LAND AT CASTLE STREET/HOLLY STREET LUTON BEDFORDSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION

INTERIM REPORT ONE

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Produced for: Bellway Homes Ltd.

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Preface

Every effort has been made in the preparation of this document to provide as complete a summary as possible within the terms of the method statement. All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. Albion Archaeology cannot accept responsibility for errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by a third party, or for any loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in this document.

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Structure of the Report

After the introductory Section 1, there is a summary of the results of the programme of archaeological observation and recording in Section 2, followed by a brief conclusion (Section 3). Section 4 is a bibliography and the appendices contain archaeological context and artefact summaries.

Key Terms

Throughout this report the following terms or abbreviations are used:

Albion Archaeology

Client Bellway Homes Ltd

IFA Institute of Field Archaeologists

Procedures Manual Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork, 2nd Edition 2001.

Bedfordshire County Council



Non-Technical Summary

In October 2004 Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Bellway Homes Ltd. to undertake a programme of archaeological observation, evaluation and possible mitigation ahead of residential development at Castle Street/Holly Street, Luton, Bedfordshire.

This document sets out the results for the first phase of c.0.30ha of trial trench evaluation (Area 1).

The development area lies c.200m south of the historic core of Luton and is bordered by Castle Street, Holly Street and Latimer Road. It is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) TL 0920 2075. The entire study area is c.0.66ha in extent and until recently was occupied by disused office buildings and a car park. Area 1 represents the eastern part of the development area and is approximately 0.30ha in extent.

Luton sits on alluvium, between valley gravels to both the east and west. The historic core of Luton is located in the valley; whereas the development area is located on relatively high ground generally characterised by chalk geological deposits (Albion Archaeology 2003).

Previous archaeological investigations on the site (west of Area 1) suggest that the remains of a ditch, thought to be associated with a medieval castle, had survived modern truncation (Dony and Dyer 1975). More recent work within the existing bus depot, to the west of the site, also recorded the presence of a substantial ditch feature. This is also thought to be part of the same putative castle (Thames Valley Archaeological Services, 2002).

Trial trenching in Area 1 revealed buried topsoil and subsoil overburden overlying gravels although some areas revealed significant modern truncation. Few archaeological remains were observed apart from a possible boundary ditch containing very little evidence of occupational debris within its backfill. This suggests that it represents rural field demarcation perhaps associated with the nearby castle site although it may equally relate to field systems beyond the historic core of Luton.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location

The development area lies c.200m south of the historic core of Luton and is bordered by Castle Street, Holly Street and Latimer Road. It is approximately 0.66ha in size and centred on grid reference TL 0920 2075. Area 1 represents the eastern part of the development area and is approximately 0.30ha in extent (Figure 1).

1.2 Landform, Geology and Soils

The entire site is an L-shape in plan and until recently was occupied by disused office buildings and a car park. It lies at an average height of c.115m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD).

Luton sits on alluvium, between valley gravels to both the east and west. The historic core of Luton is located in the valley; whereas the development area is located on relatively high ground generally characterised by chalk geological deposits (Albion Archaeology 2003).

1.3 Archaeological Background

The historical and archaeological background to Luton has been summarised in the extensive urban survey, undertaken by English Heritage and Bedfordshire County Council (Albion Archaeology 2003). It indicates the high potential for recovering archaeological remains within Luton from the prehistoric, Roman, Saxon, medieval and post-medieval periods.

Although archaeological remains from any of these periods may be encountered during the development, it is the remains of Robert de Waudari's early medieval castle which are the specific concern. Previous archaeological investigations *on* the site (Dony and Dyer 1975) suggest that the remains of a ditch, thought to be associated with the castle, had survived modern truncation. More recent work (Thames Valley Archaeological Services, 2002) within the existing bus depot, to the west of the site, also recorded the presence of a substantial ditch feature.

The combination of the above archaeological fieldwork with various historical sources (Albion Archaeology 2003) suggests that the site may contain significant archaeological remains connected with the castle.



2. RESULTS OF OBSERVATION AND RECORDING

2.1 Introduction

Archaeological observation and evaluation of Area 1 was undertaken between 10th and 19th January 2005.

Detailed technical information on all deposits and archaeological features discussed below can be found in Appendix 2.

2.2 Methodology

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

- IFA's Standard and Guidance for Field Evaluation;
- Albion Archaeology's Procedures Manual for Archaeological Fieldwork and the Analysis of Fieldwork Records (1996);
- IFA's Code of Conduct;
- English Heritage's Management of Archaeological Projects (1991).

The trench plan (Figure 2) was discussed with, and approved by, BCC's AO prior to any trial trenching taking place. These trenches were designed to determine the location, extent, nature and date of any archaeological features or deposits that were present and to obtain information on the integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that were present.

The required area of trenching for the whole development is 330m² with a provision for a further 33m² of contingency trenching. Area 1 represents 45% of the development area. Therefore, 148m² of trenching was undertaken within this area; no contingency was invoked.

The location of all trenches was marked out on the ground in advance of machine excavation. Topsoil and modern overburden were mechanically removed by a tracked excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. This was conducted under close archaeological supervision. These deposits were removed down to the top of the archaeological deposits, or undisturbed geological deposits, whichever was encountered first. The spoil heaps were scanned for artefacts.

The bases and sections of all trenches were cleaned by hand. The deposits and any potential archaeological features were noted, cleaned, excavated by hand and recorded using Albion Archaeology's *pro forma* sheets. The trenches were subsequently drawn, and photographed as appropriate. All deposits were recorded using a unique recording number sequence commencing at 100 for Trench 1, 200 for Trench 2 etc.

The trenches were inspected by BCC's AO prior to being backfilled.



2.3 Results

Only three trenches, Trenches 4, 5 and 6 contained archaeological remains. These are described individually below. Detailed technical information on all the trenches can be found in Appendix 2.

2.3.1 Trench 4 (Figure 2)

This trench was located towards the centre of Area 1 in the present car park area. This trench revealed two postholes, [407] and [409], near the NNE end of the trench.

The stratigraphy in the trench consisted of layers associated with the present car park, (400) and (401), overlying probable occupation/demolition layers (402) and (403) associated with modern pre-car park activity. These layers overlay a topsoil (404) and colluvial subsoil (405) which sealed the natural geology (406).

Due to modern terracing affecting the northern part of the study area, the topsoil was only preserved in the southern half of the trench.

Both postholes truncated the colluvium (405) and appeared to be sealed by the modern layer (403). They were square in shape and measured approximately 0.5m in diameter with near vertical sides and flat base. Deposits within both features consisted of friable mid to dark grey brown silty clay. Posthole [407] contained a post-medieval tile fragment and posthole [409] contained a small fragment of post-medieval pottery (Appendix 1).

2.3.2 Trench 5 (Figure 2)

This trench was located towards the centre of Area 1 in the present car park area. It exhibited similar stratigraphy to that observed in Trench 4, though no buried topsoil was preserved.

A ditch [505] was revealed in the SSE end of the trench. It was aligned NNE-SSW and measured approximately 1m wide and up to 0.7m deep. It had moderately sloping straight sides with a slightly concave base and contained orange-brown silty clay.

The ditch was sealed by colluvium (503) and some worked flint and animal bone were recovered from it (Appendix 1).

The ditch was observed continuing SSW into Trench 6.

2.3.3 Trench 6 (Figure 2)

This trench was located to the south of Trench 5 towards the centre of Area 1. It overburden was similar to Trench 4.

Ditch [607] was revealed near the middle of the trench and aligned NNE-SSW. This was a continuation of ditch [505] (Trench 5). It was similar in character to [505] although the profile on its north-west side had a step perhaps indicative of a re-cut.

It contained a very abraded fragment of late Iron Age (Belgic) pottery and an early prehistoric flint scraper (Appendix 1).



3. SYNTHESIS

3.1 Significance of Results

The evaluation demonstrated the presence of archaeological features within the study area. However, the existence of one ditch and two post holes indicates that the density of these features is low.

A single very abraded late Iron Age pottery fragment recovered from the ditch does not date this feature. However, its stratigraphic relationship sealed below colluvial deposits suggests that the ditch is likely to pre-date the post-medieval period.

The lack of occupational debris from the ditch indicates that it is unlikely to be associated with settlement activity and may instead have been located in a more rural setting.

Artefactual material recovered from two postholes in Trench 4 suggests they were backfilled in the post-medieval period. Both postholes truncated colluvial deposits within the Trench adding further evidence of their likely post-medieval date.

Despite having a relatively low archaeological potential, Area 1 does have a well preserved depth of buried soil in the south-west part of the study area. This indicates that that the natural slope of the ground has been largely unaffected by modern truncation. The area to the north-east seems to have been subject to significant modern terracing, truncating the underlying geology (Figure 2).

3.2 Summary

Despite significant undisturbed overburden existing on at least half of the southern area, few archaeological remains were present. A possible boundary ditch contained very little occupational debris within the excavated segments, suggesting that it represents rural field demarcation. This may be associated with the nearby castle site although it may equally relate to field systems beyond the historic core of Luton.



4. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Dony & Dyer 1975 The Story of Luton, White Crescent Press

English Heritage 1991 Management of Archaeological Projects

English Heritage 2002 Environmental Archaeology: a guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation

IFA 1999 Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Briefs

TVAS 2004 Excavation at Castle Street, Luton: The site of Robert de Waudari's Castle? *Bedfordshire Archaeology* Vol 25 p199-205



5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Artefact Summary

The evaluation produced a small artefact assemblage comprising pottery, animal bone and flint (Table 1). The material was scanned to ascertain the nature, condition and, where possible, date range of the artefact types present.

Trench	Context	Spotdate	Finds Type
4	(404)	Modern	Pottery (9g), brick (56g)
	(408)	Post-medieval	Flat roof tile (34g)
	(410)	Post-medieval	Pottery (3g)
5	(506)	-	Worked flint (63g)
	Upper part of ditch	-	Animal bone (16g)
6	(606)	Post dates late	Pottery (32g: v abr &
		'Belgic' IA	probably residual),
			Flint scraper (18g)
8	(800)	Modern	Pottery (215g), teaspoon
			bowl

Table 1: Artefact Summary by trench and context



Appendix 2: Trench and Context Summaries



Max Dimensions: Length: 5.00 m. Width: 1.50 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: m. Max: m.

OS Co-ordinates: Ref. 1: TL0928420715 Ref. 2: TL0927820717

Context:	Type:	Description: Exca	avated: Find	s Present:
100	Tarmac	Car park surface.	V	
101	Make up layer	Hardcore (Type 1) associated with present car park.	V	
102	Layer	Firm mid orange grey silty clay occasional flecks chalk, occasional small-medium stone Contained moderate amount of brick fragments. Associated with modern pre-car park activity.	s 🗸	
103	Layer	Firm dark grey silty clay occasional small-large ceramic building material, occasional small stones Probable occupation layer associated with modern pre - car park activity.	✓	
104	Buried topsoil	Friable light orange grey silty clay moderate flecks chalk, moderate small stones	V	
105	Colluvium	Friable light orange brown silty clay frequent small-medium stones	✓	
106	Natural	Compact mid orange sand moderate small-medium stones		



Max Dimensions: Length: 8.70 m. Width: 1.50 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: m. Max: m.

OS Co-ordinates: Ref. 1: TL0928120733 Ref. 2: TL0928020724

Context:	Type:	Description: E	xcavated:	Finds Present:
200	Tarmac	Car park surface.	✓	
201	Make up layer	Hardcore (Type 1) associated with car park.	✓	
202	Make up layer	Firm light grey brown silty clay frequent small-medium ceramic building material, frequent small-medium stones Also contained frequent lumps of tarmac and chalk. Associated with car park make-up.	✓	
203	Make up layer	Friable light grey brown silty clay Redeposited topsoil.	✓	
204	Natural	Compact mid orange clay sand moderate small-medium stones	✓	
205	Layer	Firm dark grey silty clay occasional small stones Also contained occasional brick fragments. Probable occupation layer associated with modern pre-car park activity.	✓	
206	External surface	Light greyish-white cement layer with occasional CBM and small stones. Associated with brick wall (209).	d 🗸	
207	Buried topsoil	Friable light grey brown silty clay moderate small stones	✓	
208	Colluvium	Friable mid grey orange silty clay occasional small-medium stones	✓	
209	Wall	'Frogged' brick wall aligned WNW-ESE consisting of two single 'skins' of bricks wit gap in between filled by soil and rubble.	h the	



Max Dimensions: Length: 10.00 m. Width: 1.50 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: m. Max: m.

OS Co-ordinates: Ref. 1: TL0926220736 Ref. 2: TL0927220732

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated: Finds	Present:
300	Tarmac	Car park surface.	V	
301	Make up layer	Hardcore (Type 1) associated with present car park.	V	
302	Layer	Firm mid grey brown silty clay Probable occupation layer associated with modern car park activity.	pre-	
303	Wall	Three mortared 'frogged' bricks visible in section.		
304	Natural	Compact mid brown orange gravel with orange-brown sandy clay.	V	
305	Natural	Compact mid orange clay sand occasional small-medium stones		



Max Dimensions: Length: 11.30 m. Width: 1.50 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.7 m. Max: 1.5 m.

OS Co-ordinates: Ref. 1: TL0924320733 Ref. 2: TL0924120744

Context:	Type:	Description: E	xcavated:	Finds Present:
500	Tarmac	Car park surface.	✓	
501	Make up layer	Hardcore (Type 1) associated with car park.	✓	
502	Layer	Firm mid brown grey silty clay moderate small-medium stones, occasional large store. Contained occasional large lumps of modern brick. Probable occupation layer associately with modern pre-car park activity.		
503	Colluvium	Firm mid grey brown silty clay occasional flecks chalk, moderate small-medium stor	nes 🗸	
504	Natural	Compact mid brown orange clay sand frequent small-large stones		
505	Ditch	Linear NNE-SSW profile: 45 degrees base: concave dimensions: max breadth 1 max depth 0.7m, min length 3.m	.2m,	
506	Fill	Firm mid orange brown silty clay occasional flecks charcoal, frequent small-large st	ones 🗸	\checkmark



Max Dimensions: Length: 12.10 m. Width: 1.50 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 1.25 m. Max: 1.65 m.

OS Co-ordinates: Ref. 1: TL0923420727 Ref. 2: TL0924620729

Context:	Type:	Description: Ex	cavated:	Finds Present:
600	Tarmac	Car park surface.	✓	
601	Make up layer	Mixture of loose rubble consisting of frequent brick and CBM. Associated with car p	oark.	
602	Layer	Firm dark grey silty clay occasional small-medium stones Probable occupation layer associated with modern pre-car park activity.	· 🗸	
603	Layer	Firm light grey silty clay Contained lenses of orange clay. Probable occupation lay associated with modern pre-car park activity.	er 🗸	
604	Buried topsoil	Friable light grey brown silty clay	✓	
605	Colluvium	Friable light orange brown silty clay occasional small stones	✓	
607	Ditch	Linear NNE-SSW profile: 45 degrees base: concave dimensions: max breadth 1.0 max depth 0.4m, min length 1.5m	05m, 🗸	
606	Fill	Firm light orange grey silty clay occasional flecks charcoal, moderate small stones	\checkmark	\checkmark
608	Natural	Firm mid orange sandy clay frequent small-medium stones		
609	Make up layer	Firm mid grey orange silty clay moderate small-medium stones Contained moderate amount of modern brick, CBM and tarmac lumps.	✓	



Max Dimensions: Length: 10.00 m. Width: 1.50 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: m. Max: m.

OS Co-ordinates: Ref. 1: TL0922620756 Ref. 2: TL0922120747

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated: Finds Pres	sent:
700	Demolition layer	Loose dark grey brown clay silt with frequent modern building rubble.	✓	
701	Natural	Compact mid brown orange clay sand frequent small-large stones		
702	Demolition layer	Firm dark grey clay silt moderate small-large ceramic building material, moderate large stones Modern demolition spread.	small-	



Max Dimensions: Length: 12.00 m. Width: 1.50 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: m. Max: m.

OS Co-ordinates: Ref. 1: TL0922320731 Ref. 2: TL0921220737

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated: Finds Present:	;
800	Demolition layer	Mixed layer of dark grey silty clay with large lenses of redeposited natural. Free inclusions of brick and CBM. Associated with demolition of existing buildings.		
801	Natural	Compact mid orange clay sand frequent small-medium stones]



Max Dimensions: Length: 15.00 m. Width: 1.50 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.35 m. Max: 0.75 m.

OS Co-ordinates: Ref. 1: TL0925720716 Ref. 2: TL0926120732

Context:	Type:	Description: E	xcavated:	Finds Present:
400	Tarmac	Car park surface.	✓	
401	Make up layer	Hardcore (Type 1) associated with car park.	✓	
402	Layer	Firm mid grey silty clay frequent small-large ceramic building material, frequent sm stones Probable occupation layer associated with modern pre-car park activity.	nall 🗸	
403	Layer	Firm dark blue grey silty clay Contained frequent 'frog' type brick fragments. Prob occupation layer associated with modern pre-car park activity.	pable 🗸	
404	Buried topsoil	Friable mid grey brown silty clay occasional small ceramic building material, occasi flecks chalk, moderate small stones	onal	✓
405	Colluvium	Friable mid orange brown silty clay frequent small stones	✓	
406	Natural	Compact Yellow - orange fine silty clay and gravel.		
407	Posthole	Square profile: near vertical base: flat dimensions: min breadth 0.55m, min de 0.13m, min length 0.55m	pth 🗸	
408	Fill	Friable mid grey brown silty clay moderate small stones	\checkmark	\checkmark
409	Posthole	Square profile: near vertical base: flat dimensions: min breadth 0.5m, min dep 0.25m, min length 0.5m	th 🗸	
410	Fill	Friable dark grey brown silty clay moderate small stones	~	\checkmark

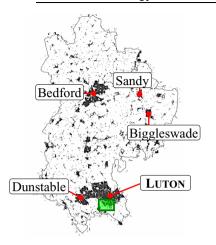


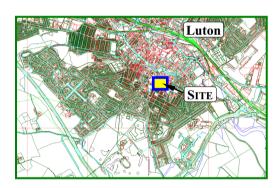
Max Dimensions: Length: 7.00 m. Width: 1.50 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: m. Max: m.

OS Co-ordinates: Ref. 1: TL0927220719 Ref. 2: TL0926620721

Context:	Type:	Description: Ex	cavated:	Finds Present:
900	Tarmac	Car park surface.	~	
901	Make up layer	Hardcore (Type 1) associated with car park.	✓	
902	Layer	Firm light yellow brown silty clay moderate small-medium stones Contained modera brick fragments. Probable occupation layer associated with modern pre-car park activ		
903	Layer	Firm dark grey silty clay occasional small chalk, occasional small stones Probable occupation layer associated with modern pre-car park activity.	✓	
904	Buried topsoil	Friable mid grey brown silty clay occasional small stones	✓	
905	Colluvium	Friable light brown orange silty clay frequent small-medium stones	✓	
906	Natural	Compact mid orange clay sand moderate small-medium stones	✓	







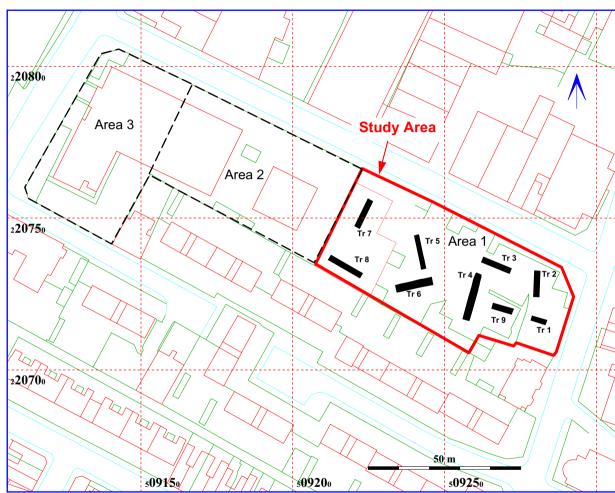


Figure 1: Site location map

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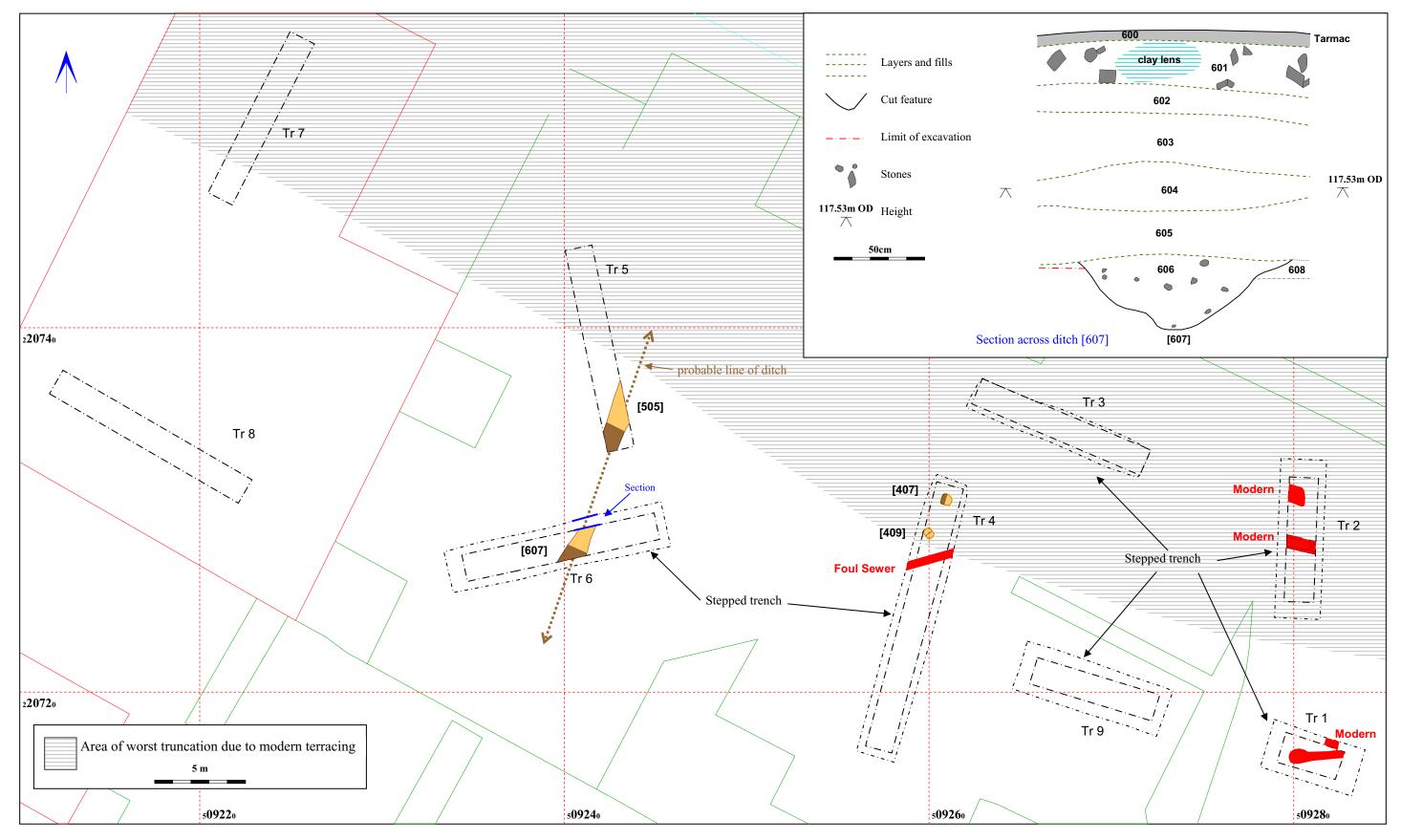


Figure 2: All features

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