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The Greyhound Smithfield Street, Amesbury, Wiltshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report



Planning Ref: 14/01413/FUL

Ref: 104440.01

June 2014



**The Greyhound
Smithfield Street,
Amesbury, Wiltshire**

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Prepared for:

Relph Ross Architects
35 Brown Street
Salisbury
Wiltshire
SP1 2AS

Prepared by:

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

www.wessexarch.co.uk



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Quality Assurance

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The Greyhound Smithfield Street, Amesbury, Wiltshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Relph Ross Architects to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land to the rear of the former Greyhound Public House, Amesbury, Wiltshire centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 415663 141434.

A planning application (14/01413/FUL) has been submitted to Wiltshire Council for the conversion of the former Public House into three residential properties, the construction of three houses at the rear of the existing building, and associated landscaping and parking provision. The Wiltshire Assistant County Archaeologist, recommended an archaeological evaluation was undertaken ahead of the determination of the planning application to assess the archaeological potential of the site.

A trench, 15m long and aligned approximately E-W, was excavated across the proposed footprint of units 4-6. The excavation demonstrated that archaeological features were present on the site. These features included two pits and a shallow ditch, aligned N-S, which cut through one of the pits. Dating of the features was determined by a small number of sherds of 12th-14th century pottery.



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Archaeological Evaluation Report

Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology extends thanks to The Relph Ross Partnership, in particular Peter Morse, for commissioning the archaeological work. Thanks are also extended to Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger, County Archaeologist at Wiltshire Council for cooperation and undertaking to monitor work at the Site.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Phil Harding, who also compiled this report, with comments on the finds provided by Lorraine Mephram. The graphics were prepared by Rob Goller. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Sue Farr.



The Greyhound Smithfield Street, Amesbury, Wiltshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology (WA) was commissioned by Relph Ross Architects ('the Client'), to carry out an archaeological trial trench evaluation to the rear of the former Greyhound Public House, Amesbury, Wiltshire centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 415663 141434 (hereafter 'the Site', **Figure 1**).
- 1.1.2 A planning application (14/01413/FUL) was submitted to Wiltshire Council for the conversion of the former public house into three residential properties, the construction of three houses at the rear of the existing building, and associated landscaping and parking provision.
- 1.1.3 The Wiltshire Assistant County Archaeologist recommended that an archaeological evaluation should be undertaken ahead of the determination of the planning application to assess the archaeological potential of the Site.
- 1.1.4 The methodologies and standards to be employed by Wessex Archaeology to complete the archaeological evaluation were set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (WA 2014), which was submitted to and approved by the Wiltshire Assistant County Archaeologist prior to fieldwork commencing.

1.2 Site location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 Amesbury lies within the valley of the meandering River Avon, and was originally centred on an east bank of the river, on an expanse of river gravels that were deposited on the inner bend of a meander.
- 1.2.2 The Site was located in the centre of Amesbury, and comprised a sub-rectangular plot of land bounded to the south by Earl's Court Road, to the west by Smithfield Street, and to the north and east by residential properties. The former Greyhound Public House occupied the western end of the Site, with associated gardens to the east, which were the subject of the archaeological evaluation.
- 1.2.3 The Site was relatively level, at a surface elevation of approximately 72m above Ordnance Datum (aOD)
- 1.2.4 The underlying geology of the Site comprised Pleistocene River Valley Gravels which overlay Cretaceous Upper Chalk (British Geological Survey 1976 Sheet 298).



2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 An *Extensive Urban Survey* (McMahon 2004) has been prepared for Amesbury which details the archaeological and historical development of Amesbury town centre, and includes the Site.

2.2 Archaeological background

2.2.1 Amesbury lies within an area of outstanding archaeological importance and at the eastern edge of the Stonehenge World Heritage Site; however very little evidence of prehistoric activity has been found within the historic core of Amesbury itself. A Palaeolithic hand-axe was discovered near the High Street in 1938, and in 1996 a small archaeological evaluation (WA 1996) along Salisbury Street identified a large, shallow scoop and soil horizons, both yielding probable Iron Age pottery, worked and burnt flint. There has been no evidence found for Roman activity within the historic core of the town.

2.2.2 Although Amesbury is known to have developed into a sizeable settlement by the 10th century, there is little archaeological evidence for the Saxon period. A number of pagan Saxon burials, perhaps from a cemetery, were discovered in the 19th century near the High Street-London Road junction (Bonney 1983), and a small assemblage of isolated artefacts have also been recorded.

2.2.3 The only extant building from the medieval period is the parish church. The prosperity of the town in this period was largely dependent on the visitors and trade generated by the priory on the western side of town. A market place is known to have existed in Amesbury since at least the 13th century and was bounded by the High Street to the north-west and by Salisbury Street to the north-east. The other extents of the market are conjectural.

2.3 Recent investigations in the area

2.3.1 A limited number of controlled, small scale, developer funded excavations have added significant results towards understanding the development of Amesbury in recent years. A very large north to south aligned ditch possibly dating to the Saxon period was found on land to the rear of the Antrobus Arms, Church Street (Hulka and Valentin 1999) together with pits and pottery.

2.3.2 To the west of the Site an archaeological excavation and watching brief was undertaken along Salisbury Street (WA 1996, 2006), which revealed late Saxon and early medieval features, comprising a number of ditches that were interpreted as property boundaries, one of which ran beneath the northern boundary wall of the former Redworth House. The excavation also revealed a large pit with a dog burial at its base, three smaller pits and four postholes. Medieval features included two ditches and a group of intercutting pits. Several pits, a line of postholes, a boundary ditch and evidence of small-scale quarrying were also revealed, but considered to be of post-medieval or more recent date.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Aims and objectives

3.1.1 The archaeological field evaluation at the former Greyhound Public House aimed to:

- Establish whether any buried archaeological remains were present within the Site that may be impacted by development;



- Identify, within the constraints of the evaluation, the date, extent, character and condition 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.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Fieldwork

- 3.1.2 All aspects of fieldwork, including details of Health and Safety, provision for service location, artefact recovery, environmental sampling, treatment of human remains, conservation and treasure were contained in the WSI (WA 2014).
- 3.1.3 The fieldwork comprised a single, machine-excavated trench, measuring 15m x 1.8m wide, which was positioned to the east of the former Greyhound Public House within the garden area (**Figure 1**).

2.2 Evaluation methodology

- 3.1.4 The trench was laid out using coordinates that were loaded into a GPS, in accordance with the pattern requested and tied into the Ordnance Survey. The line of the evaluation trench was scanned before excavation using a Cable Avoidance Tool (CAT) in order to verify the absence of any live underground services.
- 3.1.5 The evaluation trench was excavated using a tracked mini digger excavator equipped with a toothless bucket. All work was undertaken under constant archaeological supervision. Machine excavation proceeded until undisturbed archaeological levels, or the surface of natural deposits, were exposed, according to which was encountered first.
- 3.1.6 Archaeological deposits and features exposed by machine were cleaned by hand where necessary and sampled accordingly. The scope of the sampling was sufficient to characterise individual features and ascertain where possible their date.
- 3.1.7 Once all features had been sampled and recorded, and the work monitored by the Wiltshire Council Archaeologist, the trench was backfilled. The ground was levelled; no other reinstatement or surface treatment was undertaken.

2.3 Recording

- 3.1.8 All artefacts from excavated contexts were retained, except those from features or deposits of obviously modern date where only a representative sample was taken, to elucidate the date and/or function of the feature or deposit.
- 3.1.9 Excavated spoil was scanned for artefacts.
- 3.1.10 All exposed archaeological deposits were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording system.
- 3.1.11 In addition to digital data collection, using GPS to record all principal features and Ordnance Datum (OD) levels, a complete drawn record of archaeological features and



deposits was also compiled. This included plans and sections drawn to appropriate scales (generally 1:20 for plans, 1:10 for sections).

- 3.1.12 A digital photographic record was also maintained during the evaluation using digital cameras equipped with an image sensor of not less than 10 megapixels.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

4.1 Stratigraphic sequence

- 4.1.1 Archaeological features were generally capped by a succession of topsoil and subsoil deposits, which were up to 0.90m thick at the east end of the trench but thinned to 0.55m at the west. The thickness of overburden was accentuated in the east by two layers of topsoil.
- 4.1.2 The upper layer (**115**) comprised a dark grey silty clay, which contained poorly sorted accumulations of chalk pellets. This material was probably derived from a recent phase of construction work/redevelopment to outbuildings to the rear of the public house.
- 4.1.3 This deposit overlay a well developed garden soil/topsoil horizon, which comprised dark grey to black silty clay (**114**) approximately 0.23m thick. It was present across the entire trench.
- 4.1.4 These deposits overlay a layer of grey brown silty clay subsoil (**112**), which included poorly sorted sub-angular flint pebbles, derived from the underlying natural gravel. This deposit, which probably derived from prolonged use as cultivated ground, was also present across the entire trench and, where it could be determined, varied between 0.20-0.30m thick. Feature [**101**] was cut through the subsoil, and was therefore likely to be relatively recent in date. However features [**103**], [**105**] and [**107**] were apparently overlain by and predate the development of the subsoil.
- 4.1.5 The entire sequence was underlain by a geological deposit (**116**) comprising orange silt/silty clay with mixed scatters of water worn flint pebbles. The origin of this material is uncertain, but may be fluvial or colluvial, possibly originally chalk rich but now much decalcified.
- 4.1.6 Observation of the spoil as it was removed produced virtually no artefacts that might derive from structures or domestic or industrial activity.

4.2 Archaeological features

- 4.2.1 A number of archaeological features were cut into the natural deposits (**Figure 1**).

Feature 101

- 4.2.2 This feature was exposed in the NW corner of the trench and was cut through the subsoil **112**. There was insufficient of this feature visible to establish its function. It measured approximately 1.15m long and extended from the north edge of the trench by approximately 0.40m. It penetrated the subsoil by approximately 0.20m. The most notable feature of the infilling was a deposit (**109**) of white creamy mortar mixed with crushed chalk flecks, brick and tile fragments.
- 4.2.3 The character of this demolition type material and its proximity to the rear of the present building suggests that this feature was possibly a robbed wall foundation slot associated with a former outbuilding at the rear of the public house.

Pit 103

- 4.2.4 A large segment of a circular pit approximately 3.5m in diameter, extended from the southern edge of the trench by 1m (**Plate 2**). A small sample quadrant indicated that it was 0.25m deep with relatively shallow sloping sides and a flat base. It was filled with a homogeneous deposit of very dark grey brown silty clay (**104**) and produced a sherd of 12th-14th century pottery.

Pit 105

- 4.2.5 A segment of a pit, approximately 1.60m in diameter, extended from the north section at the east end of the trench (**Figure 2, Plate 1**). The pit was sampled in a slot 0.40m wide to characterise the profile and retrieve dating evidence, although it was not possible to recover a complete cross section due to the limited space available and the depth of overburden.
- 4.2.6 The principal fill of the feature comprised grey brown silty clay (**106**) which was indistinguishable from the overlying subsoil **112**. This made it impossible to ascertain the level from which the pit had been cut (**Figure 2**). A sherd of abraded medieval pottery was found near the surface. A second sherd of similar date was found at a depth of approximately 0.55m from the surface of the natural deposits, at the base of a shovel pit which was dug unsuccessfully to locate the base of the feature.
- 4.2.7 A deposit of orange silty clay (**111**) was present around the edge of the pit, in a band approximately 0.20m wide. This material, derived from the natural sediments, may well represent deliberate infill to seal the pit or a phase of its use.

Ditch 107

- 4.2.8 A ditch [**107**] aligned N-S cut through the east edge of pit **105**. The ditch measured approximately 1.05m wide and extended 0.15m into the natural deposits, although the upper fill (**113**) suggests it may originally have been at least 0.40m deep from the old ground surface (**Figure 2, Plate 1**).
- 4.2.9 The ditch sides sloped gently to a flat base. The feature contained two distinct deposits. The primary fill comprised a band of grey brown silty clay (**108**) with relatively large quantities of rounded flint nodules, up to 25mm across, fragments of roof tile and a sherd of medieval pottery. The upper deposit (**113**) was grey brown silty clay mottled with pockets of orange silt derived from the natural bedrock, and at its eastern end was very similar to the overlying subsoil. The southern end of the ditch was extensively disturbed by a pit, dug by machine to anchor a stay for an electricity pole.

5 FINDS

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 A very small quantity of finds was recovered, in a limited range of material types, and deriving from four contexts (see **Appendix 2: Table 2**). These included items of prehistoric and medieval date.

5.2 Ceramic building material and pottery

- 5.2.1 The ceramic building material (CBM) and pottery are all medieval in date; the CBM comprising fragments of flat (peg) roof tiles, and the pottery comprising sherds of coarsewares and glazed finewares in the Laverstock tradition, dating between the 12th and 14th centuries. These finds provide dating evidence (albeit in small quantities) for feature **101**, pit **103**, pit **105** and ditch **107**.



5.3 Other finds

- 5.3.1 Two worked flints from ditch **107** (fill **108**) are prehistoric in date, but in the absence of chronologically distinctive attributes cannot be dated more closely. The flints were residual in a later context.
- 5.3.2 The animal bone includes a sheep mandible, and the associated finds suggest a medieval date.
- 5.3.3 Given the small size of the assemblage, and the fact that all finds are of very commonly occurring types in the area, retention for long-term curation is not warranted, and these finds will be discarded prior to archive deposition.

6 DISCUSSION

6.1 Summary

- 6.1.1 The results of the evaluation trench to the rear of the former Greyhound Public House suggest that settlement had extended into this part of Amesbury by the 12th -14th century. The limited artefact assemblage is consistently of this date and the contents of pit **105** sufficiently well stratified to be reliable.
- 6.1.2 The presence of pits in the trench, which was located to the rear of the present property, can probably be related to tenements fronting onto Smithfield Street.
- 6.1.3 Powell *et al* (2009) have argued that much of the present tenement boundary lay-out of Amesbury was established during the Late Saxon period when the settlement was centred on the market place towards the west end of Smithfield Street.
- 6.1.4 The results of the archaeological evaluation have demonstrated settlement by the early medieval period. It is uncertain, from the limited results of the single evaluation trench, whether Saxon tenement boundary influences extended to the area of the Greyhound Public House or whether this part of the town was not colonised until the medieval period.

7 STORAGE AND CURATION

7.1 Museum

- 7.1.1 The project archive resulting from the evaluation will be deposited with the Wiltshire Heritage Museum.
- 7.1.2 If/when available, deposition of any finds with the museum will only be carried out with the full agreement of the landowner.

7.2 Preparation of archive

- 7.2.1 The complete site archive, which will include paper records, photographic records, graphics, artefacts, ecofacts and digital data, will be prepared following the standard conditions for the acceptance of excavated archaeological material by the local museum, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; IfA 2009; Brown 2011; ADS 2013).
- 7.2.2 All archive elements will be marked with the Site code **104440**, and a full index will be prepared.



7.2.3 The archive of all records and finds will be consistent with the principles of *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE; English Heritage 2006).

7.3 Discard policy

7.3.1 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. Any discard of artefacts will be fully documented in the project archive.

7.3.2 The discard of environmental remains and samples follows nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1993; 1995; English Heritage 2002).

7.4 Security copy

7.4.1 In line with current best practice (e.g. Brown 2011), on completion of the project a security copy of the written records will be prepared, in the form of a digital PDF/A file. PDF/A is an ISO-standardised version of the Portable Document Format (PDF) designed for the digital preservation of electronic documents through omission of features ill-suited to long-term archiving.

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9 APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: STRATIGRAPHIC SUMMARIES

Table 1: Trench summary table

Trench 1			
Dimensions: 15 m x 1.8 m x 1m			
Coordinates:			
Context	Category	Description	Depth
101	Cut	Feature, possibly robbed foundation. Steep regular sides, flat base	0.25
102	Fill of 101	Grey brown silty clay with isolated sub angular flints up to 20 mm. Material at E end of feature. Cuts through subsoil.	
103	Cut	Pit 3.5 m x 1m extending from S trench section. Regular sloping sides, flat base	0.24
104	Fill of 103	Very dark grey brown silty clay with small flint grits, Capped by flint rich layer, probably sorted horizon of topsoil/subsoil	
105	Cut	Pit approximately 1.60 m diameter, extends 0.74 m from N trench section. Steep sides, base not seen	
106	Fill of 105	Grey brown silty clay, sub angular flint gravels up to 50 mm. Indistinguishable from subsoil 112. Two sherds of pot.	
107	Cut	Ditch aligned N-S, 1.05 m wide. Regular gently sloping sides flat base.	0.25
108	Fill of 107	Grey brown silt/silty clay with poorly sorted flints gravel <25 mm approximately 60%. CBM, pot and worked flint	
109	Fill of 101	Demolition deposit. White creamy sandy mortar with crushed chalk flecks. Brick and CBM (not retained)	
110	Fill of 101	Grey brown silty clay with chalk flecks, brick and CBM	
111	Fill of 105	Orange silt/silty clay with sub angular flint gravels. Deliberate pit backfill	
112	Layer	Subsoil. Grey brown silty clay with sub angular flint gravels <50mm but generally rare.	0.25+
113	Fill of 107	Grey brown silt/silty clay with mottled pockets of orange silt derived from natural. Possibly deliberate backfill.	0.25
114	Layer	Old garden soil/topsoil. Dark grey/black silty clay with poorly sorted chalk flecks <10mm (20%)	0.23+
115	Layer	Modern topsoil. Dark grey silty clay with much poorly sorted chalk flecks to W (70%) thinning to E. Possibly modern landscaping	0.32
116	Layer	Natural geology. Orange silt/silty clay with sub angular flints <50mm	



APPENDIX 2: FINDS DATA

Table 2: All finds by material type (number / weight in grammes)

Context	Animal Bone	CBM	Flint	Pottery
102	1/5	4/114		
104				1/1
106	1/1			2/21
108		5/195	2/51	1/8
111	1/31			
TOTALS	3/37	9/309	2/51	4/30

APPENDIX 3: OASIS RECORD FORM

The Greyhound, Smithfield Street, Amesbury, Wiltshire - Wessex Archaeology

OASIS ID - wessexar1-181980

Versions

View	Version	Completed by	Email	Date
View 1	1	Sue Farr	s.farr@wessexarch.co.uk	20 June 2014

Completed sections in current version

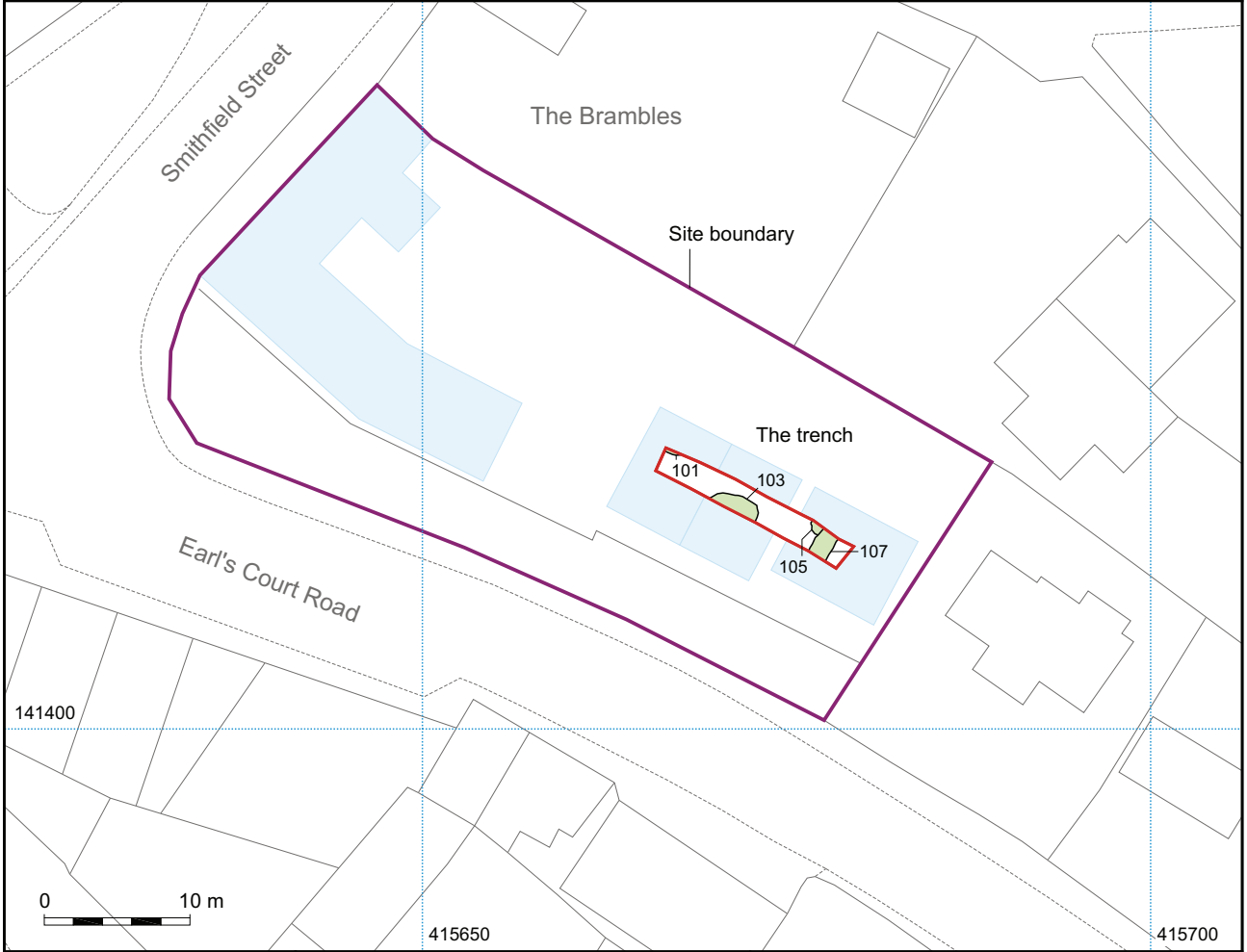
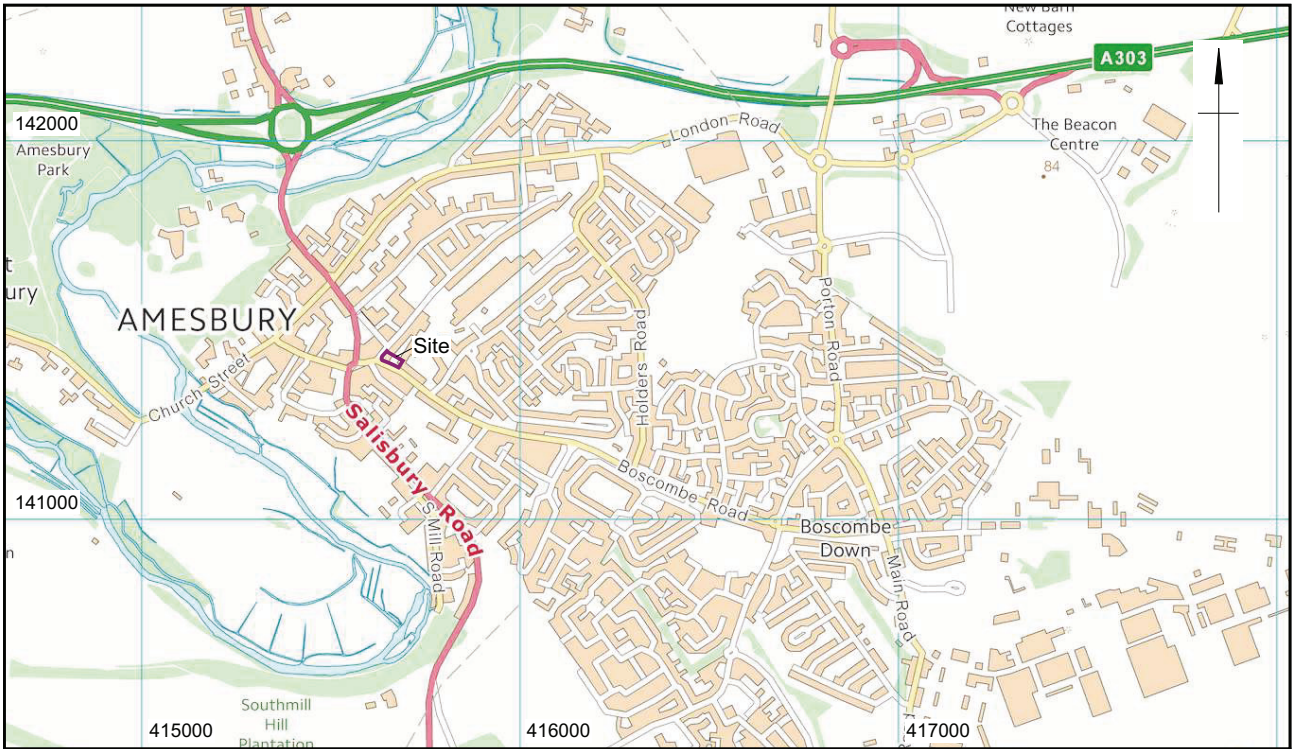
Details	Location	Creators	Archive	Publications
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	1/1

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 location and trench plan

Figure 1

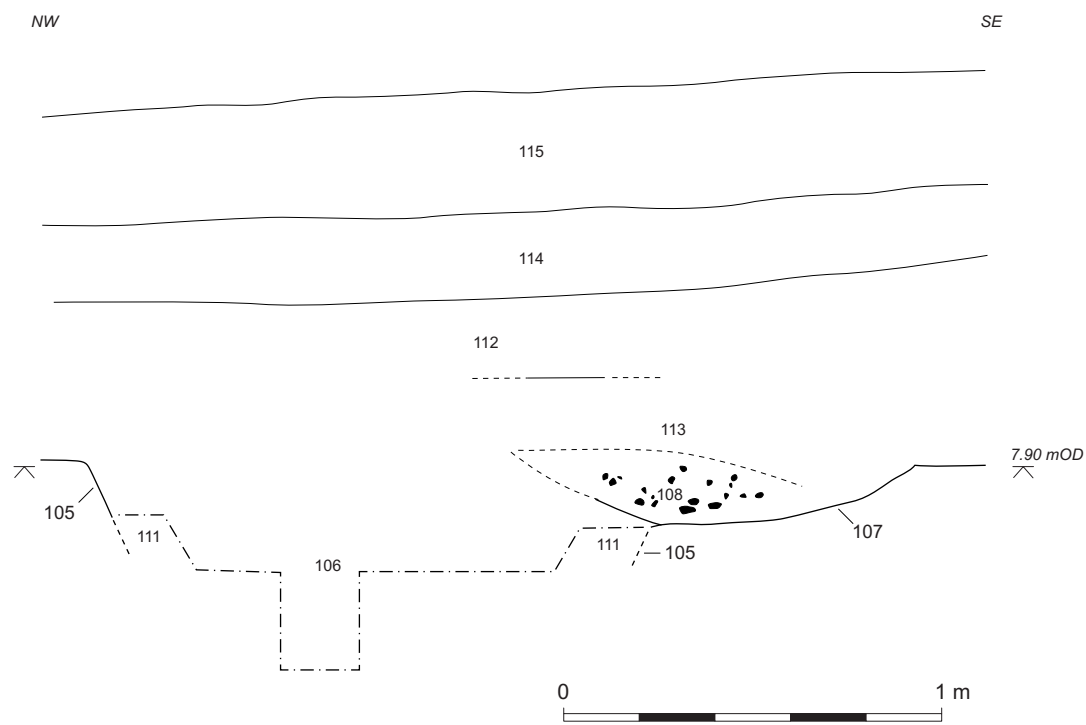


Plate 1: South-west facing section of pit 105 and ditch 107 (scale bar 1 m)



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Plate 2: South-east facing section of pit 103 (scale bar 0.5 m)

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