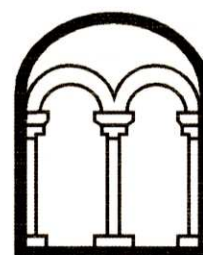


**LAND SOUTH OF ROOKERY FARM
COTTON END
BEDFORDSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION

Albion
archaeology



**LAND SOUTH OF ROOKERY FARM
COTTON END
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ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION

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Compiled by	Approved by
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Prepared for:
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Preface

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Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned by Wilmott Dixon Construction and monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Geoff Saunders of the Bedford Borough Council Historic Environment Team.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Iain Leslie (Project Officer) and Jonathan Nilsson (Archaeological Technician). The report was prepared by Iain Leslie with contributions from Joan Lightning (CAD Technician). The project was managed by Iain Leslie. All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

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Version History

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Key Terms

The following terms and abbreviations are used throughout this report:

AO	Bedford Borough Council Archaeological Officer
BBC	Bedford Borough Council
BBHER	Bedford Borough Historic Environment Record
CIfA	Chartered Institute <i>for</i> Archaeologists
HET	Bedford Borough Council Historic Environment Team
PDA	Permitted development area
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



Non-Technical Summary

Planning permission (17/01602/MDC3) was granted by Bedford Borough Council for the erection of a new primary school, drop-off area and car park and associated landscaping works at land south of Rookery Farm, High Road, Cotton End, Bedfordshire.

The permitted development area (PDA) is located to the south of medieval settlement earthworks and partially overlies associated ridge and furrow earthworks; together, these heritage assets have the potential to be of national significance. Because of the high potential for the presence of archaeological remains and potential impacts on existing earthworks within the PDA, a condition (12) was attached to the planning consent for a programme of archaeological works.

The adjoining car park area was subject to an earthworks survey to record the extant medieval ridge and furrow earthworks. Prior to commencement of construction of the car park, the Bedford Borough Council Archaeological Officer (AO) advised that an archaeological trial trench evaluation was required to determine whether any below ground archaeological remains survived.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Willmott Dixon Construction to carry out the trial trench evaluation. This report presents the results of the investigation.

In Trench 40 a single probable pit was identified; it contained late Iron Age/early Roman pottery. The small amount and abraded nature of the pottery suggests that whilst activity of this date probably took place in the wider vicinity, the focus of domestic activity was elsewhere. This was probably outside of the PDA to the west where there are known cropmarks (BBHER 14750).

Furrows were identified in both Trenches 40 and 41, corresponding with the extant ridge and furrow earthworks present across the car park area. This suggests that the area was part of a system of open fields in the medieval period.

The results of the trial trenching suggest that there is low potential for the survival of archaeological remains within the car park area. The revealed features are of no more than local significance and have little potential to address regional research objectives. Where remains are present, the fairly substantial depth of overburden (c.0.6m) means that the impact of the car park construction is unlikely to be significant.

The project archive will be deposited at The Higgins Art Gallery & Museum, Bedford (accession no.: BEDFM: 2017.24). Details of the project and its findings will be submitted to the OASIS database (reference no.: albionar1-302320) in accordance with the guidelines issued by Historic England and the Archaeology Data Service.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Planning Background*

Planning permission (17/01602/MDC3) was granted by Bedford Borough Council for the erection of a new primary school, drop-off area and car park and associated landscaping works at land south of Rookery Farm, High Road, Cotton End, Bedfordshire.

The permitted development area (PDA) is located to the south of medieval settlement earthworks and partially overlies associated ridge and furrow earthworks; together, these heritage assets have the potential to be of national significance. Because of the high potential for the presence of archaeological remains and potential impacts on existing earthworks within the PDA, a condition (12) was attached to the planning consent for a programme of archaeological works.

Archaeological evaluation, followed by open-area excavation and strip, map and sample investigation in the southern part of the site — the school site — identified a focus of medieval settlement activity at the eastern limit of the PDA, with dispersed peripheral activity elsewhere.

The adjoining overspill car park to the north — the car park area — was subject to an earthwork survey to record the extant medieval ridge and furrow earthworks (Souterrain 2018). Prior to commencement of construction of the car park, the Bedford Borough Council Archaeological Officer (AO) advised that an archaeological trial trench evaluation was required to determine whether any below-ground archaeological remains survived.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Willmott Dixon Construction to carry out the trial trench evaluation. A Method Statement for the works was prepared (Albion Archaeology 2018) as an Addendum to the original Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (Albion Archaeology 2017a), which was approved by the AO. This report presents the results of the trial trench evaluation

1.2 *Site Location and Geology*

Cotton End is a village within the unitary Borough of Bedford and is situated in the centre of Bedfordshire. The county town of Bedford lies 5km to the north-west, and the A1 (Great North Road) and Biggleswade are located *c.* 10km to the east. Cotton End is a linear development situated on the east side of the A600.

The PDA lies on the west side of the A600 (High Road), centred on NGR TL 08319 45355 (Figure 1). The car park area comprises a *c.* 1.3ha field bounded by fields to the north and east, the school site to the south and the Marston Vale forest area to the west. The field was pasture at the time of the fieldwork.



The underlying bedrock comprises Stewartby Member and Weymouth Member (undifferentiated) Mudstone¹. This is overlain by a mix of sands, gravels, silt and clay. The site lies on fairly flat ground at *c.*30.6m OD.

1.3 Archaeological and Historical Background

1.3.1 Archaeological evaluation of the site

Archaeological trial trenching of the school site was undertaken between 17th and 23rd August 2017 (Albion Archaeology 2017b). Archaeological features were identified in seven of the fourteen trenches excavated, providing evidence of activity on the site dating from the early medieval to post-medieval periods.

The vast majority of features dating to the early medieval period were revealed within Trench 1 located at the north end of the site. These features included a number of boundary ditches and a pit, which together produced a reasonably substantial amount of pottery and other artefacts, suggesting that they represent a continuation of the medieval settlement activity surviving as earthworks immediately to the north-west (BBHER 15818).

In contrast, the few early medieval artefacts recovered from a ditch and two pits revealed within Trench 8 suggest that they represent peripheral activity away from the main settlement focus. Located within the centre of the site, they lie closer to the neighbouring ridge and furrow earthworks of the medieval fields bordering the former settlement.

The revealed late medieval/early post-medieval activity largely consisted of ditches confined to the areas nearest the eastern and southern boundaries of the site. A series of ditches revealed within Trenches 7, 9 and 13 appeared to define a NE–SW aligned boundary, whilst the nature of a number of features within Trenches 10 and 11 suggests they may be associated with the management and drainage of water within this area of the site. Alluvial deposits were also revealed within Trench 10 and an existing watercourse lies immediately to the west. The small amount of artefacts collectively recovered from all the late medieval/early post-medieval features tends to confirm their association with land management/division on the periphery of any settlement focus; their location within the site is more in line with the ridge and furrow earthworks (BBHER 3291) of the medieval fields immediately to the north-west rather than the settlement remains further to the north.

1.3.2 Archaeological open-area excavation and strip, map and sample investigation

Archaeological open-area excavation in the north-east part of the school site was undertaken between 7th and 23rd February 2018. An area of *c.* 0.2ha revealed a focus of early medieval settlement, including boundary ditches, a partial enclosure and part of a building. These probably represent a continuation of the known medieval settlement that survives as extant earthworks to the north (BBHER 15818) and correspond with the remains revealed in Trench 1 of the archaeological evaluation.

¹ <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>



The strip, map and sample investigation over the remainder of the school site showed only continuations of the late/medieval/early post-medieval boundary ditches identified during the archaeological evaluation. This confirms that medieval settlement did not continue into this area with the remains representing land management on the periphery of any settlement focus.

1.3.3 The wider historical and archaeological background

The car park area is situated immediately to the west of known medieval settlement (BBHER 15818) and partially overlying ridge and furrow earthworks (BBHER 3291). The former comprise holloways, ponds and at least one possible moated site. Recent LIDAR data and aerial photographs have highlighted that both sets of earthworks are well preserved and have the potential to be of national significance, equivalent to a scheduled monument.

In addition, cropmarks likely to be indicative of Iron Age settlement have been identified within the fields to the west of the site (BBHER 14750). Further cropmarks of probable Iron Age origin have been identified at the northern edge of Cotton End (BBHER 16659). These cropmarks are part of an extensive area of cropmarks (BBHER 1181) that lie to the north and west of the site; they include double-ditched trackways, small enclosures and ring ditches. Finds of late Iron Age and Roman pottery, roof and floor tiles, quern fragments and metal objects have also been recorded in this general area.

1.4 Project Objectives

The principal purpose of the archaeological field evaluation was to recover information on the:

- location, extent, nature, and date of any archaeological features or deposits that were present within the proposed development site;
- integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that were present at the proposed development site.
- nature of palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.

This information will be used by the HET and the Local Planning Authority to evaluate the significance of the potential impact of the proposed development on any archaeological remains that might survive within the site.



2. METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach to the project is summarised below; a full methodology is provided in the Method Statement (Albion Archaeology 2018).

The standards and requirements set out in the following documents were adhered to throughout the project:

• Albion Archaeology	<i>Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> (3rd ed., 2017).
• Bedford Museum	<i>Preparing Archaeological Archives for Deposition in Registered Museums in Bedfordshire</i> (2010).
• CIfA	<i>Charter and By-law; Code of Conduct</i> (2014).
	<i>Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation</i> (2014).
	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i> (2014).
• EAA	<i>Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England</i> (2003)
• Historic England	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment PPN3: Archaeological Excavation</i> (2015)
	<i>Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation</i> (2nd ed.) (2011).

Trial trenching took place within the car park area on 19th July 2018. Two 30m-long trenches were excavated, both measuring 1.8m wide (Figure 1). The trenches were inspected by the AO on 23rd July 2018.

The trenches were opened by a mechanical excavator fitted with a flat-edged bucket, operated by an experienced driver under close archaeological supervision. Overburden was removed down to the top of the archaeological deposits or undisturbed geological deposits, whichever were encountered first. All excavation and recording was carried out by experienced Albion staff. Any potential archaeological features were cleaned, excavated by hand and recorded using Albion Archaeology's *pro forma* sheets. All features and deposits were assigned a unique context number commencing at 100 for Trench 1, 200 for Trench 2 *etc.* Each trench was subsequently drawn and photographed as appropriate.

For the car park area, the Trenches were numbered 40 and 41, so as to differentiate the numbers from those trenches excavated during evaluation of the school site (Albion Archaeology 2017b) and open-area excavation.

The project archive will be deposited at The Higgins Art Gallery & Museum, Bedford (accession no.: BEDFM: 2017.24). Details of the project and its findings will be submitted to the OASIS database (reference no albionar1-



302320) in accordance with the guidelines issued by Historic England and the Archaeology Data Service.



3. RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

All significant deposits and features found within the trial trenches are summarised below and shown on Figure 2. Context numbers in square brackets refer to cuts [***] and round brackets to fills or layers (***). Archaeological features were identified in both trenches.

Details of all observed deposits and archaeological features are provided in Appendix 1.

3.2 Overburden and Geological Deposits

In both trenches the overburden consisted of topsoil and subsoil. The topsoil was generally around 0.3m thick and comprised mid-brown-grey clay silt. The subsoil was 0.2–0.3m thick and comprised mid-brown silty clay.

3.3 Probable Late Iron Age / Early Roman Pit

Trench 40 contained a feature [4004] which probably represents a pit. It was at least 3m wide by 0.45m deep and extended beyond the limits of trench. It had a U-shaped profile with concave sides and base, and was filled with a light brown-grey clay silt deposit. Excavation of the pit produced one late Iron Age and two early Roman pottery sherds (10g); respectively fabrics F06B, R06C and R13², all likely to be of local manufacture.

This feature most likely represents a pit, although the possibility that it may represent a large tree-throw cannot be ruled out, especially as it continued beyond the limits of the trench and, therefore, its full form in plan is not available. Nonetheless, the presence of late Iron Age / early Roman pottery in the feature, whatever the interpretation, confirms that activity of this date was present in the wider vicinity. However, the small amount of pottery and its abraded condition suggests that the feature was outside of any focus of domestic activity — which was probably to the west in the vicinity of the known cropmarks (BBHER 14750).

3.4 Furrows

Furrows were present in both Trenches 40 and 41. They were orientated NE-SW and had concave profiles; they were *c* 0.4m wide by 0.05m deep. These corresponded with the extant ridge and furrow earthworks visible in the ground surface.

The furrows are evidence for this area having been open fields utilised for strip cultivation in the medieval period.

² Fabric types identified in accordance with the Bedfordshire Ceramic Type Series



4. CONCLUSIONS

The archaeological field evaluation of the car park area identified archaeological remains in both of the two trenches.

In Trench 40 a single probable pit was identified; it contained late Iron Age/early Roman pottery. The small amount and abraded nature of the pottery suggests that whilst activity of this date probably took place in the wider vicinity, the focus of domestic activity was elsewhere. This was probably outside of the PDA to the west where there are known cropmarks (BBHER 14750).

Furrows were identified in both Trenches 40 and 41, corresponding with the extant ridge and furrow earthworks present across the car park area. The earthworks were the subject of a previous survey (Souterrain 2018) and indicate that the car park area was part of a system of open fields in the medieval period.

The results suggest that there is low potential for the survival of significant archaeological remains within the car park area. The revealed features are of no more than local significance and have little potential to address regional research objectives. Where remains are present, the fairly substantial depth of overburden (*c.*0.6m) means that the archaeological impact of the car park construction is unlikely to be significant.



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6. APPENDIX 1: TRENCH SUMMARIES



Trench: 40

Max Dimensions: Length: 30.00 m. Width: 1.80 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.6 m. Max: 0.6 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL 08285 45365

OS Grid Ref.: TL 08300 45306

Reason: To evaluate archaeological potential

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
4001	Topsoil	Friable mid brown grey clay silt Thickness 0.3m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4002	Subsoil	Firm mid brown silty clay Thickness 0.3m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4003	Natural	Firm mid orange brown clay frequent small-medium stones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4004	Pit	Sub-circular sides: concave base: concave dimensions: max depth 0.45m, min diameter 3m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4005	Fill	Firm light brown grey clay silt occasional small-medium stones Thickness 0.45m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4006	Furrow	Linear NE-SW sides: convex base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.4m, max depth 0.05m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4007	Fill	Firm mid brown clay silt Thickness 0.05m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Trench: 41

Max Dimensions: Length: 30.00 m. Width: 1.80 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.53 m. Max: 0.54 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL 08285 45365

OS Grid Ref.: TL 08274 45337

Reason: To evaluate archaeological potential

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
4101	Topsoil	Friable mid grey clay silt Thickness 0.26m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4102	Subsoil	Firm mid brown grey silty clay Thickness 0.22m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4103	Natural	Firm mid orange brown sand frequent small-medium stones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4104	Furrow	Linear NE-SW sides: concave base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.4m, max depth 0.05m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4105	Fill	Firm mid brown clay silt Thickness 0.05m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

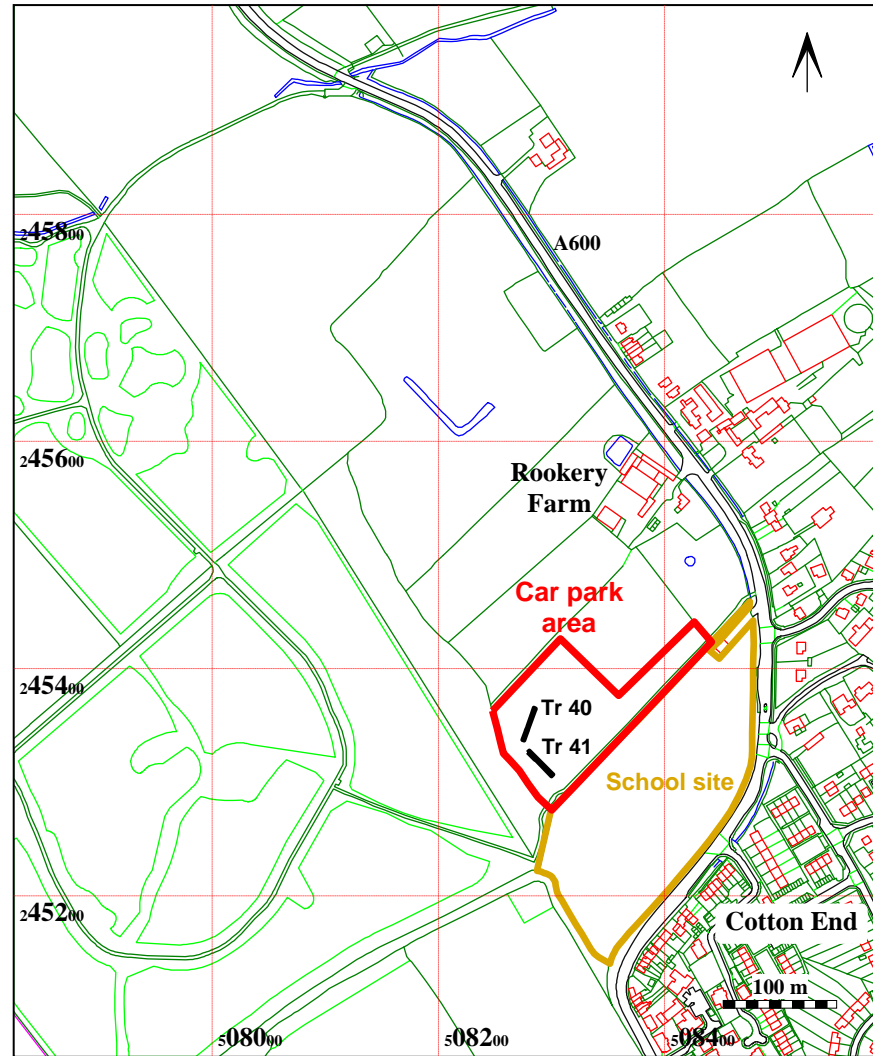
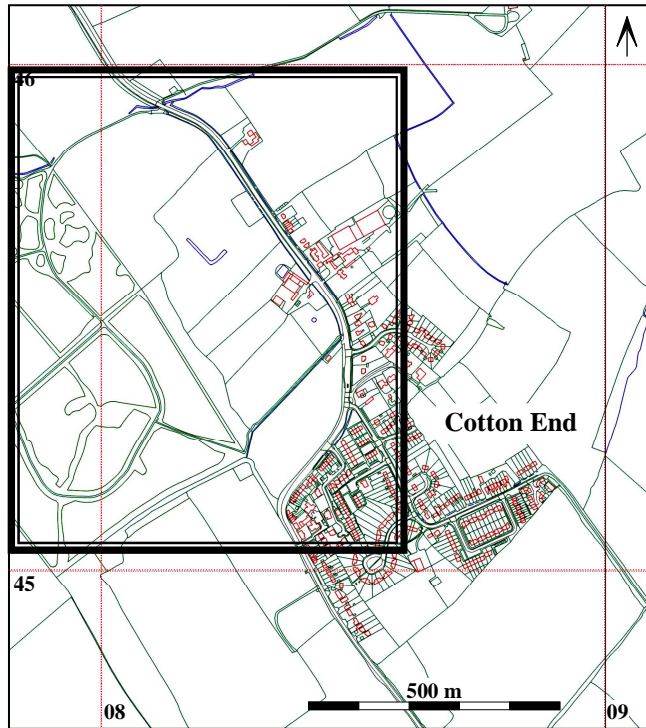
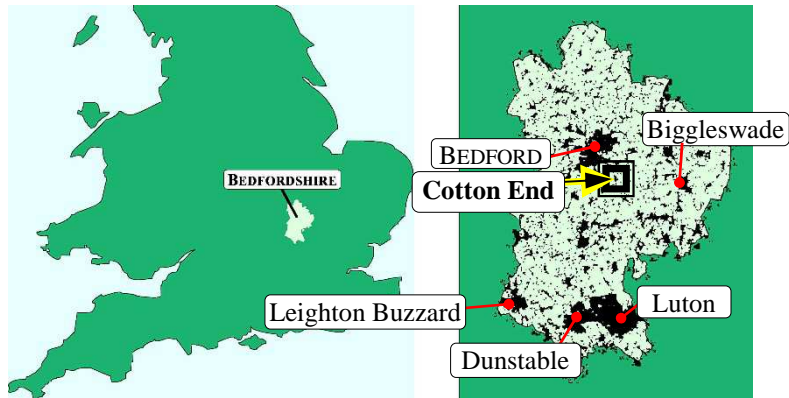
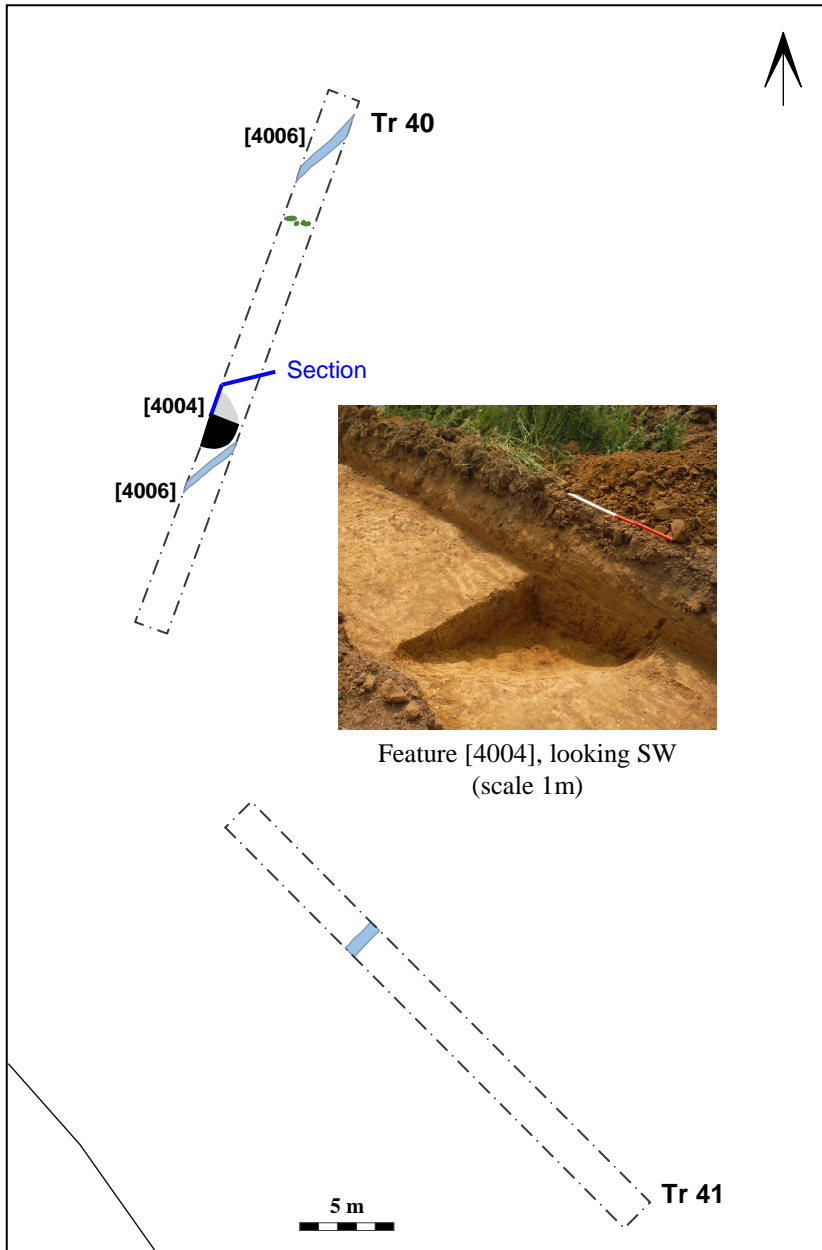
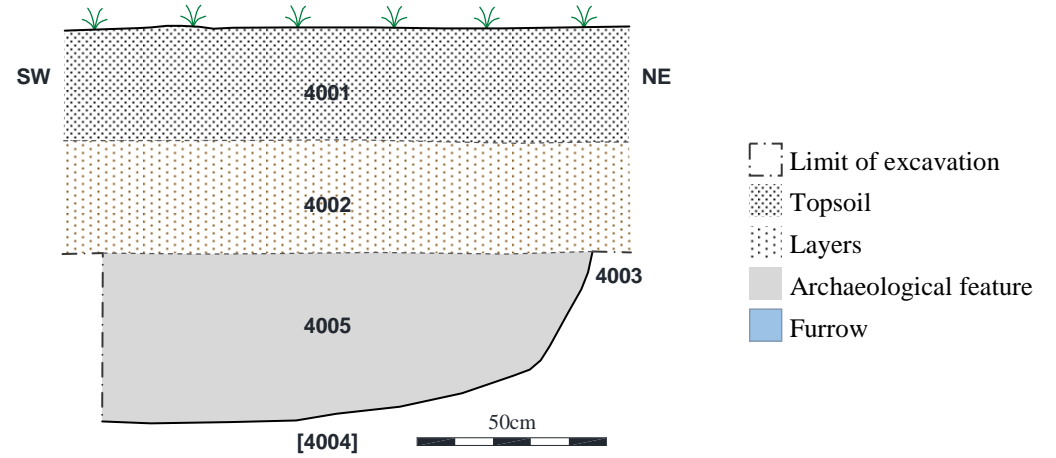


Figure 1: Site location

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Feature [4004], looking SW
(scale 1m)



Trench 40, looking NE (scale 1m)

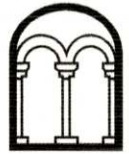


Trench 40, looking SE (scale 1m)

Figure 2: All-features plan, section and photographs



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