

The Iron Age Ouse and Derwent Project

Excavations at North Duffield, 2018

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Excavation supervisor:	Paul Durdin, Jon Kenny
Report prepared by:	Brian Elsey, Paul Durdin, Jon Kenny
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Summary

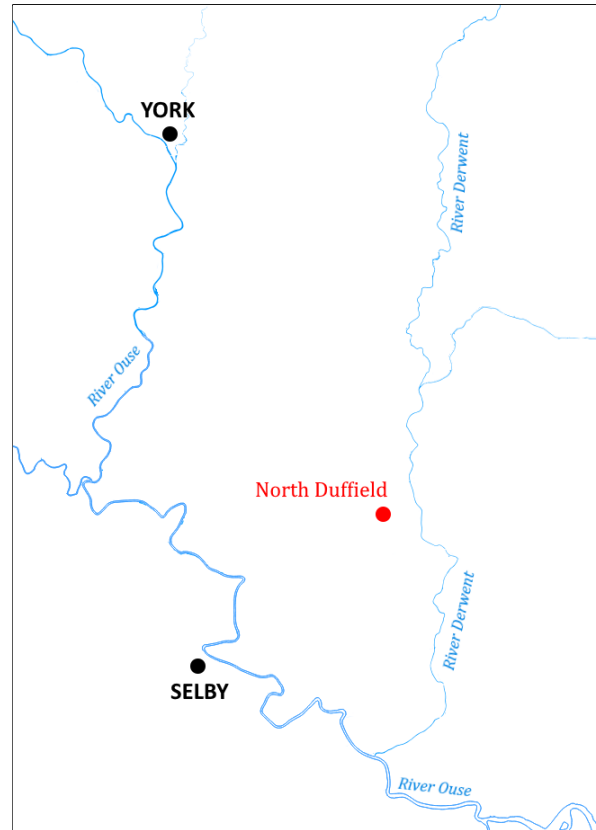
Six trenches were excavated at North Duffield, revealing a large number of archaeological features of late Iron Age to early Roman date. Trench 2 uncovered a portion of the interior of a large double-bounded enclosure, containing several intercutting ring-ditches that were overlaid by a series of beam slots that suggested a large rectangular building replaced the earlier prehistoric round-houses. The other trenches examined the boundary ditches and other features within the complicated landscape surrounding the main enclosure, including a separate round-house ring-ditch within Trench 1.

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Archaeological Preamble	2
Geology	3
Current use	3
Methodology	3
Trench 1	4
Phase 1 - Prehistoric / Romano-British features	4
Phase 2 - Post-Medieval agriculture	4
Phase 3 - 19th-20th century drains	4
Trench 2	5
Phase 1 - Prehistoric / Romano-British features	5
Phase 1a - Earliest ring-ditches	5
Phase 1b - Small intercutting ring-ditches	6
Phase 1c - Beam slots	8
Phase 2 - Post-Medieval agriculture	8
Phase 3 - 19th-20th century drains	8
Trench 3	9
Phase 1 - Prehistoric / Romano-British features	9
Phase 2 - Post-Medieval agriculture	10
Phase 3 - Field drains	10
Trench 4	10
Phase 1 - Prehistoric / Romano-British features	10
Phase 2 - 19th-20th century drains	11
Trench 5	11
Phase 1 - Prehistoric / Romano-British features	11
Phase 2 - Post-Medieval agriculture	12
Phase 3 - 19th-20th century drains	12
Trench 6	12
Phase 1 - Prehistoric / Romano-British features	13
Phase 2 - Post-Medieval agriculture	13
Phase 3 - Field drain	13
Discussion	13
Bibliography	16
Appendix 1: Trench Matrices	17

Introduction

The excavation site at North Duffield is situated off Hugh Field Lane, North Duffield, which runs along the western and northern boundaries. The field is irregular in shape and covers slightly in excess of 6 hectares, and was selected for investigation as a result of aerial photographic evidence revealing crop-marks that suggested a very large double-bounded enclosure containing a large ring-ditch. Previous excavations by the North Duffield Conservation and Local History Society, between 2012 and 2014, had revealed a similarly large ring ditch in a field some 200 metres north east of this site. The excavation site is 1.5 kilometres from the River Derwent to the east, and 5.7 kilometres to the nearest point of the River Ouse to the southwest, located within the southern Vale of York bounded by these two rivers.



Geophysical surveys were conducted prior to the excavation, using both fluxgate gradiometry and earth resistance, revealing a far more complex set of features than suggested by the crop-marks alone (Durdin 2020). Besides the main enclosure, which showed a complicated interior with multiple ring-ditches and other features, further enclosures were visible to the south alongside a large driveway running northwest-southeast. A single clear ring-ditch was visible outside the main enclosure, towards the western boundary of the present-day field.

Archaeological Preamble

The project objectives sought to build on our understanding of the archaeological landscape in our part of the Vale of York area. The large enclosure, linear features and ring ditches suggested a complex Iron Age or Romano-British settlement of the kind to be expected in the area, outlined in the desk based assessment produced for the project (Ratcliffe *et al* 2020). It also corresponds to the late Iron Age and Romano-British enclosed and complex settlements indicated to the east and west (Chadwick 2009, Halkon 2014 and Allen *et al* 2016). Our objective was to highlight the dating and changes through time at the Wheldrake site, securing the site in the chronology of settlement observed elsewhere.

The apparent enclosed settlement may be a family or clan based rural settlement, with its size and complexity suggesting residents of higher social status, in either the Iron Age or Romano-British period. It was our objective to attempt to understand the status of the site in

its appropriate point or points in time. With regard to status we would also seek to understand the activities going on at the site: were they simply an isolated farmstead engaged in subsistence agriculture, or was the settlement part of a widely populated landscape and interacting with links further afield.

Geology

The site at North Duffield is situated on Sherwood Sandstone Group bedrock, overlain by the Skipwith Sand Member. The natural geology encountered was sand, varying between white, grey and yellow, visible to a maximum excavation depth of 1.17m in cut [1208]. In Trench 3, a shovel pit was dug in the base of the inner enclosure ditch [1305], through the natural sand, revealing a layer of peat approximately 1.5m below the current day ground surface. The topsoil was a greyish brown silty sand, varying from 0.3m to 0.4m in depth across the site.

Current use

The field in which the excavation took place is currently in use as arable land, although at the time of excavation it was pasture for grazing sheep, as the farmer delayed the return to arable use in order to allow the archaeological investigation to take place unhindered.

Methodology

The trenches were laid out on the same site grid as the geophysical survey, using a Leica total station positioned with reference to several previously identified fixed points (cf. Methodology in Durdin 2020). All the agricultural plough soil was removed by machine, after which the trenches were cleaned by hand to identify archaeological features. Excavation of features was undertaken selectively, with the priority placed on identifying stratigraphic relationships (where unclear), clarifying feature form and function, and recovering dating evidence. In most cases, only a percentage of any single feature was excavated, with the majority of the fills preserved *in situ*, both to allow future investigations and to limit post-excavation time and costs.

Finds were largely cleaned and bagged on site. A very large quantity of heat-affected stones were recovered from some features, and of these only a small number were kept as a representative sample. Due to the fact that most fills were primarily silty sands devoid of biological material, bulk soil samples were only retrieved from archaeological contexts that were either in important stratigraphic positions or had a noticeable charcoal or organic component.

Context, drawing, photo and sample registers were filled out by hand on paper and digitised following the excavation. Individual context records were completed digitally on Android tablets, in a recording system developed using Memento Database. All site records were reviewed on PC following the excavation, and the complete context data was then exported in CSV format for inclusion in the final project archive.

Trench 1

Trench 1 at North Duffield, 13.4m by 3.3m, was located over the double ditched enclosure boundary, at a point in the western side where the geophysical results suggested a possible entrance. After removal of the topsoil, faint traces of the boundary ditches were visible in the underlying material. However, this deposit turned out to be an earlier plough soil, likely post-Medieval in date, and only after this was removed were the earlier archaeological features exposed.

Phase 1 - Prehistoric / Romano-British features

Evidence of prehistoric or Romano-British activity was present in the form of two very large ditches running northwest-southeast across the trench. These features were not excavated, only recorded as exposed in plan, due in part to lack of time. However, it was also considered that in the absence of an entrance to the enclosure, there would be limited benefit gained from excavating the boundary ditches further when they had already been investigated in Trench 3.

Phase 2 - Post-Medieval agriculture

The later plough soil **1101** (equated to **1201**, **1301**, **1501** and **1601**) was found to be present, in all trenches except Trench 4. This layer had a maximum depth of 0.25m, although in places it appeared to have subsided into or filled the top of earlier features and could in such places be deeper. The deposit took the form of an orangish brown silty sand, clearly distinct from both the topsoil and the underlying earlier features and natural sands. It was presumed to be a pre-modern agricultural layer due to the absence of any 20th-21st century material that was present in the current topsoil. However, it may date from as late as the 19th century, despite the predominance of 11th-17th century pottery in the finds recovered, as a few sherds of later date were found in the deposit.

In many instances, earlier features were visible 'through' this layer, due to earlier material being lifted and mixed by the plough. This provides strong evidence that truncation of the prehistoric or Romano-British features started at least as early as the 19th century, and the survival of this plough soil suggests that the older features are likely not being directly affected, in this field, by current agricultural practices.

Phase 3 - 19th-20th century drains

A single 19th-20th century ceramic field drain running east-west was exposed in the eastern half of Trench 1, clearly cutting through plough soil **1101**.

Trench 2

This trench was located over the eastern centre of the larger, main enclosure, stretching south to include the southern double boundary. At 26m x 12.4m, with a small 5.9m x 1.9m extension at its southeastern corner, it was by far the largest and most complex of the trenches.

Removal of the topsoil was initiated at the northern end of the trench, where the post-Medieval plough soil that covered most of the trench was not extant. This resulted in the rest of the trench being machined to a 'false level' above this largely unremarkable layer, and only after it was removed by hand were the underlying prehistoric and Romano-British features revealed.

The earlier features were a complicated palimpsest of cut features in the form of overlapping ring-ditches, pits, and beam slots. Only limited excavation of these features was undertaken, in the form of small slots, with the priority placed on establishing the nature of the features and their stratigraphic sequence. It would perhaps be possible to divide these features into multiple phases or sub-phases, given the clear sequences of building and re-building, but the dating evidence does not provide clear and consistent enough chronology for this purpose.

Phase 1 - Prehistoric / Romano-British features

The features in this phase constitute the majority of archaeological evidence in the trench, and the pottery recovered from them was all dated from the Iron Age through to the mid-Roman period of 2nd-3rd century AD. This phase is separated into three sub-phases, categorised by the changes in the nature of the features through the stratigraphic sequence, but this phasing is necessarily somewhat arbitrary and may not truly reflect phases of occupation and use of the site.

Phase 1a - Earliest ring-ditches

Appearing most prominently in this trench was an intercutting sequence of ring-ditches. The earliest of these, representing the first sub-phase, were two very circular ring-ditches at the northern end of the trench **[1212=1290]** and **[1233=1264]**, but though there is no direct relationship between them they are unlikely to be contemporary as the smaller **[1233=1264]**, with a diameter of only 4.5m, is located entirely within the larger **[1212]**. The latter is only partially within the trench, extending out the north and east boundaries, but has an estimated external diameter of 19m based on the arc revealed. It was the largest of the ring-ditches and was the only one to appear in the original crop-mark analysis, situated centrally in the east end of the main enclosure. Corresponding with a faint but definite arcing anomaly in the magnetometry survey, the location of this ring-ditch suggested that it was an original part of the settlement, originally constructed at the same time as the enclosure ditches. Ring-ditch **[1212]** was originally narrow, with only one primary fill **1236=1291** before being recut **[1237]** wider and then silting up over time with fills **1238**, **1239** and **1211**. This suggested it was

extant and in use for a considerable period of time, and if it was the ring-ditch for a round-house implies that a certain amount of effort was taken to re-establish the ring-ditch during the lifetime of the house.

Phase 1b - Small intercutting ring-ditches

The second sub-phase is characterised by a number of small, intercutting ring-ditches, multiple of which exhibit a very ovate shape. Both the earliest ring-ditches are cut by ring-ditch **[1266=1292]**, a very indistinct ovate cut oriented northwest-southeast. The uppermost fill **1265** of this feature was a pale grey sand very close in appearance to the nearby natural sand, and the true extent of the feature was not identified until after the excavation had concluded. As such, excavation of this ring-ditch was limited to its presence in three relationship slots, and its true profile was not determined, despite being entirely contained within the trench limits.

Ring-ditch **[1266=1292]** was itself cut by a 6.3m diameter ring-ditch **[1220]**, also entirely within the trench. This ring-ditch was circular, with a v-shape profile, and truncated a linear feature **[1229]** that entered from the western side of the trench but did not extend past the ring-ditch. The form and nature of this linear **[1229]** could not be fully examined, but it's not impossible that it was part of an earlier ring-ditch, as there was an isolated terminus visible to the east that could have been the continuation. This would have been of a similar scale to ring-ditch **[1212]**, and as it must have overlapped with that ring-ditch it would have likely represented a different phase of building. However, this is speculative, and the feature may not have been a ring-ditch at all.

During post-excavation, an apparent pit **[1296]** with a pale grey fill was identified amongst the ring-ditches, cutting ring-ditches **[1220]** and **[1266]** and ditch **[1252]**, and itself truncated by ring-ditches **[1235=1254]** and **[1246=1268]**. This apparent pit, approximately 2.9m long and 1.6m wide and oriented roughly north-south, was not investigated during the course of the excavation, although its southeast corner was slightly affected during the excavation of ring-ditch **[1246=1268]**.

Likewise during post-excavation, a portion of a possible ring-ditch was identified comprising features **[1276]** and **[1277]**. This was most clear on the orthographic trench photos, but was not ascertained through excavation and it's form and stratigraphic position remain uncertain. A part of this feature, possibly a terminal end, was excavated along with one portion of ring-ditch **[1246=1268]**, which clearly truncates it. A small post or stake setting **[1287]** was seen in the base of this feature.

The clearest ring-ditch in the trench was **[1235=1254]**, an ovate feature oriented east-west and filled with a firm brownish orange silty sand **1234=1253**. It was slightly narrower at the eastern end than at the western, and there were no breaks visible in the feature; it was only truncated in two small areas by a later ditch **[1246=1268]**. Large quantities of calcite gritted pottery were recovered from fill **1253** in the western end of this ring-ditch, representing at least part of multiple vessels. By contrast, no pottery was found in the fill **1234** as excavated towards the eastern end of the feature.

*Iron Age Ouse and Derwent
Excavations at North Duffield, 2018*

Carbonised residue on a pottery sherd from fill **1253** was successfully radiocarbon dated to 2008 ±24 BP: 13 ±63 calAD (95.4% probability). This provides a definite Late Iron Age date for this fill, although the stratigraphy of the phase is obviously too complex to simplify down to a single date.

A last possible ring-ditch [**1246=1268**] was present as a semi-circular ditch just south of, and very similar in size to, ring-ditch [**1235=1254**]. The ditch terminates in the region of its truncation by beam slots [**1244=1260**] and [**1248=1250=1262**], but if it was a full circle rather than the ovate shape of ring-ditch [**1235=1254**], the remaining portion could be projected to lie under post-Medieval plough soil **1201** and within the area of enclosure ditch [**1222**]. No clear evidence of the ring-ditch continuing was visible in the sections of ditch [**1222**], but if it was truncated by the enclosure ditch then that would be understandable. Calcite gritted pot was also found in fill **1245** of this ring-ditch.

No interior features were identified that could be definitely associated with any of the ring-ditches, but there were a number of possible post holes, in the northern end of the trench, which may have related to the earliest ring-ditches [**1212**] or [**1233=1264**]. Only one of these post holes [**1286**] was excavated, due to time constraints. An isolated feature [**1225**] within the arc of ring-ditch [**1212**] was also investigated, but it contained no finds, was only 0.07m deep and had irregular, very indistinct edges, making interpretation practically impossible.

The lack of interior features makes it difficult to understand the function and purpose of these ring-ditches, but the most likely explanation is that they are ring-ditches or drip gullies for small round-houses or similar structures. If this is the case, it signifies a considerable amount of building and re-building after the huge central round-house has gone out of use. However, the ovate shape that some of them have does raise questions about the construction of such a building, particularly with regard to the roof. Likewise, at least two have no sign of the gaps for doorways that might be expected. An alternative interpretation is that they are the remains of barrows, but the absence of any evidence for burials, along with the intercutting and overlapping nature of the features, makes this unlikely.

The two large enclosure ditches were present towards the southern end of the trench, oriented east-northeast to west-southwest and likely extant through at least the first and second sub-phase. The inner ditch [**1222**] was 2.27m wide and was excavated to a depth of 0.77m, with two post or stake settings [**1272**] and [**1274**] in the base. The outer ditch [**1208**] was considerably larger at 3.4m wide and 1.17m depth, and it was not excavated to its full depth. Both ditches showed a clear sequence of slumping sides and gradual filling up, with wetter, carbon-rich fills towards the base. Likewise, both contained pottery of Iron Age and Romano-British type.

Carbonised residue on a pottery sherd from fill **1258** in the inner enclosure ditch was successfully radiocarbon dated to 2096 ±29 BP: 160 ±119 calAD (95.4% probability). This provides a reliable Middle-to-Late Iron Age date, although the presence of Roman greyware sherds within the same fill suggests the earlier pottery may be residual.

Phase 1c - Beam slots

The last sub-phase is defined by a change to very regular, parallel, straight cuts running east-west across the southern half of the trench. Their consistent straight sides and flat base suggested they were beam slots, although the profile of ditch **[1244=1260]** was less convincing. The northernmost of these, ditch **[1252]**, was stratigraphically earlier than ring-ditch **[1235=1254]** and thus cannot be contemporary with those that are stratigraphically later. It also extended only 3.6 metres into the trench, not the full width of the trench. However, as it was of very similar form and runs parallel with the other three, some association with them could not be entirely discounted.

Ditches **[1244=1260]** and **[1248=1250=1262]** lie very close together, between ring-ditch **[1235=1254]** to the north and the inner enclosure ditch **[1222]** to the south. The former is slightly shallower, and had a less consistent profile than the latter, and may not have been a beam slot. Beam slot **[1248=1250=1262]** was the clearest, with a width of 0.25-0.48m and a depth of 0.28-0.37m and an extremely regular profile and flat base. Likewise, beam slot **[1205]**, lying in between the inner and outer enclosure ditches, had a very flat base and regular profile, although it was slightly larger. It was thought most likely that beam slots **[1248=1250=1262]** and **[1205]** formed two sides of a large rectangular structure, with shallower ditch **[1244=1260]** representing a drip gully or drain along the north side. This correlated well with the geophysical results that suggested a large rectilinear building over the enclosure, the beam slots here providing evidence of the southern part of the structure. However, a larger area would need to be uncovered to be able to understand this structure properly, and no dating evidence was recovered from any of the beam slots. There was similarly no remnant of wall or roofing material.

Phase 2 - Post-Medieval agriculture

The trench was mostly covered with a layer of post-Medieval plough soil **1201** to a maximum depth of 0.2m, although this material was absent in the northernmost end of the trench, corresponding to a slight rise in the underlying natural geology. For a full discussion of this material, refer to the Phase 2 description in Trench 1. In order to save time, this earlier plough soil was not entirely removed across the trench, particularly towards the south where it was felt the large enclosure ditches only needed to be exposed enough to excavate a single slot across them.

Three shallow linear scrapes **1203**, **1241** and **1256**, running roughly northeast-southwest, were visible after removal of the post-Medieval plough soil. These clearly post-dated the prehistoric and Romano-British features underneath, and their parallel nature and spacing suggest they may be the remnants of Medieval furrows.

Phase 3 - 19th-20th century drains

Two ceramic field drain systems **1283** were exposed within Trench 2, both cutting through the post-Medieval plough soil and likely to date from the 19th or 20th century. Neither was

investigated beyond recording its presence, but both were partially machined away during the initial opening of the trench.

The most prominent field drains were a set of four drains running east-west at even intervals across the trench, with a single north-south drain, connecting the three more southern east-west drains, near the eastern boundary of the trench.

A second system of drains, running roughly north-northeast to south-southwest, was seen in two places. This was at a higher level than the first, not penetrating below the post-Medieval plough soil **1201** and was largely excavated with that material. Where remaining, it showed evidence of considerable disturbance and damage, likely from ploughing.

Trench 3

This trench, 9.1m by 1.5m, was positioned over the eastern side of the main enclosure to investigate the boundary. Removal of the topsoil, and following that the post-Medieval plough soil **1301**, revealed two large cut features, the double ditch that forms the boundary around the settlement.

Phase 1 - Prehistoric / Romano-British features

The inner, western ditch **[1305]** was 2.5m wide and 0.73m deep as excavated, with a number of clear distinctions in the fill suggesting multiple types of deposit. In the base of the ditch is a dark band of silty sand suggesting vegetation growth in the original ditch cut, followed by brownish white natural sand **1313** slumping down the east side. This is covered by a second band of dark grey silty sand **1312**, which covers both sides of the ditch and is also interpreted as relating to vegetation growth. These lowest fills produced no finds. However, a light grey silty sand **1311** above this produced 12 sherds of pottery, mostly calcite gritted and dated to the Roman period. Over this was dark brown silty sand **1302**, possibly sitting within a recut of the ditch, and this also produced Roman pottery, including a sherd of Samian ware. The presence of a recut was not ascertained during excavation.

The outer ditch **[1306]** was significantly larger than the inner at 3.4m wide and 0.84m deep, and the true dimensions will be larger still (see note below on under-excavation). It contained a somewhat simpler sequence of fills, with no suggestion of a recut. Darker layers **1316** and **1315** at the base again suggest vegetation growth, with a consistent mid greyish brown silty sand **1314** evidencing silting up over some length of time. The uppermost layer **1304** is a mid brownish grey silty sand with frequent orange speckling where bog iron is forming, suggesting this fill has remained very wet over time. This last is the only fill in the ditch to produce any finds, in the form of three sherds of Iron Age or Roman pottery.

These two ditches form the eastern side of the main enclosure's double boundary, and the low number of finds from the outer ditch perhaps suggests a lack of activity immediately outside the eastern side of the enclosure. Future investigation could perhaps compare this

with the ditches on the western boundary, where they adjoin a putative trackway and where more complex fills and quantity of anthropogenic material might be expected.

On later inspection of the 3D model and site photographs, it appears that both ditches were somewhat under-excavated and their true profile not ascertained. The inner ditch **[1305]** was excavated to the base but likely had some deposits still extant along the sides, whereas the outer ditch **[1306]** still had material in both base and along the sides. Slumping of the natural sand into which the ditches are cut, likely soon after their initial creation in the past, creates a misleading 'false edge' which was not identified on site. Note that the sections selected for illustration were not perpendicular to the feature: the sections along the trench baulk were selected instead as the stratigraphic details were clearer. This does not affect the interpretation of the features, but any future excavation will have to take it into account.

Phase 2 - Post-Medieval agriculture

The earlier archaeological features were covered with a layer of post-Medieval plough soil **1301=1303** of 0.25m depth. For a full discussion of this material, refer to the Phase 2 description in Trench 1.

Phase 3 - Field drains

Two probable field drains **[1307]** and **[1308]** running north-south were identified cutting through, and therefore post-dating, the post-Medieval layer **1301**. They did not intersect with either ditch, and thus were not excavated and only recorded in plan.

Trench 4

This trench, 6.3m by 3.7m, was positioned to investigate one of a series of northwest-southeast linear features visible as crop marks and in the geophysical survey results. These features were apparent for around 150m, and were interpreted as ditches bordering a trackway or driveway that adjoined the western edge of the large enclosure. Removal of the topsoil revealed the expected linear feature.

This was the only trench which did not have a layer of post-Medieval plough soil obscuring the underlying features. Why it was not present in this location is uncertain, although as seen in Trench 2 it was not always consistent across the other areas excavated.

Phase 1 - Prehistoric / Romano-British features

A single ditch **1405** was uncovered running northwest-southeast across Trench 4, correlating exactly with the linear feature seen in the geophysical survey. This ditch had a single fill **1402=1403=1406** that was largely excavated within the trench, producing several sherds of calcite gritted pottery and a single sherd of Roman colour-coated ware.

Due to this trench's use as a training area and opportunity to take part for visitors, the priority was given to obtaining dating evidence and recording the true profile of the ditch; the feature was only very roughly excavated in other places.

A second feature **1407** was partially visible in the northeast corner of the trench, but it was left unexcavated as its extent and shape in plan were not possible to ascertain.

Phase 2 - 19th-20th century drains

A single cylindrical ceramic field drain **1404**, running east-west across the trench, was exposed but left unexcavated. It clearly truncates ditch **1405** and as it appears machine-made most likely dates from the 19th or early 20th century.

Trench 5

Trench 5, 7.3m by 1.6m, was located over the northern boundary of what appeared to be a double-ditched enclosure just to the south of the larger main enclosure investigated in Trenches 1, 2 and 3. This second, smaller enclosure was visible in the geophysical survey and appeared to abut, to its west, the same trackway as the larger enclosure. It measured around 33m north-south and 27m east-west in the geophysics, although the boundary is not clearly defined for its entire length.

Removal of the topsoil revealed the expected ditches as broad parallel bands of darker fills, although as with other trenches they were obscured by a layer of post-Medieval plough soil.

Phase 1 - Prehistoric / Romano-British features

Two large ditches **[1527]** and **[1533]** extended across the trench, running roughly northeast-southwest, with a much smaller third ditch **[1524]** running parallel between them. The larger features correspond to the double-ditch boundary of the southern enclosure seen on the geophysical survey.

The northern, outer ditch **[1527]** was considerably larger at 2.1m wide than the inner, with evidence for a recut **[1522]** after partially silting up during its use. It was interpreted as truncating a smaller feature **[1505]**, possibly a ditch, in the northern end of the trench, but the relationship was not completely clear due to later disturbance by a field drain. Feature **[1505]** extended out of the trench and its form or purpose was never fully determined, and as there were no finds within it can not be firmly dated. The inner enclosure ditch **[1533]** was only 1.66m wide, and may also have been recut, but the latter point is unclear due to the poor clarity of horizon between fills. There were many lenses of natural sand within the fills of both ditches, along with evidence of vegetation growth, slumping of ditches sides and bioturbation by both roots and animals. While there were no finds from the northern, outer ditch, the inner ditch produced two small sherds of calcite gritted pottery that were typologically dated to the Late Iron Age.

These two ditches clearly form part of the boundary of the southern enclosure, and likely correspond to the parallel ditches seen in Trench 6 despite the difference in size. Unfortunately, the purpose of this enclosure remains unknown, but future investigation of the interior may provide an answer to that question.

Ditch **[1524]**, in between the two enclosure ditches, was only identified after partial excavation, as the fill **1525** merged in plan with the uppermost fill of ditch **[1527]**. However, three sherds of calcite gritted pottery were also recovered from this feature. Due to the small area excavated, it is not clear if this feature represents a third enclosure ditch or an entirely separate feature, as no direct stratigraphic relationship with the ditches was seen and it does not appear on the geophysical survey.

As with the enclosure ditches in Trench 3, it was later concluded that ditches **[1527]** and **[1533]** had not been fully excavated, with some fill remaining on the sides and in the base. This is due to the appearance of natural sands within the ditch fills, caused by slumping of the sides while the ditch was in use, concealing the true boundary of the features. However, this issue does not affect the broader interpretation of the features.

Phase 2 - Post-Medieval agriculture

The earlier archaeological features were covered with a layer of post-Medieval plough soil **1501** of 0.2m depth, which had partially filled, or subsided into, the top of the ditches. For a full discussion of this material, refer to the Phase 2 description in Trench 1. This material was removed by hand to expose the underlying features.

Phase 3 - 19th-20th century drains

A single 19th-20th century ceramic field drain **1507**, running east-west across the northern half of the trench, partially obscured the relationship between ditch **[1527]** and feature **[1505]**. The drain pipe was exposed but left in place.

Trench 6

This trench, 12.6m by 3.1m, was positioned across what appeared, in the geophysical survey, to be two large pit features towards the southern end of the south enclosure. It was hoped that excavating these might help elucidate the purpose of this enclosure. However, after removal of both the topsoil and the requisite post-Medieval plough soil, two clear roughly northeast-southwest linear features were revealed, rather than any pits: the southern boundary ditches of the enclosure, running parallel to those in Trench 5. Two other features were also identified by the southern edge of the trench, meeting the southern of the two ditches.

Phase 1 - Prehistoric / Romano-British features

The earliest features in Trench 6 were the two apparent linear features **[1609]** and **[1613]** entering from the southern baulk and both truncated by the southern, outer enclosure ditch. Neither of these features produced any finds, and as their visible extent was minimal no firm interpretation was possible. Their stratigraphic position is, however, good evidence of activity on site prior to the enclosure being created.

The inner and outer enclosure ditches were very similar in size and shape, and this, along with the exactly parallel course, is good evidence for their contemporaneity. Only four body sherds of calcite gritted pottery were recovered from the two features, all from within a small area of the outer ditch. These were dated to the Iron Age, but in the absence of any characteristic rim sherds, this leaves a very wide date range which may well extend into the Roman period. The geophysical evidence does, however, suggest that this enclosure was at least contemporary with the larger enclosure to the north, and this may provide a more useful chronological context.

A bulk soil sample from the inner enclosure ditch was sent for flotation but produced only a small number of minute charcoal fragments, largely unidentifiable.

Phase 2 - Post-Medieval agriculture

The earlier archaeological features were covered with a layer of post-Medieval plough soil **1601** of 0.25m depth. For a full discussion of this material, refer to the Phase 2 description in Trench 1.

Phase 3 - Field drain

A narrow, straight linear feature running north-south across the western half of the trench was identified as a probable field drain due to its regularity and mixed fill. It cut through and definitely post-dated the post-Medieval plough soil **1601**, and was thus not excavated and only recorded in plan.

Discussion

The excavations at North Duffield revealed a well-organised settlement of late prehistoric to early Roman date. Crop-mark evidence and geophysical survey results had already presented a very clear picture of the settlement layout, which was formed of large enclosures adjoining the east side of a northwest-southeast trackway or droveway. The huge double-bounded enclosure on the site, investigated in Trenches 1 to 3, contained a sequence of buildings and features whose stratigraphic depth and complexity represents a long duration of occupation. Likewise, the great size of the enclosure may indicate that the inhabitants were relatively wealthy or held a position of some status in the locality.

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Excavations at North Duffield, 2018*

The second double-bounded enclosure to the south, of much smaller size, received limited attention with the sole aim of obtaining dating evidence. Trenches 5 and 6 were located over the boundary ditches of this enclosure, and the pottery recovered suggests it was roughly contemporary with the larger enclosure investigated to the north. Geophysical survey suggests there may be a ring-ditch within this southern enclosure, but further investigation will be necessary to properly ascertain its purpose.

Both enclosures adjoin a trackway or droveway that runs northwest-southeast, bounded by linear ditches. One such ditch was excavated in Trench 4, and the few pottery finds recovered dated from later in the Iron Age or into the Roman period. However, this ditch may well have represented a re-establishment of the trackway boundary, as the geophysical survey shows multiple ditches along the alignment of the trackway, suggesting there may be more than one phase to the feature.

A noticeable number of sherds of Medieval pottery were recovered from the buried plough soil layer and the present topsoil, but there were no extant features to suggest anything other than agricultural use of the site after the Roman period. It therefore seems likely that the pottery originated in night soil or similar waste from the nearby Medieval village of North Duffield. It's worth noting that the prehistoric and Roman features were all subject to truncation at the level of the buried plough soil, and were largely undisturbed by modern cultivation, implying that Medieval or post-Medieval agricultural processes on the site were significantly destructive.

While there were no coins found during the excavation, the significant number of later Roman wheel-turned vessels amongst the pottery assemblage indicates that there was at least regular interaction with Roman trade networks. There is also strong indication for iron smelting taking place on site, evidenced by large quantities of smelting slag and similar waste recovered, chiefly, from the enclosure ditches. A concentration of this material appears in Trench 6, which may suggest a function for the southern enclosure, but smelting waste was recovered from all trenches.

The extremely poor preservation conditions make analysis of the animal bone assemblage limited to ascertaining the presence of cattle, sheep or goats, and pigs at the site, with no deeper interpretation possible. Similarly, the biological evidence recovered from the environmental samples was minimal, providing no information on agriculture.

Dating of the settlement at North Duffield is fairly convincing, although further samples from across the site would provide a more definite chronology. The radiocarbon dates obtained from pottery residues in the main enclosure (see Figure 1) suggest that the settlement was first established in the Late Iron Age, or perhaps very late in the Middle Iron Age, and was occupied at least into the early Roman period. This corresponds well to much of the pottery dating, although the latter is less definite due to the continual use of calcite gritted wares from the early Iron Age right through to the late Roman period. However, some of the pottery indicates that use of the main enclosure continued well into the 3rd or 4th century AD, and such a long period of occupation is consistent with the many overlapping ring-ditches encountered in Trench 2. The rectangular beam slot structure encountered very high in the

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Excavations at North Duffield, 2018*

pre-Medieval sequence is perhaps also suggestive of a more Romanised population than the earlier round-houses.

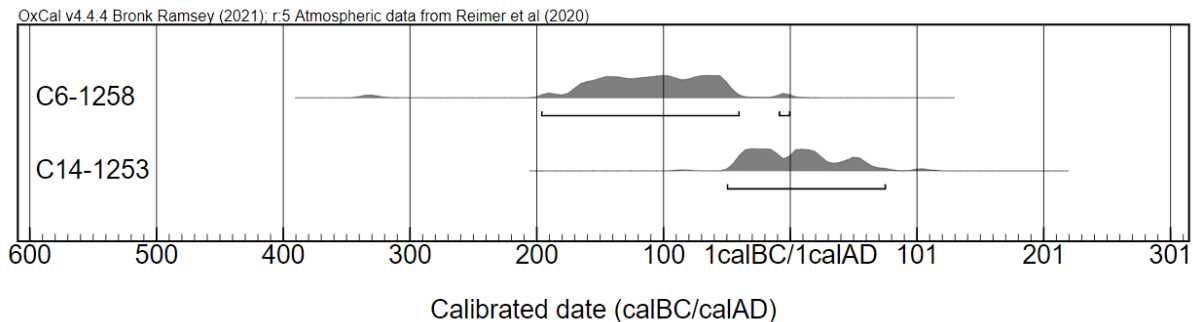


Figure 1. Radiocarbon dates from North Duffield.

No absolute dates were obtained for the southern enclosure or the trackway, but the morphology of the features, the spatial relationships, and the pottery recovered suggest that they were at least partially contemporary with the main enclosure. Further work would be necessary to determine if there is any closer relationship between these elements of the settlement.

In conclusion, the settlement at North Duffield appears to have been originally established late in the Middle Iron Age, with occupation continuing through until quite late in the Roman period. The main enclosure first contained at least one very large central round-house, but over time saw many smaller buildings constructed and reconstructed, leaving the palimpsest of ring-ditches uncovered in Trench 2. Towards the end of its occupation a sizeable rectangular building with beam slot foundations replaced the earlier round-houses, potentially indicating a more 'Romanised' population. There is little direct material evidence of agriculture, but this may be due to the extremely poor preservation conditions; the field boundaries and trackways visible in crop-mark evidence suggest the settlement was closely integrated with a well-organised agricultural system that covered much of the surrounding area.

There is considerable potential for future investigation of this settlement at North Duffield. More extensive earth resistance survey, in better conditions, might help to clarify the complex linear features that run northwest-southeast through the field. Less than 10% of the main enclosure was uncovered, and within that area only a small portion of any feature was excavated, so there is enormous potential for further understanding to be gained from excavation. Uncovering other parts of the enclosure may help to clarify the chronology of the settlement, particularly the earliest origins and the last period of occupation. Likewise, further excavations of the boundaries, ring-ditches and other features external to the main double-bounded enclosure would provide a more complete understanding of the broader settlement patterns across the field. In such a case, an emphasis should be placed on the interior of the southern enclosure, along with comprehensive dating in order to establish the chronology of the features and thus the development of the settlement over time. There is also an extensive spread of crop-mark evidence over the surrounding fields, including other ring-ditches and enclosures, and more work is still needed to fully understand how this

landscape fits within the context of the transition to 'Roman' Britain. Similarly, there is no doubt that the nearby River Derwent would have been of great importance to the inhabitants of this site, but how they interacted with and made use of it remains largely unknown.

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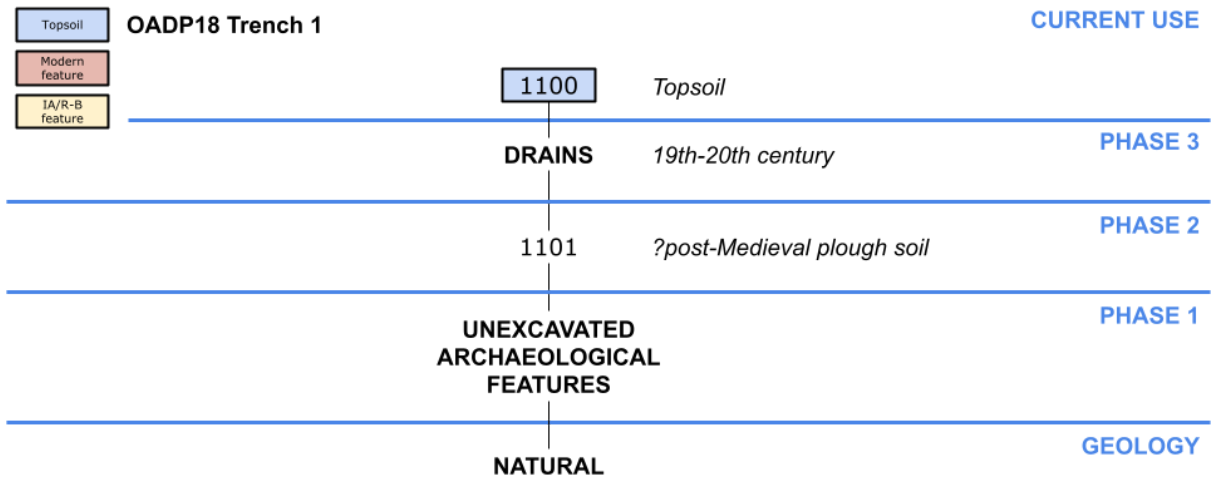
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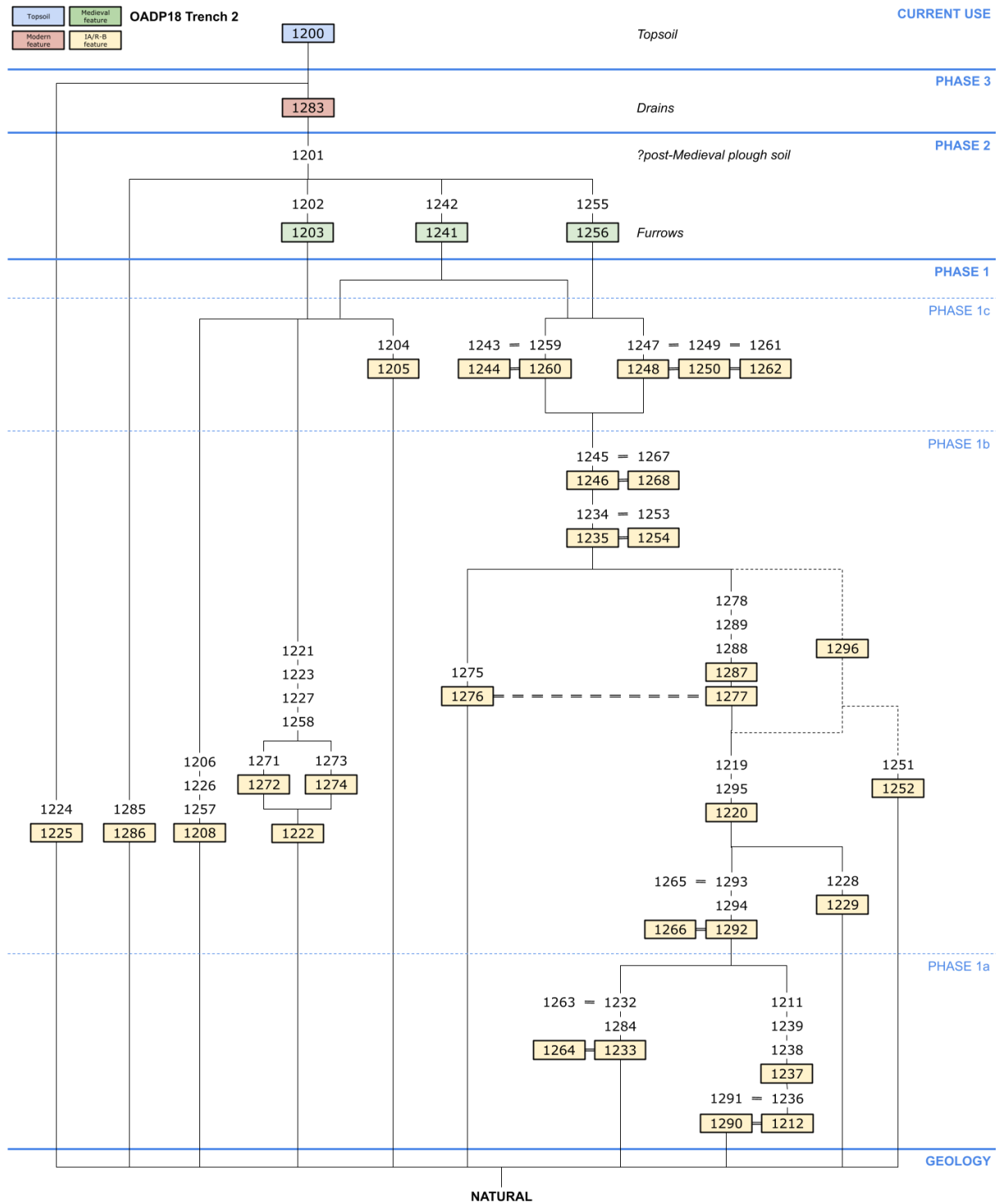
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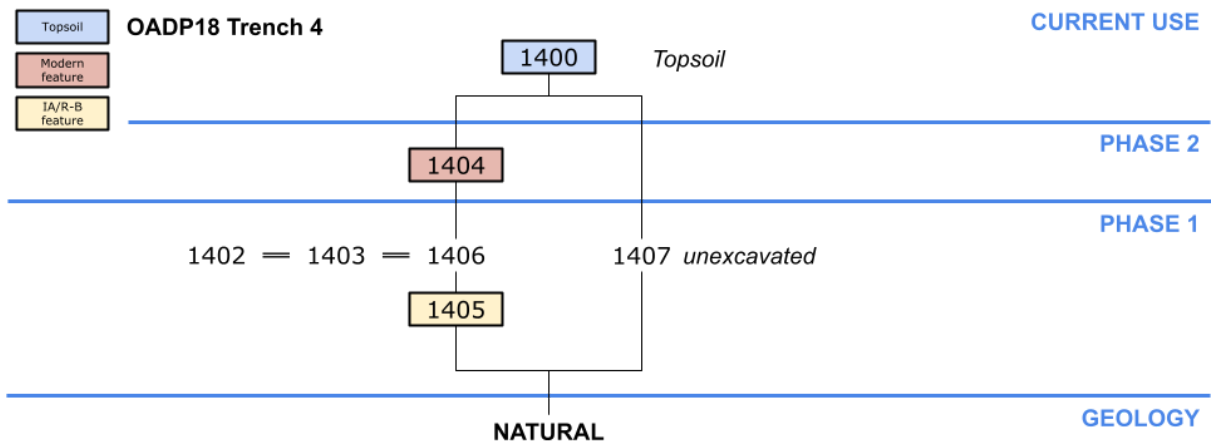
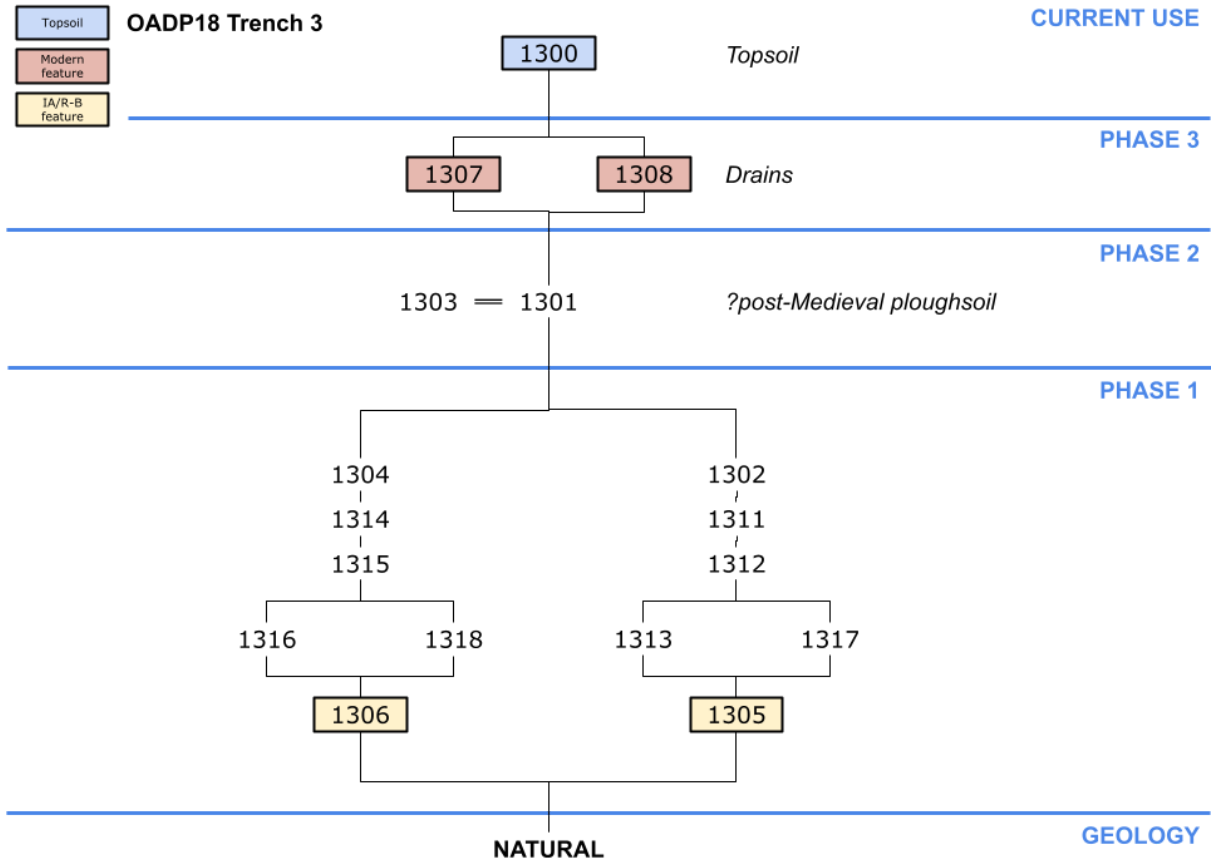
Appendix 1: Trench Matrices



Iron Age Ouse and Derwent Excavations at North Duffield, 2018



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Excavations at North Duffield, 2018*

