



## Royal Ordnance Factory, Puriton, Somerset

### Phase 1 Archaeological Evaluation Report





**ROYAL ORDANCE FACTORY, PURITON,  
SOMERSET**

**Archaeological Evaluation Report**

Prepared for:  
**Alder King**  
15 Pembroke Road,  
Bristol  
BS8 3BA

by  
**Wessex Archaeology**  
Portway House  
Old Sarum Park  
SALISBURY  
Wiltshire  
SP4 6EB

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SOMERSET****Phase I  
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**ROYAL ORDNANCE FACTORY, PURITON,  
SOMERSET****Phase I  
Archaeological Evaluation Report****Summary**

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Alder King Planning Consultants, on behalf of BAE Systems, to undertake a programme of archaeological evaluation at the Former Royal Ordnance Factory, Western Approach Road, Puriton, Somerset, centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 333436 142425.

Planning consent has been granted by Sedgemoor District Council (SDC) for engineering works to facilitate the remediation of the former Royal Ordnance Factory, which will include earthworks and demolition of existing buildings on condition that a programme of archaeological works is undertaken. The Senior Historic Environment Officer at Somerset County Council recommended an archaeological evaluation was undertaken to assess the buried archaeology within the Site.

A total of 14 machine excavated trial trenches each measuring 30m x 2.2m were excavated during the archaeological evaluation. The trenches were positioned in relatively open areas of the site to provide an overview of the archaeological potential. Where practical, an additional machine dug sondage was also excavated at the end of each trench to investigate and record deeper stratigraphy.

Archaeological features and deposits were identified within one of the fourteen evaluation trenches. Two parallel Romano-British ditches were recorded in Trench 6 and given their relatively close proximity (c. 2.50m), may indicate a track/drove-way or small drainage channels leading off a low lying peninsula of higher and drier ground to the east. The un-abraded Roman pottery recovered from these ditches is indicative of settlement activity in the area.

Modern disturbance of varying degrees was located within five of the trenches (Trench 1, Trench 8, Trench 9, Trench 10 and Trench 13). With the exception of a thin peat deposit located within Trench 12 all the other evaluation trenches proved to be archaeologically sterile.

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**ROYAL ORDANCE FACTORY, PURITON,  
SOMERSET****Phase I  
Archaeological Evaluation Report****Acknowledgements**

Wessex Archaeology is grateful to Matthew Halstead, Principal Planner at Alder King LLP, Chris Shipperley Senior Remediation Engineer and Paul Harris Principal Consultant at BAE Environmental for commissioning the evaluation. Thanks are also due to Chris Palmer and Ian Swallow, of BAE Environmental for their assistance on site.

Wessex Archaeology would also like to thank Steven Membery, the Senior Historic Environment Officer at Somerset County Council who monitored the work on behalf of the local authority.

The fieldwork was directed by Stephen Beach who was assisted by Lorrain Higbee. The environmental samples were processed by Nicki Mulhall and assessed by Sarah F. Wyles. The finds report was prepared by Lorraine Mephram. The report was compiled by Stephen Beach and the illustrations were prepared by Kenneth Lymer. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Sue Farr.

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## ROYAL ORDNANCE FACTORY, PURITON, SOMERSET

### Phase I Archaeological Evaluation Report

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

##### 1.1 Project Background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Alder King Planning Consultants (the Consultant), on behalf of BAE Systems (the Client), to undertake a programme of archaeological evaluation at the Former Royal Ordnance Factory, Western Approach Road, Puriton, Somerset (**Figure 1**), centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 333436 142425, (hereafter 'the Site').

1.1.2 Planning consent (**42/11/00017**) has been granted by Sedgemoor District Council (SDC) for engineering works to facilitate the remediation of the former Royal Ordnance Factory, which will include earthworks and demolition of existing buildings on condition that a programme of archaeological works is undertaken. Once completed the Site will be subject to a further planning application for an Energy Park and will include uses for energy production, manufacturing, research and development

1.1.3 In order to assess the archaeological potential and record the known heritage assets within the Site, the Senior Historic Environment Officer at Somerset County Council recommended a two-phased approach to the archaeological mitigation on the Site. This comprised an historic building survey of the WWII structures (Wessex Archaeology 2012b) and this phase of archaeological evaluation, designed to assess the buried archaeology within the Site.

1.1.4 The Project Design (WA 2012a) set out the strategy and methodology by which Wessex Archaeology implemented this programme of archaeological mitigation. In format and content it conforms with current best practice and to the guidance outlined in *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (English Heritage 2006) and the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (IfA 2008). It was submitted to and approved by the Senior Historic Environment Officer.

##### 1.2 Site location, topography and geology

1.2.1 The Site is located on the flat, low-lying topography of the Somerset Levels, between the man-made drainage systems of the Huntspill River directly to the north and King's Sedgemoor Drain, 1km to the south. It is bounded to the south-east and south-west by the villages of Woolavington and Puriton respectively.

1.2.2 The underlying geology is recorded as Quaternary Estuarine Alluvium deposits, overlying Jurassic Blue Lias limestone deposits along the southern



edge of the Site (Geological Survey of Great Britain 1:50,000 map sheet 295).

- 1.2.3 The Site, as expected due to its location in the Somerset Levels, is relatively low-lying, ranging from 6-7m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

## **2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Introduction**

- 2.1.1 The archaeological background and historical development of the Site is set out in detail in the 2011 Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (Wessex Archaeology 2011b) and the 2012 Historic Building Record (Wessex Archaeology 2012b), it is therefore not intended to repeat, unless prudent to do so, a detailed archaeological background within this document. However, a brief outline of the archaeological and historical background is provided.

### **2.2 Background**

- 2.2.1 No prehistoric monuments or finds have been recorded within the Site, although a number of prehistoric flint scatters and stone tools have been found in the wider region.
- 2.2.2 Palaeoenvironmental sampling approximately 1km north of the Site, recorded that the landscape had been subject to continual cycles of transgressive and regressive sea level change resulting in the production of clay and peat layers during the Bronze Age and Iron Age.
- 2.2.3 Romano-British activity has been recorded from within and around the Site. The Somerset Levels was utilised for industrial processes, demonstrated by the concentration of salt mounds to the north of the Site. The Charterhouse-Bawdrip Roman road runs ESE-WNW c.1km to the south of the Site, broadly on the course of the modern A39. This route would have facilitated travel into the area between populated centres and salt production sites to the north.
- 2.2.4 Medieval pottery recovered during a watching brief indicated habitation from the 11<sup>th</sup> century until the later medieval period beyond the south-western corner of the Site.
- 2.2.5 The Royal Ordnance Factory, Bridgwater was one of a number of purpose-built specialised production sites constructed across Britain during World War II.

### **2.3 Recent investigations in the area – archaeological evaluations**

- 2.3.1 An archaeological watching brief along the course of a pipeline was carried out along the southern edge of the Site, recovering Romano-British pottery (Colls 2002).
- 2.3.2 A small evaluation comprising the machine excavation of four 30m trial trenches was carried out near to the south-west corner of the Site, on existing farmland (Wessex Archaeology 2011a). No archaeological remains were recorded during the course of this fieldwork.

2.3.3 Within the wider area, two evaluation trenches were investigated prior to construction works at 26 Lower Road, Woolavington (Broomhead 1999), beyond the south-east corner of the Site. Some fragments of medieval and post-medieval pottery were recovered, and a ditch of unknown origin and function was identified.

## **2.4 Palaeoenvironmental potential**

2.4.1 In order to assess the palaeoenvironmental potential within the Site, a rapid geoarchaeological assessment of the borehole logs recorded during the Stage 2 Ground Investigations (BAE 2010) was completed by Wessex Archaeology's in house geoarchaeologist.

2.4.2 In general, the silts and clays encountered represent the marine *transgressive* phases (estuarine mud at times of rising sea level), and the peats are indicative of the marine *regressive* phases, where the area was dominated by freshwater and heavily vegetated (probably by *Phragmites* reed swamp or similar).

2.4.3 Peat deposits were found to be present in a 1m thick band across the Site, between 3.5 and 6m below ground level. It was present in all boreholes which went deep enough to encounter it, with the exception of those in the very south of the Site. In addition, a thin peat layer was observed at 14.1m in BH17; potentially of a very early date.

## **3 AIMS AND METHODS**

### **3.1 Introduction and General Objectives**

3.1.1 All works were conducted in compliance with the standards outlined in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (IfA 2008), excepting where they are superseded by statements made below.

3.1.2 The results of the Phase I evaluation will help inform proposals for the Energy Park, which will be the subject of a future planning application.

3.1.3 The evaluation was designed to;

- Clarify the presence/absence and extent of any buried archaeological within the Site that may be impacted by development
- Identify, within the constraints of the evaluation, the date, character, condition and depth of any surviving remains within the Site
- Assess the degree of existing impacts to sub-surface horizons and to document the extent of archaeological survival of buried deposits.

### **3.2 Health and Safety**

3.2.1 Health and Safety considerations were of paramount importance in conducting the fieldwork. Safe working practices overrode archaeological considerations at all times.

- 3.2.2 All works were carried out in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1992, and all other relevant Health and Safety legislation, regulations and codes of practice in force at the time.
- 3.2.3 Wessex Archaeology supplied a copy of their Health and Safety Policy and a Risk Assessment to the Client before the commencement of the fieldwork. This Risk Assessment was read and understood by all staff attending the Site before any groundwork's commenced.
- 3.2.4 All evaluation trenches were scanned before and, if considered necessary, during excavation with a Cable Avoidance Tool (CAT) in order to verify the absence of any live underground services.

### **3.3 Fieldwork Methodology**

- 3.3.1 A total of 14no. machine excavated trial trenches each measuring 30m x 2.20m were excavated during the Phase I evaluation (**Figure 1**).
- 3.3.2 The majority of the trenches were positioned in the southern half of the Site. The results of the rapid palaeoenvironmental assessment had shown the presence of significant depths of alluvium across the entire Site, yet these deposits were at their shallowest in the southern area.
- 3.3.3 All trenches were laid out using a Leica Viva GPS.
- 3.3.4 The trial trenches were excavated using a tracked 360° excavator equipped with a toothless bucket and under constant supervision by Wessex Archaeology. Machine excavation proceeded to a depth at which the top of archaeological deposits, or a safe depth in the top of the alluvial deposits were reached.
- 3.3.5 The general depth of the trial trenches did not exceed a depth considered to be safe by the archaeological fieldwork director, and did not in any event exceed 1.2m below ground level, to comply with Health and Safety regulations.
- 3.3.6 Where practical, an additional machine dug sondage was also excavated at the end of each trench to investigate and record deeper stratigraphy. Due to health and safety issues, staff did not, under any circumstances, enter these sondages, and recording was limited to a photographic record with additional written observations on stratigraphic changes, within the exposed sections. No access was permitted in areas of deeper sondage, and these sondages were immediately backfilled on completion of the written and photographic record.
- 3.3.7 Topsoil and subsoil were separated and stored on either side of the trench to ensure the minimum cross-contamination of the different deposits. Spoil was kept at a minimum of 1m from the trench edge in order to provide a safe working area. In addition spoil was stored a sufficient distance from the excavation to prevent any failure to the sides of the trenches and to prevent any loose material falling into the working area.

3.3.8 When archaeological deposits were exposed, appropriate sampling of archaeological features identified was undertaken by hand. The scope of this sampling was agreed with the Senior Historic Environment Officer and was sufficient to resolve the principal aims of the evaluation.

### **3.4 Recording**

3.4.1 All exposed archaeological deposits were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording system.

3.4.2 A complete drawn record of excavated archaeological features and deposits was compiled. This included both plans and sections, drawn to the appropriate scale (1:20 for plans, 1:10 for sections), and referenced to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. The Ordnance Datum (OD) height of all principal features and levels was calculated and plans/sections were annotated with OD heights. A representative section, generally from the deeper sondage, from each trench was recorded.

3.4.3 A photographic record was maintained during the evaluation using digital cameras equipped with an image sensor of 12.10 megapixels. Digital images were subject to managed quality control and curation processes, which embed appropriate metadata within the image, to ensure long term accessibility of the image set.

3.4.4 Wessex Archaeology informed the Senior Historic Environment Officer of the commencement of fieldwork and the progress of the investigations on the Site. A minimum of one weeks' notice was provided prior to commencement of the works.

3.4.5 Reasonable access to the Site was arranged for the Senior Historic Environment Officer to undertake a Site visit to inspect and monitor the archaeological investigations as they progress. A single Site visit took place on the 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2012.

3.4.6 Any variations to the WSI and Method Statement were agreed in advance with the Senior Historic Environment Officer.

### **3.5 Finds and Environmental Strategies**

3.5.1 Appropriate strategies for the recovery of artefacts and environmental samples was devised and implemented by Wessex Archaeology's Finds and Environmental Specialists.

#### ***Finds***

3.5.2 All artefacts from excavated contexts were retained, except those from features or deposits of obviously modern date.

3.5.3 All retained artefacts were washed, weighed, counted and identified. Any artefacts requiring conservation or specific storage conditions were dealt with immediately in line with *First Aid for Finds* (Watkinson & Neal 1998).

3.5.4 Assessment of all retained artefacts was made by appropriately qualified specialists.

- 3.5.5 All artefacts recovered during the excavations on the Site remain the property of the landowner. They were suitably bagged, bowed in accordance with the *United Kingdom Institute for Conservation, Conservation Guidelines nos.2* and, on completion of the archaeological post-excavation programme, will be deposited with the relevant museum.

#### ***Environmental Sampling***

- 3.5.6 Wessex Archaeology's Guidelines for Environmental Sampling were used for the sampling archaeological and environmental deposits and structures.
- 3.5.7 Bulk environmental soil samples of 40 litres were taken from appropriate well sealed and dated/datable archaeological contexts. The residues and sieved fractions of the bulk environmental soil samples were recorded and retained with the project archive.
- 3.5.8 Samples for charred plant remains (charcoal and charred seeds etc) were taken from well dated and sealed deposits to define presence and preservation to enable comments on any further sampling strategy to be made.

## **4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

- 4.1.1 The following sections provide a summary of the information held in the Site archive. Details of individually excavated contexts and features are retained in the Site archive, and a detailed tabulated version of these can be found in **Appendix 1**.
- 4.1.2 Archaeological features and deposits will be considered below by trench (TR) number. A consideration of the broader context of relevant archaeological features and deposits will be discussed in **Section 7**.

### **4.2 Natural deposits and soil sequences**

#### ***Rock Beds***

- 4.2.1 Horizontally laminated natural Blue Lias ledges with regular angular fracturing, interspersed with yellow brown clay, was identified at a depth of 0.45m below ground level (BGL) within **TR7 (Plate 7)**. The Lias ledges were heavily weathered and frost-fractured and were de-laminating from east to west to form a stepped outcrop. This natural geology was overlain by a thin layer of alluvial clay 0.05m thick, which included common Lias rubble derived from the weathering and de-lamination processes, and later disturbed by ploughing.
- 4.2.2 Bands vertically laminated Mudstone (Penarth Group?), Yellow Clay with Mudstone and Blue Lias were also identified with **TR14** c. 40m west of **TR7 (Plate 12)**. These deposits were situated directly below the topsoil horizon at a depth of 0.25m BGL.

#### ***Alluvial Clays and Peat Deposits***

- 4.2.3 Alluvial clays generally comprising a layer of mid grey-brown or yellow/orange-brown clay overlying a layer of blue-grey clay were encountered with all evaluation trenches, except **TR7** and **TR14**. In the

majority of the trenches these alluvial clays were the deepest deposits reached within the trenches and their sondages. A single peaty or organic rich layer c. 0.05m thick was encountered at a depth of 1.35m BGL within the sondage at the north end of **TR12**.

#### ***Subsoil***

- 4.2.4 Subsoil was only encountered within five of the evaluation trenches (**TR1**, **TR3**, **TR5**, **TR7** and **TR12**). The subsoil comprised a mid brown or grey-brown silty clay, and was located at a depth of between 0.30m and 0.50m BGL.

#### ***Topsoil***

- 4.2.5 Topsoil comprising of mid brown silty clay was encountered across the Site to a depth of between 0.10m and 0.40m BGL.

### **4.3 Summary of the evaluation results**

- 4.3.1 The Phase I Evaluation represents a limited sample of the entire Site (<0.10%); therefore any identification of any archaeological features or deposits may be considered to be significant (**Figure 1**).
- 4.3.2 Archaeological features and deposits were identified within one of the fourteen evaluation trenches (**TR6**). Modern disturbance of varying degrees was located within five of the trenches (**TR1**, **TR8**, **TR9**, **TR10** and **TR13**). With the exception of the thin peat deposit located within **TR12** all the other evaluation trenches proved to be archaeologically sterile.

#### ***TR1 and TR2***

- 4.3.3 Both **TR1** and **TR2** were positioned in the central western portion of the Site adjacent to the North Road (**Figure 1**). Both proved to be archaeologically sterile, although modern hardcore presumably relating to an area of hardstanding was identified at a depth between 0.20m and 0.50m in the western end of **TR1**. Alluvial clays were encountered between 0.25m and 0.30m BGL, and comprised an initial layer of grey-brown to orange-brown clay, 1.45m to 2.05m thick overlying blue-grey clay. A maximum depth of 2.60m BGL was reached within these evaluation trenches (**TR1**).

#### ***TR3, TR4 and TR5***

- 4.3.4 **TR3**, **TR4** and **TR5** were located in a relatively tight group in an undeveloped field in the south-western corner of the Site (**Figure 1**). Alluvial clays were encountered between 0.35m and 0.40m BGL, and comprised an initial layer of grey-brown to orange-brown clay, 1.00m to 1.75m thick overlying blue-grey clay. A maximum depth of 2.30m BGL was reached within these evaluation trenches (**TR3**).

#### ***TR6, TR7 and TR14***

- 4.3.5 **TR6**, **TR7** and **TR14** were situated in an undeveloped field in the central southern portion of the Site, north of the Southern Road. **TR14** was originally located in the north-eastern corner of the Site, but was moved between **TR6** and **TR7** after the identification of archaeological remains in that area and in consultation with the Senior Historic Environment Officer at Somerset County Council.

- 4.3.6 **TR6** extended in a north-west to south-east direction. Alluvial clays were encountered at a depth of 0.25m BGL and comprised an initial layer of yellow-brown clay 0.95m thick overlying a random rubble band of Blue Lias stone and yellow-brown clay c. 0.30m thick, which was overlying a second layer of yellow-brown clay. A maximum depth of 2.40m BGL was reached within **TR6**.
- 4.3.7 Two parallel ditches (**604** and **606**) were identified within **TR6** (**Figure 2**). Both ditches were found to cut the very upper surface of the alluvial clays, at 0.25m BGL.
- 4.3.8 Ditch **604** extended in a north-west to south-east direction, c. 2.50m north of ditch **606**. Ditch **604** was found to be 0.60m wide and 0.22m deep with very steeply sloping sides to the south, but moderately sloping sides to the north. It contained a single topsoil derived secondary fill (**603**), which appears to have formed through gradual silting process and minor edge derived slumping events. A complete horse skull was placed in the base of ditch **604** (**Plate 1**); the skull being placed lengthways, with the anterior facing east towards slightly higher ground c. 0.40m distant. Romano-British pottery and burnt or fired clay were also recovered from this ditch (fill **603**). The pottery was fragmentary, and did not appear to be deliberately placed within the ditch, unless it was dumped as rubbish. It was however relatively fresh and un-abraded, indicating it had not travelled far or spent a considerable period of time weathering before deposition, suggesting Romano-British occupation activity near-by.
- 4.3.9 Ditch **606** was found to extend in a north-west to south-east direction and parallel to ditch **604**. Ditch **606** measured 0.44m wide and 0.25m deep with steeply sloping straight sides and a concave base. The single topsoil derived fill of ditch **606** (**605**) revealed no clear direction of deposition, but was found to contain fragments of Roman pottery and burnt or fired clay.
- 4.3.10 **TR7** (**Plate 7**) extended in a north-west to south-east direction. A thin deposit of alluvial clay 0.05m thick was found to be overlying a series of Blue Lias ledges at a depth of 0.40m BGL (see **Section 4.2**). The alluvial clay and Blue Lias deposits were first encountered at 6.14m aOD and were overlain by a disturbed subsoil horizon, which contained frequent Lias rubble blocks, believed to be derived from natural weathering and de-lamination processes, later disturbed by ploughing.
- 4.3.11 **TR14** was original intended to be located in the north-east corner of the Site (**Plate 13**). It was moved between **TR6** and **TR7** on the identification of Romano-British remains within **TR6**. **TR14** was positioned to determine the possible continuation of ditches **604** and **606**, and to investigate an area of slightly higher ground which extended in a broadly north-south direction between **TR6** and **TR7**, interest in this area of slightly higher ground was heightened as the parallel ditches **604** and **606** appeared to be leading towards it.
- 4.3.12 No archaeological features or deposits were identified within **TR14**, however the trench did prove to have distinct underlying geology, with bands of horizontally laminated mudstone, firm yellow clay and Blue Lias to a maximum height of 6.66m aOD. The trench is located towards the south of the Site, where the mapped extent of the alluvial wetland deposits of the

Levels meet the Jurassic geology of the higher (and drier) ground to the south, to which these deposits belong. No overlying alluvial clays were encountered within the trench, which is not unexpected as the level of the geology is considerably higher than the upper surface of the alluvial clays elsewhere on the Site.

- 4.3.13 Such areas of higher ground within a generally low-lying wetland environment are often the focus of archaeological activity (Grant & Norcott 2012).

#### **TR8, TR9 and TR10**

- 4.3.14 **TR8, TR9 and TR10** were situated in a relatively high field c. 7.50m aOD, known locally as 'Bridgwater Hill' in the south-eastern corner of the Site. **TR10** was originally located c. 80m west of **TR9**, but could not be excavated in its planned location due to access issues regarding mature trees. No archaeological features or deposits were encountered within any of these trenches. Alluvial clays were detected within **TR8, TR9 and TR10** between 0.62m and 1.50m BGL, these clays were overlain by thick layers of re-deposited alluvial derived clay mixed with modern ceramic building material (CBM), Blue Lias rubble and occasional fertiliser bags. The origin of these modern deposits is not certain, although they did not appear particularly recent. It was considered at the time of excavation that these deposits were likely to be derived from some of construction process associated with the factory.

#### **TR11**

- 4.3.15 **TR11** was positioned c. 225m north-east of **TR9**, in the south-eastern portion of the Site and proved to be archaeologically sterile (**Figure 1**). Alluvial clays were encountered at 0.28m BGL, and comprised an initial layer of orange-brown clay 0.42m thick, overlying blue-grey clay. A maximum depth of 1.20m BGL was reached within **TR11**.

#### **TR12 and TR13**

- 4.3.16 **TR12 and TR13** were located in an undeveloped field in the central western portion of the Site (**Figure 1**). Alluvial clays were encountered at 0.50m BGL, and consisted of an initial layer of grey-brown to orange-brown clay 0.85m to 1.30m thick, overlying blue-grey clay. A maximum depth of 1.80m BGL was reached within these evaluation trenches. Small dumps of modern CBM and scalplings were also located below the topsoil horizon within **TR13**.

## **5 FINDS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

- 5.1.1 A small quantity of finds was recovered during the evaluation, deriving from three contexts within two trial trenches (alluvial clay **401** in **TR4** and ditch fills **603** and **605** in **TR6**). Finds comprised fragments of pottery, animal bone, fired clay and iron (see **Appendix 2**); datable finds (pottery) are all of Romano-British date.

### **5.2 Pottery**

- 5.2.1 The pottery consists of a range of Romano-British ware types, including Severn Valley, possible Oxfordshire colour coated ware, south-east Dorset



Black Burnished ware (BB1), and south-western greywares. The latter include sherds containing distinctive soft, flaky, silver or pink rock inclusions, which appear to correlate with 'Norton Fitzwarren ware', as defined at Exeter (Holbrook and Bidwell 1991, 175, fabric 107; Timby 1989, 54). Other gritty greywares, lacking these distinctive inclusions, also find parallels at Exeter (Holbrook and Bidwell 1991, 171, 175), but are of uncertain source, as are a few sherds of greywares in finer sandy fabrics. One of the greyware sherds has been roughly trimmed to a small disc. The only diagnostic sherds comprise a lipped, convex bowl or dish and a flanged bowl, both in gritty greyware, and a greyware flagon rim (all from ditch **606**); these, and the range of fabrics, suggest a date range no earlier than the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, and extending at least into the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, and possibly beyond.

- 5.2.2 All of the pottery sherds came from the fills of ditches **604** and **606**, but the small quantities, combined with the scarcity of diagnostic forms, hamper any attempt to assign relative dates to the two features.

### **5.3 Fired Clay**

- 5.3.1 The most diagnostic piece within the small group of fired clay (all from the fills of ditches **604** and **606**) comprises the base of a small 'pedestal', a distinctive form associated with salt-working ceramics (briquetage). The existence of a salt extraction industry in Somerset during the Romano-British period is well established, and a number of salt-making sites have been identified, for example, in the Huntspill Cut (Grove and Brunning 1998).

### **5.4 Iron**

- 5.4.1 The six iron objects recovered (from the fill of ditch **606**) comprise one nail and five hobnails, the latter probably from footwear. These objects are not chronologically distinctive, but associated finds indicate a Romano-British date.

### **5.5 Animal Bone**

- 5.5.1 All of the pottery sherds came from the fills of ditches **604** and **606**, but the small quantities, combined with the scarcity of diagnostic forms, hamper any attempt to assign relative dates to the two features. The faunal assemblage is dominated by fragments from a complete horse skull, recovered from the fill of ditch **604**. Other identifiable bone is all from cattle.

## **6 ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE**

### **6.1 Introduction and Objectives**

- 6.1.1 One bulk sample was taken from ditch **606** and was processed to evaluate the presence and preservation of palaeoenvironmental remains. This information can provide an indication of the significance of the archaeological site as a whole.

### **6.2 Charred Plant Remains and Charcoal**

- 6.2.1 The bulk sample was processed by standard flotation methods; the flot retained on a 0.5 mm mesh, the residue fractionated into 5.6 mm, 2mm and 1mm fractions and dried. The coarse fraction (>5.6 mm) was sorted, weighed and discarded. The flot was scanned under a x10 – x40 stereobinocular microscope and the preservation and nature of the charred plant

and wood charcoal remains recorded in **Appendix 3**. Preliminary identifications of dominant or important taxa are noted below, following the nomenclature of Stace (1997) for wild plants, and traditional nomenclature, as provided by Zohary and Hopf (2000, Tables 3, page 28 and 5, page 65), for cereals.

6.2.2 The flot was large with c. 50% rooty material. This may be indicative of stratigraphic movement and the possibility of contamination by later intrusive elements. Charred material comprised varying degrees of preservation.

6.2.3 The moderate charred plant assemblage recovered from ditch **606** included cereal remains, including grains and glume bases of hulled wheat, emmer or spelt (*Triticum dicoccum/spelta*). Some of the glume bases were likely to be those of spelt wheat (*Triticum spelta*). The weed seeds included seeds of oat/brome grass (*Avena/Bromus* sp.), docks (*Rumex* sp.), knotgrass (*Polygonum* sp.), vetch/wild pea (*Vicia/Lathyrus* sp.) and meadow grass/cat's-tails (*Poa/Phleum* sp.). These are all typical arable weed species. The charred plant assemblage is indicative of settlement waste and the likelihood of settlement activity in the vicinity. It is comparable with other sites of this date in the area such as at Huntworth (Stevens 2008)

### 6.3 Wood charcoal

6.3.1 Very small amounts of wood charcoal fragments greater than 4mm were recorded in the sample.

### 6.4 Land and fresh/brackish water molluscs

6.4.1 The bulk sample flot was rapidly assessed by scanning under a x 10 – x 40 stereo-binocular microscope to provide some information about shell preservation and species representation. Nomenclature is according to Kerney (1999).

6.4.2 The majority of the mollusc assemblage comprised terrestrial species, in particular *Trichia hispida*, part of the intermediate species group. Other species recorded included the open country species *Vallonia* spp., *Vertigo pygmaea* and *Helicella itala* together with the intermediate species *Cochlicopa* sp, *Cepaea/Arianta* spp. and *Helix aspersa*. There were also a few specimens of *Hydrobia* spp., species which are found in brackish water environments such as drainage ditches in coastal marshes and estuaries (Kerney 1999).

## 7 DISCUSSION

7.1.1 Given the Site constraints, this evaluation represents a very small percentage sample of the Site (<0.1%), and is considerably smaller than a standard evaluation sample area (c. 5-8%), making the identification of any archaeological features or deposits more significant. This small sample area also limits what can be confidently implied for the lack of archaeological features identified within sterile trenches. However this approach has highlighted the archaeological potential of the central southern portion of the Site with particular regard to the identification of Romano-British remains within **TR6**, and will aid the design of any further archaeological works on the Site.

- 7.1.2 The function of the two parallel Romano-British ditches (**604** and **606**) is unclear, however their parallel nature and their relatively close proximity (c. 2.50m) may indicate a small track/drove-way or small drainage channels leading off a low lying peninsula of higher and drier ground to the east. The un-abraded Roman pottery recovered from these ditches is clearly indicative of settlement activity in the area. Roman pottery has previously been identified c. 200m to the south outside the Site boundary, during works on a gas pipeline (**SMR No.15974**). Given their un-abraded nature, these finds were also interpreted as being indicative of settlement activity in the area, probably linked to the Romano-British salt working sites identified to the north (**SMR No.12863 and 12866**).

## **8 CONCLUSION**

- 8.1.1 The full extent of the potential Romano-British features within the southern portion of the Site cannot be fully understood at this evaluation stage. Indeed the true archaeological potential of the remainder of the Site could not be fully assessed by this Phase I evaluation, however, the fieldwork has provided a broad overview with regard to the archaeological potential of the Site.
- 8.1.2 Given the present available evidence, it is considered that the archaeological features identified within the Site as a result of this evaluation are unlikely to preclude development and that they could be satisfactorily mitigated through their preservation by record. As such it is likely that additional archaeological investigations may be required by the Senior Historic Environment Officer at Somerset County Council and may take the form of a watching brief during development.
- 8.1.3 The need for and scope for any further archaeological work within the Site, should be established through consultation with the Senior Historic Environment Officer at Somerset County Council.

## **9 ARCHIVE**

### **9.1 Preparation and Deposition**

- 9.1.1 On completion of the report a cross-referenced and internally consistent archive was produced. It is intended that the project archive, which is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology under the project code **84300.03**, and includes artefacts, ecofacts, documentary records and digital data, will be deposited with the Somerset Museums Service, no later than 6 months after completion of the work.

### **9.2 The Archive**

- 9.2.1 The completed project archive was prepared in accordance with the guidelines outlined in Appendix 3 of *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage 1991) and in accordance with the *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long term storage* (UKIC 1990).

### **9.3 Quality Assurance Procedures**

- 9.3.1 Wessex Archaeology operates a Project Management system. Projects are assigned to individual managers who monitor their progress and quality, and control budgets from inception to completion, in all aspects including Health

and Safety etc. Projects are managed in accordance with English Heritage guidelines outlined in the document *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)*, English Heritage 2006). At all stages the manager will carefully assess and monitor performance of staff and adherence to objectives, timetables and budgets, while the manager's performance is monitored in turn by the Director of Heritage & Archaeology who will ensure that the project meets Wessex Archaeology's quality standards and is adequately programmed and resourced within Wessex Archaeology's portfolio of project commitments. A formal written report is made to the Executive Management Group once a month by the Director of Heritage & Archaeology.

#### **9.4 Copyright**

- 9.4.1 The full copyright of the written/illustrative archive relating to the Site will be retained by Wessex Archaeology Ltd under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved. The recipient museum, however, will be granted an exclusive licence for the use of the archive for educational purposes, including academic research, providing that such use shall be non-profitmaking, and conforms with the Copyright and Related Rights regulations 2003.

#### **9.5 Security Copy**

- 9.5.1 In line with current best practice, on completion of the project a security copy of the paper records will be prepared, in the form of microfilm. The master jackets and one diazo copy of the microfilm will be submitted to the National Archaeological Record (English Heritage), a second diazo copy will be deposited with the paper records, and a third diazo copy will be retained by Wessex Archaeology. Alternatively, the security copy may be in the form of a pdf file.

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**APPENDIX 1: TABLE OF TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS**

Trial Trench No.	1	NGR	E	332853 142524	SW	332824 142524
<b>Length (m)</b>		<b>Width (m)</b>			<b>Max. Depth (m)</b> (Below Ground Level – Ground Level at 5.32m aOD through this sequence)	
<b>30.00</b>		<b>2.2</b>			<b>2.60</b>	
Context No.	Soil Description					Depth (m) (B.G.L.)
100	Topsoil – Dark brown silty clay loam					0-0.20
101	Subsoil – Mid brown silty clay					0.20-0.30
102	Alluvial Clay – Mid grey-brown silty clay with frequent orange mottling					0.30-2.35
103	Alluvial Clay – Mid blue-grey silty clay with frequent dark brown organic staining and manganese flecks					2.35→
104	Modern Hardcore – Hardcore scalplings with occasional inclusions of red brick CBM. Only situated between layers <b>100</b> and <b>102</b> in the western end of the trench, were the subsoil is not present.					0.20-0.50

Trial Trench No.	2	NGR	E	333084 142402	W	333056 142396
<b>Length (m)</b>		<b>Width (m)</b>			<b>Max. Depth (m)</b> (Below Ground Level – Ground Level at 5.40m aOD through this sequence)	
<b>30.00</b>		<b>2.2</b>			<b>2.10</b>	
Context No.	Soil Description					Depth (m) (B.G.L.)
200	Topsoil – Dark brown silty clay loam					0-0.25
201	Alluvial Clay – Mid orange brown silty clay with frequent blue-grey mottles					0.25-1.70
202	Alluvial Clay – mid blue-grey silty clay					1.70→

Trial Trench No.	3	NGR	E	332814 142183	W	332785 142184
<b>Length (m)</b>		<b>Width (m)</b>			<b>Max. Depth (m)</b> (Below Ground Level – Ground Level at 5.46m aOD through this sequence)	
<b>30.00</b>		<b>2.2</b>			<b>2.30</b>	
Context No.	Soil Description					Depth (m) (B.G.L.)
300	Topsoil – Dark brown silty clay loam					0-0.25
301	Subsoil – Mid brown silty clay					0.25-0.40

302	Alluvial Clay – Mid orange brown silty clay with frequent blue-grey mottles	0.40-2.15
303	Alluvial Clay – mid blue-grey silty clay	2.15→

<b>Trial Trench No.</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>NGR</b>	<b>NW</b>	<b>332759 142111</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>332773 142086</b>
<b>Length (m)</b>	<b>Width (m)</b>		<b>Max. Depth (m)</b> (Below Ground Level – Ground Level at 5.40m aOD through this sequence)			
<b>30.00</b>	<b>2.20</b>		<b>2.00</b>			
<b>Context No.</b>	<b>Soil Description</b>					<b>Depth (m)</b> (B.G.L.)
400	Topsoil – Dark brown silty clay loam					0-0.40
401	Alluvial Clay – Mid orange brown silty clay with frequent blue-grey mottles					0.40-1.40
402	Alluvial Clay – Mid blue-grey silty clay with frequent dark orange mottling near the upper boundary					1.40→

<b>Trial Trench No.</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>NGR</b>	<b>NE</b>	<b>332846 142116</b>	<b>SW</b>	<b>332825 142094</b>
<b>Length (m)</b>	<b>Width (m)</b>		<b>Max. Depth (m)</b> (Below Ground Level – Ground Level at 5.30m aOD through this sequence)			
<b>30.00</b>	<b>2.20</b>		<b>2.10</b>			
<b>Context No.</b>	<b>Soil Description</b>					<b>Depth (m)</b> (B.G.L.)
500	Topsoil – Dark brown silty clay loam					0-0.25
501	Subsoil – Mid grey-brown silty clay					0.25-0.35
502	Alluvial Clay – Mid grey-brown silty clay with frequent blue-grey mottles					0.35-2.00
503	Alluvial Clay – Mid blue-grey silty clay with frequent dark orange-brown mottling					2.00→

<b>Trial Trench No.</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>NGR</b>	<b>NW</b>	<b>333108 142022</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>333135 142006</b>
<b>Length (m)</b>	<b>Width (m)</b>		<b>Max. Depth (m)</b> (Below Ground Level – Ground Level at 6.60m aOD through this sequence)			
<b>30.00</b>	<b>2.20</b>		<b>2.40</b>			
<b>Context No.</b>	<b>Soil Description</b>					<b>Depth (m)</b> (B.G.L.)
600	Topsoil – Dark blackish brown silty clay loam					0-0.25
601	Alluvial Clay – Mid yellowish-brown silty clay with frequent blue-grey mottles					0.25-1.20
602	Stone Rubble – Natural stone rubble layer					1.20-1.50

603	Fill of linear ditch <b>604</b>	
<b>604</b>	Ditch	
605	Fill of linear ditch <b>606</b>	
<b>606</b>	Ditch	
607	Alluvial Clay – Mid yellowish-brown silty clay with frequent blue-grey mottles	1.50→
608	Possible Layer – Mid brown silty clay with rare mid sized angular blue lias fragments. Only just seen in southern edge of the trench	0.25→

<b>Trial Trench No.</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>NGR</b>	<b>NW</b>	<b>333197 142026</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>333226 142018</b>
<b>Length (m)</b>	<b>Width (m)</b>		<b>Max. Depth (m)</b> (Below Ground Level – Ground Level at 6.56m aOD through this sequence)			
<b>30.00</b>	<b>2.20</b>		<b>0.50</b>			
<b>Context No.</b>	<b>Soil Description</b>					<b>Depth (m)</b> (B.G.L.)
700	Topsoil – Dark blackish brown silty clay loam with moderate inclusions of small sub-angular fragments of Blue Lias					0-0.20
701	Subsoil – Light grey-brown silty clay					0.20-0.40
702	Alluvial Clay – Mid grey-brown silty clay with frequent blue-grey and orange mottling					0.40-0.45
703	Bedrock – Weathered Blue Lias pavement with regular angular fracturing, interspersed with yellow brown clay.					0.45→

<b>Trial Trench No.</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>NGR</b>	<b>NW</b>	<b>333674 142005</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>333686 141978</b>
<b>Length (m)</b>	<b>Width (m)</b>		<b>Max. Depth (m)</b> (Below Ground Level – Ground Level at 6.29m aOD through this sequence)			
<b>30.00</b>	<b>2.20</b>		<b>2.20</b>			
<b>Context No.</b>	<b>Soil Description</b>					<b>Depth (m)</b> (B.G.L.)
800	Topsoil – Mid brown silty clay loam with frequent inclusions of grassroots and wet boggy area (southeast)					0-0.10
801	Re-deposited Clay – Mixed deposit of topsoil, subsoil and alluvial clay with inclusions of modern brick rubble, tile and fertiliser bags					0.10-0.62
802	Alluvial Clay – Mid orange-brown silty clay with frequent small blue-grey mottling					0.62→

<b>Trial Trench No.</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>NGR</b>	<b>NE</b>	<b>333768 142008</b>	<b>SW</b>	<b>333756 141982</b>
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Length (m)	Width (m)	Max. Depth (m) (Below Ground Level – Ground Level at 7.40m aOD through this sequence)
30.00	2.20	2.00
Context No.	Soil Description	Depth (m) (B.G.L.)
900	Topsoil – Mid brown silty clay loam	0-0.20
901	Re-deposited Clay – Mixed deposit of topsoil, subsoil and alluvial clay with inclusions of modern brick rubble and tile	0.20-0.60
902	Re-deposited Clay – Mid yellow brown clay with rare to moderate large angular blue lias rubble and modern CBM	0.60-1.50
903	Alluvial Clay – Dark blue-grey clay with lenses of organic staining	1.50→

Trial Trench No.	10	NGR	E	333739 141956	W	333710 141955
Length (m)	Width (m)	Max. Depth (m) (Below Ground Level – Ground Level at 6.89m aOD through this sequence)				
30.00	2.20	1.30				
Context No.	Soil Description					Depth (m) (B.G.L.)
1000	Topsoil – Mid brown silty clay loam					0-0.25
1001	Re-deposited Clay – Mixed deposit of topsoil, subsoil and alluvial clay with very sparse inclusions of modern brick rubble					0.25-1.26
1002	Alluvial Clay – Dark blue-grey clay					1.26→

Trial Trench No.	11	NGR	E	333987 142123	W	333958 142123
Length (m)	Width (m)	Max. Depth (m) (Below Ground Level – Ground Level at 5.47m aOD through this sequence)				
30.00	2.20	1.20				
Context No.	Soil Description					Depth (m) (B.G.L.)
1101	Topsoil – Mid brown silty clay loam					0-0.28
1102	Alluvial Clay – Mid orange-brown silty clay with frequent small blue-grey mottling					0.28-0.70
1103	Alluvial Clay – Dark blue-grey clay with frequent light blue mottling					0.70

Trial Trench No.	12	NGR	N	333626 142324	S	333626 142294
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Length (m)	Width (m)	Max. Depth (m) (Below Ground Level – Ground Level at 5.13m aOD through this sequence)
30.00	2.20	1.70
Context No.	Soil Description	Depth (m) (B.G.L.)
1200	Topsoil – Mid brown silty clay loam	0-0.30
1201	Subsoil – Light grey-brown silty clay	0.30-0.50
1202	Alluvial Clay – Mid grey-brown silty clay	0.50-1.35
1203	Peat – Thin layer of brown organic rich silty clay	1.35-1.40
1204	Alluvial Clay – Light blue-grey silty clay	1.40→

Trial Trench No.	13	NGR	NE	333629 142570	SW	333615 142545
Length (m)	Width (m)	Max. Depth (m) (Below Ground Level – Ground Level at 5.24m aOD through this sequence)				
30.00	2.20	1.80				
Context No.	Soil Description					Depth (m) (B.G.L.)
1300	Topsoil – Mid brown silty clay loam					0-0.20
1301	Rubble Layer – Patches of small light pink scalplings and med sized stone rubble and modern CBM with a matrix of mid brown silty clay					0.20-0.50
1302	Alluvial Clay – Mid orange-brown silty clay with frequent blue-grey mottling					0.50-1.80
1303	Alluvial Clay – Mid blue-grey silty clay with lenses of dark blue-grey clay					1.80→

Trial Trench No.	14	NGR	N	333158 142031	S	333154 142002
Length (m)	Width (m)	Max. Depth (m) (Below Ground Level – Ground Level at 6.79m aOD through this sequence)				
30.00	2.20	0.50				
Context No.	Soil Description					Depth (m) (B.G.L.)
1400	Topsoil – Mid brown silty clay loam					0-0.25
1401	Natural Geology – Bands of Mudstone and Shale, Yellow Clay and Mudstone and Blue Lias					0.25→

**APPENDIX 2: ALL FINDS BY CONTEXT (NUMBER / WEIGHT IN GRAMMES)**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Animal Bone</b>	<b>Fired Clay</b>	<b>Iron</b>	<b>Pottery</b>
401	6/62			
603	197/1999	5/41		2/17
605	12/28	20/198	6/14	20/182
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>215/2089</b>	<b>25/239</b>	<b>6/14</b>	<b>22/199</b>

**APPENDIX 3: ASSESSMENT OF THE CHARRED PLANT REMAINS AND CHARCOAL**

Samples				Flot							
Feature	Context	Sam ple	Vol. Ltrs	Flot (ml)	% roots	Charred Plant Remains				Charcoal >4/2mm	Other
						Grain	Chaff	Other	Comments		
Trench 6 -?Romano-British Ditch											
606	605	1	33	250	50	B	A	B	Hulled wheat grain frags, glume frags including spelt, <i>Avena/Bromus</i> , <i>Rumex</i> , <i>Polygonum</i> , <i>Vicia/Lathyrus</i> , <i>Poa/Phleum</i>	1/1 ml	Sab (B), Moll-t (A**), Moll-f (C)

Key: A\*\*\* = exceptional, A\*\* = 100+, A\* = 30-99, A = >10, B = 9-5, C = <5; sab = small animal bones, Moll-t = terrestrial molluscs, Moll-f = fresh/brackish water molluscs;

**APPENDIX 3: OASIS RECORD FORM**
**10.1 ROF Puriton, Bridgwater, Somerset - Wessex Archaeology**
**OASIS ID - wessexar1-134491**
**Versions**

View	Version	Completed by	Email	Date
<a href="#">View 1</a>	1	Sue Farr	s.farr@wessexarch.co.uk	28 September 2012

**Completed sections in current version**

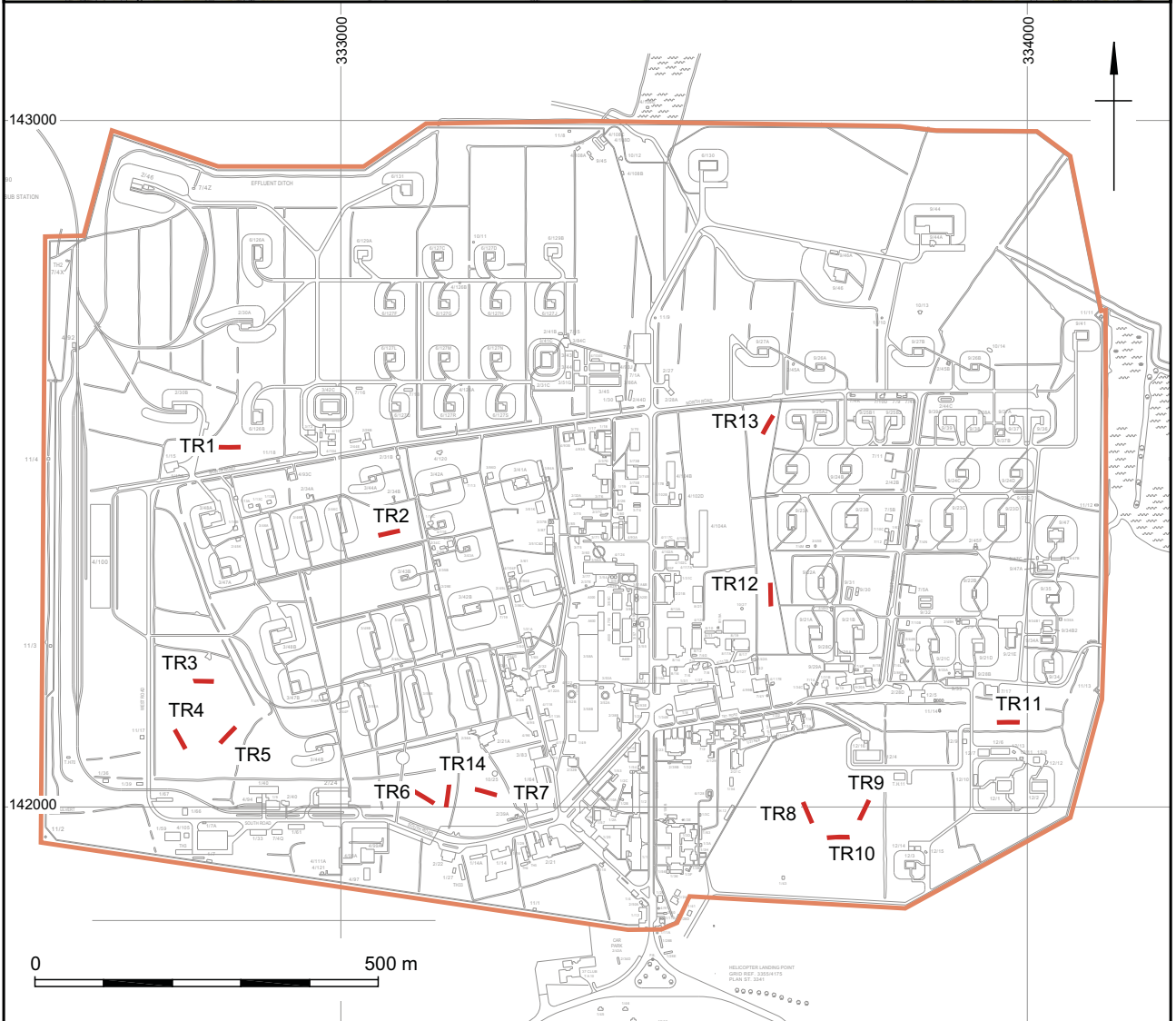
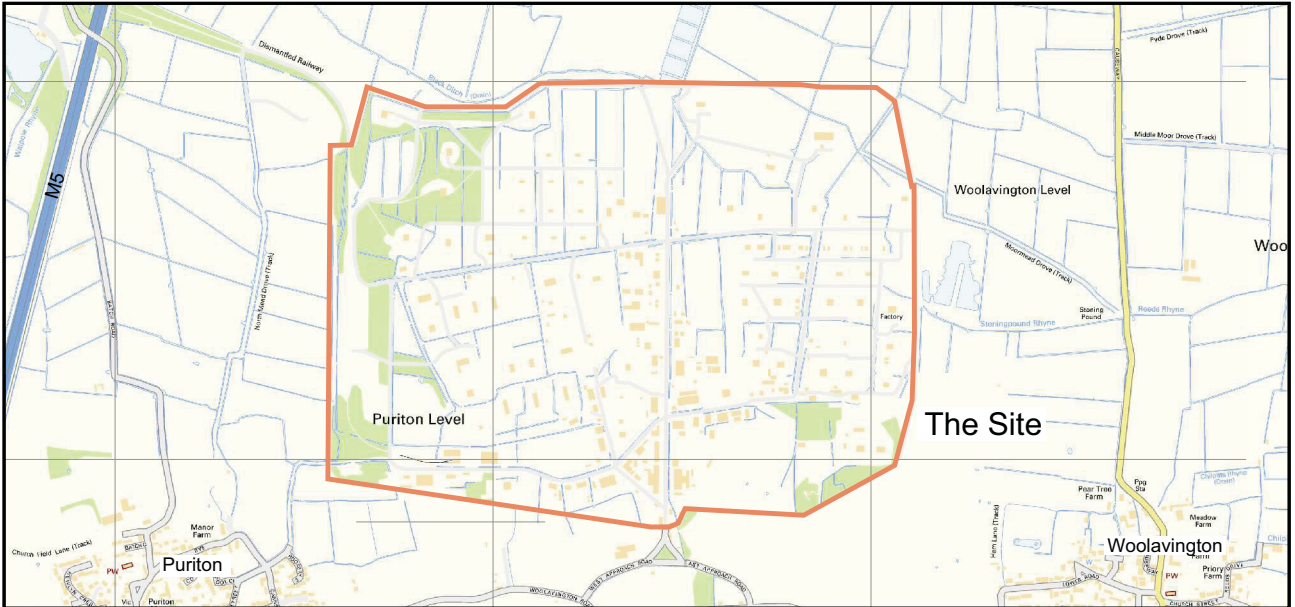
Details	Location	Creators	Archive	Publications
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	1/1



**Validated sections in current version**

Details	Location	Creators	Archive	Publications
No	No	No	No	0/1

**File submission and form progress**

Grey literature report submitted?	No	Grey literature report filename/s
Images submitted?	No	Image filename/s
Boundary file submitted?	No	Boundary filename
HER signed off?		NMR signed off?



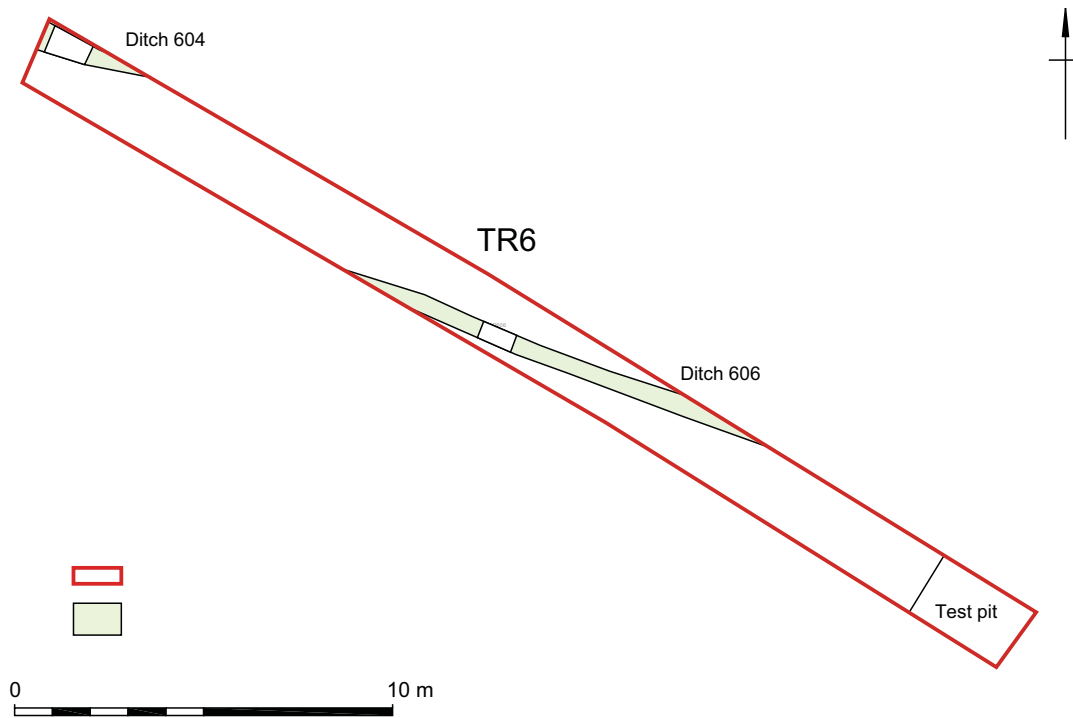
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Site and trench location plan

Figure 1



Plate 1: Placed horse skull in ditch 604 (viewed from the north-west)



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Plate 2: Trench 1 facing east



Plate 3: North facing section through sondage in Trench 5



Plate 4: South facing section through sondage in Trench 3



Plate 5: Trench 4 facing south-west



Plate 6: Trench 6 facing south-east



Plate 7: Trench 7 looking east



Plate 8: Lias pavement (natural) at western end of Trench 7



Plate 9: Trench 9 facing south





Plate 10: Trench 11 looking east with sondage in foreground



Plate 11: Trench 12 facing north



Plate 12: Trench 13 facing north-east



Plate 13: Trench 14 looking north

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**WESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY LIMITED.**

**Registered Head Office:** Portway House, Old Sarum Park, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP4 6EB.

Tel: 01722 326867 Fax: 01722 337562 [info@wessexarch.co.uk](mailto:info@wessexarch.co.uk)

Regional offices in **Edinburgh, Rochester and Sheffield**

For more information visit [www.wessexarch.co.uk](http://www.wessexarch.co.uk)

