



SITE 10A
Viscount Way
South Marston Park
Swindon

County of Wiltshire

An archaeological evaluation report

December 2005



MUSEUM OF LONDON

Archaeology Service

SITE 10A
Viscount Way
South Marston Park
Swindon

County of Wiltshire

An archaeological evaluation report

Site Code: WT-VWY05
National Grid Reference: 418450 188790

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Summary (non-technical)

This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out by the Museum of London Archaeology Service on Plot 10A, of South Marston Park Industrial Estate, Swindon, Wiltshire. The report has been commissioned from MoLAS by Michael Sparks Associates on behalf of Prologis Developments Limited.

Following consultation with the Wiltshire Libraries and Heritage Archaeological Service five evaluation trenches were excavated on the site between 12th and 16th December 2005. Of these five trenches, three contained archaeological evidence for the Iron Age and Roman periods. These were located in the southern and central areas. Two trenches in the northern part of the site were negative. Features included ditches, pits and postholes of Late Iron Age and Roman date.

The field evaluation helped to refine the initial assessment of the archaeological potential of the site and in light of the revised understanding of the archaeological potential it was concluded that the proposed redevelopment would have an impact on archaeological remains of local – regional significance relating to the Iron Age or Iron Age – Roman transition period, and that an appropriate mitigation strategy for these remains would need to be implemented in the form of controlled archaeological excavation.

This report details the evidence found at the evaluation stage, and defines the area for further archaeological excavation.

Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Site background	1
1.2	Planning and legislative framework	3
1.3	Planning background	3
1.4	Origin and scope of the report	3
1.5	Aims and objectives	3
2	Topographical and historical background	4
2.1	Topography	4
2.2	Prehistoric	4
2.3	Roman	4
2.4	Saxon	5
2.5	Medieval	5
2.6	Post-medieval	5
3	The evaluation	6
3.1	Methodology	6
3.2	Results of the evaluation	6
3.3	Roman Pottery by Rupert Featherby	10
3.4	Table of excavated contexts	11
3.5	Assessment of the evaluation	12
4	Archaeological potential	14
4.1	Realisation of original research aims	14
4.2	General discussion of potential	14
4.3	Significance	14
5	Proposed development impact and recommendations	16

6	Acknowledgements	17
7	Bibliography	17
8	SMR archaeological report form	18

List Of Illustrations

Front cover: Features from excavation adjacent to site in 2005 (WT-SMA05)

<i>Fig 1 Site location</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Fig 2 Trench location</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Fig 3 Plans of features in trenches 3, 4 and 5</i>	<i>9</i>

1 Introduction

1.1 Site background

The evaluation took place at Plot 10A, Viscount Way, South Marston Industrial Estate, hereafter called 'the site'. The Industrial Estate lies to the west of the Highworth Road and north west of South Marston Village. The site is bounded by Stirling Road to the west and Viscount Way to the south. The OS National Grid Ref. for centre of site is 418450 188790. Modern ground level is c 109.6m OD in the centre of site gently rising to the north at 110.1m OD and a small rise in the far south west corner to 110.1m OD. The site code is WT-VWY05.

A desk-top *Archaeological assessment* was previously prepared, covering the area directly south of the site (Knight, 2005) but also assessing the background for the vicinity, this identified the potential for deposits of the prehistoric, Roman, medieval and post-medieval periods. This led to evaluation and excavation of settlement and field system features of Iron Age and Roman date (Askew, 2005).

The archaeological field evaluation was carried out on five trenches between 12th and 16th December 2005.

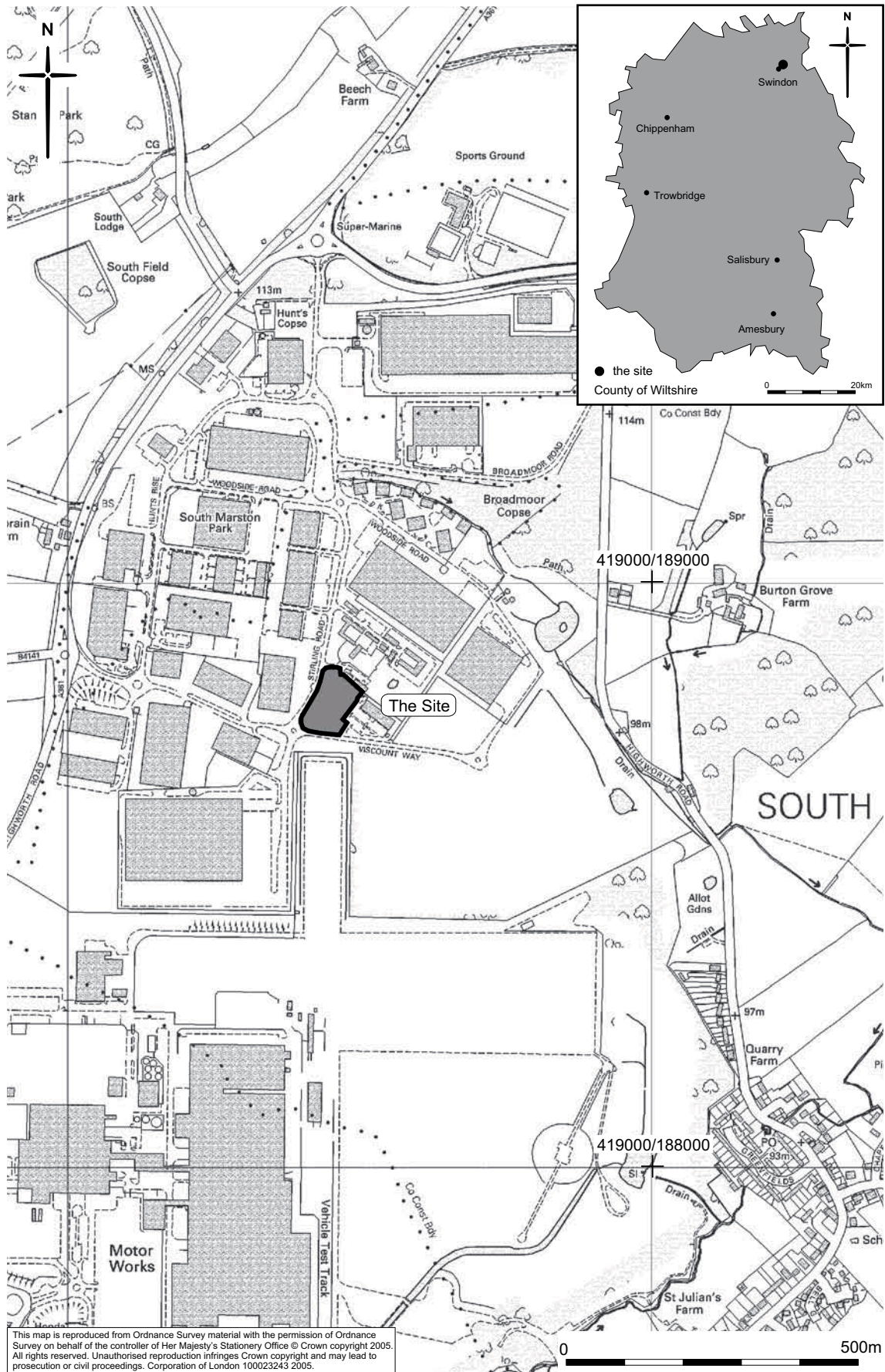


Fig 1 Site location

1.2 Planning and legislative framework

The legislative and planning framework in which the archaeological exercise took place was summarised in the *Method Statement*, which formed the project design for the evaluation (see Section 1, Nielson, 2005).

1.3 Planning background

This report is being prepared in advance of an application for planning permission, and will inform the planning process under which archaeology is regarded as a material consideration.

1.4 Origin and scope of the report

This report was commissioned by Michael Sparks Associates on behalf of Prologis Development Limited and produced by the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS). The report has been prepared within the terms of the relevant Standard specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA, 2001).

Field evaluation, and the *Evaluation report* which comments on the results of that exercise are intended to provide information about the archaeological resource in order to contribute to the:

- formulation of a strategy for the preservation or management of those remains; and/or
- formulation of an appropriate response or mitigation strategy to planning applications or other proposals which may adversely affect such archaeological remains, or enhance them; and/or
- formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigations within a programme of research

1.5 Aims and objectives

The aim of the evaluation was to gain information about the archaeological resource within the site (including presence or absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality), in order to make an assessment of its merit in the appropriate context. This would be used to formulate an appropriate mitigation strategy if required within a programme agreed between the applicant, MoLAS, the Local Planning Authority and their archaeological advisors, the Wiltshire County Archaeological Service.

2 Topographical and historical background

2.1 Topography

The site is c 109.6m OD in the centre of site gently rising to the north at 110.1m OD and a small rise in the far south west corner to 110.1m OD. Natural clay is located c 0.3m below the surface.

2.2 Prehistoric

Numerous Palaeolithic and Mesolithic flint artefacts have been recovered from the topsoil at the Kingsdown Crematorium, which is situated 1.3km to the west of the site. One hundred and forty Neolithic worked flints, burnt flints, and a potsherd have also come from the Kingsdown Crematorium. Approximately 1km to the west of the site, Neolithic worked flints including axes, blades and arrowheads have also been recovered.

The fieldwork at the Crematorium site has also produced evidence of later occupation with 93 Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age worked flints. Abraded pottery sherds have been found to the south of Marston Copse 1.5km to the east of the site and Neolithic tools have been found in Stanton Fitzwarren.

Immediately to the south, at the Honda car plant, a group of Middle Iron Age features comprising nine linear features and three shallow pit-type features was found. A possible Iron Age pottery sherd was found during a watching brief of a water pipeline in area to the northeast of Kingsdown, approximately 1.08km to the southwest of the site.

Later Iron Age activity was located in excavations undertaken directly south of the site consisting of ring ditch, enclosure areas and field systems (Askew 2005).

2.3 Roman

Numerous sites along the 25km length of the A417 and A419 have produced archaeological finds from the Roman period. The most important find was near Birdlip Quarry where a farming settlement was discovered alongside Ermin Way. Three wells, a corn-drier and several hearths and ovens were excavated. The most significant discovery was a sequence of buildings between the 2nd and 4th centuries AD that showed a development from earlier circular timber structures to later stone buildings. In 1997, a digger preparing the ground for homes unearthed the remains of a Roman villa at Groundwell Ridge, to the northwest of Swindon. Further excavation revealed evidence of a vast Roman community with a 10-acre complex of sanctuaries, temples, pools and terraced gardens.

A Roman villa, which is now a scheduled ancient monument, was excavated in 1969

to the west of Stanton House, 1.7km to the northwest of the site. At the Honda works site, to the south, a watching brief located a series of Romano-British field drains and possible field boundaries. Evidence of Roman occupation on the Honda car plant site has also been found in the form of pottery fragments, a possible building wall and three Romano-British linear features. Other evidence of Roman occupation in the area comes from pottery fragments recovered from the Kingsdown Crematorium site and the area to the northeast of Kingsdown Farm and a possible Roman Road has been identified on the western edge of South Marston Airfield, c 800m to the southwest of the site.

The majority of features located adjacent to the site (Askew, 2005) were of Roman date including ring ditches, re-organisation of the Iron Age enclosure systems and limited structural evidence for later Roman activity, the masonry walls of a possible enclosure, to the south of that site.

2.4 Saxon

South Marston is derived from the Old English *mersc*, meaning marsh, and *tun*, meaning farm or village. Apart from the entries in the Domesday Book very few other references to Swindon have survived. The only evidence of Saxon occupation near to the site was found 1.8km to the north, where a Saxon burial, which included a knife, was found in 1906 to the east of Stanton Fitzwarren.

2.5 Medieval

The site was occupied in the medieval period by a farmstead associated with Thomas le Hunt and the name Hunt's Copse Farm survived into the 20th century. The neighbouring Burton Grove Farm, c 600m to the northeast of the site, is also medieval in origin. Evidence for medieval occupation in the area includes the remains of at least three human skeletons, which were discovered in 1989 on the Honda works site to the south.

2.6 Post-medieval

Until very recently, South Marston was a purely agricultural community, with most of the inhabitants working on the farms in the area. Tithe maps of the area show large open fields with farm buildings in the vicinity of site. In the late 1930s the Vickers aircraft factory was constructed. The factory continued to operate until the mid-1980s when Honda purchased the site and established a car manufacturing plant. The north-south airfield runway is visible today and lies directly south of the site.

3 The evaluation

3.1 Methodology

All archaeological excavation and monitoring during the evaluation was carried out in accordance with the preceding *Method Statement* (Nielson, 2005), and the MoLAS *Archaeological Site Manual* (MoLAS, 1994).

Five evaluation trenches were excavated to the archaeologically relevant level where present, by a JCB digger. Where no archaeology was present excavation continued to the top of the natural geological levels. Trenches were excavated by machine by the contractors, and monitored by a member of staff from MoLAS.

The locations of evaluation trenches were recorded by MoLAS Geomatics team and plotted onto the OS grid.

A written and drawn record of all archaeological deposits encountered was made in accordance with the principles set out in the MoLAS site-recording manual (MoLAS, 1994). Levels were calculated by using a temporary benchmark supplied by Norwest Holst Ltd on the pavement of Viscount Way, south east of the site, with a value of 109.442m OD.

The site has produced: a trench location plan; 27 context records; 5 plan and 5 section drawings at 1:50, 1:20 and 1:10; and 18 photographs. In addition one small box of finds was recovered from the site.

The site finds and records can presently be found under the site code WT-VWY05 in the MoL archive but will eventually be donated to the Swindon Museum and Art Gallery by the landowner.

3.2 Results of the evaluation

For trench locations see Fig 2.

<i>Evaluation Trench 1</i>	
Location	Northwest corner
Dimensions	15m by 2m
Modern ground level	110.17m OD
Base of modern fill	109.69m OD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	None present
Level of base of deposits observed	109.95m hard core rubble, onto 109.76m made ground clay
Natural observed	109.79m OD orange brown clay

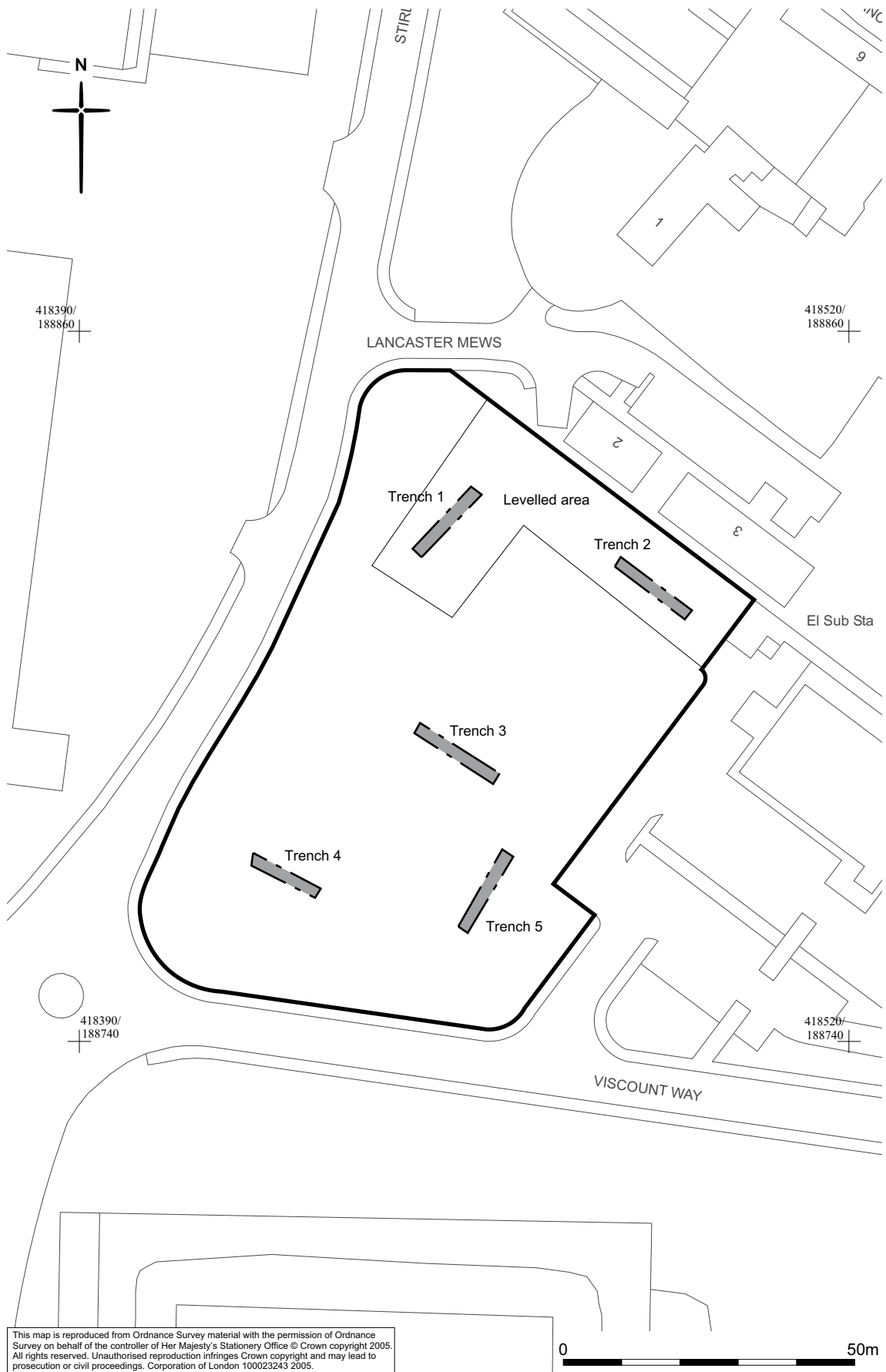


Fig 2 Trench location

<i>Evaluation Trench 2</i>	
Location	North east corner
Dimensions	15m by 2m by 0.58m
Modern ground level	110.1m OD
Base of modern fill	109.6m OD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	None present
Level of base of deposits observed	109.87m OD hard core rubble, onto 109.7m OD made ground clay
Natural observed	109.6 m OD

Trenches 1 and 2 are located in the northern end of the site, in a levelled area of hard core and gravel, although topographically higher than the rest of the site, it is the only area showing modern activity in the form of truncation and made ground where no archaeological deposits survive.

<i>Evaluation Trench 3</i>	
Location	Centre of site
Dimensions	15m by 2m by 0.41m
Modern ground level	109.65m OD
Base of topsoil	109.53m OD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	0.21m of subsoil, then features
Level of base of deposits observed	109.02m OD deepest cut feature
Natural observed	109.24 m OD

This trench contained a small pit/posthole [8], a pit or gully terminus [10] and a small linear gully [12]. The small pit was only 0.5m wide and very shallow, it contained only one piece of later Roman pottery. The larger pit/ gully terminus was 0.98m wide and continued into the south trench baulk; it contained Iron Age or early Roman pottery and ceramic building material. The linear gully cut across the SE end of the trench, curving back into the baulk and may have formed part of a ring gully. It was a shallow feature only 0.3m wide and only 0.07m deep. A modern drain was also revealed in the NW end of the trench.

<i>Evaluation Trench 4</i>	
Location	South western corner
Dimensions	15m by 2m by 0.58m
Modern ground level	109.92m OD (at SE), 110.18m OD (at NW)
Base of topsoil	109.77m OD (at SE), 110.03m OD (at NW)
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	0.2m subsoil, then layer 23 (0.36m deep) covering features
Level of base of deposits observed	108.93m OD deepest cut feature
Natural observed	109.21 m OD

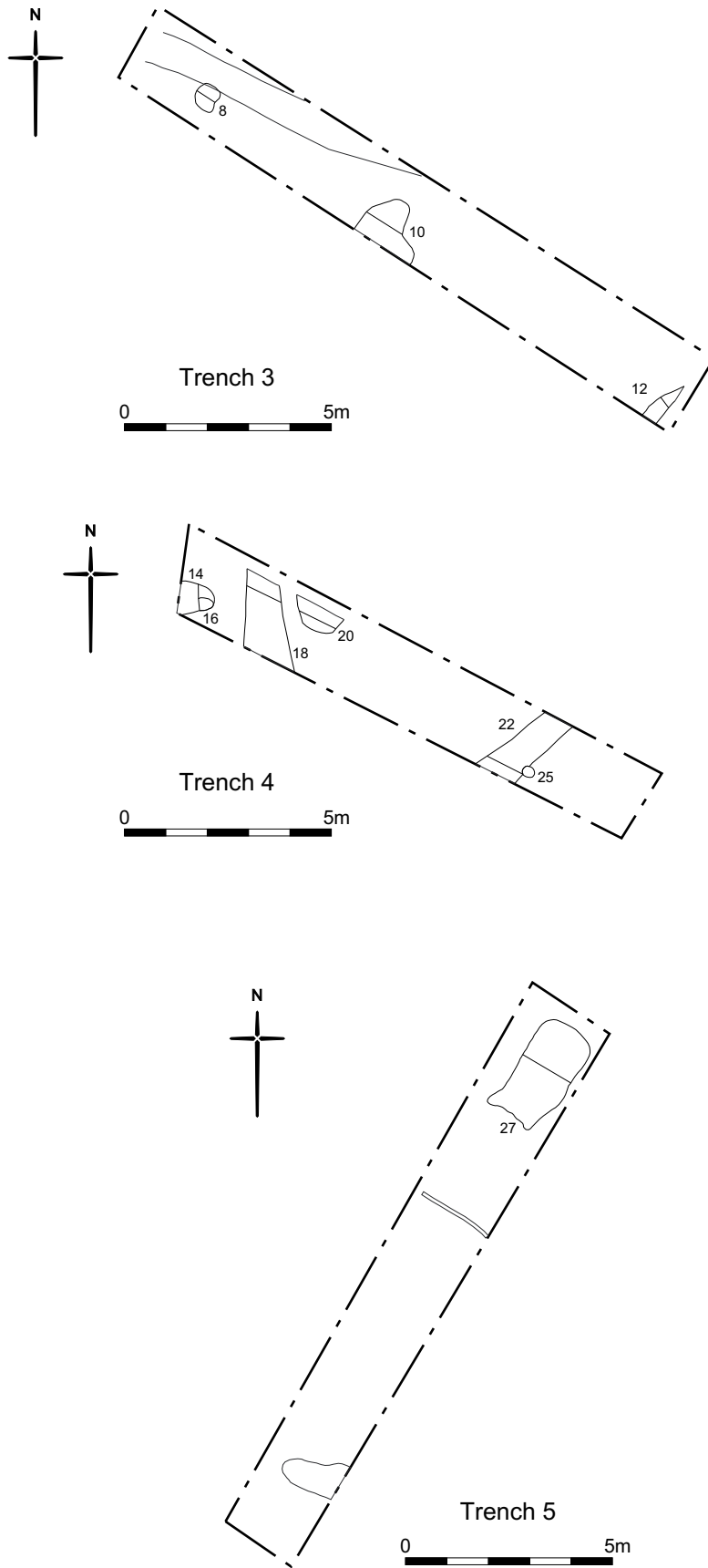


Fig 3 Plan of features in trenches 3, 4 and 5

Archaeology revealed in this trench included six intrusive cut features and one horizontal layer present throughout the trench. This layer [23] averaged 0.36m deep and lay under the subsoil but covered all archaeological features; the presence of this layer may explain the higher current ground surface of this area of site. It contained residual artefacts of Roman date and may represent either a buried topsoil or ridge of a medieval or post medieval ridge and furrow feature.

In the NW end of the trench, a small posthole [14] was cut into a small pit or gully terminus [16] that continued into the baulk. The posthole was 0.31m in diameter and contained pottery. The small pit or gully terminus also contained Roman pottery and one piece of slag residue.

A linear ditch [18] aligned N-S, was 0.92m wide and contained pieces of later Roman pottery including two rims. Adjacent to the east of the linear ditch lay a pit or gully terminus [20] that continued into the baulk of the trench wall. This was 1.26m wide but quite shallow; a large piece of Roman pot base and ceramic building material was recovered from this feature.

A second linear feature [22], with a noticeably darker grey fill than other features on site was also aligned N-S. 1.06m wide it had distinctive V-shape profile and contained large thick pieces of late Roman pottery and one large cow-sized bone in poor condition. A small posthole [25] cut into the ditch on its eastern edge, only 0.27m in diameter, contained no finds.

<i>Evaluation Trench 5</i>	
Location	South east corner
Dimensions	15m by 2m by 0.58m
Modern ground level	109.6m OD (at NE), 109.8m OD (at SW)
Base of topsoil	109.56m OD (at NE), 109.68mOD (at SW)
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	109.32m OD
Level of base of deposits observed	109m OD
Natural observed	109.3 m OD

Only one feature was revealed in this trench, a large irregular pit [27] in the NE end, 1.21m long by 1.36m wide, and a maximum 0.35m deep. The pit contained early Roman pottery throughout (and one residual sherd of Bronze Age material – Mephram fabric C1) and small fragments of animal bone, a cow mandible was recovered from the base of the feature.

3.3 Pottery (Rupert Featherby)

There are 43 sherds of Late Iron age/Roman pottery from ten contexts all of which are small in size, containing less than 30 sherds. The sherds are mostly small in size and generally quite abraded. The pottery was spot-dated using standard MoLAS/MoLSS methods. It was quantified by rows, sherds, estimated number of vessels (ENV), and weight and the data entered into the MoLAS/MoLSS Oracle database. Tempered wares comprised the largest proportion of the assemblage, twenty-three sherds from 43, with late Iron Age/early Roman tempered wares contributing the most, fourteen

sherds of the twenty-three. Two sherds of central Gaulish samian were identified, dating AD 120–250, as well as four sherds of black-burnished wares, dating AD 120–400. The date ranges for contexts are set out in Table 1 below, which shows the majority dating to the later Roman period. This appears to be in opposition to the findings from the excavation site to the south east, but it must be remembered that this site has so far only produced 43 small abraded sherds, upon which it is difficult to make any secure dating decisions. However, it may be that further work on this site will produce more data for the period dating AD 120–250.

Date Range	Late Date					
Early Date	50	100	250	300	400	Total
0	1					1
40		1				1
50		1			3	4
120			2	1	1	4
Total	1	2	2	1	4	10

Table 1 Date Range

3.4 Animal Bone (Kevin Rielly)

Bones were recovered from just two deposits – fill [21] of the north-south ditch [22], and fill [26] of pit [27]. These are dated between AD120 and AD300 and AD40-100AD respectively. While each assemblage is relatively well-preserved, each is highly fragmented.

Neither assemblage is large, [21] contains the anterior part of a cattle mandible, and [26] most of the mid-section (toothrow) part of another cattle mandible, as well as a fragment of cattle skull (nasal), part of a sheep/goat pelvis and a cattle-size lumbar vertebra. Both mandibles are from older individuals, well in excess of two years, while the sheep/goat pelvis has a fused acetabulum, belonging to an animal at least 6 months old (ages after Schmid 1972, 75 and 77).

3.5 Table of excavated contexts

Number	Trench	Type	Comment	Date
1	1,2	Deposit	Hard core rubble	Modern
2	1,2	Deposit	Contaminated clay	Modern
3	Voided number			
4	3,4,5	Deposit	Topsoil	-
5	3,4,5	Deposit	Subsoil	-
6	All	Deposit	Natural	-
7	3	Deposit	Fill of 8	Roman (AD120-400)
8	3	Cut	Pit	Roman (AD120-400)
9	3	Deposit	Fill of 10	IA – Roman (0 – AD50)
10	3	Cut	Pit/ Gully terminus	IA – Roman (0 – AD50)

11	3	Deposit	Fill of 12	Roman (AD50-100)
12	3	Cut	Gully – ring ditch?	Roman (AD50-100)
13	4	Deposit	Fill of 14	Roman (AD50-400)
14	4	Cut	Pit/ Gully terminus	Roman (AD50-400)
15	4	Deposit	Fill of 16	Roman (AD50-400)
16	4	Cut	Posthole	Roman (AD50-400)
17	4	Deposit	Fill of 18	Roman (AD120-250)
18	4	Cut	Ditch	Roman (AD120-250)
19	4	Deposit	Fill of 20	Roman (AD50-400)
20	4	Cut	Pit/ Gully terminus	Roman (AD50-400)
21	4	Deposit	Fill of 22	Roman (AD120-300)
22	4	Cut	Ditch	Roman (AD120-300)
23	4	Deposit	Layer – ridge and furrow?	Medieval?
24	4	Deposit	Fill of 25	Undated
25	4	Cut	Posthole	Undated
26	5	Deposit	Fill of 27	Roman (AD40-100)
27	5	Cut	Pit	Roman (AD40-100)

Table 2

3.6 Animal Bone (Kevin Rielly)

Kevin Rielly

Bones were recovered from just two deposits – fill [21] of the north-south ditch [22], and fill [26] of pit [27]. These are dated between AD120 and AD300 and AD40-100AD respectively. While each assemblage is relatively well-preserved, each is highly fragmented. The wealth of fresh breakage marks clearly suggest this fragmentation occurred either during excavation and/or in the processing stage. Neither assemblage is large, [21] contains the anterior part of a cattle mandible, and [26] most of the mid-section (toothrow) part of another cattle mandible, as well as a fragment of cattle skull (nasal), part of a sheep/goat pelvis and a cattle-size lumbar vertebra. Both mandibles are from older individuals, well in excess of two years, while the sheep/goat pelvis has a fused acetabulum, belonging to an animal at least 6 months old (ages after Schmid 1972, 75 and 77).

3.7 Assessment of the evaluation

It is normal to provide an assessment of the success of the evaluation ‘in order to illustrate what level of confidence can be placed on the information which will provide the basis of the mitigation strategy’. In the case of this site, the trenches have sampled an appropriate amount of the area to indicate the level of survival and preservation of archaeological deposits. The evaluation has proved that there is little remaining of horizontal archaeological deposits but there are cut features. The trenches have also proved that archaeological deposits are likely to cover almost the entire area of the site, with the exception of a small area of land in the north (See Fig 2) which has previously been levelled and therefore truncated.

4 Archaeological potential

4.1 Realisation of original research aims

The aim of the evaluation was to gain information about the archaeological resource within the site (including presence or absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality), in order to make an assessment of its merit in the appropriate context. The results of the evaluation will help to formulate a mitigation strategy for dealing with the archaeological remains identified, in order to discharge any future planning condition.

Archaeological remains were present beneath the topsoil and subsoil deposits and consisted of cut features such as drainage ditches, a possible ring ditch, pits and postholes of the Iron Age and Roman periods. This is likely to be a continuation of the settlement and associated agricultural activity excavated to the south east of the site. Archaeological survival is proved in the central and southern area. The northern section where levelled (See Fig 2) had only negative evidence, any archaeology here has probably been removed. .

The condition of the surviving archaeological remains was good; with the cut features containing fills rich in organic waste material, which were likely to be derived from domestic and industrial activities from the site. There was little evidence of horizontal truncation of archaeological deposits in the southern and central areas. The depth of the surviving cut features uncovered during the evaluation stage ranged between 0.07m and 0.35m.

4.2 General discussion of potential

The evaluation has shown that the potential for survival of ancient ground surfaces (horizontal archaeological stratification) on the site is minimal except in the south western corner where a possible area of medieval ridge and furrow may still be present. However, there is good potential for survival of cut features. Such survival is likely to be extremely limited in the northern portion of site because of modern disturbance. The average depth of archaeological deposits where they do survive is likely to be between 0.35m below current ground surface and in the south western corner approximately 0.7m below current ground level.

4.3 Significance

The continuation of features of the Late Iron Age/early Roman settlement is considered to be of local and regional significance in the area, mainly due to the types of pottery found on the site. The pottery dates broadly from the Late Iron Age – Roman transition with examples from AD 120-250 also found on site. The assemblage indicates late Iron Age activity, which, while declining over the Roman period did not cease. It reflects the rural nature of the site and, when considered

alongside a number of sites identified around South Marston Industrial Estate, has the potential to contribute to the understanding of the relationship between Roman rural and urban sites and of the late Iron Age/early Roman transition.

5 Proposed development impact and recommendations

The proposed redevelopment at Plot 10A, Viscount Way, South Marston Industrial estate involves the construction of an office unit. The impact of this will be to remove the surviving archaeological deposits. The shallow depth of the archaeologically relevant levels also indicates that any surrounding temporary building works, ancillary works, and service trenches will have a severe impact on them.

The assessment above does not suggest that preservation *in situ* would be an appropriate mitigation strategy, as the features encountered are not of major archaeological significance. MoLAS considers that the remaining archaeological deposits should be excavated archaeologically in advance of any further ground reduction (i.e. preservation by record).

The decision on the appropriate archaeological response to the deposits revealed within the site rests with the Local Planning Authority and their designated archaeological advisor.

6 Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Prologis Developments Limited for funding the evaluation, Justin Galloway of NorWest Holst and HE Services for their assistance. MoLAS would also like to thank Robert Shannon of Michael Sparks Associates and Roy Canham, Wiltshire County Archaeologist, for their advice and assistance.

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8 SMR archaeological report form

NMR ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT FORM

1) TYPE OF RECORDING

Evaluation

2) LOCATION

Site address: Site 10A, Viscount Way, South Marston Industrial Estate, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN3

Site code: WT-VWY05

Nat. Grid Refs: centre of site: **418450 188790**

limits of site	a)	b)
	c)	d)

3) ORGANISATION

Name of archaeological unit/company/society:

Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS)

**Address: Mortimer Wheeler House,
46 Eagle Wharf Road,
London N1 7ED**

Site director/supervisor: Sian Anthony

Project Manager: Robin Nielsen

Funded by: Prologis Ltd

4) DURATION

Date fieldwork started: 12-12-2005

Date finished: 16-12-2005

Fieldwork previously notified? YES

Fieldwork will continue? YES

5) PERIODS REPRESENTED

Palaeolithic	Roman YES
Mesolithic	Saxon (pre-AD 1066)
Neolithic	Medieval (AD 1066-1485)
Bronze Age	Post-Medieval
Iron Age YES	Unknown

6) PERIOD SUMMARIES Use headings for each period (ROMAN; MEDIEVAL; etc.), and additional sheets if necessary.

IRON AGE

Several features including pits, postholes, ditches and termini of ditches were located on this site comprising agricultural and domestic features of a settlement. Pottery, slag and animal bones were recovered.

ROMAN

Features including pits, postholes, ditches and termini of ditches were located on this site comprising agricultural and domestic features of a settlement. Pottery, slag and animal bones were recovered.

7) NATURAL (state if not observed; please DO NOT LEAVE BLANK)

Type: Orange brown clay

Height above Ordnance Datum: 109.3m OD

8) LOCATION OF ARCHIVES

a) Please provide an estimate of the quantity of material in your possession for the following categories:

Notes Context, plan and section registers 27 context sheets	Plans 1 trench location plan, 5 trench plans	PHotos 18 digital	NGatives
SLides	COrrrespondence	MScripts (unpub reports, etc.)	
BULK finds	SMall finds	SOil samples	

Other (please specify) Small box of finds inc. pottery and animal bone

b) The archive has been prepared and stored in accordance with MGC standards and has been deposited in the following location:

c) Has a security copy of the archive been made?: YES – in prep.
 Have you arranged for RCHME microfilming?: YES – in prep.

9) BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anthony, S, 2005 Site 10A, Viscount Way, South Marston Industrial Estate, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN3;
 An evaluation report, MoLAS, London

SIGNED:

DATE: 20th December 2005

NAME (Block capitals): SIAN ANTHONY