Park Street, Heytesbury, Wiltshire

An Archaeological Evaluation

for The Executors of George Sassoon

by Jo Pine

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code PSH07/40

Summary

Site name: Park Street, Heytesbury, Wiltshire

Grid reference: ST 9285 4270

Site activity: Field Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 3rd-10th April 2007

Project manager: Jo Pine

Site supervisor: Jo Pine

Site code: PSW07/40

Area of site: *c*. 1.6ha

Summary of results: The site has produced a number of finds and deposits of archaeological interest from the Bronze Age/Iron Age, and the Medieval periods

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Devizes Museum in due course.

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Steve Preston ✓ 03.05.07

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Report 07/40

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out on an L-shaped plot of land of c. 1.6ha located to the north of Park Street and the south of the A36, Heytesbury, Wiltshire (ST 9285 4270) (Fig. 1). The land is currently used as a football field. The work was commissioned by Mr Mike Fowler of Mike Fowler Architects, 19 High Street, Pewsey Wiltshire SN9 5AS on behalf of The Executors of George Sassoon, c/o Voisey and Co, 8 Winmarleigh Street, Warrington, Cheshire.

Planning permission (07/00214/FUL) is being sought from West Wiltshire District Council to redevelop part of the site for housing and construction of a new village hall and associated car parking. As a consequence of the possibility of archaeological deposits on the site, which may be destroyed or damaged by the proposed groundworks, a field evaluation has been requested to better inform the planning process. Two components of work were proposed; geophysical survey and field evaluation by means of machine trenching.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology* and *Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Sue Farr, Archaeological Officer with Wiltshire County Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Jo Pine, Ceri Falys and Steve Hammond between the 3rd and 10th April 2007, and the site code is PSH 07/40. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Devizes Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on undulating land which naturally slopes gently down to the east and south, however some of the slope is accentuated by the presence of what appears to be an artificial earthwork. Also within the southern and western part of the site are other upstanding earthworks, considered to be possible medieval remains. The east of the site has been landscaped to create a football pitch (Fig. 2).

According to the British Geological Survey, the underlying geology for the site consists of West Melbury marly chalk, part of the lower chalk formation (BGS 1996). This geology was observed within all the evaluation The site lies at a height of approximately 98m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in an advice letter to the District from Ms Sue Farr, assistant archaeologist for Wiltshire County Council. In summary the site lies in an area of archaeological potential as earthworks on the site were considered as indicative of medieval settlement. Heytesbury is recorded in Domesday Book (AD 1086) as *Hestrebe* when it was a very small manor held by Alweard, a priest, from the King (Willams and Martin 2002, 164). A medieval seal matrix was found on the site in the 1950s and an evaluation immediately to the east recorded deposits of medieval date and a ditch of early Iron Age date. Cotley Hill to the west is the site of at least one long and six round barrows.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological or palaeoenvironmental deposits within the area of development. The work was to be carried out in such a way that would not compromise the integrity of archaeological features or deposits which might warrant preservation *in situ*, or might better be excavated under conditions pertaining to full excavation.

The specific research aims of the project are:

To determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site.

To determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present.

To determine if any earthworks are still present on the site and are representative of medieval settlement.

It was proposed to excavate nine trenches, each 1.6m wide and 20m long, using a JCB-type mechanical excavator, fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under constant archaeological supervision. The trench locations were positioned after a walkover of the site in consultation with Ms Farr (Fig. 3). Trenches 1 and 2 were placed on the footprint of the proposed village hall and Trench 3 across the associated carparking towards the north-east portion of the site. Trenches 4 to 6 and 8-9 were located to target the observed earthworks.

Part of the site was occupied by an extant football pitch and thus was not to be evaluated by trenching. Instead, it was proposed that non-invasive geophysical survey was a more suitable method to examine this area of the site. This report is concerned only with machine trenching evaluation.

Monitoring of the project was carried out by Ms Sue Farr, Archaeological Officer with Wiltshire County Council. All changes to the agreed scheme and the recording of certain features were discussed and agreed on site.

Results

Out of a total of nine trenches, six (Trenches 1, 2, 3, 7, 8 and 9) contained possible archaeological deposits. However the findings of Trenches 4, 5 and 6 were also of significance in that modern made ground/rubble dumps were recorded within them which corresponded in part to the earthworks on the site. This indicates these are of modern origin and their superficial resemblance to medieval village house platforms is coincidental. The details of the trenches and stratigraphy encountered is presented in Appendix 1; feature details are summarized in Appendix 2.

Trench 1 (Figs 4, 7)

Trench 1 was aligned approximately north west-south east and was 19.9m in length and 0.70m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.21m of topsoil over a mid grey/brown silt (subsoil) which was 0.17m deep. This in turn sealed 0.27m of grey/brown silt (subsoil) above the natural geology (marl). A single posthole (1) at the north end of the trench, 0.30m in diameter and 0.28m deep with moderate gravel inclusions (62) produced 24 small crumbs of later prehistoric pottery.

Trench 2 (Figs 4, 7)

This was orientated approximately east-west and was 20.40m in length and 0.64m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.16m of topsoil over a mid grey/brown silt (subsoil) which was 0.16m deep. This in turn sealed 0.21m of grey silt (subsoil) above the natural geology (marl). A small posthole (2) 0.30m by 0.17m and 0.09m deep was recorded. From its grey/brown silty clay fill (54) 6 sherds of prehistoric pottery and a fragment of black polished bone were recovered. A gully (3) was also recorded and was 0.09m deep. No finds were recorded for its grey silty clay fill (55).

Trench 3 (Figs 5, 7)

This trench was aligned north west -south east across an earthwork. This was shown to be a modern earthwork created by the dumping of limestone (some dressed) and rubble and gravel, particularly at the north-eastern end of the trench. This may have been slightly truncated to the south east during levelling and inserting of a service. However, part of the slope is a natural topographic feature and has been accentuated by the modern dumping and

landscaping. This dumping is considered modern due to the extremely sterile and unstructured nature of the deposit, its extent and depth only 0.10m below a thin and undeveloped turf profile. This dumped material sealed a grey/brown silty clay buried soil (a relict A horizon) which was between 0.35m and 0.48m deep. This in turn sealed a light brown silty clay (subsoil) which sealed the natural geology.

Eight features were present in this trench. Gully 4 was parallel to gully 5 but the relationship between the two is unclear. Gully 4 was 0.2m wide and 0.09m deep and Gully 5 was 0.35m wide and 0.18m deep and contained a few fragments of burnt flint. Neither produced any dating evidence.

Pit 6 was 0.8m across and 0.14m deep. Its grey clayey silt fill (58) contained three sherds of later prehistoric pottery. Feature 7 was also a pit, 0.42m across and 0.29m deep. It had two fills: an upper fill of grey clayey silt (59) which produced 3 sherds of later prehistoric pottery and a struck flint; and a lower fill of a grey/brown clayey silt (60). Feature 8 was a gully, also broadly parallel to gullies 4 and 5; the excavated slot was 0.52m across and 0.12m deep. It was undated. Features 9 and 25 are circular and probably pits but were not excavated. However, two sherds of early prehistoric pottery were recovered from the surface of pit 9. Similarly a probable large pit (26) and a probable gully (27) were unexcavated.

Trench 4 (Figs 6, 7)

This trench was aligned approximately east-west, slightly moved due to the presence of a large tree and access issues. The stratigraphy comprised 0.1m of turf above a dump of dressed limestone blocks and rubble, 0.25m deep to the west and 0.1m deep to the east. This sealed a grey brown silty clay buried soil which was 0.40m deep which in turn sealed a light grey clayey silt (subsoil) which was 0.05m deep. This overlay the chalky marl natural geology. A late post-medieval or modern pit (10) truncating the lower light grey silt deposit (subsoil) contained slate, clinker and tile fragments. At the east end of the trench two shallow features (11 and 12) considered to be gullies, appeared to curve gently but had been disturbed at their western end. One gully truncated the other but it was not possible to clarify the sequence. There is some doubt about the authenticity of these features and they may be of periglacial origin.

Trench 5 (Plate 1)

This trench was aligned north west - south east and moved slightly from its intended location due to the presence of a service pipe. It was 20m long and 0.78m deep. The stratigraphy was similar to Trench 4, with turf 0.10m deep over a dump of dressed limestone blocks and rubble c.0.20m deep. This sealed a grey/brown silty clay

buried soil which was 0.30m deep which in turn sealed a light grey clayey silt, 0.13m deep. This overlay the natural geology, chalky marl. No archaeological deposits were recorded.

Trench 6

This trench was aligned approximately north east - south west and was 19.7m long and up to 1.05m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.1m of turf above a dump of dressed limestone blocks and rubble, 0.30 m deep. This sealed a mid grey/brown silty clay buried soil which was 0.40m deep which in turn sealed a light grey clayey silt which was 0.20 m deep. No archaeological deposits were recorded.

<u>Trench 7</u> (Figs 6, 7; Pl. 2,)

Trench 7 was aligned north east - south west and was 20m in length and 0.75m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.4m of topsoil which contained many tree roots, over a grey clayey silt (subsoil) which was 0.3m deep, which in turn sealed the natural geology (chalky marl). Three postholes (16, 17 and 18) were recorded Posthole 16 was oval in plan, 0.42m and 0.39m deep but its grey/brown clayey silt fill (66) produced no finds. Posthole 17 was 0.15m by 0.31m and 0.19m deep. It had two fills, an upper fill (70) a grey/brown clayey silt and a lower fill (71) a grey clayey silt. Neither fill produced any finds. Feature 18 was not excavated. The terminal of a shallow gully (19) was also excavated and showed it was 0.30m wide and 0.07m deep. The grey/ brown clayey silt fill (73) contained no finds.

Trench 8 (Figs 6, 8; Pl. 3)

Trench 8 was aligned south-north and was 18.0m in length and up to 0.85m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.34m of topsoil over a grey silt (subsoil) which was 0.18m deep. This in turn sealed the natural geology (marl). A test pit was dug at the south end to a depth of 0.87m to confirm the nature of the stratigraphy.

A complex of archaeology was revealed in this trench along with some modern disturbance. A gully terminal was investigated by two slots (14/20). The gully was 0.42m across and 0.15m deep. It had a single fill (68/75) of brown/grey clayey silt but produced no finds. A second possible gully (23), parallel to 14/20, was 0.28m wide and 0.05m deep. It produced no finds.

Feature 15 is a doubtful pit and is possibly a tree hole or a disturbed area. Two sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from its loose grey clayey silt fill (69).

Pit 22 was partly truncated by a modern pit (21) and its full extent is unknown. It contained up to three fills (82-84), one of which (84) contained five sherds of medieval pottery.

Trench 9 (Figs 4, 8; Pl. 4)

Trench 9 was aligned approximately south-north and was 19.8m in length and up to 0.76m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.3m of topsoil over a grey silt (subsoil) which was 0.2m deep. This in turn sealed the natural geology (marl). A dump of chalk lay above the cut features. A service pipe traversed the trench. A ditch (13) was revealed which contained 3 fills (67, 87, 88) from which were recovered 24 sherds of medieval pottery. The ditch was 0.57m deep with a v-shaped profile. It cut pit 24 which contained a grey silt fill (88) from which 17 sherds of medieval pottery were recovered.

Finds

Pottery by Jane Timby

The archaeological evaluation resulted in the recovery of a small assemblage of 89 sherds of pottery, weighing 516g, dating to the prehistoric and medieval periods. Pottery was recovered from seven of the nine trenches (Trenches 1-4, 7-9), and 14 defined contexts from 11 features. Four sherds were recovered from the spoil. The prehistoric material was poorly preserved with small, very abraded sherds; the medieval sherds were in a slightly better state of preservation. The overall average sherd weight was just 5.8g. For the purposes of the assessment the assemblage was scanned to assess its likely chronology and quantified by sherd count and weight for each recorded context. The resulting data are summarized in Appendix 3.

Prehistoric

Some 33 sherds have been designated prehistoric but this includes 24 tiny crumbs of indeterminate date. There are no diagnostic sherds present on which to hinge any dating. A single, worn bodysherd with a coarse calcined flint temper from Trench 2 spoil is probably of earlier prehistoric date. Two further oxidized sherds from pit 9 in Trench 3 could be of similar date. These are in a fine sandy fabric with sparse calcareous inclusions (chalk and shell) and flint.

The complete base of a handmade closed form was recovered from posthole/pit 2 (54). This is in a soft orange-brown sandy fabric with a grey core and rare iron and flint. This piece cannot be dated closer than Bronze Age or Iron Age. The surfaces were covered in a thin calcareous post-depositional deposit. A similar trace of such a deposit was visible on some of the 24 crumbs from pit 1 (53) suggesting potential contemporaneity. These were in a dark grey fine sandy fabric. The final sherds placed in this group came from pit 6 (58), one also with a surface patina.

Medieval

Some 45 sherds are dated to the medieval – early post-medieval period. These include several sherds of a micaceous sandy ware with sparse flint, generally referred to as West Wiltshire ware fabric used for jars/cooking pots. Sherds of this ware were recovered from Trench 8 feature 22, marl pit 21 and pit 15; the spoil from Trench 7 and , ditch 13 [Trench 9] suggesting these features belong to the same episode of activity.

Evidence from Warminster suggest that West Wiltshire ware dates back to the 11th century continuing into the 13th century, overlapping with Laverstock ware. One single possible piece of this latter ware was associated with a sherd of West Wiltshire ware in ditch 13 suggesting this is likely to date to the 12th or 13th century.

Marl pit 21 also contained a sherd of scratch-marked sandy ware and feature 24 produced 17 sherds from a single jug. This is in a fine orange micaceous sandy ware and is decorated with bands of white slip forming a geometric design over which there is a patchy green glaze. This vessel is also likely to date to the 13th or 14th century.

Pit 10 (63) contained two sherds of a micaceous red ware with a dark green glaze with further similar sherds from ditch 13 (67) which appear to be slightly later in date, possibly 15th-16th century though these finds are residual as this feature is considered to be of late 19th century date.

Pit 7 (59) contained eight small sherds, which have been left undated. Six of these sherds had an oolitic limestone temper indicating a source in the Cotswolds. In view of the other material from the site it is most likely that these come from a medieval Cotswold ware jar (but the feature also produced two struck flints). The other two pieces in this group are probably fragments of fired clay/ daub. This fabric did not occur in any of the other features.

Animal Bone by Ceri Falys

A small assemblage of animal bone was excavated from eight contexts (Appendix 4). A total of 34 pieces were analysed, weighing 213g. All bone was highly fragmented and very poorly preserved. Surface damage due to root activity was observed on numerous pieces. The preservation of the remains had a detrimental effect on the ability to identify species as well as skeletal elements present in the assemblage. The only identifiable species of the remains was sheep/goat, due to the presence of a right calcaneus in feature 2 (54). Evidence of cutmarks was observed on a rib in feature 21 (81) and a medium-sized bovid metapodial shaft from feature 13 (86). Three fragments from 2 (54) were blackened, indicating some burning took place. No further information could be retrieved from the remains.

Struck Flint by Steve Ford

A small collection comprising just 5 struck flints was recovered during the course of the evaluation. These

comprise a retouched flake from pit 7 (59); two broken flakes and a spall from trench 4, and a spall from feature

22 (83). None of the items are closely datable in themselves and could be of Neolithic or Bronze Age date.

However, the pieces from pit 7 are stratified with undated pottery and it is suggested that these finds together

indicate a prehistoric date. The finds from feature 22 are residual.

Other Finds

Two iron nails were recovered, one from each of ditch 13 and pit 21. Thirteen pieces of burnt flint weighing

143g were recovered from six contexts, two of which were prehistoric pits 6 and 7. A peg tile fragment, clinker

and a slate fragment were recovered from 19th-century pit 10. Two oyster shells were recovered from medieval

ditches 13 and 24.

Conclusion

This evaluation has successfully examined the archaeological potential of the site. It has shown that the

'earthworks' on the site, considered as possible examples of medieval village earthworks, are in fact a product of

modern dumping. However, beneath this modern dumping it has indicated the presence of archaeological

remains. Two periods are represented; an earlier, prehistoric phase of later Bronze Age or Iron Age date and a

later, medieval phase. Whilst an area of the site occupied by the current football pitch could not be trenched, the

disposition of trenches containing archaeological deposits around two sides of the football pitch suggests that the

results of the evaluation can be extrapolated with a reasonable degree of confidence into that part of the proposal

site currently occupied by the football pitch.

The site therefore clearly has archaeological potential with deposits present likely to be of local

significance, at least in terms of the development of the medieval village and potentially also the prehistoric

landscape.

References

BGS, 1996, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 297, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO

Williams, A and Martin, G H, 2002, Domesday Book, a complete translation, London

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APPENDIX 1: Trench details

Trench	Length (m)	Breadth (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	
1	19.90	1.60	0.70	0-0.21m topsoil; 0.21-0.38m grey/brown silt (subsoil); 0.38m- 0.65m brown/grey silt	
				(subsoil); 0.65m+ Natural geology (marl). Feature 1	
2	20.40	1.60	0.64	0-0.16m topsoil; 0.16-0.32m grey/brown silt (subsoil); 0.32-0.53m grey silt (subsoil);	
				0.53-m+ Natural geology. Features 2 and 3	
3	20.00	1.60	0.90 (NE)	0-0.1m topsoil; 0.1-0.19m rubble; 0.19-0.35m sand/gravel (made ground); 0.35-0.7m	
			0.72 (SW)	buried topsoil; 0.7m+ Natural geology (marl). Features 4-9	
4	17.80	1.60	0.80	0-0.1m topsoil; 0.1-0.35m rubble; 0.35m- 0.75m grey silt (subsoil); 0.75-0.8m light	
				grey silt; 0.80m+ Natural geology (marl). Feature 10, possible features 11 and 12.	
5	20.00	1.60	0.86	0-0.1m topsoil; 0.1-0.35m rubble; 0.35m- 0.65m buried soil; 0.65-0.78m light grey	
				silt (subsoil); 0.78m+ Natural geology (marl). [Plate 1]	
6	19.70	1.60	0.9 (NE)	0-0.1m topsoil; 0.1-0.4m rubble; 0.4m- 0.7m buried soil; 0.7-0.9m grey silt (subsoil);	
			1.05 (mid)	0.9m+ light grey silt; 0.80m+ Natural geology (marl).	
7	20.00	1.60	0.75	0-0.4m topsoil/ tree roots; 0.40-0.70m grey silt (subsoil); 0.70m+ Natural geology	
				(marl). Features 16-19 [Plate 2]	
8	18.00	1.60	0.85 (N)	0-0.34m topsoil; 0.34-0.52m grey silt (subsoil); 0.52m+ Natural geology (marl).	
			0.52 (S)	Features 14,15 20-23 [Plate 3]	
9	19.80	1.60	0.62 (N)	0-0.25m topsoil; 0.25-0.65m grey/brown silt (subsoil) and made ground (chalk);	
			0.7 (S)	0.65m+ Natural geology (marl). Features 13, 25 [Plate 4]	

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

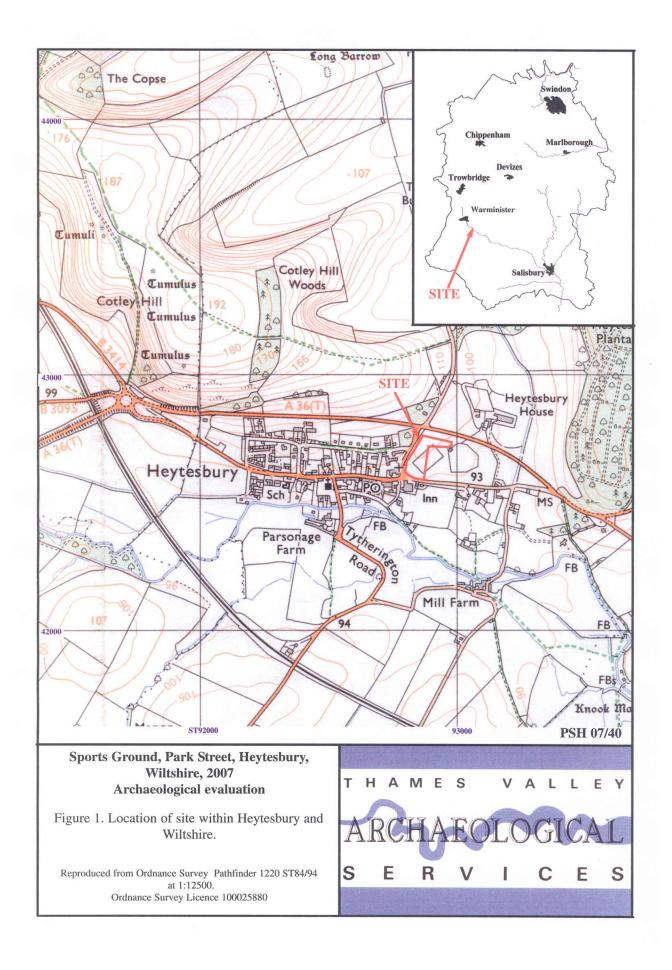
Trench	Cut	Fill (s)	Туре	Date	Dating evidence
1	1	53	Posthole	Later prehistoric?	Pottery
2	2	54	Posthole	Later prehistoric	Pottery
2	3	55	Gully slot?	-	-
3	4	56	Gully slot	-	-
3	5	57	Gully slot	-	-
3	6	58	Pit	Later prehistoric	Pottery
3	7	59, 60	Pit	Later prehistoric	Flint, pottery?
3	8	61	Gully slot	•	-
3	9	62	Pit (not dug)	Prehistoric?	Pottery
4	10	63	Pit	19th-20th century	Slate, tile
4	11	64	Gully?	-	-
4	12	65	Gully?		-
9	13	67, 86, 87	Ditch	Medieval	Pottery
8	14	68	Gully		-
8	15	69	Pit/treehole- doubtful	Medieval	Pottery
7	16	66	Posthole		-
7	17	70, 71	Posthole		=
7	18	72	Posthole (not dug)		-
7	19	73	Gully		-
8	20	75	Gully terminal		-
8	21	76-81	Pit (large)	Modern	Stratigraphy
8	22	82-84	Pit? Medieval		Pottery
8	23	85	Gully		= .
9	24	88	Pit	Medieval	Pottery
3	25	74	Pit (not dug)		-
3	26		Pit (not dug		
3	27		Gully (not dug		

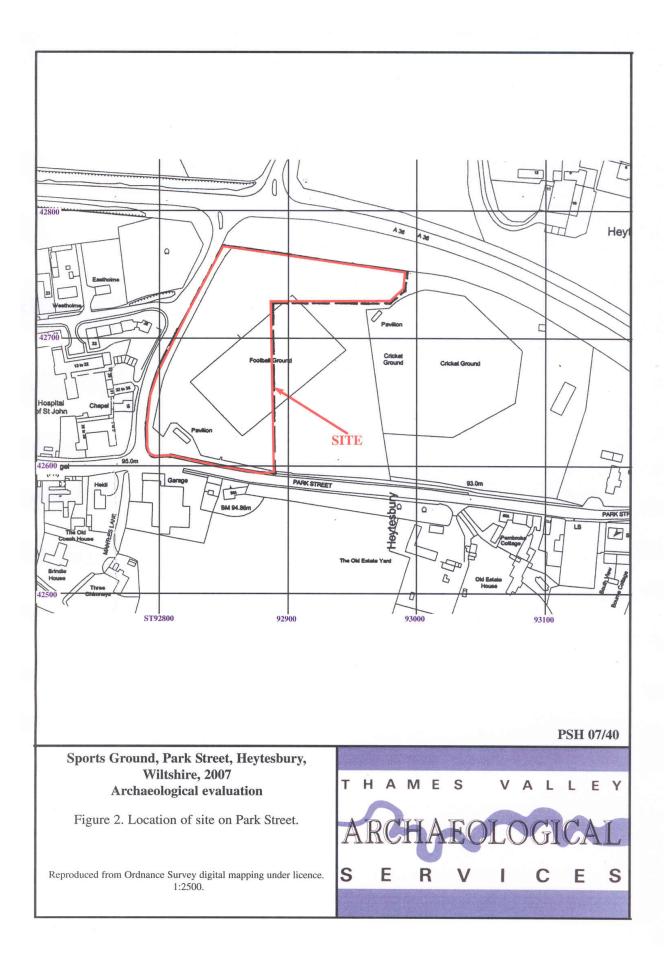
APPENDIX 3: Pottery Catalogue

Trench	Cut	-	Early Prehistoric		Medieval	Undated		Total Wt (g)
1	1	53		24			24	3
2		spoil	1				1	6
2	2	54		6			6	141
3	6	58		3			3	15
3	7	59				8	8	12
3	9	62	2				2	10
4	10	63			1		1	58
7		spoil			1		1	5
7		spoil			1		1	4
8		spoil			1		1	9
8	15	69			2		2	14
8	21	77			2		2	11
8	21	81			3		3	13
8	22	84			5		5	19
9	13	67			5		5	64
9	13	86			1		1	10
9	13	87			6		6	43
9	24	88			17		17	79
TOTAL			3	33	45	8	89	516

Appendix 4 – Inventory of animal bone

Area	Cut	Deposit	No Frags	WT (g)	Identified Species	Comments
Tr 2		54	4	14	Sheep / Goat	3 fragments burnt
Tr 3		58	2	1	-	Highly Fragmented
Tr 3		59	2	2	-	Highly Fragmented
Tr 9	13	67	1	6	-	-
Tr 8	21	81	1	4	Medium sized bovid	Rib with cut marks
Tr 9	13	86	4	80	-	Cut marks on metapodial shaft
Tr 9	13	87	16	100	-	Highly Fragmented
Tr 9	24	88	4	6	-	Highly Fragmented
		Total	34	213		





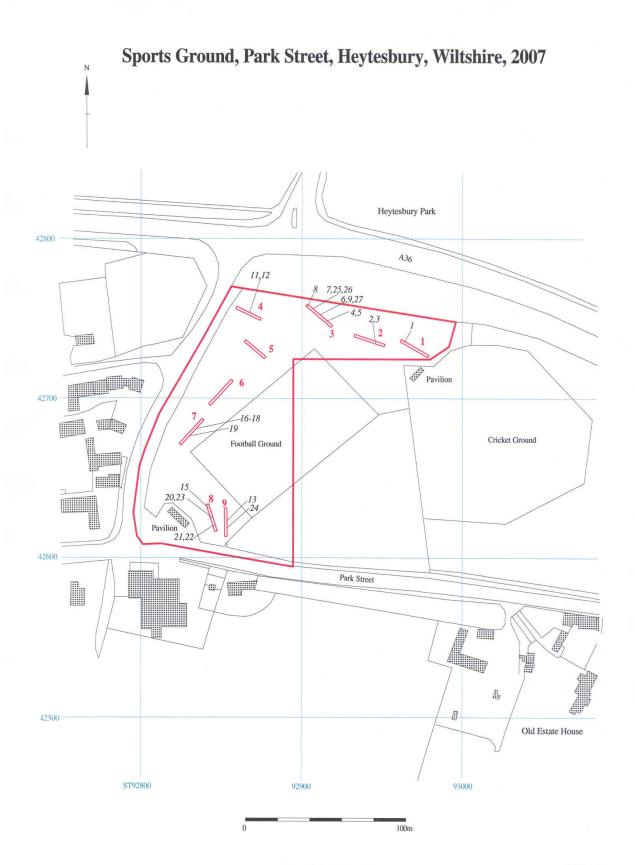
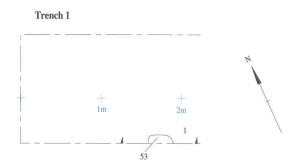
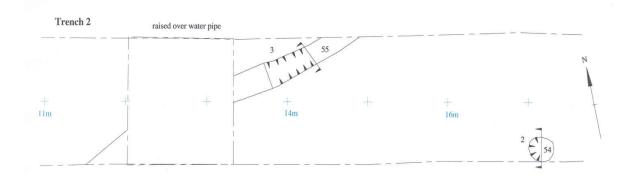


Figure 3. Trench locations..





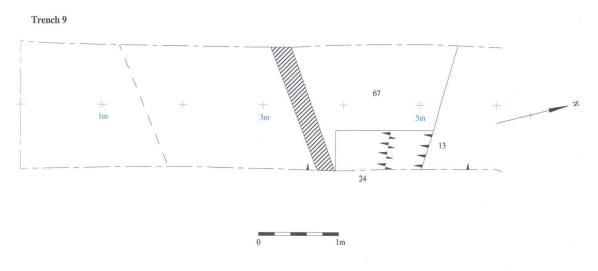
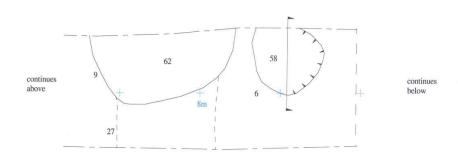
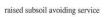


Figure 4. Plans of trenches 1, 2 and 9.

Trench 3







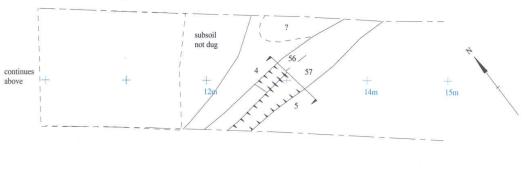
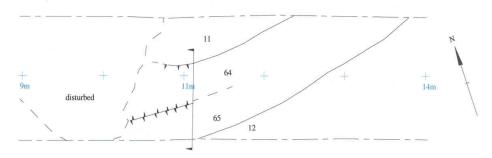


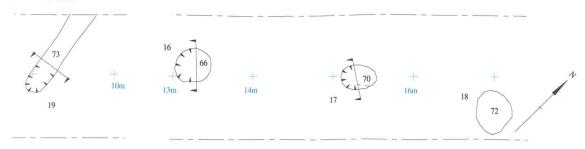
Figure 5. Plan of trench 3.

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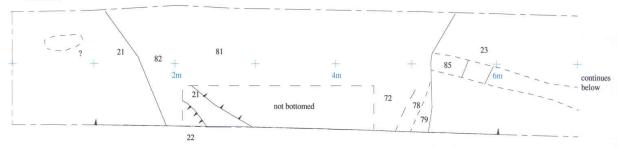
Trench 4



Trench 7



Trench 8



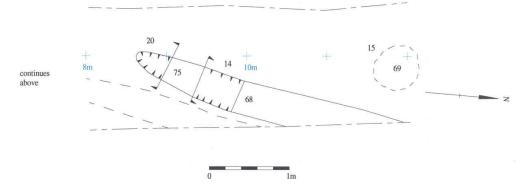


Figure 6. Plans of trenches 4,7 and 8.

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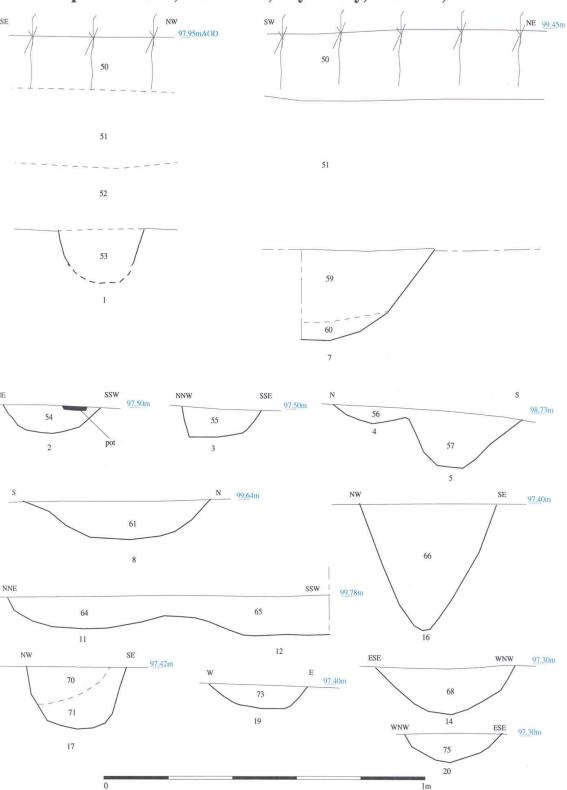


Figure 7. Sections

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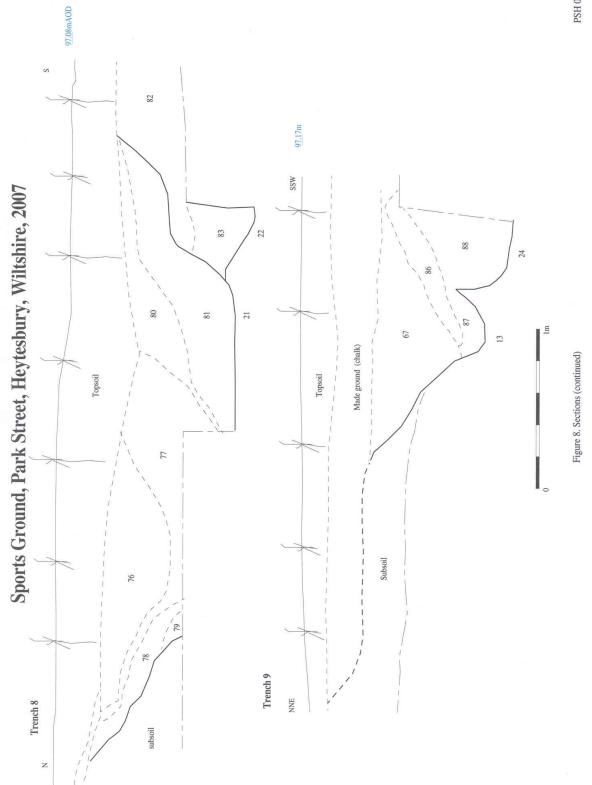




Plate 1. Trench 5 looking south-east, scales; 2m.



Plate 2. Trench 7, pit 16, looking north-east, horizontal scale 0.5m; vertical scale 0.3m





Plate 3. Trench 8, linear sections 14 and 20, looking north, scales; 0.5 m and 0.3 m.



Plate 4. Trench 9, feature 13 and 24, looking east, horizontal scale 0.5m; vertical scale 0.3m and 0.1m.

