



**University of
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Archaeological Services



**An Archaeological Excavation
At Sandy Hill Lane,
Moulton, Northamptonshire.**

NGR: SP 7919 6647

Gavin Speed

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**An Archaeological Excavation
at Sandy Hill Lane,
Moulton, Northamptonshire.**

SP 7768 5203

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For: Taylor East Midlands

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Summary

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) carried out an archaeological excavation on land to the east of Sandy Hill Lane, Moulton, Northamptonshire (SP 7919 6647) on behalf of Wimpey East Midlands.

The excavation revealed field boundaries of probable 17th to 19th century date.

The site archive will be held by ULAS, accession no. ULAS_SLM12, until a recipient organization for Northamptonshire has been established.

1. Introduction

An archaeological excavation was carried out by ULAS for Taylor Wimpey East Midlands in September 2012 on land to the east of Sandy Hill Lane, Moulton, Northamptonshire (SP 7919 6647). This was undertaken in advance of the proposed construction of residential development consisting of 150 dwellings, employment, open space, and land for community uses with associated parking and access (planning application number 09/0995).

Northamptonshire County Council as archaeological advisors to the planning authority have requested an excavation to identify, locate and record any archaeological remains of significance, in advance of the development and detailed in their 'brief' of 15.05.2012 (NCC 2012). This report presents the results of the archaeological excavation that took place from 28th August to 20th September 2012.

2. Site Description, Topography and Geology

The site lies in the north-east area of Moulton, on the northern edge of Northampton (Figure 1 & 2). The application area currently consists of a large arable field (Area 1), a former orchard (Area 2), and industrial land covering 6.7ha. It is bordered by nursery gardens and residential areas along Kettering and Overstone Road. The land slopes down north-west to south-east and lies at a height of 110m OD. The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain shows that the underlying geology is Jurassic Lower Estuarine pale sand and sandstone.

3. Archaeological Background

A desk-based assessment had been prepared by Cotswold Archaeology (2009a) which indicated that there was prehistoric activity known from the area with cropmark complexes to the north, west, and east of the area. Geophysical survey by Pre-Construct Geophysics (2009) recorded anomalies of potential buried ditches and pits and ridge and furrow. Following this an archaeological trial trench evaluation comprising 11 trenches was undertaken targeting the results of the geophysical survey (Cotswold Archaeology 2009b). This confirmed the

presence of archaeological deposits of ditches, though their dating was uncertain. Some contained 17th to 19th century finds, along with Iron Age and Roman pottery, and a single worked flint flake. The conclusion was “it is considered probable that elements of the field system may date to the medieval or post-medieval periods”, and the earlier finds may be residual (Cotswold Archaeology 2009b, 3.2).

4. Aims and Objectives

The principal aims of the archaeological excavation were:

- To identify possible areas of archaeological potential liable to be threatened by the proposed development.
- To establish the location, extent, date, and significance of any archaeological deposits located.
- To define the quality and state of preservation of these deposits.
- To assess the local, regional and national importance of any deposits.
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

The objective was to gain an indication of the nature, extent, date and significance of any archaeological deposits which may be present in order that an informed planning decision can be taken.

5. Methodology

Prior to any machining general photographs of the site areas were taken. The areas were excavated using a Hymac 360 mechanical excavator equipped with a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket. The topsoil and overlying layers were removed under full archaeological supervision until either the top of archaeological deposits or the natural undisturbed substratum was reached. The areas were examined for archaeological deposits or finds by hand cleaning. The areas were tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid and then were backfilled and leveled at the end of the evaluation.

The work followed the approved design specification (ULAS 2012) and adhered to the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct* and their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavations* (2010).

6. Results

The excavation consisted of two areas, the main area (Area 1) located in a large arable field, and a much smaller area (Area 2) lay to the north in a former orchard and caravan park (Figure 3).

Area 1

Area 1 was a broadly oval area (Figure 4, 5, 8), 130 x 110m at its maximum extents (12100m²). It was located to target geophysical anomalies and to clarify evaluation results.

The topsoil, consisting of a dark grey-brown ploughsoil, was generally 0.25-0.4m in depth. Below this was a brown sandy subsoil, ranging in thickness from 0.05m to 0.2m.

The excavation revealed a sequence of ditches that cut into (i.e. post-dated) the extant agricultural furrows, and were positioned on a very similar alignment. The ditches formed a series of square enclosures, c. 40-45 x 35-37m. One metre wide sections were excavated to check for dating, and establish the profile and possible phasing. A cluster of post-holes were located within one of these enclosures, along with a linear arrangement of post-holes seen running parallel with a ditch (Figure 6).

Two parallel ditches, 130m in length and 2.6 – 2.7m apart, were centrally-located (Figure 9). The western-ditch ([9], [174]) had a 3.3m wide entrance. It had concave sides, and slightly wavy base. It contained a sandy-silt (8) and (173); no finds were recovered from these deposits. The Section on Figure 7 shows the ditch cutting a furrow. A post-hole alignment was located 3.7m to the west. The 45 post-holes contained no dating evidence and may represent a fence.

The square enclosures on the north-western side were defined by a ditch [7], 1.85m wide and 0.49m deep. It ran for a length of 130m into the edge of excavation to the north-east and south-west. It had gradual sides and an uneven base and root disturbance was visible in the base. It was filled with a loose silt-sand (6). No finds were recovered from this ditch. It cut into a furrow.

Ditches [187], [136], and [183] were all connected to ditch [7], and were orientated north-west to south-east, measuring 36-37m in length. They were much smaller in width and depth, measuring 0.5-1m wide, and 0.29-0.4m deep. They contained no finds and [187] cut a furrow (Figure 7).

The square enclosures on the south-eastern side were defined by ditch [179]. This had a concave side, and an irregular base with root disturbance throughout. It contained a mid grey and mottled brown silty-sand (178). No finds were recovered and again this ditch cut into a furrow.

Located within the central enclosure was a cluster of 38 post-holes (Figure 6), some of which cut a furrow, and one [83] contained a sherd of modern glazed white china (19th to 20th century AD). Another post-hole [47] contained hearth slag, and another [109] hearth lining. These likely represent fence lines, or a structure of modern date.

A short length of ditch [12], on the same orientation of ditch [179], contained two sherds of 10th to 11th centuries pottery. This ditch had very uneven sides and base. The base of an apparent hedge was located parallel to ditch [9] and [179] at the east-end of the site.

Area 2

Two areas were excavated in the only available space surrounded by large trees (Figure 10). The northern area (Figure 11) was broadly square, and measured 20 x 15m (260m²), the southern area (Figure 12) was rectangular and measured 43 x 9m (360m²). No archaeological deposits were located in either area. A 1911 penny was recovered and post-medieval pottery was recovered from the topsoil.

7. Discussion and Conclusion

Iron Age and Roman pottery found during the evaluation (Cotswold Archaeology 2009b) but not during the excavation suggests some activity of this date in the vicinity. Abraded 10th-11th century medieval pottery may have been introduced by manuring the open fields around Moulton.

The square field-system identified here is quite unusual, and the initial view would suggest an Iron Age or Roman date, but actually the evidence confirms that these are of a far more recent construction of probable 19th century or 20th century. Crucially, these have been found to post-date the ridge and furrow. The ridge and furrow is presumably of a pre-enclosure date (part of the parish was enclosed from 1772 – see Salzman 1937, 88-94), although, post-enclosure ridge and furrow dating to the 19th century is known locally at Naseby (Hall 1998).

Interestingly, these field boundaries do not appear on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map, or subsequent editions. An earlier field boundary is shown on the 1st edition, but this lies further south than the stripped area and was identified in the evaluation (Cotswold Archaeology 2009b). This was still partly present on the 1964 Ordnance Survey map. The only other change detectable from mapping is with the construction of Sandy Hill Farm and surrounding roadside housing by the 1964 Ordnance Survey map (1:2500, sp7966b6). Also of note, is the alignment of the field-system – it does not fit into the wider landscape, i.e. it is not on the same alignment of other field boundaries or roads, but it does mirror the orientation of the ridge and furrow.

Unfortunately very little dating evidence was recovered from the ditches. Taking into account the finds recovered from the evaluation, a wide date-range of finds from the ditches have been recovered, including material of Iron Age, Roman, and medieval date. All of these sherds appear heavily abraded and are considered to be residual. The latest artefacts are an 18th to 19th century pottery sherd, and a 17th or 18th century thimble (both from the evaluation), along with a 19th to 20th century pottery sherd from a post-hole.

Therefore, taking all of these factors into account, it is probable that the features represent an agricultural field system of post-medieval - modern date. It may reflect the changes in agricultural practice that were taking place in the region from the early 19th century onwards including new approaches to crop rotation and drainage (Campion 2006, 246).

8. Archive

The site archive will be held by ULAS under accession number ULAS_SLM12 until an appropriate recipient organisation is established for Northamptonshire.

The archive contains:

- Context summary records
- 193 context sheets
- Photographic recording sheets
- Drawing Index sheet and drawings (x9 sheets)
- CD containing digital photographs and report
- Survey data
- Unbound copy of this report
- Thumbnail print of digital photographs
- 33mm black and white contact sheet and negatives

The report is listed on the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) held by the Archaeological Data Service at the University of York, under ID: universi1-135026. Available at: <http://oasis.ac.uk/>

ID	OASIS entry summary
Project Name	Land at Sandy Hill Lane, Moulton, Northamptonshire
Summary	University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) carried out an archaeological excavation on land to the east of Sandy Hill Lane, Moulton, Northamptonshire (SP 7919 6647) on behalf of Wimpey East Midlands. The evaluation revealed field boundaries of probable 17th to 19th century date.
Project Type	Excavation
Project Manager	Patrick Clay
Project Supervisor	Gavin Speed
Previous/Future work	Previous: DBA, geophysics, evaluation / Future: unlikely
Current Land Use	Field
Development Type	Residential
Reason for Investigation	PPS5
Position in the Planning Process	Condition
Site Co ordinates	SP 7919 6647
Start/end dates of field work	28/08/2012-20/09/2012
Archive Recipient	To be arranged
Study Area	6.7ha
Associated project reference codes	Project ID: ULAS_SLM12 OASIS form ID: universi1-135026

9. Publication

A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in the local archaeological journal *Northamptonshire Archaeology* in due course. The report has been added to the Archaeology Data Service's (ADS) Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) database held by the University of York.

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11. Acknowledgements

The fieldwork undertaken Taylor Wimpey East Midlands and was carried out by Gavin Speed, Steve Baker, and Andrew Hyam. The finds were analysed by D. Sawday of ULAS. Dr Patrick Clay managed the project. Lesley-Ann Mather (County Archaeological Advisor of Northamptonshire County Council) monitored the work on behalf of the planning authority.

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Appendix I: Finds by Deborah Sawday

The Finds

The pottery, eight sherds, weighing 107 grams, and a vessel rim equivalent of 0.1., (calculated by measuring the circumference of the surviving rim sherd, where one vessel equals 1.00) was catalogued with reference to the guidelines set out by the Medieval Pottery Research Group, (MPRG 1998; MPRG, 2001) and the Northamptonshire Anglo-Saxon and Medieval County Ceramic Type-Series. The miscellaneous finds in contexts [47], [51] and [109] comprised burnt/fired clay, slag and hearth lining, and burnt bone. The finds are listed by context below (Table 1).

Four of the pottery sherds dated from between 10th or 11th centuries to *circa* 1400. Unfortunately all of these are either unstratified or residual in contexts [11] and [12], (G. Speed, pers. comm.). Modern pottery was recovered from context [83], and post medieval or modern material from unstratified levels.

The pottery provides some evidence of medieval activity in the vicinity. The condition on the pottery was not good; the medieval material in particular was abraded and/or leached. However the few identifiable fabric types appear to be typical of that found in the locality, for example at Raunds (Blinkhorn 2001).

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- Northamptonshire Anglo-Saxon and Medieval County Ceramic type Series.

Table 1: The medieval and later pottery by fabric, sherd numbers and weight (grams) by context.

Context	Fabric/Ware	Nos	Grams	Comments
POTTERY				
10 [11]	?CTS 305 – Fine Sandy Coarse ware	1	14	Abraded body sherd. Fine sand, sparse ironstone, mica and voids – the latter possibly from burnt out organic matter. Reduced grey exterior and core, buff interior surface. ? Hand-made. ?Early medieval ?c.AD1100-AD1400.
13 [12]	Saxo Norman shell/oolitic tempered	2	3	Joining fragments leached calcareous fabric, pinkish buff surfaces, light buff margins and grey core. Possibly a ‘developed’ late Saxon St Neots type (Blinkhorn 2007, 161) CTS100/101/105, c.AD900-1100.
82 [83]	CTS 430 - China	1	1	Modern glazed white china.
U/S	CTS 319 – Lyveden A ware	1	23	Everted and externally thickened jar rim, (Blinkhorn 2001, fig.10.20.134), c.1150-1400. Rim diameter c.220mm, vessel rim equivalent 0.01%.
U/S A2	CTS 427 – Local Coarse ware	1	29	Over-fired body with dark brown/black glaze internally. Post medieval.
U/S	CTS 430 - China	2	37	Modern glazed white china, one sherd transfer printed blue under glaze.
MISCELLANEOUS				
46 [47]	Fe	13	246	Hearth slag – including fragments of vitrified lining (H. Addison, pers.comm.).
46 [47]	Burnt/fired clay	2		One fragment with evidence of vitrified residue
50 [51]	Bone	2		Burnt.
172 [109]	Burnt/Fired Clay^Fe	7	17	Hearth lining with vitrified Fe residue & burnt/fired clay fragments

Appendix II: Figures

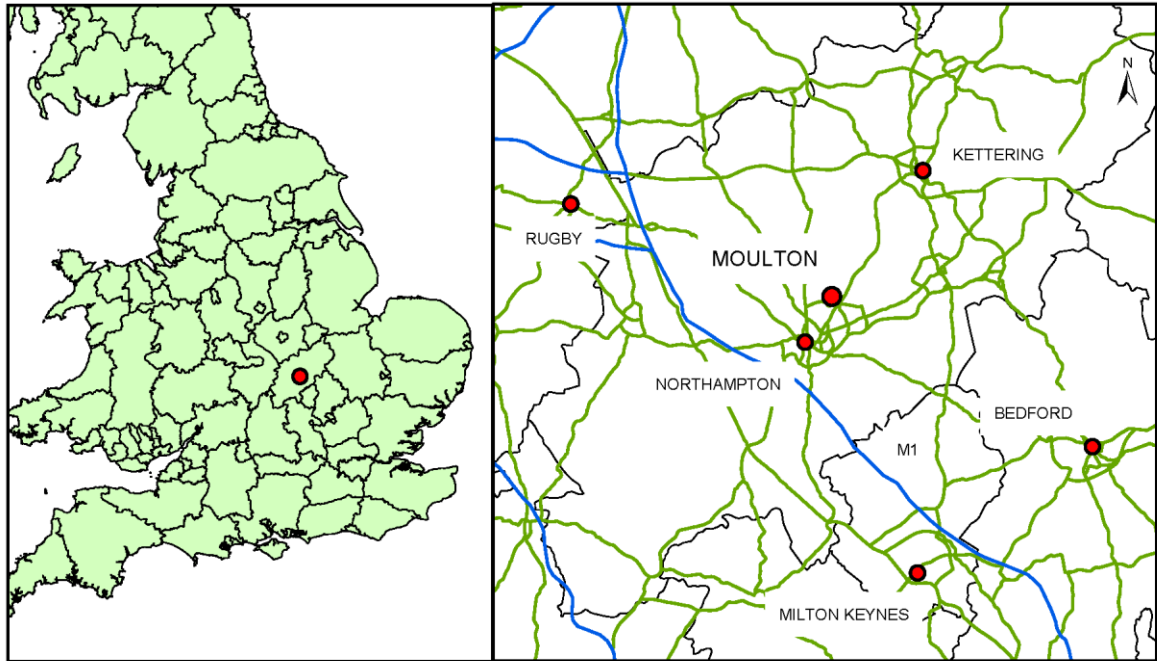


Figure 1: Location plan within the UK and region



Figure 2: Site location (shaded)

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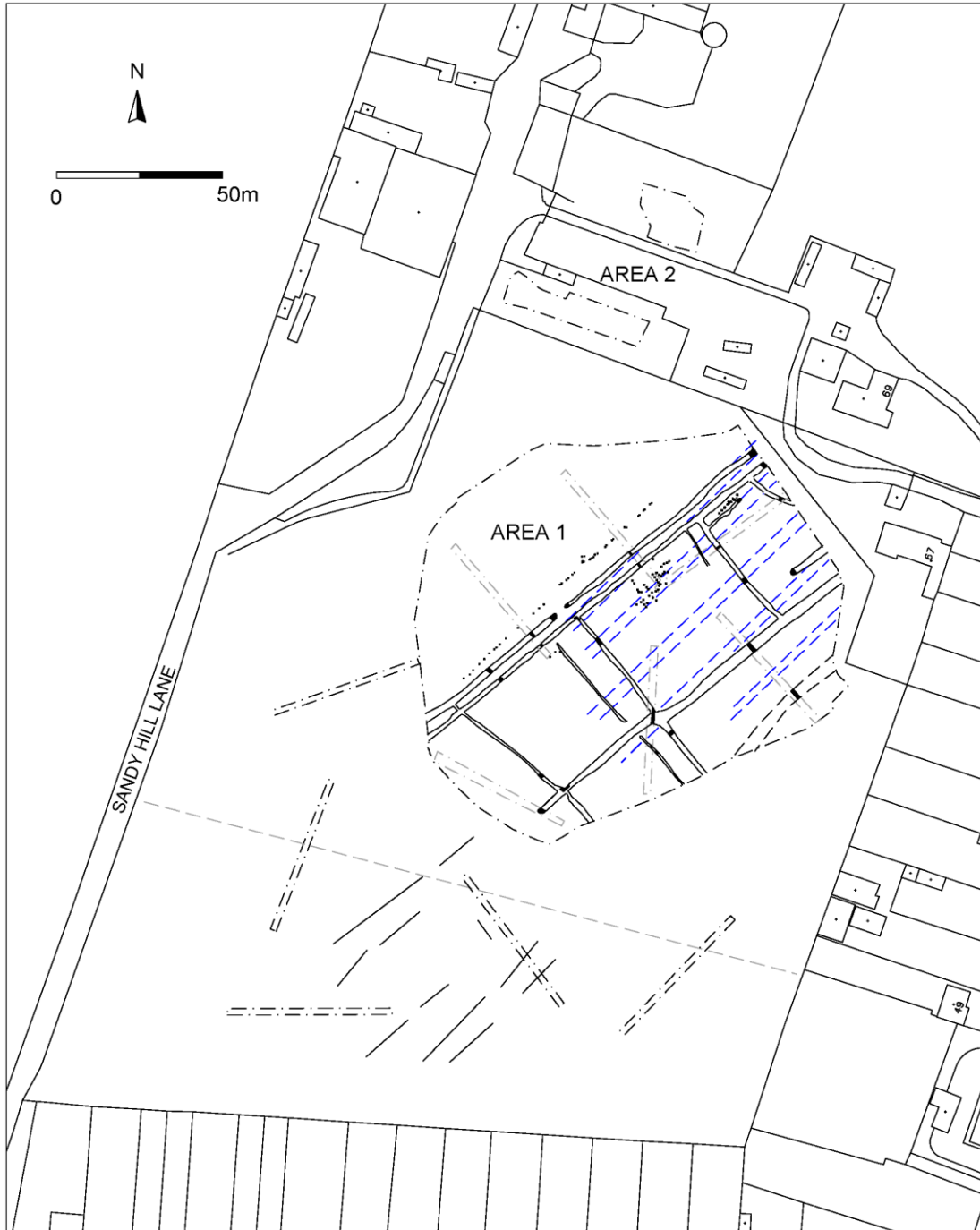


Figure 3: Plan showing Areas 1 and 2. Also shows earlier evaluation trenches, extant field boundary (grey dashed line), and geophysical anomalies outside of the striped area.

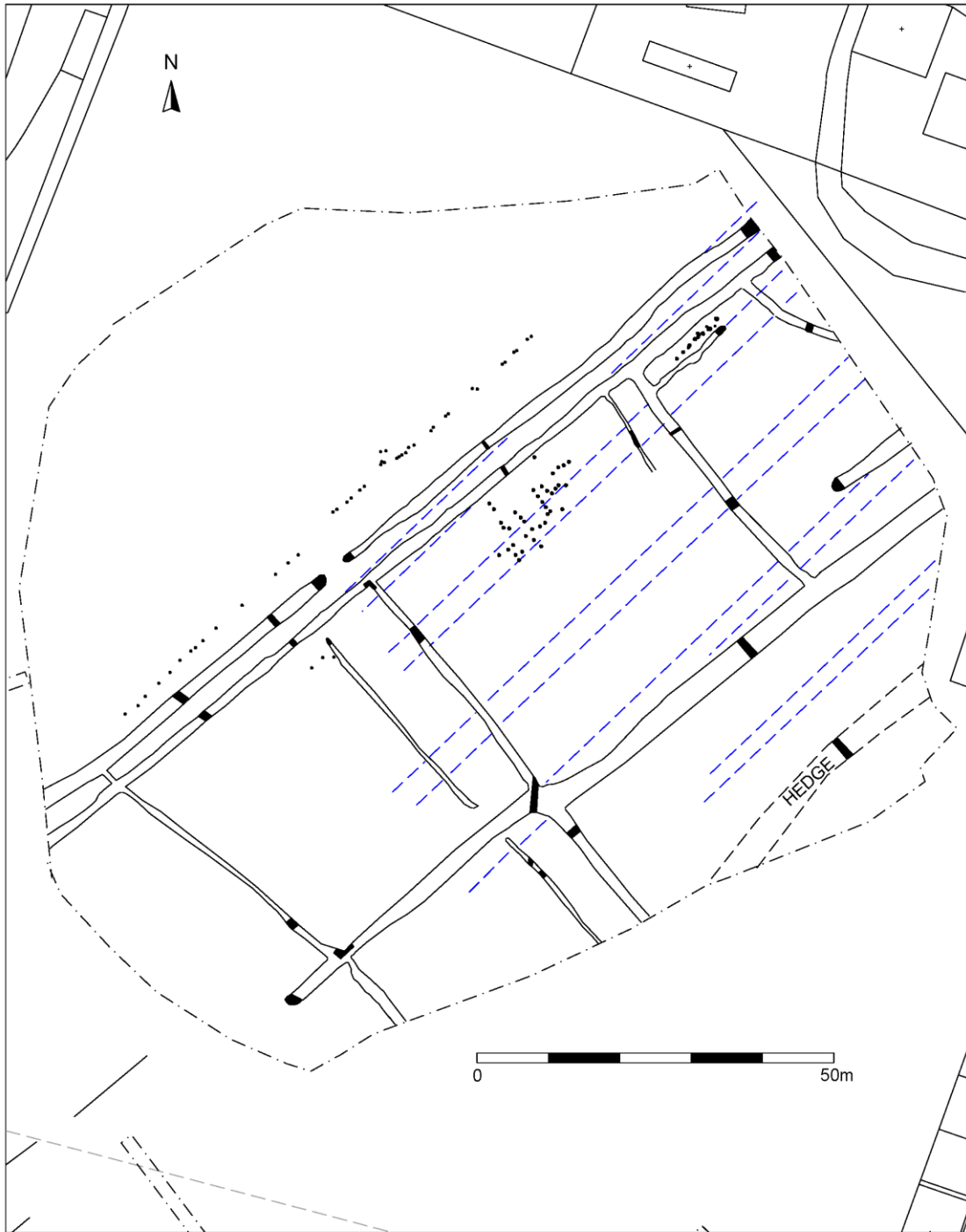


Figure 4: Area 1. Excavated sections shaded, furrows dashed

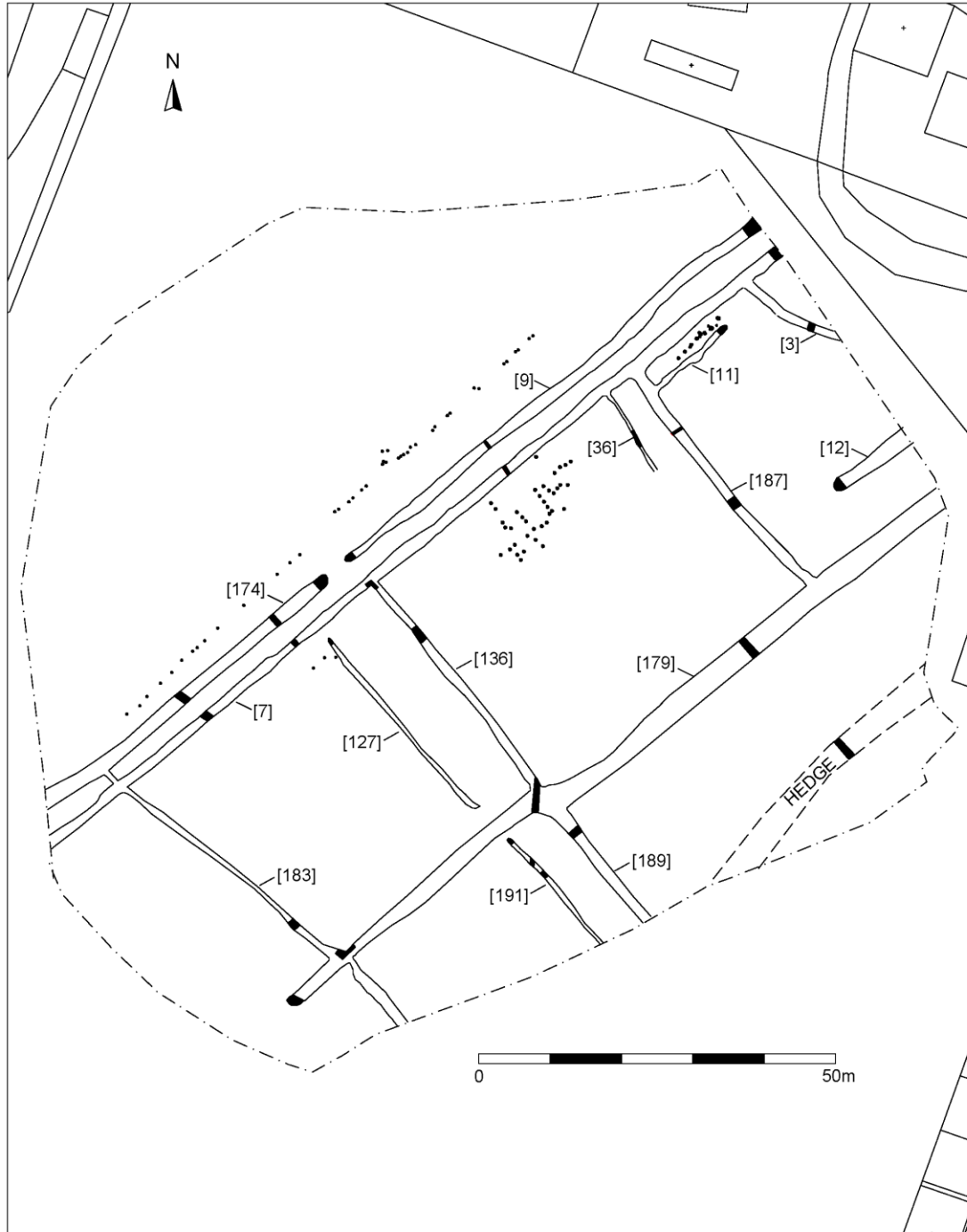


Figure 5: Area 1, context numbers

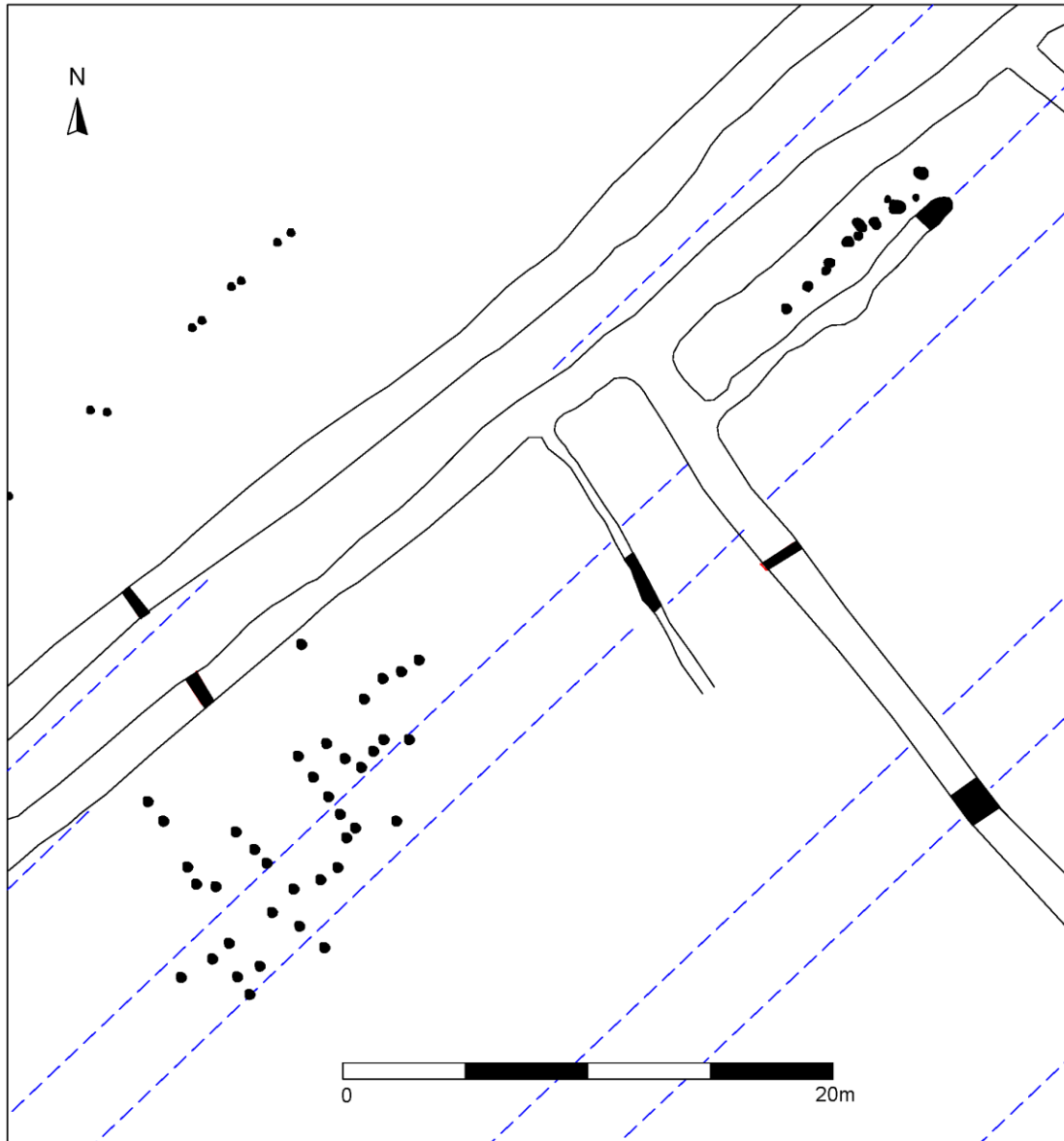


Figure 6: Detailed view of postholes

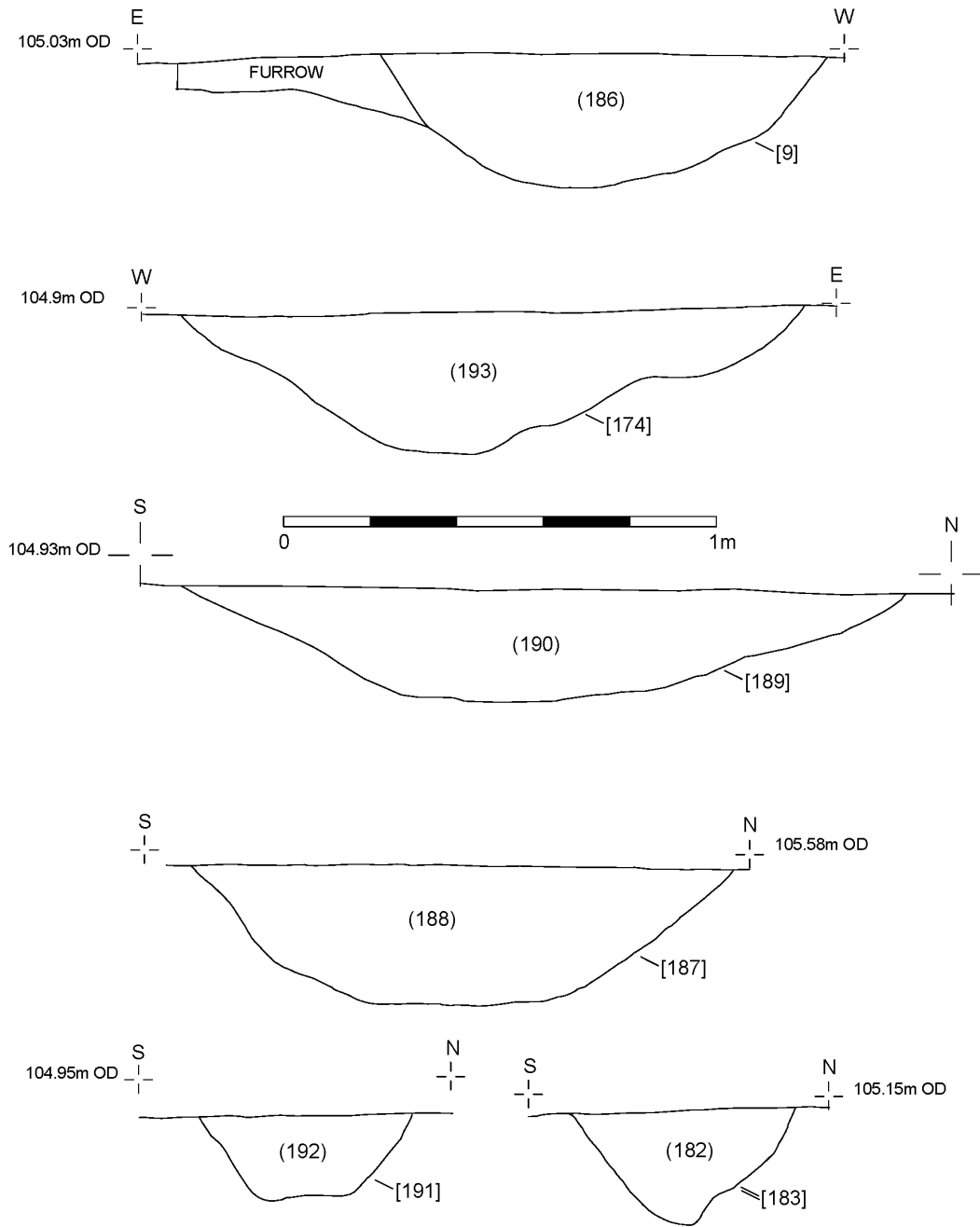


Figure 7: Ditch sections



Figure 8: General view of Area 1



Figure 9: View of parallel ditches

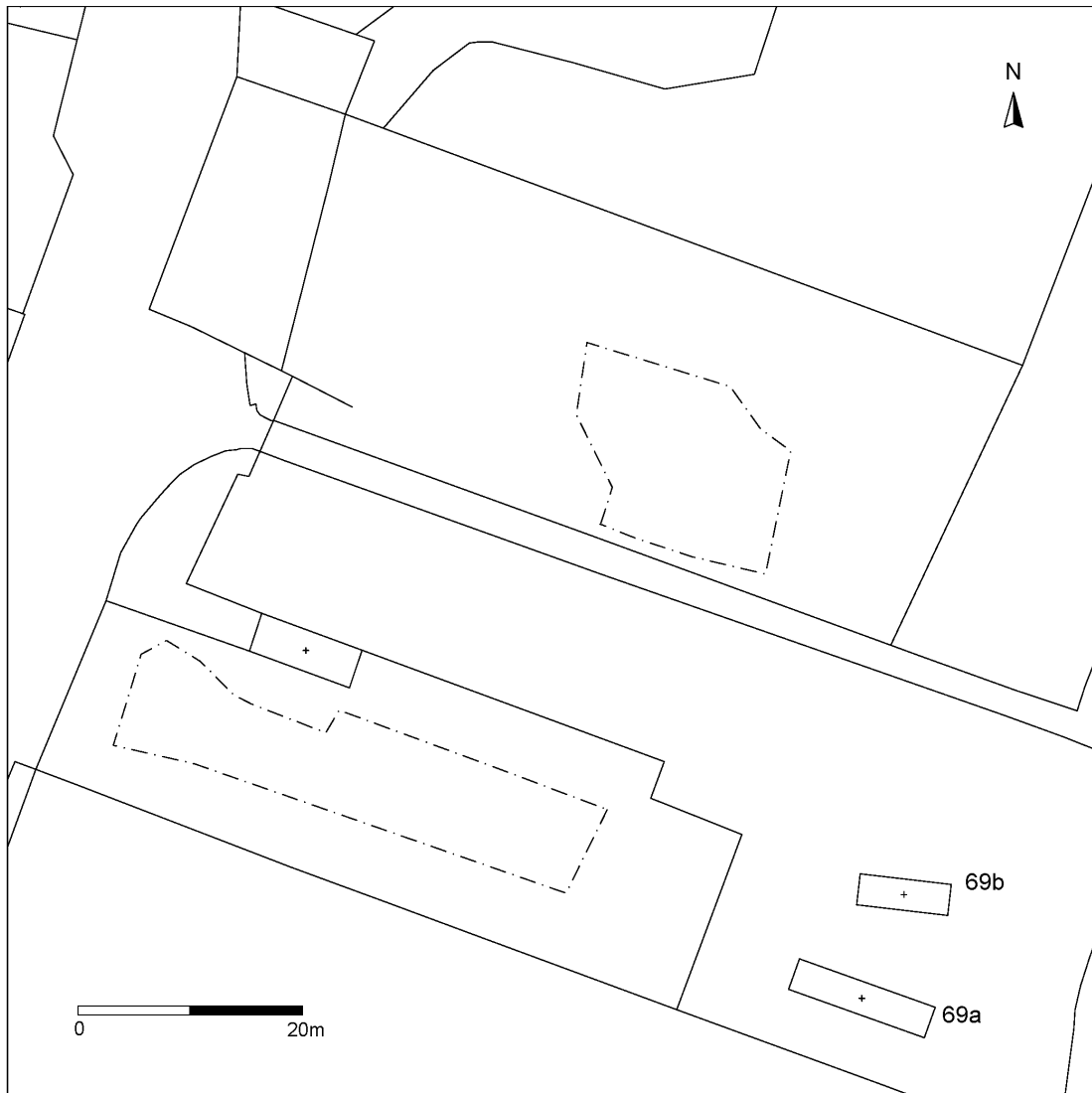


Figure 10: Area 2



Figure 11: View of area 2 northern, 2m x 1m scale, looking north



Figure 12: View of area 2 southern, looking east

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