



Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological trial trench evaluation at Boot Lane, Dunton Bedfordshire



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Report 13/69

April 2013

BEDFM.2013.8



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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS No: 148916
Project name	Archaeological trial trench evaluation at Boot Lane, Dunton, Bedfordshire	
Short description	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) was commissioned by Prospect Archaeology, on behalf of Linen Homes, to carry out archaeological trial trenching on a proposed development site at land off Boot Lane, Dunton, Bedfordshire. All seven trenches were excavated. Remnant furrows from the medieval ridge and furrow field cultivation were visible in most trenches. There was evidence of the northern reach of possible post-medieval clay pits. The remains of two probable hedge lines and old tree throws were also recorded.	
Project type	Evaluation	
Site status	None	
Previous work	None	
Current Land use	Arable	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type/ period	Medieval ridge and furrow; Undated remains, post-medieval clay pits	
Significant finds	None	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Bedfordshire	
Site address	Land of Boot Lane, Dunton	
Study area	c 0.75ha	
OS grid reference	TL 2361 4454	
Height OD	c 50m AOD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)	
Project brief originator	Central Bedfordshire	
Project Design originator	NA	
Director/Supervisor	Yvonne Wolfram-Murray	
Project Manager	Ian Meadows	
Sponsor or funding body	Prospect Archaeology	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	15 April 2013	
End date	16 April 2013	
ARCHIVES	Location	Content
Physical	BEDFM.2013.8	
Paper		Site survey records
Digital		
BIBLIOGRAPHY	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report	
Title	Archaeological trial trench evaluation at Boot Lane, Dunton, Bedfordshire	
Serial title & volume	Northamptonshire Archaeology Reports 13/69	
Author(s)	Yvonne Wolfram-Murray	
Page numbers	20	
Date	7 May 2013	

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION AT
BOOT LANE, DUNTON, BEDFORDSHIRE
APRIL 2013**

Abstract

Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) was commissioned by Prospect Archaeology, on behalf of Linden Homes, to carry out archaeological trial trenching on a proposed development site at land off Boot Lane, Dunton, Bedfordshire. All seven trenches were excavated. Remnant furrows from the medieval ridge and furrow field cultivation were visible in most trenches. There was evidence of the northern edge of possible post-medieval clay pits. The remains of two probable hedge lines and old tree throws were also recorded.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) was commissioned by Prospect Archaeology, on behalf of Linden Homes, to carry out archaeological trial trenching on a proposed development site at land off Boot Lane, Dunton, Bedfordshire (NGR TL 2361 4454, Fig 1). The works were undertaken in accordance with *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012) and a brief issued by the Archaeology Team of Central Bedfordshire Council (Oake 2013). The works form part of the requirements of the Central Bedfordshire Local Validation Checklist.

The evaluation was required as part of a Heritage Asset Assessment. The proposed development site was identified as archaeologically sensitive due to its proximity to other heritage assets and the potential to contain archaeological remains.

Northamptonshire Archaeology is an Institute for Archaeologists' (IfA) registered organisation. This document was prepared in accordance with *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003), the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IfA 2008b) and *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE) (EH 2006).

2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The main aim of the investigation was to determine if archaeological remains were present within the application area. The national framework for research is set out by English Heritage (EH 1991). The local and regional research frameworks are set out by Glazebrook (1997), Brown and Glazebrook (2000), Oake *et al* (2007) and Medlycott (2011).

The specific objectives of the project were to provide further information on the following at the proposed development site, as set out in the Brief (Oake 2013):

- The location, extent, nature, and date of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present;
- The integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present.



Scale 1:7500

Site location Fig 1

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Topography and geology

The proposed development site comprises c 0.75ha of land, located in the north of Dunton, Central Bedfordshire, approximately 3.5m west from Biggleswade (Figs 1 and 2). The site lies at the northern end of Boot Lane and is surrounded on the southern and eastern sides by a housing estate, and on the northern and western sides by arable fields, the site itself forms part of a larger arable field. The site lies at a height of approximately 50m aOD. The underlying solid geology is the Gault Formation overlain by Glacial Till.



General view of site, looking north-west Fig 2

3.2 Historical and archaeological background

Three Bronze Age axe-heads have been found in the village (HER 9814 and 19400). An Iron Age coin has also been found somewhere in the vicinity of Church Farm (HER 18696). A Roman coin and brooch have been found to the west of the site at Middlesex Farm (HER 18397). The Iron Age and Roman finds may indicate sporadic activity in the area during these periods and the casual loss of items. The Bronze Age axe-heads, however, may have been the result of deliberate deposition. There are a series of cropmark enclosures to the east of the site, one of which is visible on the south-eastern edge of the village (HER 16835). Although undated, it is probable they date to the Iron Age or Roman periods.

There is to date no evidence of Saxon settlement, although earlier forms of the village name suggest a Saxon origin. At Domesday, in 1086, the largest manor in the parish

was that which was later known as Dunton Chamberlain. It was held by Richard Pungiant, but had formerly belonged to Archbishop Stigand. The manor passed to the eponymous Chamberlain family in the 13th century. After being owned by a number of different families, in the 18th century it passed to Earl Spencer.

The Church of St Mary Magdalene, in the centre of the village, dates from the 14th century (HER 1046). It is grade II* listed and is the only listed building in the village. There is evidence that a vicarage was constructed as early as the 13th century, making it one of the earliest in the county (HER 4142). Around 1624, the vicarage was described as being built at the east end of the church. It was present on the 1799 map, but by 1820 the site was vacant. It was replaced by The Rectory in the 19th century (HER13443).

On the eastern edge of the village is an L-shaped pond, which may be the remains of a moated site (HER 3649). Certainly, in 1799 there is a large house on the site which belonged to Earl Spencer; this may be the same house that is also shown on the 1770 map (HER 3124). The field has an uneven surface that may be the remains of this house. A dove house is also thought to have been in the same field (HER 3118).

A single previous archaeological investigation has been undertaken within the village, in the churchyard. A single narrow trench found evidence of two brick burial vaults, probably 19th century in date.

4 EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

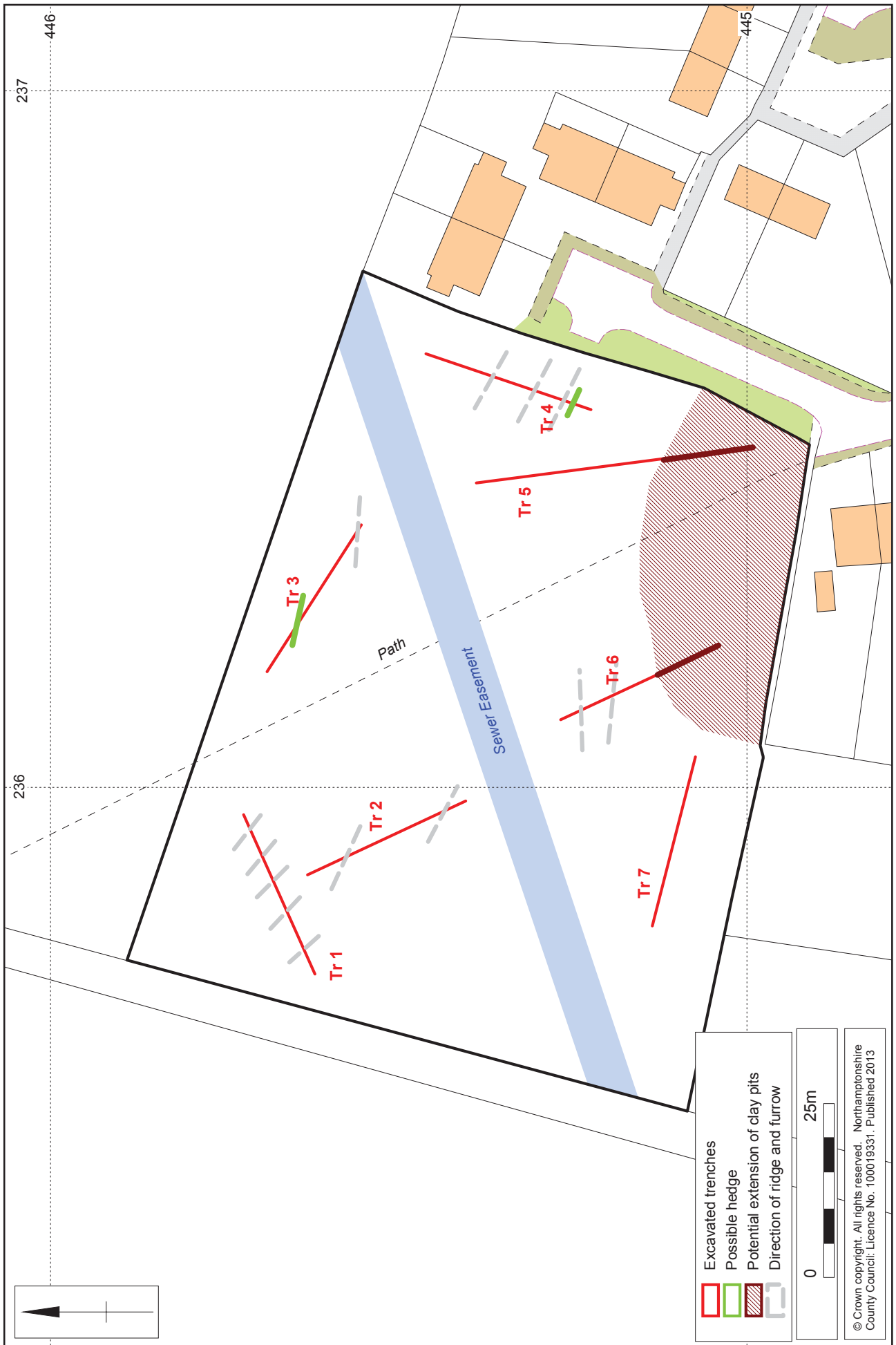
Seven (7) trial trenches, one 50m long and six 25m long, each 2m wide were excavated (Fig 3). The total area of trenching was 400m², amounting to approximately 5% of the proposed development area. All areas of ground disturbance were accurately surveyed in and marked out prior to the commencement of work.

Machine excavation was undertaken under the direction of a suitably experienced archaeologist. Trenches were excavated by machine using a toothless bucket wide, to reveal archaeological remains or, where absent, undisturbed natural horizons.

Each trench was cleaned sufficiently to enhance the definition of features. All archaeological features were investigated. All archaeological deposits and artefacts encountered during the course of evaluation were fully recorded. Recording followed standard Northamptonshire Archaeology procedures (NA 2011). All archaeological features were given a separate context number. Deposits were described on pro-forma context sheets to include details of the context, its relationships, interpretation and a checklist of associated finds.

Archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:50. Sections through features were drawn at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20. All levels were related to Ordnance Datum. A photographic record was maintained using black and white film supplemented by digital photography. Photographic views of the site were taken prior to excavation and after backfilling. Each trench was photographed, together with views of individual features.

Finds were collected from the individual deposits and appropriately packed and stored in stable conditions, by context. The field data was compiled into a site archive with appropriate cross-referencing. All records were compiled during fieldwork into a comprehensive and fully cross-referenced site archive.



Scale 1:750 (A4)

Excavated trenches Fig 3

5 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

The natural substrate consisted of light yellow-brown clay and sands (Fig 4). The topsoil was dark grey-brown sandy loam sealing all features (see Appendix for details).



Trench 7 showing general geology of the site, looking south-east Fig 4

In Trenches 5 and 6 post-medieval pits were uncovered. In Trenches 4 and 3 possible hedge lines were found. Ridge and furrow was noted in Trenches 1-4 and 6, approximately oriented north-west to south-east. They were the clearest in Trenches 1 and 4, typical distances between the furrows were around 5m apart. A sampled furrow in Trench 6 indicated a depth of up to 0.08m. No archaeological features were recorded in Trench 7, therefore not discussed below.

5.1 Trench 1

In this trench five furrows were recorded. The furrows, as in the other trenches, are very shallow and truncated, possibly due to modern ploughing depths, exact direction and width was not always clear as a result. Three furrows had also land drains running along one side, which may have affected their recorded width.

5.2 Trench 2

Two shallow furrows were recorded at either in end in this trench, the south-eastern furrow had a less clear boundary with the edge of the trench. The furrows in the centre of the trench have been probably ploughed out.

5.3 Trench 3

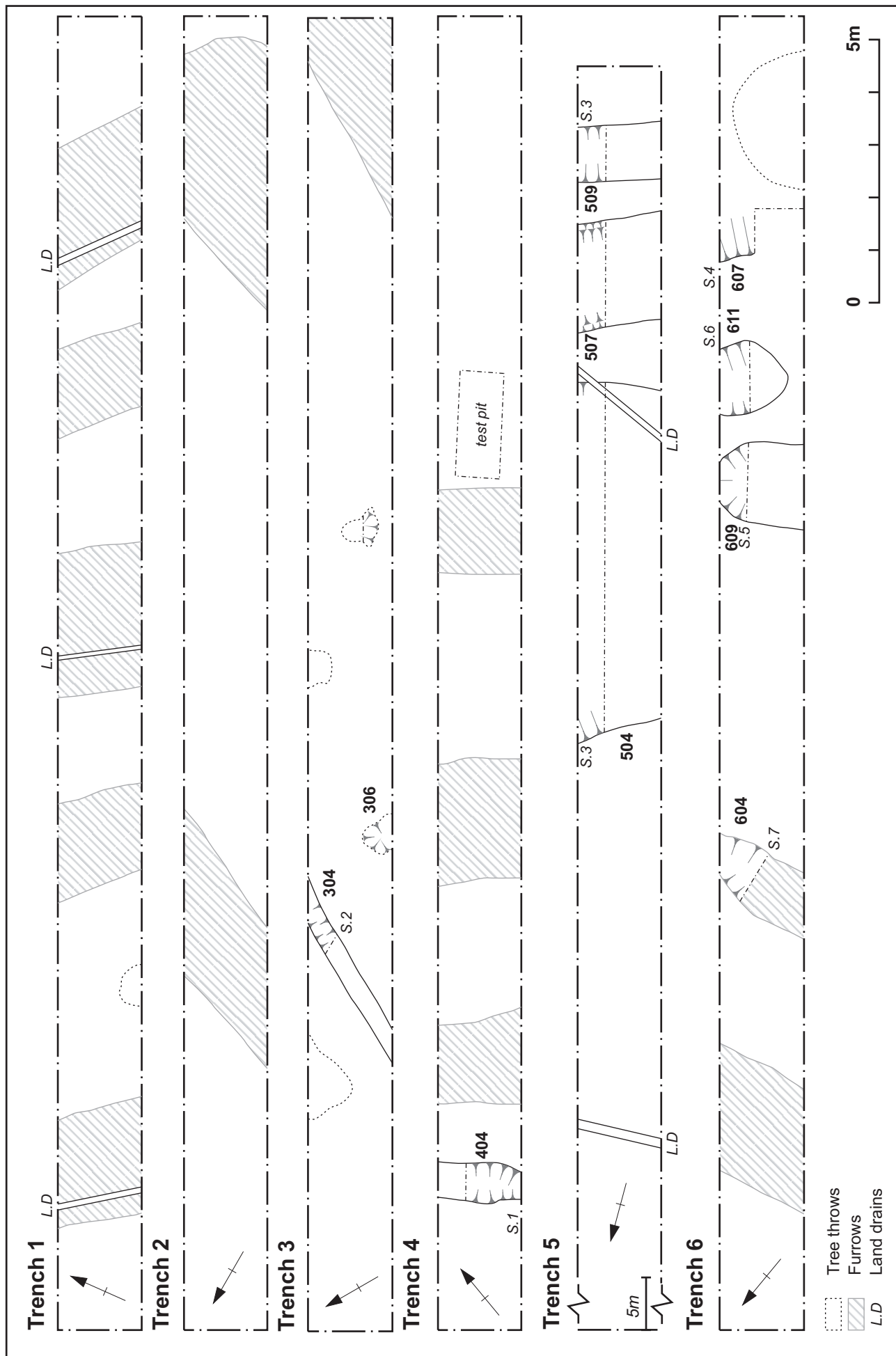
This trench was 25m long by 1.6m wide and aligned north-west by south-east (Figs 5 and 7). Towards the north-west end of the trench was an uneven base of root disturbance [304], possibly a hedge line. The hedge line was 0.50m wide and 0.12m deep, aligned west to east (Figs 6 and 8, Section 2). No finds were recovered from the mid yellow-grey sandy clay fill (303). There were also tree throws showing up in the trench.



Trench 3, looking north-east Fig 5

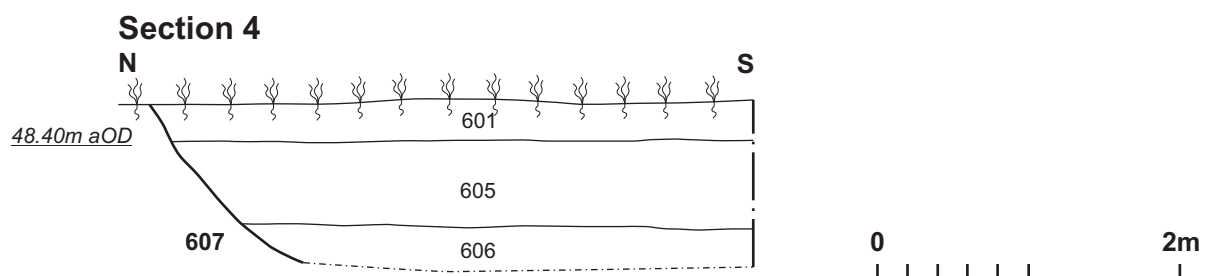
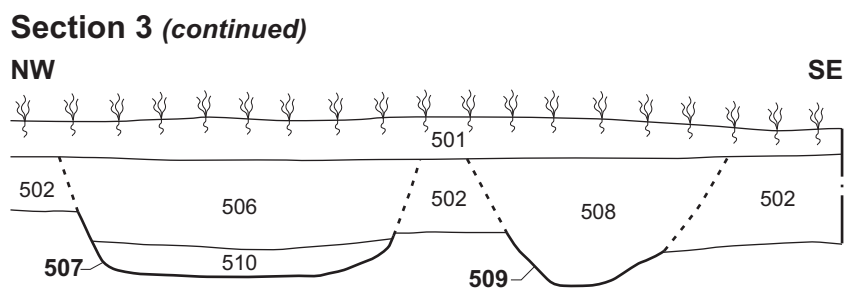
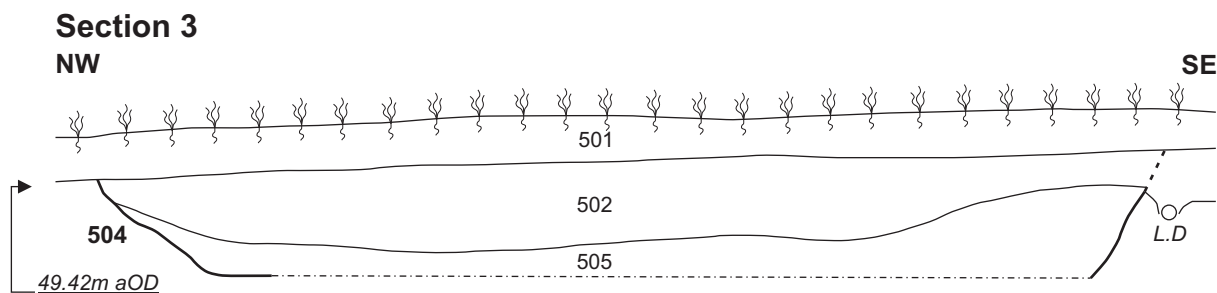
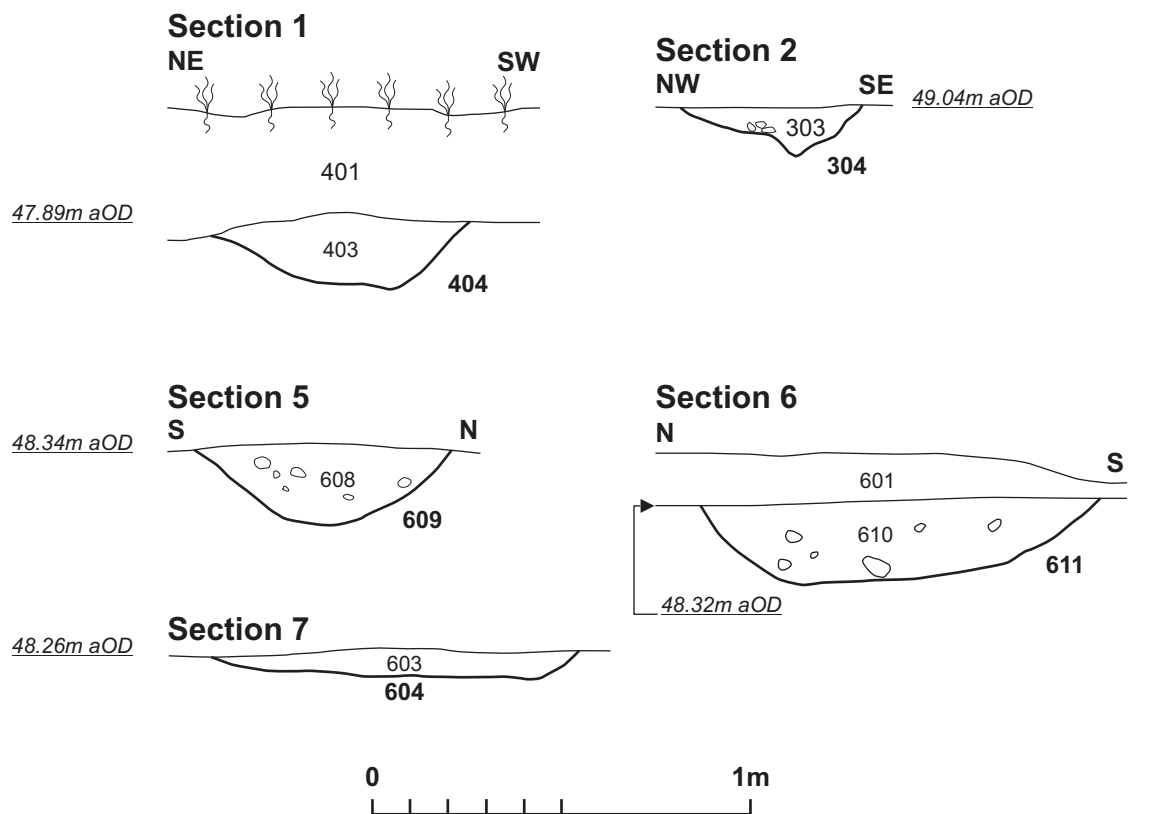


Hedge line [304], looking west Fig 6



Scale 1:100

Plans of trenches 1 - 6 Fig 7



5.4 Trench 4

This was 25m long by 1.6m wide and aligned north-east by south-west (Figs 7 and 9). Near the north-west end of the trench was an uneven base of a former hedge line [404], on a north-west south-east alignment, 0.70m wide and 0.26m deep (Figs 8, section 1 and 10). No finds were recovered from the mid brown clay sand fill (403).



Trench 4, looking north-west Fig 9



Hedge line [404], looking south-east Fig 10

5.5 Trench 5

Trench 5 was 40m long by 1.6m wide and aligned north-north-west by south-south-east (Figs 7 and 11). In the south-eastern end of the trench were a group of linear features and a spread, aligned west to east. Upon excavation it became apparent that these features might have been a series of intercutting pits as well as elongated pits. Pit [504] was minimally 7.10m wide and more than 0.80m deep, it was filled by light brown silty clay (505) overlain by mid brown-orange clay (502) (Figs 8, Section 3, and 12). Due to health and safety concerns and water content the exact depth of the pit could not be determined. Pit [507] was 2.20m wide and 0.75m deep and Pit [509] was 1.40m wide and 0.85m deep (Figs 8, Section 3, and 13), Pit [507] was filled by mid brown-red clay loam (510) overlain by mid brown clay loam (506), which was similar to (508), fill of [509]. The fills of the pits are not easily distinguished, especially from layer (502). Animal bone was recovered from (506).



Trench 5, looking north-north-west Fig 11



Pit [504], looking east Fig 12



Pit [507] and Pit [509], looking east Fig 13

5.6 Trench 6

Trench 6 was 25m long by 1.6m wide and aligned north-west by south-east (Figs 7 and 14). Further clay pits were uncovered in this trench.



Trench 6 pre- and post-excavation, looking north-west Fig 14

Pit [609] was 0.66m wide and 0.22m deep and filled with dark brown silty clay (608) from which a post-medieval tile sherd and animal bone were recovered (Figs 8, section 5, and 15. Pit [611] was 1.04m wide and 0.22m deep. The fill (610) was dark brown silty clay (Figs 8, Section 6, and 16).



Pit [609], looking west Fig 15



Pit [611], looking east Fig 16

Pit [607] at the southern end of the trench was large and could not be fully excavated due to health and safety concerns. The pit was a minimum of 4m wide and 0.90m deep, with a lower fill of mid orange-brown clay silt (606) overlain by dark brown clay silt (605) (Figs 8, Section 4, and 17). A sampled furrow [604] was shallow and uneven, filled with mid orange-brown clay sand (603) (Figs 8, Section 7, and 18).



Pit [607], looking east Fig 17



Furrow [604], looking north-west Fig 18

6 THE FINDS

6.1 Ceramic roof tile by Pat Chapman

The one sherd of roof tile came from fill (608) of pit [609]. It is about 15mm thick and made from very hard fired sandy purple-brown clay with a wide black core. There are

frequent fine shelly inclusions with occasional gravel and larger fragments up to 25mm long. This tile probably dates to between the 15th and 18th centuries.

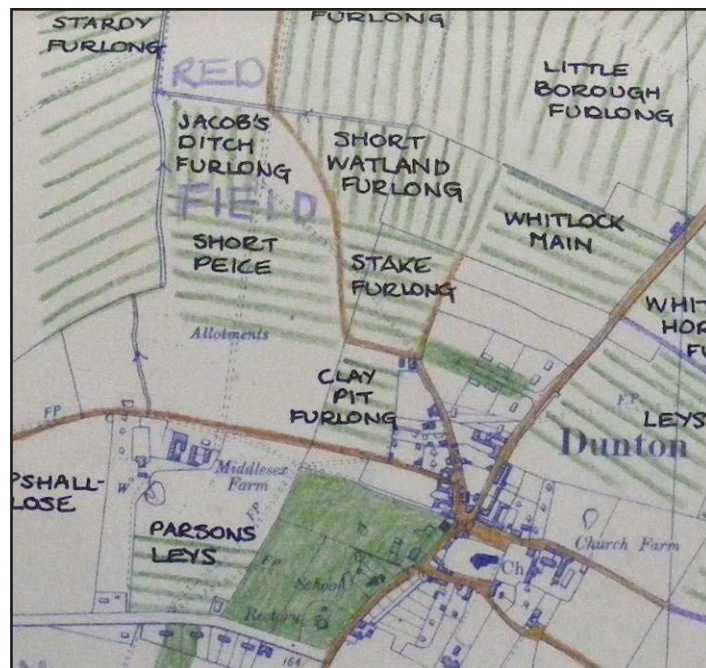
6.2 Animal bone

A total of 367g of animal bone were recovered from post-medieval clay pits; pit [504] upper fill (502), pit [507] upper fill (506), and pit [609] fill (608). Preservation of the animal bone was moderate with some damage and abrasion to the cortical bone and fragmentation, which was mostly due to old breaks.

The total number of fragments was seven, comprising two cattle long bones and rib and vertebrae fragments of a medium-sized mammal.

7 DISCUSSION

Remnant furrows of the medieval ridge and furrow field cultivation system, aligned north-west to south-east, still survive as very shallow gullies. In some trenches these markings are very faint and irregular; however, these generally match the ridge and furrow marked on the map (Fig 19, green lines). No evidence of ridge and furrow as earthworks remain. There were also two possible undated hedge lines aligned in a similar direction to the furrows.



Map 3- 1770 Pre-enclosure open fields and furlongs Fig 19
(taken from CRO:x1/75/1,1770)

A pre-enclosure map of the parish, dated 1770, indicates that the site lay in *Stake Furlong*. The eastern and southern boundaries of the furlong were formed by tracks. These boundaries have survived as the eastern and northern boundaries of the current site.

Immediately to the south was *Clay Pit Furlong*, suggesting the presence of clay pits at an earlier date, a possible indication of clay extraction. The features uncovered in Trenches 5 and 6, in the southern corner of the site may present the northern extent of the potential clay pits. A single post-medieval tile was uncovered from pit [609].

The open fields of the parish were enclosed in 1799. The northern and western boundaries of the site were created at this time. The track that formed the southern boundary of the former furlong appears to have been diverted through the centre of the newly created field and survives as the present footpath. The footpath is a continuation of Boot Lane.

8 CONCLUSION

The historic map evidence suggests that the site probably lies immediately outside the historic core of the village, but within the former open fields of the parish. The site was probably never occupied in the medieval period, and no medieval finds were recovered during the evaluation. The clay extraction, a marginal activity, during the post-medieval period may also suggest that the site lay at this time outside the village. Early OS maps show that development in this part of the village is relatively recent, possibly early 20th century. During the evaluation no evidence for any prehistoric or Roman activity was noted on the site.

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7 May 2013

APPENDIX: CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
1	25m x 1.6m NW-SE		47.88m aOD	0.28m, 47.60m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/samples
101	Topsoil	Dark grey-brown sandy clay with frequent stone inclusions	0.28m	-
102	Natural	Light yellow-brown clay and sand with frequent small to large stone, flint and chalk inclusions	-	-

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
2	25m x 1.6m SE-NW		48.00m aOD	0.26m, 47.74m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/samples
201	Topsoil	Dark grey-brown sandy clay with frequent stone inclusions	0.26m thick	-
202	Subsoil	Light yellow-brown clay and sand with frequent small to large stone, flint and chalk inclusions	-	-

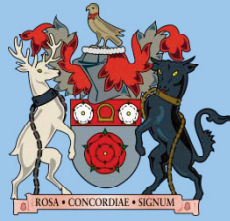
Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
3	25m x 1.6m NW-SE		48.35m aOD	0.24m, 48.11m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/samples
301	Topsoil	Dark grey-brown sandy clay with frequent stone inclusions	0.24m thick	-
302	Natural	Light yellow-brown clay and sand with frequent small to large stone, flint and chalk inclusions	-	-
303	Fill of [304]	Mid yellow-grey sandy clay with frequent stone, flint and chalk fragments	-	-
304	Cut of hedgerow	Uneven W-shaped gully due to root disturbance	0.12m deep 0.50m wide	-
305	Fill of [306]	Mid orange-brown silty clay with occasional to moderate stone inclusions	-	-
306	Cut of tree throw	Uneven semi-circular outline and base	-	-

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
4	25m x 1.6m SW-NE		49.03m aOD	0.36m, 48.67m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/samples
401	Topsoil	Dark grey-brown sandy clay with frequent stone inclusions	0.36m thick	-
402	Natural	Light yellow-brown clay and sand with frequent small to large stone, flint and chalk inclusions	-	-
403	Fill of [404]	Mid brown clay sand with infrequent small to medium sized pebble and occasional charcoal flecks	-	-
404	Cut hedgerow	Irregular V-shape, root disturbance	0.26m deep 0.70m wide	-

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
5	40m x 1.6m NNW-SSE		49.12m aOD	0.40m, 48.72m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/samples
501	Topsoil	Dark grey-brown sandy clay with frequent stone inclusions	0.40m thick	-
502	Fill of [504]	Mid brown-orange clay loam	0.55m thick	Animal bone
503	Natural	Light yellow-brown clay and sand with frequent small to large stone, flint and chalk inclusions	-	-
504	Cut of pit/ditch	Steep sloping sides	>0.80m deep >7.10m wide	-
505	Fill of [504]	Lower fill; light brown silty clay	>0.60m thick	-
506	Fill of [507]	Mid brown clay loam, merging boundaries	0.65m thick	Animal bone
507	Cut of pit/ditch	Vertical sides and flat broad base	0.75m deep 2.20m wide	-
508	Fill of [509]	Mid brown clay loam, merging boundaries	-	-
509	Cut of pit	Gently sloping sides, curved base	0.85m deep 1.40m wide	-
510	Fill of [507]	Mid brown-red clay loam, merging boundaries	0.20m thick	-

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
6	25m x 16m NW-SE		48.65m aOD	0.23m, 48.42m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/samples
601	Topsoil	Dark grey-brown sandy clay with frequent stone inclusions	0.23m thick	-
602	Natural	Light yellow-brown clay and sand with frequent small to large stone, flint and chalk inclusions	-	-
603	Fill of [604]	Mid orange-brown clay sand	-	-
604	Cut of furrow	Shallow, uneven base	0.08m deep 0.98m wide	-
605	Fill of [607]	Firm, clay silt, dark brown, occasional small to medium inclusions	0.60m thick	-
606	Fill of [607]	Firm, clay silt, mid orange-brown, occasional small inclusions	>0.30m thick	-
607	Cut of pit/pits	Steep sided, uncertain base	>0.90m deep >4.00m wide	-
608	Fill of [609]	Firm, silty clay, dark brown, moderate small to medium rounded stone	-	Ceramic roof tile and animal bone
609	Cut of pit	45° sloping sides and concave base	0.22m deep 0.66m wide	-
610	Fill of [611]	Firm, silty clay, dark brown, moderate small to medium rounded stone	-	-
611	Cut of pit	30° sloping sides, concave base	0.22m deep 1.04m wide	-

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
7	25m x 1.6m SE-NW		48.50m aOD	0.25m; 48.25m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/samples
701	Topsoil	Dark grey-brown sandy clay with frequent stone inclusions	0.25m thick	-
702	Natural	Light yellow-brown clay and sand with frequent small to large stone, flint and chalk inclusions	-	-



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