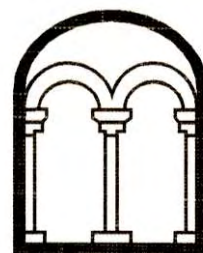


**LAND TO THE REAR OF 93 AYLESBURY ROAD
ASTON CLINTON
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION
FINAL REPORT**

Albion
archaeology



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FINAL REPORT**

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Preface

All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. This document has been prepared for the titled project or named part thereof and was prepared solely for the benefit of the client. This document should not be relied upon or used for any other project without an independent check being carried out as to its suitability and the prior written authority of Albion Archaeology (a trading unit of Central Bedfordshire Council).

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Albion Archaeology was commissioned to carry out the archaeological works by Rectory (Aston Clinton) Ltd. The project was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Eliza Alqassar, Buckinghamshire County Council Archaeology Officer.

The archaeological excavation was supervised by Ian Turner under the direction of Wesley Keir (Project Officer) and management of Robert Wardill (Project Manager). Investigation and recording were carried out by Ian Turner, Adrian Woolmer, Anna Orłowska-Synus, Matt Billings, Catie Watts, and Ernie Rizzo (Archaeological Assistant Supervisors / Archaeological Technicians). This document has been prepared by Ian Turner, with contributions by Jackie Wells (Albion Archaeology Finds Officer), John Giorgi (freelance specialist in environmental remains), Natasha Powers (human osteologist, Allen Archaeology) and James Rackham (palaeo-environmental specialist, Environmental Archaeology Consultancy).

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Key Terms

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

AO	Archaeology Officer of the BCC Historic Environment Service
AVDC	Aylesbury Vale District Council
BCAS	Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service
BCC	Buckinghamshire County Council
CI/A	Chartered Institute <i>for</i> Archaeologists
LPA	Local Planning Authority
WSI	Written scheme of investigation



Non-technical Summary

Aylesbury Vale District Council granted Rectory (Aston Clinton) Ltd outline planning permission (16/00780/AOP) for housing development on land to the rear of 93 Aylesbury Road, Aston Clinton, Buckinghamshire.

A condition attached to the planning consent (Condition 13) required the implementation of a programme of archaeological investigation as a consequence of the development.

Archaeological field evaluation, completed in December 2016, had indicated that the north-eastern half of the development site retained archaeological potential. As a result, the Archaeology Officer of Buckinghamshire County Council issued an Archaeological Design Brief setting out a requirement for open-area archaeological excavation within this part of the development site. The archaeological excavation was carried out between May and June 2017.

Given the nature of the recovered data sets, it was agreed with the Archaeology Officer that this report would present the results of all stages of the archaeological investigations, including any required analysis of the results.

The earliest and most notable archaeological features revealed were boundary ditches and an enclosure dating to the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age. Their location and, albeit small, finds assemblage suggest that the related settlement focus is likely to have lain to the west and north-west of the site. Later features were largely associated with the site's agricultural use during the medieval and post-medieval periods, consisting of a series of furrows pre-dating the upstanding ridge and furrow earthworks within the site. A distinct area temporarily set aside for quarrying, probably during the late medieval/early post-medieval period, was also revealed.

Following approval of this report by the Archaeology Officer, the archive of materials (subject to the landowner's permission) and accompanying records will be deposited with the Buckinghamshire County Museum (accession number AYBCM: 2016.125). A summary of the investigations will be published in Records of Buckinghamshire and the CBA South Midlands annual report; this report will also be uploaded onto the ADS Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS ref: albionar1-281061).



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 **Project Background**

Aylesbury Vale District Council granted Rectory (Aston Clinton) Ltd outline planning permission (16/00780/AOP) for housing development on land to the rear of 93 Aylesbury Road, Aston Clinton, Buckinghamshire.

A condition attached to the planning consent (Condition 13) required the implementation of a programme of archaeological investigation as a consequence of the development. Archaeological field evaluation, completed in December 2016, had indicated that the development site contained archaeological remains that largely comprised pits and ditches, all located in the north-eastern half of the development site (Albion Archaeology 2017a). Although only sparse dating material was obtained from these features, the quantity of pits and ditches and their proximity to known archaeological remains to the north-east suggested that the site retained archaeological potential.

For this reason and in accordance with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012), the Archaeology Officer (AO) of Buckinghamshire County Council issued an Archaeological Design Brief (BCAS 2017) setting out a requirement for open-area archaeological excavation within the north-eastern half of the development site.

The archaeological excavation was carried out between May and June 2017 in accordance with the Brief (BCAS 2017) and a Written Scheme of Investigation (Albion Archaeology 2017b) approved by the AO on behalf of the local planning authority.

1.2 **Status and Purpose of this Document**

Given the nature of the recovered data sets, it was agreed with the AO that this report would present the results of all stages of the archaeological investigations, including any required analysis of the results.

1.3 **Site Location and Description**

The village of Aston Clinton lies on the northern slopes of the Chiltern Hills in the Aylesbury Vale, c. 5km to the east of Aylesbury and c. 3km west of Tring. The A41 now bypasses the village to the north but its original route still forms the main road through the village following the line of the Roman Akeman Street. Within the village the former A41 is called London Road, but it changes its name to Aylesbury Road when it passes the junction with Weston Road to the south-east of the site.

The site lies to the north of 93 Aylesbury Road (Figure 1) and at the time of the archaeological investigation consisted of a paddock containing the remnants of ridge and furrow earthworks. It is situated on level ground at a height of c. 90m OD and is bounded to the south by residential properties fronting onto Aylesbury Road and to the north, east and west by further paddocks and arable fields; a brook runs along the north-eastern edge of the



site. The underlying geology consists of Gault Formation And Upper Greensand Formation (undifferentiated) – Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone¹.

The excavation area measured c. 0.85ha and was located within the north-eastern half of the development site centred on grid reference SP 87467 12458.

1.4 Archaeological and Historical Background

1.4.1 Archaeological evaluation of the site

The trial trenching took place between 28th November and 12th December 2016 and comprised the excavation of fourteen trenches.

Medieval / post-medieval furrows and modern drains were found to be present across the site; some of the furrows corresponded with upstanding ridge and furrow earthworks. Archaeological features, which included a number of pits and ditches, were revealed within the trenches in the north-eastern half of the site; these features produced virtually no artefacts.

The ditches were interpreted as probable field system boundaries. The purpose of the pits was uncertain; some of the larger ones were thought likely to be quarries. One of the features contained fragments of a human cranium, which might have originated from a burial disturbed in antiquity, but its significance was uncertain.

Due to the paucity of artefacts, dating of the features was problematic, though by comparison with the results from the Brook Farm excavation to the north-east (Albion Archaeology 2017c), a broad medieval date was tentatively suggested.

1.4.2 The wider historic and archaeological background

A heritage statement was compiled in April 2015 (Albion Archaeology 2015) to accompany the planning application. The document reviewed known heritage assets recorded in the Historic Environment Record (HER) in the vicinity of the site and a 500m-radius study area around it and assessed the potential for further assets within the site itself. Its main conclusions are summarised here, together with more recent evidence from evaluations in the vicinity of the site.

Aston Clinton lies at the junction of the Icknield Way, thought to be prehistoric in origin, and Roman Akeman Street, a major routeway from Roman London to Cirencester. The present-day Aylesbury Road follows the line of Akeman Street (010500).

The data of known prehistoric and Roman settlement sites in the HER suggests a wide corridor of settlement along this Roman road (Alquassar 2016). For example, late Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman settlement remains, including the existence of a Roman trackway on the same line as Akeman Street, were

¹ 'British Geological Survey Geology of Britain Viewer' <http://www.bgs.ac.uk>. Accessed 09/01/2018



excavated during investigations of the Aston Clinton bypass to the west and north of the site (Masefield 2008).

Excavations at the Arla Dairy site, c. 1km to the north of the site, revealed a late Iron Age/ Romano-British settlement located on a slight ridge of ground situated adjacent to ponds and marshy ground. Similarly, excavations at Stablebridge Road, c. 1 km to the south-east of the site encountered a significant late Iron Age/early Roman settlement and the course of the Lower Icknield Way.

Closer to the site, several prehistoric and Roman find-spots are known. Evidence for a possible late Iron Age settlement was retrieved during the machine-digging of a pond c. 500m to the east of the site (0572500, 0572501). Work during the pond-digging recorded a possible hearth structure and “plentiful” Belgic pottery. A number of Iron Age coins were found by metal-detecting in a field c. 500m west of the site (MBC 31953, 32054, 32055, 32056, 32100).

A number of ditches of possible Roman date were excavated during an evaluation of the land adjacent to the site in the east. The ditches were possibly part of a Roman field system (076850, EBC17571). The absence of any artefacts, with the exception of one sherd of Roman pottery in the fill of one of the ditches, suggests that they were not near any Roman settlement. The ditches were parallel to existing field boundaries, suggesting the possible antiquity of the current field system.

Aston Clinton was recorded in Domesday Book (1086), suggesting it has at least late Saxon origins. The site lies within part of field systems that were adjacent to the medieval settlement; ridge and furrow earthworks survive within the site. Field systems and enclosures dating to the medieval and post-medieval periods were revealed during excavation 60m to the north-east of the site on the other side of the brook (Albion Archaeology 2017c).

To the east of the site, possible medieval plot boundaries, which contained abraded and residual Romano-British pottery sherds, were excavated at Park Farm, adjacent to Church Lane. The evaluation report notes that Church Lane follows the general NE–SW alignment of prehistoric trackways and boundaries in the vicinity and, therefore, a Roman date for the ditches cannot be discounted (Cotswold Archaeology 2016, 2).

1.5 Project Objectives

The primary function of the archaeological works was to determine and understand the nature, function and character of the site in its cultural and environmental setting, and to prepare and disseminate a report that fully describes the findings (this document).

The general objective was to advance understanding of the historic environment at a local and regional scale with particular reference to the relevant research agendas for the region as set out within *Solent-Thames: Research Framework for the Historic Environment: Resource Assessments*



and Research Agendas (Hey and Hind 2014). The following project specific objectives were identified in the project brief (BCAS 2017):

1. Establish the chronology, layout and development and economic function (e.g. arable/pastoral) of any identifiable field system(s)/droveways and associated features (e.g. crop-processing or storage areas).
2. Establish the chronology, character, status and economic basis of any occupation and investigate its relationship to the field system(s). If necessary, confirm the dating of the earliest and final phases of occupation by scientific dating.
3. Establish the extent, date and character of any ritual or burial remains and investigate the nature of such activities conducted on the site and their relationship to settlement and fields.
4. Interpret the results of the project within the context of current knowledge and research on the relevant periods in the region, specifically how the buried archaeological remains compare with other sites recorded in the area, such as Land North of Brook Farm.
5. Carry out a programme of environmental sampling to further understanding of the palaeo-environment of the site.



2 METHODOLOGY

The area of excavation measured c. 0.85 ha and targeted the archaeological features revealed during trial trenching within the north-eastern half of the site (Figure 1).

All topsoil and overburden was removed by a mechanical excavator using a toothless bucket, operating under close archaeological supervision.

Deposits encountered were investigated and recorded in accordance with Albion's *Procedures Manual*.

Throughout the project the standards set out in the following documents have been adhered to:

• Albion Archaeology	<i>Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> (2nd ed, 2002).
• Archaeological Archives Forum	<i>Archaeological Archives: A Guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation</i> (2nd ed. 2011)
• Buckinghamshire County Museum	<i>Procedures for Notifying and Transferring Archaeological Archives</i> (rev. 2013)
• ClfA	<i>Charter and by-Law</i> (2014); <i>Code of Conduct</i> (2014) <i>Standard and guidance for archaeological excavation</i> (2014) <i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i> (2014)
• English Heritage	<i>Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation. 2nd ed. (2011)</i>
• Historic England	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)</i> (2015)

A detailed methodology is provided in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Albion Archaeology 2017b).



3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

All archaeological features and deposits revealed during the archaeological works are discussed chronologically below and shown on Figures 2–5. Full details of the artefacts and ecofacts recovered are contained in Appendix 1.

3.2 Overburden and Undisturbed Geological Deposits

The overburden was fairly uniform in character but varied in thickness across the site due to the surviving ridge and furrow earthworks.

It comprised 0.15–0.30m of topsoil above 0.10–0.25m of mid-brown-grey silty clay subsoil. This overlay undisturbed geological deposits, which varied across the excavation area; within the central and north-eastern parts of the site closest to the brook these consisted of light yellow-white silty gravels and to the south-west, of broad bands of mid-orange-grey clay and light orange silty clay.

A generally W–E aligned band of palaeochannel deposits G1/G24 — the remains of a former watercourse — was located beneath the subsoil within the central part of the site (Figure 2). The deposits varied from light grey-white silt and gravel to mid-brown silty clay. The current watercourse — known as the Bear Brook — runs along the north-eastern edge of the site.

3.3 Phase 1: Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age Features and Deposits (Figure 2)

3.3.1 Boundary and enclosure within the western corner of the site

A NE–SW aligned ditch G4, measuring 0.96–1.1m wide and 0.44m deep, was revealed within the western corner of the site; it was filled with a mid orange-grey to brown-grey silty clay, which produced two sherds of late Bronze Age/early Iron Age pottery.

The ditch was truncated by ditches G5/G6, defining the south-west and south-east sides of an enclosure that appeared to respect the NE–SW aligned boundary previously defined by ditch G4. Ditch G5 was 1.5–2.05m wide, 0.25–0.7m deep and contained deposits that varied from mid-orange-grey silty clay to dark orange-grey silty clay.

Following the same course as ditch G5, ditch G6 appears to represent a re-cut of the earlier ditch. It was of a similar size but contained a slightly darker fill — a mid-brown silty clay to dark grey-black clay silt. A modest number of late Bronze Age/early Iron Age pottery sherds and small amount of animal bone — of cattle, sheep/goat and horse — were recovered from the fills of both ditches. A single identifiable cereal grain, of barley, was also recovered along with the possible residues of arable weeds that may have been incidentally imported onto the site with the cereals. Modest snail assemblages recovered from both ditches were dominated by species typically found in water bodies that seasonally dry up; the bulk of the remaining species were



those associated with open country or grassland and indicative of grazed pasture.

The south-east arm of enclosure G5/G6 became noticeably shallower towards its north-east end where it appeared to merge with the generally W–E aligned palaeochannel (G24; see below). As it appears to have been contemporary with the enclosure ditches, the palaeochannel probably served to define the north-eastern limits of the enclosure.

3.3.1 Palaeochannel deposits G24

A generally W–E aligned palaeochannel G1 — the remains of a former watercourse — was located within the central part of the site, continuing beyond the limits of the excavation to the north-west and east. The channel was 1.8–4.6m wide and 0.1–0.25m deep; its lower deposits generally consisted of light grey-white silts and gravels, whilst its uppermost deposits G24 comprised mid-brown silty clay.

This watercourse is likely to have been in existence for a considerable period of time, before a small sherd of late Bronze Age/early Iron Age pottery and a modest amount of animal bone became incorporated into its fills. However, it was still at least partially open during the period when the nearby late Bronze Age/early Iron Age enclosures were in use.

3.3.1 Ditches G2 and G3

Two small, somewhat isolated, ditches were located within the central part of the site. They were of similar size and character. Ditch G2 was 0.33–0.60m wide and 0.07–0.11m deep; it contained mid-brown silty clay. Ditch G3 was 0.5–0.57m wide and 0.11–0.33m deep; it contained mid-brown to mid-grey-brown clay silt.

Neither ditch produced any artefacts. However, they appeared to merge with the palaeochannel deposits, suggesting that they represent some form of land division that could be broadly contemporary with the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age activity within the western corner of the site.

3.3.2 Tree throws/root holes G7

A number of irregular-shaped features of varying sizes were investigated near to the north-east side of the excavation area, parallel with the brook. They measured 0.3–4m across and were 0.06–0.4m deep. They contained deposits that varied from mid-brown-grey silty clay to dark brown-grey clay silt.

Their very irregular shape and location suggests that they are the result of past vegetation that has exploited the historically wetter ground in this part of the site — as signified by the ‘ancient’ palaeochannel deposits and the nearby brook, which runs parallel with this side of the site. Some of these holes or depressions are likely to have been open during the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age period, when they were used to dispose of rubbish or naturally collected washed-in material. A few small sherds of late Bronze Age/early Iron Age pottery and some animal bone were recovered from their fills; fragments of an



adult human skull were recovered from one of the features during the trial trenching (see Appendix 1; Section 6.4).

The human skull fragments were a unique find within the investigated area, with no other human remains being present. It is quite possible that they entered the local watercourse some distance away from where they came to rest within a tree-hole void. The deposition of human remains within water features has been conjectured as an Iron Age ritual, as burials for the period are under-represented on contemporary settlement sites.

3.4 Phase 2: Late Medieval/Early Post-medieval Features (c. 1400–1600) (Figure 3)

3.4.1 Cultivation furrows G8

In addition to the upstanding ridge and furrow earthworks, earlier phases of cultivation furrows were revealed as linear ‘negative’ features within the site.

Furrows G8 were the earliest phase of furrows that could be distinguished; they were slightly off-set in relation to the later furrows but were on a similar NE–SW alignment. They were spaced 6.5–8.5m apart and had typically shallow, concave profiles, up to 0.2m in depth. They were filled with a light grey-brown to brown-grey silty clay.

Ridge and furrow cultivation typically dates to the medieval or early post-medieval period, though the system of strip farming continued in use in some areas until the fields were ‘Inclosed’ from the 18th century onwards. Two fragments of late medieval/early post-medieval roof tile were recovered from one of the furrows.

The north-east end of this area of cultivation appears to have later been set aside for quarrying (see below), though the area to the south-west of the quarries would in all likelihood have still been under cultivation.

3.4.2 Quarry area — pits G9 and boundary ditches G11, G12 and G17

A distinct area set aside for quarrying was located at the north-east end of the area of cultivation furrows G8. The vast majority of the quarry pits were located within the depressions of the furrows — each group of quarry pits being arranged in a linear fashion presumably so as to exploit the already reduced ground level created by the furrows.

The shape of the quarry pits varied considerably, with rectangular, oval and irregular-shaped examples all being present in close proximity to each other. Some had shallow, concave profiles whilst others had steeper, vertical sides and flat bases. They ranged in size from 1.5–12m long, 1.08–4.25m wide and 0.1–0.53m deep. They contained backfill deposits that varied from light grey-white silty gravel to mid-brown-grey or grey-brown silty clay.

A small amount of pottery and roof tile fragments dating from the medieval to early post-medieval periods was recovered from the quarry pits, suggesting that they are most likely to date to the later medieval/early post-medieval



period. The location of the quarry pits suggests that they were extracting the mix of gravel and siltier chalky/calcareous clay deposits within this area of the site, rather than the heavier clay deposits further to the south-west; the quarried deposits could have had a number of uses, including as daub-like material for walling.

Two NW–SE aligned ditches (G11 and G17) appear to have originally demarcated the *c.* 20m-wide strip that was available for quarrying, although some of the quarry pits did appear to have extended beyond this area. A similarly aligned ditch G12 may have defined a potential extension to the quarry area further to the south-west, although only a small number of quarry pits were located within this area — it may have proved to be unproductive, given the more variable geology (with increasing amounts of clay) the further one travels to the south-west. All three ditches were similarly shallow; ditches G11 and G17 were 0.24–1.1m wide and 0.04–0.16m deep, while ditch G12 was *c.* 0.53m wide and 0.15–0.25m deep. They were filled with mid-brown-grey silty clay; a small amount of animal bone from ditch G12 represents the only finds recovered from these boundaries.

3.4.3 NE–SW aligned boundary/route-way ditches G10 and G13

Two broadly parallel ditches (G10 and G13), aligned NE–SW and more than 40m long, were revealed within the south-east part of the site; both ditches truncated the nearest quarry pit and thus post-date the backfilling of that particular feature.

The ditches were 0.38–0.8m wide and 0.06–0.0m deep; they were filled with mid- to dark brown-grey silty clay. A single sherd of late medieval/early post-medieval pottery was recovered from ditch G10.

It is possible that the ditches defined a 4.3–5.3m-wide trackway, although their slightly divergent alignments and slightly different fills suggest that they are perhaps more likely to represent a boundary that has changed position over time.

3.4.4 Tree-throws/root holes G16

A broadly NW–SE aligned band of irregular-shaped features G16 mark the location of trees/shrubs growing within the presumably then uncultivated area immediately to the north-east of furrows G8, quarry pits G9 and associated boundary G17.

These features contained markedly darker fills — mid grey-brown to dark brown-grey silty clays — than those of the earlier, Phase 1 tree/root holes G7. A late medieval/post-medieval iron shoeing nail and tiny fragment of roof tile were recovered from their fills.

3.5 Phase 3: Post-medieval Features (c. 1500–1750) (Figure 4)

3.5.1 Second phase of NE–SW aligned cultivation furrows G14

Occasional surviving examples of a second phase of NE–SW aligned furrows, representing the gradual movement of the ploughed strips over time, were



located parallel to and immediately north-west of the earlier, Phase 2 furrows G8. In places they were truncated by later furrows G15 (see below).

Though terminating in a similar position to that of the earlier furrows, these features appear to post-date the Phase 2 quarrying G9, visibly cutting across the backfilled quarry pits.

The furrows were typically wide and shallow and contained mid-orange-brown to dark grey-brown silty clay. A single, small sherd of post-medieval pottery and fragments of late medieval/early post-medieval roof tile were recovered from the furrows.

3.5.2 Final phase of cultivation furrows (G15)

The final phase of furrows G15 represents the remnants of the ridge and furrow earthworks that were upstanding immediately prior to these works. Their fills tended to be notably darker in colour than those of the earlier furrows, consisting of mid-grey-brown to dark grey-brown silty clay. A small number of late medieval/post-medieval artefacts were recovered from their fills, including pottery sherds, roof tile fragments and an ox-shoe.

By this time, the strip of land adjacent to the north-east boundary of the site and closest to the brook was also being cultivated, perhaps due to drier ground conditions. Furrows within this area were aligned NW–SE, perpendicular to the furrows to the south-west.

3.6 Phase 4: Modern Features (post-1750) (Figure 5)

3.6.1 French drains G20

An extensive system of French field drains was present within the site, in many cases having been placed within the bases of the latest series of furrows. The cut of the drains was typically 0.2–0.3m wide and c. 0.25m deep; they were filled with the characteristic chalk fragments.

French field drains are so called because they were described and popularised by the lawyer and farmer, Henry Flagg French (1813–1885) of Massachusetts, in his 1859 book *Farm Drainage*. French's own drains were made of sections of roofing tile, laid with an eighth-of-an-inch gap between the sections to admit water.

3.6.2 Land drains G19

Red ceramic-pipe land drains, likely to date to no earlier than the 19th century, were revealed across the site. In some cases they had also been placed within the bases of the most recent furrows.

3.6.3 Geo-technical trenches G21

Backfilled geo-technical trenches resulting from recent ground assessment tests were present on site; where visible their locations were recorded.



3.7 Undated Features (Figure 5)

Three small, shallow features G18 were investigated near to the location of the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age enclosure within the western corner of the site.

Two of the features were investigated within one of the trial trenches; they were sub-oval in plan and measured *c.* 1m x *c.* 0.80m across and *c.* 0.18m deep. The third feature was sub-circular in plan and measured 0.71m x 0.64m across and 0.03m deep.

All three features were filled with dark brown-grey clay silt; two each contained a tiny fragment of unidentifiable pottery. Their shallow and rather irregular shape suggests that they could be the result of tree/root holes; a large tree throw/area of rooting G16 is located close to two of the features.



4 CONCLUSIONS

The earliest and most notable archaeological features revealed on site were boundary ditches and an enclosure dating to the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age. Their location and, albeit small, finds assemblage suggest that the related settlement focus is likely to have lain to the west and north-west of the site. These features add to the growing body of evidence of later prehistoric settlement within the area; features of a similar date were revealed during investigations associated with the construction of the Aston Clinton Bypass at sites 1.5km to the west and 2km to the east of the site. The location of these sites within the Aylesbury Vale may have been favoured for a number of reasons — having the use of the nearby watercourses and grazing land of the Vale for cattle and sheep within the summer months would have been advantageous whilst, as has been suggested from findings from the Aston Clinton Bypass excavations (Masefield 2008, 185), also having access to the nearby Chiltern Hills for grazing during the winter months.

Historical mapping and aerial photography indicate that the site lies within an area of field systems that would have adjoined the medieval settlement of Aston Clinton. The upstanding ridge and furrow earthworks within the site and the series of earlier furrows revealed during the investigations are evidence of the site's agricultural use during the medieval and post-medieval periods; further evidence of these field systems and enclosures was revealed during excavation to the north-east of the site on the other side of the brook (Albion Archaeology 2017c). During the later medieval/early post-medieval period a distinct piece of the cultivated area was set aside for quarrying — numerous quarry pits were located within the previously cultivated furrows. The quarried mix of gravel and siltier chalky/calcareous clay deposits could have had a number of uses, including as daub-like material for walling. The extent of the latest series of furrows indicates that this area of quarrying was again being cultivated, probably, by the earlier post-medieval period.

Following approval of this report by the AO, the archive of materials (subject to the landowner's permission) and accompanying records will be deposited with the Buckinghamshire County Museum (accession number AYBCM: 2016.125). A summary of the investigations will be published in *Records of Buckinghamshire* and the CBA South Midlands annual report; this report will also be uploaded onto the ADS Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS ref: albionar1-281061).



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6 APPENDIX 1: ARTEFACTS AND ECOFACTS

6.1 Ceramics

The pottery assemblage totals 51 abraded sherds (608g); approximately half are datable to the later Bronze Age/earlier Iron Age, and the remainder are of medieval and later date, broadly spanning the 12th–19th centuries (Table 1).

Fabric name	No. sherd	Wt. (g)
<i>Late Bronze Age/early Iron Age</i>		
Coarse flint	12	140
Fine flint	6	91
Flint and sand	2	28
Flint and grog	1	37
Fine sand	3	39
<i>Medieval and later</i>		
Medieval shelly ware (MC1*)	1	9
Medieval coarse sandy ware (MS2)	10	68
Late medieval oxidised ware	1	11
Late medieval Brill/Boarstall ware (TLMS7)	2	8
Glazed red earthenware (PM8)	5	63
Transfer-printed white earthenware (PM25)	3	46
Modern terracotta plant pot	1	53
Unidentified	4	15

* Fabric codes in accordance with the Milton Keynes post-Roman pottery type series (Mynard 1992).

Table 1: Pottery type series and quantification

6.1.1 Prehistoric

Twenty-four plain body sherds representing twelve vessels (335g: mean sherd weight 14g) derived mainly from Phase 1 enclosure ditch G5 (Table 2). Fabrics are predominantly flint-tempered, broadly characteristic of the later Bronze Age and earlier Iron Age in the region, and comparable with wares recovered from Sites A and B along the route of the Aston Clinton Bypass (Slowikowski 2008, 224). An absence of diagnostic sherds (rims, bases) or classifiable forms precludes closer dating.

6.1.2 Medieval and later

Medieval and later pottery (23 sherds, weighing 258g) occurred mainly in quarry pits, furrows and topsoil/subsoil deposits assigned to Phases 2–4 (Table 2). Twelfth- to thirteenth-century wares comprise ten coarse sandy sherds and a contemporary shelly body sherd, collected from quarry pit G9. An everted rim jar with a vertical applied thumbed strip is the sole diagnostic early medieval form. Two sherds of 15th–17th-century Brill/Boarstall ware, including a jug rim, and a similarly dated sherd of smooth oxidised sandy ware derived from furrows G14/G15. The latter also contained five abraded sherds of 16th–18th-century glazed red earthenware. Unstratified sherds of 19th-century transfer-printed earthenware and the rim from a modern terracotta plant pot (not retained) derived from G23.

Quarry pits G9 (Phase 2) and furrows G14/G15 (Phase 3) yielded 54 sand-tempered late medieval/post-medieval peg tile fragments (2.7 kg).



Ph.	Group	No. Sherd	Wt. (g)
1	G4 Ditch	2	4
	G5 Enclosure ditch	15	239
	G6 Enclosure ditch re-cut	3	37
	G7 Tree boles	5	58
	G24 Palaeochannel	1	2
2	G9 Quarry pits	10	72
	G13 NE-SW aligned ditch	1	3
3	G14 Furrows	1	3
	G15 Furrows	2	24
4	G20 French drains	1	9
	G23 Subsoil and topsoil	8	155
5	G18 Undated features	2	2
Total		51	608

Table 2: Pottery quantification by Phase and Group

6.2 Other Finds

Phase 1 enclosure ditch re-cut G6 yielded an intrusive late 13th- to later 15th-century iron shoeing nail with a shouldered head and ribbon-like shank (registered artefact (RA) 3), and an indeterminate iron sheet/strip fragment (RA4).

Degraded and amorphous lava fragments (29g) from a rotary quern or millstone (RA5) were collected from Phase 2 quarry pits G9. Although a long-lived form, occurring in the Roman period and spanning the mid-Saxon to post-medieval periods, it seems likely in the context of the site that RA5 may date to the latter period. A late medieval/post-medieval iron shoeing nail (RA2: Type D; Goodall 1980) derived from tree boles G16.

Phase 3 furrows G15 contained an incomplete medieval or post-medieval iron ox-shoe (RA6) with a wavy-rimmed edge, a lead alloy sheet off-cut (RA1) and a damaged iron nail shank or staple arm.

Furrows G15 and subsoil/topsoil G23 yielded five clay tobacco pipe stem fragments (11g), one with a protruding decorated spur, of post-medieval or later date.

6.3 Animal Bone

The assemblage totals 279 fragments (2.6kg) obtained via hand-collection and the sieving of environmental samples. The material is well fragmented, with a mean bone weight of 11g, and generally abraded. Fragments were identified to species where possible, with reference to Hillson (1992) and Schmid (1972). Given the condition of the material, the recording of metrical data was not possible. The small size of the assemblage allows only general conclusions to be drawn regarding species representation and husbandry practices.

6.3.1 Prehistoric

Phase 1 features yielded 244 fragments (2.2kg), occurring mainly in enclosure ditch G5 and its re-cut G6 (Table 3). Species represented are cattle, sheep/goat and horse, with less diagnostic remains identifiable only as large



and medium mammals. Classifiable elements are limb bone shafts, ribs, scapulae, vertebrae, a single astragalus, crania and horn cores, mandibles (one toothless), and several loose teeth, including cattle, sheep/goat and horse molars and a horse canine. No cut marks were observed on any fragments, and there is no evidence for splitting the long bones for marrow extraction. None of the bones appears to have been gnawed, although in some instances, heavy surface erosion may have obscured such evidence. Although the material represents the general accumulation of domestic refuse, the small assemblage size suggests the focus of domestic settlement lies beyond the limit of excavation.

6.3.2 Medieval and later

Thirty-five abraded fragments (389g) were collected from features assigned to Phases 2 and 3, the majority from NW–SE aligned ditch G12. Most pieces derive from indeterminate limb bones: a fragmented cattle radius and two sheep/goat molars are the only diagnostic elements.

Ph.	Group	No. Frag.	Wt. (g)
1	G4 Ditch	2	14
	G5 Enclosure ditch	45	829
	G6 Enclosure ditch re-cut	48	645
	G7 Tree boles	60	221
	G24 Palaeochannel	89	552
2	G9 Quarry pits	16	81
	G12 NW–SE aligned ditch	14	260
3	G14 Furrows	2	27
	G15 Furrows	3	21
Total		279	2,650

Table 3: Animal bone quantification by Phase and Group

6.4 Human Bone

6.4.1 Methodology

Fragmentary human skull bone was recovered from within an area of tree rooting (1209; G7), dated to the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age (Phase 1). It was visually examined to enable identification. Preservation was scored on a three-point scale from good to poor. The remains were insufficiently well preserved to allow the collection of metric or non-metric data.

6.4.1 Results

Five conjoining fragments come from the central portion of the left parietal, adjacent to the sagittal suture and measured a total of 73mm anterior to posterior and 57mm in a medio-lateral direction. The sixth fragment comes from the adjacent area of the right parietal and measures 46mm (a-p) by 30mm (m-l). All but one of the breaks has occurred relatively recently, the posterior border of the right parietal having been broken in antiquity. The thickness of the cranial vault suggests that the bone is most likely from an adult. The sagittal suture remains entirely open, and although an age at death estimate cannot be accurately obtained from this alone, it suggests that the remains are not those of an elderly individual.



6.4.1 Discussion and conclusions

The remains represent a single individual and most likely originate from a young or middle-aged adult. The discovery of isolated elements of human bone is not uncommon in prehistoric contexts. There is considerable evidence of variety in Bronze Age burial practices (Brück 2008, 27), whilst a recent reevaluation of evidence for excarnation in the British Iron Age also noted great variety in the treatment and location for the discovery of human remains and the rarity of formal cemeteries (Booth and Madgwick 2016).

6.5 Charred Plant Remains

6.5.1 Methodology

During the investigations a number of environmental bulk soil samples were collected for the recovery of biological materials including charred plant remains for potential information on the agrarian economy (crop husbandry and processing) of the site during the late prehistoric period.

Four samples of c. 30 litres were collected from ditch fills associated with a late Bronze Age/early Iron Age enclosure (G5/G6). All, or virtually all, the soil from each sample was processed using a Siraf-style type flotation tank with mesh sizes of 0.3mm and 1mm for the recovery of the flot and residue respectively. The residues were dried and sorted for biological remains and artefacts. The flots were also dried and any charred plant remains sorted and quantified with the exception of grain fragments <2mm and charcoal, estimates of which were made using the following scale: + = 1-10; ++ = 11-50; +++ = 51-150; ++++ = 151-250; +++++ = >250 items. The charred plant remains were identified using a binocular microscope together with modern and charred reference material and manuals (e.g. Cappers *et al* 2006).

6.5.2 Results

Three of the four ditch fill samples produced traces or occasional fragmented and poorly preserved cereal grains, none of which, however, could be identified except for a possible barley (*Hordeum vulgare*) grain in ditch fill (2175; G5) (sample <7>) (Table 4). Large charred wild grass (Poaceae) seeds in ditch fills (2175; G5) and (2178; G6) and a charred *Persicaria* (knotweed) seed in ditch fill (2232; G5), may be the residues of arable weeds incidentally imported onto the site with the cereals. There were no charred plant remains in sampled ditch fill (2230; G6).

Little comment may be made on the basis of these few, mainly unidentifiable, cereal grains, with barley, tentatively identified in one sample, along with hulled wheat (*Triticum dicoccum/spelta*) being the main cereals during the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age (Greig 1991, 302, 306). The few grains probably represent background debris blowing around the site, accidentally burnt while being dried before milling or during food preparation/cooking, in domestic activities perhaps taking place at some distance from the sampled features. There was little charcoal in any of the ditch fill samples which included occasional or small amounts of potentially identifiable (>2mm) fragments.



A few uncharred seeds in the four samples including *Papaver somniferum* (opium poppy), *Ranunculus* (buttercup), *Carduus/Cirsium* (thistles), *Sambucus* (elder) and *Buxus sempervivens* (box) are probably intrusive, particularly given the presence of large amounts of roots and occasional worm eggs in the flots.

	Period Group	Late Bronze Age/early Iron Age			
		5	5	6	6
Feature		Ditch	Ditch	Ditch	Ditch
Feature number		2174	2231	2176	2229
Context type		Fill	Fill	Fill	Fill
Context number		2175	2232	2178	2230
Sample number		7	5	6	4
Volume of soil (litres)		30	30	28	20
Volume of flot (ml)		2	1	2	<1
Latin name	English name				
Cereal grains					
<i>cf Hordeum vulgare</i>	?barley	1			
Cerealia indet.	indet. cereal (estimate)	4	3	6	
Cerealia indet.	indet cereal fragments <2mm	+	+	+	
Other plant/weed seeds					
<i>Persicaria</i> sp.	knotweed		1		
Poaceae indet.	wild grasses (large seeds)	1		1	
indeterminate	wood charcoal	+++	++	++++	++
	Total nos	6	4	7	0

Item frequency: +=1-10; +++=11-50; ++++=51-150; +++++=>150 items

Table 4: Charred plant remains

6.6 Snails

6.6.1 Introduction and methodology

Four environmental samples taken from the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age enclosure ditch G5 and its re-cut G6 contained snail assemblages which were deemed worthy of further study (Giorgi 2017). Samples 5 and 4 were taken from the fill and re-cut fill on the south-east side of the enclosure ditch, while samples 7 and 6 were taken from the fill and re-cut fill on the south-west side. Sample processing was conducted by Albion Archaeology and the flots caught on a 300 micron sieve were submitted for study. It should be noted that bulk environmental samples can mix distinct snail assemblages which may change with no accompanying visual change in the sediment character so these samples could mix chronologically distinct assemblages. Nevertheless there is some uniformity in the assemblages. The snails were identified using reference material and keys (Macan 1969; Cameron 2008) and taxa individually quantified.



6.6.2 Results

The primary fills of the enclosure ditch (G5) have produced much richer snail assemblages than the re-cut (Table 5: Mollusc taxa identified within sample flots from) reflecting either a faster infilling of G6 or perhaps poorer preservation in the re-cut fills or a difference in the fills (i.e. primary fill of re-cut G6 but secondary fill of G5 sampled).

The two samples from G5 are dominated by the amphibious gastropod *Anisus leucostoma* (Table 5). This species is common and typically found in water bodies that seasonally dry up (Macan 1969; Davies 2008), the absence of almost all other aquatic taxa tending to support an interpretation that the enclosure ditch was seasonally water-filled but dry during the summer and seasons of lower rainfall. A few shells of *Lymnaea peregra*, our most common aquatic snail, and bones of stickleback suggest that perhaps the south-west section may have held water for more extended periods possibly if it lies at a slightly lower elevation. A few shells of *Glabra truncatula* and *Vallonia pulchella* suggest wet grassland within the ditch environment but marsh elements are largely absent. The bulk of the remaining species are those associated with open country or grassland, shells of *Vallonia costata* and *V. excentrica* the most numerous of the terrestrial assemblage, with the dominance of *V. costata* in the south-west section suggesting dry short turved grassland (Davies 2008; Evans 1972). There is a small component in both ditch sections of species that favour shaded, damper habitats normally equated with woodland, but could here reflect an overgrown ditch environment or adjacent hedgerow. Given the possibility of chronologically mixed assemblages in the bulk sampling, attempting any more detailed interpretation would be unwise.

In the fills of the re-cut ditch, G6, *A. leucostoma* remains the most abundant taxa in the south-east section but is of much reduced importance in the south-west section (Table 5). These variations may merely reflect the level within the ditch fills from which the bulk of the sample was collected, the south-west section perhaps being taken from slightly higher fills within the ditch re-cut. The woodland element falls in the fills of the re-cut relative to taxa of grassland habitats and ‘catholic’ habit, and an open country/short-turved grassland is still indicated by the assemblages, although that in the south-east section is very small.

In summary, ditch G5 was seasonally wet, but may never have contained permanent water, although the water body remained for sufficient time on occasions for sticklebacks and facultative aquatic snails to colonise. The sampled fills of G6 indicate that the enclosure ditch remained seasonally wet in this phase.

The terrestrial snail assemblages indicate that the adjacent land was short-turved grassland in both phases, those associated with ditch G5 and its re-cut G6. The few shells of taxa favouring shaded or woodland habitats might derive from periods when the ditch was unmanaged and overgrown or from an adjacent hedgerow on the ditch’s bank. The inference is that the local landscape was grazed pasture with a stream running through it.



	South-East Section		South-West Section	
	G5	G6	G5	G6
	SAMPLE	CONTEXT	SAMPLE SIZE (L)	SAMPLE SIZE (L)
	5	4	7	6
	2232	2230	2175	2178
	30	20	30	28
<i>Trochulus hispidus</i>	28	5	36	38
<i>Helicella itala</i>	21	-	1	-
<i>Cochlicopa</i> sp.	1	1	3	2
<i>Cochlicopa lubrica</i>	1	-	4	-
<i>Cepaea hortensis</i>	-	-	-	1
<i>Cepaea nemoralis</i>	-	-	-	1
<i>Pupilla muscorum</i>	5	-	3	1
<i>Vallonia</i> sp.	18	2	26	16
<i>Vallonia costata</i>	20	1	136	22
<i>Vallonia excentrica</i>	29	1	57	18
<i>Vallonia pulchella</i>	4	-	8	8
<i>Vertigo</i> spp.	-	-	1	-
<i>Vertigo pygmaea</i>	2	-	4	3
<i>Punctum pygmaeum</i>	-	-	-	2
<i>Vitrea crystalina</i>	-	-	6	-
<i>Vitrea contracta</i>	4	-	19	-
<i>Nesovitrea hammonis</i>	-	-	3	1
<i>Aegopinella nitidula</i>	2	-	2	3
<i>Aegopinella pura</i>	3	-	12	3
<i>Oxychilus</i> sp.	-	-	-	4
<i>Oxychilus alliarus</i>	-	-	5	-
<i>Discus rotundatus</i>	1	-	1	-
<i>Carychium</i> sp.	-	-	1	-
<i>Anisus leucostoma</i>	315	23	165	8
<i>Galba truncatula</i>	6	-	6	-
<i>Lymnaea peregra</i>	-	-	4	-
TOTAL	456	33	503	131
Frog	1	-	1	-
Stickleback	-	-	6	-

Table 5: Mollusc taxa identified within sample flots from a late Bronze Age/early Iron Age enclosure ditch



FIGURES

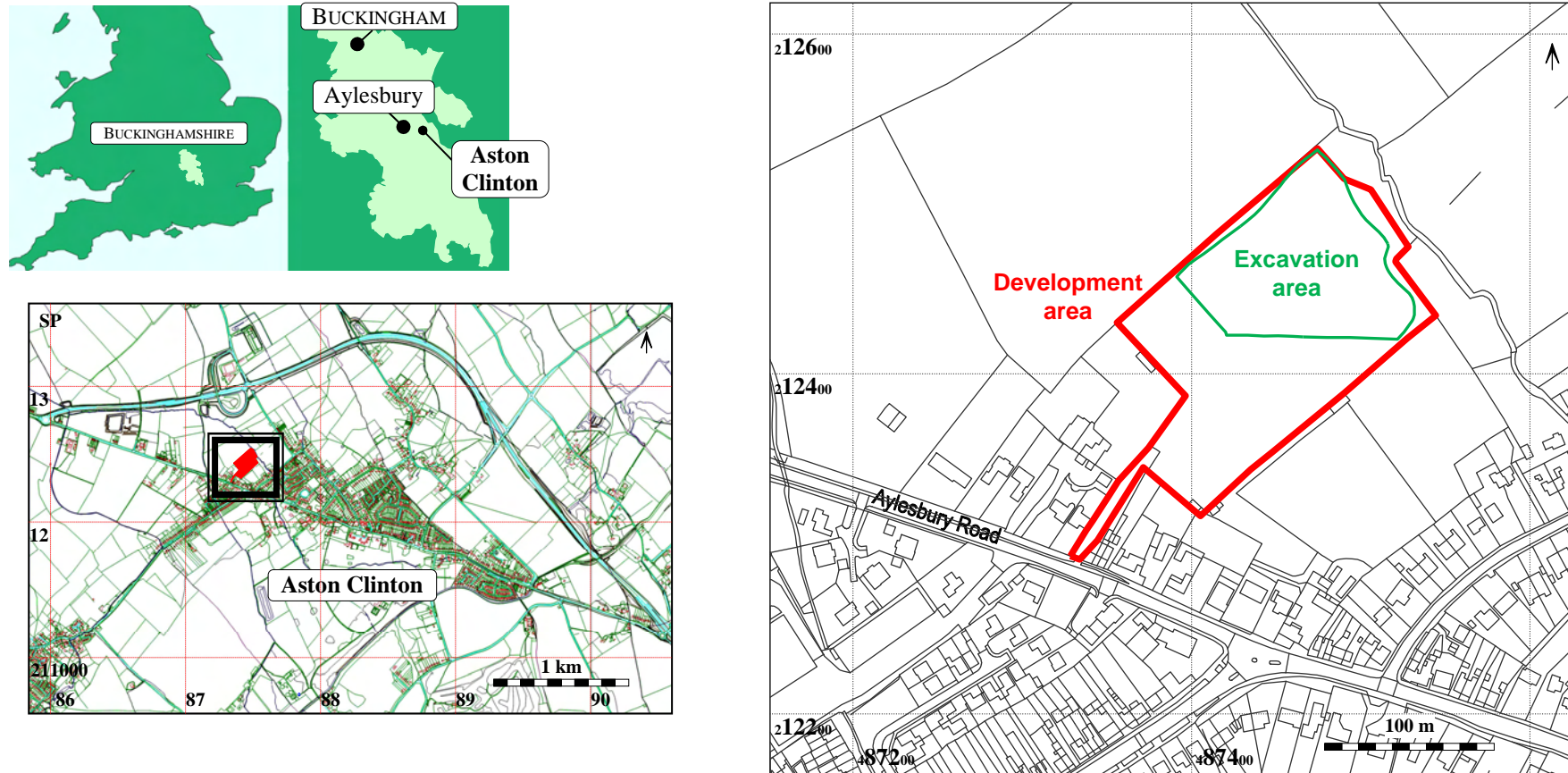


Figure 1: Site location plan

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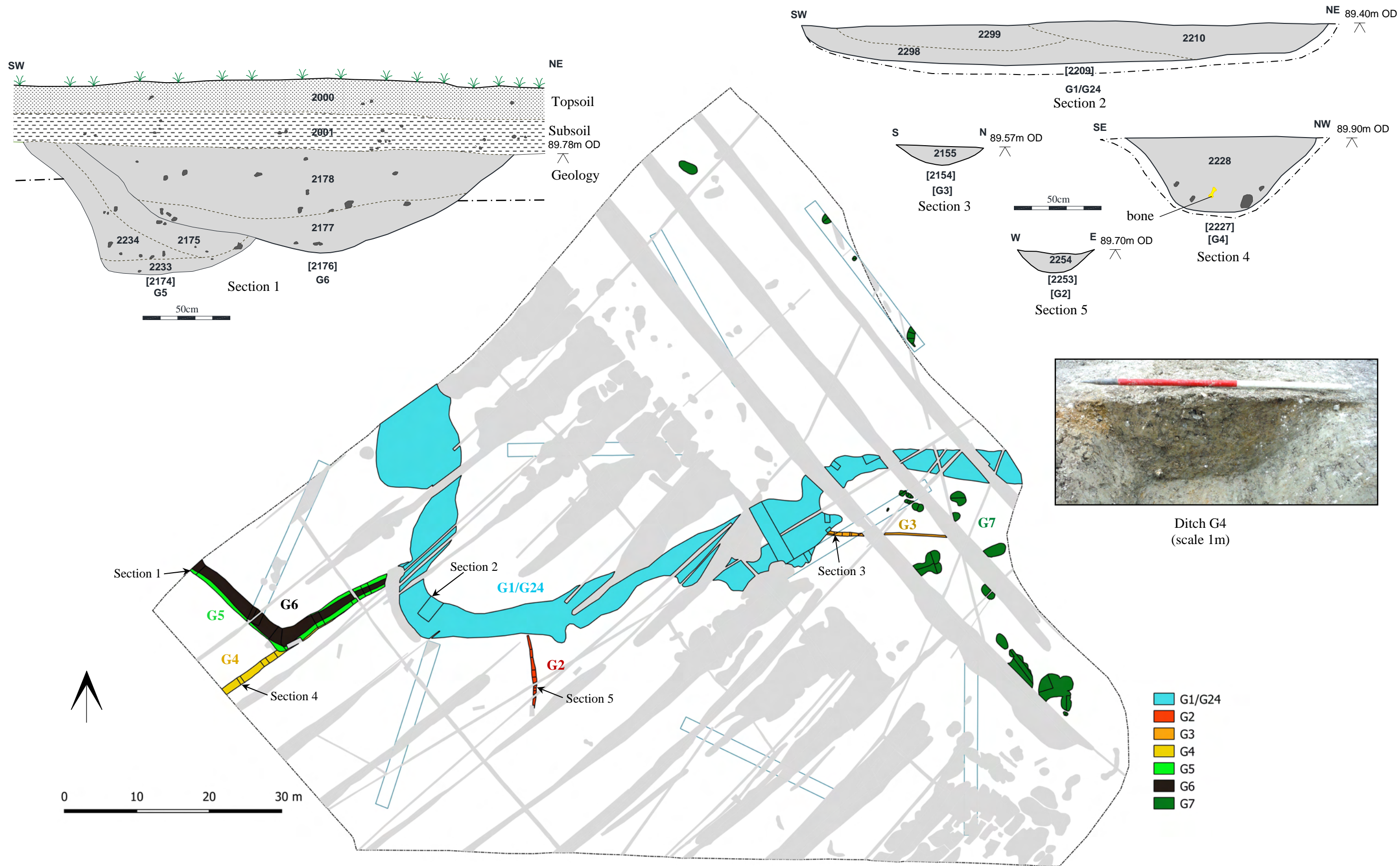


Figure 2: Phase 1 (late Bronze Age/early Iron Age)

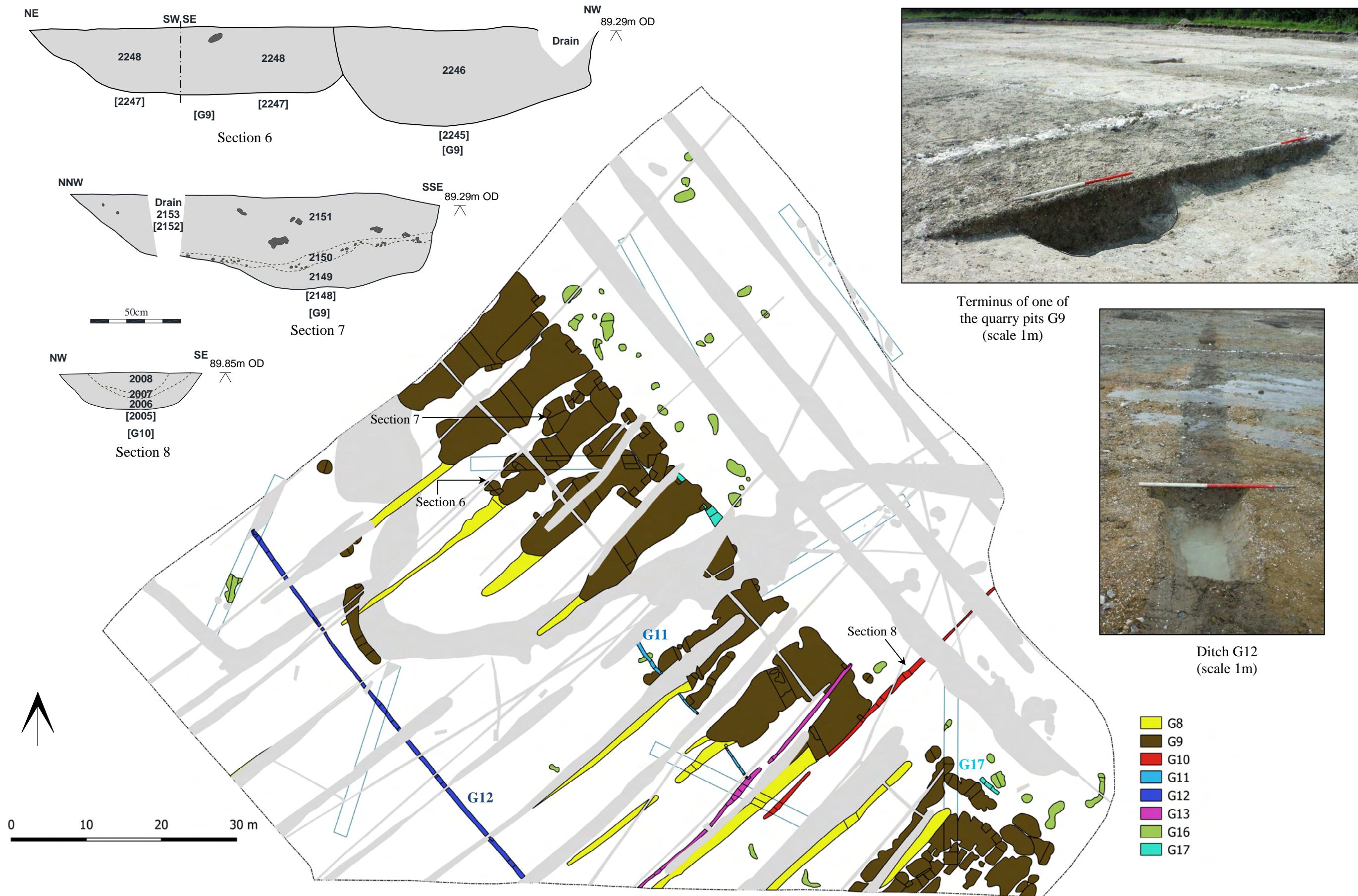


Figure 3: Phase 2 (late medieval/early post-medieval)



Intercutting furrows G8, G14 and G15,
the latter corresponds with upstanding ridge and furrow earthworks
(scale 1m)

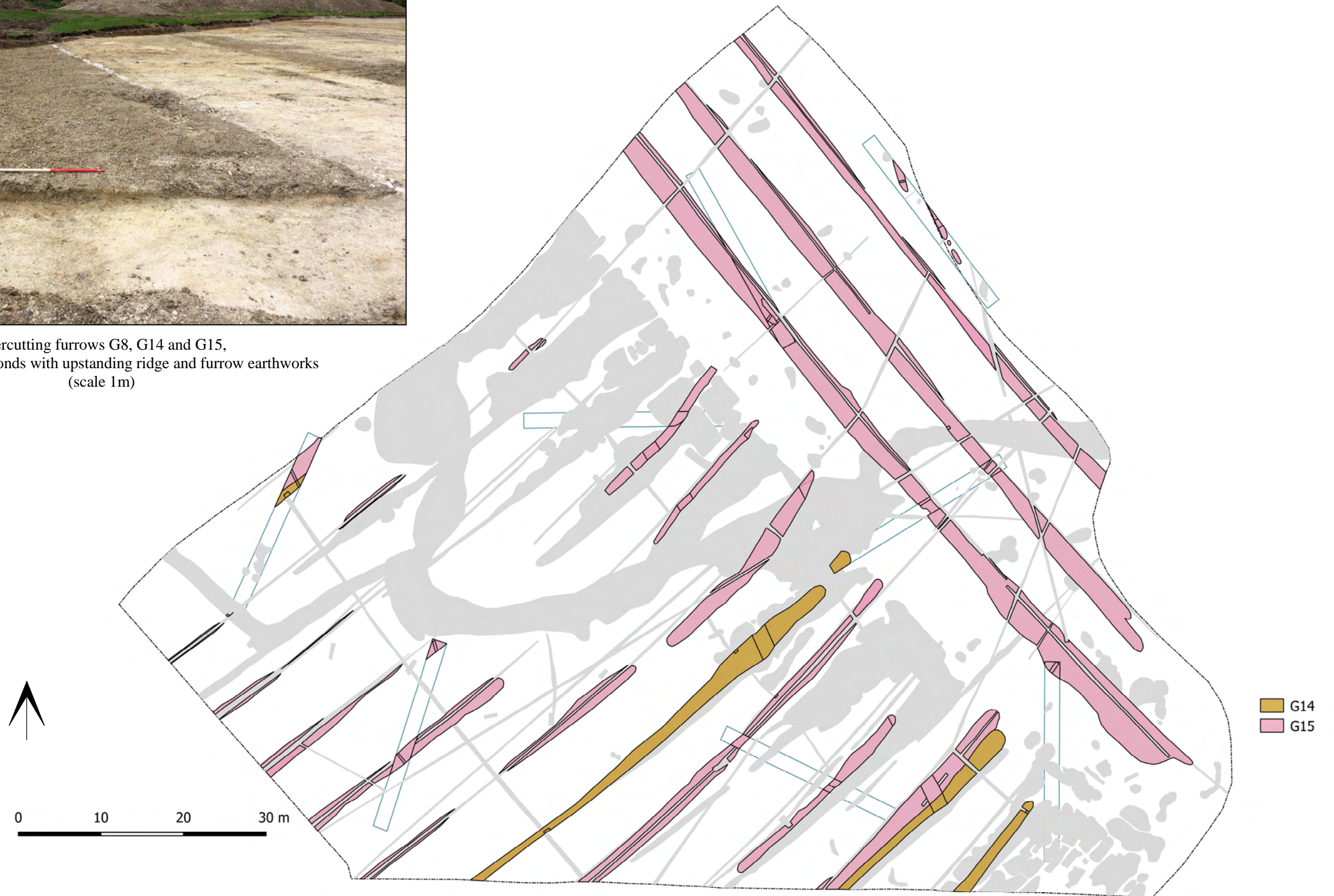


Figure 4: Phase 3 (post-medieval)

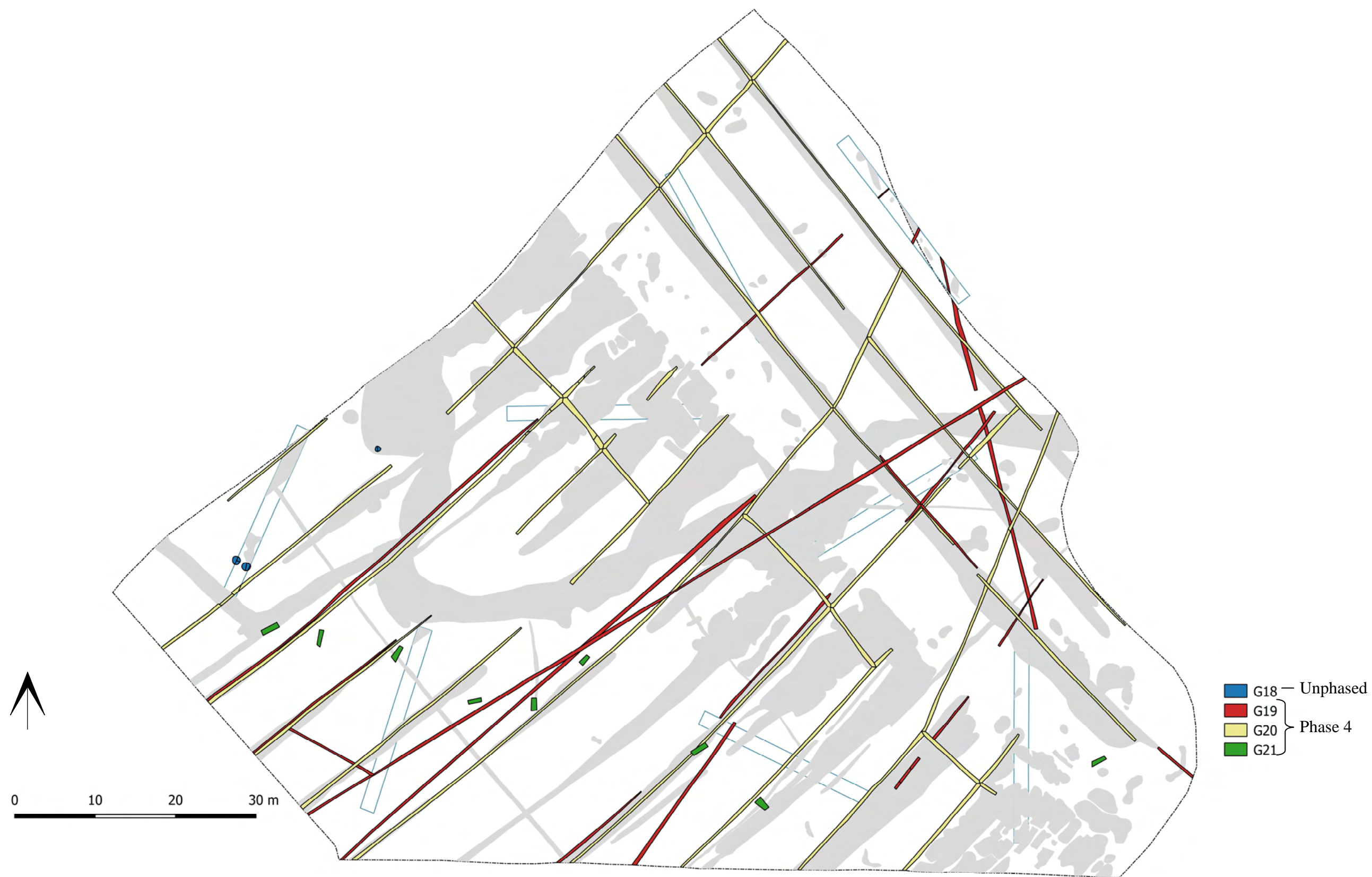


Figure 5: Phase 4 (modern) and Unphased (undated)



View of the site
(facing north-east)



View of the Phase 1 late Bronze Age/early Iron Age enclosure
(facing north)



View of the Phase 2 late medieval/early post-medieval quarrying activity
(facing south-east)

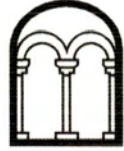


View of the site
(facing south)

Figure 6: General site photographs

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