LAND AT SAXON GATE, EAST HANNEY, OXFORDSHIRE.

NGR: 442288.193286 (centred)

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

February 2014
Report No. 938

Quality Assurance
This Document has been compiled and authorised in accordance with AMS's Quality Procedures (BS EN ISO 9001: 2008)
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Date: 12th February 2014
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SUMMARY

On 10th and 11th February 2014 Foundations Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological evaluation on land at Saxon Gate, East Hanney, Oxfordshire (NGR: 442288.193286 - centred). The works were commissioned by Linden Homes.

The project comprised the excavation and recording of five trenches within a proposed development area. Due to extensive surface flooding it was not possible to excavate trenches in the north-western part of the site. Most of the features identified within the trenches were not excavated due to trench flooding and, as such, the majority of features were recorded in plan only.

The evaluation identified the presence of former possible agricultural boundaries or drainage ditches, as well as a number of possible furrow bases and a possible natural clay deposit. Due to a general paucity of artefacts, along with the limited nature of the investigation, the features remained undated.

There was no evidence for any significant clusters of features and it is therefore most likely that the on-site remains represented former agricultural activity, which occurred on the periphery of any settlement focus.

GLOSSARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Archaeology

For the purpose of this project, archaeology is taken to mean the study of past human societies through their material remains from prehistoric times to the modern era. No rigid upper date limit has been set, but AD 1900 is used as a general cut-off point.

CBM

Ceramic Building Material.

Headland

A linear bank, formed of accumulated plough soil, which occurred at the end of, and perpendicular to, plough strips or rows. They are commonly associated with ridge and furrow ploughing.

Medieval

The period between AD 1066 and AD 1500.

Natural

In archaeological terms this refers to the undisturbed natural geology of a site.

NGR

National Grid Reference from the Ordnance Survey Grid.

OD

Ordnance datum; used to express a given height above sea-level. (AOD Above Ordnance Datum).

OS

Ordnance Survey.

Post-medieval

The period between AD 1500 and AD 1900.

Prehistoric

The period prior to the Roman invasion of AD 43, traditionally sub divided into; *Palaeolithic* – c. 500,000 BC to c. 12,000 BC; *Mesolithic* – c. 12,000 BC to c. 4,500 BC; *Neolithic* – c. 4,500 BC to c. 2,000 BC; *Bronze Age* – c. 2,000 BC to c. 800 BC; *Iron Age* – c. 800 BC to AD 43.

Roman

The period traditionally dated AD 43 until AD 410.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on 10th and 11th February 2014 by Foundations Archaeology on land at Saxon Gate, East Hanney, Oxfordshire (NGR: 442288.193286 - centred). The works were commissioned by Linden Homes.

1.2 The project was conducted in accordance with the approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), prepared by Foundations Archaeology (2014); IfA *Standards and Guidance on Archaeological Evaluation* (2008); and MoRPHE, issued by English Heritage (2006).

1.3 This report constitutes the results of the archaeological works.

2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

2.1 The site is located to the east of the A338 and is bounded to the north by Greenway Farm and residential dwellings, to the west by a new housing estate, to the south by an industrial estate and pasture land to the east. The site covers an area of approximately 0.8ha and comprised pasture at the time of the fieldwork. The underlying geology consists of *Ampthill Clay Formation* and *Kimmeridge Clay Formation* (undifferentiated) – mudstone, overlaid by *Northmoor Sand and Gravel Member* – sand and gravel (BGS Online Viewer).

2.2 Planning permission has been sought for the construction of 16 dwellings with associated access, public open space and landscaping (**P13/V2608/FUL**). In accordance with the principles of National Planning Policy Framework (2012), a programme of archaeological evaluation was required in advance of the determination of the planning application.

2.3 An archaeological survey in relation to a proposed reservoir east of Hanney identified several enclosures in the form of cropmarks. Subsequent evaluation dated this settlement to the middle Iron Age, but did not attempt to establish the extent of the features. Other sites of this type in the area have been found to be extensive and, as such, this activity could extend beyond the cropmarks into the proposed development site.

2.4 The site therefore contained the potential for the presence of archaeological features, predominately relating to the Iron Age. This did not prejudice the evaluation against deposits dating to other periods.

3 AIMS

3.1 The aims of the archaeological evaluation were to gather high quality data from the direct observation of archaeological deposits in order to provide sufficient information to establish the nature, extent, preservation and potential of any surviving archaeological remains; as well as to make recommendations

for management of the resource, including further archaeological works if necessary. In turn, this would allow reasonable planning decisions to be taken regarding the archaeological provision for the areas affected by the proposed development.

3.2 These aims were achieved through pursuit of the following specific objectives:

i) To define and identify the nature of archaeological deposits on site, and date these where possible;

ii) To attempt to characterise the nature of the archaeological sequence and recover as much information as possible about the spatial patterning of features present on the site;

iii) To recover a well dated stratigraphic sequence, which will attempt to determine the complexity of the horizontal and vertical stratigraphy present, and to recover coherent artefact, ecofact and environmental samples;

iv) To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence and the forms in which such evidence may be present;

v) To define any research priorities that may be relevant should further field investigation be required.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 The WSI stipulated that a total of eight 30m by 1.5m trenches were to be excavated within the site. However, due to extensive surface flooding across the north-western part of the site, it was only possible to excavate five trenches, as shown in Figure 2. The trenches were located in order to provide as representative a sample as possible of the study area.

4.2 Non-significant overburden was removed, under constant archaeological supervision, to the top of the archaeological deposits or the underlying natural substrates, whichever was encountered first. This was achieved through the use of a JCB type excavator, equipped with a toothless grading bucket. Spoil tips were scanned for finds.

4.3 Where possible, all excavation and recording work was undertaken in accordance with the WSI and the Foundations Archaeology Technical Manual 3: Excavation Manual.

4.4 Prior to flooding within the trenches, visibility conditions were very good and, as such, it was possible to confidently identify features. However, due to the trench flooding, the majority of features were not hand-excavated and were therefore recorded in plan only.

4.5 All amendments to the trenching and excavation methodology were agreed with the archaeological representative of Oxfordshire County Council.

5 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 A detailed description of all contexts identified in the course of the project is presented in Appendix 1. A summary discussion is given below.

5.2 A series of approximately east-west aligned linear earthworks, which were visible on the ground surface in the central part of the site, probably represented the remains of former ridge and furrow ploughing.

5.3 The natural substrates were encountered at an average depth of 0.79m (59.30m OD) below Modern ground. Within Trenches 3 and 5, the top of the natural deposits had a gently undulating profile, which was probably indicative of ridge and furrow ploughing. The natural was overlaid by up to two subsoil layers, which were, in turn, sealed by the topsoil.

5.4 Relatively thick subsoils, which were encountered throughout Trench 3, and in the northeastern half of Trench 2, the western half of Trench 4 and the northern part of Trench 5, formed part of an extant earthwork feature. This feature was visible on the ground surface as a north-south aligned ridge, approximately 20m wide, which extended beyond the northern and southern site boundaries. In light of the evidence for ridge and furrow ploughing within the site, it is most likely that this earthwork represented the remains of a former plough *headland*.

5.5 A total of fifteen features were present within the trenches. These appeared to be cut into the top of the natural deposits and comprised possible ditches, drains and furrow bases, as well as a deposit of possible natural clay (Figures 2 – 5). Hand excavation of feature [503] confirmed that it was a ditch with a shallow, rounded profile. A single possible struck flint was recovered from the ditch fill (504).

5.6 Slight differences in the apparent alignments of the possible ditches, drains and furrows suggested that these remains potentially represented more than one phase of landscape activity. As a result of the flooded conditions, it was not possible to demonstrate the stratigraphic relationship of any of these features with the overlying subsoil layers, and, due to the paucity of recovered finds, it was not possible to confidently date any of the features.

5.7 The evaluation has identified the presence of former agricultural boundaries or drainage ditches, as well as a number of possible furrow bases and a possible natural clay deposit.

5.8 There was no evidence for any significant clusters of features and it is therefore most likely that the on-site remains represent former agricultural activity, which occurred on the periphery of any settlement focus.

5.9 The archive is currently held at the offices of Foundations Archaeology, but will be deposited with the Oxford County Museum Service in due course. A short note will be submitted for publication in the relevant local archaeological journal and an OASIS form will also be submitted to ADS.

6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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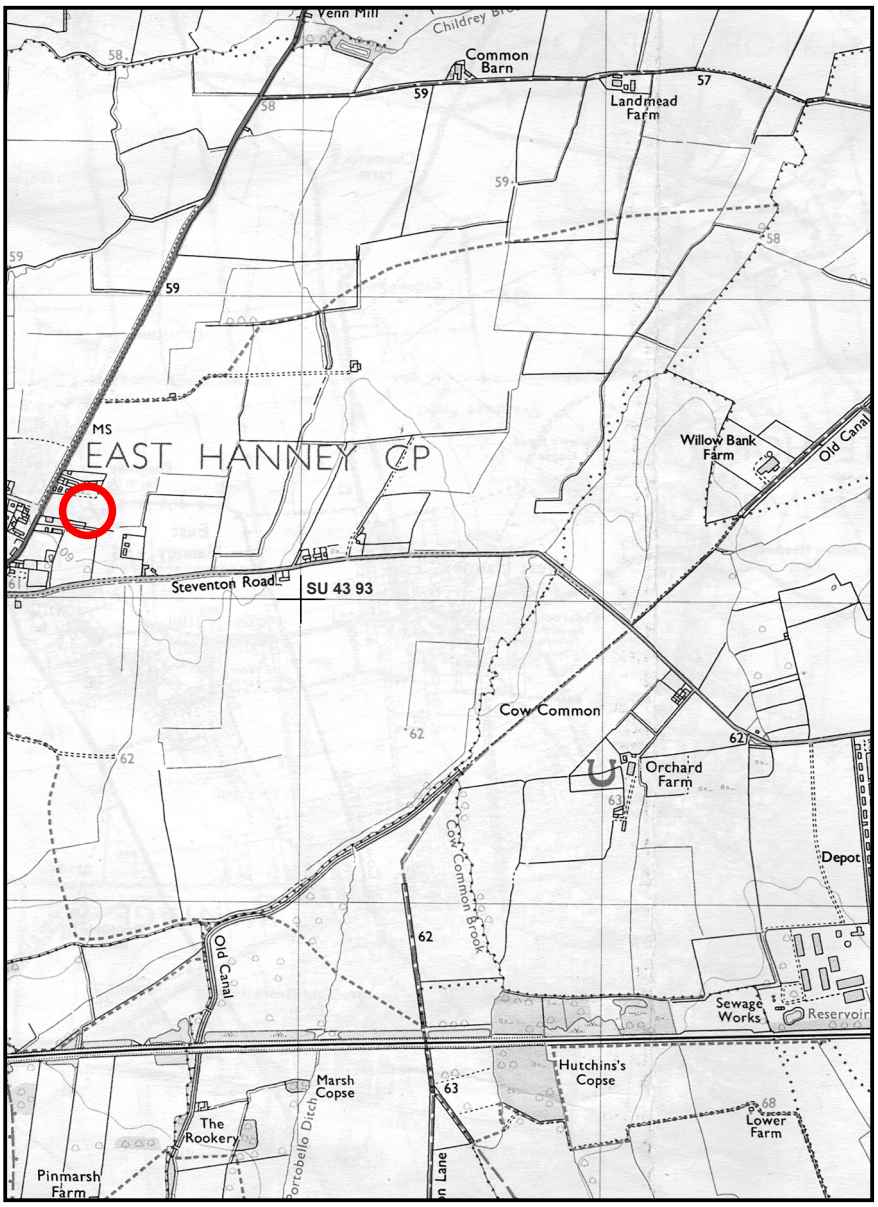
7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foundations Archaeology would like to thank Hugh Coddington of Oxfordshire County Council and Tom Smailes of Linden Homes for their help during the course of the project.

APPENDIX 1: The Stratigraphic Data

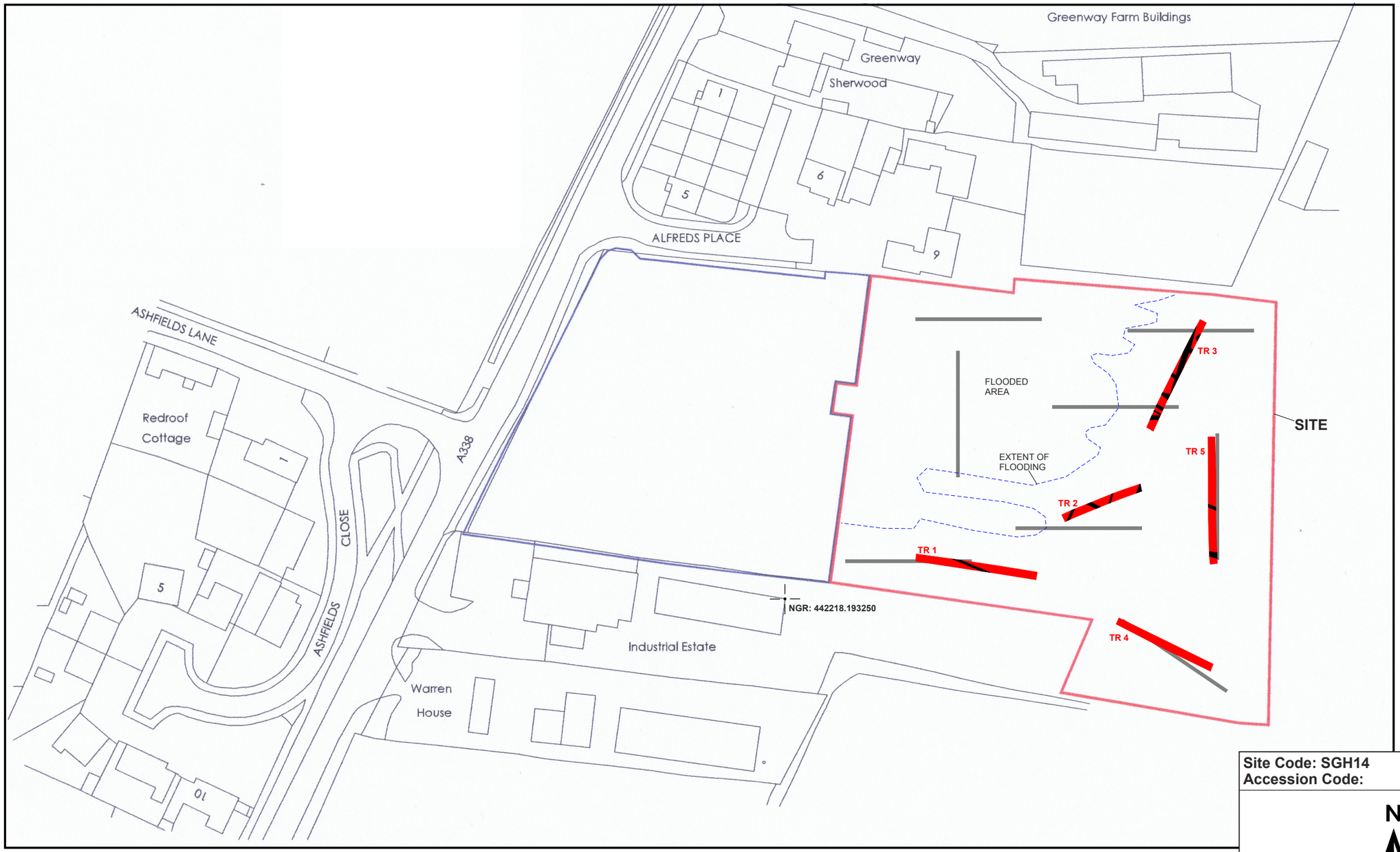
CXT	L(m)	W(m)	D(m)	DESCRIPTION	CUTS/LATER THAN	CUT BY/EARLIER THAN
				Trench 1: 29m by 1.7m; natural (at average 59.46m OD) = light beige grey chalk marl - clay gravel.		
101	na	na	0.31w	Topsoil - dark brown clay silt.	102	na
			0.30e			
102	na	na	0.33w	Layer of light grey brown clay silt.	nat.	101
			0.34e			
103	9.3	0.5	?	West-northwest - east-southeast aligned linear deposit of dark brown clay silt. Possible ditch. Not excavated.	nat.	?
				Trench 2: 20m by 1.7m; natural (at average 59.31m OD) = light beige grey chalk marl - clay gravel.		
201	na	na	0.31sw	Topsoil - dark brown clay silt.	202	na
			0.31ne			
202	na	na	0.10sw	Layer of mid grey clay silt.	203	201
			0.35ne			
203	na	na	0.40sw	Layer of grey brown clay silt.	nat.	202
			0.34ne			
204	3.3	0.52	?	North-northeast - south-southwest aligned linear deposit of dark brown clay silt. Possible ditch. Not excavated.	nat.	?
205	3.2	0.85	?	West-northwest - east-southeast aligned linear deposit of dark brown clay silt. Possible ditch. Not excavated.	nat.	?
206	2.5	0.32	?	North-northeast - south-southwest aligned linear deposit of dark brown clay silt. Possible ditch or land drain. Not excavated.	nat.	?
207	2.2	1	?	North-northeast - south-southwest aligned linear deposit of dark brown clay silt. Possible ditch. Not excavated.	nat.	?
				Probably equivalent to 305.		
				Trench 3: 29m by 1.7m; natural (at average 59.27m OD) = light beige grey chalk marl - clay gravel.		
301	na	na	0.25ne	Topsoil - dark brown clay silt.	302	na
			0.22sw			
302	na	na	0.50ne	Layer of mid grey clay silt. Contained a single fragment of glazed tile.	303	301
			0.25sw			
303	na	na	0.30ne	Layer of grey brown clay silt.	nat.	302
			0.24sw			

CXT	L(m)	W(m)	D(m)	DESCRIPTION	CUTS/LATER THAN	CUT BY/EARLIER THAN
304	1.65	0.6	?	Deposit of mid grey clay silt. Possible natural clay deposit.	?	?
305	17	1.3	?	North-northeast - south-southwest aligned linear deposit of dark brown clay silt. Possible ditch. Not excavated.	nat.	?
306	0.67	1.03	?	West-northwest - east-southeast aligned linear deposit of dark brown clay silt. Possible ditch. Not excavated.	nat.	?
307	1.07	0.82	?	Northwest - southeast aligned linear deposit of dark brown clay silt. Possible furrow base. Not excavated.	nat.	?
308	1.7	1.4	?	Northwest - southeast aligned linear deposit of dark brown clay silt. Possible furrow base. Not excavated.	nat.	?
309	1.7	0.75	?	Northwest - southeast aligned linear deposit of dark brown clay silt. Possible furrow base. Not excavated.	nat.	?
310	1.7	0.28	?	Northwest - southeast aligned linear deposit of dark brown clay silt. Possible ditch or land drain. Not excavated.	nat.	?
311	2.3	1	?	East - west aligned linear deposit of dark brown clay silt. Possible ditch. Not excavated.	nat.	?
				Trench 4: 25m by 1.7m**;** natural (at average 59.32m OD) = light beige grey chalk marl - clay gravel.		
401	na	na	0.30nw	Topsoil - dark brown clay silt.	402	na
			0.35se			
402	na	20	0.60nw	Layer of mid grey clay silt. Dissipated towards southeast end of the trench.	403	401
			0.00se			
403	na	20	0.20nw	Layer of grey brown clay silt.	nat.	402
			0.00se			
				No archaeological artefacts, features or deposits were present within the trench.		
				Trench 5: 30m by 1.7m**;** natural (at average 59.15m OD) = light beige grey chalk marl - clay gravel.		
501	na	na	0.30n	Topsoil - dark brown clay silt.	502	na
			0.29s			
502	na	na	0.50n	Layer of mid grey clay silt.	505	501
			0.27s			
[503]	2.1	0.68	0.24	West-northwest - east-southeast aligned ditch with a shallow, rounded profile. Contained fill 504.	nat.	504
504	2.1	0.68	0.24	Fill of ditch [503]; grey plastic silt clay, which contained a single possible struck flint. Uncertain stratigraphic relationship	[503]	?
				with subsoil 502.		
505	na	na	0.15n	Layer of grey brown clay silt. Occurred intermittently within the trench.	nat.	502
			0.07s			
506	2.1	1.45	?	West-northwest - east-southeast aligned linear deposit of dark brown clay silt. Possible furrow base. Not excavated.	nat.	?



Site Code: SGH14
Accession Code:

FIGURE 1: Site Location



Site Code: SGH14
Accession Code:

N

0m 40m

= PROPOSED TRENCH LOCATION

= ACTUAL TRENCH LOCATION

= FEATURE LOCATION

FIGURE 2: Trench Locations

TRENCH 1

5m

59.43m

(103)

19m

59.30m

(207)

(206)

59.38m

TRENCH 2

(205)

59.38m

59.18m

(204)

Site Code:
Accession Code: SGH14

N

0m 2m

FIGURE 3: Trenches 1 and 2 Plans

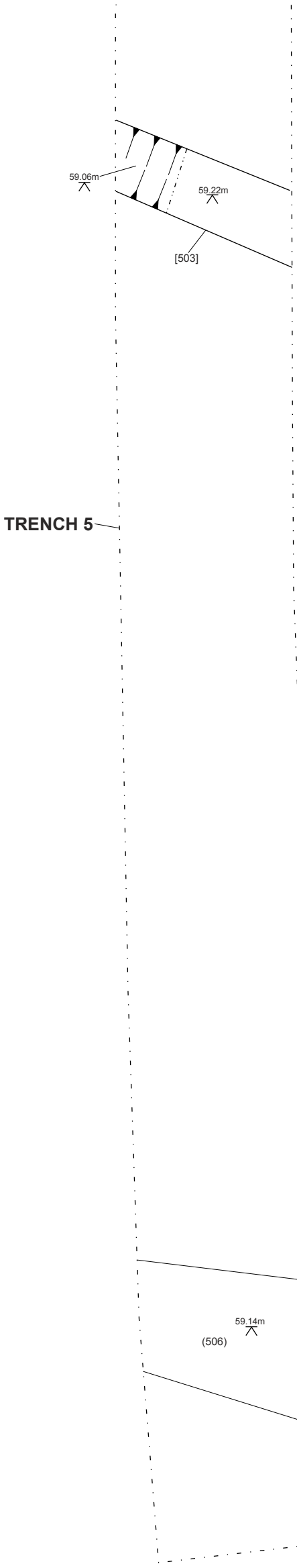
(304)
59.29m
(305)
59.13m
(306)
TRENCH 3
(305)
(307)
59.34m
(305)
(308)
59.28m
TRENCH 3
(309)
59.33m
59.30m
(310)
(311)
59.23m

Site Code:
Accession Code: SGH14

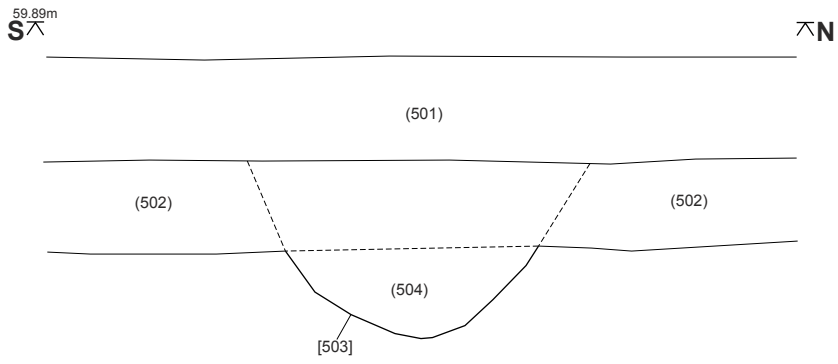
N

0m 2m

FIGURE 4: Trench 3 Plan



EAST FACING TRENCH SECTION SHOWING [503]



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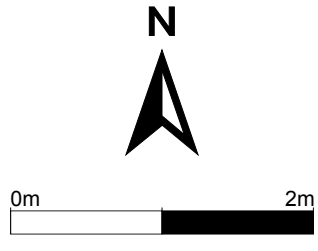

FIGURE 5: Trench 5 Plan and Section