Archaeological Watching Brief Report

LEISURE AND WILDLIFE LAKES CONDOVER

For Travel Class Ltd

Matthew Williams MA MIfA

L-P:ARCHÆOLOGY

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

LEISURE AND WILDLIFE LAKES CONDOVER

Client:	Travel Class Ltd
Local Authority:	Shropshire Council
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A trading name of L – P : Heritage LLP

The Pump House | Coton Hill | Shrewsbury, SY1 2DP | +44 [0]1743 361552 | marches@lparchaeology.com

www.lparchaeology.com

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Abstract

An archaeological watching brief was carried out during construction of a wildlife and leisure lake at Condover Hall, Shropshire.

The topsoil strip revealed a the northeast corner of a sub rectangular enclosure. To the north of the enclosure was a hearth and cobbled area of unknown function. Within the enclosure was a ring gulley with western entrance and probable gate structure which may have been used as an animal compound.

The evidence indicates a small or medium sized Romano-British rural settlement dating from the early 2nd to mid 3rd century. There is little evidence for industry and the chief economy was probably farming. The site is adjacent to the River Cound, which would have provided water but also may have caused parts of the site to occasionally flood.

This site represents the only known Romano-British settlement in the vicinity. A double ditched sub rectangular enclosure is recorded 200m to the north but the date is unknown. No evidence for a deserted Medieval village, as suggested in the SHER, was seen in the south of the site.

It is recommended that a short description or note of the results is published in a suitable journal.

1. Introduction

1.1. This report details the results of an archaeological Watching Brief carried out at Condover Hall for Travel Class Ltd. The local authority is Shropshire County Council (SCC).

1.2. The fieldwork was carried out by Marcus Headifen, Christopher Matthews and Matthew Williams between 1st and 12th June 2015.

1.3. The site is located to the south of Condover Hall, Condover, SY5 7AF (NGR 349500,305450) hereafter referred to as 'the site' (FIGURE 1).

1.4. The work was carried out in accordance with the specification prepared by Matthew Williams of L – P : Archaeology (WILLIAMS 2015).

1.5. The work has been recorded as part of the OASIS project (Appendix 1).

2. Site Background

2.1. GEOLOGY

2.1.1. The bedrock geology is Salop formation (mudstone, sandstone and conglomerate) and the drift deposits are alluvium and river gravel terraces associated with the River Cound (BRITISH GEOLOGICAL SURVEY 2014). This was confirmed during the watching brief.

2.2. TOPOGRAPHY

2.2.1. The site is to the south of Condover Hall. It slopes down gently from 80m OD in the south to 75m OD at the Cound. (**FIGURE 2**).

2.3. ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY

2.3.1. There are 18th century records of Roman coins being discovered at Burriewood and coin moulds at Little Ryton (GAYDON (ED) 1968). It has been suggested that the Roman road from Uriconium (Wroxeter) to Caerleon in South Wales (PRN08494) (MARGARY 1973) passes through Allfield, 1.4km to the northeast of the site although this has not been proved (GAYDON (ED), 1968). Prior to this watching brief there was very little known Roman activity in the area.

2.3.2. The Medieval historic core of the village of Condover comprises the church and settlement along Church Street and Station Road. Condover Hall and estate was built at the turn of the 17th century just to the southeast of the church. The village has expanded considerably to the west of Station Road and this area consists of mid to late 20th century low density houses and bungalows. The area to the south and west of the Hall is still open fields (WILLIAMS 2014).

2.3.3. The site is in the approximate location of potential buried remains of a shifted Medieval settlement (SHER PRN 00958) and a pond marked on historic maps. No evidence for a Medieval settlement or pond was noted during the watching brief.

2.4. SITE CONDITIONS

2.4.1. Prior to the work the site was pasture. The eastern part of the site, adjacent to the Cound, was waterlogged (**FIGURE 2**).

3. Aims and Objectives

3.1. The aims of the watching brief were:

- to record the character, date, location and preservation of any archaeological remains on the site.
- to record any remains related to the shifted Medieval settlement and pond.

4. Methodology

4.1. For a full description of the archaeological methodology please refer to the Written Scheme of Investigation (WILLIAMS 2015).

4.2. The site topsoil was removed using a toothless bucket. Stripped areas were then cleaned by hand to locate archaeological features. The work programme also allowed the stripped areas to weather for several days which helped to clarify some archaeological features.

4.3. Exposed features were cleaned and excavated by hand. Pits were half sectioned and sample sections were excavated from ditches.

4.4. Seven environmental samples were taken.

5. Results

5.1. The archaeological horizon was sealed below approximately 300mm of dark brown humic topsoil and 200mm of mid brown subsoil. All features were cut into the orange clay sand natural geology.

5.2. POST MEDIEVAL GULLIES [117] AND [138] (FIGURE 3 AND FIGURE 4)

5.2.1. Two linear cuts with concave sides and flat bases were recorded in the central part of the site. (117) cut the ring gulley (see below para 5.6.) and was 0.60m wide and 0.20m deep; (138) was 0.90m wide and 0.20m deep; both had a single fill of light brown grey clay silt (116 and 136 respectively). 18th/19th century pot was found in (136). Both features were very similar in form and fill; they are interpreted as Post Medieval drainage gullies.

5.2.2. A modern field drain was recorded in the north of the site at the east side of the cobbled surface (118).

5.3. HEARTH [132] (FIGURE 3 AND FIGURE 5)

5.3.1. In the north of the site was a shallow circular pit 0.90m in diameter and 0.10m deep. The upper fill (133) was a grey orange sand with occasional cobbles, the primary fill (134) was an orange brown sand with frequent areas of charcoal and occasional cobbles and gravel. The discolouration may suggest *in situ* burning although the natural sand and clay is red/orange, and it may be natural. (134) was sampled as <4> and contained roundwood twigs that had been burned at a high temperature which supports the interpretation of this feature as a hearth. There were no datable finds from this feature.

5.4. COBBLED SURFACE (118) AND PIT [160] (FIGURE 3)

5.4.1. In the north of the site was a sub-rectangular cobbled surface (118) measuring 4.4m north-south and 4.1m east-west. It was overlain by a light grey brown clay silt (119). (119) contained fragments of very abraded 2nd century pottery; it is interpreted as a silting up layer after the surface went out of use.

5.4.2. The area surrounding (118) was carefully examined but there was no indication of post pipes, stake holes or any other features that would indicate a

fence or wall around the cobbles. Two slots were excavated through (118) and it was found to be 0.10m thick (i.e. one or two cobbles depth) with no underlying deposits or features. In some areas (119) seemed to butt up against the edge of (118), this may have been caused by the cobbles sinking into the silt over time.

5.4.3. The survival of this surface indicates that there has been little plough damage within the site.

5.4.4. On the east side of (118) was a shallow oval pit [160] 3m long, 1.7m deep and 0.12m deep. The fill (159) was mid grey brown clay silt with occasional charcoal inclusions but no finds. There was no physical relationship between the cobbled surface and the pit.

5.4.5. On the north side of [160] were two sub-circular depressions in the natural clay, each about 2m across. These may have been similar features to [160] but there were no discernible fills.

5.5. ENCLOSURE DITCH [108]/[115]/[146]/[149] (FIGURE 2, FIGURE 3 AND FIGURE 6)

5.5.1. In the centre of the site was substantial linear ditch running east west from the west site boundary and then turning south to form a northeast angle. It was sectioned in four locations and given the cut numbers [108], [115], [146] and [149].

5.5.2. The westernmost section was recorded as cut [108]. It was 1.9m wide and 0.75m deep with straight 45° sides and a flat base. The primary fill (107) was a dark grey brown clay sand with occasional organic inclusions. This was overlain by an orange sand slump (109), which suggests the ditch was not cleared out or maintained after this deposit. The slump was overlain by a dark grey clay sand (106) with frequent charcoal inclusions and occasional pebbles, and finally a brown clay silt (105) with occasional pebbles.

5.5.3. The ditch was sectioned 4.5m to the west as cut [115]. Here it was 2.3m wide and 0.75m deep with shallow concave sides and a flat base. The same sequence was recorded as deposits (113), (112), (111) and (110) which were the same as (107), (109), (106) and (105) respectively. There was also a slump of

orange sand (114) at the base of the ditch.

5.5.4. The primary silt fill (113) was sampled as <6>. It contained woody roots, uncharred indeterminate seed remains and elder fruits as well as poorly preserved unidentifiable beetle fragments. There was also small amounts of charcoal and burnt bone. Pollen/spores indicated grass and alder in the environment. The pottery, charcoal and burnt bone probably derives from domestic refuse.

5.5.5. The second silt fill (111) was sampled as <5>. It contained elder fruits, poorly preserved cereal grains, chaff and 'seeds, and charcoal roundwood including possible a heather twig. The cereal remains suggest that grain was being processed at the site.

5.5.6. The ditch was sectioned at the corner as cut [146] (PLATE 5). It was 2m wide with straight sides at 45° and an irregular base. The primary fill was dark brown peat (145). This was overlain by the same sequence as the other sections: a sand slump same as (114), overlain by (143), (142) and (141) which were the same as (107), (106) and (105) respectively. There was no slump equivalent to (109).

5.5.7. (145) was sampled as <7> and found to contain decayed unidentifiable wood or woody root fragments, elder fruits, dock seeds and blackberry/raspberry seeds. A very small amount of coal was also noted. These could have been introduced to the deposit by worm action, roots or other 'bioturbation'.

5.5.8. The final section was to the south where it was seen in plan the widest. The top of the ditch in this area measured 3.20m across. This section was 0.50m deep.

5.5.9. The primary fill was a mid grey silt (148) with occasional charcoal inclusions, which was probably equivalent to (107) and represents the final use period of the ditch. This was overlain by an orange grey silt (147) which contained occasional sub-angular stones, rounded cobbles and abraded pottery. The upper fill was a mid brown silt (158). (147) and (158) both represent later silting up and are equivalent to (106) and (105).

5.5.10. The only primary fill to contain finds was (148). It contained large sherds of unabraded pottery dated to AD190-250. There were no finds in the slump layers. Above the slump layers abraded course pottery was recovered from (111), (142) and one sherd of samian from (110). The pottery from (110) and (111) was not diagnostic but the pottery from (142) was dated to the late 2nd to late 3rd centuries – the same date as the unabraded pottery from the primary fill.

5.6. RING GULLEY AND ASSOCIATED FEATURES (FIGURE 4, FIGURE 7, FIGURE 8 AND FIGURE 9)

5.6.1. In the northeast corner of the enclosure was a circular gulley feature measuring 7m across with a 2.10m gap in the west side. The gulley [124] was sectioned in four locations and shown to be between 50 and 200mm deep with a rounded profile (PLATE 4). It was filled with brown sand clay with moderate sub-angular or rounded stone inclusions (125) which contained pottery dated to the mid to late 2nd century. Below this fill at the south terminus was a burnt clay deposit (129). Within the west side of the central area was a compact clay surface with occasional cobbles (161).

5.6.2. Fill (129) was sampled as <2>. There were some indeterminate charcoal fragments but no significant finds.

5.6.3. At the west side of the gulley, just outside the gap, were three postholes features. [150] was circular, 0.50m and 0.12m deep with a concave profile. Ot was filled with brown sand clay (151) with some scorched red areas and several angular packing stones. [130] was also circular, 0.45m across and 0.15m deep, it was filled with brown sand clay (131) with a flat stone and a deposit of burnt clay at the base. [152] was 1m long, 0.40m wide and 0.10m deep. It was filled with a brown sand clay with scorching and charcoal in the northern end and sub-angular stones in the southern end (153). The southern part of the fill was similar to the other postholes and is the probable location of a post within this feature. There were no finds from these features.

5.6.4. Immediately south of the postholes were two intercutting pits. The earlier pit [121] was oval and measured 1.3m long by 0.9m wide and 0.25m deep with

concave sides and base. The primary fill was a brown silt clay (123) with occasional angular stone inclusions, this was overlain by a loose brown silt (122) with occasional rounded pebbles. (122) was probably washed into the feature naturally.

5.6.5. The later pit [126] was oval and measured 0.9m long, 0.7m wide and 0.2m deep with a concave profile (**PLATE 6**). At the base of the cut was a deposit of burnt clay (128), this was overlain by brown sand clay (127) with occasional sub-angular stone inclusions and a large flat stone at the top; it contained pottery dated to AD 120-160. The stony fill is similar to those of the postholes to the north.

5.6.6. The lower fill (128) was sampled as <1>.There were no organic remains other than a small amount of indeterminate charcoal. The sand and gravel within the sample had been scorched and there were also several lumps of heat affected sediment conglomerates which may contain slag. The industry that produced the slag is unknown although the scorching and size of the hearth suggests a relatively low heat.

5.6.7. At the west edge of the stripped area was a shallow oval cut [156] measuring 0.5m long, 0.4m wide and 50mm deep. It was filled with a scorched orange brown clay with charcoal inclusions (157) but no finds.

5.6.8. Fill (157) was sampled as <3>. It contained a small amount of indeterminate charcoal although there was no magnetic component which would indicate high temperatures.

5.6.9. To the south of the postholes was a ephemeral circular area, about 1.6m across, of loose brown silt with three large stones at the edge. Investigation showed the edges to be unclear but the loose material it was at least 0.25m deep. It may be the result of water collecting in a depression.

6. Ceramic finds

6.1. INTRODUCTION

6.1.1. Two hundred and twenty-seven sherds of pottery were recovered from the site, weighing a total of 4644g. In addition there were three CBM fragments weighing 220g (95)/(125) and one fragment of bricotage weighing 18g (119). A table of all finds by context is given in Appendix 2. Twenty-two sherds were Post Medieval, these were recovered from the gulley fill (136). The remaining sherds are Romano-British; the majority are are orange courseware, there are also three sherds of samian (110)/(127), nine sherds of Severn Valley ware (125) and 32 sherds of mortaria (105)/(106)/(125)/(127)/(148).

6.2. CONDITION

6.2.1. The sherds were generally large with some over 200mm across, however all were very abraded with the exception of those from the primary fill of the enclosure ditch (148). One sherd from the top fill of the ditch (105) and several from the layer below (106) had been burnt in a fire, probably within a refuse deposit.

6.2.2. The size and abrasion suggests that the site has not been ploughed but the pottery has been rolled around and redeposited within the site. This is likely to have been caused by water action such as flooding and runoff. This is unsurprising as the site is adjacent to the Cound and the eastern part was waterlogged during the excavation.

6.3. RANGE

6.3.1. There is a small Post Medieval assemblage from gulley fill (136). One short, straight sided basin sherd may date to the early Post Medieval period but the most are glazed or unglazed hard coarse orange ware storage jars or dishes dating to the 18th or 19th centuries.

6.3.2. The majority of the Romano-British sherds are undiagnostic body sherds. The earliest sherds are AD120-160 from upper ditch fill (127) and 2nd century from silt (119) overlying the cobbles. Sherds from fill (125) of the ring gulley

date to the mid/late 2nd century.

6.3.3. Sherds of mortaria from primary enclosure ditch fill (148) are dated AD190-250 and sherds from the later enclosure ditch fill (106) date to the late 2nd or early 3rd century.

6.3.4. The sherds cover a range of about 140 years from AD120 to 260. The majority fall in the earlier part of the range but there are no distinct chronological groups that would indicate different phases of occupation; in addition the vast majority of sherds are undiagnostic and could not be dated. The earliest are abraded sherds from the later enclosure ditch fills, whereas the latest are unabraded sherds are from the earliest ditch fills. This infers that the ditch was regularly cleaned out until it fell out of use soon after AD260; pottery from across the site was then gradually washed into the ditch as it silted up.

6.4.FUNCTION

6.4.1. The pottery assemblage is typically domestic, comprising courseware jars and dishes with occasional samian and Severn Valley Ware. Food preparation is represented by the various fragments of mortaria. There were no forms or residues noted that would suggest an industrial function.

6.4.2. One fragment of bricotage was found in silt (119) overlying the cobbles (118) which implies that there was a kiln or oven within the site. A possible hearth [126] was recorded just outside the ring gulley to the south. These are the only indications of industry within the site.

6.4.3. Only three small fragments of CBM were recovered from the site which suggests that there were no tiled roofs or brick structures in the vicinity.

6.5.DISCUSSION

6.5.1. The pottery assemblage suggests a domestic settlement dating from the early 2nd to mid 3rd centuries. The pottery is coarse and probably local – the likely provenance for the coarseware is Wroxeter, 7.5km to the east. The bricotage implies some small scale industry although this does not seem to have been an important activity within the excavated part of the site. Occupation ended around the middle of the 3rd century and sherds from the site were gradually

washed into the backfill of the enclosure ditch.

6.5.2. No further work is envisaged on the assemblage however it should be retained to provide comparative material for any future excavations.

7. Environmental Sampling

7.1. The environmental sample processing and assessment was carried out by John Carrott of Palaeoecology Research Services. A table of samples taken and the summary of the assessment is given below. The full assessment report is included as Appendix 3.

7.2. SUMMARY

Sample no.	Cntxt no.	Description
<1>	128	Primary fill of oval cut or hearth [126] outside circular cobbled structure
<2>	129	Primary fill of circular cobble filled gully [124]
<3>	157	Fill of small burnt pit or hearth [156]
<4>	134	Primary fill of oval pit or hearth [132]
<5>	111	Secondary fill of ditch [108]/[115]/[146]
<6>	113	Primary fill of ditch [108]/[115]/[146]
<7>	145	Primary peat fill of enclosure ditch [108]/[115]/[146]

Table 1 - Environmental samples taken

7.2.1. Seven 'bulk' sediment samples recovered from deposits encountered during excavations on the south bank of Cound Brook, near Condover, Shropshire, were submitted for an assessment of their bioarchaeological potential. The excavations revealed a Romano-British site represented by a substantial enclosure ditch [108]/[115]/[146], a cobble filled ring gully [124] and a roughly circular cobbled area (118), together with several pits (two of which, [126] and [124], were perhaps hearths) associated with the two last. The recovered pottery was of low status, domestic form and initial spot dating suggested a late 2nd century date.

7.2.2. Three of the sampled deposits gave no concentrations of macrofossil remains of any interpretative value yielding just small amounts of indeterminate charcoal <1>, <2> and <3>; one of these, the primary fill of an oval cut or hearth <1>, also contained some conglomerate material perhaps including slag, however. The peat sample <7> and primary silt fill <6> of the enclosure ditch (taken at different sections) included waterlogged plant remains but the bulk of the material was rootlet fragments (at least half of the volume in each case) and indeterminate detritus. Both contained abundant uncharred elder

fruits and indeterminate fragments of beetle sclerites, a small number of other uncharred plant macrofossils and occasional pollen grains/spores, but the generally poor preservation and restricted range of identifiable remains rendered these assemblages of no real interpretative value; the provenance of the elder fruits and other uncharred plant macrofossil remains was also unclear. One of the enclosure ditch primary fills <6> also gave a single poorly preserved intestinal parasite (whipworm) egg indicating a trace level of faecal contamination.

7.2.3. Two larger assemblages of charred plant remains were recovered, one from the secondary fill of the enclosure ditch <5> and one from the primary fill of one of the oval pits/hearths <4>. The latter was exclusively of poorly preserved charcoal, including roundwood twigs, two of which were tentatively identified as ?oak; sufficient charcoal was present to favour an interpretation as a hearth. The secondary ditch fill <5> assemblage was primarily of charcoal but also included a small quantity of charred cereal grains, chaff, other 'seeds' and fragments of hazelnut shell – overall the impression was of waste from food preparation and cereal processing discarded into, or used as fuel for, a fire, the remains of which were subsequently disposed of within the ditch. Charred plant remains from the secondary fill of the enclosure ditch and the charcoal from the primary fill of one of the oval pits/hearths could provide suitable material for radiocarbon dating if required.

7.2.4. Although assemblages of charred and waterlogged plant and invertebrate remains have been recovered from some of the deposits (together with occasional fragments of indeterminate calcined bone), these were too poorly preserved and/or too small to warrant any more detailed analysis.

8. Discussion and Conclusions

8.1. A watching brief was carried out during the excavation of a leisure and wildlife lake at Condover Hall, Condover. The site was adjacent to the River Cound.

8.2. No evidence for a deserted Medieval village, as suggested in the SHER, was seen in the south of the site.

8.3. The work revealed the northeast corner of a ditched enclosure and several features dated by pottery to the Romano-British period. The enclosure ditch was up to 3.2m wide and 0.85m deep. The base was nearly 1m higher in the southern section of the ditch than in the corner section; a peat deposit was recorded at the base in the corner. The ditch separates the interior of the enclosure from the river, and it is likely to have served some drainage purpose as well as stopping animals from crossing the enclosure. The uneven base suggests that water was collected at the corner which resulted in the peat deposit. The primary fills of the ditch contained the latest pottery on site, which suggests that it was cleaned out and maintained which would have prevented flooding the enclosure.

8.4. To the north of the enclosure ditch was a cobbled surface measuring about 4.4m across. There was no indication of a surrounding wall or fence, nor was there any wear suggesting an entrance area or regular patterns of movement. The associated finds from the overlying silt were abraded domestic coarsewares which had washed into the area. The silt butted the side of the cobbles and it appeared that the cobbles had sunk into the silt, or perhaps once stood slightly proud. A shallow oval sterile pit was located on the east side of the cobbles, it is unclear whether it was contemporary, and a small hearth of unknown function was located 8m to the north of the cobbles. The function of the cobbles is unknown, it may simply represent consolidation in what was clearly a very wet part of the site.

8.5. Within the northeast corner of the enclosure was a ring gulley measuring 7m across with a 2.10m gap in the west side. The gulley was filled with angular pebbles and there was no evidence for a wall or fence, however there were four postholes outside the ring across the gap which suggests a gate. Again the function of this feature is unclear; given the size and location within the enclosure, it may be a roundhouse.

8.6. One of the postholes had been overlain by a small hearth with some possible light slag remains, which demonstrates later activity within the compound after the ring gulley had gone out of use. The process that produced the slag is unknown. One small fragment of bricotage was found on site which also suggests possible industrial activity in the vicinity.

8.7. Overall the evidence indicates a small or medium sized Romano-British rural settlement dating from the early 2nd to mid 3rd century. There is little evidence for industry and the chief economy was probably farming. The site is adjacent to the River Cound, which would have provided water but also may have caused parts of the site to occasionally flood. This was mitigated slightly by the square or rectangular enclosure ditch.

8.8. Only the northeast corner of the enclosure was excavated; the rest of the ditch and further features no doubt remain to the west and south. The condition of the finds and surviving surfaces indicate that the site has not been badly damaged by ploughing but has been affected by water. Occupation surfaces do survive.

8.9. There is very little known Romano-British activity in the area. Antiquarian coin finds are recorded at Burriewood and coin moulds at Little Ryton. The closest potential main road is that from Wroxteter to Caerleon (PRN08494) which passes through Allfield, 1.4km to the northeast.

8.10. A double ditched sub rectilinear enclosure (PRN28727) was noted on a south facing slope 200m north of the site. It has very straight sides and has been interpreted as a park feature (the area was within the park associated with Condover Hall) however, given the results of the watching brief, there is a possibility that it is another Romano-British enclosure.

9. Archive

9.1. The paper archive consists of:

- 1 x Drawing Register
- 3 x Photographic Register
- 2 x Context Register
- 48 x Context sheets
- 1 x Sample Register

9.2. The finds archive consists of:

- 1 x box artefacts as described in Section 6.

9.3. The archive is to be deposited with the Shropshire Museum Service.

SOURCES CONSULTED

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MARGARY, I.D., 1973. *Roman Roads in Britain*. London: John Baker.

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WILLIAMS, M., 2015. *Specification for Archaeological Watching Brief Leisure and Wildlife Lakes, Condover*. L - P : Archaeology.

FIGURES

FIGURE 1 // Site location

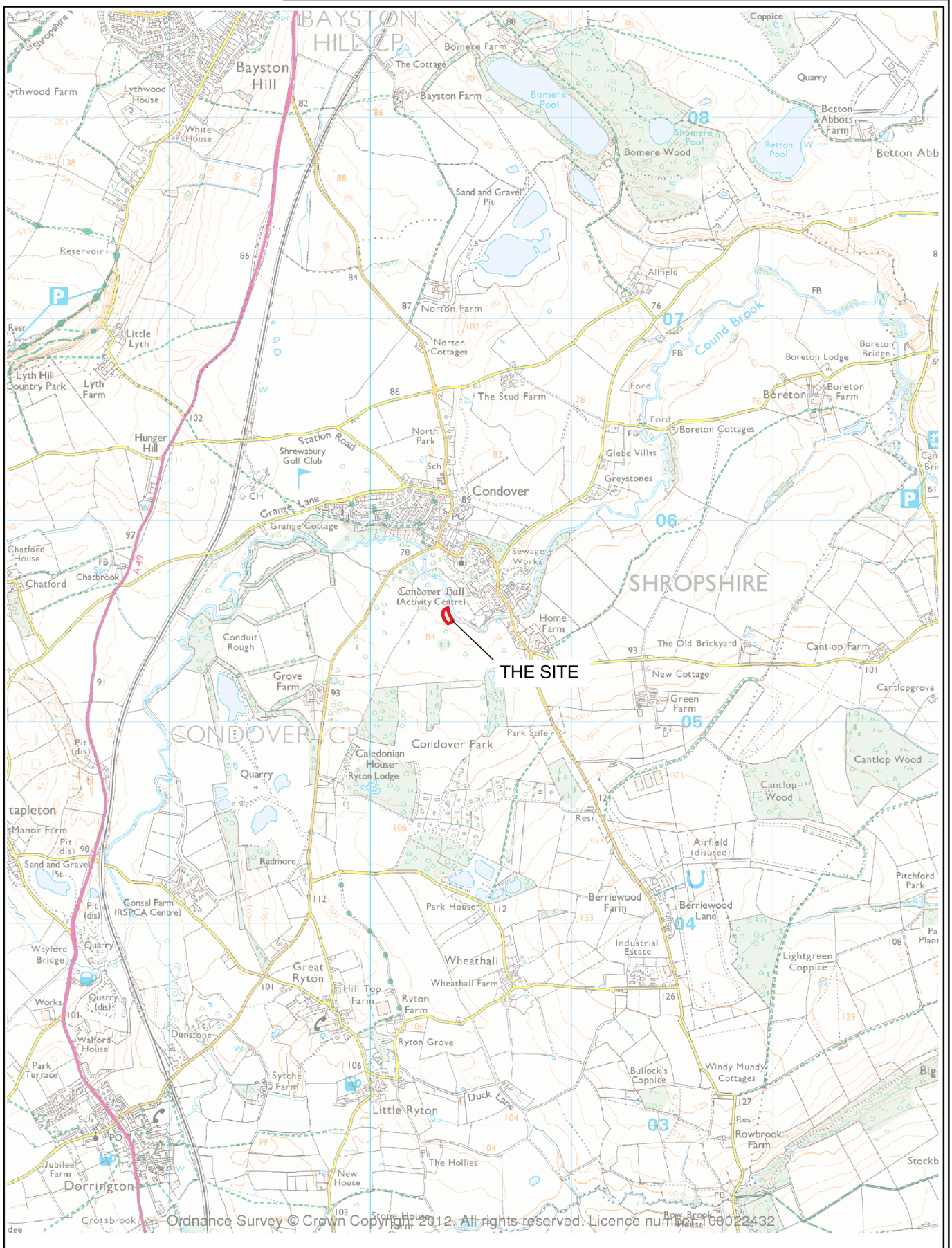
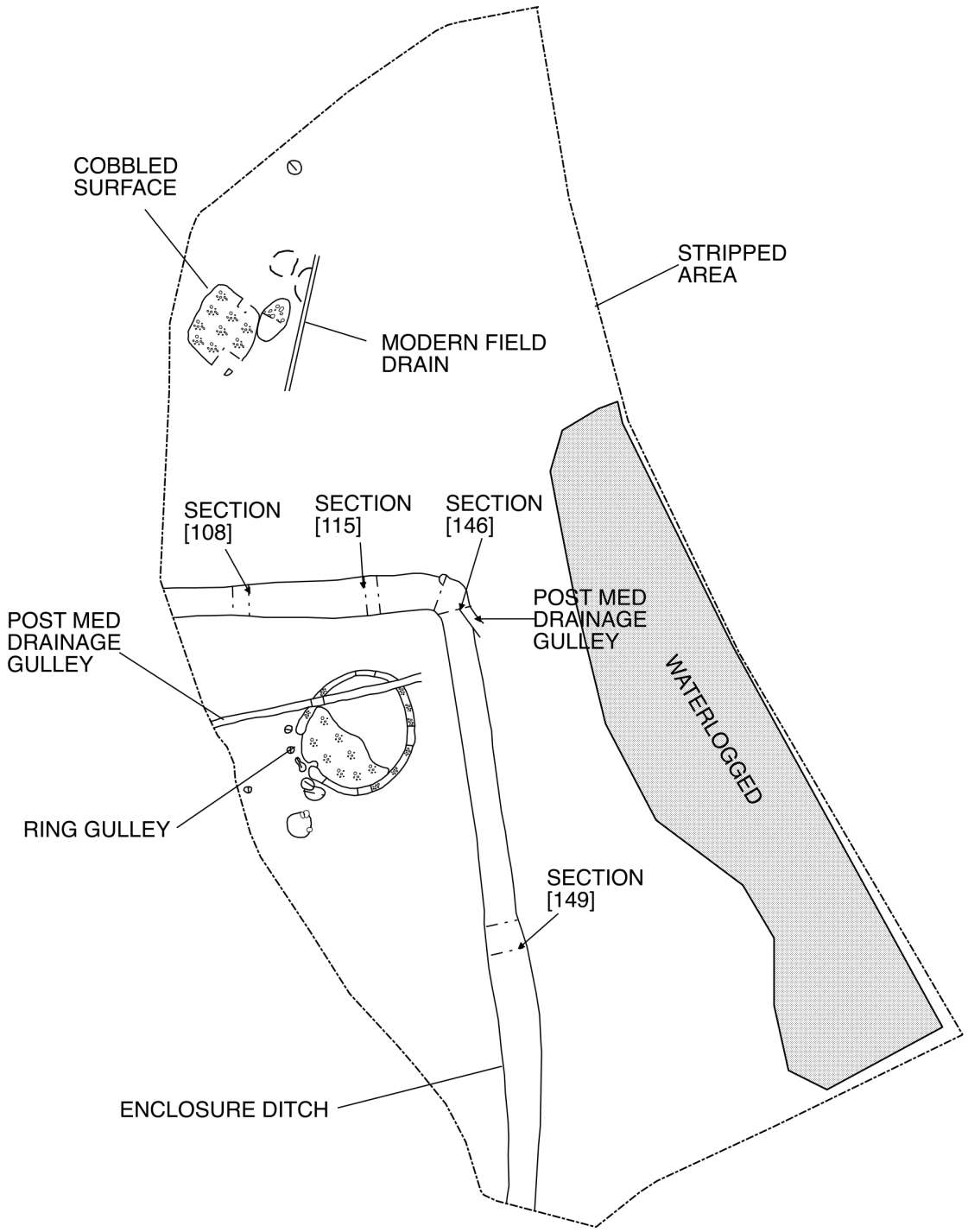


FIGURE 2 // Site plan



0 25 m

N

PROJECT // 1713M - Condover Hall

DESCRIPTION // Site plan

DOC REF: LP1713M-AMR-v1

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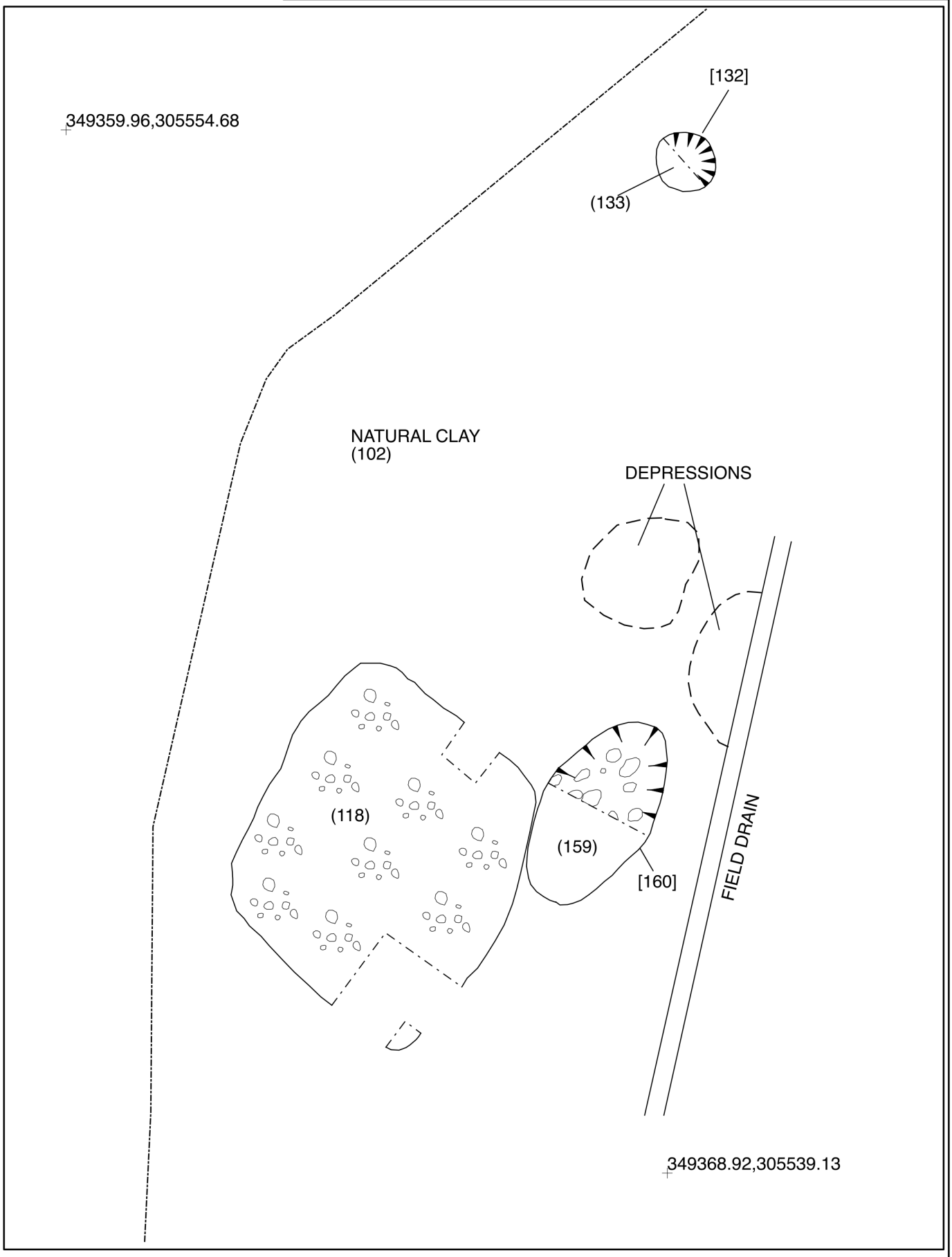
FIGURE 3 // North site area



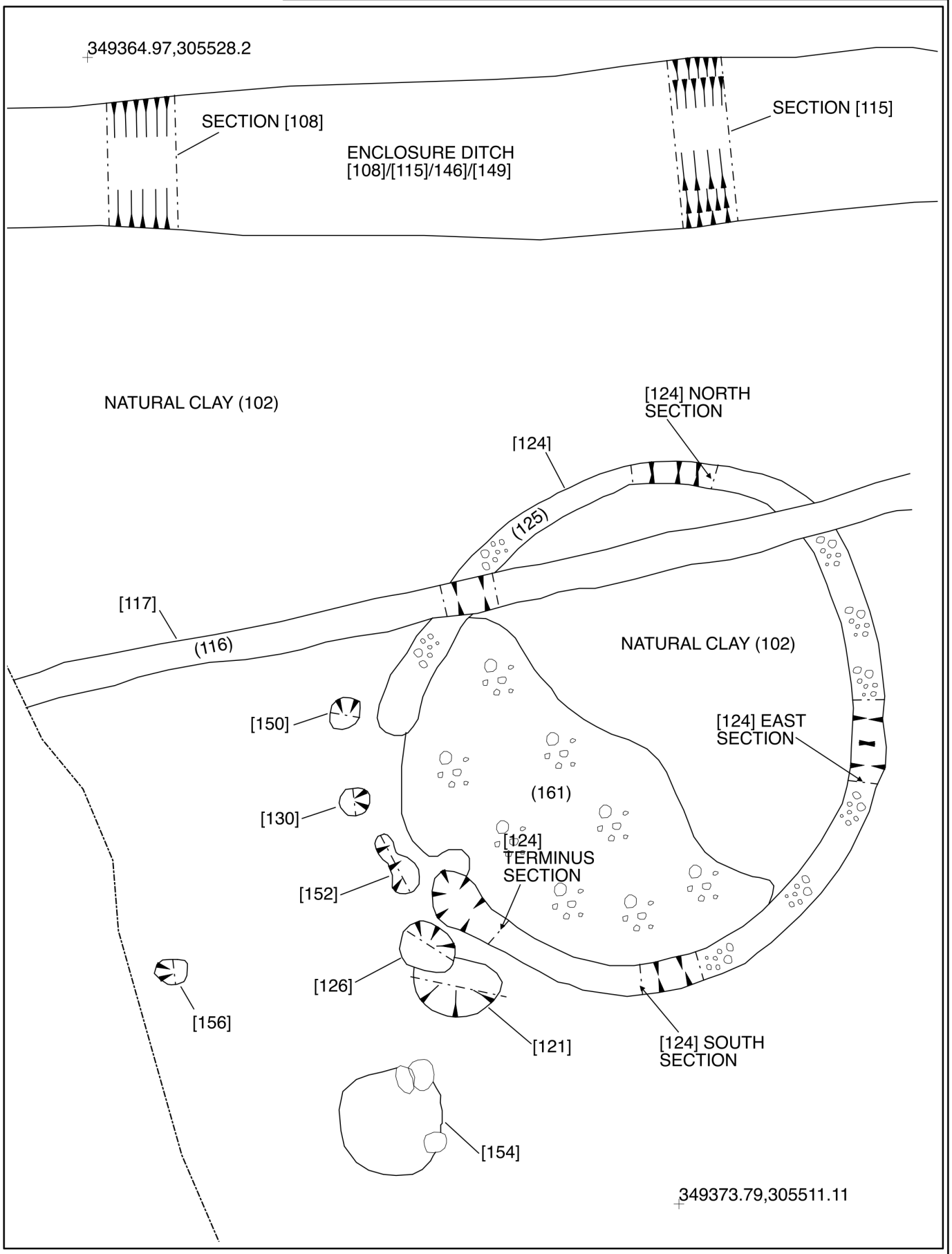
PROJECT // 1713M - Condover Hall

DESCRIPTION // Cobble surface and surrounding features

DOC REF: LP1713M-AMR-v1

L-P:ARCHÆOLOGY

FIGURE 4 // Centre of site



0 5 m

N

PROJECT // 1713M - Condover Hall

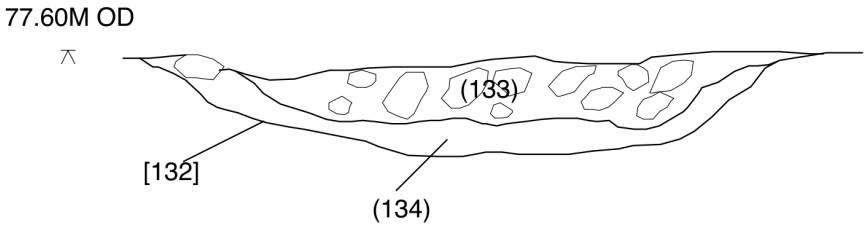
DESCRIPTION // Ring gulley [124] and surrounding features

DOC REF: LP1713M-AMR-v1

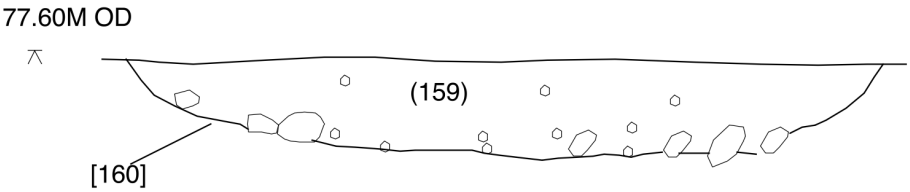
L-P:ARCHÆOLOGY

FIGURE 5 // Sections

PIT [132]
SW FACING



PIT [160]
NNE FACING



SCALE 1:10 @ A4

0 0.5 m

N

PROJECT // 1713M - Condover Hall

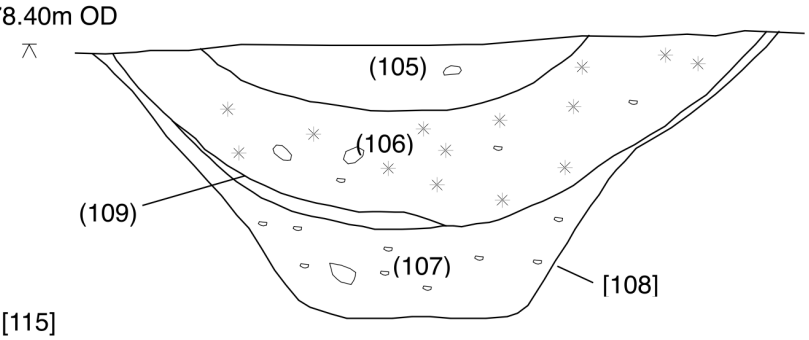
DESCRIPTION // Sections [132] and [160]

DOC REF: LP1713M-AMR-v1

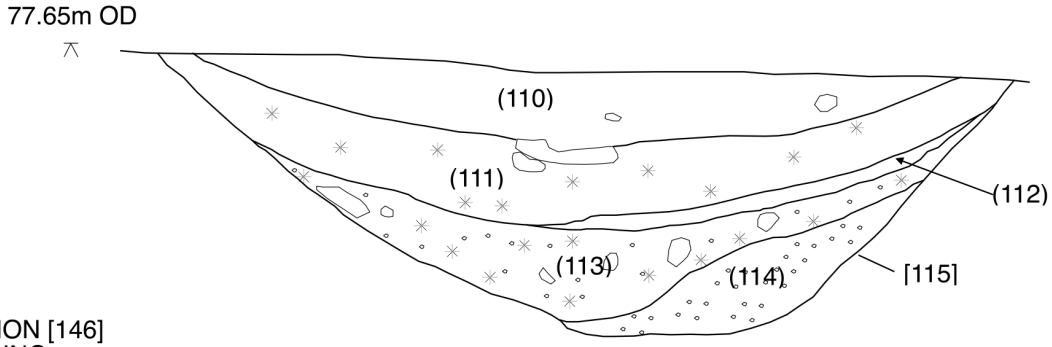
L-P:ARCHÆOLOGY

FIGURE 6 // Sections

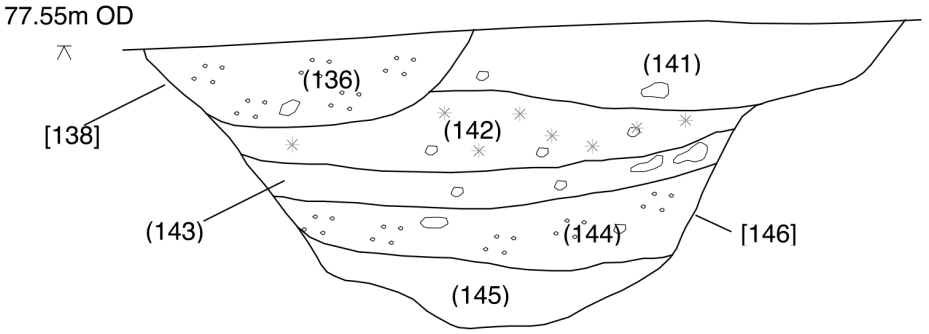
SECTION [108]]
W FACING



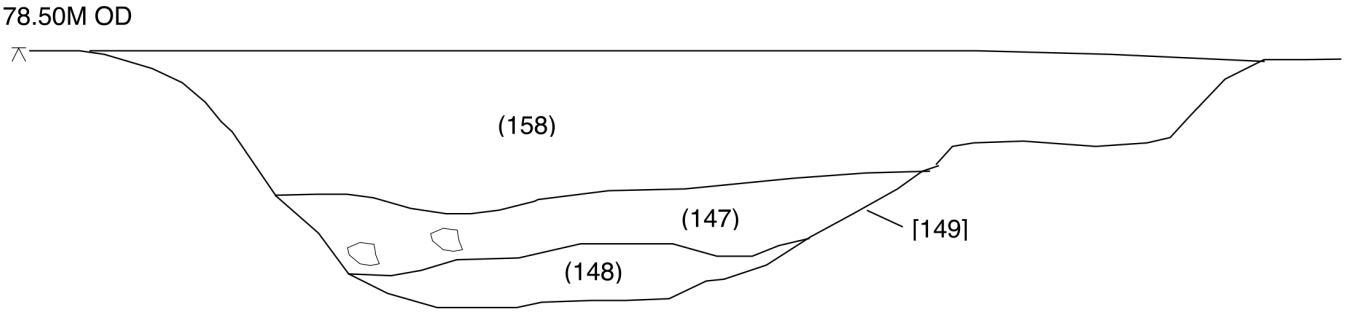
SECTION [115]
E FACING



SECTION [146]
N FACING



SECTION [149]
N FACING



SCALE 1:20 @ A4

0 1 m

N

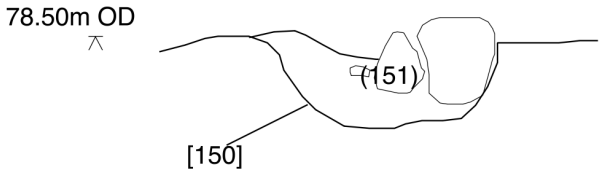
PROJECT // 1713M - Condover Hall

DESCRIPTION // Sections through enclosure dtch

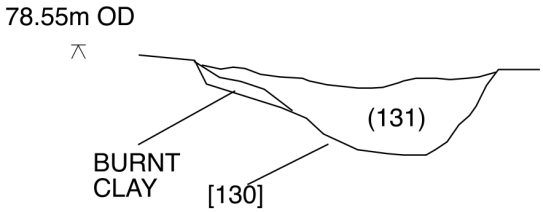
DOC REF: LP1713M-AMR-v1

L-P:ARCHÆOLOGY

PIT [150]
NNW FACING

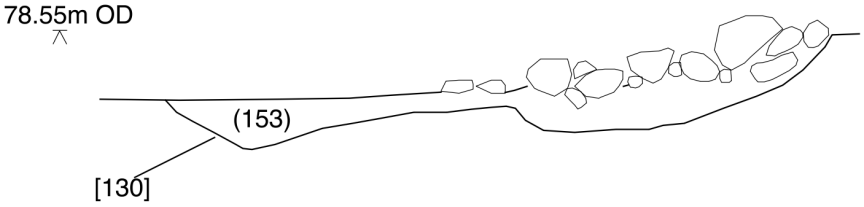


PIT [130]
SW FACING



PIT [152]
SW FACING

(159)



SCALE 1:10 @ A4

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N

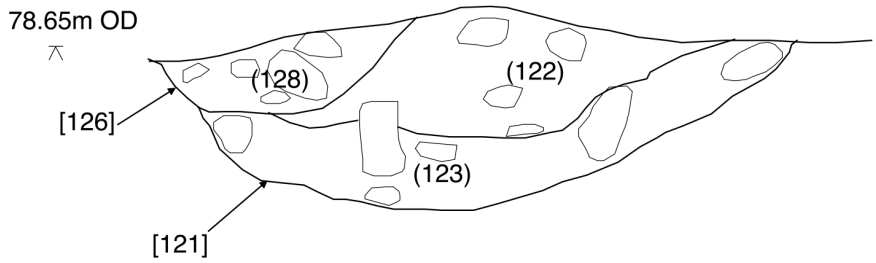
PROJECT // 1713M - Condover Hall

DESCRIPTION // Sections [150], [131], [152]

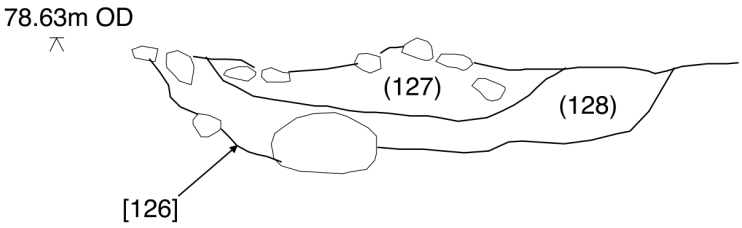
DOC REF: LP1713M-AMR-v1

L-P:ARCHÆOLOGY

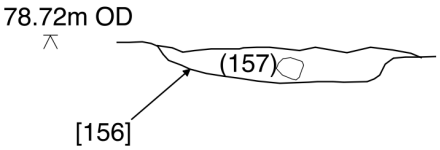
PIT [121]
S FACING



PIT [126]
NE FACING



PIT [156]
W FACING



SCALE 1:10 @ A4

0 0.5 m

N

PROJECT // 1713M - Condover Hall

DESCRIPTION // Sections [121],[126],[156]

DOC REF: LP1713M-AMR-v1

L-P:ARCHÆOLOGY

PLATES

Plate 1 - Stripped area looking NW

Plate 2 - Cobbles (118) looking east. 2x1m scale

Plate 3 - Ring gulley [124] looking east. 2x1m scale

Plate 4 - Southern terminus of gulley [124] post excavation. 1m scale.

Plate 5 - North facing section of enclosure ditch [146]. 1m scale.

Plate 6 - Hearth [126]. 50cm scale.

OASIS FORM

APPENDIX 1

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

List of Projects | Manage Projects | Search Projects | New project | Change your details | HER coverage | Change country | Log out

Printable version

OASIS ID: lparchae1-239282

Project details

Project name	Condover Leisure and Wildlife Lake
Short description of the project	Watching brief during strip for lake adjacent to 16th c. Condover Hall. Romano-British enclosure with associated cobbled surface, hearths and ring gulley revealed. Pottery dated from early 2nd to mid 3rd c.
Project dates	Start: 01-06-2015 End: 11-06-2015
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	1713MLWL - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Grassland Heathland 4 - Regularly improved
Monument type	ENCLOSURE DITCH Roman
Monument type	RING GULLEY Roman
Monument type	HEARTH Roman
Monument type	COBBLED SURFACE Roman
Significant Finds	POTTERY Roman
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	SHROPSHIRE SHREWSBURY AND ATCHAM CONDOVER Condover Hall
Postcode	SY5 7AF
Study area	160 Square metres
Site coordinates	SJ 495 054 52.64363625623 -2.746438422631 52 38 37 N 002 44 47 W Point

Height OD / Depth	Min: 77m Max: 80m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	L - P : Archaeology
Project brief originator	No brief
Project design originator	L - P : Archaeology
Project director/manager	Matthew Williams
Project supervisor	Marcus Headifen
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Travelclass Ltd

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Shropshire Museum Service
Physical Contents	"Ceramics"
Digital Archive recipient	Shropshire Museum Service
Digital Contents	"Stratigraphic","Survey"
Digital Media available	"GIS","Images raster / digital photography"
Paper Archive recipient	Shropshire Museum Service
Paper Contents	"Ceramics","Environmental","Stratigraphic"
Paper Media available	"Report"

Entered by	Matthew Williams (m.williams@lparchaeology.com)
Entered on	19 January 2016

OASIS:

FINDS BY CONTEXT

APPENDIX 2

CNTXT	FEATURE	WEIGHT	NO.	COLOUR	FABRIC	SHERD TYPE	FORM	NOTES	TYPE	PROV DATE/REF
105	UPPER FILL OF ENCLOSURE DITCH	14	1	ORANGE	COURSE	RIM	DISH			
105		14	1	PINK/CREAM	COURSE	BODY	BOWL	V.ABRADED	MORTARIA	
105		106	10	ORANGE	COURSE	BODY	LARGE DISH			
106	SECONDARY DITCH FILL	369	33	ORANGE	COURSE	BODY	VARIOUS	TWO BURNT SHERDS WITH INCISED LINE DECORATION		
106		226	8	ORANGE	COURSE	RIM	WIDE MOUTHED JAR	THREE BURNT		LATE 2ND TO LATE 3RD CENTURY (WEBSTER, 1976, NO.24)
106		210	5	ORANGE	COURSE	BASE	JAR	TWO BURNT		
106		107	1	ORANGE	COURSE	BASE	BOWL	GRIT INTERIOR	MORTARIA	
106		139	2	CREAM	COURSE	RIM	BOWL	MORTARIA		
110	UPPER DITCH FILL	14	1	RED	FINE	RIM/BASE	DISH	V. ABRADED	SAMIAN	
111	SECONDARY DITCH FILL	371	2	ORANGE	COURSE	BASE	JAR			
111		193	10	ORANGE	COURSE	BODY	JAR			
119	OVERLYNG COBBLES (118)	275	21	ORANGE	COURSE	BODY	JAR	V.ABRADED		
119		108	2	ORANGE	COURSE	BASE	JAR	THICK, UNOXIDISED CENTRE		
119		115	4	ORANGE	COURSE	RIM	WIDE MOUTHED JAR			2ND CENTURY (RAWES, 1982, NO.67)
119		125	1	ORANGE	CBM	FRAGMENT	?TEGULA			
119		18	1	BRICOTAGE	COURSE	FRAGMENT	KILN FRAG			

125	GULLEY [124] FILL	47	1	ORANGE	FINE	RIM	WIDE MOUTHED JAR	SEVERN VALLEY WARE		MID/LATE 2ND CENTURY (WEBSTER 1976 NO.21)
125		76	8	ORANGE	FINE	BODY	-			
125		45	5	CREAM	COURSE	BODY	BOWL	ORANGE GRIT	MORTARIA	
127	UPPER FILL OF HEARTH [126]	22	1	D. ORANGE RED	COURSE GRITTY INCL.	RIM	JAR	OXIDISED BB1		AD 120-160 (GILLAM, 1976, NO.123)
127		43	4	D. ORANGE RED	COURSE GRITTY INCL.	BODY	JAR			
127		38	2	ORANGE	COURSE	RIM	JAR			
127		61	10	CREAM	COURSE	BODY	BOWL	SOME GRIT ON INTERIOR	MORTARIA	
127		32	3	CREAM	COURSE	RIM	BOWL	SOME GRIT ON INTERIOR	MORTARIA	
127		11	2	RED	FINE	RIM	DISH		SAMIAN	
136	F.O. P.MED GULLEY [138	115	6	PALE RED/ORANGE	HARD/FINE	BODY	JAR	NOT ABRADED		18TH/19TH C.
136		262	5	PALE RED/ORANGE	HARD/FINE	BASE	JAR			18TH/19TH C.
136		209	8	PALE RED/ORANGE	HARD/FINE	RIM	JAR			18TH/19TH C.
136		67	1	PALE RED/ORANGE	HARD/FINE	RIM	LARGE DISH	D BROWN INTERIOR GLAZE		18TH/19TH C.
136		71	1	PALE RED/ORANGE	HARD/FINE	BASE/BODY/RIM	SHORT BASIN	STRAIGHT SIDES		POST MED.
136		21	1	PALE RED/ORANGE	HARD/FINE	RIM	JAR	PALE CREAM/GREEN EXTERIOR WASH		POST MED.
147	UPPER FILL OF ENCLOSURE DITCH	49	3	ORANGE	COURSE	RIM	JAR	TWO TYPES PRESENT		
147		56	6	ORANGE	COURSE	BODY	-			
148	LOWER FILL OF ENCLOSURE DITCH	83	6	ORANGE	COURSE	BODY	JAR			

148		38	2	ORANGE	COURSE	RIM	JAR			
148		34	1	ORANGE	COURSE	BASE	JAR			
148		39	1	CREAM	COURSE	RIM	BOWL	GRIT INTERIOR; POSSIBLE UPPER NENE VALLEY WARE	MORTARIA	AD 190-250 (Gillam, 1976, no.271)
148		29	1	CREAM	COURSE	BODY	BOWL	GRIT INTERIOR	MORTARIA	
159	F.O. PIT [160]	77	8	ORANGE	COURSE	BODY	WIDE JAR OR DISH	UNOXIDISED CENTRE		
SURFACE FINDS FROM ENCLOSURE DITCH (105) etc		510	26	ORANGE	COURSE	BODY	JAR			
SURFACE FINDS FROM DITCH (105) etc		205	9	ORANGE	COURSE	RIM	JAR		ONE SHERD BURNT	
SURFACE FINDS FROM DITCH (105) etc		143	5	ORANGE	COURSE	BASE				
SURFACE FINDS FROM DITCH (105) etc		95	2	ORANGE	CBM	FRAGMENT	TILE			

ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

APPENDIX 3

Palaeoecology Research Services

Assessment of biological remains from seven sediment samples recovered during excavations on the south bank of Cound Brook, near Condover, Shropshire (site code: CON15)

***PRS* 2015/27**

Assessment of biological remains from seven sediment samples recovered during excavations on the south bank of Cound Brook, near Condover, Shropshire (site code: CON15)

by

John Carrott

Summary

Seven 'bulk' sediment samples recovered from deposits encountered during excavations on the south bank of Cound Brook, near Condover, Shropshire, were submitted for an assessment of their bioarchaeological potential. The excavations revealed a Romano-British site represented by a substantial enclosure ditch, a cobble filled ring gully and a roughly circular cobbled area, together with several pits (some of which were perhaps hearths) associated with the two last. The recovered pottery was of low status, domestic form and initial spot dating suggested a late 2nd century date.

Three of the sampled deposits gave no concentrations of macrofossil remains of any interpretative value yielding just small amounts of indeterminate charcoal; one of these, the primary fill of an oval cut or hearth, also contained some conglomerate material perhaps including slag, however. Two samples from the primary fill of the enclosure ditch (taken at different sections) included waterlogged plant remains but the bulk of the material was rootlet fragments (at least half of the volume in each case) and indeterminate detritus. Both contained abundant uncharred elder fruits and indeterminate fragments of beetle sclerites, a small number of other uncharred plant macrofossils and occasional pollen grains/spores, but the generally poor preservation and restricted range of identifiable remains rendered these assemblages of no real interpretative value; the provenance of the elder fruits and other uncharred plant macrofossil remains was also unclear. One of the enclosure ditch primary fills also gave a single poorly preserved intestinal parasite (whipworm) egg indicating a trace level of faecal contamination.

Two larger assemblages of charred plant remains were recovered, one from the secondary fill of the enclosure ditch and one from the primary fill of one of the oval pits/hearths. The latter was exclusively of poorly preserved charcoal, including roundwood twigs, two of which were tentatively identified as ?oak; sufficient charcoal was present to favour an interpretation as a hearth. The secondary ditch fill assemblage was primarily of charcoal but also included a small quantity of charred cereal grains, chaff, other 'seeds' and fragments of hazelnut shell – overall the impression was of waste from food preparation and cereal processing discarded into, or used as fuel for, a fire, the remains of which were subsequently disposed of within the ditch. Charred plant remains from the secondary fill of the enclosure ditch and the charcoal from the primary fill of one of the oval pits/hearths could provide suitable material for radiocarbon dating if required.

Although assemblages of charred and waterlogged plant and invertebrate remains have been recovered from some of the deposits (together with occasional fragments of indeterminate calcined bone), these were too poorly preserved and/or too small to warrant any more detailed analysis.

KEYWORDS: SOUTH BANK OF COUND BROOK; NEAR CONDOVER; SHROPSHIRE; ASSESSMENT; ROMANO-BRITISH; LATE 2ND CENTURY; PLANT REMAINS; CHARRED PLANT REMAINS; CHARCOAL; CHARRED CEREAL REMAINS; CHARRED HAZELNUT SHELL; INVERTEBRATE REMAINS; BEETLES; VERTEBRATE REMAINS; MICROFOSSILS; POLLEN GRAINS/SPORES; WHIPWORM (*TRICHURIS*) EGG; POT SHERDS; ?SLAG

Contact address for author:

Palaeoecology Research Services Ltd
Unit 4 National Industrial Estate
Bontoft Avenue
Kingston upon Hull
HU5 4HF

Prepared for:

L-P: Archaeology
The Pump House
Coton Hill
Shrewsbury
SY1 2DP

Assessment of biological remains from seven sediment samples recovered during excavations on the south bank of Cound Brook, near Condover, Shropshire (site code: CON15)

Introduction

An archaeological excavation was undertaken on the south bank of Cound Brook, near Condover, Shropshire (approximate centre NGR SJ 494 055), by L-P: Archaeology, during 2015.

The excavations revealed a Romano-British site represented by a substantial enclosure ditch, a cobble filled ring gully and a roughly circular cobbled area, together with several pits (some of which were perhaps hearths) associated with the two last. The recovered pottery was of low status, domestic form and initial spot dating suggested a late 2nd century date. The excavator's initial impressions of the site were that it was rural and non-military in nature (Matthew Williams pers. comm.).

Seven bulk sediment samples ('GBA'/'BS' *sensu* Dobney *et al*. 1992), from fills of the enclosure ditch, the primary fill of the ring ditch and three pits/?hearths, were submitted to PRS for an assessment of their bioarchaeological potential.

Methods

The lithologies of the submitted sediment samples were recorded using a standard *pro forma*. The samples were then processed (six in their entirety, barring small subsamples for microfossil investigation – see below – and a nine litre subsample of the seventh) for the recovery of plant, invertebrate and vertebrate remains (macrofossils), broadly following the techniques of Kenward *et al*. (1980), producing a residue and a washover.

Five of the deposits did not exhibit preservation of uncharred organic remains by waterlogging and the washovers were dried prior to examination for macrofossils using a low-power microscope (x7 to x45 magnification). The remaining two did appear to contain waterlogged remains and were kept wet.

The residues were primarily mineral in nature and were dried prior to the recording of their components. The residues were separated into fractions (using 1 mm, 4 mm and 10 mm sieves) to facilitate recording. Residue less than 1 mm was retained unsorted. The residue fractions (including the less than 1 mm fraction) were scanned for magnetic material. Artefactual material and biological remains were noted and recorded, or removed to be returned to the excavator to be forwarded to appropriate specialists.

The processed sample fractions were scanned until no new remains were observed and a sense of the abundance of each taxon or component was achieved and these were recorded either as counts or using a five-point semi-quantitative scale as: 1 – few/rare, up to 3 individuals/items or a trace level component of the whole; 2 – some/present, 4 to 20 items or a minor component; 3 – many/common, 21 to 50 or a significant component; 4 – very many/abundant, 51 to 200 or a major component; and 5 – super-abundant, over 200 items/individuals or a dominant component of the whole.

Plant macrofossil remains were identified by comparison with modern reference material (where possible), and the use of published works (e.g. Cappers *et al*. 2006 for plant remains; Jacomet 2006 for cereals). Remains were identified to the lowest taxon possible or necessary to achieve the aims of the project. Nomenclature for plant taxa follows Stace (1997), with cereal identifications following Jacomet (2006) where nomenclature follows van Zeist (1984).

Charcoal identifications were attempted (and also for a few wood fragments from one sample) for a small number of larger fragments, all of which were over 4 mm. Pieces were broken to give clean cross-sectional surfaces and the anatomical structures were examined using a low-power binocular microscope (x7 to x45) and higher magnification where necessary (x100 and x150). Identifications were made by comparison with modern reference material where possible, and with reference to published works (principally Hather 2000 and Schoch *et al*. 2004).

The washovers were examined for the presence of insects and other invertebrates. Preliminary identification of beetles (Coleoptera) was attempted using a low-power microscope (x7 to x45) and by reference to published works (e.g. Lindroth 1974; Harde 1984).

During recording consideration was given to the identification of suitable remains (if present) for possible submission for radiocarbon dating by standard radiometric technique or accelerator mass spectrometry (AMS).

A small subsample (of approximately 5 ml) was extracted from each of the submitted samples for examination for microfossils. These were investigated using the 'squash' technique of Dainton (1992), originally designed specifically to assess the content of eggs of intestinal parasitic nematodes; however, this method routinely reveals the presence of other microfossils, such as pollen and diatoms, which were also recorded if present. The slide was scanned at x150 magnification and at x600 where necessary.

Results

The results of the investigations are presented below in context number order. Archaeological information, provided by the excavator, is given in square brackets. A brief summary of the processing method and an estimate of the remaining volume of unprocessed sediment follows (in round brackets) after the sample numbers.

Context 111 [Secondary fill of ditch [108]/[115]/[146]; Romano-British]
Sample 5/T (11.5 kg/12 litres sieved to 300 microns with washover and microfossil 'squash'; approximately 5 ml of unprocessed sediment remain)

Moist, varicoloured but mostly mid to mid/dark grey (mottled at mm- and cm-scales with shades of brown and grey-brown from light/mid to mid and occasional small patches of light/mid yellow-brown), stiff and slightly brittle to crumbly (working soft and somewhat plastic), slightly sandy clay silt (to silty clay in isolated lumps). Stones (20 to 60 mm) and modern rootlets were present and charcoal was common.

There was large washover (~500 ml; dry weight 155.5 g) composed largely of charcoal (to 26 mm; score 5) which was mostly rather silted and included some roundwood twigs, with abundant uncharred elder (*Sambucus nigra* L.) fruits (and fragments thereof) and sclerotia of a soil-dwelling fungus (cf. *Cenococcum geophilum* Fr.) – the last perhaps most likely to be of modern origin. Other almost certainly modern intrusive remains were occasional fine rootlet and earthworm egg capsules (both score 2) and there were a few (score 1) uncharred indeterminate 'seeds'. Sand grains were frequent (score 3) and there was also a small assemblage of charred plant macrofossil remains which included cereal grains, chaff and 'seeds' (42 items in total) and seven fragments of hazel (*Corylus avellana* L.) nutshell (to 10 mm; ~0.1 g). The charred cereal grains and 'seeds' were mostly poorly preserved being 'puffed', missing much of their surfaces and/or sediment encrusted; there were, however, three rather better preserved wheat (*Triticum*) grains, six slender grains perhaps of brome (*Bromus*) or rye (*Secale cereale* L.) and one or two remains which were probably grass (Poaceae) caryopses. The cereal chaff was rather fragmented but comprised six glume bases (suggesting that the wheat present was a glume wheat) and a single indeterminate culm node. Twelve charcoal identifications were attempted only one of which failed entirely (the fragment crumbled and provided no cross-sections for examination). The remainder provided the following results: 1x oak (*Quercus*) non-roundwood fragment; 4x ?hazel (cf. *Corylus*) roundwood fragments – one with no waney edge evident so age of wood growth indeterminate and the others each with the waney edge and representing 2, 3 and 9 years of growth; 1x ?heather (cf. *Calluna*) roundwood twig of 1 year of growth; 3x diffuse-porous species roundwood of 5 or 6 years growth; 2x ring-porous roundwood with no waney edge and of 12+ years growth.

The modest residue (dry weight 3804 g) was mostly sand (score 5; the less than 1 mm fraction weighed 2685 g, approximately 71% of the total residue weight) and stones (to 74 mm; score 4 – some rounded pebbles and others more angular), with 70 larger fragments of charcoal (to 10 mm; ~2 g) together with frequent (score 3) additional flecks within the less than 1 mm fraction. Five of the larger charcoal fragments were examined further and two could be partially identified as of a diffuse-porous species (not roundwood); the three others crumbled and remained indeterminate. Other biological remains present were four fragments of calcined (white) indeterminate bone to 8 mm (~1 g). The greater than 1 mm fraction of the residue was distributed as follows: over 10 mm – 625 g (16% of total); 4-10 mm – 222 g (6%); 1-4 mm – 272 g (7%). Artefactual remains recovered comprised six sherds of pot (to 44 mm; 18 g) all of which appeared to be of the same fabric; there was no magnetic component present.

The 'squash' subsample was mostly inorganic with a trace of uncharred organic detritus and a few fragments of fungal hyphae and fungal spores (both score 1). Flecks of microscopic charcoal were abundant (score 4) but no interpretatively valuable microfossils were recorded.

Context 113 [Primary fill of ditch [108]/[115]/[146]; Romano-British]
Sample 6/T (11.75 kg/10 litres sieved to 300 microns with washover and microfossil 'squash'; approximately 5 ml of unprocessed sediment remain)

Moist, mostly mid/dark grey-brown (mottled at mm- and cm-scales with light/mid and mid grey-brown and occasionally light brown), crumbly to very slightly sticky (working soft), slightly humic, slightly sandy silt. Stones (6 to 60 mm), charcoal, ?rotted wood fragments and modern rootlets were present.

The relatively small washover (400 ml; kept wet) was largely waterlogged plant detritus (score 5) which included fragments of fine rootlet (50-75% of the total volume) and occasional (score 2) 'woody' fragments of soft, rotted wood or woody root. Other components comprised abundant (score 5) uncharred elder fruits and a few (score 1) uncharred 'seeds' (indeterminate), frequent (score 3) sand grains, some undisaggregated sediment 'crumb' (to 2 mm; score 2) and earthworm egg capsules (score 2), together with abundant (score 4) beetle sclerite fragments. The last were, in general, very heavily fragmented and exhibited a variable but typically high degree of chemical erosion; although some pieces could be recognised as parts of heads, elytra and undersides, none could be identified to species or even genus. Occasional (score 2) more complete beetle remains were all of non-diagnostic body parts such as leg and abdominal sclerites. Charred remains in the washover were exclusively fragments of charcoal (to 20 mm but mostly less than 4 mm) including occasional roundwood (score 2). Preservation of the charcoal was poor and the fragments were fragile and crumbly – seven identifications were attempted but five of the fragments crumbled and provided no cross-sections for examination; the two others were both of roundwood twigs representing one or two years of wood growth but also could not be identified.

The modest residue (dry weight 2434 g) was mostly sand (score 5; the less than 1 mm fraction weighed 1584 g, approximately 65% of the total residue weight) and stones (to 55 mm; score 5 – some rounded pebbles and others more angular but typically with rounded edges), with seven larger fragments of charcoal (to 8 mm; <1 g) together with some (score 2) additional flecks within the less than 1 mm fraction. Three of the larger charcoal fragments were examined further but all crumbled and remained indeterminate to species; one exhibited a rather vitrified appearance. Other biological remains present were 18 fragments of calcined (white) indeterminate bone to 11 mm (~2 g). The greater than 1 mm fraction of the residue was distributed as follows: over 10 mm – 428 g (18% of total); 4-10 mm – 224 g (9%); 1-4 mm – 198 g (8%). Artefactual remains recovered comprised seven sherds of pot (to 52 mm; 31 g) six of which appeared to be of one fabric (to 52 mm; 26 g) and one of another (to 32 mm; 5 g); there was no magnetic component present.

The 'squash' subsample was approximately equal parts inorganic and organic detritus with some plant tissue fragments (score 2), pollen grains/spores (score 2; including grass (Poaceae)-type (score 1) and alder (*Alnus*) and at least two other indeterminate forms). Preservation of the pollen grains/spores was 'fair' – most were not crumpled or broken but all showed at least some erosion and this was sometimes quite severe). There was also a single *Trichuris* (whipworm) egg – this lacked both polar plugs and was not measurable owing to its poor preservation, however, and so could not be identified.

Context 128 [Primary fill of oval cut or hearth [126] outside circular cobbled structure [124]; Romano-British]
Sample 1/T (1 kg/1 litre sieved to 300 microns with washover and microfossil 'squash'; approximately 5 ml of unprocessed sediment remain)

Dry, varicoloured (jumbled shades of brown, grey-brown and grey from light to mid), brittle (indurated) to crumbly (working soft and somewhat plastic – when wetted), silty clay. Stones (20 to 60 mm), black flecks of ?charcoal and modern rootlets were present.

The minute washover (~2 ml; dry weight 0.8 g) was mostly fine modern rootlet (score 5) and

indeterminate silted charcoal (to 3 mm but almost all <1 mm; score 4 – no roundwood present), with frequent sand grains (score 3) and a trace of fine cinder (to 1 mm; score 1).

Most of the weight of the small residue (dry weight 364 g) was 33 lumps of material (three in the >10 mm fraction, one of which broke into two) which appeared to be conglomerates of ?heat-affected sediment (to 69 mm; 267 g) perhaps incorporating some slag as they seemed unusually heavy/dense) – these were separated to be returned to the excavator as possible artefactual remains. The remainder of the residue was mostly stones (to 37 mm; score 4 – mostly angular but with rounded edges) and sand (score 4; the less than 1 mm fraction weighed 55 g, approximately 15% of the total residue weight). There was also a little indeterminate charcoal (to 4 mm but predominantly present as <1 mm flecks; <0.1 g; score 2). The greater than 1 mm fraction of the residue was distributed as follows: over 10 mm – 280 g (77% of total – of which 260 g was the conglomerate ?slag); 4-10 mm – 15 g (4% – of which 7 g was the conglomerate ?slag); 1-4 mm – 14 g (4%). Other than the conglomerate ?slag, no artefactual remains were recovered and although both of the finer residue fractions contained trace levels of magnetic material (score 2 in each case) these consisted entirely of heat-affected small stones (to 2 mm) and sand and were returned to the sorted residue.

The 'squash' subsample was almost entirely inorganic with just a trace of organic detritus. No identifiable microfossils were present.

Context 129 [Primary fill of circular cobble filled gully [124]; Romano-British]
Sample 2/T (1 kg/1 litre sieved to 300 microns with washover and microfossil 'squash'; approximately 5 ml of unprocessed sediment remain)

Dry, mostly light/mid to mid grey (external surfaces light/mid brown to grey-brown), brittle (indurated) to crumbly (working soft and somewhat plastic – when wetted), silty clay. Stones (6 to 20 mm), black flecks of ?charcoal and modern rootlets were present.

The minute washover (~2 ml; dry weight 1 g) was almost all fine modern rootlet (score 5), with frequent sand grains (score 3) and a little indeterminate silted charcoal (to 3 mm; score 2 – no roundwood present). Other components were a trace of fine cinder (to 1 mm; score 1), three earthworm egg capsules (reflecting modern intrusions) and a few (score 1) sclerotia of a soil-dwelling fungus (cf, *Cenococcum geophilum*).

The small residue (dry weight 279 g) was mostly sand (score 5; the less than 1 mm fraction weighed 121 g, approximately 43% of the total residue weight) and stones (to 34 mm; score 5 – some rounded pebbles and others more angular), with a little charcoal (to 7 mm but predominantly present as <1 mm flecks; score 2) and a single fragment of fine modern rootlet. The single charcoal fragment greater than 4 mm was only partially identifiable as of a diffuse-porous species as the cell structures were rather distorted and was not roundwood. The greater than 1 mm fraction of the residue was distributed as follows: over 10 mm – 95 g (34% of total); 4-10 mm – 30 g (11%); 1-4 mm – 33 g (12%). No artefactual remains were recovered and there was no magnetic component present.

The 'squash' subsample was almost entirely inorganic with just a trace of organic detritus. The only possible microfossil noted was a single very poorly preserved (heavily eroded and crumpled) indeterminate ?pollen grain/spore.

Context 134 [Primary fill of oval pit or hearth [132]; Romano-British]
Sample 4/T (3.5 kg/3 litres sieved to 300 microns with washover and microfossil 'squash'; approximately 5 ml of unprocessed sediment remain)

Moist, mid to mid/dark grey (mottled at mm- and cm-scales with mid grey-brown and occasionally light/mid brown), sandy silt (localised slight clay content), Stones (6 to 60 mm), charcoal (including roundwood twig fragments) and modern rootlets were present.

The very small washover (~20 ml; dry weight 4.9 g) was mostly fine modern rootlet (score 5) and indeterminate silted charcoal (to 2 mm), with occasional larger silted charcoal fragments (to 14 mm; score 2 – no roundwood present) and frequent sand grains (score 3). The charcoal fragments were very fragile and three of the larger pieces crumbled when identification was attempted whilst a fourth could only be tentatively identified as ?oak (cf. *Quercus*).

The rather small residue (dry weight 914 g) was largely composed of charcoal (to 20 mm; score 5) and sand (score 5; the less than 1 mm fraction weighed 363 g, approximately 40% of the total residue weight), with some stones (to 57 mm; score 3 – mostly rounded pebbles with occasional (score 2) slightly more angular stones but most still with rounded edges. Eighteen charcoal identifications were attempted but preservation was very poor and little additional information was obtained. Of five rectilinear fragments examined, four crumbled and one revealed a vitrified appearance with distorted cell structures and also remained indeterminate. Thirteen roundwood fragments were examined and 11 of these were also vitrified with distorted cell structures; so much so that even the number of annual growth rings present could not be determined (although none

exceeded 5 mm in diameter and it is highly unlikely that any represented more than a few years of wood growth). The two remaining roundwood charcoal fragments were both ?oak twigs of 2 or 3 years of wood growth. The greater than 1 mm fraction of the residue was distributed as follows: over 10 mm – 203 g (22% of total); 4-10 mm – 140 g (15%); 1-4 mm – 208 g (23%). There was also a little heat-affected clay (to 22 mm; score 2 – 11 g of this material was sorted from the >10 and 4-10 mm fractions of the residue. The less than 1 mm fraction contained a trace level (score 1) magnetic component (to 1 mm) but this was composed entirely of ?heat-affected sand and was returned to the sorted residue.

The 'squash' subsample was mostly inorganic with a trace of uncharred organic detritus and a few fragments of fungal hyphae (score 1). Flecks of microscopic charcoal were abundant (score 4) but no interpretatively valuable microfossils were recorded.

Context 145 [Primary peat fill of enclosure ditch [108]/[115]/[146]; Romano-British]
Sample 7/T (10 kg/9 litres sieved to 300 microns with washover and microfossil 'squash'; approximately 4 litres of unprocessed sediment remain)

Moist, varicoloured but mostly jumbled shades of grey from light to dark (with occasional light, light/mid and mid brown), crumbly to slightly sticky (working soft), slightly humic, slightly sandy slightly clay silt (more clay in places). Modern rootlets were present.

The relatively small washover (250 ml; kept wet) was largely waterlogged plant detritus (score 5) which included fragments of fine rootlet (>50% of the total volume) and frequent very decayed wood or woody root fragments (to 25 mm; score 3); the last included a little possible roundwood (score 1) but all of the fragments were extremely soft and all four identifications attempted provided no information regarding species or number of years of wood growth represented. Other components comprised abundant (score 4) uncharred elder fruits and some (score 2) other uncharred 'seeds' (dock – *Rumex* – achenes score 1; blackberry/raspberry – *Rubus fruticosus* L. agg./*R. idaeus* L. – fruit stones score 2; indeterminate – score 1), a few earthworm egg capsules and soil-dwelling fungus (cf. *Cenococcum geophilum*) sclerotia (both score 1) and a trace of fine coal (to 3 mm; score 1), together with frequent (score 3) beetle sclerite fragments. The last were, in general, severely fragmented and exhibited a variable but typically high degree of chemical erosion; some pieces could be recognised as parts of elytra but none could be identified to species or even genus. A few (score 1) more complete beetle remains were present but all were of non-diagnostic leg sclerites. Charred remains in the washover were exclusively small rectilinear fragments of indeterminate charcoal (to 4 mm; mostly to 2 mm; score 3).

The small residue (dry weight 1179 g) was mostly sand (score 5; the less than 1 mm fraction weighed 517 g, approximately 44% of the total residue weight) and stones (to 50 mm; score 5 – mostly rounded pebbles with some others more angular but with rounded edges), with four fragments of rotted wood or woody root (to 30 mm; ~2 g) retaining some ?bark – three of these were examined more closely but, although cross-sections were obtained, the cell structures visible were heavily distorted and no identifications were possible. The greater than 1 mm fraction of the residue was distributed as follows: over 10 mm – 274 g (23% of total); 4-10 mm – 193 g (16%); 1-4 mm – 195 g (17%). No artefactual remains were recovered and there was no magnetic component present.

The 'squash' subsample was mostly inorganic with approximately 20% organic detritus, some flecks of microscopic charcoal (score 2) and pollen grains/spores (score 2). None of the last could be identified as preservation was very poor – erosion was severe and most of the individual remains were also crumpled or broken.

Context 157 [Single fill of small burnt pit or hearth [156]; Romano-British]
Sample 3/T (1.6 kg/1.5 litres sieved to 300 microns with washover and microfossil 'squash'; approximately 5 ml of unprocessed sediment remain)

Dry, light brown to light/mid grey-brown (with occasional patches of mid brown), brittle (indurated) to crumbly (working soft and somewhat plastic), silty clay to clay silt. Stones (6 to 20 mm), black flecks of ?charcoal and modern rootlets were present.

The very small washover (~10 ml; dry weight 4.9 g) was mostly fine modern rootlet (score 5), 'crumbs' (to 2 mm but mostly <1 mm) of undisaggregated sediment and sand (all score 5). Charcoal fragments (to 5 mm but predominantly less than 2 mm) were frequent (score 3) but poorly preserved (fragile and silted) and although identification of three larger fragments was attempted all of these crumbled providing no cross-sections for examination and they remained indeterminate.

The small residue (dry weight 326 g) was mostly sand (score 5; the less than 1 mm fraction weighed 138 g, approximately 42% of the total residue weight), stones (to 54 mm; score 4 – some rounded pebbles and others more angular) and abundant (score 5) indurated sediment 'crumb' (to 4 mm) in the two finest fractions. The greater than 1 mm fraction of the residue was distributed as follows: over 10 mm – 80 g (24% of total); 4-10 mm – 54 g (17%); 1-4 mm – 54 g

(17%). There was also a little indeterminate fine charcoal (to 5 mm; score 2 – three fragments were over 4 mm but crumbled when identification was attempted). No artefactual remains were recovered and there was no magnetic component present.

The 'squash' subsample was almost entirely inorganic with a trace of organic detritus and occasional fragments of rootlet and fungal hyphae (both score 1). No interpretatively valuable microfossil remains were present.

Discussion and statement of potential

The washovers from two of the samples (from Contexts 113 and 145), from the Romano-British site on the south bank of Cound Brook, near Condover, Shropshire, both from the primary fill of ditch [108]/[115]/[146] (which was sectioned in three places) were largely composed of waterlogged plant remains and were kept wet. On further examination, however, much of the material was small fragments of rootlet (at least 50% of the total volume in each case) and most of the remainder small fragments of indeterminate plant detritus. Both of these samples also yielded abundant uncharred elder fruits and occasional other plant macrofossil remains (including blackberry/raspberry fruit stones and dock achenes from Context 145), together with numerous but generally very poorly preserved (mostly heavily fragmented and also chemically eroded) beetle sclerites. None of the last could be identified to species or even genus as diagnostic sclerites (e.g. heads, elytra, undersides) were too poorly preserved (more complete remains were restricted to non-diagnostic body parts such as legs and abdominal sclerites) and, consequently they were of no interpretative value. The elder fruits and blackberry/raspberry fruit stones could represent original elements of the fills derived from surrounding hedgerow, scrub or woodland undergrowth (these rather 'woody' remains are rather more resistant to decay than most other uncharred plant macrofossils) but may equally be of relatively recent origin introduced by bioturbation by roots/rootlets and earthworm burrowing, for example. The abundance of plant detritus and rootlet fragments from both contexts suggests that preservation in permanently waterlogged anoxic conditions has not occurred (supported by the poor condition of the beetle remains) and it is more likely that the deposits have been subject to repeated wetting and drying (presumably through fluctuations in the level of the water table). Other macrofossil remains from these two samples which were likely to be contemporary with deposit formation were restricted to a little indeterminate charcoal and calcined bone from Context 113 and this deposit also contained occasional pollen grains/spores (including alder and grass-type), together with a single very poorly preserved intestinal parasite (whipworm) egg which indicated a trace level of faecal contamination; Context 145 also contained a small number of pollen grains/spores but here the preservation was too poor to allow any identifications. Context 113 yielded seven sherds of pot (of two different fabrics) but no artefactual material was recovered from Context 145.

The presence of abundant uncharred elder fruits from the sample from the secondary fill of ditch [108]/[115]/[146] (Context 111) lends some support to the interpretation of similar remains within the primary fills (Context 113 and 145; see above) as being of relatively modern origin as, here, there was little else to suggest any prior waterlogged preservation. There was, however, a relatively large assemblage of charcoal and also a small assemblage of other charred plant remains including cereal grains and chaff. The latter was mostly poorly preserved but did include three wheat grains, six slender grains (perhaps of brome or rye) and one or two remains which were probably grass caryopses, together with seven glume fragments (suggesting that the wheat present was a glume wheat such as emmer or spelt, *Triticum dicoccum* Schübl. or *T. spelta* L. – or, rather less probably, einkorn, *T. monococcum* L.) and a single indeterminate culm node. There were also seven small fragments of charred

hazelnut shell. The charred plant macrofossil assemblage was too small for any more detailed interpretation (just 49 items in total and mostly indeterminate) but, coupled with the charcoal assemblage (which included oak and possible hazel and heather), does suggest waste from food preparation and cereal processing discarded into, or used as fuel for, a fire, the remains of which were subsequently disposed of within the ditch. Oak and hazel (and perhaps heather) were presumably locally available resources and there was other domestic refuse present within the fill in the form of a trace of indeterminate calcined bone and six pot sherds (all of which appeared to be of the same fabric). No interpretatively valuable microfossil remains were recorded from this deposit.

Of the four remaining samples, from Context 128 **(**primary fill of oval cut or hearth [126] outside circular cobbled structure [124]), Context 129 (primary fill of circular cobble filled gully [124]), Context 157 (single fill of small burnt pit or hearth [156]) and Context 134 (primary fill of oval pit or hearth [132]), only the last yielded biological remains likely to be contemporary with deposit formation beyond traces of indeterminate charcoal and none contained interpretively valuable microfossils. Context 134 gave a modest assemblage of charcoal, including roundwood twigs, but which was too poorly preserved for any definite species identifications to be made. The fragments were very fragile and some exhibited a rather vitrified appearance (in the past this has been suggested to reflect high temperature burning but experimental work by McParland *et al*. (2010) suggests a more moderate formation temperature of 310-530 degrees Centigrade); only two of the 18 fragments examined could be tentatively identified as ?oak. The concentration of charcoal from Context 134 was sufficient to suggest that feature [132] may well have been a hearth, however; whereas this could not be said of the assemblages from Contexts 128 and 157. The only possible artefactual remains from these four deposits were from Context 128 which gave some lumps of what appeared to be conglomerates of ?heat-affected sediment perhaps incorporating some slag as, subjectively, they seemed unusually heavy/dense.

Although sufficient charcoal was recovered from all of the deposits for radiocarbon dating (via AMS) to be attempted, this could not be recommended in all cases. Where identification to species and/or determination of the number of years of wood growth represented could not be achieved, the 'old wood' problem of radiocarbon dating the charcoal, whereby any date returned could be far earlier than the charring event but by an unknown number of years (the carbon content of the wood being fixed at the time of its growth), would apply. Furthermore, the validity of attempting to date the deposits themselves where only very little material was recovered would be highly questionable; particularly when coupled with evidence for possible disturbance by bioturbation (e.g. rootlet, earthworm egg capsules). However, roundwood charcoal from Contexts 111 and 134, which gave reasonable concentrations of charred remains overall, could be submitted for AMS dating; although, for Context 111, the charred cereal remains and hazelnut shell would provide superior material for this purpose. It would be of some academic interest to radiocarbon date some of the uncharred elder fruits recorded (Contexts 111, 113 and 145) in order to determine if these were original components of the fills or relatively modern introductions.

Recommendations

Although assemblages of charred and waterlogged plant and invertebrate remains have been recovered from some of the deposits (together with occasional fragments of indeterminate calcined bone), these were too poorly preserved and/or too small to warrant any more detailed analysis.

Retention and disposal

The washovers and the remains sorted from the residue fractions from the processed sediment subsamples should be retained as part of the physical archive for the site; for the present at least. Artefactual remains recovered will be returned to the excavator to be forwarded to the appropriate appointed specialists for their consideration.

The sorted residue fractions and the unprocessed sediment may be discarded.

Archive

All material is currently stored by Palaeoecology Research Services (Unit 4, National Industrial Estate, Bontoft Avenue, Kingston upon Hull), pending return to the excavator or permission to discard, along with paper and electronic records pertaining to the work described here.

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