



Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION:
LAND AT FOX HOUSE
HILGAY, NORFOLK**

*on behalf of
Mr & Mrs Muskett*



**By
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ASC: 643/HCR/2

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Site Data

<i>ASC project code:</i>	HCR	<i>ASC Project No:</i>	643
<i>Norfolk Landscape Archaeology code:</i>	41220HLG		
<i>County:</i>	Norfolk		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Hilgay		
<i>Civil Parish:</i>	Hilgay		
<i>NGR (to 8 figs):</i>	TL 6218 9837		
<i>Present use:</i>	Garden		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Outline planning permissions for development		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	04/2160/O		
<i>Local Planning Authority:</i>	King's Lynn and West Norfolk		
<i>Date of fieldwork:</i>	2 nd March 2005		
<i>Client:</i>	Mr & Mrs Muskett		
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Internal Quality Check

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Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

Summary

In March 2005 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Fox House, Hilgay, Norfolk. The site was close to the village church and offered the potential to reveal archaeological remains of the medieval period. Seven trial trenches were excavated and recorded, but archaeological remains were not observed. The site was largely undisturbed and if archaeological remains are present in the area, they probably lie beyond the southern boundary of the site.

1 Introduction

1.1 Planning Background

Mr and Mrs Muskett intend undertaking development at Fox House, Hilgay, Norfolk. Two applications have been made to *Kings Lynn and West Norfolk District Council* in support of the development and, in line with the guidance contained in the document PPG16 *Archaeology and Planning* the Senior Archaeologist of *Norfolk Landscape Archaeology* advised that the site may be archaeologically sensitive, required the developer to commission an archaeological evaluation prior to the development and issued a *brief* for the works (Hutcheson 2004).

1.2 The developer commissioned *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd (ASC)* to prepare a project design (Fell 2005) and to undertake the evaluation. This document presents the results of the fieldwork.

1.3 Location

The site is situated in Hilgay, in the administrative district of King's Lynn and West Norfolk (Fig. 1). It lies in the historic core of the village, north of the church and is centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference (NGR) TL 6218 9837 (Fig. 2).

1.4 Description

The site is a domestic garden, at the intersection of Church Road and Lawrence's Lane and largely comprises lawn. Fox House is situated in an 'L shaped' plot of land with access from the southwest and southeast. The land on the west side of the house comprises lawn with a central gazebo with a small central gazebo. That to the east and north is also lawn with a number of mature trees, hedges and a small outbuilding. A gravel drive lies to the south of the house.

1.5 Geology & Topography

Hilgay lies on an 'island' within the fens, to the south of the river Wissey (Fig. 1). Locally the ground rises to a maximum elevation of *c.*20m OD and the site lies on the margin of the higher area at an elevation of *c.*12m OD. The natural soils comprise the *Newport 2 Association*; namely well drained sandy soils over glaciofluvial drift (Soil Association 1983, 551e).

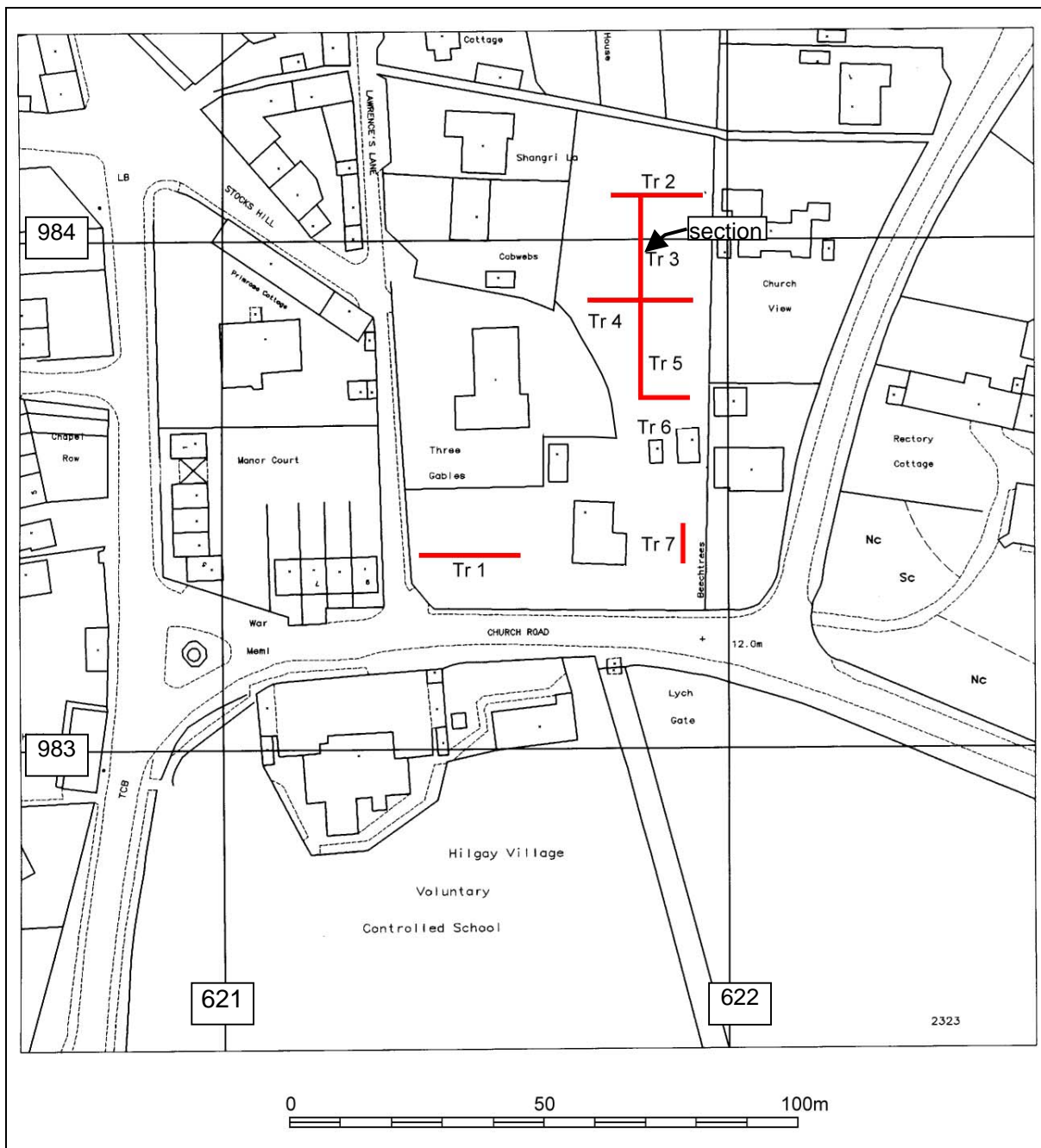


Figure 2: Site plan showing the locations of the trenches (scale 1:1250)

2 Aims & Methods

2.1 Aims

As described in the *brief* (Section 4), the aims of the evaluation were:

- to recover as much information as possible on the extent, date, phasing, character, function, status and significance of the site
- to determine the state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits within the site

The *brief* was compiled in response to the application for development on the west side of the house (application no. 04/2160/O). Following discussion with the Senior Archaeologist of *Norfolk Landscape Archaeology*, it was agreed that the aims and methods could also be applied to the second application. Consequently, a separate *brief* was not issued for the development on the north side of the existing house.

2.2 Standards

The work conformed to the project design, to the relevant sections of the Institute of Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (IFA 2000) and *Standard & Guidance Notes* (IFA 2001), to the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers East of England Region *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (ALGAO 2003), and to the relevant sections of ASC's own *Operations Manual*.

2.3 Methods

The work was carried out according to the *brief* (Section 4), which required:

- archaeological trial trenching of the site
- A 5% sample was excavated, amounting to c.110m of trial trenches. The trenches were located to the garden of Fox House, to the north and west of the existing building. The locations of the trenches are shown on Figure 2.

3 Archaeological & Historical Background

SMR = Sites and Monuments Record

- 3.1 Hilgay is an area of considerable archaeological and historical importance (Page, 1906). The site has the potential to reveal evidence of a variety of periods, but the focus of interest was considered to lie in the medieval period.
- 3.2 There is only extremely limited evidence for prehistoric activity in the area. Prehistoric settlement may be anticipated on the islands in the fens, including Hilgay and Southery and a single sherd of prehistoric flint gritted pot has been found at Hilgay in a field west of churchyard (SMR 15871).
- 3.3 The area was away from the main population centres and communication routes of the Roman period, but Roman buildings were situated on the fen edge at Feltwell 10km southeast of the Hilgay. Roman remains have not been recorded in the village.
- 3.4 The present village of Hilgay may have originated during the Saxon period, exploiting an 'island' of higher land, rising out of the fens. Little is known of the early development of the village, but finds of early Saxon pot, a spear and a pin in the churchyard (SMR 4453) indicate that this area may have been included within the Saxon settlement.
- 3.5 The first documentary reference to the village occurs in 974 AD in a grant by King Edgar to Ramsey Abbey. The area is referred to as *Hillingeiae*, which may mean 'the the island of Hypla's people' (Ekwall 1977, 239). At the time of the Domesday survey (1086), the land was held by *W de Warenne* and was referred to as *Hidingheia*.
- 3.6 It is likely that the medieval village was centred on the church of All Saints, which is situated c.200m south of the site. The area around the church is now largely unoccupied and the village may have shrunk during the medieval period, perhaps as a result of the '*Black Death*' or other factors. The present village occupies the northern part of the island, but remains of the medieval settlement may be present within the site, extending to the south towards the church.
- 3.7 The layout of the medieval village is not fully understood. The land on the northern margin of the 'island', close to the south bank of the river Wissey was of importance and an earthwork site, interpreted as 'manorial' is present (SMR 4454). It comprises three individual moated sites in a row, the largest, possibly principal site being situated to the west.
- 3.8 All Saints Church (SMR 4453) is situated south of the site. The earliest elements of the present building date to the 14th century, but the tower is a later addition, dated 1794. Given the likely early origin of the site, it is possible that the present building may have been constructed on the site of an earlier church. An archaeological watching brief was undertaken northeast of the church in 2000, but no archaeological remains were observed (SMR 35195).

- 3.9 The late 19th century layout of the village is shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey map, published in 1891 (Fig. 3). The site is shown as open land, part of several more extensive plots between Church Road and Lawrence's Lane.
- 3.10 Fox House is an early 20th century red brick building, constructed on the north side of Church Road. The grounds extending to the west of the building largely comprise lawn, with a central gazebo. A number of similar houses were constructed in surrounding plots, part of a significant expansion of the village during the first half of the 20th century.

4 Results

4.1 Introduction

The following paragraphs provide a summary of the results of the trial trenches. A full description of all contexts, with illustrations of the trenches, is offered in Appendix 1.

Seven trenches were excavated across the sites and were distributed in order to provide as wide a sample as possible (Figure 2).

4.2 The Trial Trenches

4.2.1 Trenches 1 and 2

Trenches 1 and 2 were situated in the southwest and northern parts of the site respectively. The topsoil (102), (202) was 0.3-0.4m thick and comprised greyish brown loam. The underlying subsoil (101), (201) consisted of yellowish brown silty clay, which was thicker (c.0.5m) in Trench 2. The natural strata comprised a yellowish brown sandy ironstone rich deposit (100), (200). This deposit was revealed at a depth of c.0.4m in Trench 1 but was significantly deeper (0.8m) in Trench 2.

Archaeological deposits or artefacts were not observed in Trenches 1 and 2.

4.2.2 Trench 3 (Figure 3)

Trench 3 was situated in the north part of the site and was aligned north to south.

The topsoil (301) was similar to that in Trenches 1 and 2 and comprised greyish loam. This was 0.3m deep and overlay a light greyish brown sandy clay subsoil (302), which was c.0.8m deep. A deposit of greyish brown clay (303) was present below the subsoil, in the south part of the trench. A sample was excavated through this deposit, which was c.0.2m deep and extended in a southerly direction, into Trench 4. It is interpreted as a localised deposit of silt or alluvium, within a minor depression in the underlying natural strata. This is not archaeologically significant.

A linear cut (304) was present at the north part of the trench. It was aligned east to west and was 0.5m wide and 0.13m deep. It was filled with a deposit of homogenous greyish brown silty clay (304). No dating evidence was present in this feature.

No significant archaeological deposits or artefacts were observed in this trench.

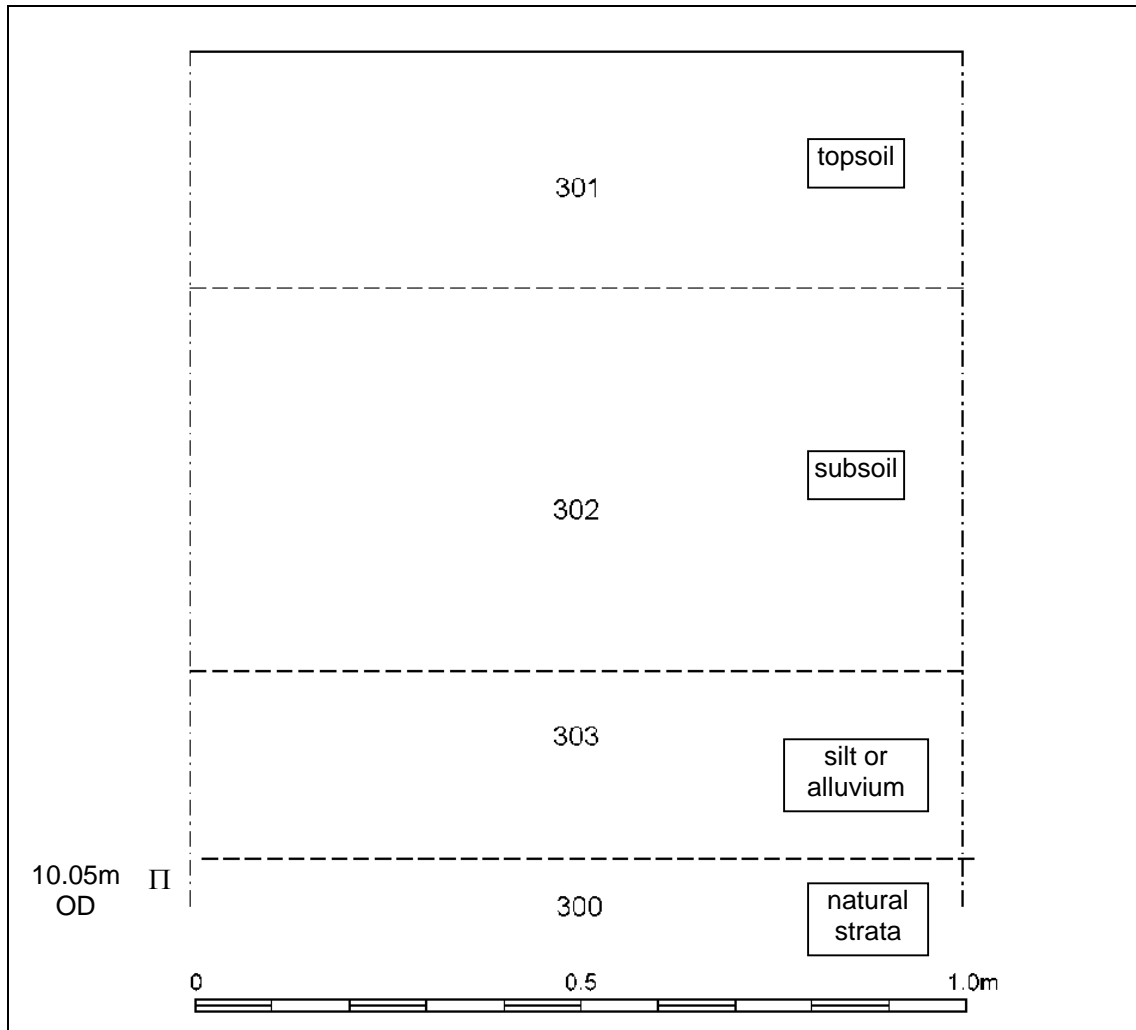


Figure 3: West facing section of Trench 3
(Centred on NGR TL 62181 98395)

4.2.3 *Trenches 4 to 7*

The remaining trenches were situated in the south part of the site. They were all of similar character with topsoil between 0.3 and 0.4m deep. The subsoil was generally slightly deeper in the northern trenches where it was up to 0.5m deep. The natural strata was also deeper to the north. It was present at a depth c.1.1m in Trench 4 in comparison to 0.5m in Trench 7.

All these trenches contained a number of minor modern pits/ intrusions. They were typically subrectangular or oval in shape and contained obviously modern debris. They were not archaeologically significant and were not excavated. The southern edge of the silt/alluvium present in Trench 3 was present at the north edge of Trench 4.

Archaeological deposits or artefacts were not observed in these trenches.



Plate 1: View of the lawn to the west of the house, during the excavation of Trench 1



Plate 2: View of Trenches 2 and 3 during excavation

5. Conclusions

5.1 *Confidence rating*

The fieldwork successfully addressed the project aims. Conditions for the fieldwork were good and the trenches were opened in dry overcast conditions. Full co-operation was received from the client and machine contractor and a high confidence rating is attached to the results of the evaluation.

5.2 *Discussion*

The natural soil deposits were observed across the site and comprised the turf and topsoil above silty clay subsoil. The natural strata, was reached in all the trenches and comprised mixed iron rich yellowish brown sand and ironstone. The soils were deeper in the northern part of the site. The depth of the natural strata ranged between 0.4m at the southern end of the site (Trench 1) and 0.8m (Trench 2). A slight natural depression was present in the central area (Trenches 3 and 4) where a band of grey silt or alluvium (303), (408) was present at the base of the trenches in this area. The base of the natural strata was at a depth of 1.1m in Trench 4.

5.3 The site was relatively undisturbed. The soil layers retained their natural profiles, and became deeper towards the north, as the ground sloped down towards the river Wissey. A small number of pits and intrusions were present, generally in the south part of the site. These were modern and not archaeologically significant. The soils in the north part of the site were undisturbed.

5.4 In all the trenches the spoil heaps were examined for artefacts, but nothing earlier than the mid 20th century was present.

5.5 Archaeological features were not observed in the trenches and no activity pre-dating the modern period was discovered. The occasional survival of isolated archaeological features away from the trenches cannot be excluded, but it is unlikely that a large quantity of archaeological features or artefacts are present on the site.

5.6 Little archaeological work has taken place in Hilgay and the nature and extent of the medieval and earlier settlement pattern is not fully understood. The parish church is situated c.200m south of the site and may have formed the focus of the settlement during the medieval period, exploiting a minor area of higher ground within the surrounding fens. If this hypothesis is correct, the settlement may not have extended very far to the north of the church and the site was probably beyond the northern limit of the settlement. The higher ground continues for c.1km east of the church and it is possible that medieval settlement may have been located in this area, perhaps in the area of Wood Hall or Rose Hill Farm.

6. Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to Mr and Mrs Muskett for sponsoring the evaluation and for their interest in the project. Data from the Norfolk Sites and Monuments Record was provided by Mr Edwin Rose and Andrew Hutcheson BSc MIFA of *Norfolk Landscape Archaeology* acted as curatorial monitor.

The fieldwork was managed for *ASC Ltd* by Jonathan Hunn BA PhD MIFA, assisted by David Fell BA MA MIFA. The report was prepared by David Fell and edited by Bob Zeepvat BA MIFA.

7. Archive

7.1 The project archive will comprise:

1. Brief
2. Project Design
3. Initial Report
4. Site records
5. List of photographs/slides
6. photographs
7. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

7.2 The archive will be deposited with *Norfolk Museums Service*: Archive number 41220HLG.

8. References


Standards & Specifications


- ALGAO 2003 *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper **14**.
- EH 1991 *The Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2nd edition. English Heritage (London).
- EH 2002 *Environmental Archaeology: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods, from Sampling and Recovery to Post-Excavation*. English Heritage (London).
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- IFA 2000a Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct*.
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- McKinley J.I. & Roberts C. 1993 *Excavation and Post-Excavation Treatment of Cremated and Inhumed Human Remains*. Institute of Field Archaeologists Technical Paper **13**.


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- Eckwall 1977 *The Oxford Dictionary of English Place Names*
- Page W (ed), 1906 *The Victoria History of the County of Norfolk*.
- Soil Survey 1983 *1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend* (Harpندن).


Appendix 1: Trench Summary Tables


Trench 1						
	Max Dimensions					
	Length	20m	Width	1.6m	Depth	c.0.6m
	Levels					
	Trench top east		12.29m OD			
	Trench base east		11.36m OD			
	Trench top west		12.29m OD			
	Trench base west		11.89m OD			
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	E	TL 62147 98338	W	TL 62137 98338		
	Orientation		East to West			
Reason for Trench		Evaluation of unknown area				
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)	
102	Layer	Dark greyish brown sandy friable loam. Topsoil	-	c.200	0	
101	Layer	Dark yellowish brown silty clay. Occasional pebbles. Subsoil	-	c.200	c.200	
100	Layer	Yellowish brown sand & ironstone. Natural strata	-	200+	c.400	


Trench 2						
	Max Dimensions					
	Length	18.2m	Width	1.6m	Depth	c.0.8m
	Levels					
	Mid point top		10.74m OD			
	Mid point base		10.21m OD			
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	E	TL 62194 98408	W	62175 98408		
	Orientation		East to West			
	Reason for Trench		Evaluation of unknown area			
	Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)
202	Layer	Dark greyish brown sandy friable loam. Topsoil	-	300	-	
201	Layer	Dark yellowish brown silty clay. Subsoil	-	500	300	
200	Layer	Natural strata	-	Un-exc	800	

Trench 3						
	Max Dimensions					
	Length	21m	Width	1.6m	Depth	c.1.3m
	Levels					
	Trench top north			10.74m OD		
	Trench base north			10.21m OD		
	Trench top south			-11.18		
	Trench base south			9.88m OD		
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	N	TL 62181 98408		S	TL 62181 98368	
	Orientation			North to South		
Reason for Trench			Evaluation of unknown area			
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)	
301	Layer	Dark greyish brown sandy friable loam. Topsoil	-	300	-	
302	Layer	Light greyish brown sandy clay. Subsoil	-	800	300	
303	Layer	Greyish brown clay. Silt or alluvium? Continuous with (408) in Trench 4	-	200	1.1m	
305	Fill	Greyish brown silty clay. Filling of [304]	500	130	650	
304	Cut	E-W aligned linear cut. Shallow gully?	500	130	650	
300	Layer	Yellowish brown iron rich clay. Natural Strata	-	Un-exc	650	

Trench 4						
	Max Dimensions					
	Length	21m	Width	1.6m	Depth	c.1.1m
	Levels					
	Trench top centre		11.99m OD			
	Trench base centre		9.88m OD			
			-			
			-			
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	E	TL 62191 98387		W	TL 62171 98387	
	Orientation			East to West		
Reason for Trench			Evaluation of unknown area			
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)	
409	Layer	Dark greyish brown sandy friable loam. Topsoil	-	300	-	
408	Layer	Greyish brown clay. Silt or alluvium? Continuous with (303) in Trench 3	400+	Un-exc	c.500	
407	Fill	Modern brick, chalk and building debris	1.05m	1.3m	300	
406	Cut	Subcircular cut. Modern rubbish pit	1.05m	1.3m	300	
405	Fill	Modern brick, chalk and building debris	1m	Un-exc	300	
404	Cut	Subcircular cut. Modern rubbish pit	1m	Un-exc	300	
403	Fill	Modern brick and building debris	500	Un-exc	300	
402	Cut	Square cut. Construction cut of modern feature	500	Un-exc	300	
401	Layer	Dark yellowish brown silty clay. Subsoil	-	700	300	
400	Layer	Yellowish brown iron rich clay. Natural Strata	-	Un-exc	1.1m	

Trench 5						
	Max Dimensions					
	Length	18.5m	Width	1.6m	Depth	c.0.65m
	Levels					
	Trench top north			-		
	Trench base north			-		
	Trench top south			11.54m OD		
	Trench base south			10.89m OD		
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	N	TL 62181 98398		S	TL 62181 98368	
	Orientation			North to South		
Reason for Trench			Evaluation of unknown area			
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)	
506	Layer	Dark greyish brown sandy friable loam. Topsoil		300	-	
505	Fill	Modern debris- glass, rusty iron frags, etc	350	Un-exc	c.300	
504	Cut	Subcircular cut. Modern rubbish pit	350	Un-exc	c.300	
503	Fill	Mixed modern debris	700	Un-exc	c.300	
502	Cut	Sub-circular cut. Modern rubbish pit	700	Un-exc	c.300	
501	Layer	Dark yellowish brown silty clay. Subsoil	-	350	c.300	
500	Layer	Yellowish brown iron rich clay. Natural Strata	-	Un-exc	650	

Trench 6						
	Max Dimensions					
	Length	10m	Width	1.6m	Depth	c.0.8m
	Levels					
	Trench top west			11.69m OD		
	Trench base west			10.89m OD		
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	E	TL 62190 98368		W	62181 98368	
	Orientation			East to West		
Reason for Trench			Evaluation of unknown area			
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)	
604	Layer	Dark greyish brown sandy friable loam. Topsoil	-	c.400	-	
603	Fill	Mixed modern debris	c.500	Un-exc	c.400	
602	Cut	Subcircular cut. Modern pit	c.500	Un-exc	c.400	
601	Layer	Dark yellowish brown silty clay. Occasional pebbles. Subsoil	-	200	c.400	
600	Layer	Yellowish brown iron rich clay. Natural Strata	-	Un-exc	600	

Trench 7						
	Max Dimensions					
	Length	7.8m	Width	1.6m	Depth	c.0.8m
	Levels					
	Trench top north			12.42m OD		
	Trench base north			11.62m OD		
	Trench top south			12..51m OD		
	Trench base south			12.08m OD		
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	N	TL 62189 98345		S	TL 62189 98337	
	Orientation			North to South		
Reason for Trench			Evaluation of unknown area			
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)	
704	Layer	Dark greyish brown sandy friable loam. Topsoil	-	300	-	
703	Fill	Orange brown sand. Modern backfilling	1.6m		300	
702	Cut	Subcircular cut. Construction cut of modern pit	1.6m		300	
701	Layer	Dark yellowish brown silty clay. Occasional pebbles. Subsoil	-	c.500	300	
700	Layer	Yellowish brown iron rich clay. Natural Strata	-	Un-exc	c.500	