Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological trial trench evaluation on land at Stanford Road, Shefford Bedfordshire

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Report 11/272
January 2012
BEDFM 2011.73

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QUALITY CONTROL

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***OASIS* REPORT FORM**

Project details		
Project name	Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation at Stanford Road, Shefford, Bedfordshire	
Short description (250 words maximum)	Archaeological trial excavations were undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology on behalf of Bloor Homes at Stanford Road, Shefford, Bedfordshire. The trenching followed on from a geophysical survey that identified a number of curvilinear features and several possible pits. A sub-rectangular feature contained early-middle Saxon pottery, suggesting that it may be the remains of a Saxon sunken-floored building. Similar pit-like anomalies on the geophysical survey may indicate further such features in the vicinity. A number of possible boundary ditches may have been contemporary. There were further, scattered features in many of the trenches although the majority were undated. A substantial ditch, aligned east to west, dates to the post-medieval period. The ditch lay on a similar orientation to a footpath and may be a former field boundary, although it is not visible on historic maps.	
Project type	Trial excavation	
Site status	Agricultural	
Previous work	Geophysical survey (NA 2011), desk-based assessment (Walker 2007)	
Current Land use	Arable	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument / period	Early/middle Saxon	
Significant finds	Early-middle Saxon pottery	
Project location		
County	Bedfordshire	
Site address	Stanford Road, Shefford	
Study area	3.7 ha	
OS location	centred on NGR TL 14700 39400	
Height OD	*c*38-45m above Ordnance Datum	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Steve Morris, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project Manager	Adam Yates, Northamptonshire Archaeology,	
Sponsor	Bloor Homes	
Project date		
Start date	November 2011	
End date	November 2011	
Archives	**Location (Accession no)**	**Content**
Physical	BEDFM 2011.73	Pottery, brick, tile and flint
Paper		Context record, associated registers, photographic record, permatrace drawings & background documentation
Digital		Client report PDF
Bibliography	client report	
Title	Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation at Stanton Road, Shefford, Bedfordshire	
Serial title & volume	Northamptonshire Archaeology report 11/272	
Author(s)	Charlotte Walker and Steve Morris	
Page numbers	22	
Date	January 2011	

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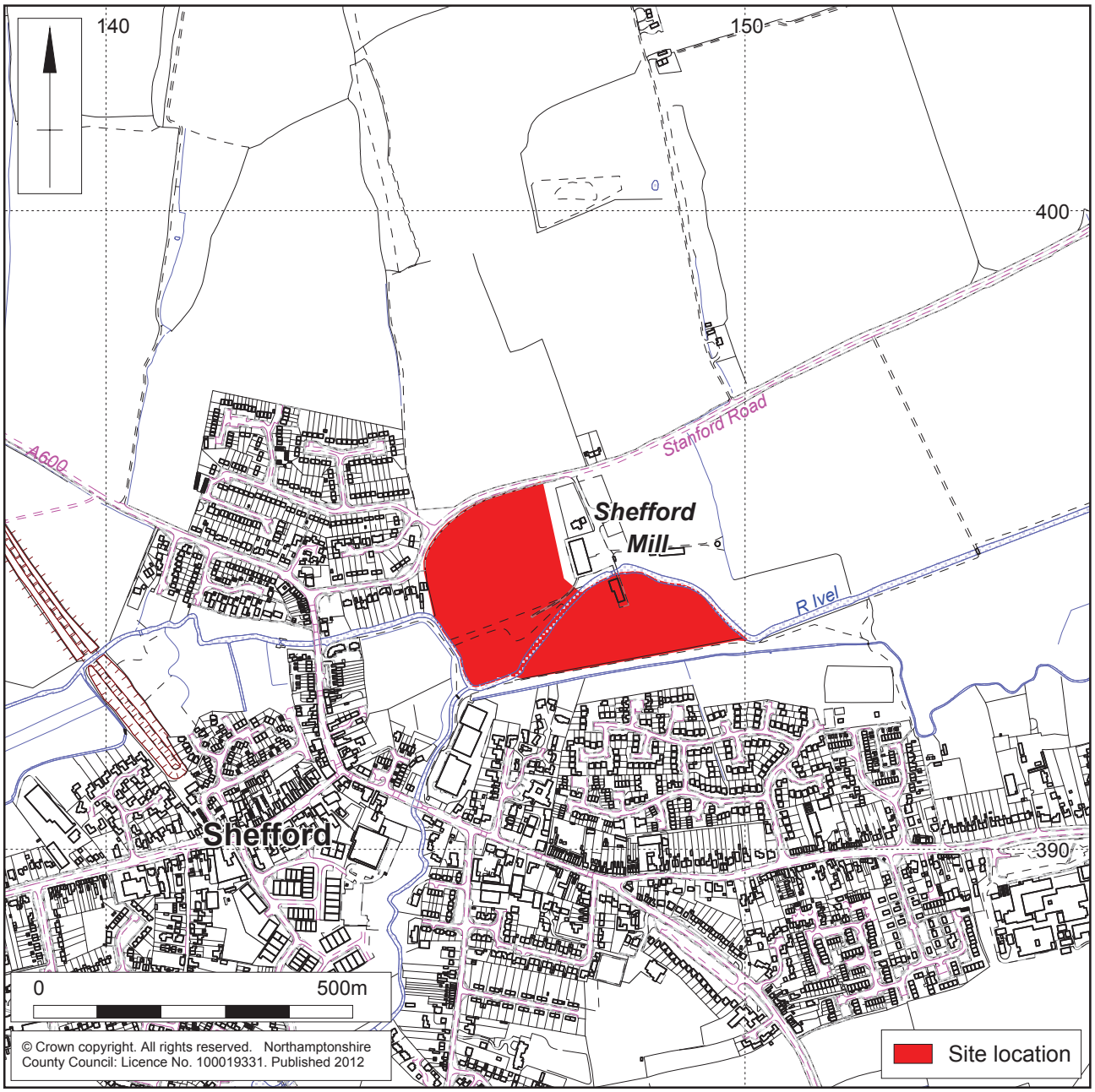

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Site Location Fig 1

ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION ON LAND AT STANFORD ROAD, SHEFFORD BEDFORDSHIRE NOVEMBER 2011

Abstract

Archaeological trial excavations were undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology on behalf of Bloor Homes at Stanford Road, Shefford, Bedfordshire. The trenching followed on from a geophysical survey that identified a number of curvilinear features and several possible pits.

A sub-rectangular feature contained early-middle Saxon pottery, suggesting that it may be the remains of a Saxon sunken-floored building. Similar pit-like anomalies on the geophysical survey may indicate further such features in the vicinity. A number of possible boundary ditches may have been contemporary. There were further, scattered features in many of the trenches although the majority were undated.

A substantial ditch, aligned east to west, dates to the post-medieval period. The ditch lay on a similar orientation to a footpath and may be a former field boundary, although it is not visible on historic maps.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology undertook archaeological trial trench excavation on behalf of Bloor Homes on *c* 3.7ha of land between Stanford Road and the River Ivel, Stafford, Bedfordshire (Fig 1; centred on NGR TL 14700 39400). The Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist (Oake 2011) issued a brief and advised that a programme of archaeological evaluation should be undertaken in accordance with PPS5 *Planning for the Historic Environment* (DCLG 2010). This work was undertaken following a specification produced by Northamptonshire Archaeology for Bloor Homes to meet the requirements of the brief (NA 2011). The specification was approved prior to the works by the Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeological Team, who also visited the site during its undertaking. The works form part of the requirements of the Central Bedfordshire Local Validation Checklist. The site has been allocated for housing and creation of a nature reserve in the Central Bedfordshire Site Allocation DPD.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Archaeological background

Previous archaeological work comprises desk-based assessment (Walker 2007) and geophysical survey (Fisher 2011; Fig 3).

Significant Roman finds have been found to the west of Shefford on the Ampthill Road indicating the presence of a settlement, the size of which has not yet been determined. The course of a possible Roman road may also run close to the south-western perimeter of the site. The presence of Roman activity on site is therefore a possibility, but probably unlikely, although one Roman pot sherd was found close to its south-western corner. More generally speaking, there are a number of sites of prehistoric and Roman date within the wider vicinity of Shefford (Walker 2007).

Shefford probably originates in the late Saxon period. Although there is no mention of Shefford in the Domesday Book there is a record of a 'Sheep-ford', by which the crossing was known in the early 11th century. It only appears to become a place in its own right, rather than just a river-crossing, in the 12th century. Although no settlement is mentioned here at Domesday it is thought that there was at least one, if not several, mills in the area at that time, including a watermill belonging to Walter Gifford, lord of the manor of Campton. This may have been located either on the River Hit at Campton or possibly at Shefford (VCH 1908). It is probable that the proximity of the Gilbertine Priory at Chicksands, 2km to the west, influenced the development of the settlement (Steadman and MacQueen 2003). By 1225, the right to a market was granted. The population of the town, however, remained small until the middle of the nineteenth century.

Shefford Mill to the immediate east of the site is thought to have been the site of milling since the medieval period. Mills in Southill and in Clifton are known to have been in the possession of Chicksands Priory in 1535 and were known as Tythe Mills. In 1606 they were granted to Sir Francis Ventris for forty years at £61 6s 6d annual rent. By 1611, the mills were granted to Felix Wilson and Robert Morgan and their heirs for the same (Bedfordshire and Luton Record and Archives Service (BLRAS): BS 858). Richard Welby was in possession in 1698 and 1702. By 1724, the mills were part of a settlement in the marriage of Pattee Byns and Lady Charlotte Montagu. The earliest entries in the set of deeds for Shefford Mills are from 1806 and detail the estate holdings.

In 1835 the windmill to the east was constructed by Henry Haynes. It may have been around this time that a steam-powered mill was added to Shefford Mill to augment its power. By 1848 the mill was owned by Richard Bodger, subsequently passing into the hands of his son Edward Bodger. The estate was sold in 1869 (BLRAS: X215/20). The watermill appears to have been partially destroyed by floods and was finally demolished in 1967.

The geophysical survey revealed an area of possible archaeological significance: four likely ditches and several pits were identified along with a former footpath (Fig 3). The survey also identified associated features from the former Shefford Mill that was located on the site. These include a former canal (Ivel Navigation) and palaeochannels (Fisher 2011).

2.2 Location and topography

The site is located on cultivated farmland to the north-east side of Shefford (Fig 2). To the north the site fronts onto Stanford Road, to the west it is bounded by residential properties and gardens. The eastern side was formerly the site of the mill, now occupied by two residences and a small industrial/business park. To the south side of the site is a small area of rough scrubland, formerly a reservoir/leat for the mill, which now lies adjacent to the River Ivel. The site lies between *c* 38-41.5m above Ordnance Datum on a gentle downward slope from Stanford Road.

2.3 **Geology** by Steve Critchley

The solid geology of the site consists of rock belonging to the Lower Cretaceous Woburn Sands Formation. These consist of fine grained often glauconitic marine sandstones or loose sands. When fresh these beds are typically greenish-grey, but readily weather to ferruginous yellow to orange-brown uncemented often pebbly sands with inter bedded ferruginous sandstones, many exposures of which were noted in most trenches. According to the British Geological Survey, published 1;50000 scale geological map, these beds are mapped as being overlain by periglacial Head deposits consisting of mixed clays, sands and gravels. Field observation would suggest that the actual geology is a little more complex with Head being confined to the upper portion of the evaluation area. Substantial areas of the Woburn Sands lie beneath a limited soil profile within the mid portion where the more resistant sandstone beds form a natural break in the slope whilst within the lower portion of the evaluation area a limited series of coarse grained fluvial sands and gravels were exposed probably belonging to the late Pleistocene River Ivel Terrace Gravels which are in turn overlain by thin layers of late Holocene alluvial sandy silts (BGS 2001).

The site, looking west towards Shefford Fig 2

Scale 1:1500

Geophysical Survey Interpretation Fig 3

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Objectives

The main aim of the investigation is to determine if archaeological remains are present within the application area.

The specific objectives of the project are to provide further information on the following as set out in the Brief (Oake 2011):

- The location, extent, nature, and date of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present at the proposed development site
- The integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present at the proposed development site

The project will address the research aims and make reference to the following documents as appropriate:

- *Research and Archaeology, A Framework for the Eastern Counties: 1, Resource Assessment* (Glazebrook 1997)
- *Research and Archaeology, A Framework for the Eastern Counties: 2, Research Agenda and Strategy* (Brown and Glazebrook 2000)
- *Revision of the Regional Archaeological Framework for the Eastern Region* (Medleycott and Brown 2008)
- *Bedfordshire Archaeology, Research and Archaeology: Resource Assessment, Research Agenda and Strategy* (Oake *et al* 2007)
- *Research and Archaeology Revisited: a revised framework for the East of England* (Medlycott 2011)

If applicable, reference will be made to the national framework for research, as set out by English Heritage (1997).

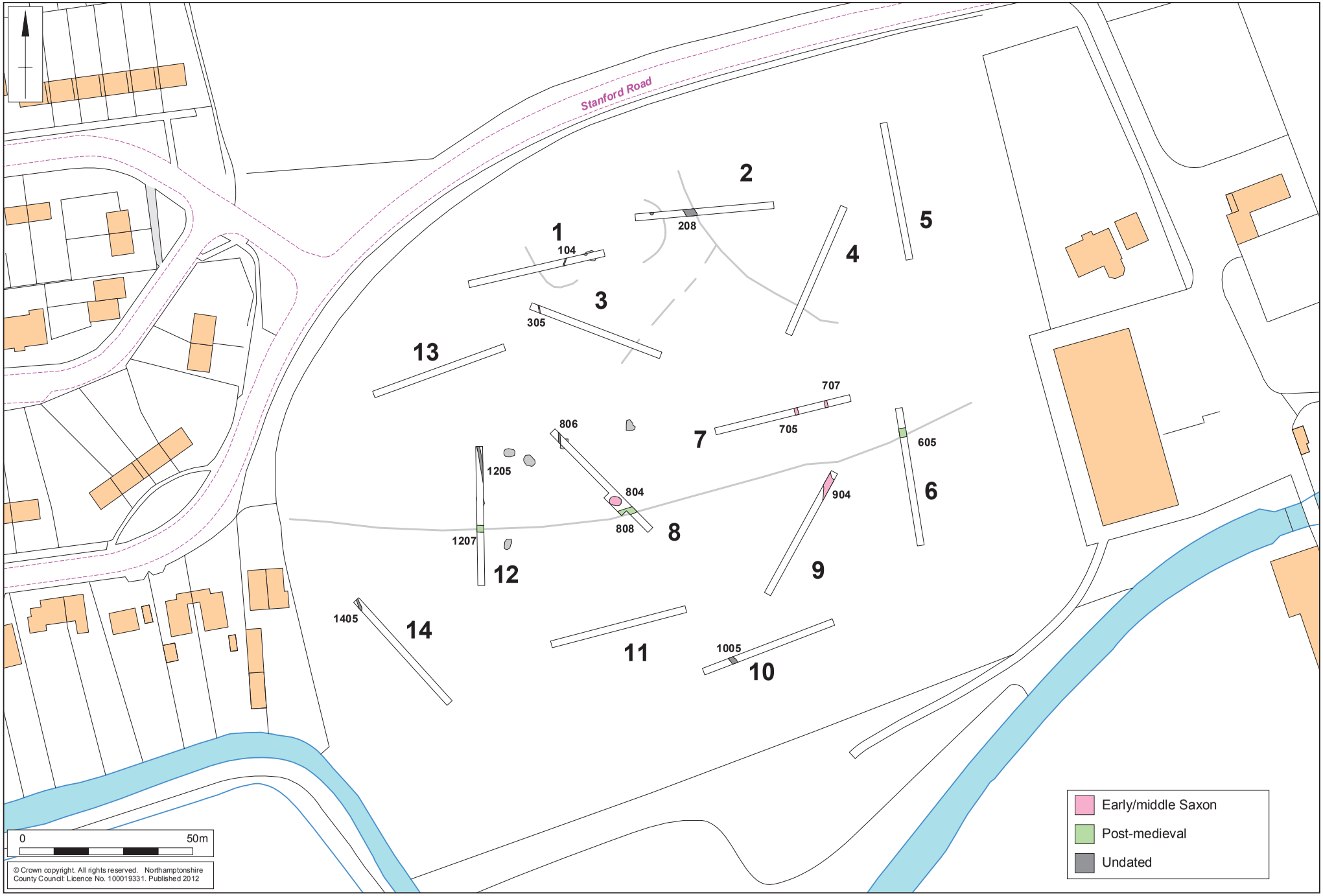
3.2 Methodology

Work was carried out in accordance with *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003) and the Institute for *Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (IfA 2008b).

The evaluation comprised the excavation of 14 trial trenches, each 40m long and 2m wide within the proposed residential area (Fig 4). The total length of trenching was 560m^2, amounting to approximately 3% of the site.

The trenches were positioned using a Leica System 1200 GPS and were excavated, under continuous archaeological supervision, using a JCB type mechanical excavator fitted with a flat toothless bucket. The topsoil and subsoil were stacked separately and adjacent to the trenches. Mechanical excavation proceeded to the top of the archaeological deposits or to the natural substrate where no archaeology was encountered.

Archaeological excavation and recording followed the guidelines outlined in NA's *Archaeological Fieldwork Manual* (2006). Trenches containing archaeological remains were cleaned by hand, sufficient to define the features. Each feature or deposit was given a unique number consisting of the trench number and an individual context number (e.g. 402, Trench 4, context 2). The details of each context were recorded on *pro-forma* sheets. The trenches were planned (scale 1:50) and section drawings were made at an appropriate scale (1:10 or 1:20). Levels, which were related to Ordnance Datum, were taken on the trenches at appropriate points, on section datum and on all major features. Trench locations were related to the Ordnance Survey National Grid.



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Principal archaeological features with geophysical survey interpretation Fig 4

A photographic record was made of the evaluation, using 35mm black and white negative and colour slide film, supplemented by digital images.

Artefacts were collected by hand and retained, receiving appropriate care prior to removal from site (UKIC 1998). The spoil heaps and features were scanned with a metal detector to ensure maximum finds retrieval. The archive will be prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Museums and Galleries Commission (MGC 1992).

All works were carried out accordance with the Scheme of Archaeological Resource Management prepared by NA (2011), the *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2002), and the Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (1985, revised 2010) and *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (1994, revised 2008). All procedures complied with Northamptonshire County Council Health and Safety provisions and Northamptonshire Archaeology's Health and Safety at Work Guidelines.

4 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

4.1 General comments

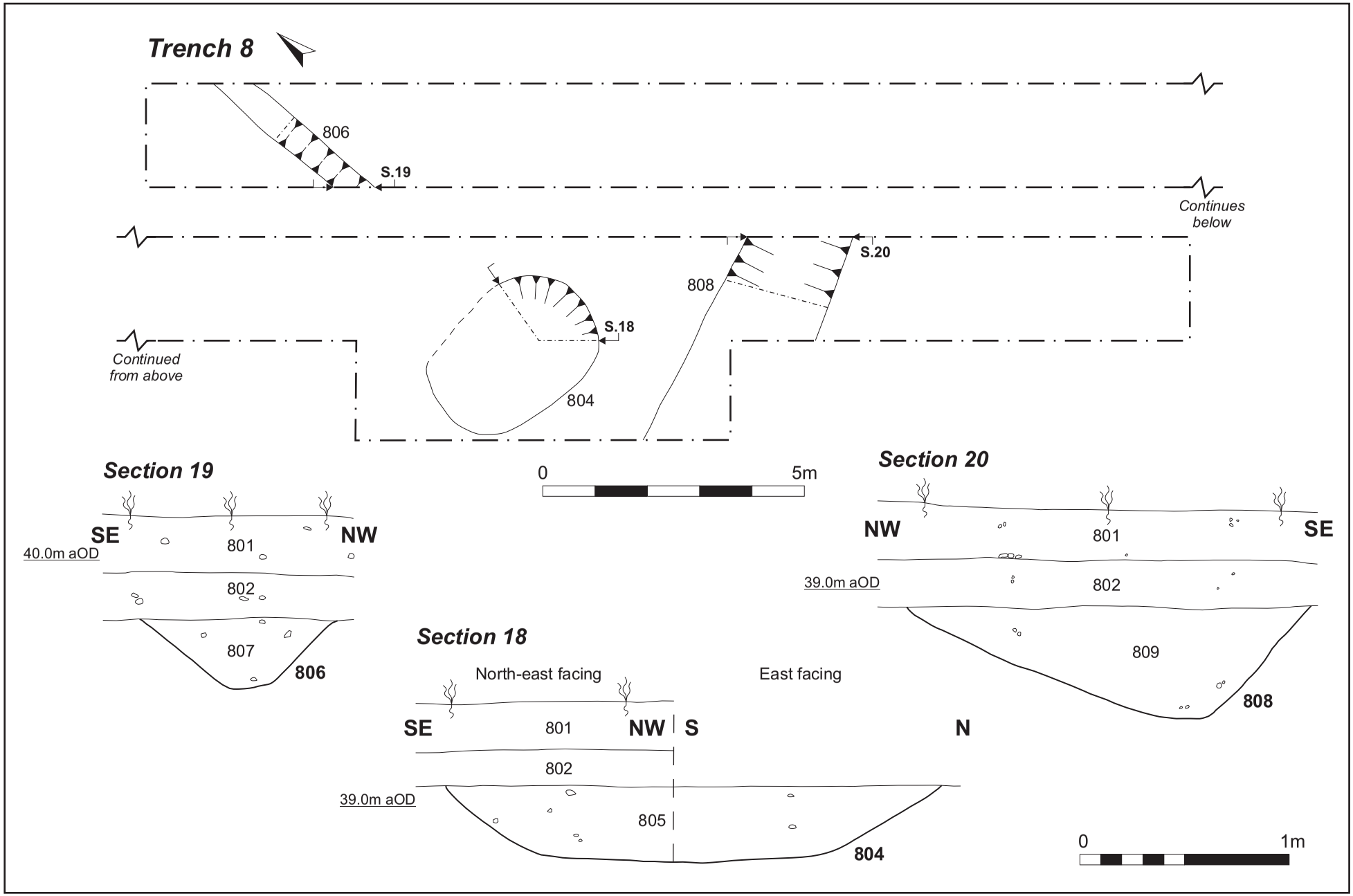
The trenches were positioned to provide a full coverage of the development area, and to provide more detailed coverage where the geophysical survey had identified any possible archaeological features (Fig 4). The subsoil was generally orange-brown silty sand up to 0.48m thick and the overlying topsoil was made up of darker grey-brown silty sand up to 0.50m thick. Trenches 4, 5, 11 and 13 did not contain any archaeological features.

A large feature exposed in Trench 8 contained a large assemblage of early-middle Saxon pottery and it was decided, on consultation with the Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeological Advisor, to extend the trench to expose the entire feature.

4.2 Early-middle Saxon activity

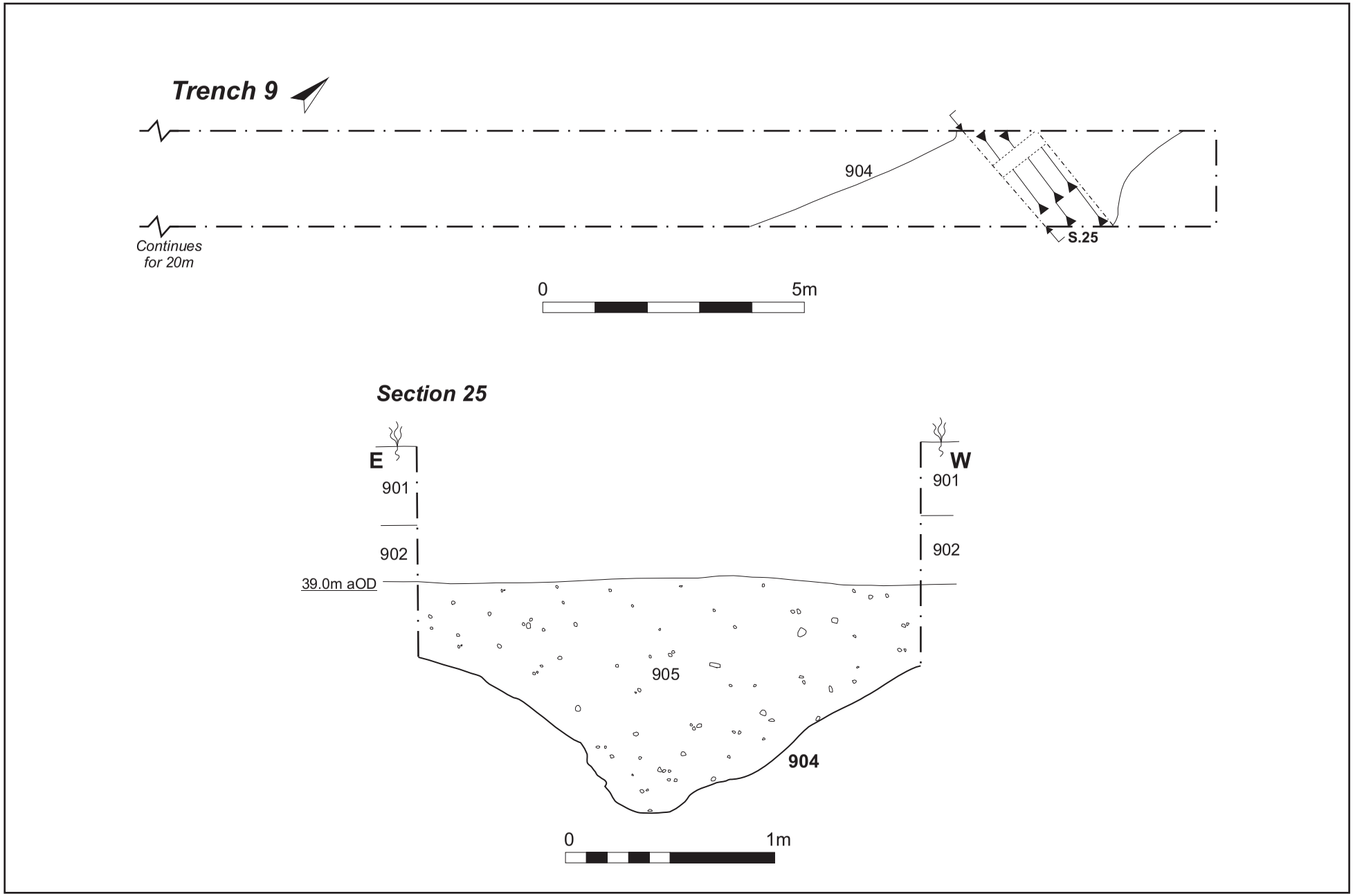
There was a large oval or sub-rectangular feature, [804], in Trench 8. It was 3.4m long, 2.4m wide and 0.37m deep, with fairly shallow edges leading onto a flat base (Figs 5 and 6, section 18). The fill (804) was friable mid red-brown silty sand with rare pebbles. There was a fairly large assemblage of pottery (for the early Saxon period) which dated to the 6th century. The feature is likely to be the remains of a sunken-featured building.

The sunken-featured building, [804], looking south-west Fig 5



Scale 1:100 (Plan) & 1:25 (sections)

Trench 8, plan and sections Fig 6



Scale 1:100 (Plan) & 1:25 (section)

Trench 9, plan and section Fig 7

There was a large ditch [904] in Trench 9, aligned north to south, 2.40m wide and 1.10m deep with fairly steep sides and a narrow concave base (Fig 7, section 25). The fill (905) was dark orange-brown fine, slightly gritty, sand. There was a single sherd of early-middle Saxon pottery. The northerly continuation of this ditch may have been exposed in Trench 7, although it was much smaller. Ditch [707] was aligned north to south and was 0.80m wide and 0.20m deep with a wide U-shaped profile (Fig 9, section 22). The fill (706) was dark red-brown silty sand. A single sherd of early-middle Saxon pottery was also found. Nearly 8m to the west was a further ditch aligned north to south. Ditch [705] was 1.10m wide and 0.30m deep with a wide U-shaped profile (Fig 9, section 21). The fill (704) was the same as (706). A single sherd of early Saxon pottery was found in the ditch. There were a number of undated ditches on the same north to south alignment to the west (see section 4.4 below). This may indicate that they were contemporary.

4.3 Post-medieval activity

The geophysical survey results suggested that there was a ditch aligned south-west-north-east to east-west extending across the width of the site. It was exposed in Trenches 6, 8 and 12. In Trench 6 the ditch, [605], was 3.30m wide and 0.95m deep with an asymmetrical profile (Fig 4). The fill (604) was loose mid yellow-brown silty sand with very rare pieces of flint and ironstone. There was a single sherd of glazed red earthenware dating to the 16th century in the fill as well as tile and clay tobacco-pipe, dated 1730-1780.

Ditch [605], looking west Fig 8

In Trench 8, ditch [808] was 0.85m wide and 0.52m deep with steep sides and a flat base (Fig 6, section 20). The fill (809) was friable mid red-brown silty sand. There were no finds in this part of the ditch. In Trench 12, ditch [1207] was 2.30m wide and 0.56m deep with a wide U-shaped profile (Fig 13, section 16). The fill (1206) was dark red-brown silty sand. There were no finds.

It is likely that this ditch is a former field boundary. It follows the same route as the former footpath from Shefford to the mill.

4.4 Undated activity

There were several ephemeral features in Trench 1. A narrow gully [104] was aligned north-east to south-west and was 0.35m wide and 0.19m deep with a V-shaped profile. The fill (109) was dark red-brown silty sand. A small posthole [105] was 0.20m in diameter and 0.09m deep with a wide U-shaped profile (Fig 10, section 4). The fill (106) was dark grey-brown silty sand.

In Trench 2, there was a large ditch, [208], aligned north-west to south-east (Figs 9 and 11, section 13). It appeared to correspond to an anomaly on the geophysical survey, although it wasn't exposed in Trench 4. The ditch was 3.54m wide and 1.08m deep with fairly shallow, slightly convex edges. This may indicate that the ditch was open for a long period of time and the edges had eroded back. The edges of the ditch appeared to be curving inwards at the southern end of the section, suggesting that the ditch was terminating. The primary fill (209) was friable mid brown silty sand with an area of redeposited natural and the upper fill (210) was friable mid yellow-brown silty sand. There were no finds in either of the fills, although a sample from the primary fill contained small amounts of barley and hazel shell.

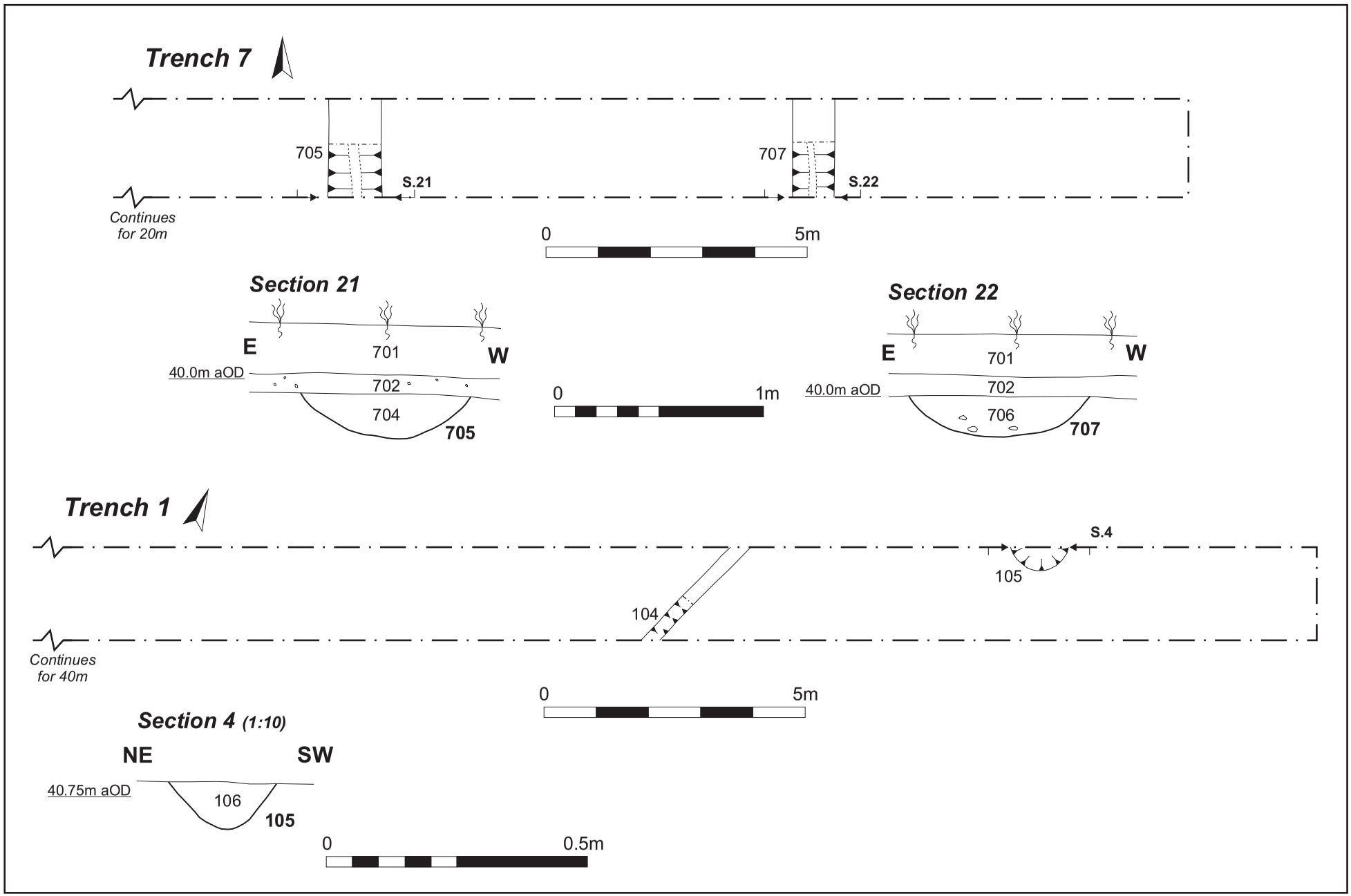
Ditch [208], looking north Fig 9

There was a further pit or ditch terminal, [207], to the west (Fig 11, section 6). It was 1.00m wide and 0.38m deep with steep edges and an uneven base. The primary fill (206) was loose dark red-brown silty sand. Overlying it was a thin layer of dark grey-brown silty sand (205) that appeared to contain ash. This probably represented a single episode of dumping. The upper fill (204) was dark grey-brown silty sand with yellow mottling.

A narrow gully [305] at the western end of Trench 3 (Fig 12, section 8) was aligned north to south, 0.60m wide and 0.15m deep with a wide U-shaped profile. The fill (304) was mid grey-brown silty sand. To the east was a posthole [307] which was 0.20m in diameter and 0.10m deep (Fig 12, section 9). The fill (306) was dark grey-brown silty sand.

At the northern end of Trench 8, gully [806], which was aligned north to south, was 0.85m wide and 0.34m deep with a V-shaped profile (Fig 6, section 19). The fill (807) was friable mid orange-brown silty sand. In Trench 10 there was a possible ditch [1005], aligned north-west to south-east, 1.32m wide and 0.55m deep with a U-shaped profile (Fig 13, section 23). The fill (1004) was very pale brown silty sand with orange mottling.

In Trench 12, ditch [1205], also aligned north to south aligned was 0.70m wide and 0.55m deep (Fig 13, section 15). The fill (1204) was dark red-brown silty sand. There was a further possible ditch, [1405], aligned north to south, in Trench 14, although its full profile was not exposed within the trench. It was at least 0.70m wide and 0.70m deep. The fill (1404) was mid brown silty sand.



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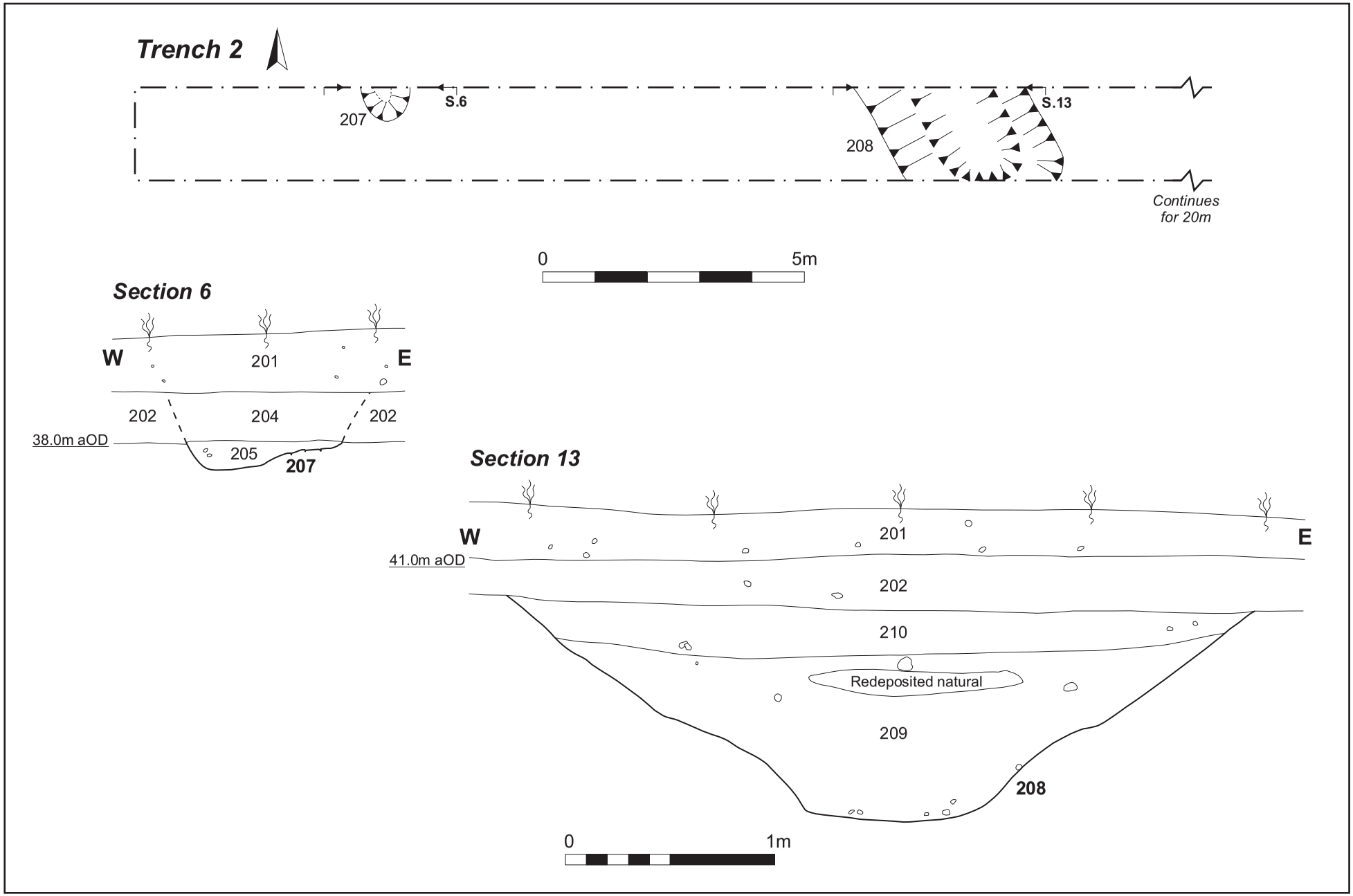
Trenches 7 and 1, plans and sections

Fig 10



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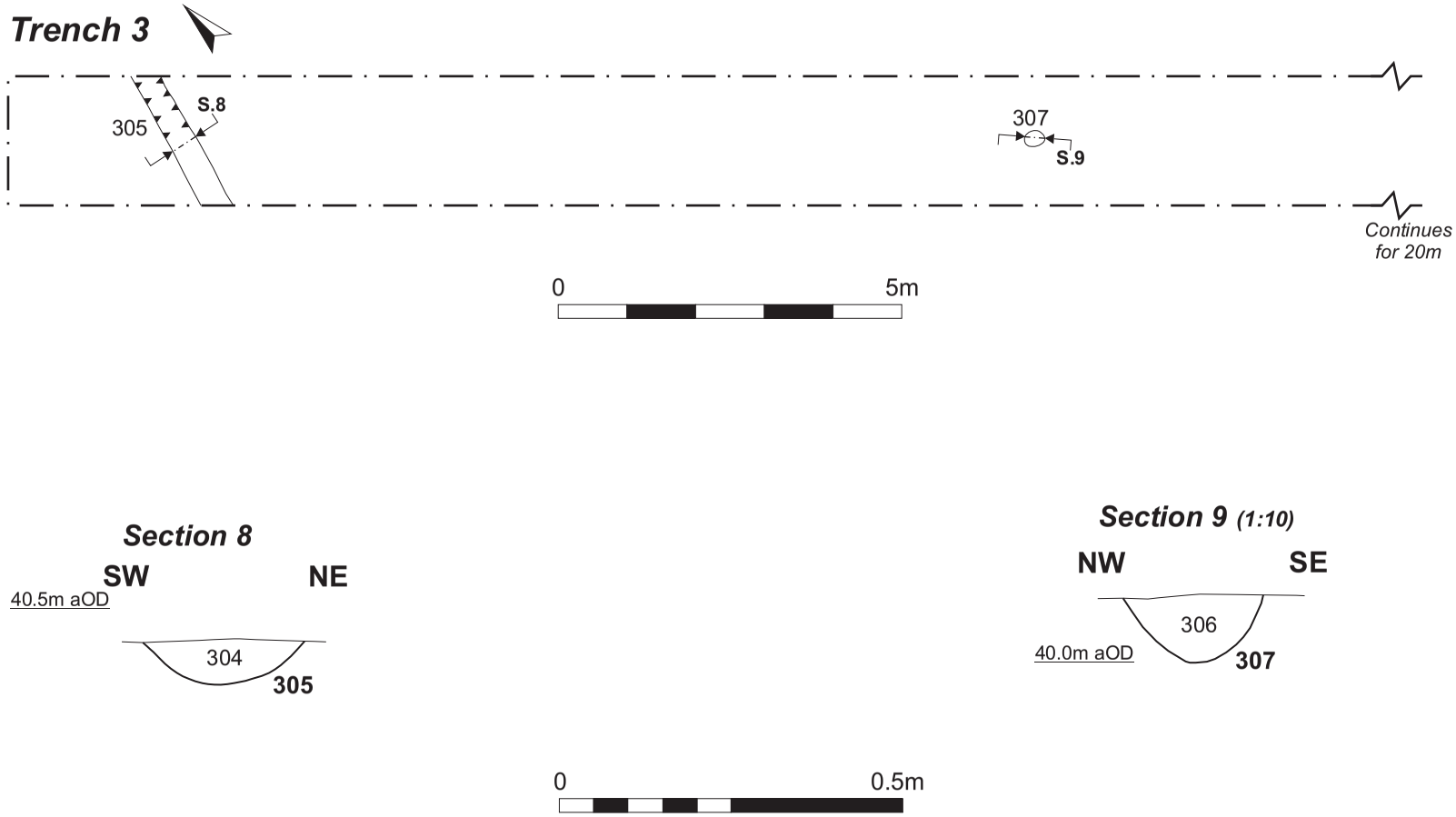
Trench 2, plan and sections Fig 11



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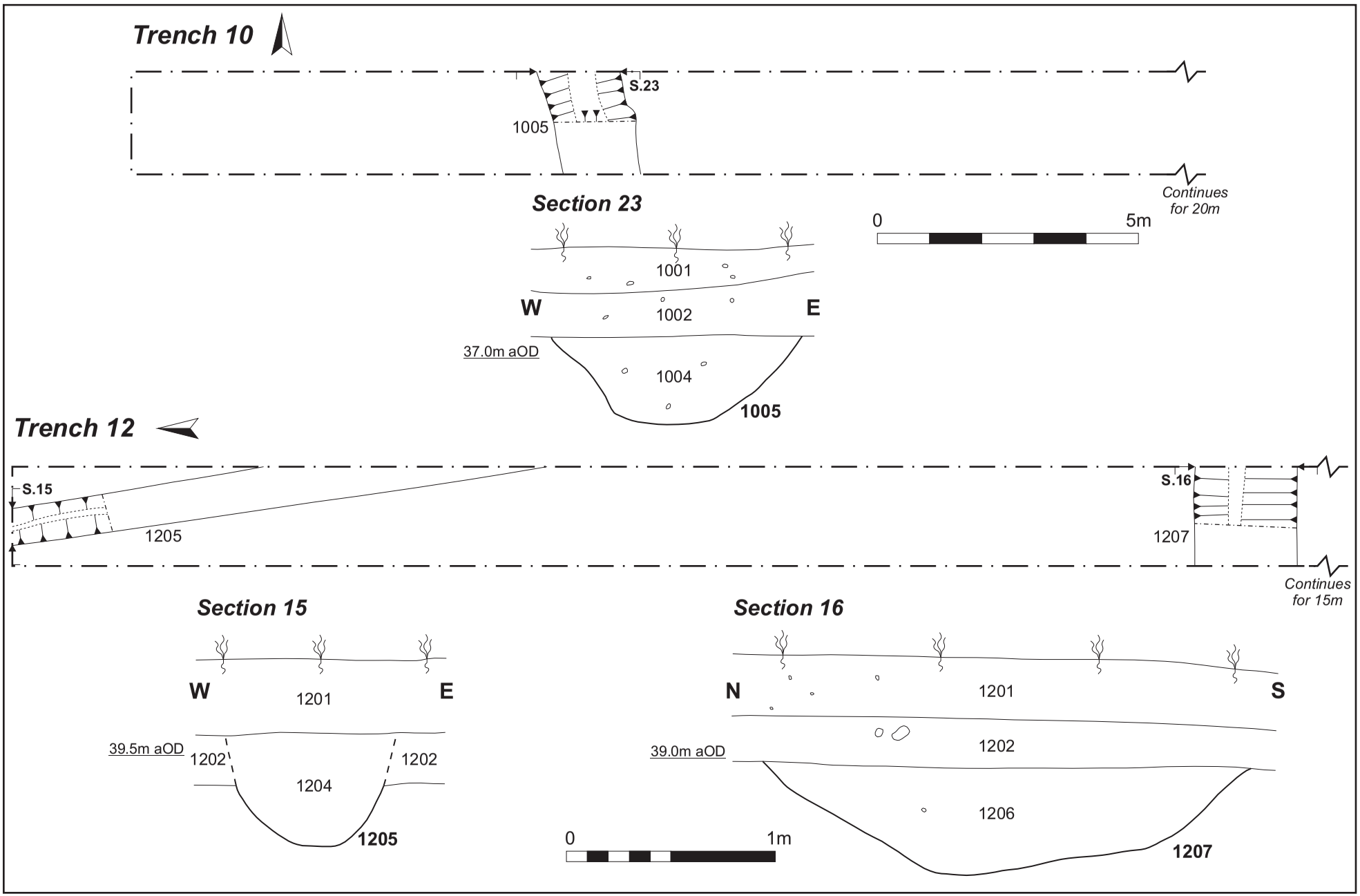
Trench 1, plan and sections Fig 12



Scale 1:100 (Plans), 1:25 & 1:10 (sections)

Trenches 10 and 12, plans and sections
Fig 13

5 FINDS

5.1 Worked flint by Andy Chapman

There is a small group of eight flints, with four from the fill (209) of a ditch [208] (Table 1). The raw material is black vitreous flint, with pale brown cortex. The group includes two small irregular flint cores, 30mm and 40mm long, each with a single striking platform. Both are fashioned on small pebbles, probably derived from river gravels.

There are five flakes, three of which have irregular edge damage. In one instance, the edge damage is on a regular triangular flake struck from a prepared core (SF9), and derives from utilisation of the flake, as the damage predates the light blue-grey surface patination.

There is a single blade (SF8), struck from a prepared core, which has edge damage, and a broken flake (SF6) may also have come from a blade.

This small group can only be broadly dated to the Neolithic to early Bronze Age.

Table 1: The worked flint

Fill/feature (SF)	Type	Comments
209/208 (SF6)	Flake	Patinated, edge damage
209/208 (SF8)	Blade	Edge damage
209/208 (SF8)	Core	Small, Single platform
209/208 (SF8)	Flake	small
401 topsoil	Core	Small, Single platform
604/605 (SF9)	Flake	Edge damage, utilised, patinated
801 topsoil	Flake	
1202 subsoil (SF1)	Flake	Edge damage

5.2 The pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 23 sherds with a total weight of 813g. It was all early or early/middle Anglo-Saxon, apart from a single post-medieval sherd. Where appropriate, it was recorded using the codings and chronology of the Bedfordshire County Archaeology Service type-series (eg Baker and Hassall 1977):

Early/Middle Saxon

F1: **Quartz**. Moderate sub-rounded white and grey quartz up to 1mm. Some sherds have a very few fragments of red ironstone. Occasional fragments of flint and/or chert up to 5mm. 14 sherds, 298g

F2: **Iron-rich Quartz**. Moderate to dense iron-rich orange sub-rounded quartz up to 2mm. Occasional fragments of flint and/or chert up to 2mm. 6 sherds, 179g.

F3: **Sparse Quartz**. Sparse dark grey sub-rounded quartz up to 1mm, sparse black ironstone of the same size and shape. 2 sherds, 24g.

Post-medieval

P01: **Glazed Red Earthenware**, 16th century. 1 sherd, 12g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 2. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*.

The dating of Early Saxon hand-built pottery is almost entirely reliant on the presence of decorated sherds. It seems that the Anglo-Saxon generally stopped decorating hand-built pottery around the beginning of the 7th century (Myres 1977, 1), so any pottery with decoration is likely to date to before that time. Two decorated sherds were noted. Pottery from fill (805), of the SFB [804], included a small sherd from the rim of a jar, with fragments of two stamp impressions on the shoulder. It is almost certainly 6th century in date. Three other rimsherds were present, one from a deep bowl and two from jars, one of which had part of an upright, rim-mounted lug. The fill (704), of ditch [705], produced a small rimsherd with slashing on the outside face. This cannot be closely dated, but is likely to be early Anglo-Saxon (*c* AD450-650). The undecorated pottery from the other features can only be broadly dated to the early/middle Anglo-Saxon period (*c* AD450-850).

The assemblage is typical of the early Saxon pottery of the area, and can be paralleled at a number of sites, such as Tempsford Park (Blinkhorn 2005). The sherds are generally in good condition, and appear reliably stratified, particularly the material from context (805), which appears to be a typical domestic assemblage of the period.

Table 2: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

	F1		F2		F3		P01		
Cntxt	**No**	**Wt (g)**	**No**	**Wt (g)**	**No**	**Wt (g)**	**No**	**Wt (g)**	**Date**
604							1	12	16thC
704	1	3							ES?
706					1	5			E/MS
805	13	295	5	173	1	19			6thC
905			1	6					E/MS
Total	**14**	**298**	**6**	**179**	**2**	**24**	**1**	**12**	

5.3 **Ceramic roof tile** by Pat Chapman

This is a little assemblage of 14 small roof tile sherds, weighing 238g (Table 3). The sherds are abraded, particularly the eleven sherds that come from the topsoil. The tiles are 12-14mm thick and one sherd, from topsoil (101), has a fragmentary peghole. Thirteen of the sherds are made from hard orange and orange-brown sandy clay, fine to slightly coarse, with a few tiny inclusions and occasional larger inclusions of flint and calcareous material. One sherd, from topsoil (1101), is made from hard fine silty buff-coloured clay with small grog inclusions.

These are all sherds from flat roof tiles, datable from the 14th to 19th centuries. A small fragment of asbestos, from topsoil (1101), has been discarded.

Table 3: Quantification of ceramic tile

Context/feature	No	Wt (g)	Comment
101, topsoil	5	38	12-13mm thick, 1 peghole frag
604 / 605	2	58	11-12mm thick
704 / 705	1	32	12mm thick
901, topsoil	1	26	13mm thick
1101, topsoil	4	70	12-14mm thick, 1 buff-coloured
1301, topsoil	1	14	12mm thick
Totals	**14**	**238**	

5.4 The other finds by Tora Hylton

Five small finds were recovered from topsoil deposits overlying Trenches 4, 7 and 13 and they are therefore unstratified. With the exception of a fragment from a medieval bronze vessel, all the finds are post-medieval in date.

A rim fragment from a tripod cauldron was recovered from Trench 13. It has an everted rim and its dimensions indicate that it originally would have measured *c*180mm in diameter. Sooting is evident on the exterior surface of the vessel. Vessels of this type generally date to the 14th-15th centuries.

The post-medieval finds include two lead weights and two pieces of lead shot. One of the lead weights is a possible circular lay (pan) weight (cf Egan 2005, fig 160). It has a flat underside furnished with a faint circular motif; it measures 37mm in diameter and weighs 49.7g. The other is a perforated weight and is circular with a rectangular cross-section. It measures 24mm in diameter and weighs 41.7g.

There are two pieces of lead shot, they measure 13mm and 15mm in diameter. The size suggests that that they would have been for use with pistols rather than muskets. One of the examples has an impact mark.

Clay tobacco-pipe

A bowl and stem fragment were recovered from the fill of ditch [605]. The bowl is sufficiently complete to enable dating using Oswalds simplified general typology (1975, 37ff). Stylistically it is upright, fairly tall and it represents an Oswald Type G 12 which dates to 1730-80.

6 THE CHARRED PLANT REMAINS by Val Fryer

A single sample for the evaluation of the content and preservation of the plant macrofossil assemblage was taken from a fill within boundary ditch [208].

The sample was bulk floated by NA and the flot was collected in a 300 micron mesh sieve. The dried flot was scanned under a binocular microscope at magnifications up to x16 and the plant macrofossils and other remains noted are listed below in Table 4. Nomenclature within the table follows Stace (1997). All plant remains were charred. Modern roots and seeds were also recorded.

Results

The assemblage is small (<0.1 litres in volume) and is largely composed of modern fibrous roots. However, charred macrofossils, including a very well preserved barley (*Hordeum* sp) grain, a possible fragment of hazel (*Corylus avellana*) nutshell and pieces of charcoal/charred wood are recorded along with fragments of coal and black porous and tarry residues. Although some of the latter may be derived from the combustion of organic remains at very high temperatures, it is considered most likely that the majority are bi-products of the combustion of the coal and are, therefore, probably intrusive within the ditch fill.

Table 4: Charred plant macrofossils and other remains

Sample No	**1**
Context No	**209**
Feature No	**208**
Barley (*Hordeum)*	x
Hazel (*Corylus avellana*)	xcf
Charcoal	xx
Charred root/stem	x
Back porous/tarry residues	x
Small coal frags	xx
Sample volume (litres)	**40**
Volume of flot (litres)	**<0.1**
% flot sorted	**100%**

Conclusions and recommendations for further work

In summary, the few remains which are recorded are almost certainly derived from scattered refuse, some or all of which was accidentally incorporated within the ditch fill.

Although the current assemblage is sparse, the few remains which are recorded clearly show that plant macrofossils, some of which are extremely well preserved, are present within the archaeological horizon at Shefford. Therefore, if further interventions are planned, it is suggested that additional plant macrofossil samples of approximately 20 – 40 litres in volume are taken from any well-sealed and dated contexts which are recorded during excavation.

7 DISCUSSION

The small group of flints found in later features and the topsoil broadly date to the Neolithic and early Bronze Age periods and may be the product of casual loss or sporadic activity during these periods.

The evaluation has found evidence of early/middle Saxon activity including a sunken-featured building and several possible contemporary ditches. It may be the remains of a small, dispersed settlement of a type that appears to be typical of this period. Similar such settlement has been found at Oakley Road, Clapham in the Ouse valley, although this settlement may have been a continuation of Romano-British settlement.

There was some degree of correspondence between the geophysical survey and the results of the trial trench evaluation. The sunken-featured building in Trench 8 corresponds with a pit-like anomaly. However, no features were present to correspond with similar anomaliesat the north of Trenches 1, 8 and 12. The possible enclosure targeted by Trenches 1 and 2 was not present. Saxon ditches seen in Trenches 7 and 9 were not detected by the geophysical survey.

Although a small number of Anglo-Saxon artefacts have been found in association with the Romano-British cemetery to the west of Shefford, no other activity of this date has previously been found in the vicinity. The limited pottery evidence from the site tends to suggest that this site had fallen out of use by the mid/late 9th century. Shefford is not mentioned in the Domesday Book perhaps suggesting that there was no later Saxon continuity of settlement; certainly, there hasn't as yet been any archaeological evidence to suggest late Saxon activity in the area.

The charred plant remains, though sparse, are well-preserved. No animal bone was found during the course of the evaluation, although this is not surprising given the sandy soils, which are not conducive to such preservation.

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APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench No	**Length, width & alignment**	**NGR**	**Surface height**	**Depth & height of natural**
1	**50m x 2m NW-SE**		**41.20m aOD**	**0.0.57m, 40.63m aOD**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/Samples***
101	Topsoil	Dark grey-brown silty sand	0.26-0.31m thick	
102	Subsoil	Dark red-brown silty sand with rare rounded pebbles	0.19-0.26m	
103	Natural	Mid yellow-red coarse sand, occasional areas of ironstone	_	
104	Gully	Aligned NE-SW, V-shaped profile	0.35m wide 0.19m deep	
105	Posthole	Circular, shallow edges, concave base	0.20m in diameter, 0.09m deep	_
106	Fill of posthole [105]	Firm dark grey-brown silty sand	0.09m thick	_
107	Natural feature	Aligned north-south, almost vertical edges	0.26m wide 0.30m deep	
108	Fill of natural feature [107]	Dark grey-brown silty sand	0.30m thick	_
109	Fill of gully [104]	Loose dark red-brown silty sand	0.19m thick	_

Trench No	**Length, width & alignment**	**NGR**	**Surface height**	**Depth & height of natural**
2	**50m x 2m N-S**		**79.50m aOD**	**0.44m, 79.06m aOD**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
201	Topsoil	Dark brown loose silty sand, occasional pebbles	0.29-0.30m thick	
202	Subsoil	Red-brown silty sand, some patches of ironstone	0.25-0.27m thick	
203	Natural	Mix of mottled yellow sand and dark red sand	_	
204	Fill of pit/ditch terminal? [207]	Loose dark red-brown silty sand	0.24m thick	_
205	Fill of pit/ditch terminal? [207]	Loose dark grey-brown silty sand and ash, occasional burnt stone	0.04m thick	_

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
2	**50m x 2m N-S**		**79.50m aOD**	**0.44m, 79.06m aOD**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
206	Fill of pit/ditch terminal? [207]	Loose dark grey-brown silty sand with yellow mottling, occasional ironstone	0.10m thick	_
207	Pit/ditch terminal?	Oval, steep sides and uneven base	1.00m wide 0.38m deep	
208	Ditch	Aligned NW-SE, stepped edges and narrow flat base	3.54m wide 1.08m deep	
209	Fill of ditch [208]	Friable mid brown silty sand, rare flint	0.79m thick	Flint
210	Fill of ditch [210]	Friable mid yellow-brown silty sand	0.29m thick	

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
3	**50m x 2m NE-SW**		**79.60m aOD**	**0.56m, 79.04m aOD**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
301	Topsoil	Dark grey-brown silty sand		
302	Subsoil	Dark red silty sand		
303	Natural	Mottled red and yellow sands	_	
304	Fill of ditch [305]	Loose mid grey-brown silty sand	0.15m thick	_
305	Ditch	Aligned N-S, U-shaped profile	0.60m wide 0.15m deep	
306	Fill of posthole [307]	Loose dark grey-brown silty sand	0.10m thick	_
307	Posthole	Circular, steep sides and concave base	0.20m in diameter 0.10m deep	

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
4	**50m x 2m NE-SW**		**79.10m aOD**	**0.43m, 78.64m aOD**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
401	Topsoil	Dark brown loose silty sand	0.22-0.31m thick	

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
4	**50m x 2m NE-SW**		**79.10m aOD**	**0.43m, 78.64m aOD**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
402	Subsoil	Red-brown silty sand, frequent ironstone	0.26-0.32m thick	
403	Natural	Mix of yellow and red-brown silty sand with ironstone and flint	_	
404	Natural	Red-brown silty sand, frequent ironstone		

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
5	**50m x 2m NW-SE**		**77.50m aOD**	**0.41m, 77.09m aOD**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/Samples***
501	Topsoil	Dark brown loose silty sand	0.29-0.41m thick	
502	Subsoil	Dark orange-brown silty sand, moderate pebbles	0.28-0.42m thick	
503	Natural	Mixed yellow silty sand	_	
504	Natural	Mid-dark brown coarse-grained silty sand, frequent ironstone	_	

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
6	**50m x 2m NE-SW**		**78.60m aOD**	**0.36m, 78.24m aOD**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/Samples***
601	Topsoil	Dark brown silty sand, occasional pebbles	0.28-0.40m thick	
602	Subsoil	Orange-brown silty sand, occasional pebbles	0.12-0.48m thick	
603	Natural	Mixed red-brown and yellow silty sand and bands of ironstone	_	
604	Fill of ditch [605]	Loose mid yellow-brown silty sand, rare flint and ironstone	0.95m thick	Pottery (Post-medieval, 16th century), flint (SF9), clay pipe, brick,
605	Ditch	Aligned E-W, V-shaped profile	3.30m wide 0.95m deep	

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
7	**50m x 2m N-S**		**77.50m aOD**	**0.43m, 77.07m aOD**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/Samples***
701	Topsoil	Dark grey-brown silty sand, occasional gravel	0.46-0.50m thick	
702	Subsoil	Dark red-brown silty sand, occasional flint	0.09-0.16m thick	
703	Natural	Mixed dark red coarse sand and yellow sand	_	
704	Fill of ditch [705]	Firm dark red-brown silty sand, rare flint and ironstone	0.30m thick	Pottery (Early Saxon?)
705	Ditch	Aligned N-S, fairly steep sides and concave base	1.10m wide 0.30m deep	
706	Fill of ditch [707]	Loose dark red-brown silty sand, occasional ironstone and charcoal	0.20m thick	Pottery (Early-middle Saxon)

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
8	**50m x 2m NW-SE**		**74.50m aOD**	**0.48m, 74.02m aOD**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/Samples***
801	Topsoil	Mid brown silty sand	0.24-0.28m thick	
802	Subsoil	Mid orange-brown silty sand	0.14-0.21m thick	
803	Natural	Mid yellow- red sand	_	
804	Sunken-featured building (SFB)	Sub-rectangular, steep sides and broad flat base	3.4m long, 2.4m wide and 0.37m deep	
805	Fill of (SFB) [804]	Friable mid red-brown silty sand, rare pebbles	0.37m thick	Pottery (Saxon, 6th century), flint (SF7)
806	Gully	Aligned N-S, V-shaped profile	0.85m wide 0.34m deep	
807	Fill of gully [806]	Friable mid orange-brown silty sand, rare ironstone	0.34m thick	_
808	Ditch	Aligned NE-SW, steep sides and flat base	0.85m wide 0.52m deep	
809	Fill of ditch [808]	Friable mid red-brown silty sand	0.52m thick	-

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
9	**50m x 2m NE-SW**		**77.20m aOD**	**0.48m, 76.72m aOD**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/Samples***
901	Topsoil	Dark grey-brown sandy loam	0.35-0.40m thick	Tile
902	Subsoil	Orange-brown sandy loam	0.15-0.25m thick	
903	Natural	Pale yellow-orange sand with bands of ironstone	–	
904	Ditch	Aligned N-S, wide V-shaped profile	2.40m wide 1.10m deep	
905	Fill of ditch [904]	Loose dark orange-brown slightly gritty sand, moderate pebbles	1.10m thick	Pottery (one sherd early-middle Saxon)

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
10	**50m x 2m NE-SW**		**77.20m aOD**	**0.48m, 76.72m aOD**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/Samples***
1001	Topsoil	Dark grey-brown sandy loam, occasional pebbles	0.38-0.41m thick	
1002	Subsoil	Mottled orange-brown silty sand, frequent pebbles	0.27-0.31m thick	
1003	Natural	Mixed orange-brown and pale brown mottled silty sand	–	
1004	Fill of ditch [1005]	Soft mottled orange and pale brown silty sand, rare flint	0.55m thick	–
1005	Ditch	Aligned NW-SE, U-shaped profile	1.32m wide and 0.55m deep	

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
11	**50m x 2m NE-SW**		**77.20m aOD**	**0.48m, 76.72m aOD**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/Samples***
1101	Topsoil	Dark grey-brown sandy loam, occasional pebbles	0.16-0.24m thick	
1102	Subsoil	Mid brown silty sand, occasional pebbles	0.12-0.20m thick	
1103	Natural	Pale brown silty sand, rare flint	_	
1104	Natural	Mottled mid brown and pale brown silty sand, occasional gravel	_	

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
12	**50m x 2m NE-SW**		**77.20m aOD**	**0.48m, 76.72m aOD**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/Samples***
1201	Topsoil	Dark grey-brown silty sand, occasional gravel	0.30-0.36m thick	
1202	Subsoil	Dark red-brown silty sand, occasional gravel	0.18-0.25m thick	
1203	Natural	Mid red and yellow coarse sand	_	
1204	Fill of ditch [1205]	Loose dark red-brown silty sand, rare gravel	0.55m thick	_
1205	Ditch	Aligned N-S, U-shaped profile	0.70m wide 0.55m deep	
1206	Fill of ditch [1207]	Dark red-brown silty sand, rare gravel	0.56m thick	_
1207	Ditch	Aligned E-W, fairly steep sides, wide flat base	2.30m wide 0.56m deep	

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
13	**50m x 2m NE-SW**		**77.20m aOD**	**0.48m, 76.72m aOD**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/Samples***
1301	Topsoil	Dark grey-brown silty sand, rare pebbles	0.18-0.35m thick	
1302	Subsoil	Orange-brown silty sand	0.06-0.11m thick	
1303	Natural	Mixed yellow and red-brown silty sand, rare patches of flint and ironstone	_	
1304	Subsoil	Mid brown silty sand	0.06-0.11m thick	

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
14	**50m x 2m NE-SW**		**77.20m aOD**	**0.48m, 76.72m aOD**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/Samples***
1401	Topsoil	Dark grey-brown sandy loam	0.19-0.22m thick	
1402	Subsoil	Mid red-brown silty sand	0.21-0.23m thick	
1403	Natural	Yellow-brown silty sand, frequent gravel	_	
1404	Fill of ditch [1405]	Soft mid brown silty sand, occasional small pebbles	0.30m thick	
1405	Ditch?	Possibly aligned N-S, shallow edges	At least 0.70m wide 0.30m deep	

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