



# Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological trial trench evaluation  
Straight Furlong, Harborough Road  
Desborough, Northamptonshire  
May 2012



## Northamptonshire Archaeology

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Northamptonshire  
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Report 12/99

May 2012



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**QUALITY CONTROL**

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**OASIS REPORT FORM 127733**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project title	Archaeological Trial Trenching Evaluation, Straight Furlong, Harborough Road, Desborough, Northamptonshire	
Short description (250 words maximum)	An archaeological trial trench excavation was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology at Harborough Road, Desborough, Northamptonshire prior to the proposed development on the site. Thirteen trenches were excavated with twelve of the trenches revealing only remnant ridge and furrow cultivation. Trench eleven contained three archaeological features; three shallow gullies and a possible pit or ditch terminal, no finds were recovered from the fills. All the features were aligned in the same direction as the ridge and furrow which could indicate they are associated with previous agriculture.	
Project type	Trial trench evaluation	
Previous work	Geophysical survey	
Current land use	Arable	
Future work	-	
Monument type and period	Possible Saxon cemetery, exact location unknown	
Significant finds	None	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address	Straight Furlong Harborough Road, Desborough	
NGR	SP 797 840	
Area (sq m/ha)	Approx 6.8ha	
Height aOD	148m	
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)	
Project brief originator	County Archaeological Advisor Northamptonshire County Council	
Project Design originator	NA	
Director/Supervisor	Christopher Jones	
Project Manager	Mark Holmes	
Sponsor or funding body	CgMs Consulting Ltd	
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>		
Start date	14/05/2012	
End date	17/05/2012	
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Location (Accession no.)</b>	<b>Contents</b>
Physical		None
Paper		Site records
Digital		Client report PDF
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)	
Title	Archaeological Trial Trenching Evaluation	
Serial title & volume	12/99	
Author(s)	Christopher Jones	
Page numbers	14	
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION AT  
STRAIGHT FURLONG, HARBOROUGH ROAD  
DESBOROUGH, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE  
MAY 2012**

**Abstract**

*An archaeological trial trench excavation was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology at Harborough Road, Desborough Northamptonshire prior to the proposed development on the site. Thirteen trenches were excavated with twelve of the trenches revealing only the remains of ridge and furrow cultivation. Trench eleven was the only trench which contained archaeological features, three shallow gullies and a possible pit or ditch terminal, no finds were recovered from the fills. All the features were aligned in the same direction as the ridge and furrow which could indicate they are associated with the previous agriculture.*

**1 INTRODUCTION**

In May 2012, an archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) on land at Harborough Road, Desborough Northamptonshire (NGR: 479700 284000; Fig 1). The work was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd and was undertaken to inform a planning application for the proposed development of the land for residential use.

The scope of works was outlined in the brief issued by the Northamptonshire County Council County Archaeological Advisor (NCC 2012) and detailed in the written scheme of investigation prepared by NA (NA 2012). The works were undertaken according to the following guidelines: Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (2010) and *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2008), and English Heritage's *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (2006).

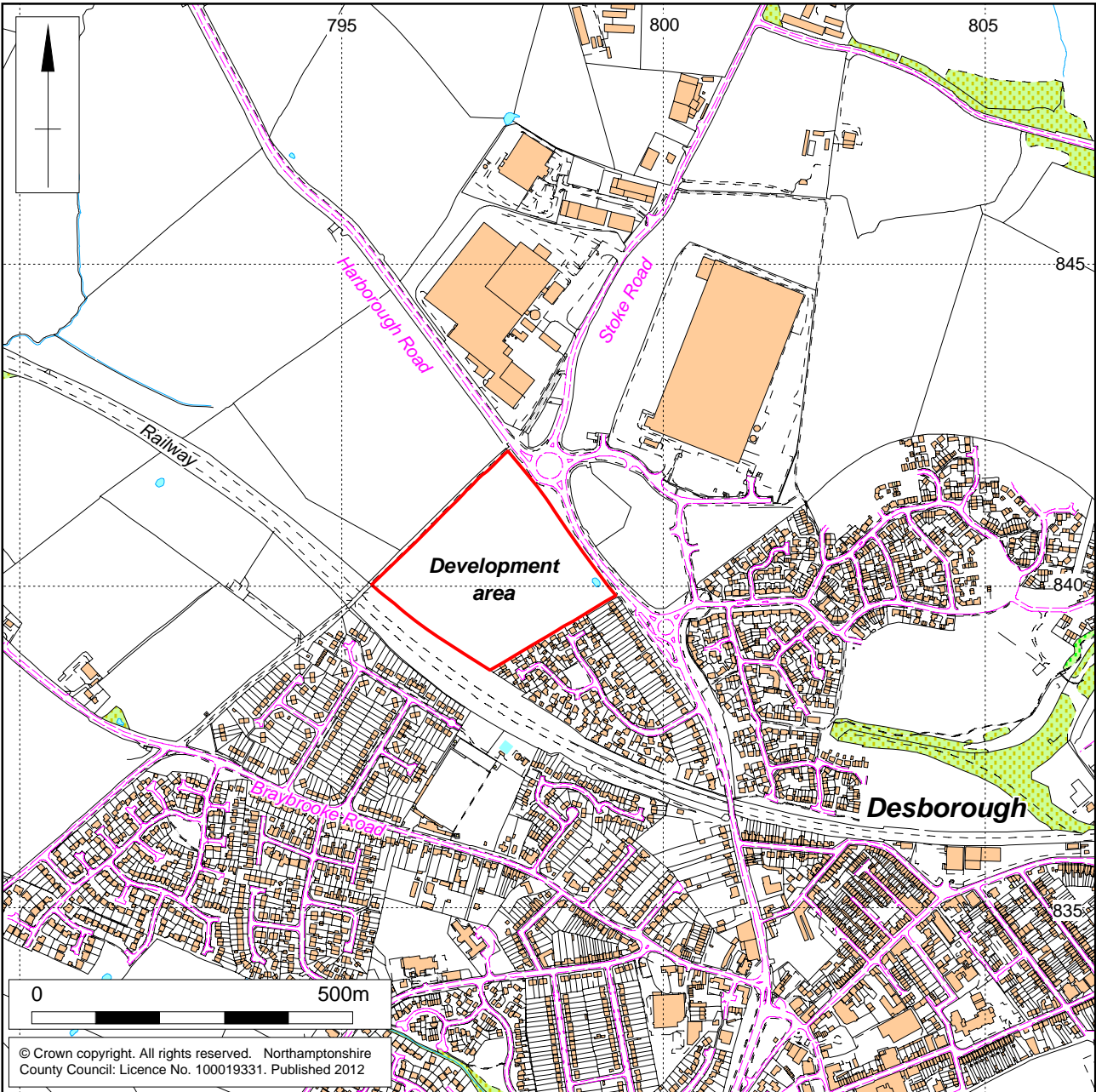
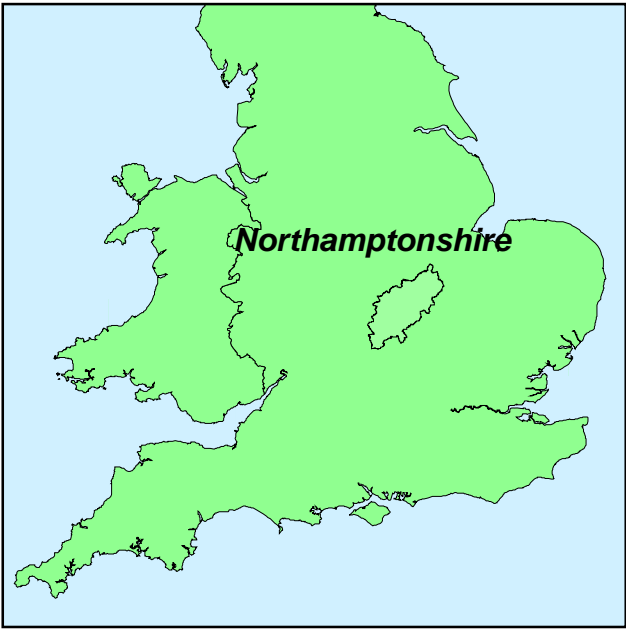
**2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The purpose of the work was to determine and understand the nature, function and character of the archaeological site in its cultural and environmental setting.

The specific aims of the investigation were to:

- Identify the location, extent, nature, and date of any archaeological features or deposits present;
- Determine the integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits present.

Specific research objectives were to be drawn from national and regional research frameworks documents (English Heritage 1991, Knight *et al* 2012) as relevant depending upon the results of the evaluation.



Scale 1:10,000

Site location Fig 1



### **3 BACKGROUND**

#### **3.1 Topography and geology**

The site lies on the north-western edge of the town of Desborough, north of the River Ise which forms the southern boundary of the parish. The study area itself is bounded to the north-east by the Harborough Road onto which it fronts directly, whilst to the south-west it is bounded by the Midland Railway, housing to the south and fields to the north. The site lies at a height of 148m aOD on ground sloping down to the south-west. The underlying geology comprises Northampton Sand and Upper Lias Clay.

#### **3.2 Historical and archaeological background**

A desk-based assessment was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology (Leigh 2008). A number of prehistoric finds have been made in the vicinity of the site. These include Bronze Age burials and Iron Age and Romano-British settlement. The most notable finds are the Desborough Mirror, which is of Iron Age date and is decorated in the *La Tene III* style, a style of Celtic Art first identified at a site on the northern side of Lake Neuchâtel in Switzerland and dates from the 5th to the 1st centuries BC, and a gold necklace of Anglo-Saxon date which was discovered in a grave off Paddock Lane. Both of these artefacts are now on display in the British Museum. An Anglo-Saxon cemetery is thought to have been located somewhere in the vicinity of the site, but its exact whereabouts is unknown.

Desborough is first mentioned in the *Domesday Book* of 1086 where it is referred to as *Dereburg* meaning place of judgement. In the post-medieval period, after 1750AD, Desborough developed a thriving textile trade with a particular emphasis on weaving. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries Desborough has been subject to extensive quarrying, all of which has been to the south and east of the study area.

Subsequent geophysical survey (Walker 2010) did not identify any archaeological remains, although anomalies related to medieval ridge and furrow cultivation were present across the site.

### **4 EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY**

Monitoring of the programme of fieldwork was carried out by the Archaeological Advisor Northamptonshire County Council (NCC). All parties were informed of the commencement and progress of works.

The trial trenches were positioned to ensure a full coverage of the area, whilst also targeting anomalies identified during the geophysical survey as well as avoiding known services (Fig 2).

Each trench was located using a Leica System 1200 GPS operating to an accuracy of +/- 0.05m to Ordnance Survey National Grid and Datum. Thirteen trenches were excavated across the site, each measuring 50m x 2m which represents a 2% sample of the development area.

The trenches were excavated under continuous archaeological supervision and were excavated to the first archaeological remains or, where these are absent, the upper interface of geological deposits. Topsoil and subsoil were stored separately on either side of the trench, at least 1.0m from the trench edges.



Scale 1:2500

Trench locations, showing geophysical survey results

Fig 2



The trenches were cleaned sufficiently to enhance the definition of features, unless it was certain that there were no archaeological features or deposits present.

All deposits were given individual context numbers and recording followed standard Northamptonshire Archaeology procedures (NA 2011). Deposits were described on pro-forma context sheets to include details of the context, its relationships, interpretation and a checklist of associated finds.

A photographic record was kept of the excavation, comprising black and white negatives and colour slides with supporting digital photographs. The field data were compiled into a site archive with appropriate cross-referencing.

The excavated area and spoil heaps were scanned with a metal detector to ensure maximum finds retrieval.

The trenches were backfilled with their up-cast, lightly compacted by the mechanical digger. Subsoil and topsoil were backfilled separately.

## **5 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE**

The average depth of the trenches was 0.50m on to grey silt clay natural, overlain with light brown clay loam subsoil to a depth of 0.25m. The topsoil was up to 0.32m deep and consisted of a dark brown clay loam.

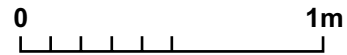
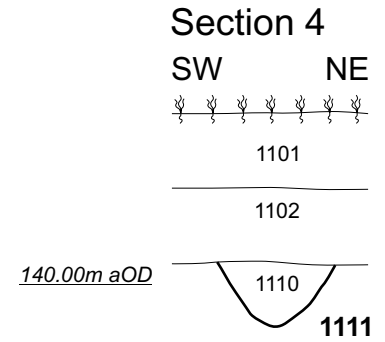
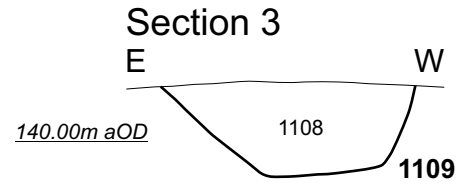
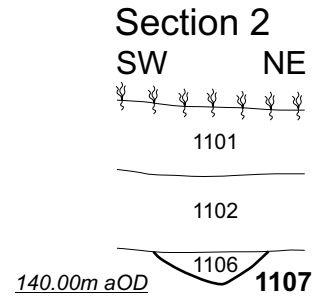
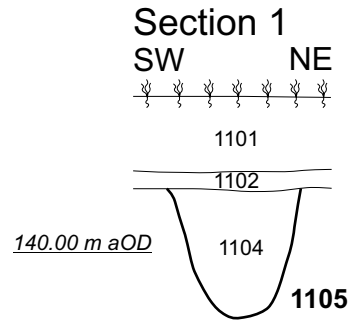
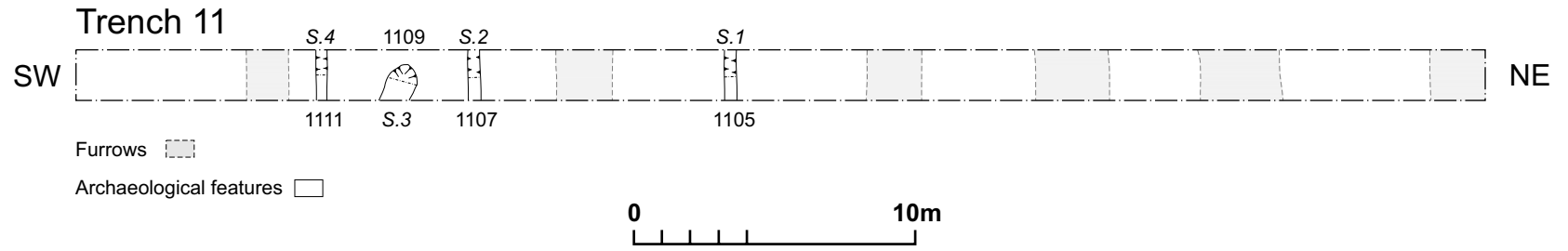
Only trench eleven revealed any archaeological features. These comprised three shallow gullies [1105], [1107] and [1111] and a possible pit or ditch terminal [1109].

The three gullies were aligned north-west by south-east and spaced six metres apart. When excavated they proved to all be of a similar size and depth and filled with light orange brown clay with few inclusions (Figs 3, 4, 6 and 7). No finds were present.

The possible pit or ditch terminal seen between the gullies was excavated and was 0.84m wide by 0.30m deep with a fill (1108) of light orange clay with no finds present (Figs 3 and 5).

Ridge and furrow running on the same alignment as the gullies was also recorded in trench eleven.

The only archaeological features within the other twelve trenches were remnants from ridge and furrow cultivation running in a north-west by south-east direction and isolated field drains.





Gully 1105, looking north-west Fig 4



Pit or ditch terminus 1109, looking south-east Fig 5





Gully 1107, looking north-west Fig 6



Gully 1111, looking north-west Fig 7

## 6 THE FINDS

No finds were recovered from the evaluation.

## 7 DISCUSSION

The evaluation confirmed the geophysical survey showing ridge and furrow running across the field in a north-west by south-east direction. The only other features present were in trench eleven, positioned at the east corner of the proposed development area. The three gullies and possible pit or ditch had sterile fills and were aligned in the same direction as the ridge and furrow, which could indicate they are of the same date. No evidence of a Saxon cemetery was present.

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31 May 2012



## APPENDIX: CONTEXT LIST

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
1	50m x 2m NW-SE	479450/284143	137.80m aOD	137.40m aOD
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
101	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam	0.30m thick	–
102	Subsoil	Orange-brown clay loam	0.10m thick	–
103	Natural	Orange-grey clay and orange sand		–

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
2	50m x 2m NE-SW	479689/284108	136.42m aOD	135.86m aOD
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
201	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam	0.32m thick	–
202	Subsoil	Orange brown clay loam	0.24m thick	–
203	Natural	Orange-grey clay and orange sand		–

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
3	50m x 2m NE-SW	479788/28493	137.80m aOD	137.30m aOD
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
301	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam	0.28m thick	–
302	Subsoil	Orange-brown clay loam	0.22m thick	–
303	Natural	Orange-grey clay and orange sand		–

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
4	50m x 2m NW-SE	479710/284062	136.42m aOD	135.84m aOD
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
401	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam	0.29m thick	–
402	Subsoil	Orange-brown clay loam	0.29m thick	–
403	Natural	Orange-grey clay and orange sand		–

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
5	50m x 2m NE-SW	479646/284018	136.42m aOD	135.87m aOD
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
501	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam	0.30m thick	–
502	Subsoil	Orange-brown clay loam	0.25m thick	–
503	Natural	Orange-grey clay and orange sand		–

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
6	50m x 2m NW-SE	479608/283986	136.42m aOD	135.67m aOD
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
601	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam	0.33m thick	–
602	Subsoil	Orange-brown clay loam	0.42m thick	–
603	Natural	Orange-grey clay and orange sand. Flint and chalk flecks		–

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
7	50m x 2m NE-SW	479673/283946	140.21m aOD	139.66m aOD
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
701	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam	0.28m thick	–
702	Subsoil	Orange-brown clay loam	0.27m thick	–
703	Natural	Orange-grey clay and orange sand. Flint and chalk flecks		–

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
8	50m x 2m NW-SE	479720/283977	140.21m aOD	139.71m aOD
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
801	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam	0.24m thick	–
802	Subsoil	Orange-brown clay loam	0.26m thick	–
803	Natural	Orange-grey clay and orange sand. Flint and chalk flecks		–

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
9	50m x 2m NE-SW	479771/284028	139.96m aOD	139.41m aOD
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
901	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam	0.30m thick	–
902	Subsoil	Orange-brown clay loam	0.25m thick	–
903	Natural	Orange-grey clay and orange sand. Flint and chalk flecks		–

<b>Trench No</b>	<b>Length, width &amp; alignment</b>	<b>NGR</b>	<b>Surface height</b>	<b>Depth &amp; height of natural</b>
10	50m x 2m NW-SE	479839/284055	139.96m aOD	139.40m aOD
<b>Context</b>	<b>Context type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Artefacts/Samples</b>
1001	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam	0.27m thick	–
1002	Subsoil	Orange-brown clay loam	0.25m thick	–
1003	Natural	Orange-grey clay and orange sand. Flint and chalk flecks		–

<b>Trench No</b>	<b>Length, width &amp; alignment</b>	<b>NGR</b>	<b>Surface height</b>	<b>Depth &amp; height of natural</b>
11	50m x 2m NE-SW	479852/283981	139.96m aOD	139.49m aOD
<b>Context</b>	<b>Context type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Artefacts/Samples</b>
1101	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam	0.29m thick	–
1102	Subsoil	Orange-brown clay loam	0.18m thick	–
1103	Natural	Orange-grey clay and orange sand. Flint and chalk flecks		–
1104	Fill of 1105	Light orange grey clay	0.45m deep	Sample 1
1105	Gully cut	Aligned NW-SE, U-shaped profile	0.45m wide 0.22m deep	
1106	Fill of 1107	Light orange grey clay	0.12m deep	
1107	Gully cut	Aligned NW-SE, U-shaped profile	0.43m wide 0.12m deep	
1108	Fill of 1109	Light orange grey clay	0.13m deep	Sample 2
1109	Cut	Aligned NW-SE, sharp sides to flat base	0.84m wide 0.30m deep	
1110	Fill of 1111	Light orange-grey clay	0.13m deep	
1111	Gully cut	Aligned NW-SE, U-shaped profile	0.37m wide 0.13m deep	

<b>Trench No</b>	<b>Length, width &amp; alignment</b>	<b>NGR</b>	<b>Surface height</b>	<b>Depth &amp; height of natural</b>
12	50m x 2m NW-SE	479790/283960	139.96m aOD	139.47m aOD
<b>Context</b>	<b>Context type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Artefacts/Samples</b>
1201	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam	0.23m thick	–
1202	Subsoil	Orange brown clay loam	0.26m thick	–
1203	Natural	Orange-grey clay and orange sand. Flint and chalk flecks		–

<b>Trench No</b>	<b>Length, width &amp; alignment</b>	<b>NGR</b>	<b>Surface height</b>	<b>Depth &amp; height of natural</b>
13	50m x 2m NE-SW	479754/283915	140.21m aOD	139.70m aOD
<b>Context</b>	<b>Context type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Artefacts/Samples</b>
1301	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam	0.24m thick	–
1302	Subsoil	Orange-brown clay loam	0.27m thick	–
1303	Natural	Orange-grey clay and orange sand. Flint and chalk flecks		–





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