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Merland Rise Recreation Ground Tadworth, Surrey

Archaeological Evaluation Report



Planning Ref: 13/01729/OUT
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April 2015



**Merland Rise Recreation Ground,
Tadworth, Surrey**

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Merland Rise Recreation Ground, Tadworth, Surrey Archaeological Evaluation Report

Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Croudace Homes to carry out the first phase of an archaeological evaluation at Merland Rise Recreation Ground, Tadworth, Surrey, KT20 5LP.

The evaluation trenching was completed between the 16th February and the 20th February 2015, ahead of future phases of evaluation trenching due to occur at a later date. Seven 30m evaluation trenches were opened and examined. One trench contained a three-throw hollow and an east-west linear feature, into which worked flints of a Mesolithic typology had weathered. Other redeposited worked flints were present in two more of the trenches. All the remaining trenches were void of archaeological features.



Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Kristoffer Holmes, of Croudace Homes for commissioning the work and Nick Truckle, Surrey County Council Archaeological Officer, for his assistance and advice.

The evaluation was directed by Michael Fleming, assisted by Roy Krakowicz and Frances Ward. This report was written and compiled by Michael Fleming. The flint report was compiled by Phil Harding, other finds were assessed by Lorraine Mepham. The illustrations were produced by Kenneth Lymer and Karen Nichols. The project was managed by Andy King.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology were commissioned by Croudace Homes to carry out the first phase of an archaeological sample evaluation by trial-trenching of land at Merland Rise Recreation Ground, Tadworth, Surrey, KT20 5LP (hereafter 'the Site', **Figures 1 & 2**), centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) TQ 2340 5750. The evaluation was conducted in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation, approved by the Local Planning Authority and with regard to the requirements of the Reigate and Banstead Borough Local Plan 2005 policy Pc8.
- 1.1.2 The evaluation fieldwork took place from the 16th to the 20th February 2015. Seven trenches were opened, five of which measured 30m x 2m, one of which measured 27m x 2m and one measured 20m x 2m.
- 1.1.3 The aim of the evaluation was to establish the presence/absence, date, and significance of any archaeological remains within the eastern side of the proposed development site, in order to provide sufficient information to inform a decision on the need for further archaeological investigation and/or mitigation as stated in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Wessex Archaeology 2015).

1.2 The Site

- 1.2.1 The Site is located in Tadworth village in the borough of Reigate and Banstead, 500m west of Burgh Heath, Surrey. The site is an irregular plot of land currently in use as recreational playing fields, community facilities and open space. It is accessible from Marbles Way to the east.
- 1.2.2 The Site lies at a height of approximately 170m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The underlying geology of the area is Thanet Formation Sands in the south and Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation in the north. The superficial deposit across site is clay with flint formations (British Geological Survey 2014).

1.3 Archaeological background

- 1.3.1 The following section summarises the results of a Desk-based Heritage Assessment undertaken by Thames Valley Archaeological Services in September 2012 (TVAS 2012) and the Surrey Historic Environment Record (HER). Thirty six HER entries are within a radius of 1000m of Site.

1.3.2 *Prehistoric*

Palaeolithic stone tools were found in 1961 on the southern edge of site (SHHER 911). Other finds also include Mesolithic flints (SHHER 3253), two Neolithic polished axes and three Neolithic scrapers (SHHER 934).

1.3.3 *Romano-British*

A nearby evaluation and subsequent excavation by TVAS (SHHER 4877) uncovered gullies dated to the 1st to 2nd century AD and a pit containing pottery dating to the late 2nd century which were interpreted as part of a Romano-British field system with a possible nearby settlement.



1.3.4 Saxon

An excavation in 1986 exposed 42 shallow inhumation burials approximately 500m to the north west of the site (SHHER 3022). Grave goods included Saxon knives, bronze belt fittings, a small biconical pot, a rock-crystal amulet with a bronze strap work holder and decorative bone knife fitting, all dating to the 6th and 7th century AD.

1.3.5 Medieval

Approximately 200m south-east of the site are a complex of earthworks dating to around the 12th to 14th century AD, associated with a Medieval manor house called Preston Howe (SHHER 922). Further ditches and gullies around 200m north west of the site, dated to the 12th to 13th century AD and representing Medieval field systems have also been noted (SHHER 4865). Around 200m to the north east of Site, 13th to 14th-century AD lime-burning clamps and settlement evidence were also revealed in another TVAS excavation (SHHER 4878).

2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

2.1.1 The aims and objectives of the archaeological work were carried out in accordance with the current IfA *Standard and Guidance for archaeological evaluation* (ClfA 2014a) and as such the aim of the project can be defined as:

- *To locate, identify and to investigate and record the presence/absence of archaeological features or deposit.*
- *The evaluation, where possible, would confirm the extent, date, character, relationship, condition and significance of archaeological features, artefacts and deposits within the proposed development area.*
- *To inform the scope and nature of any requirements for any potential further fieldwork, whether additional watching brief, excavation or post-excavation work.*
- *To enable the preservation by record of any archaeological features or deposits uncovered.*
- *To place any identified archaeological remains within their historical context.*

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1.1 The archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (Wessex Archaeology 2015). This first phase of the required evaluation comprised seven trenches to the north-east and south-east of the proposed development area. The location of these trenches has been indicated in **Figures 1 & 2**.

3.1.2 The evaluation trenches were positioned before excavation using GPS survey equipment. The excavation of the evaluation trenches was carried out by mechanical excavator in discrete 0.20m spits equipped with a toothless grading bucket and ceased at a depth of c.1m below ground surface, the upper surface of significant archaeological features/deposits, or the *in situ* natural geology, whichever was initially encountered. All machine-excavation was monitored by an experienced archaeologist with topsoil and subsoil/ overburden deposits stored separately and scanned for artefacts.



- 3.1.3 All potential archaeological features and deposits were assigned a unique context number. Features were hand excavated appropriately in order to ascertain their nature, date and function, and were fully recorded using WA's *pro forma* record sheets.
- 3.1.4 A photographic record was created using digital and monochrome images. Particular attention was taken to record all trench locations to provide a full record of both the original and final condition of the trenches excavated.
- 3.1.5 The Site survey was carried out using a Leica GNSS Viva NetRover 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.
- 3.1.6 Nick Truckle (SCCAO) was kept informed of the progress of the archaeological fieldwork.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

- 4.1.1 The underlying geology of the site comprised undulating Thanet Formation compacted sands of varying mid. to light yellow-brown colour with mixed Lewes Nodular chalk Formation and Newhaven Chalk Formation (British Geological Survey 2014) from around 0.40m depth onwards. This was overlain by mid. yellow-grey clay-silt-sand subsoil from 0.15m – 0.65m from the surface. This was then covered by modern topsoil at a depth of 0-0.45m (Plate 1). In trenches 1, 2, 3 and 4 the stratigraphy was notably deeper than that of 5, 6 and 7, largely due to evidence suggesting heavy site landscaping prior to works commencing of possible subsoil deposition to the north east of the site but ground level reduction to the south east of the site.
- 4.1.2 Trench 4 was the only trench in which features were observed (**Plate 2**), two of the features contained worked flint, that stylistically appears to be Mesolithic in date. The first feature was that of an east-west aligned linear cut [406] (**Plate 3**), seen to be terminating to the east and found to contain 48 Mesolithic flint artefacts within fill (408). The second feature was that of a possible tree-throw [409] containing 10 Mesolithic flint objects within its fill (410) (**Plate 4**). Both features were shallow and possibly truncated by modern landscaping. The features were 100% excavated within the boundaries of the trench. One further north-south aligned modern linear [404] was exposed, possibly associated with landscaping of the site (**Plate 5**). A residual sherd of medieval pottery was recovered from [404] and another from the subsoil (402)
- 4.1.3 Trenches 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7 were observed to be void of archaeology, with the exception of flint artefacts recovered on subsoil scans from trenches 2 and 3 including a Mesolithic tranchet axe recovered from the subsoil of trench 3 (302).
- 4.1.4 A full description of the flint artefacts recovered from the evaluation can be found in section 5 of this report.



5 THE WORKED FLINT (by Phil Harding)

- 5.1.1 The worked flint assemblage comprises 69 pieces of material which were recovered from five contexts in trenches 2, 3 and 4 at the north-eastern end of the site. These collections include three small groups of material from subsoil deposits (202, 302 and 402) with larger groups, containing 58 pieces, from contexts within excavated features (408, 410).
- 5.1.2 Most of the flint survives in good condition and is unpatinated or only lightly patinated. The edges show no trace of damage indicative of post-depositional movement within the soil. Only one artefact, a probable tranchet axe from context 302, is more 'weathered' than the remainder. It seems safe to conclude that the artefacts were contained within the subsoil or had weathered from the subsoil into archaeological features. This assemblage therefore probably represents a relatively undisturbed flint scatter, albeit possibly partially truncated by ploughing.
- 5.1.3 The raw material is good quality flint, characterised by a chalky cortex that is dappled black/brown. This surface appearance is undoubtedly particular to flint obtained from the local Clay-with-Flints, rather than the Chalk.
- 5.1.4 The assemblage represents by-products from a blade/let technology. The three blade/let cores from context 408 are all made on large flakes, indicating that large nodules, on the Clay-with-Flints, were broken up to provide flake-blanks from which the blades were removed. The assemblage is not numerous; nevertheless it contains elements of the complete production sequence including a primary flake, a broken crested blade, rejuvenation tablets and retouched material.
- 5.1.5 The retouched component comprises a bifacial core tool, almost certainly a tranchet axe and a backed bladelet. The former, from 302, is a 'robust' implement, with hints of a transverse tranchet sharpening blow, although the edge has been modified by secondary flaking that is aligned perpendicular to the blade. The backed bladelet was found in context 408.
- 5.1.6 The component parts of the assemblage, most notably the technology and retouched tools indicate that this material is almost certainly of Mesolithic date. The argument is enhanced by its location within the broader landscape. A distribution plot of Mesolithic find-spots, derived from the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic database (PaMeLa) and superimposed on the basal geology, shows that the site lies near the fringes of three geological boundaries comprising Chalk, Thanet Sand and Clay-with-Flints. These fringe areas provided benefits of three contrasting ecosystems. The Chalk is frequently viewed as an area where Mesolithic activity is thinly represented, while sands were favoured locations and Mesolithic groups habitually exploited areas of Clay-with-Flints for stone tool production, especially tranchet axes.
- 5.1.7 The distribution of Mesolithic find-spots for the area reflects these trends. Records of material from the Chalk are sparse, while records are more heavily concentrated around outliers of Thanet Sand and along the periphery of the Clay-with-Flints and Chalk. The densest concentrations are centred on the Clay-with-Flints where, of 18 find-spots, 11 refer to one or more tranchet axes. Only three locations record blades and three more note 'microlith'. These are the most likely locations to represent camp sites.
- 5.1.8 The preferential exploitation of flint from the Clay-with-Flints at Merland Rise therefore follows trends observed elsewhere. The presence of a tranchet axe enhances this



occurrence. The significance of this small group of material is improved by the associated material; cores, blade/lets and a microlith, which, as has been noted, are relatively rare in the area. The importance of the location, as a camp site, is further enhanced by its location on a spur, which may have improved visibility across the wider landscape. It indicates that the Chalk/Clay-with-Flints uplands formed more than just a flint source, but were also occupied areas. This particular location is unlikely to have formed a major long-term settlement due to the apparent lack of a water supply but probably served as a short term base where flint was worked, tools were refurbished and hunting undertaken.

5.2 Table 1: Distribution of Flint types by Context

	202	302	402	408	410
Flake core			1		
Blade core			1	3	
Blade				6	2
Broken blade				6	1
Bladelet				1	
Broken bladelet				1	1
Flake	2		3	16	1
Broken flake			1	11	4
Crested blade			1		
Rejuvenation flake				2	
Tranchet axe		1			
Backed bladelet				1	
Chip				1	1
Debitage			1		
Total	2	1	8	48	10
Burnt flint			5 (174g)	1 (2g)	1 (70g)

6 OTHER FINDS

- 6.1.1 Other finds comprised two sherds of pottery, and one piece of ceramic building material.
- 6.1.2 Both pottery sherds are of Medieval date, comprising one of whiteware (glazed internally) from context 405, and one of coarse sandy ware from context 402. Both are well-known types within the regional type series (Jones 1998, types WW and Q2 respectively), the coarse sandy ware most common in the 13th –13th centuries, while the whiteware has a currency spanning the 13th to 15th centuries.
- 6.1.3 The piece of ceramic building material is a modern (20th century) wall tile, recovered from context 405, which has been discarded.



7 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1.1 From this initial phase of evaluation trenching a redeposited assemblage of Mesolithic flint-working activity was recovered from the north-eastern edge of the Site within trench 4, where it had weathered into an east-west aligned linear cut-feature [406] and tree-throw hollow [409]. Subsoil scans also revealed further flints within trenches 2 and 3 but no associated features.
- 7.1.2 There is very little evidence of any other activity on the Site apart from a single modern north-south aligned linear feature [404] which yielded a single residual sherd of medieval. This may be associated with a recent landscaping event which has resulted in subsoil levels being truncated to the south-eastern edge of the Site and possibly being redeposited to the north-eastern edge of Site. No archaeological features were present in trenches 1, 5, 6 and 7.

8 STORAGE AND CURATION

8.1 Museum

- 8.1.1 The information will be deposited within the Historic Environment Record (HER) maintained by Surrey County Council where it can be freely copied without reference to Wessex Archaeology for the purposes of archaeological research or Development Control within the planning process.

8.2 Preparation of Archive

- 8.2.1 The complete project archive which will include paper records, photographic records, graphics, artefacts and digital data, will be prepared for the County Museum Service, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; ClfA 2014b; Brown 2011).
- 8.2.2 The County museum is Guildford Museum, Castle Arch, Guildford, Surrey, GU1 3SX, which is currently not accepting archaeological archives. In the absence of a recipient museum, the archive will be temporarily retained at Wessex Archaeology Head Office, Portway House, Old Sarum Park, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP4 6EB until deposition of the archive can be arranged.

8.3 OASIS

- 8.3.1 An OASIS online record has been initiated for the work and key fields in regard of the evaluation has been entered under OASIS ID wessexar1-202011. All appropriate parts of the OASIS online form will be completed for submission to the Surrey Historic Environment Record. This will include an uploaded .pdf version of the entire report.

8.4 Security Copy

- 8.4.1 In line with current best practice (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.

8.5 Copyright

- 8.5.1 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 County HER, 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-profit making, and conforms to the *Copyright and Related Rights* regulations 2003.

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10 APPENDICES

10.1 Appendix 1: Trench Tables

Trench 1				
Dimensions: 30m x 1.85m x 0.83m				
Context	Description		Dimensions (m)	Depth below surface (m)
101	Topsoil	Disturbed mid. grey-brown silty-sand.	Whole trench	0-0.48
102	Subsoil	Mid. yellow-grey clay- silt-sand.	Whole trench	0.48-0.63
103	Natural	Mid. yellow-brown silty-sand, with geological undulations of gravel and chalk.	Whole trench	0.63+

Trench 2				
Dimensions: 29.40m x 1.85m x 0.70m				
Context	Description		Dimensions (m)	Depth below surface (m)
201	Topsoil	Disturbed mid-brown silty-sand.	Whole trench	0-0.23
202	Subsoil	Mid. brown-yellow clay-silt-sand.	Whole trench	0.23-0.55
203	Natural	Light to Mid. yellow sand and clay-sand, with infrequent undulations of gravel and chalk.	Whole trench	0.55+

Trench 3				
Dimensions: 30m x 1.85m x 0.75m				
Context	Description		Dimensions (m)	Depth below surface (m)
301	Topsoil	Disturbed mid-brown silty-sand.	Whole trench	0-0.25
302	Subsoil	Mid. grey-brown silty-sand.	Whole trench	0.25-0.60
303	Natural	Mid. yellow clay-silt-sand, with infrequent undulations of gravel, chalk and mid. yellow clay.	Whole trench	0.60+

Trench 4				
Dimensions: 30m x 1.85m x 0.87m				
Context	Description		Dimensions (m)	Depth below surface (m)
401	Topsoil	Disturbed mid-brown sandy-silt.	Whole trench	0-0.17
402	Subsoil	Mid. brown-yellow clay-silt-sand.	Whole trench	0.17-0.67
403	Natural	Mid. yellow clay-silt-sand, with infrequent undulations of gravel, chalk.	Whole trench	0.67+
404	Cut	Cut of north-south aligned linear.	0.85 wide x 0.18 deep	0.60-0.78
405	Secondary Fill	Disturbed mid. grey-brown clay-silt-sand within [404].	0.85 wide x 0.18 deep	0.60-0.78
406	Cut	Cut of east-west aligned linear.	1.30 wide x 0.35 deep	0.67-1.02
407	Primary Fill	Light orange-brown sand-silt-clay with mid. grey mottling within [406].	1.15 wide x 0.35 deep	0.67-1.02
408	Secondary Fill	Light grey-brown sand-clay-silt within [406].	1.00 wide x 0.20 deep	0.67-0.87
409	Cut	Cut of tree-throw.	1.75 length x 0.60 wide x 0.18 deep	0.67-0.87
410	Primary Fill	Light grey-brown sand-clay-silt within [409].	1.75 length x 0.60 wide x 0.18 deep	0.67-0.87



Trench 5				
Dimensions: 29.60m x 1.85m x 0.43m				
Context	Description		Dimensions (m)	Depth below surface (m)
501	Topsoil/ Interface	Disturbed light brown clay-sand-silt with a heavily blurred interface with natural (502).	Whole trench	0–0.43
502	Natural	Mid. yellow-brown silt-sand-clay, with geological undulations of gravel.	Whole trench	0.43+

Trench 6				
Dimensions: 26.70m x 1.85m x 0.57m				
Context	Description		Dimensions (m)	Depth below surface (m)
601	Topsoil/ Interface	Disturbed light brown sandy-silt with a heavily blurred interface with natural (602).	Whole trench	0–0.57
602	Natural	Mid. yellow-brown silt-sand-clay, with geological undulations of gravel.	Whole trench	0.57+

Trench 7				
Dimensions: 20.35m x 1.85m x 0.55m				
Context	Description		Dimensions (m)	Depth below surface (m)
701	Topsoil/ Interface	Disturbed light brown clay-sand-silt with a heavily blurred interface with natural (702).	Whole trench	0–0.55
702	Natural	Mid. yellow-brown clay-silt-sand, with geological undulations of gravel.	Whole trench	0.55+

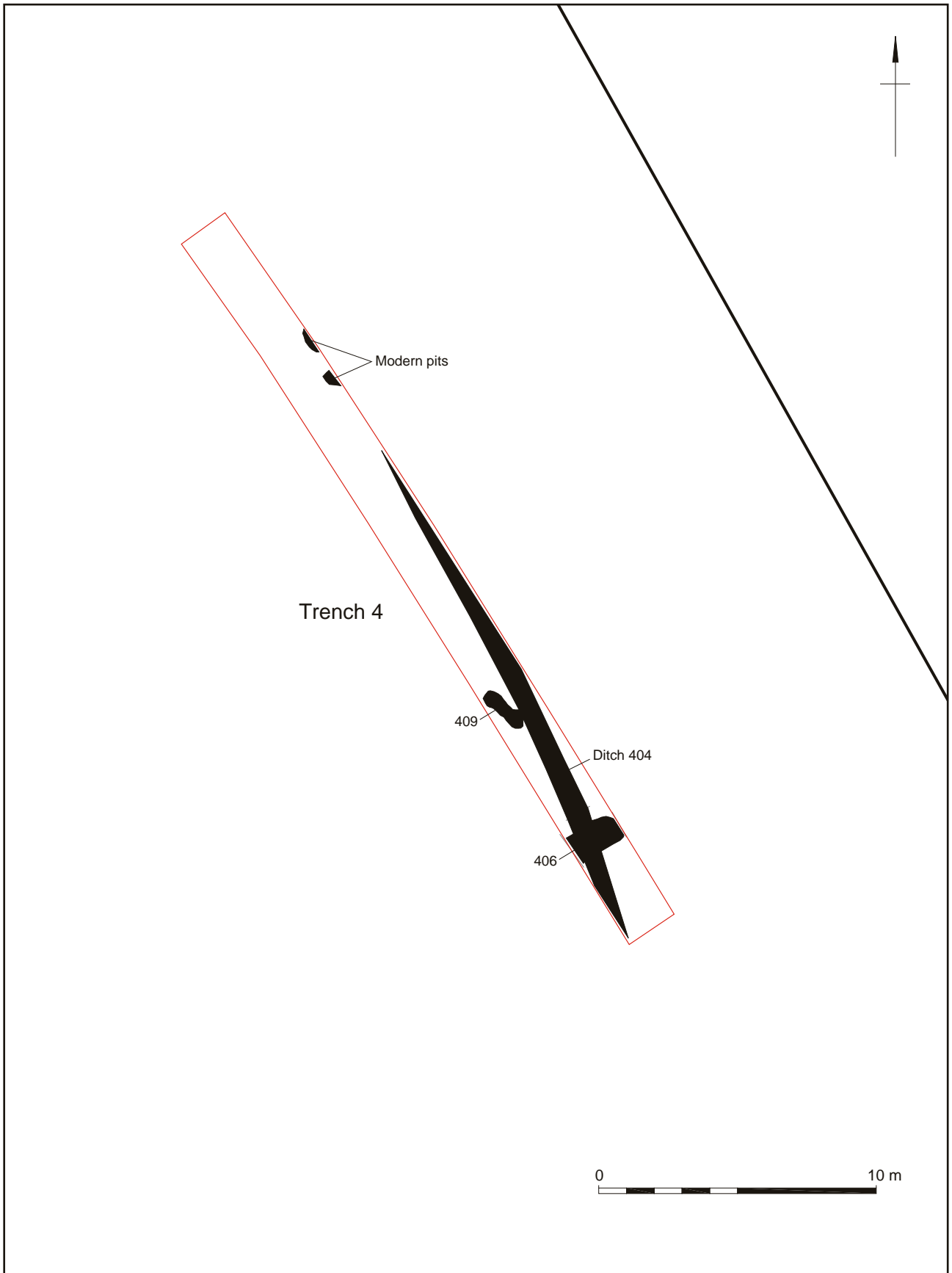



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Site location plan and trench locations

Figure 1



 <p>Phase 1 trenching</p> <p>Archaeological feature</p>	This material is for client report only © Wessex Archaeology. No unauthorised reproduction.			
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Detail plan of Phase 1 Trench 4

Figure 2



Plate 1: East facing representative section of trench 2



Plate 2: General shot of trench 4 from the north-west


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Plate 3: North-east facing profile section of linear 406



Plate 4: Overall shot of quadrant through tree-throw 409 from the south-west



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Plate 5: South-east facing profile section of linear 404

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