Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological evaluation of land at Brackmills Point former Cattlemarket site, Liliput Road Northampton February 2013

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Report 13/37

March 2013

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QUALITY CONTOL

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS	**Oasis No: 144680**	
Project title	Archaeological evaluation of land at Brackmills Point former cattlemarket site, Liliput Road, Northampton, February 2013	
Short description	In February 2013, an archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology, on behalf of CgMs Consulting Ltd, on land at Brackmills Point former Cattlemarket site, Liliput Road, Northampton. The works identified a single undated pit that may have been a midden for the disposal of hearth waste. The site was traversed by remnant furrows of medieval ridge and furrow cultivation.	
Project type	Trial trench evaluation	
Previous work	Geophysical survey	
Current land use	Scrubland	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type and period	Prehistoric? and Post-Medieval	
Significant finds	None	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address	Liliputt Road, Brackmills	
Easting Northing	SP 798 593	
Area (sq m/ha)	10ha	
Height aOD	55mAOD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)	
Project brief originator	Northamptonshire County Council	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)	
Director/Supervisor	Jason Clarke (NA)	
Project Manager	Mark Holmes (NA) Steve Weaver (CgMs)	
Sponsor or funding body	CgMs Consulting	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	04/02/2013	
End date	08/02/2013	
ARCHIVES	**Location (Accession no.)**	**Contents**
Physical		
Paper		Site records (1 archive box)
Digital		Client report PDF. Survey Data, Photographs
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Title	Archaeological evaluation of land at Brackmills Point former Cattlemarket site, Liliput Road, Northampton February 2013	
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ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL EVALUATION OF LAND AT BRACKMILLS POINT FORMER CATTLEMARKET SITE, LILIPUT ROAD NORTHAMPTON

FEBRUARY 2013

Abstract

In February 2013, an archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology, on behalf of CgMs Consulting, on land at Brackmills Point former Cattlemarket site, Liliput Road, Northampton. The works identified a single undated pit that may have been a midden for the disposal of hearth waste. The site was traversed by remnant furrows of medieval ridge and furrow cultivation.

1 INTRODUCTION

In February 2013, an archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) on land at Brackmills Point former Cattlemarket site, Liliput Road, Northampton (NGR: SP 793 593, Fig 1). The work was commissioned by CgMs Consulting ahead of the proposed development of the land.

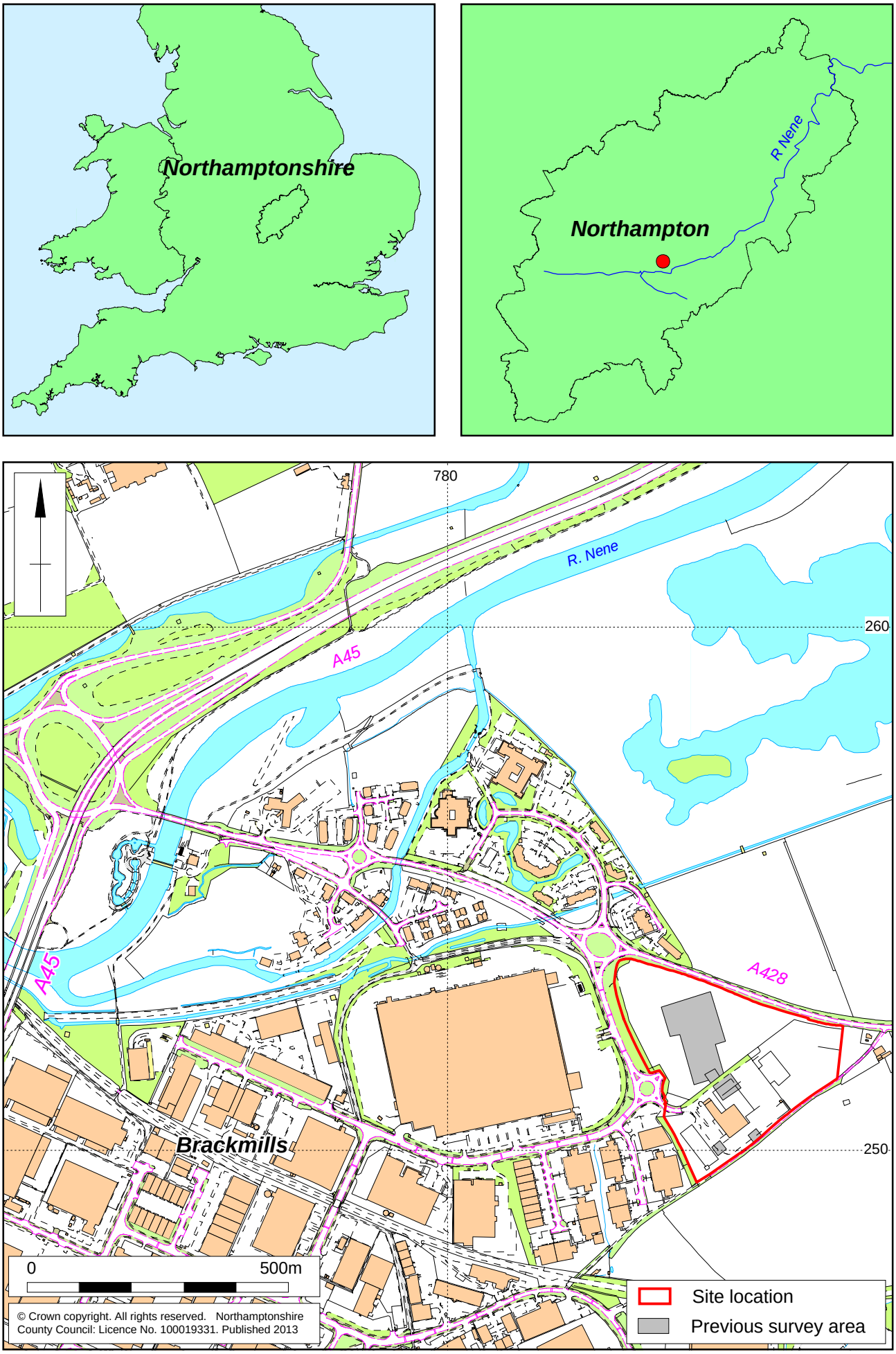
The scope of works was outlined and detailed in the Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA 2013). The objectives of the evaluation were to determine the presence of any archaeological features or deposits within the application area and to date and characterise their extent, depth of burial and state of preservation.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and geology

The proposed development area comprises a roughly triangular piece of land, approximately 10ha in extent, lying in between the A428 Bedford Road and Liliput Road on the eastern outskirts of Northampton (Fig 1). It is split into three main areas; an area of rough grassland in the north-west, an area of soil bunds to the north-east, and the former site of the Cattle Market to the south. Only the grassed area was suitable for evaluation.

The proposed development area stands to the south of the River Nene, between the 55m and 60m contours. Its geology is mapped as Whitby Mudstone (Lias group), overlain by 1st terrace gravels (BGS 2012). In the easternmost part of the site, the natural geology is overlain by made ground which was deposited by the farmer in the early 1990s (Soden and Holmes 1995, 3-4).



Scale 1:10,000

Site location Fig 1

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

The proposed development area and its environs have been the subject of several previous archaeological evaluations, comprising two partial geophysical surveys and multiple phases of desk-based assessment.

The first geophysical survey was carried out in 1995, in advance of the construction of the cattle market. Magnetic scanning of 20m transects was followed up by the detailed survey of three sample blocks. No archaeological remains were detected (Soden and Holmes 1995, 3-4; this report, Fig 2). The second survey was carried out in 1996, and again comprised magnetic scanning followed by the detailed survey of a sample area. This survey identified several '*broad, curvilinear anomalies that have some archaeological potential, although they may be natural*' (Wessex Archaeology 1996).

Both of the above surveys were carried out as part of wider evaluations, which also included desk-based assessments. A further desk-based assessment was carried out in 2006 (Mason 2006). All of these assessments noted the presence of nearby Roman remains, and of ridge and furrow earthworks to the south-east of the proposed development area.

Further geophysical survey was undertaken specifically for this development by Northamptonshire Archaeology in 2012 (Walford 2012). This survey detected several weak and disjointed linear anomalies which probably represent ditches, possibly contiguous with the Roman ditches previously discovered to the north and west of the proposed development area, and may represent parts of an early field system. More recent cultivation of the area was represented by extensive traces of medieval or later ridge and furrow.

The site lies within a wider area of known prehistoric, Roman and later activity. Fieldwalking *c* 500m to the south of the site in 1990, prior to the extension of the Brackmills estate, produced prehistoric worked flint, Iron Age and Roman and medieval pottery but did not identify any specific settlement evidence (Shaw 1990). Approximately one kilometre to the south-west of the site, an extensive Iron Age settlement and part of a Saxon cemetery were excavated prior to the installation of a water pipeline (Chapman 2001). A possible Roman ditch or pit was located during a watching brief undertaken immediately adjacent to the western boundary of the site (HER 5043/0/1).

3 METHODOLOGY

Thirteen trial trenches were excavated in accordance with a trench plan prepared by Northamptonshire Archaeology and approved by Lesley-Ann Mather (Senior Planning Archaeologist, Northamptonshire) (Fig 2).

The trenches measured 50m long by 1.80m wide. The total length excavated was 650m. Trenches were positioned using a Leica system 1200 GPS.

A 360^{o} tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.80m-wide ditching bucket was used to remove overburden to archaeological levels or the natural substrate, whichever was encountered first. The trenches were cleaned sufficiently to enable the identification and definition of archaeological features. A hand-drawn plan of all archaeological features was made at scale 1:50 or 1:100 and was related to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. Archaeological deposits were examined by hand excavation to determine their nature. Recording followed standard NA procedures as described in the *Fieldwork*

Manual (NA 2011). Deposits were described on *pro-forma* sheets to include measured and descriptive details of the context, its relationships, interpretation and a checklist of associated finds. Context sheets were cross-referenced to scale plans, section drawings and photographs. Photography was with 35mm black and white film and colour slides, supplemented with digital images. Sections were drawn at scale 1:10 or 1:20, as appropriate and related to Ordnance Survey datum. Spoil heaps and features were scanned with a metal detector to maximise the recovery of metal objects.

All works were conducted in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (IfA 2010) and *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (IfA 1994, revised 2008).

4 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

4.1 General stratigraphy

The underlying geology of mudstones and clay was encountered between 0.2-0.5m below the modern ground surface. This occurred as light-mid orange or brownish-yellow sandy clay with occasional angular to sub-angular pebbles. The subsoil was light grey-brown sandy clay and the topsoil was mid greyish-brown sandy clay, both soils contained occasional sandstone fragments and pebbles. A thick layer of made ground was present in Trenches 1-3.

An archaeological feature cut into the natural geology was found in Trench 7. Remnant furrows from ridge and furrow cultivation were encountered in Trenches 6, 7,8,11 and 13.

4.2 The trial trenches (Figs 2 -3)

The trench locations are shown in Figure 2 and an inventory of contexts is provided as an Appendix. The topsoil had an average depth of 0.40m and the subsoil of 0.20m.

Trench 7

Trench 7 was L-shaped, 25m, aligned north to south, turning east to west for 25m (Figs 2 and 3). A small pit was present in the eastern end of the east to west aligned part of the trench.

Pit [705]

A circular pit [705], 0.58m wide and 0.22m deep, had an irregular U-shaped profile (Figs 2 and 3). The fill of mid to dark grey-brown sandy clay with frequent heat affected stones ranging from 50mm-150mm in diameter, and charcoal fragments (704) contained small fragment of fired clay, a flint core and burnt bone.

Medieval cultivation

Remnant furrows from a medieval ridge and furrow cultivation system were present throughout the site. The furrows were highly truncated by subsequent agricultural activity and no finds were recovered from them.

5 THE FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

5.1 **The worked flint** by Andy Chapman

A single flint, recovered from the fill (704) of a pit [705], is a small core in grey flint with a brown cortex, although the surface is almost entirely covered with light blue-grey patination. The core measures 40 x 40 x 20mm and has two platforms set almost at right angles, from small blade-like flakes have been removed. A late Mesolithic or early Neolithic date is most likely.

5.2 **Fired clay** by Pat Chapman

The one large and seven small fragments of fired clay from the fill (704), of pit [705], weigh 34g. They are irregularly-shaped and made from hard fine silty sandy orange and black clay. These have been subject to quite high temperatures and so is probably hearth or bonfire debris.

5.3 **Burnt bone** by Andy Chapman

A small quantity of calcined bone, weighing 4g, was recovered from a bulk soil sample from the fill (704) of a Pit [705]. The bone is white in colour, indicating a temperature in excess of 600^0C, as is typical of many cremation burials. The bone comprises small fragments from long bone shafts, but there is insufficient to indentify it to species.

5.4 **Charred plant macrofossils** by Val Fryer

A single sample for the evaluation of the content and preservation of the plant macrofossil assemblage was taken from the fill of pit [705].

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 x 16, and the plant macrofossils and other remains noted are listed in Table 1. Nomenclature within the table follows Stace (1997). All plant remains were charred. Modern fibrous roots were extremely abundant within the assemblage.

Results

The assemblage is small (<0.1 litres in volume) and largely composed of charcoal/charred wood fragments, some of which are relatively large (i.e. >10mm). Well preserved barley (*Hordeum* sp.) and wheat (*Triticum* sp.) grains are also present, with the latter all being of an elongated 'drop' form typical of emmer (*T. dicoccum*) or spelt (*T. spelta*). A single black bindweed (*Fallopia convolvulus*) seed is also recorded. Other remains are scarce.

Conclusions and recommendations for further work

In summary, as the assemblage is so small and limited in composition, it is, perhaps, most likely that it is partly or wholly derived from scattered or wind-blown material, which accidentally accumulated within the pit fill.

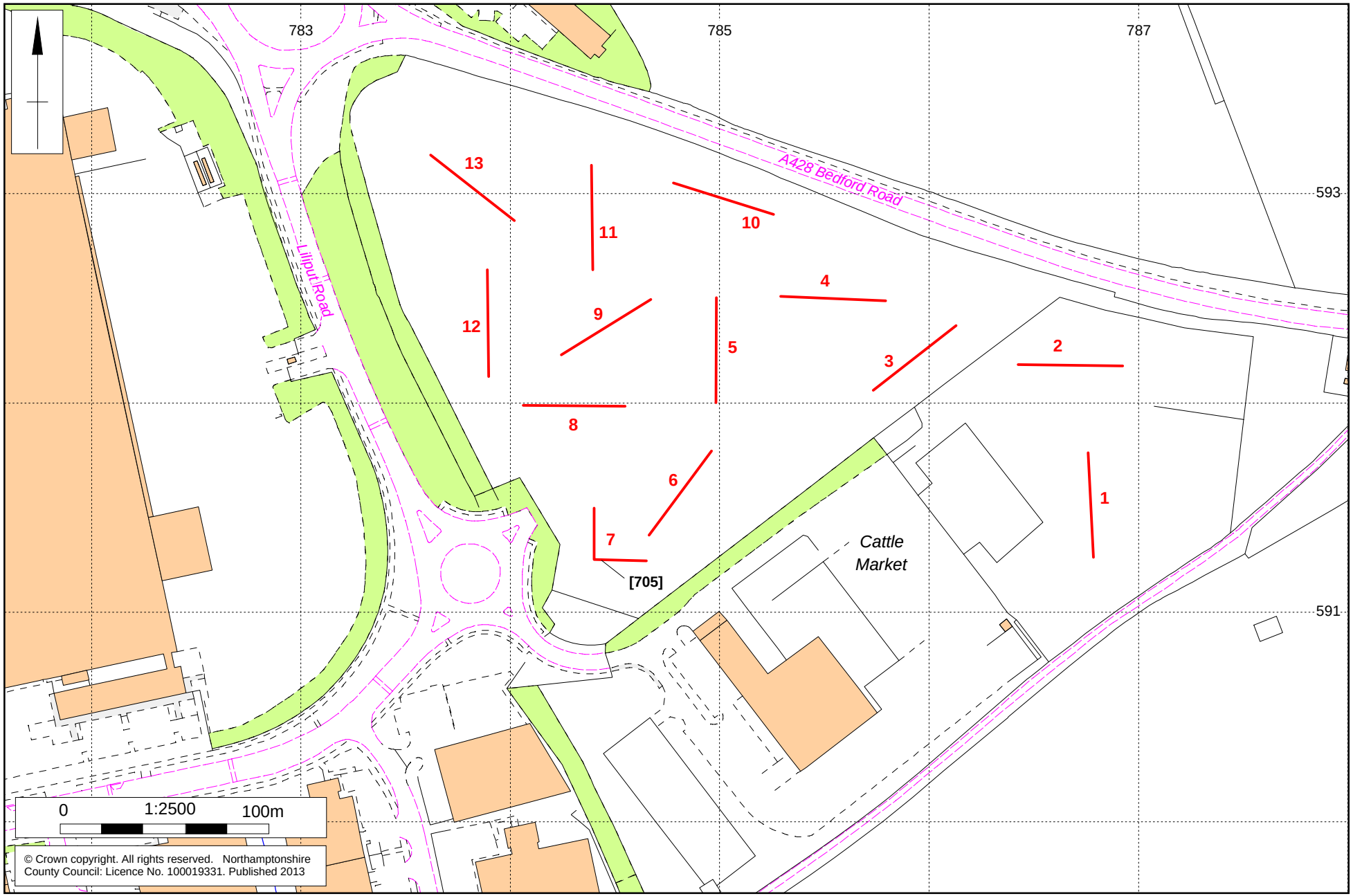
Although remains are scarce within the current assemblage, those which are recorded are very well preserved, clearly indicating that plant macrofossils are present within the archaeological horizon at Brackmills. Therefore, if further interventions are planned, it is strongly recommended that additional plant macrofossil samples of approximately 40 – 60 litres in volume are taken from all dated and well-sealed contexts recorded during the excavation.

Table 1: Charred plant macrofossils

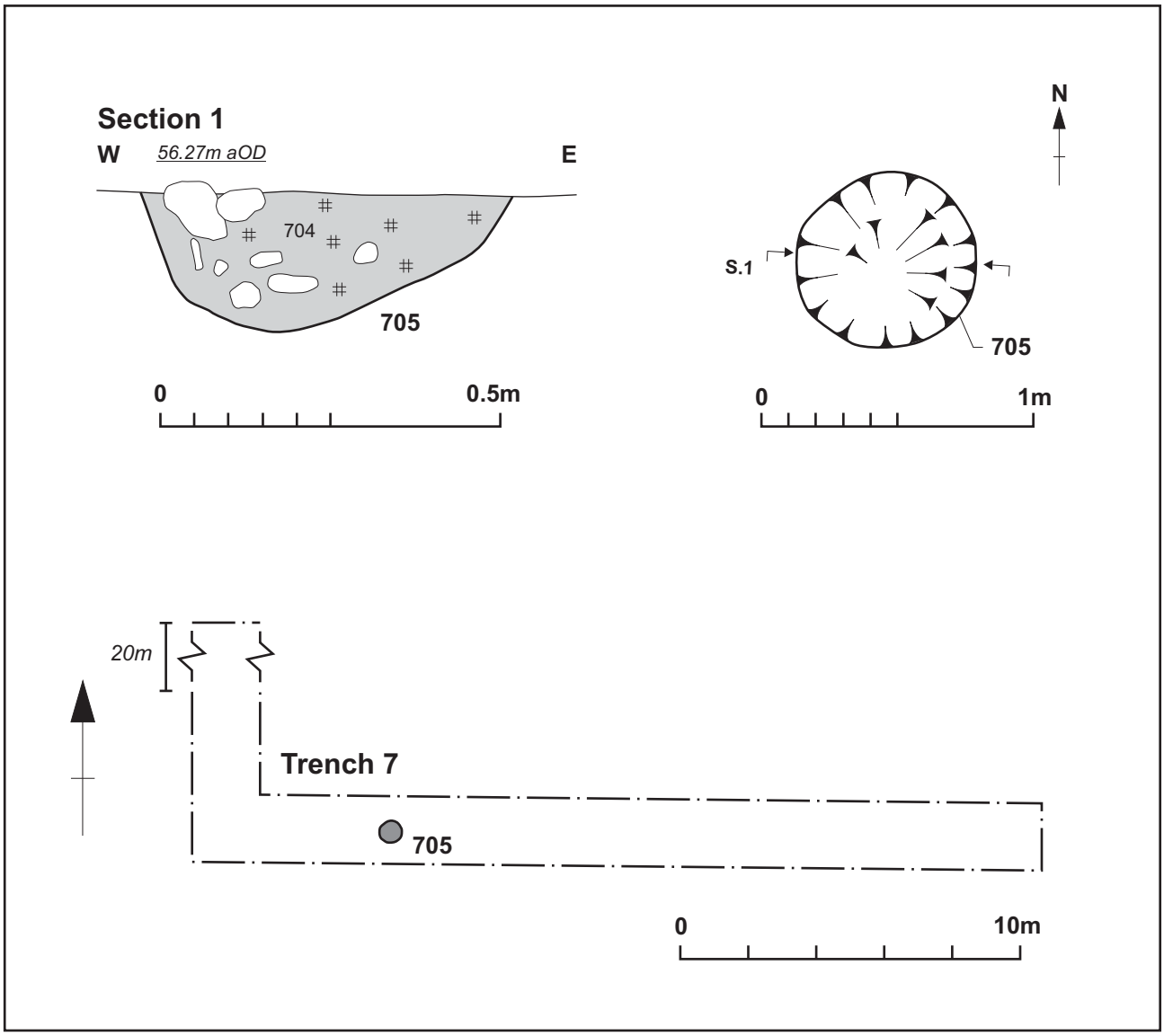
Sample No.	**1**
Context No.	**704**
Feature No.	**705**
Feature type	**Pit**
Plant macrofossils	
Hordeum sp. (grain)	x
Triticum sp. (grains)	x
Cereal indet. (grains)	*x*
Fallopia convolvulus (L.)A.Love	x
Charcoal <2mm	xxxx
Charcoal >2mm	xxx
Charcoal >5mm	xx
Charcoal >10mm	x
Other remains	
Black porous 'cokey' material	x
Burnt/fired clay	x
Sample volume (litres)	**40**
Volume of flot (litres)	**<0.1**
% flot sorted	**100%**

Key to Table
x = 1 – 10 specimens xx = 11 – 50 specimens xxxx = 100+ specimens

Scale 1:2500 (A4)



The excavated trenches Fig 2



Trench 7, pit [705], section 1 Fig 3

6 DISCUSSION

The trial trenching generally confirmed the accuracy of the earlier geophysical survey. The development area was traversed by medieval ridge and furrow cultivation.

The undated pit in Trench 7 clearly contained debris from an episode of burning including burnt stone, fired clay, charcoal and burnt bone and was probably domestic debris from a hearth. The charred plant remains included evidence for arable cultivation.

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APPENDIX: SUMMERY OF CONTEXTS

Trench No	**Length, width, alignment**	**NGR**	**Surface height**	**Depth of natural**
1	**50m x 2m N-S**	**SP 786 591**	**60.09m aOD**	**58.89m aOD**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
101	Topsoil	Mid-dark brown sandy loam with occasional gravel	0.10 - 0.20m thick	__
102	Modern layer (made ground)	Mid orange-grey clay with pebbles/cobbles, demolition rubble	Over 1.00m thick	__
103	Natural or colluvium	Mid-dark grey-orange silty clay	__	__

Trench No	**Length, width, alignment**	**NGR**	**Surface height**	**Depth of natural**
2	**50m x 2m E-W**	**SP 786 259**	**59.96m aOD**	**58.76m aOD**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
201	Topsoil	Mid-dark brown sandy loam with occasional gravel	0.20 - 0.50m thick	__
202	Modern layer (made ground)	Mid yellow-grey clay with pebbles/cobbles, demolition rubble	Over 1.00m thick	__

Trench No	**Length, width, alignment**	**NGR**	**Surface height**	**Depth of natural**
3	**50m x 2m NE-SW**	**SP 785 592**	**57.41m aOD**	**56.46m aOD**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
301	Topsoil	Mid-dark brown sandy loam with occasional gravel	0.15 - 0.30m thick	__
302	Modern layer (made ground)	Mid orange-grey clay with tarmac, plastic, demolition rubble	0.30 – 0.65m thick	__

Trench No	**Length, width, alignment**	**NGR**	**Surface height**	**Depth of natural**
4	**50m x 2m E-W**	**SP 785 592**	**56.10m aOD**	**55.60m aOD**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
401	Topsoil	Mid-dark brown silty clay loam, occasional gravel	0.20 - 0.30m thick	__
402	Subsoil	Mid orange-brown sandy clay with occasional gravel	0.10 - 0.20m thick	__
403	Natural	Mid orange-brown sandy clay and gravel	__	__

Trench No	**Length, width, alignment**	**NGR**	**Surface height**	**Depth of Natural aOD**
5	**50m x 2m N-S**	**SP 784 592**	**56.21m aOD**	**55.76m**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
501	Topsoil	Mid-dark brown silty clay loam, occasional gravel	0.30m thick	__
502	Subsoil	Mid orange-brown sandy clay with occasional gravel	0.15m thick	__
503	Natural	Mid orange-brown sandy clay and gravel	__	__

Trench No	**Length, width alignment**	**NGR**	**Surface height**	**Depth of natural**
6	**50m x 2m NE-SW**	**SP 784 591**	**56.43m aOD**	**55.98m aOD**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
601	Topsoil	Mid-dark brown silty clay loam, occasional gravel	0.30m thick	__
602	Subsoil	Mid orange-brown sandy clay with occasional gravel	0.15m thick	__
603	Natural	Mid orange-brown sandy clay and gravel	__	__

Trench No	**Length, width alignment**	**NGR**	**Surface height**	**Depth of natural**
7	**50m x 2m E-W**	**SP 784 591**	**56.82m aOD**	**56.37m aOD**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts / Samples***
701	Topsoil	Mid-dark brown silty clay loam, occasional gravel	0.25 - 0.33m thick	__
702	Subsoil	Mid orange-brown sandy clay with occasional gravel	0.10 - 0.20m thick	__
703	Natural	Mid orange-brown sandy clay and gravel	__	__
704	Fill of 705	Mid-dark grey-brown silty clay with orange mottling, very frequent pebbles/cobbles burnt and cracked	0.22m thick	Flint, Fired Clay and burnt bone sample 1
705	Cut of pit	Circular in plan, curved sides & base	0.58m diameter	

Trench No	**Length, width, alignment**	**NGR**	**Surface height**	**Depth of natural**
8	**50m x 2m E-W**	**SP 784 592**	**56.39m aOD**	**55.66m aOD**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
801	Topsoil	Mid-dark brown silty clay loam, occasional gravel	0.24 - 0.40m thick	__
802	Subsoil	Mid orange-brown sandy clay with occasional gravel	0.20 - 0.35m thick	__
803	Natural	Mid orange-brown sandy clay and gravel	__	__

Trench No	**Length, width, alignment**	**NGR**	**Surface height**	**Depth of natural**
9	**50m x 2m NE-SW**	**SP 784 592**	**55.95m aOD**	**55.42m aOD**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
901	Topsoil	Mid-dark brown silty clay loam, occasional gravel	0.24 - 0.30m thick	__
902	Subsoil	Mid orange-brown sandy clay with occasional gravel	0.23m thick	__
903	Natural	Mid orange-brown sandy clay and gravel	__	__

Trench No	**Length, width, alignment**	**NGR**	**Surface height**	**Depth of natural**
10	**50m x 2m NW-SE**	**SP 785 593**	**55.53m aOD**	**54.98m aOD**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
1001	Topsoil	Mid-dark brown silty clay loam, occasional gravel	0.28 - 0.35m thick	__
1002	Subsoil	Mid orange-brown sandy clay with occasional gravel	0.10 - 0.20m thick	__
1003	Natural	Mid orange-brown sandy clay and gravel	__	__

Trench No	**Length, width, alignment**	**NGR**	**Surface height**	**Depth of natural**
11	**50m x 2m N-S**	**SP 784 593**	**55.77m aOD**	**54.97m aOD**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
1101	Topsoil	Mid-dark brown silty clay loam, occasional gravel	0.28 - 0.44m thick	__
1102	Subsoil	Mid orange-brown sandy clay with occasional gravel	0.20 - 0.36m thick	__
1103	Natural	Mid orange-brown sandy clay and gravel	__	__

Trench	**Length,**	**NGR**	**Surface**	**Depth of**

No	**width, alignment**		**height**	**natural**
12	**50m x 2m N-S**	**SP 784 593**	**56.20m aOD**	**55.70m aOD**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
1201	Topsoil	Mid-dark brown silty clay loam, occasional gravel	0.20 - 0.30m thick	__
1202	Subsoil	Mid orange-brown sandy clay with occasional gravel	0.08 - 0.20m thick	__
1203	Natural	Mid orange-brown sandy clay and gravel	__	__

Trench No	**Length, width, alignment**	**NGR**	**Surface height**	**Depth of natural**
13	**50m x 2m NW-SE**	**SP 784 593**	**55.82m aOD**	**55.07m aOD**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
1301	Topsoil	Mid-dark brown silty clay loam, occasional gravel	0.20 - 0.35m thick	__
1302	Subsoil	Mid orange-brown sandy clay with occasional gravel	0.10 - 0.40m thick	__
1303	Natural	Mid orange-brown sandy clay and gravel	__	__

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