

SECT12



SOUTH ESSEX COLLEGE, THURROCK, ESSEX

Archaeological Evaluation

for CgMs Consulting Ltd on behalf of Persimmon Homes

July 2012

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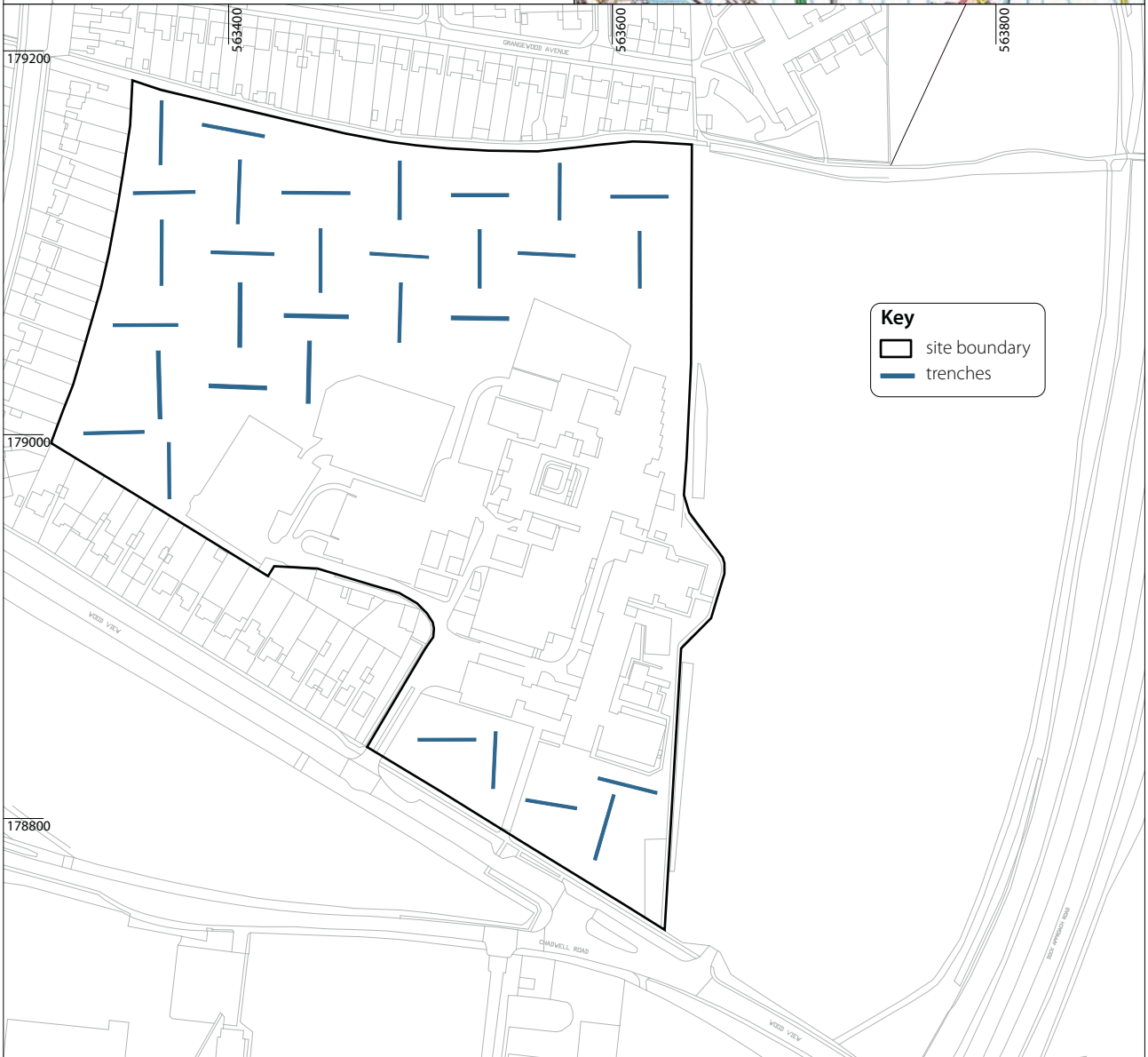


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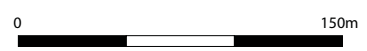
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Illus 1
Site location

SOUTH ESSEX COLLEGE, THURROCK, ESSEX

Archaeological Evaluation

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken over the remaining undisturbed 7.7ha portion of a proposed development area (DA) at South Essex College in Thurrock. The thirty one trenches excavated identified two former field boundaries and an isolated discrete feature in the eastern part of the site. The latter contained heat affected soil, pottery, grain and charcoal and is likely to be Iron Age in date. It was sealed beneath a soil horizon which extended across the north-eastern half of the site. This horizon was not observed in the western part of the DA and is likely to have been subsequently truncated through modern landscaping.

1. INTRODUCTION

During June 2012 a programme of archaeological field evaluation was undertaken at South Essex College, Thurrock, Essex. The work was undertaken in response to a brief prepared by the Historic Environment Management (HEM) Officer for Essex County Council (with reference to Planning Policy Statement 5 Policy HE 6.1). The work was commissioned through CgMs Consulting Ltd (the consultant) acting on behalf of Persimmon Homes. The evaluation focused on 7.7ha of land at South Essex College, Wood View Campus, Little Thurrock proposed as part of a scheme of development.

The development area is centred at TQ 6357 7896 and is bounded by the B149 to the south (Woodview), the A189 to the east and housing to the north and west (Illus 1).

The geology of the area is identified as a Thanet Sand Formations (British Geological Survey website).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The archaeological background is detailed in a desk-based assessment (Meager 2010) based on a study of all known archaeological sites in the Essex HER within 1,000m of DA (the study area). The results are summarised below.

The Historic Environment Record shows that a Palaeolithic Acheulian ovate flint handaxe was found in 1957 on the site of Thurrock Technical College. Another hand axe was found to the north of the grounds (HER 1723).

To the south of the college Late Iron Age cremation burials have been recorded, during construction works at Palmer's College.

Further remains were later identified including two further cremation burials, a pottery kiln and the boundary ditches of a rectangular field (HER 1711). Additional Roman finds including a tessellated floor, a coin of Claudius and a Samian dish were identified to the south-east and south of the DA.

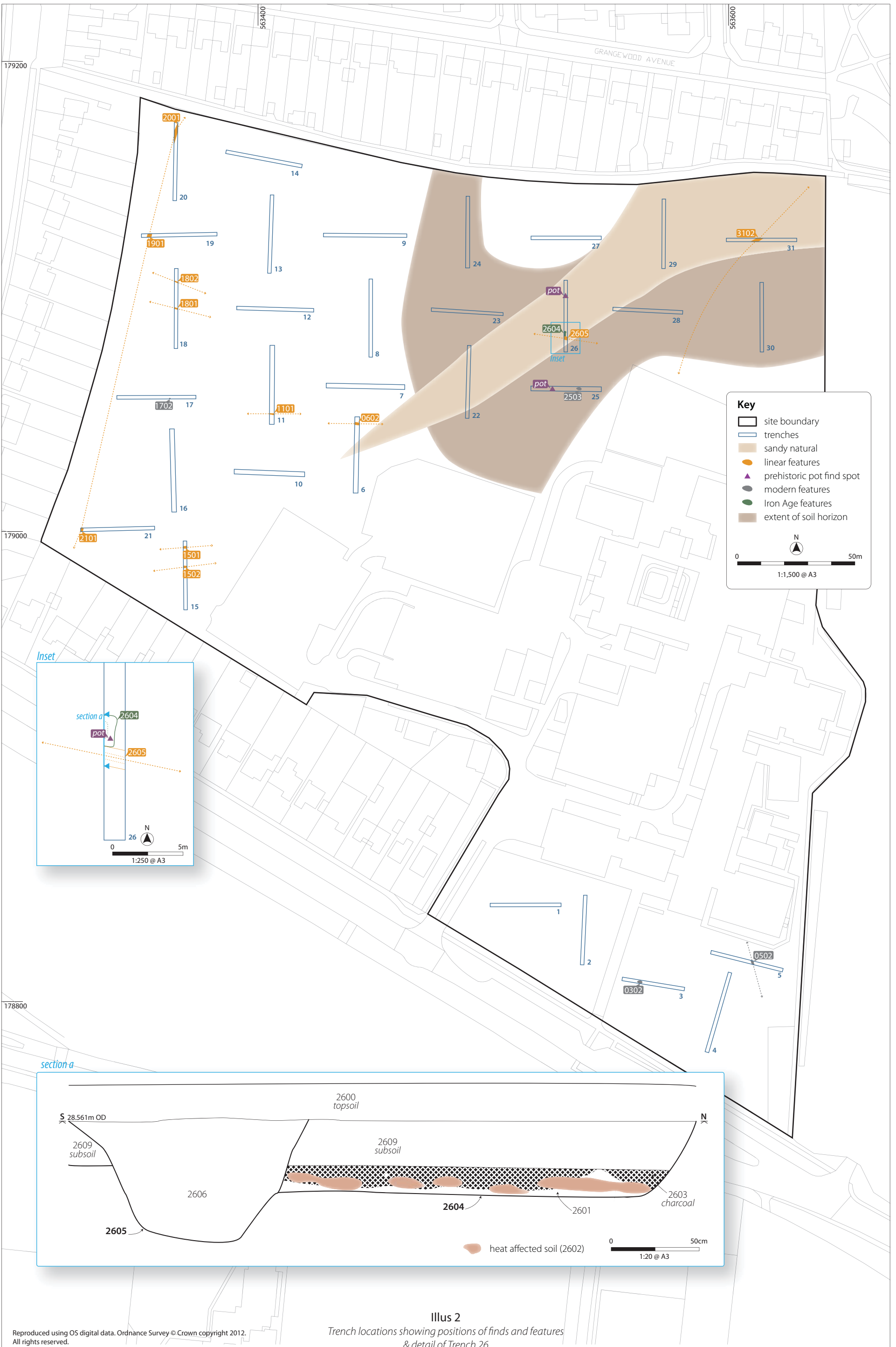
To the west of the site are a number of Dene Holes traditionally interpreted as chalk quarrying (HER 1681) and protected as Scheduled Monuments within Hangmans Wood. These examples are considered to date from the medieval or later periods.

Within the site itself, the remains of a curvilinear field boundary and a NE-SW aligned footpath are present on the Tithe Map of 1840 and Ordnance Survey maps from 1867-1939. A subsequent geophysical survey (Bunn *et al* 2010) within the site failed to reveal any possible archaeological features.

3. OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the investigation was to identify and assess the particular significance of any element of the historic environment that may be affected by the proposal (PPS 5 Planning for the Historic Environment Policy HE7.1). This will be achieved by determining and understanding the nature, function and character of any remains on the site, in their cultural and environmental setting.

The local and regional research contexts are provided by Research and Archaeology Revisited: a Revised Framework for the East of England, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 24 (Medlycott 2011); Research and Archaeology; A Framework for the Eastern Counties (Glazebrook 1997; Brown *et al* 2000), Exploring Our Past (English Heritage 1991), and English Heritage Archaeology Division Research Agenda (English Heritage 1997).



Illus 2

Trench locations showing positions of finds and features & detail of Trench 26



Illus 3

Photograph of field boundary [1901] shown on 1840 Tithe map

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Any evidence retrieved during the works will be analysed in light of the objectives contained in these frameworks.

The specific aims of the investigation were:

- to clarify the nature and extent of any prehistoric and Roman occupation,
- to assess the ecofactual and environmental potential of any archaeological features and deposits,
- to inform any mitigation strategy including preservation *in situ* and preservation by record determined following the evaluation,
- to deposit an archive (finds and records) with Thurrock Museum (Accession Number to be requested).

4. METHOD

The project involved machine excavation of thirty-one 30m by 1.8m trenches. The location of trenches was designed to provide even coverage of the site. Trenches were set-out using a differential GPS system (Trimble R6).

On completion of machine excavation, all faces of trenches that required examination or recording were cleaned using appropriate hand tools and the stratigraphic sequence recorded in full.

Any archaeological features identified were investigated and recorded. Recording followed IfA Standards and Guidance for conducting archaeological evaluations and the Regional Standard for Field Archaeology (Gurney 2003). This included written, drawn and photographic records.

5. RESULTS

The upper surface of geological deposits demonstrated broad trends across the site. In general it was predominated by gravel deposits overlying sand, in the northeast part of the site there was a thin band where only sand was located. It is likely that the sand deposit represented the solid geology (Thanet Sand Formation) with superficial quaternary gravels sealing it in places. From Appendix 1 it can be determined that the topography of the site, whilst apparently level, sloped down from the school buildings (at c29.5m OD) towards the west (27.2m OD at the west end of Trench 21) and north (28.4m OD, Trench 14). Within the part of the DA to the north of the school buildings, nine of the ten eastern-most trenches a mid-yellowish brown silty loam deposit (Appendix 1 – Context Register 2201 etc) interpreted as a sub-soil. This deposit was not present in the lower lying trenches adjacent.

Trenches 3, 5, 17 and 25 contained evidence of modern disturbance or features. Otherwise nine of the excavated trenches contained features of varying degrees of archaeological significance. Six of these simply contained the lines of former field boundaries identifiable from earlier maps of the site, two contained pairs of linear features of unknown date or function. These are considered to be of post-medieval or modern date. Trench 26 contained a piece of prehistoric pottery from the base of the sub-soil at the northern end and a shallow prehistoric feature with evidence of burning within it (Illus 2).

5.1 Trenches containing former field boundary features (Illus 3)

Trenches 20, 19 and 21 contained evidence for the line of



Illus 4

Photograph of feature containing burnt material [2604] with [2605] in the background

5.2 Trench containing archaeological feature and finds (Illus 4)

Feature [2604] is distinct from all others within the site in that it contained more than one fill. The lower two deposits are in fact a single backfilled deposit of loamy sand comprising a mixture of pinkish heat affected naturally derived soil [2602] and a charcoal bearing sandy loam [2601]. Charcoal was also present in the upper fill [2603] as well as charred grain and five small fragments of prehistoric pottery. The feature was sealed by a subsoil deposit [2609], the base of which yielded a single sherd of prehistoric pottery. A ditch running across the trench [2605] cut the subsoil deposit.

6. FINDS

By Julie Franklin

Ten sherds of ceramic material were recovered from the site (Appendix 2). Most are of possible late prehistoric date, though none provide very accurate dating evidence. The only stratified finds were pottery sherds and fragments of daub from the upper fill of [2604]. The pottery is coarse with a small sherd size and is largely undiagnostic, but is of prehistoric date. The lump of daub is abraded and featureless but might be indicative of a structure in the vicinity.

Other finds include a large sherd of pottery from the sub-soil in Trench 26. It is a sherd of a straight walled coarse vessel, of probable

late Bronze Age or Iron Age date. A rim sherd recovered from the topsoil of Trench 25 is more enigmatic. It is, again, from a straight walled vessel though of a much finer sandy fabric. It may be of Iron Age date (Paul Blinkhorn pers. com.), though it is conceivable that it is a very thin tile sherd of much later date. The remaining sherd, from the Trench 22 topsoil, is a piece of post-medieval pan tile.

With the exception of the pan tile sherd, all the finds are likely to be of Iron Age date. However, the pottery sherds are all of diverse fabrics and are not necessarily contemporary with each other.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL

By Orla Power

All the plant remains were preserved through charring tables (Appendix 3) presented the retent and flot samples respectively.

a field boundary running along the west side of the site [1901/2001/2101]. A similar feature running parallel to this was recorded in Trench 31 on the east side of the site. These both survived to about the same depth (0.34 and 0.4m respectively) and had rounded profiles. They both appear on the 1840 tithe map. Only [3102] survives until the 1939 Ordnance Survey map.

Two other features were recorded as being possible field boundaries [1101] and [602]. The latter has a depth and profile consistent with a field boundary but does not appear on maps from 1840 onwards. However, it is aligned perpendicular to [1901/2001/2101] and may be part of the same field system. [602] is shallow and probably related to superficial drainage.

Trenches 15 and 18 contained a similar configuration of two parallel linear features measuring between 0.5–0.8m wide and 0.05–0.18m deep. The features in Trench 15 lie close to the line of a footpath on the Ordnance Survey maps, however, it is probable that these features relate to recent superficial drainage associated with the playing fields.



One sample (001) from the fill [2601] of irregular-shaped feature [2604] was assessed for environmental potential. A high incidence of charred cereal grain was identified in this sample (see Flotation sample results table). The level of preservation was very poor with a significant number of grains found to be strongly abraded. The assemblage was dominated by oats (*Avena* sp.) followed by lesser amounts of wheat (*Triticum* sp.) and club/bread wheat (*Triticum aestivo-compactum*). A moderate incidence of indeterminate cereal grains (*Cerealia indet.*) was also identified. Preliminary dating of the assemblage based on the charred grains present and in particular the dominance of oat, would suggest at the earliest an Iron Age date. A small quantity of sedges (*Carex* sp.), which are typically associated with wet habitats were also present.

A high incidence of wood charcoal fragments was observed in the sample (see Appendix 3). Charcoal sizes ranged from <0.5cm to 1.1cm. This range of fragment size could indicate either *in situ* burning or the intentional deposition of material, although given the heterogeneous character of the deposit the latter is more likely. Charcoal fragments were identified visually as a mix of oak sp. (*Quercus* sp.) and non-oak sp. with roundwood fragments included amongst the non-oak charcoal.

8. DISCUSSION

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The archaeological evaluation revealed limited remains of archaeological significance. The single prehistoric cut feature comprised a shallow depression at least 2.3m maximum length and 0.13m deep. Its deposits contained burnt material including charcoal, charred grain and heat affected, naturally derived soil as well as five small pieces of prehistoric pottery. The upper fill of the feature was sealed by the subsoil deposit (Illus 2). A fragment of Late Bronze Age/Iron Age pot was also recovered from the base of this layer. Another piece of prehistoric pottery was recovered from the topsoil in the trench immediately to the south of this (Trench 25). Environmental evidence from the fill of the shallow feature indicates that it is unlikely that the deposit is earlier than the Iron Age on the basis of the high quantity of oat grains. The heterogeneous character of the deposits within the feature indicates mixing of the material prior to deposition rather than *in situ* burning. This feature is likely to be an isolated pit.

These remains were located within the vicinity of the sub-soil deposit. It is possible that this deposit is in fact a palaeosol, preserved within the highest part of the site. As such the fact that it does not occur within trenches down slope might be due to truncation through re-landscaping during construction of the college. As the possible palaeosol also appears to be absent in Trench 27 it is assumed that the low lying area around this trench has been truncated in a similar way. Although this deposit has sealed the remains of an Iron Age feature, the absence of any other features beneath this layer indicate that in general the potential of the site for prehistoric remains is low.

The only other features of note were two field boundaries that can be identified on the 1840 Ordnance Survey map.

9. ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

It appears on the basis of the work undertaken to date that an archaeological horizon survives in a limited capacity within the northeast part of the site. Sealed beneath this is an isolated feature and finds of Iron Age date. Given the limited size and poor preservation of the assemblage, it would not warrant further research and would not contribute to regional research agendas (Medlycott 2011). These remains are considered to be of local significance.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Site registers

Trench register

Trench	Length	Width	Depth	Orientation	Level N or W		Level S or E		Level of sub-soil	
					Top	Bottom	Top	Bottom	Top	Bottom
1	30	1.8	0.65	E-W	28.38	27.93	29.12	28.68	-	-
2	30	1.5	0.4	N-S	29.39	28.93	27.97	27.62	-	-
3	26	1.5	0.3	E-W	27.98	27.66	27.77	28.13	-	-
4	35	1.5	0.35	N-S	28.68	28.25	27.02	27.28	-	-
5	35	1.5	0.35	E-W	28.98	28.6	28.72	28.37	-	-
6	31.5	1.5	0.85	N-S	28.74	27.91	28.9	28.39	-	-
7	33	1.5	0.55	E-W	28.27	27.69	28.81	28.29	-	-
8	33	1.5	0.45	N-S	28.53	28.08	28.62	28.12	-	-
9	35	1.5	0.45	E-W	28.52	28.16	28.64	28.27	-	-
10	30	1.5	0.4	E-W	28.17	27.78	28.46	27.99	-	-
11	33.5	1.5	0.8	N-S	28.27	27.77	28.19	27.39	-	-
12	33	1.5	0.4	E-W	28.22	27.91	28.39	27.97	-	-
13	33	1.5	0.8	N-S	28.38	28.22	28.41	28.05	-	-
14	33	1.5	0.7	E-W	28.46	27.72	28.33	28.03	-	-
15	30	1.5	0.45	N-S	27.84	27.52	28.02	27.68	-	-
16	34	1.8	0.4	N-S	28.05	27.62	27.97	27.57	-	-
17	38.5	1.8	0.4	E-W	27.95	27.64	28.15	27.77	-	-
18	33	1.5	0.4	N-S	28.3	27.92	28.11	27.83	-	-
19	32.5	1.5	0.45	E-W	28.33	27.98	28.38	27.99	-	-
20	33	1.5	0.52	N-S	28.36	27.93	28.42	28.12	-	-
21	30	1.5	0.35	E-W	27.18	26.71	27.86	27.61	-	-
22	30	1.5	0.78	N-S	28.84	28.06	29.34	28.66	28.79	28.61
23	30	1.5	0.45	E-W	28.64	28.28	28.74	28.35	28.47	28.34
24	30	1.5	0.48	N-S	28.63	28.17	28.63	28.18	28.37	28.25
25	30	1.5	0.45	E-W	29.4	28.92	29.59	29.18	29.22	29.14
26	30	1.5	0.51	N-S	28.68	28.21	29.19	28.56	28.74	28.45
27	30	1.5	0.4	E-W	28.48	28.12	28.56	28.12	-	-
28	30	1.5	0.55	E-W	28.92	28.46	29.12	28.51	28.74	28.48
29	30	1.5	0.42	N-S	28.75	28.33	28.47	28.05	28.35	28.2
30	30	1.5	0.58	N-S	29.2	28.4	29.4	29.09	29.03	28.78
31	30	1.5	0.48	E-W	28.61	28.35	28.64	28.29	28.38	28.15



Context register

Context	Area	Trench	Depth (m)	Description
101, 200, 300 etc.	All	All	0.25–0.3	Dark Greyish brown silty loam – topsoil
102	C	1	0.45	Very abundant gravel in light yellowish brown silt – possible palaeo channel
103	C	1	–	Mid orange yellow silty sand – natural geology
201–203	C	2	0.05	Gravel deposits – similar to [102]
301	C	3	0.1	Gravel deposits – similar to [102]
302	C	3	–	Modern feature 2.4m x 0.9m in plan containing concrete, brick and roofing felt
303	C	3	–	Service cables in plastic pipes – not detected by CAT
401	C	4	0.1	Gravel deposits – similar to [102]
501	C	5	0.1	Gravel deposits – similar to [102]
502	C	5	–	Semi-circular feature at east end of trench; possibly a former flower bed – no dating evidence retrieved from 1m wide slot excavated through the feature
601	A	6	–	Dark yellow-orange sand; recently desposited sand in square cut as part of sports field (long jump pit?)
602	A	6	0.46	Linear feature 1.1m x 0.42m containing a mid greyish brown silty loam which only contained small to medium stones; thought to possibly be a field boundary aligned east-west
603	A	6	–	Gravel deposits – similar to [102] + sand under
701	A	7	–	Gravel deposits – similar to [102] + sand under
801	A	8	–	Gravel deposits – similar to [102] + sand under
901	A	9	–	Gravel deposits – similar to [102] + sand under
8 1001	A	10	–	Gravel deposits – similar to [102] + sand under
1101	A	11	0.05	Linear feature 1.5m x 0.45m containing a light brown/grey silt; no archaeological finds
1102	A	11	–	Gravel deposits – similar to [102] + sand under
1201	A	12	–	Gravel deposits – similar to [102] + sand under
1301	A	13	–	Gravel deposits – similar to [102] + sand under
1401	A	14	–	Gravel deposits – similar to [102] + sand under
1501	A	15	–	Gravel deposits – similar to [102] + sand under
1502	A	15	0.15	Linear feature 0.8m wide running east west with a gradual slope towards its base containing a light yellow-brown silty loam; no finds
1503	A	15	0.18	Linear feature 0.6m wide running east west with a gradual slope towards its base; no finds
1601	A	16	0.1	Gravel deposits – similar to [102]
1701	A	17	–	Gravel deposits – similar to [102] + sand under
1702	A	17	0.12	Small oval cut 0.57m x 0.45m with an irregular base – possibly a tree bole
1703	A	17	0.12	Fill of [1702] = topsoil containing a nail (nail not retained)
1801	A	18	0.07	Linear feature 0.52m wide – orientated east/west; no finds
1802	A	18	0.05	Linear feature 0.62m wide – orientated east/west; no finds
1803	A	18	–	Gravel deposits – similar to [102] + sand under
1901	A	19	0.36	A 1.8m wide linear feature containing a dark brownish/grey silty loam and occasional small to medium stones. Finds included a bucket handle and red tile of modern date (not retained). The feature had a rounded profile. Field boundary?
1902	A	19	–	Gravel deposits – similar to [102] + sand under
2001	A	20	–	= [1901]

Context	Area	Trench	Depth (m)	Description
2002	A	20	–	Gravel deposits – similar to [102] + sand under
2101	A	21	0.2	Mid greyish brown silt at west end of trench, could be remains of the continuation of [1901] along the west side of the site
2201	B	22	0.18	Mid yellowish-brown silty loam – sub-soil?
2202	B	22	–	Whitish yellow sand beneath [2201]; in vicinity of centre circle to sports pitch so could be grounds repairs
2203	B	22	–	Relatively stone-free sandy natural geology
2301	B	23	0.13	Mid yellowish brown silty loam – sub-soil?
2302	B	23	–	Gravel deposits – similar to [102] + sand under
2401	B	24	0.12	Mid yellowish brown silty loam – sub-soil?
2402	B	24	–	Gravel deposits – similar to [102] + sand under
2501	B	25	0.11	Mid greyish brown silty loam – sub-soil?
2502	B	25	–	Gravel deposits – similar to [102] + sand under
2503	B	25	–	A 1m wide north-south orientated band of modern disturbance containing tarmac and red brick
2601	B	26	0.025	Lower fill of [2604] – dark greyish brown loamy sand
2602	B	26	0.03	Mid pinkish brown loamy sand – fill of [2604] above [2601] – possibly indicative of burning
2603	B	26	0.06	Upper fill of [2604] – dark brownish grey loamy sand, contained charcoal
2604	B	26	0.13	An irregular shaped cut with gently sloping sides to a rounded base
2605	B	26	0.4	An east-west orientated 1.4m wide linear feature with rounded base and steep sides
2606	B	26	0.4	Mid greyish-brown sandy loam filling [2605]
2607	B	26	0.05	A mid greyish brown sandy loam – deposit overlying [2603]
2608	B	26	–	Relatively stone-free sandy natural geology
2609	B	26	–	Like [2201]
2701	B	27	–	Gravel deposits – similar to [102] + sand under
2801	B	28	0.26	Like [2201]
2802	B	28	–	Gravel deposits – similar to [102] + sand under
2901	B	29	0.15	Like [2201]
2902	B	29	–	Relatively stone-free sandy natural geology
3001	B	30	0.25	Like [2201]
3002	B	30	–	Gravel deposits – similar to [102] + sand under
3101	B	31	0.23	Like [2201]
3102	B	31	0.4	Linear feature 1.1m wide running NE-SW with gently sloping sides to a rounded base – possible field boundary; cuts through sub-soil [3101]
3103	B	31	0.4	Fill of [1302] a dark brownish grey sandy loam
3104	B	31	–	Relatively stone-free sandy natural geology



Appendix 2 Finds catalogue

Trench	Context	Q-ty	Weight (g)	Material	Object	Description	Spot date
22	2200 (topsoil)	1	80	CBM	Pan tile	Rim and nib sherd	PM/Mod
25	2500 (topsoil)	1	13	Pottery	Unidentified	Two joining sherds forming rim. Simple square cut, slightly bevelled rim. Angled break suggests coil join. Sandy, slightly micaceous redware with reduced interior. 10mm thick. Possibly Iron Age pot, though thin tile sherd a possibility.	IA?
26	2609 (sub-soil)	1	106	Pottery (PH)	Coarseware	Four conjoining body sherds of straight-walled vessel. Surfaces are uneven and fabric is heavily quartz tempered. Probably later Bronze Age or Iron Age in date.	LBA/IA
26	2601	5	17	Pottery (PH)	Coarseware	Small, heavily abraded body sherds	Prehist
26	2601	2	14	CBM	Daub	Two small abraded fragments	–

Appendix 3 Environmental catalogue

Retent sample results

Context	Sample	Feature	Sample vol (l)	Ceramic		Charcoal		Material available for AMS dating	Comments		
				Pottery	CBM	PH	Daub			Q-ty	Max size (cm)
				2603	1	Lower fill of irregular shaped cut [2604]	10			+	+

Key: + = rare (0-5), ++ = occasional (6-15), +++ = common (15-50) and ++++ = abundant (>50)
 NB charcoal over 1cm is suitable for identification and AMS dating

Flotation sample results

Context	Sample	Feature	Total flot vol (ml)	Cereal graint						Other plant remains	Charcoal q-ty	Charcoal max size (cm)	Material available for AMS	Comments
				cf. Avena sp.	Avena sp.	cf. Triticum sp.	Triticum sp.	Triticum aestivo-compactum	Cerealia indet.					
2603	1	Lower fill of irregular shaped cut [2604]	25	+++	+++	+	+	+	++	Carex sp. +	++++	1.2	Charred grain +++, Charcoal +	Mollusc ++, 2 species identified. Charcoal is oak and non-oak.

Key: + = rare (1-5), ++ = occasional (6-15), +++ = common (16-50) and ++++ = abundant (>50)
 NB charcoal over 1cm is suitable for identification and AMS dating



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