Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological trial trench evaluation of land at Crowfoot Way, Broughton Astley Leicestershire, February-March 2011 Accession No. X.A21.2011

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Report 11/74

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project title	Archaeological trial trench evaluation of land at Crowfoot Way, Broughton Astley, Leicestershire, February-March 2011	
Short description	In February-March 2011, an archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology on land at Crowfoot Way, Broughton Astley, Leicestershire. The evaluation was carried out in response to the submission of a planning application for the development of the land for a new residential development and areas of open space. A ditch, gully and posthole of prehistoric date were found, along with a medieval field boundary, and a modern trackway.	
Project type	Trial trench evaluation	
Site Status		
Previous work	Geophysical survey (NA) Desk-based assessment (CgMs)	
Current land use	Pasture	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type and period	None	
Significant finds	None	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Leicestershire	
Site address	Crowfoot Way, Broughton Astley	
Post code		
OS co-ordinates	SP 5297 9165	
Area (sq m/ha)	5.5 ha	
Height aOD	92m-100m	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)	
Project brief originator	Leicestershire County Council	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Nathan Flavell (NA)	
Project Manager	Adam Yates (NA), Mike Dawson (CgMs Consulting Ltd)	
Sponsor or funding body	CgMs Consulting Ltd	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	28/02/2011	
End date	02/03/2011	
ARCHIVES	**Location**	**Contents**
Physical	X.A21.2011	Pottery, flint, fired clay, animal bone
Paper		Site records (1 small archive box)
Digital		Client report PDF
BIBLIOGRAPHY	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)	
Title	Archaeological trial trench evaluation of land at Crowfoot Way, Broughton Astley, Leicestershire, February-March 2011	
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ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION OF LAND AT CROWFOOT WAY, BROUGHTON ASTLEY, LEICESTERSHIRE FEBRUARY-MARCH 2011

Abstract

In February-March 2011, an archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology on land at Crowfoot Way, Broughton Astley, Leicestershire. The evaluation was carried out in response to the submission of a planning application for the development of the land for a new residential development and areas of open space. A ditch, gully and posthole of prehistoric date were found, along with a medieval field boundary, and a modern trackway.

1 INTRODUCTION

In February-March 2011, an archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) on land at Crowfoot Way, Broughton Astley, Leicestershire (NGR: SP 5297 9165; Fig 1). The work was commissioned by CgMs Consulting on and was undertaken to inform a planning application for a proposed residential development and areas of public open spaces. The scope of works was outlined in the specification issued by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA 2011).

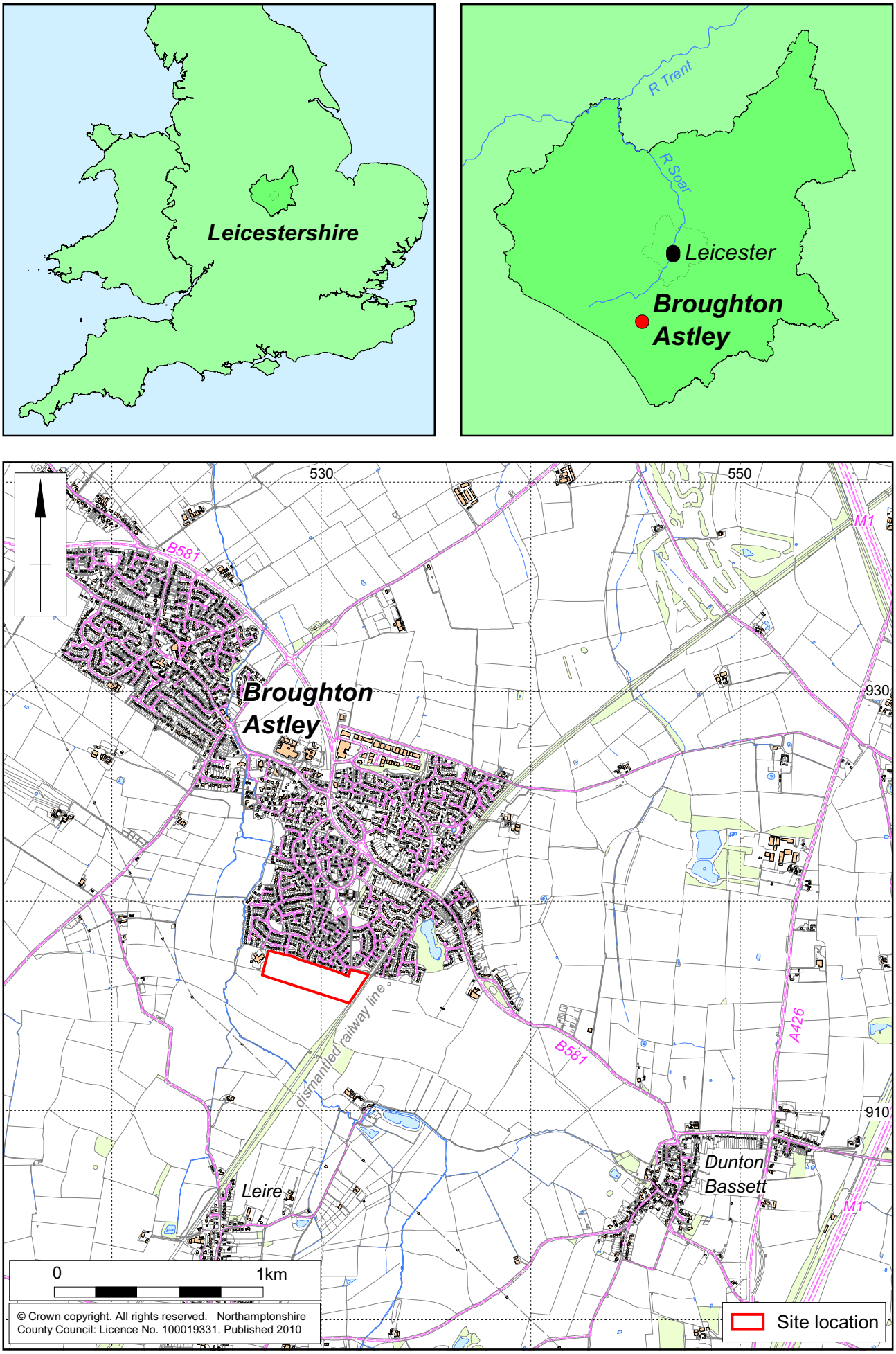
2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Topography and geology

The site is located to the south of Broughton Astley and is approximately 5.5ha in size. It is bounded by a dismantled railway to the east, and Hallbrook Primary School to the west. To the north lies a modern housing estate and the south is open fields.

There is a noticeable mound in the middle of the site, formed by a natural outcropping of sand, although his has been enhanced by rubble from the demolished pig sheds. The land drops down to the east, then gradually rises up toward the railway cutting. The ground level across the site lies between 92m-100m aOD.

The geology of the site comprises Thrussington Tills, Wolston Clays and Wolston sand and gravels (Diamicton) (www.bgs.ac.uk).



Scale 1:25,000

Site location Fig 1

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

Previous geophysical survey (Clements and Simmonds 2010) identified no potential archaeological features other than possible remnants of ridge and furrow ploughing. The principal recorded signals related to modern disturbance following the demolition of the structures that may have been a block of modern, 20th-century pig sheds.

The site has been examined by desk-based assessment (Dawson 2010). This determined that there were no known or undesignated heritage assets within the development area, although there was low potential for previously unknown assets to be present.

Two finds spots have been recorded in the immediate area on the Leicestershire Historic Environment Record (LHER). Two Neolithic burials were found during quarrying near Clump Hill, located to the south-east of the dismantled railway (LHER1318); and a Roman coin was found in 1958 to the south of the development area at Hall Farm (LHER7818).

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Objectives

The specific objectives of the project were set out in the WSI (NA 2011) as follows:

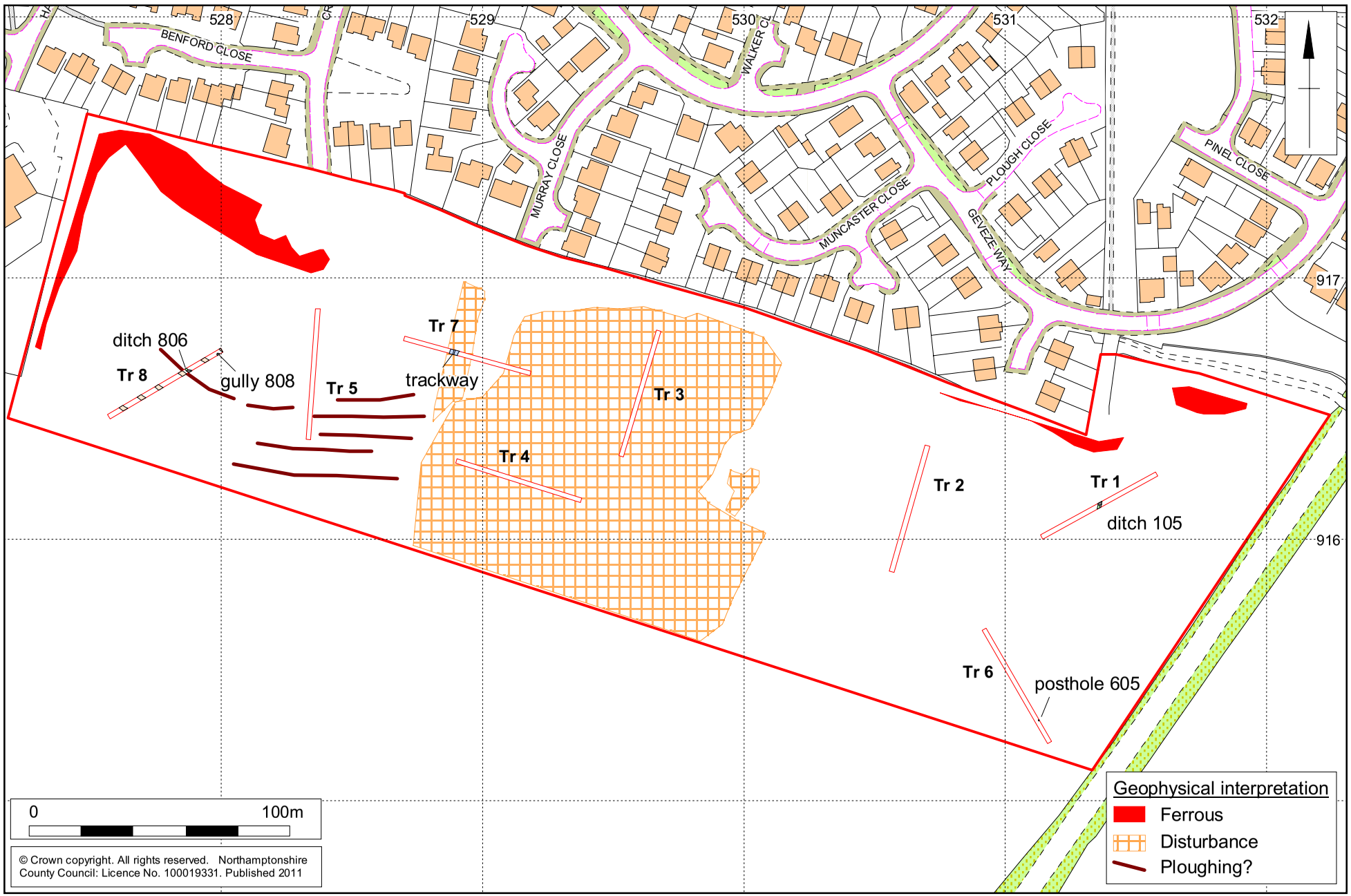
- Establish whether any archaeological deposit exists in the area with particular regard to any which merit preservation *in situ*.
- Identify the date, form and function of any archaeological deposit, together with its extent, depth and quality of preservation.
- Evaluate the likely impact of past land use and possible presence of masking ridge and furrow features.
- Establish the potential for the survival of environmental evidence.
- Provide sufficient information to construct an archaeological mitigation strategy, dealing with preservation, the recording of archaeological deposits, working practises, timetables and overheads.

3.2 Methodology

Eight trial trenches each 50m long and 1.8m wide were excavated in accordance with the specification (NA 2011) (Fig 2). These were targeted on anomalies identified by the geophysical survey and 'blank' areas.

A 360-degree tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket was used to remove overburden to archaeological levels or the natural substrate, whichever was encountered first. Furrows, where visible during machining, were removed with the machine to reveal any potential archaeology.

Topsoil and subsoil were removed under archaeological supervision to reveal the natural substrate. The topsoil and subsoil were stacked separately at the side of the excavated area. All procedures complied with Northamptonshire County Council Health and Safety provisions and Northamptonshire Archaeology Health and Safety at Work Guidelines.



Trench location plan showing archaeological features and geophysical anomalies

Fig 2

Each trench was cleaned sufficiently to define the exposed features, and the features were then excavated by hand to determine their date and character. All archaeological deposits were fully recorded, following standard NA procedures (NA 2006). The archaeological features and deposits were given separate context numbers. They were described on pro-forma context sheets to include details of the context, its relationships and interpretation. Artefacts and ecofacts were collected by hand and retained, receiving appropriate care prior to removal from site (Watkinson and Neal 1998). Unstratified animal bones and modern material were not retained.

The location of the trenches was surveyed using GPS and related to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. Trenches with archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:50 and Sections or profiles through features were drawn at a scale of 1:10, and related to Ordnance Datum. A full photographic record comprising 35mm black and white film and colour slides was maintained, supplemented with digital images. The field data, including that from the evaluation, has been compiled into a site archive with appropriate cross-referencing.

Monitoring of the programme of fieldwork was carried out by the Leicestershire Planning Archaeologist and CgMs Consulting Ltd. All works were conducted in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (IfA 1994, revised 2008) and the *Code of Conduct of the Institute for Archaeologists* (1985, revised 2010). In addition, all works complied with the guidelines detailed in *The Archaeology of the East Midlands* (Cooper 2006).

4 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

4.1 General stratigraphy

The underlying natural comprised superficial glacial till deposits and was encountered between 0.22-0.52m below the modern ground surface in Trenches 1, 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8. This generally occurred as yellow-orange sandy clay with frequent angular to sub-angular pebbles, and patches of gravels. In Trench 7 it comprised grey-orange sandy clay with ironstone mottling. The subsoil varied between grey-brown and yellow-brown sandy clay and was generally between 0.1m-0.25m thick across the site. The topsoil was dark brown silty-clay with some occasional small pebble inclusions, 0.15m-0.3m thick.

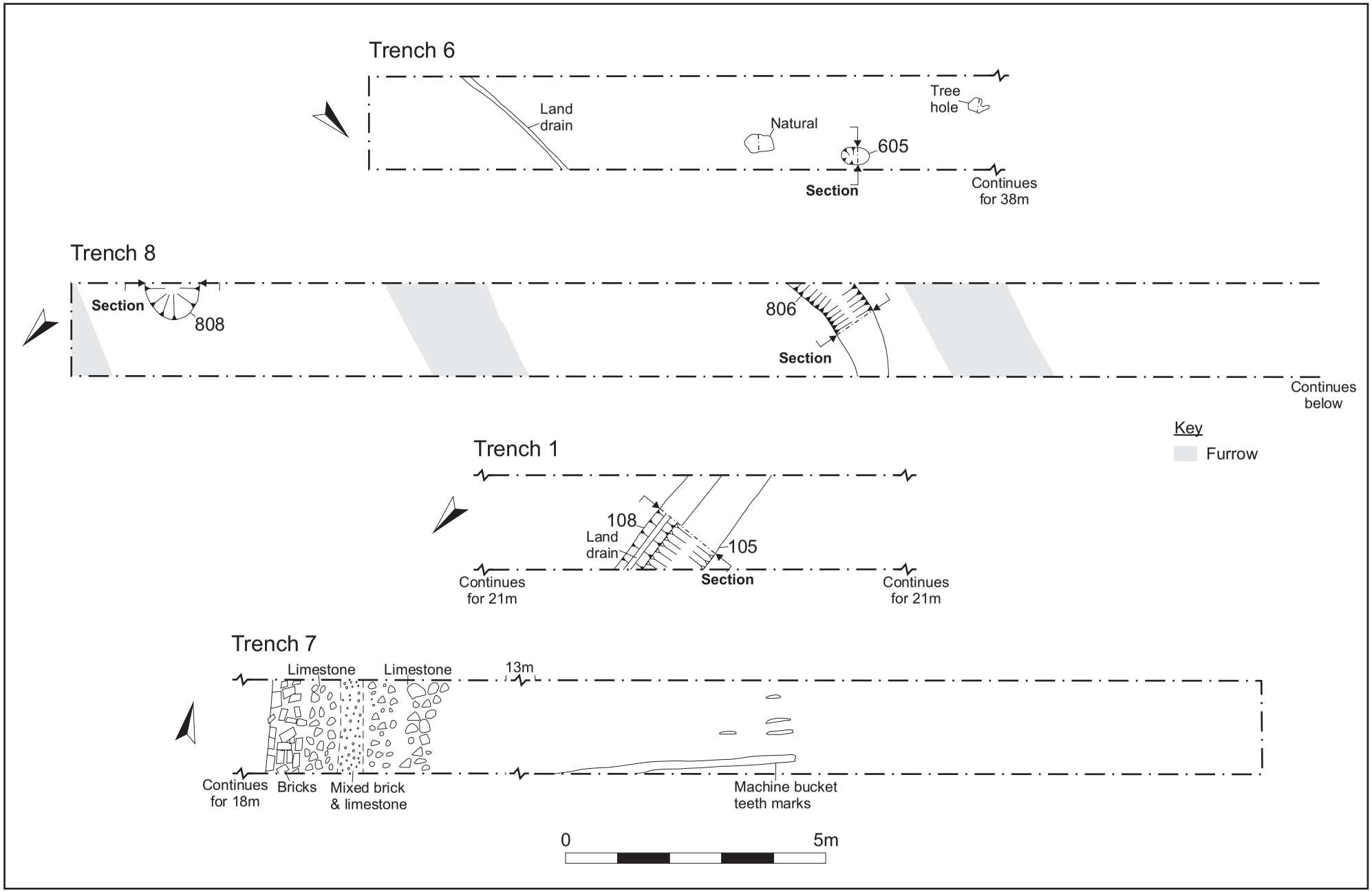
In Trenches 3 and 4 extensive areas of modern disturbance were encountered, probably derived from the demolition and levelling of former pig sties. The depth of these was investigated through a sondage in Trench 3, which encountered natural deposits at a depth of 2.85m below current ground surface.

Four archaeological features were found in Trenches 1, 6, and 8 (Fig 3). These comprised a ditch in Trench 1, a posthole in Trench 6, and a ditch and gully terminal in Trench 8. Pottery from these features was possibly Middle Iron Age in date. A modern trackway was present in Trench 7.

A number of amorphous features were present in Trenches 1-2, 5-6 and 8 which, when excavated, proved to be vegetatational disturbance.

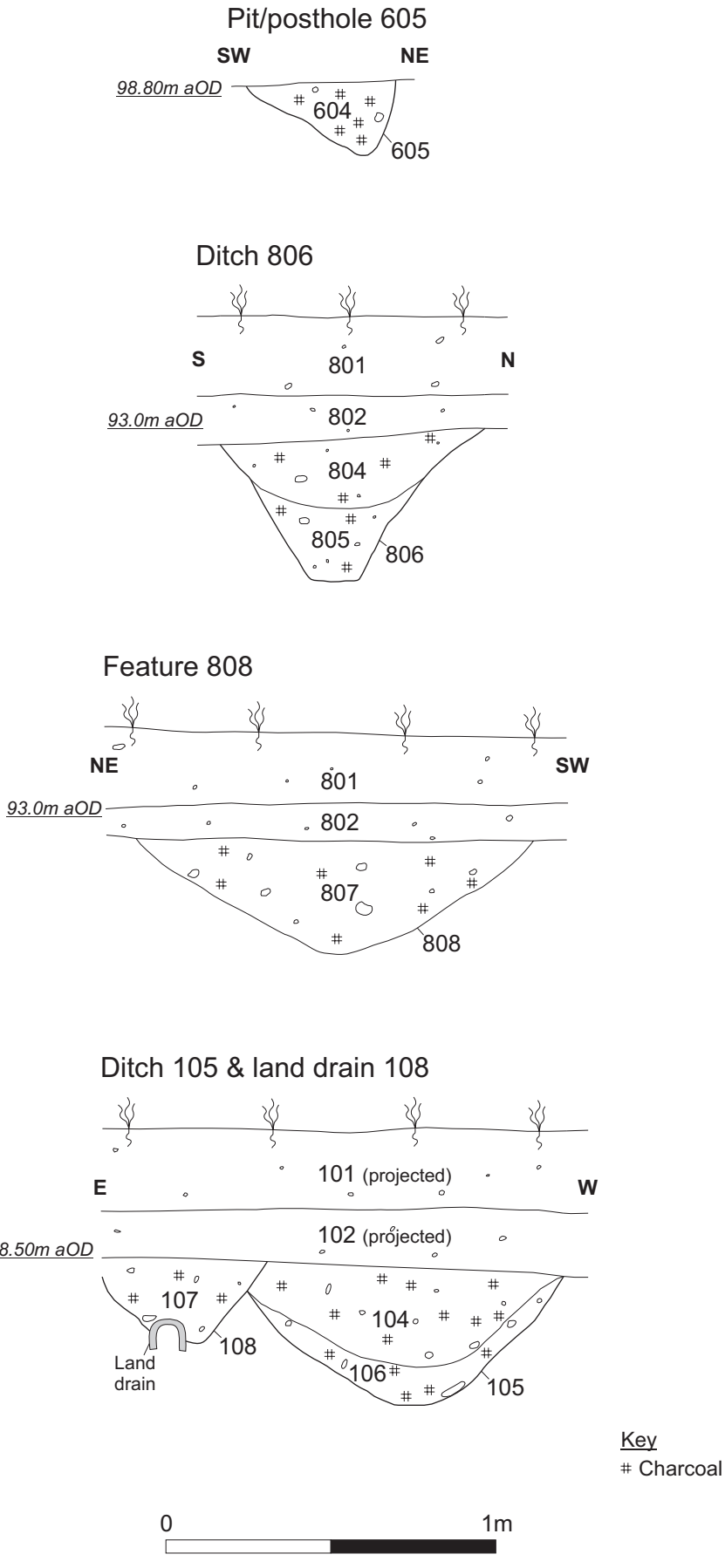
Trenches 5 and 8 contained remnants of ridge and furrow aligned in approximate east-west direction, with a slight curve. The furrows were generally 2m wide, with some variations, and were be up to 4m apart. Land drains were also encountered in Trenches 1-2, 5-6, and 8.

A full inventory of contexts is included as an Appendix.



Scale 1:100

Plans of Trenches 6, 8, 1 & 7 Fig 3



Scale 1:20 Sections of posthole 605 and ditches 806, 808, and 105 Fig 4

4.2 The archaeological evidence

Trench 6

Natural geology was encountered at a depth of between 0.41m-0.49m across the trench. There was a single posthole.

Posthole [605] (Figs 3, 4 and 5) was circular in shape with a diameter of 0.45m, and was 0.22m deep. It was steeper to one side, with a shallow edge opposite. The fill (604) was dark mottled grey silty-clay with occasional charcoal inclusions, 0.04m thick. Within the fill medium-sized stones were present that could have been packing for a post. Three sherds and a number of crumbs of pottery of possible Middle Iron Age date were recovered from the fill, together with fired clay fragments. Assessment of a sample from this fill produced charcoal and low quantities of cereal and weed seeds and two pieces of unidentifiable animal bone.

Posthole [605], looking north-west Fig 5

Trench 8

Within this trench was a ditch [806] and a gully terminal [808]. Ditch [806], aligned north-west to south-east with a slight curve, was 0.8m wide and 0.43m deep (Figs 3, 4 and 6). It had steep sloping sides and a flat, narrow base. The lower fill (805) was mid grey-brown silty-clay with occasional small stones and charcoal flecking 0.22m thick. This was overlain by dark grey-brown silty-clay (804), 0.21m thick, which produced possibly Middle Iron Age pottery, a worked flint and fragments of bone from a large ungulate.

The gully terminal [808] was partially in the south-east section of the trench, 0.31m below the ground surface (Figs 3, 4 and 7). It was 1.2m wide and 0.33m deep, and had a concave profile. The fill was dark grey sandy-clay (807) with occasional small stones and charcoal flecking. The fill contained prehistoric pottery of possibly Middle Iron Age date. A sample from this feature produced some charcoal and low

quantities of cereal and weed seeds. This feature seems to correspond with a partial linear area of magnetic disturbance identified by the geophysical survey.

Ditch [806], looking west Fig 6

Gully [808], looking south-east Fig 7

Both features were sealed by a layer of subsoil (802), 0.1m thick, with 0.24m of topsoil (801).

Trench 1

Ditch [105] was encountered at 0.4m below the current ground surface (Figs 3, 4 and 8). It was aligned north-south, 0.96m wide and 0.4m deep, with a deep concave profile. The lower fill was red-brown sandy-clay (106) 0.1m deep, with some small stone inclusions. This was overlain by mid brown-grey silty-clay (104) 0.3m deep, with occasional small stones which contained medieval pottery. The ditch was cut by a ceramic land drain on the east side [108]. Both were sealed by 0.14m of subsoil (102), and 0.24m of topsoil overlaying that.

Ditch [105] and land drain [108], looking south Fig 8

Trench 7

Trench 7 contained a modern trackway (Figs 3 and 9). It was 3.1m wide, 0.15m below the current ground surface. It was constructed from compacted stone and brick rubble. The edges were defined by bricks on the east side, and rough granite stone on the west. There were two clearly defined parallel wheel ruts containing 20th century pottery. The ruts had been in filled partially by natural silting, and partially from refuse deriving from demolition of the associated pig sheds.

Track way (703) looking south Fig 9

5 THE FINDS

5.1 The worked flint by Yvonne Wolframm-Murray

One piece of core shatter was recovered from fill (804) of ditch [806]. The condition of the piece was good and a thermal heat-spall was present. The vitreous flint was dark grey in colour with a smooth dark brown cortex. The source of the raw material was possibly local gravel flint. The worked flint is not directly dateable.

5.2 Prehistoric pottery by Andy Chapman

A total of only seven sherds, plus crumbs, of probable hand-built prehistoric pottery, weighing 13g, came from three features and in two instances there were also small pieces of fired clay, a total of ten sherds plus crumbs, weighing 27g (Table 1).

Table 1: Quantification of prehistoric pottery

Fill/cut	Sherds	Weight (g)	Fired clay Sherds/weight (g)
604/605 posthole	3 + crumbs	5	5 +crumbs/15g
804/806 ditch	4 + crumbs	5	--
807/808 ditch	Crumbs only	3	5 +crumbs/12g
Totals	**7**	**13**	**10/27g**

The pottery

Posthole [605] contains small sherds and crumbs, brown to brown-grey in colour, which are all in a sandy fabric, containing fine rounded quartz (Leicestershire Fabric Q1, Quartz Sand Temper (Marsden 1998, 45-46)). Ditch [806] contains small sherds, grey in colour, which are also all in a sandy fabric, containing fine rounded quartz, which are. The crumbs of pottery from ditch [808] are grey with brown or orange surfaces, and are also in a sandy fabric.

Given the presence of only small sherds and crumbs, and a total absence of any diagnostic features, it is difficult to provide any chronology beyond stating that they are from hand-built vessels and the predominance of dark colours would be appropriate for the Middle Iron Age, as would the presence of associated fired clay.

The fired clay

The fired clay from posthole [605] comprises small fragments and crumbs, up 13mm thick, in an oxidised, orange, fabric containing grit and small pebbles up to 12mm across. A couple of fragments retain a smooth surface, and it is possible that the fragments may have come from a loomweight. The fired clay from ditch [808] is more variable in colour, ranging from dull orange-brown to brown and grey-brown, with coarse sand inclusions.

5.3 The medieval and post-medieval pottery by Iain Soden

A total of seven sherds of medieval and modern pottery was recovered from contexts 104 (4 sherds weighing 14g) and 703 (3 sherds, weighing 191g).

Those from (104) are very small, abraded gritty coarsewares, probably cooking pot, of indeterminate medieval origin. They have a grey core and oxidised orange surfaces, all surfaces and most edges being very hard and gritty (Leicestershire Type Series MS, Davies and Sawday 1999). They probably date between *c*1100 and *c*1400 and derive their gritty feel from the inclusion of regular, but ill-sorted sub-rounded to angular quartz temper. Their heavy abrasion suggests they have been weathered on the surface for some time after breakage.

The three sherds of modern ceramic from (703) comprise fragments from modern sanitary stoneware, formed around a mould and glazed white. They are of 20th-century date and probably derive from a sink or toilet cistern.

5.4 The animal bone by Karen Deighton

A total of 27g of animal bone was collected by hand from context (804). This material is indentified as a pelvic fragment, a scapula fragment and three long bone fragments of a large ungulate. Preservation was very poor with all bones fragmented and highly abraded.

Animal bone from sieved samples is included (Table 2). Sieve sizes were 1mm, 2mm and 3.4mm.

Table 2: Sieved animal bone by context and sample

Sample	**1**	**2**
Fill/cut	**807/808**	**604/605**
Feature	**gully**	**posthole**
Date	**prehistoric**	**prehistoric**
Volume (litres)	**40**	**40**
Weight of bone (g)	43	2
Taxa	indet	indet

The poor preservation and paucity of bone suggests the potential of any further work would be extremely limited.

5.5 Charred plant material by Karen Deighton

Two bulk soil samples were collected. This material was assessed to determine the presence, nature and preservation of ecofacts and to inform on any future sampling strategies (Table 3).

The samples were processed using a siraf tank fitted with a 250micron mesh and flot sieve. The resulting flot and residue were dried. The flot was sorted with the aid of a microscope (10x magnification). Residues were dry sieved (3.4mm, 1mm) and the 3.4mm retent sorted by eye. The 1mm retent was scanned using a microscope.

On the whole charcoal was heavy comminuted rendering any further identification very difficult. Cereal grains were fragmentary and abraded, again rendering classification problematical

Table 3: Ecofacts by sample and context

Sample	**1**	**2**
Fill/cut	**807/808**	**604/605**
Feature	**gully**	**posthole**
date	**prehistoric**	**prehistoric**
Volume (litres)	**40**	**40**
Charcoal	10+	50+
Spelt (*T. Spelta)*	-	1
Wheat/barley (*Triticum*/*Hordeum)*	1	-
Cereal	2	3
Fat hen (*C. Album)*	-	1
Sheep sorrel (*R. Acetosella)*	-	1

The wild/weed taxa present are common crop weeds. Fat hen is an annual and sheep sorrel is a perennial, however, data are insufficient to make comments on crop regimes.

The limited range of ecofacts and poor preservation encountered suggests the potential of any future sampling to aid in the understanding of the nature and economy of the site or to provide any inform on the local palaeoenvironment would be restricted.

6 DISCUSSION

The features identified in Trenches 6 and 8 are of probable Middle Iron Age date. The isolated nature of the features together with the low artfactual and ecofactual counts are suggestive of non-intensive dispersed activity. The use of the posthole is unknown, and at present there is no evidence to suggest it formed part of a structure. The gully and ditch may have formed parts of boundaries or enclosures.

The ditch in Trench 1 is probably of a medieval to post-medieval date. While the pottery is datable to the 12th–15th centuries, its abraded nature points to it being present in the plough soil when the ditch was eventually filled in. The ditch itself is likely to be the continuation of the field boundary to the north, and which may have well been filled in when the railway truncated across the field in the 19th century, when it was replaced by a ceramic field drain.

The backfill present in Trenches 3, 4 and 7, is associated with demolition of the modern pig sheds in the 1970s, and the trackway present in Trench 7, served as an access to these.

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APPENDIX: CONTEXT DATA

Trench No	**Length, width & alignment**	**NGR**	**Surface height**	**Depth & height of natural**
1				
Context	***Context type Feature & type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
101	Topsoil	Mid grey-brown sandy-clay	0.23m-0.3m thick	
102	Subsoil	Mid yellow-brown sandy-clay	0m-0.17m thick	
103	Natural	Grey-brown silty-clay		
104	Fill of ditch [105]	Mid brown-grey sand-clay	0.3m thick	Medieval pottery
105	Cut of ditch	N-S linear	0.96m wide	
106	Fill of ditch	Red-brown sandy-clay	0.1m thick	

Trench No	**Length, width & alignment**	**NGR**	**Surface height**	**Depth & height of natural**
2				
Context	***Context type Feature & type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
201	Topsoil	Dark brown sandy-clay	0.2m-0.25m thick	
202	Subsoil	Mid-brown sandy-clay	0.1m-0.2m thick	
203	Natural	Yellow-orange clay/sand and pink clay with pebble areas		

Trench No	**Length, width & alignment**	**NGR**	**Surface height**	**Depth & height of natural**
3				
Context	***Context type Feature & type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
301	Topsoil	Dark brown sandy-loam	0.3m thick	
302	Subsoil	Mid-brown silty-clay	0.2m-0.3m thick	
303	Layer	Red-orange clay-sand with patches of yellow clay		
304	Layer	Grey-brown sandy-clay		
305	Layer	Black clay		
306	Natural	Green-yellow clay		

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
4				
Context	***Context type Feature & type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
401	Topsoil	Dark brown sandy-loam	0.3m thick	
402	Subsoil	Mid-brown sandy-clay	0.2m-0.35m	
403	Layer	Modern demolition		

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
5				
Context	***Context type Feature & type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
501	Topsoil	Dark brown clay-loam	0.15m-0.22m thick	
502	Subsoil	Mid brown sandy-clay	0.12m-0.15m thick	
503	Natural	Mid yellow-orange sandy-clay		

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
6				
Context	***Context type Feature & type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
601	Topsoil	Brown-grey sandy-clay	0.15m-0.26m thick	
602	Subsoil	Orange-yellow sandy-clay	0.1m-0.2m thick	
603	Natural	Yellow-grey sandy-clay		
604	Fill of posthole	Dark mottled grey sandy-clay	0.22m thick	Prehistoric pottery Sample 2
605	Cut of posthole	Circular, with one steep side, and one shallow side	0.45m diameter	

Trench No	**Length, width & alignment**	**NGR**	**Surface height**	**Depth & height of natural**
7				
Context	***Context type Feature & type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
701	Topsoil	Mid brown sandy loam	0.15m-0.36m thick	
702	Layer	Mid-dark brown sandy clay mix	0.1m-0.15m thick	
703	Trackway	N-S linear	3.1m wide	Modern pottery
704	Natural	Grey-orange sandy-clay with ironstone mottling		

Trench No	**Length, width & alignment**	**NGR**	**Surface height**	**Depth & height of natural**
8				
Context	***Context type Feature & type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
801	Topsoil	Dark brown clay-loam	0.2m-0.3m thick	
802	Subsoil	Mid brown sandy-clay	0.m-0.122m thick	
803	Natural	Mid brown-orange clay with stone inclusions		
804	Fill of ditch [806]	Dark grey-brown silty-clay	0.21m thick	Prehistoric pottery SF 1 Flint Bone
805	Fill of ditch [806]	Mid grey-brown silty-clay	0.22m thick	
806	Cut of ditch	NW-SE linear, narrow profile	0.8m wide	
807	Fill of gully [808]	Dark grey sandy-clay	0.33m thick	Prehistoric pottery Bone Sample 1
808	Cut of gully	Circular gully terminal	1.2m wide	

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