Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological evaluation at Nerrols Farm, Taunton, Somerset
TTNCM:108/2010

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Report 10/198

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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Archaeological evaluation at Nerrols Farm, Taunton, Somerset	
Short description	Northamptonshire Archaeology undertook a trial trench evaluation on land at Nerrols Farm, Taunton, Somerset. Two separate archaeological sites were identified. A rectangular enclosure with associated features in a field to the north-west of the farm has been provisionally dated to the early to mid Bronze Age by a small pottery assemblage. To the south-east a series of ditches, gullies, pits and postholes clustered around a broad trackway have produced a larger assemblage of medieval pottery dated to the 11th-15th centuries.	
Project type	Evaluation (NER10)	
Site status	Rural	
Previous work	Geophysical survey	
Current Land use	Arable fields	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type/ period	Bronze Age/Medieval	
Significant finds	Pottery	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Somerset	
Site address	Nerrols Farm, Taunton	
Study area	*c* 17.65 ha	
OS Easting & Northing	ST 2436 2673	
Height OD	15-30mOD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)	
Project brief originator	Somerset County Council's Archaeological Advisor	
Project Design originator	Entec UK Ltd	
Director/Supervisor	Paul Mason	
Project Manager	Paul Mason (NA), Rob Johns (Entec UK Ltd)	
Sponsor or funding body	The Crown Estate	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date/end date	September/October 2010	
ARCHIVES	Location	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical	TTNCM:108/2010	Pottery, flint, flots
Paper	TTNCM:108/2010	Site records, photographic, drawings
Digital	TTNCM:108/2010	Mapinfo GIS data, photographs
BIBLIOGRAPHY	Unpublished client report (NA report)	
Title	Archaeological evaluation at Nerrols Farm, Taunton, Somerset	
Serial title & volume	Northamptonshire Archaeology Report 10/198	
Author(s)	Paul Mason	
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Date	2010	

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT NERROLS FARM, TAUNTON, SOMERSET

TTNCM:108/2010

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2010

ABSTRACT

Northamptonshire Archaeology undertook a trial trench evaluation on land at Nerrols Farm, Taunton, Somerset. Two separate archaeological sites were identified. A rectangular enclosure with associated features in a field to the north-west of the farm has been provisionally dated to the early to mid Bronze Age by a small pottery assemblage. To the south-east a series of ditches, gullies, pits and postholes clustered around a broad trackway have produced a larger assemblage of medieval pottery dated to the 11th-15th centuries.

1 INTRODUCTION

In September 2010 Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) was commissioned by Entec UK Ltd, on behalf of their client The Crown Estate, to undertake a trial trench evaluation on land at Nerrols Farm, Taunton, Somerset (NGR ST 2436 2673, Fig 1). The work was undertaken at the request of Somerset County Council's Assistant County Archaeologist to inform proposals for residential and infra-structure development.

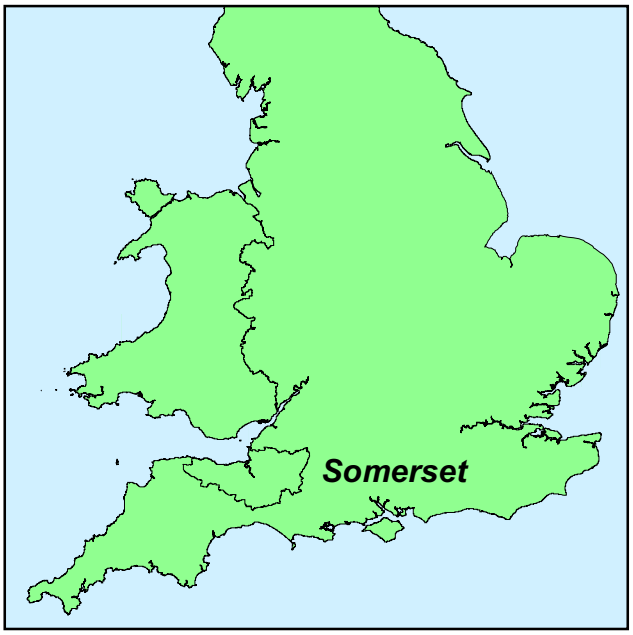
The evaluation complied with a Written Scheme of Investigation formulated by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA 2010) in accordance with the methodologies set out in Somerset County Council's *Heritage Service Archaeological Handbook* (SCC 2009). It was undertaken in two phases; 21st September to 1st October and 14th to 26th October 2010. A total of twenty-two trenches were excavated across the proposed development area (Fig 2).

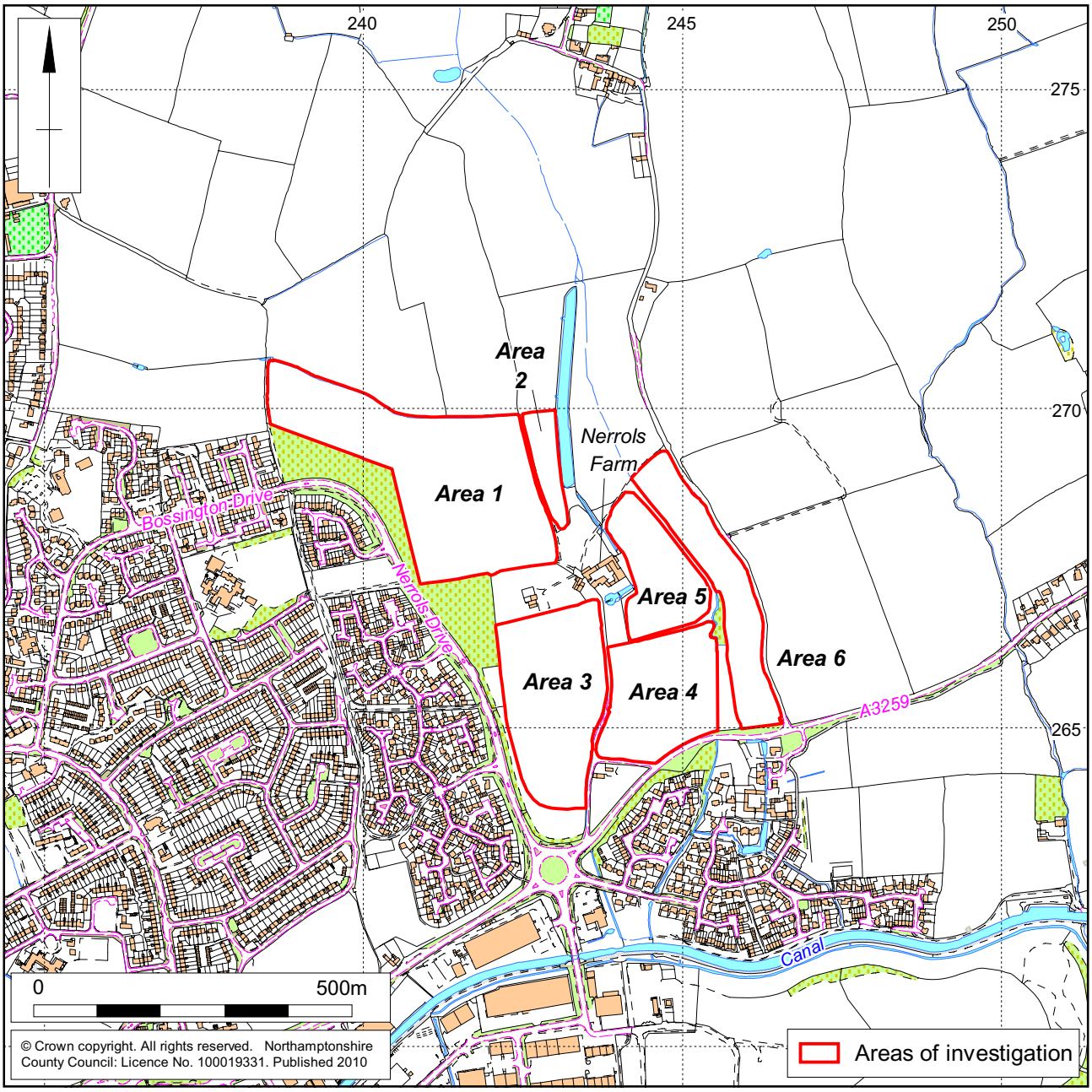
The site code NER10 was allocated to the project and the site archive will be deposited with Somerset Heritage Service (Accession Number: TTNCM: 108/2010).

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Topography and geology

The proposed development site lies on the north-east periphery of Taunton, to the north of the A3259 (NGR ST 2436 2673). The site comprises an area of some 26ha of farmland around the farmstead of Nerrols Farm (excluded from the Scheme), within which the majority of the site is arranged over six arable fields (Areas 1-6; Fig 2). Area 1 (7.3 ha) is located to the north-west of the farm and occupies a plateau at 25-30mOD which slopes away to the north and east (Figs 3 and 4). Areas 2 and 6 were not subject to evaluation, as no construction is indicated in these areas as part of the Scheme. Area 3 (4.2 ha) lies to the south-west of the farm and occupies a field with a very gentle south-facing slope, from *c* 20.20 to *c* 16.50mOD (Fig 5). Areas 4 and 5 (5.2 ha) lie to the west/south-west of the farm (Figs 6). They form two conjoined fields, flattish in the north

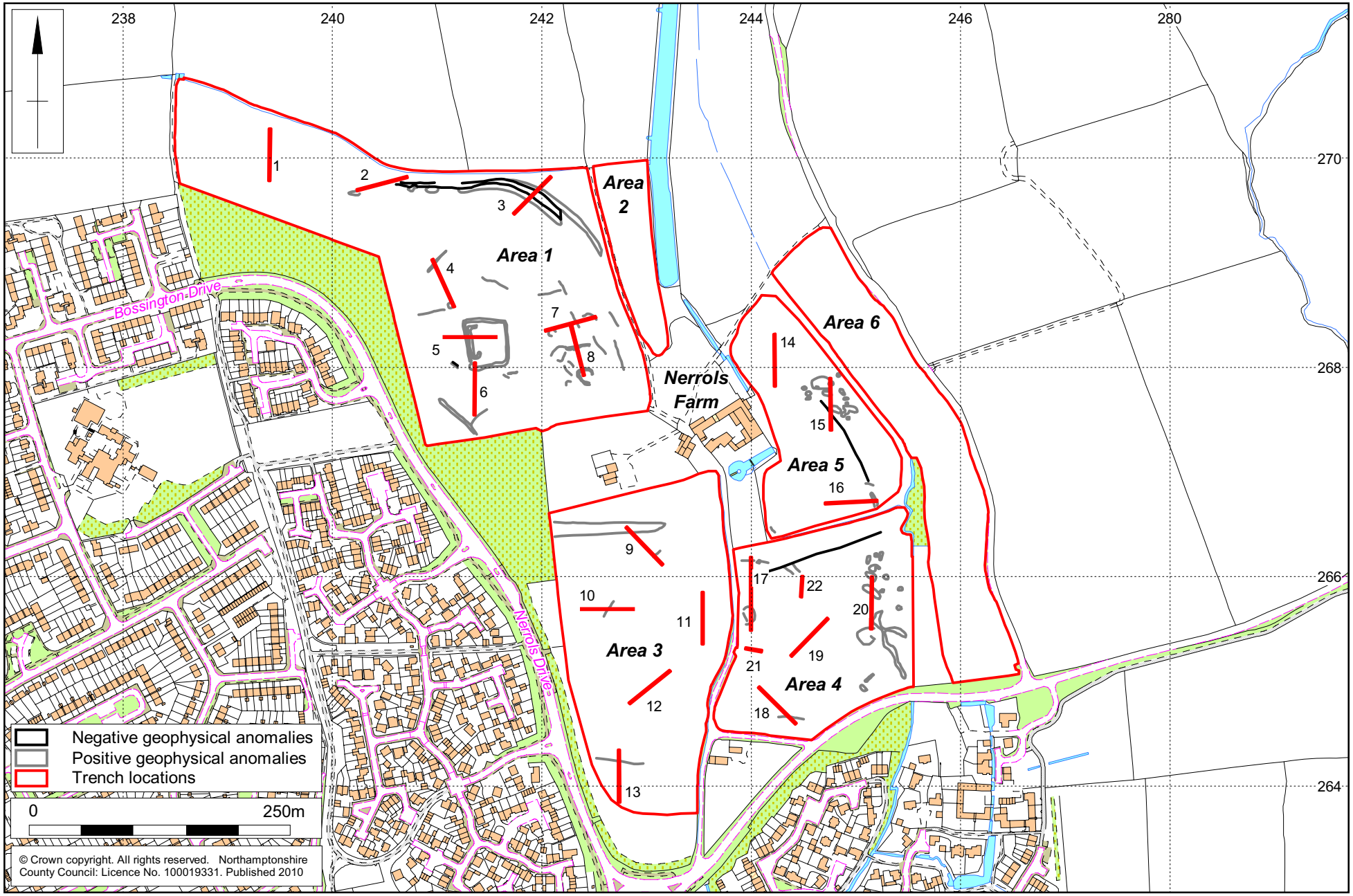




Scale 1:10,000

Site location Fig 1

Scale 1:5000



Trench plan showing results of geophysical survey

Fig 2

View of Area 1, looking west Fig 3

View of Area 1, looking north-west Fig 4

View of Area 3, looking south Fig 5

View of Area 5, looking south towards Area 4 Fig 6

(Area 5) but sloping gently from west (*c* 20mOD) to east (*c* 15mOD) in the south (Area 4). A small brook defines the eastern boundary of these fields.

The geology is recorded as Sand and Gravel overlying Triassic Rock (undifferentiated) Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone (www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex).

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

The following summary of the site's historical/archaeological background is paraphrased from Entec's draft Heritage Statement (Entec 2009) which will be superseded by the forthcoming Environmental Statement.

Prehistoric

Limited archaeological work undertaken in 1993, to the west of Area 1, revealed a Neolithic ditch and pits. Some Bronze Age finds were also recorded. Other prehistoric finds in the vicinity of the housing development to the west of the Area are indicative of Mesolithic-Iron Age activity (Cox and Samuel 2001).

Within the proposed development area itself, a rectangular cropmark enclosure has been identified in the south-western part of Area 1. It encloses an area of 43m by 30m and is thought to be of prehistoric or Roman date. Further cropmarks of possible prehistoric date exist in fields to the north of Area 1, outside the site.

Roman

Archaeological excavation to the immediate west of Area 1 revealed the remains of a Roman settlement which is thought to extend into the proposed development area (Cox and Samuel 2001). Further to the west, but still in close vicinity to the site, a scatter of Roman black-burnished pottery was collected by fieldwalkers.

Medieval

No medieval remains have been observed within the proposed development area.

Post-medieval

Nerrols Farmhouse is thought to be 17th century in origin (though it may contain elements of an earlier house) and was enlarged in the 18th and early 19th centuries.

Recent archaeological work

Geophysical survey undertaken by Archaeological Surveys Ltd as part of the current scheme of works has identified a number of anomalies in each of the four areas (Fig 2). Some were interpreted as having archaeological potential; the clearest example being confirmation of the presence of a rectangular cropmark in Area 1. Trenches were subsequently placed to test these areas of geophysical anomaly and blank areas.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Written Scheme of Investigation (NA 2010) defines the aim of the evaluation as follows:

The purpose of the work is to examine archaeological remains on the proposed development site and gain information to determine the physical impact the proposal will have on the buried remains and inform a mitigation strategy.

4 METHODOLOGY

In the first instance, twenty 50m-long trenches were excavated in pre-agreed positions spread over four separate fields (Areas 1, 3, 4 and 5) their positions having been surveyed in using a Leica System 1200 GPS (Fig 2). Two further trenches, Trenches 21 and 22, measuring 10m and 20m respectively, were later added as a contingency and a further 20m was added to the southern end of Trench 17.

Overburden was removed by tracked mechanical digger and JCB fitted with toothless ditching buckets (1.8m and 1.5m) to expose the first significant archaeological level, or in the absence of archaeology, the geology. Cleaning of exposed surfaces, hand excavation and recording progressed in accordance with the methodologies set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (NA 2010), Somerset County Council's Heritage Service Archaeological Handbook (SCC 2009) and in fulfilment of the standards set by the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (IfA 2008) and the Code of Conduct (IfA 2010)

Following the completion of the work, and having been signed off by the Assistant County Archaeologist, the trenches were backfilled with their up-cast,.

5 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

5.1 Area 1

General comments

The geology varied greatly between orange-brown sandy clay and gravel on the plateau in southern part of the field to a reddish-brown sandy clay down slope in the south. It was observed at a typical depth of 0.40m below the existing ground surface. The geology was overlain by deposits of subsoil, 0.20-0.30m thick and topsoil, typically 0.10-0.20m thick. Archaeological features were present in the trenches located over the gravel (Trenches 4-8), in the vicinity of a ditched enclosure previously identified as a cropmark and corroborated by geophysical survey.

Trench 4

Trench 4 (50m x 1.8m) was aligned north-north-west to south-south-east towards the centre of Area 1 (Figs 2 and 7). The geology, an orange-brown sandy clay with frequent patches of gravel (4003), lay *c* 0.50m below the existing ground surface at *c* 29.90-30.80mOD. It was overlain by up to 0.30m of orange-brown sandy clay subsoil (4002) and 0.25m of mid brown sandy clay loam topsoil (4001).

Cutting the geology at the southern end of the trench were three linear/curvilinear gullies [4004], [4006], [4008] and a small pit or posthole [4010] (Fig 8). The southernmost curvilinear gully, [4004], was 1.50m wide, 0.50m deep and was filled with dark brown sandy loam (4005) (Fig 9; Section 2). Its location appears to correspond with the southern arm of a curved geophysical anomaly (Fig 2). A short distance to the north a 1.0m-wide gully [4008] formed the opposing arm of this feature. It was 0.15m deep and filled with mid brown sandy loam (4009). No dating evidence was retrieved from either gully.

A 1.10m-wide gully [4006] was aligned east to west between the aforementioned features. It was 0.50m deep and filled with light brown sandy loam (4007). To the north of this group of gullies was a small oval pit [4010] measuring 0.50m by 0.40m by 0.15m deep. It was filled with dark brown sandy loam (4001).

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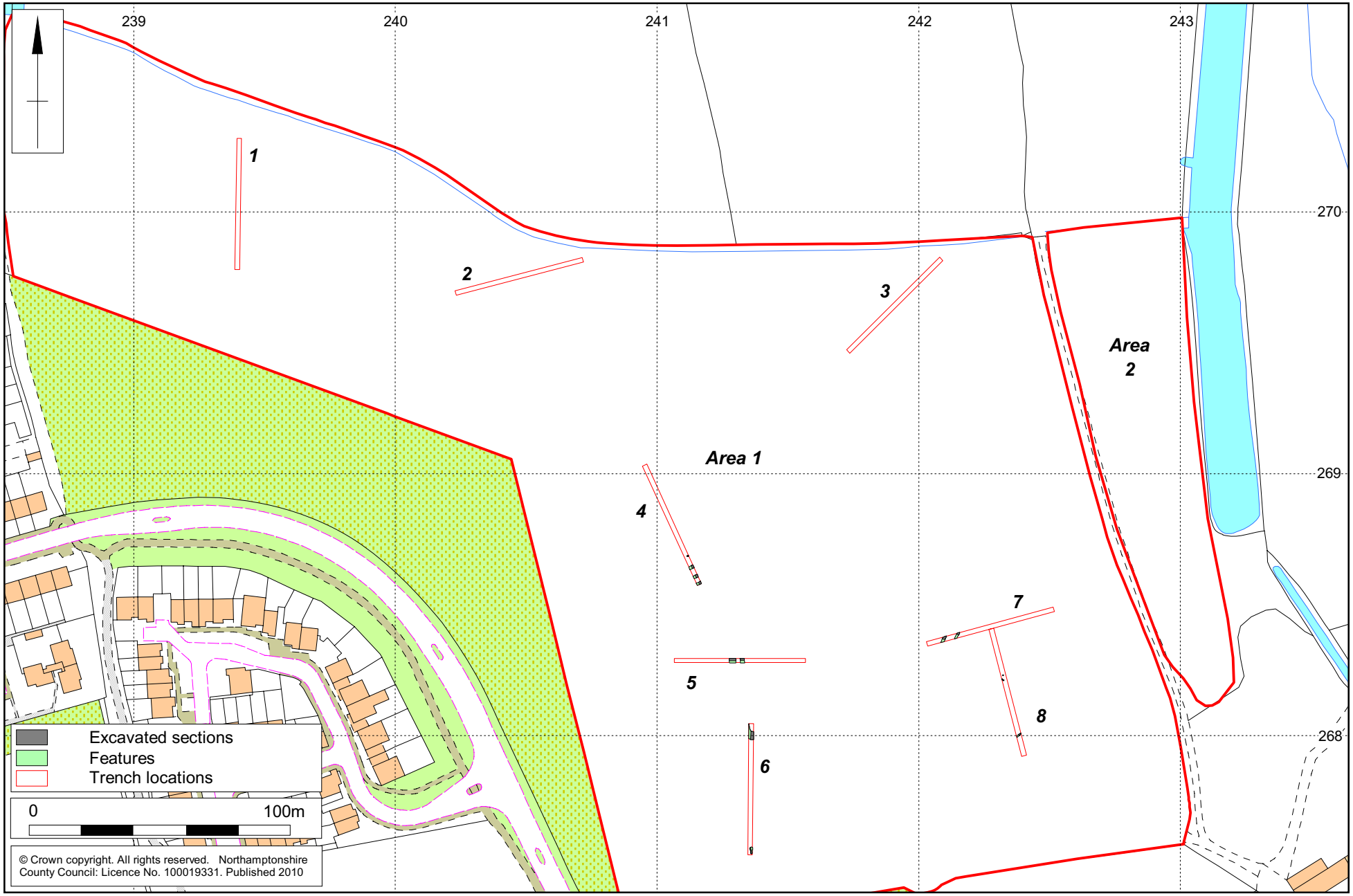
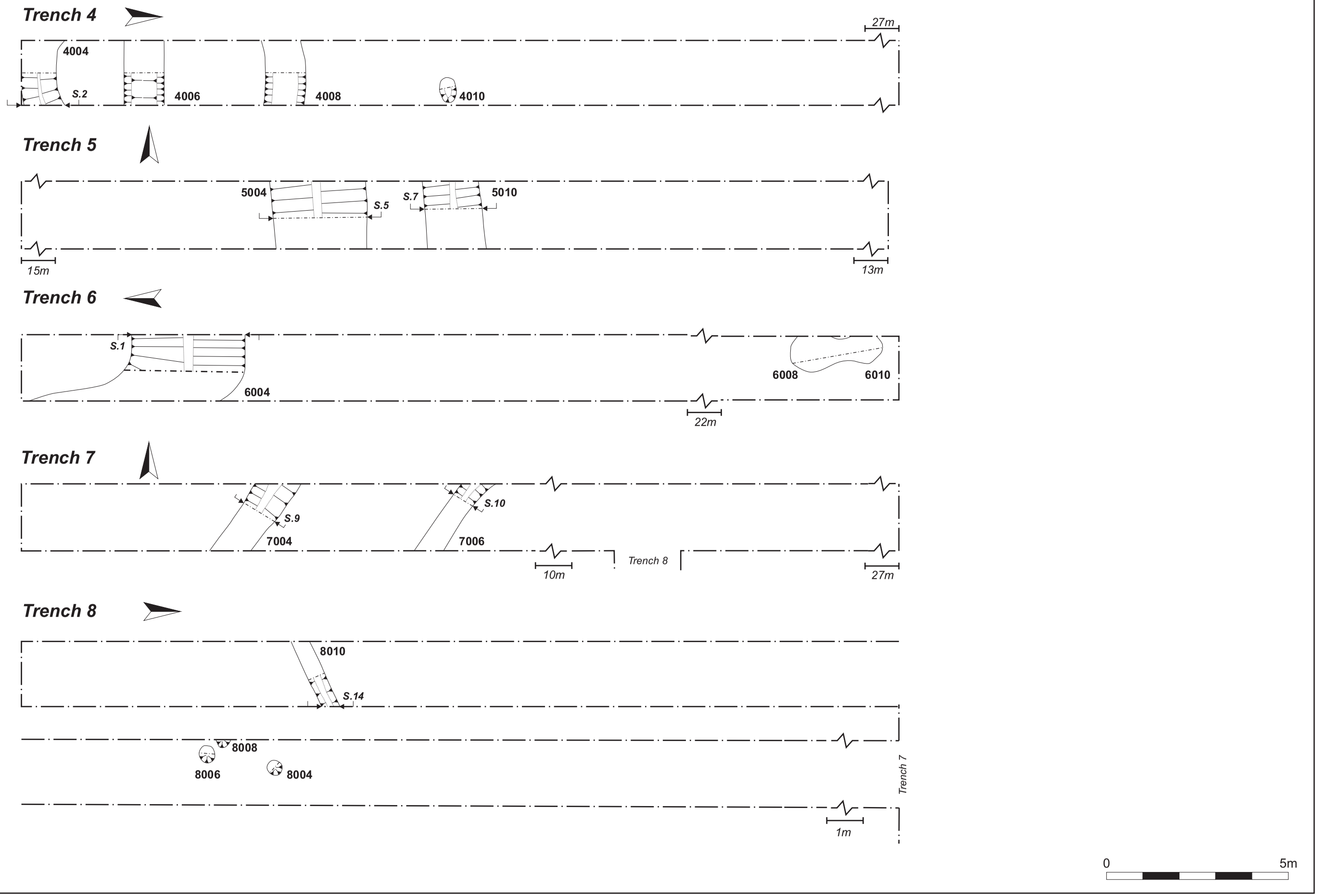


Plan of Area 1 Fig 7



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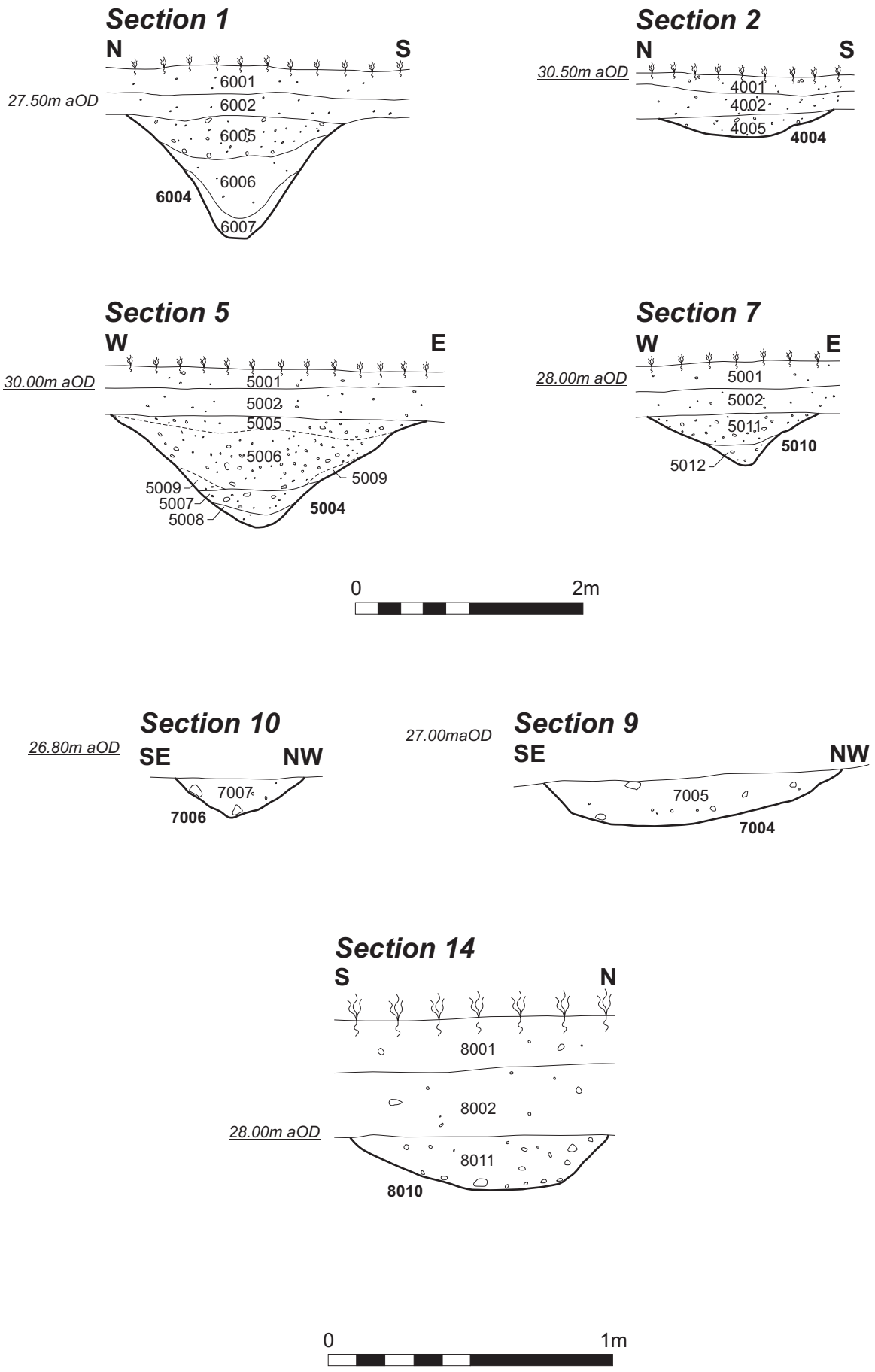
Plans of trenches 4-8, Area 1 Fig 8



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Sections: Area 1 features Fig 9

Although none of these features contained dating evidence, they are thought to be of some antiquity as each was sealed by the subsoil.

There was no physical evidence of an irregular geophysical anomaly detected at the northern end of the trench.

Trench 5

Trench 5 (50m x 1.8m) was aligned east to west in the south-western part of Area 1 and targeted on the ditched enclosure visible as a cropmark and corroborated by geophysical survey (Figs 2 and 7). The geology, an orange-brown sandy clay with frequent patches of gravel (5003), lay *c* 0.40m below the existing ground level at *c* 29.60-29.70mOD. It was overlain by up to 0.25m of orange-brown sandy clay subsoil (5002) and 0.20m of mid brown sandy clay loam topsoil (5001).

The enclosure ditch was aligned north to south (Fig 8). It was 2.80m wide and 1m deep with a 'V'-shaped profile and had a primary fill of purple brown sandy clay (5008), probably introduced as the sides of the ditch eroded shortly after cutting (Figs 9; Section 5, and 10). Overlying this were deposits of mid orange-brown sandy clay (5007) and (5009), again the products of natural erosion/silting. These were sealed by a very compact, light orange-brown sandy clay (5006) containing sherds of early-mid Bronze Age pottery and a retouched flint flake. The uppermost fill of the ditch was an orange-brown sandy clay (5005) which contained a single flint flake.

Bronze Age enclosure ditch [5004], looking north Fig 10

Approximately 1.6m to the east of the enclosure ditch was a smaller ditch [5010] which had also been detected by the geophysical survey. It too had a 'V'-shaped profile, was 1.50m wide, 0.50m deep and had a primary fill of light orange-brown sandy clay (5012)

(Figs 9; Section 7, and 11) . This was overlain by a darker sandy clay (5011) containing a single flint flake. No dating evidence was retrieved, however, it the ditch appeared to respect the alignment of the enclosure ditch.

No other features were identified.

Bronze Age ditch [5010], looking north Fig 11

Trench 6

Trench 6 (50m x 1.8m) was aligned roughly north to south in the south-west corner of Area 1 having been positioned to pick up the south-west corner of the enclosure ditch (Figs 2 and 7). The geology, an orange-brown sandy clay with frequent patches of gravel (6003), lay *c* 0.40m below the existing ground level at *c* 27.75-29.25mOD. It was overlain by up to 0.25m of orange-brown sandy clay subsoil (6002) and 0.20m of mid brown sandy clay loam topsoil (6001).

The enclosure ditch [6004] was duly located in the northern end of the trench where it turned sharply to the north (Fig 8). Here the ditch was 'V'-shaped, 2.7m wide and 1.5m deep with a primary fill of brown, charcoal-flecked sandy clay (6007) (Figs 9; Section 1, and 12). No dating evidence was retrieved, however, it was sampled for environmental evidence <1>, producing only weed seeds and charcoal. The secondary fill was a light reddish-brown sandy clay (6006) subsequently overlain by an orange-brown sandy clay (6005); neither of these fills contained dating evidence.

Towards the southern end of the trench were two intercutting oval pits [6008] and [6010] that may have functioned as simple hearths (Fig 13). The former measured 1.2m by 1.0m by 0.25m deep and was filled with dark reddish brown sandy clay (6009) containing frequent fragments and flecks of charcoal. The second pit was of slightly

Bronze Age enclosure ditch [6004], looking east Fig 12

Inter-cutting pits [6008] and [6010], Bronze Age (?), looking north-east Fig 13

smaller dimensions but had a similar fill (6011). Neither feature produced dating evidence and the stratigraphic relationship between the two could not be ascertained.

The geology around the edges of the features was discoloured in a manner suggestive of *in situ* burning. A soil sample <2> taken from the fill of pit [6008] produced a large quantity of charred cereal grains.

Irregular geophysical anomalies detected towards the centre of the trench ware probably reflected changes in geology; no archaeological features were detected in this location.

Trench 7

Trench 7 (50m x 1.8m) was aligned roughly east to west in the south-east corner of Area 1 and was joined to Trench 8 forming a 'T'-shape (Figs 2 and 7). The geology, an orange-brown sandy clay with frequent patches of gravel (7003), lay *c* 0.40m below the existing ground level at *c* 26.70-29.0mOD. It was overlain by up to 0.20m of orange-brown sandy clay subsoil (7002) and 0.20m of mid brown sandy clay loam topsoil (7001).

Two curvilinear gullies were revealed towards the eastern end of the trench (Fig 8). The most westerly [7004] was 1.0m wide, 0.17m deep and filled with orange-brown sandy clay (7005) containing a single flint flake (Fig 9; Section 9). The other [7006] was 0.45m wide, 0.12m deep and filled with mid brown sandy clay (7007) (Fig 9; Section 10). Neither contained dating evidence. Although a curved geophysical anomaly had been detected in this area, neither feature corresponded with its expected location and alignment.

A linear geophysical anomaly located in the western half of the trench was not detected.

Trench 8

Trench 8 (50m x 1.8m) was aligned roughly north north-west to south south-east, joining Trench 7 at its centre (Figs 2 and 7). The geology, an orange-brown sandy clay with frequent patches of gravel (8003), lay *c* 0.40m below the existing ground level at *c* 27.80-28.0mOD. It was overlain by up to 0.20m of orange-brown sandy clay subsoil (8002) and 0.20m of mid brown sandy clay loam topsoil (8001).

A 0.55m-wide curvilinear gully [8010] located close to the southern end of the trench corresponded with a curved geophysical anomaly (Fig 8). It was 0.18m deep and filled with mid reddish brown sandy clay loam (8011) containing occasional charcoal flecks but no dating evidence (Fig 9; Section 14).

Towards the centre of the trench were a cluster of three small pits or postholes, although such features could conceivably represent plant root holes. The largest of the group, pit [8006] was circular with a diameter of 0.6m and a depth of 0.16m. It was filled with light orange brown sandy clay (8007). Nearby pit [8004] had diameter of 0.30m, a depth of 0.50m and was filled with light orange-brown sandy clay (8005). Only partially revealed against the edge of the trench was pit [8008] with a projected diameter of 0.30m, a depth of 0.10m and an orange-brown sandy clay fill (8009). None of the pits contained dating evidence.

There was no evidence for an irregular geophysical anomaly located just north of the centre of the trench.

5.2 Area 3

General comments

The geology of Area 3 varied from reddish-brown sandy clay in the north to mottled orange-brown-yellow clay in the south. It was observed at a typical depth of 0.40m below the existing ground surface. The geology was overlain by deposits of subsoil,

0.10-0.30m thick except in Trench 13 where subsoil was absent and had probably been truncated as the ground here was disturbed by a number of modern features. Topsoil was typically 0.20-0.40m thick across the area. Archaeological features were present in Trenches 10, 12 and 13. These, however, were either undated or post-medieval/modern.

Trench 10

Trench 10 (50m x 1.8m) was aligned east to west towards the centre of Area 3 (Figs 2 and 14). The geology, a reddish-brown sandy clay with frequent patches of gravel (10003), lay *c* 0.55m below the existing ground level at *c* 18.50-18.80mOD. It was overlain by up to 0.25m of orange-brown sandy clay subsoil (10002) and 0.40m of mid brown sandy clay loam topsoil (10001).

A spread of fragmented shale (10005) containing a piece of stem from an 18th-century clay tobacco pipe (Tim Upson-Smith pers comm) overlay a French drain [10006] aligned north-east to south-west in the centre of the trench (Fig 15). The location of the drain corresponded with a linear geophysical anomaly.

Trench 12

Trench 12 (50m x 1.8m) was aligned north-east to south-west towards the centre of Area 3 (Figs 2 and 14). The geology, an orange-yellow-brown sandy clay (12003), lay *c* 0.35m below the existing ground level at *c* 17.05-17.15mOD. It was overlain by up to 0.25m of orange brown sandy clay subsoil (12002) and 0.25m of dark greyish-brown sandy clay loam topsoil (12001).

A 0.45m-wide curvilinear gully [12004] was aligned north to south in the centre of the trench (Fig 15). It was 0.12m deep and filled with a mottled grey/brown sandy clay (12005) (Fig 16). No dating evidence was retrieved, however, the leached nature of the fill and the overlying depth of subsoil suggest that the gully may be of some antiquity.

At the extreme north-eastern end of the trench was a linear robber trench [12008] positioned over a vertical-sided, flat-based gully [12006] which most likely held a French drain. The back-fill of the robber trench (12009) contained pottery and clay tobacco pipe dating to the 19th century (Tim Upson-Smith pers comm).

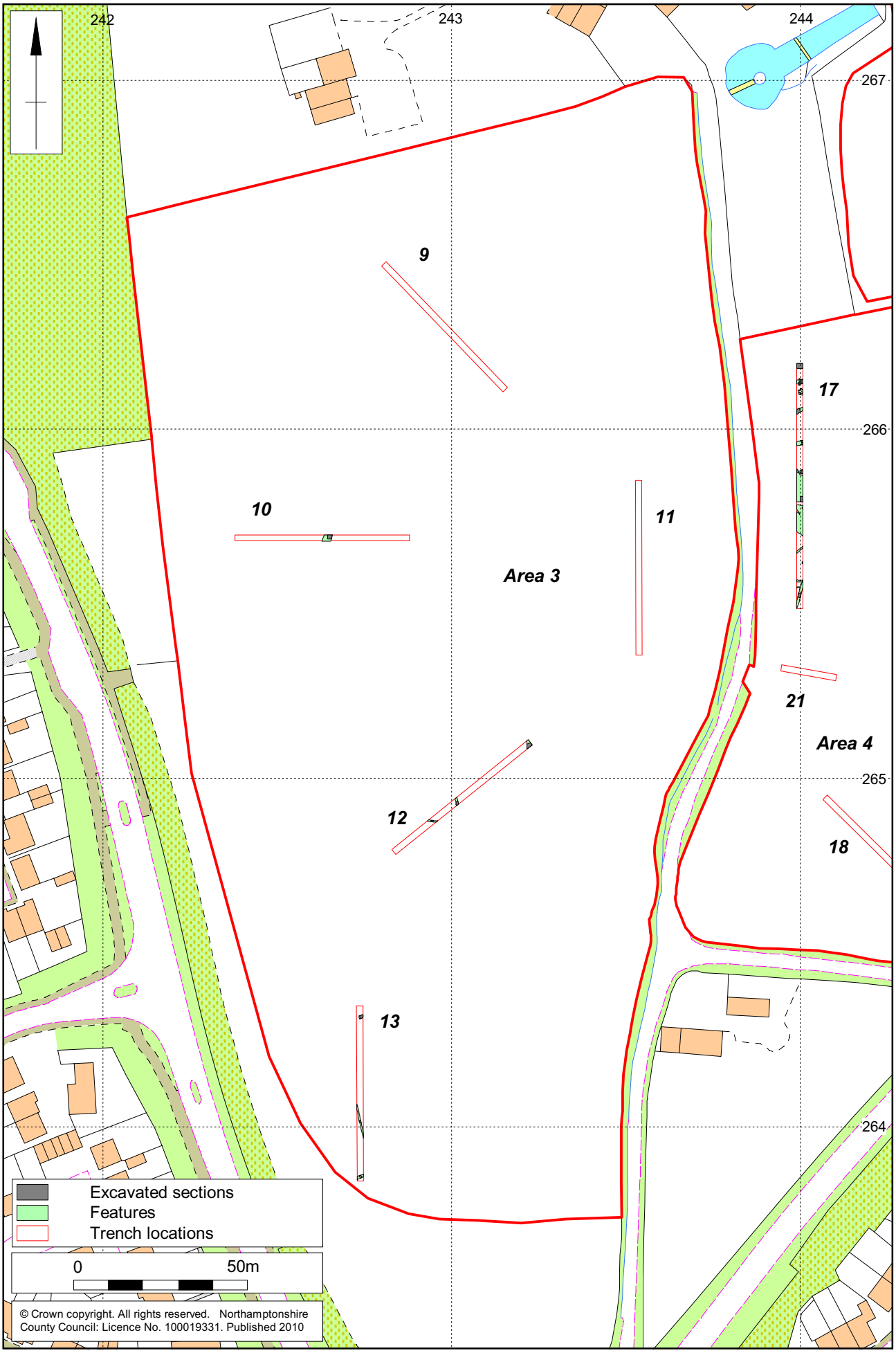
Aligned north-west to south-east in the south-western part of the trench was a 0.30m wide linear gully [12001] with vertical sides and a flat base. It was 0.30m deep and filled with undated mottled grey and brown sandy clay (12012). This feature may have been dug to house a land drain.

Trench 13

Trench 13 (50m x 1.8m) was aligned roughly north to south in the south-west corner of Area 3 (Figs 2 and 14). The geology, an orange-yellow-brown sandy clay (13003), lay *c* 0.30m below the existing ground level at *c* 16.20-16.35m OD. It was overlain by up to 0.30m of dark brown sandy clay loam (13001). No subsoil was present suggesting that this area of the site had been previously truncated.

In the southern end of the trench were two ditch-like features (Fig 15). The most southerly [13008] was 1.0m wide, 0.40m deep and filled with undated dark brown clay loam (13009) clearly deriving from the topsoil. To the north, and throughout the rest of the trench, were a number of field drains, modern features and areas of disturbed ground, some of which were sampled. A linear gully [13006], very similar to gully [12006] in Trench 12, was backfilled with gravely sand and clay (13007) and probably functioned as a drain. At the northern end of the trench one of a number of irregular patches of compacted dark loam [13004]/(13005) had been introduced into the surface of the geology, probably by wheels or tracks.

The geophysical survey had identified a single anomaly which proved to be a land drain.



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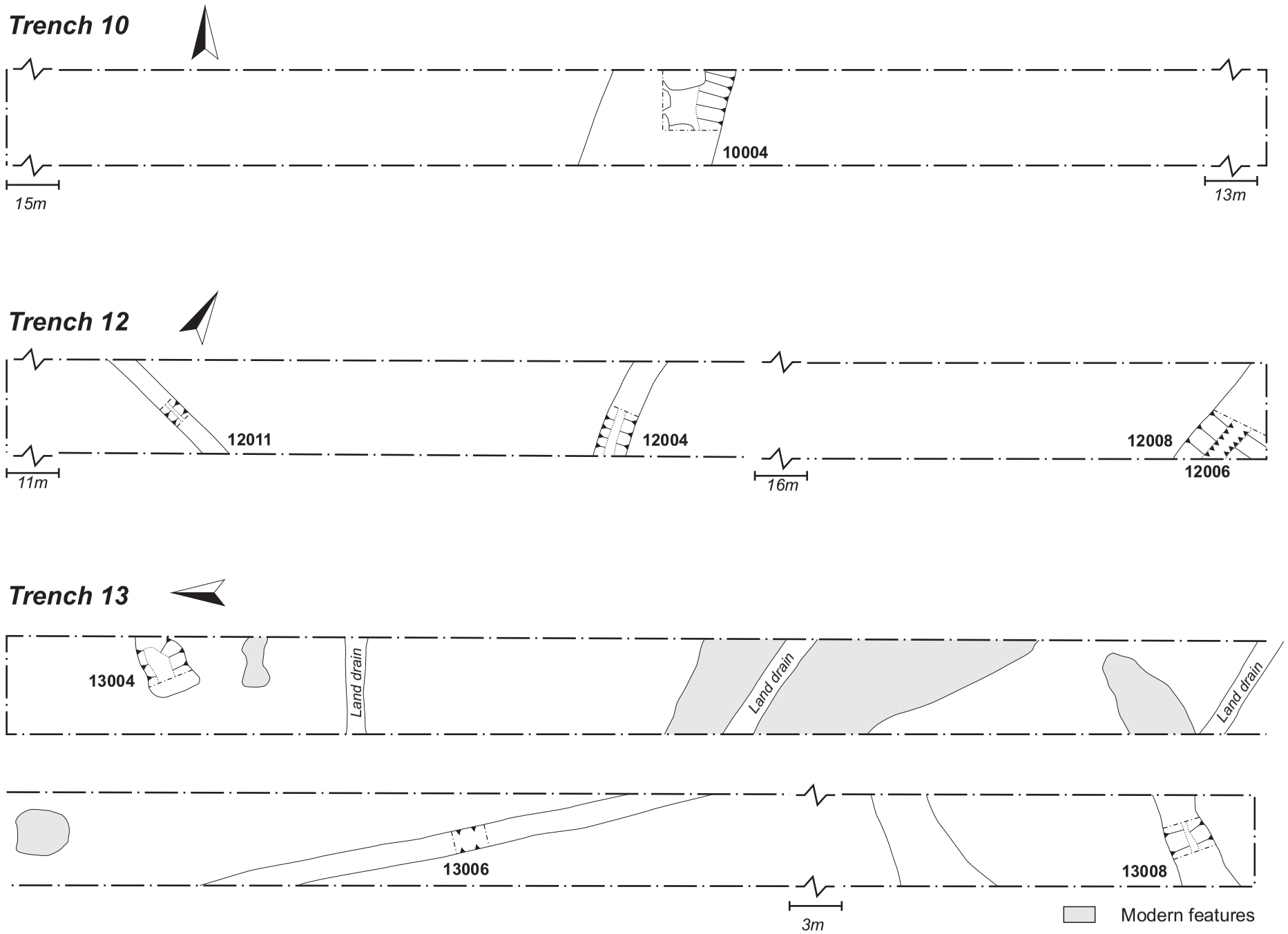
Plan of Area 3 Fig 14



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Plans of trenches 10, 12 and 13, Area 3 Fig 15

Gully [12004], looking south-east Fig 16

5.3 Areas 4 and 5

General comments

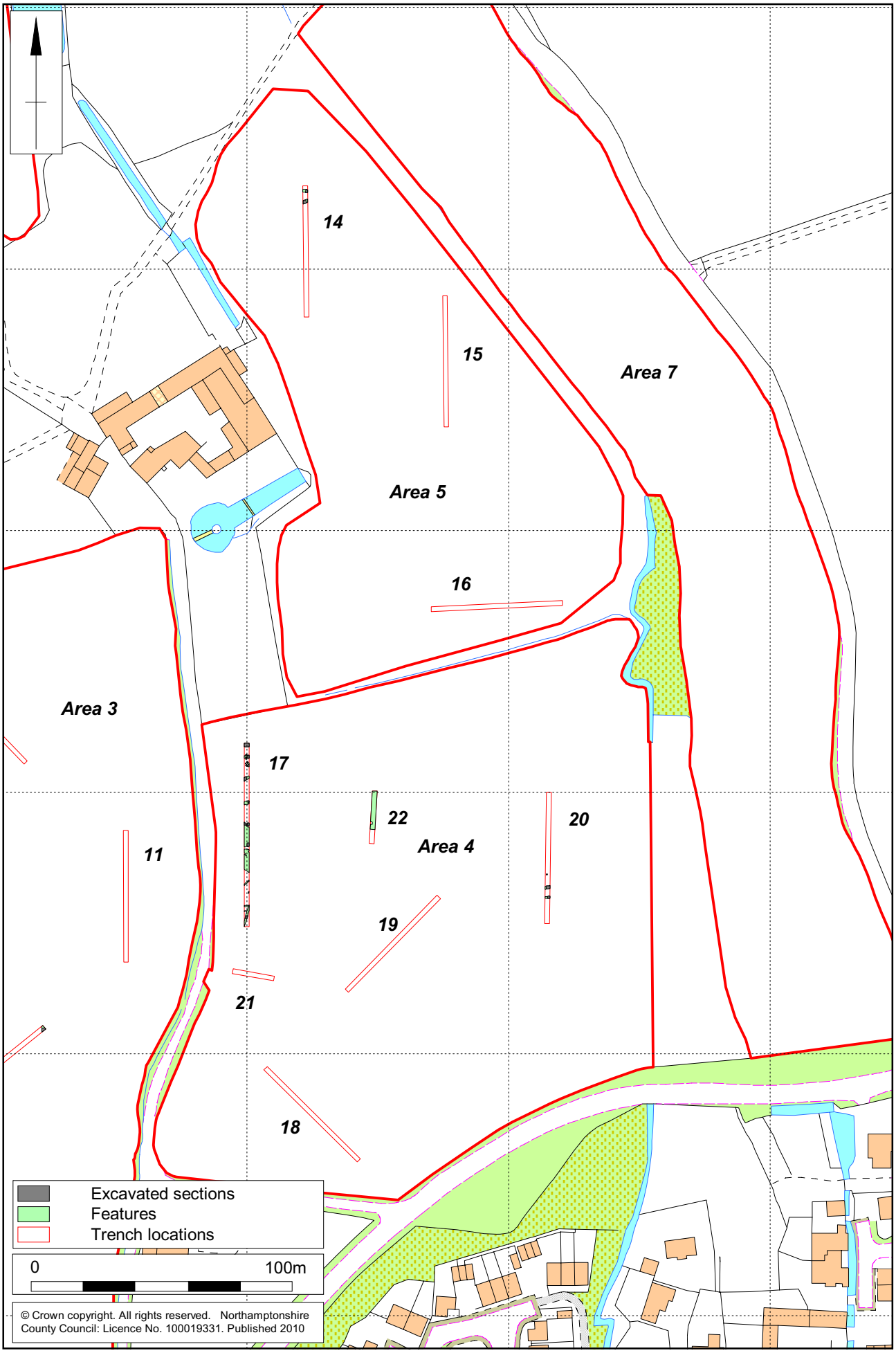
The geology in Areas 4 and 5 comprised reddish-brown and yellow-brown sandy clay with localised patches of gravel. It was observed at a typical depth of 0.40m below the existing ground surface. The geology was overlain by deposits of subsoil, 0.10-0.35m thick and topsoil ranging between 0.15-0.40m thick. Archaeological features relating to a settlement and trackway were present in the northern part of the Area 4 (Trenches 17, 20 and 22). Post-medieval features were present in Trench 14 of Area 5. Deep plough furrows aligned with the maize crop scarred the geology across both fields.

Trench 14

Trench 14 (50m x 1.5m) was aligned north to south towards the north of Area 5 (Figs 2 and 17). The geology, a reddish-yellow-brown sandy clay with frequent patches of gravel (14003), lay *c* 0.50m below the existing ground level at *c* 18.0-18.10mOD. It was overlain by up to 0.30m of brown sandy clay subsoil (14002) and 0.30m of mid brown sandy clay loam topsoil (14001).

A 1.0m-wide gully [14004] was aligned east to west in the southern end of the trench (Fig 18). It was filled with dark brown sandy loam (14005) containing sherds of post-medieval pottery representing fabric types spanning the 17th to 19th centuries (Iain Soden pers comm). Two postholes [14006] and [14008] were present in the base of the gully, which is thought to correspond with the line of a leat that appears on historic mapping (Robert Johns pers comm).

A few metres to the north, and following a similar alignment, was a 1.2m wide ditch [14010] filled with brown sandy clay loam (14011). No dating evidence was recovered.



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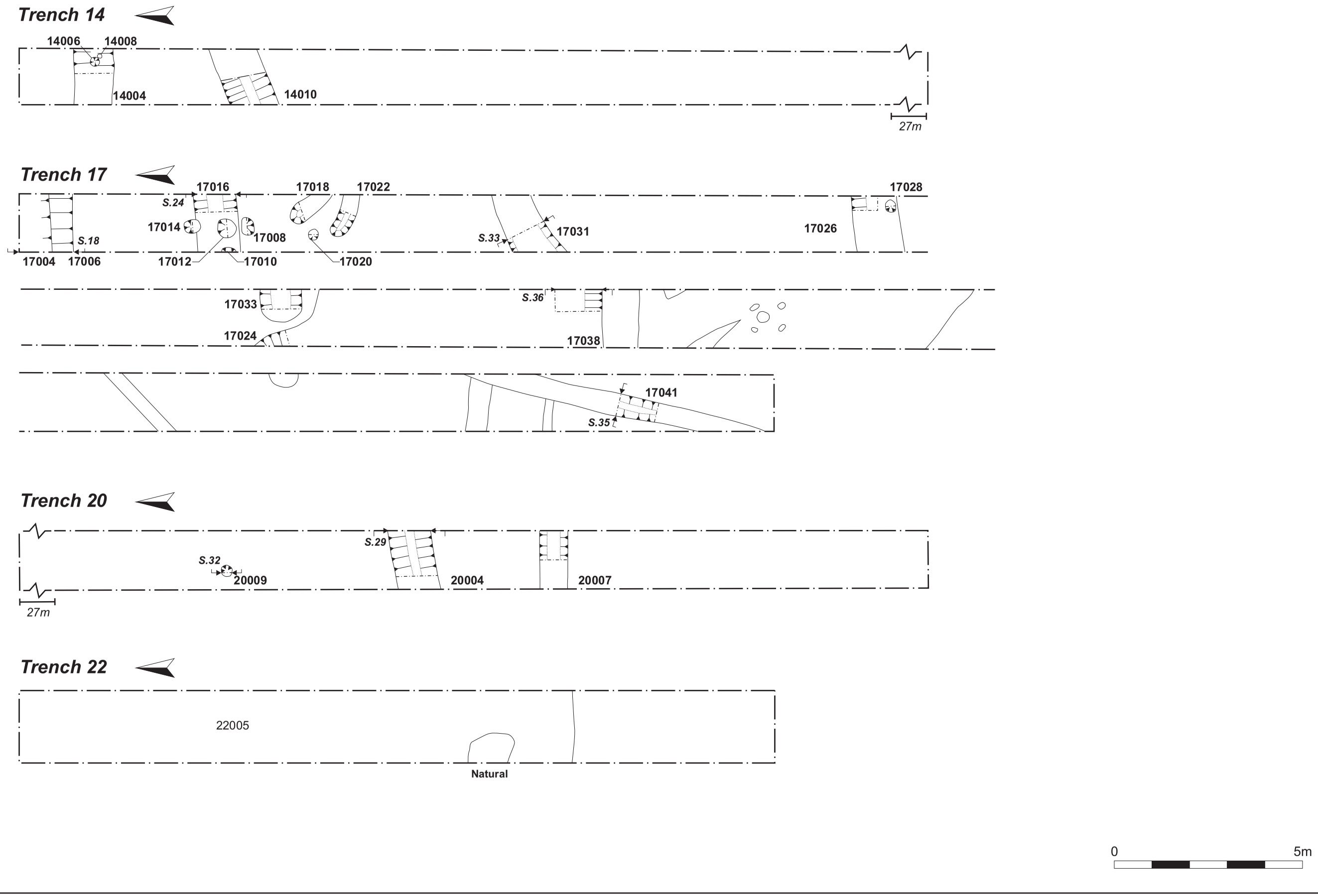
Plan of Areas 4 and 5 Fig 17



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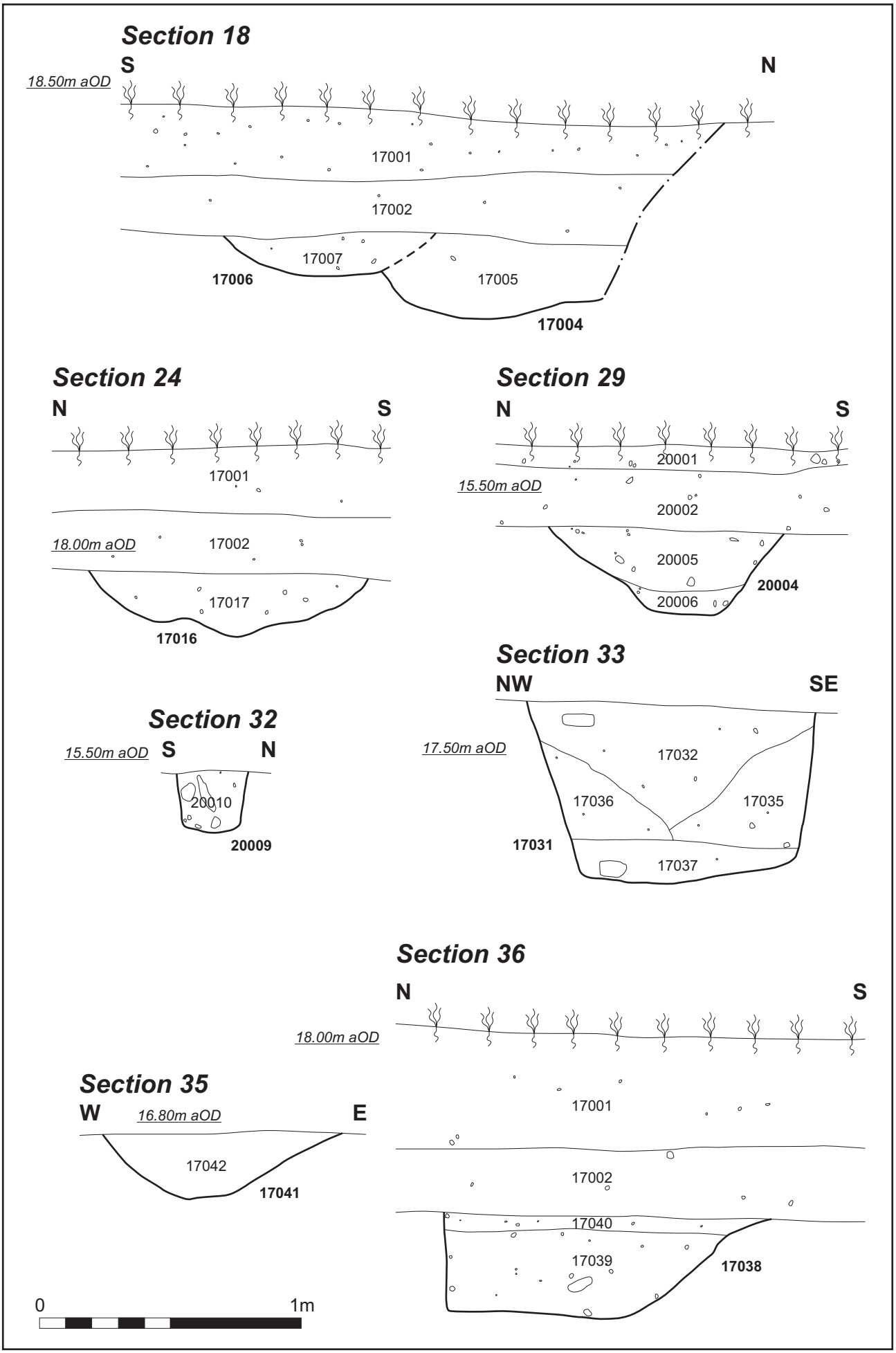
Plans of trenches 17, 20 and 22, Area 4 and trench 14, Area 5 Fig 18



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Sections: Area 4 features Fig 19

Trench 17

Trench 17 (70m x 1.5m) was aligned north to south in the north-west corner of Area 4 (Figs 2 and 17). The geology, a reddish-yellow-brown sandy clay with frequent patches of gravel (17003), lay *c* 0.50m below the existing ground level at *c* 17.10-17.85mOD. It was overlain by up to 0.30m of orange-brown sandy clay subsoil (17002) and 0.30m of dark brown sandy clay loam topsoil (17001).

At the extreme northern end of the trench was an east to west aligned ditch [17004] (Fig 18), previously identified by geophysical survey. There was 0.90m of its width visible within the trench; it was 0.30m deep and filled with mid reddish-brown sandy clay (17005) (Figs 19; Section 18, and 20). Sherds of medieval pottery were recovered and a soil sample <3> produced a small number of cereal grains. The ditch had a 0.70m-wide re-cut along its southern edge [17006] which was 0.15m deep and filled with a similar mid-brown sandy clay (17007) also containing medieval pottery.

Medieval ditch [17004] and re-cut [17006], looking west Fig 20

A short distance to the south a smaller gully [17016] was cut on the same alignment. This was 1.10m wide, 0.25m deep and filled with greyish-brown sandy clay (17017) containing medieval pottery (Fig 19; Section 24). Three of a group of small pits or postholes [17008], [17010], 17012] and [17014] cut the fill of the gully. These measured up to 0.65m in diameter and 0.15m deep and were filled with reddish-brown sandy clay containing, in the case of [17008] and [17010], sherds of medieval pottery.

To the south were the terminal ends of two shallow gullies [17018] and [17022] and a small posthole [17020]. All three were filled with reddish-brown sandy clay; sherds of medieval pottery were found in the gullies.

Curvilinear ditch [17031] was aligned north-west to south-east and appeared to be tapering towards a terminal against the western side of the trench. It was steep-sided, 1.10m deep and 0.70m wide (Figs 19; Section 33). Its primary fill was a very charcoal-rich sandy clay (17037) containing medieval pottery and a pocket of highly fragmented burned bone of which a single piece of sheep rib was the only identifiable element (Karen Deighton pers comm). This deposit was sampled <6> producing cereal grains, pulses and peas. It was overlain by a deposit of reddish-brown clay and loam (17036), seemingly tipped or slumped into the ditch from its northern edge. A similar deposit (17035) was present against the southern edge of the ditch. This contained frequent fragments and flecks of charcoal and pottery dating to the medieval period. A soil sample <5> produced an assemblage similar to that recovered from the overlying fill. The uppermost fill (17032) was a mid brown sandy clay containing later medieval pottery.

Beyond this ditch was another [17026], aligned east to west, 1.20m wide and 0.45m deep. Its sandy clay fill (17027) contained medieval pottery and was cut by a two postholes, one of which was sampled [17028]. This had a diameter of 0.25m, was 0.20m deep and was filled with mid brown sandy clay (17029) containing medieval pottery.

Further south, against the eastern edge of the trench, was a ditch terminal or pit [17033] 1.0m wide and 0.35m deep. It was filled with undated reddish-brown sandy clay (17034) which contained a residual flint flake of probable Bronze Age date. Adjacent to this was one edge of a steep-sided ditch [17024] filled with greyish-brown sandy clay (17025) containing medieval pottery. It was aligned north-west to south-east where it intersected with a very broad linear feature aligned south-west to north-east [17038]. This probable trackway was 7.20m wide, 0.40m deep and filled with orange-brown sandy clay (17039) overlain by a shallower deposit (17040) containing later medieval pottery (Fig 19; Section 36, and 21). This feature was also present in Trench 22 (see below).

South of the postulated trackway was a morass of intercutting features that were left unexcavated. The density of features diminished towards the southern end of the trench where a north to south aligned gully [17041] cut two east to west aligned (unexcavated) linear features. Gully [17041] was 0.90m wide, 0.25m deep and filled with light grey clay (17042) (Fig 19; Section 35), quite different in character to the fills of the other features, but containing medieval pottery.

Trench 20

Trench 20 (50m x 1.5m) was aligned north to south in the eastern part of Area 4 (Figs 2 and 17). The geology, a reddish-brown sandy clay with frequent patches of gravel (20003), lay *c* 0.40m below the existing ground level at *c* 15.50-15.60mOD. It was overlain by up to 0.30m of mid brown sandy clay subsoil (20002) and 0.20m of mid brown sandy clay loam topsoil (20001).

Aligned east to west towards the southern end of the trench was a very shallow gully [20007] (Fig 18). It was 0.60m wide, 0.10m deep and filled with dark brown sandy loam (20008). A short distance to the north was a larger ditch [20004], 1.0m wide and 0.50m deep (Fig 19; Section 29). Its primary fill was an orange-brown sandy loam (20006) containing medieval pottery. This was overlain by a deeper deposit of charcoal-flecked clay loam (20005) also containing sherds of medieval pottery and a single fragment of cattle skull. A soil sample <4> taken from this context produced a large number of cereal grains.

To the north was a posthole [20009] with a diameter of 0.20m and a depth of 0.25m (Fig 19; Section 32). It was filled with dark brown sandy loam and disturbed packing stones (20010).

The geophysical anomalies detected in the northern end of the trench corresponded with

a slight change in the geology.

A section through medieval trackway [17038], looking east Fig 21

Trench 22

Trench 22 (20m x 1.5m) was aligned north to south towards the north of Area 4 (Figs 2 and 17). The geology, a reddish-brown sandy clay with frequent patches of gravel (22003), lay up to *c* 0.60m below the existing ground level at *c* 17.70-17.25mOD. It was overlain by up to 0.20m of reddish-brown sandy clay subsoil (22002) and 0.40m of mid brown sandy clay loam topsoil (22001).

The trackway observed in Trench 17 was aligned east to west through the northern end of the trench (22004] (Fig 18). Here it was at least 12m wide. The surface of its dark brown sandy clay fill (22005) was reduced by 0.25m by machine and sherds of medieval pottery were observed within the fill. Another feature, perhaps a curvilinear ditch, adjoined the southern side of the trackway.

6 THE FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

6.1 **Worked flint** by Yvonne Wolframm-Murray

In total seven pieces of worked flint were recovered *in situ* from Bronze Age ditches and as residual finds from medieval contexts and the topsoil. The flint comprised six flakes and one flake with miscellaneous retouch (Table 1).

The flints showed post-depositional damage, displaying frequent nicks to the edges. The majority of the raw material was vitreous mid grey and brown-grey flint with a small component of a more granular light grey and dark brown 'chert'-like flint. Small amounts of light and mid brown cortex were present on the dorsal surface of the majority of flints. The raw material was probably locally procured gravel flint.

The assemblage consisted mostly of waste flakes; of the six flakes three were broken. The flakes included a squat flake with a broad striking platform and a flake with a cortical striking platform. One flake had miscellaneous semi-abrupt retouch along the distal end, it possibly had been utilised.

The technological characteristics of the assemblage are consistent with the early to mid Bronze Age date of the contexts they were recovered from. No further work is recommended.

Table 1: Summary of flint

Context	Flake/Blade	Portion	Tool	Material	Cortex	Comments
U/S Area 1	Flake	Distal		vitreous mid grey	mid brown	post-depositional edge damage
5005	Flake	Whole		opaque mid grey	mid brown	hinge termination; BA context
5006	Flake	fragment	miscellaneous retouch	vitreous mid brown-grey	patina	miscellaneous retouch on distal end; BA context
5011	Flake	Proximal		vitreous mid brown-grey	mid brown	cortical striking platform, BA context
7005	Flake	Shatter		vitreous light brown-grey		post-depositional edge damage; possible BA context
9001	Flake	Whole		vitreous dark grey	mid brown	post-depositional edge damage
17034	Flake	Whole		opaque mid brown		squat flake with broad striking platform

6.2 **Prehistoric and medieval pottery** by Jane Timby

Introduction

The archaeological assessment at Nerrols Farm resulted in the recovery of 344 sherds of pottery weighing 2277g dating to the earlier prehistoric and medieval. Sherds were recovered from four of the twenty-two excavated trenches with the greatest focus of material coming from Trench 17. In total 19 defined contexts yielded pottery (see Appendix 2).

The assemblage was scanned to assess its likely chronology and broadly sorted into fabrics based on the type, size and frequency of inclusions in the clay. The sorted assemblage was quantified by sherd count and weight and the rims identified to form.

Despite the assemblage being in quite a fragmented condition, reflected in a low average sherd size of 7g, there appear to be multiple sherds from single vessels. Surface preservation was moderately good and the sherd breaks quite fresh.

No detailed analysis has been carried out in conjunction with this assessment to check for other material from the locality or compare the assemblage in detail with other local or regional assemblages.

Prehistoric

Thirteen sherds (49g) of prehistoric date were recovered from enclosure ditch [5004]. The group comprises 11 small bodysherds, one decorated rim and one inner face of a rim. All the sherds contain a grog temper. The decorated rim comes from a plain vertical-walled, moderately thin-walled vessel with an undifferentiated rim. It has a line of short diagonal-slash decoration immediately below the top. The second rim appears to come from a much larger, thicker-walled vessel, just possibly urn.

The nature of the tempering material and decoration might provisionally suggest this group is of Bronze Age date, more specifically perhaps early- middle Bronze Age but this would need to be confirmed by an appropriate prehistoric pottery specialist. Broadly similar material was recovered from Norton Fitzwarren hillfort where the early-middle Bronze Age assemblage was dominated by grog-tempered wares and similarly showed the use of deeply incised decorative techniques (Woodward 1989).

Medieval

Most of the assemblage, 331 sherds, date to the medieval period. These were recovered from features in Trenches 17 and 20 with 98% of the group coming from Trench 17.

Four main fabrics could be discerned all of which are likely to be local: a basically quartz tempered ware (medqtz); a quartz sand and sparse limestone-tempered ware (medqtzca); a calcareous ‘corky’ textured ware (medca) and a fine sandy oxidised ware with an olive green glaze (Medoxid).

The former three fabrics mainly feature as handmade cooking pots/jars and possibly dishes although there is at least one pitcher and a possible lamp base; the latter ware is used for jugs.

The largest group of pottery is that from ditch [17031] which produced some 237 sherds (1883 g), 71.5% of the medieval assemblage. This group produced mainly the coarser quartz, and quartz and limestone-tempered wares but four sherds of glazed jug came from the upper level. Three sherds of the vesicular calcareous fabric were also present.

The vessels from ditch [17031] included a thumbed strap-handle and rimsherds from an unglazed pitcher from (17035) along with an angular base, probably from a lamp. Fill (17037) produced the flared rim from a cooking pot with undulating, thumbed rim surface along with various sooted cooking-pot bodysherds. It also produced a collection of quartz sand-tempered sherds of medieval date, a mixture of body and basesherds from jar/cooking pot

Other significant groups of material were recovered from ditch [17004] and gully [17016] both with 22 sherds in the same range of fabrics as ditch [17031] although ditch [17005] had a higher proportion of calcareous-tempered ware; and posthole [17009] with 15 sherds.

The remaining assemblage from this trench was distributed across a further nine contexts but the quantities involved are low. In all cases the nature of the material suggests that activity is broadly contemporary.

A further five sherds of similar material were recovered from ditch [20004] in Trench 20. This included a hammer-head cooking pot rim typical of the 11-13th centuries.

Fired clay and ceramic building material

Six fragments of fired clay were recovered, three very small crumbs from medieval gully [17018] and three slightly larger amorphous fragments (39 g) from ditch [17031]. The

pieces had no form to indicate original purpose and were not burnt to suggest oven or kiln material.

The substantial part of a thick floor tile (thickness 34 mm) in a quartz sand fabric similar to that used for some of the pottery was recovered from ditch [17031]. Apart from the thickness no other dimension survived.

Potential and further work

If further work is expected at the site or the existing assemblage is to be published the pottery should be reported in full by the appropriate period specialists familiar with the region. The publication of significant groups of medieval material from Ilchester (Pearson 1982) and Shapwick (Gutierrez 2007) should provide useful comparanda.

If publication is envisaged a small number of sherds would warrant illustration.

6.3 Charred plant material by Karen Deighton

Introduction

A total of six samples were collected by hand from a range of contexts during the course of excavation. This material was processed and assessed to determine the presence, preservation and nature of any ecofacts and to inform on further sampling strategies.

Method

The samples were processed using a modified siraf tank fitted with a 250micron mesh and flot sieve. The resulting flots and residues were dried. The flots were then sorted with the aid of a stereoscopic microscope (10x magnification) and residues were scanned. Sample 2 was particularly large and was therefore subsampled; a third of the sample was examined and both actual and estimated figures are provided in Table 2. Any charred plant remains were identified with the aid of the author's small reference collection, Jacomet (1996) and the SCRI website.

Results

Preservation for was solely by charring and fragmentation was low, and surface abrasion was moderate. Taxonomic distribution is given in Table 2 below.

Discussion

The samples from Area 1 produced an abundance of charcoal. Sample 2 contained a high concentration of cereal grain including hulled (*H.vulgare*) and naked barley (*H. vulgare var nudum*) and possibly oat (*Avena sativum*). A further investigation of the relative proportions of the cereal taxa would be required to determine if oat was present as a crop or a contaminant. The wild/weed taxa present were typical crop weeds or weeds of disturbed ground, both annuals and perennials were noted. The absence of chaff and the low proportions of wild/weed taxa suggests that this sample represents a later stage of crop processing (i.e. after winnowing, threshing and sieving have taken place yet before the final cleaning).The presence of such large concentrations of grain could suggest the pit had been used for storage, however, the presence of large amounts of charcoal seems to contradict this interpretation. Does the sample instead represent disposal of spoiled food? Context (6009) has no direct dating but was provisionally assigned to the early to mid Bronze Age due to its proximity to an enclosure of this date. If the pit is contemporary, the cereal is unusually well preserved and unusually abundant for this date. It is worth noting that this sample contained many of the same cereal taxa and represents the same processing stage as the medieval samples from Area 5.

The samples from Area 5 were less charcoal-rich than those from Area 1 and all contained cereal grains including hulled barley, naked barley, breadwheat (*T.aestivum*)

and oat. Again any weeds present are typical crop weeds and the samples appear to represent a late stage in crop processing. The presence of cultivated pulses (i.e. peas and beans) and cereal together could suggest these taxa where grown, harvested and stored together; such 'maslin' crops were not unusual in the Middle Ages. Pulses were a cheap and easily stored source of protein, as well as acting soil nitrogen fixers. The mixed nature of the samples (i.e. grains and wood charcoal) could suggest ditches were used for waste disposal.

Table 2: Ecofacts by context

Cut/fill	**6004/ 6007**	**6008/ 6009**	**17004/ 17005**	**20004/ 20005**	**17031/ 17035**	**17031/ 17037**
Sample	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Feature type	**Ditch**	**pit**	**ditch**	**ditch**	**ditch**	**ditch**
Area	**1**	**1**	**5**	**5**	**5**	**5**
Date	**Early-mid B.A. (?)**	**Early-mid B.A. (?)**	**C11th-13th**	**C11th-13th**	**C11th-13th**	**C11th-13th**
Volume(litres)	**40**	**40**	**40**	**40**	**40**	**40**
Charcoal	10,000 +	10,000 +	300	500	1000+	1000+
Cereal		2000 (6000e)	33	600	117	195
Bean (Faba sp)					2	5
Pea (Pisum sativa)			5	4	11	4
Fat hen (Chenopodium album)		1(3e)				
Sheep sorel (Rumex acetosella)		5(15e)	1			
Dock (Rumex sp)		18(54e)				
Speedwell (Veronica sp)		1(3e)				
Corn marigold (Chrysanthemum segatum)			1			
Cabbage family (Brassica)		3(9e)	5	3		

Potential

Well preserved and numerous identifiable ecofacts were recovered from all samples. Their presence indicates that, should further fieldwork be undertaken, sampling of suitable phaseable/dateable contexts could result in the recovery of material that would aid the understanding of the site. Sampling from secure well dated Bronze Age contexts in particular should be a high sampling priority as charred grains from these early contexts are not especially common. Samples from trial trenches should also be

included in any further analysis.

Conclusion

Assessment has shown a small range of well preserved ecofacts and indicates that further sampling during the course of any subsequent excavation could be viable. Further sampling could prove particularly important due to the possible presence of charred plant material from early-mid Bronze Age contexts.

7 CONCLUSIONS

The trial trench evaluation has identified two distinct areas of archaeological remains within the site. The earliest remains have been provisionally dated to the early to mid Bronze Age and are clustered around the rectangular ditched enclosure in the north-west part of the site (Area 1). A second group of features, dating to the medieval period, are located in the south-east of the site, in the northern part of Area 4.

The ditched enclosure (43m by 30m), previously identified by aerial photography and geophysical survey, appears, on the basis of the small assemblage of pottery recovered from its perimeter ditch, to be of early-mid Bronze Age date. Whilst the 'V'-shaped ditch is of fairly substantial size - *c* 2.8m wide and up to 1.5m deep – the only interior feature identified was a smaller ditch, lying 1.5m inside the western perimeter. Geophysical survey suggests that it shares the same alignment as the enclosure ditch, but turns inwards at either end. The entrance to the enclosure lies in its south-west corner. The absence of interior features and dearth of artefactual evidence suggests that this enclosure may have been for livestock rather than human occupation.

A number of features, mainly sections of shallow gully, lay around the periphery if the enclosure, hugging the gravel-capped summit of the plateau. None of these produced dating evidence, however, a pair of intercutting pits located to the south may be hearths. Soil samples taken from their fill produced large quantities of cereal grains. It is possible that these, and many of the other undated features in the vicinity, are contemporary with the enclosure. Bronze Age activity was also indentified to the west where investigations were carried out prior to the construction of the neighbouring housing estate (Cox and Samuel 2001).

The medieval archaeology to the south-east of Nerrols farm comprised ditches, gullies, pits and postholes ranged around a broad (up to 12m wide) trackway that appears to be aligned north-east to south-west across the northern part of the field (Area 4). The greatest concentration of features were present to the north-west in Trench 17 where, in contrast to the Bronze Age site, a reasonably large assemblage of pottery was recovered suggesting domestic occupation dating to the 11th-13th centuries. On the basis of the excavated evidence it would appear that the remains relate to a simple farmstead, perhaps with associated track-side field systems stretching across the northern part of the field.

Environmental evidence retrieved from soil samples suggests that the economy was based upon the cultivation of cereals. Evidence for associated animal husbandry was missing; bone rarely survived in the acidic sandy soils. The only fragments recovered were a small piece of cattle skull and a burned fragment of sheep rib.

A number of anomalies, particularly in the northern the part of Area 1 and along the eastern periphery of Areas 4 and 5, were proven to be of geological origin. Otherwise, the trial trench evaluation has corroborated and expanded upon the results of the

geophysical survey.

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Appendix 1: Trench Summaries

Trench No	Area	Length	Depth of overburden	Comments
1	1	50m	Topsoil: 0.10-0.25m Subsoil: 0.20-0.25m Geology: *c* 28.50-31.30mOD	No archaeology
2	1	50m	Topsoil: 0.10m Subsoil: 0.20-0.25m Geology: *c* 26.40-28.60mOD	No archaeology
3	1	50m	Topsoil: 0.16-0.18m Subsoil: 0.20-0.25m Geology: *c* 22.65-25.85mOD	No archaeology
4	1	50m	Topsoil: 0.20-0.25m Subsoil: 0.30m Geology: *c* 29.90-30.80mOD	Three undated gullies and a possible pit/posthole in the southern end of the trench.
5	1	50m	Topsoil: 0.15-0.20m OD Subsoil: 0.20-0.25m OD Geology: *c* 29.60-29.70mOD	Enclosure ditch with associated BA pottery. A second ditch located within enclosure.
6	1	50m	Topsoil: 0.15-0.20m Subsoil: 0.20-0.25m Geology: *c* 27.75-29.25mOD	Curving enclosure ditch located in northern end of trench. Two, undated, inter-cutting pits with evidence of *in situ* burning in southern end of trench
7	1	50m	Topsoil: 0.15-0.18m Subsoil: 0.20m Geology: *c* 26.70-29.00mOD	Two curvilinear gullies in western end of trench
8	1	50m	Topsoil: 0.15-0.20m Subsoil: 0.18-0.20m Geology: *c* 27.80-28.00mOD	Gully in southern end of trench. Three possible postholes towards centre
9	3	50m	Topsoil: 0.30m Subsoil: 0.10-0.20m Geology: *c* 19.00-21.20mOD	No archaeology
10	3	50m	Topsoil: 0.30-0.40m Subsoil: 0.20-0.25m Geology: *c* 18.50-18.80mOD	French drain capped with stone spread
11	3	50m	Topsoil: 0.30-0.40m Subsoil 0.15-0.30m Geology: *c* 17.15-18.20mOD	No archaeology
12	3	50m	Topsoil: 0.20-0.25m Subsoil: 0.15-0.20m Geology: *c* 17.05-17.15mOD	Undated gully, second (probable modern) gully and robbed-out French drain
13	3	50m	Topsoil: 0.20-0.30m Subsoil: not present Geology: *c* 16.20-16.35mOD	Modern disturbance throughout trench
14	5	50m	Topsoil: 0.30-0.35m Subsoil: 0.15-0.20m Geology: *c* 18.00-18.10mOD	Ditch (former field boundary?) and gully with postholes (relict leat?). Post-medieval pottery in association
15	5	50m	Topsoil: 0.50m Subsoil: 0.10m Geology: *c* 16.70-17.20mOD	No archaeology

Trench No	Area	Length	Depth of overburden	Comments
16	5	50m	Topsoil: 0.25-0.30m Subsoil: 0.15-0.20m Geology: *c* 15.80-17.30mOD	Intrusive stone, brick and tile at eastern end of trench (introduced from topsoil) with associated post-medieval pottery
17	4	70m	Topsoil: 0.30m Subsoil: 0.30-0.35m Geology: *c* 17.10-17.85mOD	Medieval settlement features including a large number of ditches, gullies, postholes and pits with associated pottery. Broad east to west aligned 'trackway' in centre of trench
18	4	50m	Topsoil: 0.30-0.35m Subsoil: 0.15-0.20m Geology: *c* 15.85-16.50mOD	No archaeology
19	4	50m	Topsoil: 0.15m Subsoil: 0.10m Geology: *c* 16.40-16.70mOD	No archaeology
20	4	50m	Topsoil: 0.20m Subsoil: 0.10-0.30m Geology: *c* 15.50-15.60mOD	Two gullies and a posthole with associated medieval pottery
21	4	10m	Topsoil: 0.25m Subsoil: 0.08-0.20m Geology: *c* 16.36-16.64mOD	No archaeology
22	4	20m	Topsoil: 0.40m Subsoil: 0.15-0.20m Geology: *c* 17.10-17.25mOD	Broad east to west aligned 'trackway' in north of trench embedded with medieval pottery aligned east to west. Associated ditch-like feature

Appendix 2: Quantified summary of prehistoric and medieval pottery

Context	Type	Preh	Med qtz	Medqtzca	Medca	Medoxid	Tot No	Tot Wt	Date	Fclay/cbm
5006	encl ditch 5004	13	0	0	0	0	13	49	E-MBA	
17005	ditch 17004	0	11	0	11	0	22	69	C11-13th	
17007	recut 17006	0	2	0	2	0	4	6	C11-13th	
17009	phole 17008	0	15	0	0	0	15	80	C11-13th	
17011	phole 17008	0	3	0	0	0	3	1.5	C11-13th	
17017	gully 17016	0	22	0	0	0	22	60	C11-13th	
17019	gully 17018	0	1	0	2	0	3	3.5	C11-13th	3 fclay
17023	gully 17022	0	3	0	0	0	3	7	C11-13th	
17025	pit 17024	0	0	0	6	0	6	17	C11-13th	
17027	gully 17026	0	2	0	0	1	3	7	C11-13th	
17029	phole 17028	0	5	0	0	0	5	3	C11-13th	
17032	ditch 17031	0	79	1	2	4	86	479	C13-14th	4 cbm
17035	ditch 17031	0	11	24	1	0	36	318	C11-13th	
17037	ditch 17031	0	95	20	0	0	115	1086	C11-13th	3 fclay
17040	track 17038	0	1	0	0	1	2	8	C13-15th	
17042	gully 17041	0	0	0	1	0	1	9	C11-13th	
20005	ditch 20004	0	3	0	1	0	4	61	C11-13th	
20006	ditch 20004	0	1	0	0	0	1	13	C11-13th	
TOTAL		**13**	**254**	**45**	**26**	**6**	**344**	**2277**		

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