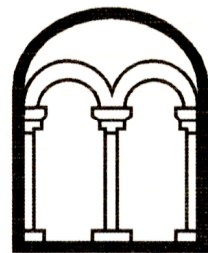


**LAND AT POTTON ROAD
WRESTLINGWORTH
BEDFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION,
RECORDING, ANALYSIS
AND PUBLICATION**

Albion
archaeology



**LAND AT POTTON ROAD
WRESTLINGWORTH
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RECORDING, ANALYSIS
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Preface

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The fieldwork was undertaken by Ernie Rizzo assisted by Lewis Busby and Matteo Palombelli (Archaeological Supervisors), and Adrian Woolmer and Berta Font (Assistant Archaeological Supervisors). All finds were processed by Jackie Wells (Finds Officer), and ecofact samples were processed by Arkadiusz Pruchniak (Assistant Archaeological Supervisor). The project was managed by Kathleen Pilkinton (Assistant Archaeological Manager) and Iain Leslie (Archaeological Manager). All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff.

This report has been prepared by Kathleen Pilkinton with contributions from Jackie Wells (artefacts), Rebecca Gordon (animal bone), John Giorgi (charred plant remains) and Joan Lightning (Figure 1).

Version History

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1.2	17/02/2022	Comments from CBCAO
1.1	10/02/2022	Comments from CBCAO
1.0	01/10/2021	n/a

Key Terms

The following abbreviations are used throughout this report:

CBCAO Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeological Officer
 CIfA Chartered Institute for Archaeologists



Client Central Bedfordshire Council – Community Services
HER Central Bedfordshire and Luton Historic Environment Record
PDA Permitted development area (location of development site)



Non-Technical Summary

Central Bedfordshire Council granted planning permission (CB/19/01999/REG3) for an amended proposal for the construction of five dwellings, including roads, sewers, and hard and soft landscaping, on land off Potton Road, Wrestlingworth.

Archaeological evaluation of the site had previously revealed the potential survival of remains dated to the Anglo-Saxon period. Advice provided by the CBC Archaeological Officer (CBCAO) indicated a requirement for a strip, map, and sample investigation of the permitted development area (PDA) in order to fulfil pre-commencement condition no. 6. Albion Archaeology was commissioned to undertake the archaeological mitigation works, in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation, approved by the CBCAO and the LPA. This report presents the results of the mitigation works.

The archaeological remains revealed within the PDA were concentrated in the east half of the site. Evidence for activity ranging in date from the late Anglo-Saxon to the modern periods was identified.

The earliest remains comprised a shallow quarry pit and a series of boundary ditches established in the late Anglo-Saxon period. The alignment of the boundary persisted into the early medieval period and hedgerows on a similar alignment may have been used to mark smaller plots to the west of the ditches. Three pits were also dated to the early medieval period. A small assemblage of artefacts and ecofacts were recovered, suggesting that the PDA lay on the periphery of Anglo-Saxon/medieval Wrestlingworth. Activity within the PDA appears to have ceased by the end of the 13th century. The remains were heavily truncated in places by a modern driveway and demolished building, associated with the former use of the site as allotments.

Although the remains were limited in extent, they support the idea that the village of Wrestlingworth has its origins in the Anglo-Saxon period and form part of a growing body of archaeological evidence indicating that the initial settlement was founded in the 10th century.

With the landowner's permission, the project archive will be deposited with the Higgins Art Gallery & Museum, Bedford (accession no.: BEDFM 2018.07). Details of the project and its findings will be submitted to the OASIS database (reference no.: albionar1-411176) in accordance with the guidelines issued by Historic England and the Archaeology Data Service.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 **Project Background**

Central Bedfordshire Council granted planning permission (CB/19/01999/REG3) for an amended proposal for the construction of five dwellings, including roads, sewers, and hard and soft landscaping, on land off Potton Road, Wrestlingworth (Figure 1).

The following pre-commencement condition (no. 6) was attached to the planning permission:

No development shall take place until a written scheme of archaeological investigation (WSI); that includes provision for fieldwork followed by post excavation analysis and publication, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development hereby approved shall only be implemented in full accordance with the approved archaeological scheme and this condition will only be fully discharged when the post-excavation analysis and reporting is complete, and the future of the site archive is secured.

Reason: This condition is pre-commencement as a failure to secure appropriate archaeological investigation in advance of development would be contrary to paragraph 199 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that requires developers to record and advance of understanding of the significance of any heritage assets affected by development before they are lost (wholly or in part).

The condition was based on the advice of the CBC Archaeological Officer (CBCAO), which indicated a requirement for a strip, map, and sample investigation of the permitted development area (PDA). The CBCAO specified that the investigation area would cover the footprint of the five new dwellings, together with associated landscaping and access road.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned to prepare a written scheme of investigation (WSI) for LPA approval. When the WSI had been agreed with the CBCAO, it was submitted to the LPA for formal approval of details as required by Condition 6. Albion Archaeology then carried out the fieldwork, the results of which are presented in this report.

1.1 **Site Location and Description**

The PDA lies at the west edge of the village of Wrestlingworth, 50m to the west of the intersection of High Street and Potton Road (Figure 1). It extends to the south of Potton Road (B1042) by c. 35m and is c. 0.23ha in extent. A residential property borders the site to the east; there is open grassland to the south and an arable field to the west. The land is enclosed by mature hedgerows and was previously used in association with a tree nursery.

The PDA is centred on grid reference TL 25701 47500 on roughly level ground at a height of c. 39m OD. The underlying geology of the area is Gault Formation Mudstone overlain by Oadby Member Diamicton.



1.2 Archaeological Background

The origins of Wrestlingworth are not well understood. It is first documented in the mid-12th century, although the place-name suggests Anglo-Saxon origins (Lock 1976). The PDA is located *c.* 250m to the north-west of the 12th-century parish Church of St Peter (HER1155). The east part of the PDA lies within the core of the medieval village of Wrestlingworth as defined by the HER (HER17167) (Figure 4).

An archaeological evaluation of the PDA was undertaken in order to help inform the planning application (Albion Archaeology 2018). Four 20m-long trial trenches were excavated. No archaeological features were found in Trench 1 in the west of the PDA. A small undated pit and two approximately parallel ditches were found in Trenches 2 and 3 in the central part of the PDA. One of the ditches produced two small sherds of late Anglo-Saxon pottery and a fragment of animal bone. In Trench 4 in the east of the PDA modern rubble make-up for a trackway overlay a feature interpreted as a quarry pit. This pit contained a single, small sherd of late Anglo-Saxon pottery and a small quantity of animal bone. The ditches and pits were interpreted as later features with the late Anglo-Saxon pottery being residual in these contexts. The brief for the evaluation (CBC 2017) noted that the east part of the PDA contained linear earthworks (HER20561), which appear to be aligned N–S and to extend beyond the site to the south-east.

Other heritage assets in the vicinity include the following.

A complex of earthworks (HER3421) that represent an area of settlement deserted in the late medieval or early post-medieval period is sited 50m to the south of the PDA. The earthworks comprise at least two house platforms and two hollow-ways. Further earthworks (HER588) representing medieval ridge and furrow are located in fields on the opposite side of Potton Road extending to the north fringes of the village.

An 18th-century thatched cottage (HER3333) is also located on the north side of Potton Road, immediately opposite the PDA, whilst the Chequers Inn (HER6061), a late 17th- or early 18th-century building, is located on the High Street, less than 50m to the south-east of the site. This latter building is Grade II listed (NHLE 1114109)

Outside the village are a number of cropmark sites (HERs 16841–16843 and 16846–16848) containing linear and enclosure features that may relate to later prehistoric or Roman settlement.

Archaeological investigations in Wrestlingworth have identified evidence for activity during the 12th–13th centuries. These were located at Wrestlingworth Lower School (EBD211), *c.* 200m to the south-east of the PDA (Albion Archaeology 2008) and at Home Farm (EBD1062), *c.* 400m to the south-east of the PDA (Albion Archaeology 2013a and b). Residual pottery recovered from the Home Farm site may be indicative of earlier Saxo-Norman activity on the site or wider area.

More recent archaeological work in Wrestlingworth includes a small open-area investigation on Church Lane which identified two phases of activity dating from the late Anglo-Saxon period to the 12th century (Dodd and Watson 2020).



1.3 Project/Research Objectives

The overall aim of the programme of archaeological works, as stated in the WSI (Albion Archaeology 2021), was to preserve the archaeological remains contained within the site by record and to determine and understand the nature, function, and character of the site in its cultural and environmental setting.

The general purpose of the mitigation was to recover information on the:

1. the date, nature, and extent of any remains of former activity or occupation within the site;
2. the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscapes;
3. the local environmental conditions (through the recovery of palaeo-environmental remains).

Potential archaeological heritage assets on the PDA were most likely date to the late Anglo-Saxon/Saxo-Norman or medieval periods, and most likely to consist of agricultural or rural settlement-related evidence.

A number of research objectives relating to late Anglo-Saxon and medieval rural settlement have been highlighted in the regional research frameworks for Bedfordshire and the eastern counties. These include:

4. The extent and nature of late Anglo-Saxon landscape reorganisation, village nucleation, field systems etc. (Medlycott, 2011, 58);
5. The origins, chronology and development of the varied rural settlement types and settlement patterns (Medlycott 2011, 70; Oake et al. 2007, 14).

Any further research questions identified in the course of the investigation were to be derived from the topics presented in the research frameworks, i.e. Brown and Glazebrook 2000; Oake et al. 2007; Medlycott 2011.

1.4 Methodology

The full methodological approach to the project is detailed in the WSI (Albion Archaeology 2021). The project adhered throughout to the standards set out in the following documents:

• Albion Archaeology	<i>Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> (3rd ed, 2017).
• Bedford Borough Council	<i>Procedures for preparing archaeological archives for deposition with Registered Museums in Bedfordshire. V2.8</i> (2010)
• CIfA	<i>Charter and by-law</i> (2014); <i>Code of conduct</i> (2019)
	<i>Standard and guidance for archaeological excavation</i> (2020)
	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i> (2020)
	<i>Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives</i> (2020)



• EAA	<i>Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (2003)</i>
• Historic England	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) Project Managers' Guide (2015)</i>
	<i>Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation, (2nd edn, 2011)</i>

The archaeological investigations were undertaken between 22nd February and 12th March 2021. An area of c. 1,500m² was subject to archaeological strip, map, and sample excavation.

The overburden was removed by a mechanical excavator fitted with a flat-toothed bucket and operated by an experienced driver under archaeological supervision. The possibility of Anglo-Saxon/early medieval features in the subsoil was highlighted by the archaeological evaluation and therefore removal of both topsoil and subsoil were carefully observed.

The presence of groundwater at the same depth as the natural deposits made excavation of the deeper features problematic.

1.5 Project Archive

With the landowner's permission, the project archive will be deposited with the Higgins Art Gallery & Museum, Bedford (accession no.: BEDFM 2018.07). Details of the project and its findings will be submitted to the OASIS database (reference no.: albionar1-411176) in accordance with the guidelines issued by Historic England and the Archaeology Data Service.



2 CONTEXTUAL RESULTS

2.1 Introduction

The results of the excavation are presented below. This section presents the contextual evidence, whilst detailed information on the artefacts and ecofacts recovered can be found in Section 3. For ease of analysis and discussion, all features recorded on site were assigned to Groups (indicated by a ‘G’ prefix), which were in turn assigned to broad chronological Phases. A total of 93 context numbers were recorded and assigned to the hierarchy (Table 1), including 15 excavated during the evaluation.

Phase	Group	Description	No. of contexts	
1	Late Anglo-Saxon	3	Boundary ditches	17
	(10th–12th century)	4	Earliest boundary ditch	7
		6	Quarry pit	7
2	Early medieval (12th–13th century)	1	Hedgerows	38
		2	Two shallow gullies and larger ditch terminus	6
		5	Three pits	11
		8	Small ditch	2
3	Modern	7	Modern demolition	3
		9	Overburden, topsoil, and subsoil	2
Total				93

Table 1: Summary of Phase and Group hierarchy

The results which follow are structured by Phase and discussed by Group. Assignment of Groups to Phases is based on artefactual and stratigraphic evidence. Full details of the context assignments are available in Appendix 1. A plan of all features and Phases can be found on Figure 2 with specific Groups shown on Figure 3.

2.2 Phase 1: Late Anglo-Saxon (10th–12th Century)

Evidence for activity in the late Anglo-Saxon period was concentrated in the north-east corner of the excavation area and comprised boundary ditches and a quarry pit. Phase 1 features produced 204g of late Anglo-Saxon pottery.

A series of NNW–SSE aligned ditches were identified (Figure 5). The earliest of these G4 measured a maximum of 1.2m wide and 0.46m deep. This was replaced by a similar parallel ditch and re-cut G3, which was 0.8–1.5m wide and up to 0.42m deep. They were filled with sterile brown-grey clayey silt. Re-cutting and realignment of the ditches suggest sustained use of the boundary. The ditches were truncated to the south by a modern demolition layer and continued beyond the edge of the PDA to the north.

South-west of the ditched boundary a sub-rectangular quarry pit G6 (identified during trial trenching) was also heavily truncated by modern demolition layers. The sides and base were uneven, and the surviving extent measured 2.9 x 6.5m; the feature was 0.2–0.6m deep. Further excavation was not possible due to the level of truncation.



2.3 Phase 2: Early Medieval (12th–13th century)

Phase 2 features generally continued the alignment established in the late Anglo-Saxon period (Phase 1). They comprised boundary ditches, three pits and a series of ‘hedgerow features’.

Two shallow gullies and a larger ditch terminus (G2) were aligned roughly parallel to the Phase 1 boundary ditches. The two gullies were *c.* 0.4m wide and up to 0.1m deep; they were filled with a single mid-grey silty clay deposit. The gullies were superseded by the terminus of a more substantial ditch at their south end. The ditch was *c.* 1.5m wide and 0.35m deep; it was filled with a single clayey silt deposit, similar to that in the smaller gullies (Figure 6). It yielded an abraded lava quern fragment (RA3). Only *c.* 10m of the ditch were visible within the PDA and it was partially truncated by the modern building demolition.

Ditch terminus G8 (on the north limit of excavation) also followed the line of the earlier Phase 1 ditches; it produced 44g of early medieval pottery. Only 3m of the ditch were visible within the PDA; it was 0.8m wide and 0.12m deep and was filled with dark grey clayey silt.

Three pits G5 were cut into the top of the Phase 1 ditches (Figure 6). The largest was sub-oval in plan with steep sides and a stepped base. It was 4.3m long, 2.5m wide and up to 1.1m deep. The full depth of the pit was ascertained by machine due to the depth of groundwater within the PDA. The lower fill was the same grey clayey silt seen across the site, but the upper fill comprised loose dark topsoil-like material and was heavily rooted. To the south two broadly circular pits were a maximum of 2m in diameter and 0.6m deep. They were filled with dark brown-grey clayey silt, distinct from the stratigraphically earlier Phase 1 ditches. The central and smallest G5 pit produced a bone pin beater (RA1) and six fragments of lava rotary quern (RA2).

To the west of the ditched boundary a series of elongated, shallow, irregular pits G1, produced 143g of pottery. Although the individual features were irregular, they were broadly linear in placement and aligned with the ditches to the east. The rows were evenly spaced and approximately 10m apart. The pits were individually *c.* 4m long, up to 2m wide and *c.* 0.25m deep with heavily irregular bases (Figure 7). They were all filled with loose friable dark deposits similar to topsoil.

These irregular pits are most likely to represent the remains of deliberately planted hedgerows and were partially visible, although undefined, in the subsoil. They were identified as linear ditches in the trial trenching.

2.4 Phase 3: Modern

Modern overburden comprised friable dark grey silty topsoil, varying significantly in thickness across the site (0.2–0.8m); the thickest deposits lay along the north side of the area adjacent to the hedge. The topsoil overlay *c.* 0.3m of soft brown-orange sandy subsoil. Overburden had been previously removed along the east side of the PDA in the area of the demolished building and driveway.

Modern features were mostly located along the east side of the PDA in the location of a demolished building and driveway associated with the former allotments.



3 ARTEFACTS AND ECOFACTS

3.1 Pottery

A small assemblage of 51 sherds (883g) representing a minimum of 45 vessels was collected, the majority associated with Phase 2 features (Table 2). The material is moderately abraded and displays variable condition and fragmentation, with single sherds weighing between 1g and 84g. Pottery was examined in accordance with PCRG/SGRP/MPRG guidelines (2016). Fabrics, based on surface appearance and the type, size and density of principal inclusions, are identified in accordance with the Bedfordshire Ceramic Type Series (Table 3). No new fabric types were identified. Wares and forms are common and well-represented from published excavations across the county, and the assemblage compares well with that recovered from recent excavations in the village (Blinkhorn 2020, 52).

Phase	Group	Sherd No.	Wt. (g)
1	G3 Boundary ditches	3	120
	G6 Quarry pit	1	84
2	G1 Hedgerows	14	143
	G2 Gullies/ditch terminus	17	233
	G5 Pits	13	259
	G8 Ditch	3	44
Total		51	883

Table 2: Pottery quantification by Phase and Group

Fabric code	Common name	Sherd No.	Wt. (g)	MSW*
<i>Late Anglo-Saxon</i>				
B01	St Neots-type ware	9	137	15.2
B01A	St Neots-type ware (orange)	3	39	13.0
B01B	St Neots-type ware (fine)	6	198	33.0
B01C	St Neots-type ware (mixed)	1	5	5.0
C08	Thetford-type ware	1	49	49.0
<i>Early medieval</i>				
B07	Shell	4	54	10.8
C04	Sand (coarse)	4	38	9.5
C59A	Sand (pasty)	6	141	23.5
C59B	Sand (harsh)	4	21	5.2
C60	Hertfordshire-type grey ware	3	77	25.6
C61	Sand (calcareous inclusions)	8	93	11.6
C67	Sand (mixed inclusions)	1	7	7.0
C75	Sand (micaceous)	1	24	24.0

* mean sherd weight

Table 3: Pottery Type Series

The earliest pottery comprises shell-tempered, wheel-thrown vessels in the St Neots-ware tradition (fabric B01) and its variants (19 sherds, weighing 379g), ranging in date from the 10th to early 12th century. Forms are two everted-rim jars, two bowls with inturned rims, and a bowl with a simple upright rim. Of similar date is a thumb-rim from a sand-tempered Thetford-type ware vessel (49g).

Most pottery is 12th–13th century in date and comprises unsourced, locally manufactured, sand-tempered, coarse wares (24 sherds: 324g) and four shell-tempered sherds (54g), the latter likely to derive from production centres on the



Beds./Bucks./Northants. borders. Three Hertfordshire-type greyware sherds (77g) datable from the mid-/late 12th to mid-14th century were also identified. Diagnostic forms are single examples of an everted rim jar and square rim jar, the latter with an applied vertical thumbled strip; and two bowls with simple upright rims, one flattened and thumbled. Several vessels have sooted exteriors, indicating their use as cooking pots.

3.2 Other Artefacts

Phase 2 pits G5 contained a bone pin beater (Registered Artefact (RA) 1, Figure 8), and eight lava rotary quern fragments (RA2 and RA4). A further quern fragment (RA3) was collected from ditch G2. The locations of the RAs are shown on Figure 3.

The virtually complete pin beater (length 87mm) is a flat, single-ended form with a rectangular cross-section; one end trimmed to a point and a chisel-shaped butt end (cf. MacGregor 1985, fig. 101, 17). Datable to the late Anglo-Saxon/early medieval period, the object is highly polished through wear/use – in compacting the weft threads on an upright loom by pushing down between each of the warp threads. Its relatively good condition suggests accidental loss rather than deliberate discard.

Quern fragments are manufactured from imported material deriving from either the Mayen quarries of Germany, or from French lava outcrops found near Volvic (King, 1986, 94). Trade in these objects was well established in Britain by the 9th/10th centuries and continued throughout the medieval period. Two joining fragments (RA2: 194g) are highly abraded and of indeterminate form. RA3 (209g) and RA4 (3.7kg) retain worn, roughly pecked grinding surfaces, RA4 possibly representing an upper stone.

3.3 Animal Bone

3.3.1 Methodology

The animal bone assemblage was recorded using an ‘all fragments’ method. Bones that could not be identified to species were recorded to their nearest size category (large or medium mammal). Remains recovered from soil samples were recorded if they could be identified to species and/or element. Associated bone groups (ABGs) were recorded as one bone fragment. The eruption and subsequent wear of mandibular teeth were recorded following the methods outlined in Grant (1982), Hambleton (1999) and Payne (1973). Gnawing and butchery were recorded on identifiable bones, and butchery and its location were recorded using the codes devised by Lauwerier (1988). Bone preservation was recorded for identifiable post-cranial bones using Harland et al. (2003) and measurements were taken following von den Driesch (1976).

3.3.2 Assemblage

A total of 48 animal bone fragments were recovered from late Anglo-Saxon and early medieval features. Bone preservation was ‘good’ with minimal signs of weathering and abrasion (Table 4). Butchery marks were observed on a cattle pelvis (G3, Phase 1) and eight specimens displayed carnivore gnawing. Three bones also exhibited fresh breaks.



Preservation	Phase	
	1	2
Good	11	9
Fair	1	
Poor		
Total	12	9
Gnawing	3	5
Butchery	1	
Loose teeth*	1	1
Teeth in mandibles*	4	
Refit	2 = 5	1 = 2
Fresh break	2	1

*cattle, sheep/goat, pig and horse juvenile and adult premolars and molars.
Counts show post-cranial bones only, except for teeth.

Table 4: Condition and taphonomic modifications on hand-collected animal bones

The bone assemblage comprises cattle (*Bos taurus*), sheep/goat (*Ovis aris/Capra hircus*), pig (*Sus scrofa*), horse/donkey (*Equus* sp.) and dog (*Canis familiaris*) (Table 5). Boundary ditches G3 (Phase 1) had the largest concentration of bones containing cattle (n = 6), sheep/goat (n = 2) and pig (n = 1). Three bones of a horse/donkey ABG were found in quarry pit G6 (Phase 1); they came from the left lower leg and foot (metacarpal, first and second phalanx). Phase 1 had one mandible of a young sheep/goat between 6–12 months old.

Taxon	Hand-collected			Soil samples	
	Phase 1	Phase 2	Total	Phase 2	Total
Cattle	7	5	12	1	1
Sheep/goat	4	2	6	2	2
Pig	1		1		
Horse/donkey*	2	2	4		
Dog	2	1	3		
Total identifiable	16	10	26	3	3
Unidentifiable large mammal	9	5	14		
Unidentifiable medium mammal	2	1	3	1	1
Unidentifiable small mammal				1	1
Total unidentifiable	11	6	17	2	2

*ABGs were recorded as 1

Table 5: Species representation (NISP) of animal bones

3.3.3 Conclusions

The size of the assemblage is below the recommended 100 fragments for basic analysis which limits the interpretation of the remains (Davis 1987). Nonetheless, the evidence suggests domestic mammals would have provided meat and perhaps additional animal products (i.e. milk, wool, and manure). Other animals such as horse and dog may have provided traction, transportation, and security.



3.4 Charred Plant Remains

3.4.1 Introduction

Three environmental bulk soil samples were collected for the potential recovery of charred plant remains for information on economy (diet), arable agriculture (crop-husbandry and processing) and human activities on the site during the late Anglo-Saxon and early medieval periods. The sample locations are shown on Figure 3.

3.4.2 Methodology

The three 20-litre soil samples were processed using a Siraf-style flotation tank and meshes of 0.3mm and 1mm for the recovery of the flot and residue respectively. The flots were then dried along with the residues, which were sorted for biological and artefactual remains. The flots were sorted for charred plant remains using a binocular microscope (with a magnification of up to x40) and the material identified with the aid of modern and charred reference material and reference manuals (Cappers et al. 2006; Jacomet 2006). The sorted charred seeds and fruits were counted while estimates were made of the frequency of wood charcoal and small cereal grain fragments (<2mm) using the following scale: + = 1–10; ++ = 11–50; +++ = 51–100; ++++ = 101–250; +++++ = >250 items.

3.4.3 Results

The samples were taken from late Anglo-Saxon (Phase 1) ditch G3 (Sample 1), early medieval (Phase 2) ditch G2 (Sample 2) and pit G5 (Sample 3). The three samples only produced small amounts (between 12 and 33 items) and low densities (<1.7 items per litre of processed soil) of charred plant remains with no significant difference between the three assemblages (Appendix 2). Cereal grains accounted for virtually all the quantified remains with wheat (*Triticum*) in all three samples being the best-represented cereal with the well-preserved grains showing the presence of free-threshing wheat, either bread wheat (*Triticum aestivum*) and/or rivet wheat (*T. turgidum*). It is not possible to distinguish between these two free-threshing wheats on the basis of grain morphology alone, although a hexaploid free-threshing wheat rachis fragment in early medieval pit fill (G5) showed the presence of bread wheat. There were much smaller numbers of barley (*Hordeum vulgare*), including hulled grains, in two samples.

Free-threshing (including bread) wheat and hulled barley are two of the main cereals (along with rye and oats) found in Anglo-Saxon and medieval sites from southern England (Greig 1991, 315, 321; Carruthers and Hunter Dowse 2019, 105, 124; Moffett 2006, 45). Wheat would have been the preferred bread-making grain during both periods (Hagen 1994, 125; Hammond 1995, 2) with bread wheat producing relatively strong flour suitable for bread making. Cereals, however, may have also been used as gruel or porridge in the Anglo-Saxon period – probably a significant part of the diet at the time (Hagen 1994, 60) – and also for biscuits, cakes or in pottage in the medieval period (Campbell et al. 1993, 25). There were no sprouted grains to suggest that the cereals were being used for brewing on site. Barley grains were also used as fodder.

There were just two other charred seeds in the samples: a large legume seed, possibly from a cultivated pulse, in early medieval pits G5; and a weed seed of *Sherardia arvensis* (field madder) in the late Anglo-Saxon ditch G3, a plant mainly found in



light calcareous loams, and which probably reflects the cultivation of the surrounding fertile boulder clay soils.

3.4.4 Conclusions

The small amounts of cereal grains in the three samples may have been accidentally burnt during drying before milling or storage or perhaps during cooking/food preparation. The remains represent background debris blowing around the site probably from low-scale (domestic) activities, which may have been taking place at some distance from the sampled features.



4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Discussion

The results of the excavations at Potton Road, Wrestlingworth revealed two main phases of evidence: late Anglo-Saxon and early medieval. It was possible to determine a broad chronological sequence based on the limited artefact assemblage, supported by stratigraphic relationships. In reality the remains probably represent continuous activity spanning a relatively short period of approximately 300 years from the 10th–13th centuries.

The earliest activity on site is represented by three ditches and a quarry pit dated to the late Anglo-Saxon period (Phase 1). The NNE–SSW aligned ditches are likely to represent a boundary. Remodeling and realignment of the ditches suggest the boundary remained in use for a sustained period. The shallow quarry pit suggests activity related to the periphery of a settlement, e.g. the extraction of clay for construction.

Features dated to the early medieval period (Phase 2) comprised four ditches, three pits and a series of uneven linear pits.

The NNW–SSE ditches represent a continuation of the boundary established in Phase 1 and show further evidence of remodeling over a sustained period. The boundary is aligned with the medieval ridge and furrow earthworks in the adjacent field (HER588, Figure 4). It is also broadly aligned with, and directly beneath, an extant earthwork (HER20561, Figure 4) noted during trial trenching. This suggests the ditches represent a former field boundary or possibly even the remains of a hollow-way, superseded by the current alignment of the High Street to the east. Similar earthworks, thought to represent hollow-ways, were identified to the south of the PDA (HER3421, Figure 4).

Two circular pits and a larger, irregular pit truncated the Phase 1 ditches, indicating that they had fully silted up by the time the pits were dug. The pits performed no obvious function, although the larger, more irregular one may represent evidence for further quarrying.

Three evenly spaced rows of shallow irregular pits, interpreted as deliberately planted hedgerows, were also aligned with the boundary ditches. They may represent the demarcation of small garden plots or cultivation of particular shrubs or trees; the environmental remains recovered were limited and do not indicate any particular type of cultivation other than cereals common to Anglo-Saxon and medieval sites from southern England.

The limited artefactual assemblage is suggestive of low-level domestic and craft activities. The pottery comprises largely local wares with few diagnostic sherds present. Quern stone fragments recovered from Phase 2 features were manufactured from material imported from Germany or France. However, these are relatively common domestic artefacts in the medieval period and trade in these objects was well established by the 9th/10th centuries.



The floral and faunal remains are similarly suggestive of domestic activity with no difference noted between the Phase 1 and Phase 2 assemblages (although the overall quantities limit their analytical potential). The animal bone assemblage suggests the use of domestic animals for meat, milk, wool, and manure. The presence of horse and dog suggests the use of animals for traction, transportation, and security. The environmental samples only produced low densities of charred plant remains dominated by cereal grains common in the Anglo-Saxon and medieval periods. They are indicative of low-scale domestic crop-processing or food production. The paucity of remains suggests these activities may have been taking place at some distance from the site – the absence of building remains further suggests that the site was not a focus of domestic occupation.

The evidence recovered from the PDA is indicative of low-level activity on the periphery of the Anglo-Saxon and medieval settlement of Wrestlingworth. Recent excavations to the south-east Church Lane (Dodd and Watson 2020 ; Figure 4) produced more substantial settlement evidence, similarly spanning the 10th–12th centuries, suggesting the core of the settlement lay to the south-east of the PDA in this period. The absence of remains in the west half of the PDA suggest the ditches identified may represent a boundary to Anglo-Saxon/early medieval settlement activity.

The boundary ditches and hedgerows identified within the PDA conform to the alignment of the surrounding field boundaries and earthworks, suggesting that the archaeological remains represent part of a landscape still visible in the modern field systems and settlement layout.

4.2 Conclusions

The archaeological remains revealed at Potton Road were concentrated in the east half of the PDA. Evidence for activity ranging in date from the late Anglo-Saxon to the modern periods was identified. The earliest features comprised a shallow quarry pit and a series of boundary ditches established in the late Anglo-Saxon period. The alignment of the boundary persisted into the early medieval period and hedgerows on a similar alignment may have been used to mark smaller plots to the west of the ditches. Three pits were also dated to the early medieval period. Activity within the PDA appears to cease by the end of the 13th century. The remains were heavily truncated in places by a modern driveway and demolished building associated with the former use of the site as allotments.

Although the remains were limited, they support the idea that the village of Wrestlingworth has its origins in the Anglo-Saxon period and form part of a growing body of archaeological evidence indicating that the initial settlement was founded in the 10th century.



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6 APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT ASSIGNMENTS

Phase and Group	Context number	Context type
Phase 1 - Late Anglo-Saxon (10th–12th century)		
G3 Boundary ditches	1017	Cut
	1018	Fill
	1021	Cut
	1022	Fill
	1023	Cut
	1024	Fill
	1027	Cut
	1028	Fill
	1039	Cut
	1040	Fill
	1058	Cut
	1059	Fill
	1060	Fill
	1061	Cut
	1062	Fill
	2002	Cut
	2003	Cut
G4 Earliest boundary ditch	1015	Cut
	1016	Fill
	1037	Cut
	1038	Fill
	1073	Cut
	1074	Fill
	2001	Cut
G6 Quarry pit	404	Cut
	405	Fill
	406	Cut
	407	Fill
	408	Cut
	409	Fill
	2006	Cut
Phase 2 - Early medieval (12th–13th century)		
G1 Hedgerow/tree throws	203	Cut
	204	Fill
	303	Cut
	304	Fill
	305	Cut
	306	Fill
	307	Cut
	308	Fill
	1019	Cut
	1020	Fill
	1029	Cut
	1030	Fill
	1041	Cut
	1042	Fill
	1043	Cut
	1044	Fill
	1048	Cut
	1049	Fill
	1050	Cut
	1051	Fill
	1052	Cut
	1053	Fill



Phase and Group		Context number	Context type
		1054	Cut
		1055	Fill
		1056	Cut
		1057	Fill
		1063	Cut
		1064	Fill
		1065	Cut
		1066	Fill
		1067	Cut
		1068	Fill
		1069	Cut
		1070	Fill
		1071	Cut
		1072	Fill
		2004	Cut
		2005	Cut
G2	Two shallow gullies and larger ditch terminus	1005	Cut
		1006	Fill
		1007	Cut
		1008	Fill
		1009	Cut
		1010	Fill
G5	Three pits	1011	Cut
		1012	Fill
		1025	Cut
		1026	Fill
		1031	Cut
		1032	Fill
		1033	Fill
		1034	Cut
		1035	Fill
		1036	Fill
		2000	Cut
G8	Small ditch	1013	Cut
		1014	Fill
Phase 3 - Modern			
G7	Modern demolition	1003	Layer
		1004	Layer
		2007	Layer
G9	Overburden, topsoil, and subsoil	1000	Layer
		1001	Layer



7 APPENDIX 2: CHARRED PLANT REMAINS

	Period	Late Anglo-Saxon	Early medieval	
	Phase	1	2	
	Group	3	2	5
	Feature type	Ditch	Ditch	Pit
	Sample number	1	2	3
	vol sample (l)	20	20	20
	vol flot (ml)	25	35	15
Latin name	English name			
Cereal grains				
<i>Triticum aestivum/turgidum</i> type	free-threshing wheat	5	8	1
<i>T. cf. aestivum/turgidum</i> type	?free-threshing wheat	4	4	2
<i>Triticum</i> spp.	wheat	3	2	-
cf. <i>Triticum</i> spp.	?wheat	3	4	2
<i>Hordeum vulgare</i> L.	hulled barley straight	-	1	-
<i>H. vulgare</i> L.	hulled barley indet	1	1	-
<i>H. vulgare</i> L.	barley, indet	-	3	-
cf. <i>H. vulgare</i>	?barley	3	-	-
Cerealia	indet. cereal (estimate)	12	10	5
Cerealia	indet cereal fragments <2mm	++	+	++
Cereal chaff				
<i>Triticum aestivum</i> type	hexaploid wheat rachis	-	-	1
Other plant/weed seeds				
<i>Vicia/Lathyrus/Pisum</i> sp.	vetch/tare/vetchling/pea (>2mm)	-	-	1
<i>Sherardia arvensis</i> L.	field madder	1	-	-
indeterminate	wood charcoal (>/<2mm)	+/++	+/++	+/+++
Total		32	33	12
Item density (per litre of processed soil)		1.6	1.7	0.6

key: item frequency: + = 1-10 items; ++ = 11-50 items; +++ = >50 items

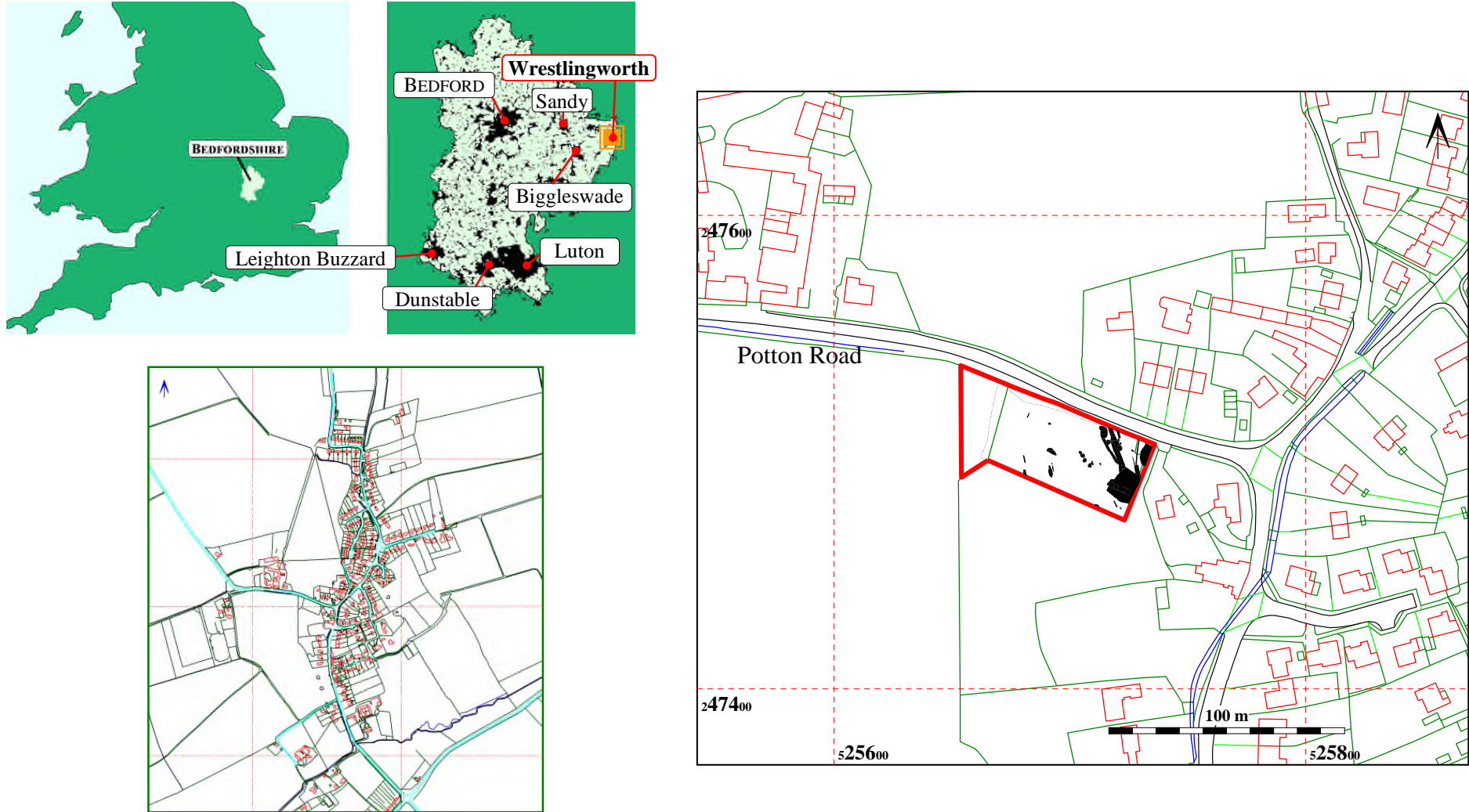


Figure 1: Site location plan

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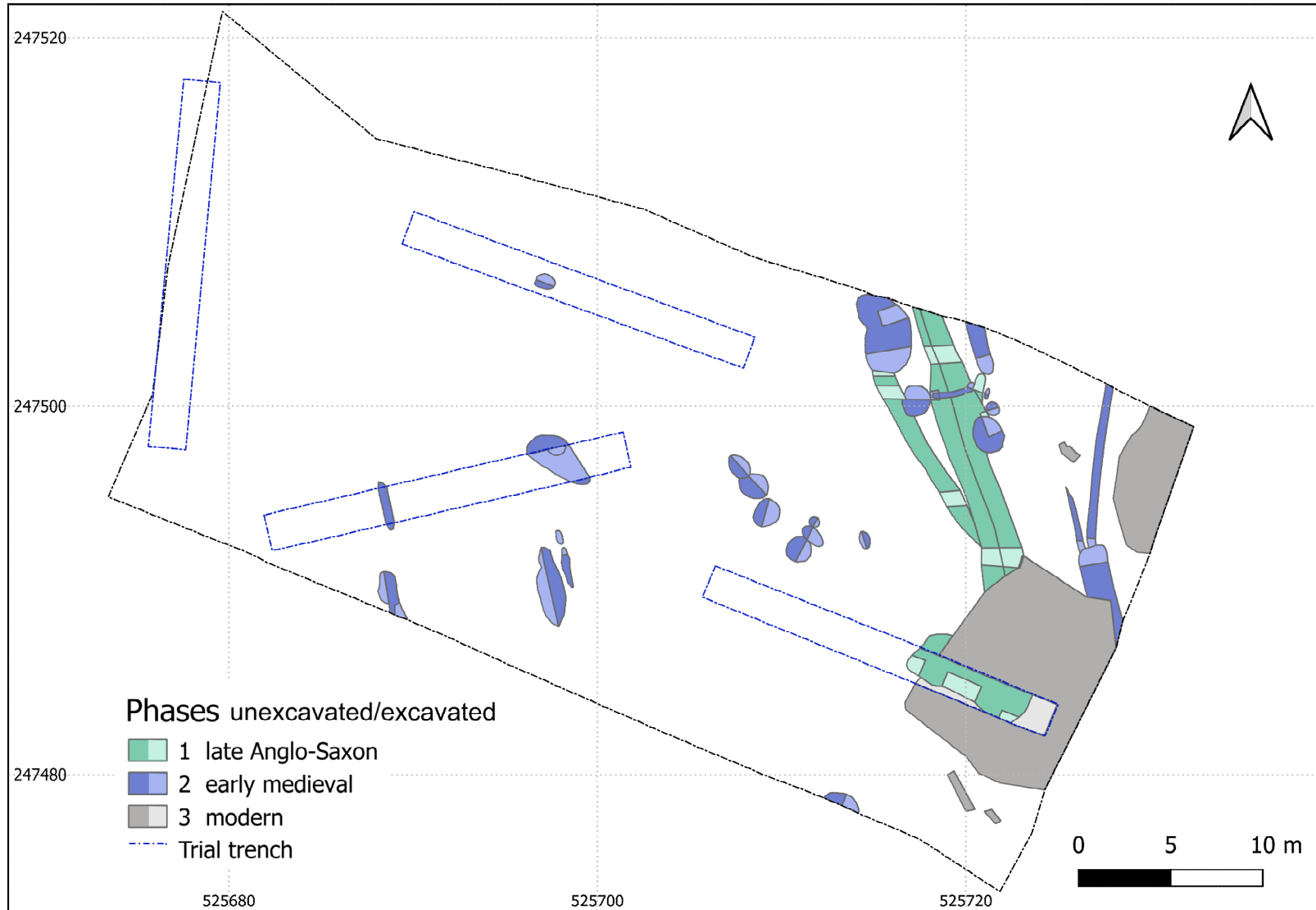


Figure 2: Plan of Phases 1–3

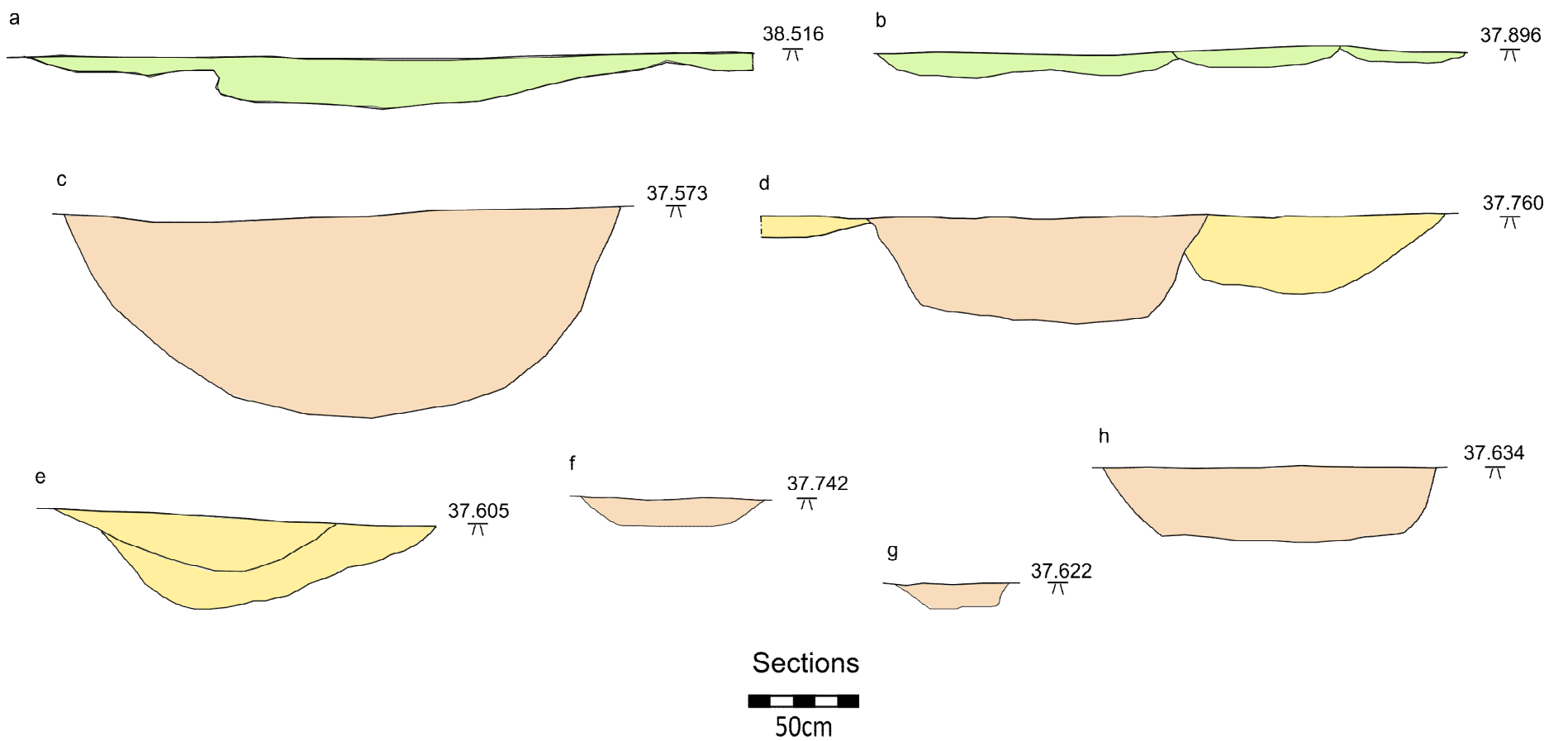
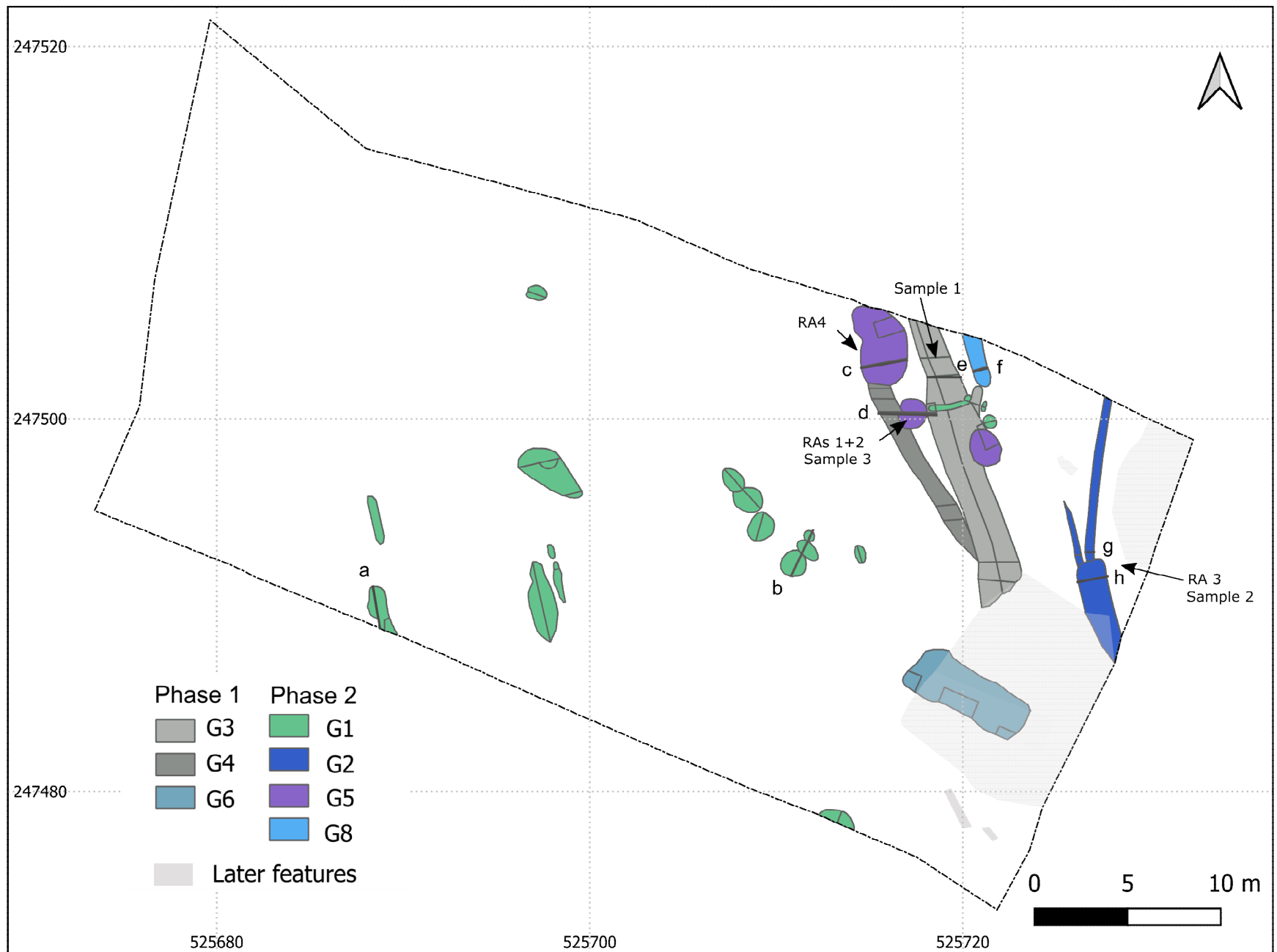
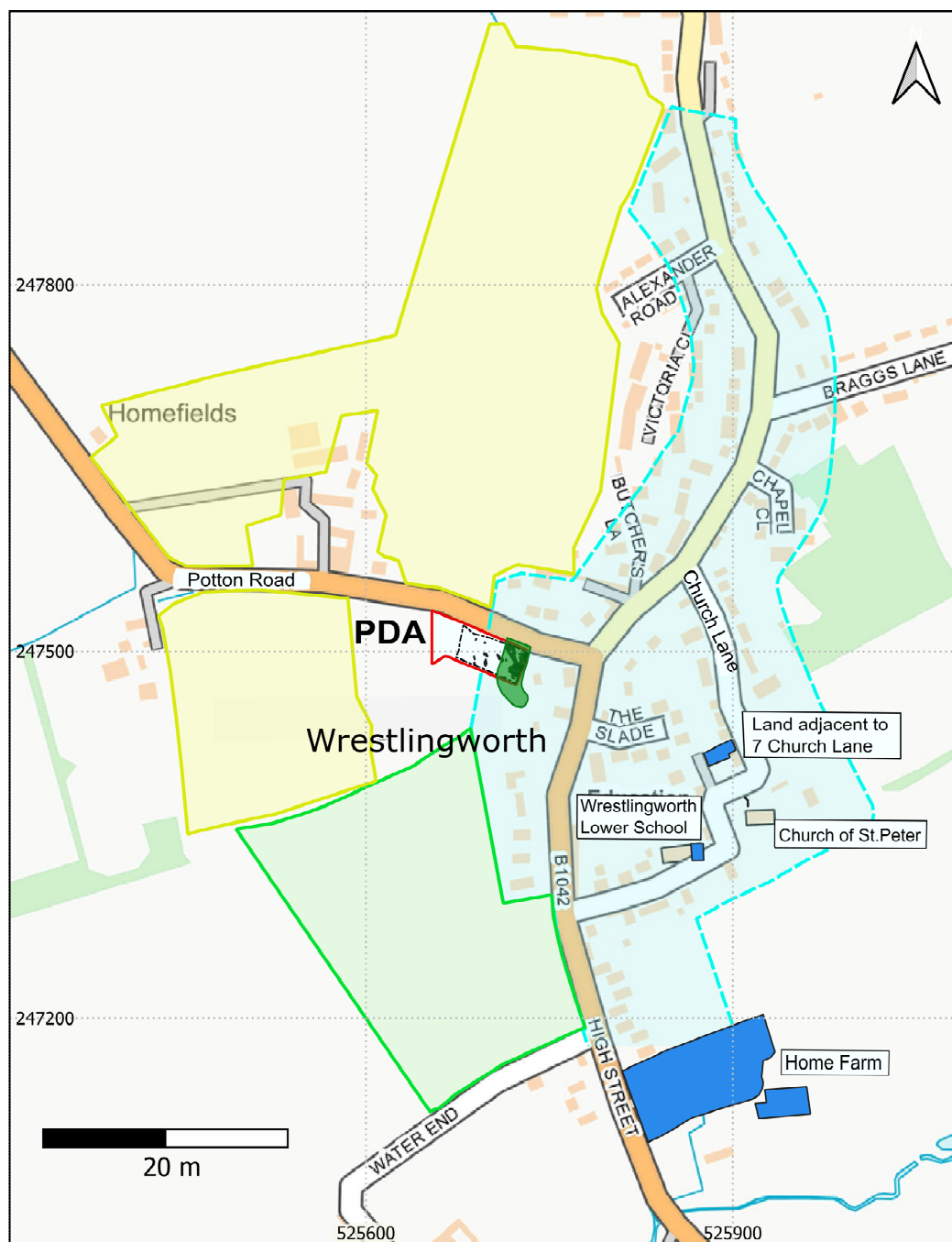


Figure 3: Plan of Phases 1 and 2 showing Groups with selected sections



- Previous archaeological excavations
- Earthworks (HER3421) ■ Earthworks within PDA (HER20561)
- Medieval ridge and furrow earthworks (HER588)
- Medieval village of Wrestlingworth (HER17167)

Figure 4: Archaeological background to the site



Ditches G3 (Phase 1) from NE
(1m scale)



Ditches G4 (Phase 1) from SW – opposite Section d (Figure 3)
(1m scale)

Figure 5: Photographs of Phase 1 ditches



Pit G5 (Phase 2) from north – Section d (Figure 3)
(1m scale)



Ditches G2 (Phase 2) from NNW – Section h (Figure 3)
(1m scale)

Figure 6: Photographs of Phase 2 features



'Hedgerow feature' G1 from SE – Section b (Figure 3)
(1m scale)



'Hedgerow feature' G1, from SE
(1m scale)

Figure 7: Photographs of Phase 2 hedgerow G1



Late Anglo-Saxon/early medieval bone pin beater (RA1)
recovered from pit G5

Figure 8: Photograph of bone pin beater

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