Wessex Archaeology

Steart Farm, Cheddar, Somerset

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Ref: 88300.01

December 2012

STEART FARM,
CHEDDAR, SOMERSET

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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QUALITY ASSURANCE

SITE CODE	88300	ACCESSION CODE	TTNCM111/2012	CLIENT CODE	
PLANNING APPLICATION REF.	17/12/0067	NGR	345200, 152800		

VERSION	STATUS*	PREPARED BY	APPROVED BY	APPROVER'S SIGNATURE	DATE	FILE
1	I	SF	ML		21/12/12	X:\PROJECTS\88300\REPORT\
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I= Internal Draft E= External Draft F= Final

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Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by WYG Planning and Environment to undertake an evaluation at Steart Farm, Cheddar, Somerset (NGR 345200 152800). The fieldwork, comprising two machine-dug trial trenches, was undertaken on the 17th of December 2012.

A Desk-based assessment (WYG 2012) revealed Bronze Age pottery and later prehistoric features in the vicinity of the Site. Significant Romano-British activity is known close by, including a villa at the Kings of Wessex School and pottery within the Site's limits. The villa became the focus for a later monastic settlement and Anglo-Saxon palace. The historic core of Cheddar has medieval origins.

A Geophysical survey (Archaeological Surveys Ltd 2012) revealed no anomalies indicative of archaeological deposits.

The evaluation exposed two archaeological features within Trench 2. These comprised two ditches running parallel in a north-east to south-west direction. The ditches were unable to be excavated due to the high water table, however three pieces of Black Burnished Ware were recovered from the top of one of the ditches indicating that they may be Romano-British in date.

Trench 1 did not expose any significant archaeological features however c.8m of the trench were unable to be excavated below 0.45m due to an active field drain.

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Acknowledgements

This project was commissioned by WYG Planning & Environment and Wessex Archaeology is grateful to Martin Brown in this regard. Wessex Archaeology would also like to thank Steve Membery (Senior Historic Environment Officer) who monitored the project on behalf of Somerset County Council.

The report was researched and compiled by Simon Flaherty. The Fieldwork was completed by Simon Flaherty and Darryl Freer. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Matt Leivers.

STEART FARM,
CHEDDAR SOMERSET

Archaeological Evaluation Report

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology (WA) were commissioned by WYG Planning & Environment (the Client) to undertake a programme of archaeological evaluation on land at Steart Farm, Cheddar, Somerset (hereafter, 'the Site'), centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 345200 152800 (**Figure 1**).

1.1.2 The Client has submitted a planning application (ref 17/12/00067) to Sedgemoor District Council for the construction of a foodstore with customer cafe, car parking, access and landscaping. A Geophysical Survey (Archaeological Surveys Ltd 2012) had been undertaken for the majority of the Site with the exception of an orchard at the north, which was considered unsuitable for geophysical survey.

1.1.3 In the absence of geophysical survey in the northern area, and following consultation with Steve Membery, Senior Archaeologist, Somerset County Council (SCC), it was agreed that a programme of limited archaeological evaluation was required in the orchard. The evaluation was the second stage of archaeological works in support of the planning application and comprised of:

- Mechanical excavation of two 20m x 2m trenches positioned in the locations specified in the Project Design (WYG 2012) in order to establish the presence/absence of any archaeological features/deposits, confidence in the results of the geophysical survey and the potential for the survival of archaeological remains within the Site.

1.1.4 The evaluation took place on the 17th December 2012.

1.2 Site location, topography and geology

1.2.1 The Site is located in the south-western part of the village of Cheddar, Somerset (**Figure 1**). It comprises 2.4 hectares of land given over to agricultural activity, including a farmyard (partly occupied by 20th century agricultural buildings), pasture and orchard. The Site is bounded to the west by Lower New Road and Wedmore Road; to the north by Wedmore Road, to the east by Cheddar Business Park and to the south by farmland.

1.2.2 The Site lies at approximately 10m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) at its northern boundary, falling to 6m aOD at its southern limit. The underlying geology is Mercia Mudstone with overlying tidal flat deposits of clay, silt and sand (BGS 2012).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1.1 Desk-based assessment (WYG 2012) revealed Bronze Age pottery and later prehistoric features in the vicinity of the Site. Significant Romano-British activity is known close by, including a villa at the Kings of Wessex School and pottery within the Site's limits. The villa became the focus for a later monastic settlement and Anglo-Saxon palace. The historic core of Cheddar has medieval origins.

2.1.2 Geophysical survey (Archaeological Surveys Ltd 2012) revealed no anomalies indicative of archaeological deposits.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1.1 The general aims and objectives of the archaeological evaluation were to:

- clarify the presence/absence and extent of any buried archaeological remains within the Site that may be disturbed 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; and
- produce a report which will present the results of the evaluation in sufficient detail to allow an informed decision to be made concerning the Site's archaeological potential.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The detailed methodology for the evaluation was laid out in a written scheme of investigation (WA 2012).

4.1.2 All works were carried out in accordance with the relevant guidance given in the Institute for Archaeologist's *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (IfA, 2008) excepting where they were superseded by statements made below.

4.1.3 The evaluation comprised two trenches, each measuring 20m x 2m. Trenches were located as illustrated on **Figure 1**. Some amendments to the trench locations proposed in the WSI were necessary due to a number of uprooted trees lying within the lines of the proposed trenches.

4.1.4 Prior to machine excavation, investigation locations were scanned by Wessex Archaeology using a cable avoidance tool and genny.

4.1.5 All overburden (topsoil and subsoil) was carefully removed by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon or natural geology, whichever was encountered first. All machine work was carried out under constant

archaeological supervision and excavated material was visually examined for archaeological material.

4.1.6 Archaeological deposits and features were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording system with a unique numbering system for individual contexts. Archaeological features and deposits were hand-drawn at either 1:10 or 1:20, including both plans and sections, these were referred to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. The Ordnance Datum (OD) height of all principal features and levels were calculated and this information is included on both plans and sections. A representative section of each trench was recorded showing the depth of the overburden deposits.

4.1.7 A photographic record was kept utilising black and white film, colour slides and digital images. The record illustrates both the detail and the general context of the principal features, finds excavated, and the Site as a whole.

4.1.8 The survey was carried out with a Leica Viva series GNSS unit using the OS National GPS Network through an RTK network with a 3D accuracy of 30mm or below. All survey data was recorded using the OSGB36 British National Grid coordinate system.

4.1.9 A unique site code **88300** was allocated to the Site, and was used on all records and finds.

4.1.10 A sample of each feature type, for example pits, postholes, and ditches, was intended to be excavated and recorded. However excavation proved impossible due to the high water table and the depth of the archaeological features.

4.1.11 Once the fieldwork had been completed the trenches were backfilled and left level on completion using the excavated material. The backfilled material was compacted intermittently using the machine bucket in order to avoid air pockets and soft spots. No other reinstatement or surface treatment was undertaken.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Details of individual excavated contexts and features are retained in the archive. Summaries of the excavated sequence can be found in **Appendix 1**.

5.1.2 The archaeological evaluation revealed evidence of intact archaeological features and deposits within the site. Archaeological features were present from 0.60m BGL (below ground level). In agreement with Steve Membery, Senior Historic Environment Officer for Somerset County Council, none of the features were investigated due to the high water table and the rapid ingress of water.

5.1.3 Approximately 8m of Trench 1 were not fully excavated due to an active field drain running in a north-east – south-west direction at a depth of 0.44m BGL.

5.2 Natural deposits and soil sequences

5.2.1 The soil sequence recorded across the site was fairly uniform (**Plate 1**). A mid brown grey silty clay top soil up to a depth of 0.15m was present within both trenches overlaying a pale brown silty clay subsoil (up 0.24m thick).

5.2.2 Lying below this were alluvial layers associated with the fluctuating water levels of the area. A pale greyish brown silty clay alluvial layer was situated beneath the subsoil. This was up to 0.25m thick. Directly beneath this was a pale reddish brown silty clay alluvial layer (up to 0.44m thick). The archaeological features exposed were cut into this layer.

5.2.3 A sondage was dug down to a depth of 1.2m within the southern end of Trench 1 and the rest of the soil sequence was recorded in this. At a depth of 0.66m, a pale brownish grey silty clay alluvial layer was up to 0.18m thick. This layer sealed a final pale brown silty clay alluvial layer (up to 0.13m thick). These layers represent the changing water table upon the Somerset Levels.

5.2.4 A final layer of silty sandy clay with abundant sub angular to rounded gravels lay at a depth of 0.97m to 1.20m+. This layer most likely represents the movement of material from the last Ice Age.

5.3 Trench 1

5.3.1 Trench 1 was placed to test the archaeological potential of the former apple orchard at Steart Farm, Cheddar. As previously noted the position of the trench within the orchard had been altered due to the volume of overturned trees within the field (**Figure 1 & 2, Plate 1 & 2**). The trench measured 20m by 1.9m running in a north – south direction within the south west side of the orchard.

5.3.2 Trench 1 was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.2m (**Plate 1 & 2**). As previously noted the only feature encountered within the trench was a ceramic field drain that was post-medieval in date. This was located at a depth of 0.44m and prevented deeper excavation of the trench for a distance of c.8m.

5.3.3 The stratigraphic sequence of the trench has been discussed previously, besides the sondage at the southern end of the trench the rest of the trench was dug to a depth of 0.8m which was the same level as the archaeological features were encountered within Trench 2.

5.4 Trench 2

5.4.1 Trench 2 was also placed within the former apple orchard and due to the nature of the orchard the trench position was changed. The trench measured 20m by 1.9m and ran in an east to west direction at the northern edge of site (**Figure 1 & 3**).

5.4.2 Archaeological features were present from approximately 0.60m (BGL). In consultation with Steve Membery (SCC) the features were exposed and recorded in plan only and not excavated due to the high water table. As such

interpretation of the horizontal deposits remains uncertain and is limited to physical descriptions only.

5.5 Post-medieval

5.5.1 Two field drains were located within the trench both running in a approximately north east to south-west direction. These were both located at a depth of approximately 0.35m. These were left *in situ* and excavation continued either side of them.

5.6 Romano-British

5.6.1 Two features of possible Romano-British date were recorded within the trench and were present form 0.60m (BGL). The features were two possible ditches, they remain unexcavated and as such their interpretation remains uncertain.

5.6.2 At the eastern end of the trench a possible ditch **206** was recorded. The ditch ran in a north-east – south-west direction for approximately 3.85m within the trench and measured 2m in width. The cut was clearly defined and was filled with pale grey silty clay with sub rounded stone inclusions of moderate density. The ditch contained three sherds of Black Burnished Ware, clearly from the same straight-sided bowl or dish, which were found towards the surface of the ditch. The sherds date from the mid-2nd century onwards, suggesting a possible Romano-British date for the feature.

5.6.3 Running on the same alignment (north east – south west) was a second ditch **208**. The ditch ran for 3.75m within the trench and had a width of 0.85m. The ditch contained mid reddish brown silty clay that did not contain any finds or inclusions.

5.6.4 Ditch **208** was located at a distance of 0.60m from ditch **206**. The two ditches being on the same alignment and within close proximity of one another suggests they maybe contemporary and possibly Romano-British in date.

6 ARTEFACTS

6.1.1 Three sherds of pottery weighing 41g were recovered from the top of ditch **206**. All are Black Burnished Ware, suggesting a Romano-British date for the feature.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

7.1.1 No deposits or features that were suitable for palaeoenvironmental sampling were identified during the course of the evaluation.

8 CONCLUSIONS

8.1.1 The archaeological trial trench evaluation has achieved the aims of the project set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (WA2012). It has helped to demonstrate the geology of the area and the potential depth of 0.60m for possible Romano-British archaeological features.

8.1.2 Features and deposits were not fully excavated but were cleaned and recorded in plan and therefore their interpretations remain uncertain. Two possibly contemporary ditches ran in a north-east – south-west direction, the recovery of three pot sherds from the top of ditch **206** suggest a possible Romano-British date for the features. The large width of ditch **206** suggests it may be a significant boundary ditch; however further investigation would be needed before a full interpretation could be given.

8.1.3 Trench 1 did not reveal any significant archaeological deposits; it contained a single post-medieval field drain, although some of the trench was could not be excavated to a full depth due to this feature.

8.1.4 The evaluation has demonstrated the potential for archaeological features to be present within the development area.

9 STORAGE AND CURATION

9.1 Museum

9.1.1 It is recommended that the project archive resulting from the excavation be deposited with Somerset County Museum. The Museum has agreed in principle to accept the project archive on completion of the project [under the accession code TTNCM111/2012]. Deposition of the finds with the Museum will only be carried out with the full agreement of the landowner.

9.2 Preparation of Archive

9.2.1 The complete site archive, which will include paper records, photographic records, graphics, artefacts and ecofacts, will be prepared following the standard conditions for the acceptance of excavated archaeological material by Somerset Museum, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (Walker 1990; SMA 1995; Richards and Robinson 2000; Brown 2011).

9.2.2 All archive elements are marked with site/accession code, and a full index has been prepared. The archive comprises the following:

- 1 cardboard box of artefacts
- 1 file of paper records & A3/A4 graphics
- 1 file photographs

9.3 Discard Policy

9.3.1 Wessex Archaeology follows the guidelines set out in Selection, Retention and Dispersal (Society of Museum Archaeologists 1993), which allows for the discard of selected artefact and ecofact categories which are not considered to warrant any future analysis. In this instance, no categories should be targeted.

10 COPYRIGHT

10.1.1 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.

11 SECURITY COPY

11.1.1 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.

12 REFERENCES

Archaeological Surveys Ltd 2012: Steart Farm Cheddar Somerset Magnetometer Survey Report

British Geological Survey, 2012. Geology of Britain viewer, 1:50 000 scale [online] available from **http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyviewer/**

IfA 2008: Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation. **http://www.archaeologists.net/modules/icontent/inPages/docs/codes/fldeval2.pdf**

Wessex Archaeology, 2012, *Steart Farm, Cheddar, Somerset*. *Written Scheme of Investigation for a Programmeof Archaeological Evaluation.* Reference: 88300

WYG Environment 2012: Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd Steart Farm, Cheddar, Somerset Proposed New Foodstore Archaeological Evaluation November 2012, report ref. A069799

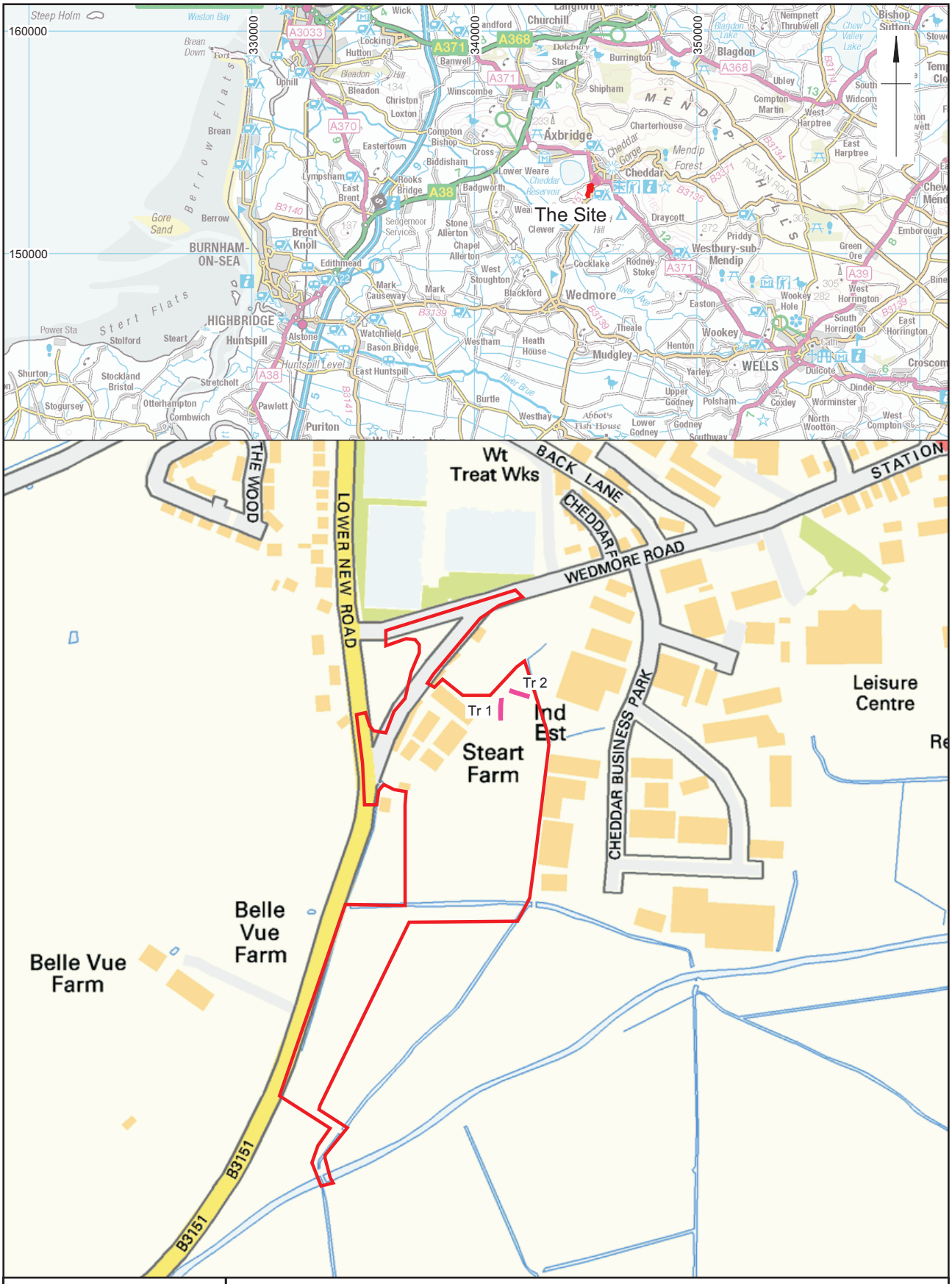
Appendix 1: TABLE OF TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS

All depths are below ground level. The order in which the deposits are listed represents their stratigraphic position, except where noted.

Trench 1	**Dimensions :**	20m x 1.90m x 1.20m	
	Land use:	Pasture	
	Coordinates:	345259.94, 152996.31 345259.32, 152978.55	
Context	**Category**	**Description**	**Depth**
101	Topsoil	Mid brown silty clay, No coarse components visible, abundant bioturbation, loose compaction.	0-0.15m
102	Subsoil	Pale Brown Silty Clay with rare Sub angular – sub rounded stones <30mm. The layer is bioturbated. The layer is quite loose but becomes firmer at a depth of 0.25m	0.15m-0.30m
103	Backfill	Discrete dump of large stones < 300mm, sub angular – rounded, poorly sorted abundant. Located at the northern edge of the trench. It covers about 5m of the trench. Fairly modern as the yare located just below the subsoil.	0.30m-0.65m
104	Layer	Alluvium- Pale greyish brown silty clay. Contains rare , sub angular stones <30mm. it contained rare charcoal flecks and occasional manganese. There is some bioturbation. The layer is firm.	0.30-0.44m
105	Layer	Alluvium Pale reddish brown silty clay with occasional sub angular – rounded stone <70mm with rare managenese, occasional bioturbation. The layer was firm.	0.44m - 0.84m (max)
106	Layer	Alluvium- Pale brownish grey silty clay with rare sub angular – rounded stones <30mm. The layer was firm.	0.66m-0.84m
107	Layer	Alluvium- Pale brown silty clay with rare sub angular- rounded stones <20mm, contained common manganese inclusions. The layer was firm.	0.84m-0.97m
108	Layer	Alluvium- pale grey silty sandy clay with 20-40% sub angular-rounded gravels <100mm loose	0.97m-1.20m

Trench 2	**Dimensions :**	20m x 1.90m x 1.20m	
	Land use:	Pasture	
	Coordinates:	345268.39, 153003.92 345284.10, 152999.02	
Context	**Category**	**Description**	**Depth**
201	Layer	Topsoil Mid brown silty clay. No inclusions. Heavily bioturbated. Loose compaction.	0-0.13m
202	Layer	Subsoil pale brown silty clay with rare sub angular- rounded stone inclusions <40mm. bioturbated and a loose compaction.	0.13m-0.37m
203	Layer	Alluvium brownish grey silty clay. No course components were visible, There was rare to occasional bioturbation activity. The layer had a firm compaction. It was deeper at the eastern end of the trench c.0.60m	0.37m-0.53m
204		Not used	

205		Not used	
206	Cut	Cut of possible ditch running a NE- SW direction. It was 2m wide and runs for a distance of 3.85m within the trench	0.60m+
207	Fill	Pale grey silty clay fill of ditch **206** most likely caused by the gradual silting up of the feature. It contained Moderate sub rounded stones <130mm. The fill contained 3 pieces of black burnished ware that was a originally part of the same fragment.	0.60m+
208	Cut	Cut of possible ditch running a NE – SW direction. Lying to the north west of ditch **206** and running on the same alignment. It measured 0.85m wide and ran for a distance of 3.75m within the trench. The feature was not excavated due to the high water table. Although undated it likely to be of the same date as ditch 206 due to them being on similar alignments.	0.53m+
209	Fill	Most likely secondary fill of ditch caused by the gradual silting up of the feature, however not known for sure as the fill was unexcavated. It comprised of a mid reddish brown silty clay that did not contain any inclusions or finds.	0.53m+
210	Layer	Alluvial layer that archaeological features were cut into. Pale brown silty clay it did not contain any inclusions.	0.53m+



The Site

Trench

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Wessex Archaeology

Site and trench location plan

Figure 1

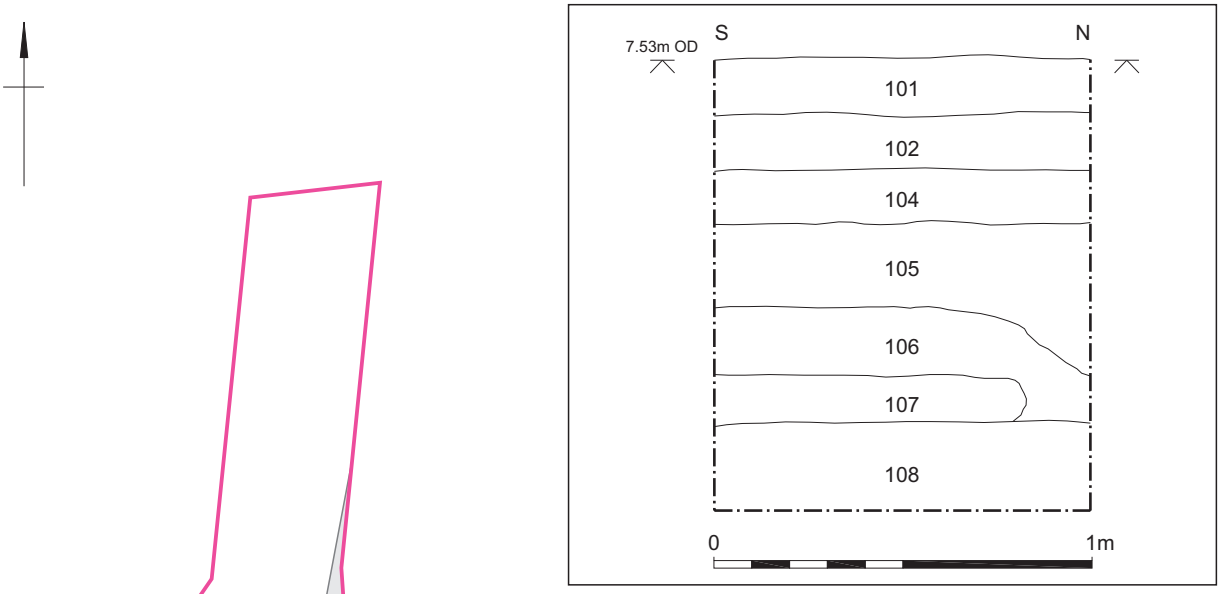
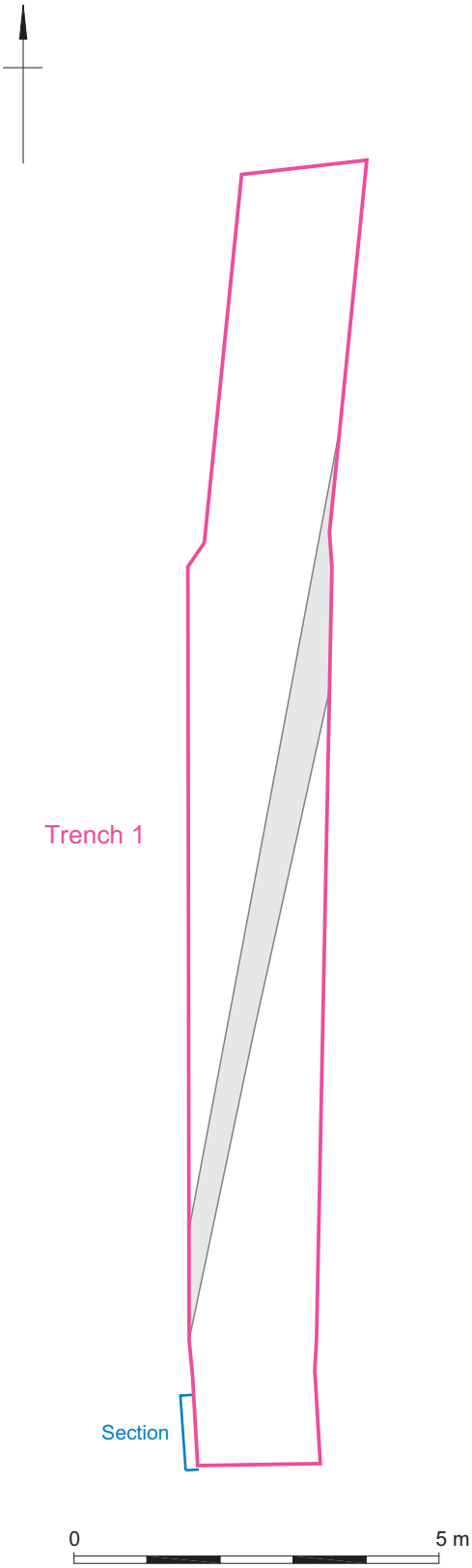


Plate 1. East facing section of Trench 1

Plate 2. Shot of Trench 1 looking north



Trench

Utility trench

Section location

Wessex Archaeology

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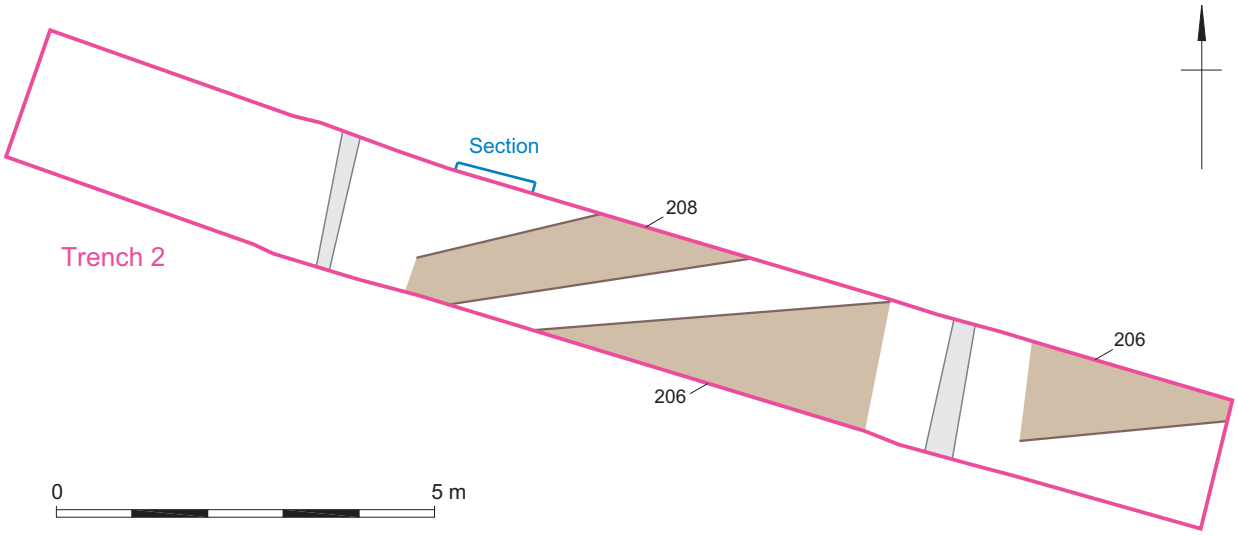
Plan and east facing section of Trench 1

Figure 2



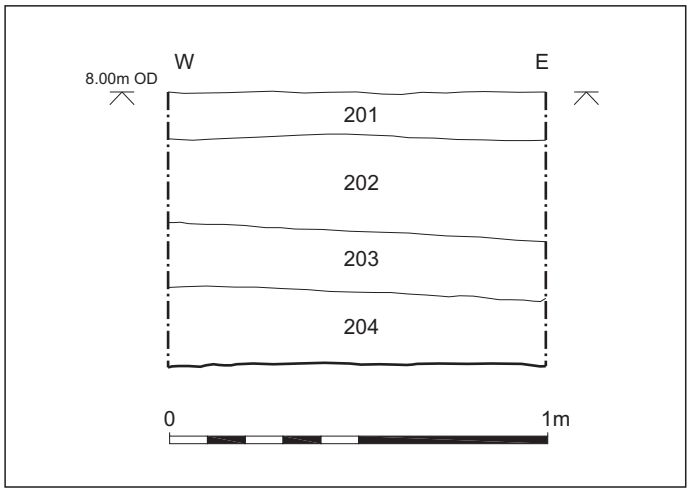


Plate 3. Eastern view of Ditches 206 and 208

Plate 4. South facing section of Trench 2

Trench
Archaeology
Utility trench
Section location

Wessex Archaeology

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Plan and south facing section of Trench 2

Figure 3

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