the proposed creek system.
- 2.2.2 In this regard the recovery of medieval pottery during fieldwalking appeared to corroborate the likely period for any subsurface remains; the geophysical survey results, although inconclusive, appeared to indicate that at least the westernmost element of anomaly 4010 coincides with the eastern boundary for the enclosure from AP evidence. This anomaly appears to turn towards the east at its southern extent, to align with Ditch 2406/8 recorded during the evaluation (see below).
- 2.2.3 Also with reference to the AP evidence, the linear ferrous anomaly 4009 located at the western edge of the geophysical survey appears to coincide with a possible field boundary which bisects (and therefore presumably post-dates) the enclosure. The stone spread noted during evaluation is therefore largely focussed on the interior of this enclosure, though apparently extending beyond the enclosure's eastern boundary.

### *Trench 24*

- 2.2.4 Trench 24 revealed three archaeological features, comprising Ditch 2406 (and recut 2408) and Pit 2403. Ditch 2406 was aligned south-west to north-east, and therefore parallel to the adjacent modern drainage ditch that forms the southern boundary of Plot 11. The original undated ditch (2406) measured up to approximately 3.1m in width and 1.2m in depth with moderately sloping convex sides and a broad slightly rounded base, and was filled with single fill 2407. This ditch was cut from the surface of alluvial layer 2402, and sealed by subsoil 2401 and topsoil 2400, to a combined thickness of c. 0.6m below modern ground surface (though somewhat truncated during the evaluation process).
- 2.2.5 Ditch 2406 appeared to have been recut as Ditch 2408, a slightly narrower feature that either respected, or possibly truncated the original northern edge of Ditch 2406 – hence the original width of the latter cannot be confidently determined. Ditch 2408 was approximately 2.5m wide and 1.2m deep, with moderate sloping convex sides and a 'U'-shaped base, and contained a sequence of five fills (2409, 2410, 2411, 2412 and 2413) producing diagnostic 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century pottery. Stratigraphically, the recut was cut from the surface of fill 2407 in Ditch 2406, and as with Ditch 2406, was sealed by subsoil 2401 and topsoil 2400 to a depth of c. 0.6m below modern ground surface.
- 2.2.6 The fill of neither ditch produced a clear indication of whether there was an associated up-cast bank to either side, but given the proximity of Pit 2403 (see below), and on the assumption that these features are all broadly contemporaneous, it would be most likely that had there been an associated bank, it would have been on the north-west side of the ditches.
- 2.2.7 Pit 2403 was located immediately to the south-east of Ditch 2406/2408. The pit was oval in plan, co-aligned with the adjacent ditches and measuring 1.9m by 1.3m. The undated feature was comparatively shallow at only 0.24m depth, with shallow concave sides and a broad very slightly rounded base, and contained two fills (2405 and 2404). The pit was wholly contained within the evaluation trench footprint, and therefore it was not possible to determine with absolute certainty the surface from which it was originally excavated, though given the level at which this feature was first observed during stripping, it is most

probable that the pit was cut from the surface of alluvial layer 2402 and sealed by subsoil 2401 and topsoil 2400 to a depth of c. 0.6m below modern ground surface.

#### *Artefacts*

- 2.2.8 Small quantities of finds, comprising animal bone, pottery and stone, were recovered from Trench 24 (**Table 1**).

**Table 1: Artefact quantification (no. / wt g)**

Context	Animal Bone	Pottery	Stone
2401	1 / 8	1 / 16	
2411	2 / 22	3 / 34	
2412	2 / 34	6 / 43	6 / 2,456
<b>Total</b>	<b>5 / 64</b>	<b>10 / 93</b>	<b>6 / 2,456</b>

- 2.2.9 The only datable material within this small group comprises the pottery sherds. All sherds recovered from this trench are medieval, with a date range of 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century, and includes both coarse sandy wares and finer sandy glazed wares, the latter from a Bristol source. The stone probably consists of undressed building stone; one large piece (2.4kg+) has been heavily burnt on one side.

#### *Discussion*

- 2.2.10 It is most probable that the remains recorded in Trench 24 represent features contemporaneous with the AP enclosure, the ditch (and its recut) in particular possibly representing part of the enclosure's eastern boundary. The quantity (although modest) and range of artefacts recovered certainly corroborates the suggestion that these features are located in close proximity to an occupation site of 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century date.
- 2.2.11 Moreover, on the assumption that the stone rubble concentration noted in the topsoil during the evaluation is most likely associated, it would appear to suggest the former presence of a stone-built structure (or structures) within the enclosure; in this regard the results can be directly compared to previous investigations of similar stone-built structures within moated sites at Steart Point (e.g. Woolstone Farm; WA 2011a).

### **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

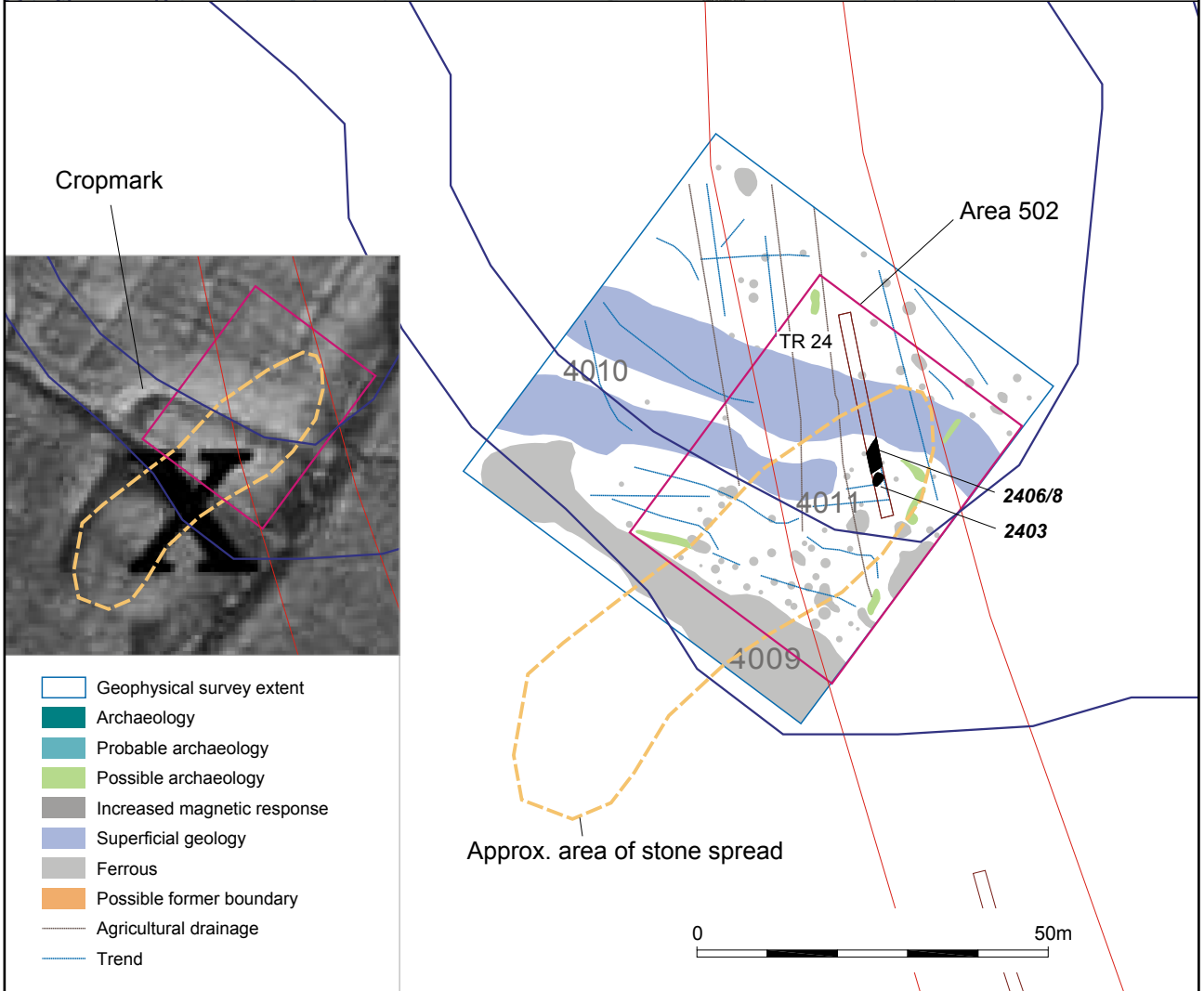
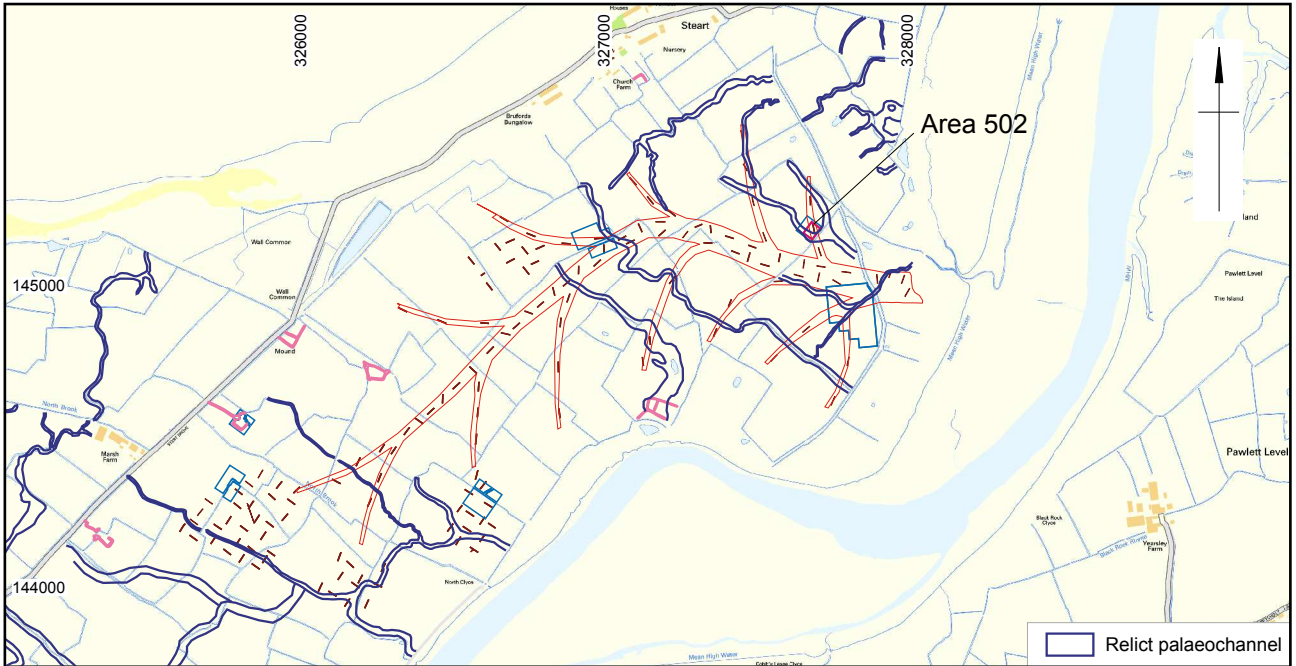
- 5.1.1 All finds and environmental samples will be processed according to procedures set out in the original evaluation WSI (WA 2012b). A report on the results of this investigation will be incorporated into the overall assessment reporting for the trial trench evaluation.

## 6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Site and proposed excavation Area 502

Figure 1